



A public mandate for mental health action

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH REPORT

Prepared for Mental Health Australia

4th of August 2026

About this poll

This report summarises the results of a monthly omnibus conducted by Essential Research with data provided by PureProfile. The survey was conducted online from 22nd to 27th July 2026 and is based on 1,060 respondents.

The sample has been weighted to ensure it is representative of the Australian population aged 18+ years. The weighting efficiency applied to the results is 76%, which gives an effective sample size of 802. The maximal margin of error at the overall sample size is $\pm 3.4\%$ (95% confidence level).

The full methodology used to carry out this research is described in the appendix at the end of the report.

Note that due to rounding, not all tables and charts necessarily total 100% and subtotals may also vary.

Overview

Mental Health Australia commissioned Essential Research to explore how Australians view access to mental health support and how well governments are meeting mental health needs.

This report focuses on the gap between the importance Australians place on mental health support and what they can access and afford, ahead of negotiations on the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement.

The findings show a public consensus that the system is falling short: most Australians see a gap between need and available support.

Support for action crosses party lines. There is strong support across all voter groups for increased government funding for mental health (One Nation 74%, Labor 72%, Greens 72%, Coalition 63%).

Key Findings

Australians agree that the system is falling short.

- More than two in five people (43%) say governments are handling mental health poorly.
- Two in three people (65%) agree there is a gap between the mental health support Australians need and what is currently available.
- Affordability is a major barrier to accessing mental health support - only half (49%) believe they could afford it – falling to 33% among those struggling financially.

There is a public mandate to act.

- More Australians would increase income tax to fund free or low-cost support for everyone (41%) than would leave funding as it is (32%).
- Two in three people (68%) agree governments should commit more funding to mental health support, even if it means redirecting funding from other programs.
- 81% agree cost shouldn't stop people accessing mental health support if they need it.

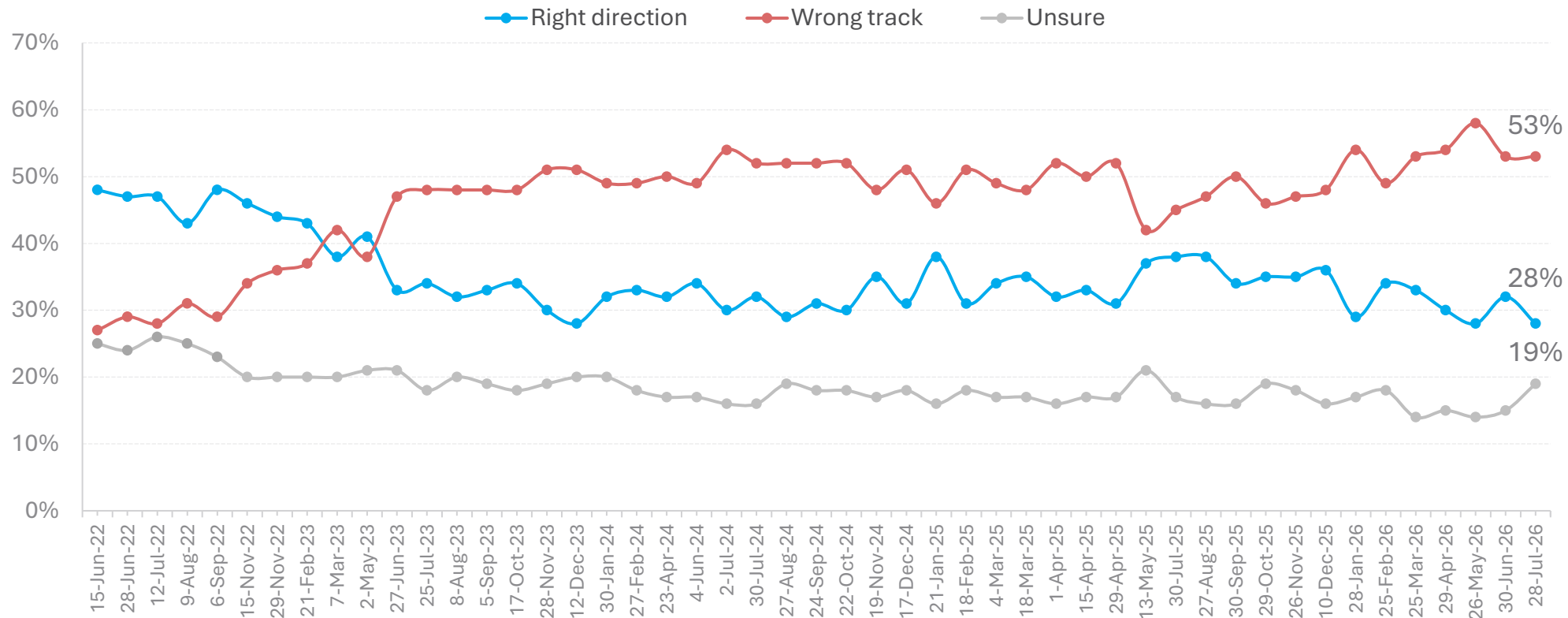
Mental health is not a partisan issue – the strongest demand comes from outside the political centre.

