Report

The Future of Emergency Call Handling in Australia and New Zealand

Harnessing the power of innovation to transform emergency response

MOTOROLA SOLUTIONS

Australia and New Zealand's emergency call services were first introduced more than 60 years ago, but the need to modernise these services to keep pace with new technological advancements has never been greater.

A new independent research study conducted on behalf of Motorola Solutions, a global leader in public safety and enterprise security, consulted **2,550+** residents across Australia and New Zealand about their views and expectations of emergency services and their call handling functions. Responses were fielded across a broad range of demographics including different genders, multiple generations and those living in urban and regional locations.

The results reveal a clear desire among the public to share personal data to facilitate better emergency response, coupled with high expectations that our emergency services should be able to make use of advanced technologies to deliver their vital services.

Emergency Call Handling Technology - the case for change

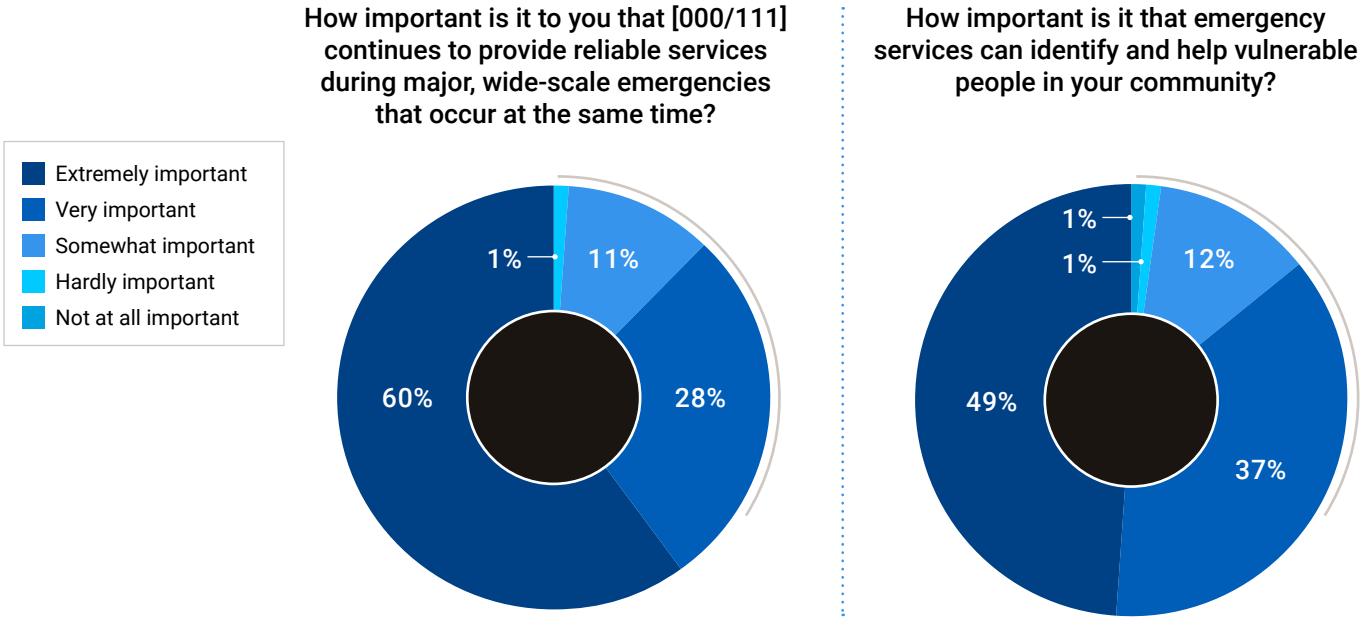
Australia's Triple Zero hotline has been the subject of heavy scrutiny recently, with the federal government introducing new legislation to bolster the powers of the Triple Zero Custodian after multiple cellular network outages resulted in missed emergency calls.

Treasury analysis estimates the cost of more frequent and severe natural disasters in Australia at more than $2.2bn in the first half of 2025. Public safety agencies in multiple states and territories are seeking to modernise their emergency call handling and computer-aided dispatch (CAD) solutions in the coming years provide better support for communities.

