

Polling - Public funding for political parties and candidates

August 2024

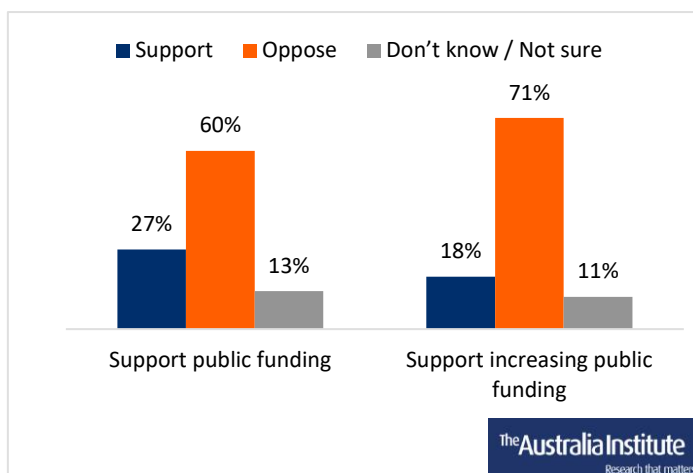
Key results

The Australia Institute surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,014 Australians about whether they support public funding for political parties and candidates to run election campaigns and cover administrative costs.

The results show that:

- Three in five (60%) Australians oppose public funding of political parties and candidates. Only one in four (27%) Australians support public funding.
- A majority of voters for all political parties oppose public funding.
- Seven in ten (71%) Australians oppose *increasing* public funding for political parties and candidates. Only one in six (18%) Australians support increasing it.
- A majority of voters for all political parties oppose increasing public funding. Opposition was highest among voters for One Nation (92%), the Coalition (78%) and Other/Independent candidates (71%).
- Earlier polling research finds that Australians would be more likely to use an alternative public funding system, “democracy vouchers” (39% are likely), than to donate under the status quo (16% are likely).

Figure 1: Total support for public funding and increasing public funding



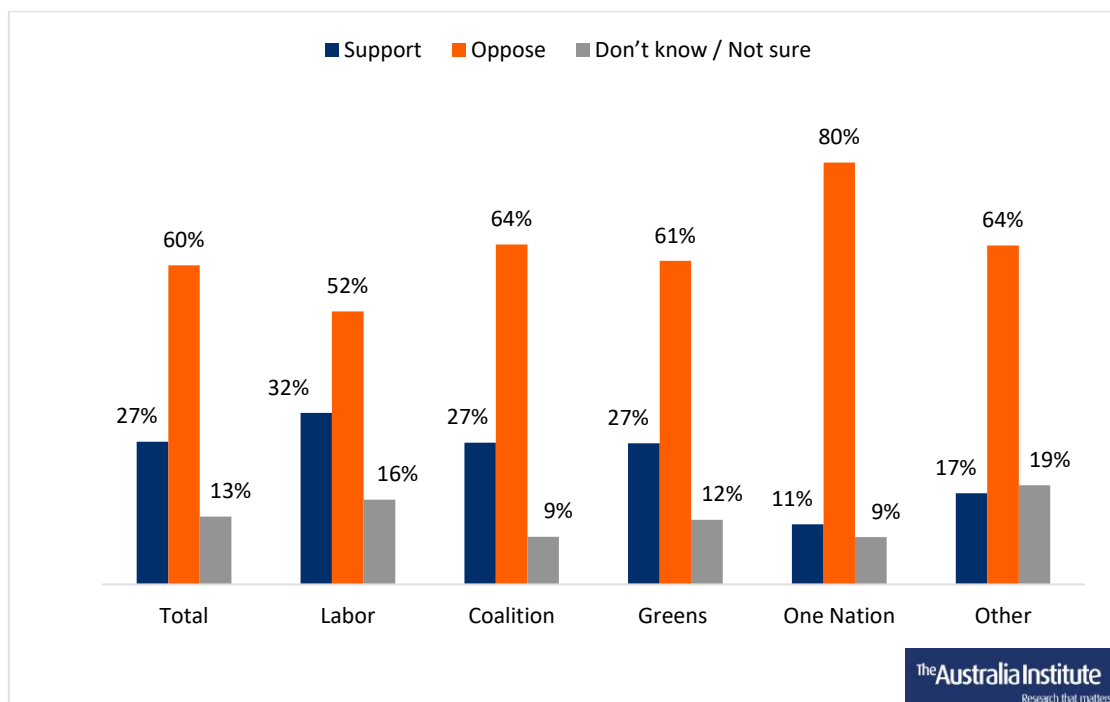
Respondents were told:

