

ACOSS AND UNSW SYDNEY

COMMUNITY ATTITUDES TOWARDS POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

SNAPSHOT 2026

A POVERTY AND INEQUALITY PARTNERSHIP REPORT

acoss

UNSW SYDNEY

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Find out more at https://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/

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Glossary

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACOSS	Australian Council of Social Service
Age Pension	The main income support payment for people who are Age Pension age, which is 67 years or older.
Carer Payment	The payment for people who give care to someone with disability or a medical condition, or an adult who' is frail aged.
Disability Support Pension	A payment for people who are unable to engage in paid work because of physical, intellectual or psychiatric impairments that will persist for more than 2 years.
Income quintiles/groups	Five equal groups according to disposable income of their household after that income is adjusted up or down to take account of household size (equivalised).
Iterative proportional fitting (GREGWT)	A generalised regression weighting macro developed by the ABS that calibrates survey data to match known population benchmarks.
JobSeeker Payment	Financial assistance for people aged between 22 and 67 who are looking for work, or for those who are temporarily sick or injured.
Parenting Payment	The main income support payment for a child's main carer.
UNSW	University of New South Wales

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Foreword

The Poverty and Inequality Partnership, headed by ACOSS and UNSW Sydney and supported by non-government organisation and philanthropic partners, conducts research to reduce poverty and inequality in Australia. *Community attitudes towards poverty and inequality 2026* is the 28th research report from the Partnership.

This report examines findings from a survey of 2250 people aged 18 years and over from around the country to understand what the Australian community believes and knows about poverty and inequality in Australia. The results from this survey conducted in 2025 are compared with results from the first wave of the study, which was conducted in 2023.

This report has been made possible thanks to the generous support of our valued non-government organisation partners: 54 reasons (part of the Save the Children Australia Group), cohealth (a Victorian community health service), Jesuit Social Services, Life Without Barriers, Mission Australia, Settlement Services International, and The Smith Family. We are also grateful for the contributions of the David Morawetz Social Justice Fund, part of the Australian Communities Foundation, and John C H Mitchell OAM. We sincerely thank these organisations and individuals for their commitment to this important national initiative.

We further acknowledge the leadership of Professor Attila Brungs, President and Vice Chancellor of UNSW, and Professor Verity Firth, Vice President Societal Impact, Equity and Engagement, as well as the ACOSS Board, for their ongoing support of this Partnership and its vital research.



Dr Cassandra Goldie AO, ACOSS



Scientia Professor Carla Treloar AM, Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Sydney

Key findings

Most people agree that we should look after people in need

The majority of people in Australia (74%) agree that poverty is a big problem in Australia and we should look after people in need (86%). Most (76%) consider the gap between the lowest and highest incomes to be too great and see government policies to be both a cause of (60%) and a solution to (76%) poverty. It is generally agreed that people experiencing poverty or unemployment do not deserve this circumstance (85%), nor are they to be blamed for it (79%), and the majority would not behave negatively towards people experiencing these (82%).

Strong support for adequate income support

There is general agreement that income support payments for people without paid work should not mean people need to skip meals (87%). Less than a quarter of survey respondents (23%) report that they could live on the JobSeeker payment of $56 a day (the rate at the time of survey distribution).

Community attitudes are shaped by individual experience

- Older people were most likely to believe that incomes at the top are too high (84%) and that poverty can occur through circumstances beyond people's control (86%).
- People in households with lower incomes showed higher levels of agreement that poverty (78%) and inequality (80%) are problems, and were more supportive of interventions to reduce them.
- People receiving government income support payments showed higher levels of agreement that poverty is a major problem (80%) than the general population (73%), and that nobody deserves to live in poverty (94% compared with 85%).

While political preference produced some large opinion gaps, there was broad agreement that poverty can be solved

- Regardless of political preference, an average 77% of voters agreed that poverty can be solved with the right systems and policies. Respondents who voted for the Greens and for Labor in the last election were more likely to agree (83%, 80%) than Liberal/National voters (73%).
- Those who voted Labor in the last election were less likely (48%) than people who voted for 'other' parties (not Labor, Liberal/National, Greens or independents) to blame government policies for poverty (79%).

Views have remained largely consistent since 2023

These results remained consistent from 2023 to 2025 with only one major change: significantly more people agreed that 'people who receive unemployment payments do not deserve to live in poverty' – an increase from 59% to 74%.

Executive summary

Overview

Community attitudes towards poverty and inequality 2026 reports the findings from a nationally representative survey in late 2025 of 2,520 people from around the country aged 18 and over. This is the second wave of this study, following the initial survey, which was undertaken and reported in 2023. This report is designed to analyse the responses from the survey in 2025 across the full sample and within key demographic groups; and reports on the difference and similarities within the two survey periods.

People in Australia were concerned about poverty and thought that we should look after people in need. The 2025 results were very similar to what we found in 2023. There was one major change: 15% more people agreed with the statement that people who receive unemployment payments do not deserve to live in poverty. Agreement with the statements that poverty is a big problem in Australia today and incomes at the top are too high both increased by 5% from 2023 to 2025, and all other responses were within 5%.

The most strongly supported statements were 'unemployment payments should be enough so that people don't have to skip meals' (87% agreed) and 'Australia should be a country that looks after those in need' (86% agreed). The statement with the least support was that 'government policies have caused some people to be poor' (60% agreed), and the statement with the highest level of disagreement (56%) was 'I would be able to live on the current rate of unemployment payment ($56 per day)'.

There were also high levels of agreement with some statements pointing to the role of policies in delivering solutions to poverty. 76% of people agreed that poverty is a problem that can be solved with the right systems and policies.

To understand more about people's attitudes, we also analysed the responses to each of the statements by a range of demographic characteristics. This included age, state, household income, employment, main source of income, and housing. We looked at how people voted in the 2025 federal election and the party of their elected representative. We also reviewed the responses that were from people in the lowest household income group who are receiving government income support payments.

The most supportive attitudes were among people aged 68 or over, women, people with the least household income (and particularly among those receiving JobSeeker, carer, or age pension payments), people who were experiencing unemployment, people who lived in a privately rented property, people who voted for the Greens, and people in Tasmania. Although many responses did not show much difference in agreement between different groups, people with less supportive attitudes were more likely to be aged under 30, have the most household income, and have voted Liberal/National in the last federal election.

Demographic perspectives

Age

Fewer younger people (aged 18 to 30) agreed that incomes at the top are too high (57%, 11% lower than average). People aged 68 and over were most likely to agree that incomes at the top are too high (84%, 16% higher than average), that people can find themselves needing unemployment payments due to circumstances beyond their control (89%, 10% higher than average), and that they would never or rarely behave negatively towards other people because they live in poverty (92%, 12% higher than average).

Gender

Compared with men, women were slightly (10%) more likely to think of poverty as being a big problem in Australia and a circumstance that no one deserves, and to consider incomes at the bottom as too low.

Income quintile

People in the highest income quintile (group) were least likely to agree that government policies have caused some people to experience poverty (51%, 9% lower than average).

People in the lowest income quintile who were receiving government payments

More people receiving carer payments agreed that they never or rarely behaved negatively towards other people because they live in poverty (95%, 11% higher than average). More people receiving age pensions agreed that incomes at the top are too high (81%, 13% higher than average), and that people can find themselves needing unemployment payments 'due to circumstances beyond their control' (88%, 11% higher than average). Fewer people receiving parenting payments agreed that incomes at the top are too high (45%, 23% lower than average) and that people can find themselves needing unemployment payments due to circumstances beyond their control (61%, 18% lower than average).

Employment status

More people not in the labour force agreed that unemployment payments should be enough so that people don't have to skip meals (87%, 9% higher than average). People who were unemployed agreed that poverty is a big problem in Australia today (83%, 9% higher than average); while people who were retired agreed most that incomes at the top are too high (81%, 13% higher than average) and agreed least that government policies have caused some people to experience poverty (51%, 11% lower than average).

Main source of income

More people who were receiving government income support payments agreed that people who receive unemployment payments do not deserve to live in poverty (82%, 9% higher than average). People who were self-employed were more likely to agree that government policies have caused some people to experience poverty (77%, 17% higher than average), and that incomes at the bottom are too low (82%, 9% higher). Fewer people who had investment or other main sources of income agreed that government policies have caused some people to experience poverty (49%, 11% lower than average).

Housing status

People who had other housing arrangements (i.e., who did not rent or own a home, and who were not homeless) were least likely to agree that incomes at the top are too high (56%, 14% lower than average) and that people can find themselves needing unemployment payments due to circumstances beyond their control (69%, 10% lower than average).

State

People in Tasmania were most likely to agree that people who receive unemployment payments do not deserve to live in poverty (82%, 11% higher than average) and least likely to agree that poverty is a problem that can be solved with the right systems and policies (66%, 10% lower than average).

Party voted for in 2025 federal election

Regardless of political preference, at least 73% of voters agreed that poverty can be solved with the right systems and policies. Greens voters recorded higher agreement that they never or rarely behave negatively towards people receiving unemployment payments (90%, 8% above average) and that people who receive unemployment payments do not deserve to live in poverty (86%, 13% above average). In contrast, Liberal/National voters were less likely to agree that the gap between wealth and poverty is too great (68%, 8% below average). Respondents who reported not voting were less likely to agree that incomes at the top are too high (56%, 12% below average), but more likely to report never or rarely behaving negatively towards people living in poverty (92%, 8% above average). Voters for independent candidates were more likely to agree that incomes at the top are too high (82%, 14% above average). Those who voted for 'other' parties (not the major parties or independents) recorded high agreement that government policies have contributed to poverty (79%, 19% above average) and that poverty is a major problem in Australia today (89%, 15% above average). Within this category, people who voted One Nation had particularly high agreement (81%, 21% above average).

Party affiliation of elected federal parliament representative

Only one notable difference was found when analysing by party affiliation of elected federal parliament representative: fewer people who were represented by an independent politician agreed that government policies have caused some people to experience poverty (47%, 13% lower than average).

Recommendations

These results provide evidence that people in Australia have a clear vision of the society that they value. Policies to alleviate poverty and support people in tough circumstances are supported by the majority of people in Australia. The results have relevance for policy makers and communicators, providing insights into the way people think about poverty and inequality and will likely respond to different policy arguments and options.

The Partnership has proposed strategies to address poverty in Australia, drawing from evidence in this report and other sources:

- *Lift the lowest income support payments* (including Youth Allowance, JobSeeker Payment and Parenting Payment Single) to a benchmark level of adequacy, taking account of essential living costs, and relativities with other income support payments and wages.
- In addition, introduce and improve income support supplements to cover essential costs above and beyond basic income support, *including the extra costs of sole parenthood, disability and rent assistance*.
- *Commit to full employment* based on targets which guarantee there are enough jobs and paid working hours overall for people who need them.
- *Invest in effective employment services* to end the entrenched economic exclusion of people such as those unemployed long-term, First Nations communities, refugees and migrants, people with disability and older people; and to improve access to decent jobs and careers for people entering or returning to paid work including young people, parents and carers.
- *Set and fund clear social housing targets to address unmet housing need* and strengthen rental protections, including protections against excessive rent increases.

Introduction

Community attitudes can contribute to, or undermine, the achievement of social policy change (Schofield & Butterworth, 2015). Recent research has focused on the ways in which the framing of poverty in media and in political discourse is central to support for government policy (Martin et al., 2022; Redden, 2011). These framings are important as these are the ways that people without experience or other knowledge of poverty learn about such experiences, and form opinions about the policy settings that could address poverty (Kerins et al., 2023; Reutter et al., 2005).

There is little research on community attitudes in Australia that can be used for framing impactful communications to support policy change that could alleviate poverty. A 2015 paper used a limited set of items available from the 2009 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (Schofield & Butterworth, 2015). This study found that attitudes of the Australian public towards those receiving government payments ("welfare") were largely negative; people on welfare were perceived as lazy and the income thresholds to access these payments were perceived as too low. Higher education levels, personal experience of receiving government payments, and markers of life instability (such as unpartnered, renting, current unemployment) were associated with more positive attitudes. The authors noted the contrast between these negative attitudes towards people receiving payments with more positive attitudes towards the existence of a social security system. These data were collected 15 years ago, and we theorised that attitudes towards people experiencing poverty and those receiving income support payments were likely to have changed in the interim.

In March 2026, The Brotherhood of St Laurence published a report on perceptions of poverty which focused on mapping the dimensions of poverty, including cost-of-living pressures, and the impacts of inequality on democratic processes (Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2026). It used survey response data and narrative insights from participants to explore the causes of perceived changes in poverty levels, and it emphasised the need for government-led systemic reform. Our report complements these findings by quantitatively reflecting attitudes of the general public, using weighting techniques across a range of important population characteristics, and in providing detail on how these vary across different demographic groups and over time. Together, these reports contributed important information that can guide future efforts to understand and address poverty and inequality in Australia.

In this report, we examine the attitudes of the general public towards some key measures of attitude towards poverty and inequality. The results of these analyses are useful in shaping media, public, and political discourse in supporting policy change to alleviate poverty in Australia.

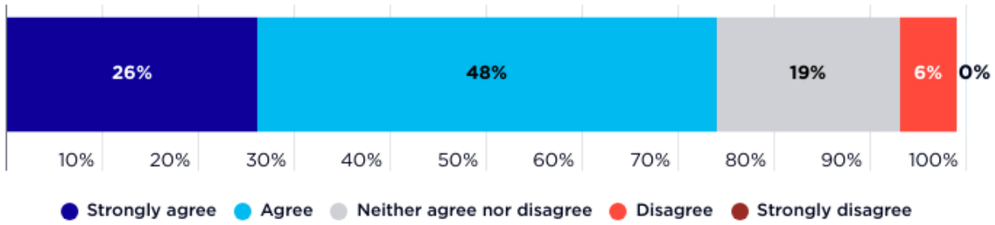
We first ran a survey in 2023 that examined community attitudes towards key aspects of poverty and inequality, and related social policies. We repeated this survey in 2025, and this report presents the latest results. Each survey was completed by over two thousand adults in Australia. Participants were presented with 16 statements about poverty and inequality and asked how much they agreed with them. We applied a statistical method to the responses so that they would be reflective of attitudes of the general population in Australia.



