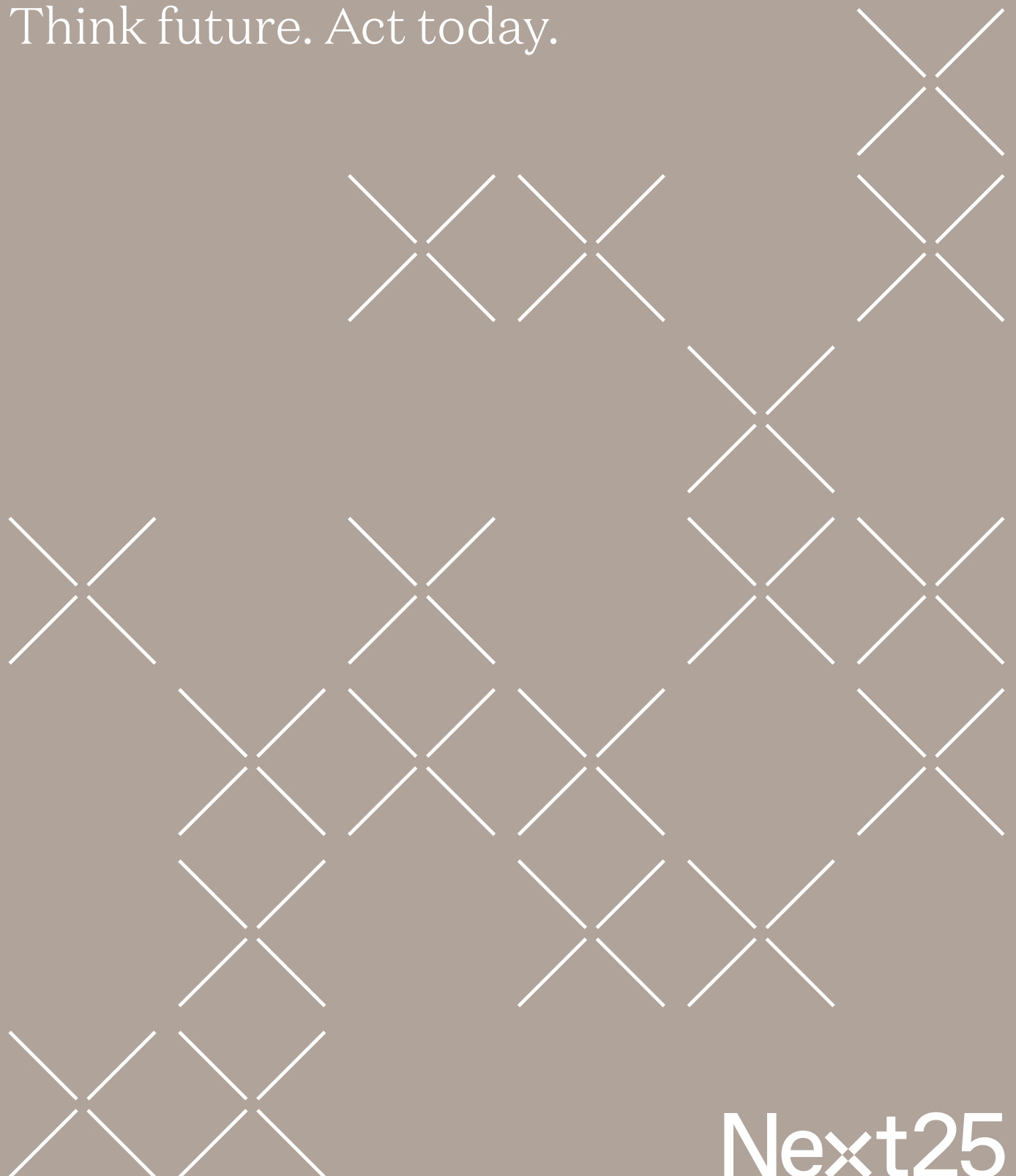


# Next25 Navigator Social Research Report 2021

Think future. Act today.



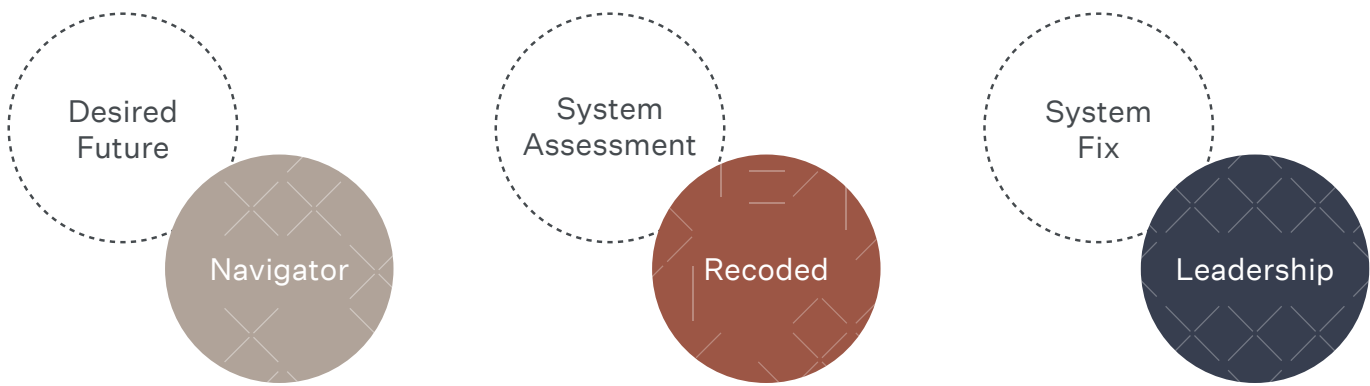
Next25

# Think future. Act today.

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We are committed to ensuring Australia maximises and shares its success by improving how Australia makes its future. Let's make the future Australia wants.

We know Australia can make the future it wants only with three strong pillars in place that (1) describe the desired future, (2) assess the future-making system's capability, and (3) fix the system where it is found wanting. However, from deep engagement with the public, decision-makers, and experts, we have learned that each of these three pillars is weak. Next25 is focused on strengthening them. Here's how:



## Next25 Navigator

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A comprehensive picture of the future Australia wants and whether we're on track.

## Next25 Recoded

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A clear diagnosis of whether the country has what it takes to create the future Australia wants and, if not, what more is needed.

## Next25 Leadership

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Professional development to strengthen the capability of Australia's parliamentarians to respond to the challenges of the 21st century and restore trust in the political system.

We are independent, non-partisan, and non-profit. We inform the country about the future Australia wants, explain the state of the future-making system, and hold leaders accountable. We drive action with paid keynote speaking, facilitation, and strategic advice based on our data, insights, and expertise. Our clients come from all sectors and include governments, businesses, universities, philanthropists, and other non-profit organisations.

## Acknowledgement of Country

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In the spirit of reconciliation, Next25 acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to their elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

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# A Wake-Up Call for Australia

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Ten years ago, I began the work of Next25 out of frustration, curiosity, and optimism. Frustration that a smart and rich nation had thrown so many important issues in the too-hard basket. Curiosity about whether there was a common diagnosis of the root causes and a clear set of priorities to fix an apparently broken future-making system. And optimism that influential Australians in all walks of life could and would take positive steps to fix it and keep it fit for purpose.

In the early years, I met with over one thousand leaders, experts, and opinion-makers in all sectors around Australia. Everyone was frustrated that Australia was dropping the ball. A wealthy nation with boundless opportunity was squandering its future success.

With Next25 Navigator, we now have for the first time a clear picture of what the public believes is in the public interest, of the future Australia wants.

One part of Navigator is the Public Interest Index, a new national assessment of how well politicians and five other institutions act in the public interest. This year, the Index is just 31/100.

This is a wake-up call for government (politicians and the public service), business, and the media, as well as leaders in all sectors – in fact for all Australians. The system is broken. There is a dangerous disconnect between those in power who make choices for Australians and the people they serve.

Thanks to Navigator, we know where the biggest gaps are. The public has set out the priority to-do list for Australia's leaders and anyone wanting to act in the public interest. It's time to focus on the most important aspirations where the country is tracking the worst.

Australia cannot accept the current dire situation laid bare by the research summarised in this report — where institutions are failing the Australian public, where so many people in Australia feel powerless, where vested interest trumps the public interest.

We are watching. With our annual release of Navigator, we will have an ongoing assessment of politicians and other key institutions. Anyone with our data can watch too and hold the powerful accountable. The public has spoken and there is nowhere to hide.

Australia cannot waste yet another decade. It is time for our leaders and institutions to make the future Australia wants.

Ralph Ashton  
Executive Director, Next25  
31 March 2021

Thanks to Navigator, we know where the biggest gaps are. The public has set out the priority to-do list for Australia's leaders and anyone wanting to act in the public interest. It's time to focus on the most important aspirations where the country is tracking the worst."

# 2021 Key Findings

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Next25 Navigator presents a negative and confronting picture of how Australians view institutions and progress on important aspirations. Six findings stand out:

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## Institutions are failing

The Public Interest Index is a new national assessment of how well politicians and five other institutions act in the public interest. This year, the Index is just 31/100. 4/5 of us think politicians have a big say in setting priorities for the nation, but only 1/5 think they are doing a good job.

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## Short-termism and vested interests trump the public interest

- Only 34% of Australians say government is taking future generations into account.
- Only 27% say government puts the public before vested interests.

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## No one is taking accountability

- Four of the top five poorest performing aspirations are about accountability (institutional, leadership, and personal).

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## A generational schism has opened up

Under 30s have five top-ten concerns (poorest tracking aspirations) that don't make the nation's list of top ten concerns:

- Caring for our natural environment, plants, and animals
- Being willing to "talk things out" when we disagree
- Respecting First Nations heritage and culture in everyday life
- Having empathy for disadvantaged groups
- Accepting those with different views

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## Australians feel powerless and have switched off

- Only 30% of us feel we can influence the future. 52% of the population is disengaged.
- Only 34% believe they have a say beyond voting.

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## All resulting in a pessimistic nation

- Only 39% of us are confident Australia will be a better country in 5-10 years.
- 

However, it is not all negative. We have many more things in common as a nation than the national conversation might lead us to believe. Despite all our difference, there is a common core, and a clear sense of what the priorities are. Next25 is optimistic and looks forward to working with others to improve how Australia makes its future so that future editions of Next25 Navigator reflect progress and a more positive nation.

