

# The Essential Report

14 December 2020



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Prepared By: Essential Research

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Data Supplied by:



**AMSRS** 

Our researchers are members of the Australian Market and Social Research Society.



## 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 9<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020 and is based on 1,071 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.

## Performance of Scott Morrison

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

	Dec'20	Nov'20	Oct'20	Sep'20	Aug'20	Jul'20	Jun'20	May'20	Apr'20	Mar'20	Feb'20	Jan'20
TOTAL: Approve	<b>62%</b>	66%	63%	64%	66%	63%	65%	64%	59%	41%	39%	40%
TOTAL: Disapprove	<b>28%</b>	25%	27%	28%	23%	27%	26%	27%	31%	49%	52%	52%
Don't know	<b>11%</b>	9%	10%	8%	11%	10%	8%	9%	10%	10%	9%	8%
Base (n)	<b>1,071</b>	1,010	1,082	1,076	1,010	1,054	1,059	1,093	1,069	1,096	1,056	1,081

	Total	Federal Voting Intention			
		Labor	Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Strongly approve	<b>23%</b>	12%	43%	7%	21%
Approve	<b>39%</b>	36%	47%	35%	36%
Disapprove	<b>17%</b>	27%	6%	25%	20%
Strongly disapprove	<b>11%</b>	18%	1%	26%	16%
Don't know	<b>11%</b>	6%	3%	8%	7%
TOTAL: Approve	<b>62%</b>	48%	90%	41%	57%
TOTAL: Disapprove	<b>28%</b>	45%	7%	50%	35%
Base (n)	<b>1,071</b>	356	406	102	107

- The Prime Minister's approval rating is now at 62%, a fall from 66% last month, but equivalent to approval in October.
- Approval of the Prime Minister is at 90% among Coalition supporters (94% last month) and 48% among Labor voters (50% last month).



## Performance of Anthony Albanese

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

	Dec'20	Nov'20	Oct'20	Sep'20	Aug'20	Jul'20	Jun'20	May'20	Apr'20	Mar'20	Feb'20	Jan'20
TOTAL: Approve	<b>43%</b>	40%	44%	44%	44%	44%	43%	42%	44%	41%	41%	43%
TOTAL: Disapprove	<b>29%</b>	33%	29%	29%	30%	28%	30%	27%	29%	33%	31%	30%
Don't know	<b>28%</b>	27%	27%	27%	25%	28%	26%	31%	27%	26%	28%	27%
Base (n)	<b>1,071</b>	1,010	1,082	1,076	1,010	1,054	1,059	1,093	1,069	1,096	1,056	1,081

	Total	Federal Voting Intention			TOTAL: Other
		Labor	Coalition	Greens	
Strongly approve	<b>9%</b>	13%	7%	11%	15%
Approve	<b>34%</b>	48%	29%	30%	22%
Disapprove	<b>19%</b>	14%	30%	20%	18%
Strongly disapprove	<b>10%</b>	3%	17%	5%	17%
Don't know	<b>28%</b>	21%	17%	35%	29%
TOTAL: Approve	<b>43%</b>	62%	36%	40%	36%
TOTAL: Disapprove	<b>29%</b>	17%	47%	25%	35%
Base (n)	<b>1,071</b>	356	406	102	107

- The Opposition Leader's approval rating is now 43% (40% in November) and about the same as ratings seen throughout the year.



## Preferred Prime Minister

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

	Dec'20	Nov'20	Oct'20	Sep'20	Aug'20	Jul'20	Jun'20	May'20	Apr'20	Mar'20	Feb'20	Jan'20
Scott Morrison	<b>50%</b>	53%	50%	49%	52%	50%	53%	50%	46%	40%	36%	36%
Anthony Albanese	<b>24%</b>	24%	25%	26%	22%	27%	23%	25%	27%	35%	36%	39%
Don't know	<b>26%</b>	24%	25%	25%	26%	23%	24%	25%	27%	25%	28%	25%
Base (n)	<b>1,071</b>	1,010	1,082	1,076	1,010	1,054	1,059	1,093	1,069	1,096	1,056	1,081

	Total	Labor	Federal Voting Intention		
			Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Scott Morrison	<b>50%</b>	27%	84%	36%	53%
Anthony Albanese	<b>24%</b>	46%	8%	34%	19%
Don't know	<b>26%</b>	28%	8%	31%	28%
Base (n)	<b>1,071</b>	356	406	102	107

- Half of participants believe that Scott Morrison would make a better PM than Anthony Albanese (50%), while a quarter would prefer the opposition leader (24%). A further quarter (26%) of participants don't know who would make the better PM.
- Morrison is strongly favoured by Coalition voters, with 84% believing Morrison makes the better PM, compared to Albanese (8%).



