



The Real Australian Commute Report

November 2022



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About the report

The *Real Australian Commute Report* forms part of the Real Insurance Research Series. In its latest instalment, this study explores aspects of commuting in Australia, looking to tackle the cost, time and distance commuted by Australians and how this impacts where people want to work and live. It also explores the effect that COVID-19 had on the experience of Australian commuters working from home.

The report is compiled based on research commissioned by Real Insurance and conducted by CoreData between 22 July and 12 August 2022. The research was conducted via a quantitative online survey, gathering **5,001** responses from commuting Australians.

The sample is representative of the general commuting population of Australia in terms of cost, distance and time spent commuting across age, gender, wealth, and state/territory.

Important things to observe about the charts and figures

- Footnotes directly underneath the charts (e.g. *Asked to mass transit commuters only) mainly refer to the sampling involved per question. This is to differentiate who was asked that particular question in the survey.
- Charts without a specific note represent questions that were asked to all respondents.
- The types of questions asked are also noted. For instance, '*Multiple answers allowed' appears when the question called for more than one answer from the respondent.
- Some charts and figures may not be equal to 100% due to rounding differences. This is also true for summed up figures.
- Figures were determined from self-reported estimates provided by respondents for a typical week or typical day.
- Annual averages and annual figures were derived/calculated from the survey responses.
- Certain figures have had outlier responses removed and where applicable this will be accompanied with a specific note.



Key findings

Key findings

Commuting time and costs are usually higher in capital cities

- Capital cities have a higher average annual commute cost in 5 of 8 states and territories compared to rural and regional areas.*
- Commuting times are higher in all capital cities compared to suburban, regional and rural areas in their respective state or territory.*

Commuting is costly

- Over 7 in 10 (71%) commuters agree that the rising cost of living has reasonably impacted their commuting costs in the past year. Close to 1 in 2 (48%) say that this has resulted in considerable financial pressure on their household.
- More than 4 in 5 (83%) agree that commuting has never been as expensive as it is now.
- The average daily cost of commuting per person is \$20, while the average yearly cost of commuting per person is \$4,003.*
- The findings suggest that collectively, Australians spend \$43.2 billion annually on commuting.*^
- The furthest average daily commutes belong mainly to areas outside of capital cities with other VIC having the tied longest at 39 km with other NSW, other QLD (37km), and other SA (35 km).*
- For capital cities, Brisbane has the furthest average commute at 33 km, followed by Adelaide and Melbourne (both averaging 30 km), Perth (29 km), then Sydney at 28km.*

Commuters like public transport (without the public)

- Nearly 9 in 10 (87%) mass transit commuters wish that public transport commuters had better manners.
- Over 8 in 10 (83%) wish people were friendlier to each other on public transport.
- Close to 8 in 10 (78%) also believe that commuters with poor manners should be fined or even banned from using public transport.

Private commuting can be frustrating

- Over 9 in 10 (91%) car commuters wish other drivers had better knowledge of the rules.
- Almost 9 in 10 (87%) think that drivers behaving poorly should be fined or even banned from using the roads.
- Additionally, more than 8 in 10 (85%) agree that too many drivers and road users are not courteous or safe.
- Nearly 1 in 3 (34%) commuters prefer to work completely from an office, while almost 3 in 10 (28%) prefer to work from home and an office equally. Less than 1 in 10 (7%) prefer to work completely from home.

*Outliers have been removed in analysis.

^This figure was calculated using survey results and ABS data from June 2022 for employment numbers to get the commuting population. The commuting population was used with self reported costs from survey respondents to derive this figure.

Key findings

Commuters want to be closer to home

- Almost 2 in 3 (68%) commuters agree that commuting time and costs strongly impact their job choice. Additionally, close to 3 in 4 (73%) said they would change jobs to reduce their commute if there were work opportunities closer to home.
- The maximum commuters are willing to spend per week on average commuting before they would move house or change jobs is \$80*, while the average longest commute people could tolerate before moving house or changing jobs is 62 mins.*
- Almost 3 in 5 (59%) commuters have somewhat changed their view on how much they are willing to spend in time and money to commute to work due to their experiences through COVID.
- Over 1 in 3 (34%) commuters prefer to work completely from an office, while almost 3 in 10 (28%) prefer to work from home and an office equally. Less than 1 in 10 (7%) prefer to work completely from home.

Although people are happy living in regional or rural areas, many want to move back

- Over 6 in 10 (62%) commuters say that commuting cost and time are an important consideration when choosing where to live.
- More than 9 in 10 (94%) of those who moved from inner city to regional areas are at least somewhat happy, with 1 in 2 (50%) being very happy.
- However, almost 7 in 10 (68%) of those who moved from inner city to regional areas are already in the process or are planning to move back, with more than 1 in 3 (36%) already in the process of moving back.
- The main reasons for moving back are missing friends and family (44%), work opportunities (42%), and missing the lifestyle (37%).

When buying a car, environmental friendliness was important to some

- Low running costs were extremely important when buying a car for more than 2 in 5 (42%) commuters, followed closely by good performance (39%). Over 1 in 5 (21%) point to environmental friendliness as a critical factor in purchasing a car.
- Over 2 in 3 (68%) commuters who own environmentally friendly cars estimate that they are saving more than \$150 a month on fuel costs by having an electric/hybrid car; however, over 1 in 2 (55%) say they are paying more than \$150 a month on electricity due to owning an hybrid/electric car.
- Many agree that electric/hybrid cars are more expensive when it comes to purchasing spare parts (49%), servicing (41%), and repairs (22%).

Tolls are taking a toll on commuters

- Over 4 in 5 (85%) commuters feel that the government can be doing more to ease the cost of commuting.
- Over 1 in 2 (56%) said that they avoid road tolls on their commute.
- Over 1 in 2 (55%) agree that rising fuel prices are making the cost of tolls unsustainable for them. However, 1 in 3 (33%) agree that road tolls are worth every cent.
- Almost 1 in 2 (49%) people whose income is \$200,000 and above agree that road tolls are worth every cent, much higher than any other income band.
- 2 in 3 (66%) of Sydney commuters say that they avoid road tolls on their commute, this is the most of any capital city. This is closely followed by Melbourne (64%) and Brisbane (60%).

