



True Issues[®]

May 2026

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Rate rises and the fuel crisis add to cost of living, housing and economic concerns, as more want greater focus on NDIS

Following fuel price volatility linked to the Middle East conflict, further cash rate rises and the 2026 Federal Budget, this latest *True Issues*[®] shows living costs and housing still leading community concerns. More Australians want greater Government focus on the NDIS than in February, while concerns about immigration and border security and social cohesion have eased slightly.

Around three-quarters (78%) of adults still include **cost of living** in their top five prompted issues or concerns requiring more Government attention. With relief from the 2025 interest rate cuts now offset by three consecutive rate rises, housing costs are further straining household budgets already hit by the recent ‘fuel crisis’ and rising inflation.

A majority (53%) of adults also want more Government focus on **housing supply and affordability**. Amid deteriorating affordability, tight rental markets and a shortfall in new builds against government targets, housing is a key concern for two-thirds (66%) of 18 to 34 year olds.

- Fuel has emerged as a notable top of mind concern, with 9% spontaneously naming it as an issue the Government should focus on. However, cost of living and housing remain dominant.

Hospitals and healthcare and **the economy and finances** (43% and 42%, respectively) are the next most important issues. Economic concern is up seven percentage points since November, while healthcare is down five. Amid growing concern about slowdown and recession, the economy remains a key issue among all age groups.

Immigration and border security (30%) continues to round out the top five prompted issues, but concern has eased four points after an eight-point jump in February. It remains a stronger concern among older adults aged 55 years and over (38%) than younger adults, and for a majority of One Nation voters (65%).

Employment and wages (25%) follows, ahead of the **environment and climate change** and **interest rates** (23% each). Concern about interest rates is unchanged, having previously jumped six points in February after the first 2026 rate rise. Jobs and wages remains a top-three concern among 18 to 34 year olds (40%), after living costs and housing.

With more time passing since the December Bondi terrorist attacks and the Royal Commission into Antisemitism and Social Cohesion underway, fewer Australians (15%, down from 19%) now place **social cohesion (including radicalisation and violent extremism)** in their top five issues for Government attention.

By contrast, major **NDIS** changes announced in the 2026 Federal Budget have lifted calls for more focus in this area (12%, up from 8%).

Overall, one in three Australians remain optimistic and say their **personal situation** is heading in the right direction (33%), compared with one in four (26%) who say it is heading in the wrong direction. Renters, One Nation voters and households earning \$50K–\$75K per annum are most pessimistic.

No improvement in perceptions of Government performance as confidence in national economy slips further

Ratings of **Australian Government** performance have not recovered from the declines recorded between November and February, and remain below 'average' (an index score below 50) overall and across all issues measured. The Albanese Government's **overall performance** index remains at 41, unchanged since a six-point fall in February.

The Government's weakest rated performance areas remain **cost of living** and **housing supply and affordability** (index scores of 23 and 24, respectively), followed by **interest rates** (index score of 32). Performance on interest rates is little changed after a 10-point fall in February, following the first 2026 rate rise.

With limits on NDIS access a key 2026 Federal Budget measure, performance on the **NDIS** fell five points to an index score of 34 (from 39 in February) – the only significant decline recorded in May.

Other weak areas for the Albanese Government include **the economy and finances** and **vision and leadership** (index scores of 36 and 37, respectively), as well as **social cohesion (including radicalisation and violent extremism)** (index score of 36), amid ongoing coverage of the public hearings at the Royal Commission.

After falling to a series low in February, confidence in the **national economy** has slipped further. Around half of adults say the economy is heading in the wrong direction (51%, up from 48% in February), compared with just 15% who say it is heading in the right direction (previously 14%).

Australians remain more positive about **business and industry** performance (index score of 53) than any level of government. Even so, more adults say business is heading in the wrong direction (28%) than in the right direction (20%).

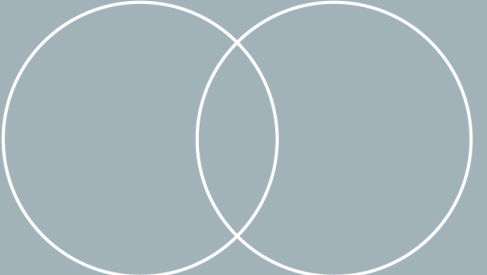
Following its landslide election win in March, the **South Australian Government** (index score of 57) leads performance at the state level, ahead of the **Western Australian and Queensland Governments** (index scores of 54 each). Views of these **state economies** are mixed, with similar proportions of residents saying they are heading in the right direction as see them heading in the wrong direction.

NSW Government performance remains weaker (index score of 50), and more NSW residents say their **state economy** is heading in the wrong direction (33%) than the right direction (22%).

After delivering its 2026 State Budget and with an election only six months away, the **Victorian Government** continues to rate poorly (index score of 35), and a majority (58%) of Victorians say their **state economy** is heading in the wrong direction.

Local council performance remains slightly stronger than other levels of government (index score of 49), though optimism about the **local community** has been softening since late 2025. Similar proportions of adults now say their local community is heading in the right direction as see it heading in the wrong direction (net direction score of +2, down from +8 in September).

