

Research Australia

An alliance for discoveries in health

Health & Medical Research Public Opinion Poll 2010

Major partners of Research Australia

(as at 30 June 2010)

Foundation



Platinum



Gold



Silver



Bronze



Research Australia Philanthropy



Contents and key findings

Major supporters of research Australia	2
Acknowledgements	4
Foreword	5
Methodology	6
Demographic profile	7

Key findings

Hospitals and the healthcare system are the issues that respondents would most like the Federal	8
Australians see research as part of the solution to addressing healthcare costs	10
Prevention and the ageing population are a priority	11
Australians would rather see public funds spent on health and medical research rather than elite sports	12
Australians think that government expenditure on health and medical research is too low	13
Cancer research tops the list of diseases that respondents view as important to support	14
Clinical trials are recognised as offering many benefits	15
General health and fitness important in addressing the challenges of an ageing workforce	16
Health conditions play a large role in the lives of Australians	17
Australians believe that innovation is moving offshore	18
Australians believe that government should be responsible for supporting research	19
Transparency and proactive matching would encourage greater giving	20
82% agree that it is unacceptable that Australians are suffering from potentially treatable disease	21
Observations and conclusions	22
Research Australia partners	24

Acknowledgements

Auspoll

Research Australia thanks Auspoll for conducting this public opinion poll and for supporting our activities. Auspoll is a social and market research company that specialises in providing independent, impartial and intellectually rigorous results.

Copyright

This work including without limitation all information text, graphs, names and logos is protected by copyright. This work may be used to your own personal use, information, research or study, or in a public forum solely to the promotion of the importance and benefits of health and medical research, so long as the work is attributed to Research Australia and used in a strictly not-for-profit capacity. Reproduction by bona fide newspapers, journals and similar publications is also permitted by Research Australia subject to attribution of Research Australia in any reproduction. Neither this work (nor any part of it) may be reproduced, stored, on salt, redistributed or otherwise used for profit.

Members of Research Australia can access the full report on the Research Australia website at **www.researchaustralia.org**

Foreword

Since Research Australia's last opinion poll, Australia has been less affected by the global economic downturn than anticipated. Health, however, still remains a central issue of concern to Australians.

Hospitals and the healthcare system is seen as the highest priority issue for the Federal Government over the next few years (90% believe it is an extremely important or very important priority). It is also seen as a higher priority than other high-profile issues such as reducing the number of refugees that enter Australia by boat, reducing government debt, reducing taxes, and introducing an ETS to address climate change.

Many Australians feel that serious medical conditions have a negative impact on the way we are living with 56% of respondents or their immediate family having a serious medical condition. It is unsurprising that Australians see health reform as a priority for the Government. With the recent focus on health care reform 83% of respondents believe it is unacceptable that Australians are suffering from diseases that could be treatable with more investment in health and medical research. Australians are looking for the government to take leadership on the issue and increase funding for health and medical research.

77% of respondents believe that spending 2% of our healthcare budget on health and medical research is too low and 79% believe the Federal Government should increase funding for health and medical research by \$200 million - based on recommendations made by Research Australia

Productivity and policies to get Australians working longer have been a recent focus for government. The poll showed that the community recognises the impact of disease on productivity and the burden this creates for hospitals and healthcare system.

43% of respondents or their immediate family members have been unable to work for an extended period because of a medical condition. This is an area that requires further research.

The survey is particularly relevant in the context of government reviews regarding health system reform, primary health care, innovation and preventative health.



Dr Christine Bennett
Chairman



Rebecca James
Chief Executive Officer

Methodology

Research Australia commissioned Auspoll to conduct qualitative and quantitative research on the attitudes and perceptions of the community toward health and medical research. Qualitative research was conducted through focus groups and quantitative research conducted through an online survey.

Focus groups

Four discussion groups with eight people in each were conducted in different locations. The following table outlines the composition of people in the four discussion groups.

Group 1 Hurstville (Mid metropolitan NSW) Age 18–45 50:50 gender split	Group 2 Bathurst (Regional NSW) Age 45+ 50:50 gender split
Group 3 St Kilda (Inner metropolitan, Vic) Age 18–45 50:50 gender split	Group 4 Werribee (Outer metropolitan, Vic) Age 45 + 50:50 gender split

Insights from focus groups

Asked about health and medical research taking place in Australia, respondents identified the following benefits:

“Australia has had great breakthroughs in research. It’s one of the leaders in the world in medical research”

“We discover it but then overseas buy it (Australia’s research achievements) and we don’t get the benefits”

“It would have to benefit Australia if research was done here. If it was funded here we might get to see results more quickly and employ more people”

Such interest was matched by support for more investment in the health system,

“We can find millions and millions of dollars for fireworks at the start of the New Year. Why don’t we put that money into the hospitals where is it going to make some difference?”

Demographic profile

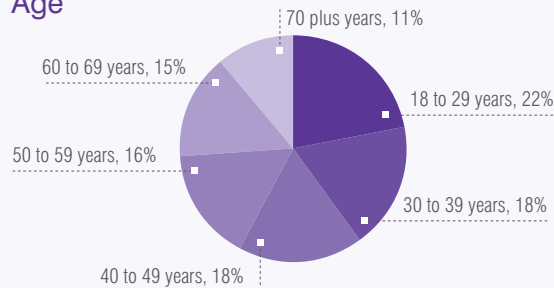
Quantitative

The sample for the quantitative survey was drawn from of a professional market and social research panel.

