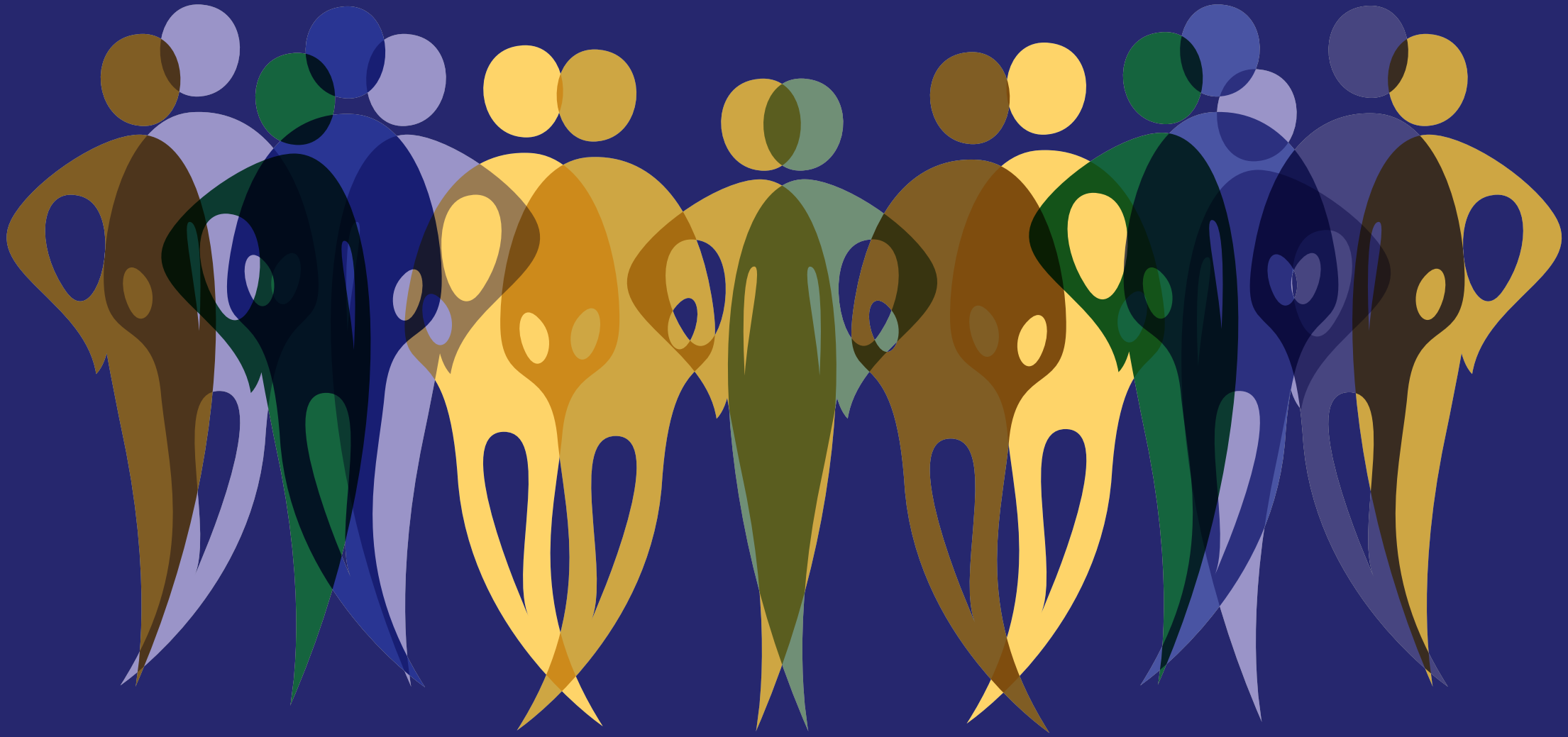


Australia Speaks!

Research Australia Opinion Polling 2015

Volume 13

RESEARCH AUSTRALIA

AN ALLIANCE FOR DISCOVERIES IN HEALTH

A Message from Research Australia's Leadership

As Research Australia celebrates its 15th anniversary we are pleased to provide you with our 13th public opinion poll, charting the attitudes of Australians to health and medical research since 2003.

Once again the report reflects the high value Australians place on health and medical research and their strong support for continued government funding. This attitude extends to science more generally:

- 90% of respondents want a higher priority on the teaching of science, technology, engineering and mathematics
- 91% support government funding for basic scientific research
- 93% expect politicians and public servants to listen to scientists when it comes to decisions about Australia's future.

This is encouraging news at a time when there is a renewed emphasis on the need for Australia to be more innovative and to look to knowledge intensive industries for our future. The Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) is a key component of this future. A strong supporter of the MRFF, Research Australia is heartened by the poll's finding of a high level of support for the MRFF in the wider community.

In the era of 'Dr Google', we were curious about how people are using the internet when it comes to their own health. While some people use the internet to diagnose and treat themselves, 70% of people who had seen a doctor in the last year reported using the internet to learn more about what their doctor had told them.

These topics and many others are covered in more detail in the following pages. We hope that you fund this report insightful and informative.



