

# NAB QUARTERLY CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR SURVEY Q1 2018



**INSIGHTS INTO THE MINDSET OF AUSTRALIAN CONSUMERS – ANXIETIES AROUND FUTURE SPENDING AND SAVINGS PLANS, HOUSEHOLD FINANCES, THE ECONOMY, FINANCIAL CONCERNS & HOW THESE ARE IMPACTING SPENDING BEHAVIOURS AND LEVELS OF FINANCIAL HARDSHIP.**

NAB Behavioural & Industry Economics

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*Consumer anxiety falls, particularly for jobs. Spending tightens but is up on same time last year. Utilities still a key expense, but stress eases. Hardship down for all except young people.*

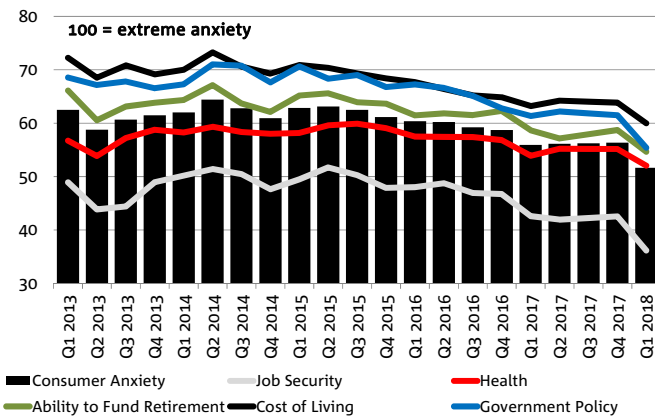
*NAB's Australian Consumer Anxiety Index fell sharply in Q1 2018 across all measures. Anxiety from job security fell most, consistent with solid jobs growth. Consumers are most anxious in NSW/ACT, where anxiety is highest for the cost of living, retirement and health funding. Anxiety fell most in WA.*

*Despite much lower anxiety, consumers were more reluctant to spend - more Australians cut back on eating out, charitable donations, personal goods and use of credit. While utilities remain the area where most consumers are spending more, there has been some relief, with far fewer citing this category in Q1 2018 compared with Q4 2017. Australians were also noticeably less concerned about their household finances. By age, it fell most (and was lowest) for over 50s and by some margin. By contrast, the level of concern among younger people (18-29) rose, driven by heightened worries among young women.*

*Looking beyond financial concern to actual hardship, around 37% of Australians experienced some form of financial stress in the past 3 months (39% in Q4 2017). Hardship fell across all age groups except 18-29 year olds and men. Being unable to pay a bill remains the most frequently cited cause of stress - for 1 in 5 (20%) Australians overall, but for almost 1 in 3 young women and low income earning Australians. Not having enough for food and basic necessities is the next biggest cause - affecting 17% in total, but almost 1 in 3 low income earners.*

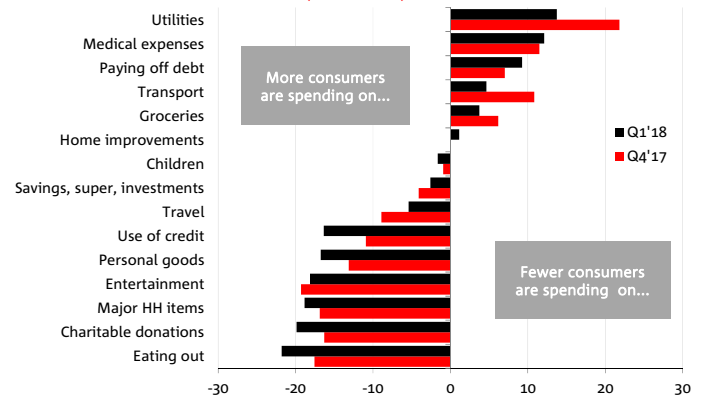
## Consumer anxiety falls to survey low levels ...

### NAB CONSUMER ANXIETY INDEX: COMPONENTS



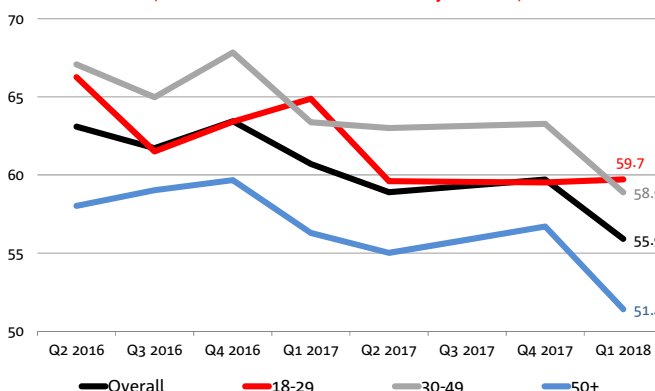
## Spending still conservative, but big fall in utilities...

### CHANGES IN HOUSEHOLD SPENDING BEHAVIOURS (Q/Q) (NET BALANCE)



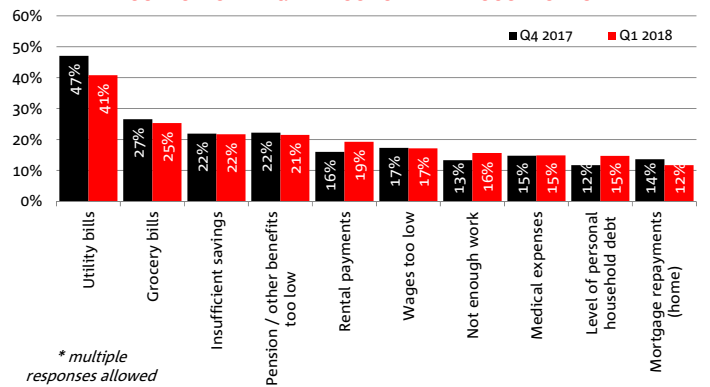
## Household financial concern down for all but young...

### CONCERN OVER HOUSEHOLD FINANCIAL POSITION: AGE (0 = not at all concerned; 100 = extremely concerned)



## But utilities still have the biggest impact...

### TOP 10 FACTORS IMPACTING CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION OF "HIGHLY" CONCERNED HOUSEHOLDS\*



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Consumer Anxiety – A measure of household concern over jobs, health, retirement, cost of living & government policy and whether these are their impacting spending/savings.*

- NAB's Australian Consumer Anxiety Index fell sharply in Q1 2018 - down 4.7 points to a new survey low 51.6 points, indicating 'moderate' levels of anxiety.
- All index components fell to new Survey lows. Anxiety arising from job security fell, consistent with solid jobs growth. Cost of living was still the biggest driver of anxiety. But it was encouraging to see that despite sluggish wages growth, only 1 in 5 consumers reported "high" anxiety over their living costs (1 in 4 in Q4 2017).
- Anxiety fell in all groups (except in Tasmania and for labourers). It was highest for labourers, those earning less than \$35,000 p.a. and single people. It was lowest for widows, consumers living in Tasmania and men over 50.

