

Labor maintains 52-48% lead in Newspoll as vote polarises

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Labor has retained a two-party 52-48% lead in the latest [Newspoll](#), taken after Scott Morrison called the election last Thursday.

Both Labor and the Coalition increased their primary votes and are now equal on 39%. Labor was up 2 points and the Coalition rose a point, compared with the previous poll published a week ago.

The Newspoll, in Monday's Australian, shows signs of the vote polarising as the campaign formally starts for the May 18 election.

One Nation - which has had a spate of bad publicity since revelations about its canvassing of the US gun lobby - has fallen 2 points to 4%, and support for "others" was down a point to 9%. The Greens are stable on 9%.

Morrison has maintained an 11-point lead over Bill Shorten as better prime minister. There was virtually no change in the leaders' approval ratings.

The results represent a 2.4% swing against the Coalition from the last election - which, if uniform, would elect a Shorten government.

The total vote for independents and minor parties including the Greens was 22%, compared with a peak of 29% in mid 2017. The April 11-14 poll surveyed 1697 voters.

Speaking in Brisbane on Sunday, Morrison pushed the theme that Labor could not "manage money", declaring that "if you can't manage money, then you can't run the country".

"If you can't manage money, you can't run health system. If you can't manage money, you can't run an education system. If you can't manage money, you can't create jobs for young people.

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"If you can't manage money, you can't combat youth suicide. You can't go out there and change the lives for Australians living with disabilities. You can't go out there and stand with parents while they are working to try and change the life of their kids who are struggling with eating disorder.

"You can't go out there and actually make the environment the beautiful thing we want it to be for everybody in this country," Morrison said.

Addressing a rally of volunteers in Sydney, Shorten said the election was "a choice between better hospitals and better schools – or bigger tax loopholes for the top end of town".

Labor would make multinationals pay their fair share of tax, end the intergenerational bias in the tax system, and close the unfair, unsustainable loopholes the top end of town used, he said.

"And I have to say this: if you are getting a tax credit when you haven't paid any income tax, this is a gift. [...] It is a gift lifted from the taxes paid by working class and middle class people in Australia today.

"It is a gift that is eating our budget. It's now costing our nation over \$6 billion this year, and pretty soon will cost \$8 billion.

"And if all of this talk of billions is too much, perhaps think of it in the following way:

"Two minutes' worth of the gift, the money that flows out of this one loophole, two minutes out of 365 days, could pay for someone's knee replacement surgery.

"Ten minutes worth of the gift is enough to employ a nurse, full-time, for a year.

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"In one hour, this loophole alone could pay for a hospital bed, for a whole year."

Michelle Grattan does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

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