

Genomics Knowledge and Attitudes Survey

A survey of the Australian public about the use of genomics in health care

Prepared for: Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

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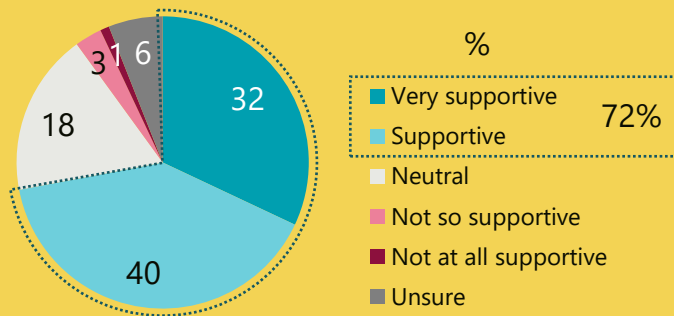
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Date: September 2026

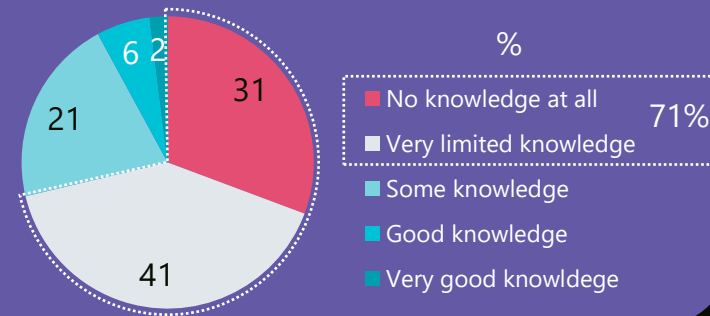


What do Australians think about genomics in healthcare?

Australians are broadly supportive for use of genomics in everyday medical care



71% think they have no or very limited knowledge of genomics



Australians see clear personal value in genomic information

92% see at least some personal benefit.

Examples include:



faster or more accurate diagnosis



understanding personal health risks



finding the right medicines and doses

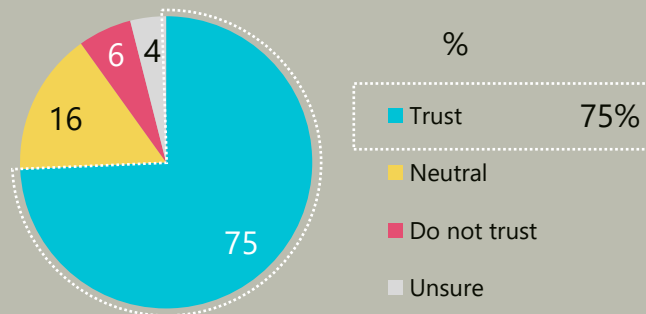
Australians expect access to genomic testing to be fair and equitable

access should be fair for all communities in Australia **80%**

all Australians should have equal access, regardless of income **79%**

genomic testing should not increase existing health inequalities **75%**

Australians trust healthcare professionals with genomic information



Support for genomics sits alongside strong concerns about privacy and data use

misuse of genomic testing information by commercial entities **73%**

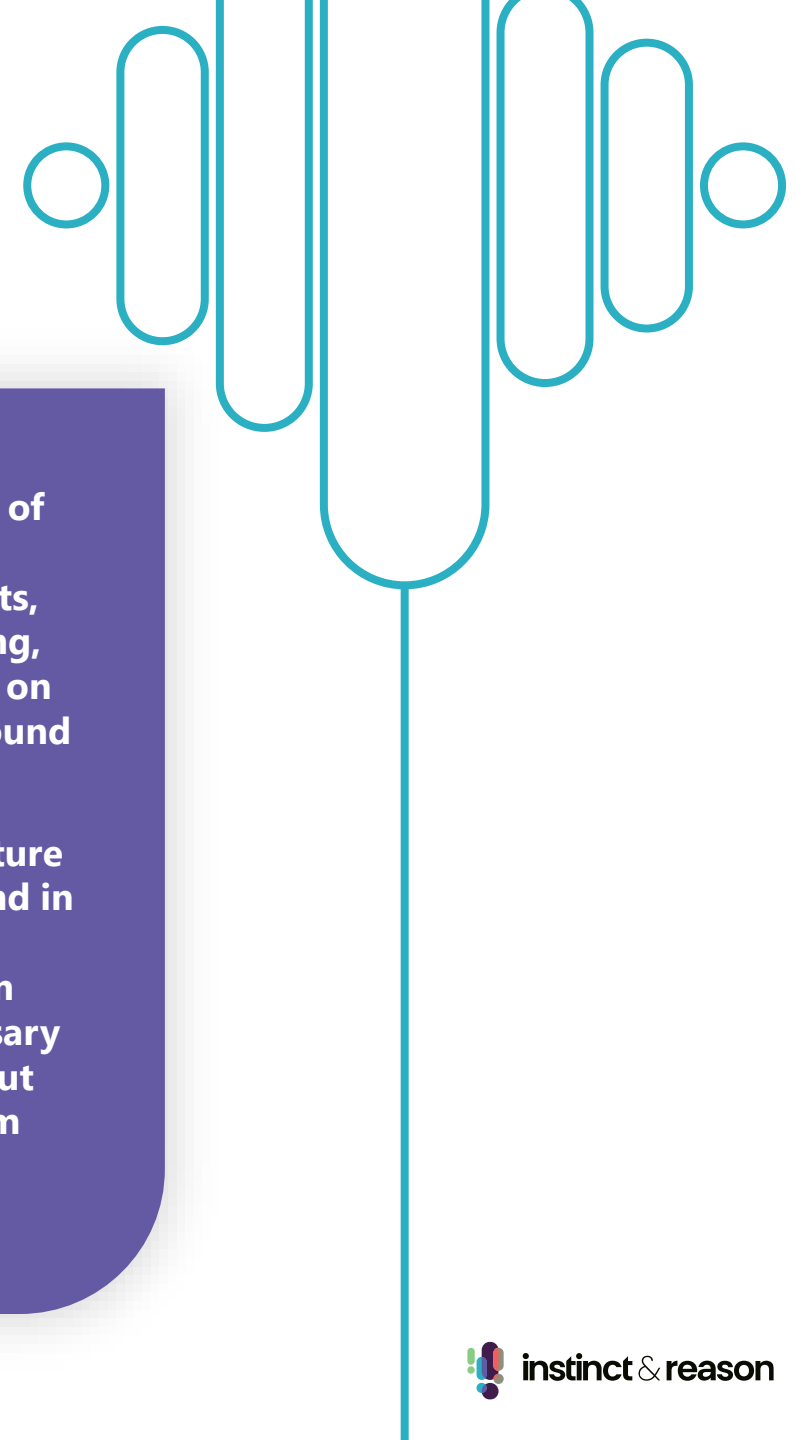
data breaches exposing your genomic testing information **72%**

commercial companies using genomic testing information for marketing or profit **71%**

Research objectives



Why we did this research



Genomics is becoming increasingly relevant to healthcare, moving beyond specialist research and clinical settings into broader healthcare delivery. It can influence how health conditions are diagnosed, how health risks are understood and how care and treatment are tailored.

At the same time, there has been limited national evidence about whether Australians understand genomics, how they feel about its use in healthcare, and the levels of trust, confidence and concern that surround it.

Public attitudes matter because genomics can have implications not only for individuals, but also for families and communities.

This research provides a baseline of Australians' awareness and understanding, perceived benefits, willingness to use genomic testing, trust and privacy concerns, views on data sharing, and expectations around fair access.

The findings provide a clearer picture of where Australians currently stand in relation to genomics, to equip policymakers and health system planners with the evidence necessary to make informed decisions about resource allocation and program development.

The research objectives

This research provides reliable evidence that can be used to support public understanding and trust in health genomics.



Establish a national
baseline of
genomic
understanding and
confidence



Identify priority
knowledge gaps
and
misconceptions



Assess equity of
understanding
across population
groups



Understand public
attitudes towards
and acceptance of
genomics



Inform future
public education,
engagement and
evaluation activities

Our research approach

The study was developed in stages, drawing on existing evidence, public discussion in online spaces, survey testing and a national survey.

We started by reviewing existing research and public discussion about genomics

A rapid review of existing research identified established measures of genomic attitudes and understanding, with particular attention to **17 peer-reviewed studies** relevant to the Australian healthcare context. This was complemented by an AI-assisted scan of Australian public commentary present in online spaces.

We designed and tested the survey before launching nationally

The survey was developed through stakeholder workshops with the findings from the review in mind, then tested with **61 participants** to check that the questions were clear, easy to understand and interpreted as intended. It was refined based on their feedback before the national survey began.

We then surveyed a nationally representative sample of Australians

The representative online survey included **1,751 Australian adults** and was conducted from **22 May to 2 June 2026**.

Results were weighted to reflect the Australian population by age, gender, location and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status.

*Rounding of figures – may result in anomalies of +/- 1%.

We also boosted cultural groups with larger populations in Australia

To strengthen subgroup analysis, an additional 259 culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) respondents were recruited from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with the largest population representation in Australia. This brought the total number of completed surveys to 2,010.

Who we surveyed

This sample shows the actual profile of people who completed the survey (unweighted), before the results were adjusted using ABS Census data to better reflect the Australian population (weighted).

Total unweighted sample n=1751

Gender n=

Female	898
Male	850
Non-binary / other	3

State/territory n=

NSW	574
QLD	398
VIC	347
WA	212
TAS	44
ACT	28
NT	11

Region n=

Metropolitan	1296
Regional / rural	349
Remote / other	106

Annual household income n=

Less than \$29,999	175
Between \$30,000 and \$59,999	390
Between \$60,000 and \$79,999	229
Between \$80,000 and \$99,999	173
Between \$100,000 and \$149,999	342
Between \$150,000 and \$199,999	169
Between \$200,000 and \$299,999	107
\$300,000 or more	77
Prefer not to say	89

Highest education level n=

No formal schooling	1
Primary school	17
Some secondary school	202
Completed secondary school	363
Trade or technical qualification	395
University diploma or degree	524
Postgraduate	223
Other	12
Prefer not to say	14

Age n=

18 to 24	181
25 to 34	394
35 to 44	317
45 to 54	253
55 to 64	240
65+	366

Do you currently work in or have a background in health, science, or a related work field? n=1751

Yes - health or medical profession	183
Yes - scientific research or academia	61
Yes - allied health or disability sector	95
No	1383
Don't know / prefer not to say	29

Have you or an immediate family member ever had genetic testing or received genetic test results? n=1751

Yes – myself	213
Yes – a family member	218
Yes – both myself and a family member	101
No	1110
Don't know / prefer not to say	109

What does this study mean by genomics?

