

RESEARCH AUSTRALIA

NATIONAL AND MARGINAL SEATS SURVEY RESULTS

APRIL 2011

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Background and Objectives

- The Australian government announced it is looking to reduce annual funding for the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) by up to \$400 million in the May 2011 budget.
- JWS Research was commissioned by Research Australia to undertake a national survey of attitudes and reactions to this announcement.
- The results of this research will be used to assist Research Australia's objective of at least maintaining existing funding for the NHMRC.

Research Methodology

- Computer Assisted Telephone Survey (CATI):
 - Conducted 18-20 April 2011.
 - Random probability sample of n=800 voters nationwide, including an over sample of n=400 voters in key and marginal seats.
 - Effective sample size of approximately n=770 votes nationally.
 - Maximum margin of error on each sample of n=770 voters of +/-3.5% at 95% confidence level for results near 50%. Margins of error will be greater for results based on sub samples.
 - Variations of +/-1% between individual results is due to rounding.
- Results compared to relevant previous research where possible.
The 2010 Research Australia survey was conducted as an online survey of a representative national sample of n=1,000 voters.

STRATEGIC SUMMARY



Strategic Summary

- Amongst the many issues voters believe the Federal Government needs to focus on in the next few years, *'increasing funding for health and medical research'* is rated one of the most important, with 83% of voters believing it is highly important for the Government to focus on (comprising 44% extremely important and 39% very important).
- This followed 92%, 88% and 85% of voters respectively believing *'improving Australia's hospitals and healthcare system'*, *'improving education standards and outcomes'* and *'protecting Australian jobs and industries'* to be highly important for the Government to focus on.
- Voters in marginal seats rate *'increasing funding for health and medical research'* just as highly as all voters and the issue is also rated just as highly as it was a year ago.
- As a stand alone consideration, 95% of Australian voters think it is important (51% extremely, 33% very and 11% moderately) for Australia to have a strong health and medical research industry. This is consistent with the results of the same question asked a year ago and attitudes are currently just as strong in key marginal seats.

Strategic Summary

- These findings alone beg the question of why the Federal Government would consider cutting any funding to the health and medical research sector, but even more so when it is known that *'introducing a mining tax'*, a *'introducing a carbon tax to address climate change'* and *'building a national broadband system'* are considered the least important Federal Government priorities of those presented and that *'increasing funding for health and medical research'* is considered a higher priority than *'keeping the cost of living down'* and *'reducing the level of Federal Government debt'*.
- The Government may be relying on low awareness of possible Health and Medical Research cuts to sneak the cuts in 'below the radar'. The survey shows that only 46% of Australians are aware the Government is looking to reduce future funding for health and medical research by up to \$400 million in the May 2011 Federal Budget.
- However, the Government should be on notice that fully three quarters (75%) of Australians disagree with the potential budget cuts to health and medical research, including an overwhelming 63% who strongly disagree. Attitudes are just as strong in marginal seats.

Strategic Summary

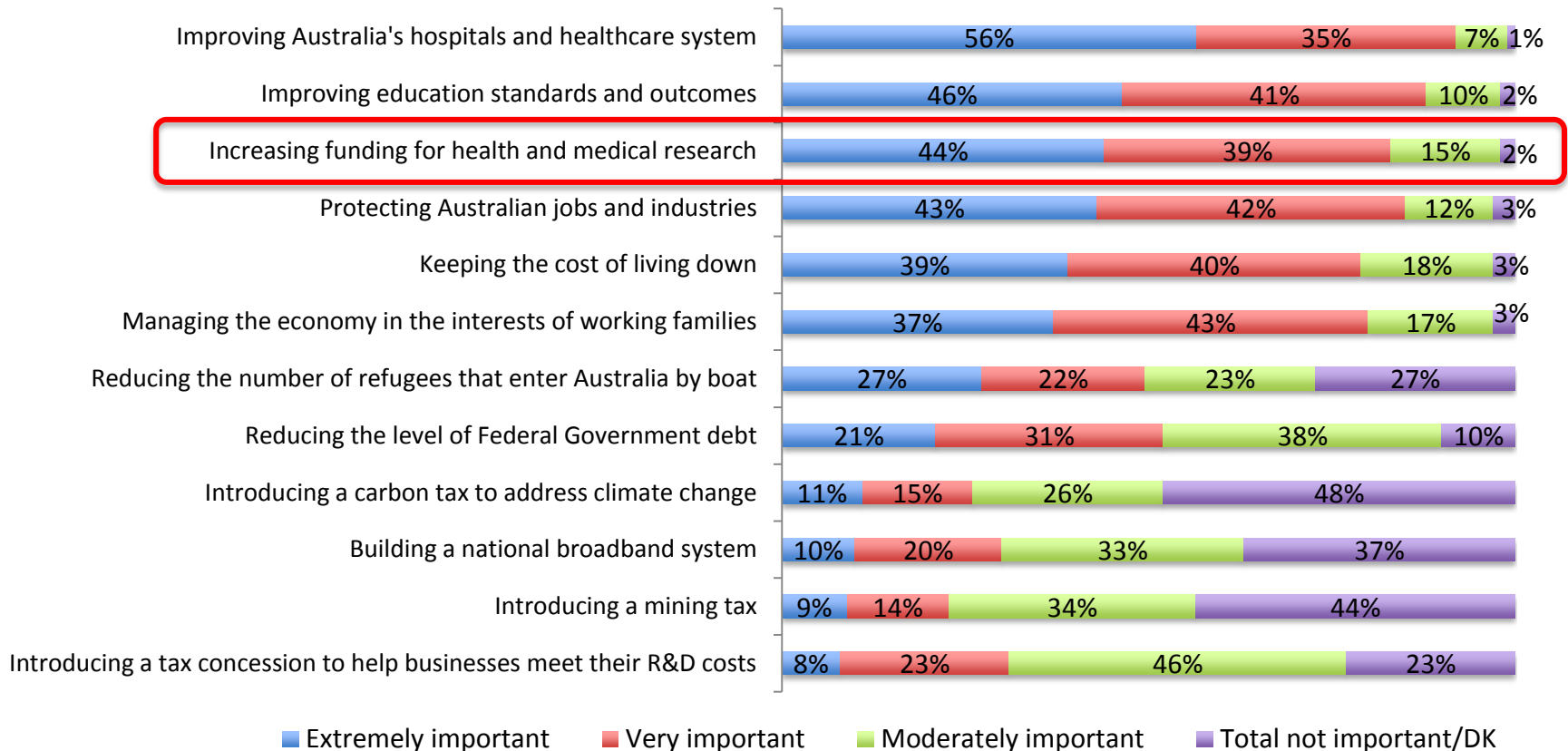
- Even after considering the Government's commitment to bring the budget into surplus by 2012-2013, 69% of Australians continue to disagree with the potential cuts, including 55% who strongly disagree.
- Australians are concerned about a diverse range of negative impacts as a result of funding cuts. The top 3 of the presented concerns about the potential negative impacts are:
 - *'Missing out on new cures and treatments for people suffering from serious diseases'* (95% concerned, including 48% extremely concerned).
 - *'Not being able to keep people healthy, active and out of hospital'* (94% concerned, including 46% extremely concerned).
 - *'Inability to develop new vaccines, such as flu or cancer vaccines'* (93% concerned, including 43% extremely concerned).
- 64% of Australians agree (46% definitely and 18% probably) that the Australian Government should in fact quarantine health and medical research from budget cuts just like in the UK.