- 68% of One Nation voters say governments are handling mental health poorly – the highest of any voter group. Only 38% of this voter cohort say they could afford appropriate care.
- There is strong support across all voter groups for increased government funding for mental health (One Nation 74%, Labor 72%, Greens 72%, Coalition 63%)
- Independent voters are most willing to support increased income tax to improve access to mental health support (61%). (Labor 50%, Greens 49%, Coalition 43%, One Nation 43%)
- There is strong concern for mental health and wellbeing of families and younger generations (64%) – this is highest amongst One Nation and Greens voters.

The backdrop: national pessimism is high, with more than half of Australians saying the country is on the “wrong track” (53%)

Trended national mood

In general, would you say that Australia is heading in the right direction or is it off on the wrong track?



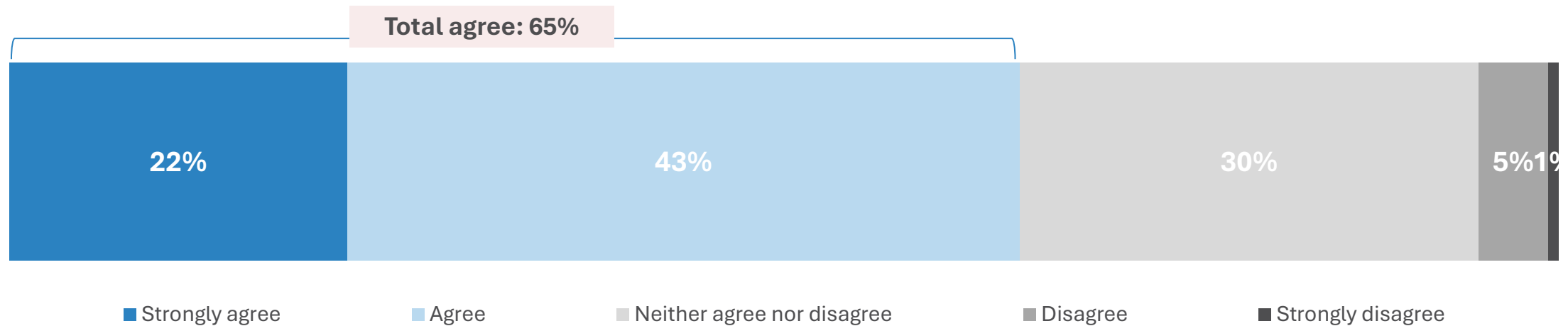
Wrong track sentiment strongest among:

- One Nation voters (86%)
- Those in financial difficulty (58%)

