

Wednesday, 16 March 2021

ALP (50.5%) retains lead over L-NP (49.5%) as 'Gender Gap' now favours ALP

In March, support for the ALP is 50.5% on a two-party preferred basis, unchanged since February 2021 and ahead of the L-NP on 49.5% (unchanged) according to the latest Morgan Poll on Federal voting intention.

If a Federal Election were held now it would be too close to call with a higher than usual 6% of electors undecided about who they would vote for and with the real possibility Australia would have a hung Parliament for the first time in nearly a decade. Normally around 3-4% of electors can't say who they would vote for.

Interviewing for the latest Morgan Poll was conducted over the weekends of March 6/7 & 13/14, 2021 with a nationally representative cross-section of 2,747 Australian electors using a combination of telephone and online interviews (multi-mode).

Primary Voting Intention for the L-NP at 41% still ahead of the ALP on 34.5%

Primary support for the L-NP is now at 41% (up 1% point since February) compared to the ALP on 34.5% (unchanged). Greens support is down 0.5% points to 12.5%.

Support for One Nation is down 1% point to 2.5% while support for Independents/Others has increased 0.5% points to 9.5%.

Roy Morgan Government Confidence drops 5.5pts since mid-February

The Roy Morgan Government Confidence Rating has dropped 5.5pts since February to 118. Now 51.5% (down 2% points since February) of Australians say the country is 'heading in the right direction', while only 33.5% (up 3.5%) say the country is 'heading in the wrong direction'.

'Gender gap' now favours ALP based on strong support amongst Women

The advantage held by the ALP in March is based on their support amongst women. On a two-party preferred basis women now support the ALP 53.5% cf. L-NP 46.5% while men favour the L-NP 52.5% cf. ALP 47.5%.

Since the L-NP Government was re-elected in May 2019 men have consistently supported the L-NP on a two-party preferred basis. Over the last two years men's support for the two major parties has averaged L-NP 52.7% cf. ALP 47.3%.

In contrast, women's support for the ALP has also been consistent at a slightly lesser level with support over the last two years averaging ALP 52.5% cf. L-NP 47.5% on a two-party preferred basis.

The closeness of these results hide the impact of COVID-19 on the overall two-party preferred result.

Following the Federal Election support for the Government slumped and largely trailed the Opposition through the remainder of 2019 and dropped further during a devastating summer of bushfires.

In early March 2020 the ALP 53% led the L-NP 47% on a two-party preferred basis. Women supported the ALP 56% cf. L-NP 44% while men were evenly split between the ALP 50% cf. L-NP 50% - but then COVID-19 hit the Australian economy with a nationwide lockdown in late March and continuing throughout April and into May.

The L-NP's support increased substantially during this period and remained high until last month.

From early April 2020 through until early February 2021 support for the L-NP averaged 51.7% cf. ALP 48.3%. This lead was built on high support amongst men during this period: L-NP 53.5% cf. ALP 46.5% while women narrowly favoured the ALP 50.7% cf. L-NP 49.3%.

Trends in two-party preferred support by Gender: May 2019 – March 2021

Australian electors	Average two-party preferred support	
Time periods	L-NP	ALP
	%	%
Pre-Bushfires	49.5%*	50.5%*
Bushfires through to COVID-19	46.9%	53.1%
COVID-19 period	51.7%	48.3%
Since rape allegations	49.5%	50.4%
Overall L-NP average support	50.1%	49.9%

Male electors	Average two-party preferred support	
Time periods	L-NP	ALP
	%	%
Pre-Bushfires	51.9%	48.1%
Bushfires through to COVID-19	50.4%	49.6%
COVID-19 period	53.5%	46.5%
Since rape allegations	52.8%	47.2%
Overall L-NP average support	52.7%	47.3%

Female electors	Average two-party preferred support	
Time periods	L-NP	ALP
	%	%
Pre-Bushfires	47.0%	53.0%
Bushfires through to COVID-19	43.3%	56.7%
COVID-19 period	49.3%	50.7%
Since rape allegations	46.5%	53.5%
Overall L-NP average support	47.5%	52.5%

Dates of interviewing for the highlighted time periods:

Pre-Bushfires: May 25, 2019 – November 10, 2019.

