



TRUE ISSUES®

**FIND OUT
WHAT THEY'RE
THINKING.**

October 2023



J W S R E S E A R C H



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Cost of living still leads community concerns but a majority also want action on housing and interest rates and health

Amid rising housing, food, fuel and energy costs, cost of living remains the most important issue Australians want the Federal Government to focus on in October 2023.

Unprompted, a majority of Australians now name **cost of living** in their top three most important issues or concerns (56%, up from 43% in June). Similarly, from a prompted list, eight in ten adults select cost of living in their top five issues (81%, up from 75%). This is the leading concern across all age and income groups.

There is a sense that cost of living is now a challenge for ‘most’ households, impacting not just low-income earners but also middle Australia. People express frustration at increases in essential expenses outstripping rises in their income, limiting their ability to maintain their standard of living and to save for their future.

Housing and interest rates and **hospitals, healthcare and ageing** remain the next most important issues overall (56% prompted mentions of each). Amid rising rents, house prices and short-term resales, housing and interest rates remain the second highest unprompted concern (33%), ahead of health and ageing (25%).

The **economy and finances** (16% unprompted, 42% prompted) remains a leading concern across all age groups, but the related issue of employment and wages continues to be more important to 18 to 34 year olds.

Addressing the **environment and climate change** (22% unprompted, 32% prompted), **energy** issues (8% unprompted, 31% prompted) and **employment and wages** (9% unprompted, 29% prompted) remain other community priorities, with energy outweighing environmental and employment concerns among older adults (55 years and over).

After almost 18 months in Parliament and positive overall performance ratings, the **Australian Government** now rates below ‘average’ (i.e. below 50) with a performance index score of 48, down from 52 in June. This is similar to the Morrison Government’s final score of 47 in March 2022, prior to its May election loss.

Ratings of the Albanese Government’s performance on individual issues have also largely declined since June. Heading into the October 14th Voice referendum*, its largest declines were on **Indigenous issues (including the Voice)** (down five points) and **vision and leadership** (down four points), followed by **foreign affairs and trade** (down three points).

* Fieldwork undertaken 6th-9th October.

Government performance down across most issues and sharp decline in confidence about personal situation



The Federal Government continues to perform well on the **defence and security of our nation, terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism**, managing the **COVID-19 pandemic** and **innovation, science and technology** (index scores of 55, 54, 54 and 53, respectively).

However, its performance remains well below ‘average’ on the top issues Australians want them to address, including **cost of living** (index score of 27, down from 29 in June and 31 in February), **housing and interest rates** (index score of 30, unchanged but lower than 33 in February), and **hospitals, healthcare and ageing** (index score of 40, unchanged over the past year).

Energy, the economy and finances, employment and wages and the **environment and climate change** remain other key areas of concern where Australians see substantial room for improvement from government (index scores of 39, 42, 45 and 45, respectively).

Similarly, amid talk of a recession in the next 12 months, Australians continue to have limited confidence in the future of our economy – twice as many see the **national economy** heading in the wrong direction (39%) as see it heading in the right direction (19%).

Australian **business and industry** performance continues to rate ahead of government, despite a small

decrease from June (index score of 53, down from 55). Slightly more adults see business heading in the right direction (23%) as heading in the wrong direction (21%).

At state level, the **WA and SA Governments** maintain positive index scores of 58 and 56, respectively, however this represents a decline in WA since June. The **NSW Government** rates just ‘average’ at an index score of 50, and the **Victorian and Queensland Governments** continue to rate below ‘average’ (index scores of 48 and 45, respectively). Overall, more in the eastern states continue to see their state economy as heading in the wrong direction than in the right direction.

At a local level, **council** performance continues to rate slightly above ‘average’ (index score of 51, unchanged) as more Australians see their **local community** heading in the right direction than in the wrong direction.

Similar to 2022, there has been a sharp decline in sentiment from mid-year to October in how Australians see their **own personal situation** – 31% now see it heading in the right direction (down from 37%), 23% in the wrong direction (up from 19%).

