



# **THE AUSTRALIAN EARLY LEARNING MONITOR.**

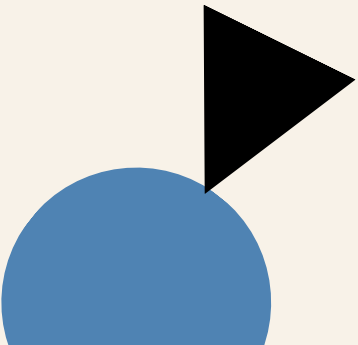
Rural & metro results  
June 2021.



**THRIVE  
BY FIVE**

# KEY FINDINGS.

1. Generally, there is broad understanding of the impact of early childhood education and care, agreement and support for a universal system across Australia.
2. Regardless of location, at least three-quarters of parents with a child under school-age say cheaper access to good quality care which better suited the times they work, would help their family.
3. Similarly, a minimum 75% of Australians think a universal high-quality early childhood education and care would be good for the education system as a whole.
4. The importance of the issue to participants' vote does vary by location though.
5. Despite 60% of rural parents with a child under school-age attending centre-based daycare (compared to 72% of inner metro parents) – 63% would vote for a party which had a universal early childhood education and care policy.
6. 42% of rural residents overall, say that improving the early childhood education and care system is important to their vote – compared to 48% of inner metropolitan residents.
7. 2 in 5 inner metropolitan parents who have made career or family sacrifices say these wouldn't have been as big, if they had access to a universal high-quality early childhood education and care.
8. This is higher than the 30% of rural parents in the same situation.



# METHODOLOGY.

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

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**Sample:**

Inner metro, n=1,792  
Outer metro, n=1,503  
Regional, n=497  
Rural, n=992

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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.

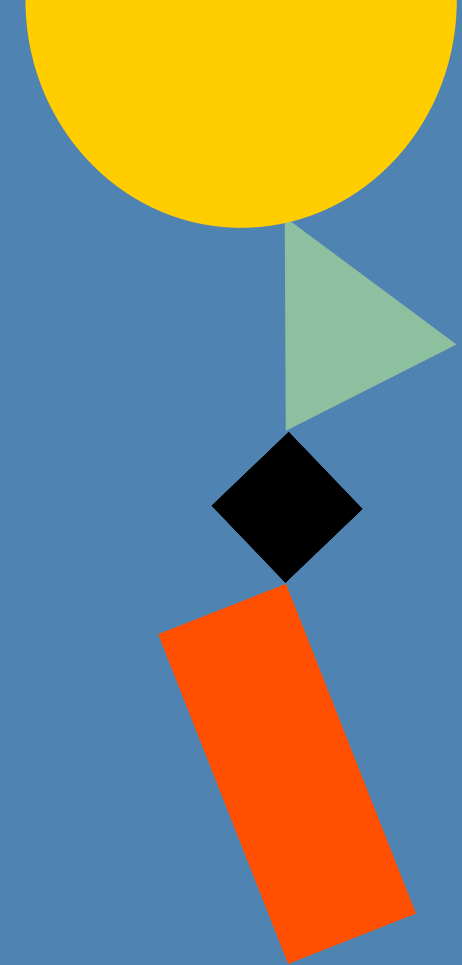
The national online survey was hosted by Qualtrics and took respondents approximately 15 minutes to complete. The definition of metropolitan, regional and rural areas uses location information sourced from ABS 2016 census.

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

The maximum margin of error is  $\pm 4.4\%$  at a 95% confidence level for the full sample. For questions asked of half sample, maximum margin of error is  $\pm 6.4\%$ .

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/>

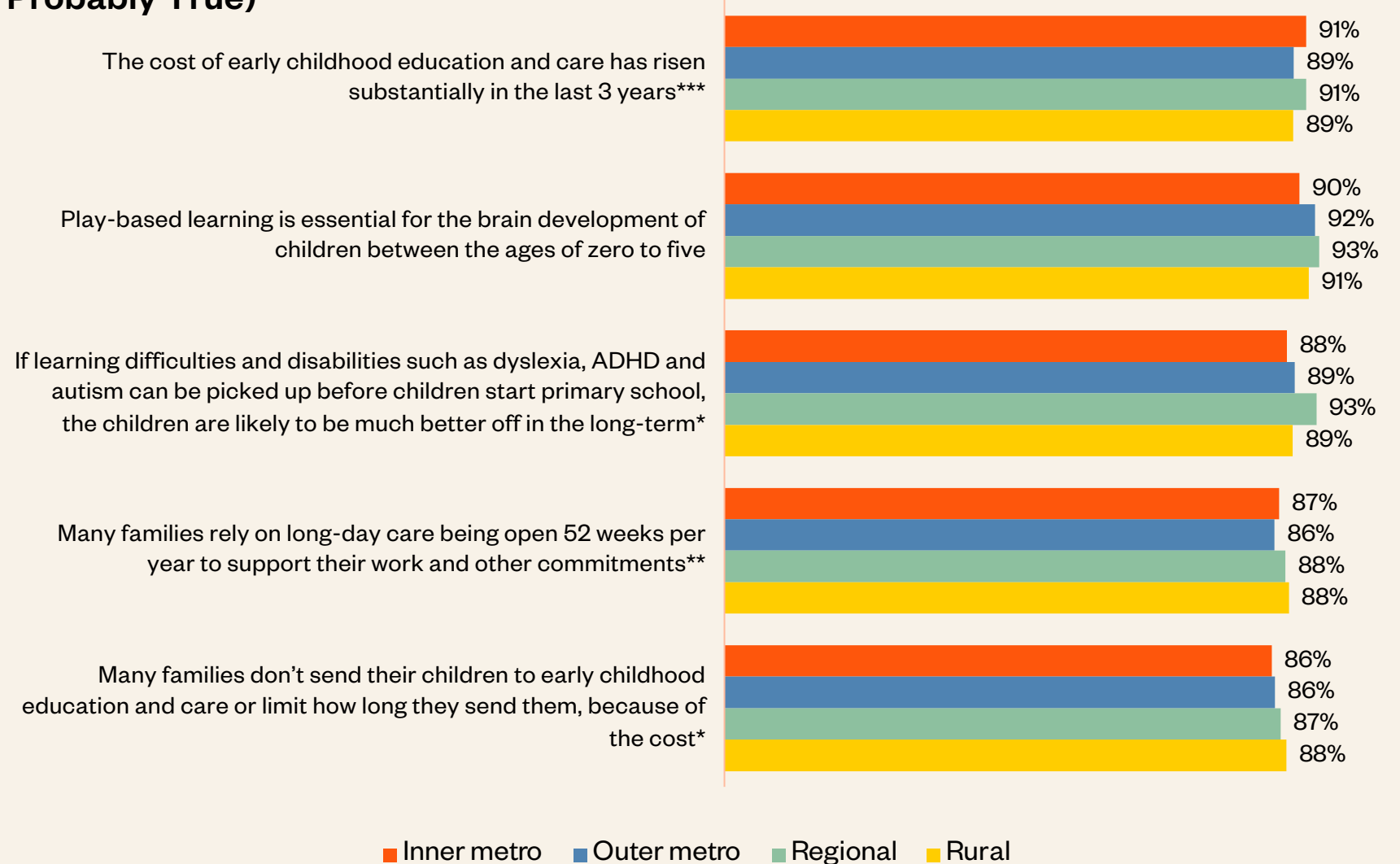
# **CURRENT ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS.**