*Household Spending – How are these factors impacting household spending behaviours?*

- How consumers 'feel' doesn't always correlate with how they spend - and that was evident in the household spending behaviours in Q1. Despite much lower anxiety, more consumers overall were reluctant to spend more.
- But there were important differences in spending behaviours by spending category. Although more consumers still said they spent more on 'essentials' than those who said they cut back, we did see a sizeable fall in the number of consumers who said they spent more on utilities in Q1.
- More consumers also said they spent less on 'non-essentials' than did those who said they spent more - but the net overall number that cut back was unchanged. In Q1, noticeably more consumers reined in their spending on eating out, charitable donations and personal goods, but fewer cut back on travel and entertainment.

*Economy – How concerned are consumers about the general economic situation?*

- Consumers were far less concerned about the economy and its impact on their spending and savings plans. We suspect this may reflect employment growth, low unemployment and more favourable outlook for 2018-19.
- But there are important differences. Concern fell in all states except SA/NT (unchanged). Tasmanians worried the least and SA/NT the most. The economy is still a much bigger worry in low income groups and for over 50s.

*Household Finances – How concerned are consumers about their current household financial position?*

- Australians were noticeably less concerned about their household financial position in Q1 2018, indicating only 'moderate' levels of concern.
- Women worried more than men and over 50s the least concerned by age. Concern among 18-29 rose a little and was highest of all age groups. It was also much bigger worry for young women than young men.

*Drivers – What factors are most impacting the financial position of "highly" concerned households?*

- Around 2 in 5 consumers who were "extremely" concerned about their current financial position said their utility bills were having the biggest impact (down from almost 1 in 2 in Q4).
- And it continued to impact significantly more Australians than the next biggest issues - their grocery bills, insufficient savings, low pensions and/or other benefits, rental payments and low wages (around 1 in 5).

*Fears – What consumers most worry about in relation to their current household financial position?*

- Being able to finance retirement is the still biggest worry for consumers in relation to their current household financial position, followed by their ability to provide for their family's future and raise \$2,000 for an emergency.
- By income, consumers earning less than \$35,000 p.a. expressed higher concern over all drivers than any other income group, except having enough to pay for their children's education and their personal loans.

*Financial Hardship – Prevalence of financial stress or hardship and the most common causes?*

- Slightly fewer Australians overall (37%) have experienced some form of hardship in the past 3 months. But over 1 in 2 low income earners and 18-29 year olds were impacted, with hardship among 18-29 men up noticeably.
- Being unable to pay a bill is still the most common cause of stress or hardship - for 1 in 5 people overall and almost 1 in 3 young women and low income earners. Not having enough for food and basic necessities is next affecting 17% in total but almost 1 in 3 (31%) low income earners.

**NAB CONSUMER ANXIETY INDEX (100 = extremely concerned)**

	Q1 2017	Q4 2017	Q1 2018
<b>Overall Index</b>	<b>55.9</b>	<b>56.3</b>	<b>51.6</b>
- Job security	42.6	42.5	36.2
- Health	53.9	55.2	52.0
- Ability to fund retirement	58.7	58.7	54.6
- Cost of living	63.2	63.8	60.0
- Government policy	61.4	61.5	55.4

**CURRENT HOUSEHOLD FINANCIAL POSITION (100 = extremely concerned)**

Q1 2017	Q4 2017	Q1 2018
60.7	59.7	55.9

**CONCERN RELATING TO THE HOUSEHOLD FINANCIAL POSITION OF CONSUMERS (100 = extremely concerned)**

	Q1 2017	Q4 2017	Q1 2018
Medical bills/healthcare	42	45	42
Mortgage, rent, housing costs	37	41	38
Credit card repayments	30	34	32
Personal loan repayments	35	36	36
Children's education	36	37	36
Food/basic necessities	34	39	36
Monthly household bills	39	43	40
Non-essentials (holidays, eating out)	41	45	40
Raising \$2,000 in emergency	46	49	45
Financing retirement	53	56	53
Providing for family's future	45	51	48

**HOUSEHOLD SPENDING BEHAVIOURS (net balance - spending more/spending less)**

	Q1 2017	Q4 2017	Q1 2018
Non-essential spending	-19	-13	-13
Essential spending	-3	10	7
Financial spending	-5	-3	-3
<b>Overall Spending Behaviours</b>	<b>-10</b>	<b>-4</b>	<b>-6</b>

**HOUSEHOLD SPENDING BEHAVIOURS - SPENDING CATEGORY (net balance - spending more/spending less)**

	Q1 2017	Q4 2017	Q1 2018
Travel	-13	-9	-5
Eating out (coffee, take-away, restaurants, etc.)	-27	-18	-22
Entertainment (movies, sports, concerts, etc.)	-24	-19	-18
Groceries (food, alcohol etc.)	-1	6	4
Home improvements and maintenance	-8	0	1
Major household items (appliances, furniture etc.)	-23	-17	-19
Utilities (electricity, gas, phone, etc.)	8	22	14
Personal goods (clothes, toiletries, sports, pets, etc.)	-21	-13	-17
Medical expenses (doctors, pharmacy, optical etc.)	9	11	12
Transport (car running costs and public transport)	2	11	5
Children (school fees, childcare, activities etc.)	-3	-1	-2
Paying off debt	8	7	9
Use of credit	-18	-11	-16
Savings, investments and super contributions	-6	-4	-3
Charitable donations	-23	-16	-20

# PART 1: CONSUMER ANXIETY

*How concerned are consumers that their spending and savings will be impacted by their job security, health, retirement, cost of living and government policy?*

## Consumer anxiety levels falls to new survey lows across all components of the index...

NAB's Consumer Anxiety Index - which measures concerns about future spending and savings plans arising from job security, health, retirement funding, cost of living and government policy - fell sharply in Q1 2018 to a new survey low.

The overall Index fell to 51.6 points in Q1 2018, down from 56.3 points in Q4 2017 and 55.9 points at the same time last year, and remains well below average (59.9 points).

Anxiety fell across all demographic groups except in TAS and for labourers (see below for more detail).

All components of the index fell to new Survey lows.

Anxiety stemming from job security fell most (down 6.4 points to 36.2), consistent with solid jobs growth. In fact, only 1 in 10 (10%) Australian consumers reported "high" anxiety about their job security, down from 15% in Q4.