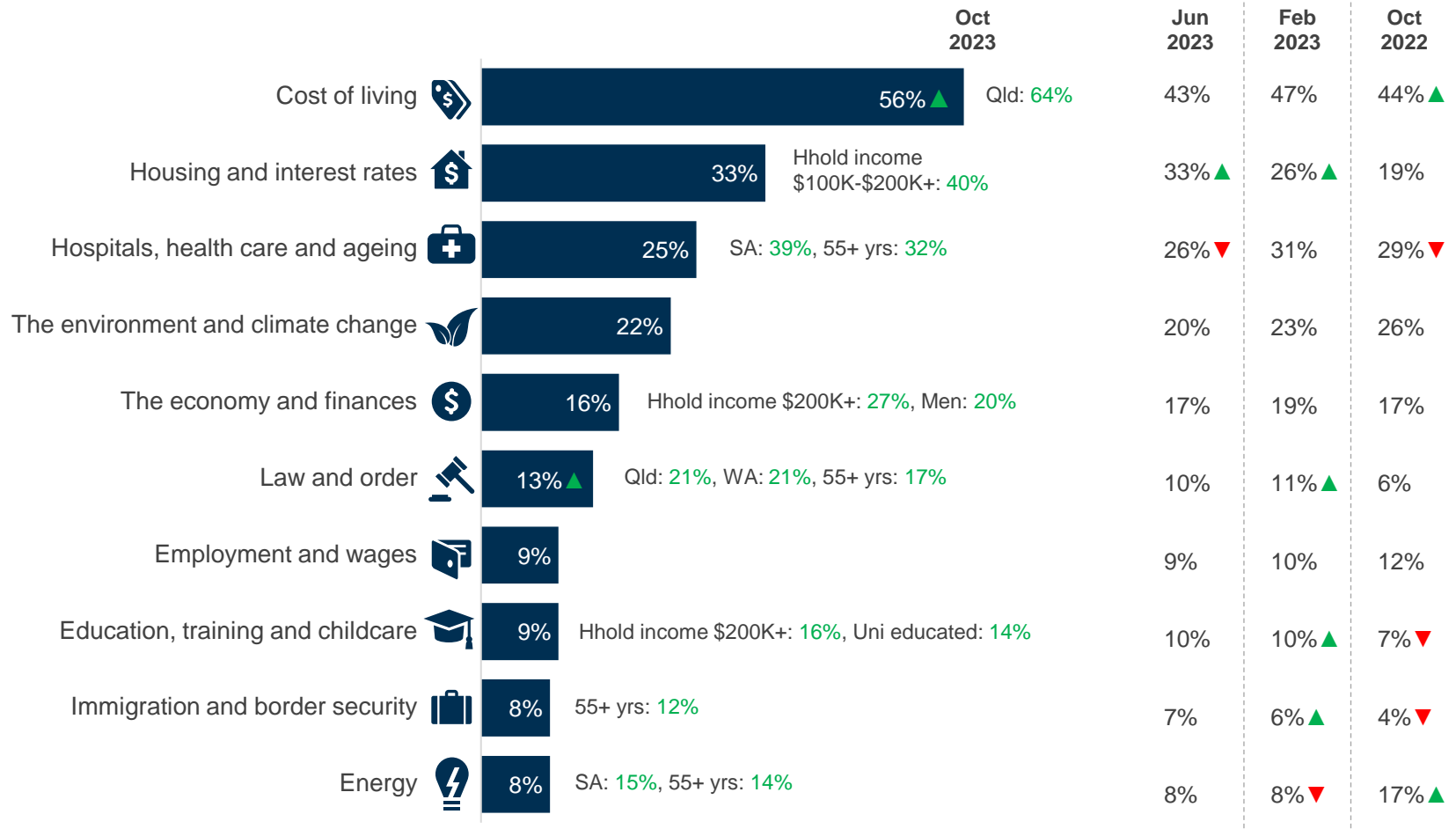


**What are the
issues
Australians care
about?**

Cost of living now top of mind for a majority of adults, ahead of housing and interest rates and health and ageing



Most important issues the Australian Government should focus on
(Up to 3 issues – unprompted^)



^ Note: Issues mentioned among 5% or fewer not shown.

Significantly higher than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.

Significantly ▲ higher / ▼ lower than previous True Issues wave at the 95% confidence interval.

Q. What are the most important issues that you think the Australian Government should focus on? These would be the issues or problems that personally interest or concern you the most. Please describe up to three separate issues in the text boxes below.

Base: All respondents (approximately n=1,000 per wave, n=1,225 in June 2023).

Living costs edge further ahead of other prompted issues as concern about housing and rates equals that for health



Most important issues the Australian Government should focus on (Top 5 most important – prompted)



* 'including The Voice' added in June 2023.

Significantly ▲ higher / ▼ lower than previous True Issues wave at the 95% confidence interval.

