



THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Public opinion towards population growth in Australia

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ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences

October 2010



There is perhaps no more important policy issue for Australia in the 21st century than the size of the population. The size of the population shapes our economic growth, the infrastructure we put in place to meet the needs of the population, and much of what we take for granted in our society. It is appropriate, therefore, that the seventh in the series, deals with this important policy issue.

The results from the ANUpoll show that many Australians need to be convinced by the need for a larger population, citing a wide range of problems that population growth brings. If there is to be a larger population, most hope that it will come through greater levels of population fertility rather than by immigration. And there are widespread concerns about the social and economic impact of the ageing population, and the ability of government to deal with it.

Like previous ANUpolls, this study sheds new light on public opinion about a major policy topic that will shape Australia's future development for decades to come. The survey fulfils the University's mission of addressing topics of national importance. The ANUpoll also differs from other opinion polls by placing public opinion in a broad policy context, and by benchmarking Australia against international opinion.

ANUpoll was designed to inform public and policy debate, and to assist in scholarly research. It builds on the University's long tradition of social survey research, which began in the 1960s. I hope this ANUpoll contributes to a greater understanding of the issues surrounding Australia's population debate.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Ian Chubb AC". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Professor Ian Chubb AC
Vice-Chancellor, The Australian National University



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Key points summary

Population policy

- A total of 44 per cent of Australians favour population growth, while 52 per cent want the population to remain at or below current levels.
- Support for a population increase is based mainly on arguments that are associated with economic growth.
- Opposition to a population increase is broadly based, encompassing concerns about the effect on the economy as well as the effects on the natural and built environments.

Environment & infrastructure

- A majority of Australians think that the world population is too large, and is causing environmental damage.
- Opinions are divided on the effects of Australia's current population size on the environment, with three in 10 thinking that the current population levels are not harming the environment.
- Australian and British respondents have very similar opinions about the world population, but differ considerably on evaluations of the environmental effects of their own national populations.
- About half of the respondents think that people should consider limiting the sizes of their families in order to minimise the impact of population growth on the environment.

Immigration versus fertility

- About half of Australians want to see the population increased through greater fertility, and just 16 per cent want to see any increase come about through more immigration.
- If the population were to increase through immigration, skilled migrants are seen as more acceptable than either refugees or family migrants.

The ageing population

- Around two in three respondents believe that the ageing population will cause Australia problems in the future.
- A majority of the public are concerned about the government's ability to tackle the problem, and reject increased taxes as an option.
- Slightly more respondents want to see individuals rather than governments funding the costs of retirement.

Key trends: Most important problems & political mood

- The economy and jobs are viewed by the public as the most important problems facing Australia, with 17 per cent mentioning them, although this represents a substantial decline on previous surveys.
- A large majority of Australians are satisfied with the way the country is heading, with little change since we first asked the question in early 2008.

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Population policy

Key points

- A total of 44 per cent of Australians favour population growth, while 52 per cent want the population to remain at or below current levels.
- Support for a population increase is based mainly on arguments that are associated with economic growth.
- Opposition to a population increase is broadly based, encompassing concerns about the effect on the economy as well as the effects on the natural and built environments.

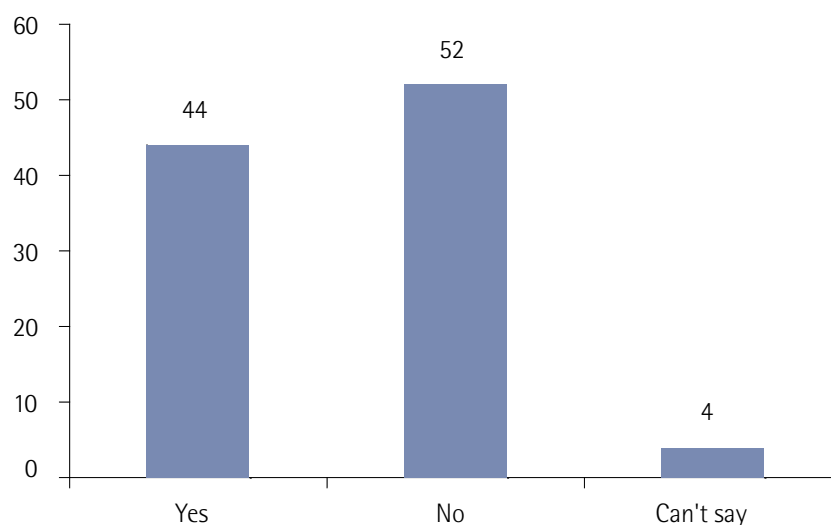
The size and growth of Australia's population has been a periodic public policy concern, but it has rarely been an issue for public opinion. Public debates about population policy have generally taken place in the context of the immigration program. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's statement in October 2009 that he believed in a 'big Australia', followed by projections that the population would reach 36 million by 2050, have for the first time focused public attention on population growth.

As a consequence of this debate, on 3 April 2010, the government appointed Tony Burke as Australia's first population minister, with responsibility for drawing up a national population policy. In June 2010, following Julia Gillard's replacement of Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister, the position became retitled the Minister for Sustainable Population.

What, then, are the public's views on the future size of the population? The aim of this ANUpoll is, for the first time, to find out in-depth what the public thinks about population growth, and to examine the reasons that underlie their opinions.

The survey first asked the respondents if they believed that Australia needed more people. When given this choice, 44 per cent of the respondents said that Australia did need more people, and 52 per cent said that Australia did not need more. A relatively small number, just four per cent, had no view, suggesting that the public had well-formed opinions on the question.

Does Australia need more people? (per cent)



Q Do you think Australia needs more people?

The survey next asked the respondents what reasons they most agreed with in support of their opinions about population growth, with supporters and opponents of growth being asked a separate group of eight questions. For those who supported a population increase, the main justification was economic growth, with 38 per cent strongly agreeing with the proposition, followed by 33 per cent who supported bringing skilled migrants into the workforce and creating more cultural diversity.

