

The Essential Report

13 May 2014





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Prepared by: Essential Research

Data supplied:



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About this poll

This report summarises the results of a weekly omnibus conducted by Essential Research with data provided by Your Source. The survey was conducted online from the 7th to 12th May 2014 and is based on 1,024 respondents.

Aside from the standard question on voting intention, this week's report includes questions on leadership approval, preferred PM, national debt, tax levels, support for policies that were included in the commission of audit and the federal budget.

The methodology used to carry out this research is described in the appendix on page 17.

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

Federal politics – voting intention

Q. If a Federal Election was held today to which party will you probably give your first preference vote? If not sure, which party are you currently leaning toward?

Q. If don't know -Well which party are you currently leaning to?

Sample size = 1,883 respondents

First preference/leaning to	Election 7 Sep 13	4 weeks ago 15/4/14	2 weeks ago 29/4/14	Last week 06/5/14	This week 12/5/14
Liberal		40%	38%	38%	38%
National		3%	2%	3%	3%
Total Lib/Nat	45.6%	42%	40%	40%	40%
Labor	33.4%	37%	38%	38%	39%
Greens	8.6%	10%	10%	10%	9%
Palmer United Party	5.5%	4%	5%	5%	5%
Other/Independent	6.9%	7%	6%	8%	8%

2 Party Preferred	Election 7 Sep 13	4 weeks ago 15/4/14	2 weeks ago 29/4/14	Last week 06/5/14	This week 12/5/14
Liberal National	53.5%	50%	48%	48%	48%
Labor	46.5%	50%	52%	52%	52%

NB. The data in the above tables comprise 2-week averages derived from the first preference/leaning to voting questions. Respondents who select 'don't know' are not included in the results. The two-party preferred estimate is calculated by distributing the votes of the other parties according to their preferences at the 2013 election.

Approval of Tony Abbott

Q. Do you approve or disapprove of the job Tony Abbott is doing as Prime Minister?

	Total	Vote Labor	Vote Lib/Nat	Vote Greens	Vote Other	Tony Abbott as Opposition Leader 2 Sep 13	Tony Abbott as Prime Minister 24 Sep	22 Oct	12 Nov	10 Dec	14 Jan 2014	11 Feb	11 Mar	8 April
Total approve	35%	7%	80%	2%	19%	40%	41%	46%	45%	45%	47%	41%	40%	41%
Total disapprove	55%	88%	12%	94%	76%	49%	36%	35%	40%	46%	43%	47%	47%	47%
Strongly approve	12%	3%	29%	2%	-	13%	14%	16%	14%	12%	13%	12%	11%	13%
Approve	23%	4%	51%	-	19%	27%	27%	30%	31%	33%	34%	29%	29%	28%
Disapprove	18%	19%	10%	25%	32%	19%	13%	15%	19%	20%	18%	19%	20%	17%
Strongly disapprove	37%	69%	2%	69%	44%	30%	23%	20%	21%	26%	25%	28%	27%	30%
Don't know	10%	5%	9%	5%	5%	10%	23%	19%	16%	9%	11%	12%	12%	12%

55% of Australian's disapprove of the job Tony Abbott is doing as Prime Minister, a jump of +8% since the last time this question was asked in April 2014.

35% approve of the job Tony Abbott is doing, a drop of -6%.

80% of Lib/Nat voters approve of Tony Abbott's performance, with just 12% disapproving. 88% of Labor voters and 94% of Greens voters disapprove of Tony Abbott's performance.

Males (39%) were slightly more likely than females (32%) to approve of Tony Abbott, however, the disapproval ratings were similar (54% for males, 57% for females) with females being more likely to select 'don't know' (11% compared to 8% of males).

Those aged 55+ were the most likely to approve of Tony Abbott (49%). Those aged under 30 were the least likely (25%), with those aged 30-55 not significantly different from the average (32%).

Approval of Bill Shorten

Q. Do you approve or disapprove of the job Bill Shorten is doing as Opposition Leader?

	Total	Vote Labor	Vote Lib/Nat	Vote Greens	Vote Other	12 Nov 2013	10 Dec	14 Jan 2014	11 Feb	11 Mar	8 April
Total approve	35%	63%	17%	34%	27%	31%	39%	35%	30%	32%	34%
Total disapprove	37%	11%	64%	35%	44%	27%	31%	32%	34%	39%	38%
Strongly approve	6%	14%	1%	2%	3%	5%	7%	5%	4%	4%	6%
Approve	29%	49%	16%	32%	24%	26%	32%	30%	26%	28%	28%
Disapprove	19%	10%	26%	29%	23%	17%	19%	20%	21%	24%	22%
Strongly disapprove	18%	1%	38%	6%	21%	10%	12%	12%	13%	15%	16%
Don't know	28%	27%	19%	32%	29%	43%	31%	32%	35%	29%	28%

37% of Australians disapprove of the job Bill Shorten is doing as opposition leader. 35% approve.

