

A large, dark blue, stylized letter 'W' that serves as a background element. It is filled with a complex, glowing pattern of white and light blue lines and dots, resembling a cosmic web or a neural network.

TRUE ISSUES®

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

February 2024



J W S R E S E A R C H



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Living costs, housing, health and ageing remain top issues, as more are concerned about immigration and borders



In February 2024, cost of living remains the dominant issue Australians want the Federal Government to focus on. Unprompted, a majority (58%) of adults continue to name **cost of living** in their top three most important issues or concerns, and eight in ten (80%) select cost of living in their top five from a prompted list.

Despite interest rates remaining on hold over the summer, even those who consider themselves ‘on a reasonable wage’ express concern about meeting increased costs for essentials like food, fuel, utilities and housing.

Hospitals, healthcare and ageing and **housing and interest rates** are the next most important issues overall (56% and 53% prompted mentions, respectively). Housing and interest rates remain the second highest unprompted concern (36%), ahead of health and ageing (26%), as Australians consider the wider impacts of our ‘housing crisis’ on homelessness and intergenerational inequity, in addition to more personal concerns about meeting their own housing costs and needs.

The **economy and finances** is more top of mind than in October (20% unprompted mentions – up from 16%, 41% prompted). This remains a leading concern across all age groups, but the related issue of jobs and wages continues to be more important to 18 to 34 year olds.

Addressing the **environment and climate change** (21% unprompted, 33% prompted mentions) and **employment and wages** (7% unprompted, 32% prompted mentions) remain other key community priorities.

Fewer Australians see a focus on **energy** as important than in October (4% unprompted and 22% prompted mentions, down from 8% and 31%, respectively), however the issue remains a higher priority for adults aged 55 years and over, outweighing job and wage concerns.

In contrast, more adults are concerned about **immigration and border security** than four months ago (13% unprompted and 21% prompted mentions, up from 8% and 16%, respectively). Some Australians raise concerns about immigration putting further pressure on housing stock and infrastructure. Others mention concerns about illegal immigration and about crime. This may reflect recent media coverage around crimes committed by former indefinite immigration detainees.

Rated performance of the **Australian Government** remains below ‘average’ (i.e. below 50), falling three points since October (index score of 45, down from 48). This is the level recorded by the Morrison Government during the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires.



Government performance down across most issues but small rebound in confidence about personal situation

Government performance ratings have also declined across most individual issues, including for some of its stronger areas – **defence and security of our nation** and **terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism** (index scores of 53 and 52, respectively, down two points each), and the **COVID-19 pandemic** and **foreign affairs and trade** (index scores of 53 and 51, respectively, down one point each).

Largest performance declines over the past four months have been on **agriculture and regional development, immigration and border security** and **population growth** (down 3 index points each).

The Government also continues to rate well below ‘average’ on the top issues Australians want them to address – **cost of living** and **housing and interest rates** (index scores of 25 and 28, respectively, down two points each), and **hospitals, healthcare and ageing** (index score of 39, down one point).

Notably, performance on cost of living and population growth has declined every quarter over the past year.

Australians continue to have limited confidence in the future of our economy – twice as many see the **national economy** heading in the wrong direction as see it heading in the right direction (39% versus 19%, unchanged from October).

Australian **business and industry** performance (index score of 54) continues to rate ahead of government and more adults see business heading in the right direction (23%) than see it heading in the wrong direction (19%).

At state level, the **WA and SA Governments** maintain positive performance index scores (61 and 51, respectively), while the **NSW Government** continues to rate just ‘average’ (index score of 50). The **Victorian and Queensland Governments** continue to rate below ‘average’ (index scores of 44 and 43, respectively) and more people in these states view the state economy as heading in the wrong direction than heading in the right direction.

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

There has been a small new year’s boost to how Australians see their own **personal situation**, after a sharp decline from last June to October – 35% of adults now feel they are heading in the right direction (up from 31%), however 23% still see themselves heading in the wrong direction (unchanged from October and higher than 19% in June).

