UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA

LIVING WELL IN THE ACT REGION IN 2025



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wave 9 of the *Living well in the ACT region* survey was conducted in 2025 with funding support from the ACT Government and the University of Canberra. A large number of people supported development of the survey, including the ACT Government Wellbeing Team, other parts of the ACT Government, community organisations in the ACT, and researchers who provided their views and perspectives to help inform design of survey content. At the University of Canberra, we would particularly like to acknowledge the work of the staff of the WellRes Unit who worked on survey data collection, cleaning and analysis.

ACCESSIBILITY

This report contains a large number of data visualisations, not all of which will be read by a screen reader. An accessible edition of this report is also available in which a table of data is provided below each visualisation, to enable data to be readily accessed by those using a screen reader.

CITATION

This document can be cited as Schirmer, J., Carroll, S., Dale. M. 2026. Living well in the ACT region in 2025. WellRes Unit, Health Research Institute, University of Canberra, Canberra.

THE CHANGING WELLBEING OF CANBERRANS: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Living Well in the ACT Region* survey (*Living well* survey) has been conducted nine times since 2019. The survey asks adults living in the ACT region about their wellbeing, resilience, and the liveability of their community. In 2025, the ninth survey collected data from mid-November, with 3,223 survey participants.

Personal wellbeing

The wellbeing of Canberrans improved slightly but significantly in 2025 compared to 2024: whereas 31.2% of Canberrans had low wellbeing in late 2024, 27.4% did in late 2025 – although despite this improvement, wellbeing levels overall remained lower than 2023 levels. This increase in wellbeing was almost entirely amongst those younger than 50 who were either mortgage holders or renting. It was driven by a small increase in standard of living amongst these groups, likely driven at least in part by the two interest rate cuts in 2025 that reduced interest rates on mortgages for many. The interest rate cuts of 2025 were, however, followed by interest rate rises in 2026, which may mean some or all of the increase in wellbeing observed in 2025 was short lived.

While wellbeing improved for many of those younger than 50, the wellbeing of those living with moderately and severely restrictive disability declined in 2025.

Living standards and confidence in the future

In 2025, the household financial wellbeing of some Canberrans improved slightly, with a 3.6 percentage point increase in those reporting their household was very comfortable or prosperous, from 24.4% to 28.0%; and a 3.2 percentage point decline in those reporting being very poor, poor or just getting along, from 26.2% to 23.0%. This increase largely occurred amongst mortgage holders, likely reflecting the two interest rate cuts of 2025. Slightly more Canberrans found living costs affordable in 2025 (33.3%) than 2024 (29.4%), with the increase in affordability higher amongst men, those aged under 30 and renters. However, the large majority reported finding living costs unaffordable, and despite these small improvements, 58.2% of Canberrans reported that their household expenses grew faster than their income in 2025, and only 8.7% that income grew faster than expenses. The groups most likely to report expenses growing faster than income were those aged 30 to 49, caring for dependent children or others, mortgage holders, renters, those with moderately or severely restrictive disability, and those living in Gungahlin and Outer Belconnen.

In 2025, most Canberrans (86.8%) lived in homes that met their needs well, were well maintained (80.6%), and were large enough for current residents to live in easily (77.4%). However, nearly two in five Canberrans (37.5%) experienced a financial stress event in 2025, particularly those aged 30 to 49, caring for children or others, renting, and living with restrictive disability. This stress resulted in many Canberrans reducing takeaway and restaurant meals (70.9%), buying cheaper supermarket goods (66.6%), reducing home heating or cooling (56.7%), cancelling social events (49.3%), or delaying medical appointments (41.5%) and medication purchase (24.4%).

Food stress was reported by more than one in five Canberrans, with 21.6% worrying their food would run out before they next had money coming into their bank account, and 20.6% unable to afford to eat balanced meals. More than one in ten - 12.4% - ran out of food and money to purchase more at some point in the 12 months prior to completing the survey. In addition, 36.7% of Canberrans either reduced home maintenance and repairs, and/or reduced or stopped at least one form of insurance in 2025. Reducing

home maintenance and insurance was reported more often by women and those aged 30-49 compared to men and other age groups.

In 2025, 42.4% of Canberrans felt their household would be better off in five years (compared to 40.4% in 2024), while 27.8% felt they would be worse off (compared to 28.7% in 2024). Men's confidence in the future increased compared to 2024, while women's did not. Confidence that in five year's time, they would be better off increased by 4.0 percentage points amongst men (from 39.0% in 2024 to 43.0% in 2025), but not women (changed by less than one percentage point, with only 41.0% confident they would be better off in five years as of 2025). Confidence in the future increased amongst younger age groups, and decreased slightly amongst older age groups: Amongst 18-29 year olds, confidence things would be better off increased 4.3 percentage points; for 30-49 year olds the increase was greater, at 6.0% (from 41.5% to 47.5%). Meanwhile, confidence decreased by four percentage points amongst those aged 50-64 (from 37.6% to 33.6%). Optimism that children today will be better off than their parents remained low. In 2025, 67.9% of Canberrans felt that children today would be worse off than their parents, compared to 70.4% in 2024.

Connecting with others and balancing time use

Two in five Canberrans (42.1%) were sometimes or often lonely in 2025, similar to 2024 levels. Loneliness grew amongst those speaking a language other than English, and those living in apartments, and fell amongst women, carers, those with children, aged 30-49 and with severely restrictive disability. However, time spent socialising in-person increased, with 49.2% of Canberrans sometimes or regularly socialising in 2025, up from 40.2% in 2024. Growth in socialising was highest amongst those aged 65 and older. Regular engagement in community events/activities also grew, from 61.7% in 2024 to 68.0% in 2025; again, growth was greatest amongst those aged 65 and older.

Nearly two in five Canberrans (38.6%) volunteered once or more in 2025. Volunteering was higher amongst older age groups, reaching 52.1% amongst those aged 65 and older, compared to 31.6% amongst those aged 18 to 29. Amongst volunteers, between 77% and 79% found their volunteering enjoyable and safe, while 51.9% made new social connections through volunteering, and 36.9% made lasting friendships. For some, the motivation to volunteer was more to ensure activities could occur: 54.1% said if they didn't volunteer some activities wouldn't happen. However, only 8.1% said they volunteered because they had to, not because they wanted to. While volunteering had benefits for most, more than one in four volunteers (27.9%) found some of their volunteering stressful in the last year.

In 2025, most Canberrans reported enjoying (60.6%) and having control (64.3%) over how they spent most of their time; however, 55.5% reported they had too many demands on their time. Time use challenges varied: for example, 36.4% of Canberrans were doing more housework than they wanted ; 31.1% were spending less time caring for children, and 19.0% more time, than desired. Amongst those in paid employment, 24.4% were doing more paid work hours than they wanted to, while 18.9% were working fewer hours than desired, and 56.6% were working about as much as they wanted to. In 2025, 57.9% of adult Canberrans were spending less time than desired attending arts, culture and music events, despite 78.7% attending at least one event in 2025.

Working from home was common, with 45.3% of employed Canberrans working at least one day at home each week, and a further 18.2% occasionally working from home. Commonwealth public servants were most likely to regularly work from home.

Between 2024 and 2025, satisfaction with time spent outdoors declined significantly, with only 39.1% spending as much time outdoors as they wanted in 2025, compared to 44.2% in 2024. Only 37.0% of Canberrans were exercising as much as they wanted to; the likelihood a person was doing less exercise than desired increased if they were female, in paid work, had children at home, were aged 30-49, had a mortgage, had a restrictive disability, or identified as LGBTIQA+.

A liveable and functional community

In 2025, 91.3% of Canberrans agreed that their local area – the suburb they lived in – was very liveable, a small but statistically significant increase from the 89.0% reporting this in 2024. Some were less likely to report their local area was highly liveable, although even amongst these groups more than 80% reported good liveability: residents of West Gungahlin (86.9%), Weston Creek (86.4%), Molonglo (83.5%), and Tuggeranong South (80.2%); single parents (86.7%), and those with a moderately (88.4%) and severely (84.4%) restrictive disability.

Most Canberrans – 71.9% – felt their local streets had enough shade on a hot day, although this declined to 56.5% amongst those living in East Gungahlin, 58.5% in West Gungahlin, and only 29.9% amongst those living in Molonglo.

Seven in ten Canberrans (70.9%) could easily get to the places they need to, while almost one in four (23.4%) sometimes had difficulty with transport, and 5.7% often or always experienced difficulty. Satisfaction with active and public transportation in the ACT declined between 2024 and 2025: satisfaction with cycling paths declined to 61.7%, down from 64.8% in 2024; 58.7% were satisfied with light rail (compared to 66.7% in 2024); 50.8% were satisfied with buses (down from 53.4%); and 65.0% were satisfied with walking paths (down from 73.2%). Those who were not satisfied with public transport wanted to see increased timeliness, higher integration of services, improved safety and accessibility, and MyWay improvements. Those who were not satisfied with walking and cycling paths were asked what would improve their satisfaction. Key themes in responses included increasing investment in maintenance, improving connectivity of paths; and improving safety through actions such as increased separation of cars and bicycles on on-road paths, and bicycles and pedestrians on off-road paths.

There was improvement in ability to easily access GP services: the proportion of Canberrans reporting it was hard to access a GP fell from 24.7% in 2024 to 19.1% in 2025. There was also some improvement in reported access to psychiatrists and psychologists, although the change was not statistically significant, and these remained the services with the poorest overall access, together with other specialist medical services.

Confidence in being able to have a say and be heard in local decision making processes declined slightly in 2025, but remained higher than levels in 2019 and 2020. Similar to previous years, confidence to have a say and be heard increased somewhat with age.

Confidence that the ACT Government respects and protects human rights improved between 2024 and 2025: 66.4% of Canberrans were confident human rights were respected and protected, up from 59.4% in 2024, while 20.5% were not confident. Similarly, there was an increase in confidence that vulnerable people were protected and supported, from 50.0% in 2024 to 55.0% in 2025. However, confidence varied significantly between groups: women were much less confident than men (45.4% compared to 65.9%), while those speaking a language other than English at home were more confident (65.1%). Single parents (38.7%), carers (41.8%), and those living with restrictive disability (42.6%) were all less likely to agree that vulnerable people are protected and supported.

Trust in the ACT Government remained relatively stable between 2024 and 2025: 45.4% of Canberran trusted the ACT Government to do what is right, a small but not statistically significant increase from 42.0% in 2024, while 35.4% had low trust, a slight decline from 37.4% in 2024. Overall, trust remains higher than it was prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but below the high levels seen during the pandemic. Confidence in different institutions to do what is right increased slightly across all types of institutions asked about, including police, courts, the ACT public service, and financial institutions. Confidence in local groups and organisations to get things done did not increase, with 45.0% of Canberrans agreeing that local groups and organisations in the ACT are good at getting things done, down slightly from 48.9% in 2024.

Belonging and inclusion

In 2025, there was continued confidence that Canberrans accepts people from different cultures (with 79.1% agreeing with this statement) and that this makes Canberra better (80.0% agreeing). Confidence in

the inclusiveness of local communities remained steady, with 35.2% reporting high inclusiveness, 16.1% low inclusiveness (in the form of high levels of disagreement, some groups keeping to themselves, and some groups not being made welcome), and 48.7% moderate inclusiveness. Canberrans continue to rate Canberra highly as a place to live, with 90.0% saying they would recommend the ACT region to others as a good place to live. Sense of belonging also stayed stable between 2024 and 2025, with 66.0% reporting a high sense of belonging and 5.4% a low sense of belonging. However, sense of belonging has declined overall since 2019. Just over a quarter of ACT residents (25.8%) experienced discrimination in the last 12 months.

In 2025, 82.1% of ACT adults could name one or more of the Traditional Custodians of the ACT region, up from 74.7% in 2019. Most Canberrans feel proud of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures (75.1%), and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are important to Australia's identity as a nation (83.2%).

Health and healthy lifestyle

In 2025, 47.1% of Canberrans reported being in very good to excellent health, up from 41.2% in 2024. Those more likely to report poor or fair health included women, those identifying as LGBTIQA+, single parents, those living alone, the unemployed, those with restrictive disability, and residents of Outer Belconnen. Those more likely to report very good or excellent health included men, those living in the ACT for five years or less, those born overseas in a non-English speaking country, and those with no restrictive disability.

The proportion of Canberrans reporting very good to excellent mental health remained, at 43.2%, similar to 2023 and 2024. Just over one third (35.8%) of adult Canberrans had moderate or high psychological distress levels, similar to 2024 and 2023, but higher than in earlier years. Higher distress and poorer mental health were more common amongst those aged 18 to 29 year, and amongst groups with higher proportions of this age group including renters, those in share/group households, and those in units/apartments. They were also more common amongst those living with restrictive disability, identifying as LGBTIQA+, the unemployed, and those living in Outer Belconnen and Weston Creek.

In late 2025, 57.0% of adult Canberrans were getting enough sleep – similar to late 2024, early 2023, early 2020 and late 2019, but significantly less than during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 (62.9%) and 2021 (63.1%). The Canberrans most likely to be achieving healthy hours of sleep were 18–29-year-olds, residents of Weston Creek, those living in a unit/apartment, and those with no restrictive disability. Those less likely to be achieving healthy sleep hours were those living with children aged 0 to 17 in the household, with a mortgage, aged 30 and older, and living with a restrictive disability.

Safety and resilience

Between 2023 and 2025, the proportion of Canberrans who felt confident the ACT copes pretty well when faced with challenges (of any type) fell from 73.8% to 68.0%. Confidence was lower amongst those living in Outer Belconnen, Weston Creek and Tuggeranong South.

In 2025, climate resilience increased slightly amongst ACT residents, following a decline between 2023 and 2024. The proportion of Canberrans with very low climate resilience fell from 14.4% to 10.3%; there was growth in those with moderate resilience, from 39.4% to 42.6%, and in those with high resilience. This largely reflected an increase in heatwave resilience and community resilience. Resilience grew most amongst those who have historically had lower resilience: those speaking a language other than English at home, sole person households, single parent households, couples with children at home, and those living with restrictive disability.

In 2025, 93.0% of Canberrans felt safe to walk alone in their local neighbourhood during the day – a small but statistically significant increase from 91.1% in 2024 – and 65.0% felt safe walking alone at night, up from 60.1% in 2024. People living alone, renting, with a restrictive disability or living in Tuggeranong South were less likely than others to feel safe walking locally during the day. Most Canberrans (89.3%) feel safe at

home alone at night, with higher safety reported by men, those with no restrictive disability, living in a unit/apartment or residing in Woden Valley or Tuggeranong North, and lower safety by women, those with restrictive disability and those living in Gungahlin and Outer Belconnen. Most Canberrans reported feeling safe when in town centres (84.5%) and nearby supermarkets (84.8%), and most working Canberrans feel safe in their workplace, with 92.9% feeling safe in 2025, similar to late 2024 (91.4%) and previous years. Just over three quarters of Canberrans (77.0%) felt safe using public transport, similar to 2024, but a decline from 84.0% in 2023 and 83.3% in 2020.

Conclusions

In 2025, there was a small but significant improvement in personal wellbeing for some Canberrans, and improvements in some key contributors to wellbeing including household finances (for mortgage holders), access to some health services, overall health, and social connection. However, this occurred against a backdrop of continuing high financial stress for many. Despite these relatively small improvements for some, most Canberrans continue to find local living costs unaffordable, more than half report expenses growing faster than income, and two in five experienced a significant financial stress event in 2025. Of particular concern is food stress, which was experienced by more than one in five Canberrans, as well as the significant numbers of Canberrans who are reducing insurance coverage, delaying medical treatment, and delaying home repairs and maintenance due to financial stress. Despite the continuation of these high levels of financial stress, most Canberrans report high local liveability and good transport access, feel safe, and are confident that human rights are respected. The gains in wellbeing seen in 2025 are likely to be short lived, however, with interest rate rises in 2026 likely to have negatively impacted the wellbeing of mortgage holders in particular. However, it is possible the increases in social connection and access to health services will continue, and may lead to longer term improvement in loneliness and mental health.

CHAPTER 1

THE LIVING WELL IN THE ACT REGION SURVEY



KEY POINTS

- The *Living Well in the ACT Region* survey (*Living well* survey) has been conducted nine times since 2019
- The survey asks adults living in the ACT region about their wellbeing, resilience, and the liveability of their community
- The survey can be completed online or on a paper form, and participants are recruited using methods documented in the survey User Guide
- In 2025, the ninth survey collected data from mid-November 2025, with 3,223 survey participants
- This report examines the wellbeing, resilience and liveability of the ACT region in 2025, and how these have changed since the survey started collecting data in 2019.

THE *LIVING WELL IN THE ACT REGION* SURVEY

The *Living well in the ACT region* survey (*Living well* survey) examines the wellbeing and resilience of Canberrans every year. Each year, the survey tracks how Canberrans find the liveability of their area, their living standards, their social connections, their safety, resilience to natural hazards, and their overall health and wellbeing. This report examines the wellbeing, resilience and liveability of the ACT region as of the end of 2025, and how they have changed since the survey started in 2019.

Each year, in addition to the topics tracked annually, a small number of topics are asked about in more depth. In 2025, these included engaging in arts and cultural activities, volunteering, and experience of food and financial stress.

METHODS – 2025 SURVEY (WAVE 9)

In 2025, data for the ninth *Living Well* survey were collected between mid-November 2025 and mid-February 2026, with a total of 3,223 valid survey responses, the large majority of which were collected in November and December 2025. The survey could be completed either online or on a paper form, with almost all surveys completed online. Survey participants were recruited to participate using the following methods:

- Inviting prior survey participants to take part again (if they had given permission to be contacted for future surveys)
- Letters mailed to a random sample of 15,000 ACT residential addresses, inviting adults living at the address to take part in the survey either online (via scanning a QR code or going to a web address) or on paper (via requesting a paper copy by phone or email)
- Social media advertising on Facebook and Instagram, used to increase participation by younger adults in particular
- Promotion in specific newsletters (such as the University of Canberra weekly student newsletter)
- A prize draw was offered to participants.

Completed surveys were inspected to remove invalid responses (630 invalid responses were removed). When analysing and producing results, statistical weights were produced and applied to correct for biases in the sample. Unless otherwise stated, all findings presented in this report are weighted to be representative of the adult population of the ACT region by age, gender, residential location and language spoken at home; the weighted findings are also representative by educational attainment.

The survey methods are documented in detail in the *Living well in the ACT region* survey User Guide (Schirmer and Dale, 2026).

UNDERSTANDING THE WELLBEING OF DIFFERENT CANBERRANS

This report examines the wellbeing of different Canberrans. Throughout the report, comparisons are made of the experiences of people of different ages, gender, cultural background, housing type and tenure, caring responsibilities, restrictions due to disability, and living in different parts of the ACT. These groups are compared because they can experience different types of change, even when living in the same city. A rapid increase in weekly rental costs will have a significant effect on those living in rental properties – but often little on those living in homes they own. This will flow on to show up as an effect on younger people, with younger adults being much more likely to be renting than those who are older (see Schirmer et al. 2025). This example highlights the intersectionality of experience; it also highlights the importance of understanding the complex factors influencing changes in wellbeing and resilience of different groups. Within any group, there will be diverse experiences: for example, some young renters will not experience negative impacts if their rent rises, even if the majority do. Appendix 1 provides definitions of the population groups and districts examined in this report, as well as common known intersectionalities. These are described in further detail in Schirmer et al. (2025).

Canberra's districts vary significantly in their populations: for example, areas with more housing development activity typically have a younger population and more mortgage holders compare to those with mostly long-established homes. Schirmer et al. (2025) provides a detailed examination of population growth trends and demographic profiles by ACT district. This analysis highlighted large differences in population growth of different parts of Canberra, as well as in home tenure. For example, renting is much more common in Inner Belconnen (40.2% of homes are rented) and the Inner North (48.7%) than the Canberran average of 29.9% (see Appendix 1 for the list of suburbs included in these districts). As of 2021, Molonglo had the youngest overall age profile of any Canberra district, with only 12.6% of residents older than 50 compared to 29.6% of ACT residents.

CHAPTER 2

PERSONAL WELLBEING OF CANBERRANS OVER TIME



KEY POINTS

- The wellbeing of Canberrans improved slightly but significantly in 2025 compared to 2024 – although despite this improvement, wellbeing levels overall remained lower than pre-COVID-19levels
- This increase in wellbeing was almost entirely amongst those younger than 50, who were either mortgage holders or renting
- When components of wellbeing were examined, the increase in wellbeing appeared to be driven largely by improvement in standard of living
- This is likely to at least in part reflect the positive effects for mortgage holders of two interest rate cuts in 2025, and possibly of slower growth in rental costs amongst renters
- The interest rate cuts of 2025 were, however, followed by interest rate rises in 2026, which may mean at least some of the increase in wellbeing observed in 2025 was short lived
- The wellbeing of those living with moderately and severely restrictive disability declined in 2025.

UNDERSTANDING PERSONAL WELLBEING

What is personal wellbeing – and how is it measured?

'Personal wellbeing' is something that is talked about a lot, but often hard to define. Personal wellbeing focuses on the wellbeing of an individual person, and examines the overall quality of life that person is experiencing. This can be measured in many ways. Some measures simply ask a person to rate their overall satisfaction with their life. Others ask a person to rate their satisfaction with different aspects of their life, such as their standard of living, health, relationships and community. This section examines personal wellbeing using three measures: the Personal Wellbeing Index, which asks a person to rate how well seven aspects of their life are going, and turns this into an overall wellbeing score; the Global Life Satisfaction measure, which simply asks a person to rate their overall satisfaction with their life; and the Cantril Ladder, which asks a person to assess how well their life is going on a ladder from the lowest rung (worst possible life) to the top rung (best possible life).

These measures have been examined in every report of the *Living well* survey, and are described in detail in previous reports (see Schirmer 2020, Schirmer and Mylek 2022, Schirmer and Dale 2023, Schirmer et al. 2025). This section summarises key trends in wellbeing in 2025.

Overall, personal wellbeing improved for some Canberrans between 2024 and 2025: whereas 31.2% of Canberrans had low wellbeing in late 2024, 27.4% did in late 2025, a return to levels similar to those seen in mid-2022 to early 2023 (Figure 1).

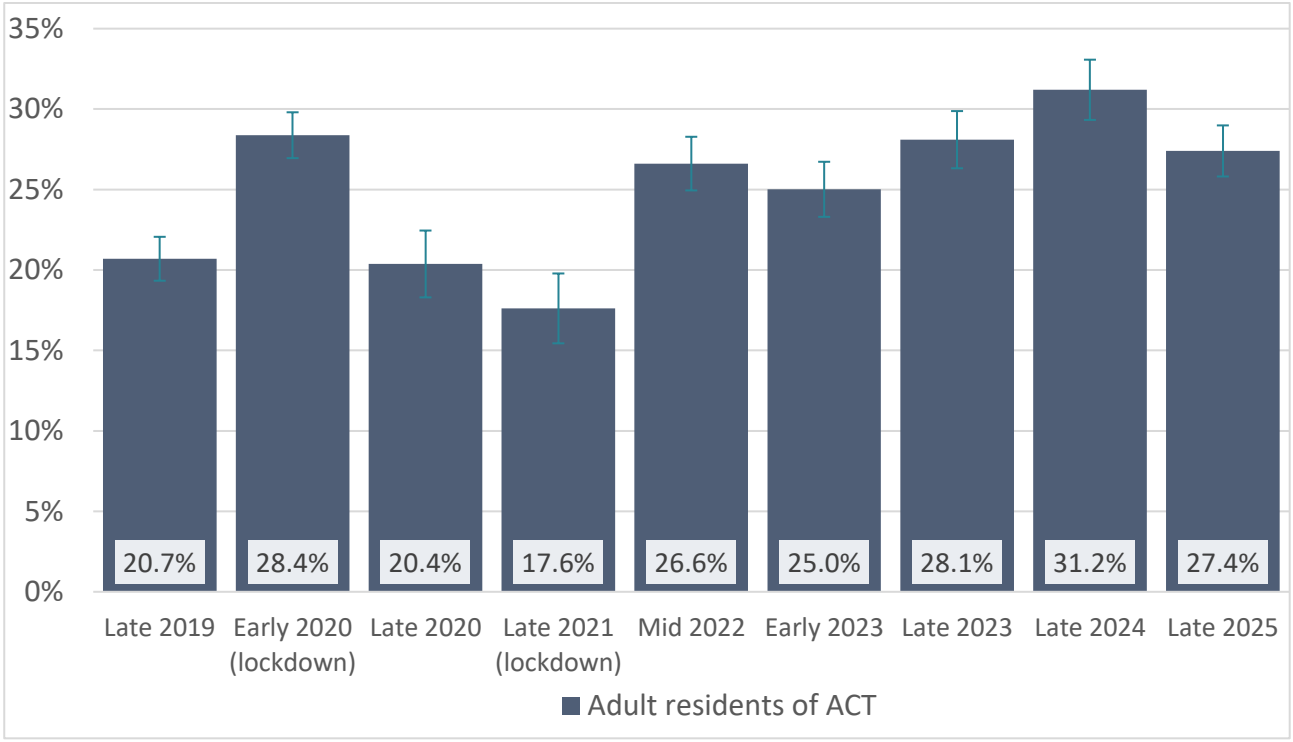


Figure 1 Proportion of ACT residents with low wellbeing (Personal Wellbeing Index score <60), 2025

A similar trend was seen with other wellbeing measures, with a small increase in global life satisfaction (Figure 2), and a small but not significant increase in the proportion of people who were 'thriving' versus 'surviving' and 'struggling' using the Cantril ladder wellbeing measure (Figure 3).

The Personal Wellbeing Index can be unpacked to examine its seven individual elements, and identify which changed positively or negatively to affect the overall PWI score. Between 2024 and 2025, there was a statistically significant increase in satisfaction with standard of living (although levels did not fully return to those seen in late 2023), and in feeling safe. There was a small increase in satisfaction with health, while other aspects of wellbeing (satisfaction with achievements, relationships, feeling part of the community and future security) did not increase significantly.

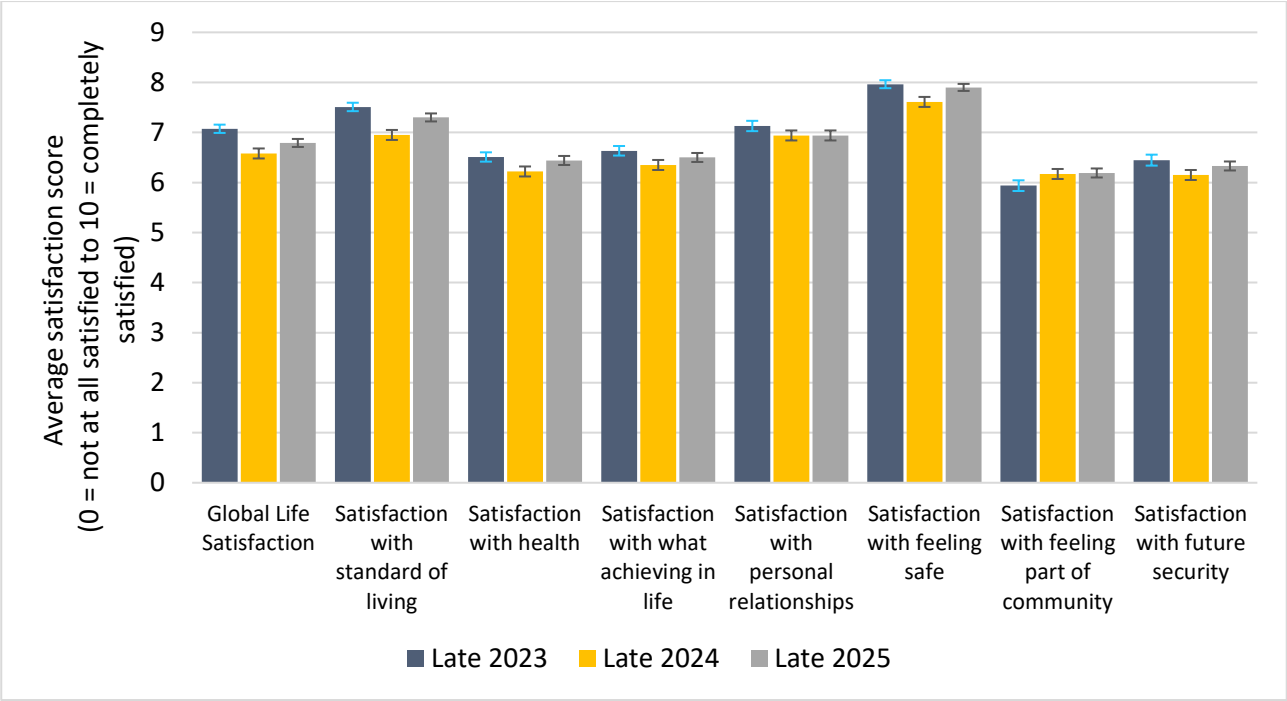


Figure 2 Average life satisfaction scores of ACT adults – Global Life Satisfaction and 7 Personal Wellbeing Index components, 2023-2025

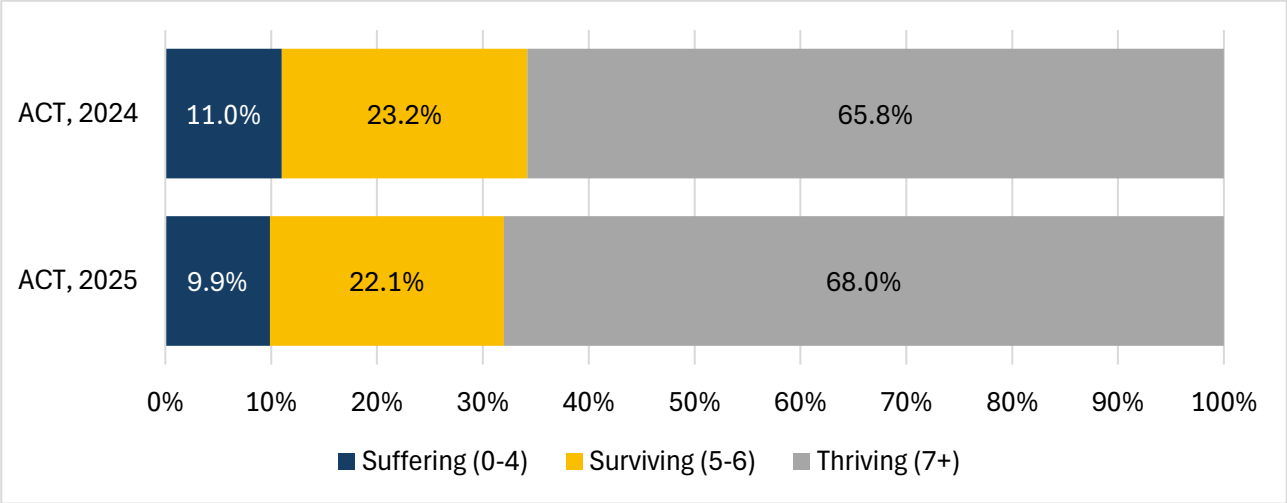


Figure 3 Wellbeing measured using the Cantril ladder, ACT adults, 2024 and 2025

The change in wellbeing was similar amongst both men and women (Figure 4), although wellbeing improved slightly more amongst men, with an additional 4.7% of men having healthy wellbeing in 2025 compared to 2024, versus an additional 4.4% of women.

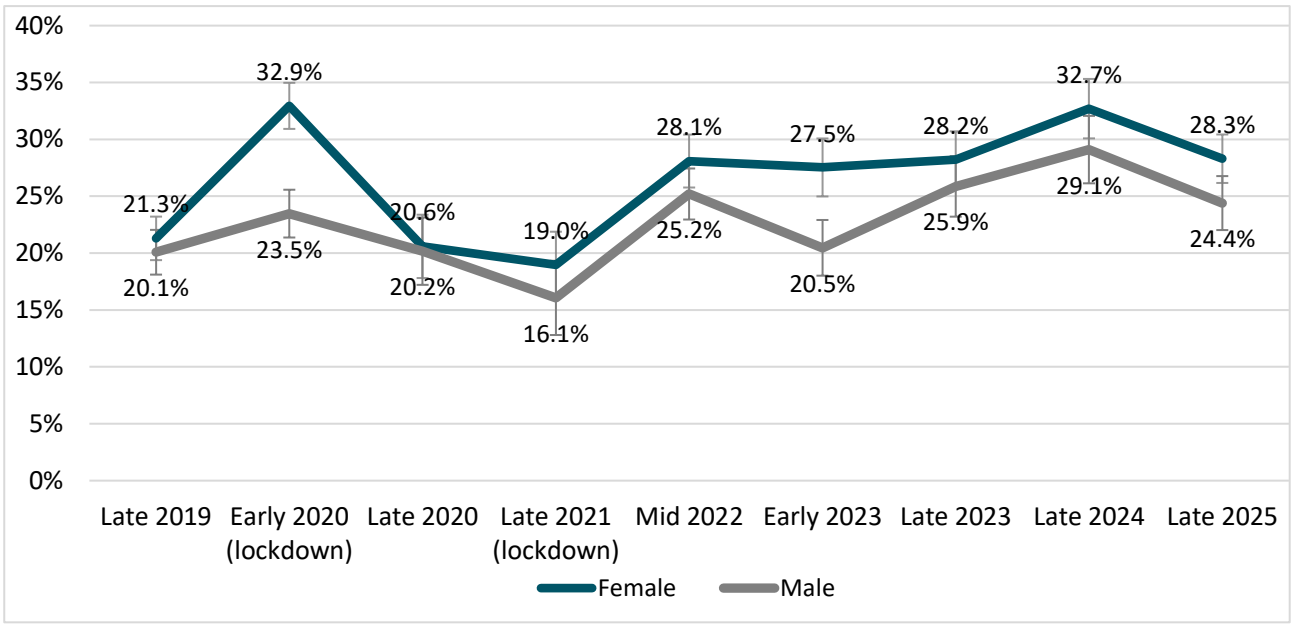


Figure 4 Proportion of female and male ACT residents with low wellbeing (Personal Wellbeing Index score <60), 2019 to 2025

The improvement in wellbeing was almost entirely driven by change amongst those aged under 50 (Figure 5). The proportion of people aged 18-29 with low wellbeing fell from 35.2% to 29.8%, meaning 5.4% of this age group shifted from having low wellbeing and into the 'healthy wellbeing' category. Amongst those aged 30 to 49, low wellbeing declined from 37.2% to 28.9%, meaning 8.3% of this age group shifted to having healthy wellbeing levels. Amongst those aged 50 and older, there was less than a one percentage point change in the proportions with healthy versus low wellbeing: 27.9% of those aged 50-64 had low wellbeing in 2025, compared to 28.0% in 2024; and the proportion of those aged 65 and older with low wellbeing remained at 19.2%, the same level as in 2024.

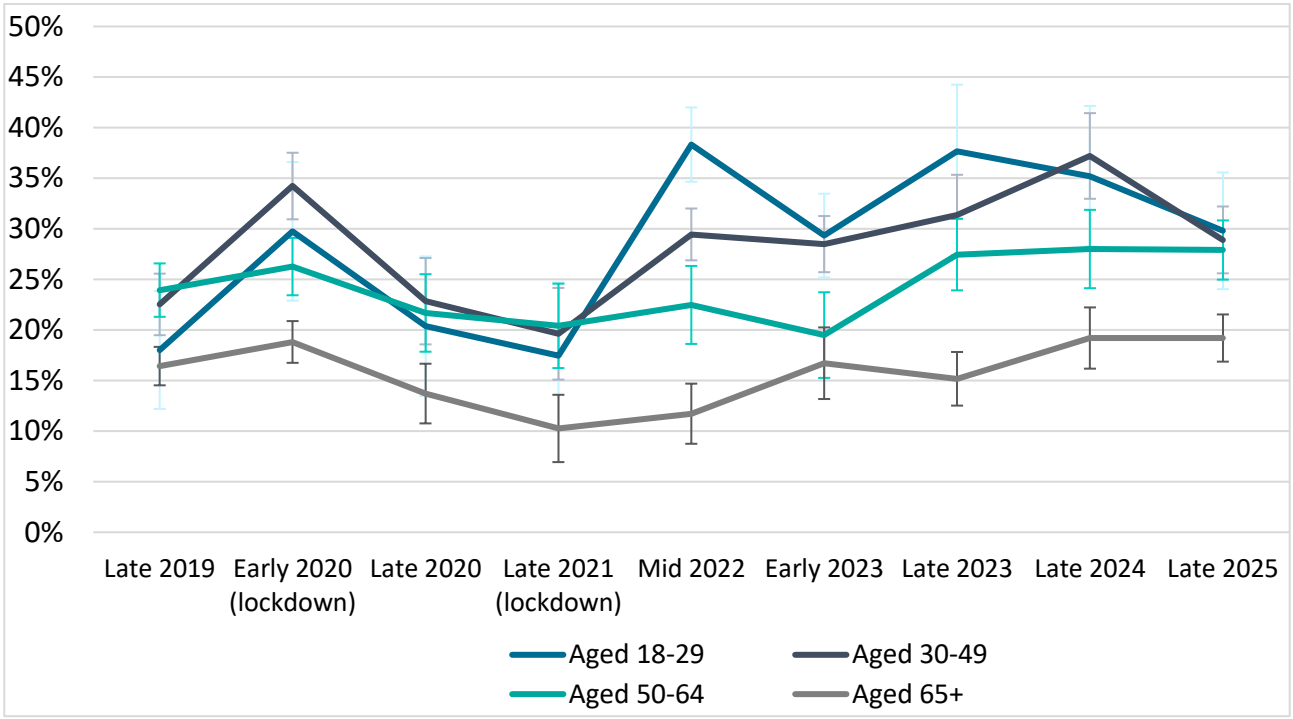


Figure 5 Proportion of ACT residents with low wellbeing, by age group (Personal Wellbeing Index score <60), 2019 to 2025

In addition to those aged under 50, groups who had notable changes in wellbeing included the following:

- Those who speak a language other than English at home (the proportion with healthy wellbeing increased 8.9 percentage points)
- Mortgage holders (increased 4.6 percentage points)
- Renters (increased 6.5 percentage points)
- Couples with children at home (increased 7.4 percentage points)
- Couples with no children at home (increased 6.3 percentage points)

In addition, the following groups showed improvements in wellbeing, however these were not statistically significant due to the relatively small sample size of the group: those identifying as LGBTIQA+, those who had lived in the ACT three years or less, single parents, and carers.

Wellbeing worsened slightly but not statistically significantly amongst those living alone (sole person households) and in share/group households. There was no significant change in wellbeing amongst those who owned their home outright.

Amongst those living with restrictive disabilities, wellbeing declined between 2024 and 2025, particularly amongst those living with moderately or severely restrictive disability: healthy wellbeing fell by 17.5% amongst those with moderately restrictive disability and 4.6% amongst those with severely restrictive disability. The proportion of those living with a physically restrictive disability who had healthy wellbeing declined by 4.7 percentage points to 70.3%, while the proportion of those living with a mental health related disability who had healthy wellbeing remained very low at 46.2%, with no significant change between 2024 and 2025. This suggests that the factors positively influencing the wellbeing of some other Canberrans largely did not provide wellbeing benefits for those living with significant restrictions to day to day activities as a result of a disability. It also suggests there was an increase in stressors for many living with significantly restrictive disabilities during 2025.

The small improvement in wellbeing seen across ACT adults overall between 2024 and 2025 is likely to be at least in part explained by an improvement in financial circumstances for some Canberrans, with a decline in the proportion of ACT residents reporting their household was poor or just getting along, and an increase in the proportion reporting being very comfortable or prosperous. As discussed in detail in the next chapter of this report, which examines change in living standards, the improved financial status was concentrated predominantly amongst Canberrans who were mortgage holders, and the aspect of wellbeing that typically improved amongst this group was their standard of living, likely associated with two interest rate cuts by the Reserve Bank of Australia in 2025. It is likely that the subsequent interest rate rises in 2026 led to reversal of the small improvement of wellbeing seen amongst mortgage holders in 2025.

Improvement in wellbeing amongst renters is less likely to be associated with interest rate cuts. However, living cost affordability improved for some renters in 2025 (described in the next section). Optimism about the future also increase more amongst renters than amongst mortgage holders or outright home owners; it is possible this increased optimism was partly a result of feeling greater confidence about the future due to interest rate cuts, although it is not possible to confirm this was the case.

CHAPTER 3

LIVING STANDARDS AND CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE



KEY POINTS

- In 2025, the household financial wellbeing of some Canberrans improved slightly, with a 3.6 percentage point increase in those who were very comfortable or prosperous; this increase largely occurred amongst mortgage holders, likely reflecting two interest rate cuts in 2025
- Slightly more Canberrans found living costs affordable in 2025 (33.3%) than 2024 (29.4%), with the increase in affordability higher amongst men, those aged under 30 and renters
- Despite these small improvements, 58.2% of Canberrans reported that their household expenses grew faster than their income in 2025, and only 8.7% that income grew faster than expenses
- The groups most likely to report expenses growing faster than income were those aged 30 to 49, caring for dependent children or others, mortgage holders, renters, those with moderately or severely restrictive disability, and those living in Gungahlin and Outer Belconnen.
- 37.5% of Canberrans experienced one or more financial stress events in 2025, with those aged 30 to 49, caring for children or others, renting, and living with restrictive disability more likely than others to experience financial stress
- Financial stress resulted in many Canberrans reducing takeaway and restaurant meals (70.9%), buying cheaper supermarket goods (66.6%), reducing home heating or cooling (56.7%), cancelling social events (49.3%), or delaying medical appointments (41.5%) and medication purchase (24.4%)
- Food stress was reported by more than one in five Canberrans: at some point in the previous 12 months,21.6% had worried their food would run out before they next had money coming into their bank account, 20.6% were unable to afford to eat balanced meals; and 12.4% had run out of foods and money to purchase more
- 36.7% of Canberrans either reduced home maintenance and repairs, and/or reduced or stopped at least one form of insurance in 2025: reduced home maintenance and insurance was more common amongst women and those aged 30-49 compared to men and other age groups
- Most Canberrans (86.8%) live in homes that meet their needs well, are well maintained (80.6%), and are large enough for current residents to live in easily (77.4%).
- In 2025, 42.4% of Canberrans felt their household would be better off in five years (compared to 40.4% in 2024), while 27.8% felt they would be worse off (compared to 28.7% in 2024).

LIVING STANDARDS

People who are able to easily afford living costs and who live in a home that meets their needs well, have higher wellbeing. Living standards are examined in the *Living well* survey through examining:

- Household financial position
- Affordability of living costs & actions taken to manage rising costs of living, and
- Experience of household financial stress events.

In addition, being able to easily access transport and services affects living standards – these are examined in subsequent sections of this report.

Self-rated household financial position

In 2025, the self-rated financial position of some Canberran households improved (Figure 6):

- There was a 3.6 percentage point increase in people reporting they were very comfortable or prosperous, from 24.4% to 28.0%
- There was a 3.2 percentage point decline in those reporting being very poor, poor or just getting along, from 26.2% to 23.0%.

This improvement in household finances was small, but significant.

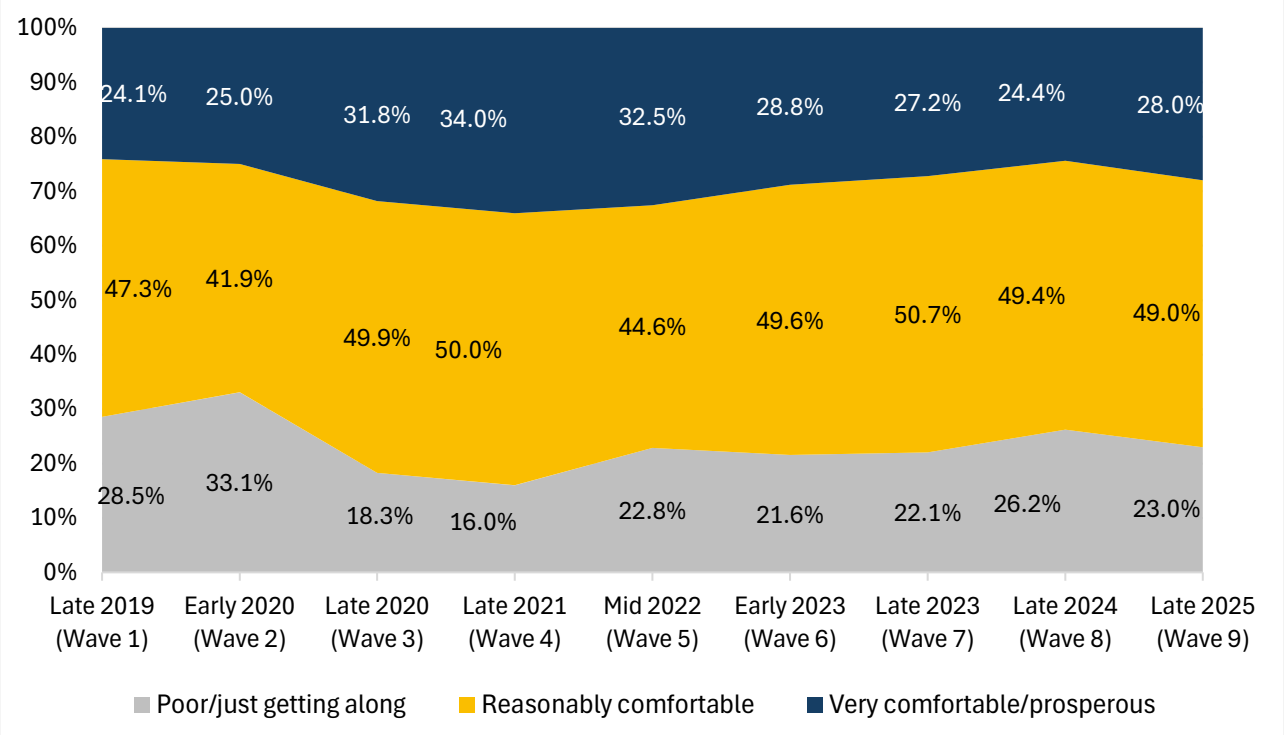


Figure 6 Self-rated household financial position, ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

It is important to interpret this improvement in financial status in the context of the specific time data were collected. At the end of 2025, when survey data were collected, the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) had reduced interest rates twice in the previous 12 months, first in February with rates reduced to 4.10% from the 4.35% rate that had applied since 2023; then in August with rates reduced further to 3.60%. Survey data examined in this report were collected before the two rate rises in February and May 2026, which are likely to have reintroduced significant financial stress. Thus the 2025 *Living well* survey data were collected

at the point where mortgage holders with variable interest loans were experiencing some reduction in mortgage repayments due to the two reductions in the RBA rate, likely reducing financial stress.

The impacts of interest rate reduction are clear in the *Living well* survey findings: improvements in household financial status occurred only amongst mortgage holders, and not amongst those who were renting or who owned their home outright (Figure 7). In late 2025 when *Living well* survey data were collected, 19.1% of mortgage holders reported being poor/just getting along, a 8.3% reduction since 2024 (when it was 27.4%). There was growth in those reporting being very comfortable and prosperous, from 18.7% to 23.6%.

There was very little change in financial status of renters, with just under half (46.7% in 2025 and 45.4% in 2024) reporting being poor or just getting along, and just over one in ten reporting being very comfortable or prosperous. Outright home owners were nearly the opposite, with almost half – 46.7% in 2025 – reporting being very comfortable or prosperous, and less than one in ten reporting being poor or just getting along.

