

Indi Budget Survey 2021

Your say on what
matters most.



Helen
Haines MP

INDEPENDENT FEDERAL MEMBER FOR INDI

Foreword



The 2021 Federal Budget is the Government's spending plan. There are big announcements in this budget – from \$17.7 billion to aged care, to \$2 billion for mental health and an additional \$15 billion for infrastructure projects.

Over the last year, record spending has become the norm as we move through the COVID-19 pandemic.

With trillions of dollars of debt that future generations will repay, it's important to hear if the people of Indi think this is money well spent.

In order to understand the impact of the Budget on the people of Indi, I ran a survey over two weeks asking for people's perspectives. People were contacted via social and traditional media and through my mailing list, and were asked to complete a 5 minute questionnaire in Survey Monkey.

1402 people responded to that call and I present their answers in this report. The results reveal a snapshot from the electorate. Most respondents were over the age of 55 (72%). There was a wide geographical spread reflective of our major population centres - Wodonga (14%), Wangaratta (10%) and Benalla (7%) and the remaining 70% from across the smaller towns and districts of Indi.

The results show that overwhelmingly, people in Indi believe the Government should do much more to invest in critical services like renewable energy, aged care, mental health and childcare. People also want the Government to act on their concerns about climate change, political and government integrity, and women's safety and economic security, but generally have a low confidence that they will do so.

I will use the results of this survey to inform my work in Parliament over the coming months – how I vote on Bills, the policies I advocate for, and the proposals I take to Ministers for funding.

As a community Independent, I am dedicated to directly representing the perspectives of my constituents. The Government's decisions affect the type of community we live in for many years to come.

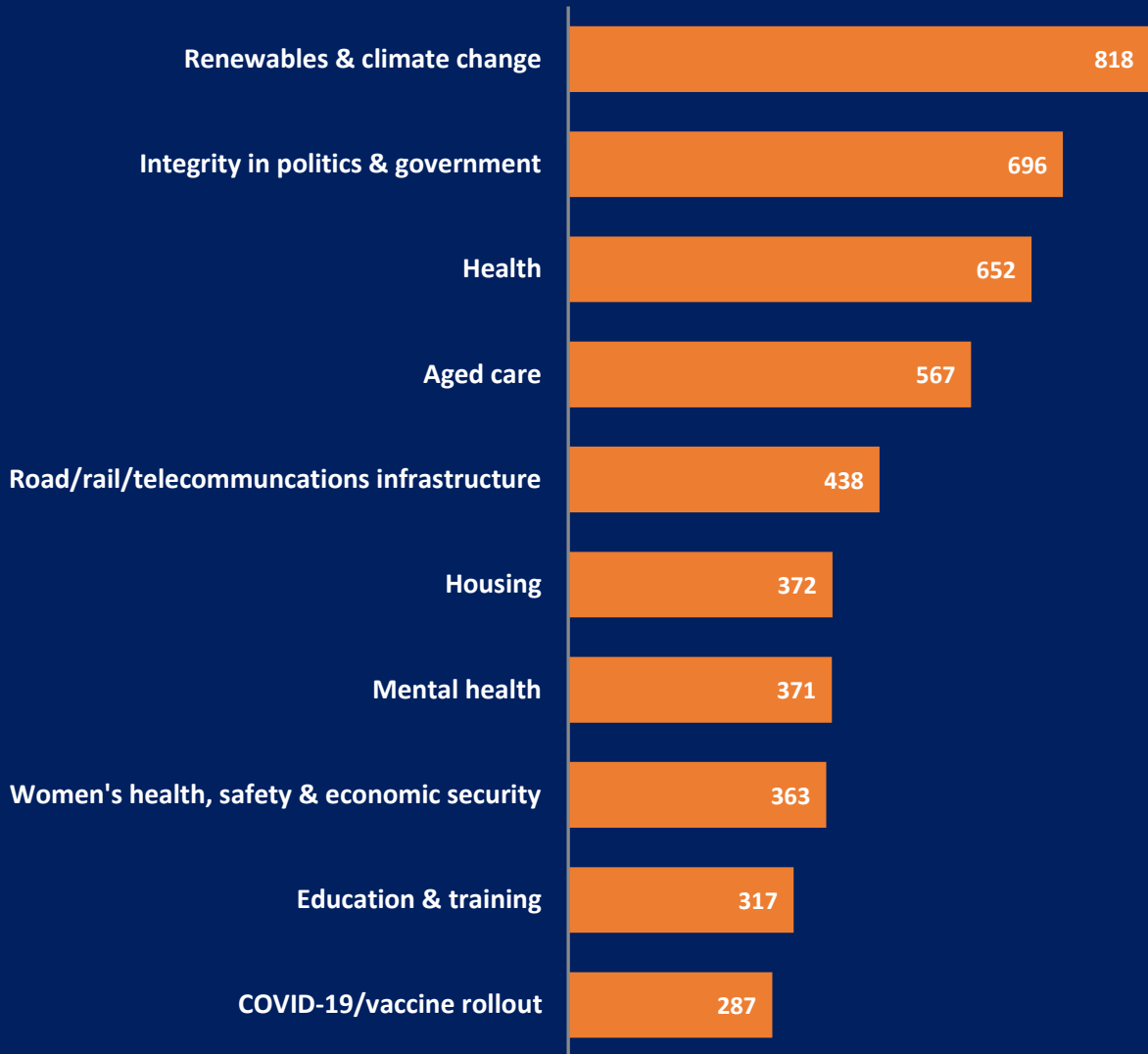
A big thank you to all who completed this survey.

