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Australian Constitutional Values Survey 2021

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Results Release 1

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1. METHODOLOGY & FUNDING

Samples and data collection

- Conducted nationally in Australia by OmniPoll
- Respondents: Australian citizens and permanent residents aged 18 years and over
- 2017 online AVCS (n=1,526); 2021 ACVS (n= 1,511)

Year	Online		
	n	date	methods
2017	1,526	3-10 Aug	• Respondents drawn from the online consumer panel managed by Lightspeed Research, and Lightspeed Research and Research Now (2017); OmniPoll's online partners • Sample quotas set for state, city and region; sex; and age.
2021	1,511	9-18 Feb	

Weighting

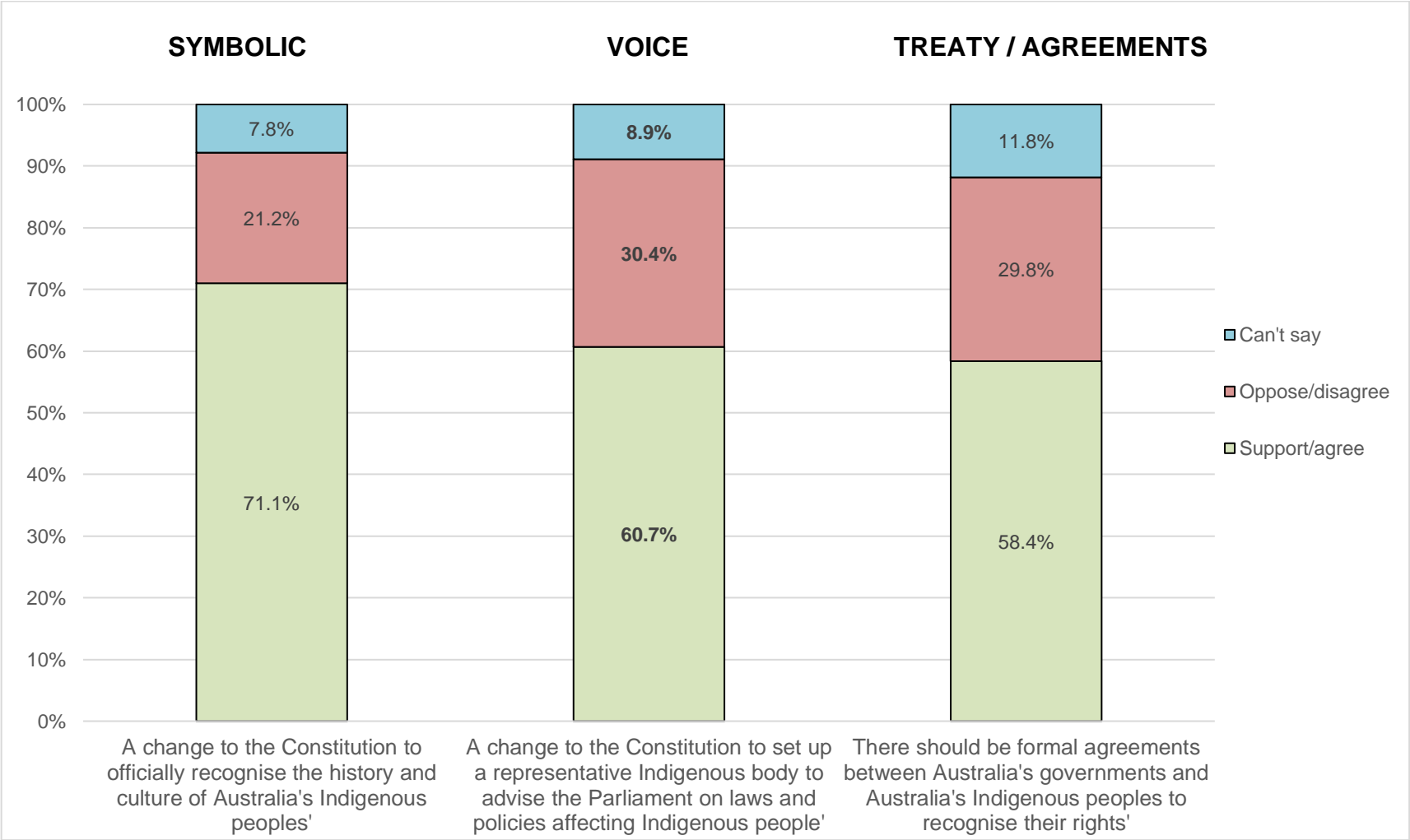
- To reflect the population distribution, results were post-weighted to:
 - Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area;
 - federal voting intention (using the previous two Newspoll/OmniPoll voting intention surveys).