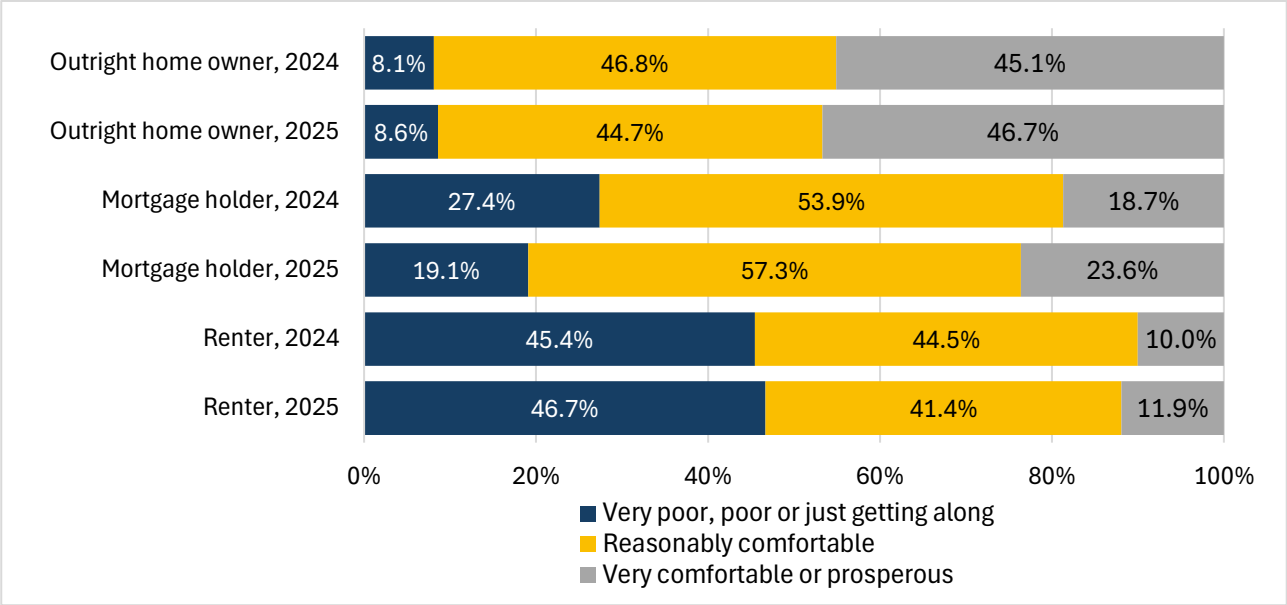


Figure 7 Self-rated household financial position, by home tenure, 2024 and 2025

Household financial prosperity is a subjective measure which asks a person to self-rate how financially well-off their household is. This measure is used in the *Living well* survey as it has a very high correlation with incidence of financial stress events. It is a more useful measure than household income for identifying whether a household has sufficient income to cover its living costs, as the person answering the question is able to take into account both income and their financial responsibilities. Household income on its own is not a preferred measure of household financial wellbeing, because the same income can deliver very different standard of living depending on a household's circumstances. For example, a given level of income may deliver a very high standard of living for a retired couple with no dependent children who live in a home they own outright, but may be barely sufficient to cover basic living costs for a single parent with a large mortgage and three dependent children. While household income is significantly correlated with self-rated household financial wellbeing (Spearman's correlation coefficient = 0.399, $p<0.001$ in 2025), as shown in Figure 8, within every household income category there is some variation in self-rated financial wellbeing. For example, while almost all people who self-rated themselves as very poor or poor earned household income of less than $104,000, more than 20% of those in all income categories under $156,000 reported they were 'just getting along', while people were similarly likely to report being 'reasonably comfortable' across income categories from $31,200 to $259,999.

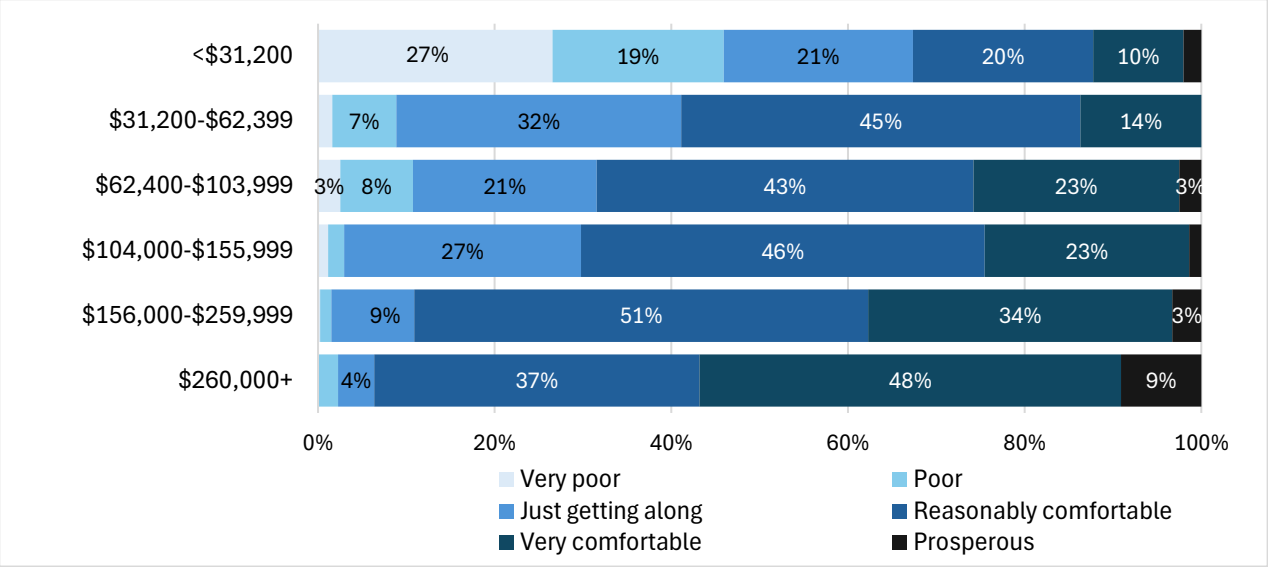


Figure 8 Self-rated household financial wellbeing by household income, ACT adults, 2025

Self-rated household financial wellbeing is also a useful measure due to its high correlation with financial stress events (Figure 9). Survey participants were asked whether they had experienced any of several financial stress events in the last year, including being unable to pay bills on time, not using heating or cooling, going without meals, and asking for financial help. Almost all those who reported being very poor or poor experienced at least one financial stress event, with the large majority experiencing two or more. The average number of financial stress events then decreased with higher self-reported financial prosperity, with the greatest difference occurring from the point where people reported being financially comfortable. Whereas the majority of those who reported being poor or just getting along experienced financial stress events, a minority of those who reported being reasonably comfortable, very comfortable or prosperous experienced any financial stress events. Amongst those reporting being prosperous, only 7.9% experienced any financial stress event – and no person who reported being prosperous reported experienced more than one type of financial stress.

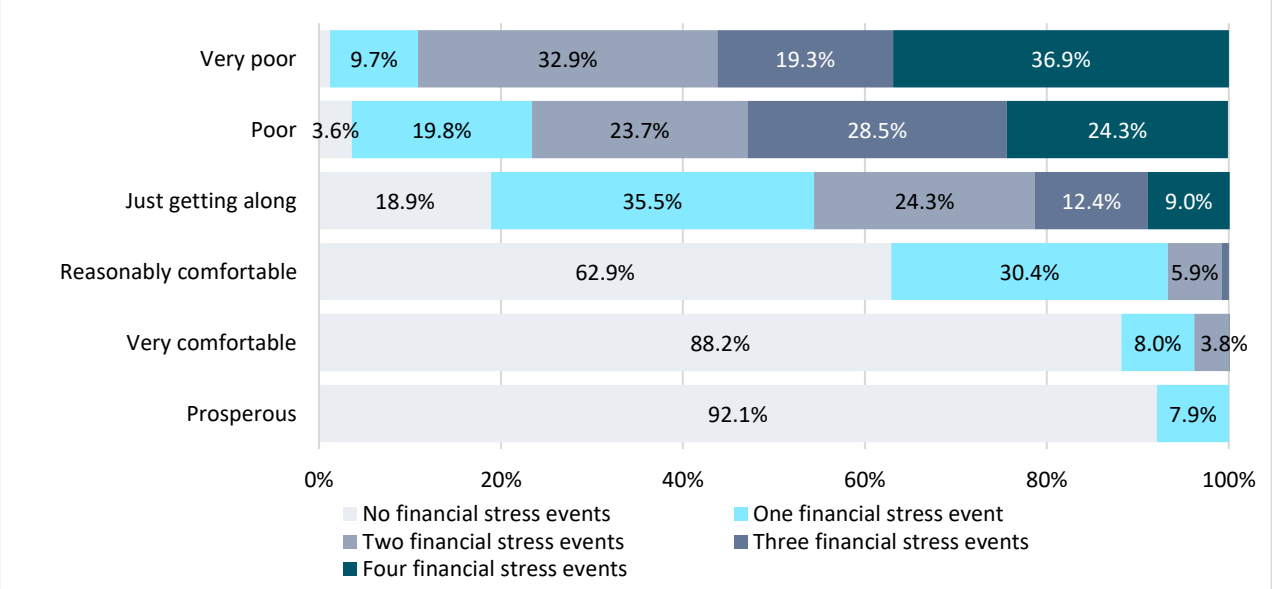


Figure 9 Self-rated household financial wellbeing by financial stress events experienced in last 12 months, ACT adults, 2025

Affordability of living costs

Consistent with the changes seen in overall household finances, in 2025 there was a small increase in the proportion of Canberrans who found living costs in the ACT affordable, rising to 33.3% from 29.4% in 2024 (Figure 10). The increase in reported affordability of living costs was higher amongst men (6.1 percentage point increase compared to 3.1 percentage point growth for women), and for those aged under 30 (9.8 percentage point increase) compared to other age groups. Consistent with this pattern, growth in living cost affordability was greater amongst renters (rising from 13.7% in 2024 to 24.6% in 2025) than mortgage holders (rising from 27.3% to 29.1%) or outright home owners (rising from 49.2 to 51.2%)with a large proportion of those aged under 30 being renters). This growth in living cost affordability for some renters may in part explain the growth in wellbeing seen amongst this group.

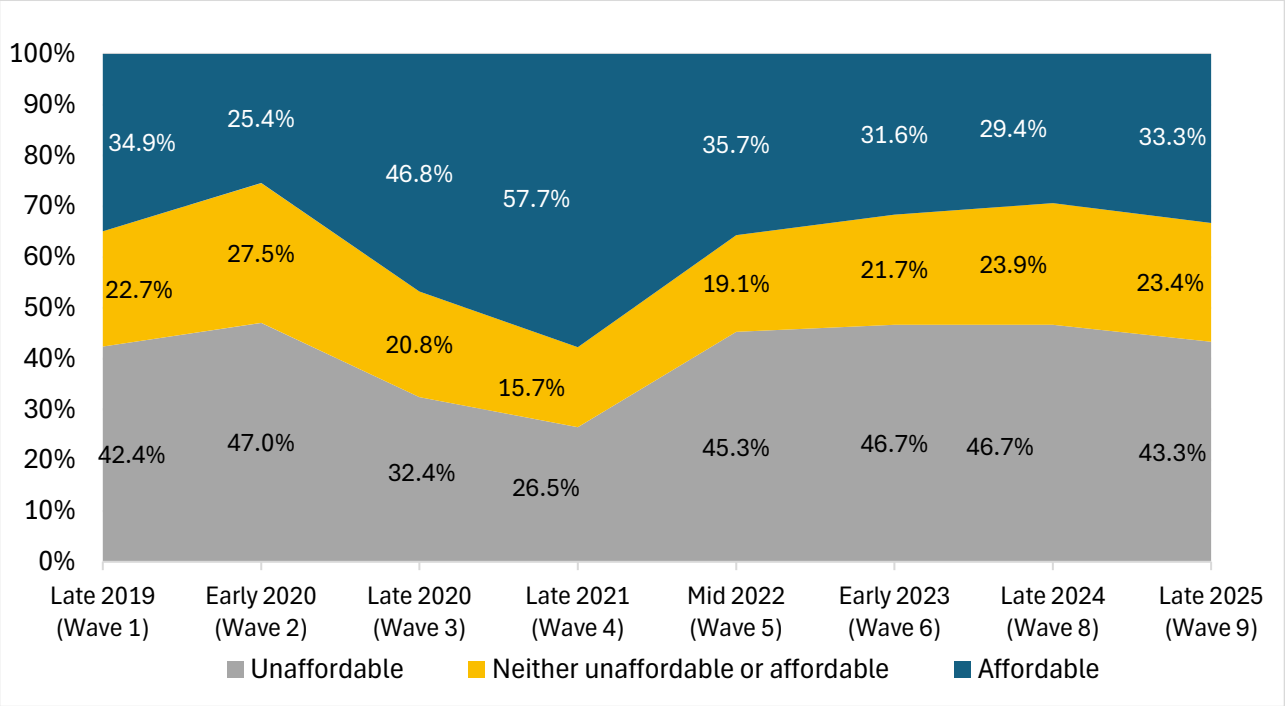


Figure 10 'I find living costs affordable in the ACT region e.g. food, petrol, housing', ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

Household financial stress

In 2025, 58.2% of Canberrans reported that their household expenses grew faster than their income, while only 8.7% reported income growing faster than expenses (Figure 11). The groups most likely to report expenses grew faster than income were those aged 30 to 49 (65.6%), single parents (68.8%), those living in multigenerational households (75.6%), those with dependent children aged 0-17 in the home (69.6%), those caring for someone with a long-term illness or disability (67.6%), mortgage holders (65.6%), renters (63.5%), those who were unemployed (81.9%), and those with a restrictive disability (61.2%), particularly if it was moderately (70.6%) or severely restrictive (67.9%). Those least likely to report expenses grew faster than income were those aged 65 and older and outright home owners.

There were geographic differences as well: the districts where residents were most likely to report expenses growing faster than income were Gungahlin (67.0%) and Outer Belconnen (71.5%).

Survey participants were asked if they experienced any of a number of financial stress events in the last year. Almost two in five (37.5%) reporting having to delay or cancel non-essential purchases, while 13.4% asked for financial help from friends or family, 10.7% could not pay bills on times, and 6.7% went without meals or were unable to heat or cool their home. Higher rates of financial stress events were reported by

those aged below 50, those with children under 18 in the home, carers, renters, and those living with moderately or severely restrictive disability, similar to previous years (Table 1).

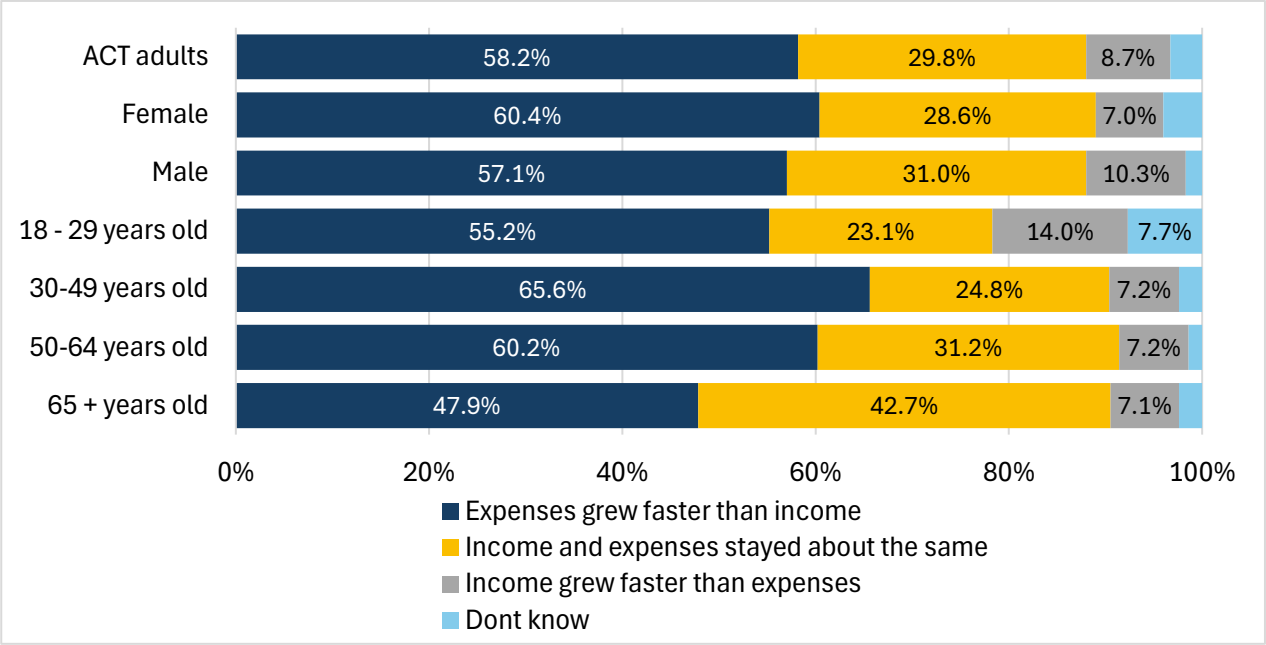


Figure 11 Growth in expenses relative to income, ACT adults by age and gender, 2025

Table 1 Financial stress events experienced in last 12 months, ACT adults by selected demographic group, 2025

	Had to delay or cancel non-essential purchases	Asked for financial help from friends or family	Could not pay bills on time e.g. electricity, rent, gas	Went without meals, or was unable to heat or cool home	None of these happened
ACT	37.5%	13.4%	10.7%	6.7%	58.9%
Female	41.0%	14.1%	12.1%	7.1%	56.1%
Male	31.2%	11.0%	9.1%	5.4%	64.4%
18-29 years old	47.3%	24.0%	11.2%	9.6%	45.4%
30-49 years old	47.5%	16.2%	15.4%	8.7%	48.7%
50-64 years old	28.6%	5.6%	9.4%	5.8%	68.8%
65 + years old	13.8%	1.2%	2.4%	1.1%	84.9%
Single parent	60.7%	34.2%	32.5%	15.3%	34.4%
Children aged 0-17 in household	48.6%	17.1%	17.0%	6.6%	48.6%
Carer	50.5%	25.6%	18.5%	9.0%	46.8%
Home owned outright	16.5%	1.0%	1.9%	0.9%	82.5%
Home has mortgage	40.5%	9.9%	10.0%	4.6%	57.3%
Home rented	57.0%	32.1%	22.8%	14.9%	33.8%
Moderately restrictive disability	54.0%	18.9%	16.9%	13.7%	44.5%
Severely restrictive disability	48.0%	29.3%	22.4%	20.9%	44.6%
Physical disability	35.6%	6.3%	8.5%	6.3%	63.2%
Mental health disability	54.9%	30.1%	21.6%	15.6%	40.6%

Experiences of financial stress can be varied. To better understand the consequences of financial stress for ACT households, survey participants were asked whether in the last year rising living costs had led to changes in any of a number of aspects of their life (Figure 12). More than half of Canberrans reported reducing purchase of takeaway and restaurant meals (70.9%), buying cheaper food at the supermarket (66.6%), and reducing use of home heating or cooling (56.7%). Nearly half – 49.3% – cancelled going to a social event because of a need to save money, and 41.5% delayed seeking a medical appointment for themselves or others to save money. Nearly three in ten reduced sports activities, and almost one in four (24.4%) delayed or didn't purchase medication.

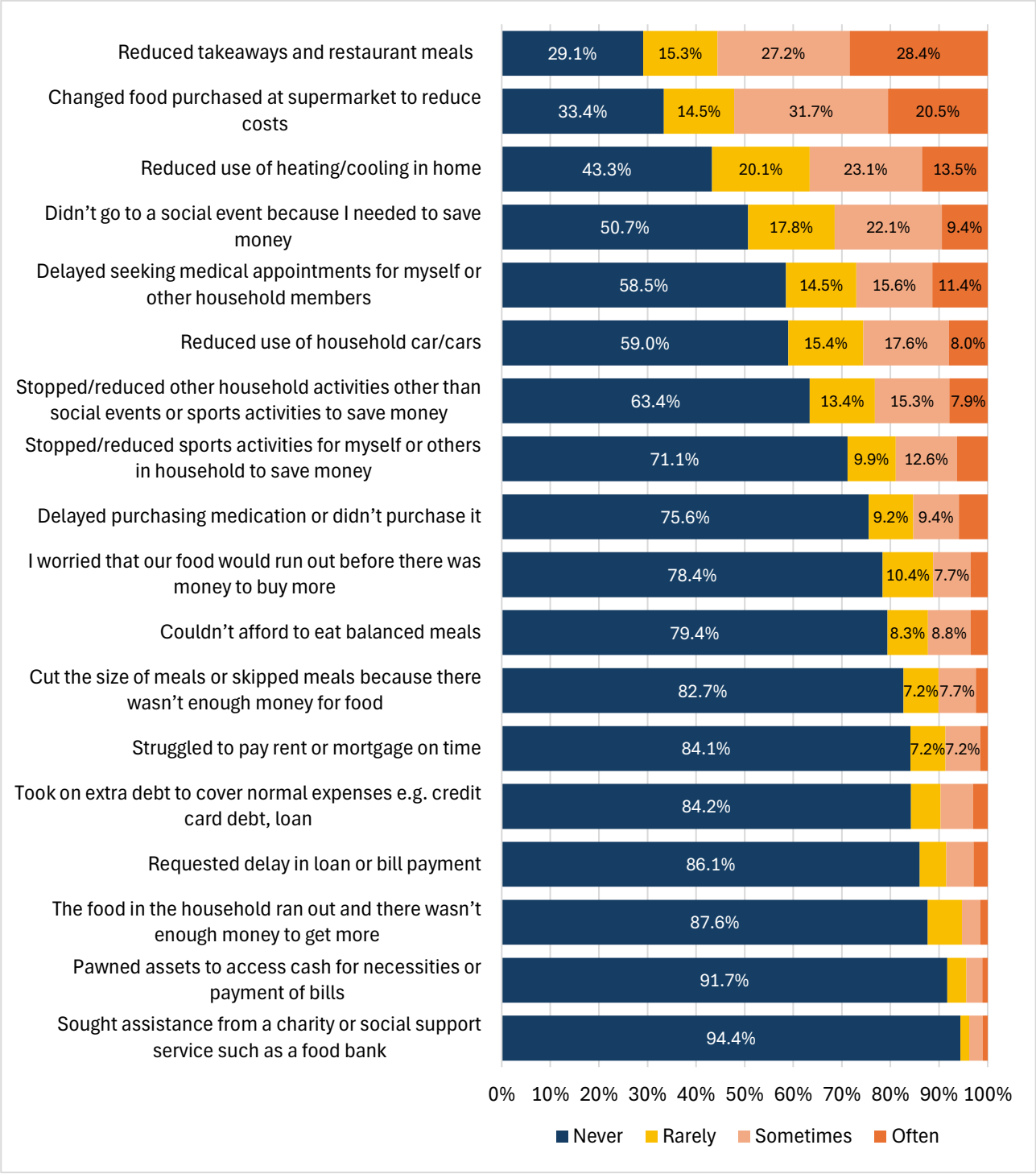


Figure 12 Changes in daily life made to save money in last 12 months, ACT adults, 2025

Food stress was reported by more than one in five Canberrans, with 21.6% worrying their food would run out before they next had money coming into their bank account, and 20.6% unable to afford to eat balanced meals at some point in the last 12 month. More than one in ten – 12.4% - had run out of food at some point with no money to purchase more.

Experiencing financial stress can lead to people making changes that affect their longer term financial wellbeing. In particular, maintaining insurance levels, and ensuring repairs and home maintenance are up to date, are important actions that help protect against future losses if an accident or natural hazard occurs. In 2025, new questions were asked, which identified whether a person had stopped or reduced different types of insurance in the last year, and whether they had difficulty keeping up home maintenance and repairs.

Overall, 36.7% of Canberrans either reduced home maintenance and repairs, and/or reduced or stopped at least one form of insurance, in 2025. Nearly one in four Canberrans (24.0%) reported they either reduced spending on home maintenance or didn't make some needed repairs, while 10.5% reduced their level of car insurance, and 8.6% reduced their health insurance cover. Fully stopping insurance was not common, however one in 20 Canberrans (5.0%) reported stopping health insurance, while 2.6% stopped their home or contents insurance, and 2.4% stopped their car insurance (Figure 13).

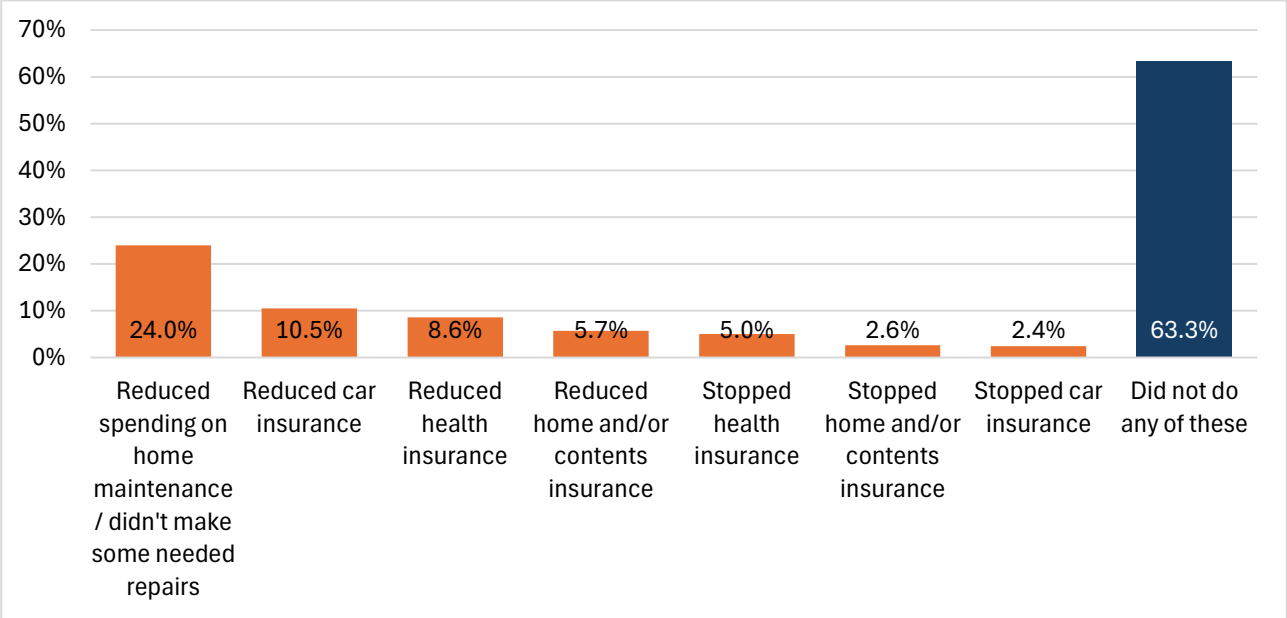


Figure 13 Proportion of ACT adults who reduced insurance coverage and spending on home maintenance and repairs, 2025

The likelihood of reducing insurance or home maintenance varied by gender and age group: women were more likely than men to report doing more than one of these things, and those aged 30 to 49 were much more likely to than those in other age groups (Figure 14).

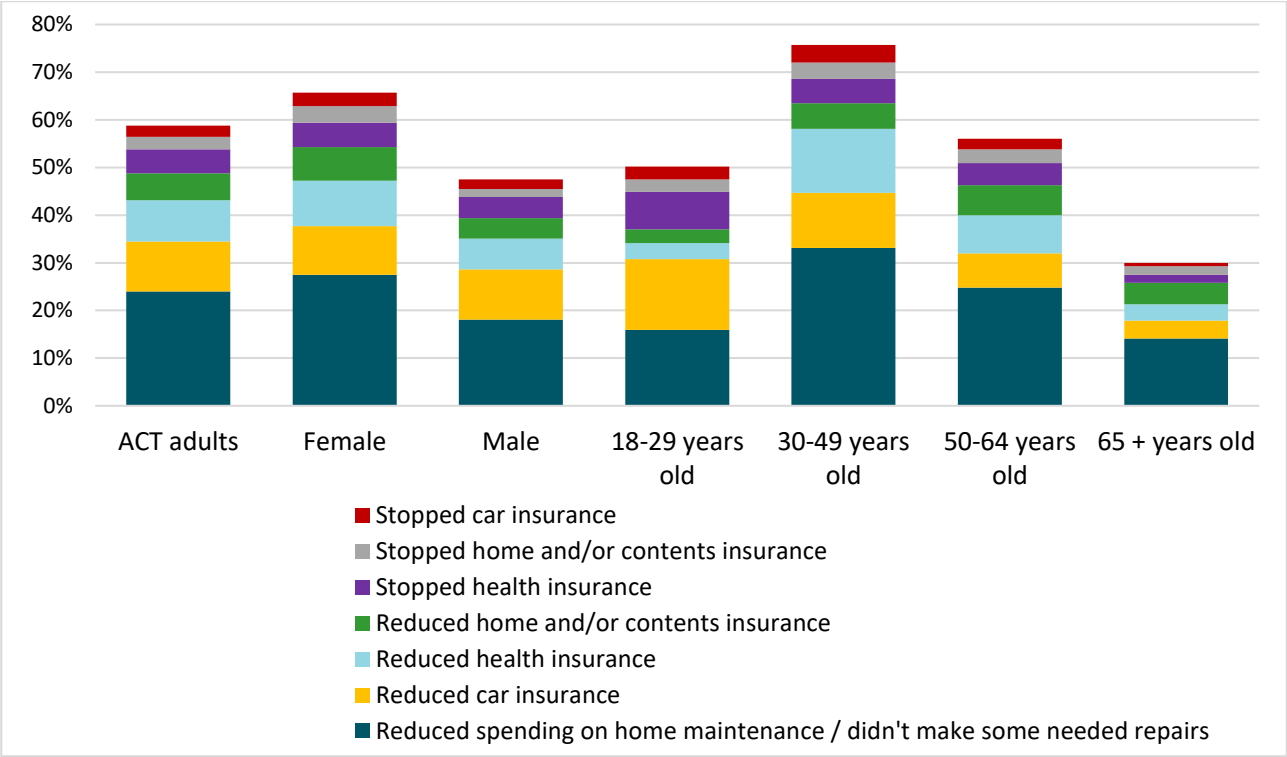


Figure 14 Proportion of ACT adults who reduced insurance coverage and spending on home maintenance and repairs, by gender and age group, 2025

HOUSING AND HOME

Housing suitability

The large majority of Canberrans – 86.8% – reported that their home met their needs well in 2025, was well maintained (80.6%), and was large enough for current residents to live in easily (77.4%). This was similar across most ACT residents (Figure 15). However, those living with a severely restrictive disability were more likely to report their home did not meet their needs well (16.8%, compared to the ACT average of 7.4%), as were those aged 30 to 49 (11.2%) and with children aged under 18 living at home (10.3%).

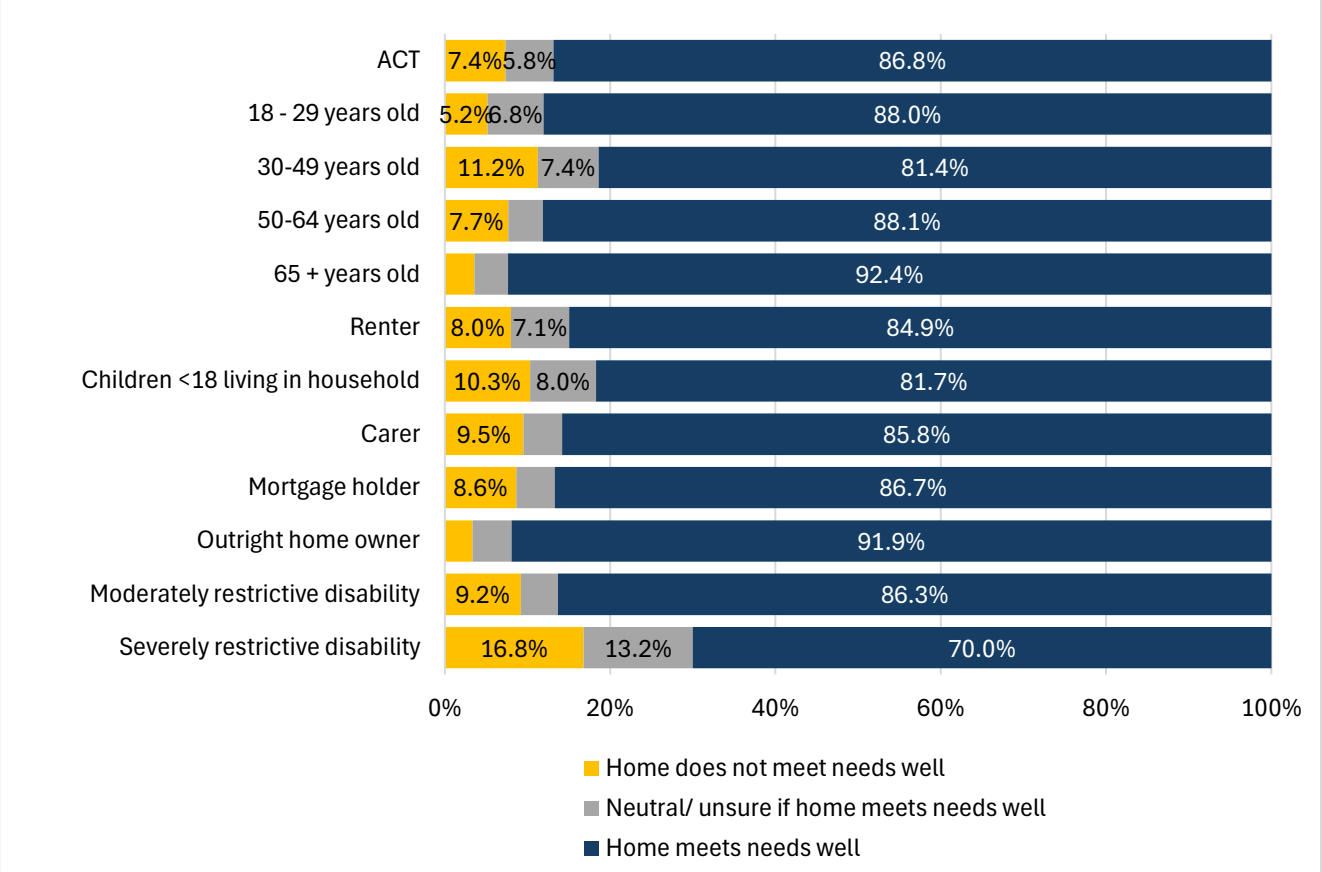


Figure 15 'Overall, my home meets my needs well', ACT adults by selected demographic groups, 2025

Most Canberrans – 82.0% – reported that their current housing situation was somewhat or very secure, while 17.7% reported their housing situation was insecure, and 0.3% were unsure. The following groups were more likely than the average Canberran to report an insecure housing situation:

- Those who were unemployed (36.0%)
- Those living with a severely restrictive disability (32.3%)
- Renters (30.5%)
- Those not currently paying rent or mortgage (typically living with friends or family, 27.6%)
- Those who had lived in the ACT for three years or less (27.1%)
- Those living in share/group households (25.9%)
- People living alone in sole person households (23.8%)
- Those who spoke a language other than English at home (22.8%)
- Those living with moderately restrictive disability (22.7%).

CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE

In 2025, confidence in the future remained at similar levels to 2024: 42.4% felt their household would be better off in five years (compared to 40.4% in 2024), while 27.8% felt they would be worse off (compared to 28.7% in 2024) (Figure 16). The average change across all ACT residents was not statistically significant. However, there were significant differences by age, gender and other characteristics. In particular:

- Men's confidence in the future increased while women's did not: Confidence that in five year's time, they would be better off increased by 4.0 percentage points amongst men (from 39.0% in 2024 to 43.0% in 2025), but not women (less than one percentage point change, with only 41.0% confident they would be better off in five year's time as of 2025)
- Confidence in the future increased amongst younger people, and decreased slightly amongst older people: Amongst 18-29 year olds, confidence things would be better off increased by 4.3 percentage points; for 30-49 year olds the increase was greater, at 6.0 percentage points (from 41.5% to 47.5%). Meanwhile, confidence decreased 4.0 percentage points amongst those aged 50-64 (from 37.6% to 33.6%).
- Those who spoke a language other than English at home had a larger increase in confidence than others, with 7.3 percentage point growth (from 39.9% to 47.2%)
- Renter's confidence they would be better off in future increased from 40.4% to 44.2% in 2025, while amongst mortgage holders, it rose from 45.0% to 48.3%; confidence changed by less than one percentage point amongst those who owned their home outright.

Optimism that children today will be better off than their parents remained low. In 2025, 67.9% of Canberrans felt that children today would be worse off than their parents, compared to 70.4% in 2024.

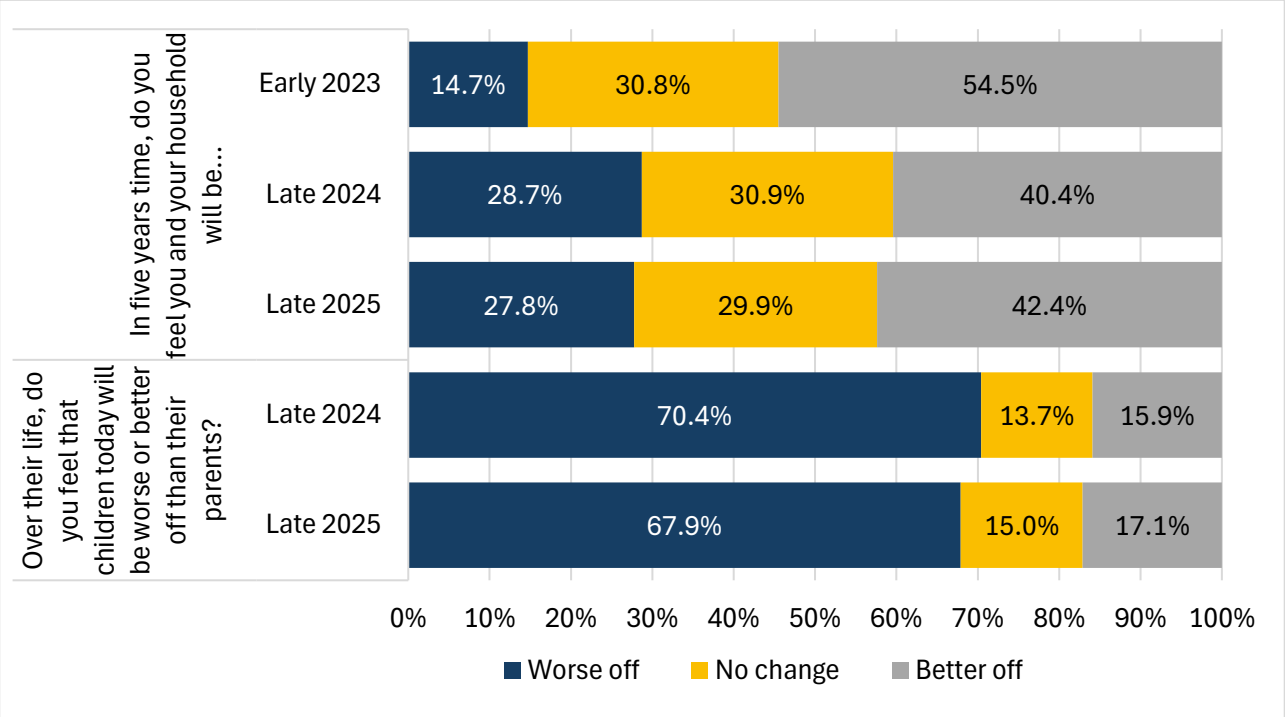


Figure 16 'In five years time, do you feel you and your household will be...', ACT adults, 2023 to 2025

CHAPTER 4

CONNECTING WITH OTHERS AND BALANCING TIME USE



KEY POINTS

- 42.1% of Canberrans were sometimes or often lonely in 2025, similar to 2024 levels; loneliness grew amongst those speaking a language other than English, and those living in apartments, and fell amongst those with severely restrictive disability, those with children, women, carers, and those aged 30 to 49
- Time spent socialising in-person increased, with 49.2% of Canberrans sometimes or regularly socialising, up from 40.2% in 2024; growth was highest amongst those aged 65 and older
- Regular engagement in community events/activities grew from 61.7% in 2024 to 68.0% in 2025; again, growth was greatest amongst those aged 65 and older
- 38.6% of Canberrans volunteered once or more in 2025; volunteering was enjoyable for 77% and safe for 79% of volunteers; 51.9% made new social connections through volunteering, and 36.9% made lasting friendships, although 27.9% sometimes found volunteering stressful
- In 2025, most Canberrans reported enjoying (60.6%) and having control (64.3%) over how they spent most of their time; however, 55.5% reported they had too many demands on their time
- 36.4% of Canberrans were doing more housework than they wanted in 2025
- 31.1% were spending less time caring for children, and 19.0% more time, than desired
- 24.4% of employed Canberrans were working more hours than they wanted to, 18.9% fewer hours than desired, and 56.6% about as much as they wanted to
- 45.3% of employed Canberrans worked from home one or more days each week, while another 18.2% did so occasionally, with Commonwealth public servants the most likely to work from home
- Between 2024 and 2025, satisfaction with time spent outdoors declined significantly, with only 39.1% spending as much time outdoors as they wanted in 2025, compared to 44.2% in 2024
- Only 37.0% of Canberrans were exercising as much as they wanted to; the likelihood a person was doing less exercise than desired increased if they were female, in paid work, had children at home, were aged 30-49, had a mortgage, had a restrictive disability, or identified as LGBTIQA+
- In 2025, 57.9% of adult Canberrans were spending less time than desired attending arts, culture and music events, despite 78.7% of Canberrans attending at least one event in 2025.

SOCIAL CONNECTION

Connecting with other people is central to a person's wellbeing, providing many benefits that range from access to practical and emotional support, to opportunities to gain knowledge and skills, and an increased sense of belonging. Social connection take many forms, from relationships with family and friends, to connections with colleagues and acquaintances, and shared community experiences at events and festivals. These interactions all contribute to overall experiences of loneliness, belonging and inclusion: loneliness is examined in this section, while belonging and inclusion are examined in subsequent parts of this report.

Loneliness

In 2025, 11.6% of Canberrans were often lonely, and another 30.5% sometimes lonely, with almost no change between 2024 and 2025 (Figure 17). Levels of loneliness seen in 2025 were similar to those seen in 2019, prior to COVID-19, and it is possible loneliness levels returned to pre-COVID-19 levels.

However, loneliness increased significantly between 2024 and 2025 for a small number of groups: those who speak a language other than English at home (the proportion feeling sometimes or often lonely increased by 4.1 percentage point growth), and those living in units/apartments (7.7 percentage point growth). Loneliness decreased amongst women (by 3.5 percentage points), those aged 30 to 49 (3.9 percentage points), those with children at home (7.0 percentage points), carers (15.9 percentage points), and those living with severely restrictive disability (11.1 percentage points).

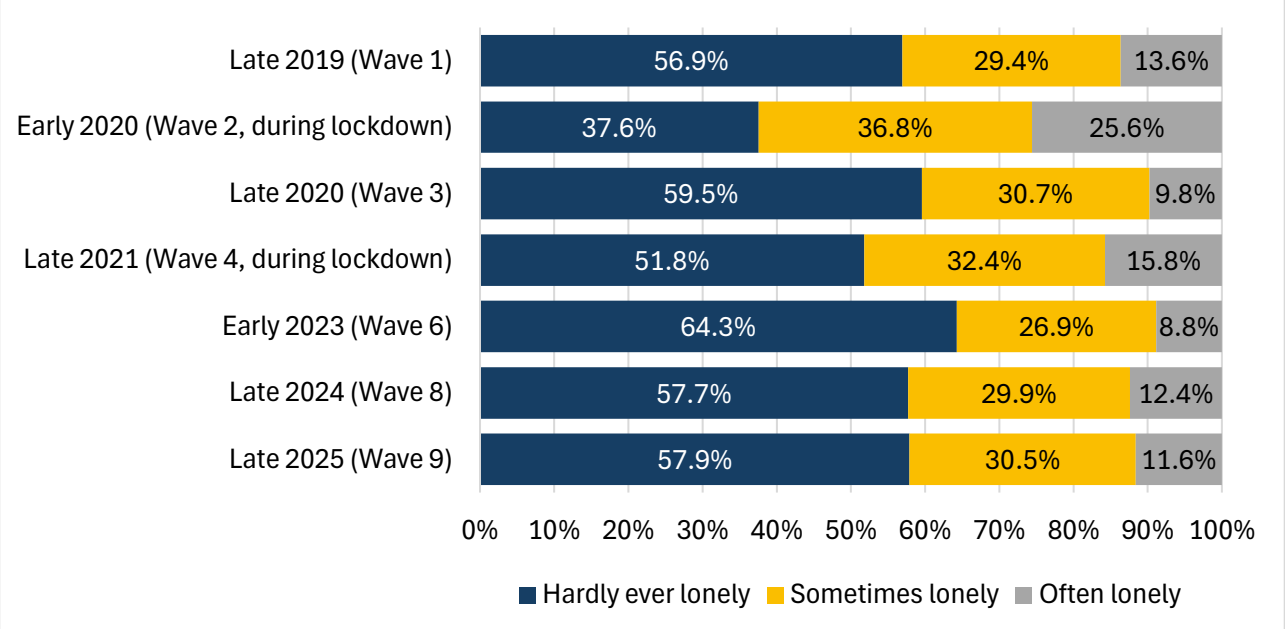


Figure 17 Frequency of experiencing loneliness, ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

Spending time with others

Between 2024 and 2025, a significant number of Canberrans increased the time they spent socialising with family and friends face to face (Figure 18): the proportion reporting they rarely spent time with family and friends in person fell from 59.8% to 50.8%, and the proportion reporting frequently spending in-person time rose from 15.6% to 20.8%. Meanwhile, distanced social connection – in which people spend time with each other online and by phone – did not change significantly (Figure 19).

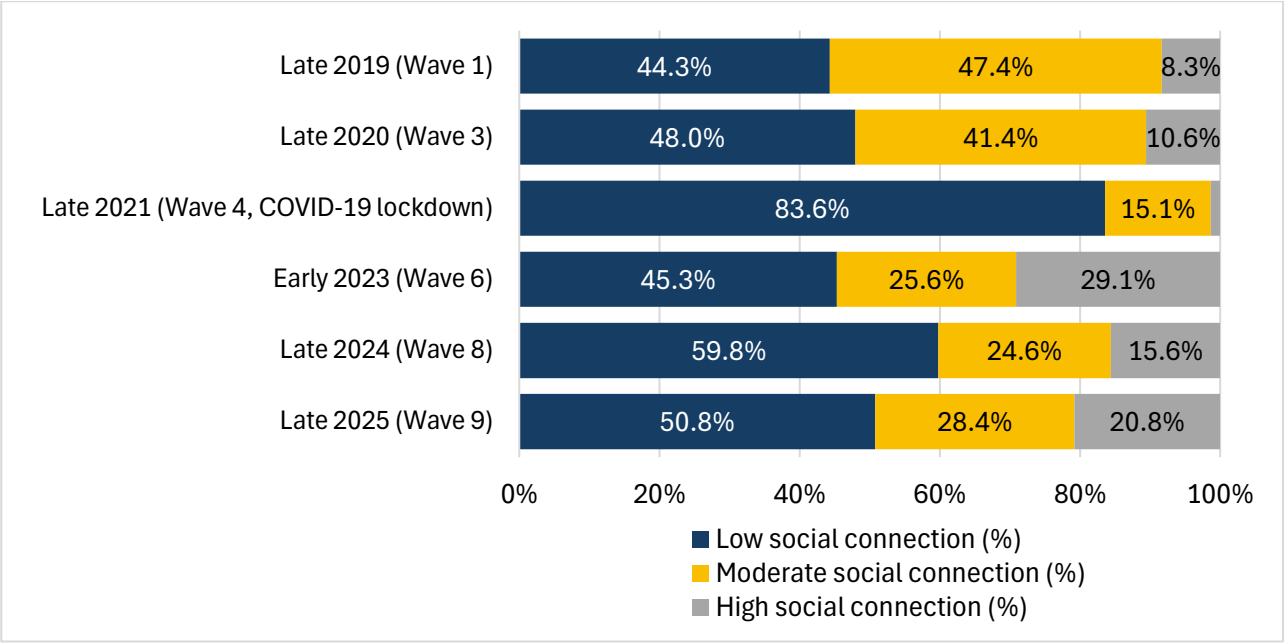


Figure 18 In-person social connection with family and friends, ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

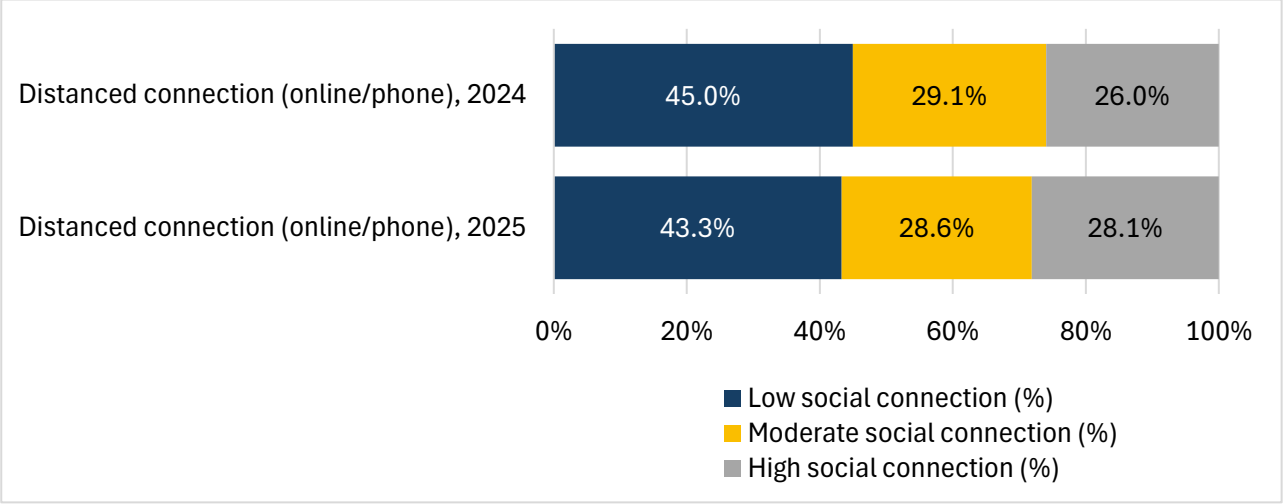


Figure 19 Distanced (online and phone) social connection with family and friends, ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

The increase in in-person social connection occurred across both women and men, and all age groups. However, the increase was greatest amongst those aged 65 and older. This group had the highest level of in person social connection in 2024, with 50.6% having moderate or high social connection. This rose 16.2 percentage points, to reach 66.8% with moderate or high connection in 2025, compared to 52.5% of those aged 50-64, 42.5% of those aged 30-49 and 41.2% of those aged 18-29.

