

# Polling - Territory rights

*August 2021*

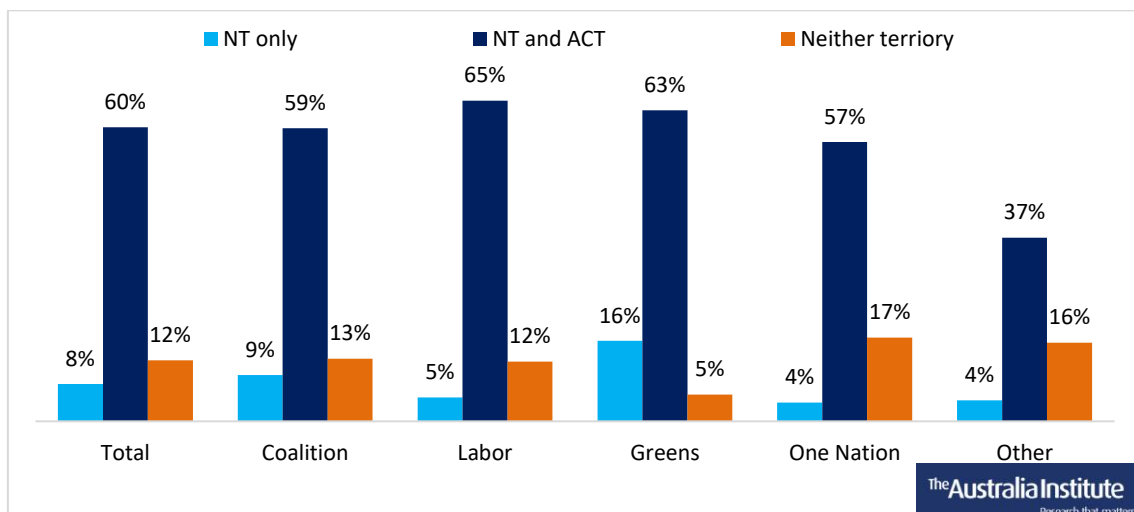
## Key results

The Australia Institute surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,004 Australians about their views on various restrictions on the rights and representation of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

The results show:

- Six in ten (60%) Australians support both the ACT and Northern Territory being allowed to legalise voluntary assisted dying.
- One in two (49%) Australians agree that the National Capital Authority (NCA) should be abolished, compared to 13% who disagree.
- Six in ten (62%) Australians agree that the ACT Government, not the NCA, should decide whether pill testing can occur in the ACT.
- One in two (51%) Australians support increasing the number of senators elected by each territory from 2 to 4, with one in five (21%) opposed.
- 45% of Australians support the ACT having the right to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to enrol to vote on a voluntary basis, with 31% opposed.
- 57% of respondents support allowing Jervis Bay Territory residents to vote in ACT Legislative Assembly elections.

**Figure 1: The rights of territories to legalise voluntary assisted dying, voting intention**



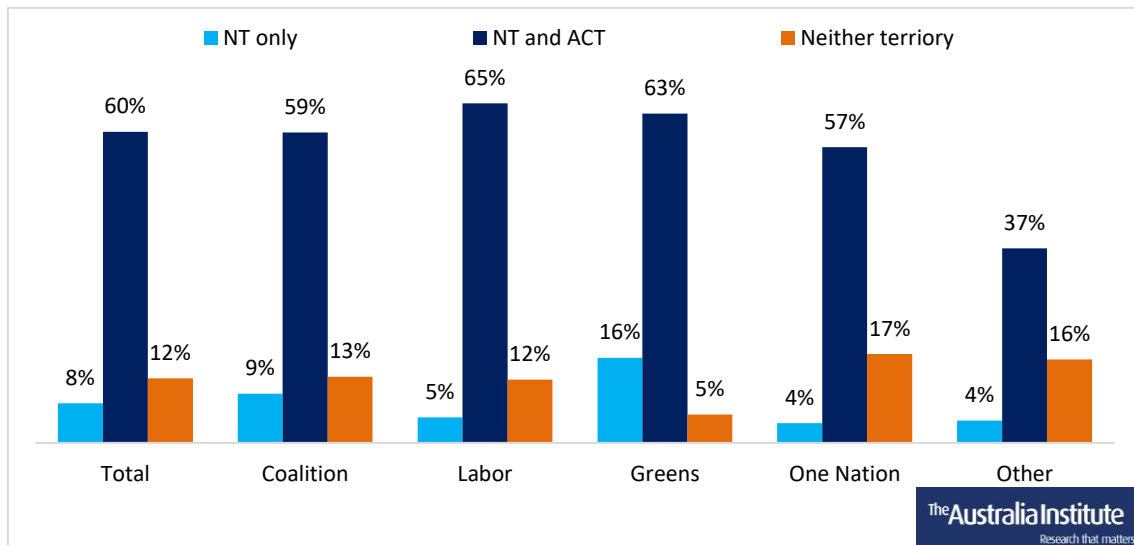
## Voluntary assisted dying

A proposed bill in the Federal Parliament would remove restrictions on the ability of the Northern Territory (NT) to legislate to allow voluntary assisted dying (VAD), but would leave restrictions on the ACT in place. Respondents were asked whether either or both territories should be allowed to legalise voluntary assisted dying.