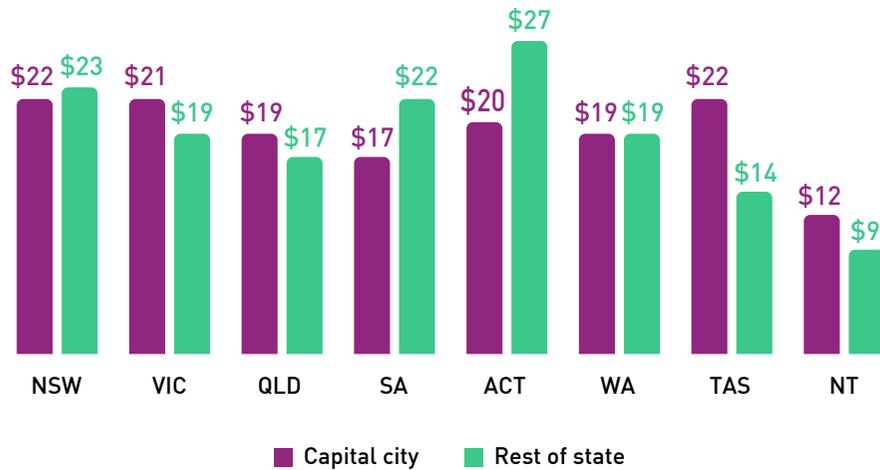
*Outliers have been removed in analysis.



Best and worst commutes

Comparative cost of commuting

Daily cost of commuting per person



*Outliers removed in analysis.

Annual cost of commuting per person



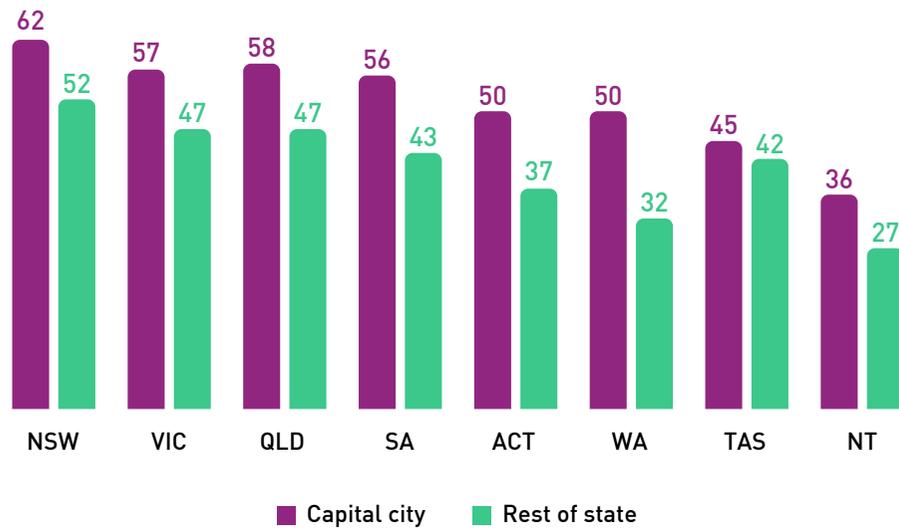
*Outliers removed in analysis.

**The average daily figures were multiplied by the average number of commuting days to get annual commuting figures.

Capital cities have a higher average annual commute cost in 5 of 8 states and territories compared to rural and regional areas. The average daily cost of commuting is relatively split between capital cities and the rest of their respective states. Other ACT has the highest cost at \$27 per day, followed by Other NSW (\$23), Hobart (\$22), Other SA (\$22), Sydney (\$22) and Melbourne (\$21).

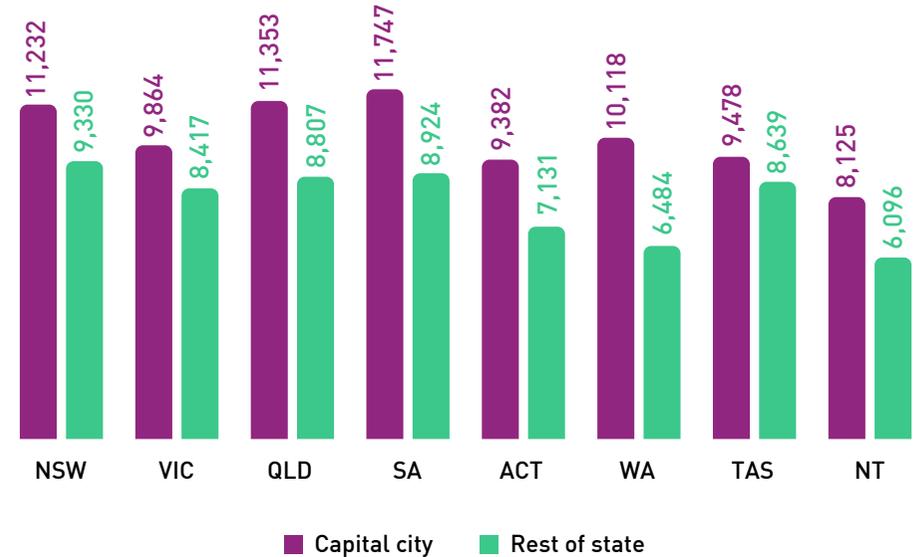
Comparative commute times

Average daily commute time per person



*Figures in minutes; outliers removed in analysis.

Annual average commute time per person



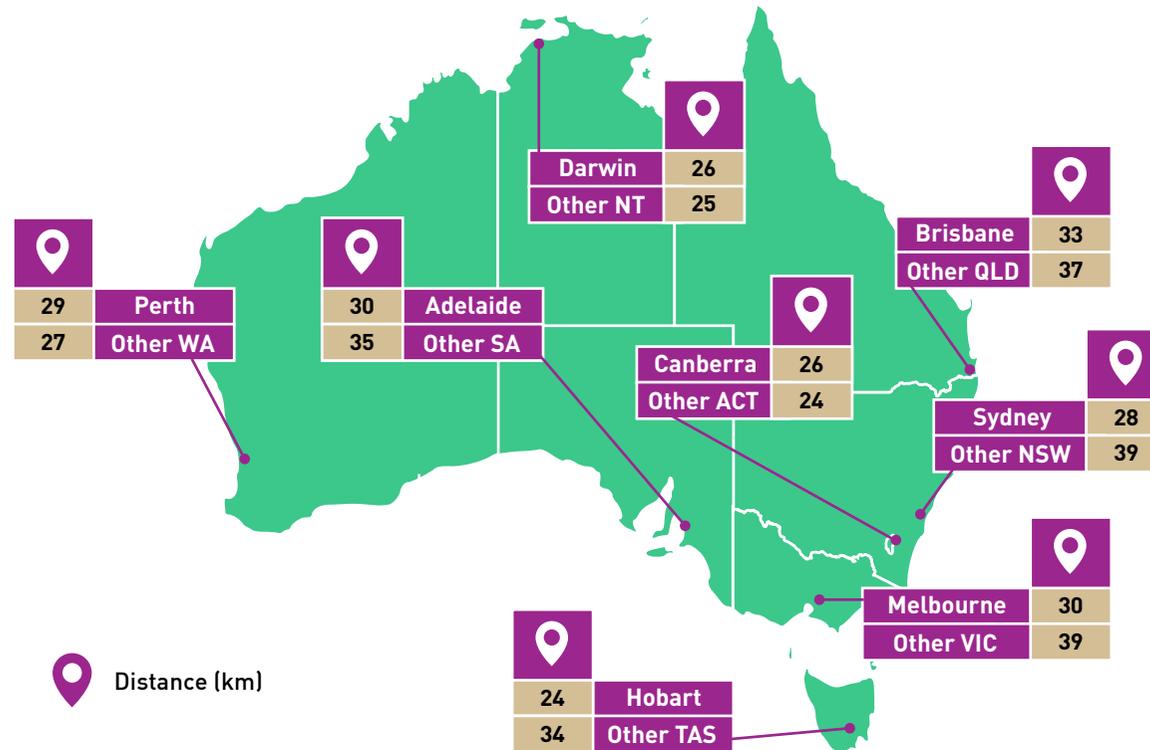
*Figures in minutes; outliers removed in analysis.