Other groups with growth in face to face social connection between 2024 and 2025 were those who had lived in the ACT for less than three years (a group that historically has had lower social connection than others), carers, and those with a moderately or severely restrictive disability.

Taking part in community events and activities

Between 2024 and 2025, there was an increase in participation in community events and activities, such as festivals, shows, local markets and other events (Figure 20). In 2022, participation in community events and activities reached a low point, in which 68.8% of Canberrans reporting rarely spending time attending community events and activities, with the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacting participation. Since

2022, participation has increased year on year, with low participation falling to 32.0% in 2025 (down from 38.3% in 2024), and high participation rising to 20.1% (up from 14.8% in 2024). This shows continued recovery of engagement in community activities since the COVID-19 pandemic.

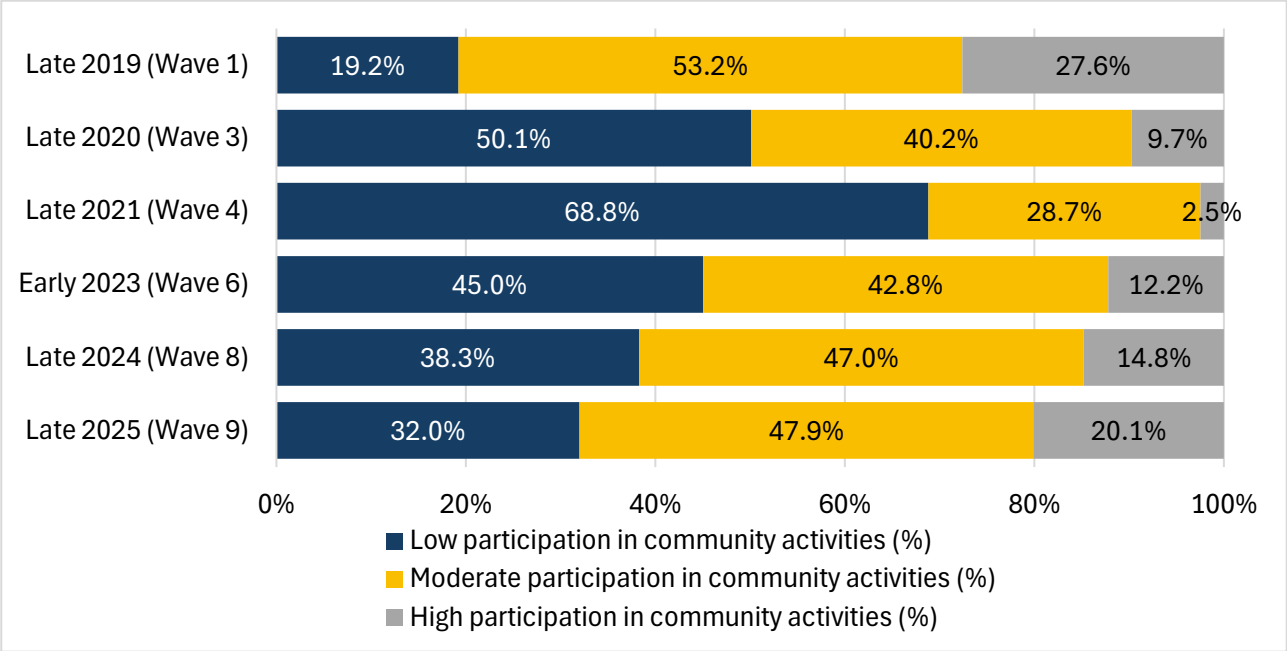


Figure 20 Participation in community events and activities, ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

Similar to in-person social connection, the growth in community engagement was greatest amongst those aged 65 and older – the group who had reported the lowest participation since the COVID-19 pandemic. Community participation also grew more amongst men than women. As a result of this higher than average growth in participation, men's community engagement, previously lower than women's, 'caught up' to women; similar, community engagement amongst those aged 65 and older caught up to those in younger age groups (Figure 21).

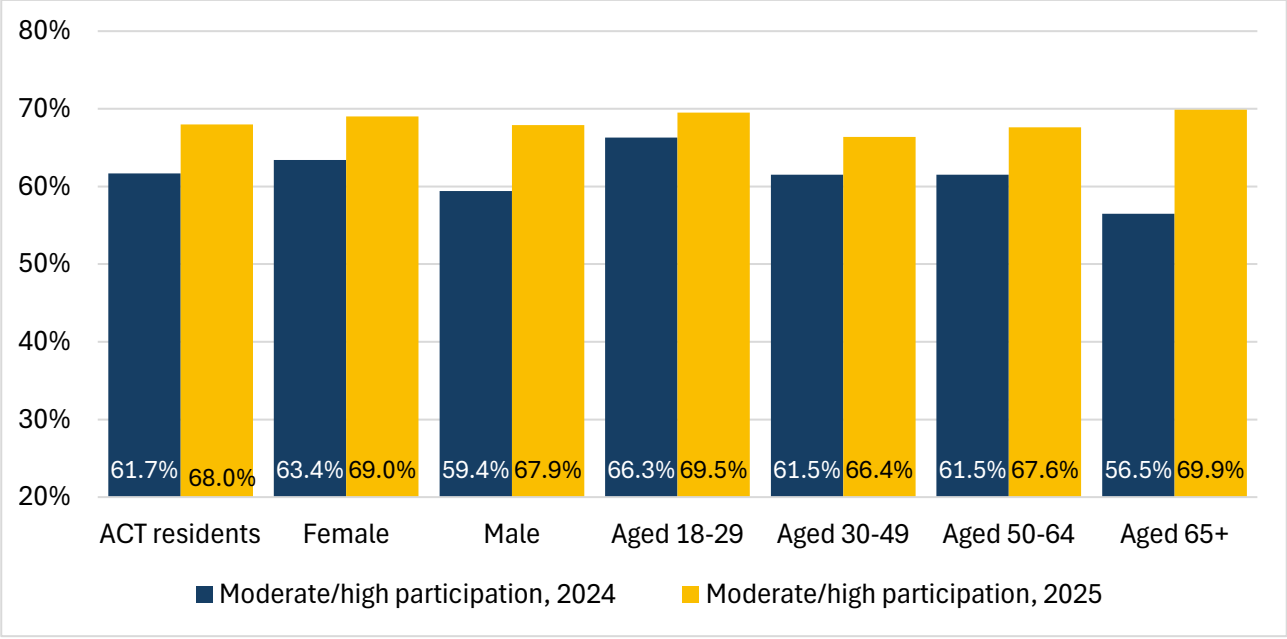


Figure 21 Participation in community events and activities, ACT adults by gender and age group, 2019 to 2025

VOLUNTEERING

Participation in volunteering stayed relatively stable between 2024 and 2025, with 38.6% of Canberrans reporting they volunteered at least once in the last 12 months in 2025, similar to the 40.2% who reported this in 2024 (Figure 22). This volunteering level was similar to that reported in 2019, prior to the drop in volunteering that occurred during the initial years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Volunteering was higher amongst older age groups, reaching 52.1% amongst those aged 65 and older, compared to 31.6% amongst those aged 18 to 29 (Figure 23). Volunteering rates were similar amongst men and women.

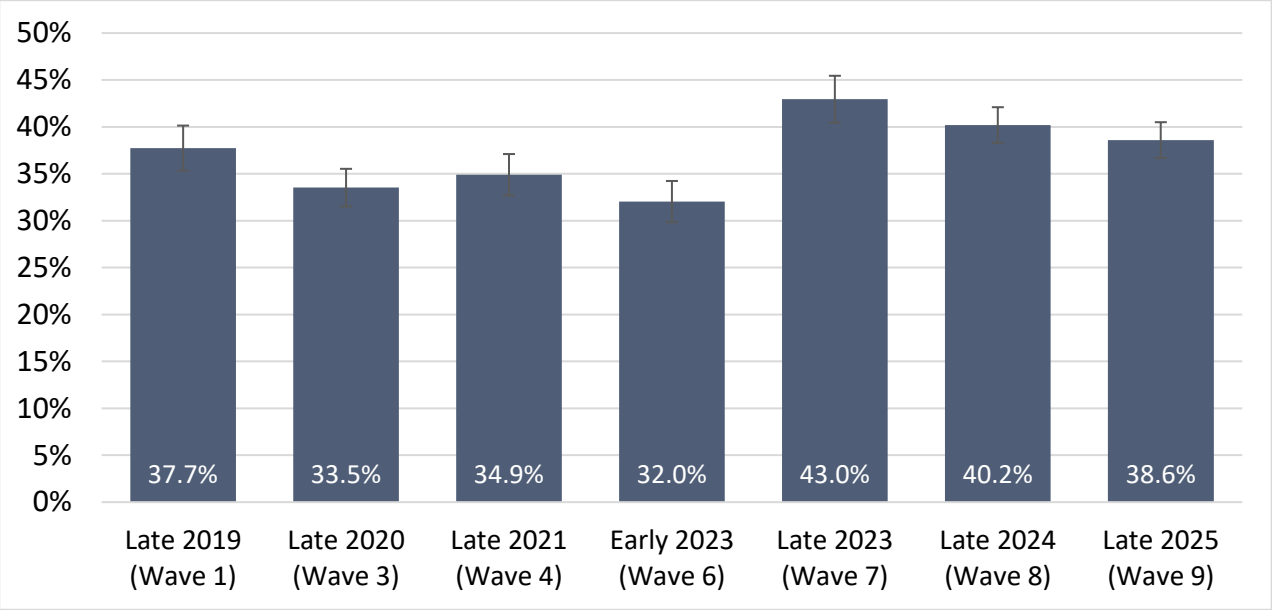


Figure 22 Proportion of Canberran adults who volunteered in the last 12 months, 2019 to 2025

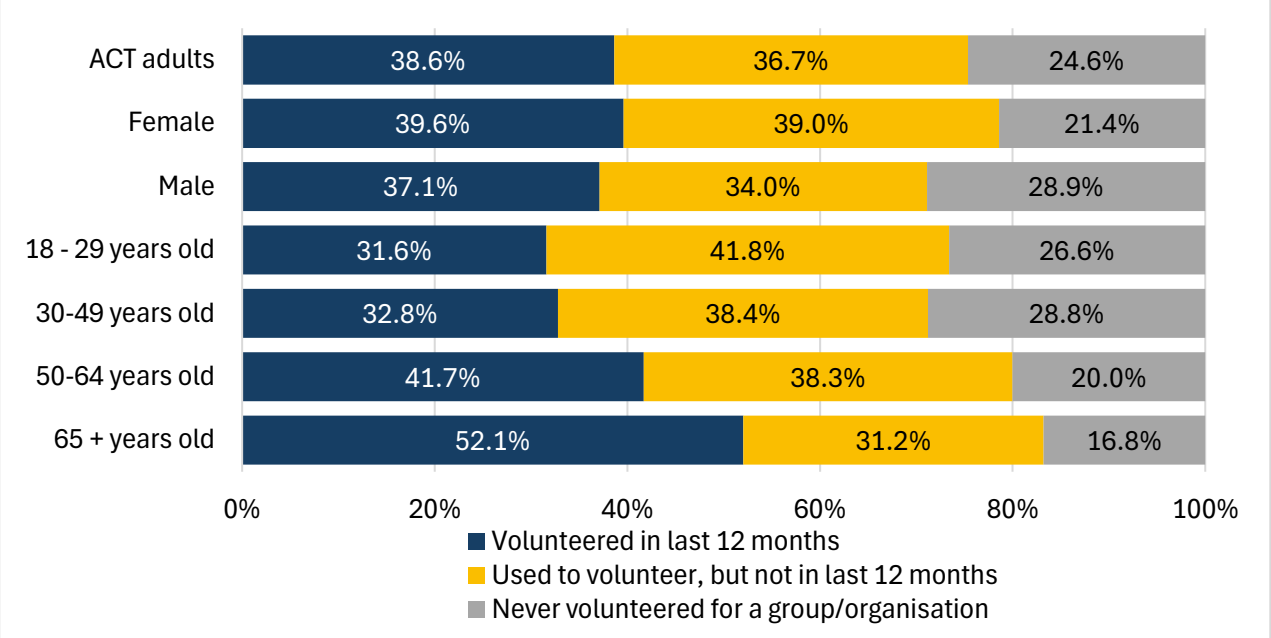


Figure 23 Participation in volunteering, ACT adults, by selected demographic groups, 2025

Those who had volunteered in the last 12 months were asked about their motivations for volunteering, and the benefits and costs of volunteering (Figure 24). Almost all volunteers reported feeling they made a contribution and a difference, enjoyed their volunteering, and felt safe when volunteering, with 77% to 79% reporting each of these things. Around half of volunteers (51.9%) made new social connections through volunteering, and 36.9% reported making lasting friendships as a result of volunteering.

For some, the motivation to volunteer was more to ensure activities could occur: 54.1% said if they didn't volunteer some activities wouldn't happen. However, only 8.1% said they volunteered because they had to, not because they wanted to. While volunteering had benefits for most, more than one in four volunteers (27.9%) found some of their volunteering stressful in the the last year.

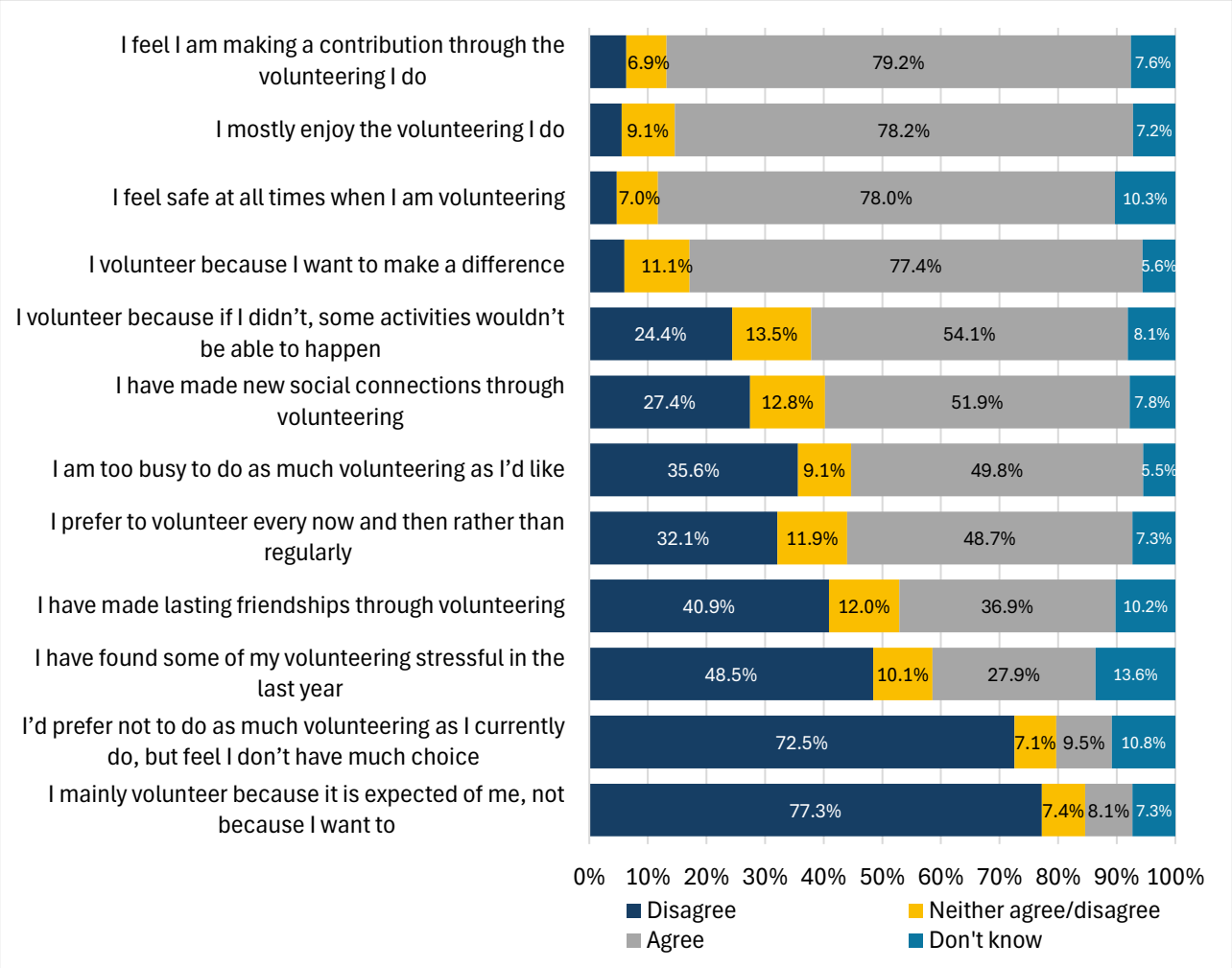


Figure 24 Volunteering motivations, benefits and costs experienced by Canberran volunteers, 2025

TIME

Overall quality of time use

A person's overall quality of time use is examined in two ways in the *Living well* survey. First, participants are asked to rate whether they spent more time than they wanted, less time, or about as much time as they wanted in the last four weeks doing activities including paid work, unpaid care for children or others, socialising with family and friends, unpaid housework, gardening, volunteering, exercising, getting outdoors, attending arts and cultural events, and engaged in creative activities. This is then used to calculate an overall 'quality of time use' score, where a person is given a score from 0 to 1, based on the average score of all activities where doing too much or too little of an activity is score 0 and doing about the right amount is scored 1. In 2025, overall quality of time use did not change significantly compared to 2024 (Figure 25).

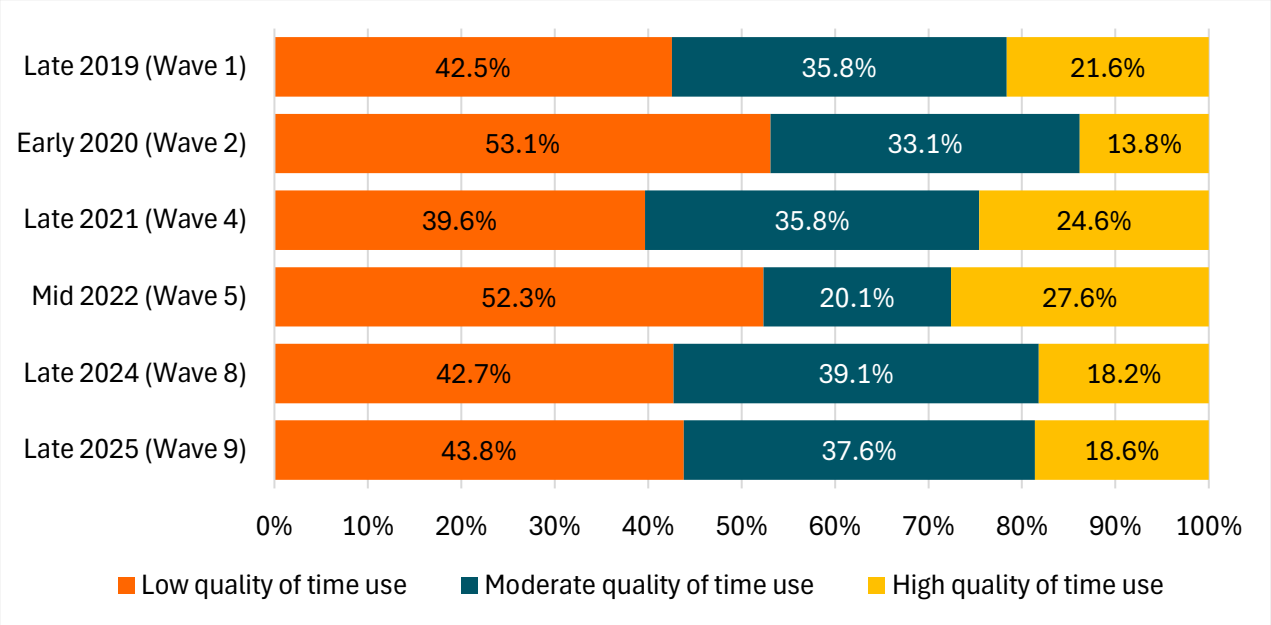


Figure 25 Overall quality of time use, ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

The second way quality of time use is assessed is based on the experience of time use, rather than the amount of time spent on different activities. Since 2024, the *Living Well* survey has asked about control, meaning and enjoyment of time use. In 2025, most Canberrans reported enjoying how they spent their time, spending time on things they felt were important or meaningful, and having control over how they spend most of their time (agreement ranging from 57% to 64%, Figure 26). However, 55.5% reported they had too many demands on their time, while one in four reported spending a lot of their time doing either unimportant things, or activities they don't find satisfying. A relatively small proportion (13.1%) reported having an excess of spare time. There was only one significant change in the experience of time use between 2024 and 2025: the proportion who enjoyed how they spend their time increased to 63.9%, up from 58.0% in 2024.

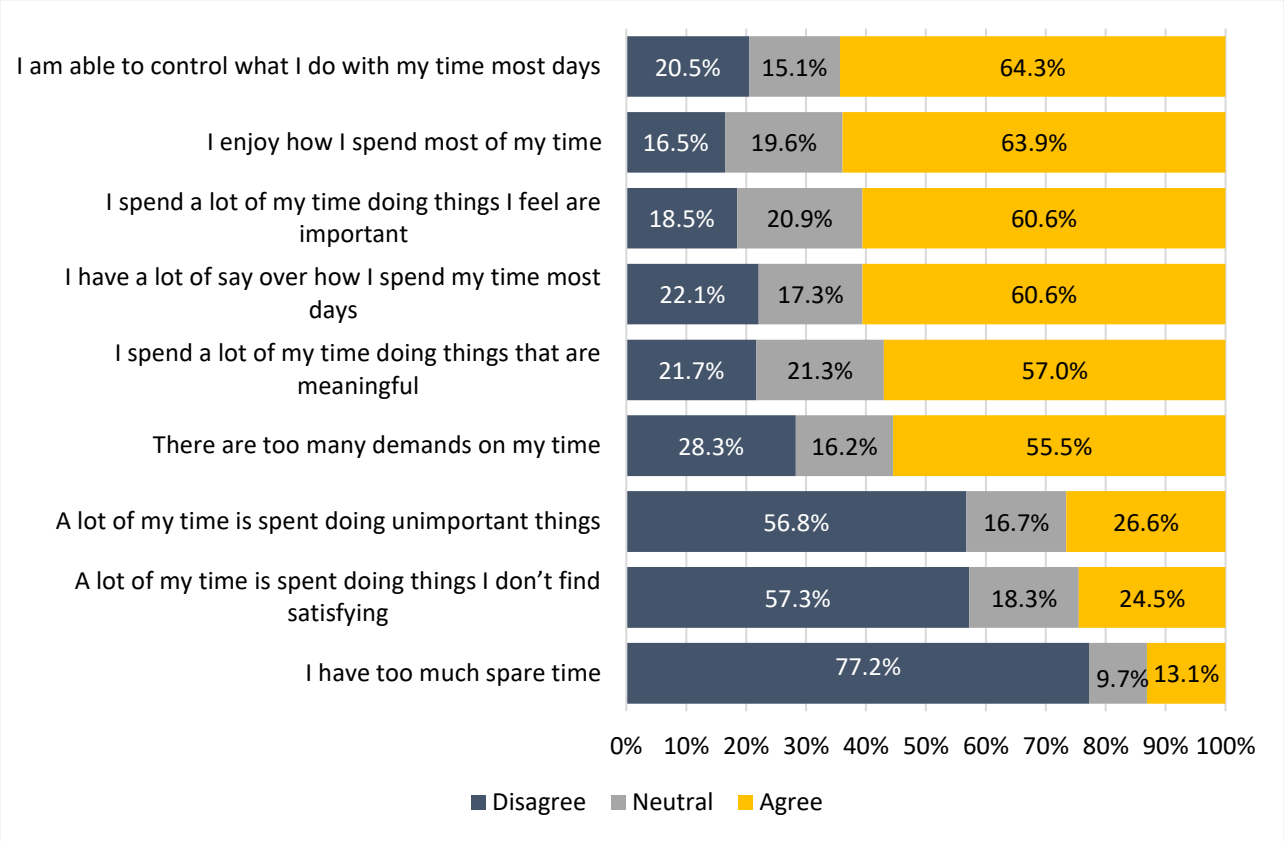


Figure 26 Quality of overall time use – control, meaning and enjoyment, 2025

Housework

In 2025, the proportion of Canberrans doing less housework than desired increased slightly to 17.6%, up from 15.7% in 2024; the proportion reporting doing too much household fell slightly but not significantly (Figure 27).

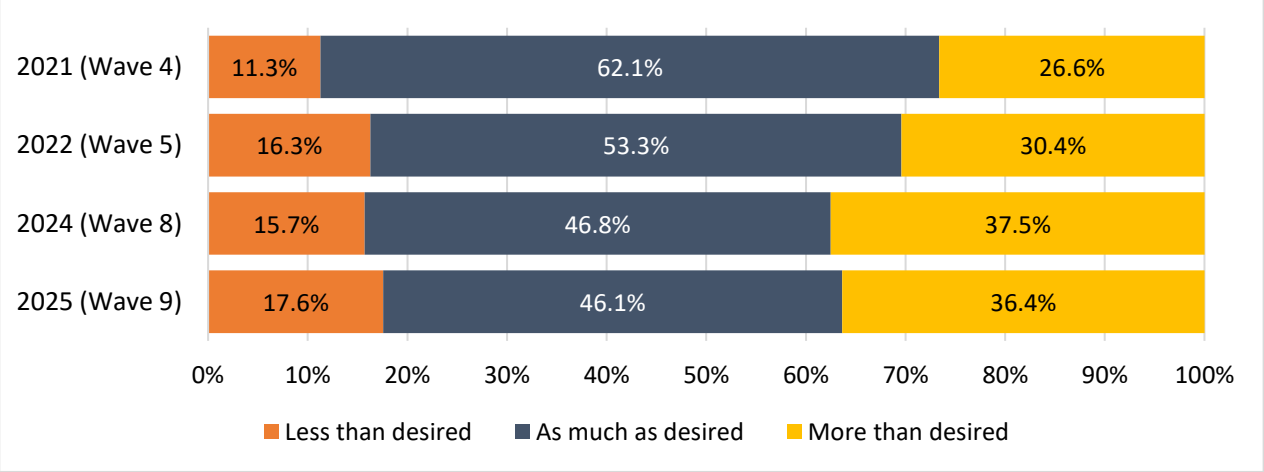


Figure 27 Satisfaction with time spent doing housework (unpaid), ACT adults, 2021 to 2025

Older Canberrans (65+), men, outright homeowners, those with no children at home, and those living in the North or Inner North were more likely to report being satisfied with the amount of time they spent on housework. Those who were employed, had children at home, renters, women, single parents, aged 30 to 69 and those with moderate or severely restrictive disability were less likely to report doing as much housework as desired – usually because they were spending more time doing housework than they wanted

to (Figure 28). Between 2024 and 2025, there were significant changes in reported time spent on housework amongst only two groups: there was an increase in the proportion of outright home owners who were spending more time than they wanted to doing housework, and an increase in the proportion of those with moderately restrictive disability who were spending less time than desired doing housework.

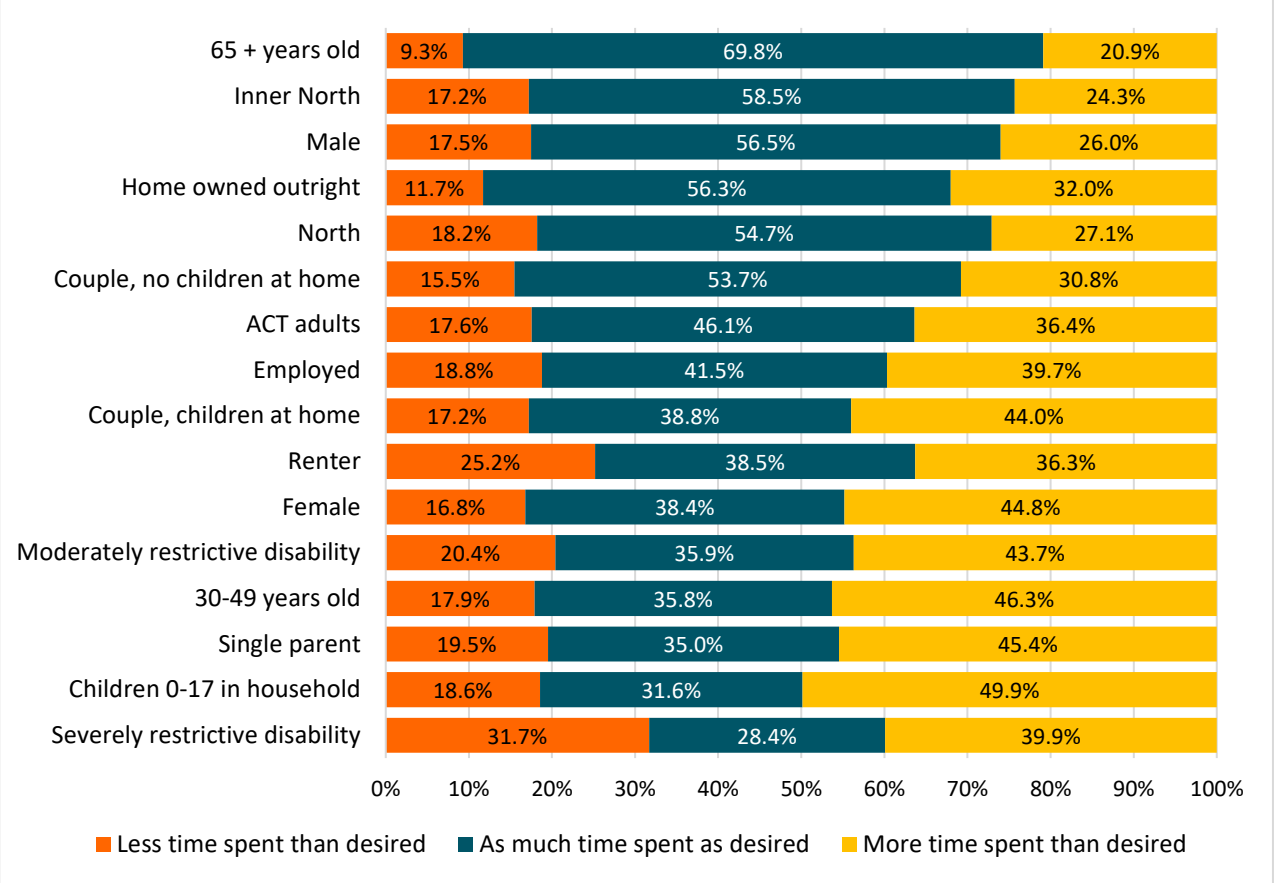


Figure 28 Satisfaction with time spent doing housework (unpaid), ACT adults by selected demographic group, 2025[1]

Unpaid caring

Two types of unpaid caring role are asked about in the *Living well* survey: caring for children, and caring for family or friends with a long term disability, illness or old-age related frailty. In 2025, 49.9% of adult Canberrans with children reported spending as much time caring for them as desired, 31.1% were spending less time and 19.0% more time than they wanted to (Figure 29). This is similar to previous years, other than 2021 when there was a higher proportion reporting doing more than desired during the COVID-19 lockdown (30.3%). Fifty percent of those caring for a person with disability, illness or frailty also reported spending about as much time as they wanted engaged in caring activities, again similar to all previous years except 2021.

The groups most likely to be spending about as much time as they wanted to caring for children were older Canberrans (aged 65 and older) and outright homeowners (most of whom are in older age groups) (Figure 30). Those least likely to be spending the amount of time they wanted to caring for children were those living in a unit/apartment, living in Canberra for less than five years (who were more likely to report spending less time with children than they wanted to), while those who reported having a mental health related disability, and those who identified as LGBTIQA+, were more likely report spending more time than desired engaged in child care compared to others.

[1] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.

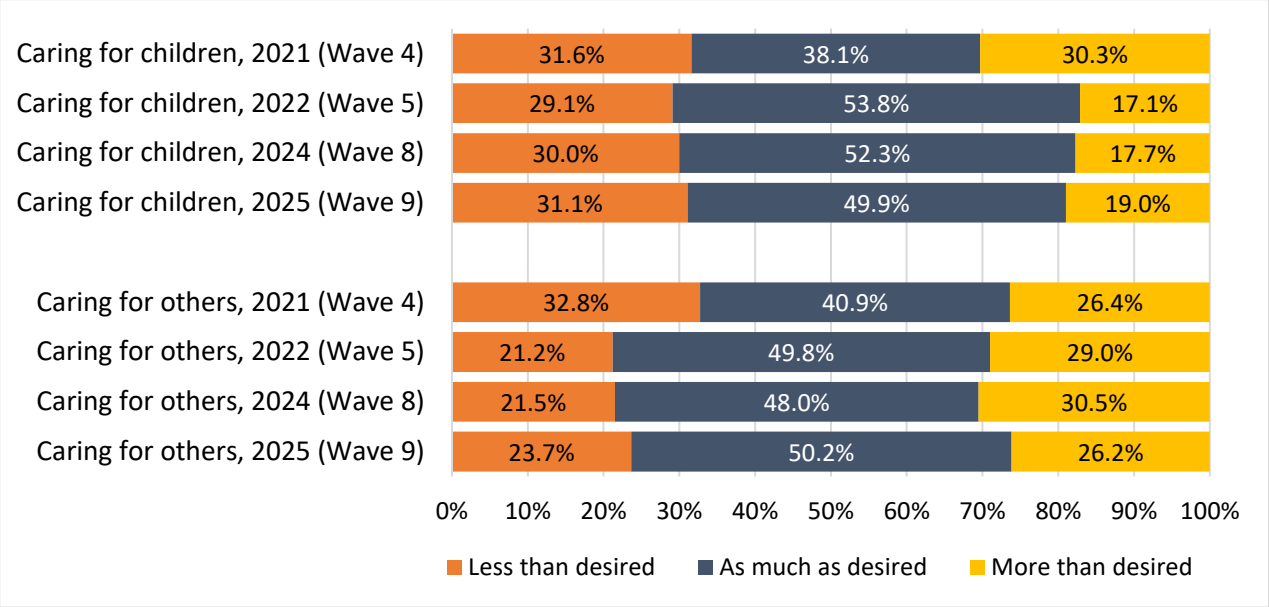


Figure 29 Time spent caring for children and for others, ACT adults, 2021 to 2025

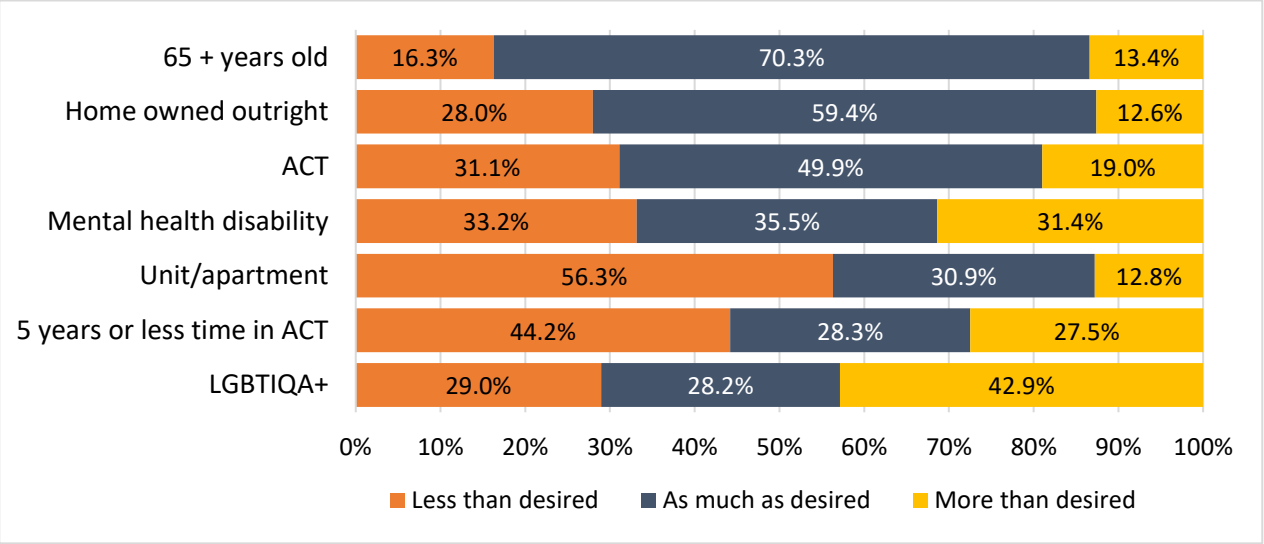


Figure 30 Satisfaction with time spent caring for children, ACT adults by selected demographic group, 2025[2]

When examining those who care for one or more people with a long-term disability, illness or frailty, the highest satisfaction with time spent caring was reported by those aged 65 and older, and those living in Tuggeranong North (Figure 31). Those aged 30-49 were more likely to report spending less time *and* more time than desired caring, reflecting the often high caring demands experienced by those in this 'sandwich' age group where it is common to be caring for both children and for other family such as ageing parents. Others who were more likely to report doing less caring for others than desired included those in paid work, renters, those who had lived in Canberra for five years or less, and those who spoke a language other than English at home.

[2] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.

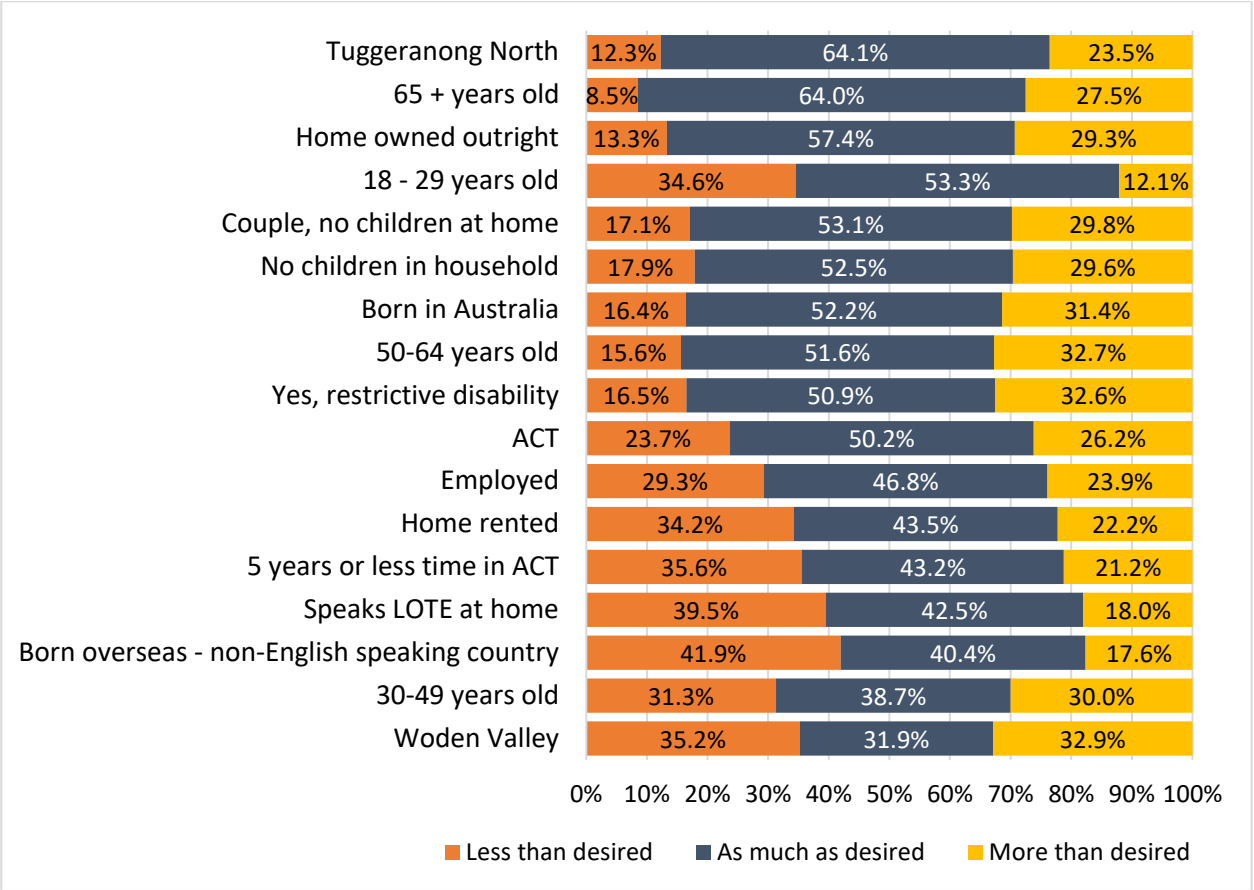


Figure 31 Satisfaction with time spent caring for others, ACT adults by selected demographic group, 2025[3]

[3] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.

Paid work

Satisfaction with time spent in paid work stayed stable between 2024 and 2025 (Figure 32): one quarter (24.4%) of working Canberrans were doing more paid work hours than they wanted to, 18.9% were working fewer hours than desired, and 56.6% were working about as much as they wanted to.

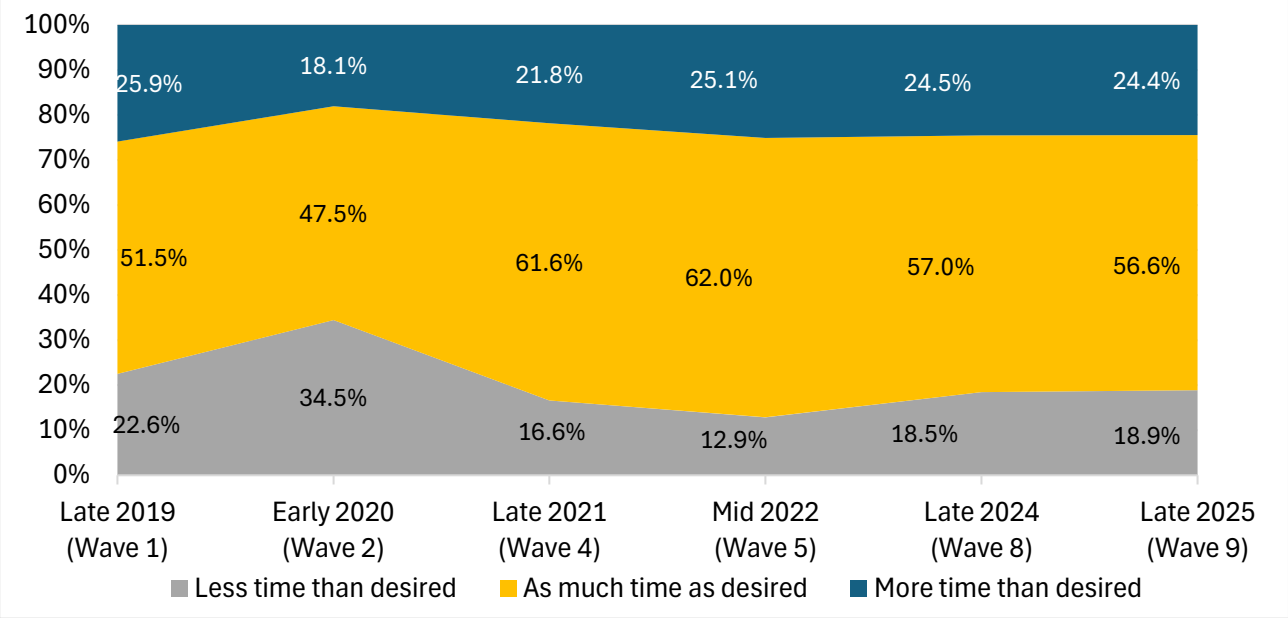


Figure 32 Satisfaction with hours of paid work, ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

Nine groups of Canberrans had significantly different satisfaction with their paid work to the average (Figure 33). Those most likely to report doing less paid work than they wanted to were those living with severely restrictive disability, living in a share or group household or renting, aged 18-29, aged 65 and older, and those who spoke a language other than English at home. Those with a mortgage were more likely to report working as many or more hours than they wanted to than the average Canberran.

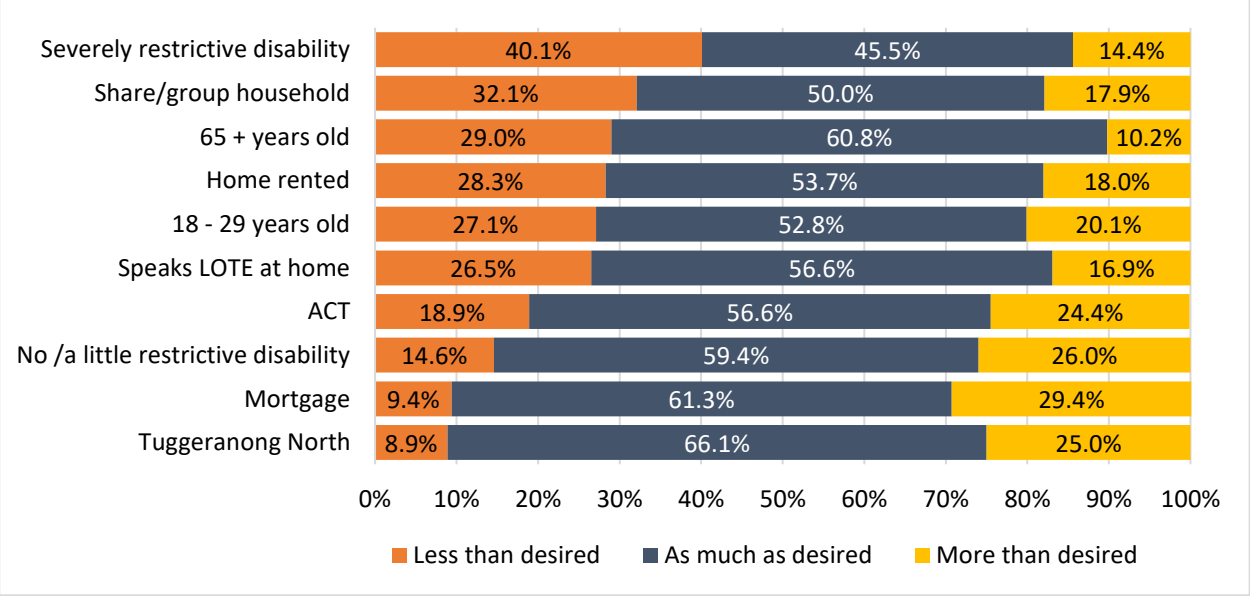


Figure 33 Satisfaction with time spent doing paid work, ACT adults by selected demographic group, 2025[4]

[4] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to significant change in patterns of work, with many workers continuing to work some days from home rather than an office or workplace. In 2025, the *Living well* survey asked those in paid employment how often they worked from home in a typical work week. Just under half of those in paid work (45.3%) worked from home at least one day in an average week, while 18.2% occasionally worked from home and 36.5% never worked from home (Figure 34).

