Polling - Senate voting
May 2022

Key results

The Australia Institute surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,002 Australians about their Senate voting intentions and their understanding of how Senate voting works.

The results show:

- An increase in support for the idea that a government majority in the Senate is beneficial, up from one in three (33%) in March 2022 to four in ten (42%).
- Only three in 10 (31%) Australians correctly answered that their Senate representatives are elected by the people living in their own state or territory.

A significant proportion of Australians remain uncertain about important aspects of Senate preferential voting:

- More than four in ten (43%) thought that putting a 6 beside a box made it harder for that party to be elected.
- Nearly half (49%) agreed that you should vote 1 for the party you thought most likely to be elected – although more than eight in ten (83%) agreed that you should vote 1 for the party you most want to be elected.
- One in two (50%) thought that you should put a 6 beside the box of the party you dislike more than any other.
- When given an example, only three in 10 (29%) were correct about how to vote to make it hardest for a party they did not like to get elected.

Figure 1: How to make it hardest for a party to get elected in the Senate
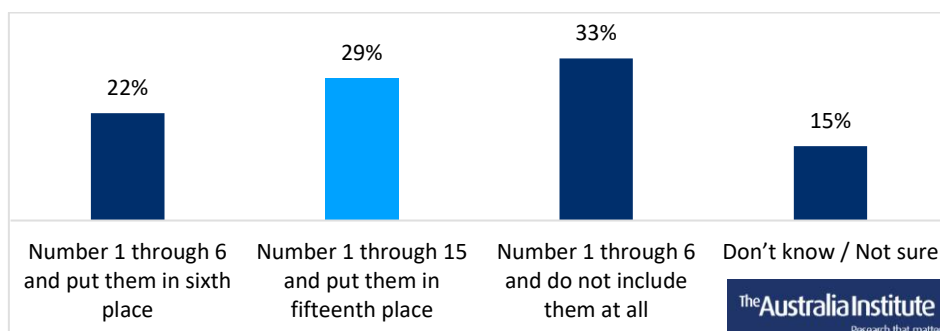
Is a government majority in the Senate beneficial?

Respondents were reminded that the government of the day does not have a majority in the Senate, it must gain support from other Senators in order to pass legislation into law. They were then asked whether they considered it better for Australia if the government of the day does or does not have a majority in the Senate.

- More than four in ten respondents (42%) thought that a government majority was better, up from one in three (33%) in January 2022.
- However, those saying that it is better for the country if the government does not have a majority in the Senate has remained steady at three in 10 (31% in May, 32% in January).
- The highest level of support for a government majority came from Coalition voters (58%), compared with 37% among Labor voters.

Although levels of support for a government Senate majority were lower in the minor parties – 29% among Greens voters, 34% among One Nation voters, and 27% among Independent/Other voters – they were nonetheless higher than might have been expected, given that the influence of those parties in that chamber is reduced by a government majority.

Figure 2: Better if the Government does/does not have a Senate majority
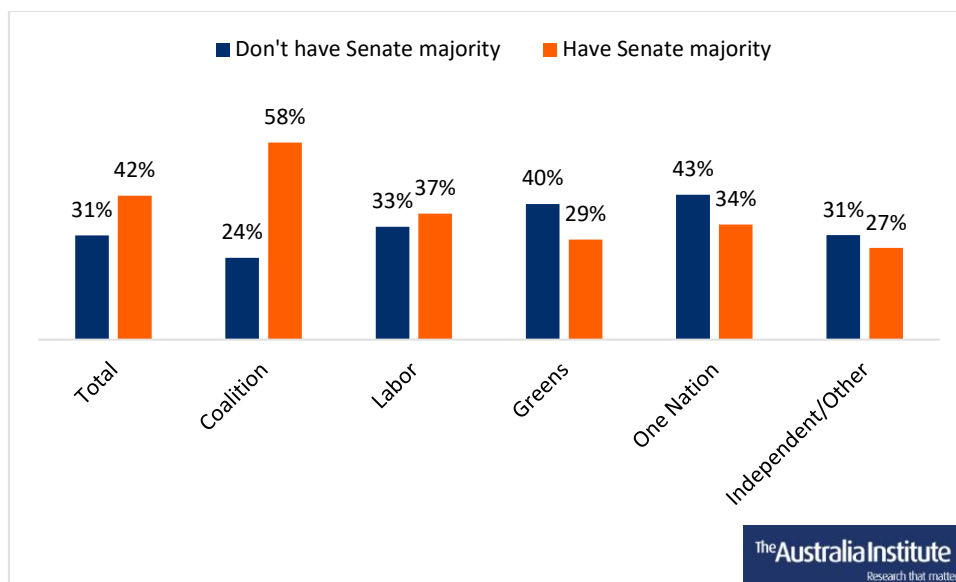
Knowledge of Senate voting process

