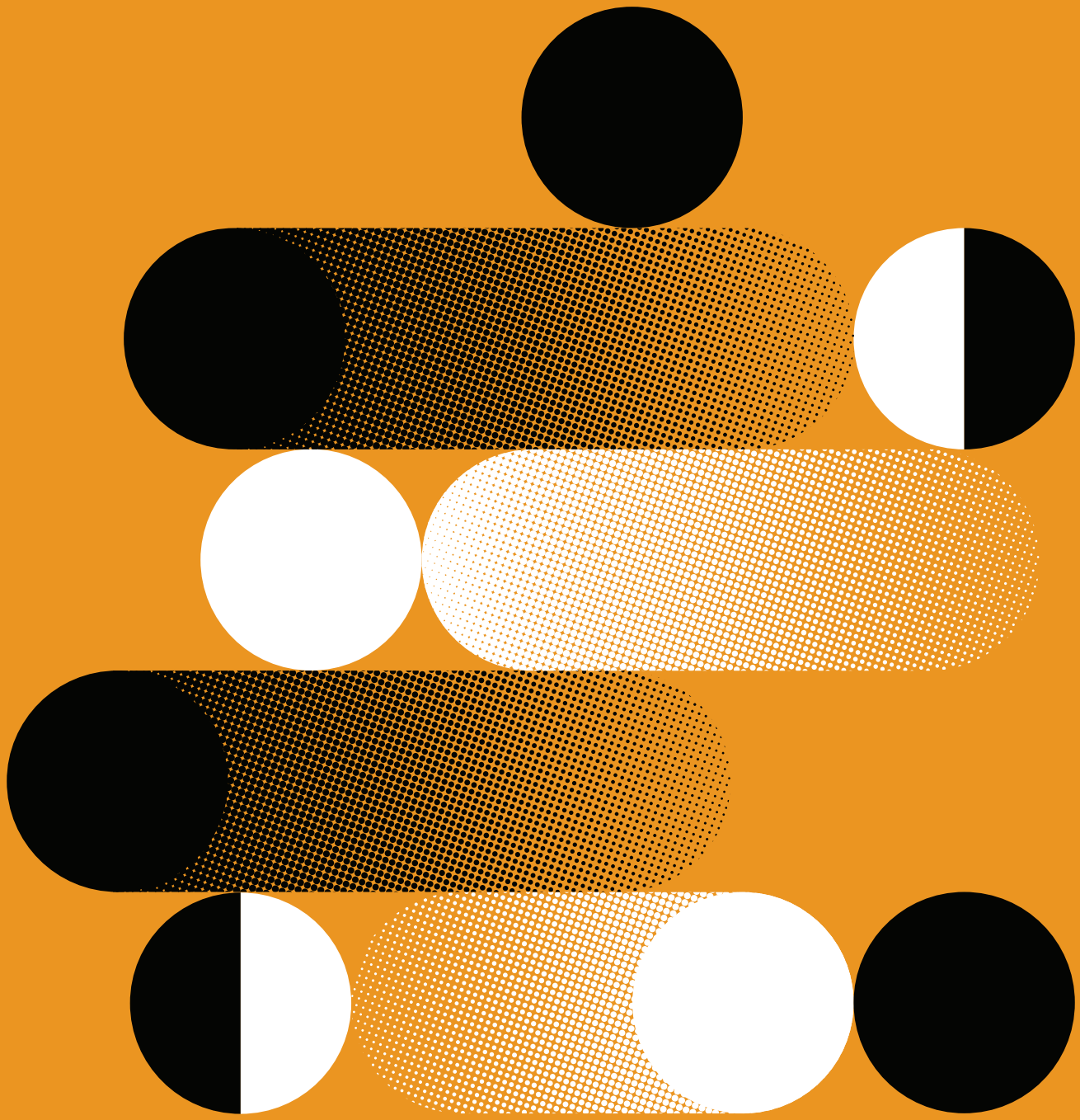
Mapping Social Cohesion

2022

by Dr James O'Donnell



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Foreword

It is with great pleasure that we bring you the 2022 Mapping Social Cohesion Report. There are a number of very important findings in this year's results and it is clear that how our society responds at this critical juncture will influence our social cohesion in the future.

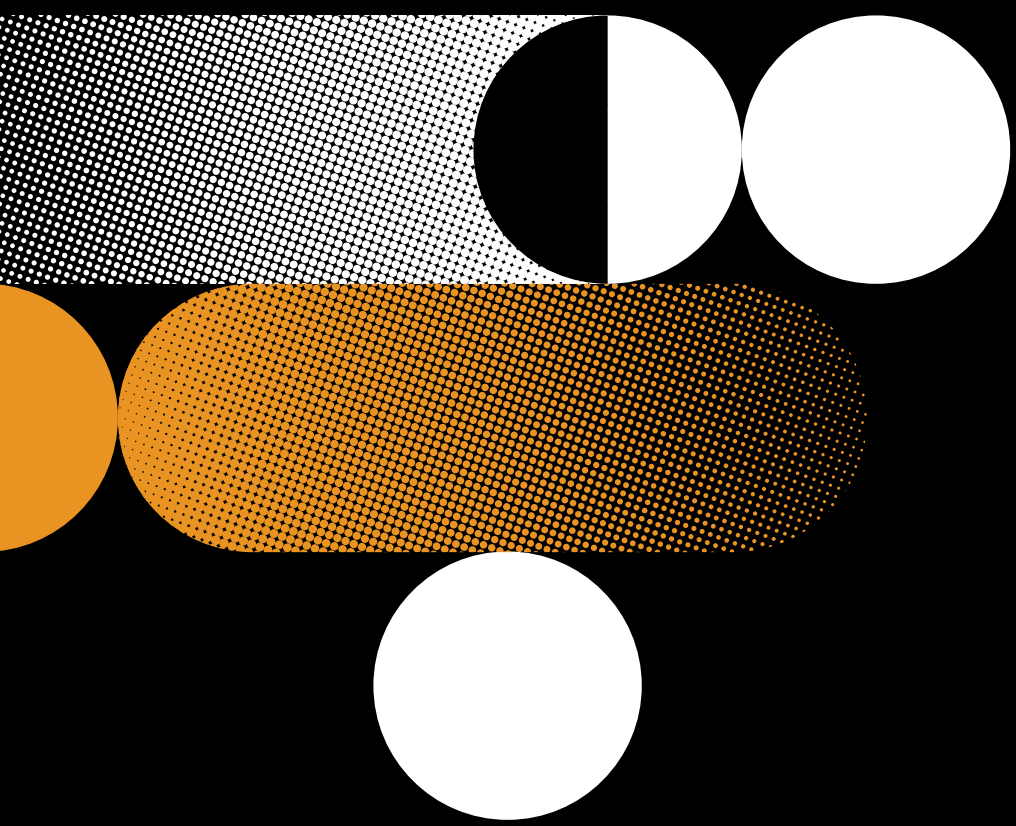
Earlier this year, Emeritus Professor Andrew Markus AO retired as the author of this significant research and report. Professor Markus was the inaugural senior researcher behind the Mapping Social Cohesion survey and has ensured its ongoing integrity and international benchmarking since 2007. Many readers will be familiar with Andrew's writings and presentations on the findings each year — in particular, his very insightful commentary and his ability to help us understand the world around us. We are extremely grateful for the enormous commitment and contribution that Professor Markus has made to Australia and to expanding our understanding of the field.

Taking over the role of lead researcher and author is Dr James O'Donnell from Australian National University. James has considerable experience in the field. He is a demographer whose research is focused on understanding and measuring social cohesion within and across neighbourhoods.

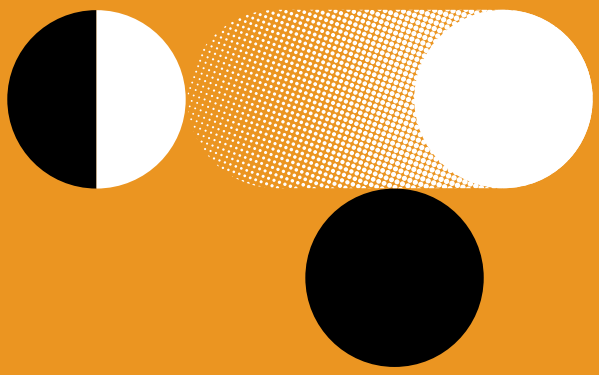
His broader research interests include housing and homelessness, labour market and household dynamics, and social and demographic change. We are delighted that Dr O'Donnell has joined us to continue this research and to build on the legacy left by Professor Markus.

The 2022 Mapping Social Cohesion Report continues to provide us with the most significant and detailed profile of social cohesion in Australia today. Again, it reveals our perceptions of immigration, trust in government, multiculturalism and our neighbourhoods. Importantly, it enables each of us to better understand how we can strengthen bonds between people and build a welcoming and cohesive society.

Anthea Hancocks
CEO, Scanlon Foundation Research Institute



Contents



Executive summary

The Mapping Social Cohesion 2022 study comes at an important time for social cohesion in Australia. Around the world, social, political, and economic turbulence has seen social cohesion emerge as a critical global issue. In 2022, the experience of war, economic uncertainty, the coronavirus pandemic, and widespread political divisions and protests potentially adds to existing long-running pressures.

The Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion 2022 survey provides critical new information on how social cohesion is faring in Australia. This is the 16th survey in the series dating back to 2007, expanding what is now an unparalleled resource for understanding and tracking changes in the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours of Australians. The 2022 survey is the largest in the Mapping Social Cohesion series. It was administered to almost 5,800 respondents on the Social Research Centre's Life in Australia™ panel (see Appendix A for more information).

The survey was complemented by a set of in-depth interviews with people who live and work in local communities around Australia. The interviews help us to understand how communities are faring and managing the challenges we face in 2022.

Three key findings emerge from this year's results:

- Social cohesion in Australia increased during the pandemic but is now declining. As we readjust to life after the pandemic, we are at a crucial tipping point where we can solidify and strengthen social cohesion or allow it to further weaken.
- Australia's population-wide support for multiculturalism is high and growing, and it is an enormous advantage in responding to the pressures placed on social cohesion.
- The degree to which we feel a sense of belonging and connectedness in our neighbourhoods has been high and growing since the start of the pandemic. However, our sense of pride, belonging, and social justice In Australia are declining and are now at their lowest levels since 2007. How do we draw on the strengths of our neighbourhoods to improve national cohesion?

Social cohesion in Australia

The Mapping Social Cohesion series reveals that social cohesion in Australia increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the height of the pandemic in 2020, Australians reported higher levels of national pride and belonging, higher levels of trust in the Federal Government, a greater sense of social justice, and increased acceptance of people from different national and ethnic backgrounds.

However, **the spike in social cohesion during the pandemic is wearing off**. Overall social cohesion is now back to where it was before the pandemic. While this may indicate a return to a pre-COVID normal, there are clear warning signs in the data. In particular, levels of national pride, belonging, and the sense of social justice in Australia are now lower than they were before the pandemic.

Social cohesion varies widely across Australia. Levels of cohesion expressed by individuals vary the most by age and financial situation. Younger adults and those who describe themselves as poor or struggling to pay bills report substantially lower levels of national pride and belonging, material and emotional wellbeing, social inclusion, and participation. Young adults, by contrast, are very highly accepting and supportive of differences and diversity.

In this report, social cohesion is measured in five key areas:

- **Belonging:** the sense of pride and belonging people have in Australia and in Australian life and culture, and the belonging they feel in their neighbourhoods
- **Worth:** the degree of emotional and material wellbeing
- **Social inclusion and justice:** perceptions of economic fairness and trust in government
- **Participation:** involvement in political activities and participation in social, community, and civic groups
- **Acceptance and rejection:** attitudes to immigrant diversity, support for minorities, and experience of discrimination.

Sense of belonging

The sense of national pride and belonging in Australia has declined over time. Despite a boost to national belonging during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the proportions of people reporting a great sense of belonging in Australia and pride in the Australian way of life and culture have declined over the past 15 years and are now lower than at any point in the Mapping Social Cohesion series.

The decline in national pride and belonging over time is widely felt across society. Australian-born and foreign-born populations, young and old, affluent and lower-socioeconomic groups, and Liberal/National, Labor, and Greens voters have all recorded declining belonging. Of particular concern, the groups with the largest declines in belonging include young adults and those who are financially struggling or just getting by. The differential impact on these groups reflects an important way in which **social and economic inequalities in Australia weigh down overall social cohesion.**

In stark contrast, at a local level, the belonging that people feel in their neighbourhoods is very strong. This year substantial majorities of people agree or strongly agree that they feel a sense of belonging in their neighbourhood (82 per cent). Smaller majorities agree that their neighbourhood has a strong sense of community (66 per cent) and that they are able to have a real say on important issues to them in their community (62 per cent).

Social inclusion and justice

The sense of social inclusion and justice in Australia increased strongly during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Probably reflecting a positive public response to government measures to protect health and financial wellbeing, in 2020 there was an increase in the proportion of people who believe there was adequate financial support for people on low incomes, and a decline in the proportion who believe the gap between those with high and low incomes is too large.

However, social inclusion and justice has declined sharply since 2020. In 2022, social cohesion on this measure is lower than it was before the pandemic. This has been driven by a renewed growth in the number of people who are concerned with economic inequality in Australia. The proportion of people who strongly agree that the gap in incomes is too large has increased from 31 per cent in 2019 to 36 per cent in 2022, while the proportion who strongly agree that 'Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life' has declined from 19 per cent in 2019 to just 14 per cent in 2022.

Trust in government

Trust in the federal Government and the system of government in Australia increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although levels have since declined, **trust in government remains at or above pre-pandemic levels.** The proportion of people who believe that the Federal Government 'can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people' all or most of the time peaked at 56 per cent in 2020 and has since declined to 41 per cent in 2022 – still substantially higher than the average of 29 per cent recorded over the period 2010 to 2018.

Belief that the Federal and state governments are handling the COVID-19 pandemic very or fairly well was remarkably high across Australia in 2020. While that view has become less common since then, substantial majorities in all states believe that their state government is handling the crisis at least fairly well in 2022, ranging from 63 per cent in Victoria to 81 per cent in Western Australia.

However, there are widely held doubts about the integrity of politicians and the electoral system. More than three-quarters of the population (79 per cent) believe government leaders abuse their power at least some of the time, while 24 per cent think it happens most or all of the time. About one-in-three people (34 per cent) believe elections are fair only some of the time at most.

Immigration and multiculturalism

Australians have a high and growing level of support for ethnic diversity and multiculturalism. This is reflected across multiple indicators, including in the proportion of people who agree that accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger (63 per cent in 2018 and 78 per cent in 2022), that multiculturalism has been good for Australia (77 per cent in 2018 and 88 per cent in 2022) and that immigrants improve Australian society by bringing new ideas and cultures (76 per cent in 2018 and 86 per cent in 2022).

Foreign-born populations are increasingly perceived to integrate well into Australian society and are less likely to be seen as a threat. People overwhelmingly believe that people born outside Australia make good citizens (94 per cent in 2022), and people are increasingly less likely to believe that immigrants take jobs away or do not adopt Australian values.

Positive attitudes towards diversity and multiculturalism are complemented by active intercultural relations. This is reflected by the large number of people who have close friends from different national and cultural backgrounds, and the steadily growing share who think ethnic minorities should be given government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions.

Discrimination and prejudice

Discrimination and prejudice towards groups from different backgrounds persists despite high levels of support for immigrant diversity and multiculturalism. About one-in-six people (16 per cent) reported experiencing discrimination in the 12 months to July 2022 based on their skin colour, ethnic origin, or religion. This was similar to the proportion last year and in 2019. Almost one-in-four people (24 per cent) born overseas, and more than one-in-three people (35 per cent) who speak a language other than English, reported discrimination in 2022.

The proportion of people reporting discrimination based on their skin colour, ethnic origin, or religion increased significantly between 2007 and 2017, from 9 per cent to 20 per cent. Reported discrimination has declined somewhat since then but remains above where it was before 2013.

Discrimination is mirrored by a concerning level of prejudice directed towards people from different backgrounds. In particular, people report negative perceptions and feelings towards Muslims and people immigrating from non-European countries.

On a positive note, **negative attitudes have become significantly less common and positive attitudes more common over time**. The proportion of people with positive feelings towards immigrants from China increased from 52 per cent in July 2020 to 61 per cent in 2022. Over the same period, the proportion of people with negative attitudes to Muslims decreased from 40 per cent in 2020 to 29 per cent in 2022.

The biggest problem facing Australia

Since 2011, the first question on the Mapping Social Cohesion questionnaire has asked respondents to nominate the most important problem facing Australia. Before COVID-19, economic issues were the most reported. Understandably, COVID-19 was the most important problem for the largest share of the population in 2020 and 2021.

In 2022, economic issues are again the most reported, cited by two-in-five people (39 per cent) as the biggest problem. This is the largest share of the population citing economic issues in the Mapping Social Cohesion series, **reflecting the importance of and uncertainties in the economy and the cost of living in 2022**.

The environment and climate change has emerged as the second most-cited problem facing Australia in 2022. The proportion of people citing the environment as the most important problem had been on an upward trend before COVID-19. Now that concern about the pandemic has receded, concern for the environment is growing again.

Major global threats

In 2022, respondents were asked how concerned they are about five major global threats to Australia. People are most likely to be very concerned about climate change (41 per cent). Most people are at least quite concerned about the other four issues, including three-quarters of people who are at least quite concerned about Australia-China relations and a severe global economic downturn, while more than half of the population are concerned about COVID-19 and other potential pandemics, and a military conflict involving Australia.

An important consideration is the extent to which attitudes to major issues relate to social cohesion. **Polarised views on these challenges, and the public and political debate surrounding them, has the potential to strain emotional, psychological, and behavioural ties across Australian society.**

Concern about climate change continues to be strongly related to voting patterns, with Labor and Greens voters much more likely to be concerned than Liberal and National voters. People who are at least quite concerned about climate change also have a significantly lower sense of belonging in Australia, a lower sense of worth, and a lower sense of social inclusion and justice than people who are at most only slightly concerned. On the other hand, **people who are concerned about climate change are strongly engaged in politics and are substantially more accepting of difference and diversity in Australia.** Climate change, therefore, continues to be a socially and politically polarising issue in Australia – with important implications for social cohesion.

Indigenous Voice to Parliament

The 2022 Mapping Social Cohesion questionnaire asked respondents for their views on the proposed Indigenous Voice to Parliament based on the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Almost 60 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that we should establish an Indigenous Voice to Parliament. Only one-in-five disagreed, while a similar proportion were neutral.

A majority of respondents across all states and territories indicated their support for the Voice to Parliament, including in NSW (62 per cent), Victoria (63 per cent), Queensland (51 per cent), South Australia (57 per cent), and Western Australia (59 per cent). Females (66 per cent), people aged 18-24 (75 per cent), Labor voters (70 per cent) and Greens voters (86 per cent) had the strongest level of support for the Voice to Parliament.

People born overseas, including those from non-English speaking backgrounds, also have a high level of support for the Voice to Parliament. But 30 per cent of people who speak a language other than English say they neither agree nor disagree with the Voice to Parliament, indicating a high degree of uncertainty and the need for greater information.

Expressed social cohesion varies by the degree of support for the proposed Indigenous Voice to Parliament. People who support the Voice to Parliament have a significantly lower sense of belonging, worth, and social inclusion and justice, higher levels of participation in political or community activities, and much higher acceptance of differences and diversity in Australia. Polarised views on the Voice to Parliament therefore has the potential to be a divisive social issue, emphasising the need for considered and respectful dialogue in the lead-up to a referendum.

Cost of living and the economy

The economy generally and the cost of living specifically emerged from the 2022 Mapping Social Cohesion survey and our in-depth interviews as the most important issues in Australia today. As noted, two in five people cited economic issues as the most important problem facing Australia in 2022, and three-quarters of people are very or quite concerned about a severe downturn in the global economy.

The impact of cost-of-living pressures is shown in an increase in financial stress in 2022 and a decline in financial satisfaction. Between 2021 and 2022, the proportion of people who describe themselves as poor or struggling to pay bills increased from 7 per cent to 10 per cent, while the proportion who are 'just getting along' increased from 24 per cent to 27 per cent. The proportion who are dissatisfied with their financial situation increased from 29 per cent to 35 per cent.

Economic issues, financial stress, and economic inequality have a very important bearing on social cohesion. As reported in the 2021 Mapping Social Cohesion report, financial wellbeing is the strongest predictor of social cohesion identified in the survey. People who are financially struggling or just getting by, pessimistic about the future, or worried about losing their job report substantially lower levels of national pride and belonging, happiness, and social inclusion. **Economic inequalities exacerbated by the current economic climate therefore appear to be giving rise to social inequalities that, in turn, drag down social cohesion in Australia.**

Social trust and neighbourhood cohesion

While there are concerns at a national level, social trust and neighbourhood cohesion remain high and resilient. Almost half of Australians think that most people can be trusted, one of the highest levels in the world (EVS/WVS, 2022). More than eight-in-ten people agree that their neighbours are willing to help each other (85 per cent) and get along well with each other and with people from different national and ethnic backgrounds (83 per cent). Trust and neighbourhood cohesion appear to have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, and encouragingly, remain above pre-pandemic levels in 2022.

The strengthening of interpersonal ties during the pandemic is likely to be a great asset for Australia in managing future threats to social cohesion. Encouragingly, growth in the belief that neighbours from different ethnic and national backgrounds get along well together has been widespread, but particularly among older and lower-educated Australians and people living outside the capital cities and in neighbourhoods with higher socioeconomic disadvantage.

People who live in cohesive neighbourhoods have a greater sense of belonging, worth, and social inclusion and justice in Australia. This suggests that if nurtured and maintained, the strengthening of neighbourhood cohesion may help to improve national level social cohesion.

Implications

Social cohesion in Australia is at a critical juncture in 2022. The spike in overall social cohesion during the COVID-19 pandemic appears to be wearing off, perhaps signalling a return to pre-pandemic normality. This is not unexpected or even necessarily undesirable to the extent that the spike in cohesion reflected our collective ability to galvanise in response to the pandemic and the government response. This elasticity in Australia's cohesion potentially bodes well for our ability to manage future crises.

However, emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic in a strong position and with the experience of what an even more cohesive society looks like, the Australian community has an opportunity to take the benefits and learn the lessons of what was done well and what was done poorly to strengthen social cohesion. In a world in which immigration continues to be a source of social division, the history of and public support for multiculturalism is a great asset to Australia, potentially insulating us from deeper divisions. On the other hand, social and economic inequalities, experience of discrimination, and concern about national and global issues is weighing heavily on social cohesion.

Efforts to address the sources of division and inequality and to alleviate the effects of global issues is a necessary first step in protecting and strengthening social cohesion in Australia.

Photo by Pat Whelan on Unsplash

Social cohesion in 2022

Australia is a highly cohesive nation and became even more so during the COVID-19 pandemic. But there are now signs that the boost to social cohesion during the pandemic is wearing off, leaving social cohesion in Australia at a critical juncture in 2022.

The Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion Survey indicates that social cohesion in Australia increased during the height of the pandemic. The Index of Social Cohesion increased from 84 in 2019 (before COVID) to 89 in July 2020 (after the first wave of COVID infections and the national lockdown). It increased again to 92 in a mid-COVID survey we conducted in November 2020, and remained high (at 89) in our July 2021 survey as the pandemic and lockdown restrictions were hitting Melbourne and Sydney hard.

But the index fell 5 points over the last 12 months, to 83 in our July 2022 survey. Index scores declined over those 12 months on four of our five measures of social cohesion: social inclusion and justice (down 12 points), acceptance and rejection (7 points), sense of worth (4 points), and sense of belonging (4 points).

The upshot is that Australia's overall social cohesion is now back to pre-pandemic levels. The measures of social inclusion and justice (down 7 points in 2022 compared to 2019), sense of belonging (down 5 points), and sense of worth (down 2 points), are lower now than before the pandemic. But the measures of acceptance and rejection (up 7 points in 2022 compared to 2019) and political participation (up 4 points) are higher now than before the pandemic.

Figure 1 shows the overall Index of Social Cohesion scores from the first survey in 2007 to the most recent survey in 2022.

> The index dropped 8 points in 2018 when we modernised the way we took the survey. Before then, we conducted interviews by telephone, using Random Digit Dialling. Now, the survey is done online and by telephone and administered to the Social Research Centre's Life in Australia™ panel. We believe people tend to want to report higher levels of social cohesion if they are talking to an interviewer over the phone rather than filling out the survey online and this is likely to explain why social cohesion appears to be lower on the Life in Australia™ survey.

Figure 1 The Scanlon Index of Social Cohesion, 2007 to 2018 (telephone surveys) and 2018 to 2022 (online and telephone)

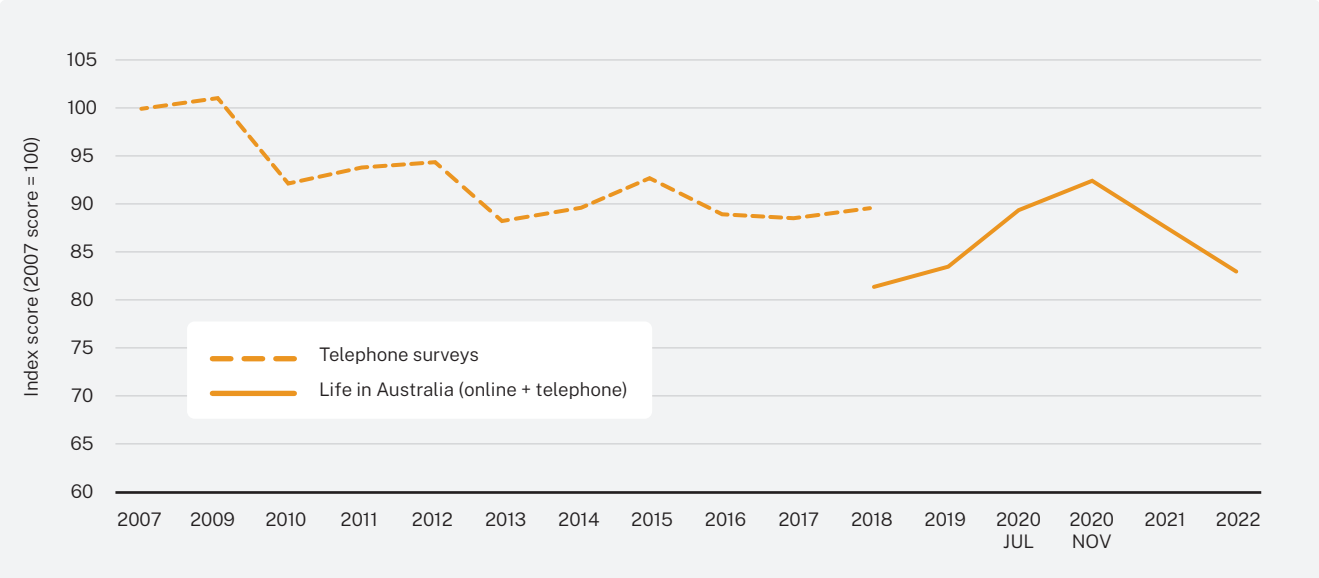


Table 1 shows the index scores for each measure of social inclusion from 2007 to the last telephone survey, in 2018, and Table 2 shows those scores from the first online survey, in 2018, to the most recent survey in 2022.

Table 1 The Scanlon Index of Social Cohesion, 2007 to 2018 (telephone surveys)

MEASURE	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
1. Sense of belonging	100	97	95	97	95	91	93	93	94	92	92
2. Sense of worth	100	97	97	97	97	94	97	97	96	95	94
3. Social inclusion and justice	100	112	92	94	95	98	94	91	92	88	92
4. Political participation	100	105	98	106	107	91	94	100	99	104	101
5. Acceptance and rejection	100	94	82	75	79	69	71	82	67	64	69
Overall social cohesion	**100**	**101**	**93**	**94**	**94**	**89**	**90**	**93**	**89**	**89**	**90**

Table 2 The Scanlon Index of Social Cohesion, 2018 to 2022 (Life in Australia™ – online and telephone)

MEASURE	2018	2019	JUL 2020	NOV 2020	2021	2022	CHANGE 2021-2022	CHANGE 2019-2022
1. Sense of belonging	85	86	88	88	84	81	**–3**	**–5**
2. Sense of worth	77	80	84	83	82	78	**–4**	**–2**
3. Social inclusion and justice	88	93	112	111	97	86	**–11**	**–7**
4. Political participation	95	93	95	94	95	97	**2**	**4**
5. Acceptance and rejection	63	67	67	87	81	74	**–7**	**7**
Overall social cohesion	**82**	**84**	**89**	**92**	**88**	**83**	**–5**	**–1**

Social cohesion scores are highest among older people and lowest among people who are struggling financially

Social cohesion scores vary widely across our society, depending on factors like age, financial situation and education levels. As Figure 2 shows, people in their late teens, 20s, and 30s are least likely to think Australia is socially cohesive. The rate increases as people get older and peaks among the over-75s.

Figure 3 shows that people who regard themselves as prosperous or very comfortable are most likely to think Australia is cohesive, and people who regard themselves as poor or who struggle to pay the bills are least likely to think of us a cohesive nation.

Table 3 shows the extent to which social cohesion scores differed from the national average across a range of demographic and socioeconomic groups in our 2022 survey, with numbers in red signifying scores significantly below the national average. It shows, for example, that renters are much less likely than homeowners to think Australis is cohesive. And the average social cohesion score for people with a postgraduate degree was 1.5 points above the national average, whereas the average score for people who didn't complete their schooling was 1.1 points below the national average.

