



[Community Value of Public Interest Journalism]

October 2019

[PIJI] Public
Interest
Journalism
Initiative

Community value of public interest journalism

Glenn Withers

This is a report of results of a survey commissioned by the Public Interest Journalism Initiative from Essential Media. Essential Media conduct a fortnightly omnibus survey, in which five questions relating to public interest journalism were included. This survey was conducted from 24-29 October, 2019, and had 1,084 respondents (95% certainty for random sampling).

The Essential Report - Public Interest Journalism Initiative is Essential Media's report on its Qualtrics survey results. It is included in this document in its entirety.

This forms part of PIJI's ongoing work to understand how the community values public interest journalism and will involve further surveys conducted at six-month intervals. A deeper analysis of trends in public sentiment across demographics and comparisons over time will be conducted by Applied Economics after the third survey in October 2020.

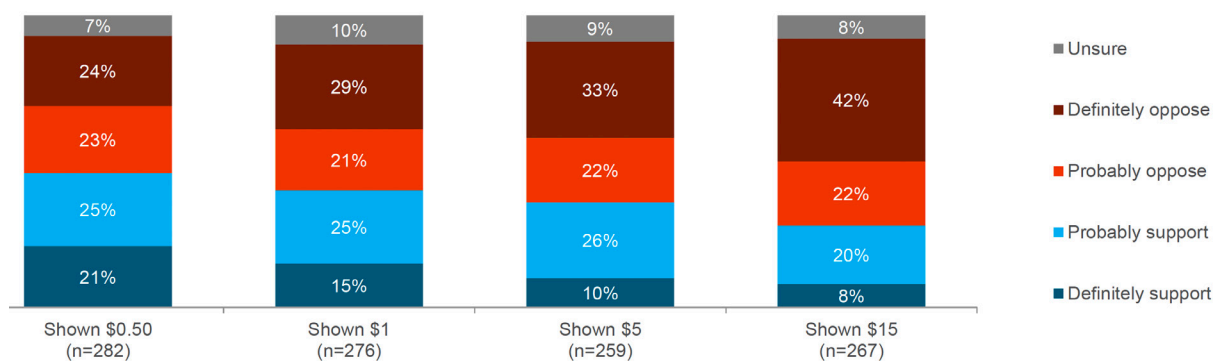
This Essential Media survey material is also being used as a resource for a separate report for PIJI from the Centre for International Economics, *Tax Concessions for Public Interest Journalism*.

Key findings

The key findings from this survey are as follows:

1. Australians are **strong users of media**, with commercial radio and television still leading (used by 55% daily), followed by social media (47%), then public radio and television (44%) and, finally, newspapers and magazines (25%). (Report p.6)
2. Beyond media being interesting and entertaining, Australians also **want their media to inform and educate and investigate issues of national importance**. 89% rate media content that is informative and educative as “very important” or “important”, and likewise 86% report that for investigative and critical content. (Report p.7)
3. Almost half of Australians do say they **would pay higher taxes for increased public interest journalism**. To obtain a 50% increase in this journalism, 46% of respondents would offer support for a tax increase of \$6 a year, and 47% would oppose. 40% would still pay a tax increase of \$12 per year, and 36% would support a \$60 tax increase, with opposition rising correspondingly. (Report p.12, Figure reproduced below)
4. Too little public interest journalism is seen as occurring in **local government affairs**, followed by state and territory and international affairs, with national affairs being better catered for. 35% are concerned at too little local reporting as opposed to 23% for national affairs. (Report p.9)

Willingness to Support a Tax Increase for Greater Public Interest Journalism.



The Essential Report – Public Interest Journalism Initiative

4 November 2019



The Essential Report

Date: 04/11/2019

Prepared By: Essential Research

Data Supplied by:



AMSRS 

Our researchers are members of the Australian Market and Social Research Society.



About this poll

This report summarises the results of a fortnightly omnibus conducted by Essential Research with data provided by Qualtrics. The survey was conducted online from 24th October 2019 to 29th October 2019 and is based on 1,084 respondents.

The methodology used to carry out this research is described in the appendix at the end of the report.

Note that due to rounding, not all tables necessarily total 100% and subtotals may also vary.



