The Essential Report

15 February 2021

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Prepared By: Essential Research

Data Supplied by:

qualtrics

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About this poll

This report summarises the results of a fortnightly omnibus conducted by Essential Research with data provided by Qualtrics. The survey was conducted online from 10th to 15th February 2021 and is based on 1,109 respondents.

The methodology used to carry out this research is described in the appendix at the end of the report.

Note that due to rounding, not all tables necessarily total 100% and subtotals may also vary.

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Performance of Scott Morrison

Q   Do you approve or disapprove of the job Scott Morrison is doing as Prime Minister?

	Feb'21	Jan'21	Dec'20	Nov'20	Oct'20	Sep'20	Aug'20	Jul'20	Jun'20	May'20	Apr'20	Mar'20
TOTAL: Approve	**65%**	61%	62%	66%	63%	64%	66%	63%	65%	64%	59%	41%
TOTAL: Disapprove	**28%**	30%	28%	25%	27%	28%	23%	27%	26%	27%	31%	49%
Don't know	**7%**	9%	11%	9%	10%	8%	11%	10%	8%	9%	10%	10%
Base (n)	**1,109**	1,084	1,071	1,010	1,082	1,076	1,010	1,054	1,059	1,093	1,069	1,096

	Total	Federal Voting Intention			
		Labor	Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Strongly approve	**23%**	8%	44%	6%	17%
Approve	**42%**	40%	49%	29%	40%
Disapprove	**16%**	24%	4%	30%	27%
Strongly disapprove	**11%**	20%	1%	29%	11%
Don't know	**7%**	7%	2%	6%	5%
TOTAL: Approve	**65%**	49%	93%	35%	57%
TOTAL: Disapprove	**28%**	44%	5%	59%	37%
Base (n)	**1,109**	359	428	101	131

-   The Prime Minister's approval rating has increased to 65%, the highest rating since November last year.

-   Approval of the Prime Minister is now at 93% among Coalition supporters (90% last month) and 49% among Labor voters (47% last month).

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Performance of Anthony Albanese

Q   Do you approve or disapprove of the job Anthony Albanese is doing as Opposition Leader?

	Feb'21	Jan'21	Dec'20	Nov'20	Oct'20	Sep'20	Aug'20	Jul'20	Jun'20	May'20	Apr'20	Mar'20
TOTAL: Approve	**40%**	42%	43%	40%	44%	44%	44%	44%	43%	42%	44%	41%
TOTAL: Disapprove	**33%**	33%	29%	33%	29%	29%	30%	28%	30%	27%	29%	33%
Don't know	**27%**	25%	28%	27%	27%	27%	25%	28%	26%	31%	27%	26%
Base (n)	**1,109**	1,084	1,071	1,010	1,082	1,076	1,010	1,054	1,059	1,093	1,069	1,096

	Total		Federal Voting Intention		
		Labor	Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Strongly approve	**10%**	13%	10%	6%	10%
Approve	**30%**	45%	21%	28%	27%
Disapprove	**22%**	13%	30%	28%	25%
Strongly disapprove	**11%**	4%	18%	4%	16%
Don't know	**27%**	25%	21%	33%	22%
TOTAL: Approve	**40%**	58%	31%	35%	37%
TOTAL: Disapprove	**33%**	17%	48%	32%	42%
Base (n)	**1,109**	359	428	101	131

- The Opposition Leader's approval rating is now at 40%, down from 42% last month and the lowest rating since last November.

- Approval of the Opposition Leader has fallen to 58% among Labor voters (from 63% in January) and 31% among Coalition voters (down from 35% in January).

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Preferred Prime Minister

Q   Who do you think would make the better Prime Minister out of Scott Morrison and Anthony Albanese?

	Feb'21	Jan'21	Dec'20	Nov'20	Oct'20	Sep'20	Aug'20	Jul'20	Jun'20	May'20	Apr'20	Mar'20
Scott Morrison	**52%**	51%	50%	53%	50%	49%	52%	50%	53%	50%	46%	40%
Anthony Albanese	**24%**	25%	24%	24%	25%	26%	22%	27%	23%	25%	27%	35%
Don't know	**24%**	25%	26%	24%	25%	25%	26%	23%	24%	25%	27%	25%
Base (n)	**1,109**	1,084	1,071	1,010	1,082	1,076	1,010	1,054	1,059	1,093	1,069	1,096

			Federal Voting Intention		
	Total	Labor	Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Scott Morrison	**52%**	33%	83%	33%	40%
Anthony Albanese	**24%**	42%	7%	39%	28%
Don't know	**24%**	25%	11%	28%	31%
Base (n)	**1,109**	359	428	101	131

- Just over half of participants believe that Scott Morrison would make a better PM than Anthony Albanese (52%), while around a quarter would prefer the Opposition Leader (24%). About a further quarter (24%) of participants don't know who would make the better PM.

