Australian
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THE 2019
AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL ELECTION

RESULTS FROM THE AUSTRALIAN
ELECTION STUDY

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australianelectionstudy.org

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December, 2019

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ELECTION STUDY**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents findings from the 2019 Australian Election Study (AES). The AES surveyed a nationally representative sample of 2,179 voters after the 2019 Australian federal election to find out what shaped their choices in the election. The AES has fielded representative surveys after every federal election since 1987, which allows these results to be placed in a long-term context. This report provides insights into what informed voting behaviour in the election and voters' attitudes towards policy issues, the political leaders, and the functioning of Australian democracy generally. The main findings are as follows:

Policy issues

> A majority of voters (66%) cast their ballots based on policy issues.

> The most important issues in the election identified by voters include management of the economy (24%), health (22%) and environmental issues (21%).

> Voters preferred the Coalition's policies on management of the economy, taxation, and immigration.

> Voters preferred Labor's policies on education, health, and the environment.

> More voters indicated that global warming or the environment was the most important issue in casting their vote than at any other point on record.

Leaders

> Scott Morrison is the most popular political leader since Kevin Rudd in 2007, scoring 5.1 on a zero to 10 popularity scale.

> Bill Shorten is the least popular leader of a major political party since 1990.

> A majority of voters (74%) disapproved of the way the Liberal Party handled the leadership change in 2018, when Scott Morrison replaced Malcolm Turnbull.

Political trust

> Satisfaction with democracy is at its lowest level (59%) since the constitutional crisis of the 1970s.

> Trust in government has reached its lowest level on record, with just 25% believing people in government can be trusted.

> 56% of Australians believe that the government is run for 'a few big interests', while just 12% believe the government is run for 'all the people'.

A divided electorate?

> Men were much more likely to vote for the Coalition than women (men: 48%; women: 38%). Women were more likely than men to vote for the Greens (men: 9%; women: 15%).

> Gender differences in voting have changed over time. In the 1990s men were slightly more likely to vote Labor than women, in recent elections women have become more likely to vote Labor.

> There is evidence of a growing divide between the voting behavior of younger and older generations. The 2019 election represented the lowest Liberal party vote on record for those under 35 (23%), and the highest ever vote for the Greens (28%).

> Working class voters are much more likely to vote Labor than middle class voters (working class: 41%; middle class: 29%). Long-term trends show an erosion of Labor's working class base.

> Asset ownership, including property and shares, was strongly associated with a higher vote for the Coalition.

Explaining the election result

> The Coalition had a strong advantage in management of the economy, taxation and leadership. Labor had a strong advantage on environmental issues.

> Voters swung to the Coalition based on the economy, tax and leadership. Voters swung to Labor on the environment and health. On balance, there were a greater number of voters that switched from Labor to the Coalition based on economic issues, than from the Coalition to Labor based on environmental issues.

> A rise in support for minor parties contributed to the election result. This trend is associated with record low political partisnship. 21% of voters do not align with any political party.

This report highlights just a few of the main findings from the 2019 Australian Election Study. Further information on the long-term trends is available in an accompanying report *Trends in Australian Political Opinion: Results from the Australian Election Study 1987-2019*. The Australian Election Study website provides the data for researchers to conduct their own analysis, and interactive charts to explore the data online: www.australianelectionstudy.org

INTRODUCTION

The re-election of the Liberal-National Coalition government in the May 2019 election confounded most observers and politicians. The Coalition had only narrowly won the previous 2016 election, reducing a substantial 15 seat majority to just one seat. Since that election, the opinion polls had consistently pointed to a Labor victory. The apparently looming Labor landslide led the Liberals to replace their leader and prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, in August 2018. In the wake of the leadership turmoil and consistently poor poll results, several senior government ministers announced their resignations, including Julie Bishop, the former Minister for Foreign Affairs. The scene seemed set for a major Labor victory. Why this did not occur is the subject of this report.

The period leading up to the election was also notable for what has been called 'the world's most ridiculous constitutional crisis'.[1] A total of 17 parliamentarians were either deemed to be dual citizens and therefore ineligible to sit in parliament under section 44 of the constitution, or resigned pre-emptively when their citizenship status was publicly questioned. The most prominent of this group was Barnaby Joyce, the deputy prime minister and National party leader; Joyce was subsequently re-elected in a by-election held in December 2017. The dual citizenship crisis of 2017-18 caused a further turnover of parliamentarians.

Labor took the opportunity of their poll lead to promote a series of major economic policy changes. This involved four tax changes, the most important and contentious being the abolition of cash refunds for franking credits and the restriction of negative gearing on property investments. The increased taxation was intended to fund an expansion in social services, including health and childcare. This was easily the most far-reaching economic policy change proposed in any election since 1993, when the Liberals led by John Hewson proposed wide-ranging tax changes, including the introduction of a goods and services tax. These changes were rejected by voters in what became known as 'the unlosable election'.

The 2019 Australian election was therefore one of the more interesting in recent decades. It featured the fourth change of prime minister outside an election since 2010, a constitutional crisis which caused 17 parliamentarians to stand down, an invigorated opposition with a radical policy agenda, and a Labor leader who was one of the most unpopular since polling began. This report describes how voters viewed the election, and how they responded to the policies, the leaders and the campaign.

This report proceeds in five sections, examining: the policy issues; the political leaders; political trust; divisions in the electorate; and what explains the election result. The findings presented are drawn primarily from the Australian Election Study (AES). The AES has fielded nationally representative public opinion surveys after every federal election since 1987, providing the most sophisticated and comprehensive source of evidence ever collected on political attitudes and behavior in Australia. The 2019 study surveyed over 2000 Australians to discover what shaped their choices at the ballot box, and their attitudes towards a range of policy issues. Details on the survey methodology are provided in the appendix.

In addition to this report that examines the 2019 election, further details on the long-term trends in Australian political attitudes are provided in our accompanying report, *Trends in Australian Political Opinion: Results from the Australian Election Study 1987-2019*. These reports and a range of other resources including data, codebooks, and an interactive tool to explore the data online are available on the AES website: www.australianelectionstudy.org

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POLICY ISSUES

Policy issues play a major role in determining election outcomes. The Australian Election Study has asked voters in every election since 1996 what was the most important issue in deciding how they would cast their vote. In 2019, 66% of voters cast their ballots based on policy issues, with the remainder voting based on the parties as a whole (19%), candidates in the electorate (8%), and the party leaders (7%) (see Figure 1.1). The impact of policy issues in voting has been gradually rising over time, reaching the highest point in over 20 years in 2019. The previous high point in 1998 (also 66%) was related to the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

Figure 1.1: Considerations in the voting decision
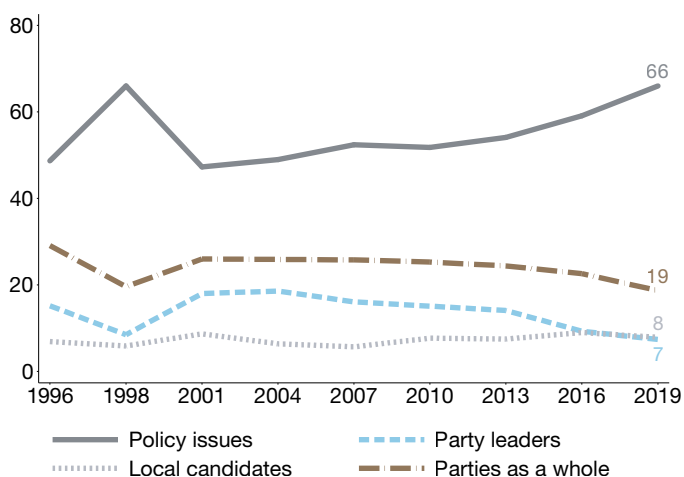
Note: Estimates are percentages.

Most important election issues

Which policy issues did voters consider to be the most important in choosing how they were going to vote in the 2019 election? AES respondents were given a list of ten election issues and asked to identify which was the most important. Their responses are presented in Figure 1.2.

The biggest issue in the election was management of the economy, highlighted by 24% of voters as the most important issue. Other economic issues voters considered to be important included taxation (12%), superannuation (5%) and government debt (2%). Altogether nearly half of all voters (43%) identified an economic issue as the most important issue. The second biggest issue for voters was Health and Medicare (22%), which features consistently in the top two issues in recent elections.[2]

Figure 1.2: Most important election issues
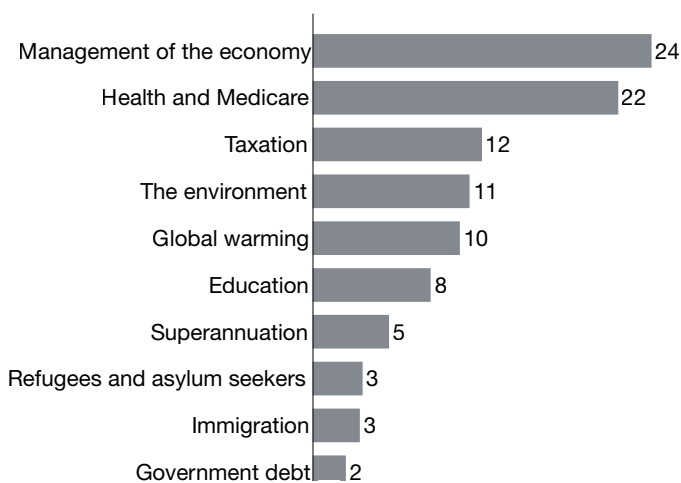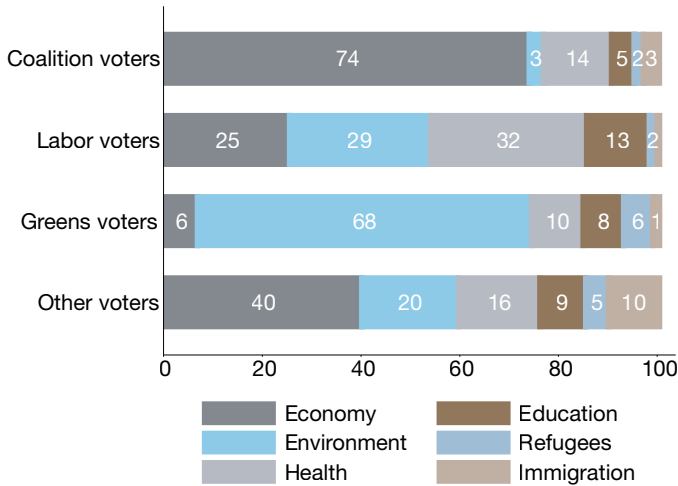

Note: Estimates are percentages.