Q. In general, would you say that Australia is heading in the right direction or is it off on the wrong track?
Base: Australians 18+, min n=1,000 (weighted to be representative of the Australian population)

Almost 2 in 3 Australians agree that there's a gap between the amount of mental health support needed and the amount that is currently available

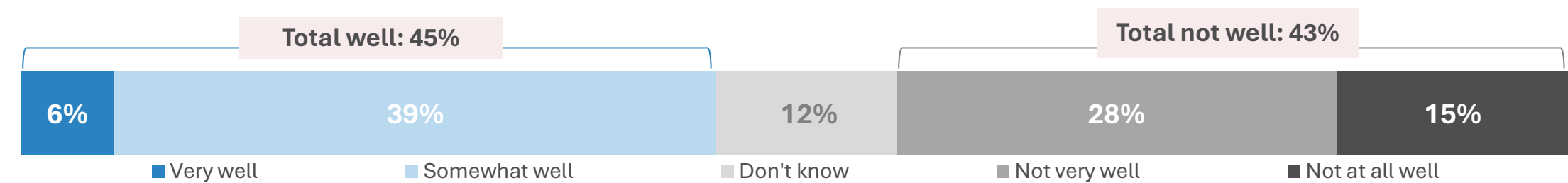
Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? *There is a gap between the amount of mental health support Australians need and the amount that is currently available.*
Base: All respondents (n=1060)



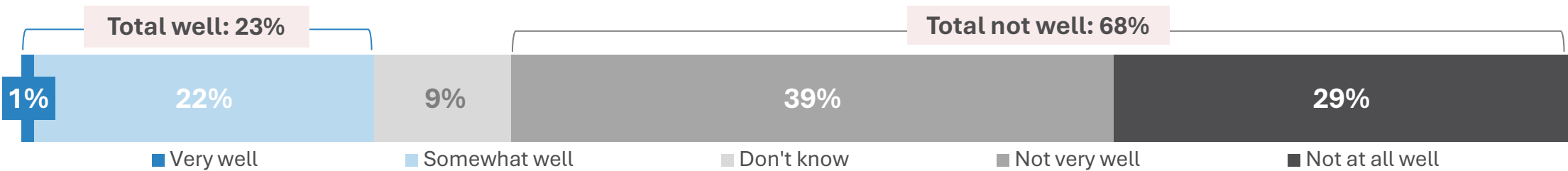
Australians think governments can do better on mental health: just 6% say they are handling it very well, and 43% say they are doing it poorly

Q. Overall, how well do you think governments (federal, state and territory), are addressing the mental health needs of Australians?
Base: All respondents (n=1060)