Figure 2 Social cohesion scores increase as people get older (National average = 0)

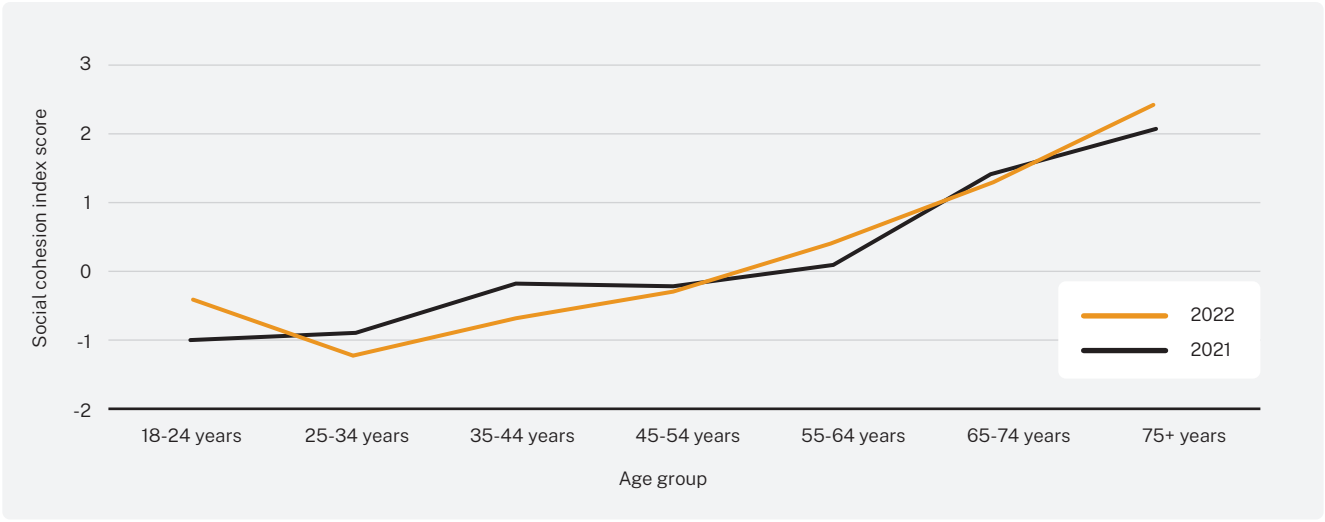


Figure 3 The better your finances, the more likely you are to think Australia is socially cohesive (National average = 0))

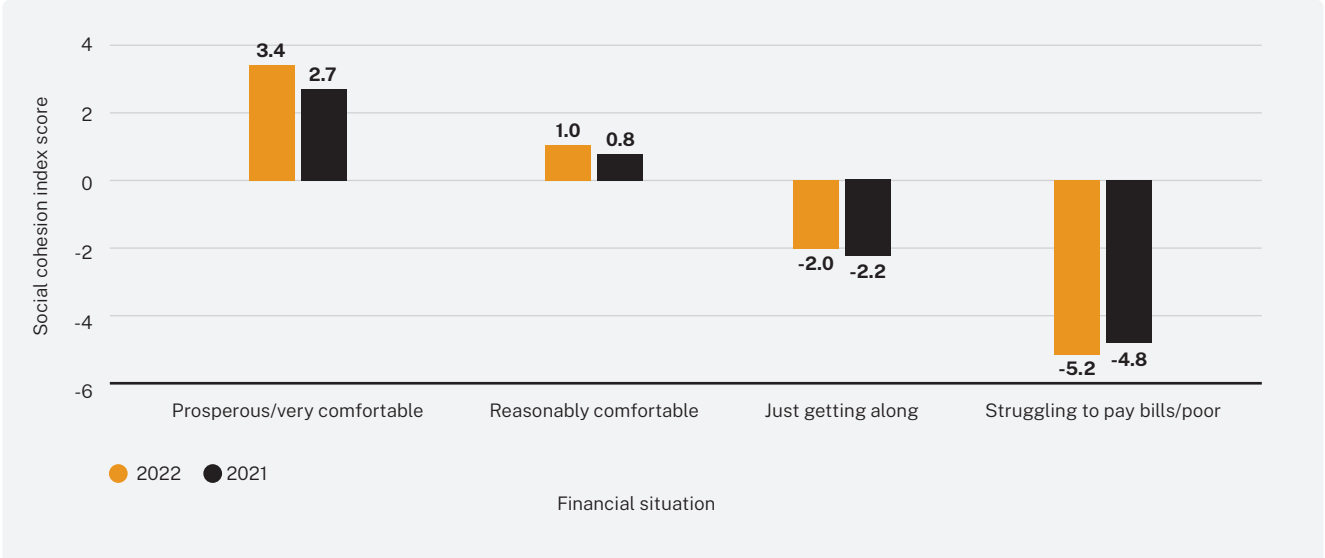


Table 3 Social cohesion index scores across demographic and socioeconomic groups, difference from national average, 2022 survey

GENDER	Female	Male				
	–0.1	0.1				
AGE	65 +	55-64	45-54	35-44	25-34	18-24
	+1.7	+0.4	–0.3	**–0.7**	**–1.2**	–0.4
STATE	NSW	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	
	+0.1	–0.1	**–0.5**	–0.2	+0.2	
CAPITAL CITY/ REST OF STATE	Capital city	Rest of State				
	0.0	–0.1				
HIGHEST EDUCATION	Postgraduate degree	Bachelor degree	Certificate/ diploma	Year 12	Up to Year 11	
	+1.5	+1.0	–0.3	–0.2	**–1.1**	
FINANCIAL SITUATION	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ poor		
	+3.4	+1.0	**–2.0**	**–5.2**		
VOTE AT 2022 ELECTION	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Other		
	+0.2	+1.0	+0.1	**–0.9**		
WHERE BORN & FIRST LANGUAGE	Australian-born	Foreign-born/ English	Foreign-born/ non-English			
	0.0	+0.2	0.0			
HOUSEHOLD TYPE	Couple no children	Couple parent	Single parent	Group household	Live alone	
	+1.1	+0.2	**–1.9**	**–1.2**	**–0.6**	
HOUSING TENURE	Own outright	Mortgage	Rent			
	+1.6	+0.5	**–1.5**			
NEIGHBOURHOOD DISADVANTAGE	Quintile 1 (Low disadvantage)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (High disadvantage)	
	+1.0	+0.2	**–0.3**	**–0.5**	**–1.0**	

Notes: Neighbourhood disadvantage is measured with the ABS (2018) Socio-economic Indexes For Areas (SEIFA) Index of Relative Socio-economic disadvantage. Index scores are based on respondents' postcode and grouped into five equally sized quintiles. Numbers in red are significantly lower than the national average.

Sense of belonging

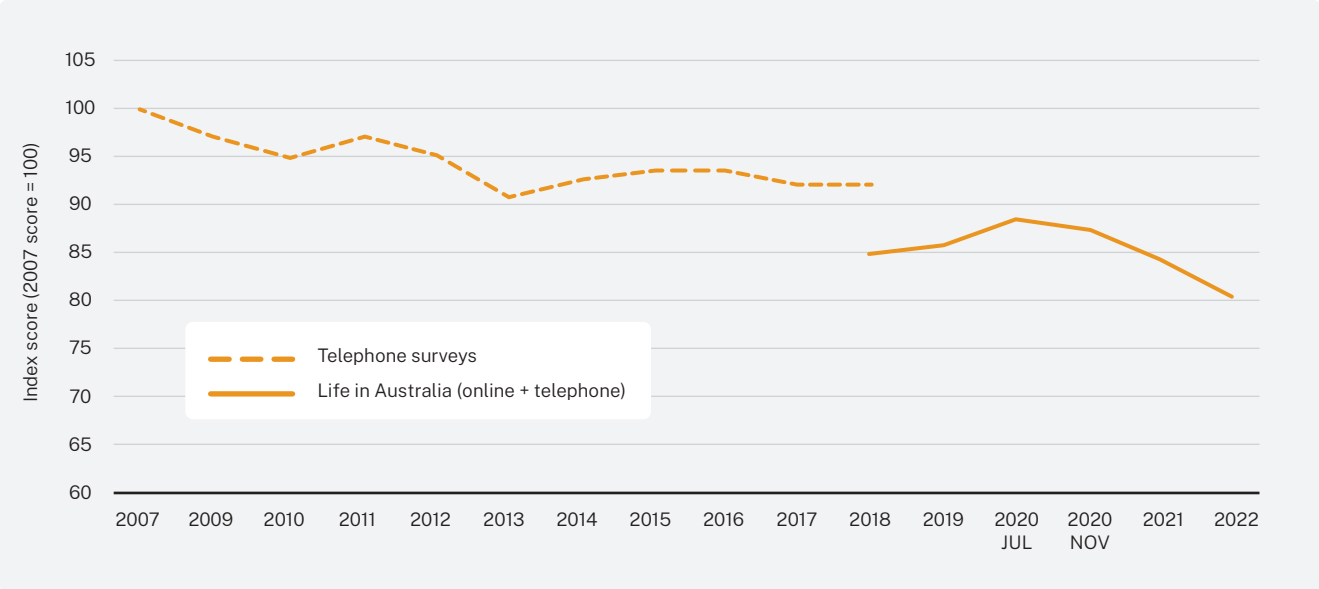
The first measure in the Scanlon Social Cohesion Index is the sense of belonging people have in Australia and in their communities.

As explained in the Scanlon Foundation's Social Cohesion Insights Series #4, 'belonging' is the extent to which people feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported by others.[1] The sense of belonging can be felt at multiple levels, including belonging in Australia and in local communities. Historically, the belonging measure in the Mapping Social Cohesion survey has concentrated on the sense of pride and belonging in Australia. In this year's survey, new items reflect on the sense of belonging people feel in their neighbourhoods and in their social connectedness.

Over the history of the Mapping Social Cohesion survey, Australians have reported a very strong sense of national pride and belonging. In our first survey in 2007, more than three-quarters (77 per cent) of the people we surveyed said they had a sense of belonging in Australia to a great extent, 58 per cent indicated they took pride in the Australian way of life and culture to a great extent, and 65 per cent strongly agreed that maintaining the Australian way of life and culture in the modern world was important. However, Australians' sense of national belonging and pride has declined over time. As shown in Figure 4, scores on the index of belonging declined from 100 in 2007 to 91 in 2013 before stabilising until at least 2018. After we switched the survey from telephone polling to the primarily online Life in Australia™ panel in 2018, scores increased modestly, from 85 in 2018 to 88 in July 2020, but in 2022 they fell below their pre-pandemic level to 81.

A similar decline in Australians' sense of national belonging is apparent in the World Values Survey, where the proportion of Australians who said they were very proud of their nationality fell from 71 per cent in 2012 to 57 per cent in 2018 (EVS/WVS, 2022).

Figure 4 The Scanlon Social Cohesion Index: Sense of belonging measure, 2007 to 2018 (telephone surveys) and 2018 to 2022 (online and telephone)



1 https://scanloninstitute.org.au/news/social-cohesion-insights-04-belonging

Over the history of our surveys, the index of belonging has been comprised of three questions, all of which have recorded a declining sense of national pride and belonging over time.

- The proportion of people who feel a great 'sense of belonging in Australia' declined from 77 per cent in 2007 to 64 per cent in 2018, in our telephone surveys. In our internet and telephone surveys to the Life in Australia™ panel, the proportion increased from 57 per cent in 2018 to 63 per cent in July 2020 but fell to 52 per cent in 2022 (see Figure 5). This proportion has declined by an average of 1.2 percentage points every year between 2007 and 2022, or a total of 19 percentage points over the 15 years, after removing the effect of the transition from telephone to internet surveys.
- The proportion of people who take great 'pride in the Australian way of life and culture' was reasonably stable between 2007 and 2018, moving from 58 per cent to 55 per cent in our telephone surveys. On the online and telephone surveys to the Life in Australia™ panel, the proportion increased from 43 per cent in 2018 to 48 per cent in 2020 but fell to 37 per cent in 2022 (see Table 5).
- The proportion of people who strongly agree that 'in the modern world, maintaining the Australian way of life and culture is important' declined from 65 per cent in 2007 to 58 per cent in 2018 in our telephone surveys. On Life in Australia™, the proportion increased slightly from 46 per cent in 2018 to 48 per cent in 2020 but fell to 42 per cent in 2022.

Personal and community belonging

In last year's survey, and again this year, we asked new questions about people's sense of belonging at personal and local levels: whether they **a)** feel isolated from others, **b)** feel they belong in their neighbourhoods, **c)** feel their neighbourhoods have a strong sense of community, and **d)** feel safe at home during the day.

The sense of neighbourhood belonging has remained strong over the last 12 months. Substantial majorities agree or strongly agree that they belong in their neighbourhood (82 per cent in 2022) and that their neighbourhood has a strong sense of community (66 per cent in 2022), while almost three-quarters (74 per cent) feel very safe at home during the day. On the downside, almost half of the population reported feeling isolated from others often or some of the time in 2022, similar to 2021.

Table 4 gives a summary of responses to each of the 'sense of belonging' questions since we began surveying on the Life in Australia™ panel in 2018.

Photo by Mason Dahl on Unsplash

Figure 5 'To what extent do you have a sense of belonging in Australia?' 2018 to 2022

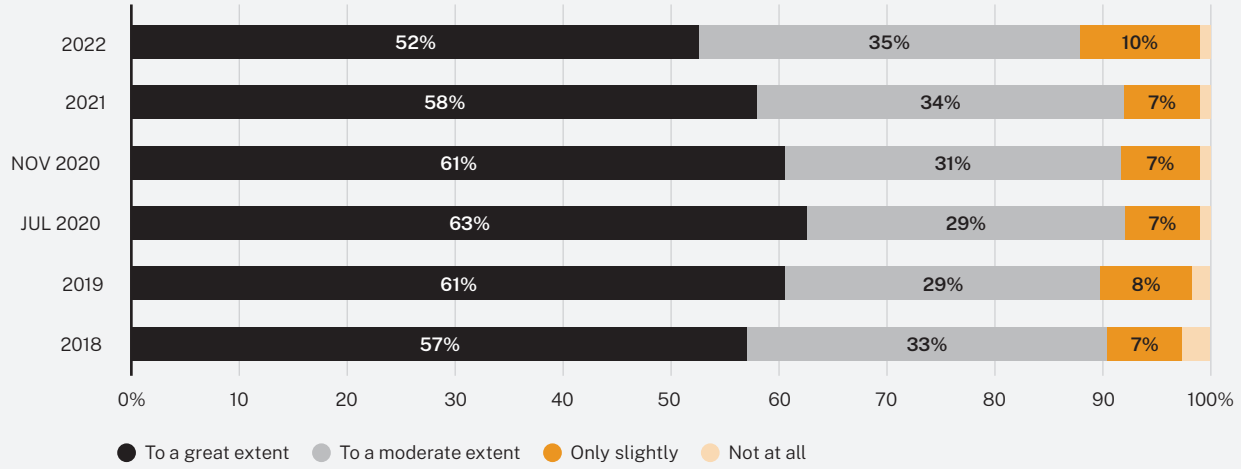


Table 4 Responses to individual questions on the sense of belonging measure, 2018 to 2022

		2018	2019	JUL 2020	NOV 2020	2021	2022
		% OF RESPONDENTS					
SENSE OF BELONGING IN AUSTRALIA	Great extent	57	61	63	61	58	52
	Moderate extent	33	29	29	31	34	35
	Total great/moderate	**90**	**90**	**92**	**92**	**91**	**88**
SENSE OF PRIDE	Great extent	43	45	48	46	42	37
	Moderate extent	44	41	41	42	45	46
	Total agree	**87**	**85**	**89**	**88**	**86**	**83**
MAINTAINING AUSTRALIAN WAY OF LIFE IS IMPORTANT	Strongly agree	46	49	48	47	44	42
	Agree	42	37	41	43	43	44
	Total agree	**88**	**87**	**89**	**90**	**87**	**87**
NEIGHBOURHOOD BELONGING	Strongly agree					15	15
	Agree					68	67
	Total agree					**83**	**82**
SENSE OF COMMUNITY IN NEIGHBOURHOOD	Strongly agree					15	12
	Agree					52	54
	Total agree					**67**	**66**
ISOLATION FROM OTHERS	Some of the time					37	40
	Often					12	9
	Total often/sometimes					**48**	**49**
FEEL SAFE AT HOME	Very safe					74	74
	Fairly safe					24	24
	Total very/fairly safe					**98**	**98**

Sense of belonging is lower among the young and people who are struggling financially

Table 5 shows the variations in social cohesion index scores between different social, demographic, and economic groups. The overall sense of belonging varies most strongly by age group, with young adults expressing much lower levels of belonging than older people. The average belonging score for people aged 18-24 is 6.7 points lower than the national average, while the average score for people aged 75 and older is 9.8 points higher than the national average.

The average belonging score for people who are living prosperously or very comfortably is 16 points higher than for people who are struggling to pay their bills or describe themselves as poor.

People who voted for the Greens at the 2022 Federal Election have an average belonging score 10 points lower than people who voted for the Liberal/National Coalition.

Australian-born populations have a stronger sense of belonging than immigrant populations. People born overseas and whose first language is not English have an average belonging score 4.4 points below the national average. As shown in Figure 6, average belonging scores generally increase the longer that people have lived in Australia. For example, the average belonging score among people whose first language is not English is 6.2 points lower than the national average for people who have been in Australia for less than 10 years, but only 3.0 points lower than the national average for people who have been in Australia for 20 years or longer.

This is to be expected and not necessarily a cause for concern, because the immigrant population is comprised of groups that may not have had time to establish themselves in Australia and in their local communities. Of greater concern is that Australian-born residents from non-English speaking backgrounds, and long-term residents from non-English speaking backgrounds, whether Australian-born or foreign-born, have a substantially lower sense of belonging than their counterparts from English-speaking backgrounds (see Figure 6).

Figure 6 Average belonging scores by length of time spent in Australia and first language, 2022 survey (National average = 0)

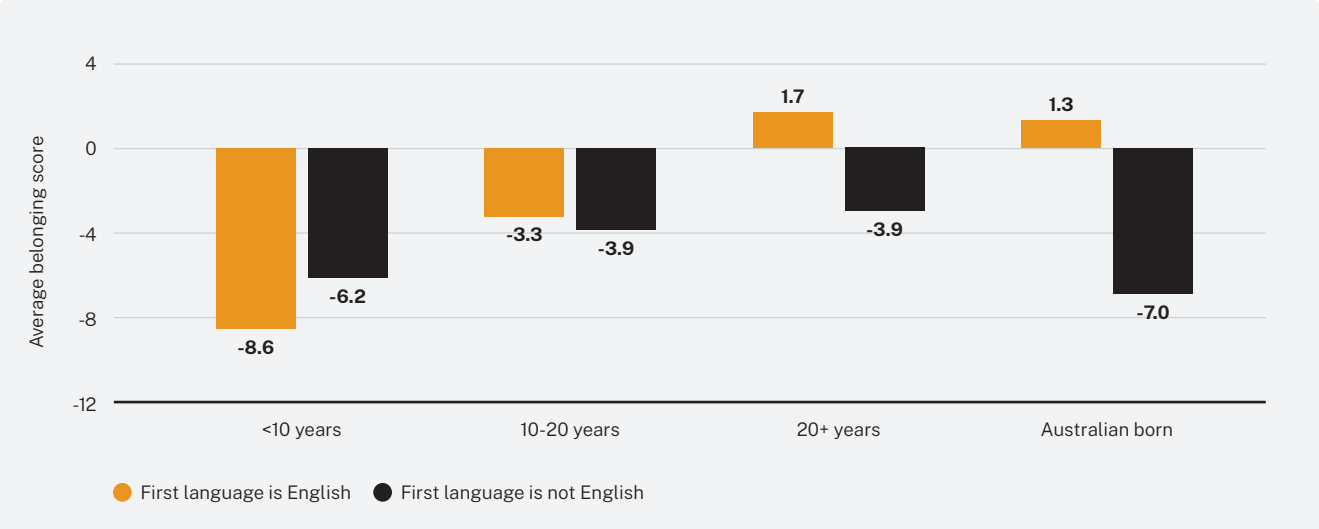


Table 5 Sense of belonging index scores across demographic and socioeconomic groups, difference from national average, 2022 survey

GENDER	Female	Male				
	–0.1	+0.2				
AGE	65 +	55-64	45-54	35-44	25-34	18-24
	+7.5	+2.7	+0.9	**–3.1**	**–5.0**	**–6.7**
STATE	NSW	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	
	+0.8	**–1.2**	+0.2	+0.1	+0.5	
CAPITAL CITY/ REST OF STATE	Capital city	Rest of State				
	–1.0	+2.1				
HIGHEST EDUCATION	Postgraduate degree	Bachelor degree	Certificate/ diploma	Year 12	Up to Year 11	
	–0.5	**-1.5**	+0.6	**–1.8**	+2.2	
FINANCIAL SITUATION	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ poor		
	+6.3	+2.2	**–4.1**	**–9.6**		
VOTE AT 2022 ELECTION	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Other		
	–0.2	+5.4	**–4.5**	**–0.8**		
WHERE BORN & FIRST LANGUAGE	Australian-born	Foreign-born/ English	Foreign-born/ non-English			
	+1.1	–0.1	**–4.4**			
HOUSEHOLD TYPE	Couple no children	Couple parent	Single parent	Group household	Live alone	
	+3.4	+0.3	**–3.8**	**–6.9**	**–1.3**	
HOUSING TENURE	Own outright	Mortgage	Rent			
	+6.3	+1.2	**–5.0**			
NEIGHBOURHOOD DISADVANTAGE	Quintile 1 (Low disadvantage)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (High disadvantage)	
	+1.1	+0.2	–0.7	+0.3	**–1.2**	

Notes: Neighbourhood disadvantage is measured with the ABS (2018) Socio-economic Indexes For Areas (SEIFA) Index of Relative Socio-economic disadvantage. Index scores are based on respondents' postcode and grouped into five equally sized quintiles. Numbers in red are significantly lower than the national average.

Explaining the decline in national pride and belonging

Identifying the causes of the decline in the sense of national belonging is critical to understanding its importance and impact on broader social cohesion in Australia. We have analysed the potential causes by estimating the proportion of people expressing a great sense of belonging in Australia for different demographic and socioeconomic groups since 2009. The results are shown in Table 6.

We used a logistic regression model to determine whether changes in the sense of national belonging are statistically significant (that is, likely to be due to more than random variation).

Our findings show the decline in the sense of national belonging has been felt across the Australian population. The decline between 2009 and 2022 in the proportion of people who have a great sense of belonging in Australia is evident among Australian-born and foreign-born populations, younger and older generations, and people with high and lower levels of education. But it is striking that much of the decline has been concentrated among the Australian-born population and among people born overseas who speak English as a first language.

Between 2009 and 2022, younger adults recorded a much larger decline in their sense of national belonging compared to older adults. The proportion of 18-24 year olds indicating a great sense of national belonging declined from 60 per cent in 2009 to 39 per cent in 2020 and 34 per cent in 2022.

This compares with a decline from 83 per cent in 2009 to 82 per cent in 2020 and 75 per cent in 2022 for people aged 65 and older. The decline for those aged 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, and 45-54 was significantly larger than the decline for people aged 65 and older.

The decline in belonging was also disproportionately felt by people who are struggling financially or 'just getting along'. The decline in belonging was 25 percentage points for those who say they are poor or struggling to pay their bills, and 29 percentage points for those who are 'just getting along'. This compares with a 15 percentage point decline for those living prosperously or very comfortably. The decline for those who are 'just getting along' was significantly larger than the decline for the most affluent group.

The results suggest that the broad-based decline in belonging is partly the product of society-wide changes in social and cultural norms, and not necessarily a cause for alarm. However, the decline in belonging for younger adults and people struggling financially is a concern because it may exacerbate existing social inequalities. Back in our first survey from 2007, younger adults and people suffering financial stress still had lower levels of belonging than older and more affluent people. But that gap is much wider in 2022. The widening gap by age may reflect changing norms and values around national identity among young adults. But the widening gap by financial situation may indicate that economic inequalities are giving rise to increasingly strong social inequalities in Australia.

Table 6 To what extent do you have a sense of belonging in Australia?' Proportion of the population who indicate 'to a great extent', 2009 (telephone survey), 2020 and 2022 (online and telephone)

GENDER	Female	Male				
	74, 62, 51	71, 64, 54				
AGE	65 +	55-64	45-54	35-44	25-34	18-24
	83, 82, 75	77, 74, 67	**79, 68, 57**	**71, 53, 41**	**62, 49, 31**	**60, 39, 34**
MARITAL STATUS	Married / co-habiting	Single				
	74, 65, 55	70, 53, 41				
STATE	NSW	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	
	71, 64, 53	69, 61, 49	77, 58, 54	76, 71, 51	76, 67, 55	
CAPITAL CITY/ REST OF STATE	Capital city	Rest of State				
	69, 60, 49	80, 68, 59				
HIGHEST EDUCATION	Postgraduate degree	Bachelor degree	Certificate/ diploma	Year 12	Up to Year 11	
	62, 52, 46	69, 56, 46	75, 67, 55	70, 53, 44	83, 74, 66	
FINANCIAL SITUATION	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ poor		
	78, 70, 63	72, 66, 56	**72, 56, 43**	65, 47, 40		
WHERE BORN & FIRST LANGUAGE	Australian-born	Foreign-born/ English	Foreign-born/ non-English			
	80, 70, 58	67, 53, 46	40, 41, 35			
NEIGHBOURHOOD DISADVANTAGE	Quintile 1 (Low disadvantage)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (High disadvantage)	
	70, 67, 51	69, 63, 52	79, 61, 50	75, 62, 54	70, 60, 55	

Notes: The numbers in each cell represent the values for 2009, 2020, and 2022 respectively. For example, the proportion of females who have a great sense of belonging was 74% in 2009, 62% in 2020, and 51% in 2022.

Numbers in red represent declines in the sense of national belonging that are significantly larger than the corresponding decline in the first column (e.g. the proportions for males are in red if the decline between 2009 and 2022 is significantly larger than the decline for females) after controlling for all demographic and socioeconomic characteristics in the table and whether the survey was done by telephone (2009) or on the primarily online Life in Australia™ panel (2020 and 2022).

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Sense of worth

Sense of worth is a key measure of social cohesion, reflecting the extent to which the harmony and connectedness of society provides for the social, psychological and material well-being of individual members.

Since our first survey in 2007, we have measured sense of worth with two items: level of financial satisfaction and the level of happiness. We expanded this year's survey to include the extent to which individuals feel respected, that the things they do in life are worthwhile, and that they have money for food.

Our surveys shows that Australians' sense of worth has been reasonably stable since 2007. The index of the sense of worth hovered around an average score of 96 between 2009 and 2018, as shown in Figure 7.

Australians' sense of worth increased marginally during the COVID-19 pandemic but has since fallen back to pre-pandemic levels. After taking account of the transition from telephone to online surveying, scores on the sense of worth measure are now similar to where they were between 2009 and 2019.

- When we shifted from telephone surveys to largely online surveys in 2018, our measure of the sense of worth declined. Respondents to the online survey were less likely to report feeling very happy and satisfied with their finances when they did not have to speak to a person.

Financial satisfaction has declined since 2020, while happiness has remained steady. Table 7 gives a summary of people's responses to each of the individual items relating to sense of worth.

- In 2022, 64 per cent of people were satisfied or very satisfied with their financial situation, down from 73 per cent in July 2020 and 71 per cent in 2021. The degree of satisfaction is now the same as it was in 2019.
- Levels of happiness remain very high. Almost eight in ten (78 per cent) Australians report being happy or very happy, similar to where that measure has been since 2018. The proportion of people who are very happy is at 13 per cent, the same as in 2019 (see Figure 8).
- The proportion of people who feel they are treated with respect remains stable. Just over a quarter of people in 2021 (27 per cent) and 2022 (26 per cent) felt they were treated with respect to a great extent. Almost two-thirds felt they were treated with respect to a moderate extent (64 per cent in 2021 and 63 per cent in 2022).
- The proportion of people who say that the things they do in life are worthwhile has also remained stable. Only 12 per cent of people in 2022 and 13 per cent in 2021 said that the things they do were worthwhile all of the time, however much larger proportions said that the things they do are worthwhile most of the time (45 per cent in 2022 and 47 per cent in 2021).
- In 2022, 11 per cent of people said they often or sometimes went without food in the last 12 months due to a lack of money.