The environment played a much bigger role in the 2019 election than in previous elections. Combining those who identified the environment (11%) and global warming (10%) as the most important issue, around one in five voters identified an environmental issue as their top concern in the election. This compares to the 2016 election when fewer than 10% identified an environmental issue as their top consideration.

Other concerns including education (8%), refugees and asylum seekers (3%), and immigration (3%) were mentioned as the top issue priorities for only a minority of voters.

There can be considerable variation in the salience of different issues from election to election.[3] In the 2019 election refugees were considered less important than in other recent elections, while environmental issues were much more important.

The most important election issue varied considerably between voters for different parties (see Figure 1.3). Three quarters of Coalition voters identified an economic issue as their top issue in the election. A further 14% of Coalition voters identified health as the top issue. Labor voters were more diverse in their top issue priorities. A third considered health to be the most important (32%), followed by the environment (29%), economic issues (25%), and education (13%). Two thirds of Greens voters considered environmental issues to be the top consideration in the election (68%), with the remainder split between health (10%), education (8%), the economy (6%), and refugees and asylum seekers (6%).

Figure 1.3: Most important election issues by vote

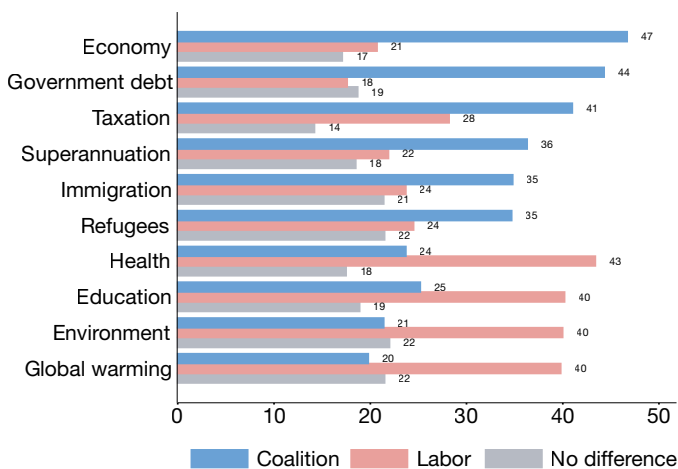|	Economy	Environment	Health	Education	Refugees	Immigration
Coalition voters	74	3	14	5	2	3
Labor voters	25	29	32	13		2
Greens voters	6	68	10	8	6	1
Other voters	40	20	16	9	5	10

Note: Estimates are percentages.

Preferred party policies

The major parties have advantages in different policy areas (see Figure 1.4). The AES asked voters for the same ten issues, "whose policies – the Labor Party's or the Liberal-National Coalition's –would you say come closer to your own views on each of these issues?" The Coalition has an advantage in management of the economy, taxation and immigration. Labor, on the other hand, is the preferred party on education, health, and environmental issues. As nearly half of the electorate considered an economic issue to be the most important in the 2019 election, this benefitted the Coalition. Health and the environment on the other hand, benefitted Labor.

Although there can be some fluctuations from election to election, overall voters' preferences for one party over the other on these policy areas remain fairly consistent over time.[4] What is noticeable in 2019 is the declining proportion of voters who said there was 'no difference' between the parties on salient issues in the campaign, particularly tax and global warming.[5]

Figure 1.4: Preferred party policies

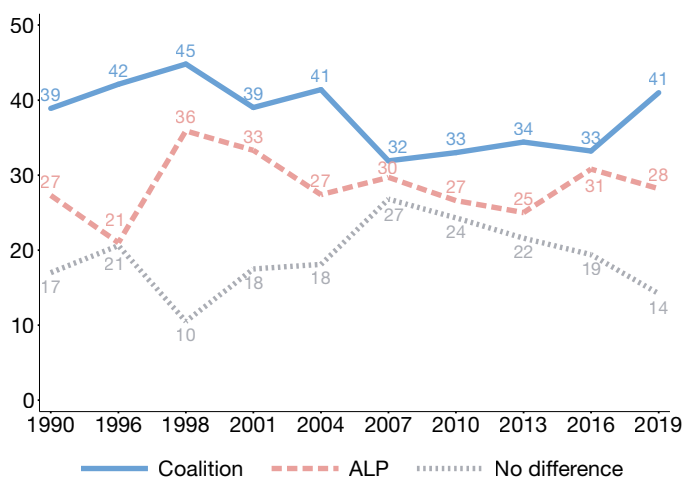|	Coalition	Labor	No difference
Economy	47	21	17
Government debt	44	18	19
Taxation	41	28	14
Superannuation	36	22	18
Immigration	35	24	21
Refugees	35	24	22
Health	24	43	18
Education	25	40	19
Environment	21	40	22
Global warming	20	40	22

Note: Estimates are percentages.

Tax policies

Economic policies were a focus of the campaign, particularly Labor's policies on tax. Labor policies included the abolition of negative gearing on older properties, and the removal of share dividend imputation refunds (franking credits) for those paying no tax. Labor's choice to campaign on tax was a risky strategy as the Coalition has maintained a long-term advantage on tax, so they were contesting the election in an area where they are at a persistent disadvantage. Figure 1.5 shows the trends over time in preferred party policy on taxation. While Labor and the Coalition drew close in the 2016 election, these results show that the gap widened considerably in the 2019 election, with the Coalition reaching a 13-point lead over Labor on this issue.
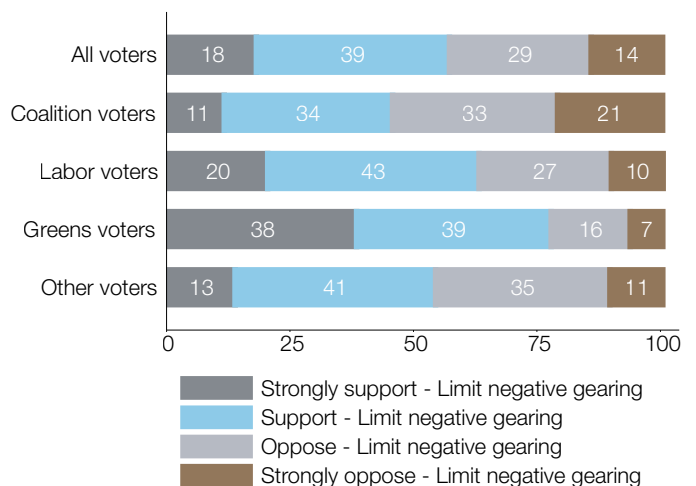
Figure 1.5: Preferred party policy on taxation

Year	Coalition	ALP	No difference
1990	39	27	17
1996	42	21	21
1998	45	36	10
2001	39	33	18
2004	41	27	18
2007	32	30	27
2010	33	27	24
2013	34	25	22
2016	33	31	19
2019	41	28	14

Note: Estimates are percentages.

The AES asked specifically what voters thought about the proposals on negative gearing. The survey asked: "do you support or oppose policies to limit property investors claiming tax deductions (i.e. negative gearing)?" Figure 1.6 shows voter responses overall, and by first preference vote in the House of Representatives in 2019. A majority (57%) responded that they approved of the policies. Although a Labor policy area, over a third of Labor voters (37%) opposed the policies.
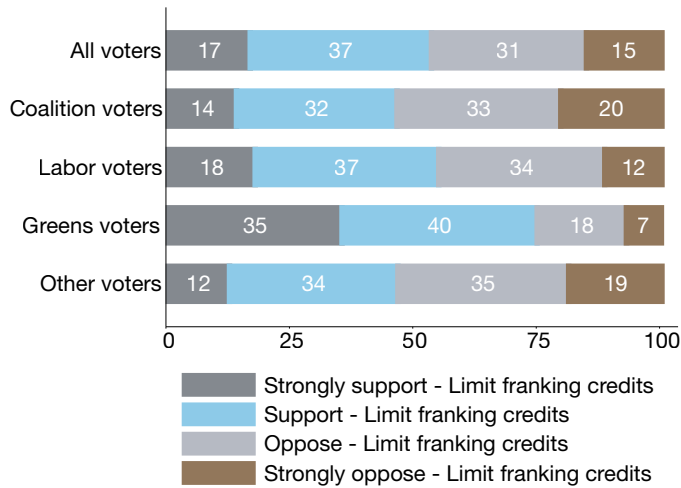
Figure 1.6: Support for policies to limit negative gearing

	Strongly support	Support	Oppose	Strongly oppose
All voters	18	39	29	14
Coalition voters	11	34	33	21
Labor voters	20	43	27	10
Greens voters	38	39	16	7
Other voters	13	41	35	11

Legend:
- Strongly support - Limit negative gearing
- Support - Limit negative gearing
- Oppose - Limit negative gearing
- Strongly oppose - Limit negative gearing

Note: Estimates are percentages.

A similar question was asked on franking credits: "do you support or oppose policies to limit shareholders receiving a cash rebate on dividends (i.e. franking credits)?" Figure 1.7 shows voters' responses. Overall 54% indicated support for these policies with a similar distribution of responses to negative gearing. Labor voters were somewhat more supportive of the changes than Coalition voters, although still nearly half (46%) opposed the policy.

