



Australian
National
University



TAX AND EQUITY IN AUSTRALIA: **What Australians Want**

ANUpoll March 2016
Report No. 21: April 2016

ANU College of
Arts & Social
Sciences

TAX AND EQUITY IN AUSTRALIA: **What Australians Want**

Dr Jill Sheppard, Ben Phillips and Matthew Taylor

ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods
ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences

Report No. 21
April 2016

About the poll

ANUpoll is conducted for The Australian National University (ANU) by the Social Research Centre, an ANU Enterprise business. The poll is a national random sample of the adult population, and is conducted by telephone. In this poll, 1,200 people were interviewed between 22 February and 13 March 2016 with a response rate of 21.5 per cent. The results have been weighted to represent the national population. The poll's margin of error is ± 2.5 per cent.

Suggested citation: Sheppard, J., B. Phillips & M. Taylor, ANU Poll 21, Tax and Equity in Australia: What Australians Want, 2016, [Computer file]. Canberra: Australian Data Archive, The Australian National University, 2016.

CONTENTS

Vice-Chancellor's message	1
Dealing with debt: importance and solutions	2
Tax or spend? The rise of support for spending	4
Evaluating the tax burden	6
Government expenditure: what do we know?	8
Government expenditure: what do we want?	10
Key trends: most important problems and political mood	12
ANUpoll questions	14

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S MESSAGE



How much governments tax their citizens and how much governments spend is a core question of political debate. Public policy discussions regularly take place in the context of a government's capacity – or willingness – to fund new spending programs. Recent debates in Australia on tax reform and government debt are only the latest examples of this challenge faced by all governments.

This ANUpoll – the 21st in the series – asks Australians what they think about these issues in the Australian context. Should we be worried about governments holding debt? Which areas of spending should have priority, and which can be cut? Should we pay more tax, or less? Is our tax system generally fair?

The findings from this survey may challenge some of our conventional wisdom as to what Australians want from their governments. More Australians favour greater spending on social services than favour reducing taxes. If reducing government debt is the aim, cutting welfare payments is among the least popular options, according to this poll. Australians want more spending directed to health, domestic violence prevention, education, and disability and aged care. They want international companies operating in Australia to pay more tax here, but overall believe our tax system is moderately fair. These findings should resonate with policy makers across Australia.

The ANUpoll, conducted by the ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods, is designed to inform public and policy debate, as well as to assist scholarly research. It is an important contribution that ANU makes to public debate about the key social issues facing Australia and the type of country in which we want to live.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "B. P. Schmidt".

Professor Brian P. Schmidt AC

Vice-Chancellor and President

DEALING WITH DEBT: IMPORTANCE AND SOLUTIONS

Key Points

- > Australians have strong, polarised opinions on the importance of debt reduction as a national issue.
- > When presented with a range of options to improve the country's budgetary position, cutting non-welfare spending is the most popular choice.
- > Increasing the GST rate is a more popular debt reduction option than reducing welfare payments.
- > Among a range of options to specifically fund hypothetical income tax cuts, Australians are more likely to support reductions in (or removal of) negative gearing tax deductions and capital gains tax concessions.

Australians are split fairly evenly on whether reducing government debt is the most important economic issue facing the country. Contrasting with the 'budget emergency' rhetoric of the Tony Abbott-led Federal Government, 51 per cent of respondents disagree (or strongly disagree) that debt reduction is the country's most important economic problem. On the other hand, 45 per cent agree that it is the most important. Only four per cent of the valid responses received express no opinion either way.

In recent months, the Federal Government has floated – and then retracted – proposals for using the tax system to increase government revenues and reduce national debt. Reductions in superannuation tax concessions (which allow individuals to transfer savings into superannuation funds to minimise income tax), changes to negative gearing tax deductions, and increasing the rate of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) from 10 per cent to 15 per cent have all been canvassed publicly.

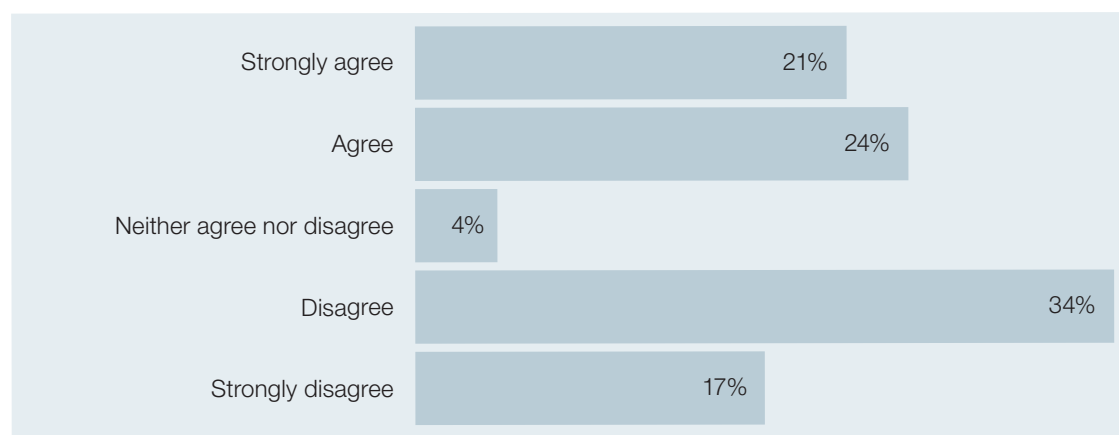
Regardless of their view on the urgency of debt reduction, respondents were asked to choose their preferred option for reducing government debt from a range of revenue maximising and expenditure minimising policies. More Australians would rather cuts to non-welfare areas of government spending than would rather cuts to welfare spending, increasing the GST rate, or reducing ways to minimise tax burdens.

Perhaps most surprisingly, more Australians (25 per cent) prefer a hypothetical increase in the GST rate with corresponding compensation for low-income earners than a reduction in superannuation tax concessions and tax minimisation through negative gearing (23 per cent of respondents) – both policies which tend to disproportionately reduce the tax burden of higher income earners. There is no significant variation in the policy preferences of those respondents who agree that debt reduction is the country's most important economic issue, and those who disagree.

Looking more specifically at what they would give up in order to fund personal income tax cuts, Australians are more likely (41 per cent) to prefer the removal or reduction of negative gearing deductions and capital gains tax concessions. Only one in four – 26 per cent – would choose an increase in the GST rate to 15 per cent: an option that seemed to be the Federal Government's preferred policy in early 2016. A smaller number of Australians would prefer the GST rate held at 10 per cent, but extended to fresh food, education, and health, or that superannuation tax concessions were cut.

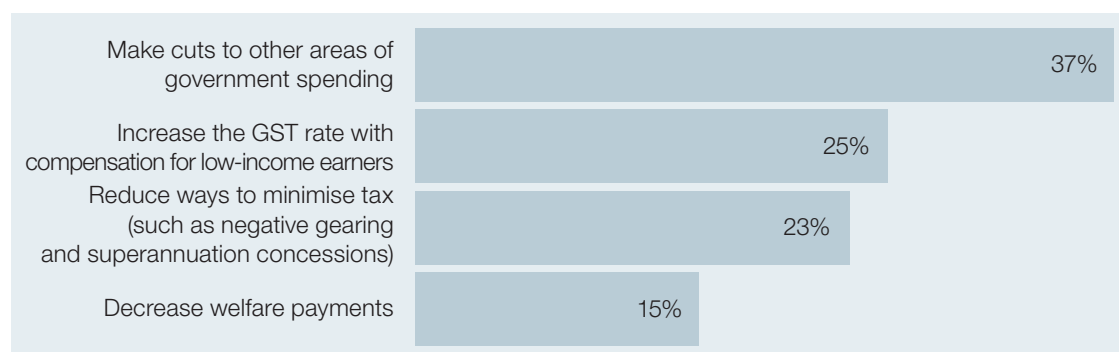
“Do you agree or disagree that reducing government debt is currently the most important economic issue facing the country?”