Prof Christine Bennett AO
Chair
Research Australia



Elizabeth Foley
CEO and Managing Director
Research Australia

Table of Contents

Foreword 2
Acknowledgements 2
Priorities for the Australian Government 3
Medical Research Future Fund popular 4
Strong support for science 5
All types of health and medical research are valued 6
Research can reduce health costs 7
Willingness to share our health information 8
Willingness to participate in clinical trials 9
Should we tax sugary soft drinks? 10
Donations to health and medical research 11
How do we use the internet for our health? 12
Miracle Cures, Super Foods and Special Diets 13
Opinion Polling Questions 14
Methodology 16
Major partners 17
About Research Australia 18
Copyright 19

Acknowledgements

The polling for this report was conducted for the first time this year by Roy Morgan Research, a Research Australia Platinum Member.

It was also supported by funding from the Australian Government under the Health System Capacity Development Fund and from the Ingham Institute.

Priorities for the Australian Government

Australians' top 10 priorities for the Australian Government 2015*

01	Improving hospitals and the health care system	**89%**
02	Improving education standards and outcomes	86%
03	Improving employment opportunities	83%
04	Keeping the national economy strong	83%
05	Improving national infrastructure, including roads, rail, ports, airports and water quality and supply	82%
06	More funding for health and medical research	**81%**
07	Providing strong leadership	80%
08	Creating more skilled jobs and apprenticeships	80%
09	Increasing funding and programs for preventive health care	**77%**
10	Having policies and programs for the aged and ageing, including for pensioners and self-funded retirees	76%

27 priorities for Australian Government spending in the next two to three years were shown to repondents. The above scores reflect the proportion of respondents who rated each priority 7 or above out of a ranking of zero ('not important') to 10 ('extremely important')

Improving hospitals and the health system ranked No.1 over the last decade

3 of our top 10 priorities for spending relate to looking after our health

More funding for health and medical research moved up from 9 to 6

From time to time we add or remove some priorities from the list of priorities, to reflect current issues and concerns. In 2015 we included '*Addressing Domestic and Family Violence*'. It was rated 11th out of 27, with a score of 75%. Alcohol abuse, drug addiction and mental illness are all contributors to domestic and family violence, and research into these areas has a role to play in addressing it.

Medical Research Future Fund popular

The Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) legislation passed into law in August 2015. The new Fund is forecast to provide an additional $1 billion p.a. for health and medical research and innovation within seven years.