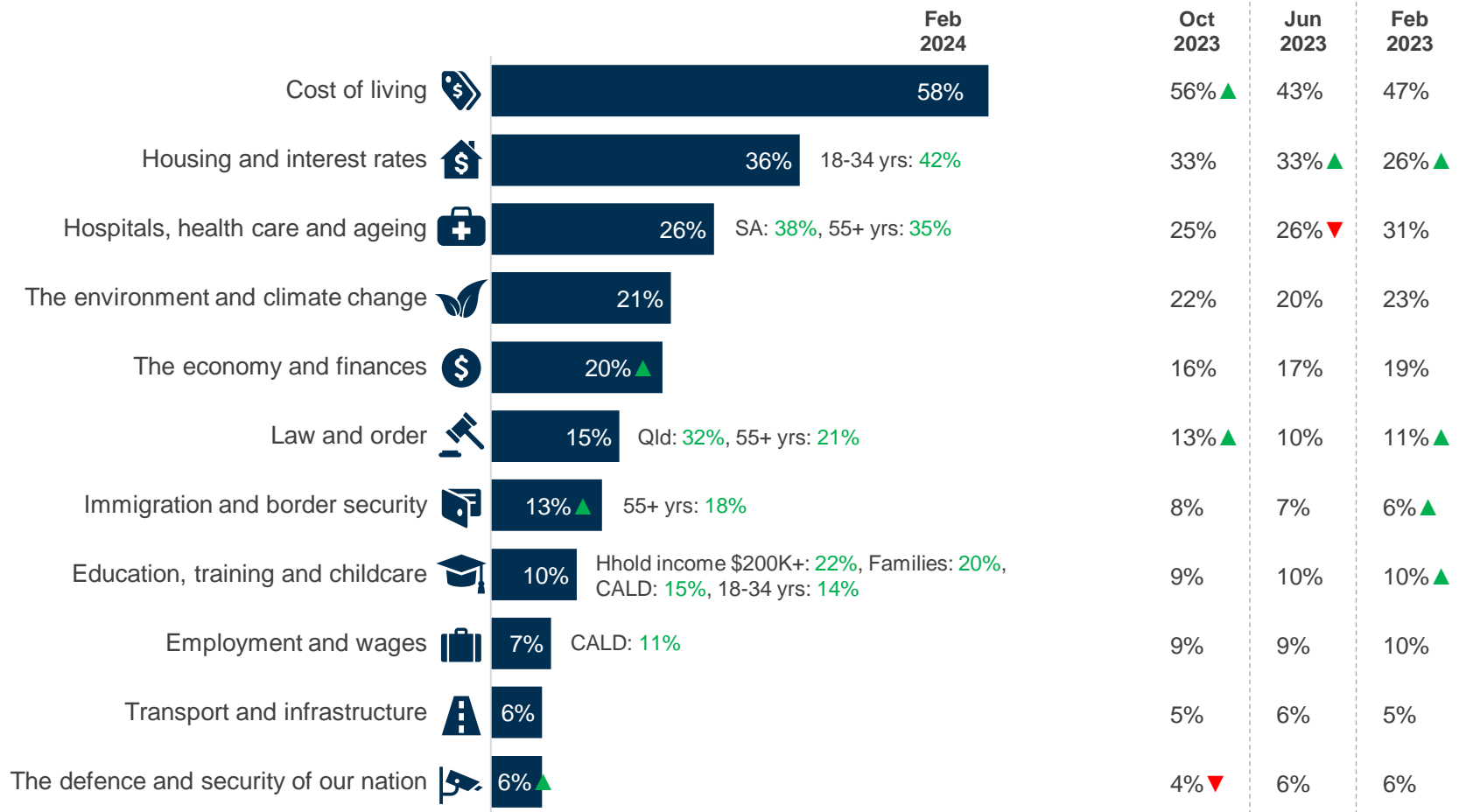
What are the issues Australians care about?



More want focus on the economy and immigration and borders but cost of living still top of mind for a majority



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, health and housing remain leading prompted issues as concern about immigration and extremism rises



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



* 'including The Voice' added June-October 2023.

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

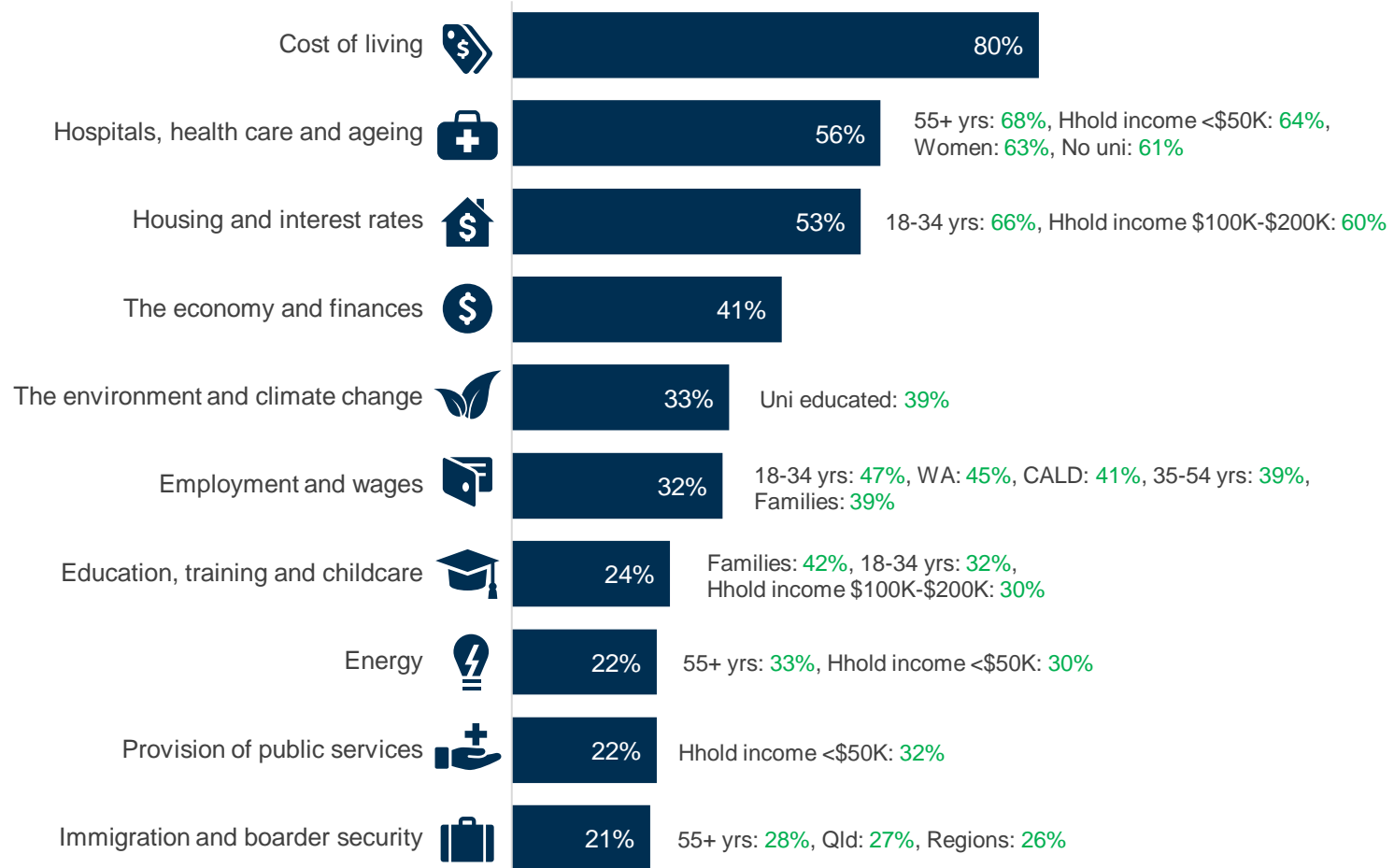
Q. From the following list, please select the five most important issues you think the Australian Government should focus on.

