



# **THE AUSTRALIAN EARLY LEARNING MONITOR.**

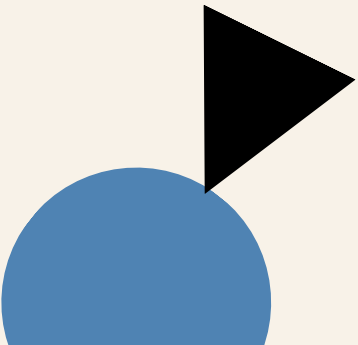
Gender results  
June 2021.



**THRIVE  
BY FIVE**

# KEY FINDINGS.

1. The benefits and potential long-term impacts of early learning is similarly understood by men and women.
2. Men and women of any age have similar levels of support for a universal high-quality early childhood education and care; combining early learning with the education system; and are similarly likely to say cheaper early childhood education and care would help their family.
3. However, the importance of this issue and the experiences of men and women greatly varies by age; with younger men being more aware of the issue than older men.
5. Men and women 18-34 years old are more likely to vote for a party committed to a universal high-quality early childhood education and care (53% and 57% respectively); than participants over 35 years old.
6. When it comes to balancing work and family life, men recognise the impact family life has on their partners' careers and want more government support to take an active child-rearing role.
7. 64% of men say their live-in-partner has made career sacrifices to look after family (compared to 36% of women in the same situation) and 65% of men 18-34 years old agree that the government should help fathers take a more active role in raising children.



# METHODOLOGY.

**Fieldwork:** 22<sup>nd</sup> April – 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021

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**Sample:**

Men, n=2,343 (MoE  $\pm$ 2.0%)  
Women, n=2,434 (MoE  $\pm$ 2.0%)  
Men 18-34, n=710 (MoE  $\pm$ 3.7%)  
Men 35-54, n=803 (MoE  $\pm$ 3.5%)  
Men 55+, n=830 (MoE  $\pm$ 3.4%)  
Women 18-34, n=729 (MoE  $\pm$ 3.6%)  
Women 35-54, n=841 (MoE  $\pm$ 3.4%)  
Women 55+, n=864 (MoE  $\pm$ 3.3%)

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**Prepared by:** Essential Research

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Our researchers are members of the Research Society. This research is compliant with the Australian Polling Council Quality Mark standards.

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**Australian  
Polling Council  
Quality Mark**

The quantitative poll was developed to canvas a representative sample of the Australian public on their views, attitudes and experiences with the early learning and childcare system in Australia, and to understand their views on relevant issues related to family life, working life and society more broadly.

The national online survey was hosted by Qualtrics and took respondents approximately 15 minutes to complete.

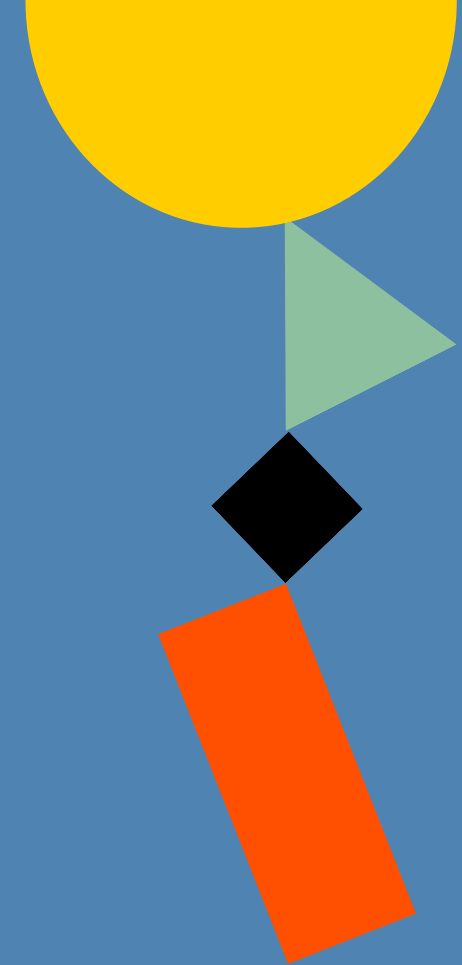
Note that some questions were asked of only half the sample to maximise the number of questions without increasing respondent burden.

The maximum margins of error at a 95% confidence level for the full samples are shown in the left-hand table. For questions asked of half sample, maximum margin of error for any sub-sample is  $\pm$  5.2%.

Some figures in this report will not total 100% due to rounding. Full methodology can be found [here](#). For more results from the Early Learning Monitor go to:

<https://thrivebyfive.org.au/earlylearningmonitor/>

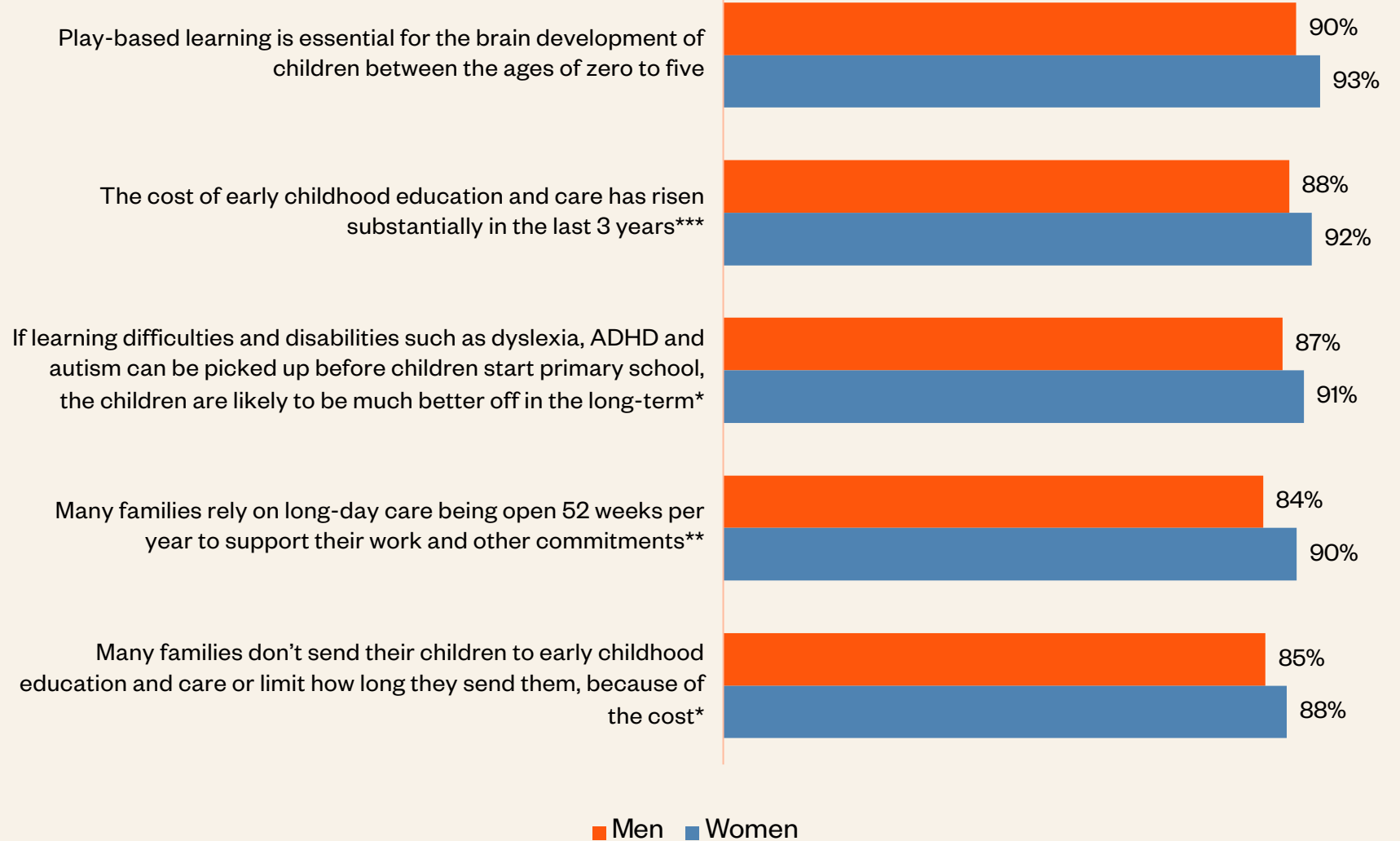
# **CURRENT ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS.**



**THRIVE  
BY FIVE**

**WHILE WOMEN ARE  
GENERALLY MORE LIKELY  
THAN MEN TO BELIEVE  
THE IMPACT OF EARLY  
LEARNING, THE RESULTS  
ARE CONSISTENTLY  
HIGH.**

**Understanding of the impact of early learning (% Definitely / Probably True)**



Q. For each of the following statements about early childhood education and care, please indicate if you think they are definitely true, probably true, probably not true or definitely not true.

Base: Men, n=2,343; Women, n=2,434

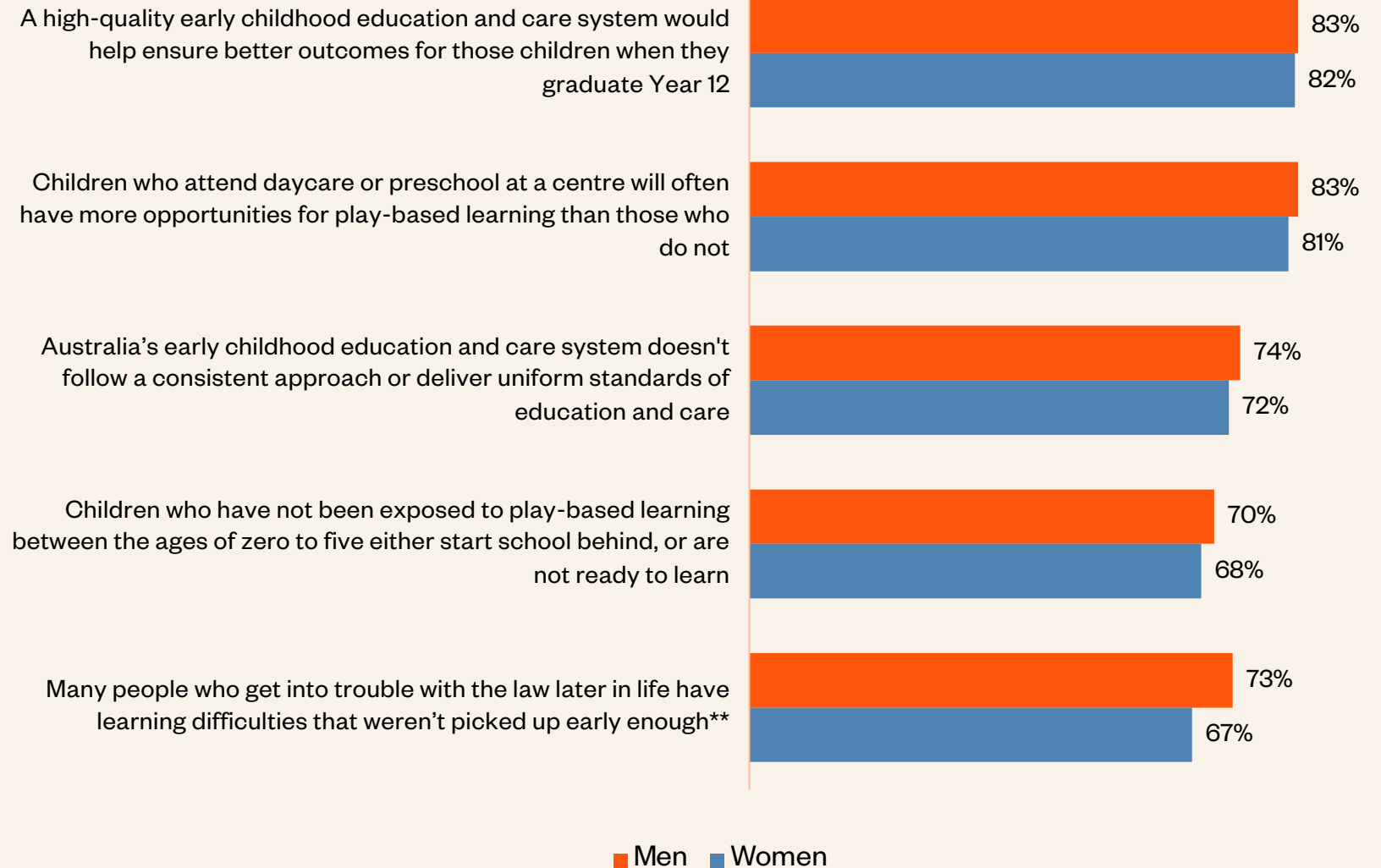
\*Only shown to half sample: Men, n=1,162; Women, n=1,224

\*\*Only shown to half sample: Men, n=1,181; Women, n=1,210

\*\*\*Only shown to parents with a child that attends/attended daycare: Men, n=483; Women, n=434

**THE DIFFERENCES  
BETWEEN THE GENDERS  
ON THESE ISSUES ARE  
MOSTLY SMALL.**

Understanding of the impact of early learning (% Definitely / Probably True)



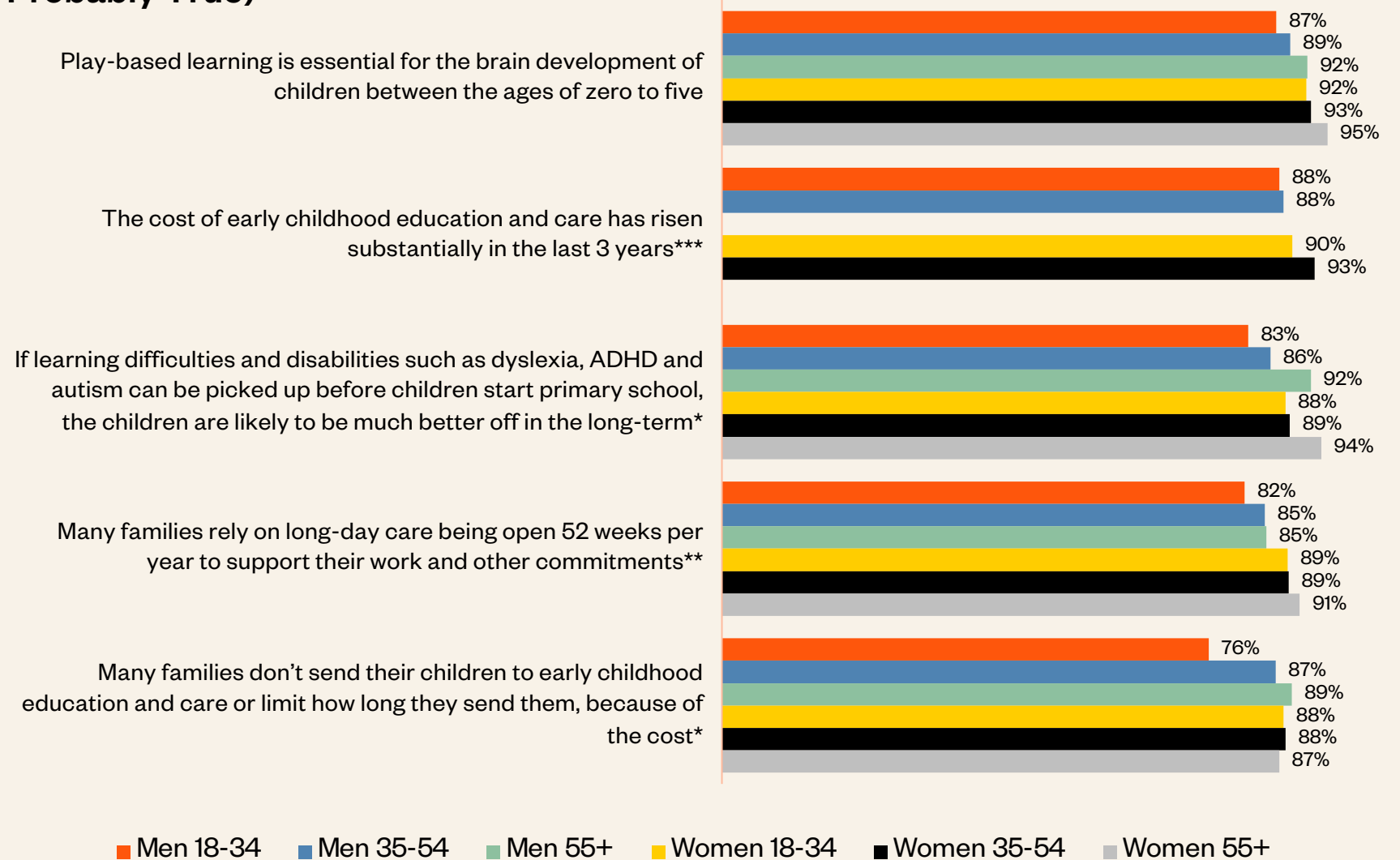
Q. For each of the following statements about early childhood education and care, please indicate if you think they are definitely true, probably true, probably not true or definitely not true.