Respondents were asked a series of questions that tested their understanding of the Senate voting process.
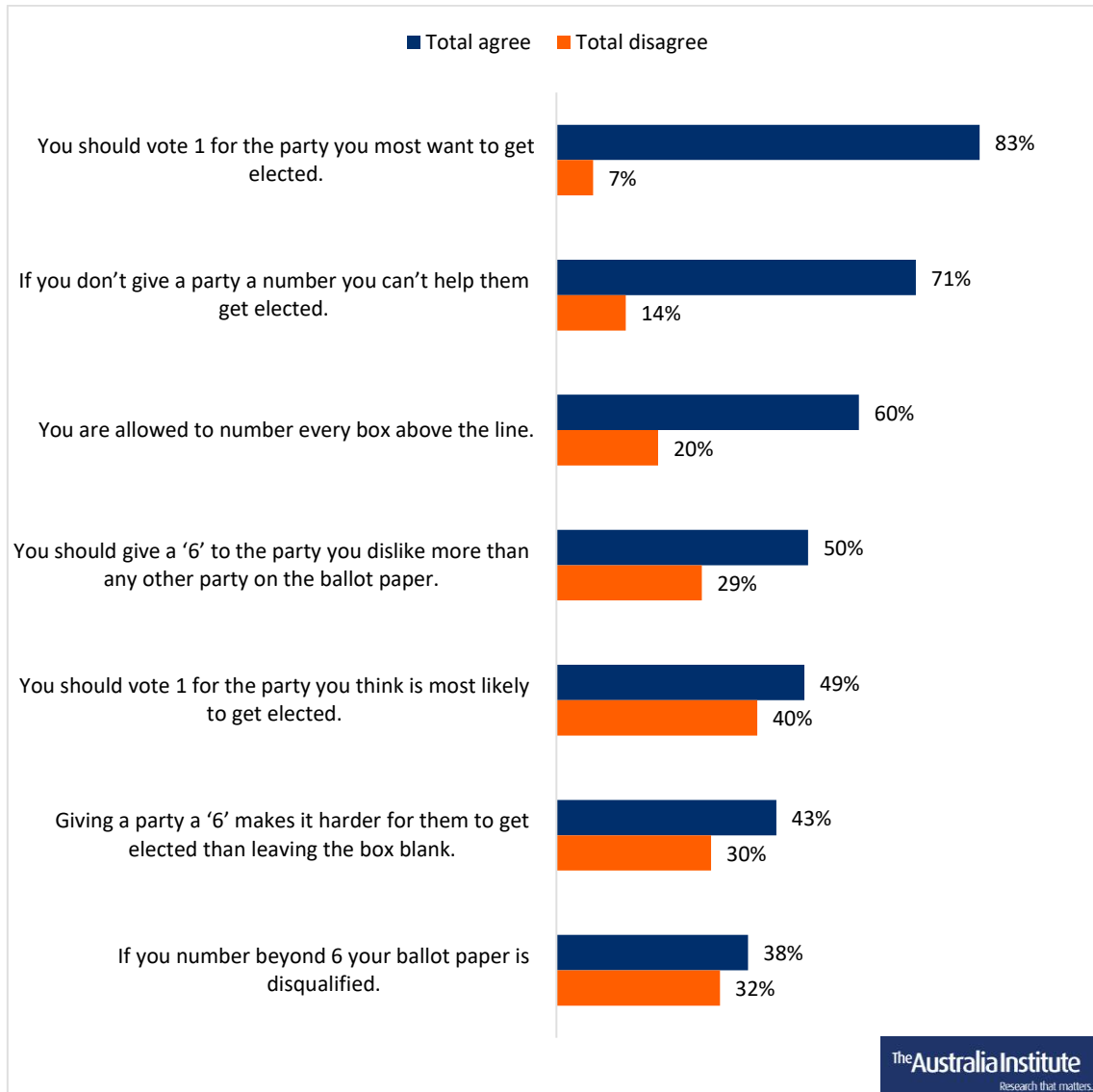
Overall, only three of the seven questions in this section were answered correctly by a majority of respondents:

- You should vote 1 for the party you most want to be elected (83% agreed);
- You can't help a party be elected if you have not given a number to that party (71% agreed); and
- You are allowed to number every box above the line (60%).