Analysis

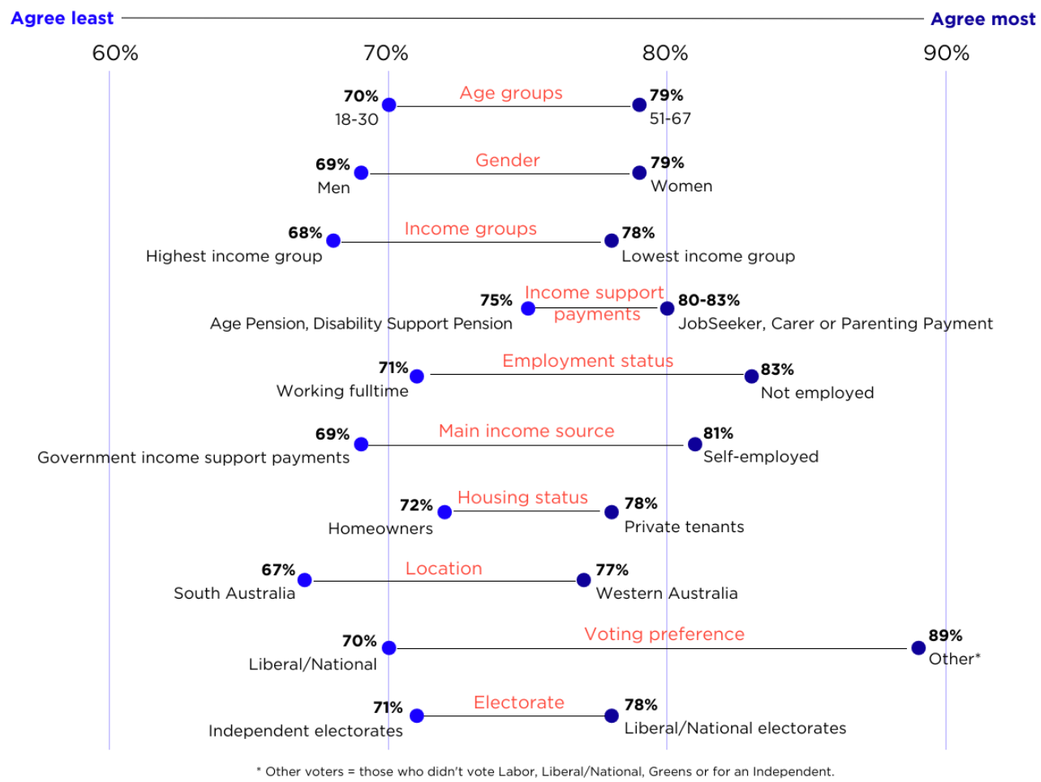
What do we think about poverty?

Figure 1: *Poverty is a big problem in Australia today*



74% of people agreed that poverty is a big problem in Australia today (up from 69% in 2023). This indicates that concern about poverty has grown over the past two years.

Figure 2: Perspectives by demographic group, *poverty is a big problem in Australia today*

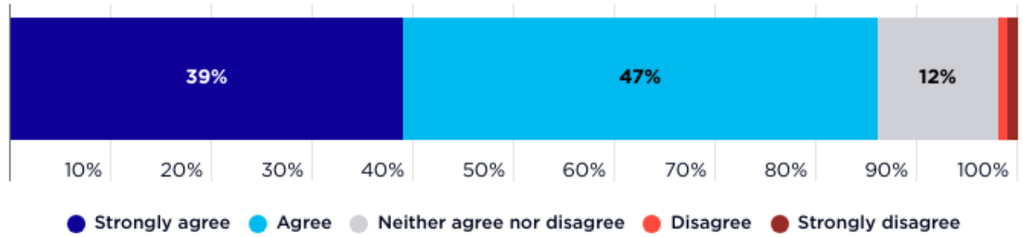


* Other voters = those who didn't vote Labor, Liberal/National, Greens or for an Independent.

- **By age:** When compared by age group, people aged 51 to 67 agreed most (79%) and people aged 18 to 30 agreed least with this statement (70%).
- **By gender:** More women agreed with this statement (79%) than men (69%).

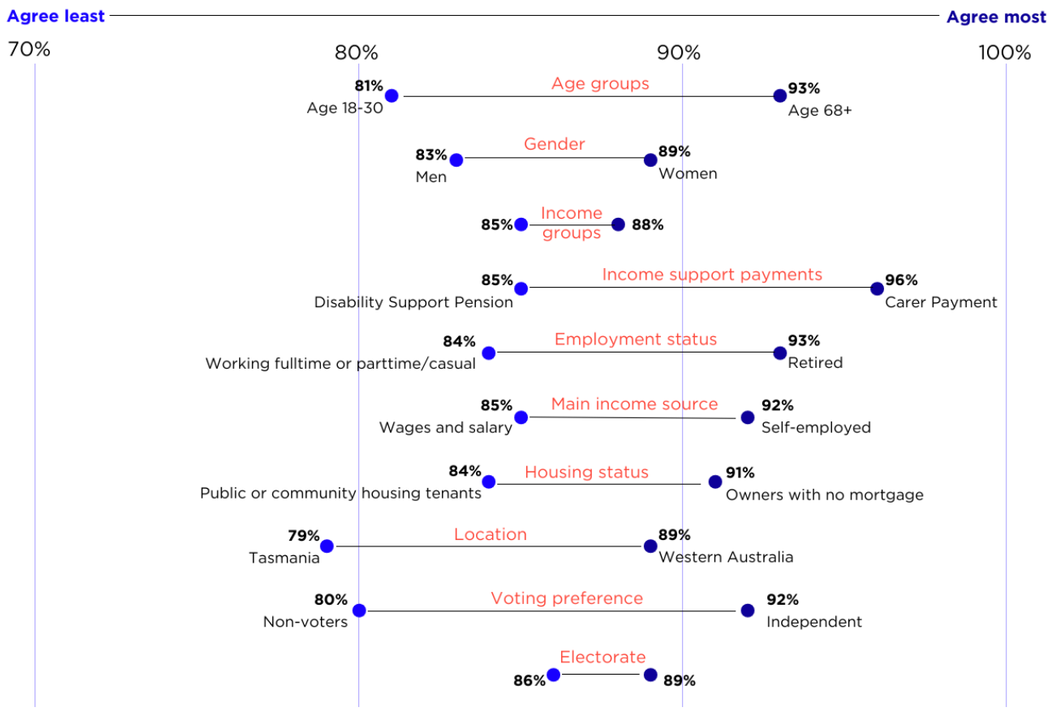
- **By income:** When compared by household income, people in the lowest income quintile agreed most (78%) and those in the highest income quintile agreed least (68%).
- **By income support payment:** People in the lowest income quintile who were receiving JobSeeker, carer, or parenting payments had a higher rate of agreement (80–83%) than those receiving disability or age pensions (75%) or the rest of the population (73%).
- **By employment status:** When analysed by employment status, people who were not employed agreed most (83%) and people who worked full-time agreed least (71%).
- **By income source:** When compared by main income source, people who were self-employed agreed most (81%) and people receiving government income support payments agreed least (69%).
- **By housing status:** When analysed by housing status, tenants in private housing agreed most (78%) and homeowners (both with and without a mortgage) agreed least (72%).
- **By state/territory:** When analysed by state, people from Western Australia agreed most (77%) and people from South Australia agreed least (67%).
- **By party affiliation:** When compared by party voted for in the 2025 federal election, people who voted for 'other' parties (i.e., not Labor, Liberal/National, Greens, or an independent) agreed most (89%) and people who did not vote or voted Liberal/National in the last election agreed least (70%).
- **By electorate affiliation:** People in electorates held by Liberal/National politicians agreed most with this statement (78%) and those in electorates held by independent politicians agreed least (71%).

Figure 3. *Australia should be a country that looks after those in need*



86% of people agreed that Australia should be a country that looks after those in need (this was 83% in 2023).

Figure 4: Perspectives by demographic group, *Australia should be a country that looks after those in need*

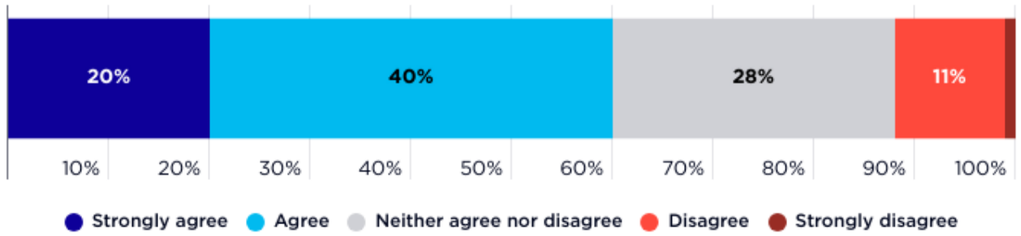


- **By age:** Agreement with this statement differed by age group, ranging from 93% (people aged 68 and over) to 81% (people aged 18 to 30).
- **By gender:** More women agreed with this statement (89%) than men (83%).
- **By income:** Agreement was largely consistent across income quintiles (85–88%).
- **By income support payment:** Those in the lowest income quintile who were receiving carer payments agreed most (96%) compared with those receiving disability payments (85%).
- **By employment status:** People who had retired agreed most with this statement (93%) and people employed full-time or part-time/casual agreed least (84%).
- **By income source:** People who were self-employed (92%) agreed most and people receiving wages or salary agreed least (85%).
- **By housing status:** Homeowners without a mortgage (91%) agreed most and tenants in public or community housing agreed least (84%).
- **By location:** People from Western Australia agreed most (89%) and people from Tasmania agreed least (79%).
- **By voting preference:** People who voted for independent politicians agreed most (92%) and people who did not vote agreed least (80%).
- **By electorate:** Agreement was typically consistent by party affiliation of elected parliamentary representative (86–89%).



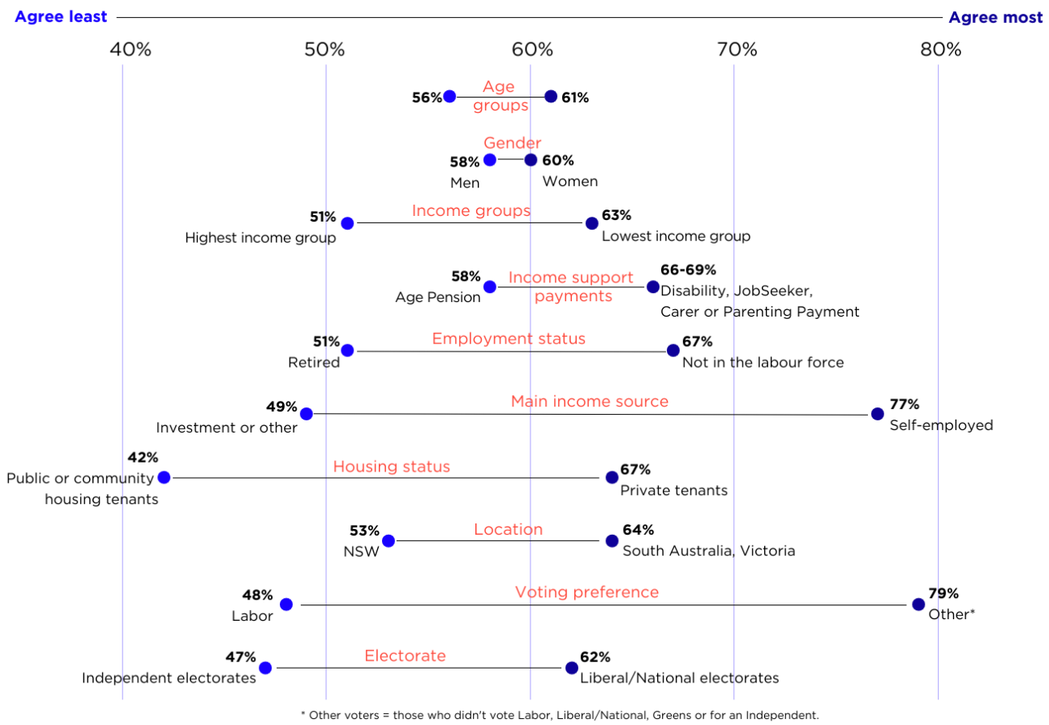
What do we think about the role of government policies in causing poverty in Australia?

Figure 5. *Government policies have caused some people to be poor*[1]



60% of people in Australia agreed that government policies have caused some people in Australia to experience poverty (this was 62% in 2023). This was the least supported statement of the 16 presented. It suggests that although many people believe that government policies can result in worsened inequality, they may also see other factors contributing to poverty in Australia.

Figure 6: Perspectives by demographic group, *government policies have caused some people to be poor*

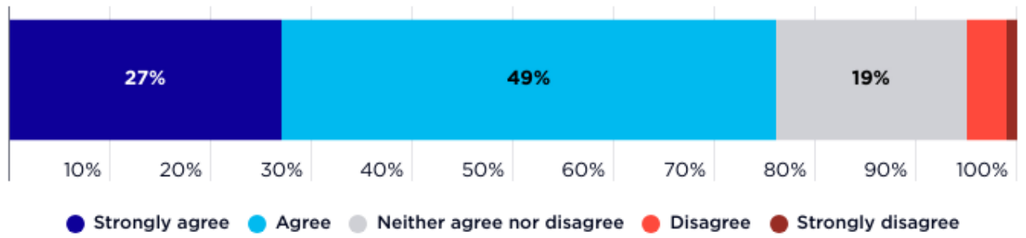


* Other voters = those who didn't vote Labor, Liberal/National, Greens or for an Independent.

[1] In survey design, wording can be chosen to elicit attitudes to clear and specific prompts. The language chosen for these survey questions was chosen to retain consistency with similar survey questions undertaken in similar research (for example Azize, 2018). The report authors and the Poverty and Inequality Partnership recognise the limitations and challenges associated the broader use of this language.