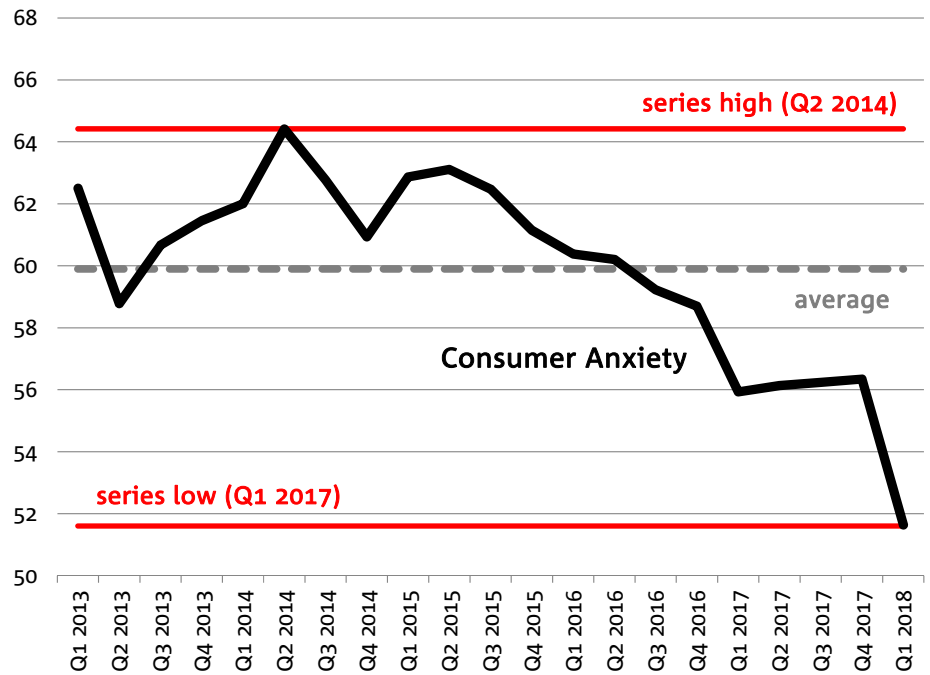
Anxiety over health fell 3.1 points to 52.0 points, with 2 in 3 (66%) consumers reporting "very low" or "low" levels of concern.

Worry over retirement funding was down 4.1 points to 54.6 and government policy 6.1 points lower to 55.4 points.

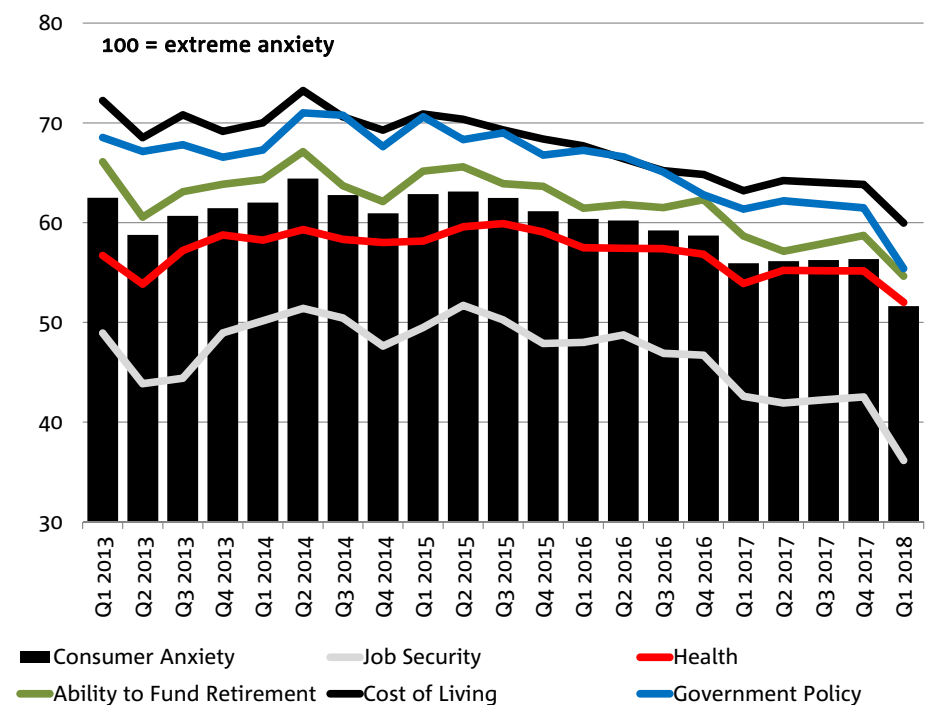
Anxiety arising from cost of living also eased (down 3.9 points to 60.0) but continued to be the single biggest cause of consumer stress.

Despite sluggish wages growth, it was very encouraging to see only 1 in 5 (19%) consumers reporting "high" levels of anxiety over their living costs, down from almost 1 in 4 (24%) in the previous quarter.

## NAB CONSUMER ANXIETY INDEX



## NAB CONSUMER ANXIETY INDEX: COMPONENTS



Across all consumer groups, anxiety was highest for labourers (59.7 points). Labourers were also one of only 2 groups where anxiety increased (TAS the other), mainly due to much higher levels of anxiety about their job security.

Other groups experiencing relatively higher levels of consumer stress included those earning less than \$35,000 p.a. (55.3 points), men aged 30-49 (55.2 points) and single people (55.0 points).

Consumer anxiety was lowest for widows (45.0 points), in TAS (46.2 points), for those earning over \$100,000 p.a. (47.4 points), men over the age of 50 (48.3 points) and professionals (53.2 points).

Among key groups, anxiety was highest for consumers living in NSW/ACT (52.9 points), who also had the highest anxiety over cost of living, retirement funding and health. Anxiety fell most in WA, supported by a sharp fall in concerns over job security (but still highest of all states) and cost of living (lowest of all states).

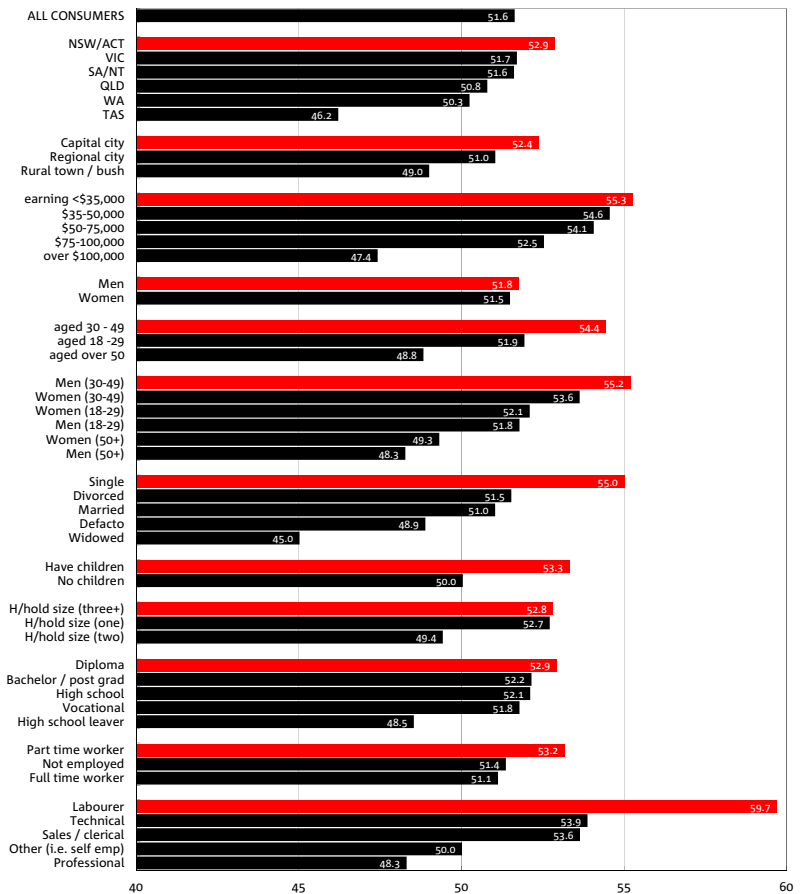
In a turnaround from last quarter, anxiety was slightly higher for men (51.8 points) than women (51.5 points). This mainly reflected a much larger reduction in stress levels for women relating to their ability to fund their retirement, which is now almost equal to men. They also reported lower levels of stress over their job security and government policy than did men.

