

# One Nation voters' changed habits prompt Newspoll rethink

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A reassessment of One Nation preference flows prompted a change by Newspoll late last year to the way it calculates the two-party-preferred vote in its regular poll of Australian voting intentions, published exclusively by *The Australian*.

YouGov Galaxy, which conducts Newspoll, said the company had altered the way it allocated One Nation preferences following last year's Queensland and West Australian elections, which showed One Nation voters were more likely to preference the Coalition than Labor.

There have been eight Newspolls conducted so far using the refined methodology.

Newspoll has historically calculated the two-party-preferred vote based on preference flows from the last election, which in the case of One Nation broke almost evenly between Labor and the Coalition.

But in November's Queensland state poll, 65 per cent of One Nation preferences flowed to the LNP; and in WA's March 2017 state poll, the Liberal Party received about 60 per cent of One Nation's preferences. The company decided in December to change its methodology to reflect the observed preference flows from both elections.

ABC election analyst Antony Green said yesterday there had been a strong case for Newspoll to change the way it allocated One Nation preferences. "Given these are assumptions about preferences, it is perfectly reasonable, if you think there has been a change in preference flows, to make a change in your calculation," he said. Mr Green said the changes to the methodology would affect the poll's two-party-preferred results.

"If One Nation is getting 7-8 per cent, and you're adjusting away from 50 towards 65 per cent preference flows, then you're talking about a difference of up to 0.7 to 1 per cent in the two-party preferred, just by a simple change in technique," he said.

Mr Green said asking voters about the way they would allocate their preferences had "proven to be quite inaccurate". "They either haven't thought about it or it doesn't reflect what happens on the day," he said.

The most recent Fairfax Ipsos poll, which asked voters how they intended to allocate preferences, recorded the Coalition and Labor tied with a 50:50 two-party-preferred vote.

Political pundits have incorrectly speculated that the Coalition's improved performance to 49-51 in last week's Newspoll was due to the new methodology. ABC's *Insiders* host Barrie Cassidy said the April 22 Newspoll showed the gap between the parties "suddenly tightening". "It came about because the pollsters changed the methodology," he said. He added that "conspiracy theorists" should consider the new formula may be more accurate.

YouGov Galaxy managing director David Briggs said the new methodology had been in place since before Christmas.

"Just to be completely clear, the change to One Nation preference flows was made in December 2017, not prior to the most recent poll as some commentators have wrongly suggested," Mr Briggs said.

Newspoll is seen as the gold standard in Australian political polling. The Prime Minister recognised its status when challenging Tony Abbott for the leadership, lashing his predecessor for losing 30 Newspolls in a row. But the benchmark came back to haunt him this month, when Mr Turnbull achieved the same losing run.

## Science of accurately predicting minor party preference flows

DAVID BRIGGS, The Australian, 12:00AM April 30, 2018

In recent years the major parties' share of the vote has declined. This means preference flows from minor parties such as the Greens, One Nation and the Australian Conservatives have become increasingly important in determining the outcome of elections.

One of the most challenging aspects of Australian polling is to accurately predict these preference flows from minor parties. We have always believed preference flows at previous elections provides the best guide to how they will flow at the next. This is much more accurate than asking people about their second or third preferences, as some polling companies do.

One reason this latter method has generally proven to be unreliable is many voters follow how-to-vote cards. The other reason is preference flows for established parties tend to be rather consistent. The best example of this is the Greens, which consistently deliver more than three-quarters of their preferences to the Labor Party.

Since the 2016 federal election the Australian political landscape has changed dramatically. The growth of minor parties has accelerated.

Parties like One Nation, which barely registered at the last federal election, now enjoys substantial support in published polls, including Newspoll. We also have new parties such as the Australian Conservatives, which didn't exist at the last election.

## 2PP SINCE DECEMBER 2017



	Dec 14-17	Feb 1-4	Feb 15-18	Mar 1-4	Mar 22-25	Apr 5-8	Apr 19-22
COALITION	47	48	47	47	47	48	49
LABOR	53	52	53	53	53	52	51

### Newspoll 2PP since December 2017

For these parties, attempting to extrapolate from preferences flows at the last election may not produce the most accurate results.

For instance, in the 2016 federal election One Nation stood in just 15 of the 150 lower house seats. On average, its preferences flowed almost 50-50 between the two major parties.

But One Nation in 2018 is attracting many more voters in polling. More importantly, the party is picking up supporters who are not necessarily of the same ilk as those who voted for it when it was attracting a smaller percentage of the vote.

## THE TRACK RECORD

	Newspoll 2PP %	Actual result %
<b>July 2016</b>		
Coalition	50.5	50.4
Labor	49.5	49.6

### September 2013

Coalition	53.5	54
Labor	46.5	46

### August 2010

Coalition	49.8	49.9
Labor	50.2	50.1

### November 2007

Coalition	48	47.3
Labor	52	52.7

Newspoll's track record since 2007.

Clear evidence of this was at the Queensland state election where One Nation's preferences flowed very differently, with almost two-thirds flowing to the LNP (65 per cent) and just a third to Labor. This was consistent with what happened in the earlier WA election where the Liberals received 60 per cent of One Nation's preferences.

After the Queensland election, we made an internal decision to adjust the preference flow in our national polling to also reflect the realities we are observing in these elections.

Just to be clear, the change to One Nation preference flows was made in December 2017, not before the most recent poll as some commentators wrongly suggested. The preference flow from minor parties is a complex issue and it is entirely appropriate that professional pollsters should adapt their methods to suit the facts. Many of the problems we have seen overseas with polling have occurred precisely because polling companies have failed to take into account realities on the ground that affect their assumptions.

Newspoll has been the most accurate Australian poll for multiple state and federal polls precisely because we weigh up the evidence and make appropriate decisions.

*David Briggs is managing director of YouGov Galaxy, which conducts Newspoll for The Australian.*