Funding

- 2017 – Australian Research Council, Discovery Project DP140102682, led by Griffith University, with University of Sydney, University of New South Wales, Australian National University, Lafayette College and University of Texas.
- 2021 – CQUniversity New Staff Research Grant HE1349, and Dean (Research), Griffith Business School.

2. 2017 AUSTRALIAN CONSTITUTIONAL VALUES SURVEY

“It’s been suggested the Constitution should be changed in some way to recognise Australia’s **Indigenous peoples** – that is, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. Would you **support** or **oppose** the following changes?”



3. 2021 AUSTRALIAN CONSTITUTIONAL VALUES SURVEY

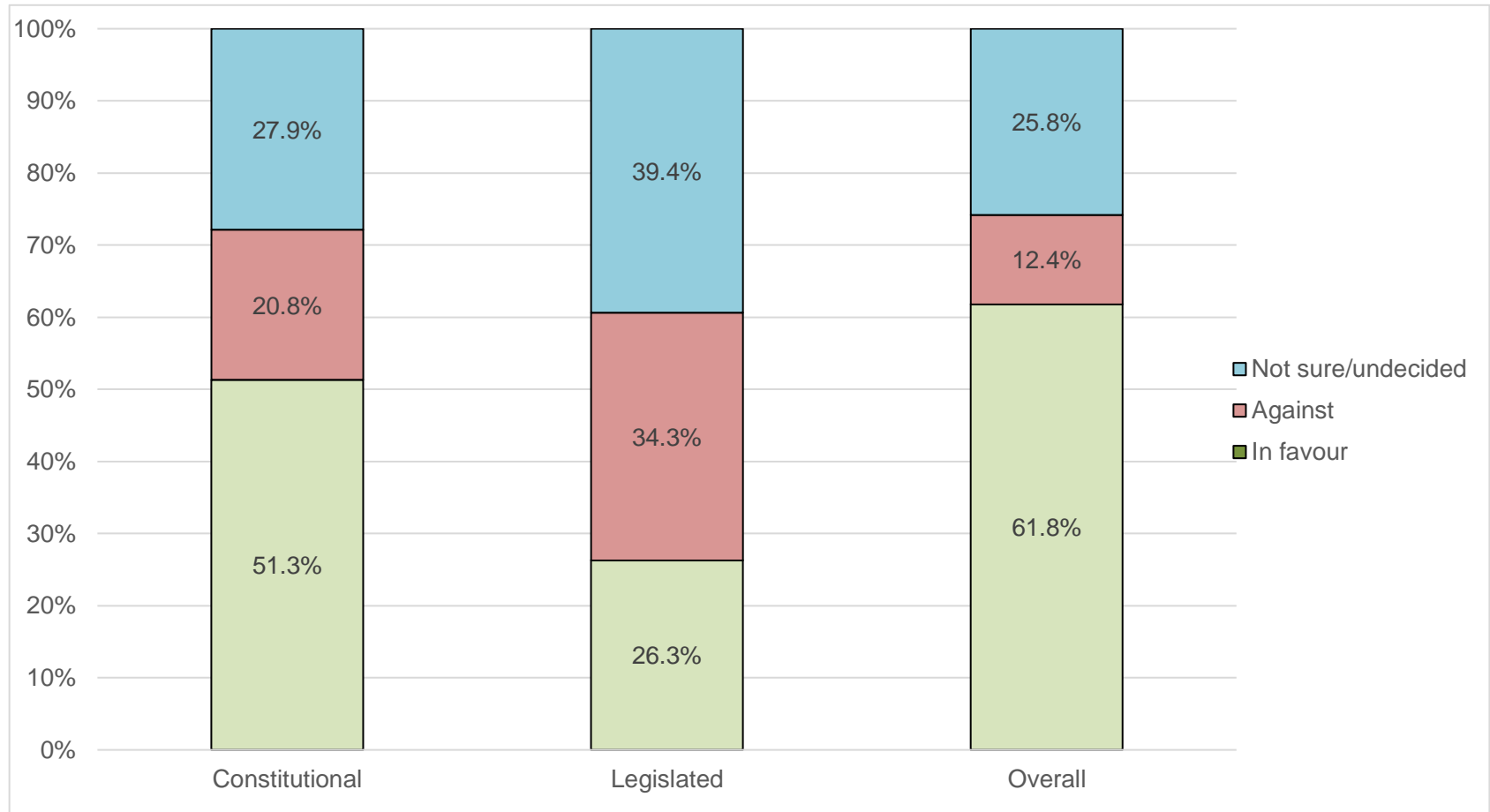
A. PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF THE CONSTITUTION AND VOICE (2021)