ALL RESPONDENTS

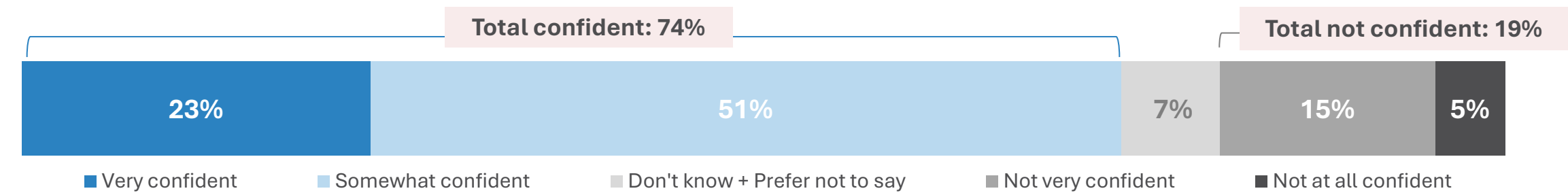


ONE NATION VOTERS

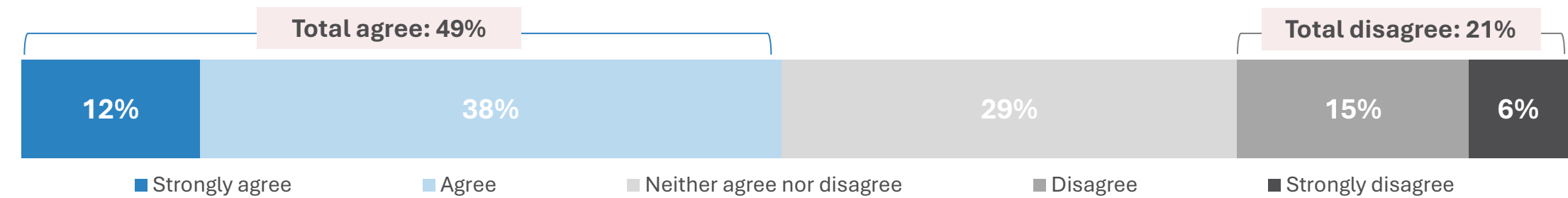


While 74% feel appropriate mental health support would be available, if needed, less than half say they would be able to afford it

Q. If you or a family member needed mental health support, how confident are you that you could access appropriate help?
Base: All respondents (n=1060)



Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? I could afford appropriate mental health support if I/my family needed it
Base: All respondents (n=1060)

