

# THE IPSOS CLIMATE CHANGE REPORT 2023

July 2023



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GAME CHANGERS



# Every year, Ipsos surveys more than 1000 Australians about their views on climate change

This is the 17<sup>th</sup> edition of the Ipsos Climate Change Report. This year's fieldwork was conducted between 24 and 31 May 2023.

Several relevant events have occurred since our last report was released in April 2022:

- Significant flooding events continued to occur on the east coast of Australia.
- The Labor Party won the Federal Election in May 2022. It has since set an emissions reduction target of 43% below 2005 levels by 2030. The previous target was 26% to 28%.
- Inflation climbed rapidly, peaking at 7.8% in the December quarter of 2022. This, along with increasing interest rates, has precipitated increasing cost of living pressures on Australian households.
- The IPCC's *AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023* was released in March 2023. It provides a best estimate of 1.5°C in global warming between the late 2020s and mid-2030s.

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## Key findings for 2023



**Renewable energy** remains the environmental issue Australians would most like to see action on.



**There is increasing consensus that climate change is already impacting Australia.** Two thirds now believe that climate change is causing more bushfires, storms and floods.



Two thirds believe that climate change presents a threat to our way of life in the next 25 years – stable compared to 2022 but **significantly higher than a decade ago.**



31% of Australians believe the **Federal Government is doing too little** to address climate change – down from 44% in 2022.



The proportion of Australians who feel that they personally can make a difference to climate change has dipped, **suggesting decreasing self-efficacy and engagement.**



**59% support the Federal Government's most recent commitment** to a 43% reduction in carbon emissions below 2005 levels.



**But confidence that the energy transition will lead to positive outcomes appears to be slipping.** The proportion of Australians who believe that the transition to renewable energy will have a positive impact on cost of living, jobs and reliability of the energy supply has dipped since 2022.



Trust is strongest in climate change information from **scientists and specialist organisations.**



Australians are most interested in learning about **climate action being taken by our governments** and how new technology is being used to reduce emissions.

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# Issues landscape

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Concern about cost of living is at its highest level in past decade.

The environment is sitting just outside the top 5 issues for Australia. It was the number 1 issue at the beginning of 2020, before the Covid-19 pandemic, and was last in the top 5 in February 2022.



Renewable energy remains the environmental issue Australians would most like to see action on, followed by climate change in general.

Action on 'sustainability' in general is less desired, with specific concerns about household waste, health of waterways, deforestation and bushfires becoming more important.



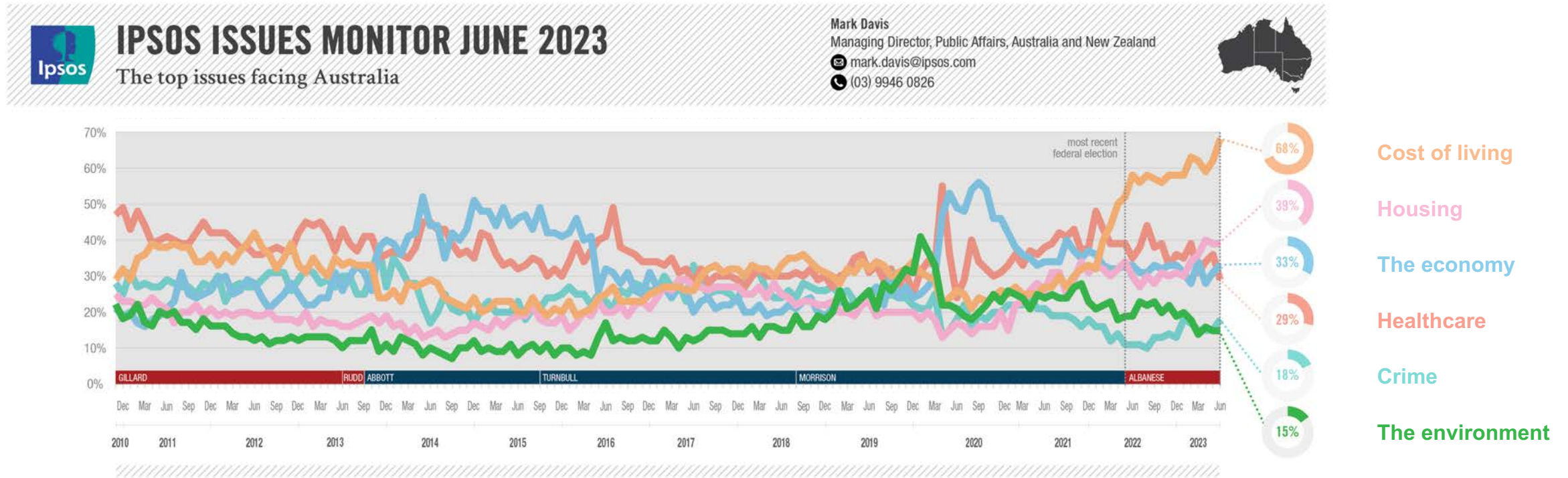
Attitudes about the causes of climate change remain stable. Half of Australians believe climate change is entirely or mainly caused by human activity.

Two thirds still believe that climate change presents a threat to our way of life in the next 25 years – stable compared to 2022 but significantly higher than a decade ago.

# Cost of living is the dominant issue for Australians at present

Each month the Ipsos Issues Monitor ask 1,000 Australians to select the 3 most important issues facing the nation. The top 5 issues between April and June 2023 are shown below, along with *the environment*, which is ranked number 6.

The environment is sitting just outside the top 5 issues for Australia – it was the number 1 issue at the beginning of 2020 before the Covid-19 pandemic and was last in the top 5 in February 2022.



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This research was conducted by Ipsos, on its own behalf. Approx 1,000 interviews per month were conducted via online panel between April and June 2023 (5 - 6 April n = 1000 / 3 - 6 May n = 1000 / 7 - 11 June n = 1000) among Australian adults aged 18+.  
Data has been weighted to represent the adult Australian population. This research is compliant with the Australian Polling Council Quality Mark standards: <https://www.austrianpollingcouncil.com/>.  
A long methodology disclosure statement is available here: <https://www.ipsos.com/en-au/polling-methodology-disclosure-statements>



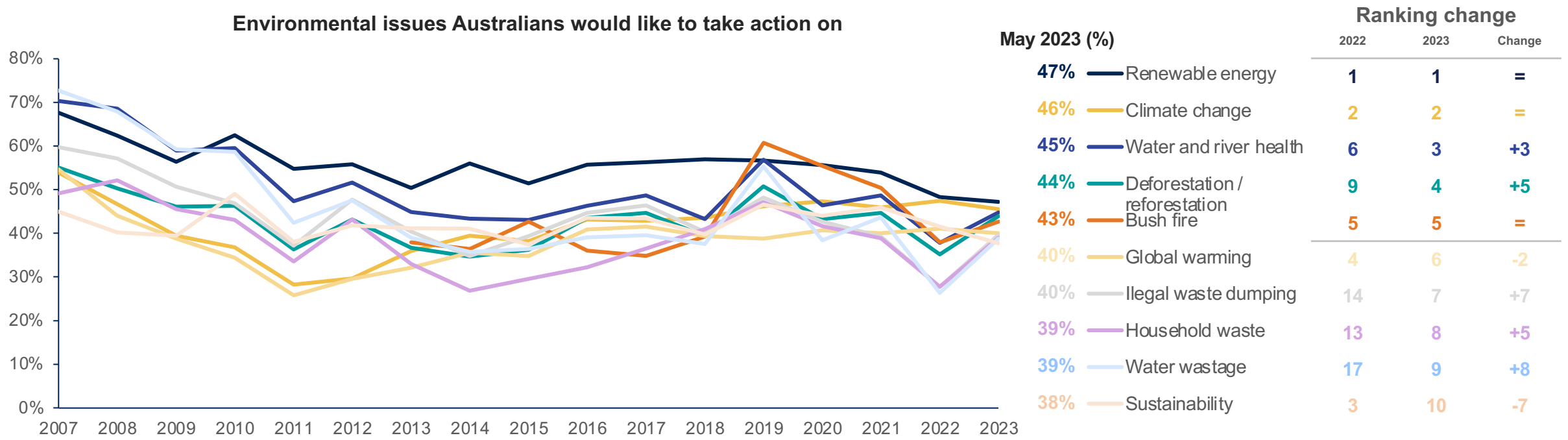
# Desire to take action on climate change is stable. Development of renewable energy remains an obvious solution for Australians.

*Climate change* remains the second most important environmental issue Australians select as an area for action, with close to half indicating they would like to see action taken on it. However, *Global warming* is also selected by 40% (ranked 6<sup>th</sup>). Renewable energy, the perennial favourite, remains the top priority.

*Ecosystem health* appears to be an increasing concern this year. Desire for action on *water and river health*, *deforestation* and *bush fire* has increased, rounding out the top 5 issues.

Additional sharp increases in desire for action on *illegal dumping*, *household waste* and *water wastage*, have contributed to *sustainability* dropping from 3<sup>rd</sup> rank to 10<sup>th</sup>. This change may indicate increasing literacy or focus around the specifics of sustainable consumption.

*Flood* and *drought* have dropped out of the top 10 completely, although it should be noted that concern about this issues has not dropped significantly – rather, the sharp increase in the above mentioned issues has pushed them down the ranking.



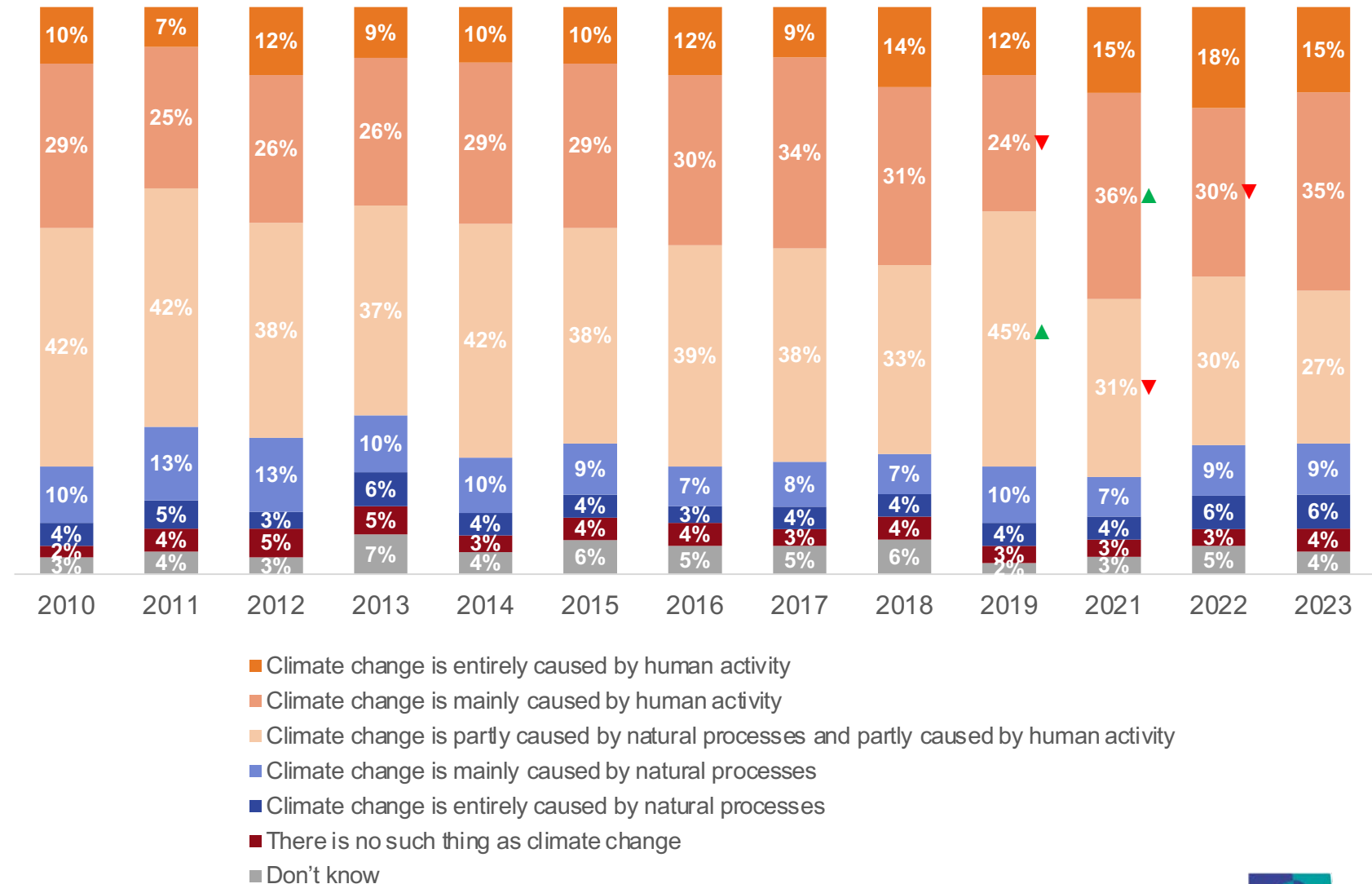
# Perceptions of the causes of climate change

No significant changes in perception of the causes of climate change are observed in 2023.

