

Polling - The ABC and public broadcasting

April 2020

Key results

The Australia Institute surveyed nationally representative samples of Australians about the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) in 2019 and 2020, including asking about trust in the ABC and support for increasing the ABC's funding.

Key findings are:

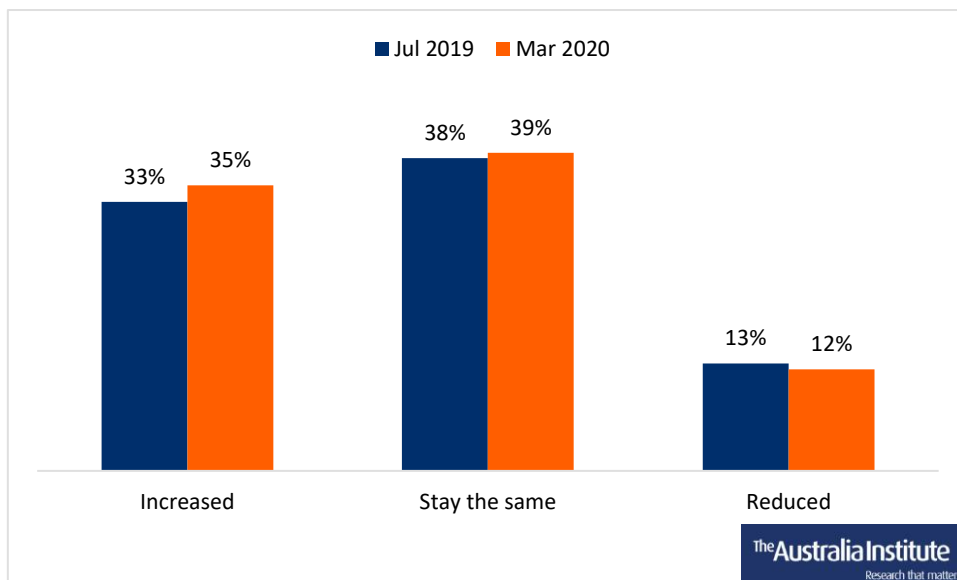
- An increasing share of Australians agree with the general proposition that the ABC's funding should be increased (35%, vs 12% who think it should be reduced).
- When additional funding is associated with the ABC's emergency role, support rises dramatically to three in four Australians (75%), with 39% in strong support.
- The Liberal Party's federal council motion to privatise the ABC (except some operations in regional areas) is opposed by three in five Australians (59%).
 - More Coalition voters oppose the motion (45%) than support it (31%).
- The ABC and SBS remain significantly better trusted than the commercial media, and the ABC remains the most trusted news source in Australia.
 - Trust in the ABC has increased dramatically since the question was first asked in 2013 (from 41% to 58% in 2019).

Funding for the ABC

Results show that an increasing share of Australians agree with the general proposition that the ABC's funding should be increased.

- In 2019, one in three Australians (33%) thought the ABC's funding should be increased, compared to 13% that thought it should be reduced.
- In 2020, 35% of Australians thought funding should be increased, compared to 12% that thought it should be reduced.

Figure 1: Funding for the ABC should be ...



Respondents were then told that there is no specific funding for the ABC’s bushfire information, emergency broadcasts and alerts, and asked if they would support or oppose increased funding for the ABC to reflect its role in providing information in an emergency.

When increased funding is specifically associated with the ABC’s emergency role, an overwhelming majority of Australians support increased funding for the ABC:

- Three in four Australians (75%) supported increased funding for the ABC to reflect its emergency role with 39% in strong support.
- Increased funding to reflect the ABC’s emergency role is supported by 67% of Coalition voters, 84% of Labor voters, 81% of Greens voters, 66% of One Nation voters and 67% of Other/Independent voters.
 - One in four Coalition voters (24%) and one in two Labor and Greens voters (49% and 51% respectively) strongly support increased funding.