Strategic Summary

- Health and medical research is an area Australians are sufficiently passionate enough to take action to defend:
 - 1 in 5 Australians felt they would be more inclined to increase their own charitable donations to health and medical research organisations if the Government were to proceed with the proposed budget cuts.
 - Of particular concern for the Government is that 58% of both all voters and marginal seat voters would be less likely to vote for their local federal member of parliament if they knew that local MP supported cutting NHMRC funding for health and medical research.
 - 89% of Australians would be willing (71% definitely and 18% probably) to pay \$1 more for each prescription medicine if they knew that all the money would be spent on additional health and medical research.
- **In summary, health and medical research funding is an issue where the message to the Government from voters is overwhelmingly and clearly ‘keep your hands off, at risk of your own peril’.**

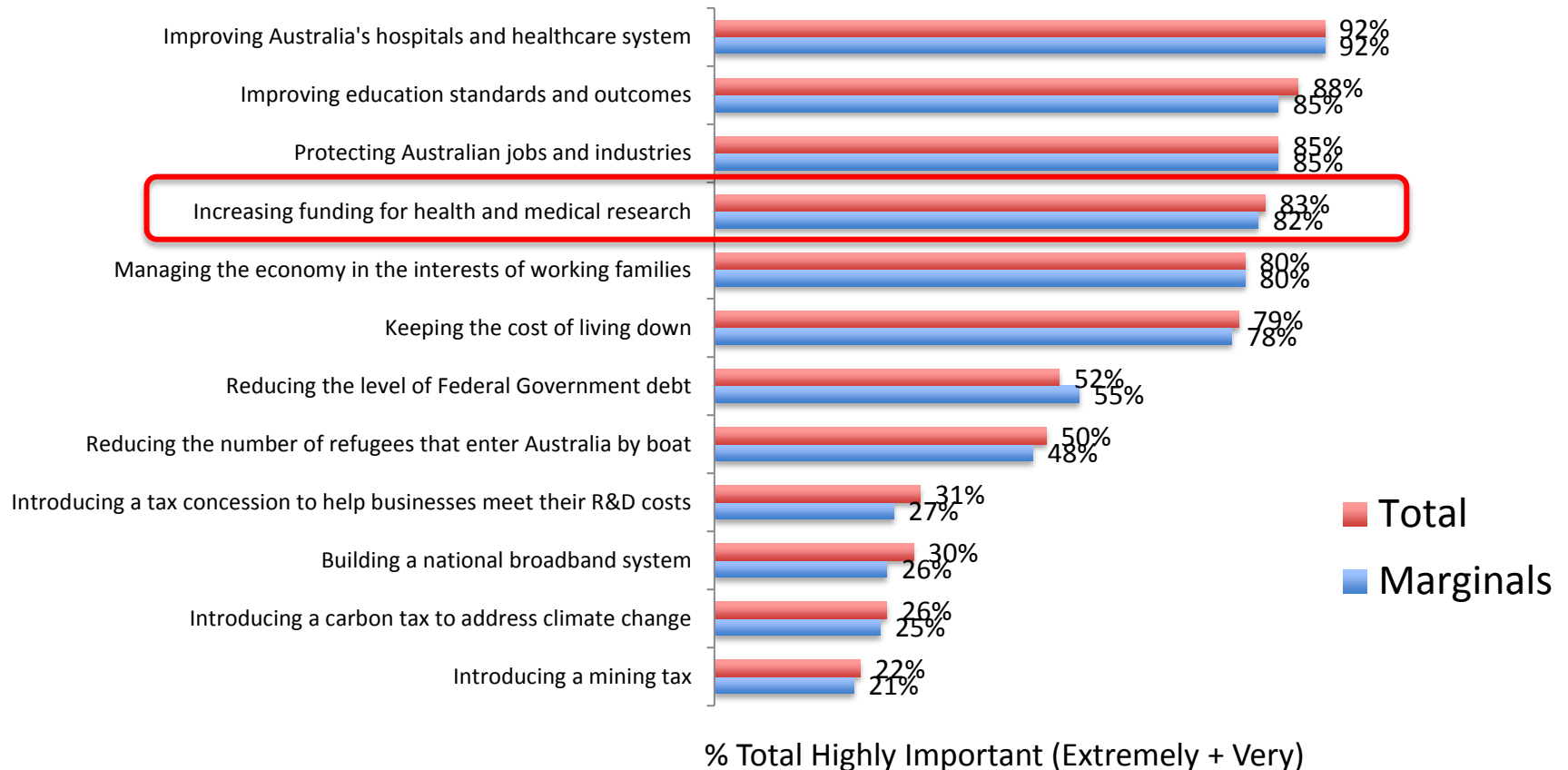
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Increasing funding for Health and Medical Research is a very important Government priority