Key Insights

1. The majority of people consume some form of media on a daily basis

- 81% of participants use at least one form of media daily, with commercial TV/radio the most popular (55% using daily). Just under half use digital social media daily (47%), with a similar proportion using public access TV/radio (44%). A quarter (25%) read newspapers or magazines on a daily basis.
- People with a lower household income (under \$52k) were twice as likely than those on a mid/higher income to never read newspapers/magazines (22% to 11%). 23% of Queenslanders say they never read printed media (compared to 14% elsewhere in Australia).
- Older people are more regular consumers of print and TV/radio. 35% of those over the age of 55 read printed media on a daily basis (compared to 19% of those aged 18-34), 74% watch or listen to commercial TV or radio (to 36% of 18-34 year olds) and 57% use public TV/radio (to 28% 18-34 year olds).
- Digital social media has a very different audience compared to these traditional media formats. Those who use social media on a daily basis are more likely to be women (54% compared to 39% of men), aged 18-34 (60% compared to 34% of 55+ year olds), have dependent children in the household (60% to 41% without). tend to use social media more frequently than men (39%), and those over 55 (23%).

2. Public interest journalism is very important, particularly to older people and non-Coalition voters

- 52% of participants consider public interest journalism very important and another 34% say it's somewhat important.
- People over 55 years old are more likely to say that public interest journalism is very important (61%) compared to 18-34 year olds (43%).
- Coalition voters are less likely to rate public interest journalism (45%) as very important, when compared all other voters (57%).

3. Just under half of participants showed some willingness to pay more in tax specifically to support public interest journalism

- 22% of participants would definitely support a tax increase at one of the price points they were shown and a further 25% said they would probably support an increase at one of the price points they were shown.



- 53% of participants would not support any amount of increased tax for public interest journalism (i.e. they did not definitely or probably support a tax increase at either of the two price-points shown).
- As respondents were only shown two price-points, this research cannot conclude whether those who definitely support at both price-points (say \$1 and \$5) would also support at the next price (\$15). Likewise, whether those who opposed at both would also oppose at a lower price. However, there is a notable drop-off in support between \$1 per month tax increase and \$5 per month.
- There was a tendency for participants who did not definitely support a tax increase at the first price-point not to definitely support a tax increase at the second (lower) price point. Similarly those who definitely supported a tax increase at the first price point tended to also support a tax increase at the higher price point.

4. The most important role of the media is seen to be to inform and educate Australians about current affairs

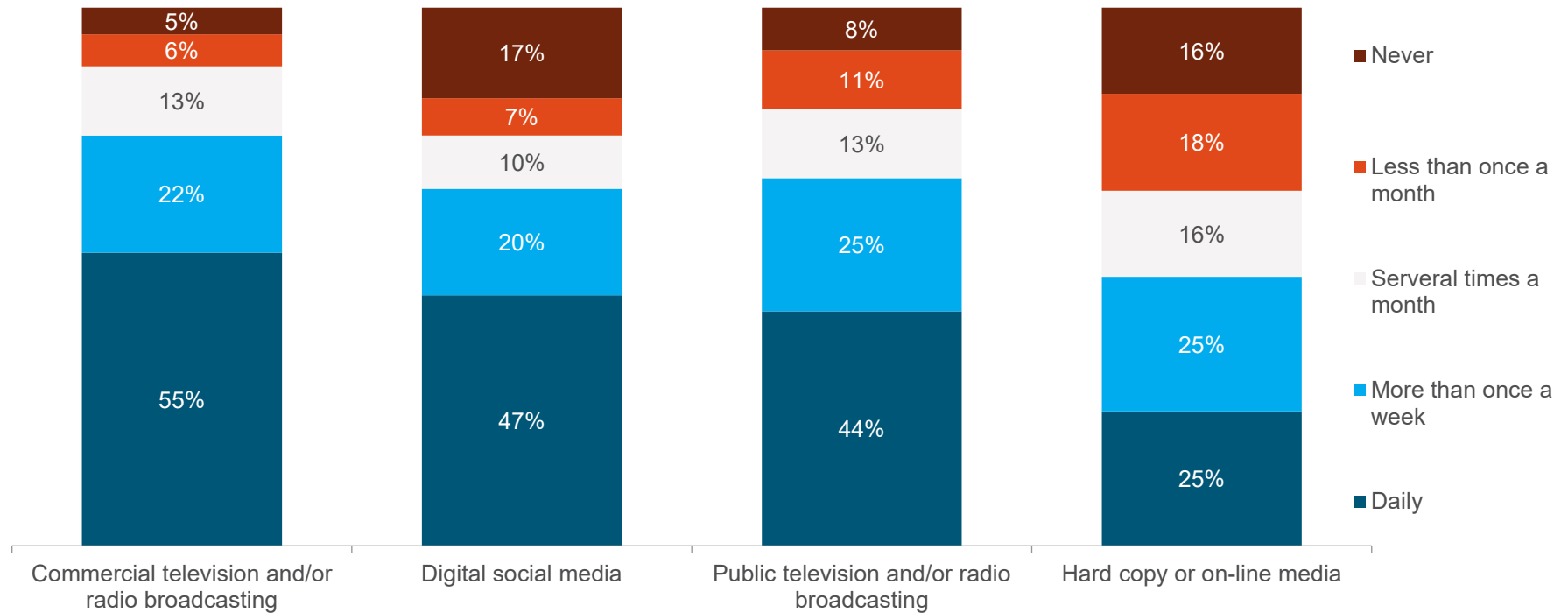
- Of the three media content types referenced, media which informs/educates (63%) has the highest proportion of very important responses, followed by investigative and critical content (55%) and interesting and entertaining content (44%).
- Participants over 55 are more likely to rate informative/educational (74%) and investigative/critical (65%) content as very important, than those aged 18-34 (54% and 45% respectively).
- Coalition voters are less likely to rate investigative/critical (48%) and informative/educational (58%) as very important, compared to all other voters (60% and 66%).