On November 12, 2019 a 'catastrophic' fire danger was declared in the Greater Sydney region for the first time ever.

Bushfires through to COVID-19: November 16, 2019 – March 8, 2020.

On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organisation (WHO) officially declared the COVID-19 virus as a pandemic.

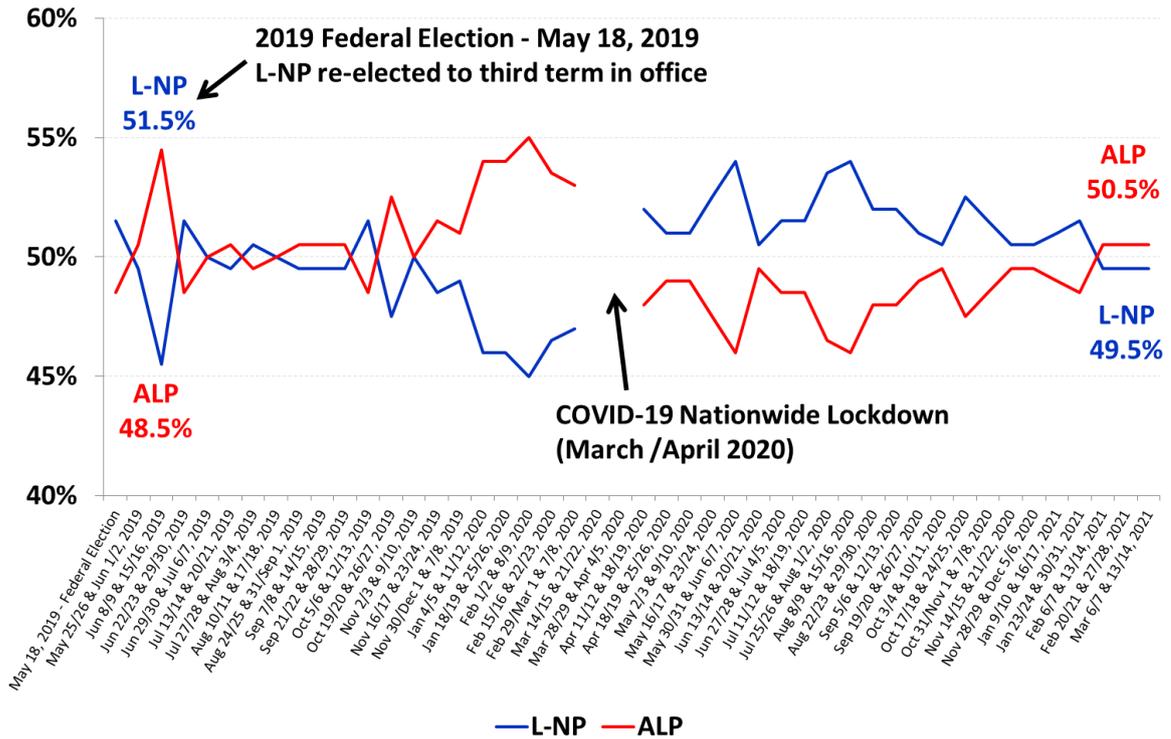
COVID-19 period: April 11, 2020 – February 14, 2021.

On February 15, 2021 former Liberal Party staffer Brittany Higgins went public on allegations that she was raped in the Parliamentary offices of Defence Minister Linda Reynolds.

Since rape allegations: February 20, 2021 – March 14, 2021.

*Figures marked in **Green** indicate being in the lead and above 50% of the two-party preferred vote; figures marked in **Red** indicate being behind and below 50% of the two-party preferred vote.

Australian two-party preferred chart: May 2019 Federal Election to March 2021



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source survey. May 2019 – March 2021. Base: Australians electors aged 18+.