These figures are not significantly different from the last time this question was asked, in April 2014.

63% of Labor voters approve of the job Bill Shorten is doing. Just 11% disapprove. Lib/Nat voters were less likely to approve (17%) and more likely to disapprove (64%). Greens voters were split with 34% approving and 35% disapproving.

35% of both males and females approve of Bill Shorten. 48% of males and 46% of females disapprove.

Those aged 30-55 were the most likely to approve (37%), with those aged under 30 (31%) and those aged 55+ (32%) less likely. Those aged under 30 were also far more likely to select 'don't know' (45%). 55% of those aged 55+ disapprove.

Better Prime Minister

Q. Who do you think would make the better Prime Minister out of Tony Abbott and Bill Shorten?

	Total	Vote Labor	Vote Lib/Nat	Vote Greens	Vote Other	22 Oct 2013	12 Nov	10 Dec	14 Jan 2014	11 Feb	11 Mar	8 April
Tony Abbott	36%	4%	81%	4%	23%	41%	42%	43%	42%	40%	39%	42%
Bill Shorten	37%	74%	3%	60%	35%	22%	27%	33%	31%	30%	33%	32%
Don't know	28%	22%	16%	36%	42%	37%	31%	24%	27%	31%	28%	26%

37% of Australians believe Bill Shorten would make a better Prime Minister than Tony Abbott. This is just 1% more than selected Tony Abbott (36%).

28% don't know who would make a better Prime Minister.

Since this question was last asked in April 2014, Tony Abbott has dropped -6% as preferred Prime Minister (down from 42%) and Bill Shorten has gained +5% (up from 32%).

Males (38%) were slightly more likely than females (34%) to select Tony Abbott. There was no difference between the genders in their preference from Bill Shorten, with 37% of males and 36% of females selecting him. Females (30%) were more likely than males (25%) to select 'don't know'.

Those aged 55+ (51%) were more likely than those aged under 30 (26%) or 30-55 (32%) to select Tony Abbott.

Those aged 30-55 (42%) were more likely than those aged under 30 (31%) or 55+ (30%) to select Bill Shorten. A very large number of those aged under 30 selected don't know (44%).

Those in NSW (42%) were far more likely than those in QLD (28%) or VIC (34%) to select Tony Abbott.

Those in QLD (44%) were more likely to select Bill Shorten (just 34% of those in NSW and 35% of those in VIC selected Bill Shorten).

National Debt Level

Q. Compared to other developed countries, do you think Australia's national debt is higher, lower or about the same?

	Total	Vote Labor	Vote Lib/Nat	Vote Greens	Vote Other	May 2013	August 2013
Total higher	22%	18%	30%	16%	13%	25%	25%
Total lower	45%	52%	39%	61%	46%	48%	46%
A lot higher	7%	5%	11%	5%	3%	9%	10%
A little higher	15%	13%	19%	11%	10%	16%	15%
About the same	20%	19%	22%	11%	23%	18%	19%
A little lower	24%	23%	28%	23%	23%	29%	24%
A lot lower	21%	29%	11%	38%	23%	19%	22%
Don't know	13%	11%	8%	11%	17%	10%	10%

Just 22% of Australians believe that Australia's national debt is higher than other developed countries. 45% think it is lower, and just 20% believe it is about the same.

These results are not significantly different from when the question was asked in May or August 2013.

Lib/Nat voters were more likely to think that Australia's national debt is higher than other developed countries (30%). Labor (52%) and Green (62%) voters were more likely to think that it is lower.

There were no significant differences by age.