Figure 2: Support for increased funding for the ABC to reflect its emergency broadcasting role, by gender and state

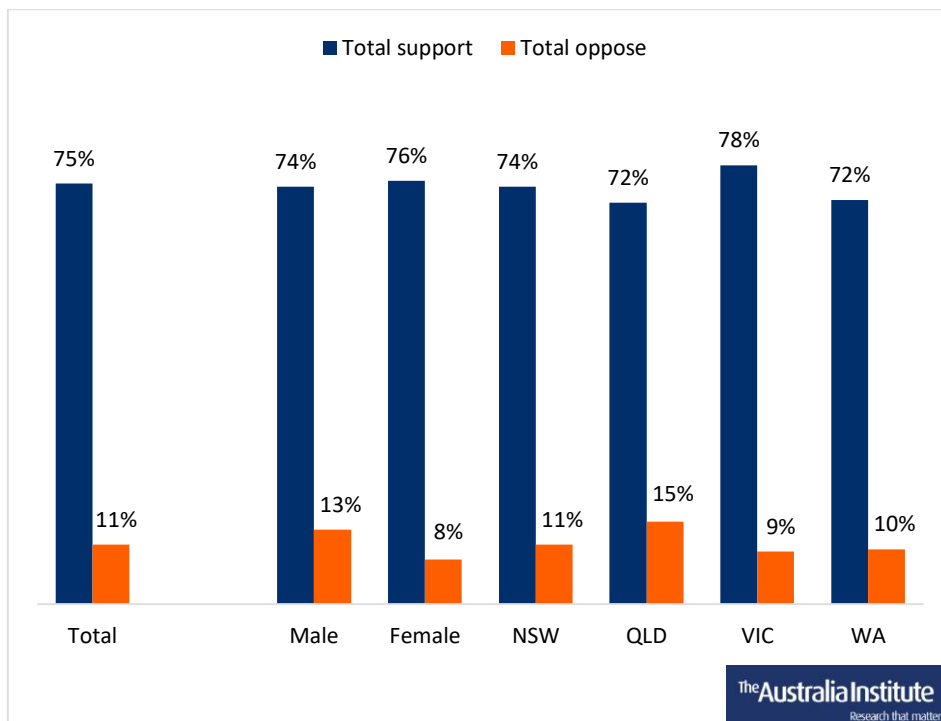
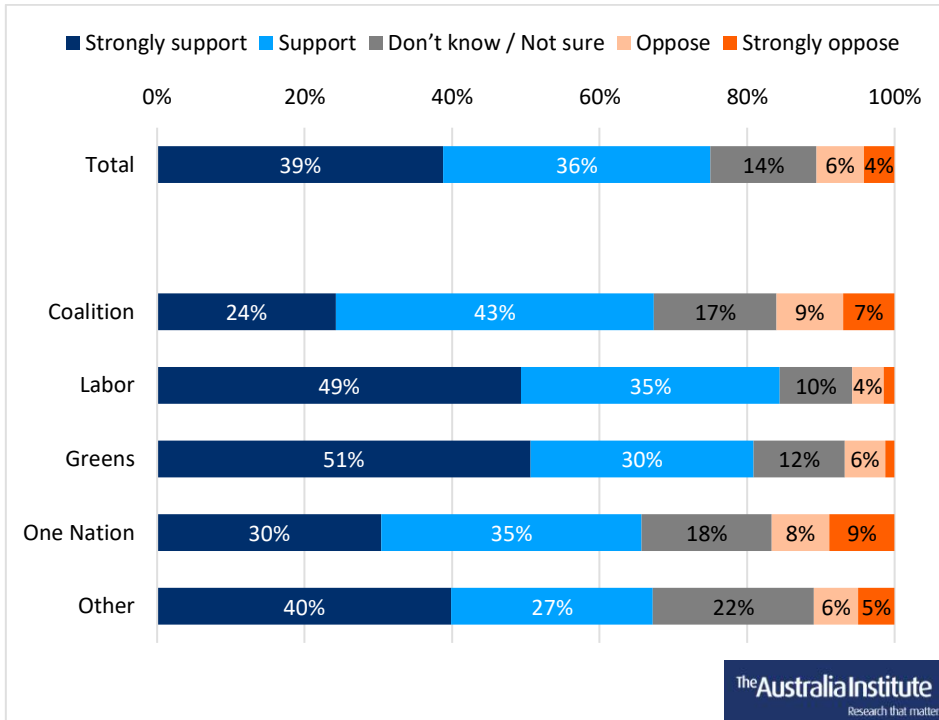


