

Polling - Reflections on 2020

December 2020

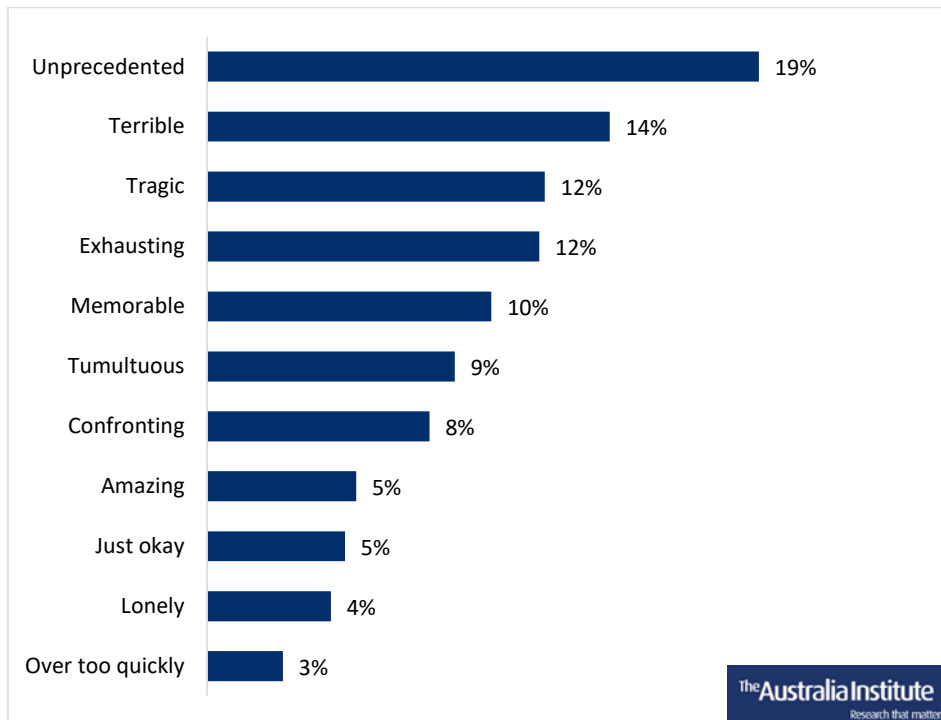
Key results

The Australia Institute surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,018 Australians about their perceptions of the year 2020.

Australians were presented with a list of 11 words or phrases and asked which best describes 2020.

- “Unprecedented” was the single most popular choice, chosen by 19%.
- “Unprecedented” was followed by “Terrible” (14%), “Tragic” (12%) and “Exhausting” (12%).
- Chosen least often were “Over too quickly” (3%), “Lonely” (4%), “Just okay” (5%) and “Amazing” (5%).