Reasons for opinions on population growth (per cent 'strongly agree')

Reasons for increasing the population....		Reasons for not increasing the population....	
...We need more people for economic growth	38	...The cost of housing is too high	53
...We need skilled migrants for the workforce	33	...We should train our own skilled people, not take them from other countries	52
...Having more people means more cultural diversity	33	...Australia might not have enough water for more people	45
...Increasing fertility or migration rates could counteract the ageing of the population	20	...Our cities are too crowded and there is too much traffic	45
...More population could boost the housing industry and help support property prices	16	...The natural environment is stressed by the numbers we already have	43
...A larger population could make it easier to defend Australia	11	...Having more people could make unemployment worse	35
...A larger population could give Australia more say in world affairs	11	...Population growth makes it harder for Australia to cut total greenhouse gas emissions	32
...We could ease overpopulation overseas by taking in more migrants	9	...We have too much cultural diversity already	28

The reasons for not supporting population growth all gained greater support, ranging from the cost of housing, which 53 per cent of the respondents strongly agreed with, to concerns about skills training and the pressure on cities and the natural environment that a population increase would cause. In general, opponents of population growth supported a more varied range of explanations than the supporters; opponents of population growth strongly agreed with an average of 3.1 of the eight statements they were presented with, while those who were in favour of population growth strongly agreed with only 1.7 of the statements they were presented with.

Support for population growth is therefore driven in the main by economic arguments. Opposition to population growth is more broadly based, encompassing not just the economy, but concerns about the effects such a change could bring on the natural and built environment.

Environment & infrastructure

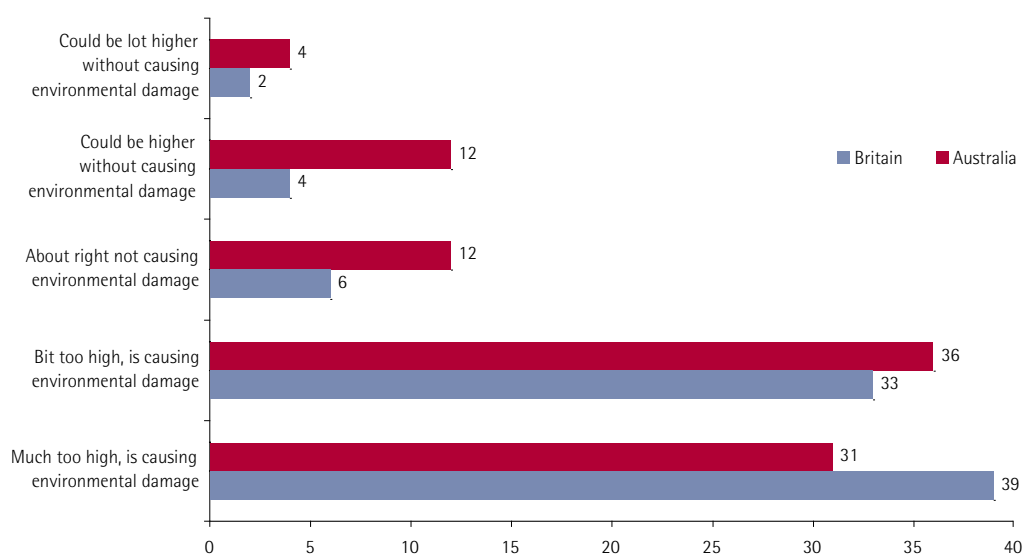
Key points

- A majority of Australians think that the world population is too large, and is causing environmental damage.
- Opinions are divided on the effects of Australia's current population size on the environment, with three in 10 thinking that the current population levels are not harming the environment.
- Australian and British respondents have very similar opinions about the world population, but differ considerably on evaluations of the environmental effects of their own national populations.
- About half of the respondents think that people should consider limiting the sizes of their families in order to minimise the impact of population growth on the environment.

The population policy section indicated that opinions about the size of Australia's future population are strongly rooted in beliefs about the potential environmental damage that a large population might cause. To explore this further the survey asked a series of questions about the potential effects of population growth on the environment, and at what population level environmental damage might become a risk.

The respondents were first asked if they thought there could be higher population levels without environmental damage. The same question was also asked in a British survey conducted in May 2009. Just 16 per cent of the Australian respondents thought that there could be a higher world population without causing environmental damage. Two-thirds of those interviewed thought that the world population was too high, and was causing environmental damage. The figures from the British survey indicate that the British respondents took almost exactly the same view about the effects of the world population on the environment as did their Australian counterparts.

The world's population size & the environment (per cent)

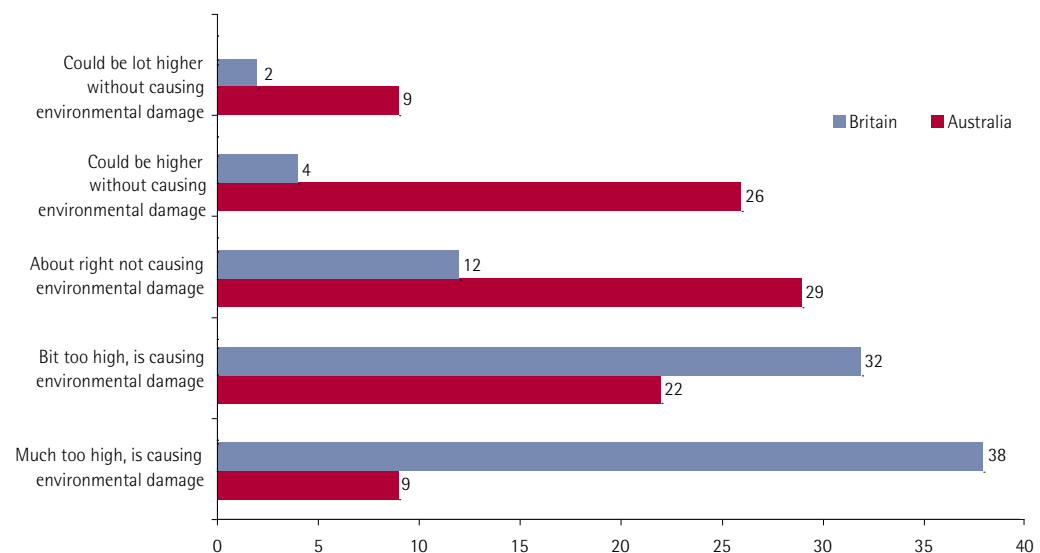


Q The current world human population is 6.8 billion and growing. Thinking about this... Which, if any, of the following statements relating to the world population level and environmental impact do you agree with?