Support for the MRFF

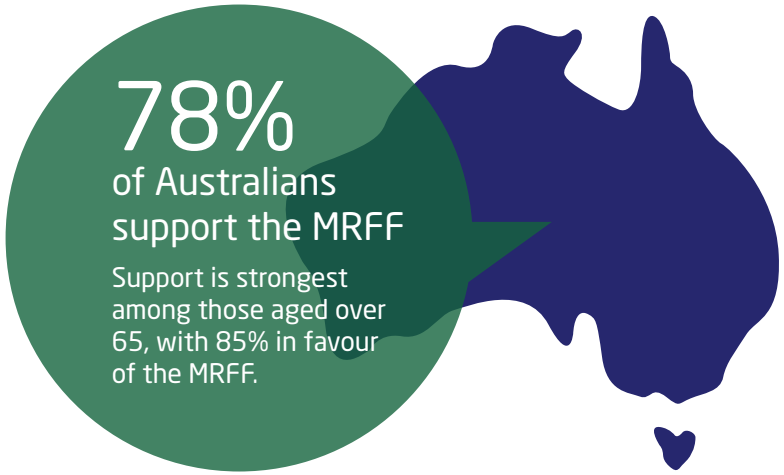
36%
Strongly support

42%
Somewhat support

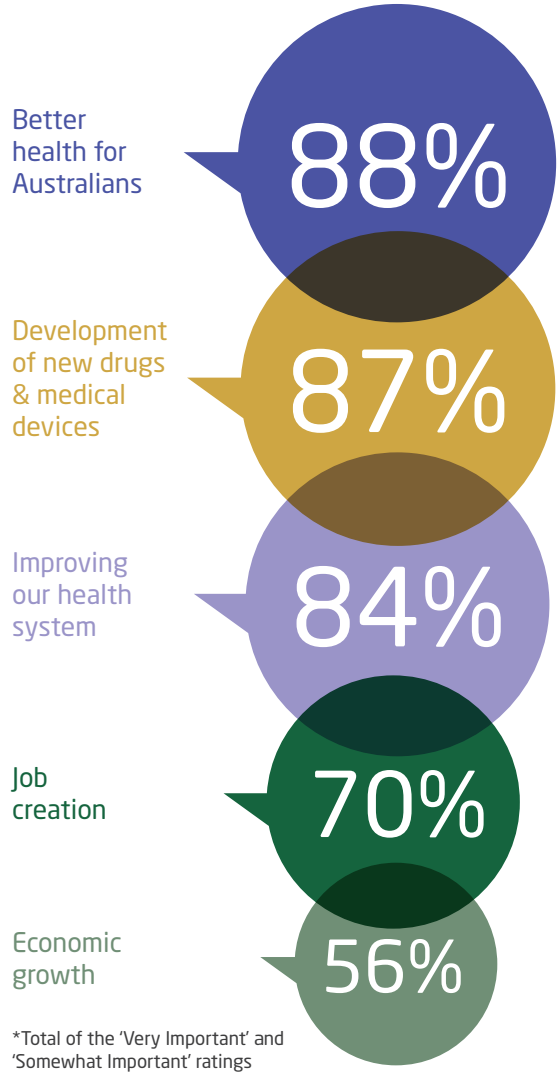
6%
Somewhat oppose

4%
Strongly oppose

12%
I do not know / not sure



Perceived benefits of MRFF*



*Total of the 'Very Important' and 'Somewhat Important' ratings

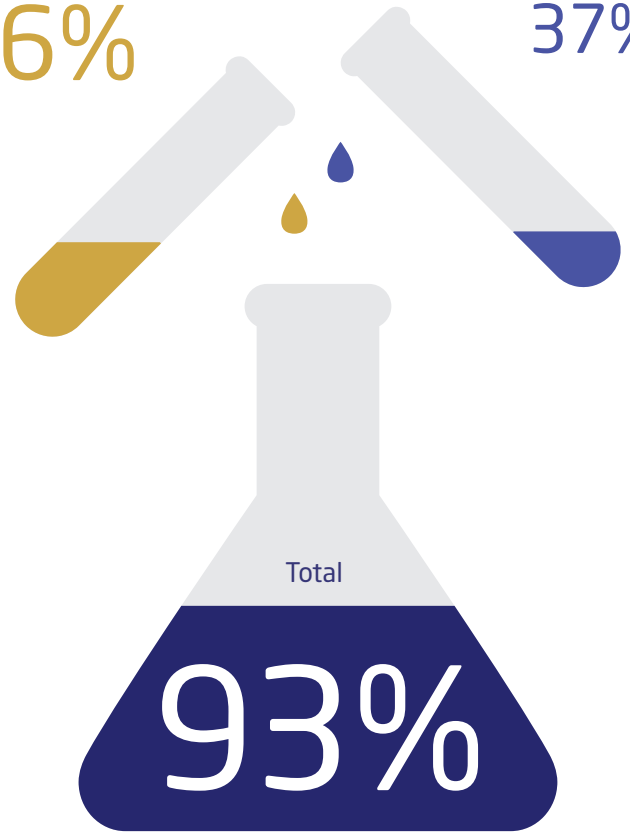
Strong support for science

It is clear from the response to a series of questions we asked that Australians value science and the role it can play in national decision-making.

Politicians and public servants should listen to advice from scientists

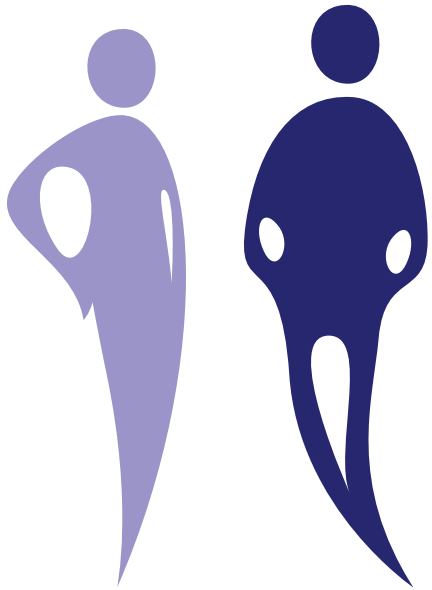
Very Important
56%

Important
37%



90% agree that the Australian Government should assign a **higher priority to education in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths** (STEM)

91% believe the Australian Government should support basic scientific research that advances the frontiers of knowledge even if it brings no immediate benefits.



95.1%
Women

91.4%
Men

All types of health and medical research are valued

There are many types of health and medical research, different reasons for undertaking research, and several ways of supporting it. Australians value a range of different types of research.

Research valued by Australians

85%
Making new discoveries about human health and disease

82%
Turning discoveries into new drugs and treatments

80%
Research focused on finding ways to prevent illness and promote good health

79%
Research to make our health system safer, more effective and efficient

78%
Working in collaboration with researchers around the world on major problems

76%
Investing in better facilities and equipment in our health and medical research organisations

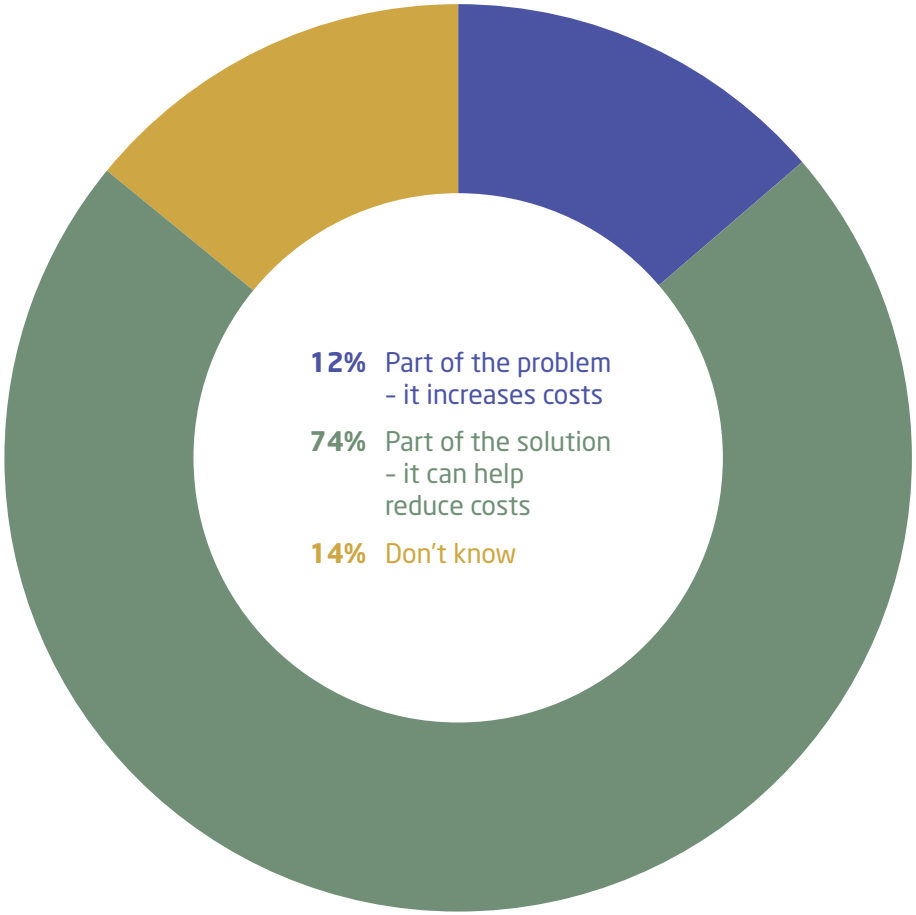
74%
Investing in national programs and equipment that can be used by all health and medical researchers to make their work more effective