Public funding refers to taxpayer money for political parties and candidates to run election campaigns and/or cover the administrative costs of running a political party. After the last federal election, political parties and candidates received about \$75 million in public funding to help fund their election campaigns.

They were then asked whether they support or oppose public funding for political parties and candidates.

- Three in five (60%) Australians oppose public funding of political parties and candidates. Only one in four (27%) Australians support public funding.
- A majority of voters for all parties oppose public funding. Opposition was highest for One Nation voters (80%), Coalition voters (64%) and Independent/Other voters (64%).
- Younger Australians are more supportive of public funding compared to older generations. 44% of Australians aged 18–29 support public funding compared to 20% of those aged 50–59 and those aged 60 and older.
- A majority of voters from NSW (56%), Victoria (64%), Queensland (61%), Western Australia (68%) and South Australia (62%) oppose public funding.

Figure 2: Public funding for parties and candidates, by voting preference



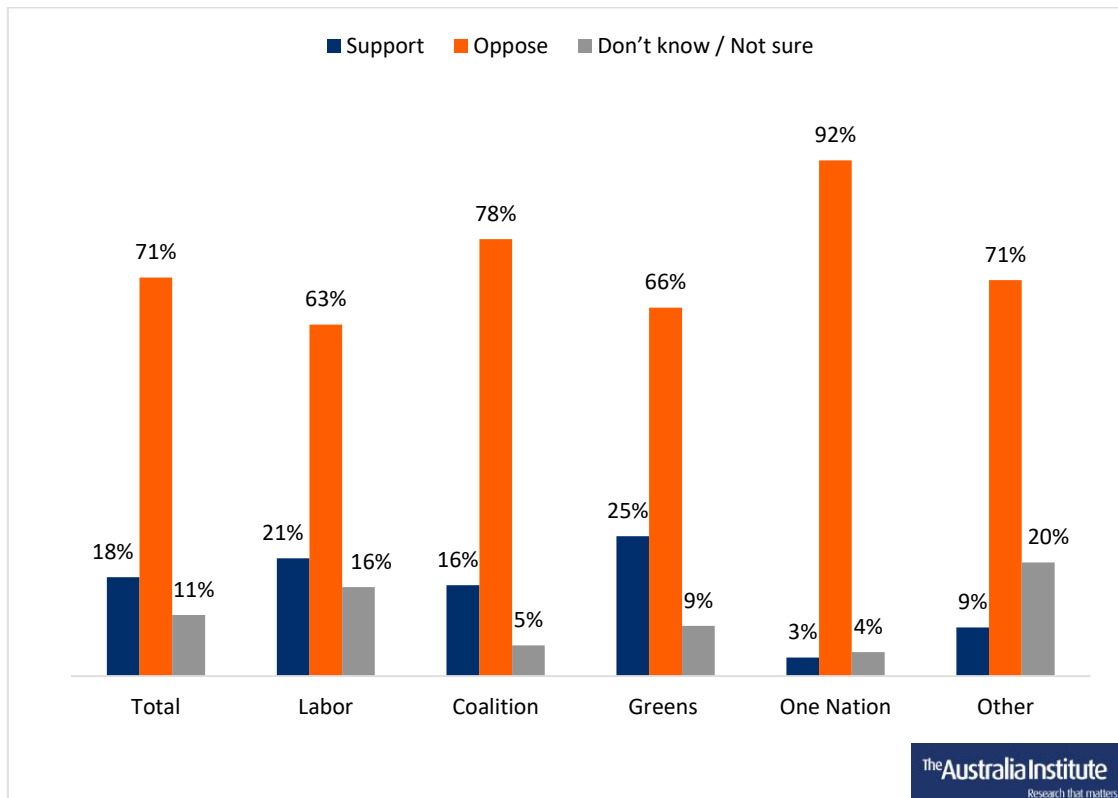
Respondents were then told:

The federal government may be considering a significant increase in public funding to political parties and candidates.