Overall, middle-aged men and women still report the highest anxiety by age and gender. This is mainly being driven by much higher anxiety about their ability to fund retirement, as well as job security (for men) and health (for women). In the over 50 group, men were far less worried about retirement funding than women, and young women (18-29) far more anxious around cost of living than young men.

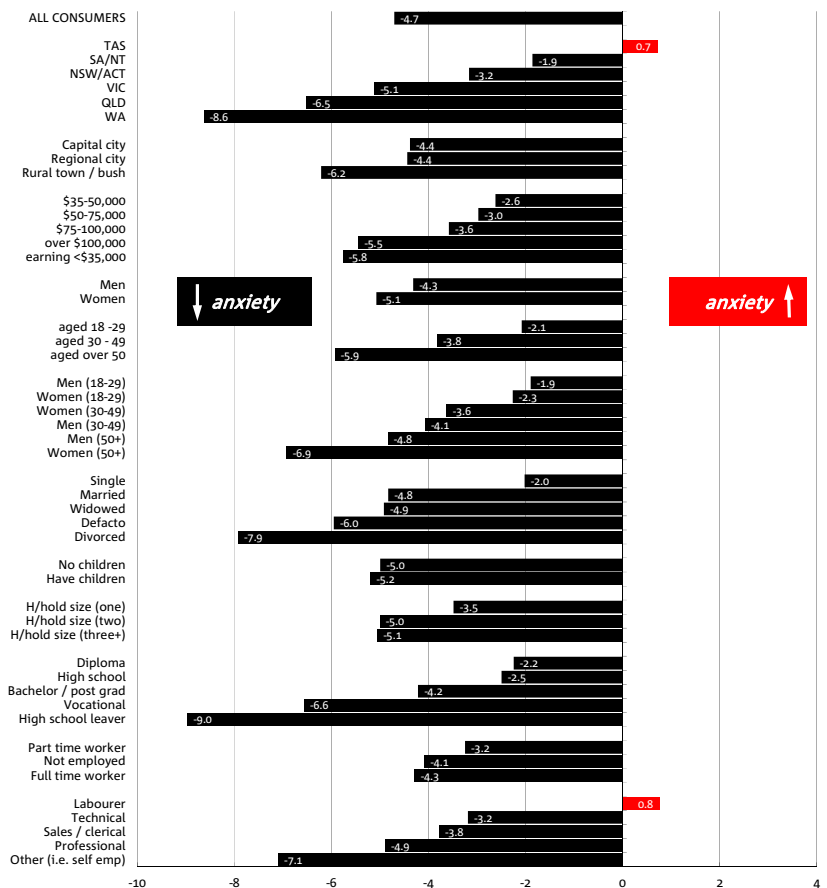
By income, we continue to see a very strong inverse relationship between earnings and anxiety - when earnings improve anxiety falls and vice versa. In Q1, high income earners scored their anxiety 47.4 points, below the lowest income group (55.3 points). Low income earners also had the highest levels of stress for all components of the anxiety index, except job security.

Consumers in capital cities were most anxious by region, especially about their job security. There was also a big gap between those who had and didn't have children and between full and part time workers.

### NAB CONSUMER ANXIETY INDEX: ALL GROUPS



### CONSUMER ANXIETY: ALL GROUPS (CHANGE)



## PART 2: HOUSEHOLD SPENDING BEHAVIOURS

*How has the household financial position of Australian consumers impacted their overall spending behaviours?*

### Consumer spending behaviours are still fundamentally cautious...

How consumers “feel” doesn’t always correlate with how they spend. And in Q1 2018 that was evident in the spending behaviours of Australian households.

Despite much lower levels of consumer anxiety, NAB’s measure of household spending behaviours (which counts the number of consumers that spent more on a range of items against those that spent less on these items) showed consumers more reluctant to spend over the quarter. But their spending behaviours were less conservative than at the same time last year.

NAB’s overall spending indicator fell to -6 in Q1 (-3 points in Q4 2017 and -10 in the same period last year). This signifies the number of consumers that cut back on their overall spending out-numbered those that increased their overall spending.

But there were some important differences in how consumers chose to spend by category.

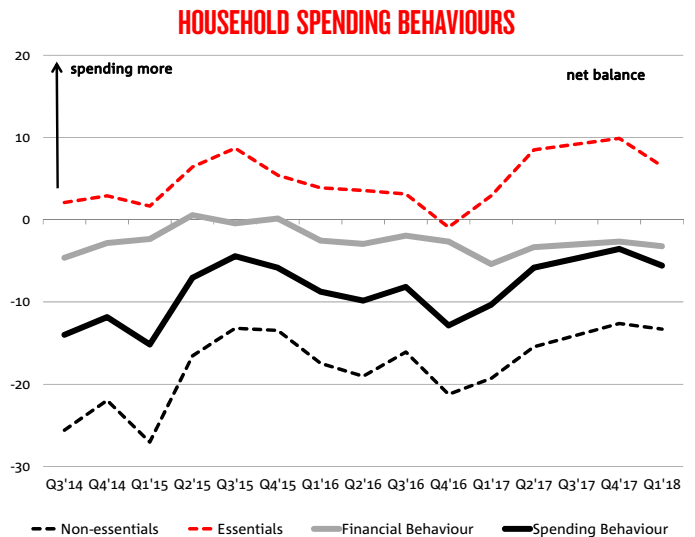
Overall, more consumers increased their spending on ‘essential’ goods and services than those who cut back. The net number of consumers that spent more did however fall to +7 (+10 in the previous quarter), but remained higher than at the same time last year (+3).

Higher spending was mainly driven by utilities. While we noted a large fall in the number of consumers who spent more on utilities over the quarter (+14 vs. +22), this number was still above year earlier levels (+14 vs. +8). More consumers also increased their spending on medical expenses and their children in Q1, but we also counted a reduction in the number of consumers who said they spent more on transport and groceries.