The results show that:

- Six in ten (60%) Australians support both the ACT and NT being allowed to legalise VAD.
- 8% say only the NT should be allowed, and 12% say neither territory should be allowed.
- Across every voting intention except Independent/Other, the majority of Australians support both the ACT and NT being allowed to legalise VAD.
  - 59% of Coalition, 65% of Labor, 63% of Greens and 57% of One Nation voters support both the ACT and NT being allowed to legalise VAD.

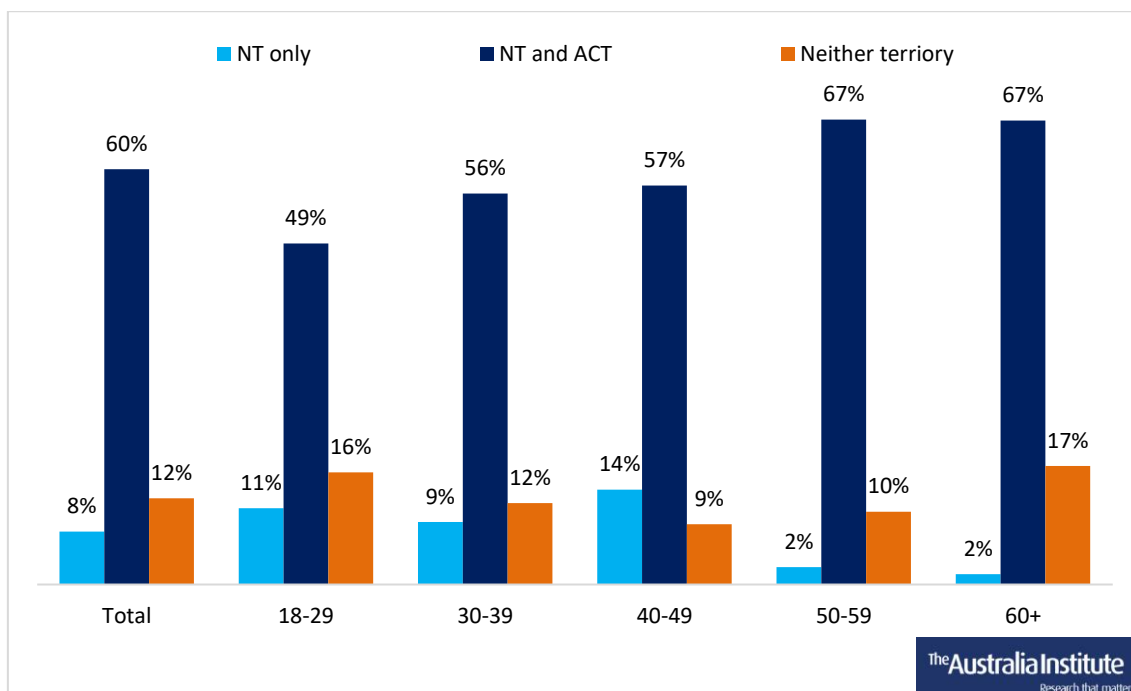
**Figure 1: The rights of territories to legalise voluntary assisted dying, voting intention**



Older Australians are more likely to support allowing the ACT and NT to legalise voluntary assisted dying.

- 67% of people aged 50 or older support both the ACT and NT being allowed to legalise VAD.
- With the exception of the youngest age group (18-29), a majority of each age group say both the ACT and NT should be allowed to legalise VAD.