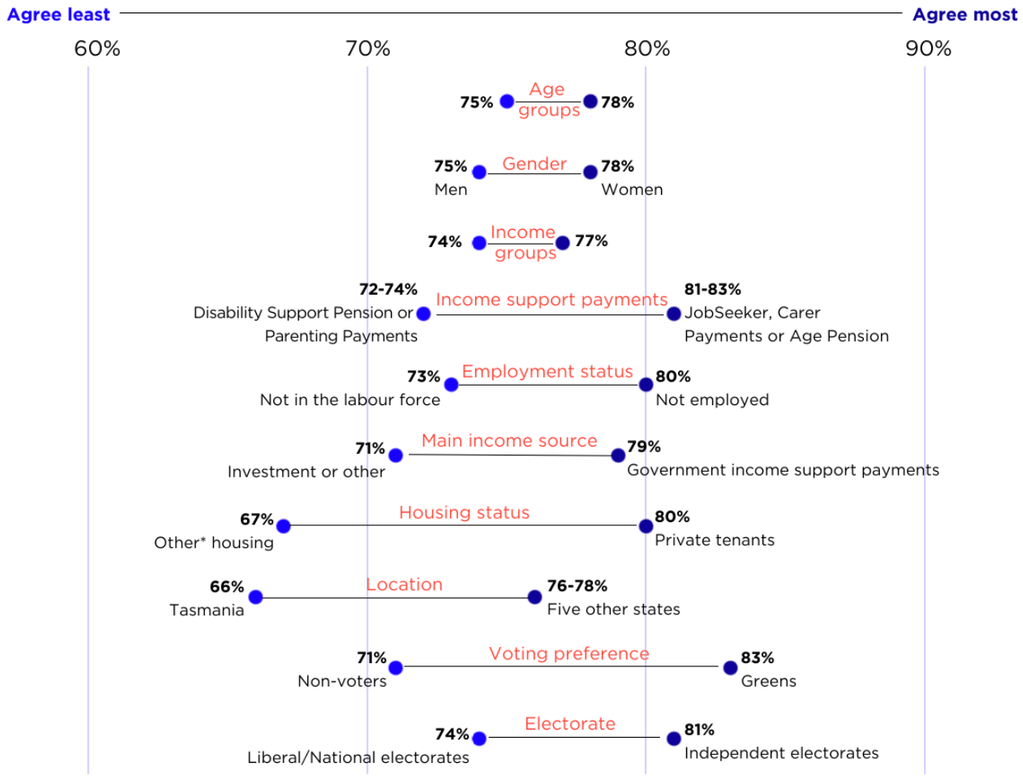
- **By age:** Agreement with this statement was largely consistent across age groups (56–61%).
- **By gender:** Women (60%) and men (58%) had similar levels of agreement.
- **By income:** Agreement differed by income level, ranging from 63% of people in the lowest income quintile to 51% in the highest income quintile.
- **By income support payment:** People in the lowest income quintile who were receiving disability, JobSeeker, carer, or parenting payments agreed more (66–69%) than those receiving the age pension (58%).
- **By employment status:** People who were not in the labour force agreed most (67%) and people who had retired agreed least (51%).
- **By income source:** People who were self-employed agreed most (77%) and people with investment or other main income sources agreed least (49%).
- **By housing status:** Tenants in private housing agreed most (67%) and tenants in public or community housing agreed least (42%).
- **By location:** People from South Australia and Victoria agreed most (64%) and people from NSW agreed least (53%).
- **By voting preference:** People who voted for 'other' parties (i.e., not Labor, Liberal/National, Greens, or an independent) agreed most (79%) and people who voted for Labor in last federal election agreed least (48%).
- **By electorate:** People in federal electorates held by Liberal/National politicians agreed most (62%) and people in electorates held by independent politicians agreed least (47%).

Figure 7. *Poverty is a problem that can be solved with the right systems and policies*



76% of people in Australia agreed that poverty is a problem that can be solved with the right systems and policies (this was 75% in 2023).

Figure 8. Perspectives by demographic group, *poverty is a problem that can be solved with the right systems and policies*



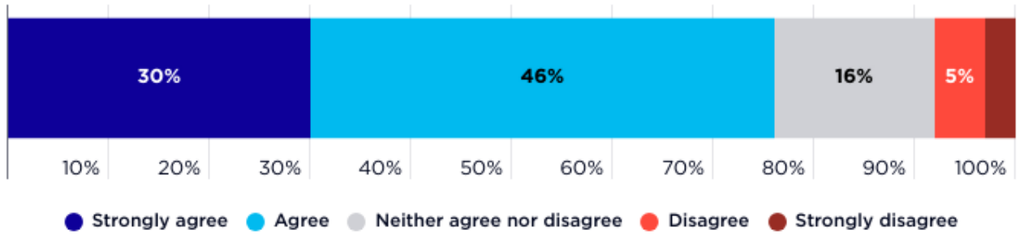
* Other housing = people who are not a homeowner, tenant or experiencing homelessness, ie have other housing arrangements

- **By age:** Agreement was largely consistent across age groups (75–78%).
- **By gender:** Women (78%) and men (74%) had similar levels of agreement.
- **By income:** Differences by income quintile were small (74–77%).
- **By income support payment:** People in the lowest income quintile who received JobSeeker, carer, or age pension payments agreed more (81–83%) than those who were receiving disability or parenting payments (72–74%).
- **By employment status:** People who were not employed agreed most (80%) and people who were not in the labour force agreed least (73%).
- **By income type:** People receiving government income support payments agreed most (79%) and people with investment or other main income sources agreed least (71%).
- **By housing tenure:** Tenants in private housing agreed most (80%) and people who were not a homeowner, tenant, or homeless (i.e., had ‘other’ housing arrangements) agreed least (67%).
- **By location:** People from Tasmania agreed less (66%) than people from the five other states (76–78%).
- **By voting preference:** People who voted Greens agreed most (83%) and people who did not vote agreed least (71%).
- **By electorate:** People in electorates held by independent politicians agreed most (81%) and those in electorates held by Liberal/National politicians agreed least (74%).



What do we think about income inequality?

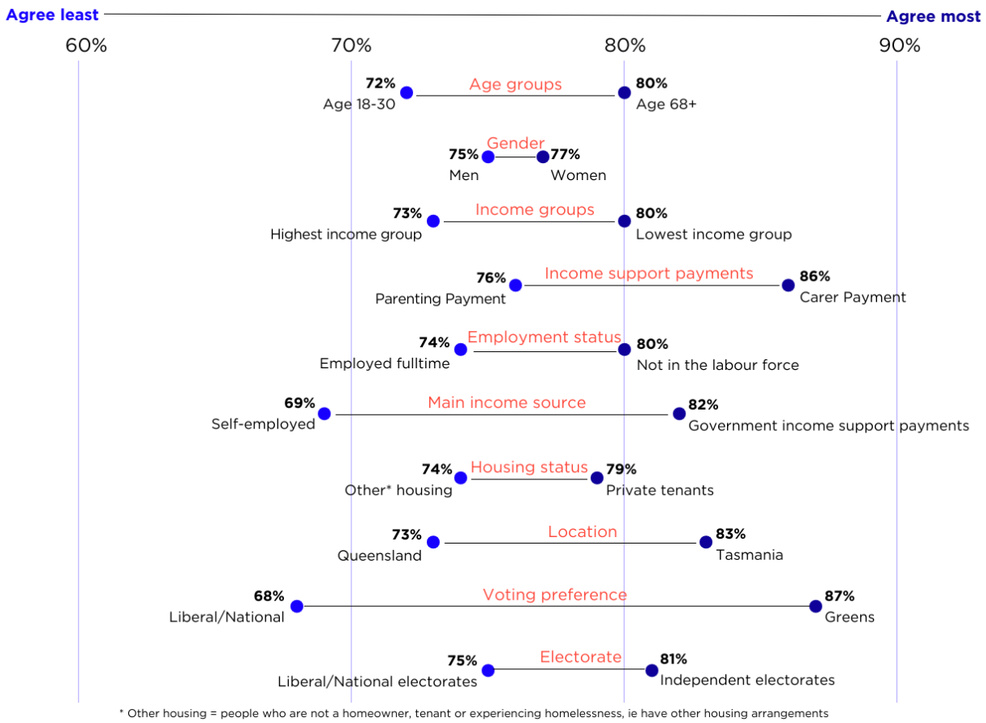
Figure 9. *The gap between rich and poor is too great*



*Note: Question wording in the 2023 survey was 'The gap between rich and poor is too great and should be reduced'

76% of people agreed that the gap between wealth and poverty is too great (this was 74% in 2023).

Figure 10. Perspectives by demographic group, *the gap between rich and poor is too great*

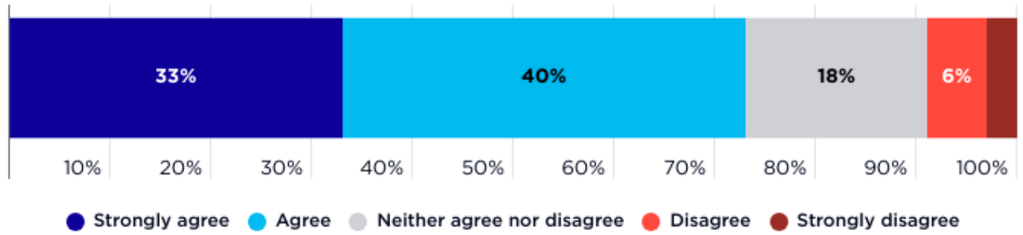


* Other housing = people who are not a homeowner, tenant or experiencing homelessness, ie have other housing arrangements

- **By age:** Agreement increased by age group, from 72% (aged 18 to 30) to 80% (aged 68 and above).
- **By gender:** Women (77%) and men (75%) had similar levels of agreement.
- **By income:** Agreement decreased by income group, from 80% (lowest quintile) to 73% (highest quintile).

- **By income support payment:** People in the lowest income quintile who were receiving carer payments agreed most (86%) and people receiving parenting payments agreed least (76%).
- **By employment status:** People who were not in the labour force agreed most (80%) and people in full-time employment agreed least (74%).
- **By income type:** People receiving government income support payments agreed most (82%) and people who were self-employed agreed least (69%).
- **By housing tenure:** Tenants in private rental agreed most (79%) and people with 'other' housing arrangements agreed least (74%).
- **By location:** People from Tasmania agreed most (83%) and people from Queensland agreed least (73%).
- **By voting preference:** People who voted Greens agreed most (87%) and people who voted Liberal/National agreed least (68%).
- **By electorate:** People in electorates held by independent politicians agreed most (81%) and people in electorates held by Liberal/National members agreed least (75%).

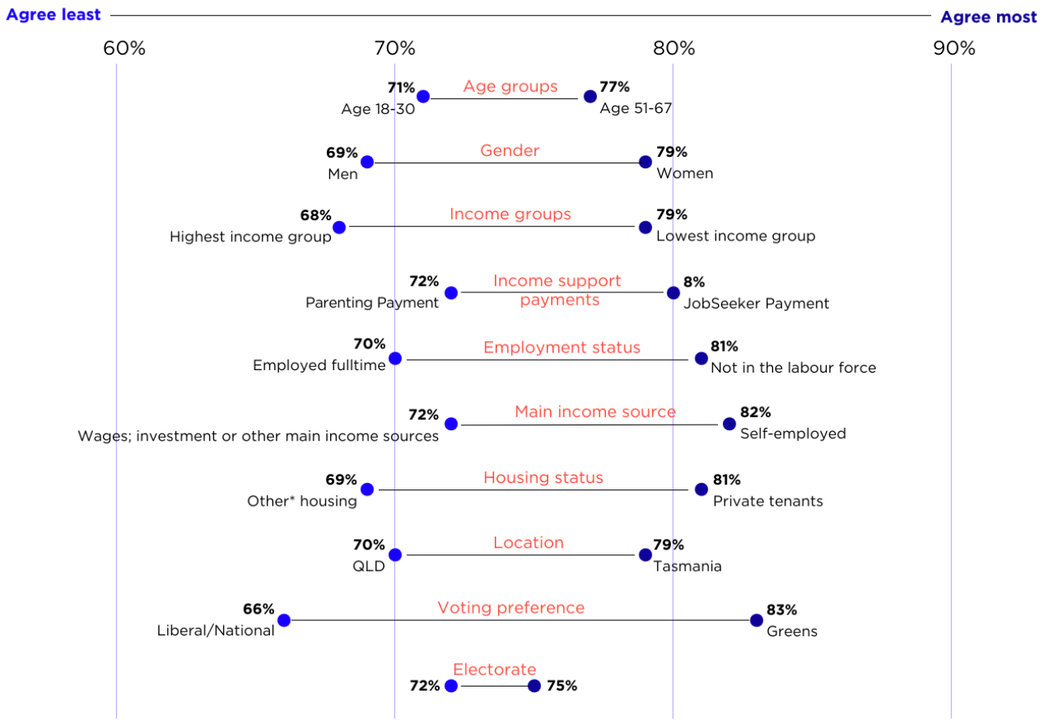
Figure 11. *Incomes at the bottom are too low*



*Note: Question wording in the 2023 survey was 'Incomes at the bottom are too low and should be increased'

73% of people agreed that incomes at the bottom are too low (this was 76% in 2023).

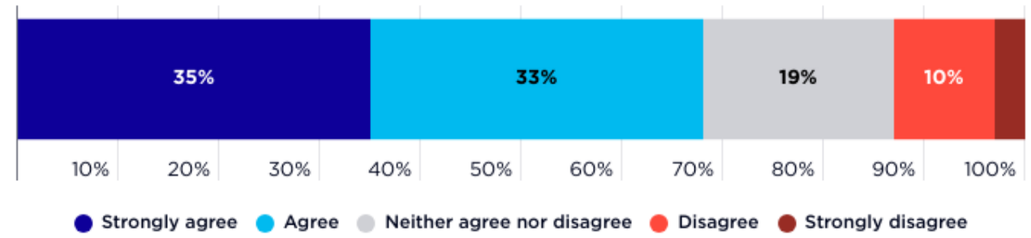
Figure 12. Perspectives by demographic group, *incomes at the bottom are too low*



* Other housing = people who are not a homeowner, tenant or experiencing homelessness, ie have other housing arrangements

- **By age:** People aged 51 to 67 agreed most (77%) and people aged 18 to 30 agreed least (71%).
- **By gender:** More women agreed with this statement (79%) than men (69%).
- **By income:** People in the lowest income quintile agreed most (79%) and people in the highest income quintile agreed least (68%).
- **By income support payment:** People in the lowest income quintile who were receiving JobSeeker agreed most (80%) and people receiving parenting payments agreed least (72%).
- **By employment status:** People who were not in the labour force agreed most with this statement (81%) and people who were employed full-time agreed least (70%).
- **By income source:** People who were self-employed agreed most (82%) and people receiving wages or with investment or other main income sources agreed least (72%).
- **By housing tenure:** Tenants in private housing agreed most (81%) and people who were not a homeowner or tenant (i.e., had 'other' housing arrangements) agreed least (69%).
- **By location:** People from Tasmania agreed most (79%) and people from Queensland agreed least (70%).
- **By voting preference:** People who voted Greens agreed most (83%) and people who voted Liberal/National agreed least (66%).
- **By electorate:** Agreement was typically consistent by party affiliation of elected parliamentary representative (72–75%).

