

The Essential Report – Climate Media Centre

03 December 2024

The Essential Report

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Prepared By: Essential Research

Data Supplied by:



Our researchers are members of The 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 27th November to 1st December 2024 and is based on 1,123 participants.

The weighting efficiency applied to the results at a national level is 80%, which gives an effective sample size of 895. The maximal margin of error at this effective sample size is $\pm 3.3\%$ (95% confidence level).

The full 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. There is low awareness around the timelines for renewable electricity generation and the closure of coal fired power stations in Australia

- 41% of participants are unsure what percentage of our electricity will be generated by renewable energy sources by 2030.
- Those who gave an answer were more likely to underestimate the percentage of renewable energy generation by 2030, with 48% saying it would be less than 80% by 2030.
- Only 6% gave the correct answer of 80-89%. Those with a university education were most likely to give the correct answer (11%).
- 38% of participants are also unsure when the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) expects all coal fired power stations to close.
- Participants tended to either overestimate or underestimate the timeline for closing coal fired power stations, 21% say 2035 and 17% say 2050.
- Only 16% gave the correct answer of 2040.

2. People have greater knowledge of which types of energy are renewable

- A majority of participants consider rooftop solar (65%), large scale solar (56%), onshore / offshore wind (56%) and hydropower (55%) as renewable energy sources.
- However, they have lower awareness of lesser-known renewable energies such as concentrated solar thermal (38%), green hydrogen (34%) and bioenergy (27%).
- Very few consider gas and coal to be renewable energies (17% and 12%), although around a quarter (24%) see nuclear as a renewable energy source.
 - o This perception of nuclear is driven by older people (aged 55 and over) (31%) and Coalition voters (36%).

3. Most overestimate the amount of land required to significantly increase our current electricity generation from renewables

- 60% overestimate the amount of total land required to generate over 20 times our annual electricity generation from solar and onshore wind (i.e. 2% or more).
- Only 8% gave the correct answer of less than 2% and around a third (32%) were unsure.

4. There is moderate awareness of the forms of renewable energy storage that Australia currently uses

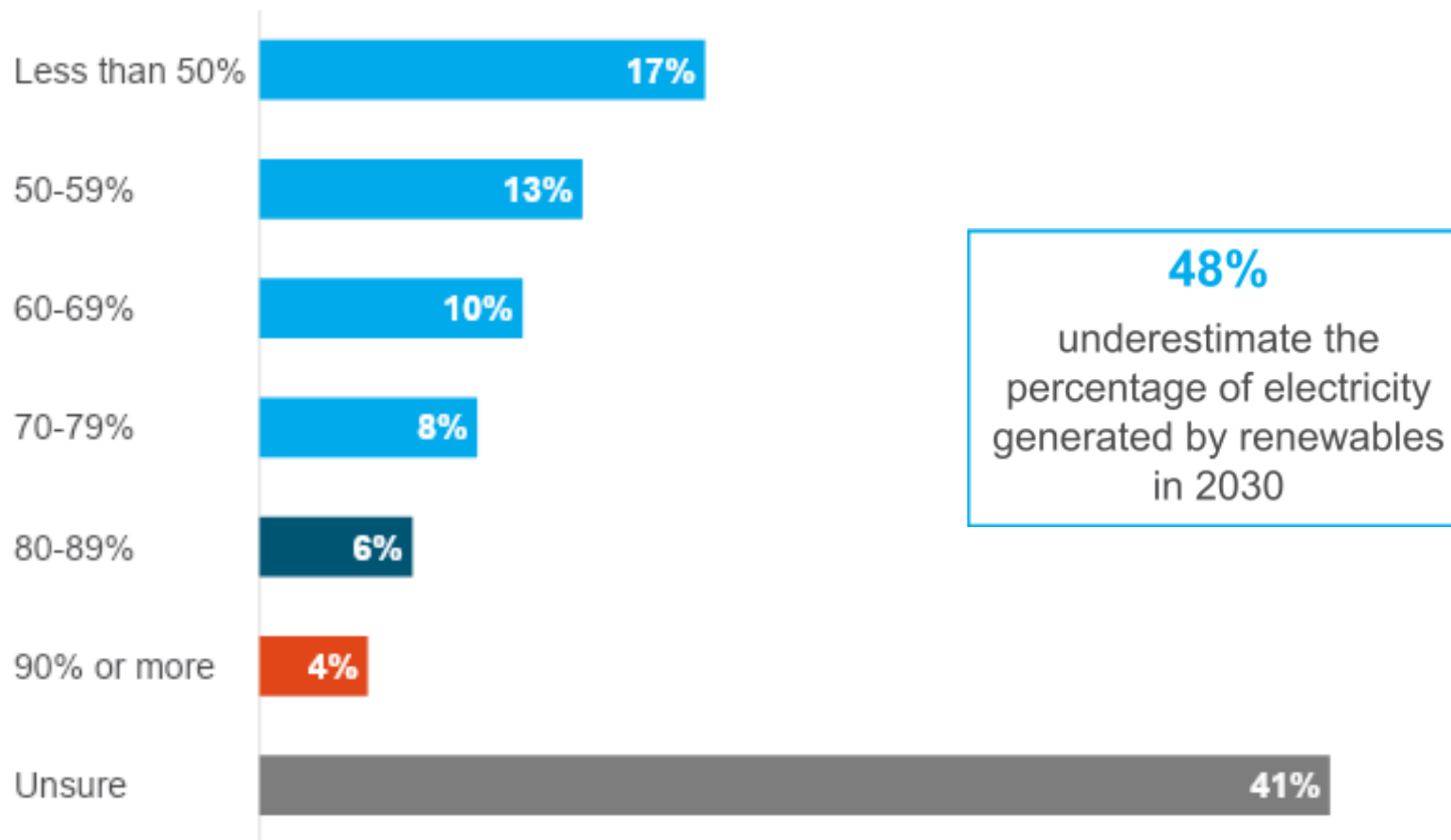
- 58% are aware that Australia uses household battery storage and 48% are aware that Australia uses large-scale battery storage.
- However, participants are less aware that Australia uses solar thermal and pumped hydro (38% and 35%).
- 15% are not aware that Australia already uses all these forms of renewable energy storage.