Implementing new and upgraded call handling capabilities can better equip agencies to deal with natural disasters and other surge events that place considerable strain on emergency call handling services. In fact, 88% of survey respondents said it's important to them that triple zero and 111 services continue to provide reliable services during wide scale events that occur at the same time.

Many public safety agencies in Australia and New Zealand are planning for the broader adoption of high-tech public safety solutions and cloud-based deployments which is supported by government spending in the region.

Importance questions



The latest generation of command centre solutions are designed to help public safety agencies surface critical information from a variety of sources to streamline their workflows and enhance situational clarity, enabling first responders to make better decisions with greater focus, accuracy and speed, especially in times of crisis.

Investing in new emergency call handling technology can help to close the gap between public expectations and the capabilities of emergency services to implement data driven responses, while fostering greater trust and confidence in public safety overall.

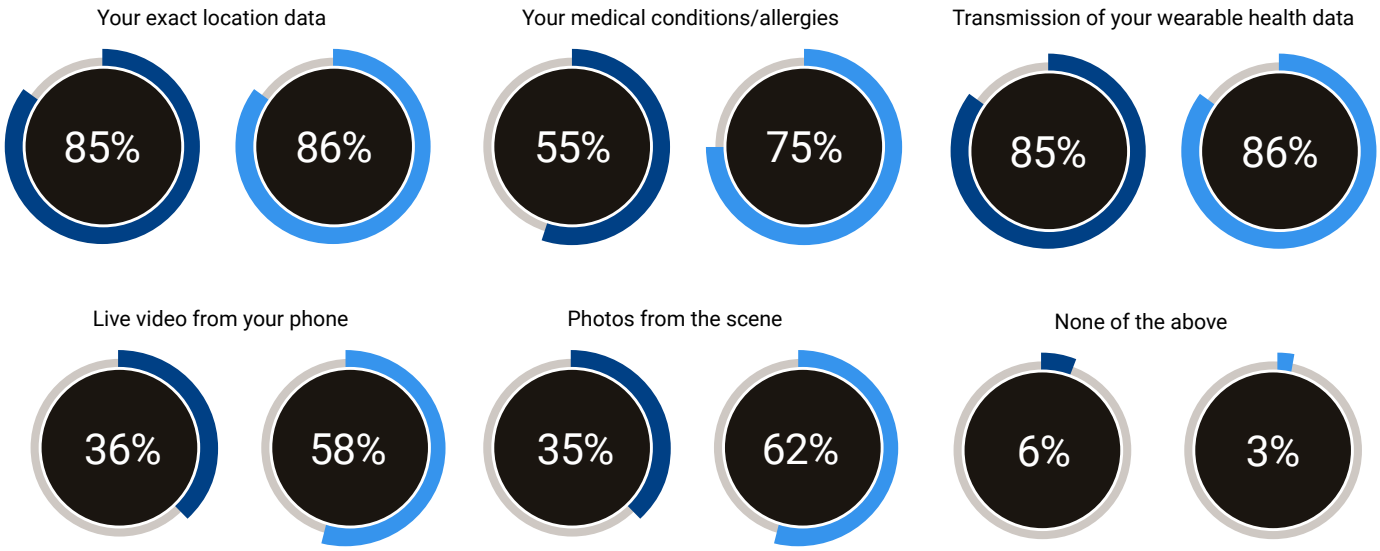
A clear desire to share personal data with emergency services

Exact location data (86%), personal information about medical conditions/ allergies (75%) and the transmission of wearable data from smart watches and other devices (54%) top the list of data sources that respondents said they are comfortable sharing with emergency services to improve emergency response.

Although respondents have high levels of comfort in sharing their personal data with public safety agencies, they had lower expectations that those agencies would actually be capable of receiving that data and using it to improve their response to emergencies.

Capabilities questions

- **Which of the following capabilities would you expect emergency services to be capable of receiving during a [000/111] call?**
- **Would you be comfortable sharing the following with emergency services during an emergency to help them respond more effectively?**



When asked to rank the top three most important things about emergency services in their area, survey respondents pointed to fast response times, accurate location finding and professional calm operators - all of which can be supported through new emergency call handling technology.

What is most important to you about emergency services in your area?

Ranked

#1 Fast response times

#2 Accurate location finding

#3 Professional and calm operators

In Emergency Services We Trust (but we don't always call)

According to the survey, 60% of Australians and New Zealanders either completely trust (30%) or trust quite a bit (30%), their emergency services. A total of 66% rated their emergency services as extremely well managed (22%) or very well managed (44%).

