





Health & Medical Research Public Opinion Poll 2006

Research Australia

An alliance for discoveries in health





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Acknowledgements

CrosbyTextor

Research Australia thanks CrosbyTextor for conducting this public opinion poll and for supporting our activities.

CrosbyTextor is a boutique polling and communications consultancy that delivers actionable, quality-driven market research to corporations, industry associations and government. The combined experience of its staff in researching the opinions, hopes, concerns, motivations and values of people in over 35 countries, provides CrosbyTextor with unique and extensive insight into public views around the world.

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Foreword



Research Australia's fifth annual Public Opinion Poll shows increasing support for Australian health and medical research. An overwhelming 90% of Australians now recognise health and medical research as an industry important to Australia's future, up 4% from last year's poll.

Four in five Australians approve of the increases in health and medical research funding announced in the 2006 Budget and believe the Federal Government should focus more on innovative industries such as health and medical technologies and research. There is also strong support for tax incentives for emerging health and biotechnology companies in Australia to conduct and commercialise their research here.

This year's poll included several questions on stem cell research to update data obtained in our 2003 Public Opinion Poll. Fifty eight per cent of Australians support therapeutic cloning for health and medical research and 74% of people support a continuation of stem cell research on excess embryos from IVF treatment.

There is outstanding community awareness of the importance of preventative health care and a healthy lifestyle. Most Australians believe more research funding should go into the area of preventative health care. Almost all Australians say they know how healthy behaviours can improve and protect their health and three quarters of Australians say they think they have a healthy lifestyle. This is perhaps surprising given rising levels of obesity and suggests there is a difference between what Australians think they need to do to maintain a healthy lifestyle, and what they actually do. Interestingly, two thirds of Australians plan to seek information on exercise, diet and nutrition in the near future, perhaps reflecting increased awareness of obesity and related conditions. Almost four in five Australians support mandatory fitness testing for school children to tackle the issue of childhood obesity; this includes households with dependent children under 16.

Clearly, Australians value health and medical research as an extremely important national priority, in terms of funding and with respect to its impact on the community. This year's poll leaves us in no doubt that health continues to be one of the issues of greatest concern to Australians.

We gratefully acknowledge the MBF Foundation for generously supporting Research Australia's Health and Medical Research Public Opinion Poll 2006.

Dr Chris Roberts
Chairman

Rebecca James
Chief Executive Officer





Methodology

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

Focus groups

Qualitative research was designed to uncover ideas to guide formulation of questions for the quantitative survey. Two focus groups each of 9-10 participants were held in August 2006. One group was conducted among 55+ year old semi-retirees and retirees, including a 50/50 mix of pensioners and self-funded retirees. One group consisted of 25-54 year olds, where men were employed full-time, and women employed either full-time or on home duties with dependent children aged under the age of 18 living in their care. No 25-54 year old participants were reliant on government benefits for the majority of their income.

Insights from focus groups

Focus group participants read an extract of the Treasurer's Budget Speech and acknowledged that the government's allocation to the National Health and Medical Research Council in the 2006 Federal Budget was going to the right areas but felt that it was not enough. Health and medical research, like health, was an area where participants believed you could never spend too much.

As in 2005, research was seen as intrinsically linked to Australia's future.

"Australians are innovative, clever, educated people, there is always room for us to do more."

The perceived benefits of health and medical research were economic and health-focused: health and medical research brings money into Australia, reduces time in hospitals, takes the weight off the health/hospital systems, and gets people back into the workforce faster.

Barriers to the expansion of health and medical research were seen to be lack of funding and religious or ethical considerations (for example with stem cell research).

Demographic profile

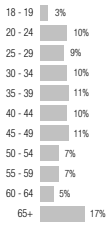




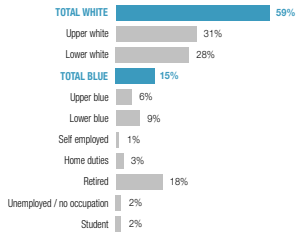
Quantitative

Quantitative research was conducted between 22-29 September 2006 as an online survey, with an effective sample of 567 respondents, 18 years of age and older Australia-wide. The maximum margin of error for a sample size of approximately 570 is ±4.1 percentage points in 95 out of 100 cases. The sample was drawn from a permission-based online research panel with up to 400,000 registered members. Quotas were placed on the survey to ensure that the final sample followed population distributions by gender, age and area.