**The average daily figures were multiplied by the average number of commuting days to get annual commuting figures.

Commuting times are higher in all capital cities around Australia compared to the rest of their respective state or territory. The longest daily commute times mainly belong to capital cities with the top four being Sydney (62 minutes), Brisbane (58 minutes), Melbourne (57 minutes), and Adelaide with (56 minutes).

Metro vs regional distance

On a typical day of commuting, how far would you estimate you travel (including the return trip)?



*Outliers removed in analysis.

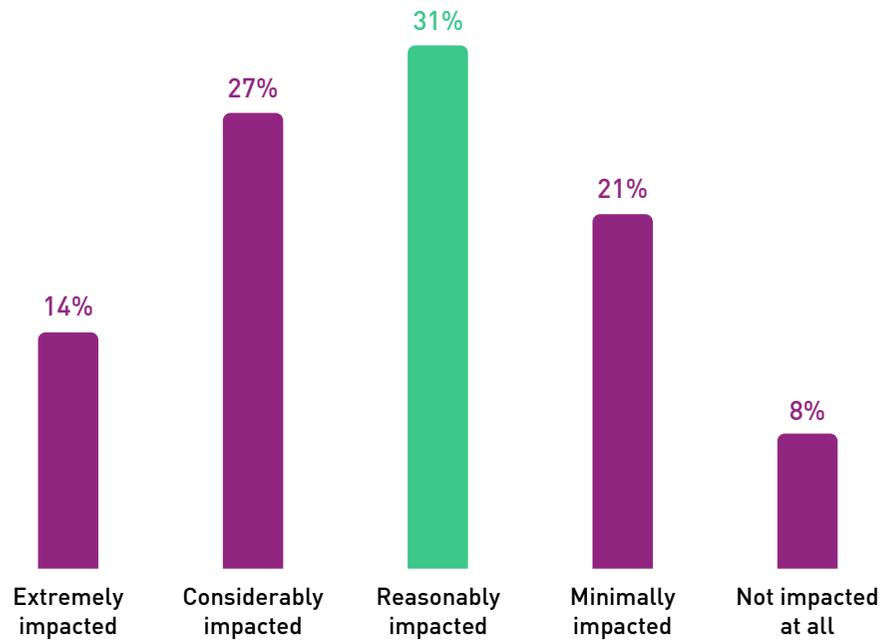
The furthest daily commutes belong mainly to areas outside of capital cities such as Other VIC and Other NSW (both averaging 39km), followed by Other QLD (37km) and Other SA (35km). For capital cities, Brisbane has the furthest commute at 33km, followed by Adelaide and Melbourne (both averaging 30km), Perth (29km), then Sydney (28km).



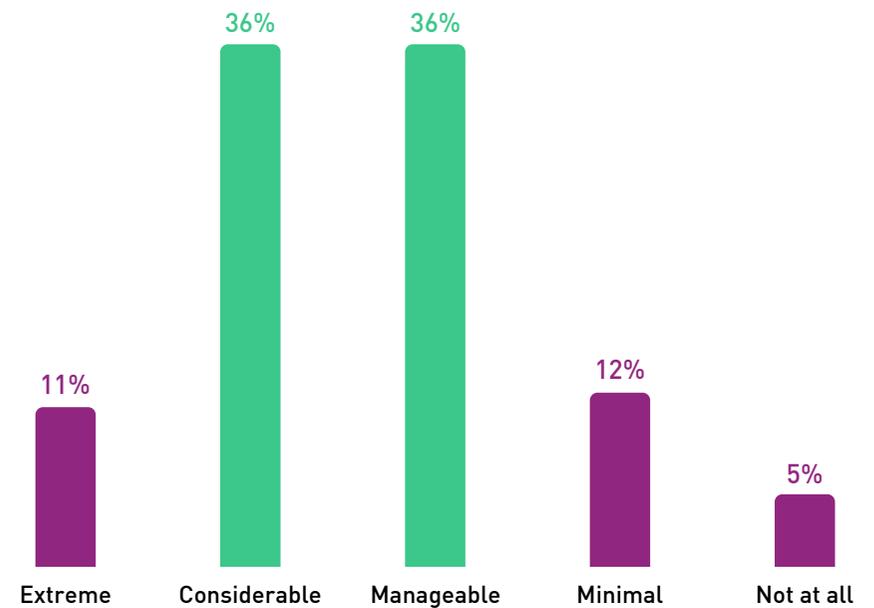
Cost of commuting

Pressures and increasing cost

How much has the rising cost of living impacted your commuting costs in the past year?



How much additional financial pressure has your household felt due to rising fuel and transport costs?



Average commuting cost per person



Per day: \$20

Per week: \$104

Per year: \$4,003



Collectively,
Australians spend
\$43.2 billion per year
commuting**

*Individual cost was calculated from self-reported daily commuting estimates, with outliers removed. The average daily figures were multiplied by the average number of commuting days to get annual commuting figures. Commuting cost does not include registration/maintenance costs which are estimated to be a further \$2,015 annually on average.

**This figure was calculated using survey results and ABS data from June 2022 for employment numbers to get the commuting population. The commuting population was used with self reported costs from survey respondents to derive this figure.



Public vs private commuting etiquette

Public commuting sentiment

How much do you agree with the following statements?



*n = 1,902, mass transit commuters only

Nearly 9 in 10 (87%) mass transit commuters wish that public transport commuters had better manners. Over 8 in 10 (83%) wish people were friendlier to each other on public transport, and close to 8 in 10 (78%) also believe that commuters with poor manners should be fined or even banned from using public transport.

Private commuting attitudes

How much do you agree with the following statements?