Source: ANUpoll on Tax and Equity, March 2016



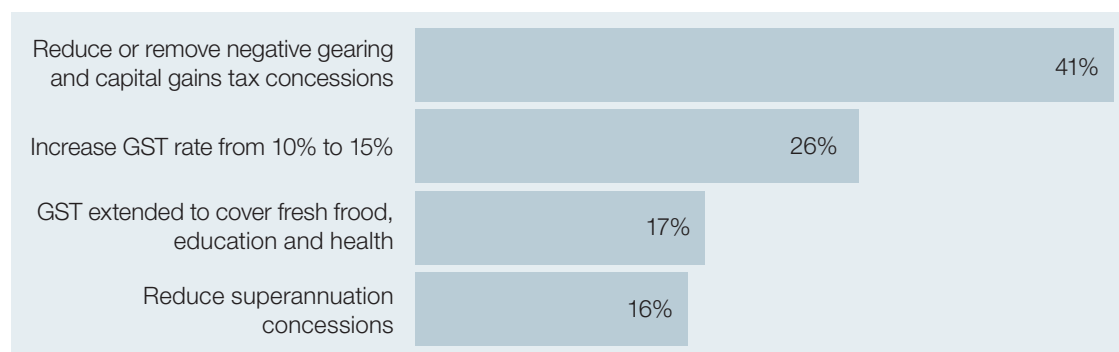
“A range of measures exists to reduce government debt in Australia. Which of the following policy responses would you prefer?”

Source: ANUpoll on Tax and Equity, March 2016



“If cuts to personal income tax were made, which of the following options would you prefer for funding these cuts?”

Source: ANUpoll on Tax and Equity, March 2016



TAX OR SPEND? THE RISE OF SUPPORT FOR SPENDING

Key Points

- > The percentage of Australians wanting more money to be spent on social services has increased dramatically since 2013, to record highs.
- > To balance the budget, 54 per cent of respondents prefer tax increases to cuts in spending on social services (only 32 per cent).
- > Asking whether Australians favour tax cuts or spending cuts elicits substantially similar results, suggesting that they understand the tax and spend equation faced by governments.

Asked whether government had a choice between reducing taxes or spending more money on social services – a widely used measure of whether individuals prefer redistributive or more individualistic government policies – Australians express a strong preference for social services. More than half (55 per cent) either ‘strongly’ or ‘mildly favour’ spending more on social services, while a further 10 per cent say it ‘depends’. Just more than one third (36 per cent) prefer reducing taxes, given this particular choice.

This same question has been asked in every Australian Election Study (AES) since 1987. While the percentage of Australians who favour either ‘mild’ or ‘strong’ reductions in taxes has declined fairly constantly over the 29 years of surveys, the percentage favouring spending on social services has shown more fluctuation. Although the overall trend is in support of spending over tax cuts, there is obvious movement after 2007. However, the sharp increase in support for spending since 2013 appears to revert to the long-term trend.

As an experiment in this ANUpoll, the sample of 1200 respondents was split randomly into two groups. One group of 600 respondents was asked “if the government had a choice between reducing taxes or spending more on social services, which do you think it should do”, and the other 600 respondents was asked “if the government had a choice between increasing taxes or spending less on social services, which do you think it should do”. It was expected that respondents would answer differently depending on whether they were asked to consider tax cuts or tax increases, or spending increases or spending cuts.

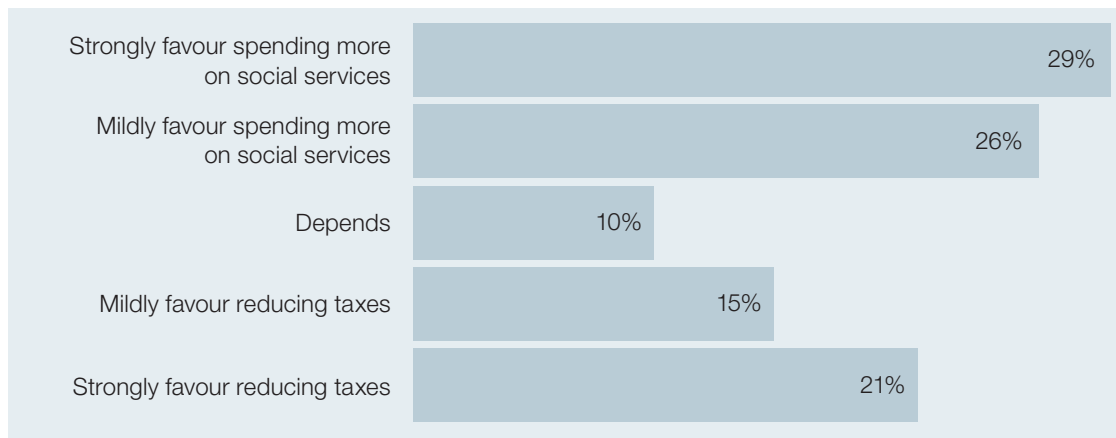
While there is some moderation of Australians’ views depending on whether the tax/spend equation is worded, the preference for spending on social services over reducing tax revenues holds. Still more than half (54 per cent) believe government should increase taxes rather than spend less on social services, compared to 55 per cent who believe that government should spend more on social services rather than cutting taxes.

The exact same percentage – 36 per cent – of respondents prefer spending less on social services as prefer tax cuts. The only real difference between the two sets of respondents is that those asked to choose between tax cuts and increased spending are more emphatic in their views. The group asked to choose between tax increases and cuts to social service funding are more likely to choose the ‘mildly favour’ than the ‘strongly favour’ response options. Similarly, a higher number – 15 compared to 10 per cent – of the latter group respond that it ‘depends’.

The outcome of this survey experiment suggests that Australians have a good understanding of the problem governments face in having to offset expenditure with revenues. Reshaping that problem as one of increasing taxes – which would have a direct financial impact on respondents – only has the effect of tempering Australians’ opinions on the best approaches to balancing expenditure and revenue, rather than changing their minds completely.

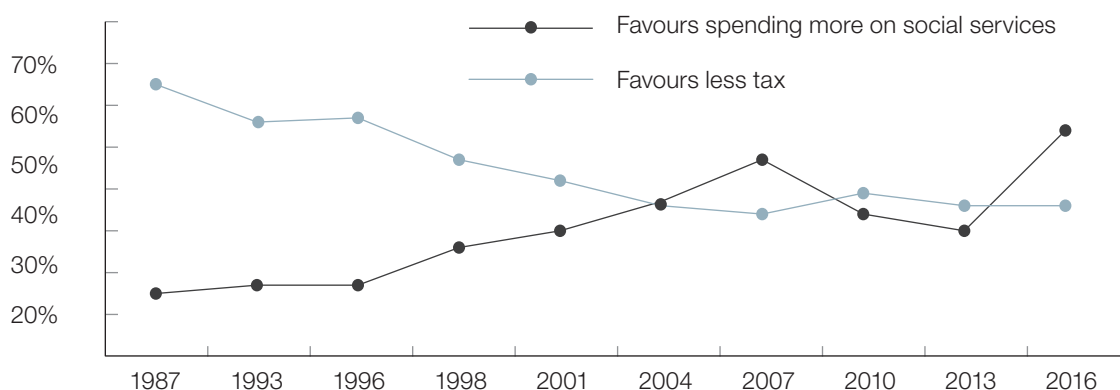
“If the government had a choice between reducing taxes or spending more on social services, which do you think it should do?”