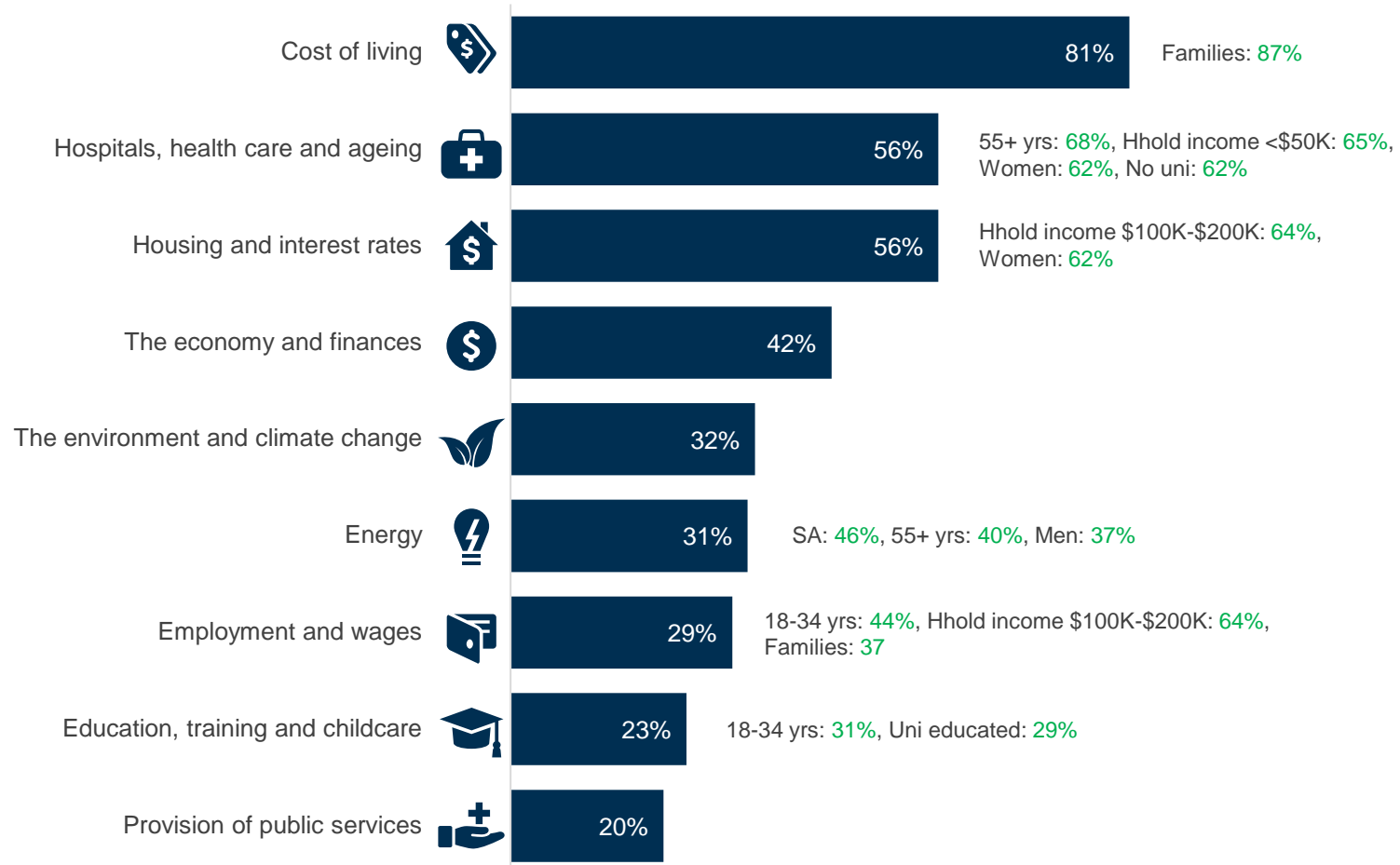
Q. From the following list, please select the five most important issues you think the Australian Government should focus on.

Base: All respondents (approximately n=1,000 per wave, n=1,225 in June 2023).

Housing and interest rates and jobs and wages of greater concern among households earning \$100K-\$200K p.a.



Highest ranked issues the Australian Government should focus on
(Top 5 most important – prompted)



Significantly higher than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.
Q. From the following list, please select the five most important issues you think the Australian Government should focus on.
Base: All respondents (n=1,000).



Why Australians want a focus on cost of living

“I think this is the biggest issue facing most people. It’s becoming increasingly more difficult to provide for a family with the increase in cost of day-to-day living that isn’t matched by salary increases. The housing and interest rate hikes further exacerbate the situation.”

“We are getting so much less for our money. Our shopping trolleys are half as full, petrol is very expensive, and all utilities are going up.”

“My hourly rate went up 50 cents this year, about an extra \$12 a week - but my weekly shopping bill has increased \$100+. \$80 used to get me almost a full tank of fuel, now it does not even give me half a tank. My gas and electricity bills have increased, yet my family and I are using less of it. We’ve never had a car accident, but our insurance premiums are up over \$120 per month.”

“My wages have not increased but my rent was put up by \$125 extra a week. My utilities have also increased.”

“We’re paying almost double what we expected our mortgage to be at the beginning of the build.”

“Inflation has got out of hand and I don’t think the Government is doing enough to help.”

“I have a fulltime job earning six figures plus I spend 20+ hours every weekend driving for Uber and we are just covering our bills.”

“As a 23 year old I am struggling to afford rent and bills and groceries, which are basic living costs. I don’t have any spare money to save, which is putting huge pressure on me, and I know it is affecting many others.”

“Even though I have started earning more in my job I am still unable to get a good amount of savings, the cost of fuel and groceries has increased so much.”

“Inflation and rising cost of living prevents households from being able to plan for the future as they are constantly struggling to get by day by day.”

“On a fixed income, my standard of living is falling because the cost of everything is going up.”

“We get a pension rise and everything goes up more than the rise we get. We never get ahead.”

“The cost of living doesn’t just impact people financially but also physically and mentally. This then leads to further issues in the healthcare sector, etc.”

