

# The Australian Housing Monitor

Housing Affordability:  
Experiences, Attitudes,  
and Appetite for Change

Report 1 2023



Centre for  
Equitable  
Housing  
A Per Capita Initiative

**V&F** HOUSING  
ENTERPRISE  
FOUNDATION

**percapita**  
FIGHTING INEQUALITY IN AUSTRALIA

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# About Per Capita

Per Capita is an independent public policy think tank. We work to build a new vision for Australia based on fairness, shared prosperity and social justice.

Our office is located on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations, which were never ceded. We strongly support the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the call for a First Nations Voice to Parliament.

Per Capita's research and policy prescriptions are rigorous, evidence-based and long-term in outlook. All our publications and activities are intended to deepen political, social and economic democracy, and we are focused on challenges for the next generations rather than the next election cycle.

## Our approach to public policy

Per Capita's approach to public policy challenges the dominant narrative that disadvantage arises from personal fault or failure by pointing out the policy choices that have deepened inequality and proposing alternative choices that will lessen it.

Our policy analysis and recommended solutions seek to recognise the challenges, and work within the complex economic, political and social conditions, of our age, such as:

- The impact of rapid climate change and extreme weather events;
- Growing economic inequality, with increasing returns to capital and a decline in returns to labour;

- The growing difficulty of accessing good jobs, adequate income support and secure housing; and
- The negative effects of privatisation and the deliberate shrinking of essential public services.

In doing so, we strive to incorporate new thinking in social science and economics, innovative ways of working with data, and effective evaluation tools to measure outcomes. We also engage actively with organisations across society, including the union movement, civil society, the community sector, academia, business, government and the public service, and social change movements.

In all our work, we seek to understand and highlight the experiences of those who bear the brunt of the effects of policy choices that exacerbate inequality, including underpaid and exploited workers, people who can't get a decent job, women, First Nations people, members of the LGBTQ+ community, people with disability and their carers, migrants and refugees, and others who are marginalised by our economic and social structures and denied their fair share of power and resources.

## We live and work in hope and solidarity

The democracy Per Capita works for is one that shares its knowledge, wealth and power, to ensure all its citizens can live meaningful and fulfilling lives, able to take care of each other and of our shared planet.

# About the Centre for Equitable Housing

The Centre for Equitable Housing (CEH) is a new initiative within Per Capita, which provides research, policy advice and public engagement on housing affordability-related issues. The Centre was established with funding from V&F Housing Enterprise Foundation, in response to the failure of the housing market to deliver a pathway to affordable housing for many Australians in recent decades.

CEH works toward a future where all Australians have access to affordable, secure, and appropriate housing, regardless of their personal circumstances. Housing meets a fundamental human need for shelter, safety, and stability. It is essential to individual and community wellbeing, as well as our shared economic prosperity. Home is a necessary foundation for building a productive and fulfilling life, and for raising children. But despite our growing national wealth it is increasingly difficult for Australians to find homes that are affordable and appropriate to their needs.

Housing policies at the national, state, and local level are failing to provide reasonable pathways to housing, contributing to unaffordability, and entrenching inequality. Policy making around housing is often described as a wicked problem because of the deep conflict of interest we have as a society: high property prices represent wealth for homeowners and investors, but unaffordability and insecurity for others.

And things are getting worse: many trends show that negative policy outcomes are being borne by an increasingly large proportion of society, while the benefits accrue to a shrinking share of the population.

Per Capita and V&F Housing Enterprise Foundation believe that the time has come for a significant overhaul of housing policy at all levels of government.

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[vfhousing.org.au](http://vfhousing.org.au)

## About the Author

**Matt Lloyd-Cape,  
Director of the Centre  
for Equitable Housing**

Matt has worked in project management, policy development and research for over 20 years.

His career includes work with the trade union movement, international development NGOs and with universities on issues of economic and social development, and social justice. His experience includes managing disaster relief and development projects, and research on industrial relations, education and livelihoods, in Eastern Europe, Russia, Central America, East Africa, Papua New Guinea and South Asia.

Before joining Per Capita Matt worked at the Australian Council of Trade Unions as an international officer. Prior to this, he worked at Islamic Relief International, Tufts University, Builders and Woodworkers International and Central European University. He also worked as a carpenter for several years.

Matt holds an MSc in International Relations and Development from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, and an MPhil in Political Economy from Central European University.

His research interests include housing affordability, labour markets, the cost of living, and fiscal policy.



# Executive summary

While housing affordability has been a perennial issue in newspaper articles and policy debates for decades, recent trends have catapulted the topic into the forefront of many peoples' minds. Volatile house prices, dramatic changes in rents and availability of rental properties, rapid shifts in interest rates and seismic changes to location and dwelling type preferences have defined much of the public conversation since the COVID pandemic reached Australia in early 2020.

## ***The findings of the inaugural Australian Housing Monitor reveal deep and widespread concern about the state of the housing system, and challenge some long held beliefs among policy makers about the community's appetite for government intervention...***

Yet the views of the Australian people about the security and affordability of their homes are too often drowned out by the voices of vested interests such property developers, banks and investors, or overruled by the self-proclaimed dispassionate analysis of economists.

The Australian Housing Monitor is intended to widen the conversation and deepen our understanding of housing and the role it plays in the wellbeing of the Australian people.

The Australian Housing Monitor is a new annual survey of public attitudes toward, and experiences of, housing. It is one of the largest surveys of its kind and provides a rich set of data to understand how people living in Australia feel about their homes, and about the impact of ever-rising property prices.

This report provides some of the headline results from the inaugural survey. Future reports will go into greater detail, and more complex analysis, of specific topics and issues.

The Housing Monitor data will also be available for the public, policy makers and researchers through an online data tool at [housingmonitor.org.au](https://housingmonitor.org.au). This will allow anyone to explore the public's views of housing affordability and security, examine attitudes to specific policies or market developments, and understand the views of different demographic groups.

Fundamentally, the survey shows that a large proportion of Australians are deeply uncomfortable with the current housing system.

Affordability is seen as a significant challenge for nearly a quarter of Australians, with 20.7% of people saying that paying their rent or mortgage was a constant struggle, while 4.1% of respondents said that they were falling behind with payments. Based on similar research in 2017, there appears to be a shift of 5.6% of respondents from keeping up but occasionally struggling, to constantly struggling or falling behind.



Nearly a fifth (18.3%) of respondents reported that it was fairly or very likely they will find themselves without a place to live for an extended period of time in the future, and a large proportion of people say that they have put off leaving a partner due to the cost of moving out.

The survey shows a widespread loss of faith in the Australian Dream of owning one's own home. Over half of respondents believe that many people can no longer realistically hope to ever own a property that meets their needs, and only 24% of non-owners who aspire to own a home expect to be able to do so in the future.

For people trying to buy their first home, affordability is a major issue. 76% of renters who want to own a home are concerned, including 49% who are very concerned, about being able to afford to buy a home in their lifetime. This compares to 68% of people who answered a similar question in 2017.

Most Australians believe that the housing market as it stands is causing economic and social problems. Around two thirds of those surveyed agree that the continued rise in house prices is bad for the economy, and that hot local property markets can lead to low- and middle-income workers, including essential workers, unable to live close to their place of work, producing inefficient labour market outcomes.

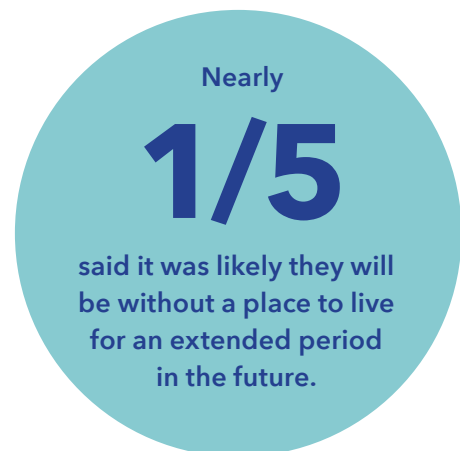
Most people agreed that property prices are increasing wealth inequality within and between generations, particularly renters, of whom 66% agree and only 7% of respondents disagree.

70% of respondents from households earning up to \$103,999 per annum say that the only way they will be able to buy a house is if they receive a large inheritance.

Interestingly, despite significant house price appreciation in recent decades, only 40% of homeowners feel that they are benefitting from long term house price increases.

The housing system is also replicating or exacerbating existing inequalities in society: women report experiencing significantly worse housing outcomes. 25% of female mortgage holders report constantly struggling to keep up or falling behind with mortgage payments compared to 18% of male mortgage holders. 92% of female renters are deeply concerned about their ability to buy a house in the future, and female homebuyers reporting significantly less financial support from their family.

Around two thirds of people are concerned about the current low level of public housing construction.



The significant degree of scepticism around the functioning of the housing market was matched by an apparently large appetite for significant policy interventions, particularly among young people and women.

- Rebuilding the public housing system is the most popular policy option tested in the survey, with 72% supporting an increase in construction.
- 67% of respondents support the idea of some form of a cap on rent increases. Even among the majority of investors, there is support for limited rent increases: people owning one investment property were more than twice as likely to support than oppose rent increase caps.
- Well over half of respondents agree that governments should remove tax deductions for housing investors and use the money to build more social housing, compared to 14% who disagree.
- Nearly half of all homeowners report being willing to see their house stop growing in value if it would improve overall housing affordability. Interestingly enough, 42% of investors report that they would be happy to see their investment properties stop growing in value if it would help improve housing affordability.
- Reducing bank profits on mortgages (66.7%), and increasing Commonwealth Rent Assistance (63.4% total support) are also highly popular policy solutions.

- Housing affordability ranked as the third most important electoral issue for survey respondents overall, with responses heavily correlated to age: for people under 26, housing affordability ranks as their second highest concern after the cost of living, while for respondents aged 26-56 it remains a top three issue.
- A significant majority of voters for all parties are concerned about housing affordability.
- Housing affordability could play a more significant role in determining where swing voters place their preferences in coming elections, with 78% of Labor voters and 80.5% of Liberal voters who say they are likely to change their vote at the next election ranking housing affordability as highly important in determining their vote.

The findings of the inaugural Australian Housing Monitor reveal deep and widespread concern about the state of the housing system, and challenge some long held beliefs among policy makers about the community's appetite for government intervention on both the supply and demand sides of the market.

This report is intended to inform the public conversation about housing affordability, and to challenge some of the political and policy barriers that prevent our housing system from providing an affordable, secure and appropriate home for everyone living in Australia, regardless of their circumstances.





# Introduction

Housing affordability has become a central focus of the national discourse, and with good reason: the past three years has seen the most volatile house and rental price changes in decades.

In the two years to March 2022, the value of residential dwellings in Australia increased by over a third, rising to over ten trillion dollars for the first time. To put it in context, this breathtaking increase of \$2.9 trillion<sup>1</sup> is far larger than the value of all ASX-listed companies combined.

In just the year to March 2022, the price of homes in regional Tasmania, regional NSW and Brisbane increased by slightly under 30%.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps inevitably, this period of rapid price inflation has been followed by a sharp decline: over the following nine months to December 2022, house prices dropped by up to 12% (Sydney) with a 5.3% drop overall in the year to December 2022.

## **People from many different segments of society - owners and renters, low and medium income, old and young, rural and urban - are facing significant housing challenges.**

These dramatic shifts in property prices have huge national and household implications, causing sudden changes in personal wealth, disposable income and household outgoings.

- As interest rate rises are introduced by the RBA month upon month, many mortgage holders are grappling with significant cost increases,



some as much as 55%, as low fixed rates in the 2% range are converted into 6% variable rates. For a mortgage holder with \$800,000 in debt, this will mean finding an additional \$500 per week<sup>3</sup>. RBA modelling suggests that 15% of mortgage holders may be “cashflow negative” by the end of the year.<sup>4</sup>

- For private renters, housing cost changes have been dramatic and highly variable. Asking rents in the capitals increased by over 14% over 2022, while the regions saw an 11.1% increase<sup>5</sup>. Meanwhile, the rental vacancy rate has fallen to an all-time low at 0.8%.
- Social housing systems are experiencing significant stress and overload. Waiting lists

1 ABS 6432.0 Total Value of Dwellings, Table 1

2 CoreLogic, Monthly Chart Pack, January 2023

3 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-01-16/mortgages-real-estate-and-consumers-economic-challenges/101848280>

4 <https://www.rba.gov.au/publications/fsr/2022/oct/box-b-the-impact-of-rising-interest-rates-and-inflation-on-indebted-households-cash-flows.html>

5 Domain December 2022 Rental Report, <https://www.domain.com.au/research/rental-report/december-2022/#melbourne>



lengthened by 16% over the three years to 2021, while the number of “greatest need” applications increased by nearly half.<sup>6</sup>

- Homelessness has increased significantly, with the affordability being a key determinant: the number of homelessness service users reporting affordability as a causal issue has risen by 27% in the past four years.<sup>7</sup>

However, while the focus of the housing debate tends to look only at housing costs, it is important to remember that housing affordability is affected by changes in both housing costs and household incomes. A decade of wage stagnation, and recent below-inflation wage growth, plus the declining real value of social security payments such as Jobseeker have had a significant impact on housing affordability.

The breadth of effects across the different types of households indicates the scale of the problems facing the Australian housing system. People from many different segments of society – owners and renters, low and medium income, old and young, rural and urban – are facing significant housing challenges.

While housing has been a national obsession for decades, the tone of the debate appears to be shifting: there is a growing recognition that the current state of affairs is increasing inequality within and between generations, increasing poverty rates and causing a range of economic and social problems.

## The Australian Housing Monitor

The Australian Housing Monitor 2023 offers a unique insight into how Australians feel about the turbulent state of housing costs, their feelings towards the housing system and opinions on what might help address the

problems. The survey gauged the opinions of 4733 Australians and is broadly representative of the Australian public: age, income level, tenure type, location, voting intention, marital and parental status, educational level, and

**Through this survey, we endeavour to understand Australians’ broad beliefs and experience of the housing market.**

several other demographic markers were collected. Respondents have been weighted to ensure the sample population is representative of the Australian public based on age, gender and location.

Through this survey, we endeavour to understand Australians’ broad beliefs and experience of the housing market. Our questions covered renter, owner occupier and investor attitudes toward:

1. The functioning of the housing system in general
2. Current dwelling experience – building stock quality, rent and mortgage costs, location and services
3. Existing housing policies
4. Potential housing policies
5. Future trends in the housing market
6. Housing as an investment

The Housing Monitor also replicates several questions from a previous survey in order to provide insights into how Australians’ attitude and experiences have changed over time. Specifically, we asked several questions that were included in the 24th ANU Poll, *Attitudes to Housing Affordability*, a survey of 2513 people conducted by the ANU Centre for Social Research & Methods in 2017.<sup>8</sup> The data produced in this poll were kindly shared with Per Capita by the authors, enabling us to observe changing attitudes over time.

<sup>6</sup> Hal Pawson and David Lilley (2022), *Managing Access to Social Housing in Australia: Unpacking policy frameworks and service provision outcomes*

<sup>7</sup> Hal Pawson, Andrew Clarke, Cameron Parsell, Chris Hartley (2022) *Australian Homelessness Monitor 2022, Launch Housing*

<sup>8</sup> <https://csrsm.cass.anu.edu.au/research/publications/attitudes-housing-affordability>

The Housing Monitor provides a rich source of data for understanding the different experiences and views people have of housing around the country. It will be the foundation for a series of thematic policy papers over coming months.

Housing affordability is one of the most significant economic and social problems of our time. As such, we will also be making the data available for other researchers to use, in order that the issue can be examined as broadly as possible.

As with any research method there are limitations to this survey. Aiming for

national representivity meant that some groups are not well represented by the data. For example, we were not able to gather sufficiently representative data on Indigenous Australians, LGBTQI+ Australians, and people who live in remote areas. We recognise that these groups often experience specific housing challenges and poorer housing outcomes and will explore methodologies to capture their voices and experiences more fully in future research.

This research was only possible thanks to the generosity of V&F Housing Enterprise Foundation, the founding donors to the Centre for Equitable Housing at Per Capita.

## Survey methodology

Field work was carried out by Essential Media and conducted between 13th - 23rd December 2022. It was conducted online, with panel members being invited to participate and complete the questions in their own time without an interviewer present. The survey generally took around 15 to 20 minutes to complete. This provided around 160 data points per respondent, with producing a rich dataset of around 750,000 data points.

Quotas were applied to be representative of the target population by age, gender and location. RIM and cell weighting was applied to the data using information sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and Australian Electoral Commission (AEC). The factors used in the weighting were age, gender, location as well as an adjustment for previous vote (May 2022 Federal Election). The rim weight efficiency was 90% with an effective sample size of 4245.

The survey was designed by Per Capita and Essential Media, and programmed and hosted by Dynata, an international online sampling and data collection organisation.

All Essential Research staff hold Research Society membership and are bound by professional codes of behaviour. This research is compliant with the Australian Polling Council Quality Mark standards. The Australian Polling Council standards can be found [here](#).



## Structure of this report

This report is broken down into five key sections. We first introduce the context in which this survey was conducted, highlighting the unusual trends that were, and remain, prevalent in the Australian housing system.

**Section One** then examines some of the broad beliefs respondents have regarding affordability, the social and economic effects of our current housing system, and opinions about government policies.

**Section Two** explores the experience of renters in terms of housing costs and quality, opinions surrounding rental rights and laws, and renters' opinions about their future prospects of home ownership.

**Section Three** moves on to the experience of homeowners. We explore mortgage affordability, issues of housing wealth and property financing.

**Section Four** then examines investment in the housing market and the effect of investors on affordability.

In **Section Five** we move on to the relationship between housing affordability, voting and support for different policies. We explore the salience of housing affordability as a political issue, who it matters to most, and which housing policies respondents like and dislike.

We then offer some concluding thoughts.

Throughout the paper, data is presented in a variety of formats, using a range of variables such as gender, income, voter preference, age and location. The dataset generated through the Housing Monitor is too complex and rich to summarise in one paper. As such, readers may find that they want to explore a specific issue from an angle not represented in this paper. We encourage readers to visit [HousingMonitor.org.au](https://HousingMonitor.org.au) to further explore the data.





**Section 1.  
What do Australians  
think about the  
housing market?**



# 1.1 Housing affordability and social impacts

The vast majority of Australians believe that housing plays an important role in general wellbeing. 82.4% of respondents somewhat or strongly agree that **having access to good quality and secure housing plays a significant role in people's health and wellbeing.**

Over a third of people (37.1%) report being able to keep up with their rent and/or mortgage payments without any difficulty. A similar proportion - 36% - say they struggle with payments from time to time.

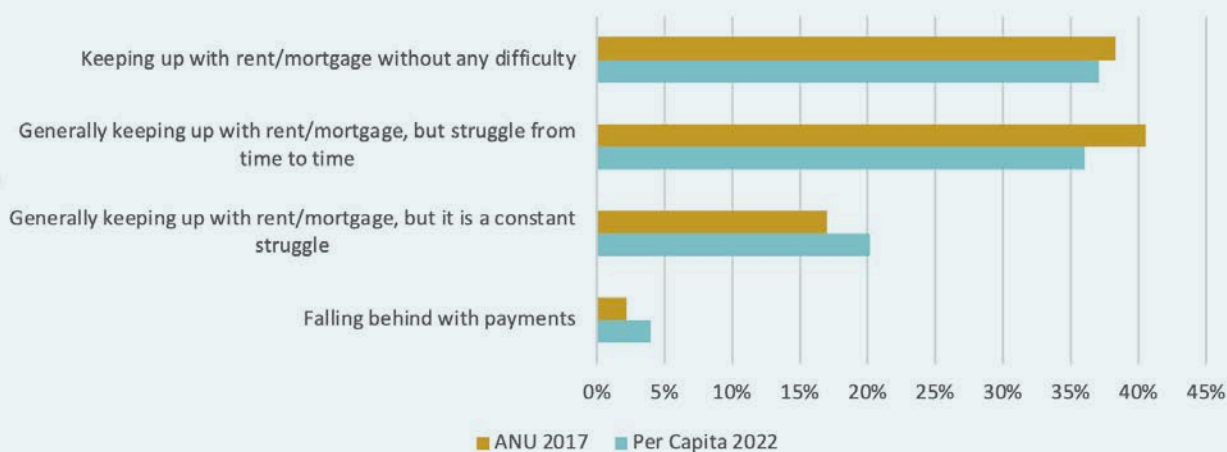
A quarter of respondents to the survey, however, reported housing stress, with 20.1% saying that making payments is a constant struggle and 4% already falling behind. When compared with a similar question in the 2017 ANU Attitudes to Housing Affordability poll, we find an increase of 4.9% of people reporting such housing stress.