Source: ANUpoll on Tax and Equity, March 2016



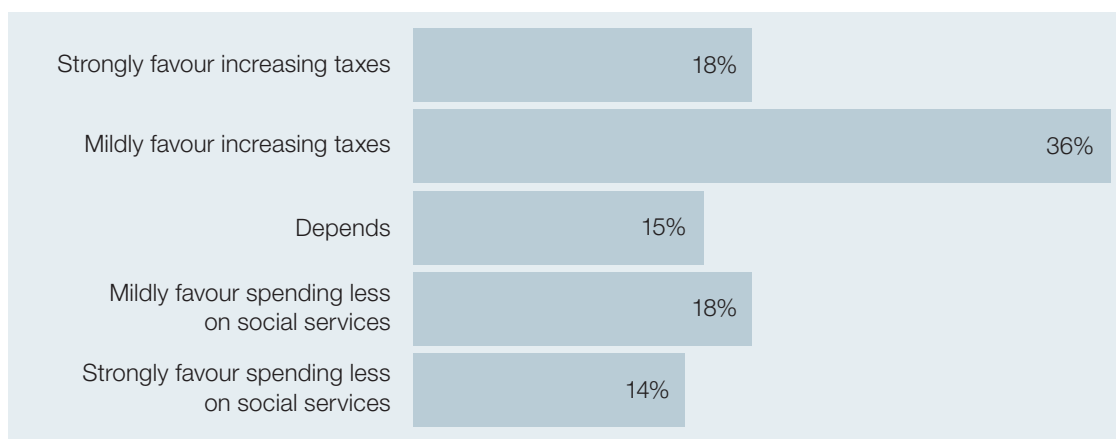
“If the government had a choice between reducing taxes or spending more on social services, which do you think it should do?”

Source: Australian Election Study, 1987 to 2013; ANUpoll on Tax and Equity, March 2016



“If the government had a choice between increasing taxes or spending less on social services, which do you think it should do?”

Source: ANUpoll on Tax and Equity, March 2016



EVALUATING THE TAX BURDEN

Key Points

- > Australians express moderate support for the fairness of the country's overall tax system.
- > Sixty per cent of Australians describe the tax system as either moderately or very fair, compared with 50 per cent of Americans.
- > Australians believe that low income, older people, and families with children pay too much tax.
- > By contrast, they believe large Australian and international companies, and upper-income earners pay too little tax.

Australians overwhelmingly describe the country's overall tax system – not specific to income or any other form of tax – as 'moderately fair'. However, 40 per cent of respondents instead describe the system as either 'not too fair' or 'not fair at all'. Only a very small number – four per cent – express emphatic support for the equity of Australia's tax system.

Perhaps reflecting substantial differences in the structures and administration of the country's income tax systems, Australians are more likely than Americans to describe their tax system as fair. In a February 2015 Pew Research study, 50 per cent of American respondents – ten points fewer than in Australia – described their tax system as either 'moderately' or 'very fair'. Likewise, more Americans – 48 per cent compared with 40 per cent of Australians – described their system as 'not too fair' or 'not fair at all'.

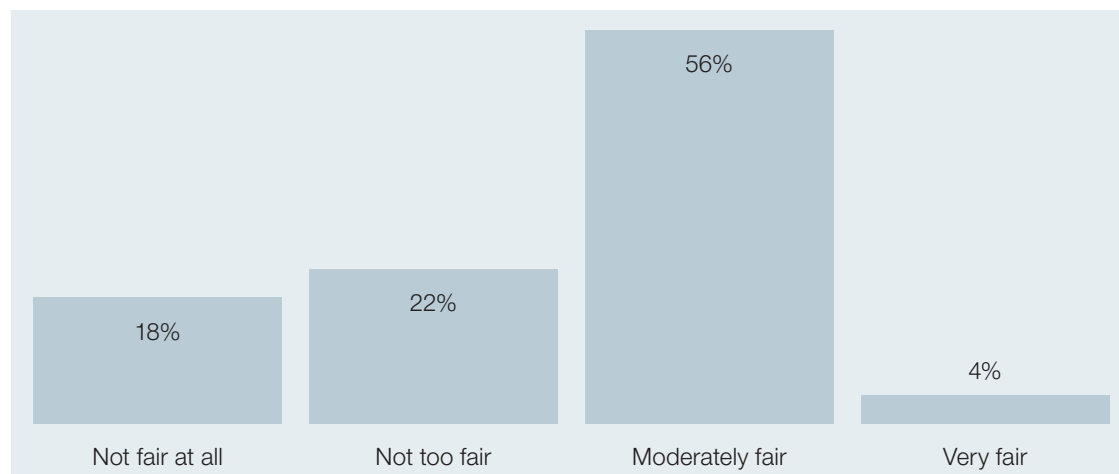
Looking at the fairness of the tax burden faced by specific groups in Australia, respondents show a distinct pattern in their attitudes: families, older people, lower-income earners, and small businesses pay too much; upper-income people, large companies, and particularly international companies, pay too little. Perhaps most notable in these results is that almost 40 per cent of respondents believe that 'upper-income people' pay either 'too much' or their 'fair share'.

Similarly, while opinions on international companies' tax contributions are most likely influenced by recent discussions on tax minimisation by multinational (particularly tech and software) companies, Australians are relatively sanguine toward large Australian companies. In contrast, their sympathies with regard to tax burden are strongly with small business; only six per cent believe this sector pays 'too little' tax.

In a similar study by the Pew Research Center (February 2015), Americans expressed vastly different sentiments. Asked how strongly different aspects of the tax system 'bothers them', 64 per cent responded that 'the feeling that corporations don't pay their fair share' bothered them 'a lot'. Similarly, 61 per cent were bothered 'a lot' by the feeling that some wealthy people don't pay their fair share. As many as 20 per cent were bothered 'a lot' that poor people don't pay their own share. Finally, 59 per cent agreed that the United States Congress should 'completely change' the country's tax system.

“Overall would you say our tax system is...?”

Source: ANUpoll on Tax and Equity, March 2016



“I’m now going to read out some different groups of people. Please tell me if you think they are paying their fair share of taxes, paying too much, or paying too little?”