In contrast to their views about the world population, the Australian respondents had mixed views about the effects of the levels of Australian population on the environment. A plurality of the respondents thought that the current population level was about right and not causing environmental damage. Opinions were evenly divided about whether the population could be higher without causing environmental damage, or if it needed to be lower to avoid damage. A total of 31 per cent of respondents thought it was a bit or much too high and causing environmental damage. Slightly more (35 per cent) thought the population size could be higher without causing environmental damage.

Not surprisingly, the same figures for Britain show much more resistance to a population increase. Respondents there see such a scenario as likely to lead to environmental damage. A total of 38 per cent of the British respondents see the population as much too high and causing damage, compared to just nine per cent of their Australian counterparts.

Australia and Britain's population size & the environment (per cent)



Q Australia's population is just over 21 million. [The current UK human population is 61 million and growing] Thinking about this... Which, if any, of the following statements relating to the Australian population level and environmental impact do you agree with?

The survey also asked about the impact of family fertility on the environment, and if people should consider the environment when deciding to have more children. About half of the respondents thought that either the number of children would not affect the environment, or that the environment should not be a consideration in deciding family size. Among those who were not in favour of increasing the population, considerations about family size loomed larger; among this group, a total of 52 per cent thought that people should have smaller families in order to help the environment.

Environmental damage & family size (per cent)

	All respondents	Increase population size	Do not increase population size
Yes, they should think about not having any children	2	1	2
Yes, they should think about having only one child	3	1	4
Yes, they should think about having up to two children only	24	18	28
Yes, they should think about having up to three children only	18	18	18
No, they shouldn't worry about the environment and just have as many children as they like	26	30	23
The number of children people have won't affect the environment	21	26	18
Can't say	6	6	7
Total	100	100	100

Q Do you think people should take the impact on the environment into account when deciding how many children to have?

Immigration versus fertility

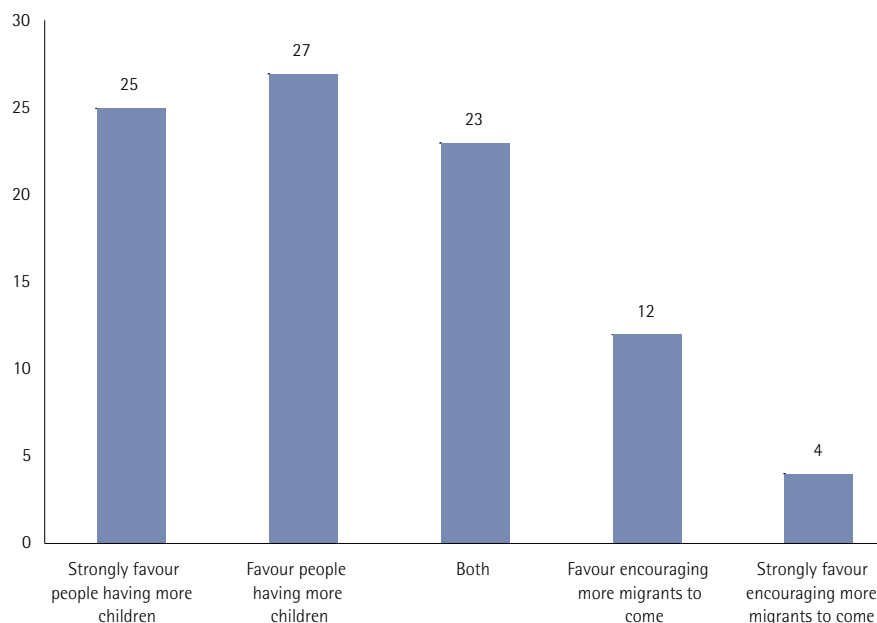
Key points

- About half of Australians want to see the population increased through greater fertility, and just 16 per cent want to see any increase come about through more immigration.
- If the population were to increase through immigration, skilled migrants are seen as more acceptable than either refugees or family migrants.

If the Australian population were to increase, growth could only come about by either higher levels of fertility among the existing population, or by more immigration. In recent years, population increases have come about largely through immigration, since the levels of fertility in the population have declined consistently from the 1970s through to the present.

The survey respondents were asked if they favoured population growth coming about through higher levels of fertility or as a result of higher levels of immigration. Just over half of the respondents favoured growth through greater fertility, with just 16 per cent favouring immigration as the major growth mechanism. Moreover, a greater proportion of those favouring the fertility option held their opinions strongly compared to those favouring immigration. Around a quarter of the respondents said both methods were appropriate.

