

The Essential Report

24 May 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 19th to 23rd May 2021 and is based on 1,100 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.

Federal budget engagement

Q How much attention have you paid to the federal budget announcements?

	This budget May'21	Last budget Oct'20
A lot of attention	19%	19%
A little attention	44%	44%
Not much attention	27%	25%
No attention at all	10%	12%
Base (n)	1,100	1,082

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
A lot of attention	19%	24%	13%	15%	20%	20%	18%	24%	16%	14%
A little attention	44%	45%	44%	40%	46%	47%	48%	50%	50%	32%
Not much attention	27%	24%	31%	34%	22%	27%	28%	19%	24%	35%
No attention at all	10%	8%	12%	11%	12%	6%	6%	6%	11%	19%
Base (n)	1,100	539	561	341	379	380	369	410	105	112

- There is little difference between the level of engagement in the federal budget announcements this May compared to last October. People mainly either paid a little attention (44%) or not much attention (27%) to the announcements.
- Men are more likely than women to say they paid a lot of attention to the federal budget announcements (24% to 13%). Coalition voters are also more likely to have paid a lot of attention compared to all other voters (24% to 17%).



Federal budget expectations

Q The federal budget will be / was announced on Tuesday 11th May. In general, do you expect the federal budget will be good or bad for the following?

	After Budget Announced 24 May'21				Before Budget Announced 10 May'21			
	TOTAL: Good / Very Good	Neither good, nor bad	TOTAL: Bad / Very Bad	Don't know	TOTAL: Very Good / Good	Neither good, nor bad	TOTAL: Bad / Very Bad	Don't know
People who are well-off	51%	29%	8%	12%	53%	28%	8%	12%
Big businesses	49%	32%	7%	13%	51%	30%	9%	11%
Women	40%	33%	15%	11%	34%	36%	18%	12%
Australian families	39%	33%	17%	11%	38%	33%	19%	10%
Small businesses	38%	35%	15%	12%	44%	28%	17%	11%
The economy overall	38%	35%	16%	10%	41%	33%	16%	10%
Younger Australians	33%	34%	21%	12%	31%	35%	23%	12%
Average working people	33%	33%	23%	11%	32%	32%	25%	10%
People on lower incomes	30%	27%	33%	10%	30%	27%	33%	11%
Older Australians	29%	33%	26%	12%	29%	28%	32%	11%
You personally	22%	43%	25%	10%	23%	40%	27%	10%

- More people now expect the federal budget will be good for women than before the budget was announced; those expecting it will be good / very good for women is now at 40% (from 34%).
- However, less people now expect it will be good for small businesses compared to before the budget was announced (38% from 44%).
- Less people now expect the budget will be bad / very bad for older Australians (26% from 32%).

TOTAL: Good / Very Good	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
People who are well-off	51%	57%	46%	47%	50%	55%	57%	49%	54%	56%
Big businesses	49%	55%	43%	47%	45%	54%	53%	49%	54%	50%
Women	40%	47%	34%	36%	40%	45%	35%	58%	24%	27%
Australian families	39%	42%	36%	36%	38%	43%	31%	57%	31%	28%
Small businesses	38%	45%	32%	39%	35%	40%	32%	55%	26%	29%
The economy overall	38%	43%	34%	35%	37%	43%	28%	59%	26%	29%
Younger Australians	33%	37%	30%	34%	30%	36%	26%	50%	22%	23%
Average working people	33%	37%	29%	33%	31%	34%	23%	52%	18%	22%
People on lower incomes	30%	34%	26%	33%	27%	29%	18%	48%	20%	24%
Older Australians	29%	34%	24%	35%	30%	22%	21%	43%	22%	23%
You personally	22%	26%	18%	32%	23%	12%	16%	33%	16%	16%
Base (n)	1,100	539	561	341	379	380	369	410	105	112

- Men are more likely than women to expect the budget will be good / very good for women (47% to 34%). Men are also more likely than women to expect the budget will be good for them personally (26% to 18%).
- Those over 55 are less likely than younger cohorts to expect the budget will be good for older Australians (22% to 35% of those 18-34 and 30% those 35-54). This reflects how they are also less likely to expect the budget will be good for them personally compared to younger groups (12% to 32% those 18-34 and 23% those 35-54).
- 33% of Coalition voters expect the budget will be good for them personally. This is higher than Labor, Greens and those voting for minor/independent parties (16% respectively).