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

Two-thirds of young adults concerned about housing and interest rates, almost half concerned about jobs and wages



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 cost of living, hospitals, healthcare and ageing, and housing and interest rates are the top three to focus on

“Everything is increasing in price at the moment, but wages are remaining the same, so it’s becoming increasingly more difficult to live a great, happy life because there are so many financial pressures placed on people.”

“The current crisis is unsustainable for many vulnerable people.”

“The cost of living crisis is currently decimating the Australian population. The housing market has become so expensive the average Aussie can no longer afford a home. Centrelink payments no longer cover basic rent / living essentials. The national minimum wage can no longer support the basic Australian resident.”

“Everything is expensive, and wages aren’t going up. How can we afford food and a house over our heads?”

“I’m not under financial stress but the rise of costs has been exorbitant, and it’s been having negative impacts on the community (greater stress, more homelessness).”

“This concerns me the most as it is something I am currently feeling the effects of. Cost of living has skyrocketed, in particular groceries and interest rates.”

“It is affecting everyone across the country. People who rent or own a house, simply paying for groceries is stressful. The Government must focus on Australians’ needs if they want to be considered successful by the people.”

“It is crucial to maintain well-functioning hospitals, offer free healthcare for underprivileged individuals, and ensure adequate care for the elderly population is well catered for in the long term.”

“We need beds available, ambulance ramping, treating the aged with respect, setting appropriate nursing and care numbers for all communities.”

“Healthcare is appalling in regional areas. Hospitals are not managed properly and cannot retain quality staff, forcing everyone to go to the city, putting more cost and financial strain on people who are sick.”

“The Australian population is ageing and neither State or Federal Governments have prepared for this.”

“Everyone needs a house to live in and with the housing costs being so high many people cannot afford to even buy a house. The interest rates are getting too high and more people are being left on the streets.”

“People are suffering and living in cars and on couches because they cannot afford rent or find a house or afford a mortgage.”

“The more interest rates and housing go up, the more we all struggle to pay to keep a roof over our heads.”

