



Making Membership Meaningful

Learnings from Life in Australia™

February 2025

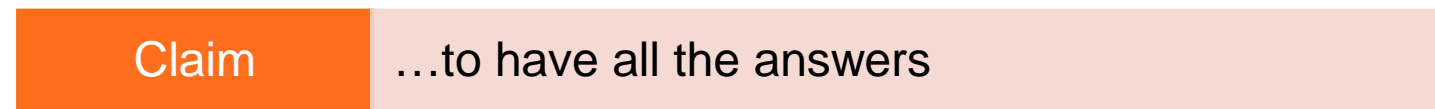


*What motivates
our members?*

What I will do...



What I won't do...





Life in
Australia™

Est. 2016

- Recognised a need for research infrastructure
- Increasingly competitive landscape
- 1st probability-based online panel in Australia
 - Self-funded
 - Commercial panel
 - Social research only
 - Used by Government, Non-Profits and Universities



Panel evolution

2016



- Panel size of 3,322
- ≈75.0 completion rate
- 13.5% offline
- Monthly waves
- Dual-frame RDD telephone recruitment

≈45% of original panelists retained

2025



- Panel size of 10,000+
- ≈70.0 completion rate
- 1.5% offline
- Bi-monthly waves
- RDD text-to-web recruitment



01

Why join...?

Didn't dive straight in



Life in
AustraliaTM

Be heard | Be represented

Evidence-based design

Life in Australia™ is **important**

Have **your say** on the **big issues** facing Australia

Have **your views heard** and **represented**

Interesting and **engaging surveys**

Membership is **invitation-only**

Influence Australian researchers, **policymakers** and academics

Receive a **reward** for joining and every survey you complete

Choose from **gift card, PayPal** or charitable **donations**

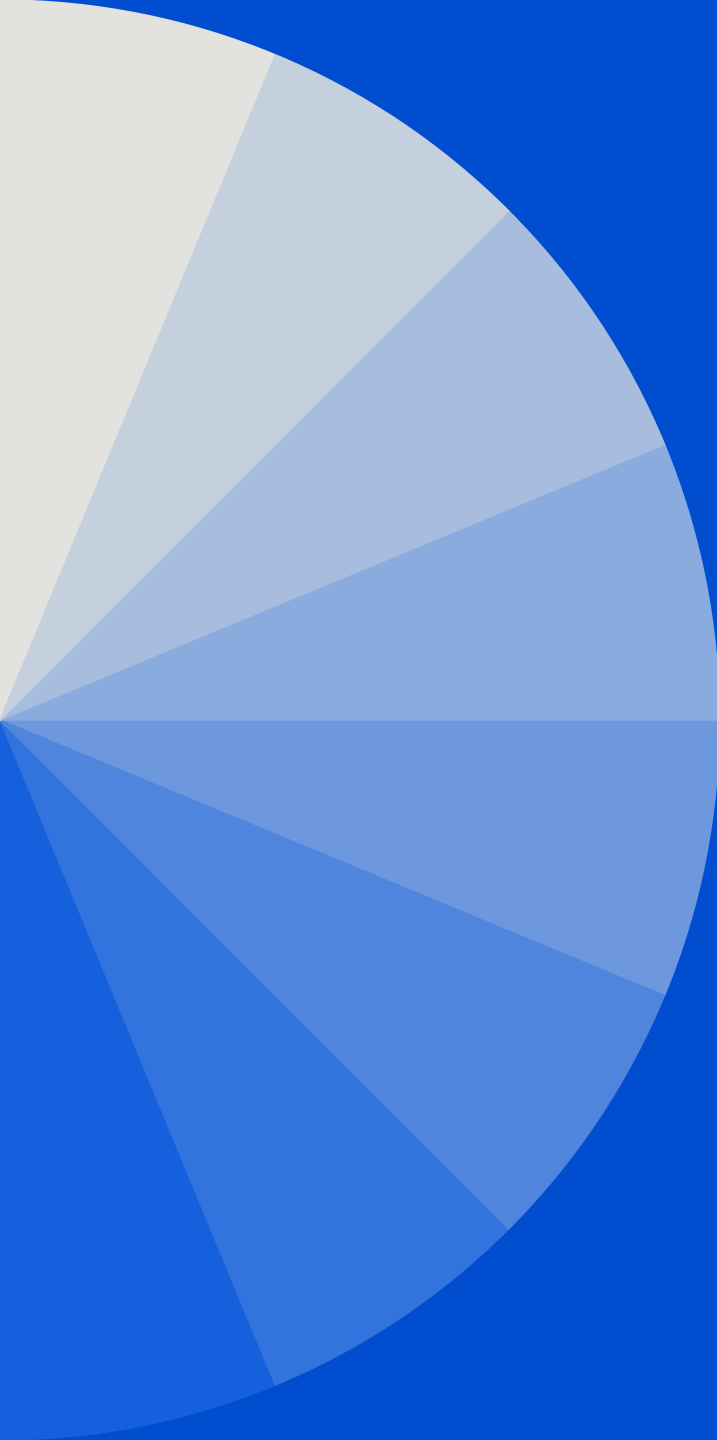
Social Research Centre is owned by the **Australian National University**





02

Does message
= meaning?