While one in five voters indicated the environment or global warming was the most important issue, a much greater proportion of voters (81%) responded that these issues were important in casting their vote (if not the most important issue). Figure 1.9 shows the percentage of voters for each of the main parties that thought global warming was important. Two thirds of Coalition voters considered the issue to be important, while 93% of Labor voters and 98% of Greens voters thought so.

Figure 1.7: Support for policies to limit franking credits

Note: Estimates are percentages.

Figure 1.9: Importance of global warming

Note: Estimates are percentages.

Climate change

During the campaign, commentators referred to the 2019 election as the "climate change election". To what degree is this claim supported by the evidence? Climate change and the environment were salient issues in the election campaign. More voters indicated that global warming or the environment was the most important issue in casting their vote than at any other point on record (see Figure 1.8). The previous high point was in 2007 when Labor, led by Kevin Rudd, won the election after 11 years of Coalition government under John Howard. In the lead up to the 2007 election, Rudd had framed climate change as "the great moral challenge of our generation".[6]
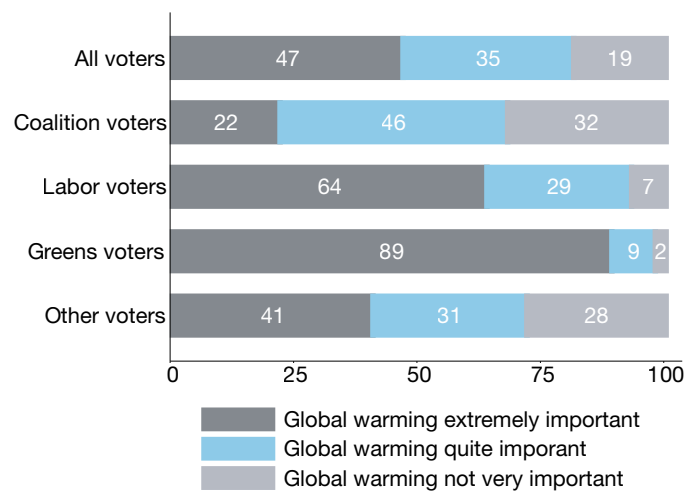
Figure 1.8: The environment and global warming as most important election issues

Note: Estimates are percentages.

Notes

Figure 1.1: Considerations in the voting decision

Question wording: "In deciding how you would vote in the election, which was most important to you?"

Figure 1.2: Most important election issues

Estimates show the percentage of respondents who indicated each issue was the most important in the 2019 election. Question wording: "…which of these issues was the most important to you and your family during the election campaign?"

Figure 1.3: Most important election issues by vote

Estimates show the percentage of respondents who indicated each issue was the most important in the 2019 election by first preference vote in the House of Representatives. Environment combines 'the environment' and 'global warming'. Economy combines 'management of the economy', 'taxation', 'superannuation' and 'government debt'.

Figure 1.4: Preferred party policies

Estimates are percentages. Question wording: "...whose policies – the Labor Party's or the Liberal-National Coalition's – would you say come closer to your own views on each of these issues?"

Figure 1.5: Preferred party policy on taxation

Estimates are percentages. Question wording: "…whose policies – the Labor Party's or the Liberal-National Coalition's –would you say come closer to your own views on each of these issues?... Taxation"

Figure 1.6: Support for policies to limit negative gearing

Estimates show the percentage of responses to the following question, by respondent first preference vote in the House of Representatives. Question wording: "And do you support or oppose policies to limit property investors claiming tax deductions (i.e. negative gearing)?"

Figure 1.7: Support for policies to limit franking credits

Estimates show the percentage of responses to the following question, by respondent first preference vote in the House of Representatives. Question wording: "Do you support or oppose policies to limit shareholders receiving a cash rebate on dividends (i.e. franking credits)?"

Figure 1.8: The environment and global warming as most important election issues

Estimates show the percentage of respondents who indicated the environment or global warming was the most important election issue. Question wording: "…which of these issues was the most important to you and your family during the election campaign?"

Figure 1.9: Importance of global warming

Estimates show the percentage of respondents who indicated global warming was important when they decided how to vote, by respondent first preference vote in the House of Representatives. Question wording: "Here is a list of important issues that were discussed during the election campaign. When you were deciding how to vote, how important was each of these issues to you personally?... Global warming"
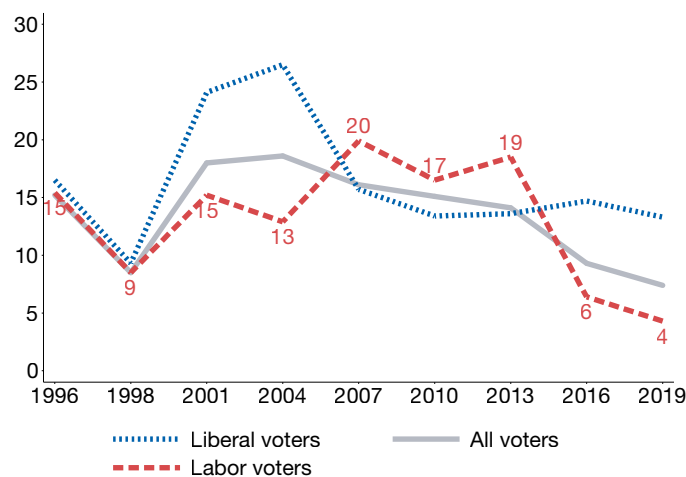
LEADERS

The popularity of the party leaders has always been important in shaping vote choice, and the 2019 election was no exception. Nevertheless, the role of leadership in the 2019 election was different from other elections in two respects. First, Bill Shorten's popularity represented a historic low for any major party leader in recent times and this undoubtedly disadvantaged Labor. Second, Scott Morrison's replacement of Malcolm Turnbull was the fourth time a sitting prime minister had been replaced outside an election since 2010. The 2019 AES shows that voters were becoming weary of these constant changes.

Does leadership matter?

Voters cast their ballots for a number of reasons. Responses to the AES show that in 2019, while 66% of voters cast their ballots based on policy issues, just 7% did so based on the party leaders. Although party leadership is not the most important factor, people who vote based on party leaders are more likely to be swing voters, so leadership can make a difference to electoral outcomes.[7] This is particularly the case in close contests, or when there is a leader who is particularly popular or unpopular.

On average over the past 23 years, 14% of voters have cast their ballots based on party leadership. This can fluctuate depending on leader popularity (see Figure 2.1). In 2007, when Labor won the election, it was led by a very popular Kevin Rudd and 20% of Labor voters said that they cast their ballots based on the party leaders. In 2019 with Bill Shorten as leader, only 4% of Labor voters said that leadership was their main consideration. In contrast, 13% of Coalition voters cast their ballots based on leadership in the 2019 election. To put this another way, among those who voted based on party leaders in 2019, 76% voted for the Coalition, while just 21% voted for the Labor Party. Based on these voter responses, it is estimated that the net effect of leadership on the vote was 4% against Labor.[8]

Figure 2.1: Voting based on the party leaders

Note: Estimates are percentages.

Leader popularity

The AES asked voters to evaluate how much they like the party leaders on a scale from 0 (strongly dislike) to 10 (strongly like). The 2019 results are presented in Figure 2.2. Scott Morrison was the most popular leader in 2019, with an average evaluation of 5.1.

Morrison is somewhat more popular than his predecessor Malcolm Turnbull (4.8). Turnbull is followed by the Nationals leader Michael McCormack (4.4), although more than half of voters gave him a neutral evaluation of 5, indicating they did not know much about him. Greens leader Richard Di Natale received an average evaluation of 4.0. Bill Shorten was the least popular leader, also with a score of 4.0. Although Di Natale's evaluation did not increase compared to 2016, this is the first time a Greens leader has been evaluated more favorably than a leader of one of the major parties.
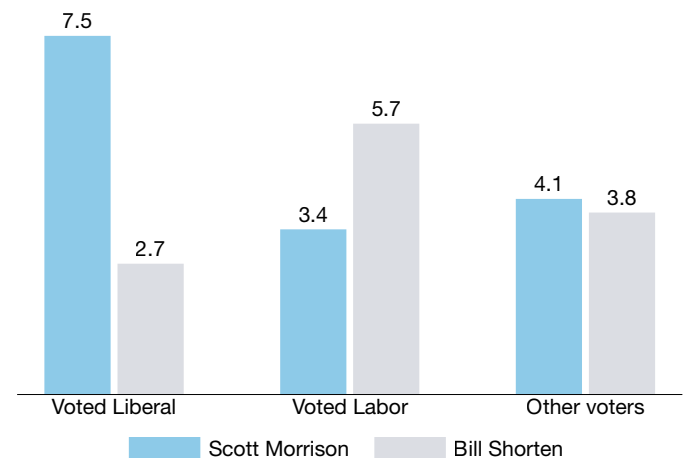
Figure 2.2: Leader popularity
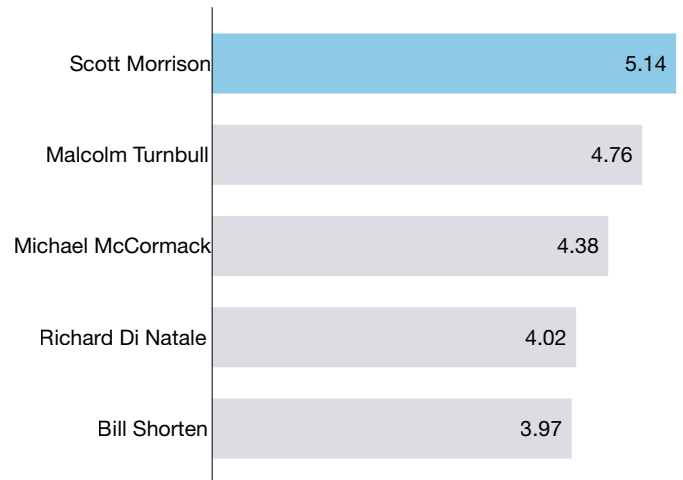
Note: Estimates are means. Scale 0 (strongly dislike) to 10 (strongly like).