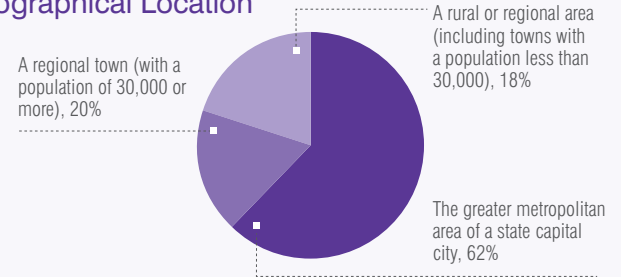
Respondents were drawn in proportions that were representative of the Australian population in regards to age, gender and location (state and regional/urban locations). The sample size of 1000 is associated with an error margin of +/- 3.1% at the 95% confidence interval.

A 15-minute online survey was conducted of 1000 Australians (19th – 21st July)

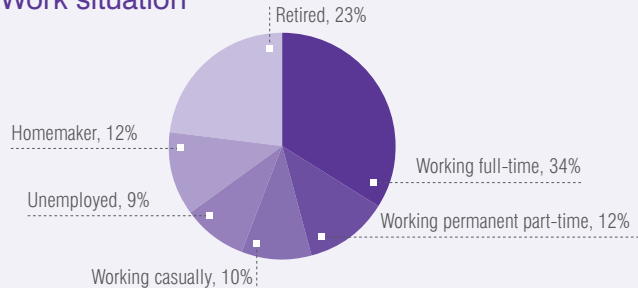
Age



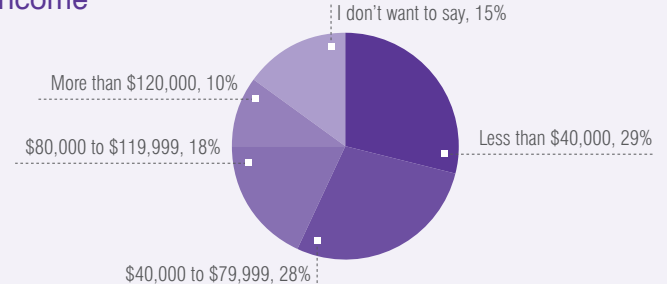
Geographical Location



Work situation

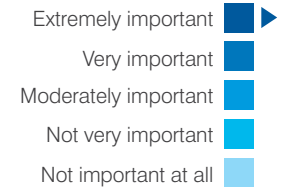


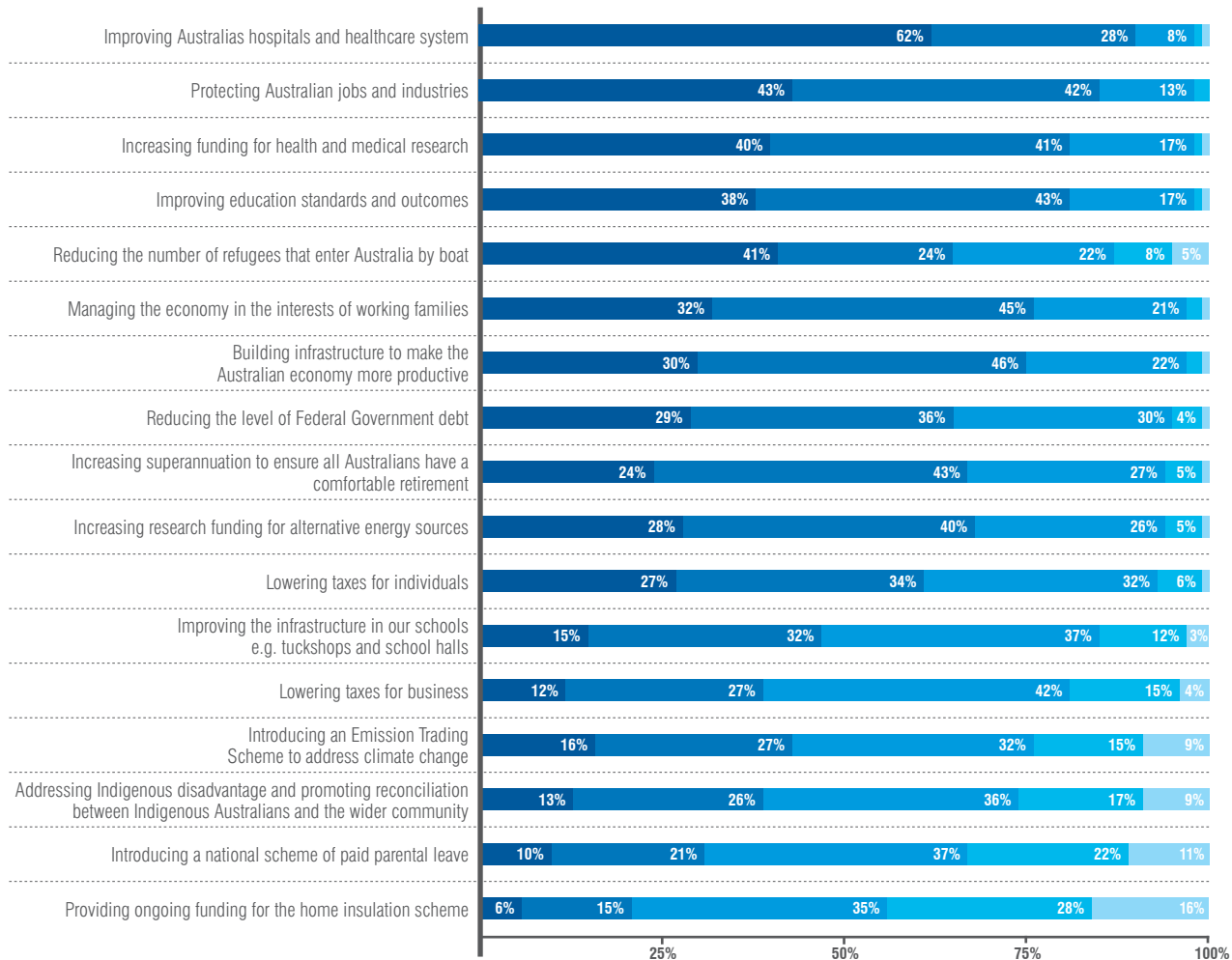
Income



Hospitals and the healthcare system are the issues that respondents would most like the Federal Government to focus on in the next few years

Q: The following are a list of issues facing Australia today. How important is it for the Federal Government to be focusing on these issues in the next few years?





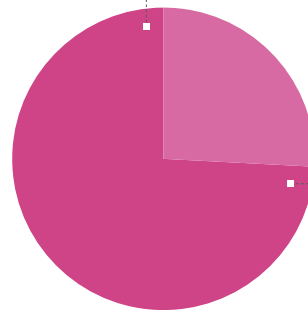
Australians see research as part of the solution to addressing healthcare costs