The survey also revealed reasons that may *prevent* the public from contacting triple zero or 111 during an emergency. Primarily, this was not knowing if their situation qualifies as an emergency (43%) and concern about wasting the time of emergency services (33%).

This comes despite ongoing public awareness campaigns to promote police non-emergency assistance lines in Australia and New Zealand and South Australia's campaign aimed at easing pressures on the state's hospital system

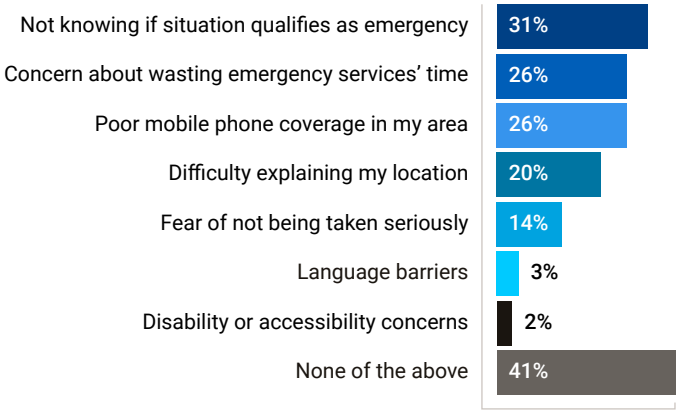
The third-ranked reason survey respondents said they may not contact emergency services is because of poor mobile phone coverage in their local area (30%).

Lacking mobile reception is a major concern felt strongly within Australia's rural and remote communities. Survey respondents living in rural areas that cited poor mobile phone coverage as a reason that may prevent them from contacting emergency services were 12% higher than those living in suburban areas.

Rapid technological growth and innovation is changing expectations for how we want to get in touch with emergency services too. While the majority of survey respondents want to contact emergency services via phone (88%), SMS/ text messaging (41%) smartphone apps (38%) and video calls (15%) are the leading alternative options for getting in touch.

Current challenges & concerns

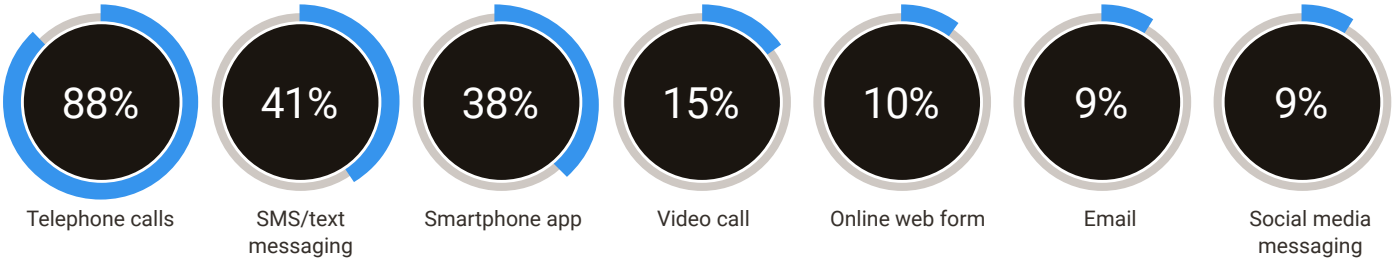
Which of the following, if any, might prevent you from calling in an emergency?



	AVG RANK	#1	#2	#3
Fast response times	2.1	59%	17%	8%
Accurate location finding	3.2	13%	32%	29%
Professional and calm operators	4.1	10%	16%	22%
Good coordination between different emergency services	4.5	7%	9%	22%
Ability to handle multiple emergencies at once	5.2	4%	12%	7%
Effective communication with the public	5.6	5%	7%	10%
Access to up-to-date technology	5.9	2%	6%	3%

Base: 115 (94% of respondents); Note: Respondents could select multiple options

Which of the following ways would you like to be able to contact emergency services?



Base: 2,388 (93% of responders); Note: respondents could select multiple options

Different perspectives across generations

The way Australians and New Zealanders contact emergency services is dramatically changing, driven largely by who is contacting public safety agencies. For older generations, the traditional voice call is a reliable standard, but for today's teenagers, communication is primarily visual and instant. Understanding these differences is key to designing future-ready emergency response systems.

