

Newspoll: Scott Morrison takes significant personal hit in wake of Wentworth by-election



Prime Minister Scott Morrison. Picture: AAP

EXCLUSIVE

Simon Benson, National Affairs Editor, 8:30PM October 28, 2018

Scott Morrison's approval ratings have dropped into negative territory for the first time in the wake of the Wentworth by-election as voters punish the Coalition with a fall in support following its descent into minority government.

But voters have rejected the suggestion of an early election and still want the government to serve its full term as the Prime Minister grapples with trying to seize back the political agenda.

An exclusive Newspoll conducted for The Australian shows Mr Morrison's net approval ratings dipping into negative territory for the first time since he was installed as the Liberal leader, and Prime Minister, just nine weeks ago.

Yesterday Mr Morrison stayed away from the launch of the Victorian Liberal Party's state election campaign, with local officials already trying to sheet blame home to the federal Coalition should they lose. While still dominating his rival Bill Shorten in the electoral popularity contest, voter satisfaction with Mr Morrison's performance over the past fortnight has fallen four points to 41 per cent.

The number dissatisfied with the new leader jumped a significant six points to 44 per cent, giving Mr Morrison a net negative approval rating for the first time. The short time it has taken for Mr Morrison to slide into negative territory now rivals that of Tony Abbott and Kevin Rudd, in his second spell as prime minister, and has been a more rapid descent than other prime ministers since 1996.

An apparent recovery in the Coalition's primary vote, which strengthened in the last poll, was also sent backwards. It dropped a point to 36 per cent, returning the government to where it was a month ago. While still three points higher than the record low of 33 per cent recorded in the aftermath of Malcolm Turnbull's demise, it is six points down on the 2016 election result which delivered the Coalition a one-seat majority.

The slide in popular support has translated into a one-point drop in the two-party-preferred split — the likely election outcome after a distribution of preferences — with the Coalition returning to where it was a month ago, trailing Labor 46-54.

Despite the potential chaos of minority government following the loss of Mr Turnbull's seat of Wentworth to independent Kerry Phelps, the poll also showed an electorate that was eager for stable government, with 58 per cent of voters wanting the parliament to run a full term with an election to be held when it falls due next year.

Only a third claimed to support an election to be called before the end of the year, while 80 per cent of Coalition voters and 75 per cent of One Nation voters backing a full term government.

Opinion was divided among Labor and Greens voters with 41 of supporters for both parties also wanting the Morrison government to serve its full term with 52 per cent wanting to go to an early poll.

On the latest poll, the government would stand to lose 19 seats if an election outcome was based on these results — not including the loss of Wentworth on October 20.

The slide in satisfaction with the Prime Minister's performance comes a little over a week since the Liberal Party's defeat on the back of a dramatic 19 per cent swing in Wentworth. It also reflects a torrid fortnight for the government

as it was forced into a controversial debate over child asylum-seekers on Nauru and the rights of gay students, and suffered what was widely acknowledged as a horror week politically leading up to the Wentworth by-election on October 20.

The government was prevented from capitalising on good economic news, with record low unemployment rates, the passage of small business tax cuts and bumper updated revenue windfalls helping to return the budget to an earlier surplus.

The Prime Minister also announced a \$7 billion drought fund and unveiled a discount card for war veterans to help with the cost of living. The opposition has been helped by the fallout over the loss of the blue-ribbon Liberal seat in Sydney's eastern harbourside suburbs which sparked a public spat over Mr Turnbull's refusal to help campaign for the Liberal candidate Dave Sharma.

Labor's primary vote has improved a point to 39 per cent, having fallen to 38 per cent two weeks ago from a 10 year high of 42 per cent last month. Bill Shorten enjoyed a lift in approval, rising two points to 37 per cent while those dissatisfied fell a point to 50. This returned the Labor leader a net negative approval rating of minus 13.

The Greens dropped two points to nine per cent following its failed campaign in Wentworth where it suffered a six-point swing against it after having claimed the deciding issues in the campaign were climate change and taking asylum-seeker children off Nauru.

One Nation's primary vote of six per cent remained unchanged.

Collective popular support for all other minor parties and independents was now stronger than support for the Greens for the first time since April 2017 with the category having benefited from a two points rise to 10 per cent.

When asked who would make the better prime minister, Mr Morrison dropped two points to 43 per cent while Mr Shorten gained a point to 35 per cent.

Mr Morrison has been credited with turning around the Coalition's fortunes having suffered an immediate and catastrophic fall in support in the days following the change of leadership with its primary vote plummeting to 33 per

cent — the worst for a decade — with the resulting 2/PP vote of 44/56 translating into the potential loss of 25 seats.

The latest poll was based on interviews with 1646 voters nationally across regional and city areas between October 25 and October 28. The margin of error is plus or minus 2.4 per cent.



PRIMARY VOTE

%	2016		2018				
	Election July 2	Aug 9-12	Aug 24-26	Sep 6-9	Sep 20-23	Oct 11-14	Oct 25-28
Coalition	42.1	37	33	34	36	37	36
Labor	34.7	35	41	42	39	38	39
Greens	10.2	10	10	10	10	11	9
One Nation	1.3	9	7	6	6	6	6
Others	11.7	9	9	8	9	8	10

6 per cent 'uncommitted' excluded

Question: If a federal election for the House of Representatives were held today, which one of the following would you vote for? If 'uncommitted', to which one of these do you have a leaning?

TWO-PARTY PREFERRED

%	2016		2018				
	Election July 2	Aug 9-12	Aug 24-26	Sep 6-9	Sep 20-23	Oct 11-14	Oct 25-28
Coalition	50.4	49	44	44	46	47	46
Labor	49.6	51	56	56	54	53	54

Preference flows based on recent federal and state elections

This survey was conducted in all states of Australia and in both city and country areas between October 25-28, 2018. The data has been weighted to reflect the population distribution. The survey is based on 1,646 interviews among voters. The maximum sampling error is plus or minus 2.4 percentage points. Copyright at all times remains with Newspoll.

EARLY ELECTION

	Total	Political support			
		Coalition	Labor	Green	One Nation
Election before the end of the year	33	16	52	52	22
Serve full term/hold when due next year	58	80	41	41	75
Uncommitted	9	4	7	7	3

Question: Should Scott Morrison call an early federal election before the end of the year or serve the full term and hold the election when it is due next year?

MORRISON/TURNBULL'S PERFORMANCE

%	2018					
	Jul 26-29	Aug 9-12	Sep 6-9*	Sep 20-23*	Oct 11-14*	Oct 25-28*
Satisfied	42	36	41	44	45	41
Dissatisfied	48	55	39	39	38	44
Uncommitted	10	9	20	17	17	15

Question: Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way Scott Morrison (Malcolm Turnbull) is doing his job as Prime Minister? *Scott Morrison

SHORTEN'S PERFORMANCE

%	2018					
	Jul 26-29	Aug 9-12	Sep 6-9	Sep 20-23	Oct 11-14	Oct 25-28
Satisfied	32	32	37	32	35	37
Dissatisfied	57	56	51	54	51	50
Uncommitted	11	12	12	14	14	13

Question: Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way Bill Shorten is doing his job as Opposition Leader?

BETTER PRIME MINISTER

%	2018				
	Aug 9-12	Sep 6-9*	Sep 20-23*	Oct 11-14*	Oct 25-28
Turnbull/Morrison	44	42	45	45	43
Shorten	32	36	32	34	35
Uncommitted	24	22	23	21	22

Question: Who do you think would make the better PM? *Scott Morrison

Newspoll, published exclusively in The Australian.