Helen Haines MP

Independent Federal Member for Indi

Top 10 Issues *

What issues are most important to you?



- The top issues for survey respondents are renewable energy and climate change, integrity in politics and government, and health.
- The top issues differed for younger age groups
 - People aged under 34 years chose renewable energy and climate change, women's health, safety and economic security, and mental health as their top issues.

* Number of times nominated. Respondents nominated their top 3 issues

1. Regional infrastructure

The Government has committed to a \$250 million expansion of the Building Better Regions Fund, which has previously funded projects in Indi.

There are over half a billion dollars' worth of shovel-ready infrastructure projects in Indi that could be eligible, such as rail trails, community halls and swimming pool upgrades.

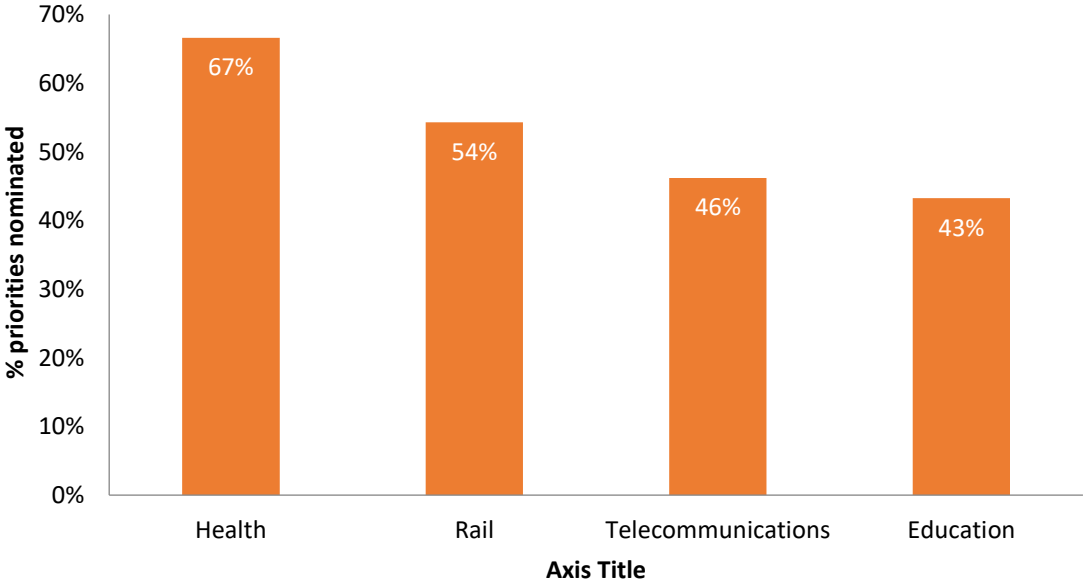
Key Points:

- Respondents were asked to nominate their Top 3 priorities
- Health infrastructure was the top type of regional infrastructure that people would like the Government to fund (67%).
- This was followed by rail (54%), telecommunications infrastructure (46%) and education (43%).

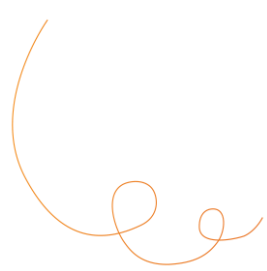
“[There is a] huge imbalance between country and regional telecommunications, especially access to cheap, fast and unlimited internet, and that enjoyed by urban Australians.”

“[Indi is] a great place to live but poor rail service to Melbourne and poor internet connections are major issues for liveability and work.”

Funding regional infrastructure projects (top 3)



2. Aged care



The Budget commits \$17.7 billion over five years for aged care services, including implementing some of the Royal Commission into Aged Care recommendations. This includes additional home care packages, ensuring aged care residents receive 200 minutes of care per day, an additional \$10 per bed daily for aged care providers, and a new star rating system.

Key Points:

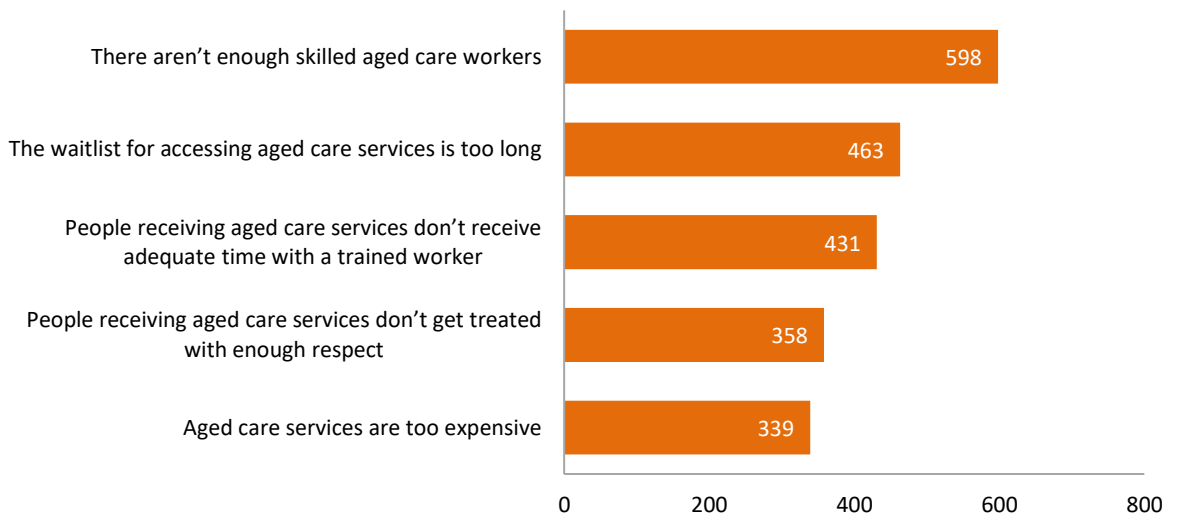
- Half of respondents use aged care services for themselves or a close relative, or expect that they will in the next five years (52%). Of those, more than half use or expect to use home care packages (53%), 9% use or expect to use residential aged care services and 20% use or expect to use both.
- People identified a number of issues related to aged care services. Only 10% of respondents identified no issues with aged care services.
- 70% of respondents believe there aren't enough skilled aged care workers.
- 54% of respondents believe the waitlist for accessing aged care services is too long.
- Respondents have very low confidence that the Government will implement funding and reforms to address issues they identify with – ranking on average 3 out of 10 confidence.

