

# Australians Want a Republic

---

Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

November 2008

# Methodology

- 18+ nationally representative survey
- Fieldwork:
  - 16-21 May 2008 (1000 online interviews)
  - 14-26 November 2008 (2000 online interviews)
- Data is weighted and matched with ABS census data to ensure a nationally representative sample
- Online panel members are primarily recruited offline and by invitation only ruling out self-selection issues associated with online methodologies
- Maximum margin of error at 95% confidence level:
  - $\pm 3.1\%$  (for  $n=1000$ )
  - $\pm 2.2\%$  (for  $n=2000$ )

# Key findings

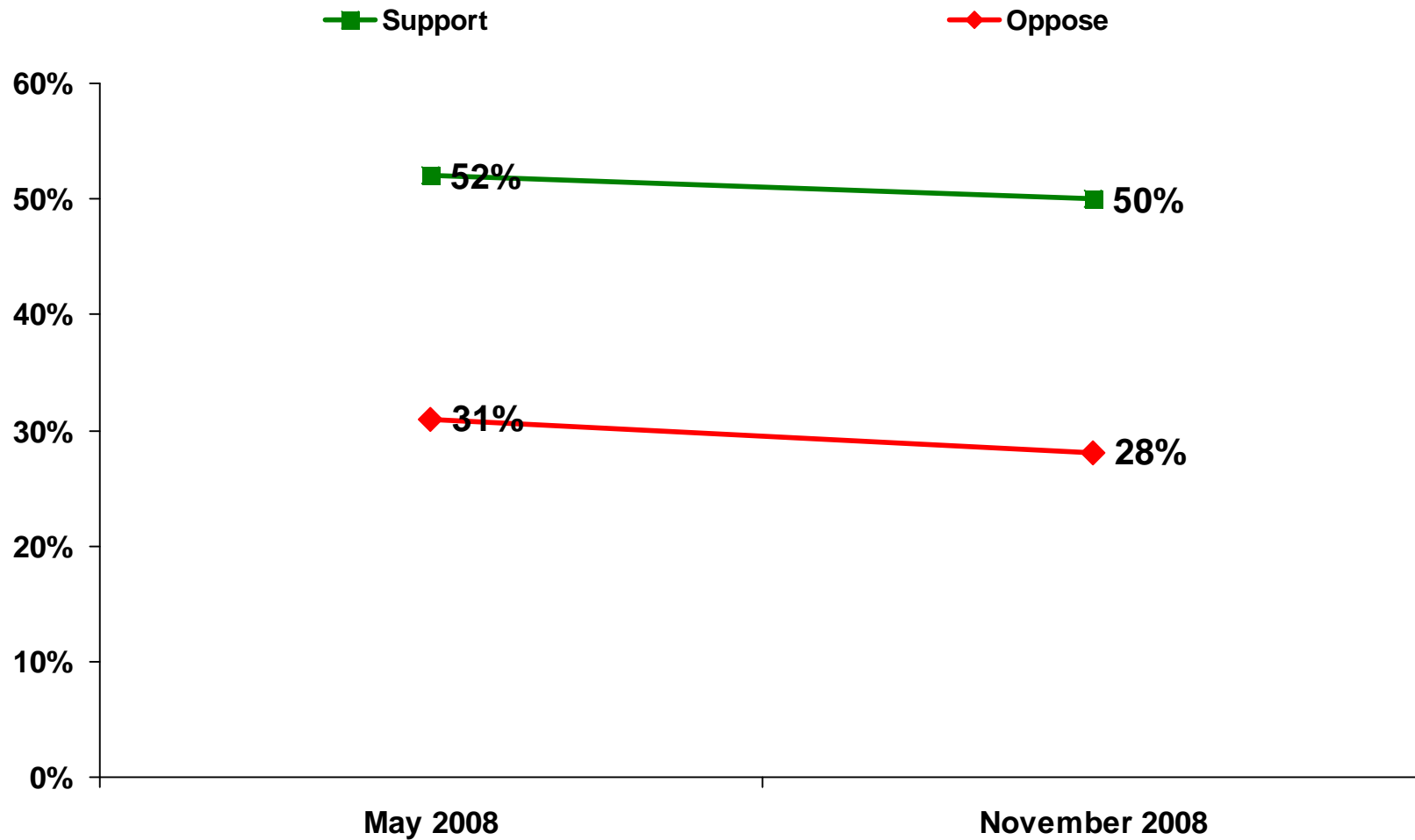
- Half of all Australians support Australia becoming a republic, while 28% oppose this. Men and Labor voters are more in favour as are those earning higher incomes.
- Overall, there are four broad themes why Australians support a republic: They think that
  - It's time to cut old ties to Great Britain
  - Monarchy is an outdated concept
  - There are little benefits to Australia from the current system
  - Australia is strong and can stand alone in the world
  - Indigenous Australians have been here before Britain
- Reasons for opposing a republic are more diverse:
  - The current system is working, why should it be changed
  - The change would be too expensive, and there are other things that should be fixed first
  - The current system of parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy is the better system
  - Unwanted consequences that a republic might have, mainly due to less control
  - The ties with Great Britain and the Commonwealth carry advantages for Australia that it would lose
  - Heritage and tradition
- If Australia became a republic with a president as head of state, 4 in 5 want the president to be elected by the people, only 12% say he should be appointed by parliament