Figure 3: Support for increased funding for the ABC to reflect its emergency broadcasting role, by voting intention

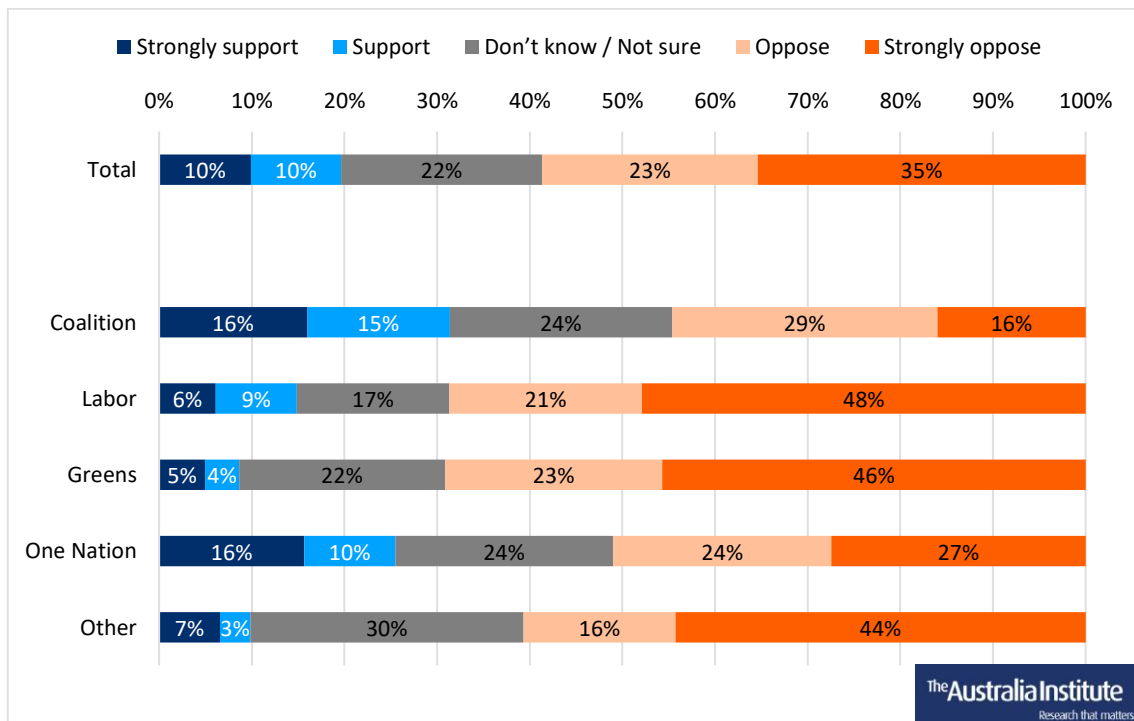


Privatising the ABC

Respondents were also asked about the Liberal Party’s federal council motion calling for the privatisation of the ABC except services into regional areas that are not commercially viable.