The proportion of people who say they are falling behind on payments has nearly doubled in five years, from 2.2% to 4% of all respondents.

When we extrapolate these findings, we find that around 1.25 million Australian adults have begun to experience housing stress over the last five years, having moved from being relatively comfortable in 2017 to constantly struggling or falling behind in 2022.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 1**

**R7/O3: Which of the following best describes how you feel about paying your rent/mortgage?**



<sup>9</sup> Based on the ABS 2021 Census population data: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/population-census/latest-release>

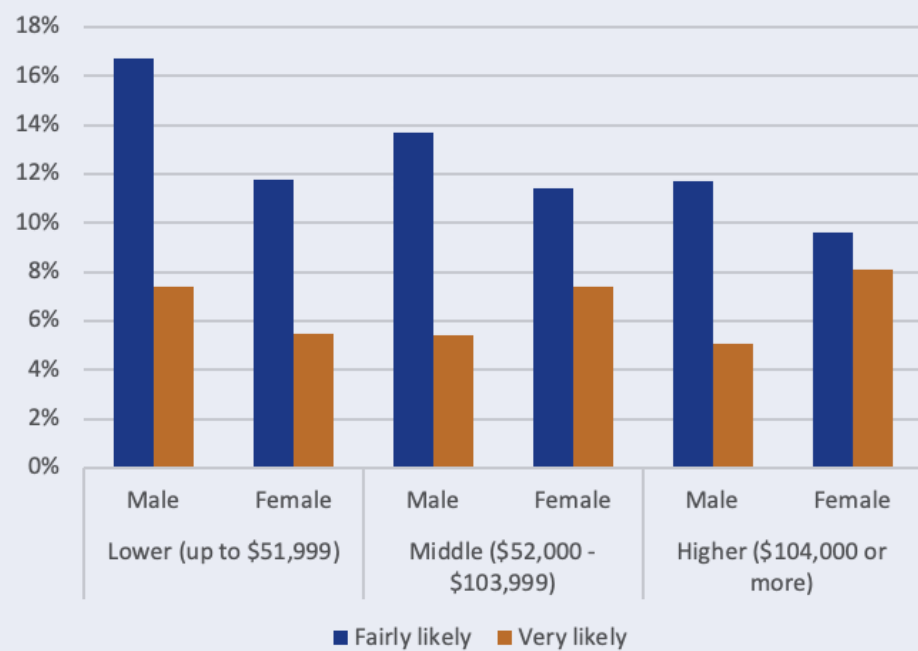
A significant share of respondents report experiencing housing insecurity. When asked if they have **been without a place to live for an extended period of time**, 11.2% of men and 7.4% of women answer in the affirmative. When it comes to future housing insecurity, nearly a fifth (18.3%) of respondents answered that it was fairly or very likely that they may find themselves **without a place to live for an extended period of time in the future**.

This figure rises to 30% for private renters and drops to 6.3% for owners with a mortgage.

Men were consistently more likely to report that they might find themselves without a place to live for an extended period of time in the future: 24.1% of men in low-income households reported that this was fairly or very likely compared with 17.3% of women in low-income households.

**Figure 2**

**H7: Apart from situations where you are waiting for a new home to be ready to move into, how likely do you think it is that you will find yourself without a place to live for an extended period of time in the future?**



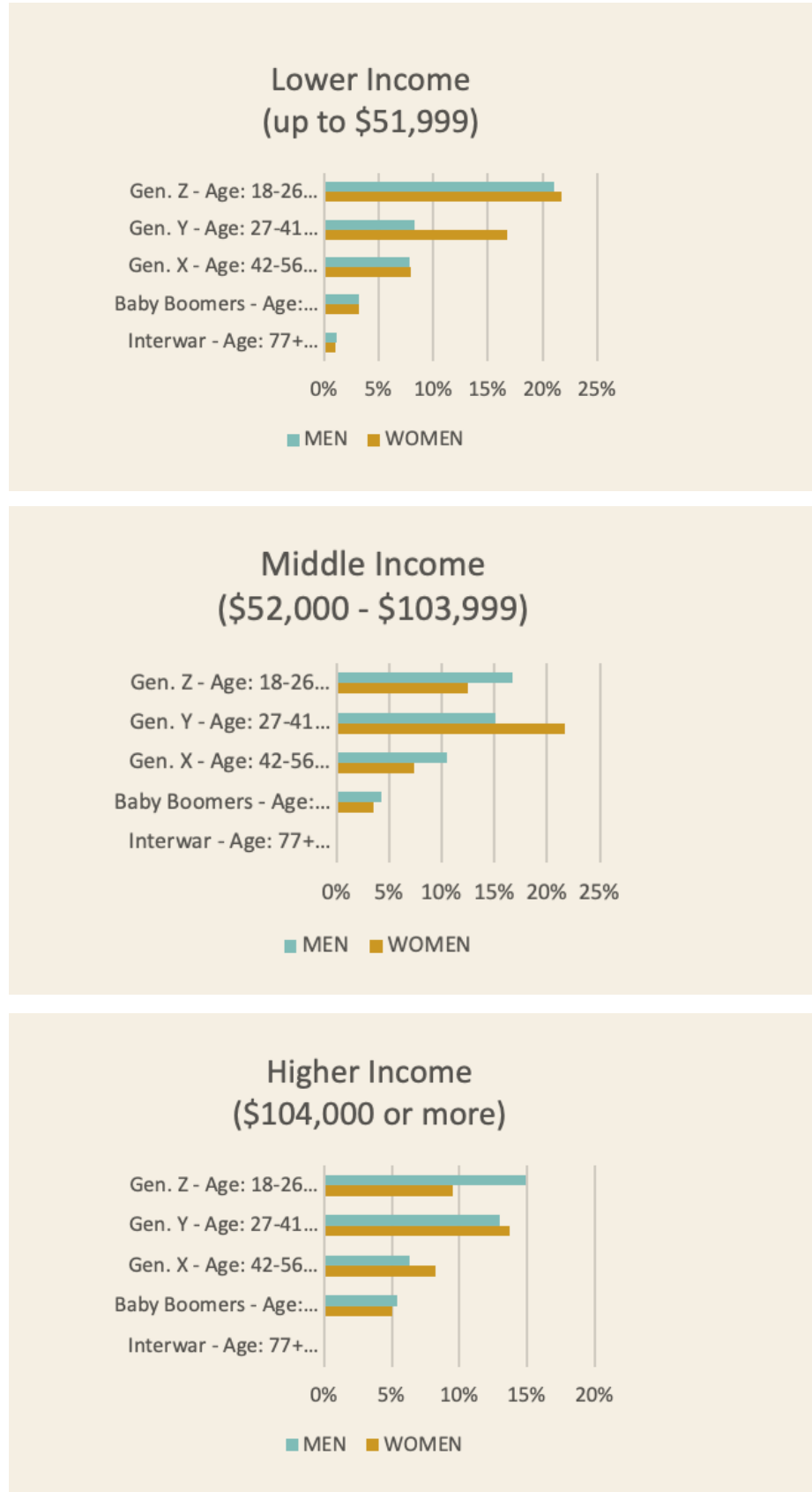


A high proportion of people aged under 41 report that they have delayed leaving a partner because it was too expensive to move out. Lower- and middle-income respondents were more likely to provide this response, peaking at over 21% of low-income Gen Z men and women, and Millennial middle-income women.

This trend is troubling, suggesting as it does that up to a fifth of people in the typical family-building period of life have delayed leaving a partner due to housing costs associated with separating. This aligns with recent findings by sector experts that thousands of victims of domestic and family violence stay in dangerous relationships due to the high cost and low availability of suitable accommodation.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 3**

**H6r2: I have put off leaving a partner because it was too expensive to move out**



<sup>10</sup> See for example, the Royal Commission into Family Violence (Vic) 2016

27.6% of respondents are relatively optimistic about the capacity of the housing system to house all or most people, regardless of how much income someone makes. 41.0% of people think that some people can access a secure home, but that income plays a large role, while 23.7% of people think that not many people can access a secure home, only very well-off people can really be secure in their home.

Results were strongly gendered: While 11.7% of men believe that all people can access a secure home, regardless of their income, only 4.2% of women agree.

Conversely, 28.6% of women believe that only very well-off people can really be secure in their home, compared to 18.6% of men.

**Table 1**

**Q27: Do you think the current housing system in Australia provides everybody with access to a home regardless of whether the home is owned or rented? (by gender)**

	Male	Female	Total
Yes, all people can access a secure home, regardless of their income	11.7%	4.2%	7.8%
Most people can access a secure home, but personal income plays a role	23.8%	15.9%	19.8%
Some people can access a secure home, but personal income plays a big role	38.6%	43.2%	41.0%
Not many people can access a secure home, only very well-off people can really be secure in their home	18.6%	28.6%	23.8%
Unsure	6.0%	7.1%	6.5%
Prefer not to answer	1.2%	1.0%	1.1%

People who rent or live with their parents tend to have lower confidence in the current housing system. For example, 33.8% of social housing tenants and 32% of private renters agree with the statement **Not many people can access a secure home, only very well-off people can really be secure in their home**, compared to 20.2% of mortgage holders and 16.4% of outright homeowners.

**Figure 4**

**Q27: Do you think the current housing system in Australia provides everybody with access to a home regardless of whether the home is owned or rented? (by tenure)**





# 1.2 Economic Trends

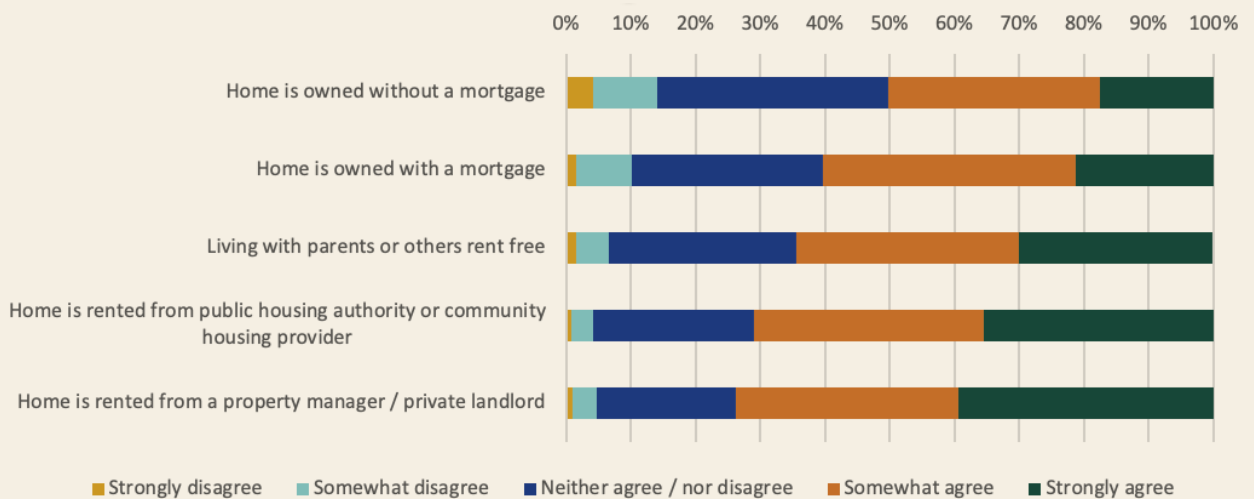
This section looks at people’s understanding of how the trends in housing affect the broader Australian economy.

62% of respondents somewhat or strongly agree with the proposition that **the continued increase in house prices is bad for the economy**, with only around 9% disagreeing with this statement. The gender difference in how people respond is pronounced, and this holds true when adjusting for other variables, such as whether someone owns a house or rents.

Regardless of tenure, respondents were more likely to agree than disagree that ongoing rapid house price increases harm the economy. Renters are significantly more likely to see ongoing house price increases as being bad for the economy (social housing 73.8%, private landlord 71%), with outright owners being the least likely to see house prices as an economic problem – although a bare majority (50.3%) does agree.

**Figure 5**

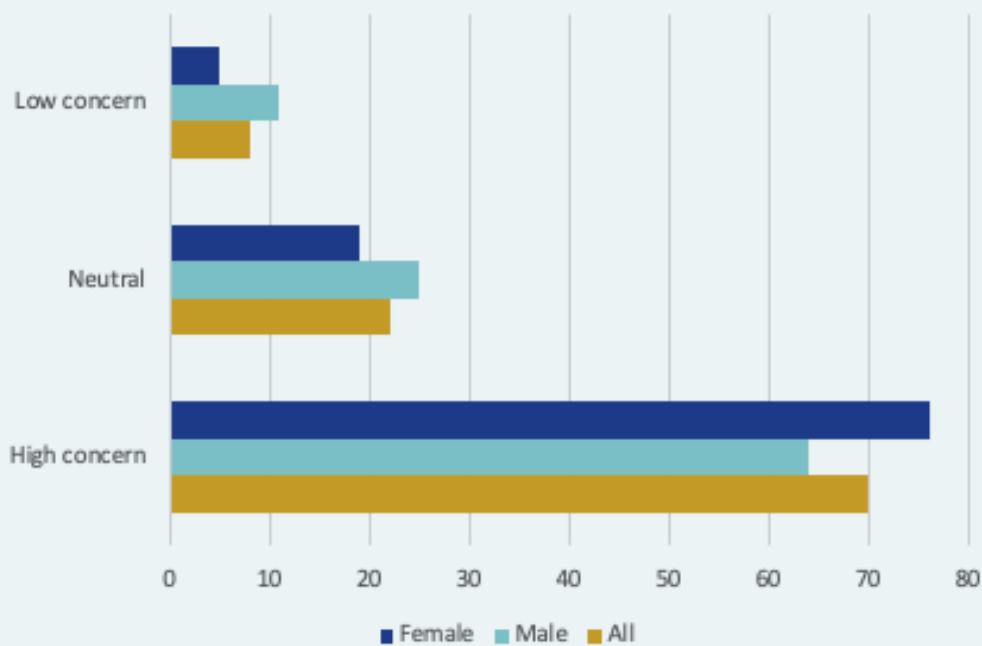
**P4r4: How strongly do you agree or disagree...  
The continued increase in house prices is bad for the Australian economy  
(by tenure type)**



We asked how concerned, on a scale of 0-10, people were that house prices in Australia's eight capital cities had nearly doubled between 2011 and 2021. 70% of respondents said they were very worried about this development, with almost two-thirds of men and more than three-quarters of women expressing this level of concern.

**Figure 6**

**H10r2: How concerned are you about... House prices in Australia's eight state and territory capitals almost doubled between 2011 and 2021**

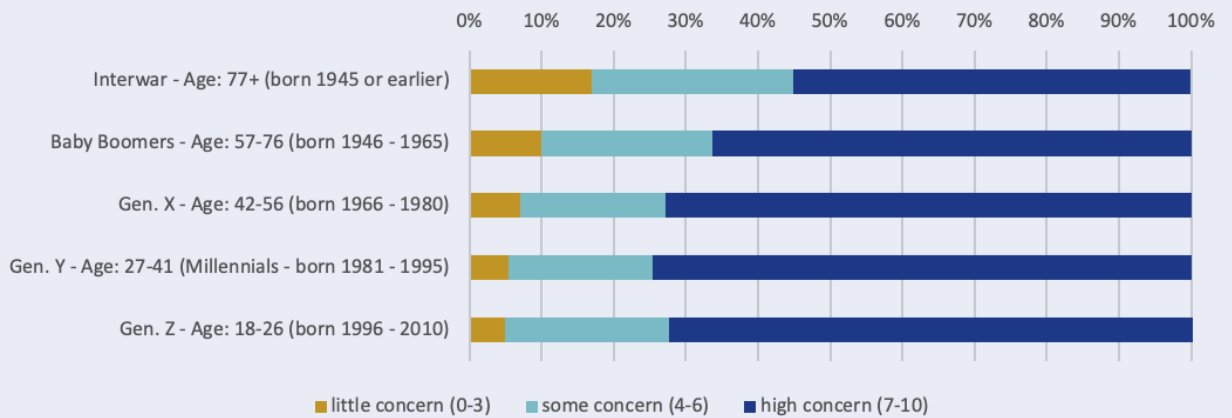


Generally, concern over house price increases is correlated with age: for Millennial respondents, 74.7% expressed high concern (7 or more out of 10), while for the Interwar Generation, the figure falls to 55%.

Respondents from the Interwar generation were far more likely to see no problem with such rapid house price increases, with 16.9% rating this issue 0-3, compared to just 5% of Gen Z respondents who were similarly unconcerned.

**Figure 7**

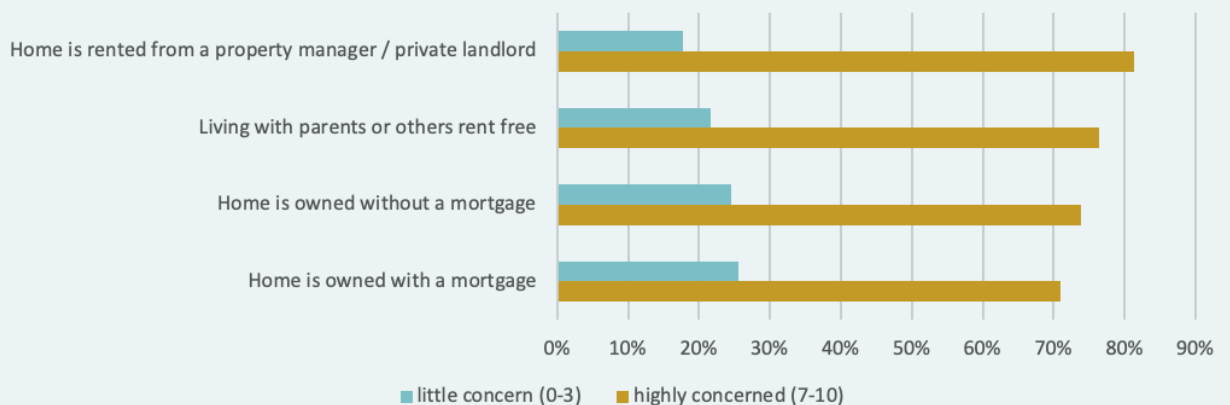
**H10r2: how concerned are you about... House prices in Australia’s eight state and territory capitals almost doubled between 2011 and 2021 (by generation)**



The survey results demonstrated that concern about the doubling of house prices in capital cities was relatively consistent across these age cohorts, regardless of their personal housing arrangements.

**Figure 8**

**H10r2: How concerned are you about... House prices in Australia’s eight state and territory capitals almost doubled between 2011 and 2021 (by type of tenure)**

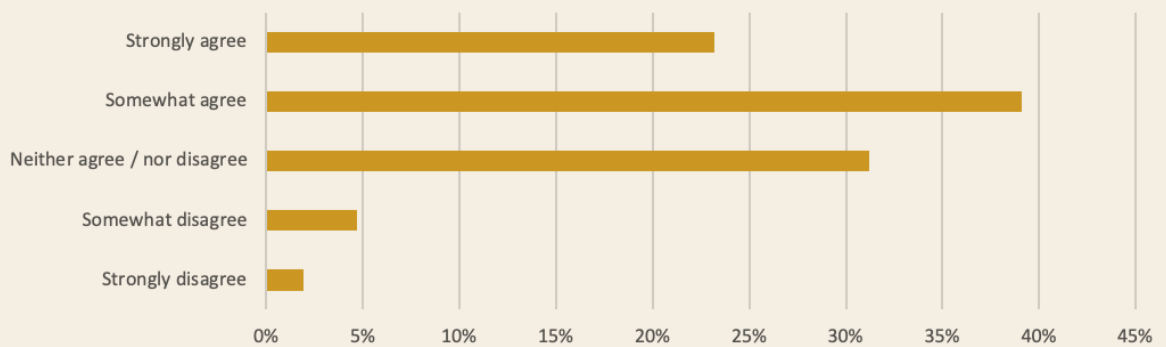




When it comes to the effect of house prices on inequality, there was a broad agreement that property price distortions were increasing the gap between the rich and the poor. 62% of respondents strongly or somewhat agree that property prices are increasing wealth inequality, compared with fewer than 7% who disagree. Almost a third of respondents, however, were unsure about this question.