**Figure 2: The rights of territories to legalise voluntary assisted dying, by age group**



The Australia Institute has polled a similar question in April 2021, which asked about both territories together. In the previous question, both support and opposition were somewhat higher, suggesting that the added complexity of the different treatment of the ACT and NT led to more respondents selecting “Don’t know / Not sure”.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Australia Institute (2021) *Majority of Australians support territories rights on voluntary assisted dying*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/majority-of-australians-support-territories-rights-on-voluntary-assisted-dying/>

### ACT planning: National Capital Authority or ACT Government?

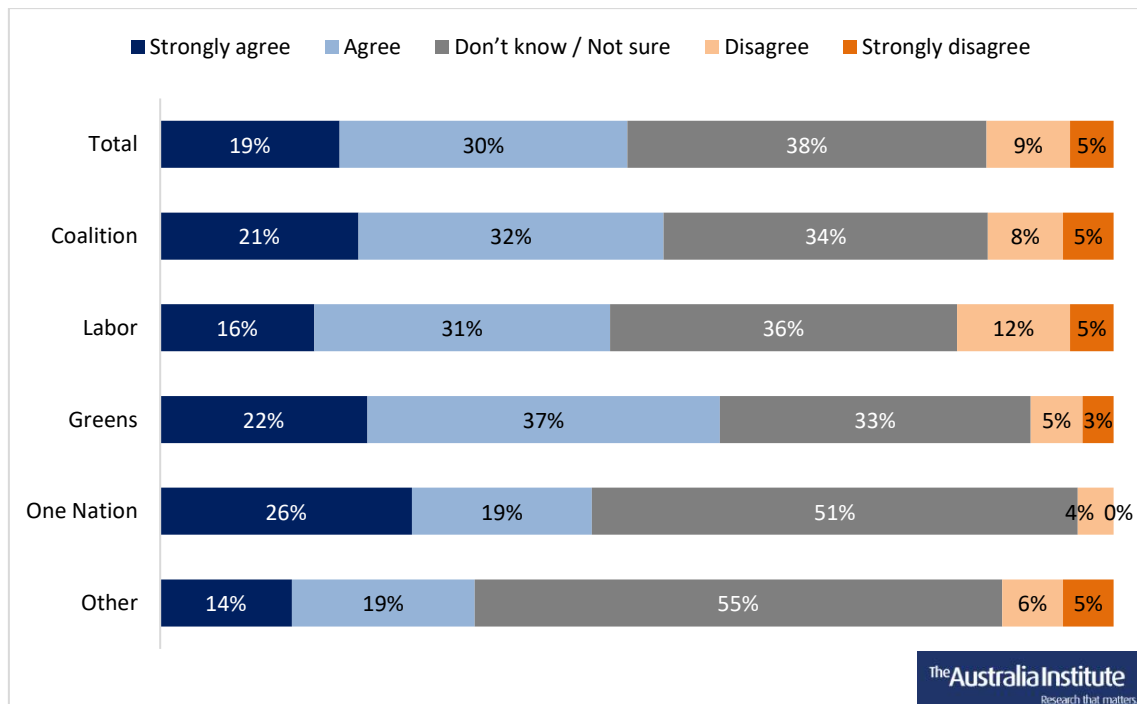
Respondents were asked about the role of the National Capital Authority (NCA), which administers part of the ACT on behalf of the Australian Government. The NCA administers areas including the “National Triangle” where Parliament House, the High Court and other national institutions are located; Lake Burley Griffin and the areas around the lake; and major avenues and roads. The National Capital Authority makes plans for these parts of Canberra, instead of the ACT Government and Parliament.

Respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree that the National Capital Authority should be abolished so the ACT Government and Parliament can make planning decisions for all of Canberra.

- One in two (49%) Australians agree that the NCA should be abolished, compared to 13% who disagree.

While significantly more Australians agree than disagree, it is worth noting an unusually high number (38%) answer that they do not know or are unsure. This suggests that the public’s engagement with this issue is limited; some may not have heard of the NCA or are not familiar with its work.

**Figure 3: Support for abolishing the National Capital Authority and allowing the ACT Government and Parliament to make planning decisions for all of Canberra, by voting intention**