5. Generally, participants believe there is enough public interest journalism across the governance levels

- More than half of participants say there is 'about the right amount' of public interest journalism across the four categories of governance.
- 35% of participants say there is 'too little' public interest journalism into local government affairs and 27% say the same for international affairs.
- Greens voters are more likely than all other voters to say that there is 'too little' public interest journalism into local government (45% compared to 34% all other), national affairs (34% to 22%) and international affairs (41% compared to 25%).

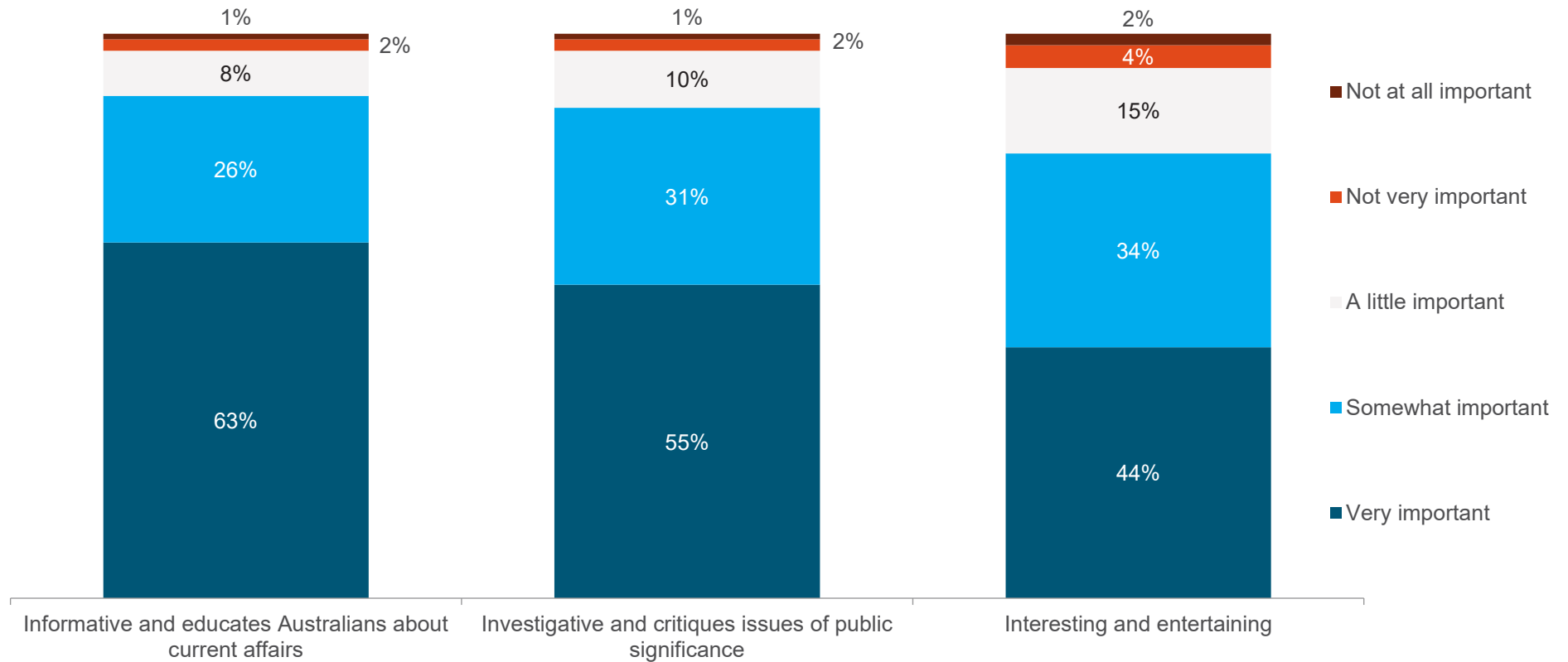
Frequency watch or read media

Q How frequently do you watch or read the following types of media?