# Support for Australia becoming a republic

---

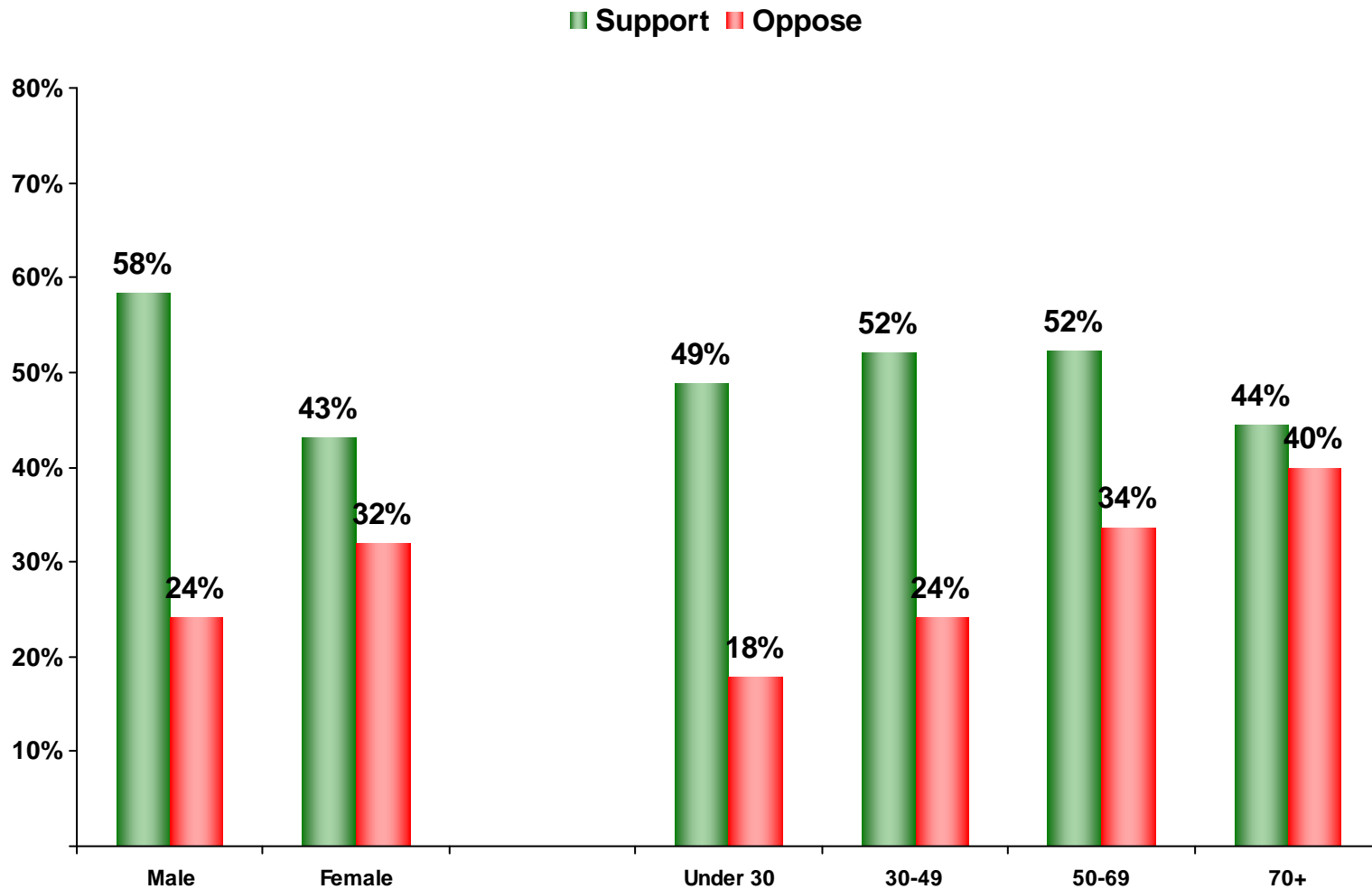
# Stable support for a republic

Do you support or