They were asked whether they support or oppose increasing public funding for political parties and candidates.

- Seven in ten (71%) Australians oppose increasing public funding for political parties and candidates. Only one in six (18%) Australians support increasing it.
- A majority of voters for all political parties oppose increasing public funding. Opposition was highest among voters for One Nation (92%), the Coalition (78%) and Other/Independent candidates (71%).
- Younger Australians are more supportive of increasing public funding compared to older generations. 35% of Australians aged 18–29 support increasing public funding compared to 11% of those aged 50–59 and 6% of those aged over 60.
- A majority of voters from NSW (69%), Victoria (75%), Queensland (72%), Western Australia (72%) and South Australia (74%) oppose public funding.

Figure 3: Increasing public funding for parties and candidates, by voting preference

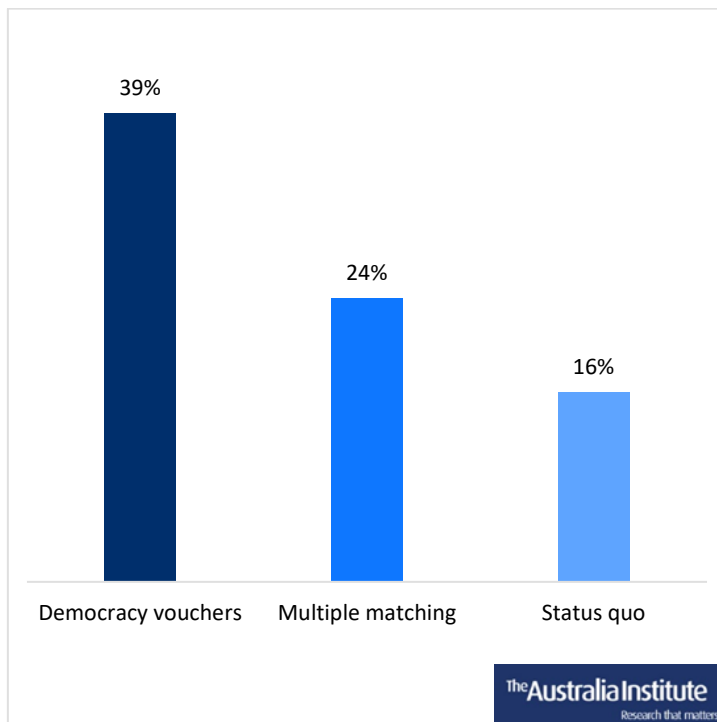


Alternatives to the current public funding system

The Australia Institute has conducted polling research into Australians' willingness to adopt one of two alternative public funding systems: democracy vouchers and multiple matching of donations. It finds that while the majority of Australians say they are unlikely to provide financial support to a political party or candidate in the next federal election, regardless of the funding model used, more would participate under a democracy voucher model than a multiple matching model or the status quo.

This research first appeared in the Australia Institute's submission to the South Australian Government's consultation on the Electoral (Accountability and Integrity) Amendment Bill 2024 (awaiting publication).

Figure 1: Likelihood of participating at the next federal election, by funding model



Respondents were asked if they had ever donated to a political party or candidate. One in 10 (10%) respondents said they had previously donated to a political party or candidate. This is less than the number who say they are “likely” to donate to a political party or candidate at the next federal election (16%). This suggests that respondents somewhat over-estimate how likely they are to make political donations.

After assessing how likely respondents thought they were to make political donations at the next election under the status quo, respondents were asked how likely they would be to participate in two alternative public funding models.

Democracy vouchers

Respondents were shown the following:

The City of Seattle uses a public funding model for its elections, called “democracy vouchers”. Before an election, each voter is sent four vouchers worth \$25 each. They can allocate these vouchers to the candidates that they support, or recycle them if there are no candidates they wish to support.