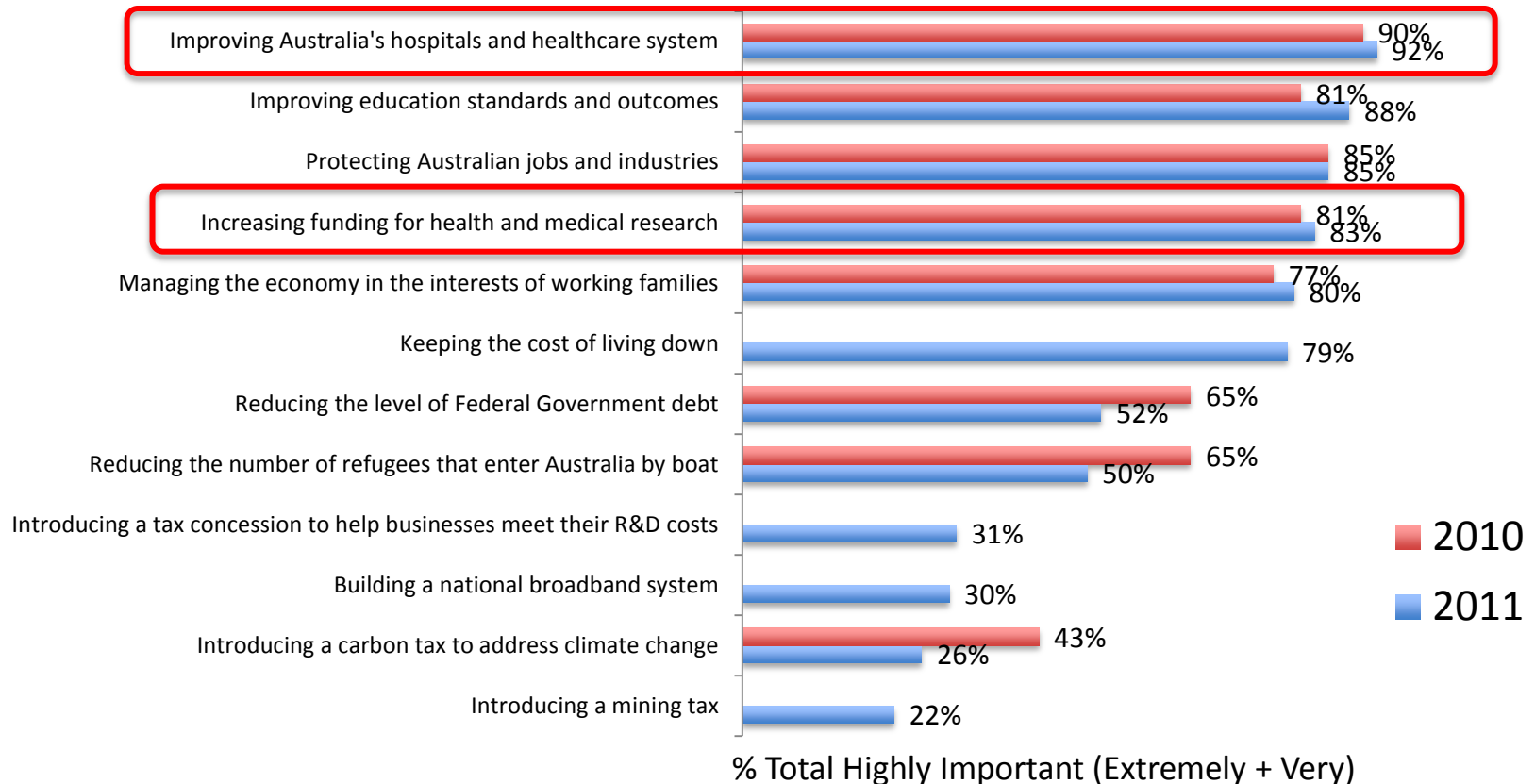
Q: The following are a list of issues facing Australia today. For each I would like you to indicate how important you think it is for the Federal Government to be focusing on these issues in the next few years – using a scale of extremely important, very important, moderately important, not very important or not at all important?
 Base: n=800

Increased Health and Medical Research funding also a priority in marginal seats, much more so than introducing a mining or carbon tax or building the NBN



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Total Base: n=800; Marginals Base n=400

Funding for Hospitals and Healthcare and Health and Medical Research an ongoing priority

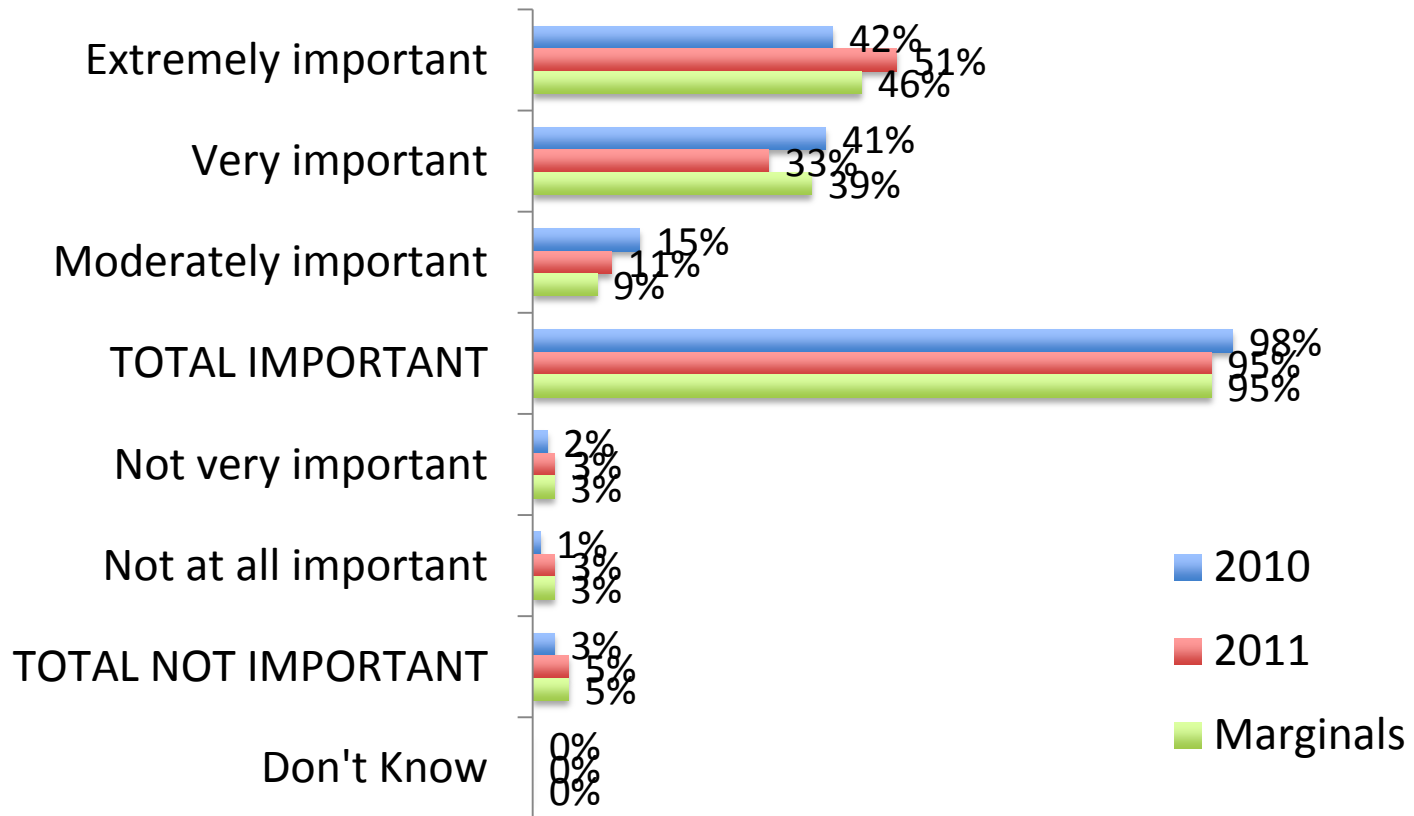


Q: The following are a list of issues facing Australia today. For each I would like you to indicate how important you think it is for the Federal Government to be focusing on these issues in the next few years – using a scale of extremely important, very important, moderately important, not very important or not at all important?

