



## Climate Institute Marginal Electorates Exit Poll

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## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **2. INTRODUCTION**

- This research was conducted by the Australian Research Group (ARG) on behalf of the Climate Institute. The poll explored issues around the 2007 Federal election, the importance of environmental issues in general and climate change in particular. It examined the perceptions and attitudes of voters in eight key marginal seats in New South Wales (Bennelong, Wentworth, Lindsay, Eden Monaro), Queensland (Petrie, Bowman) and South Australia (Makin, Sturt). All of these seats were held by the Howard Coalition government after the 2004 election but Labor picked up at least five of the eight seats.
- This poll was conducted online using a representative sample of 984 voters and was conducted from 6pm on Saturday 24 November (close of polls on election day) until Tuesday 27 November.

### **3. POLICY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PARTIES**

- Climate change was the third most important distinguishing policy between the major parties at the recent election. Half of all voters (50%) believed that it represented a large difference between the parties and a further 34% believed there was a small difference between the parties on climate change policy. Climate change was seen as representing a greater difference than: The economy; Education; Health; Interest rates; and National security.
- The only two issues which reflected a greater difference between the parties were industrial relations (76% saw a 'large difference') and 'leadership' (60%).
- However when data is restricted to voters who gave their first preference to Labor, climate change became their second most distinguishing policy (70%) behind industrial relations (81%).
- This means that, for ALP voters, climate change was one of the two issues which most clearly distinguished the policy positions of the major parties.

### **4. BETTER PARTY TO HANDLE CLIMATE CHANGE**

- Labor succeeded in establishing climate change as a clear point of difference among its supporters while the Coalition was only able to minimise difference (not to clearly establish superiority on the issue). When asked which of the major parties was better at handling climate change, 47% chose the ALP and 13% the Coalition. 27% said the parties were 'both the same'.
- Among ALP voters Labor led 79% to 0% while among Coalition voters Labor only trailed 27% to 12%. Thus a high proportion of Coalition voters saw 'no difference between the parties'.

### **5. WHY CLIMATE CHANGE WAS IMPORTANT**

- Almost 8 out of 10 voters (79%) agreed that climate change was important at the election because they wanted to see "a clean energy future for Australia based on renewable energy". This was followed by the desire to doing "something to protect the future for the next generation" (67% agree) and "see Australia as a leader in action and negotiations on climate change" (66% agree).
- Those issues which appeared as the most common were those which were concentrated on policy positions. Voters were less likely to agree with statements that concentrated on the symbolic elements of climate change – like Kevin Rudd being a man of the future (22% strongly agreed) or John Howard being a man of the past (22% strongly agree).

## **6. SUPPORT FOR CLIMATE CHANGE POLICIES**

- The vast majority of all marginal voters now agree that the next Government should introduce a series of policies to deal with climate change.
- Around 8 out of 10 marginal voters support the introduction of five different policies: targets to reverse greenhouse pollution within five years (86%); matching energy efficiency targets for the developed world (85%); reducing emissions by 20% by 2020 (85%); all new electricity generation to come from clean energy (82%); and 80% by 2050 (80%).
- Ratification of Kyoto had 59% support but this was largely due to a relatively high 'no opinion' (27%). Just 14% were opposed to the ratification of Kyoto.
- Nuclear reactors had clearly the lowest level of support (38%).

## **7. LATE DECIDERS**

- The poll showed that 56% of voters had made up their mind about their vote before the start of the election campaign. 20% made up their mind during the first five weeks of the campaign, 13% during the week and 11% on election day.
- The poll showed that, for those who made up their mind during the campaign, climate change was more important than for those who made up their mind earlier in the campaign. 26% of those who made up their mind during the campaign ranked climate change in the top two issues compared to 19% of those who made up their mind earlier.

## **7. 'SWITCHERS' TO LABOR**

- It was apparent that voters who had switched to Labor from the Coalition rated climate change as an influence on their vote more highly than the rest of the population.
- Voters who had switched to Labor were also more likely than average to support a range of solutions to address climate change – in particular the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol (75% of 'switchers' compared to 59% of all voters). However they were less likely to agree with the introduction of nuclear power (35% to 38%)

## 2. INTRODUCTION

This research was conducted by the Australian Research Group (ARG) on behalf of the Climate Institute.