“200 minutes of care will not happen where I work, as we are so chronically short of staff.”

“The Government needs to substantially increase the wages for Aged Care workers.”

Issues with aged care

Respondents nominated their top 3 issues



3. Renewable energy & climate change

The Budget allocates funding to gas projects, hydrogen hubs and carbon capture and storage. There is no new funding in the Budget for regional renewable energy projects or more ambitious climate change policies.

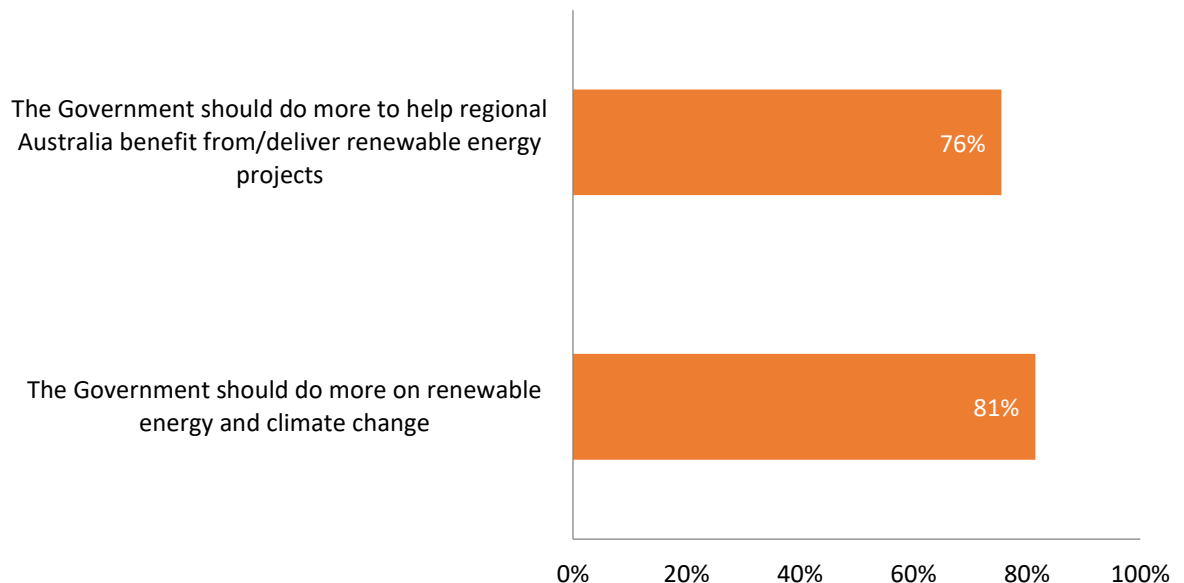
On 22nd February I tabled the Australian Local Power Agency (ALPA) Bill in Parliament, which would help fund community-owned renewables and support the development of medium and large scale renewable projects that will benefit local communities.

Key Points:

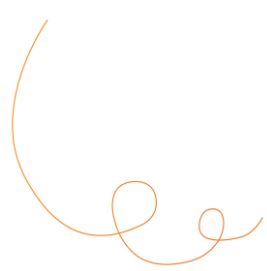
- 81% of respondents think the Government should do more on renewable energy and climate change.
- 76% of respondents think the Government should do more to help regional Australia benefit from and deliver renewable energy projects.

“The time for obfuscating, and procrastinating on climate change has passed - we want concrete commitments to climate change now.”

“It is so worrying that this government is supporting fossil fuel projects rather than renewable. A gas led recovery will lead us into further climate change disaster.”



4. Childcare



In regional areas, access to affordable, quality childcare is often difficult.