Likelihood of federal budget delivering outcomes

Q How likely do you think it will be that the budget will deliver the following outcomes over the next few years?

TOTAL: Quite likely / Very likely	This budget May'21	Last budget Oct'20
Create jobs	52%	53%
Help Australia recover from the economic impacts of Covid-19	55%	56%
Keep debt under control	31%	36%
Create long-term problems that will need to be fixed in the future	55%	58%
Place unnecessary burdens on future generations	58%	62%
Base (n)	1,100	1,082

- There is no significant difference in people's views towards the likelihood of the federal budget delivering on the listed outcomes compared to last October.

	TOTAL: Quite likely / Very likely	TOTAL: Not very likely / Not at all likely	9%	Quite likely	Not that likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely
Create jobs	52%	13%	9%	43%	35%	8%	6%
Help Australia recover from the economic impacts of Covid-19	55%	16%	11%	44%	29%	10%	6%
Keep debt under control	31%	34%	6%	25%	36%	21%	12%
Create long-term problems that will need to be fixed in the future	55%	16%	17%	38%	29%	12%	4%
Place unnecessary burdens on future generations	58%	14%	17%	41%	28%	10%	4%

- Out of the budget outcomes listed, most Australians think it's likely that the budget will place unnecessary burdens on future generations (58%).
- While 55% think it's likely the budget will help Australia recover from the economic impacts of Covid-19, 55% also think it's likely the budget will create long-term problems that will need to be fixed in the future.
- The budget is not expected to keep debt under control, with 34% thinking this is not very / not all likely.



TOTAL: Quite likely / Very likely	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Create jobs	52%	55%	49%	47%	49%	58%	39%	75%	42%	44%
Help Australia recover from the economic impacts of Covid-19	55%	59%	51%	52%	53%	60%	46%	76%	47%	40%
Keep debt under control	31%	32%	30%	35%	34%	24%	25%	43%	19%	22%
Create long-term problems that will need to be fixed in the future	55%	60%	50%	52%	53%	59%	63%	50%	55%	57%
Place unnecessary burdens on future generations	58%	61%	55%	53%	55%	66%	63%	57%	60%	61%
Base (n)	1,100	539	561	341	379	380	369	410	105	112

- Coalition voters are more likely to think the budget will deliver on positive outcomes (i.e. create jobs, help Australia recover from Covid-19, and keep debt under control) than Labor, Greens and minor/independent party voters; They are less likely to think the budget will create long-term problems that will need to be fixed in the future (50% to 61% all other voters).
- However, Coalition voters are just as likely as these other voters to think the budget will place unnecessary burdens on future generations.



Federal budget and post Covid-19 economic recovery

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the recent federal budget and the direction for the country to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic?

	TOTAL: Agree	This budget May'21	Last budget Oct'20
The decisions the government makes now will affect the future health of the economy		75%	75%
The government should take the recognition if their budget measures work, just as they should take responsibility if they do not		73%	70%
The global pandemic means that the health of the economy is out of the government's control		42%	49%

	TOTAL: Agree	TOTAL: Disagree	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure
The decisions the government makes now will affect the future health of the economy	75%	6%	43%	32%	15%	4%	2%	4%
The government should take the recognition if their budget measures work, just as they should take responsibility if they do not	73%	5%	37%	36%	18%	2%	2%	4%
The global pandemic means that the health of the economy is out of the government's control	42%	26%	12%	30%	27%	19%	7%	5%

- There is now less agreement that the global pandemic means that the health of the economy is out of the government's control compared to last October (42% from 49%).
- However, there is still high agreement that 'the decisions the government makes now will affect the future health of the economy', and 'the government should take the recognition if their budget measures work, just as they should take responsibility if they do not' (75% and 73% respectively).



Federal budget: Balance of interests between different groups

Q To the best of your knowledge, did the federal budget put the interests of each of the groups ahead of the other, or was there a balance?