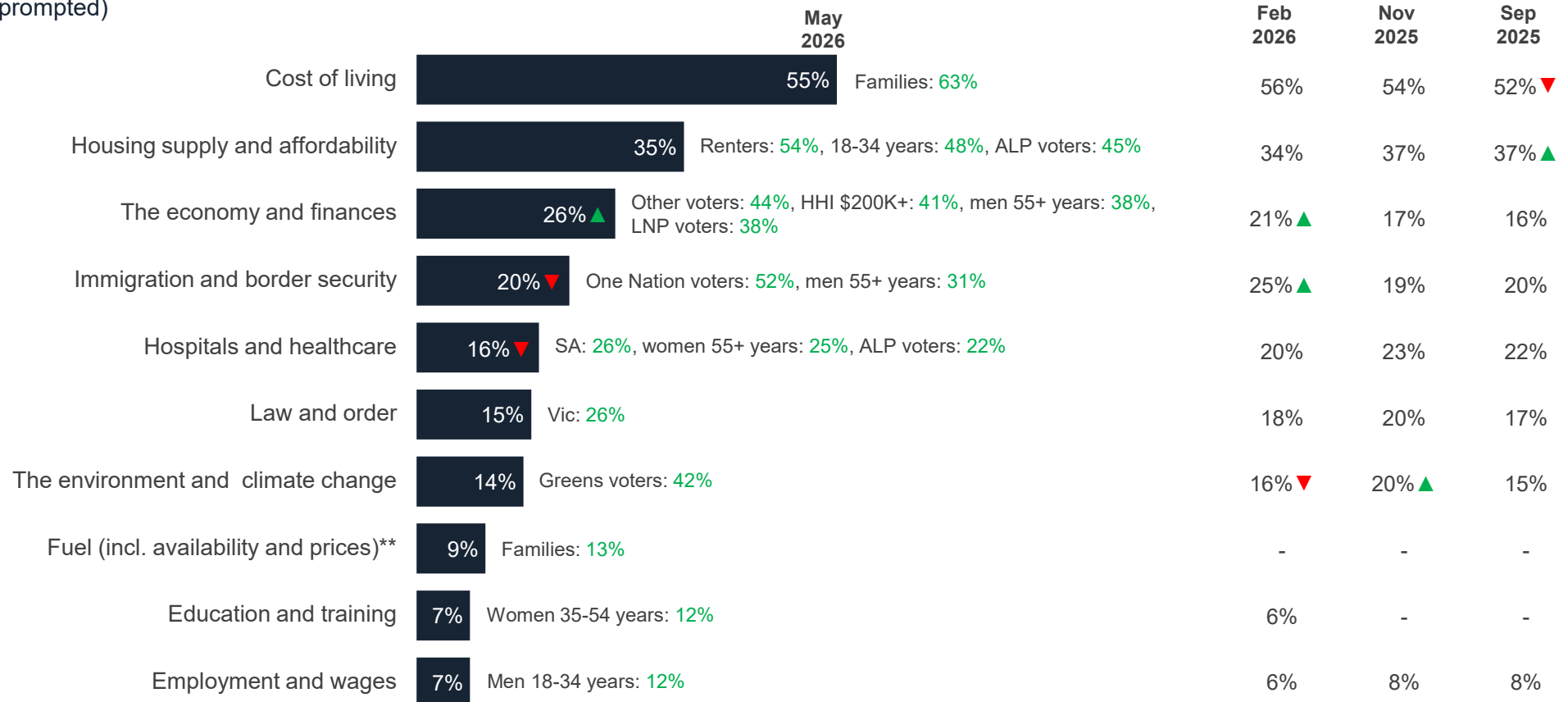
What are the issues Australians care about?



Increased concern about economy as living costs and housing remain most top of mind and fuel emerges as a key concern

Most important issues the Australian Government should focus on*

(Up to 3 issues – unprompted)



*Note: Issues mentioned by less than 7% not shown. ** New code raised in May 2026.

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

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

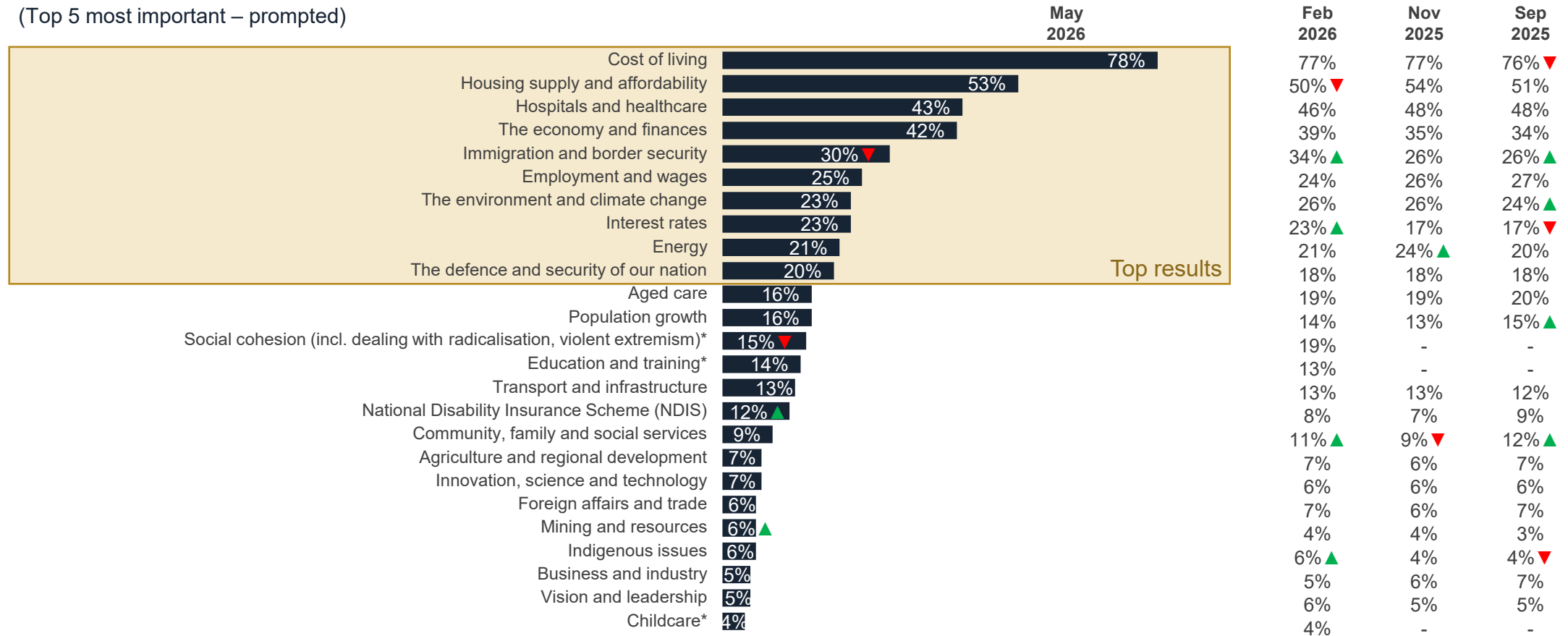
Q. What are the most important issues that you think the Australian Government should focus on? These would be the issues or problems that personally interest or concern you the most.