** 2010 issue was 'Introducing an Emission Trading Scheme to address climate change'*

2010 Base: n=1,000; 2011 Base: n=800

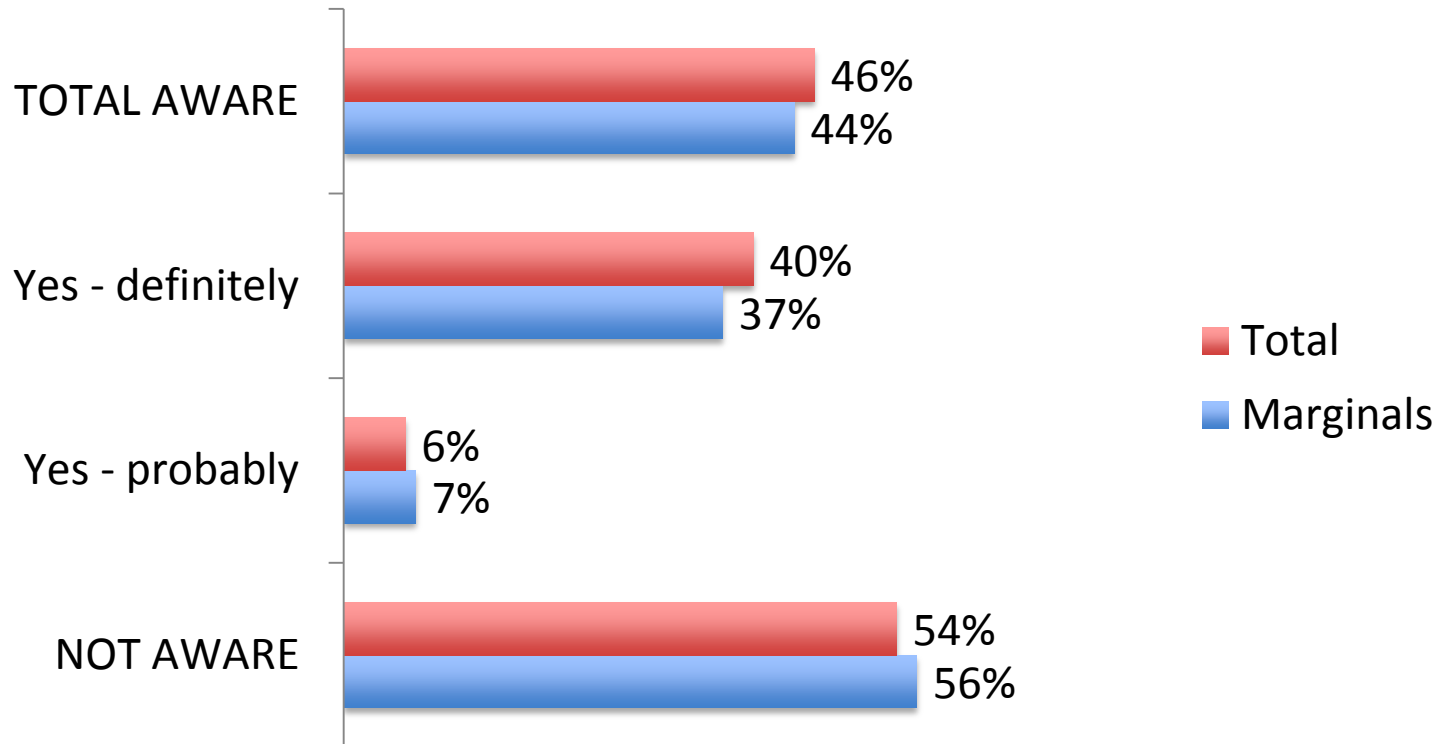
A strong Health and Medical Research industry is considered just as important now as it was last year and also in marginal seats



Q: Thinking specifically about the health and medical research industry. How important do you think it is for Australia to have a strong health and medical research industry – extremely important, very important, moderately important, not very important or not at all important?

2010 Total Base: n=1,000; 2011 Total Base: n=800; 2011 Marginals Base: n=400

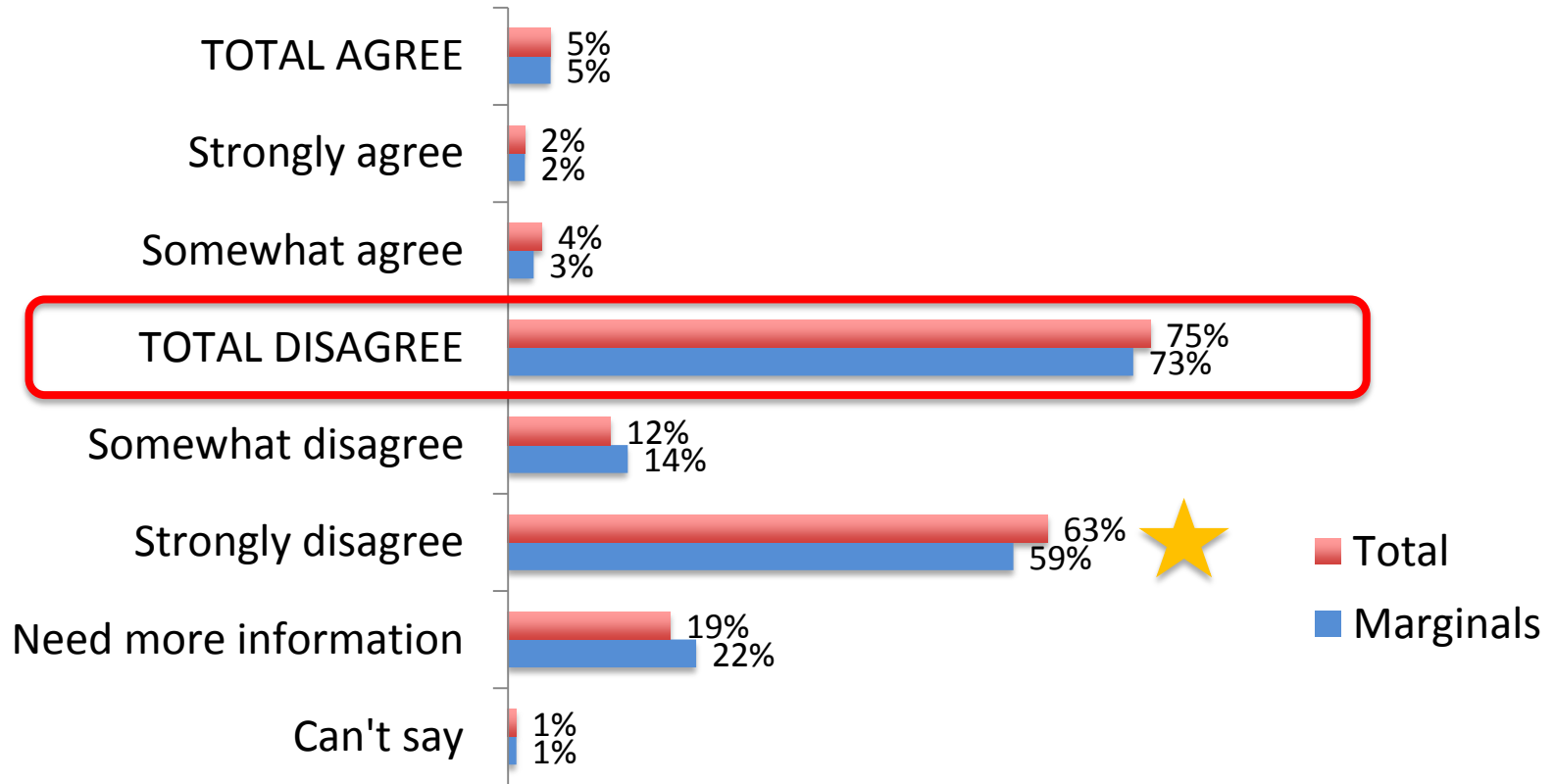
Less than half of all voters aware of possible funding cuts – so some potential for Government to sneak the cuts in ‘under the radar’



