



Debt Monitor Survey

November 2013



Research Summary – Australians’ Attitudes to Debt

The Fox Symes Debt Monitor Poll is a national poll conducted by Newspoll for Fox Symes & Associates which examines Australian attitudes to debt and changes in the levels and causes of personal debt.

This wave was conducted by telephone on the 15th to 17th of November 2013 among a national sample of 1,202 people aged 18 years and over. The results have been post-weighted to Australian Bureau of Statistics data to reflect the population distribution for age, sex, area and highest level of schooling completed. Results based on the total sample have a maximum margin of error of plus or minus 3 per cent.

Changes in financial situation

Most people say their financial situation is the same as three months ago, though 19% say it is *worse* and 15% say it is *better*.

A higher proportion of people living in lower income households (households with an income of less than \$50,000) say their financial situation is worse, 29%. Conversely, more people living in households with an income of \$90,000+ say their situation is better (20%).

“Now a question about your finances. Compared with three months ago, do you think your financial situation is now...?”

Based on all aged 18+	TOTAL	HOUSEHOLD INCOME		
		<\$50k	\$50K - \$89K	\$90K+
n=	1202	302	269	447
	%	%	%	%
Better	15	8	16	20
Worse	19	29	16	14
Same	65	63	69	65
Don't know / refused	1	0	0	0

Changes in level of personal financial debt

Similarly, most say their level of debt is unchanged compared with three months ago, but 10% say it has increased, and 16% that it has decreased.

Those aged 35-49 are more likely than others to say it has increased. Consistent with more people from higher income households (\$90,000+) saying their financial situation has improved, more of them also say their level of debt has *reduced*.

“Now thinking about your own level of financial debt on things like credit cards, home mortgages, car loans or other personal loans you may have. Compared with three months ago, has your personal level of financial debt...?”

Based on all aged 18+	TOTAL	HOUSEHOLD INCOME		
		<\$50k	\$50K-\$89K	\$90K+
n=	1202	302	269	447
	%	%	%	%
Increased	10	10	9	10
Decreased	16	8	20	21
Same	71	80	71	66
Don't know / refused	4	2	1	3

Based on all aged 18+	TOTAL	AGE		
		18-34	35-49	50+
n=	1202	282	335	585
	%	%	%	%
Increased	10	9	13	7
Decreased	16	22	18	10
Same	71	65	67	77
Don't know / refused	4	3	1	6

About Fox Symes

Fox Symes is the premier debt relief company in Australia. It is a wholly owned subsidiary of FSA Group Limited, a public company listed on the Australian Stock Exchange. Fox Symes helps people manage their debt by restructuring their current situation. It is not a bank, financial institution or law firm. Since 2000 Fox Symes has helped thousands of Australians work their way through debt.

Reasons debt increased in past 3 months

Among those that say their level of debt has increased in the past 3 months, day to day living expenses and bills (32%) and new purchases / expenses (28%) are the most commonly nominated reasons.

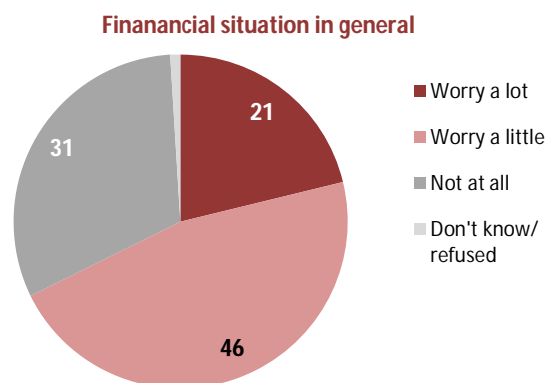
“For what particular reasons has your level of debt increased in the past three months? What other reasons?”

	TOTAL
Based on those debt increased in past 3 months	
n=	113
	%
Cost of petrol / running vehicle	6
Total mortgage / loan / interest related	3
Mortgage / home loans / interest on home loans	1
Loans / interest on loans / interest rates NFI	2
Total new purchases / expenses	28
Bought / paying off new vehicle	8
Modifications / renovations to home	3
Build or buy new house / unit / property	8
Holiday	8
New TV / computer / other household purchases / maintenance	3
Other new expenses	1
Total day to day living expenses / bills	32
Cost of groceries / food	5
Cost of living / things more expensive / spending more NFI	15
Rates	2
Electricity / gas	8
Insurance	2
Cost of rent / rent increase	1
Cost of children / family	5
Water	5
Other bills / bills NFI	5
Total employment related	14
Partner / self lost job	5
Change of employment / less work	9
Credit card NFI	1
Education expenses	4
Investing in shares / investing NFI	1
Business related expenses / difficulties / GST	2
Health / medical expenses	4
Tax	2
Other	14

Extent worry about finances

Almost 7-in-10 people say they worry about their financial situation to some degree, including 21% who worry a lot. Those aged 35-49 and those with a household income of \$50,000+ are more likely to worry. Among those who say their level of debt has increased compared with three months ago, 84% say they worry, and 37% a lot.

“Now a question about things that some people may worry about. At the moment, do you personally worry about each of the following things a lot, a little, or not at all?”



Your financial situation in general				
	TOTAL	HOUSEHOLD INCOME		
Based on all aged 18+		<\$50k	\$50K - \$89K	\$90K+
n=	1202	302	269	447
	%	%	%	%
A lot	21	24	27	19
A little	46	35	51	56
Total a lot / a little	68	59	78	74
Not at all	31	40	22	26
Don't know / refused	1	0	0	0
Based on all aged 18+	TOTAL	AGE		
		18-34	35-49	50+
n=	1202	282	335	585
	%	%	%	%
A lot	21	21	29	16
A little	46	50	51	41
Total a lot / a little	68	71	81	57
Not at all	31	28	19	41
Don't know / refused	1	1	0	2

Around 40% worry about not having enough money to pay the bills; 18% about falling deep into debt from credit card bills, and 17% about falling behind on their mortgage payments and losing their home. Consistently it is people aged 35 to 49 most likely to worry about these issues, along with either lower/ middle or middle income households.