The poll explored issues around the 2007 Federal election, the importance of environmental issues in general and climate change in particular. It examined the perceptions and attitudes of voters in eight key marginal seats in New South Wales (Bennelong, Wentworth, Lindsay, Eden Monaro), Queensland (Petrie, Bowman) and South Australia (Makin, Sturt). All of these seats were held by the Howard Coalition government after the 2004 election but Labor picked up at least five of the eight seats.

This poll was conducted online using a representative sample of 984 voters and was conducted from 6pm on Saturday 24 November (close of polls on election day) until Tuesday 27 November.

Data was weighted by age, sex and location to ensure a representative sample was achieved. To ensure that data was indicative of voting at the federal election it was also weighted to reflect the primary vote in each State. The effect of this weighting was minimal – overall it corrected a slight overrepresentation of Labor's primary vote but there were differences between each electorate.

A sample of 800 has a corresponding margin of error of +/-3.1% at the 95% confidence interval. This means that in the true result in the population is 50% then there is a 19 in 20 chance that the survey will return a result between 46.9% and 53.1%. Subgroup analysis involving smaller sample sizes will have a higher margin of error.

### 3. POLICY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PARTIES

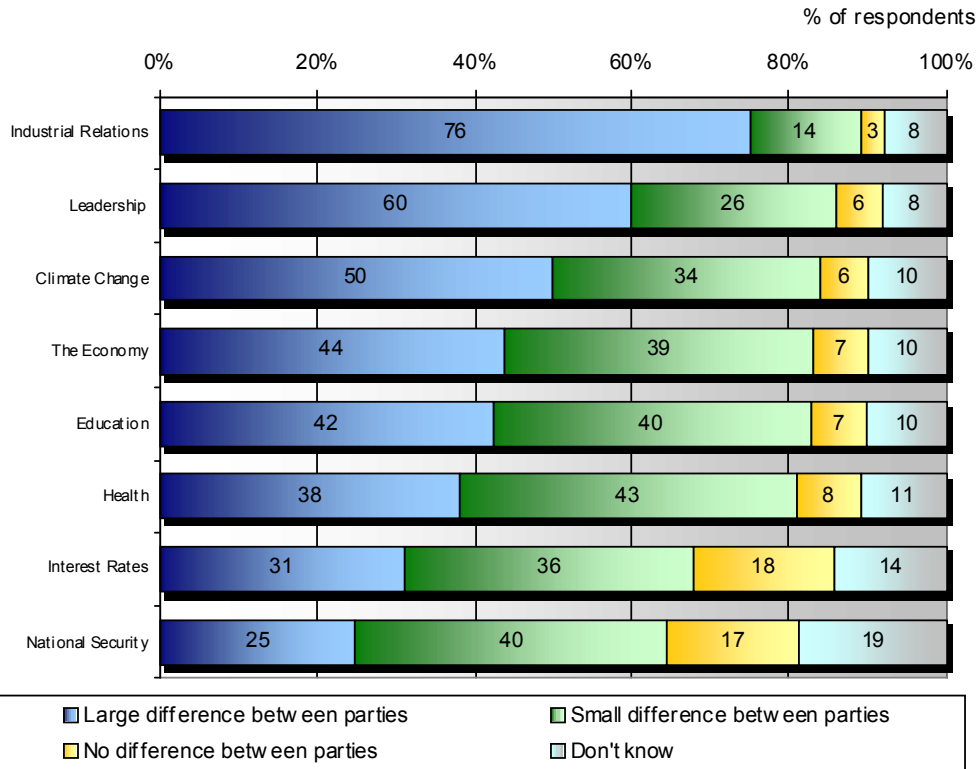
#### Key points

- Climate change was the third most important distinguishing policy between the major parties at the recent election. Half of all voters (50%) believed that it represented a large difference between the parties and a further 34% believed there was a small difference between the parties on climate change policy. Climate change was seen as representing a greater difference than: The economy; Education; Health; Interest rates; and National security.
- The only two issues which reflected a greater difference between the parties were industrial relations (76% saw a 'large difference') and 'leadership' (60%).
- However when data is restricted to voters who gave their first preference to Labor, climate change became their second most distinguishing policy (70%) behind industrial relations (81%).
- This means that, for ALP voters, climate change was one of the two issues which most clearly distinguished the policy positions of the major parties.