Overall, confusion about the Senate voting system appeared high:

- What it means when you vote 1 for a party:
  - Nearly half (49%) agreed that you should vote 1 for the party you thought most likely to be elected.
  - This was despite the fact mentioned above that 84% agreed that they should vote 1 for the party they most want to be elected.
- How best to indicate lack of support for a party.
  - More than 4 in 10 (43%) thought that putting a 6 beside a party's box made it harder for that party to be elected.
  - More people agreed that putting a 6 beside the box of the party you liked least (50%) would be more effective than leaving the box blank (43%).
- The effect of numbering more than six boxes:
  - More than one third (38%) thought that numbering the boxes beyond 6 would make the ballot paper invalid.
  - One in five (20%) thought you are not allowed to number every box above the line.

Figure 3: Knowledge of Senate voting

Legend: ■ Total agree ■ Total disagree

Statement	Total agree	Total disagree
You should vote 1 for the party you most want to get elected.	83%	7%
If you don't give a party a number you can't help them get elected.	71%	14%
You are allowed to number every box above the line.	60%	20%
You should give a '6' to the party you dislike more than any other party on the ballot paper.	50%	29%
You should vote 1 for the party you think is most likely to get elected.	49%	40%
Giving a party a '6' makes it harder for them to get elected than leaving the box blank.	43%	30%
If you number beyond 6 your ballot paper is disqualified.	38%	32%

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Test of understanding of the Senate voting system

To further test understanding of the Senate voting system, respondents were asked which party they would like *least* to be elected to the Senate, and then given a hypothetical scenario:

> Imagine there are 15 parties running for election in the Senate in your state or territory.
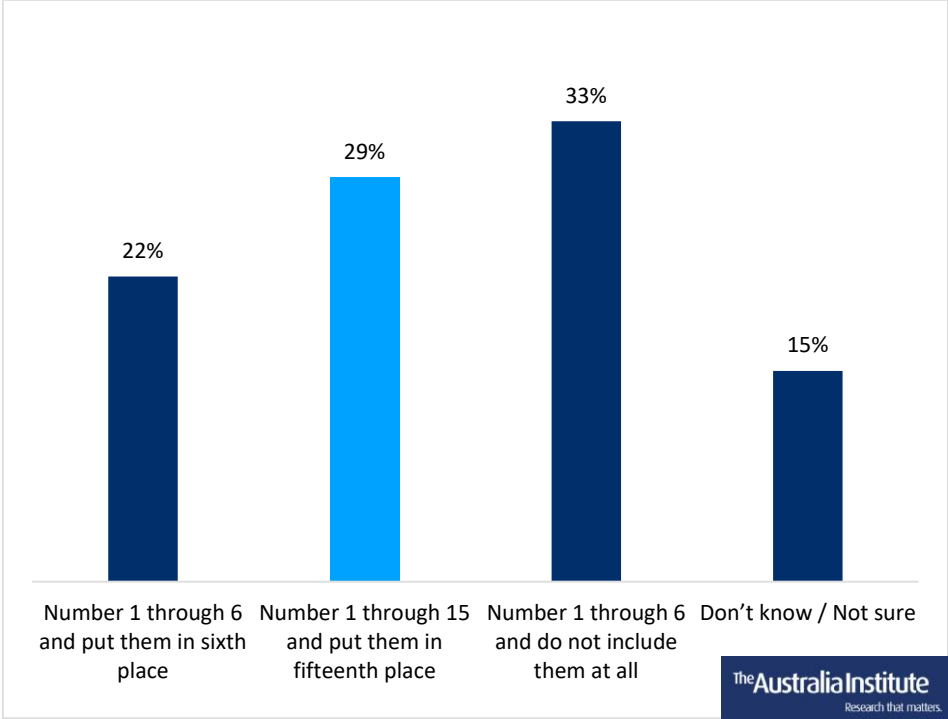>
> If you wanted to stop [response from previous question] senators from being elected, how would you vote above the line to make it hardest for them to get elected?
>
> - Number 1 through 6 and put them in sixth place
>
> - Number 1 through 15 and put them in fifteenth place
>
> - Number 1 through 6 and do not include them at all
>
> - Don't know / Not sure

