

Fairfax-Ipsos: Labor leads Coalition 55:45



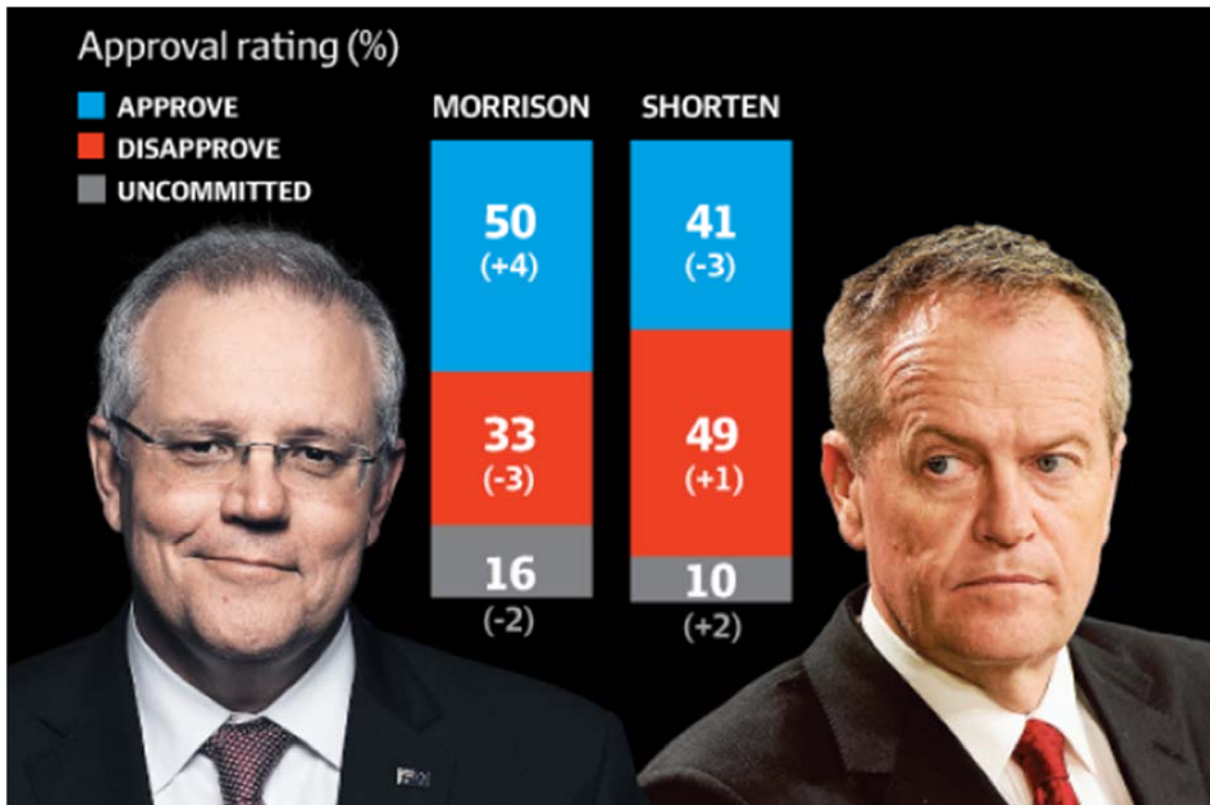
Scott Morrison with local MP Nicole Flint in Glenelg on Sunday. On Saturday, Mr Morrison appealed to voters to choose Liberal candidate for Wentworth Dave Sharma in the national interest, and not to protest the ousting of Malcolm Turnbull. AAP

AFR, [Phillip Coorey, 15 October](#)