Base: Men, n=2,343; Women, n=2,434

\*\*Only shown to half sample: Men, n=1,181; Women, n=1,210

# THREE-QUARTERS OF AUSTRALIANS UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF EARLY LEARNING GENERALLY.

## Understanding of the impact of early learning (% Definitely / Probably True)



Q. For each of the following statements about early childhood education and care, please indicate if you think they are definitely true, probably true, probably not true or definitely not true.

Base: Men 18-34 (n=710), Men 35-54 (n=803), Men 55+ (n=830), Women 18-34 (n=729), Women 35-54 (n=841), Women 55+ (n=864)

\*Only shown to half sample: Men 18-34 (n=341), Men 35-54 (n=398), Men 55+ (n=423), Women 18-34 (n=373), Women 35-54 (n=428), Women 55+ (n=423)

\*\*Only shown to half sample: Men 18-34 (n=369), Men 35-54 (n=405), Men 55+ (n=407), Women 18-34 (n=356), Women 35-54 (n=413), Women 55+ (n=441)

\*\*\*Only shown to parents with a child that attends/attended daycare: Men 18-34 (n=143), Men 35-54 (n=323), Women 18-34 (n=173), Women 35-54 (n=250). Data not shown for over 55s because of small sample size

**MEN OVER 35 ARE MOST LIKELY TO UNDERSTAND THAT LEARNING DIFFICULTIES, IF NOT PICKED UP EARLY ENOUGH, CAN LEAD TO TROUBLE WITH THE LAW LATER IN LIFE.**

Understanding of the impact of early learning (% Definitely / Probably True)

A high-quality early childhood education and care system would help ensure better outcomes for those children when they graduate Year 12



Children who attend daycare or preschool at a centre will often have more opportunities for play-based learning than those who do not



Australia's early childhood education and care system doesn't follow a consistent approach or deliver uniform standards of education and care



Children who have not been exposed to play-based learning between the ages of zero to five either start school behind, or are not ready to learn



Many people who get into trouble with the law later in life have learning difficulties that weren't picked up early enough\*\*



Men 18-34 Men 35-54 Men 55+ Women 18-34 Women 35-54 Women 55+

Q. For each of the following statements about early childhood education and care, please indicate if you think they are definitely true, probably true, probably not true or definitely not true.

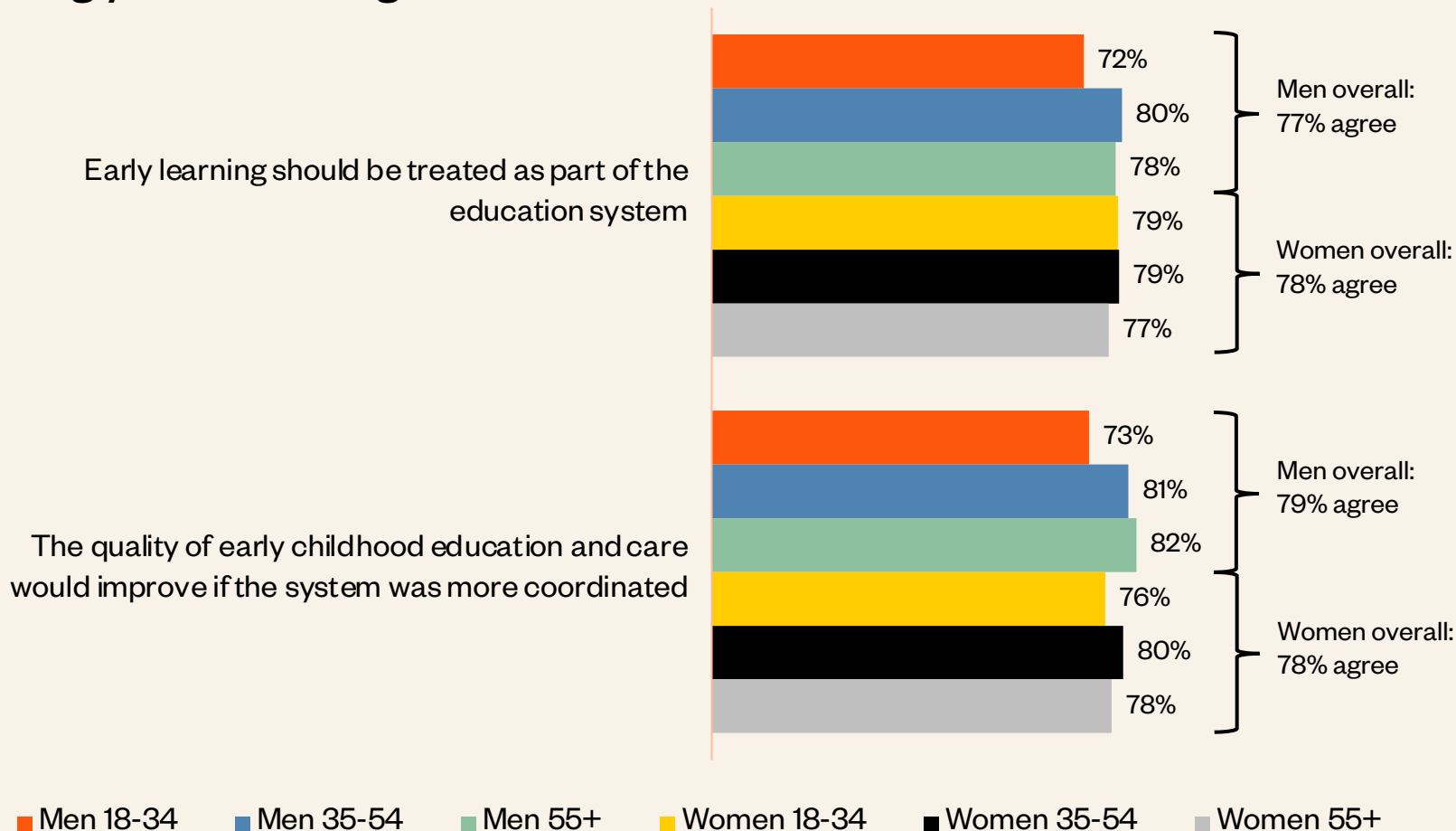
Base: Men 18-34 (n=710), Men 35-54 (n=803), Men 55+ (n=830), Women 18-34 (n=729), Women 35-54 (n=841), Women 55+ (n=864)

\*\*Only shown to half sample: Men 18-34 (n=369), Men 35-54 (n=405), Men 55+ (n=407), Women 18-34 (n=356), Women 35-54 (n=413), Women 55+ (n=441)



**THE MAJORITY OF AUSTRALIANS AGREE THAT THE EARLY LEARNING SYSTEM SHOULD BE PART OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND THE QUALITY OF THE SYSTEM WOULD BE IMPROVED WITH THIS APPROACH.**

**Total agree with a coordinated future for early learning (% Strongly / Somewhat agree)**

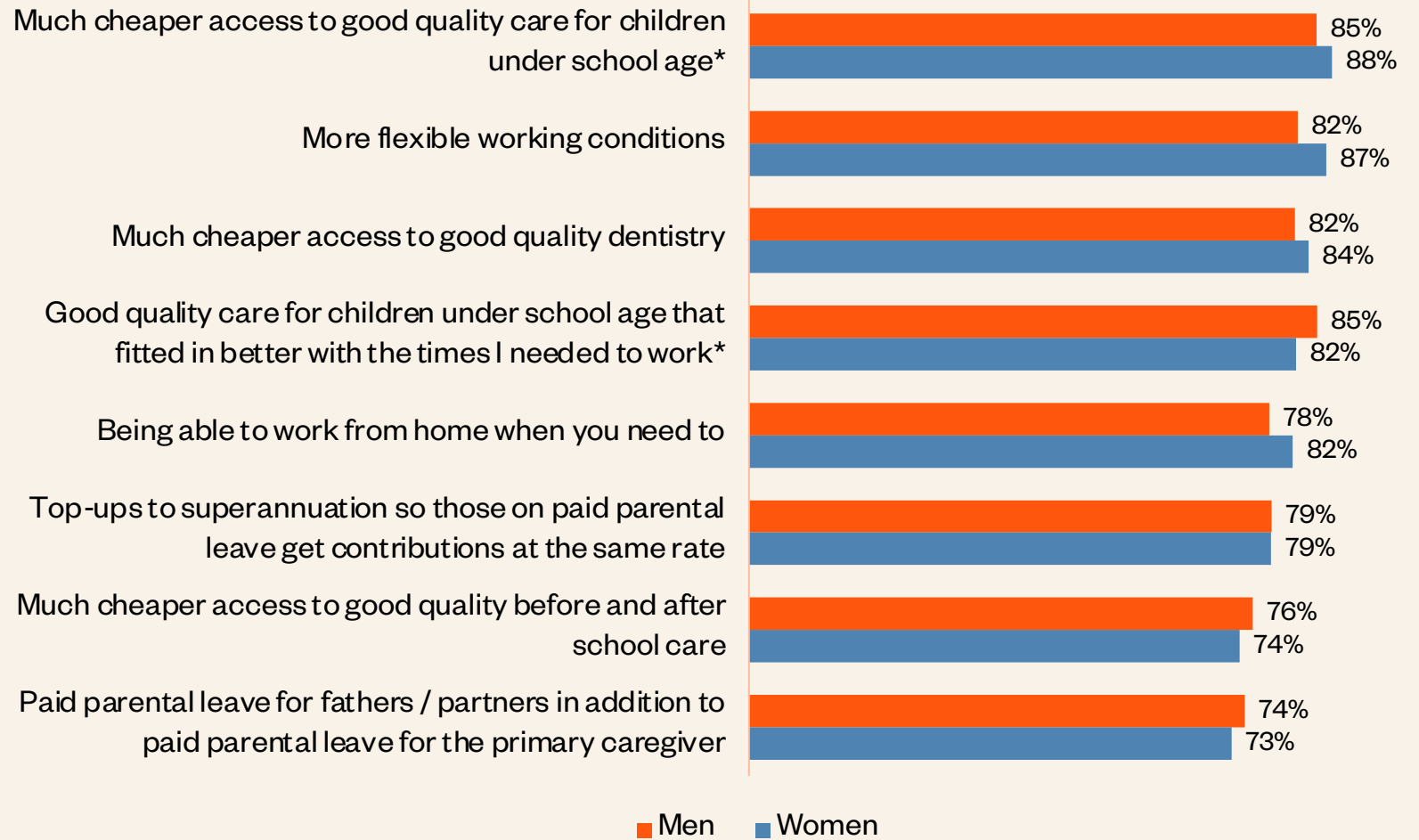


Q. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: Men, n=2,343; Women, n=2,434; Men 18-34 (n=710), Men 35-54 (n=803), Men 55+ (n=830), Women 18-34 (n=729), Women 35-54 (n=841), Women 55+ (n=864)

**THE VAST MAJORITY OF PARENTS WITH A CHILD UNDER SCHOOL AGE SAY HAVING CHEAPER ACCESS TO QUALITY CHILDCARE WOULD HELP THEIR FAMILIES.**

**What would help respondents and their families (% A lot /A fair amount)**



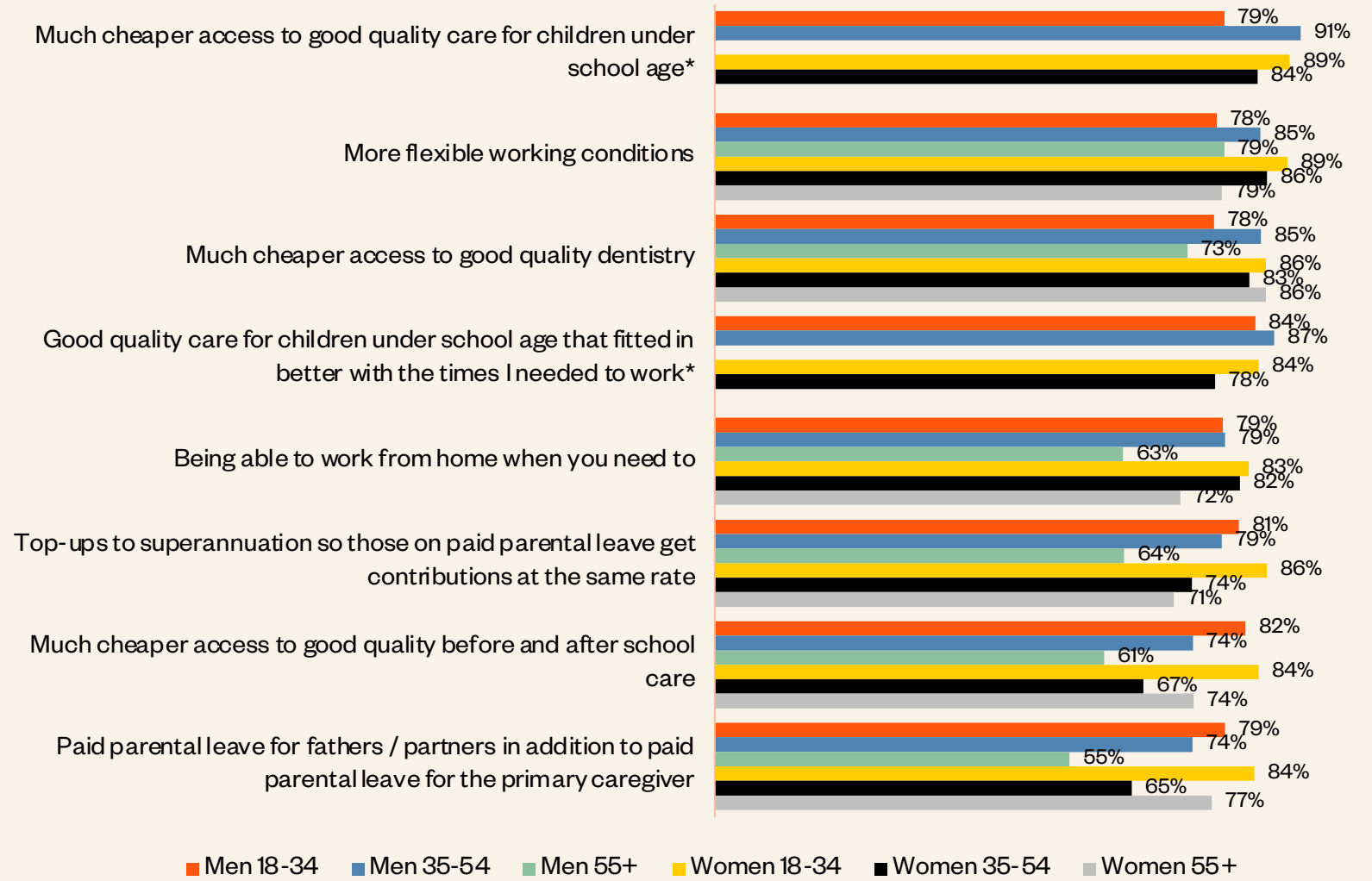
Q. How much would each of the following help you and your family, now or in the future?

