

Polling - Threats and security

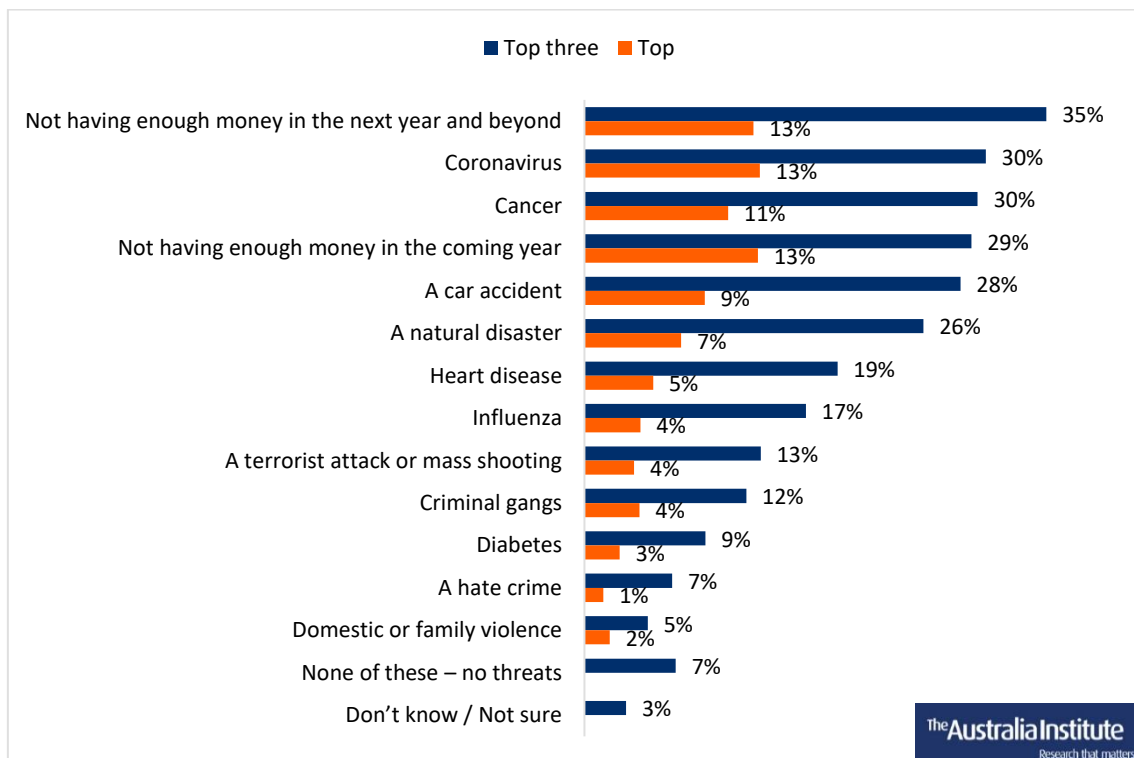
June 2020

Key results

The Australia Institute surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,461 Australians about what they think threatens themselves and their family and what they think threatens Australia. The polling was conducted in early March, during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak but before the number of confirmed cases in Australia had exceeded 100.

Results show that money concerns and disease are the greatest perceived threats for individual Australians and their families, and natural disasters, economic collapse and climate change are the greatest perceived threat for Australians as a whole.

Figure 1: Perceived threats for Australians and their families



Threats to self and family

Australians were asked to rank up to three things that they think represent the greatest threats for them and their families.

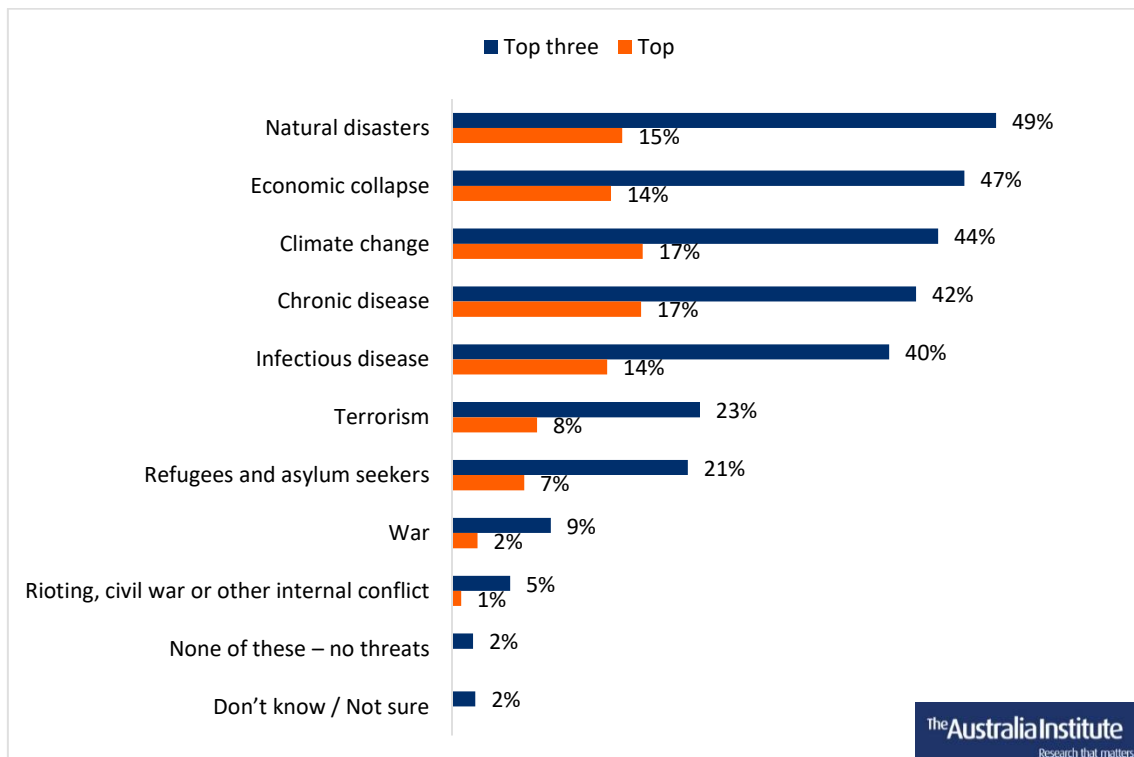
- Financial concerns are major perceived threats.
 - Not having enough money in the next year and beyond is the top threat for 13% of Australians, and in the top three threats for 35% of Australians.
 - Not having enough money in the coming year is the top threat for 13% of Australians, and in the top three threats for 29% of Australians.
- Diseases are also major perceived threats.
 - Coronavirus (COVID-19) is the top threat for 13% of Australians, and in the top three threats for 30% of Australians.
 - Cancer is the top threat for 11% of Australians, and in the top three threats for 30% of Australians.
 - Heart disease is the top threat for 5% of Australians, and in the top three threats for 19% of Australians.
 - Influenza (the “flu”) is the top threat for 4% of Australians, and in the top three threats for 17% of Australians.
 - Diabetes is the top threat for 3% of Australians, and in the top three threats for 9% of Australians.
- A car accident is a greater perceived threat (28% of Australians had it in their top three) than any individual threat of violence.
- Violence was nonetheless a perceived threat for many Australians.
 - 13% of Australians had a terrorist attack or mass shooting in their top three threats, 12% had criminal gangs, 7% had a hate crime and 5% had domestic or family violence.