Participants were then asked how likely they would be to use some or all of the vouchers to support political parties or candidates if they received four vouchers each worth \$25 before the next federal election.

Two in five Australians (39%) said they would be likely to use some or all of the vouchers to support political parties or candidates. 46% said they would be unlikely to use some or all of the vouchers.

Multiple matching

Respondents were shown the following:

The City of New York uses a different public funding model for its elections, called “multiple matching”. Before an election, voters who make small donations to a candidate can have their donations topped up by public money. For example, if eligible, a \$175 donation would become \$1,050 thanks to public funding.

They were then asked how likely or unlikely is it that they would make a political donation to a political party or candidate at the next federal election if Australia adopted a multiple matching system, whereby their small donation to a candidate would be topped up by public money.

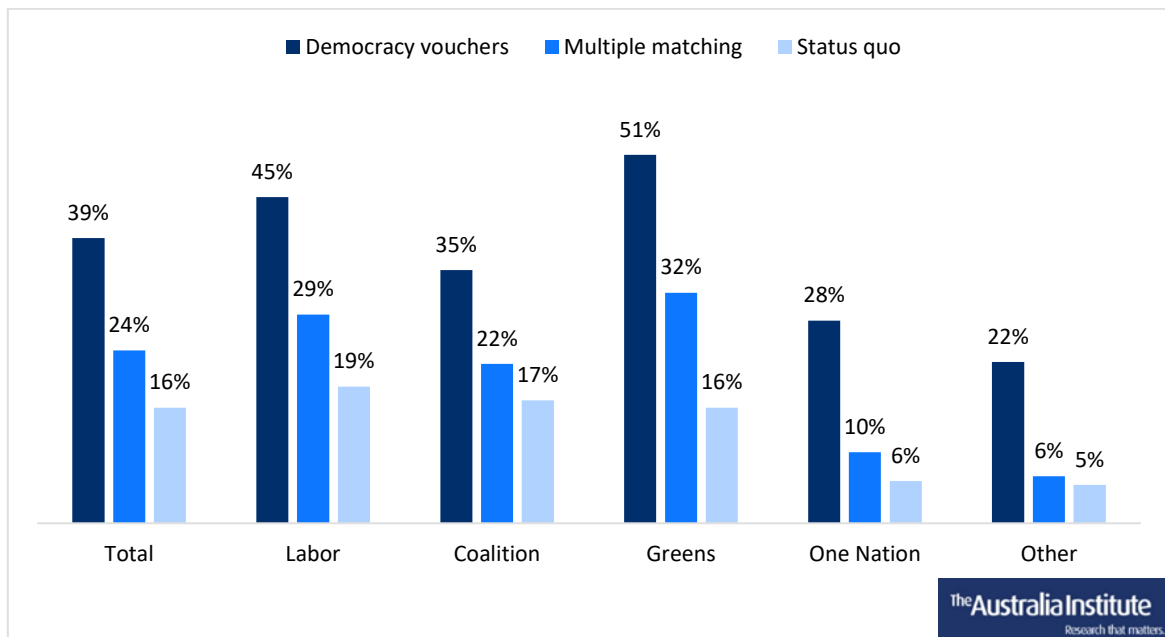
One in four Australians (24%) said they would be likely to make a political donation to a political party or candidate at the next federal election if Australia adopted a multiple matching system. 64% say they would be unlikely to donate at the next federal election if Australia adopted a multiple matching system.

Comparing funding models

More Australians say they would participate in a voucher-based public funding scheme than donate under a multiple matching model or the status quo.

More respondents are likely to use democracy vouchers (39% are likely) than donate under a multiple matching system (24% are likely) and or donate under the status quo (16% are likely). Across all voting intentions, more respondents would use democracy vouchers than donate under multiple matching or the status quo.