The longer-term trend shows increasing acceptance of climate change being mainly or entirely caused by human activity.

However, the proportion who believe climate change is not real or is mainly caused by natural processes has been steady at 15-20% for the past decade.

Which best describes your opinion about the causes of climate change?



▲ Significantly higher than previous wave  
▼ Significantly lower than previous wave



# Perceptions of the threat and claims about climate change

More than **two thirds** of Australians are concerned about the threat of climate change to our way of life over the medium to long-term.

This is stable compared to 2022 but the trend over the longer-term is one of increasing concern.

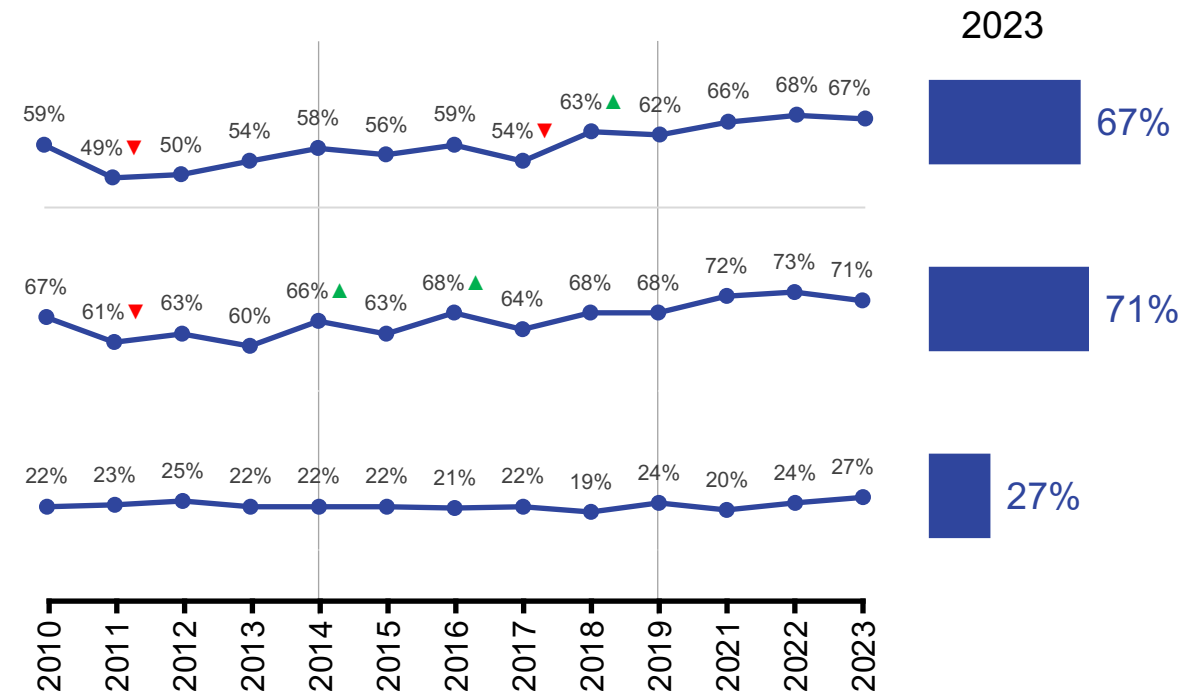
The proportion of those expressing doubts about climate change is stable (a non-statistically significant increase on 2022).

Climate change poses a serious threat to our way of life over the next 25 years

Climate change poses a serious threat to our way of life over the next 100 years

I have serious doubts about whether climate change is occurring

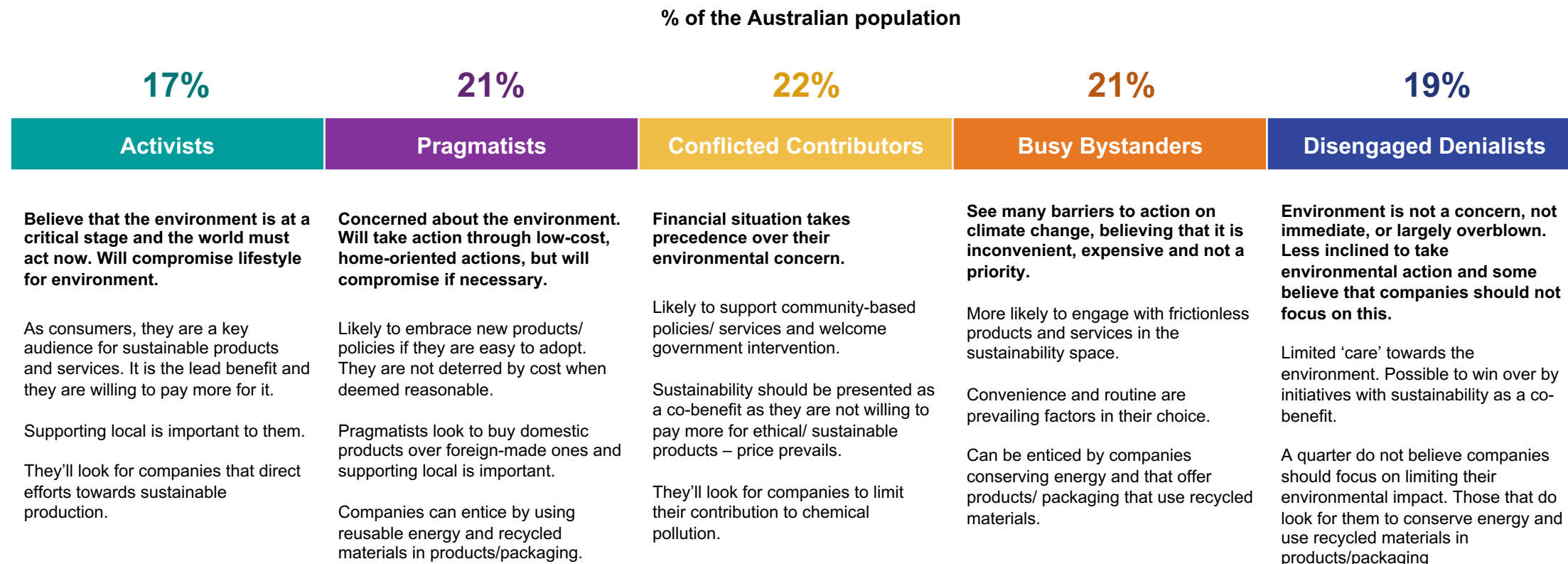
How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Total Agree + Strongly agree)





# Ipsos sustainability segmentation

This year we have utilised Ipsos' global sustainability segmentation to support our understanding of Australians' attitudes towards climate change. The segmentation was developed using a global study covering 15 countries. Five segments have been identified across two main dimensions: level of concern for the environment and how much action/intended action there is by individuals to reduce their own impact on the environment.



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# Impacts of climate change

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[Concern about climate change in general is stable](#), with 81% at least somewhat concerned about it.

Australians are most concerned about [impacts on biodiversity and people in other parts of the world](#).

We are less concerned about the [impacts on the Australian economy and our own households](#).



There is [increasing consensus among Australians that climate change is already impacting the country directly](#).

Two thirds of Australians now believe that climate change is [already causing more frequent or intense bushfires, storms and floods](#).



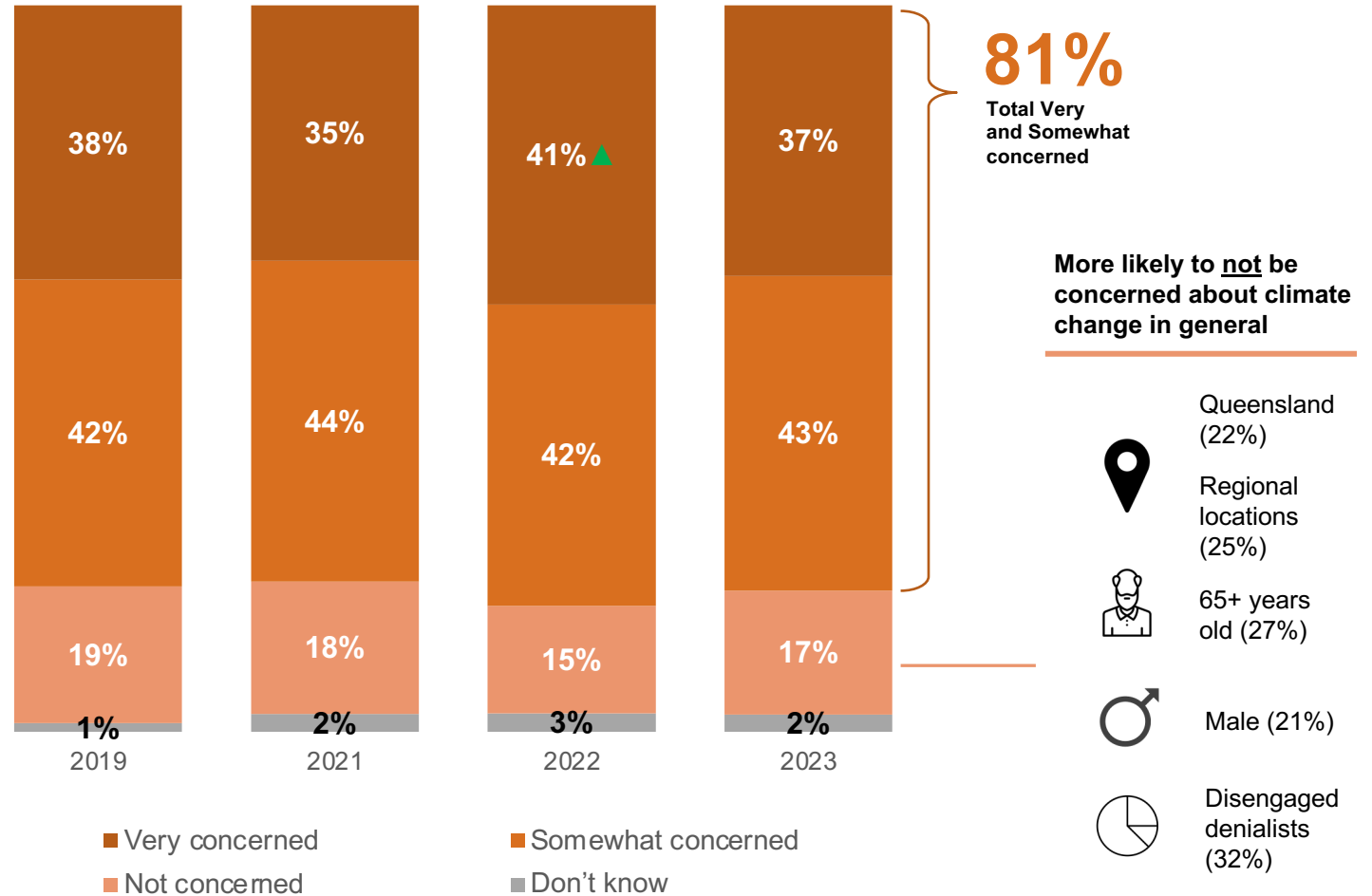
[Significant proportions of the population believe it is probable that their household will be directly impacted by severe heat \(44%\) and severe storms \(39%\) in the next 5 years](#).

Fewer think it is probable that they will be impacted by drought, fire or floods.

81% of Australians are at least somewhat concerned about climate change in general, similar to previous waves.

Concern is lower in regional locations and among older people and men.

How concerned are you about climate change in general?