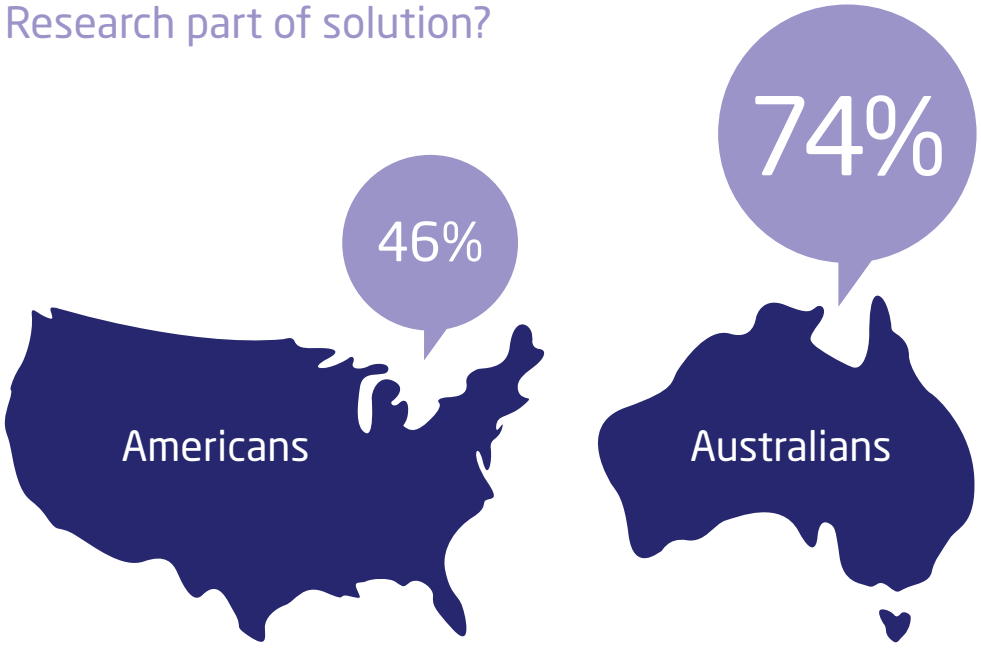


Research can reduce health costs

Australians are confident that health and medical research can provide solutions that reduce the cost of health care.

Research Australia shares this view. Using research to improve healthcare can result in earlier diagnoses, quicker and more complete recoveries, shorter hospital stays and fewer readmissions. Research can also help keep people out of hospital in the first place. All these actions can reduce the pressure on our health system and help keep total costs down.





Research Australia's sister organisation, Research!America asked the same question in the USA. A greater percentage of Australians than Americans think research will reduce health costs!

Willingness to share our health information

As we improve our ability to collect and analyse large quantities of health information, it becomes an increasingly important tool for research that can lead to new discoveries and improved healthcare. We asked people about their willingness to share their personal health information for research purposes and the reasons that motivated them.