Threats to people living in Australia

Australians were also asked to rank up to three things that they think represent the greatest threats for people living in Australia.

- Five threats are identified by 40% or more Australians: natural disasters, economic collapse, climate change, chronic disease and infectious disease.
- Every one of the top five threats is an economic, environmental or health issue.
 - Conventional security issues, like terrorism, refugees and asylum seekers, war and internal conflict, are of significantly less concern.
- Perhaps reflecting political rhetoric, twice as many Australians identify refugees and asylum seekers as a threat (21%) as identify war as a threat (9%), despite war killing about 100,000 Australians during the 20th Century.¹

Figure 2: Perceived threats for people living in Australia



¹ The Australian War Memorial (n.d.) *First World War 1914–18*, <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/atwar/first-world-war>; (n.d.) *Second World War, 1939–45*, <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/second-world-war>

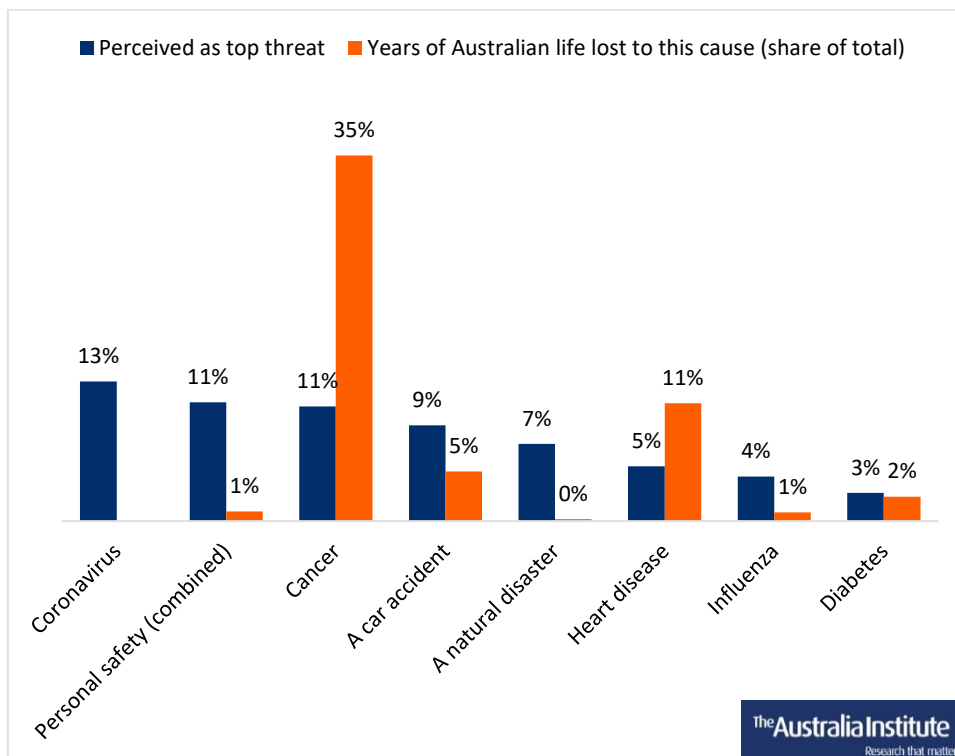
Causes of death in Australia

These perceived threats can be compared to the prevalence of causes of death in Australia in 2018, the most recent year for which we have data.

In this case, the metric used is the years of potential life lost.

- The novel coronavirus, the greatest perceived threat, did not exist in 2018.
- Cancer is both the greatest single killer, in terms of years lost from deaths, and the top perceived threat among those that existed in 2018.
- Heart disease, the second greatest single killer, is perceived as less of a threat than car accidents and natural disasters.
- Perhaps reflecting the 2019–20 bushfires, natural disasters are a greater perceived threat than influenza and diabetes, both of which kill more people.
- Personal safety concerns (gangs, terrorism, family violence and hate crimes) are greater perceived threats than the years of life lost from all assaults would suggest.

Figure 3: Top threat to self and family, compared to years lost from deaths caused by threat (in 2018)



Source: ABS (2019) *Australia's leading causes of death, 2018*,
<https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3303.0Main+Features12018>

Figure 4: Causes of death in Australia in 2018

ABS category	“Threat”	People	Standardised Death Rate	Years of Potential Life Lost
Total deaths		158,493	507.9	938,648
Influenza and pneumonia	Influenza	3,102	9.3	7,617
Neoplasms	Cancer	47,802	157.2	325,939
Transport accidents	A car accident	1,320	5.1	44,214
Assault	Criminal gangs, terrorist attack or mass shooting, family violence, hate crime	228	0.9	8,733
Diabetes mellitus	Diabetes	4,656	14.9	21,626
Exposure to forces of nature	A natural disaster	31	0.1	655
Exposure to smoke, fire and flames		47	0.2	970
Heart diseases	Heart disease	29,627	91.5	105,177

Source: ABS (2019) *Australia’s leading causes of death, 2018*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3303.0Main+Features12018>

Note: ABS causes of death do not correspond perfectly with the threats Australians were asked about. For example, “Exposure to smoke, fire and flames” is likely to include many deaths from house fires, rather than bushfires (i.e. natural disasters). “Transport accidents” in the ABS causes of death is also more broad than just the car accidents that respondents were surveyed on.

There is no single category in the ABS data for heart disease. The ICD-10 codes for the categories this paper counts under “heart disease” are I05-I15, I20-I28 and I30-I152.

Of course, there are many reasons why a person could rationally perceive something as a greater threat even if it was less likely to kill them in 2018 than another threat, including:

- A threat can reduce someone’s wellbeing or quality of life without killing them.
- People may be more concerned about an unexpected, unpleasant or early cause of death.
- The question asks respondents about perceived future threats not past threats.

- Some threats like natural disasters and terrorism could cause many deaths in a one-off event rather than kill some people every year.
- A cause of death that a person has more control over (e.g. lifestyle diseases) may not be considered a “threat”.

This comparison is not meant to imply that perceived threats should exactly correspond with the prevalence of different causes of death, but just to put perceived threats in context with one way of measuring the impact of those threats.

Demographics

There are some differences in perceived threat by gender.

- Women are more concerned than men about having enough money in the coming year (31% vs 27%) and in the next year and beyond (40% vs 30%).
 - However, men and women are equally likely to perceive economic collapse as a threat (46% women, 47% men).
- Men are more likely than women to see criminal gangs as a threat (15% vs 9%).
- Women are more likely than men to see a car accident as a threat (31% vs 26%).

