

The Essential Report

05 August 2019



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Prepared By: Essential Research

Data Supplied by:



AMSRS 

Our researchers are members of the Australian Market and Social Research Society.



About this poll

This report summarises the results of a weekly omnibus conducted by Essential Research with data provided by Qualtrics. The survey was conducted online from 1st August 2019 to 4th August 2019 and is based on 1,102 respondents.

This week's report includes questions about Newstart, Centrelink debt recovery, and large online platforms' (such as Google and Facebook) responsibility in delivering content.

The methodology used to carry out this research is described in the appendix at the end of the report.

Note that due to rounding, not all tables necessarily total 100% and subtotals may also vary.

Awareness of Newstart payment amount

Q As far as you know, how much is the weekly Newstart payment for a single person with no children (this is the benefit paid to people who are out of work)?

	Total	Gender		Age			June 2018
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	
Less than \$250 per week	24%	23%	25%	25%	23%	25%	23%
Between \$250 and \$300 per week	40%	40%	40%	33%	40%	46%	27%
Between \$300 and \$400 per week	10%	10%	9%	11%	11%	8%	10%
More than \$400 per week	5%	6%	4%	8%	5%	2%	4%
Don't know	21%	21%	22%	23%	22%	19%	36%
Base (n)	1,102	543	559	348	374	380	1,091

- Two-fifths (40%) of participants correctly selected 'Between \$250 and \$300 per week' as the Newstart payment.
- Younger participants (18-34 year olds) were less likely than other age groups to correctly select the Newstart payment (33%), while 55+ year olds (46%) were more likely than others.
- In June 2018 only a quarter (27%) of participants selected the correct weekly amount for Newstart, which is significantly lower than in 2019, and more than a third (36%) didn't know.

Awareness of Newstart payment amount

Q As far as you know, how much is the weekly Newstart payment for a single person with no children (this is the benefit paid to people who are out of work)?

	Total	Income		
		NET: Lower Income	NET: Mid-Income	NET: High Income
Less than \$250 per week	24%	24%	28%	23%
Between \$250 and \$300 per week	40%	46%	38%	37%
Between \$300 and \$400 per week	10%	9%	13%	9%
More than \$400 per week	5%	4%	4%	8%
Don't know	21%	17%	17%	23%
Base (n)	1,102	399	301	275

- Almost one-in-ten (8%) high income participants thought that the weekly Newstart amount was more than \$400, twice as many as those on lower or mid-incomes (both 4%).
- Forty-six percent of lower income participants correctly selected \$250-\$300 per week as the Newstart payment.



Appropriateness of Newstart benefit amount

Q The Newstart benefit for a single person with no children is about \$280 per week.

Do you think it is too high, too low or about right?

	Total	Gender		Age			June 2018
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	
Too high	5%	7%	3%	6%	7%	2%	9%
About right	30%	31%	30%	42%	24%	27%	26%
Too low	58%	57%	59%	46%	60%	66%	50%
Don't know	7%	5%	8%	6%	9%	5%	15%
Base (n)	1,102	543	559	348	374	380	1,091

- Almost three-fifths (58%) of participants thought that the Newstart benefit of \$280 per week was too low for a single person with no children.
- Two-thirds (66%) of participants over 55 years old thought that the Newstart benefit was too low, compared to 46% of those 18-34 years old.



Appropriateness of Newstart benefit amount

Q The Newstart benefit for a single person with no children is about \$280 per week.

Do you think it is too high, too low or about right?

	Total	Federal Voting Intention			
		Labor	Coalition	Greens	NET: Other
Too high	5%	3%	7%	2%	9%
About right	30%	25%	40%	25%	25%
Too low	58%	66%	48%	69%	59%
Don't know	7%	6%	6%	3%	7%
Base (n)	1,102	320	387	107	159

- Two-thirds (66%) of Labor voters thought that the Newstart benefit was too low, compared to 48% of Coalition voters. Coalition voters were more likely than Labor voters to believe that the benefit was about right (40% Coalition, 25% Labor).

Appropriateness of Newstart benefit amount

Q The Newstart benefit for a single person with no children is about \$280 per week.

Do you think it is too high, too low or about right?