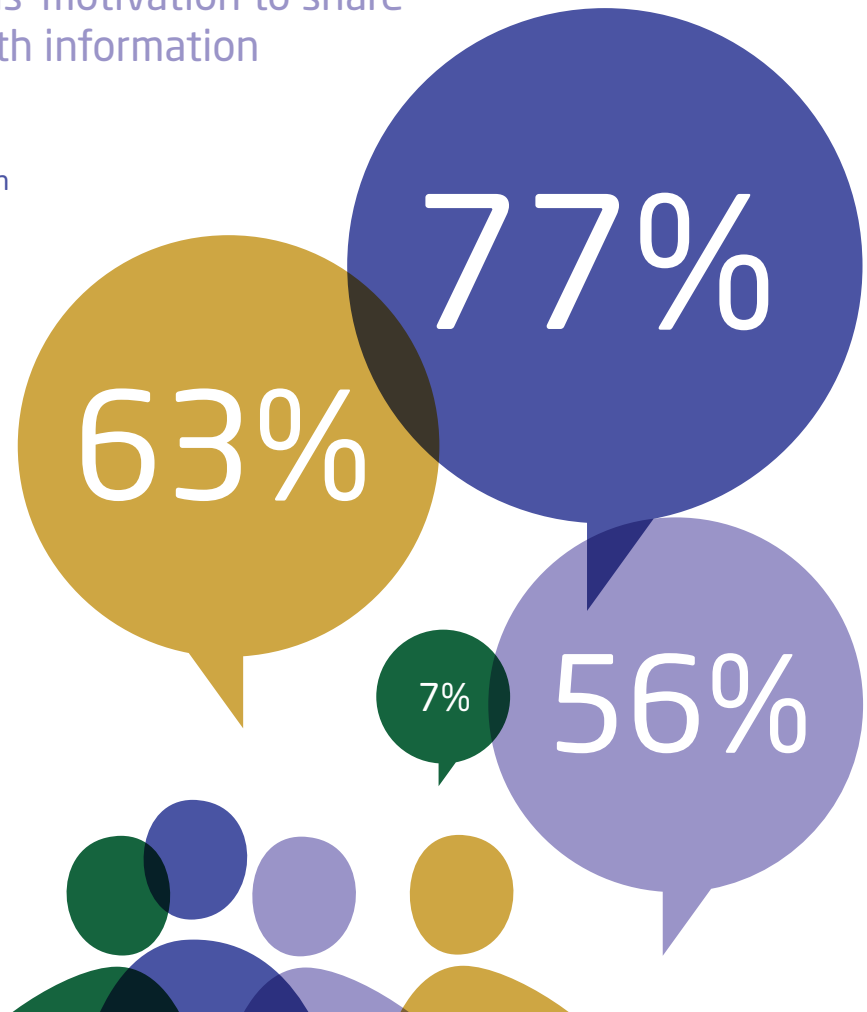
Australians' motivation to share their health information

To advance medical research
77%

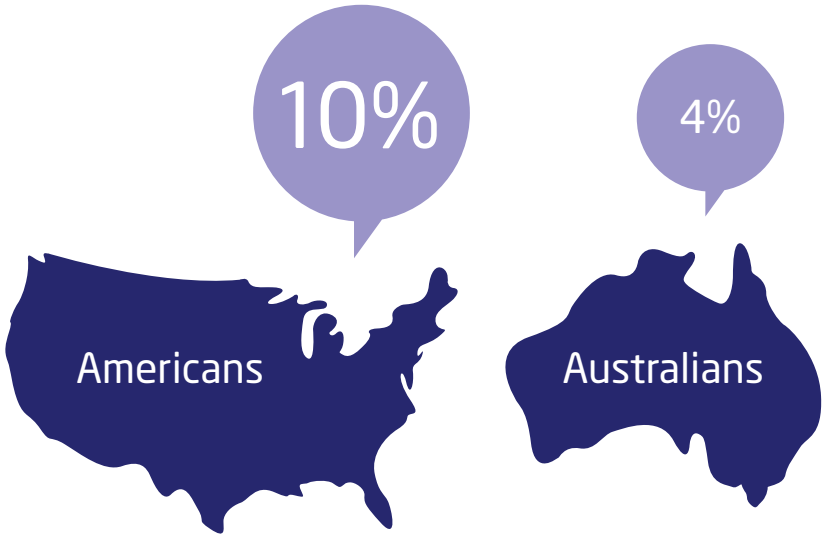
So health care providers can improve patient care
63%

So public health officials can better track disease and disability and the causes
56%

Not sure
7%



Unwilling to share health information



When Research!America asked the same question in the USA, a much greater percentage of Americans surveyed were unwilling to share their personal health information for any reason than their Australian counterparts.

Willingness to participate in clinical trials

Clinical trials are an important way of testing the effectiveness of new drugs and devices and for evaluating the effectiveness of new and existing practices.

For people with hard to treat diseases, participation in a clinical trial for a new drug can offer the only promise of a cure, but these new treatments are still experimental- they may not work and they may have unintended side effects. We wanted to know how willing Australians are to participate in clinical trials.

58%
would definitely or probably participate in a clinical trial if asked to do so.

1%
definitely wouldn't participate in a clinical trial.

65%
of people aged 65 or over would agree to participate.

Willing to participate in a clinical trial

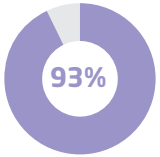


53%
Women

62%
Men

The most influential reasons for being willing to participate

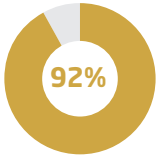
'Clinical trials are necessary to develop new medical treatments'



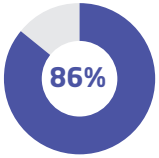
'I want to help those who have health problems even if it might not help me'



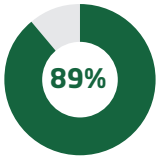
'There may be a chance it will save or extend my life'



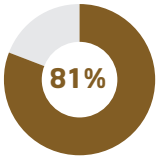
'I trust that my doctor would recommend participation in my best interest'



'It would give me access to new treatments not yet generally available'



'Australia has a well regulated and ethical process for clinical trials'



For the unsure or for whom 'it depends',

The two most important considerations were:

- what their other treatment options were; and
- how sick they were.