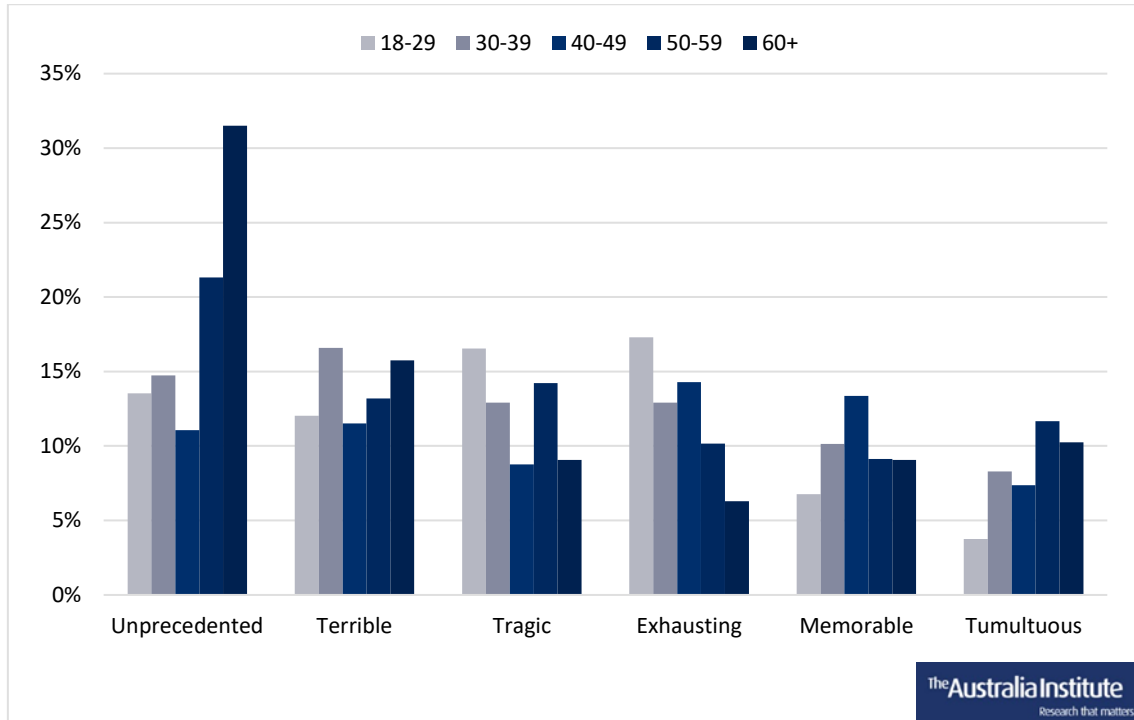
Figure 1: Word to describe 2020



Looking at words chosen by different age groups, there was some notable differences in which words those aged 60 and older chose compared to those aged 18–39.

- Those aged 60 and older were twice as likely to choose the word “Unprecedented” (31%) as those aged 18–39 (14–15%).
- Those aged 18–39 were two to three times as likely to choose “Exhausting” (13–17%) as those aged 60 and older (6%).

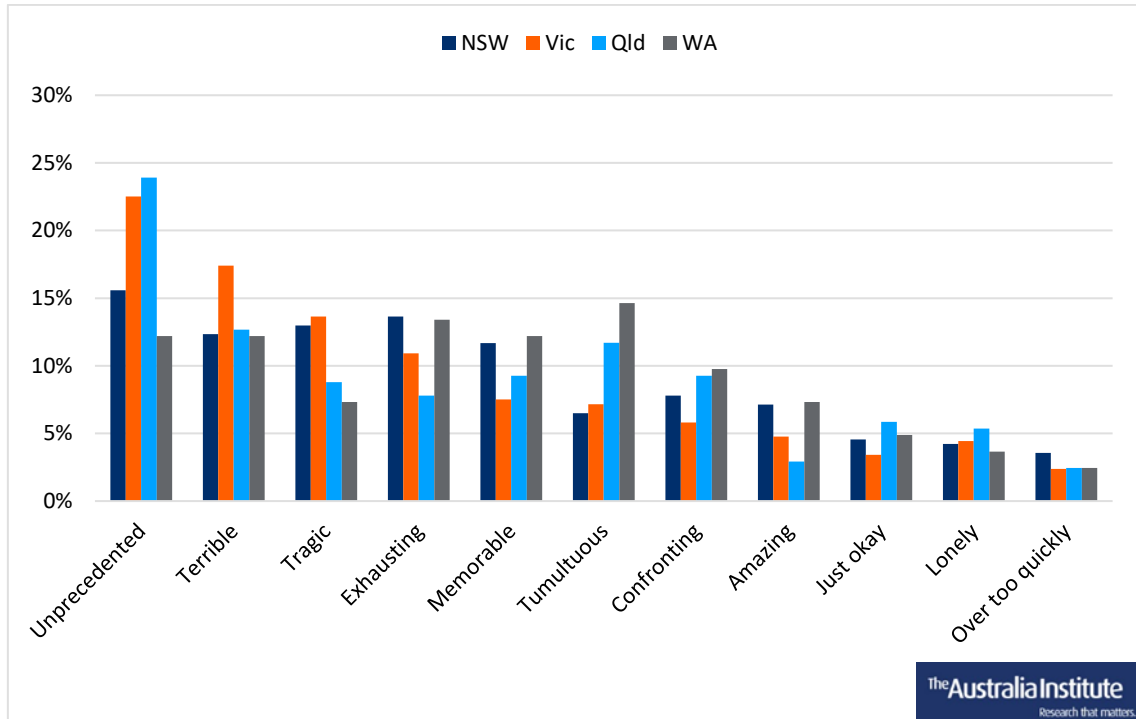
Figure 2: Word to describe 2020 (age group, top six words)