oppose Australia becoming a republic?



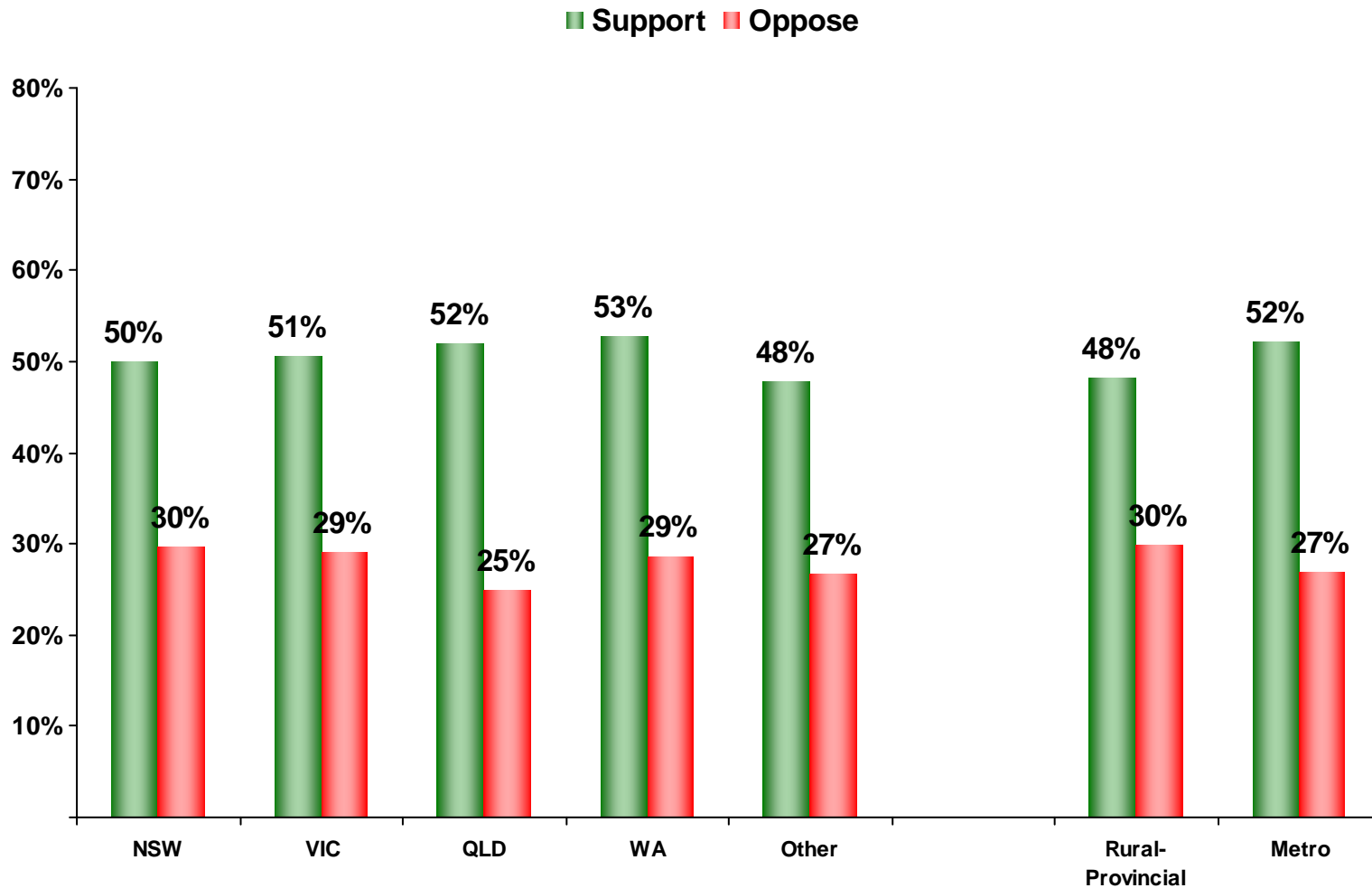
# Men and younger Australians more in favour of a republic