Q: When it comes to rising healthcare costs, do you think that research to improve health is part of the problem or part of the solution?

Respondents overwhelmingly see health research as part of the solution to rising healthcare costs. Only around one in four respondents see health research as being a part of the problem.

Health research can play an important part in healthcare reform by understanding efficiency and effectiveness issues.

Research to improve health is part of the solution, 74%

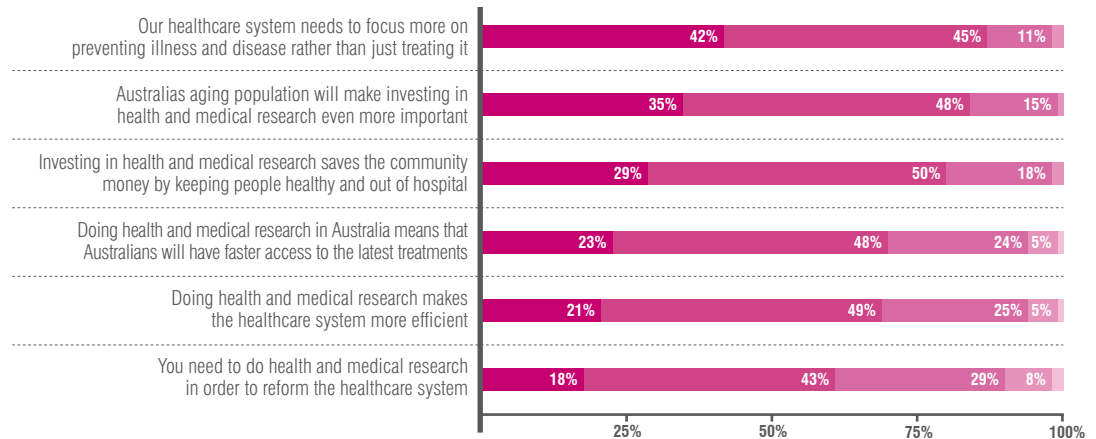
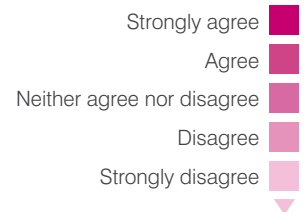


Research to improve health is part of the problem, 26%

Prevention and the ageing population are a priority focus for respondents

Q: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

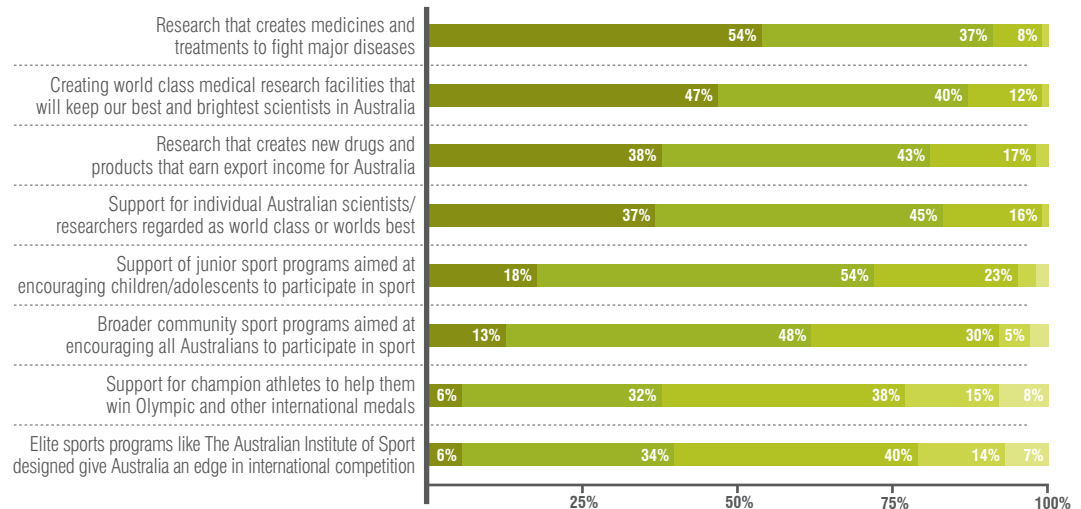
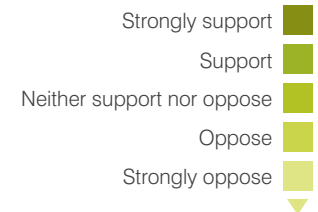
Illness prevention and addressing issues related to ageing are popular with respondents. This provides an excellent case for funders to put their efforts into research linking it to the national prevention and ageing agendas.