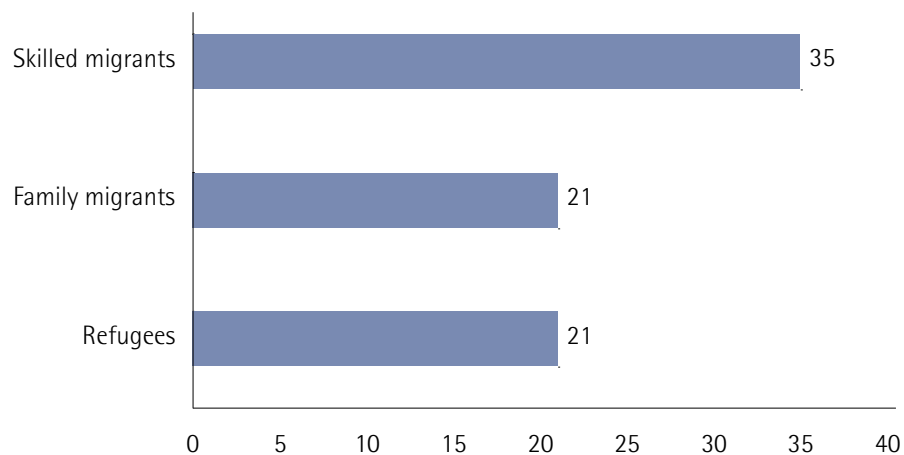
Should the population grow through fertility or immigration? (per cent)



Q If the Australian population were to grow, would you favour growth occurring by encouraging people having more children, or by encouraging more migrants coming to Australia?

Immigration is, then, the least popular of the two options for population growth. However, if immigration did become the major means of increasing the size of the population, what sort of immigrants would the public like to see come to Australia? The survey suggests that skilled migrants, who could contribute directly to the economy, would be the preferred group. Just over one in three of the respondents said that they would 'strongly support' accepting more skilled migrants, compared to 21 per cent who said that they would 'strongly support' accepting more refugees or family migrants.

Preferences for migrant groups (per cent)



Q If Australia's population were to grow by increased immigration, please say whether you support or oppose Australia accepting more of the following types of migrant: ... Humanitarian migrants – that is refugees ... Family migrants – that's relatives of migrants already living in Australia ... Skilled migrants – that's migrants with particular skills.

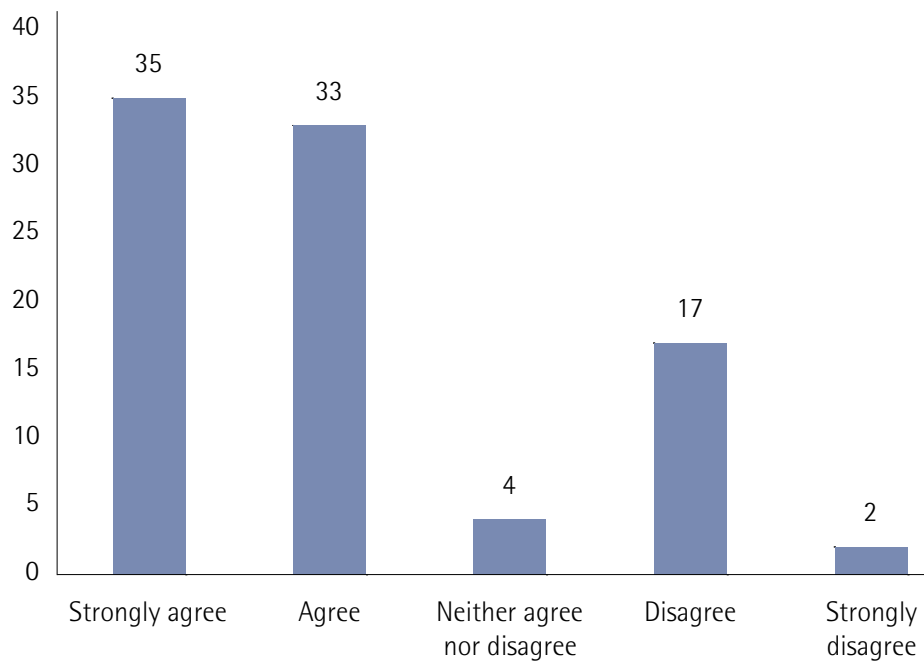
The ageing population

Key points

- Around two in three respondents believe that the ageing population will cause Australia problems in the future.
- A majority of the public are concerned about the government's ability to tackle the problem, and reject increased taxes as an option.
- Slightly more respondents want to see individuals rather than governments funding the costs of retirement.

Australia is predicted to have one of the largest proportions of aged citizens within the OECD by the middle of the century. A government report published in early 2010, *Australia to 2050: Future Challenges*, examined these trends and estimated that with the decline in the proportion of people of working age, there will be only 2.7 people of traditional working age to support each retired person by 2050. This is about half the proportion at the present time. It is anticipated that these trends will produce significantly slower economic growth, as well as reducing the proportion of the population in the workforce.

Will the ageing population cause problems for Australia? (per cent)



Q Now turning to Australia's ageing population. Do you agree or disagree that the ageing population will cause Australia problems in the future?

Well over half of the respondents (68 per cent) believe that the ageing population will cause Australia problems in the future. Just 19 per cent disagree with the statement, suggesting that public discussion of the problem (in the media and by politicians) has had a significant impact on the public's understanding of the problem and its implications.

This conclusion is also supported by a question asking if the respondents were worried about the government's ability to fund the costs associated with the ageing population. Of those interviewed in the survey, 32 per cent said they were 'very worried', and 36 per cent said they were 'worried' by the issue. Only 13 per cent said that they were not worried about the costs related to an ageing population. Again, the survey evidence confirms the widespread understanding that exists in the population about the problem.

In general, the respondents take a pessimistic view of the ability of the government to manage the consequences of an ageing population. Less than one in four believe that the health system will be able to cope, and 59 per cent believe that government services will have to be cut in order to meet the additional costs. However, a majority disagree that taxes should be increased to pay for these additional costs, and opinions are divided on whether or not retirees should fund their own retirement.

