

The Essential Report

30 November 2020



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Prepared By: Essential Research

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 25th to 30th November 2020 and is based on 1,034 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.

Interest in news stories

Q How closely have you been following these news stories in the last fortnight?

	TOTAL: Closely	TOTAL: Not closely
The Covid-19 outbreak in South Australia	69%	31%
The trial results of Covid-19 vaccines	66%	34%
The Trump campaign's ongoing legal disputes regarding the US presidential election	56%	44%
The alleged war crimes committed by Australian special forces soldiers in Afghanistan	53%	47%

- The Covid-19 outbreak in South Australia was the news item most closely followed over the past two weeks (69%), followed closely by the trial results of Covid-19 vaccines (66%).
- The Trump campaign's ongoing legal disputes regarding the US presidential election was followed by 56% of people and the alleged war crimes committed by Australian special forces soldiers in Afghanistan by 53%.

Interest in news stories

Q How closely have you been following these news stories in the last fortnight?

The Covid-19 outbreak in South Australia

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Very closely	26%	28%	23%	22%	28%	27%	24%	29%	30%	22%
Fairly closely	43%	45%	42%	42%	41%	46%	48%	46%	31%	36%
Not that closely	23%	21%	25%	28%	22%	21%	23%	21%	25%	28%
Not closely at all	8%	6%	9%	7%	9%	7%	4%	4%	14%	14%
TOTAL: Closely	69%	73%	65%	65%	69%	73%	73%	75%	61%	59%
TOTAL: Not closely	31%	27%	35%	35%	31%	27%	27%	25%	39%	41%
Base (n)	1,034	528	506	329	320	385	322	430	88	107



Interest in news stories

Q How closely have you been following these news stories in the last fortnight?

The alleged war crimes committed by Australian special forces soldiers in Afghanistan

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Very closely	17%	23%	10%	17%	16%	17%	19%	17%	22%	17%
Fairly closely	36%	39%	34%	32%	33%	42%	38%	40%	27%	33%
Not that closely	31%	27%	36%	32%	31%	31%	30%	32%	31%	29%
Not closely at all	16%	11%	21%	18%	20%	10%	13%	11%	21%	21%
TOTAL: Closely	53%	62%	44%	49%	49%	59%	57%	57%	49%	50%
TOTAL: Not closely	47%	38%	56%	51%	51%	41%	43%	43%	51%	50%
Base (n)	1,034	528	506	329	320	385	322	430	88	107



Interest in news stories

Q How closely have you been following these news stories in the last fortnight?

The Trump campaign’s ongoing legal disputes regarding the US presidential election

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Very closely	22%	29%	16%	23%	25%	19%	21%	25%	29%	28%
Fairly closely	34%	36%	33%	38%	31%	34%	39%	36%	28%	28%
Not that closely	29%	23%	33%	27%	28%	31%	28%	29%	27%	22%
Not closely at all	15%	11%	19%	13%	17%	15%	12%	10%	16%	22%
TOTAL: Closely	56%	65%	48%	60%	56%	54%	60%	61%	57%	55%
TOTAL: Not closely	44%	35%	52%	40%	44%	46%	40%	39%	43%	45%
Base (n)	1,034	528	506	329	320	385	322	430	88	107



Interest in news stories

Q How closely have you been following these news stories in the last fortnight?

The trial results of Covid-19 vaccines

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Very closely	23%	28%	18%	16%	27%	25%	21%	27%	25%	22%
Fairly closely	43%	42%	44%	47%	37%	46%	51%	44%	35%	33%
Not that closely	25%	23%	26%	28%	25%	22%	21%	23%	31%	29%
Not closely at all	9%	7%	11%	9%	11%	7%	7%	5%	10%	15%
TOTAL: Closely	66%	70%	63%	63%	63%	72%	72%	71%	59%	55%
TOTAL: Not closely	34%	30%	37%	37%	37%	28%	28%	29%	41%	45%
Base (n)	1,034	528	506	329	320	385	322	430	88	107



Coronavirus concerns

Q To what extent are you concerned about the threat of Covid-19 (coronavirus) in Australia?