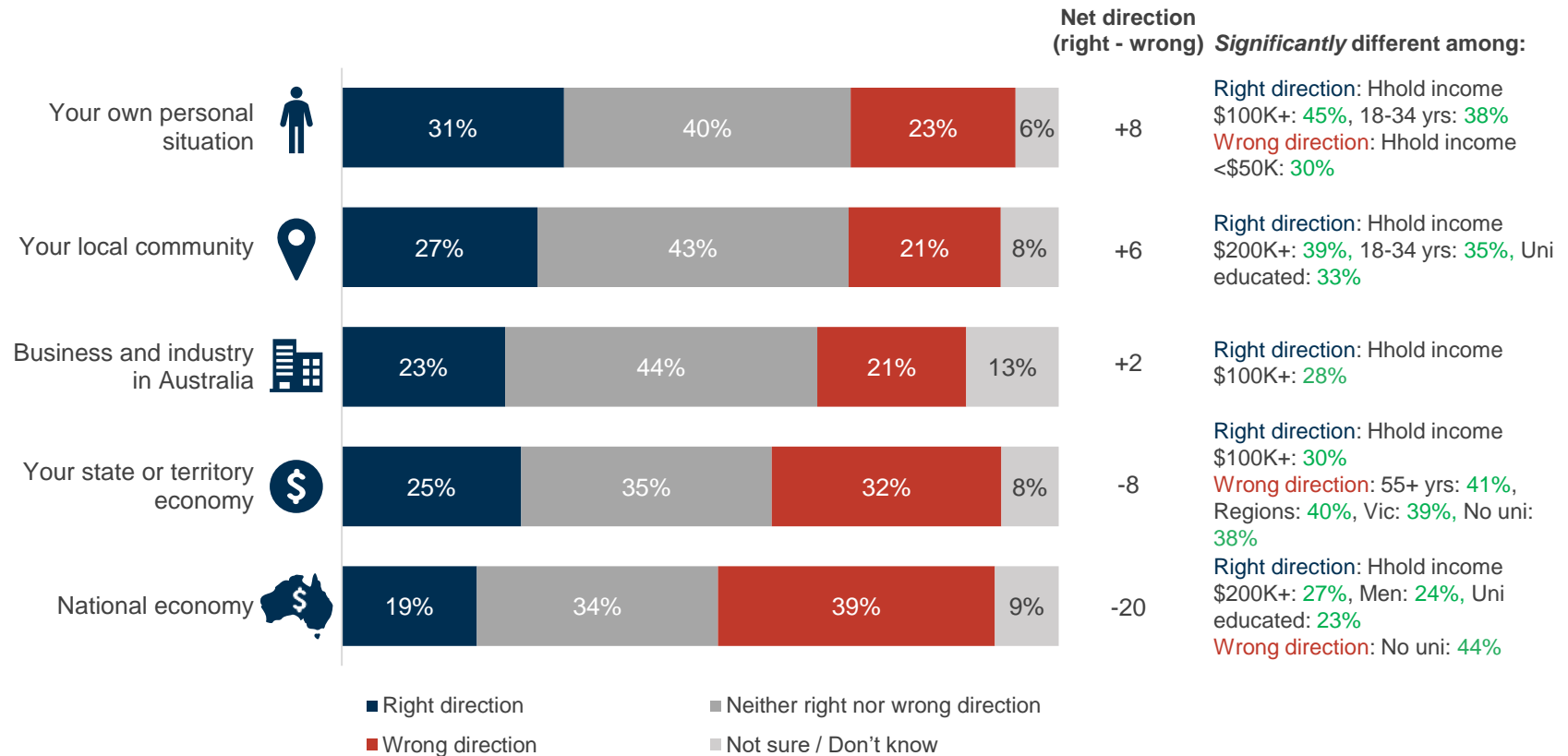


**Are we headed in
the right
direction?**

Australians still most optimistic about their own situation and community, most pessimistic on the national economy