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

Living costs and housing lead prompted concerns followed by health and economy, as more want greater focus on NDIS

Most important issues the Australian Government should focus on

(Top 5 most important – prompted)



* In February 2026 a new category of 'social cohesion' was created, while 'childcare' was split out from 'education and training', and as such trends are not shown for these categories.

Significantly ▲ higher / ▼ lower than the previous wave at the 95% confidence level.

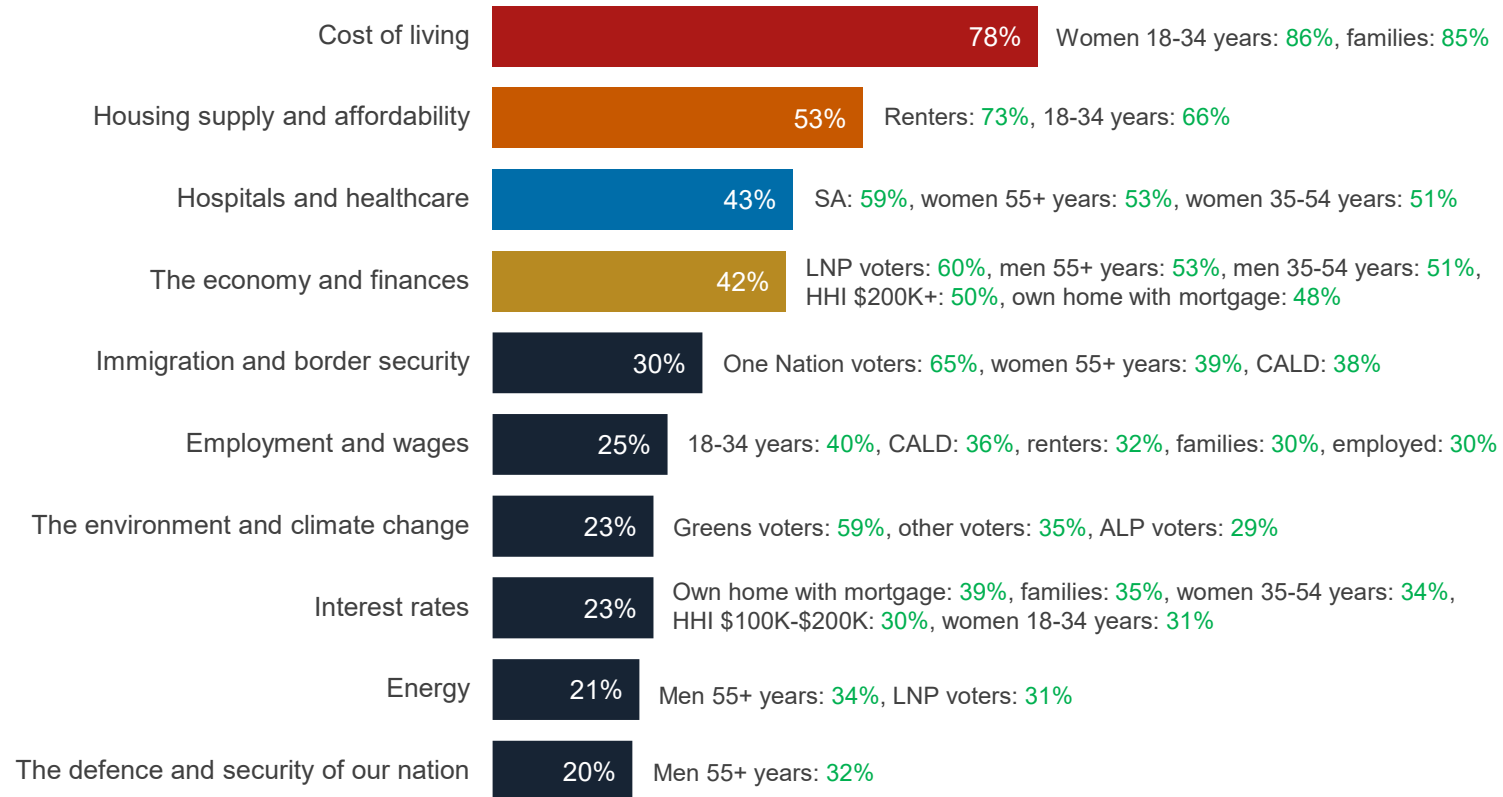
Q. From the following list, please select the five most important issues you think the Australian Government should focus on.

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

Cost of living dominates across all demographic groups, while the majority of 18-34 year olds also call for action on housing

Highest ranked issues the Australian Government should focus on

(Top 5 most important – prompted)



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

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).

Selected verbatims illustrating Australians key concerns around cost of living and housing supply and affordability

“Rising inflation means our available funds get reduced to meet the basics – food, petrol, housing, insurance, transport, health costs, etc. These costs continue to rise and wages do not keep pace.”

“Giant supermarkets should not be allowed to continually raise prices on a weekly basis and pretend to fool customers by their ‘prices are down’ rubbish. There should be a limit as to how much they can change their pricing.”