*n = 3,949, car commuters (public/private cars)

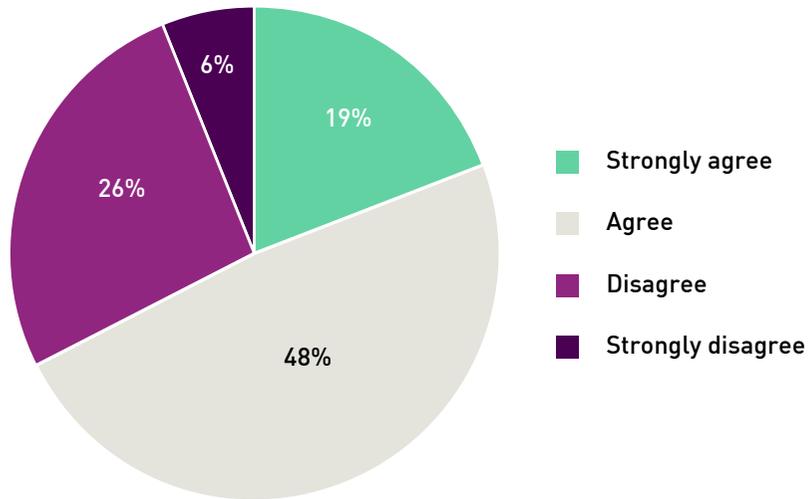
Over 9 in 10 (91%) car commuters wish other drivers had better knowledge of the rules, while almost 9 in 10 (87%) think that drivers behaving poorly should be fined or even banned from using the roads. Additionally, 85% of commuters agree that too many drivers and road users are not courteous or safe.



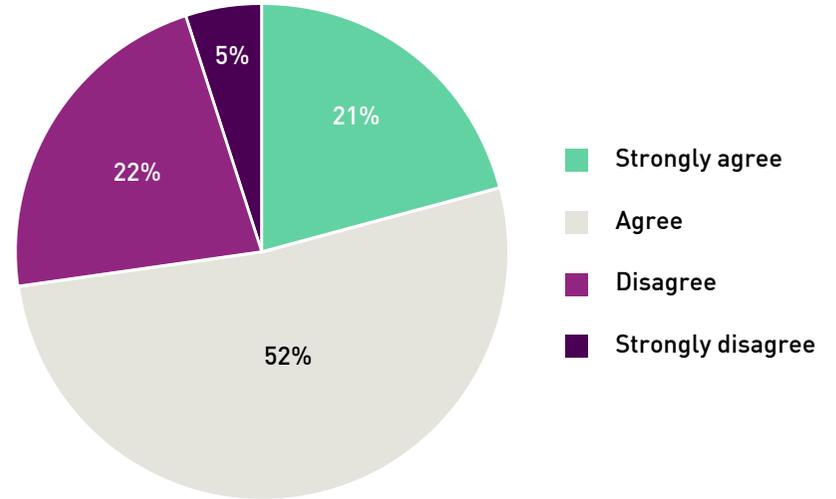
Impact of commuting on work decisions

Influence on job choice

Commuting time and costs strongly impact my choice of jobs



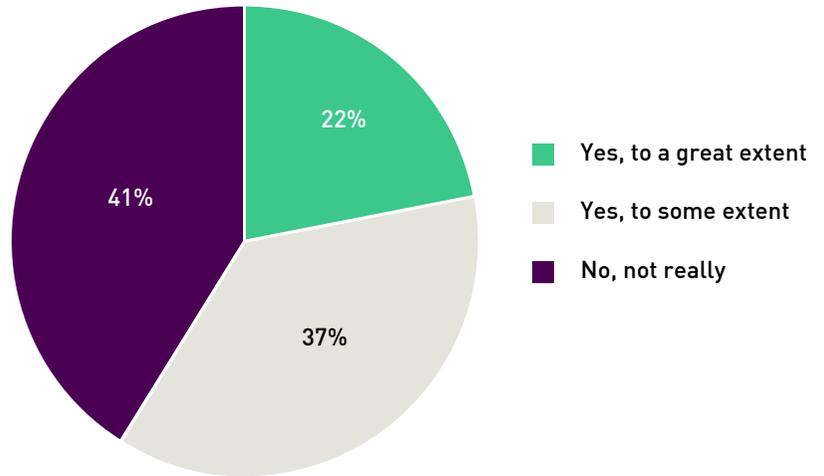
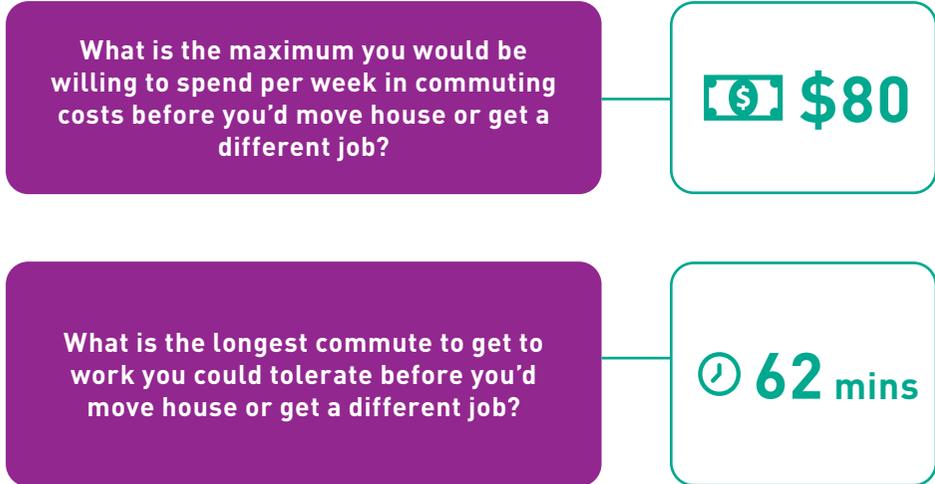
If there were work opportunities closer to home, I would change jobs to reduce my commute



Almost 2 in 3 (68%) commuters agree that commuting time and costs strongly impact their job choice. Additionally, close to 3 in 4 (73%) agree that if there were work opportunities closer to home, they would change jobs to reduce their commute.

Views on cost and time of commuting

Have your experiences through COVID-19 and working from home changed your view on how much time and money you are willing to spend on your commute?