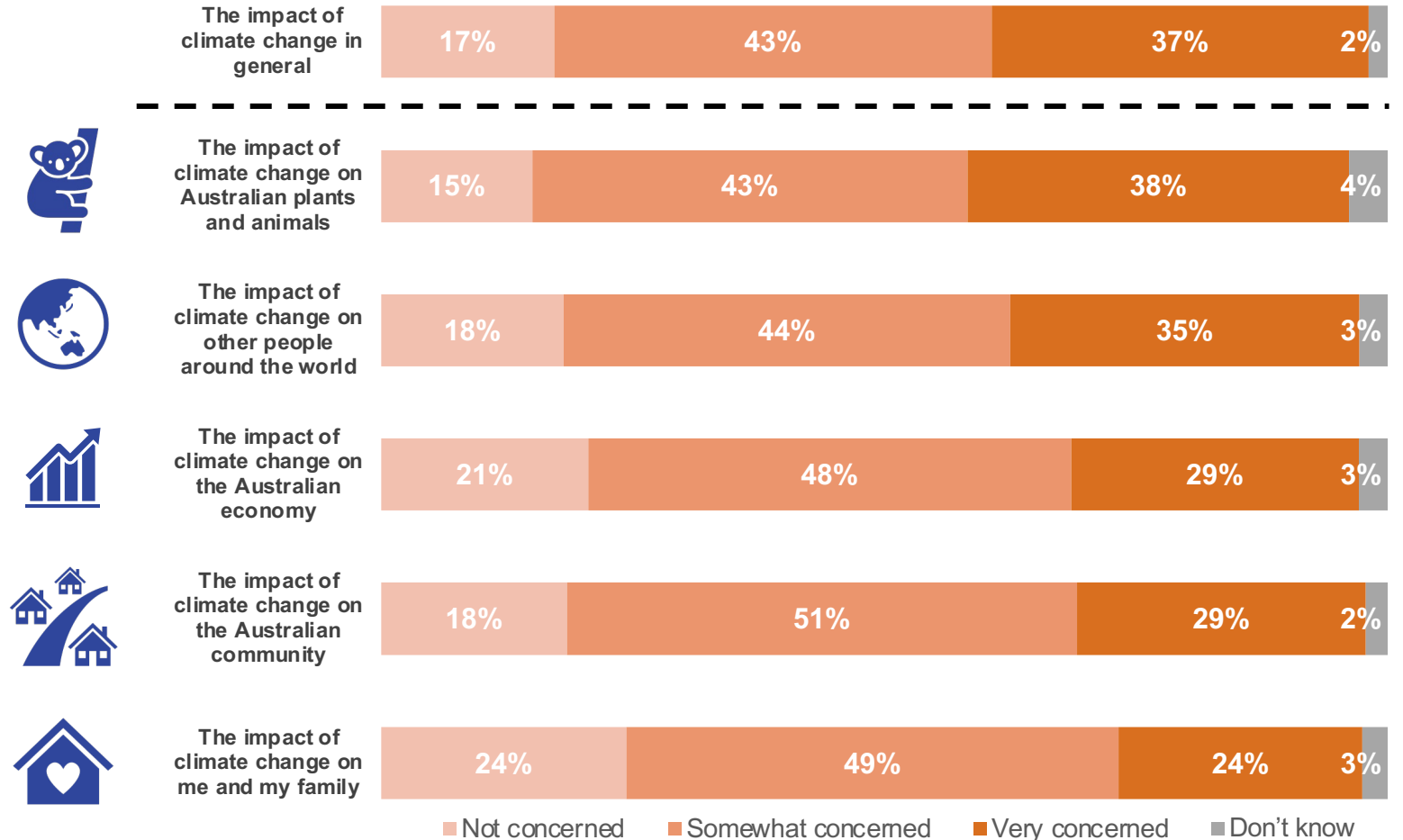


# Concern about the impacts of climate change

The highest level of concern is for Australian plants and animals, followed by people around the world.

We are less concerned about the impact on the Australian community and our own families, highlighting the fact that climate impacts remain somewhat remote in the minds of many.

## How concerned are you about...?



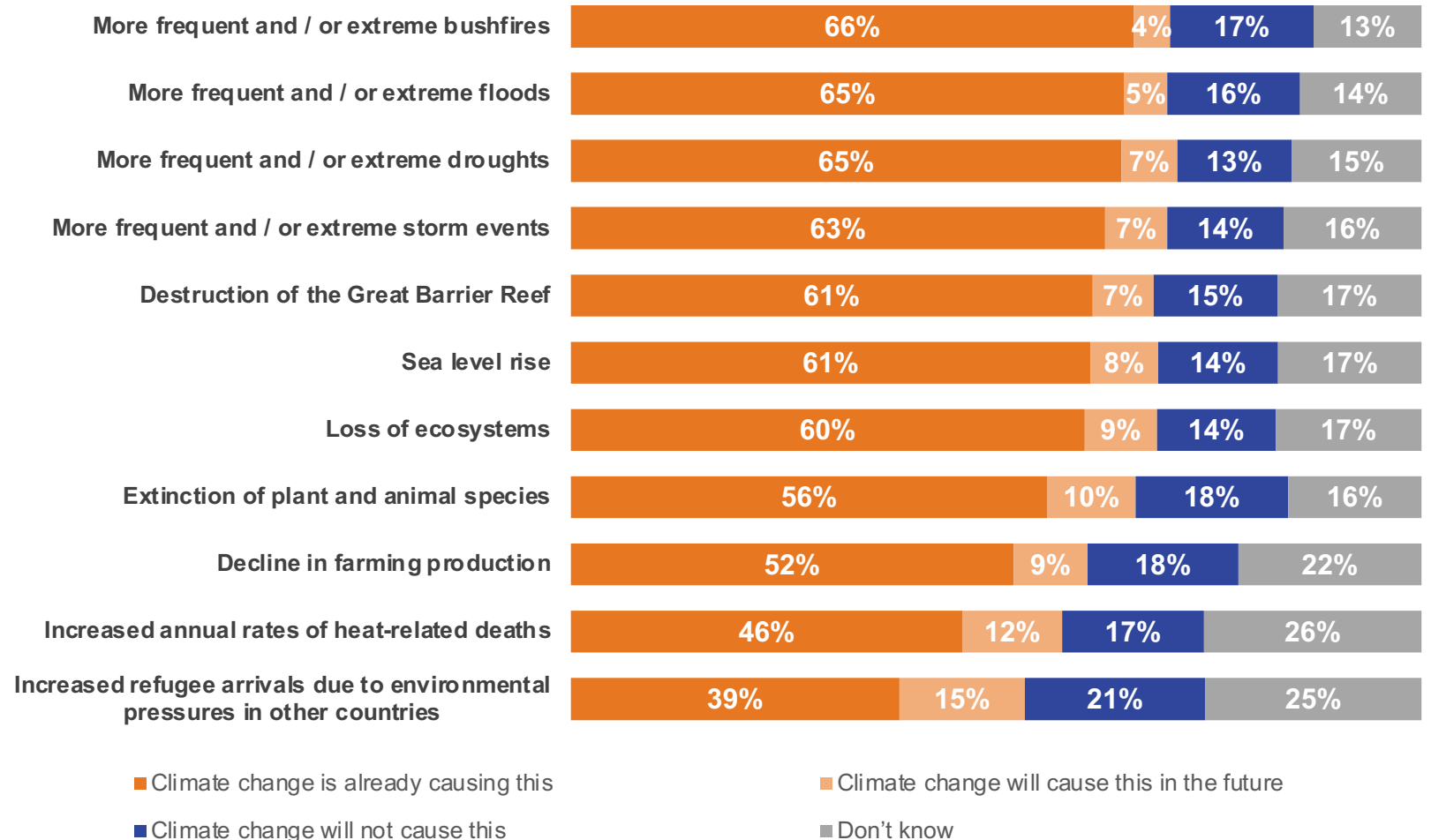
# Perceptions of timing of impacts of climate change

The majority of Australians believe that we are already being impacted by a range of natural disasters and weather events due to climate change.

More than half also believe that farm production is being impacted.

Note that, for most measures, the proportion who believe the impact will happen in the future is less than half of the proportion that who believe that climate change will not cause the impacts.

In how many years, if at all, do you think climate change will cause the following in Australia?

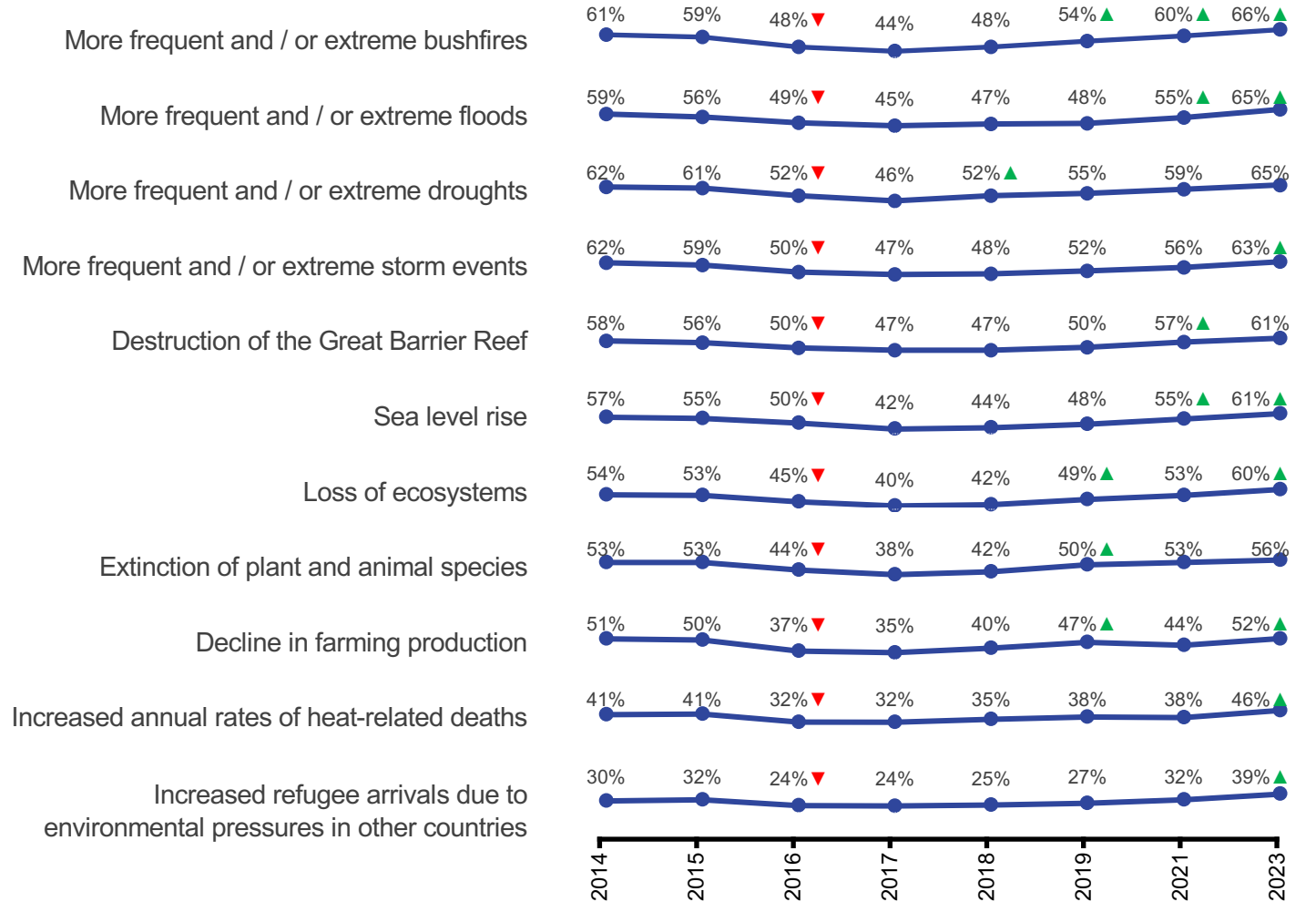


# Perceptions of timing of impacts of climate change

Perception that the impacts of climate change are already occurring have trended up over the past 5 years. This followed a major dip in 2016.

Australians are more convinced that impacts are occurring now than at any time since we started measurement in 2014.

In how many years, if at all, do you think climate change will cause the following in Australia?  
(% Climate change is already causing this)



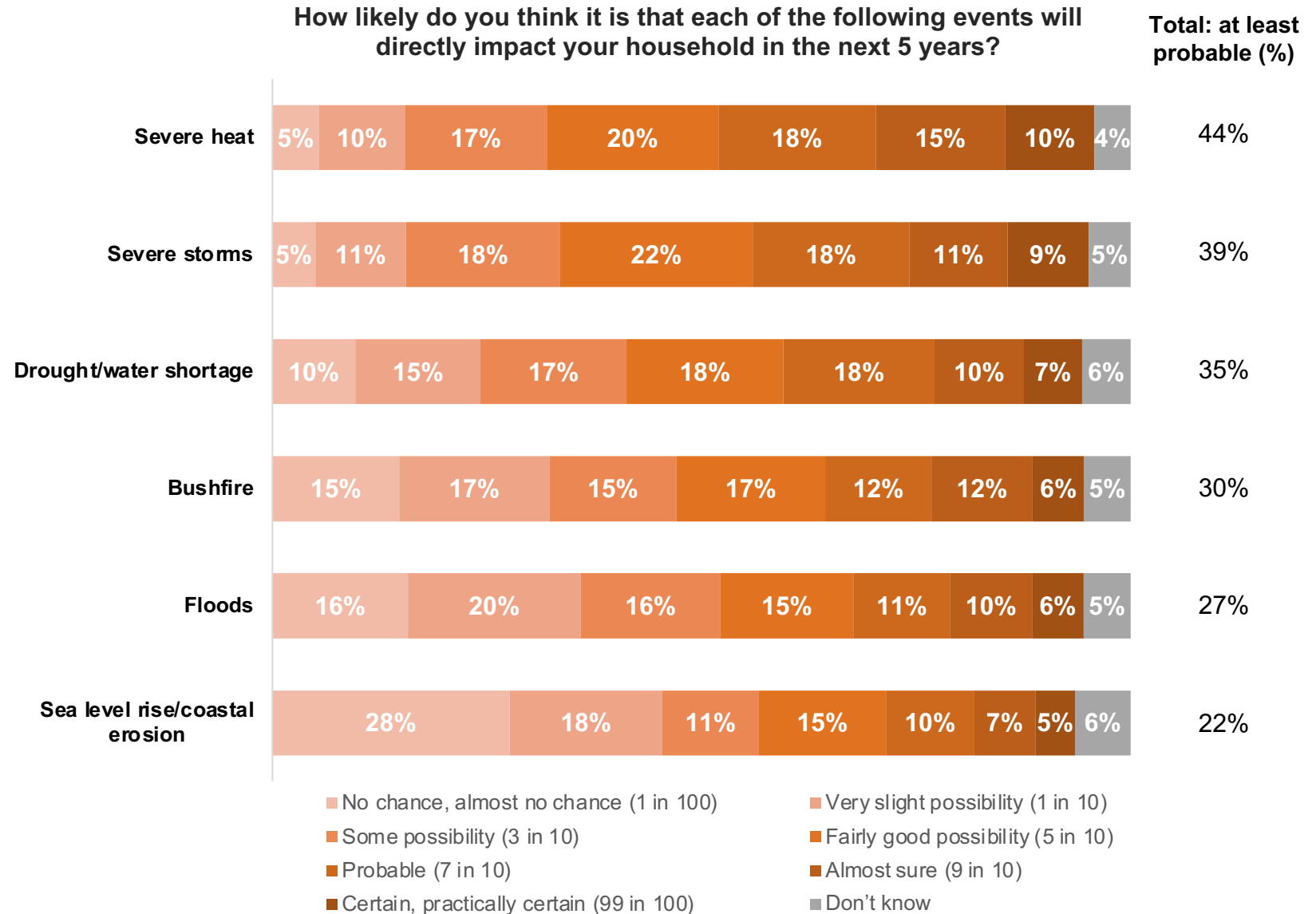
▲ Significantly higher than previous wave  
▼ Significantly lower than previous wave



# Perceived likelihood of personal impact by weather and natural disasters

Close to half of Australians think it's probable that they will be impacted by severe heat in the next 5 years. 4 in 10 are concerned about severe storms

A third think it's probable that they will be impacted by drought or bushfire.