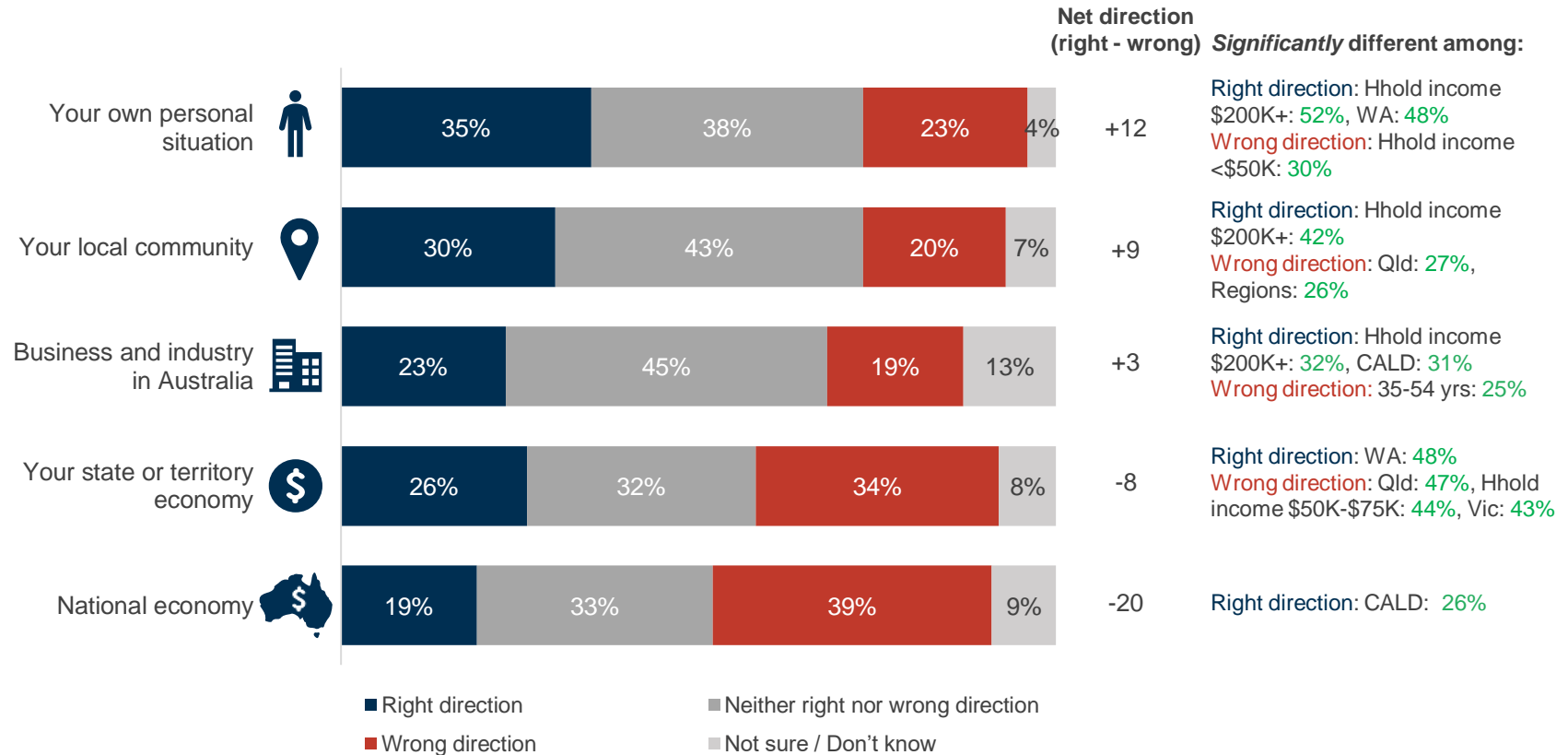


**Are we headed in
the right
direction?**

Australians optimistic about their personal situation, community and business but pessimistic on economies



Direction of organisations and groups in Australia



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

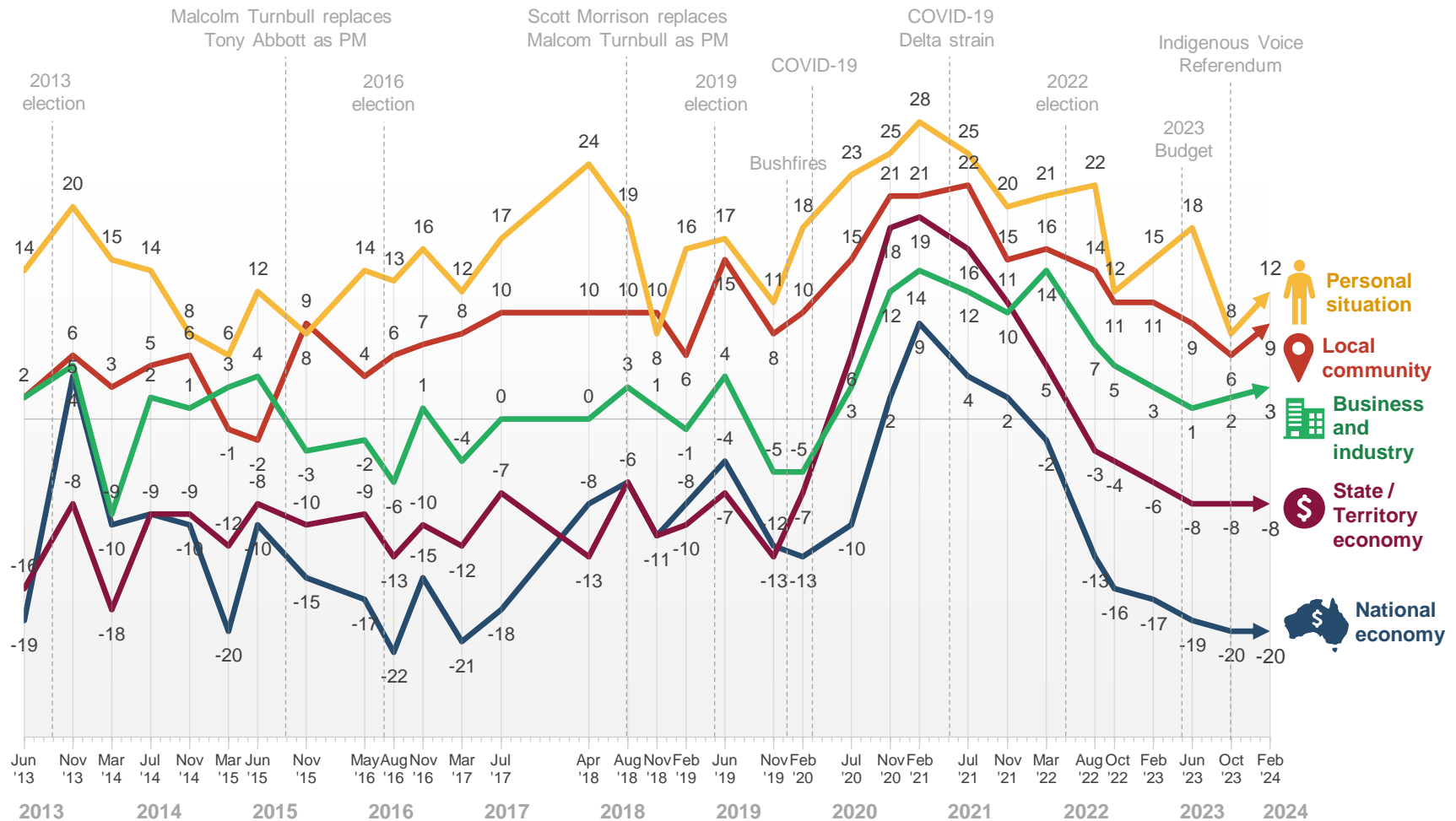
Q. Do you think each of the following is generally headed in the right or the wrong direction?