# About Next25 Navigator

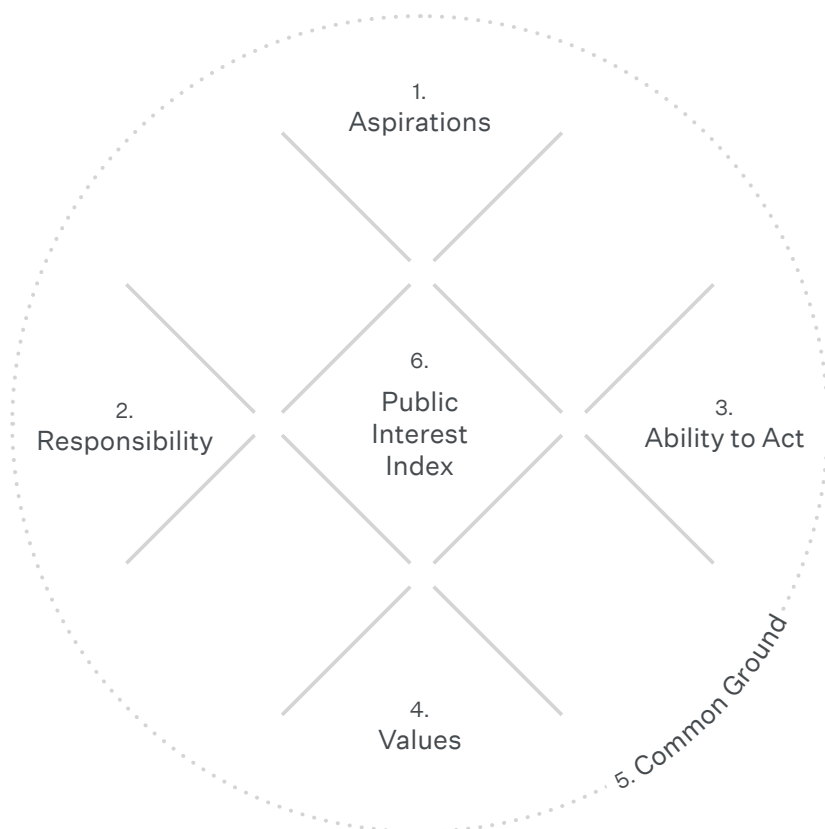
Next25 Navigator is an annual research study that answers the question, “What future does Australia want and are we on track?”

It sets a clear direction for where Australians want to see our country head over the next 25 years with respect to Australians’ values and aspirations. It outlines what responsibilities people and organisations have in making that future a reality. And it tells us how much ability people feel they have to contribute to a positive future for Australia.

Navigator shows where the similarities and differences are across Australia because there is no simple, single definition of the public interest. It also identifies gaps between what Australians want compared to what they are currently experiencing.

Navigator explores five dimensions that together provide a holistic view of the public interest, together with an overall sentiment score, the Public Interest Index:

Figure 1: Next25 Public Interest Model



1. What should life in Australia be like?
2. Who should do what?
3. Can everyone live and act in accordance with Australia’s wishes?
4. What are our principles and standards of behaviour — for ourselves and the nation?
5. Where does Australia agree and disagree?
6. How are institutions rated on delivering the needs and desires of the Australian public?

## Why we created Navigator

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Our work at Next25 has shown that despite Australia’s prosperity and opportunity, the country is not effectively balancing the immediate and long-term needs of the nation. We are not maximising and sharing our success across current and future generations.

Australia lacks a comprehensive understanding of what its people want for the future and how well they feel their country is progressing towards that future. In other words, we need a working understanding of Australians’ view of the public interest.

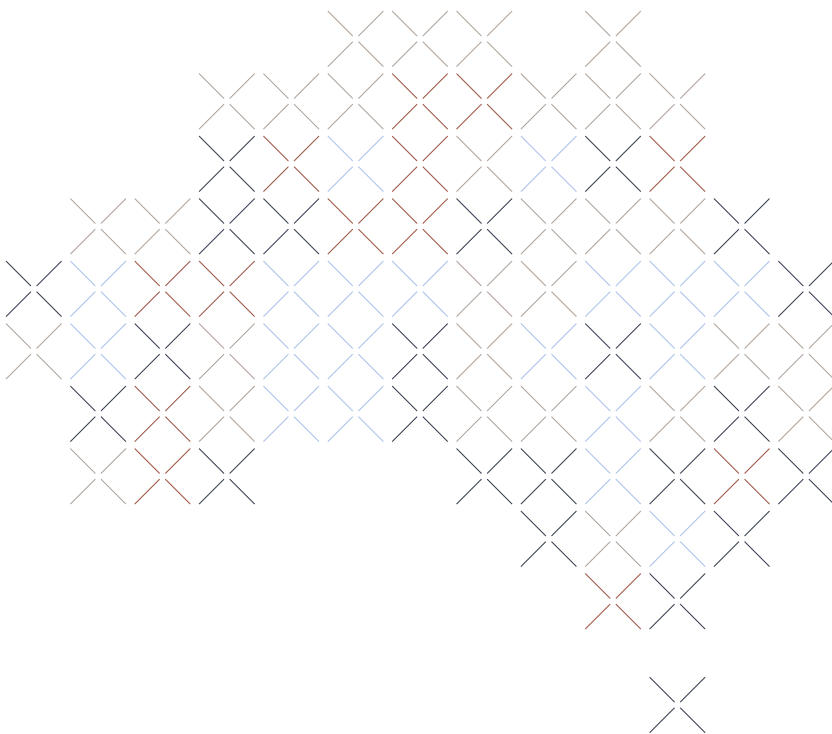
In Australia, decisions and actions are taken by leaders and institutions as well as by all of us as individuals. Next25 calls this the future-making system. It includes politicians and the public service (together, government), business, non-government organisations (NGOs), media, and experts/academia. These leaders and institutions are given or assume the authority to act on behalf of the broader public. Often, they invoke the “public interest” to justify their priorities, decisions, and actions.

However, despite the frequent use of the term, there is currently no clear understanding of what Australians believe is in the public interest or of how well Australia is delivering the future Australia wants.

There are countless ad hoc polls about Australians’ aspirations and concerns, numerous research papers by experts on aspects of Australian values, and regular studies that measure progress on specific social, economic, and environmental criteria set by experts. From our extensive preparatory research phase, we know there is a glaring lack of clarity about what Australia believes is in the public interest.

If we do not engage with Australians to understand the public interest, Australia risks sleepwalking into a future we do not want. Or worse still, we risk having our future hijacked by a powerful few who misrepresent the views of the public for their own gain.

Without this critical information, Australia does not know when to celebrate success as a nation. Without this critical information, Australia lacks the ability to keep the national conversation and democratic effort focused on what matters most – including where there is most disagreement across society and where the biggest gaps are between what we have now and what we want for our future.



“However, despite the frequent use of the term, there is currently no clear understanding of what Australians believe is in the public interest or of how well Australia is delivering the future Australia wants”

# Next25 Next Steps

At Next25, the release of the inaugural edition of Navigator is just the first step. We are committed to ensuring Australia maximises and shares its success by improving how Australia makes its future. Over the next twelve months, we will take further steps.

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Hold the powerful accountable

We will use the data and insights from Navigator to keep the national conversation focused on the issues that matter most.

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Support organisations serve the public interest

We will deliver keynote presentations, interactive strategy workshops, and bespoke advisory services to any group or organisation in any sector that wants to better serve the public interest.

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Expand the conversation

We will invite experts to add their knowledge and perspectives to the data and insights presented in this report.

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Dig deeper

We will dig deeper into the ‘why’ behind key insights from our research. We will do further work to understand why self-sufficiency is the worst tracking aspiration, why the legal system is seen as performing so poorly, and what Australians mean when they talk about a fair go as well as everyone taking responsibility for their own mistakes.

---

Share the data

We will work with others who are also committed to improving how Australia makes its future and are interested in:

- Importance and performance gaps for Australians’ aspirations
- Importance of democracy to Australians
- Performance of the nation’s legal system
- Common ground — the aspirations on which Australia agrees most
- Importance of self-sufficiency
- How people under 30 share Australia’s top aspirations, but differ widely on their assessment of how well Australia is performing
- The factors contributing to our national identity
- State, gender, and other demographic breakdowns

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Enhance Next25 Navigator

We will increase the number of respondents (the sample size), add questions to delve deeper into insights gleaned this year, add the values dimension, and broaden the role of experts in analysing and acting on the data.

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Analyse the future-making system

Through Next25 Recoded, we will continue to engage decision-makers and experts to identify and prioritise improvements to the future-making system.

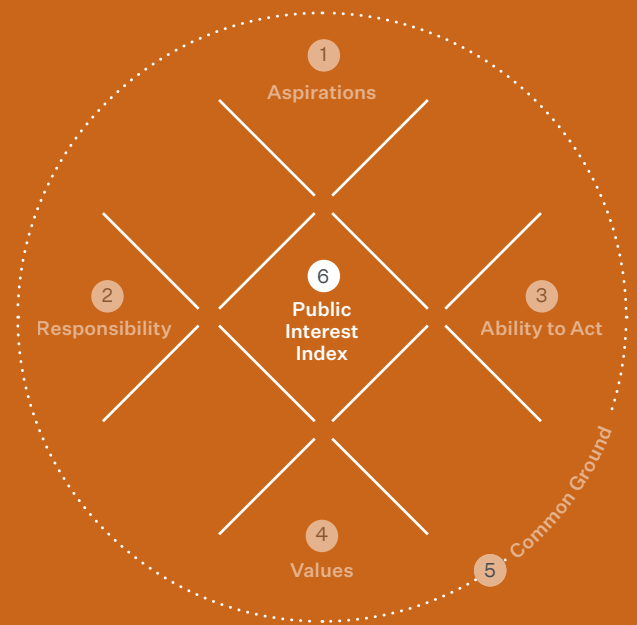
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Support Australia’s parliamentarians

Through Next25 Leadership, we will continue to strengthen the capability of Australia’s parliamentarians to respond to the challenges of the 21st century and restore trust in the political system.



# Public Interest Index



## National

One of the findings in this year’s Navigator is about how well Australians believe we are doing as a nation — is the country better today than in recent history? The answer is no.

61% of Australians do not believe the country is any better than it was 5-10 years ago.

We created the Public Interest Index as part of Navigator. It measures the public’s sentiment about how well institutions are delivering what Australia wants, how well institutions are acting in the public interest. Next25 will release Navigator and its Public Interest Index every year. This allows Australians to track changes over time and keep institutions focused on Australia’s real public interest.