Importance of Australian media providing different content types

Q To what extent do you think it is important or not important that the Australian media provides content which is...?



Importance of public interest journalism to Australian society

Q **Public interest journalism** refers to the **news and current affairs media or journalism which records, investigates and explains issues of public significance.**

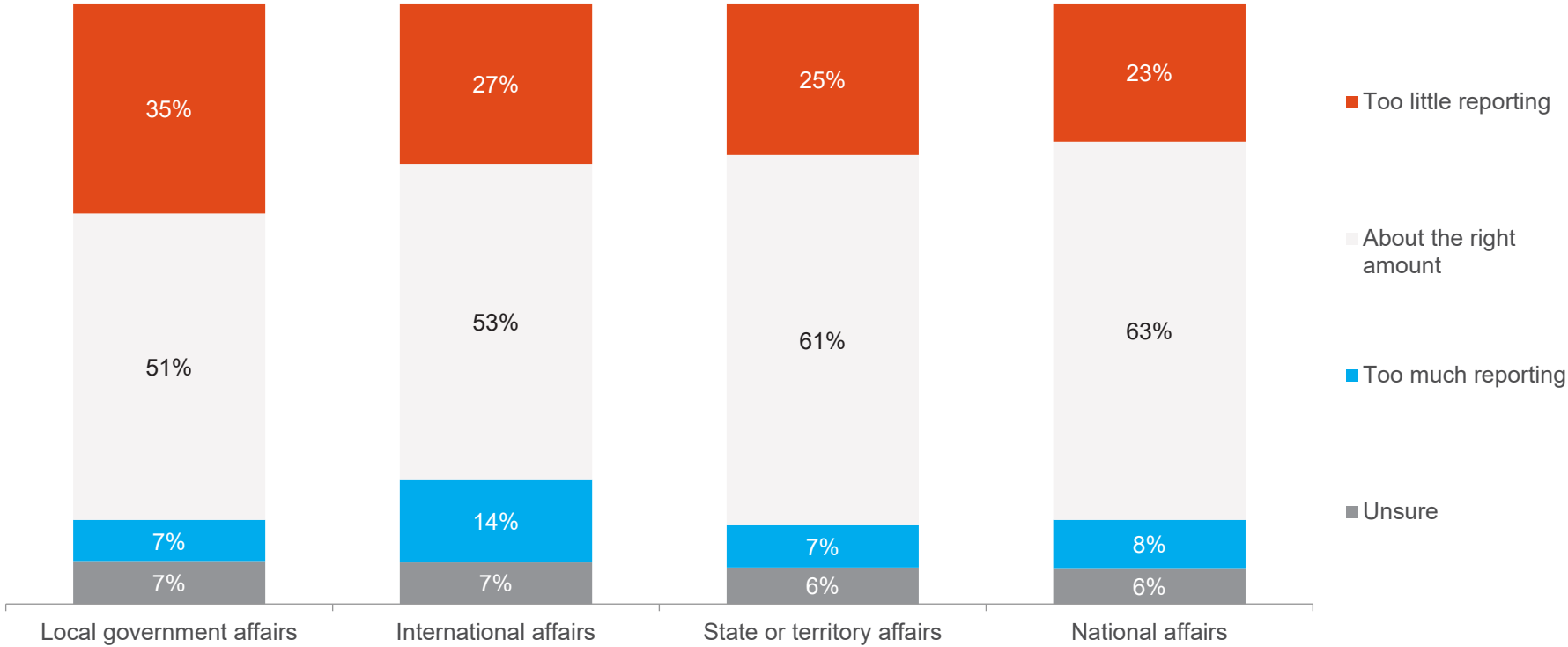
To what extent to you think that public interest journalism is important or not important to Australian society?



■ Very important ■ Somewhat important ■ A little important ■ Not very important ■ Not at all important

Sufficient public interest journalism at various levels

Q Do you think there is enough public interest journalism reporting in the following areas?



