

# Labour leads, but Gonzi makes slight recovery

## mt survey

Lawrence Gonzi's backbench coup might have worked wonders: even with his unpopular tariffs, the PM's positive ratings improve, especially among PN voters, but he trails Muscat by 13 points in the trust barometer

### Survey highlights

- 23.1% rate Gonzi's performance positively, up 4 points from September
- PN voters who assess Gonzi positively up 12 points
- Muscat more trusted than Gonzi by 13 points
- Both leaders remain more popular than their party
- Labour ahead by 15 points, but PN gains 3.7% since September
- Nearly 50% say Gonzi will serve his full term
- Only a quarter think he will call an early election

*The Nationalist Party has also seen its support rise from an abysmal 15% in September to 19%, the same score registered by the PN in a survey held in July 2007, less than a year before the party won the last general election*

JAMES DEBONO

LAWRENCE Gonzi's performance as Prime Minister is judged positively by just 23% of respondents to a MaltaToday survey, and he still lags 13 points behind Labour leader Joseph Muscat, who remains the most trusted political leader.

But Gonzi is now also recovering some lost ground since the survey was held last September, when his performance was judged positively by just 19%. His trust rating has also risen from 23% to 26%.

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MaltaToday's survey was held after last Sunday's trade union protest against the hike in utility tariffs and last Monday's parliamentary debate on the same issue, after Gonzi managed to quell the unrest in his backbench to garner a majority in parliament.

The survey shows that just under 50% believe Gonzi will serve his full mandate, while only 26% think he will have to call an early election. A further 26% are not sure whether Gonzi will survive or not.

#### Will Gonzi's government serve its full term till 2013?

Yes 48.4%  
No 25.6%  
Don't know 26%

#### How do you assess Gonzi's performance as Prime Minister?

	March 2010	September 2009	September 2008
Positively	23.1%	18.9%	38%
Negatively	36%	37%	29.5%
Fair	36.1%	39.6%	18.1%
No reply	4.8%	4.4%	14.3%

#### Assessment of Gonzi's performance by party vote \* respondents who declared their voting preference in 2008

	PN voters		PL voters	
	March 2010	September 2009	March 2010	September 2009
Positively	47.7%	36%	1.2%	5.7%
Negatively	16.8%	18.6%	81.7%	65.5%
Fair	32.7%	39.5%	15.9%	25.3%
No reply	2.8%	5.6%	1.2%	3.5%

#### Given a choice between Gonzi and Muscat, who do you trust most?

Joseph Muscat	38.9%
Lawrence Gonzi	26.3%
None	21.4%
No reply	13.4%

#### Trust Barometer among Labour and Nationalist voters (2008)

	PN voters	PL voters
Joseph Muscat	13.9%	85.4%
Lawrence Gonzi	56.1%	0
None	17.8%	11%
No reply	12.2%	3.6%

#### If an election was held tomorrow, who would you vote for?

	March 2010	September 2009
PL	34%	36.8%
PN	18.6%	14.9%
AD	1.4%	0.7%
Not voting	12.6%	12.3%
No reply	33.4%	35.4%

#### Present voting intentions according to 2008 voters

	PN voters		PL voters	
	March 2010	September 2009	March 2010	September 2009
PL	14.8%	15.1%	79.3%	81.6%
PN	45.8%	43%	1.2%	0
Not voting	11.2%	19.8%	2.4%	0
No reply	28.2%	22.1%	17.1	18.3

This indicates that last Monday's vote has not quelled uncertainty on the government's stability.

But the climate of increased

confrontation seems to have galvanised the core voters of both parties, with both political leaders' trust rating increasing by three points over

last September.

Gonzi especially has solidified his hold among a segment of PN voters. From the respondents who voted PN



In the aftermath of Gonzi's 'backbench coup', his show of strength may have earned him vital trust points, especially from his core voters



Muscat still retains the highest trust ratings, but even in the midst of the tariffs hike, Gonzi is no write-off

in 2008, the percentage who deem Gonzi's performance as Prime Minister positively has increased from 36% in September to 48% now.

Even the percentage of PN voters in 2008 who would vote PN again in a forthcoming election has also increased slightly by three points.