Source: ANUpoll on Tax and Equity, March 2016

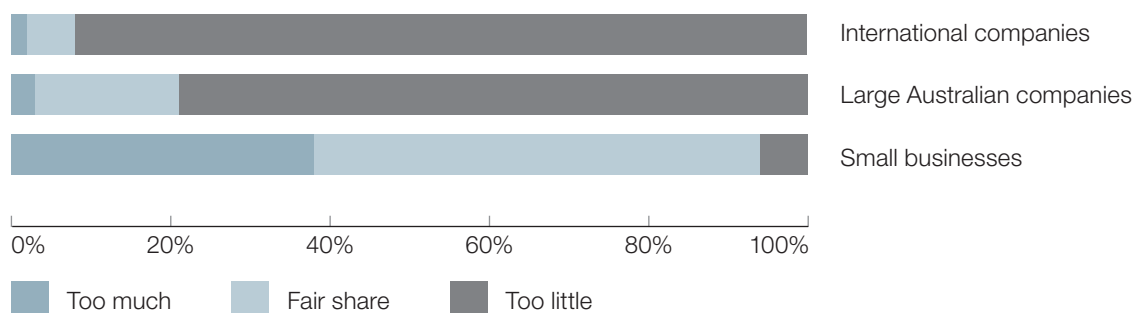
Income groups:



Age groups:



Companies:



GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE: WHAT DO WE KNOW?

Key Points

- > Australians show some confusion over the relative costs of different welfare spending programs.
- > Fewer than one in four respondents correctly answer that aged pensions are the most expensive welfare program.
- > Almost 30 per cent incorrectly name disability pensions as the least expensive welfare program.
- > Australians vastly overestimate the relative costs of unemployment benefits, one of the least expensive federal welfare programs.

Beyond just asking what Australians think about government tax and spending policies, this ANUpoll also sought to uncover what they know about them. From a range of five options, respondents were asked to name which type of welfare expenditure costs the most to fund each year. The options presented are, from most expensive (according to 2015-16 Federal Government budget papers) to least expensive: aged pensions; family tax benefits; disability pensions; unemployment benefits; and single parent pensions.¹ Although expenditure on each of those areas varies from year to year, the order of expenditure is reasonably constant.

Almost half of all respondents – 45 per cent – believe that unemployment benefits are the most expensive area of welfare spending in Australia. Rather, it is the second least expensive of the five areas listed. Almost one quarter – 22 per cent – correctly answer that aged pensions are the most expensive item listed. They are in fact the second most expensive of all the programs in the 2015-16 federal budget (behind only revenue transfers to the states and territories, and in front of Medicare expenditure). Family tax benefits, the second most expensive item listed and the fourth most expensive budget program overall, was named by only 11 per cent of respondents.

Asked which area of welfare costs the least money, Australians' answers are more diverse. The correct answer – single parent pensions, or 'Parenting Payment – Single' – received only 16 per cent of responses. Even fewer – six per cent – responded with the second least expensive area, in unemployment benefits (i.e. 'Job Seeker Income support'). Disability pensions are the most commonly named answer, with 28 per cent of all responses, despite being the fifth most expensive of all programs in the 2015-16 federal budget.

¹ In 2015-2016, the Federal Government has appropriated the following to each listed item:

Aged pension ('income support for seniors') – \$44,178m

Family tax benefit – \$20,152m

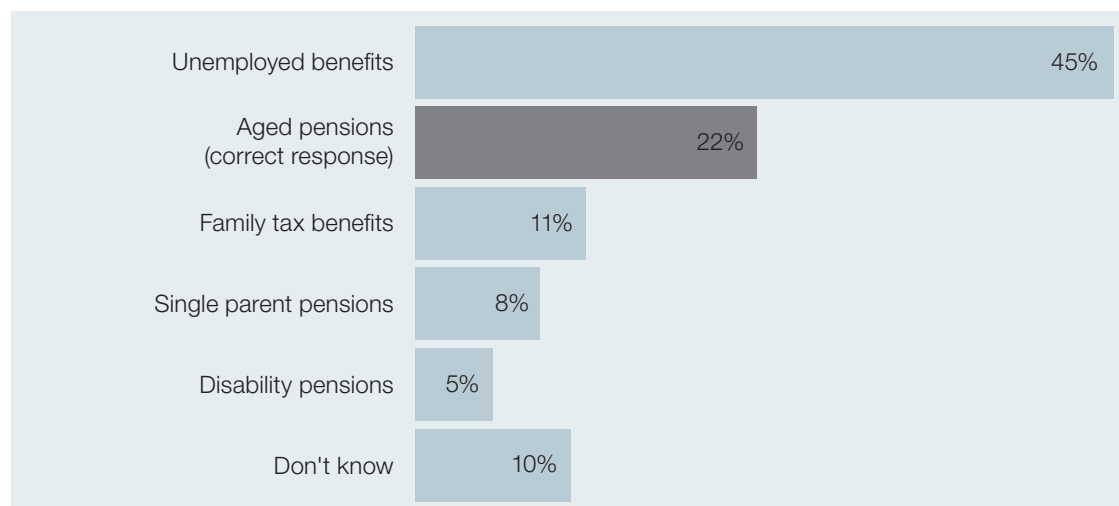
Disability pensions ('income support for people with a disability') – \$17,059m

Unemployment benefit ('job seeker income support') – \$11,515m

Single parent pension ('parenting payment single') – \$4,677m

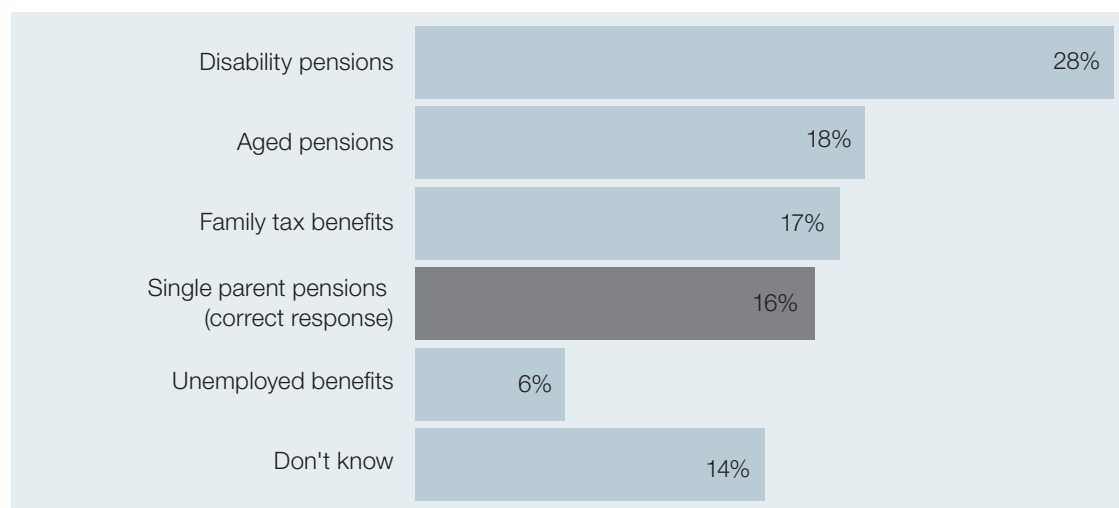
“Thinking about the different types of welfare – which do you think costs the *most* money each year?”

Source: ANUpoll on Tax and Equity, March 2016



“Thinking about the different types of welfare – which do you think costs the *least* money each year?”

Source: ANUpoll on Tax and Equity, March 2016



GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE: WHAT DO WE WANT?

Key Points

- > Australians express desire for more public expenditure in a broad range of policy areas, but specifically health, aged care, disability support, policing, and education.
- > The areas where Australians underestimate existing levels of funding receive the highest support for more funding, and vice versa.
- > Women express much stronger support than men for additional funding for health, education, aged care and pensions, disability support, and domestic violence prevention programs.