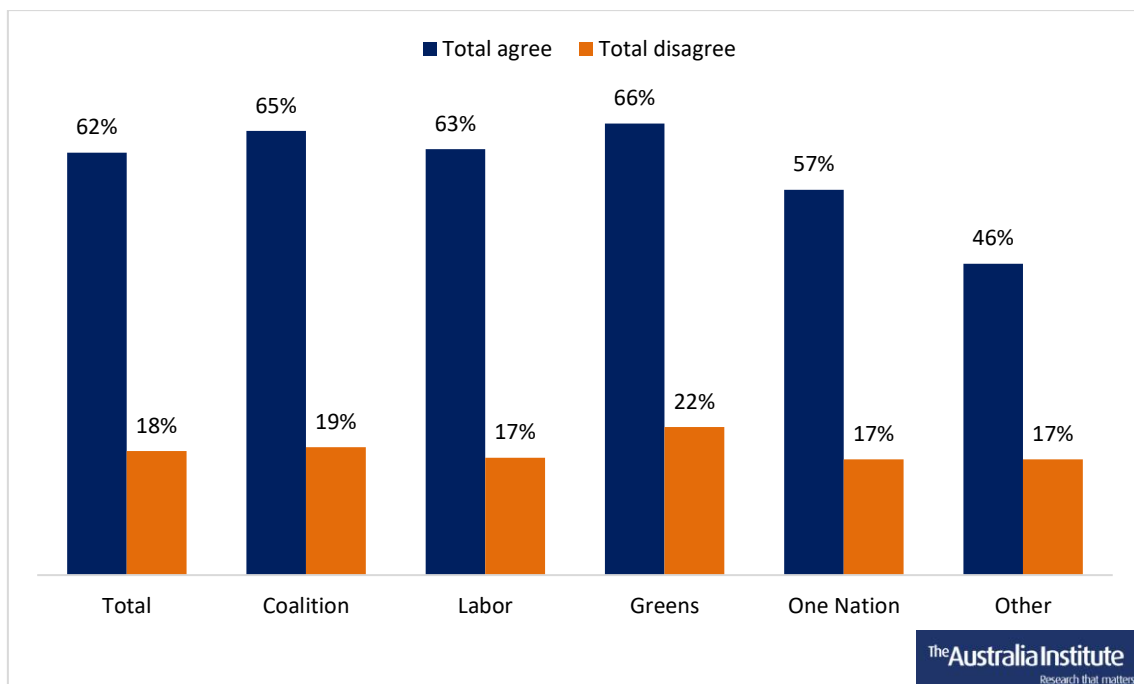
## ACT governance of pill testing

The ACT Government has held pill testing trials at music festivals, in which people are allowed to test illegal drugs to see what they might contain. The National Capital Authority, a Commonwealth authority, has refused to allow pill testing to go ahead at festivals held in Canberra on land that the National Capital Authority controls.

Respondents were asked whether they agree that the ACT Government should be the one to decide whether pill testing takes place at festivals within the ACT.

- Six in ten (62%) Australians agree that the ACT Government should decide, with 24% strongly agreeing.
- Across every voting intention except Independent/Other voters, the majority of Australians agree that the ACT Government should be the one that decides.
  - 65% of Coalition, 63% of Labor, 66% of Greens, and 57% of One Nation voters agree,
  - 46% of Independent/Other voters agree, however 37% said that they did not know or were unsure.

**Figure 4: Support for ACT Government to have the say over whether pill testing occurs at festivals in the territory, by voting intention**



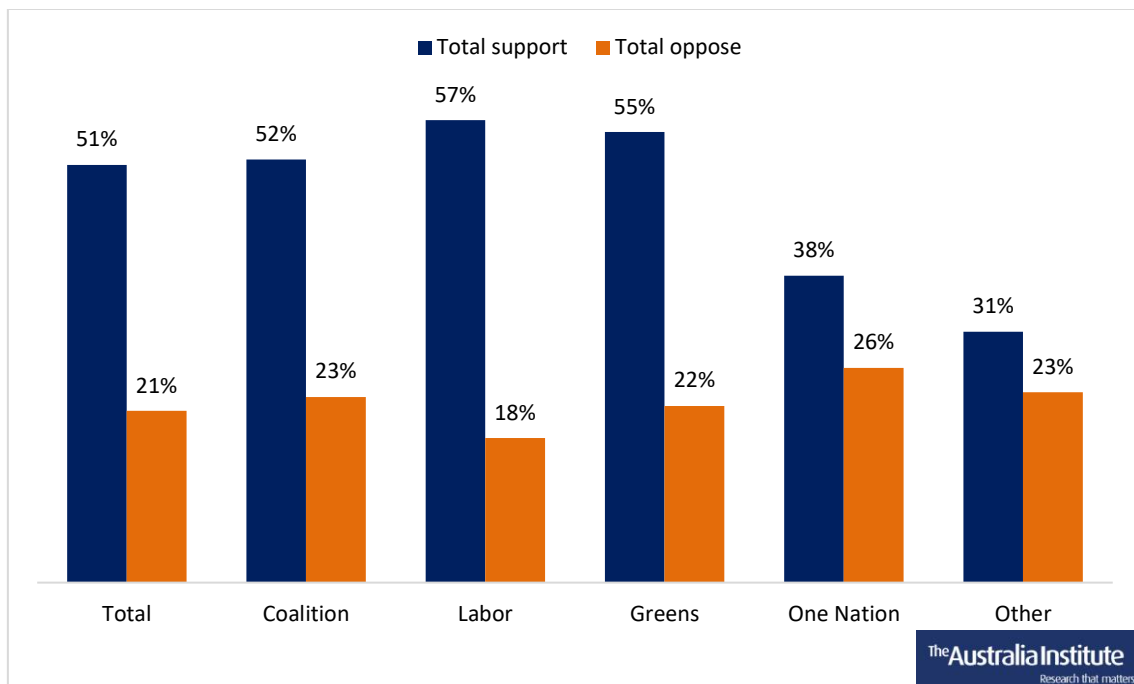
## Increasing the territories' Senate representation

Respondents were asked about a potential increase to the number of senators representing the Northern Territory and ACT. Currently every state elects 12 senators to the Australian Senate, but the ACT and the Northern Territory only elect 2 each.