The consequences of the ageing population (per cent)

Do you agree or disagree that...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
...the public health care system will be able to cope with the ageing population	4	18	4	33	38
...the government will have to cut programs and welfare spending in the future to deal with the costs associated with an ageing population	19	40	5	21	8
...the government should increase taxes in order to pay for the costs associated with an ageing population	6	30	5	30	26
...retirees should fund their own retirement	13	29	23	21	12

These results suggest that while the public is aware of the problem of the ageing population, and of its potential consequences, there is uncertainty and divided opinion about how government should tackle it. Most importantly, a majority do not wish to see taxes raised to deal with it, and there is a balance of opinion in favour of individuals rather than government funding retirements. A majority of the public clearly sees private solutions to the ageing population as preferable to public ones.

Key trends: Most important problems and political mood

Key points

- The economy and jobs are viewed by the public as the most important problems facing Australia, with 17 per cent mentioning them, although this represents a substantial decline on previous surveys.
- A large majority of Australians are satisfied with the way the country is heading, with little change since we first asked the question in early 2008.

Since ANUpoll started in early 2008, the two main problems mentioned as priorities for Australia by the survey respondents have been the economy and the environment, the latter also encompassing global warming. The global financial crisis and the recession resulted in the economy dominating the mentions as the most important problem facing the country for most of 2009.

In this ANUpoll, many fewer respondents mentioned the economy and jobs as the most important problem; 17 per cent mentioned it, compared to 32 per cent in October 2009. The peak concern about the economy occurred in early 2009, when just over half of the survey respondents mentioned it as the most important problem facing the country.

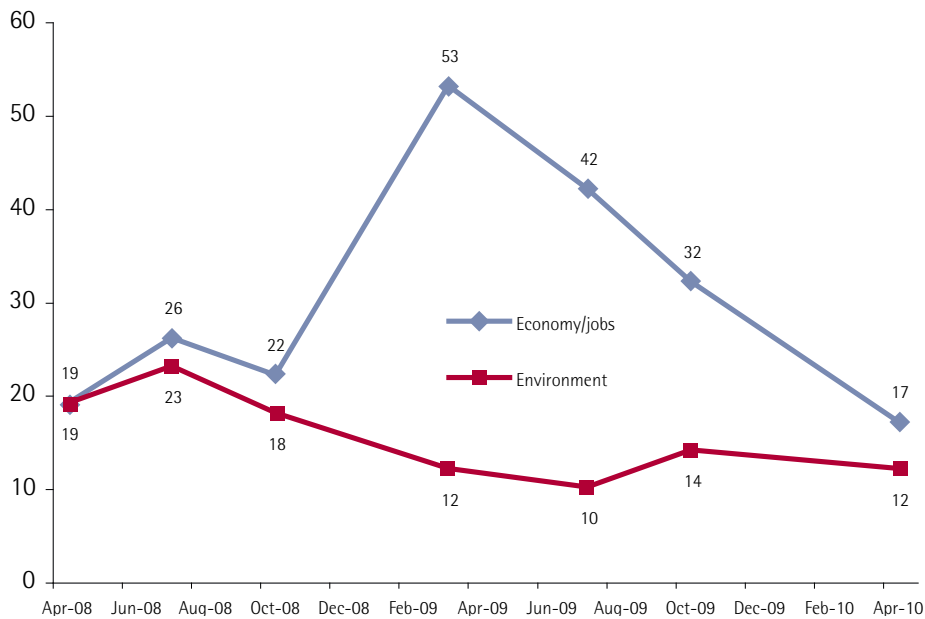
Most important problems facing Australia (per cent)

Rank	Issue	Per cent mentioned	(July-Oct Change)
1	Economy/jobs	17	(-15)
2	Health care	13	(+6)
3	Immigration	13	(+6)
4	Environment/global warming	12	(-2)
5	Law and order	5	(+1)

Q What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?

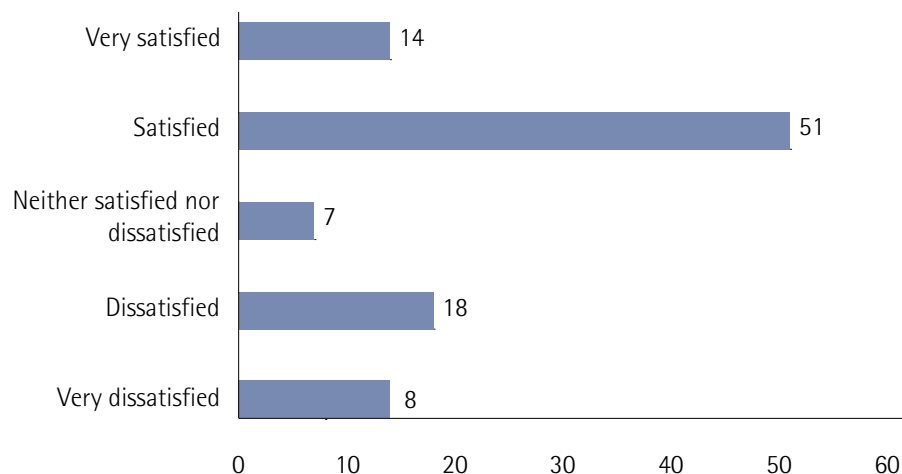
Health care was the second most frequently mentioned problem in the current survey, at 13 per cent, followed by immigration. The environment and global warming were mentioned by 12 per cent of the respondents, a decrease of 2 percentage points. No other issue attracted the attention of more than one in 20 of the respondents. It would appear that declining worries about the state of the economy have been partially replaced by a renewed concern about health and immigration.

Per cent mentioning the economy and the environment since April 2008 (per cent)



The political mood has been remarkably positive over the two years since ANUpoll began, and this poll is no exception. A remarkably high 65 per cent are satisfied with the way the country is heading, compared to 70 per cent in October 2009 and 71 per cent in July 2009. Just 18 per cent say that they are dissatisfied, and a further 8 per cent are 'very dissatisfied'. The predominant picture remains one of general satisfaction, with relatively little change over the seven polls in two years. The economic concerns, registered most clearly in the first poll in 2009, have had little effect on the predominantly positive political mood of the country.