- Morrison is strongly favoured by Coalition voters, with 83% believing Morrison makes the better PM, compared to Albanese (7%).

- 42% of Labor voters believe Albanese would make the better PM, a decrease since last month (47%). A quarter (25%) of Labor voters said they don't know who would make the better leader.

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Federal government response to Covid-19

Q Overall, how would you rate the **federal government's** response to the Covid-19 outbreak?

	15/02	01/02	30/11	16/11	02/11	05/10	21/09	07/09	24/08	10/08	27/07	13/07
Very poor	**5%**	4%	6%	5%	5%	5%	5%	8%	6%	7%	6%	6%
Quite poor	**7%**	11%	8%	9%	10%	12%	13%	12%	11%	8%	11%	10%
Neither good nor poor	**19%**	19%	19%	18%	24%	22%	21%	22%	22%	21%	20%	20%
Quite good	**42%**	42%	41%	41%	39%	39%	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%
Very good	**27%**	25%	26%	26%	22%	21%	21%	18%	22%	24%	24%	24%
TOTAL: Poor	**12%**	14%	13%	15%	15%	18%	18%	19%	17%	16%	16%	16%
TOTAL: Good	**69%**	67%	67%	67%	61%	60%	61%	59%	61%	63%	64%	64%
Base (n)	**1,109**	1,092	1,034	1,010	1,063	1,066	1,081	1,076	1,068	1,010	1,058	1,054

- Rating of the federal government's handling of Covid-19 has increased to 69% since last month, the highest rating in the last six months.

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State government response to Covid-19

Q   How would you rate your **state government's** response to the Covid-19 outbreak?

TOTAL: Good	15/02	01/02	30/11	16/11	02/11	05/10	21/09	07/09	24/08	10/08	27/07	13/07
NSW	**72%**	71%	76%	75%	68%	65%	67%	57%	59%	61%	62%	63%
VIC	**59%**	61%	60%	59%	55%	45%	47%	50%	47%	49%	53%	49%
QLD	**76%**	78%	72%	71%	69%	69%	68%	66%	73%	68%	67%	69%
SA	**79%**	80%	70%	76%	77%	81%	81%	74%	65%	72%	76%	79%
WA	**88%**	80%	83%	82%	81%	83%	84%	87%	84%	86%	82%	77%

- As Victoria entered a snap 5-day lockdown, the rating of the VIC government dropped to 59% (from 61% earlier this month).

- Positive rating of the WA government has increased to 88% (from 80% earlier this month). This is the highest rating in the last six months.

- Positive rating of the QLD government has fallen slightly to 76% (from 78% earlier this month). Ratings of the NSW and SA government remain virtually unchanged at 72% and 79% respectively.

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Better leadership during Covid-19 – PM vs state leader

Q   Who do you think has demonstrated better leadership qualities throughout the Covid-19 pandemic in Australia?

	TOTAL: All states
Prime Minister Scott Morrison	**30%**
TOTAL: State Premier / Chief Minister	**52%**
Don't know	**19%**
Base (n)	**1,109**

- The majority of people (52%) think their state leaders have demonstrated better leadership qualities throughout the Covid-19 pandemic in Australia than the Prime Minister.

- About a third (30%) think the opposite is true – that the PM has performed better than state leaders and 19% don't know.

- The pattern of people thinking their state leader has demonstrated better leadership qualities throughout the pandemic than the Prime Minister is consistent across each state. This is most apparent in WA where 76% think their premier, Mark McGowan, has demonstrated better leadership than Scott Morrison.

- Note: Due to small base sizes results for ACT, TAS and NT are not shown.