- Over half of Labor voters believe Albanese would make the better PM (46%). 28% of Labor voters said they don't know who would make the better leader.



## Last 12 months

Q Thinking about the last 12 months, has it been a good or bad year for each of the following?

	TOTAL: Good	TOTAL: Bad	NET	Very good	Good	Neither good nor bad	Bad	Very bad	Don't know
The Australian economy	15%	62%	-47	6%	9%	18%	39%	23%	3%
Australian politics in general	24%	31%	-7	7%	17%	35%	23%	10%	7%
The Australian Government	27%	34%	-7	8%	19%	31%	23%	10%	8%
Large companies and corporations	27%	32%	-5	9%	18%	32%	26%	6%	9%
Small business	17%	60%	-43	7%	10%	18%	34%	27%	5%
Trade unions	17%	26%	-9	6%	11%	37%	19%	7%	20%
The average Australian	18%	50%	-32	7%	11%	27%	38%	11%	6%
Your personal financial situation	26%	30%	-4	7%	18%	40%	20%	9%	4%
Your workplace	21%	17%	+4	7%	14%	33%	12%	5%	29%
You and your family overall	29%	25%	+4	8%	21%	42%	18%	7%	4%
The planet	32%	36%	-4	9%	23%	25%	20%	16%	7%





	2020 NET	2019 NET	2018 NET	2017 NET	2016 NET	2015 NET	2014 NET	2013 NET
The Australian economy	-47	-13	+6	+11	-19	-11	-13	-13
The Australian Government	-7	-7	-41	-	-	-	-	-
Australian politics in general	-7	-20	-50	-36	-53	-41	-53	-62
Large companies and corporations	-5	+23	+9	+22	+5	+5	+14	-9
Small business	-43	-12	+6	-2	-22	-12	-28	-45
Trade unions	-9	-11	-1	-7	-18	-27	-18	-25
The average Australian	-32	-4	-1	-6	-18	-14	-23	-22
Your personal financial situation	-4	-2	0	+1	-8	-6	-11	-8
Your workplace (workers)	+4	+14	+28	+34	+12	+14	-5	+8
You and your family overall	+4	+19	+28	+27	+12	+21	+3	+18
The planet	-4	-29	-19	-22	-32	-	-	-

- In a generally poor year, most aspects of society received a negative net score in 2020 (more people thinking it was a bad year, than good year).
- 2020 has been a particularly poor year for the economy (-47), small businesses (-43) and the average Australian (-32).



## Economic expectations post Covid-19

Q Which of the following is closer to your expectations of what will happen to the economy following the Covid-19 situation?

	14/12	27/04	20/04	13/04	06/04
The economy will rebound within 2-3 months and grow just as strong or stronger than before Covid-19	<b>18%</b>	13%	11%	12%	11%
The economy will be impacted for 6-12 months or longer and will stagnate or show slow growth thereafter	<b>43%</b>	49%	47%	49%	51%
Covid-19 will have long lasting impact on the economy and the country will fall into a lengthy recession	<b>22%</b>	28%	30%	27%	29%
Unsure	<b>17%</b>	10%	11%	11%	9%
Base (n)	<b>1,071</b>	1,054	1,051	1,068	1,069

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
The economy will rebound within 2-3 months and grow just as strong or stronger than before Covid-19	<b>18%</b>	27%	10%	18%	22%	15%	15%	25%	13%	21%
The economy will be impacted for 6-12 months or longer and will stagnate or show slow growth thereafter	<b>43%</b>	42%	44%	45%	38%	47%	47%	48%	46%	36%
Covid-19 will have long lasting impact on the economy and the country will fall into a lengthy recession	<b>22%</b>	18%	25%	18%	25%	22%	25%	17%	32%	33%
Unsure	<b>17%</b>	13%	20%	19%	15%	16%	13%	10%	10%	10%
Base (n)	<b>1,071</b>	539	532	339	374	358	356	406	102	107



- There is now more uncertainty about the future of the economy than earlier in the year. 17% say they are unsure how the economy will rebound following Covid-19, up from 10% in April.
- 18% think the economy will rebound in the next 2-3 months (up from 13% in April) and 22% think Covid-19 will cause a long-term recession (down from 28%).
- However most people think there will be some growth in the economy after 6-12 months (43%).



## Uptake of a Covid-19 vaccine

Q Once a vaccine for Covid-19 becomes available in Australia, how long would you wait before taking it?