Figure 5: Perceived threats for Australians and their families, by gender

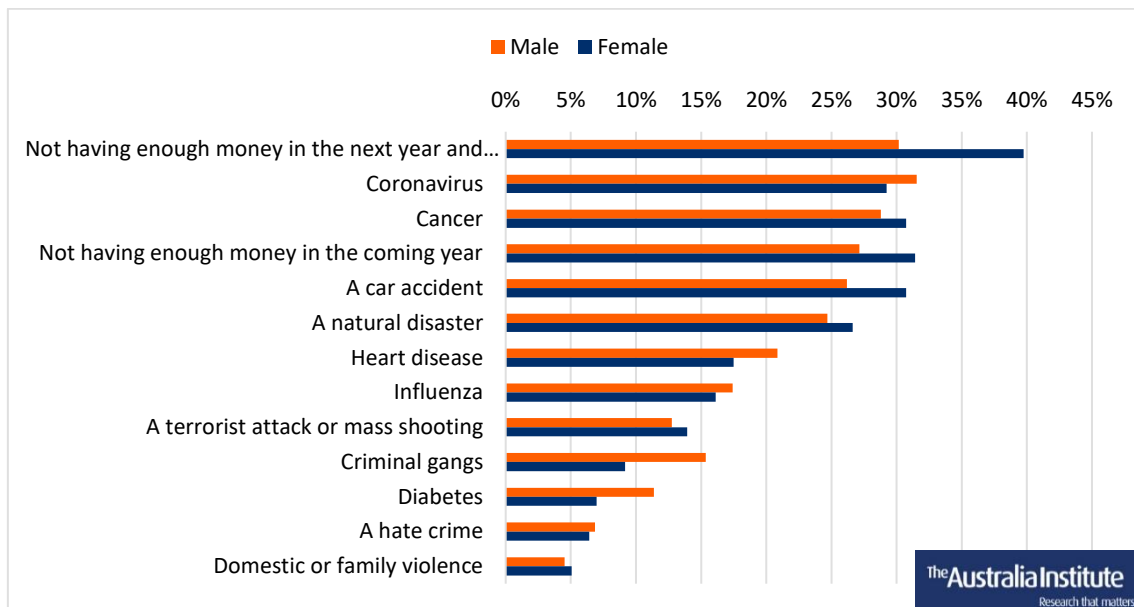
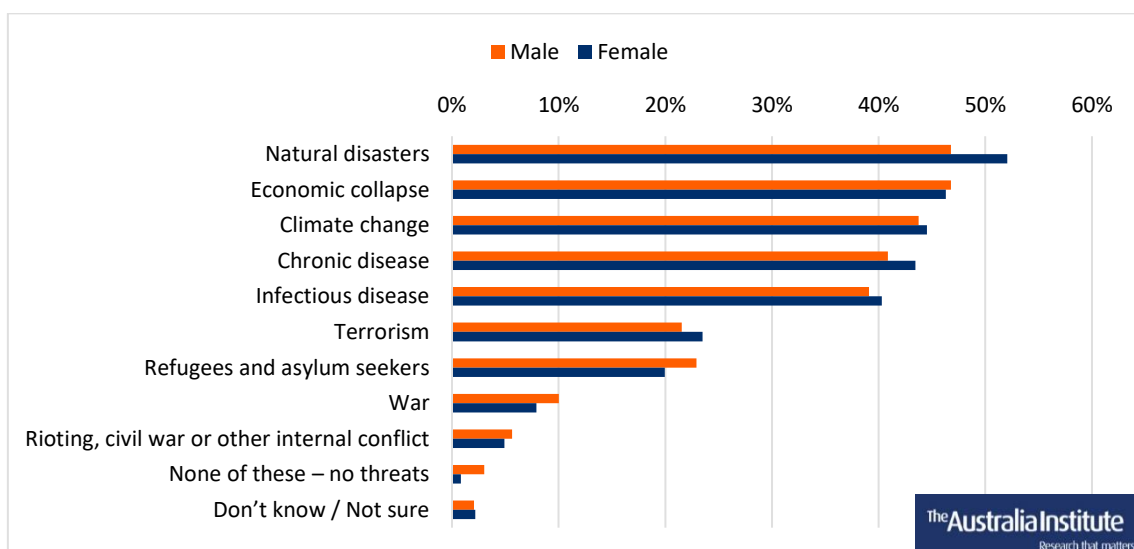


Figure 6: Perceived threats for people living in Australia, by gender



There are some differences in perceived threat by voting intention.

- Coalition voters are significantly less likely to identify not having enough money (either in the coming year or the next year and beyond) as a threat (21% vs 29% total and 25% vs 35% total respectively).
 - Despite this, Coalition voters are as likely to identify economic collapse as a general threat as anyone else (48% vs 47% total).
- Greens and to some extent Labor voters are much more likely to identify climate change as a threat (77% and 53% vs 44% total).
- One Nation voters are much more likely to perceive refugees and asylum seekers as a threat (52%) than Coalition voters are (29%), both well ahead of Labor (14%) and Greens (7%) voters.

Figure 7: Perceived threats for Australians and their families, by voting intention