Working from home was least common amongst younger workers aged 18 to 29, and groups dominated by younger people such as those living in share/group households, those who had lived in the ACT only a short time, and renters. This may reflect that younger people are more commonly working in jobs such as hospitality and retail, where it is not possible to work from home. Working from home was more common amongst those with children at home, those aged 30 to 64, and those living with restrictive disability.

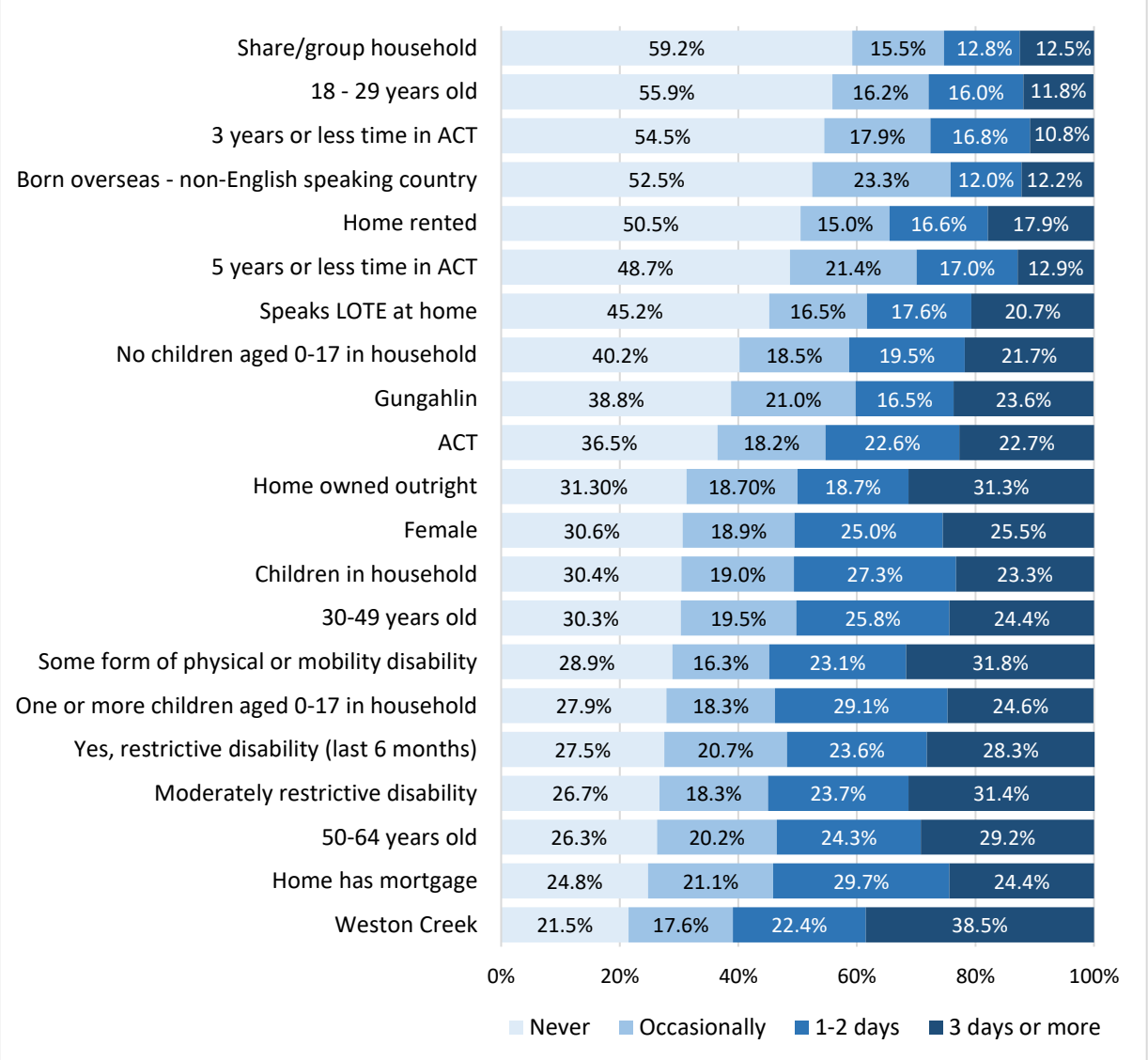


Figure 34 Days worked from home in a typical working week, ACT adults in paid work, by selected demographic group, 2025[5]

Patterns of working from home vary depending on the sector and industry a person works in (Figure 35). Commonwealth and New South Wales public servants, those working in the tertiary education sector, and those working in the not-for-profit/community sector were more likely to work regularly from home than those in the private sector or ACT public servants. When examined by industry, very few of those working

[5] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.

in retail/hospitality, transport, manufacturing or tourism worked regularly from home, while those providing professional services (such as legal, accounting, or policy development and implementation) were much more likely to work from home regularly.

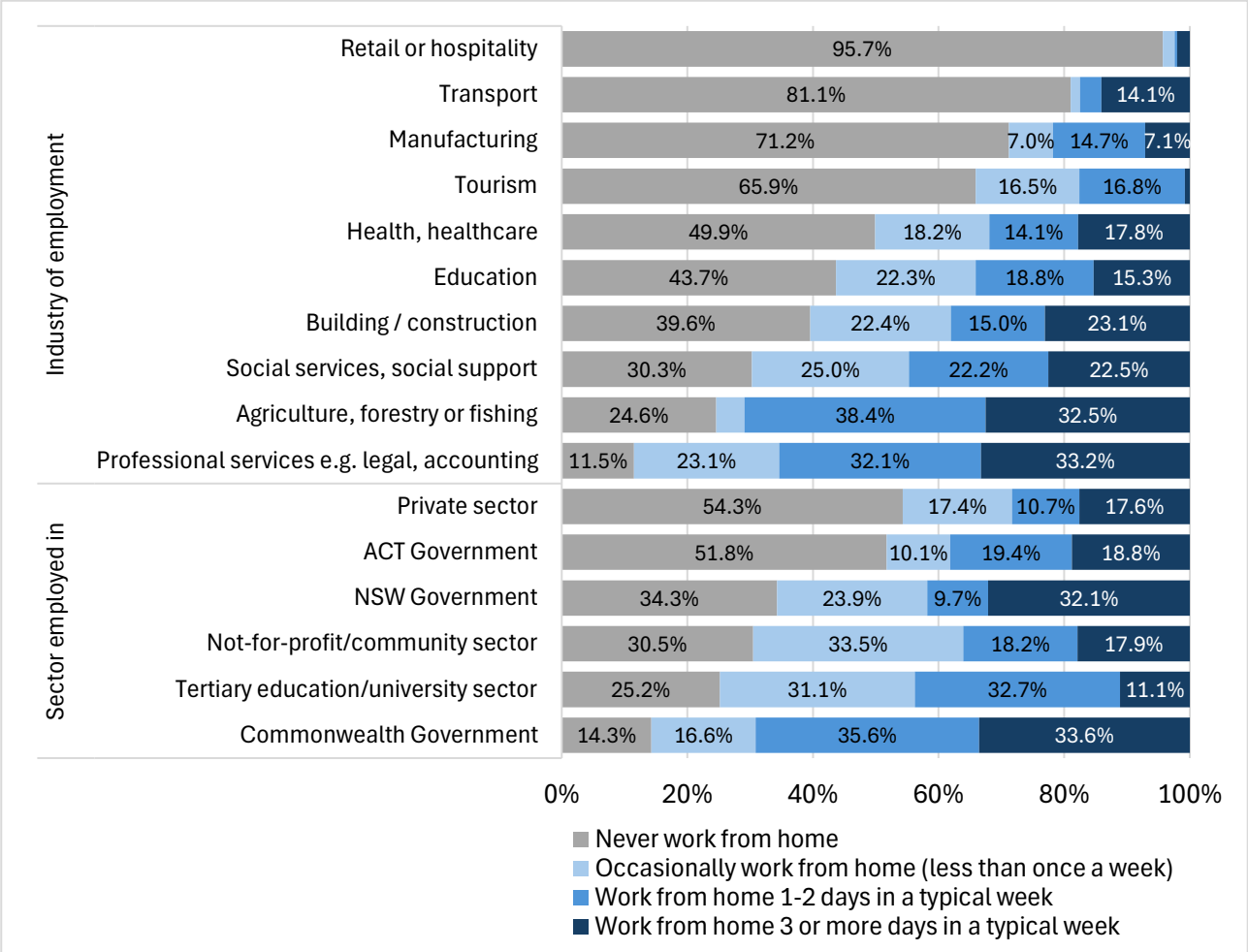


Figure 35 Days worked from home in a typical working week, ACT adults in paid work, by sector and industry of work, 2025

Working Canberrans were typically satisfied with their working from home arrangements, with 61.6% satisfied and only 16.2% dissatisfied (Figure 36). Higher satisfaction was reported by some groups who were also more likely to report working from home regularly – for example, residents of Weston Creek and those aged 50 to 64. Lower satisfaction with time spent working from home was reported by younger workers (those aged 18-29), and by those in groups dominated by younger workers such as those who were renting or in share/group households, and who had lived less time in the ACT, as well as by those who spoke a language other than English at home.

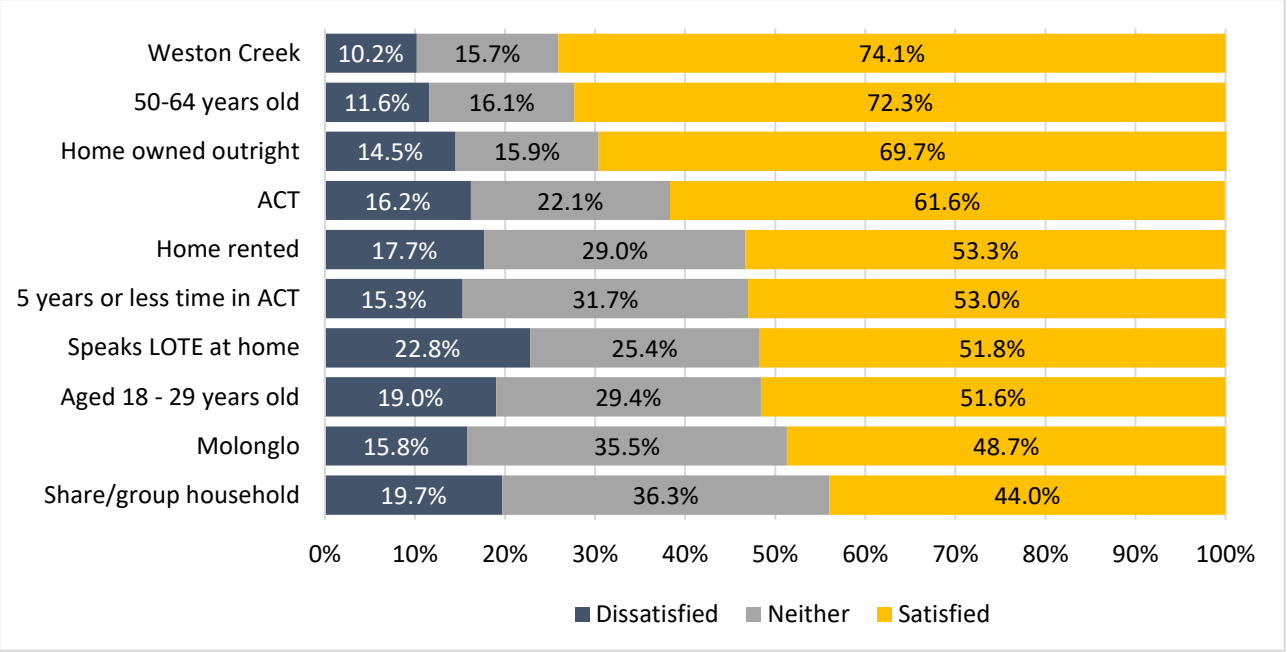


Figure 36 Satisfaction with current working from home arrangements, ACT adults in paid work, by selected demographic group, 2025[6]

Those in paid work were asked if they were satisfied with their current balance of time spent working from home versus an office/workplace, or whether they wanted more days at home, or more days at the workplace (Figure 37). Overall, 62.5% reported being satisfied with their current mix of working from home versus the workplace, while 31.3% wanted more days working from home, and 6.2% wanted to spend more work days at their workplace. A small number of groups varied significantly from this average: workers aged 50 and older were more likely to report being satisfied with their current balance, while those who spoke a language other than English at home and who had arrived more recently in the ACT were more likely to report wanting to work more often from home.

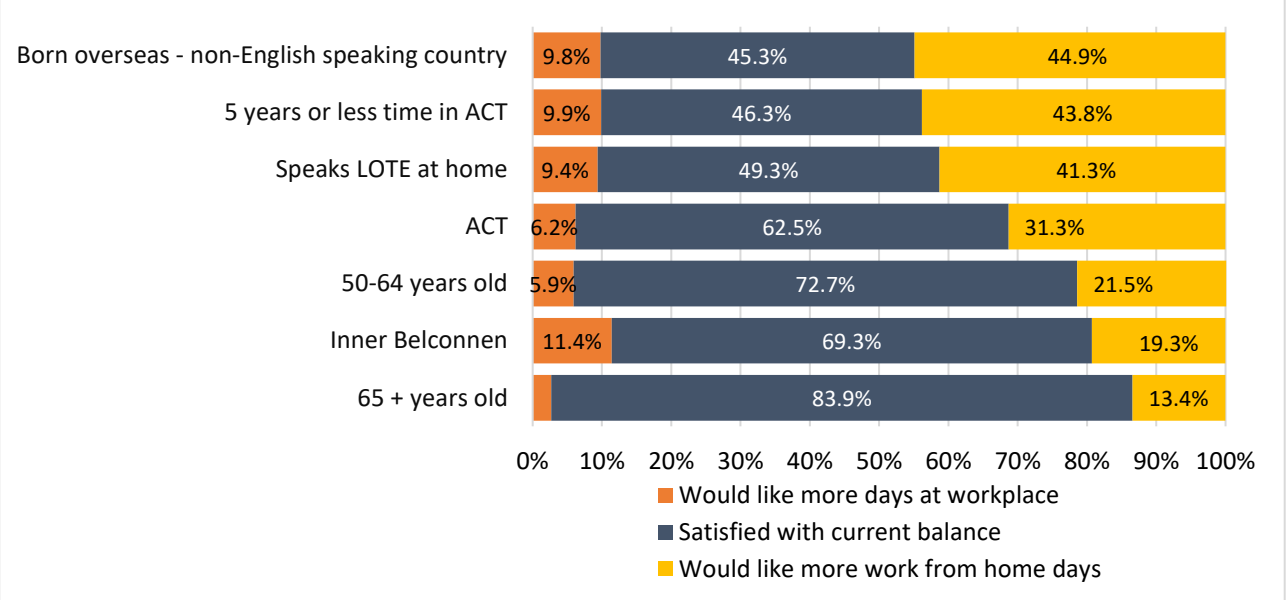


Figure 37 Preference for working from home or workplace, ACT adults in paid work, by selected demographic group, 2025[7]

[6] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.
[7] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.

Exercise and time outdoors

Most Canberrans spend less time exercising and outdoors than they want to, with 61.3% reporting they did less exercise than they wanted to in the last month, and 59.1% that they spent less time outdoors than they wanted to. Nearly half – 45.2% – spent less time gardening than they wanted to (Figure 38). Between 2024 and 2025, satisfaction with time spent outdoors declined significantly, with only 39.1% spending as much time outdoors as they wanted in 2025, compared to 44.2% in 2024. Only 37.0% of adult Canberrans were spending as much time as they wanted exercising (similar to 2024). Eleven percent of Canberrans reported gardening more than desired in both 2024 and 2025, whereas less than two per cent reported spending more time than they wanted exercising or outdoors.

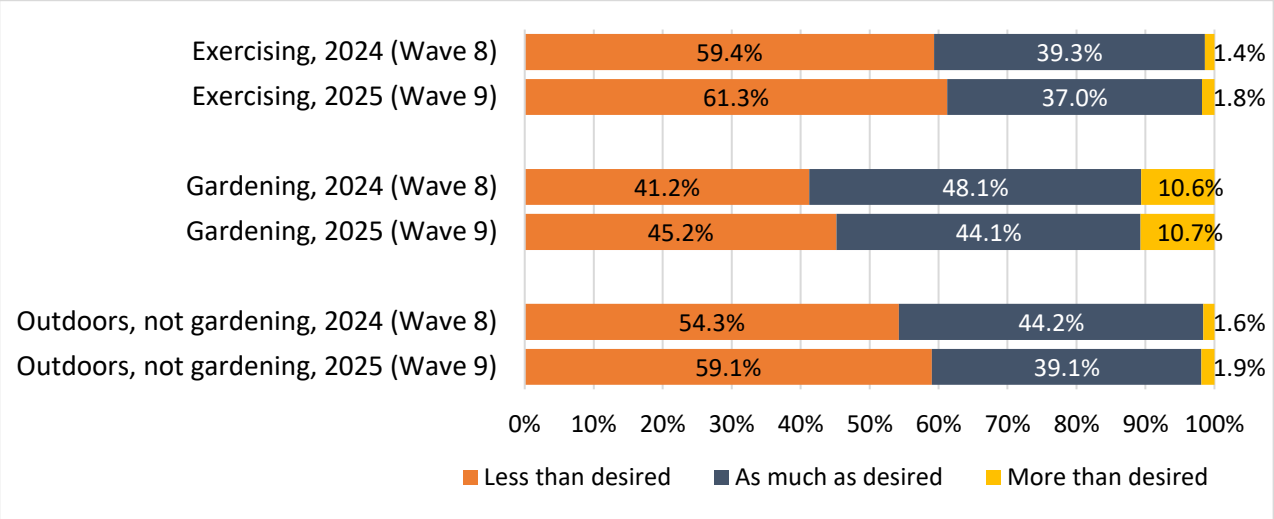


Figure 38 Change in satisfaction with amount of time spent exercising or in nature, 2024 to 2025

The likelihood a person was doing less exercise than desired increased if they were female, in paid work, had children at home, were aged 30-49, had a mortgage, had a restrictive disability, or identified as LGBTIQA+ (Figure 39). The only group more likely to be doing as much exercise as desired than doing less than desired were those aged 65 and older, amongst whom 53.5% reported exercising as much as they wanted to. Men, people living alone, those with no children at home, and those who did not have a restrictive disability were somewhat less likely to report doing less exercise than desired. However, even amongst these groups, 50% or more reported doing less exercise than they wanted to.

Renters, those with children living at home, those aged 30 to 49, and those with restrictive disability were more likely than other Canberrans to report they were doing less gardening than desired. The only group amongst which a majority reported doing as much gardening as they wanted to were those aged 65 and older – and even amongst this group, 33.8% wanted to do more gardening (Figure 40). Between 2024 and 2025, some groups experienced a decline in gardening time – particularly those with restrictive disability, aged 50 and older, and those living in the Inner North.

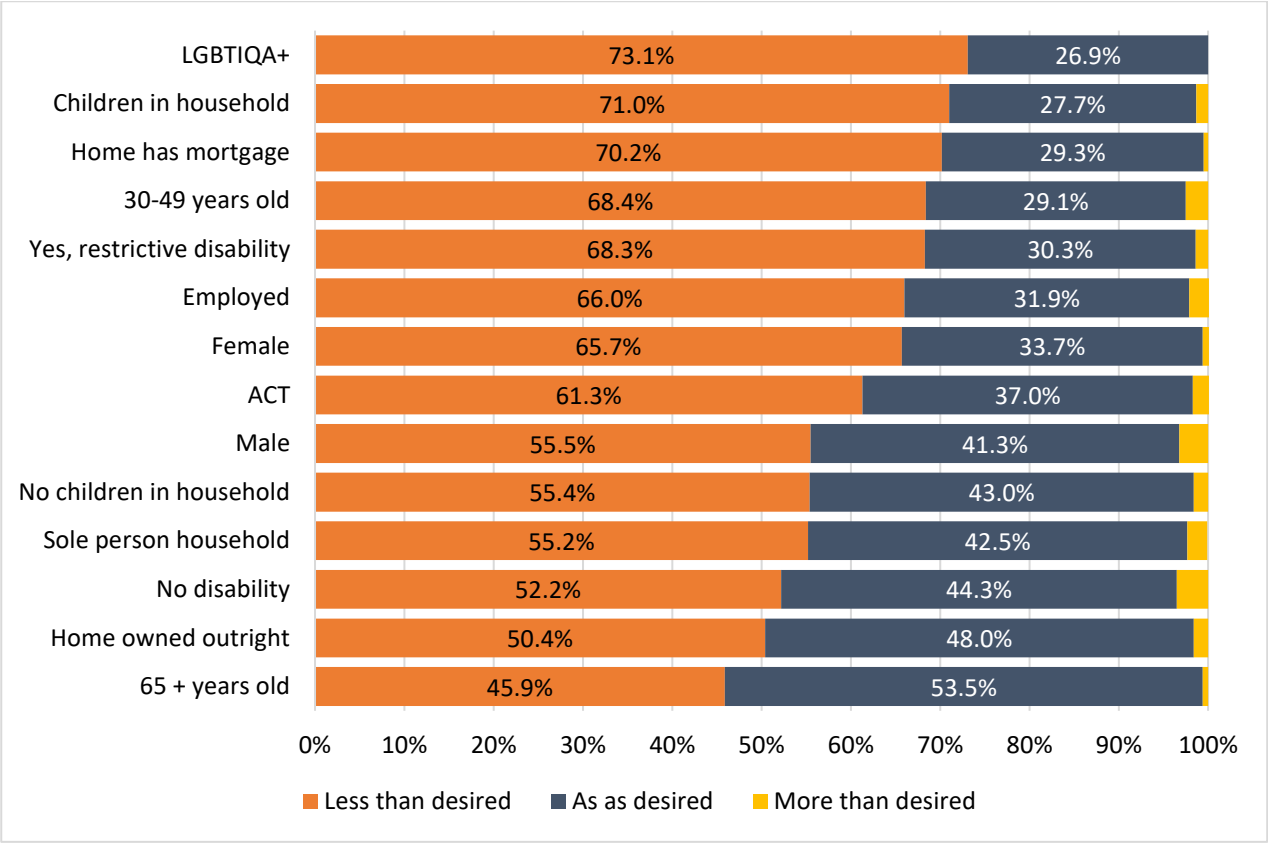


Figure 39 Satisfaction with time spent exercising, ACT adults, by selected demographic group, 2025[8]

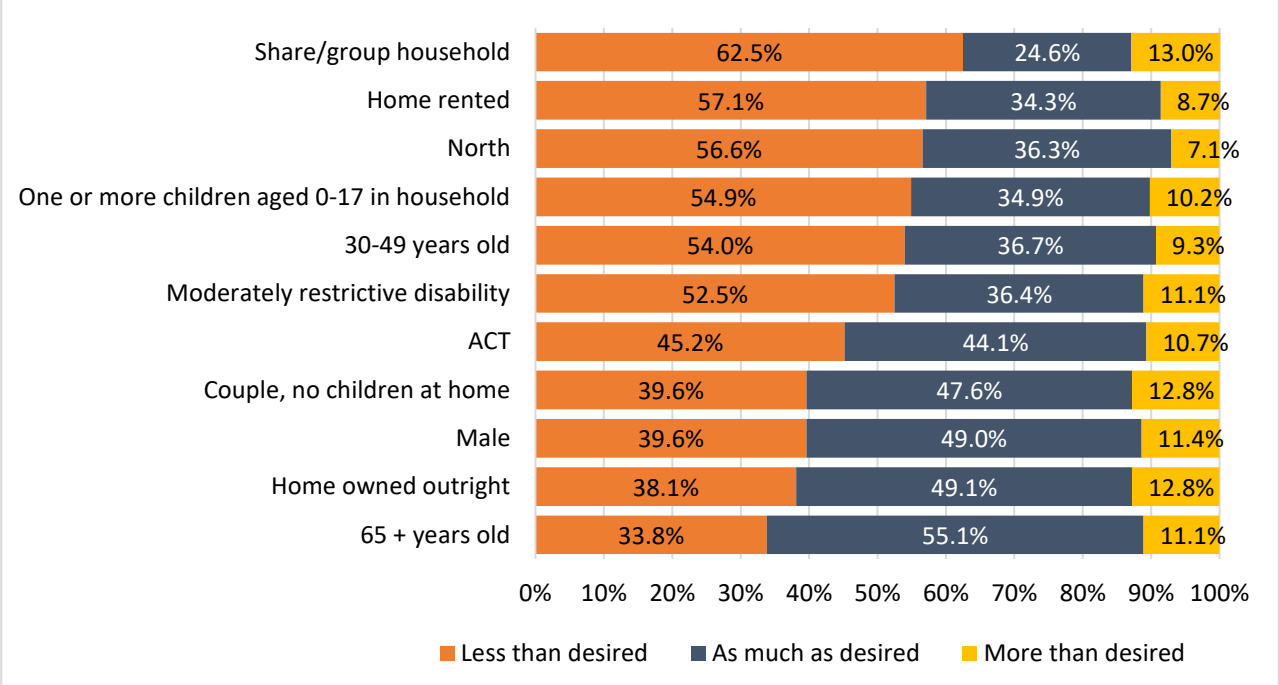


Figure 40 Satisfaction with time spent gardening, ACT adults, by selected demographic group, 2025[9]

[8] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.
[9] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.

The Canberrans most likely to report that they were spending less time outdoors than they wanted to were primarily those with child care responsibilities, and with a restrictive disability: they included single parents and those with children at home more generally, those with moderately or severely restrictive disability, as well as renters and those aged 30-49 (Figure 41). The only group in which a majority was spending as much time outdoors as desired was those aged 65 and older (55.8%), although even in this group 42.1% were spending less time outdoors than they wanted to.

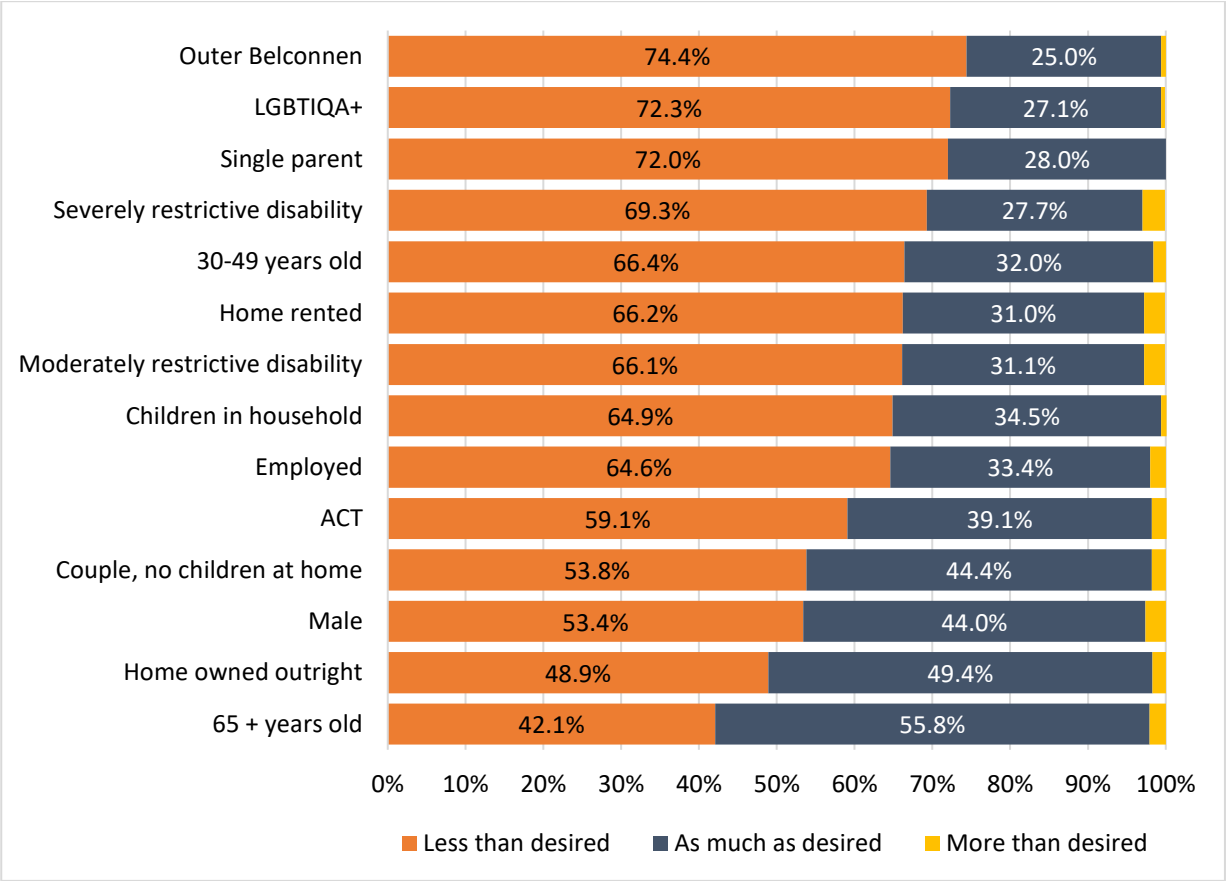


Figure 41 Satisfaction with time spent outdoors, ACT adults, by selected demographic group, 2025[10]

The *Living well* survey asks people how many times a week they spend time outdoors in areas that enable connection to nature such as local streets, walking paths, ovals/parks and nature reserves. The proportion who spent time walking outdoors in a nature reserve or around their local streets and area in a typical week stayed stable in 2025, at 64.1% (Figure 42). However, while similar to 2024 levels, this was a decline from earlier years, with more people reporting spending times in local nature and outdoors areas during and immediately after COVID-19 pandemic restrictions were in place, compared to 2024 and 2025.

Adults residing in the North, Inner North and Inner South, those who had lived in Canberra less than five years, and those living in a unit/apartment, were more likely than other Canberrans to walk in nature at least once in a usual week (Figure 43). Those less likely to walk outdoors in greenspace/nature areas at least once a week included residents of Tuggeranong North, West Gungahlin, Gungahlin and Outer Belconnen; older Canberrans, women, those living in a freestanding house or multigenerational household, and those with a restrictive disability. Between 2024 and 2025, there was a significant increase in time spent in nature amongst those speaking a language other than English at home, increasing from 58.3% to 73.2% spending time outdoors weekly.

[10] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.

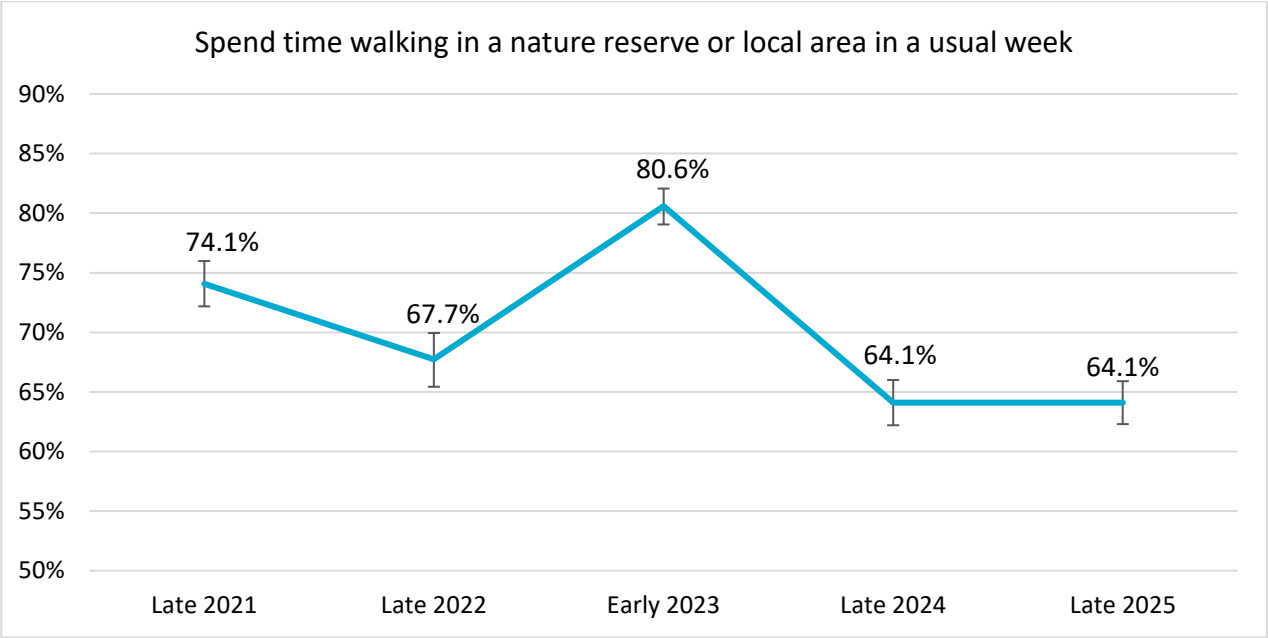


Figure 42 Proportion of ACT adults who walked in local streets or reserves at least once in a typical week, 2021 to 2025

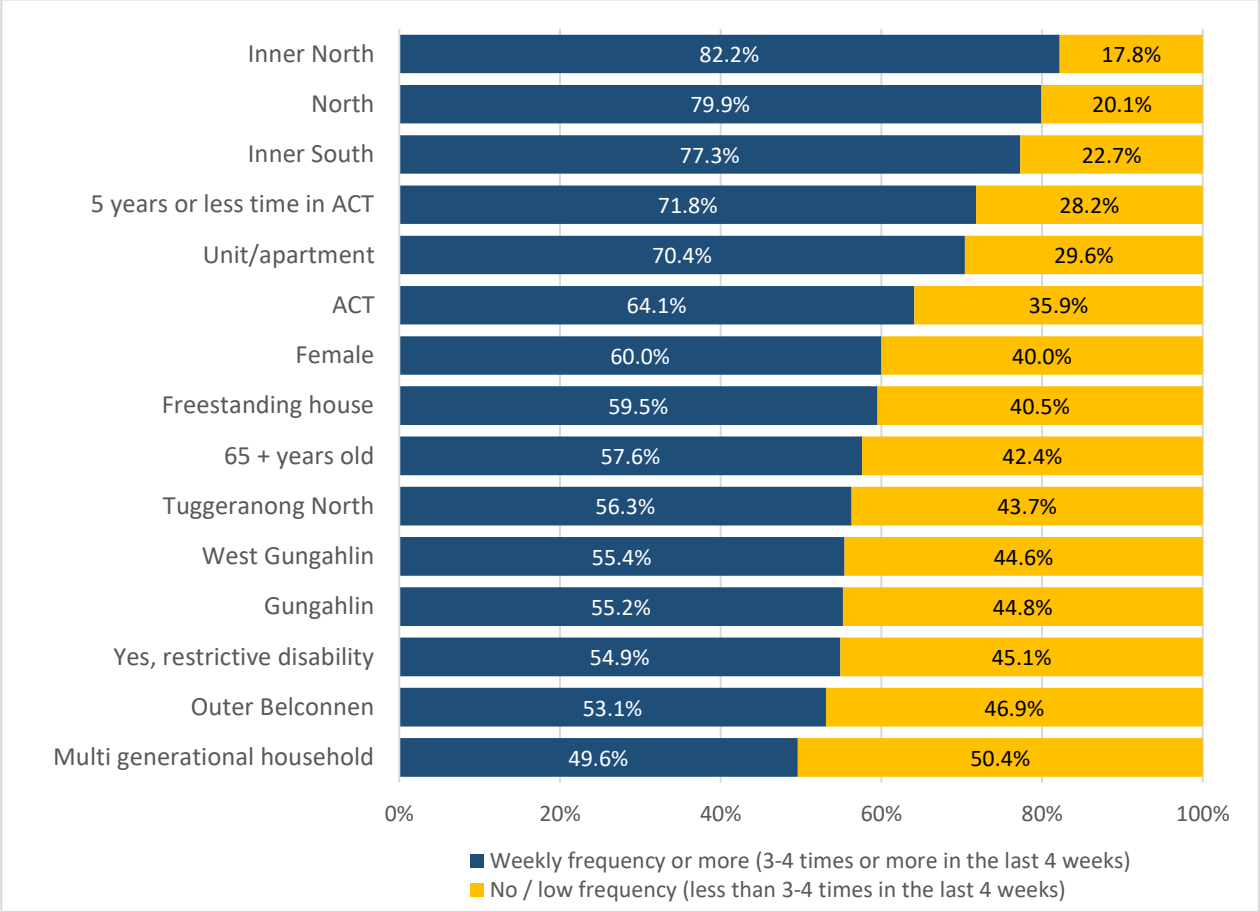


Figure 43 Proportion of ACT adults who walked in local streets or reserves at least once in a typical week, by selected demographic group, 2025[11]

[11] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.

Attending arts, culture and music events

There is a growing body of evidence linking engagement with arts and culture and wellbeing (Fancourt & Finn, 2019). Art and culture are recognised by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as important to wellbeing, mental and physical health, as well as social inclusion and social capital (Fancourt & Finn 2019; OECD 2022). Arts and culture participation includes a broad range of activities including music, dance, theatre, literature, visual arts, and crafting. Participation can be active (e.g. painting, creating, writing, playing a musical instrument, dancing, acting, performing) or passive (listening, watching, reading). The benefits of arts and culture participation are apparent in healthy individuals across the life-course, as well as for groups with chronic conditions such as Parkinson's disease, dementia, mental illness as well as social and behavioural difficulties in children and adults (Sheppard & Broughton 2020; Pesata et al 2022).

In 2025, 57.9% of adult Canberrans spent less time than desired attending arts, culture and music events (**Error! Reference source not found.**). This was a statistically significant increase from 50.9% in 2024. Very few people report more time at arts, culture or music events than desired.

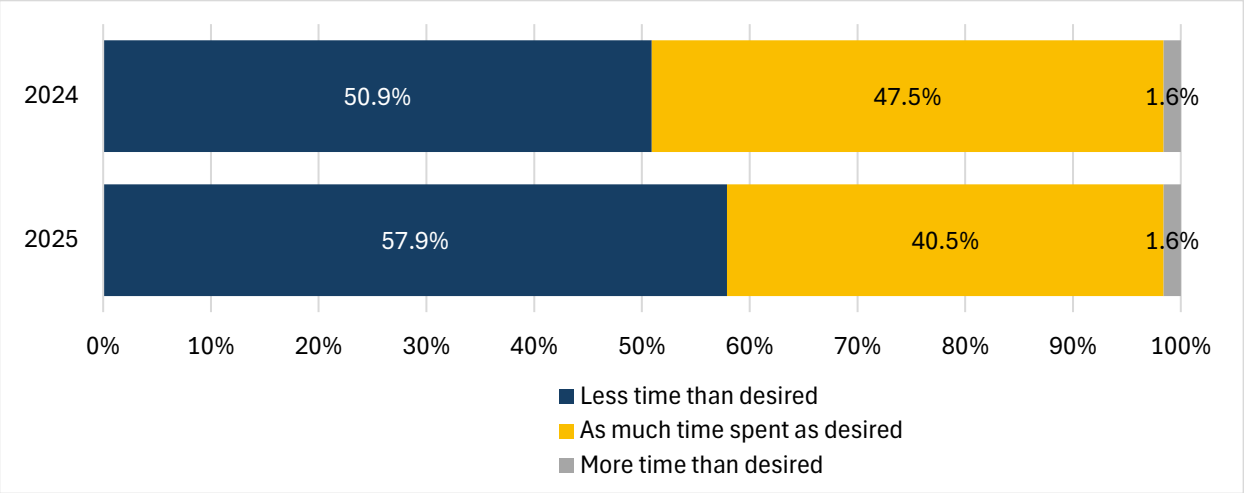


Figure 44 Satisfaction with amount of time spent at arts, cultural and music events, ACT adults, 2024 to 2025

Those most likely to attend arts events and festivals were those who were younger, female, university educated and financially comfortable or prosperous.

New questions on attendance at arts events and festivals were included in the 2025 *Living Well* survey. These questions asked about attendance at different types of arts events and festivals, satisfaction with frequency of attendance, and barriers to attendance.

Overall, 78.7% of Canberrans attended one or more of the different events asked about (visual arts, theatre, music, dance and literary events, Figure 45): this was higher than the 68% of Australians who reported attending an arts event in the National Arts Participation survey in 2022 (Creative Australia 2023). The most common types of events attended were visual arts (52.2%), music (51.6%), and theatre events (48.1%), with fewer attending literary (19.3%) or dance (14.3%) events.

Fewer people attended arts festivals compared to specific arts events. This is not surprising, given that festivals often involve attending multiple events over a concentrated period of a few days, with higher associated financial costs and time involved. In total, 51.0% of Canberrans had attended some kind of arts festival in the last 12 months. Attendance at individual types of event ranged from 21.2% for performing arts to 24.7% for visual arts festivals (Figure 46).

There is a clear appetite for more frequent attendance at arts events, with more than half of respondents (54.3%) indicating a wish to attend events more frequently, compared with only 8.4% of respondents with

no desire for attending more events. However, barriers to attending events (Figure 47) included cost (45.9%), timeliness of information (40.8%), business (36.8%) and the need to travel outside the ACT to attend some events (35.6%). Ticket availability was an issue for a lower proportion of respondents (9.7%).

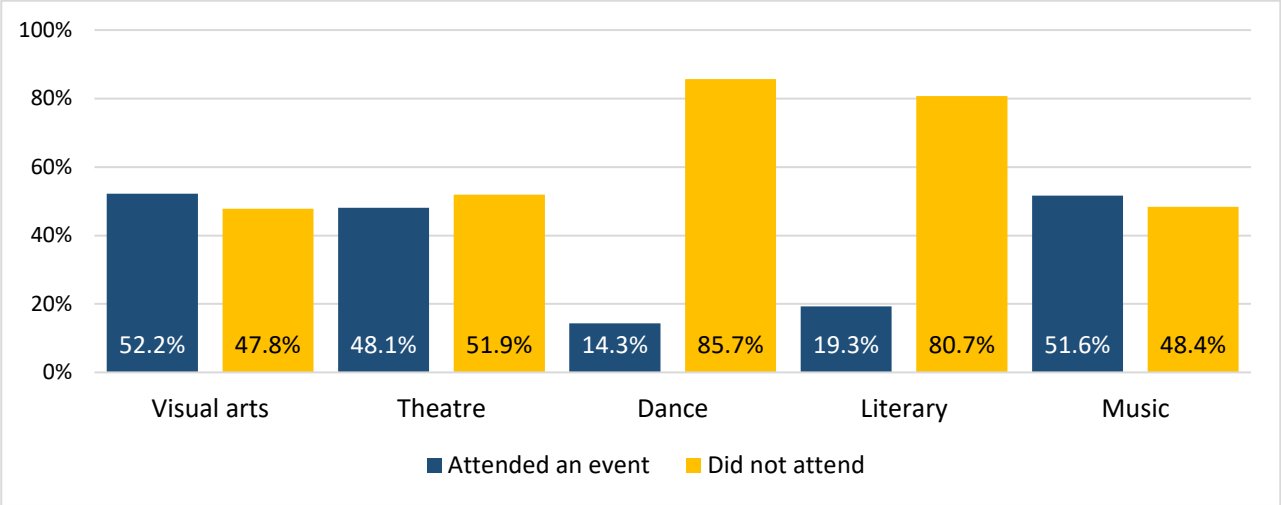


Figure 45 Attendance at arts events in the last 12 months

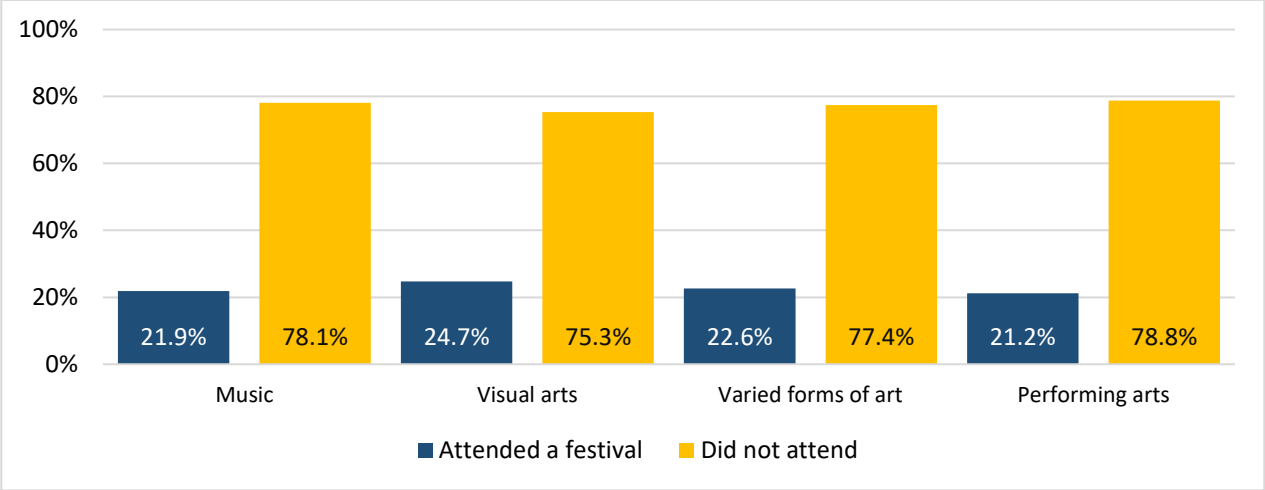


Figure 46 Attendance at arts festivals in the last 12 months

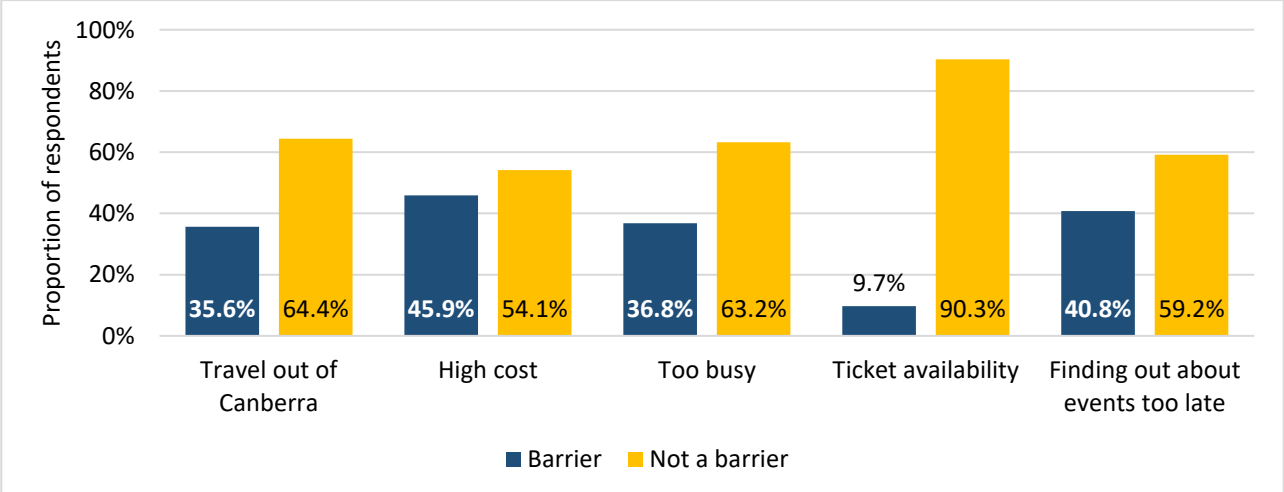


Figure 47 Barriers to attendance at arts, cultural or music events

Statistical analysis of 2025 *Living well* survey data (regression modelling, Table 2) found those who attended arts events or festivals had higher levels of wellbeing than those who did not (coefficient = 8.36, 95% confidence interval [CI] 6.14 to 10.59, p<0.001, not shown in table) and that this association held after controlling for age, gender, education and financial status (coefficient = 5.54, 95% CI 3.58 to 7.50, p<0.001). The association between attendance and wellbeing was high amongst those with moderate to severely restrictive disability (coefficient of 6.09, 95% CI 2.11 to 10.07, p<0.01). Amongst carers the coefficient was larger again but not statistically significant, likely due to the relatively small sample size of carers. Overall, these results indicate that attending art events and festivals is related to better wellbeing, possibly more so in key at risk groups.

