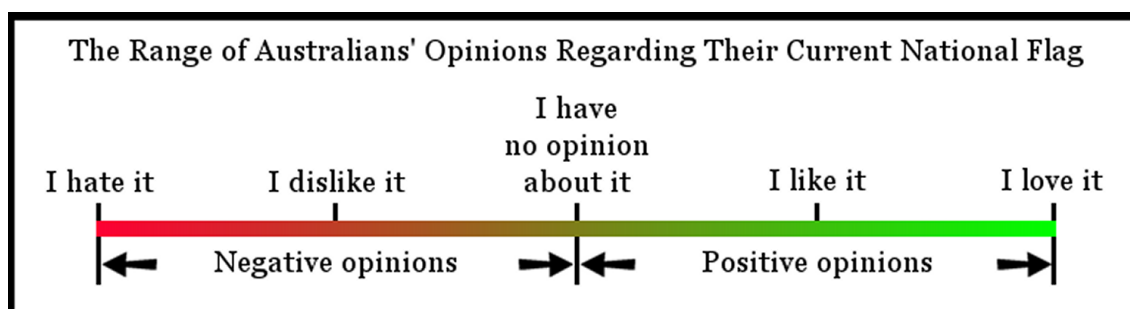


## The Most Important Thing to Know About the Current Australian National Flag

No one knows whether a majority of Australians have a negative or positive opinion of their flag. The knowledge of which opinion is predominant would be beneficial to the Australian populace. Anyone claiming to already know the majority Australian opinion of the current national flag lies. Media polls on the question to small numbers of Aussies will be about as trustworthy as tea leaves. Only one approach exists by which the majority opinion of the flag can be undeniably determined.



Majority opinion is a cornerstone of democracy, making the determination of any majority opinion a democratic endeavour. By determining their majority opinion of their flag, Australians would be engaging in a modest but genuine democratic exercise. They would also be answering a social, cultural, and demographic question, not a political one. Knowing a majority opinion of a flag does not equate to a political process of changing or keeping a flag. Nevertheless, Australian politicians would benefit from having that opinion determined, because knowing the majority opinion of the flag would let them better tailor their stances on the flag to those of their voting constituencies.

For ordinary Australians, a knowledge of the majority opinion of their flag would be far superior to what they currently know about their flag, which is that large numbers of their fellow Australians have had heated opinions about it on both ends of the spectrum for roughly 125 years. Both sides have always pretended to enjoy majority sympathy. With the majority view truly determined, one side could claim the catbird seat, whilst the other would be forced to eat crow. Knowing which was which would benefit both politicians and hoi polloi alike. Both sides could still try to sway hearts and minds, but there would no longer be any doubt about which side the bread is buttered on. Should a majority negative opinion prove to be the case, proponents of flag change would have the legitimate right to expect political action. Should a majority positive opinion prove to be the case, proponents of flag change could stop wasting time, money, and effort on an obviously lost cause.

Only one institution has the authority and ability to accurately poll the full Australian population. [The Australian Bureau of Statistics](#) is responsible for conducting the Australian Census as well as Australia-wide surveys on virtually any topic that is of interest to the Australian Parliament, to which the ABS answers. Should the Australian Parliament ever want to determine the majority Australian opinion of the current Australian national flag, the ABS would readily comply, either by means of the Census or through the use of a more limited-size ABS survey. Again, the question is not a political one, but a social, cultural, and demographic one, and providing definitive answers to social, cultural, and demographic questions is the very reason for which the ABS and Census exist. The form that the question should take might be as simple as the following:

Tick the response below that best describes your attitude towards the current Australian national flag

- I have a positive opinion of the current national flag
- I have a negative opinion of the current national flag
- I have a neutral opinion of the current national flag

Because [the Census form](#) takes account of all of the persons at any given domicile, it would provide each of the persons in that domicile with a place to answer the question. Thus a complete profile of the Australian majority opinion of the flag would be derived, a profile that could be further broken down along the lines of the other social, cultural, and demographic information gathered. The costs of adding the question to the Census would essentially be nil, and the costs of calculating and publishing its answer would be no greater than those required for any other Census question. Although the use of the Census would answer the question most irrefutably, an ABS survey such as the [Multipurpose Household Survey](#) could also answer it with low costs and very high accuracy.

Had New Zealand included such a question in their 2013 census, they might well have spared themselves the expense and embarrassment that their 2015-2016 flag referendums caused them. Instead a paternalistic NZ government put the cart before the horse, by forcing a new flag to be considered without even knowing the majority opinion of the current New Zealand flag, and even after the referendums they *still* did not know the majority opinion. The referendums did not prove that a majority of the NZ population had a positive opinion of their current flag, but only that a majority of the NZ population had a lesser opinion of all of the other flags that were put on offer.

As this document was being authored, roughly two years remained to the 2026 Australian Census. Visitors to the ABS website may read that the questions to be asked by that Census have already been finalised. Nonsense. If the Australian Parliament wants the majority opinion of the flag to be determined by the 2026 Census or by an ABS survey, plenty of time remains to change or develop forms. If Australians learn from New Zealand's foremost mistake, and instead use their 2026 or a later Census or ABS survey to determine the true majority opinion of their current flag, they will be forging a path that the people of every other democratic nation with a long-standing flag debate can follow, perhaps in future even the people of New Zealand. Moreover, if the majority opinion of the current flag proves to be negative, a recriminations-free flag change process may follow, which in yet another way will give Australia a leg up on New Zealand's folly. Finally, if such a flag change process does emerge, and if Australia bothers to learn from [the other mistakes](#) that were made during the New Zealand referendums, they could end up with a national flag that is not only loved by an unquestionable majority of Australians, but one that is the envy of the democratic world.

What this document has proposed is that a simple question be asked of the full Australian public. It maintains that the question is an important one, that the Australian public deserves to know its answer, and that the Australian public would benefit from having learned it. Naturally there would be those who decry the asking of the question, for fear of what its answer might be. If any public swell of support arose for its asking, a swell of opposition to its asking would certainly arise as well. There are Australian organisations at both ends of the flag opinion spectrum who would probably become strange bedfellows in their mutual opposition to the question, their vested interests in the status quo being preferable to them to the possibility of ending up with the wrong end of the stick. Some of those who would oppose the asking of the question might have legitimate reasons for doing so. The less savoury motives of others would of course be obfuscated by claims that the question is untimely or unnecessary, controversial or divisive, disingenuous, misleading, harmful, or for any number of other spurious but valid-sounding reasons a question not worth the asking. It can only be hoped that the Australian public and Parliament would see through such subterfuge.

Whatever your opinion regarding the current Australian national flag, you are entitled to it, subject to your being an Australian, rather than some other nationality. What you are *not* entitled to is the claim that your opinion is the majority one, unless an Australian Census or a comprehensive ABS survey proves it to be so. That can only happen if the Australian Parliament embraces the salient fact that has been underscored by this document—that the most important thing to know about the current Australian national flag is whether a majority of Australians view it favourably or not.

Anne Onymous, October 2024  
[australian.flagalternatives.com](http://australian.flagalternatives.com)  
[newzealand.flagoptions.com](http://newzealand.flagoptions.com)

## Afterword

This document takes no stance in the Australian flag debate. Readers who have parsed its words carefully will not mischaracterise it that way, making the intentions of anyone who does so suspect.

Nowadays one often sees the flags of large populaces being changed in processes that are initiated, managed, and finalised by small groups of activists and legislators, with the wishes of the majority never once taken into account. Such minority-controlled processes are oligarchic, not democratic.