“Because housing is focused more on investment rather than homes for all Australians. Buying a home is becoming out of reach for most Australians and rents are exorbitant.”

“The cost of buying a house relative to wages is ridiculous compared to a generation ago and it is getting worse. Not only that, the government is introducing more and more schemes to strip generational wealth to stop it being passed on. This is a bleak outlook for young people.”

“There are so many people I know who are struggling to keep their heads above water which shouldn’t be the case in our country which is so rich in resources. The price of everything is going up and up.”

“The rapid increase in prices of utilities is making it difficult to maintain a stable budget. There is a need to be more transparent in supermarket pricing and better government initiatives to make housing more affordable.”

“Housing is increasingly unaffordable. More Australians are becoming homeless and people who want to build or buy new [homes] have to wait because there are way too many regulatory hurdles in housing approvals.”

“We are facing a massive housing shortage, and costs are skyrocketing, both in terms of prices to buy a house, but also rental costs and people not being able to afford to rent.”

“The rising costs of living is just enhancing the distance between the poor and the rich, by ensuring the poor can’t afford as much. The costs need to come down and the rich need to be taxed a lot more.”

“The cost of living in Australia continues to rise despite the government’s efforts to roll out policies, such as free public transport, that alleviate some of the financial pressures. Average households are unable to save or purchase homes due to cost of living. Every day families are struggling.”

“Because there are families that can’t find somewhere to live or afford it if they can. Older Australians are pushed out of renting.”

“Housing is too expensive. The changes to negative gearing are a start but allowing current properties to be grandfathered to eternity is madness.”

“Because it impacts the most vulnerable and the majority of middle Australia. Especially remote and regional communities who suffer from price gouging on food, fuel and transportation.”

“I have my 2 adult children living at home. My daughter is 23 and my son 21. In the foreseeable future, they can not move into either a rental or their own home unless I gift them a considerable deposit. Our government has let this generation down.”

“The housing shortage works in my favor at the moment as a property investor, however the growing disparity between socio economic groups will lead to many more social issues if not resolved.”

Q. Please tell us a little about why a focus on [FIRST ISSUE SELECTED / ‘MOST IMPORTANT’] is most important to you. What are your key issues or concerns about this, at the moment? How do things need to change?
Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

Selected verbatims illustrating Australians key concerns about hospitals and healthcare and the economy and finances

"Always seems to be long waiting times for operations in public hospitals, ambulance ramping, lack of doctors and nurses, access to healthcare in rural areas and cost of prescriptions."

"I live in a town with no high care nursing home, no fully functioning hospital, health services fast disappearing with 100km travel to adequate health facilities, hospital, scans, services."

"Governments can not provide services if they do not raise revenue. Some sections of the economy have not been paying their fair share. Until the government has sufficient funds to support things like health, education, defense and climate change, the current situation will continue. Some sectors are getting rich, while most are struggling."

"Productivity has stagnated. Wage caps and inflation have reduced real incomes for wage earners and those with similar fixed incomes (e.g. public service pensioners) ... There has been no significant tax reform in decades. National debt is a significant expense that is a burden today and if allowed to continue to grow, will be an extremely unfair burden on future taxpayers."

"Hospitals are being overwhelmed with patients that cannot afford to see a GP. Nurses are overworked, under paid and leaving the profession to work in other industries. Country patients travelling to the city have to wait up to 3 months for reimbursement from PATS [Patient Assisted Travel Scheme]."

"They are always stretched to the limit and services are lacking in regional areas. Staffing levels are too low and lack of beds in hospitals. Country people have to travel many hours to get specialist care with long waiting lists."

"We are in too much debt and there is wasteful government spending and corruption."

"Need to support local manufacturers rather than offshore and import. Create more jobs. Need more measures in place to recover economy."

"I work in healthcare. We are constantly asked to do more with less and patients are suffering. There is a significant disparity in how resources (equipment and staff) are distributed through the system."

"Healthcare in rural areas is limited and when available very expensive. Government doesn't factor in that we have to travel and seek accommodation as part of the healthcare package. Wait times in hospitals are extreme and the amount you pay for private health compared to benefits received is not worthwhile. A larger tax rebate or consideration for travel/accommodation costs should be part of the tax package."

"Ensuring our economy flourishes ensures that we can spend on all sectors without our federal government spiraling into severe debt. Many Australians are suffering under the current economic pressures of high cost of living, high interest rates, high inflation, wage stagnation and having little assets/equity due to the greed of investors buying up the majority of available homes."

"I don't believe our government is operating in a manner that benefits Australians. We have a ridiculous amount of debt, the NDIS is out of control and now they want to punish households that try to get ahead by abolishing CGT. They can't manage the budget."

"A healthy nation (including dentistry) will contribute to reducing poverty, child development, employment, productivity, social cohesion."

Q. Please tell us a little about why a focus on [FIRST ISSUE SELECTED / 'MOST IMPORTANT'] is most important to you. What are your key issues or concerns about this, at the moment? How do things need to change?
Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