Direction of organisations and groups in Australia

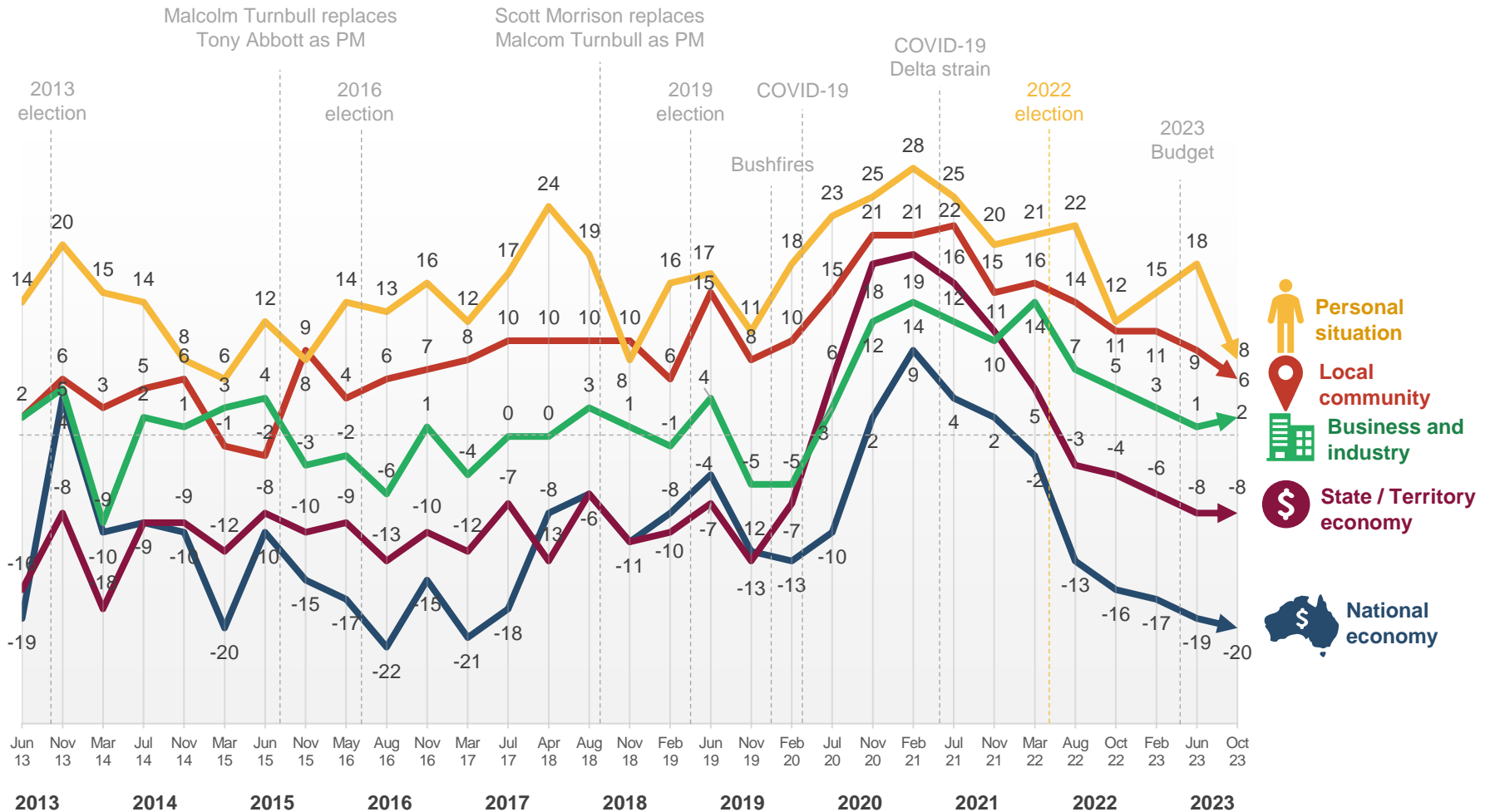


Significantly higher than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.
 Q. Do you think each of the following is generally headed in the right or the wrong direction?
 Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

Australians' confidence about the direction they and the economy are heading falls to its lowest level in five years



Direction of organisations and groups in Australia
 Net direction trend (right direction % - wrong direction %)



Q. Do you think each of the following is generally headed in the right or the wrong direction?
 Base: All respondents (approximately n=1,000 per wave, n=1,225 in June 2023).

The background features a collage of financial data and charts. On the left, a smartphone screen displays a table with columns for 'Index', 'Daily', and 'US Sp'. The table includes values such as 1.11, 1.99, 31.42, 1.79, 2.05, 43.66, 5.7, 3, 1.8, 6.94, 2.86, 50, 4.02, 1.02, 1.24, 1.4, 4.58, 7.85, 1.4, 33.44, 6.94, and 3.4%. In the center, a line graph shows an upward trend. On the right, a laptop screen shows a bar chart with blue bars and a numerical value of 16.17. The overall theme is financial analysis and data visualization.

How does the Australian Government perform on top issues?

Government performance declines on most issues, with sharpest falls on Indigenous issues, vision, foreign affairs



Australian Government performance on issues (Performance index#)

		Oct 2023	Jun 2023	Feb 2023	Oct 2022
The defence and security of our nation		55	55	55	55
Terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism		54	56	55	55
The COVID-19 pandemic		54	56	56	53
Innovation, science and technology		53	54	52	53
Foreign affairs and trade		52	55	54	52
Mining and resources		51	52	52	51
Business and industry		51	52	52	52
Agriculture and regional development		50	50	49	51
Provision of public services		49	49	49	51
Immigration and border security		49	51	51	52
Community, family and social services		49	49	48	50
Education, training and childcare		48	50	49	51
Transport and infrastructure		47	49	49	49
The environment and climate change		45	46	45	46
Employment and wages		45	46	45	45
Population growth		44	46	49	48
Indigenous issues (including The Voice)*		44	49	52	51
Vision and leadership		43	47	47	48
The economy and finances		42	42	44	45
Hospitals, health care and ageing		40	40	40	40
Energy		39	41	40	38
Housing and interest rates		30	30	33	36
Cost of living		27	29	31	32

Top 8 results

For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the survey methodology section of this report

* 'including The Voice' added in June 2023.

