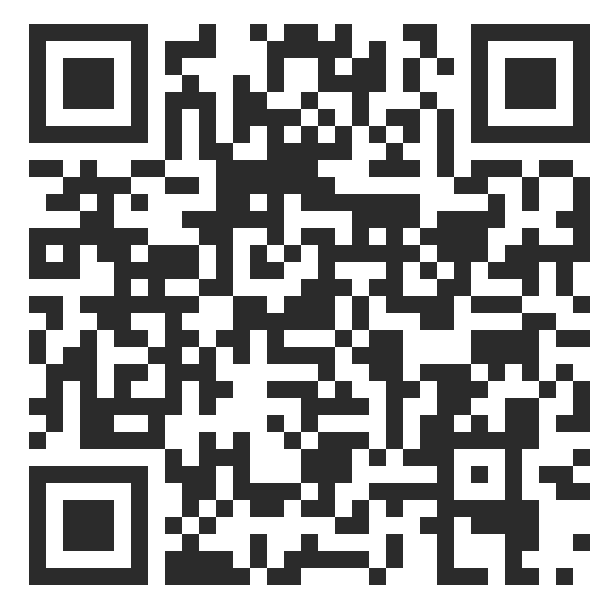


# WHAT DO ADULTS REALLY THINK OF CHILDREN?

*And why this matters*

Valuing Children Initiative  
Maddie McLeod, Development Executive



## METHODOLOGY/APPROACH

This research project is undertaken by the Valuing Children Initiative (VCI) and a group of researchers from the University of Western Australia, Curtin University, Edith Cowan University and Murdoch University.

**Phase 1:** Repeat VCI's 2016 benchmark survey with 1000 or more Australian adults from a broad cross section of society.

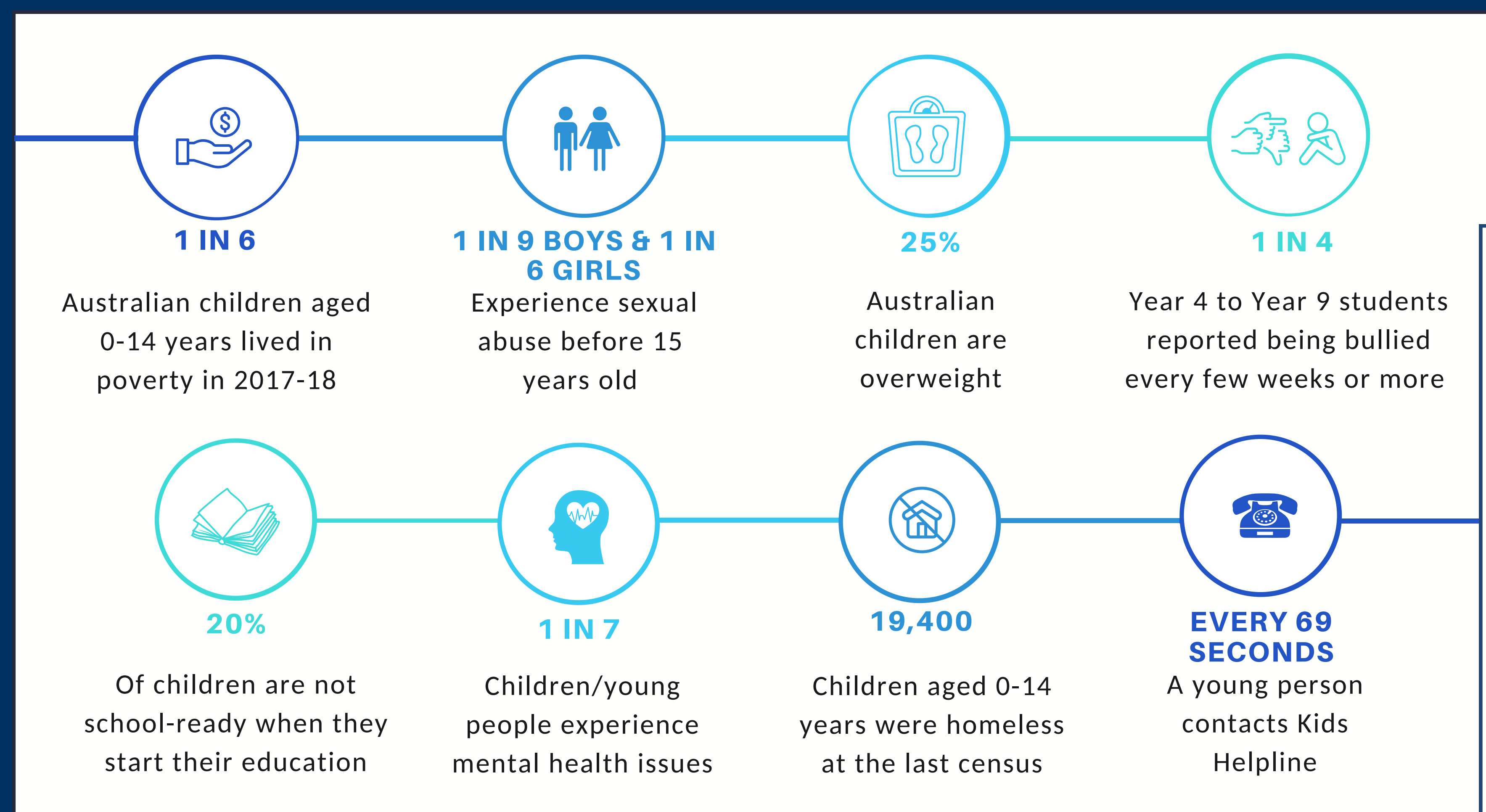
**Phase 2:** Compare results from 2016 survey with results from 2022 survey. Report on similarities and differences.