"Voice First" Generations: Silent Generation and Baby Boomers (Ages 60+)

For those who grew up before the internet, the voice call is the most trusted way to get help. This focus on traditional protocol is reflected in the priorities of these cohorts, who are the core of the 88% of the public who still rely on the telephone.

Their top three expectations — fast response times, accurate location finding and having a professional, calm operator — show a reliance on human response. This group is also the most concerned about operational resilience, with more than 97% of them citing the importance of reliable service during wide-scale events.

The "Digital Bridge": Gen X and Millennials (Ages 30s to 50s)

Generation X and Millennials represent a pivot point. While they still primarily use voice, they are comfortable using digital tools. This group drives a significant portion of public demand for non-voice contact, with 43% of Millenialls and 40% of Gen X interested in using a smartphone app.. Critically, these generations are is more likely to prioritise information sharing that speeds up response: they are the main drivers behind the 55% overall public who expect to be able to share their medical conditions and allergies with emergency services, seeing this data as a way to receive better, personalised service. Their willingness to use non-voice channels demonstrates an adaptability to use more multimedia and AI-driven solutions. This research found that GenZ and Millennials have greater awareness of the use and development of AI in emergency call taking than their older cohorts, by 32% and 28% respectively. The next closest cohort was Gen X at 17%

The "App-First" Cohort: Generation Z (Ages 14–28)

Teenagers and young adults today are the first generation to grow up entirely immersed in high-speed digital tools. When communicating with friends, the vast majority of young people prefer messaging over phone calls. A Deloitte study on social media use found that Australians in this cohort spent most of their social media time on Instagram, YouTube and TikTok in 2024.

For them, the emergency contact system needs to look and feel like the apps they use every day.

Teens are strong users of platforms like Instagram (81% for direct messaging) and Snapchat (74%), while TikTok has shown major growth among Australian teens (reaching 38%).

This signals an expectation that communication in a crisis should be visual and immediate, meaning they are willing to share time-sensitive video or photos of an incident instantly. This aligns strongly with the 52% overall public support for AI that can automatically identify safety threats in live video footage.

Based on these different intergenerational needs, emergency services can better meet public expectations by upgrading their call handling and dispatch systems to interpret and act upon a wider variety of data sources. In addition to voice communication, this research highlights a clear public demand for media-rich data streams that can support faster and better informed emergency responses while catering for the needs of the next generation of emergency callers.

AI in the new era of emergency response

While artificial intelligence continues to transform many aspects of our lives, the ways in which it impacts emergency management are less well known.

An overwhelming 78% of survey respondents said they were unaware that AI technology is currently being used or developed for emergency call handling.

Yet those who were aware of AI usage in emergency response were almost three times more likely to trust it: 56% completely /quite a bit, versus only 19% of those who said they were unaware.

The public strongly endorses the adoption of AI to accelerate triage and streamline resource allocation. That support is particularly evident for detecting critical keywords in emergency calls such as “knife” and “collision” (58% support), ranking calls by urgency (55% support), completing live translations of emergency calls spoken in foreign languages and identifying potential safety threats within live video footage (both 52%).

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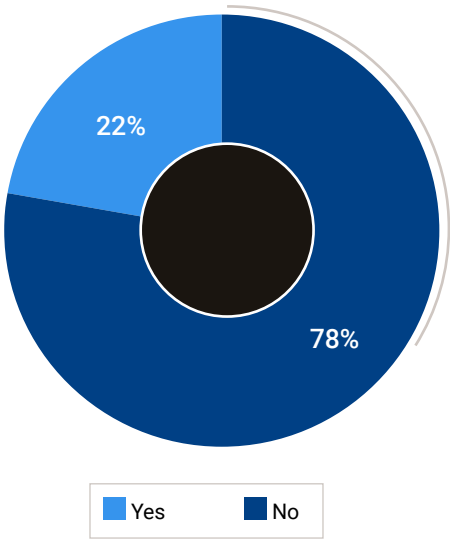
Modern public safety emergency call handling systems that employ assistive AI are able to extract and summarize information to help increase call handler speed and efficiency while reducing information overload and stress. This includes surfacing critical data such as maps, floor plans and caller information from across public safety systems to connect callers with resources, which can lessen a call handler’s workload by an estimated 20-35%.