5. There is low awareness of when Australia's first solar and wind farms were built

- 38% of participants are unsure of when Australia's first solar farm was built and 37% are unsure when the first wind farm was built.
- A majority (56%) underestimate how long ago Australia built its first solar farm (i.e. 1990s or later).
- Only 6% gave the correct answer of 1980s.
- 49% also underestimate how long ago Australia built its first wind farm (i.e. 1990s or later).
- Only 14% gave the correct answer of 1980s.

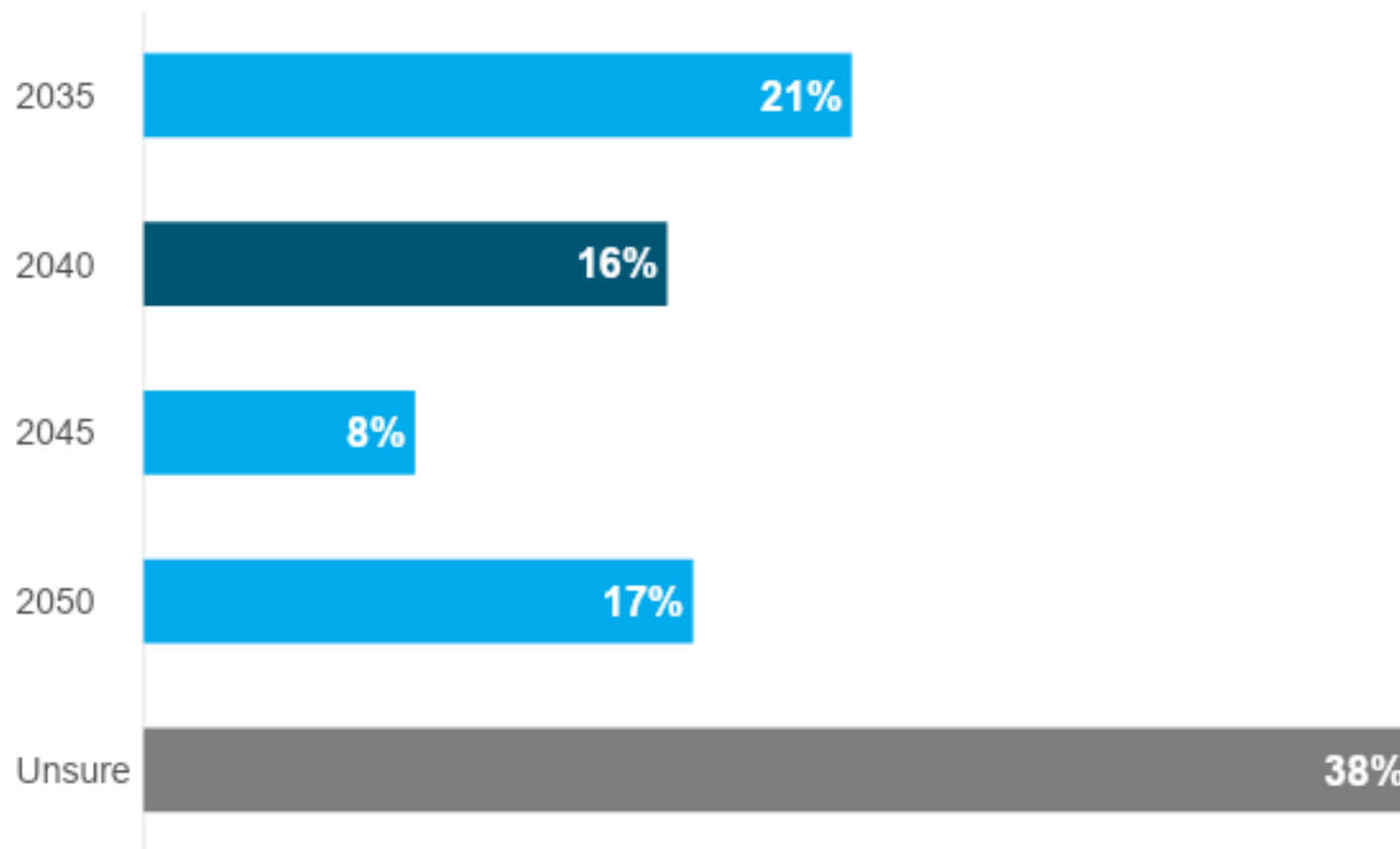
Percentage renewable energy by 2030

Q Based on the Federal Government's Powering Australia Plan what percentage of our electricity will be coming from renewable energy sources by 2030?



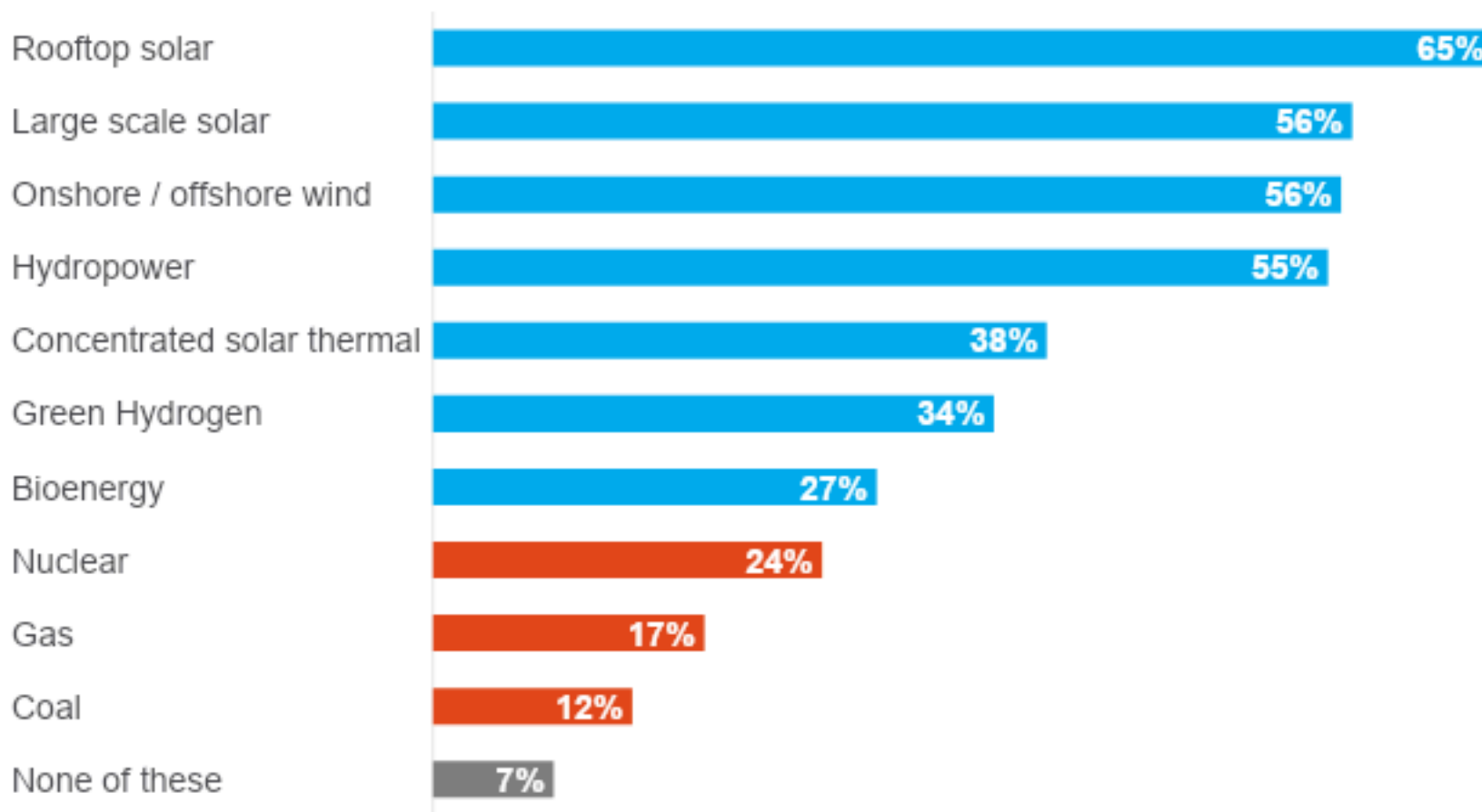
Closure of coal fired power stations in Australia