Australians would rather see public funds spent on health and medical research rather than elite sports

Q: Do you support or oppose the Federal Government investing more money in the following?

Respondents would like to see public funding go into improving the health of the wider population rather than sport.

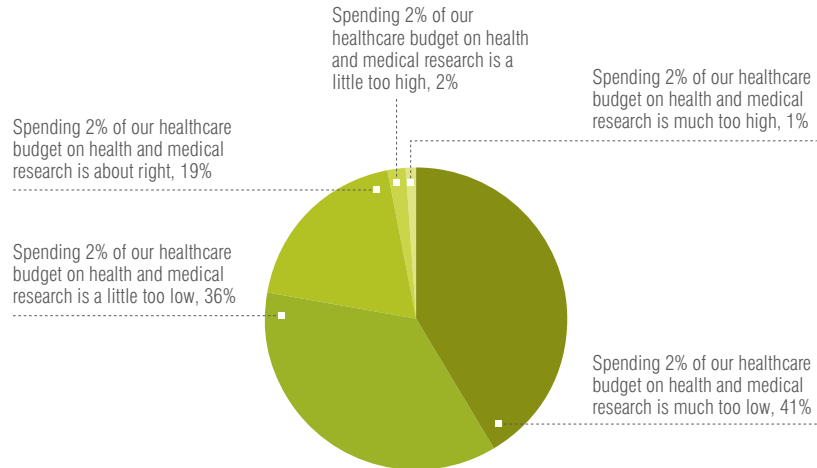


Australians think that government expenditure on health and medical research is too low

Q: Every year \$80 billion is spent on health in Australia and 2% of this is allocated for health and medical research. What do you think about this?

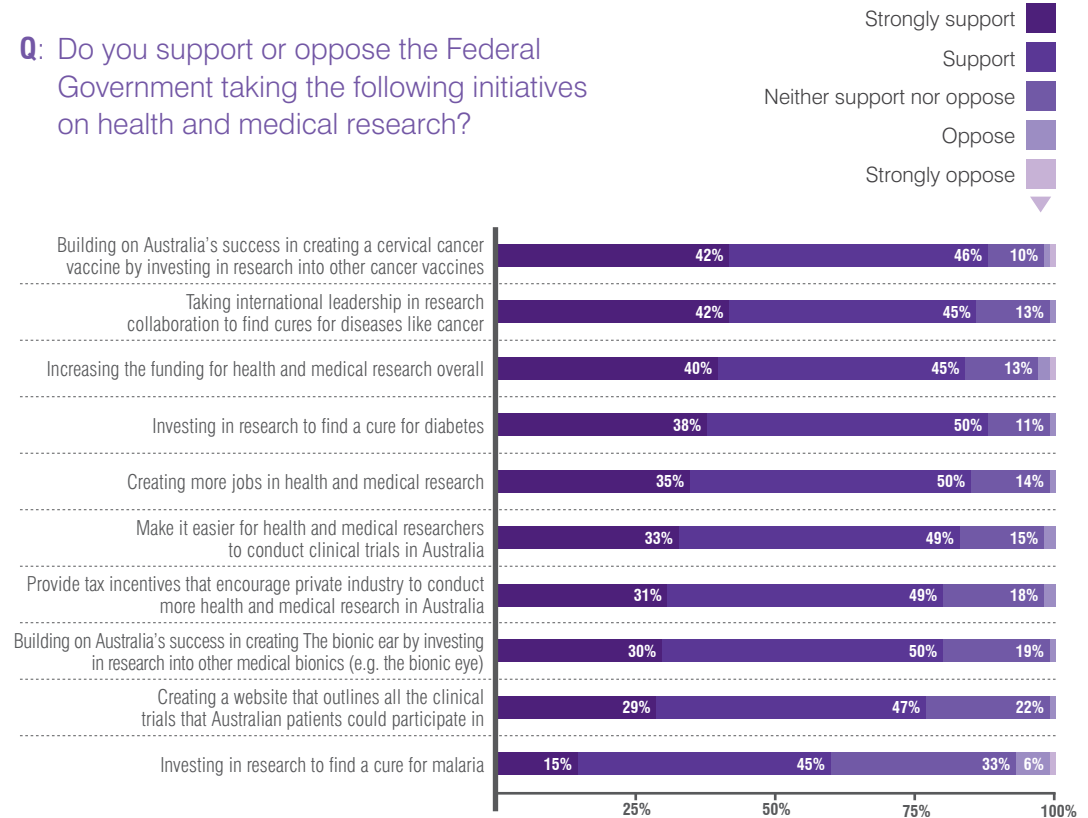
The overwhelming majority of respondents believe that spending 2% of our overall healthcare costs on health and medical research is too low.