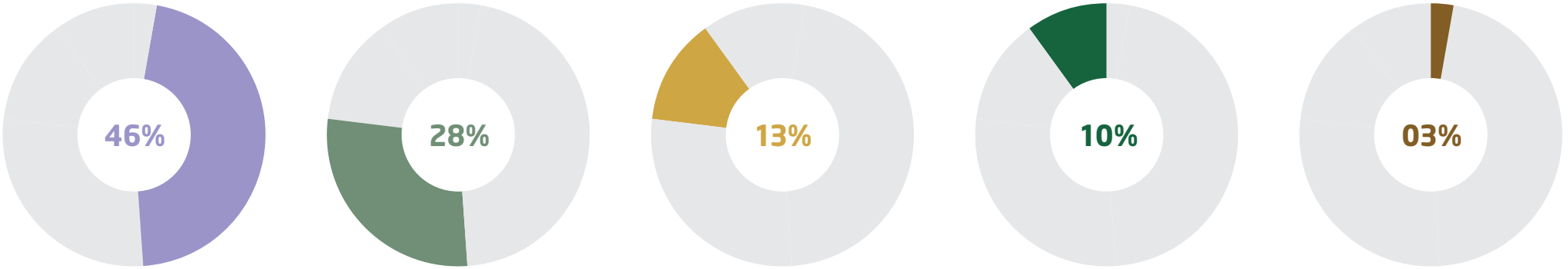
Should we tax sugary soft drinks?

Currently alcohol and tobacco are taxed, in part, to reduce consumption and therefore reduce the impact on individuals' health and the cost of poor health to the community.

Australians are facing increasing threats from preventable chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes which are linked to obesity. Will a shift in attitudes towards sugar become similar to the movement against tobacco in the 1960s? Mexico introduced a 10% tax on sugar-sweetened drinks in January 2014 and sugary drink consumption has fallen by as much as 12%[1]. Research Australia wondered whether there would be support in the Australian community for a similar tax on soft drinks with high levels of sugar.

(1. http://uncfoodresearchprogram.web.unc.edu/822/)