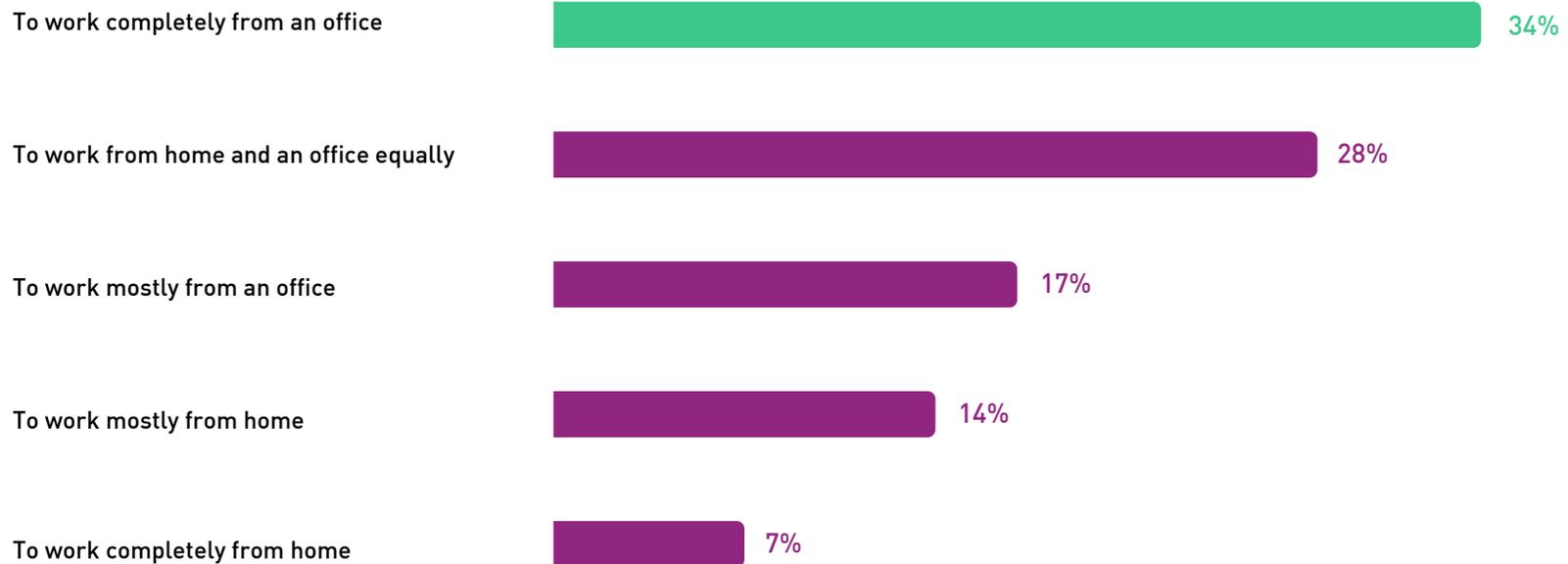
*Outliers removed in analysis.

The maximum commuters are willing to spend per week on average commuting to work before they would move house or change jobs is \$80, while the longest commute people could tolerate before moving house or changing jobs is 62 minutes.

Almost 3 in 5 (59%) commuters have to somewhat changed their view on how much time and money they are willing to spend on their commute as a result of experiences through COVID-19.

Work preferences

What are your preferred work arrangements in terms of work location?



Nearly 1 in 3 (34%) commuters prefer to work completely from an office, while almost 3 in 10 (28%) prefer to work from home and an office equally. Less than 1 in 10 (7%) prefer to work completely from home.



Location, location, location

Working from home

How much do you consider commuting cost and time when choosing where to live?

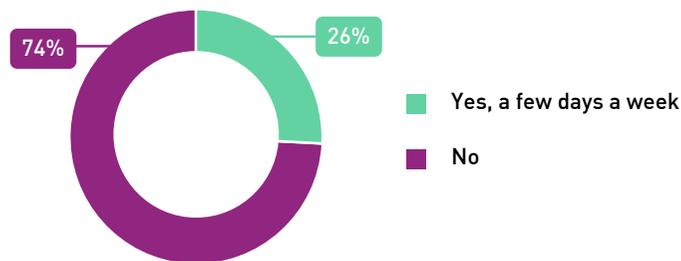


Do you think you will be able to continue working from home in the future?



*n = 265, respondents who live in coastal/regional/rural areas AND work remotely

Do you work remotely/work from home?



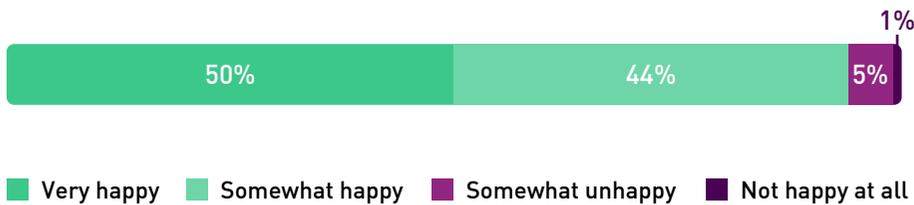
*n = 1,021, respondents who live in coastal/regional/rural areas

Over 6 in 10 (62%) commuters say that commuting cost and time are an important consideration when choosing where to live.

Over 1 in 4 (26%) respondents who live in live in coastal/regional/rural areas work remotely/work from home a few days a week. Of these, 3 in 5 (60%) think they will be able to continue working from home for the foreseeable future.

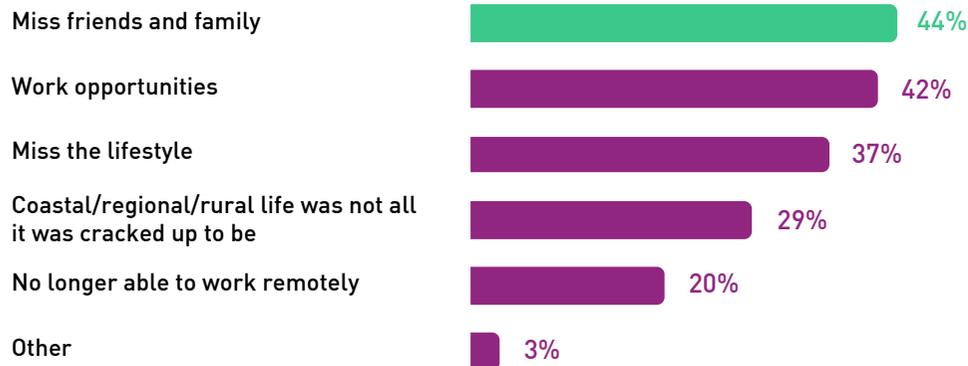
Going regional and rural

Are you happy with your decision to move to a coastal, regional or rural area?



*n = 525, respondents who moved from inner city to regional areas

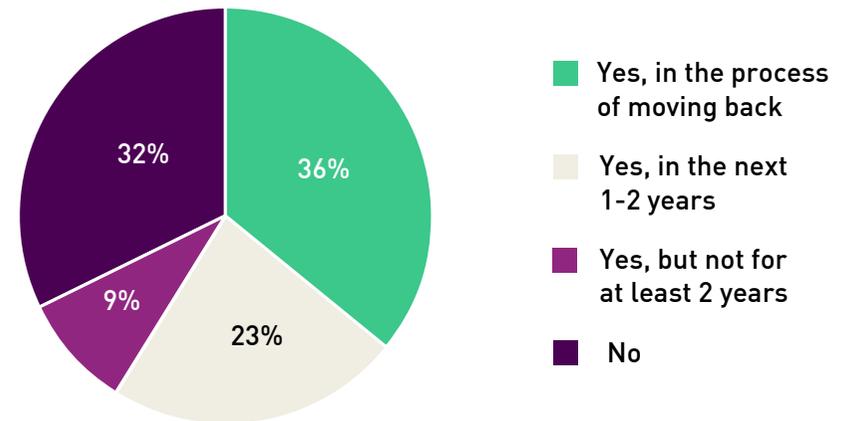
Why are you planning to move back to the inner city or urban areas?