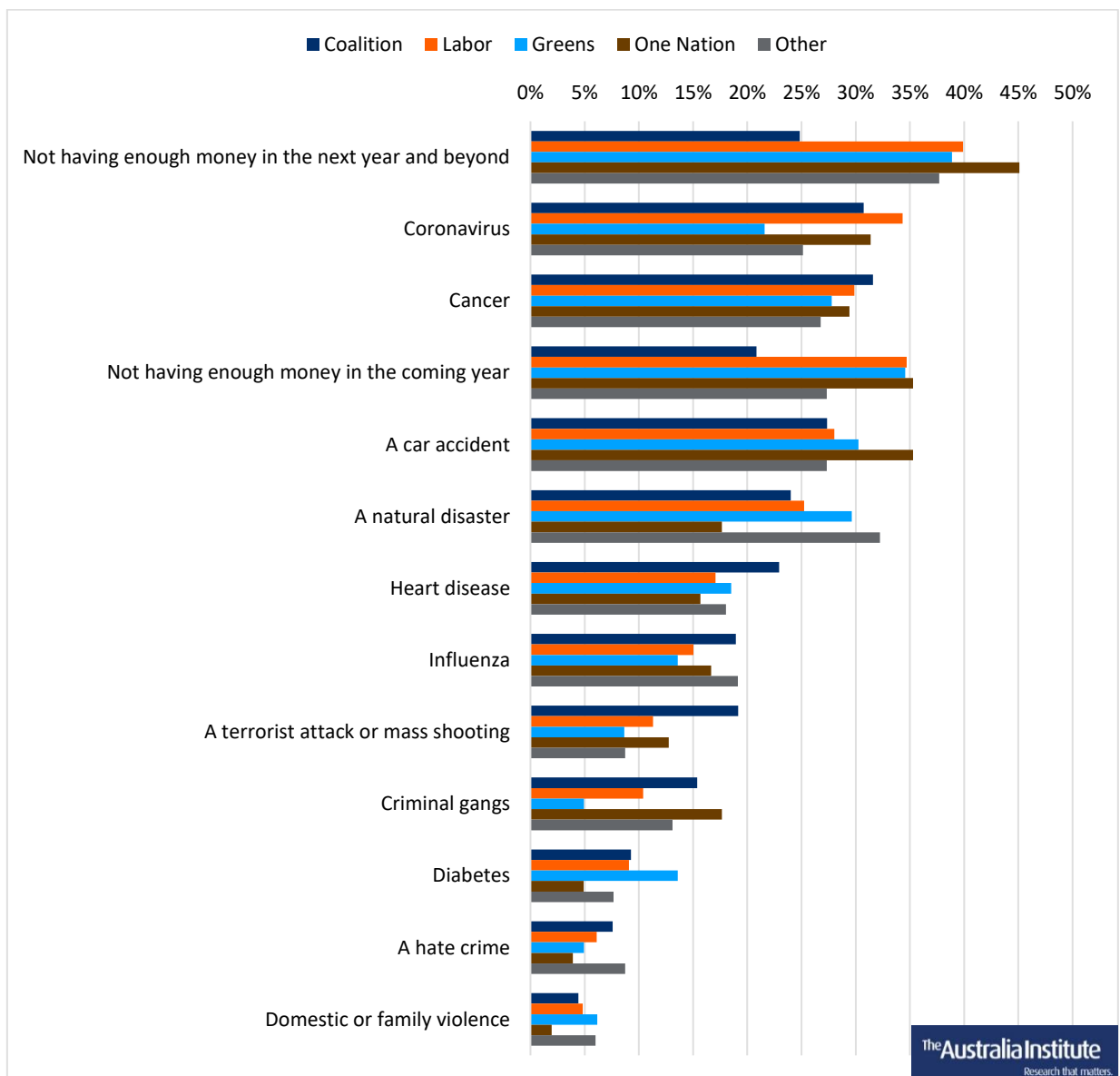
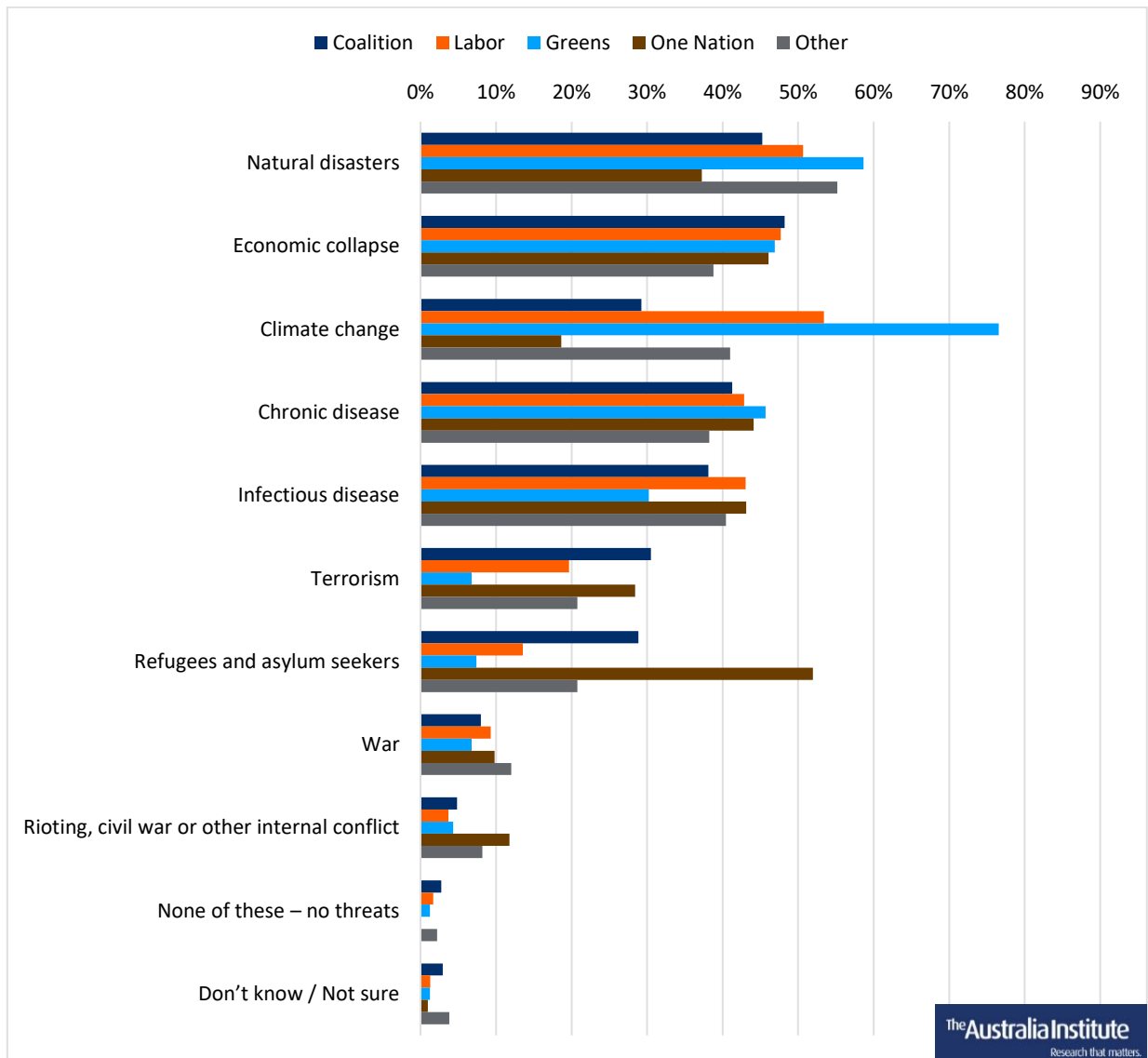


Figure 8: Perceived threats for people living in Australia, by voting intention



Some issues show a major difference in perceived threat by age.

- Cancer and heart disease are more likely to be perceived as a threat the older an Australian is.
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) is more likely to be perceived as a threat the *younger* an Australian is, despite the disease having a worse effect on the elderly.
- Criminal gangs are more likely to be perceived as a threat the older an Australian is.
- Those aged 55 and older are much less likely to perceive not having enough money in the coming year as a threat than those aged 54 and younger.