Q: The Australian government directly allocates about \$775 million each year for health and medical research through the National Health and Medical Research Council. Recently it has been leaked that the Australian government is looking to reduce future funding for health and medical research, by up to \$400 million in the May 2011 federal budget. Before today, have you read, seen or heard anything about this possible \$400 million funding cut to health and medical research? IF YES: Is that definitely or probably?

Total Base: n=800; Marginals Base n=400

Three quarters of Australians disagree with proposed \$400m Health and Medical Research funding cut – more than 6 in 10 strongly disagree

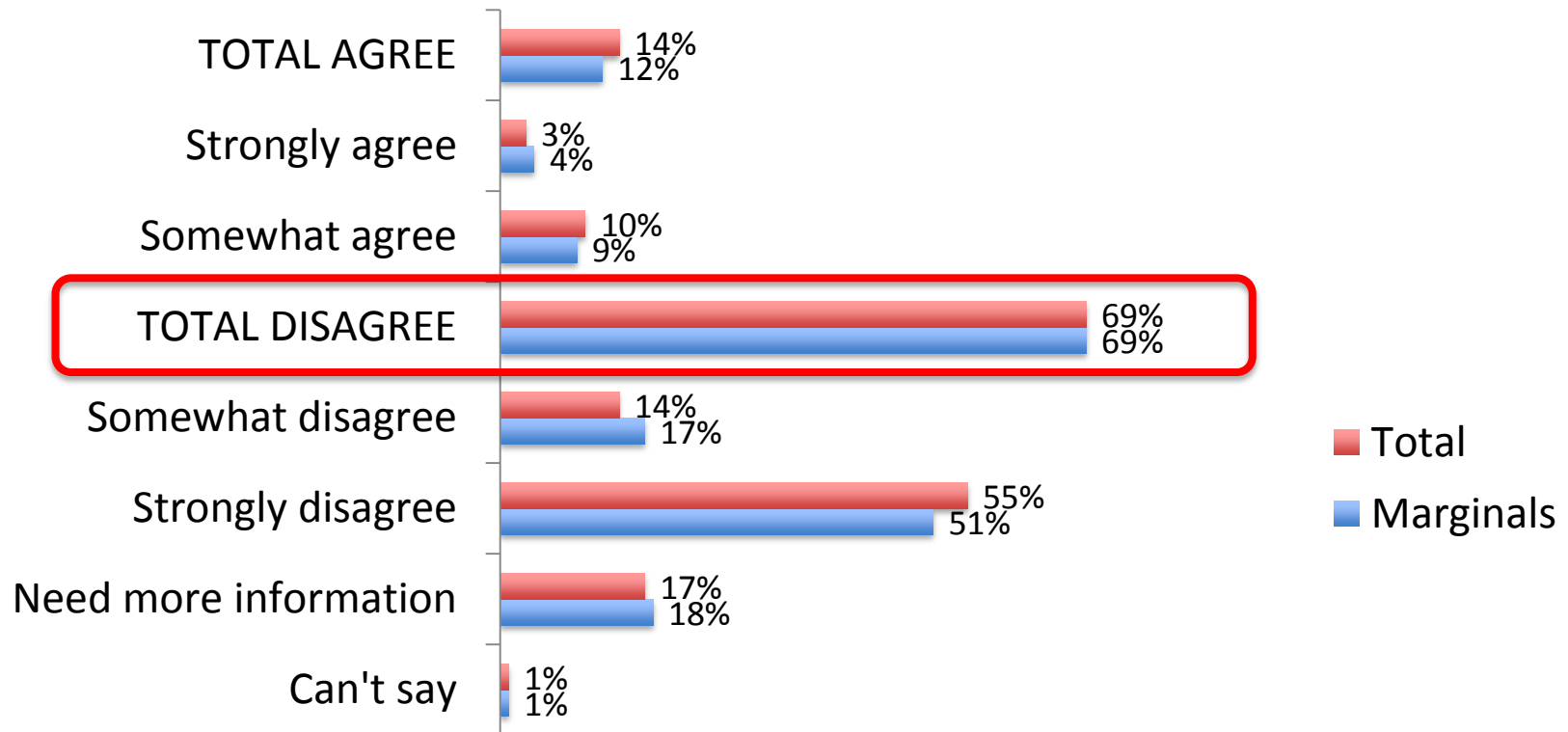


Q: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with cutting NHMRC funding for health and medical research by up to \$400 million in the May 2011 federal budget, or would you need more information to decide?