Genomics is the study of our complete DNA sequence – the instructions inherited from biological parents that shape our health, your disease risks, and how your body responds to medicines. Your DNA can also be influenced by environmental factors. Unlike a single genetic test that looks at one gene, genomics looks at your entire genetic makeup to build a more complete picture of your health.

Main findings

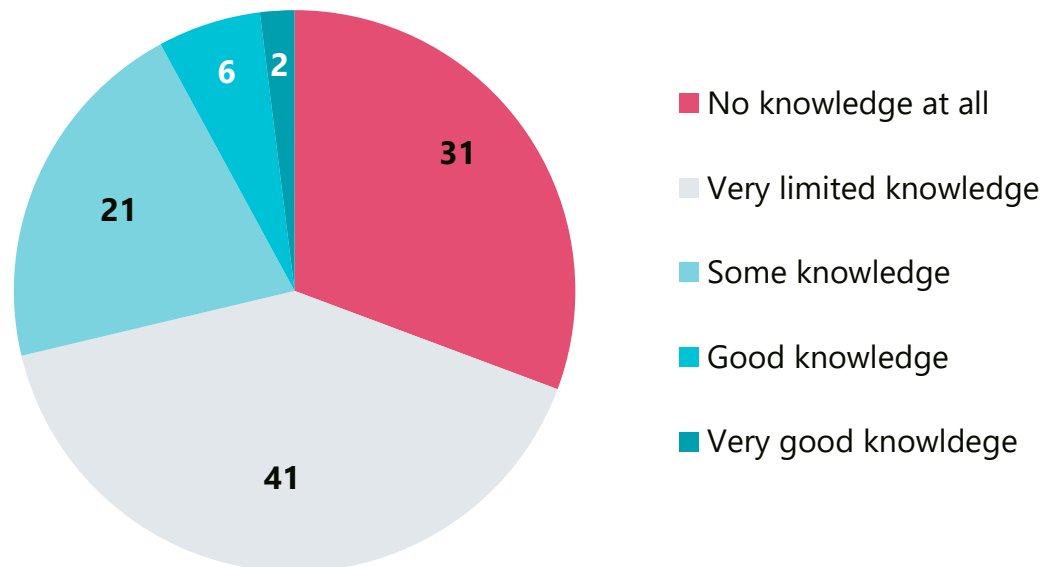


How much do Australians think they know about genomics?

Most Australians think they know little about genomics, and their own descriptions suggest that understanding is often broad rather than specific.

How Australians rate their own knowledge of genomics

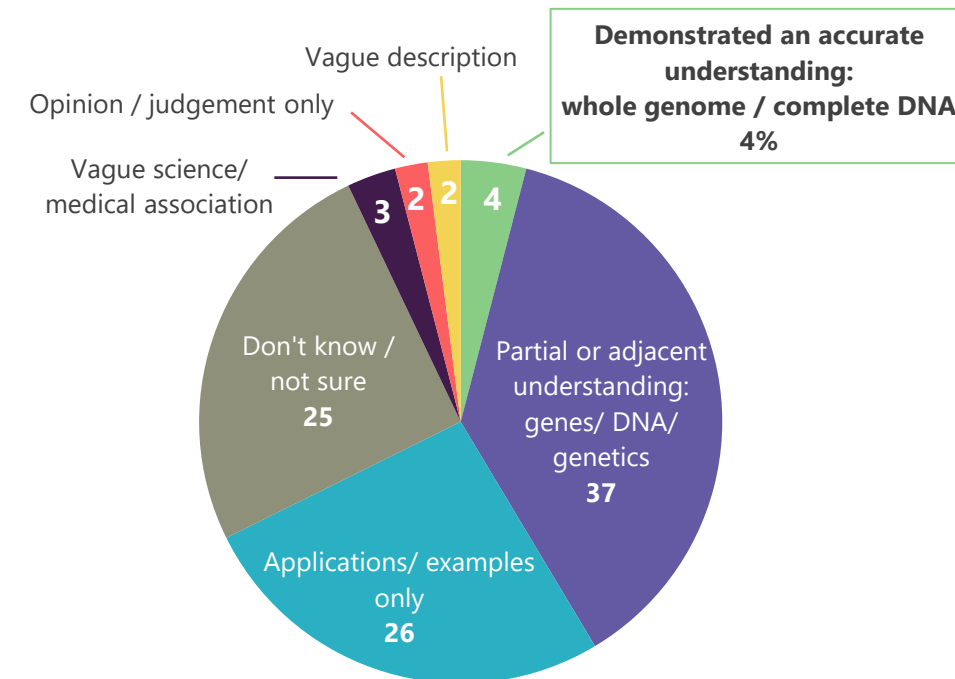
In %



Many can answer basic questions when prompted, but few can clearly explain what genomics is.

How genomics is described

In %



Sample size = 1751.

A4. How would you rate your overall knowledge of genomics and how it is used in health care and medicine?

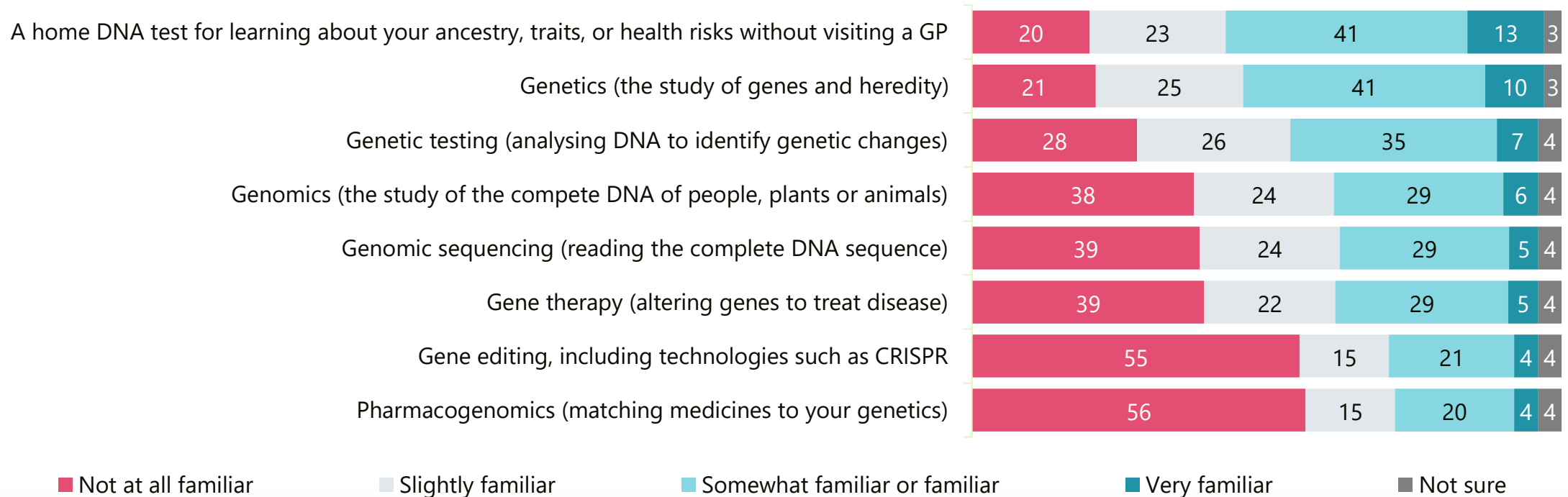
A6. How would you describe genomics, in your own words? [Open-ended responses have been back-coded].

Are Australians equally familiar with genetics and genomics?

Familiarity is higher for general concepts and practical uses, than more technical terms.
51% say they are at least somewhat familiar with genetics, whereas this drops to 34% for genomics.

Familiarity with terms

In %



Sample size = 1751.

A1. How familiar are you with each of the following terms?

Awareness & understanding

Which aspects of genomics are better understood than others?

Australians are more likely to understand some practical uses of genomics than its limits, availability and implications.

Better understood aspects

In %

	Answer	Correctly answered	Incorrectly answered	Unsure
Genomics can help diagnose rare or undiagnosed diseases	True	65%	5%	30%
A genomic test can tell you exactly which health conditions you will develop in the future	False	60%	8%	32%
Genomic information is inherited and shared among biological family members	True	58%	7%	35%
Genomic testing is currently available in Australian public hospitals	True	57%	12%	31%

Less understood aspects

In %

	Answer	Correctly answered	Incorrectly answered	Unsure
I will have to share my genomic results with others (employer, insurer etc) Note: prior to 8 October 2026, genetic test results could be used in life insurance underwriting.	False	44%	22%	34%
Genomics is only relevant to people with a family history of genetic disease	False	29%	12%	60%
Genomics can guide which medications work best for an individual	True	21%	37%	42%

Uncertainty is widespread across the statements, indicating that many people are unsure about key aspects of genomics.

Sample size = 1751.

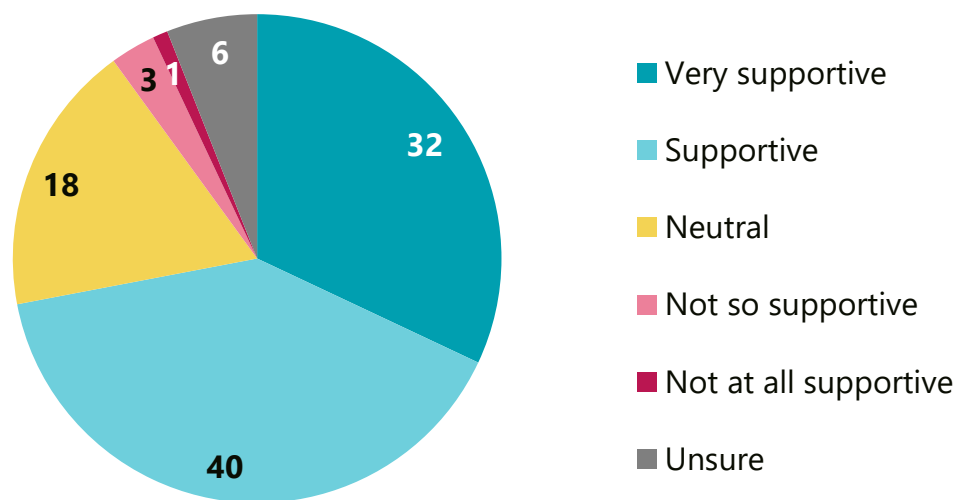
A2. To the best of your knowledge, which of the following do you think are true or false about genomics [True/False/Not sure]?