It is difficult to make out any pattern in words chosen by state, although Victorians were somewhat more likely to say that 2020 had been “Terrible” than the average Australian (17% vs 14%).

Despite Victoria’s lockdown exceeding 100 days, Victorians were no more likely to say that 2020 had been “Lonely” than the average Australian (both 4%).

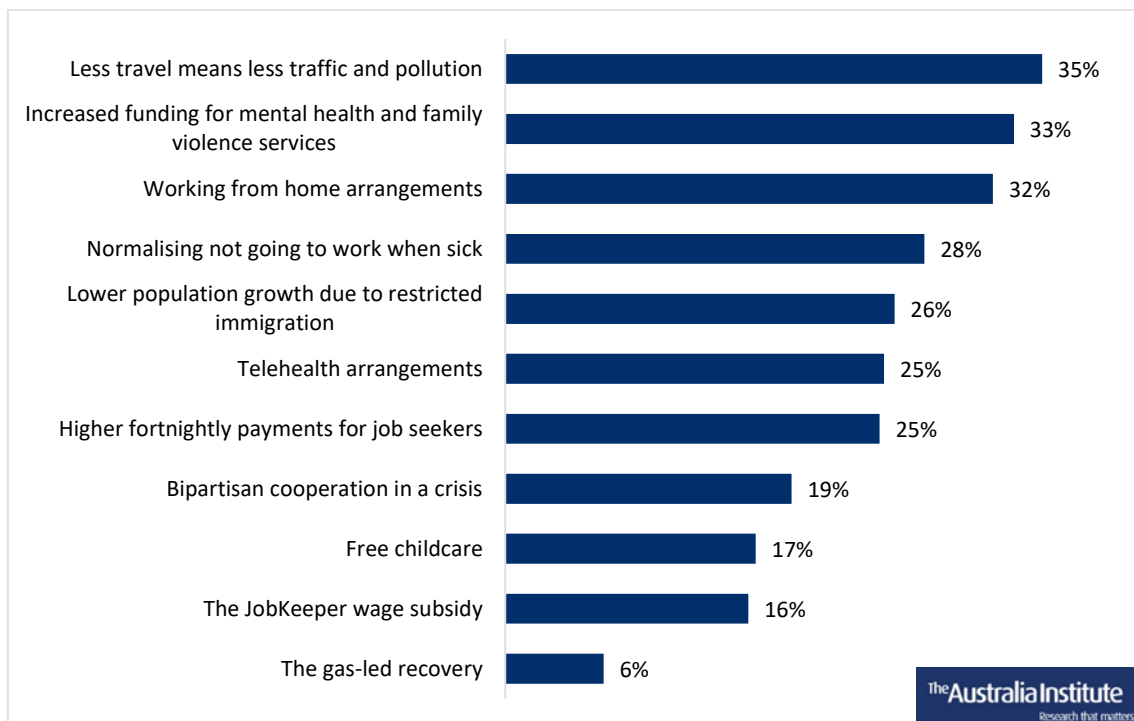
Figure 3: Word to describe 2020 (state, all eleven words)



Respondents were then asked what they would keep from 2020 if they could, from a list of 11 options. Respondents could choose as many options as they wanted, although on average respondents only chose 2.6 options.