*How much difference is there between the positions of the Liberal National Coalition and the Labor Party in the following policy areas?*

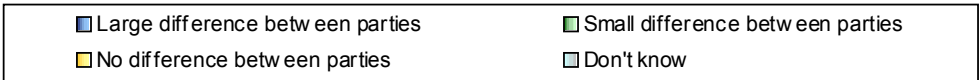
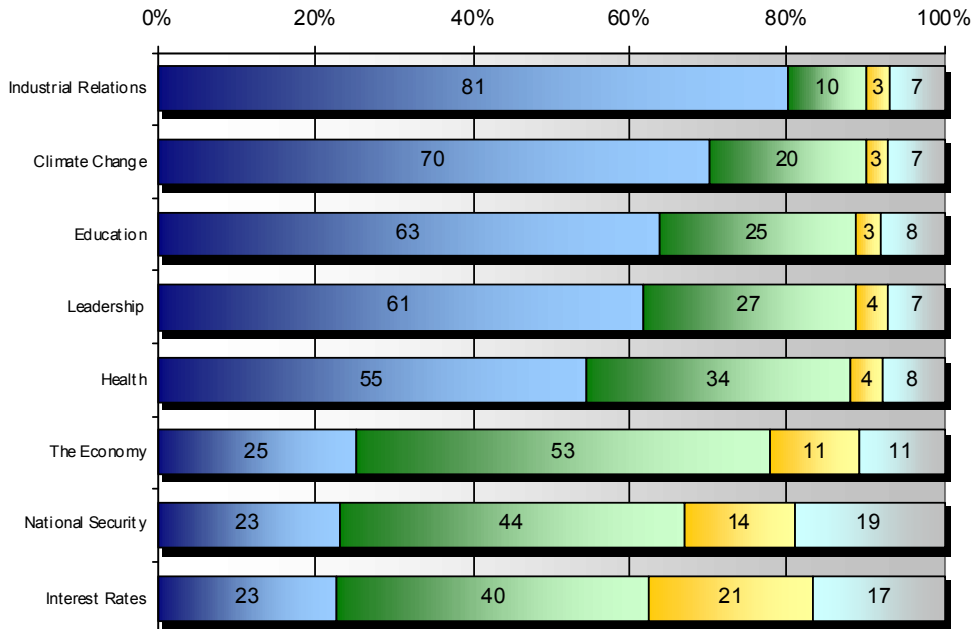
	Large difference	Small difference	No difference	Don't know
Industrial Relations	76	14	3	8
Leadership	60	26	6	8
Climate Change	50	34	6	10
The Economy	44	39	7	10
Education	42	40	7	10
Health	38	43	8	11
Interest Rates	31	36	18	14
National Security	25	40	17	19