Notwithstanding that Australians are often confused about the relative cost of different areas of government expenditure, this ANUpoll also asked which areas respondents believe should receive more or less public expenditure. Many areas receive overwhelming support for additional funding: domestic violence prevention, police and law enforcement, health, education, environmental protection, disability support, aged care, and aged pensions.

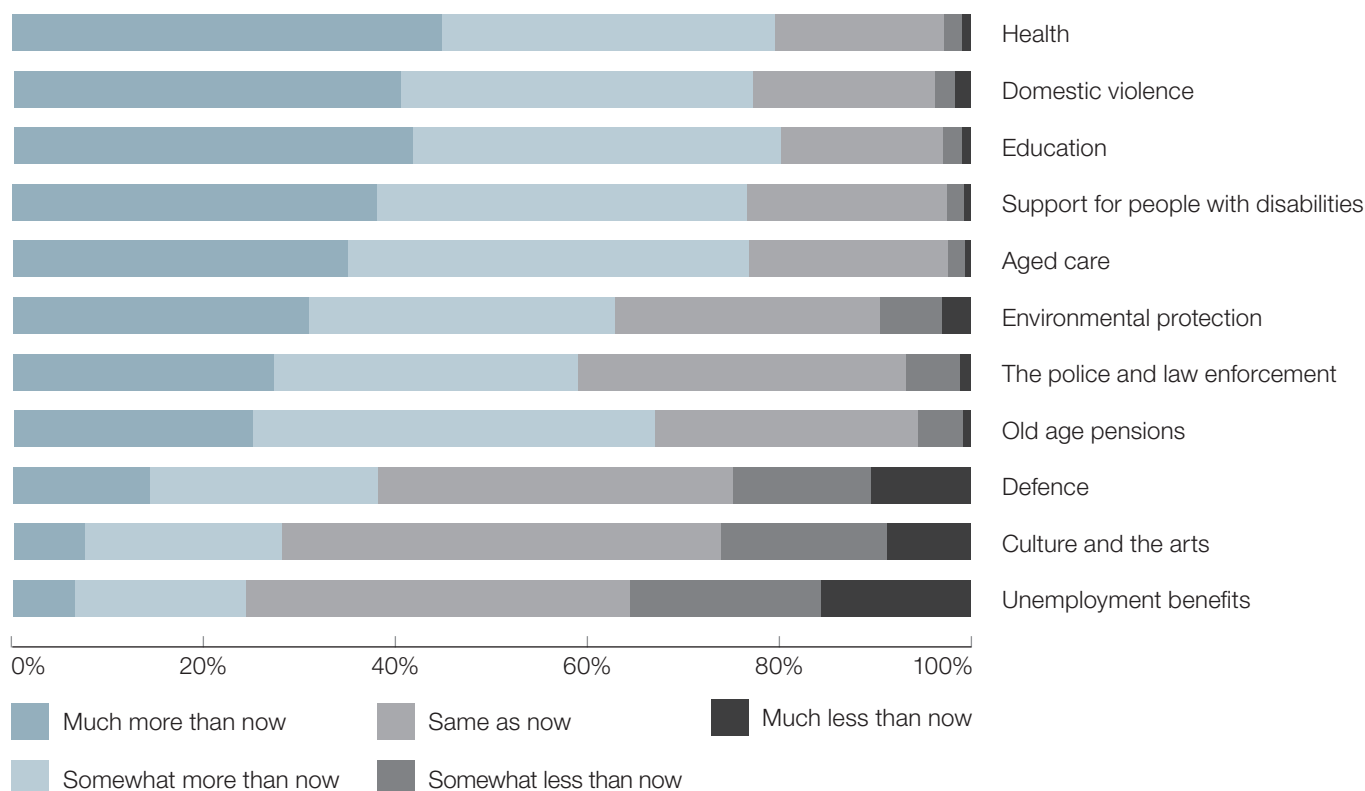
Some of this support may be based on the general underestimation of existing funding, for instance in the case of aged pensions and support for people with disabilities. Likewise, the relative lack of support for increases to unemployment benefits is most likely based on the general overestimation of existing funding. There is little to no variation in the spending preferences of those respondents who correctly answered questions on the most and least expensive areas of welfare spending, and those who answered incorrectly.

Looking at the spending preferences of men and women reveals some differences in priorities between genders. Women are more supportive of health funding than men; 51 per cent of women want 'much more' expenditure, compared with 37 per cent of men. Likewise, 31 per cent of women want 'much more' funding of police and law enforcement, compared with 22 per cent of men. In terms of education expenditure, 45 per cent of women report wanting 'much more' expenditure, compared with 37 per cent of men. Similar gaps exist between men and women with regard to aged care, aged pensions, disability support, and domestic violence expenditure.

While support for greater expenditure in the listed policy areas can appear almost unbelievably strong, time series data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) and Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (ASSA) show that these percentages are actually remarkably stable. Support for additional expenditure for defence declined between 1985 and 2007, but has rebounded slightly in 2016, while support for unemployment benefits and culture and arts funding are at their highest since 1985. Calls for more funding for environmental protection are more sporadic, most likely depending on environmental events or campaigns. Otherwise, Australian attitudes towards public expenditure by policy area have shown little change over the past 30 years.

“I’m now going to read out a number of different areas that government currently funds through taxes. Could you please say whether there should be more or less public expenditure in each area?”

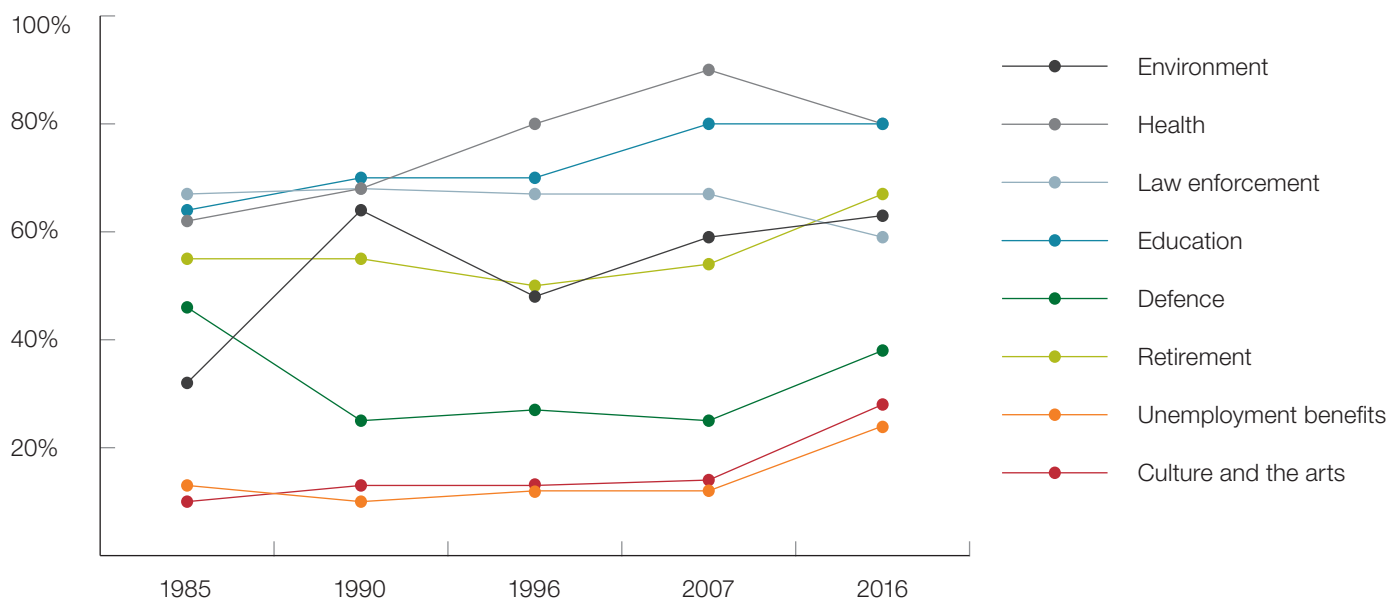
Source: ANUpoll on Tax and Equity, March 2016



“I’m now going to read out a number of different areas that government currently funds through taxes. Could you please say whether there should be more or less public expenditure in each area?”