Do you support or oppose Australia becoming a republic?



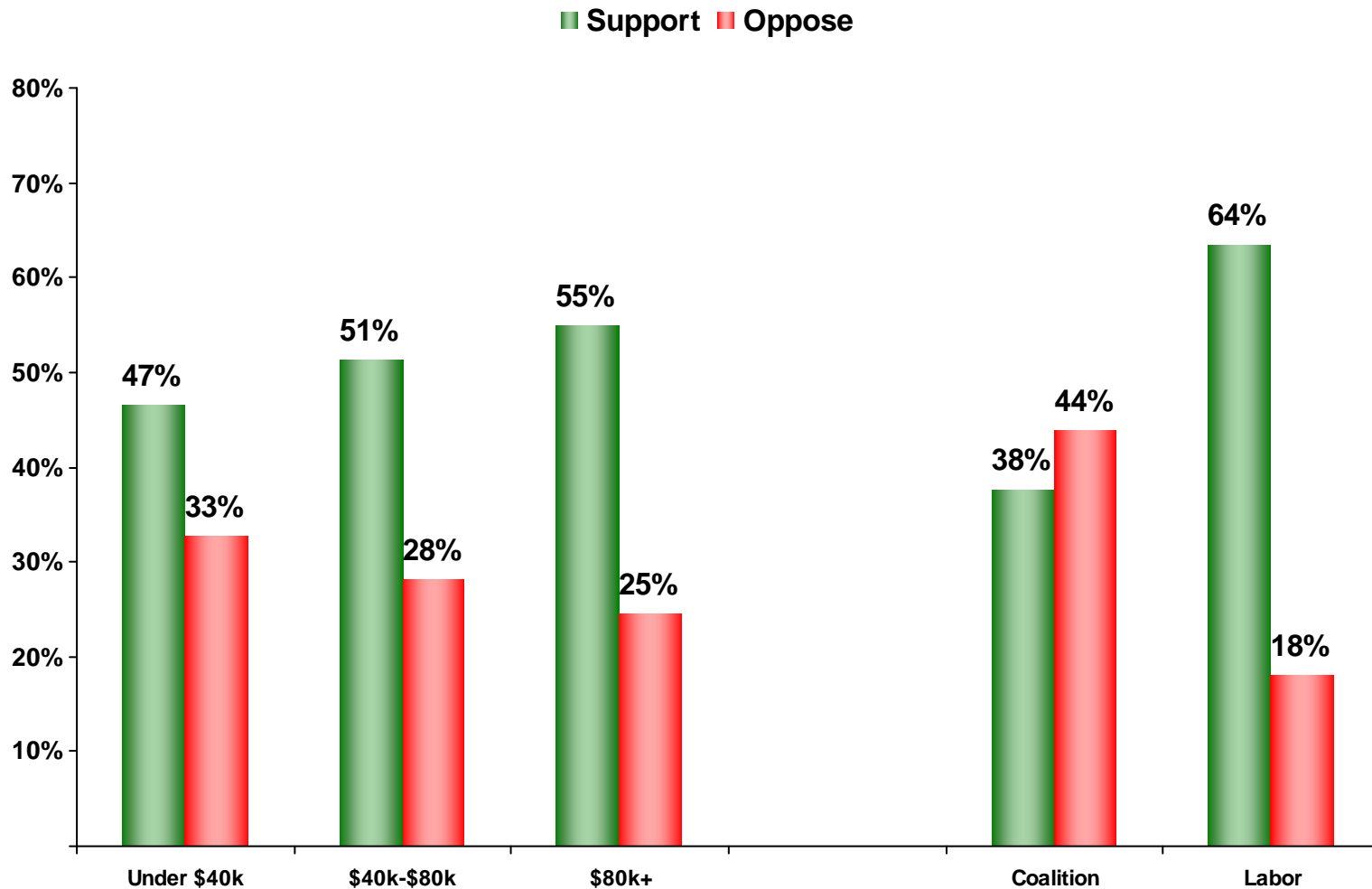
# More support for a republic in metropolitan areas