Base: Men with dependent children, n=729; Women with dependent children, n=788

\*Only shown to parents with at least one child under school age: Men, n=304; Women, n=366

**FOUR IN FIVE MEN 18-34 YEARS OLD WITH CHILDREN UNDER SCHOOL-AGE SAY CHEAPER ACCESS TO CHILDCARE WOULD HELP THEIR FAMILIES.**

**What would help respondents and their families (% A lot /A fair amount)**

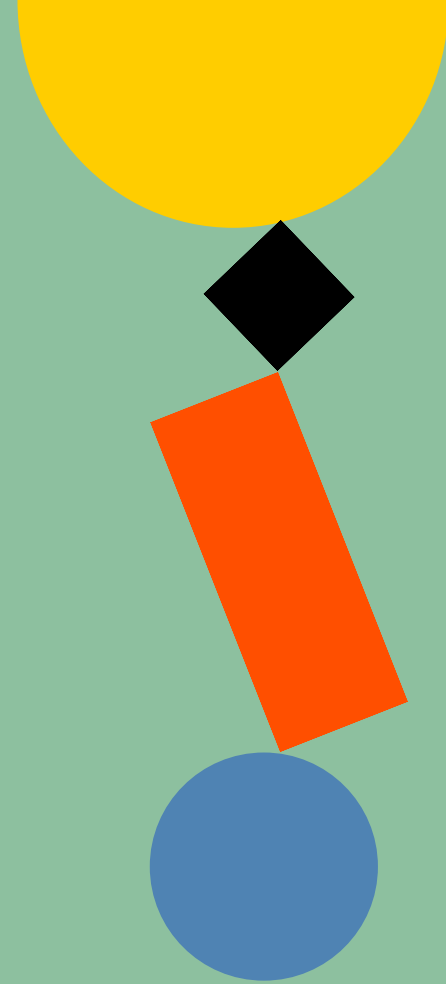


Q. How much would each of the following help you and your family, now or in the future?

Base: Men 18-34 (n=710), Men 35-54 (n=803), Men 55+ (n=830), Women 18-34 (n=729), Women 35-54 (n=841), Women 55+ (n=864)

\*Only shown to parents with at least one child under school age: Men 18-34 (n=135), Men 35-54 (n=165), Women 18-34 (n=238), Women 35-54 (n=125). Data not shown for Men and Women over 55

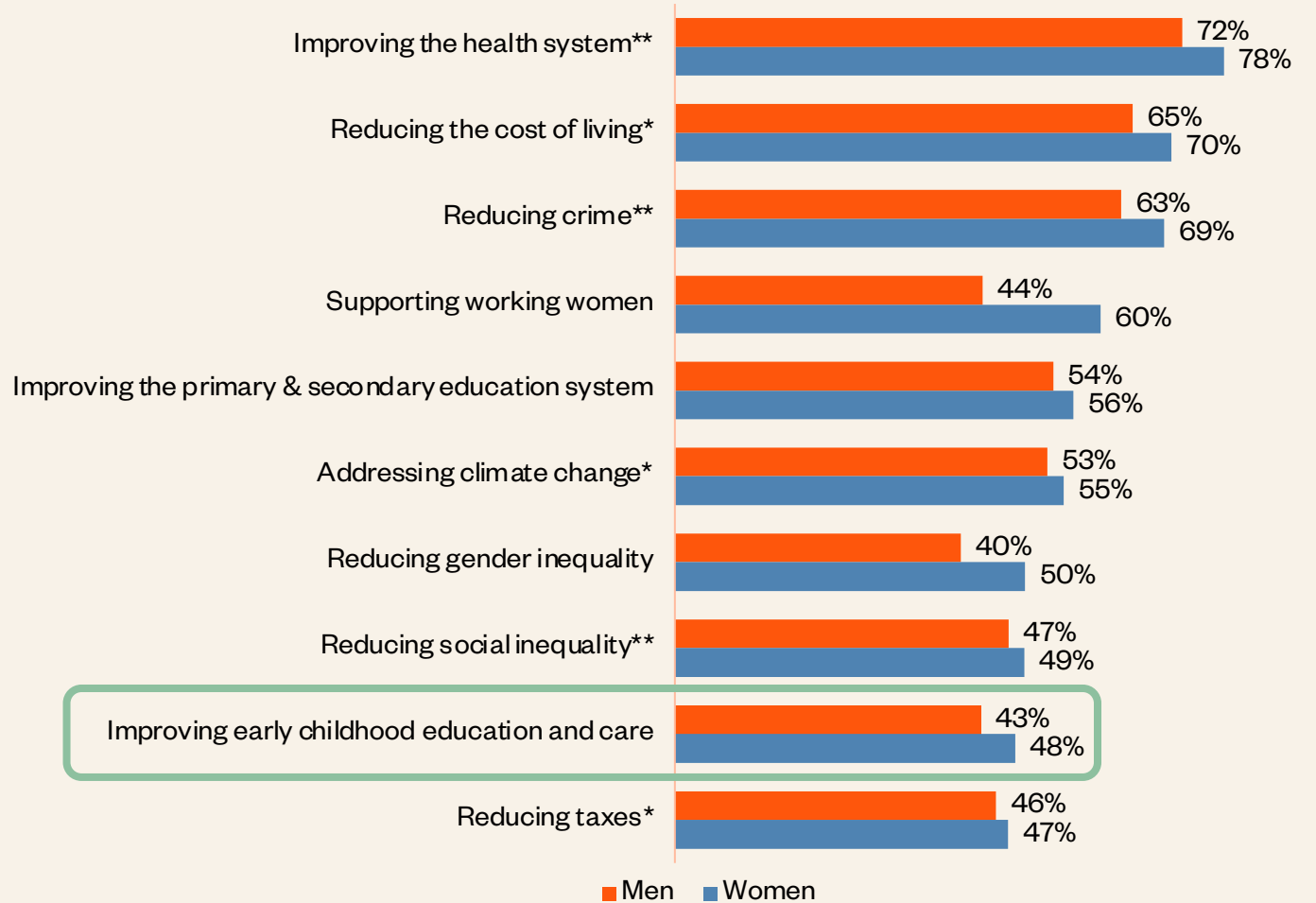
**TOWARDS A UNIVERSAL,  
HIGH-QUALITY EARLY  
LEARNING SYSTEM.**



**THRIVE  
BY FIVE**

**EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION AND CARE IS  
AN IMPORTANT ISSUE  
FOR WOMEN AT  
ELECTIONS.**

**Importance of issues when voting at federal elections  
(% Extremely/very important)**



Q. How important are each of the following issues when it comes to voting at federal elections?

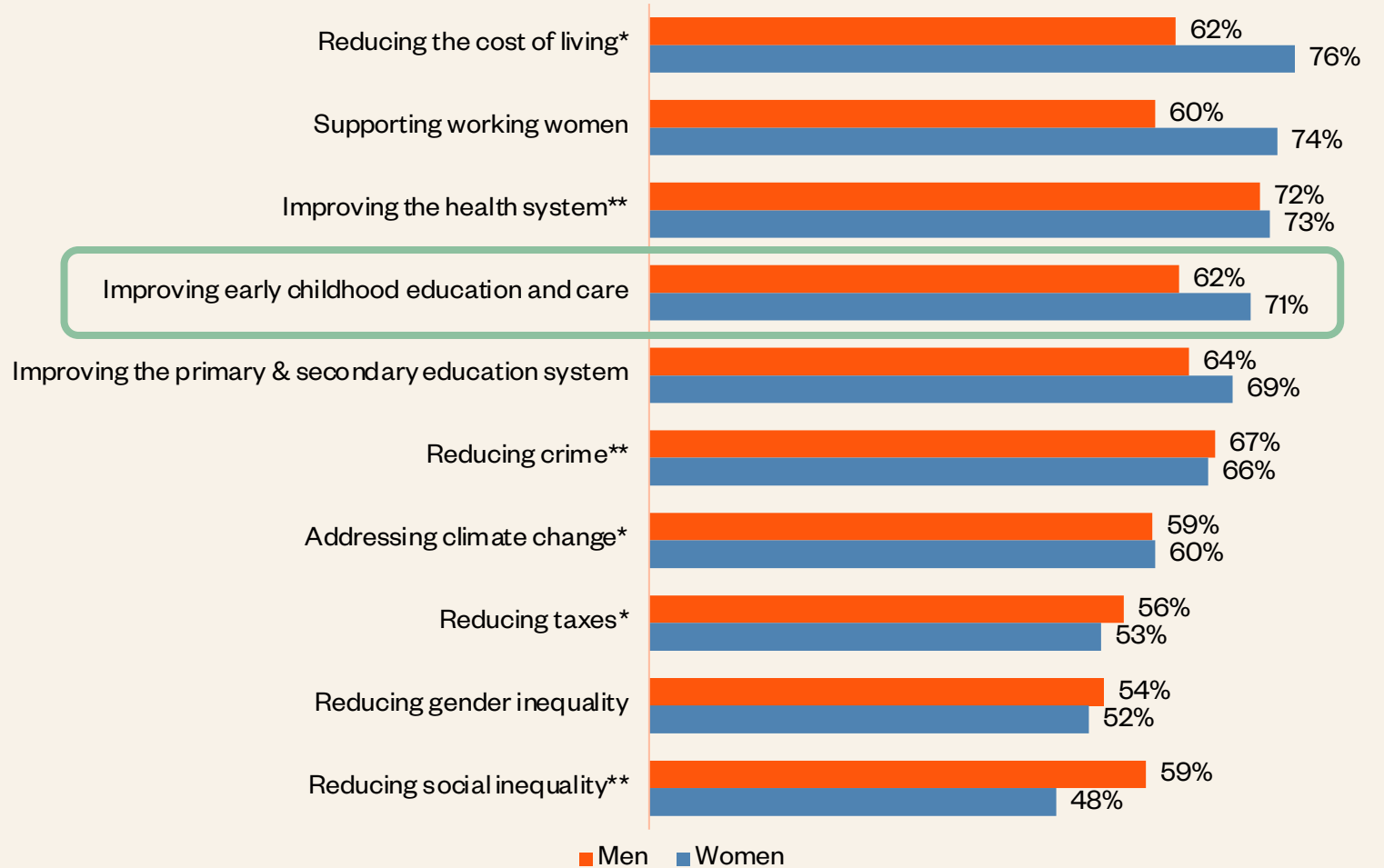
Base: Men, n=2,343; Women, n=2,434

\*Only shown to half sample: Men, n=1,162; Women, n=1,224

\*\*Only shown to half sample: Men, n=1,181; Women, n=1,210

**HOWEVER, AMONG  
WOMEN WITH SCHOOL  
AGED CHILDREN, EARLY  
LEARNING BECOMES A  
TOP-TIER ISSUE.**

**Importance of issues when voting at federal elections  
(% Extremely/very important)**



Q. How important are each of the following issues when it comes to voting at federal elections?

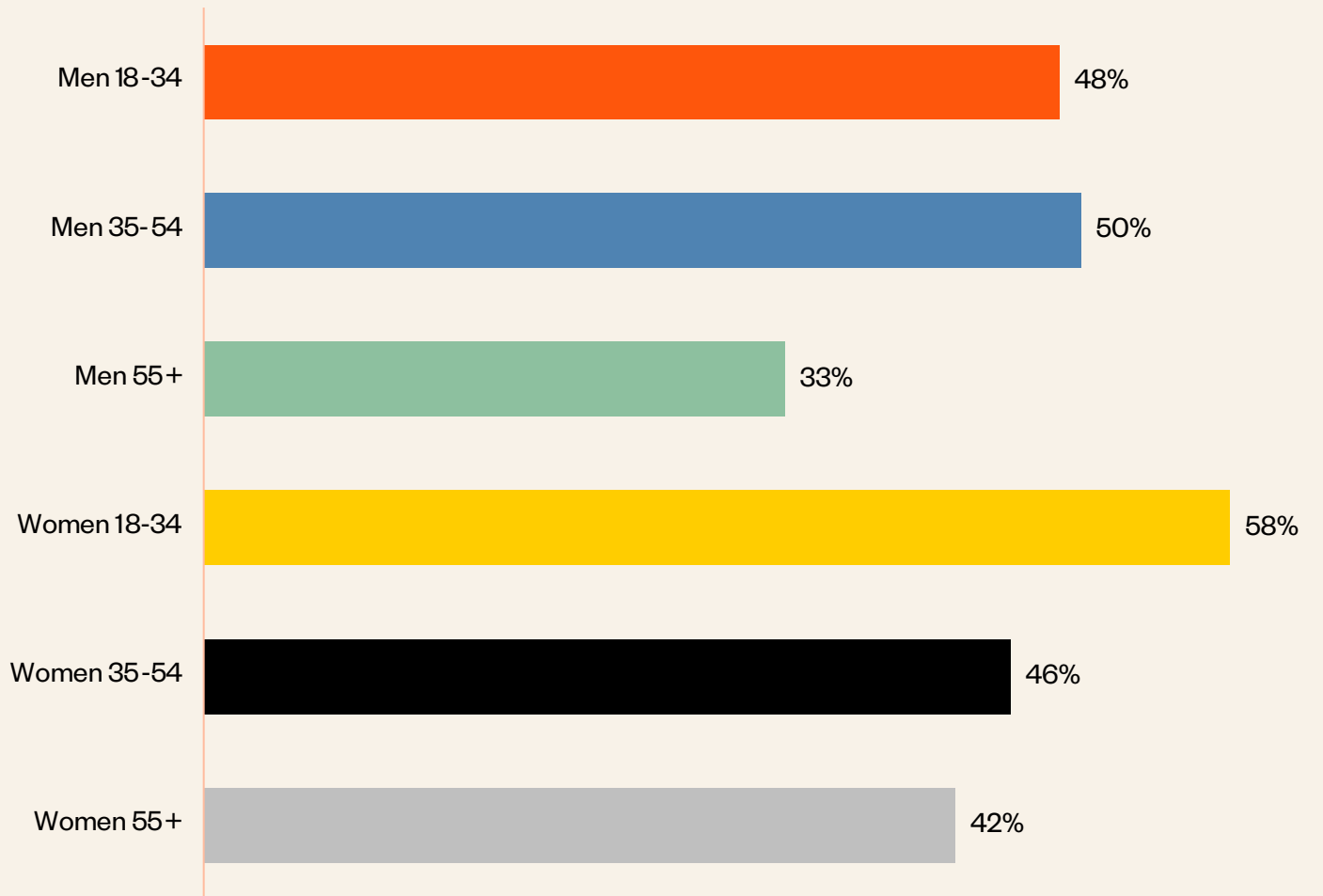
Base: Male parent of at least one child under school age, n=304; Female parent of at least one child under school age, n=366

\*Only shown to half sample: Men, n=150; Women, n=198

\*\*Only shown to half sample: Men, n=154; Women, n=168

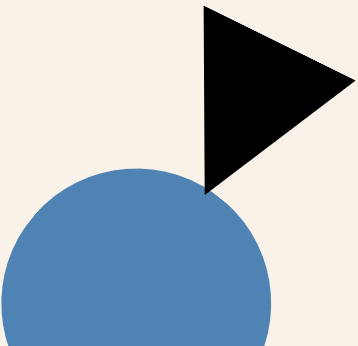
**58% OF WOMEN UNDER 35 SAY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE IS IMPORTANT TO THEIR VOTE.**

Importance of improving early childhood education and care when voting at federal elections (% Extremely/very important)