How accepting are Australians of genomics in healthcare?

Support is high, with relatively little active opposition.

How much support is there for genomics in everyday medical care provided to Australians?

In %

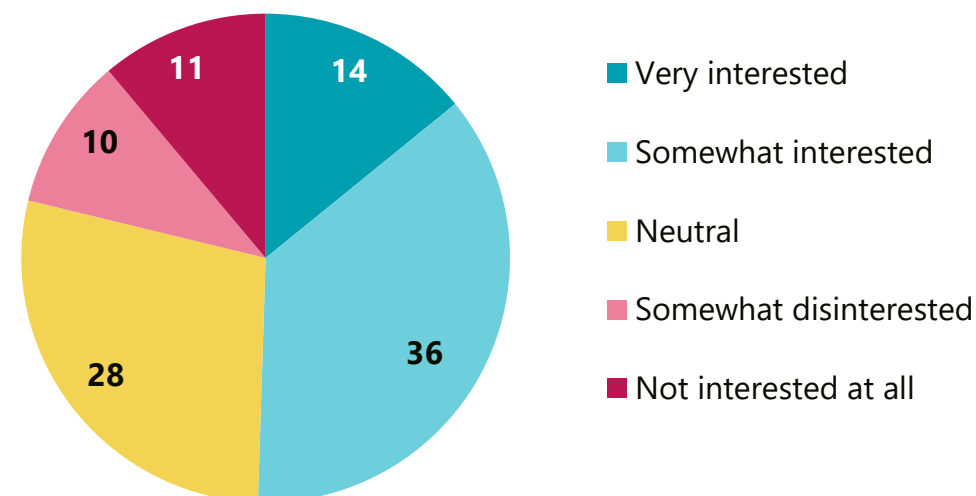


51% are interested in learning more about genomics.

For a specialised scientific topic that many people currently know little about, this indicates a meaningful level of curiosity and openness to further information.

How much interest is there in learning more?

In %

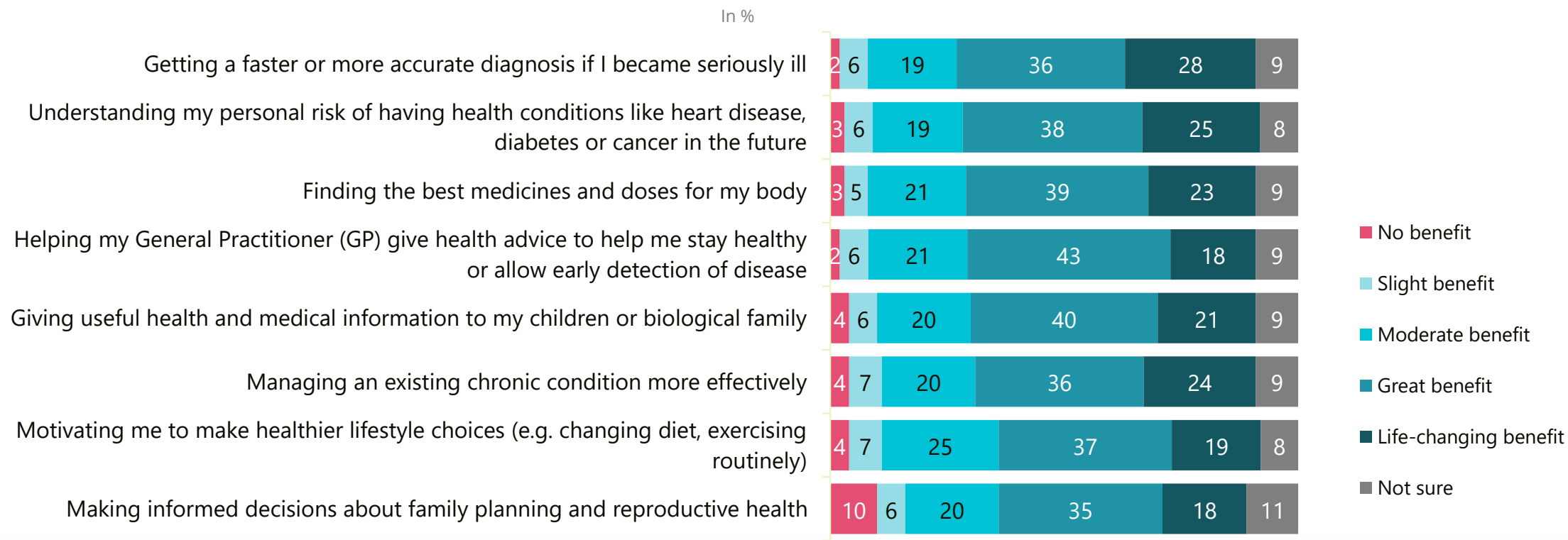


Sample size = 1751. B1. How much do you support the use of genomics in everyday medical care provided to Australians? A5. How interested are you in learning more about genomics? Use the scale below where 1 means not at all interested and 5 means very interested.

What value do Australians see in genomics?

The potential personal benefits are widely recognised, particularly for diagnosis, understanding health risks and finding the right medicines.

Perceived personal benefits of genomic information



Sample size = 1751.

A7. How beneficial do you think genomic information could be for you personally in each of the following areas of your everyday healthcare?

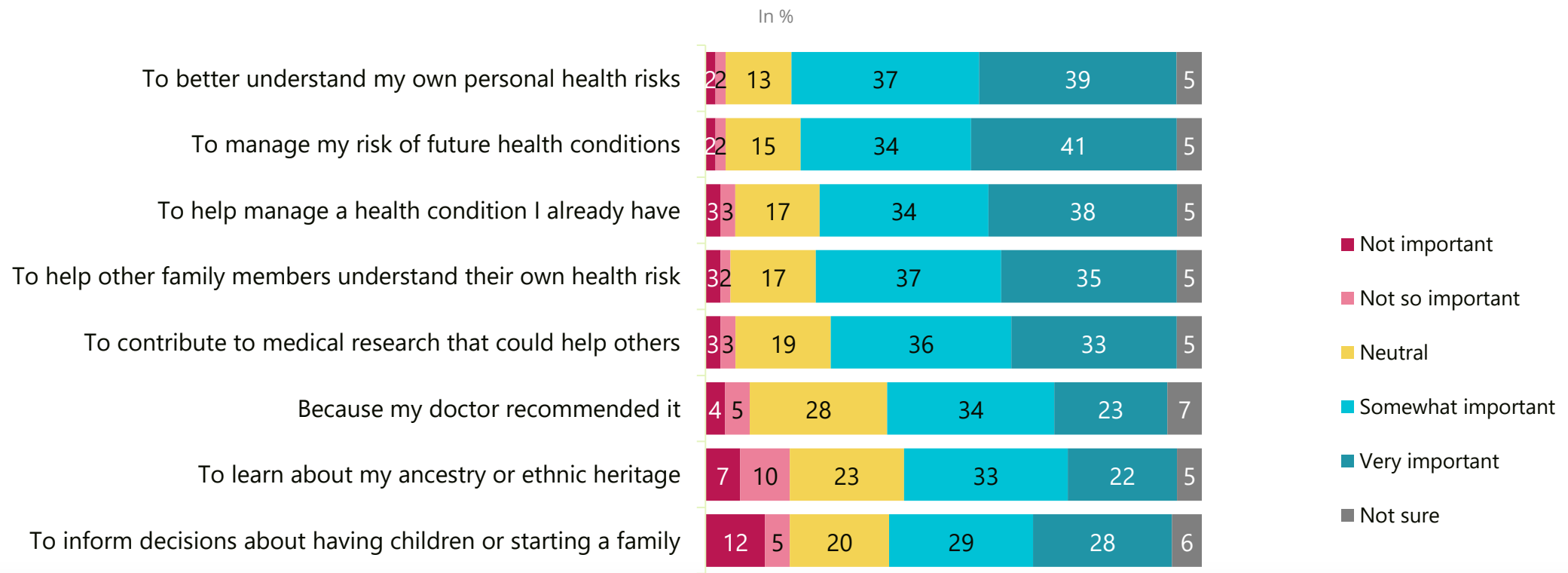
Support, benefits and willingness to use genomics

What would motivate Australians to have a genomic test?

Australians are more likely to act when genomics has a clear and immediate relevance to their own health, both for understanding future risk and managing existing conditions.

Reasons for testing also include benefits for family members and contributing to medical research.

Importance of reasons for having a genomic test



Sample size = 1751.

B5. People may consider genomic testing for a range of different reasons. If you were to have a genomic test, how important would each of the following be as a reason for doing so?

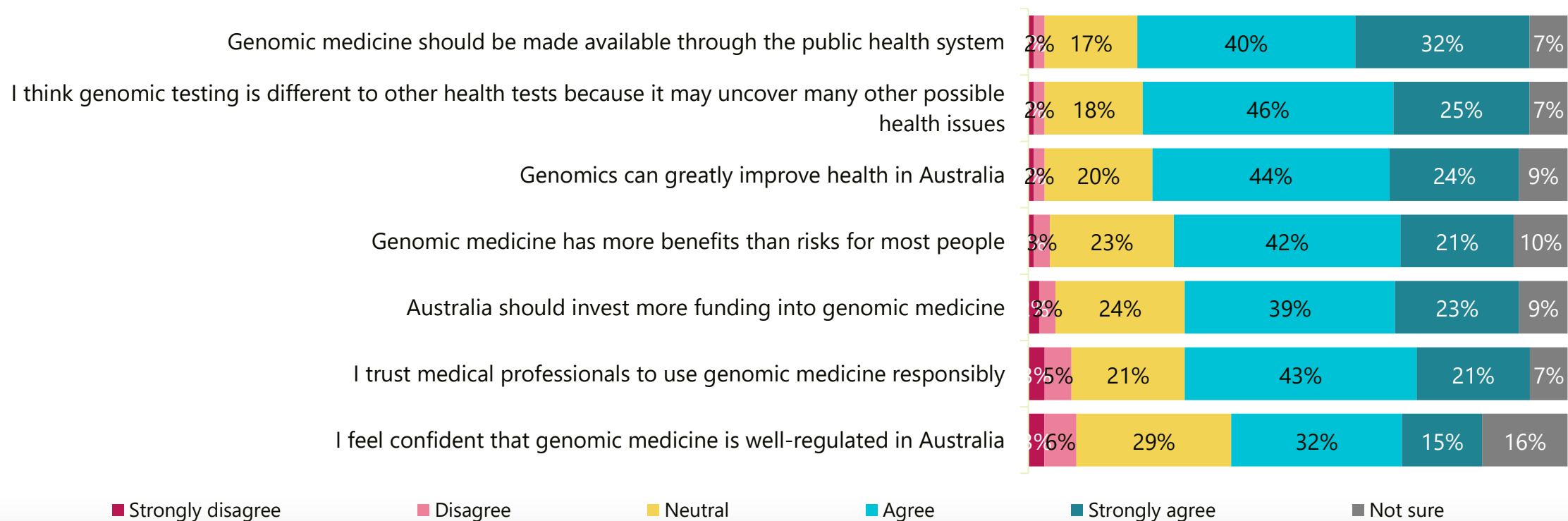
Support, benefits and willingness to use genomics

How is genomics viewed in the context of healthcare?