## POLICY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PARTIES



**POLICY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PARTIES - ALP PRIMARY  
VOTERS**

% of respondents



## 4. BETTER PARTY TO HANDLE CLIMATE CHANGE

### Key points

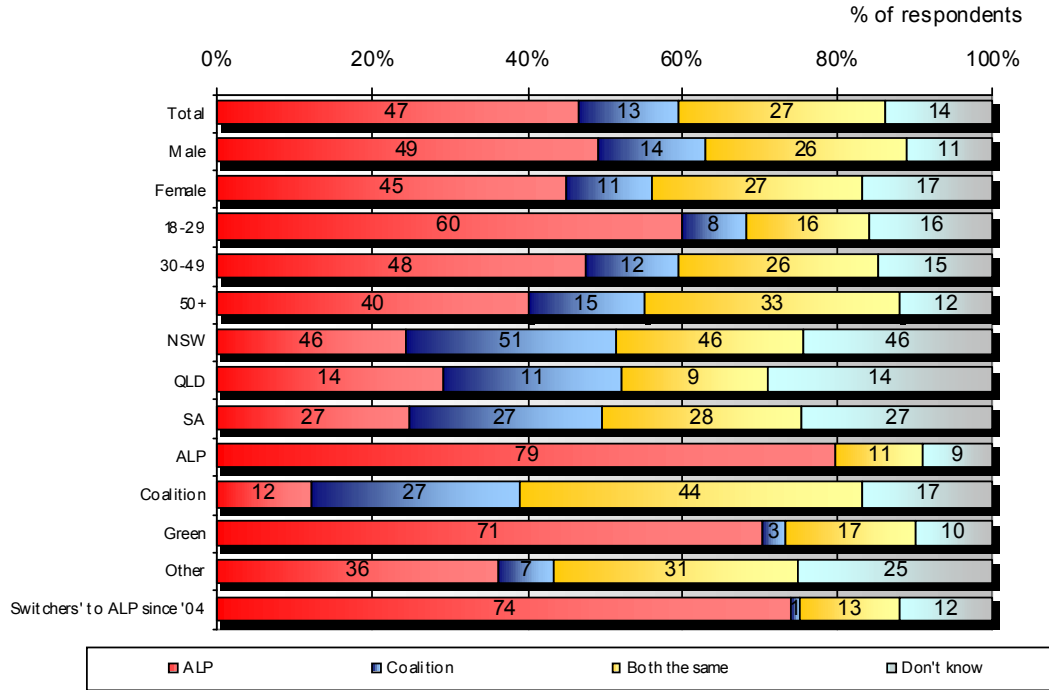
- Labor succeeded in establishing climate change as a clear point of difference among its supporters while the Coalition was only able to minimise difference (not to clearly establish superiority on the issue). When asked which of the major parties was better at handling climate change, 47% chose the ALP and 13% the Coalition. 27% said the parties were 'both the same'.
- Among ALP voters Labor led 79% to 0% while among Coalition voters Labor only trailed 27% to 12%. Thus a high proportion of Coalition voters saw 'no difference between the parties'.

### *Which of the major political parties do you think is better at handling climate change?*

	ALP	Coalition	Both the same	Don't know
Total	47	13	27	14
Male	49	14	26	11
Female	45	11	27	17
18-29	60	8	16	16
30-49	48	12	26	15
50+	40	15	33	12
NSW	46	51	46	46
QLD	14	11	9	14
SA	27	27	28	27
ALP	79	-	11	9
Coalition	12	27	44	17
Green	71	3	17	10
Other	36	7	31	25
Switchers' to ALP since '04	74	1	13	12



