

The Essential Report

15 March 2021



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Prepared By: Essential Research

Data Supplied by:



Our researchers are members of the 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 10th to 15th March 2021 and is based on 1,124 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?

	Mar'21	Feb'21	Jan'21	Dec'20	Nov'20	Oct'20	Sep'20	Aug'20	Jul'20	Jun'20	May'20	Apr'20
TOTAL: Approve	62%	65%	61%	62%	66%	63%	64%	66%	63%	65%	64%	59%
TOTAL: Disapprove	29%	28%	30%	28%	25%	27%	28%	23%	27%	26%	27%	31%
Don't know	8%	7%	9%	11%	9%	10%	8%	11%	10%	8%	9%	10%
Base (n)	1,124	1,109	1,084	1,071	1,010	1,082	1,076	1,010	1,054	1,059	1,093	1,069

	Total	Federal Voting Intention			
		Labor	Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Strongly approve	22%	7%	46%	3%	20%
Approve	40%	38%	46%	38%	34%
Disapprove	16%	25%	5%	26%	16%
Strongly disapprove	13%	23%	1%	26%	17%
Don't know	8%	7%	3%	8%	12%
TOTAL: Approve	62%	45%	91%	40%	55%
TOTAL: Disapprove	29%	48%	6%	51%	33%
Base (n)	1,124	375	410	98	142

- The Prime Minister's approval rating has dipped back down to 62%, consistent with results in January (61%) and December (62%).
- Approval of the Prime Minister is now at 91% among Coalition supporters (93% last month) and 45% among Labor voters (49% last month).



Performance of Anthony Albanese

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

	Mar'21	Feb'21	Jan'21	Dec'20	Nov'20	Oct'20	Sep'20	Aug'20	Jul'20	Jun'20	May'20	Apr'20
TOTAL: Approve	41%	40%	42%	43%	40%	44%	44%	44%	44%	43%	42%	44%
TOTAL: Disapprove	32%	33%	33%	29%	33%	29%	29%	30%	28%	30%	27%	29%
Don't know	27%	27%	25%	28%	27%	27%	27%	25%	28%	26%	31%	27%
Base (n)	1,124	1,109	1,084	1,071	1,010	1,082	1,076	1,010	1,054	1,059	1,093	1,069

	Total	Federal Voting Intention			
		Labor	Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Strongly approve	9%	11%	7%	6%	17%
Approve	32%	50%	23%	38%	19%
Disapprove	22%	15%	31%	21%	24%
Strongly disapprove	11%	2%	20%	4%	13%
Don't know	27%	23%	19%	31%	25%
TOTAL: Approve	41%	60%	30%	44%	37%
TOTAL: Disapprove	32%	16%	50%	25%	38%
Base (n)	1,124	375	410	98	142

- The Opposition Leader's approval rating is now at 41%, consistent with the level last month.
- Approval of the Opposition Leader has risen to 60% among Labor voters (from 58% in February) and is consistent at 30% among Coalition voters (31% in February).



Preferred Prime Minister

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

	Mar'21	Feb'21	Jan'21	Dec'20	Nov'20	Oct'20	Sep'20	Aug'20	Jul'20	Jun'20	May'20	Apr'20
Scott Morrison	52%	52%	51%	50%	53%	50%	49%	52%	50%	53%	50%	46%
Anthony Albanese	26%	24%	25%	24%	24%	25%	26%	22%	27%	23%	25%	27%
Don't know	22%	24%	25%	26%	24%	25%	25%	26%	23%	24%	25%	27%
Base (n)	1,124	1,109	1,084	1,071	1,010	1,082	1,076	1,010	1,054	1,059	1,093	1,069

	Total	Labor	Federal Voting Intention		
			Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Scott Morrison	52%	31%	86%	25%	46%
Anthony Albanese	26%	49%	8%	41%	26%
Don't know	22%	20%	6%	33%	28%
Base (n)	1,124	375	410	98	142

- 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 (26%). 22% of participants don't know who would make the better PM.
- Morrison is strongly favoured by Coalition voters, with 86% believing Morrison makes the better PM, compared to Albanese (8%).
- Just under half (49%) of Labor voters now believe Albanese would make the better PM, a notable increase since last month (42%). A third (31%) still think Morrison would make the better leader and 20% don't know.