Figure 7 The Scanlon Social Cohesion Index: Sense of worth measure, 2007 to 2018 (telephone surveys) and 2018 to 2022 (online and telephone)

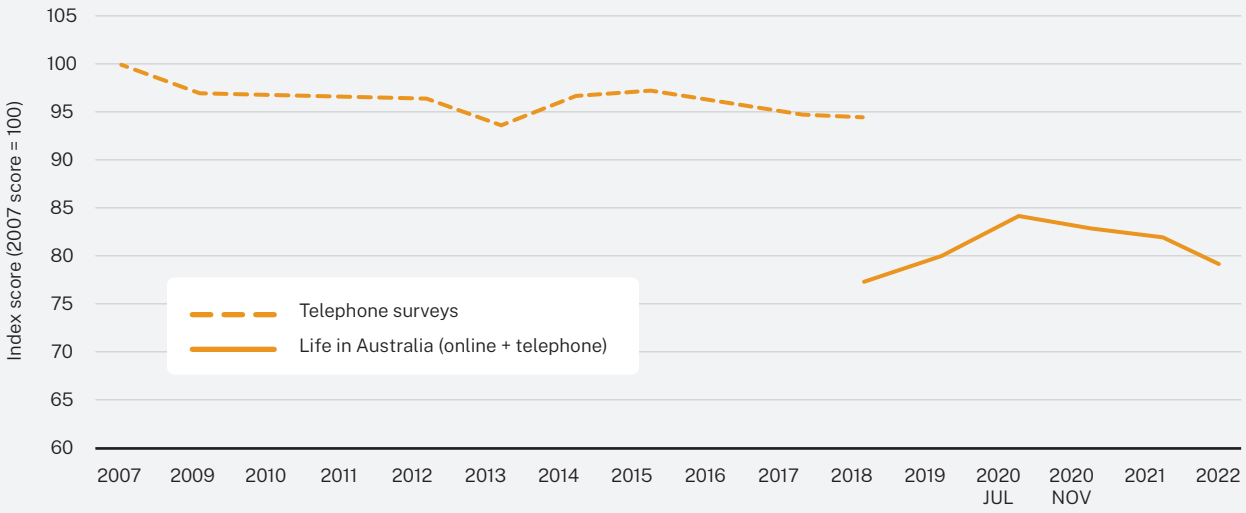
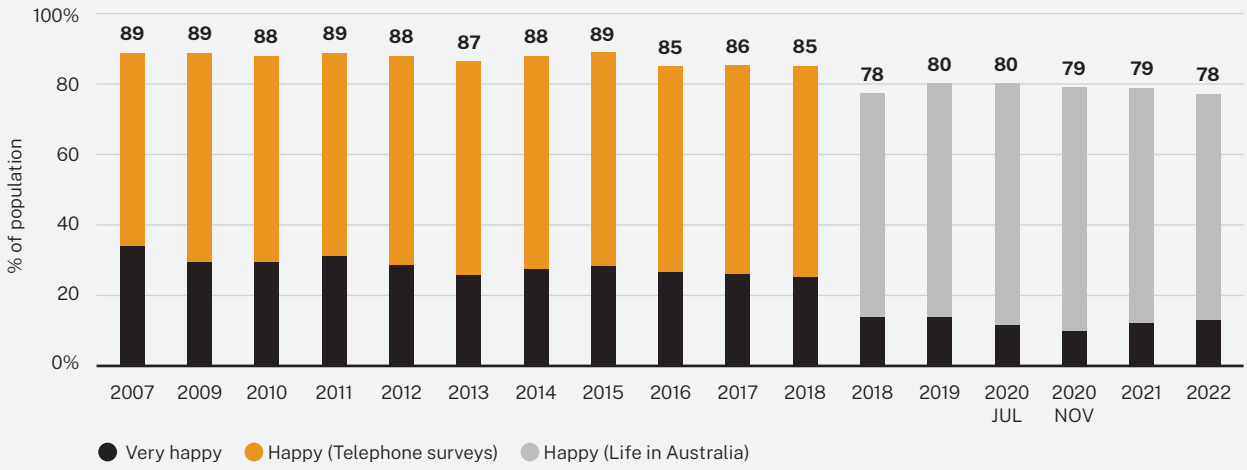


Table 7 Responses to items relating to sense of worth, 2018 to 2022

		2018	2019	JUL 2020	NOV 2020	2021	2022
		% OF RESPONDENTS					
FINANCIAL SATISFACTION	Very satisfied	10	11	11	11	9	9
	Satisfied	51	53	63	61	61	55
	Total satisfied	**61**	**64**	**73**	**72**	**71**	**64**
HAPPINESS OVER THE LAST YEAR	Very happy	14	13	11	10	12	13
	Happy	63	67	68	69	67	66
	Total happy	**78**	**80**	**80**	**79**	**79**	**78**
PEOPLE TREAT YOU WITH RESPECT	To a great extent					27	26
	To a moderate extent					64	63
	Total great/ moderate					**90**	**89**
THINGS IN LIFE ARE WORTHWHILE	All of the time					13	12
	Most of the time					47	45
	Total all/most					**60**	**58**
WENT WITHOUT FOOD BECAUSE OF MONEY	Often true					1	2
	Sometimes true					8	9
	Total true					**9**	**11**

Figure 8 'Taking all things into consideration, would you say that over the last year, you have been...?' 2007 to 2018 (telephone surveys) and 2018 to 2022 (online and telephone)



Happiness and social cohesion

Happiness and personal wellbeing are strongly related to general feelings of social cohesion.

Table 8 shows the average social cohesion index scores for each question related to happiness and personal wellbeing. We have calculated the scores using a linear regression model, so that the differences in index scores in Table 8 are independent of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics.

Our model shows that the people who report being unhappy or very unhappy have an average belonging score 8.8 points lower than the national average (and 12 points lower than people who are happy or very happy). The same group were found to have a social inclusion and justice score 5.7 points below the national average, and an acceptance and rejection score 1.8 points below the national average.

Happiness is also strongly related to another major component of worth – financial satisfaction. In 2022, 90 per cent of people who were satisfied with their finances were happy or very happy, compared with 35 per cent of people who were dissatisfied with their finances.

Other aspects of personal well-being are also strongly related to social cohesion. People who feel they are treated with respect to a great extent, those who feel that things in life are worthwhile all or most of the time, and those who feel isolated from others never or hardly ever, all have a substantially greater sense of belonging, worth, and social inclusion and justice (see Table 9).

There are several potential reasons why happiness and personal well-being are closely connected to social cohesion. On one hand, people who are happy and well connected in their personal lives are perhaps likely to have positive perceptions of national cohesion. On the other hand, the friendships, interpersonal connections, and support networks that people derive from living in highly cohesive societies can contribute to their happiness and wellbeing. In either case, a cohesive society is a happy society.

Table 8 Social cohesion index scores by measures of happiness and personal wellbeing, differences with the national average, 2022 survey

	BELONGING	WORTH	SOCIAL INCLUSION AND JUSTICE	PARTICIPATION	ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION
HAPPINESS IN LAST YEAR					
Happy/very happy	+2.7	+4.3	+1.8	–0.4	+0.3
Unhappy/very unhappy	**–8.8**	**–14**	**–5.7**	+1.8	**–1.8**
FEEL ISOLATED FROM OTHERS					
Often/some of the time	**–7.2**	**–6.3**	**–2.6**	+0.6	+0.6
Never/hardly ever	+6.9	+6.0	+2.5	–0.6	–0.6
TREATED WITH RESPECT					
To a great extent	+7.5	+13	+3.7	+2.2	+3.9
To a moderate extent	**–1.3**	**–2.6**	–0.4	–0.9	–0.5
Only slightly/not at all	**–11**	**–17**	**–6.8**	–0.2	**–7.0**
THINGS IN LIFE ARE WORTHWHILE					
All/most of the time	+4.1	+8.5	+2.1	+1.0	+1.3
Some/little of the time	**–6.1**	**–11**	**–3.0**	–0.7	**–2.0**

Notes: Our model ensures these scores are independent of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Numbers in red indicate social cohesion scores are significantly lower than the national average.

People's sense of worth tends to increase with age and wealth

Table 9 shows average sense of worth scores in 2022 for different social, demographic, and economic groups. Table 10 shows differences and changes in happiness over time across demographic and socioeconomic groups.

Older Australians have a much greater sense of worth than younger Australians. The average score for 18-24 year olds in 2022 was 2.6 points below the national average, and for 25-34 year olds it was 3.3 points below the national average. Sense of worth increases with age from that point, reaching 6.1 points above the national average for people aged 65 and older. The proportion who are happy or very happy is significantly higher for people aged 65 years and older (88 per cent in 2022).

People who are financially comfortable have a much higher sense of worth and happiness than people who are struggling. In 2022, just 41 per cent of people who said they were poor or struggling to pay their bills also said they were happy or very happy. That number was substantially higher for those people who described themselves as prosperous/very comfortable (94 per cent) or reasonably comfortable (88 per cent).

The proportion of people who are happy or very happy has declined among those born overseas and whose first language is not English – down from 86 per cent in 2018 to 80 per cent in July 2020 and 76 per cent in 2022.

Table 9 Sense of worth index scores across demographic and socioeconomic groups, difference from national average, 2022 survey

GENDER	Female	Male				
	–0.6	+0.6				
AGE	65 +	55-64	45-54	35-44	25-34	18-24
	+6.1	+1.3	**–1.5**	**–2.2**	**–3.3**	**–2.6**
STATE	NSW	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	
	+0.2	–0.6	–0.1	–0.3	+0.8	
CAPITAL CITY/ REST OF STATE	Capital city	Rest of State				
	–0.3	+0.6				
HIGHEST EDUCATION	Postgraduate degree	Bachelor degree	Certificate/ diploma	Year 12	Up to Year 11	
	+2.9	+2.1	–0.6	**–1.5**	–1.1	
FINANCIAL SITUATION	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ poor		
	+14	+3.0	**–7.0**	**–17**		
VOTE AT 2022 ELECTION	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Other		
	–0.6	+3.6	**–2.0**	–0.5		
WHERE BORN & FIRST LANGUAGE	Australian-born	Foreign-born/ English	Foreign-born/ non-English			
	+0.2	+1.3	**–2.1**			
HOUSEHOLD TYPE	Couple no children	Couple parent	Single parent	Group household	Live alone	
	+3.8	+0.4	**–7.0**	**–4.8**	**–1.8**	
HOUSING TENURE	Own outright	Mortgage	Rent			
	+5.9	+1.0	**–5.2**			
NEIGHBOURHOOD DISADVANTAGE	Quintile 1 (Low disadvantage)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (High disadvantage)	
	+2.2	+0.2	–0.4	–0.8	**–2.2**	

Notes: Neighbourhood disadvantage is measured with the ABS (2018) Socio-economic Indexes For Areas (SEIFA) Index of Relative Socio-economic disadvantage. Index scores are based on respondents' postcode and grouped into five equally sized quintiles. Numbers in red are significantly lower than the national average.

Table 10 Proportion of people who are happy or very happy across demographic and socioeconomic groups, July 2018, 2020, 2022

GENDER	Female	Male				
	76, 80, 79	79, 80, 78				
AGE	65 +	55-64	45-54	35-44	25-34	18-24
	89, 89, 88	**74, 79, 79**	81, **81, 74**	**76, 76, 75**	**74, 74, 76**	**67, 76, 76**
STATE	NSW	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	
	77, 78, 78	78, 81, 77	81, 75, 78	84, 86, 79	75, 84, 80	
CAPITAL CITY/ REST OF STATE	Capital city	Rest of State				
	77, 78, 78	79, 82, 80				
HIGHEST EDUCATION	Postgraduate degree	Bachelor degree	Certificate/ diploma	Year 12	Up to Year 11	
	80, 79, 84	82, 83, 81	78, 81, 77	**76, 77, 77**	73, 79, 77	
FINANCIAL SITUATION	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ poor		
	93, 91, 94	86, 88, **88**	**74, 66, 66**	**40, 47, 41**		
VOTE AT 2022 ELECTION	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Other		
	72, 78, 79	87, 86, 86	70, 76, **72**	77, 73, 77		
WHERE BORN & FIRST LANGUAGE	Australian-born	Foreign-born/ English	Foreign-born/ non-English			
	76, 80, 79	77, 78, 80	86, 80, 76			
HOUSEHOLD TYPE	Couple no children	Couple parent	Single parent	Group household	Live alone	
	NA, NA, 85	NA, NA, 80	NA, NA, 65	NA, NA, 69	NA, NA, **71**	
HOUSING TENURE	Own outright	Mortgage	Rent			
	NA, NA, 86	NA, NA, 81	NA, NA, 69			
NEIGHBOURHOOD DISADVANTAGE	Quintile 1 (Low disadvantage)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (High disadvantage)	
	79, 82, 80	76, 80, 79	74, 80, 78	81, 76, 79	78, 80, 74	

Notes: The values in each cell represent the values for 2018, 2020, and 2022 respectively. For example, the proportion of females who were happy or very happy was 76% in 2018, 80% in 2020, and 79% in 2022.

Numbers in red are significantly lower than the corresponding values in the first column (e.g. the proportion for males in 2022 is in red if it is significantly lower than the proportion for females in 2022) after controlling for all demographic and socioeconomic characteristics in the table.

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Social inclusion and justice

The social inclusion and justice measure of social cohesion reflects the degree to which people feel that social, economic, and political opportunities and outcomes in society are fair and equitable.

Since our first survey in 2007, we have asked three 'social inclusion and justice' questions, relating to economic opportunities in Australia, income inequality, and trust in the Federal Government. New questions in the 2021 and 2022 surveys relate to economic opportunities, financial support for lowincome earners, fairness of job opportunities, government abuse of power, and trust in elections and the courts.

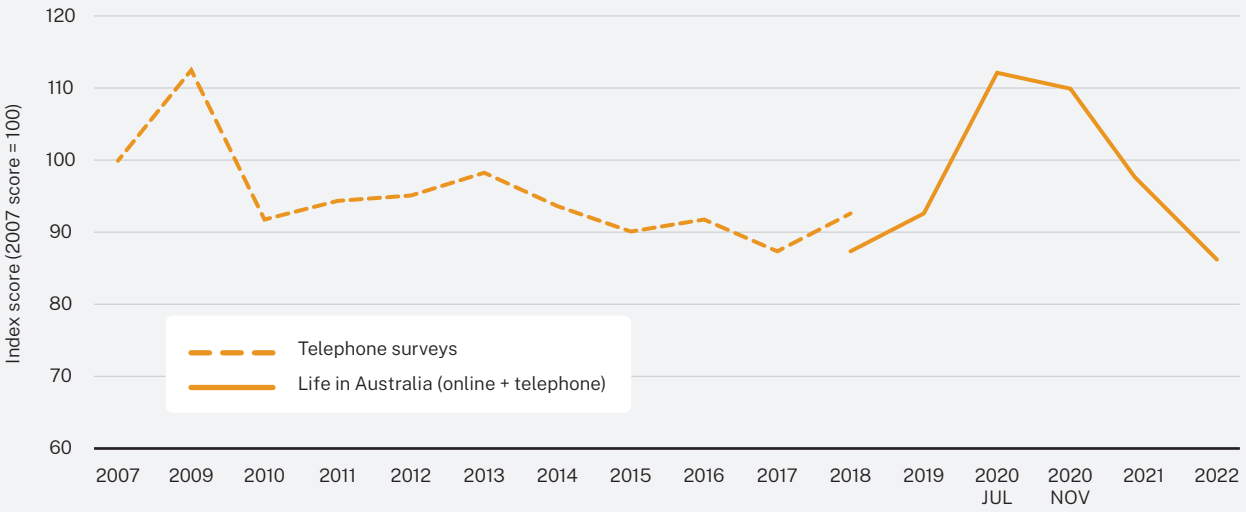
Figures 9 shows that scores on the social inclusion and justice index are coming off a peak during the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2010 and 2018 (in our telephone surveys), index scores fluctuated around an average of 93. Scores increased, from 88 in 2018 to 112 in July 2020 (once we switched to largely online surveys), before dropping back to 97 in 2021 and then 86 in 2022. Scores on the social inclusion and justice index are now lower than they have been since the start of the survey in 2007.

Table 11 gives a summary of responses to each of the individual items in the social inclusion and justice section of the survey. It shows that belief in economic fairness in Australia declined in 2022. And on all the following measures, boosts to social cohesion during the pandemic have been wiped out and are now at, or below, pre-pandemic levels:

- Fewer people agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life' in 2022 (69 per cent) than in 2021 (74 per cent), July 2020 (74 per cent), or 2019 (71 per cent). The proportion who strongly agree with the statement (14 per cent in 2022) is now significantly smaller than it was before or during the height of the pandemic (19 per cent in both 2019 and 2020).
- Significantly smaller proportions of people now disagree or strongly disagree that the gap in incomes in Australia is too large. In 2022 it was 18 per cent, in 2021 it was 22 per cent, and in 2020 it was 23 per cent. These levels are not significantly different to pre-pandemic levels.
- Agreement with the statement 'people living on low incomes in Australia receive enough support from the government' has sharply receded from its pandemic peak of 55 per cent, falling to 40 per cent in 2022 – exactly where it was in 2019.

Trust in the Federal Government has also declined from a peak in 2020, but remains higher than pre-pandemic levels. In 2022, 41 per cent of people felt that the Federal Government could be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people all or most of the time, significantly smaller than the 44 per cent recorded in 2021 and 54 per cent in July 2020, but significantly higher than the 28 per cent recorded in 2018 (see the Chapter on Trust in Government for more information).

Figure 9 The Scanlon Social Cohesion Index: Social inclusion and justice measures, 2007 to 2022



Our new questions in the social inclusion and justice section of the survey highlight a degree of diversity in attitudes to economic and political fairness in Australia. In 2022:

- 55 per cent of people agreed with the statement 'overall, everyone in Australia has a fair chance of getting the jobs they seek' (up from 51 per cent in 2021)
- 65 per cent believe that 'elections are fair all or most of the time' (63 per cent in 2021)
- 21 per cent believe that 'government leaders in Australia abuse their power' none of the time or a little of the time (23 per cent in 2021)
- 56 per cent believe that 'courts make fair, impartial decisions based on the evidence available to them' all or most of the time (57 per cent in 2021).

Group differences in social inclusion and justice scores

Table 12 shows average scores on the social inclusion and justice index for different social, demographic, and economic groups.

- People who voted for the Liberal or National parties at the 2022 Federal Election (+4.5) and those who are financially very comfortable or prosperous (+5.2) had the highest average scores on the social inclusion and justice index in 2022, relative to the national average. People aged 65 years and older (+2.6), those with a postgraduate degree (+2.3), and overseas-born immigrants from non-English speaking backgrounds (+2.6) also scored relatively highly on the social inclusion and justice index.

At the other end of the scale, people who are financially 'just getting along' (–4.0), struggling to pay their bills or are poor (–9.3), voted for the Greens at the 2022 election (–3.9), or are aged 25-34 (–2.3) all have index scores that are significantly below the national average.

Table 11 Responses to items in the social inclusion and justice section of the survey, 2018 to 2022

		2018	2019	JUL 2020	NOV 2020	2021	2022
		% OF RESPONDENTS					
LAND OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY	Strongly agree	21	19	19	19	15	14
	Agree	50	51	55	53	58	54
	Total agree	**71**	**71**	**74**	**72**	**74**	**69**
GAPS IN INCOMES TOO LARGE	Strongly disagree	4	4	3	3	2	2
	Disagree	16	18	21	19	20	16
	Total disagree	**19**	**21**	**23**	**22**	**22**	**18**
TRUST FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	Almost always	2	3	5	6	4	2
	Most of the time	26	33	49	49	40	39
	Total most/always	**28**	**36**	**54**	**56**	**44**	**41**
SUPPORT FOR LOW INCOMES	Strongly agree	8	8	9	10	6	5
	Agree	36	32	45	38	42	35
	Total agree	**44**	**40**	**55**	**49**	**47**	**40**
FAIR CHANCE OF JOBS	Strongly agree					5	7
	Agree					46	48
	Total agree					**51**	**55**
ELECTIONS ARE FAIR	All of the time					15	18
	Most of the time					49	47
	Total all/most					**63**	**65**
LEADERS ABUSE POWER	None of the time					2	2
	A little					21	19
	Total none/little					**23**	**21**
COURTS MAKE FAIR DECISIONS	All of the time					5	4
	Most of the time					52	52
	Total all/most					**57**	**56**

Table 12 Social inclusion and justice index scores across demographic and socioeconomic groups, difference from national average, 2022

GENDER	Female	Male				
	–1.8	+1.9				
AGE	65 +	55-64	45-54	35-44	25-34	18-24
	+2.6	+0.4	0.0	–0.4	**–2.3**	–1.0
STATE	NSW	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	
	+0.5	–0.1	**–1.2**	–0.2	+0.8	
CAPITAL CITY/ REST OF STATE	Capital city	Rest of State				
	+0.3	**–0.7**				
HIGHEST EDUCATION	Postgraduate degree	Bachelor degree	Certificate/ diploma	Year 12	Up to Year 11	
	+2.3	+1.5	**–0.8**	+0.1	**–1.4**	
FINANCIAL SITUATION	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ poor		
	+5.2	+2.4	**–4.0**	**–9.3**		
VOTE AT 2022 ELECTION	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Other		
	+0.1	+4.5	**–3.9**	**–1.2**		
WHERE BORN & FIRST LANGUAGE	Australian-born	Foreign-born, English	Foreign-born, non-English			
	–0.6	+0.3	+2.6			
HOUSEHOLD TYPE	Couple no children	Couple parent	Single parent	Group household	Live alone	
	+1.8	+0.7	**–4.6**	**–2.5**	–0.8	
HOUSING TENURE	Own outright	Mortgage	Rent			
	+2.6	+1.3	**–3.0**			
NEIGHBOURHOOD DISADVANTAGE	Quintile 1 (Low disadvantage)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (High disadvantage)	
	+1.9	+0.5	–0.3	**–1.1**	**–1.8**	

Note: Neighbourhood disadvantage is measured with the ABS (2018) Socio-economic Indexes For Areas (SEIFA) Index of Relative Socio-economic disadvantage. Index scores are based on respondents' postcode and grouped into five equally sized quintiles. Numbers in red are significantly lower than the national average.

Participation

The participation measure of social cohesion shows the extent to which individuals are actively engaged in the political process and in their communities. It reflects people's behaviour and the relations they build in their communities.

Since our first survey in 2007, the participation measure has focused on political participation and whether individuals have voted, signed a petition, communicated with a Member of Parliament, joined a boycott, or attended a protest in the last three years. In this year's and last year's surveys, we added questions on whether individuals are involved in social, religious, community support, civic, or political groups, and whether they provide other forms of formal or informal support in their communities.

Figure 10 shows the index of political participation. It fluctuated around an average of 101 between 2007 and 2018, in our telephone surveys. In our internet and telephone surveys to the Life in Australia™ panel, the index has averaged 95 since 2018. In 2022, it sits at 97.

Figure 11 shows the proportion of Australians engaged in political activities. Engagement in political activities has been reasonably stable in recent years. The proportion of people who voted in an election over in the last three years was significantly higher in 2022 (83 per cent) than in 2020 or 2021. The spikes in voting in 2019 and 2022 coincide with federal election years, which may reflect increased political engagement in election years, increased voter eligibility, or simply that people could more easily remember they had voted recently.

- Signing a petition is the second most common political activity after voting. In 2022, 49 per cent of Australians said they had signed a petition in the last three years, significantly lower than in either 2020 or 2021.
- Engagement in political protest has increased from a low point during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, 11 per cent of people said they had attended a protest, march, or demonstration in the last three years, significantly higher than the 8 per cent recorded in November 2020.
- The proportion of people who communicate with Members of Parliament (20 per cent in 2022), join boycotts (17 per cent in 2022), get together to resolve local problems (12 per cent in 2022), and post anything about politics online (25 per cent in 2022) has been relatively stable in recent years.

Figure 10 The Scanlon Social Cohesion Index: Political participation measure, 2007 to 2018 (telephone surveys) and 2018 to 2022 (online and telephone surveys)

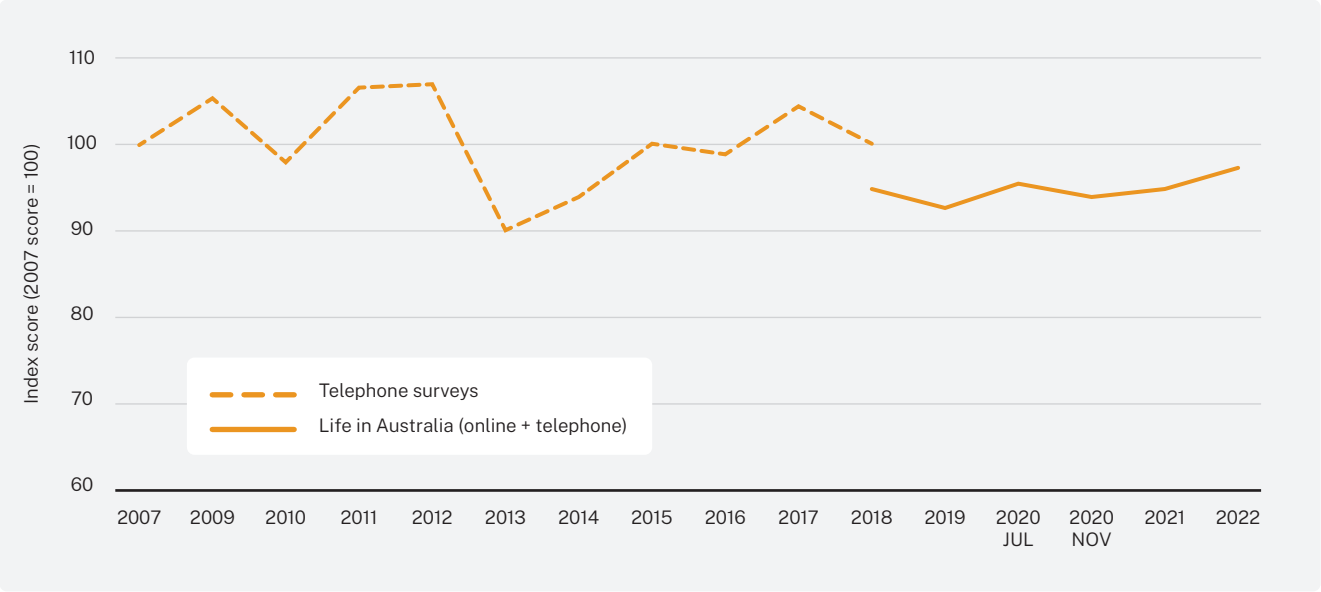
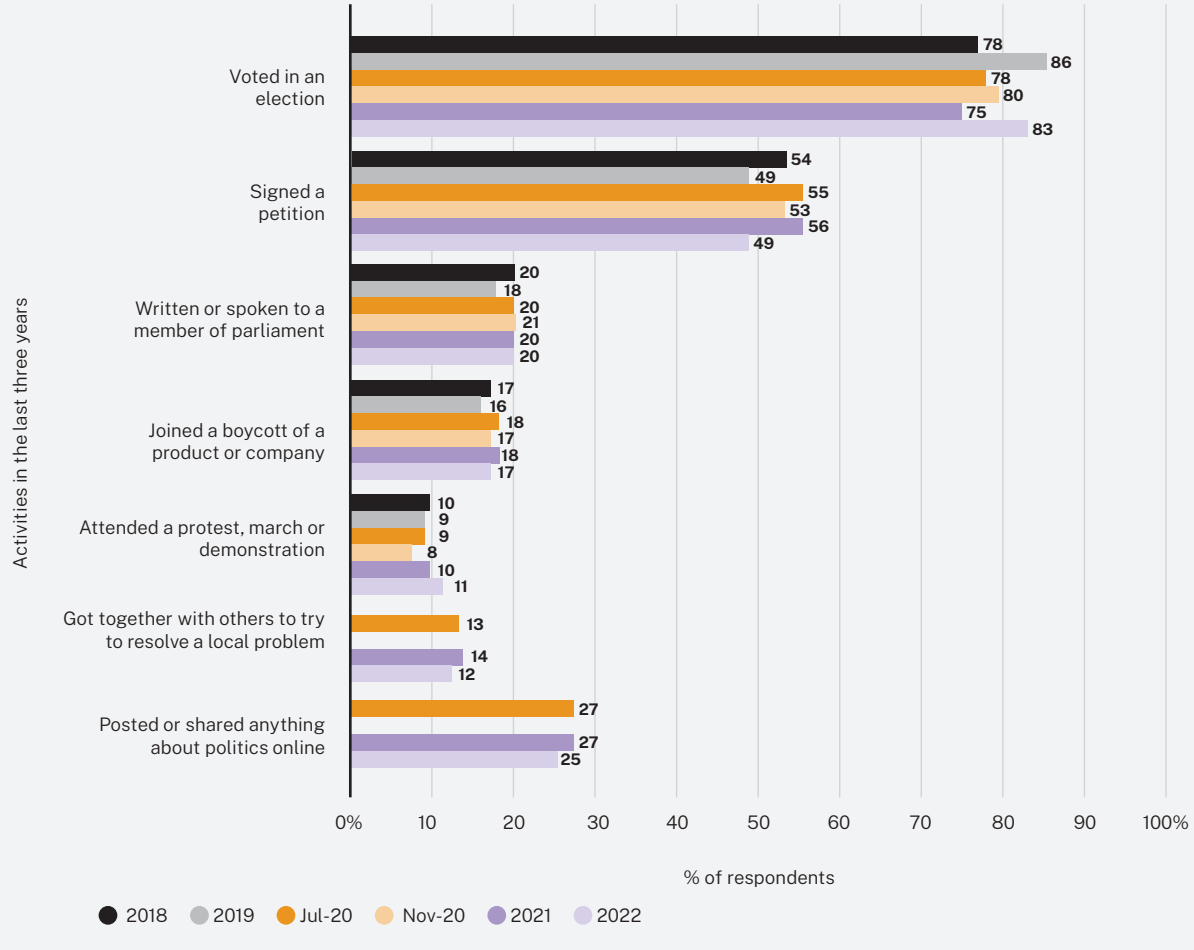


Figure 11 Engagement in political activities, 2018 to 2022 surveys



Social, community, and civic engagement in Australia

The extent to which Australians participate in social, community support, and civic/political groups has been stable over the last year, as shown in Figure 12.

In 2022, 24 per cent had been involved in a community support group over the previous 12 months, 41 per cent in a social or religious group, and 16 per cent in a civic or political group. While these measures reflect the degree of participation in formal organisations, informal and unpaid help is a more common form of community engagement. In 2022, 56 per cent of people had provided unpaid help to someone outside their household in just the four weeks before our survey.

The stability of social, community, and civic participation in the last year comes after a period of sustained decline in participation. While these measures of participation were new to our Mapping Social Cohesion survey in 2021, they have been recorded in the ABS General Social Surveys for a longer period (see Figure 13). According to the General Social Surveys, the proportion of adults involved in social groups declined from 63 per cent in 2010 to 46 per cent in 2020, while the proportion involved in community support groups declined from 35 to 21 per cent over the same period, and the proportion involved in civic/political groups declined from 19 to 7 per cent. Involvement in voluntary work also appears to be declining in the ABS survey.