Satisfaction with the country's direction (per cent)



Q All things considered, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way the country is heading?

Questions: general questions

Q I'd like to start with a general question about your views on life in Australia.
All things considered, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way the country is heading?

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Very satisfied	172	14.4	14.4
Satisfied	614	51.2	65.6
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	90	7.5	73.1
Dissatisfied	216	18.0	91.1
Very dissatisfied	91	7.6	98.6
(Don't know/not sure)	14	1.2	99.8
(Refused)	2	.2	100.0
Total	1200	100.0	

Q What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Economy/jobs	200	16.7	16.7
Industrial relations	3	.3	16.9
Interest rates	2	.2	17.1
Housing affordability	27	2.2	19.3
Health care	158	13.1	32.4
Education	35	2.9	35.3
Defence/national security	10	.9	36.2
Terrorism	5	.4	36.6
Iraq war	1	.1	36.7
Environment/global warming	146	12.2	48.9
Water management	51	4.2	53.1
Immigration	153	12.8	65.9
Indigenous affairs	19	1.6	67.5
Taxation	9	.8	68.2
Social services (including aged care, etc)	4	.4	68.6
Law and order/crime/justice system	65	5.4	74.0
Poverty/social exclusion/inequality	12	1.0	75.0
Infrastructure/planning/innovation	21	1.7	76.8
Alcohol and drug use	8	.7	77.5
Better government	57	4.7	82.2
Young people's behaviour/attitudes	23	1.9	84.1
Foreign influence/Australia's position in the world	14	1.2	85.3
Values/morals/respect for others	30	2.5	87.8
Family/community/societal breakdown	4	.4	88.1
Increasing/ageing population	43	3.6	91.8

Q What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today? (continued)

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Other	42	3.5	95.2
None	7	.6	95.8
(Don't know/Can't say)	47	3.9	99.7
(Refused)	3	.3	100.0
Total	1200	100.0	

Q And what do you think is the second most important problem facing Australia today?

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Economy/jobs	155	13.5	13.5
Industrial relations	9	.8	14.3
Interest rates	4	.4	14.7
Housing affordability	30	2.6	17.3
Health care	126	11.0	28.3
Education	80	7.0	35.3
Defence/national security	10	.8	36.2
Terrorism	4	.4	36.5
Iraq war	2	.2	36.7
Environment/global warming	105	9.2	45.9
Water management	37	3.2	49.1
Immigration	126	11.0	60.1
Indigenous affairs	12	1.1	61.2
Taxation	8	.7	61.9
Social services (including aged care, etc.)	15	1.3	63.2
Law and order/crime/justice system	36	3.2	66.4
Poverty/social exclusion/inequality	25	2.2	68.6
Infrastructure/planning/innovation	35	3.1	71.7
Alcohol and drug use	9	.8	72.5
Better government	40	3.5	76.0
Young people's behaviour/attitudes	6	.5	76.5
Foreign influence/Australia's position in the world	7	.6	77.1
Values/morals/respect for others	17	1.5	78.6
Family/community/societal breakdown	15	1.3	79.9
Increasing/ageing population	47	4.1	84.0
Other	54	4.7	88.7
None	22	1.9	90.6
(Don't know/Can't say)	106	9.3	99.9
(Refused)	1	0.1	100.0
Total	1143	100.0	
(Missing)	57		
Total	1200		

Questions: population policy

Q Do you think Australia needs more people?

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Yes	305	43.9	43.9
No	362	52.1	96.1
(Can't say)	27	3.9	100.0
Total	695	100.0	

Q Various reasons have been given to increase Australia's population. Please say whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.
... We need more people for economic growth.

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	116	37.8	37.8
Agree	163	53.5	91.3
Neither agree nor disagree	1	0.2	91.5
Disagree	24	7.9	99.5
Strongly disagree	1	0.3	99.8
(Can't say)	1	0.2	100.0
Total	305	100.0	
(Missing)	390		
Total	695		

Q... Having more people means more cultural diversity.

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	100	32.6	32.6
Agree	171	56.2	88.8
Neither agree nor disagree	3	1.1	89.9
Disagree	23	7.7	97.6
Strongly disagree	6	1.9	99.4
(Can't say)	2	0.6	100.0
Total	305	100.0	
(Missing)	390		
Total	695		

Q... We could ease over-population overseas by taking in more migrants.

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	27	8.8	8.8
Agree	166	54.3	63.0
Neither agree nor disagree	10	3.4	66.4
Disagree	69	22.5	88.9
Strongly disagree	26	8.6	97.5
(Can't say)	8	2.5	100.0
Total	305	100.0	
(Missing)	390		
Total	695		

Q... A larger population could make it easier to defend Australia.

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	34	11.3	11.3
Agree	139	45.4	56.7
Neither agree nor disagree	12	3.9	60.6
Disagree	87	28.5	89.1
Strongly disagree	22	7.2	96.3
(Can't say)	9	3.0	99.3
(Refused)	2	0.7	100.0
Total	305	100.0	
(Missing)	390		
Total	695		

Q ...We need skilled migrants for the work force.

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	102	33.4	33.4
Agree	154	50.3	83.7
Neither agree nor disagree	4	1.5	85.2
Disagree	30	9.7	94.9
Strongly disagree	14	4.6	99.5
(Can't say)	2	0.5	100.0
Total	305	100.0	
(Missing)	390		
Total	695		

Q... Increasing fertility or migration rates could counteract the ageing of the population.

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	62	20.2	20.2
Agree	178	58.4	78.6
Neither agree nor disagree	2	0.8	79.4
Disagree	41	13.6	93.0
Strongly disagree	4	1.3	94.2
(Can't say)	18	5.8	100.0
Total	305	100.0	
(Missing)	390		
Total	695		

Q... More population could boost the housing industry and help support property prices.