There is considerable variation in voters' evaluations of the leaders, as shown in Figure 2.3. Scott Morrison is extremely popular among those who voted for the Liberal party, with an average evaluation of 7.5. Labor voters on the other hand, evaluated Morrison with an average score of 3.4 out of 10. Relative to Morrison, Bill Shorten was less well liked by both those who voted for his party (5.7) and those who voted for the Liberal party (2.7).
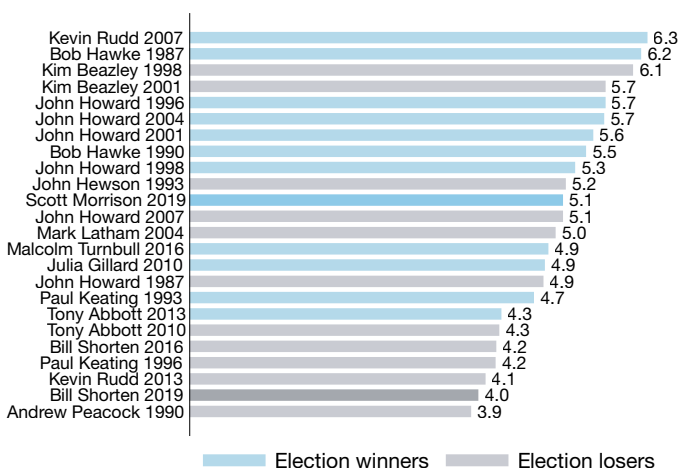
Figure 2.3: Vote choice and leader popularity

Note: Estimates are means. Scale 0 (strongly dislike) to 10 (strongly like).

The question on leader popularity has been asked consistently since 1987, enabling long term comparisons to be made on the main party leaders (see Figure 2.4). Scott Morrison's popularity rating places him as the most popular leader to win an election since Kevin Rudd's 2007 win. It is the first occasion since 2007 where a party leader's average evaluation has exceeded the mid-point of five on the popularity scale. Each of the elections between 2010 to 2016 were won by unpopular leaders, competing against even more unpopular opponents. The 2019 election breaks this trend. While Morrison is not well liked by those who did not vote for the Liberal party, he is exceptionally popular among Liberal voters. Bill Shorten's evaluations are lower than any election winner on record, in both 2016 and 2019. In 2019, he had the second lowest level of popularity on record for a main party leader.

Figure 2.4: Leader popularity 1987-2019

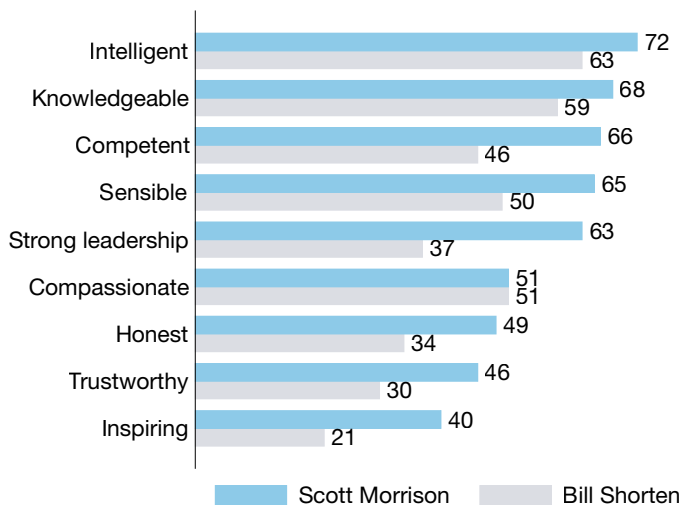|	
Kevin Rudd 2007	6.3
Bob Hawke 1987	6.2
Kim Beazley 1998	6.1
Kim Beazley 2001	5.7
John Howard 1996	5.7
John Howard 2004	5.7
John Howard 2001	5.6
Bob Hawke 1990	5.5
John Howard 1998	5.3
John Hewson 1993	5.2
Scott Morrison 2019	5.1
John Howard 2007	5.1
Mark Latham 2004	5.0
Malcolm Turnbull 2016	4.9
Julia Gillard 2010	4.9
John Howard 1987	4.9
Paul Keating 1993	4.7
Tony Abbott 2013	4.3
Tony Abbott 2010	4.3
Bill Shorten 2016	4.2
Paul Keating 1996	4.2
Kevin Rudd 2013	4.1
Bill Shorten 2019	4.0
Andrew Peacock 1990	3.9

Election winners   Election losers

Note: Estimates are means. Scale 0 (strongly dislike) to 10 (strongly like).

Leader characteristics

Since 1993 the AES has asked voters to evaluate the party leaders in terms of leadership characteristics, including factors such as strong leadership, trustworthiness, honesty, intelligence, competence, knowledge and the ability to be inspiring, compassionate and sensible.

The percentage of voters who believe the various characteristics described the leader either 'extremely well' or 'quite well' are presented in Figure 2.5. Across all but one of these factors Morrison was viewed a good deal more favourably than Shorten. Both leaders were rated equally compassionate (at 51%). The biggest gaps between the two leaders were on competence (Morrison: 66%; Shorten: 46%), strong leadership (Morrison: 63%; Shorten: 37%), trustworthiness (Morrison: 46%; Shorten: 30%), and whether the leader was inspiring (Morrison: 40%; Shorten: 21%). If we compare Morrison and Shorten's leadership traits in 2019 to other Labor and Liberal party leaders over the past 26 years, Shorten has the lowest average evaluation on record, while Morrison is placed in the middle of the group.[9]

Figure 2.5: Leader characteristics

	Scott Morrison	Bill Shorten
Intelligent	72	63
Knowledgeable	68	59
Competent	66	46
Sensible	65	50
Strong leadership	63	37
Compassionate	51	51
Honest	49	34
Trustworthy	46	30
Inspiring	40	21

Note: Estimates are percentages, combining 'extremely well' and 'quite well'.

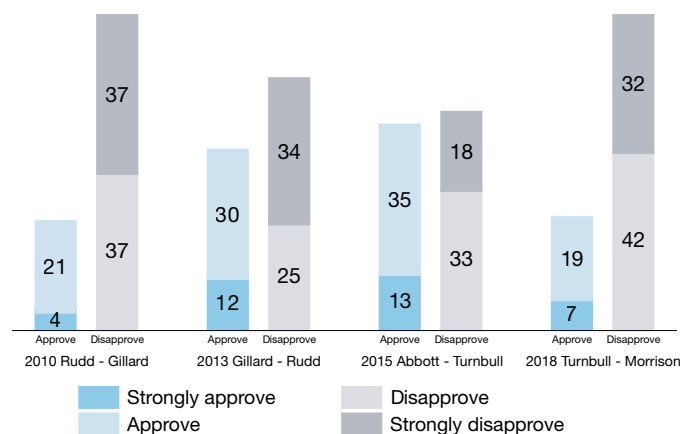## Leadership change from Malcolm Turnbull to Scott Morrison

The other aspect of leadership that was a factor in the 2019 election was the 2018 change of Liberal Party leader and prime minister, from Malcolm Turnbull to Scott Morrison. Every term of government since the 2007 election has seen a change of prime minister brought about by party infighting—from Rudd to Gillard to Rudd when Labor was in government from 2007 to 2013, and from Abbott to Turnbull to Morrison since the Coalition won government in 2013. Australia had six prime ministers over an eight year period from 2010, with only one change of prime minister since coming about as the result of an election (in 2013). In this context, Australia has come to be referred to as the 'coup capital of the world'.[10]

The AES has asked voters how they felt about these leadership changes since 2010.[11] The question in the 2019 study asked, "Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Liberal Party handled the leadership change in August of last year, when Scott Morrison replaced Malcolm Turnbull?" Voters have disapproved of these leadership changes whether Labor or the Coalition was in government (see Figure 2.6). Three in four voters disapproved of the way the Liberal party handled the latest change in 2018, when Scott Morrison replaced Malcolm Turnbull. This level of disapproval is comparable to 2010 when Julia Gillard replaced Kevin Rudd (74% disapprove), and slightly higher than the 2013 change when Rudd replaced Gillard (58% disapprove).

The only leader change where voters were more evenly divided was in 2015 when Malcolm Turnbull replaced Tony Abbott. The AES data suggests this was driven by leader popularity, as Turnbull was a good deal more popular than Abbott.[12]

Figure 2.6: Attitudes towards the leadership changes

Note: Estimates are percentages.

Legend:
- Strongly approve
- Approve
- Disapprove
- Strongly disapprove

Categories: 2010 Rudd - Gillard, 2013 Gillard - Rudd, 2015 Abbott - Turnbull, 2018 Turnbull - Morrison

2010 Rudd - Gillard: Approve (4 Strongly approve, 21 Approve); Disapprove (37 Disapprove, 37 Strongly disapprove)
2013 Gillard - Rudd: Approve (12, 30); Disapprove (25, 34)
2015 Abbott - Turnbull: Approve (13, 35); Disapprove (33, 18)
2018 Turnbull - Morrison: Approve (7, 19); Disapprove (42, 32)

Notes

Figure 2.1: Voting based on the party leaders

Estimates show the percentage of respondents who indicated that party leadership was the most important factor in deciding how they would vote. Question wording: "In deciding how you would vote in the election, which was most important to you?" [The party leaders / The policy issues / The candidates in your electorate / The parties taken as a whole]

Figure 2.2: Leader popularity

Estimates are means. The scale runs from 0 (strongly dislike politician) to 10 (strongly like politician) with a designated midpoint of 5 (neither like nor dislike).

Figure 2.3: Vote choice and leader popularity

Estimates show the average level of leader popularity, for each category of voters. The scale runs from 0 (strongly dislike politician) to 10 (strongly like politician) with a designated midpoint of 5 (neither like nor dislike).