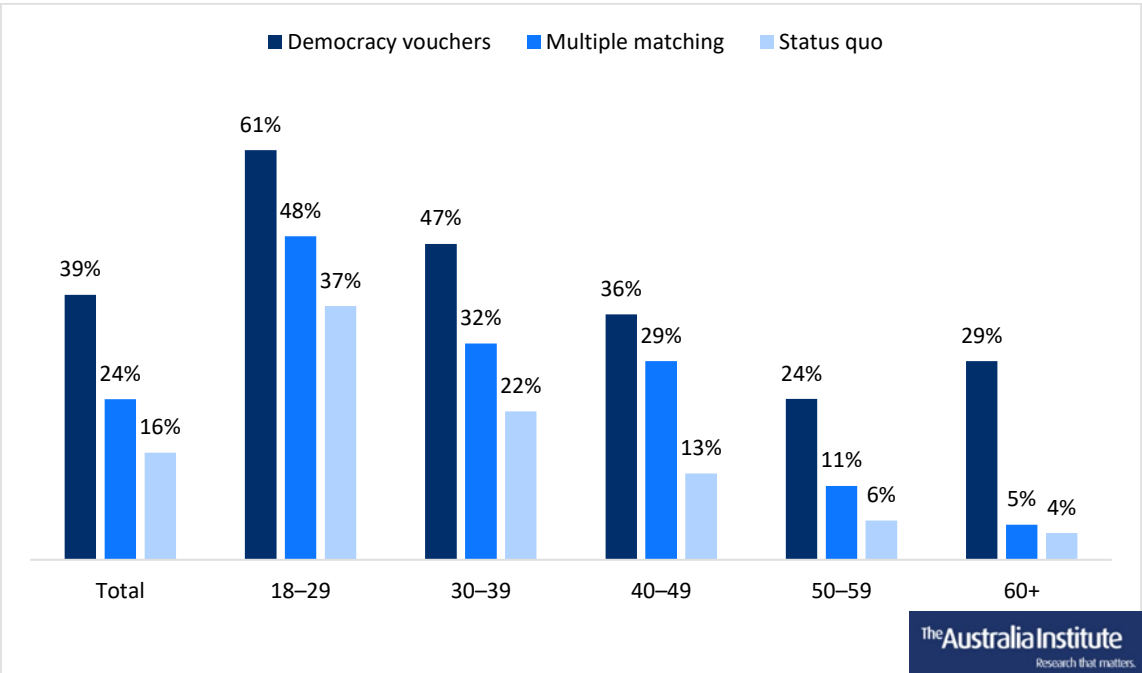
Figure 2: Likelihood of participating at the next federal election, by voting intention



Source: Australia Institute polling research.

Across all age ranges, more respondents would use democracy vouchers than donate under multiple matching or the status quo. While the youngest group (18–29) were most likely to say they would use democracy vouchers (61% are likely), it is the oldest group (60 and older) that see the greatest *increase* in participation compared to multiple matching (5%) or the status quo (4%).

Figure 3: Likelihood of donating at the next federal election, by age group



Method - Public funding polling

Short disclosure statement

Panel provider	Dynata
Research company	The Australia Institute
Client commissioning the research	NA
Fieldwork dates	10 July 2024 to 16 July 2024
Mode of data collection	Online recruited from research panel
Target population	Australian adults aged 18+
Sample size	1,014. A further 498 South Australians were sampled to produce more precise results, but weighting was used to ensure that people from the state were not over-represented in national results.
Australian Polling Council compliant	Yes
Voting intention published	Yes
Long disclosure statement	See below

Long disclosure statement

Effective sample size after weighting applied	1,031
Margin of error associated with effective sample size	±3%
Variables used in weighting	Age, gender, state or territory based on Australian Bureau of Statistics “National, state and territory population” data
Gender identity categorisation	Those who answered the gender identity question as “Non-binary”, “I use a different term”, or “Prefer not to answer” had their responses included with females for the purpose of reporting, due to constraints from weighting data availability
Weighting method used	Raking method
Full question text, responses categories and randomisation	See below
Source of online sample	Dynata’s online panel
Positioning of voting intention questions in questionnaire	Immediately after demographics, before policy questions. Lower house voting intention was asked first, followed by upper house voting intention.
How were undecided voters handled?	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
Method of calculating 2PP	N/A
Voting intention categorisation	Voting crosstabs show voting intentions for the House of Representatives. “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
Location results	Results are shown only for larger states