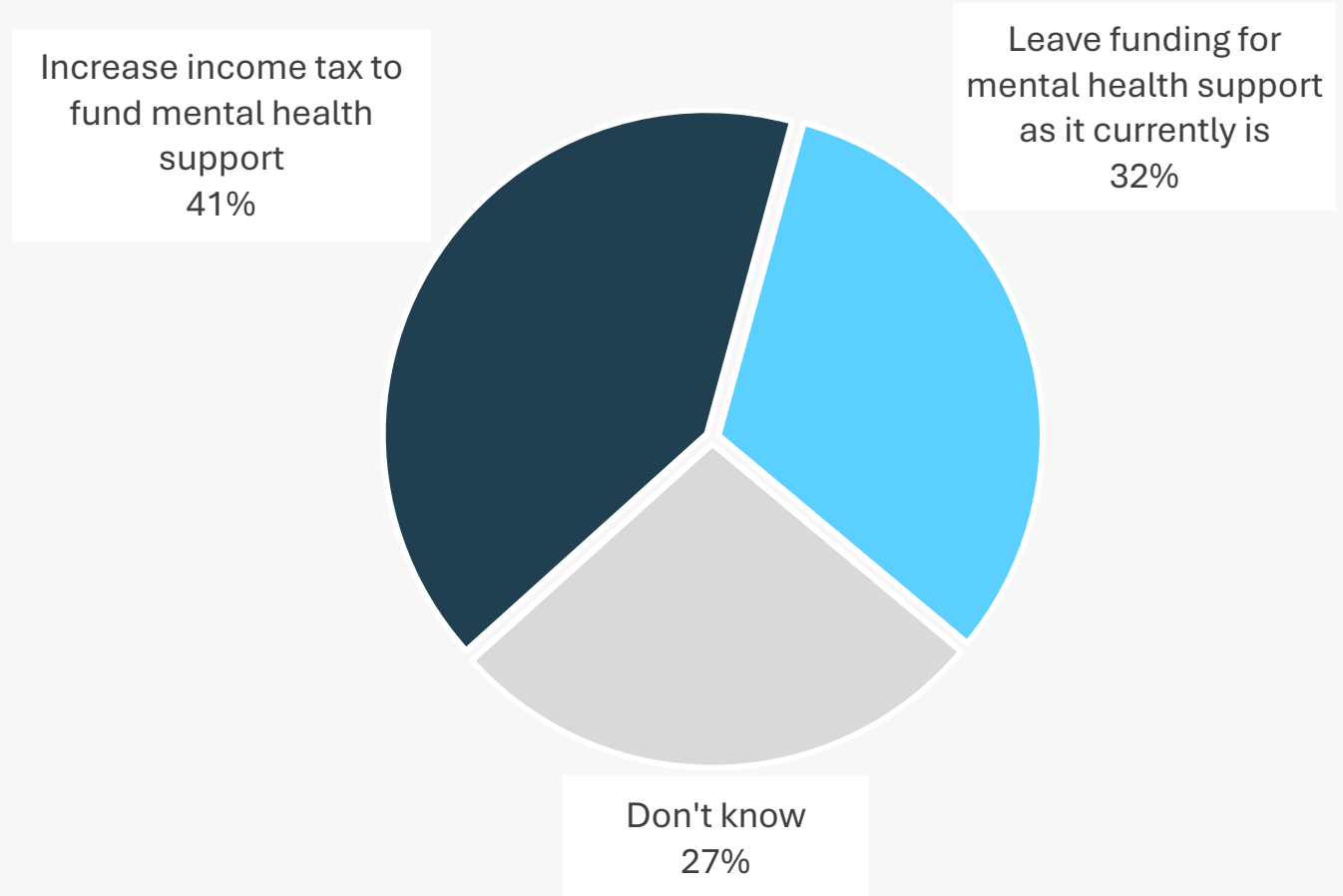


Australians would rather pay more tax than keep mental health funding where it is (41% vs 32%)

Willingness to pay is among the strongest tests of public support a poll can offer.

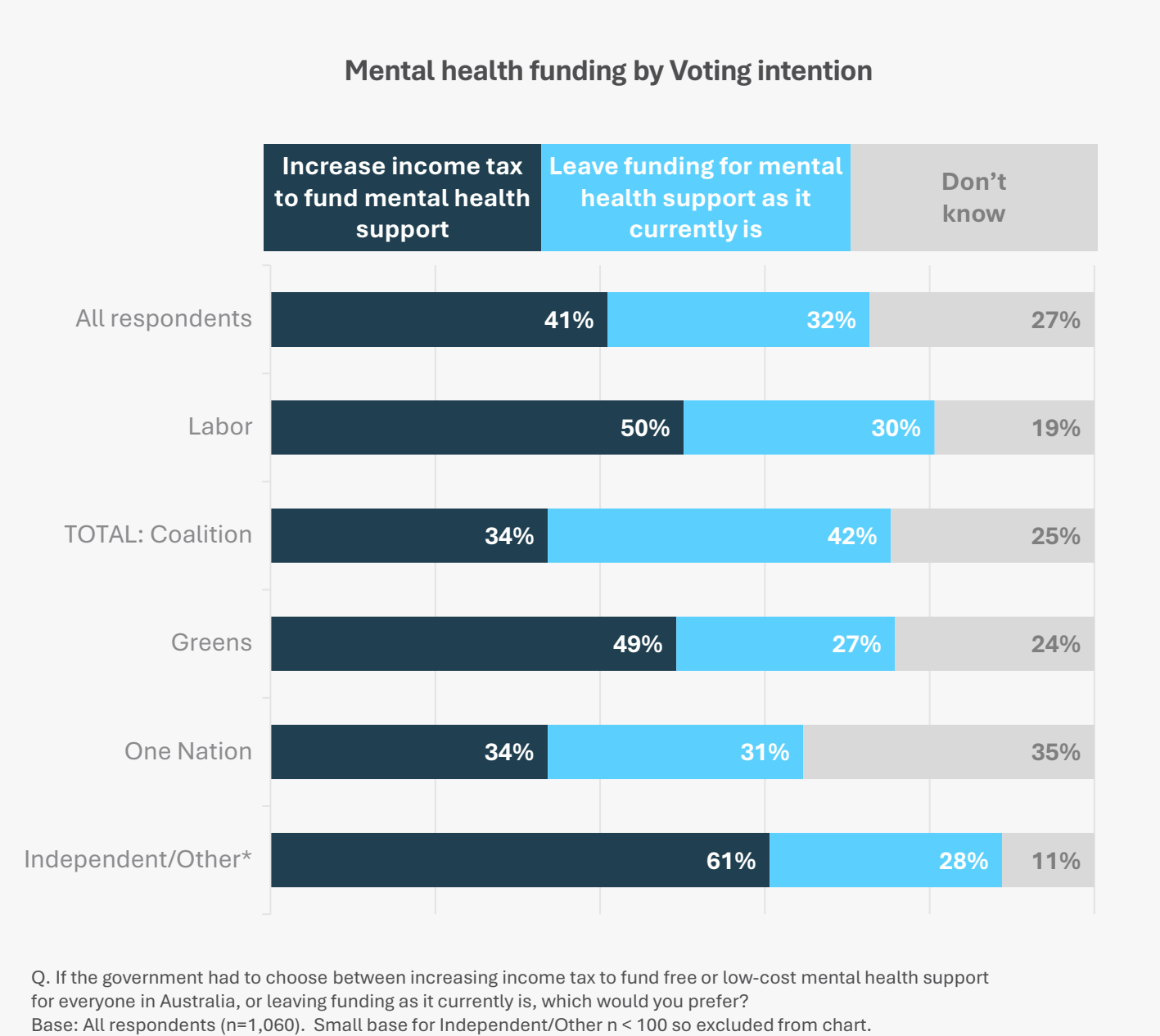
This finding says the public would rather contribute themselves than accept government inaction.