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

Confidence bounces back for own situation and community as business direction trends up but economies stay flat



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



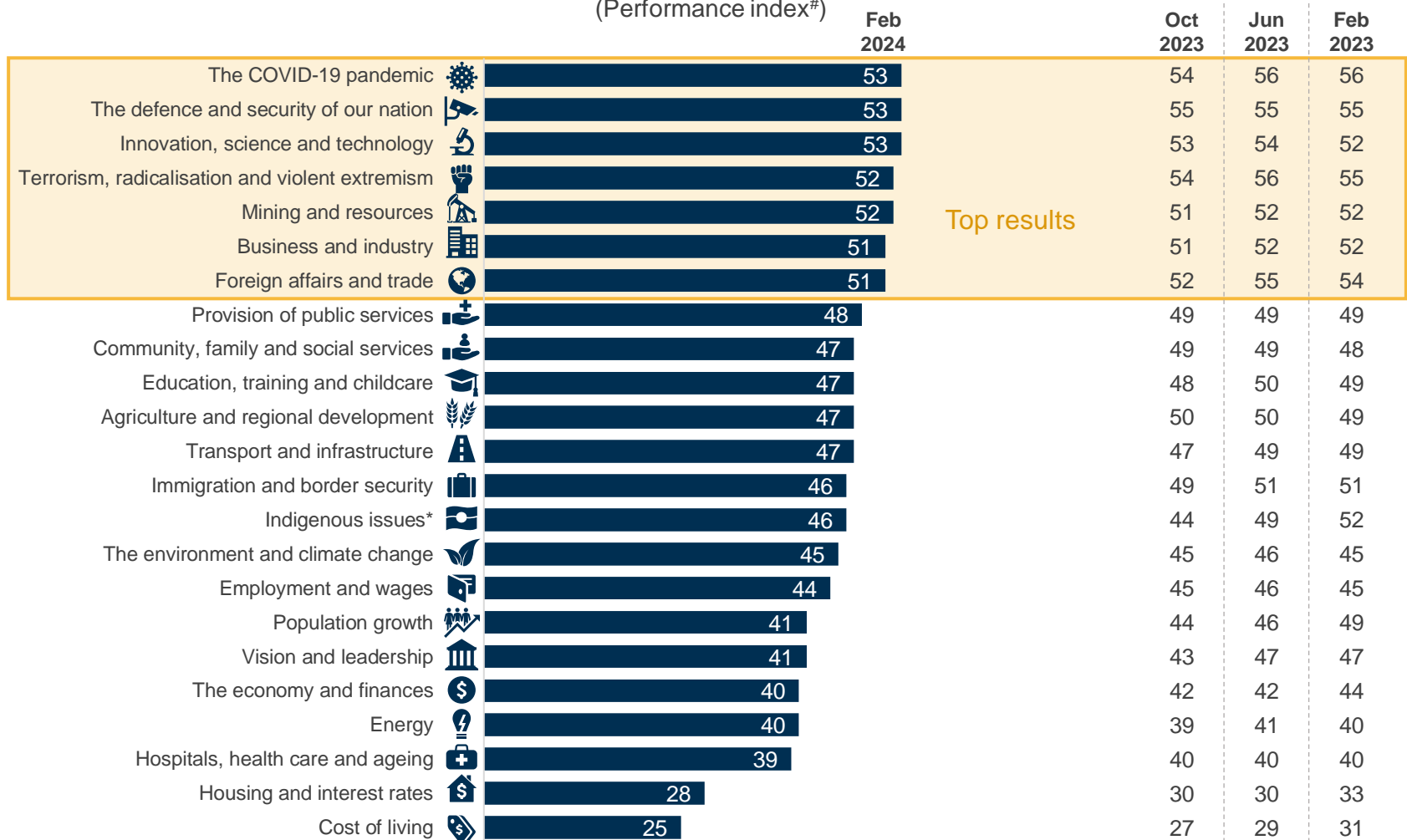


How does the Australian Government perform on top issues?

Government performance declines on most issues with largest falls on regions, immigration and population



Australian Government performance on issues (Performance index#)



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

* 'including The Voice' added June-October 2023.