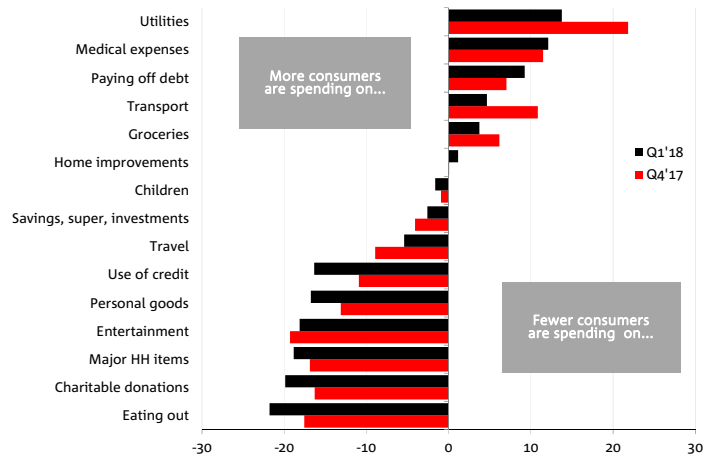
In contrast, more consumers continued to tell us they spent less on ‘non-essential’ goods and services than did those who said they spent more - although the net number that did cut back was unchanged at -13 over the quarter, but noticeably better relative to the same period last year (-19).

Specifically, more consumers cut back on things such as eating out, charitable donations and personal goods in Q1, while fewer cut back on travel and entertainment. Slightly more consumers also spent more on home improvements than cut back. While still mostly negative, spending behaviours on all ‘non essentials’ was less conservative than at the same time last year.

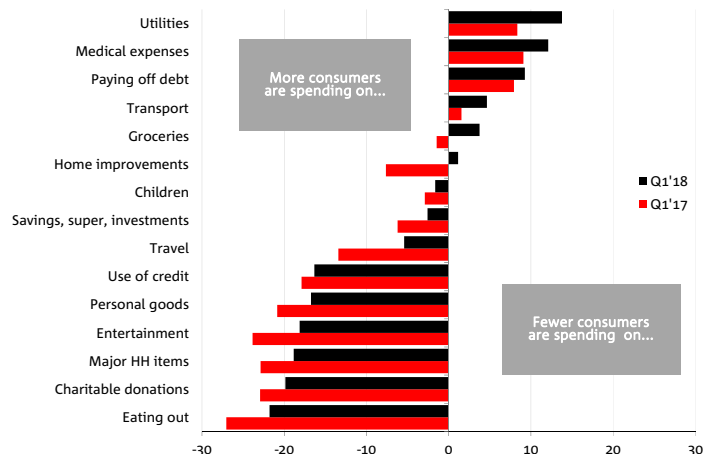
Financial spending behaviours (consisting of paying off debt, using credit cards and savings, investments and superannuation) were largely unchanged over the quarter and relative to the same period last year.



### CHANGES IN HOUSEHOLD SPENDING BEHAVIOURS (Q/Q) (NET BALANCE)



### CHANGES IN HOUSEHOLD SPENDING BEHAVIOURS (Y/Y) (NET BALANCE)





## How concerned are consumers about the general economic situation in Australia?

### The general economic situation in Australia is causing less concern...

In the March quarter, consumers were noticeably less concerned about the general economic situation in Australia and its impact on their future spending and savings plans. Overall, they scored 55.1 points (where 100 is “extremely” concerned), down from 61.0 points in Q4 2017.

Although full year economic in 2017 growth came in at a relatively subdued 2.3%, we suspect more positive sentiment towards the general economic situation may be reflecting continued employment growth, relatively low unemployment and a more favourable economic outlook for 2018-19.

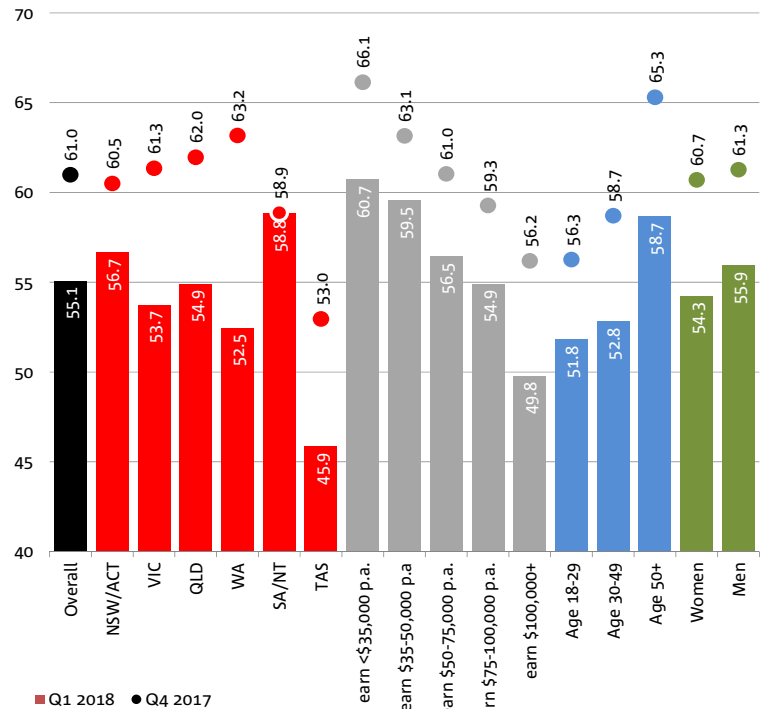
However, there remain some important differences in key groups. The level of concern about the general economy fell in all states except SA/NT (unchanged), with the biggest falls in WA (52.5 points) and VIC (53.7 points). Consumers living in TAS (45.9 points) were least concerned about the economy and those in SA/NT (58.8 points) the most concerned.

We continue to see a very clear relationship between the economy and income - it is still a far bigger concern in the lowest income group (60.7 points) and lowest for the highest income earners (49.8 points). Encouragingly, the level of concern has fallen in all income groups.

By age, the economy caused the most concern for over 50s (58.7 points). It was of least concern to 18-29 year olds (51.8 points).

By gender, women and men were less concerned about the general economic situation in Australia in Q1, but women more so than men. Consequently, the gulf between men (55.9 points) and women (54.3 points).

**HOW CONCERNED ARE CONSUMERS ABOUT THE GENERAL ECONOMIC SITUATION IN AUSTRALIA**  
(0 = not at all; 100 = completely)



# PART 3: HOUSEHOLD FINANCIAL POSITION & DRIVERS OF FINANCIAL STRESS

*How concerned are consumers about their current household financial position?*

## Australian consumers are noticeably less concerned about their household financial position...

When asked to rate their level of concern relating to their future spending and savings plans arising from their current financial position, Australian consumers scored 55.9 points out of 100 (100 is 'extremely concerned'), down from 59.7 points in Q4 2017.

The overall result continues to suggest Australian consumers are experiencing 'moderate' levels of concern about their household financial position.

By gender, the level of concern fell for women and men, but women (56.3 points) remained more anxious than men (55.5 points).