In 2019, a colleague at the Australian National University asked our panelists why they joined and why they continue to take part in Life in Australia™...



Social
Research
Centre

Fully owned by



Australian
National
University

Identified 15 persuasive statements



You can **influence** Australian researchers, **policy-makers**, and academics

You will **help others** better **understand Australia** and Australians

Your **views will be heard**

It's an **opportunity to share** your views

Your views will **be represented**

You will **gain incentives**/rewards/make donations

Your input will **be appreciated**

Your **input is valuable**

You will be participating in **important national research**

You are special - relatively few Australians get this **invitation-only** chance to join

This is a chance to participate in **something innovative**/novel/**unique**

Your **data are protected** by Australian privacy laws and kept confidential

Your **participation is voluntary** and you can drop out at any time

You will be **helping** the **Social Research Centre/Australian National University**

You will be **affiliated with** something **Social Research Centre/Australian National University** is doing

Member motivations

- Lavrakas and Kokar (2023) said researchers are faced with a three-fold challenge
- Concern is that quality will be compromised
- They identified:
 - ‘persuasive statements’ using content analysis of recruitment materials
 - ‘motivators’ for panelists by analyzing coded responses (n=1,557)
- Low-cost method of increasing representation of under-represented

We need to ramp up the motivators that work for our cohorts of interest



Two out of three ain't bad

(Aday and Steinman, 1977)

The trinity of trouble

1. Youth
2. Less educated
3. Right-leaning



Can we fix it?

Panelists' stated motivators

	Mentions
Self-actualization, allows my voice to be heard	35.8
Sharing views /opinions to make a difference or influence change	32.2
Sharing views /opinions to represent others like me /population subgroups/minorities	12.0
Thought-provoking to participate in the panel	11.6
My input is valuable	10.3
Interesting topics	8.2
Receiving incentives	7.8
Contributing to the survey/study/research/science	5.8
Enjoying surveys, participating in research	5.5
Donating incentives to charity	5.1
To be informed about topical issues	3.9
Positive sentiment towards Australia	2.9
Like being part of something, part of a team	2.3
Sharing views/opinions in a non-judgmental platform	1.8
Social Research Centre/Life in Australia™ are reliable enterprises	1.3
Have the time/something to do	1.0
Other misc. motivation	0.5

Top three closely aligned to messaging

All but one of our statements was mentioned

Missing motivators

	Mentions (%)
Self-actualization, allows my voice to be heard	35.8
Sharing views/opinions to make a difference or influence change	32.2
Sharing views/opinions to represent others like me/population subgroups/minorities	12.0
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Sharing views/opinions in a non-judgmental platform	1.8
Social media /Life	1.3
Have the opportunity to	1.0
Other reasons	0.5

Participation-
focussed

Topics-
focussed

Other
omissions

+ significant correlates

	Mentions (%)
Self-actualization, allows my voice to be heard	35.8
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Sharing views/opinions in a non-judgmental platform	1.8
Social Research Centre/Life in Australia™ are reliable enterprises	
Have the time/something to do	

Resonates
with males

Resonates
with young
adults



03

Can we improve
the quality...?

Challenge accepted!



Self-actualization, allows my voice to be heard	35.8
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Member testimonials

Share broad topics / some findings

Created 'Member home'

Increased emphasis

More flexible rewards



04

What else have
you done?

Other activity



The screenshot displays the Life in Australia member portal. At the top, the logo and tagline "Be heard | Be represented" are visible. The main navigation menu includes "Home", "My surveys", "My rewards", "Update profile", "FAQs", "News", "Contact us", "Logout", and "Change Your Password". A large blue banner features the text: "Welcome to your home for Life in Australia™. Use this site to access your Life in Australia™ surveys and rewards. If there is anything else you need, please contact us. We are always happy to hear from our members." Below the banner is a sidebar with links: "View my surveys", "Access my rewards", "Update my profile", "Find out more", "Contact us", and "Member news". The main content area includes a "Charity scorecard" section with the text: "Each year, we like to pick your brains for charities that Life in Australia™ members can choose to donate their rewards to. This year, Life in Australia™ members have given over \$100,000 to selected charities." Another section titled "Be heard | Be represented" explains the invitation-only membership and the importance of member participation. A final snippet at the bottom states: "Whether or not you choose to keep your rewards or donate them, the reward is a small token of our appreciation for making your voice heard."

This year so far...

- At the end of the January survey we asked for feedback from panelists (n=1,054)
 - Why they joined
 - Why they continue to be involved
 - Whether they expect to continue to be involved
 - What could we do differently
- Implemented an experiment during the top-up recruitment in February
 - Randomised sample across four batches (n=45,000)
 - Wanted to increase representation in under-represented groups
- Asked the following of existing panelists in our February panel profile refresh questionnaire
 - Experiences using the panel
 - Satisfaction with rewards
 - Improvement suggestions

Text-to-web experiment (2025)

Control

1. The Social Research Centre has **randomly selected** you for an **important national study**.
2. The Social Research Centre **invites you** to participate in the Life in Australia **study**... and you will receive a **\$20 gift voucher** for completing.
3. The Life in Australia study is **closing soon**.
4. This is your **last chance** to participate in the Life in Australia study.