Only 1 in 5 respondents believe that a 2% spend on research is about right, and virtually no respondents believe it is too high.



Cancer research tops the list of diseases that respondents view as important

Q: Do you support or oppose the Federal Government taking the following initiatives on health and medical research?

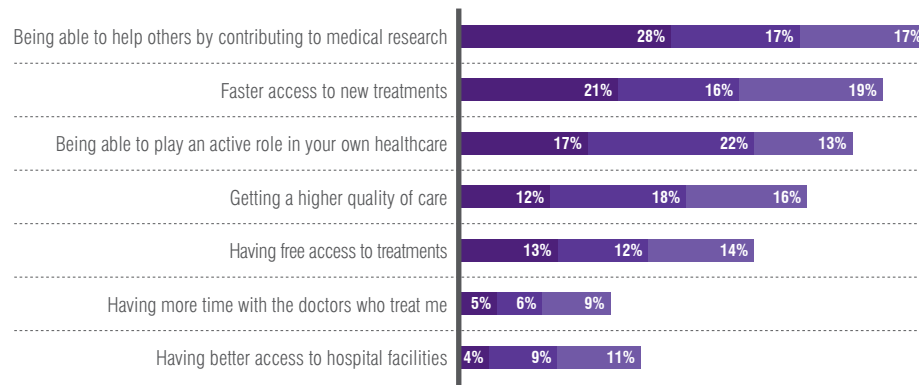




Clinical trials are recognised as offering many benefits

Q: The following are a series of benefits of participating in a clinical trial. Please select the 3 benefits that you think are most important by entering the number 1 for the most important benefit through to 3 for the 3rd most important benefit.

Participating in clinical trials in order to gain better access to facilities and doctors, and having free access to treatments are less important benefits of participating in a clinical trial.

Helping others by contributing to medical research, and having faster access to new treatments are seen as the most important benefits of participating in a clinical trial



% who ranked benefit first  % who ranked benefit second  % who ranked benefit third 

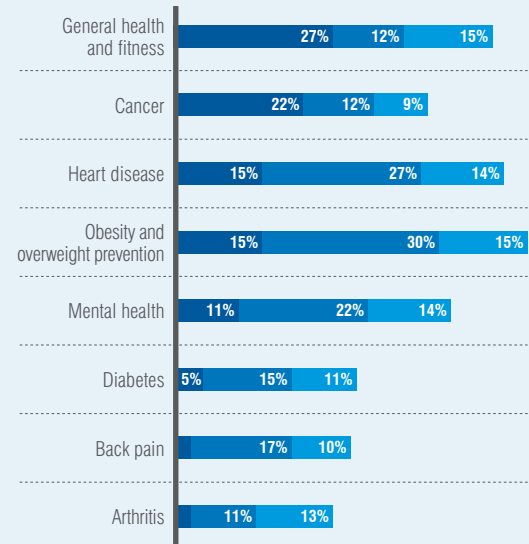
General health and fitness important in addressing the challenges of an ageing workforce

Q: The Federal Government will soon be changing the retirement age to 67. Which of the following health issues do you think will be most important to address in order to help keep Australians productive and in the workforce?

Please select the 3 issues that you think are most important and then rank these from 1 to 3. Please enter the number 1 for the issues you think will be most important, down to 3 for the issue you think will be 3rd most important.

Respondents saw general health and fitness as the most important health issue in addressing the challenges of an ageing workforce. It is interesting that chronic health conditions are less important to respondents than more general health as workers are expected to work longer during their lives.

% who ranked issue first
% who ranked issue second
% who ranked issue third



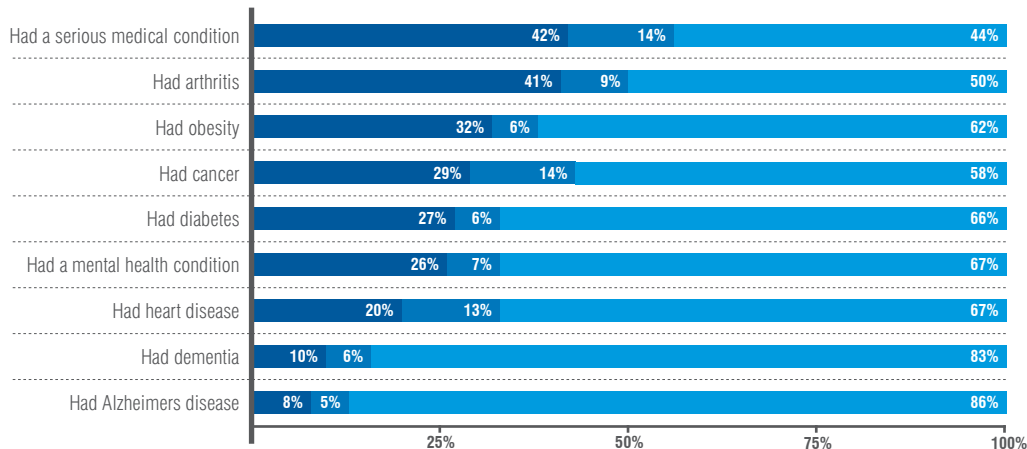
Health conditions play a large role in the lives of Australians