Do you support or oppose Australia becoming a republic?



# Stronger support amongst higher income earners and Labor voters

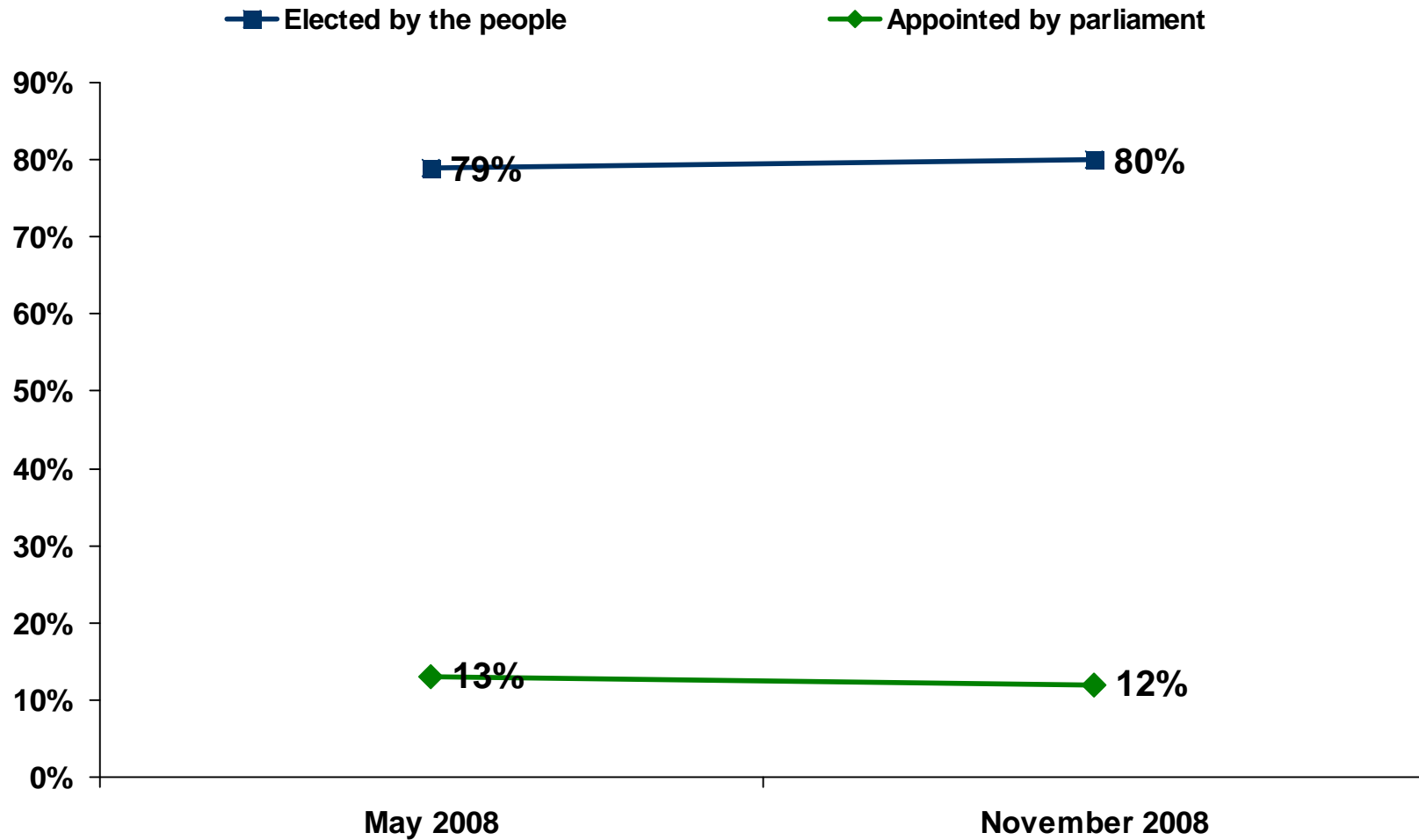
Do you support or oppose Australia becoming a republic?