Age



Work and household status



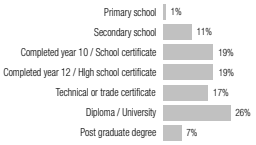
State



Employment

62% of participants were in paid employment and 38% were not in paid employment.

Highest level of education



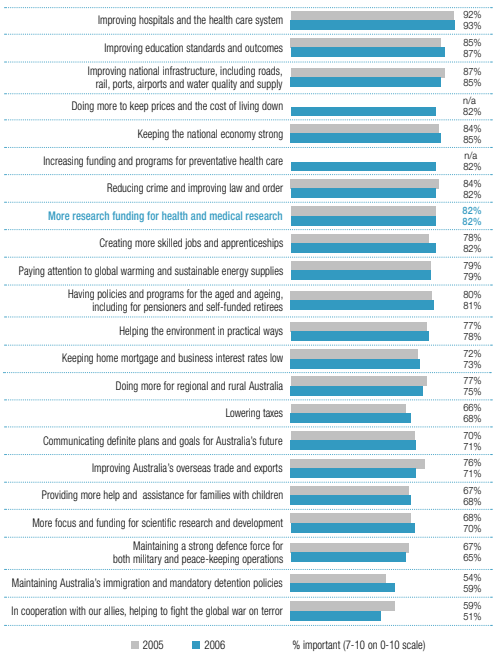




Health continues to be one of the issues of greatest concern to Australians

Q. What priorities do you think the Federal Government should be focusing on over the next 2-3 years? (On a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 means that it is not so important a priority and 10 means that it is an extremely important or critical priority).

- Improving hospitals and the health care system was seen as the most important issue governments should be doing something about.
- 82% of Australians think more research funding for health and medical research is an important priority for the Federal Government to be focusing on over the next 2-3 years.
- Of the 24 priorities listed, Australians rated health and medical research equal sixth highest priority for the Federal Government along with increasing funding and programs for preventative healthcare, and reducing crime and improving law and order.



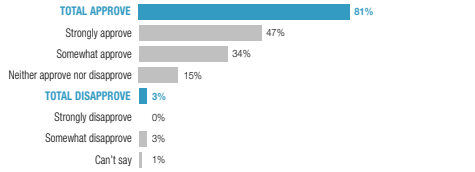
Australians approve of the increases in health and medical research funding announced in the 2006 Budget





Q. In the 2006 May Federal Budget, the Treasurer Peter Costello announced an increase in Federal Government funding for the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) – the national funding body for health and medical research in Australia – from $430 million this year to $718 million by 2009-2010. Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, neither approve nor disapprove, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the Federal Government's move to increase NHMRC funding?

- 81% of Australians approve of the increases in health and medical research funding in the 2006 Budget.



% approval for increases in health and medical research funding in the 2006 Budget

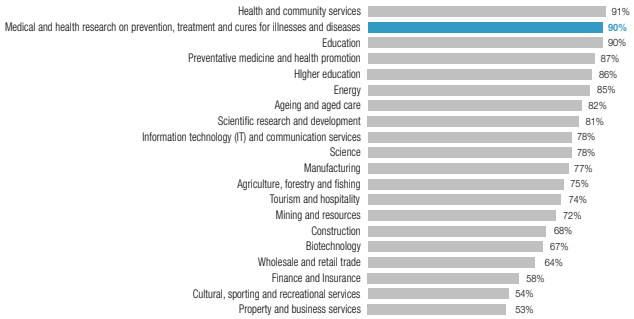




Growing recognition of the importance of Australian health and medical research

Q. Following is a list of industries and sectors that may or may not play an important role in Australia's future. For each industry or sector please rate whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree that it should play an important role in Australia's future.

- Health and medical research has seen a 4% increase in support as an industry important to Australia's future since 2005 (from 86% to 90% in 2006).