Federal government response to Covid-19

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

	15/03	01/03	15/02	01/02	30/11	16/11	02/11	05/10	21/09	07/09	24/08	10/08	27/07
Very poor	5%	6%	5%	4%	6%	5%	5%	5%	5%	8%	6%	7%	6%
Quite poor	7%	8%	7%	11%	8%	9%	10%	12%	13%	12%	11%	8%	11%
Neither good nor poor	18%	24%	19%	19%	19%	18%	24%	22%	21%	22%	22%	21%	20%
Quite good	39%	39%	42%	42%	41%	41%	39%	39%	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%
Very good	31%	23%	27%	25%	26%	26%	22%	21%	21%	18%	22%	24%	24%
TOTAL: Poor	12%	14%	12%	14%	13%	15%	15%	18%	18%	19%	17%	16%	16%
TOTAL: Good	70%	62%	69%	67%	67%	67%	61%	60%	61%	59%	61%	63%	64%
Base (n)	1,124	1,074	1,109	1,092	1,034	1,010	1,063	1,066	1,081	1,076	1,068	1,010	1,058

- Rating of the federal government's handling of Covid-19 has bounced back up to 70%, the highest rating seen in the last six months.
- This result is driven by the increase within Victoria (65% rating quite or very good, up from 51% 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	15/03	01/03	15/02	01/02	30/11	16/11	02/11	05/10	21/09	07/09	24/08	10/08	27/07
NSW	75%	72%	72%	71%	76%	75%	68%	65%	67%	57%	59%	61%	62%
VIC	62%	49%	59%	61%	60%	59%	55%	45%	47%	50%	47%	49%	53%
QLD	75%	73%	76%	78%	72%	71%	69%	69%	68%	66%	73%	68%	67%
SA	85%	78%	79%	80%	70%	76%	77%	81%	81%	74%	65%	72%	76%
WA	91%	85%	88%	80%	83%	82%	81%	83%	84%	87%	84%	86%	82%

- Positive rating of state governments' response to the Covid-19 outbreak has increased in all states since earlier this month.
- Notably, the rating of the VIC government has risen to 62% (from 49% earlier in March). This is the highest rating in the last six months.
- Positive rating of the WA and SA governments have also increased to 91% and 85% respectively (from 85% and 73% mid last month). This rating of the WA government's response to the Covid-19 outbreak is the highest seen for any state government to date.
- Rating of the NSW and QLD governments remain stable at 75% respectively.

Uptake of a Covid-19 vaccine

Q The Covid-19 vaccine rollout has begun in Australia.

Once a vaccine becomes available to you, how long would you wait before taking it?

	15/03	01/03	18/01	14/12	10/08
I'd get vaccinated as soon as possible / I've already been vaccinated	47%	50%	42%	43%	56%
I'd get vaccinated, but wouldn't do it straight away	40%	40%	47%	46%	35%
I'd never get vaccinated	12%	10%	11%	10%	8%
Base (n)	1,124	1,074	1,084	1,071	1,010

- With the launch of the Covid-19 vaccine rollout underway nationwide, just under half (47%) now say they would get vaccinated as soon as possible – a slight dip from earlier in March but still noticeably higher than levels at the end of 2020 and at the start of this year.
- The same proportion of people as earlier in the month say that would get vaccinated but not straight away (40%).
- Just over 1 in 10 (12%) say that would never get vaccinated, consistent with levels seen in the last few months.

Uptake of a Covid-19 vaccine

Q The Covid-19 vaccine rollout has begun in Australia.

Once a vaccine becomes available to you, how long would you wait before taking it?