**THRIVE  
BY FIVE**

# UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE CUTS ACROSS AUSTRALIA.

## 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: Inner metro, n=1,792; Outer metro, n=1,503; Regional, n=497; Rural, n=992

\*Only shown to half sample: Inner metro, n=910; Outer metro, n=735; Regional, n=238; Rural, n=506

\*\*Only shown to half sample: Inner metro, n=882; Outer metro, n=768; Regional, n=259; Rural, n=486

\*\*\*Only shown to parents with a child that attends/attended daycare: Inner metro, n=420; Outer metro, n=305; Regional, n=64; Rural, n=129

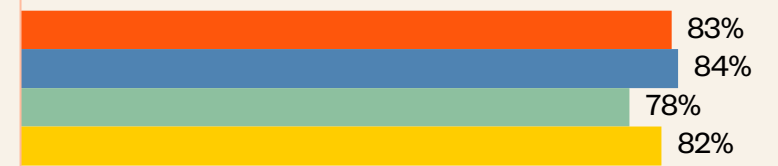
**THE MAJORITY OF AUSTRALIANS, REGARDLESS OF LOCATION, UNDERSTAND THAT DAYCARE PROVIDES MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLAY-BASED LEARNING.**

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

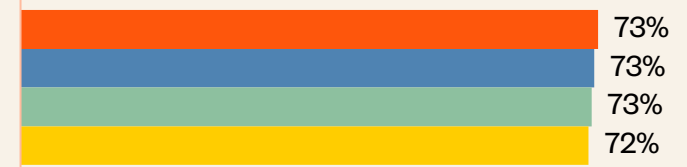
Children who attend daycare or preschool at a centre will often have more opportunities for play-based learning than those who do not



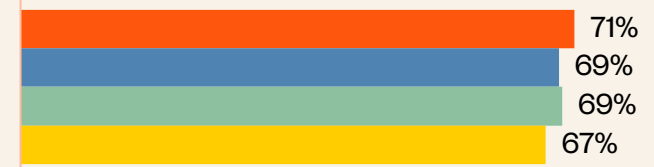
A high-quality early childhood education and care system would help ensure better outcomes for those children when they graduate Year 12



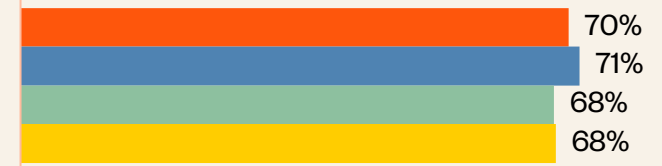
Australia's early childhood education and care system doesn't follow a consistent approach or deliver uniform standards of education and care



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\*\*



■ Inner metro ■ Outer metro ■ Regional ■ Rural

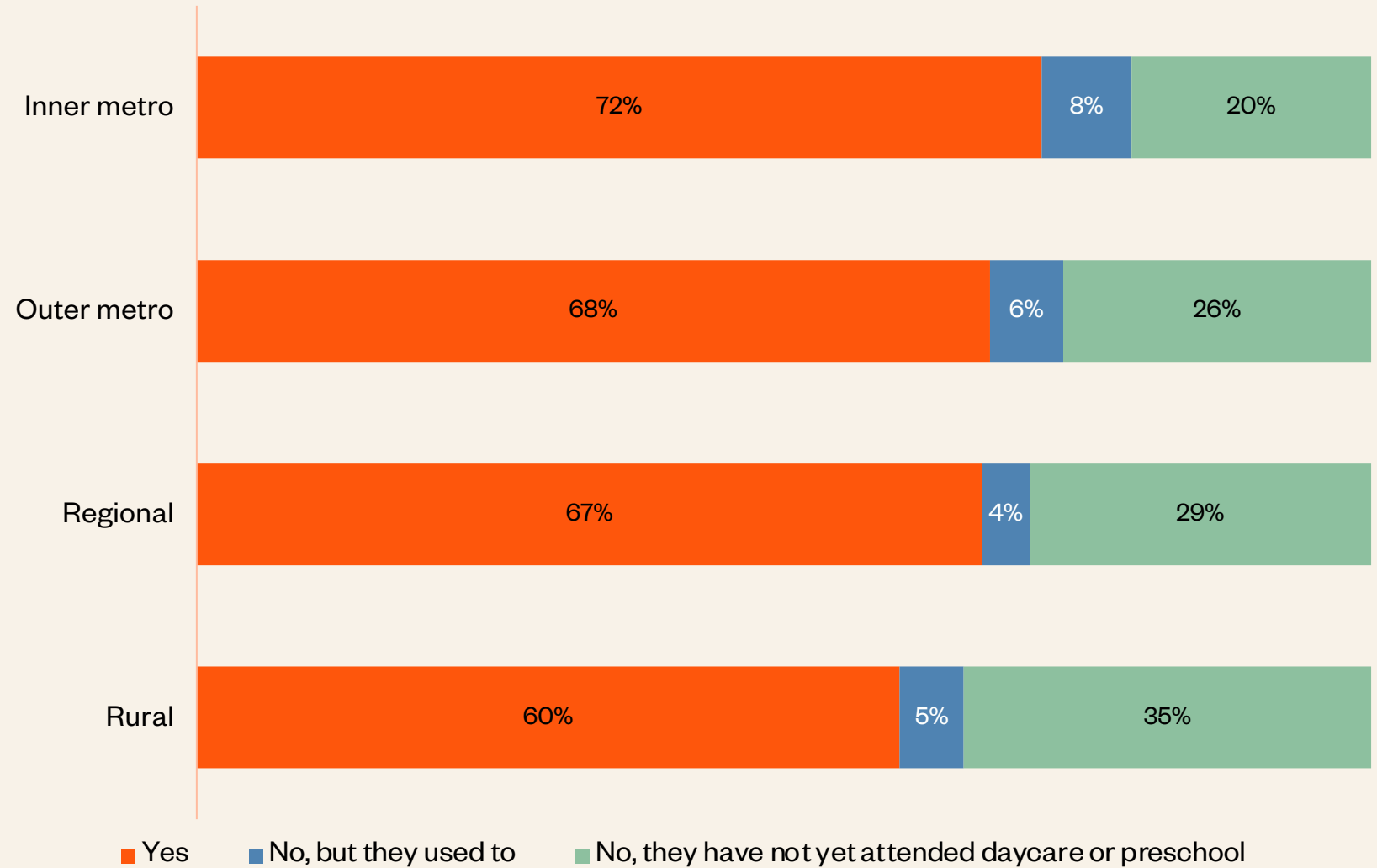
Q. For each of the following statements about early childhood education and care, please indicate if you think they are definitely true, probably true, probably not true or definitely not true.