Australians see genomics as a distinct and important part of healthcare, with clear potential to improve outcomes. However, people were less certain that genomic medicine is well-regulated in Australia.

Impressions of the role of genomics in healthcare

In %



Sample size = 1751.

B4. Based on your own impressions or understanding about genomics and its role in healthcare, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

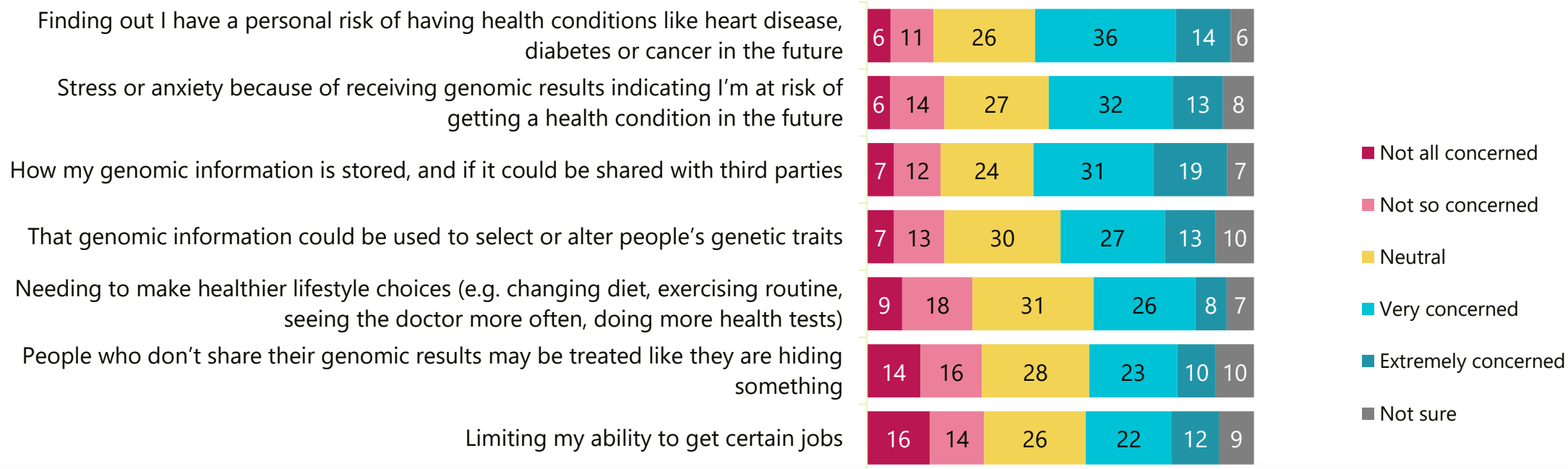
Support, benefits and willingness to use genomics

What are Australians' concerns relating to personal genomic information?

A range of concerns emerge, from possible future health risks, to developing stress or anxiety, and around how genomic information is stored and accessed.

Areas of concern around receiving personal genomic information

In %



Sample size = 1751.

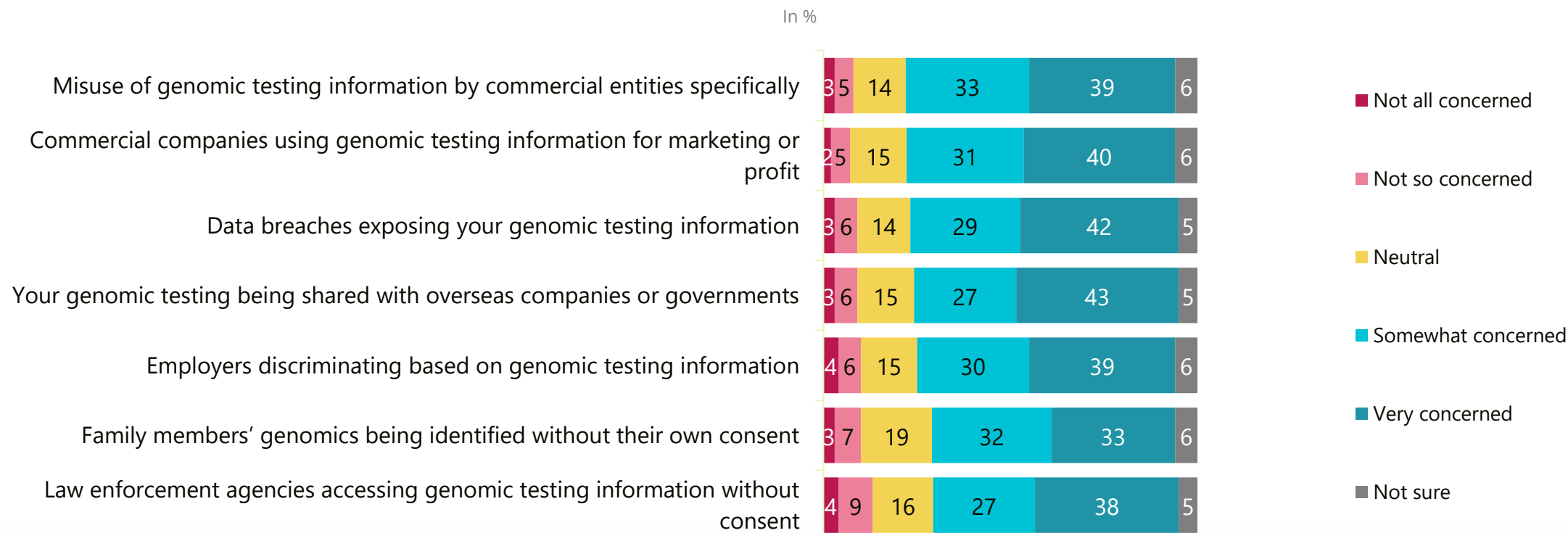
A8. Thinking about receiving genomic information about your health, how concerned would you be about each of the following?

Concerns and risks

How important is the secure handling of genomic testing information?

Secure handling is crucial to public trust and support. Australians have substantial concerns about how information from genomic testing could be accessed, used or misused, particularly through commercial use and data breaches.

Concerns about genomic testing information



Sample size = 1751.

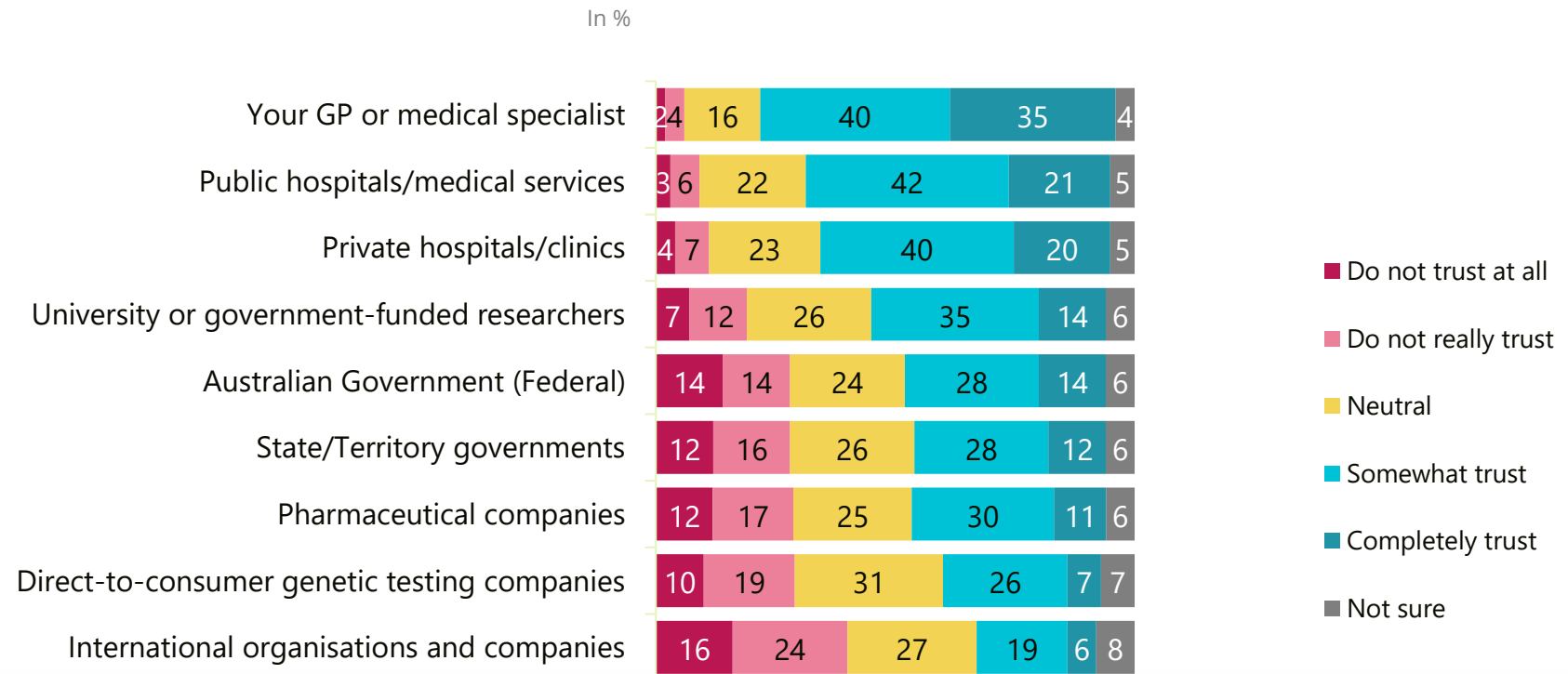
C2. People may have different concerns about how genomic information could be used or accessed. Thinking generally, how concerned would you be about each of the following?