Incentive

1. Get a **\$20 gift voucher** to take part in an important national study!
2. Get a **\$20 gift voucher** for taking part in the Life in Australia Study by the Social Research Centre!
3. **Get paid to take part** in an important national study from the Social Research Centre!
4. **Last chance to get paid** to take part in a national study from the Social Research Centre!

***Included on all:** Go to [LINK] and receive a \$20 voucher for completing. For more info, go to lifeinaus.srcentre.com.au. Reply 1 to opt out.

Voice

1. **Have your voice heard** in an important national study.
2. **Make your voice count** on **important issues** by joining the Life in Australia study by the Social Research Centre.
3. We really **want to hear from YOU! (Yes, you!)**.
4. Last chance to have your **voice heard by government**.

Conservative-leaning

1. **Tell government** and others **what you really think** in an important national study!
2. **Speak up for people like you** on national security, cost of living & more.
3. There is **no such thing as a 'wrong' opinion** in the SRC's Life in Australia study. Closing soon!
4. Last chance to **tell government what you really think** by taking part in the SRC's Life in Australia study.





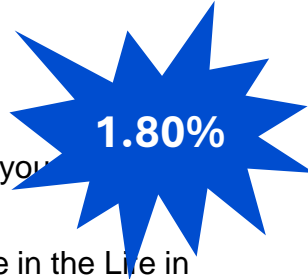
05

Did we win?

2025 Experiment Results

Control

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Incentive

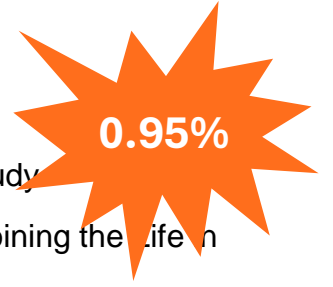
1. Get a **\$20 gift voucher** to take part in an important national study from the Social Research Centre!
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Conservative-leaning

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Reason for involvement

Which, if any, of the following are reasons why you continue to be involved in Life in Australia™...?

Jan 2025 member feedback (n=1,054)	All reasons
To share my opinions	52
The rewards	51
For people like me to be heard	42
The topics are interesting	41
Feel my opinions are valued	40
To make a difference	38
It is an important study	37
To learn about current issues	36
Like being part of something	29
Can trust the researchers	24
Doing surveys is fun	20
For something to do	8
To donate to charity	6
Feel obliged to take part	6
Other reason	1

Adapted from
Lavrakas and Kocar (2023)

Main reason for involvement



If you had to choose, what is the main reason why you continue to be involved in Life in Australia™...?

Jan 2025 member feedback (n=1,054)	All reasons	Order	Main reason
The rewards	51	2	23
For people like me to be heard	42	3	15
To share my opinions	52	1	13
To make a difference	38	6	10
It is an important study	37	7	10
Feel my opinions are valued	40	5	6
To learn about current issues	36	8	6
The topics are interesting	41	4	5
Like being part of something	29	9	4
Doing surveys is fun	20	11	2
To donate to charity	6	10	1
Can trust the researchers	24	13	1
Feel obliged to take part	6	14	1
For something to do	8	12	0
Other reason	1	2	1

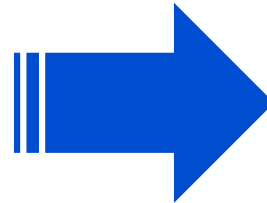
Other findings

- Top reasons for *joining* and *continuing* were consistent
 - The rewards
 - To share opinions
 - For people like me to be heard
 - It is an important study
- Identified motivators that correlate with political orientation
- To boost inclusion of right-wing:
 - Share opinions
 - For people like me to be heard
- Strongly resonates with left-wing:
 - It is an important survey

Take-up of incentive options

Preferred reward type (2022)

E-cards	58%
PayPal	22%
Charity	19%
No reward	1%



Portal use in (2024)

Accessed 'Member Home'	71%
Redeemed e-gift	56%
Donated to charity	5%

Note: Preferred reward type varies wave by wave, the above snapshot is a point-in-time estimate



06

Next steps

To-do-list



- Analyze Feb 2025 member questions
- Attempt to correct under-representation
- Working on a panel conditioning paper
- Find ways to explore non-response
- Respond to panelist feedback
- Continued learning!

Meet the team

Founder



Darren Pennay

Founder and methods advisor
Role: Co-contributor



**Social
Research
Centre**

Team



Dr Dina Neiger

Chief Statistician
Role: Strategy and oversight



Dr Benjamin Phillips

Chief Survey Methodologist
Role: Methods and sampling



Ben

Me



Anna Lethborg

Director, Quantitative Research
Role: Business development



Dale VanderGert

Operations Manager
Role: Project and ops management



Busy!

Thank you

I'd love to hear from you

Anna Lethborg

anna.lethborg@srcentre.com.au



Online panels
benchmarking
study (2015)



Building
Life in Australia™
(2019)



Australian comparative
study of survey methods
(2022)



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