Figure 12 Involvement in community, social, religious, civic, and political groups and other activities, Scanlon's 2021 and 2022 surveys

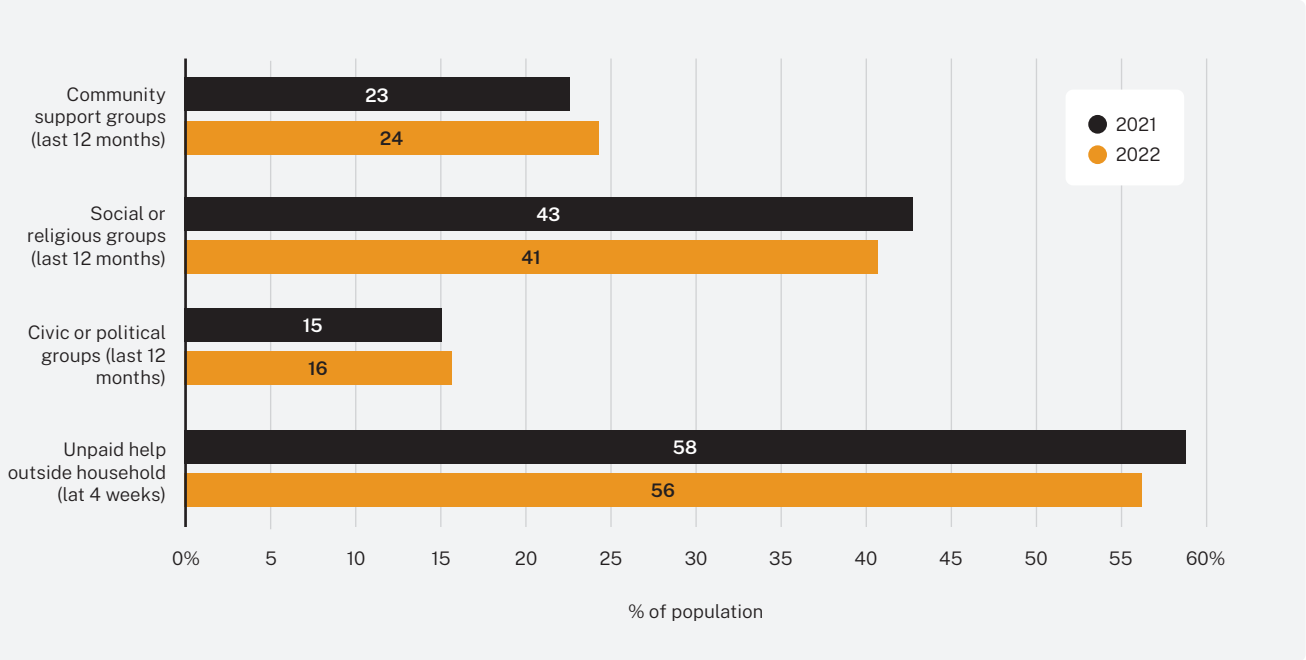
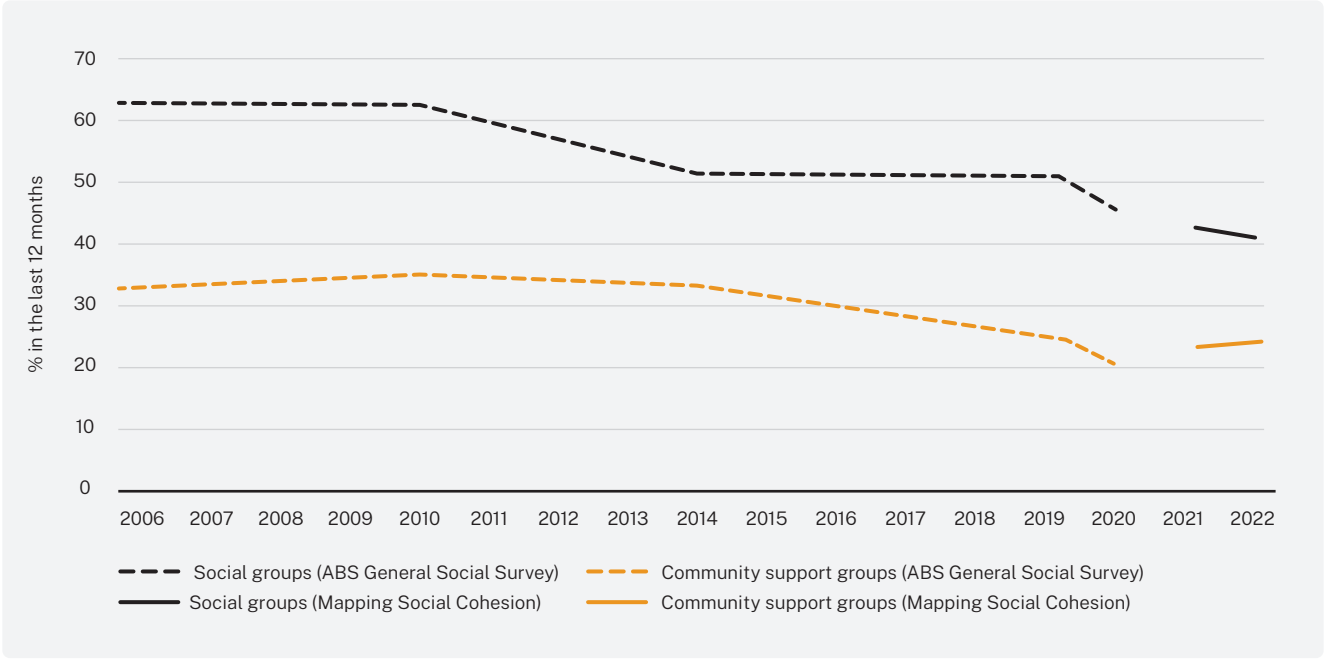


Figure 13 Participation in social and community support groups, proportion of population, 2006 to 2020 (ABS General Social Surveys) and 2021 and 2022 (Scanlon Mapping Social Cohesion surveys)



Sources: ABS (2021) General Social Survey 2020, and Scanlon Mapping Social Cohesion surveys 2021 and 2022

Participation is high among Greens voters and older Australians

Table 13 shows average index scores for participation among different demographic and socioeconomic groups. It shows that participation in Australia varies by education level, political alignment, age, and immigrant status.

Average participation scores in 2022 are higher than the national average for people with a Postgraduate degree (+3.8), people who voted for the Greens (+6.2), people aged 65 and older (+3.2), and those born in Australia (+1.2). Participation is lower among people with education only up to Year 11 (–4.2), people aged 25-34 (–2.9), and those who were born overseas and speak a language other than English (–5.1).

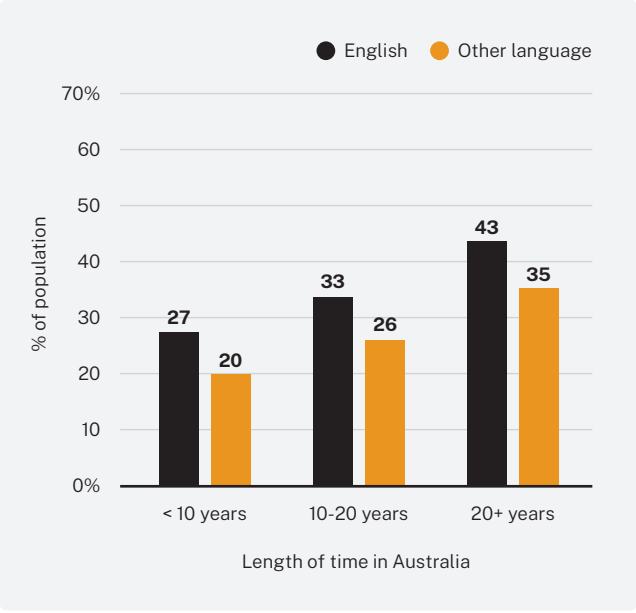
The proportion of Australians who communicate with Members of Parliament and participate in social, community support, and civic groups increases with age. On the other hand, joining a boycott, posting online about politics and attending protests all become less common with age.

Figure 14 shows that engagement in political activities and participation in social, community, and civic groups increases the longer that overseas-born populations have lived in Australia, particularly for people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

The proportion of overseas-born, non-English speaking people who have communicated with an MP, joined a boycott, or posted online about politics increases from 20 per cent for those who have been in Australia for less than 10 years to 35 per cent for those who have been here for 20 years or longer. While the proportion involved in social, community support, and/or civic groups increases from 40 per cent to 52 per cent. Levels of involvement in social, community, and/or civic groups is no different between English and non-English speaking immigrant groups who have lived in Australia for 10 years or longer.

Figure 14 Participation in political activities and social, community, and/or civic groups among overseas-born populations, by length of time in Australia, 2022 survey

a) Communicate with an MP / posted online / joined a boycott (last 3 years)



b) Involved in social / community / civic groups

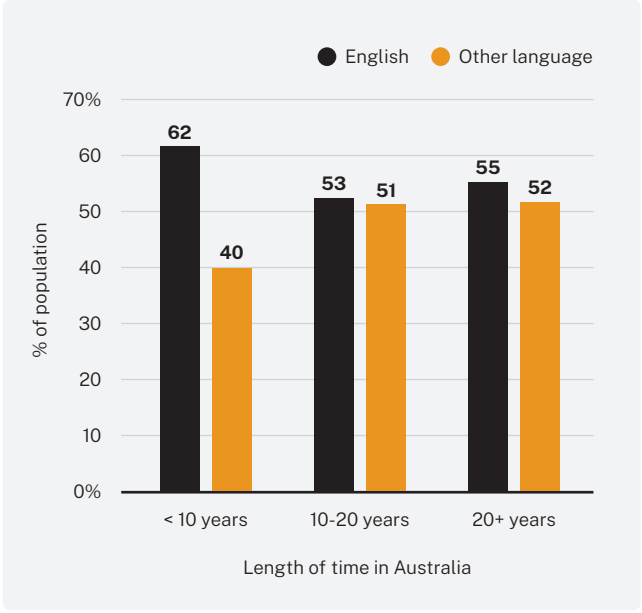


Table 13 Participation index scores across demographic and socioeconomic groups, difference from national average, 2022 survey

GENDER	Female	Male				
	+0.5	–0.6				
AGE	65 +	55-64	45-54	35-44	25-34	18-24
	+3.2	+2.2	+0.6	**–2.3**	**–2.9**	–1.8
STATE	NSW	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	
	+0.5	–1.3	+0.9	–0.3	–0.4	
CAPITAL CITY/ REST OF STATE	Capital city	Rest of State				
	–0.7	+1.5				
HIGHEST EDUCATION	Postgraduate degree	Bachelor degree	Certificate/ diploma	Year 12	Up to Year 11	
	+3.8	+1.0	+1.3	**–2.5**	**–4.2**	
FINANCIAL SITUATION	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ poor		
	+2.9	–0.3	**–1.5**	+1.1		
VOTE AT 2022 ELECTION	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Other		
	–0.8	**–1.9**	+6.2	+0.5		
WHERE BORN & FIRST LANGUAGE	Australian-born	Foreign-born/ English	Foreign-born/ non-English			
	+1.2	+0.1	**–5.1**			
HOUSEHOLD TYPE	Couple no children	Couple parent	Single parent	Group household	Live alone	
	+0.8	–1.1	+4.0	0.0	+0.7	
HOUSING TENURE	Own outright	Mortgage	Rent			
	+3.5	–0.6	**–1.9**			
NEIGHBOURHOOD DISADVANTAGE	Quintile 1 (Low disadvantage)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (High disadvantage)	
	+1.0	0.0	–0.7	+1.1	–1.8	

Note: Neighbourhood disadvantage is measured with the ABS (2018) Socio-economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Relative Socio-economic disadvantage. Index scores are based on respondents' postcode and grouped into five equally sized quintiles. Numbers in red are significantly lower than the national average.

Acceptance and rejection

The acceptance and rejection measure in our survey reflects the lived reality of social cohesion in contemporary Australia — ethnically diverse, multicultural, and with substantial unfinished work in reconciliation with Australia's First Nations peoples.

Acceptance and rejection shows the extent to which respondents are accepting of people from different backgrounds, and are themselves accepted by wider society.

Since our first survey in 2007, the 'acceptance and rejection' measure has included four items: acceptance of immigrants in Australia, provision of government support to maintain the customs and traditions of ethnic minorities, experience of discrimination, and perceptions of life in Australia in three or four years' time. In last year's and this year's survey, we included new items related to the perceived importance of the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and the wider community, and the importance of Indigenous histories and cultures in school curricula.

Figure 15 shows that the scores on the index of acceptance and rejection were on a downward trajectory until 2017. Encouragingly, scores increased both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although it has come down since 2020, the acceptance and rejection index score in 2022 (74) remains higher than pre-pandemic levels (67 in 2019).

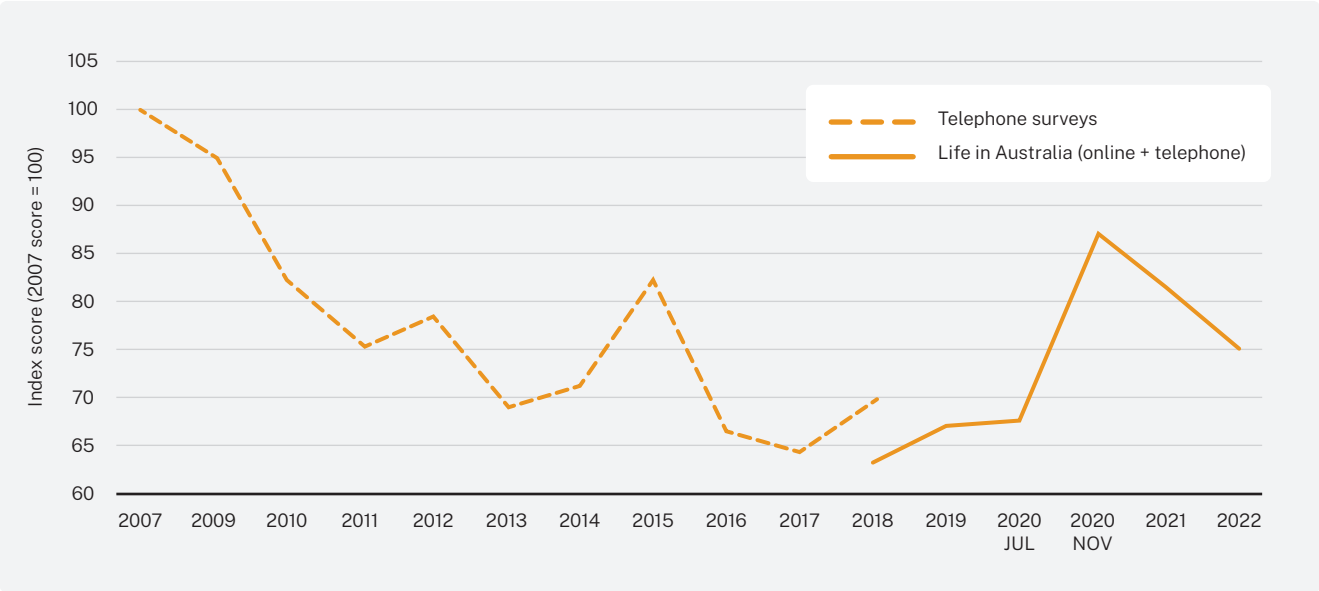
Table 14 presents a summary of individual items in the acceptance and rejection section of our internet surveys from 2018 to 2022.

It shows that a growing number of Australians agree or strongly agree that 'accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger' and that 'ethnic minorities should be given Australian Government assistance to maintain their customs and heritage'. The proportion of people agreeing with the first statement increased from 63 per cent in 2018 to 78 per cent in 2022, while agreement with the second statement increased from 30 to 38 per cent.

About one in six people (16 per cent) in our 2022 survey said they had experienced discrimination on the basis of skin colour, ethnic origin, or religion in the last 12 months. This was similar to the proportion last year and in 2019. Almost one in four people (24 per cent) born overseas, and more than one in three people (35 per cent) who speak a language other than English, reported discrimination on this basis in 2022. See the chapter on 'Discrimination and prejudice' for more information.

The proportion of people in 2022 who believed that life in Australia would be either 'much' or 'a little' improved in three or four years (44 per cent) returned to pre-pandemic levels (43 per cent in 2018 and 45 per cent in 2019). Understandably, the proportion spiked during 2020, with people feeling that the difficulties of life during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic would inevitably recede.

Figure 15 The Scanlon Social Cohesion Index: Acceptance and rejection measure, 2007 to 2018 (telephone surveys) and 2018 to 2022 (online and telephone surveys)



New items in the acceptance and rejection section of our survey reveal near consensus on the importance of the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and the wider community. In 2022,

- 89 per cent of people agree or strongly agree with the statement 'the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the wider Australian community is very important for Australia as a nation' (90 per cent in 2021).
- 87 per cent of people agree or strongly agree with the statement 'it is important for Indigenous histories and cultures to be included in the school curriculum' (88 per cent in 2021).

Levels of acceptance and rejection vary strongly according to age, political alignment, and education

Table 15 shows acceptance and rejection index scores in 2022 for different social, demographic, and economic groups, compared to the national average.

Index scores are relatively high among the 18-24 (+11) and 25-34 (+3.9) age groups, Greens voters (+14), people with postgraduate degrees (+5.4) and Bachelor degrees (+5.5), as well as overseas-born populations who speak a language other than English (+4.6).

Index scores are relatively low among people with education only up to Year 11 (–6.9), Liberal/National Coalition voters (–7.8), and people aged 65 and older (–5.0).

Table 14 Responses to items in the acceptance and rejection section, 2018 to 2022 surveys

		2018	2019	JUL 2020	NOV 2020	2021	2022
		% OF RESPONDENTS					
ACCEPTING IMMIGRANTS	Strongly agree	17	17	19	21	23	24
	Agree	46	50	53	53	53	54
	Total agree	**63**	**67**	**71**	**74**	**76**	**78**
ASSISTANCE TO MINORITIES	Strongly agree	5	4	6	7	8	8
	Agree	25	26	30	28	30	31
	Total agree	**30**	**30**	**36**	**35**	**38**	**38**
EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION	Yes	19	16	18	13	16	16
	Total yes	**19**	**16**	**18**	**13**	**16**	**16**
LIFE IN 3 OR 4 YEARS	Much improved	11	9	12	11	11	9
	A little improved	32	35	36	42	39	35
	Total improved	**43**	**45**	**48**	**53**	**51**	**44**
INDIGENOUS RELATIONSHIP	Strongly agree					46	43
	Agree					44	46
	Total agree					**90**	**89**
INDIGENOUS HISTORIES AND CULTURES	Strongly agree					46	45
	Agree					42	43
	Total agree					**88**	**87**

Table 15 Acceptance and rejection index scores across demographic and socioeconomic groups, difference from national average, 2022 survey

GENDER	Female	Male				
	+2.6	**–2.8**				
AGE	65 +	55-64	45-54	35-44	25-34	18-24
	–5.0	**–3.2**	**–2.7**	+1.1	+3.9	+11
STATE	NSW	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	
	+0.7	+2.1	**–3.2**	–0.4	–1.2	
CAPITAL CITY/ REST OF STATE	Capital city	Rest of State				
	+1.6	**–3.2**				
HIGHEST EDUCATION	Postgraduate degree	Bachelor degree	Certificate/ diploma	Year 12	Up to Year 11	
	+5.4	+5.5	**–2.3**	+2.9	**–6.9**	
FINANCIAL SITUATION	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ poor		
	+1.9	–0.8	+0.6	–1.1		
VOTE AT 2022 ELECTION	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Other		
	+2.1	**–7.8**	+14	**–4.4**		
WHERE BORN & FIRST LANGUAGE	Australian-born	Foreign-born/ English	Foreign-born/ non-English			
	–0.9	–0.5	+4.6			
HOUSEHOLD TYPE	Couple no children	Couple parent	Single parent	Group household	Live alone	
	–1.0	–0.3	+1.3	+7.0	–1.0	
HOUSING TENURE	Own outright	Mortgage	Rent			
	–4.1	**–1.2**	+3.4			
NEIGHBOURHOOD DISADVANTAGE	Quintile 1 (Low disadvantage)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (High disadvantage)	
	+2.0	+0.9	–0.4	**–2.1**	–1.2	

Notes: Neighbourhood disadvantage is measured with the ABS (2018) Socio-economic Indexes For Areas (SEIFA) Index of Relative Socio-economic disadvantage. Index scores are based on respondents' postcode and grouped into five equally sized quintiles. Numbers in red are significantly lower than the national average.

Major issues facing Australia

Every year, the Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion survey seeks to understand the issues that matter most to Australians. The first question we've asked in every survey since 2011 is 'What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?'

It's an open-ended question, giving people the opportunity to cite and describe the most important problem in their own words.

Economic, environmental, housing, and national security issues appear to be of growing importance as we move out of the COVID-19 pandemic. Figure 16 compares the importance of issues in 2022 to July 2018 (pre-pandemic) and July 2020 (during the height of the pandemic). And Figure 17 shows the trajectories of the top five most important issues across the 2011-2022 period.

Economic issues were commonly cited as the most important problems facing Australia in 2022. Economic issues, including those related to unemployment, jobs, poverty, and the deficit were cited by 39 per cent of people in this year's survey as the most important problem. This is the highest proportion citing economic issues since the question was first asked. Economic concerns may reflect economic uncertainty and cost-of-living pressures in 2022, as well as increased personal and household financial strain (see the chapters on Cost of living and Social cohesion for more information).

Aside from economic issues, the environment, climate change, and water (cited by 17 per cent), the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery (9 per cent), and housing shortages, affordability, and interest rates (6 per cent) were commonly cited as the most important problems facing Australia.

People were much less likely to cite the COVID-19 pandemic as the most important problem facing Australia in 2022 than in 2021 or 2020. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic was the most important problem for a substantial majority of people (63 per cent). In 2022, the proportion citing the COVID-19 pandemic dropped to 9 per cent.

Figure 16 The most important problem facing Australia, 2018, 2020, and 2022 surveys

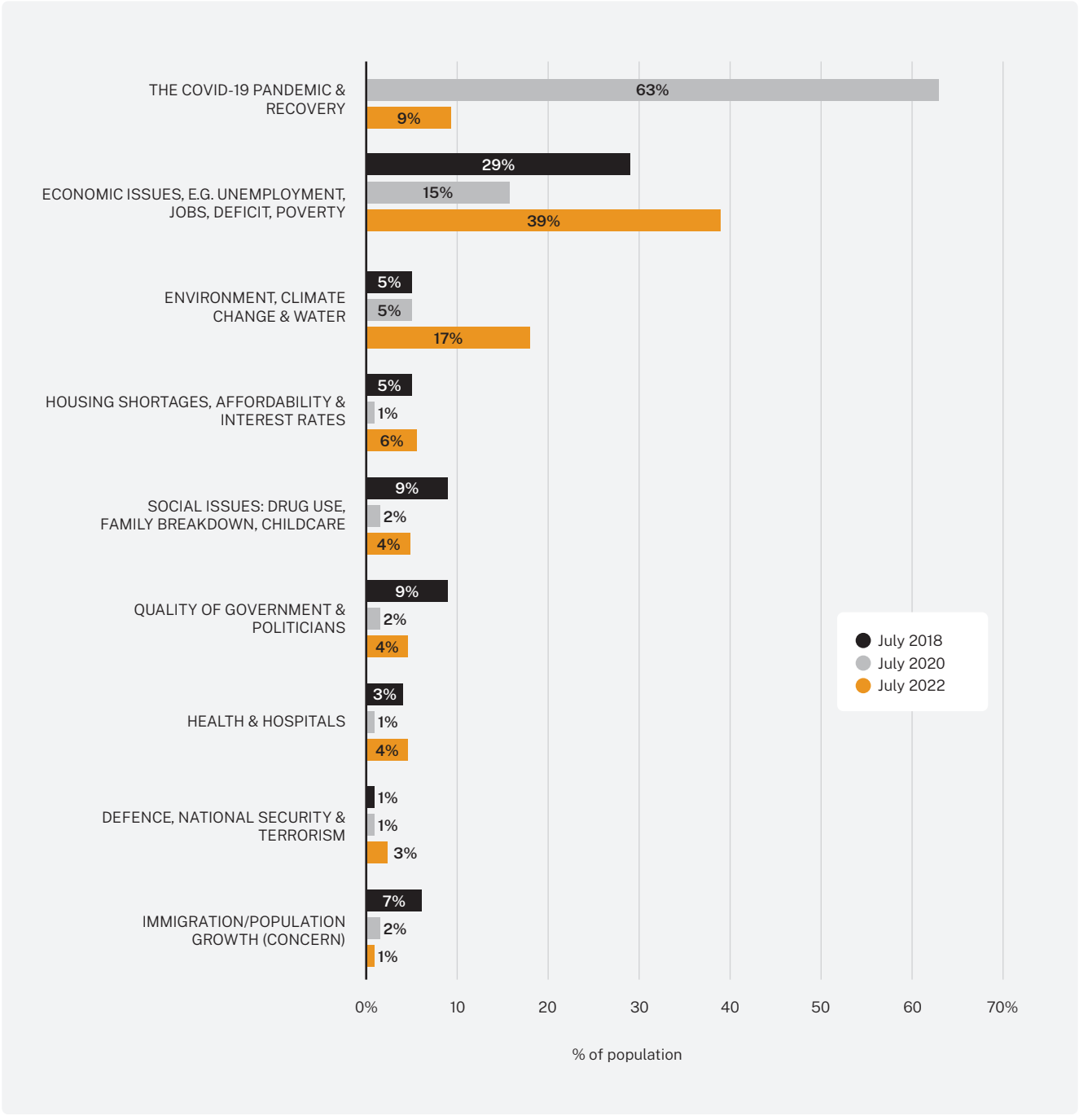
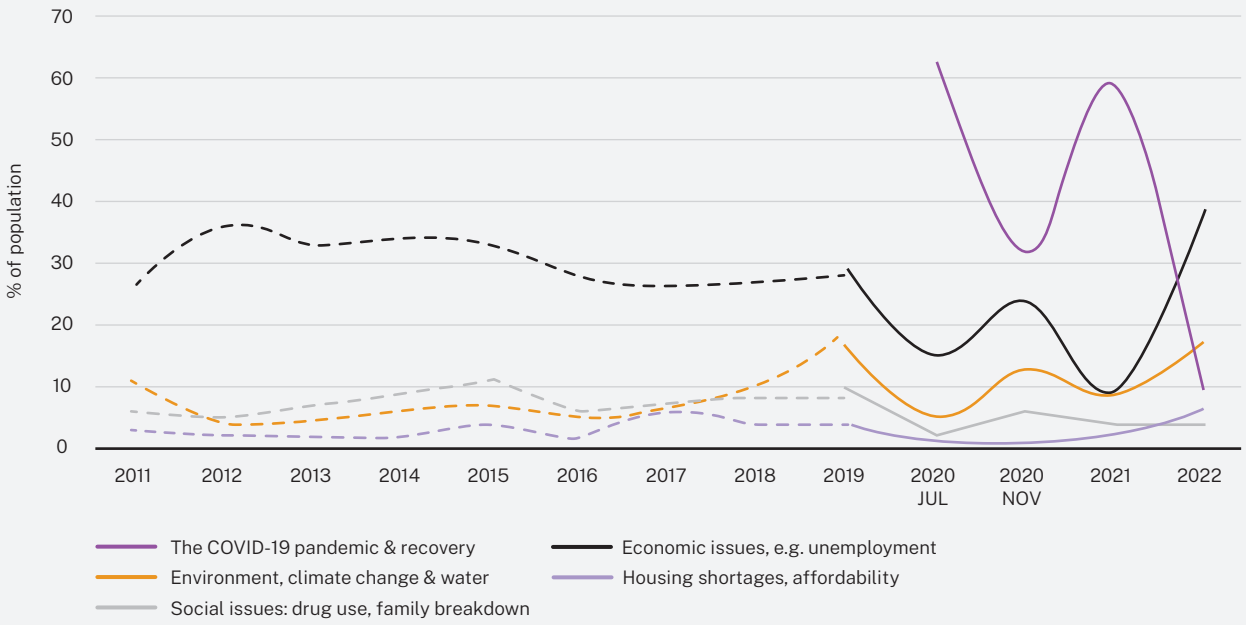


Figure 17 The top five most important problems facing Australia, 2011 to 2018 (telephone surveys) and 2018 to 2022 (online and telephone)



Major geopolitical issues

Australians are concerned by a number of global geopolitical issues. In our 2022 survey, we asked people how concerned they were about climate change, Australia-China relations, the global economy, COVID-19 and other pandemics, and military conflict. The results are shown in Figure 18.

Most Australians are quite or very concerned about all five issues. People are most likely to be very concerned about climate change (41 per cent), while large proportions are at least quite concerned about a severe downturn in the global economy (75 per cent) and in Australia-China relations (74 per cent). More than half of the people we surveyed are quite or very concerned about COVID-19 and other potential pandemics (62 per cent) and a military conflict involving Australia (54 per cent).

Support for globalisation remains high in 2022. Since 2018, we have asked people whether 'growing economic ties between Australia and other countries, sometimes referred to as globalisation' has been good or bad for Australia. Almost three-quarters (73 per cent) of people in 2022 believe globalisation has been very good (14 per cent) or fairly good (59 per cent), significantly higher than in 2019 (68 per cent) and July 2020 (65 per cent) but in line with 2021 (76 per cent) and 2018 (73 per cent). Interestingly, this continued support for globalisation comes despite the pressures that the COVID-19 pandemic has placed on global supply chains.

Australians continue to believe that China will become the most influential country in our region. More than three-quarters (77 per cent) of people in our 2022 survey nominated China when asked 'Which country do you think will have the most influence in the Pacific region?'. Interestingly, this is a significant decline from 2019 when 85 per cent of people nominated China, though is still substantial considering that only 12 per cent of people nominated the USA in 2022 (10 per cent in 2019). People who think China will become the most influential country in the region are significantly more likely to be very concerned about Australia-China relations than people who do not think China will be the most influential country (30 per cent versus 25 per cent).

Most Australians support the proposed Indigenous Voice to Parliament

In our 2022 survey, we asked people for their views on the proposed Indigenous Voice to Parliament based on the Uluru Statement from the Heart. In response to the question, 'Australia should amend its constitution to establish a representative Indigenous body, or 'Voice', to advise Parliament on laws and policies affecting Indigenous people':

- 59 per cent of people agreed (28 per cent) or strongly agreed (31 per cent);
- 22 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed; and
- 19 per cent disagreed (9 per cent) or strongly disagreed (9 per cent).

A majority in all state and territories support the Voice to Parliament. For example, in NSW 62 per cent agreed or strongly agreed, in Victoria 63 per cent, Queensland 51 per cent, South Australia 57 per cent, and Western Australia 59 per cent.

As shown in Table 16, females (66 per cent), people aged 18-24 (75 per cent), Labor voters (70 per cent) and Greens voters (86 per cent) had the strongest levels of support for the Voice to Parliament.