Total Base: n=800; Marginals Base n=400

J W S R E S E A R C H

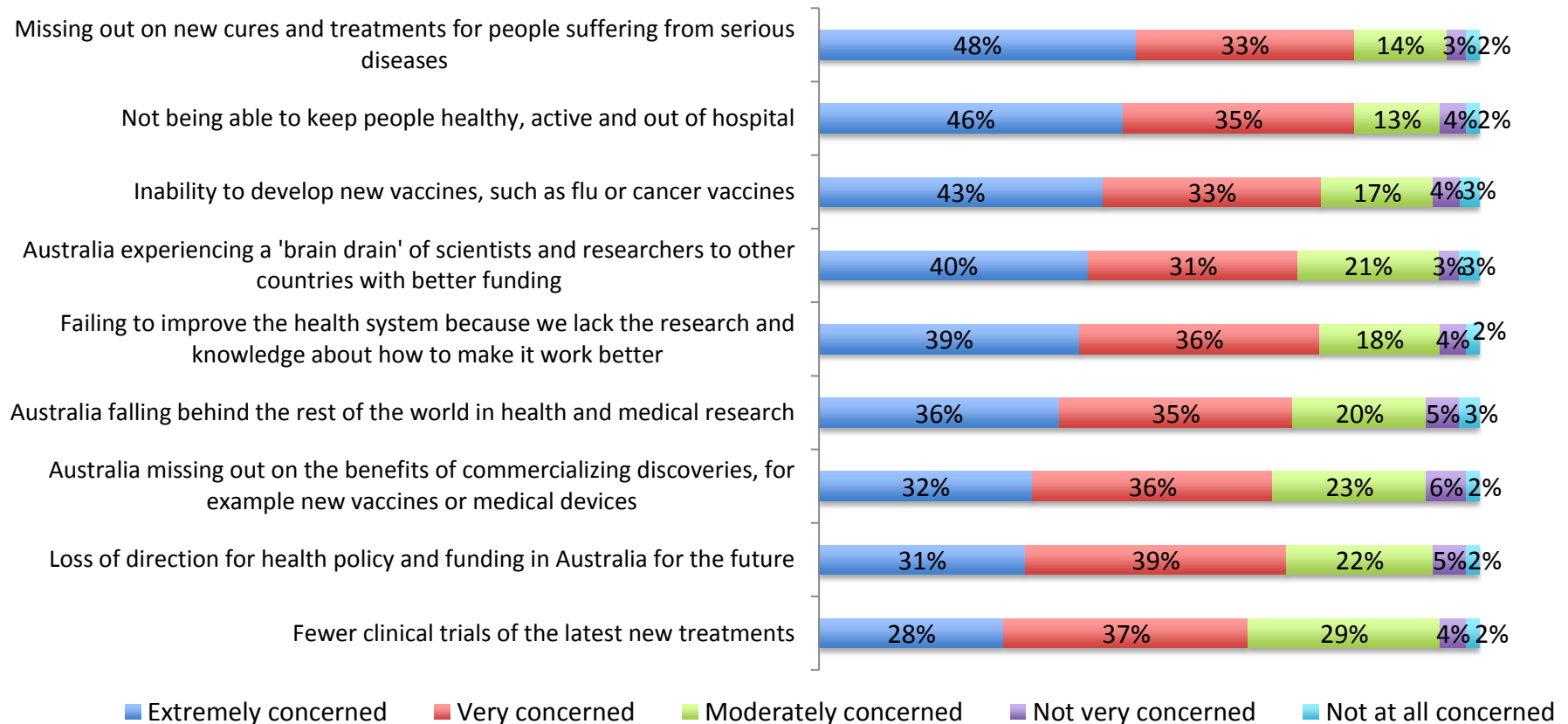
The vast majority still disagree with a funding cut even if it is required to achieve a budget surplus



Q: Some people would argue that cutting NHMRC funding for health and medical research is required for the Government to keep its commitment to bring the budget into surplus by 2012-2013? Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree that this is a legitimate reason for cutting NHMRC funding for health and medical research by up to \$400 million in the May 2011 federal budget, or would you need more information to decide?

Total Base: n=800; Marginals Base n=400

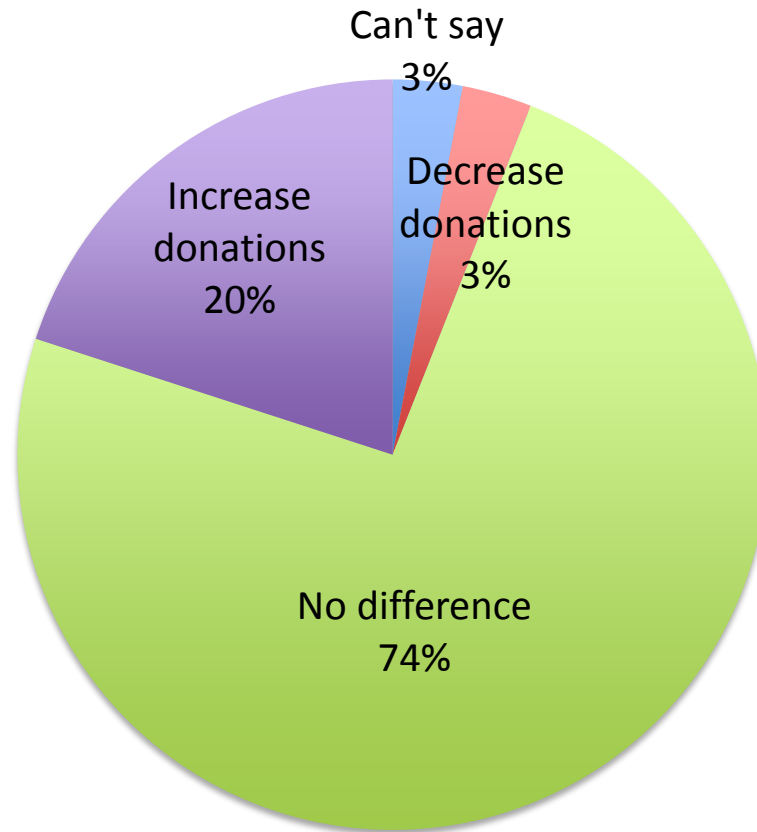
On a prompted basis, Australians are concerned funding cuts will have a diverse range of negative impacts, including missing out on new cures, treatments and vaccines and less preventative research and action, as well as a 'brain drain' to other countries



Q: I am now going to read out some potential negative affects if the Government were to cut NHMRC funding for health and medical research by up to \$400 million in the May 2011 federal budget. Please tell me how concerned you are about each potential negative affect.