Level of tax

Q. Do you think the following pay too much tax, not enough tax or about the right amount?

	Total				Labor voters				Lib/Nat voters			
	Pay too much	Don't pay enough	Pay about right amount	Don't know	Pay too much	Don't pay enough	Pay about right amount	Don't know	Pay too much	Don't pay enough	Pay about right amount	Don't know
Large businesses	5%	61%	19%	15%	5%	68%	11%	15%	5%	56%	28%	11%
Small businesses	40%	6%	39%	15%	35%	8%	42%	15%	47%	6%	38%	9%
People on low incomes	43%	6%	41%	10%	50%	3%	36%	10%	33%	9%	51%	7%
People on average incomes	38%	6%	47%	9%	42%	6%	43%	9%	32%	7%	56%	5%
People on high incomes	12%	59%	19%	10%	10%	63%	17%	10%	14%	57%	22%	6%
Mining companies	5%	61%	19%	15%	5%	69%	14%	12%	5%	51%	29%	15%
Retirees on large incomes	15%	29%	35%	20%	13%	29%	37%	21%	16%	31%	40%	13%
Large carbon emitters	6%	59%	17%	18%	5%	68%	13%	15%	7%	50%	25%	19%
Large international companies (such as Google and Apple)	3%	68%	11%	18%	3%	72%	9%	16%	3%	67%	15%	16%
Religious organisations	4%	56%	18%	22%	5%	57%	15%	23%	3%	54%	24%	19%

From the groups listed, people on low income (43%), small businesses (40%) and people on average incomes (38%) were the group Australians were most likely to think pay too much tax.

More than half of Australians believe that 'large international companies' (68%), 'large businesses' (61%), 'mining companies' (61%), 'large carbon emitters' (59%) and 'religious organisations' (56%) do not pay enough tax.

The table demonstrates that the results were not remarkably different across the two voting groups analysed.

Level of tax continued (historical data)

Q. Do you think the following pay too much tax, not enough tax or about the right amount?

	Total				May 2013			
	Pay too much	Don't pay enough	Pay about right amount	Don't know	Pay too much	Don't pay enough	Pay about right amount	Don't know
Large businesses	5%	61%	19%	15%	7%	63%	17%	13%
Small businesses	40%	6%	39%	15%	43%	7%	37%	14%
People on low incomes	43%	6%	41%	10%	41%	8%	41%	10%
People on average incomes	38%	6%	47%	9%	37%	7%	49%	8%
People on high incomes	12%	59%	19%	10%	12%	60%	19%	8%
Mining companies	5%	61%	19%	15%	7%	62%	16%	15%

Please note: 'retirees on large incomes', 'large carbon emitters', 'large international companies' and 'religious organisations' were not included in May 2013.

The results have not changed significantly since the last time this question was asked in May 2013.

Support for Commission of Audit Policies

Q58. Do you support or oppose the following possible policies that could be announced in the budget, as set out in the recently released 'Commission of Audit' report:

	Total Support	Total Oppose	Strongly support	Support	Neither support nor oppose	Oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't know
Privatise Australia Post	18%	54%	6%	12%	18%	23%	31%	9%
Privatise Snowy Hydro	16%	39%	5%	11%	23%	19%	20%	21%
Introduce co-payments for all Medicare services: \$15 per service for general patients and \$5 per service for concession holders with payments reduced after 15 visits	25%	55%	7%	18%	14%	19%	36%	6%
Partial or full deregulation of university fees	17%	43%	5%	12%	24%	20%	23%	17%
Increase interest rates on student (HELP) debt	13%	63%	5%	8%	17%	33%	30%	7%
University graduates to repay HELP debt once they earn the minimum wage (\$32,354).	50%	24%	15%	35%	17%	13%	11%	9%
Include the value of family home in an assets test for new pensioners, but with a high threshold	22%	50%	7%	15%	16%	21%	29%	11%
Scrap the national minimum wage in favour of a new Minimum Wage benchmark of 44 per cent of Average Weekly Earnings.	18%	35%	5%	13%	25%	17%	18%	22%
Single people aged 22-30 without dependents must relocate to high employment areas or lose access to unemployment benefits after 12 months	44%	31%	18%	26%	19%	15%	16%	7%
Privatise the Royal Australian Mint	15%	49%	5%	10%	20%	24%	25%	16%
Raise pension age to 70 by 2053	18%	62%	5%	13%	15%	24%	38%	5%
Make those under 25 apply for Youth Allowance, instead of Newstart (Youth Allowance is around \$100 less per fortnight)	39%	31%	13%	26%	19%	18%	13%	11%

Please find the commentary for this table on page 13.