**Figure 9**

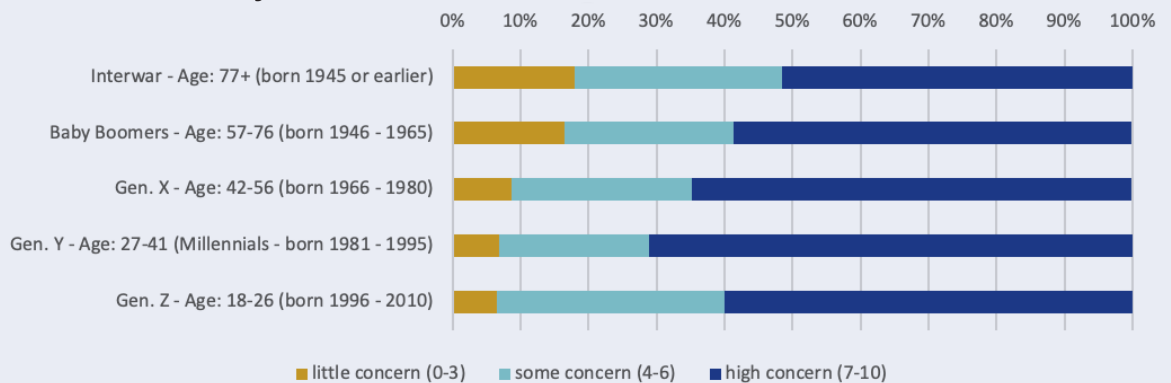
**G2r4: Beyond individual impacts, society as a whole is detrimentally affected by property price distortions, which increase wealth inequality between and within generations.**



Similarly, respondents tended to respond to the statement **rising property values increasingly benefiting those who are already well off, widening the gap between the rich and the poor in society** with concern. 27% of respondents rated this issue a 10 out of 10 (highest concern), with 68.8% rating it 7 or more. Only 7.6% regarded it as a low concern issue (0-3). As found previously, age correlates with concern over this issue, with Gen Z respondents bucking the trend. This may be due to a higher proportion of Gen Z living at home, and less likely to have experience in the housing market than older generations.

**Figure 10**

**H10r6: Rising property values increasingly benefiting those who are already well off and widening the gap between the rich and the poor in society.**

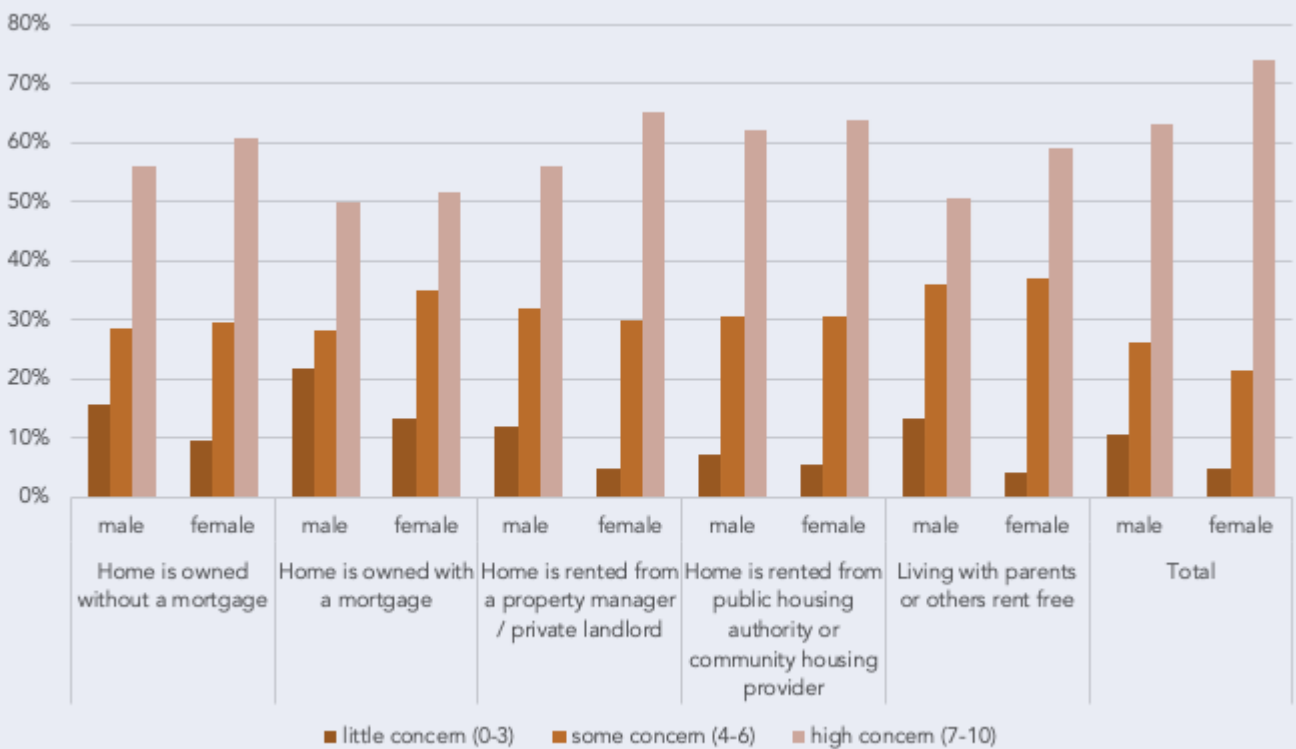


As in many other questions, women were far more likely than men to express concern about the social effects of housing trends. When it comes to the question of rising property values widening the gap between rich and poor, 74% of women and 63.1% consider this to be an issue of high concern. Around a third of women and over 20% of men considered this issue a 10 out of 10 issue.

Private renters are most likely to be highly concerned, while mortgaged home owners scored this issue significantly lower.

**Figure 11**

**How concerned are you about ...H10r6: Rising property values increasingly benefiting those who are already well off, widening the gap between the rich and the poor in society.**



# 1.3 Opinions on Government Policies

Despite the rapid financialisation of housing over recent decades, a majority of Australians do not view housing solely as a 'market'; in fact, there is a relatively strong consensus that housing is a government responsibility.

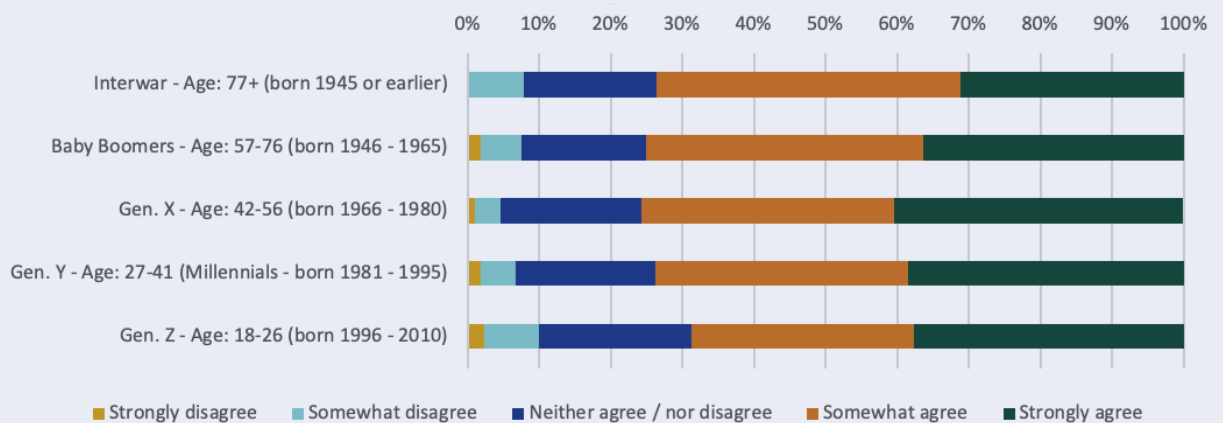
In total, 77.8% of women and 69.5% of men agree or strongly agree with the proposition that **the government has a responsibility to ensure that all children growing up in Australia have a home that is safe and healthy.**

This varies only slightly between generations, with those age groups most likely to be raising, or having recently raised, children in the home showing a slight increase in agreement with the statement. There was also only small variation between income or tenure groups.

Interestingly, there is a growing trend in those people who strongly disagree with this statement, rising from 0.3% of the Interwar generation, to 2.4% of Gen Z. As will be discussed later, support for public housing is also highest among older people. These findings suggesting that the social norm of government responsibility to ensure people are securely housed is weakening over time.

**Figure 12**

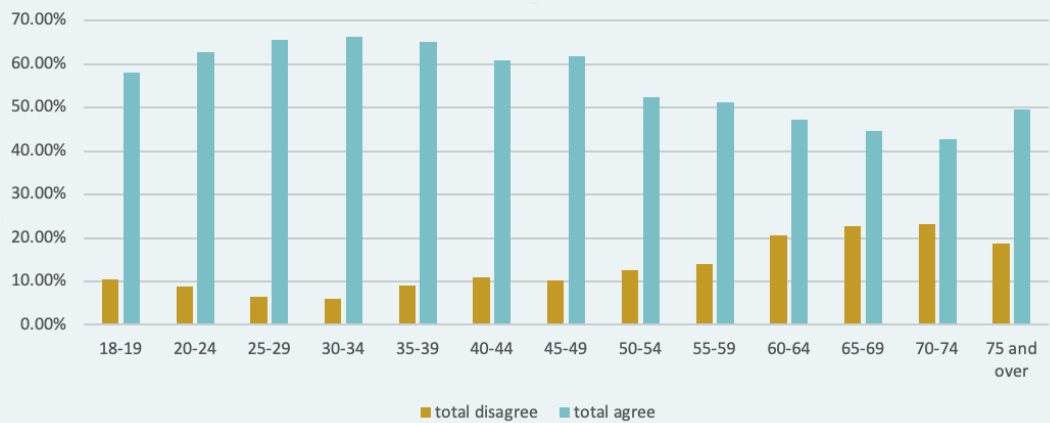
**G2r1: How strongly do you agree or disagree... The government has a responsibility to ensure that all children growing up in Australia have a home that is safe and healthy**



It is widely agreed that housing policy in Australia favours older wealthier people who already own houses (56.6% total agree). This belief peaks around the typical age of first home buyers (25-39) at over 66% and declines to a low of 42.7% for people aged 70-74.

**Figure 13**

**G5r8: How strongly do you agree or disagree... Housing policy in Australia favours older wealthier people who already own houses**

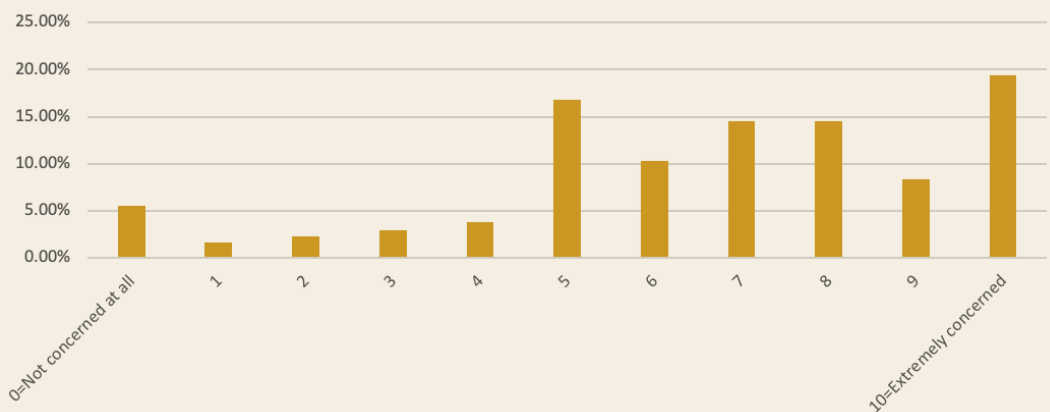


We asked about recent projections from the Parliamentary Budget Office that the cost of negative gearing and capital gains tax discounting for property investors will reach \$20 billion a year by 2030.

Overall, 56.8% of people expressed high concern (7-10), while 12.3% expressed little concern (0-3) about this projection. Interestingly, people who owned a single investment property expressed a similar level of concern to those who did not, a subject we will return to in the investment section below.

**Figure 14**

**H10r4: How concerned... Government estimates show that or tax incentives for property investors on investment properties may soon cost the country \$20 billion per year**



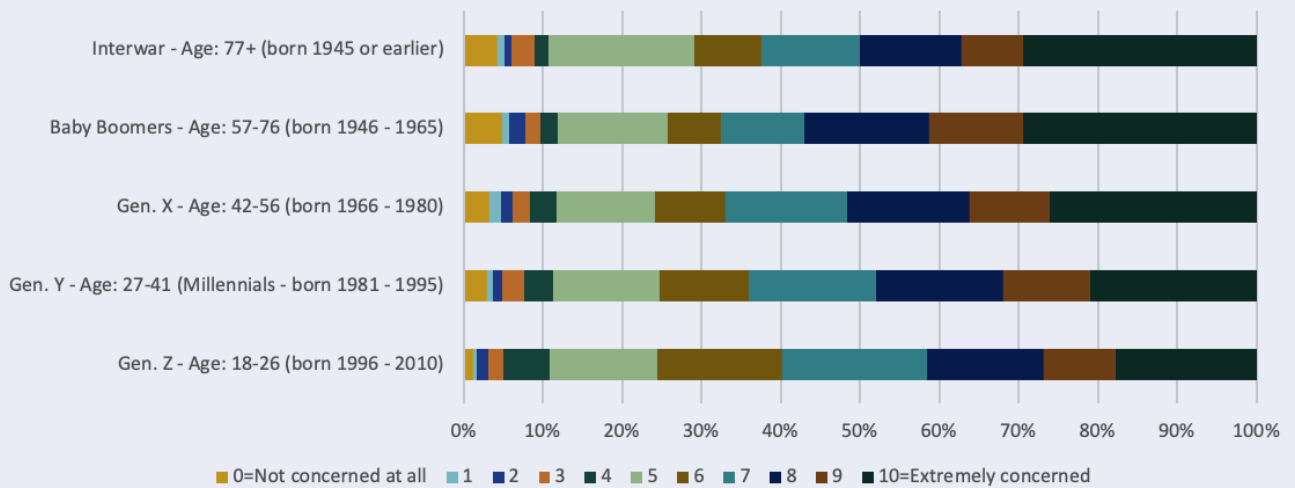
Australians are very concerned about the loss of public housing over recent decades. When told that public housing construction had dropped from around 9% of all dwellings in the 1980s to just 1.5% today, 64.2% of respondents expressed high concern, with only 6.3% reporting little concern.

Interestingly, although 18 - 41 year olds have tended to show more concern about broader housing affordability, concern over levels of social housing is positively correlated with increasing age, with Interwar generation and Baby Boomer respondents most likely to be extremely concerned. 29.49% of interwar respondents were extremely concerned, compared to just 17.8% of Gen Z.

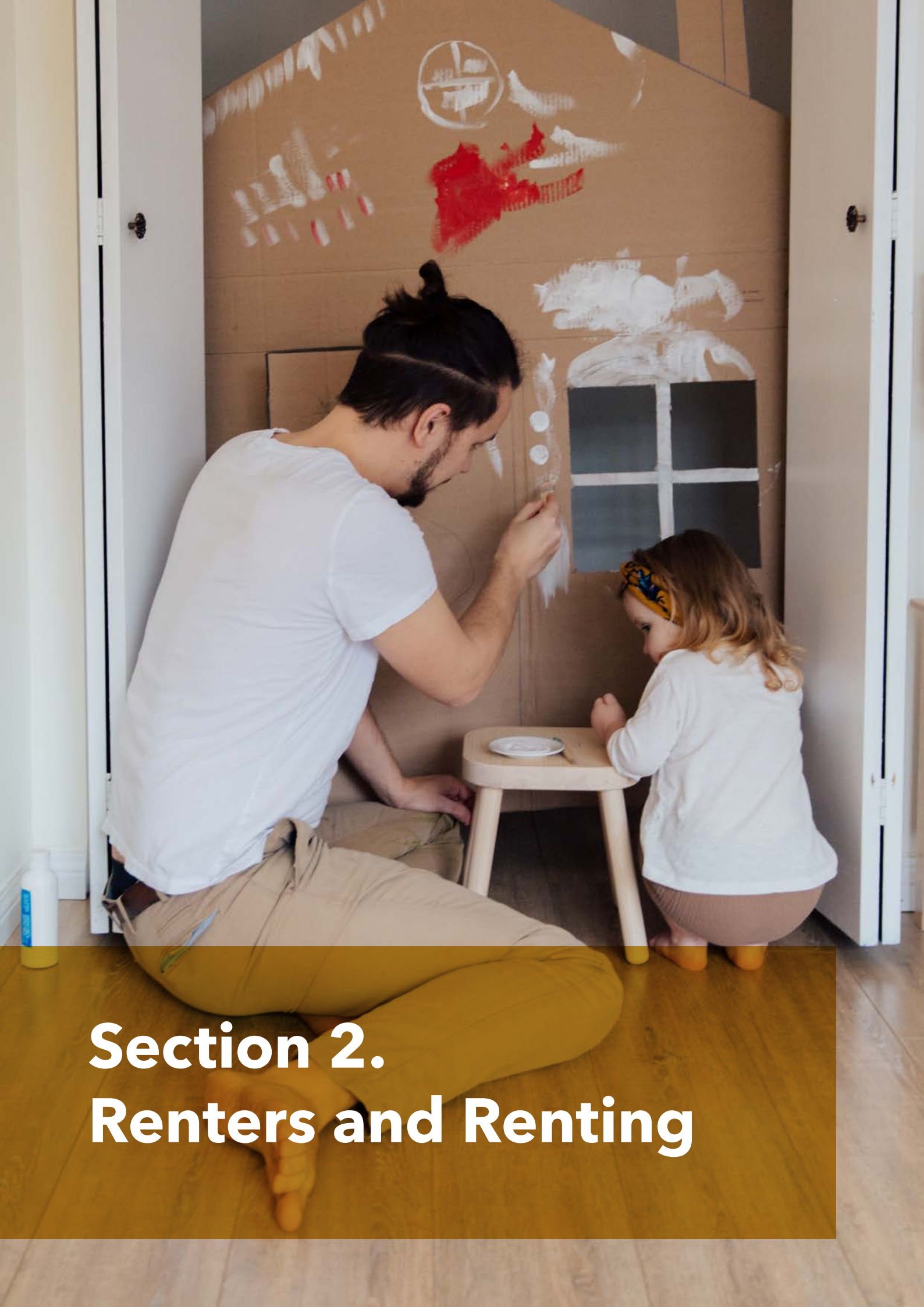
This likely reflects a lack of understanding among younger generations of the role that public housing traditionally played in housing affordability and security, as the proportion of the population living in public housing has been residualised over the past few decades.

**Figure 15**

**H10r3: How concerned... Public housing construction has fallen from around 9% of all new houses in the 1980s, to around 1.5% now**







## **Section 2. Renters and Renting**

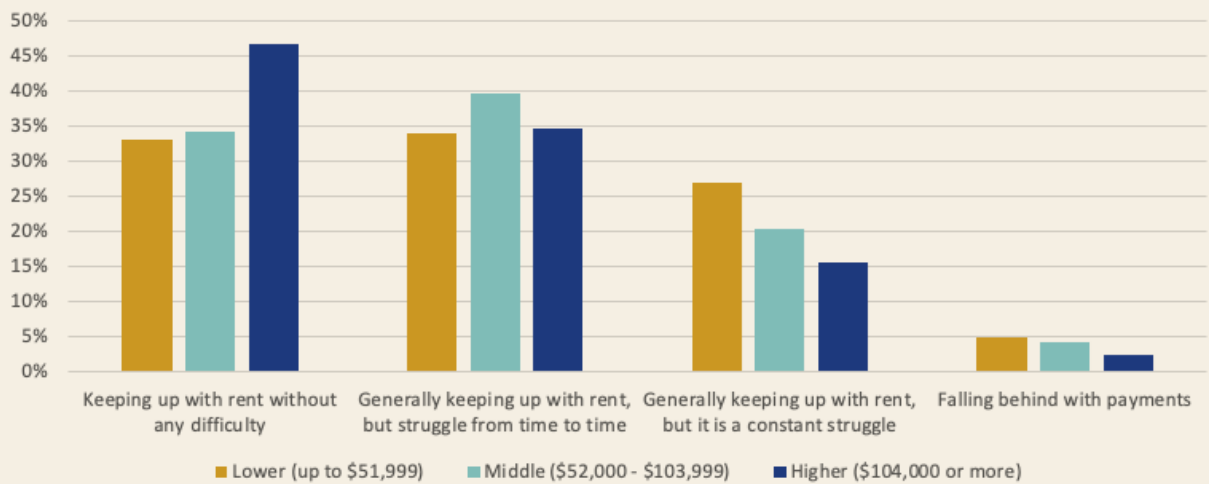
## 2.1 Affordability of rents

When it comes to affordability, renters are more likely to report difficulties than homeowners. 4% of respondents report that they are falling behind with rental payments, while 22.6% say that meeting their rent it is a constant struggle. A further 35.4% of respondents report struggling to pay rent from time to time, while a similar sized group (35.9%) report that they can pay their rent without any difficulty.