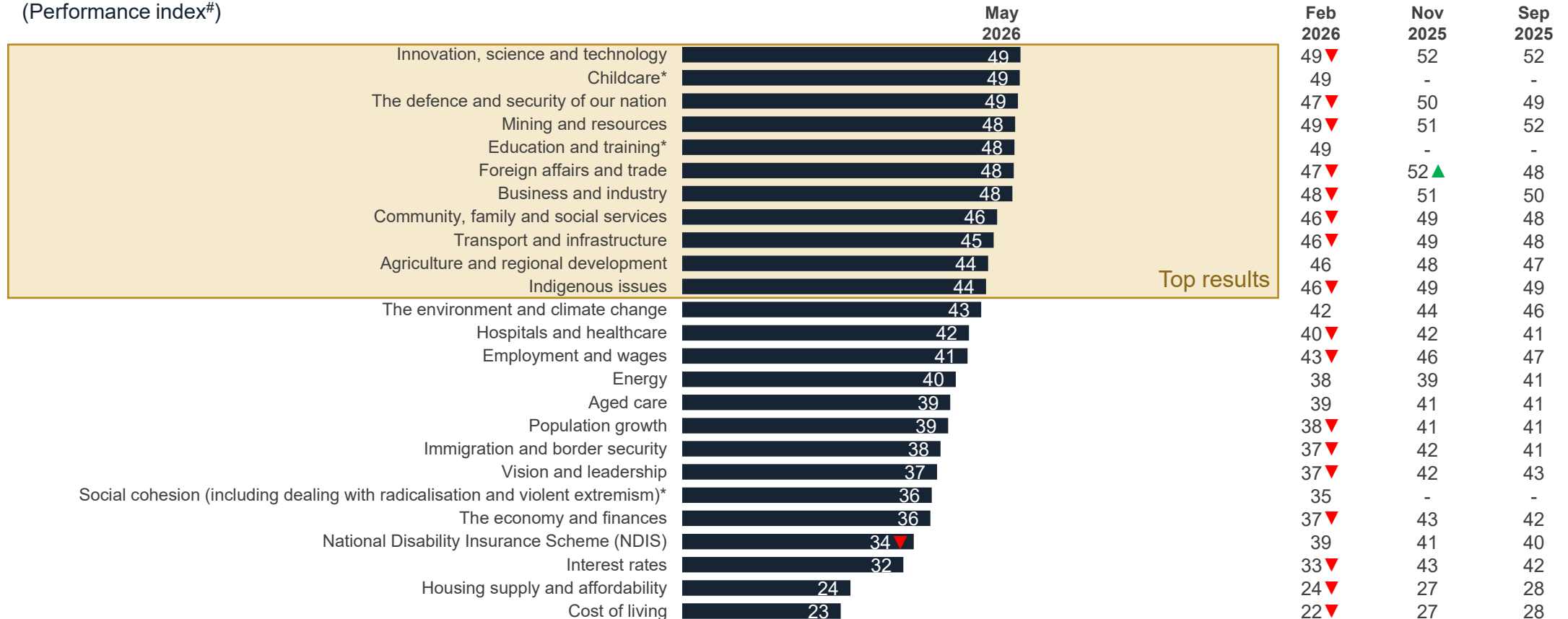
How does the Australian Government perform on top issues?



Government performance unimproved after February declines and lower on NDIS post-Federal Budget

Australian Government performance on issues

(Performance index#)



* In February 2026 a new category of 'social cohesion' was created, while 'childcare' was split out from 'education and training', and as such trends are not shown for these categories.

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

Significantly ▲ higher / ▼ lower than the previous wave at the 95% confidence level.

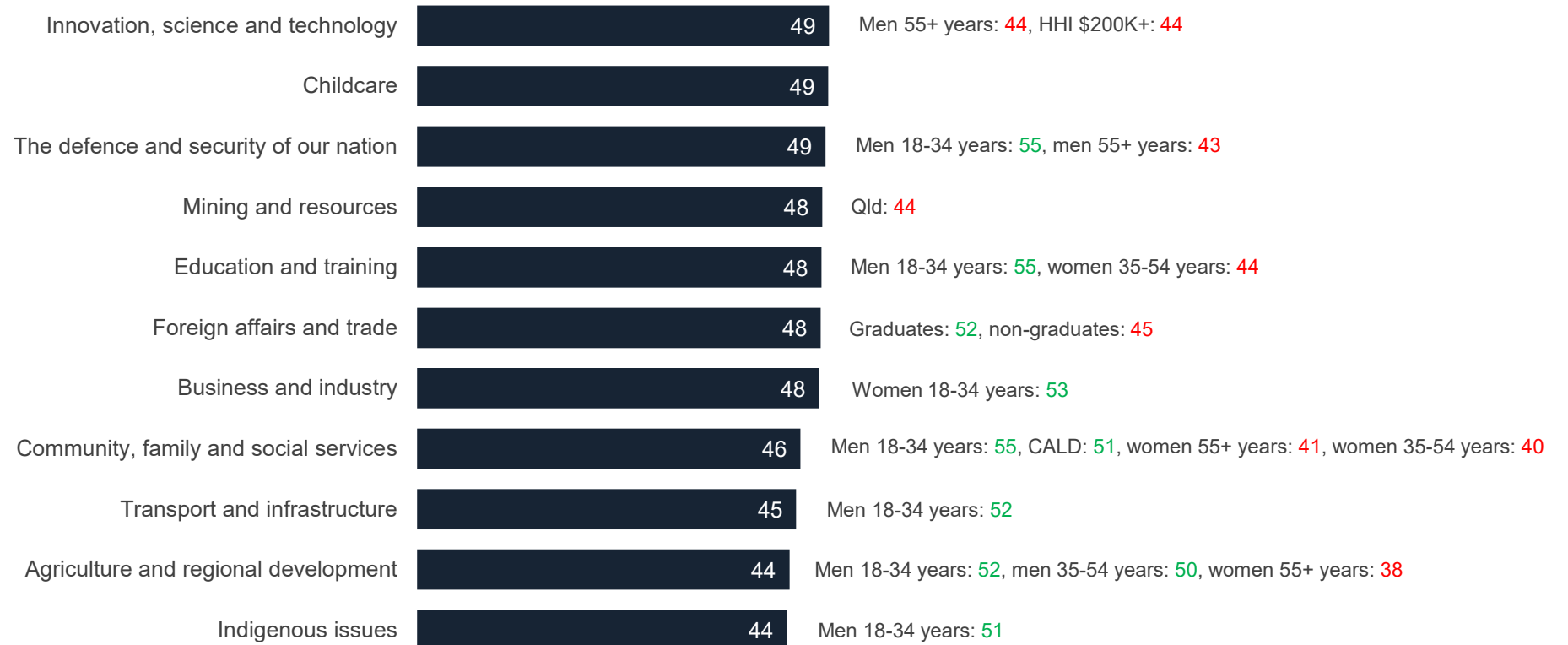
Q. How would you rate the performance of the Australian Government on each of the following issues?