We asked the public to assess the performance of six key institutions that have a mandate to act in the public interest – politicians, the public service, business, non-government organisations (NGOs), media, and experts/academia.

A depressing picture emerges.

The Public Interest Index is just 31/100.

This is a very low score for a country like Australia that on an international stage performs comparatively well across many measures, including our overall national response to the coronavirus pandemic. However, when Australians assess Australia, a different picture emerges



Figure 2: Public Interest Index

“61% of Australians do not believe the country is any better than it was 5-10 years ago.”

Q: How often do different groups consider what Australians want? Does [Institution] act on the needs and desires of Australians, A: (7-10). Institutions: Politicians, NGOs (civic society, unions, churches and non profit organisations), Business, Media, Public Service, Experts/ Academia. Averaged across all six institutions.

## By where people live

When we look at the Public Interest Index based on where people live, an interesting finding emerges — the further away from Canberra you live, the worse you believe institutions across Australia are acting in the public interest.

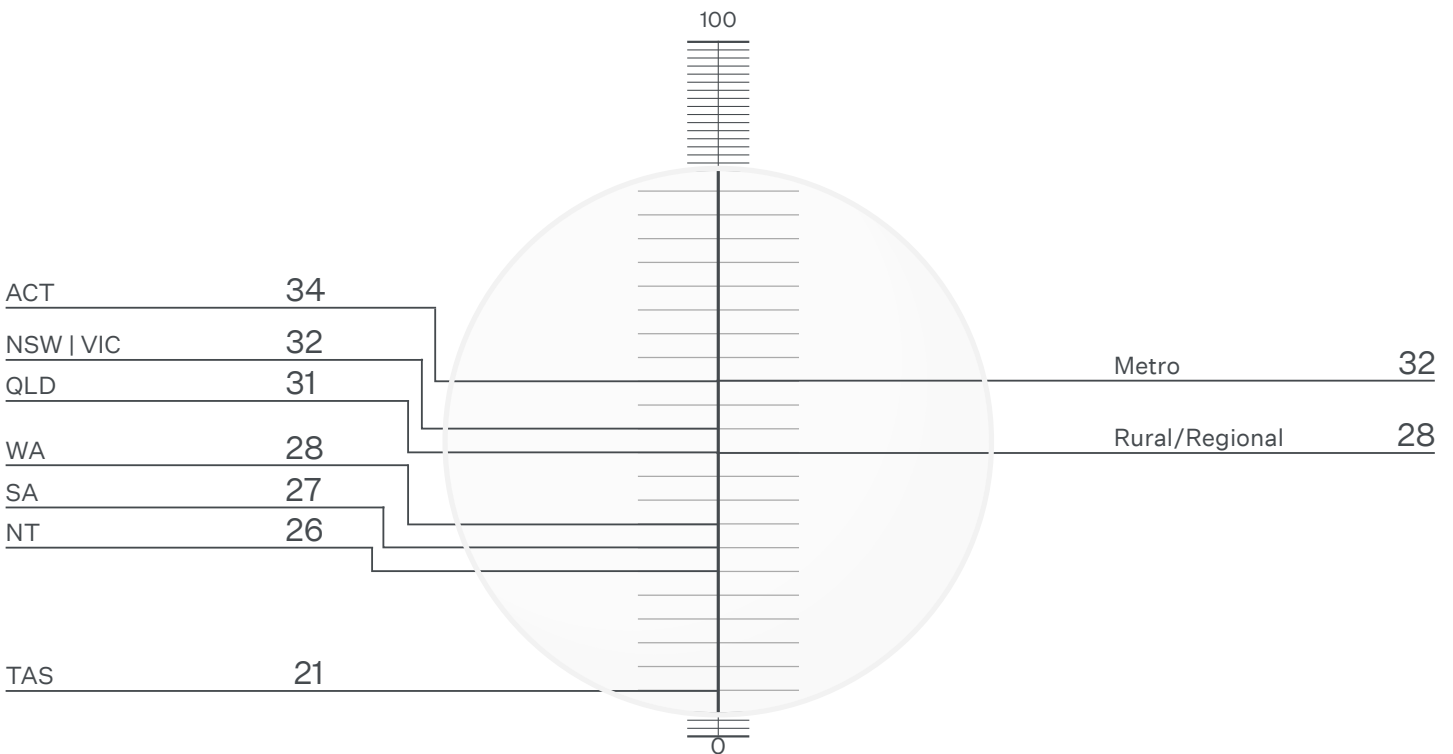
The Public Interest Index also differs depending on whether you live in metropolitan areas or in regional and rural Australia.

This difference is smaller than might be expected based on the national conversation, which often attributes great differences between people who live in metropolitan areas and people who live in regional and rural areas. In fact, the Public Interest Index in 2021 does not change very much regardless of whether people live in metropolitan areas (32/100) or rural and regional areas (28/100).

What is interesting is that, overall, people in metropolitan areas are very similar to each other, so someone in Melbourne is likely to have very similar views about the performance of institutions as someone in Perth or Brisbane. However, in rural and regional Australia, people have a broad range of opinions on that question, so someone in Dubbo might have different opinions on that question compared to another person in Dubbo or to a person in the Barossa Valley.

Next25 will use future editions of Navigator to explore in greater details this breadth of opinion in rural and regional Australia.

Figure 3: Public Interest Index (state and territory)



Q: How often do different groups consider what Australians want? Does [Institution] act on the needs and desires of Australians, A: (7-10).  
Institutions: Politicians, NGOs (civic society, unions, churches and non profit organisations), Business, Media, Public Service, Experts/Academia. Averaged across all six institutions per state or territory.

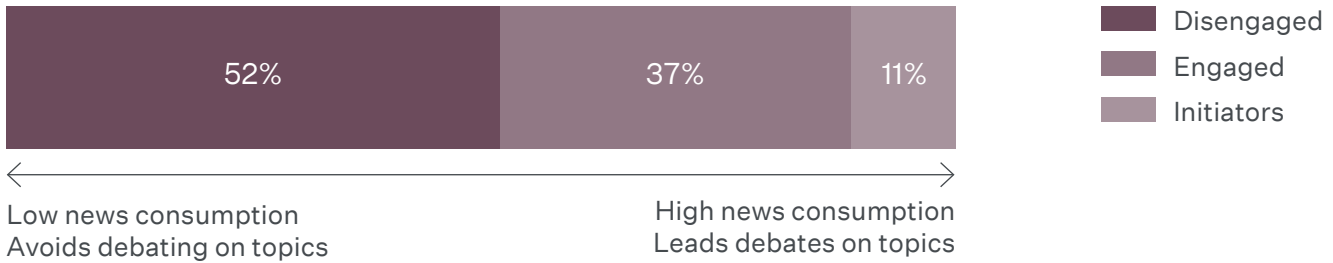
## Segmentation

We also asked Australians how often they read/listen to the news (including newspapers, news websites, social media and podcasts) and how much they engage with and lead discussion on social issues (such as politics, climate change, tax reform, gay marriage, vaccination, religion, assisted suicide, and so on).

The Navigator found that only 11% of Australians read/listen to the news multiple times a day and are willing to lead conversations on these topics – we call them “Initiators”. In contrast, 52% are disengaged and have low consumption and avoid participation in conversations and debate — we refer to them as “Disengaged”. In the middle are the 37% of Australians who engage with media but do not lead the conversation — we call them “Engaged”.

We highlight this segmentation throughout the report because it often has a greater impact on what Australians think than the other demographics analysed.

Figure 4: Segmentation according to strength of participation and debate, and level of news consumption



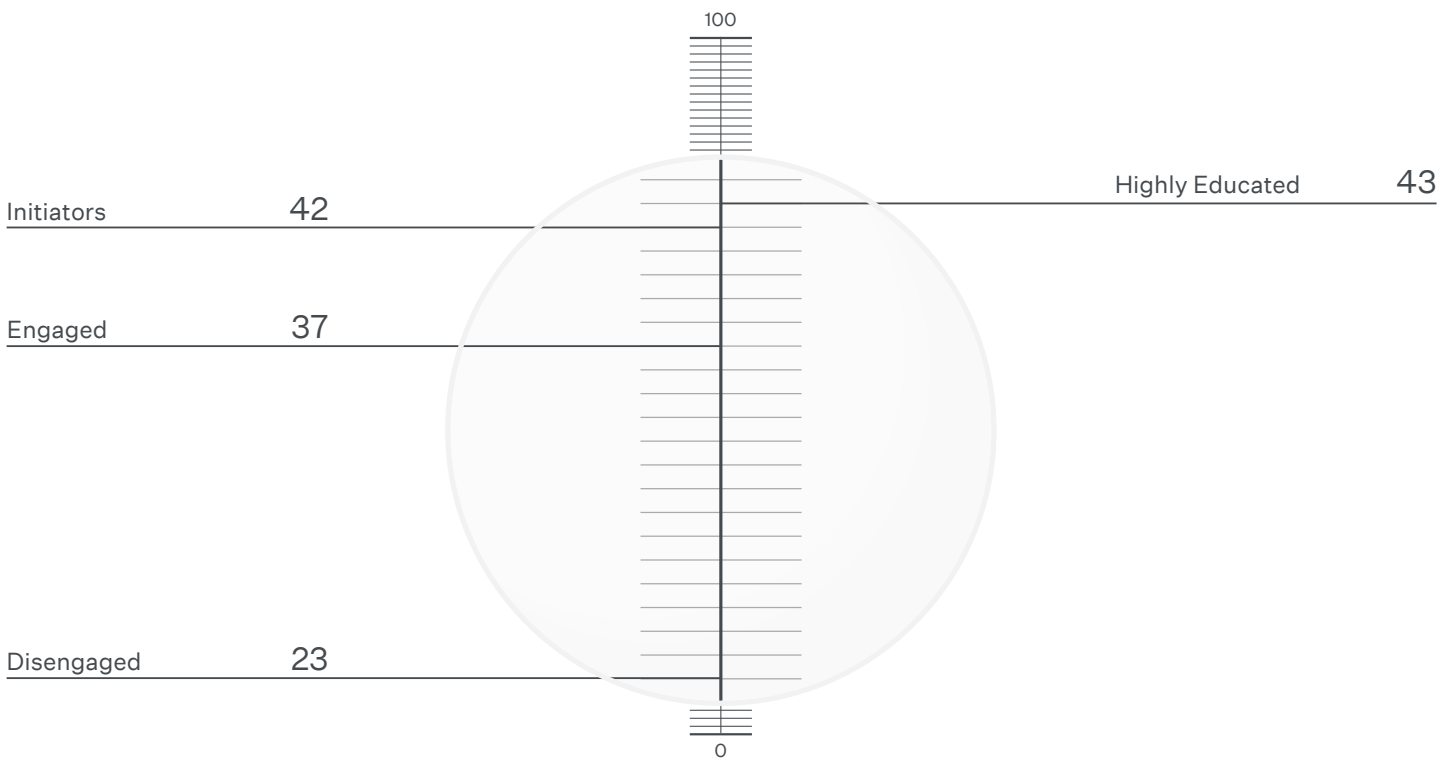
Q: How often do different groups consider what Australians want? Does [Institution] act on the needs and desires of Australians, A: (7-10).  
Institutions: Politicians, NGOs (civic society, unions, churches and non profit organisations), Business, Media, Public Service, Experts/Academia. Averaged across all six institutions per state or territory.