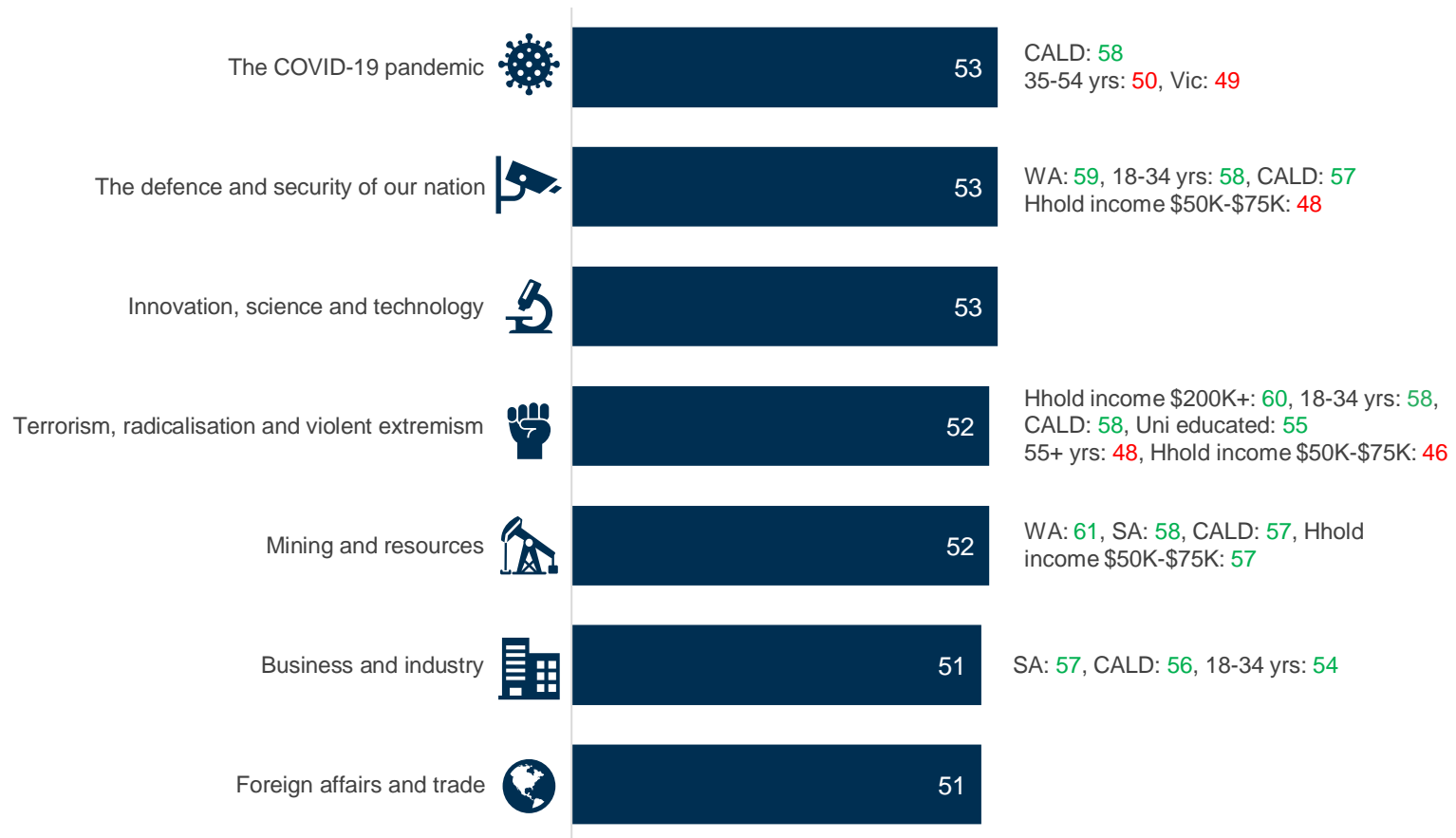
Q. How would you rate the performance of the Australian Government on each of the following issues?

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

CALD and young adults more positive about Government performance on key issues



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.