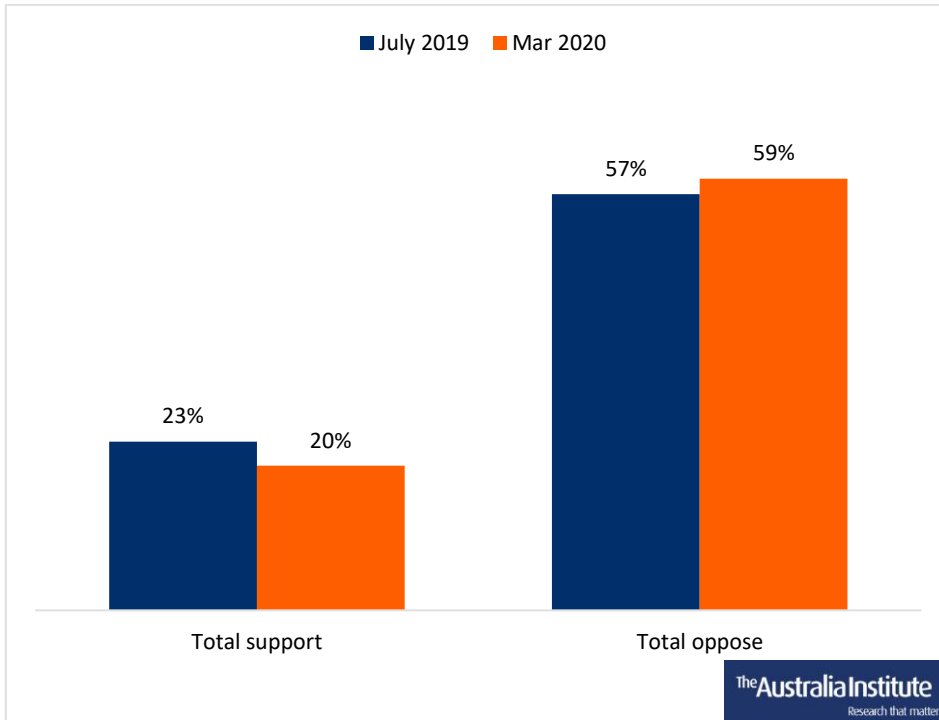
- Three in five Australians (59%) oppose the privatisation of the ABC, including 35% strongly opposed.
- Privatisation is opposed by a majority of all voting intentions except Coalition voters.
 - 69% of Labor voters, 69% of Greens voters, 51% of One Nation voters and 61% of Other/Independent voters oppose privatisation.
 - Among Coalition voters, more oppose the privatisation of the ABC (45%) than support it (31%).

Figure 4: Support for the Liberal federal council motion to privatise the ABC, by voting intention



Opposition to privatising the ABC has grown in the past year, with support falling from 23% to 20% and opposition rising from 57% to 59%.

Figure 5: Support for the Liberal federal council motion to privatise the ABC, over time



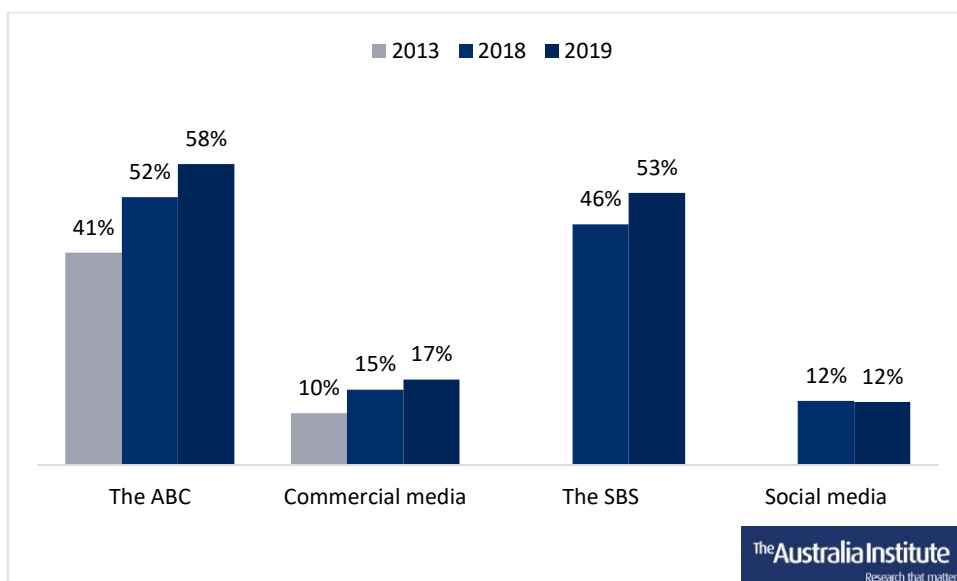
Trust in the public broadcasters

Three polls by The Australia Institute over the six years 2013–2019 consistently show that the ABC is Australia’s most trusted news source, ahead of the SBS and then commercial media.¹

Trust in the ABC has grown over time.

- In 2013, 41% of respondents rated their trust in the ABC a 4 or 5 out of 5. By 2019, that had increased to 58% of respondents.
- In 2013, 10% of respondents rated their trust in commercial media 4 or 5 out of 5. By 2019, that had increased to 17% of respondents.
- Trust in the SBS increased dramatically between 2018 (46%) and 2019 (53%).

