

Labour Party heading for absolute majority

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JUST a week before election day, MaltaToday's latest opinion poll for the European Parliament elections puts Labour ahead with an absolute majority of 51.7%, nine points above the PN. Alternativa Demokratika comes at a distant third at 4.1%.

The sample for the survey has increased from 300 to 720 respondents, decreasing the poll's margin of error to just +/-3.65%.

Edward Scicluna remains the PL's frontrunner although incumbent Louis Grech and newcomer Marlene Mizzi have made substantial inroads since three weeks ago when the last survey was held.

Simon Busuttil is the only PN frontrunner, followed by Roberta Metsola Tedesco Triccas, David Casa, Vince Farrugia and Marthese Portelli amongst declared PN voters.

The poll also reveals that 7% will not be voting in this election and 25% are either undecided or will not reveal their intentions.

In the survey, more than two-thirds (68.4%) of respondents declared they will be voting – in this category, Labour enjoys 52% of the declared vote.

When all respondents – including those intending to abstain or still undecided – are taken into account, both major parties have seen their support increase since the last MaltaToday survey. At 35.4%, the PL increased by 6.4%; the PN saw support increase from 19.9% to 29% and AD remained stable at 2.8%.

The increase in support for the PN could reflect the late push to mobilise its voters with the Prime Minister taking a prominent role in the campaign. Yet so far, this has not stopped the haemorrhage of votes from the PN.

The PN's haemorrhage

10% of respondents who voted for the PN in the 2008 general election said they will not be voting; while only 60% of those who voted PN back in 2008 are sure of voting PN this time around.

But a significant 21.5% of these voters remain undecided on what to do next week, so the party's fortunes depend

on its ability to mobilise these voters in the next few days.

Unlike Labour, the PN is also losing votes to third parties – 3% to AD and 0.6% to Azzjoni Nazzjonali.

On the other hand Labour is being more successful in mobilising its core support, with 80% of those who voted for the PL in 2008 sure to vote again for the party.

Significantly, while 4.5% of PN voters in 2008 will vote for the PL this time, only 0.7% of Labour voters in 2008 will vote for the PN – an indication that Labour is not only benefiting from apathy among Nationalist voters, but has also made small but significant inroads among Labour voters.

Only 15.5% of the 2008 Labour voters remain undecided (6% less than undecided PN voters), indicating that the PN has a greater potential pool of votes which it can persuade in the last days of the campaign.

Only 3% of 2008 Labour voters are determined not to vote in next week's election, while 10% of 2008 PN voters said they will abstain.

Former Nationalist voters also constitute 63% of AD's current level of support. The rest have either not voted in past elections or had already voted AD.

Busuttil's solid lead

With the support of 55% of declared PN voters, incumbent Simon Busuttil is likely to be elected after the first count of votes. Most likely the second preferences of those opting for Busuttil will determine which other PN candidate will be elected.

Roberta Metsola Tedesco Triccas, David Casa, Vince Farrugia and Marthese Portelli all stand a chance of being elected. But to get elected they will also need a substantial chunk of Busuttil's second preferences. Over the past months incumbent David Casa has seen his support dip from 9% in March to just 2.8% now.

Labour moderates lead

Moderates like economist Edward Scicluna, incumbent Louis Grech and former Sea Malta chairman Marlene Mizzi are clear favourites in the Labour Party.



Which candidate will you be giving your first preference?

All respondents who expressed preference (%)

Simon Busuttil (PN)	23.7
Edward Scicluna (PL)	7.2
Louis Grech (PL)	5.3
Marlene Mizzi (PL)	4.3
Arnold Cassola (AD)	3
Joe Cuschieri (PL)	2.2
John Attard Montalto (PL)	2

Candidates with ratings less than margin of error of 3.7% are indicative; candidates with less than 2% are not included.

Frontrunners (according to PN/PL declared voters) (%)

	PL declared voters	PN declared voters
Edward Scicluna	13.8	Simon Busuttil 54.9
Louis Grech	10.2	R. Tedesco Triccas 3.8
Marlene Mizzi	8.3	David Casa 2.8
Joe Cuschieri	4.3	Vince Farrugia 2.5
J. Attard Montalto	3.9	Marthese Portelli 2.5
C. Abela Baldachino	2.8	
Others	4.3	Others 2.8
Undecided	52.4	Undecided 30.7

Figures of candidates with less than +/-3.7% margin of error are only indicative. Candidates with less than 2% are not included.

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While Scicluna retains the same level of support he enjoyed three weeks ago, Grech and Mizzi have scored substantial gains. Grech's support among declared Labour voters rose from 7.4% to 10.2%; Mizzi has seen her support rise from 7.4% to 8.3%. Incumbent John Attard Montalto has seen the biggest drop in support. While in Febru-

ary he enjoyed the support of 10% of Labour respondents his support has dropped to 3.9%.