Respondents were asked whether they would support or oppose an increase in the number of senators each territory elects from 2 to 4.

- One in two (51%) Australians support increasing the number of senators elected by each territory from 2 to 4.
- One in five (21%) oppose increasing the number of senators each territory elects.
- The majority of Coalition (52%), Labor (57%) and Greens (55%) voters support increasing the number of senators elected by each territory from 2 to 4.

**Figure 5: Support for increasing the number of territory senators from 2 each to 4, by voting intention**



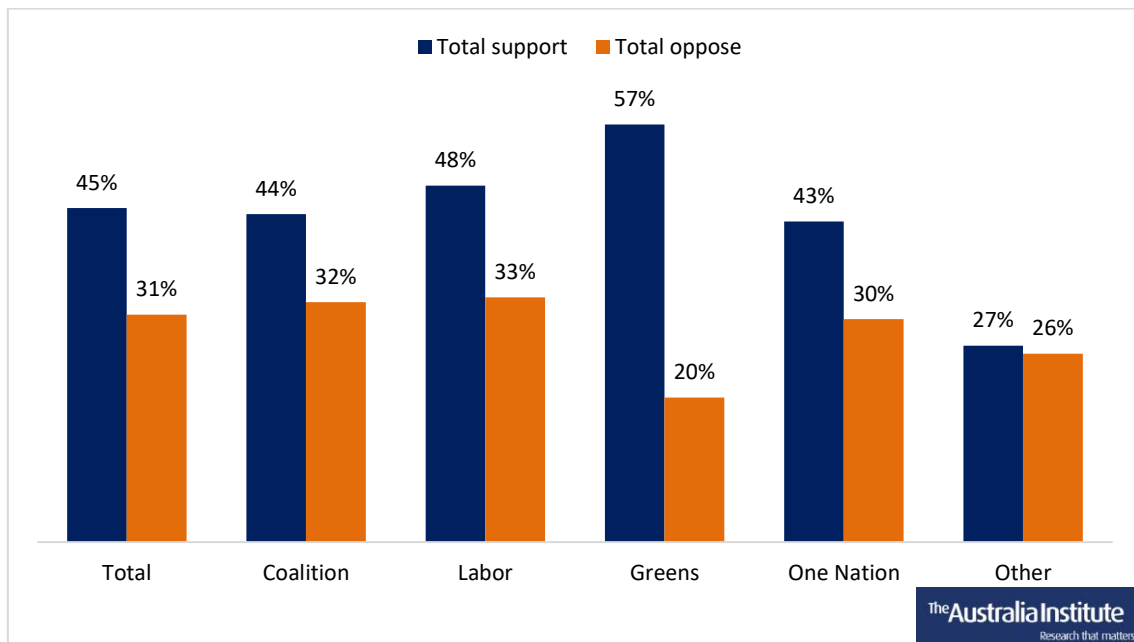
## Territories' right to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to enrol to vote on a voluntary basis

Respondents were also asked about their views on the ability of the ACT to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to enrol to vote on a voluntary basis. Currently, an act of the Australian Parliament means that the ACT cannot allow 16- and 17-year-olds to enrol to vote on a voluntary basis,<sup>2</sup> whereas states are not limited by federal legislation.

Results show that support for the ACT to be able to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to enrol to vote on a voluntary basis is stronger than opposition to the idea across all voting intentions, however a significant amount of people are unsure or don't know.

- 45% of Australians support the idea, with 31% opposing it.
- 44% of Coalition voters support the ACT having the right to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to enrol to vote on a voluntary basis, with 32% opposing the idea.
- 48% of Labor, 57% of Greens, 43% of One Nation and 27% of Other voters support the idea.
- One in four (24%) Australians say they don't know or are unsure.