Figure 9: Perceived threats for Australians and their families, by age group

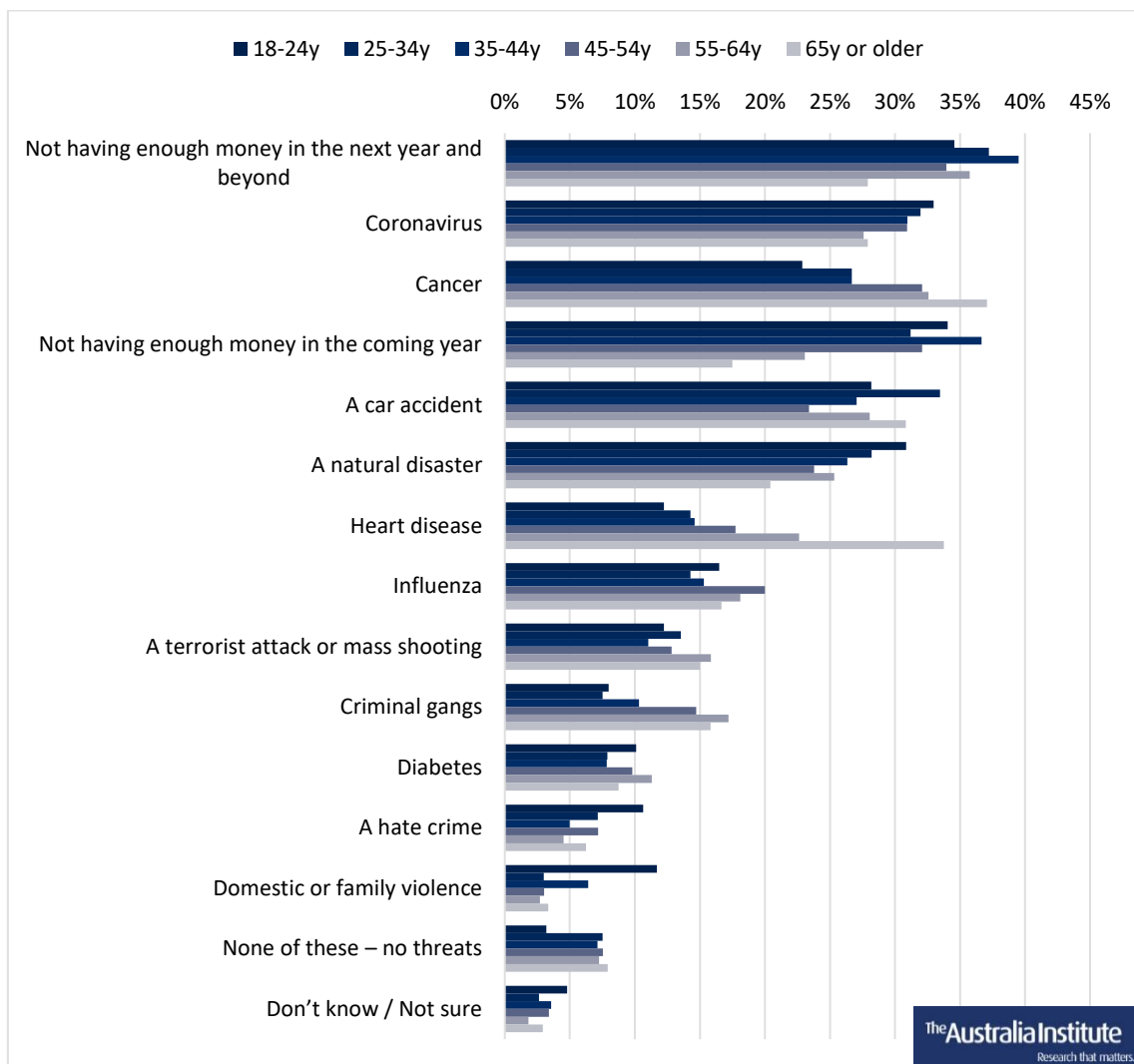
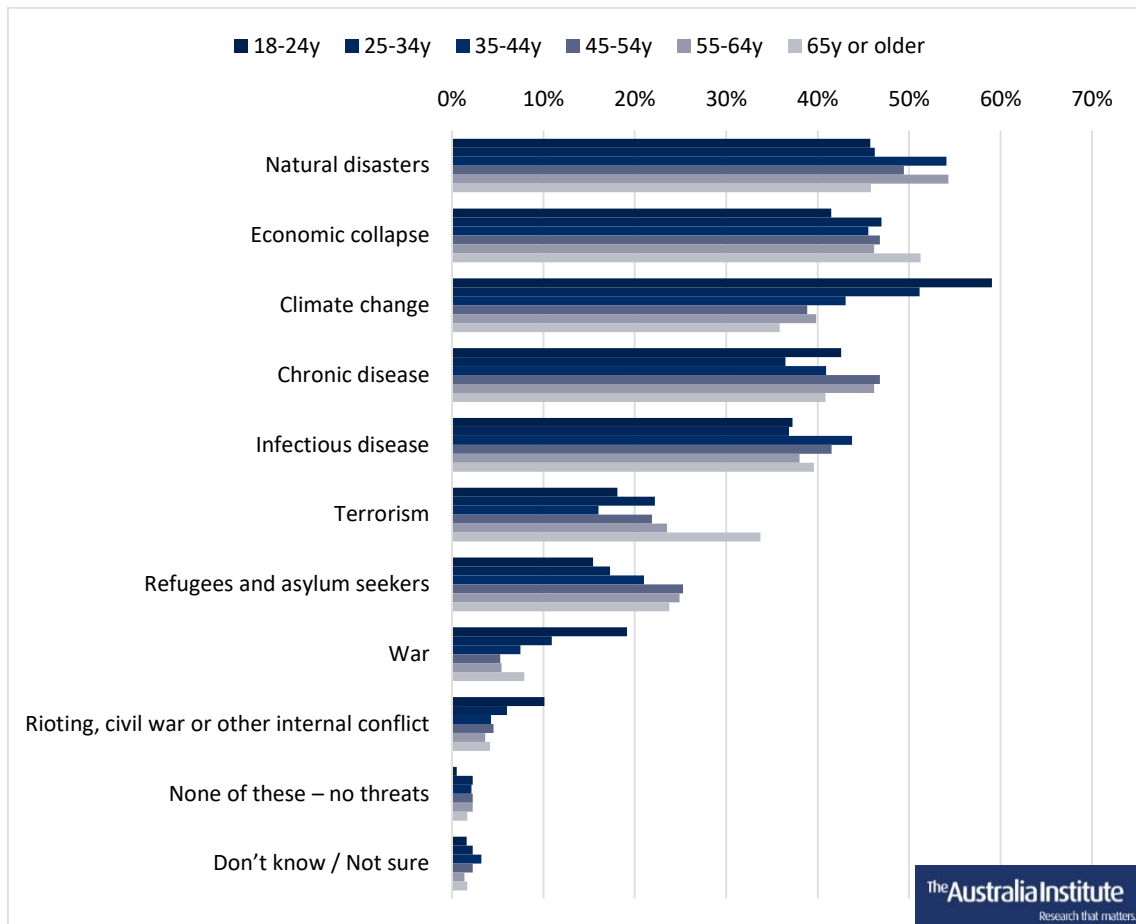


Figure 10: Perceived threats for people living in Australia, by age group



Some issues show a major difference in perceived threat by household income.

- Not having enough money in the next year and beyond is less of a perceived threat for those with higher household incomes.
- However, not having enough money in the coming year is a significant concern even for those with household incomes \$80,000–\$100,000 a year (31%).
 - As a perceived threat, not having enough money in the coming year falls off dramatically for incomes above \$100,000 a year, but even among those earning more than \$200,000 per year, 17% perceive not having enough money in the coming year as a threat.