Base: n=800

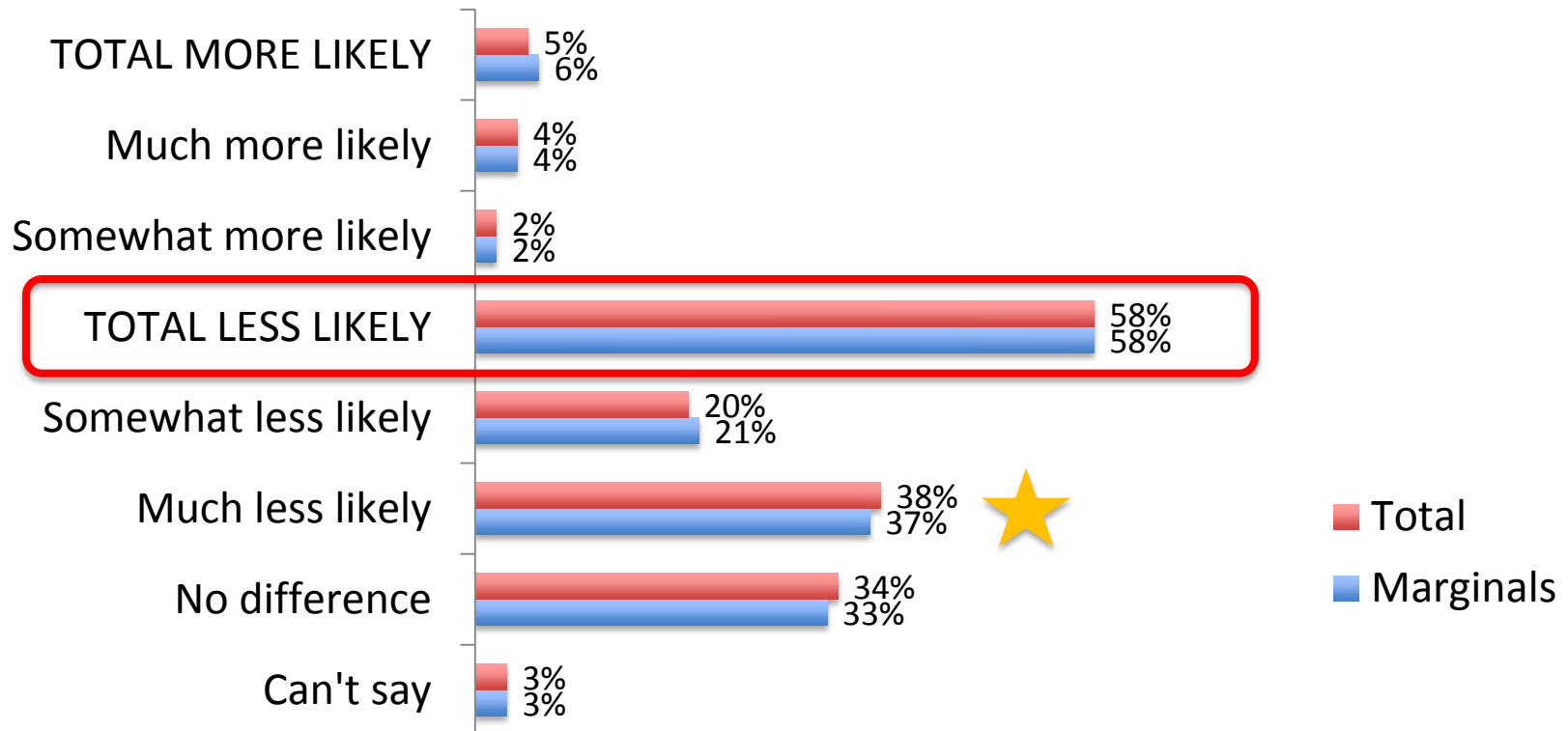
Government funding cut would not make a difference to personal donations for a majority of Australians, but 1 in 5 would be inclined to give more



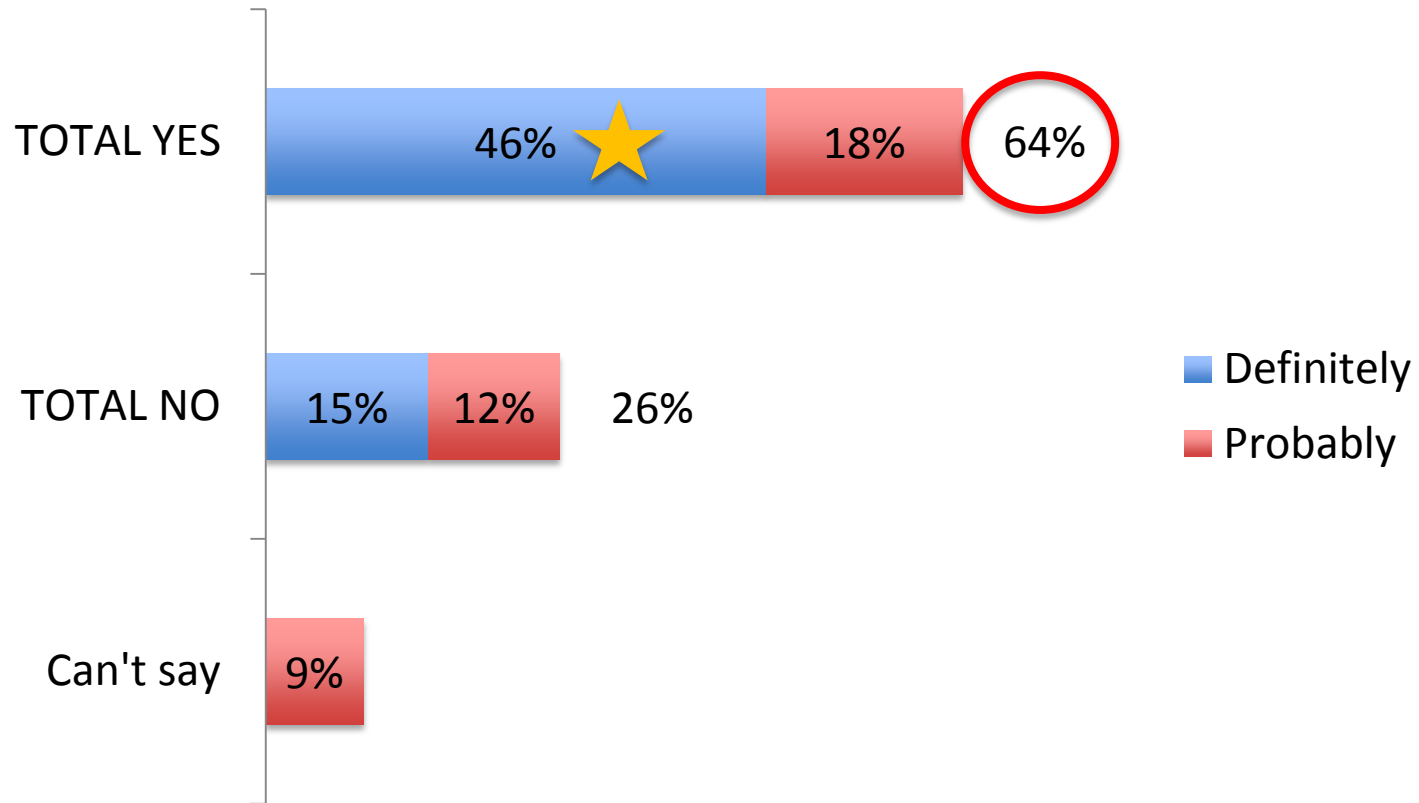
Q: As a result of the Government making a significant cut to its funding for health and medical research, would you personally be inclined to increase or decrease your own charitable donations to health and medical research organisations, or would it not make any difference?

Base: n=800

58% of all and marginal seat voters would be less likely to vote for their local MP if they knew the MP supported funding cuts, with more than 1 in 3 much less likely