The responses to this question indicate that Australians do not understand how to cast their Senate vote most effectively.

- Only three in 10 (29%) correctly answered that numbering 1 through 15 and putting their least-liked party 15th would make it hardest for them to get elected.
- One in three (33%) wrongly answered that numbering 1 through 6 and not including their least-liked party would make it hardest for them to get elected.
- One in five (22%) wrongly answered that numbering 1 through 6 and putting their least-liked party sixth would make it hardest for them to get elected.

Figure 4: How to make it hardest for a party to get elected in the Senate (correct answer in light blue)

22% — Number 1 through 6 and put them in sixth place

29% — Number 1 through 15 and put them in fifteenth place

33% — Number 1 through 6 and do not include them at all

15% — Don't know / Not sure

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Who elects your Senators?

Respondents were asked where the people who elected their Senate representatives lived.

- Less than one in three (31%) correctly identified the people in their own state or territory as the people who elected their senators.
    - More males (37%) than females (26%) gave the correct response.
- One in four (26%) answered that people across the country elect their senators, about the same number that answered that people in their local area elect their senators (24%).
- A further one in five (18%) answered "Don't know / Not sure".

Figure 5: Who elects your senators?
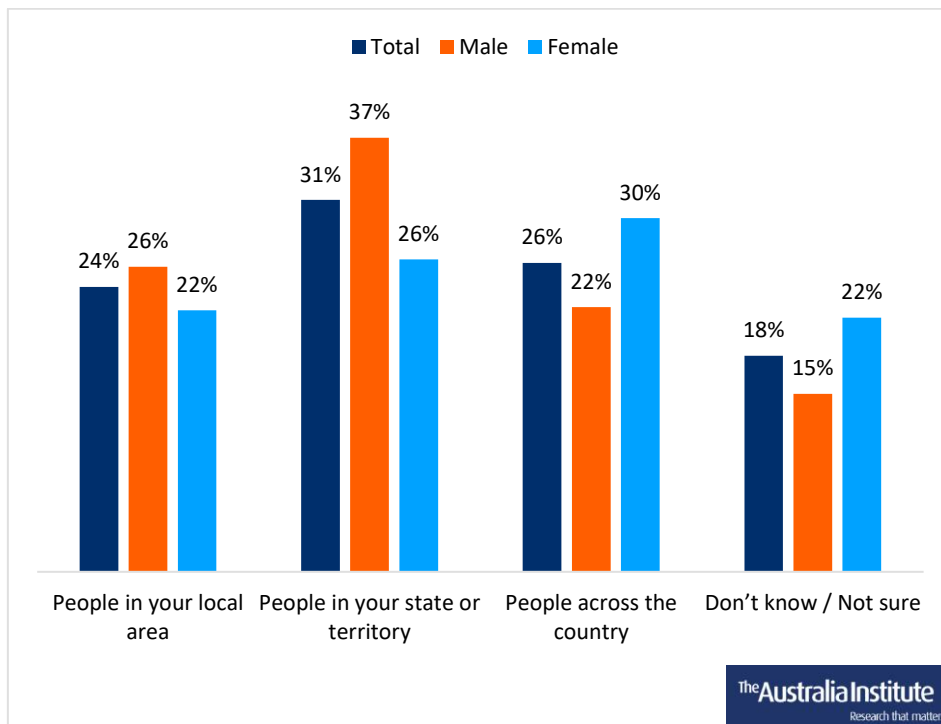
Method

Between 3 and 6 May 2022, the Australia Institute surveyed 1,002 adults living in Australia, online through Dynata's panel, with nationally representative samples by gender, age group and state/territory.

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.

The research is compliant with the Australian Polling Council Quality Mark standards. The long methodology disclosure statement follows.