Figure 11: Perceived threats for Australians and their families, by household income

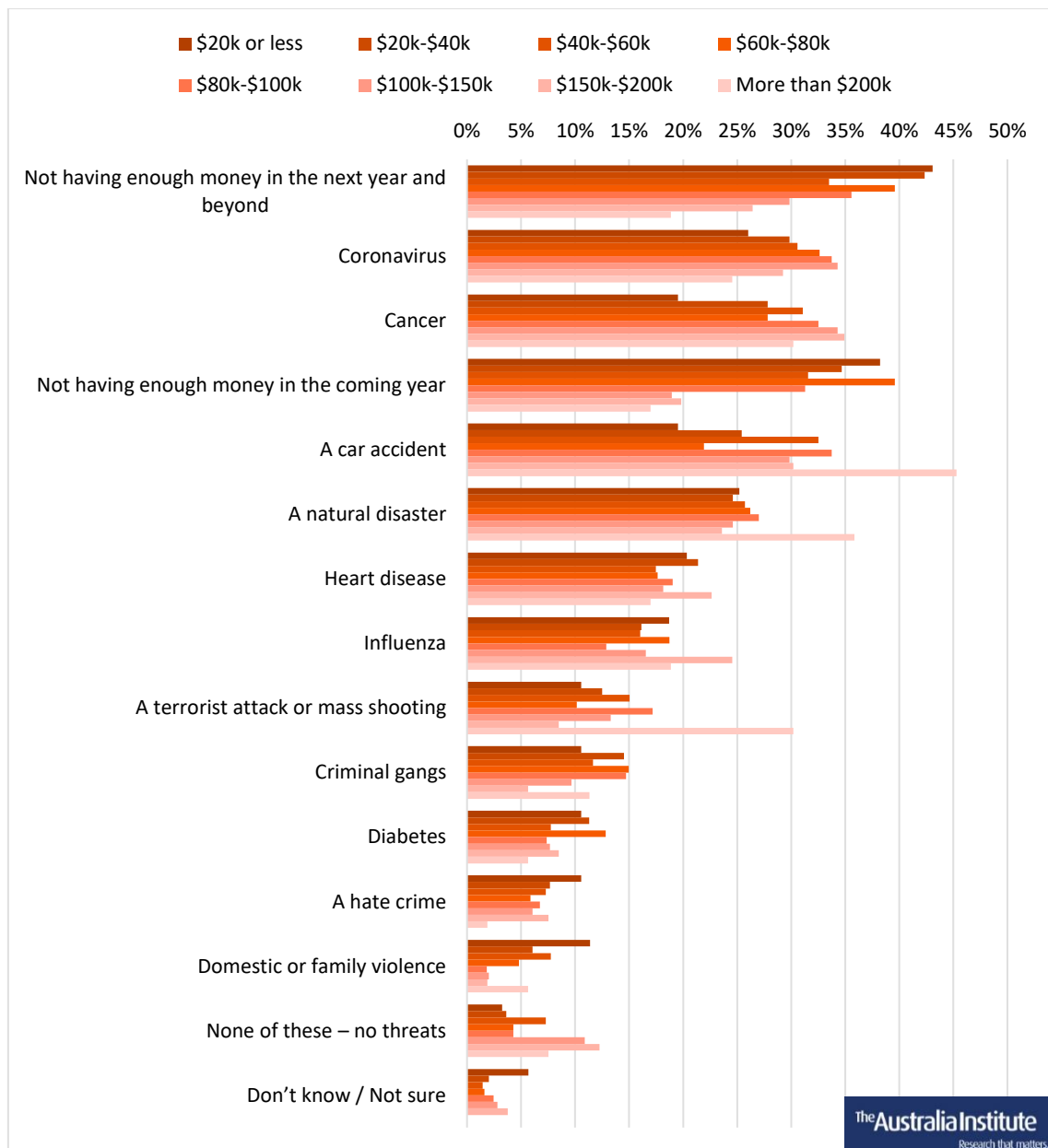
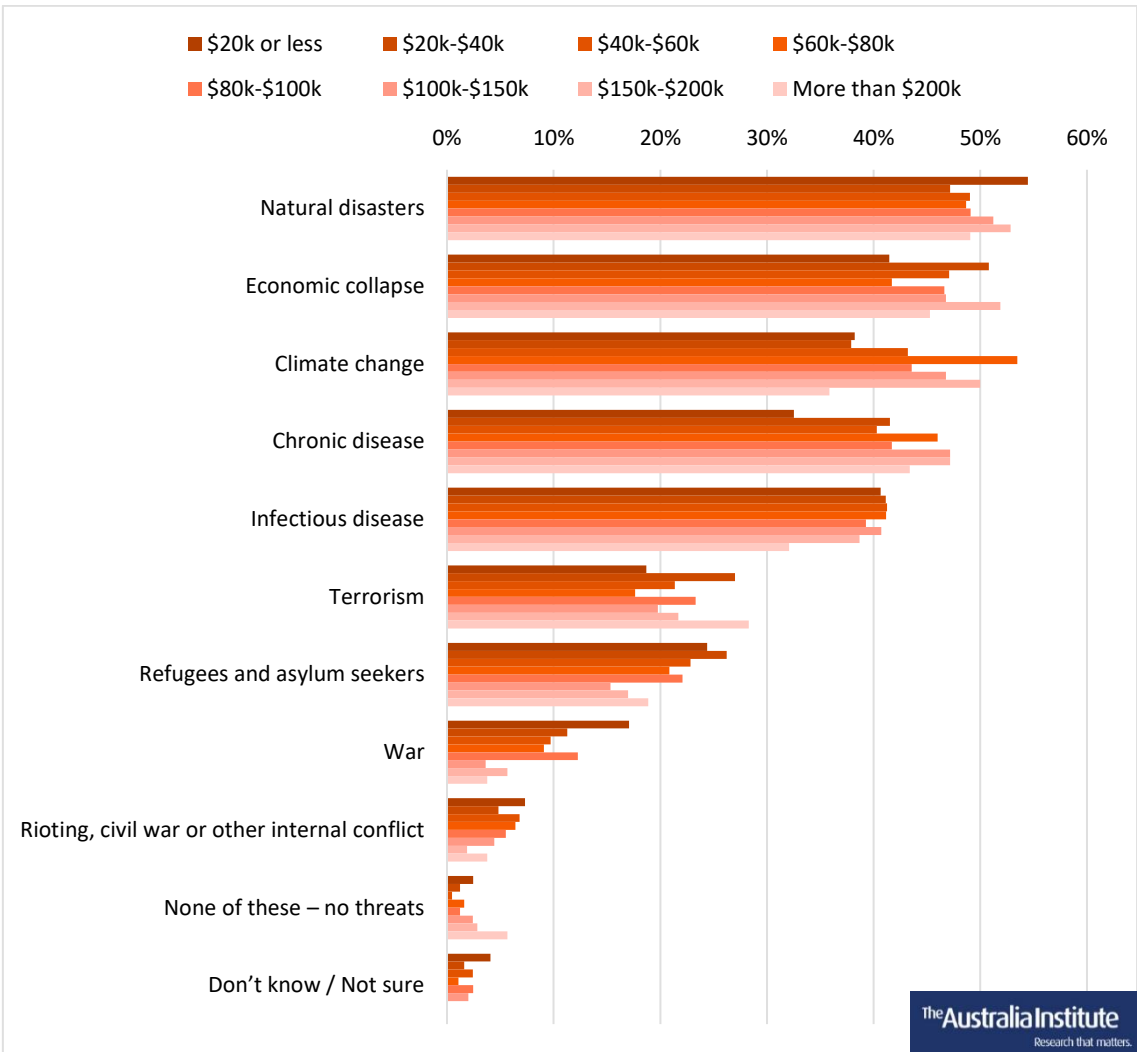


Figure 12: Perceived threats for people living in Australia, by household income



Method

The Australia Institute conducted a national survey of 1,461 people between 3 and 6 March 2020, online through Dynata with nationally representative samples by gender, age, state and territory, and household income.

The margin of error (95% confidence level) for the national results is 2.6%.

Results are shown only for larger states.