## Segmentation (cont).

When this segmentation is applied, there is often a significant split in sentiment, depending on whether someone is in the Initiator, Engaged, or Disengaged segment. Another driving force for difference is someone's level of education.

We know from Navigator that being more engaged and being more positive about the country are linked, but we do not yet know whether a positive view drives engagement or engagement drives a positive view. The same is true of having higher education and being more positive. We know they are linked, but we do not know how. We will investigate this further in future editions of Navigator.

Figure 5: Public Interest Index by segmentation



Q: How often do different groups consider what Australians want? Does [Institution] act on the needs and desires of Australians, A: (7-10).  
Institutions: Politicians, NGOs (civic society, unions, churches and non profit organisations), Business, Media, Public Service, Experts/ Academia. Averaged across all six institutions per segment.

## By institution

The overall Public Interest Index demonstrates that Australians feel unhappy with how institutions are performing as a whole.

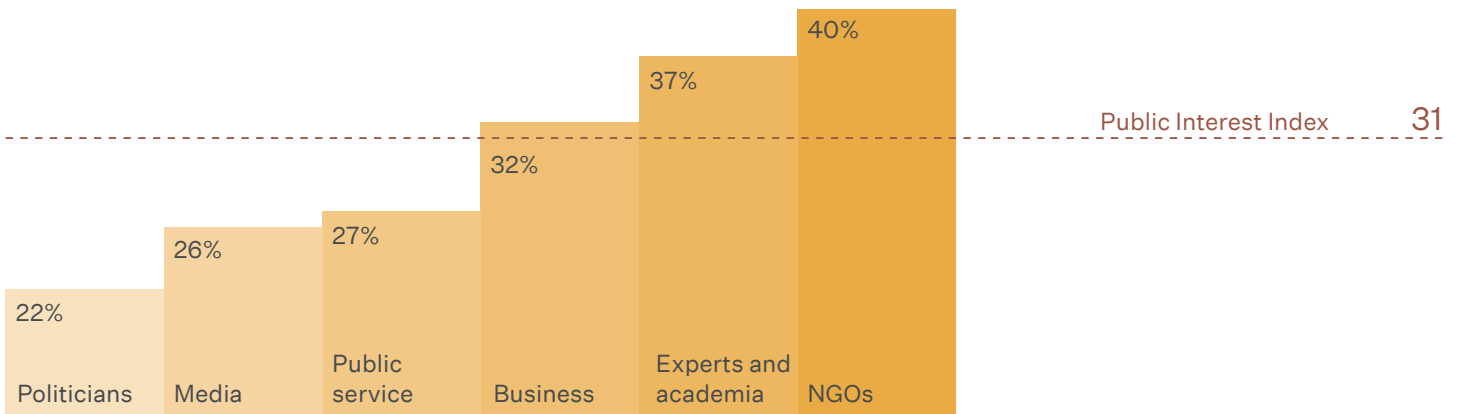
When broken down, we see that there is a marked difference in how the public sees politicians, who rate the lowest, and NGOs, who rate the highest.

Politicians score 22%, meaning just one in five of us thinks that politicians act in accordance with the needs of Australians. Meanwhile, only 26% of Australian believe the public service acts in the public interest. For a world-leading democracy, this is a major problem.

Compared to how we rate politicians, almost twice as many of us (40%) believe that NGOs act in the public interest, but this is not a strong endorsement.

The fact that no institution rates higher than 40% suggests that Australian institutions are not in touch with the needs of the people. It is clear that the public believes that institutions are not serving the public interest. Other institutions that were towards the bottom of the Public Interest Index were the media and the public service, at 26% and 27% respectively. Experts/academia were the second highest rated, at 37%, and business the third, at 32%.

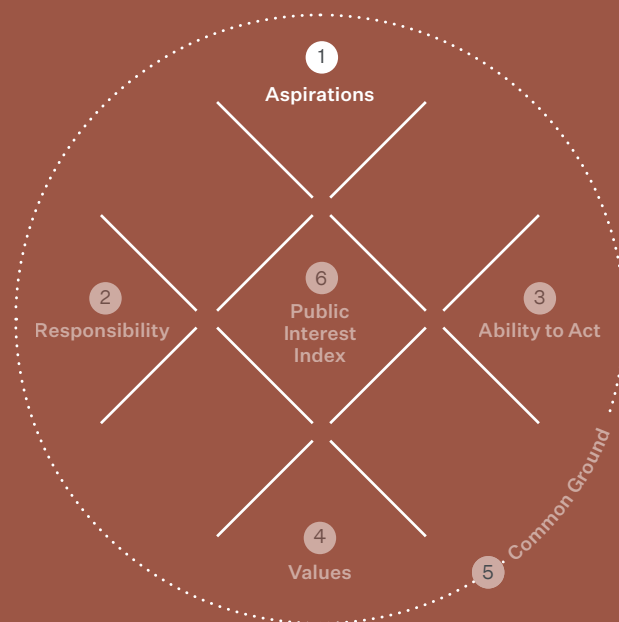
Figure 6: Public Interest Index by institution



Q: How often do different groups consider what Australians want? Does [Institution] act on the needs and desires of Australians, A: (7-10).  
Institutions: Politicians, NGOs (civic society, unions, churches and non profit organisations), Business, Media, Public Service, Experts/ Academia.

# Aspirations

## What should life in Australia be like?



A large part of this first edition of Next25 Navigator is focused on Australians’ aspirations, asking what the priorities of life in Australia should be. With this knowledge, Next25 can begin to answer the question “what future does Australia want?”

We selected 39 aspirations based on our extensive literature review and global research. We reviewed more than 1000 aspirations from other studies. We filtered out aspirations that other research has found are generally less important to people in Australia. We tested and refined our list of aspirations through qualitative research including focus groups and one-on-one interviews. The 39 aspirations in Next25 Navigator are therefore seen by researchers and the public as the most important 39 aspirations for modern Australian life. With Next25 Navigator, we have asked Australians to prioritise the priorities.

We asked Australians to rate the importance of each of the 39 aspirations and then to rank how well Australia is doing on each of them – we call this performance.

The top ten most important aspirations are shown in Table 1. While the top five includes three that are not surprising based on other research (access to quality healthcare, access to good education, and caring for our natural environment, plants, and animals), the other two stood out. The second and third most important issues are having a fair, honest, and capable legal system and Australians taking responsibility for their own mistakes.

“With Next25 Navigator, we have asked Australians to prioritise the priorities.”

Table 1: Top 10 aspirations in order of importance – All Australians

Aspiration	Importance rank	Importance score
All Australians having access to quality healthcare	1	81.06%
Having a fair, honest, and capable legal system	2	80.33%
Australians should take responsibility for their own mistakes	3	79.05%
Caring for our natural environment, plants, and animals	4	78.25%
All Australians having access to good education	5	77.75%
The government prioritising the needs of Australia first when making decisions	6	77.41%
Honouring, respecting, and maintaining the rule of law	7	76.29%
Providing opportunities for everyone – the “fair go”	8	76.27%
Australia being self-sufficient and able to stand on its own two feet as a country	9	76.10%
Considering all Australians to be equal	10	75.20%

We then measured the total gap between an aspiration’s importance and its performance. We call this its tracking score; the higher the number, the poorer it is tracking. Table 2 shows the gap for the 10 poorest tracking aspirations.

Table 2: Top 10 poorest tracking aspirations - all Australians

Gap rank	Aspiration	Gap score
1	Australia being self-sufficient and able to stand on its own two feet as a country (eg economic security, and being less reliant on other nations in general)	-39
2	Governments prioritising voters above donors, property developers, big business, unions, media, lobbyists	-37
3	Governments taking into account the impact upon future generations when making decisions	-36
4	Australians should take responsibility for their own mistakes	-35
5	Having a fair, honest, and capable legal system	-34
6	Collecting and allocating tax fairly	-34
7	The government prioritising the needs of Australia first when making decisions	-33
8	Considering all Australians to be equal	-33
9	All Australians having access to resources and support to make the life they want	-33
10	The privacy of the Australian public should be protected from business interference	-33

This is the priority to-do list for the nation and for anyone wanting to act in the public interest. These are the aspirations that are important to Australians that the nation is doing a poor job on.

The top five poorest tracking aspirations are a mix of national, institutional, and individual aspirations. Three at an institution level dominate the list: governments taking into account the impact upon future generations when making decisions, governments prioritising voters above vested interests (donors, property developers, big business, unions, media, lobbyists), and having a fair, honest, and capable legal system. One is at the national level: Australia being self-sufficient and able to stand on its own two feet as a country. Finally, one is at the individual level: Australians should take responsibility for their own mistakes.

Aspirations that Australians believe the nation is performing relatively well on include all Australians having access to quality healthcare and access to good education alongside freedom to pursue whatever makes you happy and freedom to practise your beliefs. We also have a good sense that Australians benefit from their own achievements.

The five aspirations with the biggest gap between importance and performance – the poorest tracking aspirations – are further explained in the following sections.

“This is the priority to-do list for the nation and for anyone wanting to act in the public interest. These are the aspirations that are important to Australians that the nation is doing a poor job on.”