% of Australians that agree health and medical research plays an important role in Australia's future

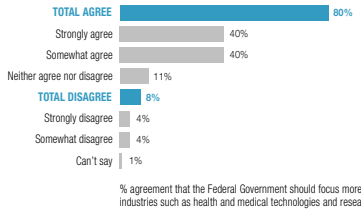




Australians want government to support research industry innovation

Q. Given the loss of traditional manufacturing industries in Australia to countries like China, do you agree or disagree that it is a smart move by the Federal Government to focus more on innovative industries such as health and medical technologies and research? Is that strongly or somewhat agree/disagree?

- 80% of Australians agree that the Federal Government should focus more on innovative industries such as health and medical technologies and research.





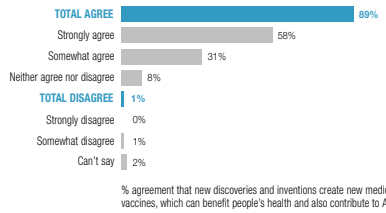


Almost nine out of ten Australians agree new discoveries can benefit their health and help the economy

Q. Following is a possible reason for a significant increase in the level of research funding for health and medical research in Australia. Please rate whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with this as an argument or reason for a significant increase in the level of research funding for health and medical research in Australia.

"New discoveries and inventions create new medicines, devices and vaccines which can benefit people's health and also contribute to Australia's economy."

- The majority of Australians (89%) agree that new discoveries and inventions create new medicines, devices and vaccines, which can benefit people's health and also contribute to Australia's economy; 58% strongly agree, 31% somewhat agree.



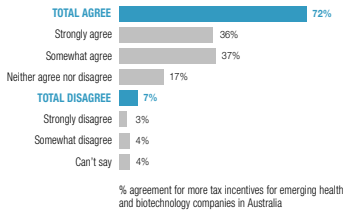
The Federal Government should provide more tax incentives for emerging health and biotechnology companies



Q. Please indicate whether you: strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement:

"The Federal Government should provide more tax incentives for emerging health and biotechnology companies in Australia to conduct and commercialise their research in Australia."

- 72% of Australians agree the Federal Government should provide more tax incentives for emerging health and biotechnology companies in Australia to conduct and commercialise their research here.



% agreement for more tax incentives for emerging health and biotechnology companies in Australia

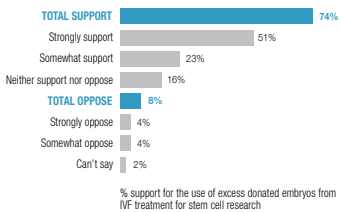


Almost three quarters of Australians support the use of excess donated embryos from IVF treatment for stem cell research

Q. There has been a lot of public discussion recently about stem cell research with scientists in Australia and around the world investigating the potential of both adult and embryonic stem cells to repair or replenish diseased or damaged tissues and organs. By way of background, at the stage of an early embryo, stem cells begin the process of tissue and organ development. Stem cells can also be found in many mature tissues and organs in the body as the process of cell division and growth continues throughout life and these are known as adult stem cells. Under current Australian laws, donated excess embryos from IVF treatment are allowed to be used for health and medical research, including for embryonic stem cell research.

Do you strongly support, somewhat support, neither support nor oppose, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose the continuation of the current Australian laws allowing embryonic stem cell research on excess donated embryos?

- 74% of Australians support the use of excess donated embryos from IVF treatment for stem cell research.



% support for the use of excess donated embryos from IVF treatment for stem cell research



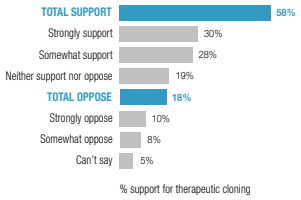


Almost six out of ten Australians support therapeutic cloning for health and medical research

Q. While normal embryonic stem cells are important for producing normal cells to potentially repair or replace diseased and damaged tissues, they have a limited use for researchers in understanding how diseases are established and develop. It is proposed that the laws governing stem cell research be extended to allow Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer (SCNT), also known as therapeutic cloning, which involves creating a stem cell from a patient's cell but does not involve the union of an egg and sperm. Theoretically, SCNT is the same technology that has been used to reproductively clone animals (such as Dolly the sheep), but the Australian scientific community does not support reproductive cloning and the use of SCNT to clone a human will continue to be explicitly prohibited and be a criminal offence under Australian laws.

Do you strongly support, somewhat support, neither support nor oppose, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose the extension of the current Australian laws to allow therapeutic cloning of nuclear transfer embryos for health and medical research?