Disaggregation by income levels predictably shows that respondents from high income households are more likely to be keeping up without any difficulty, and less likely to struggle or fall behind on rent than respondents from middle and low-income households.

**Figure 16**

**R7: Which of the following best describes how you feel about paying your rent? (by income)**



## 2.2 Quality of rental homes

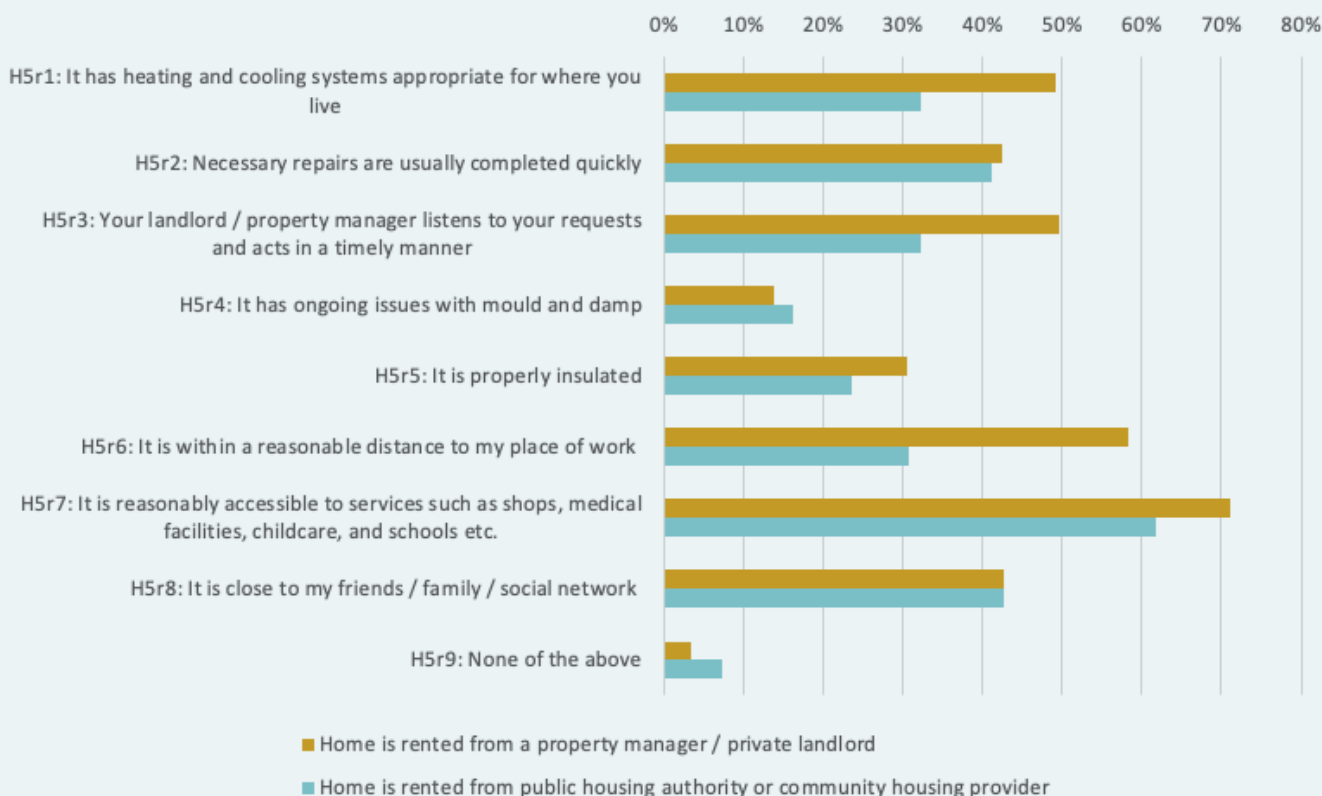
Renters in Australia report a highly variable experience of rental housing stock quality. 71.1% of private renters report being reasonably close to schools and childcare, while nearly 60% regard their home as being a reasonable distance from work. Around half of private renters consider the heating and cooling in their home to be adequate and say that their landlord or property manager listens to requests and acts in a timely manner.

However, only 30.3% of private renters reported having sufficient insulation, and only 42% regard their home as being a reasonable distance from their friends and families. Nearly 14% live with damp or mould, and report that repairs tend not to be carried out quickly.

Respondents living in social housing report worse housing quality standards on all but one metric. Over 16% report living with mould or damp, just 30% live a reasonable distance from work, 75% say that their home is not properly insulated, and fewer than a third have appropriate heating and cooling. Again, this reflects the residualisation of, and lack of investment in, public housing over many decades.

**Figure 17**

### H5. Which of the following apply to the home you currently live in?



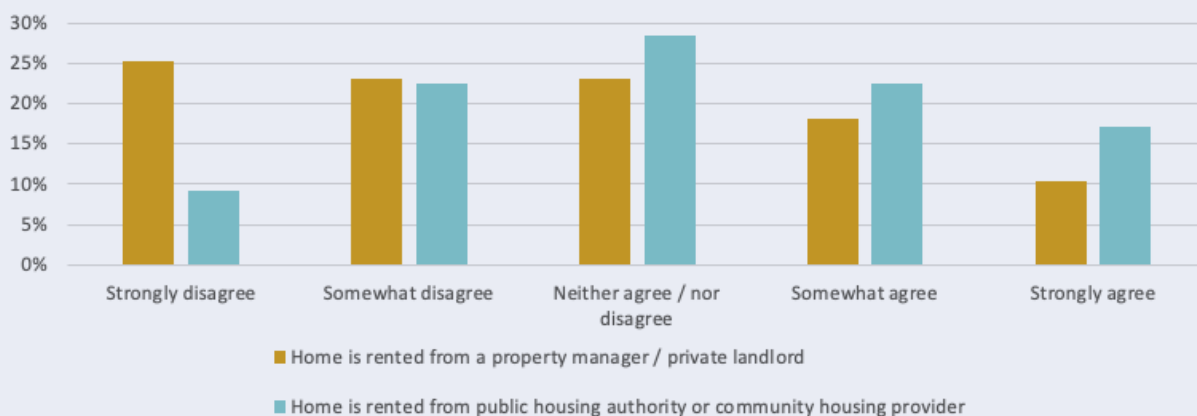
## 2.3 Landlords, rights and laws

Respondents were more likely to report that they didn't have any difficulties getting landlords to repair things in the house: nearly half of private tenants somewhat or strongly disagree that it is difficult, while on the opposite end of this spectrum 28.5% somewhat or strongly agree that it is difficult.

The reported experience of social housing tenants is quite different: a larger share report that it is difficult than those reporting that it is not. 39.8% somewhat or strongly agree, while 31.8% disagree that it is difficult. This indicates that the government and community housing providers are not as responsive to tenants' needs as are most private landlords.

**Figure 18**

**R6r2/r3: It's difficult to get my landlord to fix anything**



Tenants are more likely to think that their landlord has their best interest at heart than not. A little over a third of renters somewhat or strongly agree with the statement **My property manager / landlord has my best interests at heart**, compared to a quarter who disagree. Landlords in Victoria are most favourably viewed, while respondents in WA are split fairly evenly between agree/disagree.

Tenants are also optimistic about their likelihood of staying in their home as long as they like. 41.6% of private and 56.4% of social renters agree somewhat or strongly that they are confident in this prospect. Conversely, 27% of private, and 15.3% of social renters disagree with this statement. This finding suggests that tenure security for the majority of renters may be better than is often reported in the media.

**Figure 19**

**I'm confident I will be able to live in this home as long as I would like**



While social housing tenants may find their landlords less responsive to problems, they do seem to enjoy a greater level of security in their tenancies than do renters in the private market.



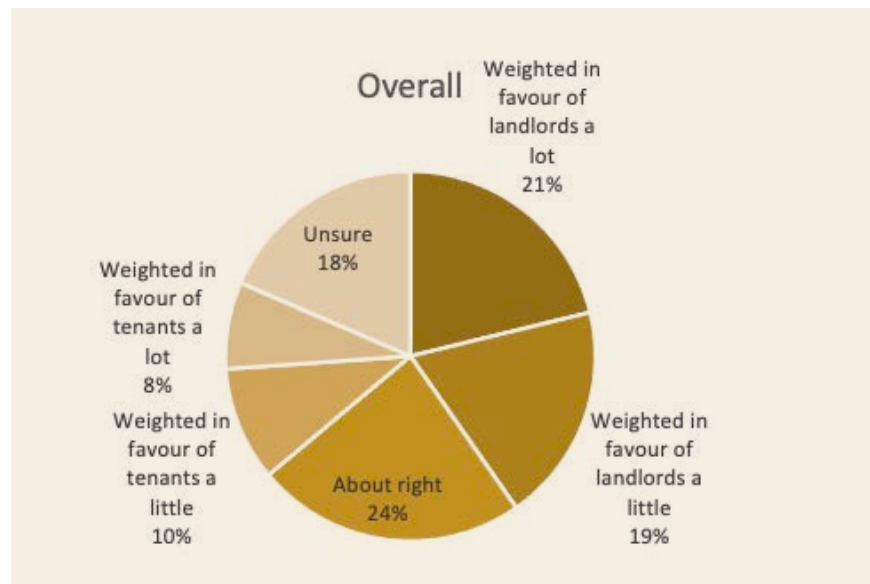
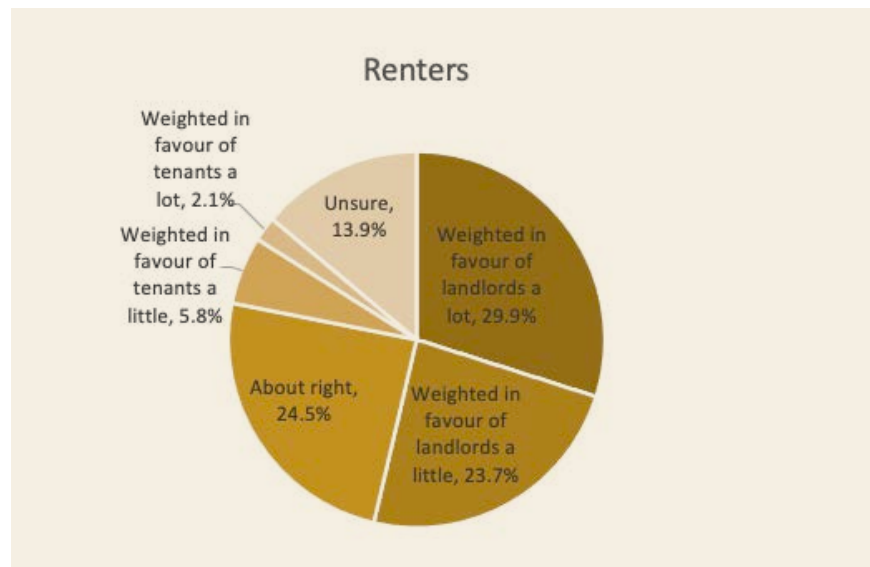
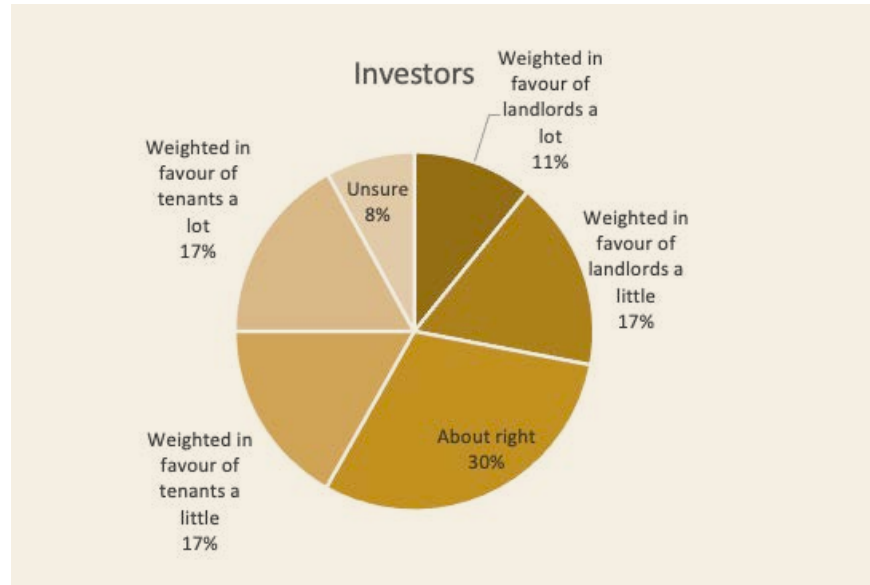
When it comes to the legal relationship between renters and landlords, respondents were significantly more likely to view tenancy laws as favouring landlords over tenants. 40.3% saw tenancy laws as favouring landlords, compared to 17.6% who regarded tenancy laws as weighted in favour of tenants.

Over half of renters tend to see tenancy laws in their state as weighted in favour of landlords either a little or a lot, with only 8% viewing tenancy laws as favouring tenants.

Investor opinion was roughly split evenly into three, with 28% of investors considered tenancy laws to be in their favour, 30.2% about right and 33.8% who saw tenancy laws as weighted in favour of tenants.

**Figure 20**

**P5. Thinking about landlords and tenants, do you think the tenancy laws in your state are...**

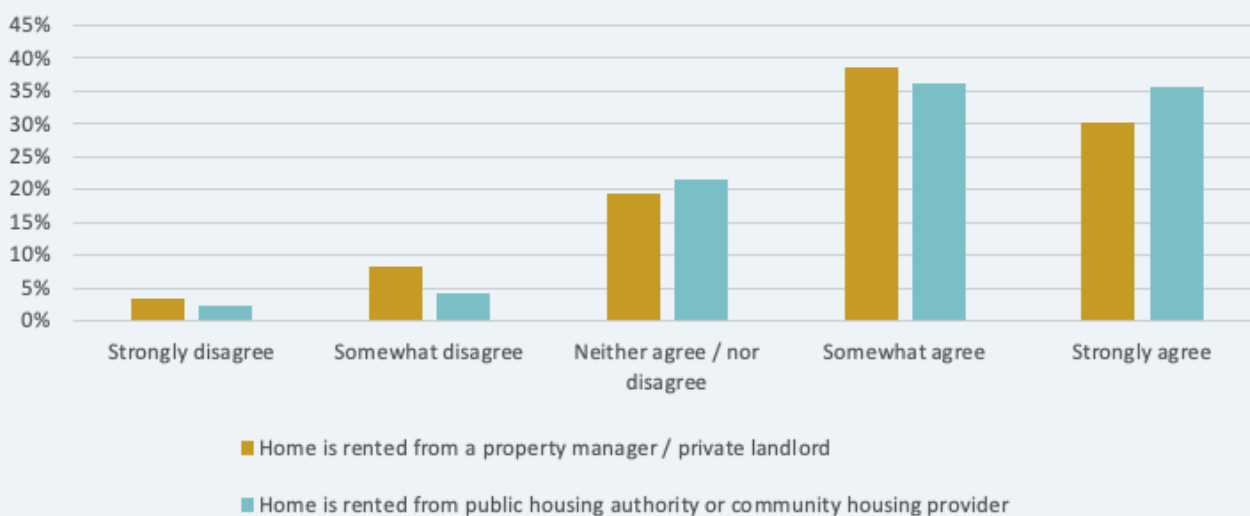


Interestingly, the survey found that around 70% of renters would be happy to rent long-term if they could treat the property as a home – that is, if they felt secure in their rental home.

This is an unexpected finding given the negative wealth accumulation implications of not owning a home. It may indicate a shift in both tenure preferences and approaches to wealth building among younger as house prices keep growing ahead of wages.

**Figure 21**

**R6r5: I would be happy to rent long term if I could treat the property as my home**



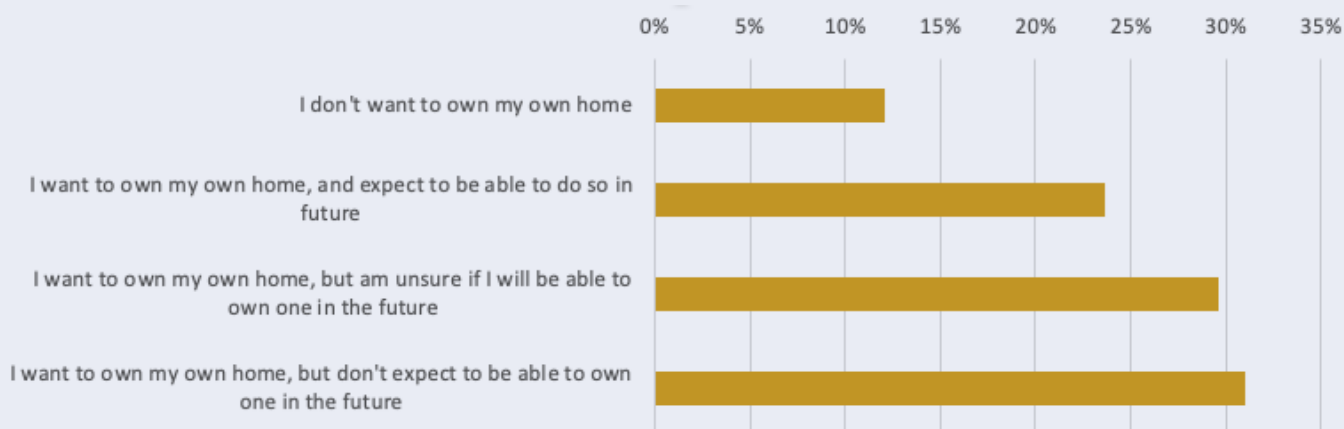
## 2.4 Views on future home ownership

For non-homeowners (IE: renters and those living with their parents) the prospect of owning a home remains desirable but is increasingly challenging. 85% of non-homeowner respondents expressed a desire to own a home at some point, while only 12% said they did not want to.

Fewer than one in four - only 24% - expect to be able to do so. 30% are unsure if they would be able to, while 31% do not expect to be able to own their own home.

**Figure 22**

**R2: Which of the following best describes how you feel about owning your own home in Australia?**

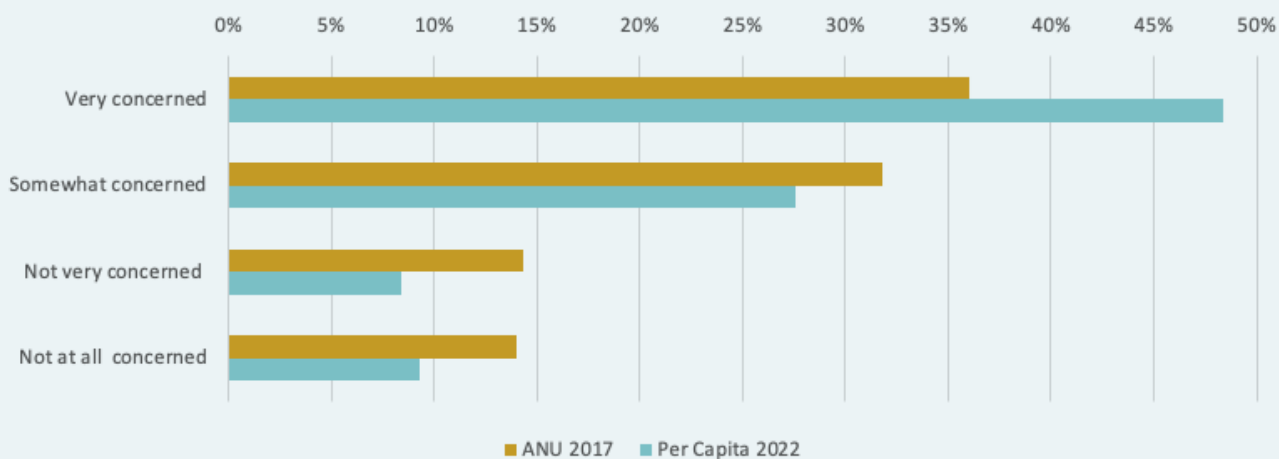


When asked **How concerned are you about being able to afford to buy a house during your lifetime?** 76% of renters who wanted to own a home were concerned, including 49% who were very concerned. The share of respondents who selected somewhat or very concerned rose to over 92% of Gen X, Millennial and Gen Z women renters.