Overall support for tax increase – support for all values shown to participants

In order to gauge possible public support in a tax increase to fund public interest journalism, it was suggested to participants that the government could increase the amount of public interest journalism by 50 per cent for a randomly assigned price (\$0.50, \$1, \$5 or \$15) monthly or annually.

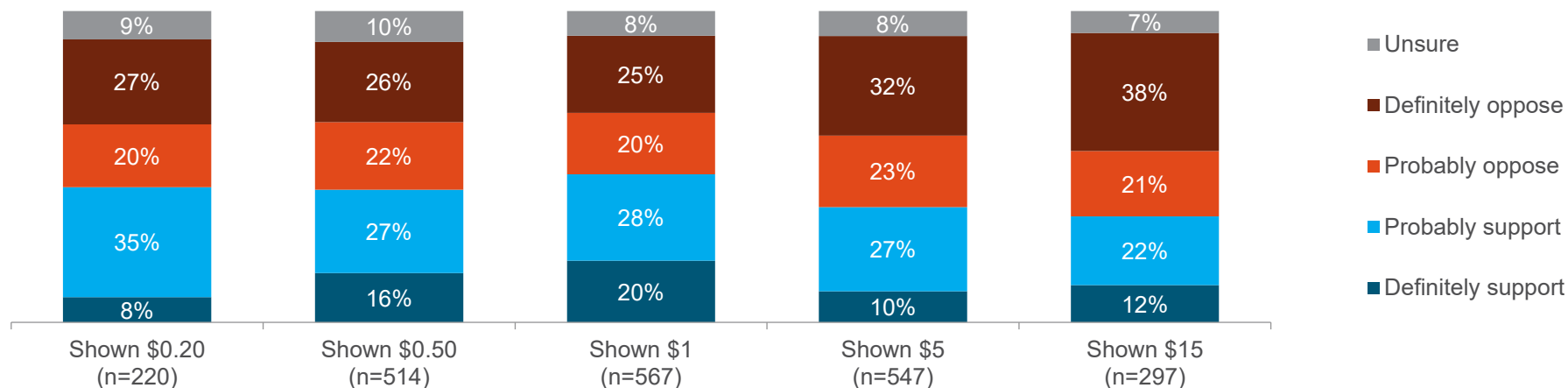
If the participant said they 'definitely would support' that tax increase, they would be asked the same question with a higher price (\$1, \$5, \$15, \$40). If the participant said any other option, they were shown a lower price (\$0.20, \$0.50, \$1, \$5) instead.

For example, the first price a participant is shown is \$5 and they 'probably would support' a tax increase at that amount. At the next question they are asked if they would support a \$1 tax increase.

The chart below shows the number of participants who were shown that value (either first or second) and the proportion who would support that value increase.

**Please note that \$40 option is not shown due to small sample size (n=23).*

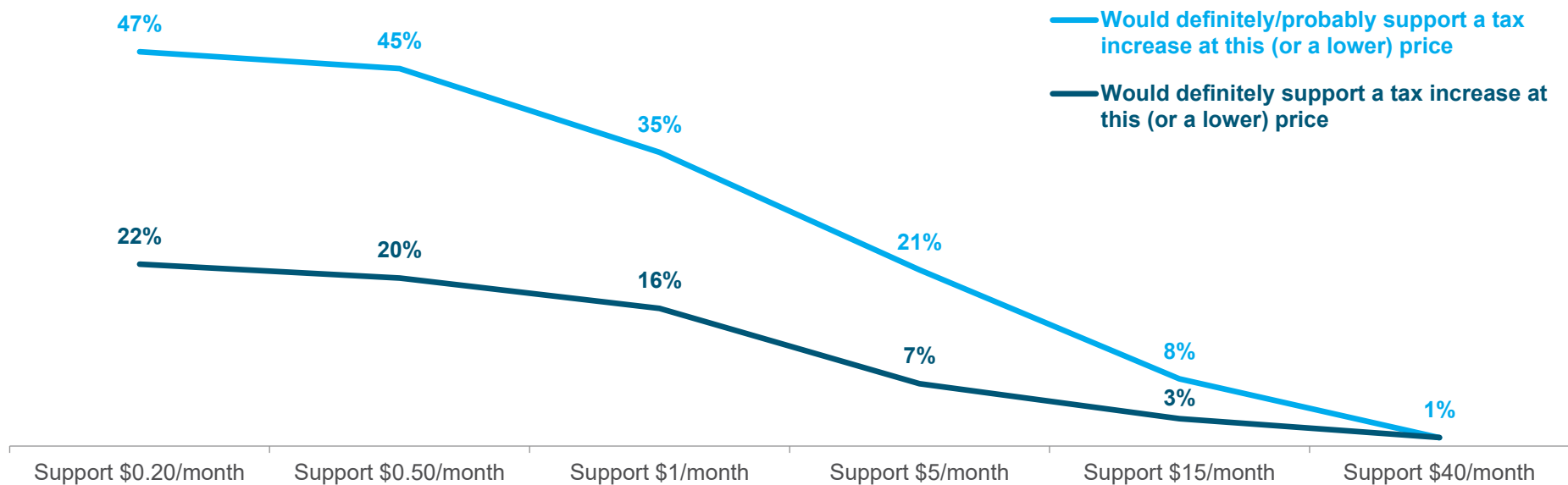
Q To what extent would you support or oppose paying <\$X1> per month in tax for increased public interest journalism? / And to what extent would you support or oppose paying more for public interest journalism – if it increased the amount of tax you pay by <\$Y1> per month (<\$Y2> per year)?