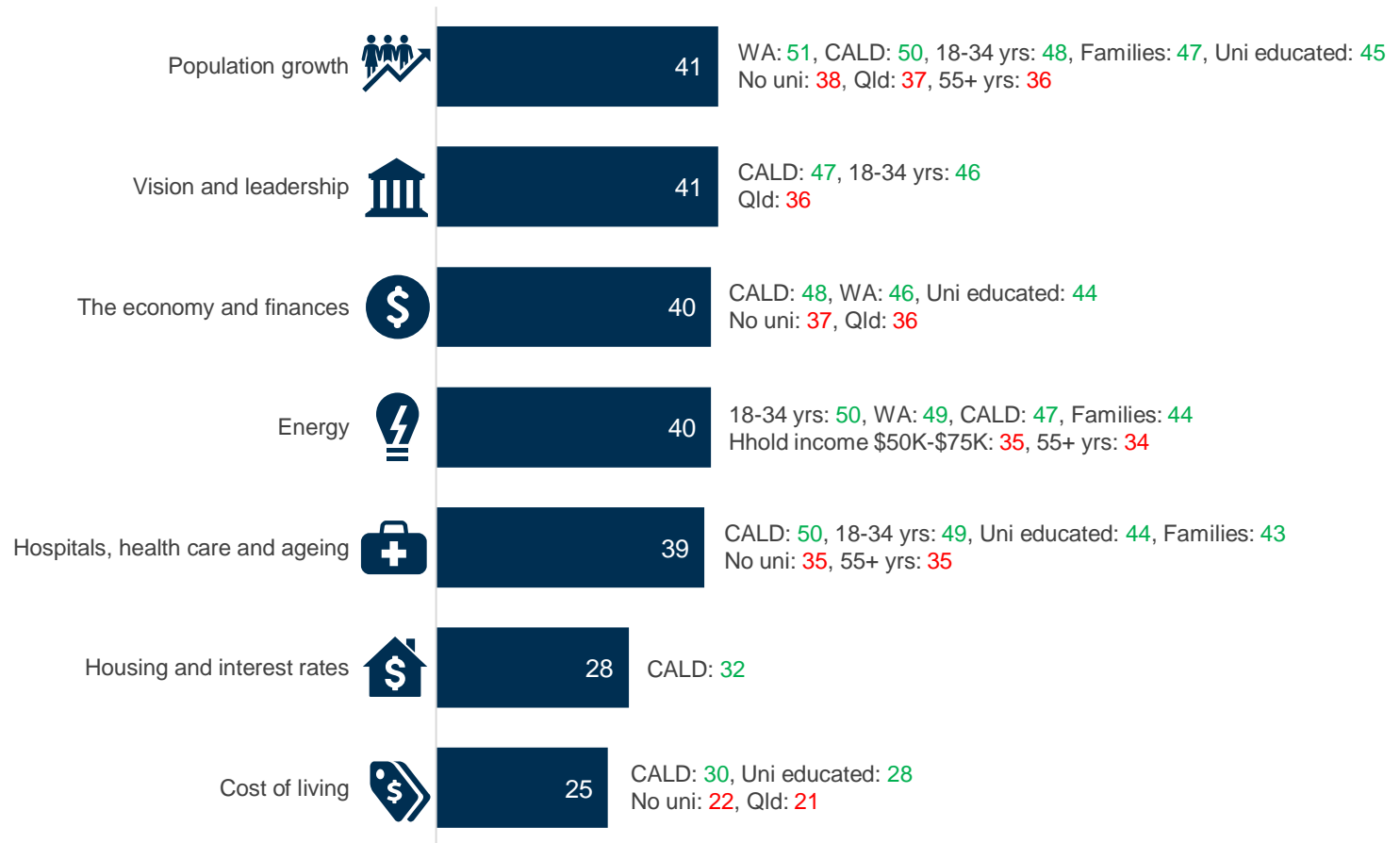
Q. How would you rate the performance of the Australian Government on each of the following issues?

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

Older adults, Queenslanders and adults who did not attend uni more critical of Government performance on key issues



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).

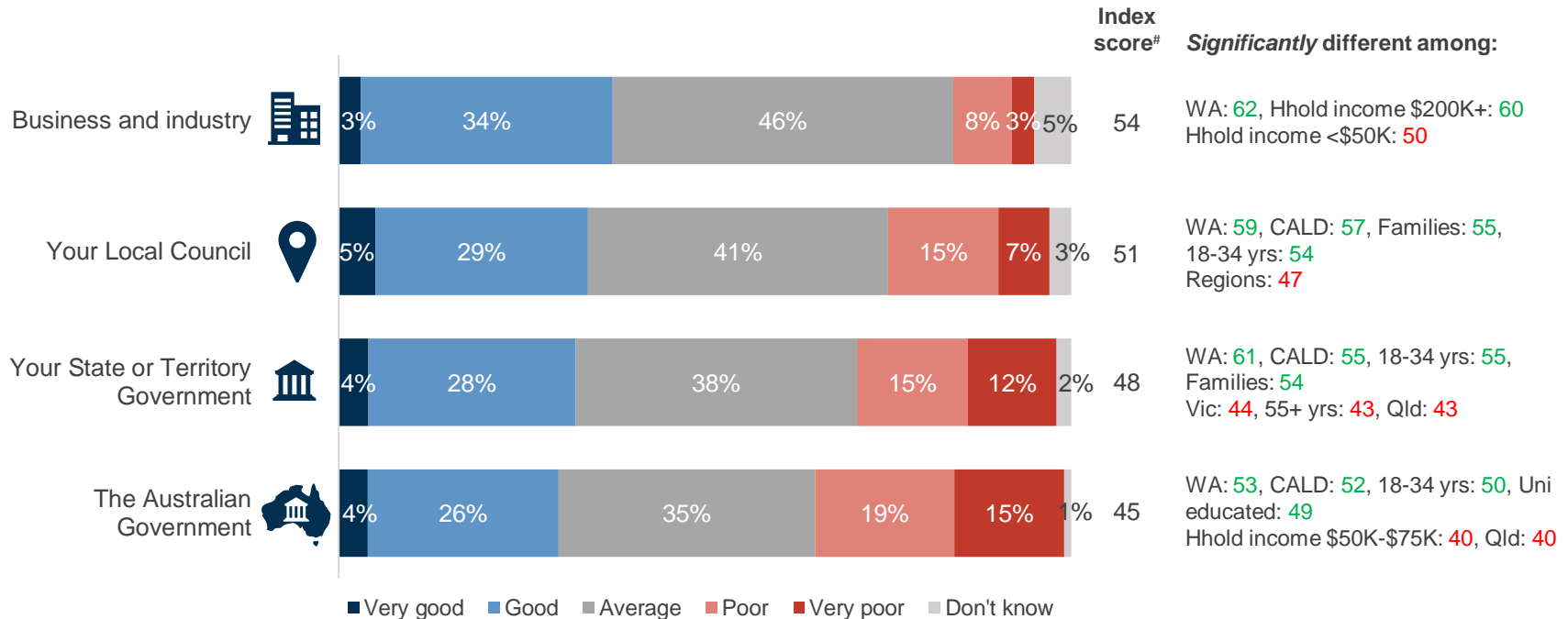
A large, stylized graphic on the right side of the slide. It consists of several overlapping, slanted rectangular shapes that resemble the facades of modern skyscrapers. The colors are primarily blue and grey, with some lighter, hazy areas at the top, suggesting a sky or a distant horizon. The shapes are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and architectural complexity.