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

Young men are most 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 level.

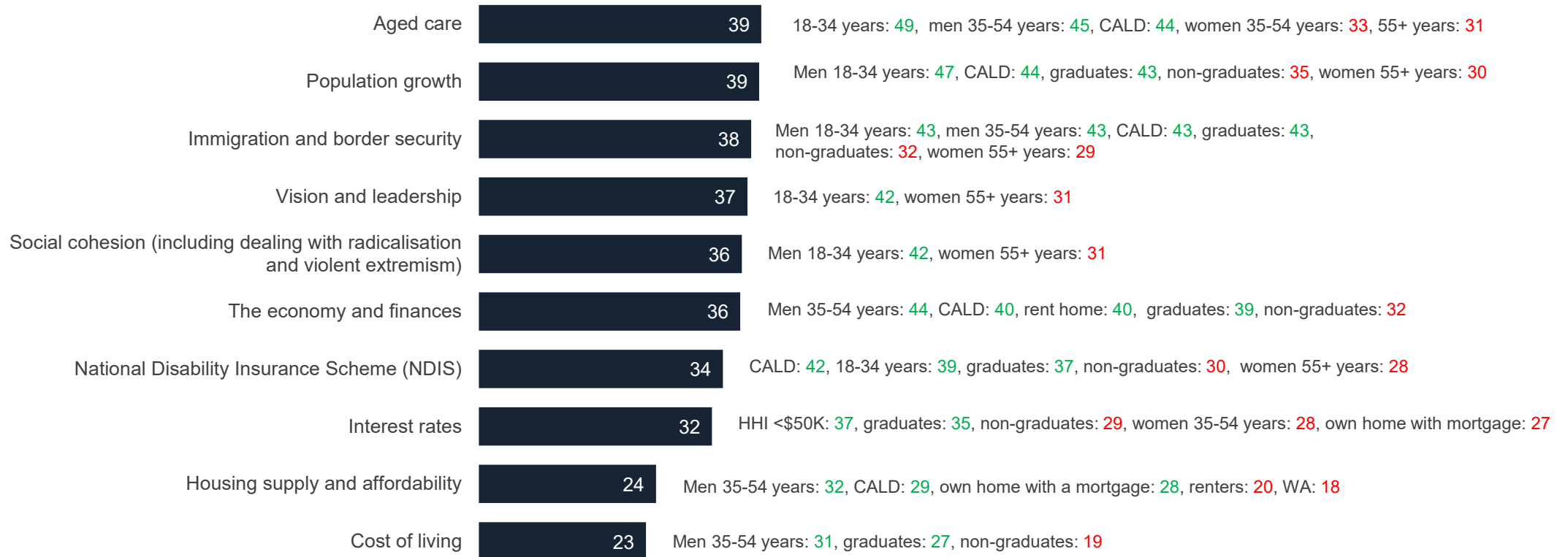
Q. How would you rate the performance of the Australian Government on each of the following issues?

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

Non-graduates, homeowners with a mortgage and women aged 35+ are most critical of Government performance

Bottom ranked issues for Australian Government performance

(Performance index#)



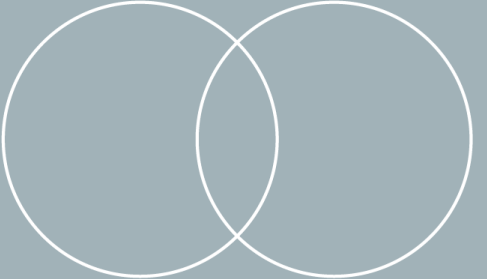
#For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the survey methodology section of this report.

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

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

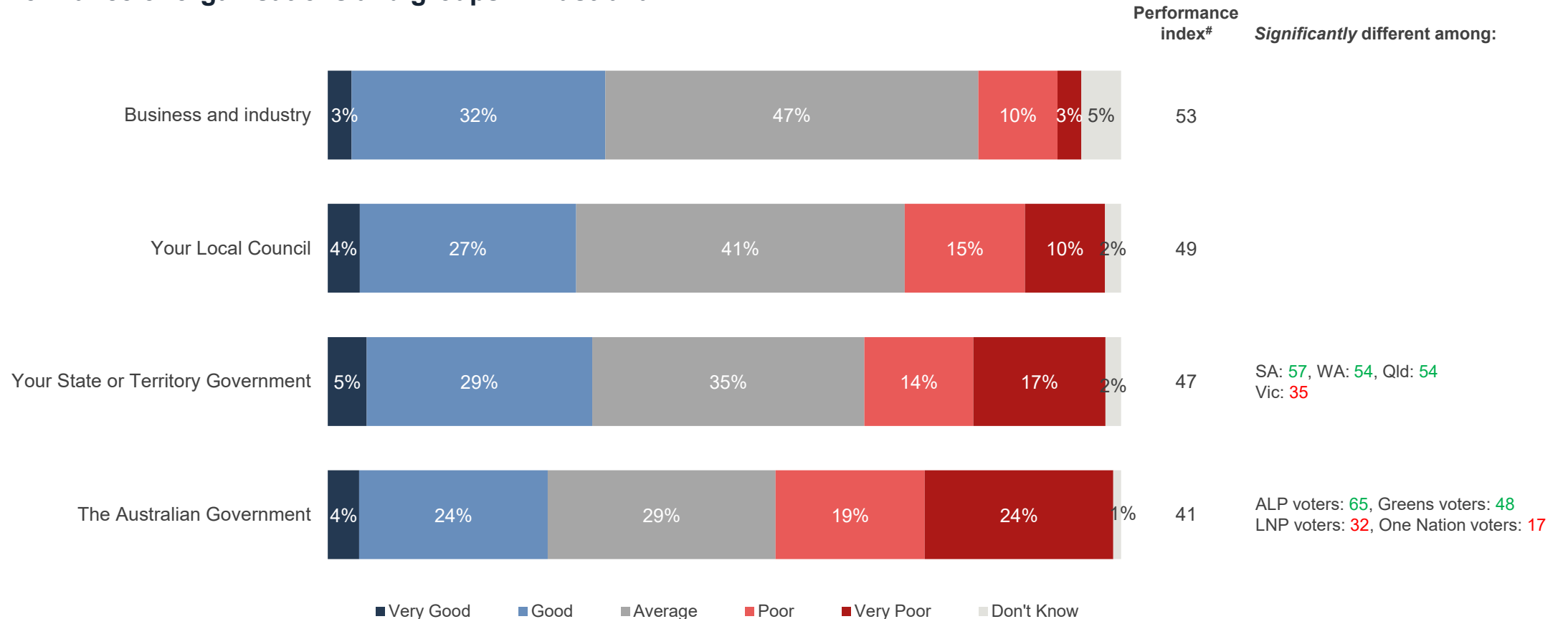
Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