Trust, privacy and data sharing

Who do Australians trust with genomic information?

Trust in responsible handling of genomic information by organisations and institutions varies; healthcare professionals are most trusted, while trust is lower for commercial and international organisations.

Trust in organisations to handle genomic information responsibly



Sample size = 1751.

C3. Thinking now about different organisations and institutions, how much would you trust each of the following to handle genomic information responsibly?

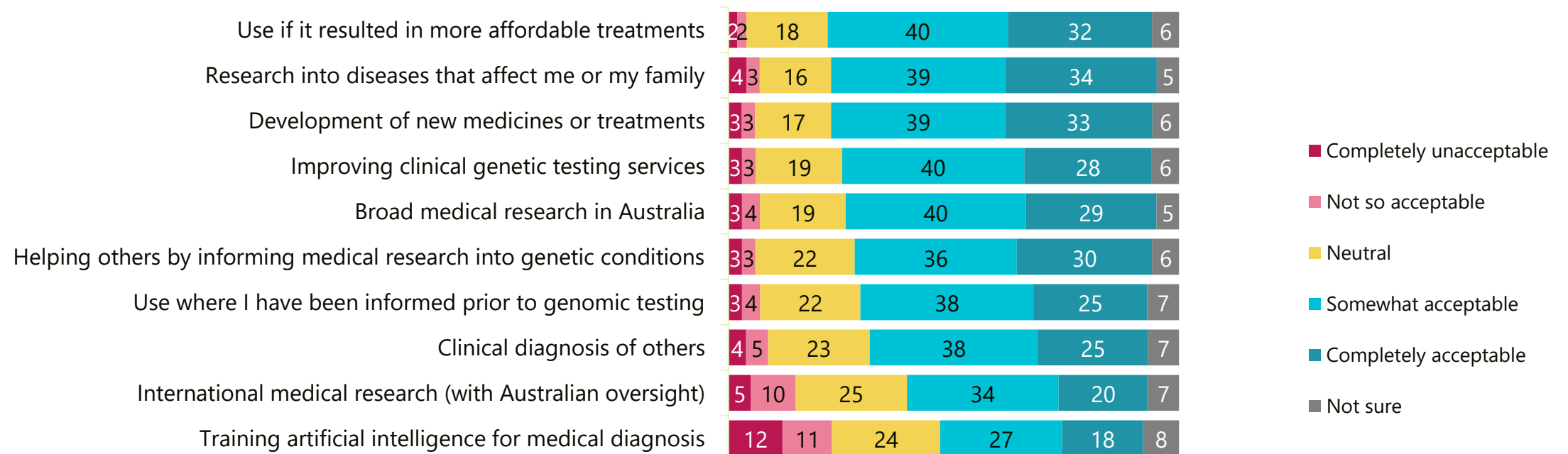
Trust, privacy and data sharing

Are Australians comfortable with use of their genomic information beyond their direct health care?

Australians show willingness to consent to their genomic information being used for the purposes of research and development, and to improve affordability and clinical services.

Uses for genomic information beyond direct health care

In %



Sample size = 1751.

C4. Under which circumstances would you consent to your de-identified genomic information being used beyond your direct health care?

Trust, privacy and data sharing

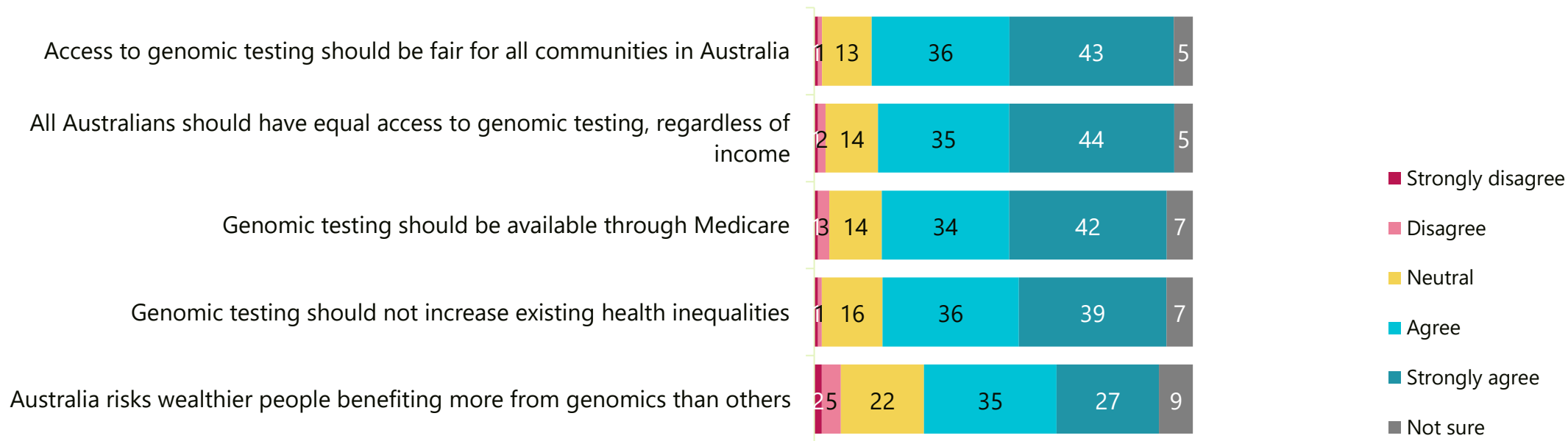
What does fair access to genomic testing look like?

Australians strongly expect equitable access to genomic testing and information, without increasing existing health inequalities.

79% of Australians surveyed agree that genomic testing should be fair for all communities in Australia.

Views on fair and equitable access to genomic testing

In %



Sample size = 1751.

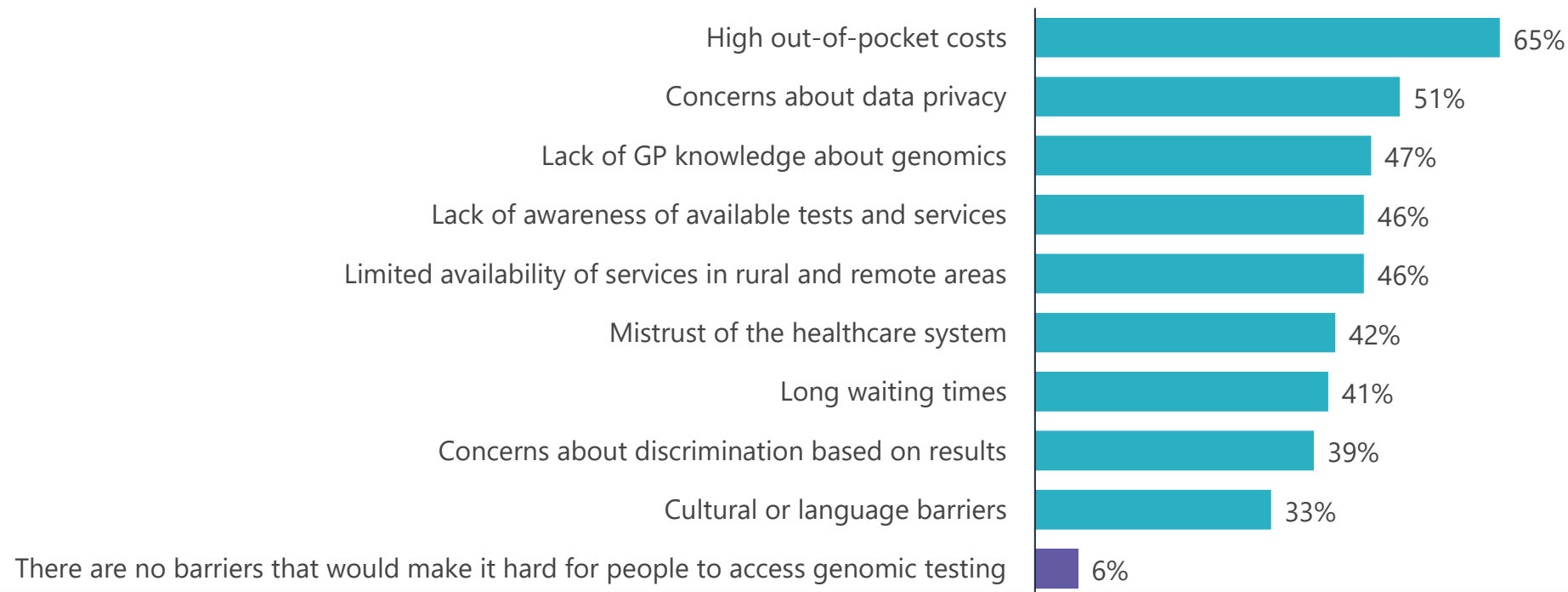
D1. The following statements relate to access to genomic testing in Australia. Thinking generally, how much do you agree or disagree with each statement?

Access and equity

Are there perceived barriers to access?

Australians were asked to comment on a range of potential barriers to accessing genomic testing. Cost is the most prominent, alongside privacy concerns, perceived lack of GP knowledge, limited awareness, and service availability.