Attard Montalto is even surpassed by former Labour MP Joseph Cuschieri who enjoys the support of 4.3% of Labour supporters.

Among third party candidates only Arnold Cassola enjoys a respectable level of support. But at 3% he is a long way from the 10% he garnered in 2004 when he was not elected by a few votes.

Immigration still the issue

Respondents consider irregular immigration as the most important issue of the campaign. But concern over this issue is far not reflected in support for Azzjoni Nazzjonali which turned this issue in to its battlecry.

This could be a result of the two major political parties taking a hawkish position on immigration, leaving little space for AN – which also faces competition from other right-wing formations.

Although among the traditional parties Labour has taken the most hawkish stand on this issue, PN voters were more likely to mention irregular immigration as their most important concern.

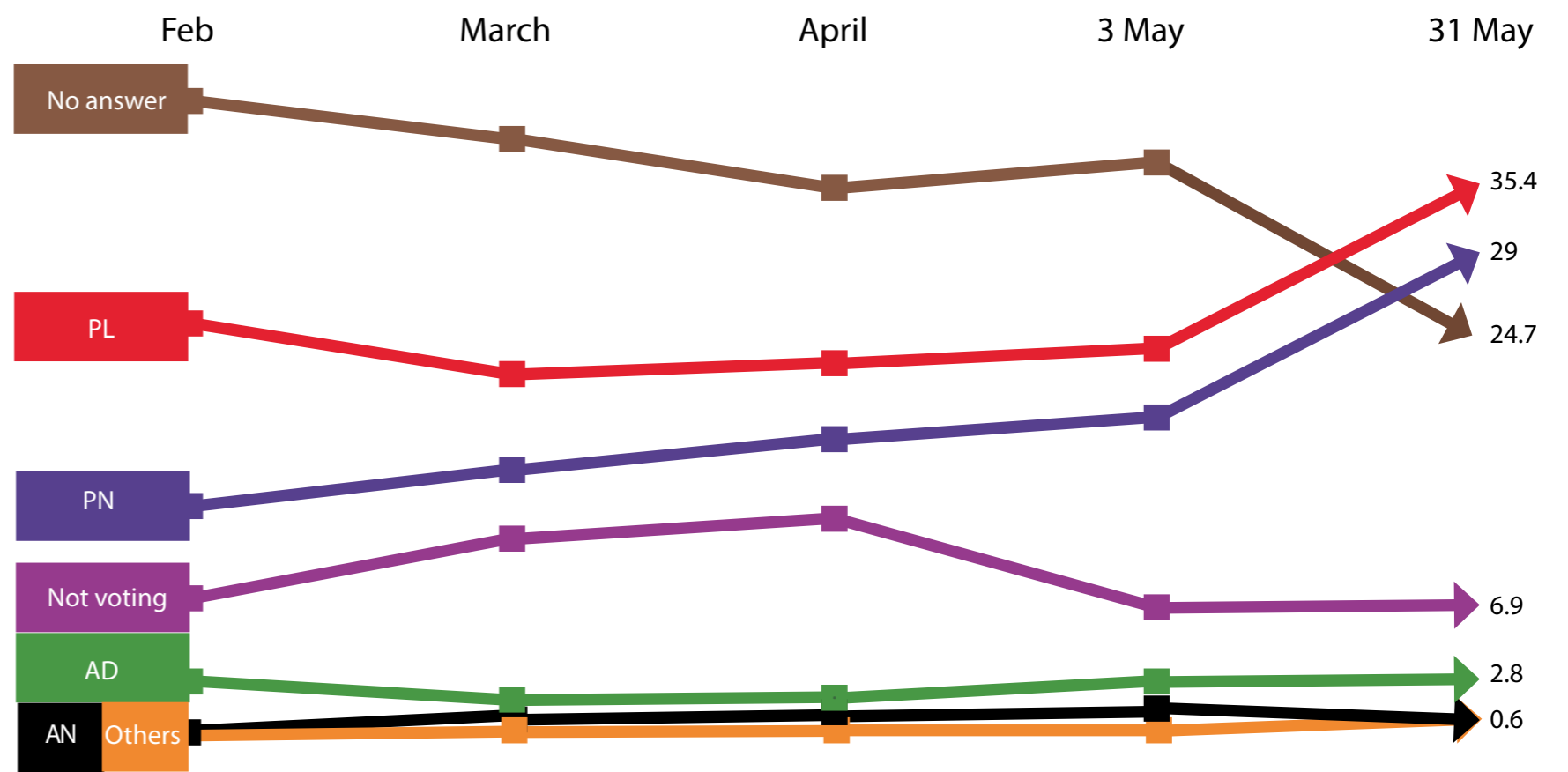
On the other hand Labour voters were the most likely to mention bread and butter issues like the cost of living and utility bills as their most important concerns.

Most respondents who think that employment is the most important issue of the campaign will vote PN, possibly reflecting the party's electoral plank.