Base: Inner metro, n=1,792; Outer metro, n=1,503; Regional, n=497; Rural, n=992

\*\*Only shown to half sample: Inner metro, n=882; Outer metro, n=768; Regional, n=259; Rural, n=486

**THE FURTHER PARENTS ARE FROM METROPOLITAN AREAS, THE LESS LIKELY THEY ARE TO SEND THEIR CHILD TO CENTRE-BASED DAYCARE.**

### Attending centre-based daycare or preschool (%)

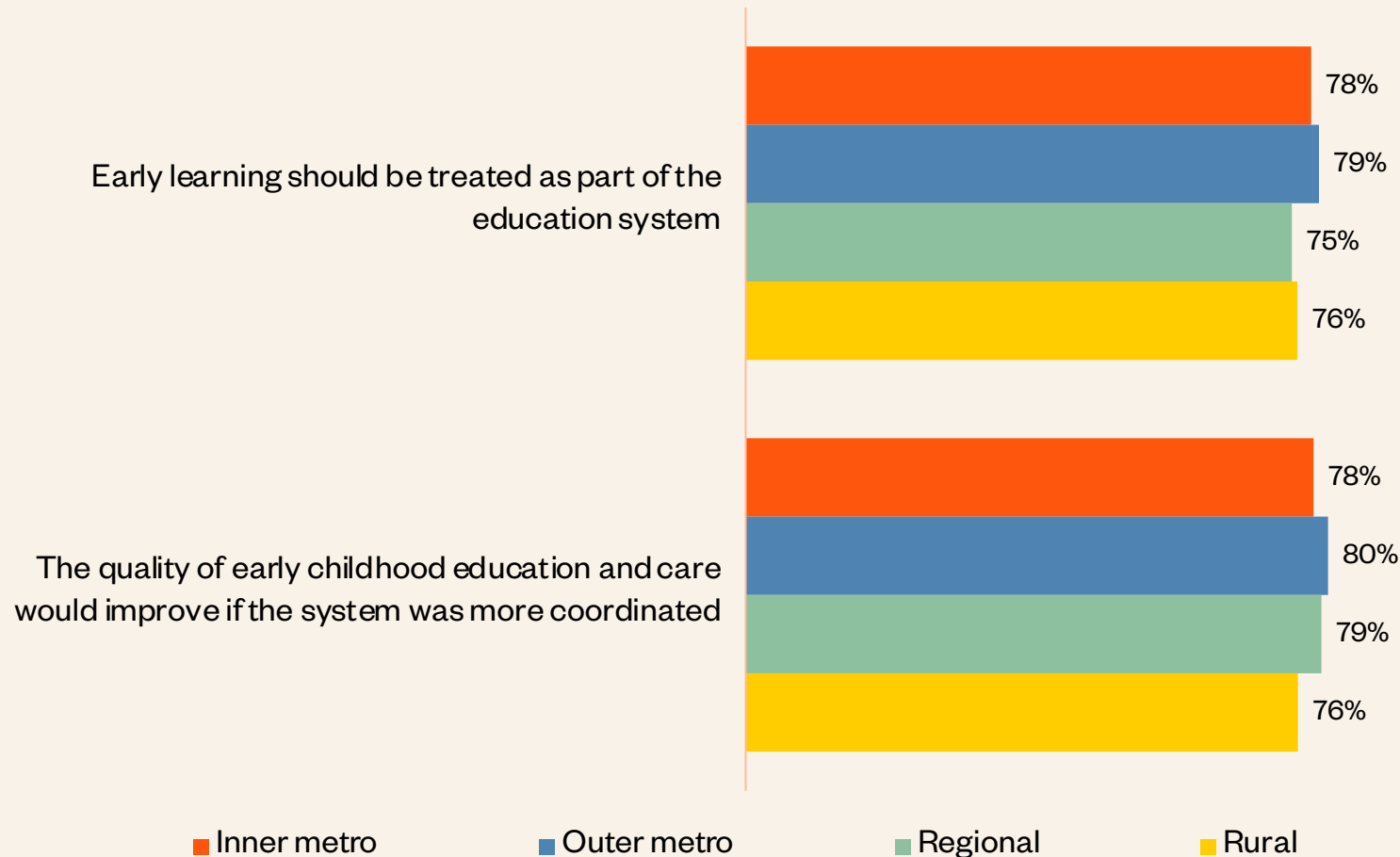


Q. Different names for early learning centres are used in different states and territories. For the purpose of the next few questions, please assume that 'centre-based daycare or preschool' refers to any formal early learning & care provided for children under school age through a centre. Does your child regularly attend centre-based daycare or preschool? If you have more than one child under school age, please answer for the child who most recently had a birthday.

Base: Parents with at least one child under school age Inner metro, n=306; Outer metro, n=189; Regional, n=57; Rural, n=118