**Australian
Polling Council
Quality Mark**

Method - Alternative public funding models

Short disclosure statement

Panel provider	Dynata
Research company	The Australia Institute
Client commissioning the research	NA
Fieldwork dates	31 October and 3 November 2023
Mode of data collection	Online recruited from research panel
Target population	Australian adults aged 18+
Sample size	1,002 Australians, and a further 377 South Australians
Australian Polling Council compliant	Yes
Voting intention published	No
Long disclosure statement	See below

Long disclosure statement

Effective sample size after weighting applied	1,059
Margin of error associated with effective sample size	±3%
Variables used in weighting	Age, gender, state/territory based on Australian Bureau of Statistics “National, state and territory population” data
Gender identity categorisation	Those who answered the gender identity question as “Non-binary”, “I use a different term”, or “Prefer not to answer” had their responses included with females for the purpose of reporting, due to constraints from weighting data availability
Weighting method used	Raking method
Full question text, responses categories and randomisation	See below
Source of online sample	Dynata’s online panel
Positioning of voting intention questions in questionnaire	Immediately after demographics, before policy questions
How were undecided voters handled?	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
Method of calculating 2PP	NA
Voting intention categorisation	Voting crosstabs show voting intentions for the House of Representatives. “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
Location results	Results are shown only for larger states



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Detailed results - Public funding polling

Preceding questions in the poll, which were only asked to respondents in South Australia, are expected to have influenced the results of the questions published here for those respondents in South Australia.

The questions, and the response options for each question, are as follows:

Have you ever donated to a political party or candidate?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know / Not sure

How likely or unlikely are you to donate to a political party or candidate at the next South Australian election?

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely
- Don't know / Not sure

The City of Seattle uses a public funding model for its elections, called “democracy vouchers”. Before an election, each voter is sent four vouchers worth \$25 each. They can allocate these vouchers to the candidates that they support, or recycle them if there are no candidates they wish to support.

If South Australia adopted a voucher system, and you received four vouchers each worth \$25 before the next South Australian election, how likely or unlikely is it that you would use some or all of the vouchers to support political parties or candidates?

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely
- Don't know / Not sure

The City of New York uses a different public funding model for its elections, called “multiple matching”. Before an election, voters who make small donations to a candidate can have their donations topped up by public money. For example, if eligible, a \$175 donation would become \$1,050 thanks to public funding.

If South Australia adopted a multiple matching system, and your small donation to a candidate would be topped up by public money, how likely or unlikely is it that you would make a political donation to a political party or candidate at the next South Australian election?

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely
- Don’t know / Not sure

Have you heard of the South Australian Government’s proposal to ban political donations?

- Yes
- No
- Don’t know / Not sure

What is your initial impression of the proposal to ban political donations?

- Very favourable
- Somewhat favourable
- Somewhat unfavourable
- Very unfavourable
- Don’t know / Not sure

Which of the following statements are closer to your understanding of how the South Australian Government’s proposal would actually work?

Please select one response per pair

- It would ban political donations to all parties and candidates
- It would ban political donations to some parties and candidates only

- It would advantage the major parties
- It would advantage new entrants

- It would increase the total amount of money spent on elections and political parties
- It would reduce the total amount of money spent on elections and political parties
- In total, the major parties would receive more money (public and private) than they did before
- In total, the major parties would receive less money than they did before
- Spending caps would only apply to political parties and candidates
- Spending caps would apply to third parties like companies, unions and lobby groups as well

Which is closer to your view of how changes to South Australian election laws should work?

Please select one response per pair

- Should ban political donations to all parties and candidates
- Should ban political donations to some parties and candidates only
- Should advantage new entrants
- Should advantage the major parties
- Should increase the total amount of money spent on elections and political parties
- Should reduce the total amount of money spent on elections and political parties
- In total, the major parties should receive more money (public and private) under the donation ban than they did before
- In total, the major parties should receive less money under the donation ban than they did before
- Spending caps should only apply to political parties and candidates
- Spending caps should apply to third parties like companies, unions and lobby groups as well

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

“Any major change to South Australian electoral law should be reviewed by a multi-party committee of parliamentarians to consider its design and impacts.”