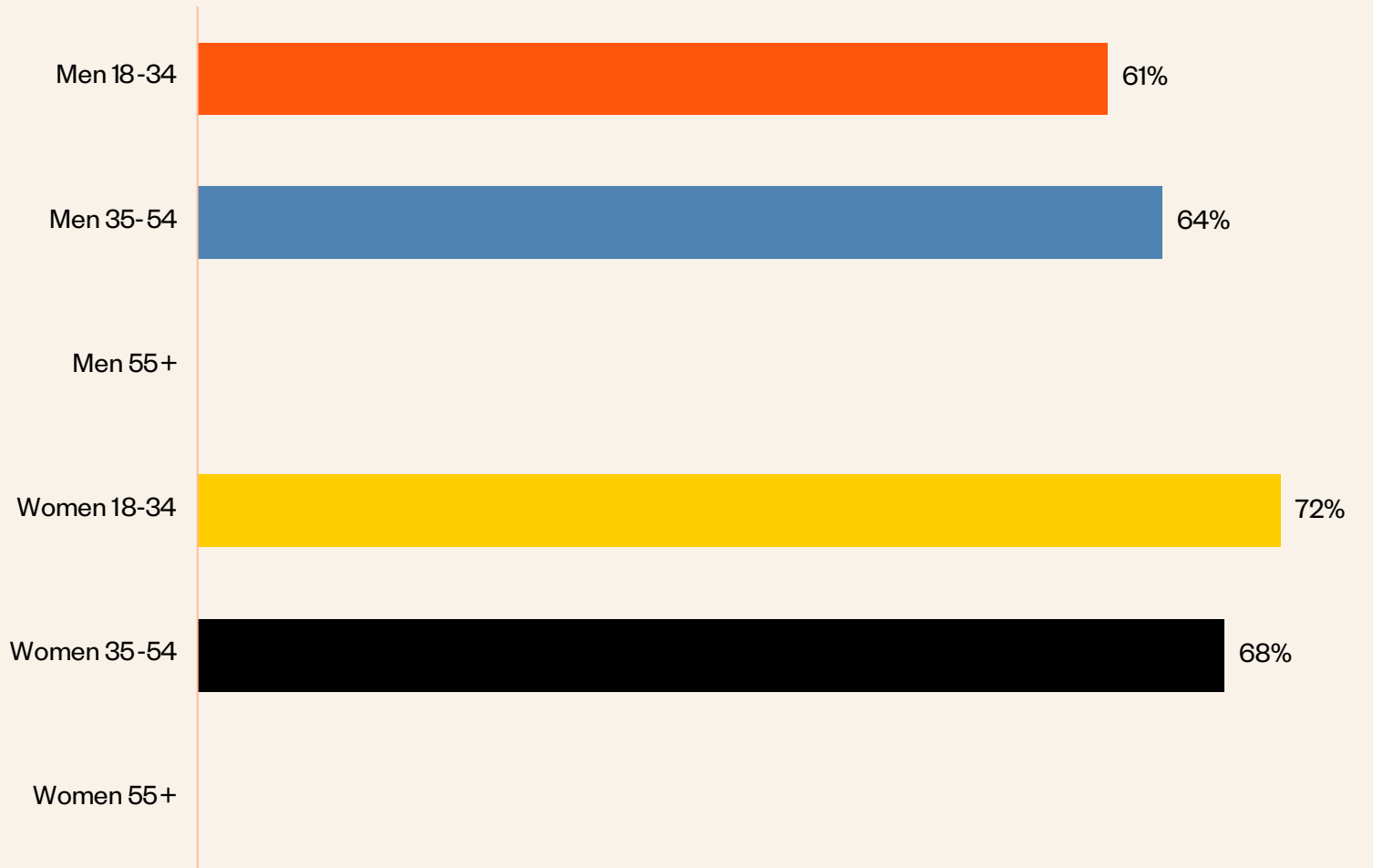
Q. How important are each of the following issues when it comes to voting at federal elections?

Base: Men 18-34 (n=710), Men 35-54 (n=803), Men 55+ (n=830), Women 18-34 (n=729), Women 35-54 (n=841), Women 55+ (n=864)



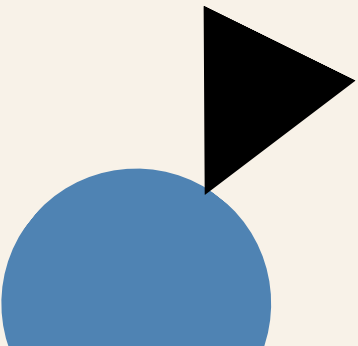
**AMONG FEMALE PARENTS  
OF SCHOOL AGED  
CHILDREN, EARLY  
LEARNING IS CEMENTED  
AS A TOP-TIER ISSUE.**

**Importance of improving early childhood education and care when  
voting at federal elections (% Extremely/very important)**



Q. How important are each of the following issues when it comes to voting at federal elections?

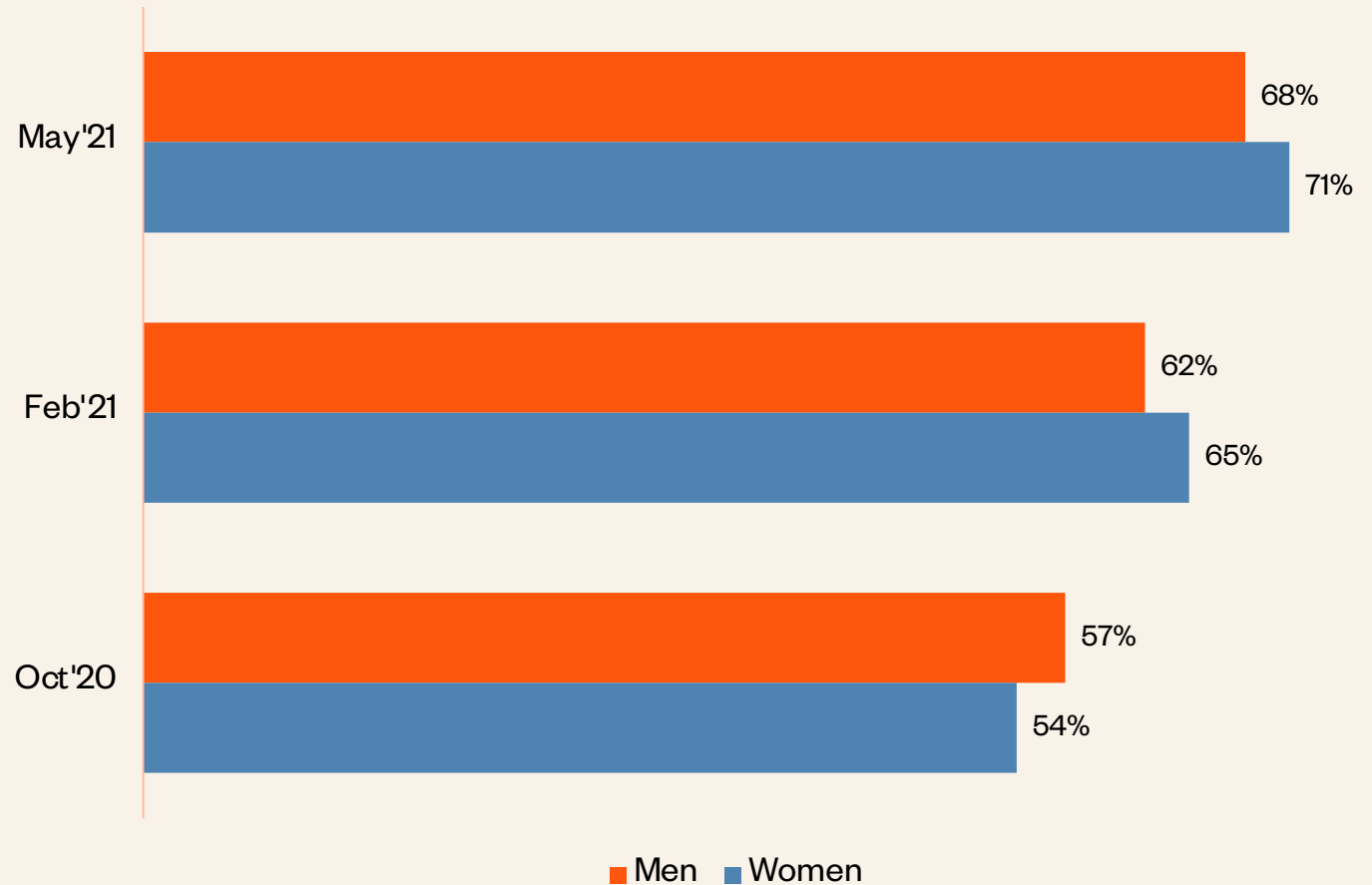
Base: Parents with at least one child under school age: Men 18-34 (n=135), Men 35-54 (n=165), Women 18-34 (n=238), Women 35-54 (n=125). Data not shown for Men and Women over 55





**SINCE OCTOBER 2020,  
AGREEMENT THAT  
CHEAPER EARLY  
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION  
WOULD BE GOOD FOR THE  
ECONOMY, HAS  
INCREASED MORE THAN  
10 PERCENTAGE POINTS.**

Agreement that cheaper early childhood education and care would be very good for the Australian economy as a whole (% Strongly / Somewhat agree)



Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

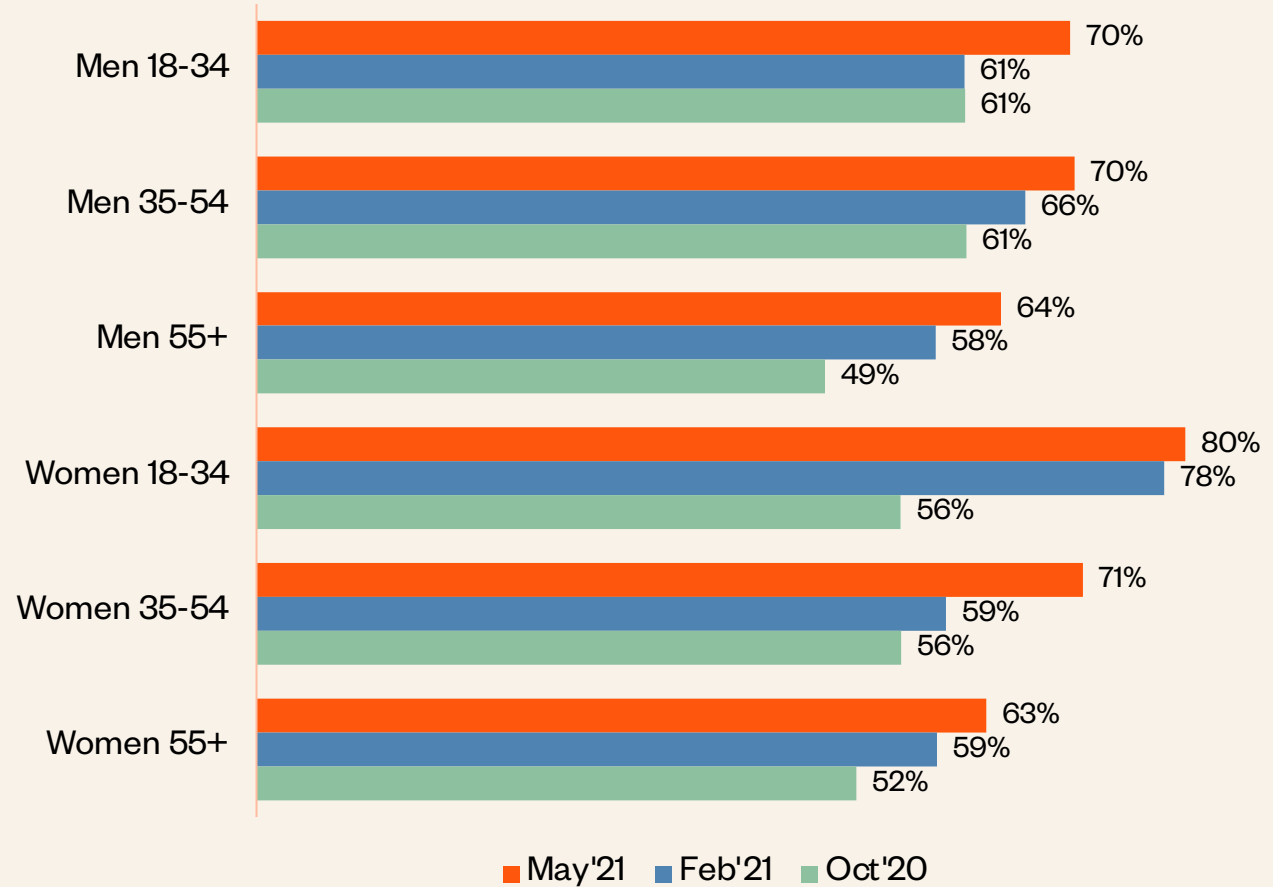
Base May'21: Men, n=2,343; Women, n=2,434

Base Feb'21: Men, n=527; Women, n=547

Base Oct'20: Men, n=263; Women, n=274

**THE MAJORITY OF MEN  
18-34 YEARS OLD NOW  
AGREE THAT CHEAPER  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION AND CARE  
WOULD BE GOOD FOR THE  
ECONOMY.**

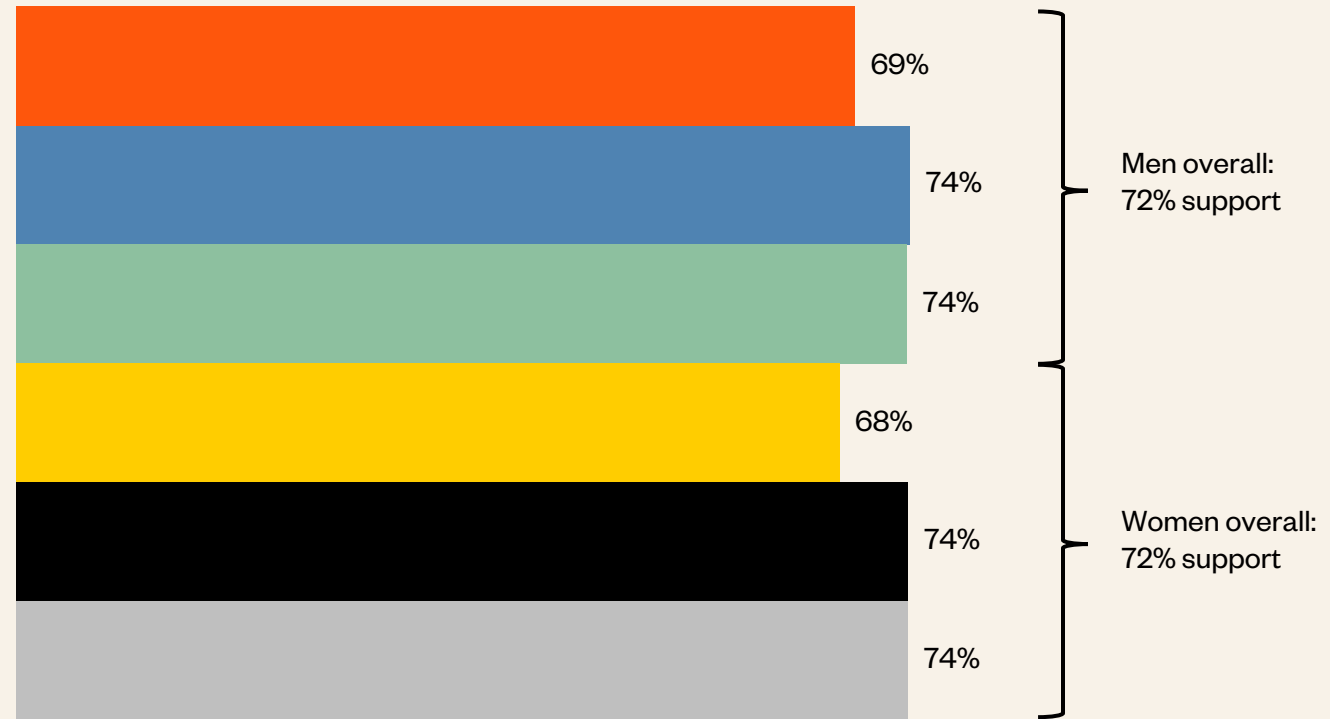
Agreement that cheaper early childhood education and care would be very good for the Australian economy as a whole (% Strongly / Somewhat agree)



Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?  
 Base May'21: Men 18-34 (n=710), Men 35-54 (n=803), Men 55+ (n=830), Women 18-34 (n=729), Women 35-54 (n=841), Women 55+ (n=864)  
 Base Feb'21: Men 18-34 (n=120), Men 35-54 (n=192), Men 55+ (n=215), Women 18-34 (n=206), Women 35-54 (n=171), Women 55+ (n=170)  
 Base Oct'20: Men 18-34 (n=60), Men 35-54 (n=99), Men 55+ (n=104), Women 18-34 (n=99), Women 35-54 (n=81), Women 55+ (n=94)