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	48	15.7	15.7
Agree	159	52.2	67.8
Neither agree nor disagree	7	2.3	70.1
Disagree	69	22.7	92.7
Strongly disagree	8	2.7	95.5
(Can't say)	14	4.5	100.0
Total	305	100.0	
(Missing)	390		
Total	695		

Q... A larger population could give Australia more say in world affairs.

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	35	11.5	11.5
Agree	161	52.8	64.3
Neither agree nor disagree	9	3.1	67.3
Disagree	89	29.1	96.4
Strongly disagree	2	0.7	97.2
(Can't say)	7	2.3	99.5
(Refused)	2	0.5	100.0
Total	305	100.0	
(Missing)	390		
Total	695	100.0	

Q Various reasons have been given to NOT increase Australia's population. Please say whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

... Our cities are too crowded and there is too much traffic.

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	162	44.7	44.7
Agree	127	34.9	79.6
Neither agree nor disagree	3	0.8	80.4
Disagree	63	17.4	97.8
Strongly disagree	5	1.5	99.3
(Can't say)	1	0.3	99.5
(Refused)	2	0.5	100.0
Total	362	100.0	
(Missing)	333		
Total	695	100.0	

Q... We have too much cultural diversity already.

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	103	28.3	28.3
Agree	81	22.4	50.7
Neither agree nor disagree	9	2.5	53.2
Disagree	110	30.5	83.6
Strongly disagree	49	13.7	97.3
(Can't say)	8	2.3	99.6
(Refused)	2	0.4	100.0
Total	362	100.0	
(Missing)	333		
Total	695		

Q... We can still take refugees without increasing total migration.

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	31	8.5	8.5
Agree	163	45.1	53.6
Neither agree nor disagree	12	3.3	56.9
Disagree	68	18.7	75.6
Strongly disagree	70	19.2	94.8
(Can't say)	15	4.2	99.1
(Refused)	3	0.9	100.0
Total	362	100.0	
(Missing)	333		
Total	695		

Q... Population growth makes it harder for Australia to cut total greenhouse gas emissions.

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	114	31.5	31.5
Agree	158	43.7	75.2
Neither agree nor disagree	9	2.4	77.6
Disagree	53	14.6	92.2
Strongly disagree	10	2.9	95.1
(Can't say)	15	4.1	99.2
(Refused)	3	0.8	100.0
Total	362	100.0	
(Missing)	333		
Total	695		

Q... The cost of housing is too high.

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	191	52.9	52.9
Agree	131	36.1	88.9
Neither agree nor disagree	7	1.8	90.7
Disagree	21	5.9	96.6
Strongly disagree	5	1.5	98.2
(Can't say)	5	1.5	99.6
(Refused)	1	0.4	100.0
Total	362	100.0	
(Missing)	333		
Total	695		

Q... The natural environment is stressed by the numbers we already have.

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	158	43.5	43.5
Agree	152	41.8	85.3
Neither agree nor disagree	2	0.5	85.9
Disagree	35	9.6	95.5
Strongly disagree	10	2.9	98.4
(Can't say)	5	1.4	99.8
(Refused)	1	0.2	100.0
Total	362	100.0	
(Missing)	333		
Total	695		

Q... Having more people could make unemployment worse.

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	126	34.9	34.9
Agree	141	39.0	73.8
Neither agree nor disagree	10	2.8	76.6
Disagree	60	16.5	93.1
Strongly disagree	15	4.1	97.2
(Can't say)	10	2.7	100.0
Total	362	100.0	
(Missing)	333		
Total	695		

Q... Australia might not have enough water for more people.

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	162	44.8	44.8
Agree	136	37.7	82.5
Neither agree nor disagree	3	1.0	83.5
Disagree	42	11.5	95.0
Strongly disagree	13	3.5	98.5
(Can't say)	5	1.5	100.0
Total	362	100.0	
(Missing)	333		
Total	695		

Q... We should train our own skilled people, not take them from other countries.

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	187	51.6	51.6
Agree	122	33.7	85.2
Neither agree nor disagree	8	2.2	87.5
Disagree	30	8.2	95.7
Strongly disagree	8	2.1	97.8
(Can't say)	6	1.7	99.5
(Refused)	2	0.5	100.0
Total	362	100.0	
(Missing)	333		
Total	695		

Q The current world human population is 6.8 billion and growing. Thinking about this... Which, if any, of the following statements relating to the world population level and environmental impact do you agree with?

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
It is much too high and is causing serious environmental problems	370	30.9	30.9
It is a bit too high and is causing serious environmental problems	431	35.9	66.8
It is about right and not causing serious environmental problems	140	11.7	78.5
It could be a bit higher without causing any serious environmental problems	142	11.8	90.3
It could be a lot higher without causing any serious environmental problems	47	3.9	94.1
(Can't say)	70	5.9	100.0
Total	1200	100.0	

Q Australia's population is just over 21 million. Thinking about this... Which, if any, of the following statements relating to the Australian population level and environmental impact do you agree with?

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
It is much too high and is causing serious environmental problems	105	8.7	8.7
It is a bit too high and is causing serious environmental problems	265	22.1	30.8
It is about right and not causing serious environmental problems	349	29.1	59.8
It could be a bit higher without causing any serious environmental problems	317	26.4	86.3
It could be a lot higher without causing any serious environmental problems	112	9.3	95.6
(Can't say)	53	4.4	100.0
Total	1200	100.0	

Q Do you think people should take the impact on the environment into account when deciding how many children to have?