Figure 6: Trust in media sources



Note: The Australia Institute did not ask respondents about their trust in social media or the SBS in 2013.

¹ The Australia Institute (2018) *ABC still Australia’s most trusted news source*, <https://www.tai.org.au/content/abc-still-australia-s-most-trusted-news-source>

Method

This report uses polling previously published by The Australia Institute.²

It also publishes for the first time 2019 polling about trust in the ABC, SBS, commercial media and social media and ABC funding, and 2020 polling about ABC funding.

The Australia Institute conducts national surveys, online through Dynata with nationally representative samples by gender, age, state and territory, and household income. The 2019 poll was a national survey of 1,464 people between 23 July 2019 and 30 July 2019. The 2020 poll was a national survey of 1,461 people between 3 and 6 March 2020.

The margin of error (95% confidence level) for the national results is 2.6%.

Results are shown only for larger states.

Voting crosstabs show voting intentions for the lower house. Those who were undecided were asked which way they were leaning; these leanings are included in voting intention crosstabs, but results are also shown separately for undecideds. "LNP" includes separate responses for Liberal and National. "Other" includes Centre Alliance, Jacqui Lambie Network and Independent/Other.

Detailed results (2019)

Thinking about government funding for the ABC. Do you think funding for the ABC should be reduced, increased, or stay the same?

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA
Increased	33%	39%	27%	33%	30%	34%	27%
Stay the same	38%	33%	42%	37%	41%	38%	44%
Reduced	13%	16%	10%	14%	12%	13%	10%
Don't know / not sure	16%	12%	21%	16%	17%	15%	18%

	Total	Coalition	Labor	Greens	One Nation	Other
Increased	33%	22%	43%	40%	12%	35%
Stay the same	38%	44%	36%	38%	33%	28%
Reduced	13%	20%	6%	6%	32%	10%
Don't know / not sure	16%	14%	14%	16%	22%	27%

² The Australia Institute (2018) *ABC still Australia's most trusted news source*

Occasionally there are stories in the media about how much trust people have in different organisations. Please indicate your level of trust for the following media organisations.

The ABC

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>VIC</i>	<i>QLD</i>	<i>WA</i>
Bottom 2	16%	18%	14%	17%	13%	19%	15%
Do not trust 1	9%	10%	7%	9%	8%	10%	10%
2	7%	8%	7%	9%	5%	9%	5%
3	26%	23%	28%	26%	27%	25%	28%
4	33%	33%	32%	30%	36%	30%	36%
Do trust 5	25%	25%	25%	26%	23%	27%	21%
Top 2	58%	59%	57%	56%	59%	56%	57%
Mean	3.59	3.56	3.61	3.56	3.62	3.54	3.52

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
Bottom 2	16%	21%	7%	9%	34%	23%
Do not trust 1	9%	12%	3%	5%	23%	11%
2	7%	9%	5%	4%	11%	12%
3	26%	26%	25%	24%	27%	26%
4	33%	33%	36%	35%	27%	25%
Do trust 5	25%	19%	31%	32%	12%	26%
Top 2	58%	52%	67%	67%	39%	51%
Mean	3.59	3.38	3.89	3.86	2.93	3.44

Commercial media

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>VIC</i>	<i>QLD</i>	<i>WA</i>
Bottom 2	41%	41%	41%	40%	38%	44%	38%
Do not trust 1	15%	16%	15%	15%	16%	13%	17%
2	26%	25%	26%	25%	23%	31%	21%
3	43%	41%	44%	41%	43%	41%	50%
4	13%	13%	13%	15%	14%	13%	12%
Do trust 5	3%	5%	2%	4%	4%	3%	1%
Top 2	17%	18%	15%	19%	18%	15%	12%
Mean	2.64	2.67	2.61	2.69	2.69	2.60	2.58

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
Bottom 2	41%	33%	40%	50%	50%	52%
Do not trust 1	15%	8%	16%	22%	24%	23%
2	26%	25%	24%	28%	26%	29%
3	43%	46%	44%	36%	37%	38%
4	13%	17%	13%	11%	12%	7%
Do trust 5	3%	4%	3%	3%	1%	3%
Top 2	17%	20%	16%	14%	13%	9%
Mean	2.64	2.83	2.65	2.45	2.40	2.37