**AROUND THREE-  
QUARTERS OF  
AUSTRALIANS  
SUPPORT  
A UNIVERSAL  
EARLY LEARNING  
SYSTEM.**

Support for a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system (% Strongly / Somewhat support)



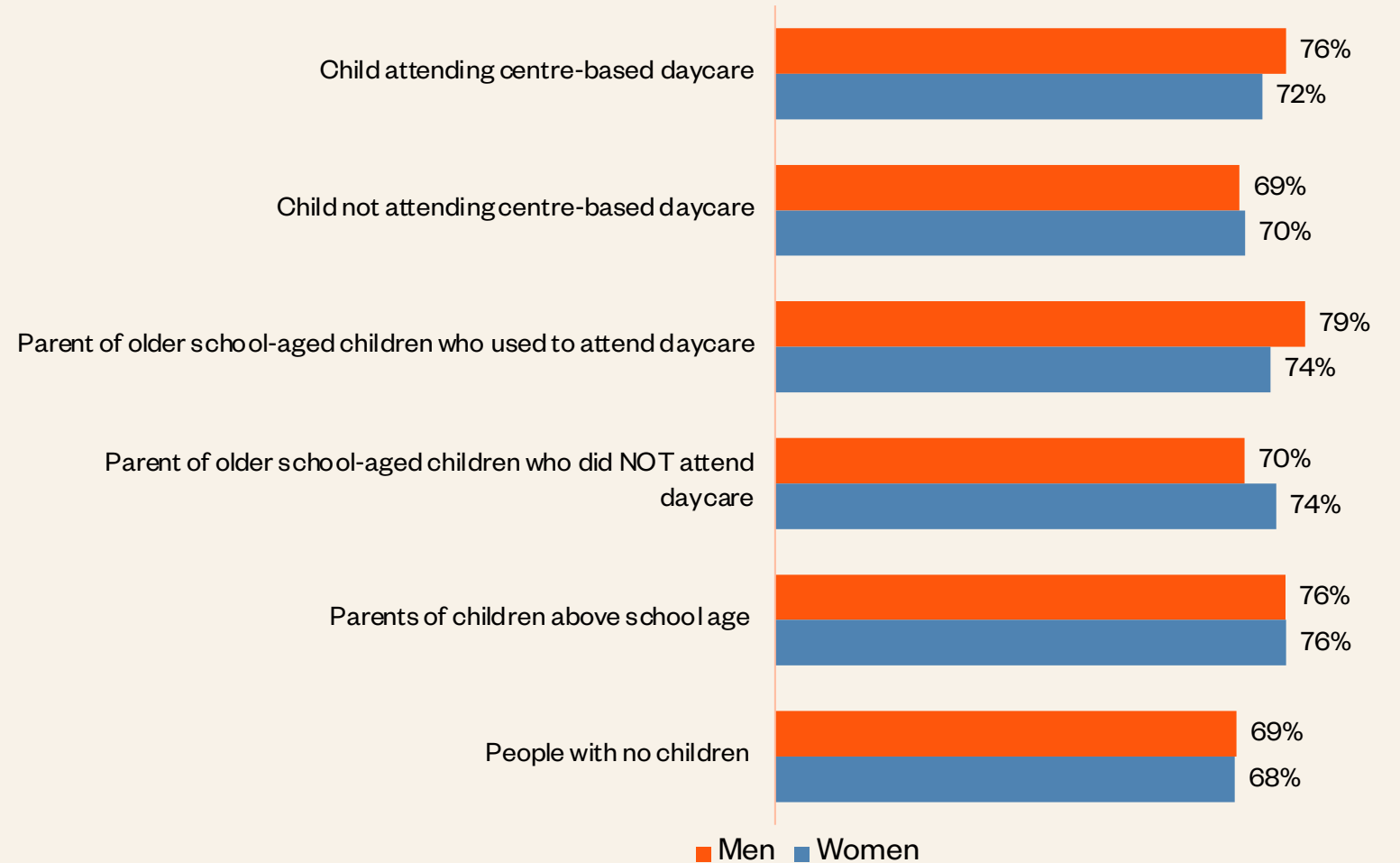
■ Men 18-34  
 ■ Men 35-54  
 ■ Men 55+  
 ■ Women 18-34  
 ■ Women 35-54  
 ■ Women 55+

Q. For the purpose of the next few questions, please assume that 'a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system' would be one that was connected to the primary and secondary education system with a standard set of teaching priorities based around play-based learning. The system would be available at low or minimal cost to anyone who wants to use it, but using it would not be compulsory. How strongly do you support or oppose introducing a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system along those lines?

Base: Men, n=2,343; Women, n=2,434; Men 18-34 (n=710), Men 35-54 (n=803), Men 55+ (n=830), Women 18-34 (n=729), Women 35-54 (n=841), Women 55+ (n=864)

**THERE'S SUPPORT  
FOR A UNIVERSAL  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION AND  
CARE SYSTEM,  
WHETHER OR  
NOT YOU HAVE  
PRESCHOOL  
CHILDREN.**

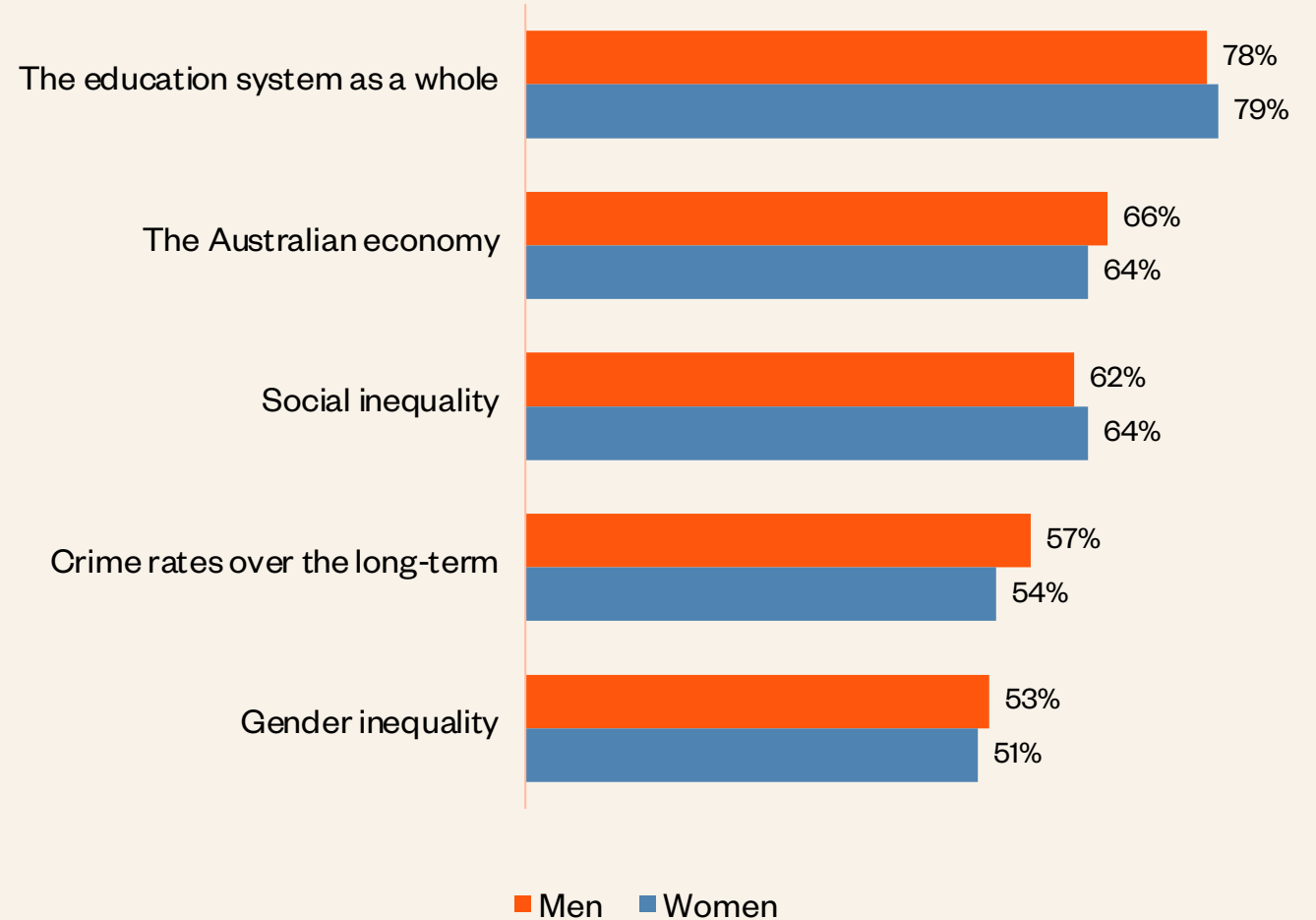
Support for a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system (% Strongly / Somewhat support)



Q. How strongly do you support or oppose introducing a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system along those lines?  
 Base: Men, n=2,343; Women, n=2,434; Child attending centre-based daycare: Men, n=230; Women, n=225; Child NOT attending centre-based daycare: Men, n=74; Women, n=141; Parent of older school-aged children who used to attend daycare: Men, n=253; Women, n=209; Parent of older school-aged children who did NOT attend daycare: Men, n=152; Women, n=184; Parents of children above school age: Men, n=646; Women, n=770; People with no children: Men, n=988; Women, n=905

**MOST AUSTRALIANS THINK  
A UNIVERSAL EARLY  
LEARNING SYSTEM WOULD  
BE GOOD FOR  
THE EDUCATION SYSTEM,  
THE ECONOMY AND  
REDUCING SOCIAL  
INEQUALITY.**

Effect of universal high-quality early childhood education and care system (% Make it a lot/a little better)

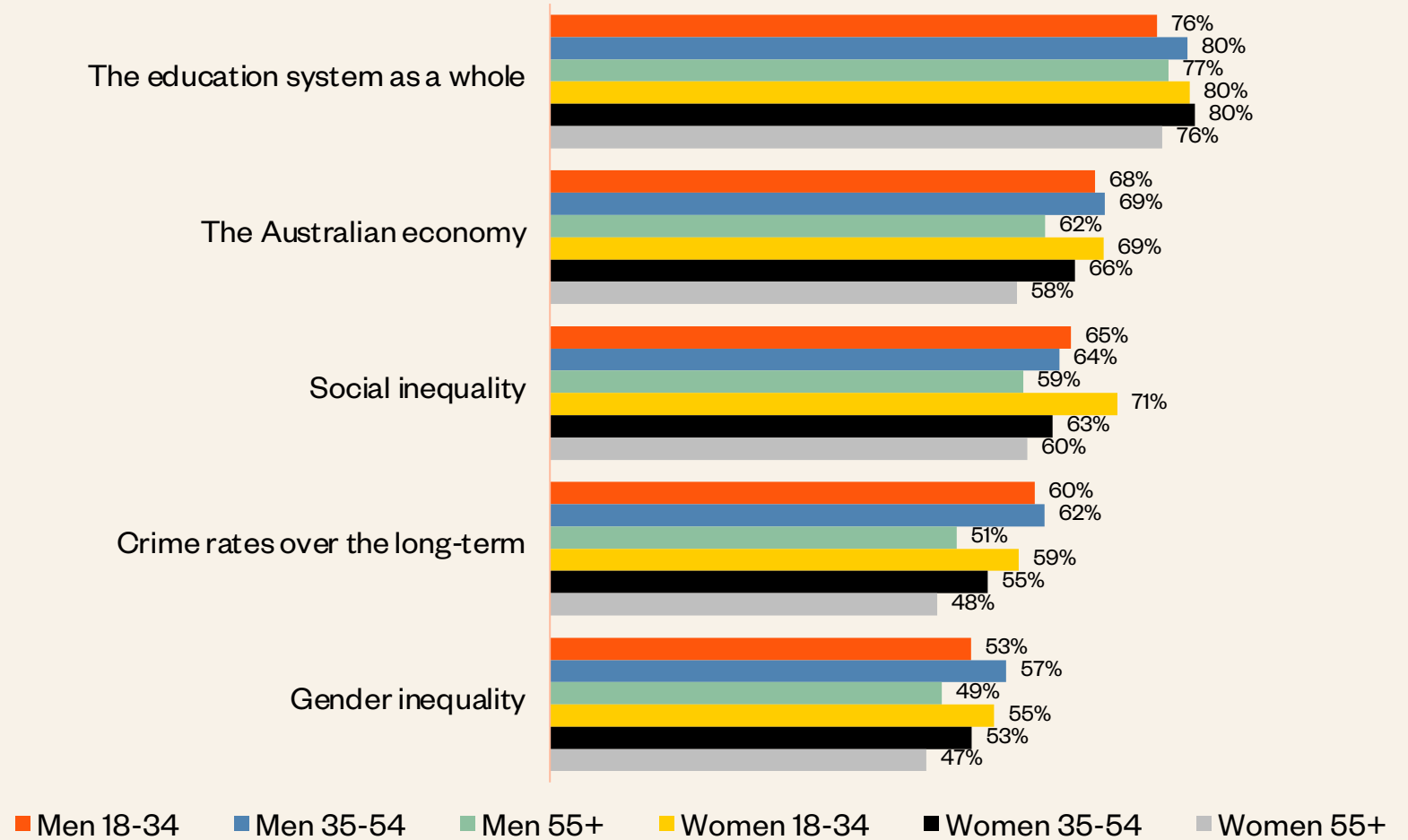


Q. If there was a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system, how do you think it would affect each of the following?

Base: Men, n=2,343; Women, n=2,434

**WOMEN 18-34 YEARS OLD  
ARE MOST LIKELY, TO  
RECOGNISE THE EFFECT  
EARLY LEARNING CAN HAVE  
ON SOCIAL INEQUALITY.**

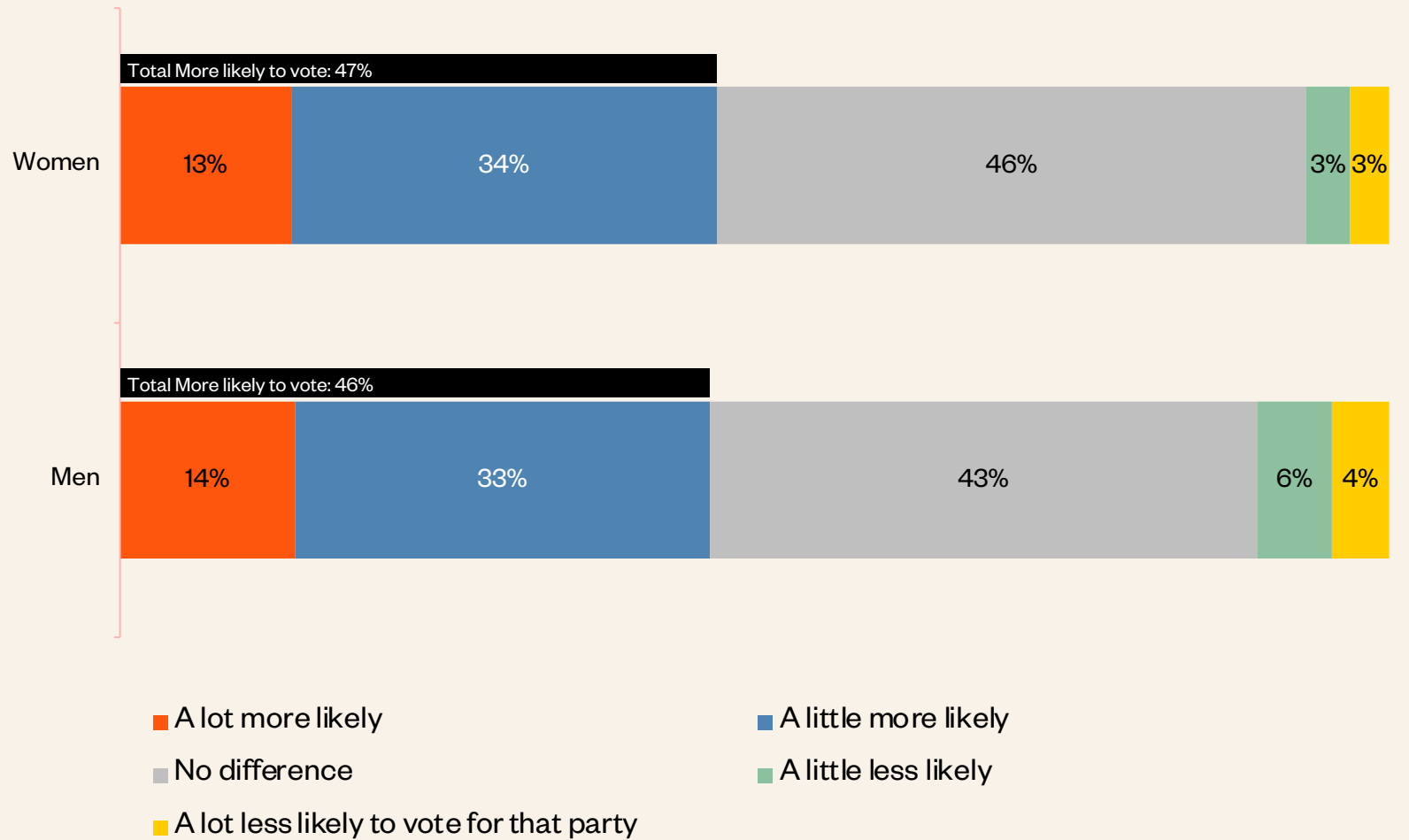
**Effect of universal high-quality early childhood education and care system (% Make it a lot/a little better)**