In 2017 the ANU carried out a similar survey which asked an equivalent question, allowing us to infer comparisons between these two time periods. This comparison shows that Australians’ confidence that they will one day realise the “great Australian dream” of homeownership is in freefall. Respondents who reported being very concerned rose from just over a third (36%) in 2017 to a little under half in 2022 (48%).

**Figure 23**

**How concerned are you/ are you concerned about being able to afford to buy a house during your lifetime?**



Renters of all kinds tend to view saving for a deposit as a significant hurdle to home ownership. 72% of private and 69% of social renters somewhat or strongly agree that the main reason they do not own a house is that it is impossible to save up a deposit.

For women, this sentiment is significantly higher, with 46.7% of female renters agreeing strongly with the statement, compared to 33.9% of men.

**Figure 24**

**R6r6: The main reason I don't own a house is that it is impossible to save up a deposit**



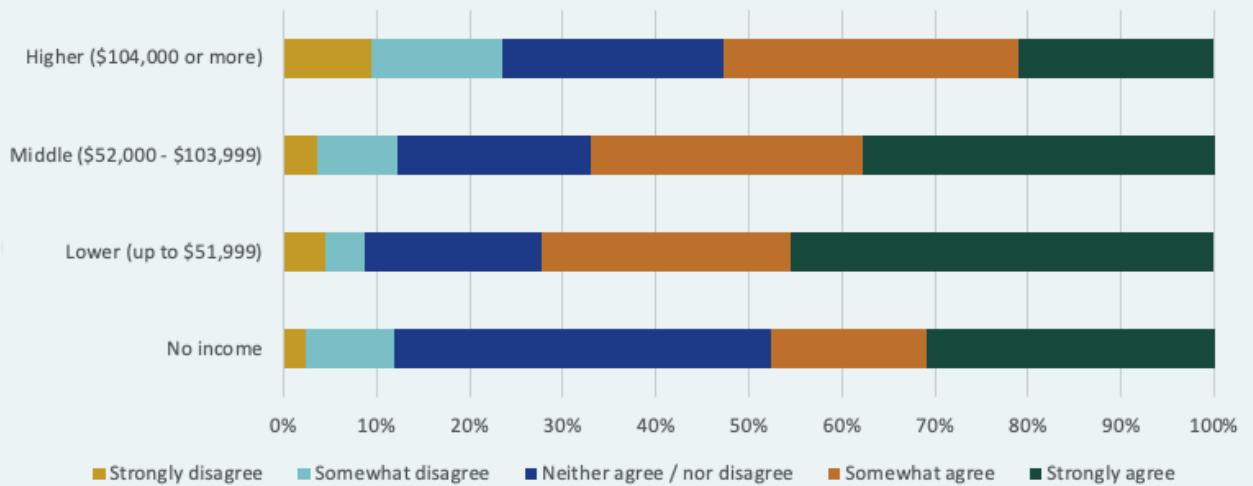


The survey also confirms that “the bank of mum and dad” is increasingly important to the prospects of home ownership among younger generations. 63.8% of non-homeowners agree with the statement ***The only way I’m ever likely to be able to own my own home is if I get a large inheritance.***

Predictably, respondents’ tendency to agree with this statement decreases as incomes rise. For those people in households with income less than \$1000 per week, 72% agreed or strongly agreed that the only way they would be able to afford to own a home was through an inheritance, while just 17% disagreed. Nevertheless, even among respondents in higher income households (\$2000 per week or more) over half - 52.8% - believed they would need an inheritance to buy a home, significantly more than the proportion who believe they will be able to go it alone, which is now less than one in four non-homeowners, at just 23.6%.

**Figure 25**

**R6r7: How strongly agree or disagree... The only way I’m ever likely to be able to own my own home is if I get a large inheritance**

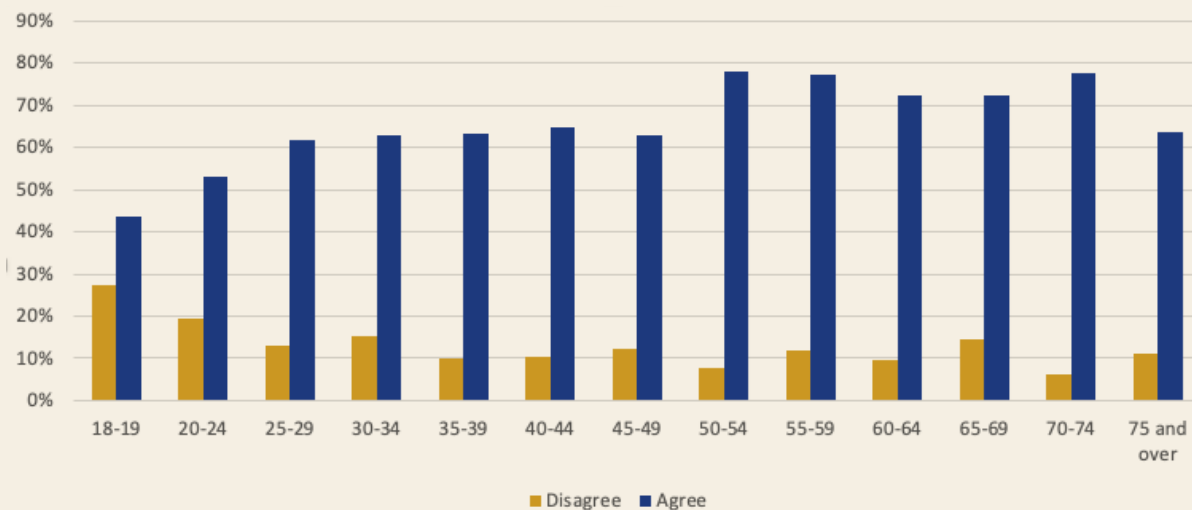


The tendency to agree increases with age up to those in their mid-70s, then declines. That is, if a person of a certain age hasn't gotten onto the housing ladder, it becomes increasingly difficult to imagine doing so without a large inheritance.

The importance with which an inheritance is regarded as necessary peaks at 78.2% of 50-54 year olds.

**Figure 26**

**R6r7: How strongly agree or disagree... The only way I'm ever likely to be able to own my own home is if I get a large inheritance**



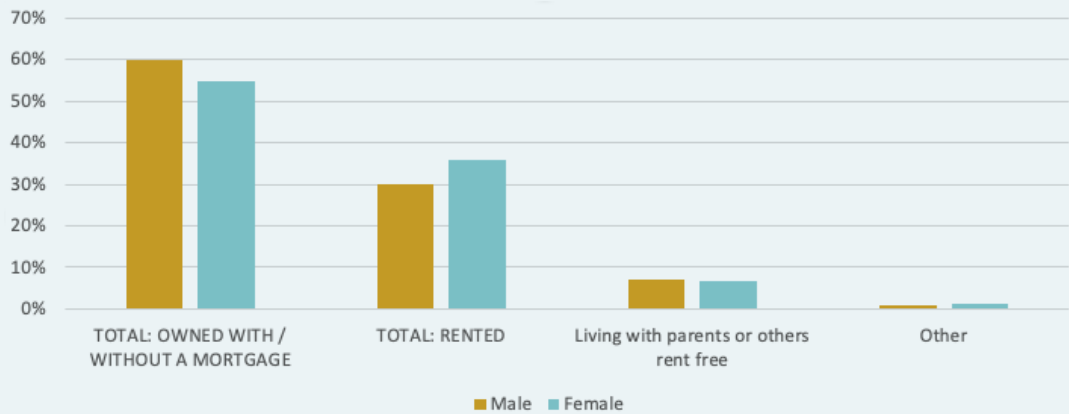


**Section 3.  
Homeowners and  
Home Ownership**

# 3.1 Mortgage affordability

The survey found significant differences between the reported tenure types of men and women. 55% of women reported owning their house compared to 60% of men, while 30% of women were renters compared to 24% of men. This aligns with findings in comparable research.<sup>11</sup>

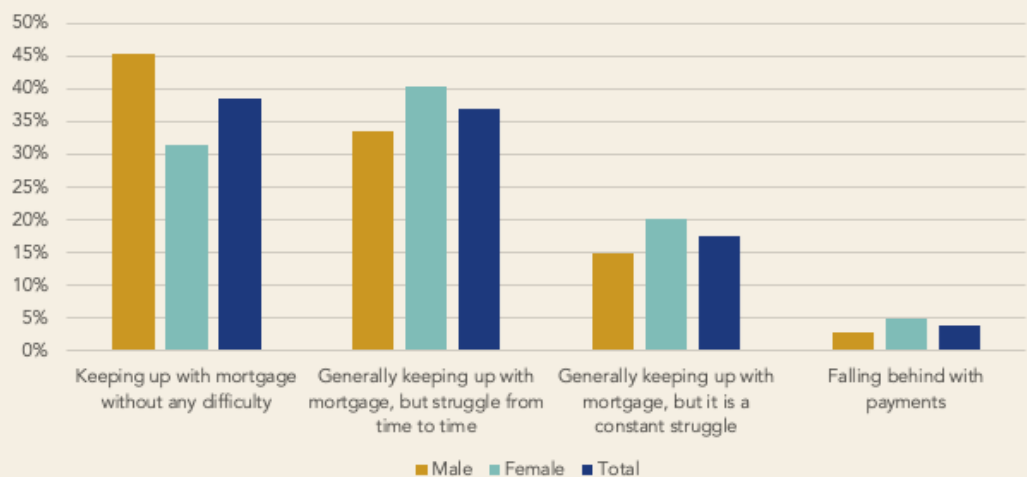
**Figure 27. H1: Tenure type (by gender)**



75% of mortgage holders reported keeping up with repayments without any difficulty, or struggling from time to time. A further 18% said that they were generally keeping up, but constantly struggling, while 4% reported falling behind on payments.

Men tended to exhibit far greater confidence in their ability to pay the mortgage than women. Just under half of men said that they can pay the mortgage without any difficulty, compared to a third of women. 25% of women reported constantly struggling or falling behind, compared to 18% of men.

**Figure 28. O3: Which of the following best describes how you feel about paying your mortgage?**



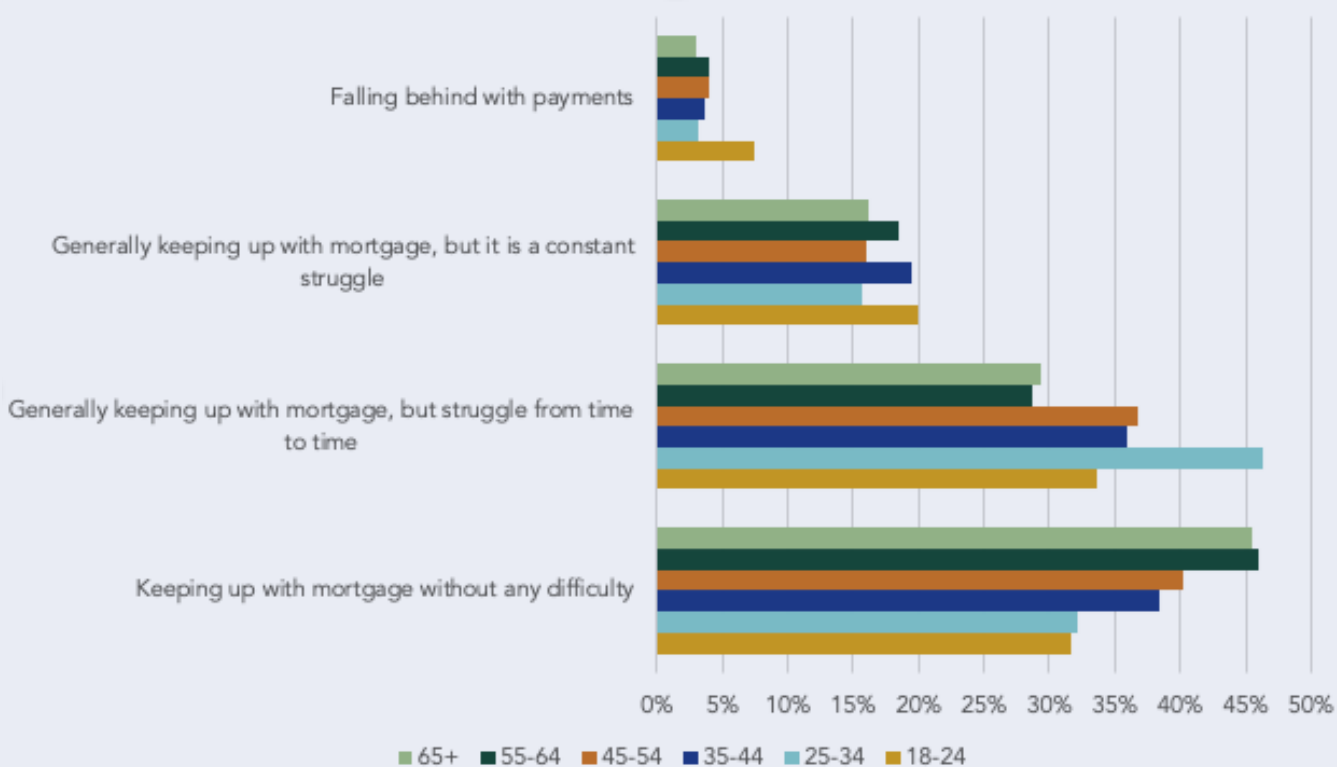
11 Such as in CoreLogic’s Women and Property reports



Age also correlates with respondent attitudes toward making mortgage payments. Mortgage holders aged 18-24 were around twice as likely to be falling behind in payments, compared to the average, and were more likely to report constantly struggling. Conversely, respondents aged 55 and over were around 50% more likely to report keeping up without any difficulty compared to 18-34 year olds.

**Figure 29**

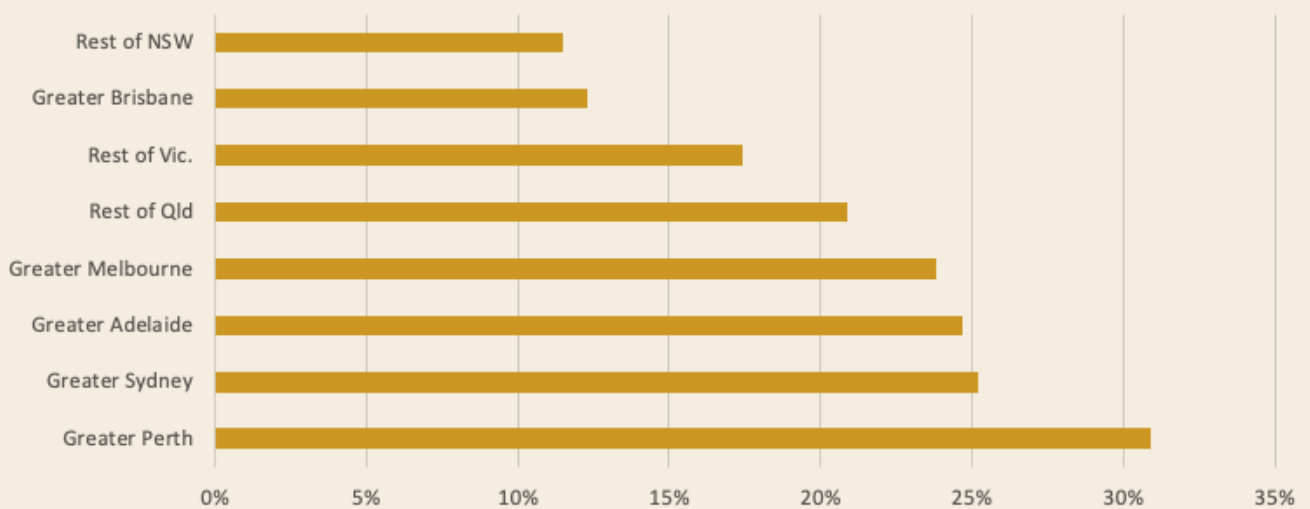
**O3: Which of the following best describes how you feel about paying your mortgage? (by age)**



Geographically, Perth, Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne were the areas of highest mortgage stress. Around 31% of mortgage holders in Perth reported constantly struggling (27%) or falling behind (4%).

**Figure 30**

**Proportion of mortgage holders reporting constantly struggling or falling behind (by region)**



It is worth noting that since the fieldwork was conducted in December 2022, there have been a further 0.5 basis point interest rate increases, significantly increasing mortgage repayments for many mortgage holders, as well as a decline in the population in mortgage holders, who have low fixed rate mortgages. This likely means that mortgage affordability has declined since fieldwork was conducted.

## 3.2 Homes, personal finance and wealth

The number of home buyers who have accessed informal financial assistance to purchase a home has increased significantly over time.

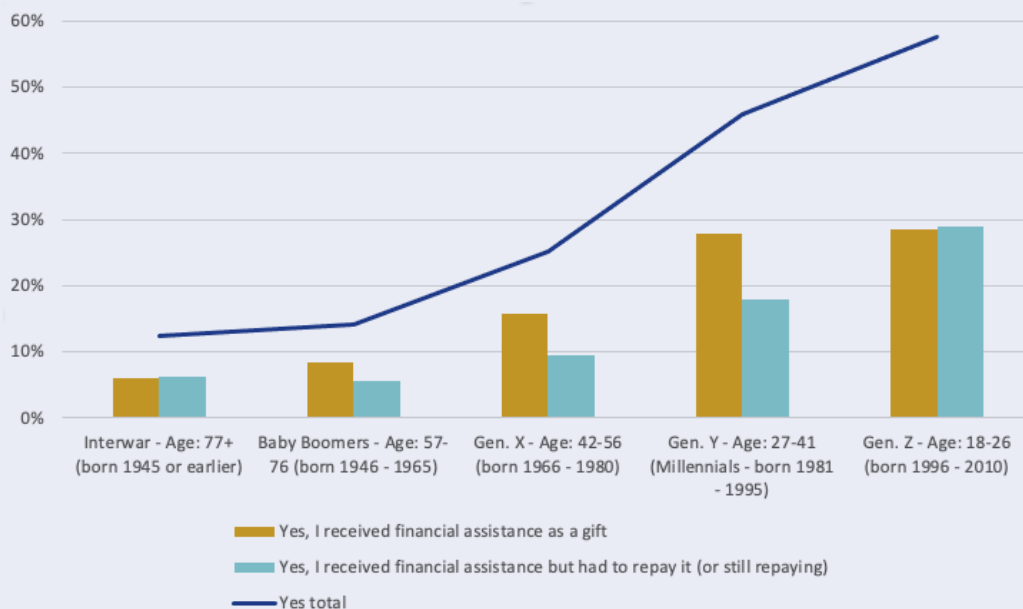
For those respondents who bought their first house before 1980, just 15.3% received a loan or a gift from family members. This had increased to 40.8% by 2020.

Generationally, the incidence of receiving a loan or gift from the bank of mum and dad has shown a dramatic increase. 12.4% of the Interwar generation received financial support, which has risen to 57.5% for Gen Z homebuyers.

This change reflects several changing household wealth and income trends. Firstly, the ratio of house prices to wages, particularly for young people, has risen dramatically. Secondly, a stable, permanent, full-time job is less likely for younger generations, and thirdly there is far more family wealth available to be lent by older generations, particularly from those who own property and have decent superannuation savings.