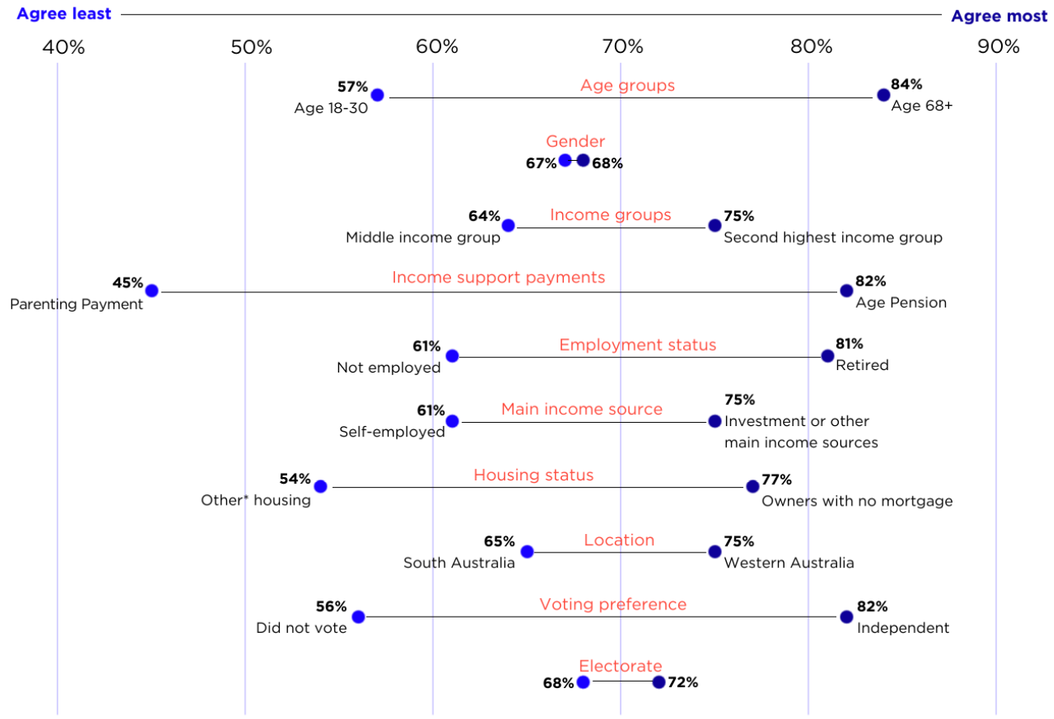
Figure 13. *Incomes at the top are too high*



*Note: Question wording in the 2023 survey was 'Incomes at the top are too high and should be reduced'

68% of people agreed that incomes at the top are too high (up from 63% in 2023).

Figure 14. Perspectives by demographic group, *incomes at the top are too high*



* Other housing = people who are not a homeowner, tenant or experiencing homelessness, ie have other housing arrangements

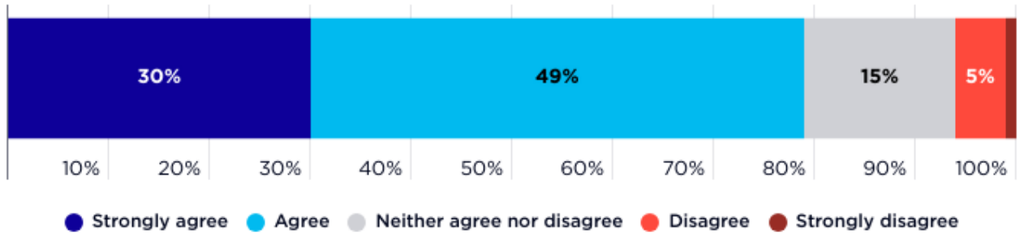
- **By age:** Agreement increased markedly by age group, from 57% (aged 18 to 30) to 84% (aged 68 and above).
- **By gender:** Agreement was largely consistent between women (67%) and men (68%).
- **By income:** Differences varied when compared by income, with people in the second income quintile agreeing most (75%) and people in the third (middle) income quintile agreeing least (64%).

- **By income support payment:** People in the lowest income quintile who were receiving the age pension agreed most (82%), compared with those receiving parenting payments (45%), or carer, JobSeeker and disability payments (58–72%).
- **By employment status:** People who had retired agreed most (81%) and people who were not employed agreed least (61%).
- **By income source:** People who had investment or other main income sources agreed most (75%) and people who were self-employed agreed least (61%).
- **By housing status:** Homeowners without a mortgage agreed most (77%) and people who were not a homeowner or tenant (i.e., had 'other' housing arrangements) agreed least (54%).
- **By location:** People from Western Australia agreed most (75%) and people from South Australia agreed least (65%).
- **By voting preference:** People who voted for an independent agreed most (82%) and people who did note vote agreed least (56%).
- **By electorate:** Agreement was typically consistent by party affiliation of elected parliamentary representative (68–72%).



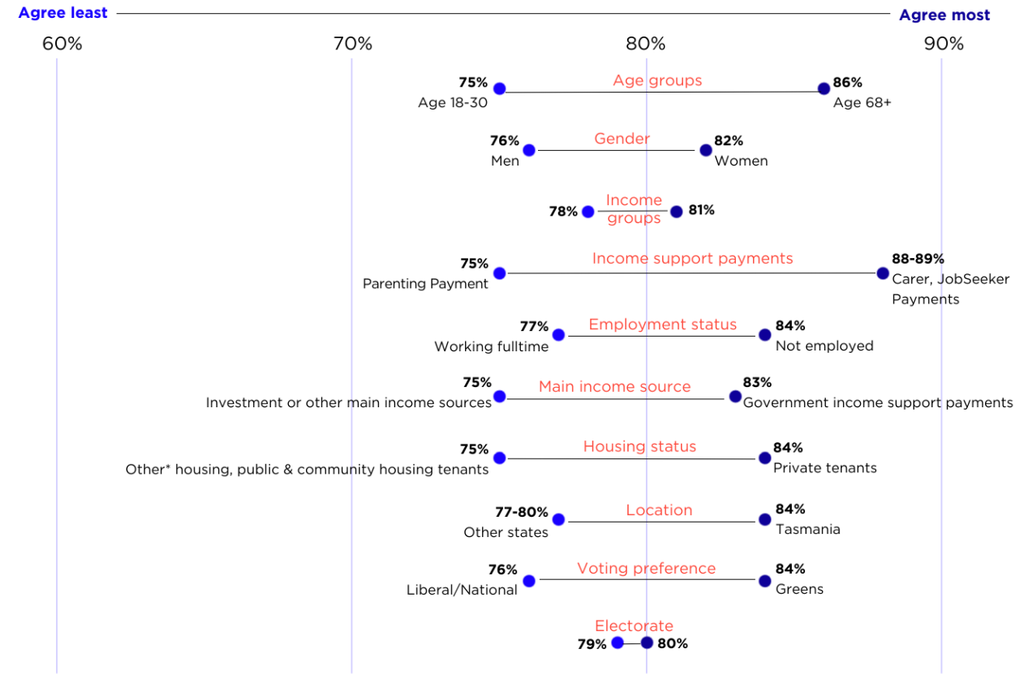
What do we think about people experiencing poverty?

Figure 15. *People can experience poverty through no fault of their own*



79% of people agreed that people can experience poverty due to circumstances beyond their control (this was 81% in 2023). This suggests that most people see poverty as having social and systemic causes, and that individuals should not be blamed for experiencing poverty because they are not necessarily able to avoid or escape it.

Figure 16. Perspectives by demographic group, *people can experience poverty through no fault of their own*

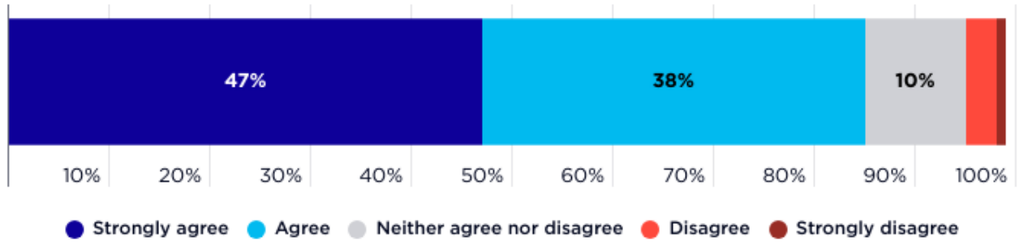


* Other housing = people who are not a homeowner, tenant or experiencing homelessness, ie have other housing arrangements

- **By age:** Agreement with this statement differed by age, with people aged 68 and above agreeing most (86%) and people aged 18 to 30 agreeing least (75%).
- **By gender:** More women agreed with this statement (82%) than men (76%).
- **By income:** Differences in agreement by income quintile were small (78–81%).
- **By income support payment:** People in the lowest income quintile who were receiving carer payments (89%) or JobSeeker (88%) agreed most, and people receiving parenting payments agreed least (75%).
- **By employment status:** People who were not employed agreed most (84%) and people who worked full-time agreed least (77%).

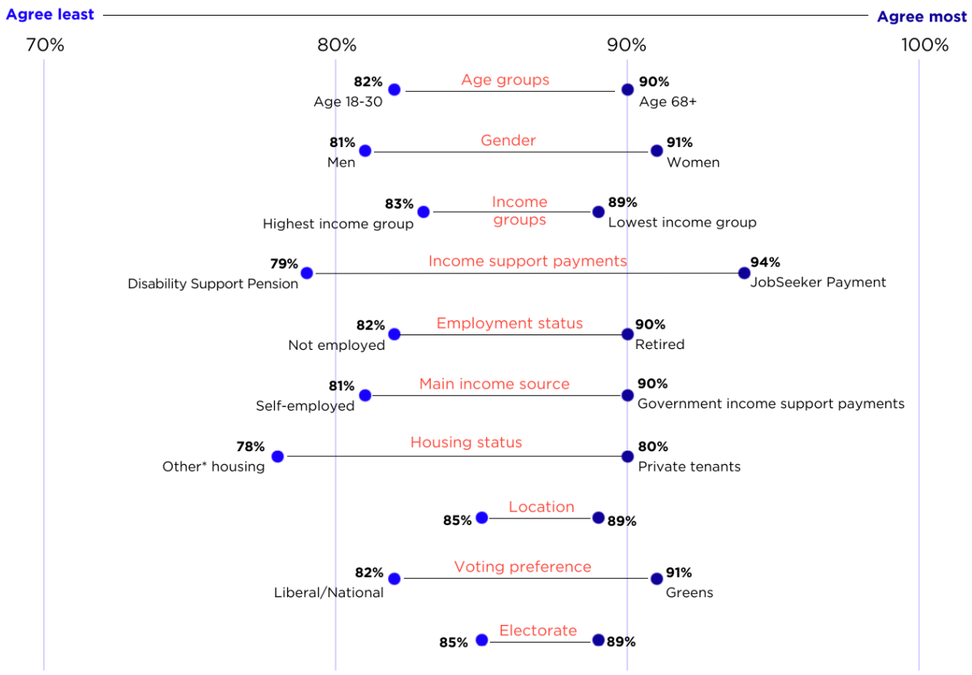
- **By income source:** People who were receiving government income support payments agreed most (83%) and people with investment or other main income sources agreed least (75%).
- **By housing tenure:** Tenants in private rental properties agreed most (84%) and people who were not a homeowner or tenant (i.e., had 'other' housing arrangements) or who were a tenant in public or community housing agreed least (75%).
- **By location:** People from Tasmania agreed most (84%) compared with people from the five other states (77–80%).
- **By voting preference:** People who voted Greens agreed most (84%) and people who did not vote or voted Liberal/National in the last election agreed least (76%).
- **By electorate:** Differences in agreement by party affiliation of elected parliamentary representative were very small (79–80%).

Figure 17. *Nobody deserves to live in poverty*



85% of people agreed that nobody deserves to live in poverty (this was 86% in 2023).

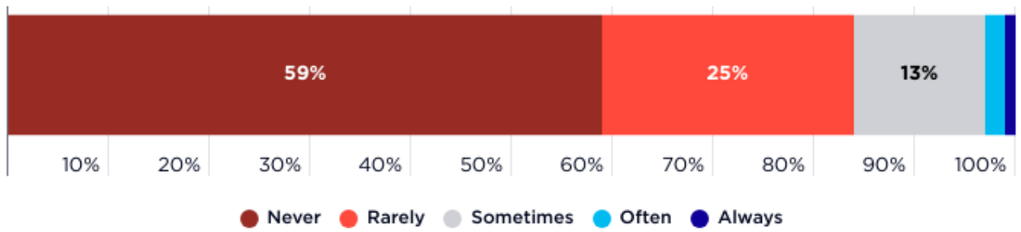
Figure 18. Demographic perspectives, *nobody deserves to live in poverty*



* Other housing = people who are not a homeowner, tenant or experiencing homelessness, ie have other housing arrangements

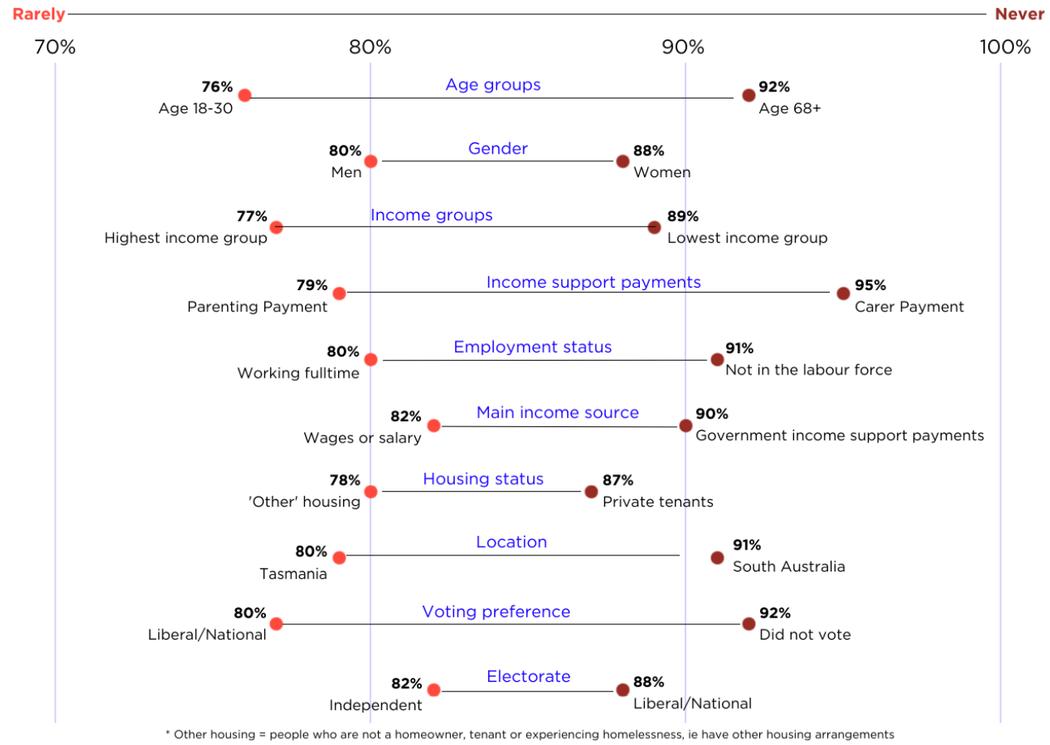
- **By age:** Agreement increased by age group from 82% (aged 18 to 30) to 90% (aged 68 and above).
- **By gender:** More women agreed with this statement (91%) than men (81%).
- **By income:** Agreement decreased by income from 89% (lowest income quintile) to 83% (highest income quintile).
- **By income support payment:** People in the lowest income quintile who were receiving JobSeeker payments agreed most (94%) and people receiving disability payments agreed least (79%).
- **By employment status:** People who had retired agreed most (90%) and people who were not employed agreed least (82%).
- **By income source:** People who were receiving government income support payments agreed most (90%) and people who were self-employed agreed least (81%).
- **By housing status:** Tenants in private rental agreed most (90%) and people who were not a homeowner or tenant (i.e., had 'other' housing arrangements) agreed least (78%).
- **By location:** Differences in agreement by state (85–89%) were small.
- **By voting preference:** People who voted Greens agreed most (91%) and people who voted Liberal/National agreed least (82%).
- **By electorate:** Differences by party affiliation of elected parliamentary representative were small (85–89%).