	30/11	16/11	02/11	05/10	21/09	07/09	24/08	10/08	27/07	13/07	22/06
Very concerned	27%	27%	30%	30%	36%	37%	40%	50%	43%	36%	25%
Quite concerned	43%	44%	46%	52%	45%	45%	46%	40%	44%	48%	50%
Not that concerned	24%	23%	20%	15%	15%	13%	10%	7%	9%	12%	21%
Not at all concerned	6%	6%	4%	3%	4%	5%	4%	3%	4%	3%	4%
Base (n)	1,034	1,010	1,063	1,066	1,081	1,076	1,068	1,010	1,058	1,054	1,079

- Concern about the threat of Covid-19 is at a similar level as last fortnight, with 30% saying they are either not that concerned (24%) or not at all concerned (6%). 27% are very concerned about the threat and the remaining 43% are quite concerned.



Federal Government response to Covid-19

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

	30/11	16/11	02/11	05/10	21/09	07/09	24/08	10/08	27/07	13/07	22/06	15/06
Very poor	6%	5%	5%	5%	5%	8%	6%	7%	6%	6%	4%	3%
Quite poor	8%	9%	10%	12%	13%	12%	11%	8%	11%	10%	8%	8%
Neither good nor poor	19%	18%	24%	22%	21%	22%	22%	21%	20%	20%	17%	16%
Quite good	41%	41%	39%	39%	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%	43%	42%
Very good	26%	26%	22%	21%	21%	18%	22%	24%	24%	24%	27%	30%
TOTAL: Poor	13%	15%	15%	18%	18%	19%	17%	16%	16%	16%	12%	11%
TOTAL: Good	67%	67%	61%	60%	61%	59%	61%	63%	64%	64%	71%	72%
Base (n)	1,034	1,010	1,063	1,066	1,081	1,076	1,068	1,010	1,058	1,054	1,079	1,087

- Rating of the Federal Government's handling of Covid-19 is stable at 67% rating it very or quite good (up from 61% earlier in the month).



State government response to Covid-19

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

TOTAL: Good	30/11	16/11	02/11	05/10	21/09	07/09	24/08	10/08	27/07	13/07	22/06	15/06
NSW	76%	75%	68%	65%	67%	57%	59%	61%	62%	63%	70%	65%
VIC	60%	59%	55%	45%	47%	50%	47%	49%	53%	49%	65%	75%
QLD	72%	71%	69%	69%	68%	66%	73%	68%	67%	69%	64%	67%
SA	70%	76%	77%	81%	81%	74%	65%	72%	76%	79%	79%	76%
WA	83%	82%	81%	83%	84%	87%	84%	86%	82%	77%	75%	77%

- Coinciding with the Covid-19 outbreak in South Australia, positive rating of the SA Government has dropped to 70%, the lowest rating we've seen since August.
- As Victoria continues to record no new Covid-19 cases, positive rating of the government is at 60%, up from a low of 45% in October.

Awareness of the proportion of the Federal Budget spent on foreign aid

Q As far as you know, about how much of the Federal Budget is spent on foreign aid?

	Nov'20	Jun'17	Jun'15	Jul'11
Less than 1%	6%	10%	13%	7%
About 1%	8%	9%	11%	8%
About 2%	13%	15%	14%	17%
About 5%	16%	10%	10%	11%
More than 5%	17%	12%	9%	16%
Don't know	39%	44%	43%	41%

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Less than 1%	6%	9%	4%	5%	6%	7%	7%	5%	11%	7%
About 1%	8%	11%	4%	11%	7%	6%	7%	8%	17%	6%
About 2%	13%	17%	10%	17%	11%	13%	15%	16%	13%	11%
About 5%	16%	19%	13%	23%	15%	12%	15%	18%	14%	21%
More than 5%	17%	15%	19%	13%	23%	15%	15%	18%	9%	29%
Don't know	39%	29%	49%	31%	38%	47%	41%	35%	36%	25%
Base (n)	1,034	528	506	329	320	385	322	430	88	107



- Only 6% of Australians correctly know that less than 1% of the Federal Budget is spent on foreign aid. Fewer people know the correct proportion than in previous years (10% in 2017 and 13% in 2015)
- 17% think over 5% is spent. This is higher than previous years when this question was asked (12% in 2017 and 9% in 2015).



Attitudes towards the amount Australia spends on foreign aid

Q Do you think Australia spends too much or too little on foreign aid?