## BETTER PARTY TO HANDLE CLIMATE CHANGE



## 5. WHY CLIMATE CHANGE WAS IMPORTANT

### Key points

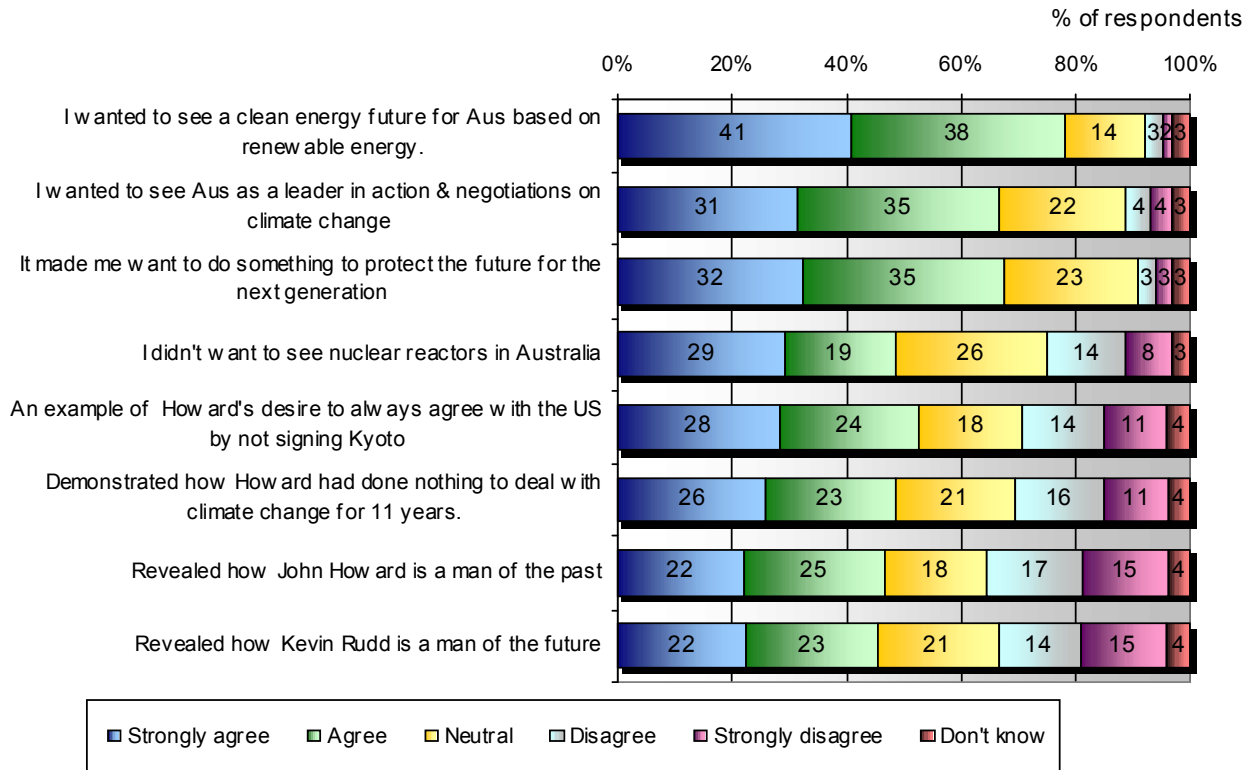
- Almost 8 out of 10 voters (79%) agreed that climate change was important at the election because they wanted to see “a clean energy future for Australia based on renewable energy”. This was followed by the desire to doing “something to protect the future for the next generation” (67% agree) and “see Australia as a leader in action and negotiations on climate change” (66% agree).
- Those issues which appeared as the most common were those which were concentrated on policy positions. Voters were less likely to agree with statements that concentrated on the symbolic elements of climate change – like Kevin Rudd being a man of the future (22% strongly agreed) or John Howard being a man of the past (22% strongly agree).