Table 2: Associations between arts events/festivals attendance and PWI (linear regression), and predictors of attendance at arts events/festivals (logistic regression)

Linear regression predicting PWI[1]	**Coefficient**	**95% CI**	**p-value**
Events of festivals: did attend (ref: did not attend)	5.54	3.58, 7.50	<0.001
Group specific models			
Moderate/severe restrictive disability	6.09	2.11, 10.07	0.003
Carers	7.31	-0.19, 14.81	0.056
Logistic regression predicting attendance at events/festivals	**OR**	**95% CI**	**p-value**
Age	0.991	0.983, 0.999	0.029
Gender			
Female	—	—	
Male	0.439	0.338, 0.569	<0.001
Other/prefer not to answer	1.687	0.634, 5.862	0.344
University degree			
No	—	—	
Yes	2.109	1.614, 2.752	<0.001
Financial status			
Very poor, poor or just getting along	—	—	
Reasonably comfortable	2.244	1.633, 3.085	<0.001
Very comfortable or prosperous	3.060	2.152, 4.364	<0.001

[1] Model adjusted for age, gender, university education and financial status

Satisfaction with time engaging in creative activities

Regularly engaging in creative activities is linked to better personal wellbeing (Conner et al. 2018). In 2025, most adult Canberrans (60.0%) did not spend as much time on creative activities as they would like, with only 38.3% doing as much as they desired, very similar to 2024 (Figure 48). Less than two per cent were spending more time on creative activities than desired.

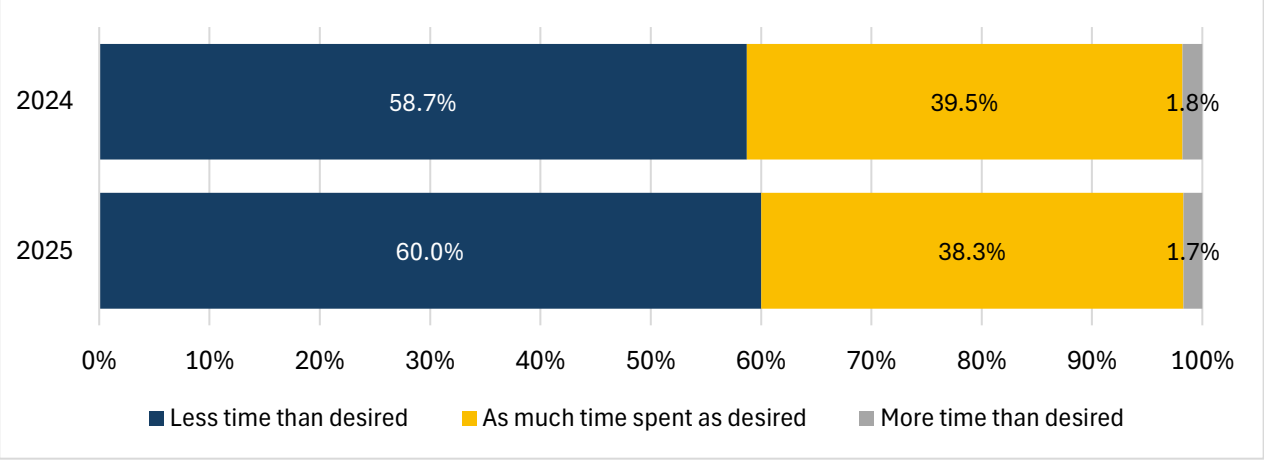


Figure 48 Satisfaction with time spent engaged in personal creative activities, ACT adults, 2024 to 2025

CHAPTER 5

A LIVEABLE AND FUNCTIONAL COMMUNITY



KEY POINTS

- In 2025, 91.3% of Canberrans agreed that their local area – the suburb they lived in – was very liveable, a small but statistically significant increase from the 89.0% reporting this in 2024
- 71.9% of Canberrans felt their local streets had enough shade on a hot day; this was lower amongst those living in East Gungahlin (56.5%), West Gungahlin (58.5%), and Molonglo (29.9%)
- Seven in ten Canberrans (70.9%) could easily get to the places they need to, while almost one in four (23.4%) sometimes had difficulty with transport, and 5.7% often or always had difficulty
- Satisfaction with active and public transportation in the ACT declined between 2024 and 2025: satisfaction with cycling paths declined to 61.7%, down from 64.8% in 2024; 58.7% were satisfied with light rail compared to 66.7% in 2024; 50.8% were satisfied with buses, down from 53.4%; and 65.0% were satisfied with walking paths, down from 73.2%.
- There was improvement in ability to easily access GP services: only 19.1% of Canberrans found it hard to access GPs in 2025, down from 24.7% in 2024
- There was also some improvement in reported access to psychiatrists and psychologists, although the change was not statistically significant, and overall access remained poor for many
- Confidence in being able to have a say and be heard in local decision making processes declined slightly in 2025, but remained higher than levels in 2019 and 2020
- 66.4% of Canberrans were confident human rights are respected and protected, up from 59.4% in 2024, while 20.5% were not confident; similarly, there was an increase in confidence that vulnerable people are protected and supported, from 50.0% in 2024 to 55.0% in 2025.
- Women (45.4%), single parents (38.7%), carers (41.8%), and those living with restrictive disability (42.6%) were all less likely to agree that vulnerable people are protected and supported.
- 45.4% of Canberran trusted the ACT Government to do what is right, a small but not significant increase from 42.0% in 2024, while 35.4% had low trust, a slight decline from 37.4% in 2024.
- Confidence in different institutions to do what is right increased slightly across all types of institutions asked about, including police, courts, the ACT public service, and financial institutions.

LIVEABILITY

Liveable city

Ratings of local liveability provide insight into how well local services and infrastructure are functioning, as well as local social connection, safety and amenity. In 2025, 91.3% of Canberrans agreed that their local area – the suburb they lived in – was very liveable (Figure 49). This was a small but statistically significant increase compared to 2024 (89.0%). The findings overall suggest an ongoing recovery from the somewhat lower levels of liveability reported in 2021 (87.8%) and 2022 (81.4%).

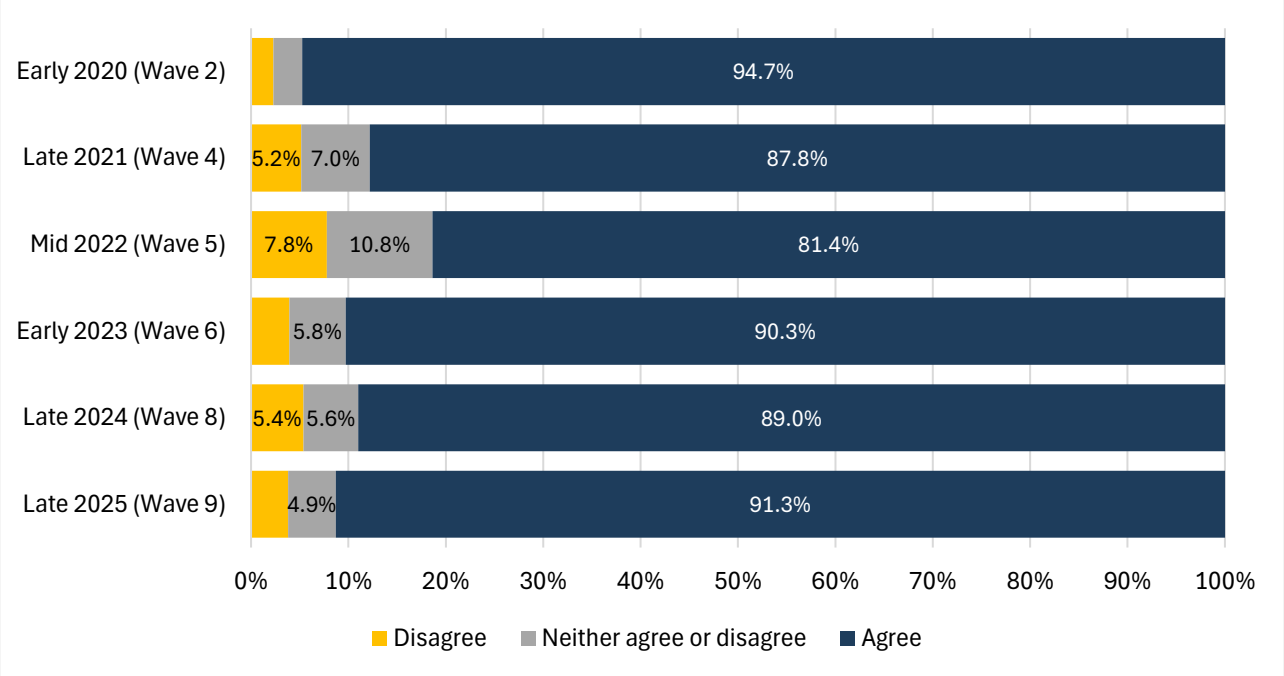


Figure 49 Local area liveability, ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

This high rating of liveability is shared across people living in different districts, and in different life stages and circumstances. Canberrans living in Inner South, Tuggeranong North and Inner Belconnen were more likely than others to report their local area was highly liveable, as were those aged 65 and older (Figure 50). Some were less likely to report their local area was highly liveable, although even amongst these groups more than 80% reported good liveability: residents of West Gungahlin (86.9%), Weston Creek (86.4%), Molonglo (83.5%), and Tuggeranong South (80.2%); those living in multi-generational household (88.9%), single parents (86.7%), and those with a moderately (88.4%) and severely (84.4%) restrictive disability.

Between 2024 and 2025, there was a significant increase in reported liveability of the local area amongst those living with a restrictive disability (increasing from 82.5% to 90.0%), those born overseas in a non-English speaking country (rising from 84.5% to 93.6%), and men (growing from 88.5% to 92.5%).

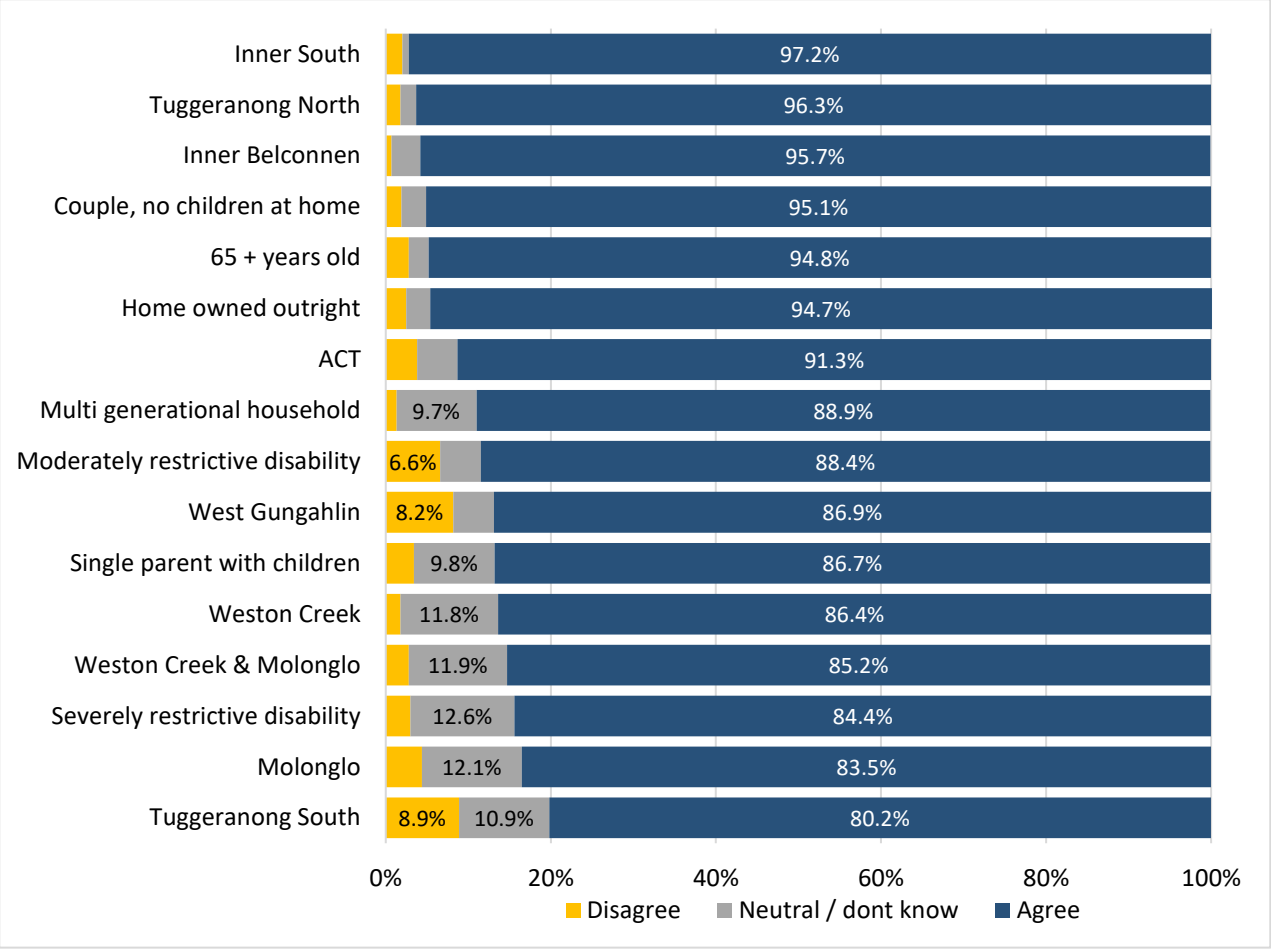


Figure 50 Local area liveability, by selected demographic groups and districts, 2025[12]

Most Canberrans – 71.9% – felt their local streets had enough shade on a hot day (Figure 51). However, there was some variation depending on where a person lived. Residents of the Inner North, Inner South, North, Woden Valley and Tuggeranong North were all more likely than the average Canberran to report having good street shade (77.4% to 87.5%). Residents of East Gungahlin (56.6%), West Gungahlin (58.5%) and Molonglo (29.9%) were less likely to report having good street shade. Molonglo was also the only district where disagreement (52.6%) exceeded agreement, likely reflecting that most housing in Molonglo is relatively young, with ongoing housing development and streets often having relatively immature street trees that provide less shade than more mature trees.

Four out of five Canberrans (80.4%) felt that most trees on their local streets were healthy (Figure 52), with less than one in ten (7.9%) disagreeing. Higher proportions of residents in the Inner North and West Gungahlin (89.3% and 87.9% respectively) reported healthy local trees. Slightly fewer of those living in East Gungahlin, Outer Belconnen, Weston Creek, Belconnen East, and Molonglo were confident most local street trees were healthy (between 66.3% and 79.2%).

[12] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.

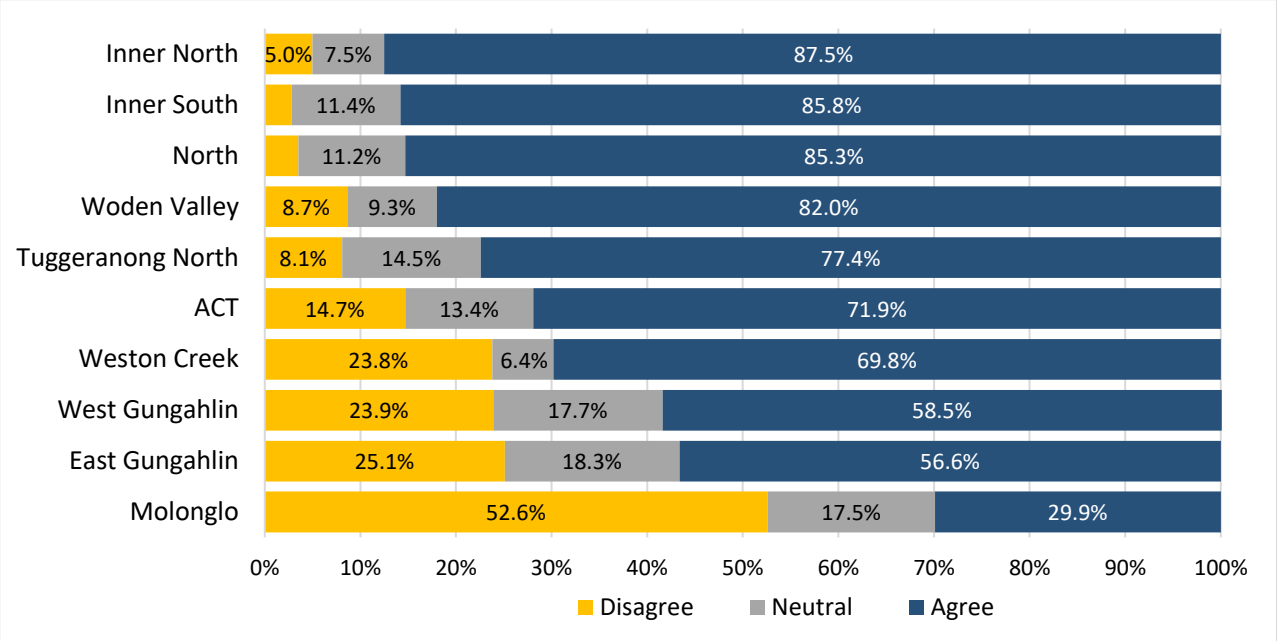


Figure 51 'The streets near where I live have enough shade on a hot day', ACT districts, 2025[13]

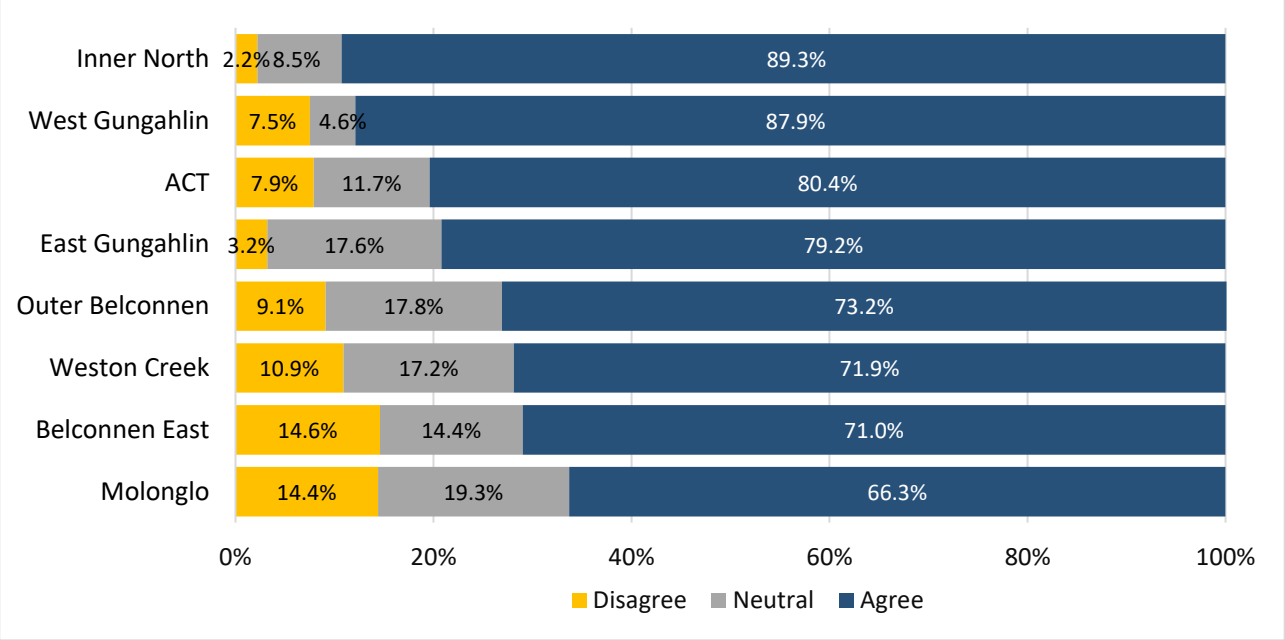


Figure 52 'Most of the trees on local streets near my home are healthy', selected ACT districts, 2025[14]

[13] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.
[14] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.

ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY

Transport use and access

In 2025, seven in ten Canberrans (70.9%) reported they could easily get to the places they needed to, while almost one in four (23.4%) sometimes had difficulty with transport, and 5.7% often or always had difficulty getting to the places they needed to go (Figure 53).

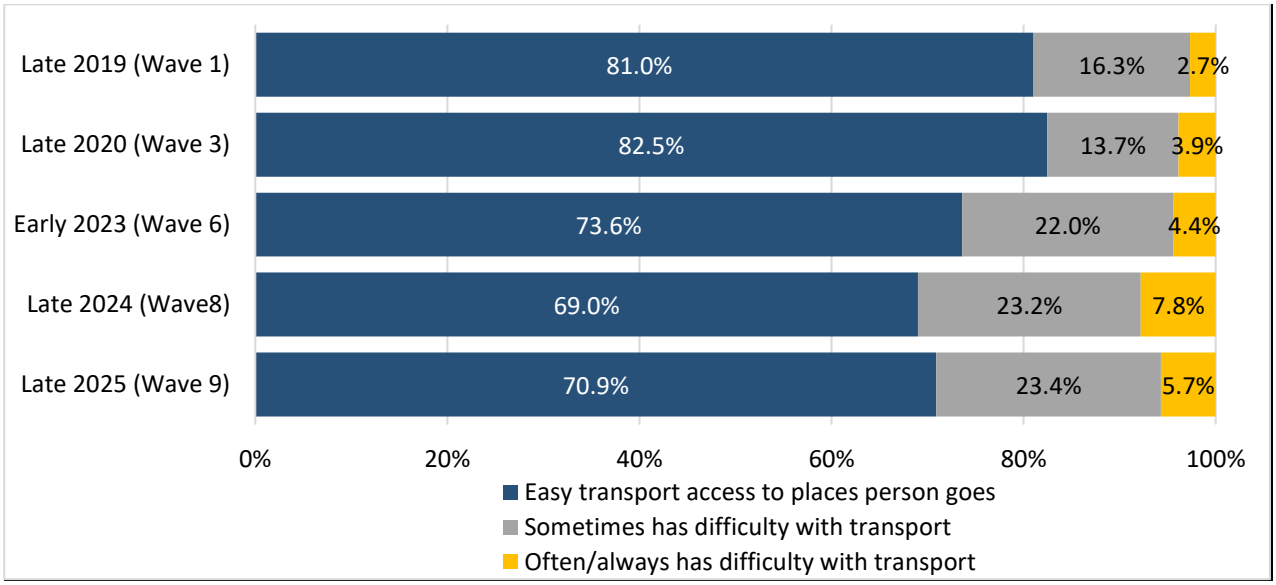


Figure 53 Ability to access transportation when needed, ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

Some groups were more likely to report they could easily get the places they needed to go, particularly residents of Weston Creek, those aged 65+, outright homeowners, and those without a restrictive disability (Figure 54). Greater difficulty with transport was reported by those in Outer Belconnen, living in a share/group household, and those who had lived a shorter time in the ACT.

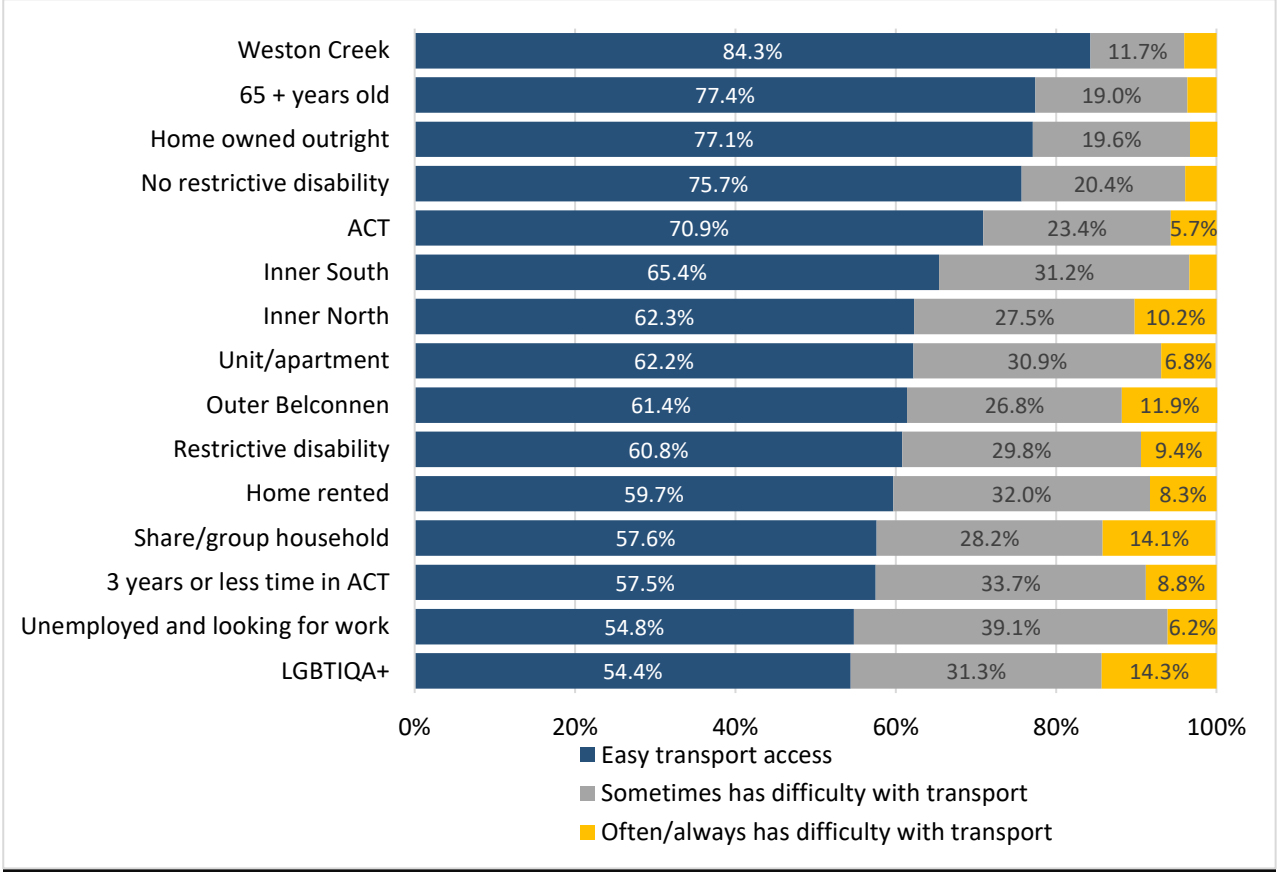


Figure 54 Ability to access transportation when needed, ACT adults by selected group and district, 2025[15]

Satisfaction with active and public transportation in the ACT declined between 2024 and 2025, particularly for walking paths (Figure 55):

- 61.7% were satisfied with cycling paths in 2025, down from 64.8% in 2024
- 58.7% were satisfied with light rail, down from 66.7% in 2024
- 50.8% were satisfied with buses, down from 53.4% in 2024
- 65.0% were satisfied with walking paths, down from 73.2% in 2024.

[15] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.

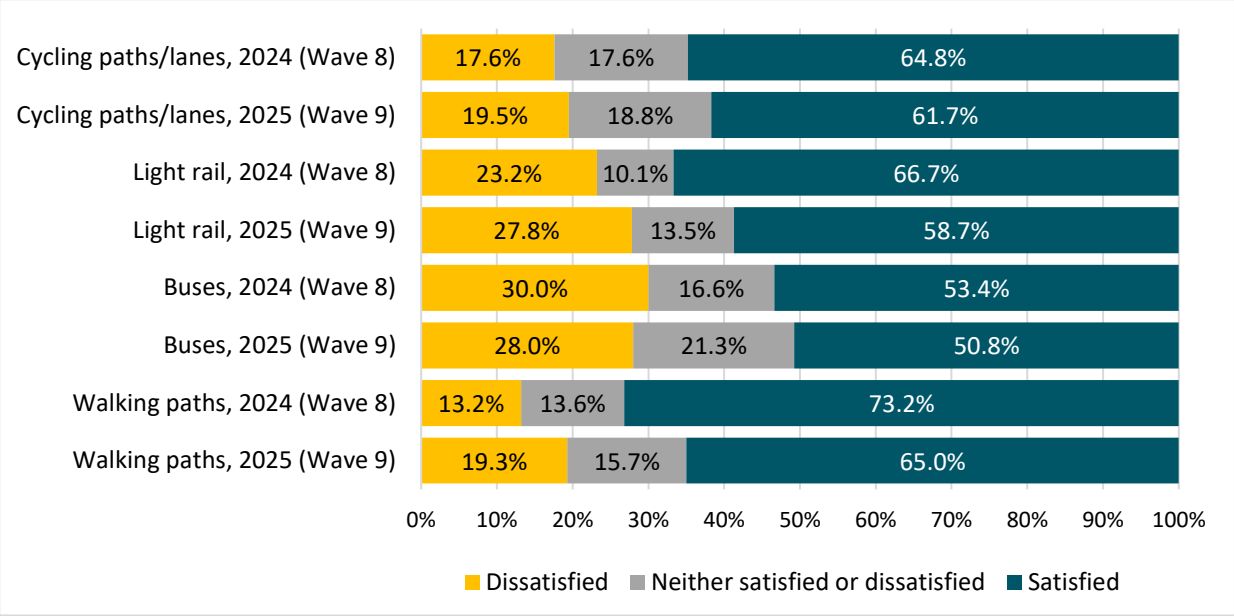


Figure 55 Satisfaction with selected infrastructure features

Decline in satisfaction with walking paths was more common amongst those living in the Inner South, Belconnen East and Outer Belconnen. Decline in satisfaction with buses was highest amongst those living in Tuggeranong North.

Survey participants who reported low satisfaction with active or public transport were asked what they would like to see improved, and their responses analysed to identify common themes.

When discussing public transport, desired areas of improvement included improved timeliness, safety, accessibility, reliability, cost and ability to use the MyWay system on public transport. Some respondents also commented more generally on their views of light rail:

- **Timeliness:** Areas suggested for improvement related to time included increasing frequency, and improving route design and network integration:
    - **Increased bus frequency:** There was a desire for more frequent services during the day, and provision of services over night and on the weekend as well as increased services to specific districts and suburbs, often those with limited or no servicing by rapid route buses. Multiple respondents reported that local buses didn't run early enough or late enough for them to use to commute to/from work.
    - **Route design/network integration**: Many reported that routes often took a long time to reach destinations ('convoluted routes', 'takes forever to get anywhere') or that they had long transfer times between services, resulting in lengthy travel time. A lack of single direct services was a common issue, with many respondents noting the need to catch multiple buses to get to Civic and that getting to other places typically meant a bus connection in Civic. Respondents noted that the time required to use buses compared to driving often make taking public transport impractical. Some identified that the transfer burden can be particularly difficult for more vulnerable community members with difficulties beyond just time and inconvenience such as transiting between connections/bus stops and safety concerns.
- **Safety – lighting and behaviour of public transport users:** Safety was a commonly mentioned concern both on public transport and at interchanges and bus stops. Concerns included poor lighting at bus stops, and anti-social behaviours. Respondents reported that taking public transport sometimes involved exposure to various anti-social behaviours ('noisy', 'uncouth', 'dirty', 'smelly' 'dodgy', 'abusive', 'drunk', 'vaping', 'drug addicts', 'screaming' and 'quite aggressive' are examples).

These behaviours were noted as occurring during daytime as well as night. These issues were flagged as of particular concern for those who were neurodivergent or with disabilities. Some respondents suggested increasing security or inspectors to improve behaviour on buses. Some reported concerns about cleanliness of buses.

- **Bus drivers:** Some survey participants reported negative experiences with bus drivers such as poor driving, poor communication, and concerns drivers were not addressing anti-social behaviour. These were counterbalanced by other respondents describing drivers in general as friendly, and recognising drivers are not necessarily able to respond to anti-social behaviour.
- **Accessibility:** Some accessibility issues were noted such as the ramp being too steep for wheelchairs, difficulty using walkers and getting mobility scooters on to buses and difficulties getting to bus stops (walking or transiting the needed distance) and/or waiting at bus stops.
- **MyWay:** There was dissatisfaction with the MyWay system including that it was 'notably inconvenient' to obtain a card and place credit on it, that the 'pay system hardly works', and monitoring balances can be difficult 'don't know how much I have on my card until it runs out'. One person noted 'public transport is now cashless, which means that people like me can no longer catch the bus'.
- **Light rail:** There were numerous negative comments regarding the light rail, focused on concerns about whether the funding invested would be better spent on other things, that it doesn't service most of Canberra (e.g., 'Light rail is irrelevant for most folks in Canberra') and concerns investment of light rail has reduced investment in bus services.

When asked about areas that needed improvement for active transport such as cycling and walking paths, responses commonly discussed maintenance, connectivity, safety and accessibility, as well as more specific issues around sharing paths:

- **Maintenance:** Many comments focused on a need for increased maintenance to address issues such as raised, uneven, cracked and damaged path surfaces (e.g. due to tree roots) as well as paths being 'covered in debris' (e.g. leaves, branches, mud, gravel, litter), creating tripping and slipping hazards. These were of particular concern for older people and those with mobility or vision issues. Multiple people commented that they had tripped/fallen or had a family member who had, with some resulting in injury ("I broke my elbow tripping on one"). Cyclists were particularly concerned about the safety hazards presented by debris, both on off-road and on-road cycling paths ("on road cycling lanes often fill with gravel and road debris, forcing cyclists out into the traffic lane").
- **Improving connectivity:** Key recurrent issues related to walking and cycling involved lacking and discontinuous paths. Respondents commonly reported a lack of walking paths in their area, or that paths were only on one side of the road, ended abruptly, or simply had poor connectivity to other paths. These issues were particularly noted as problematic for parents with prams (e.g. "It feels especially risky as a parent, having to put my baby's pram onto the road to navigate the suburbs") as well as those with mobility and vision issues (e.g. "my street has none and is unsafe to walk on if you are elderly or mobility impaired").
- **Safety of paths:** Both connectivity and maintenance problems were described as leading to safety risks, for example tree roots, debris and obstructions such as overgrown vegetation making paths unsafe. Parked cars were also noted to create safety issues for those using walking and cycling paths. Other safety issues raised focused on accessibility for those with mobility challenges, with children in prams, and those using paths at night time, including curb cuts, path slope, rest seats, shade, lighting, drainage, and path width. Curb cuts were not always present or not well placed (e.g. shop entrances, pedestrian crossings, near parking, especially disability parking) particularly impacting those using wheels (mobility aids, prams, scooters, bikes). There were comments that curb cuts are often too steep ("kerbs are too sloped for an electric wheelchair").
- **Safety – user separation:** Safety issues related to separation of cars and bikes for on-road cycling lanes, and sharing of paths by bicycles and pedestrians, as well aslack of continuity and coverage of cycling path networks ("I have checked before for how to go from home to work safely on

cycleways and they always have poor connections/areas where you're exposed to traffic and risk"). For on-road cycling there were numerous suggestions to improve separation of cycling lanes from cars and car parking due to safety concerns ("too many cyclists are hit by cars", "would like to see protected on road or entirely separated bike lanes/paths"), or to widen bike lanes or install barriers to increase separation ("a barrier from cars for safety of the bike user"). Motorists also identified a need for better separation, with concerns that cycle lanes narrow roads ("the roadside bike lanes have reduced the roadway lane width to be too narrow for cars to pass in opposing directions safely") and that some separation infrastructure could introduce new safety issues ("the high concrete bike lane dividers are damaging car tyres/rims and are dangerous to bike riders").

- **Accessibility:** Path design was often not considered age and disability friendly ("paths should be re-laid to modern accessibility standards, with smooth, even surfaces, proper drainage, and gentle gradients that are suitable for mobility aids, wheelchairs, and bicycles") with issues typically compounded by the maintenance issues noted above. A desire for more rest seats was noted ("I see elderly people, exhausted from shopping at the Ainslie shops having to stop and sit on their walkers before struggling home").
- **Length and access:** Cycling paths were identified by some as often having overly lengthy routes ("missing routes ruin the cycle network by making it circuitous and inconvenient"), and a need for better off-road access to key district centres was identified ("cycling paths are good but fail to provide off road access to retail centres such as the airport, Belconnen or Gungahlin").
- **Removing obstructions:** Path obstructions were also a common concern, with obstructions caused by overgrown gardens and hedges, overhanging branches, parked cars, wheelie bins, dumped items (rarely noted), rental scooters (rarely noted), and construction work.
- **Increased mowing:** The need for mowing the verge along walking paths was also noted, with one respondent writing that the "lack of mowing attracts snakes, which is a risk for when you're walking with young children", whilst other respondents commented on asthma and allergy issues of overgrown vegetation.
- **Sharing paths:** There was a desire for redesign of paths to improve ability for users to share them, or for clearer designation of users ("Many paths too narrow to enable 'sharing'. Northbourne new paths are great … where walking and riding are separated").
- **User behaviour:** Sharing challenges also often related to user behaviour, with multiple concerns reported about speed of cyclists and e-scooters/e-bikes, cyclists riding close to pedestrians ("I regularly have near misses with fast bikes: that don't ring a bell (I don't know they are approaching), they ride fast and close to me"). Cyclists, meanwhile, raised concerns about inattentive walkers, walkers wearing earbuds, walkers who do not share the path, and negative interactions with pedestrians ("pedestrians walk on the cycle paths with headphones in or three abreast and do not pay attention to cyclists ringing the bell to alert of an approach" and "… abused regularly for ringing the bell!"). Some cyclists reported being targets for driver anger ("some drivers delight in driving as close as possible and yelling at cyclists to get off the roads when that is where they are supposed to be cycling", "drivers can be aggressive to cyclists and some either don't see us or choose to ignore road rules if it means giving way to a cyclist").
- **Road crossings and roundabouts:** Some wanted improvements in road crossings and markings for cycle paths through roundabouts, as well as clearer line marking where cycle paths meet/cross to ensure users know who should give way.

Overall, suggestions highlighted both the value placed on Canberra's active transport infrastructure, and a strong desire to ensure it is accessible, safe, connects all parts of the city well, and is well maintained.

ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

Access to GPs improved between 2024 and 2025: the proportion of Canberrans who reported it was hard to access GP services fell from 24.7% in 2024 to 19.1% in 2025 (Figure 56). There was also improvement in reported access to psychiatrists and psychologists, although with smaller numbers of respondents having sought access to these services, the changes were not statistically significant. Despite this possible improvement in access, the poorest access continued to be for specialists, with access to psychiatrists (62.1%), psychologists (47.5%), and specialists other than mental health (41.7%).

Those with no children in the household reported improved access for four of the eight types of health service asked about (walk-in clinics, GPs, dentists, and OTs/speech pathologists), as did those reporting some form of disability (walk-in clinics, GPs, dentists and psychologists).

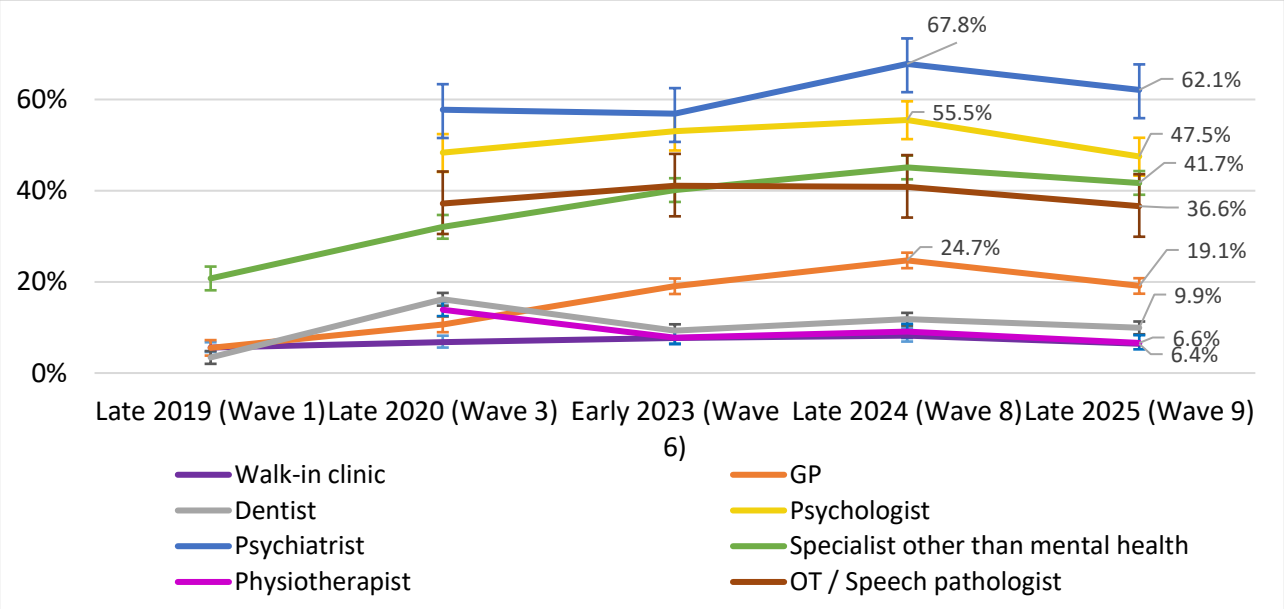


Figure 56 Proportion of Canberrans who reported it was hard to access different health services, 2019 to 2025

Difficulty accessing GPs was more commonly reported by women (23.1%), those with a restrictive disability (23.3%), residents of Weston Creek (26.4%), and those identifying as LGBTIQA+ (27.8%) (Figure 57). Better access was reported by those aged 65+ (only 8.9% of whom reported it was hard to access GPs) and men (12.2%).

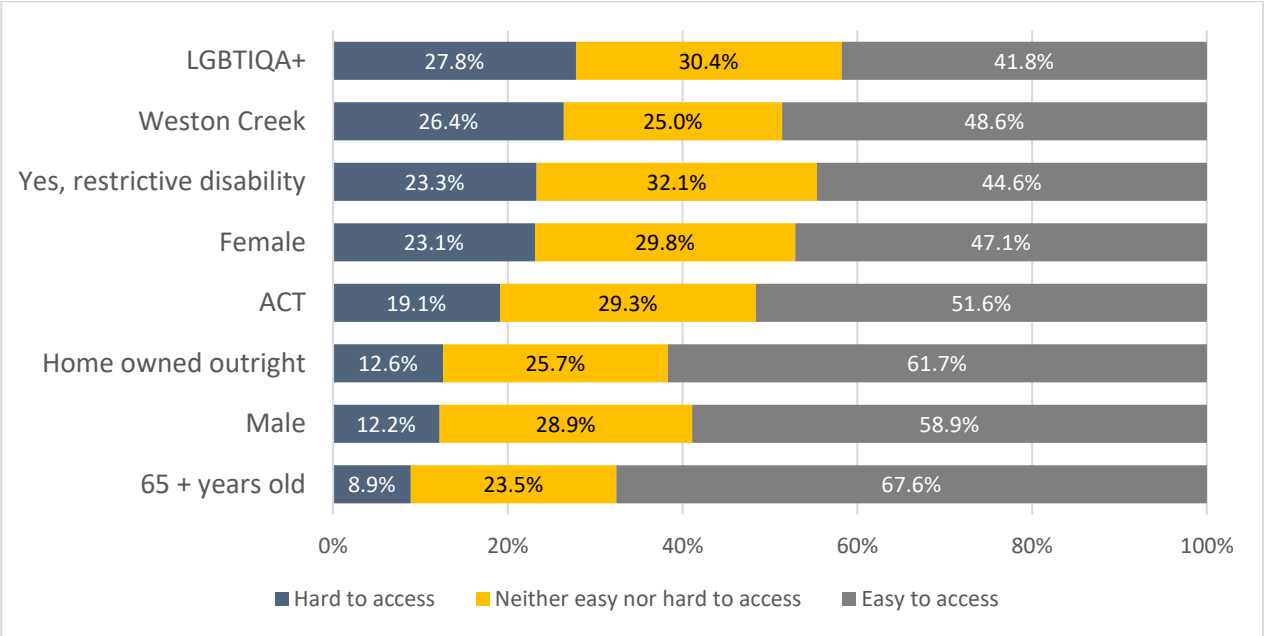


Figure 57 Access to GPs by group/district

GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONS

Having a say and being heard

Confidence in being able to say and be heard is measured in the *Living well* survey by asking Canberrans whether they feel that they can get involved in decision making processes in the ACT if they want to, that decision makers will listen to them, and whether they actively contribute to local or ACT discussion and decision making processes e.g. local consultation processes, school councils, business groups. This is used to calculate an overall score for having a say and being heard (Figure 58). Confidence in being able to have a day and be heard declined slightly between 2024 and 2025, with the proportion who had low confidence increasing from 32.4% to 35.1%. However, overall confidence remained significantly higher than levels in 2019 and 2020.

Similar to previous years, confidence to have a say and be heard increased somewhat with age, with 38.0% of those aged 18-29 having low confidence compared to 31.1% of those aged 65 and older; those with children living in the household also had slightly lower confidence (40.6%), as did renters (42.7%) and those living with severely restrictive disability (42.0%).

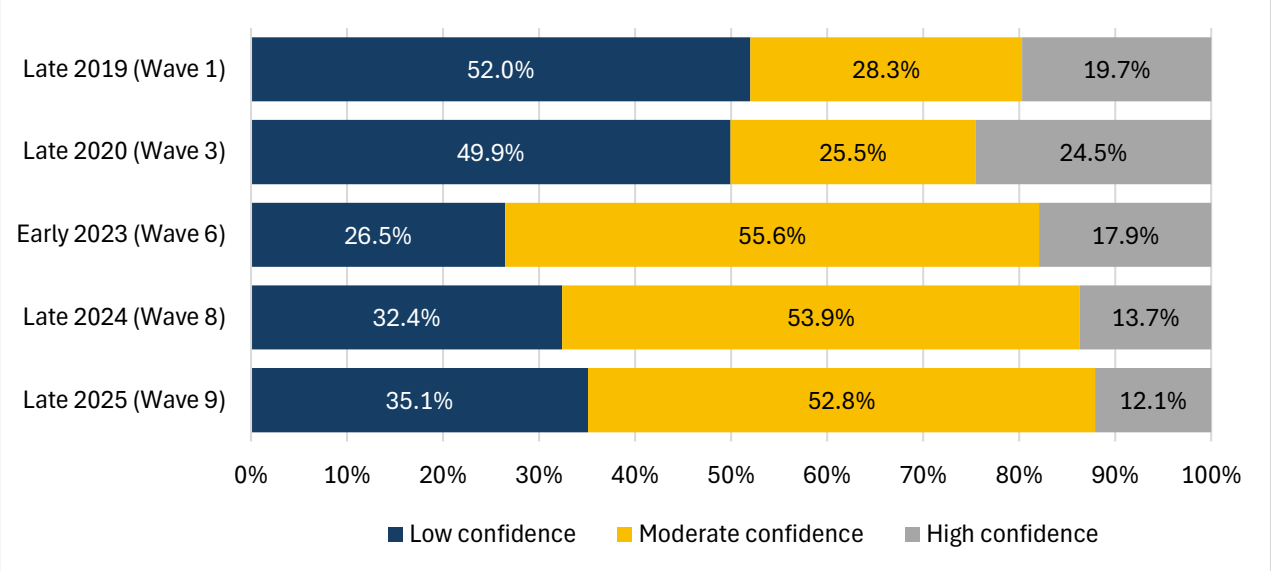


Figure 58 Confidence to have a say and be heard, ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

Human rights

Confidence that the ACT Government respects and protects human rights improved between 2024 and 2025, although it did not return to the higher levels seen between 2020 and 2023. Two thirds of Canberrans (66.4%) were confident human rights are respected and protected, up from 59.4% in 2024, while 20.5% were not confident (Figure 59). Confidence that human rights are respected and protected was significantly higher amongst those who spoke a language other than English at home (74.3%), born overseas in non-English speaking countries (78.5%), those who had lived in the ACT three years or less (80.9%), and those with no restrictive disability (74.7%). Confidence was lower amongst those living with any type of disability (61.5%), particularly a moderately restrictive (55.7%) or severely restrictive (48.6%) disability; amongst carers (54.3%), and amongst those aged 50-64 (60.6%) and 65 and older (56.8%).