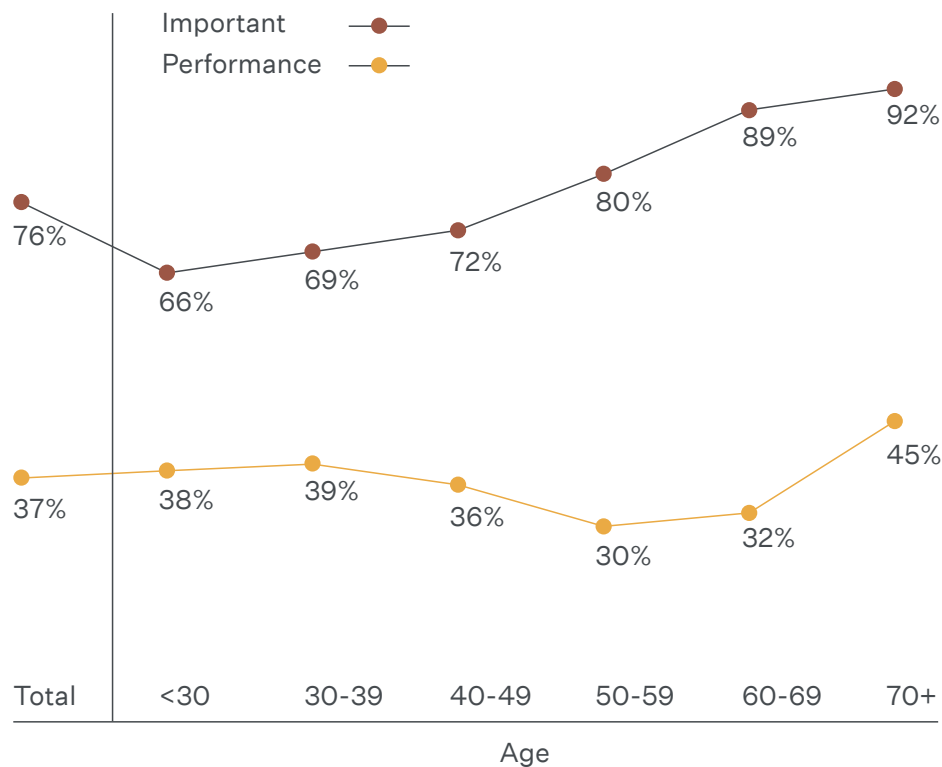
## Self-sufficiency

The poorest-tracking aspiration in Navigator in 2021 is Australia being self-sufficient and able to stand on its own two feet as a country.

Fewer than four in 10 are confident Australia is self-sufficient. The importance of national self-sufficiency increases steadily with age as shown in Figure 7.

We gathered this data from the public from December 2020 to February 2021. It will be interesting to see how this evolves in subsequent years. Is the high gap a reaction to the coronavirus pandemic? Or to the recent trade disputes with China?

Figure 7: Self-sufficiency importance versus performance, by age group



# 4/10

Fewer than four in ten are confident Australia is self sufficient

Q: To what extent do you agree/disagree the following are a) important to you b) areas where Australia is currently doing an excellent job... Australia being self sufficient and able to stand on its own two feet as a country (e.g. economic security and being less reliant on other nations in general) A:(7-10).



## Legal system

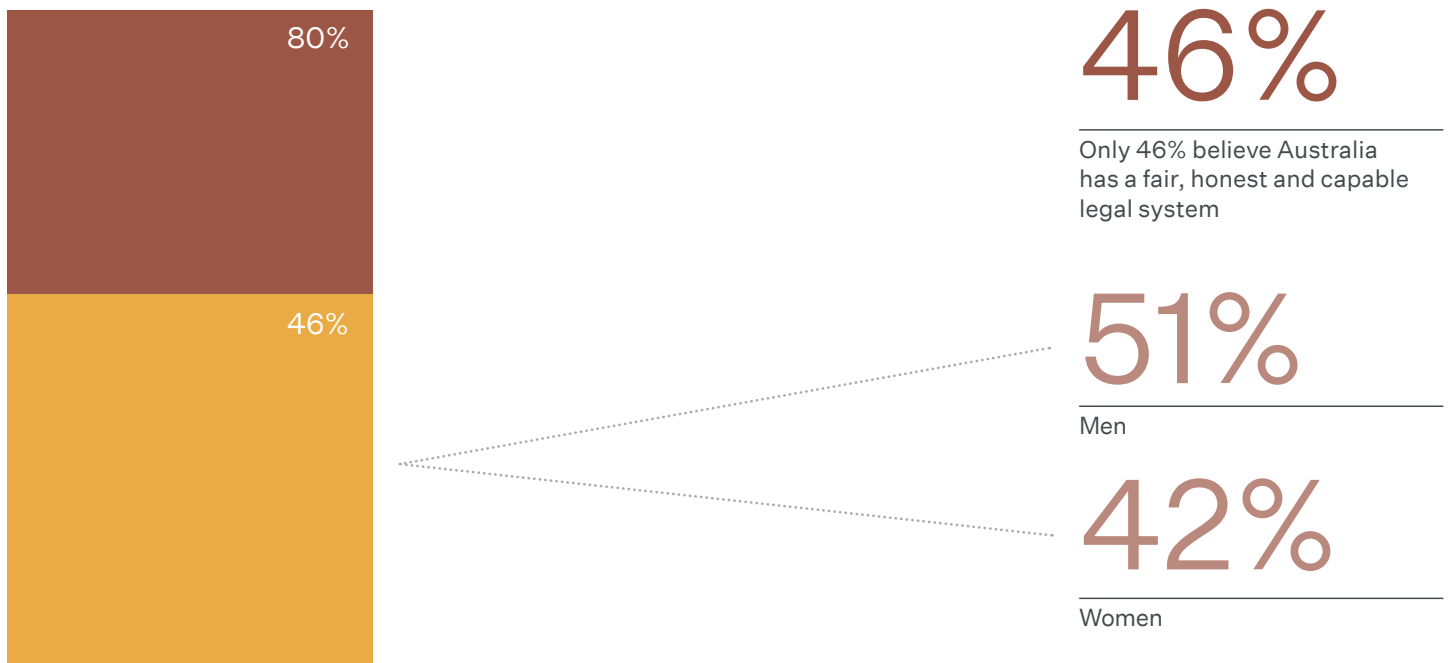
One of the two elements that appear in both the top five most important list and the top five poorest tracking list is Australia's legal system. See data in Figure 8.

Just 46% think that Australia has a fair, honest, and capable legal system. But 81% think it is important.

Further research is needed to understand why the public believe it is falling so short.

Who is satisfied? 63% of people living in households with the top 20% of income rate the performance of the legal system as satisfactory, compared to just 44% of people living in households with the bottom 20% of income. When we look at gender, 51% of men are happy with the performance of the legal system, but only 42% of women are. This is one of the most significant gender gaps in Navigator in 2021.

Figure 8: Legal system importance versus performance including gender



Q: To what extent do you agree/disagree the following are a) important to you b) areas where Australia is currently doing an excellent job...  
Having a fair, honest, and capable legal system  
A: (7-10).

## Government

Some of the poorest tracking aspirations relate to government, which includes politicians and the public service. These are also two of the worst performing institutions in our Public Interest Index.

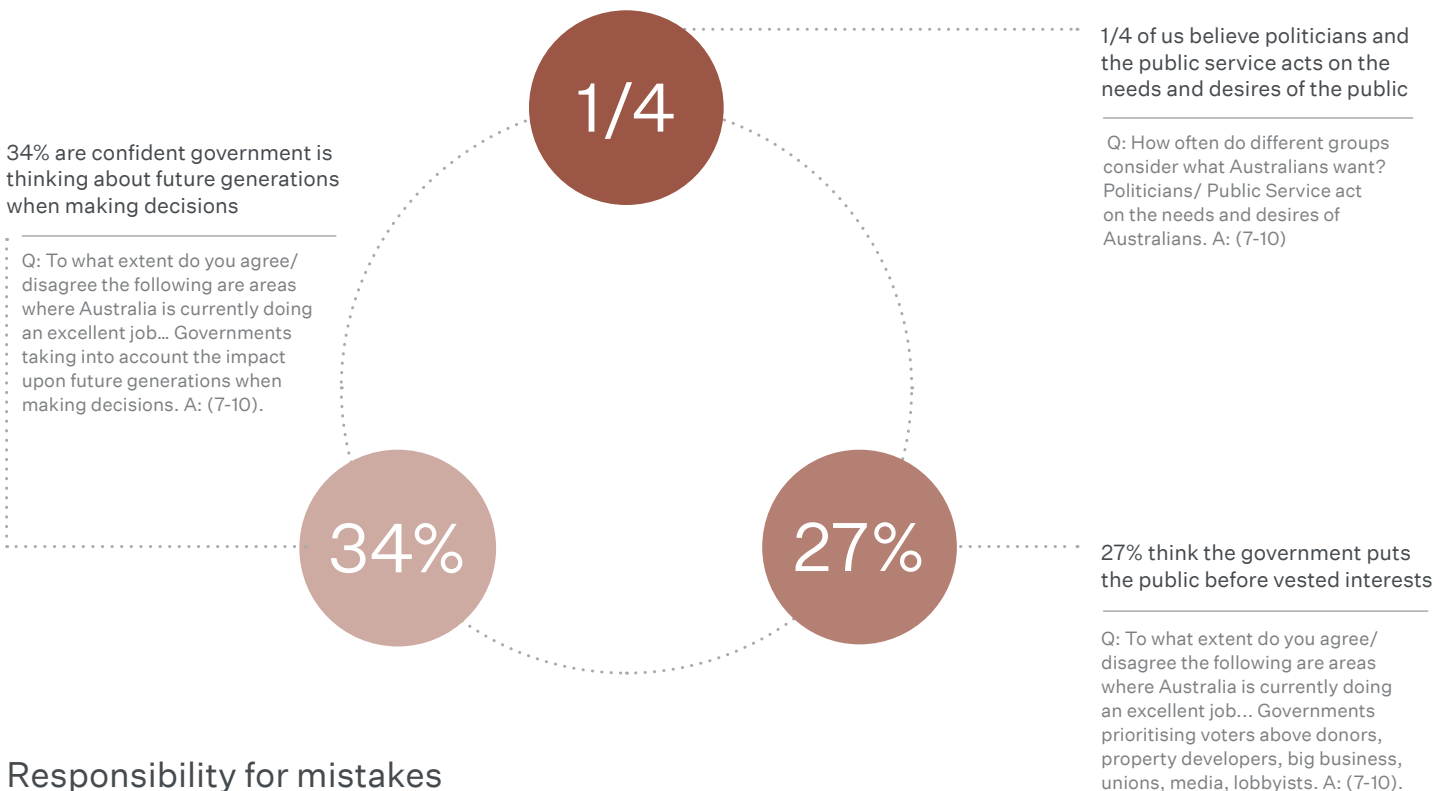
One conclusion that can be drawn from the data is that whatever the government is doing, it isn't working.