**How much do you agree or disagree with the following views about why climate change was important at the recent Federal election?**

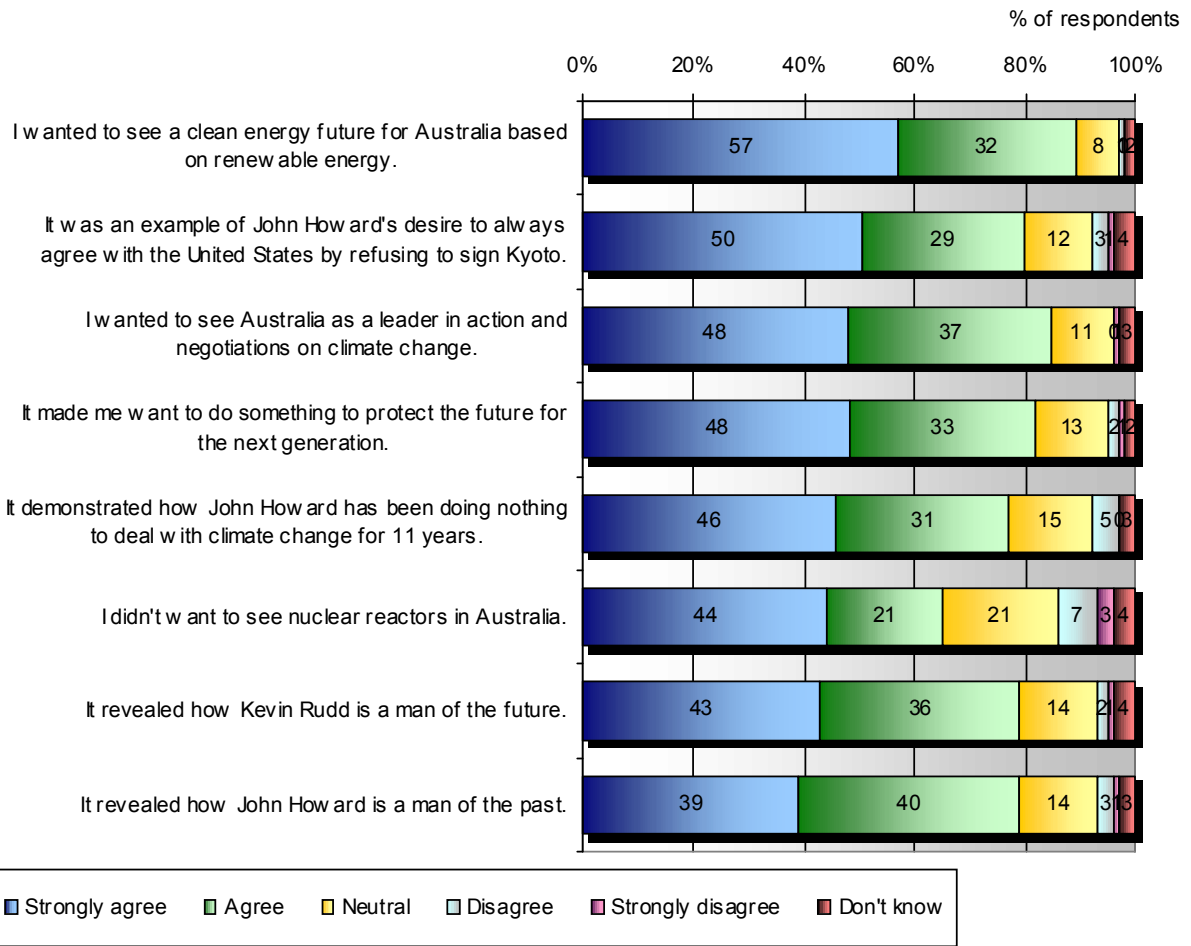
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
I wanted to see a clean energy future for Australia based on renewable energy.	41	38	14	3	2	3
It made me want to do something to protect the future for the next generation.	32	35	23	3	3	3
I wanted to see Australia as a leader in action and negotiations on climate change.	31	35	22	4	4	3
I didn't want to see nuclear reactors in Australia.	29	19	26	14	8	3
It was an example of John Howard's desire to always agree with the United States by refusing to sign Kyoto.	28	24	18	14	11	4