Figure 19. ***Would you behave negatively towards other people because they live in poverty?***



84% of people said that they would never or rarely behave negatively towards other people because they experience poverty (this was 85% in 2023).

Figure 20. Demographic perspectives, ***would you behave negatively towards other people because they live in poverty?***



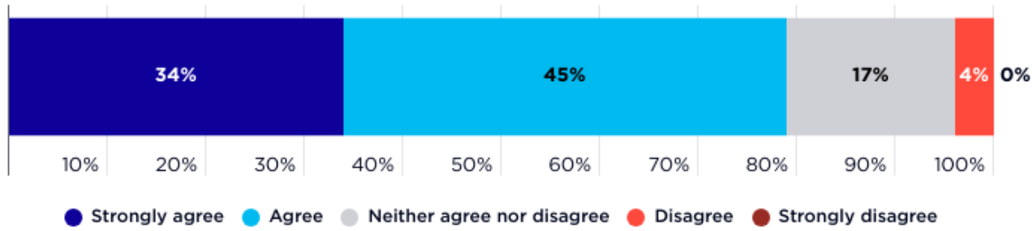
* Other housing = people who are not a homeowner, tenant or experiencing homelessness, ie have other housing arrangements

- **By age:** People aged 68 and above reported never or rarely behaving negatively most (92%) and people aged 18 to 30 reported this least (76%).
- **By gender:** More women reported never or rarely behaving negatively (88%) than men (80%).
- **By income:** People in the lowest income quintile reported never or rarely behaving negatively most (89%) and people in the highest income quintile reported this least (77%).
- **By income support payment:** People in the lowest income quintile who were receiving carer payments reported never or rarely behaving negatively most (95%) and people who were receiving parenting payments reported this least (79%).
- **By employment status:** People who were not in the labour force reported never or rarely behaving negatively most (91%) and people in full-time employment reported this least (80%).
- **By income source:** People receiving government income support payments reported never or rarely behaving negatively most (90%) and people receiving wages reported this least (82%).

- **By housing status:** Tenants in private rental reported never or rarely behaving negatively most (87%) and people who were not a homeowner or tenant (i.e., had 'other' housing arrangements) reported this least (80%).
- **By location:** South Australians reported never or rarely behaving negatively most (91%) and Tasmanians reported this least (80%).
- **By voting preference:** People who did not vote in the last election reported never or rarely behaving negatively most (92%) and people who voted for Liberal/National reported this least (80%).
- **By electorate:** People in electorates held by Liberal/National politicians reported never or rarely behaving negatively most (88%) and people in electorates held by independent politicians reported this least (82%).

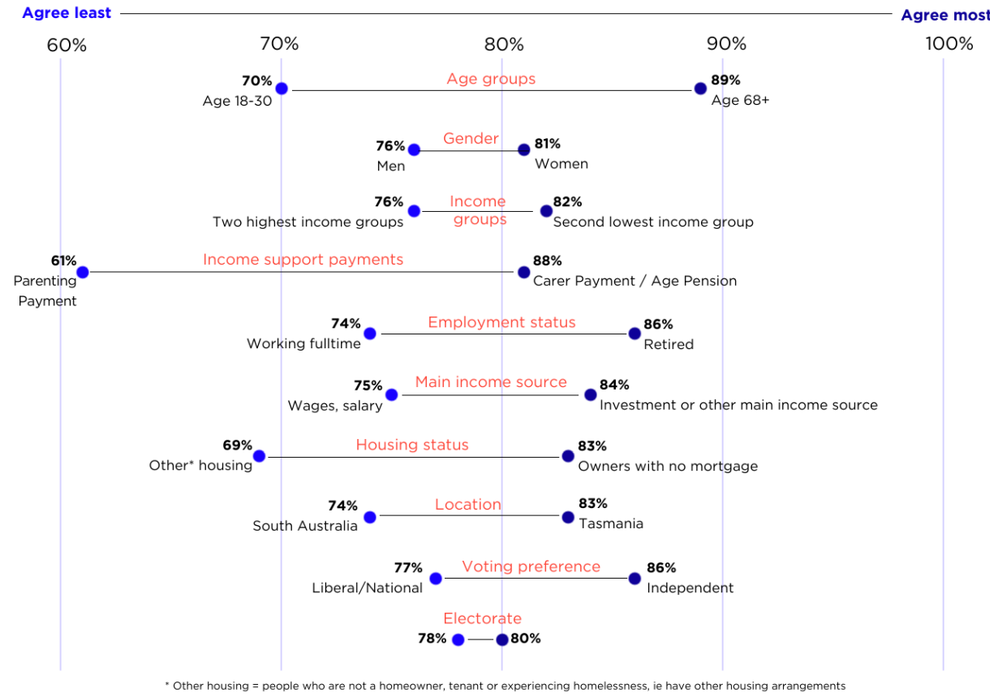
What do we think about people receiving unemployment payments?

Figure 21. *People can find themselves needing unemployment payments through no fault of their own*



79% of people agreed that people can find themselves needing unemployment payments due to circumstances beyond their control (this was 78% in 2023).

Figure 22. Demographic perspectives, *people can find themselves needing unemployment payments through no fault of their own*

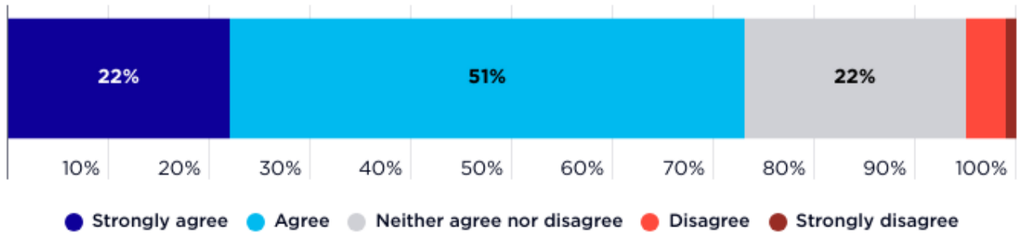


* Other housing = people who are not a homeowner, tenant or experiencing homelessness, ie have other housing arrangements

- **By age:** People aged 68 and above agreed most (89%) and people aged 18 to 30 agreed least (70%).
- **By gender:** More women agreed with this statement (81%) than men (76%).
- **By income:** People in the second lowest income group (Quintile 2) agreed most (82%) and people in the two highest income groups (Quintiles 4 and 5) agreed least (76%).

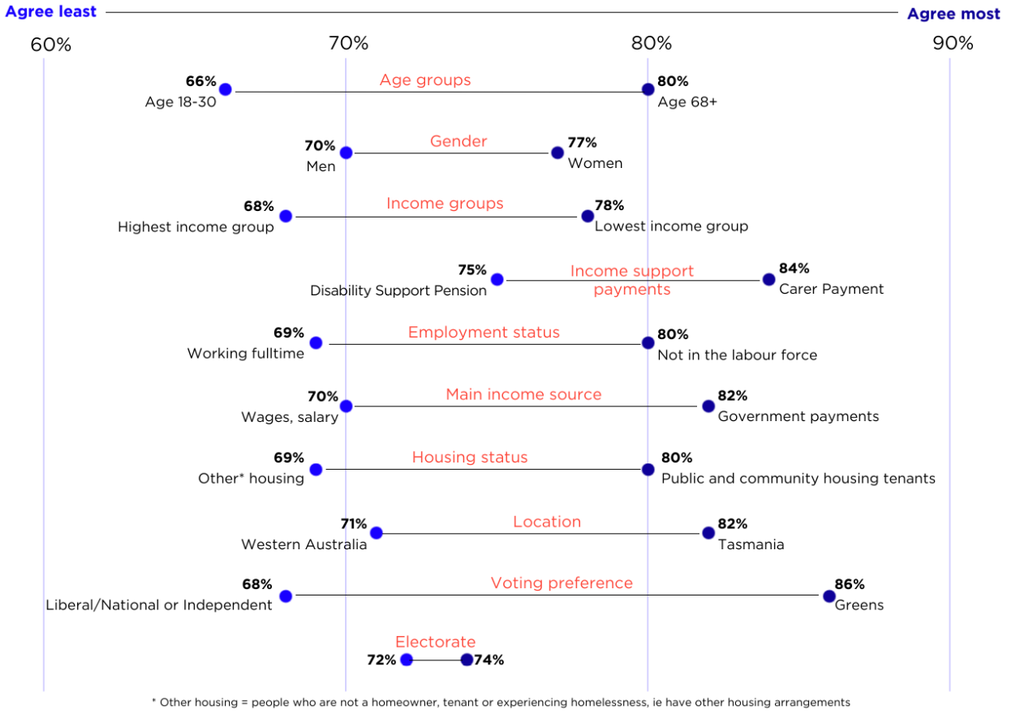
- **By income support payment:** 81% of people in the lowest income quintile who were receiving JobSeeker payments agreed with this statement. People receiving carer or age pension payments agreed most (88%) and people receiving parenting payments agreed least (61%).
- **By employment status:** People who had retired agreed most (86%) and people in full-time employment agreed least (74%).
- **By income source:** People with investment or other main income sources agreed most (84%) and people receiving wages agreed least (75%).
- **By housing status:** Homeowners without a mortgage agreed most (83%) and people who were not a homeowner or tenant (i.e., had 'other' housing arrangements) agreed least (69%).
- **By location:** Tasmanians agreed most (83%) and South Australians agreed least (74%).
- **By voting preference:** People who voted for an independent agreed most (86%) and people who voted Liberal/National agreed least (77%).
- **By electorate:** Differences in agreement by party affiliation of elected parliamentary representative were small (78–80%).

Figure 23. *People who receive unemployment payments do not deserve to live in poverty*



73% of people agreed that people who receive unemployment payments do not deserve to live in poverty (up from 59% in 2023).

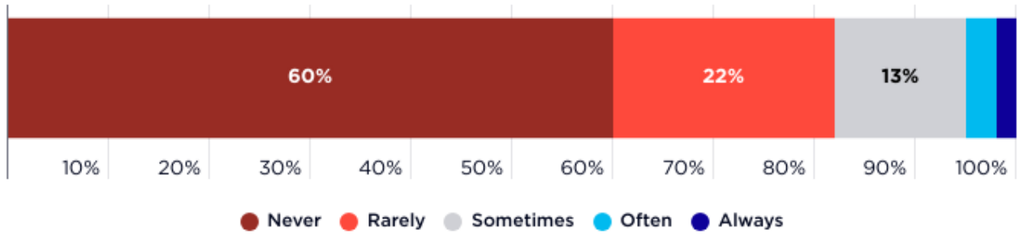
Figure 24. Demographic perspective, *people who receive unemployment payments do not deserve to live in poverty*



* Other housing = people who are not a homeowner, tenant or experiencing homelessness, ie have other housing arrangements

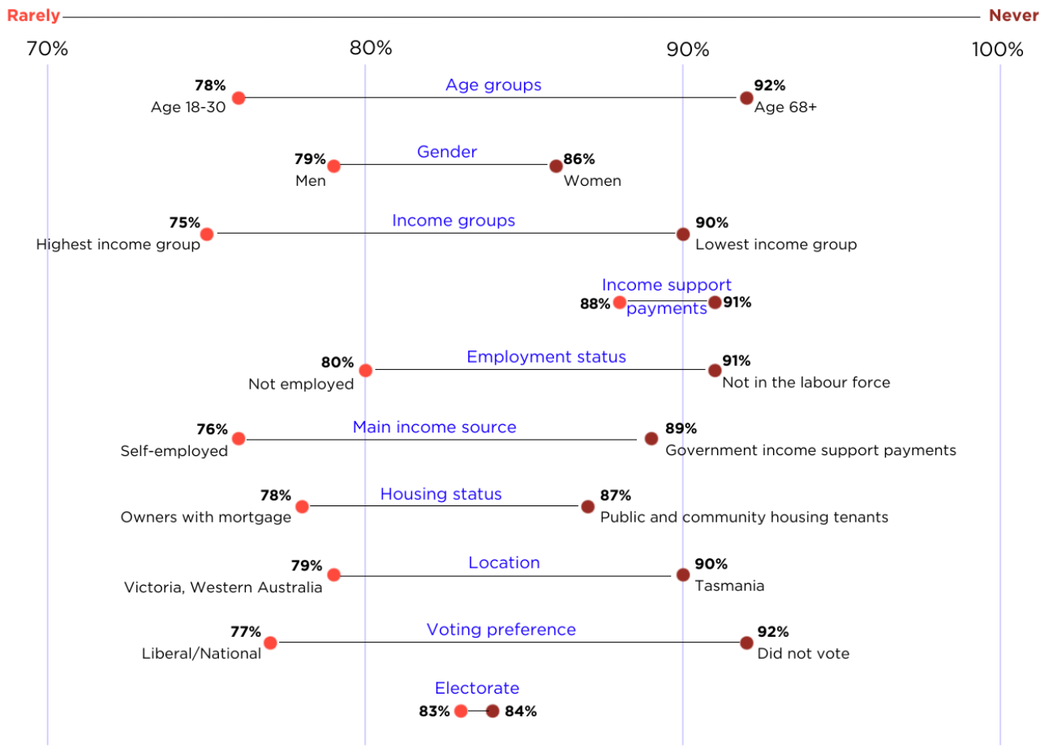
- **By age:** Agreement increased by age group, from 66% (aged 18 to 30) to 80% (aged 68 and above).
- **By gender:** More women agreed with this statement (77%) than men (70%).
- **By income:** Agreement decreased by income quintile, from 78% (lowest income) to 68% (highest income).
- **By income support payment:** 82% of people in the lowest income quintile who were receiving JobSeeker payments agreed with this statement. People receiving carer payments agreed more (84%) than those receiving disability payments (75%) or the rest of the population (73%).
- **By employment status:** People in full-time employment agreed least (69%) and people who were not in the labour force agreed most with this statement (80%) when compared by employment status.
- **By income source:** When compared by main income source, people who were receiving government income support payments (82%) agreed most, and those who received wages (70%) agreed least.
- **By housing tenure:** When compared by housing status, people who tenants in public or community housing (80%) agreed most, and those who were not a homeowner or tenant (i.e., 'other' housing arrangements; 69%) agreed least.
- **By location:** When analysed by state, West Australians agreed least (71%) and Tasmanians agreed most (82%).
- **By voting preference:** People who voted Liberal/National or Independent in the last election agreed least (68%) and people who voted Greens agreed most (86%).
- **By electorate:** Differences in agreement by party affiliation of elected parliamentary representative were small (72–74%).

