

Politics, policy and pessimism: **What Australians think**



Poll 3, June 2016

Detailed report: Part B

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Australian federal politicians: Are they doing enough for our kids?

Report highlights:

- **Over 75% of Australians say politicians should take more action on issues relating to kids and teenagers**
- **Less than 20% think that politicians in federal parliament today represent the interests of Australian children and teenagers**
- **Almost 50% of Australians said no political party leader represents their perspective on the wellbeing of Australian children and teenagers**

In a survey fielded in April 2016, more than 2,100 Australian adults were asked about their perceptions on how politicians in federal parliament today are faring on issues relating to the health and wellbeing of children and teenagers. Adults rated their level of agreement from strongly disagree through to strongly agree in response to a series of statements about politicians in federal parliament today. They were also asked to identify which political party leader best represented their perspective on issues relating to the wellbeing of Australian children and teenagers.

A call for more action

Of those surveyed, 76% agreed that politicians in federal parliament today should take more action on issues relating to the wellbeing of Australian children and teenagers (see *Figure 1*). Agreement was strongest among parents of children aged less than 18 years (81%), but a notable majority of those without children also indicated politicians should take more action on child health issues (71%). Of note, agreement was not significantly affected by age of respondent, household income, level of education, migrant status or state of residence.

Knowing what's important for Australian children and representing their interests

Less than a quarter (22%) of all adults surveyed indicated that they agreed with the statement 'the politicians in federal parliament today have a good understanding about what is important for Australian children and teenagers'. Similarly, only 19% agreed that 'the politicians in federal parliament today represent the interests of Australian children and teenagers' (see Figure 1). Rates of agreement to both statements were slightly higher among those respondents born overseas, those residing in metropolitan areas, those with higher household incomes (>\$1000 per week), those who had completed secondary education, and those with children aged less than 18 years.

Political party leaders: Who's representing the public's perspective on issues relating to the wellbeing of children and teenagers?

When asked to indicate which political party leader best represents their perspective on issues relating to the wellbeing of children and teenagers, the dominant response among Australians was 'none'. Almost half (47%) indicated no party leader represents their perspective, followed by 20% indicating Malcolm Turnbull, 17% Bill Shorten, 8% Richard DiNatale, 5% Barnaby Joyce and 2% other (see Figure 2).

Respondents who indicated that no party leader represented their perspective on child wellbeing issues were slightly more likely to be younger, female, and earning below \$500 per week than those who indicated representation by any one of the party leaders.

Implications

On the eve of the federal election, these results highlight the importance of issues relating to the wellbeing of children and teenagers to the Australian public. Despite an ageing population and increasing demand on resources, the people of Australia have indicated that they want to see more done for our children and teenagers. This poll tells us that the call for more action and belief that our politicians lack an understanding of what is important for children and teenagers is not limited to parents of young children. Adults across all states and territories, of all ages, with and without children have indicated politicians need to do more to act in the best interests of Australian children.

Strikingly, almost half the adults in this poll indicated that no political leader represented their perspective on the wellbeing of children and teenagers. These results suggest that the Australian public wants to see politicians in federal parliament today raise the importance of issues relating to child health and wellbeing.

Data source

This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by the Online Research Unit for The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne. The survey was administered from April 5 to April 19, 2016, to a randomly selected, stratified group of adults aged 18 and older (n=2,113). The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect Australian population figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. More than half of the sample were parents or caregivers of children aged less than 18 years (n=1,050). The completion rate was 65% among Online Research Unit panel members contacted to participate.

Child health and wellbeing: Australians' perceptions on politicians in federal parliament today

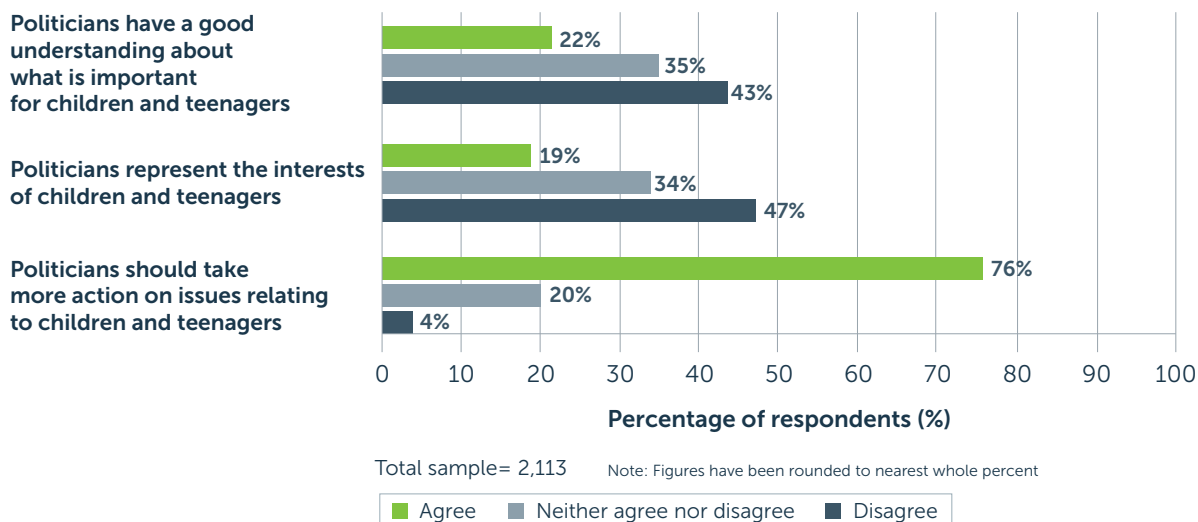
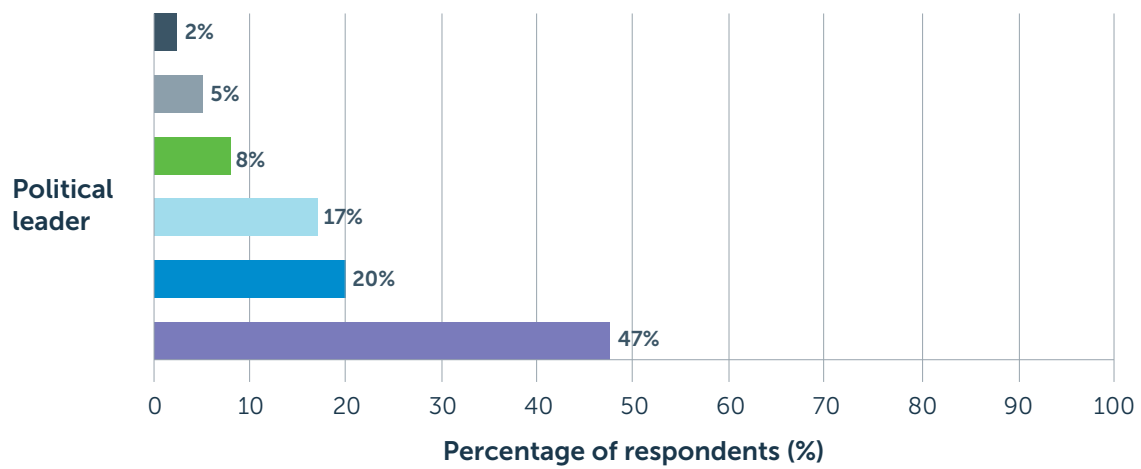


Figure 1.

Political party leader best representing **the public's perspective on the wellbeing of Australian children**



Total sample = 2,113



Figure 2.

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