

## National at 29% in UMR April poll - curtains for Bridges?

A morning can be a long time in politics.

No sooner had we hit the 'send' button on this week's Hugovision than we were made privy to the results of the latest UMR political polling, putting the National Party at 29% support.

Admittedly, the poll was taken during Bridges's recent nadir, in the days after he muffed his response to the govt's announcement about the path out of level 4 lockdown and into level 3.

On one hand, UMR polls every month and releases its results to a range of non-political subscribers, so the fact of the poll is not suspicious.

However, the results appear to have made their way to those customers very quickly.

With Bridges already destabilised and having faced down criticism from his own caucus and senior party leadership this week, the **publication of such damaging polling today can only serve to keep alive the potential for his leadership not to survive** to the election or - at this stage - even to the May 14 Budget.

Particularly telling is that **the poll has Bridges level-pegging with Judith Collins for preferred prime minister, with both attracting 7% support.**

We spoke with a range of National Party MPs this week to gauge whether there had been a leadership coup in the making after Bridges's level 3 alert gaffe and concluded there had not.

However, there was universal agreement that Bridges is only safe if the party polls above 35%. Two MPs nominated 32% support as a level at which Bridges could expect a challenge, in part because a result that poor would wipe out many of the party's parliamentary leaders of the future.

## Labour could govern alone

The same poll puts **Labour on 55% support, meaning it could govern alone comfortably** with 67 seats in the 120-seat Parliament if the poll were replicated on election night. It could still also choose to work with both NZ First and the Greens, who both just clear the 5% MMP threshold with 6% and 5% support respectively.

Jacinda Ardern's preferred PM status has risen to 65% in this poll, along with a surge to 78% in the numbers believing NZ is on the 'right track', despite a similarly large surge in the number of people expecting a more difficult year ahead, at 73%.

That can only be interpreted as an ongoing mandate for the govt to pursue its current covid-19 strategy, notwithstanding increasingly sharp critiques of both some elements of that response and the economic damage being caused by any prolonging of lockdown.

## Act a beneficiary of Nat disenchantment

The news is good too for David Seymour and the Act party. The party attracts 3.5% support in this poll, which would give it 4 MPs in a new Parliament, to National's 36.

Seymour himself figures in the preferred PM stakes too, at 3%, equal to Winston Peters.

Other minor parties remain off the radar in this poll, with the Maori Party on 1.1%, TOP on 0.8%, and no others featuring. ■