# Australians want to elect the president

Suppose Australia did become a republic with a president as head of state, should the president be...



# Reasons for supporting Australia becoming a republic

---

## It's time to cut old ties

- Finally become an independent country not reliant on an inherited structure from England.
- Australia needs to further develop its identity as an independent nation looking to the future, not the past. We have progressed as a people to become very different from our Anglo-Saxon origins, and this should be reflected in our becoming completely independent from Britain.
- I don't think becoming a republic will change our history but I think it is time to sever ties with England. We are a multi-cultural country now whose citizens come from all over the world and these people have something to offer as well.
- Why does the Queen actually have a say in what we do! Let's just get independent and become a nation where both indigenous and others can be more united without the head coming from another country.
- Because we are well able to stand by ourselves without the British influence now.

# Monarchy is outdated

- Being under the monarchy in technical terms is outdated. We need to move into the future, stop living in the past.
- The British Monarch, in her role as the Australian Head of State, fails to represent the majority of Australians who are not of British descent and who have no significant historical ties with Britain (not to mention those who actively resent the monarchy). There is no good reason to maintain an antiquated system which serves no useful purpose and which we ignore in practice anyway, namely by appointing a Governor General.
- Ties to English monarchy are outdated and roles of State Governors and the Governor General are superfluous. Their roles, apart from that of representing the Sovereign, could be fulfilled by other public officers.
- Makes sense, monarchy is outdated and irrelevant, and family heritage and birth should not bestow power over nations.
- We have no real cultural, economic or political connection to the royal family so why should we pay them lip service for having come and destroyed the way of life of the Aboriginal people that had existed for many thousands of years, and claimed sovereignty over land that did not belong to it, then badly mistreated the inhabitants. Australia has many citizens who have no heritage that traces to colonial times, so the whole concept is outdated and irrelevant to a large proportion of Australians.

## Little benefit from monarchy

- We derive little to no benefit from being a part of the Commonwealth and the association bears little relevance with the growth and future of Australia.
- We don't have the right to live in the UK on our Aussie passport, and move freely throughout the Commonwealth like Europeans do in the EU, so what's the point.
- The monarchy serves no purpose within Australia or the Australian way of life. The monarchy is an irrelevant extravagance.
- Because the Queen is only for show nowadays and we should become our own country without these old irrelevant ties.
- We have no benefits to remaining a part of the monarchy and have been capable of being a republic for a long time now.
- Our present Head of State, QE2, has very limited constitutional powers and yet Australia has a large financial commitment to maintain that status quo. Australia, by accepting this change, stands to lose little benefit yet gain a huge advantage.

# Australia as part of the world

Australia is a strong country and can stand alone amongst equals

- We are a country which has proven it can stand alone and compete with other nations on an equal footing. We should have our own head of state, whatever they may be called, and therefore beholden to our own virtues, laws etc. without having to answer to the Queen and the outdated Westminster system in its entirety.
- We as a country must move to mature and develop as a world leader standing strong among the flagging big nations.
- Australia has earned her right to stand alone as a democracy. We have our own identity within the global context/market place.
- We are a small (in population), young country with our own potential to stand in this world without being tied to the trappings of old Mother England. We are an Asian country geographically and our independence is important to standing tall in this part of the world.