Figure 25. *Would you behave negatively towards other people because they receive unemployment payments?*



82% of people said that they would never or rarely behave negatively towards other people because they receive unemployment payments (this was 85% in 2023).

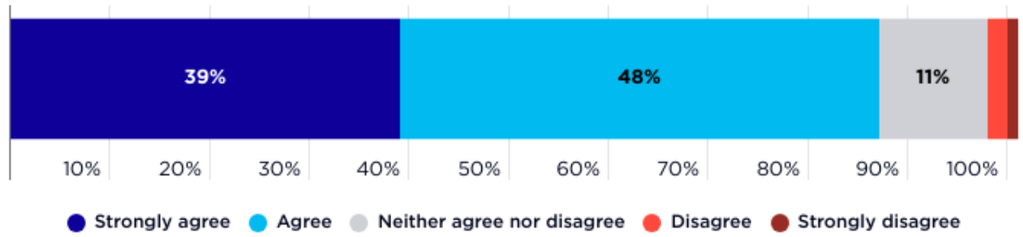
Figure 26. Demographic perspectives, *would you behave negatively towards other people because they receive unemployment payments?*



- **By age:** People aged 68 and above reported never or rarely behaving negatively most (92%) and people aged 18 to 30 reported this least (78%).
- **By gender:** More women reported never or rarely behaving negatively (86%) than men (79%).
- **By income:** People in the lowest income quintile reported never or rarely behaving negatively most (90%) and people in the highest income quintile reported this least (75%).

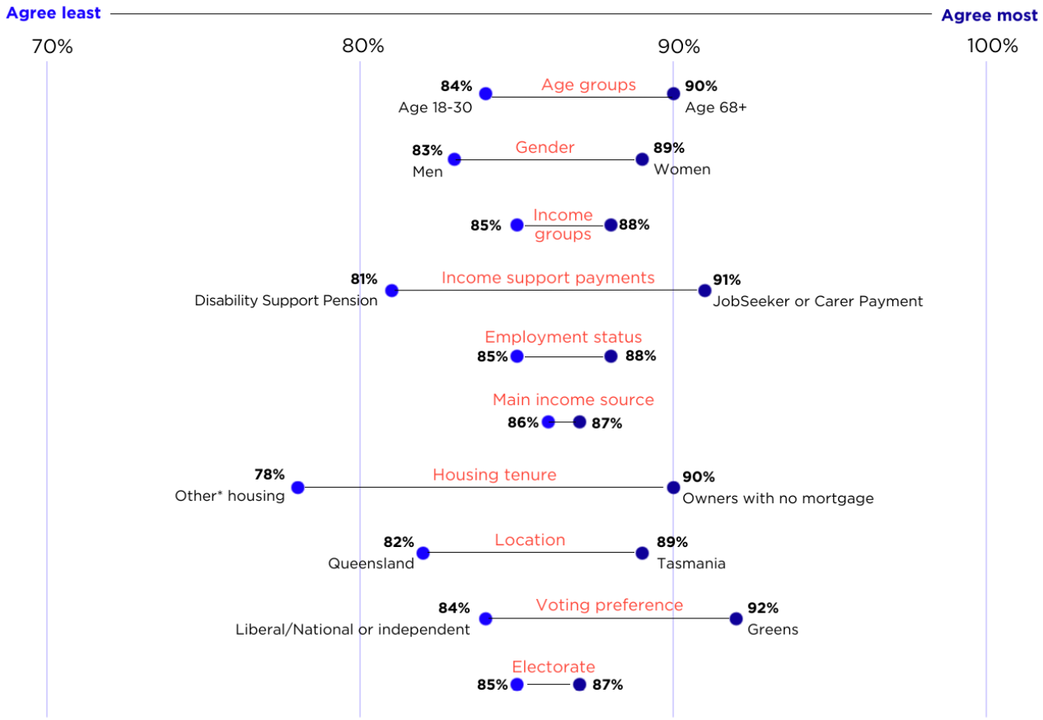
- **By income support payment:** For those in the lowest income quintile who were receiving government income support payments (either JobSeeker, age pension, parenting, carer, or disability support payments), differences in reporting never or rarely behaving negatively were small (88–91%).
- **By employment status:** People who were not in the labour force reported never or rarely behaving negatively most (91%) and people who were not employed reported this least (80%).
- **By income source:** People who were receiving government income support payments reported never or rarely behaving negatively most (89%) and people were self-employed reported this least (76%).
- **By housing status:** Public or community housing tenants reported never or rarely behaving negatively most (87%) and homeowners with a mortgage reported this least (78%).
- **By location:** People from Tasmania reported never or rarely behaving negatively most (90%) and people from Victoria and West Australia reported this least (79%).
- **By voting preference:** People who did not vote in the last election reported never or rarely behaving negatively most (92%) and people who voted Liberal/National reported this least (77%).
- **By electorate:** Differences in agreement by party affiliation of elected parliamentary representative were very small (83–84%).

Figure 27. *Unemployment payments should be enough so that people don't have to skip meals*



87% of people agreed that unemployment payments should be enough so that people do not have to skip meals (this was 86% in 2023). This statement had the highest level of agreement among the 16 presented. It indicates that Australians do not want people to go hungry because they are without work and have inadequate income.

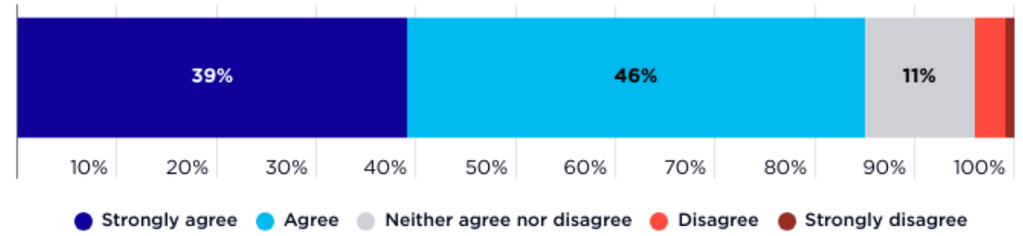
Figure 28. Demographic perspectives, *unemployment payments should be enough so that people don't have to skip meals*



* Other housing = people who are not a homeowner, tenant or experiencing homelessness, ie have other housing arrangements

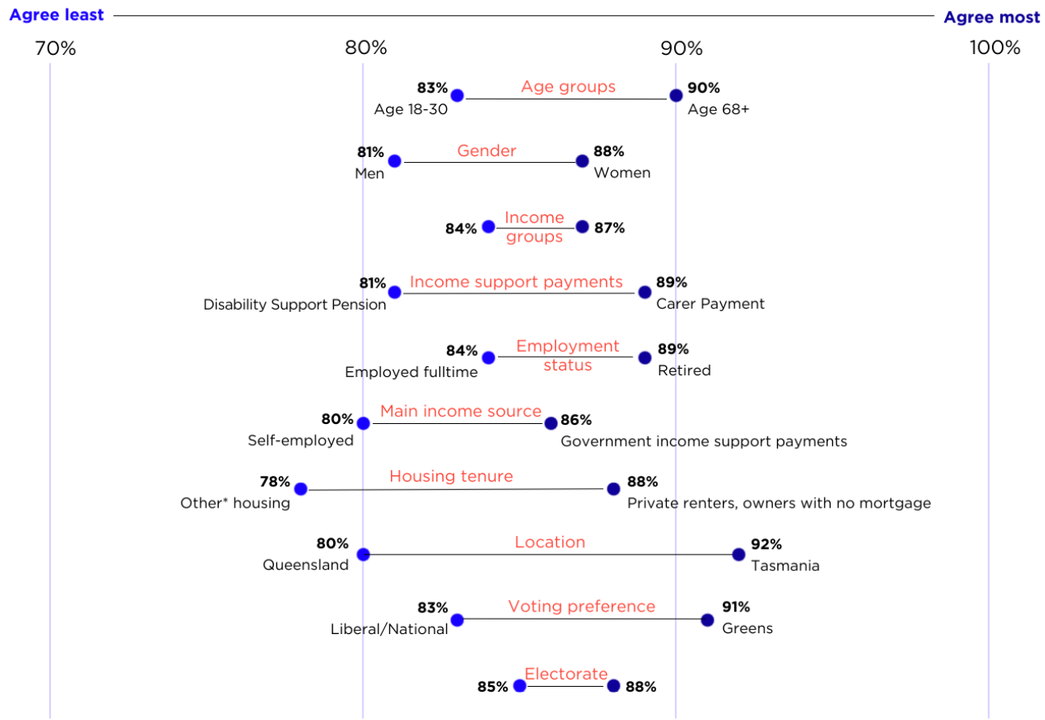
- **By age:** People aged 68 and above agreed most (90%) and people aged 18 to 30 agreed least (84%).
- **By gender:** More women agreed with this statement (89%) than men (83%).
- **By income:** Differences in agreement by income level were small (85–88%).
- **By income support payment:** People in the lowest income quintile who were receiving JobSeeker or carer payments agreed most (91%) and people receiving disability payments agreed least (81%).
- **By employment:** Differences in agreement by employment status were small (85–88%).
- **By income source:** Differences in agreement by main source of income were very small (86–87%).
- **By housing tenure:** Homeowners without a mortgage agreed most (90%) and people who were not a homeowner or tenant (i.e., had 'other' housing arrangements) agreed least (78%).
- **By location:** People from Tasmania agreed most (89%) and people from Queensland agreed least (82%).
- **By voting preference:** People who voted Greens agreed most (92%) and people who voted Liberal/National or Independent agreed least (84%).
- **By electorate:** Differences in agreement by party affiliation of elected parliamentary representative were small (85–87%).

Figure 29. *Unemployment payments should be enough for people to be able to see the doctor when they need*



85% of people agreed that unemployment payments should be enough for people to be able to see the doctor when they need (this was 84% in 2023).

Figure 30. Demographic perspectives, u*nemployment payments should be enough for people to be able to see the doctor when they need*

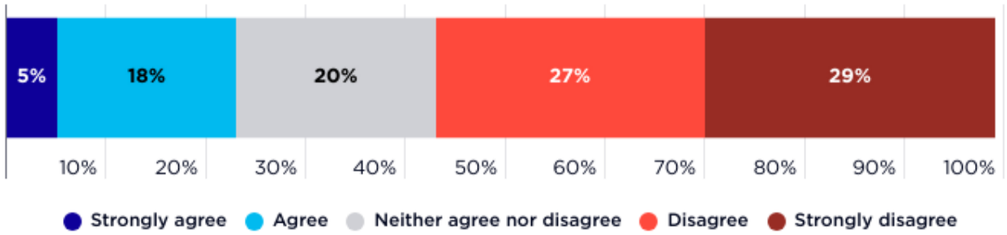


* Other housing = people who are not a homeowner, tenant or experiencing homelessness, ie have other housing arrangements

- **By age:** People aged 68 and above agreed most (90%) and people aged 18 to 30 agreed least (83%).
- **By gender:** More women agreed with this statement (88%) than men (81%).
- **By income:** Differences in agreement by income level were small (84–87%).
- **By income support payment:** People in the lowest income quintile that were receiving carer payments agreed most (89%) and people receiving disability payments agreed least (81%).