**Figure 31**

**O2: Did you receive any assistance from your family or your partner’s family when you purchased your first residential property / house in Australia? (by generation)**



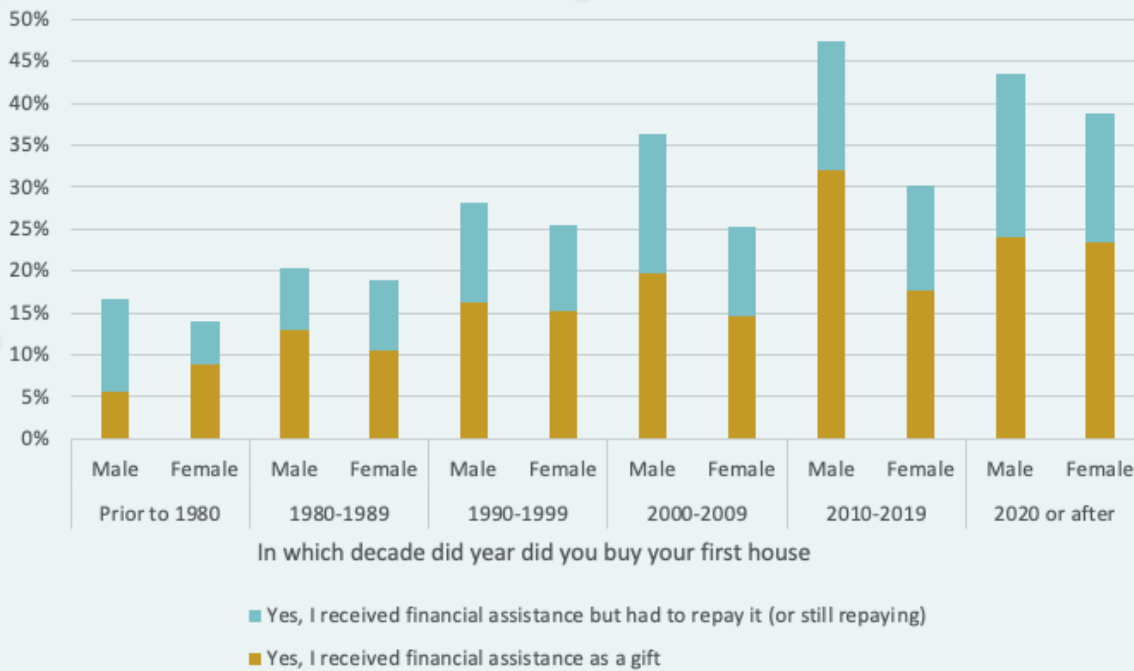
The social implications of this trend are significant, as it demonstrates that our housing market is increasing intergenerational inequality, with children of wealthier parents or existing homeowners increasingly likely to be advantaged in the housing market as house prices diverge from incomes.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See Rachel Ong ViforJ & Christopher Phelps (2023) The Growing Intergenerational Housing Wealth Divide: Drivers And Interactions In Australia, Housing, Theory and Society, DOI: 10.1080/14036096.2022.2161622

Men are also far more likely to report having received help than women. Overall, 31.6% of men and 23.9% of women received financial help of some sort. This is a significant gender gap in the provision of family support to homebuyers, which holds across the generations. In fact, the greatest gender gap is among those who received family assistance between 2010 and 2019, where the difference is a staggering 15.2%.

**Figure 32**

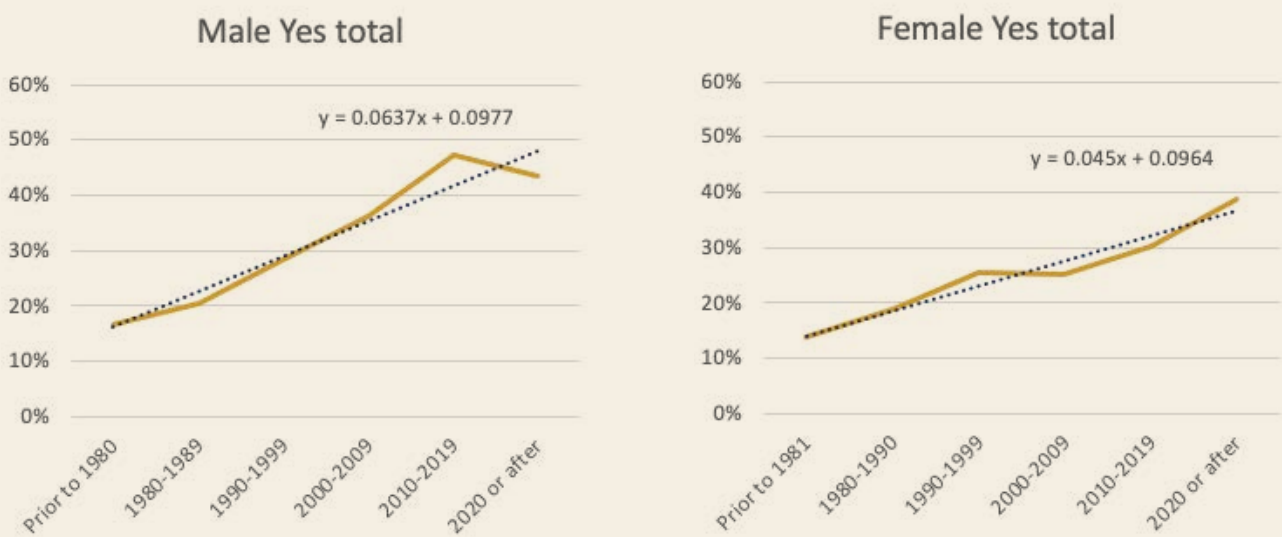
**O2: Did you receive any assistance from your family or your partner’s family when you purchased your first residential property / house in Australia? (by gender and date of first home purchase)**



While we did not ask about the size of loans and gifts, previous research has shown that the “bank of mum and dad” has been providing increasingly large sums of money over the past decade<sup>13</sup>. This means that while we cannot say from this research whether the size of gifts and loans from parents differ between their female and male children, we can say that the incidence of financial support is far higher for men than for women. Importantly, the rate of increase in financial support is far higher for men than for women, indicating a growing difference in support between genders.

**Figure 33**

**O2: Did you receive any assistance from your family or your partner’s family when you purchased your first residential property / house in Australia? (by gender and date of first home purchase)**



13 <https://digitalfinanceanalytics.com/>

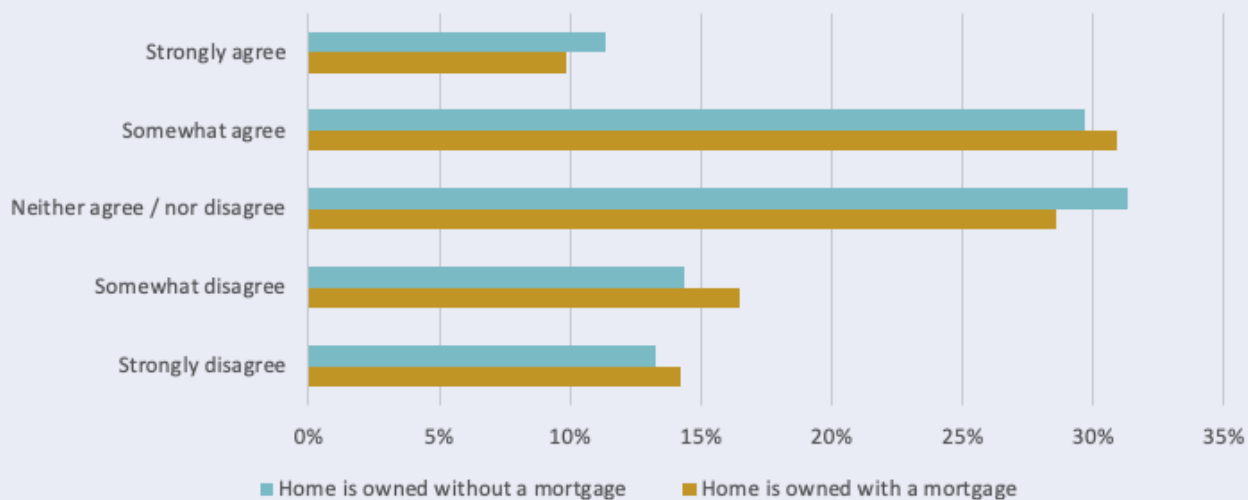


Interestingly, despite the rise in net wealth for most home owners brought about by rapidly increasing house prices over recent years, a surprisingly small proportion of home owners believe they have personally benefitted from this.

When presented with the statement ***I have benefited from the longer-term increase in house prices*** around only 40% of homeowners agree, while 27% disagree. This trend does not change significantly when disaggregating people who own their home outright, or for when respondents bought their first home.

**Figure 34**

**P4r5: I have benefited from the longer-term increase in house prices**

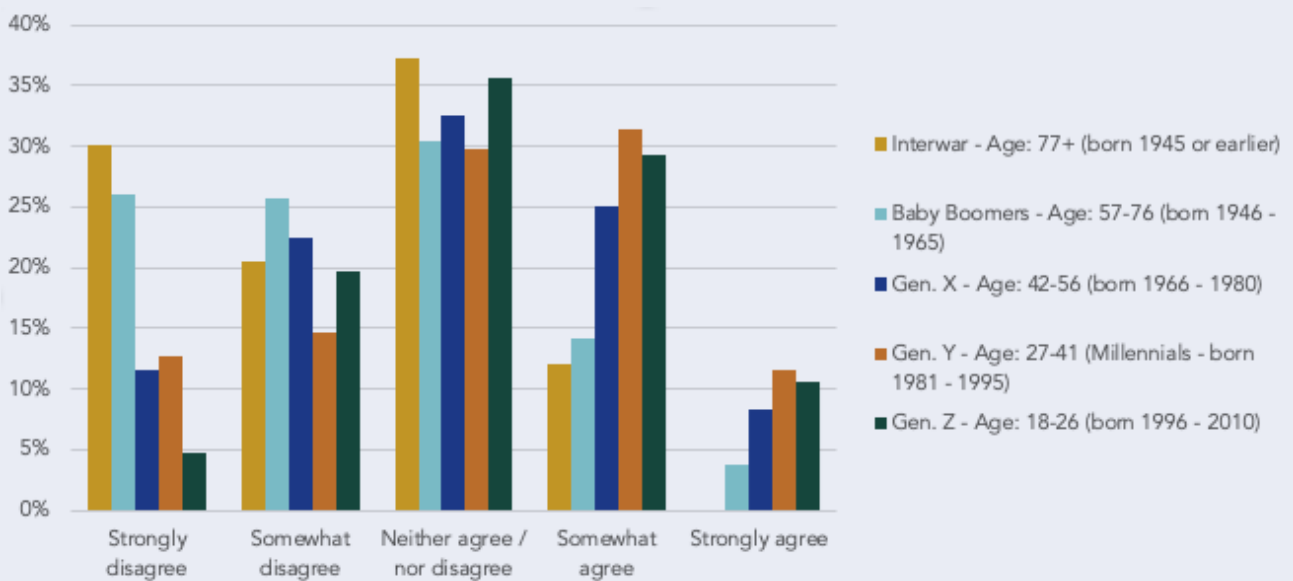


The results are similar when it comes to how people view their reliance on rising house prices for financial security. Around 29% of people believe their future fortunes are tied up with rising house prices, while just under 40% do not.

Results are highly correlated to age, with younger respondents far more likely to see their financial security tied up in future house price rises, compared to older respondents: 43% of Millennials saw their financial security tied up with house price rises, while only 17.9% of Baby Boomers agreed.

**Figure 35**

**P4r6: My financial security depends on house prices continuing to rise**

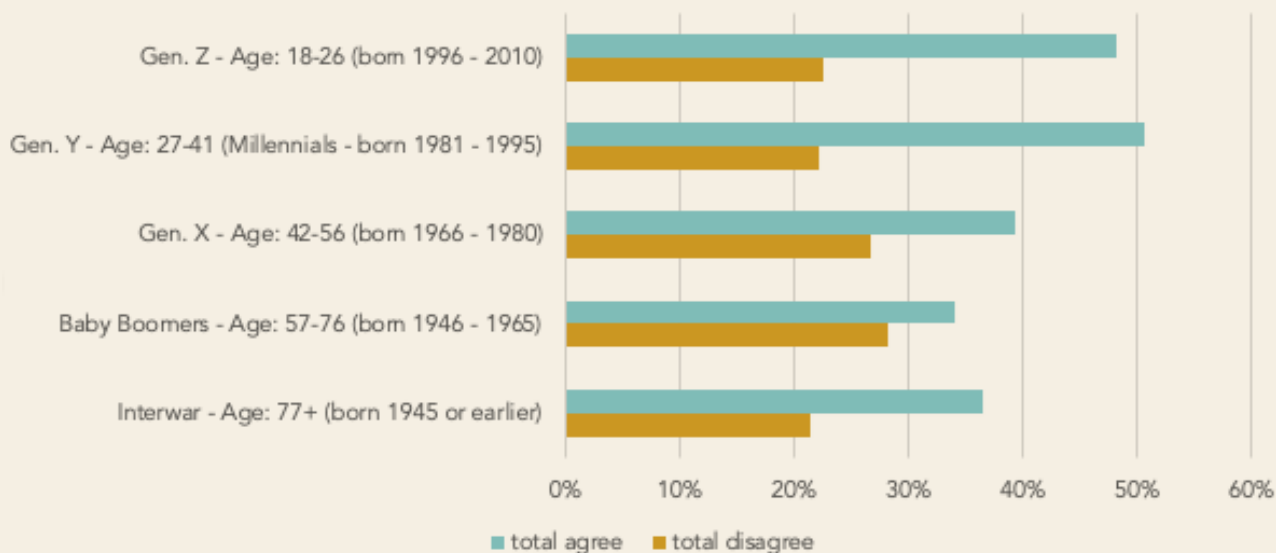


When it comes to trading off personal housing wealth against wider housing affordability, a significant share of respondents report being willing to see growth in the value of their house slow if it helped others to secure affordable housing.

Overall, 40.5% of homeowners somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement ***I would be willing to see my home stop growing in value if it would help improve housing affordability.*** This rises to around 50% for Millennial and Gen Z owners and falls to between 39.2% and 34.1% for Gen X, Baby Boomer and Interwar owners.

**Figure 36**

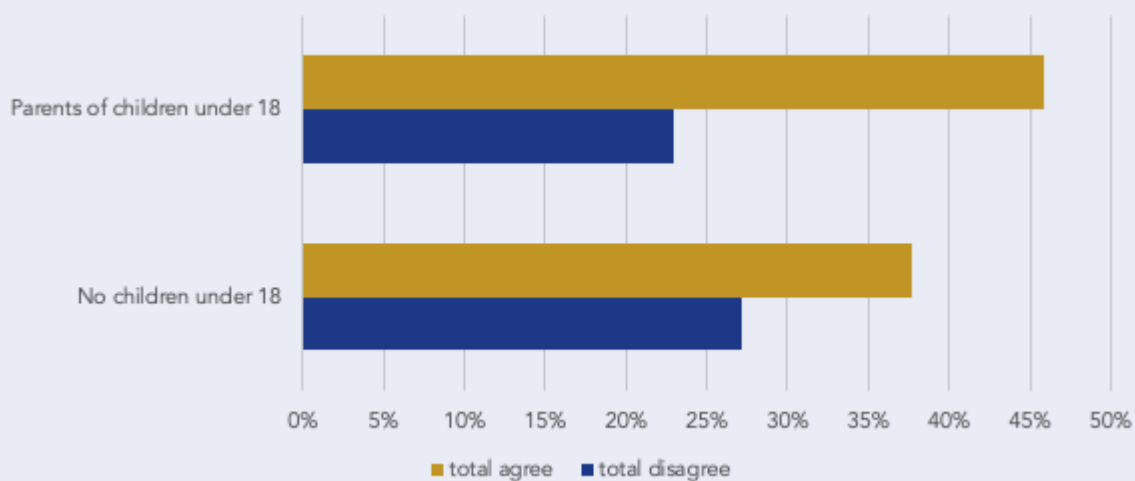
**G5r2: I would be willing to see my home stop growing in value if it would help improve housing affordability (by generation)**



Parents of young children (under 18) were significantly more likely to agree at 45.9%, compared to 37.7% of people without young children.

**Figure 37**

**G5r2: I would be willing to see my home stop growing in value if it would help improve housing affordability (by parental status)**



These findings contradict the commonly held view that ever-increasing property prices are fundamental to Australians’ personal feelings of wealth and security, and that all homeowners are personally invested in, and benefitted by, rising property prices.

Such a finding undermines the familiar political argument that intervening in the housing market to ameliorate property price rises is against the wishes of a majority of Australian households. This result warrants further investigation and we shall return to this topic in another paper.

# Section 4. Investment and Investors



## 4.1 Who are the investors?

14.3% of our sample told us that they owned at least one investment property, broadly in line with ATO estimates of 14.9% of adult Australians.<sup>14</sup> 8.4% had one investment property, 3.9% had 2 or more. Investors were generally older and wealthier.

2.1% of all respondents were “rentvestors” - people who rent their home but own an investment property. This represents 14.2% of all investors.

**Table 2. Who owns investment properties?**

	Male	Female
DO NOT OWN RENTAL	81.8%	89.4%
Homeowner who has one investment property	10.7%	6.2%
Homeowner who has two or more investment properties	5.0%	2.9%
Renter who has one investment property	1.5%	1.2%
Renter who has two or more investment properties	1.0%	0.4%
Total investors	18.2%	10.7%

14 <https://www.afr.com/policy/economy/australia-s-most-prolific-property-investors-are-also-the-best-paid-20220809-p5b8d2>



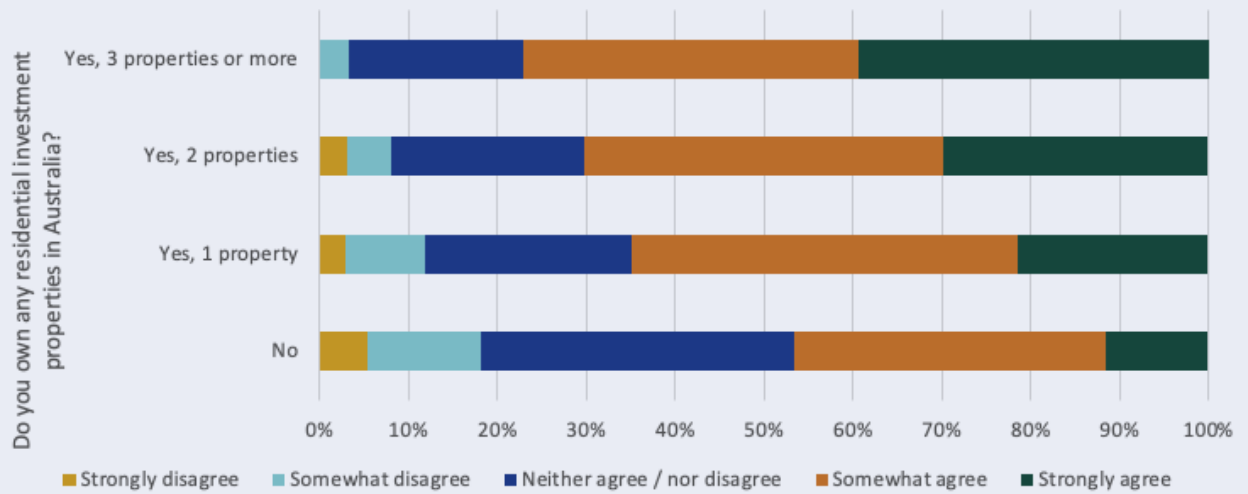
## 4.2 Does investment help or hinder the market?

Around 46% of non-investors agree or strongly agree that property investors play an important role in ensuring people have a place to live, with 18% disagreeing.