Q To the best of your knowledge, when does the Australian Energy Market Operator expect all of Australia's coal fired power stations be closed by?



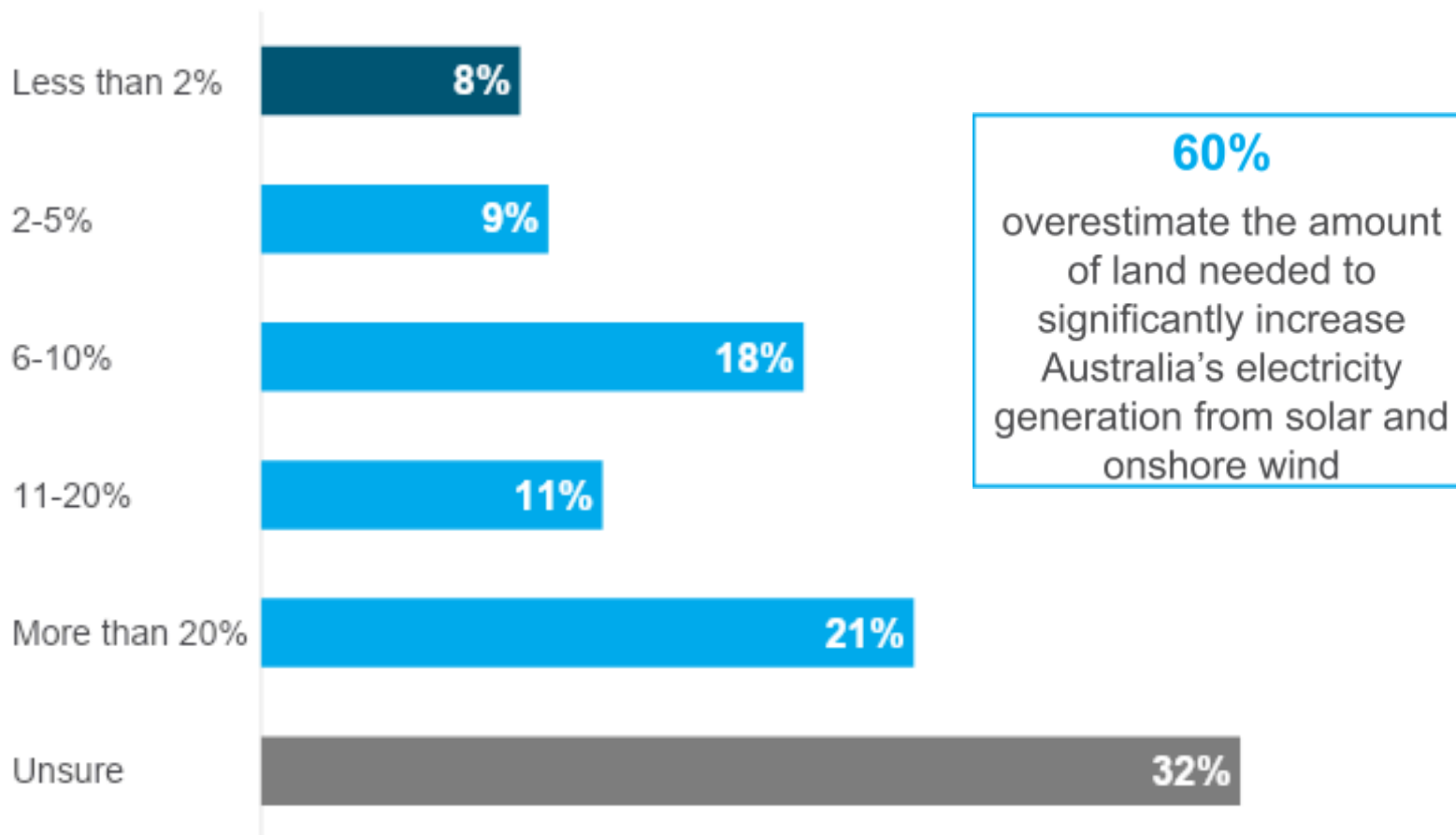
Knowledge of renewable energy sources

Q The United Nations defines renewable energy as “energy that