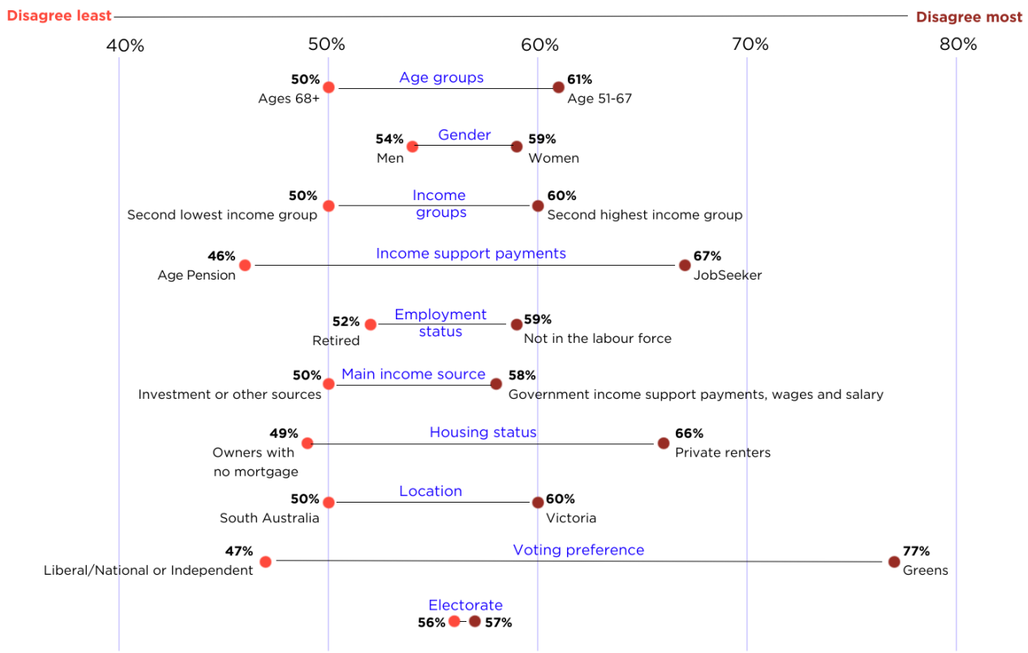
- **By employment status:** People who had retired agreed most (89%) and people employed full-time agreed least (84%).
- **By income source:** People receiving government income support payments agreed most (86%) and people who were self-employed agreed least (80%).
- **By housing status:** Private rental tenants and owners without a mortgage agreed most (88%) and people who were or who were not a homeowner or tenant (i.e., had 'other' housing arrangements) agreed least (78%).
- **By location:** People from Tasmania agreed most (92%) and people from Queensland agreed least (80%).
- **By voting preference:** People who voted Greens agreed most (91%) and people who voted Liberal/National agreed least (83%).
- **By electorate:** Differences in agreement by party affiliation of elected parliamentary representative were small (85–88%).

Figure 31. *I would be able to live on the current rate of unemployment payment ($56 per day)*



When asked if they would be able to live on the current rate of unemployment payment, 56% of people in Australia reported that they could not live on that amount (this was 58% in 2023), and 20% were unsure. Only 23% agreed that they could live on the current rate (also 23% in 2023). This shows that the current rate of unemployment is considered by the majority of Australians to be too low to provide an adequate standard of living and suggests that it needs to be increased to prevent poverty.

Figure 32. Demographic perspectives, *I would be able to live on the current rate of unemployment payment ($56 per day)*



- **By age:** People aged 51 to 67 disagreed most (61%) and people aged 68 and above disagreed least (50%).
- **By gender:** More women disagreed with this statement (59%) than men (54%).
- **By income:** People with the second highest income (Quintile 4) disagreed most (60%) and people with the second lowest income (Quintile 2) disagreed least (50%).
- **By income support payment:** People in the lowest income quintile who were receiving JobSeeker payments disagreed most with this statement (67%) and people receiving age pension disagreed least (46%).
- **By employment status:** People who were not in the labour force disagreed most (59%) and people who had retired disagreed least (52%).
- **By income source:** People who were receiving government income support payments or wages disagreed most (58%) and people with investment or other income sources disagreed least (50%).
- **By housing tenure:** Private rental tenants disagreed most (66%) and homeowners without a mortgage disagreed least (49%).
- **By location:** Victorians disagreed most (60%) and South Australians disagreed least (50%).
- **By voting preference:** People who voted Greens disagreed most (77%) and people who voted Liberal/National or Independent disagreed least (47%).
- **By electorate:** Differences in agreement by party affiliation of elected parliamentary representative were very small (56–57%).



Where were community views strongest/weakest?

The most strongly supported statements were ‘Unemployment payments should be enough so that people don’t have to skip meals’ (87% agreed) and ‘Australia should be a country that looks after those in need’ (86% agreed). The statement with the least support was ‘Government policies have caused some people to be poor’ (60% agreed), and the statement with the highest level of disagreement (56%) was ‘I would be able to live on the current rate of unemployment payment ($56 per day)’.

Responses were also analysed by a range of demographic variables. In the information that follows, we identify the groups that agreed (Figures 1–9 & 11–14), disagreed (Figure 15), or that reported ‘never or rarely behaving negatively’ (Figures 10 & 16) most and least within each category when this is greater than a 5% difference from the average level of agreement in the population. We also identify which groups had consistently lower or higher responses compared to others within their category.

Age

Fewer younger people (aged 18 to 30) saw poverty and inequality as a problem compared with older people. This included fewer agreeing that incomes at the top are too high (57%, 11% lower than average), that people can find themselves needing unemployment payments due to circumstances beyond their control (70%,9% lower than average), and that people who receive unemployment payments do not deserve to live in poverty (67%,7% lower than average). Fewer young people also reported that they would never or rarely behave negatively towards other people because they live in poverty (76%, 9% lower than average).

More people aged 51 to 67 agreed that they would never or rarely behave negatively towards other people because they receive unemployment payments (85%, 6% higher than average).

People aged 68 and over were most likely to agree that people experiencing poverty and unemployment are deserving of support. This included more agreeing that incomes at the top are too high (84%, 16% higher than average), that people can find themselves needing unemployment payments due to circumstances beyond their control (89%, 10% higher than average), and that people can experience poverty due to circumstances beyond their control (86%, 7% higher). More people aged 68 and over also reported that they would never or rarely behave negatively towards other people because they live in poverty (92%, 12% higher).

Gender

Responses from people who indicated their gender as being a woman or man were compared, omitting 9 participants who nominated only nominated nonbinary or a different term, or who preferred not to provide their gender. Differences in responses were mostly small and close to average, with women tending to show slightly more compassionate attitudes towards alleviating and solving poverty. More women agreed that nobody deserves to live in poverty (91%) and incomes at the bottom are too low (78%, both 6% higher than average).

Income quintile

People with the least household income (Quintile 1) were most likely to agree that poverty and inequality are a problem, and to see people experiencing poverty and unemployment as deserving of support, compared to other income levels. This included more agreeing that incomes at the bottom are too low (79%, 6% higher than average).

More people in the second lowest income quintile (Quintile 2) agreed that incomes at the top were too high (75%, 7% higher than average) and fewer reported that would never or rarely behave negatively towards other people because they receive unemployment payments (82%, 6% lower).

People with the most income (Quintile 5) were least likely to agree that poverty and inequality are a problem. Fewer agreed that government policies have caused some people to experience poverty (55%, 9% lower than average), that they would never or rarely behave negatively towards other people because they live in poverty (77%, 7% lower), and that poverty is a big problem in Australia today (68%, 6% lower).

People in the lowest income quintile who were receiving government payments

Within Quintile 1, people who were receiving JobSeeker, carer, or age pension payments tended to see poverty and inequality as problems requiring intervention more than people receiving disability or parenting payments.

More people receiving JobSeeker agreed that people can experience poverty due to circumstances beyond their control (88%, 9% higher than average), that nobody deserves to live in poverty (94%, 9% higher), that poverty is a big problem in Australia today (83%, 9% higher), that incomes at the bottom are too low (80%, 7% higher), and that government policies have caused some people to experience poverty (66%, 6% higher). More also reported that they would never or rarely behave negatively towards other people because they receive unemployment payments (66%, 9% higher).

People receiving carer payments had responses that were more than 5% higher than average for nine of the 16 statements, ranging from reporting that they never or rarely behaved negatively towards other people because they live in poverty (91%, 11% higher) to agreeing that government policies have caused some people to experience poverty (66%, 6% higher).

People receiving age pensions had 5% higher than average agreement with five statements, including that incomes at the top are too high (81%, 14% higher), and that people can find themselves needing unemployment payments due to circumstances beyond their control (88%, 11% higher).

More people receiving disability payments agreed that government policies have caused some people to experience poverty (69%, 9% higher than average), and fewer agreed that nobody deserves to live in poverty (79%, 6% lower).

More people receiving parenting payments agreed that poverty is a big problem in Australia today (80%, 6% higher than average), and that government policies have caused some people to experience poverty (66%, 6% higher). Fewer agreed that incomes at the top are too high (55%, 23% lower), and that people can find themselves needing unemployment payments due to circumstances beyond their control (61%, 18% lower).

Employment status

People who were not in the labour force had higher than average responses for five statements, including agreeing that unemployment payments should be enough so that people don't have to skip meals (87%, 9% higher than average), that incomes at the bottom are too low (81%, 8% higher), and that government policies have caused some people to experience poverty (67%, 7% higher).

More people who were unemployed agreed that poverty is a big problem in Australia today (83%, 9% higher than average), and fewer agreed that incomes at the top are too high (61%, 7% lower).

More people who were retired agreed that incomes at the top are too high (81%, 13% higher than average), that Australia should be a country that looks after those in need (93%, 7% higher), and that people can find themselves needing unemployment payments due to circumstances beyond their control (87%, 7% higher). However, fewer agreed that government policies have caused some people to experience poverty (51%, 11% lower).

Main source of income

More people who were receiving government payments agreed that people who receive unemployment payments do not deserve to live in poverty (82%, 9% higher than average), that poverty is a big problem in Australia (81%, 7% higher than average), that unemployment payments should be enough so that people don't have to skip meals (87%, 7% higher), and that the gap between wealth and poverty is too great (82%, 6% higher). More also reported that they would never or rarely behave negatively towards other people because they live in poverty (90%, 6% higher).

More people who were self-employed agreed that government policies have caused some people to experience poverty (77%, 17% higher than average), that incomes at the bottom are too low (82%, 9% higher), and that Australia should be a country that looks after those in need (94%, 6% higher). Fewer agreed that the gap between wealth and poverty is too great (70%, 7% lower), that incomes at the top are too high (61%, 7% lower), and that unemployment payments should be enough so that people don't have to skip meals (86%, 6% lower).

More people who had investment or other main sources of income agreed that incomes at the top are too high (75%, 7% higher than average) and fewer agreed that government policies have caused some people to experience poverty (49%, 11% lower).

Housing status

Responses were compared by housing status, omitting 29 participants who were not currently housed or were in a boarding house (as the sample was too small to compare with other groups). People who lived in a private rental property were most likely to agree that people experiencing poverty and unemployment are deserving of support, when compared by housing status. More private rental tenants agreed that incomes at the bottom are too low (81%, 8% higher), that government policies have caused some people to experience poverty (67%, 7% higher), that poverty is a problem that can be solved with the right systems and policies (80%, 7% higher), and that people who receive unemployment payments do not deserve to live in poverty (77%, 6% higher).

More people who lived in public or community housing agreed that people who receive unemployment payments do not deserve to live in poverty (78%, 7% higher than average). Fewer agreed that government policies have caused some people to experience poverty (42%, 18% lower) and that people can experience poverty due to circumstances beyond their control (75%, 14% lower).

People who had other housing arrangements (i.e., who did not rent or own a home, and who were not homeless) were least likely to agree that people experiencing poverty and unemployment are deserving of support, and had responses that were more than 5% lower than average for six of the 16 statements. These included that incomes at the top are too high (56%, 14% lower), and that people can find themselves needing unemployment payments due to circumstances beyond their control (69%, 10% lower).

More people who owned a home without a mortgage agreed incomes at the top are too high (77%, 9% higher than average), and fewer reported that they would never or rarely behave negatively towards other people because they receive unemployment payments (75%, 7% lower).

State

Responses were analysed by state, omitting 12 respondents from the Australian Capital Territory and 40 participants from the Northern Territory (as subsamples smaller than 2% of the population were determined to be less reliable for analysis). People in Tasmania were most likely to agree that people experiencing poverty and unemployment need support. More Tasmanians agreed that people who receive unemployment payments do not deserve to live in poverty (82%, 9% higher than average), that unemployment payments should be enough so that people don't have to skip meals (89%, 8% higher), that the gap between wealth and poverty is too great (7% higher), and that incomes at the bottom are too low (83%, 6% higher). Fewer agreed that poverty is a problem that can be solved with the right systems and policies (66%, 10% lower).

More people in South Australia reported that they would never or rarely behave negatively towards other people because they live in poverty (91%, 6% higher than average). Fewer agreed that poverty is a big problem in Australia today (67%, 7% lower).

More people in Victoria agreed that government policies have caused some people to experience poverty (64%, 7% higher than average) and fewer people in New South Wales agreed with this statement (53%, 7% lower).

More people in Western Australia agreed that incomes at the top are too high (75%, 7% higher than average).

Party voted for in 2025 federal election

Large differences were recorded when analysed by party given first preference in the 2025 federal election (lower house), which omitted the 154 participants who did not want to provide their voting information. People who voted for the Greens were most likely to agree that people experiencing poverty and unemployment are deserving of support, and they recorded more than 5% higher than average agreement for seven of the 16 questions asked. These included reporting that they never or rarely behaved negatively towards other people because they receive unemployment payments (90%, 21% higher than average), and agreeing that people who receive unemployment payments do not deserve to live in poverty (86%, 13% higher).

People who voted Liberal/National had consistently lower than average responses, including that the gap between wealth and poverty is too great (68%, 8% lower than average), and that incomes at the bottom are too low (66%, 7% lower).

Responses from people who didn't vote varied more; fewer agreed that incomes at the top are too high (56%, 12% lower than average) and that Australia should be a country that looks after those in need (80% 6% lower). More reported never or rarely behaving negatively towards other people because they live in poverty (92%, 12% higher).

More people who voted for independent politicians agreed that incomes at the top are too high (82%, 14% higher than average) and that Australia should be a country that looks after those in need (92%, 6% higher).

Fewer people who voted for Labor agreed that government policies have caused some people to experience poverty (48%, 12% lower than average).

More people who voted for other parties (i.e., parties other than those listed above) agreed that government policies have caused some people to experience poverty (79%, 19% higher than average).

People who voted One Nation recorded high agreement that government policies have contributed to poverty (81%, 21% higher than average).

Party affiliation of elected federal parliament representative

Only one notable difference was found when analysing by party affiliation of elected federal parliament representative: fewer people who were represented by an independent politician agreed that government policies have caused some people to experience poverty (47%, 13% lower than average).



Sampling and methodology

In 2023, a new survey was established to examine community attitudes towards key aspects of poverty and inequality, and related social policies (Treloar et al., 2023). This survey was redistributed in August 2025 and was completed by 2520 people (see Table 1). Participants were purposively recruited via Qualtrics, which coordinated a market research panel of people who had voluntarily signed up to be contacted for remunerated research opportunities. Eligibility criteria were to be residing in Australia and aged over 18. Recruitment quotas were applied to oversample people from the lowest income quintile (to obtain a higher sample of people with current or recent government income support payment experience), to generate roughly equal samples of people from the four other income quintiles, and to sample by gender and state/territory at rates that approximated the general population. Population subsamples were analysed to compare differences by participant characteristics, omitting groups that comprised under 2% of the recruited sample (see Table 2 for population group frequencies). A weighting method was applied to enable results that reflect the general Australian population with reference to age and gender, voting preferences, education, and income quintile (see Appendix 2 for calibration information). The weighted percentages presented in the graphs presented do not always add to 100% due to omitted subsample data, overlapping group data, or rounding, and values under 5% are not labelled.