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# Leadership and action

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64% of Australians believe Australia should be doing more to address climate change and 61% think we should be a global leader in emissions reduction.

32% believe we should only take action if all other countries do their fair share.



31% of Australians believe the Federal Government is doing too little to address climate change (down from 44% in 2022).

This compares to 17% who believe it is doing too much (10% in 2022).

Since coming to power at the 2022 Federal Election, Labor has built on its lead as the major party with the best policy on climate change.



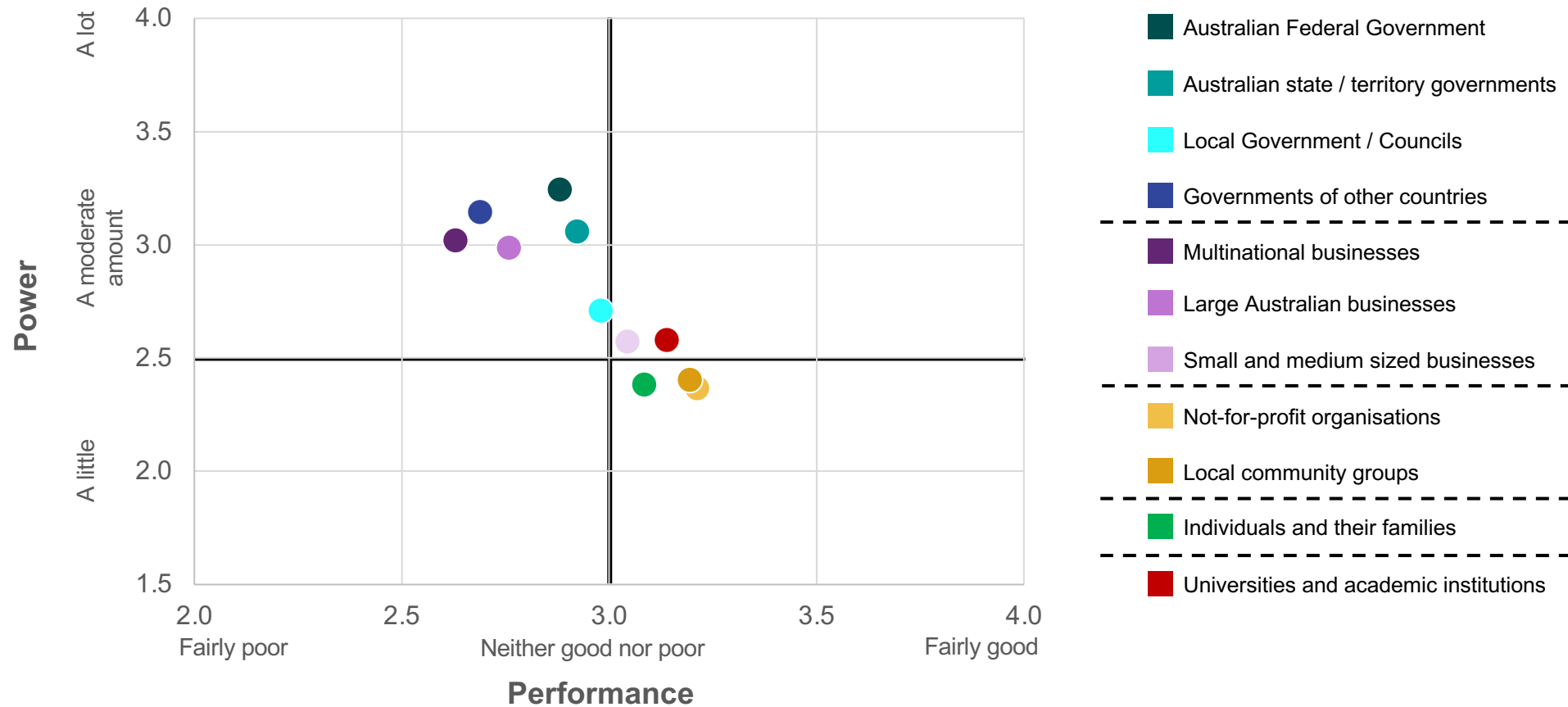
The proportion of Australians who feel that they personally can make a difference to climate change has dipped, suggesting decreasing self-efficacy and engagement (46% down from 54%).

Self-reported engagement in several sustainable behaviours is also down.

But 4 in 10 say that they would take more action if they knew everyone was doing the same.

# Governments and large businesses are seen as having the most power to influence climate change

Community organisations, not-for-profits and individuals are seen as performing better, but have less power. There are no standout performers – performance for groups cluster around being *neither good nor poor*.

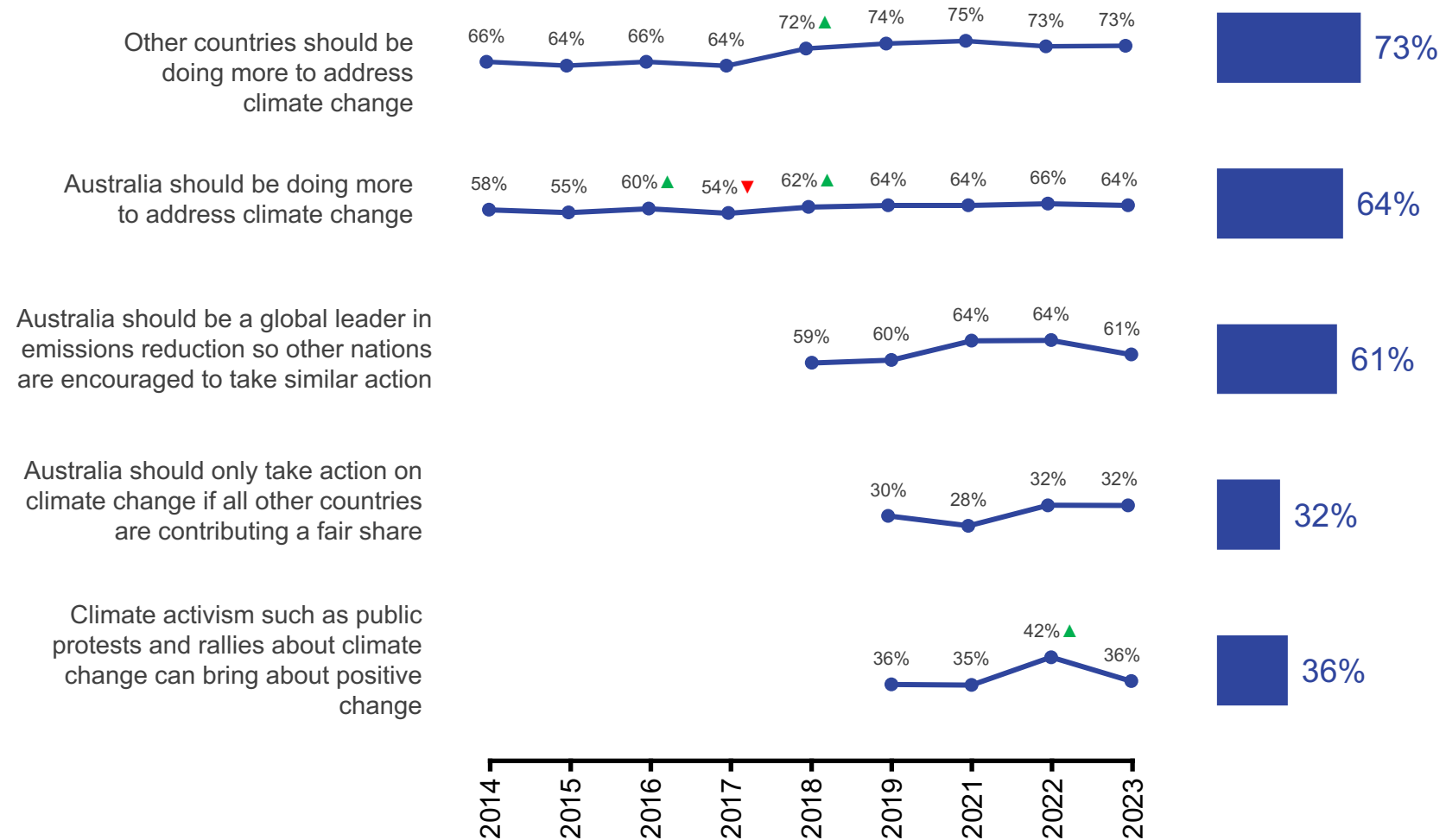


# Role of Australia in the international context

While most Australians expect other countries to be doing more to address climate change, at least half support Australia taking independent action and leading on emissions reduction.

Perceptions of the potential for activism to bring about change have returned to previous levels this year.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (% Agree + Strongly agree)

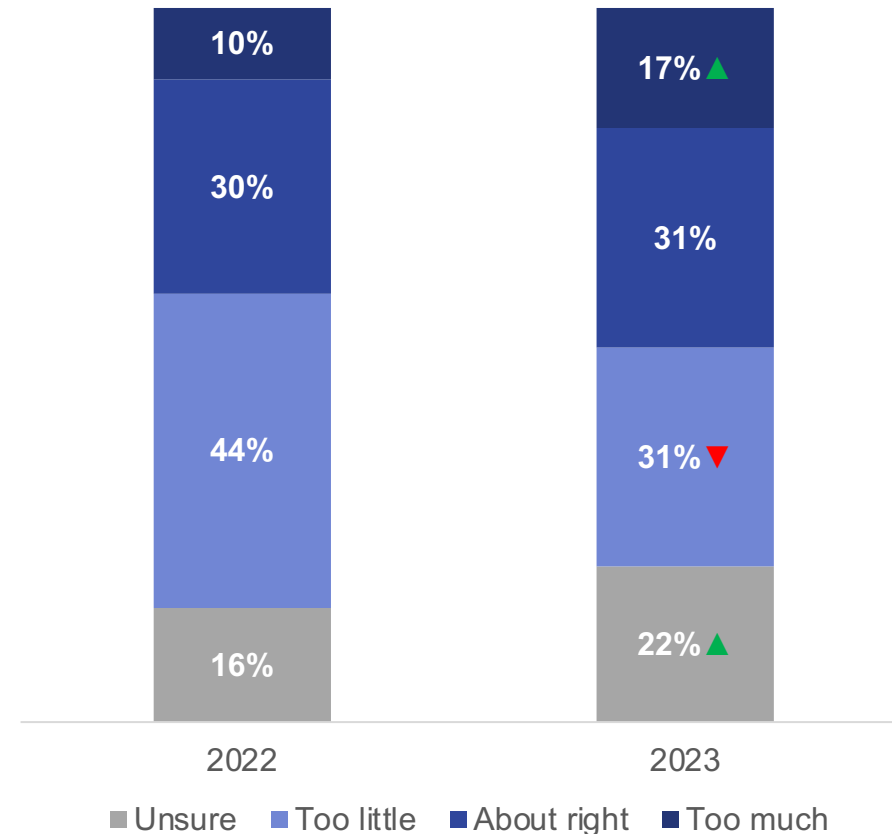


# Appropriateness of the Federal Government's measures to address climate change

The proportion of Australians who think the Federal Government is doing too little to address climate change has fallen by 13 percentage points this year.

There is a smaller 7 percentage point increase in the perceptions that it is doing too much and a 6-point increase in those who are unsure.