	TOTAL: NSW	TOTAL: VIC	TOTAL: QLD	TOTAL: SA	TOTAL: WA
Prime Minister Scott Morrison	29%	34%	32%	29%	19%
State Premier / Chief Minister	44%	49%	55%	50%	76%
Don't know	27%	17%	13%	21%	5%
Base (n)	338	297	225	91	107

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Attitudes towards Craig Kelly controversy and Scott Morrison's leadership

Q   To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about Liberal MP Craig Kelly sharing Covid-19 misinformation (e.g. advocating unproven treatments, claiming vaccines cannot be trusted, comparing masks to child abuse)?

TOTAL: Agree	Total	Federal Voting Intention			
		Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Scott Morrison has shown poor leadership in how he has responded to Craig Kelly's behaviour	**41%**	52%	32%	52%	47%
Craig Kelly is more interested in sharing Covid-19 misinformation and building his media profile than representing his constituency	**56%**	60%	58%	70%	56%
Craig Kelly's behaviour is undermining Scott Morrison's leadership by contradicting the Prime Minister on Covid-19 facts	**57%**	61%	60%	63%	55%
Base (n)	**1,109**	359	428	101	131

- Over half (57%) agree that Craig Kelly's behaviour is undermining Scott Morrison's leadership by contradicting the Prime Minister on Covid-19 facts and over half (56%) also agree that Craig Kelly is more interested in sharing Covid-19 misinformation and building his media profile than representing his constituency.

- Greens voters are more likely to agree with these two statements than other voters. Minor and independent party voters are the least likely to agree.

- 41% agree Scott Morrison has shown poor leadership in how he has responded to Craig Kelly's behaviour. Labor and Greens voters are more likely to agree with this statement than Coalition and minor and independent party voters (52% and 52% to 32% and 47% respectively).

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Views towards federal vs state government responsibility to manage Covid-19 hotel quarantine system

Q   Which of the following statements about Australia's international borders and the Covid-19 hotel quarantine system for returning travellers is closest to your view?

	Total	Federal Voting Intention			
		Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
It should be the federal government's responsibility to protect Australia's international borders and manage the hotel quarantine system	**62%**	63%	59%	57%	67%
It should be each state governments' responsibility to quarantine travellers returning within their borders and the federal government should be left out of this	**38%**	37%	41%	43%	33%
Base (n)	**1,109**	359	428	101	131

-   More people think it should be the federal government's responsibility to protect Australia's international borders and manage the hotel quarantine system, than those who think it should be each state governments' responsibility to quarantine travellers returning within their borders (62% to 38%).

-   The view that this should be a federal rather than state government responsibility is consistent across all voting intentions.

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Attitudes towards Covid-19 pandemic and reopening Australia's borders

Q   To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Covid-19 pandemic in Australia and our national borders?

	TOTAL: Agree	TOTAL: Disagree	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure
I want things to return to how they were before the Covid-19 pandemic	**71%**	**8%**	45%	26%	19%	7%	2%	2%
I don't think I could stand another lockdown	**43%**	**29%**	24%	19%	25%	18%	11%	3%
After the vaccine has been rolled out, Australia should slowly and safely reopen its borders	**67%**	**11%**	31%	36%	17%	6%	4%	5%
We should keep our borders closed until the pandemic is under control globally	**71%**	**12%**	43%	28%	15%	7%	5%	3%

- While 7 in 10 (71%) agree that we should keep our borders closed until the pandemic is under control globally, 67% agree that after the vaccine has been rolled out, Australia should slowly and safely reopen its borders.

- 7 in 10 (71%) agree that they want things to return to how they were before the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 43% don't think they could stand another lockdown. About a third (29%) disagree and a quarter (25%) neither agree nor disagree with this statement.

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Biggest Covid-19-related risks for employees

Q   In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, which of the following risks do you think employees are currently the most vulnerable to?

Please rank each of the following from biggest risk (1) to smallest risk (6).

TOTAL: Biggest risk (Ranked 1)	Total	Employment Status		
		In paid employment	Not in paid employment	Retired
Having less job security	**36%**	34%	40%	35%
Working in unsafe conditions	**20%**	18%	24%	19%
Being exploited by employers (e.g. being expected to work unpaid overtime, working long shifts)	**16%**	16%	15%	15%
Not receiving a pay increase	**10%**	12%	6%	13%
Not getting paid fairly	**10%**	11%	8%	7%
Having limited opportunities for career progression	**9%**	9%	6%	11%
Base (n)	**1,109**	552	259	255

- Considering the Covid-19 pandemic, having less job security is seen as the biggest risk for employees by over a third (36%) of people.