Overall support for tax increase – Cumulative support for tax increase

The chart below shows the proportion of participants who would support (definitely or probably) and definitely support an increased tax for public interest journalism out of the overall sample. For the purpose of this chart we have assumed that someone who would support a \$5/month tax increase, would also support \$0.20, \$0.50 and \$1 increases. Participants who did not definitely support either price points they were shown comprise the remaining 78% of the sample (53% opposed both price points shown or answered don't know).

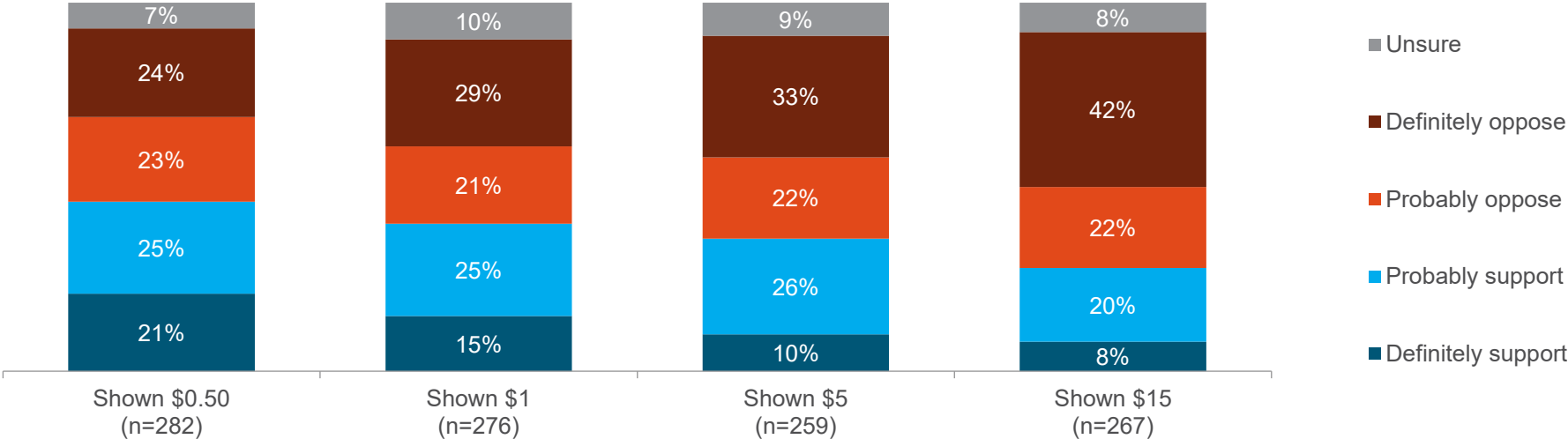
Q To what extent would you support or oppose paying <\$X1> per month in tax for increased public interest journalism? / And to what extent would you support or oppose paying more for public interest journalism – if it increased the amount of tax you pay by <\$Y1> per month (<\$Y2> per year)?



Overall support for tax increase – First price point shown

The chart below shows the proportion of participants who would definitely support, probably support, probably oppose, definitely oppose or are unsure about an increased tax for public interest journalism out of the overall sample. The first price point shown to participants was randomly generated with the intent that an even proportion of participants were shown each of the four price points across the entire sample.

Q To what extent would you support or oppose paying <\$X1> per month in tax for increased public interest journalism? / And to what extent would you support or oppose paying more for public interest journalism – if it increased the amount of tax you pay by <\$Y1> per month (<\$Y2> per year)?