Mental health funding



Q. If the government had to choose between increasing income tax to fund free or low-cost mental health support for everyone in Australia, or leaving funding as it currently is, which would you prefer?
Base: All respondents (n=1,060)

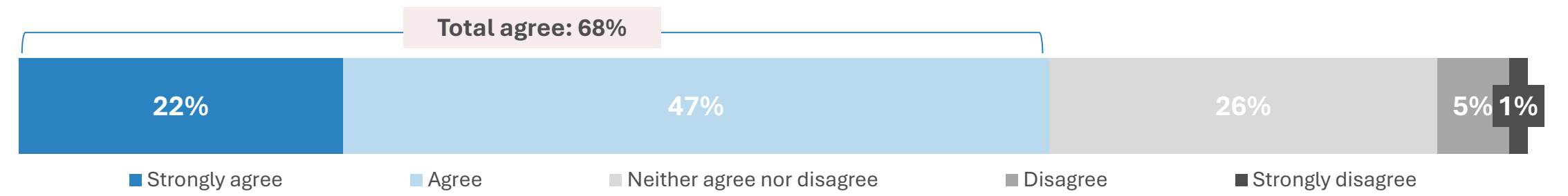
Labor, Greens and Independent voters are most likely to say they'd be willing to pay more tax to fund mental health support



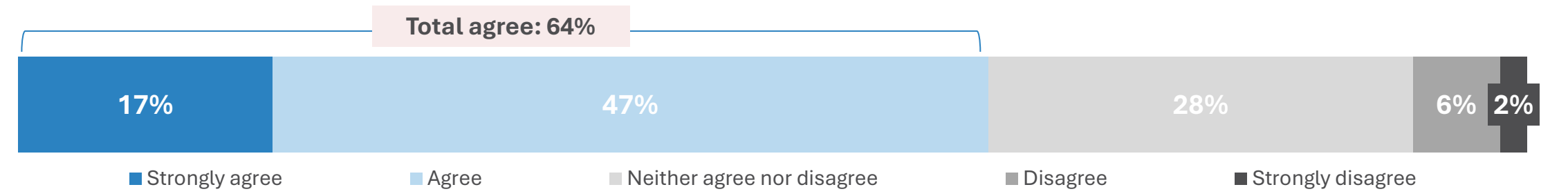
Mental health isn't a 'nice to have': 68% back more funding even if it comes at the expense of other government programs

There is strong support across all voter groups for increased government funding for mental health (One Nation 74%, Labor 72%, Greens 72%, Coalition 63%)

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Governments should commit more funding to mental health support, even if it means funding is redirected from other government programs
Base: All respondents (n=1060)



Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? I am concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of families and younger generations
Base: All respondents (n=1060)



One Nation voters are the most likely to see a support gap (77%) and the least able to afford care (38%).