Q. If there was a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system, how do you think it would affect each of the following?  
Base: Men 18-34 (n=710), Men 35-54 (n=803), Men 55+ (n=830), Women 18-34 (n=729), Women 35-54 (n=841), Women 55+ (n=864)

**THIS POLICY APPEARS  
MORE LIKELY TO ATTRACT  
VOTES THAN PUT  
PARTICIPANTS OFF.**

### Influence of a universal ECE and care policy on voting intention (%)

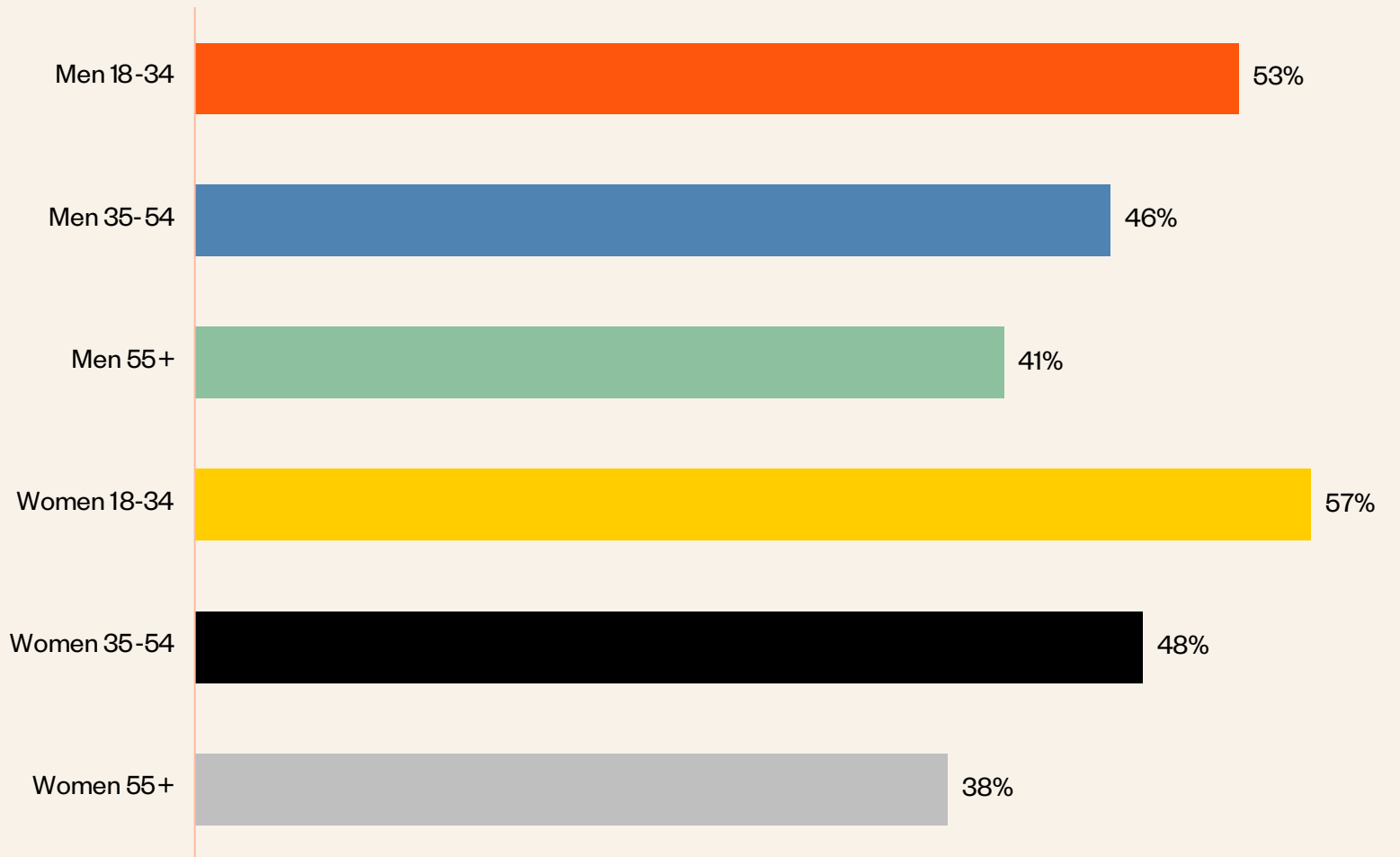


Q. If a party committed to introducing a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system, how would that affect your likelihood of voting for that party?

Base: Men, n=2,343; Women, n=2,434

**A UNIVERSAL EARLY  
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION  
AND CARE POLICY IS MORE  
LIKELY TO PUSH 18-34 YEAR  
OLDS, REGARDLESS OF  
GENDER, TO VOTE FOR THE  
PARTY COMMITTED TO IT.**

**Influence of a universal ECE and care policy on voting intention (% A lot / little more likely to vote)**

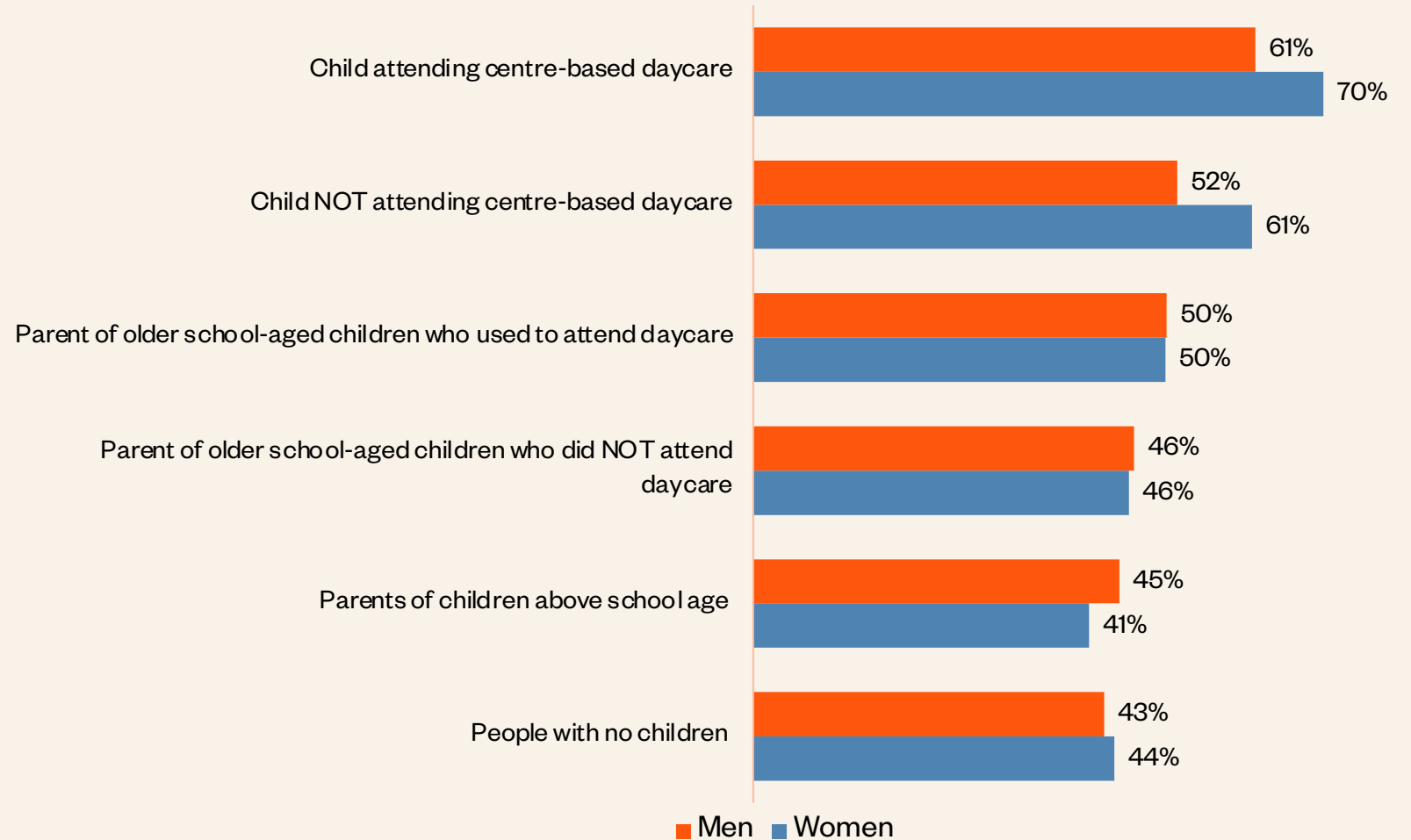


Q. If a party committed to introducing a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system, how would that affect your likelihood of voting for that party?  
Base: Men 18-34 (n=710), Men 35-54 (n=803), Men 55+ (n=830), Women 18-34 (n=729), Women 35-54 (n=841), Women 55+ (n=864)



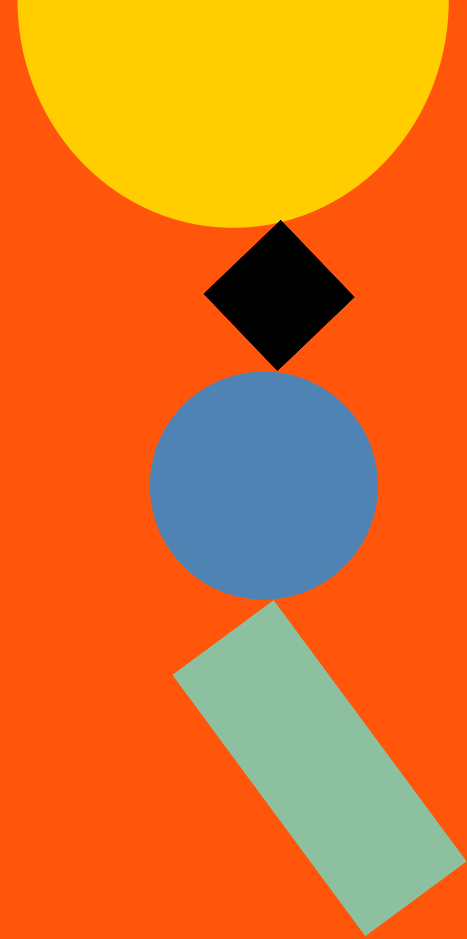
**WOMEN WITH CHILDREN UNDER SCHOOL AGE, ARE MOST LIKELY TO VOTE FOR A PARTY COMMITTED TO INTRODUCING A UNIVERSAL HIGH-QUALITY EARLY LEARNING SYSTEM.**

**Influence of a universal ECE and care policy on voting intention (% A lot / A little more likely)**



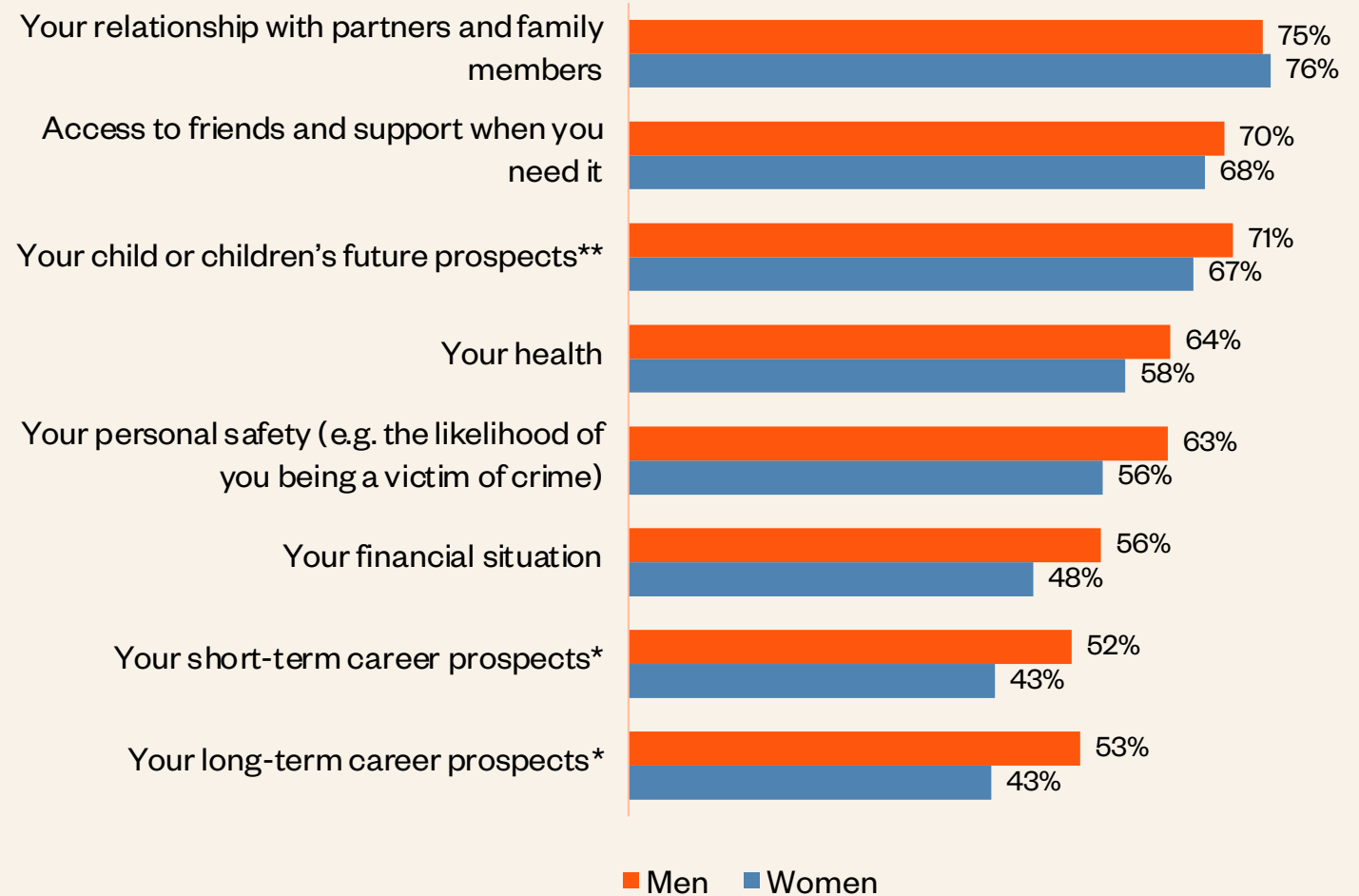
Q. If a party committed to introducing a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system, how would that affect your likelihood of voting for that party?  
 Base: Men, n=2,343; Women, n=2,434; Child attending centre-based daycare: Men, n=230; Women, n=225; Child NOT attending centre-based daycare: Men, n=74; Women, n=141; Parent of older school-aged children who used to attend daycare: Men, n=253; Women, n=209; Parent of older school-aged children who did NOT attend daycare: Men, n=152; Women, n=184; Parents of children above school age: Men, n=646; Women, n=770; People with no children: Men, n=988; Women, n=905