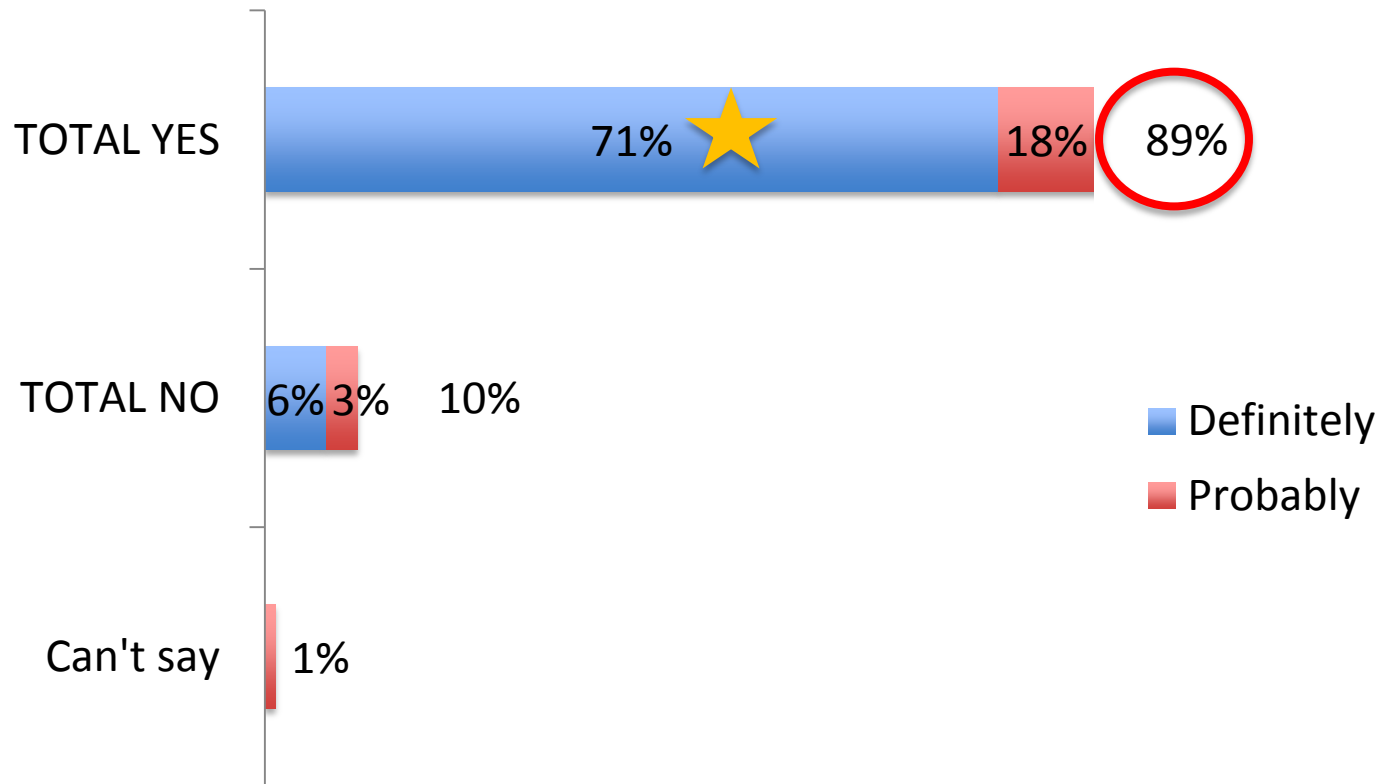
A large majority of Australians (64%, 46% definitely so) agree with quarantining Health And Medical Research from budget cuts just like in the UK



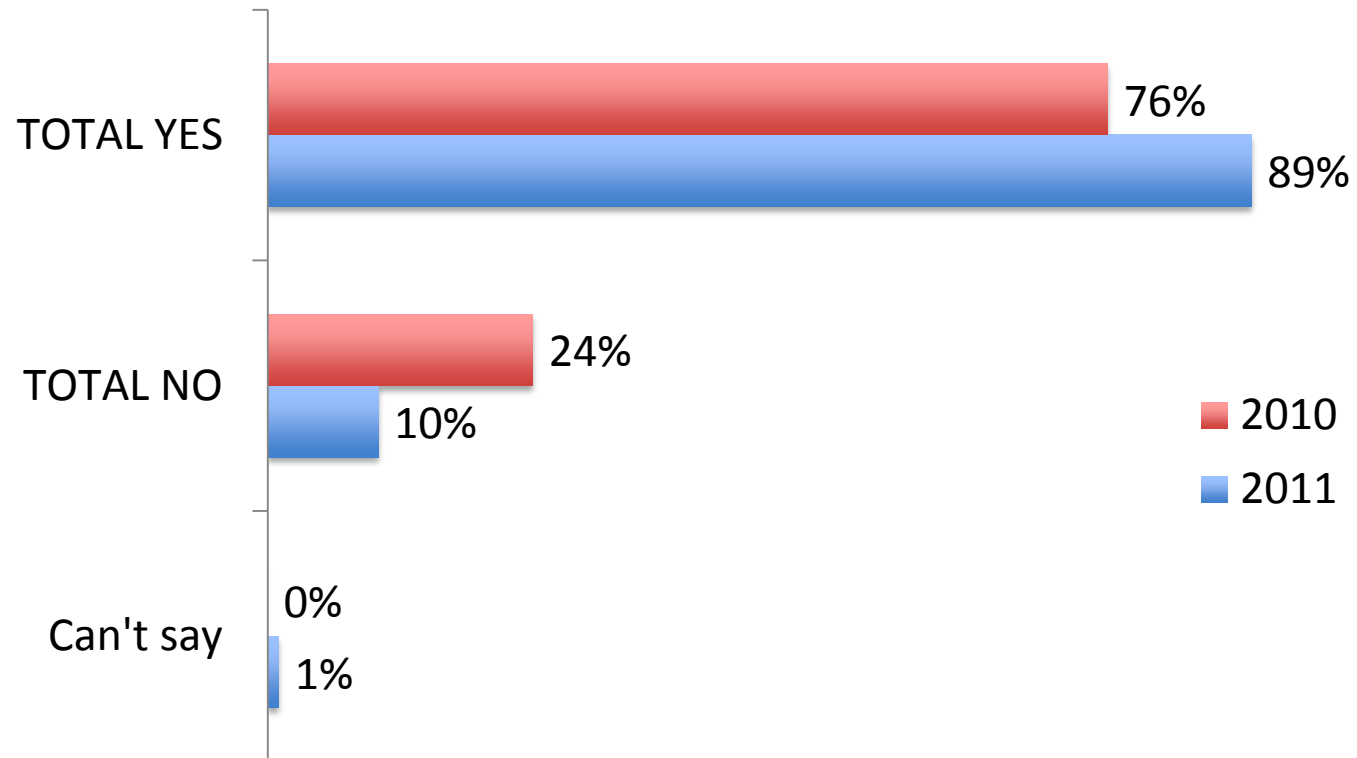
Q: To guarantee funding to health and medical research, the Government in the United Kingdom recently quarantined this sector from budget cuts. Do you think the Australian Government should quarantine health and medical research from budget cuts, just like in the UK, or not? IF YES OR NO: Is that definitely yes/no or probably yes/no?

Base: n=800

Australians are so concerned about funding cuts that nearly all would pay \$1 more for prescription medicine if it were spent on additional Health and Medical Research



The threat of a funding cut has increased voter willingness to pay more for their own prescriptions on condition the money goes toward additional research



Q: Would you be willing to pay \$1 more for each prescription medicine if you knew that all the money would be spent on additional health and medical research? IF YES OR NO: Is that definitely yes/no or probably yes/no?

2010 Base: n=1,000; 2011 Base: n=800

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