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?
 Base: All respondents (n=1060)

		Generations				Lower House Voting Intention				Employment Status			Location		Financial circumstances	
	TOTAL AGREE	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	One Nation	In paid employment	Not in paid employment	Retired	Capital	Non-capital	Comfortable / Secure	Struggling / In serious difficulty
Cost shouldn't stop people accessing mental health support if they need it	81%	75%	75%	83%	87%	83%	79%	80%	84%	80%	75%	89%	78%	86%	79%	82%
Governments should commit more funding to mental health support, even if it means funding is redirected from other government programs	68%	68%	69%	71%	65%	72%	63%	72%	74%	71%	65%	64%	67%	70%	69%	68%
There is a gap between the amount of mental health support Australians need and the amount that is currently available	65%	62%	67%	65%	66%	60%	59%	75%	77%	68%	59%	64%	64%	68%	62%	68%
I am concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of families and younger generations	64%	65%	71%	64%	58%	61%	58%	77%	71%	67%	65%	56%	63%	67%	59%	69%
I could afford appropriate mental health support if I/my family needed it	49%	56%	46%	46%	49%	61%	57%	41%	38%	52%	38%	53%	50%	47%	66%	33%

State by state breakdown

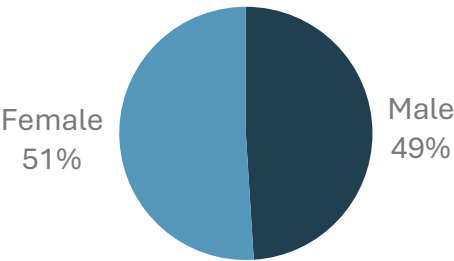
Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?
Base: All respondents (n=1060)

	State:					
	TOTAL AGREE:	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA
Cost shouldn't stop people accessing mental health support if they need it	81%	81%	73%	88%	87%	84%
Governments should commit more funding to mental health support, even if it means funding is redirected from other government programs.	68%	66%	67%	68%	75%	73%
There is a gap between the amount of mental health support Australians need and the amount that is currently available.	65%	65%	62%	64%	76%	67%
I am concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of families and younger generations	64%	63%	60%	62%	80%	67%
I could afford appropriate mental health support if I/my family needed it	49%	44%	49%	54%	48%	48%