‘Much more than now’ and ‘Somewhat more than now’ responses only.

Source: ISSP module on government spending, 1985 to 1996; ASSA 2007; ANUpoll on Tax and Equity, March 2016. Data collated by Wilson, Meagher, and Hermes in Pietsch and Aarons (eds) (2012), Australia: Identity, Fear and Governance in the 21st Century, ANU Press, Canberra.



KEY TRENDS: MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEMS AND POLITICAL MOOD

Key Points

- > Consistent with all but one ANUpoll since 2008, the economy is the most popular response to the question of the most important issue facing the country.
- > Immigration and better government remain the second and third most commonly named issues, although immigration has declined in importance.
- > Satisfaction with the direction of the country shows signs of stabilising, after turbulence throughout 2015.

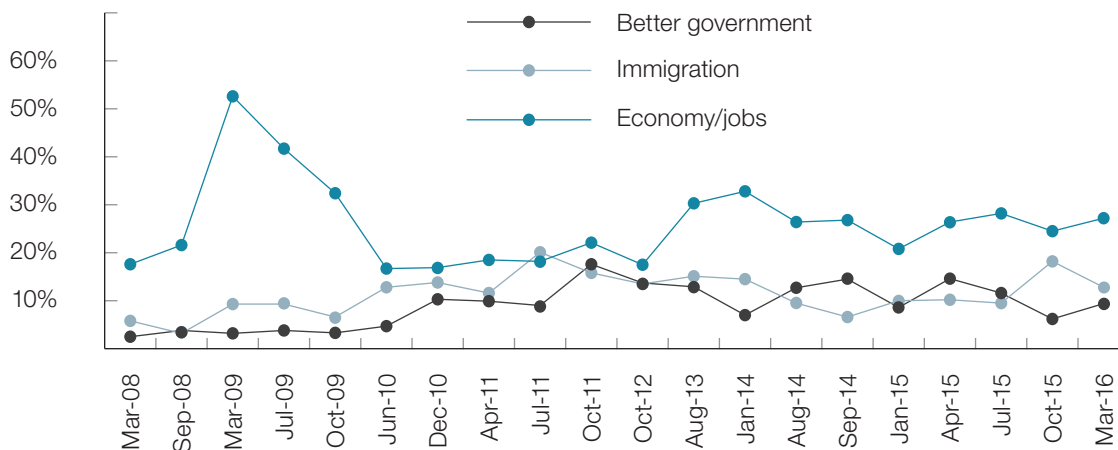
Since March 2008, every ANUpoll has asked two consistent questions: which issues Australians name the most and second most important problems facing the country, and whether Australians are satisfied with the direction of the country. Almost without exception, they have named the economy as the most important issue. Continuing that trend, 27 per cent of respondents to this poll nominate the economy, jobs, or some variation on those issues. 'Better government' receives the second highest mentions, with 13 per cent of all responses, and immigration third most with nine per cent. The prominence of these three issues in the minds of responses continues a long-term and relatively stable trend.

After plummeting in the July 2015 ANUpoll, Australians' satisfaction with the direction in which the country is heading has recovered somewhat in the two most recent polls. This poll, conducted in March 2016, reveals that 56 per cent of Australians are either 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with that direction. This is a small decrease from 59 per cent in the October 2015 poll. More than one third – 35 per cent – of respondents remain dissatisfied with the direction of the country. However, this continues a downward trend in dissatisfaction from July 2015, when 40 per cent of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the direction of the country.

The resulting net satisfaction figure (total satisfied minus total dissatisfied) of 20 percentage points represents a nine point increase from July 2015, the lowest figure recorded since 2008. While net satisfaction in March 2016 is lower than in October 2015 (falling by seven points over almost six months), this decline mirrors falling support for the Turnbull Coalition government in publicly reported opinion polling after the remarkable highs upon Turnbull's ascension to the Prime Ministership. This movement in satisfaction with the direction of the country likely reflects a reversion to the long-term trend which, while downward, is relatively stable.

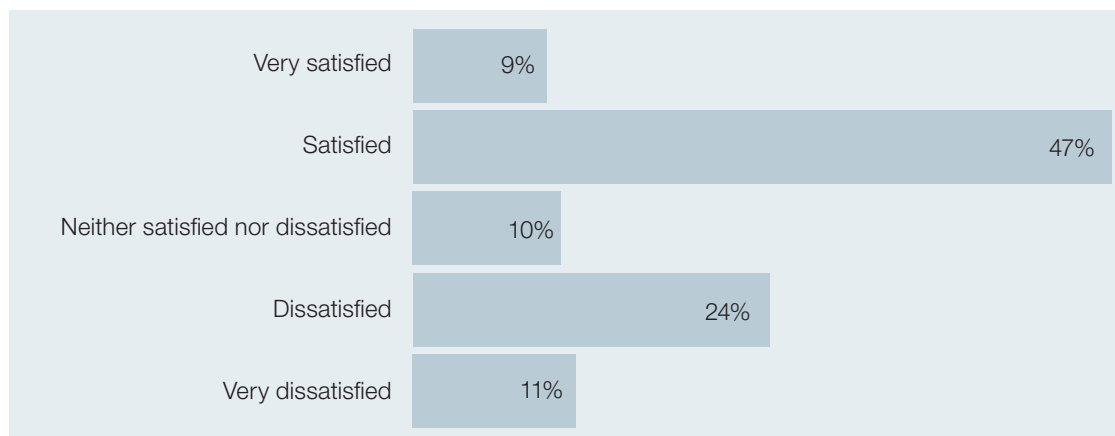
“What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?”