Figure 2.4: Leader popularity 1987-2019

Estimates are means. The scale runs from 0 (strongly dislike politician) to 10 (strongly like politician) with a designated midpoint of 5 (neither like nor dislike).

Figure 2.5: Leader characteristics

Question wording: "[Thinking first about Scott Morrison / Now thinking about Bill Shorten], in your opinion how well does each of these describe him – extremely well, quite well, not too well or not well at all?" Estimates combine the percentage who responded that the characteristic described the leader 'extremely well' or 'quite well'.

Figure 2.6: Attitudes towards the leadership changes

Figure shows approval / disapproval of the way the party (Labor in 2010 and 2013, Liberal in 2015 and 2018) handled the leadership changes in: 2010 when Julia Gillard replaced Kevin Rudd; 2013 when Kevin Rudd replaced Julia Gillard; 2015 when Malcolm Turnbull replaced Tony Abbott; and 2018 when Scott Morrison replaced Malcolm Turnbull.

POLITICAL TRUST

A series of questions in the Australian Election Study examine citizen attitudes towards the standard of democratic politics in Australia, providing an overview of long-term trends. These indicators show trust in politics has reached historic lows in Australia. Since a 2007 high point, when Labor won the election under Kevin Rudd's leadership, there has been a pattern of declining citizen trust in the political system. Trust has not declined significantly since the 2016 election, but nor has it recovered from record low levels.

Satisfaction with democracy

Satisfaction with democracy is currently at its lowest level since the constitutional crisis of the 1970s, following the dismissal of Gough Whitlam as prime minister. The AES surveys have asked, "On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in Australia?" This provides an important indicator of how well voters perceive democracy to be working in practice. In 2019 just 59% of Australians are satisfied with the way democracy is working, down 27% from the high point in 2007 (see Figure 3.1). While starting from a higher base, the rate of decline in satisfaction with democracy has been steeper in Australia than in the United Kingdom following the 2016 Brexit referendum and in the United States following Donald Trump's 2016 election win.[13]

Figure 3.1: Satisfaction with democracy
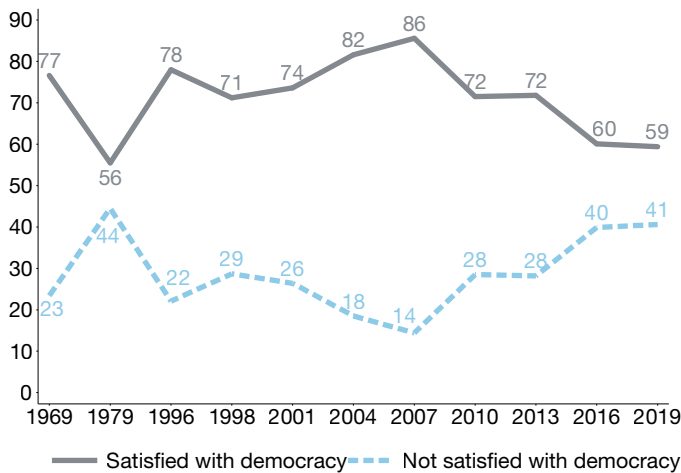
Note: Estimates are percentages.

Satisfaction with democracy in Australia can be compared to other OECD countries around the world, with data from Module 4 of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (fielded between 2011and 2016). This is supplemented with data from national election studies in Australia (2019), New Zealand (2017), the United Kingdom (2017) and the United States (2016) for the latest points of comparison. Surveys in each country asked the same question "On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in [country]?" The graph in Figure 3.2 shows the percentage in each country who were either 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied'. Satisfaction with democracy in Australia ranks 13th in this group of 26 OECD countries, beneath many countries in Western Europe and North America, as well as New Zealand and Japan. Australia ranks higher than countries hard hit by the global financial crisis including Greece and Ireland, the UK in 2017 following the Brexit referendum, and several post-Communist countries which transitioned to democracy more recently.

Australia's level of democratic satisfaction has fallen considerably—back in 2007 when 86% of Australians were satisfied with democracy, Australia would have placed near the top of this group of countries, in between Norway and Switzerland.

Figure 3.2: Satisfaction with democracy in OECD countries
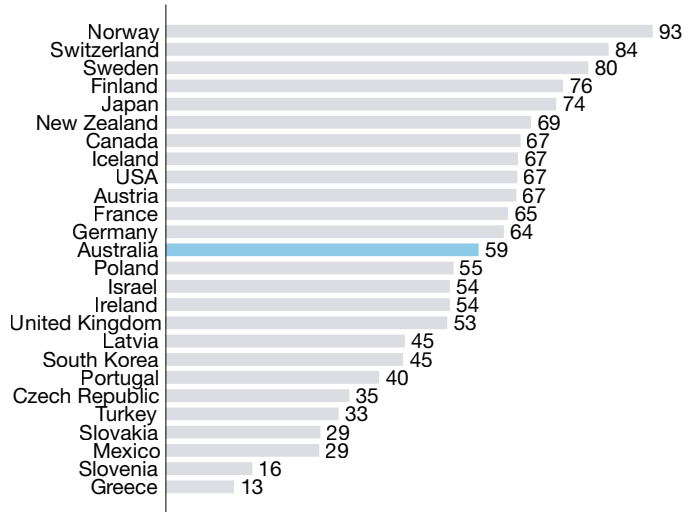
Note: Estimates are percentages.

Trust in government

A related question asked voters, "In general, do you feel that the people in government are too often interested in looking after themselves, or do you feel that they can be trusted to do the right thing nearly all the time?" Voter responses show that trust in government has reached its lowest level on record in 2019, with data covering a 50 year period since 1969. As shown in Figure 3.3, just one in four Australians believe that people in government can be trusted to do the right thing, while three quarters believe that people in government are looking after themselves. Trust in government has declined by nearly 20% since 2007.

Figure 3.3: Trust in government
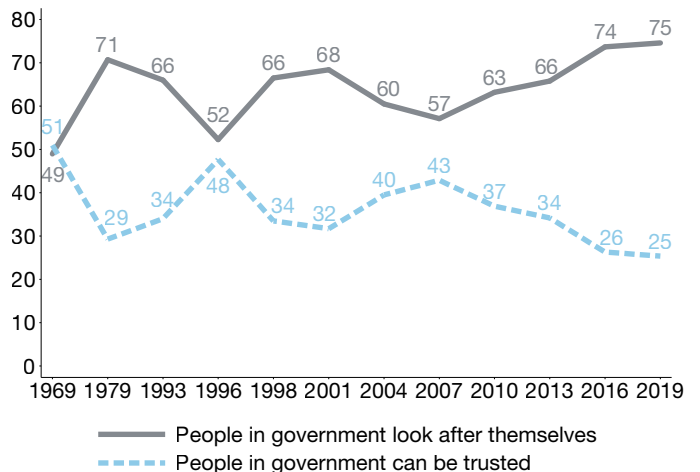
Note: Estimates are percentages.

Who the government is run for

The Australian Election Study also asked voters a question on who they believe the government is run for, 'Would you say the government is run by a few big interests looking out for themselves, or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?' The responses to this question present a similar picture of distrust in the political system (Figure 3.4). A narrow majority of Australians believe that the government is run for a few big interests while just 12% believe the government is run for all the people. That so few people believe the government is run for the Australian people, presents a serious challenge for a representative democracy.

Figure 3.4: Who the government is run for
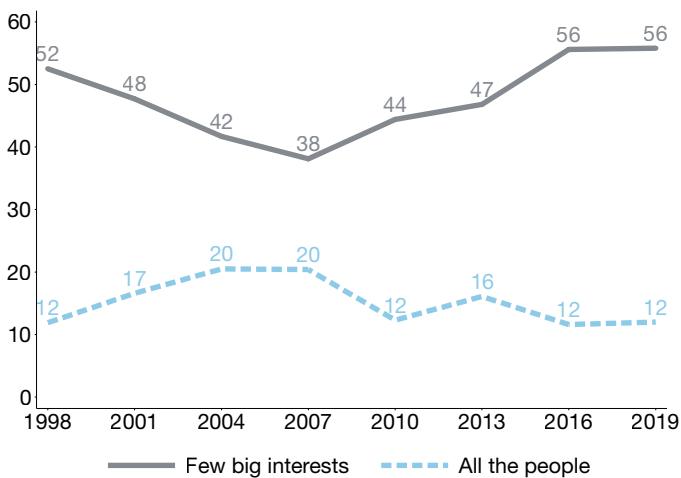
Note: Estimates are percentages.

Notes

Figure 3.1: Satisfaction with democracy

Estimates are percentages. 1969 and 1979 data is from the Australian National Political Attitudes Survey (ANPAS); 1996-2019 data is from the AES. ANPAS question wording: "On the whole, how do you feel about the state of government and politics in Australia? Would you say that you were very satisfied, fairly satisfied, or not satisfied?" AES question wording: "On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in Australia?" For satisfied with democracy, the response categories are: (1969-1979, 1998-2019) 'very satisfied' and 'fairly satisfied'; (1996) 'satisfied' and 'fairly satisfied'. For not satisfied with democracy, the response categories are: (1969-1979) 'not satisfied'; (1996-2019) 'not very satisfied' and 'not at all satisfied'.

Figure 3.2: Satisfaction with democracy in OECD countries

Bars show the percentage in each country who responded that they were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' in response to the question "On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in [country]?" Data is from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems Module 4 (2011-2016), supplemented with more recent data points for Australia (2019), New Zealand (2017), the United Kingdom (2017) and the United States (2016), from their respective national election studies.