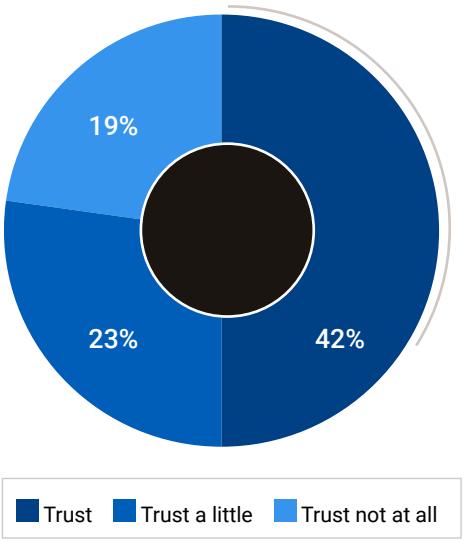
Some public safety agencies, including the Utah Emergency Communications Authority in the U.S., have already deployed AI-powered virtual response technology to automate the receipt and resolution of non-emergency calls for issues including noise and parking complaints. This has in turn helped to reduce the wait time for 911 emergency calls while alleviating stress for call handlers.

AI awareness

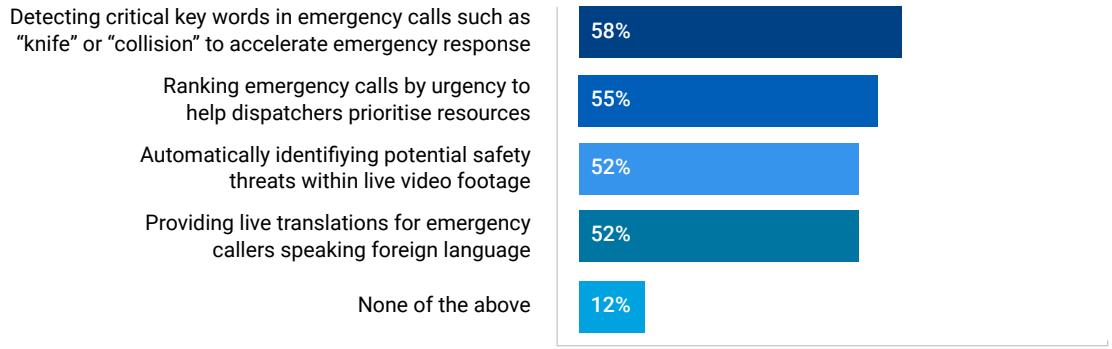
Before this survey, were you aware that artificial intelligence technology is currently being used or developed for emergency call handling?



How much would you trust the use of AI technology in emergency call handling?



Which of the following should be a priority for AI and emergency response?



Base: 2,368 (92% of responders); Note: respondents could select multiple options

AI is rapidly becoming a strategic ally in the public safety sector, augmenting human focus, effort and performance to identify patterns within vast pools of data, streamline public safety workflows and accelerate emergency response. In emergency call handling, detecting keywords in emergency calls, ranking calls by urgency and providing live translations for foreign language speakers can all help to shave vital minutes off emergency response times.

In its 2025 white paper, Emergency Communications in Australia, National Emergency Communications Working Group – Australia/New Zealand, a representative expert body of public safety communications experts, identified several potential opportunities to use AI in emergency communications and dispatch. These include leveraging AI to offload simple administrative tasks to free up more time for agents and offering multi-lingual, real-time translation of emergency calls.

Meeting high public expectations: how technology can help

Overall, Australians and New Zealanders have high levels of confidence in their emergency services with 77% of respondents rating them as excellent or good and 76% grading their most recent personal Triple Zero or 111 call experience as excellent or good.

However, public expectations of those services are extremely high with an overwhelming 84% of respondents stating they expect calls for emergency response to arrive within 15 minutes (53% of which said they expect support to arrive in 10 minutes).

The results also highlight further opportunity for improvement, with more than half of respondents (54%) stating their emergency services had stayed about the same over the past few years, versus those who said they had gotten somewhat better (21%) and significantly better (12%).