Support for Commission of Audit Policies (by voting intention)

Q58. Do you support or oppose the following possible policies that could be announced in the budget, as set out in the recently released 'Commission of Audit' report:

	Vote Labor		Vote Lib/Nat		Vote Green		Vote Other	
	Total Support	Total Oppose	Total Support	Total Oppose	Total Support	Total Oppose	Total Support	Total Oppose
Privatise Australia Post	6%	69%	30%	40%	9%	62%	15%	60%
Privatise Snowy Hydro	11%	50%	27%	28%	8%	52%	11%	50%
Introduce co-payments for all Medicare services: \$15 per service for general patients and \$5 per service for concession holders with payments reduced after 15 visits	15%	69%	43%	35%	12%	78%	23%	61%
Partial or full deregulation of university fees	11%	55%	28%	26%	5%	71%	11%	49%
Increase interest rates on student (HELP) debt	9%	53%	20%	50%	3%	84%	11%	36%
University graduates to repay HELP debt once they earn the minimum wage (\$32,354).	44%	31%	64%	15%	44%	39%	42%	27%
Include the value of family home in an assets test for new pensioners, but with a high threshold	18%	54%	27%	50%	24%	45%	21%	59%
Scrap the national minimum wage in favour of a new Minimum Wage benchmark of 44 per cent of Average Weekly Earnings.	11%	55%	29%	19%	8%	43%	16%	30%
Single people aged 22-30 without dependents must relocate to high employment areas or lose access to unemployment benefits after 12 months	30%	43%	61%	16%	32%	40%	40%	40%
Privatise the Royal Australian Mint	9%	59%	24%	40%	2%	61%	12%	56%
Raise pension age to 70 by 2053	13%	72%	28%	51%	8%	74%	15%	68%
Make those under 25 apply for Youth Allowance, instead of Newstart (Youth Allowance is around \$100 less per fortnight)	29%	43%	59%	14%	25%	52%	33%	32%

Please find the commentary for this table on page 13.

Support for Commission of Audit Policies: Comments

More people opposed than supported each of the policies listed, except for:

- University graduates to repay HELP debt once they earn the minimum wage (\$32,354) (50% support, 24% oppose)
- Single people aged 22-30 without dependents must relocate to high employment areas or lose access to unemployment benefits after 12 months (44% support, 31% oppose)
- Make those under 25 apply for Youth Allowance, instead of Newstart (Youth Allowance is around \$100 less per fortnight) (39% support, 31% oppose)

The highest levels of opposition were registered for:

- Increase interest rates on student (HELP) debt (62% oppose)
- Raise pension age to 70 by 2053 (62% oppose)
- Introduce co-payments for all Medicare services: \$15 per service for general patients and \$5 per service for concession holders with payments reduced after 15 visits (55% oppose)
- Privatised Australia Post (54% oppose)

Overall, Lib/Nat voters were more likely than the other voting groups to support each of the policies. The only areas (in addition to those listed above) where they were more likely to support than oppose were 'Introduce co-payments for all Medicare services: \$15 per service for general patients and \$5 per service for concession holders with payments reduced after 15 visits' (43% support and 35% oppose) and 'Partial or full deregulation of university fees' (28% support, 26% oppose).

The areas of highest opposition for Lib/Nat voters were:

1. Raise pension age to 70 by 2053 (51% oppose)
2. Include the value of family home in an assets test for new pensioners, but with a high threshold (50% oppose)
3. Increase interest rates on student (HELP) debt (50% oppose)

Key differences by gender included:

- Females (60%) were more likely than males (49%) to oppose the co-payment for Medicare services
- Females (66%) were more likely than males (59%) to oppose the increase of interest rates on HELP debts
- Females (67%) were more likely than males (56%) to oppose the raising of the pension age to 70 by 2053

Policies of the major parties

Q. In general, do you think the policies of the Liberal/National Coalition and the policies of Labor favour the rich, favour the middle class, favour the poor, or do they treat all groups equally?

	Favour the rich	Favour the average Australian	Favour the poor	Treat all groups equally	Don't know
The policies of the Liberal/National Coalition...	54%	16%	5%	13%	12%
The policies of Labor...	16%	34%	22%	11%	17%

	Vote Labor					Vote Liberal				
	Favour the rich	Favour the average Australian	Favour the poor	Treat all groups equally	Don't know	Favour the rich	Favour the average Australian	Favour the poor	Treat all groups equally	Don't know
The policies of the Liberal/National Coalition...	81%	5%	7%	2%	6%	24%	34%	4%	30%	8%
The policies of Labor...	6%	53%	15%	20%	7%	23%	18%	36%	3%	20%

	Vote Green					Vote Other				
	Favor the rich	Favor the average Australian	Favor the poor	Treat all groups equally	Don't know	Favor the rich	Favor the average Australian	Favor the poor	Treat all groups equally	Don't know
The policies of the Liberal/National Coalition...	81%	5%	-	5%	9%	70%	8%	4%	6%	12%
The policies of Labor...	11%	57%	10%	9%	13%	25%	33%	11%	16%	15%

Please find the commentary for these tables on page 15.