**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)**

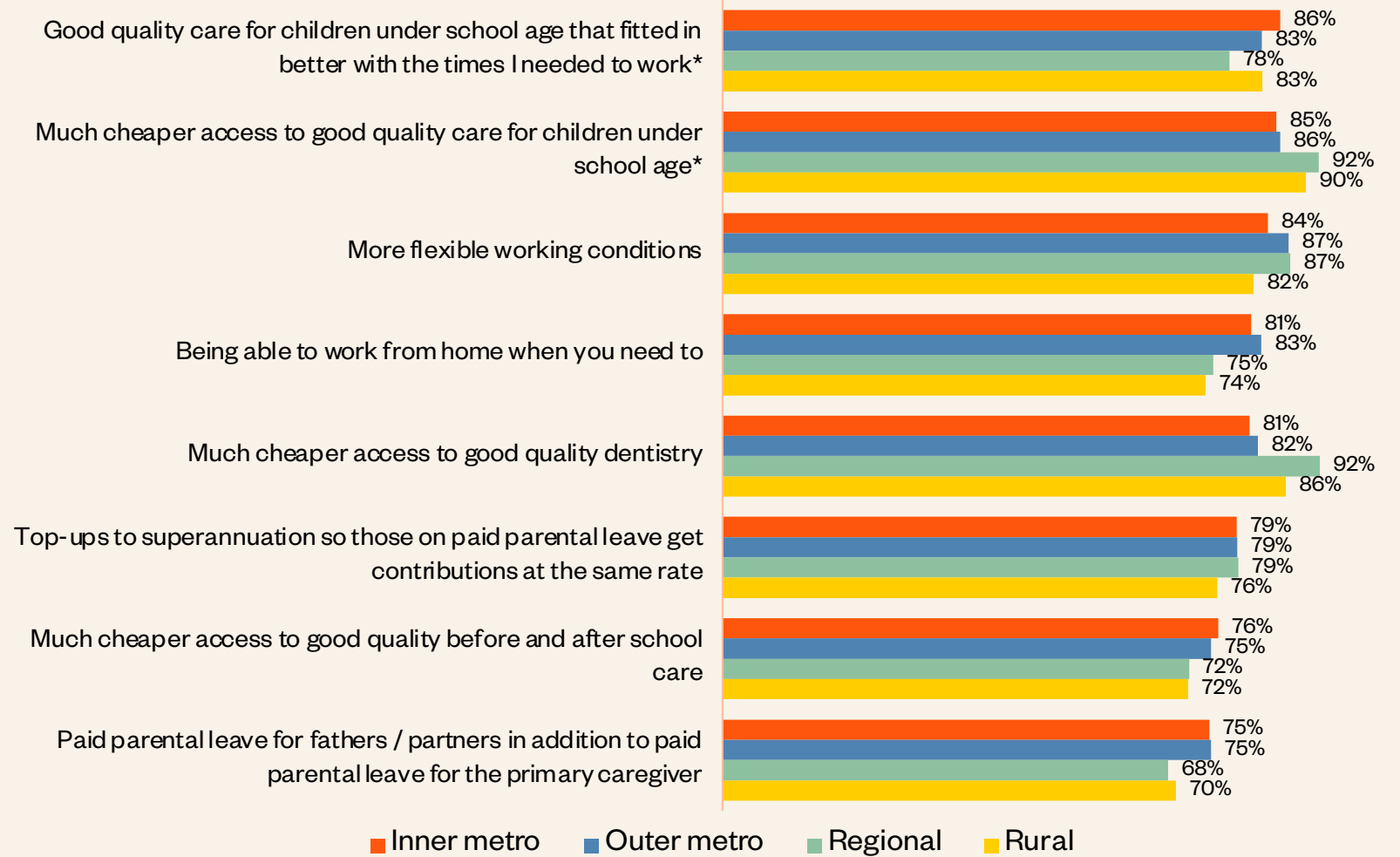


Q. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?  
Base: Inner metro, n=1,792; Outer metro, n=1,503; Regional, n=497; Rural, n=992



**MORE THAN THREE-  
QUARTERS OF PARENTS  
ACROSS AUSTRALIA FEEL  
GOOD QUALITY CARE  
WHICH FITTED IN BETTER  
WITH THEIR WORK,  
WOULD HELP THEIR  
FAMILIES.**

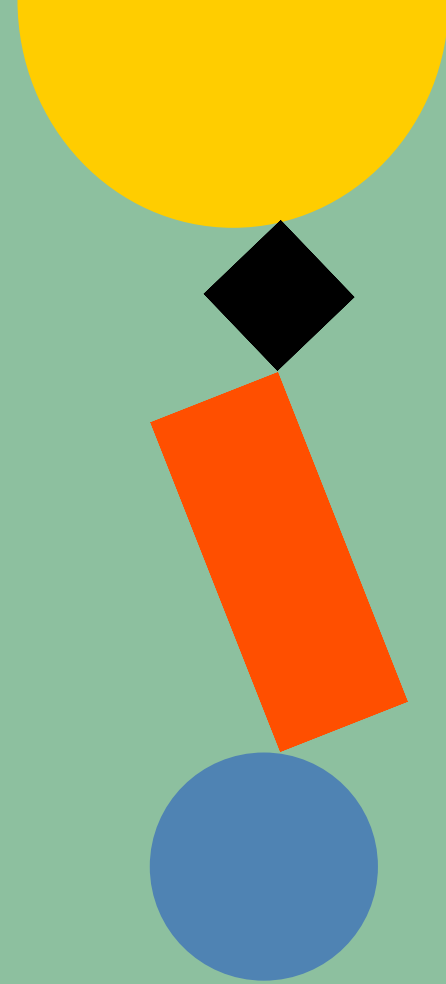
**What would help respondents and their families  
(% A lot /A fair amount)**



Q. How much would each of the following help you and your family, now or in the future?  
 Base: Inner metro resident with dependent children, n=657; Outer metro resident with dependent children, n=494; Regional resident with dependent children, n=127; Regional resident with dependent children, n=241

\*Only shown to parents with at least one child under school age: Inner metro, n=306; Outer metro, n=189; Regional, n=57; Rural, n=118

