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PHIL GOFF (54%) cf. JOHN KEY (46%) WINS LEADER'S DEBATE BUT WILL IT BE ENOUGH?

By Michele Levine, CEO Roy Morgan Research

Tonight more than 1,600 people from all over New Zealand using the Roy Morgan Mobile *Reactor* gave their second-by-second *reactions* to the Leaders' debate between Prime Minister John Key and Opposition Leader Phil Goff.

The studio *Reactor* audience, recruited to represent uncommitted voters, but they did appear to favour Labour which is not surprising given that the current Morgan Poll National vote of 53% is so high.

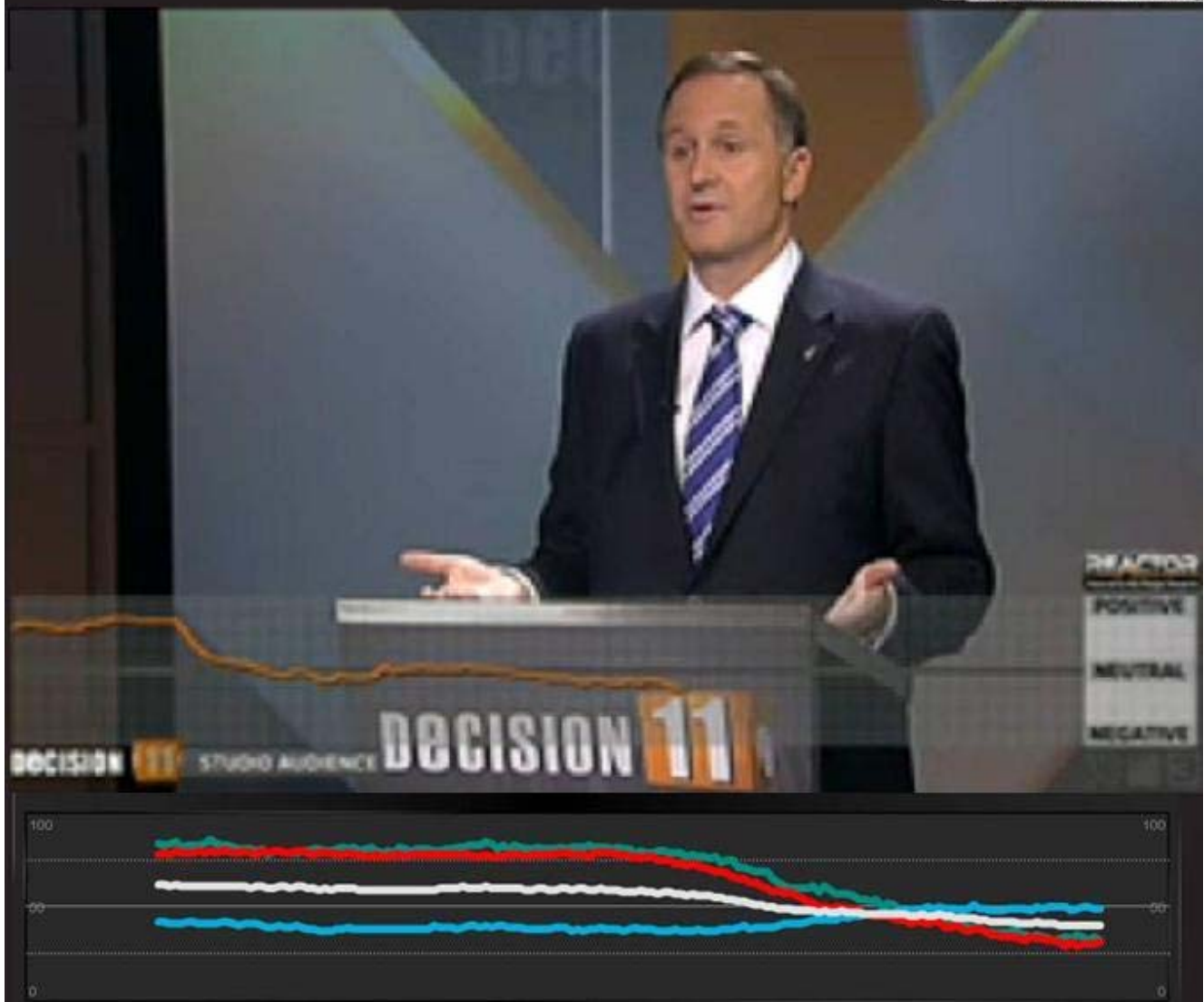
Overall, throughout the debate people's reactions split along party lines. People who tended to support the National Party tended to stay with Key and Labour supporters tended to support Goff. However, the Greens were "more Labour than the Labour voters".

- In the opening statements **both leaders** did very well building their support to 75 on the *Reactor* dial.
- On the issue of 'kids' and children both leaders did well, but neither leader pulled ahead. Goff did better among National supporters than Key did among Labour supporters.
- On the issue of the minimum wage, it looked as if Goff gained support, but he lacked arguments on the economy and wages.
- Key gained positive reactions when he talked about more training programs and did well when he said "If youth wages go up jobs go down."
- The audience reacted extremely positively when Goff made the point that "you don't sell your home to pay the mortgage."
- And Goff also did well when he talked about the mums and dads that can't afford to buy shares in utilities and that they already own them anyway.
- Key gained some traction when he talked about Fairfax–Trade Me. But he didn't regain any traction on the 'sale of assets issue' after Goff had already gained the electorate's support.
- Key began negatively on the 'sale of assets issue' and further lost support when he mentioned Air NZ.
- Key lost more support when he attacked Goff at the end of that piece by saying that New Zealanders will pay a Capital Gains Tax – importantly overall Goff won the debate on the 'sale of assets issue' and even moved National voters above that 50% line.

In the closing argument, Goff moved the studio audience positively, with even those tending to vote National at the 50% line, whereas Key's closing argument left the audience polarised along party-lines.

In terms of the debate about the minor parties – NZ First and ACT NZ – there were no real wins for either party in that discussion, but Goff did gain some traction with the *Reactor* with his comments about Key keeping the ACT NZ Party alive and when he said Key was "breathing life back into a dead ACT NZ Party."

Final Result: Phil Goff (54%) cf. John Key (46%) wins leader's debate



Prime Minister John Key during Monday night's Leader's debate. Previous *Reactor* segment shown was when Opposition Leader Phil Goff was answering questions. Note: Blue = National; Red = Labour; Green = Greens; White = Other.

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