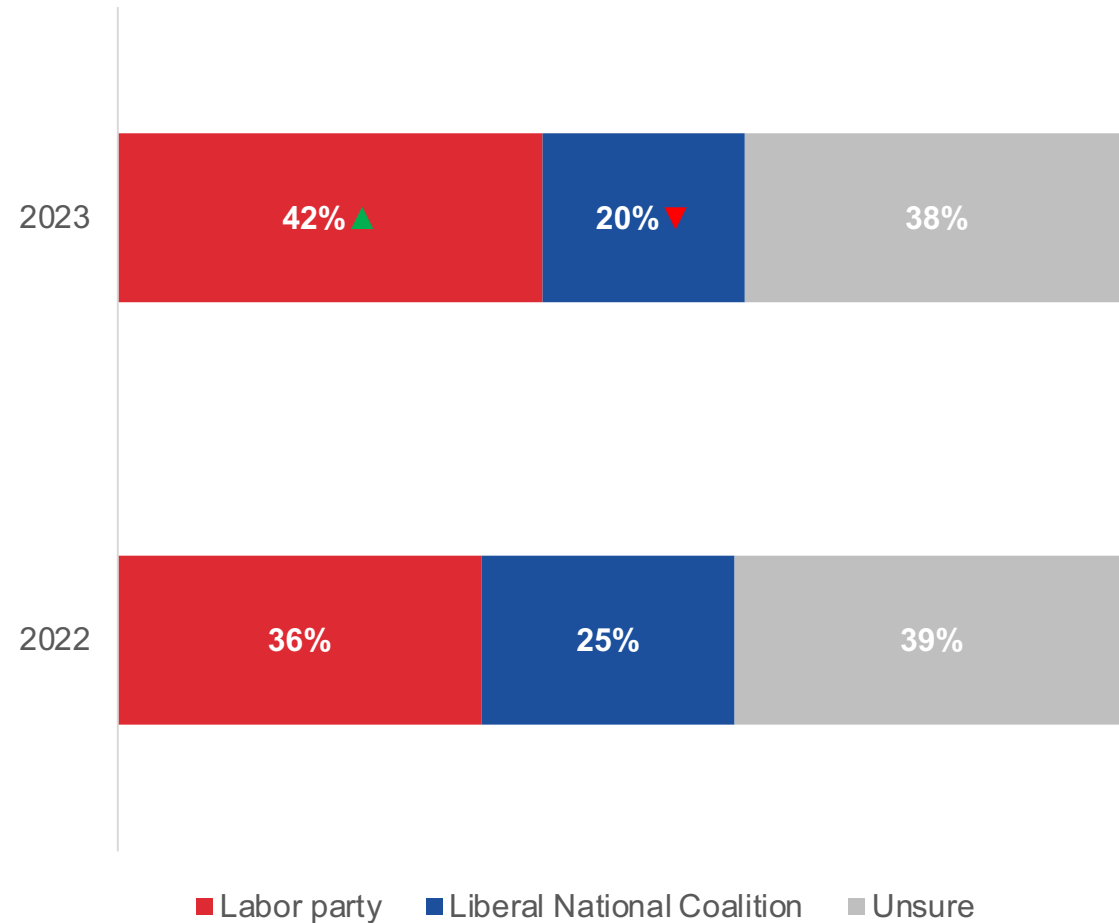
Do you think the Federal Government's measures to address climate change are too much, too little, or about right?



# Best major political party policy on climate change

Labor has extended its strong position as the better performer on climate policy during its year in government.

Which of the major parties, the Labor Party or the Liberal National Coalition, do you think has the best policy on climate change?



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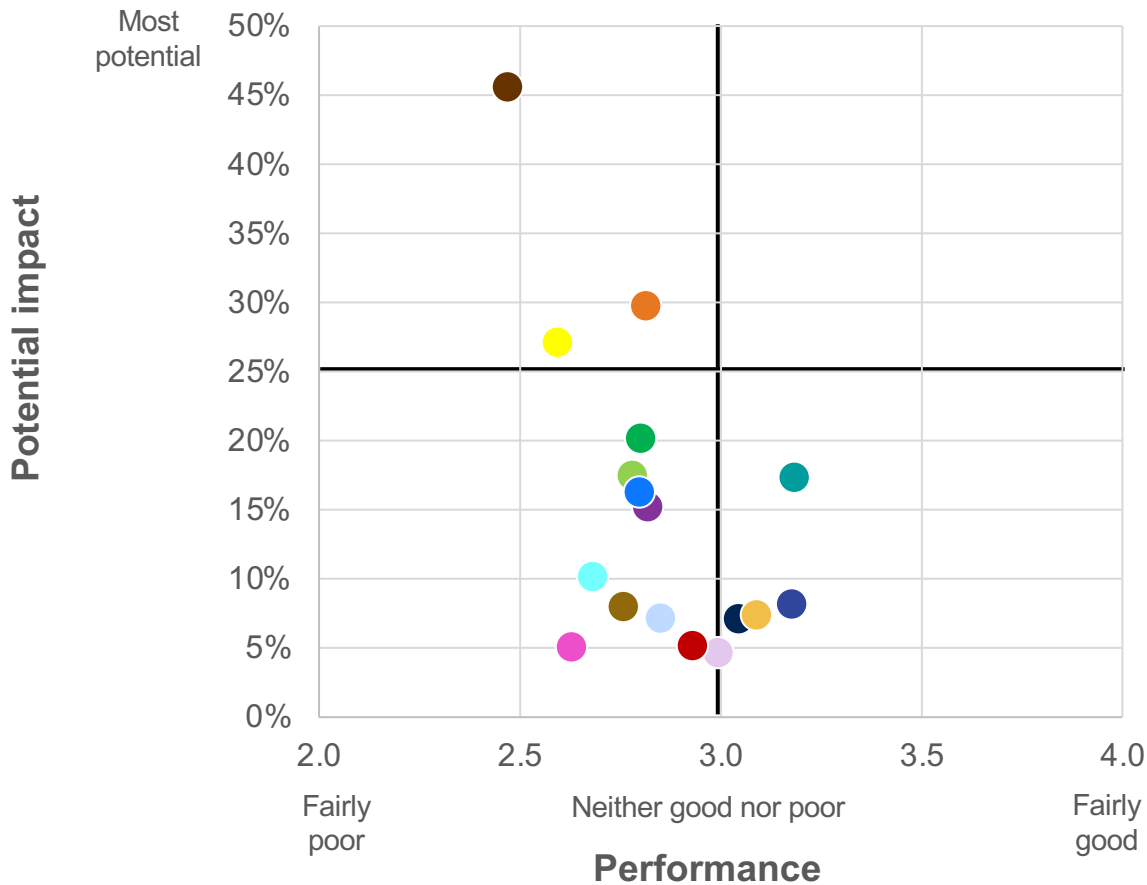
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# Extractive and energy industries are seen as having the greatest potential impact, but are perceived to perform poorly

Other industries cluster in the lower-potential range, including transport and logistics, automotive and aviation. Education and agriculture are perceived as the highest performing sectors, although none stand out as strongly differentiating themselves.



- Education and training
- Agriculture / farming
- Tourism and hospitality
- Water utilities
- Energy utilities
- Automotive
- Pharmaceutical
- Retail
- Transport and logistics
- Construction
- Waste
- Banking, finance and superannuation
- Manufacturing
- Mining
- Aviation
- Fashion
- Coal, oil and gas

**Question:** How would you rate the **performance** of the following groups in terms of the actions they have taken in response to climate change?

**Question:** How much **power** do you think the following groups have to make changes that influence climate change?



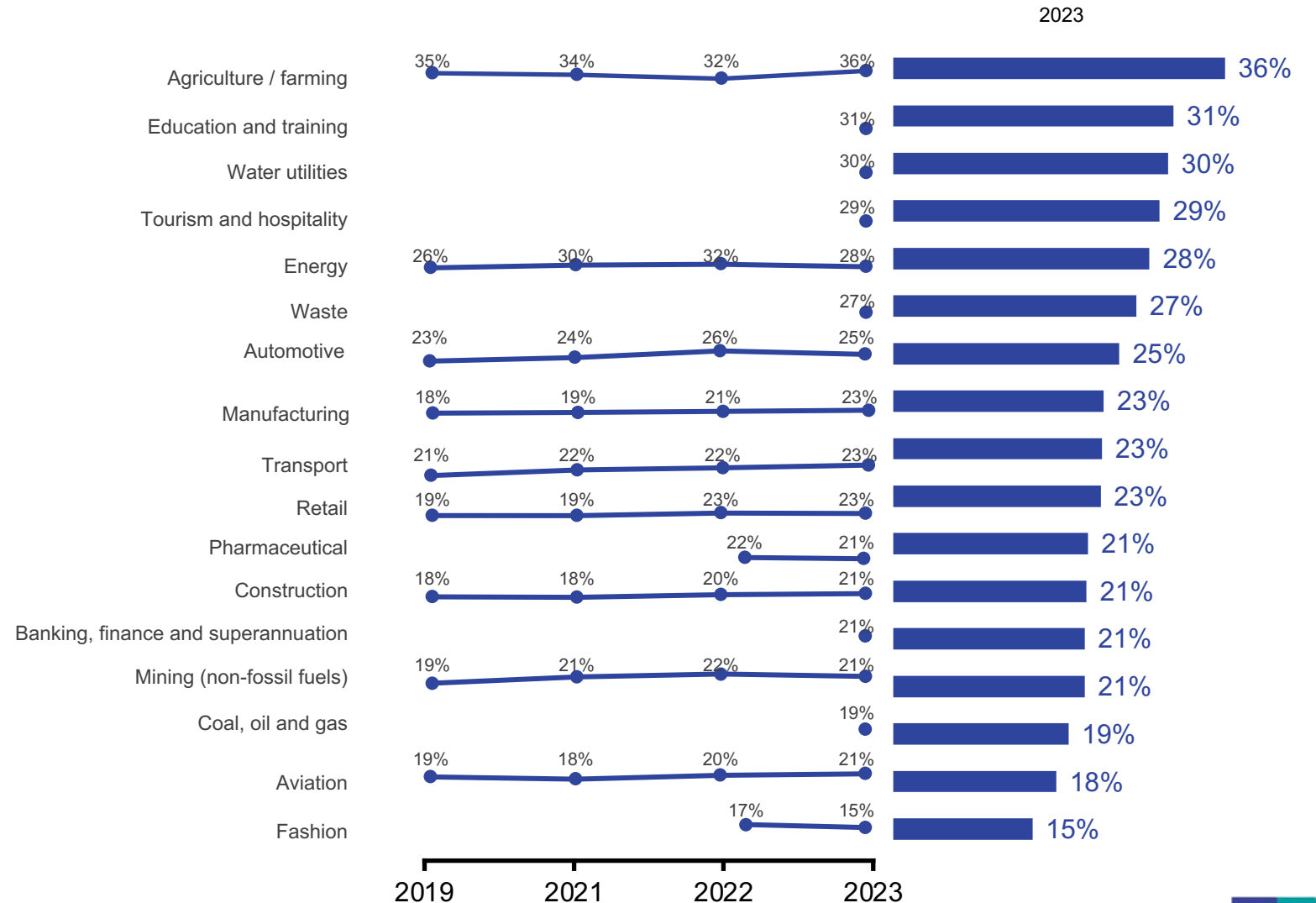
# Industry performance on climate change

The perceived performance of all industries measured is stable over time, with none standing out as having taken major steps forward in the past four years.

Extractive industries are poorly perceived, despite some companies frequently being identified by participants as taking action in unprompted questions about which companies are doing well on climate change.

There is little differentiation between the performance of the coal, oil and gas industries and other mining.