Australians support for taxing sugary soft drinks



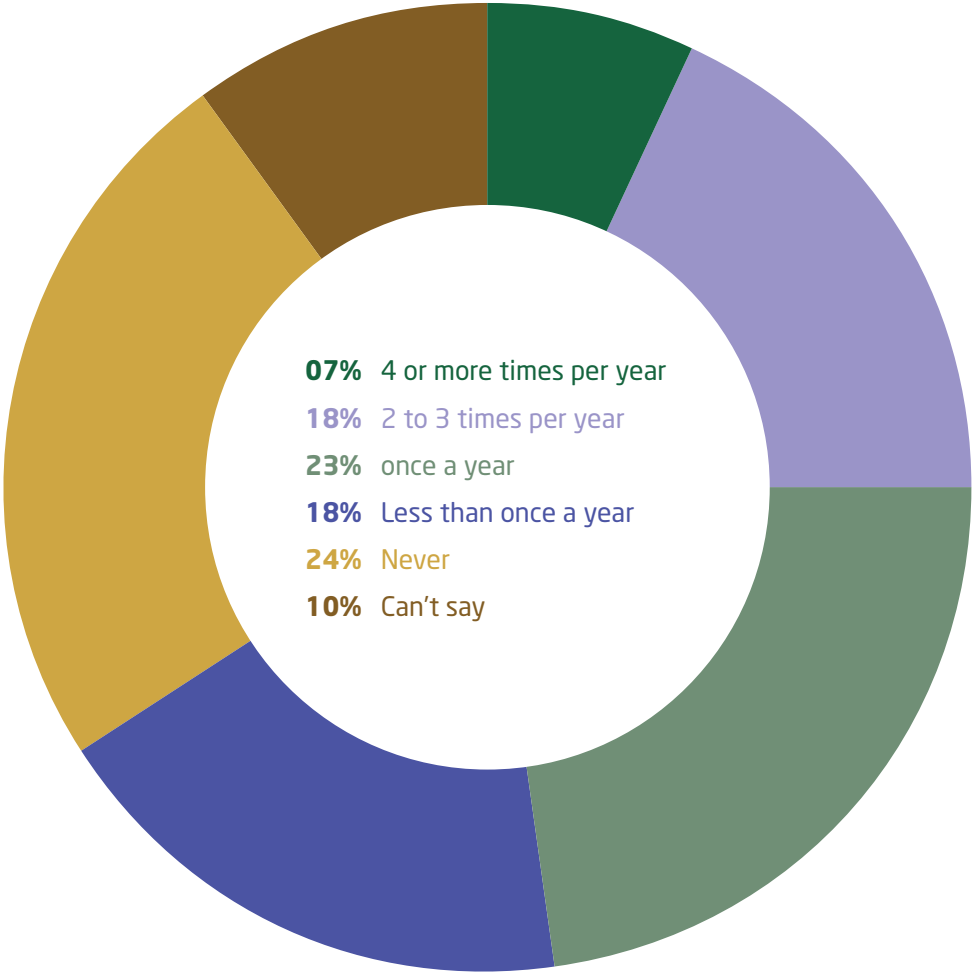


Donations to health and medical research

People giving **$101-$500** up by **13%**

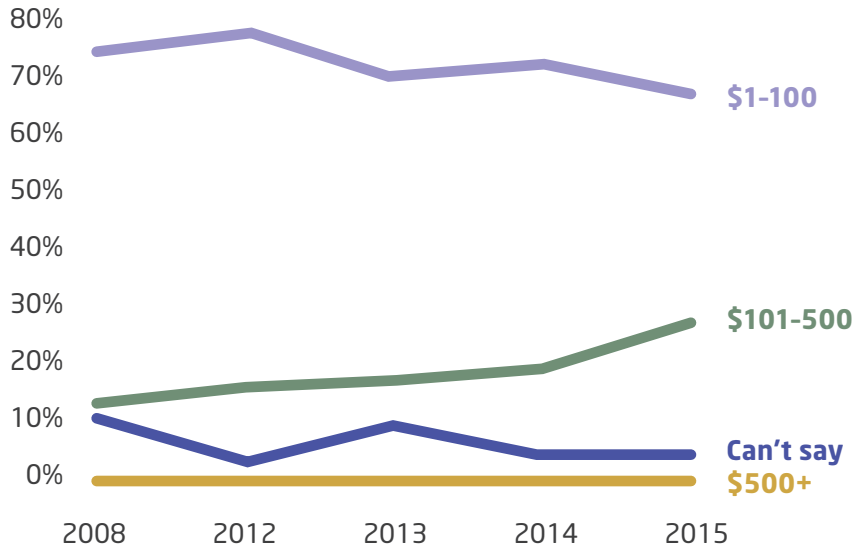


48% of people indicated that they donated at least annually to health and medical research



An increasing percentage are giving large amounts

Value of donations from regular donors



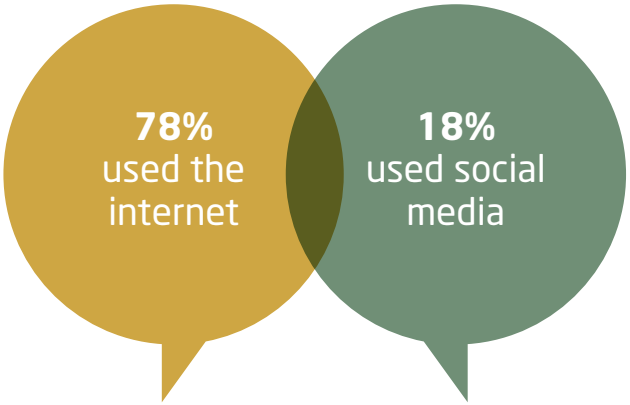
While 66% of people who donate at least annually give less than $100 in the last year, since 2008 there has been a noticeable trend up in the percentage of people donating between $101 - 500 per year (from 14% to 27%) and a corresponding decrease in the number of people donating less than $100. Only 1% give $500 or more.

Donation intentions stable

- Three quarters expect to donate about the same amount
- Only 10% expect to donate more than they have in the last year

How do we use the internet for our health?

'Dr Google' has become a well know expression, but how prevalent is the use of the internet for health information, and in what ways are Australians using it? Research Australia asked a series of questions to explore how the internet is being used by people in relation to their health and illness.



in the last 12 months to obtain information about a health problem for themselves, a friend or a family member.

Before or after seeing a doctor?

Of the **90%** who reported having been unwell at some point in the last 12 months:

- **58%** used **the internet to check their symptoms BEFORE** seeing a doctor; while **46%** consulted a friend or family member first.
- **71%** used the internet to seek **information AFTER a consultation with a doctor**, to learn more about what their doctor told them.

Which websites are used / helpful?	Helpful	Not helpful	Can't say / don't use them
Health organisations like a cancer council or heart foundation	74%	4%	22%
Government websites ('.gov')	64%	8%	28%
Universities ('.edu')	55%	6%	39%
Refer to scientific papers and journals	51%	11%	37%
Personal stories and testimonies from people who have been helped or cured	36%	27%	37%
Sell treatments, courses or programs	11%	44%	45%

Miracle Cures, Super Foods and Special Diets

Good health is big business and the world abounds with stories and advertisements for miracle cures, super foods and special diets. We were curious to know what Australians thought about such stories. Overall we found high levels of scepticism.

74% Uninterested in stories

26% Interested in stories

The interested were influenced by:

10% The article offers treatments, courses or programs for sale

17% The article uses scientific language

30% Personal stories and testimonies from people who have been helped or cured

34% Quotes from people who are described as doctors or scientists



30% Women interested in stories

21% Men interested in stories

61% The article refers to scientific papers and journals

63% The article recommends you check with your doctor first

Opinion Polling Questions

Priorities for the Australian Government

Firstly, please think about what priorities you think the Federal Government should be focusing on over the next 2-3 years. As you read through the following list of issues, please rate how important you personally think each issue is, as a priority for the Federal Government to be focusing on over the next 2-3 years. Please use a 0 to 10 scale, where a 0 means that it is not important up to a 10 that means it is extremely important or a critical priority for the Federal Government to be focusing on over the next 2-3 years.

Medical Research Future Fund

The Federal Government announced in the Budget that it will establish a Medical Research Future Fund which builds to $20 billion over 10 years and uses only the investment earnings to fund health and medical research. The aim is for the investment earnings of the Medical Research Future Fund to provide $1 billion per year for health and medical research by 2021. Do you support this proposal?

Please rate how important you think the Medical Research Future Fund will be to the following:

- Better health for Australians
- Development of new drugs & medical devices
- Improving our health system
- Job creation
- Economic growth

Support for science

How important do you think it is that politicians and public servants at all levels of government listen to advice from scientists?

It has been suggested that the Federal Government assign a higher priority to improving education focused on science, technology, engineering and mathematics than it currently does. Do you.... Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree, Unsure?

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? 'Even if it brings no immediate benefits, basic scientific research that advances the frontiers of knowledge should be supported by the Federal Government."