**Figure 6: Support for the ACT to have the right to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to enrol to vote on a voluntary basis, by voting intention**

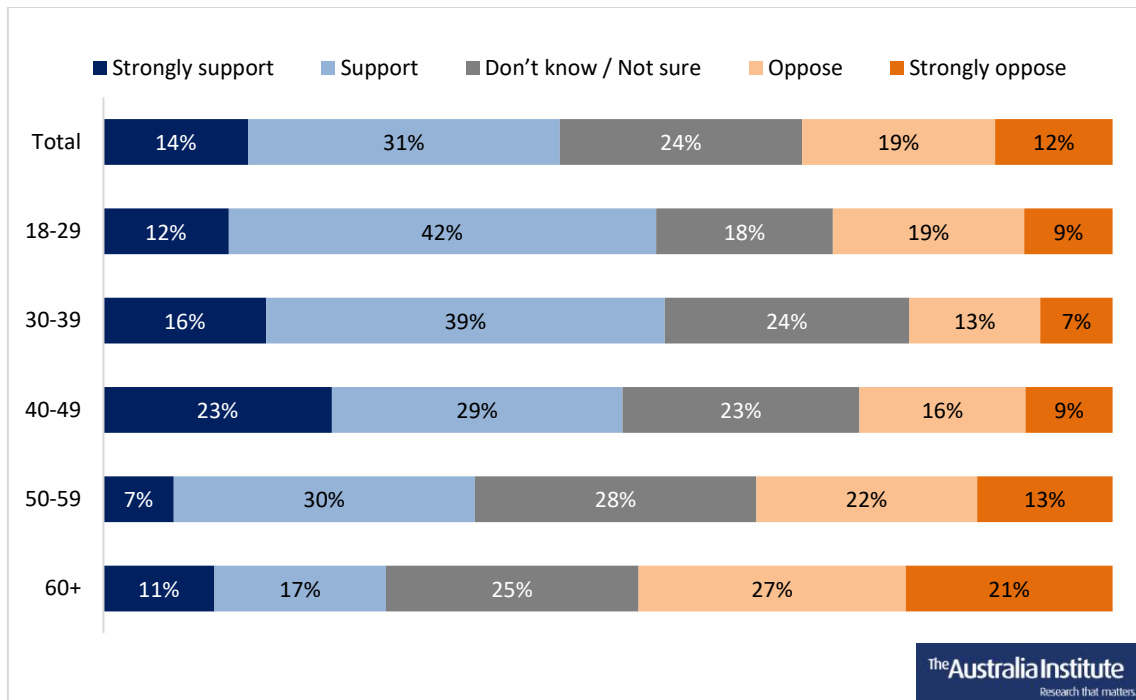


<sup>2</sup> ACT Electoral Commission (2021) *Inquiry into the 2020 ACT Election and the Electoral Act – Supplementary Submission*, pp 7-8, <https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/parliamentary-business/in-committees/committees/jcs/inquiry-into-2020-act-election-and-the-electoral-act#tab1695217-2id>

Across age groups, support is higher amongst those aged under 50-years-old, with a majority of voters in each age group under 50 supporting the idea.

- Over half of those aged 18-49 (51-56%) support the ACT having the right to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to enrol to vote on a voluntary basis.
- 37% of people aged 50-59 support the idea, with 35% opposing it.
- 28% of people aged 60 or older support the idea, with 47% opposing it.

**Figure 7: Support for the ACT to have the right to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to enrol to vote on a voluntary basis, by age group**