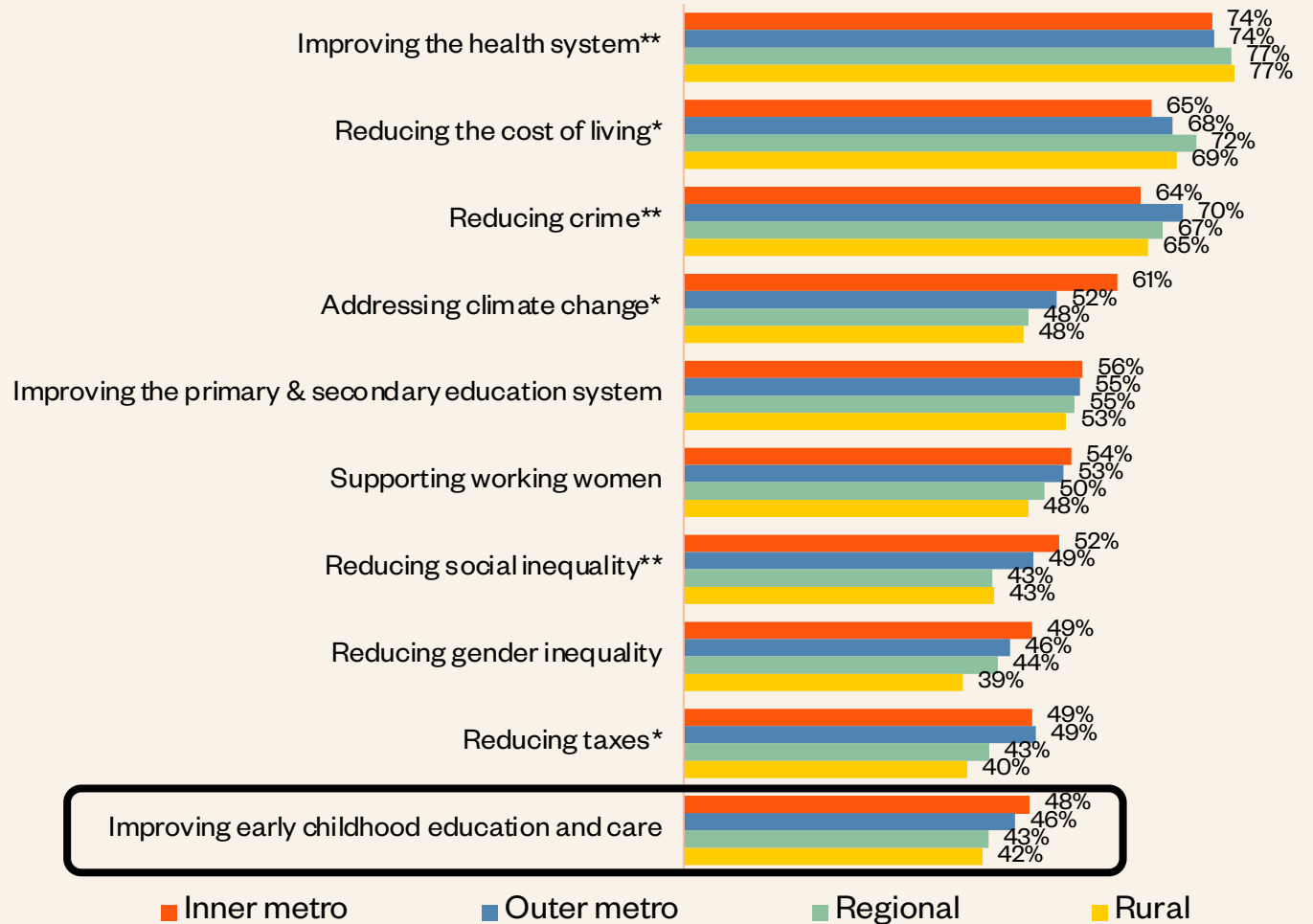
**TOWARDS A UNIVERSAL,  
HIGH-QUALITY EARLY  
LEARNING SYSTEM.**



**THRIVE  
BY FIVE**

**IMPROVING THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE SYSTEM IS A SECOND-TIER ISSUE; WHICH BECOMES LESS IMPORTANT THE FURTHER PARTICIPANTS ARE FROM METROPOLITAN AREAS.**

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?

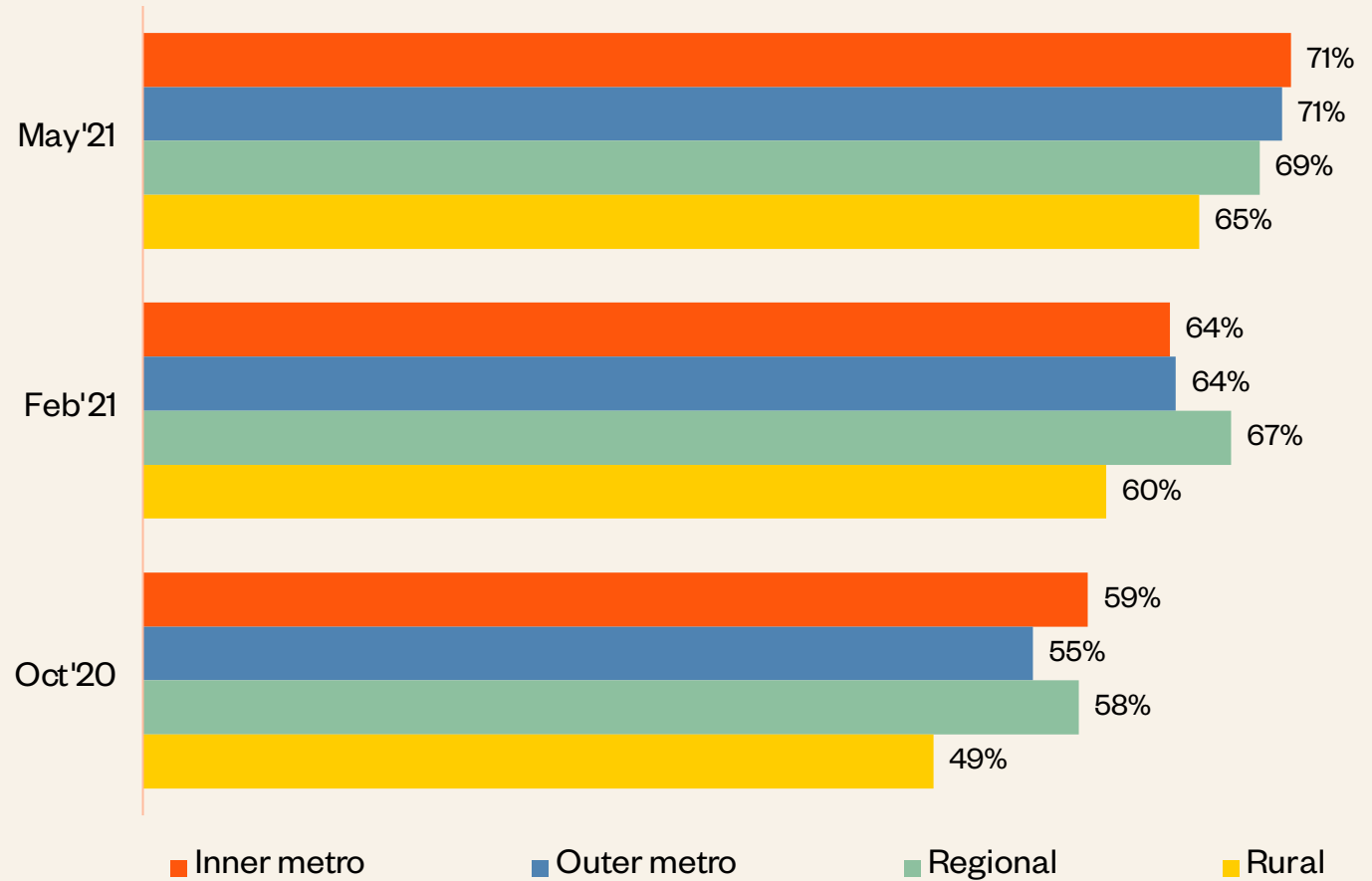
Base: Inner metro, n=1,792; Outer metro, n=1,503; Regional, n=497; Rural, n=992

\*Only shown to half sample: Inner metro, n=910; Outer metro, n=735; Regional, n=238; Rural, n=506

\*\*Only shown to half sample: Inner metro, n=882; Outer metro, n=768; Regional, n=259; Rural, n=486

**MORE THAN 3 IN 5 RURAL AUSTRALIANS AGREE THAT CHEAPER EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE IS GOOD FOR THE ECONOMY.**