Similarly, there was an increase in confidence that vulnerable people are protected and supported, from 50.0% in 2024 to 55.0% in 2025 (Figure 60). However, confidence varied significantly between groups:

women were much less confident than men (45.4% compared to 65.9%), while those speaking a language other than English at home were more confident (65.1%). Single parents (38.7%), carers (41.8%), and those living with restrictive disability (42.6%) were all less likely to agree that vulnerable people are protected and supported.

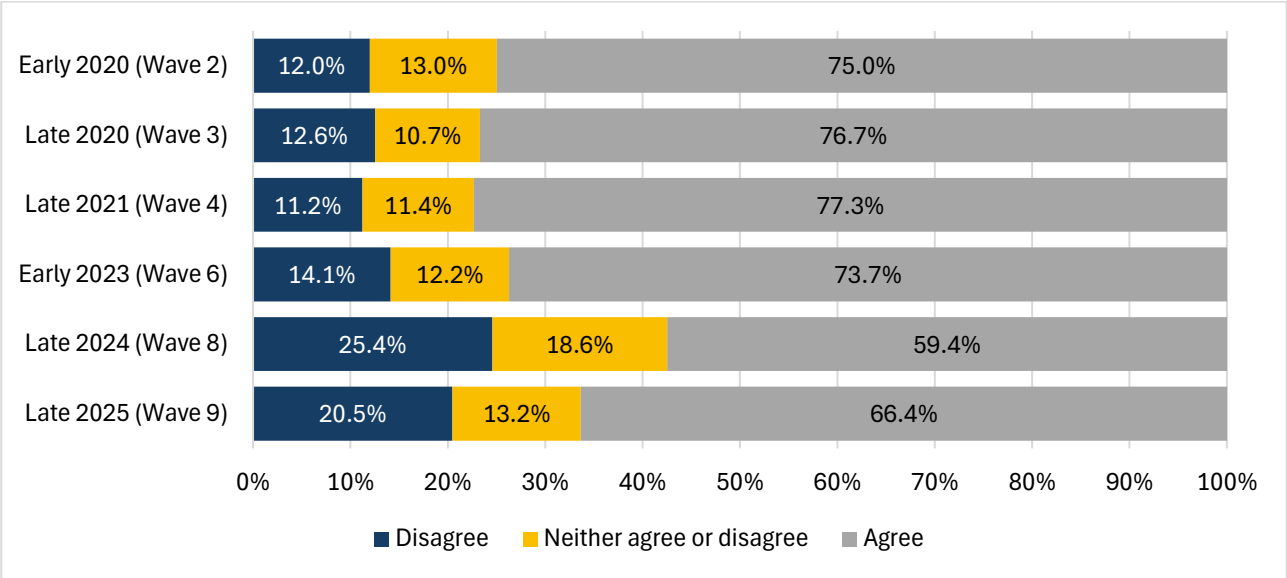


Figure 59 'The ACT Government respects and protects human rights', ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

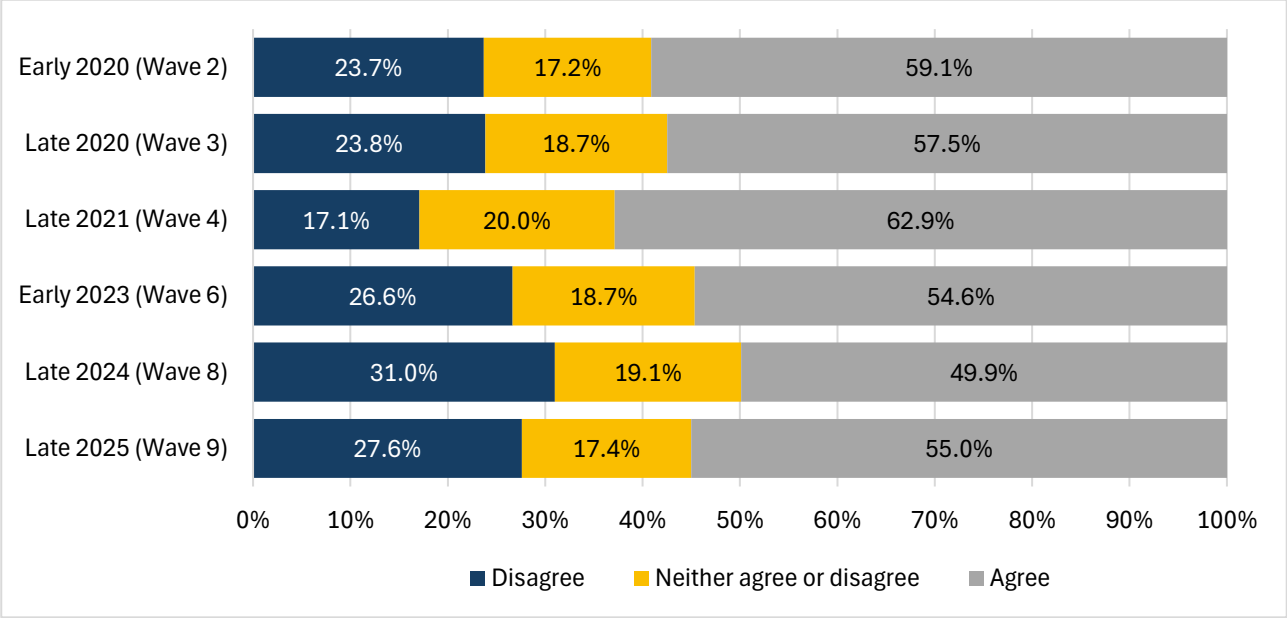


Figure 60 'Vulnerable people are protected and supported in the ACT', ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

Trust in government and other institutions

Trust in the ACT Government remained relatively stable between 2024 and 2025: 45.4% of Canberran trusted the ACT Government to do what is right, a small but not statistically significant increase from 42.0% in 2024, while 35.4% had low trust, a slight decline from 37.4% in 2024. Overall, trust remained higher than it was prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but below the high levels seen during the pandemic. Trust was slightly higher amongst younger ACT residents (49.4% amongst 30-49 year olds) and lower amongst those aged 65 and older (39.6%). Those who spoke a language other than English at home had higher trust (52.5%), as did those living in the North (52.3%) and Inner North (60.0%).

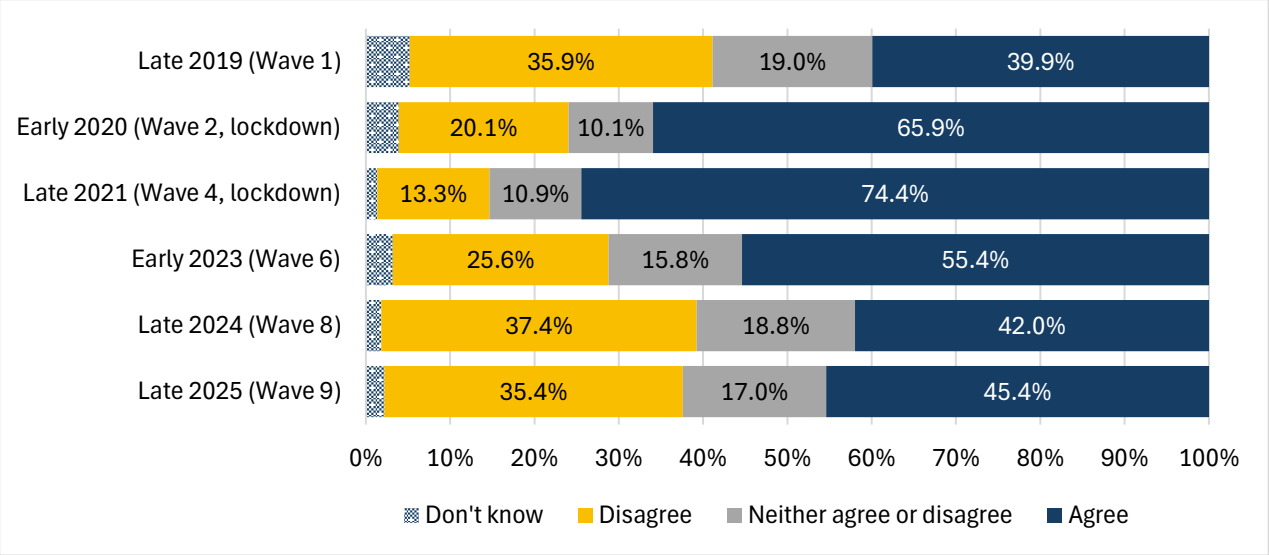


Figure 61 'I trust the ACT Government to do what is right', ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

Similar change was seen in a second measure which asked people to rate how much they trusted the ACT Government, Australian Government, and people in general, on a scale from 0 (no trust) to 10 (complete trust) (Figure 62). There was a small but significant increase in the proportion of Canberrans who reported trusting both the ACT and the Australian Government, while trust in people in general did not change significantly.

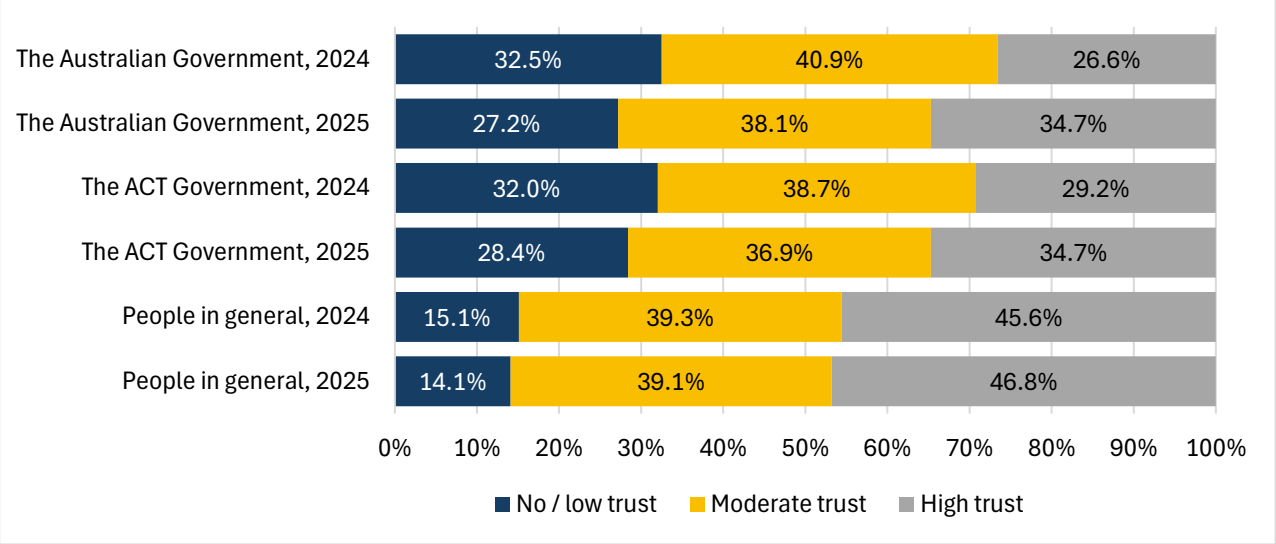


Figure 62 Trust in people, the ACT Government and the Australian Government, ACT adults, 2024 and 2025

Confidence in different institutions to do what is right increased slightly across all types of institutions asked about (Figure 63), including police, courts, the ACT public service, and financial institutions.

Confidence in local groups and organisations to get things done did not change significantly, with 45.0% of Canberrans agreeing that local groups and organisations in the ACT are good at getting things done, down slightly from 48.9% in 2024 (Figure 64).

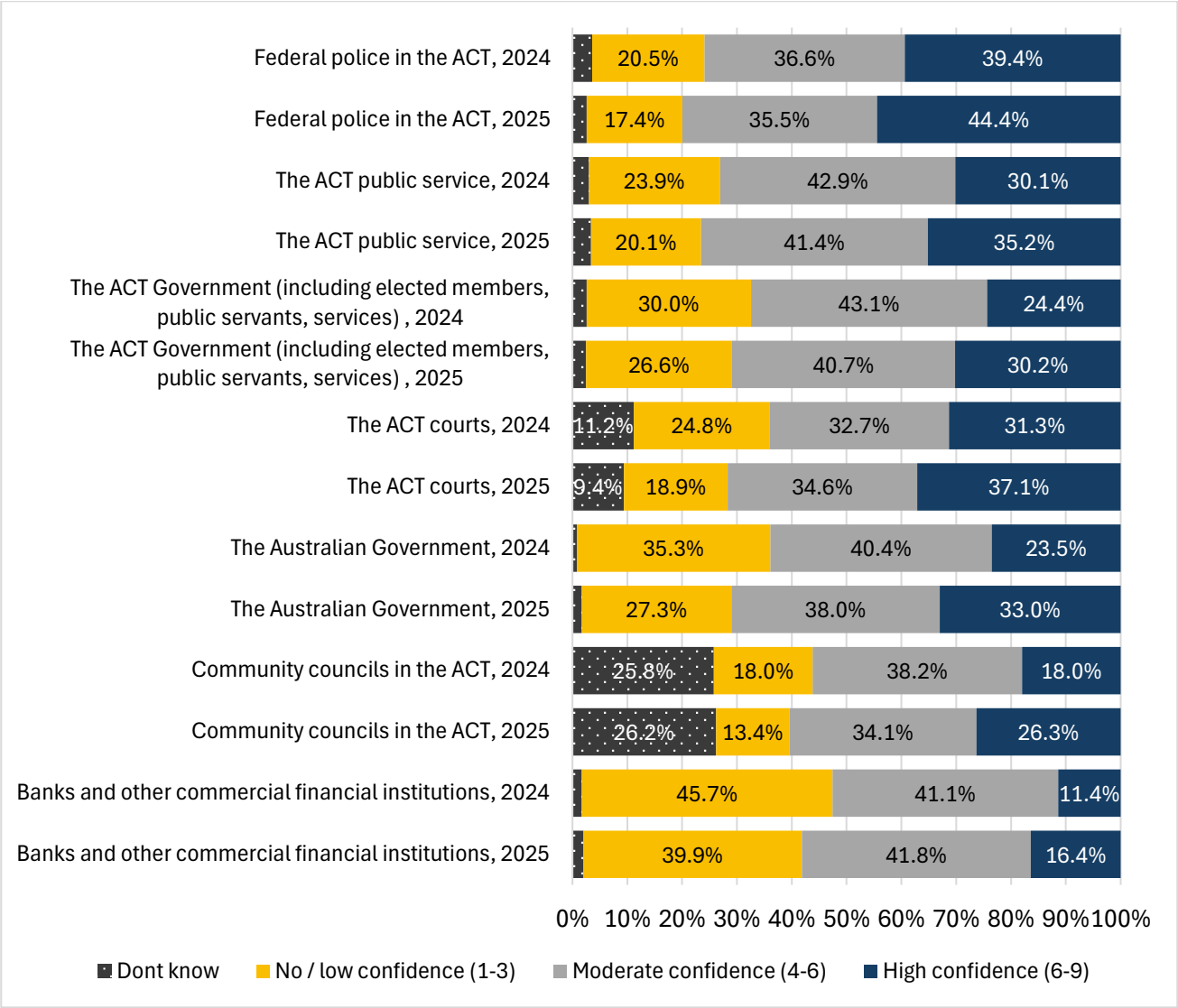


Figure 63 Confidence in different institutions to do what is right, 2024 and 2025

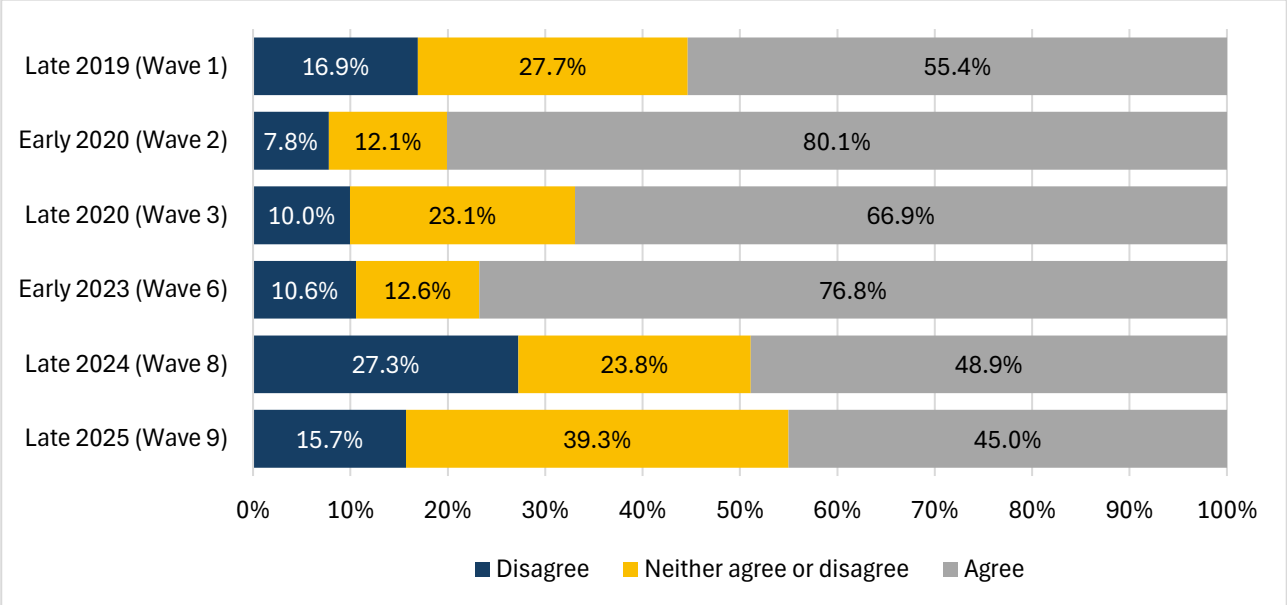


Figure 64 'Local groups and organisations in the ACT are good at getting things done', ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

CHAPTER 6

BELONGING AND INCLUSION



KEY POINTS

- In 2025, Canberrans continued to feel confident the Canberran community accepts people from different cultures (79.1%) and that this makes Canberra better (80.0%)
- Confidence in the inclusiveness of local communities remained steady, with 35.2% reporting high inclusiveness, 16.1% low inclusiveness (in the form of high levels of disagreement, some groups keeping to themselves, and some groups not being made welcome), and 48.7% moderate inclusiveness
- Canberrans continued to rate Canberra highly as a place to live, with 90.0% saying they would recommend the ACT region to others as a good place to live
- Canberrans' sense of belonging stayed stable between 2024 and 2025, with 66.0% reporting a high sense of belonging and 5.4% a low sense of belonging; however, sense of belonging has declined overall since 2019 amongst Canberrans
- 25.8% of Canberrans reported they experienced discrimination in the last 12 months
- In 2025, 82.1% of ACT adults could name one or more of the Traditional Custodians of the ACT region, up from 74.7% in 2019
- Most Canberrans feel proud of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures (75.1%), and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are important to Australia's identity as a nation (83.2%).

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Confidence that Canberra is a community that accepts people from different cultures, and is better off because it has many different cultures increased slightly between 2024 and 2025. In 2025, 79.1% felt Canberra was a community that accepts different cultures, up slightly from 76.0% in 2024; and 80.0% that this makes Canberra better (up from 76.8% in 2024) (Figures 65 and 66). Confidence that there is room for a variety of languages and cultures in the ACT remained steady at 82.7% (Figure 67).

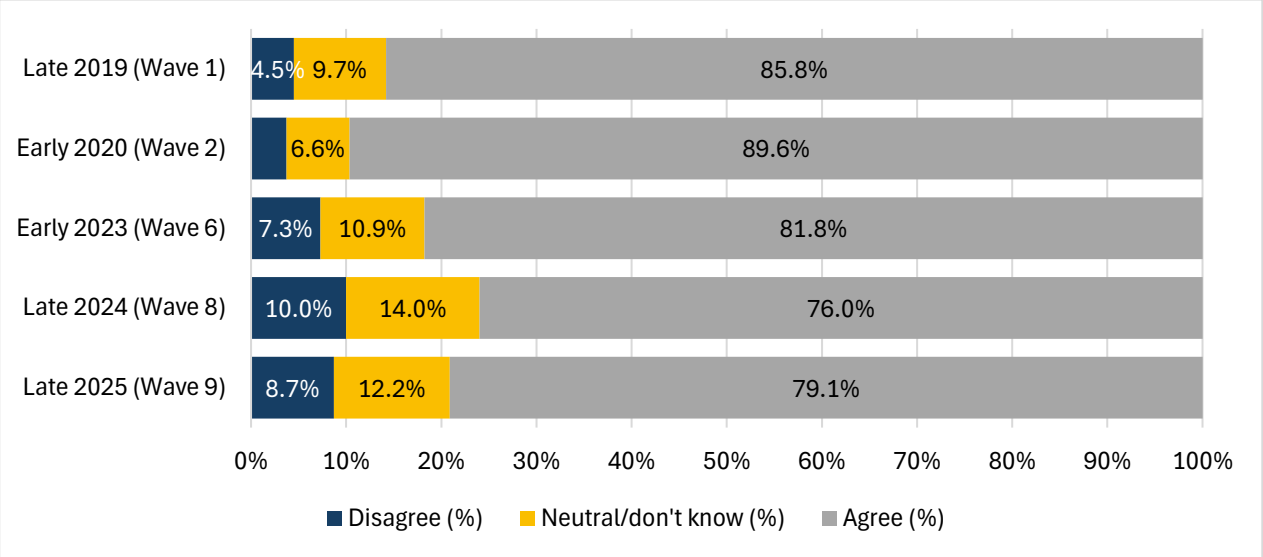


Figure 65 'Canberra as a community accepts people from different cultures', ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

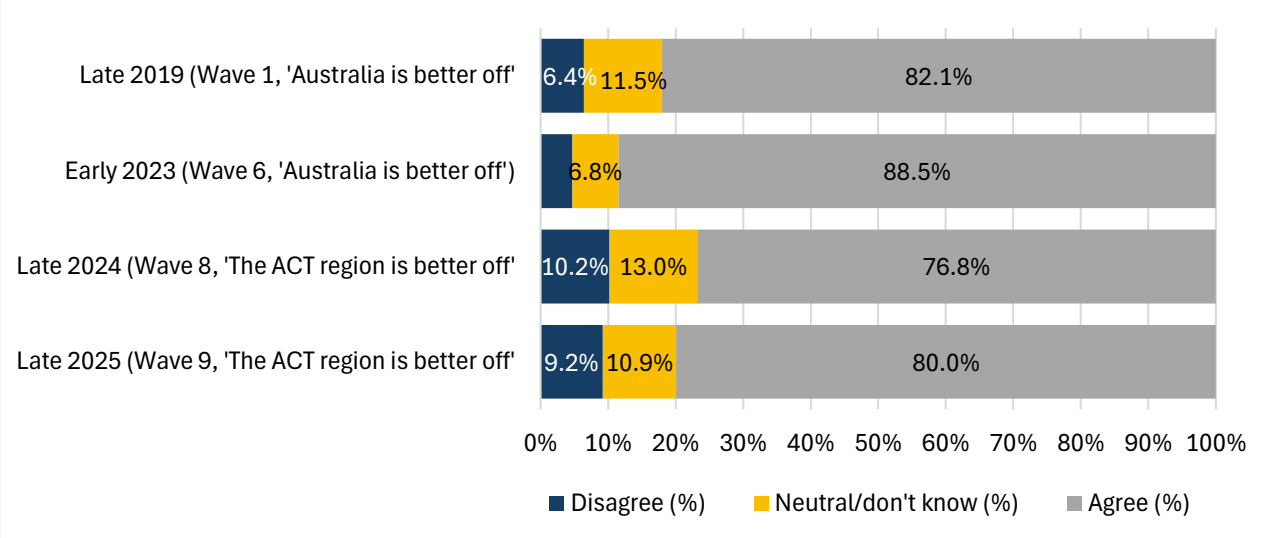


Figure 66 'Australia/the ACT region is better off because we have many different races/cultures', ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

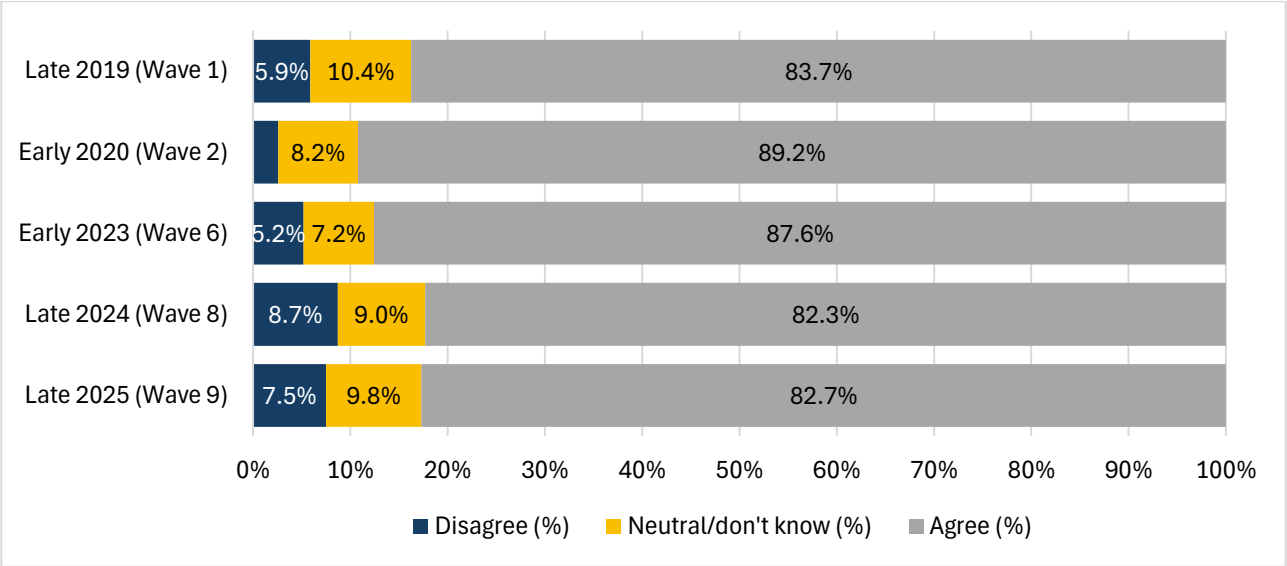


Figure 67 'There is room for a variety of languages/cultures in the ACT region', ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

INCLUSION AND COHESION

Views about social inclusion and cohesion are examined in the *Living well* survey by asking the extent to which residents feel some groups keep to themselves in their local area, that some groups aren't made to feel welcome, and that there is a lot of disagreement between people locally. This is examined once every two to three years in the *Living well* survey: prior to 2025, these questions were last asked in late 2022.

Confidence that local areas of Canberra are welcoming, different people interact, and that there is low disagreement did not change significantly between 2022 and 2025 (Figure 68). In 2025, 35.2% reported high inclusiveness, 16.1% low inclusiveness (in the form of high levels of disagreement, separation of groups, and not all being welcome), and 48.7% moderate inclusiveness.

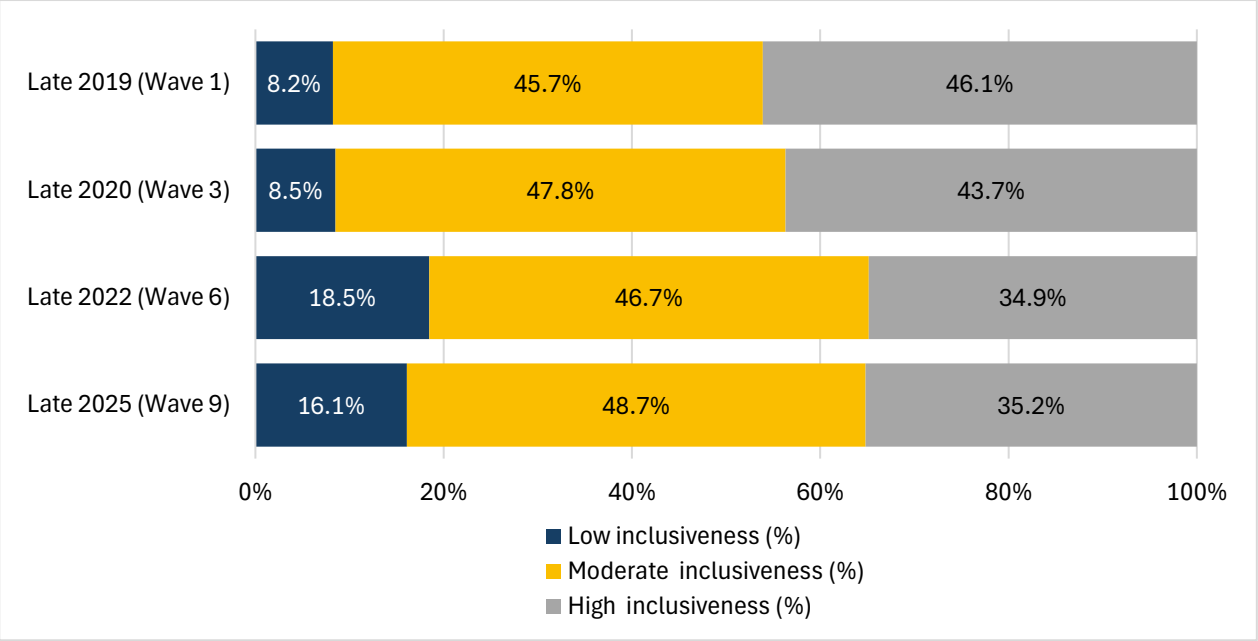


Figure 68 Sense of inclusiveness of local area, ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

CONNECTION TO CANBERRA

Canberrans continue to rate Canberra highly as a place to live, with 90.0% saying they would recommend the ACT region to others as a good place to live (Figure 69).

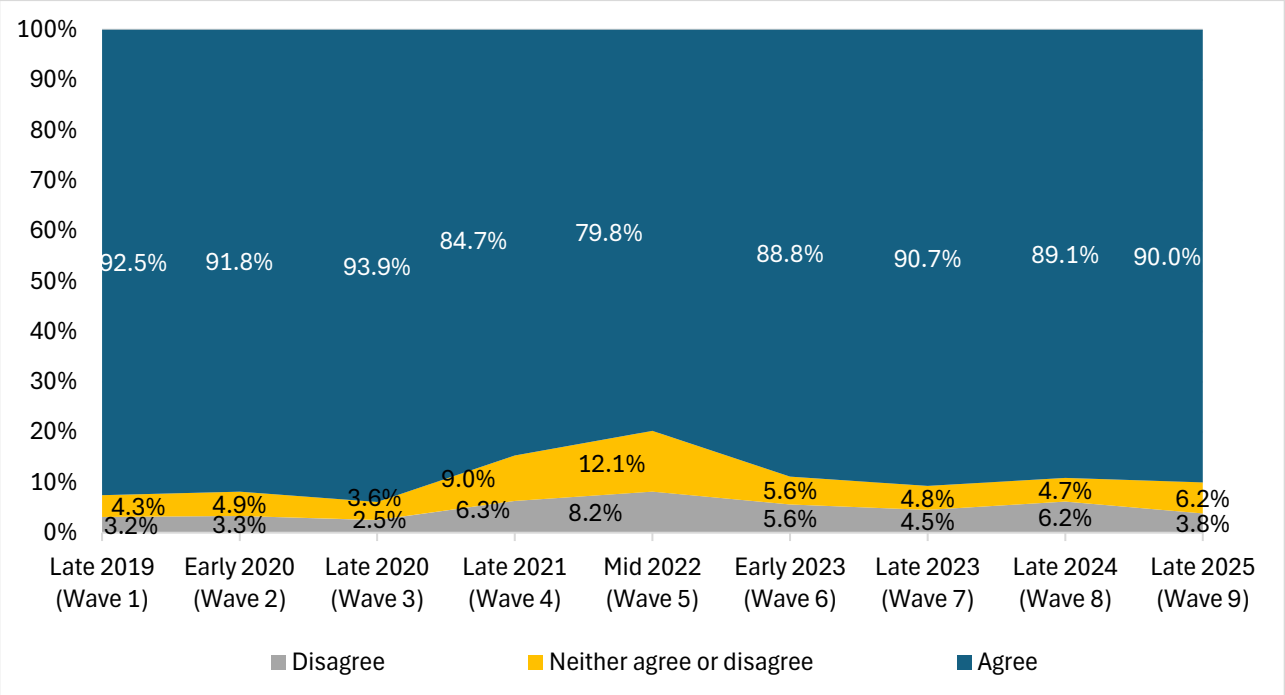


Figure 69 'I would recommend the ACT region to others as a good place to live', ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

BELONGING

Canberrans' sense of belonging did not change significantly between 2024 and 2025, with 66.0% reporting a high sense of belonging (feeling welcome, part of the community and not feeling like an outsider), and 5.4% a low sense of belonging (Figure 70). Sense of belonging has declined over time amongst Canberrans, apart from a brief increase during the first year of COVID-19 pandemic. However, the primary change has been from a high to a moderate sense of belonging, with a small decline in those with the lowest sense of belonging.

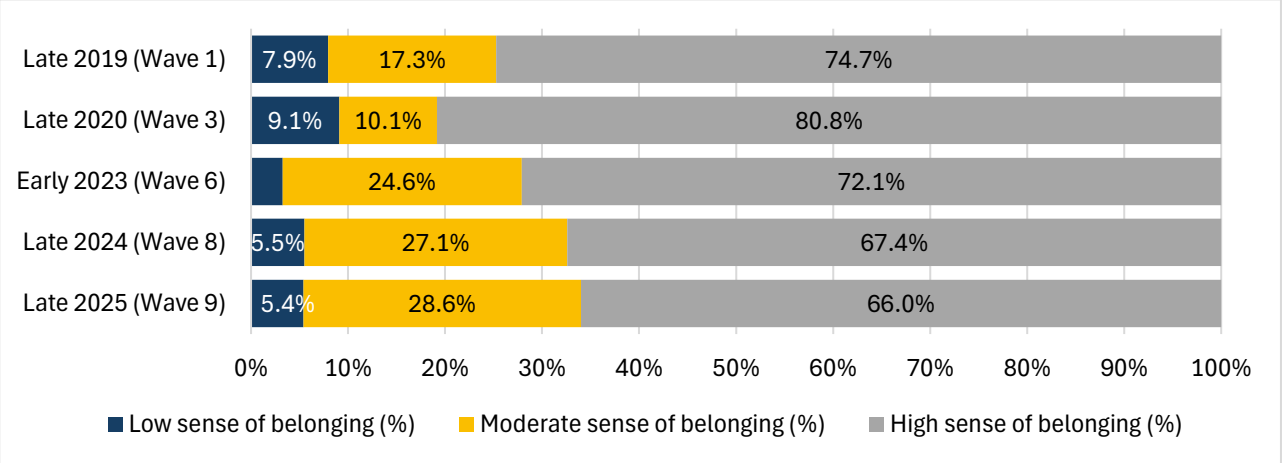


Figure 70 Sense of belonging, ACT adult, 2019 to 2025

DISCRIMINATION

Experience of discrimination declined slightly but not significantly between 2024 and 2025, with 25.8% of Canberrans reporting they experienced discrimination in the last 12 months (Figure 71).

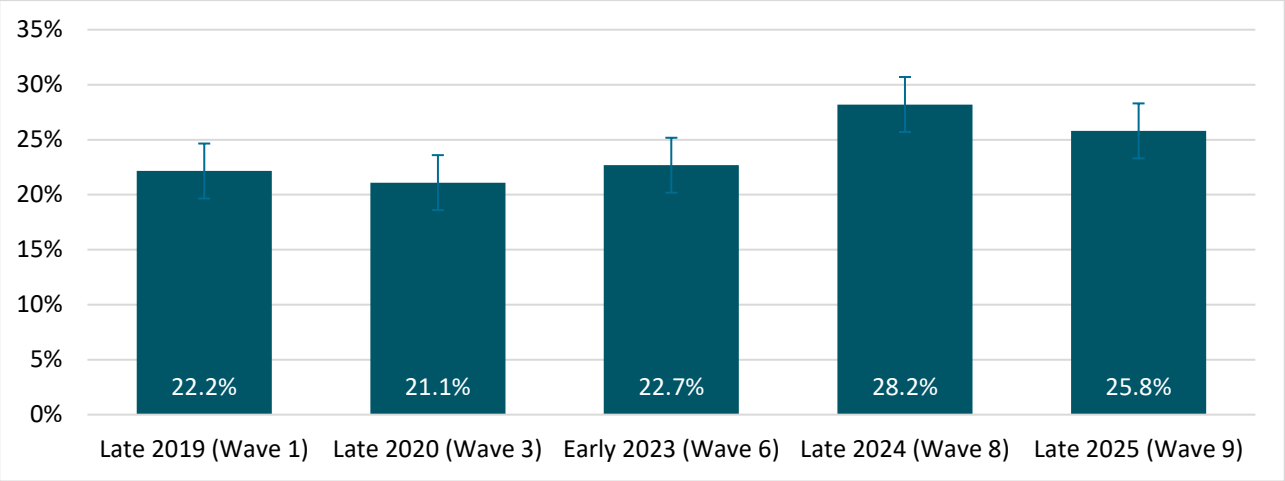


Figure 71 ACT adults who experienced discrimination in the last 12 months, 2019 to 2025

VALUING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CULTURES AND RECOGNISING TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS

In 2025, 82.1% of ACT adults could name one or more of the Traditional Custodians of the ACT region, up from 74.7% in 2019. Most – 82.8%–had attended an event at which there was an Acknowledgment of Country in the last year, while 69.4% had attended one or more events with a Welcome to Country, and 36.5% had attended one or more other events or activities focused on or held by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people (Figure 72).

The large majority of Canberrans reported feeling proud of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures (75.1%, Figure 73), and felt Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are important to Australia's identity as a nation (83.2%, Figure 74). This has remained largely stable since 2020.

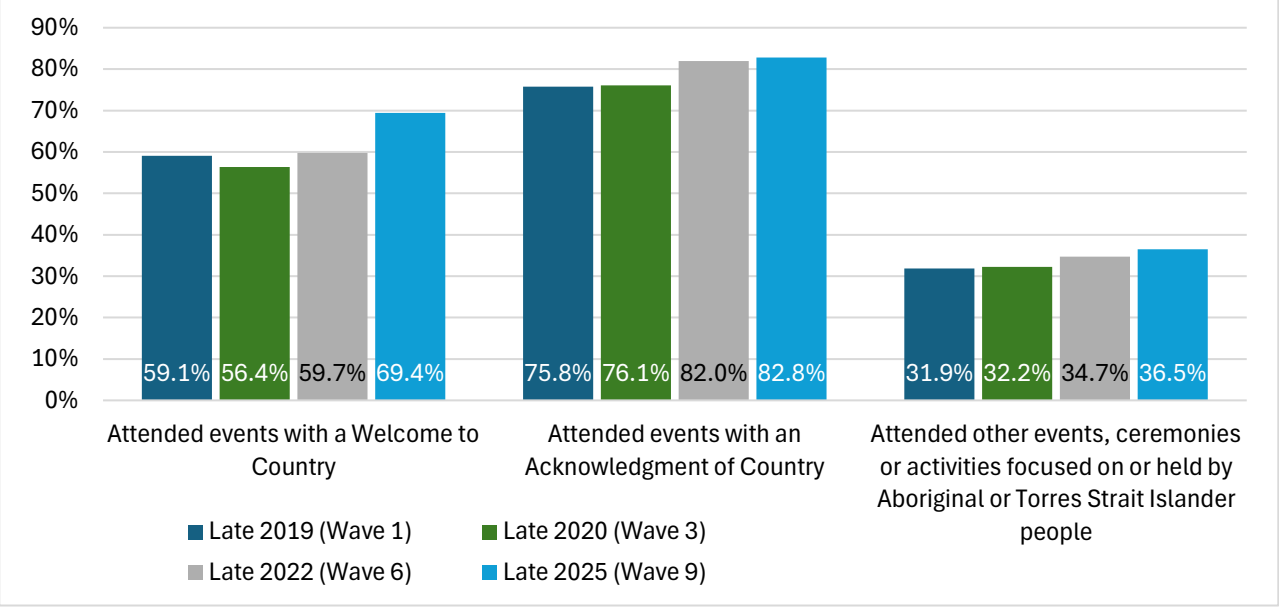


Figure 72 Acknowledgement of and engagement with Traditional Custodians at events and activities, ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

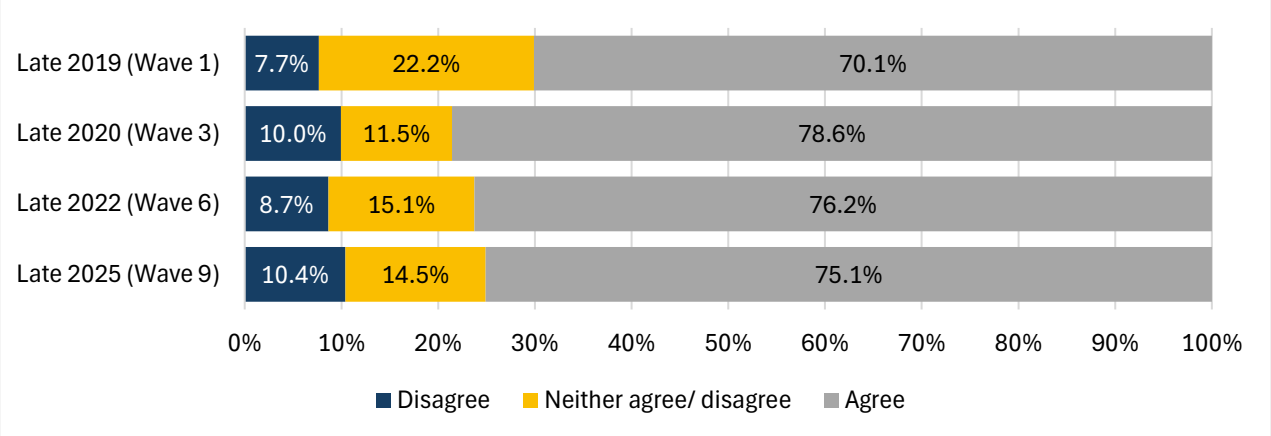


Figure 73 'I feel proud of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures', ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

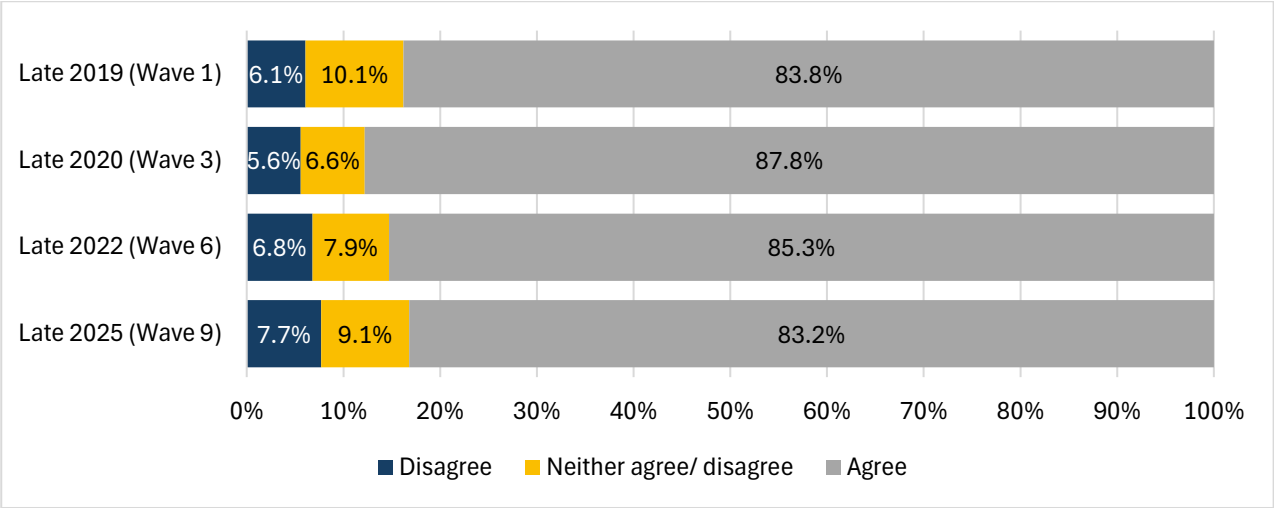


Figure 74 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are important to Australia's identity as a nation', ACT adult, 2019 to 2025

CHAPTER 7

HEALTH AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLE



KEY POINTS

- In 2025, 47.1% of Canberrans reported being in very good to excellent health, up from 41.2% in 2024
- Those more likely to report poor or fair health included women, those identifying as LGBTIQA+, single parents, those living alone, the unemployed, those with restrictive disability, and residents of Outer Belconnen
- Better average health was reported by men, those living in the ACT for five years or less, those born overseas in a non-English speaking country, and those with no restrictive disability
- In 2025, 43.2% of Canberrans reported they had very good to excellent mental health, similar to 2024 and 2023
- In 2025, 35.8% of adult Canberrans had moderate or high psychological distress levels, similar to 2024 and 2023, but higher than in earlier years
- Higher distress and poorer mental health were more common amongst those aged 18 to 29 year olds, and groups dominated by younger adults including renters, those in share/group households, and those in units/apartments; as well as being more common amongst those living with restrictive disability, identifying as LGBTIQA+, the unemployed, and those living in Outer Belconnen and Weston Creek
- In late 2025, 57.0% of adult Canberrans were getting enough sleep – similar to late 2024, early 2023, early 2020 and late 2019, but significantly less than during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 (62.9%) and 2021 (63.1%)
- The Canberrans most likely to be achieving healthy hours of sleep were 18 to 29-year-olds, residents of Weston Creek, those living in a unit/apartment, and those with no restrictive disability
- Those less likely to be achieving healthy sleep hours were those living with children aged 0 to 17 in the household, with a mortgage, aged 30 and older, and living with a restrictive disability.

HEALTH & HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Overall health

Health is one of many contributors to a person's quality of life and therefore important to wellbeing. Importantly, poor health does not necessarily result in low wellbeing, and many people with poor health are able to lead lives with high wellbeing.

The *Living well* survey examines a person's self-reported overall health using a single item measure that asks a person 'overall, how would you rate your health during the last four weeks' with response options of excellent, very good, good, fair or poor (see Schirmer and Dale 2026 for more information about the measure).

In 2025, 47.1% of adult Canberrans reported very good to excellent health (Figure 75), significantly higher than 2024 (41.2%) and 2023 (41.0%). This was accompanied by a decline in those reporting having poor or fair health.

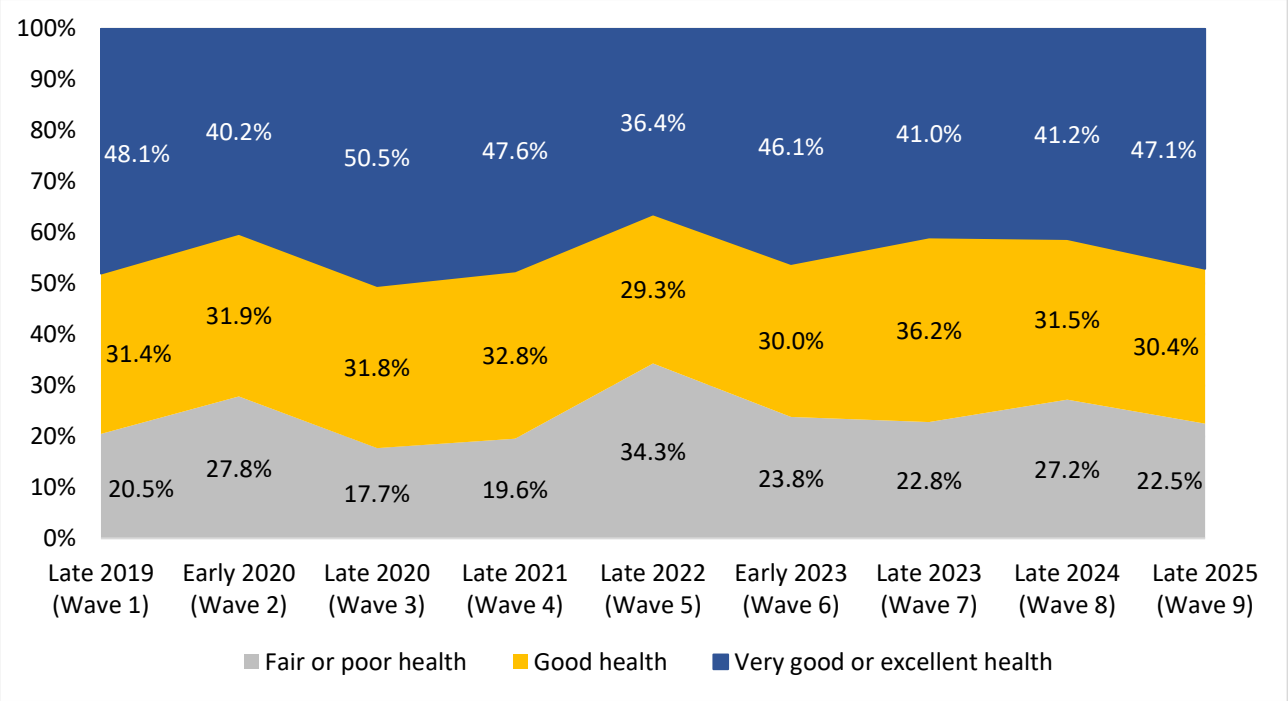


Figure 75 Overall health, ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

Better health was reported by those with no restrictive disability, males, those born in a non-English speaking country, and those who had lived in the ACT a shorter time (Figure 76). Poorer health was more common amongst females, those identifying as LGBTIQA+, single parents, sole person households, those who were unemployed, and those living with a restrictive disability, particularly if it was severely restrictive.