How would you rate the performance of the following sectors in terms of the actions they have taken in response to climate change? (Total Very good + Fairly good)



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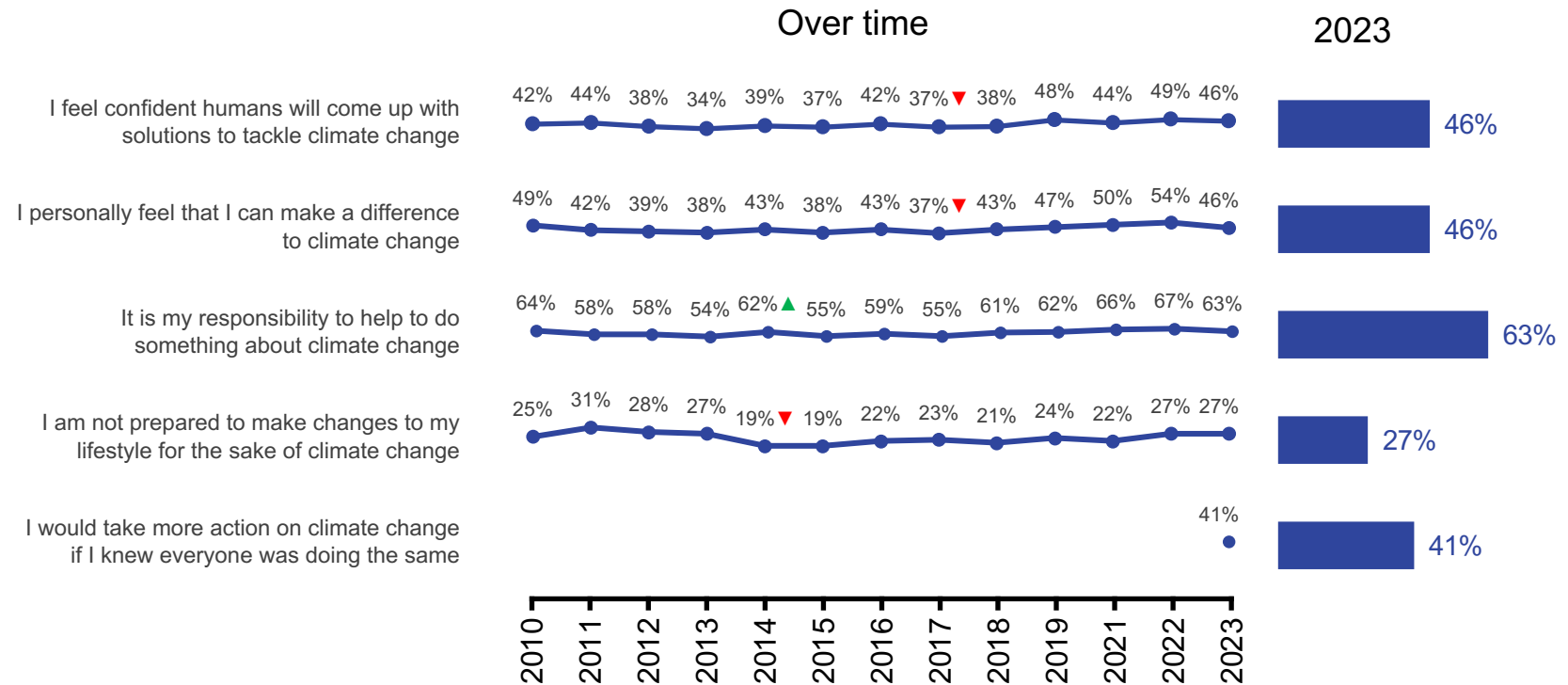
# Personal responsibility and action

This year, there are non-statistically significant drops in the proportion of Australians who feel:

- That they can make a difference to climate change (46% down from 54%)
- That it is their responsibility to take action (63% down from 67%)

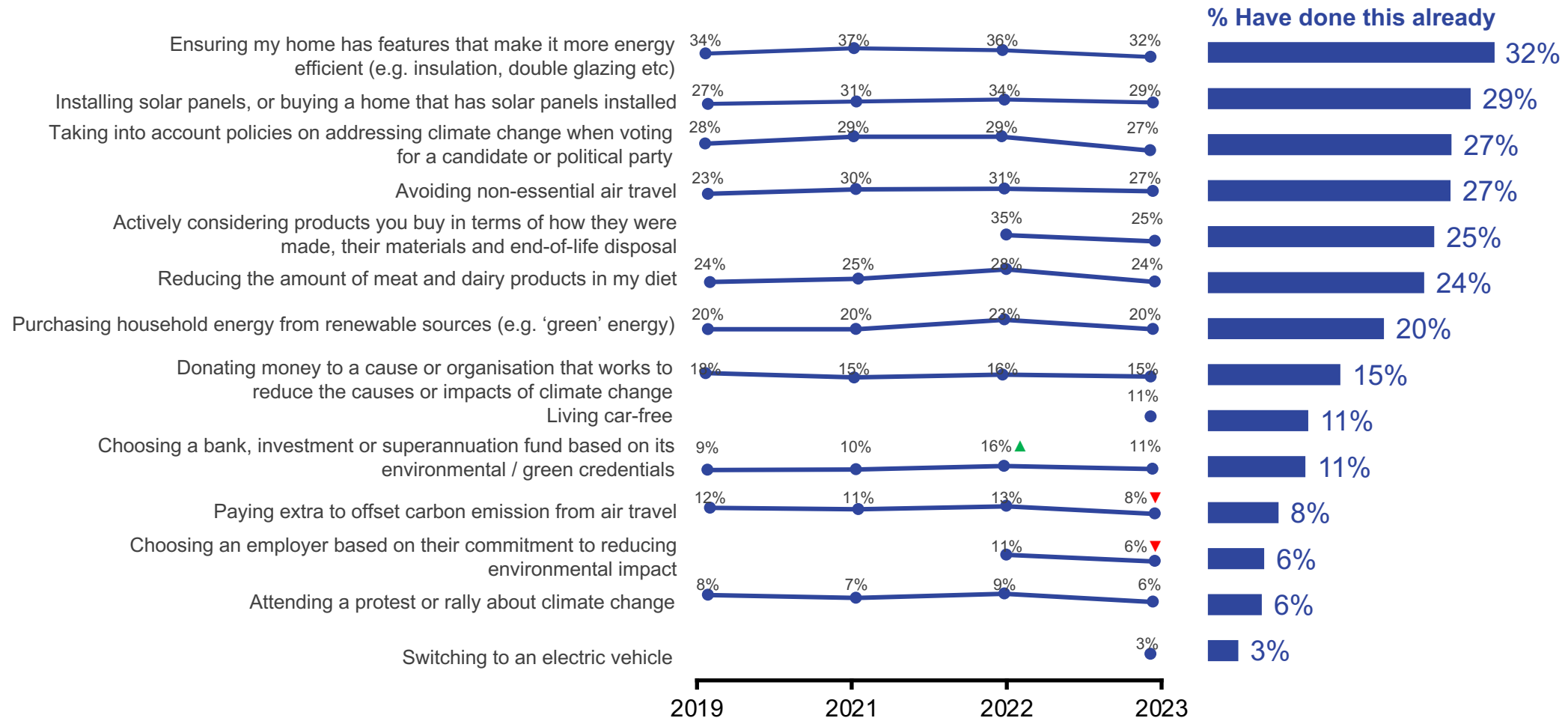
**4 in 10** say that they would take more action if they knew everyone was doing the same.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (% agree + strongly agree)



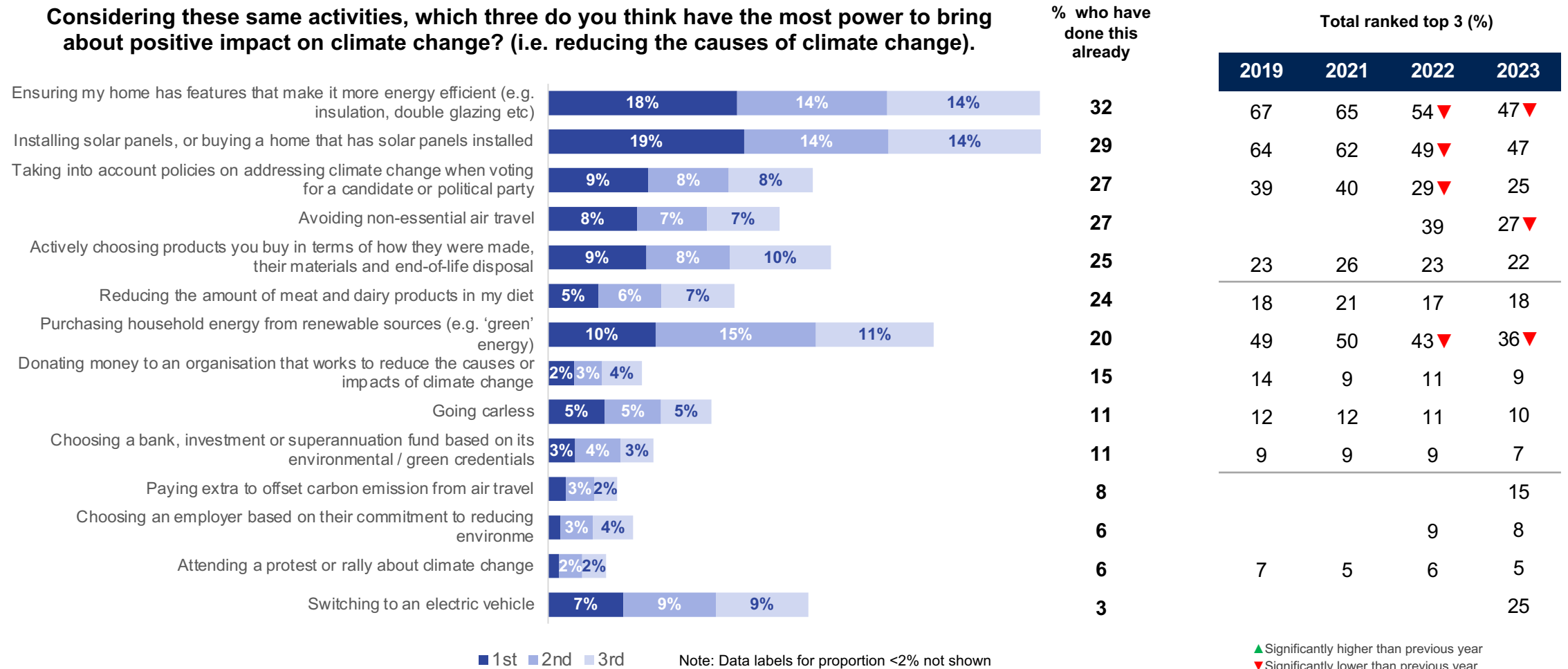
# The proportion indicating they are trying to reduce their impact on climate change has dipped across all behaviours in 2023

Other Some people try to reduce their impact on climate change by making changes to their lifestyle or the goods and services they purchase. For each, please indicate whether you have done this, are considering this, or are not going to do this.



# Ensuring homes are more efficient and installing solar panels are seen as the most impactful behaviours – the activities Australians are most likely to have undertaken

Considering these same activities, which three do you think have the most power to bring about positive impact on climate change? (i.e. reducing the causes of climate change).



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Confidence that the energy transition will lead to positive outcomes appears to be slipping.

The proportion of Australians who believe that the transition to renewable energy will have a positive impact on cost of living, jobs and reliability of the energy supply has dropped since 2022.



Ensuring reliability of the energy supply and keeping energy costs down are the top two priorities for Australian in the energy transition.

Reducing negative impacts on the environment is the third.

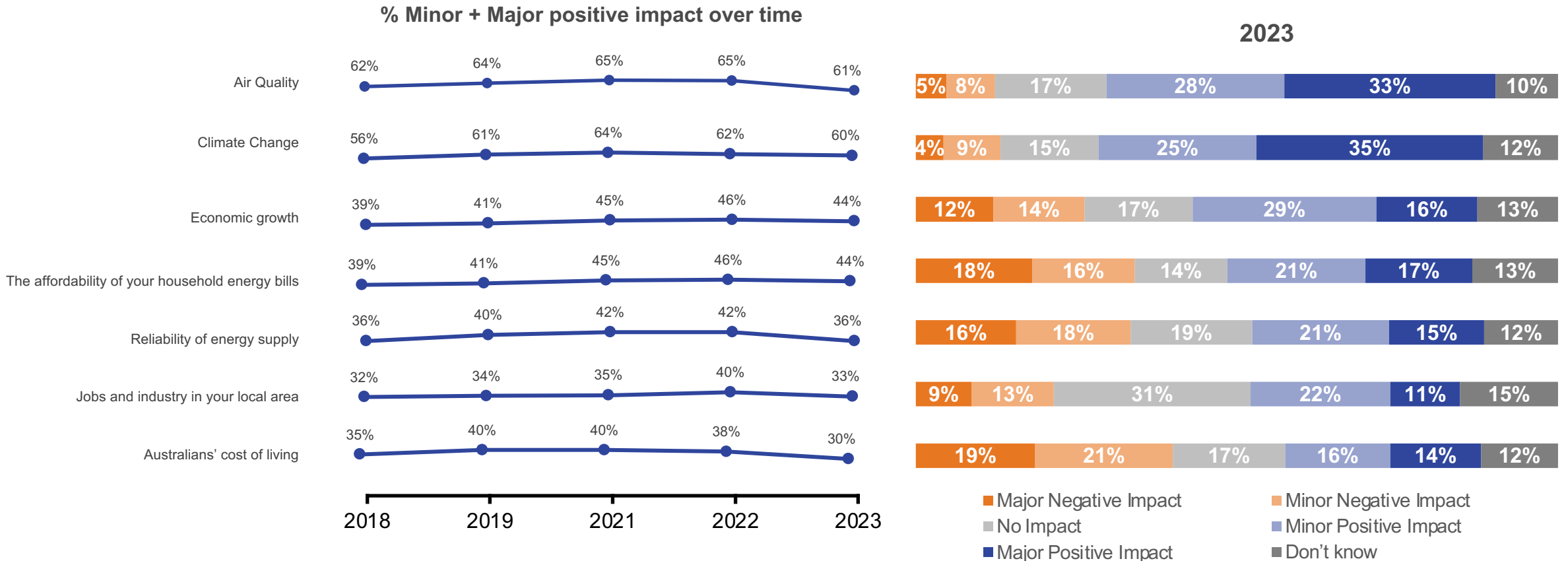


59% support the Australian Government's most recent commitment to a 43% reduction in carbon emissions below 2005 levels.

17% oppose it.

# While perceptions of the impacts of the energy transition remain stable, concerns have grown slightly about the effects on cost of living and reliability of energy supply

How do you think reducing the number of gas and coal-fired power stations and increasing the amount of power generated from renewable energy sources such as solar and wind is likely to impact the following?