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know / Not sure

Public funding refers to taxpayer money for political parties and candidates to run election campaigns and/or cover the administrative costs of running a political party.

In your view, who should be the main beneficiaries of public funding?

Choose as many as apply

- Existing major parties like Labor and the Liberals
- Existing minor parties like the Greens, One Nation and SA-BEST
- Sitting independent MPs
- Independent candidates
- New minor parties
- Don't know / Not sure

Public funding refers to taxpayer money for political parties and candidates to run election campaigns and/or cover the administrative costs of running a political party. After the last federal election, political parties and candidates received about \$75 million in public funding to help fund their election campaigns.

Do you support or oppose public funding for political parties and candidates?

	<i>Total</i>	Male	Female	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA
Strongly support	8%	12%	3%	9%	3%	7%	7%	6%
Support	19%	26%	13%	20%	21%	22%	11%	18%
Oppose	29%	26%	32%	28%	29%	30%	34%	32%
Strongly oppose	31%	28%	35%	28%	36%	31%	33%	30%
Don't know / Not sure	13%	8%	18%	14%	11%	10%	15%	14%

	<i>Total</i>	Labor	Coalition	Greens	One Nation	Other
Strongly support	8%	10%	8%	8%	0%	2%
Support	19%	22%	19%	19%	11%	15%
Oppose	29%	30%	34%	29%	15%	15%
Strongly oppose	31%	22%	30%	33%	65%	50%
Don't know / Not sure	13%	16%	9%	12%	9%	19%

	<i>Total</i>	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Strongly support	8%	17%	11%	6%	4%	2%
Support	19%	27%	22%	13%	16%	18%
Oppose	29%	26%	28%	28%	32%	31%
Strongly oppose	31%	21%	26%	34%	38%	36%
Don't know / Not sure	13%	9%	14%	19%	9%	13%

The federal government may be considering a significant increase in public funding to political parties and candidates.

Do you support or oppose increasing public funding for political parties and candidates?

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>VIC</i>	<i>QLD</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>
Strongly support	7%	10%	4%	9%	4%	6%	8%	3%
Support	11%	14%	8%	13%	10%	12%	4%	10%
Oppose	32%	29%	34%	32%	34%	30%	29%	37%
Strongly oppose	40%	37%	42%	37%	42%	42%	42%	38%
Don't know / Not sure	11%	9%	13%	9%	10%	10%	16%	13%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
Strongly support	7%	8%	7%	11%	2%	3%
Support	11%	13%	10%	14%	2%	6%
Oppose	32%	33%	38%	26%	24%	20%
Strongly oppose	40%	30%	40%	40%	69%	51%
Don't know / Not sure	11%	16%	5%	9%	4%	20%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>18-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60+</i>
Strongly support	7%	19%	10%	5%	2%	1%
Support	11%	16%	15%	10%	8%	6%
Oppose	32%	31%	31%	29%	31%	34%
Strongly oppose	40%	23%	32%	42%	49%	49%
Don't know / Not sure	11%	11%	12%	14%	9%	10%

Detailed results - Alternative public funding models

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

Have you ever donated to a political party or candidate?

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>VIC</i>	<i>QLD</i>	<i>WA</i>
Yes	10%	15%	5%	9%	8%	8%	11%
No	89%	85%	93%	89%	90%	91%	89%
Don't know / Not sure	1%	0%	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
Yes	10%	14%	9%	9%	6%	3%
No	89%	85%	90%	90%	92%	96%
Don't know / Not sure	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>18–29</i>	<i>30–39</i>	<i>40–49</i>	<i>50–59</i>	<i>60+</i>
Yes	10%	20%	10%	9%	7%	6%
No	89%	79%	88%	90%	93%	94%
Don't know / Not sure	1%	2%	2%	2%	0%	0%

How likely or unlikely are you to donate to a political party or candidate at the next federal election?