High community expectations position the need for investment in modern call handling and CAD solutions that can ingest and manage vast amounts of data as an essential strategy.

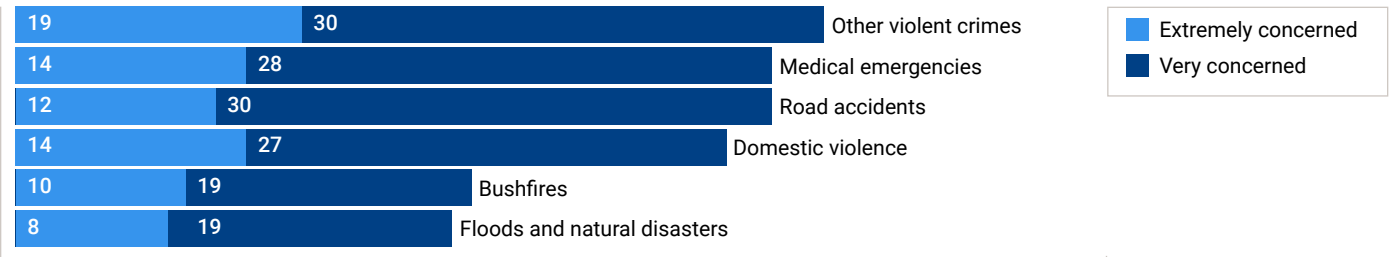
Furthermore, robust command centre software solutions are designed specifically to enhance operational workflows for first responders, surfacing critical operational information from a variety of sources to provide them with situational clarity to enable better decision-making, even when faced with high-volume, complex crisis scenarios.

The increasing adoption of smart mobile applications and AI powered communications devices by first responders is also delivering vital data from back-end call taking, CAD and records systems to their fingertips while they're working on the frontlines. For first responders using AI communication devices in the field today, it's already possible to perform live translations of witness statements spoken in foreign languages and to analyse data from vehicle license plates to provide actionable intelligence to support crime fighting and investigations.

Looking to the future, we expect AI to provide even greater functionality and situational clarity for emergency response by embedding its use across entire public safety workflows.

The increasing use of AI will be vital to surfacing and sharing more data between emergency call makers, call centre personnel and first responders.

How concerned are you about the following public safety issues in your community over the coming year?



Conclusion

Emergency services in Australia and New Zealand are dealing with an increasingly complex and dynamic public safety landscape. High public expectations for faster response times combined with constrained public safety budgets and more frequent and severe natural disasters, all place strain on emergency call handling resources.

This research highlights a clear desire for the public in Australia and New Zealand to share more of their personal data with public safety agencies to help make emergency response more collaborative, efficient and precise. It also highlights that while awareness of the use of AI in emergency call handling is largely unknown, the public want it to be used in specific and targeted ways to improve emergency response.

Through the adoption of modern call handling and CAD solutions and rapidly emerging AI capabilities, emergency services in Australia and New Zealand can realise new capabilities, delivering better patient care and faster emergency response to build a safer future for communities and public safety personnel alike.

Methodology

The independent market research firm Researchscape conducted this survey. Respondents were 2,579 New Zealand and Australian residents aged 14+.

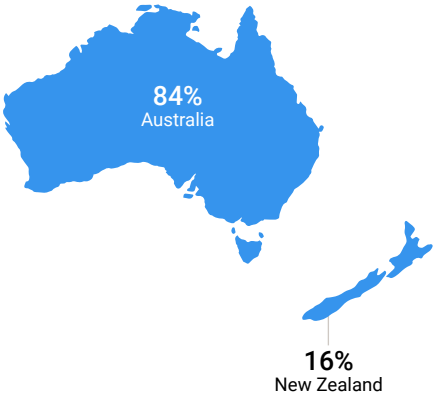
The survey was conducted from August 19 to September 25, 2025 and results were weighted to be representative of the overall populations of Australia and New Zealand.

About Motorola Solutions

Safety and security are at the heart of everything we do at Motorola Solutions. We build and connect technologies to help protect people, property and places. Our solutions foster the collaboration that's critical for safer communities, safer schools, safer hospitals, safer businesses, and ultimately, safer nations. Learn more about our commitment to innovating for a safer future for us all at www.motorolasolutions.com.