How are government, business and industry performing?



Business and industry performance rates slightly above average and outperforms all levels of government

Performance of organisations and groups in Australia

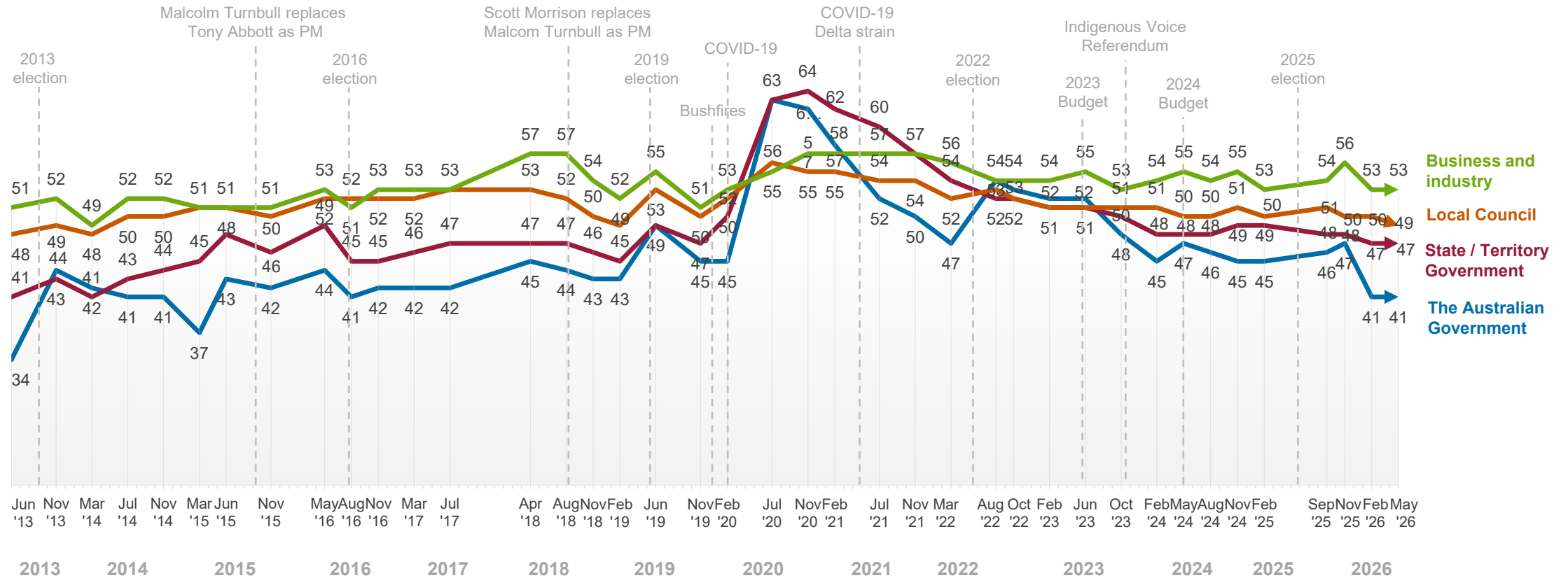


#For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the research methodology section of this report.
 Significantly higher / lower than the national total at the 95% confidence level.
 Q. How would you rate the current performance of each of the following organisations or groups in Australia?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

Government and business performance steady since February following sharp summer decline for the Australian Government

Performance of organisations and groups in Australia

(Performance index#)