	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 / I've already been vaccinated	47%	51%	42%	33%	44%	60%	46%	55%	45%	42%
I'd get vaccinated, but wouldn't do it straight away	40%	36%	43%	50%	38%	32%	42%	35%	42%	33%
I'd never get vaccinated	12%	9%	15%	16%	13%	7%	11%	8%	12%	20%
Base (n)	1,124	553	571	337	383	404	375	410	98	142

- Those most likely to get the vaccine immediately include men (51%) and those aged over 55 (60%).
- Those voting for independent or minor parties are the most likely to say they would never get vaccinated (20%).



Trust in institutions

Q How much trust do you have in the following institutions and organisations?

TOTAL: Trust	Mar'21	Change since Aug'20	Aug'20
Australia's border security agencies	72%	5%	67%
State & federal health authorities	70%	1%	69%
State or territory government	66%	6%	60%
Police, courts and the justice system	64%	No change	64%
The ABC	59%	1%	58%
The Commonwealth public service	57%	1%	56%
Federal parliament	54%	-1%	55%
News on commercial TV & radio	45%	No change	45%
Print media	35%	-4%	39%

	TOTAL: Trust	TOTAL: Don't trust	Have a lot of trust	Have some trust	Have little trust	Have no trust at all	Unsure
Australia's border security agencies	72%	24%	28%	44%	18%	6%	3%
State & federal health authorities	70%	27%	25%	45%	20%	7%	3%
State or territory government	66%	31%	22%	45%	21%	10%	2%
Police, courts and the justice system	64%	34%	21%	43%	24%	10%	2%
The ABC	59%	36%	21%	38%	24%	13%	5%
The Commonwealth public service	57%	38%	12%	45%	29%	8%	5%
Federal parliament	54%	43%	15%	39%	28%	15%	3%
News on commercial TV & radio	45%	52%	8%	36%	36%	16%	3%
Print media	35%	60%	6%	30%	40%	19%	5%



- People currently have the most trust in Australia's border security agencies (72%) and state and federal health authorities (70%). Trust in border security agencies has seen a 5% point increase since August last year and trust in health authorities is unchanged.
- Trust in state or territory governments comes in as the third most trusted institution (66%), having increased by 6% points since last August. Trust in police, courts and the justice system follows closely behind (64%).
- 57% of people trust the Commonwealth public service, and just over half (54%) trust the federal parliament, both are consistent with levels seen last August.
- 59% trust the ABC, more than the proportion who trust commercial TV and radio news (54%). Print media is the least trusted institution with only just over a third (35%) of people trusting it.



Views towards sexual assault allegations against federal politicians and staffers

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding sexual assault allegations against federal politicians and staffers?

	TOTAL: Agree	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
			Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
This is just a Canberra insider story	16%		23%	9%	13%	23%	12%	11%	21%	12%	24%
What is happening in Canberra is relevant to all women	68%		62%	75%	56%	72%	75%	77%	66%	71%	63%
It's time women were believed when they say they have been assaulted	67%		58%	76%	59%	69%	71%	76%	64%	69%	55%
Because the charge of rape is so serious, the burden of proof needs to be high	62%		66%	59%	51%	64%	71%	59%	74%	43%	61%
Base (n)		997	505	492	294	346	357	321	367	89	132

- There is widespread agreement that what is happening in Canberra is relevant to all women (68%) and it's time women were believed when they say they have been assaulted (67%). Over a third of people strongly agree with each statement (38% and 36% respectively).
- Agreement with these two statements is high overall, but highest among women (75% and 76% respectively), those over 55 (75% and 71% respectively) and Labor voters (77% and 76% respectively).
- 62% agree that because the charge of rape is so serious, the burden of proof needs to be high. While 59% of women agree with this statement, agreement is higher among men (66%). Agreement with this statement is also high among those over 55 (71%) and Coalition voters (74%).
- Just 16% of people agree the recent sexual assault allegations against federal politicians and staffers is just a Canberra insider story.



Agreement towards independent inquiry undermining the rule of law

Q Following the allegations of rape and sexual assault against Attorney General Christian Porter last week, Scott Morrison has rejected calls for an independent inquiry, saying that "I don't agree with that because I don't agree with the precedent or the prima facie case for there being such a process... because that would say the rule of law and our police are not competent to deal with these issues."