This ratio shifts, the more investment properties someone owns, so while 65% of single investment property owners agree and 12% disagree, 77% of investors with three properties agree, and just 3% disagree

**Figure 38**

**P4r1: Property investors have an important role in ensuring people have a place to live**

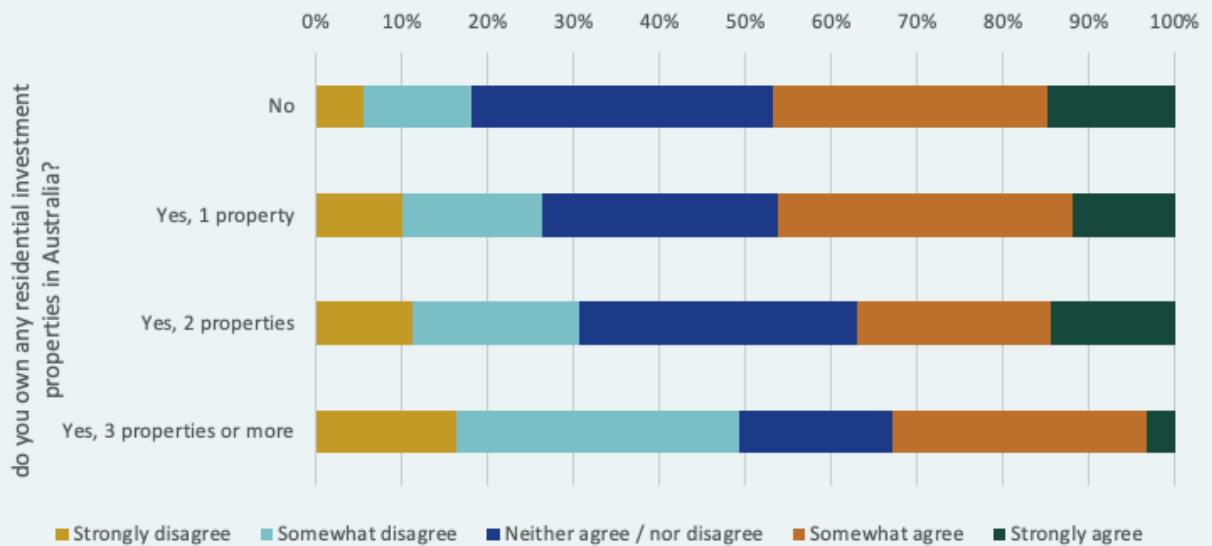


When asked to agree or disagree with the adjacent statement **One of the big reasons house prices keep going up is that there are too many property investors**, 46% of non-investor and single property investor respondents agree or strongly agree. A surprisingly high number of multi-property investors also agree: more people with two investment properties agreed (37.1%) than disagreed (30.7%), although this changes significantly for investors with 3 or more properties (32% agree, 49% disagree).

This indicates that there is confusion among the public over the actual role that investors play in the economy. This may reflect of the frequently polarised coverage in the media, with landlords often represented as causing problems for renters and competing with first home buyers for properties.

**Figure 39**

**P4r2: One of the big reasons house prices keep going up is that there are too many property investors**

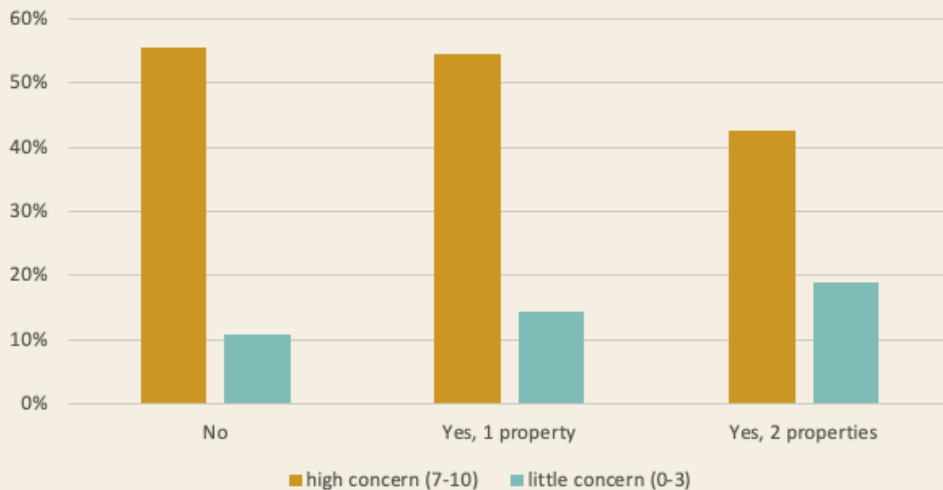


Most people are concerned about the cost of property investor tax breaks, with 54.4% rating the issue of high concern (7-10), 40.5% rating it of moderate concern (4-6) and 11.9% little concern (0-3).

People who do not own investment properties were more than five times more likely to regard the issue of high concern than of little concern. This gap narrows the more investment properties respondents own. For those owning two or more, the proportion of people expressing high concern is slightly over twice as many as those expressing little concern.

**Figure 40**

**H10r4: How concerned... Government estimates show that tax incentives for property investors on investment properties may soon cost the country \$20 billion per year (by investor)**

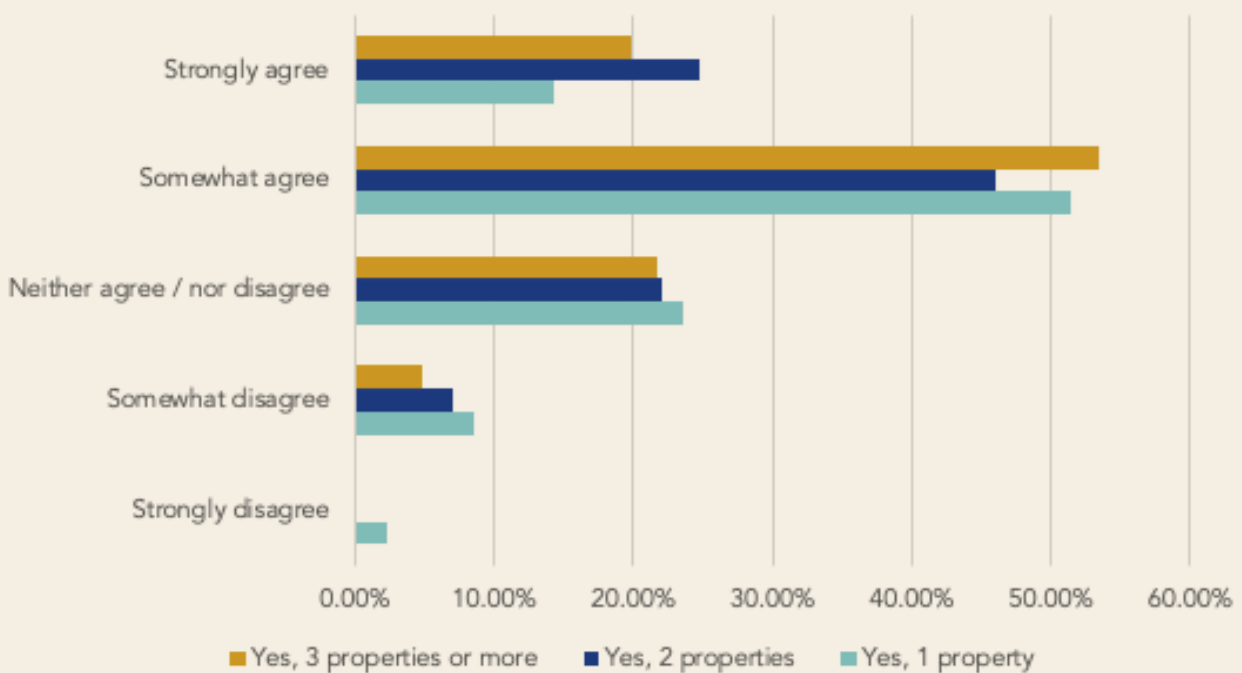


## 4.2 Comparing investment in housing with other types of investment

There is a strong consensus among investors that investing in housing is safer and offers better returns than other forms of investment: 65.1% either somewhat or strongly agree, compared to 11.2% who disagree. However, there is a significant difference between single investment property owners and those with two or more. 10.8% of investors with a single investment property disagree with this statement and are far less likely to strongly agree compared to multi-property investors.

**Figure 41**

**P4r7: I believe investing in residential property is generally safer and offers better returns than other forms of investment**



# Section 5. Housing affordability, Voting and Policy Preferences



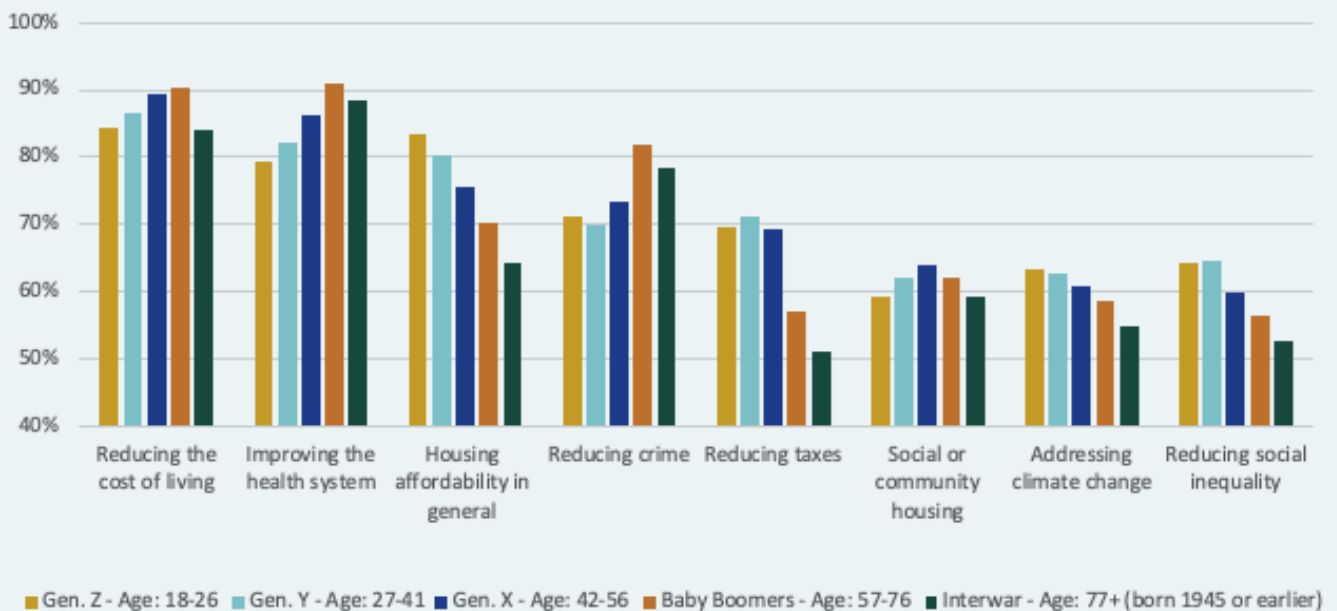
## 5.1 Housing affordability and voting

Overall, housing affordability ranked as the third most important electoral issue that we tested. However, the importance of housing affordability is heavily correlated to age and was the most age stratified issue.

For people under 26, housing affordability ranks as their second highest concern after the cost of living. For respondents aged 26-56 housing affordability remains a top three issue. However, for Baby Boomers and the Interwar generation, reducing crime replaces housing affordability as third most important after the cost of living and improving the health system. This high degree of stratification reflects the differential home ownership rates between generations and helps to explain why there is such a heated intergenerational disagreement on housing affordability.

**Figure 42**

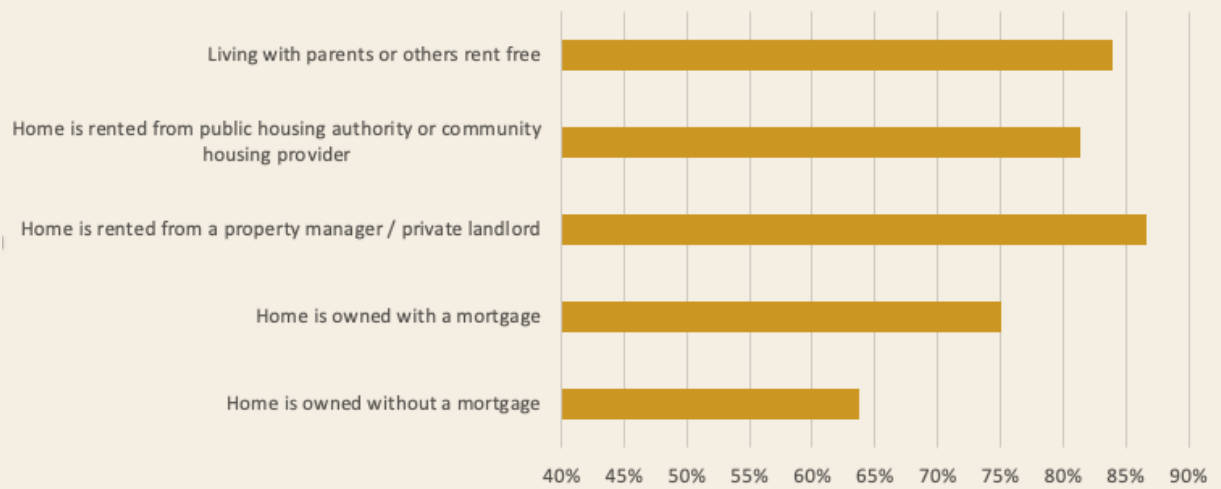
**Q48. How important are each of the following issues to you personally when it comes to voting at Federal elections? High importance (7-10)**





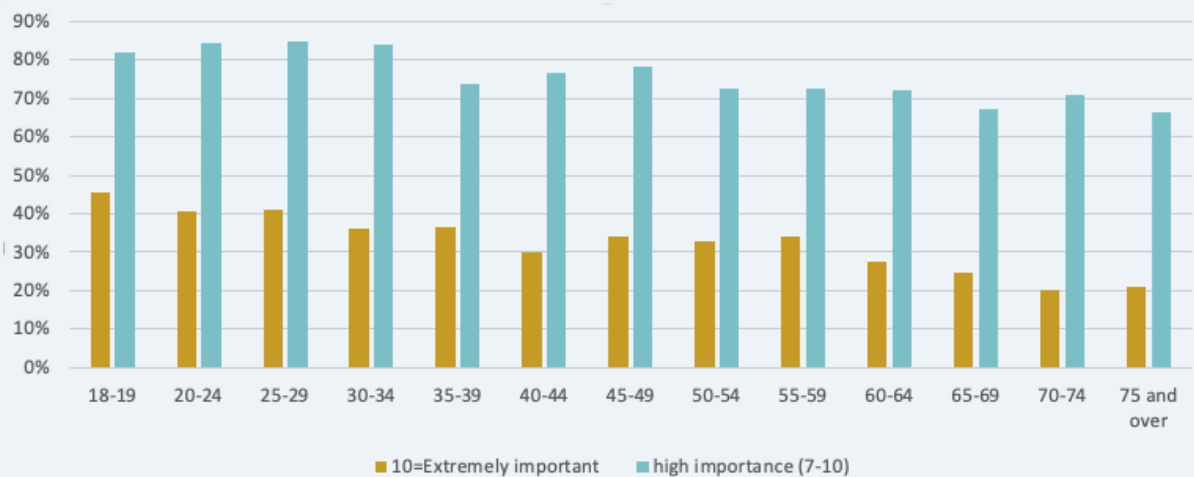
The importance with which respondents view housing affordability as an issue that will influence their vote in the next federal election is highly related to age and homeownership status, with just 63.7% of outright owners regarding housing as a highly important issue, compared to 86.6% of private renters.

**Figure 43. Q48r1: Housing affordability in general, high importance (7-10), by tenure**



The huge importance of housing affordability for young voters can be seen by the proportion of respondents ranking the issue ten out of ten. More than 45% of 18-19 year olds, and more than 40% of 20-29 year olds selected ten out of ten, while above 80% of 18-34 year olds ranked housing affordability 7-10.

**Figure 44. Q48r1: On a scale of 0-10 how important is housing affordability in general to you personally when it comes to voting at Federal elections? (by age)**

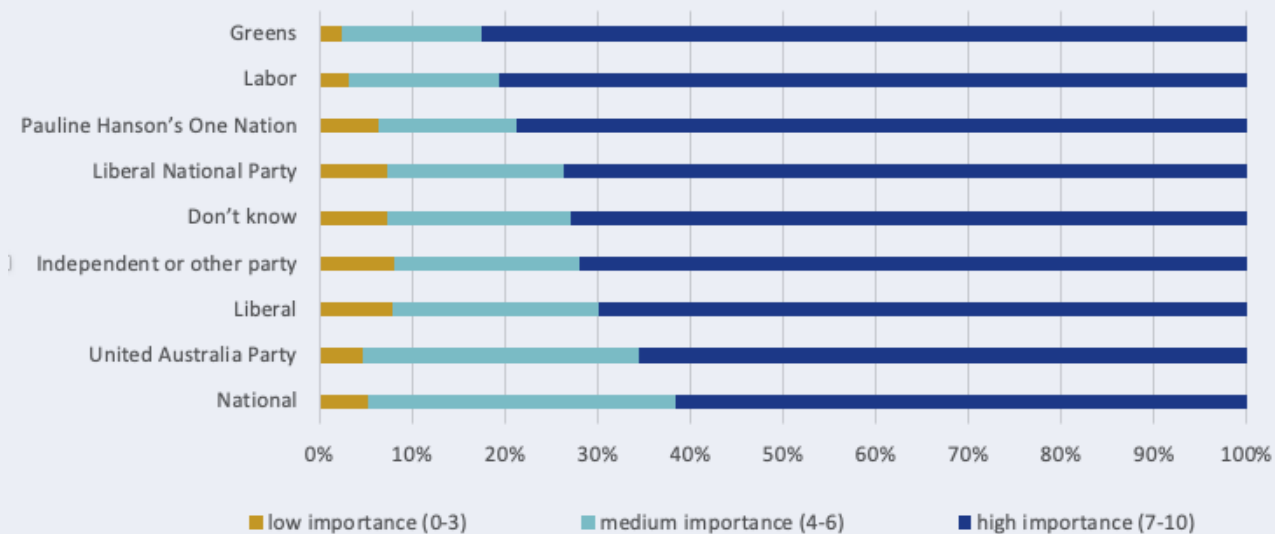


Housing affordability concern is also highly correlated with voter preference. 82.6% of respondents who voted for the Greens at the last federal election see housing affordability as highly important. Nationals voters were least likely to consider housing affordability as a high importance issue, at 61.5%.

Nevertheless, a significant majority of all voters say that housing affordability will be a very important issue at the next federal election.

**Figure 45**

**Q48r1: On a scale of 0-10 how important is housing affordability in general to you personally when it comes to voting at Federal elections? (by party preference)**



For people very likely to change their vote, housing affordability is significantly more important than it is for the population as a whole: 73% of those likely to change their vote at the next election consider housing affordability to be eight or more out of ten, compared to 62% of the general population.

For respondents who voted for Labor or the Liberals at the last federal election, and are very likely to change their vote, housing affordability is particularly important. While 66% of Labor voters in general rated housing affordability an 8 or more out of 10 in importance, this rose to 78% of Labor voters who are likely to change their vote at the next election.

For Liberal voters, the disparity is even greater: while 56% of general Liberal voters rate housing affordability 8-10 in importance, the figure rises to 80.5% of Liberal voters who are very likely to change their vote preference.

This suggests that housing affordability could play a more significant role in determining where swing voters place their preferences in coming elections.