Men and women	This budget May'21	Difference (% points)	Last budget Oct'20
This budget puts the interests of men ahead of the interests of women	19%	-12%	31%
This budget puts the interests of women ahead of the interests of men	34%	20%	14%
This budget was balanced between women and men	47%	-7%	54%
Base (n)	1,100	-	1,082

Young people and older people	This budget May'21	Difference (% points)	Last budget Oct'20
This budget puts the interests of young people ahead of the interests of older people	32%	-13%	45%
This budget puts the interests of older people ahead of the interests of young people	28%	7%	21%
This budget was balanced between the young and the old	40%	6%	34%
Base (n)	1,100	-	1,082

Employees and businesses	This budget May'21	Difference (% points)	Last budget Oct'20
This budget puts the interests of employees ahead of the interests of businesses	13%	-1%	14%
This budget puts the interests of businesses ahead of the interests of employees	49%	7%	42%
This budget was balanced between businesses and employees	38%	-7%	45%
Base (n)	1,100	-	1,082



- Compared to last year, this budget is seen to provide more support for women, with 34% saying it puts the interests of women ahead of men (14% in October), and 47% saying it is balanced between the interests of men and women. As such, fewer people think this year's budget puts the interests of men ahead of women (19% from 31% in October).
- This year's budget was seen to be less friendly to the interests of younger people. Fewer think the budget puts the interests of young people ahead of the interests of older people compared to last year (32% compared to 45% last October). More think this budget puts the interests of older people ahead of the interests of young people (28% from 21%), or that it was balanced between the young and the old (40% from 34%).
- Around half think this budget puts the interests of businesses ahead of the interests of employees (49%), while a further 38% think it was balanced between business and employee interests. Just 13% think the budget favoured employees' interests over those of businesses.



Views towards objective of federal budget

Q Do you think the federal budget was MORE about ...?

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Helping the Australian economy recover and building it over the long term	55%	56%	54%	64%	55%	46%	41%	74%	44%	44%
Helping the Coalition win the next federal election	45%	44%	46%	36%	45%	54%	59%	26%	56%	56%
Base (n)	1,100	539	561	341	379	380	369	410	105	112

- 55% think the federal budget was more about helping the Australian economy recover and building it over the long term, while 45% think it was more about helping the Coalition win the next federal election.
- Those most likely to think the budget was more about helping the government win the next election were those aged over 55 (54%), Labor voters (59%), Greens voters (56%) and minor/independent party voters (56%).



Views towards national deficit and spending

Q Which of the following approaches to debt and spending 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
Australia needs to spend whatever it takes to help the economy recover, and worry about how to repay the debt later	20%	24%	16%	26%	21%	13%	19%	21%	23%	14%
It's ok for Australia to spend whatever it takes to help the economy recover, but there needs to be a clear plan for how we will repay the debt in the future	65%	63%	66%	61%	63%	70%	66%	67%	64%	62%
Now is the time to start repaying some of the debt	16%	14%	18%	14%	16%	17%	15%	12%	13%	25%
Base (n)	1,100	539	561	341	379	380	369	410	105	112

- The majority (65%) think it's ok for Australia to spend whatever it takes to help the economy recover, but there needs to be a clear plan for how we will repay the debt in the future. While accordance with this view is high across all age groups, those over 55 are more likely than younger cohorts to think this (70% to 62% those under 55).
- 20% think Australia needs to spend whatever it takes to help the economy recover, and worry about how to repay the debt later. Those most likely to follow this view include men (24%), those aged 18-34 (26%), Greens voters (23%).



Confidence in federal government’s long-term plans

Q Please indicate which is closest to your view about the federal government’s plan for each of the following issues:

	I’m confident the federal government has a long-term plan, and it’s clear to me what this plan is	I’m confident the federal government has a long-term plan, but it hasn’t been communicated well	I’m not confident the federal government has a long-term plan
The Covid-19 vaccine rollout	25%	42%	32%
Establish quarantine facilities	21%	38%	41%
Reduce the national deficit	16%	43%	41%
Reduce Australia’s carbon emissions	18%	35%	47%
Reform and fund the aged care system	22%	39%	39%
Reopen international borders	21%	40%	39%

- There is uncertainty about the federal government’s long-term plans, or a perception that these plans have not been communicated clearly to the public.
- 41% aren’t confident there’s a long-term plan for reducing the national deficit; 43% are confident a plan exists but don’t think it’s been communicated well.
- 41% are also not confident the federal government has a long-term plan to establish quarantine facilities, with 38% confident there is a plan, but it hasn’t been communicated well.
- Over a third (32%) are not confident the federal government has a long-term plan for the Covid-19 vaccine rollout. 42% are confident they have a long-term plan, but think it hasn’t been communicated well. Only a quarter (25%) are confident there is a long-term plan and are clear on what it is.
- Nearly half (47%) are not confident the federal government has a long-term plan for reducing Australia’s carbon emissions. Over a third (35%) think there is a plan but it hasn’t been communicated well. Only 18% are confident and clear on this plan.