This has happened in the last 10 years
This has happened, but not in the last 10 years
This has never happened

Q: Have the following things ever happened to you, or anyone in your immediate family? (Partner, parents, children, brother or sister)

More than a third of Australian families have been affected by medical conditions that could not be adequately treated. On a personal level families are being affected when people are unable to work, spending extended periods in hospitals or dying before retirement age. This results in personal loss as well as a loss of productivity as carers or sufferers are unable to work. Medical conditions are impacting upon Australian families and Australia more broadly, in a variety of ways

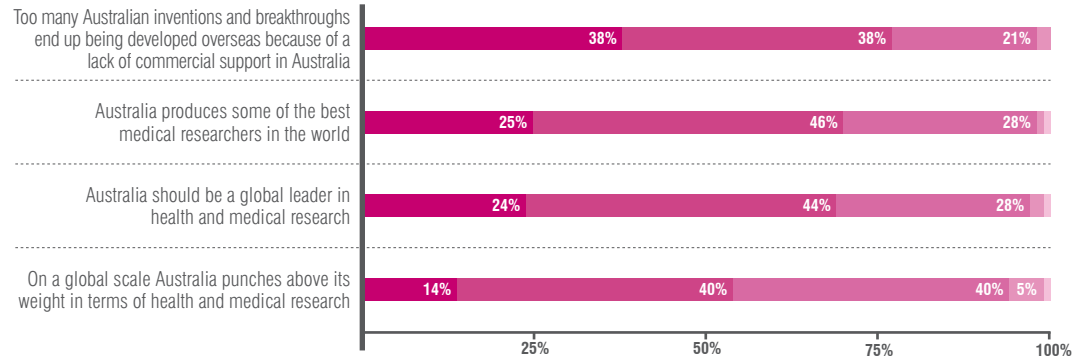
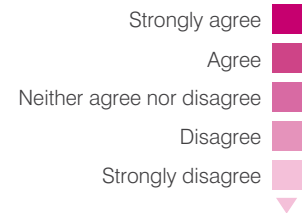
This response is most striking as there is self reported high level of illness and ongoing medical conditions that prevent people from working while at the same time not being adequately treated.



Australians believe that innovation is moving offshore

Q: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

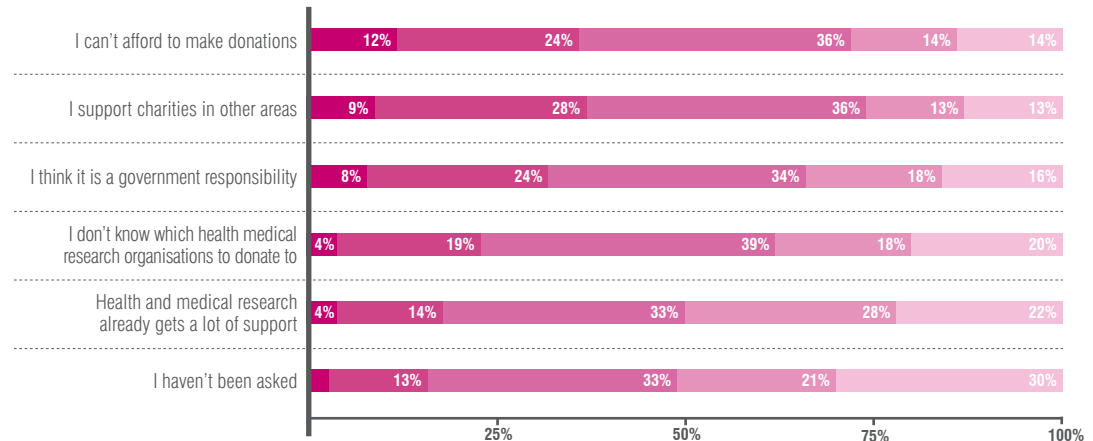
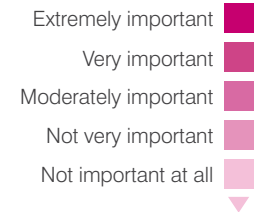
There is also strong support for Australia to be a global leader when it comes to health and medical research. There is however a perception held by respondents that Australian inventions are not being developed locally, but instead are being commercialised overseas.



Australians believe that government should be responsible for supporting research

Q: How important is it for members of the public to donate to each of the following causes?

Respondents believe that government should be responsible for supporting health and medical research. This coupled with Australians being unable to afford to donate has an impact on willingness to give to foundations and charities in the health and medical research area.