*Multiple answers allowed

*n = 359, respondents who are planning on moving back to the inner city

Are you planning on moving back to the inner city or urban areas?



*n = 525, respondents who moved from inner city to regional areas

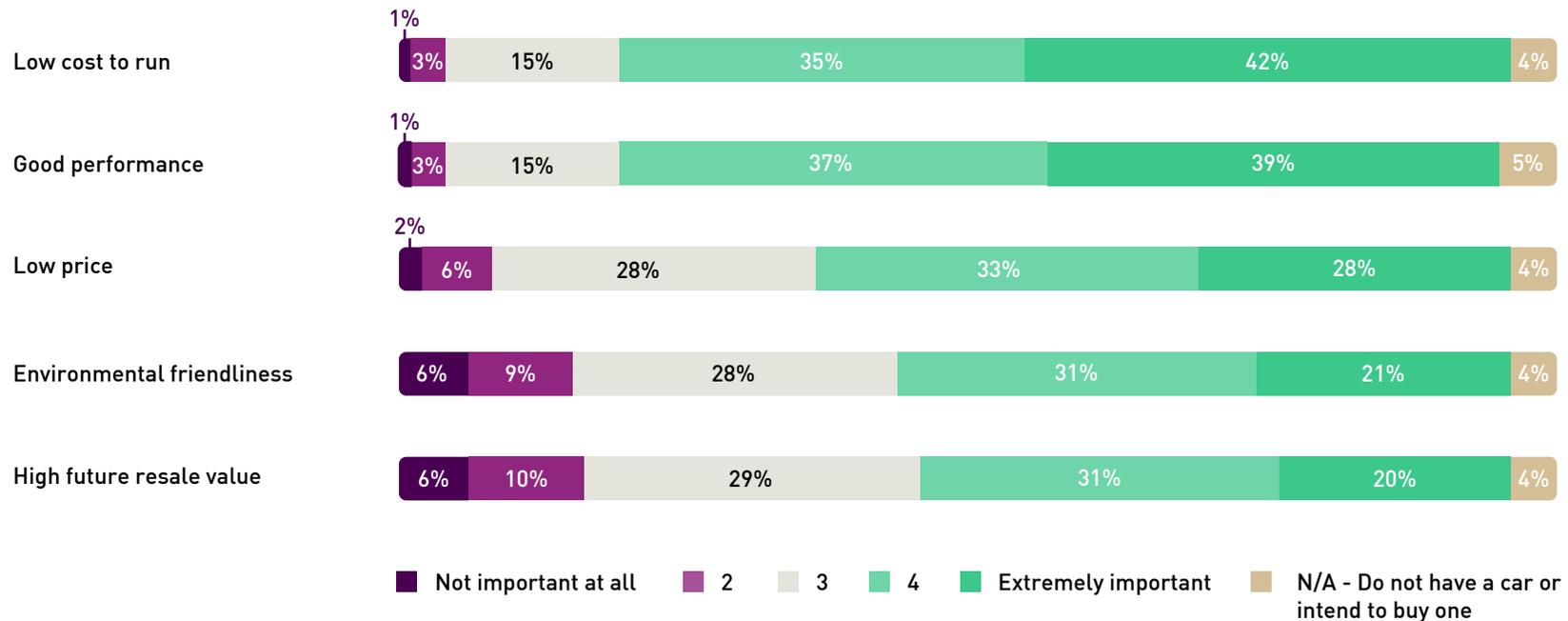
More than 9 in 10 (94%) of those who moved from inner city to regional areas are at least somewhat happy, with 1 in 2 (50%) being very happy. However, almost 7 in 10 (68%) of those who moved from inner city to regional areas are already in the process or are planning to move back, with more than 1 in 3 (36%) already in the process of moving back. The main reasons for moving back are missing friends and family (44%), work opportunities (42%), and missing the lifestyle (37%).



Electric vs fuel

Important factors for choosing a car

How important are the following factors to you when choosing a car to buy?



Low running costs were extremely important when buying a car for more than 2 in 5 (42%) commuters followed closely by good performance (39%). Nearly 1 in 5 (21%) point to environmental friendliness as a critical factor in purchasing a car.

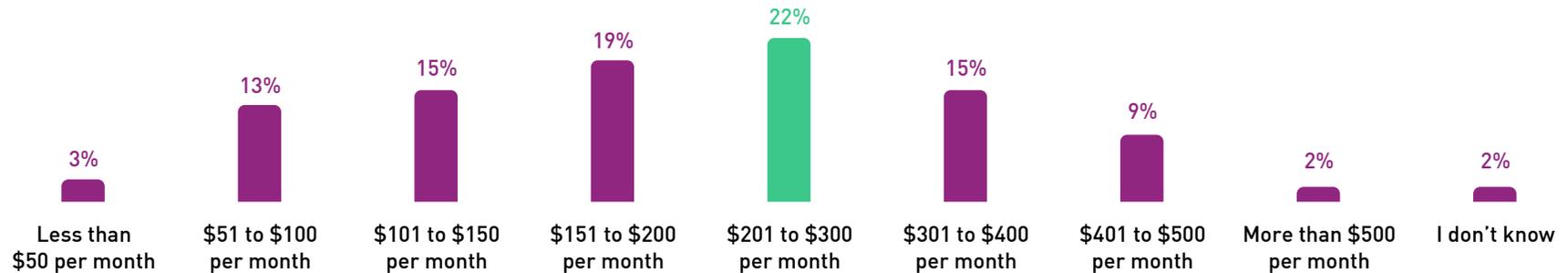
Benefits and expenses of hybrid/electric cars

How much extra do you estimate you spend on electricity each month by owning your electric/hybrid car compared to a fuel-based equivalent?