Table 1: Who completed the survey

People from around Australia, aged 18 and above	2520
Female	50.2%
Male	49.1%
Nonbinary or different term	0.6%
Average age	49.5 years
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	4.9%
Born overseas	22.4%
Had completed a university degree	42.8%

Table 2: Survey completion by population group

Population group	n	%	survey %
AGE			
Aged 18 to 30	542	21.5%	16.7%
Aged 31 to 50	599	23.8%	24.2%
Aged 51 to 68	904	35.9%	36.3%
Aged 68 or above	542	21.5%	22.9%
INCOME QUINTILE (GROUP)			
Quintile 1 (lowest income)	936	37.1%	22.6%
Quintile 2	438	17.4%	17.8%
Quintile 3	440	17.5%	22.1%
Quintile 4	429	17.0%	20.9%
Quintile 5 (highest income)	277	11.0%	16.5%
INCOME SUPPORT PAYMENT & IN LOWEST INCOME QUINTILE*			
Disability support payment	166	6.6%	4.6%
JobSeeker payment	153	6.1%	4.4%
Carer payment	72	2.9%	1.8%
Parenting payment	66	2.6%	1.5%
Age pension	257	10.2%	6.2%
Rest of population	1859	73.8%	82.9%
EMPLOYMENT STATUS			
Employed full-time	1111	44.1%	49.6%
Employed part-time or casual	425	16.9%	15.8%
Not employed and looking for work	143	5.7%	4.3%
Not in labour force	303	12.0%	11.0%
Retired	538	21.3%	19.3%
INCOME SOURCE			
Wages and salaries	1401	55.6%	61.5%
Investment or other	351	13.9%	14.7%
Self-employed (own business)	49	1.9%	1.8%
Government payments	719	28.5%	22.0%
PARTY VOTED FOR IN 2025 FEDERAL ELECTION#			
Labor	1061	42.1%	30.1%
Liberal/National	671	26.6%	27.7%
Independent	164	6.5%	12.5%
Green	207	8.2%	10.6%
Other party	93	3.7%	6.1%
Did not vote	170	6.7%	6.5%
PARTY AFFILIATION OF ELECTED FEDERAL PARLIAMENT REPRESENTATIVE^			
Labor	1690	67.1%	66.5%
Liberal/National	630	25.0%	25.9%
Independent	158	6.3%	6.3%
HOUSING STATUS~			
Owner with a mortgage	669	26.5%	29.3%
Owner without a mortgage	746	29.6%	28.4%
Tenant in private rental	694	27.5%	27.7%
Tenant in public or community housing	128	5.1%	3.8%
Other	254	10.1%	9.7%
STATE`			
New South Wales	814	32.3%	30.5%
Victoria	662	26.3%	26.2%
Queensland	509	20.2%	21.6%
South Australia	179	7.1%	6.3%
Western Australia	231	9.2%	9.9%
Tasmania	73	2.8%	3.2%

Note. Participant scores were omitted from groups comprised less than 50 participants (<2% of sample).
*39 participants receiving Youth Allowance payments were omitted.
#154 participants who did not wish to provide their voting information were omitted.
^35 participants from seats held by three other parties were omitted.
~29 participants not currently housed or in a boarding house were omitted.
`12 participants from the Australian Capital Territory and 40 participants from the Northern Territory were omitted.

Developing the survey items

A literature review was conducted to scope the previous approach to surveys of attitudes towards people experiencing poverty and people receiving unemployment payments. The results of this review were presented in a co-design workshop with participants drawn from non-government organisations (service delivery and advocacy) and people with lived experience of poverty. Workshop participants provided direction on developing the research questions and study measures. A draft survey was developed and circulated to workshop participants for review and comment.

Attitudes towards people experiencing poverty. This wording ("people experiencing poverty") was chosen, after consultation with people with lived/living experience and with community advocates for poverty reduction, to avoid priming of poverty as a permanent state (i.e., "living in") and to avoid demeaning and stigmatising language (such as "poor people"). Attitudes about people experiencing poverty in Australia were measured using items adapted from a previous "attitudes towards the poor" scale developed in the USA (Cozzarelli et al., 2001).

Attitudes towards inequality are important to take account of as adjustment in policy settings in relation to poverty will also affect inequality ratios. Attitudes towards the current level of inequality in Australia were measured using items adapted from International Social Survey Programme (ISSP Research Group, 2022).

Attitudes towards people receiving unemployment payments. This wording was chosen to avoid priming participants by use of well-known language ("welfare", "benefits") that may trigger responses based on stereotype.

Perception of poverty as a problem. Three items were used to assess perceptions of poverty as a problem that can or should be solved by policies (i.e., 'Poverty is a big problem in Australia today', 'Australia should be a country that looks after those in need', and 'Poverty is a problem that can be solved with the right systems and policies').

Attitudes towards unemployment payments. Other authors have noted the need to differentiate measures towards people receiving unemployment payments, and attitudes towards the social security system itself (Schofield & Butterworth, 2015) and attitudes towards those experiencing poverty (Suomi et al., 2022). Attitudes towards government provided unemployment payments were measured using items drawn from previous advocacy research (e.g., 'Unemployment payments should be enough so that people don't have to skip meals' (Treloar et al., 2023).

Appendix: Survey weighting

Weights have been calculated to ensure that the distribution of key characteristics of survey participants matches national aggregates. Table 3 shows the distribution of the sample across age and gender, voting preferences, education, and income quintile. Compared to the Estimated Residential Population (ERP), the survey under-sampled young men and older women, while having a corresponding excess sample of older men and younger women, which was consistent with the previous survey distributed in 2023.

To indicate political preferences, we asked respondents to recall to which party they gave their lower house first preference in the most recent federal election (2025). Target percentages were set to match the relative votes for the different parties, and people with missing data (i.e., who either did not vote or did not wish to indicate their preference) were given an average weight. The table shows that we oversampled Labor voters and under-sampled Independent and Greens voters. With respect to education, we under-sampled people with less education and oversampled people with more education.

The survey also asked respondents to report their household gross income (before tax deducted) and the number of adults, children (aged under 14), and seniors (aged over 65) in their household. This information was used to calculate income quintile groups based on a model estimated in the 2019-2020 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Household Income Survey. The sample included more lower-income households than the population, which is partially explained by the purposive sampling approach which aimed to obtain a higher proportion of people on government income support payments. Besides this, other instances of over- and under-sampling in reference to the calibration variables (described above) were consistent with the previous survey that was distributed in 2023.

Weighting methods

To ensure the simultaneous attainment of all four sets of targets we use an iterative proportional fitting method as implemented in the ABS GREGWT algorithm. This estimates a weight for each case which is as close as possible to the original weight (the total population divided by the sample size for all cases) while ensuring that the weighted percentage distributions match the target distributions. The estimates here use the exponential distance function. The procedure also generates replicate weights which can be used for calculating variance estimates for weighted estimates. The weight distribution generated by our preferred model is shown in the right-hand half of Table 1. As required, the percentage distributions in the weighted survey perfectly matches the target distributions, with the mean relative weights equal to the ratio between the survey and target percentages. The smallest weights are 0.07 times the average weight, and the largest weights were all constrained to the largest weights were constrained to three times the average weight to minimise sampling variance.

Table 3. Survey and calibration data distributions for preferred weights, 2025

	Survey %	Target %	Ratio	Weighted survey %	Relative weight mean	min	max
Age and Gender (ERP)							
18-34 male	12.0	15.4	1.3	15.4	1.30	0.12	3.00
35-64 male	24.2	23.4	1.0	23.4	0.98	0.09	3.00
65+ male	13.1	10.3	0.8	10.3	0.80	0.07	3.00
18-34 female	16.2	14.9	0.9	14.9	0.94	0.10	3.00
35-64 female	24.2	24.1	1.0	24.1	1.01	0.09	3.00
65+ female	10.4	11.8	1.1	11.8	1.16	0.13	3.00
Total	100.0	100.0	1.0	100.0	1.02	0.07	3.00
First preference in last election (AEC)							
Labor	42.1	30.1	0.7	30.1	0.73	0.07	3.00
Liberal/National	26.6	27.7	1.0	27.7	1.06	0.11	
Greens	8.2	10.6	1.3	10.6	1.31	0.17	3.00
Independent/Other	10.2	18.7	1.8	18.7	1.86	0.26	
Missing	12.9	12.9	1.0	12.9	1.02	0.11	3.00
Total	100.0	100.0	1.0	100.0	1.02	0.07	3.00
Highest education level (Census)							
Up to year 11	12.1	21.1	1.7	21.1	1.77	0.53	3.00
Completed year 12	16.3	17.5	1.1	17.5	1.09	0.18	3.00
Diploma/certificate	28.8	30.2	1.0	30.2	1.06	0.17	3.00
Undergraduate/postgraduate	42.8	31.3	0.7	31.3	0.74	0.07	3.00
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	1.02	0.07	3.00
Estimated quintile of equivalent household disposable income							
Quintile 1 (lowest)	41.0	20.0	0.0	20.0	0.50	0.07	3.00
Quintile 2	16.9	20.0	0.0	20.0	1.20	0.23	3.00
Quintile 3	14.8	20.0	0.1	20.0	1.37	0.42	3.00
Quintile 4	15.6	20.0	0.1	20.0	1.30	0.46	3.00
Quintile 5 (highest)	11.7	20.0	0.1	20.0	1.74	0.66	3.00
Total	100.0	100.0	1.0	100.0	1.02	0.07	3.00

Note: Survey N=2,520. National Estimated Resident Population target (for age 18+) = 21,722,162 (ABS, Data Explorer, Quarterly Population Estimates (ERP) for 2025-Q1, retrieved 20 October 2025). Mean weight = 8,620. Relative weights are weights that are relative to this mean. Calibration data sources (for the target column): Age and gender: estimated resident population of people aged 18+, ABS, Population clock and pyramid (estimates for October 2025). Gender randomly imputed for non-binary responses. First preference vote for House of Representatives in 2025 as recorded at https://results.aec.gov.au/31496/Website/HouseStateFirstPrefsByParty-31496-NAT.htm. Vote distribution only applied to those who reported a vote. (Missing vote fixed at survey %). Highest education level from Census of Population and Housing, 2021, TableBuilder, for people aged (18+). Quintile of income imputed from survey responses and ABS income survey data.

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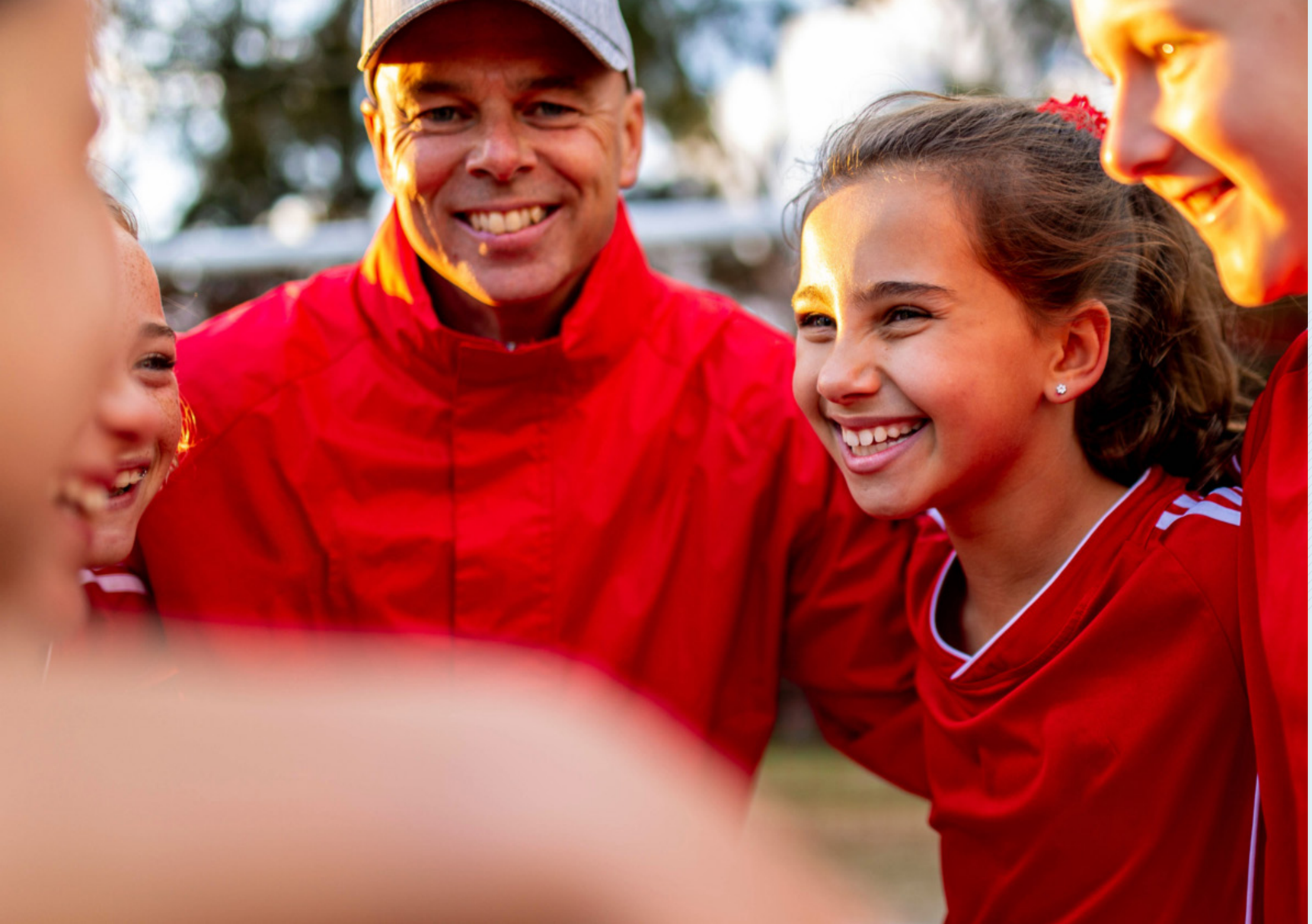
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