**Phase 3:** Thematic analysis of 50 adult interviews and both the 2016 and 2022 survey results. Publish the results and analysis in appropriate academic journal or journals.

**Note:** VCI commissioned a market research survey company to complete the 2016 survey which meant that the demographic profile of respondents was controlled and evenly distributed. In 2022, we are completing the research with the pro-bono assistance of several universities. The involvement of universities will ensure the research is academically rigorous when we get to phases 2 and 3. However, it also means that we are largely relying on networks to distribute the survey in phase 1. As such, the demographic profile of respondents to the 2022 survey is currently unevenly weighted. To ensure meaningful comparison between the 2016 and 2022 surveys, we will continue to distribute the 2022 survey until we achieve a demographic breakdown that is similar to the 2016 survey.

## DO WE VALUE CHILDREN

Most adults will tell you that children are important. Despite this, and despite the best efforts of many committed individuals and organisations we continue to see poor outcomes for children across multiple domains.



In a wealthy country like Australia, how do we account for these statistics?

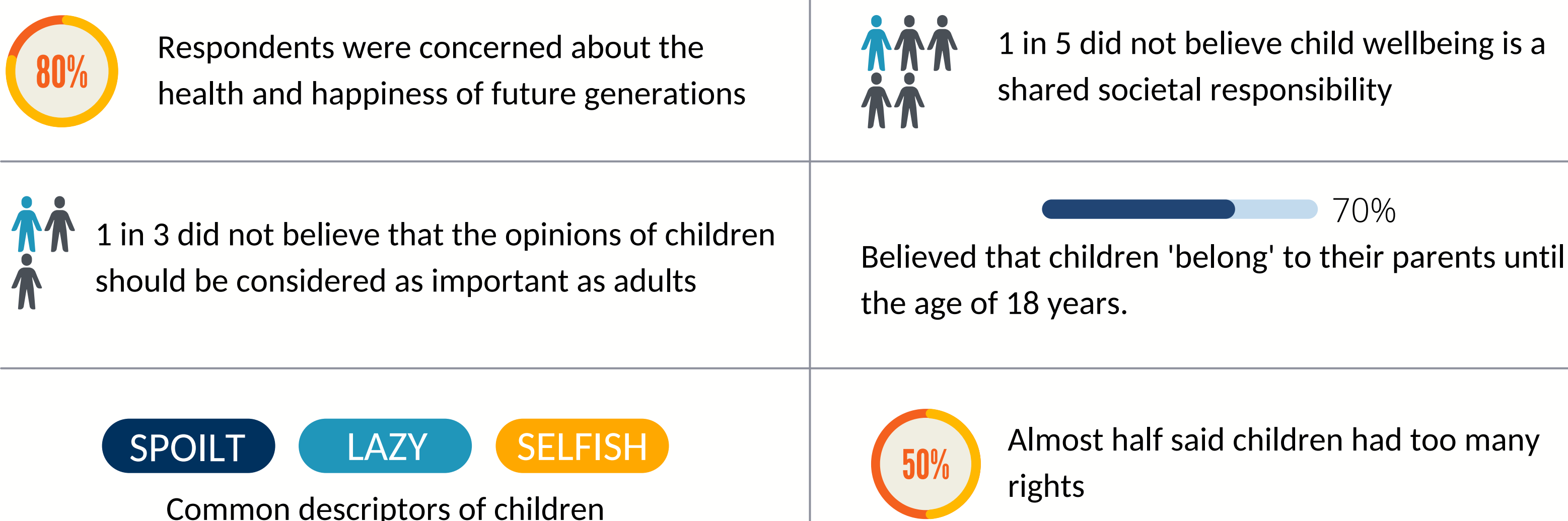
## ATTITUDES MATTER

Societal attitudes and the culture of a society are pivotal to children's wellbeing however, this important part of the picture is frequently missing from discussions and is not well captured in research.

Attitudes to children, how we value them, individually and as a section of society, directly impacts how we treat them and the priority we give to their needs and rights. This in turn impacts policy, programs and resources that directly and indirectly affect children. If we are to be successful in improving child wellbeing it is essential that we understand adult attitudes towards children so that individual and societal reflection and change can occur.

The 2022 study will repeat - and extend - the Valuing Children Initiative's 2016 benchmark survey to determine if attitudes to children have shifted. The research will help the Valuing Children Initiative, and others, to identify key adult attitudes that may be barriers to better outcomes for Australian children. This important research is a crucial precursor to meaningful, systemic change.