Barriers to accessing genomic testing in Australia

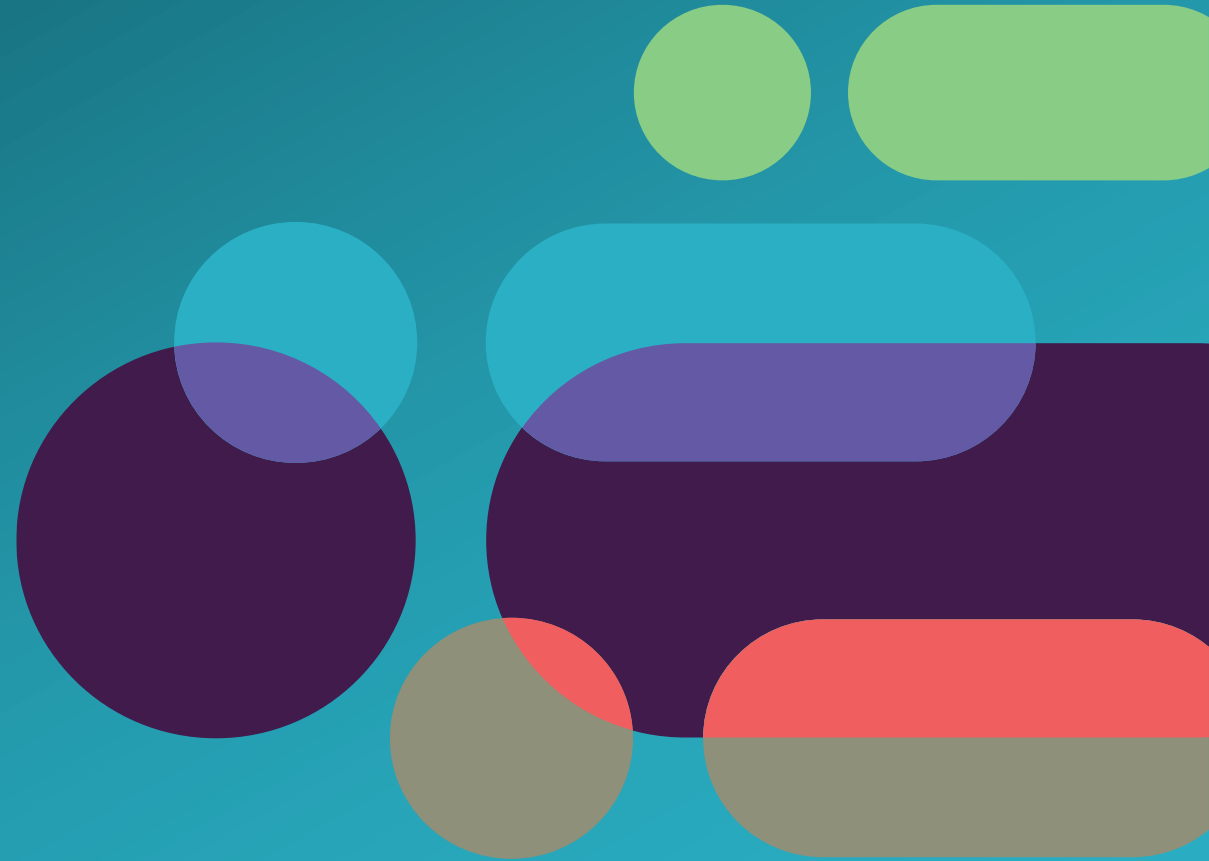


Sample size = 1751.

D2. What barriers do you think might make it hard for people to access genomic testing in in Australia?

Access and equity

Findings across the community



Findings among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents surveyed showed strong interest in and engagement with genomics, alongside clear priorities around how genomic information is used and protected.

Substantial reported familiarity and knowledge

64% reported being at least somewhat familiar with genomics. Understanding was also relatively strong in some practical areas, with **61%** correctly identifying that genomic testing is available in Australian public hospitals and **65%** knowing that genomics can help guide which medicines may work best for an individual.



Genomics was relevant to personal and family health

If genomic information were available through their GP, **80%** said they would be likely to request or use it to understand their future risk of conditions such as heart disease, diabetes or cancer, and **71%** for family planning and reproductive health.



Strong support and interest in learning more

Support for the use of genomics in everyday medical care provided to Australians was high at **77%**. When it came to interest in learning more about genomics, **62%** were somewhat or very interested.



Privacy and personal impacts remain important

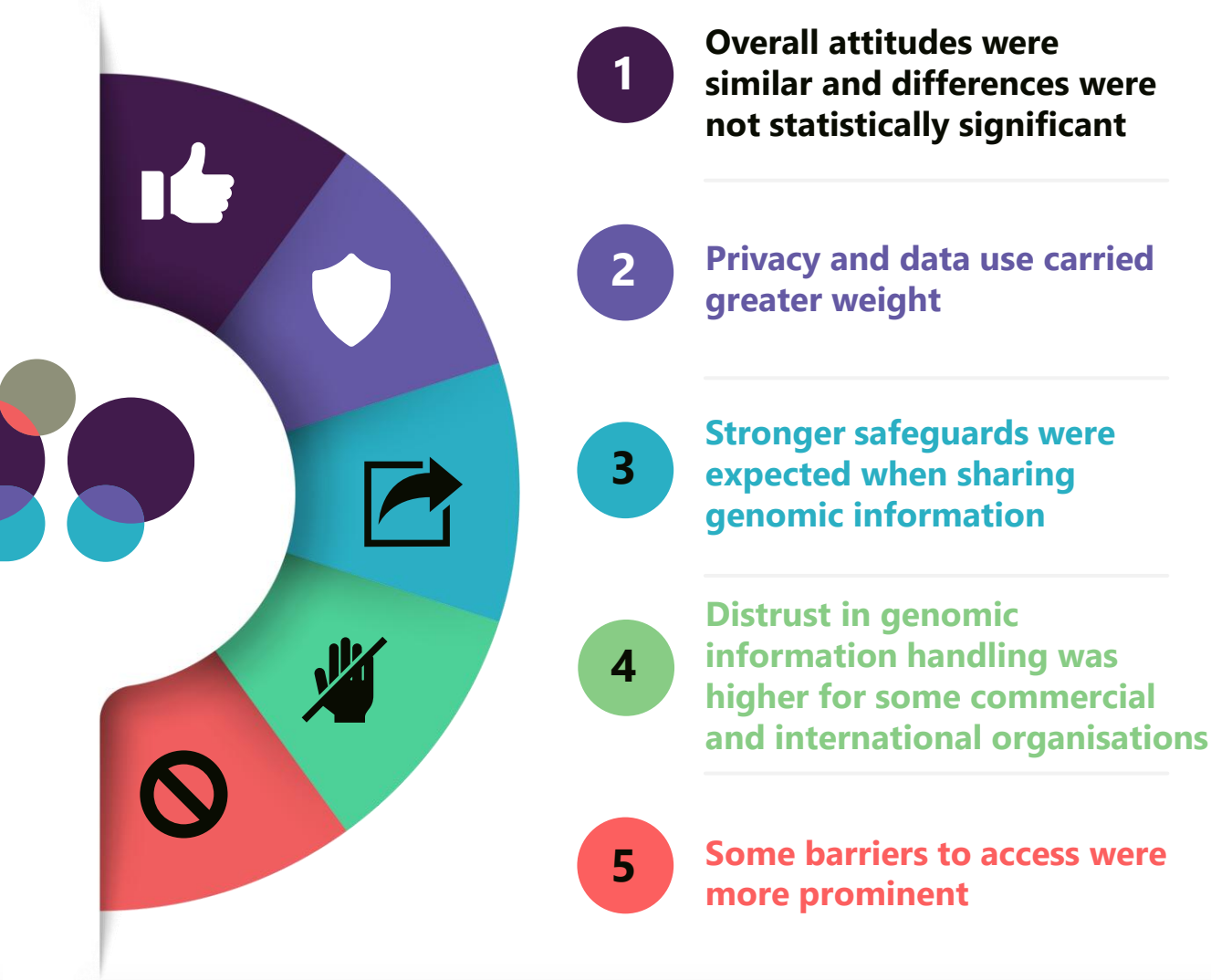
61% anticipated concern about storage or third-party sharing of their genomic information. **58%** anticipated stress or anxiety resulting from receiving genomic information about their health. **52%** were concerned that receiving this information could limit their ability to get certain jobs.



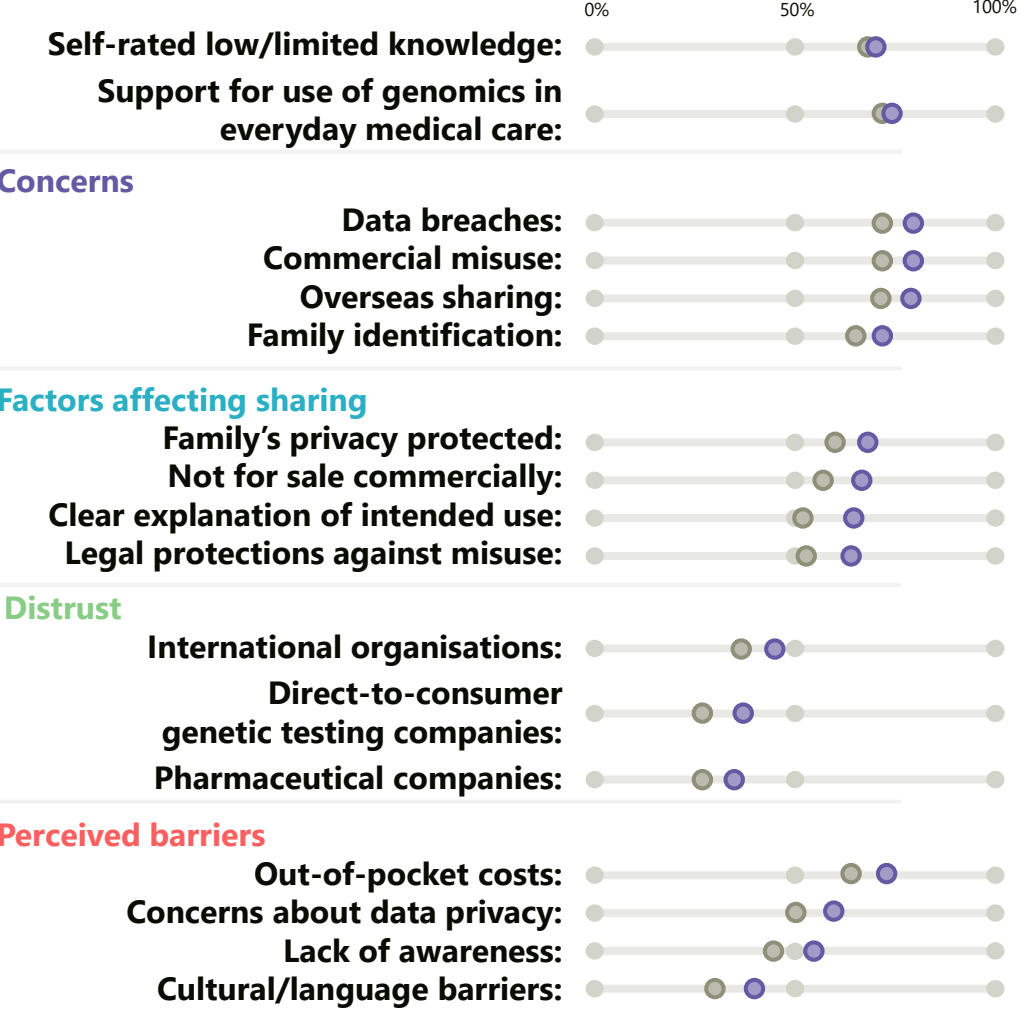
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents surveyed skewed younger and were more likely to live in large urban centres than the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population nationally.