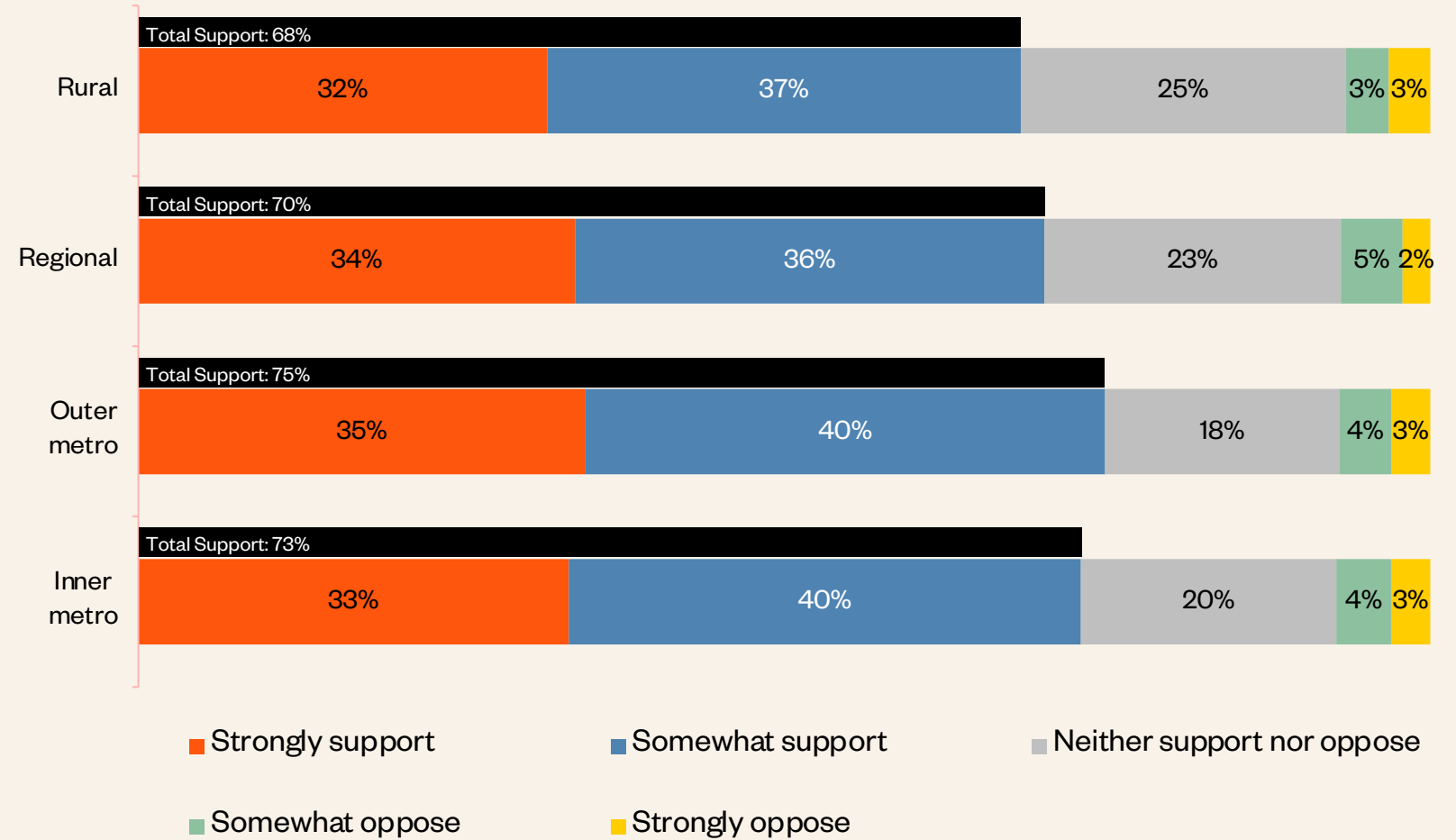
Agreement that cheaper early childhood education and care would be very good for the Australian economy as a whole (% Strongly / Somewhat agree)



Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?  
Base May'21: Inner metro, n=1,792; Outer metro, n=1,503; Regional, n=497; Rural, n=992  
Base Feb'21: Inner metro, n=366; Outer metro, n=333; Regional, n=136; Rural, n=235  
Base Oct'20: Inner metro, n=203; Outer metro, n=149; Regional, n=70; Rural, n=114

# SUPPORT FOR UNIVERSAL HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE IS HIGH ACROSS AUSTRALIA.

## Support for a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system (%)

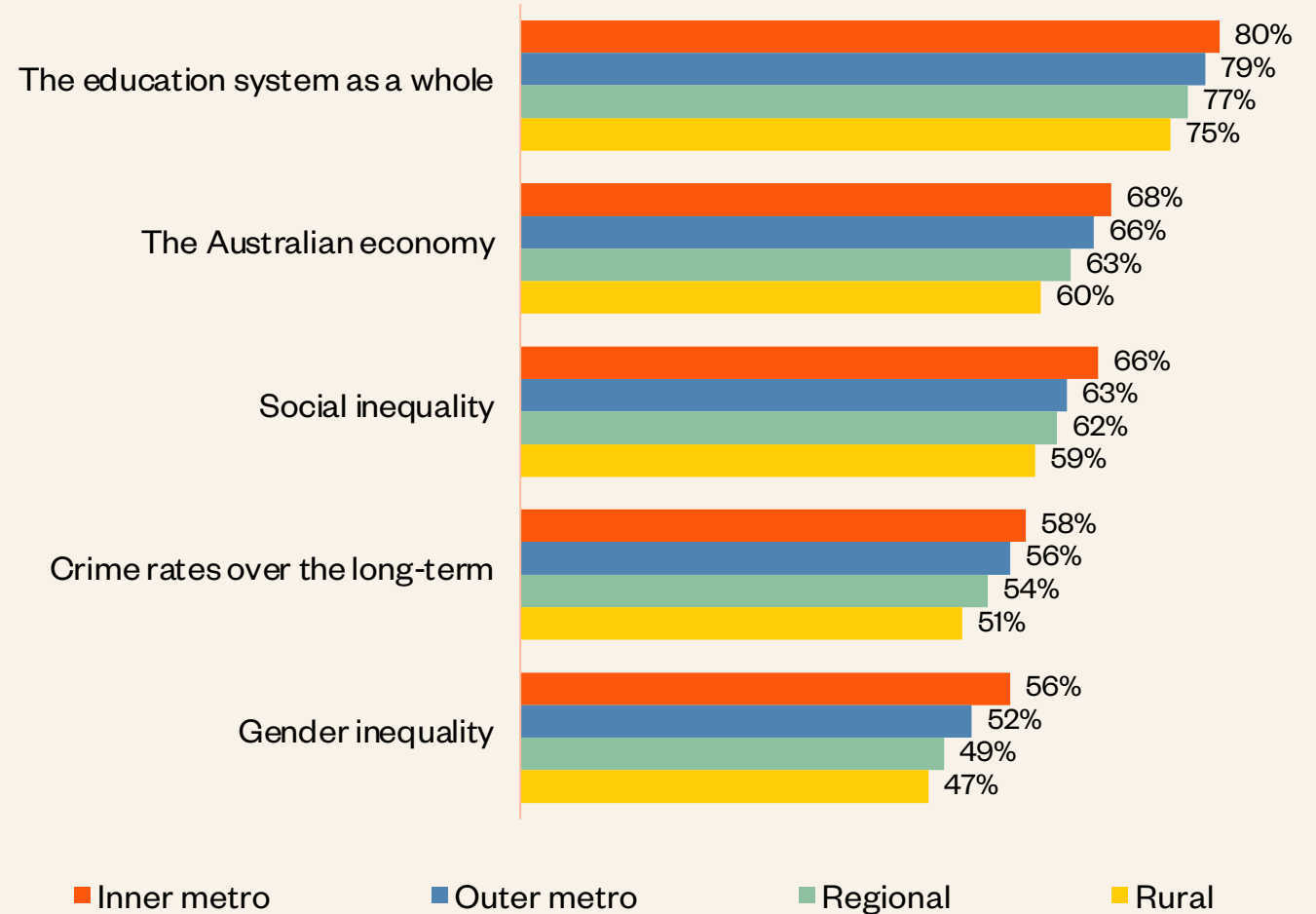


Q. For the purpose of the next few questions, please assume that 'a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system' would be one that was connected to the primary and secondary education system with a standard set of teaching priorities based around play-based learning. The system would 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: Inner metro, n=1,792; Outer metro, n=1,503; Regional, n=497; Rural, n=992

