



Women's wellbeing rises

New research data conducted on safe and marginal federal electorates has shown a significant boost to Australians' sense of wellbeing, most particularly among women.

The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index was conducted in the first week of July which also happened to be the second week after Australia's first female Prime Minister Julia Gillard was sworn in. It showed during this time wellbeing among women in marginal electorates rose to levels higher than in the surveys conducted during the periods John Howard and Kevin Rudd were Prime Ministers.

Professor Bob Cummins of Deakin University and author of the Index said the boost in women's wellbeing was related to an increase in satisfaction with community connection and sense of achieving in life in that period. While males showed no change in their sense of achieving in life, they also showed increased satisfaction with community connection.

"This most likely represents the positive influence, on common social interaction, of the swearing in of Australia's first female Prime Minister," he said.

"It could also suggest that women felt the swearing in of a female Prime Minister had improved their own aspirations in life."

The survey investigated some of the safest and most marginal federal electorates: ALP-safe, Coalition-safe, ALP-marginal, and Coalition-marginal. One thousand people were surveyed across 20 electorates.

The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index measures people's overall feeling of wellbeing through aggregate satisfaction with eight life domains: health, personal relationships, personal safety, standard of living, achieving in life, community connection, future security and spirituality or religion. It does not question respondents about political matters.

"The wellbeing index does not indicate voting intentions," Professor Cummins said.

He also said the rise in personal wellbeing has not stopped both women and men feeling less positive towards Government. An earlier survey in April 2010, showed a marked drop in satisfaction with Government and these lower satisfaction levels were maintained in July. In the survey the term 'Government' is not defined.

"The results clearly indicate a lower satisfaction with Government during the end of Mr Rudd's prime ministership and this was maintained in the second week of Ms Gillard's leadership," Professor Cummins said.

He said the highest levels of wellbeing are found in safe Coalition seats with lowest levels of wellbeing found within safe ALP seats, most particularly for males.

“Results also showed the Australian Labor Party heartland, particularly for adult males, is a place of low wellbeing. Interestingly, this occurs at all levels of household income up to \$150,000 per year.

“In other words the relatively lower levels of personal wellbeing for safe ALP seats, is not due to differences in income,” Professor Cummins said.

He said it was more likely to do with the fact that the safe ALP seats surveyed are all urban seats, while the safe Coalition held seats surveyed are primarily in rural areas.

Historically, the wellbeing index demonstrates that people living in rural areas have on average higher wellbeing than those in urban areas.

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For media enquiries contact Professor Bob Cummins on 0402 917 972 or Australian Unity’s Public Affairs Adviser Sarah Kulman on 0400 006 295.

Figure 1: Satisfaction with achieving in life

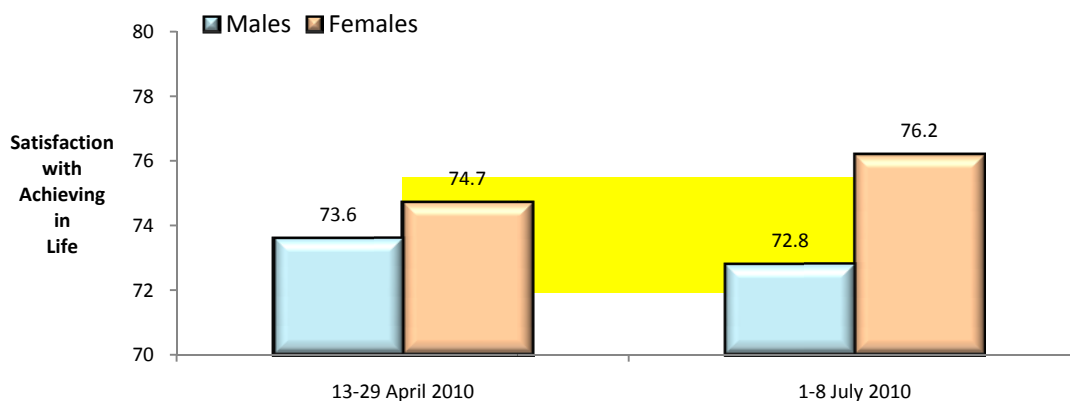


Figure 1: Leadership period x Gender (Achieving in Life)