It demonstrated how John Howard has been doing nothing to deal with climate change for 11 years.	26	23	21	16	11	4
It revealed how John Howard is a man of the past.	22	25	18	17	15	4
It revealed how Kevin Rudd is a man of the future.	22	23	21	14	15	4

### IMPORTANCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE AT FEDERAL ELECTION



## IMPORTANCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE AT FEDERAL ELECTION - ALP PRIMARY VOTERS



## 6. SUPPORT FOR CLIMATE CHANGE POLICIES

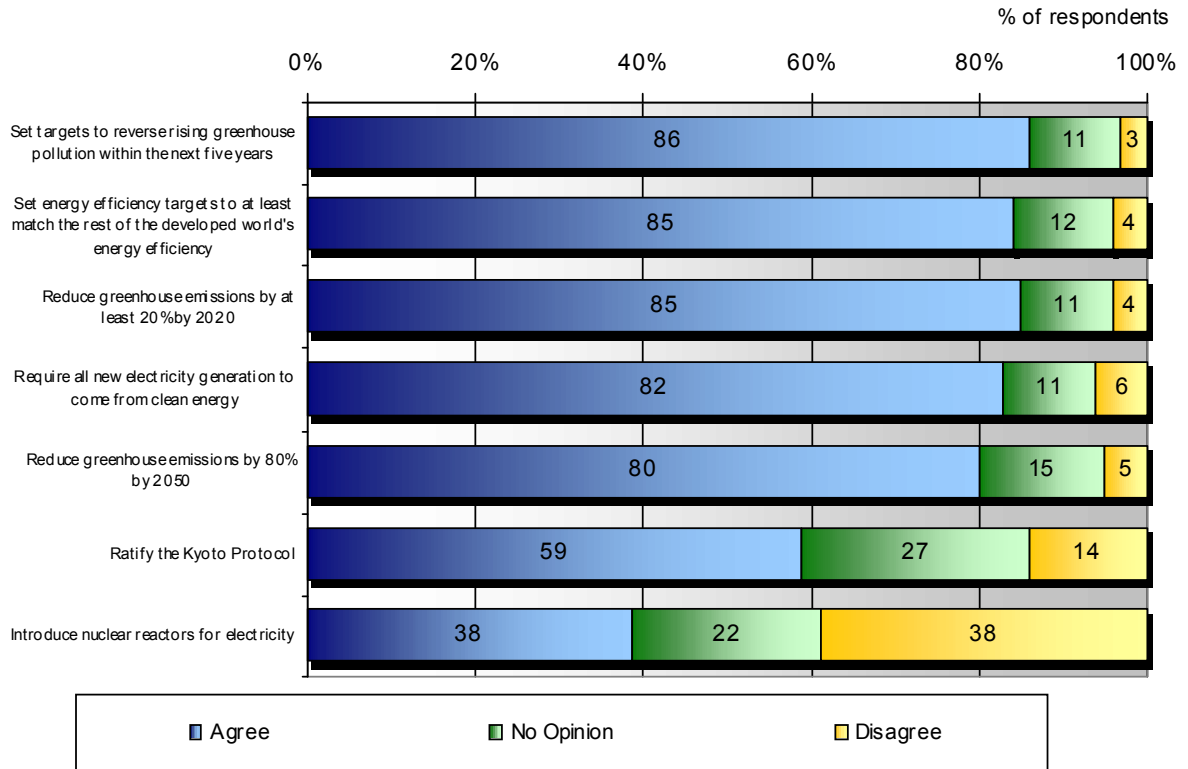
### Key points

- The vast majority of all marginal voters now agree that the next Government should introduce a series of policies to deal with climate change.
- Around 8 out of 10 marginal voters support the introduction of five different policies: targets to reverse greenhouse pollution within five years (86%); matching energy efficiency targets for the developed world (85%); reducing emissions by 20% by 2020 (85%); all new electricity generation to come from clean energy (82%); and 80% by 2050 (80%).
- Ratification of Kyoto had 59% support but this was largely due to a relatively high 'no opinion' (27%). Just 14% were opposed to the ratification of Kyoto.
- Nuclear reactors had clearly the lowest level of support (38%).

***How much do you agree or disagree that the next Government should introduce the following policies to deal with climate change?***

	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree
Set targets to reverse rising greenhouse pollution within the next five years	86	11	3
Set energy efficiency targets to at least match the rest of the developed world's energy efficiency	85	12	4
Reduce greenhouse emissions by at least 20% by 2020	85	11	4
Require all new electricity generation to come from clean energy	82	11	6
Reduce greenhouse emissions by 80% by 2050	80	15	5
Ratify the Kyoto Protocol	59	27	14
Introduce nuclear reactors for electricity	38	22	38

## SUPPORT FOR CLIMATE CHANGE POLICIES



## 7. LATE DECIDERS

### Key points

- The poll showed that 56% of voters had made up their mind about their vote before the start of the election campaign. 20% made up their mind during the first five weeks of the campaign, 13% during the week and 11% on election day.
- The poll showed that, for those who made up their mind during the campaign, climate change was more important than for those who made up their mind earlier in the campaign. 26% of those who made up their mind during the campaign ranked climate change in the top two issues compared to 19% of those who made up their mind earlier.