Source: ANUpolls March 2008-March 2016



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

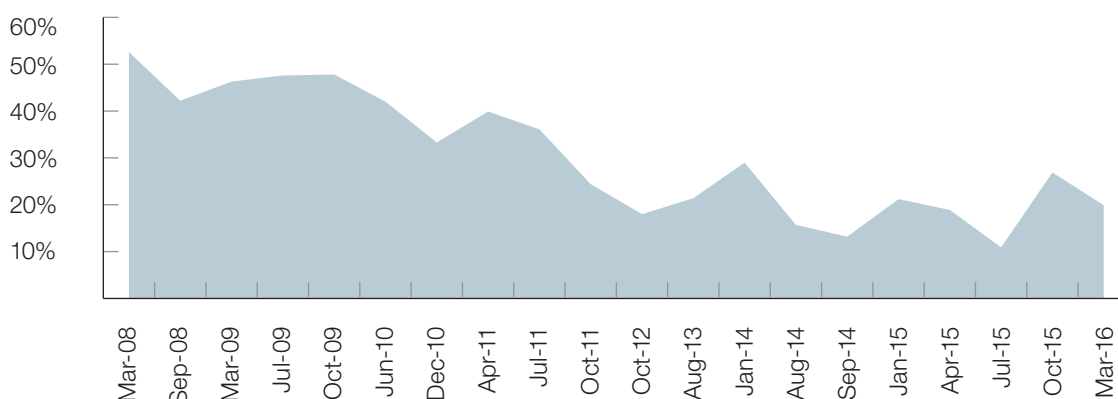
Source: ANUpoll on Tax and Equity, March 2016



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

(Total satisfied minus total dissatisfied.)

Source: ANUpoll on Tax and Equity, March 2016



ANUPOLL QUESTIONS

The following tables report the frequency of responses to questions in the March 2016 ANUpoll, weighted to reflect population age and gender benchmarks. Estimates derived from surveys are subject to sampling variability. This variability can be expressed as a standard error (i.e. the extent to which the estimate of responses may vary from the estimate if the entire population answered the same questions). Cases where this error is large relative to the estimate are marked with a single asterisk (where the relative standard error is greater than 25 per cent of the estimate) and two asterisks (where the relative standard error is greater than 50 per cent of the estimate) respectively. Such estimates should be reported with caution.

Should there be more or less public expenditure in ...

Environmental protection?

	Frequency	Per cent
Much more than now	360	30.9
Somewhat more than now	373	32.0
Same as now	323	27.7
Somewhat less than now	75	6.4
Much less than now	35	3.0
Total valid responses	1166	100.0
Refused	2	
Don't know	33	
Total	1200	

Health?

	Frequency	Per cent
Much more than now	527	44.9
Somewhat more than now	408	34.8
Same as now	207	17.6
Somewhat less than now	22	1.9
Much less than now	10	0.9*
Total valid responses	1174	100.0
Refused	0	
Don't know	26	
Total	1200	

The police and law enforcement?

	Frequency	Per cent
Much more than now	320	27.3
Somewhat more than now	372	31.7
Same as now	401	34.2
Somewhat less than now	67	5.7
Much less than now	13	1.1
Total valid responses	1172	100.0
Refused	1	
Don't know	27	
Total	1200	

Education?

	Frequency	Per cent
Much more than now	487	41.7
Somewhat more than now	448	38.4
Same as now	197	16.9
Somewhat less than now	24	2.0
Much less than now	11	0.9*
Total valid responses	1168	100.0
Refused	2	
Don't know	30	
Total	1200	

Defence?

	Frequency	Per cent
Much more than now	163	14.2
Somewhat more than now	274	23.8
Same as now	426	37.1
Somewhat less than now	166	14.4
Much less than now	120	10.4
Total valid responses	1149	100.0
Refused	0	
Don't know	51	
Total	1200	

Old age pensions?

	Frequency	Per cent
Much more than now	291	25.0
Somewhat more than now	489	42.0
Same as now	319	27.4
Somewhat less than now	55	4.7
Much less than now	10	0.8*
Total valid responses	1164	100.0
Refused	1	
Don't know	35	
Total	1200	

Unemployment benefits?

	Frequency	Per cent
Much more than now	74	6.5
Somewhat more than now	206	17.9
Same as now	459	40.0
Somewhat less than now	230	20.0
Much less than now	179	15.6
Total valid responses	1148	100.0
Refused	6	
Don't know	46	
Total	1200	

Culture and the arts?

	Frequency	Per cent
Much more than now	86	7.5
Somewhat more than now	236	20.5
Same as now	525	45.8
Somewhat less than now	200	17.4
Much less than now	100	8.7
Total valid responses	1147	100.0
Refused	2	
Don't know	51	
Total	1200	

Support for people with disabilities?

	Frequency	Per cent
Much more than now	440	38.0
Somewhat more than now	449	38.7
Same as now	241	20.8
Somewhat less than now	21	1.8
Much less than now	8	0.7*
Total valid responses	1158	100.0
Refused	2	
Don't know	39	
Total	1200	

Aged care?

	Frequency	Per cent
Much more than now	406	35.0
Somewhat more than now	486	41.9
Same as now	241	20.8
Somewhat less than now	19	1.7
Much less than now	7	.6*
Total valid responses	1160	100.0
Refused	0	
Don't know	40	
Total	1200	

Domestic violence?

	Frequency	Per cent
Much more than now	466	40.4
Somewhat more than now	424	36.8
Same as now	219	19.0
Somewhat less than now	24	2.1
Much less than now	19	1.6*
Total valid responses	1152	100.0
Refused	0	
Don't know	48	
Total	1200	

Overall would you say that our tax system is ...?

	Frequency	Per cent
Very fair	46	3.9
Moderately fair	660	56.3
Not too fair	257	21.9
Not fair at all	209	17.9
Total valid responses	1172	100.0
Refused	2	
Refused	0	
Don't know	26	
Total	1200	

I'm now going to read out some different groups of people. Please tell me if you think they are paying their fair share of taxes, paying too much, or paying too little? ...

Lower-income people?

	Frequency	Per cent
Fair share	603	52.0
Too much	499	43.0
Too little	58	5.0
Total valid responses	1160	100.0
Refused	1	
Don't know	40	
Total	1200	

Middle-income people?

	Frequency	Per cent
Fair share	775	66.7
Too much	325	28.0
Too little	62	5.3
Total valid responses	1161	100.0
Refused	2	
Don't know	37	
Total	1200	

Upper-income people?

	Frequency	Per cent
Fair share	331	29.3
Too much	88	7.7
Too little	712	63.0
Total valid responses	1131	100.0
Refused	4	
Don't know	65	
Total	1200	

International companies?

	Frequency	Per cent
Fair share	61	5.5
Too much	19	1.7*
Too little	1028	92.8
Total valid responses	1108	100.0
Refused	2	
Don't know	90	
Total	1200	

Large Australian companies?

	Frequency	Per cent
Fair share	200	17.9
Too much	34	3.1
Too little	880	79.0
Total valid responses	1114	100.0
Refused	0	
Don't know	86	
Total	1200	

Small businesses?

	Frequency	Per cent
Fair share	623	55.9
Too much	425	38.1
Too little	67	6.0
Total valid responses	1115	100.0
Refused	0	
Don't know	85	
Total	1200	

Families with children?

	Frequency	Per cent
Fair share	620	55.5
Too much	448	40.1
Too little	49	4.4
Total valid responses	1117	100.0
Refused	1	
Don't know	82	
Total	1200	

Young singles?

	Frequency	Per cent
Fair share	775	71.1
Too much	231	21.2
Too little	84	7.7
Total valid responses	1090	100.0
Refused	4	
Don't know	106	
Total	1200	

Older people?

	Frequency	Per cent
Fair share	558	51.5
Too much	468	43.1
Too little	58	5.3
Total valid responses	1084	100.0
Refused	5	
Don't know	111	
Total	1200	

If the government had a choice between reducing taxes or spending more on social services, which do you think it should do?