The SBS

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>VIC</i>	<i>QLD</i>	<i>WA</i>
Bottom 2	16%	16%	16%	16%	15%	22%	10%
Do not trust 1	6%	8%	4%	5%	7%	7%	5%
2	10%	8%	11%	11%	8%	15%	5%
3	31%	31%	32%	31%	33%	28%	36%
4	36%	37%	36%	37%	37%	34%	40%
Do trust 5	16%	16%	16%	17%	15%	16%	14%
Top 2	53%	53%	52%	54%	53%	50%	54%
Mean	3.46	3.44	3.49	3.50	3.47	3.37	3.53

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
Bottom 2	16%	19%	9%	9%	31%	25%
Do not trust 1	6%	7%	3%	5%	16%	11%
2	10%	13%	6%	5%	16%	14%
3	31%	32%	30%	30%	41%	30%
4	36%	36%	41%	37%	27%	29%
Do trust 5	16%	13%	20%	24%	1%	16%
Top 2	53%	49%	61%	61%	28%	45%
Mean	3.46	3.36	3.69	3.71	2.82	3.24

Social media

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>VIC</i>	<i>QLD</i>	<i>WA</i>
Bottom 2	63%	63%	64%	63%	60%	64%	61%
Do not trust 1	37%	39%	35%	37%	33%	38%	38%
2	26%	23%	29%	26%	26%	26%	23%
3	24%	23%	26%	26%	23%	25%	28%
4	9%	10%	8%	9%	12%	8%	10%
Do trust 5	3%	4%	2%	3%	5%	3%	1%
Top 2	12%	14%	10%	12%	17%	11%	11%
Mean	2.15	2.17	2.13	2.15	2.29	2.11	2.14

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
Bottom 2	63%	67%	57%	64%	69%	65%
Do not trust 1	37%	40%	31%	34%	49%	43%
2	26%	27%	27%	31%	20%	21%
3	24%	20%	30%	25%	26%	22%
4	9%	9%	10%	9%	4%	8%
Do trust 5	3%	4%	3%	2%	1%	5%
Top 2	12%	13%	13%	11%	6%	13%
Mean	2.15	2.09	2.27	2.15	1.89	2.10

Detailed results (2020)

Thinking about government funding for the ABC. Do you think funding for the ABC should be reduced, increased, or stay the same?

	<i>Total</i>	Male	Female	NSW	QLD	VIC	WA
Increased	35%	39%	30%	37%	24%	39%	32%
Stay the same	39%	36%	41%	37%	44%	37%	40%
Reduced	12%	16%	9%	11%	19%	11%	10%
Don't know / Not sure	14%	9%	19%	15%	13%	14%	18%

	<i>Total</i>	Coalition	Labor	Greens	One Nation	Other
Increased	35%	23%	45%	46%	15%	35%
Stay the same	39%	45%	37%	27%	40%	36%
Reduced	12%	20%	6%	5%	24%	10%
Don't know / Not sure	14%	12%	12%	22%	22%	20%

During the bushfires this summer, the ABC provided bushfire information, emergency broadcasts and alerts. There is no specific funding provided for this work.

Would you support or oppose increased funding for the ABC to reflect its role in providing information during emergencies?

	<i>Total</i>	Male	Female	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA
Strongly support	39%	38%	39%	41%	39%	36%	32%
Support	36%	36%	36%	33%	39%	36%	40%
Oppose	6%	7%	6%	6%	6%	8%	7%
Strongly oppose	4%	6%	2%	4%	4%	6%	3%
Don't know / Not sure	14%	12%	17%	15%	12%	14%	18%

	<i>Total</i>	Coalition	Labor	Greens	One Nation	Other
Strongly support	39%	24%	49%	51%	30%	40%
Support	36%	43%	35%	30%	35%	27%
Oppose	6%	9%	4%	6%	8%	6%
Strongly oppose	4%	7%	1%	1%	9%	5%
Don't know / Not sure	14%	17%	10%	12%	18%	22%