But despite this small recovery, Gonzi has not managed to block the haemorrhage to the Labour Party or to slow down Joseph Muscat's increasing popularity. In fact there was no change in the percentage of PN voters in the last election (15%) who would vote Labour if an election is held now. And significantly, Joseph Muscat enjoys more trust than Gonzi among 14% of PN voters.

Interestingly, both political leaders enjoy more popularity than the parties they represent. While 26% expressed their trust in Lawrence Gonzi, only 19% would vote for the PN. And while 39% expressed their trust in Joseph Muscat, only 34% would vote for the Labour Party.

This could indicate a greater personalisation of the political process and a strengthening of leaders over party structures. But since Malta remains essentially a parliamentary democracy, this could result in growing tension between the presidential ambitions of the leaders and rank and file MPs.

Although Muscat has managed to increase his trust rating, his party has seen its support dipping slightly from 36.8% to 34%.

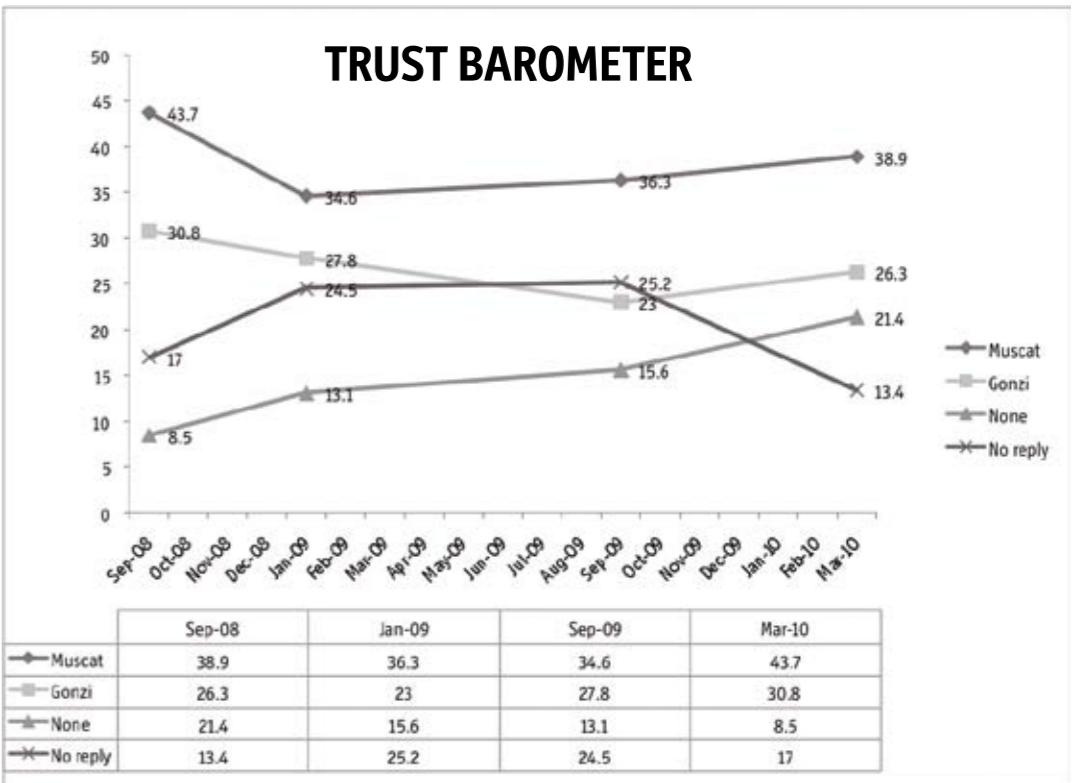
This can be partly attributed to a small shift from Labour to Alternattiva Demokratika. While no PN voters in the 2008 election shifted to AD, 2.4% of Labour voters in 2008

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are now opting for the Greens. But support for the Greens remains low at 1.4%, up from 0.7% in September before the party elected its new leader Michael Briguglio.

#### Methodological note

The survey was conducted between Monday 1 March and Thursday 4 March. 459 respondents were chosen from different telephone directories. 300 accepted to be interviewed. The survey has a margin of error of +/-5.7%.



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