# **BALANCING FAMILY LIFE AND CAREER GOALS**



**MEN TEND TO FEEL MORE POSITIVELY ABOUT ASPECTS OF THEIR LIVES THAN WOMEN - PARTICULARLY THEIR CAREER PROSPECTS.**

**Positive attitude towards aspects of life (% Very / Fairly positive)**



Q. How positive or negative do you feel about each of the following?

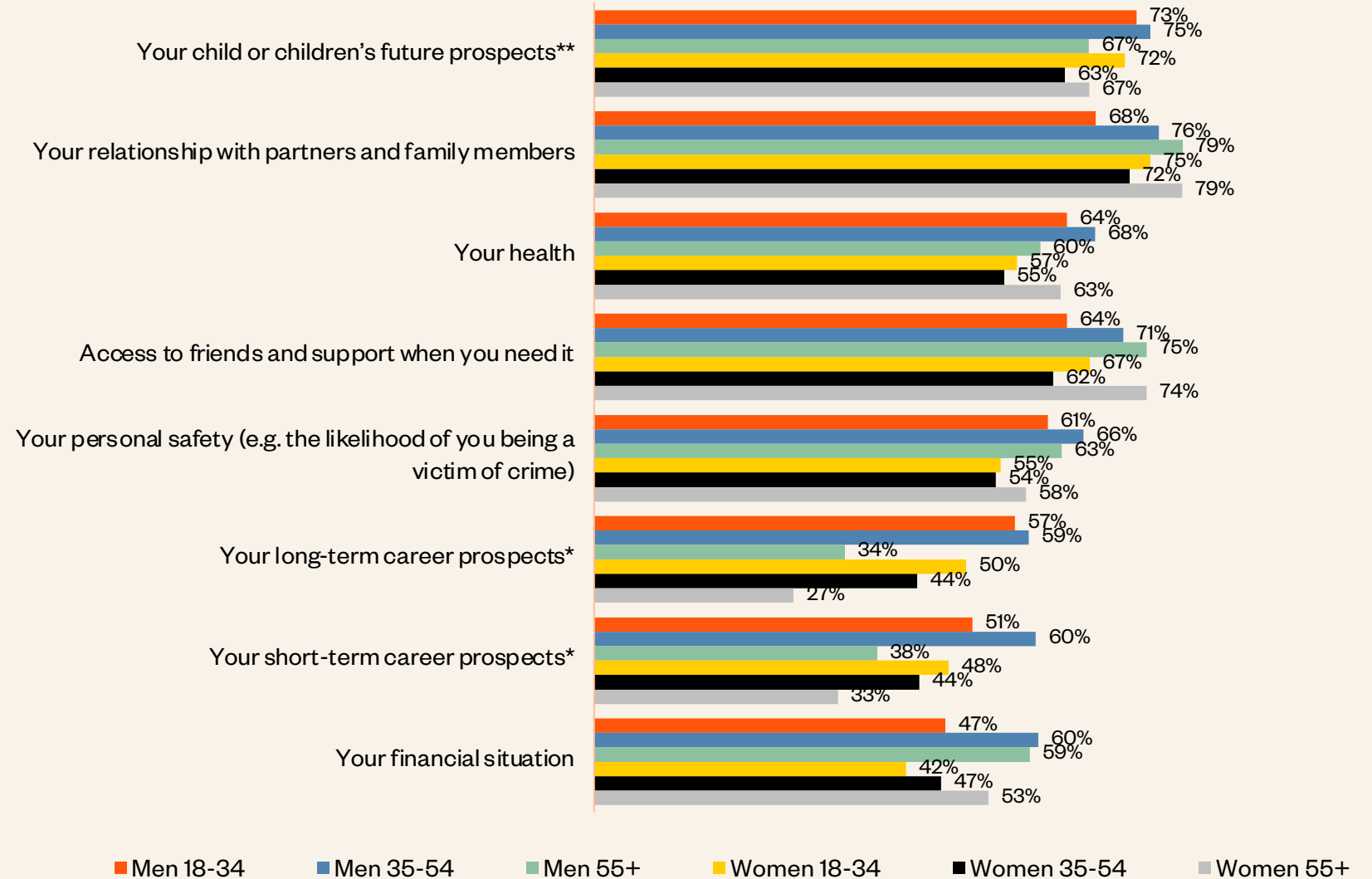
Base: Men, n=2,343; Women, n=2,434

\*Only asked of respondents who weren't retired: Men, n=1,849; Women, n=1,943

\*\*Only asked of respondents who have a child/children of any age: Men, n=1,312; Women, n=1,483

**OLDER PARTICIPANTS -  
REGARDLESS OF GENDER -  
FEEL MORE POSITIVELY  
ABOUT THEIR FINANCIAL  
SITUATION.**

**Positive attitude towards aspects of life (% Very / Fairly positive)**



Q. How positive or negative do you feel about each of the following?

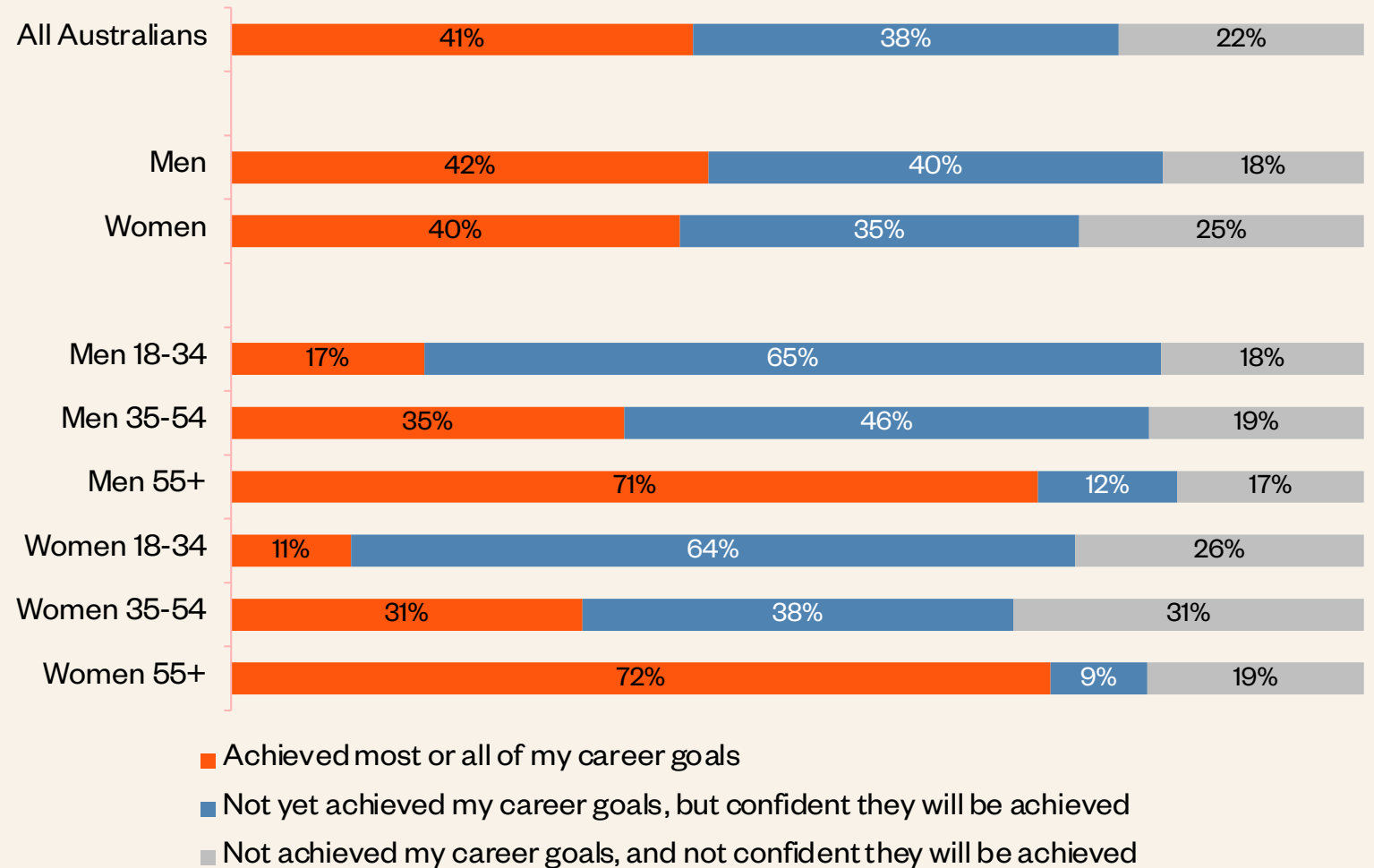
Base: Men 18-34 (n=710), Men 35-54 (n=803), Men 55+ (n=830), Women 18-34 (n=729), Women 35-54 (n=841), Women 55+ (n=864)

\*Only asked of respondents who weren't retired: Men 18-34 (n=710), Men 35-54 (n=783), Men 55+ (n=356), Women 18-34 (n=729), Women 35-54 (n=834), Women 55+ (n=380)

\*\*Only asked of respondents who have a child/children of any age: Men 18-34 (n=208), Men 35-54 (n=543), Men 55+ (n=561), Women 18-34 (n=314), Women 35-54 (n=581), Women 55+ (n=588)

# 2 IN 5 AUSTRALIANS HAVE ACHIEVED THEIR CAREER GOALS, AND THIS INCREASES DEPENDING ON THEIR AGE.

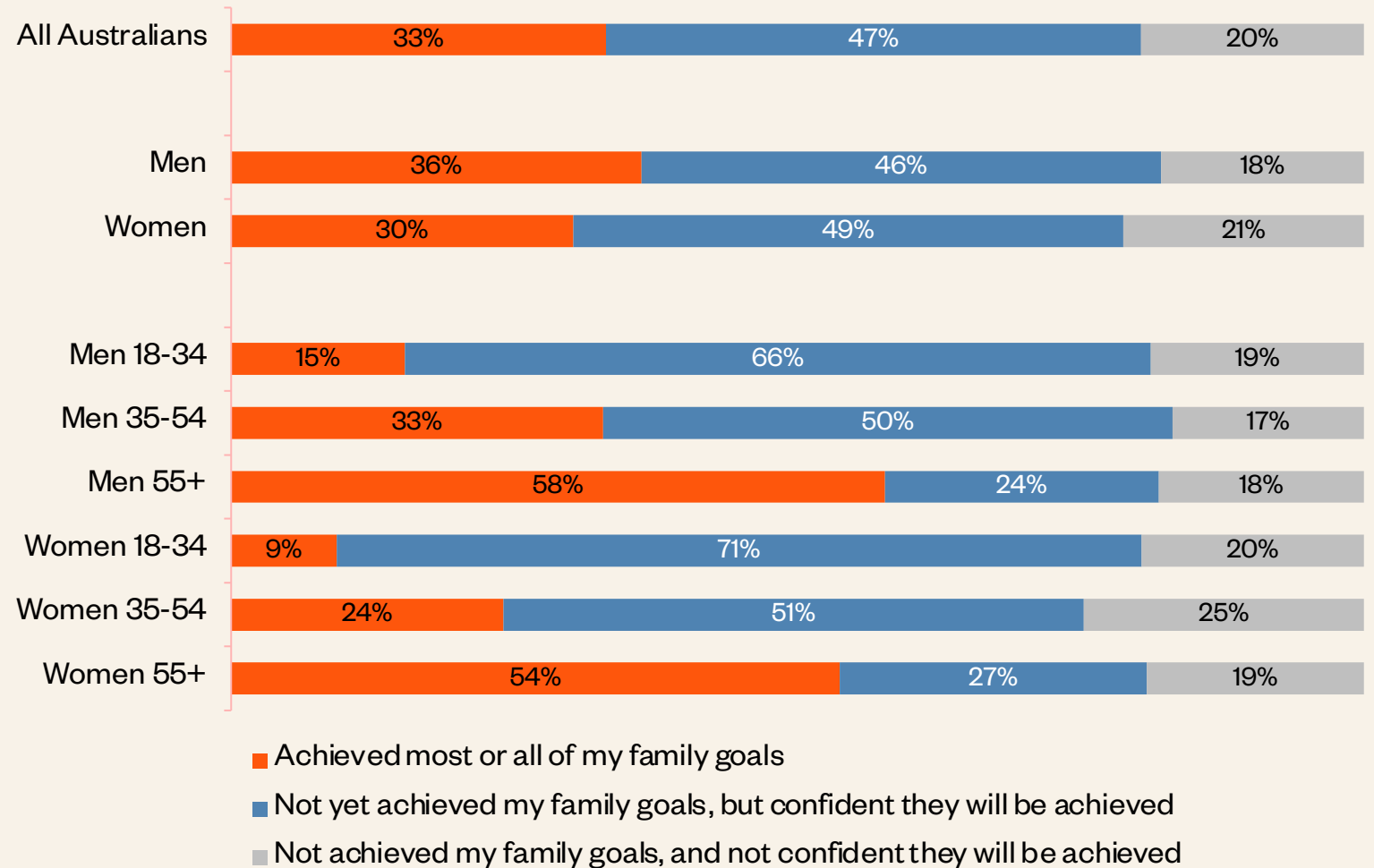
## Career goals achieved (%)



Q. Which of the following best applies to you?  
Base: All Australians, (n=4,786); Men, (n=2,343); Women, (n=2,434); Men 18-34 (n=710), Men 35-54 (n=803), Men 55+ (n=830), Women 18-34 (n=729), Women 35-54 (n=841), Women 55+ (n=864)

**WOMEN 18-54 YEARS OLD  
ARE CONSIDERABLY BEHIND  
MEN IN THE SAME AGE  
GROUPS, IN TERMS OF  
ACHIEVING ALL OR MOST  
FAMILY GOALS.**