It would improve Australia's image in the world

- Would raise Australia's status as a nation seen by the rest of the world to be independent.
- I think it's time to stand up to the world and say proudly we are Australian, and stop being a laughing stock of the world.
- Whilst the monarchy provides us with political stability, this may be achieved in other political models, and we would then be taken more seriously by the world.

# Aboriginal-related

- Because I am an Aboriginal Australian and detest having the Monarchy thrust upon me! I feel no allegiance to the English monarchy whatsoever!
- The monarchy is an outdated institution and a reminder of Indigenous oppression.
- England were not the original owner of Australia so out of respect to the Indigenous people of Australia we should become a republic and we may have an Indigenous leader, wouldn't that be great and this can happen under Labor.
- I feel like Australia has come a long way since being 'initiated' by the Queen's Country. I don't feel like we as Australians identify with the United Kingdom anymore, we have developed our own way of life and things work differently for us. We should celebrate and identify ourselves as a separate entity. Also taking in mind that I do not believe the UK has any right to this land, considering it really belongs to the Aboriginals.
- We should allow ourselves to grow up - and let our Indigenous people mature as well and preserve the oldest surviving culture in the world!

# Reasons for opposing Australia becoming a republic

---



# It's not broken – why fix it?

- We have a very good constitution and governmental system already. Australia is a recognizable country as it stands, we have very sound decision-making processes, albeit some not very good decisions by some political parties and management teams, but overall a fair system of government.
- We have a beautiful country with a system of rule that has worked for over 100 years. If we become a republic, everything from flag to elections, to postage stamps will be need to be changed.
- Why change something that has worked well for years? Other countries have shown that republics are not always a good option in running a country.
- After all the Queen has little to do with any form of government or rules and regulations in this country, why change the ingredients if the meal is satisfactory as it is.
- The country functions very well as a constitutional monarchy. What difference will a republic make to: our economy, our educational problems, our health problems?
- Our roots are British and a Christian country. I cannot see any valid reason to change this.
- We already have a very good and efficient style of Government. Most republics around the world are in some sort of political trouble.
- We have done very well over the past couple of hundred years and I do not see any reason to change. The Queen or King don't interfere with the running of our country, and the USA would love to be in our position and have a monarch to be proud of, so why should we give up what we have to please a few radicals.

# Too expensive

- I strongly oppose the costs associated with change so that a few people can say 'oh we have a president'. The costs are further reaching than expressed by republican lobbyists.
- The cost of transferring every representation of Australia being a monarchy. I don't care about whether we have a president or a prime minister, but the cost is prohibitive and with the current financial crisis is just a red-herring.
- Becoming a republic will mean many changes not just getting rid of the Royal Family as many people think - the cost and upheaval of our current system will be enormous.
- Who pays for the change? Rewriting a new constitution, reprinting all correspondence, all new letterheads, plus other associated mass changes.
- I do not believe that the benefit is worth the cost.
- Enormous cost for nothing gained (politically, economically or socially). I have not yet seen any compelling facts that prove without any doubt that the move to a republic will benefit the country in any way.
- I do not see any significant advances in being a republic. To change from the Westminster system of government would be costly - will it significantly increase jobs, security, health etc.?
- I am in no way a royalist but I feel that the monarchy has very little to do with the running of our country or our national identity. It would be a huge waste of money to hold referendums/elections for a republic or president - money that could be much better spent on the disastrous public health & education systems.

## The current system is better

- Take note of the instability of many other countries around the world who change their Head of State frequently. The present system is not causing any angst at the moment, other than those who have a need in their life to rebel against many things without just cause.
- We have the best political system in the world and I think changing it would not necessarily be good for the country.
- I believe the Westminster parliamentary system we currently have, is the best system of governance currently in existence and miles better/safer than a republic.
- I believe we currently have the best of all worlds - and many are too blind to see. The queen does not in any way interfere in the governing and laws of the country and we do not have the added cost of the whole presidential set-up.
- I look at all the republics around the world and they are in a mess or under constant pressure from would-be presidents. At least with a monarchy we have tradition, culture, a proud history and a Head of State who has spent a lifetime working for the people and who is still answerable to a parliament.