Figure 18 Level of concern about five global geopolitical issues affecting Australia, 2022 survey

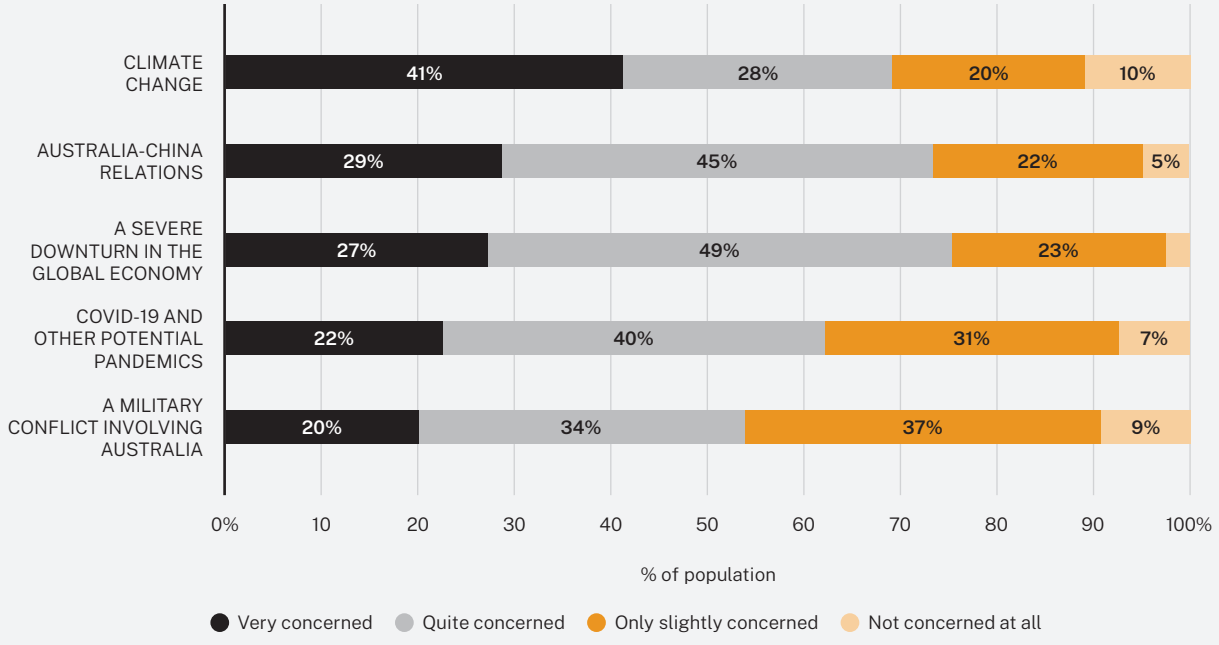


Table 16 'Australia should amend its constitution to establish a representative Indigenous body, or 'Voice',' proportion who strongly agree/agree, 2022 survey

GENDER	Female	Male				
	66	**52**				
AGE	65+	55-64	45-54	35-44	25-34	18-24
	51	54	57	59	65	75
STATE	NSW	Victoria	QLD	SA	WA	
	62	63	**51**	57	59	
CAPITAL CITY/ REST OF STATE	Capital city	Rest of State				
	61	55				
HIGHEST EDUCATION	Postgraduate degree	Bachelor degree	Certificate/ diploma	Year 12	Up to Year 11	
	64	67	**56**	64	**49**	
FINANCIAL SITUATION	Prosperous / very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/poor		
	58	56	64	61		
VOTE AT 2022 ELECTION	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Other		
	70	**40**	86	**45**		
WHERE BORN & FIRST LANGUAGE	Australian-born	Foreign-born/ English	Foreign-born/ other language			
	59	59	**57**			
HOUSEHOLD TYPE	Couple no children	Couple parent family	Single parent family	Group household	Live alone	
	56	59	66	70	59	
HOUSING TENURE	Own outright	Mortgage	Rent			
	51	58	65			
NEIGHBOURHOOD DISADVANTAGE	Quintile 1 (Low disadvantage)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (High disadvantage)	
	63	60	57	**55**	59	

Notes: Numbers in red are significantly lower than the corresponding values in the first column (e.g. the proportion for males in 2022 is in red if it is significantly lower than the proportion for females in 2022), after controlling for all demographic and socioeconomic characteristics in the table.

Major issues and social cohesion

An important consideration is the extent to which attitudes to major issues relate to social cohesion. Polarised views on these challenges, and the public and political debates surrounding them, has the potential to strain emotional, psychological, and behavioural ties across Australian society.

Table 17 shows average social cohesion index scores by degree of concern for major issues.

It shows that Australians who are quite concerned or very concerned about climate change have a significantly lower sense of belonging in Australia and/or their neighbourhoods, and a lower sense of social inclusion and justice than people who are at most only slightly concerned about climate change. On the other hand, people who are concerned about climate change are substantially more accepting of difference and diversity in Australia.

- People who are very or quite concerned about climate change have an average acceptance score 4 points higher than the national average and 13 points higher than people who are slightly concerned or not concerned at all about climate change.

People who support the Voice to Parliament have a much higher acceptance of differences and diversity in Australia (8 points higher than the national average) than people who are opposed to the Voice (16 points lower than national average).

People who are most accepting of diversity and other cultures in Australia are less concerned with geopolitical tension and conflict and much more concerned with climate change and global pandemics.

- People with relatively high scores on the acceptance and rejection measure are significantly less likely to be at least quite concerned by the prospect of military conflict involving Australia than people with lower acceptance levels, and more concerned by COVID-19 and other potential pandemics than people with lower acceptance levels.

People with a lower sense of worth have a relatively high degree of concern for all issues.

- People with lower scores on the sense of worth index are significantly more concerned about a global economic downturn, COVID-19 and other pandemics, and the prospect of military conflict involving Australia.

Photo by Nikolas Gannon on Unsplash

Table 17 Average social cohesion index scores by concern for major issues, 2022 survey

	BELONGING	WORTH	SOCIAL INCLUSION AND JUSTICE	PARTICIPATION	ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION
CLIMATE CHANGE					
Very/quite concerned	**–0.6**	–0.5	**–0.5**	+0.5	+3.9
Not/slightly concerned	+1.4	+1.1	+1.1	–1.1	**–8.9**
AUSTRALIA-CHINA RELATIONS					
Very/quite concerned	0	–0.4	0	+0.3	–0.4
Not/slightly concerned	0	+1.1	–0.1	–0.7	+0.9
SEVERE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN					
Very/quite concerned	–0.4	**–0.8**	**–0.6**	+0.2	+0.2
Not/slightly concerned	+1.3	+2.6	+1.8	–0.5	–0.7
COVID-19 & OTHER PANDEMICS					
Very/quite concerned	**–0.7**	**–1.2**	–0.2	–0.1	+2.1
Not/slightly concerned	+1.2	+1.9	+0.4	+0.2	**–3.6**
MILITARY CONFLICT INVOLVING AUSTRALIA					
Very/quite concerned	**–0.6**	**–1.3**	**–1.1**	+0.2	**–1.0**
Not/slightly concerned	+0.8	+1.6	+1.3	–0.2	+1.1
INDIGENOUS VOICE TO PARLIAMENT					
(Strongly) Agree	+0.2	+0.1	**–0.7**	+1.8	+7.7
Neither	–0.2	–0.2	+1.1	**–3.7**	**–7.2**
(Strongly) Disagree	–0.2	–0.2	+0.7	–0.8	**–16**

Notes: Numbers in red are significantly lower than the national average. Index scores are calculated after controlling for the respondent's gender, age, state, capital city or outside capital city, education, migrant status and first language, household type, housing tenure, and the level of socioeconomic disadvantage in their neighbourhood.

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Trust in government

Trust in the Federal Government and the system of government in Australia increased sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although levels have since declined, trust in government remains at or above pre-pandemic levels.

Table 18 gives a summary of people's responses to our survey questions related to trust in the government and the political system. It shows:

- Belief that 'the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people' all or most of the time declined from a peak of 56 per cent in November 2020 to 44 per cent in 2021 and 41 per cent in 2022. However, it remains significantly higher than pre-pandemic levels. As shown in Figure 19, trust is substantially and significantly higher in 2022 than it was over the period 2010 to 2018, when a consistent average of 29 per cent was recorded.
- The proportion of people who believe 'the system of government we have in Australia works fine as is' or needs only minor change declined from a peak of 71 per cent in November 2020 to 60 per cent in 2021 and 63 per cent in 2022. This is in line with levels recorded in 2019 (62 per cent) and a little above levels recorded in the mid-2010s (see Figure 20).

Of considerable concern, there are widely held doubts about the integrity of politicians and the electoral system.

- Only 2 per cent of people in 2022 believe that government leaders abuse their power none of the time. Almost one in five (19 per cent) believe it happens a little of the time, 54 per cent think it happens some of the time, and 24 per cent think government leaders abuse their power most or all of the time.
- Only one in six people (18 per cent) in 2022 believe that elections in Australia are fair all the time. Almost half (47 per cent) believe elections are fair most of the time, while one in three (34 per cent) believe elections are fair some of the time.

Support among Australians for an authoritarian style of government has declined. In 2022, 80 per cent thought that 'having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections' would be very bad (51 per cent) or fairly bad (29 per cent). This is significantly higher than pre-pandemic levels (66 per cent in 2014, 73 per cent in 2018, and 76 per cent in 2019) and marginally higher than in 2020 (78 per cent) and 2021 (78 per cent).

Table 18 Attitudes to government and the political system, 2018 to 2022

		2018	2019	JUL 2020	NOV 2020	2021	2022
		% OF RESPONDENTS					
TRUST FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	Almost always	2	3	5	6	4	2
	Most of the time	26	33	49	49	40	39
	Total always/most	**28**	**36**	**54**	**56**	**44**	**41**
SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT	Works fine as it is	12	16	17	21	13	14
	Needs minor change	44	46	52	51	47	48
	Total minor/no change	**57**	**62**	**69**	**71**	**60**	**63**
STRONG LEADER & NO ELECTIONS/ PARLIAMENT	Very bad	43	43	47	49	48	51
	Fairly bad	30	33	30	28	30	29
	Total very/fairly bad	**73**	**76**	**78**	**78**	**78**	**80**
LEADERS ABUSE POWER	None of the time					2	2
	A little of the time					21	19
	Total little/none					**23**	**21**
ELECTIONS ARE FAIR	All of the time					15	18
	Most of the time					49	47
	Total all/most					**63**	**65**

Figure 19 'How often do you think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people?', 2007 to 2018 (telephone surveys) and 2018 to 2022 (online and telephone)

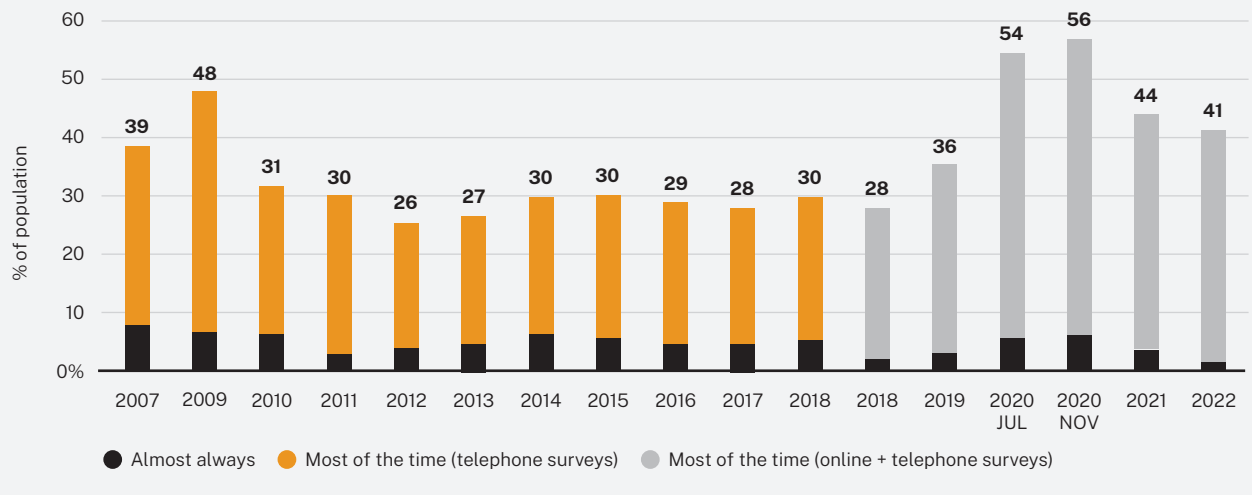
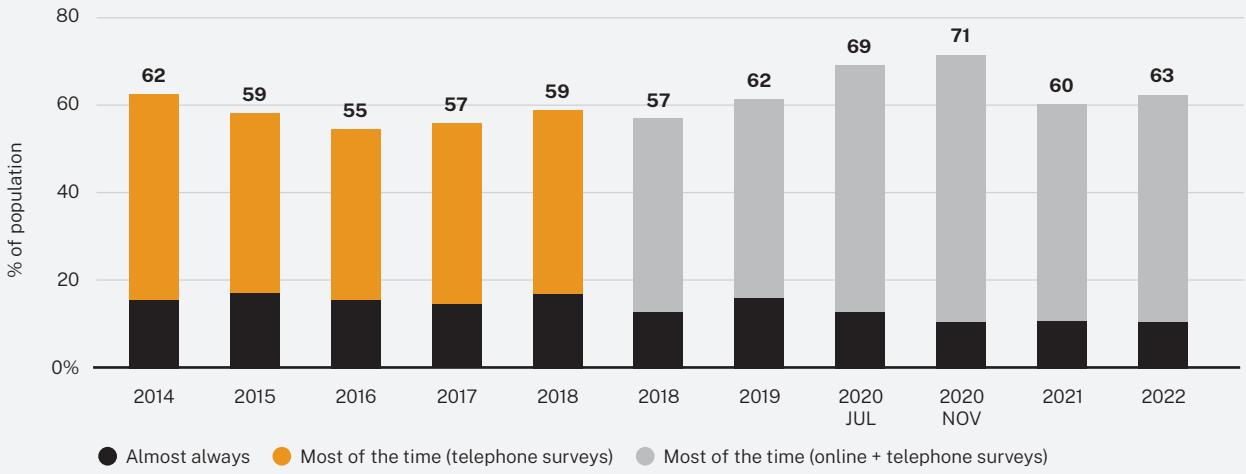


Figure 20 'Would you say the system of government we have in Australia works fine as is?', 2007 to 2018 (telephone surveys) and 2018 to 2022 (online and telephone)



Most Australians think their governments are handling the COVID-19 pandemic well

Since our July 2020 survey, we have asked Australians how they think the Federal Government and their state governments are handling the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2022, in response to the question, 'In your opinion, how well is the Federal Government responding to the COVID-19 pandemic?', 8 per cent of people said very well and 60 per cent said fairly well.

As shown in Figure 21, the proportion of people who believe the Federal Government has performed very well has declined from 28 per cent in July 2020 and 30 per cent in November 2020, to 9 per cent in 2021 and 8 per cent in 2022. The proportion who say the Federal Government is performing very badly increased sharply between November 2020 (4 per cent) and July 2021 (21 per cent) but then declined to 8 per cent in 2022.

In 2022, in response to the question, 'In your opinion, how well is your state government responding to the COVID-19 pandemic?', 15 per cent of people said very well and 54 per cent said fairly well. The proportion who said very well is significantly lower than it was in July 2020 (38 per cent) and November 2022 (49 per cent).

Figure 22 shows the proportion of people who think their state government is handling the pandemic very or fairly well, (for the states in which we obtained a large enough sample size to calculate accurate estimates).

Belief that state governments were handling the crisis very or quite well was remarkably high across all states in 2020. While that view has become less common since then, our 2022 survey shows substantial majorities in all states still believe their state government is handling the crisis at least fairly well, ranging from 63 per cent in Victoria to 81 per cent in Western Australia.

People's support for their state government during the pandemic continues to extend beyond party political lines. In our 2022 survey, two-thirds of people (67 per cent) in NSW and Tasmania who voted for Labor at the 2022 Federal Election believed their Liberal/National state governments were handling the pandemic very or quite well, while a nearly identical proportion (66 per cent) of Liberal/National voters in the other states believed their Labor state governments were handling the pandemic at least quite well.

Figure 21 'In your opinion, how well is the Federal Government responding to the COVID-19 pandemic?' 2020 to 2022 surveys

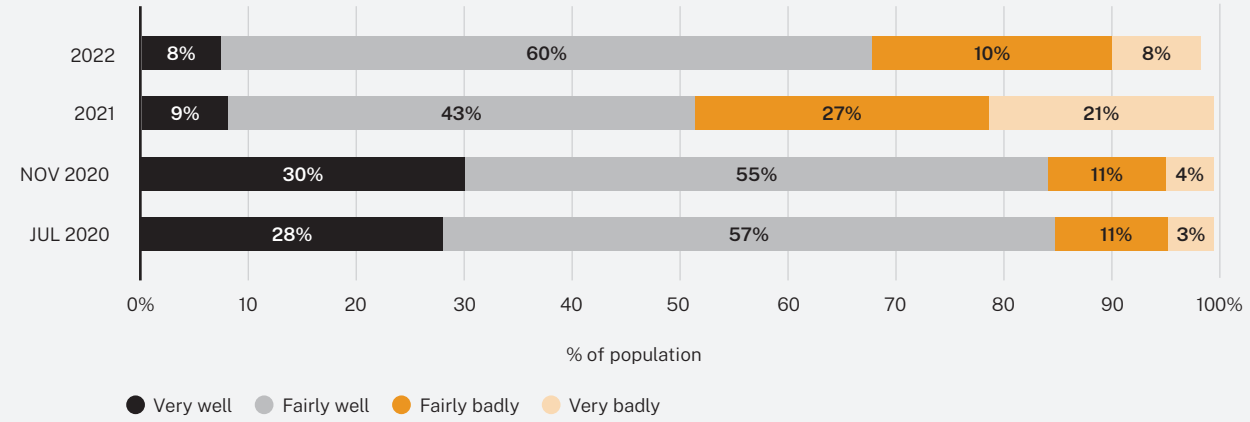
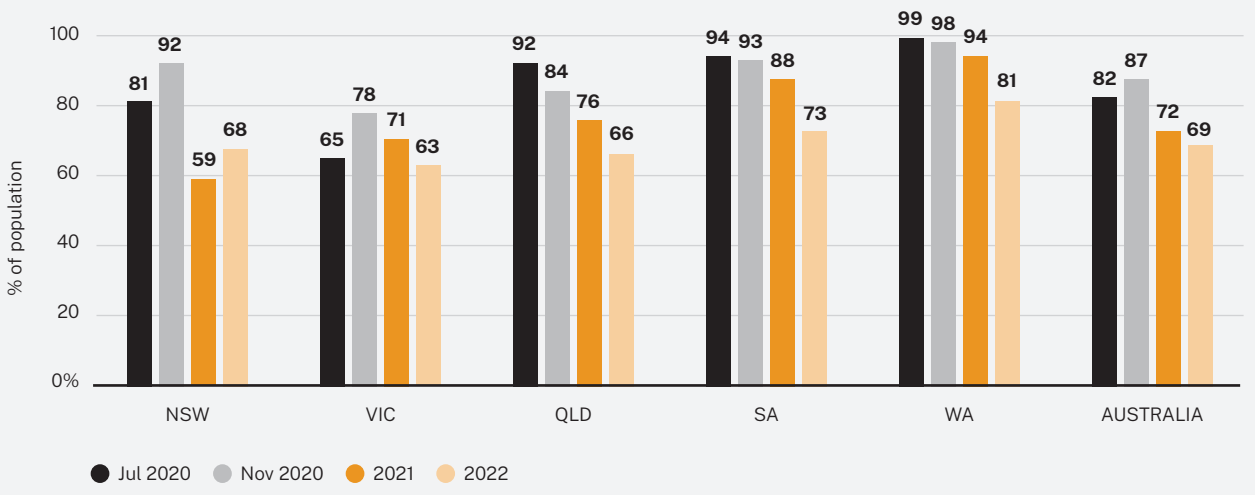


Figure 22 'In your opinion, how well is your state government responding to the COVID-19 pandemic?' Proportion who say very well or quite well, 2020 to 2022 surveys



Trust in people

Since our first survey in 2007, we have asked Australians: 'Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?'

In 2022, 49 per cent of Australians believe that most people can be trusted. This is a statistically significant decline from the peak in November 2020 (52 per cent), but in line with July 2020 (49 per cent) and significantly higher than 2018 (42 per cent) and 2019 (43 per cent).

Figure 23 shows the trend in trust since 2007. Our move in 2018 from telephone surveys to mainly online surveys led to a downward shift in measured trust.

Table 19 shows the proportion of people from different demographic and socioeconomic groups who trust others.

In 2022, 42 per cent of 18-24 year olds and 46 per cent of 25-34 year olds believe that most people can be trusted, significantly below the 54 per cent of people aged 65 and older. But in 2018 and 2019 – that is, before the pandemic – older people were no more likely than younger people to trust others.

An important question for further research is whether a divergence in trust across generations is a lasting legacy of the pandemic.

- In 2022, 28 per cent of people who say they are poor or struggling to pay their bills trust other people. That figure is 40 per cent among people who say they are 'just getting along', and 68 per cent among people who are living prosperously or very comfortably.
- People with education only up to Year 11 are significantly less likely to trust others than those with a postgraduate degree.

Figure 23 'Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?' Proportion who say people can be trusted, 2007 to 2018 (telephone surveys) and 2018 to 2022 (online and telephone)

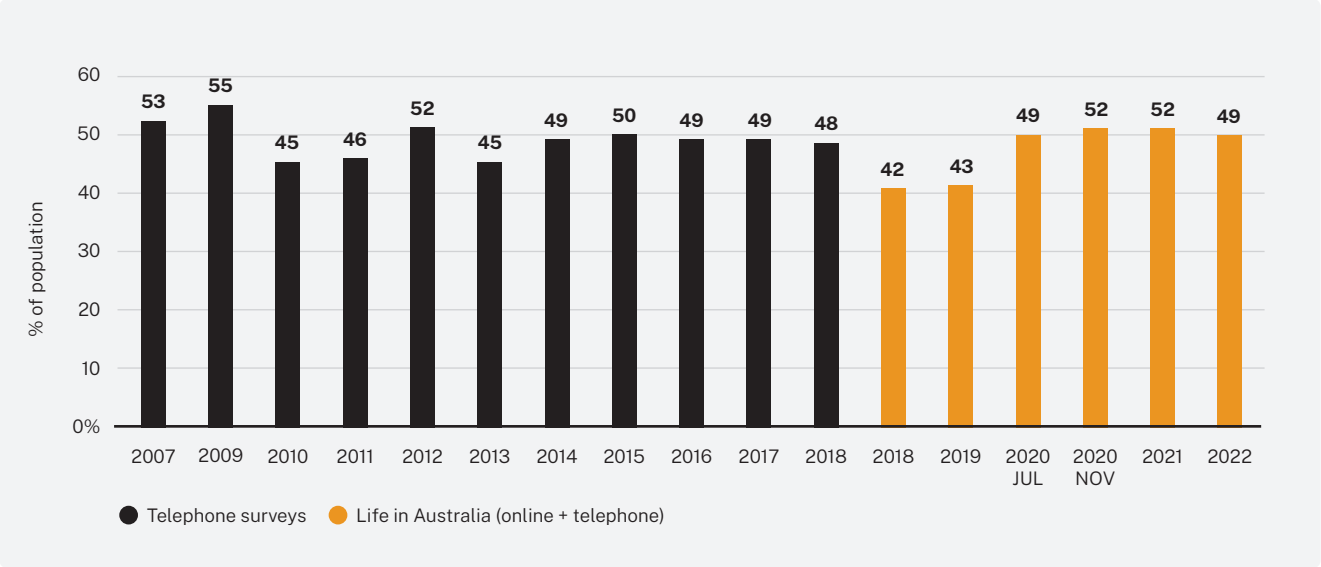


Table 19 'Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?' Proportion who say people can be trusted – July 2018, 2020, and 2022 surveys

GENDER	Female	Male				
	41, 46, 47	44, 52, 52				
AGE	65 +	55-64	45-54	35-44	25-34	18-24
	44, 54, 54	**37**, 48, **50**	43, 52, 50	**40**, 52, **50**	46, **44, 46**	43, **45, 42**
STATE	NSW	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	
	46, 50, 52	42, 52, **48**	40, 45, 46	46, 49, 47	36, 49, 52	
CAPITAL CITY/ REST OF STATE	Capital city	Rest of State				
	44, 50, 50	38, 48, 47				
HIGHEST EDUCATION	Postgraduate degree	Bachelor degree	Certificate/ diploma	Year 12	Up to Year 11	
	60, 63, 61	56, 55, 58	**35, 48, 48**	48, 50, 49	**28, 36, 38**	
FINANCIAL SITUATION	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ poor		
	54, 61, 68	45, 55, **53**	40, **38, 40**	**30, 29, 28**		
VOTE AT 2022 ELECTION	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Other		
	39, 49, 50	41, 51, 50	64, 68, 55	31, **39**, 47		
WHERE BORN & FIRST LANGUAGE	Australian-born	Foreign-born/ English	Foreign-born/ non-English			
	40, 48, 49	44, 51, 47	51, 53, 52			
HOUSEHOLD TYPE	Couple no children	Couple parent	Single parent	Group household	Live alone	
	NA, NA, 56	NA, NA, 51	NA, NA, **35**	NA, NA, 46	NA, NA, 47	
HOUSING TENURE	Own outright	Mortgage	Rent			
	NA, NA, 54	NA, NA, 54	NA, NA, 43			
NEIGHBOURHOOD DISADVANTAGE	Quintile 1 (Low disadvantage)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (High disadvantage)	
	48, 55, 55	42, 57, 50	42, 44, 48	37, 45, 49	41, 44, 42	

Note: Numbers in red are significantly lower than the corresponding values in the first column (e.g. the proportion for males in 2022 is in red if it is significantly lower than the proportion for females in 2022), after controlling for all demographic and socioeconomic characteristics in the table.

Immigration and multiculturalism

Our survey asks several questions to gauge Australians' attitudes to immigration and multiculturalism. The responses to these questions and the attitudes expressed are critical because they reflect the reality of social cohesion in Australia, a nation with high and widespread ethnic and cultural diversity.

Support for immigration and multiculturalism is high and growing

Australians have a high and growing level of support for ethnic diversity and multiculturalism. Table 20 shows that on four indicators, the degree of support for immigration and multiculturalism has increased significantly over time.

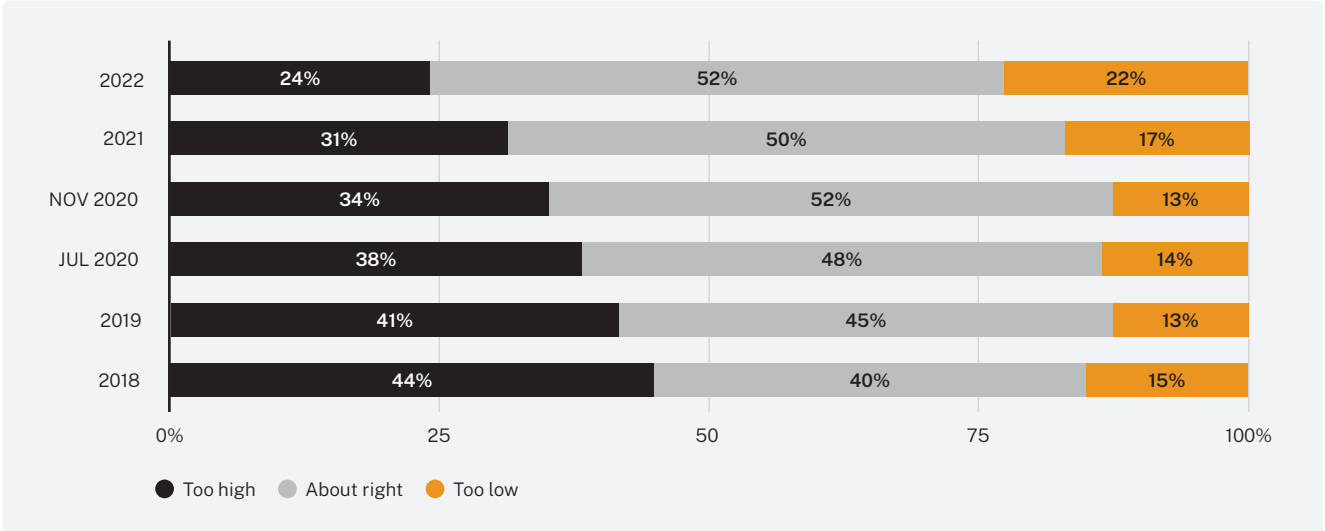
- The proportion of people who agree or strongly agree that 'accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger' increased significantly from 63 per cent in 2018 to 78 per cent in 2022.
- The proportion of people who agree or strongly agree that 'multiculturalism has been good for Australia' increased significantly from 77 per cent in 2018 to 88 per cent in 2022.
- The proportion of people who agree or strongly agree that 'immigrants improve Australian society by bringing new ideas and cultures' increased significantly from 76 per cent in 2018 to 86 per cent in 2022.
- The proportion of people who agree or strongly agree that 'immigrants are good for Australia's economy' increased significantly from 74 per cent in 2018 to 87 per cent in 2022.

Figure 24 shows that in 2018, 44 per cent of people said that 'the number of immigrants accepted into Australia at present' was 'too high'. This proportion declined to 38 per cent in July 2020, 31 per cent in 2021, and 24 per cent in 2022. Net overseas migration to Australia collapsed from 252,200 in 2018 to just 3,300 in 2020 as a result of COVID-19 border closures (ABS, 2022), and this likely explains why a declining proportion of Australians believe the immigrant intake is too high.

Table 20 Attitudes to immigration, ethnic diversity, and multiculturalism, 2018 to 2022 surveys

		2018	2019	JUL 2020	NOV 2020	2021	2022
		% OF RESPONDENTS					
IMMIGRANTS MAKE AUSTRALIA STRONGER	Strongly agree	17	17	19	21	23	24
	Agree	46	50	53	53	53	54
	Total agree	**63**	**67**	**71**	**74**	**76**	**78**
MULTICULTURALISM GOOD FOR AUSTRALIA	Strongly agree	25	25	26	27	29	30
	Agree	51	55	58	57	57	58
	Total agree	**77**	**80**	**84**	**84**	**86**	**88**
IMMIGRANTS BRING NEW IDEAS/CULTURE	Strongly agree	17	17	22	22	23	23
	Agree	59	61	60	61	62	63
	Total agree	**76**	**78**	**82**	**83**	**84**	**86**
IMMIGRANTS GOOD FOR ECONOMY	Strongly agree	14	17	18	22	22	25
	Agree	60	60	63	61	63	62
	Total agree	**74**	**76**	**81**	**83**	**86**	**87**

Figure 24 'What do you think of the number of immigrants accepted into Australia at present?' 2018 to 2022 surveys



Growing numbers of Australians think immigrants are integrating well

Our surveys show there is growing agreement that immigrants are integrating well into Australian society. Table 21 shows that on three indicators, immigrants are increasingly perceived to integrate well into Australian society and are less likely to be seen as a threat.