Long disclosure statement

The results were weighted by three variables (gender, age group, and state or territory) based on Australian Bureau of Statistics "National, state and territory population" data, using the raking method. This resulted in an effective sample size of 996.

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

Results are shown only for larger states.

Voting intention questions appeared just after the initial demographic questions, and before policy questions. Respondents who answered "Don't know / Not sure" for voting intention were then asked a leaning question; these leanings are included in voting intention crosstabs. "Coalition" includes separate responses for Liberal and National. "Other" refers to Independent/Other, and minor parties in cases where they were included in the voting intention but represent too small a sample to be reported separately in the crosstabs.

Detailed results

No preceding questions in the poll are expected to have influenced the results of the questions published here.

If the government of the day does not have a majority in the Senate, it must gain support from other Senators in order to pass legislation into law. In your view, is it better for Australia if the government of the day:

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA
Does not have a Senate majority and must seek support from other Senators to pass legislation?	*31%*	33%	28%	31%	27%	26%	33%
Does have a Senate majority and can pass legislation itself?	*42%*	45%	40%	45%	44%	43%	34%
Don't know / Not sure	*27%*	21%	33%	24%	29%	31%	32%

	Total	Coalition	Labor	Greens	One Nation	Other
Does not have a Senate majority and must seek support from other Senators to pass legislation	*31%*	24%	33%	40%	43%	31%
Does have a Senate majority and can pass legislation itself	*42%*	58%	37%	29%	34%	27%
Don't know / Not sure	*27%*	18%	30%	31%	24%	42%

	Total	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Does not have a Senate majority and must seek support from other Senators to pass legislation	*31%*	35%	33%	28%	33%	26%
Does have a Senate majority and can pass legislation itself	*42%*	37%	40%	33%	38%	55%
Don't know / Not sure	*27%*	28%	27%	38%	29%	19%

Who elects the Senators who represent you?

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA
People in your local area	24%	26%	22%	25%	28%	21%	14%
People in your state or territory	31%	37%	26%	29%	33%	30%	33%
People across the country	26%	22%	30%	29%	22%	30%	29%
Don't know / Not sure	18%	15%	22%	17%	18%	20%	24%

	Total	Coalition	Labor	Greens	One Nation	Other
People in your local area	24%	22%	26%	22%	32%	22%
People in your state or territory	31%	38%	28%	26%	29%	28%
People across the country	26%	30%	27%	27%	17%	17%
Don't know / Not sure	18%	10%	18%	25%	22%	32%

	Total	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
People in your local area	24%	28%	28%	25%	22%	20%
People in your state or territory	31%	23%	28%	26%	38%	39%
People across the country	26%	27%	28%	20%	23%	29%
Don't know / Not sure	18%	23%	16%	29%	16%	12%

On the Senate election ballot paper, you can vote 'above the line' by numbering at least 6 of the boxes in the order of your choice (with number 1 as your first choice). Thinking about voting 'above the line', to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following?

Giving a party a '6' makes it harder for them to get elected than leaving the box blank.

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA
Strongly agree	17%	18%	16%	14%	21%	19%	13%
Agree	26%	26%	27%	30%	27%	23%	24%
Disagree	19%	21%	17%	16%	19%	22%	22%
Strongly disagree	11%	11%	11%	13%	10%	9%	13%
Don't know / Not sure	26%	23%	29%	27%	23%	27%	28%

	Total	Coalition	Labor	Greens	One Nation	Other
Strongly agree	*17%*	19%	16%	17%	13%	16%
Agree	*26%*	27%	26%	23%	30%	24%
Disagree	*19%*	19%	19%	20%	20%	17%
Strongly disagree	*11%*	10%	12%	19%	8%	8%
Don't know / Not sure	*26%*	24%	26%	21%	29%	34%

	Total	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Strongly agree	*17%*	20%	17%	12%	23%	14%
Agree	*26%*	27%	36%	30%	18%	21%
Disagree	*19%*	20%	15%	18%	17%	23%
Strongly disagree	*11%*	10%	6%	15%	12%	14%
Don't know / Not sure	*26%*	22%	26%	25%	30%	28%

If you don't give a party a number you can't help them get elected.