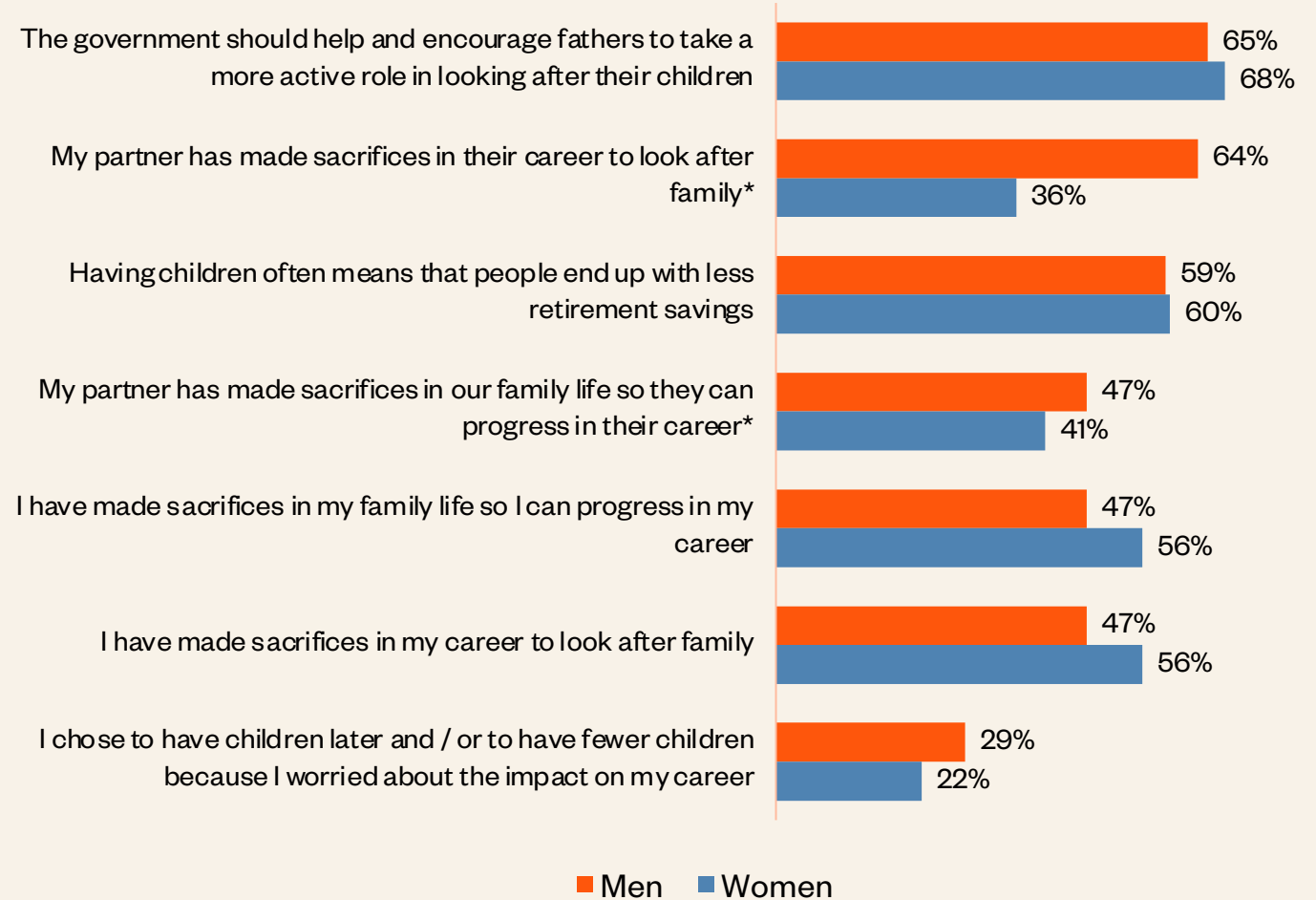
Family goals achieved (%)



Q. Which of the following best applies to you?  
Base: All Australians, (n=4,786); Men, (n=2,343); Women, (n=2,434); Men 18-34 (n=710), Men 35-54 (n=803), Men 55+ (n=830), Women 18-34 (n=729), Women 35-54 (n=841), Women 55+ (n=864)

**NEARLY TWO-THIRDS OF MEN WHO LIVE WITH THEIR PARTNER - SAY THEIR PARTNER HAS MADE SACRIFICES IN THEIR CAREER TO LOOK AFTER THE FAMILY - COMPARED TO ONLY A THIRD OF WOMEN IN THE SAME SITUATION.**

**Agreement regarding balancing family and career goals (% Strongly / Somewhat agree)**



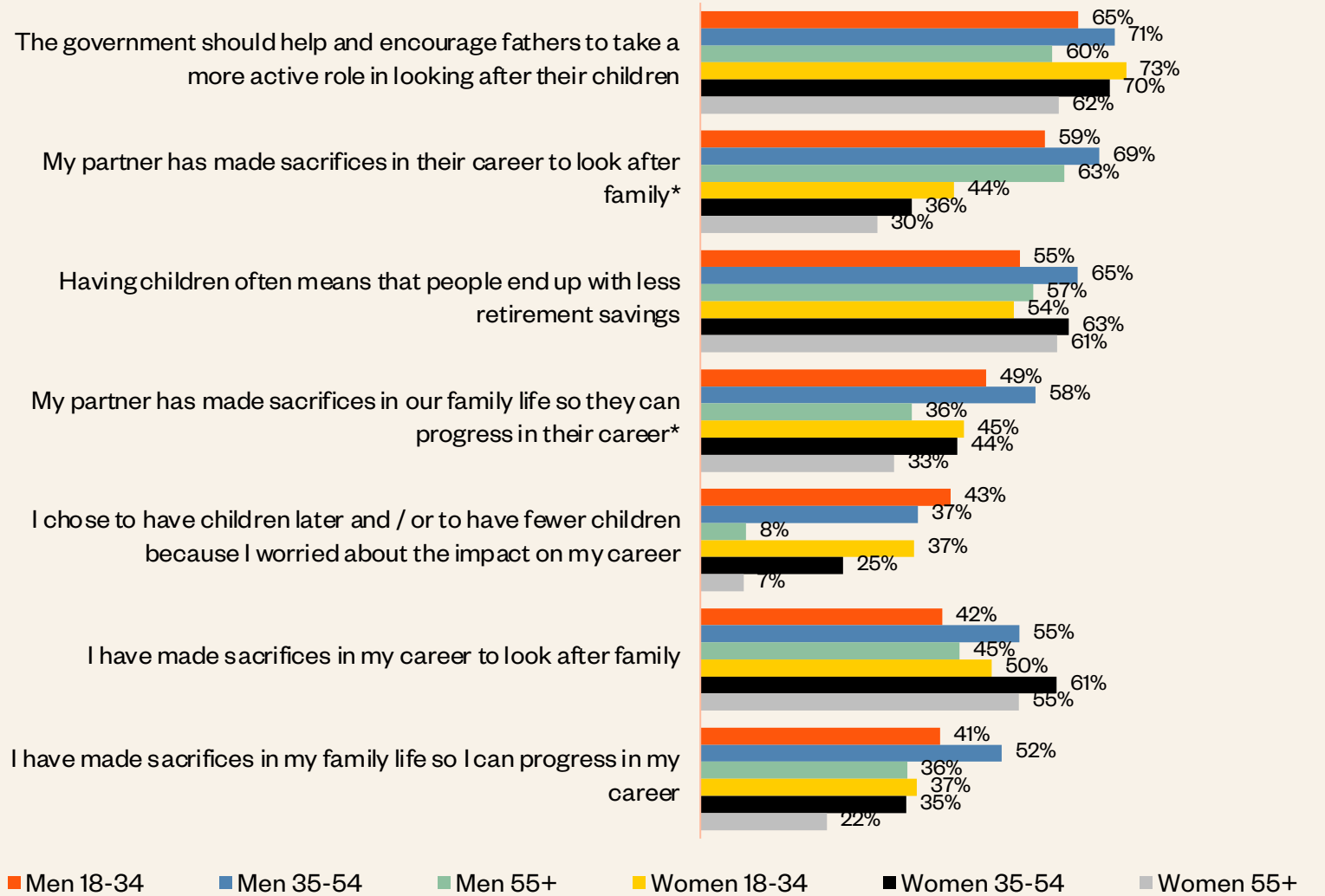
Q. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: Men, n=2,343; Women, n=2,434

\*Only asked of respondents who live with a partner: Men, n=1,455; Women, n=1,410

# ANOTHER TWO-THIRDS OF MEN 18-54 AGREE THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD ENCOURAGE FATHERS TO TAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN CHILD REARING.

## Agreement regarding balancing family and career goals (% Strongly / Somewhat agree)



Q. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

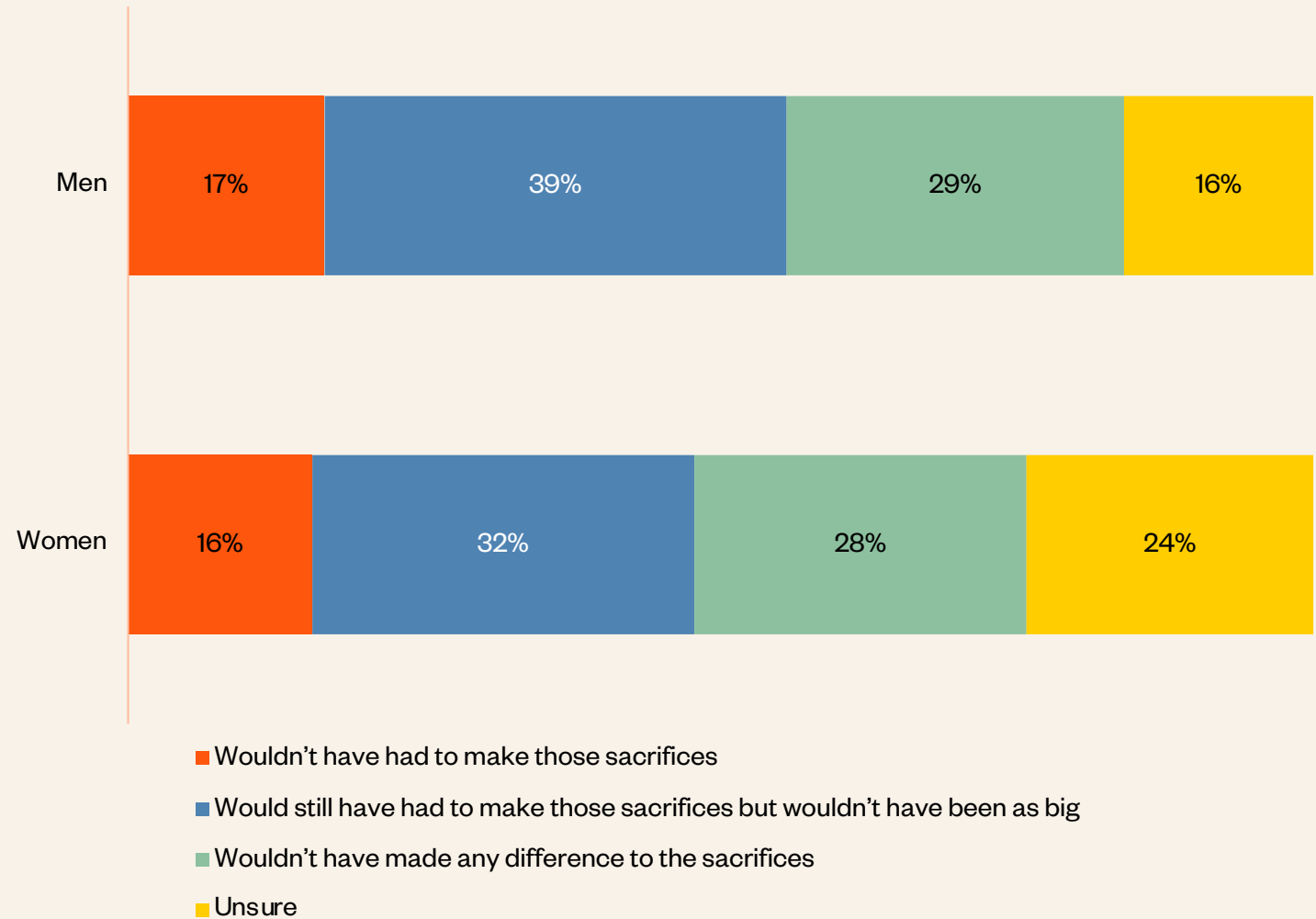
Base: Men 18-34 (n=710), Men 35-54 (n=803), Men 55+ (n=830), Women 18-34 (n=729), Women 35-54 (n=841), Women 55+ (n=864)

\*Only asked of respondents who live with a partner: Men 18-34 (n=339), Men 35-54 (n=539), Men 55+ (n=577), Women 18-34 (n=412), Women 35-54 (n=530), Women 55+ (n=468)



**2 IN 5 MEN SAY THEIR CAREER OR FAMILY SACRIFICES WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN AS BIG, IF THEY HAD ACCESS TO UNIVERSAL HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE.**

Views towards career/family sacrifices made (%)

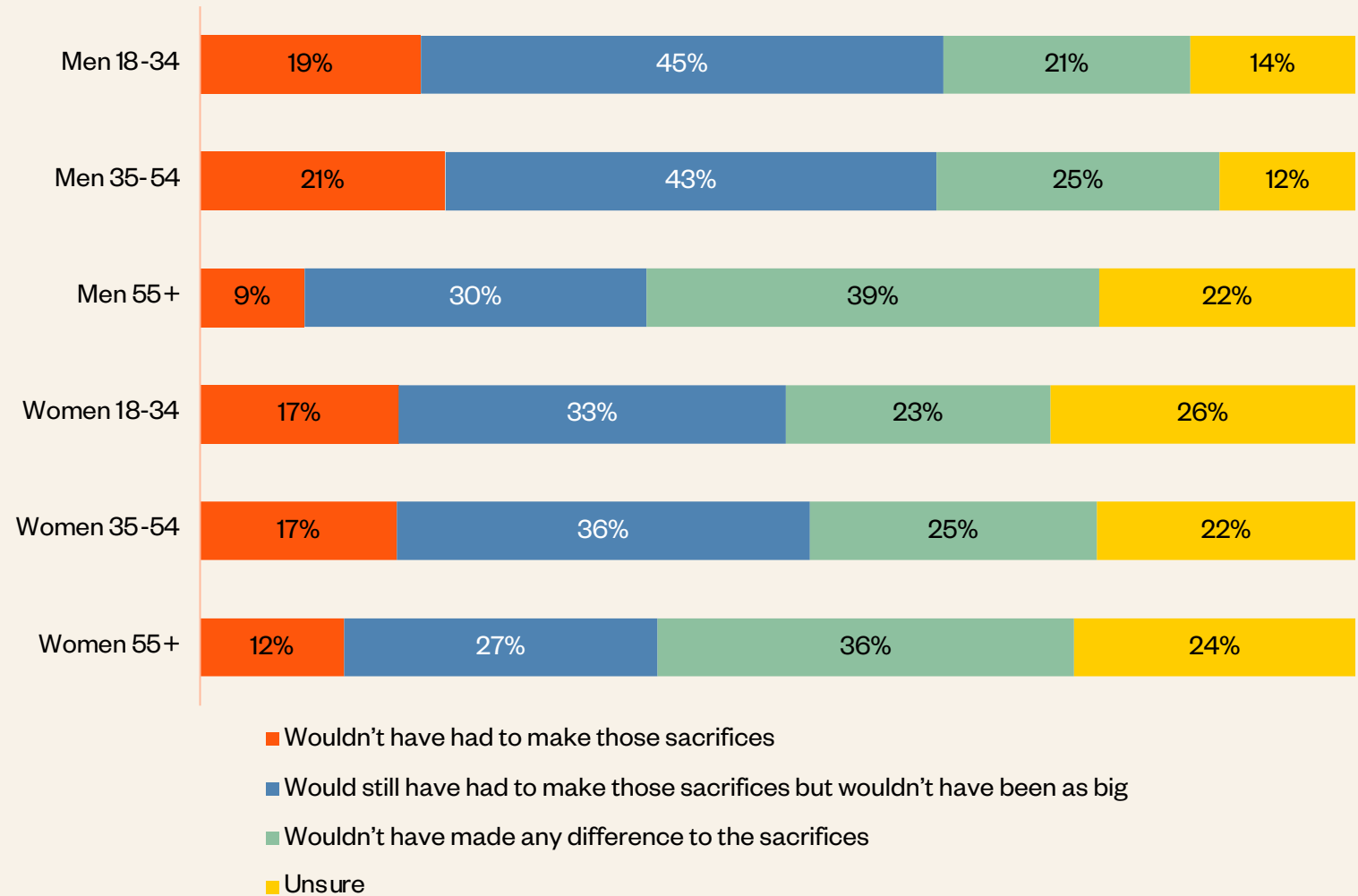


Q. You said earlier that you had made sacrifices in your career for your family or in your family life for your career. Which of the following do you think would have applied to you had you access to a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system?

Base: Respondents who strongly/somewhat agree that they have made career or family sacrifices Men, n=1,430; Women, n=1,553

**1 IN 5 MEN AGED 18-54 SAY THEY WOULDN'T HAVE HAD TO MAKE FAMILY OR CAREER SACRIFICES, IF THEY HAD ACCESS TO UNIVERSAL HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE.**

Views towards career/family sacrifices made (%)



Q. You said earlier that you had made sacrifices in your career for your family or in your family life for your career. Which of the following do you think would have applied to you had you access to a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system?  
 Base: Respondents who strongly/somewhat agree that they have made career or family sacrifices: Men 18-34 (n=411), Men 35-54 (n=543), Men 55+ (n=476), Women 18-34 (n=449), Women 35-54 (n=585), Women 55+ (n=519)