- 58% of Australians support therapeutic cloning.





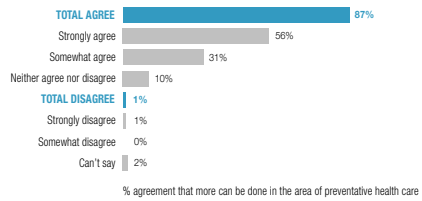


More funding sought for preventative health care

Q. Following is a possible reason for a significant increase in the level of research funding for health and medical research in Australia. Please rate whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with this as an argument or reason for a significant increase in the level of research funding for health and medical research in Australia.

"There is more that can be done in the area of preventative health care."

- 87% of Australians think more can be done in terms of preventative health care.



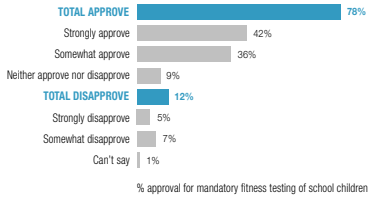




Almost four in five Australians support mandatory fitness testing for school children to address obesity

Q. Do you approve or disapprove of mandatory fitness testing for school age children to help address the issue of childhood obesity? Do you strongly or somewhat approve/disapprove?

- 78% of Australians approve (42% strongly) of mandatory fitness testing for school children to address the issue of childhood obesity.
- Results varied little amongst respondents living in households with dependent children under 16 years of age (one third of people surveyed), where 77% approved and 14% disapproved of mandatory fitness testing of school children to address the issue of childhood obesity.



% approval for mandatory fitness testing of school children

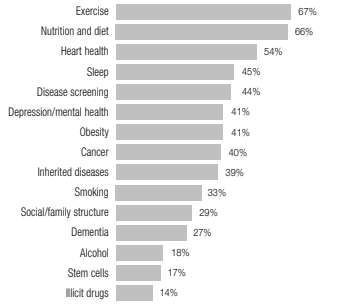




Two thirds of Australians want information on exercise, nutrition and diet

Q. In the next six months, how likely are you to seek help or need extra information for you or your family on the following?

- 67% of Australians say they will want information on exercise and 66% of Australians will want information on nutrition and diet in the next six months.



% of Australians requiring information (Total definitely or likely)

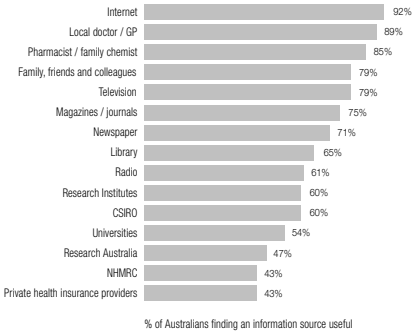
Most Australians prefer the Internet as an information source for health and medical research issues





Q. How useful have you found each of the following information sources as an information source about health and medical research?

- 92% of Australians see the Internet as a useful source of information.







Almost all Australians say they know how healthy behaviours can improve and protect their health

Q. To what extent are you aware of what healthy behaviours you should have to improve and protect your health?

- Almost all Australians (96%) say they are aware of the healthy behaviours they should be doing to improve and protect their health.



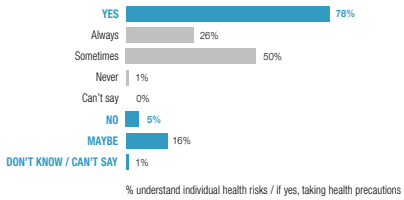
Three quarters of Australians say they understand what they need for a healthy lifestyle





Q. Do you believe you understand the health risks you face as an individual and the key health issues you have? If yes, are you taking the necessary action in terms of healthy behaviours and lifestyles to support your health?

- 78% of Australians say they understand the health risks they face personally and their own health issues, and are taking the necessary action in terms of healthy behaviours and lifestyles to support their health.
- This includes 78%, almost all (76%) who said they always (26%) or sometimes (50%) took "the necessary action in terms of health behaviours and lifestyles to support their health."
- Given increasing levels of obesity in Australia, it appears that there is a major disconnect between what Australians think they need to do to maintain a healthy lifestyle, and what they actually do.



% understand individual health risks / if yes, taking health precautions





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