The \$1.7 billion childcare package increases the subsidy for second and additional children aged 0-5, and people who can access the scheme will be ~\$132 per week better off.

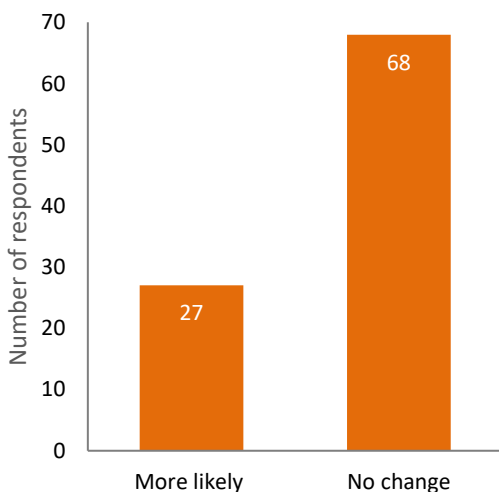
Key Points:

- For respondents who said childcare is relevant, half said the new childcare package in the Government’s Budget will not impact the likelihood of them using childcare services (51%), while 20% said they would be more likely.
- 51% also said that the new childcare package does not influence their decision or ability to work, while 23% said they would be more likely to work.
- The largest barriers facing respondents who want to use childcare services are affordability (24%) and no availability at local childcare centres (21%). 8% of respondents said there are no childcare services in their area.

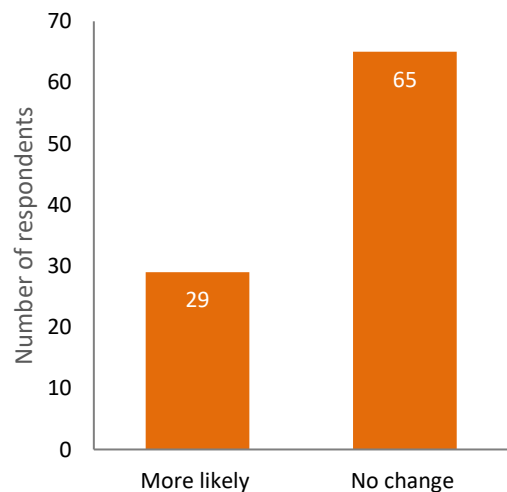
“Childcare access is almost impossible in a lot of towns around Indi, making returning to work practically impossible for many.”

“I am beyond frustrated with childcare services...Because there are no spaces available it means I can not go back to work. This has serious implications on the family finances now we will have to get by on one wage...I can not help my family financially because I have no childcare spaces for my two children!”