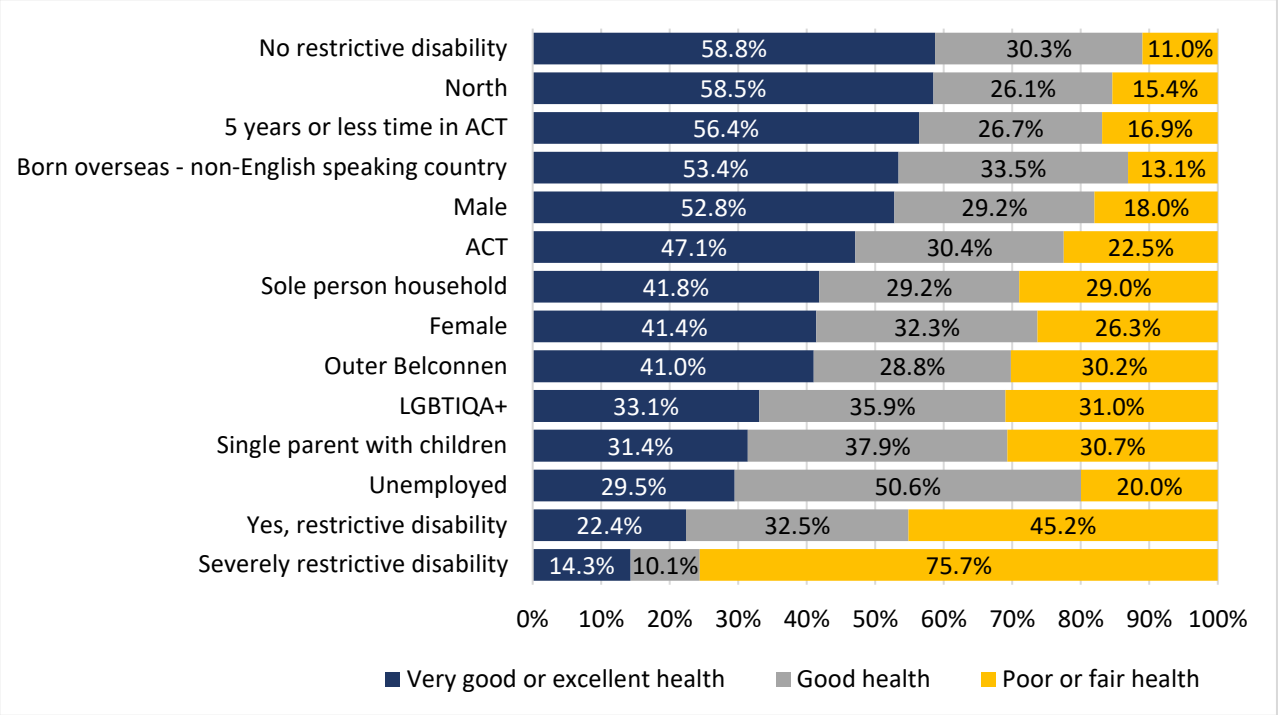


Figure 76 Overall health, ACT adults by selected demographic group and district, 2025[16]

Improvement in overall health between 2024 and 2025 was more common amongst those living in Gungahlin and Tuggeranong South, aged 30-49 years, mortgage holders, males, and those in paid employment, as well as some of those living with restrictive disability.

Mental health & psychological distress

Mental health

In 2025, 43.2% of Canberrans reported they had very good to excellent mental health (Figure 77), similar to 2024 and 2023 levels.

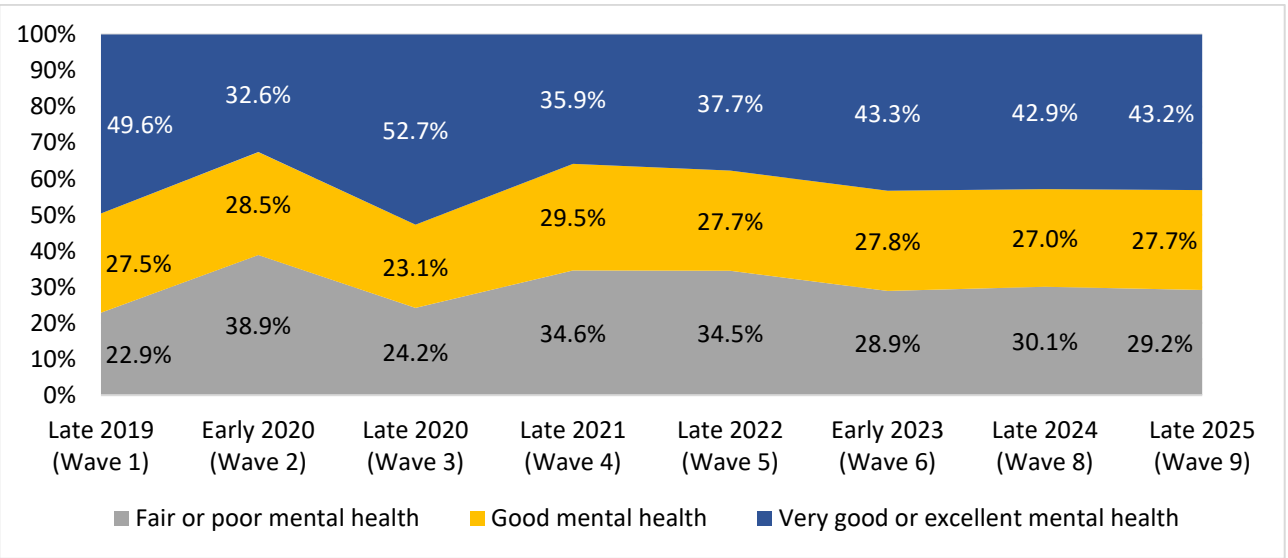


Figure 77 General mental health, ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

[16] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.

Some groups had better mental health than the average Canberran (Figure 78), particularly those living in the North, Inner North, and Woden Valley, aged 65+, males, not living with restrictive disability, and those not living with children in the household. Poorer than average mental health was more common amongst renters, share/group household, had a restrictive disability, single parents, identified as LGBTIQA+, the unemployed and those residing in the Inner South, East Gungahlin, and Outer Belconnen.

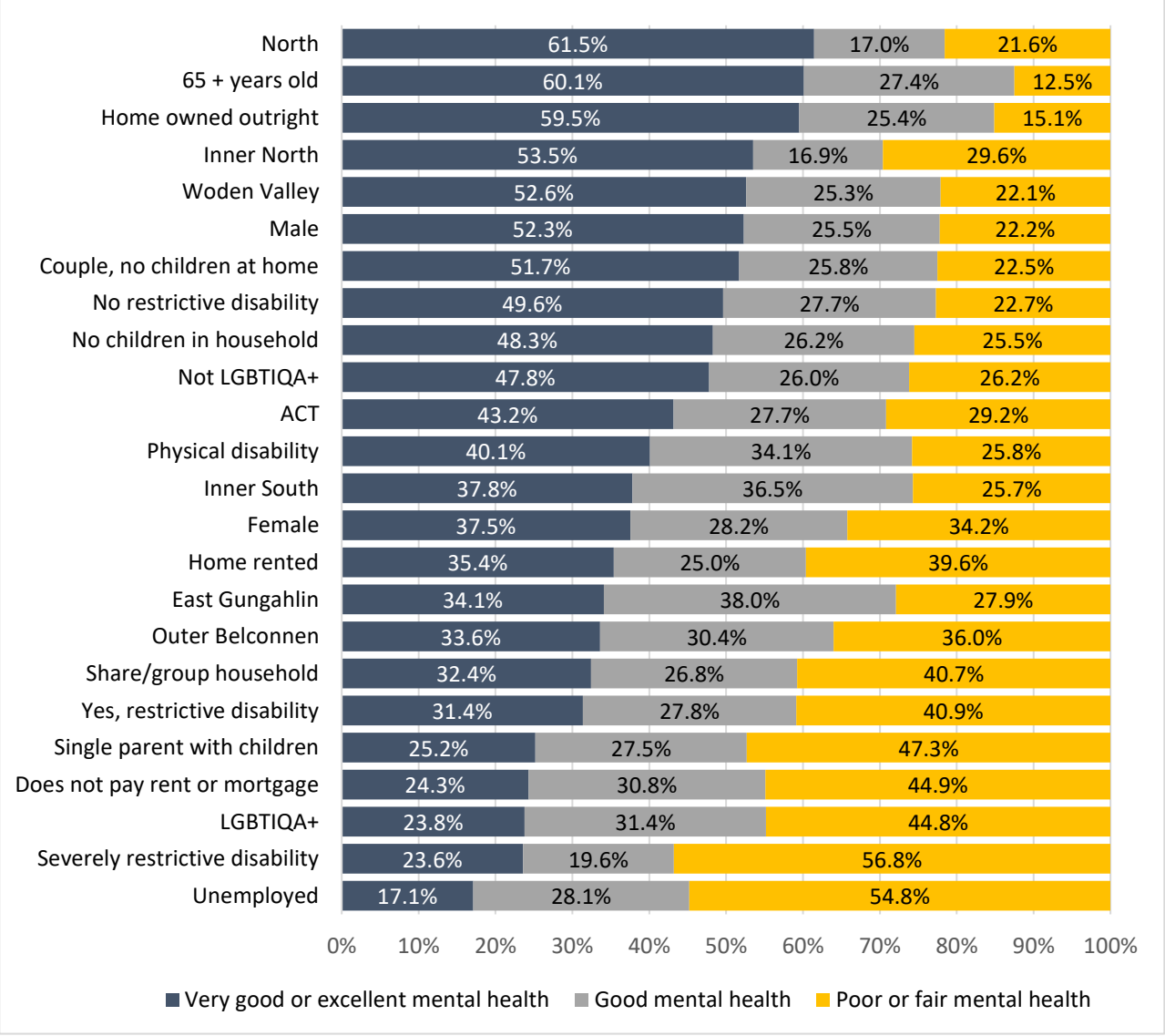


Figure 78 General mental health, ACT adults by selected demographic group and district, 2025[17]

Psychological distress

Psychological distress is defined as experiencing non-specific symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression. A person who is experiencing high levels of psychological distress will commonly (but not always) also have poorer overall wellbeing, and vice versa. A person who has very high psychological distress is also more likely to have a diagnosable mental health disorder, although not all people with high psychological distress will have a diagnosable mental health disorder. In late 2025, 35.8% of adult Canberrans had moderate or high psychological distress levels, similar to 2024 and 2023, but higher than in earlier years (Figure 79).

[17] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.

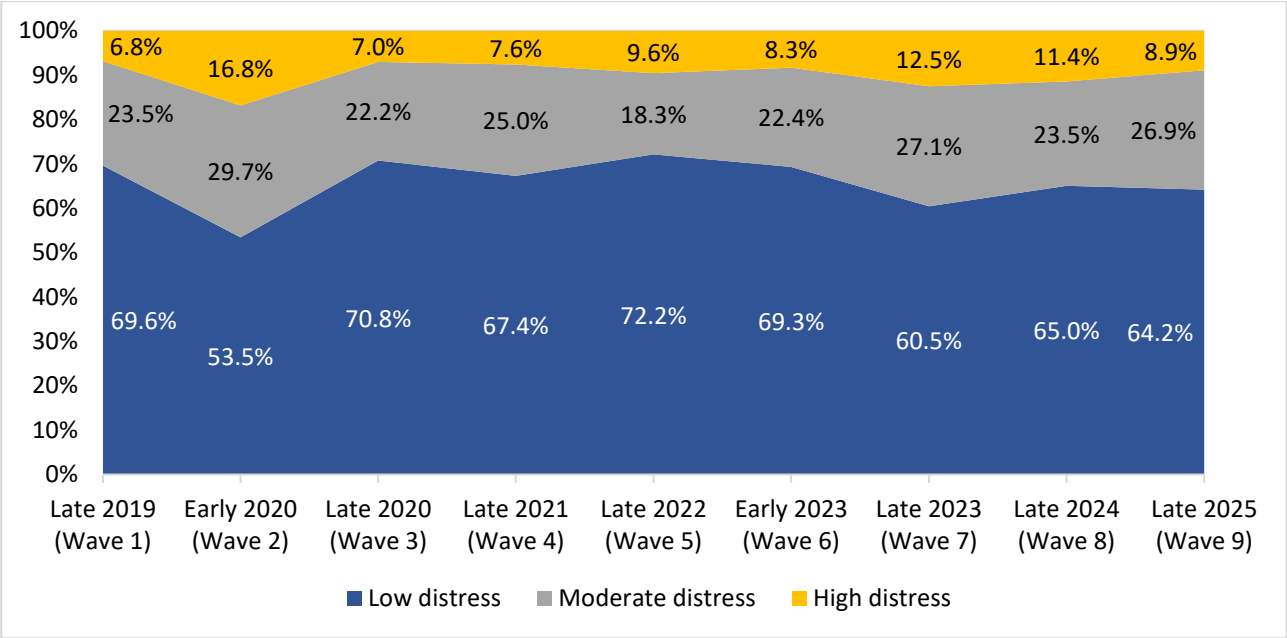


Figure 79 Psychological distress, ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

Groups with higher rates of psychological distress than the ACT average included renters, those living in share or group households, those living in units/apartments, aged 18 to 29, living with restrictive disability, identifying as LGBTIQA+, the unemployed, and residents of Outer Belconnen and Weston Creek (Figure 80). Psychological distress was significantly lower than the ACT average amongst those aged 50 or older, respondents who owned their home outright, males, those not living with a restrictive disability, and residents of the North, Inner North, or Inner South.

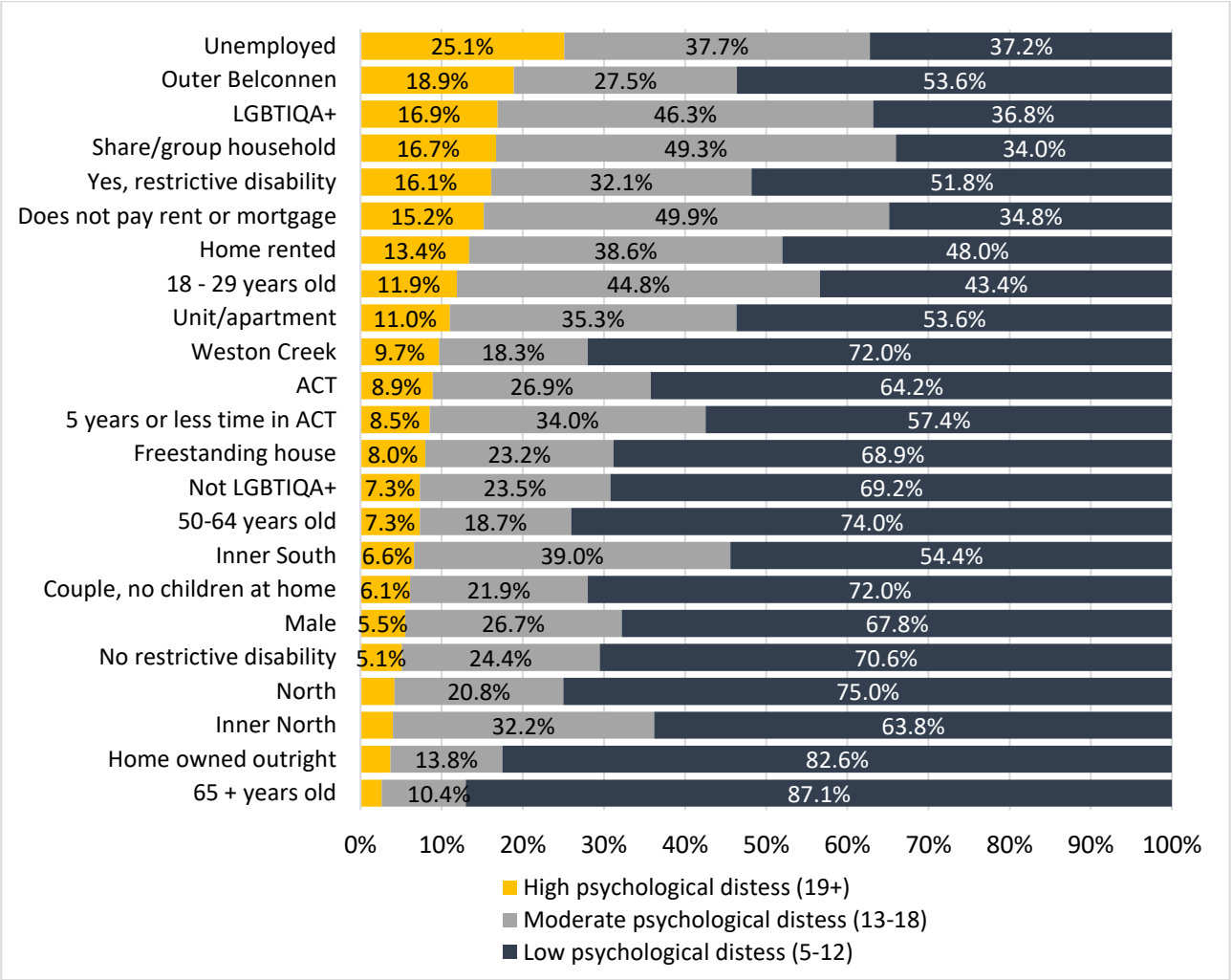


Figure 80 Variation in psychological distress, 2025 (groups statistically significantly different from the ACT overall shown

Getting enough sleep

The *Living well* survey asks participants how many hours of sleep they typically achieved over the last month. This is then used to identify how many were achieving recommended hours for their age (7-8 hours for those aged 65 and older, 7-9 hours for those aged 18-64), and which were not (see Schirmer and Dale 2026 for further detail about the measure). In late 2025, 57.0% of adult Canberrans had healthy level of sleep – similar to late 2024, early 2023, early 2020 and late 2019, but significantly less than during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 (62.9%) and 2021 (63.1%) (Figure 81).

The Canberrans most likely to be achieving healthy hours of sleep were those who did not pay rent or mortgage, 18–29-year-olds, those who were unemployed (who were more likely than others to be sleeping more hours than is considered healthy), residents of Weston Creek, those living in a unit/apartment, and those with no restrictive disability (Figure 82). Those less likely to be achieving healthy sleep hours were those living with children aged 0 to 17 in the household, with a mortgage, aged 30 and older, and those living with a restrictive disability.

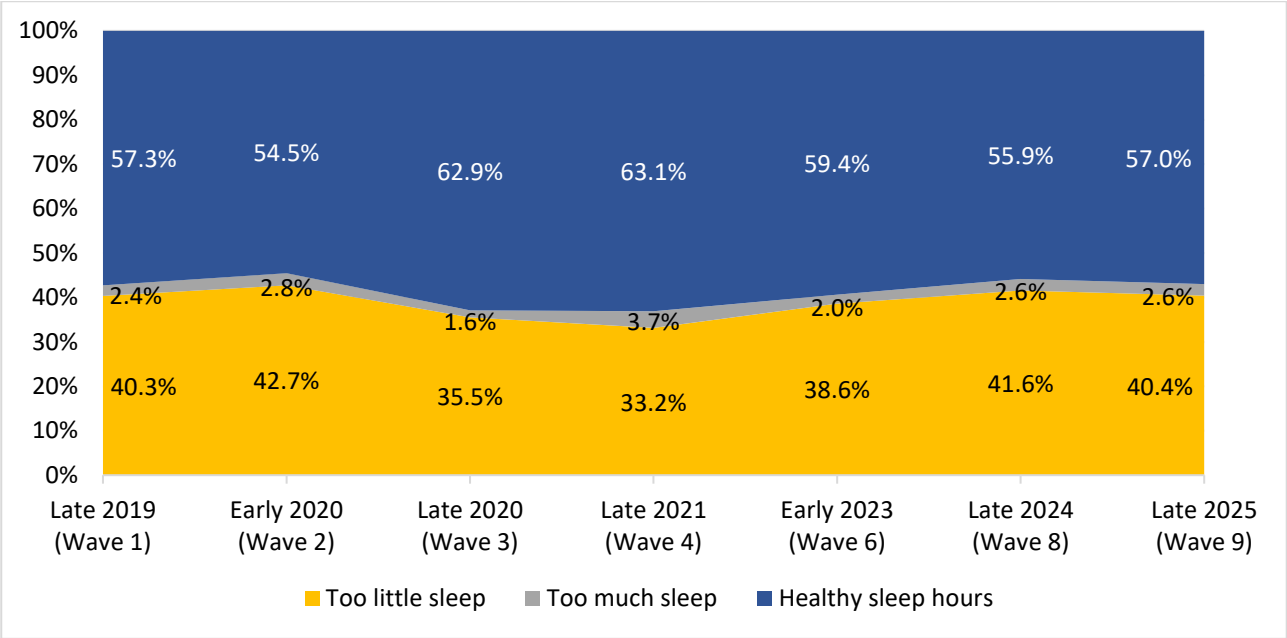


Figure 81 Healthy sleep hours, ACT adults, 2019 to 2025

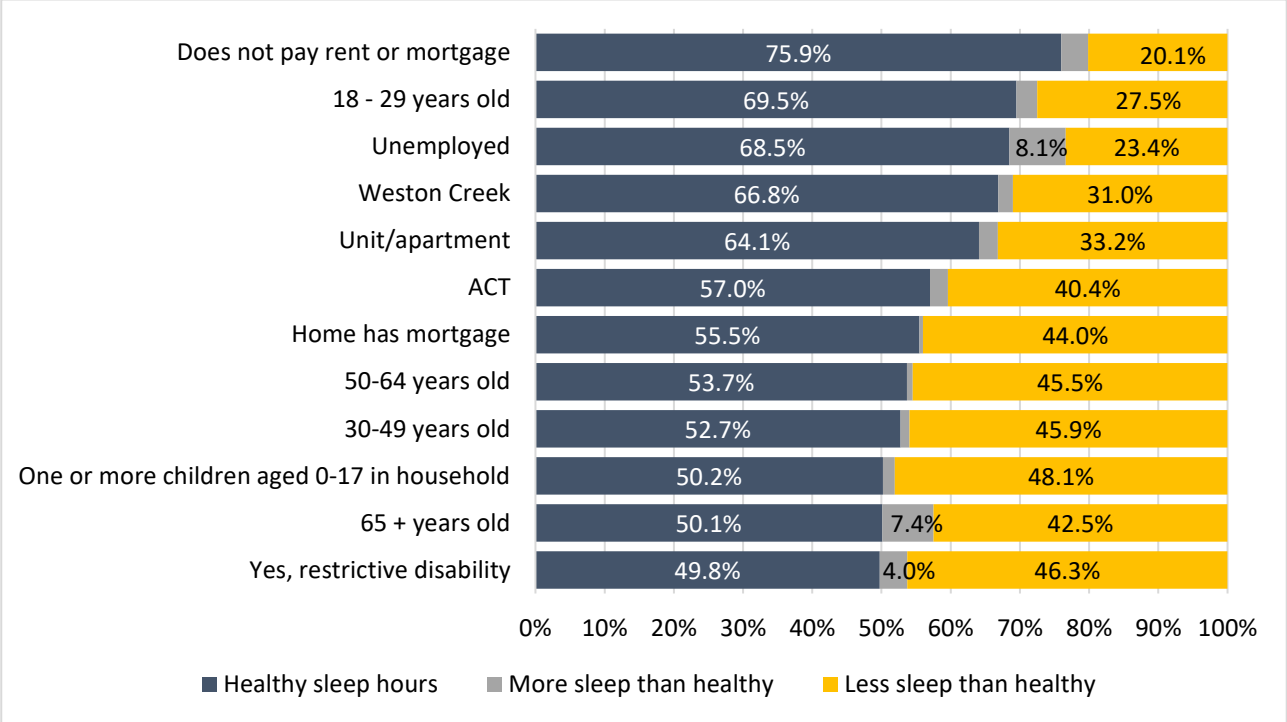


Figure 82 Healthy sleep hours, ACT adults by selected demographic group and district, 2025[18]

[18] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.

CHAPTER 8

SAFETY AND RESILIENCE



KEY POINTS

- Between 2023 and 2025, the proportion of Canberrans who felt confident the ACT copes pretty well when faced with challenges fell from 73.8% to 68.0%; confidence was lower amongst those living in Outer Belconnen, Weston Creek and Tuggeranong South
- In 2025, climate resilience increased slightly amongst ACT residents, following a decline between 2023 and 2024: the proportion of Canberrans with very low climate resilience fell from 14.4% to 10.3%; there was growth in those with moderate resilience, from 39.4% to 42.6%, and in those with high resilience. This largely reflected an increase in heatwave resilience and community resilience.
- Resilience grew most amongst those who have historically had lower resilience: those speaking a language other than English at home, sole person households, single parent households, couples with children at home, and those living with restrictive disability
- In 2025, 93.0% of Canberrans felt safe to walk alone in their local neighbourhood during the day – a small increase from 91.1% in 2024 – and 65.0% felt safe walking alone at night, up from 60.1% in 2024
- People living alone, renting, with a restrictive disability or living in Tuggeranong South were less likely than others to feel safe walking locally during the day
- 89.3% of Canberrans feel safe at home alone at night, with higher safety reported by men, those with no restrictive disability, living in a unit/apartment or residing in Woden Valley or Tuggeranong North; and lower safety by women, those with restrictive disability and those living in Gungahlin and Outer Belconnen.
- 77.0% of Canberrans felt safe using public transport in 2025, similar to 2024, but a decline from 84.0% in 2023 and 83.3% in 2020
- Most Canberrans reported feeling safe when in town centres (84.5%) and nearby supermarkets (84.8%)
- Most working Canberrans feel safe in their workplace, with 92.9% feeling safe in 2025, similar to late 2024 (91.4%) and previous years.

RESILIENCE

Overall resilience to challenges

Between 2023 and 2025, the proportion of Canberrans who felt confident the ACT copes pretty well when faced with challenges fell from 73.8% to 68.0% (excluding those who reported they were unsure). When including those who were unsure, only 60.9% felt confident the ACT copes well with challenges. Confidence was slightly higher amongst those aged 50 and older, and lower amongst those aged under 50, although the differences were small (Figure 83). Confidence was significantly higher amongst those living in the North, Woden, Gungahlin and Tuggeranong North, and lower amongst those living in Outer Belconnen, Weston Creek and Tuggeranong South (Figure 84).

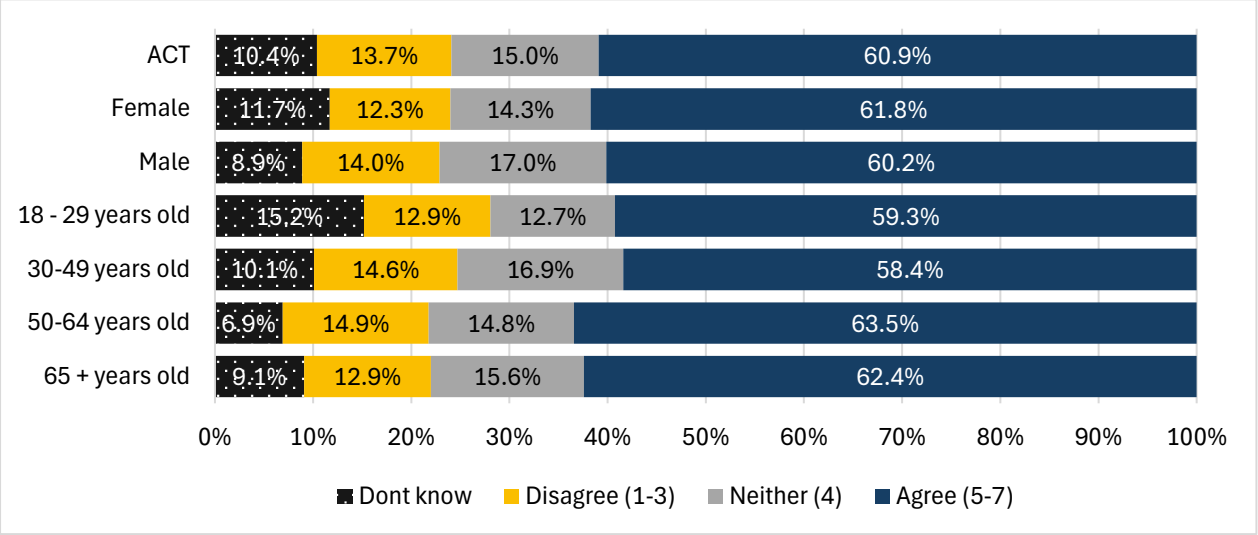


Figure 83 'The ACT region copes pretty well when faced with challenges', ACT adults by gender and age, 2025

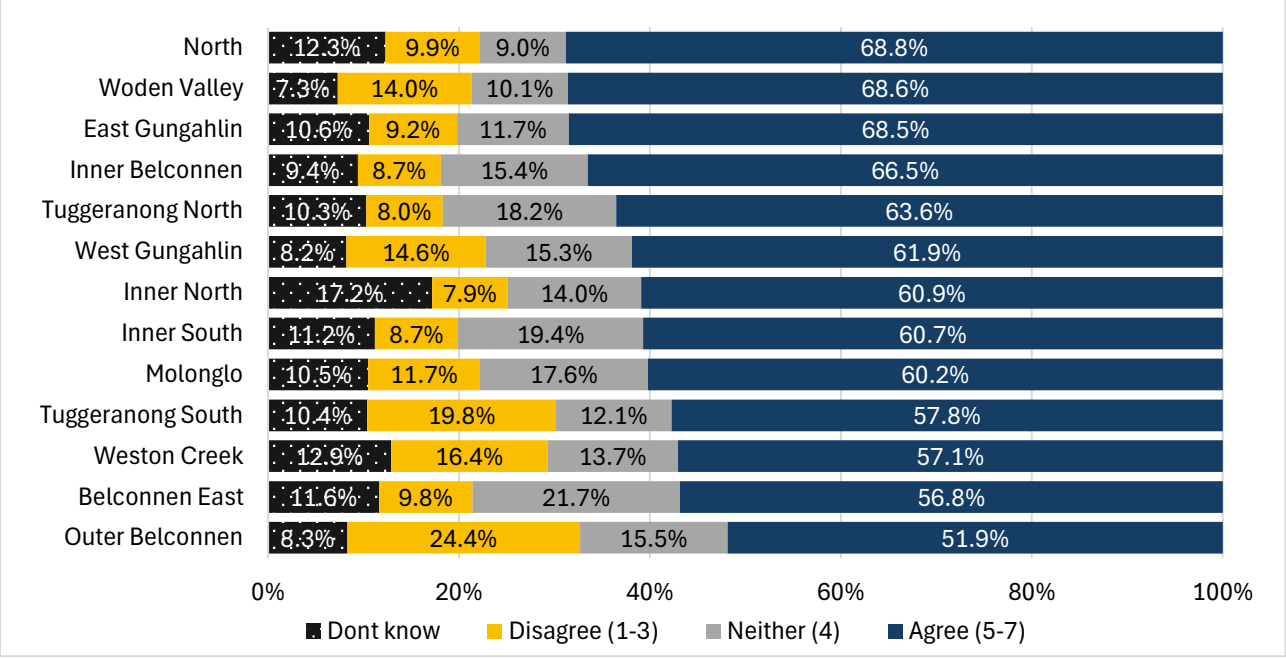


Figure 84 The ACT region copes pretty well when faced with challenges', ACT adults by district, 2025

Climate resilience

The ACT Annual Climate Change Resilience Indicator (climate resilience indicator) examines resilience to the impacts of climate change in the ACT, through data collected in the *Living well in the ACT region* survey. The indicator was first measured in 2023. The climate change resilience indicator is based on measurement of the level of access ACT residents have to six resources identified as being necessary for climate change resilience:

- Individual resilience: the personal access of individuals to resources such as household finances, health and skills and social connection
- Community resilience: the availability of community resources that enable people to prepare, respond and recover from climate-change related events, such as health services and infrastructure
- Heatwave resilience: ability to stay safe and healthy during heatwaves without spending a lot of money, including being able to easily stay cool at home and at work
- Emergency resilience: preparedness for emergency natural hazard events such as bushfire, flood and damaging storms
- Drought resilience: preparedness for times of water scarcity
- Climate change awareness and support for action: views about climate change and level of support for action to be taken to address and respond to climate change.

How is resilience changing?

In 2025, climate resilience increased slightly amongst ACT residents (Figure 85). This followed a decline between 2023 and 2024. Overall, the increase in 2025 represented a statistically significant increase from 2024, but was only slightly (but not statistically significantly) higher than 2023. This suggests that resilience recovered somewhat from the decline seen between 2023 and 2024. Key changes seen in resilience included:

- Individual resilience remained lower than in 2023, despite a slight recovery. This reflects the impacts of high levels of financial stress related to living cost pressures in 2024; these pressures eased somewhat in 2025 with two interest rate cuts. Data were collected at the end of 2025, before interest rate rises and the fuel crisis of 2026, which were likely to have increased financial stress again in 2026.
- Community resilience was higher than in 2024, returning to 2023 levels
- Heatwave resilience grew, with a higher proportion of residents reporting confidence they could cope well with heatwaves, and in particular some growth in the proportion who could stay comfortable in their homes during a heatwave without having to spend a lot of additional money
- Emergency resilience increased significantly compared to the low level of 2024, but remained below 2023 levels.
- Drought resilience increased slightly, with more people confident their garden and home were well set up to cope with times of low rainfall.
- Climate change awareness increased slightly but not statistically significantly.

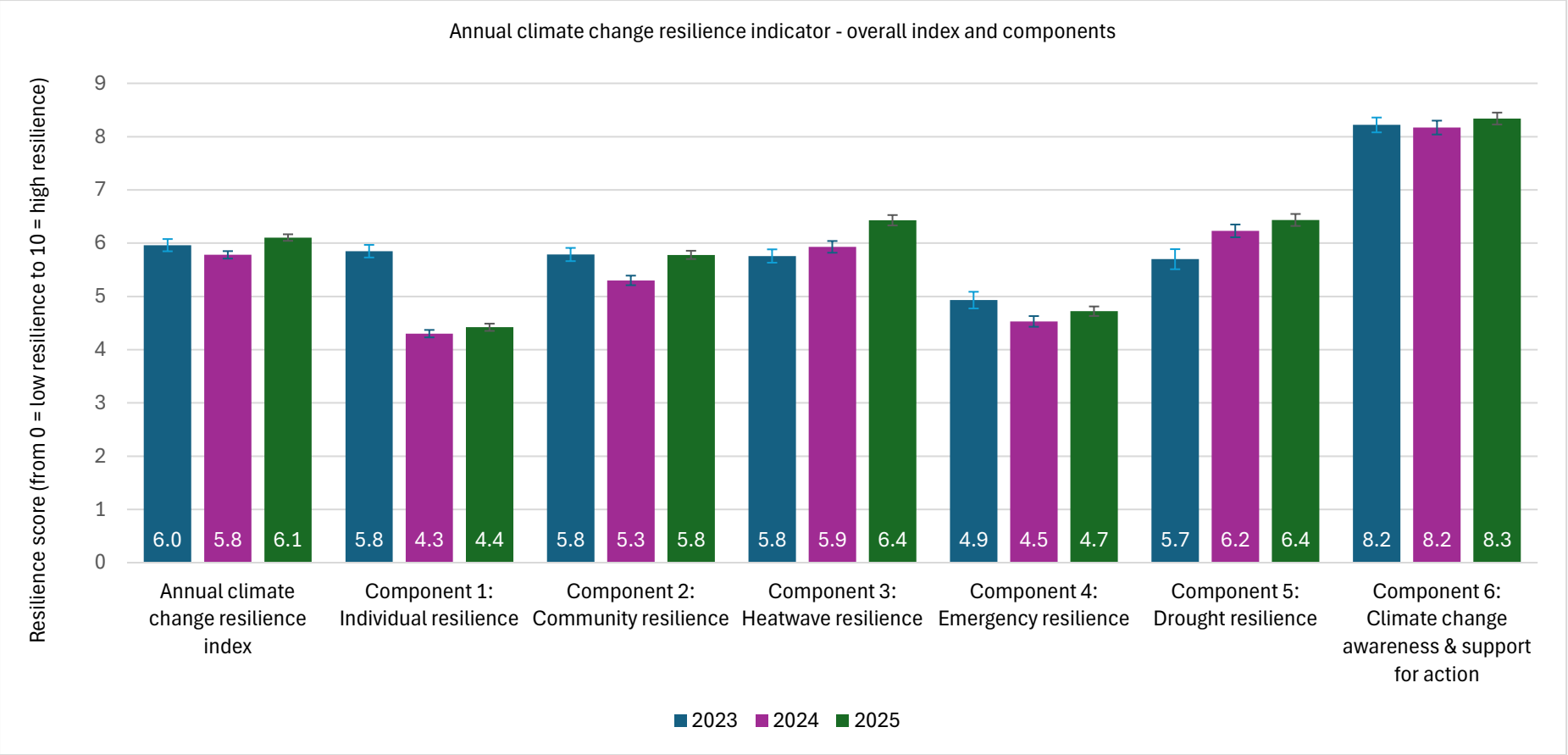


Figure 85 Annual climate change resilience indicator, 2023 to 2025

Overall, the increase in resilience saw a reduction in the proportion of Canberrans with very low climate resilience, from 14.4% to 10.3%, as well as a fall in those with low resilience (from 28.8% to 24.7%). There was growth in those with moderate resilience, from 39.4% to 42.6%, and in those with high resilience (Figure 86).

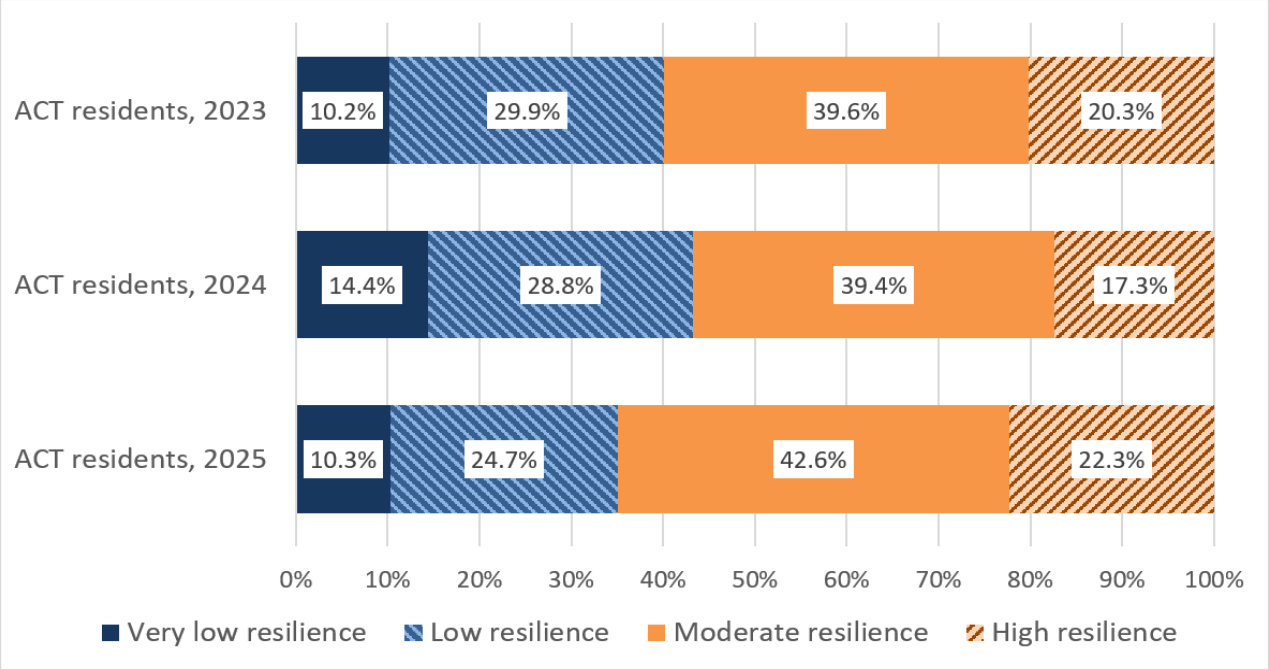


Figure 86 Proportion of ACT residents with very low, low, moderate and high climate change resilience

The change in resilience has not been distributed equally across all Canberrans. Resilience grew more amongst men than women (Figure 87). This is of concern, as women have lower overall resilience than men, and the gender resilience gap has increased.

Figure 87 also shows that resilience grew more amongst those aged under 50 compared to those aged 50 and older. This is a positive change: with younger age groups historically having lower climate change resilience compared to older age groups, this suggests some of the age-related resilience gap closed in 2025. However, younger age groups continued to have overall lower climate change resilience compared to older Canberrans.

Resilience also grew more amongst household types that have previously had lower resilience: those speaking a language other than English at home, sole person households, single parent households, and couples with children at home (Figure 88); as well as those who have a disability that restricts them in their everyday activities (Figure 89). Resilience remained stable amongst couples with no children at home, who have historically had higher resilience. This again suggests that resilience improved more amongst those groups who have had lower resilience previously.

Renters continue to have significantly lower climate change resilience (40.3% having moderate to high resilience) compared to mortgage holders (66.4%) and outright home owners (78.6%) (Figure 90). However resilience grew more amongst mortgage holders (an increase of more than 8 percentage points in the proportion who had moderate and high resilience) and renters (increased by 6 percentage points) than outright home owners (increased by 3 percentage points). As of 2025, however, renters had not returned to the resilience levels of 2023, whereas both mortgage holders and outright home owners had.