Figure 3.3: Trust in government

Estimates are percentages. 1969 and 1979 data is from the Australian National Political Attitudes Survey (ANPAS); 1993-2019 data is from the AES. Question wording: "In general, do you feel that the people in government are too often interested in looking after themselves, or do you feel that they can be trusted to do the right thing nearly all the time?" For people in government look after themselves, the response categories are: (1969, 1979) 'look after self'; (1993-2019) 'usually look after themselves' and 'sometimes look after themselves'. For people in government can be trusted, the response categories are: (1969, 1979) 'do the right thing'; (1993-2019) 'sometimes can be trusted to do the right thing' and 'usually can be trusted to do the right thing' combined.

Figure 3.4: Who the government is run for

Note: Estimates are percentages. Question wording: "Would you say the government is run by a few big interests looking out for themselves, or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?" For 'few big interests', estimates combine 'entirely run for the big interests' and 'mostly run for the big interests'. For 'all the people', estimates combine 'mostly run for the benefit of all' and 'entirely run for the benefit of all'.

A DIVIDED ELECTORATE?

Media commentary surrounding the 2019 election focused on growing divisions within the electorate. This included discussion around the role of 'quiet Australians', Australia's 'battlers' and the emergence of 'two Australias' in shaping the election outcome.[14] Differences between states were also emphasized, with a large swing against Labor in Queensland decisive in the election result. To what extent are these claims of an increasingly divided electorate supported by evidence? The Australian Election Study provides evidence on how voting patterns differed between different groups of voters, and whether these divisions increased in the 2019 election. To explore these divisions, this section examines the relationship between various socio-demographic characteristics and respondents' first preference votes in the House of Representatives.

Gender gap

To what extent are there gender differences in how Australia votes? In the 2019 election there were considerable differences, as shown in Figure 4.1. While 45% of men gave their first preferences to the Liberal Party, just 35% of women did so. Women were marginally more likely to vote Labor at 37%, compared to 34% of men. There is also a considerable gender gap in voting for the Greens, with 15% of women giving their first preference to the Greens, compared to only 9% of men.

Figure 4.1: Gender and vote choice
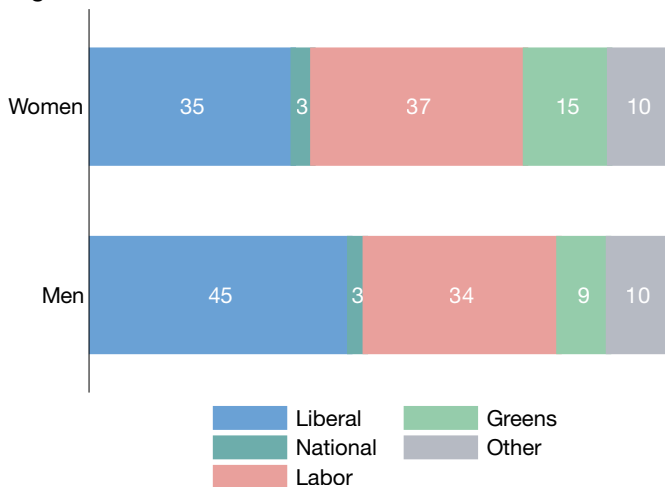
Note: Estimates are percentages.

Is this gender divide unique to the 2019 election or does it reflect long term trends? Gender differences in voting Liberal and Labor are presented in Figures 4.2 and 4.3, respectively. These results show a widening gender gap with men becoming much more likely than women to vote for the Liberal Party. The relationship has reversed over time, back in the 1990s women were slightly more likely to vote Liberal than men. We see the opposite trend in the Labor Party vote. While in the 1990s men were slightly more likely to vote Labor than women, in recent elections women have become more likely to vote Labor.

Figure 4.2: Gender differences in the Liberal Party vote
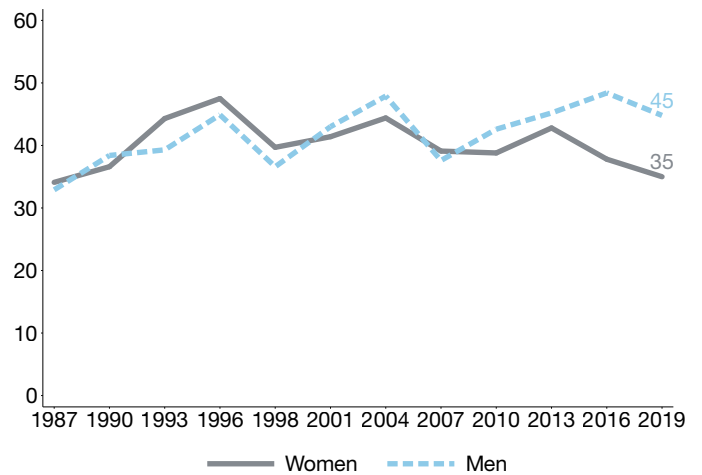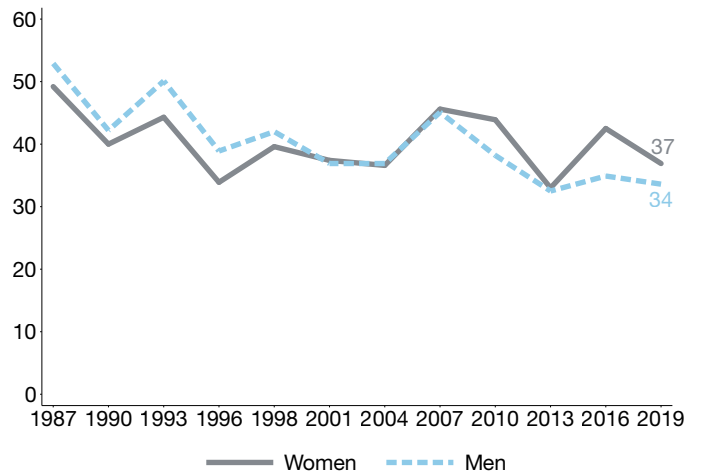

Figure 4.3: Gender differences in the Labor Party vote
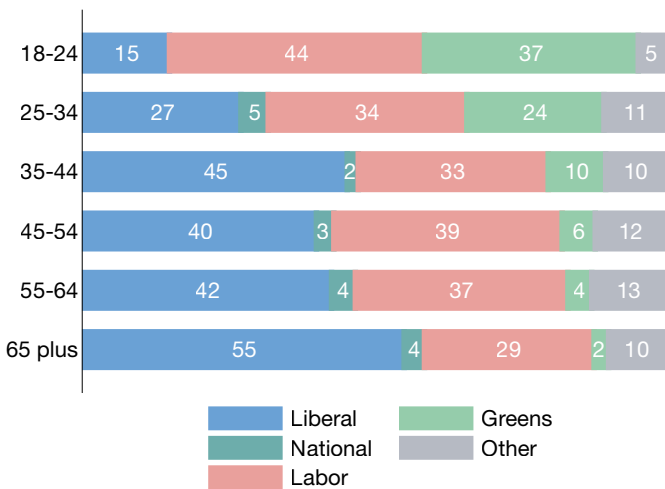

Note: Estimates are percentages

These voting patterns reflect other political differences between men and women. One question in the AES asks voters to place themselves on a scale from left to right, where 0 is left and 10 is right. The average position for men is 5.2, whereas for women it is 4.8. Back in the mid-1990s there were minimal gender differences in left-right placement and since then women have gradually moved left. There are also considerable differences in what men and women identified as the biggest issue in the 2019 election. For men the biggest issue was management of the economy (men: 32%; women 17%), whereas for women the biggest issue was health (women 30%; men 14%). Other changes which affect the gender gap in voting are trends in tertiary education (more women than ever before have a university degree) and patterns of labour force participation (more women than ever before are in the paid labour force).

Generational divide

There were major differences between younger and older voters in the issues they considered important in the election. Part of the difference can be explained by economic issues, with younger voters being particularly concerned about property prices, and this was highlighted by Labor's policies on franking credits and negative gearing. Another explanation is the greater concern of younger voters for environmental issues. Half of 18 to 24 year old voters surveyed identified an environmental issue as their top issue in the election. By contrast, older voters considered management of the economy to be the most important issue

Figure 4.4 shows voting patterns across different age groups in the 2019 election. The Liberal Party attracts its greatest support from older voters. More than half of those aged over 65 cast their first preference vote for the Liberal party. This group is also the least likely to vote for either Labor (29%) or the Greens (2%). The reverse is seen in the youngest group of voters. Those under 25 were most likely to vote Labor (44%), followed by the Greens (37%) and the Liberal party (15%).

Figure 4.4: Age and vote choice

Note: Estimates are percentages.

Were these differences across age-groups greater in 2019 than in previous elections? Long term voting patterns for younger voters (aged 18 to 34) and older voters (aged 55 and over), respectively, are presented Figures 4.5 and 4.6. These results do suggest a growing generational divide. Over the past two elections those under 35 have become much less likely to vote for the Liberal Party, and much more likely to vote for the Greens. The 2019 election exhibited the lowest Liberal party vote on record for this age group (at 23%), and the highest on record for the Greens (28%). The Labor vote within this age group has gradually declined over the past few decades, alongside the rise in the Greens vote.