	Total	Income		
		NET: Lower Income	NET: Mid-Income	NET: High Income
Too high	5%	2%	6%	11%
About right	30%	28%	34%	31%
Too low	58%	66%	55%	51%
Don't know	7%	4%	6%	7%
Base (n)	1,102	399	301	275

- Again, two-thirds (66%) of lower income earners thought that Newstart was too low compared to mid- and high income earners (55% and 51% respectively).
- High income earners were more likely than lower income earners to believe that the Newstart benefit is too high (11% versus 2%).



Attitudes towards Newstart

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about job searching and Newstart?

	NET: Agree	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
In Australia, no-one should have to go without essentials like food, healthcare and power	84%	61%	23%	10%	3%	3%
Politicians are out of touch with what it's like for people having to live off Newstart payments	73%	49%	23%	16%	7%	4%
Increasing the Newstart payment could help people find jobs, by providing funds for transport, internet access and training	66%	33%	33%	16%	12%	6%
The money it would cost to increase the Newstart payments would be better spent on other services	30%	12%	18%	30%	20%	20%

- A large majority of participants agreed that no-one should have to go without essentials like food, healthcare and power (84%) with three-fifths (61%) strongly agreeing with this statement.
- Three-quarters (73%) also agreed that politicians are out of touch with what it's like for people having to live off Newstart payments with almost half (49%) strongly agreeing with this statement.
- Two-thirds (66%) of participants agreed that increasing the Newstart payment could help people find jobs, by providing funds for transport, internet access and training.
- Only 30% agreed that the money it would cost to increase the Newstart payments would be better spent on other services.



Attitudes towards Newstart

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about job searching and Newstart?

NET: Agree	Total	Gender		Age		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
In Australia, no-one should have to go without essentials like food, healthcare and power	84%	81%	88%	75%	86%	91%
Politicians are out of touch with what it's like for people having to live off Newstart payments	73%	71%	75%	65%	74%	78%
Increasing the Newstart payment could help people find jobs, by providing funds for transport, internet access and training	66%	64%	68%	61%	67%	69%
The money it would cost to increase the Newstart payments would be better spent on other services	30%	32%	27%	36%	30%	24%
Base (n)	1,102	543	559	348	374	380

- Participants over 55 years old were more likely than younger participants to agree that no-one should have to go without essentials like food, healthcare and power (91% compared to 81%); and that politicians are out of touch with what it's like for people having to live off Newstart payments (78% compared to 70%).



Attitudes towards Newstart

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about job searching and Newstart?

NET: Agree	Total	Federal Voting Intention			
		Labor	Coalition	Greens	NET: Other
In Australia, no-one should have to go without essentials like food, healthcare and power	84%	89%	82%	85%	86%
Politicians are out of touch with what it's like for people having to live off Newstart payments	73%	79%	64%	84%	82%
Increasing the Newstart payment could help people find jobs, by providing funds for transport, internet access and training	66%	72%	61%	78%	68%
The money it would cost to increase the Newstart payments would be better spent on other services	30%	25%	38%	22%	30%
Base (n)	1,102	320	387	107	159

- Labor voters were more likely than Liberal voters to agree that no-one should have to go without essentials like food, healthcare and power (79% compared to 64%).
- Coalition voters were more likely to agree than all other voters, that the money it would cost to increase the Newstart payments would be better spent on other services (38% versus 26% all other voters).
- Coalition voters were also less likely than all other voters to agree that increasing the Newstart payment could help people find jobs, by providing funds for transport, internet access and training (61% versus 72% all other voters).



Attitudes towards Newstart

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about job searching and Newstart?

NET: Agree	Total	Income		
		NET: Lower Income	NET: Mid-Income	NET: High Income
In Australia, no-one should have to go without essentials like food, healthcare and power	84%	89%	86%	76%
Politicians are out of touch with what it's like for people having to live off Newstart payments	73%	79%	72%	66%
Increasing the Newstart payment could help people find jobs, by providing funds for transport, internet access and training	66%	74%	66%	57%
The money it would cost to increase the Newstart payments would be better spent on other services	30%	26%	32%	34%
Base (n)	1,102	399	301	275

- Lower income participants were more likely to agree with most of the statements than high income participants.



Preference for spending priorities

- Q Recent Government commitments to provide a tax break for Australia’s top income earners will cost the country approximately \$12B per year, whereas increasing the Newstart payment would cost an estimated \$4B per year.

Given the above information, which of the following options would you prefer the Government prioritise its spending?