Michele Levine, CEO, Roy Morgan says the ALP has retained a narrow lead over the L-NP on a two-party preferred basis: ALP 50.5% cf. L-NP 49.5% as allegations of rape, sexual assault and misconduct engulf the Federal Government:

“Today’s Morgan Poll shows the ALP on 50.5% continuing to hold a narrow lead over the L-NP on 49.5% on a two-party preferred basis as allegations of rape, sexual assault and misconduct engulf the Morrison Government

“Former Liberal staffer Brittany Higgins came forward on February 15, 2021 to allege she had been raped in Defence Minister Linda Reynold’s ministerial office two years earlier in March 2019 and since then several other distressing allegations have been raised.

“The most prominent allegation is against Attorney-General Christian Porter who has been accused of raping a former schoolgirl in 1988 while on a school debating team in Sydney. The woman sadly died last year but there is considerable pressure for a full investigation of the claim to establish the facts of the case.

“The Government has taken a hit over the last month with the ALP now ahead of the L-NP on a two-party preferred basis since mid-February for the first time since COVID-19 struck Australia a year ago. Australia’s world-leading response to the virus has provided a year-long boost to the L-NP although that period has now come to an end with the allegations of rape and sexual misconduct.

“The nature of the allegations has brought into question the Prime Minister’s ability to connect with women – and a look at the trends in support for the ALP and L-NP reveals a continuing ‘gender gap’ between men and women when it comes to support for the Government.

“Since the 2019 Federal Election men have supported the Government by an average of L-NP 52.7% cf. ALP 47.3% on a two-party preferred basis while women have consistently supported the ALP by a slightly lesser margin: ALP 52.5% cf. L-NP 47.5%.

“This gender gap has persisted since the 2019 Federal Election and since the first airing of Brittany Higgins’ rape allegations in mid-February women’s support of the L-NP has dropped to 46.5% compared to 53.5% for the ALP. Although this is above the level of support women gave the L-NP during the bushfires crisis of 2019/20 it is below the long-run average of 47.5%.

“Similarly, men’s support of the L-NP has also dropped since mid-February and is now at 52.5% on a two-party preferred basis, down 1% point since prior to the rape allegations first being aired.

“The result of these movements is to give the ALP the overall lead on a two-party preferred basis and it highlights how the ‘gender gap’ between the two major parties can work to either party’s advantage depending on the size of the gaps for each gender.

“At present the Morrison Government is struggling to respond appropriately to the allegations surrounding Brittany Higgins and Christian Porter and faces a tough period ahead as questions are asked about how committed to gender equality and women’s safety and support they really are.

“Although these questions are dominating media coverage at the moment the examples provided by the 2019/20 bushfires and the rapid onset of the COVID-19 pandemic a year ago illustrate that the next big news story that will capture the media’s attention could come along at any minute and change the focus of political reporting entirely.

“There is still over a year to go until the Federal Election is due to be held in May 2022.”

Electors were asked: “If an election for the House of Representatives were held today – which party will receive your first preference? and “Generally speaking, do you feel that things in Australia are heading in the right direction or would you say things are seriously heading in the wrong direction?”

This Roy Morgan Poll on Federal voting intention and Roy Morgan Government Confidence was conducted via telephone and online interviewing last weekend. Roy Morgan interviewed 2,747 Australian electors aged 18+ on the weekends of March 6/7 & 13/14, 2021. A higher than usual 6% of electors (down 0.5% from February) can’t say who they support.

For further information:

Contact	Office	Mobile
Gary Morgan:	+61 3 9224 5213	+61 411 129 094
Michele Levine:	+61 3 9224 5215	+61 411 129 093

Margin of Error

The margin of error to be allowed for in any estimate depends mainly on the number of interviews on which it is based. The following table gives indications of the likely range within which estimates would be 95% likely to fall, expressed as the number of percentage points above or below the actual estimate. The figures are approximate and for general guidance only, and assume a simple random sample. Allowance for design effects (such as stratification and weighting) should be made as appropriate.

Sample Size	Percentage Estimate			
	40%-60%	25% or 75%	10% or 90%	5% or 95%
1,000	±3.2	±2.7	±1.9	±1.4
2,000	±2.2	±1.9	±1.3	±1.0