“Now a question about the **Australian Constitution**. The Constitution can **only** be changed by the Australian people voting in a **referendum**. Have you heard of the Australian Constitution before now?”

“It’s been suggested the Constitution should be changed to recognise Indigenous people by establishing an Indigenous ‘Voice’ to the Australian Parliament. Before today, had you **heard about** this idea of an **Indigenous ‘Voice’ to Parliament?**”

	Heard of Australian Constitution before	Heard of Voice proposal before
Yes	82.7%	47.6%
No	17.3%	52.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

B. SUPPORT FOR FIRST NATIONS VOICE (2021)



“Overall” = **In favour** of the Voice as either a constitutional or legislated option, or both; **Against** the Voice (both options, i.e. irrespective of whether constitutional or legislated), **Undecided** (remainder, i.e. undecided on both, or undecided on one and against the other). *See over for questions...*

SUPPORT FOR FIRST NATIONS VOICE - QUESTIONS USED

	“Constitutional Voice”	“Legislated Voice”
Question (original)	The ‘Voice’ would be a representative Indigenous body that advises Parliament and the government when it makes laws, policies and programs that affect Indigenous people. At a referendum, would you vote in favour or against changing the Constitution to set up this advisory Indigenous ‘Voice’?	Another alternative would be to establish the ‘Voice’ <u>without</u> changing the Constitution... <i>click on ‘Continue’..</i>
Information given to participants	<p>Step 1: Determine how the ‘Voice’ would work</p> <p>i. Indigenous people, government experts and politicians would design a set of rules about how the ‘Voice’ would work, and what it can do.</p> <p>Step 2: Australians vote at a referendum</p> <p>ii. Australians vote to decide if the <u>existence</u> of the ‘Voice’ should be <u>permanently enshrined and protected</u> in the Constitution as part of our system of government.</p> <p>Step 3: <u>BUT</u> retain flexibility about the rules</p> <p>iii. The rules about how the ‘Voice’ works and what it can do, would <u>not</u> be enshrined in the Constitution.</p> <p>iv. If necessary, the rules could be changed and improved over time.</p> <p>Any changes would be determined jointly by Indigenous people and government.</p>	<p>The ‘Voice’ <u>without</u> changing the Constitution</p> <p>i. Again, the rules would be jointly decided by Indigenous people, government experts and politicians.</p> <p>ii. Because the Constitution is not being changed, people would <u>not</u> vote at a referendum.</p> <p>iii. <u>Parliament would vote</u> to decide if the ‘Voice’ is established.</p> <p>iv. The existence of the ‘Voice’ would <u>not</u> be permanently enshrined in the Constitution.</p> <p>v. Again, the rules could be changed and improved over time.</p>
Question (final)	At a referendum, would you vote in favour or against changing the Constitution to permanently enshrine the existence of the ‘Voice’ as part of our system of government?	Would you be in favour or against establishing the ‘Voice’ this way <u>without</u> changing the Constitution?