- The most popular things to keep from 2020 were less travel (meaning less traffic and pollution) (35%), increased funding for mental health and family violence services (33%) and working from home arrangements (32%).
- One in four chose normalising not going to work sick (28%), lower population growth (26%), telehealth arrangements (25%) and higher fortnightly payments for job seekers (25%).
- The least popular option, selected by 6%, was the gas-led recovery.

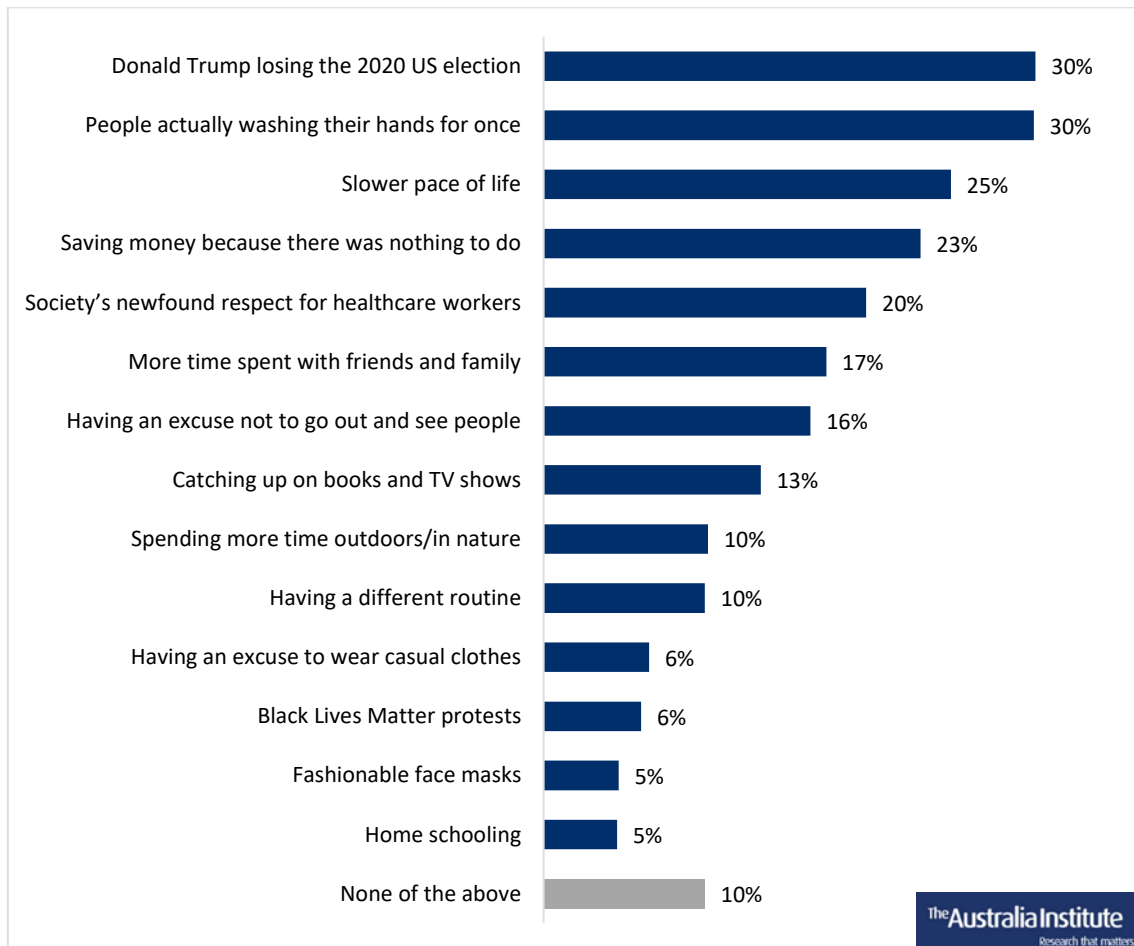
Figure 4: What would you keep from 2020 if you could?