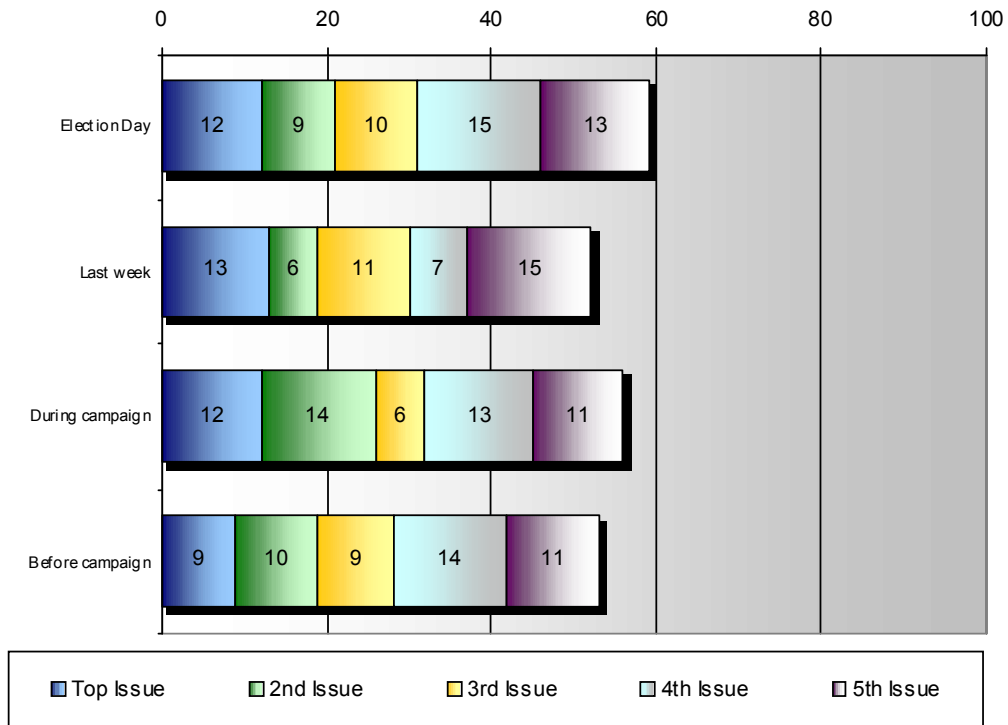
*When did you decide about how you would vote at the federal election?*

*From the following list, can you please identify the five most important issues in deciding your vote [Please give your top issue "1", your second most important issue "2", your third most important issue "3", your fourth most important issue "4" and your fifth most important issue "5"].*

		Climate change as an important issue				
		Top Issue	2 <sup>nd</sup> Issue	3 <sup>rd</sup> Issue	4 <sup>th</sup> Issue	5 <sup>th</sup> Issue
Election Day	11	12	9	10	15	13
Last week	13	13	6	11	7	15
During campaign	20	12	14	6	13	11
Before campaign	56	9	10	9	14	11

### CLIMATE CHANGE IN TOP FIVE VOTING INFLUENCES

% of respondents



## 8. 'SWITCHERS' TO LABOR

### Key points

- Voters were asked how they voted at the 2004 Federal election
- It was apparent that voters who had switched to Labor from the Coalition rated climate change as an influence on their vote more highly than the rest of the population.
- 65% of voters who switched their vote rated climate change in the top five issues compared to 54% of those who did not switch their vote.
- Voters who had switched to Labor were also more likely than average to support a range of solutions to address climate change – in particular the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol (75% of 'switchers' compared to 59% of all voters). However they were less likely to agree with the introduction of nuclear power (35% to 38%)

*From the following list, can you please identify the five most important issues in deciding your vote [Please give your top issue "1", your second most important issue "2", your third most important issue "3", your fourth most important issue "4" and your fifth most important issue "5"].*

	Climate change as an important issue				
	Top Issue	2 <sup>nd</sup> Issue	3 <sup>rd</sup> Issue	4 <sup>th</sup> Issue	5 <sup>th</sup> Issue
All Voters	14	14	13	14	10
'Switchers'	10	10	9	13	12

*How much do you agree or disagree that the next Government should introduce the following policies to deal with climate change?*

	All voters – marginal seats	'Switchers' to Labor' – marginal seats
Set targets to reverse rising greenhouse pollution within the next five years	86	93
Set energy efficiency targets to at least match the rest of the developed world's energy efficiency	85	90
Reduce greenhouse emissions by at least 20% by 2020	85	91
Require all new electricity generation to come from clean energy	82	84
Reduce greenhouse emissions by 80% by 2050	80	88
Ratify the Kyoto Protocol	59	75
Introduce nuclear reactors for electricity	38	35

NB: Table shows % who 'agree'



## ARG Contacts

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## Survey Information

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Data were obtained using a representative sample of 984 interviews from close of polls on 24 November to 27 November 2007. Interviews were conducted online using a specially managed panel. Data were weighted to reflect the population distribution.

An indicative margin of error at the 95% confidence interval is +/-3.1%. This means that if the 'true' value in the population is 50% then 19 out of 20 surveys will return a result between 46.9% and 53.1%. As the true value moves away from 50% then this margin of error is lower. Margin of error is higher when considering subgroups of the population.

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