	Total	Gender		Age		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
Spend \$12B a year to provide a tax cut for Australia’s top income earners	12%	16%	9%	15%	14%	8%
Spend \$4B a year to increase the Newstart payment for those looking for a job	70%	68%	71%	64%	66%	77%
Unsure	18%	15%	20%	20%	20%	14%
Base (n)	1,102	543	559	348	374	380

- 70% of the population would prefer spending on increasing Newstart be made a priority, compared to 12% who think the Stage 3 tax cuts should be a priority.
- Participants aged over 55 were more likely to prefer the Government prioritise an increase to Newstart (77%) than 18-54 year olds (65%).



Preference for spending priorities

- Q Recent Government commitments to provide a tax break for Australia’s top income earners will cost the country approximately \$12B per year, whereas increasing the Newstart payment would cost an estimated \$4B per year.

Given the above information, which of the following options would you prefer the Government prioritise its spending?

	Total	Federal Voting Intention			
		Labor	Coalition	Greens	NET: Other
Spend \$12B a year to provide a tax cut for Australia’s top income earners	12%	6%	19%	9%	14%
Spend \$4B a year to increase the Newstart payment for those looking for a job	70%	82%	61%	81%	68%
Unsure	18%	11%	20%	10%	18%
Base (n)	1,102	320	387	107	159

- Labor voters were more likely than Coalition voters (82% versus 61%) to prefer the Government prioritise increasing Newstart over a tax cut for top income earners.



Preference for spending priorities

- Q Recent Government commitments to provide a tax break for Australia’s top income earners will cost the country approximately \$12B per year, whereas increasing the Newstart payment would cost an estimated \$4B per year.

Given the above information, which of the following options would you prefer the Government prioritise its spending?

	Total	Income		
		NET: Lower Income	NET: Mid-Income	NET: High Income
Spend \$12B a year to provide a tax cut for Australia’s top income earners	12%	7%	15%	19%
Spend \$4B a year to increase the Newstart payment for those looking for a job	70%	78%	71%	60%
Unsure	18%	15%	15%	20%
Base (n)	1,102	399	301	275

- Lower income earners were more likely to prioritise increasing Newstart (78%) than high income earners (60%) – high income earners were over twice as likely to prioritise a tax cut for top income earners (19%) than lower income earners (7%).



Support or oppose increase to Newstart

Q To what extent would you support or oppose an increase to the weekly rate of Newstart from \$280 per week to \$355 per week?

	Total	Federal Voting Intention			
		Labor	Coalition	Greens	NET: Other
Strongly support	44%	55%	29%	63%	52%
Somewhat support	31%	29%	39%	20%	19%
Somewhat oppose	11%	6%	14%	10%	15%
Strongly oppose	7%	5%	11%	2%	7%
Unsure	7%	4%	6%	6%	6%
Base (n)	1,102	320	387	107	159

- Greens and Labor voters were more likely to strongly support an increase to Newstart (63% and 55%) than Coalition voters (29%); while Coalition voters were twice as likely to strongly oppose this measure (11% compared to 5% all other voters).



Support or oppose increase to Newstart

Q To what extent would you support or oppose an increase to the weekly rate of Newstart from \$280 per week to \$355 per week?

NET: Agree	Total	Income		
		NET: Lower Income	NET: Mid-Income	NET: High Income
Strongly support	44%	51%	43%	35%
Somewhat support	31%	29%	34%	33%
Somewhat oppose	11%	7%	12%	16%
Strongly oppose	7%	6%	7%	10%
Unsure	7%	7%	5%	6%
Base (n)	1,102	399	301	275

- Lower income earners were more likely than high income earners to strongly support increasing Newstart (51% compared to 35%).



Awareness of Centrelink ‘Robodebt’ program

Q Centrelink is currently conducting a debt recovery program in which welfare recipients are being automatically sent notifications regarding possible over payments. This has been widely referred to as ‘Robodebt’ in the media

How much have you read or heard about this program and the concerns about it?

	Total	Gender		Age		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
I have heard a lot about this	22%	24%	19%	14%	26%	24%
I have heard a little about this	30%	33%	28%	29%	30%	32%
I am aware of this, but don't know any details	18%	19%	17%	22%	15%	18%
I haven't heard of this	30%	24%	36%	35%	30%	27%
Base (n)	1,102	543	559	348	374	380



Support or oppose calls to shut down 'Robodebt' program

Q From what you have read or heard, to what extent do you support or oppose calls to shut down the Centrelink debt recovery program?