	14/12	10/08
I'd get vaccinated as soon as possible	43%	56%
I'd get vaccinated, but wouldn't do it straight away	46%	35%
I'd never get vaccinated	10%	8%
Base (n)	1,071	1,010

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
I'd get vaccinated as soon as possible	43%	53%	35%	35%	41%	53%	44%	48%	45%	42%
I'd get vaccinated, but wouldn't do it straight away	46%	41%	51%	54%	48%	38%	52%	43%	44%	39%
I'd never get vaccinated	10%	6%	14%	11%	11%	9%	5%	8%	11%	19%
Base (n)	1,071	539	532	339	374	358	356	406	102	107

- Fewer people say they would get a Covid-19 vaccine immediately than earlier in the year. 43% would get a vaccine as soon as possible, down from 56% in August. 46% would get vaccinated, but just not straight away (up from 35%) and 10% say they would never get vaccinated.
- Those most likely to get the vaccine immediately include men (53%), those aged over 55 (53%).
- Those voting for independent or minor parties are most likely to say they would never get a vaccine (19%).



## Size of Christmas gatherings

Q If you are hosting or attending a Christmas gathering this year, will there be:

	Total	Gender		Age Group		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
More people attending than in previous years	<b>8%</b>	14%	3%	12%	12%	2%
About the same amount of people attending	<b>34%</b>	33%	34%	29%	32%	40%
Less people attending than in previous years	<b>24%</b>	22%	25%	32%	22%	17%
Not sure	<b>12%</b>	12%	13%	13%	14%	11%
Not hosting or attending a Christmas gathering this year	<b>22%</b>	20%	24%	14%	20%	31%
Base (n)	<b>1,071</b>	539	532	339	374	358

- A quarter of people will be hosting or attending a smaller gathering than usual this Christmas, but more will either be hosting or attending the same size gathering as usual (34%) or more (8%).

## Christmas gift spending

Q When considering your Christmas gift spending this year compared with previous years are you likely to:

	Total	Gender		Age Group		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
Spend more than usual	13%	18%	8%	16%	18%	5%
Spend roughly the same as usual	48%	51%	46%	42%	45%	57%
Spend less than usual	31%	26%	36%	30%	30%	32%
Not sure	8%	6%	11%	12%	7%	6%
Base (n)	<b>1,071</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>358</b>

- Just under half of people intend to spend about the same amount as usual on Christmas gifts (48%), but 31% say they will spend less than usual.

## Shopping Australian made this Christmas

Q How likely are you to give Australian made gifts this year, compared with previous years?

	Total	Gender		Age Group		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
Much more likely	18%	22%	15%	15%	24%	16%
Somewhat more likely	34%	34%	34%	32%	32%	38%
Somewhat less likely	12%	14%	10%	20%	10%	6%
Much less likely	7%	6%	7%	9%	6%	5%
Not sure	29%	24%	35%	25%	28%	35%
Base (n)	<b>1,071</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>358</b>

- Just over a third of people (34%) are somewhat more likely to give Australian made gifts this year compared with previous years, and 18% say they are much more likely to do this.

## Who is favoured by changes to industrial relations laws

Q Generally speaking, when Federal Liberal-National Coalition Governments make changes to industrial relations laws, do you think they tend to favour employers and businesses, employees or strike a balance between the two?

	Total	Federal Voting Intention			
		Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
The changes tend to favour employers and businesses	<b>52%</b>	64%	41%	71%	53%
The changes tend to favour employees	<b>17%</b>	14%	19%	16%	18%
The changes tend to strike a balance between the two	<b>31%</b>	22%	40%	13%	29%
Base (n)	<b>1,071</b>	356	406	102	107

- Over half of people think changes made to industrial relations laws made by a Liberal-National government tend to favour businesses and employers (52%), while just 17% think they favour employees.
- Coalition voters are most likely to say changes made by a Coalition government strike a balance (40%), but 41% think changes favour businesses and 19% employees.



## Expectations of outcomes from changes to industrial relations laws

Q The Federal Government has announced new workplace reforms requiring employers to offer permanent employment to casual workers who have been with the same employer for a year and have had regular shifts for six months during that time.

Do you expect these changes to industrial relations laws will be good or bad for the following?

	TOTAL: Very good / Quite good	Neither good nor bad	TOTAL: Very bad / Quite bad	Don't know
Big businesses	41%	34%	12%	14%
Small businesses	35%	33%	19%	12%
Employees	48%	24%	17%	12%
People looking for work	39%	28%	20%	13%
People in casual work	51%	20%	17%	12%

	TOTAL: Very good / Quite good	Total	Federal Voting Intention			
			Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Big businesses	<b>41%</b>	44%	44%	42%	41%	44%
Small businesses	<b>35%</b>	40%	40%	39%	30%	34%
Employees	<b>48%</b>	43%	43%	57%	49%	48%
People looking for work	<b>39%</b>	39%	39%	42%	37%	37%
People in casual work	<b>51%</b>	44%	44%	42%	41%	44%



- The proposed changes to the industrial relations laws are expected to be good news for those in casual work (51% think the changes will be very good, or quite good), and employees (48%).
- It is expected that there will be less benefit to small businesses (35% think the changes will very or quite good) and those looking for work (39%) as a result of the changes.