Voting crosstabs show voting intentions for the House of Representatives. Those who were undecided were asked which way they were leaning; these leanings are included in voting intention crosstabs. “Coalition” includes separate responses for Liberal and National. “Other” includes Centre Alliance, Jacqui Lambie Network and Independent/Other.

Detailed results

What follows is a list of things that may threaten you and your family. Please select and rank up to three things that you think represent the greatest threat to you and your family.

Response	Respondents	Share of all respondents
At least one threat	1,314	90%
At least two threats	1,279	88%
Three threats	1,216	83%
None of these – no threats	101	7%
Don't know / Not sure	46	3%

First rank

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	QLD	VIC	WA
Total respondents	1461	729	732	481	278	363	154
A terrorist attack or mass shooting	4%	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%	2%
A car accident	9%	10%	8%	8%	12%	8%	13%
Not having enough money in the coming year	13%	12%	15%	13%	15%	12%	16%
Not having enough money in the next year and beyond	13%	10%	16%	14%	14%	11%	12%
Domestic or family violence	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%
Coronavirus (COVID-19)	13%	14%	13%	14%	12%	13%	15%
Influenza (the "flu")	4%	4%	4%	4%	5%	4%	3%
Cancer	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%	9%
Diabetes	3%	4%	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%
Heart disease	5%	5%	5%	6%	4%	4%	5%
Criminal gangs	4%	7%	2%	1%	5%	8%	3%
A hate crime	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	3%
A natural disaster	7%	7%	8%	9%	6%	7%	5%
None of these – no threats	7%	8%	6%	8%	6%	6%	6%
Don't know / Not sure	3%	3%	3%	3%	1%	4%	6%

	Total	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other
Total respondents	1461	475	539	162	102	183
A terrorist attack or mass shooting	4%	5%	2%	2%	7%	4%
A car accident	9%	9%	8%	13%	11%	8%
Not having enough money in the coming year	13%	9%	15%	17%	18%	12%
Not having enough money in the next year and beyond	13%	9%	14%	14%	15%	16%
Domestic or family violence	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	3%
Coronavirus (COVID-19)	13%	14%	16%	10%	13%	9%
Influenza (the "flu")	4%	5%	4%	2%	5%	5%
Cancer	11%	13%	10%	9%	8%	10%
Diabetes	3%	1%	4%	3%	2%	3%
Heart disease	5%	6%	4%	6%	5%	7%
Criminal gangs	4%	7%	3%	2%	6%	4%
A hate crime	1%	1%	2%	0%	0%	3%
A natural disaster	7%	7%	8%	10%	1%	5%
None of these – no threats	7%	9%	5%	9%	8%	7%
Don't know / Not sure	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%	5%

Second rank

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	QLD	VIC	WA
Total respondents	1279	632	647	416	252	318	129
A terrorist attack or mass shooting	5%	5%	4%	4%	5%	7%	2%
A car accident	10%	8%	11%	9%	7%	14%	5%
Not having enough money in the coming year	12%	12%	12%	11%	14%	10%	11%
Not having enough money in the next year and beyond	16%	15%	17%	15%	16%	17%	19%
Domestic or family violence	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%
Coronavirus	10%	9%	10%	11%	8%	9%	13%
Influenza	6%	7%	6%	5%	7%	7%	5%
Cancer	13%	13%	14%	14%	12%	11%	16%
Diabetes	4%	5%	3%	4%	2%	4%	5%
Heart disease	9%	10%	8%	9%	10%	8%	9%
Criminal gangs	4%	5%	3%	3%	5%	4%	6%
A hate crime	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%	2%	1%
A natural disaster	8%	8%	9%	10%	9%	8%	7%

	Total	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other
Total respondents	1279	412	479	137	91	160
A terrorist attack or mass shooting	5%	7%	4%	3%	4%	3%
A car accident	10%	9%	8%	9%	11%	14%
Not having enough money in the coming year	12%	8%	15%	18%	9%	11%
Not having enough money in the next year and beyond	16%	11%	19%	21%	19%	16%
Domestic or family violence	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Coronavirus	10%	11%	10%	7%	10%	8%
Influenza	6%	8%	5%	4%	5%	9%
Cancer	13%	14%	13%	12%	16%	13%
Diabetes	4%	5%	4%	4%	2%	3%
Heart disease	9%	12%	8%	9%	5%	7%
Criminal gangs	4%	4%	4%	1%	7%	4%
A hate crime	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%
A natural disaster	8%	8%	8%	9%	8%	11%

Third rank

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	QLD	VIC	WA
Total respondents	1216	601	615	399	239	298	126
A terrorist attack or mass shooting	6%	6%	7%	9%	3%	7%	6%
A car accident	13%	12%	14%	12%	14%	12%	16%
Not having enough money in the coming year	7%	6%	7%	9%	7%	5%	5%
Not having enough money in the next year and beyond	10%	8%	11%	10%	9%	10%	3%
Domestic or family violence	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%	2%
Coronavirus	10%	12%	8%	11%	9%	10%	13%
Influenza	9%	9%	8%	9%	9%	9%	6%
Cancer	9%	8%	10%	9%	9%	8%	10%
Diabetes	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%	4%	6%
Heart disease	7%	8%	6%	7%	7%	8%	6%
Criminal gangs	6%	5%	6%	4%	7%	8%	6%
A hate crime	4%	4%	3%	4%	4%	3%	6%
A natural disaster	13%	13%	13%	13%	16%	11%	17%

	Total	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other
Total respondents	1216	389	458	129	90	150
A terrorist attack or mass shooting	6%	10%	6%	5%	2%	3%
A car accident	13%	13%	15%	12%	17%	8%
Not having enough money in the coming year	7%	6%	7%	4%	11%	7%
Not having enough money in the next year and beyond	10%	7%	11%	9%	16%	9%
Domestic or family violence	2%	2%	2%	5%	0%	3%
Coronavirus	10%	9%	12%	7%	11%	12%
Influenza	9%	9%	8%	11%	8%	8%
Cancer	9%	8%	10%	12%	8%	7%
Diabetes	4%	5%	2%	9%	1%	3%
Heart disease	7%	9%	7%	5%	7%	7%
Criminal gangs	6%	6%	5%	3%	7%	7%
A hate crime	4%	4%	3%	4%	2%	5%
A natural disaster	13%	11%	12%	15%	11%	21%

Any rank

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	QLD	VIC	WA
A terrorist attack or mass shooting	13%	13%	14%	15%	11%	17%	9%
A car accident	28%	26%	31%	26%	30%	30%	30%
Not having enough money in the coming year	29%	27%	31%	30%	33%	25%	29%
Not having enough money in the next year and beyond	35%	30%	40%	35%	36%	34%	31%
Domestic or family violence	5%	5%	5%	5%	6%	5%	3%
Coronavirus	30%	32%	29%	32%	27%	29%	37%
Influenza	17%	17%	16%	16%	19%	18%	12%
Cancer	30%	29%	31%	30%	29%	27%	31%
Diabetes	9%	11%	7%	9%	8%	9%	10%
Heart disease	19%	21%	17%	19%	19%	18%	18%
Criminal gangs	12%	15%	9%	7%	15%	18%	12%
A hate crime	7%	7%	6%	6%	7%	6%	8%
A natural disaster	26%	25%	27%	29%	28%	22%	24%
None of these – no threats	7%	8%	6%	8%	6%	6%	6%
Don't know / Not sure	3%	3%	3%	3%	1%	4%	6%