Policies of the major parties: Comments

Just over half (54%) of Australians believe that the policies of the Lib/Nat Coalition favour the rich. 16% think they favour the average Australian, 5% think they favour the poor and 13% think they favour all groups equally.

The largest proportion of Australians (34%) think that the policies of Labor favour the average Australian. 16% think they favour the rich, 22% think they favour the poor and 11% think they treat all groups equally.

Labor and Green voters were more likely to think that the Lib/Nat's favour the rich (81% each), and that Labor favour the average Australian (53% of Labor voters and 57% of Green voters).

There were no significant differences based on gender.

Federal Budget

Q. In general, do you think the next Federal Budget, to be announced on Tuesday 13th May 2014 will be good or bad for?

									Vote Labor	Vote Lib/Nat	Vote Green	Vote Other				
	Total Good	Total Bad	Very good	Good	Neither good nor bad	Bad	Very bad	Don't know	Total Good	Total Bad	Total Good	Total Bad	Total Good	Total Bad		
You personally	8%	55%	2%	6%	28%	36%	19%	9%	7%	70%	11%	38%	4%	69%	5%	67%
Average working people	9%	63%	2%	7%	19%	45%	18%	9%	6%	77%	15%	44%	3%	81%	5%	72%
Australian business	25%	33%	3%	22%	28%	25%	8%	14%	28%	34%	27%	30%	17%	40%	20%	40%
The economy over all	28%	36%	6%	22%	24%	22%	14%	12%	11%	55%	54%	14%	11%	14%	15%	47%
People who are well off	40%	23%	14%	26%	27%	18%	5%	11%	50%	20%	26%	28%	56%	12%	47%	20%
People on lower incomes	12%	60%	2%	10%	17%	33%	27%	10%	9%	79%	21%	39%	1%	78%	7%	74%
Australian families	11%	59%	2%	9%	20%	37%	22%	10%	6%	77%	20%	37%	2%	78%	5%	71%
Older Australians	8%	67%	1%	7%	18%	34%	33%	9%	6%	78%	14%	47%	-	76%	5%	79%
Younger Australians	11%	49%	2%	9%	28%	29%	20%	12%	11%	65%	15%	30%	1%	70%	6%	58%

Over half (54%) of Australians believe that the budget will be bad for them personally. 67% think it will be bad for older Australians, 63% for average working people and 60% for people on lower incomes.

The only group that more Australians thought the budget would be good for rather than bad was 'people who are well off' (40% good, 23% bad).

Just 25% think the budget will be good for Australian business and 28% for the economy overall.

Labor voters are most likely to think that the budget will be bad for 'people on lower incomes' (79%), 'older Australians' (78%), 'average working people' (77%) and 'Australian families' (77%).

The only area where Lib/Nat voters were more likely to think that the budget would be good rather than bad was for 'the economy overall' (54% think it will be good, 14% think it will be bad).

In terms of the impact for them personally, there was no difference between males and females. Those aged 30-55 were the most likely to think that the budget would be bad for them personally (61% compared to 46% for those under 30 and 51% for those aged 55+).

Appendix: Methodology, margin of error and professional standards

The data gathered for this report is gathered from a weekly online omnibus conducted by Your Source. Essential Research has been utilizing the Your Source online panel to conduct research on a week-by-week basis since November 2007.

Each week, the team at Essential Media Communications discusses 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 media and social issues that are present at the time.

Your Source has a self-managed consumer online panel of over 100,000 members. The majority of panel members have been recruited using off line methodologies, effectively ruling out concerns associated with online self-selection.

Your Source has validation methods in place that prevent panellist over use and ensure member authenticity. Your Source randomly selects 18+ males and females (with the aim of targeting 50/50 males/females) from its Australia wide panel. An invitation is sent out to approximately 7000 – 8000 of their panel members.

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 best guide to a poll's accuracy is to look at the record of the polling company - how have they performed at previous elections or other occasions where their estimates can be compared with known population figures. In the last poll before the 2010 election, the Essential Report estimates of first preference votes were all within 1% of the election results.

The Your Source online omnibus is live from the Wednesday night of each week and closed on the following Sunday. Incentives are offered to participants in the form of points. 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.

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