- Working in unsafe conditions is seen as the next biggest risk (20%), followed by being exploited by employers (16%).

- Those not in paid employment are most likely to rate job security (40%) and unsafe conditions (24%) as the biggest risk to employees.

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Views towards 2050 net zero emissions target

Q   In a recent speech, Scott Morrison stated Australia's goal is to "…reach net zero emissions as soon as possible, and preferably by 2050".

However, the Prime Minister did not formally commit to this goal or specify how the federal government plans to achieve it.

'Net zero' carbon emissions means a situation when Australia's carbon emissions become less than or equal to the amount of carbon we are removing from the atmosphere.

Which of the following is closer to your view?

	Total	Federal Voting Intention			
		Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
We need to set a target for when we will get carbon emissions down to 'net zero', and worry about setting dates for reductions along the way later	**32%**	36%	31%	38%	33%
It is more important that we set realistic targets for reducing our emissions by 2030, than having a target date for achieving net zero	**58%**	57%	57%	62%	50%
We shouldn't have targets for reducing carbon emissions	**9%**	7%	12%	1%	17%
Base (n)	**1,109**	359	428	101	131

-   Most people prefer the government to set concrete targets for reducing emissions, rather than setting a target date for achieving net zero emissions in the future.

-   Over half (58%) of people think it is more important that we set realistic targets for reducing our emissions by 2030, than having a target date for achieving net zero. This is the prevalent view across all voting intentions.

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- Just over a third (32%) think we need to set a target for when we will get carbon emissions down to 'net zero', and worry about setting dates for reductions along the way later. 9% think we shouldn't have targets for reducing carbon emissions.

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Support towards excluding agriculture from 2050 net zero emissions target

Q   The deputy PM Michael McCormack says agriculture could be excluded from the new 2050 net zero emissions target because regional Australia is still recovering from drought, bushfires, flood and the Covid-19 pandemic, and this target will "…hurt regional Australia".

To what extent do you support or oppose this proposition to exclude agriculture from the new 2050 net zero emissions target?

	Total	Federal Voting Intention			
		Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Strongly support	17%	10%	26%	8%	22%
Somewhat support	27%	31%	29%	21%	17%
Somewhat oppose	17%	19%	15%	18%	17%
Strongly oppose	15%	16%	10%	30%	20%
Unsure	24%	24%	20%	22%	23%
TOTAL: Support	44%	41%	55%	29%	39%
TOTAL: Oppose	32%	35%	25%	48%	37%
Base (n)	1,109	359	428	101	131

-   More people support excluding agriculture from the 2050 net zero emissions target than those who oppose this proposition (44% vs 32%).

-   About a quarter (24%) are unsure.

-   Compared to other voters, Greens voters are the most likely to oppose this exclusion (48%) and Coalition voters are the most likely to support it (55%).

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Appendix: Household income definitions*

TOTAL: Lower Income	Up to $51,999 per year Total of all wages/salaries, government benefits, pensions, allowances and other income that your household usually receives (GROSS – before tax and superannuation deductions)
TOTAL: Mid Income	$52,000 to $103,999 per year Total of all wages/salaries, government benefits, pensions, allowances and other income that your household usually receives (GROSS – before tax and superannuation deductions)
TOTAL: High Income	More than $104,000 per year Total of all wages/salaries, government benefits, pensions, allowances and other income that your household usually receives (GROSS – before tax and superannuation deductions)

Appendix: Methodology, margin of error and professional standards

The data gathered for this report is gathered from a fortnightly online omnibus conducted by Qualtrics.

Every two weeks, the team at Essential considers issues that are topical, and a series of questions are devised to put to the Australian public. Some questions are repeated regularly (such as political preference and leadership approval), while others are unique to each week and reflect current media and social issues.

The response rate varies each week, but usually delivers 1000+ interviews. In theory, with a sample of this size, there is 95 per cent certainty that the results are within 3 percentage points of what they would be if the entire population had been polled. However, this assumes random sampling, which, because of non-response and less than 100% population coverage cannot be achieved in practice. Furthermore, there are other possible sources of error in all polls including question wording and question order, interviewer bias (for telephone and face-to-face polls), response errors and weighting.

The online omnibus is live from the Wednesday night and closed on the following Sunday. Incentives are offered to participants. Essential Research uses the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to analyse the data. The data is weighted against Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data.

All Essential Research staff hold Research Society membership and are bound by professional codes of behaviour.

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