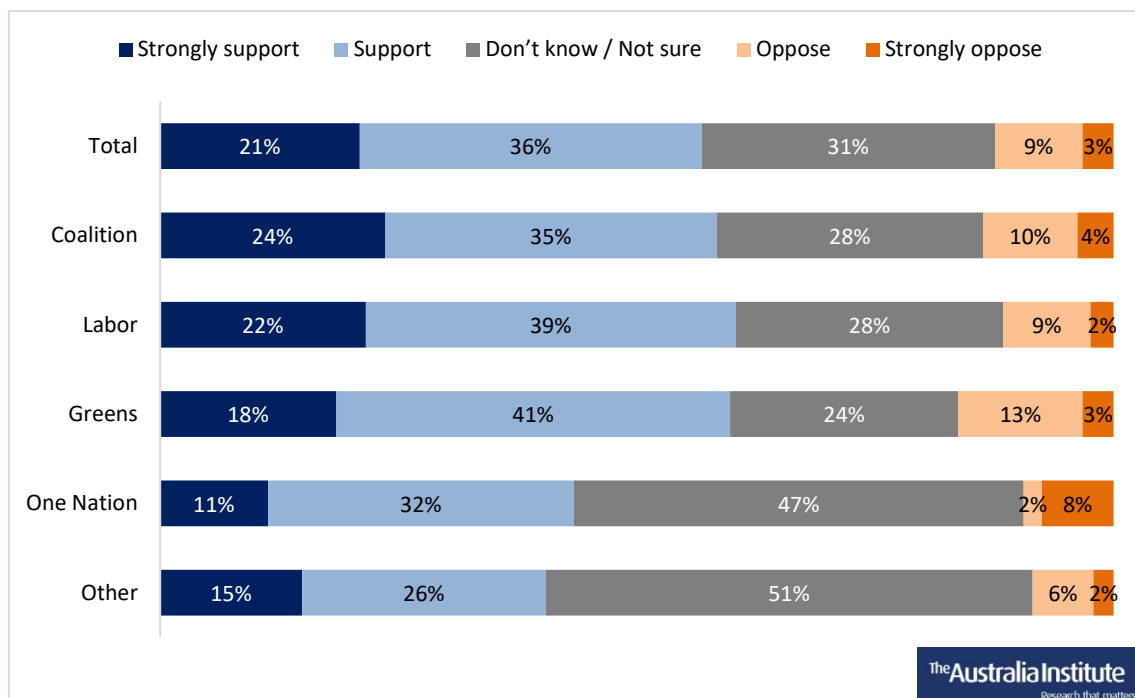
## Jervis Bay Territory voting rights

Respondents were also asked about the Jervis Bay Territory, which is located on the coast of New South Wales, but for the most part the laws of the Australian Capital Territory apply to it. Despite this, Jervis Bay Territory residents cannot vote in elections for the ACT Legislative Assembly – and are unable to vote in any state or territory elections.<sup>3</sup> Respondents were asked whether they support or oppose allowing Jervis Bay Territory residents to vote in ACT Legislative Assembly elections.

- 57% of respondents support allowing Jervis Bay Territory residents to vote in ACT Legislative Assembly elections, with 12% opposing the idea.
- 58% of Coalition, 60% of Labor, 60% of Greens, 43% of One Nation and 40% of Other voters support the idea, with between 9% and 16% opposing the idea across all voting intentions.

While significantly more Australians agree than disagree, it is worth noting an unusually high number (31%) do not know or are unsure. This suggests that public engagement with this issue is limited. By extension, some of those who support the change likely had not heard of this particular case before, but agree with the principle that those affected by laws should be able to vote for the makers of those laws.

**Figure 8: Support for allowing residents of the Jervis Bay Territory to vote in ACT Legislative Assembly elections, by voting intention**



<sup>3</sup> Foden (2020) *ACT election 2020: Jervis Bay Territory resident loses fight to vote*, <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6947243/jervis-bay-man-loses-fight-to-vote-in-act-election/>

## Method

The Australia Institute surveyed 1,004 people between 14 and 16 July 2021, 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

The National Capital Authority administers part of the Australian Capital Territory on behalf of the Australian Government, including the “National Triangle” where Parliament House, the High Court and other national institutions are located; Lake Burley Griffin and the areas around the lake; and major avenues and roads.

The National Capital Authority makes plans for these parts of Canberra, instead of the ACT Government and Parliament.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

“The National Capital Authority should be abolished so the ACT Government and Parliament can make planning decisions for all of Canberra.”

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>18-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60+</i>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	19%	25%	13%	18%	18%	24%	14%	19%
<b>Agree</b>	30%	34%	27%	34%	38%	30%	26%	23%
<b>Disagree</b>	9%	8%	9%	16%	7%	7%	6%	10%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	5%	5%	4%	4%	3%	4%	5%	6%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	38%	28%	47%	28%	33%	34%	47%	44%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	19%	21%	16%	22%	26%	14%
<b>Agree</b>	30%	32%	31%	37%	19%	19%
<b>Disagree</b>	9%	8%	12%	5%	4%	6%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	5%	5%	5%	3%	0%	5%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	38%	34%	36%	33%	51%	55%

Currently, an act of the Australian Parliament means that the ACT cannot allow 16- and 17-year-olds to enrol to vote on a voluntary basis.

Would you support or oppose amending the act, so that the ACT can decide whether it allows enrolment on a voluntary basis?

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>18-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60+</i>
<b>Strongly support</b>	14%	18%	11%	12%	16%	23%	7%	11%
<b>Support</b>	31%	30%	32%	42%	39%	29%	30%	17%
<b>Oppose</b>	19%	18%	20%	19%	13%	16%	22%	27%
<b>Strongly oppose</b>	12%	12%	12%	9%	7%	9%	13%	21%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	24%	22%	26%	18%	24%	23%	28%	25%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
<b>Strongly support</b>	14%	16%	14%	15%	13%	10%
<b>Support</b>	31%	29%	34%	41%	30%	17%
<b>Oppose</b>	19%	20%	22%	14%	15%	14%
<b>Strongly oppose</b>	12%	13%	12%	5%	15%	12%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	24%	23%	19%	24%	26%	48%

In the past the parliaments of both the Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory have considered legalising medical provision of voluntary assisted dying to terminally ill people within their jurisdictions. This was blocked by Commonwealth legislation, which bans the Territories from doing so.