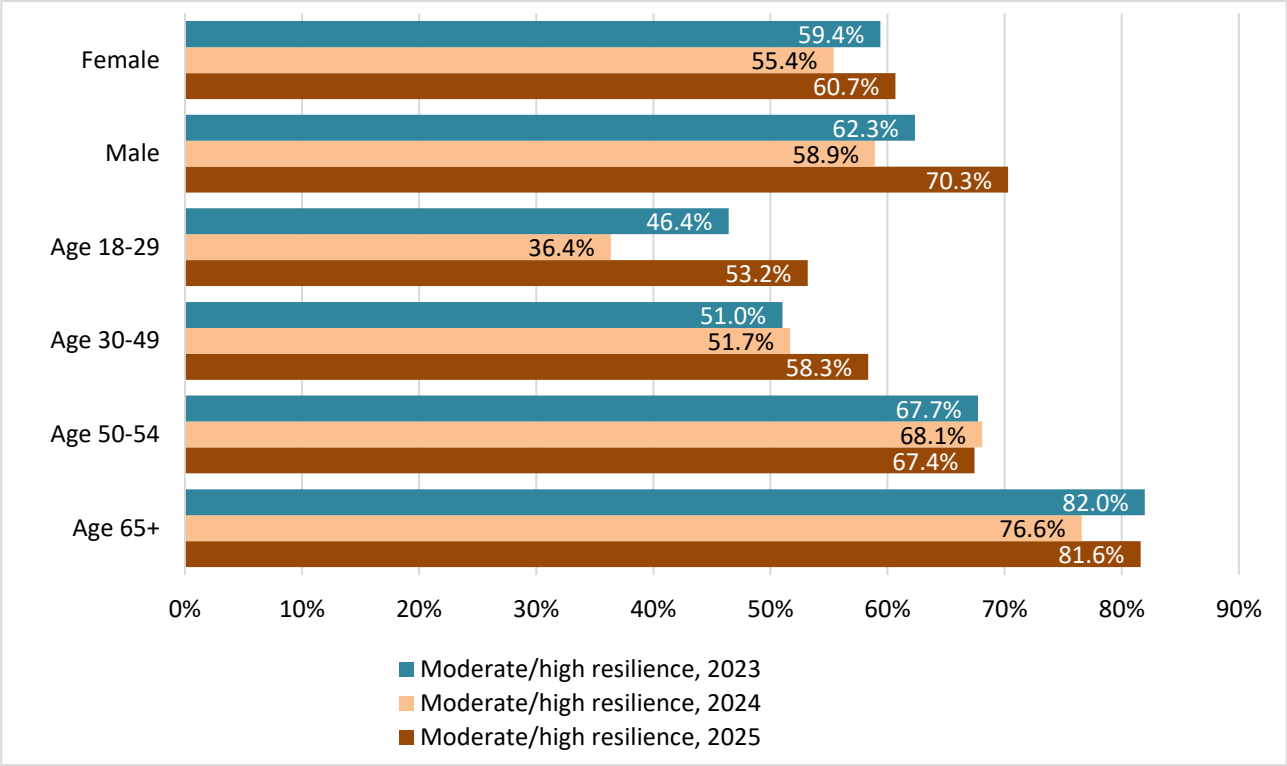


Figure 87 Change in % with moderate/high resilience, 2023-2025, by gender and age

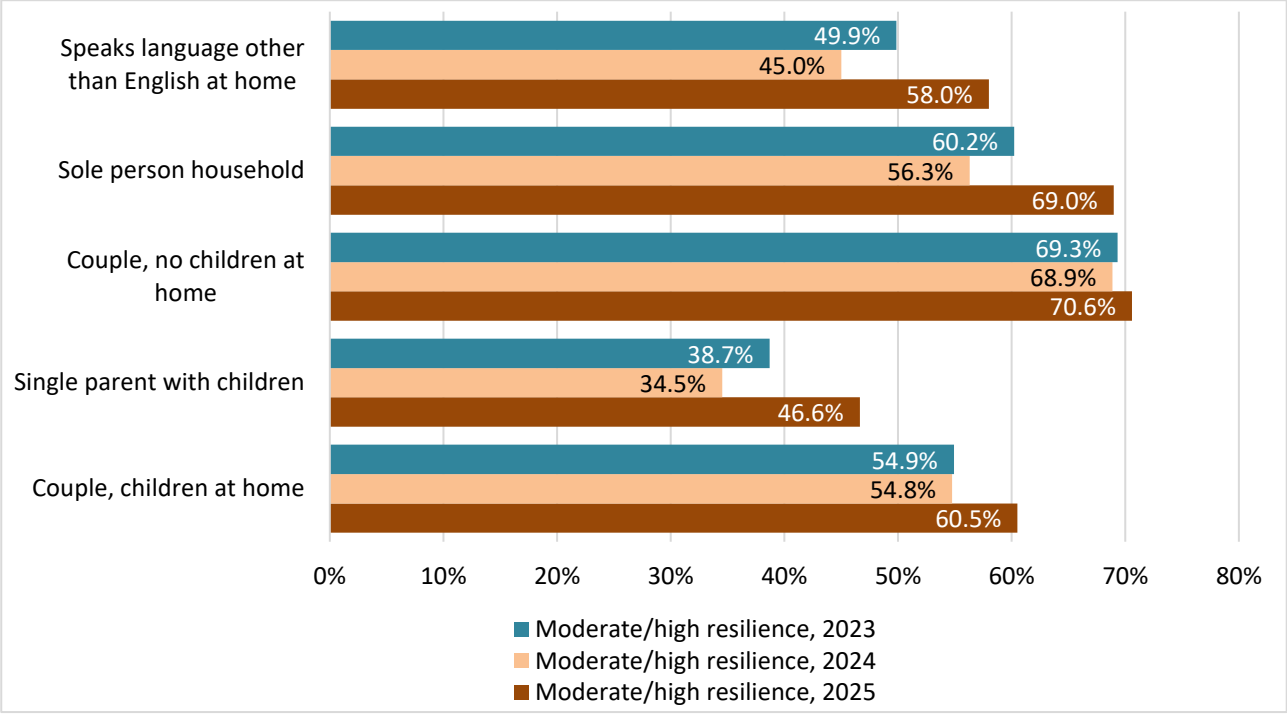


Figure 88 Change in % with moderate/high resilience, 2023-2025, by household type

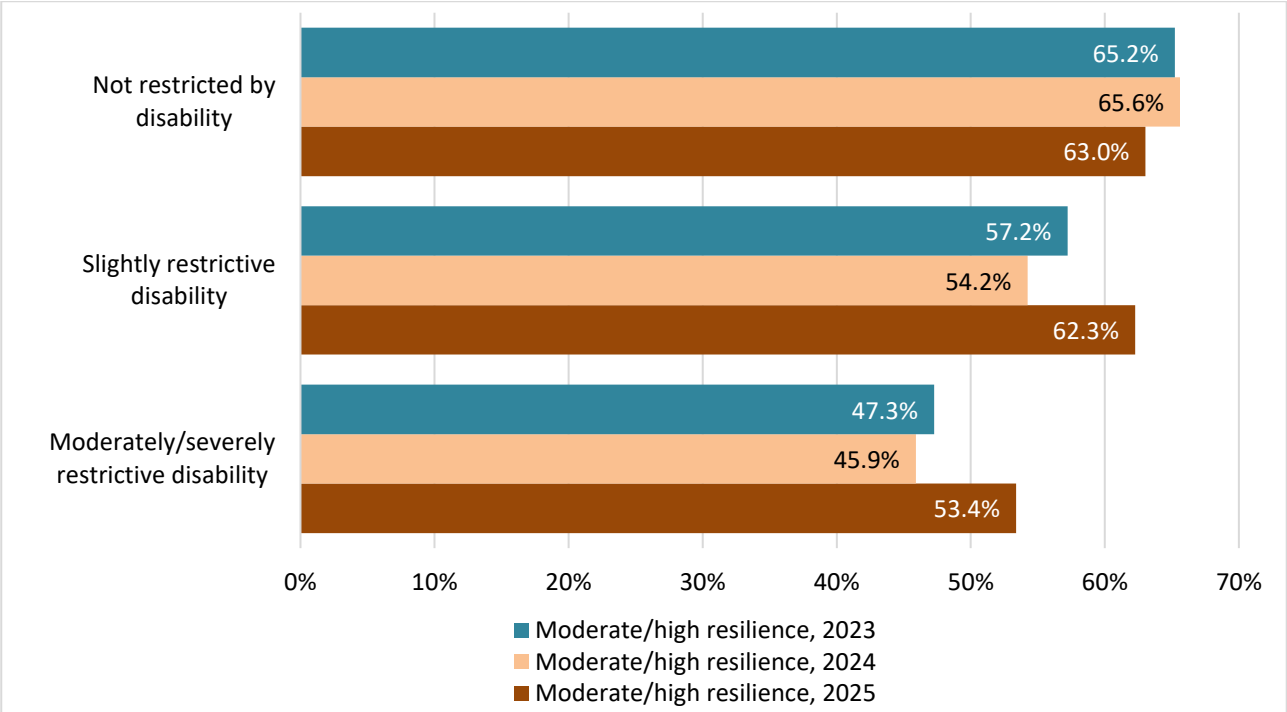


Figure 89 Change in % with moderate/high resilience, 2023-2025, by whether person lives with restrictive disability

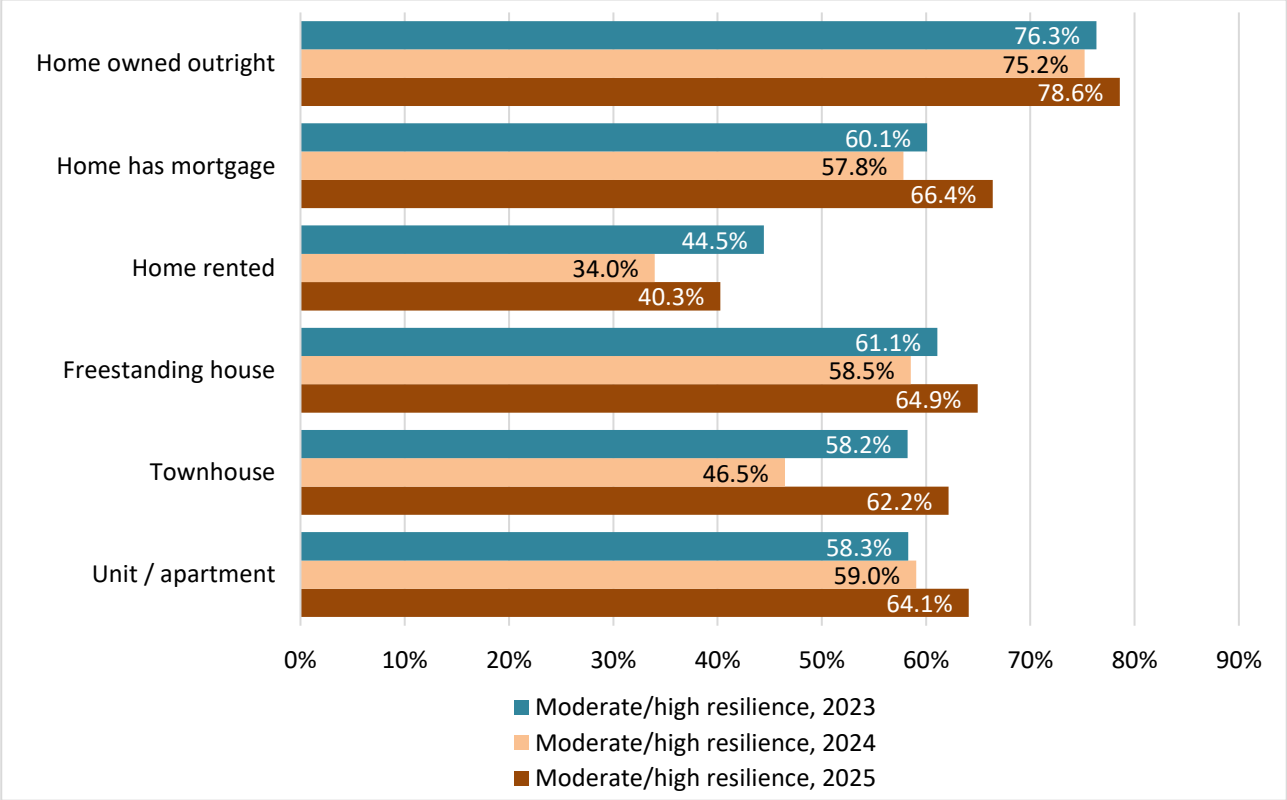


Figure 90 Change in % with moderate/high resilience, 2023-2025, by home tenure and type

FEELING SAFE

Feeling safe walking alone

In 2025, 93.0% of Canberrans felt safe to walk alone in their local neighbourhood during the day – a small but statistically significant increase from 91.1% in 2024 – and 65.0% felt safe walking alone at night, up from 60.1% in 2024 (Figure 91).

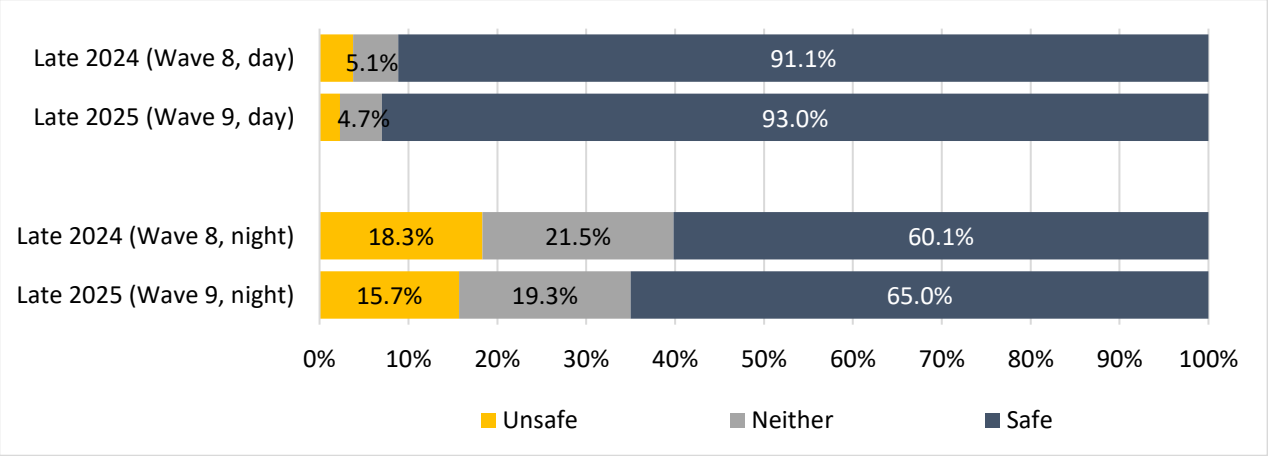


Figure 91 Sense of safety walking alone in local neighbourhood, 2024 and 2025

Men and residents of the Inner South and East Gungahlin reported greater sense of safety walking at night than the Canberra average (Figure 92). Conversely, people living alone, renting, with a restrictive disability or living in Tuggeranong South felt less safe walking locally during the day. For walking at night, men, homeowners, couples with no children at home, those aged 65+, and residents of Molonglo and the Inner South reported better sense of safety (Figure 93). Women, those identifying as LGBTIQA+, single parents, those in share housing and those living with a restrictive disability were less likely to feel safe when walking at night.

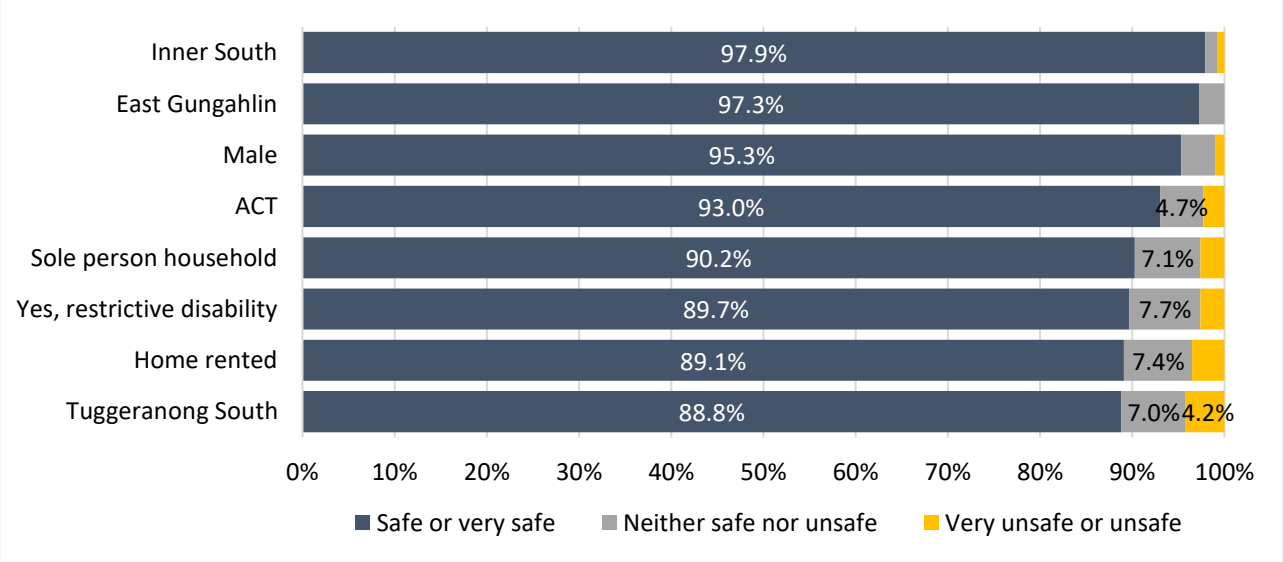


Figure 92 Safety walking during the day by selected demographic groups and districts, 2025

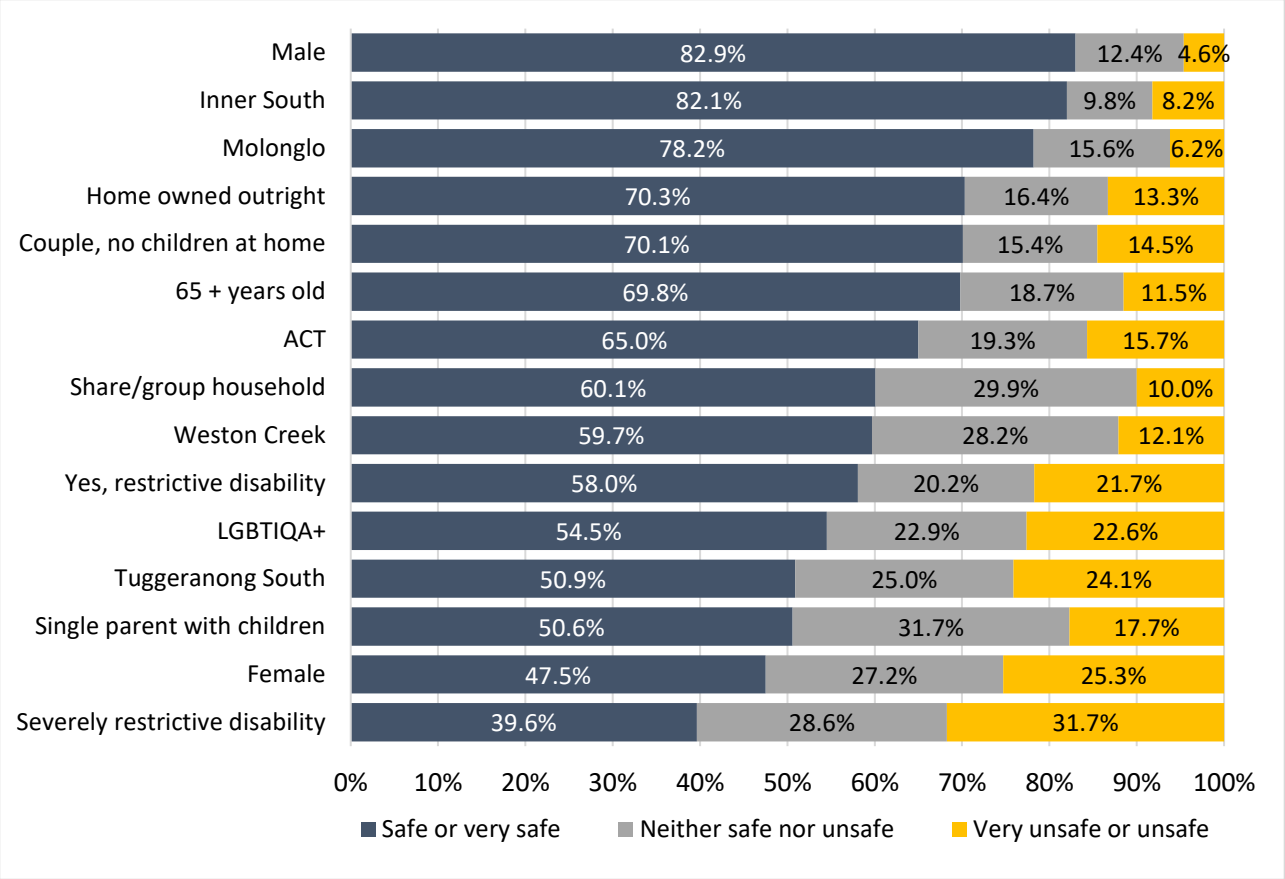


Figure 93 Safety walking at night by group/district (statistically significantly different groups only shown)

Feeling safe when at home alone

In 2025, most Canberrans reported feeling safe at home alone at night (89.3%), a small increase from 2024 (85.3%), though similar to 2023 (88.2%) and 2020 (87.6%). Men, those with no restrictive disability, living in a unit/apartment or residing in Woden Valley or Tuggeranong North had greater sense of safety when home alone than the average Canberran (Figure 94); conversely women, those with restrictive disability and those living in Gungahlin, East Gungahlin, and Outer Belconnen, were less likely to feel safe when home alone at night.

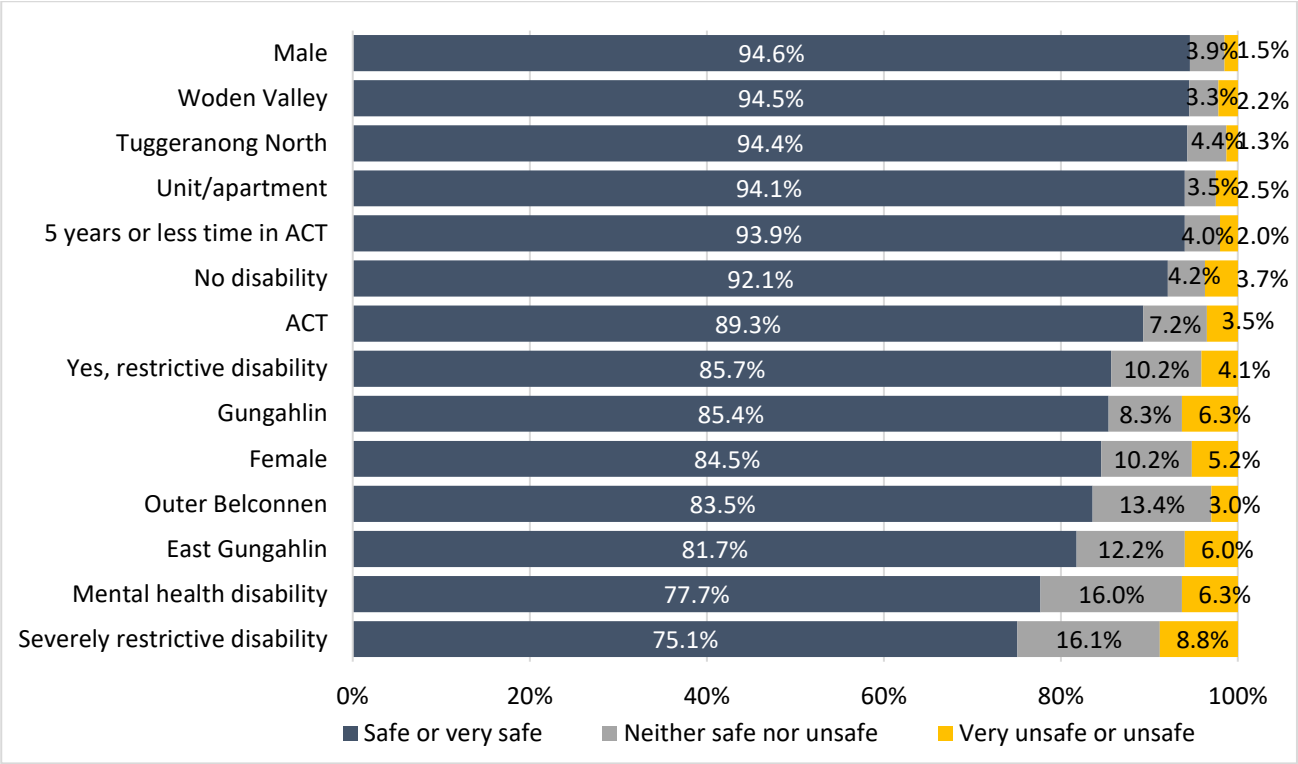


Figure 94 Safety home alone at night, ACT adults by selected demographic group and district, 2025

Feeling safe using public transport

In 2025, 77.0% of Canberrans felt safe using public transport, similar to 2024 (Figure 95). This was a statistically significant decline from 84.0% in 2023 and 83.3% in 2020. Men and those in older age groups were more likely to report feeling safe. Those less likely to report feeling safe included women, renters, those living alone, those living with restrictive disability, and those living in Gungahlin, Tuggeranong South, West Gungahlin, and Outer Belconnen (Figure 96).

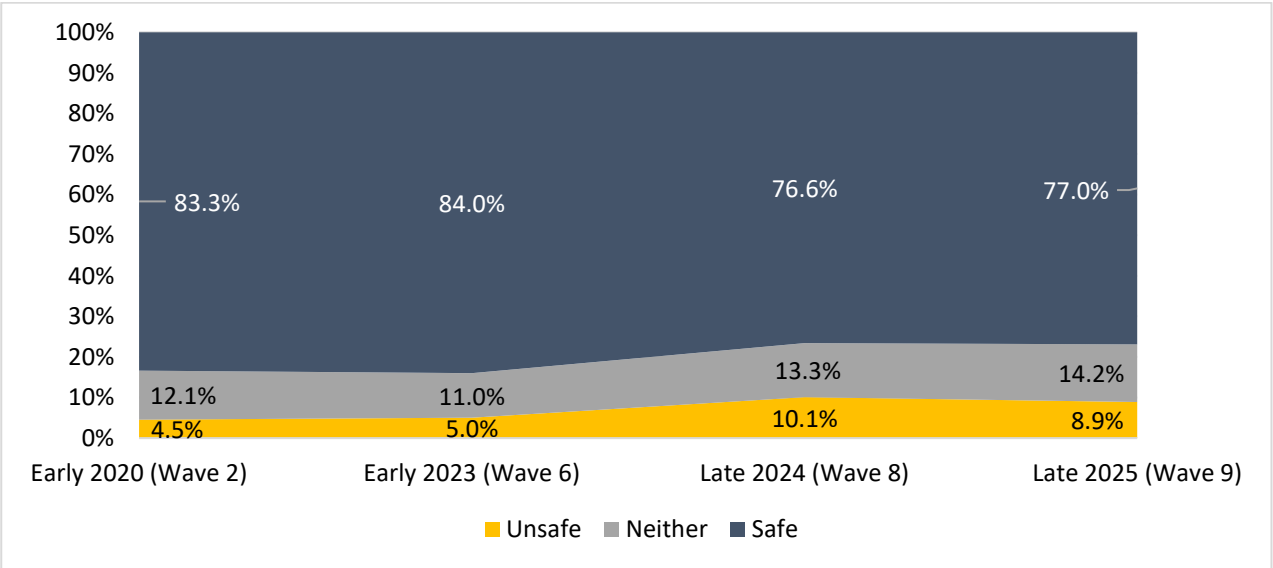


Figure 95 Sense of safety when using public transport, ACT adults, 2020 to 2025

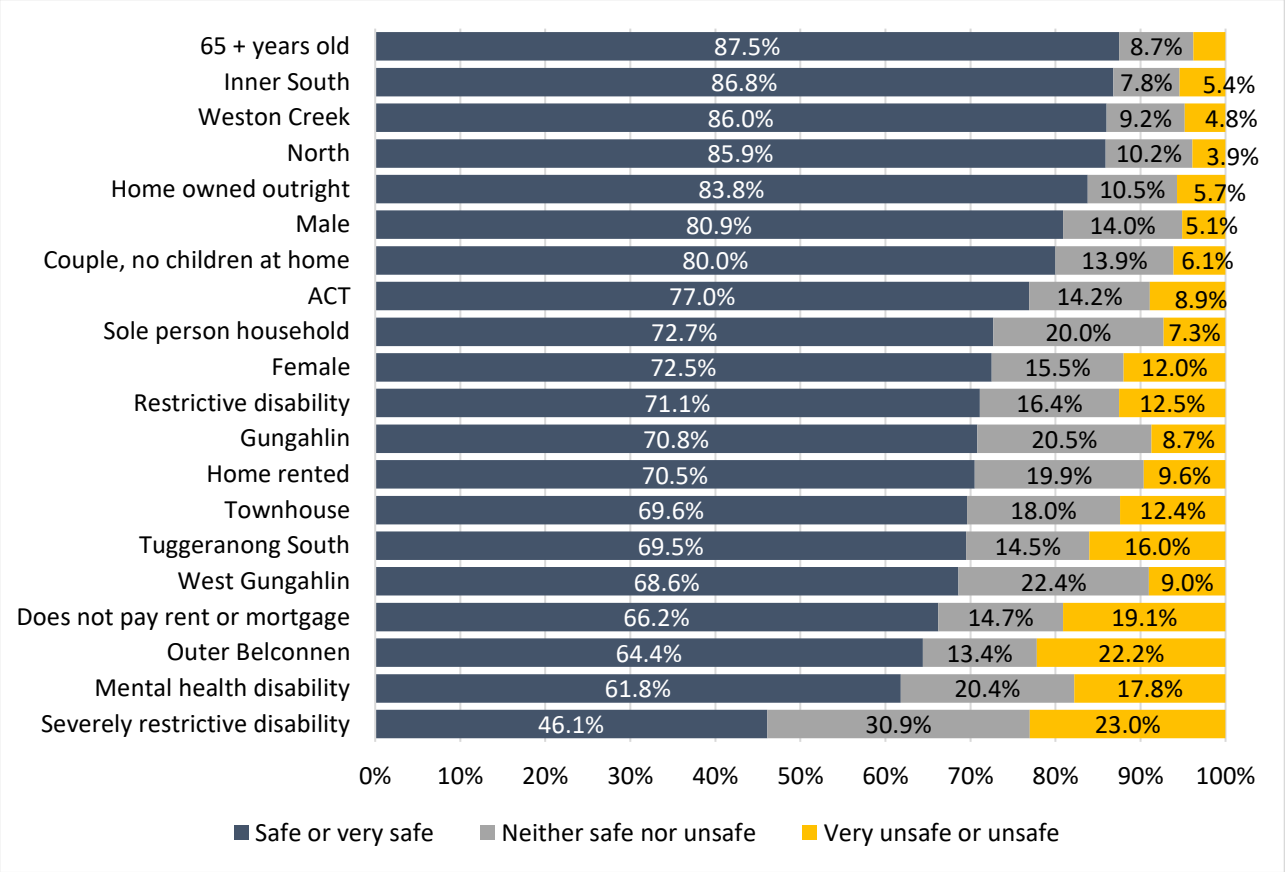


Figure 96 Safety on public transport, ACT adults by group/district, 2025 ACT adults by selected demographic group and district, 2025

Feeling safe in town centres and major supermarkets

Question on safety at town centres and major supermarkets were asked for the first time in 2025. Most Canberrans reported feeling safe when in town centres (84.5%) and nearby supermarkets (84.8%) (Figure 97). Men were more likely to report feeling safe in town centres, while women those living with a restrictive disability, and those living in Molonglo and Outer Belconnen, were less likely to report feeling safe (Figure 98). The Canberrans least likely to report feeling safe in supermarkets/local shopping centres were those living in Weston Creek, the North, and Outer Belconnen, as well as single parents and those living with a physically restrictive disability. Higher sense of safety was reported by those living in the Inner South, East Gungahlin, West Gungahlin and Gungahlin and Tuggeranong North (Figure 99).

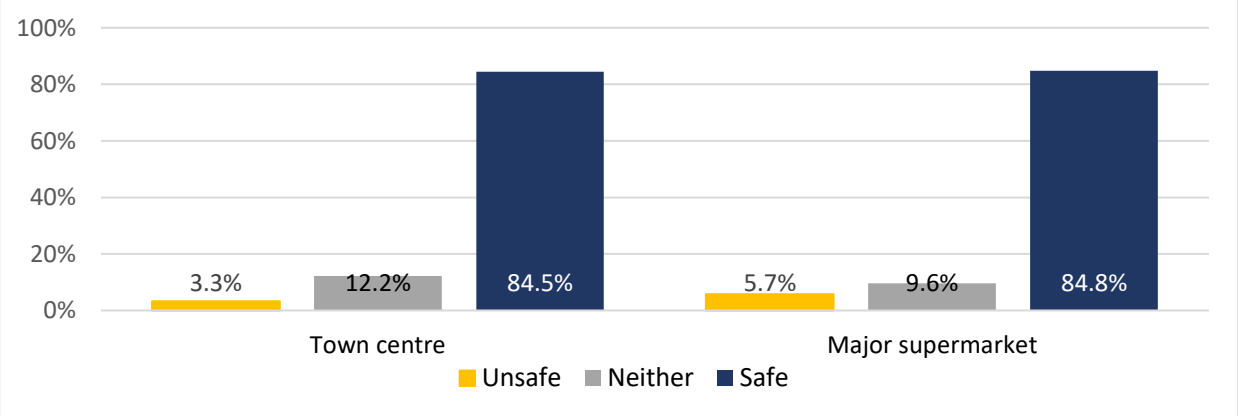


Figure 97 'How safe do you feel at town centres and major supermarkets', ACT adults, 2025

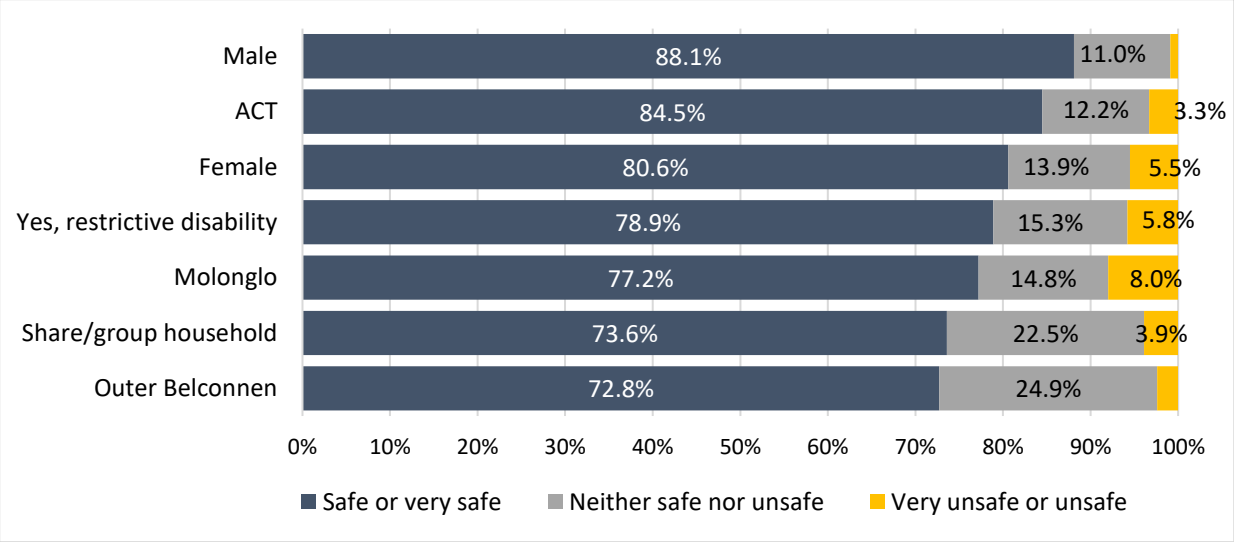


Figure 98 Safety at town centres, ACT adults by group/district, 2025[19]

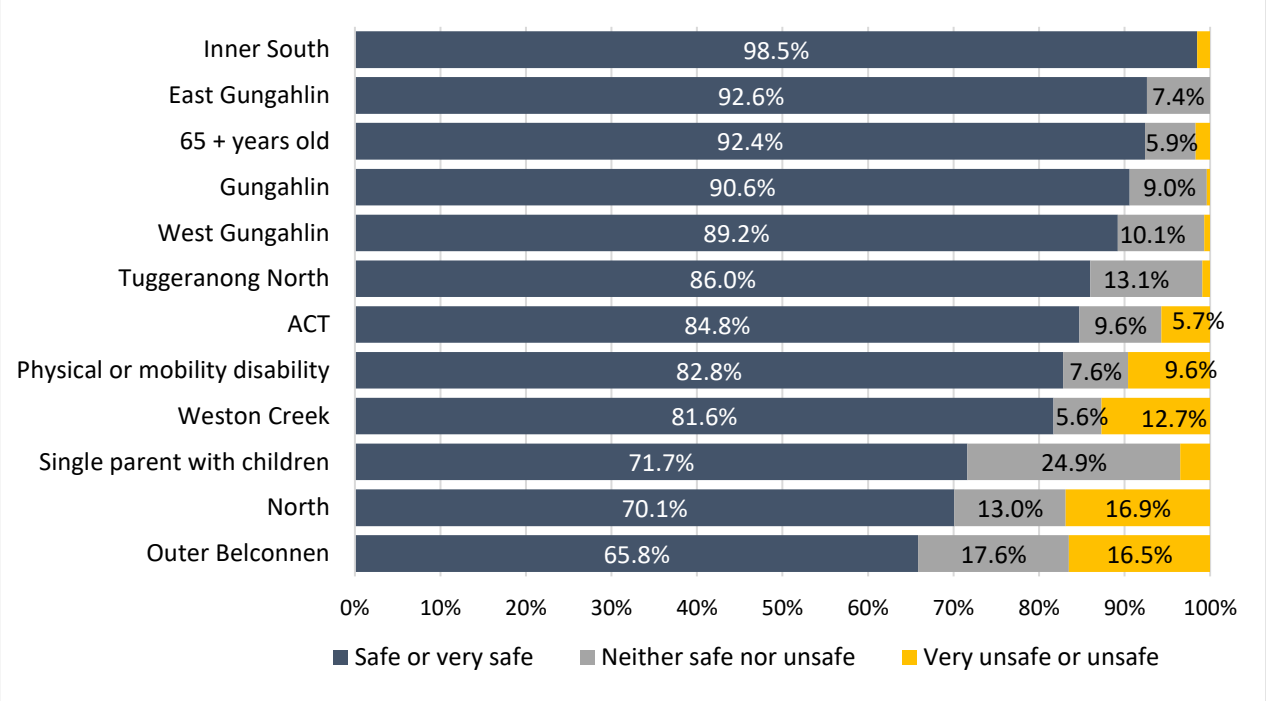


Figure 99 Safety at supermarkets, ACT adults by group/district, 2025[20]

In addition to being asked how safe they felt at local major supermarkets, respondents were asked to specify their local supermarket. When filtered to capture only those respondents who indicated that they felt unsafe or very unsafe, concerns about safety at supermarkets were most often reported relating to Dickson Kippax, Weston and Charnwood. All other locations reported as unsafe or very unsafe were identified by only one or two respondents, with the overall sample of those feeling unsafe being a small proportion of the overall sample.

[19] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.

[20] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.

Workplace safety

Most working Canberrans felt safe in their workplace in 2025, with 92.9% feeling safe, similar to late 2024 (91.4%) and previous years (Figure 100). People residing in Belconnen East and Molonglo, and couples with children at home reported higher sense of workplace safety than the ACT average (Figure 101). Conversely, lower safety at work was reported by those living in East Gungahlin, West Gungahlin, Tuggeranong South, Outer Belconnen, those living in Canberra for three years or less, and those with a moderately restrictive disability.

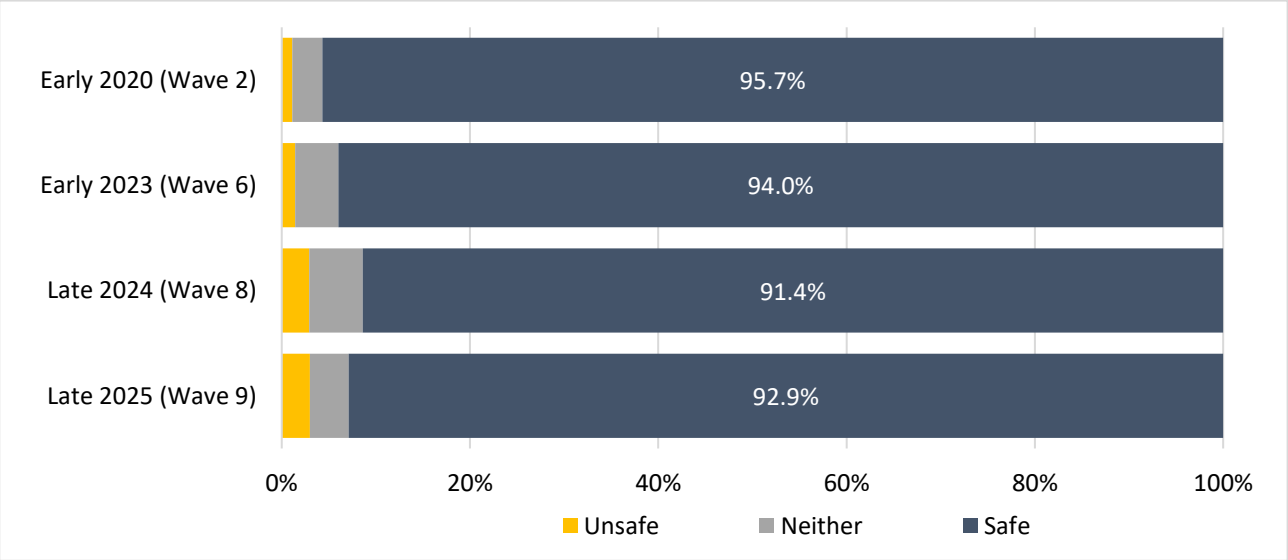


Figure 100 Sense of safety in the workplace, ACT adults, 2020 to 2025

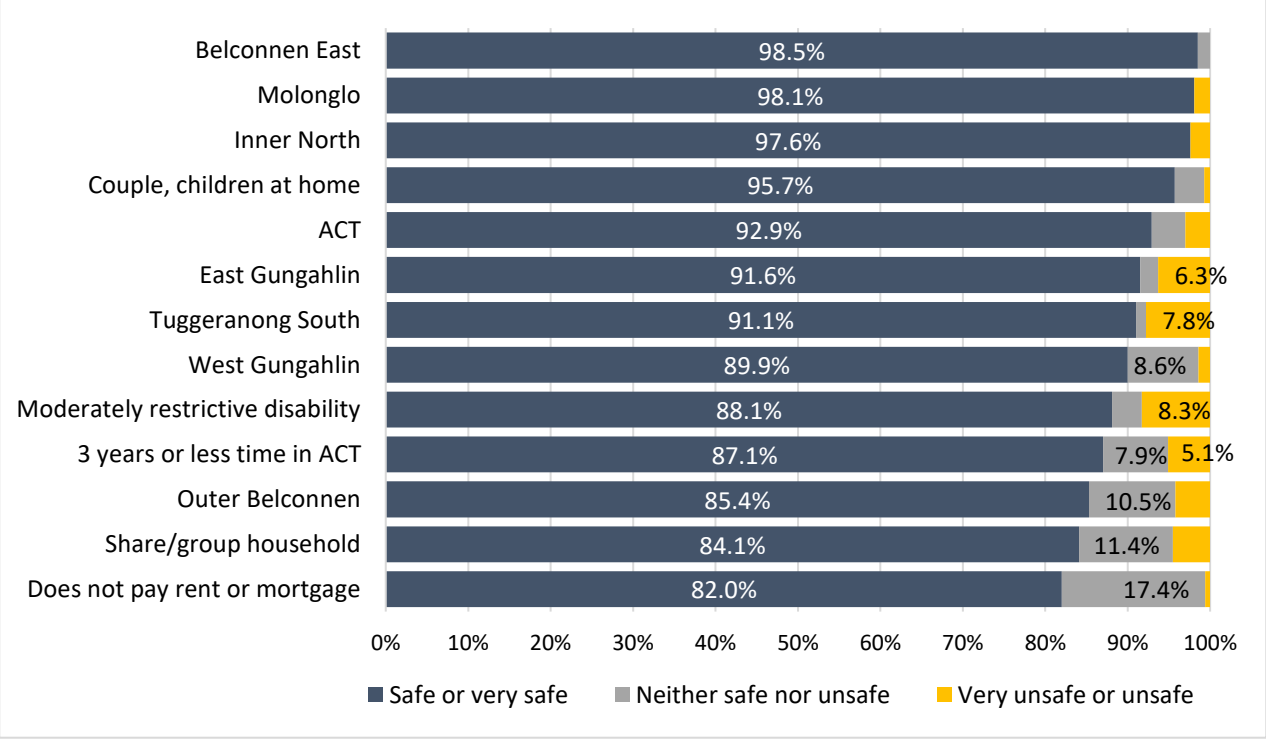


Figure 101 Safety at work, ACT adults by group/district, 2025[21]

[21] Only groups with statistical differences to the average ACT adult are shown in this figure.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS

In 2025, there was small but significant improvement in some aspects of Canberrans' wellbeing: overall wellbeing increased amongst renters and mortgage holders younger than 50, associated with an improvement in household finances for mortgage holders in particular. However, this occurred against a backdrop of continuing high financial stress for many – despite these small improvements for some, most Canberrans continue to find local living costs unaffordable, more than half report expenses growing faster than income, and two in five experienced a significant financial stress event in 2025. Of particular concern is food stress, which was experienced by more than one in five Canberrans, while 12.4% ran out of food at some point in the last 12 months without having money to purchase more. Many people report actions including reducing insurance levels, delaying home repairs and maintenance, and delaying medical appointments and purchase of medication, all of which can lead to higher expenses subsequently, for example if they experience an accident, health problem or storm.

There was also some growth in social connection, with more people – particularly more of those aged 65 and older – spending time socialising in person with family and friends, and attending community events and activities. However, this increased social connection was not associated with a decline in loneliness, possibly because those who were increasing social connection were not in the age groups who most frequently report being lonely (those aged under 50). Quality of time use stayed similar to previous years, with one exception: satisfaction with time spent outdoors declined by five per cent. Sense of belonging did not change, remaining lower than levels in 2019 and 2020.

Most Canberrans report high local liveability and good transport access, and feel safe. Confidence that human rights are respected and vulnerable people supported increased between 2024 and 2025, while trust in the ACT Government and other institutions such as the courts increased slightly but not significantly. Despite the significant numbers of Canberrans who reduced insurance coverage due to financial stress, overall climate resilience increase slightly between 2024 and 2025.

Notably, access to some health services improved in 2025, with improved access to GPs, and an increase in those reporting they could access mental health services (although the increase in the latter was not statistically significant). Overall health also improved slightly, although there was no change in mental health and psychological distress, with levels of distress remaining at the higher levels seen since 2023.

Some of the gains in wellbeing seen in 2025 are likely to be short lived, with interest rate rises in 2026 likely to have reversed some of the improvement. However, it is possible the increases in social connection and access to health services will continue, and may lead to longer term improvement in loneliness and mental health.

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APPENDIX 1 POPULATION GROUPS AND DISTRICTS

Throughout this report, findings are presented for a number of different population groups, described in Table A1. These groups represent some of the diversity of the ACT population, but not all of it. No data are reported for those who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, due to both small sample sizes and the need to establish an Indigenous data governance process before data are reported for First Nations peoples living in the ACT. The differences between groups identified in this report may be a result of many factors, including being influenced by intersecting characteristics. For example, a majority of carers and single parents are female. This may mean that differences observed between women and men relate in part to differences in wellbeing of those with differing caring responsibilities. Where common intersectionalities are known, they are briefly listed in Table A1. There will be many more intersectionalities than those identified in this report.

Throughout the report, results are reported for different districts across Canberra. Districts are groups of suburbs and localities in the ACT; Table A2 list the suburbs/places in each district[22]. Different districts of Canberra vary – sometimes considerably – in population size, proportion of renters versus home owners, average weekly income, and other characteristics. This means it is possible that variation in wellbeing observed across districts will be a result of underlying differences in their populations, such as differences in the age structure of their population, home ownership rates or typical household income.

[22] Districts are based on the ABS 'Statistical Area 3' (SA3) classification, with some SA3 regions split into two districts, e.g. the SA3 of 'Tuggeranong' is split Tuggeranong North and Tuggeranong South as there are notable differences between these parts of Tuggeranong, including timing of suburb establishment and age structure of the population.

Table A3 Population groups examined in this report

Characteristic	Groups	Common intersectionalities
Gender identity	Female (those who identify as female)	Carers, single parents
	Male (those who identify as male)	
	Not reported: Those who identify as non-binary/other, due to small sample size	
Age	Aged 18-29	Renter, share/group household
	Aged 30-49	Children in household, single parents
	Aged 50-64	
	Aged 65+	Own home outright, no children at home
Disability (has one or more long-term or permanent condition)	No disability (does not have a disability of any kind, irrespective of whether it restricts daily function)	Rate of disability increases with age, however all age groups include people living with disability.
	No restrictive disability (does not have a disability that restricts daily functioning)	
	Disability (any, including non-restrictive) (may or may not restrict person's daily functioning)	
	Restrictive disability (any type) (some restriction of daily functioning, which may be mild, moderate or severe)	
	Disability, a little restrictive (a little restriction of daily functioning)	
	Disability, moderately restrictive (moderate restriction of daily functioning)	
	Disability, severely restrictive (severe restriction of daily functioning)	
Carer	Unpaid carer (cares for person with long-term physical or mental health condition, disability or old-age related frailty)	Female, people living with disability
LGBTIQA+	LGBTIQA+	Aged 18-29, renter
Length of residence	Lived in ACT 5 years or less	Aged 18-29
	Lived in ACT 3 years or less	Aged 18-29
Employment	Unemployed (person who is not employed and is actively looking for work)	
	Employed (person in paid employment including self-employed, casual, part-time and full-time)	Aged <65
Housing tenure	Home rented/ renters	Aged 18-29; to some extent aged 30-49
	Home has mortgage / mortgage holders	Aged 30-49
	Home owned outright	Aged 50 and older
	Does not pay rent or mortgage (e.g. living at home with parents without paying rent)	Aged 18-29
Housing type	Lives in unit/apartment	Sole person household
	Lives in townhouse	
	Lives in freestanding house	
Household type	Sole person household	Unit/apartment
	Couple, no children at home	Aged 65+
	Single parent	Female
	Couple, children at home	Aged 30-49, aged 50-64
	Children in household	Aged 30-49, aged 50-64
	No children in household	Aged 65+
	Share/group household	Aged 18-29
Cultural background	Speaks language other than English (LOTE) at home	
	Born in non-English speaking country	

Table A4 List of suburbs by Canberra district

District	Suburbs *Note: includes common names for Canberra locations sometimes used by survey participants, as well as formal suburb names*
Belconnen East	Evatt, Giralang, Kaleen, Lawson, McKellar
Gungahlin[1]	Amaroo, Bonner, Casey, Crace, Forde, Franklin, Gungahlin, Harrison, Jacka, Kenny, Mitchell, Moncrieff, Ngunnawal, Nicholls, Palmerston, Taylor, Throsby
Gungahlin East	Bonner, Forde, Franklin, Harrison, Jacka, Throsby
Gungahlin West	Amaroo, Casey, Crace, Gungahlin, Kenny, Moncrieff, Ngunnawal, Nicholls, Palmerston, Taylor
Inner Belconnen	Aranda, Belconnen, Bruce, Cook, Florey, Hawker, Macquarie, Page, Scullin, Weetangera, Jamison Centre
Inner North	Acton, Ainslie, Braddon, Campbell, Canberra, Canberra City, City, Duntroon, Reid, Turner
Inner South	Barton, Deakin, Forrest, Griffith, Kingston, Manuka, Narrabundah, Parkes, Red Hill, Yarralumla
Molonglo[2]	Coombs, Denman Prospect, Molonglo, Stromlo, Whitlam, Wright
North	Dickson, Downer, Hackett, Lyneham, O'Connor, Watson
Outer Belconnen	Charnwood, Dunlop, Flynn, Fraser, Higgins, Holt, Latham, Macgregor, Macnamara, Melba, Spence, Strathnairn
Tuggeranong North	Erindale Centre, Fadden, Gowrie, Greenway, Kambah, Macarthur, Monash, Oxley, Wanniassa
Tuggeranong South	Banks, Bonython, Calwell, Chisholm, Conder, Gilmore, Gordon, Isabella Plains, Richardson, Theodore
Weston Creek[1]	Chapman, Duffy, Fisher, Holder, Rivett, Stirling, Waramanga, Weston
Woden Valley	Chifley, Curtin, Farrer, Garran, Hughes, Isaacs, Lyons, Mawson, O'Malley, Pearce, Phillip, Swinger Hill, Torrens
Other and rural ACT	Beard, Canberra Airport, Fyshwick, Hall, Hume, Oaks Estate, Pialligo, Symonston, Tharwa, Uriarra Village

[1]From Wave 9, Gungahlin is split for *weighting purposes* into East and West Gungahlin. For *reporting purposes*, East and West Gungahlin data will be reported separately where respondent numbers permit. 'Gungahlin' data will continue to be reported for several surveys to maintain backwards compatibility with prior survey reporting.
[2]Note that Weston Creek and Molonglo are combined in reporting of data from earlier waves of the Living well survey due to the small population of Molonglo at the time the survey began, with rapid growth of population in this district since the survey was established allowing separate reporting of Weston Creek and Molonglo from Wave 8 onwards.