**MOST AUSTRALIANS THINK A UNIVERSAL EARLY LEARNING SYSTEM WOULD BE GOOD FOR THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AS A WHOLE - THOUGH THIS DECREASES THE FURTHER THEY LIVE FROM METROPOLITAN REGIONS.**

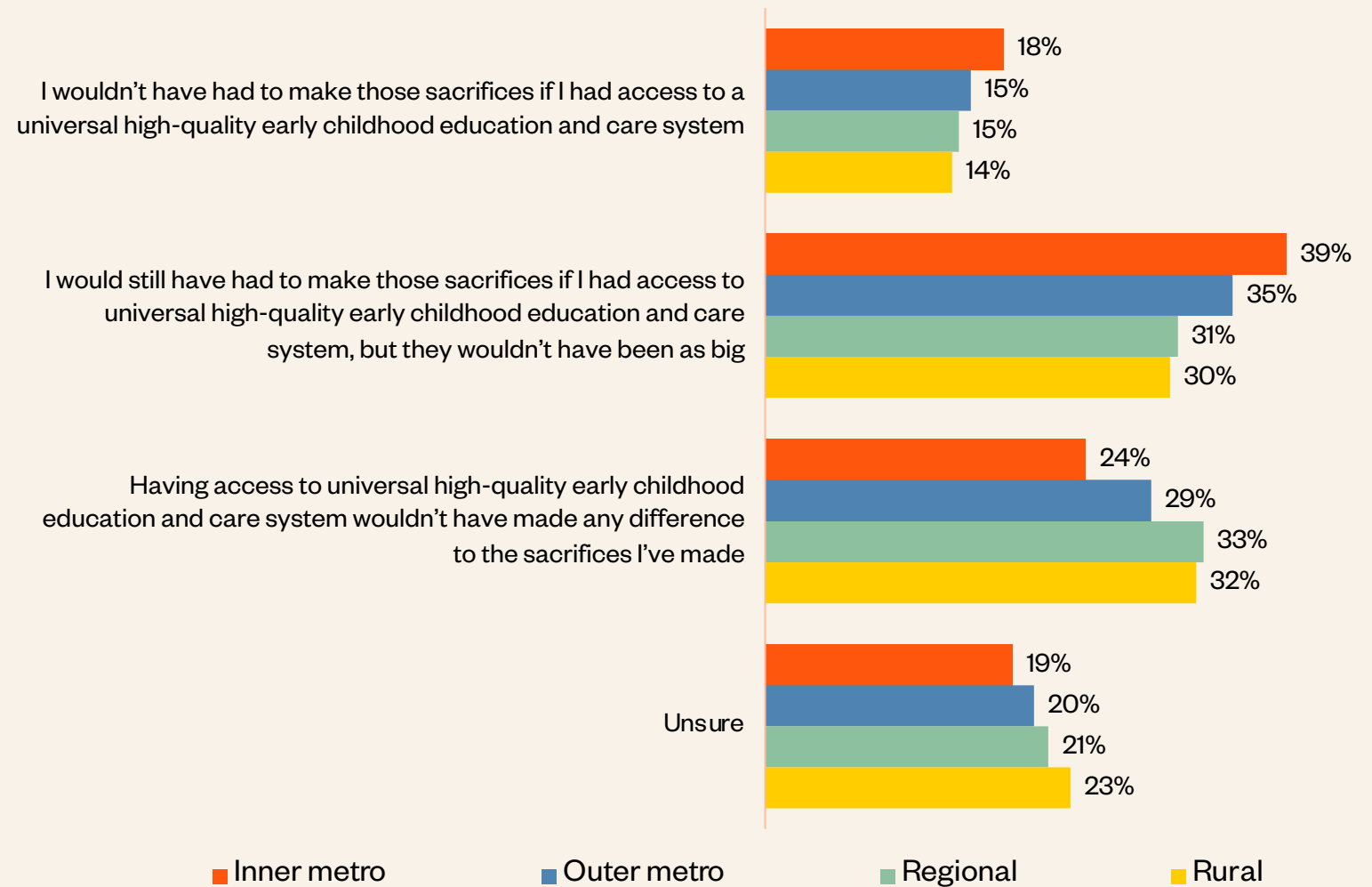
Effect of universal high-quality early childhood education and care system (% Make it a lot/a little better)



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: Inner metro, n=1,792; Outer metro, n=1,503; Regional, n=497; Rural, n=992

**2 IN 5 INNER METROPOLITAN RESIDENTS SAY THEIR FAMILY OR CAREER 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 (%)**