Respondents likelihood of using childcare



Respondents likelihood of working



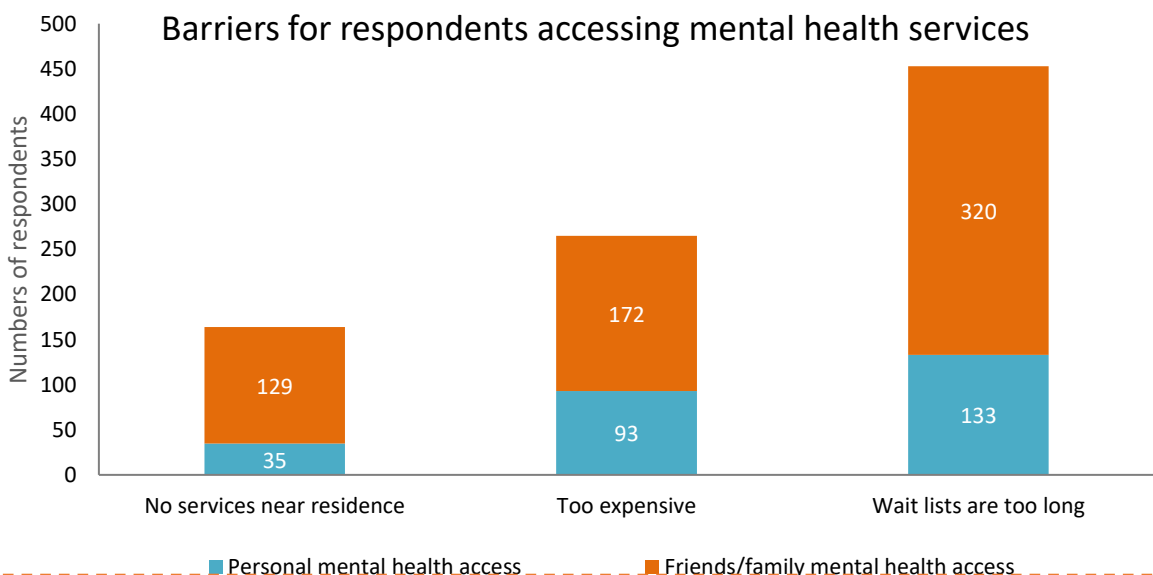
5. Mental health

This Budget allocates \$2 billion to mental health initiatives, including measures to provide care for people following a suicide attempt and expanding access to digital mental health services.

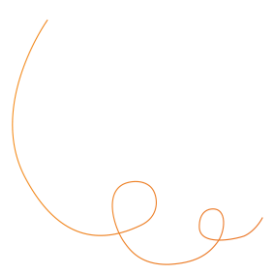
Key Points:

- Of respondents who have tried to access mental health services in the last 12 months (18%), almost three quarters have experienced barriers to accessing those services (69%).
- 36% of respondents have a close friend or family member that has tried to access mental health services in the last 12 months, and 63% have experienced barriers to accessing those services.
- The majority of respondents think that the waitlist for mental health services is too long (66% of those responding to mental health questions related to themselves, and 55% of those responding to mental health questions on behalf of a friend or family member).
- Respondents had very low confidence that the Government would implement funding and reforms to address issues they had personally experienced accessing mental health services, ranking on average 2 out of 10 confidence.

“There has been a big push by the government for one size fits all online mental health support ... Much more needs to be provided in terms of face to face services in regional areas as the wait time for these is horrendous... people often have to wait 3 weeks or more to get into a GP for a referral, creating a further delay.”



6. Housing



The Government has announced a range of Budget measures to help people enter the housing market, including reducing the deposit necessary to buy a house for single parent families and middle-income families, and increasing the amount you can withdraw from voluntary superannuation contributions.

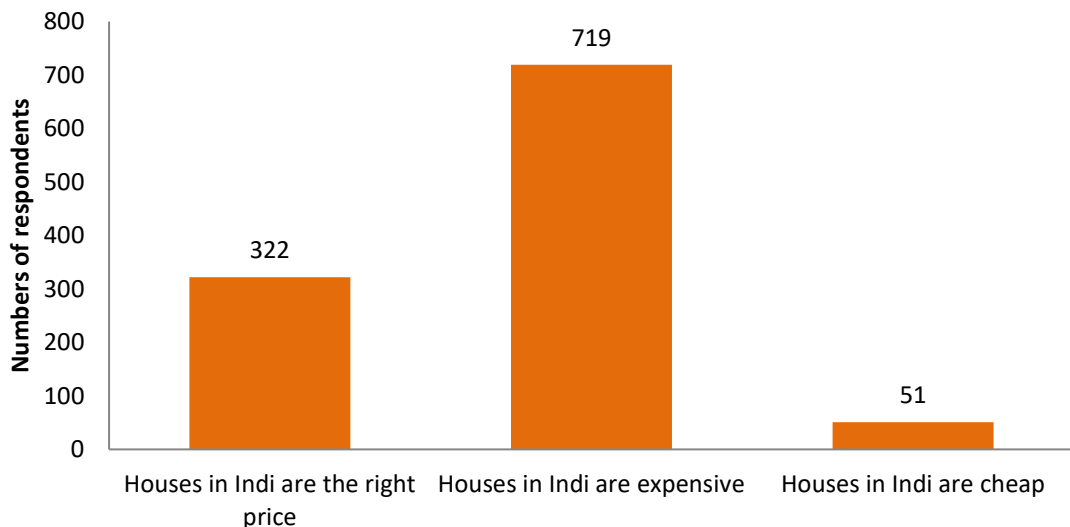
Key Points:

- 15% of respondents have experienced difficulty renting and/or buying a house in Indi.
- Two thirds of respondents believe that housing prices in Indi are too expensive (65%).
- 69% of respondents think that the Government should do more to help people in regional Australia buy a house.
- Younger people aged 18-24 years have the most difficulty renting (33%).
- Respondents aged 25-34 years have the most difficulty buying (15%).
- Respondents aged 35-44 years have the most difficulty buying and renting (16%).

“I want to see spending on social housing, not spin on the few who may be able to buy a house, then struggle to pay the mortgage when the interest rates go up.”

“I worry about how I am going afford housing in the future. Tapping into my super or taking out a bigger loan asks those with less to take big risks. Housing needs to be kept affordable or the equality gap is going to get much larger.”

Opinions on Indi housing prices



7. Women's safety & economic security

The Government has new funding to improve women's safety and economic security.

Funding for women's safety includes for Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence services.

Funding for women's economic security includes measures for childcare and changes to superannuation.

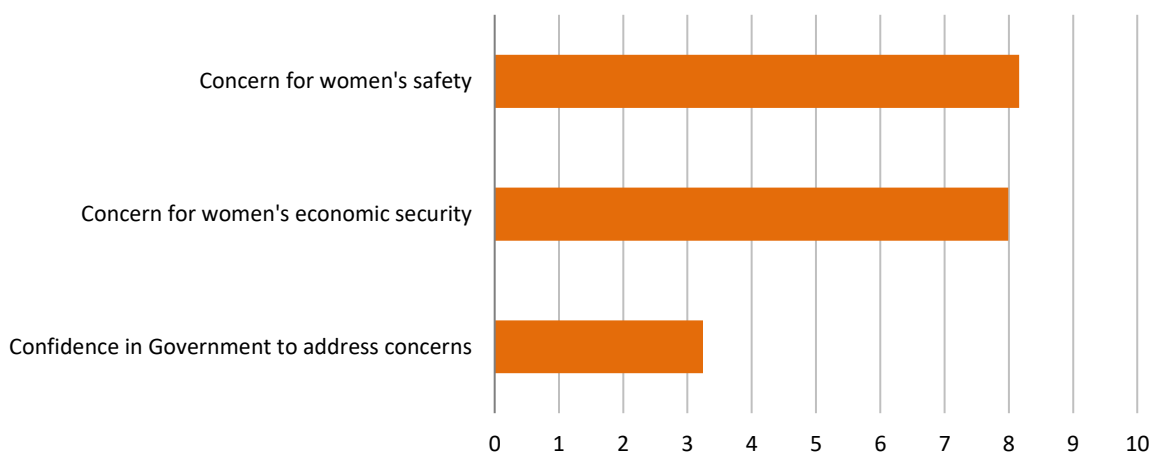
Key Points:

- Respondents on average ranked their concern for women's safety 8 out of 10.
- Respondents on average also ranked their concern for women's economic security 8 out of 10.
- Respondents on average ranked their confidence that the Government would improve women's safety and economic security 3 out of 10.

"Childcare is not simply a women's issue. It is an issue for families. There are systemic issues that need to be addressed in relation to women's safety, participation in the workforce, financial security and ageing."

"Until the pay disparity between predominantly female based "caring" industries like social work, childcare, nursing, etc is addressed, we will always earn less and contribute less to our super. Not to mention in our society we are the ones who are most likely to take time out for the household caring roles for our children and parents. Those of us who do this as a choice should not be economically penalised."

Respondents' rating out of 10





Indi's Response to Federal Budget 2021-22

Survey Results
June 2021



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