- The proportion of people who agree or strongly agree that 'someone who was born outside of Australia is just as likely to be a good citizen as someone born in Australia' is very high and growing, increasing significantly from 90 per cent in July 2020 to 94 per cent in July 2022. The proportion who strongly agree with this statement increased significantly from 40 per cent to 47 per cent over the same period.
- The proportion of people who disagree or strongly disagree that 'immigrants take jobs away' increased significantly from 64 per cent in 2018 to 78 per cent in 2022.
- The proportion of people who disagree or strongly disagree that 'too many immigrants are not adopting Australian values' increased significantly from 31 per cent in 2019 to 46 per cent in 2022.

Intercultural relations

Successful immigrant integration and multiculturalism requires not only in principle acceptance of immigrants, but active steps to establish and maintain positive and harmonious relations between ethnic and cultural groups (Berry, 2005). Table 22 shows levels of support for two aspects of active intercultural relations.

- The proportion of people who agree or strongly agree that 'ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian Government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions' has gradually increased from 30 per cent in 2018 to 38 per cent in 2022. The proportion who strongly disagree with the statement declined from 30 per cent to 17 per cent over the same period.
- The proportion of people who agree or strongly agree with the statement 'we should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups in the country' increased from 59 per cent in 2018 to 69 per cent in 2022.

A powerful indicator of active intercultural relations is the number of friendships people have with people from different backgrounds. In our 2022 survey, 81 per cent of people said they have two or more people in their 'close circle of friends' who come from 'national, ethnic, or religious backgrounds' different to their own, while 40 per cent said they have five or more such friends.

Table 21 Attitudes to immigrant integration, 2018 to 2022 surveys

		2018	2019	JUL 2020	NOV 2020	2021	2022
				% OF RESPONDENTS			
IMMIGRANTS GOOD CITIZENS	Strongly agree			40	43	43	47
	Agree			50	49	49	47
	Total agree			**90**	**91**	**92**	**94**
IMMIGRANTS TAKE JOBS	Strongly disagree	12	14	15	16	17	20
	Disagree	52	51	55	55	58	58
	Total disagree	**64**	**64**	**70**	**71**	**75**	**78**
IMMIGRANTS NOT ADOPTING VALUES	Strongly disagree		5	6	7	7	8
	Disagree		26	32	32	34	38
	Total disagree		**31**	**39**	**38**	**41**	**46**

Table 22 Active intercultural relations, 2018 to 2022 surveys

		2018	2019	JUL 2020	NOV 2020	2021	2022
		% OF RESPONDENTS					
ASSISTANCE TO MINORITIES	Strongly agree	5	4	6	7	8	8
	Agree	25	26	30	28	30	31
	Total agree	**30**	**30**	**36**	**35**	**38**	**38**
LEARN ABOUT CULTURES AND HERITAGE	Strongly agree	14					19
	Agree	45					50
	Total agree	**59**					**69**

Younger and higher-educated Australians are more likely to support diversity

Table 23 shows levels of agreement among different demographic and socioeconomic groups with the statement 'accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger'.

The proportion of people who agree or strongly agree that diversity makes Australia stronger is highest among young adults (86 per cent for 18-24 year olds), people with a Bachelor degree (89 per cent), people who are financially prosperous or very comfortable (86 per cent), Greens voters (92 per cent), and foreign-born populations who speak a language other than English (89 per cent).

Older and lower-educated people along with those who say they are financially struggling, are less likely to agree. However, agreement has increased over time among all groups and particularly among people aged 65 and older.

Table 23 'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger', proportion of population who agree/ strongly agree, 2018, 2020, and 2022 surveys

GENDER	Female	Male				
	62, 70, 78	64, 72, 77				
AGE	65 +	55-64	45-54	35-44	25-34	18-24
	46, 62, 74	57, 66, 75	64, 68, 73	60, 75, 79	79, 79, 81	75, 84, 86
STATE	NSW	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	
	64, 71, 80	66, 73, 79	57, 65, 73	59, 70, 75	60, 76, 78	
CAPITAL CITY/ REST OF STATE	Capital city	Rest of State				
	67, 75, 80	55, 65, 72				
HIGHEST EDUCATION	Postgraduate degree	Bachelor degree	Certificate/ diploma	Year 12	Up to Year 11	
	80, 82, 87	77, 86, 89	**61, 67, 74**	71, 80, 81	**38, 53, 64**	
FINANCIAL SITUATION	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ poor		
	72, 80, 86	64, **73, 79**	64, **67, 76**	**51, 60, 62**		
VOTE AT 2022 ELECTION	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Other		
	67, 80, 82	**57, 65, 71**	91, 92, 92	**36, 49, 70**		
WHERE BORN & FIRST LANGUAGE	Australian-born	Foreign-born/ English	Foreign-born/ non-English			
	58, 69, 75	67, 72, 77	77, 83, 89			
HOUSEHOLD TYPE	Live alone	Couple no children	Couple parent	Single parent	Group household	
	NA, NA, 77	NA, NA, 78	NA, NA, 77	NA, NA, 75	NA, NA, 86	
HOUSING TENURE	Own outright	Mortgage	Rent			
	NA, NA, 74	NA, NA, 79	NA, NA, 79			
NEIGHBOURHOOD DISADVANTAGE	Quintile 1 (Low disadvantage)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (High disadvantage)	
	72, 79, 84	62, 72, 79	64, 72, **75**	59, 70, 75	55, **63, 73**	

Note: Numbers in red are significantly lower than the corresponding values in the first column (e.g. the proportion for males in 2022 is in red if it is significantly lower than the proportion for females in 2022), after controlling for all demographic and socioeconomic characteristics in the table.


see - saw - seen
go - went - gone
be - was/were - been
buy - bought - bought

Discrimination and prejudice

Discrimination against and prejudice towards groups from different backgrounds remains a persistent problem in Australia, despite high levels of support for immigrant diversity and multiculturalism.

Our survey tracks the extent to which people **a)** experience discrimination based on skin colour, ethnic origin, or religion, **b)** hold prejudiced attitudes towards specific immigrant and religious groups, and **c)** perceive racism to be a problem in Australia. While there are some positive signs on these indicators, discrimination remains a common experience in 2022, particularly for people from non-English speaking backgrounds. Prejudiced attitudes towards particular groups in society are widely held and general concern about racism in Australian society is common.

Many Australians have experienced discrimination

In every year back to our first survey in 2007, we have asked Australians whether they have 'experienced discrimination because of your skin colour, ethnic origin, or religion over the last 12 months'. In 2022, 16 per cent of people reported experiencing discrimination on this basis, similar to the proportion recorded in 2021.

As shown in Figure 25, reported discrimination increased from 9 per cent in 2007 to 20 per cent in 2016 and 2017 and 19 per cent in 2018. Reported discrimination has shown some indication of a downward trend since 2018, although in 2022 it still remains more common than in the period before 2013.

More than one in three people (35 per cent) who speak a language other than English reported discrimination in 2022. Within this group, young adults experience high rates of discrimination, with almost half of 18-24 year olds reporting discrimination in 2022 (48 per cent) and 2021 (47 per cent).

Minority groups from lower socioeconomic groups are particularly vulnerable to discrimination. Figures 26 and 27 show experience of discrimination on the basis of skin colour, ethnic origin, or religion, by age group and financial situation for people who speak a language other than English.

Figure 25 Reported experience of discrimination based on skin colour, ethnic origin, or religion in the prior 12 months, 2007 to 2018 (telephone surveys) and 2018 to 2022 (online and telephone)

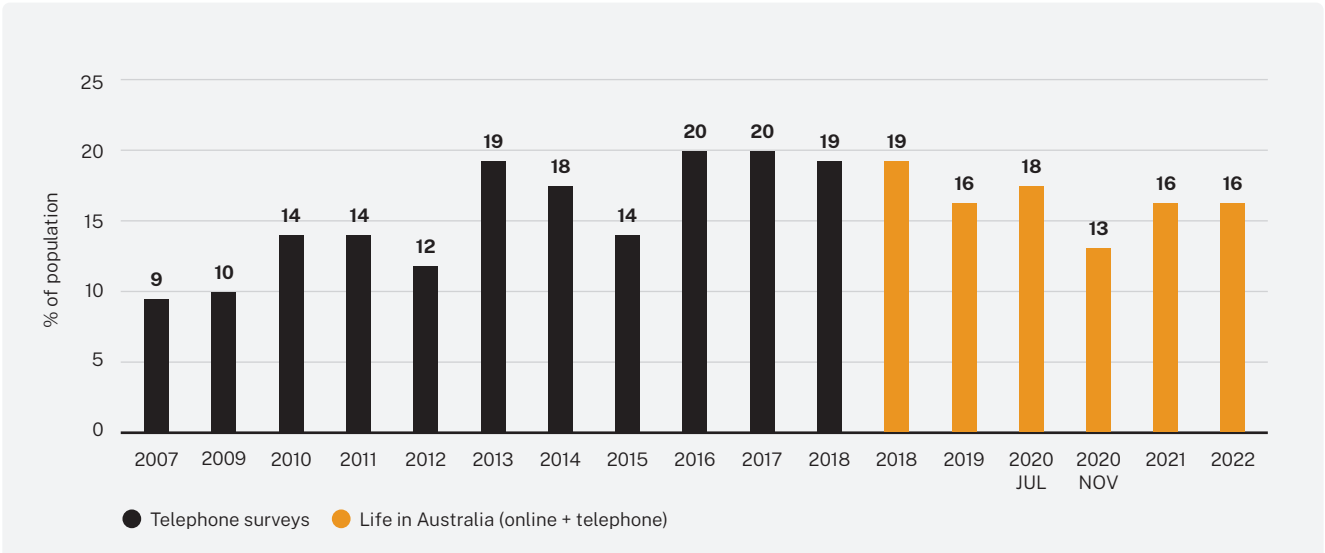


Figure 26 Experience of discrimination based on skin colour, ethnic origin, or religion in the prior 12 months by age group, non-English speaking populations

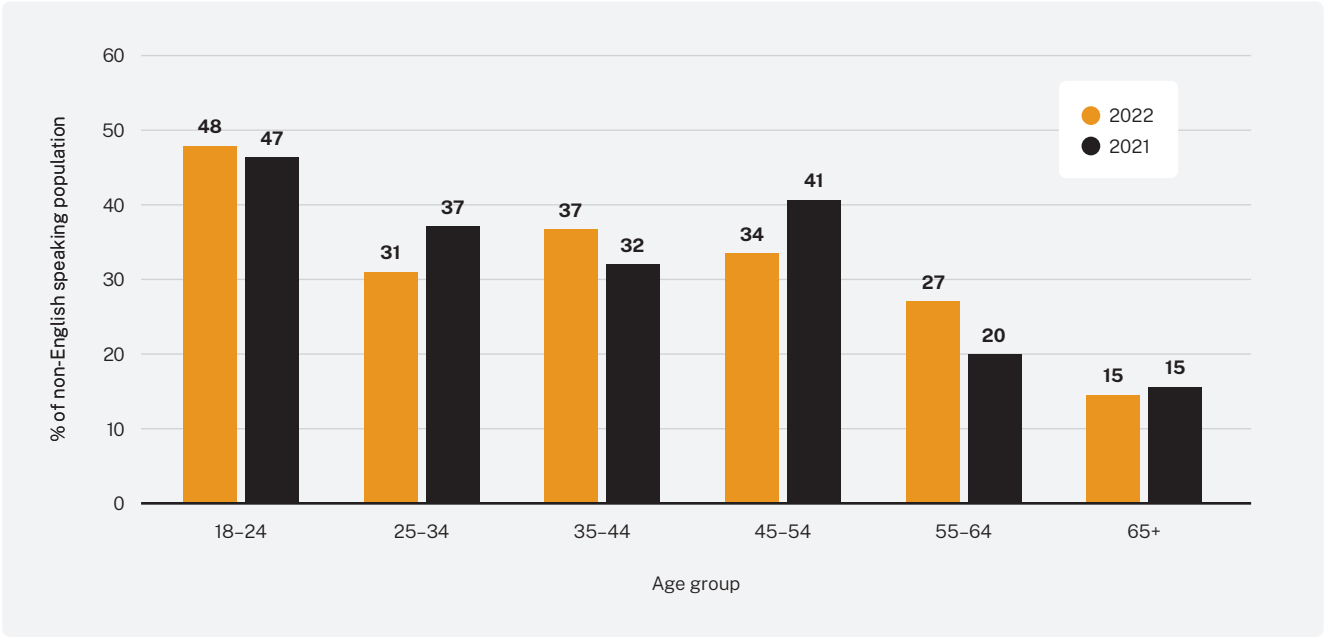
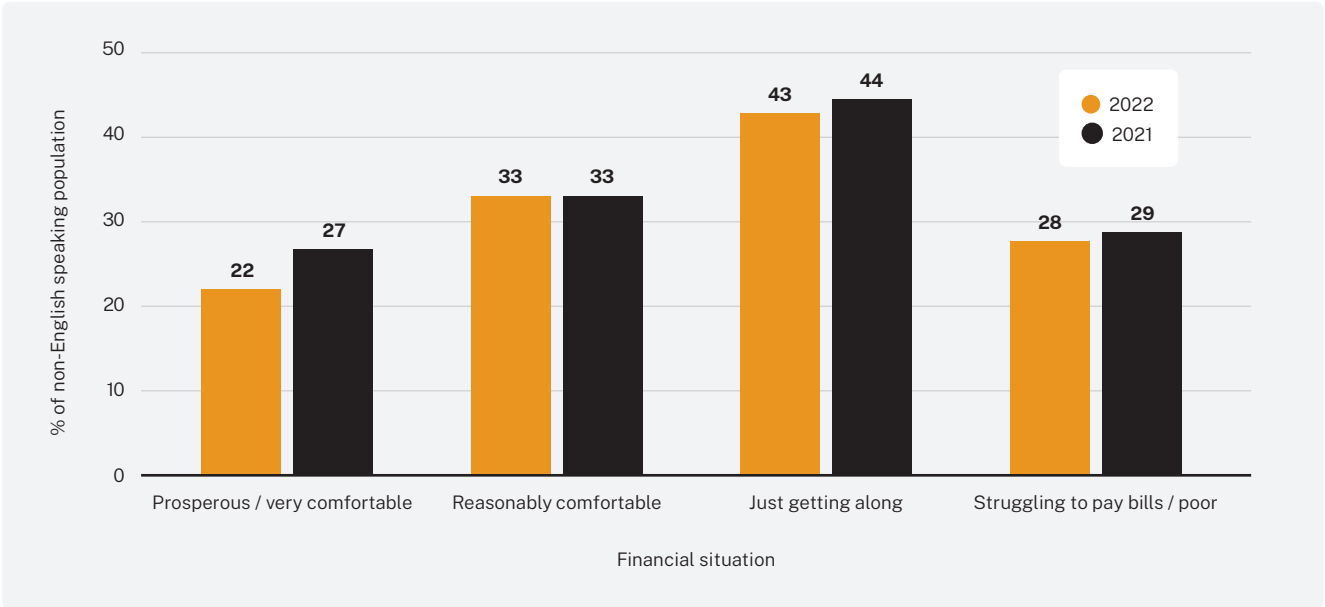


Figure 27 Experience of discrimination based on skin colour, ethnic origin, or religion in the prior 12 months by financial situation, non-English speaking populations



Prejudice remains a problem

Several questions in our survey gauge the extent to which people hold prejudicial views of people from different ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. The results suggest that despite very high and growing levels of support for multiculturalism, prejudice remains common in Australia. Encouragingly, though, levels of prejudice are declining on several indicators.

Support for a discriminatory immigration program is low and has been declining. The proportion of people who agree that it should be possible to reject immigrants to Australia on the basis of their race, ethnicity, or religion has declined from 19 per cent in 2018 to 11 per cent in 2022.

Nevertheless, some Australians continue to hold negative views of people from different backgrounds. Of considerable concern, people are substantially less likely to have a positive attitude towards non-European immigrants.

Figure 28 shows that more than 90 per cent of Australians have very or somewhat positive feelings towards immigrants from Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom. But this proportion drops to 70 per cent for immigrants from India, and to little more than 60 per cent or below for immigrants from India, Ethiopia, Lebanon, China, Iraq, and Sudan.

> On a positive note, positive attitudes towards non-European immigrant groups have become significantly more common over time. The proportion of people with positive feelings towards immigrants from China, for example, increased from 52 per cent in July 2020 to 61 per cent in 2022.

We also ask people whether their personal attitudes are positive, negative, or neutral towards people from six religious groups – Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Jews.

> Negative attitudes were most commonly directed towards people of Muslim and Christian faiths. Figure 29 shows that 29 per cent of people expressed a negative attitude towards Muslims compared to 15 per cent towards Christians. Encouragingly, the proportion expressing a negative attitude towards Muslims has declined from 39 per cent in 2019 and 40 per cent in 2020 (see Table 24). However, negative attitudes towards Christians have not declined.

Overall, 68 per cent of people hold negative feelings or attitudes towards one or more religious or non-European immigrant group. While this has declined significantly from July 2020 (72 per cent), it still represents a big majority of Australians.

Table 25 shows the extent to which this proportion varies across demographic and socioeconomic groups. The proportion is largest among Liberal/National voters (73 per cent) and other minor party and Independent voters (71 per cent), people with education only up to Year 11 (72 per cent), people aged 65 and older (71 per cent), and people who are struggling to pay their bills or describe themselves as poor (70 per cent).

Table 24 Proportion of people who have negative attitudes towards people from different religious groups, 2018 to 2022 surveys

	NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS:					
	CHRISTIANS	BUDDHISTS	MUSLIMS	HINDUS	SIKHS	JEWS
	% OF POPULATION					
2022	15	3.6	29	8.7	11	8.1
2021	13	3.7	32	10	12	9.3
NOV 2020	12	4.4	35	12	14	9.2
JUL 2020	11	4.5	37	12	13	8.9
2019	14	5.7	40	10		
2018	12	6.9	39			

Figure 28 'Would you say your feelings are positive or negative towards immigrants from...?' 2022 survey

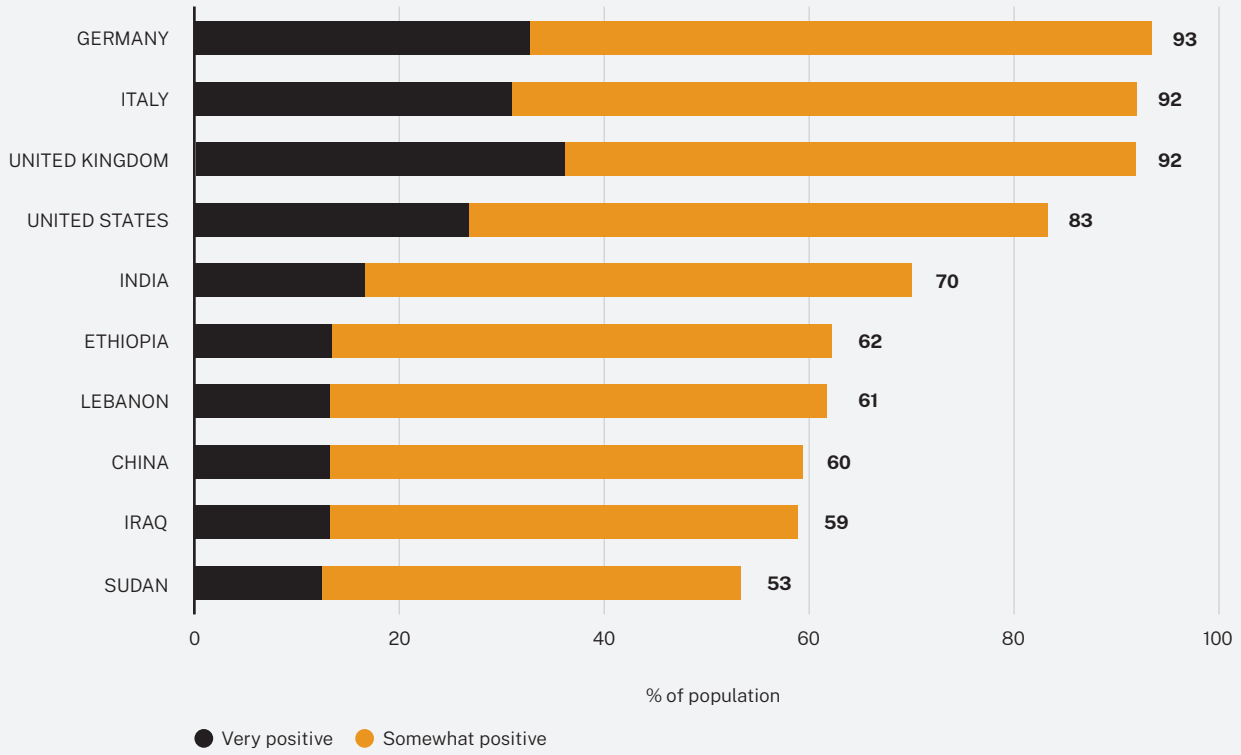


Figure 29 'Is your personal attitude positive, negative, or neutral towards...?' 2022 survey

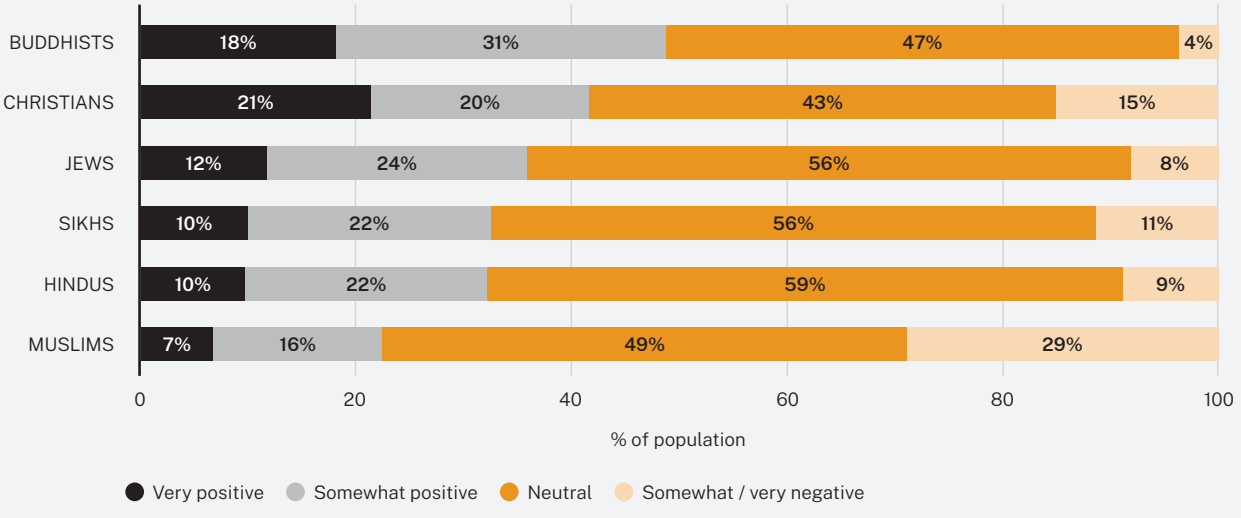


Table 25 Proportion of people who have a negative perception of religious groups or non-European/non-United States immigrants, July 2020, 2021, and 2022 surveys

GENDER	Female	Male				
	67, 65, 63	**78, 75, 72**				
AGE	65 +	55-64	45-54	35-44	25-34	18-24
	77, 78, 72	76, 73, 68	69, 71, 66	72, 67, 66	70, 66, 67	64, 61, 65
STATE	NSW	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	
	73, 72, 67	71, 69, 69	77, 73, 70	69, 67, 67	67, 65, 63	
CAPITAL CITY/ REST OF STATE	Capital city	Rest of State				
	71, 68, 67	75, 73, 68				
HIGHEST EDUCATION	Postgraduate degree	Bachelor degree	Certificate/ diploma	Year 12	Up to Year 11	
	69, 66, 64	67, 66, 63	73, 72, 68	68, 66, **68**	**81, 77, 74**	
FINANCIAL SITUATION	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ poor		
	68, 69, 63	72, 70, **68**	73, 70, **68**	**81**, 73, **76**		
VOTE AT 2022 ELECTION	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Other		
	65, 67, 64	**80, 76, 73**	51, 60, 61	**87, 78, 74**		
WHERE BORN & FIRST LANGUAGE	Australian-born	Foreign-born/ English	Foreign-born/ non-English			
	72, 69, 67	71, 68, 67	74, **75**, 70			
HOUSEHOLD TYPE	Couple no children	Couple parent	Single parent	Group household	Live alone	
	NA, NA, 70	NA, NA, 65	NA, NA, 70	NA, NA, 66	NA, NA, 69	
HOUSING TENURE	Own outright	Mortgage	Rent			
	NA, NA, 71	NA, NA, 64	NA, NA, 69			
NEIGHBOURHOOD DISADVANTAGE	Quintile 1 (Low disadvantage)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (High disadvantage)	
	69, 68, 68	69, 66, 68	76, 69, 67	75, 74, 67	73, 73, 70	

Note: Numbers in red are significantly higher than the corresponding values in the first column (e.g. the proportion for males in 2022 is in red if it is significantly higher than the proportion for females in 2022), after controlling for all demographic and socioeconomic characteristics in the table.

Awareness of racism is rising

In 2021 and 2022, we asked people 'in your opinion, how big of a problem is racism in Australia?'. In 2022, 14 per cent of people believe racism is a very big problem and 47 per cent believe it is a fairly big problem, 37 per cent believe it is not a very big problem and just 2 per cent believe it is not a problem at all. As Figure 30 shows, these proportions are very similar to what they were in 2021.

But belief that racism is a problem is substantially more widespread than it was in 2020. In the two surveys we conducted in 2020, we asked people 'in your opinion, how big of a problem is racism in Australia *during the COVID-19 pandemic*?'. The proportion of people who believed racism was a very big or fairly big problem was 40 per cent in July 2020 and November 2020 when asked in this way. In 2021 (and when we dropped the reference to COVID-19), this proportion increased to 60 per cent and remains at this level in 2022.

Growth since 2020 in the belief that racism is a problem is probably a reflection of growing public awareness of the issue. As described in this chapter, discrimination on the basis of skin colour, ethnic group, or religion has not shown the same increase. The extent of prejudiced attitudes has, if anything, declined since 2020.

As Table 26 shows, the belief that racism is a very big or fairly big problem has become more common across demographic and socioeconomic groups, including younger and older people, and people from higher and lower socioeconomic groups.

> Strikingly, the largest increase has been among people born in Australia. In July 2020, 36 per cent of the Australian-born population thought that racism was a very big or fairly big problem, rising to 61 per cent in 2022. The corresponding figures for people born overseas and who speak a language other than English was 52 per cent in July 2020 and 58 per cent in 2022. There is now little difference between the proportions of Australian-born and overseas-born populations who think that racism is a problem.

This signifies a greater awareness of racism, particularly among Australian-born people. It does not necessarily suggest that the experience of racism is becoming more common, but it does suggest there may be widespread support for public and community measures to address the problem.

Figure 30 'In your opinion, how big of a problem is racism in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic?' June and November 2020; and 'In your opinion, how big a problem is racism in Australia?' 2021 and 2022 surveys

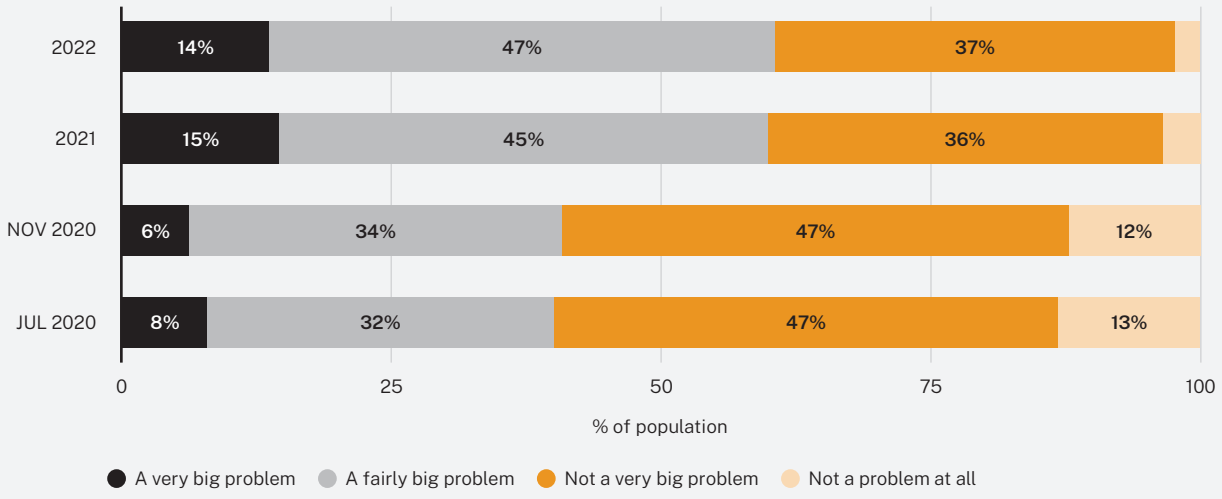


Table 26 Proportion of people who believe racism is a very big or fairly big problem in Australia (during the COVID-19 pandemic), July 2020, 2021, and 2022 surveys

GENDER	Female	Male				
	47, 68, 68	31, 50, 52				
AGE	65 +	55-64	45-54	35-44	25-34	18-24
	27, 46, 46	27, 46, 54	32, **53**, 57	**43, 64, 63**	**53, 74, 73**	**59, 79, 77**
STATE	NSW	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	
	39, 61, 58	44, 62, **64**	36, 56, 58	35, 54, 57	38, 59, 61	
CAPITAL CITY/ REST OF STATE	Capital city	Rest of State				
	41, 62, 61	35, 55, 59				
HIGHEST EDUCATION	Postgraduate degree	Bachelor degree	Certificate/ diploma	Year 12	Up to Year 11	
	44, 65, 63	46, 65, 66	36, 59, 58	45, 63, 65	31, 48, 52	
FINANCIAL SITUATION	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ poor		
	36, 58, 54	36, 56, **58**	43, 65, **66**	**53**, 69, **68**		
VOTE AT 2022 ELECTION	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Other		
	48, 71, 65	29, 41, 42	**63, 87, 86**	22, 36, 51		
WHERE BORN & FIRST LANGUAGE	Australian-born	Foreign-born/ English	Foreign-born/ non-English			
	36, 57, 61	**41**, 61, 58	**52**, 67, 58			
HOUSEHOLD TYPE	Couple no children	Couple parent	Single parent	Group household	Live alone	
	NA, NA, 55	NA, NA, 60	NA, NA, 70	NA, NA, 73	NA, NA, 59	
HOUSING TENURE	Own outright	Mortgage	Rent			
	NA, NA, 48	NA, NA, 57	NA, NA, **70**			
NEIGHBOURHOOD DISADVANTAGE	Quintile 1 (Low disadvantage)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (High disadvantage)	
	36, 61, 59	38, 60, 62	36, 58, 60	**42**, 61, 59	43, 58, 62	

Note: Numbers in red are significantly higher than the corresponding values in the first column (e.g. the proportion for males in 2022 is in red if it is significantly higher than the proportion for females in 2022), after controlling for all demographic and socioeconomic characteristics in the table. The reference to the COVID-19 pandemic was included in the question on the July 2020 survey but dropped from the question in 2021 and 2022.