There is a group of self-reinforcing issues:

- Only 1/4 of Australians believe politicians and the public service act on the needs and desires of the public
- Only 27% think government puts the public before vested interests
- Only 34% think government is taking into account the impact upon future generations when making decisions.

“One conclusion that can be drawn from the data is that whatever the government is doing, it isn't working.”

Figure 9: Government poorest tracking aspirations



## Responsibility for mistakes

When asked a series of questions about individual freedoms, the most important aspiration was Australians taking responsibility for their own mistakes.

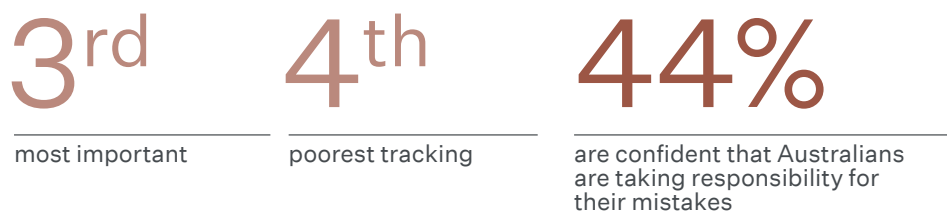
Along with the legal system, this appears in both the top five most important and top five poorest tracking aspirations.

Nearly 8/10 Australians believe it is important for Australians to take responsibility for their own mistakes.

However, just 44% of us are confident this is happening.

Australians want everyone to take more responsibility for their own mistakes.

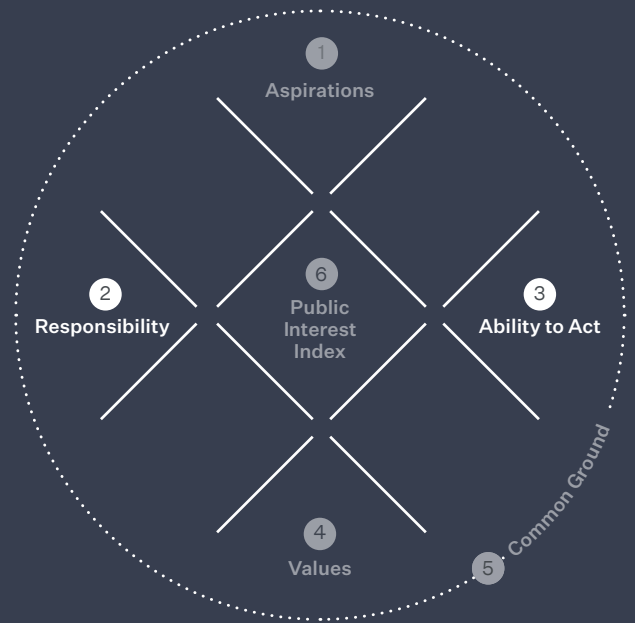
Figure 10: Responsibility for mistakes, importance versus performance



Q: To what extent do you agree/disagree the following are a) important to you b) areas where Australia is currently doing an excellent job ... Australians should take responsibility for their own mistakes. A: (7-10).

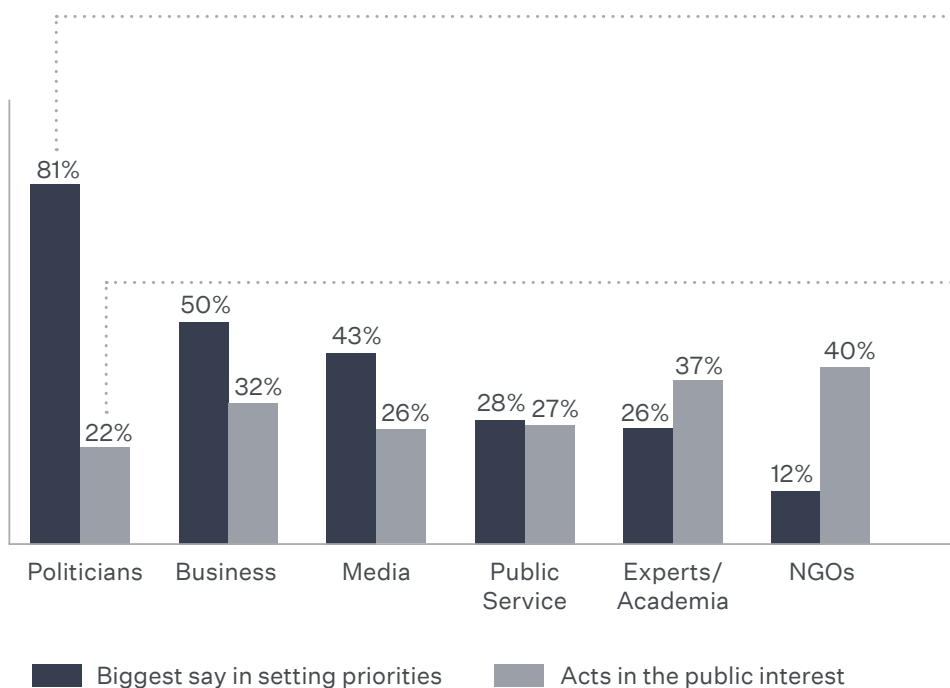
# Responsibility and Ability to Act

Who should do what?  
Can everyone live and act in accordance with Australia's wishes?



The second and third dimensions of the public interest are Responsibility and Ability to Act. Who do Australians see as having the biggest responsibility in delivering the public interest? And are these people and institutions seen as having the ability to take on the roles expected of them? Who should do what? Can everyone live and act in accordance with Australia's wishes?

Figure 11: Greatest influence = poorest performance



4/5

believe that **politicians** have the most say in **setting the priorities** of Australia

1/5

believe that **politicians** are **acting in the public interest**

Q: Currently, who has the biggest say in setting the priorities of the nation? Choose your top three. Q: How often do different groups consider what Australians want? Institutions act on the needs and desires of Australians? A: (7-10).

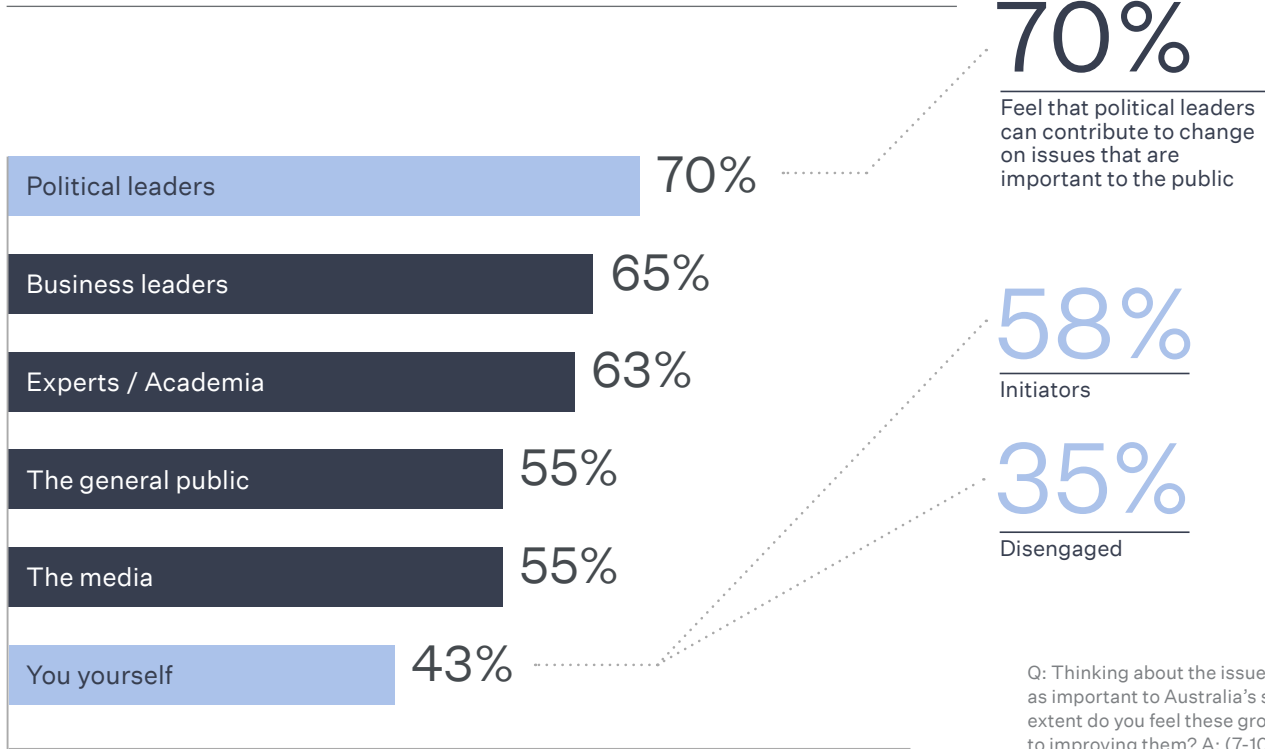
Figure 11 shows that institutions with the biggest say in setting priorities are doing the worst job of acting in the public interest.

81% of Australians believe politicians have a big say in setting priorities for the country, but just 22% of us believe politicians act in the public interest. That is a startling 59-point gap.

Interestingly, the institutions who are seen to be doing the best job of acting in the public interest have the lowest say in setting priorities.

This is a significant problem for the country.

Figure 12: Who can contribute to improving Australia?



Q: Thinking about the issues you just prioritised as important to Australia's success, to what extent do you feel these groups can contribute to improving them? A: (7-10).

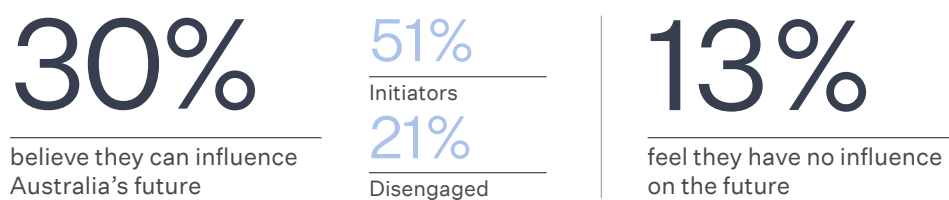
Looking deeper into the data on politicians in Figure 12, 70% of Australians feel that political leaders can contribute to change on issues that are important to the public. Politicians are ranked the highest, followed closely by business leaders and experts/academia.

The lowest score Australians give is to themselves. Just 43% think they as individuals can contribute to Australia's success.

This is reinforced by the fact that the majority of Australians feel powerless to influence the future. Just 30% believe they can influence the future and 13% believe they have no influence at all.