How are government, business and industry performing?



Business continues to outperform all levels of government

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.

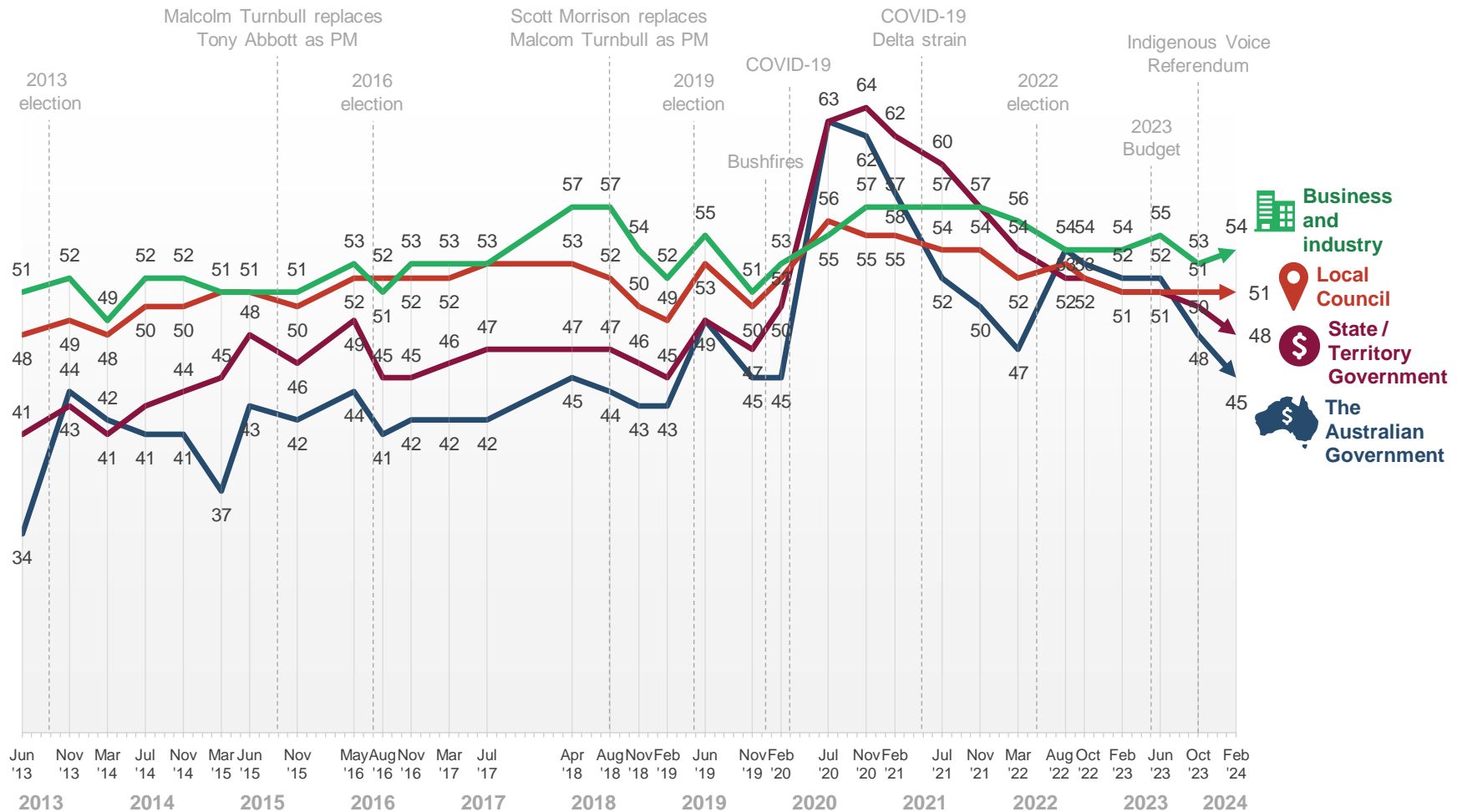
Q. How would you rate the current performance of each of the following organisations or groups in Australia?

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

Albanese Government performance falls further to its lowest level as business performance bounces back



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 Thursday 8th - Sunday 11th February 2024.
- 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 27 MILLION PEOPLE IN AUSTRALIA...

FIND OUT WHAT THEY'RE THINKING.



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