comes from natural sources that are replenished faster than they are consumed”. Which of the following would you consider to be types of renewable energy?



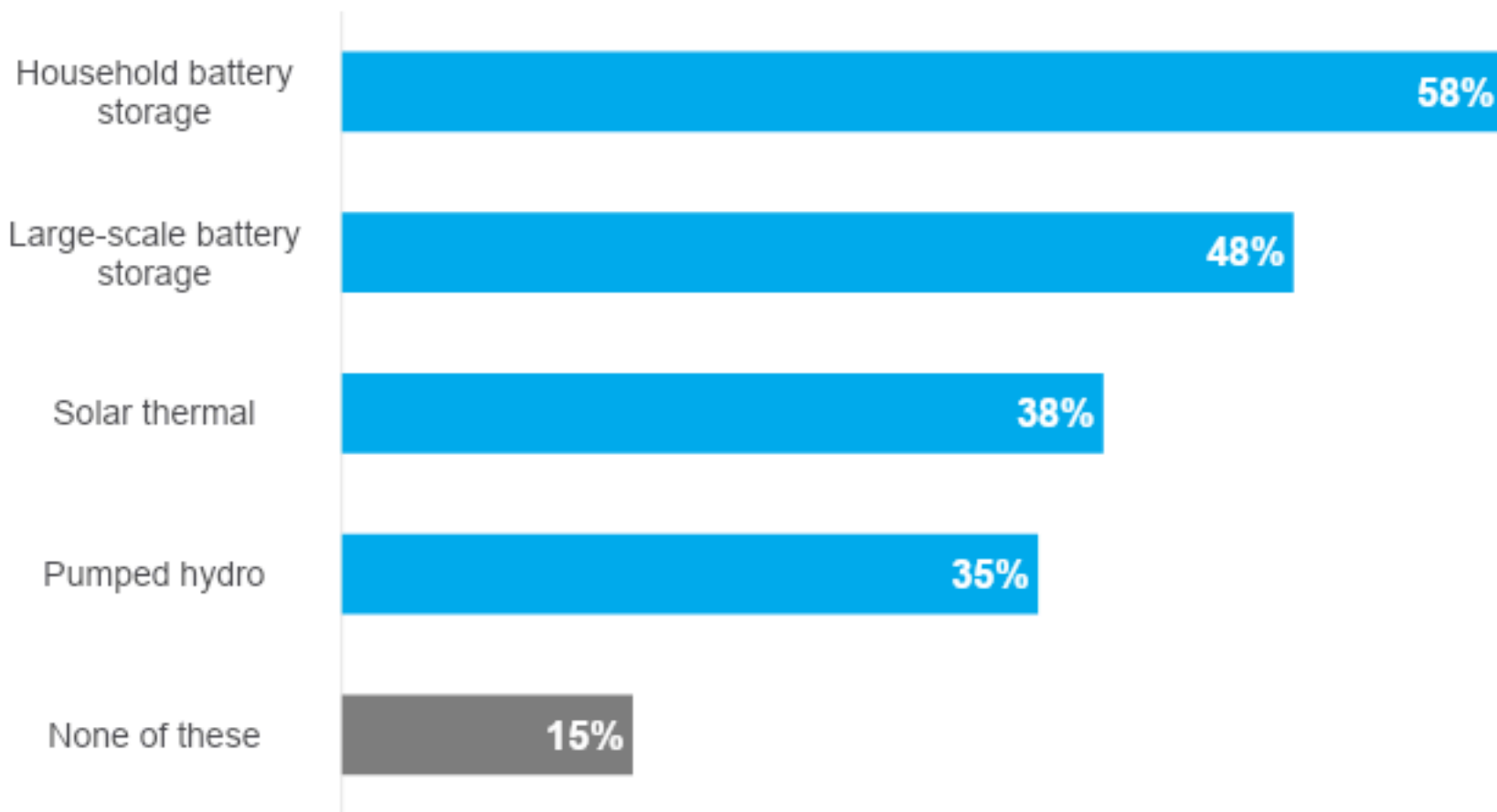
Land required to generate 20 times our annual electricity generation from solar and onshore wind