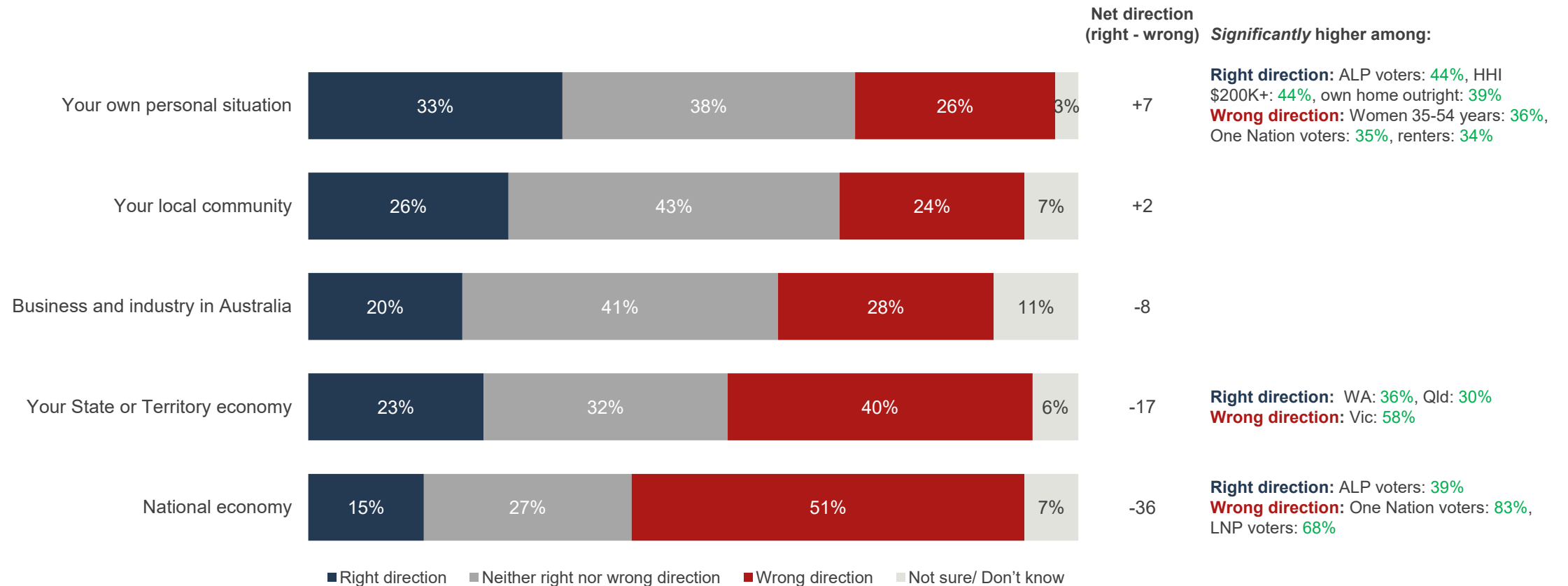
#For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the survey methodology section of this report.
 Q. How would you rate the current performance of each of the following organisations or groups in Australia?
 Base: All respondents (approximately n=1,000 per wave, n=1,225 in June 2023).

Are we headed in the right direction?



Around half of Australian adults see the national economy heading in the wrong direction

Direction of organisations and groups in Australia

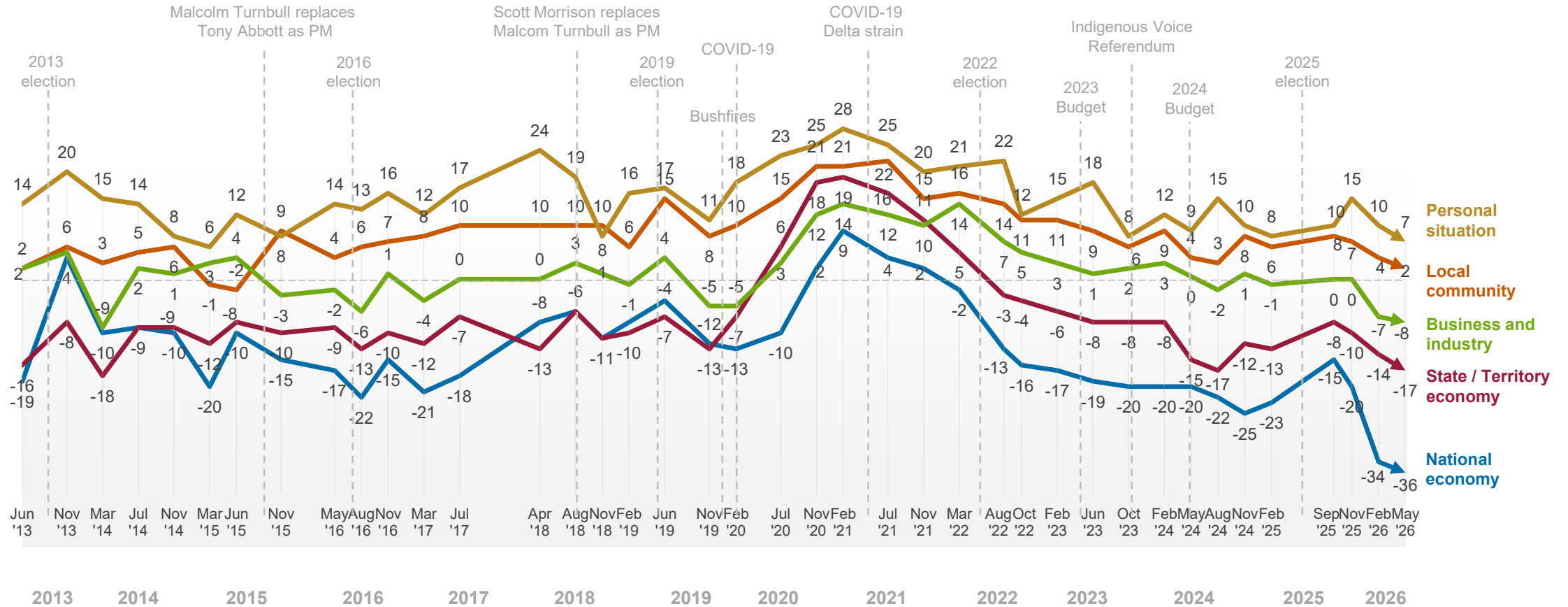


Significantly higher than the national total at the 95% confidence level.
 Q. Do you think each of the following is generally headed in the right or the wrong direction?
 Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

Direction of national and state / territory economies, business and individuals now at or near lowest levels on record

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).

Survey methodology

National Online Survey

n=1,000 Australian adults

- Conducted Friday 15th to Monday 18th May 2026.
- 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.



The research was conducted in compliance with AS-ISO 20252.

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)
Very good	5%	100	5
Good	17%	75	13
Average	40%	50	20
Poor	19%	25	5
Very poor	15%	0	0
Don't know	4%	-	-
Index score			43



There are over 27 million people
in Australia...

Find out what they're thinking.

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