**Table 3**

**Q48r1: On a scale of 0-10 how important is housing affordability in general to you personally when it comes to voting at Federal elections?**

	0,1,2	8,9,10
Labor - Very likely to change	0%	77.8%
Labor - Total	2.3%	65.9%
Liberal - Very Likely to change	0%	80.5%
Liberal - Total	6.4%	55.7%

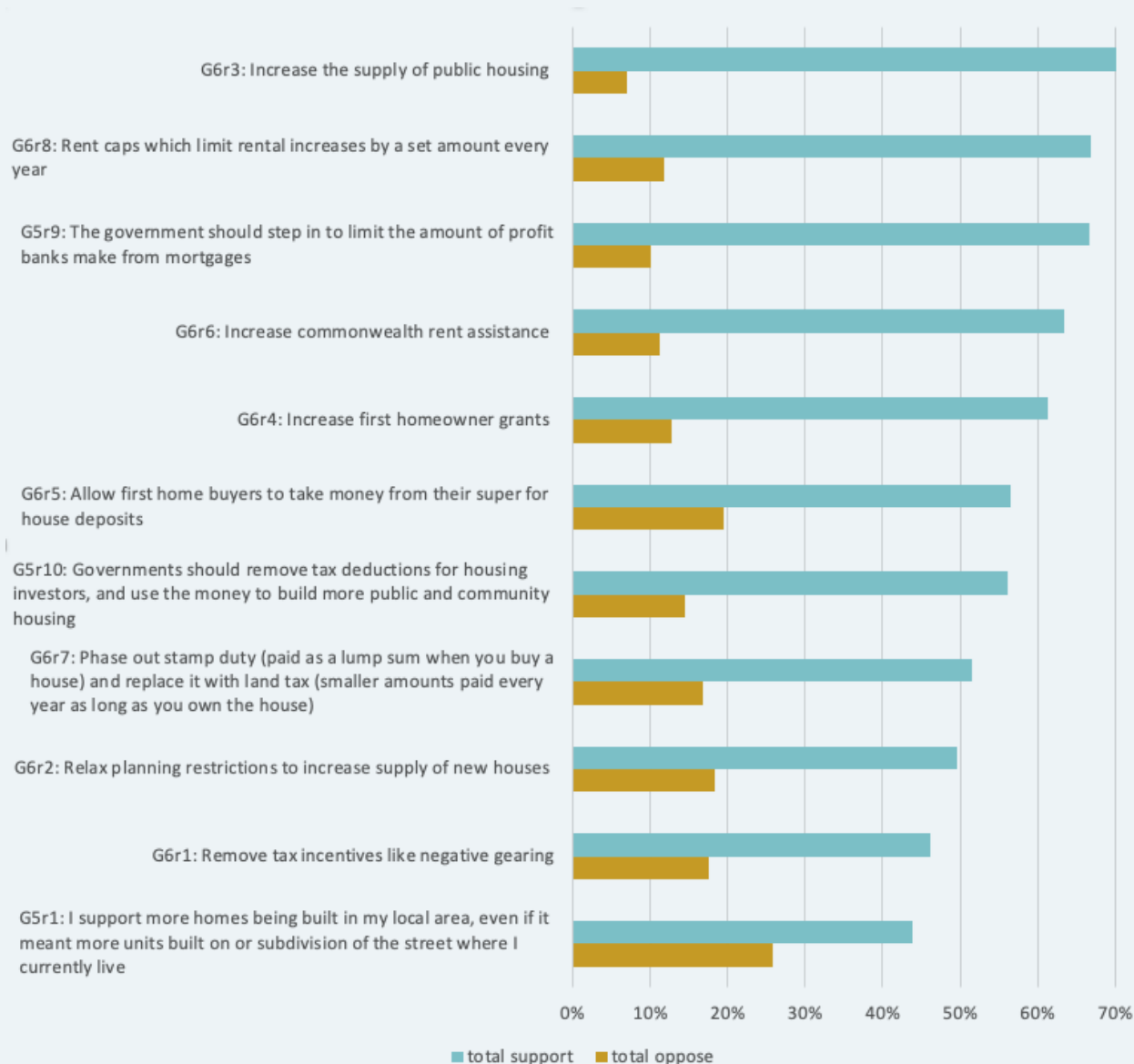
## 5.2 Policy preferences

Overall the survey found a significant appetite for housing policy reform. Respondents were asked about their views on a range of policy options, summarised in the table below.

The most popular policy option among survey respondents is to increase the supply of public housing, followed by enacting some form of rent control and then limiting bank profits from mortgages.

Women tended to be more supportive of government intervention in the housing market by some margin. For example, 72.2% of women agree with the proposition that the government should step in to limit the profits banks make from mortgages, and only 1.3% strongly disagree. While men are broadly supportive of this statement, with 61% supporting and 5.9% opposing, the level of support was significantly lower.

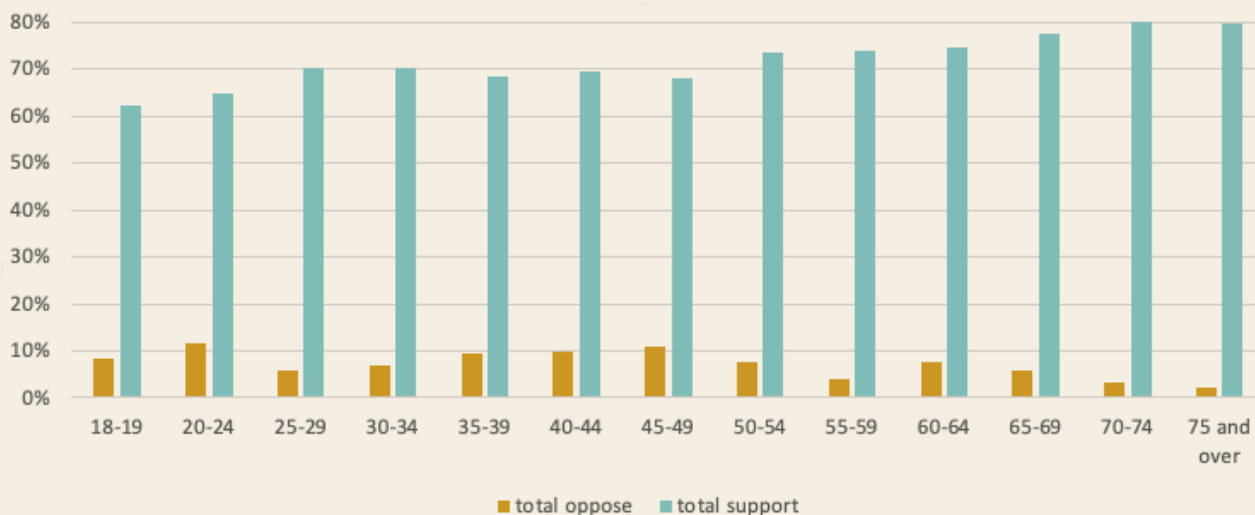
**Figure 46. G5r8: How strongly do you oppose or support... a range of policy options**



Interestingly the support for public housing, as well as being the most popular option overall, is also more popular with people aged over 50 than those aged 49 and under. This is unusual in that many other questions which imply a level of redistribution tended to be more popular with people in lower age groups.

**Figure 47**

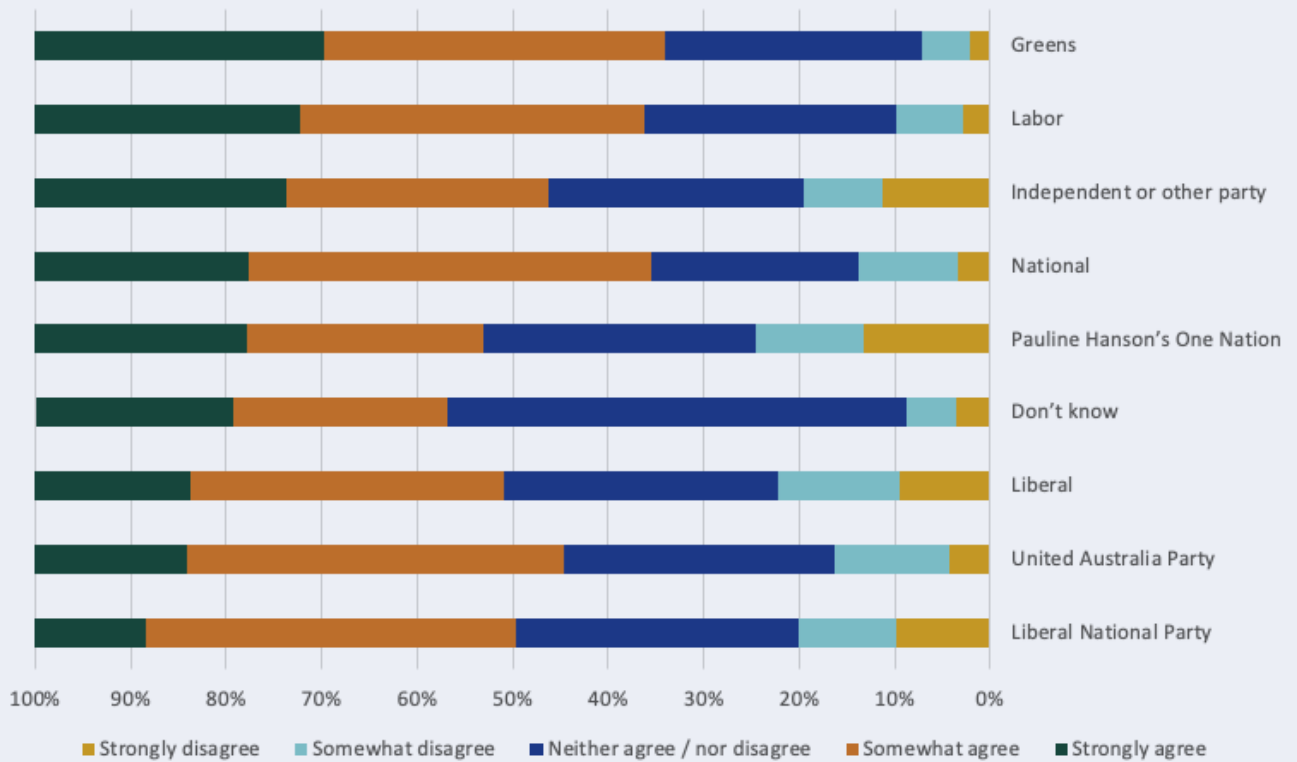
**G6r3: How strongly do you oppose or support... Increase the supply of public housing**



Removing tax incentives like negative gearing was a less popular policy option, with a total 46.2% support (see figure 45 above), but still enjoyed a net approval of 29%. However, when asked to agree or disagree with the proposition that **Governments should remove tax deductions for housing investors and use the money to build more public and community housing**, the approval rating increased significantly, with 56% of Australians supporting and 14% opposing this suggested reform, increasing the net approval to 42%. This indicates the huge importance of framing and showing fairness in policy trade-offs for the popularity of policy reforms.

**Figure 48**

**G5r10: Governments should remove tax deductions for housing investors, and use the money to build more public and community housing (by voting intention)**



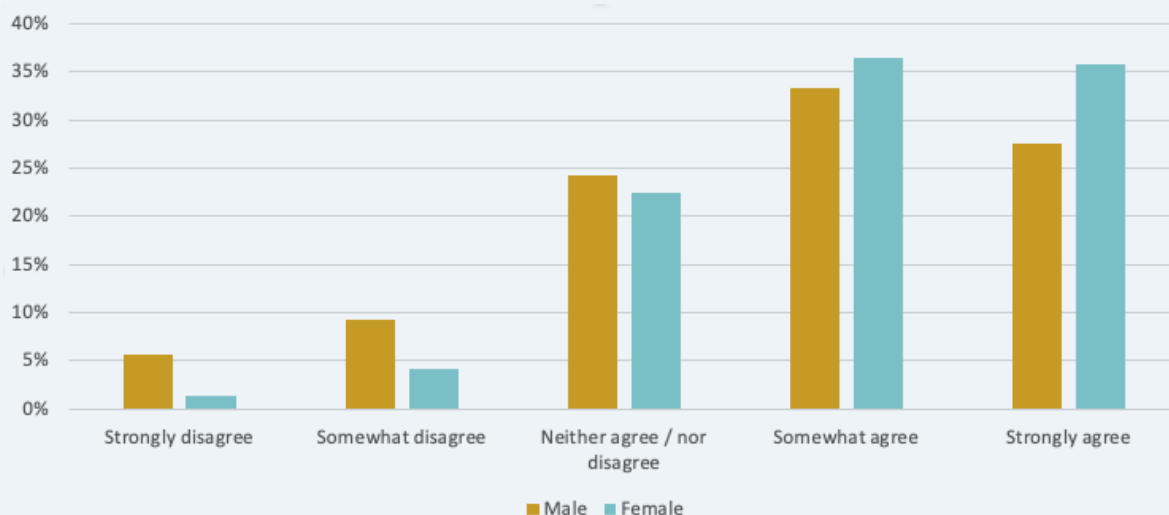
Overall support for the removal of investor tax relief is strongest among Greens, Labor and National Party voters. While people who vote Green at federal elections are more likely to strongly agree and less likely to disagree with removing tax breaks for property investors, those who vote for the National Party are most likely to agree overall.



A very large proportion of women (72%), and a large proportion of men (60.8%) believe that the government should step in to reduce the amount of profits banks make from mortgages. While this area of regulation has not been a mainstream consideration since mortgage deregulation in the 1980s, it is interesting to see such strong support remains in the community for more interventionist macroprudential regulation.

**Figure 49**

**G5r9: The government should step in to limit the amount of profit banks make from mortgages**



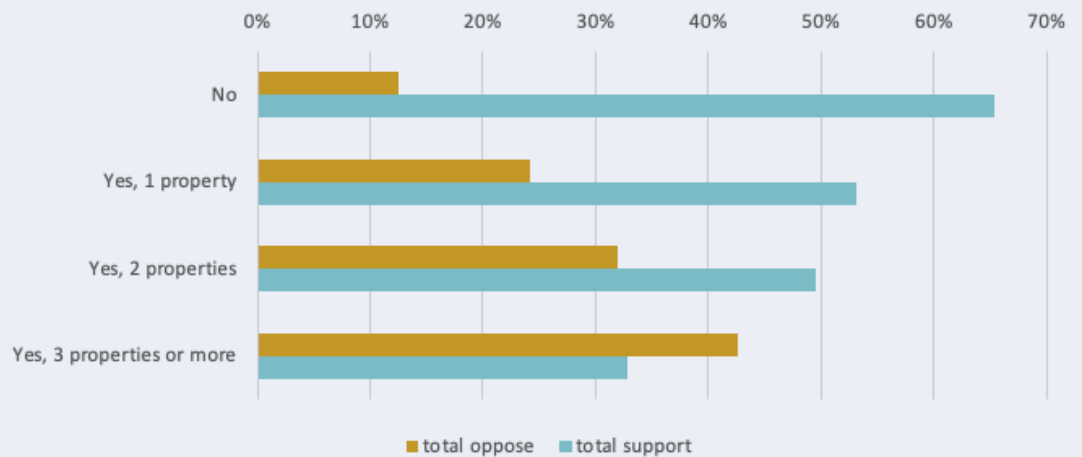
The proportion of people who support rent caps is also high, with 67% supporting overall, compared to under 12% not supporting. While overall support for rent caps was high, there was a fairly large difference between men and women, amounting to over 10% lower total support among men.

**Table 4. G6r8: Would you support or oppose... Rent caps which limit rental increases by a set amount every year**

	Strongly oppose	Somewhat oppose	Neither support / nor oppose	Somewhat support	Strongly support
<b>Male</b>	7.1%	8.7%	22.9%	34.9%	26.5%
<b>Female</b>	3.4%	4.6%	19.8%	33.9%	38.2%
<b>Total</b>	5.2%	6.6%	21.3%	34.4%	32.5%

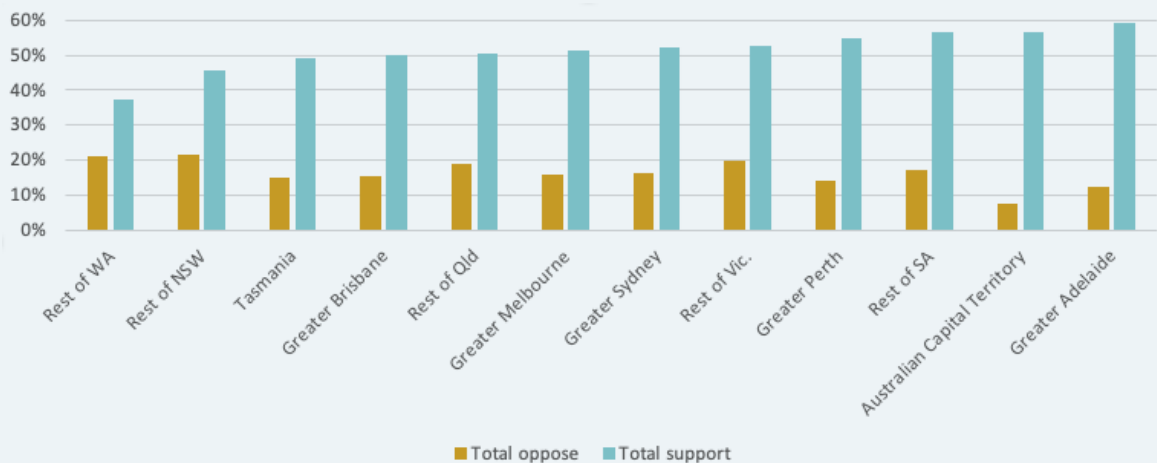
Interestingly, even among investors there was support for rent caps. More than twice as many respondents with a single investment property supported rent caps compared to those that oppose. This may be due to many single investment property owners owning a holiday house or a house bought for children, rather than a property bought purely for renting. It may also be due to some investors focusing more on capital gains than rental yield from their investment property.

**Figure 50. G6r8: Would you support or oppose... Rent caps which limit rental increases by a set amount every year**



The introduction of a land tax was a somewhat less popular option than other forms of interventions. In NSW and the ACT, where land tax on residential properties is in operation, results are mixed. For example, in the ACT, where land tax has been in operation for longer, popularity is high with 7.7% opposing and 56.8% supporting. However, in Greater Sydney, support is 7.2% lower, and in the rest of NSW support is down at 45.5%, perhaps reflecting respondent uncertainty around recent land tax policy changes.

**Figure 51. G6r7: Phase out stamp duty (paid as a lump sum when you buy a house) and replace it with land tax (smaller amounts paid every year as long as you own the house)**





# Conclusion

The inaugural Housing Monitor Survey provides a fascinating insight into how Australians experience our housing system at a time of historical change. It is clear that, while most Australians are not struggling with affordability, for around a quarter of the population, paying for housing is a growing problem.

This concern will likely grow as the RBA's increases to interest rates begin to bite, as people on low-rate fixed mortgages transition to significantly higher variable rates, and as high advertised rents filter through to actual rents. If wages continue to increase at a lower rate than inflation, the effect will be all the worse.

Respondents appear to strongly believe that the Australian Dream of home ownership is under threat. Most people believe that the current housing system is exacerbating inequality, reducing economic efficiency and favouring already wealthy Australians over the poor.

For aspiring homeowners, confidence in being able to afford a deposit and get on the property ladder is very low. The level and trends of reliance on the "bank of mum and dad" suggest that lower income families will be increasingly outbid by buyers with wealthier parents. Further, the difference in male and female rates of family lending reported in this survey

indicated that the already stark gender divide in rates of home ownership may increase.

However, while there was a large degree of discontent over the current state of the housing system, most people also appear to believe that governments can act to make the housing system more equitable. Indeed, most Australians believe that the government has a responsibility to ensure adequate housing for everyone.

Overall, we identify a strong public appetite for policy solutions to address the housing crisis. With housing affordability being the third most important electoral issue among survey respondents, it seems likely that the next election may be fought largely on which party can offer meaningful policy solutions.

The significantly higher importance of housing affordability for voters swinging away from the major parties suggests that there is much to gain for Australia's political leaders in offering a strong, equitable housing policy platform at the next federal election.

***Most Australians believe that the government has a responsibility to ensure adequate housing for everyone. Overall, we identify a strong public appetite for policy solutions to address the housing crisis.***

The level and breadth of support in the community for an increase in social housing is striking. Housing experts have been pointing to the severe decline in non-market rental options for the least well off in society for decades, and the increase in after-housing poverty is in large part an outcome of this decline. With high levels of support from all types of voters, age groups and income groups, meaningfully increasing public housing construction should be politically achievable. Making our tax system more balanced through the reduction of investor tax breaks is also a far more palatable option for respondents when that reclaimed revenue is tied to investment in public housing.

Whether and how rent controls could be implemented in Australia is a debate already underway in Queensland, with the Palaszczuk Government recently exploring the potential for such policies. While many cities around the world use rent controls with apparent success, other examples imply potential costs. It is also nearly eight decades since Australians have experienced any form of rent control. As such, carefully considered research and design would be needed to evaluate whether rent increase caps could work in our market, noting that they are, under the Australian constitution, the purview of state, rather than federal, government regulation.

While many policy options might help in Australia's journey towards a more equitable housing market, action will need to be multifaceted and carefully coordinated across all levels of government. The polycrisis currently at work in the housing system relates to a great range of policy areas: house prices decoupled from wages, social housing residualised and neglected, people renting for longer without concomitant protections, distortive tax incentive and subsidies, a lack of appropriate and well-located housing in our cities, and many more, as outlined in our 2022 report, *Housing Affordability in Australia: tackling a wicked problem*.

Our belief is that meaningful action toward finding solutions to these various policy challenges will require far greater national coordination.

Further, establishing a more equitable Australian housing market requires an acceptance that housing is a distinct area of government responsibility, and not a system that can be left to unfettered market forces.

We hope that this research contributes to a more nuanced and less fractious debate around how housing is experienced by Australians, and what the public see as the critical paths toward resolving the crisis of housing affordability in Australia.



# Centre for Equitable Housing

A Per Capita initiative

[equitablehousing.org.au](http://equitablehousing.org.au)

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