Respondents were finally asked what the best parts of 2020 were for them, from a list of 15 options (and “None of the above”). Respondents could pick up to three.

- Chosen most often as the best parts of 2020 were Donald Trump losing the 2020 US election (30%), people actually washing their hands for once (30%) and the slower pace of life (25%).
- Also popular were saving money because there was nothing to do (23%), society’s newfound respect for healthcare workers (20%) and more time spent with friends and family (17%).
- Home schooling and fashionable face masks were the least popular choices, both at 5%.
- 10% selected “none of the above”.

Figure 5: What were the best parts of 2020 for you?



Method

The Australia Institute surveyed 1,018 people on 17–18 December 2020, online through Dynata’s Rapid Results polling, with nationally representative samples by gender, age and region.

The margin of error (95% confidence level) for the national results is 3%.

Results are shown only for larger states.

Voting crosstabs show voting intentions for the House of Representatives. Those who were undecided were asked which way they were leaning; these leanings are included in voting intention crosstabs. “Coalition” includes separate responses for Liberal and National. “Other” refers to Independent/Other.

Detailed results

What one word or phrase would you choose to describe 2020?

Options presented to respondents in random order.

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>
Amazing	5%	3%	7%	7%	5%	3%	7%
Confronting	8%	9%	7%	8%	6%	9%	10%
Exhausting	12%	12%	11%	14%	11%	8%	13%
Just okay	5%	4%	6%	5%	3%	6%	5%
Lonely	4%	3%	6%	4%	4%	5%	4%
Memorable	10%	10%	10%	12%	8%	9%	12%
Over too quickly	3%	4%	2%	4%	2%	2%	2%
Terrible	14%	12%	16%	12%	17%	13%	12%
Tragic	12%	13%	10%	13%	14%	9%	7%
Tumultuous	9%	10%	7%	6%	7%	12%	15%
Unprecedented	19%	20%	18%	16%	23%	24%	12%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
Amazing	5%	7%	3%	9%	0%	3%
Confronting	8%	8%	7%	6%	9%	10%
Exhausting	12%	11%	11%	13%	14%	15%
Just okay	5%	4%	5%	9%	4%	7%
Lonely	4%	3%	6%	5%	4%	4%
Memorable	10%	12%	9%	6%	11%	11%
Over too quickly	3%	2%	3%	6%	2%	3%
Terrible	14%	15%	14%	13%	18%	11%
Tragic	12%	7%	17%	7%	16%	14%
Tumultuous	9%	10%	6%	11%	4%	10%
Unprecedented	19%	21%	20%	17%	20%	13%

What one word or phrase would you choose to describe 2020? (continued)

	<i>Total</i>	<i>18-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60+</i>
Amazing	5%	5%	6%	11%	4%	1%
Confronting	8%	11%	3%	8%	3%	14%
Exhausting	12%	17%	13%	14%	10%	6%
Just okay	5%	7%	6%	7%	5%	1%
Lonely	4%	5%	6%	6%	4%	1%
Memorable	10%	7%	10%	13%	9%	9%
Over too quickly	3%	3%	3%	2%	5%	1%
Terrible	14%	12%	17%	12%	13%	16%
Tragic	12%	17%	13%	9%	14%	9%
Tumultuous	9%	4%	8%	7%	12%	10%
Unprecedented	19%	14%	15%	11%	21%	31%

What would you keep from 2020 if you could?

Options presented to respondents in random order.