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>VIC</i>	<i>QLD</i>	<i>WA</i>
Very likely	7%	9%	5%	6%	7%	4%	7%
Likely	9%	10%	7%	9%	11%	8%	8%
Unlikely	16%	16%	17%	18%	13%	18%	21%
Very unlikely	64%	61%	66%	61%	65%	68%	61%
Don't know / Not sure	4%	4%	5%	6%	3%	3%	3%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
Very likely	7%	9%	7%	5%	4%	2%
Likely	9%	9%	10%	11%	2%	3%
Unlikely	16%	19%	15%	18%	12%	10%
Very unlikely	64%	58%	65%	60%	80%	78%
Don't know / Not sure	4%	4%	3%	6%	2%	7%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>18–29</i>	<i>30–39</i>	<i>40–49</i>	<i>50–59</i>	<i>60+</i>
Very likely	7%	18%	10%	6%	2%	1%
Likely	9%	19%	12%	7%	4%	3%
Unlikely	16%	20%	19%	19%	15%	12%
Very unlikely	64%	39%	51%	64%	75%	83%
Don't know / Not sure	4%	4%	9%	5%	5%	1%

The City of Seattle uses a public funding model for its elections, called “democracy vouchers”. Before an election, each voter is sent four vouchers worth \$25 each. They can allocate these vouchers to the candidates that they support, or recycle them if there are no candidates they wish to support.

If Australia adopted a voucher system, and you received four vouchers each worth \$25 before the next federal election, how likely or unlikely is it that you would use some or all of the vouchers to support political parties or candidates?

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>VIC</i>	<i>QLD</i>	<i>WA</i>
Very likely	18%	23%	13%	15%	19%	16%	16%
Likely	22%	20%	23%	23%	22%	18%	23%
Unlikely	12%	13%	12%	12%	11%	14%	16%
Very unlikely	34%	34%	34%	34%	34%	38%	30%
Don't know / Not sure	15%	11%	18%	15%	14%	14%	15%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
Very likely	18%	22%	13%	22%	16%	7%
Likely	22%	23%	21%	28%	12%	15%
Unlikely	12%	13%	14%	11%	15%	6%
Very unlikely	34%	28%	39%	24%	44%	48%
Don't know / Not sure	15%	15%	13%	15%	13%	24%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>18–29</i>	<i>30–39</i>	<i>40–49</i>	<i>50–59</i>	<i>60+</i>
Very likely	18%	26%	17%	19%	12%	14%
Likely	22%	34%	30%	18%	11%	15%
Unlikely	12%	10%	14%	14%	13%	13%
Very unlikely	34%	17%	24%	37%	44%	44%
Don't know / Not sure	15%	13%	15%	13%	19%	14%

The City of New York uses a different public funding model for its elections, called “multiple matching”. Before an election, voters who make small donations to a candidate can have their donations topped up by public money. For example, if eligible, a \$175 donation would become \$1,050 thanks to public funding.

If Australia adopted a multiple matching system, and your small donation to a candidate would be topped up by public money, how likely or unlikely is it that you would make a political donation to a political party or candidate at the next federal election?

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>VIC</i>	<i>QLD</i>	<i>WA</i>
Very likely	8%	12%	5%	8%	7%	6%	7%
Likely	15%	14%	17%	19%	19%	13%	9%
Unlikely	16%	17%	15%	18%	15%	13%	22%
Very unlikely	48%	48%	49%	44%	48%	54%	45%
Don't know / Not sure	12%	10%	15%	11%	12%	14%	17%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
Very likely	8%	12%	7%	7%	2%	0%
Likely	15%	16%	15%	24%	8%	6%
Unlikely	16%	17%	15%	22%	17%	6%
Very unlikely	48%	41%	53%	36%	66%	64%
Don't know / Not sure	12%	13%	10%	10%	8%	23%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>18–29</i>	<i>30–39</i>	<i>40–49</i>	<i>50–59</i>	<i>60+</i>
Very likely	8%	21%	8%	6%	6%	2%
Likely	15%	27%	23%	23%	5%	3%
Unlikely	16%	21%	17%	16%	11%	15%
Very unlikely	48%	19%	36%	46%	62%	70%
Don't know / Not sure	12%	12%	15%	9%	16%	10%