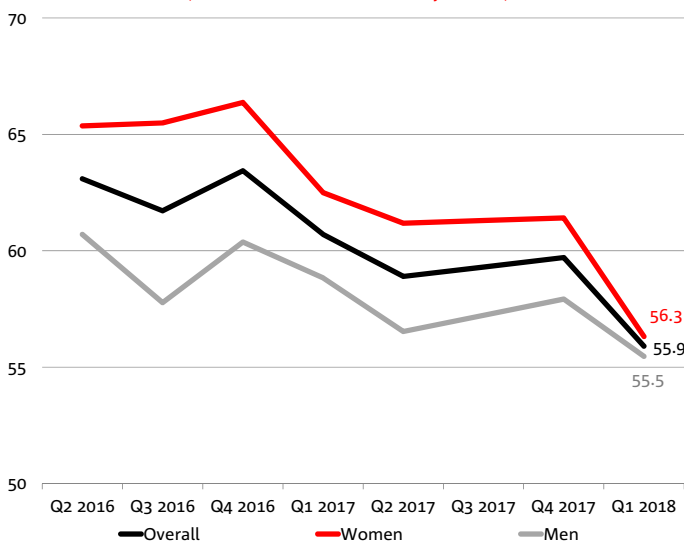
By age, concern fell most and was also lowest for over 50s (51.4 points) by some margin. Men over 50 (51.0 points) were only a little less concerned than women over 50 (51.8 points).

The level of concern among 18-29 however rose a little to 59.7 points.

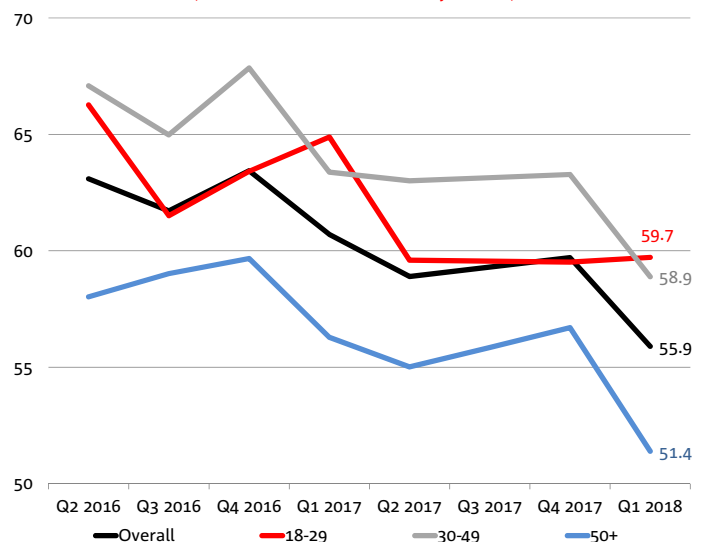
But young women (18-29) were the only group to report higher concern over their household financial position (62.1 points) in Q1. Moreover, their level of concern was significantly higher than for young men (57.4 points).

Concerns among middle-aged Australians also fell (58.9 points), but were a little higher for middle aged men (59.1 points) than women (58.7 points).

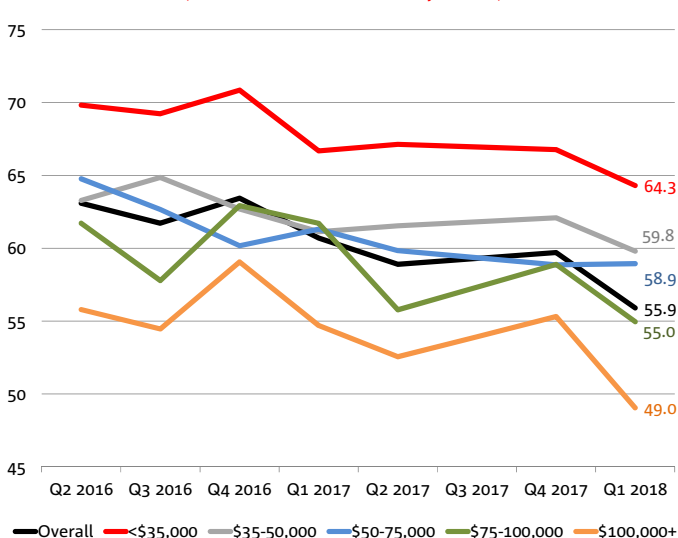
**CONCERN OVER HOUSEHOLD FINANCIAL POSITION: GENDER**  
(0 = not at all concerned; 100 = extremely concerned)



**CONCERN OVER HOUSEHOLD FINANCIAL POSITION: AGE**  
(0 = not at all concerned; 100 = extremely concerned)



**CONCERN OVER HOUSEHOLD FINANCIAL POSITION: INCOME**  
(0 = not at all concerned; 100 = extremely concerned)



NAB's survey continues to highlight a very strong inverse relationship between income and the level of consumer concern about their household financial position.

Concerns were lowest for consumers earning over \$100,000 p.a. (49.0 points) and highest in the lowest income group (64.3 points).

In Q1, the level of consumer concern was lower in all income bands, except in the \$50-75,000 group (unchanged). Significantly, the level of concern has also fallen to survey low levels in all income groups.

That said, the level of concern fell most in the highest income earning group, causing the gap between the highest income group and the lowest income group to again widen (after having improved in Q3). This gap is now also the biggest it has been since we began monitoring this data in Q2 2016.



# What are consumers most worried about in relation to their current household financial position?

## Consumers worry most about being able to finance their retirement...

Being able to finance their retirement was the biggest worry for Australian consumers in relation to their current household financial position, followed by their ability to provide for their family's future and the ability to raise \$2,000 for an emergency.

They worried least about meeting their minimum credit card repayments, and having enough to pay off personal loans and to pay for food and basic necessities.

Consumers also worried less about all factors than they did in the previous quarter, especially when it came to meeting the cost of 'non-essential' expenses such as holidays, entertainment and eating out, being able to raise \$2,000 in an emergency and their monthly household bills.

But when compared to the same period a year earlier, they were more concerned about all factors, except for 'non-essential' spending, raising \$2,000 in an emergency, retirement financing and their children's education (unchanged.)

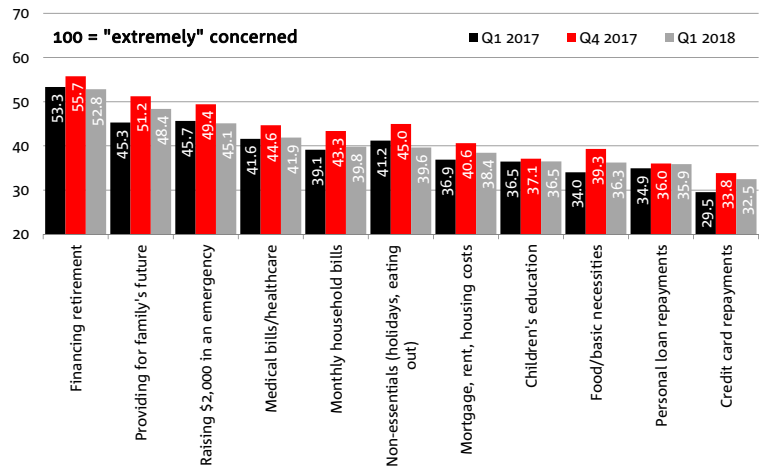
By gender, men were more concerned than women about having enough for their children's education, meeting minimum credit card repayments, paying off personal loans and being unable to meet mortgage repayments, rent or other housing costs.

In contrast, women were noticeably more concerned about being unable to raise \$2,000 in an emergency, not having enough for spending on 'non-essentials', being unable to finance their retirement, being unable to provide for their family and not having enough to pay their monthly household bills.