Sample size: The unweighted sample comprises 197 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander respondents; the weighted sample is n=88, reflecting adjustment of the results to better represent the national population using ABS data.

Findings among people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds



Respondents identifying as CALD vs non-CALD
Shown as %



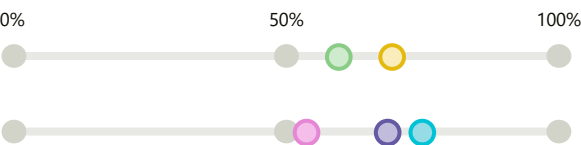
The CALD sample was highly diverse, including people with different cultural backgrounds, and language experiences and findings should be interpreted in that context. The survey was conducted in English only, so people with limited English proficiency are likely to have been under-represented.

Sample size: Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) n=668 including n=259 boost. Non-CALD n=1342.

Differences by age and gender

Who is hearing about genomics, and who is not?

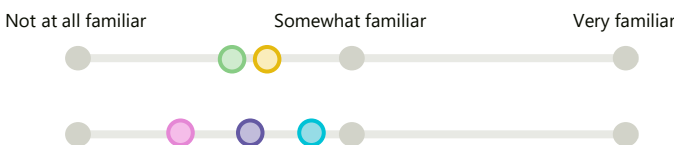
Heard of genomics in the last 12 months



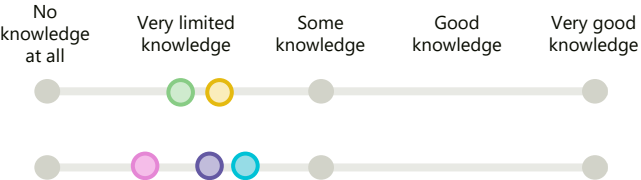
Younger respondents and men were more likely to say they had recently heard about genomics.

Some groups of Australians felt more knowledgeable than others

Familiarity with a range of genomic terms



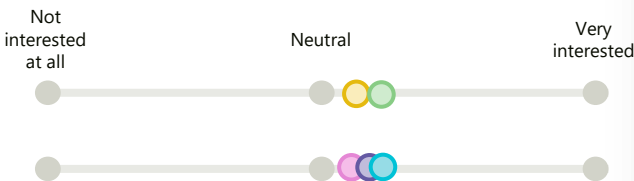
Own rating of overall knowledge of genomics



Younger respondents and men were also more likely to feel familiar with genomic terms, and to rate their own overall knowledge of genomics and how it is used in health care and medicine more highly.

Interest in learning more varied across age and gender

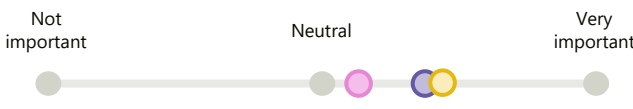
Interest in learning more about genomics



Younger respondents and women showed significantly stronger interest in learning more about genomics.

Why might Australians choose to have a genomic test?

To inform decisions about having children or starting a family



Out of general curiosity about my genetic makeup



To help manage a health condition I already have



Age was the strongest differentiator in motivations for having a genomic test. Younger respondents placed greater importance on family planning, curiosity and ancestry, while older respondents placed greater importance on using genomic testing to manage existing health conditions.

Gender

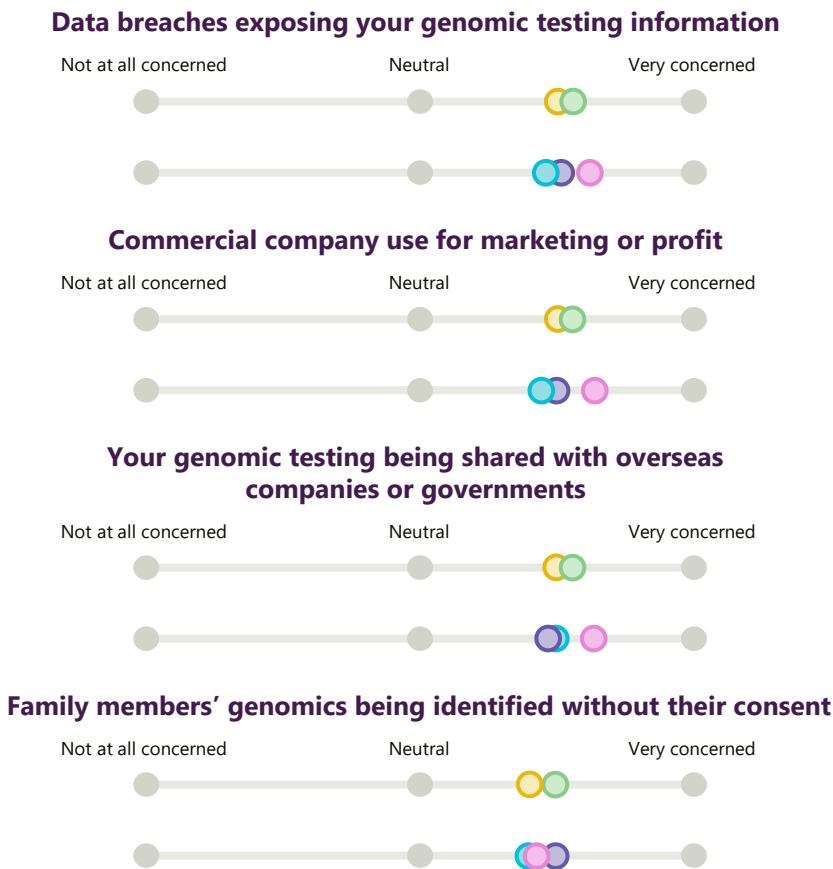
Male	Female	Other
Yellow dot	Green dot	Sample size too small

Age

18-34	35-54	55+
Cyan dot	Purple dot	Pink dot

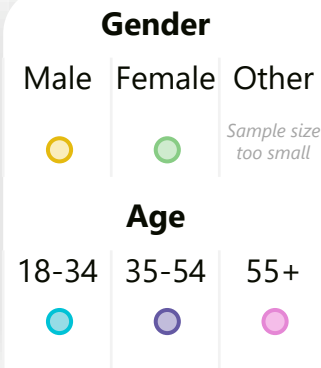
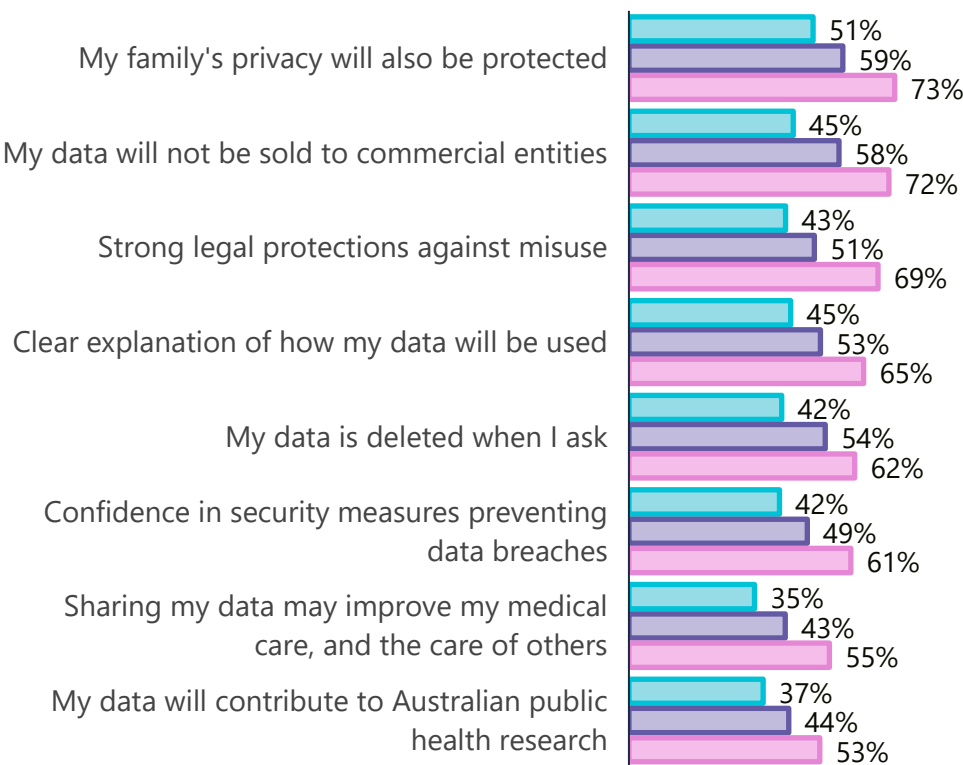
Differences by age and gender

Protecting genomic information was a key concern, particularly among older Australians



Trust, privacy protections and having safeguards in place for control over data are key to Australians' willingness to sharing genomic information.