	Nov'20	Jun'17	Jun'15	Jul'11
Spends too much	37%	41%	44%	42%
Spends too little	16%	16%	16%	16%
Spends about the right amount	23%	19%	21%	21%
Don't know	24%	24%	19%	21%

- Over a third (37%) of people think Australia spends too much on foreign aid. This is lower than previous years (41% in 2017 and 44% in 2015). 16% think too little is spent and 23% think about the right amount is spent. 24% aren't sure.

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Spends too much	37%	37%	37%	27%	42%	39%	30%	43%	17%	52%
Spends too little	16%	20%	13%	24%	14%	13%	22%	11%	29%	15%
Spends about the right amount	23%	27%	18%	23%	19%	26%	23%	27%	27%	15%
Don't know	24%	16%	32%	26%	25%	22%	25%	19%	26%	18%
Base (n)	1,034	528	506	329	320	385	322	430	88	107

- Those voting for minor parties are the most likely to think too much is being spent on foreign aid (52%), followed by Coalition voters (43%).
- Conversely, Greens voters are the most likely to think too little is being spent (29%).

	Total	Less than 1%	1% to 5%	Over 5%	Don't know
Spends too much	37%	23%	31%	68%	31%
Spends too little	16%	48%	28%	5%	5%
Spends about the right amount	23%	25%	33%	21%	14%
Don't know	24%	4%	9%	6%	50%
Base (n)	1,034	70	408	169	387

- Of those who incorrectly think over 5% of government expenditure is spent on foreign aid, 68% think too much is spent.
- Of those who correctly know that less than 1% is being spent on foreign aid, about half (48%) think too little is spent. A quarter (25%) think the right amount is spent and 4% don't know. 23% still think too much is spent on foreign aid.



Attitudes towards nationalism and Covid-19

Q Thinking now about how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the world, which of the following statements is closest to your views?

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
The pandemic has shown that the world is interconnected. The best way to respond to global threats in the future is to cooperate and provide assistance to other countries	48%	50%	45%	51%	48%	44%	48%	46%	60%	38%
The pandemic has shown that in times of crisis, it is every country for itself. Australia needs to be economically strong and maintain strict border protections to deal with global threats in the future	52%	50%	55%	49%	52%	56%	52%	54%	40%	62%
Base (n)	1,034	528	506	329	320	385	322	430	88	107

- Australians are split on their views towards the lessons from Covid-19. 52% think the pandemic has shown that in times of crisis, it is every country for itself, whereas 48% think the pandemic has shown that the world is inter-connected, and countries need to cooperate to respond to global threats.



Support for government action on climate change

Q To what extent would you support or oppose the following policy proposals if they were adopted by the Federal Government?

TOTAL: Support	Nov'20	Jan'20
Requiring mining companies to fund bushfire hazard reduction	80%	68%
Setting a zero-carbon pollution target for 2030	75%	64%
Setting a zero-carbon pollution target for 2050	81%	71%
Ban all political donations from fossil fuel companies	72%	62%
Accelerate development of new industries and jobs that are powered by renewable energy	87%	81%
New coal mines opening in Australia	49%	-
The fossil fuel industry receiving taxpayer funded subsidies	42%	-

- Support for government action on climate change has increased since earlier this year across the policy proposals put forward.



	TOTAL: Support	TOTAL: Oppose	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose
Requiring mining companies to fund bushfire hazard reduction	80%	20%	31%	49%	15%	5%
Setting a zero-carbon pollution target for 2030	75%	25%	35%	40%	16%	8%
Setting a zero-carbon pollution target for 2050	81%	19%	36%	44%	13%	7%
Ban all political donations from fossil fuel companies	72%	28%	30%	42%	21%	7%
Accelerate development of new industries and jobs that are powered by renewable energy	87%	13%	44%	43%	9%	4%
New coal mines opening in Australia	49%	51%	15%	34%	27%	24%
The fossil fuel industry receiving taxpayer funded subsidies	42%	58%	11%	31%	34%	24%

- 87% would support accelerating development of new industries and jobs that are powered by renewable energy and 80% would support requiring mining companies to fund bushfire hazard reduction.
- 81% would support setting a zero-carbon pollution target for 2050 and 75% would support setting this target for 2030.
- The most contentious issues are new coal mines opening in Australia (49% support vs 51% oppose) and the fossil fuel industry receiving taxpayer funded subsidies (42% support vs 58% oppose), where we see more of a divide between support and opposition compared to other policy proposals.