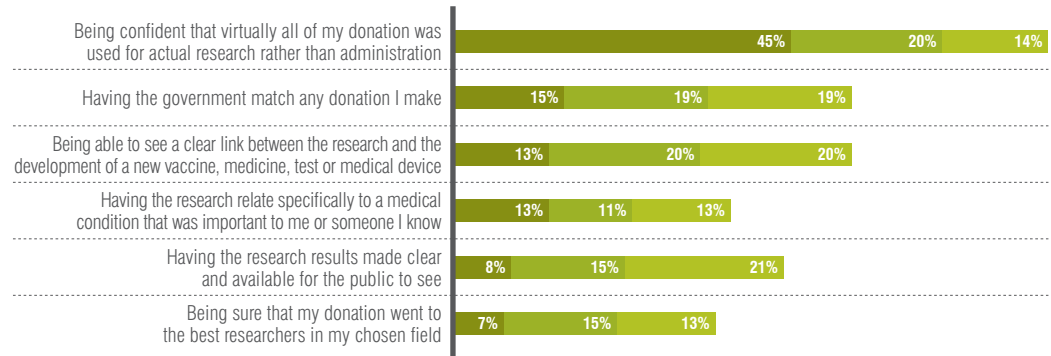


Transparency and proactive matching would encourage greater giving

Q: The following are a series of initiatives that may encourage you to donate to medical research. Please select the 3 initiatives that would give you the most encouragement to donate. Please enter the number 1 for the most appealing initiative through to a 3 for the 3rd most appealing initiative.

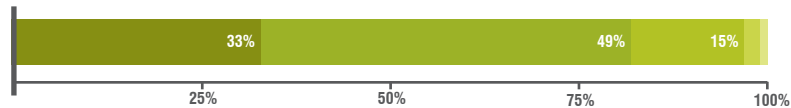
Increased confidence that donations would reach researchers and government matching of donations are key initiatives that would encourage people to donate more. Communicating a clear link between research and the development of specific treatments is also important in encouraging people to donate more.

% who ranked issue first
% who ranked issue second
% who ranked issue third



82% agree that it is unacceptable that Australians are suffering from potentially treatable disease

Q: It is unacceptable that Australians are suffering from diseases that could be treatable with more investment in health and medical research. Do you agree?



Observations and conclusions

This year's polling makes it evident that health and medical research has a strong image and is viewed positively by the public. This provides an opportunity to create a compelling story around the need for increased funding for medical research and to connect the issues more closely with people.

Key considerations in communicating medical research include:

- Making the benefits more obvious and more explicit (examples of how health and medical research has helped people);
- Linking funding requests for specific conditions or outcomes;
- Putting a face to the industry – who are the researchers? – What are they doing?; and
- Appealing to a sense of patriotism or national pride

There is also a clear opportunity to challenge the attitude that contracting serious medical conditions is just part of life or the result of chance and to link health and medical research to the issue – for example,

"It is unacceptable that Australians are suffering from conditions that would be curable with more investment in health and medical research"

There should also be a focus on the key benefits of health and medical research in terms of:

- Saving lives and finding cures for serious diseases ;
- Keeping people healthy and out of hospital; and
- Maintaining people's quality of life and allowing them to live healthier lives (not longer lives for its own sake).

This involves creating a stronger link between health and medical research and the quality of healthcare that people receive.

Other secondary benefits of health and medical research include:

- Building on our success and keeping Australia competitive (keeping our talented people and innovations in Australia); and
- Providing jobs in Australia and opportunities for young people through a stable research industry environment

Making the research story emotionally compelling could involve inviting people to consider how they would feel if they, or someone close to them, were diagnosed with a serious medical condition.

Importantly, funding for health and medical research should also be framed in terms of helping people rather than providing support for an industry (which is more likely to be seen as impersonal and profit-driven).

It was evident from the research that there is not a common belief that health and medical research is facing a funding crisis. Work in this area may need to be reframed by highlighting what Australia is missing out on due to the current inadequate levels of funding.

It was also hard for the public to put the costs of research funding, and requests for more funding in context, for example is \$200 million a lot or a little to sustain and grow this research sector? This lack of public knowledge provides an opportunity to benchmark expenditure against other research rich industries and compare the Australian context with other comparable countries. Talking about the cost of research in the context of the overall healthcare spend (i.e. 2% of healthcare costs) puts the numbers in more perspective for people who are unfamiliar with this issue. Interestingly most people also felt that 2% was far too low, and for this reason we feel it is a better way of framing the issue when discussing the numbers.

When publicising funding requests Research Australia should frame this information in terms of funding for research to help patients and people rather than an industry.

In communicating the need for additional funding it is important that funding for health and medical research should not be seen to be provided at the expense of funding for other healthcare needs such as increasing staffing levels or reducing waiting times for elective surgery.

Research Australia and our partners can take away a range of lessons from this annual poll. It is gratifying that health and medical research is highly regarded and can be capitalised upon for advocacy and continuing to highlight its contribution to Australian society.

A vertical strip on the left side of the slide shows various pieces of laboratory glassware, including Erlenmeyer flasks and a large Erlenmeyer flask, containing a red liquid. The background is a solid purple color.

Research Australia partners

Businesses/Companies

Alere
Biogen Idec Australia Pty Ltd
Brooker Consulting
Business Events Sydney
Cochlear Limited
CSL Limited
Diabetes Vaccine Development Centre
Eli Lilly Australia Pty Ltd
GlaxoSmithKline Australia Pty Ltd
Macquarie Group Foundation
MBF Foundation
Pacific Strategy Partners
Pfizer Pty Ltd
Q-Pharm Pty Ltd
ResMed Foundation Limited
Roche Products Pty Ltd
Virginia Rigoni Consulting Pty Ltd

Hospitals

Mercy Health Foundation
Sisters of Charity Health Service
– St. Vincent's Hospital Melbourne

Biotechnology Consortia/Hubs

ATP Innovations
Bio21 Cluster
BioMelbourne Network
The HEARing CRC & HearWorks Pty Ltd
Genzyme Australasia Pty Ltd