These influences were particularly important to older respondents

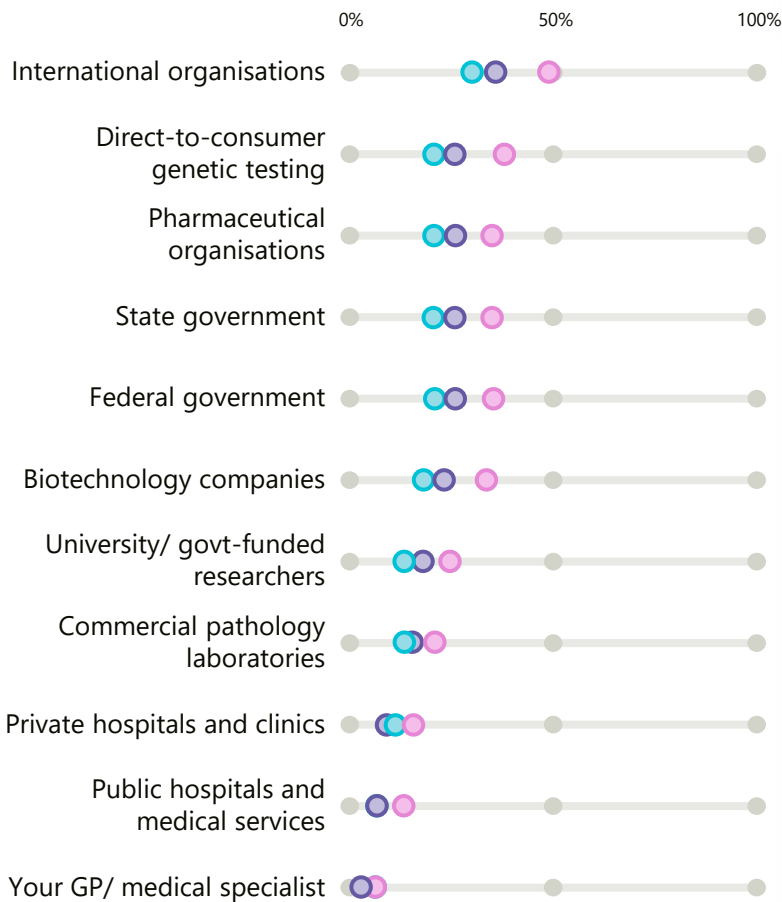


Note: Results are shown as mean scores unless a percentage is displayed (indicating the % of respondents that selected that response). Data not shown where the differences between people of different genders were not as prominent.

Sample size: Female n=897, Male n=850, Other n=4 *base too small, not shown. Ages 18-34 n=575, 35-54 n=570, 55+ n=606

Differences by age and gender

Level of distrust in organisations to responsibly handle genomic information



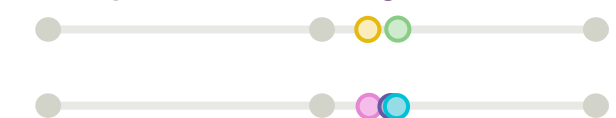
Younger respondents were more concerned about the personal consequences of knowing their genomic risks. Concerns about information handling were widespread, with older respondents showing greater concern about misuse and lower trust in some organisations' responsible handling.

Limiting my ability to get certain jobs

Not at all concerned Neutral Extremely concerned



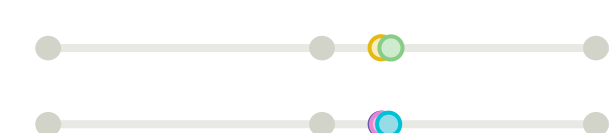
Finding out I have a personal risk of having health conditions in the future



Stress or anxiety because of receiving genomic results indicating I'm at risk



How my genomic information is stored, and if it could be shared with third parties



Gender

Male Female Other



Sample size too small

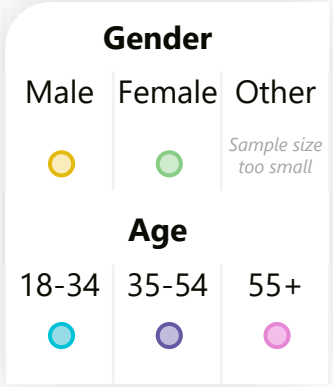
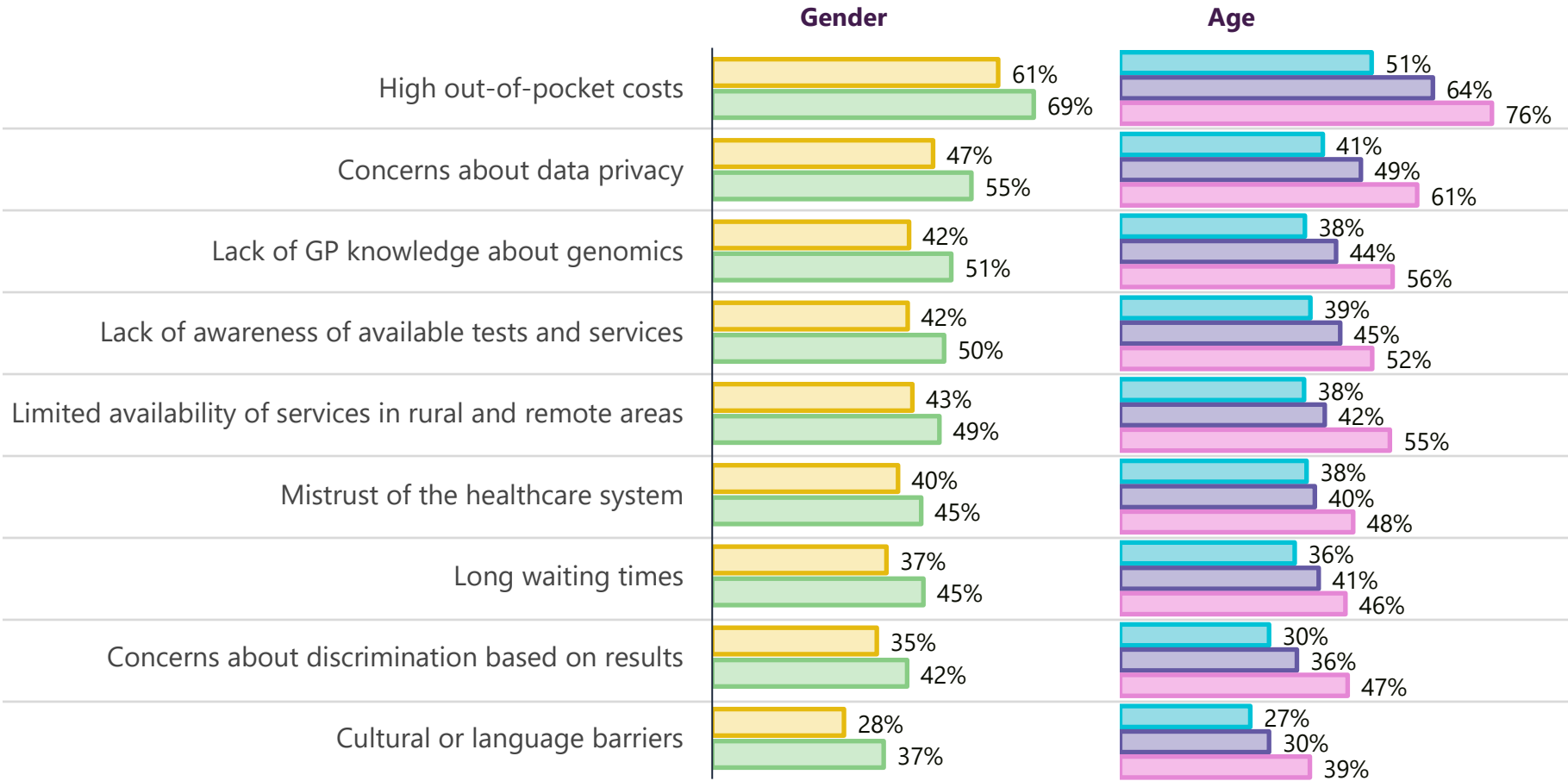
Age

18-34 35-54 55+



Differences by age and gender

Barriers to accessing genomic testing were generally perceived more strongly among older respondents and women.



Note: Results are shown as mean scores unless a percentage is displayed (indicating the % of respondents that selected that response).

Sample size: Female n=897, Male n=850, Other n=4 *base too small, not shown. Ages 18-34 n=575, 35-54 n=570, 55+ n=606

Different mindsets towards genomics



Australians hold seven distinct mindsets about genomics

Australians are not simply divided into supporters and opponents. The segmentation groups people with similar attitudes and behaviours based on how well they understand genomics, both perceived and actual knowledge, and their levels of support and concern about its use.

Segmentation analysis helps us understand the demographics of people in each segment, determine what information we need to share with them, and relevant modes of information sharing.

Low-knowledge cautious supporters – 26%

Support is relatively high, but concerns remain around privacy, governance and how genomic information may be used.

Knowledgeable but cautious supporters – 18%

Privacy, misuse, discrimination and data sharing remain important concerns.

Concerned sceptics – 18%

Concerns about privacy, discrimination, misuse and uncertainty about benefits are prominent.

Low-knowledge but receptive supporters – 14%

Support is relatively high and concern relatively low, despite limited understanding.

Knowledgeable receptive supporters – 10%

Genomics is more readily seen as a useful development in healthcare, with relatively low concern.

Disengaged / unconvinced – 9%

Genomics may feel less personally relevant or engaging, rather than actively concerning.

Confident but under-informed – 6%

Confidence in understanding is higher than factual knowledge, suggesting some gaps or misconceptions may remain.

Implications



Key messages from the survey

The findings present a picture of an Australian public broadly receptive for genomics. They are willing, interested, and capable of moving from uncertainty to confidence when given clear information, they are not yet adequately prepared. Six implications emerge from the data:

Australians are receptive to genomics

Australians showed strong support for the use of genomics in healthcare, with little active opposition. Many also saw clear personal benefits and were interested in learning more, providing a strong foundation of public receptiveness.

Feeling confident about genomics does not always equate to understanding it

Australians' confidence in their knowledge of genomics did not always match their ability to correctly answer questions about it. This means some Australians may feel confident engaging with genomic information while still being vulnerable to misinformation or misconceptions.

Australians approach genomics differently

When Australians were grouped according to their different attitudes and experiences of genomics, seven distinct groups emerged. The largest groups were supportive of genomics but cautious about its use, while caution and knowledge did not always go hand in hand. This highlights the importance of understanding the different ways Australians may approach genomic information when communicating about genomics

Key messages from the survey

Personal relevance shapes how Australians see the value of genomics

Australians saw value in genomics for their own health and for their families, with the reasons for considering genomic testing and potential uses varying by life stage. This suggests that genomics can have different personal meaning across the community.

Trust depends on confidence in how genomic information is handled

Concerns about privacy, misuse, data breaches and sharing of information show that how genomic information is handled is an important part of public trust. Australians placed trust in healthcare professionals to handle genomic information responsibly, making them an important source of information and reassurance about genomics.

Australians want fair access to genomic testing

Australians strongly supported fair and equitable access to genomic testing, including the principle that access should be fair across communities and not depend on income. This expectation extended beyond Australians' own access, reflecting a broader view that people should have the same opportunity to benefit from genomic testing.



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