Views towards early federal election

Q Some have suggested that the Prime Minister might call an early election later in 2021. It is not due until 2022.

Which of the following is closer to your view?

	May'21	Feb'21
An early federal election in 2021 will be good for Australia, because a lot has changed since the last election	39%	42%
It would just be opportunism for the Prime Minister to call an early election, and the federal election should stay in 2022	61%	58%
Base (n)	1,100	1,092

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
An early federal election in 2021 will be good for Australia, because a lot has changed since the last election	39%	39%	39%	47%	39%	31%	41%	37%	36%	43%
It would just be opportunism for the Prime Minister to call an early election, and the federal election should stay in 2022	61%	61%	61%	53%	61%	69%	59%	63%	64%	57%
Base (n)	1,100	539	561	341	379	380	369	410	105	112



- There is no significant difference in views towards an early federal election compared to when this question was asked in February.
- Most (61%) still think it would just be opportunism for the Prime Minister to call an early election, and the federal election should stay in 2022. 39% think an early federal election in 2021 will be good for Australia, because a lot has changed since the last election.



Quarantine facilities: Federal vs state government responsibility

Q There have been growing calls to build new Covid-19 quarantine facilities across the country to more safely quarantine returning travellers.

Which of the following statements about these quarantine facilities is closest to your view?

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	TOTAL: Coalition	Greens	TOTAL: Other
It should be the federal government's responsibility to build and manage quarantine facilities across the country	63%	62%	63%	57%	63%	67%	67%	56%	70%	64%
It should be each state government's responsibility to build and manage quarantine facilities within their borders	37%	38%	37%	43%	37%	33%	33%	44%	30%	36%
Base (n)	1,100	539	561	341	379	380	369	410	105	112

- Most (63%) think it should be the federal government's responsibility to build and manage quarantine facilities across the country. Coalition voters are less likely to think this compared to all other voters (56% to 67%).



Federal government response to Covid-19

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

	24/05	12/04	15/03	01/03	15/02	01/02	30/11	16/11	02/11	05/10	21/09	07/09	24/08
Very poor	6%	7%	5%	6%	5%	4%	6%	5%	5%	5%	5%	8%	6%
Quite poor	12%	10%	7%	8%	7%	11%	8%	9%	10%	12%	13%	12%	11%
Neither good nor poor	25%	21%	18%	24%	19%	19%	19%	18%	24%	22%	21%	22%	22%
Quite good	40%	40%	39%	39%	42%	42%	41%	41%	39%	39%	40%	40%	40%
Very good	18%	22%	31%	23%	27%	25%	26%	26%	22%	21%	21%	18%	22%
TOTAL: Poor	18%	17%	12%	14%	12%	14%	13%	15%	15%	18%	18%	19%	17%
TOTAL: Good	58%	62%	70%	62%	69%	67%	67%	67%	61%	60%	61%	59%	61%
Base (n)	1,100	1,368	1,124	1,074	1,109	1,092	1,034	1,010	1,063	1,066	1,081	1,076	1,068

- Since peaking at 70% in March, positive rating of the federal government's handling of Covid-19 has dropped off; falling to 58% this month which is the lowest rating seen since March last year.



State government response to Covid-19

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

TOTAL: Good	24/03	12/04	15/03	01/03	15/02	01/02	30/11	16/11	02/11	05/10	21/09	07/09	24/08
NSW	68%	73%	75%	72%	72%	71%	76%	75%	68%	65%	67%	57%	59%
VIC	63%	58%	62%	49%	59%	61%	60%	59%	55%	45%	47%	50%	47%
QLD	68%	72%	75%	73%	76%	78%	72%	71%	69%	69%	68%	66%	73%
SA	71%	75%	85%	78%	79%	80%	70%	76%	77%	81%	81%	74%	65%
WA	77%	84%	91%	85%	88%	80%	83%	82%	81%	83%	84%	87%	84%

- Positive rating of state governments' response to the Covid-19 outbreak has decreased in all states except for Victoria since last month.
- The rating of the VIC government has risen to 63% (from 58% last month). This is the highest rating since June last year.
- While still high, positive rating of the WA and SA governments has decreased to 77% and 71% respectively (from 84% and 75% last month).
- Positive rating of the NSW and QLD governments has also decreased to 68% respectively (from 73% and 72% last month).

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.