<i>Not having enough money to pay bills</i>				
	TOTAL	HOUSEHOLD INCOME		
<i>Based on all aged 18+</i>		<\$50k	\$50K - \$89K	\$90K+
<i>n=</i>	1202	302	269	447
	%	%	%	%
A lot	15	22	17	11
A little	27	26	31	24
Total a lot / a little	42	48	48	36
Not at all	57	52	52	64
Don't know / refused	1	0	0	0
	TOTAL	AGE		
<i>Based on all aged 18+</i>		18-34	35-49	50+
<i>n=</i>	1202	282	335	585
	%	%	%	%
A lot	15	13	24	10
A little	27	30	30	22
Total a lot / a little	42	43	54	32
Not at all	57	56	45	66
Don't know / refused	1	1	0	2

<i>Falling deep into debt from credit card repayments</i>				
	TOTAL	HOUSEHOLD INCOME		
<i>Based on all aged 18+</i>		<\$50k	\$50K - \$89K	\$90K+
<i>n=</i>	1202	302	269	447
	%	%	%	%
A lot	6	9	6	5
A little	12	10	17	12
Total a lot / a little	18	18	24	16
Not at all	78	76	73	80
Don't know / refused	4	5	3	3
	TOTAL	AGE		
<i>Based on all aged 18+</i>		18-34	35-49	50+
<i>n=</i>	1202	282	335	585
	%	%	%	%
A lot	6	3	10	5
A little	12	17	15	6
Total a lot / a little	18	20	26	10
Not at all	78	77	70	84
Don't know / refused	4	2	4	5

<i>Falling behind on mortgage payments and losing home</i>				
	TOTAL	HOUSEHOLD INCOME		
<i>Based on all aged 18+</i>		<\$50k	\$50K - \$89K	\$90K+
<i>n=</i>	1202	302	269	447
	%	%	%	%
A lot	5	3	7	5
A little	12	10	17	12
Total a lot / a little	17	13	24	17
Not at all	78	79	71	80
Don't know / refused	5	8	5	3
	TOTAL	AGE		
<i>Based on all aged 18+</i>		18-34	35-49	50+
<i>n=</i>	1202	282	335	585
	%	%	%	%
A lot	5	3	10	3
A little	12	15	18	6
Total a lot / a little	17	18	28	9
Not at all	78	76	70	84
Don't know / refused	5	6	2	7

Which bills worry about the most

Among those who worry about not having enough money to pay the bills, 56% nominate utility bills as being the ones they worry about the most, with 48% nominating electricity/power bills. About a quarter (23%) say they worry most about loans or credit cards. Others of note are council rates (17%), phone (16%), car related bills excluding insurance (15%) and insurance (11%).

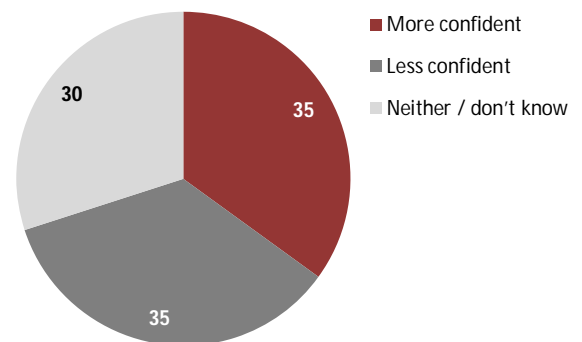
“You said that you worry about not having enough money to pay all your bills. Which particular bills worry you the most? Which other bills worry you the most?”

<i>Based on those who worry about not having enough money to pay bills</i>	TOTAL
<i>n=</i>	468
	%
Total utilities	56
Electricity / power	48
Water	14
Gas	11
Utilities NFI	5
Council rates / rates NFI	17
Phone	16
Total car (excl. Insurance)	15
Car registration / rego	8
Other car related bills	8
Total loans / credit card	23
Total loans	16
Mortgage / home loan	12
Other loan	5
Credit card	9
Total insurance	11
Health insurance	3
Car insurance / green slip	2
Other insurance	7
Medical bills (excl. insurance)	4
Food / groceries	7
Rent	5
Daily / general living / household / expenses / bills	9
School fees	2
Other	10

Confidence in personal financial situation with change to Federal Government

Australians are fairly evenly split as to whether they feel more or less confident about their personal financial situation as a result of the change to a Coalition Federal Government – 35% are more confident, 35% less confident and 30% uncommitted either way. Males and those aged 35+ (and particularly those aged 65+) are more likely to say they are more confident.

“Thinking about your financial situation in general, and the recent federal election. Now that Australia has changed to a Coalition Federal Government, do you feel more confident or less confident about your personal financial situation over the next few years?”



<i>Based on all aged 18+</i>	TOTAL	AGE		
		18-34	35-49	50+
<i>n=</i>	1202	282	335	585
	%	%	%	%
More confident	35	27	37	41
Less confident	35	38	40	29
Neither / don't know	30	35	24	30

<i>Based on all aged 18+</i>	TOTAL	SEX	
		MALE	FEMALE
<i>n=</i>	1202	602	600
	%	%	%
More confident	35	41	30
Less confident	35	29	41
Neither / don't know	30	30	29