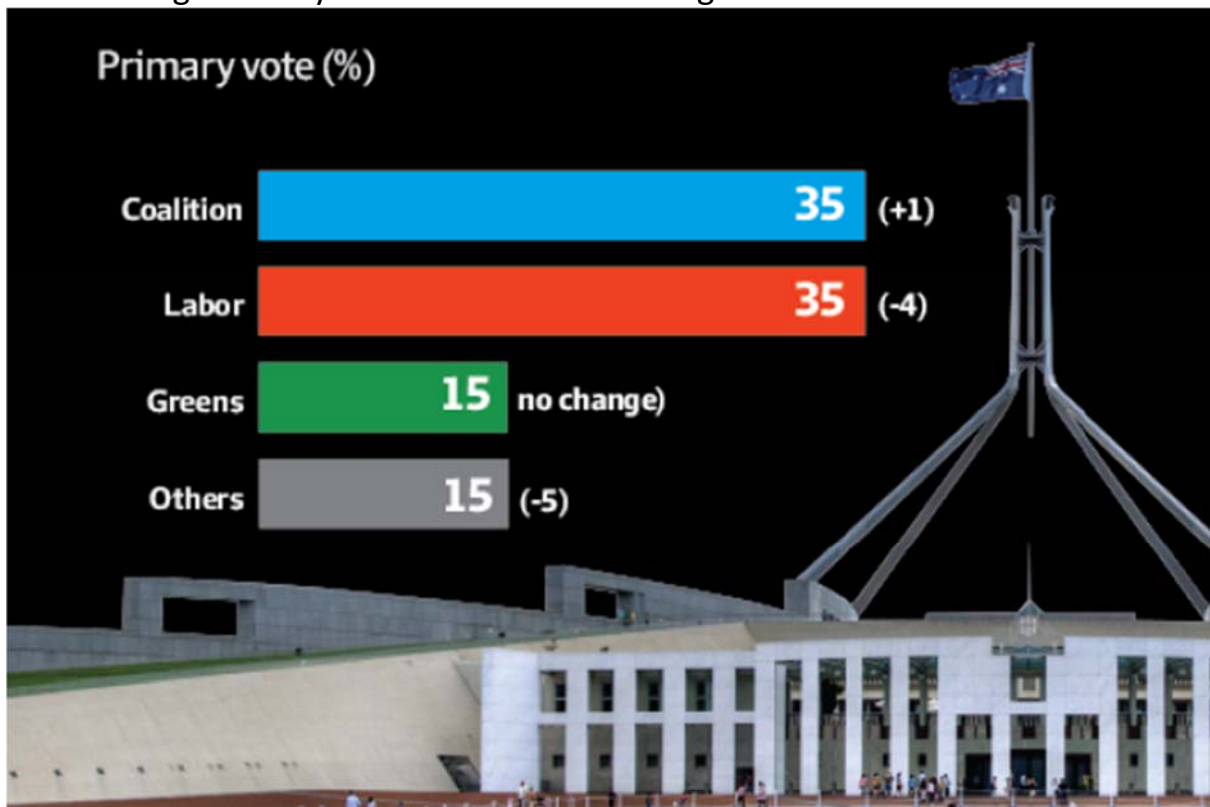
The Morrison government is struggling for traction almost two months after [dumping Malcolm Turnbull](#) and ahead of the October 20 crucial Wentworth byelection, according to a new poll that gives Labor a thumping lead.

The latest Fairfax-Ipsos poll shows Labor leading the Coalition by 55 per cent to 45 per cent on a two-party-preferred basis. This is up from its 53-47 lead in the last poll a month ago and well ahead of the 51-49 lead it held when Mr Turnbull was prime minister.

The result will be of concern to the Coalition which on Saturday is facing an uphill battle [to win Mr Turnbull's eastern Sydney seat of Wentworth](#) and maintain majority government. Over the weekend, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said a loss in Wentworth could jeopardise economic certainty and national stability and, to shore up the Coalition's prospects, he promised to introduce legislation to stop schools discriminating against gay and lesbian students.