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA
Strongly agree	*34%*	35%	33%	32%	36%	32%	32%
Agree	*37%*	35%	38%	38%	34%	42%	35%
Disagree	*9%*	10%	8%	9%	11%	6%	11%
Strongly disagree	*4%*	5%	4%	4%	3%	6%	4%
Don't know / Not sure	*16%*	15%	17%	16%	16%	13%	18%

	Total	Coalition	Labor	Greens	One Nation	Other
Strongly agree	*34%*	38%	30%	36%	30%	32%
Agree	*37%*	40%	39%	34%	32%	30%
Disagree	*9%*	7%	12%	12%	11%	6%
Strongly disagree	*4%*	4%	4%	5%	2%	6%
Don't know / Not sure	*16%*	15%	15%	13%	25%	25%

	Total	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Strongly agree	*34%*	24%	29%	26%	41%	44%
Agree	*37%*	40%	38%	38%	33%	36%
Disagree	*9%*	14%	10%	13%	7%	4%
Strongly disagree	*4%*	6%	4%	4%	4%	3%
Don't know / Not sure	*16%*	15%	19%	19%	15%	13%

You should give a '6' to the party you dislike more than any other party on the ballot paper.

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA
Strongly agree	23%	22%	24%	20%	23%	26%	18%
Agree	27%	29%	25%	25%	27%	29%	29%
Disagree	17%	20%	15%	17%	19%	17%	14%
Strongly disagree	11%	11%	11%	12%	11%	10%	11%
Don't know / Not sure	22%	18%	25%	26%	20%	17%	28%

	Total	Coalition	Labor	Greens	One Nation	Other
Strongly agree	23%	25%	20%	25%	17%	23%
Agree	27%	25%	29%	25%	30%	29%
Disagree	17%	18%	17%	18%	23%	13%
Strongly disagree	11%	12%	11%	16%	9%	6%
Don't know / Not sure	22%	19%	23%	17%	21%	30%

	Total	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Strongly agree	23%	21%	21%	16%	26%	27%
Agree	27%	28%	31%	27%	26%	24%
Disagree	17%	23%	18%	17%	14%	16%
Strongly disagree	11%	9%	9%	13%	13%	12%
Don't know / Not sure	22%	19%	21%	26%	21%	22%

You should vote 1 for the party you think is most likely to get elected

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA
Strongly agree	25%	24%	25%	23%	24%	27%	26%
Agree	24%	24%	25%	26%	26%	23%	26%
Disagree	19%	19%	19%	20%	19%	18%	14%
Strongly disagree	20%	23%	17%	18%	20%	23%	19%
Don't know / Not sure	12%	10%	14%	12%	11%	10%	15%

	Total	Coalition	Labor	Greens	Other	Other
Strongly agree	25%	31%	23%	15%	15%	20%
Agree	24%	24%	24%	24%	28%	22%
Disagree	19%	20%	20%	23%	21%	14%
Strongly disagree	20%	17%	22%	25%	27%	20%
Don't know / Not sure	12%	8%	10%	13%	10%	24%

	Total	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Strongly agree	*25%*	15%	25%	25%	28%	28%
Agree	*24%*	35%	26%	29%	14%	18%
Disagree	*19%*	20%	22%	14%	18%	21%
Strongly disagree	*20%*	18%	12%	16%	31%	23%
Don't know / Not sure	*12%*	11%	15%	16%	9%	9%

You should vote 1 for the party you most want to get elected.

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA
Strongly agree	*55%*	54%	55%	53%	55%	58%	47%
Agree	*29%*	29%	28%	29%	26%	30%	33%
Disagree	*5%*	7%	4%	6%	7%	2%	5%
Strongly disagree	*2%*	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%
Don't know / Not sure	*10%*	8%	11%	10%	10%	8%	12%

	Total	Coalition	Labor	Greens	One Nation	Other
Strongly agree	*55%*	61%	56%	50%	54%	39%
Agree	*29%*	26%	28%	32%	37%	31%
Disagree	*5%*	6%	4%	6%	0%	8%
Strongly disagree	*2%*	1%	3%	2%	2%	1%
Don't know / Not sure	*10%*	6%	9%	10%	7%	21%

	Total	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Strongly agree	*55%*	42%	46%	47%	68%	66%
Agree	*29%*	33%	36%	34%	21%	22%
Disagree	*5%*	11%	5%	6%	2%	3%
Strongly disagree	*2%*	4%	2%	1%	0%	2%
Don't know / Not sure	*10%*	11%	11%	12%	9%	7%

If you number beyond 6 your ballot paper is disqualified.