	Frequency	Per cent
Strongly favour reducing taxes	119	20.7
Mildly favour reducing taxes	85	14.8
Depends	55	9.5
Mildly favour spending more on social services	150	26.3
Strongly favour spending more on social services	164	28.7
Total valid responses	573	100.0
Refused	2	
Don't know	25	
Total	600	

If the government had a choice between increasing taxes or spending less on social services, which do you think it should do?

	Frequency	Per cent
Strongly favour increasing taxes	100	18.0
Mildly favour increasing taxes	199	35.8
Depends	81	14.5
Mildly favour spending less on social services	100	18.1
Strongly favour spending less on social services	76	13.7
Total valid responses	556	100.0
Refused	7	
Don't know	37	
Total	600	

If cuts to personal income tax were made, which of the following options would you prefer for funding these cuts?

	Frequency	Per cent
GST extended to cover fresh food, education and health	179	17.3
Increase GST rate from 10% to 15%	265	25.5
Reduce or remove negative gearing and capital gains tax concessions	424	40.9
Reduce superannuation concessions	169	16.3
Total valid responses	1036	100.0
Refused	15	
Don't know	149	
Total	1200	

Do you agree or disagree that reducing government debt is currently the most important economic issue facing the country?

	Frequency	Per cent
Strongly agree	244	21.1
Agree	282	24.4
Neither agree nor disagree	45	3.9
Disagree	392	33.9
Strongly disagree	193	16.7
Total valid responses	1156	100.0
Refused	1	
Don't know	43	
Total	1200	

A range of measures exist to reduce government debt in Australia. Which of the following policy responses would you prefer?

	Frequency	Per cent
Increase the GST rate with compensation for low-income earners	284	25.0
Reduce ways to minimise tax such as negative gearing and superannuation concessions	258	22.7
Decrease welfare payments	173	15.3
Make cuts to other areas of government spending	419	36.9
Total valid responses	1134	100.0
Refused	10	
Don't know	56	
Total	1200	

Thinking about different types of welfare – which do you think costs the MOST money each year?

	Frequency	Per cent
Unemployment benefits	534	50.0
Aged pensions	257	24.0
Disability pensions	60	5.6
Family tax benefits	127	11.9
Single parent pensions	91	8.5
Total valid responses	1068	100.0
Refused	9	
Don't know	123	
Total	1200	

Thinking about different types of welfare – which do you think costs the LEAST money each year?

	Frequency	Per cent
Unemployment benefits	69	6.7
Aged pensions	220	21.6
Disability pensions	335	32.8
Family tax benefits	203	19.9
Single parent pensions	195	19.1
Total valid responses	1022	100.0
Refused	5	
Don't know	173	
Total	1200	

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

	Frequency	Per cent
Very satisfied	102	8.6
Satisfied	547	46.5
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	114	9.7
Dissatisfied	286	24.3
Very dissatisfied	128	10.9
Total valid responses	1177	100.0
Refused	1	
Don't know/not sure	21	
Total	1200	

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

ANUpoll	Total satisfied	Total dissatisfied	Net satisfaction (satisfied minus dissatisfied)
Mar-08	72.9	20.3	52.6
Sep-08	66.9	24.7	42.2
Mar-09	70.0	23.7	46.3
Jul-09	71.1	23.5	47.6
Oct-09	70.0	22.2	47.8
Jun-10	65.6	23.6	42.0
Dec-10	62.7	29.4	33.3
Apr-11	64.9	25.0	39.9
Jul-11	62.8	26.7	36.1
Oct-11	55.2	30.8	24.4
Oct-12	54.0	36.0	18.0
Aug-13	55.3	33.9	21.4
Jan-14	61.0	32.0	29.0
Aug-14	51.5	35.8	15.7
Sep-14	52.0	38.8	13.2
Jan-15	55.9	34.7	21.2
Apr-15	53.9	35.0	18.9
Jul-15	50.6	39.7	10.9
Oct-15	58.5	31.6	26.9
Mar-16	56.1	35.2	19.9

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

	Frequency	Per cent
Economy/jobs	306	27.2
Immigration	145	12.8
Better government	106	9.4
Environment/global warming	89	7.9
Poverty/ Social exclusion/ inequality	70	6.2
Values/morals/respect for others	66	5.8
Foreign influence/Australia's position in world	31	2.7
Terrorism	30	2.7
Other Specify	30	2.6
Health care	28	2.4
Alcohol and Drug use	28	2.5
Housing affordability	25	2.2
Education	25	2.2
Ageing population	22	2.0
Law and order/crime/justice system	21	1.8
Social services including aged care, the disabled, etc	17	1.6
Taxation	14	1.2*
Indigenous affairs	13	1.1*
The budget	11	1.0*
Infrastructure/ Planning/ Innovation	11	1.0*
Defence/national security	10	0.9*
None/ no other	7	0.6*
Trade balance/loss of jobs to overseas	7	0.6*
Young people's behaviour/ attitudes	6	0.5*
Industrial relations	5	0.4*
Water management	3	0.3*
Family/community/societal breakdown	2	0.1*
Rural/farming issues	1	0.1**
Total valid responses	1127	100.0
Refused	4	
Don't know/can't say	69	
Total	1200	

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

	Frequency	Per cent
Economy/jobs	199	19.2
Immigration	124	12.0
Poverty/ Social exclusion/ inequality	81	7.8
Better government	70	6.7
Health care	65	6.3
Education	65	6.3
Environment/global warming	51	4.9
Housing affordability	38	3.7
Law and order/ crime/ justice system	35	3.4
Alcohol and Drug use	34	3.3
Values/ morals/ respect for others	33	3.2
Infrastructure/ Planning/ Innovation	32	3.1
Foreign influence/Australia's position in world	31	3.0
Ageing population	24	2.3
Terrorism	23	2.2
Other Specify	23	2.3
None/ no other	18	1.7*
Taxation	13	1.2*
Social services including aged care, the disabled, etc	13	1.3*
Defence/national security	12	1.1*
The budget	12	1.1*
Indigenous affairs	8	0.8*
Rural/farming issues	8	0.7*
Trade balance/loss of jobs to overseas	7	0.7*
Water management	5	0.5*
Industrial relations	4	0.4*
Family/community/societal breakdown	3	0.3*
Interest rates	2	0.2*
Iraq war	1	0.1**
Total valid responses	1035	100.0
Refused	2	
Don't know/can't say	84	
System	79	
Total	1200	

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

ANUpoll	Economy/ jobs	Immigration	Better government
Mar-08	17.6	5.8	2.5
Sep-08	21.6	3.2	3.8
Mar-09	52.6	9.3	3.2
Jul-09	41.7	9.3	3.8
Oct-09	32.4	6.6	3.3
Jun-10	16.7	12.8	4.7
Dec-10	16.9	13.8	10.3
Apr-11	18.5	11.6	9.9
Jul-11	18.2	20.1	9.0
Oct-11	22.1	15.8	17.6
Oct-12	17.5	13.5	13.7
Aug-13	30.3	15.1	12.9
Jan-14	32.8	14.5	7.0
Aug-14	26.4	9.5	12.7
Sep-14	26.8	6.6	14.5
Jan-15	20.8	10.	8.6
Apr-15	26.4	10.2	14.6
Jul-15	28.2	9.5	11.6
Oct-15	24.5	18.2	6.2
Mar-16	27.2	12.8	9.4

CONTACT US

The Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200
T +61 2 6125 5111

CRICOS Provider #00120C