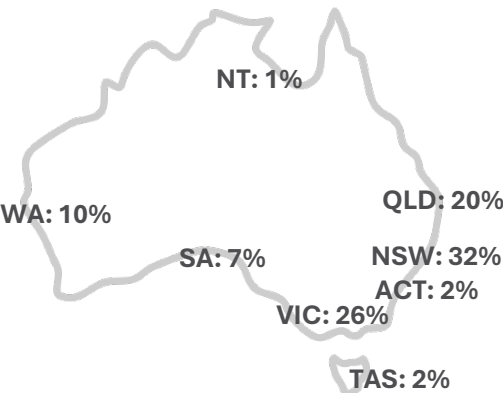
Appendix

Sample composition

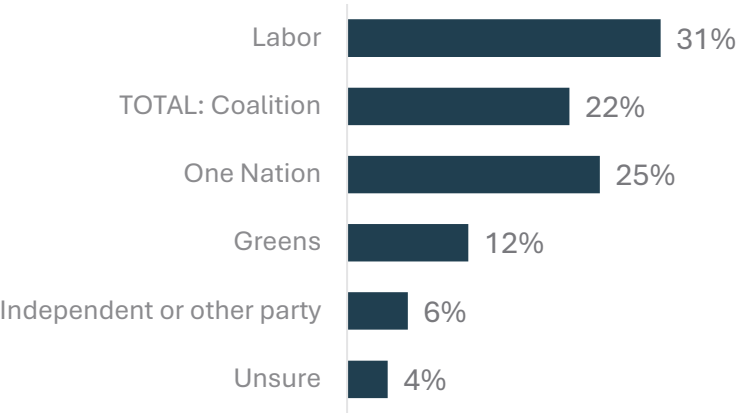
Gender



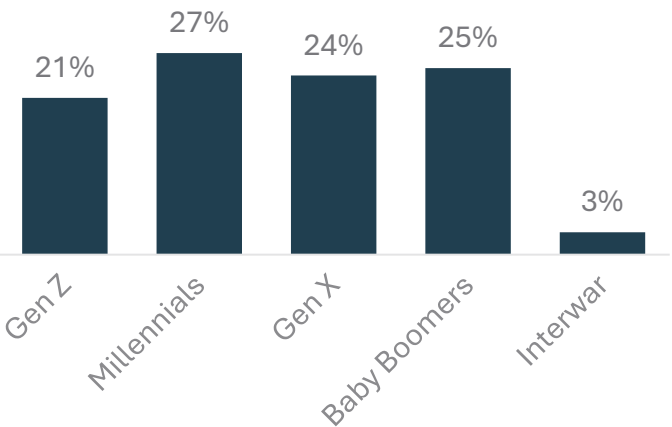
Location



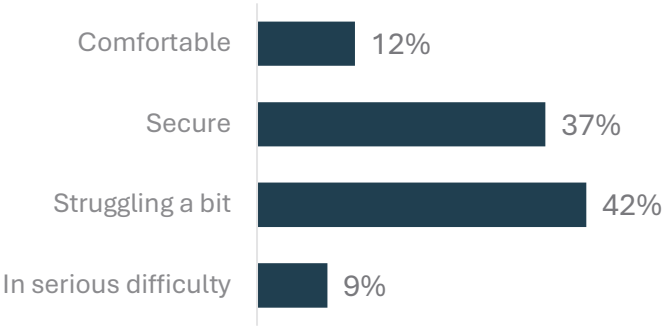
Voting intention



Generation



Financial situation



Methodology, margin of error and professional standards

The data gathered for this report is gathered from a monthly online omnibus run by Essential Research with sample provided by PureProfile from online panels.

The online omnibus is active from the Wednesday night of each week and closed on the following Sunday. The target population is all Australian residents aged 18+. Participants were invited to participate and completed the survey online without an interviewer present and incentives were offered for participation.

The response rate varies each month, but usually delivers 1000+ interviews. Quotas are applied to be representative of the target population by age, gender and location.

RIM weighting is applied to the data using information sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC). The factors used in the weighting are age, gender, location and party ID.

Information for the weighting efficiency, effective sample size and margin of error for each poll (from June 2021) can be found here:

<https://essentialreport.com.au/methodology>

Each fortnight, the team at Essential Media Communications discusses issues that are topical and a series of questions are devised to put to the Australian public. Some questions are repeated regularly (such as political preference and leadership approval), while others are unique to each week and reflect current media and social issues. Full text for standard voting and regular political preferences can be found in the link above. No questions were asked prior to these questions which have material influence on results.

Participants not eligible to vote in federal elections (either for age, residency or other reasons) are excluded from voting intention. Eligible participants are able to select 'Unsure' for voting intention. They were then asked a 'leaner' question which also included an 'Unsure' option. Participants answering 'Unsure' are NOT excluded from published results, or any subsequent questions. 2 party preferred (2PP) calculations use stated preference. Preference flows from previous federal and state elections are only used for participants answering 'Unsure' for stated preference.

All Essential Research staff hold Research Society membership and are bound by professional codes of behaviour. This research is compliant with the Australian Polling Council Quality Mark standards.



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