Figure 2: Satisfaction with community connection

72.5
Normative
range
68.9

Figure 3: Change in Personal Wellbeing Index

* = is significantly higher than former prime minister

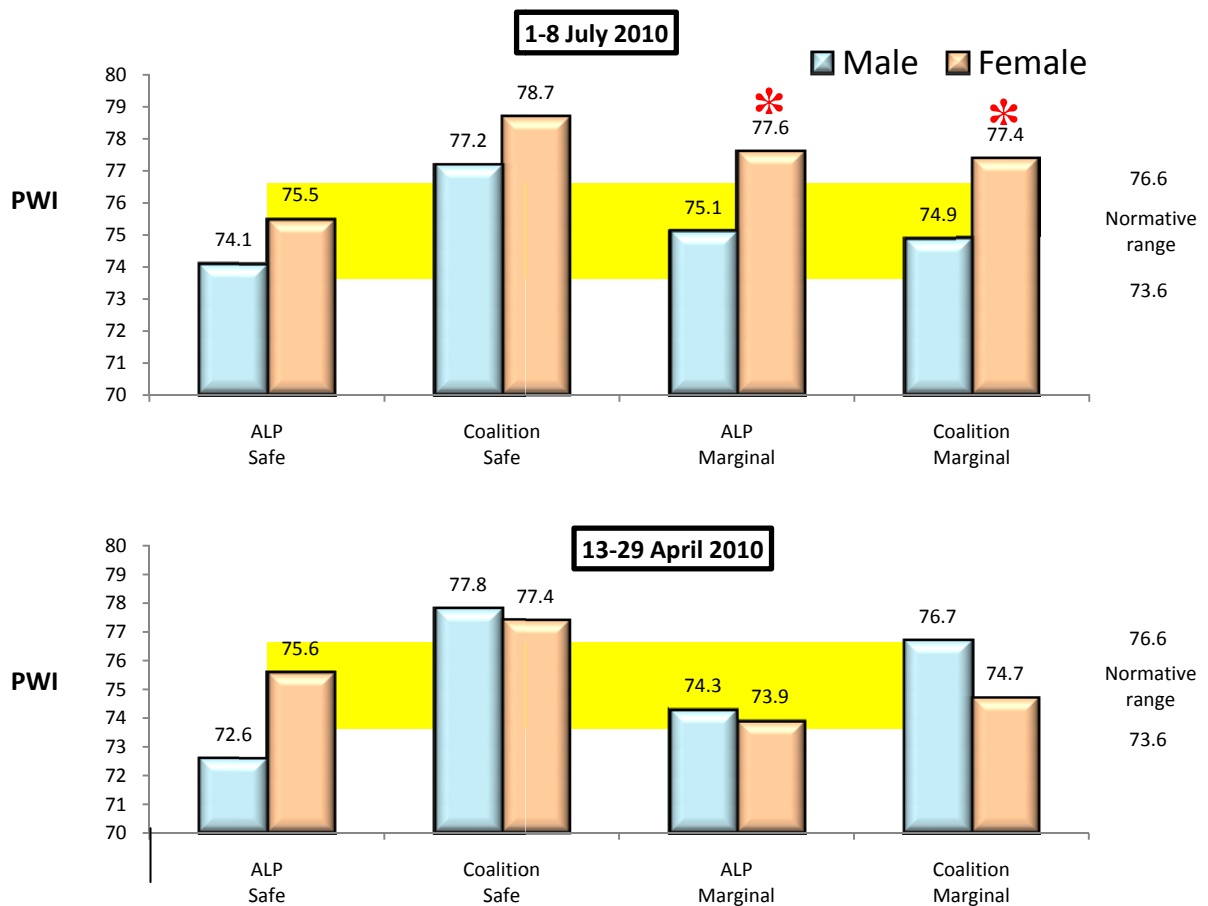


Figure 4: Average Personal Wellbeing Index across safe and marginal federal electorates