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Yes, they should think about not having any children	22	1.8	1.8
Yes, they should think about having only one child	34	2.9	4.7
Yes, they should think about having up to two children only	293	24.4	29.1
Yes, they should think about having up to three children only	213	17.8	46.9
No, they shouldn't worry about the environment and just have as many children as they like	311	25.9	72.8
Not applicable - the number of children people have won't affect the environment	249	20.7	93.5
(Can't say)	78	6.5	100.0
Total	1200	100.0	

Q Do you agree or disagree that Australia should introduce an Emissions Trading Scheme

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	308	25.7	25.7
Agree	396	33.0	58.7
Neither agree nor disagree	45	3.8	62.4
Disagree	127	10.6	73.0
Strongly disagree	149	12.4	85.4
(Can't say)	171	14.3	99.7
(Refused)	4	.3	100.0
Total	1200	100.0	

Questions: immigration versus fertility

Q If the Australian population were to grow, would you favour growth occurring by encouraging people having more children, or by encouraging more migrants coming to Australia?

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly favour encouraging people to have more children	303	25.2	25.2
Favour encouraging people to have more children	319	26.6	51.8
Both	276	23.0	74.8
Favour encouraging more migrants to come	149	12.4	87.2
Strongly favour encouraging more migrants to come	51	4.2	91.4
(Does not favour population growth)	36	3.0	94.4
(Can't say)	65	5.4	99.8
(Refused)	2	.2	100.0
Total	1200	100.0	

Q If Australia's population were to grow by increased immigration, please say whether you support or oppose Australia accepting more of the following types of migrant:
... Humanitarian migrants, that is refugees.

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly support accepting more	256	21.3	21.3
Support accepting more	477	39.7	61.0
Neither support nor oppose	103	8.6	69.6
Oppose accepting more	173	14.4	84.0
Strongly oppose accepting more	160	13.3	97.3
(Can't say)	28	2.3	99.6
(Refused)	5	.4	100.0
Total	1200	100.0	

Q... Family migrants – that's relatives of migrants already living in Australia

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly support accepting more	252	21.0	21.0
Support accepting more	592	49.4	70.4
Neither support nor oppose	96	8.0	78.4
Oppose accepting more	156	13.0	91.3
Strongly oppose accepting more	72	6.0	97.4
(Can't say)	30	2.5	99.8
(Refused)	2	.2	100.0
Total	1200	100.0	

Q... Skilled migrants – that's migrants with particular skills.

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly support accepting more	423	35.2	35.2
Support accepting more	526	43.9	79.1
Neither support nor oppose	53	4.4	83.5
Oppose accepting more	112	9.3	92.8
Strongly oppose accepting more	69	5.7	98.6
(Can't say)	16	1.3	99.9
(Refused)	1	.1	100.0
Total	1200	100.0	

Q Now turning to Australia's ageing population. Do you agree or disagree that the ageing population will cause Australia problems in the future?

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	424	35.3	35.3
Agree	393	32.7	68.0
Neither agree nor disagree	46	3.9	71.9
Disagree	210	17.5	89.4
Strongly disagree	95	7.9	97.3
(Can't say)	29	2.4	99.7
(Refused)	3	.3	100.0
Total	1200	100.0	

Q Now turning to the government's role in dealing with the ageing population. How worried are you about the government's ability to fund the costs associated with an ageing population?

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Very worried	386	32.2	32.2
Worried	432	36.0	68.2
Neutral	208	17.4	85.5
Not worried	104	8.7	94.2
Not at all worried	54	4.5	98.7
Don't Know	12	1.0	99.8
(Refused)	3	.2	100.0
Total	1200	100.0	

Q Do you agree or disagree that the public health care system will be able to cope with the ageing population?

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	50	4.2	4.2
Agree	213	17.7	21.9
Neither agree nor disagree	46	3.8	25.7
Disagree	396	33.0	58.8
Strongly disagree	462	38.5	97.3
(Can't say)	30	2.5	99.7
(Refused)	3	.3	100.0
Total	1200	100.0	

Questions: the ageing population

Q Do you agree or disagree that the government will have to cut programs and welfare spending in the future to deal with the costs associated with an ageing population?

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	233	19.4	19.4
Agree	476	39.7	59.1
Neither agree nor disagree	56	4.7	63.8
Disagree	252	21.0	84.8
Strongly disagree	98	8.1	92.9
(Can't say)	81	6.7	99.7
(Refused)	4	.3	100.0
Total	1200	100.0	

Q Do you agree or disagree that the government should increase taxes in order to pay for the costs associated with an ageing population?

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	72	6.0	6.0
Agree	363	30.3	36.3
Neither agree nor disagree	62	5.2	41.5
Disagree	356	29.7	71.2
Strongly disagree	308	25.6	96.8
(Can't say)	37	3.1	99.9
(Refused)	1	.1	100.0
Total	1200	100.0	

Q Do you agree or disagree that retirees should fund their own retirement?

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Strongly agree	156	13.0	13.0
Agree	348	29.0	42.0
Depends on one's circumstances	273	22.7	64.7
Disagree	252	21.0	85.7
Strongly disagree	140	11.6	97.3
(Can't say)	30	2.5	99.8
(Refused)	2	.2	100.0
Total	1200	100.0	

Q Which of the following statements do you most agree with?

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
The less government the better	320	26.7	26.7
There are more things the government should be doing	809	67.4	94.1
(Can't say)	57	4.7	98.9
(Refused)	13	1.1	100.0
Total	1200	100.0	

About the survey

The ANUpoll is conducted for The Australian National University by the Social Research Centre, Melbourne. The survey is a national random sample of the adult population aged 18 years and over conducted by telephone. In this survey, 1,200 people were interviewed between 15 March and 1 April, with a response rate of 45.2 per cent. For the questions relating to population size and the reasons for supporting or opposing population growth, these were conducted between 8 and 24 June among the 850 respondents in the original sample who agreed to be recontacted, achieving 695 interviews, representing a response rate of 81.8 per cent. The results have been weighted to represent the national population. The survey's margin of error is ± 2.5 per cent for the full sample. Full details of the survey can be found at www.anu.edu.au/anupoll/



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