All types of health and medical research valued

Please rate the importance of research in the following areas:

- Making new discoveries about human health and disease
- Turning discoveries into new drugs and treatments
- Investing in better facilities and equipment in our health and medical research organisations
- Investing in national programs and equipment that can be used by all health and medical researchers to make their work more effective.
- Research to make our health system safer, more effective and efficient
- Research focused on finding ways to prevent illness and promote good health
- Working in collaboration with researchers around the world on major problems

Health and medical research can reduce costs

When it comes to rising healthcare costs, do you think that research to improve health is part of the problem because it will increase costs or part of the solution as it will help reduce costs?

Our health information

For which of the following reasons would you be willing to share your personal health information, such as the results of diagnostic tests, or the outcome of treatments administered? (choose all that apply)

Clinical trials

Clinical trials are used to test the effectiveness of new medical treatments and drugs before they are commercially available. If you required treatment and were asked to participate in a clinical trial of a new medical treatment would you agree to be involved?

If AGREE: How much does each of the following statements influence your agreement to be involved in clinical trials?

IF DON'T KNOW, IT DEPENDS, NOT SURE: How much does each of the following statements influence you in feeling uncertain or unsure about involvement in a clinical trial?

Tax on soft drinks

The Australian Government currently imposes high taxes on products such as tobacco and alcohol, partly to reduce consumption and the damaging health effects and costs. Do you support a tax on soft drinks with high levels of sugar?

Donations

Thinking specifically about funding for health and medical research in Australia, about how often do you personally donate money to health and medical research?

IF DONATE AT LEAST ANNUALLY: And, on average, about how much money in total each year would you donate to health and medical research?

The internet and health information

In the last 12 months have you used the internet to obtain information about a health problem for yourself, a family member or friend?

In the last 12 months have you used social media to seek an answer to a health question for yourself or on behalf of a family member or friend?

PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN UNWELL IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS: In the last 12 months when you have been feeling unwell, have you:

- consulted a friend or family member before seeing a doctor?
- consulted a friend or family member instead of seeing a doctor?
- used the internet to check your symptoms before going to see a doctor?
- used the internet to find a treatment instead of going to see a doctor?
- used the internet to find more information about what your doctor told you?

PEOPLE WHO USE THE INTERNET FOR HEALTH INFORMATION: When you use the internet for health and medical advice or health information, do you find the following sites helpful or unhelpful?

Miracle cures, Super foods and Special Diets

There are often stories in the media about 'miracle cures', 'super foods' and special diets. How interested are you in stories such as these?

IF INTERESTED: How do each of the following influence your belief of stories about 'miracle cures', 'super foods ' and special diets?

Methodology

Research Overview	
Statement of Compliance with International Standards:	This research project was carried out in compliance with ISO 9001 & ISO 20252
Client Name:	Research Australia
Research Service Provider Name(s):	Roy Morgan Research Ltd
Sub-contractor used:	None
Process sub-contracted:	None
Research Objectives:	This research was conducted to trend attitudes towards medical and health issues in Australia.

Quantitative Research	
Target Group:	Australians 18 years and older
Proposed Sample Size:	1000
Actual Sample Size:	1000
Reason for Difference in Proposed to Actual Sample Size:	No difference in proposed to actual sample size.
Fieldwork Period:	7th to 10th August, 2015
Sampling Method:	Members of Roy Morgan Research's Proprietary Online Panel, 18 years and older, living in Australia, were emailed an invitation to participate in the survey.
Data Collection Method:	Online survey (CAWI - Computer Assisted Web Interviewing)
Response Rate:	12.6%
Weighting Process:	Weighted proportional to population by age, sex and area, and projected to Australian 18+ population estimates
Estimation/Imputation Procedure:	No estimation/imputation processes used
Representatively of the Sample Population:	Sample is broadly representative of Australia's population by sex, age and area
Maximum Sampling Tolerance:	±3.6%
Incentive Type:	Points redeemable for cash

Major partners of Research Australia

Foundation Partners

Bupa Health Foundation

Platinum Partners

GARVAN INSTITUTE
Breakthrough Medical Research

Ogilvy PR Health

Roy Morgan Research

Gold Partners

MONASH University

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND AUSTRALIA

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Silver Partners

Cochlear™ FOUNDATION

COOK® MEDICAL

CSL™

Griffith UNIVERSITY

gsk

pwc

University of South Australia

HealthConsult
Better thinking. Better advice.

About Research Australia

Research Australia is an alliance of 160 members and supporters advocating for health and medical research in Australia.

Research Australia's activities are funded by its members, donors and supporters from leading research organisations, academic institutions, philanthropy, community special interest groups, peak industry bodies, biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies, small businesses and corporate Australia. It reflects the views of its diverse membership and represents the interests of the broader community.

Research Australia's mission is to make health and medical research a higher priority for the nation, and we have four goals that support this mission.





Copyright

This work including without limitation all information text, graphs, names and logos is protected by copyright. This work may be used for your own personal use, information, research or study, or in a public forum solely for 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 sale, redistributed or otherwise used for profit.

The report is available on the Research Australia website at **www.researchaustralia.org**



RESEARCH AUSTRALIA LIMITED

384 Victoria Street Darlinghurst NSW 2010

T +61 2 9295 8546 **ABN** 28 095 324 379

www.researchaustralia.org

Sponsor

Australian Government
Department of Health

Research partner

Roy Morgan Research

Supported by

Ingham Institute
Applied Medical Research