There is little difference based on gender, but a noticeable difference emerges based on news consumption and engagement in social issues: 51% of Initiators believe that they can influence Australia's future, while for the Disengaged this falls to just 35%.

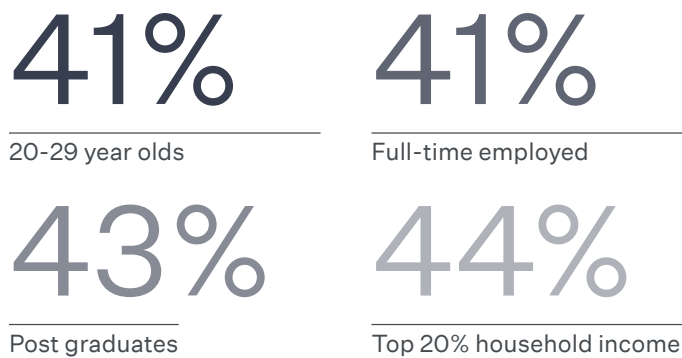
Figure 13: Australian's feelings on influencing the future



Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? I can influence Australia's journey towards a better future. A: (7-10), A: (0-1).

Those with a strong sense of agency tend to be younger, be employed full-time, have post-graduate degrees, or live in households with the top 20% of income.

Figure 14: Highest ability to act



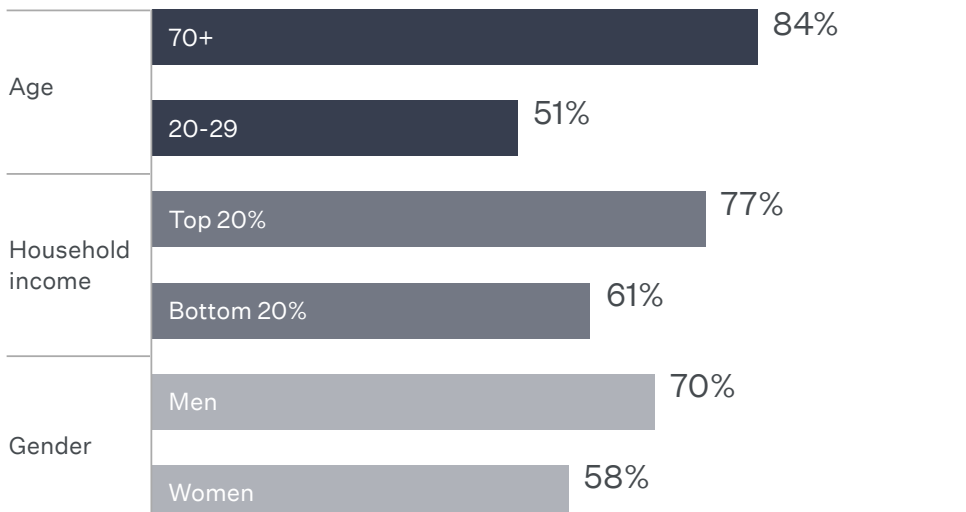
## Democracy

Despite Australians believing that politicians and the public service are not acting in the public interest, Australians still believe in democracy. However, it is fragile.

64% of us believe that continuing as a Western liberal democracy is important but only 50% believe the country is performing well as a democracy.

Of all aspirations, this has the second lowest sense of common ground – across all dimensions of Australia, we disagree more only on the importance of government taking into account the impact upon future generations when making decisions. Figure 15 highlights how views differ across certain demographics and segments. Whether it is gender, age, or income, the results are quite variable

Figure 15: Who places the most and least importance on democracy



“Of all aspirations, this has the second lowest sense of common ground – across all dimensions of Australia, we disagree more only on the importance of government taking into account the impact upon future generations when making decisions”

Q: To what extent do you agree/disagree the following are a) important to you b) areas where Australia is currently doing an excellent job... Australia continuing its role as a western liberal democracy. A: (7-10).

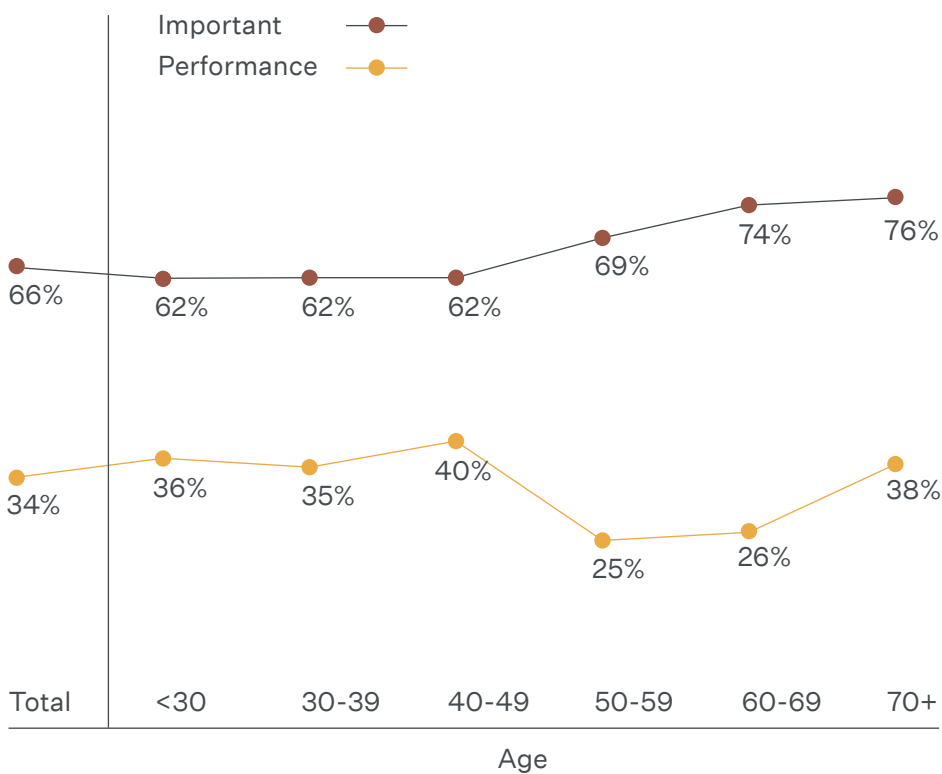
## Public voice

In addition, Figure 16 shows 66% of Australians believe it is important to have a say (beyond voting) in the decisions made on their behalf. However, just 34% believe Australia is doing a good job at this.

In general, older Australians feel it is more important to be engaged beyond voting. However, they are also more likely to feel that Australia is not performing well.

Only 25% of 50-59 year olds and 26% of 60-69 year olds feel Australia is doing an excellent job.

Figure 16: Public voice importance versus performance



66%

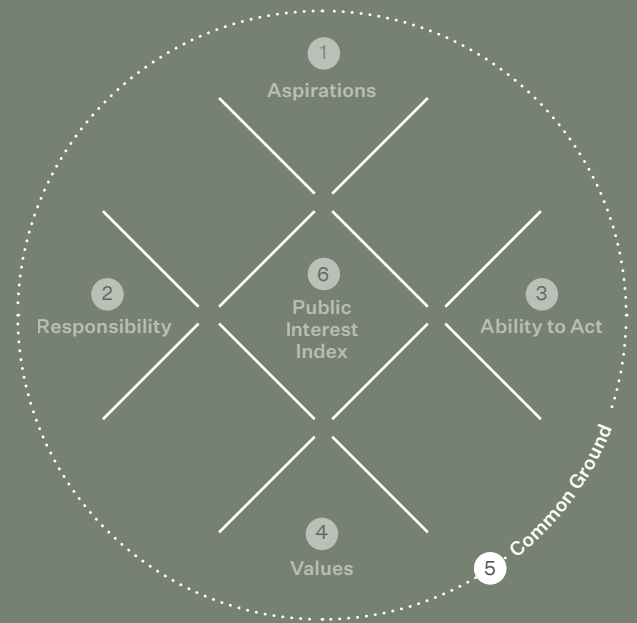
believe it's important to have a say beyond voting

34%

are confident Australia is doing a good job of enabling the public to have a say

Q: To what extent do you agree/disagree the following are a) important to you b) areas where Australia is currently doing an excellent job: The ability to have a say (beyond voting) in the decisions made on my behalf. A: (7-10).

# Common Ground



## Where does Australia agree and disagree?

Common ground shows where the similarities and differences are across Australia because there is no simple, single definition of the public interest. When looking at a large data set such as Navigator, it is easy to find differences, but Next25 also spent significant time looking at where we are similar as a country.

### Australia's generations

The generations are largely united on what is most important for the nation.

A comparison of the top five aspirations of all Australians and the top five aspirations of the Under 30s is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Generations are united on what's most important

The most important aspirations for all Australians Ranking	The most important aspirations for the under 30s Ranking
1 Access to quality healthcare	1 Access to quality healthcare
2 Fair, honest, and capable legal system	2 Caring for our natural environment, plants, and animals
3 Australians taking responsibility for their own mistakes	3 Fair, honest, and capable legal system
4 Caring for our natural environment, plants, and animals	4 Australians taking responsibility for their own mistakes
5 Access to good education	5 Freedom to pursue what makes you happy

Four of the top five aspirations are the same. There are a few differences. Young people rank the importance of caring for our natural environment, plants, and animals more highly than the overall population does. It moves from number 4 to number 2 in importance. Freedom to pursue whatever makes you happy also moves into the top five for the Under 30s (ranked 11th for the overall population), replacing all Australians having access to good education as the fifth most important aspiration for Australians overall.

## The nation's to-do list?

A generational difference starts to emerge when looking at aspirations that track poorly for the Under 30s compared to the full population. This generational data may offer a window into tomorrow's priorities for the nation.

Table 4: Poorest tracking aspirations

Under 30s	All Australians
1 Government taking future generations into account	3
2 Caring for our natural environment, plants, and animals	● 12
3 All Australians being equal	8
4 Willing to talk out our disagreements	● 16
5 All Australians having access to support and resources	9
6 Respecting our First Nations heritage and culture	● 32
7 Empathy for disadvantaged groups	● 22
8 Accepting those with different views	● 17
9 Fair, honest, and capable legal system	5
10 Australians should take responsibility for their own mistakes	4

Table 4 shows that Under 30s have five aspirations in their top ten poorest tracking list that do not appear in the equivalent national list. These are important aspirations that young Australians believe the country is performing poorly on that Australians overall believe the country is performing relatively well on.