While young voters are moving further to the left, older voters are moving to the right. Among those 55 and over, 18% more voted Liberal than Labor in the 2019 election, which is the greatest Liberal lead among this age group since the AES began in 1987. Overall the evidence from the Australian Election Study is consistent with a growing generational divide in the voting behavior of younger and older Australians.
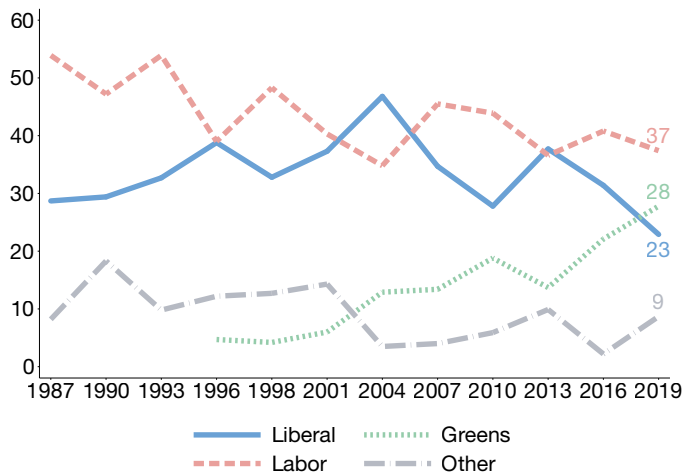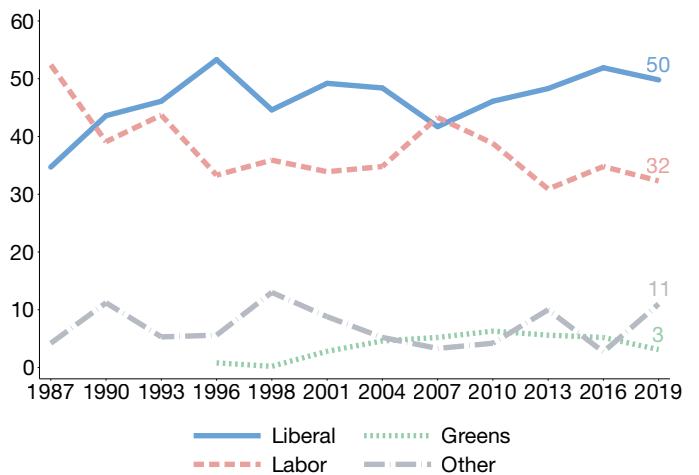
Figure 4.5: Vote choice - Age 18-34

Figure 4.6: Vote choice - Age 55 and over
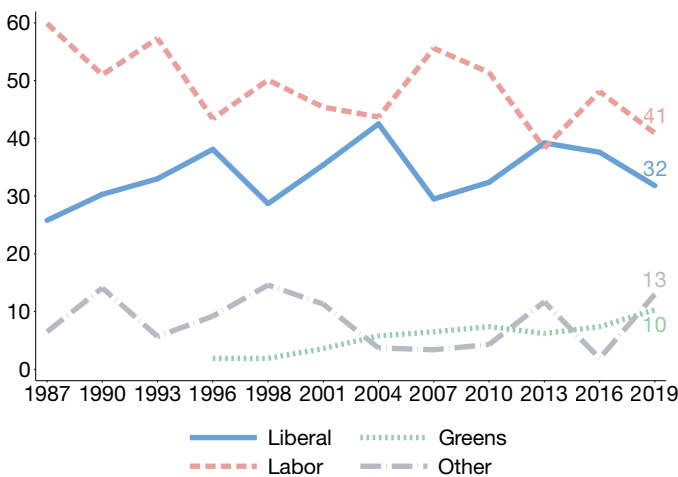

Note: Estimates are percentages.

Battlers

Following the unexpected election result, commentators debated whether the election was result of Australia's 'battlers', the working class, turning to the Coalition.[15] While the working class have typically voted Labor, some have argued that this is shifting. The voting behavior of the so-called 'battlers' can be examined with the Australian Election Study question that asks voters, "Which social class would you say you belong to?" In 2019, 2% considered themselves to be upper class, 50% middle class, and 48% working class. Voting patterns among these self-identified groups in the 2019 election are presented in Figure 4.7.[16] The evidence here shows that working class voters remain much more likely to vote Labor than middle class voters, who are more likely to vote for the Liberal party.

Figure 4.7: Social class and vote choice

Figure 4.8: Working class vote choice

Note: Estimates are percentages.

Although working class voters remain more likely to vote Labor than Liberal, has their support for Labor diminished over time? Figure 4.8 shows the voting patterns over time for those who identify as working class. These results indicate that since the 2016 election, both the Labor and Liberal parties have lost support from working class voters in favour of minor parties.

While 48% of the working class voted Labor in 2016, this dropped to 41% in 2019. The Liberal party vote declined to a similar degree.

Although these trends indicate some fluctuation from election to election, the long term pattern since the 1980s suggests an erosion of Labor's working class base. In 1987, 60% of working class voters voted Labor, by 2019 this had decreased to 41%. Over the same period of time there has been a small increase in the proportion of the working class voting for the Liberal Party, from 26% to 32%.

Self-identified class is just one way of looking at respondents' socio-economic status and how that intersects with their voting behavior. Figures 4.9 and 4.10 show the relationship between income and education, respectively, and voting behavior. Consistent with the findings on class, higher income voters are more likely to vote for the Liberal party while lower income voters are more likely to vote Labor. The findings on education show that voters with a higher level of education are more likely to vote for the Greens than groups with less education. Those with a non-tertiary qualification, for example a trade qualification, are most likely to vote for the Coalition.
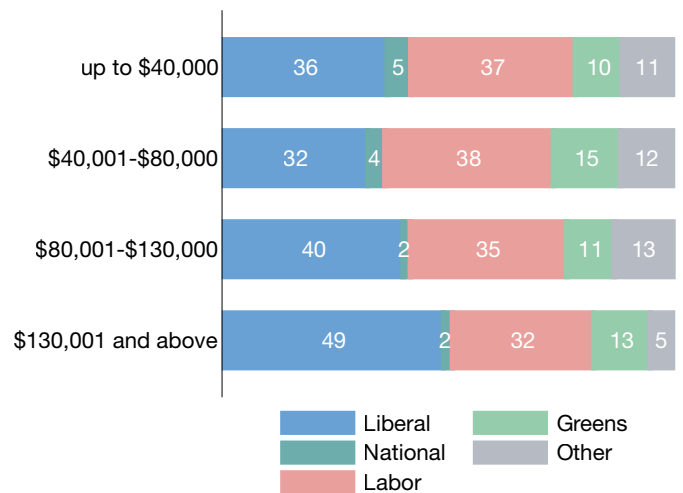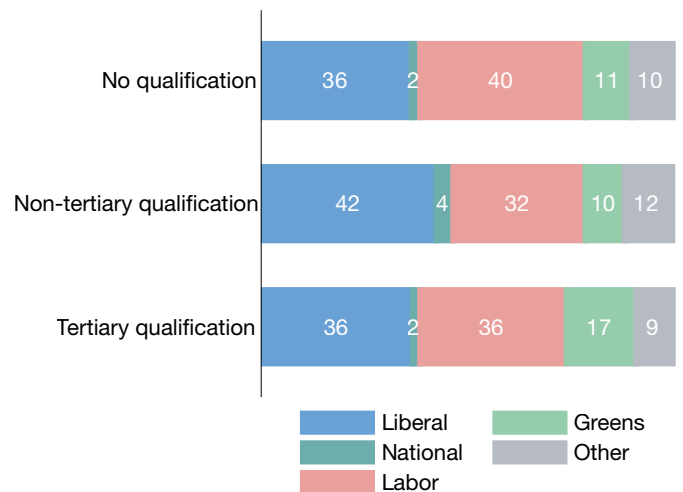
Figure 4.9: Income and vote choice

Figure 4.10: Education and vote choice

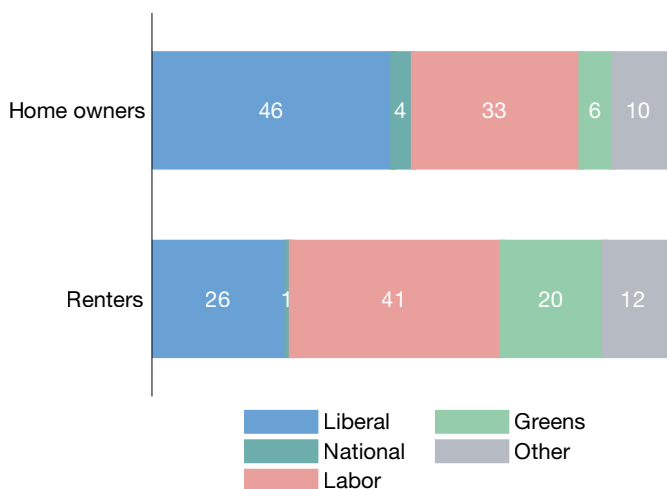
Note: Estimates are percentages.

Asset ownership

Asset ownership is an increasingly important influence on voting behaviour.[17] Labor's policy on negative gearing was targeted at improving housing affordability for first time property buyers. Among homeowners and owners of rental properties, this led to fears of declining house prices if Labor were to win government. The policy also created tensions between the interests of renters and homeowners. Labor also proposed to remove the cash rebate some shareholders received from company dividends—franking credits. This policy was controversial among many shareholders, but particularly retirees, many of whom depended on share dividends to wholly or partly fund their retirement.

Both of these policies divided voters. The proposal to limit negative gearing was supported by 57% of voters, while 53% supported changing the rebate on share dividends (see pp. 8-9). No other major tax change proposed in an election has produced such division among voters since the Coalition's proposal to introduce a goods and services tax (GST) in 1998. In that election, 42% saw the GST as the most important issue, and 42% supported Labor on the issue (who opposed the tax) while 44% supported the Coalition.

We can see the impact of the negative gearing policy on the voting behavior of the two main property owning groups in Figures 4.11 and 4.12. Among homeowners, 50% voted for the Coalition, one third voted Labor, and the remainder voted for the Greens and minor parties. By contrast, just 27% of renters voted for the Coalition, with 41% of their vote going to Labor, 20% to the Greens, and the remaining 12% to minor parties.

The are also considerable differences between those who own investment properties and everyone else. Almost one in five of the survey respondents said that they own an investment property. Among this group, 57% voted Liberal compared to 36% among those who do not own an investment property. Similarly, Figure 4.13 shows that among the 33% of voters who said they owned shares, either directly or indirectly, 45% voted Liberal compared to 37% who did not own shares.

Figure 4.11: Property ownership and vote choice

Note: Estimates are percentages.