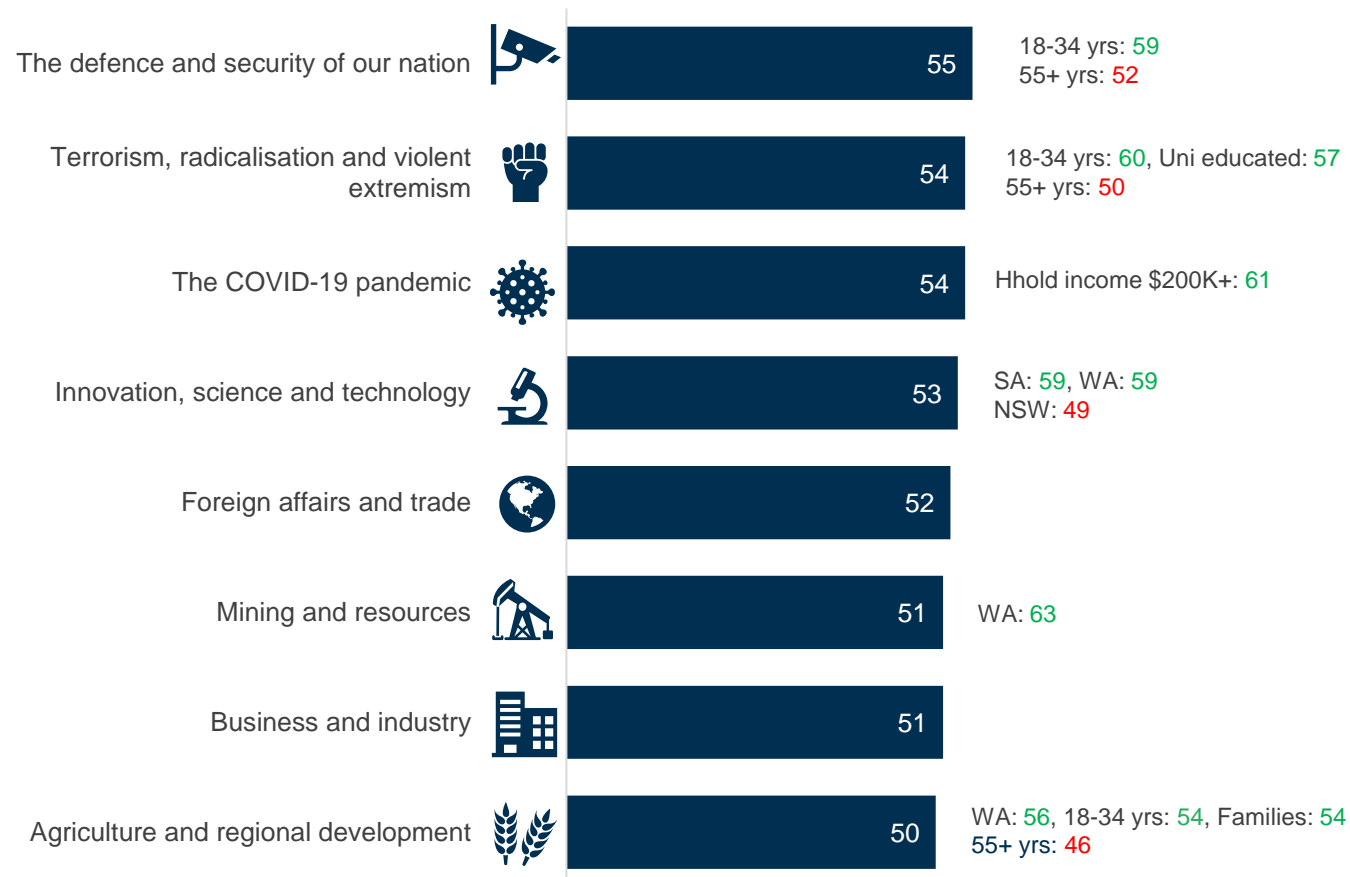
Q. How would you rate the performance of the Australian Government on each of the following issues?

Base: All respondents (approximately n=1,000 per wave, n=1,225 in June 2023).

18-34s more positive about Government performance on key issues, those aged 55 and over less so



Top ranked issues for Australian Government performance (Performance index#)



For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the survey methodology section of this report.

Significantly higher / lower than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.

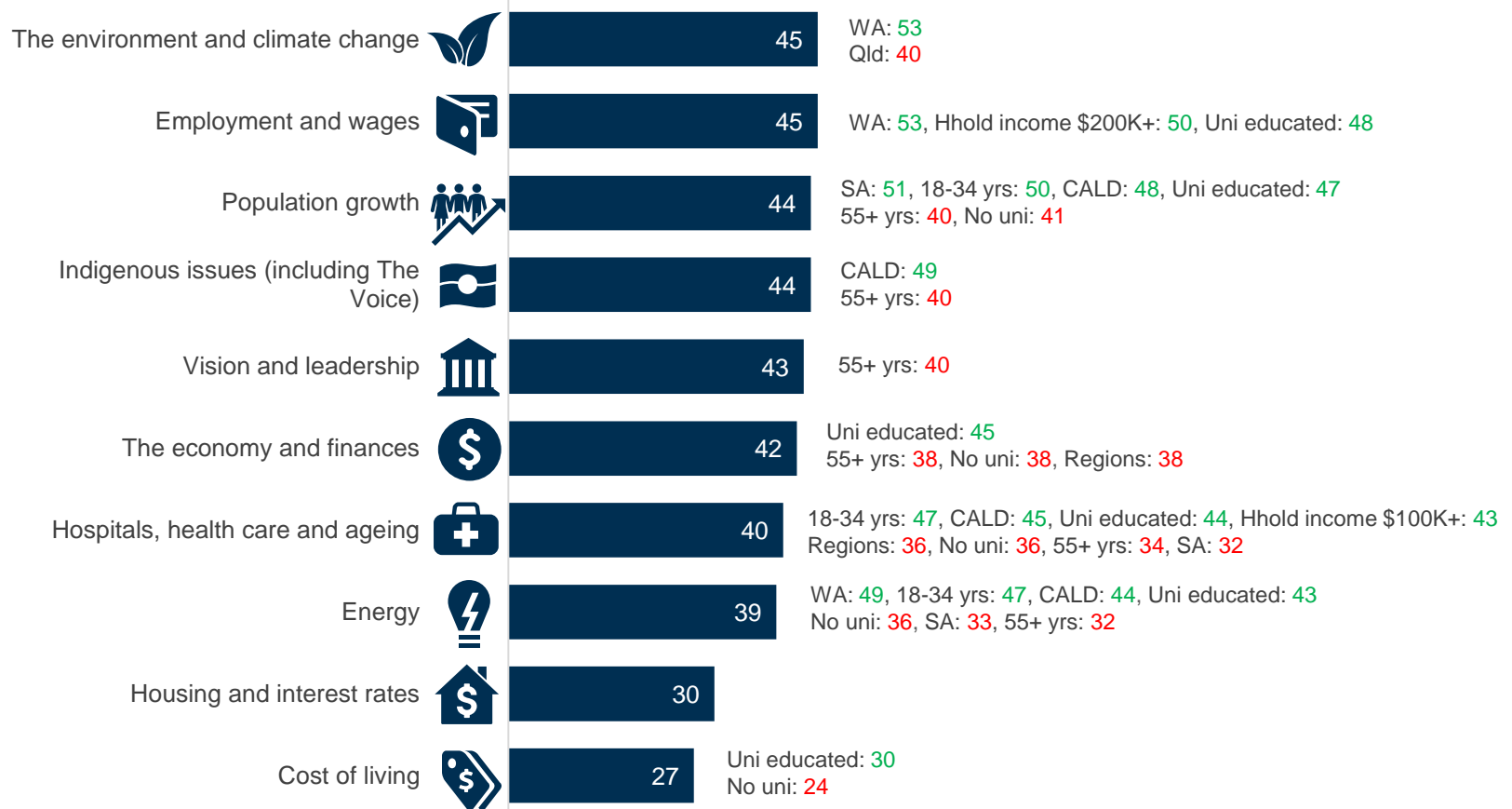
Q. How would you rate the performance of the Australian Government on each of the following issues?

Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

Older adults most critical of Government performance in weaker areas like energy, health, the economy and vision



Bottom ranked issues for Australian Government performance (Performance index#)



For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the survey methodology section of this report.
 Significantly higher / lower than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.
 Q. How would you rate the performance of the Australian Government on each of the following issues?
 Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

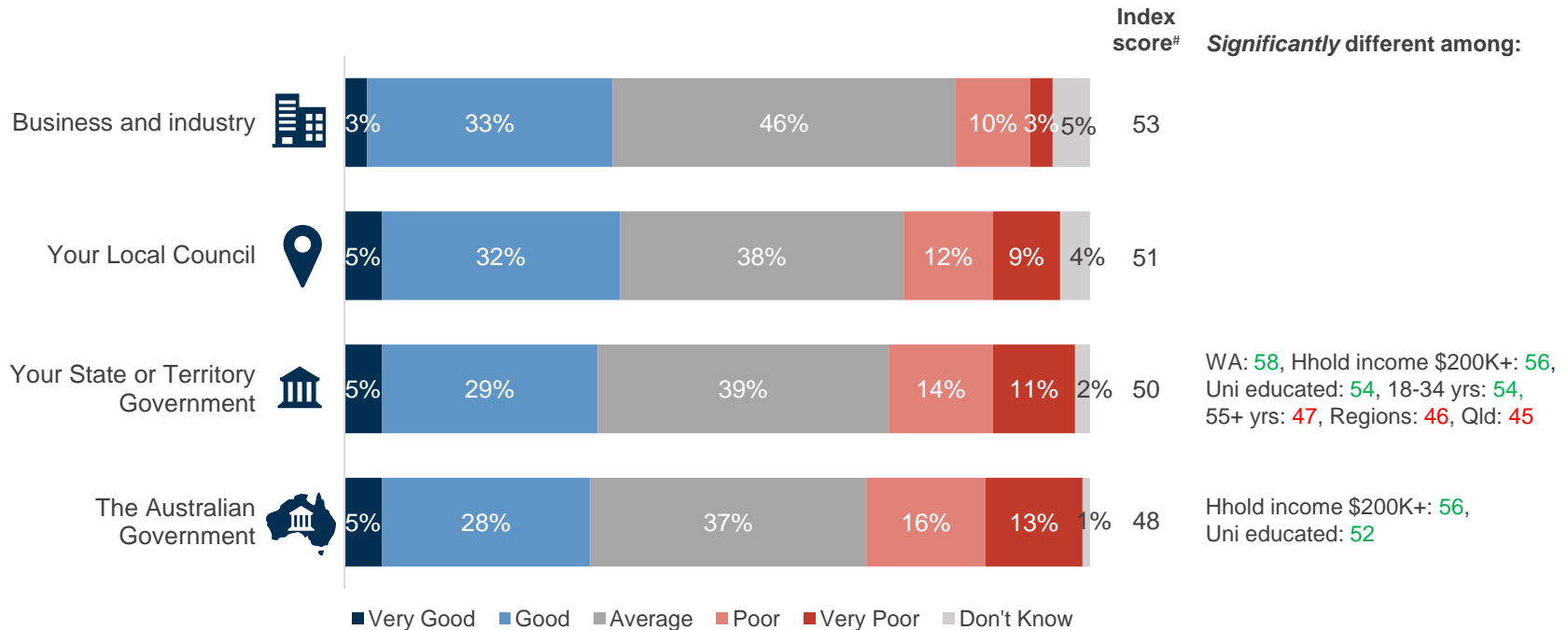


**How are
government,
business and
industry
performing?**

Business outperforms all levels of government at a national level but WA Government rates best overall