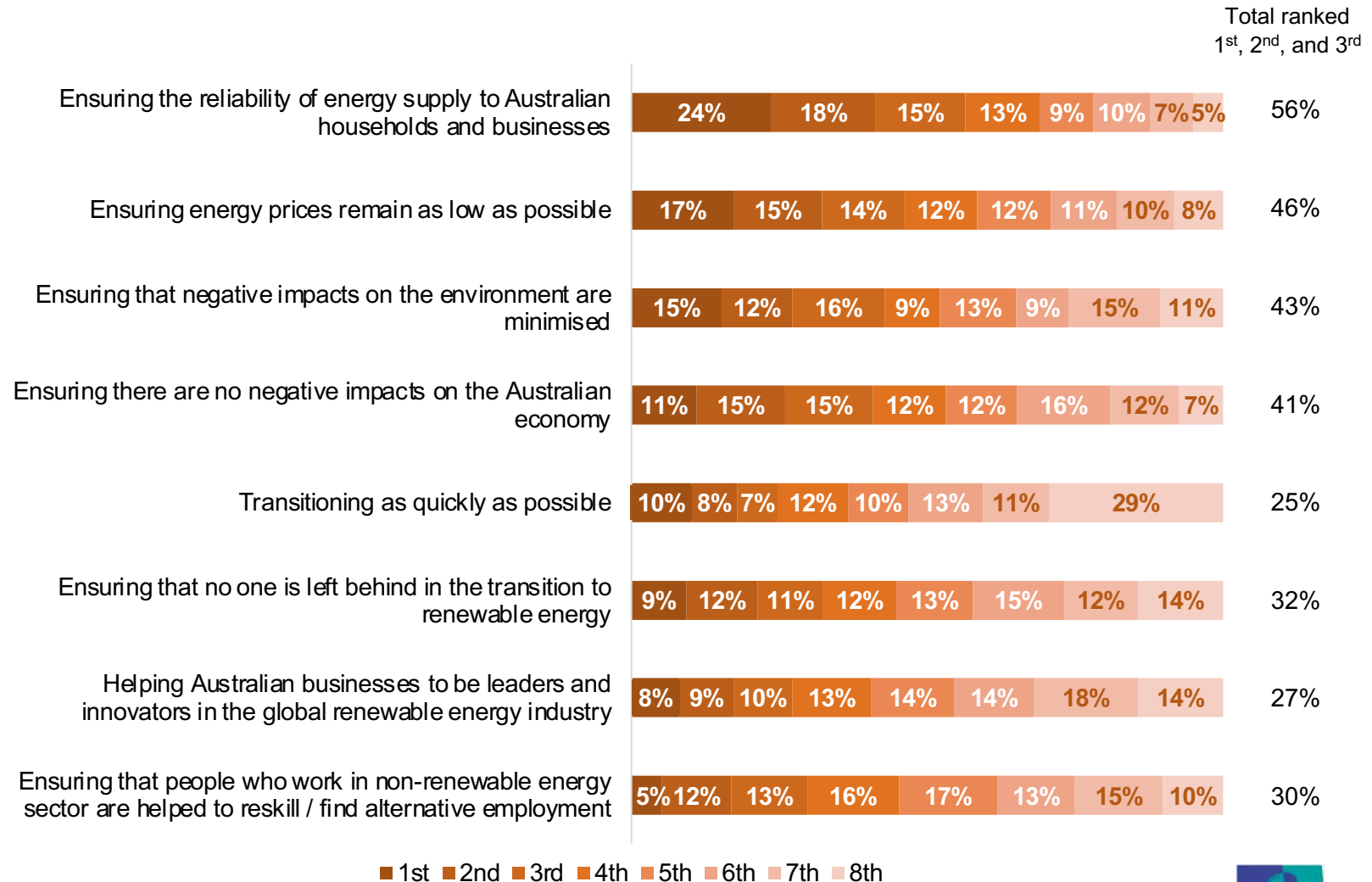
# Priorities for the energy transition

Maintaining reliability of energy supply and keeping prices down are the most important priorities for Australians in the energy transition.

Ensuring an equitable transition (i.e. no one is left behind) and support for workers in the non-renewable energy sector are lower priorities, along with support for business innovation.

**Question:** Some people say that changing Australia’s energy mix by reducing the amount of power generated from non-renewable energy sources (such as coal and gas) and transitioning to an increased share of power generated by renewable energy sources (such as wind and solar) is an important step in addressing climate change.

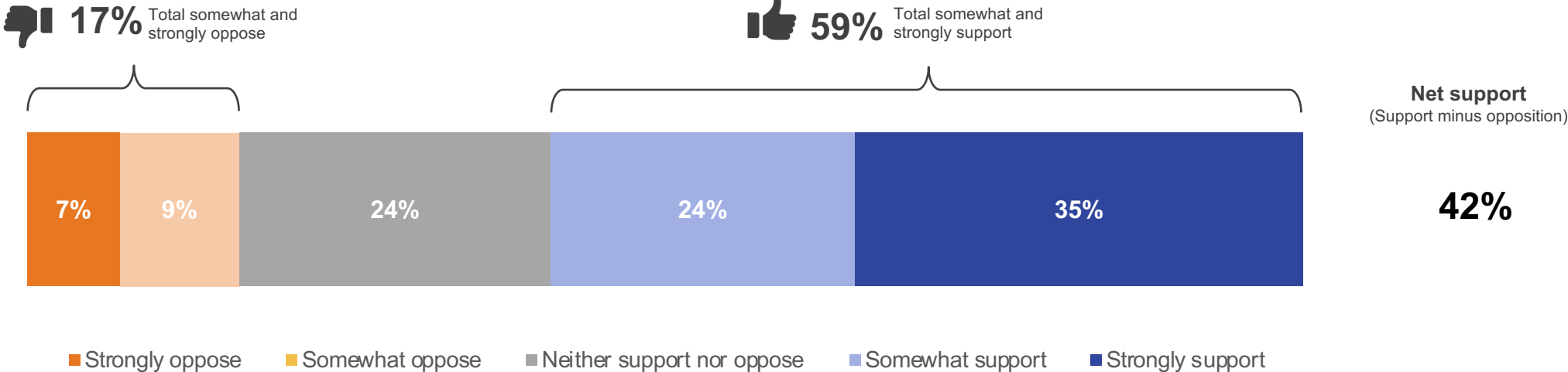
Thinking about making that transition, how do you think the following issues should be prioritised? Please indicate 1 for the most important, 2 for the second most important etc. through to 8 for the least important.



# There is strong support for the Australian Government's commitment to a 43% reduction in emissions below 2005 levels

In June 2022, Australia updated its commitments to achieve a 43% reduction in carbon emissions below 2005 levels by 2030. The previous commitment was a 26% to 28% reduction.

Please indicate the extent to which you support or oppose Australia taking actions to meet this updated commitment.



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# Communicating climate change

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The information landscape remains difficult to navigate.

60% of Australians are confident that they understand the causes of climate change.

However, 48% believe that there are too many conflicting opinions to be confident about claims.



Trust is strongest in climate change information from scientists and specialist organisations.

Federal, state and local governments sit below a range of global organisations and NGOs.

Media, business leaders, companies and politicians face stronger headwinds, with higher levels of distrust than trust.



Australians are most interested in learning about climate action being taken by our governments and how new technology is being used to reduce emissions.

However, 24% are unsure what they would like to hear more about.

# Navigating conflicting opinions on climate change

Just under **two thirds** of Australians are confident they understand the causes and impacts of climate change.

However, the information environment remains difficult to navigate for many in the community.

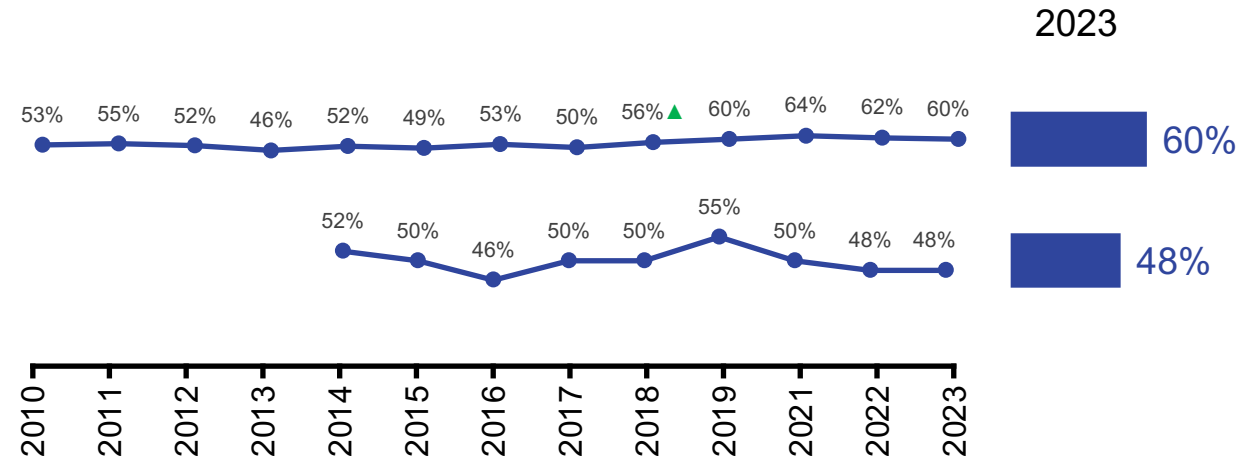
Discerning the truth among conflicting opinions on climate change remains a challenge for **close to half** of Australians.

This presents a challenge for communicators aiming for cut-through on the topic.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Total Agree + Strongly agree)

I believe I understand the causes and likely impacts of climate change

There are too many conflicting opinions for the public to be confident about claims made around climate change

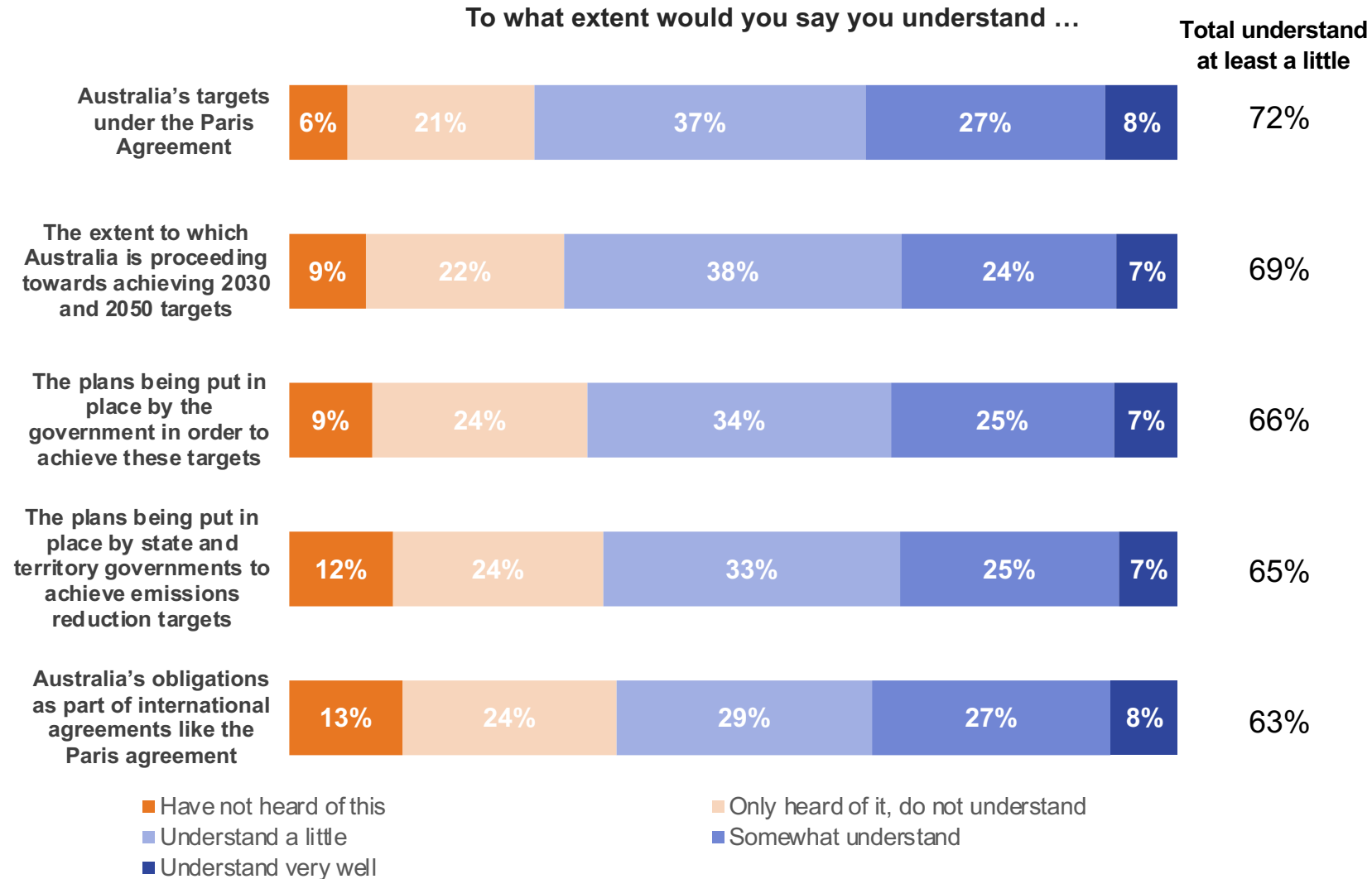


# Understanding of Australia's policies and targets

While the majority of Australians have heard of all of the plans and policies asked about, the proportion who have a detailed understanding of each is less than 10%.