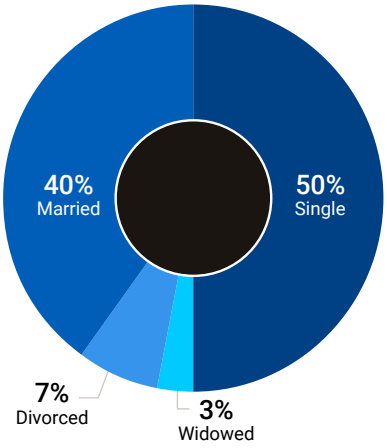
Demographics

Country

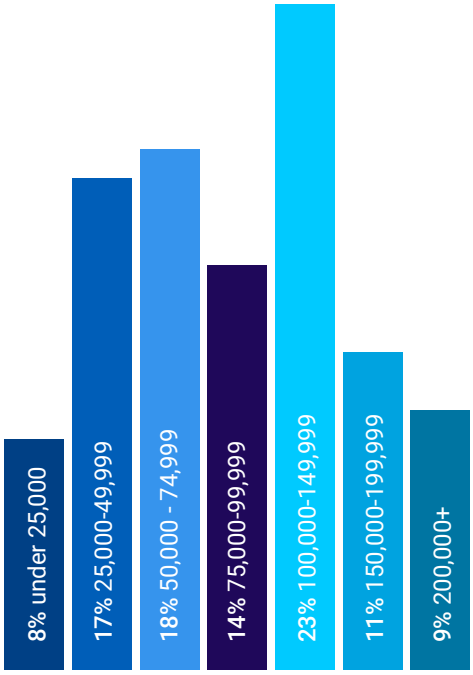


40%
have children at home

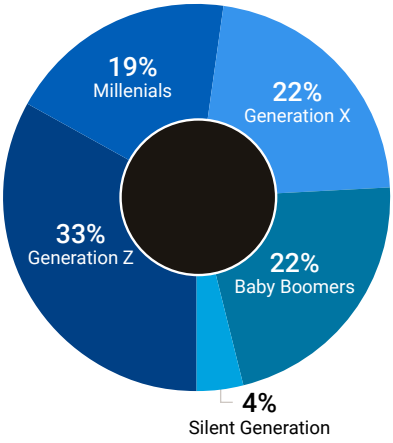
Relationship



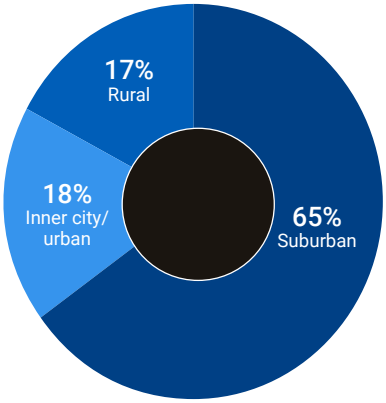
Income



Generation



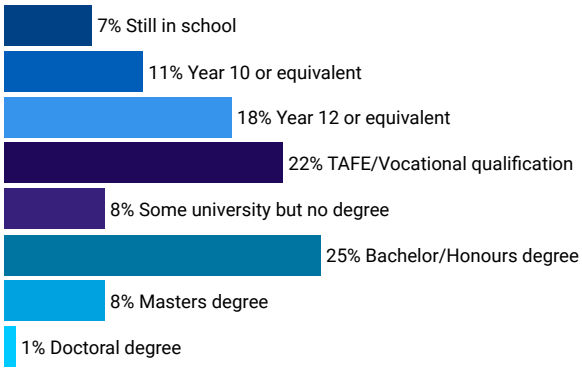
Location



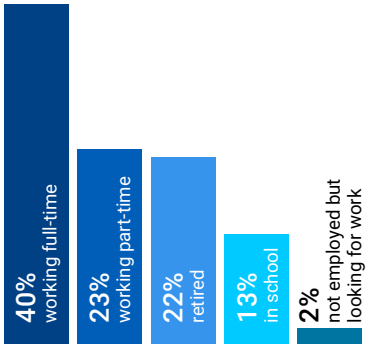
Other demographic

11%	Hearing impairment
7%	Speech impairment
8%	Vision impairment
8%	Cognitive/memory conditions
11%	Physically mobility limitations
70%	None of the above
3%	Prefer not to answer

Education



Employment



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