## Republic can have unwanted consequences

- Because the sovereignty of God will be removed from our constitution and so our country will fall into total disarray.
- How many republic countries in the world have NOT had a civil war.
- Too many countries who have become independent, have seen their economies and living standards go down the drain, and inflation through the roof.
- Look at other countries who have become republics and judge for yourself not too many are happy countries, wars, takeovers, total unrest, not too happy people.
- I oppose simply because the present system works because of the checks and balances in place with the constitution. This would need to be changed and there could be the high probability the amended constitution would allow the election of a dictator based on other countries that have changed to a presidency.
- The majority of republics end up as dictatorships. The monarchy has very little say in the running of the country but can, when necessary, give the people an 'extra mental boost' when tragedy or other calamities occur.
- Because our political system is too open to abuse and very few republics of small populations can withstand the interference of other predatory nations.
- Around the globe, the few remaining monarchies are generally stable and/or prosperous, while the most inept and corrupt regimes are republics.

# Advantages through ties with Commonwealth

- By world standards we are a small nation and although we think we are a big player in the world we really are not and by remaining in the Commonwealth we would continue to have the support of larger countries.
- The Commonwealth is a group of over 50 countries working somewhat together, it would be stupid to step out of such an important group. Also, we should not cut our ties with Europe completely, too many Aussies have roots there.
- This country doesn't have a big enough population to protect it from possible invaders and needs the support of the Commonwealth if necessary.
- I like the ties we have to the Commonwealth. I feel safer knowing we have those allies and that they are Christian countries.
- We can not afford to let Islam get any more of a hold on our country than it already has and if we loose our ties with the Commonwealth, I fear we will lose Australia and our beliefs and customs (more than we have already had them taken away from us).
- Our roots are with the British monarchy, we don't need to change for changes sake. What would we do without the Commonwealth Games to lift our nations spirits between Olympics?

# Heritage and tradition

- Because I support our flag and European heritage and believe our connection with the Monarchy is the only true way to hold on to our roots.
- Because our roots are in our heritage and there is no reason to forget that. We clearly have our own identity and are all but self-governing yet we can still retain our origins.
- Our heritage is entwined with the throne.
- It's our heritage. The biggest thing that concerns me, is the flag changing.
- Because Australia was settled by convicts from England. Why should we lose that heritage.
- No need to change a good stable democratic system recognizing British heritage.
- We have a great background from England and we should try and keep up a tradition handed down to us by the convicts, who knows maybe one of mine, we'll never know.
- Fought for the Crown as have other predecessors before me. Retention of tradition maintains civilization and law and order.
- Change for change sake is wrong, this country was made great under the flag we now salute and should remain so.
- Because as a returned ex serviceman I served the Queen and believe that she is the rightful head of state in this country.

# About UMR

## Australia's Leading Research and Issues Management Company

UMR is the company of choice for leaders and decision-makers, because we turn high quality research into useful hard-headed strategic advice. UMR Research has provided significant insights, advice and campaign management to decision-makers who have brought about major change in Australia and New Zealand for Governments and business.

UMR is a full-service opinion research, issues management and campaign company, based in Australia and Zealand, working across the Asia Pacific region. We specialise in political research and campaigns, corporate reputation, issues management and social marketing.

We have over 20 years experience developing a deep understanding of the views and opinions of Australians and New Zealanders. Our team of expert researchers are seasoned professionals who combine extensive experience with a deep understanding of the public mindset.

### Contact:

Level 1, Suite 105 • 332-342 Oxford Street • Sydney NSW 2022 • AUSTRALIA  
Tel: +61 2 9386 1622 • Fax: +61 2 9386 1633 • Email: [office@umr.com.au](mailto:office@umr.com.au)