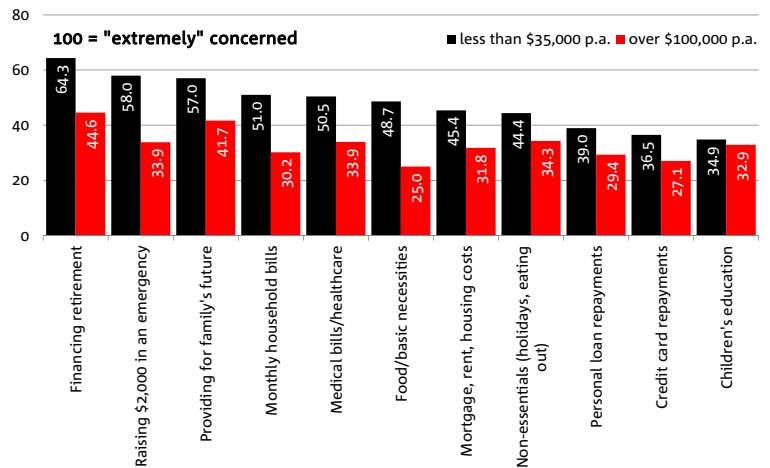
By income, consumers earning less than \$35,000 p.a. expressed higher levels of concern over all drivers than any other income group, except in regards to having enough to pay for their children's education and paying off their personal loans.

When compared to the highest income group, low income earners were noticeably more concerned about their ability to raise \$2,000 for an emergency, having enough for food and basic necessities and meeting their monthly household bills.

## WHAT WORRIES CONSUMERS MOST ABOUT THEIR CURRENT HOUSEHOLD FINANCIAL POSITION



## WHAT WORRIES CONSUMERS MOST ABOUT THEIR CURRENT HOUSEHOLD FINANCIAL POSITION: HIGH VS. LOW INCOME



## What factors most impact the financial position of 'highly' concerned households?

### Utility bills have the biggest impact on the financial position of 'highly' concerned households...

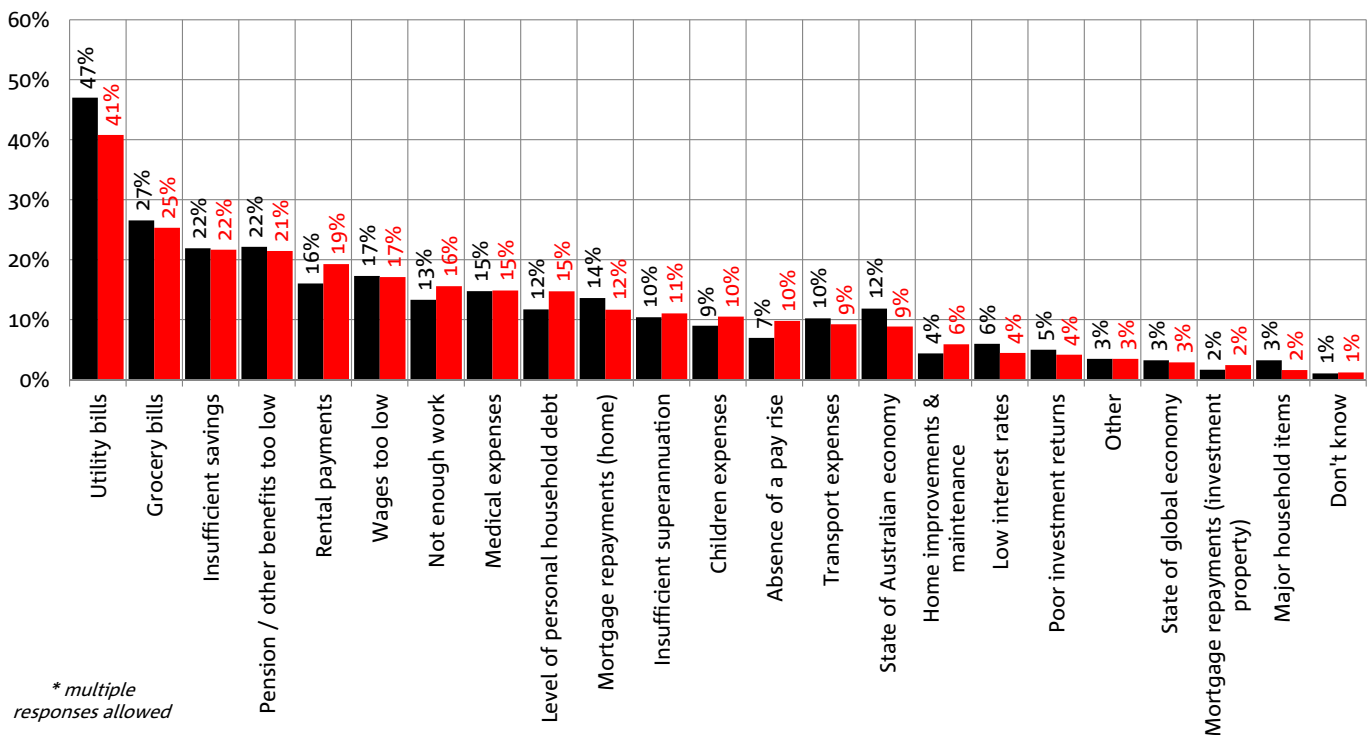
Australian consumers who said they were 'extremely' concerned about their current financial position were also asked to tell us what issues in particular were having the biggest impact on their current financial position.

By far the biggest impact in Q1 2018 came from utility bills according to 41% of consumers, but it impacted fewer consumers than in the previous quarter (47%). Nevertheless, it continued to impact significantly more Australians than the next biggest issue - their grocery bills (around 25%). Other issues that impacted a large number of Australians included insufficient savings (22%), low pensions and/or other benefits (21%) rental payments (19%) and low wages (17%).

Things that impacted the household financial position of average Australians the least included major household items (2%), mortgage repayments on investment properties (2%), the state of the global economy (3%), poor investment returns (4%), low interest rates (4%) and home improvements and maintenance (6%).

While most factors impacted fewer Australians during the quarter, things that had a bigger impact included rental payments, not enough work, the level of personal household debt, absence of a pay rise, home improvements and maintenance, children expenses and insufficient superannuation.

### FACTORS IMPACTING CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION OF "HIGHLY" CONCERNED HOUSEHOLDS\*



For the most part, women and men again reported broadly similar results. But there were some key differences. Somewhat more women were impacted by grocery bills (28% vs. 23%) and low pensions (24% vs. 19%) than men, but more men were impacted by the absence of a pay rise than women (13% vs. 7%).

Differences were more apparent by age. Young people (18-29) were noticeably more impacted by insufficient savings, rental payments, not having enough work and transport expenses than any other age group. But a lot more over 50s said low pensions and other benefits, medical expenses, insufficient superannuation and utility bills had an impact. For 30-49 year olds, home mortgage repayments and children expenses had bigger impact on their current financial position.