Discrimination, prejudice, and social cohesion

Discrimination and prejudice are strongly related to social cohesion. Table 27 shows that people who reported experiencing discrimination in the past 12 months based on their skin colour, ethnic group, or religion have social cohesion scores that are significantly lower than the national average on belonging (–2.7 points), worth (–3.0 points), social inclusion and justice (–1.8 points), and acceptance and rejection (–2.3 points) measures.

People who have a negative perception of one or more religions, or are one of the six non-European or non-US born groups, also have a significantly lower sense of belonging, worth, and social inclusion and justice – although the differences are smaller.

So tackling the drivers of prejudice, discrimination, and racism may have positive benefits for social cohesion.

The finding that people who have experienced discrimination have higher levels of participation and lower levels of acceptance is striking.

- People who have experienced discrimination are significantly more likely to have engaged in political activities in the last three years, more likely to participate in social, community support, and/or civic groups, and more likely to provide unpaid help.
- People who have experienced discrimination are significantly less likely to agree that 'accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger', a finding that perhaps reflects the impact of the personal experience of attitudes to diversity in Australia.

Table 27 Social cohesion index scores across our five measures, by reported discrimination, perceived racism and prejudice, and perceptions of religions and non-European/non-US immigrants, differences with the national average, 2022 survey

	BELONGING	WORTH	SOCIAL INCLUSION AND JUSTICE	PARTICIPATION	ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION
REPORTED DISCRIMINATION (LAST 12 MONTHS)					
Yes	**–2.7**	**–3.0**	**–1.8**	+6.4	**–2.3**
No	+0.5	+0.6	+0.3	**–1.1**	+0.4
RACISM IS A PROBLEM IN AUSTRALIA					
Very/fairly big problem	**–1.3**	–0.5	**–1.5**	+1.1	+4.5
Not a (big) problem	+2.0	+0.8	+2.3	**–1.6**	**–6.9**
NEGATIVE PERCEPTION OF RELIGIONS/NON-EUROPEAN/NON-US IMMIGRANTS					
Yes	**–0.7**	**–1.0**	**–0.5**	–0.4	**–3.5**
No	+1.6	+2.1	+1.0	+1.0	+7.2

Notes: Numbers in red indicate social cohesion scores are significantly lower than the national average.

Scores are calculated after controlling for gender, age, state, capital city or outside capital city, highest education, where born and first language, household type, housing tenure, and neighbourhood disadvantage.

Cost of living

Australians are worried about the rising cost of living and the prospect of a global economic downturn. The economy generally and the cost of living specifically emerged from our 2022 survey and in-depth interviews (see the chapter on 'Life in the pandemic') as the most important issues in Australia today.

- Two in five people (39 per cent) cited economic issues as the most important problem facing Australia in 2022. This is the largest share of the population citing economic issues since we first asked people (back in 2011) to name the biggest problem facing Australia.
- Three-quarters of Australians (75 per cent) are very or quite concerned about a severe downturn in the global economy. Only 2 per cent are not concerned at all about a downturn.

The rising cost of living has caused an increase in financial stress and a decline in financial satisfaction. Between 2021 and 2022:

- The proportion of people who describe themselves as poor or struggling to pay their bills increased from 7 per cent to 10 per cent, and the proportion who describe themselves as 'just getting along' increased from 24 per cent to 27 per cent. The combined proportion who say they are poor, struggling to pay their bills, or 'just getting along' significantly increased from 31 per cent to 37 per cent.
- The proportion who are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their financial situation increased from 29 per cent to 35 per cent. The proportion who are satisfied or very satisfied declined from 71 per cent to 64 per cent.
- One in ten people (11 per cent) in 2022 said they went without meals in the last 12 months because there was not enough money for food (9 per cent in 2021).

Financial stress and financial satisfaction are at similar levels in 2022 as they were before the pandemic. Table 28 shows that the proportion of people who described themselves as poor, struggling to pay their bills, or just getting along was 42 per cent in 2018 and 39 per cent in 2019. The proportion appears to have steadily declined during the pandemic, falling to 31 per cent in 2021 before rising again to 37 per cent in 2022.

The 2021 survey was conducted in July, soon after the end of the Federal Government's key economic measures during the pandemic: JobKeeper and the Coronavirus Supplement to the JobSeeker payment. Unemployment rates were low and inflationary pressures were yet to emerge.

Table 28 Indicators of economic and financial circumstances and attitudes, 2018 to 2022 surveys

		2018	2019	JUL 2020	NOV 2020	2021	2022
		% OF POPULATION					
FINANCIAL SITUATION	Struggling/poor	12	12	8	7	7	10
	Just getting along	30	26	27	25	24	27
	Total	**42**	**39**	**34**	**33**	**31**	**37**
FINANCIAL SATISFACTION	Very dissatisfied	9	10	5	7	6	7
	Dissatisfied	29	26	22	21	23	28
	Total dissatisfied	**38**	**36**	**27**	**28**	**29**	**35**
WORRIED ABOUT JOB	Very worried	6	7	7	4	5	3
	Worried	8	9	10	8	8	8
	Total worried	**14**	**15**	**17**	**11**	**13**	**11**
MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM	Economic issues	29	29	15	24	9	39
	Total economic	**29**	**29**	**15**	**24**	**9**	**39**
PESSIMISM FOR FUTURE	Very pessimistic	4	5	3	3	3	4
	Pessimistic	27	31	26	22	26	32
	Total economic	**31**	**36**	**29**	**24**	**29**	**36**

Financial well-being varies across society

Financial well-being varies across Australian society. Table 30 shows the proportion of Australians who describe themselves as poor, struggling to their pay bills, or 'just getting along', for different demographic and socioeconomic groups.

People who live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and/or have low education levels are, not surprisingly, more likely to have financial struggles. In 2022, 45 per cent of people who have completed education only up to Year 11 said they were poor, struggling to pay their bills, or 'just getting along', compared with 24 per cent of people with a postgraduate degree. Similarly, 47 per cent of people living in the most disadvantaged quintile said they were poor, struggling to pay their bills, or 'just getting along', compared with 26 per cent of people living in the least disadvantaged quintile.

People in single-parent families, group households, and those living alone are significantly more likely than couples with no children to say they are poor, struggling to pay their bills, or 'just getting along'. Renters are also significantly more likely than homeowners to say they are poor, struggling to pay their bills, or 'just getting along'.

The increase in financial well-being during the pandemic appears to have disproportionately benefited the Australian-born population. The proportion of Australian-born people who said they were struggling or 'just getting along' declined significantly between 2018 and 2020, but the proportion remained the same for overseas-born people who speak a language other than English. Potential reasons for this include differential access to government programs, including JobKeeper, and the differential impact of the pandemic on particular industries, occupations, and regions.

Table 29 Proportion of people who said they were financially struggling or just getting along, 2018, 2020, 2022 surveys

GENDER	Female	Male				
	34, 32, 33	40, 36, **40**				
AGE	65 +	55-64	45-54	35-44	25-34	18-24
	33, 25, 28	39, **34**, 35	**42, 37,** 40	**47, 38,** 42	**43, 35,** 40	**55, 39, 39**
STATE	NSW	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	
	40, 36, 37	33, 36, 37	38, 34, 38	38, 29, 39	39, 34, 34	
CAPITAL CITY/ REST OF STATE	Capital city	Rest of State				
	34, 35, 36	43, 33, 38				
HIGHEST EDUCATION	Postgraduate degree	Bachelor degree	Certificate/ diploma	Year 12	Up to Year 11	
	18, 21, 24	26, 24, 26	**41, 38, 40**	36, **38, 40**	**48, 40, 45**	
VOTE AT 2022 ELECTION	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Other		
	45, 35, 39	32, 28, 28	28, 34, 40	38, 40, 39		
WHERE BORN & FIRST LANGUAGE	Australian-born	Foreign-born/ English	Foreign-born/ non-English			
	45, 33, 36	33, 30, 35	44, **43**, 40			
HOUSEHOLD TYPE	Couple no children	Couple parent	Single parent	Group household	Live alone	
	NA, NA, 26	NA, NA, **35**	NA, NA, **59**	NA, NA, **48**	NA, NA, **43**	
HOUSING TENURE	Own outright	Mortgage	Rent			
	NA, NA, 22	NA, NA, **32**	NA, NA, **54**			
NEIGHBOURHOOD DISADVANTAGE	Quintile 1 (Low disadvantage)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (High disadvantage)	
	29, 24, 26	38, **31, 36**	**35, 32, 38**	41, **41, 41**	**46, 45, 47**	

Note: Numbers in red are significantly higher than the corresponding values in the first column (e.g. the proportion for males in 2022 is in red if it is significantly higher than the proportion for females in 2022), after controlling for all demographic and socioeconomic characteristics in the table.

Economic issues and social cohesion

Economic issues, financial stress, and economic inequality all have a very important bearing on social cohesion. As we reported in the 2021 Mapping Social Cohesion report, financial well-being is the strongest predictor of social cohesion identified in our survey.

Table 30 shows average social cohesion index scores by responses to a set of economic and financial indicators. It shows that people who say they are financially struggling or just getting by, are pessimistic about the future, or are worried about losing their job, also report substantially lower levels of national pride and belonging, happiness, and social inclusion.

- People who are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their financial situation have a belonging score 4 points below the national average and 6 points below those who are financially satisfied, a worth score 11 points below the national average, and a social inclusion and justice score 5 points below the national average.
- People who are worried or very worried about losing their job have a belonging score 6 points below the national average.
- In 2022, 41 per cent of people who describe themselves as poor or struggling to pay their bills, and 66 per cent of people who describe themselves as just getting along, reported they were happy or very happy. This compares with 94 per cent of people who are prosperous/very comfortable, and 88 per cent of people who are reasonably comfortable.

Therefore, economic inequalities exacerbated by the current economic climate therefore appear to be giving rise to social inequalities that, in turn, drag down social cohesion in Australia. We estimate that the increase between 2021 and 2022 in the proportion of people who say they are 'just getting along' or struggling has reduced the overall sense of belonging and worth in Australia by 0.6 points each, the sense of social inclusion and justice by 0.4 points, and the extent of participation by 0.3 points.

Table 30 Social cohesion index scores by economic and financial circumstances and attitudes, differences with the national average, 2022 survey

	BELONGING	WORTH	SOCIAL INCLUSION AND JUSTICE	PARTICIPATION	ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION
FINANCIAL SITUATION					
Comfortable/prosperous	+2.7	+5.0	+2.7	0.0	0.0
Getting along/struggling	**–4.4**	**–8.5**	**–4.5**	+0.2	0.0
FINANCIAL SATISFACTION					
Satisfied	+2.3	+5.9	+2.5	–0.5	+0.3
Dissatisfied	**–4.0**	**–11**	**–4.6**	+1.2	–0.6
WORRIED ABOUT LOSING JOB					
A little/not worried	+0.1	+1.5	+1.1	**–2.0**	+1.4
Worried/very worried	**–6.4**	**–10**	**–4.4**	+4.8	–1.4
MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM					
Economic issues	+0.4	**–0.8**	+0.4	**–1.9**	**–1.7**
Other issues	–0.2	+0.5	–0.2	+1.2	+1.0
OPTIMISIM/PESSIMISM FOR FUTURE					
Optimistic	+2.4	+3.0	+3.1	**–1.4**	+1.5
Pessimistic	**–4.2**	**–5.3**	**–5.5**	+2.7	**–2.7**

Notes: Numbers in red indicate social cohesion scores are significantly lower than the national average. Average scores are calculated after controlling for the other demographic and socioeconomic characteristics listed in Table 29.

Neighbourhood cohesion

Neighbourhoods and local communities – the places where we build our day-to-day social relationships and connections – are a vital complement to national social cohesion.

The Mapping Social Cohesion survey measures neighbourhood social cohesion through a range of questions that touch on the sense of harmony, connectedness, safety, voice, and belonging that people feel and perceive in their local areas.

Neighbourhood social cohesion is high and growing in Australia. It appears to have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, perhaps reflecting the degree to which local communities came together through the crisis. Encouragingly, neighbourhood social cohesion remains high and resilient in 2022.

Table 31 shows that:

- The proportion of people who agree or strongly agree with the statement 'People in your local area are willing to help their neighbours' increased from 81 per cent in 2019 to 86 per cent in July 2020 and 85 per cent in 2022. Figure 31 shows this proportion has been very high throughout the 14-year history of the question in our survey.
- The proportion of people who agree or strongly agree that their local area 'is a place where people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together' increased significantly from 78 per cent in 2019 to 84 per cent in July 2020 and 83 per cent in 2022. As Figure 32 shows, this proportion has been high since at least 2010 but has been at an even higher plateau since 2020.
- The proportion of people who feel fairly or very safe walking alone at night in their local area has fluctuated in recent years, but is relatively high in 2022 (66 per cent).
- The proportion of people who say that living in their local area is getting better increased sharply in 2021 (25 per cent) and remains relatively high in 2022 (21 per cent).
- The proportion of people who feel 'able to have a real say on issues that are important' to them in their local area has fluctuated in recent years but is at a similar level in 2022 (62 per cent) as it was in 2019 (61 per cent) and 2021 (62 per cent).
- More than eight in ten people in 2022 (82 per cent) agree or strongly agree with the statement 'I feel like I belong in my neighbourhood'.
- Two-thirds of people in 2022 (66 per cent) agree or strongly agree that 'my neighbourhood has a strong sense of community'.

Table 31 Indicators of neighbourhood social cohesion, 2018 to 2022 surveys

		2018	2019	JUL 2020	NOV 2020	2021	2022
		% OF POPULATION					
NEIGHBOURS WILLING TO HELP	Strongly agree	18	18	20	18	18	18
	Agree	63	62	66	69	69	68
	Total agree	**81**	**81**	**86**	**87**	**86**	**85**
NEIGHBOURS GET ON WELL	Strongly agree	11	13	14	14	11	12
	Agree	65	66	70	70	73	71
	Total agree	**76**	**78**	**84**	**84**	**84**	**83**
SAFETY AT NIGHT	Very safe	20	21	19	19	22	26
	Fairly safe	40	43	40	46	41	40
	Total fairly/very safe	**60**	**63**	**59**	**66**	**63**	**66**
LOCAL AREA GETTING BETTER	Much better	2	2	1	1	2	2
	Better	17	18	13	14	23	19
	Unchanged	58	60	70	72	57	62
	Total better/unchanged	**78**	**80**	**84**	**88**	**82**	**83**
HAVE A SAY IN LOCAL AREA	Strongly agree	7	9	7		6	6
	Agree	51	52	58		56	56
	Total agree	**58**	**61**	**65**		**62**	**62**
NEIGHBOURHOOD BELONGING	Strongly agree					15	15
	Agree					68	67
	Total agree					**83**	**82**
SENSE OF COMMUNITY	Strongly agree					15	12
	Agree					52	54
	Total agree					**67**	**66**

Figure 31 'People in your local area are willing to help their neighbours', 2009 to 2018 (telephone surveys) and 2018 to 2022 (online and telephone)

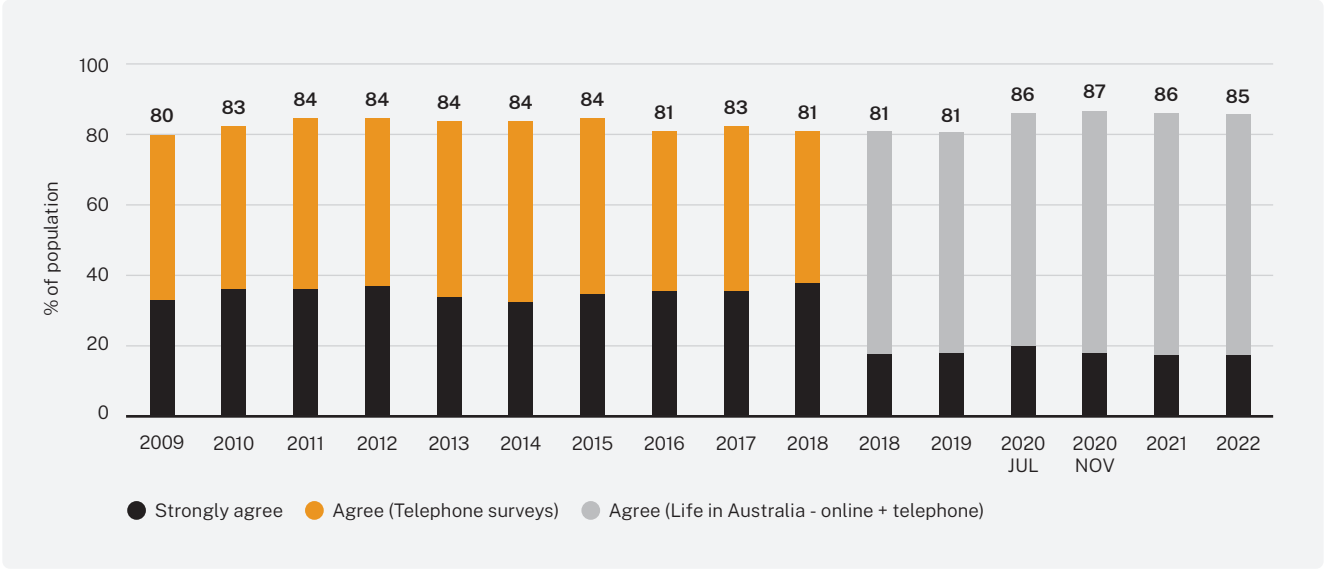
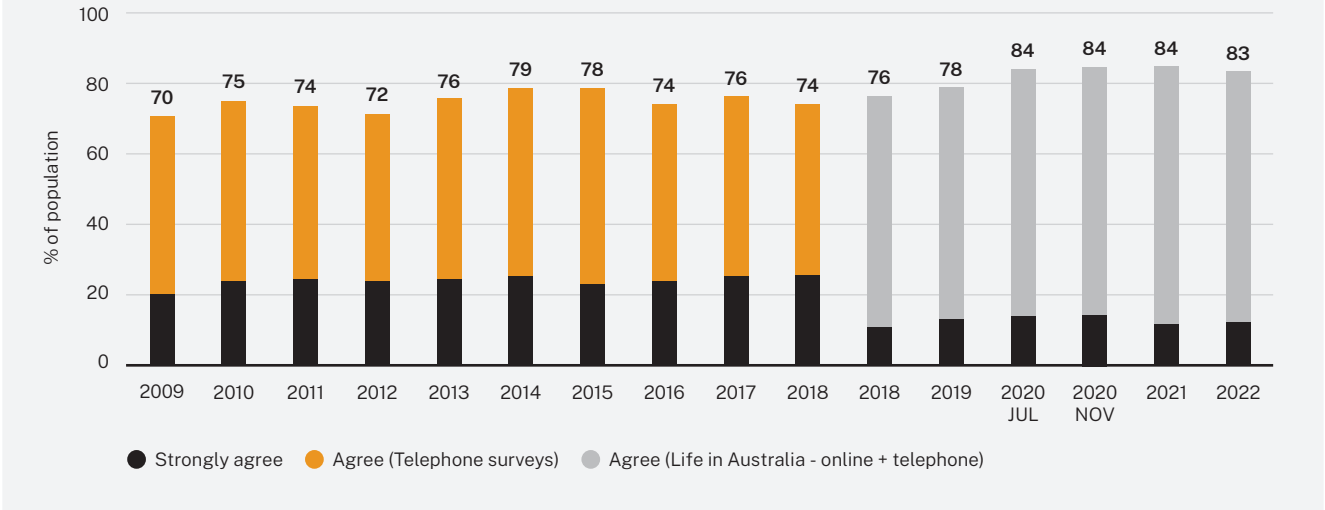


Figure 32 'My local area is a place where people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together', 2009 to 2018 (telephone surveys) and 2018 to 2022 (online and telephone)



Perceived neighbourhood cohesion is growing strongly in disadvantaged groups

Agreement that neighbours from different backgrounds get along well together is high, and increasing across most demographic and socioeconomic groups in Australia. Table 32 shows that agreement is at or above 80 per cent in 2022 across each state, age, and education groups, and among both Australian-born and overseas-born populations.

Economic factors are the strongest predictors of difference. In 2022, 71 per cent of people who describe themselves as poor or struggling to pay their bills agree that neighbours get along well, compared with 87 per cent of people living prosperously or very comfortably. And 79 per cent of people living in the most disadvantaged quintile of neighbourhoods agree that their neighbours get along well, compared with 87 per cent of people living in the least disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Encouragingly, the growth in perceived neighbourhood cohesion has been particularly strong among disadvantaged groups and other groups that typically report a lower level of acceptance of diversity. Thus, not only has neighbourhood cohesion grown stronger on average, inequalities in cohesion have also become weaker.

- Agreement that neighbours from different backgrounds get along well significantly increased from 57 per cent to 71 per cent between 2018 and 2022 for people who say they are financially struggling — a 14 percentage point increase.
- The corresponding increase was 13 percentage points for people living in the most disadvantaged quintile of neighbourhoods and 15 percentage points for people who have completed education only up to Year 11. Growth has also been strong for people aged 65 and older (12 percentage points) and people who live outside capital cities (12 percentage points).

Table 32 'My local area is a place where people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together', proportions of the population who agree or strongly agree, 2018, 2020 and 2022 surveys

GENDER	Female	Male				
	75, 84, 83	77, 84, 83				
AGE	65 +	55-64	45-54	35-44	25-34	18-24
	76, 84, 88	74, 85, 83	78, 84, 84	73, 84, 82	76, 81, 79	77, 86, 84
STATE	NSW	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	
	79, 83, 86	82, 87, 85	74, 80, **80**	66, 83, **80**	**62**, 86, 83	
CAPITAL CITY/ REST OF STATE	Capital city	Rest of State				
	78, 85, 84	70, 81, 82				
HIGHEST EDUCATION	Postgraduate degree	Bachelor degree	Certificate/ diploma	Year 12	Up to Year 11	
	82, 87, 85	79, 87, 86	77, 81, 83	77, 86, 83	**66**, 81, 81	
FINANCIAL SITUATION	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ poor		
	91, 89, 87	76, 86, 86	**76, 81, 80**	**57, 70, 71**		
VOTE AT 2022 ELECTION	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Other		
	78, 85, 84	77, 87, 86	80, 81, 84	**71**, 78, 81		
WHERE BORN & FIRST LANGUAGE	Australian-born	Foreign-born/ English	Foreign-born/ non-English			
	73, 83, 83	78, 83, 85	86, 87, 83			
HOUSEHOLD TYPE	Couple no children	Couple parent	Single parent	Group household	Live alone	
	NA, NA, 85	NA, NA, 85	NA, NA, 82	NA, NA, 74	NA, NA, 83	
HOUSING TENURE	Own outright	Mortgage	Rent			
	NA, NA, 86	NA, NA, 85	NA, NA, 80			
NEIGHBOURHOOD DISADVANTAGE	Quintile 1 (Low disadvantage)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (High disadvantage)	
	82, 88, 87	82, 86, 85	72, 86, 84	72, 81, **80**	66, **77, 79**	

Note: Numbers in red are significantly lower than the corresponding values in the first column after controlling for all demographic and socioeconomic characteristics in the table.

Neighbourhood and national social cohesion

Cohesive and resilient neighbourhoods stand as a potential positive legacy of the Australian community's response to the pandemic. This could have potential flow-on benefits for national cohesion, individual well-being, how we manage future crises, and how we interact with each other on a daily basis.

Neighbourhood social cohesion is strongly related to overall national cohesion. Table 33 shows overall cohesion index scores in each of our five measures, by responses to indicators of neighbourhood cohesion.

People who believe their neighbours are willing to help and get along with each other, and who feel they have a say in their community on issues important to them, report higher levels of social cohesion on all five measures: belonging, worth, social inclusion and justice, participation, and acceptance. Those who agree or strongly agree that their neighbours are willing to help each other, for example, have a belonging score 2 points higher than the national average and 14 points higher than those who disagree that their neighbours are willing to help each other.

People who feel a strong sense of belonging and community in their neighbourhoods also report a strong sense of worth, social inclusion and justice, and participation.

Overall, people who perceive their neighbourhoods to be highly cohesive have high levels of national pride and belonging, a greater sense of personal and material worth, perceive greater levels of social inclusion and justice, are more likely to be actively engaged in their communities, and are more likely to be accepting of differences and diversity.

Thus, neighbourhood cohesion is an important component of overall national cohesion.

Table 33 Social cohesion index scores by indicators of neighbourhood social cohesion, differences with the national average, 2022 survey

	BELONGING	WORTH	SOCIAL INCLUSION AND JUSTICE	PARTICIPATION	ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION
NEIGHBOURS WILLING TO HELP					
Agree/strongly agree	+2.0	+1.5	+0.7	+0.5	+0.4
Disagree/strongly disagree	**–12**	**–8.7**	**–4.3**	**–3.1**	**–2.1**
NEIGHBOURS GET ON WELL					
Agree/strongly agree	+1.7	+1.3	+0.7	+0.4	+0.8
Disagree/strongly disagree	**–8.4**	**–6.7**	**–3.6**	**–1.9**	**–4.0**
SAFETY AT NIGHT					
Very/fairly safe	+2.2	+2.0	+1.5	+0.2	+0.1
A bit/very unsafe	**–4.2**	**–3.9**	**–3.0**	–0.5	–0.3
HAVE A SAY IN LOCAL AREA					
Agree/strongly agree	+3.9	+2.7	+1.7	+1.2	+1.8
Disagree/strongly disagree	**–6.5**	**–4.4**	**–2.8**	**–1.9**	**–2.9**
LOCAL AREA GETTING BETTER					
Better/much better	+5.1	+4.8	+2.7	+2.3	+4.8
Unchanged	+0.1	+0.2	+0.5	**–1.1**	–0.5
Worse/much worse	**–6.3**	**–6.6**	**–5.1**	+1.7	**–4.4**
NEIGHBOURHOOD BELONGING					
Agree/strongly agree	+3.3	+2.1	+1.1	+0.6	+0.1
Disagree/strongly disagree	**–15**	**–9.1**	**–4.7**	**–2.5**	–0.6
SENSE OF COMMUNITY					
Agree/strongly agree	+5.2	+2.6	+1.4	+0.7	+0.3
Disagree/strongly disagree	**–10**	**–5.2**	**–2.8**	**–1.4**	–0.6

Notes: Numbers in red indicate social cohesion scores are significantly lower than the national average. Scores control for the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics in Table 33.

Photo by Ignacio Brosal on Unsplash

LIFE AFTER THE PANDEMIC

How has Australia fared in a time of crisis?

Trish Prentice and James O'Donnell

In 2022, the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute conducted interviews in Local Government Areas across Australia to find out how the trends we see in the survey are experienced in communities on the ground. In 2022, we conducted interviews with 13 of the same participants to gauge the extent to which life and social cohesion in their communities has changed over the past 12 months.

The people we interviewed in 2022 live and work in seven Local Government Areas with high and/or growing cultural and religious diversity, namely:

- Greater Dandenong Council and Hume City Council in Victoria
- Toowoomba Regional Council and Logan City Council in Queensland
- Fairfield City Council in New South Wales
- City of Port Adelaide Enfield in South Australia
- City of Stirling in Western Australia

Interviewees work in key sectors in community-facing roles, including in local government, health, education, business, sport, and community services.

Diverse communities are cohesive and resilient

Australian communities, especially those with high levels of ethnic and cultural diversity, are vibrant, cohesive, and well-connected places. This cohesiveness does not always show up in the survey data and the numbers that are collected. However, the interviews we conducted reveal that diversity is both an asset and source of strength and vitality for many communities.

> "Logan is amazing. Logan is a very multicultural place. It looks very different to any other part of Brisbane mainly because we see a lot of activity." (Education sector employee, Logan, QLD)

This is true in the diverse communities of the large cities, as well as in regional centres such as Toowoomba where diversity has grown substantially over the past 20 years.

> "I think Toowoomba continues to be a really well connected and pretty inclusive place… I think that there is still genuinely a level of care and connection for beyond just your neighbour, but also the stranger that you see." (Community services employee, Toowoomba, QLD)

COVID-19 will have a lasting impact on diverse communities

The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have an enduring effect on the cohesion of communities. In many ways, people have moved on from their concerns about COVID-19 infections and health-related consequences. People are generally happy to have COVID-19 restrictions lifted and greater freedom to move about and engage in their communities. However, re-establishing social connections is not immediate and varies from person to person. As a result, restoring the social life of communities is likely to be a longer-term process.

> "People are trying to reconnect, and get back to normal before COVID, where it's OK to go and see someone, it's OK to go to church, it's OK to have a community gathering. And so that process is happening, and slowly people are getting back to what socially might feel normal." (Local government employee, Fairfield, NSW)

While interviewees were generally confident that the connectedness and cohesion of communities will gradually return, lasting damage has been caused in communities that were hard hit by the pandemic.

In many diverse communities, the health and economic impacts of the crisis were compounded by wider public perceptions and media portrayals that their social and cultural ties were somehow to blame for the spread of infections. This has left some people feeling isolated and disconnected from broader Australian society. One interviewee mentioned that cultural communities who felt "blamed" or "targeted" by the broader population during the pandemic were still finding it difficult to reengage fully in society. Their confidence being out in public and social spaces has been affected by those incidences, which in turn affects their sense of connection to the broader community.