Voluntary assisted dying became legal in Victoria in 2019 and Western Australia in 2021. Tasmania has passed voluntary assisted dying laws, but they are not yet active.

A bill has been proposed that would allow the Northern Territory to legalise voluntary assisted dying, but not allow the Australian Capital Territory to do the same.

Which is closest to your view?

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>18-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60+</i>
<b>Only the Northern Territory should be allowed to legalise voluntary assisted dying</b>	8%	10%	6%	11%	9%	14%	2%	2%
<b>The Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory should be allowed to legalise voluntary assisted dying</b>	60%	60%	59%	49%	56%	57%	67%	67%
<b>Neither territory should be allowed to legalise voluntary assisted dying</b>	12%	12%	13%	16%	12%	9%	10%	17%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	21%	19%	22%	24%	23%	21%	20%	15%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
<b>Only the Northern Territory should be allowed to legalise voluntary assisted dying</b>	8%	9%	5%	16%	4%	4%
<b>The Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory should be allowed to legalise voluntary assisted dying</b>	60%	59%	65%	63%	57%	37%
<b>Neither territory should be allowed to legalise voluntary assisted dying</b>	12%	13%	12%	5%	17%	16%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	21%	19%	18%	15%	23%	43%

The Jervis Bay Territory is located on the coast of New South Wales, but for the most part the laws of the Australian Capital Territory apply to it. Despite this, Jervis Bay Territory residents cannot vote in elections for the ACT Legislative Assembly.

Would you support or oppose allowing Jervis Bay Territory residents to vote in ACT Legislative Assembly elections?

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>18-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60+</i>
<b>Strongly support</b>	21%	25%	17%	16%	22%	26%	16%	23%
<b>Support</b>	36%	35%	37%	41%	37%	38%	31%	34%
<b>Oppose</b>	9%	10%	8%	18%	8%	8%	5%	10%
<b>Strongly oppose</b>	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%	5%	4%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	31%	27%	34%	23%	30%	27%	42%	30%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
<b>Strongly support</b>	21%	24%	22%	18%	11%	15%
<b>Support</b>	36%	35%	39%	41%	32%	26%
<b>Oppose</b>	9%	10%	9%	13%	2%	6%
<b>Strongly oppose</b>	3%	4%	2%	3%	8%	2%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	31%	28%	28%	24%	47%	51%

The ACT Government has held pill testing trials at music festivals. Pill testing allows people to test illegal drugs to see what they might contain.

The National Capital Authority has refused to allow pill testing to go ahead at festivals held in Canberra on land that the National Capital Authority controls.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

“The ACT Government should be the one to decide whether pill testing takes place at festivals within the ACT.”

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>18-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60+</i>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	24%	28%	20%	20%	22%	30%	19%	28%
<b>Agree</b>	38%	37%	39%	36%	41%	40%	35%	36%
<b>Disagree</b>	10%	8%	11%	16%	12%	6%	8%	8%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	9%	10%	7%	8%	5%	7%	13%	10%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	20%	16%	22%	19%	21%	16%	24%	19%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	24%	25%	25%	28%	13%	20%
<b>Agree</b>	38%	41%	37%	38%	43%	26%
<b>Disagree</b>	10%	12%	8%	10%	8%	7%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	9%	7%	9%	12%	9%	10%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	20%	16%	20%	12%	26%	37%

Currently every state elects 12 senators to the Australian Senate, but the ACT and the Northern Territory only elect 2 each.

Would you support or oppose an increase in the number of senators each territory elects from 2 to 4?

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>18-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60+</i>
<b>Strongly support</b>	15%	18%	12%	15%	16%	21%	11%	13%
<b>Support</b>	36%	32%	40%	36%	39%	40%	36%	29%
<b>Oppose</b>	13%	15%	12%	17%	12%	11%	8%	20%
<b>Strongly oppose</b>	8%	11%	5%	5%	4%	5%	9%	15%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	27%	24%	31%	27%	29%	23%	35%	24%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
<b>Strongly support</b>	15%	16%	17%	18%	8%	9%
<b>Support</b>	36%	36%	40%	37%	30%	22%
<b>Oppose</b>	13%	15%	12%	15%	15%	10%
<b>Strongly oppose</b>	8%	8%	6%	7%	11%	14%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	27%	25%	25%	23%	36%	46%