C. SUPPORT FOR FIRST NATIONS VOICE BY STATE (2017 & 2021)

2017: “Would you **support** or **oppose** the following change: A change to the Constitution to set up a representative Indigenous body to advise the Parliament on laws and policies that affect Indigenous people”

2021: “Overall support” (Constitutional or legislation) (see above)

%	AUSTRALIA (INC. ACT AND NT)		NSW		VIC		QLD		SA		WA		TAS	
	2017 (n= 1526)	2021 (n= 1456)	2017 (n= 418)	2021 (n= 458)	2017 (n= 385)	2021 (n= 362)	2017 (n= 256)	2021 (n= 300)	2017 (n= 176)	2021 (n= 119)	2017 (n= 192)	2021 (n= 145)	2017 (n= 65)	2021 (n= 38)
SUPPORT/ IN FAVOUR	60.7	61.8	62.1	63.1	63.3	66.7	59.5	56.9	55.5	57.2	56.7	58.9	43.9	74.0
NOT SUPPORT/ AGAINST	30.4	12.4	28.8	10.2	28.1	11.2	33.2	16.0	31.3	11.0	32.9	13.6	49.1	10.9
CAN'T SAY/ UNDECIDED	8.9	25.8	9.1	26.8	8.6	22.1	7.3	27.1	13.1	31.8	10.5	27.5	7.0	15.1
TOTAL*	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

*'Prefer not to say' responses from 2021 removed

At the time of the 2017 survey, wider public discussion of the Voice was fairly new and had not engaged with the implications and significance of constitutional reform. Despite the reference to the Constitution in the question, we therefore expect that many respondents were engaging with the broad concept of a First Nations Voice rather than a specifically constitutionally enshrined model when completing the question. Accordingly, the comparison to overall support for the Voice in 2021 is most useful.

D. CHANGES IN SUPPORT FOR CONSTITUTIONAL VOICE AFTER LIMITED INFORMATION

First, respondents were asked the “Original” question on constitutional recognition (see p.6 above).

Next, respondents were given information about the Voice (see p.6).

Finally, respondents were asked a follow-up (final) question (see p.6): “At a referendum, would you vote in **favour** or **against** changing the Constitution to permanently **enshrine the existence of the ‘Voice’** as part of our system of government?”

	Original	Final	Net change	Actual change	
In Favour	52.7%	51.3%	-1.4%	In favour => In favour	43.2%
				Undecided => In favour	8.1%
				Against => In favour	0.0%
Against	18.1%	20.8%	+2.7%	Against => Against	15.1%
				Undecided => Against	4.6%
				In favour => Against	1.0%
Not sure/ undecided	29.2%	27.9%	-1.3%	Undecided => Undecided	16.5%
				In favour => Undecided	8.5%
				Against => Undecided	2.9%

Net decrease in support for the Voice between the ‘Original’ and ‘Final’ questions should not be interpreted as evidence that public education drives people away from supporting the Voice. Instead, we point to the 8% of respondents who moved from Undecided to In favour, and the 8% who moved from In favour to Undecided as highlighting the need for public education that engages with both factual elements (as presented to respondents) and moral significance of the Voice, and reassures citizens of the collective endorsement of the Voice by First Nations peoples (information that was not provided to participants).

E. PREFERENCE FOR CONSTITUTIONAL RATHER THAN LEGISLATED VOICE

Respondents who selected 'In favour' of both constitutional and legislated options were asked: "You've said you would be in favour of establishing the 'Voice' using either approach. Which way would you **most prefer** to see the 'Voice' established?"

In favour constitutional/against legislated	19.0
In favour constitutional/can't say legislated	16.7
Either, but prefer constitutional Voice	5.4
TOTAL PREFER/ONLY CONSTITUTIONAL	41.1
In favour legislated/against constitutional	4.5
In favour legislated/can't say constitutional	6.5
Either, but prefer Legislated	7.6
TOTAL PREFER/ONLY LEGISLATED	18.6
Against both	12.4
Against constitutional/can't say legislated	4.1
Against legislated/can't say constitutional	3.2
TOTAL AGAINST/NOT EXPLICITLY IN FAVOUR	19.7
Can't say/undecided both	18.6