Significantly 69% of respondents who think hunting is the most important issue in this campaign will be voting Labour.

Not surprisingly AD voters tend to mention the environment as the most important issues. But 46% of those who consider the environment as the most important issue will be voting PN and only 27% will vote Labour.

TIMELINE



TIMELINE – PN frontrunners February-May

	Feb	March	April	3 May	31 May
Simon Busuttil	23.7	31.1	50.9	45.8	54.9
David Casa	3.2	8.9	9.1	8.5	2.8
R. Tedesco Triccas	2.2	4.4	3.6	11.9	3.8
Vince Farrugia	-	6.7	3.6	1.7	2.5

TIMELINE – PL frontunners February-May

	Feb	March	April	3 May	31 May
Edward Scicluna	9.7	5.6	15.3	13.6	13.8
Louis Grech	3	5.6	3	7.4	10.2
Marlene Mizzi	4	5.6	2.7	7.4	8.3
John Attard Montalto	9.9	5.6	4.2	6.2	3.9
Joe Cuschieri	-	5.6	4.2	6.2	4.3
Claudette Abela Baldacchino	-	4.2	3	6.2	2.8

Which party will you vote for? (%)

	Declared voters	All respondents
PL	51.7	35.4
PN	42.4	29
AD	4.1	2.8
AN	0.9	0.6
Others	0.9	0.6
No answer	-	24.7
Not voting	-	6.9

(Declared voters' results are based on an extrapolation, removing from the sample those intending not to vote or who are still undecided)

Voting intentions of 2008 voters (%)

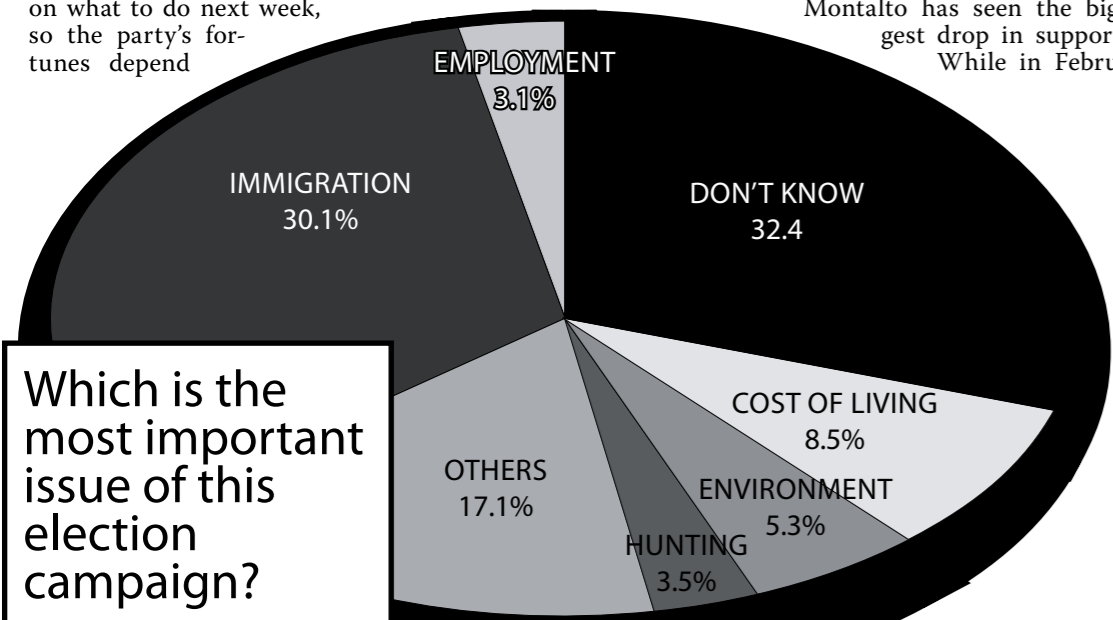
	Voted PN in 2008	Voted PL in 2008
PL	4.5	80.4
PN	59.8	0.7
AD	3	0
AN	0.6	0.4
Others	0.9	0
No answer	21.5	15.5
Not voting	9.7	3

Voting intentions, according to main electoral issue (%)

	PN	PL	AD	AN	Others
Environment	46.2	26.9	23.1	3.8	0
Cost of Living	13.6	86.4	0	0	0
Immigration	54.4	39.4	2.5	1.9	1.9
Utility bills	14.8	85.2	0	0	0
Employment	73.3	26.7	0	0	0
Hunting/trapping	25	68.8	6.3	0	0



Methodology
A total of 1127 respondents were randomly selected. Of these 720 accepted to be interviewed. The results were weighed to reflect the age/sex balance of the population as represented in the latest demographic review. The survey has a margin of error of +/-3.65. The survey was conducted between Wednesday 20th May and Wednesday 27th May.



Which is the most important issue of this election campaign?