### Snapshot- 2016 Benchmark Survey



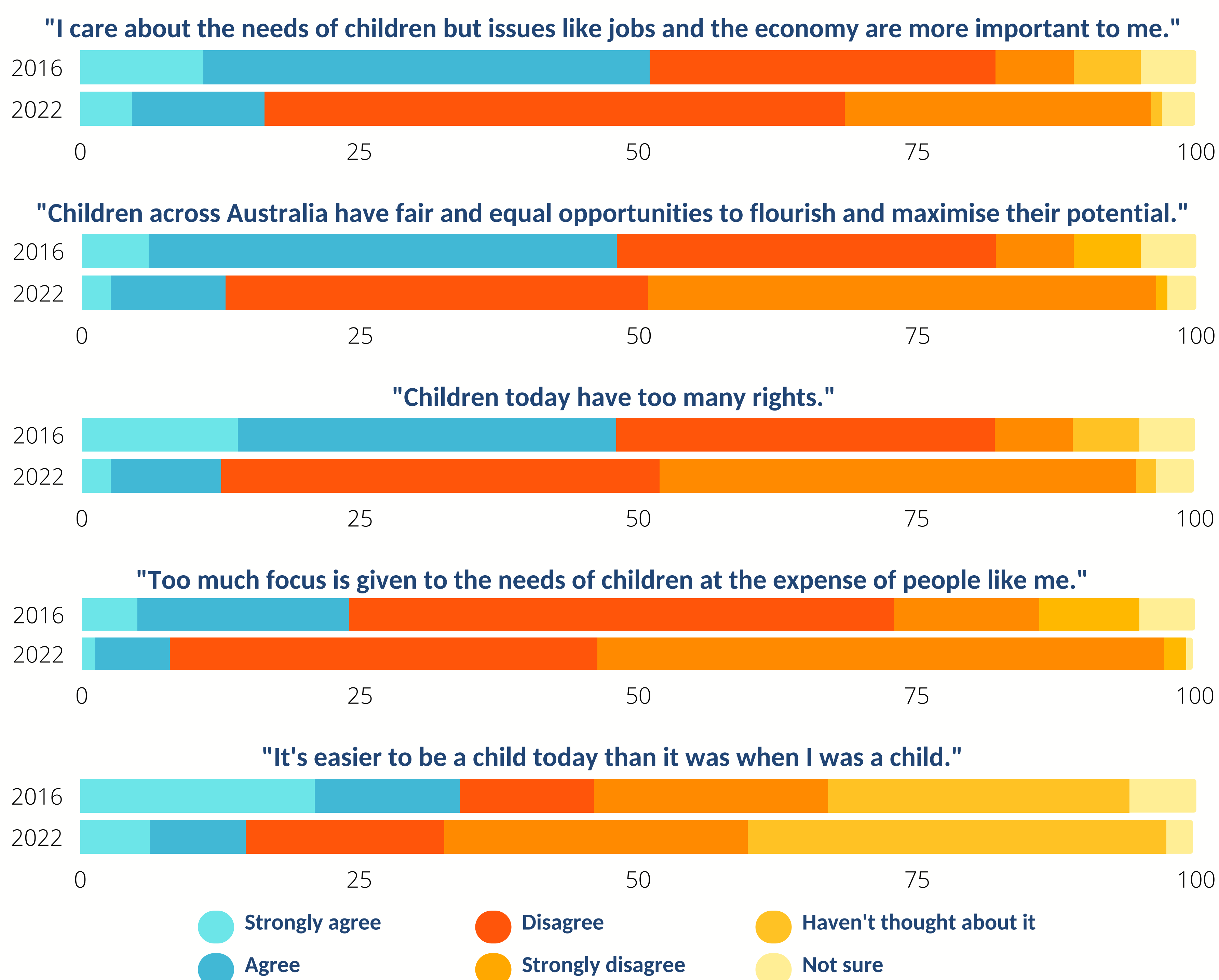
## CONCLUSION

Early findings of the 2022 research suggest things are changing. Respondents in 2022 appear to be less threatened by the concept of children's rights and more capable of seeing the connection between inequality, access to opportunity and outcomes for children. Most respondents (65%) in 2022 said it is more challenging to be a child today than it was when they were growing up and more than 80% are concerned about the health and happiness of future generations with many respondents expressing significant concern about climate change and the impact this will have on their own children and future generations. Most agreed governments should make decisions and policies in the interests of future generations but many noted a lack of government commitment to future generations particularly regarding climate change policy. Around 94% of respondents in 2022 agreed child wellbeing is a collective, community responsibility but almost 50% felt children were not prioritised enough by society.

The preliminary findings of the 2022 survey are encouraging but these are **not the final results**. To date more than 80% of respondents to the 2022 survey are women which is an interesting finding in itself. Until we have more responses from specific demographic groups; men, people living outside of WA, older adults and people with lower levels of education we cannot meaningfully interpret the data. We will continue to disseminate the survey until we achieve a similar demographic profile to the 2016 survey and are currently working on targeted recruitment. If you can assist VCI to disseminate the 2022 survey we'd be grateful for your support. Scan the QR code to access the survey or email [mmcleod@valuingchildren.com.au](mailto:mmcleod@valuingchildren.com.au) to request a survey link or any additional information about this research.

## Phase 1: PRELIMINARY RESULTS

\*based on 619 completed surveys



## 2022 SURVEY PARTICIPANT QUOTES

- "Children are reliant on us as adults to protect and care for them and look after their interests, society is not set up to give them power or authority and it is our duty to care for those who cannot care for themselves."
- "Watching the floods and bushfires and heat waves I wonder what kind of future the next generation will have."
- "As cliché as it is, children are the individuals who will shape the future, so ensuring their outcomes are as good as possible is very important to ensuring the future of the human race is positive."
- "It's morally right that we look after the interests of children until they are able to look after their own interests. Also if this is not done - the future looks bleak."
- "Where are children's voices in our political sphere? Where are they represented in policy and planning? If they're not there, then Australia isn't committed to prioritising their needs."
- "Stats tell us that kids are not a high priority."