Q What percentage of Australia's total land do you think we would need to generate over 20 times our current annual electricity generation from solar and onshore wind?



Awareness of renewable energy storage in Australia

Q Renewable energy can be stored in lots of ways. To the best of your knowledge, which of the following forms of renewable storage does Australia already use?



First solar and wind farms in Australia

Q To the best of your knowledge, when were the following built for the first time in Australia?

■ 1980s

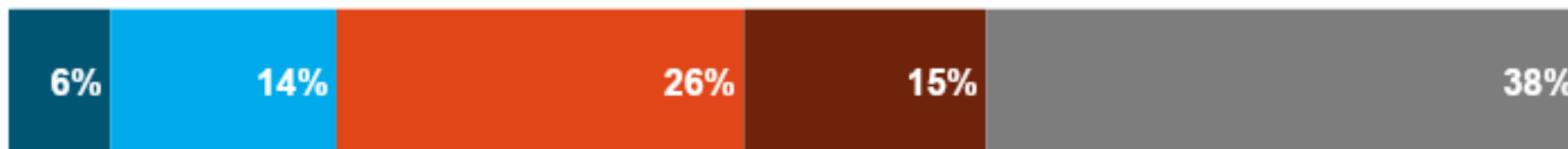
■ 1990s

■ 2000s

■ 2010s

■ Unsure

Title



Appendix: Household income definitions

TOTAL: 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)
TOTAL: 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)
TOTAL: 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: Financial circumstance definitions

Comfortable	I don't have to worry about paying bills, I have savings and enough to buy luxuries
Secure	I'm able to pay bills and usually have money spare for savings or buying luxuries
Struggling	I have to watch the budget to make sure there's enough money for all the bills
In serious difficulty	Being able to pay all the bills is a regular concern

Appendix: Methodology, margin of error and professional standards

The data gathered for this report is gathered from a fortnightly online omnibus run by Essential Research with sample provided by Qualtrics from online panels.

The online omnibus is active from the Wednesday night of each week and closed on the following Sunday. The target population is all Australian residents aged 18+. Participants were invited to participate and completed the survey online without an interviewer present and incentives were offered for participation.

The response rate varies each week, but usually delivers 1,000+ interviews. Quotas are applied to be representative of the target population by age, gender and location.

RIM weighting is applied to the data using information sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC). The factors used in the weighting are age, gender, location, education and party ID.

Information for the weighting efficiency, effective sample size and margin of error for each poll (from June 2021) can be found here:

Each fortnight, the team at Essential Media Communications discusses 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. Full text for standard voting and regular political preferences can be found in the link above. No questions were asked prior to these questions which have material influence on results.

Participants not eligible to vote in federal elections (either for age, residency or other reasons) are excluded from voting intention. Eligible participants are able to select 'Unsure' for voting intention. They were then asked a 'leaner' question which also included an 'Unsure' option. Participants answering 'Unsure' are NOT excluded from published results, or any subsequent questions. 2 party preferred (2PP) calculations use stated preference. Preference flows from previous federal and state elections are only used for participants answering 'Unsure' for stated preference.

All Essential Research staff hold Research Society membership and are bound by professional codes of behaviour. This research is compliant with the Australian Polling Council Quality Mark standards.