The two most dramatic movements are:

- Respecting our First Nations heritage and culture, which was ranked 6th poorest tracking by young people, but only 32nd poorest tracking (of 39) by all Australians.
- Empathy for disadvantaged groups, which was ranked 7th poorest tracking by young people, but only 22nd poorest tracking by all Australians.

Three further aspirations have smaller but still significantly large shifts:

- Willingness to talk out disagreements, which is 4th poorest tracking for the Under 30s and 16th poorest tracking overall
- Caring for the natural environment, which is 2nd poorest tracking for the Under 30s and 12th poorest tracking overall
- And accepting those with different views, which is 8th poorest tracking for the Under 30s and 17th poorest tracking overall

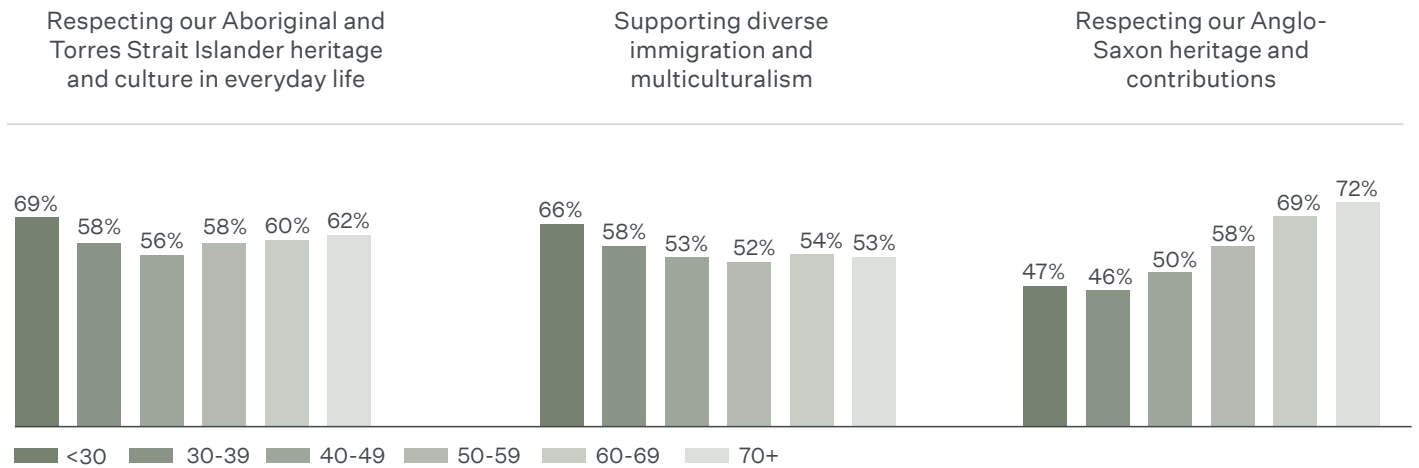
Over the coming years, Next25 will deepen the research underpinning Navigator to understand how this data changes over time. Will these differences between young people and the population overall endure? As today's young Australians get older, will all of society start assessing these five aspirations as poorly as the current Under 30s do today? Or will today's young Australians, as they get older, take on the views of today's overall population?



## National identity

Navigator included questions about Australia’s national identity. The results are shown in Figure 17.

Figure 17: National identity aspirations by age group



A majority of Australians of all ages see three key aspects of Australian identity as important:

- 61% of Australians say it is important to respect First Nations heritage and culture
- 57% say it is important to support diverse immigration and multiculturalism
- 55% say it is important to respect Anglo-Saxon heritage

More than two-thirds of the Under 30s say it is important to respect First Nations heritage and culture and to support diverse immigration and multiculturalism. This support never falls below 50% for any age group. However, for diverse immigration and multiculturalism, support does fall for those aged 40-49 and then remains between 52% and 54% for all groups over 50. When it comes to Anglo-Saxon heritage, the Under 40s see this as less important, but it increases in importance for older Australians.

## National alignment

Despite what appears to be plenty of bad news, there is a critical part of the story that is positive. Looking at where the nation has the strongest common ground, a quarter of all the aspirations in the Navigator have strong cohesion across demographics. This means that Australians have very similar views on the importance and performance of about ten of 39 important aspirations for the country. Three aspirations stand out because they are in both the top ten most important aspirations for all Australians and the top ten aspirations about which Australians agree the most regardless of demographics. They are:

- All Australians having access to quality healthcare
- Providing opportunities for everyone – the “fair go”
- Australia being self-sufficient and able to stand on its own two feet as a country

Over the next 12 months, Next25 will undertake further work to deepen our understanding about these aspirations. What do Australians mean when they use these terms? Why do Australians so tightly align on them?

Q: To what extent do you agree/disagree the following are important to you Respecting our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and culture in everyday life Supporting diverse immigration and multiculturalism, Respecting our Anglo Saxon heritage and contributions. A: (7-10).

# Technical Background

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## Methodology

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Navigator is Australia's first ongoing annual study that identifies, measures, and monitors what the public and experts define as the public interest and how well on track we are. This ongoing annual study is based on quantitative research, qualitative research (including deliberative methods), synthesis analysis, and expert commentary.

This report covers our social research, which engaged a large, nationally-representative sample of everyday Australians in quantitative and qualitative work across the five dimensions of Navigator.

The study will be repeated annually and expanded as our knowledge of the public interest grows.

Each year, Navigator comprises the same five steps (see diagram). In the second and third cycles, we will increase the number of respondents, add questions to delve deeper into insights gleaned in the previous year, and broaden the role of experts to help analyse and act on the data.

Figure 18: The research cycle

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1. Social research based on public input
2. Annual launch of insights and data
3. Deeper exploration through qualitative research
4. Quarterly discussion papers and expert commentary
5. Technical review and iteration

## Preparatory research

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Next25 undertook a rigorous preparatory research phase over nine months in 2020 in order to inform the design and methodology of Navigator. During this phase, we reviewed 358 separate pieces of literature, including relevant datasets, indexes, media usage, and academic studies on the public interest. This research informed our first stage of qualitative work, which included focus groups and one-on-one interviews with members of the public, and deep engagement with experts and stakeholders including the Next25 Research Committee, the Next25 Board of Directors, and Catalyst Research.

## Next25 Public Interest Model

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The Next25 Public Interest Model is an evolving tool. Results in this report represent the first iteration of a long-term research program. Therefore, not all elements in the Public Interest Model are measured in their entirety in this edition. Navigator will progress to maturity over the next three years to provide a complete picture of the public interest in Australia based on further quantitative and qualitative engagement with the public and experts.

## About the data

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Many of the questions in this study were asked on a scale from 0 to 10 so respondents could use 0 for not at all important or totally disagree and 10 for extremely important or totally agree. Unless noted otherwise, when referring to negative responses, we used those who answered with 0-3 and when referring to positive responses, we used 7-10. This means that the neutral group is the midpoint 5, plus the mildly positive (6) and the mildly negative (4). By removing responses with a score of 4, 5, or 6, we get a clear sense of the strength of sentiment on each question.

## Demographic analysis and segmentation

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Navigator is nationally-representative and has been analysed across gender, age, household income, education, employment, and geography. Analysis was also undertaken based on the segmentation described in the Public Interest Index section at the beginning of this report.

## Quantitative technical method overview

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- Fieldwork conducted by Catalyst Research
- Nationally-representative sample of 2,825
- Conducted online between 16 December 2020 and 12 February 2021
- Analysed according to gender, age, income, education, employment, region (metro, rural/regional), state and territory, news consumption, segments based on news consumption and debate engagement (Initiators, Engaged, Disengaged)

## Margin of error

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The margin of error for the full sample (2,825) is + / - 1.8%. Nearly every demographic and segmentation measured (see above) has a sample size of 500 or more and the margin of error is + / - 3.7%. The only exceptions are Tasmania and the ACT, which had a sample size of 100 and 101 respectively, making the margin of error + / - 8.2%. The Northern Territory had a sample size of 40 and a margin of error of + / - 13.0%. In every State and Territory, sample sizes are larger than required for the sample to be representative of the population. In the next edition of Navigator, we will increase respondents from all States and Territories to ensure an even smaller margin of error.

# Acknowledgements

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Next25 thanks the 3,000 Australians who gave their views in the qualitative and quantitative stages of the creation of the Navigator. You represent the diversity of Australia. Next25 Navigator is you giving voice to the future the whole of Australia wants.

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We thank:

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## Catalytic philanthropists

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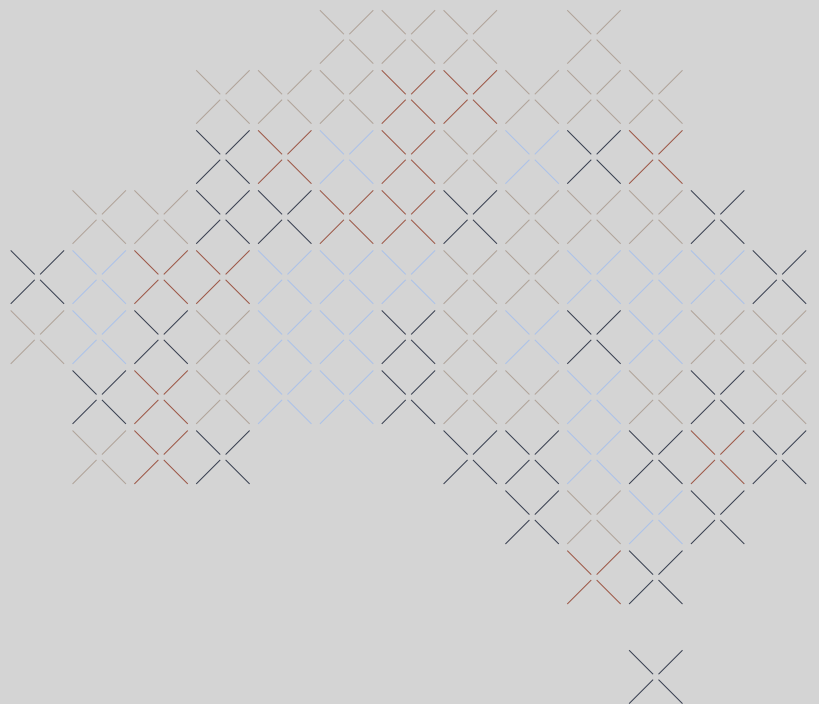
David Clark

Interweave Group

Starling Communications

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For further information or to enquire about engaging Next25 to deliver a tailored keynote presentation, interactive strategy workshop, or bespoke advisory service based on Next25 Navigator, please contact:

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