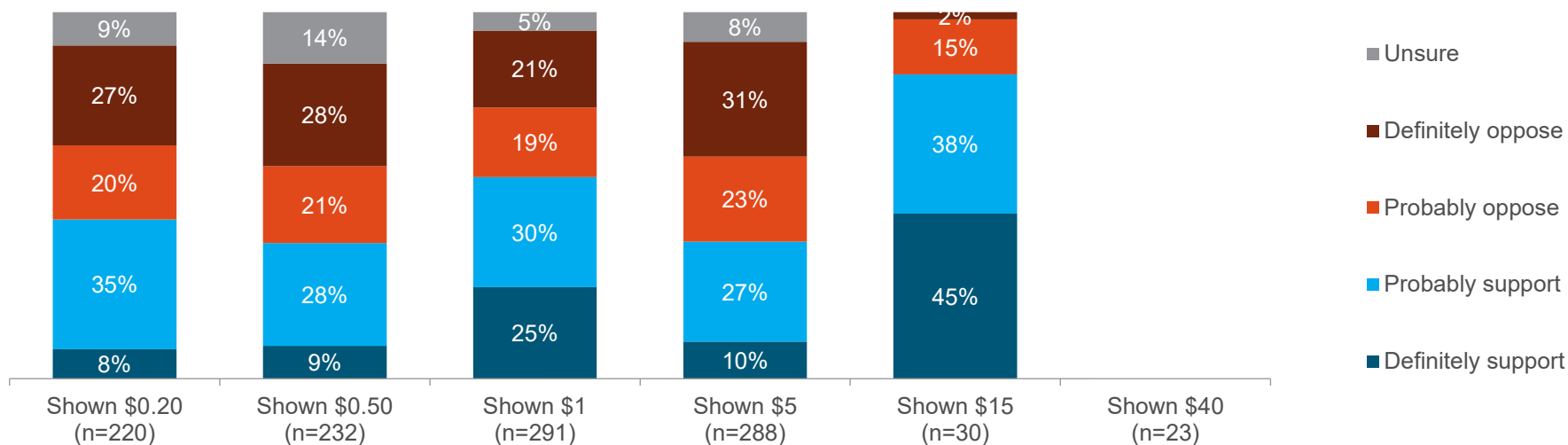


Overall support for tax increase – Second price point shown

The chart below shows the level of support or opposition for an increased tax for public interest journalism out of the overall sample. The second price point was determined by their response to the first price point – if they would definitely support the first price point, the second price point was higher. If they would not definitely support, the second price point was lower than the first.

**Please note that \$40 option is not shown due to small sample size (n=23)*

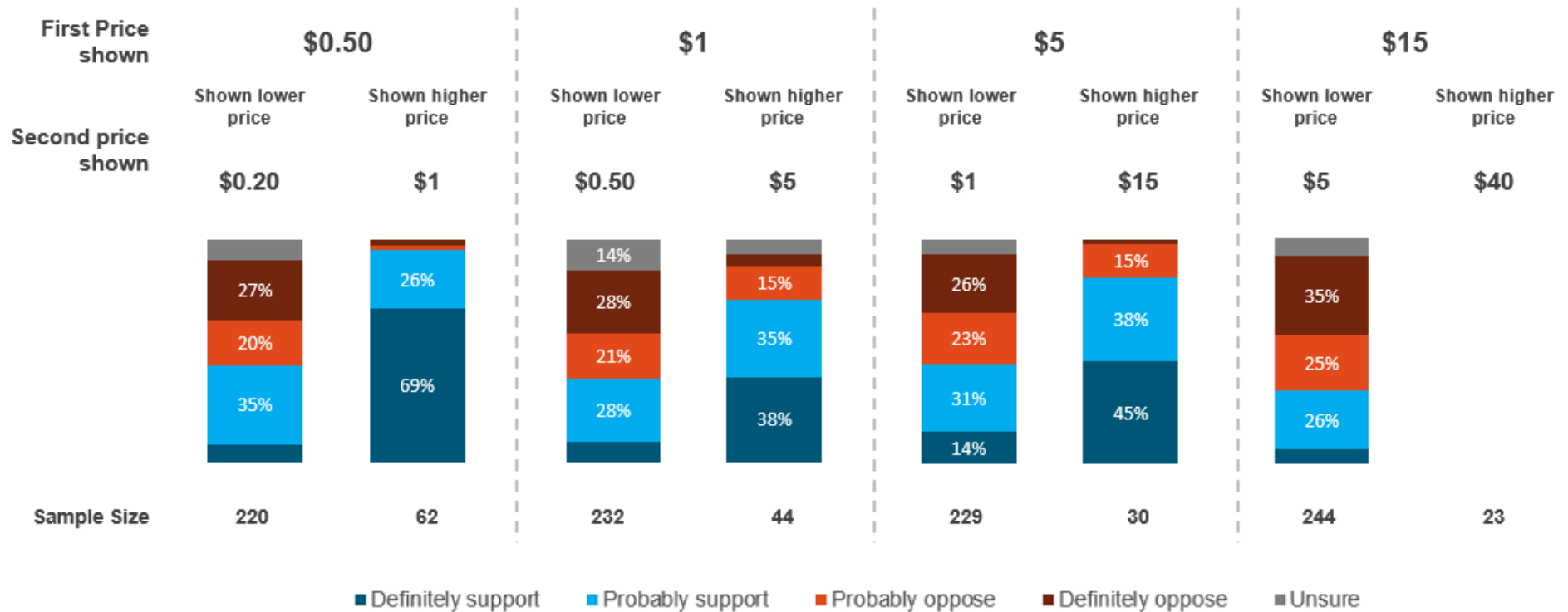
Q To what extent would you support or oppose paying <\$X1> per month in tax for increased public interest journalism? / And to what extent would you support or oppose paying more for public interest journalism – if it increased the amount of tax you pay by <\$Y1> per month (<\$Y2> per year)?