## Views towards changes to industrial relations laws and casual workers

Q According to the Fair Work Commission, “A casual employee does not have a firm commitment in advance from an employer about how long they will be employed for, or the days (or hours) they will work. A casual employee also does not commit to all work an employer might offer. For example, an employee who works to a roster that could change each week and can refuse or swap shifts is casual.”

Which of the following is closer to your view?

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
The law should be changed now to make it easier for casual workers to become permanent employees if they want to, so they have greater certainty in their lives	<b>57%</b>	56%	59%	52%	57%	62%	59%	56%	55%	67%
Now is not the right time to make changes to the rules for casual workers, because economic uncertainty means there needs to be as much flexibility in the workplace as possible	<b>43%</b>	44%	41%	48%	43%	38%	41%	44%	45%	33%
Base (n)	<b>1,071</b>	539	532	339	374	358	356	406	102	107

- Views are split on whether this is the right time to change the industrial relations laws regarding casual workers. While the majority think the laws should be changed (57%), there is a sizeable minority (43%) who believe now is not the right time to make these changes.



## Australia’s diplomatic and trade relationship with other countries

Q In terms of diplomatic & trade relationships, for each of the following countries please indicate whether you think Australia should be working more closely with them, less closely with them or stay about the same as now?

TOTAL	Get closer	Stay the same	Become less close	Don't know
New Zealand	49%	33%	6%	12%
United Kingdom	38%	42%	8%	12%
The European Union	33%	42%	11%	14%
United States	28%	44%	15%	13%
China	15%	20%	49%	15%

TOTAL: Get closer	Total	Gender		Age Group			Labor	Federal Voting Intention		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+		TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
New Zealand	<b>49%</b>	50%	48%	40%	45%	61%	50%	52%	60%	50%
United Kingdom	<b>38%</b>	42%	34%	25%	34%	53%	40%	45%	25%	45%
The European Union	<b>33%</b>	38%	27%	22%	33%	42%	33%	37%	37%	33%
United States	<b>28%</b>	34%	23%	18%	28%	36%	25%	37%	21%	31%
China	<b>15%</b>	20%	11%	18%	17%	11%	18%	12%	19%	20%

- New Zealand is Australian’s preferred diplomatic and trading partner (49% wanting closer ties), followed by the UK (38% closer ties) and the EU (33%).



## Views towards trade disputes between Australia and China

Q There are ongoing trade disputes between Australia and China, with China imposing high tariffs on imported Australian products.

Some people see this as a reaction from China to Australian calls for an inquiry into the origins of Covid-19 and leading international pressure on the Chinese Government’s record on human rights.

Which of the following statements is closer to you views on this issue?

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Australia is the innocent victim of Chinese assertion in restricting trade on certain products	<b>62%</b>	63%	61%	53%	65%	67%	59%	67%	46%	65%
Australia has made itself a target by publicly criticising the Chinese government	<b>38%</b>	37%	39%	47%	35%	33%	41%	33%	54%	35%
Base (n)	<b>1,071</b>	539	532	339	374	358	356	406	102	107

- The majority of people think Australia is the victim of trade restrictions by China (62%), with the remainder linking the dispute to criticism of China by the Australian government (38%).
- Those most likely to think Australian trade has been unfairly restricted include those aged over 55 (67%) and Coalition voters (67%).



## Views towards Scott Morrison’s handling of recent Twitter controversy

Q Which of the following is closer to your view on the recent controversy over an official Chinese Twitter account sharing a fake image on Twitter showing an Australian soldier threatening to kill a child?

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Scott Morrison was right to publicly demand an apology from the Chinese government, even if China retaliates by restricting trade with Australia	<b>56%</b>	55%	57%	48%	57%	62%	51%	65%	41%	68%
Scott Morrison should have let the issue be handled through diplomatic channels. At this time of economic uncertainty, the last thing we need is to publicly criticise our biggest trading partner	<b>44%</b>	45%	43%	52%	43%	38%	49%	35%	59%	32%
Base (n)	<b>1,071</b>	539	532	339	374	358	356	406	102	107

- Over half believe the Prime Minister was correct to demand an apology from the Chinese government regarding the fake Twitter incident (56%), but 44% believe it should have been handled by other diplomatic means.
- Those aged 18-34 (52%), Labor voters (49%) and Greens voters (59%) disagree with publicly criticising China over the incident.



## 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 Australian Market and Social Research Society (AMSRS) membership and are bound by professional codes of behaviour.