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA
Strongly agree	*16%*	15%	17%	14%	17%	16%	19%
Agree	*22%*	22%	22%	24%	23%	22%	16%
Disagree	*15%*	17%	14%	16%	15%	16%	12%
Strongly disagree	*17%*	20%	14%	17%	18%	16%	11%
Don't know / Not sure	*30%*	27%	33%	30%	26%	30%	42%

	Total	Coalition	Labor	Greens	One Nation	Other
Strongly agree	*16%*	17%	16%	20%	9%	12%
Agree	*22%*	24%	21%	17%	18%	23%
Disagree	*15%*	16%	17%	13%	16%	12%
Strongly disagree	*17%*	18%	16%	21%	15%	12%
Don't know / Not sure	*30%*	25%	30%	29%	42%	40%

	Total	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Strongly agree	*16%*	16%	20%	11%	17%	15%
Agree	*22%*	29%	26%	22%	21%	15%
Disagree	*15%*	15%	12%	16%	15%	18%
Strongly disagree	*17%*	15%	11%	17%	21%	19%
Don't know / Not sure	*30%*	26%	30%	33%	27%	33%

You are allowed to number every box above the line.

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA
Strongly agree	*30%*	29%	31%	28%	32%	33%	28%
Agree	*30%*	31%	28%	32%	28%	30%	28%
Disagree	*11%*	12%	11%	11%	12%	9%	13%
Strongly disagree	*9%*	10%	8%	9%	9%	7%	9%
Don't know / Not sure	*20%*	19%	22%	20%	19%	22%	22%

	Total	Coalition	Labor	Greens	One Nation	Other
Strongly agree	*30%*	34%	27%	31%	29%	24%
Agree	*30%*	33%	28%	23%	25%	32%
Disagree	*11%*	9%	14%	15%	13%	7%
Strongly disagree	*9%*	9%	10%	8%	7%	7%
Don't know / Not sure	*20%*	15%	21%	23%	26%	31%

	Total	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Strongly agree	*30%*	28%	27%	28%	34%	32%
Agree	*30%*	28%	35%	34%	22%	29%
Disagree	*11%*	17%	8%	11%	12%	9%
Strongly disagree	*9%*	7%	7%	6%	11%	12%
Don't know / Not sure	*20%*	21%	22%	21%	21%	18%

Which of the following parties would you like least to be elected to the Senate (upper house)?

- Liberal / National Coalition
- Labor
- Greens
- Pauline Hanson's One Nation
- United Australia Party
- Liberal Democratic Party
- Don't know / Not sure

Responses to this question were used only to populate the following question.

Imagine there are 15 parties running for election in the Senate in your state or territory.

If you wanted to stop [response from previous question] senators from being elected, how would you vote above the line to make it hardest for them to get elected?

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA
Number 1 through 6 and put them in sixth place	22%	22%	22%	27%	23%	20%	19%
Number 1 through 15 and put them in fifteenth place	29%	33%	26%	27%	30%	30%	25%
Number 1 through 6 and do not include them at all	33%	32%	35%	29%	32%	37%	39%
Don't know / Not sure	15%	14%	17%	17%	15%	13%	18%

	Total	Coalition	Labor	Greens	One Nation	Other
Number 1 through 6 and put them in sixth place	22%	23%	25%	20%	13%	16%
Number 1 through 15 and put them in fifteenth place	29%	31%	24%	32%	28%	37%
Number 1 through 6 and do not include them at all	33%	37%	33%	26%	32%	29%
Don't know / Not sure	15%	10%	17%	21%	26%	19%

	Total	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Number 1 through 6 and put them in sixth place	22%	28%	31%	18%	21%	15%
Number 1 through 15 and put them in fifteenth place	29%	23%	32%	32%	31%	29%
Number 1 through 6 and do not include them at all	33%	35%	20%	28%	33%	43%
Don't know / Not sure	15%	14%	16%	22%	14%	13%