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>
Free childcare	17%	17%	15%	17%	17%	15%	22%
The JobKeeper wage subsidy	16%	16%	16%	15%	18%	16%	15%
Higher fortnightly payments for job seekers	25%	27%	22%	24%	28%	22%	21%
Bipartisan cooperation in a crisis	19%	17%	21%	19%	20%	19%	10%
Working from home arrangements	32%	32%	32%	34%	35%	28%	29%
Telehealth arrangements	25%	27%	23%	22%	31%	21%	23%
Increased funding for mental health and family violence services	33%	39%	28%	28%	39%	33%	28%
Less travel means less traffic and pollution	35%	39%	32%	33%	41%	30%	24%
Lower population growth due to restricted immigration	26%	26%	26%	24%	29%	24%	26%
Normalising not going to work when sick	28%	34%	21%	29%	27%	24%	28%
The gas-led recovery	6%	4%	9%	7%	7%	6%	5%

What would you keep from 2020 if you could? (continued)

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
Free childcare	17%	12%	22%	21%	14%	13%
The JobKeeper wage subsidy	16%	15%	18%	24%	11%	10%
Higher fortnightly payments for job seekers	25%	17%	29%	38%	21%	27%
Bipartisan cooperation in a crisis	19%	23%	18%	17%	7%	15%
Working from home arrangements	32%	31%	37%	34%	20%	28%
Telehealth arrangements	25%	27%	27%	18%	13%	24%
Increased funding for mental health and family violence services	33%	29%	37%	43%	25%	33%
Less travel means less traffic and pollution	35%	33%	40%	32%	27%	34%
Lower population growth due to restricted immigration	26%	25%	24%	18%	52%	29%
Normalising not going to work when sick	28%	22%	29%	39%	29%	31%
The gas-led recovery	6%	9%	6%	1%	4%	6%

What were the best parts of 2020 for you?

Options presented to respondents in random order. Respondents could choose up to three options.

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>WA</i>
Black Lives Matter protests	6%	6%	6%	6%	5%	5%	9%
Catching up on books and TV shows	13%	15%	12%	18%	9%	11%	20%
Donald Trump losing the 2020 US election	30%	30%	31%	26%	35%	33%	30%
Fashionable face masks	5%	3%	6%	6%	5%	5%	1%
Having a different routine	10%	8%	12%	10%	8%	12%	7%
Having an excuse not to go out and see people	16%	20%	13%	14%	15%	19%	15%
Having an excuse to wear casual clothes	6%	7%	6%	8%	4%	6%	10%
Home schooling	5%	3%	6%	6%	3%	5%	2%
More time spent with friends and family	17%	19%	16%	20%	18%	14%	18%
People actually washing their hands for once	30%	31%	29%	31%	28%	28%	37%
Saving money because there was nothing to do	23%	23%	24%	23%	17%	29%	23%
Slower pace of life	25%	28%	22%	24%	22%	28%	13%
Society's newfound respect for healthcare workers	20%	21%	19%	21%	22%	19%	23%
Spending more time outdoors/in nature	10%	12%	8%	11%	8%	11%	5%
None of the above	10%	10%	9%	8%	15%	8%	15%

What were the best parts of 2020 for you? (continued)

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
Black Lives Matter protests	6%	4%	7%	12%	5%	4%
Catching up on books and TV shows	13%	15%	13%	11%	11%	13%
Donald Trump losing the 2020 US election	30%	26%	38%	38%	9%	24%
Fashionable face masks	5%	6%	4%	7%	2%	2%
Having a different routine	10%	12%	9%	9%	5%	8%
Having an excuse not to go out and see people	16%	12%	18%	25%	23%	14%
Having an excuse to wear casual clothes	6%	8%	7%	3%	4%	4%
Home schooling	5%	5%	6%	2%	5%	3%
More time spent with friends and family	17%	18%	17%	22%	16%	12%
People actually washing their hands for once	30%	32%	30%	18%	48%	28%
Saving money because there was nothing to do	23%	24%	25%	23%	29%	14%
Slower pace of life	25%	25%	26%	25%	25%	23%
Society's newfound respect for healthcare workers	20%	20%	22%	17%	16%	17%
Spending more time outdoors/in nature	10%	12%	8%	14%	9%	8%
None of the above	10%	8%	6%	12%	16%	23%