Only asked to participants who have heard of program	Total	Gender		Age		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
Strongly support	30%	32%	29%	27%	33%	31%
Somewhat support	28%	28%	28%	35%	26%	24%
Somewhat oppose	17%	18%	15%	15%	14%	19%
Strongly oppose	15%	14%	16%	12%	16%	16%
No opinion	11%	9%	12%	11%	10%	10%
Base (n)	763	408	355	223	258	282

- 30% of participants who were aware of the Robodebt program strongly supported it being shut down; a further 28% somewhat supported this.



Attitudes towards social media conduct

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the use of platforms like Facebook and Google?

	NET: Agree	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure
I am concerned how Facebook and Google collect and use my personal information	80%	49%	31%	8%	5%	8%
There should be tighter regulation of online platforms like Facebook and Google	80%	48%	32%	6%	6%	9%
Platforms like Facebook and Google are responsible if deliberately misleading and harmful news stories are distributed on their platforms	75%	41%	34%	10%	4%	11%
A specialist body is needed to oversee the operations of Facebook and Google	75%	39%	36%	7%	5%	13%
I am not interested how companies like Facebook and Google use my personal data to target ads to me when I'm using their platforms	31%	12%	19%	24%	37%	8%

- Four-fifths of participants agreed that there should be tighter regulation of online platforms like Facebook and Google, and are concerned with how Facebook and Google collect and use their personal information (both 80%).
- A further three-quarters of participants agreed that platforms like Facebook and Google are responsible if deliberately misleading and harmful news stories are distributed on their platforms, and a specialist body is needed to oversee the operations of Facebook and Google (both 75%).



Attitudes towards social media conduct

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the use of platforms like Facebook and Google?

NET: Agree	Total	Gender		Age		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
There should be tighter regulation of online platforms like Facebook and Google	80%	78%	81%	69%	81%	87%
I am not interested how companies like Facebook and Google use my personal data to target ads to me when I'm using their platforms	31%	33%	30%	39%	32%	24%
I am concerned how Facebook and Google collect and use my personal information	80%	78%	81%	74%	82%	83%
Platforms like Facebook and Google are responsible if deliberately misleading and harmful news stories are distributed on their platforms	75%	73%	76%	68%	74%	81%
A specialist body is needed to oversee the operations of Facebook and Google	75%	77%	74%	69%	74%	81%
Base (n)	1,102	543	559	348	374	380

- Participants over 55 years old were more likely to agree that there should be tighter regulation of online platforms like Facebook and Google (87% compared to 76% of 18-54 year olds), these platforms are responsible if deliberately misleading and harmful news stories are distributed on them (81% compared to 71%), and a specialist body is needed to oversee the operations of Facebook and Google (81% compared to 72% of 18-54 year olds).



Appendix: Household income definitions*

NET: Lower Income	Up to \$51,999 per year Total of all wages/salaries, government benefits, pensions, allowances and other income that your household usually receives (GROSS – before tax and superannuation deductions)
NET: Mid Income	\$52,000 to \$103,999 per year Total of all wages/salaries, government benefits, pensions, allowances and other income that your household usually receives (GROSS – before tax and superannuation deductions)
NET: High Income	More than \$104,000 per year Total of all wages/salaries, government benefits, pensions, allowances and other income that your household usually receives (GROSS – before tax and superannuation deductions)

Appendix: Methodology, margin of error and professional standards

The data gathered for this report is gathered from a fortnightly online omnibus conducted by Qualtrics.

Every two weeks, the team at Essential considers issues that are topical, and a series of questions are devised to put to the Australian public. Some questions are repeated regularly (such as political preference and leadership approval), while others are unique to each week and reflect current media and social issues.

The response rate varies each week, but usually delivers 1000+ interviews. In theory, with a sample of this size, there is 95 per cent certainty that the results are within 3 percentage points of what they would be if the entire population had been polled. However, this assumes random sampling, which, because of non-response and less than 100% population coverage cannot be achieved in practice. Furthermore, there are other possible sources of error in all polls including question wording and question order, interviewer bias (for telephone and face-to-face polls), response errors and weighting.

The online omnibus is live from the Wednesday night and closed on the following Sunday. Incentives are offered to participants. Essential Research uses the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to analyse the data. The data is weighted against Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data.

All Essential Research staff hold Australian Market and Social Research Society (AMSRS) membership and are bound by professional codes of behaviour.