*n = 530, respondents who own environmentally friendly cars

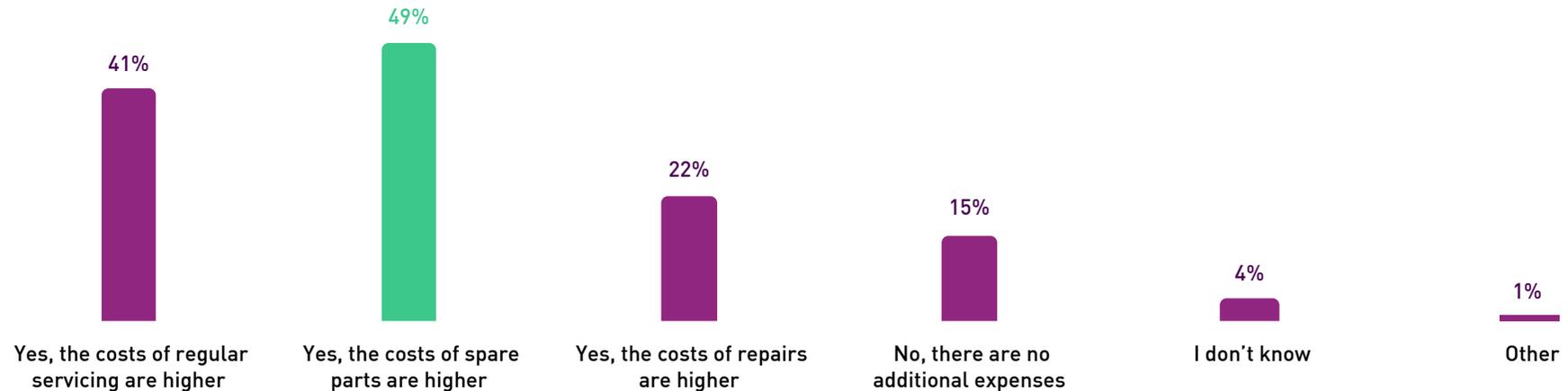
How much do you estimate you save on fuel each month by owning your electric/hybrid car compared to a fuel-based equivalent?



*n = 530, respondents who own environmentally friendly cars

Benefits and expenses of hybrid/electric cars

Are there any other additional expenses you have faced by owning your electric/hybrid car compared to a fuel-based equivalent?



*n = 530, respondents who own environmentally friendly cars

Over 2 in 3 (68%) environmentally-friendly car owners estimate that they are saving more than \$150 a month on fuel costs by having an electric/ hybrid car; however, over 1 in 2 (55%) say they are paying more than \$150 a month on electricity due to owning a hybrid/ electric car.

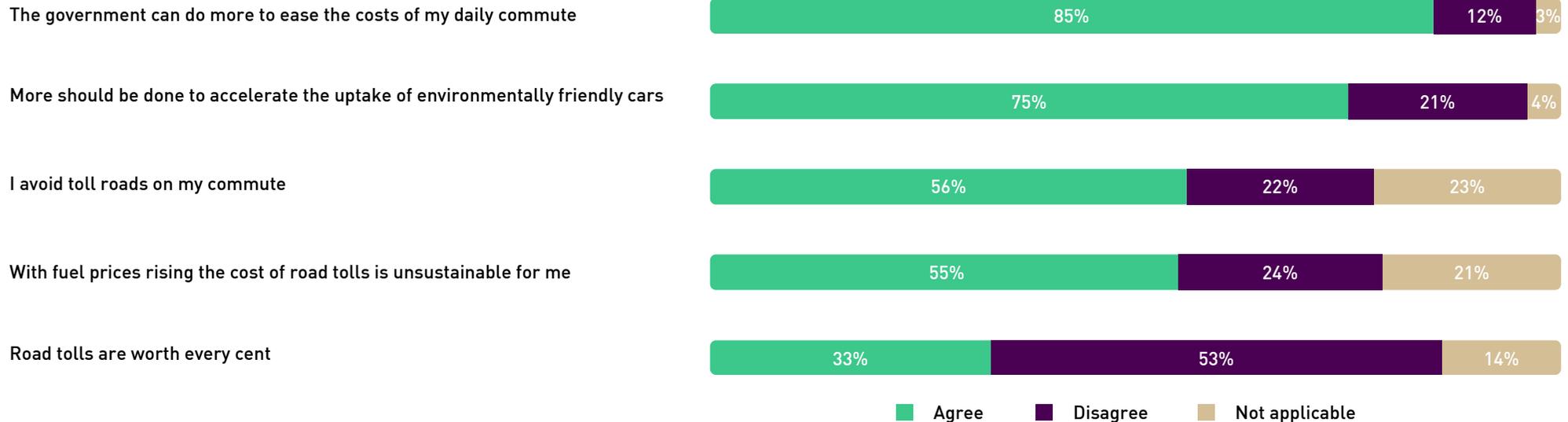
Nearly 1 in 2 (49%) environmentally friendly car owners agree that spare parts are more expensive for electric/hybrid cars, more than 2 in 5 (41%) say that servicing is more expensive and more than 1 in 5 (22%) say that repairs are more expensive.



Changes in Government law and policy

Government on cost of commuting

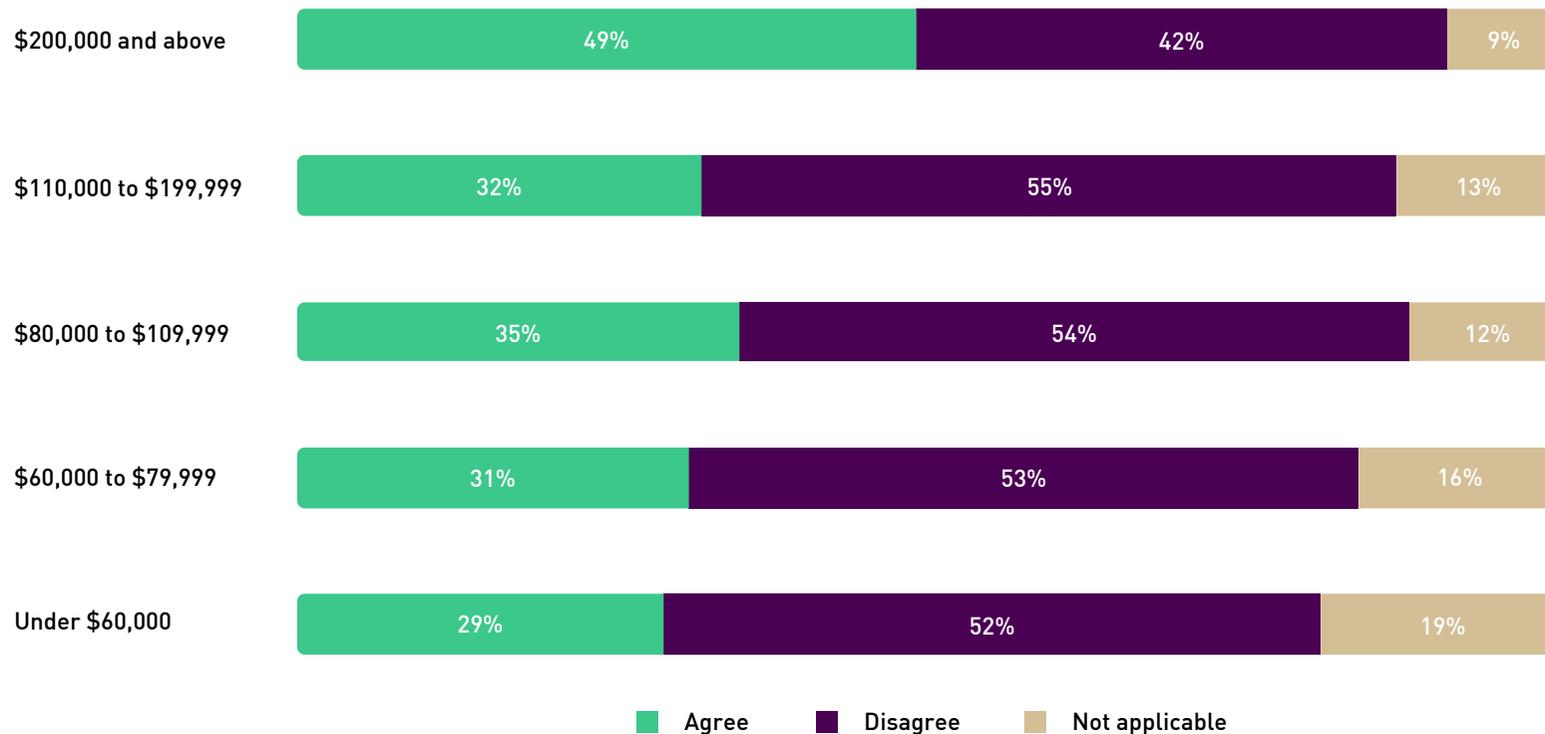
Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the statements below