Appendix: Overall support for tax increase – First and second price point differences

The first chart below shows the proportion of participants who would definitely support the tax increase at the first price they saw. The second chart shows the number of participants who were shown a higher or lower price point (based on their response to the first question) and the proportion who would/not definitely support a tax increase at this second price point.

*Please note that \$40 option is not shown due to small sample size (n=23)



Note: values lower than 10% are not shown on this chart for readability

Appendix: Household income definitions*

NET: Lower Income	Up to \$51,999 per year Total of all wages/salaries, government benefits, pensions, allowances and other income that your household usually receives (GROSS – before tax and superannuation deductions)
NET: Mid Income	\$52,000 to \$103,999 per year Total of all wages/salaries, government benefits, pensions, allowances and other income that your household usually receives (GROSS – before tax and superannuation deductions)
NET: High Income	More than \$104,000 per year Total of all wages/salaries, government benefits, pensions, allowances and other income that your household usually receives (GROSS – before tax and superannuation deductions)

Appendix: Methodology, margin of error and professional standards

The data gathered for this report is gathered from a fortnightly online omnibus conducted by Qualtrics.

Every two weeks, the team at Essential considers issues that are topical, and a series of questions are devised to put to the Australian public. Some questions are repeated regularly (such as political preference and leadership approval), while others are unique to each week and reflect current media and social issues.

The response rate varies each week, but usually delivers 1000+ interviews. In theory, with a sample of this size, there is 95 per cent certainty that the results are within 3 percentage points of what they would be if the entire population had been polled. However, this assumes random sampling, which, because of non-response and less than 100% population coverage cannot be achieved in practice. Furthermore, there are other possible sources of error in all polls including question wording and question order, interviewer bias (for telephone and face-to-face polls), response errors and weighting.

The online omnibus is live from the Wednesday night and closed on the following Sunday. Incentives are offered to participants. Essential Research uses the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to analyse the data. The data is weighted against Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data.

All Essential Research staff hold Australian Market and Social Research Society (AMSRS) membership and are bound by professional codes of behaviour.

The **Public Interest Journalism Initiative** Ltd is a non-partisan, philanthropically funded, not-for-profit body established as a limited-life initiative (3-5 years) to conduct research, develop policy and promote public discussion to ensure a sustainable ecosystem of independent, pluralistic, public interest journalism in Australia. PIJI was established in 2019 after consultations with publishers, editors, philanthropists, business leaders, policy-makers and researchers, and is governed by a board of highly-credentialed voluntary directors across the disciplines of media, law, public policy, research, philanthropy and business. PIJI supports informed debate with credible research, and works independently and collaboratively to develop rigorous public policy options.

PIJI operates as a Major Research Project of the newDemocracy Foundation.

Glenn Withers AO is a Professor of Economics in the Research School of Economics, Australian National University and UNSW Canberra. He is Past President of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, co-managing director of the consulting firm Applied Economics Pty Ltd and Board Chair of education company Blended Learning International Pty Ltd. He is also Board Chair of World Bank affiliate the Global Development Learning Network. He is a member of PIJI's Expert Research Panel and is lead adviser on the Community Value Survey project for PIJI.

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