> "People don't forget that, now that the pandemic has passed. People don't forget how they were treated during that time, so there is a residual effect. The sense of that same easy flow or connection, it's not the same." (Community sector worker, Stirling, WA)

The response within communities to COVID-19 helped to bring people together

Many of the interviewees felt that the shared experience of COVID-19 has drawn people and communities together, at least internally. The community response to COVID-19 was powerful in very diverse places that were hard hit by the crisis, such as Fairfield in Sydney. People pulled together to support one another through difficult times, and connected with each other from across national and cultural backgrounds. This has been a valuable source of strength in diverse communities, helping them pull through the crisis together and defy wider perceptions of blame for the impact of the pandemic.

> "We have seen during COVID in Fairfield and in other places, communities actually supporting each other, helping each other, people helping their neighbours, community members, making sure that other people who got COVID, or who could not go and buy food, they get food. Some people cook for other people who may not be able to cook for themselves. And so people stepped up to support others, and get supported through that period of time." (Local government employee, Fairfield, NSW)

Community services are working better since COVID-19

For several interviewees working in the community services sector, positive outcomes have also flowed through to how they run their services and connect with their communities. In their experience, people in need are now more likely to come forward and seek support. This has been especially beneficial in diverse communities where social and cultural constraints have traditionally been a barrier to people accessing some types of services.

> "People are disclosing a lot more. So some members from cultural communities that tend to keep things quite discreet or hidden because of the shame factor are now bringing letters to me and saying, 'Look, we really need help and assistance', perhaps around a son that might be in jail for drug issues and things like that." (Community services employee, Port Adelaide Enfield, SA)

Since the pandemic, community services are also learning the importance of working together. They now have a greater sense of the need to collaborate to ensure they meet the needs of the people they work with. One interviewee reported that organisations in her community appeared to be less siloed than before and more willing to work in partnership towards meeting community needs. The greater sense of collaboration offers a powerful model for how services can work within their communities in future.

> "I think that for ourselves as an organisation, it reinforced that critical importance of working with, as opposed to doing for, the community. That we really need community members involved to be champions, to be leaders, to be informing the best way services can be designed and configured for their own community. I think COVID's just absolutely highlighted that across every tier of government, across all services. That our community has the answers and let's ensure that we always have that front and centre in everything we do." (Local government employee, Hume, VIC)

Mounting pressures are having an impact on mental well-being

People and communities are currently faced with a mounting set of challenges. While concern over the health impacts of COVID-19 is generally declining, lingering issues related to mental health, social connectedness, and child development have combined with big emerging issues, like the economy and cost of living. So, while the interviews revealed that many people are embracing the freedom to engage once again in the wider community, there is a sense that community life in Australia has not yet returned to how it was before the pandemic.

Personal and financial pressures are accumulating as we seem to move from one crisis to the next. The sense emerging from the interviews is that people are fatigued. For many of the people we spoke to, mounting pressures are damaging to personal mental health and well-being, and the connectedness and cohesion of local communities.

> "I think people are definitely fatigued emotionally, financially, and in a social sense as well. I think resilience is a word that's been used to death and people want to stab someone if they use it. But in [the] absence of an alternative, I think that there has been a real test of people's capacity to bounce back." (Community sector worker, Toowoomba, QLD)

COVID-19 is having a lasting impact on child development

In 2021, a number of interviewees warned that they were seeing developmental impacts brought about by the pandemic on children in their community. In 2022, a number of interviewees raised these developmental impacts as a key challenge. Those working in children's services and the education sector reported repercussions from the pandemic on children's social and physical development, including delayed development of social skills such as playing with others, sharing, negotiating, or turn-taking, and struggles with physical activities such as navigating play equipment, playing sport, or play in general.

> "The social skills were zero. I can tell you that the kids had forgotten how to play a game of basketball together. How do you share when you've been stuck at home? Some of the kids were born in COVID and hadn't left the house for the last two years. That's a lot of the kids at playgroup." (Education sector employee, Greater Dandenong, VIC)

Economic pressures are adding to personal and community stress

Economic pressures and the rising cost of living were the most reported challenges faced by communities in 2022. Across the country, the rising costs of food, housing, and other household necessities are causing an increase in financial stress. Housing affordability was a major issue raised across all communities. The lack of affordable housing has been a longstanding issue for most communities and has been compounded recently by sharply rising rent and mortgage costs.

Of greatest concern, economic pressures are creating severe deprivation in the view of many of the people we spoke to. Interviewees across several communities reported an increase in severe financial hardship, leading to increasing homelessness, including rough sleeping. Food insecurity is another major concern and area of growing deprivation. People involved in the delivery of food relief have noted a sharp increase in demand for their services.

> "The most concerning parts at the moment are food relief. We've seen families really increasing the need for food support and it might be because they've lost jobs during the pandemic or the increasing costing of living, bills, anything else... We are giving out more and more food boxes and food relief." (Education sector employee, Hume, VIC)

Some of the people we spoke to made direct links between growing economic pressures and declining social cohesion, arguing that financial pressures and strain were negatively affecting social interactions and connections in their communities.

> "All these things put pressure on, I would imagine, social cohesion, because if people are not comfortable in their own everyday life, it would have, I would imagine, a direct impact on how people are interacting and how people go about engaging with each other." (Local government employee, Fairfield, NSW)

Communities are optimistic about the future, but there are reservations

When asked in 2022 whether their communities would emerge stronger, weaker, or go back to how they were before the pandemic, interviewees still tended to respond positively. However, the strong sense of optimism that characterised the 2021 interviews was notably absent from this year's responses. Interviewees in every community qualified their response. They noted the strength of their community and the resilience it had shown during the pandemic, yet there was a notable "but" to their belief that their community would emerge stronger.

> "So COVID, inflation, the economy, what's going to happen next? COVID last year traumatised the community, and I don't think people have recovered, but people have had to move on, because there are other more pressing things that needed to be addressed. It's like when you are in a war situation, you run from one fight to another fight, to another fight. You are just running, you are not really dealing with the trauma." (Local government employee, Fairfield, NSW)

Addressing the challenges: where are the gaps?

Most people we spoke to said there are sufficient services in place to meet the current needs of their communities. However, some interviewees felt there were still gaps. Some community members still face language barriers that prevent them accessing services. Interviewees also describe a need for more culturally appropriate support services in areas such as mental health and family violence support. One noted the ongoing vulnerability of individuals from refugee and First Nations backgrounds in her community, due to their disengagement from support services.

Another gap identified by interviewees was that the support services available to address challenges were sometimes in the 'wrong format' to really address community needs. For instance, online service provision was really useful and convenient for those with easy access to technology and data, but for those with poor access or little digital literacy, online service provision provided a barrier to access.

Conclusion

Our interviews with people from across the country give valuable meaning and context to the survey results. They provide further compelling evidence that social cohesion in Australia is at a critical juncture.

People and communities came together to support each other during the pandemic, helping to explain why social cohesion increased, especially within neighbourhoods and local communities. However, economic and financial pressures, combined with the lingering social and mental health effects of the pandemic, are weighing on social cohesion, impacting the the connectedness of individuals within and across communities.

While this threatens to continue dragging social cohesion down, we can hope to restore and increase cohesion. The interviews suggest we can achieve this by drawing on the strength and resilience of individuals, communities, and the increasingly interconnected services sector, addressing the housing, health, and skills challenges and alleviating the effects of financial hardship and deprivation.

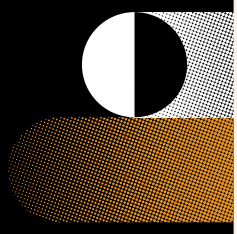
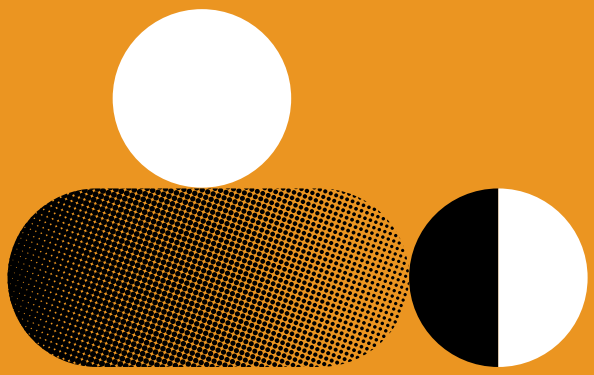


Photo by Anthony Hill on Unsplash



Conclusion

Australia experienced a sharp increase in social cohesion during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The boost to cohesion, particularly on the measure of social inclusion and justice, is indicative of the way Australians came together in the face of the pandemic and generally responded positively to government efforts to protect our health and well-being.

As the community and government response to the pandemic is scaled back, it is not unexpected that the level of cohesion is also scaled back. Indeed, the decline in overall social cohesion in 2022 leaves the historical index back where it was in 2019, before the pandemic. The decline in social cohesion since 2020 may therefore signal a return to a pre-pandemic normal — a not un-welcome position given the historically cohesive nature of Australian society.

Nevertheless, there are indicators throughout this report that suggest a return to pre-pandemic normality is not inevitable. On the positive side, indicators of interpersonal trust and neighbourhood cohesion remain high and resilient in 2022, while support for multiculturalism and diversity is high and continuing to grow. These trends possibly reflect a lasting benefit of the way in which communities came together in response to the crisis. There remains a great opportunity, therefore, to learn from what was done well during the pandemic — and what was done poorly — to maintain a stronger and more cohesive Australia post-pandemic.

Alternatively, and if not adequately addressed, the recent decline in cohesion may represent the start of a longer-term decline. Social cohesion is emerging as a key issue for countries around the world, amidst global challenges concerning the economy and the cost of living, social inequality, political division, and geopolitical instability. While Australia has fared well to date, the 2022 Scanlon Mapping Social Cohesion Survey suggests cohesion in Australia is showing signs of strain. Crucially, scores on three of the five measures of social cohesion are now lower than what they were before the pandemic. In particular, and as part of a longer-running trend, Australians report a declining sense of national pride and belonging, and a growing sense of social and economic inequality.

Indeed, social and economic inequalities continue to be a major drag on social cohesion in Australia. As shown throughout this report, financial well-being is strongly related to individual expressions and perceptions of social cohesion, with people who are struggling or 'just getting along' reporting substantially lower levels of belonging, happiness and personal well-being, and social inclusion and justice. Young adults, and people who experience discrimination on the basis of skin colour, ethnic origin, or religion, also express a weaker sense of social cohesion.

This evidence points to the need for community and government efforts to address these inequalities, and seize the wider benefit to social cohesion in doing so. Indeed, through such efforts, we can imagine an ever stronger and more cohesive Australia in the coming years.

Appendix A
The 2022 Mapping Social Cohesion Survey

The Scanlon Foundation's Mapping Social Cohesion series has been the pre-eminent source of information on social cohesion in Australia over the past 15 years. With the arrival of the 2022 survey, the value and richness of this resource in Australian public life is enhanced at a time when social cohesion at home and around the world is fragile.

The 2022 survey is the 16th in the series, following the benchmark survey in 2007 and annual surveys since 2009 (and two in 2020, after COVID-19 hit). Almost 5,800 respondents completed the 2022 survey, making it the largest in our series. The 2022 Mapping Social Cohesion survey was approved by the Australian National University Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol number 2022/166).

The first 12 surveys in the Mapping Social Cohesion series, conducted between 2007 and 2019, were administered firstly to landline telephone numbers, and then to landline and mobile numbers, employing Random Digit Dialling (RDD). In 2018 and 2019, the survey was undertaken both via RDD and the Social Research Centre's Life in Australia™ panel. Since 2020, the survey has been undertaken exclusively on Life in Australia™.

Life in Australia™ was established in 2016 and is Australia's first and only national probability-based online panel. In 2022, Life in Australia™ had 7,340 active members. Panel members have been retired and new panel members recruited since 2018 using a combination of methodologies, including a sample drawn from the Geocoded National Address File. In August and September 2021, the panel was further expanded with 3,715 new panellists being recruited. Panel members are initially recruited via their landline or mobile phone and paid $20 to join the panel. They are offered a further incentive of $10 for each questionnaire completed, paid by gift voucher, deposit into a PayPal account, or charitable donation.

Unlike most research panels, Life in Australia™ includes people both with and without internet access. Those without internet access and those who are not comfortable completing surveys over the internet are able to complete surveys by telephone. For the 2022 Mapping Social Cohesion survey, 97 per cent of responses were provided online and 3 per cent by telephone.

The parallel administration in 2018 and 2019 of the Mapping Social Cohesion Survey via both Random Digit Dialling (RDD) and the Life in Australia™ panel provides an understanding of the impact of the data collection mode on the results.

Generally speaking, Life in Australia™ members report lower levels of social cohesion than were reported through the RDD survey. One of the leading potential explanations for this difference relates to the shift from an interviewer-administered telephone survey to an almost exclusively self-administered online survey. This shift reduces some potential sources of interviewer-related bias, particularly social desirability bias (i.e., the tendency for some respondents to give socially desirable answers or avoid socially undesirable ones when providing responses to an interviewer). In this case, the shift to Life in Australia™ helps to strengthen the accuracy of the results.

Sample

The Mapping Social Cohesion study provides an Australian archive of unparalleled scope in measuring and tracking people's attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions related to social cohesion. A total of 20,200 respondents completed the telephone administered (RDD) national surveys between 2007 and 2019. An additional 21,795 responses have been provided via the Life in Australia™ panel between 2018 and 2022. In total, more than 41,000 national surveys have been completed since inception. There were 5,757 respondents in the 2022 survey.[2]

The large survey sample in 2022 provides a very strong basis for measuring and understanding social cohesion across all of Australia. With a sample of 5,757 respondents, and after taking account of the survey weighting described below, we can be 95 per cent confident that the value of any proportion for the

2 Anonymised individual-level data is progressively uploaded to the Australian Data Archive (https://dataverse.ada.edu.au/dataverse/scs) and will be accessible to approved researchers.

entire Australian population is at most 1.7 percentage points different from the survey results. For example, 52 per cent of the weighted sample said they feel a sense of belonging in Australia to a great extent in 2022. From this result, we can infer with 95 per cent confidence that the true proportion for all of Australia is between 50 per cent and 54 per cent. Such a narrow range provides for highly precise estimates in measuring and tracking social cohesion at a national level.

The large sample this year also expands the capacity of the survey to measure social cohesion at subnational levels. In this 2022 report, this strength has been used to shed new light on the differences in the social cohesion expressed by individuals and groups in society.

Questionnaire design

The 2022 national survey employed the questionnaire structure common in the 2007 to 2021 surveys, together with questions on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The questionnaire was comprised of:

- 91 substantive questions in 10 modules
- 14 demographic questions, plus 14 demographic variables obtained from the panel member profiles.

In 2022, two new questions were added to the survey, on people's attitudes to major challenges facing Australia and attitudes to the proposed Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

Questionnaire administration

The 2022 survey was administered from 11-24 July 2022. The online survey took an average of 21.8 minutes to complete, while the telephone survey took 30.7 minutes on average. Of the 7,340 panel members invited to complete the survey, 5,757 did so, giving a panel response rate of 78 per cent. Of the total panel, 2.1 per cent refused to start or complete the survey, 16 per cent did not respond or make any contact in response to the survey invitation, and 3.6 per cent did not complete the survey for other reasons.

Weighting of survey results

Survey data are weighted to adjust for the chance of being sampled in the survey and to ensure the demographic and socioeconomic profile of respondents mirrors the Australian population as closely as possible.

This involves assigning each respondent a weight so that the sum of weights across a set of demographic indicators line up with benchmarks set by population and census data created by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The benchmarks included in the weighting solution are: state or territory of residence, whether lives in a capital city or elsewhere in the state, gender, age, highest education (bachelor's degree or below), language spoken at home (English or other), dwelling tenure, and household composition. Administration and weighting details are provided in the online technical report.

Appendix B
Conceptualising and measuring social cohesion

Social cohesion as a concept has a long tradition in academic enquiry and remains fundamentally important to understanding the role of consensus and conflict in society.

In a review of the social cohesion literature, David Schiefer and Jolanda van der Noll note "social cohesion is not a contemporary construct but is rooted in a long history of theoretical debates on the question of what constitutes social order in a society and why it can be maintained even in time of social changes" (2017: 583). It was a central concern of Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), one of the founders of sociology, who studied society's ability to remain connected throughout various stages of development, from feudal, village-based societies to the complexities of the modern world.

In Durkheim's understanding, pre-modern agrarian societies were based around "mechanical solidarity" — social bonds that arise from a common identity where individuals lead similar lives, perform similar types of work and live under a common set of rules and religious beliefs.

However, in the modern, urbanised world, this commonality no longer operates. Instead, modern societies are held together by the interdependence of their members. In an industrial society, labour is divided, and each worker only produces a fraction of the goods required to sustain life. This creates a dependence among members of society for goods and services. In Durkheim's conceptualisation, this interdependence is termed "organic solidarity", likened to the way organs in the human body depend upon each other. Trust in strangers — people we do not know but on whom we are reliant, just as they are reliant on us – is essential to the functioning of modern societies (Larsen 2014).

Unlike pre-modern societies, modern societies are more fragile, with greater potential for conflict and fracturing, a consequence of the breaking of social bonds, loss of common beliefs, and the fragility of existence. Durkheim developed the concept of 'anomie' to describe the instability resulting from the breakdown of common standards and values, leaving lives characterised by a sense of futility, emptiness, and despair, or protest and rebellion.

In succession to Durkheim, social cohesion has been a major interest of leading researchers in sociology, social psychology, and political science. The aforementioned literature review covering work since the 1990s found "enormous attention" in academic and policy-directed research to social cohesion, with the publication of some 350 articles, books, reports, and policy papers (Schiefer and Noll 2017). However, there is currently no definition or conceptualisation of social cohesion that is broadly accepted.

The Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion

As every year, the 2022 Mapping Social Cohesion report publishes estimates of social cohesion based on the Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion. Developed by Professor Andrew Markus from Monash University and colleagues, the index has been used to measure social cohesion in Australia since 2007 and is now one of the most important and long-running barometers of Australia's social well-being.

The Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion is constructed by aggregating responses to 17 survey questions on the Mapping Social Cohesion survey. Responses are organised into the following five core measures or domains of social cohesion, three of which are primarily ideational, one behavioural, and one distributive:

- **Belonging:** the sense of pride and belonging people have in Australia and in Australian life and culture.
- **Worth:** the degree of emotional and material well-being across society, as measured through levels of happiness and financial satisfaction.
- **Social inclusion and justice:** perceptions of economic fairness in Australian society and trust in the Federal Government.
- **Participation:** active engagement in political activities and the political process, including through voting, signing a petition, contacting Members of Parliament, and attending protests.
- **Acceptance and rejection:** attitudes to immigrant diversity, support for ethnic minorities, and experience of discrimination.

While social cohesion will necessarily remain a contested concept, with different understandings informed by political values, there are three core dimensions, one or more of which can usually be found in definitions. These dimensions are:

1. **IDEATIONAL:** Social cohesion is understood as an intangible, subjective phenomenon. It is concerned with the extent of [a] shared values, mutual respect, and acceptance of difference, as well as [b] trust between people (horizontal) and trust in institutions (vertical). In the conceptualisation of social cohesion there has been a shift in emphasis from "consensus regarding lifestyle, beliefs, and values as an essential element of social cohesion to the notion that cohesion strongly relies on the acceptance of, and constructive dealing with diversity and … conflicts" and the willingness of individuals to cooperate and work together to achieve collective goals (Schiefer and Noll 2017).
2. **BEHAVIOURAL:** in the view of some theorists, it is essential that values and attitudes lead to action such as political and social involvement, including the provision of voluntary assistance. Action is also evident in the relational dimension, in the ties between individuals, the development of networks, and cooperation to achieve goals for mutual benefit (Chan et al. 2006).
3. **DISTRIBUTIVE:** The distributive dimension is actualised in the distribution of physical, economic, educational, social, and cultural resources. It includes the range of opportunities available to individuals to access education, health services, and employment that provides adequate income.

In 2021, the Social Research Centre was commissioned to re-develop the Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion. The objective was to enhance the robustness and statistical validity of the measurement of social cohesion and provide greater capacity to examine how expressed levels of cohesion vary across individuals and groups in society.

The re-developed index is comprised of an expanded set of 29 questions across the five domains of social cohesion. As described in the online technical report, the new index is based on a rigorous and robust methodology. It is designed to build on the original index design and strengthen our understanding of social cohesion. The particular areas in which the new index expands this understanding are as follows:

- The original index design measured social cohesion in the Belonging domain as the sense of pride and belonging in Australia and Australian life and culture. The new index measures belonging at national and neighbourhood levels, as well as on a personal level through individual social connectedness.
- 'Participation' in the original index design exclusively refers to political participation, or engagement in political activities and the political process. The new index combines engagement in political activities with measures of participation in social, community, religious, civic, and political groups.

The re-developed Index of Social Cohesion provides new power in 2022 to examine how social cohesion varies across society. In this year's report, new analyses explores how social cohesion varies across individuals and groups in society, revealing important information on the sources of social inequality and social exclusion in society. However, several questions in the new index were only asked for the first time in 2021. For this reason, the original index design based on the smaller set of 17 questions continues to be used in this report to track social cohesion over time and examine how overall social cohesion in Australia has changed since 2007.

The survey questions used to construct the historical and new indices of social cohesion are listed in Table A.1. More information on how they are constructed are provided in the online technical report.

Table A.1 Domains and items in the new and historical Indices of Social Cohesion

DOMAIN AND QUESTION	HISTORICAL INDEX	NEW INDEX
Domain 1: Sense of belonging		
To what extent do you take pride in the Australian way of life and culture?	Yes	Yes
To what extent do you have a sense of belonging in Australia?	Yes	Yes
Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?		
'In the modern world, maintaining the Australian way of life and culture is important'	Yes	No
'I feel like I belong in my neighbourhood'	No	Yes
'My neighbourhood has a strong sense of community'	No	Yes
How often do you feel isolated from others?	No	Yes
How safe do you feel at home by yourself during the day?	No	Yes
Domain 2: Sense of worth		
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your present financial situation?	Yes	Yes
To what extent do you feel that people treat you with respect?	No	Yes
Taking all things into consideration, would you say that over the last year you have been very happy, happy, unhappy, or very unhappy?	Yes	Yes
During the past 30 days, about how often did you feel the things you do in your life were worthwhile?	No	Yes
Over the last 12 months, how often is the following statement true... 'You / your household went without meals because there wasn't enough money for food'	No	Yes
Domain 3: Social inclusion and justice		
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?		
'Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life'	Yes	Yes
'In Australia today, the gap between those with high incomes and those with low incomes is too large'	Yes	No
'People living on low incomes in Australia receive enough financial support from the government'	No	Yes
'Overall, everyone in Australia has a fair chance of getting the jobs they seek'	No	Yes
'Elections are fair'	No	Yes
How often do you think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people?	Yes	No
How often do you think government leaders in Australia abuse their power?	No	Yes
In your opinion, how often do the courts make fair, impartial decisions based on the evidence made available to them?	No	Yes

DOMAIN AND QUESTION	HISTORICAL INDEX	NEW INDEX
Domain 4: Participation		
Please indicate which, if any, of the following you have done over the last three years or so?		
1. Voted in an election	Yes	No
2. Signed a petition	Yes	No
3. Written or spoken to a Federal or State Member of Parliament	Yes	Yes
4. Joined a boycott of a product or company	Yes	Yes
5. Attended a protest, march, or demonstration	Yes	No
6. Posted or shared anything about politics online	No	Yes
In the last 12 months, have you been actively involved in any community support groups?	No	Yes
In the last 12 months, have you been actively involved in any social or religious groups?	No	Yes
In the last 12 months, have you been actively involved in any civic or political groups?	No	Yes
In the last 4 weeks, did you help anyone (not living with you) with any of the following activities? • Providing transport or running errands • Any teaching, coaching, or practical advice • Providing any emotional support	No	Yes
Domain 5: Acceptance and rejection		
How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?		
'The relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the wider Australian community is very important for Australia as a nation'	No	Yes
'It is important for Indigenous histories and cultures to be included in the school curriculum'	No	Yes
'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger'	Yes	Yes
'Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions'	Yes	Yes
Have you experienced discrimination because of your skin colour, ethnic origin, or religion over the last 12 months?	Yes	No
In three or four years, do you think that your life in Australia will be much improved, a little improved, about the same, a little worse, or much worse?	Yes	No

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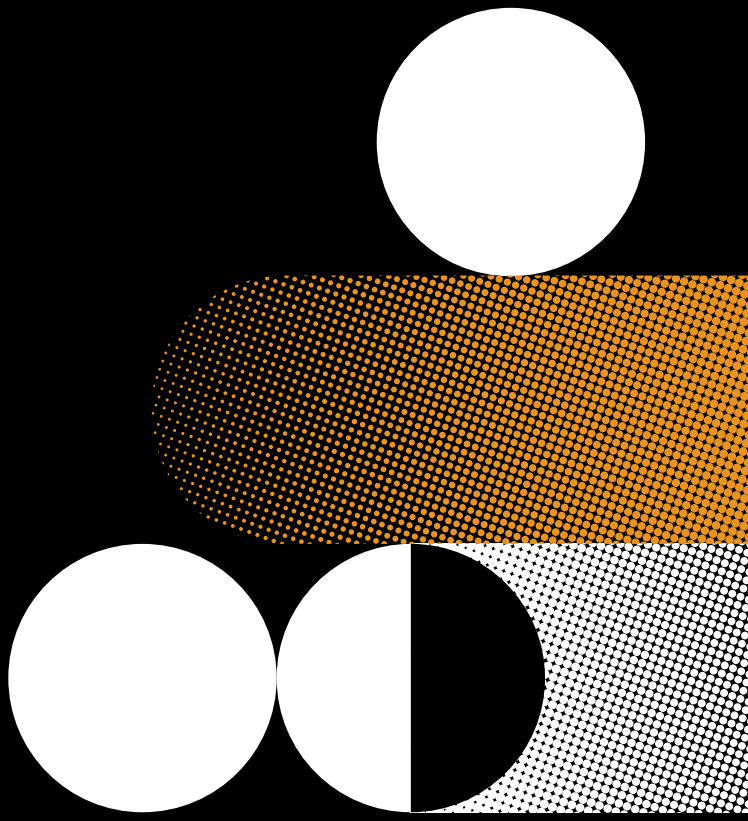

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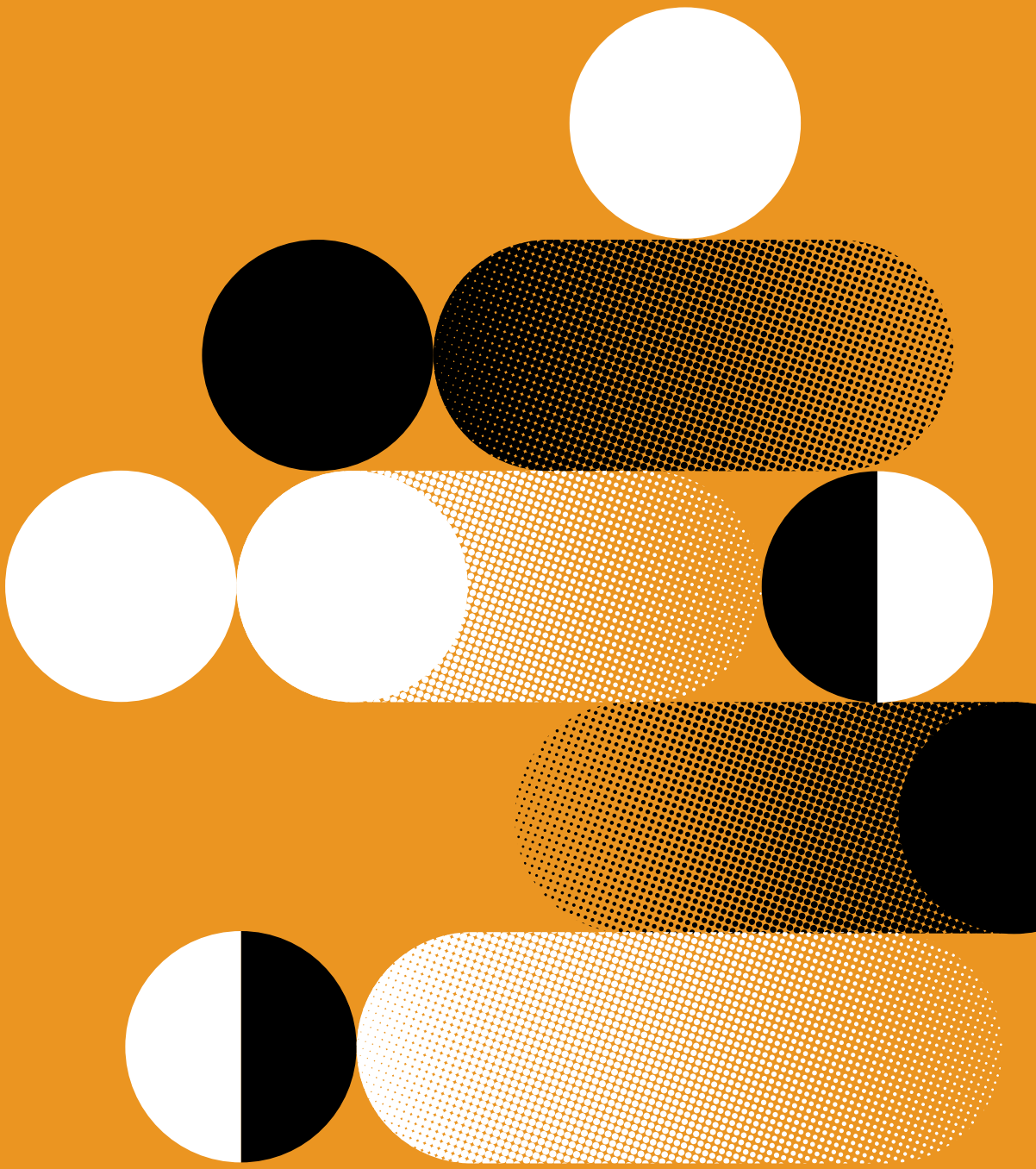

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@Scanlon_Inst
info@scanloninstitute.org.au
scanloninstitute.org.au

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