However, compared to 2022, more Australians indicate that they have heard about:

- Our Paris agreement targets (94% compared to 88%)
- Government plans for achieving the targets (91% compared to 86%)



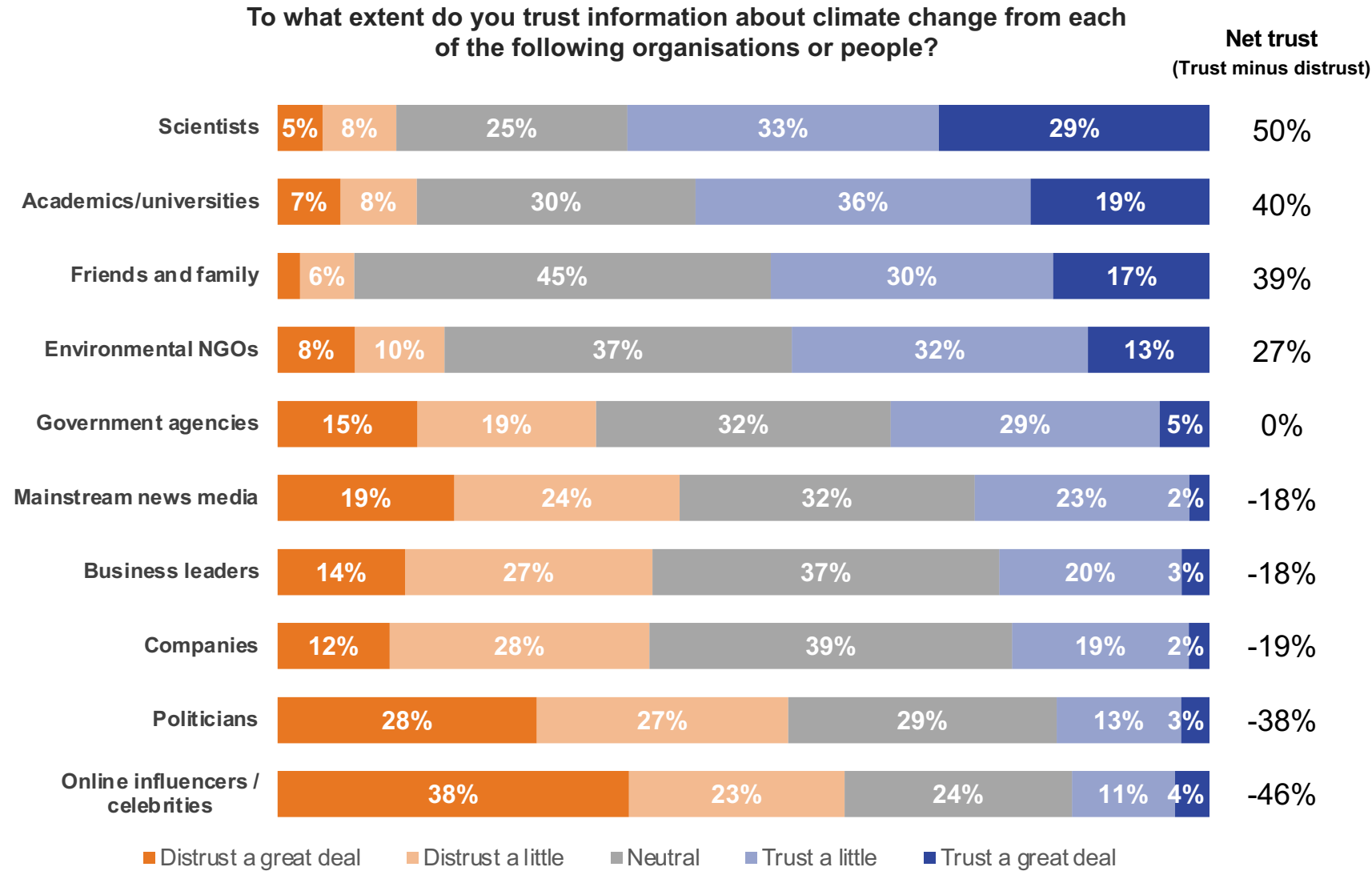
Q. CC.30, To what extent would you say you understand ...? Base: Total sample, n=1013

# Trust in sources of information on climate change

Scientists and academics are the most trusted sources of information about climate change. Friends and family are also trusted.

Net trust in government agencies is balanced.

Media, business leaders, companies and politicians face stronger headwinds, with higher levels of distrust than trust.

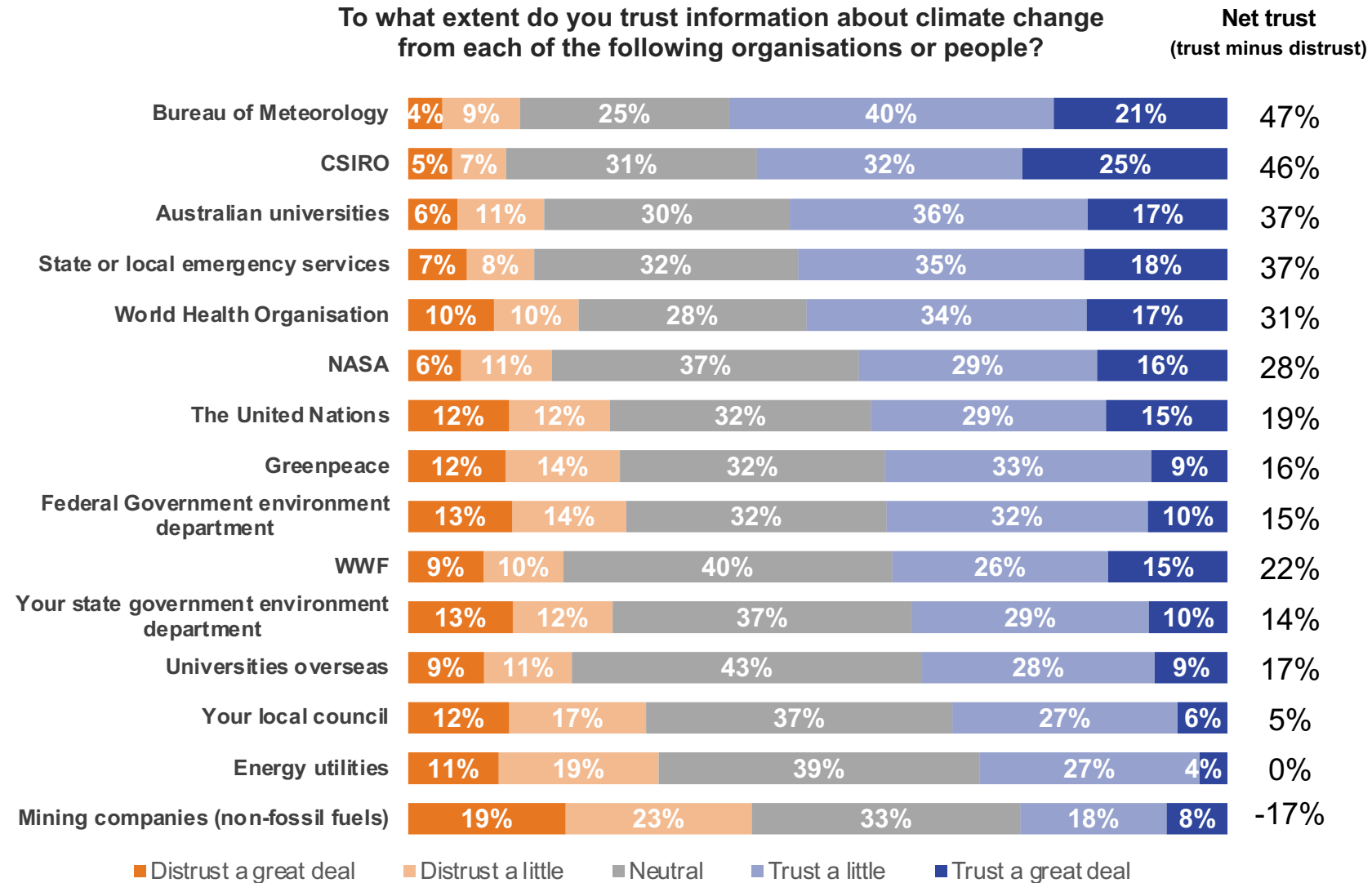


# Trust in sources of information on climate change

Australian scientific and academic organisations are the most trusted sources of information on climate change, along with emergency services.

Federal, state and local governments sit below a range of global organisations and NGOs.

Energy utilities have net neutral trust (i.e. the level of trust is equal to distrust). Mining companies stand out as having net distrust overall.





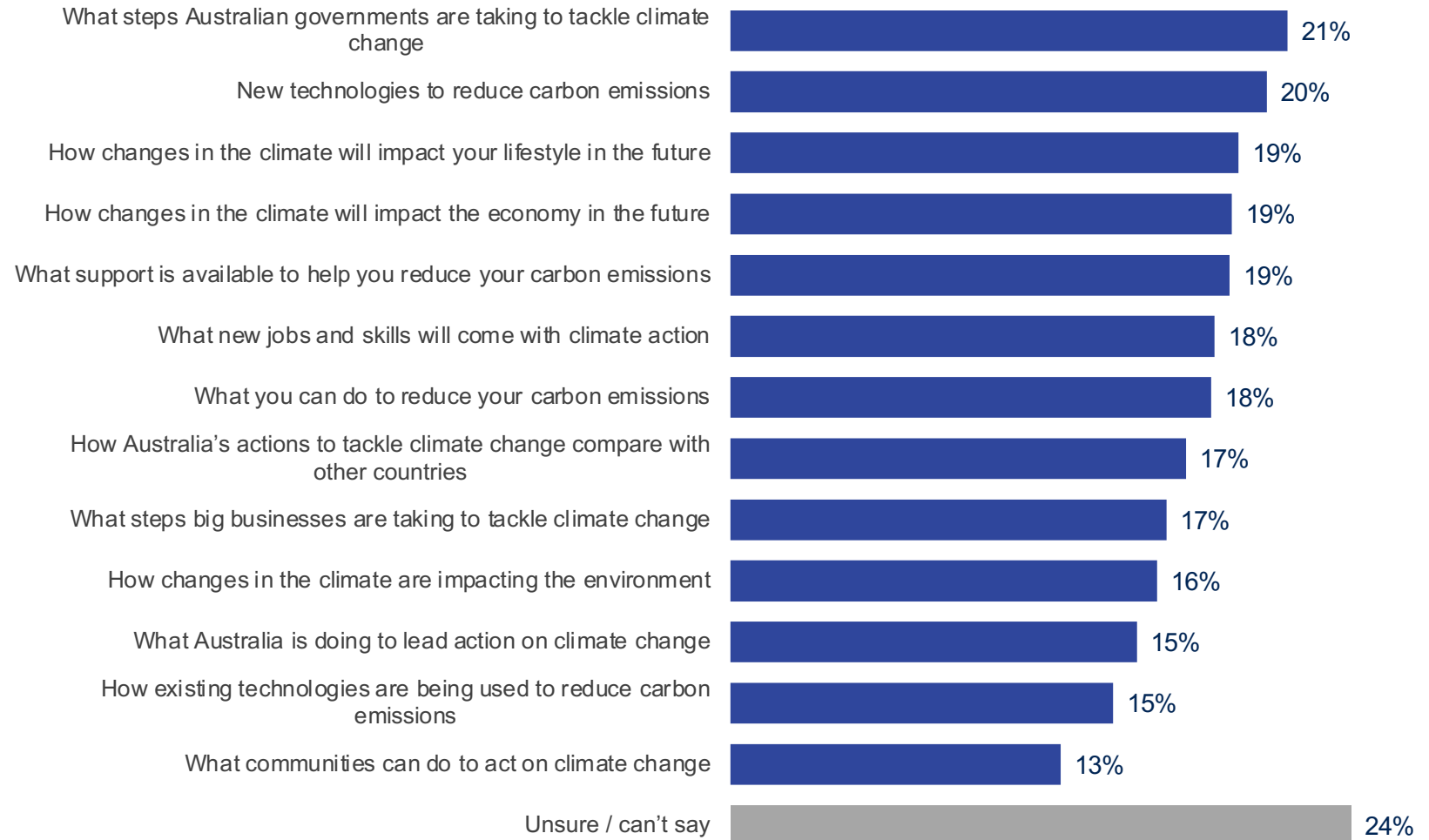
# Interest in areas of information

Australians are most interested in hearing about what actions Governments are taking to tackle climate change.

Alongside this, there is interest in new tech, negative and positive impacts, and support for individuals.

However, **24%** are unsure what they would like to learn more about.

## Which of the following topics are you most interested in learning more about?



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