To what extent do you agree with his suggestion that holding an independent inquiry would undermine the rule of law?

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Strongly agree	15%	20%	10%	4%	18%	21%	7%	25%	5%	18%
Somewhat agree	22%	24%	20%	20%	23%	23%	16%	31%	12%	23%
Neither agree nor disagree	31%	27%	34%	45%	29%	21%	31%	24%	36%	31%
Somewhat disagree	15%	13%	17%	19%	13%	13%	21%	11%	22%	7%
Strongly disagree	18%	17%	19%	12%	18%	22%	25%	9%	25%	21%
TOTAL: Agree	37%	44%	30%	24%	41%	43%	23%	57%	17%	41%
TOTAL: Disagree	33%	29%	36%	31%	31%	36%	46%	20%	47%	28%
Base (n)	1,124	553	571	337	383	404	375	410	98	142

- People are split on Scott Morrison's suggestion that holding an independent inquiry would undermine the rule of law. While 33% disagree with the Prime Minister's suggestion, 37% agree and 31% are undecided.
- Men are more likely than women to agree with this suggestion (44% to 30% respectively). Those over 55 and those aged 35-54 are also more likely to agree with it than the younger 18-34 cohort (43% and 41% to 24% respectively).



Views towards PM’s decision not to hold an independent investigation into Christian Porter allegations

Q Which of the following statements regarding the Prime Minister’s decision not to hold an independent investigation into claims of rape and sexual assault against Attorney General Christian Porter 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
We need to respect the rule of law, we can’t have a trial by mob. The police has said they will not be pressing charges and that should be the end of the matter.	45%	49%	41%	36%	42%	55%	28%	63%	23%	52%
The Prime Minister needs an independent investigation to determine if the Attorney General is a fit and proper person to be the nation’s first law officer.	55%	51%	59%	64%	58%	45%	72%	37%	77%	48%
Base (n)	997	505	492	294	346	357	321	367	89	132

- It’s closer to over half (55%) of people’s view that the Prime Minister needs an independent investigation to determine if the Attorney General is a fit and proper person to be the nation’s first law officer. The majority of women (59%) chose this option.
- Greens and Labor voters are most likely to hold this view (77% and 72% respectively) compared to other voters (37% Coalition voters, 48% minor and independent party voters).
- On the other hand, 45% think ‘We need to respect the rule of law, we can’t have a trial by mob. The police has said they will not be pressing charges and that should be the end of the matter.’ Men (49%), those over 55 (55%) and Coalition voters (63%) are mostly likely to align with this view.



Support towards aged care levy

Q Last week the Royal Commission into the aged care system released its findings and recommendations.

A major recommendation was the introduction of a levy on all taxpayers to pay for the costs of aged care, similar to the Medicare levy.

To what extent do you support or oppose the introduction of an aged care levy?

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Strongly support	12%	14%	11%	6%	15%	16%	11%	13%	14%	14%
Somewhat support	26%	27%	25%	23%	23%	32%	30%	26%	29%	19%
Neither support nor oppose	31%	29%	33%	46%	27%	23%	32%	27%	26%	32%
Somewhat oppose	14%	12%	15%	13%	15%	13%	14%	14%	12%	15%
Strongly oppose	17%	18%	15%	12%	21%	16%	13%	19%	19%	20%
TOTAL: Support	38%	41%	36%	29%	38%	48%	41%	40%	43%	33%
TOTAL: Oppose	30%	30%	30%	25%	36%	30%	27%	33%	31%	35%
Base (n)	1,124	553	571	337	383	404	375	410	98	142

- While 38% support the introduction of an aged care levy, a third (30% oppose) and a further third are undecided (31%).
- Significant difference in support is only seen among the three age cohorts. Unsurprisingly, support is higher with age (48% of those over 55 support the levy, followed by 38% of those 35-54 and 29% of those 18-34). Nearly half (46%) of those 18-34 are undecided about whether they would support or oppose the introduction of an aged care levy.



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.