	Total	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other
A terrorist attack or mass shooting	13%	19%	11%	9%	13%	9%
A car accident	28%	27%	28%	30%	35%	27%
Not having enough money in the coming year	29%	21%	35%	35%	35%	27%
Not having enough money in the next year and beyond	35%	25%	40%	39%	45%	38%
Domestic or family violence	5%	4%	5%	6%	2%	6%
Coronavirus	30%	31%	34%	22%	31%	25%
Influenza	17%	19%	15%	14%	17%	19%
Cancer	30%	32%	30%	28%	29%	27%
Diabetes	9%	9%	9%	14%	5%	8%
Heart disease	19%	23%	17%	19%	16%	18%
Criminal gangs	12%	15%	10%	5%	18%	13%
A hate crime	7%	8%	6%	5%	4%	9%
A natural disaster	26%	24%	25%	30%	18%	32%
None of these – no threats	7%	9%	5%	9%	8%	7%
Don't know / Not sure	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%	5%

What follows is a list of things that may threaten people living in Australia. Please select up to three things that you think represent the greatest threat to Australians.

Response	Respondents	Share of all respondents
At least one threat	1,402	96%
At least two threats	1,368	94%
Three threats	1,323	91%
None of these – no threats	28	2%
Don't know / Not sure	31	2%

First rank

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	QLD	VIC	WA
Total	1461	729	732	481	278	363	154
Terrorism	8%	8%	8%	7%	7%	10%	6%
Economic collapse	14%	15%	14%	14%	13%	16%	18%
Infectious disease (COVID-19, influenza, etc)	14%	13%	15%	12%	16%	15%	14%
Chronic disease (cancer, diabetes, heart disease, etc)	17%	16%	18%	18%	14%	17%	19%
War	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	3%
Rioting, civil war or other internal conflict	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%
Climate change	17%	18%	17%	20%	16%	17%	16%
Natural disasters	15%	15%	16%	17%	18%	14%	11%
Refugees and asylum seekers	7%	7%	6%	6%	9%	5%	8%
None of these – no threats	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%
Don't know / Not sure	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	4%

	Total	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other
Total	1461	475	539	162	102	183
Terrorism	8%	10%	8%	3%	6%	6%
Economic collapse	14%	17%	13%	13%	16%	11%
Infectious disease (COVID-19, influenza, etc)	14%	16%	13%	9%	17%	15%
Chronic disease (cancer, diabetes, heart disease, etc)	17%	17%	18%	20%	18%	13%
War	2%	2%	3%	1%	4%	3%
Rioting, civil war or other internal conflict	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	2%
Climate change	17%	8%	23%	36%	10%	15%
Natural disasters	15%	15%	14%	14%	13%	23%
Refugees and asylum seekers	7%	10%	4%	2%	16%	6%
None of these – no threats	2%	3%	2%	1%	0%	2%
Don't know / Not sure	2%	3%	1%	1%	1%	4%

Second rank

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	QLD	VIC	WA
Total	1368	675	693	451	262	344	138
Terrorism	8%	7%	8%	10%	4%	8%	4%
Economic collapse	16%	16%	16%	17%	19%	16%	17%
Infectious disease	14%	15%	13%	13%	13%	17%	13%
Chronic disease	13%	11%	14%	11%	15%	9%	17%
War	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%	7%
Rioting, civil war or other internal conflict	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Climate change	16%	16%	16%	17%	15%	17%	14%
Natural disasters	19%	19%	20%	20%	19%	20%	19%
Refugees and asylum seekers	8%	9%	7%	8%	10%	7%	7%

	Total	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other
Total	1368	435	511	155	99	168
Terrorism	8%	11%	6%	1%	11%	8%
Economic collapse	16%	17%	17%	12%	15%	15%
Infectious disease	14%	13%	17%	11%	10%	14%
Chronic disease	13%	12%	12%	15%	11%	15%
War	4%	4%	4%	3%	4%	3%
Rioting, civil war or other internal conflict	2%	2%	1%	3%	6%	4%
Climate change	16%	13%	17%	26%	5%	17%
Natural disasters	19%	18%	21%	26%	14%	17%
Refugees and asylum seekers	8%	10%	5%	3%	23%	7%

Third rank

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	QLD	VIC	WA
Total	1323	655	668	433	258	331	137
Terrorism	8%	8%	9%	8%	7%	9%	9%
Economic collapse	19%	19%	18%	17%	19%	18%	16%
Infectious disease	13%	13%	14%	17%	11%	9%	20%
Chronic disease	15%	16%	14%	14%	14%	18%	12%
War	4%	4%	3%	5%	2%	4%	1%
Rioting, civil war or other internal conflict	3%	4%	2%	3%	2%	4%	1%
Climate change	13%	12%	14%	13%	12%	13%	14%
Natural disasters	17%	16%	18%	16%	21%	17%	18%
Refugees and asylum seekers	8%	8%	8%	7%	10%	8%	9%

	Total	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other
Total	1323	420	496	146	97	164
Terrorism	8%	11%	7%	3%	12%	9%
Economic collapse	19%	17%	19%	25%	16%	16%
Infectious disease	13%	12%	14%	12%	18%	13%
Chronic disease	15%	16%	15%	12%	16%	12%
War	4%	3%	3%	3%	2%	7%
Rioting, civil war or other internal conflict	3%	3%	2%	2%	5%	4%
Climate change	13%	11%	16%	17%	4%	12%
Natural disasters	17%	16%	18%	22%	11%	19%
Refugees and asylum seekers	8%	11%	5%	3%	14%	9%

Any rank

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	QLD	VIC	WA
Terrorism	23%	22%	23%	23%	18%	26%	18%
Economic collapse	47%	47%	46%	46%	49%	48%	47%
Infectious disease	40%	39%	40%	39%	38%	39%	43%
Chronic disease	42%	41%	43%	41%	41%	41%	45%
War	9%	10%	8%	10%	7%	9%	10%
Rioting, civil war or other internal conflict	5%	6%	5%	5%	5%	6%	3%
Climate change	44%	44%	45%	47%	42%	44%	41%
Natural disasters	49%	47%	52%	50%	56%	49%	44%
Refugees and asylum seekers	21%	23%	20%	19%	27%	19%	23%
None of these – no threats	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%
Don't know / Not sure	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	4%

	Total	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other
Terrorism	23%	31%	20%	7%	28%	21%
Economic collapse	47%	48%	48%	47%	46%	39%
Infectious disease	40%	38%	43%	30%	43%	40%
Chronic disease	42%	41%	43%	46%	44%	38%
War	9%	8%	9%	7%	10%	12%
Rioting, civil war or other internal conflict	5%	5%	4%	4%	12%	8%
Climate change	44%	29%	53%	77%	19%	41%
Natural disasters	49%	45%	51%	59%	37%	55%
Refugees and asylum seekers	21%	29%	14%	7%	52%	21%
None of these – no threats	2%	3%	2%	1%	0%	2%
Don't know / Not sure	2%	3%	1%	1%	1%	4%