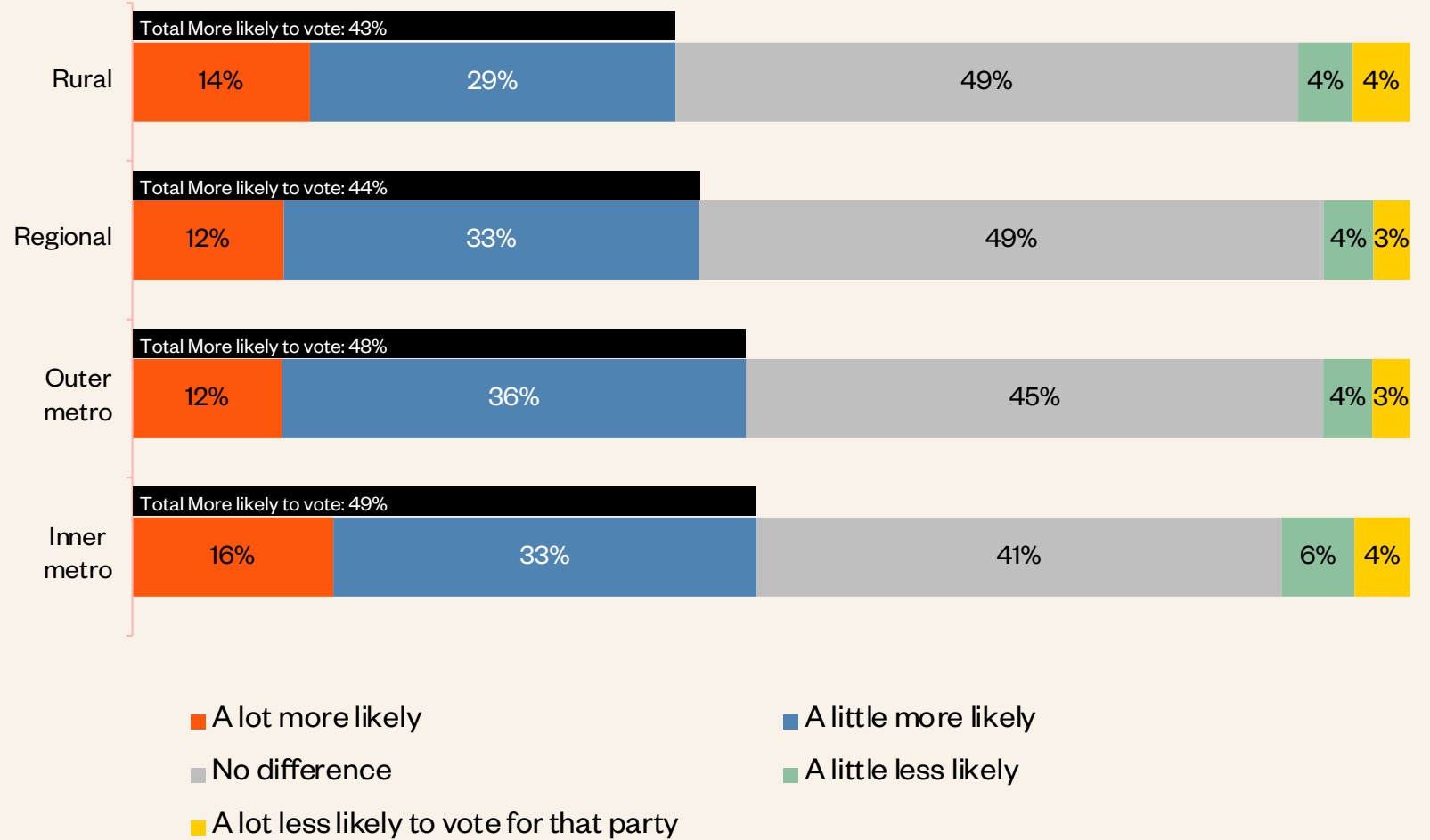


Q. You said earlier that you had made sacrifices in your career for your family or in your family life for your career. Which of the following do you think would have applied to you had you access to a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system?

Base: Respondents who strongly/somewhat agree that they have made career or family sacrifices Inner metro, n=1,146; Outer metro, n=936; Regional, n=295; Rural, n=608

**43% OF RURAL AUSTRALIANS SAY THIS POLICY WOULD MAKE THEM MORE LIKELY TO VOTE FOR A PARTY COMMITTED TO IT.**

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



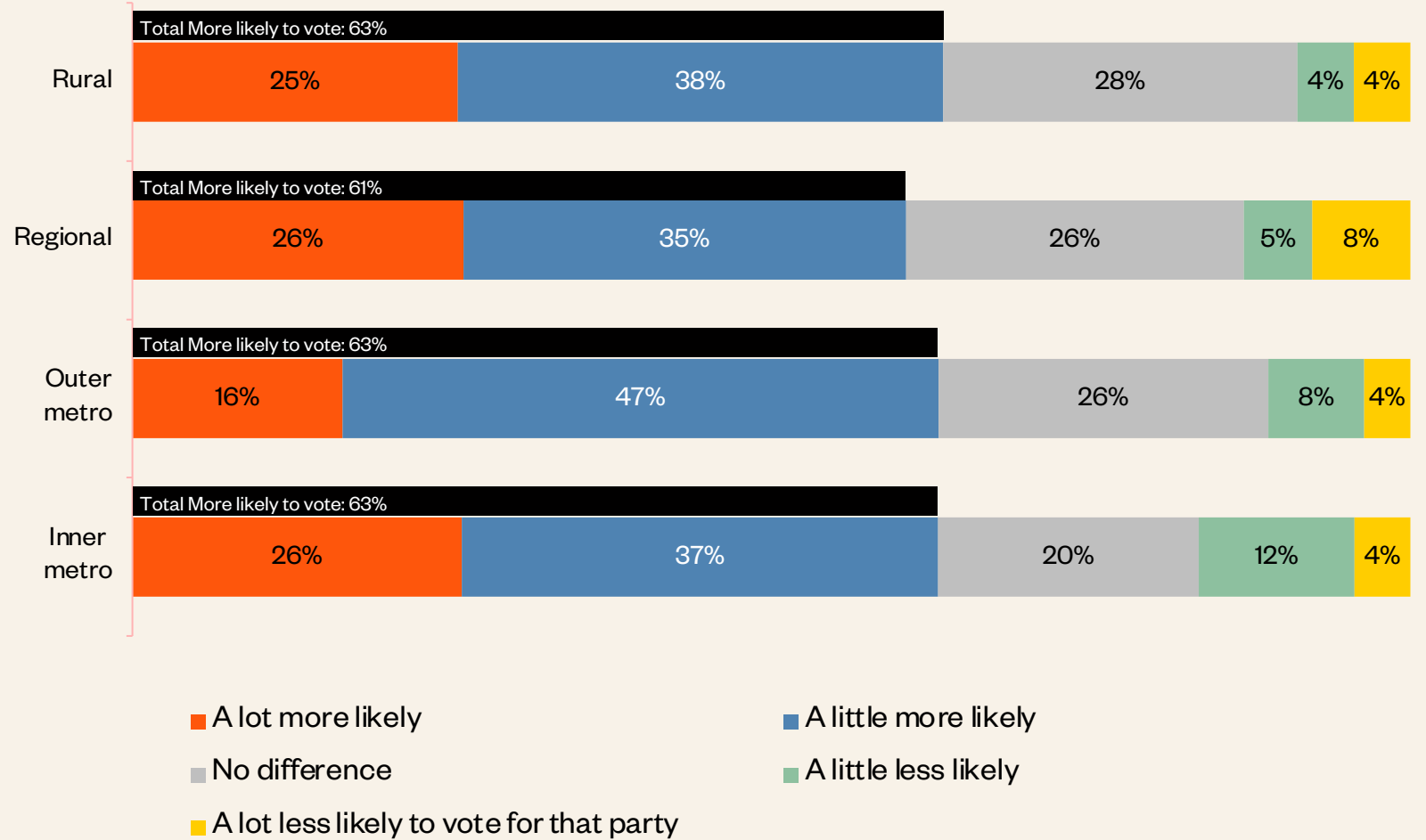
Q. If a party committed to introducing a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system, how would that affect your likelihood of voting for that party?

Base: Inner metro, n=1,792; Outer metro, n=1,503; Regional, n=497; Rural, n=992



**AMONG RURAL PARENTS WITH A CHILD UNDER SCHOOL-AGE, LIKELIHOOD TO VOTE FOR A PARTY WITH A UNIVERSAL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE POLICY INCREASES TO 63%.**

**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: Parents with at least one child under school age Inner metro, n=306; Outer metro, n=189; Regional, n=57; Rural, n=118