Industry Groups

AusBiotech Ltd
Australian Association of Neurologists
Australian Society for Medical Research
Bioplatforms Australia Limited
Medical Technology Association of Australia Ltd.
Medicines Australia
Queensland Clinical Trials Network Inc.
Research Canada
Research!America
NSW Business Chamber

Medical Research Institutes

ANZAC Research Institute
Baker IDI Heart & Diabetes Research Institute
– Nucleus Network
Bionic Ear Institute
Brain & Mind Research Institute – Sydney University
Burnet Institute
Centenary Institute

Research Australia partners *(cont)*

Children's Cancer Institute Australia
for Medical Research

Children's Medical Research Institute

Florey Neurosciences Institute

- Brain Research Institute Pty. Ltd.
- National Ageing and Research Institute
- National Stroke Research Institute
- Neurosciences Victoria

Garvan Institute of Medical Research

George Institute for International Health

Hanson Institute

Heart Research Institute

Hunter Medical Research Institute

Illawarra Health & Medical Research Institute

Joanna Briggs Institute

Kids Research Institute at the Children's
Hospital at Westmead

Kolling Institute of Medical Research

Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research

Lung Institute of Western Australia Inc.

Mater Medical Research Institute

Mental Health Research Institute

Menzies Research Institute

Menzies School of Health Research

Monash Institute of Medical Research

Murdoch Children's Research Institute

National Ageing Research Institute

Neuroscience Research Australia

O'Brien Institute

Orygen Research Centre

Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

Prince Henry's Institute of Medical Research

Queensland Institute of Medical Research

Sax Institute

Schizophrenia Research Institute

St Vincent's Institute of Medical Research

Telethon Institute for Child Health Research

Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute

Walter & Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research

Wesley Research Institute Ltd

Western Australian Institute for Medical Research

Westmead Millennium Institute

Women's and Children's Health Research Institute

Woolcock Institute

Special Interest Groups

Asthma Foundations of Australia

Asthma Foundation of NSW

Audiology Australia

Australian Cancer Research Foundation

Australian Dental Research Foundation

Australian Institute of Policy and Science

Australian Red Cross Blood Service

Australian Rotary Health



Research Australia partners (cont)

Australasian Society of Clinical and Experimental Pharmacologists and Toxicologists (ASCEPT)

Australian Stem Cell Centre

Beyondblue Ltd

Cerebral Palsy Foundation

Children, Youth & Women's Health Service

Clifford Craig Medical Research Trust Ltd

Cure Cancer Australia Foundation

Cystic Fibrosis Australia

Diabetes Australia

Garnett Passe and Rodney Williams Memorial Foundation

Heart Foundation

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation

Leukaemia Foundation of Australia

Mental Health Council of Australia

MS Research Australia

National Breast & Ovarian Cancer Centre

National Breast Cancer Foundation

National Stroke Foundation

Parks Forum

Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia

Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research

Research and Education Foundation, RACP

Skin & Cancer Foundation Inc.

Sports Medicine Australia

The Menzies Foundation

Universities/Academic Institutions

Australian Catholic University

Australian National University

- Australian Centre for Economic Research on Health

- Australian National University Medical School

- Australian Primary Health Care Institute

- Centre for Mental Health Research

- John Curtin School of Medical Research

- Menzies Centre for Health Policy

- National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health

- Research School of Biological Sciences

- School of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

Charles Sturt University

- Faculty of Science

- Centre for Inland Health

Curtin University of Technology

Deakin University

Edith Cowan University

Flinders University

Griffith University

James Cook University

Macquarie University

Monash University

Queensland University of Technology – Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation



Research Australia partners *(cont)*

RMIT University

University of Adelaide

University of Melbourne

University of New South Wales

University of Queensland

- Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology
- Institute for Molecular Bioscience
- Queensland Brain Institute
- UQ Diamantina Institute for Cancer, Immunology and Metabolic Medicine
- Faculty of Health Sciences
- Faculty of Biological and Chemical Sciences
- School of Pharmacology

University of South Australia

University of Sydney

- Menzies Centre for Health Policy
- Bosch Institute
- The Medical Foundation
- NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre
- Sydney Cancer Institute
- Sydney Bioinformatics
- School of Molecular and Microbial Biosciences
- School of Psychology
- School of Biological Sciences
- Save Sight Institute

University of Tasmania

University of Technology Sydney

University of Western Australia

University of Western Sydney

University of Wollongong

Professional Associations

Australasian Research Management Society (ARMS)

Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators

Government Agencies

Cancer Australia

Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development, Victoria

Queensland Office of Health & Medical Research

Victorian Neurotrauma Initiative Pty Ltd

Honorary Life Members

John Funder, AO

John Niland, AC

Peter Wills, AC

The Hon Michael Wooldridge

Honorary Members

DLA Phillips Fox Lawyers

KPMG

Research Australia Limited

Sydney

384 Victoria Street
Darlinghurst NSW 2010

T +61 2 9295 8536 **F** + 61 2 9295 8161

Melbourne

Suite 2, Mezzanine
257 Collins Street Melbourne Vic 3000

T + 61 3 9662 9366 **F** + 61 3 9639 4126

E enquiries@researchaustralia.org

ABN 28 095 324 379

www.researchaustralia.org

Research Australia

An alliance for discoveries in health