When it came to income, significantly more people in the lowest income group were impacted by low pensions and other benefits, rental payments and not enough work. But noticeably more consumers in the highest income group said they were impacted by the absence of a pay rise, home mortgage repayments, low wages, their level of personal household debt, children expenses and the state of the Australian economy.

## FACTORS IMPACTING CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION OF “HIGHLY” CONCERNED HOUSEHOLDS: BY GENDER, AGE & HIGH/LOW INCOME

	Overall	Women	Men	18-29	30-49	50+	Low Income	High Income
Utility bills	41%	42%	39%	28%	42%	47%	45%	44%
Grocery bills	25%	28%	23%	28%	25%	25%	30%	26%
Insufficient savings	22%	22%	21%	30%	19%	19%	17%	19%
Pension / other benefits too low	21%	24%	19%	8%	12%	40%	46%	5%
Rental payments	19%	20%	19%	26%	21%	13%	26%	9%
Wages too low	17%	16%	18%	23%	20%	11%	9%	22%
Not enough work	16%	16%	15%	24%	18%	8%	20%	9%
Medical expenses	15%	16%	14%	12%	12%	20%	17%	13%
Level of personal household debt	15%	14%	16%	17%	17%	11%	8%	21%
Mortgage repayments (home)	12%	11%	12%	7%	16%	10%	3%	18%
Insufficient superannuation	11%	10%	12%	2%	7%	21%	9%	9%
Children expenses	10%	12%	9%	8%	18%	4%	5%	18%
Absence of a pay rise	10%	7%	13%	7%	13%	8%	3%	22%
Transport expenses	9%	9%	9%	14%	6%	10%	8%	7%
State of Australian economy	9%	8%	10%	9%	5%	13%	6%	13%
Home improvements & maintenance	6%	6%	6%	4%	6%	7%	4%	7%
Low interest rates	4%	5%	4%	3%	2%	8%	7%	3%
Poor investment returns	4%	3%	6%	4%	2%	7%	5%	4%
Other	3%	4%	3%	4%	4%	3%	2%	6%
State of global economy	3%	2%	4%	2%	3%	3%	2%	3%
Mortgage repayments (investment property)	2%	1%	4%	1%	5%	1%	0%	4%
Major household items	2%	2%	1%	5%	1%	0%	1%	2%

TOP 5	1	2	3	4	5
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# PART 4: FINANCIAL STRESS & HARDSHIP

*How prevalent is financial stress or hardship, and what are the most common causes of stress or hardship people face?*

**Nearly 2 in 5 Australians experienced some form of financial stress or hardship in the last 3 months...**

Around 37% of Australians experienced some form of financial stress or hardship in the past 3 months (39% in Q4 2017). And this number fell in all key groups, except 18-29 year olds and for men.

Low income earners (<\$35,000 p.a.) and 18-29 year olds were hardest hit with over 1 in 2 (52%) experiencing some hardship. While this fell slightly among low income earners, it increased for young people - particularly young men (where the number increased to 53%, from 46% in Q4 2017).

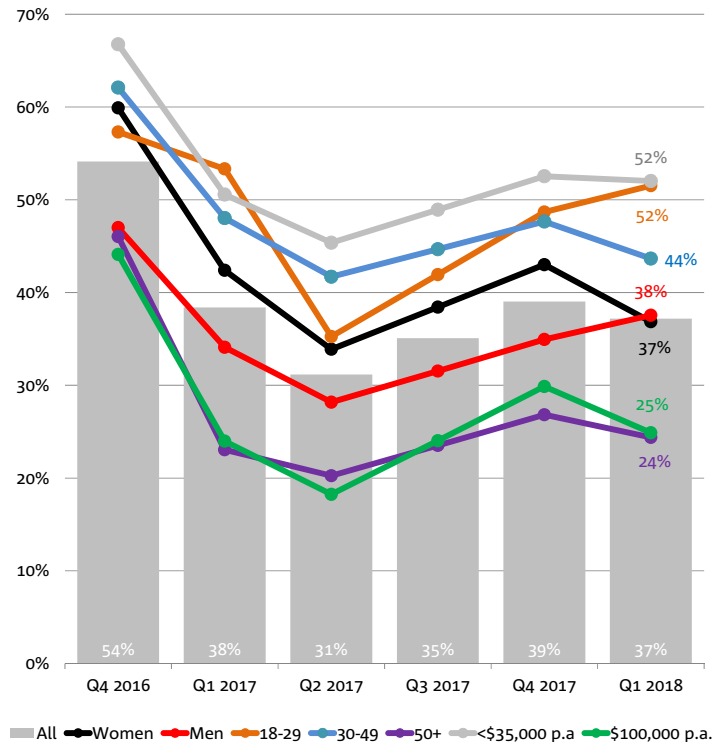
By age, over 50s experienced the least financial stress or hardship (just 24%), compared to 44% of 30-49 year olds and 52% of 18-29 year olds.

Overall, the number of men that experienced some hardship rose to 38% (35% in Q4), but fell to 37% for women (43% in Q4). But more women experienced hardship in all age groups, except 18-29.

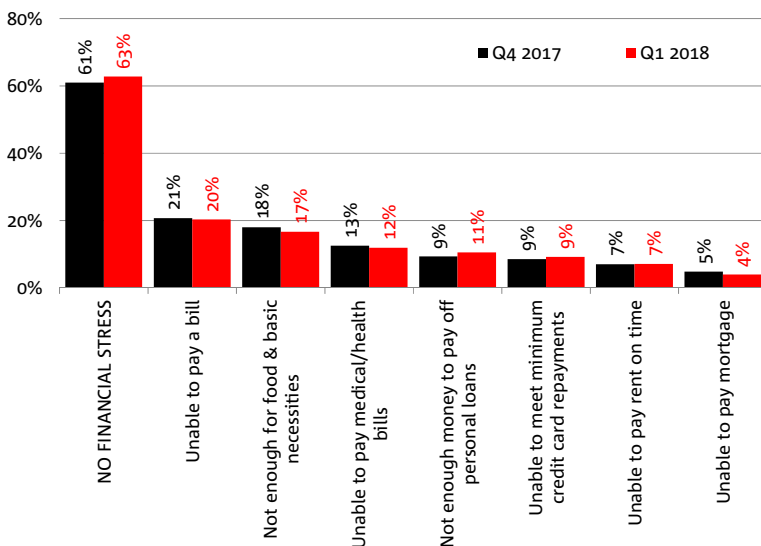
Being unable to pay a bill is still the most frequently cited cause of stress or hardship - for 1 in 5 (20%) Australians overall, but for almost 1 in 3 (29%) young women and low income earning Australians.

Not having enough for food and basic necessities was the next biggest cause of financial stress or hardship - affecting 17% in total, but almost 1 in 3 (31%) low income earners.

**NUMBER OF CONSUMERS THAT HAVE EXPERIENCED FINANCIAL STRESS OR HARDSHIP IN LAST 3 MONTHS**



**TYPE OF FINANCIAL STRESS OR HARDSHIP EXPERIENCED IN THE LAST 3 MONTHS**



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