Over half (56%) said that they avoid road tolls on their commute and over 4 in 5 (85%) agree that the government could do more to ease the costs of their daily commute. Over 1 in 2 (55%) agree that with fuel prices rising the cost of road tolls is unsustainable for them. However, 1 in 3 (33%) also say that road tolls are worth every cent.

Income vs tolls

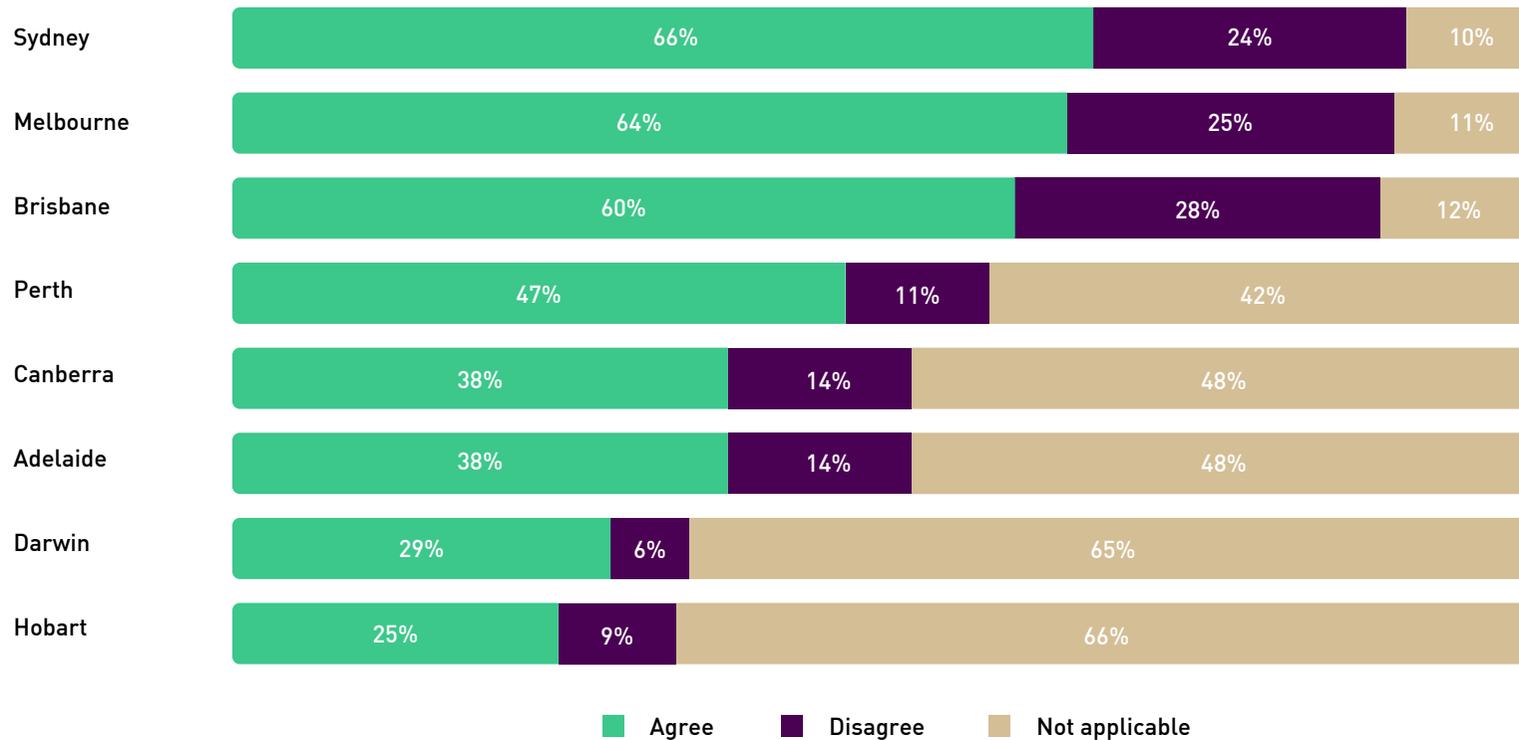
Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement: Road tolls are worth every cent (by income)



Almost 1 in 2 (49%) people whose income is \$200,000 and above agree that road tolls are worth every cent, much higher than any other income band.

Avoiding tolls

Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement: I avoid toll roads on my commute (by city)



2 in 3 (66%) of Sydney commuters say that they avoid road tolls on their commute, this is the most of any capital city. This is closely followed by Melbourne (64%) and Brisbane (60%).

More research from Real Insurance coming soon...

About Real Insurance

Real Insurance is an award-winning provider of insurance products, specialising in life, funeral, pet, travel, car, home, and bike insurance. In the market since 2005, Real Insurance has protected the quality of life of many Australians, through the delivery of innovative products. Real Insurance is the proud recipient of many product and service awards, most recently being announced a winner of the 2022 ProductReview.com.au awards for Life Insurance and Funeral Insurance, and the Reader's Digest 2022 Gold Quality Service Awards for Funeral Insurance and Pet Insurance. Real Insurance is a trading name of Greenstone Financial Services Pty Ltd.