Performance of organisations and groups in Australia

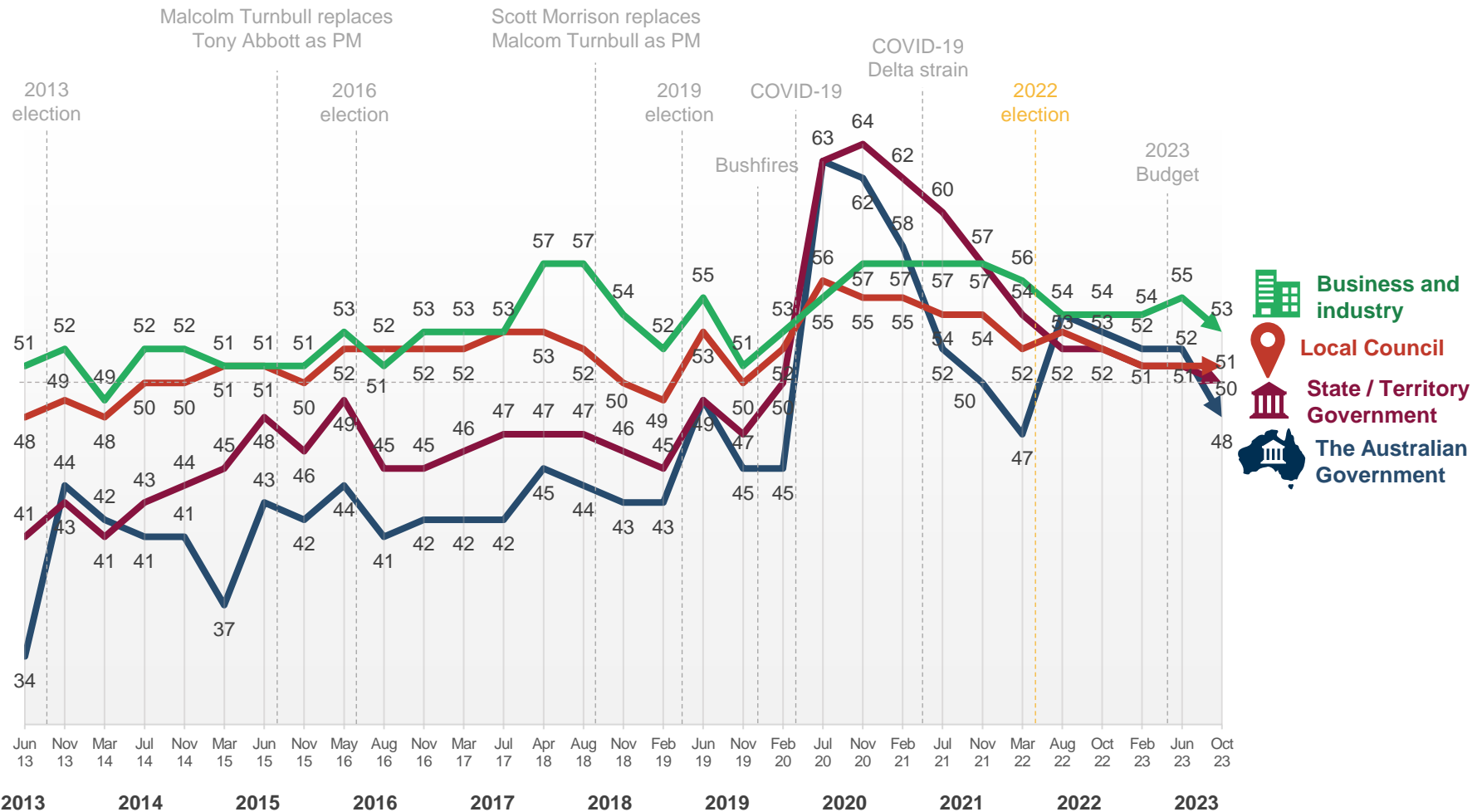


[#] For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the research methodology section of this report. Significantly higher / lower than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.
 Q. How would you rate the current performance of each of the following organisations or groups in Australia?
 Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

Albanese Government performance rating falls almost as low as former Morrison Government in March 2022



Performance of organisations and groups in Australia
Index score trend#



For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the survey methodology section of this report.
Q. How would you rate the current performance of each of the following organisations or groups in Australia?
Base: All respondents (approximately n=1,000 per wave, n=1,225 in June 2023).



Survey methodology



National Online Survey

n=1,000 Australian adults

- Conducted Friday 6th - Monday 9th October 2023.
- Sample quotas on age, gender and location, with post-survey weighting to actual age / gender / location proportions from Census data.
- Maximum margin of error on n=1,000 is +/-3.1% at the 95% confidence level.
- Differences of +/-1% for net scores are due to rounding.

Explanation of index scores:

To facilitate ease of reporting and comparison of results over time, an **index score** has been calculated for performance measures (*very good* to *very poor* ratings).

The index score is represented as a score out of 100.

To calculate this score, the **survey percentage result** for each scale category (excluding 'don't know' responses) is multiplied by an **index factor** to produce an **index value** for each category. These values are then summed to produce the **index score**, equating to 43 in this example.

Rating category	Survey percentage	Index factor	Index value (percentage x factor)
<i>Very good</i>	5%	100	5
<i>Good</i>	17%	75	13
<i>Average</i>	40%	50	20
<i>Poor</i>	19%	25	5
<i>Very poor</i>	15%	0	0
<i>Don't know</i>	4%	-	-
Index score			43

**THERE ARE
OVER
26 MILLION
PEOPLE
IN AUSTRALIA...**

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