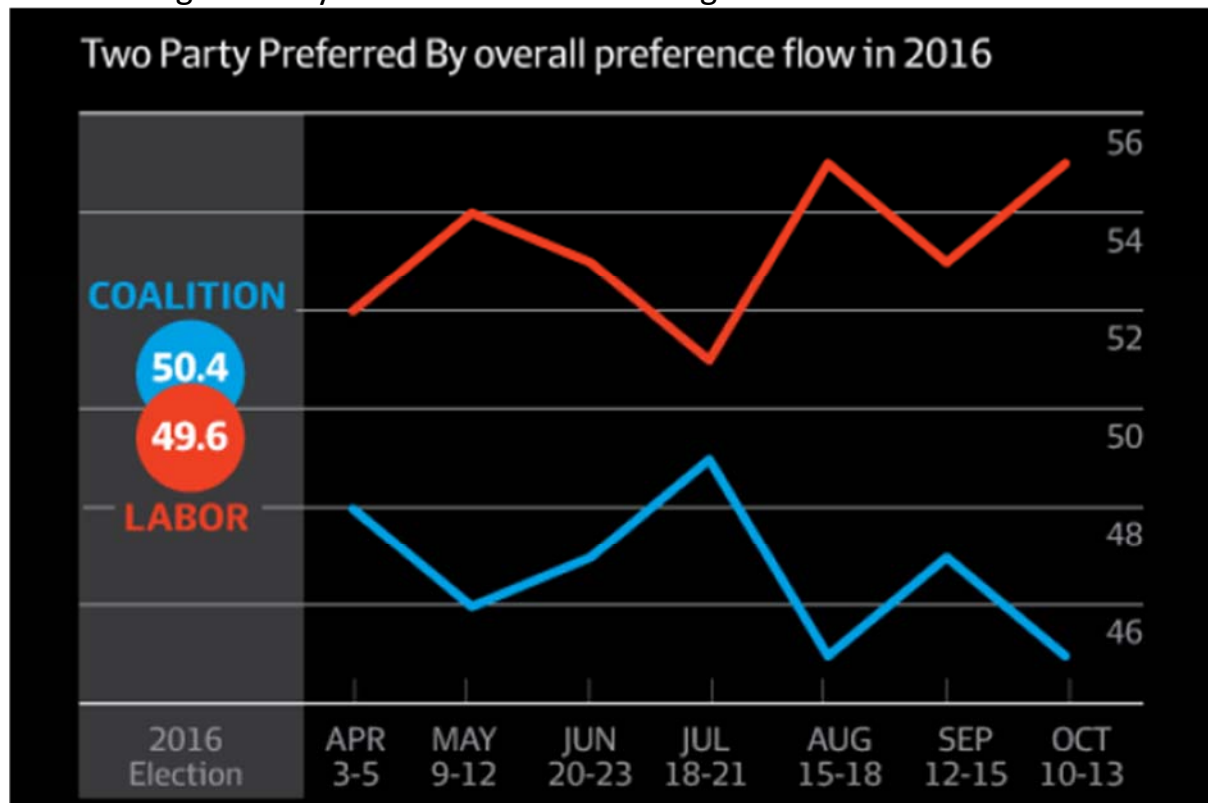


Data: FAIRFAX IPSOS Poll. National survey of 1200 respondents (aged 18+) conducted by telephone from October 10-13, 2018. Weighted by age, sex and location. Figures may not sum due to rounding.



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He did so after [the Ruddock review into religious freedom](#), which the government was sitting on until after Wentworth, was leaked. It recommended that existing laws allowing faith-based schools to kick out kids based on their sexuality needed to be tightened, but that just led to a clamour for such laws to be junked altogether. Wentworth has a large gay and lesbian population.

The Fairfax-Ipsos poll showed 74 per cent of all voters opposed laws allowing religious schools to discriminate against either students or teachers. Among Labor voters, 81 per cent were opposed and 15 per cent in support, and among Coalition voters, 62 per cent were opposed and 30 per cent in support.

Mr Morrison made the decision after a hurried cabinet consultation late last week and as Labor, which introduced the laws, the Greens and others demanded the laws be scrapped.

Deputy Labor leader Tanya Plibersek said on Sunday that laws enabling schools to discriminate against teachers should also be scrapped.



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The poll also shows voters more or less evenly split over immigration with 45 per cent wanting the intake reduced, 23 per cent wanting it increased and 29 per cent wanting it left alone.

The poll, which sampled 1200 voters, was taken from Thursday night to Saturday evening and came at the end of a week dominated by the government fast-tracking company tax cuts for small and medium enterprises, the [business community deserting the government](#) over climate and energy policy, and the religious freedom furore.

Labor and the Coalition are both tied at 35 per cent on the primary vote and the Greens are at 15 per cent.

Morrison more popular than Shorten

While the government lags Labor badly, Mr Morrison maintains his strong lead over Bill Shorten in the personal popularity stakes. His approval rating rose 4 percentage points in a month to 50 per cent and his disapproval fell 3 points to

33 per cent. He is in a better position than Tony Abbott at the same time into his prime ministership but is not doing as well as Mr Turnbull.

[Mr Shorten, who on Saturday chalked up his fifth year](#) as leader, saw his approval rating fall 3 points to 41 per cent and his disapproval edge up a point to 49 per cent. Mr Morrison leads Mr Shorten as preferred prime minister by 48 per cent to 35 per cent.

If the Coalition fails to retain Wentworth, it will be reduced to minority government with 74 MPs on the floor plus Speaker Tony Smith.

'It's simply not true'

On Saturday, Mr Morrison appealed to voters to choose Liberal candidate Dave Sharma in the national interest, and to not protest the ousting of Mr Turnbull. "Whatever concerns you may have about events of several weeks ago, if you don't vote for the Liberal candidate, then you risk a hung Parliament," he said. "You risk creating unnecessary uncertainty in our economy and the stability of our government more broadly."

Mr Shorten, who has not campaigned in the the seat, urged voters not to be swayed by Mr Morrison's appeals. "Whoever wins Wentworth, Scott Morrison will still be prime minister on Sunday," he said. "I'm not saying I'm happy about that, but that is the fact, he'll be the prime minister. A couple of the crossbenchers have guaranteed the government confidence so some argument that people in Wentworth will bring down the whole government, as much as I wish it might be true, it's simply not true.

"Voters in Wentworth have an opportunity to send a message to the current Liberal government that to express a view are they happy or not with the direction of the country."

Mr Morrison has promised the right wing of his party he will address the religious freedom issue later on. This could include an act protecting religious freedom.

"I don't foresee any problems with this from the Coalition's point of view. I have only had strong messages of support from my colleagues," he said on Sunday.

He said he had to act on the schools issue because the Ruddock review had been mis-reported creating unnecessary anxiety. "The Ruddock review actually proposes restrictions to the laws introduced by the previous Labor

government, which gave religious schools greater ability to expel students where the school considered that was necessary according to the doctrines of the religion in question," he said.

"Over the next fortnight we have just got to ensure we get the thing done. No one plays politics with it. We just fix it. There was unnecessary anxiety. Schools aren't doing this at the moment. "The Labor Party actually created the power for them to do it. No-one's been doing it. So that's why we should get the words right."