TOTAL: Support	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Requiring mining companies to fund bushfire hazard reduction	80%	75%	85%	76%	83%	80%	82%	79%	88%	77%
Setting a zero-carbon pollution target for 2030	75%	69%	81%	74%	81%	72%	82%	67%	93%	74%
Setting a zero-carbon pollution target for 2050	81%	78%	83%	81%	84%	77%	88%	75%	88%	72%
Ban all political donations from fossil fuel companies	72%	71%	73%	71%	78%	67%	74%	65%	87%	75%
Accelerate development of new industries and jobs that are powered by renewable energy	87%	84%	89%	81%	88%	91%	88%	87%	92%	82%
New coal mines opening in Australia	49%	56%	42%	53%	54%	41%	43%	57%	23%	52%
The fossil fuel industry receiving taxpayer funded subsidies	42%	43%	40%	48%	48%	29%	41%	44%	23%	40%
Base (n)	1,034	528	506	329	320	385	322	430	88	107

- Support for government action on climate change is higher among women compared to men, especially regarding setting a zero-carbon pollution target for 2030 (81% to 69%) and requiring mining companies to fund bushfire hazard reduction (85% to 75%). Women are less likely than men to support the opening of new coal mines (49% to 56%).
- Coalition voters have the highest support for opening new coal mines (57% compared to 52% minor party voters, 43% Labor voters and 23% Greens voters).



Views towards government action regarding coal-fired power plants

Q Which of the following statements regarding the future of coal is closest to your view?

	Nov'20	Feb'20
The government should be working to shut down mines and coal-fired power plants as soon as possible	31%	32%
The government should let the coal mining industry and coal-fired power plants continue operating as long as they are profitable, but not subsidise them or support the expansion of the industry	52%	47%
The government should subsidise coal-fired power plants to keep them going and provide financial support for new mines and other projects in the coal industry	17%	21%
Base (n)	1,034	1,090

- Compared to earlier this year, fewer people think the government should subsidise coal-fired power plants to keep them going and provide financial support for new mines and other projects in the coal industry (17% in November, compared to 21% in February).
- Consequently, more people now think the government should let the coal mining industry and coal-fired power plants continue operating as long as they are profitable, but not subsidise them or support the expansion of the industry (47% to 52%).
- The proportion of those preferring the immediate closure of coal-fired power plants has remained constant.



	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
The government should be working to shut down mines and coal-fired power plants as soon as possible	31%	25%	36%	28%	30%	35%	38%	23%	51%	29%
The government should let the coal mining industry and coal-fired power plants continue operating as long as they are profitable, but not subsidise them or support the expansion of the industry	52%	56%	48%	56%	49%	51%	50%	55%	40%	54%
The government should subsidise coal-fired power plants to keep them going and provide financial support for new mines and other projects in the coal industry	17%	19%	16%	16%	21%	14%	12%	22%	9%	17%
Base (n)	1,034	528	506	329	320	385	322	430	88	107

- Women are more likely than men to think the government should be working to shut down mines and coal-fired power plants as soon as possible (36% to 25% respectively).



Attitudes towards the importance of how electricity is generated in relation to price and supply

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

It doesn't matter how electricity is generated, as long as prices don't go up, and the supply is secure

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Strongly agree	24%	30%	18%	21%	28%	23%	18%	29%	13%	33%
Somewhat agree	23%	23%	23%	23%	27%	19%	26%	26%	11%	15%
Neither agree nor disagree	24%	22%	27%	27%	23%	23%	23%	22%	26%	25%
Somewhat disagree	18%	16%	19%	18%	14%	21%	19%	17%	23%	17%
Strongly disagree	11%	10%	13%	12%	8%	14%	14%	6%	27%	10%
TOTAL: Agree	47%	53%	41%	44%	55%	42%	43%	55%	23%	48%
TOTAL: Disagree	29%	26%	32%	30%	22%	35%	33%	23%	51%	28%
Base (n)	1,034	528	506	329	320	385	322	430	88	107

- Nearly half of Australians (47%) agree that it doesn't matter how electricity is generated, as long as prices don't go up, and the supply is secure. About a third (29%) disagree.
- Men are more likely to strongly agree with this statement than women (30% to 18% respectively).
- Coalition voters are also more likely to agree with this statement compared to other voters (55% to 43% Labor, 23% Greens and 48% minor party voters).



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.