Figure 4.12: Investment property ownership and vote choice
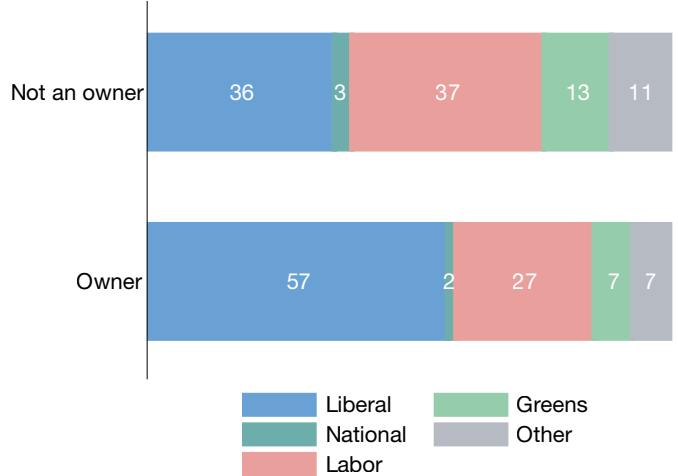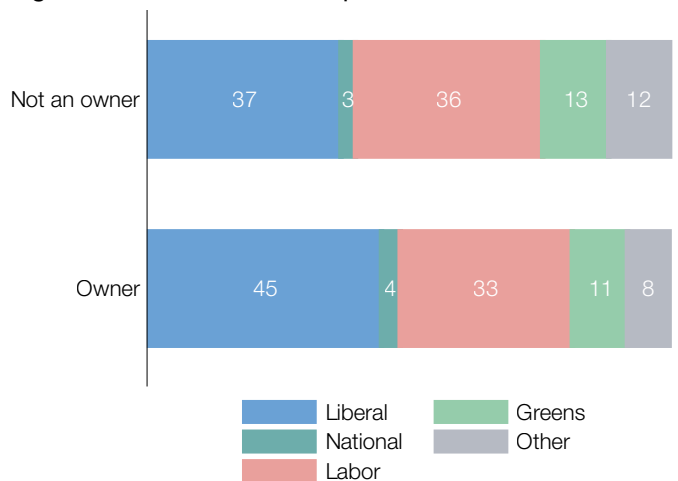

Figure 4.13: Share ownership and vote choice

Note: Estimates are percentages.

Labor's policies on the taxation of economic assets were a major factor in their election loss. The policies divided the electorate and would have had significant consequences for the one-fifth of voters who owned an investment property and the one-third who owned shares. Perhaps crucially, Labor was unable to demonstrate how these tax changes would benefit the economy as a whole. This is in contrast to 1998, when the Liberals were able to convince a skeptical electorate that a GST was a more efficient method of tax collection. More generally, the 2019 election underlined the important shift that has been taking place in voting behavior, away from occupation-based voting and towards asset-based voting, reflected in shares, housing and superannuation.[18]

State differences

State differences in support for the major political parties have traditionally been important factors in determining election outcomes in Australia. For the most part, these differences reflect variations in the socioeconomic characteristics of the various states, rather than differences related to the state itself. For example, the Liberals and the Nationals have traditionally attracted more votes in Queensland and Western Australia than in the other states because of their larger rural base.

State differences were again prominent in the 2019 election. The Coalition gained a 4.3% swing in the two-party preferred vote in Queensland, compared to a national swing of 1.2%.[19] This delivered two extra seats to the Coalition, both at Labor's expense. Figure 4.14 shows the first preference vote between the states and territories, with Queensland and Western Australia attracting the largest Liberal vote, and the ACT and the Northern Territory the largest Labor vote.

Figure 4.14: State and vote choice
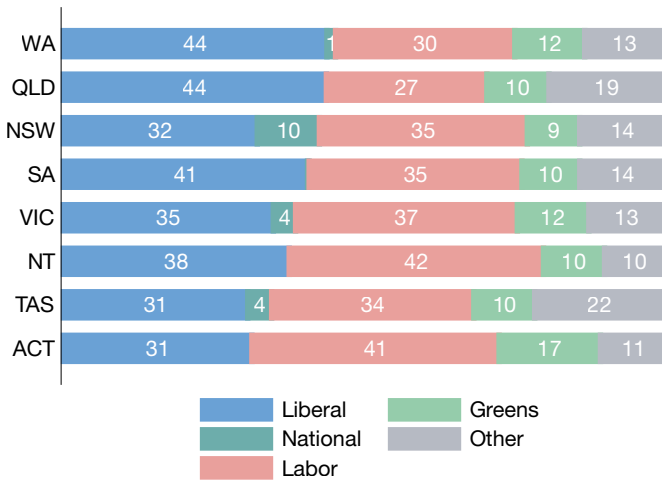
Note: Estimates are percentages.

Two factors help to explain the swing to the Coalition in Queensland. First, the One Nation Party and the United Australia Party both polled well, and the bulk of these votes returned to the Coalition via preferences. Second, a convoy of climate change activists travelled to Queensland from Tasmania to protest against a coal mine financed by Adani, an Indian company. The protest attracted considerable local opposition in Queensland from miners and their families, who were dependent on coal mining for their livelihoods.

Figure 4.15: Threat of global warming by state
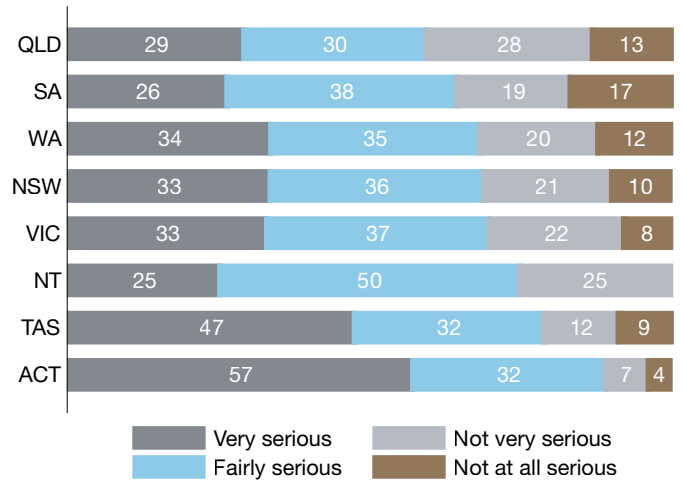
Note: Estimates are percentages.

Figure 4.15 shows that global warming was viewed as the most serious threat by voters in the ACT, followed by Tasmania. It was seen as least important in South Australia and Queensland. Living in a city also mattered, with inner city voters being more likely to view global warming as a threat compared to voters in rural areas.

Notes

Figures 4.1-4.6, 4.8

Estimates are the percentage of first preference votes in the House of Representatives.

Figure 4.7: Social class and vote choice

Estimates are the percentage of first preference votes in the House of Representatives. Question wording on class: "Which social class would you say you belong to?" [Upper class / Middle class / Working class / None]

Figure 4.9: Income and vote choice

Estimates are the percentage of first preference votes in the House of Representatives. Question wording on income: "What is the gross annual income, before tax or other deductions, for you and your family living with you from all sources? Please include any pensions and allowances, and income from interest or dividends."

Figure 4.10: Education and vote choice

Estimates are the percentage of first preference votes in the House of Representatives. Question wording on education, "Have you obtained a trade qualification, a degree or a diploma, or any other qualification since leaving school? What is your highest qualification?" The response categories are as follows: No qualification = 'No qualification since leaving school'; Non-tertiary qualification = 'Undergraduate Diploma', 'Associate Diploma', 'Trade qualification', and 'Non-trade qualification'; Tertiary qualification = 'Postgraduate Degree or Postgraduate Diploma', and 'Bachelor Degree (including Honours).'

Figure 4.11: Property ownership and vote choice

Estimates are the percentage of first preference votes in the House of Representatives. Question wording on property ownership: "Do you own outright, or are you buying or renting the dwelling in which you now live?" The response categories are as follows: Home owners = 'Own outright', and 'Own, paying off mortgage'; Renters = 'Rent from private landlord or real estate agent', and 'Rent from public housing authority'.

Figure 4.12: Investment property ownership and vote choice

Estimates are the percentage of first preference votes in the House of Representatives. Question wording on investment property ownership: "Do you own any investment properties?" [Yes / No]

Figure 4.13: Share ownership and vote choice

Estimates are the percentage of first preference votes in the House of Representatives. Question wording on share ownership: "Do you own shares in any company listed on the Australian Stock Exchange (shares registered in your name or that of your family company)?"

Figure 4.14: State and vote choice

Estimates are the percentage of first preference votes in the House of Representatives. State results sourced from the Australian Electoral Commission.

Figure 4.15: Threat of global warming threat by state

Estimates are percentages. Question wording: "How serious a threat do you think global warming will pose to you or your way of life in your lifetime?"

EXPLAINING THE ELECTION RESULT

This report has examined a range of factors that were important in the 2019 Australian federal election. Taken together, what explains the Liberal-National Coalition win? Election results are complex; they are not just determined by national swings, but by what happens in key marginal seats, and the flow of preferences from minor parties and independent candidates to the major parties. Nevertheless, the Australian Election Study sheds important light on what shaped voters' choices in the 2019 election.

Understanding voters' choices

Several questions in the Australian Election Study present an overall picture of what drove voting behavior in the election. The first is the question, "In deciding how you would vote in the election, which was most important to you?" The question has four response categories: 'the party leaders'; 'the policy issues'; 'the candidates in your electorate'; and 'the parties taken as a whole'. A majority of respondents (66%) indicated that policy issues were the most important factor. To specify which policy issue was most important for these voters, further information can be derived from another question, "Still thinking about the same 10 issues, which of these issues was the most important to you and your family during the election campaign?" Combining responses from these two questions provides an overall picture of what shaped people's votes, across nine areas, as shown in Figure 5.1.[20] This reveals that the top three considerations shaping the vote were the economy (20%), the political parties as a whole (19%), and the environment (16%).

Figure 5.1: Most important consideration in the voting decision
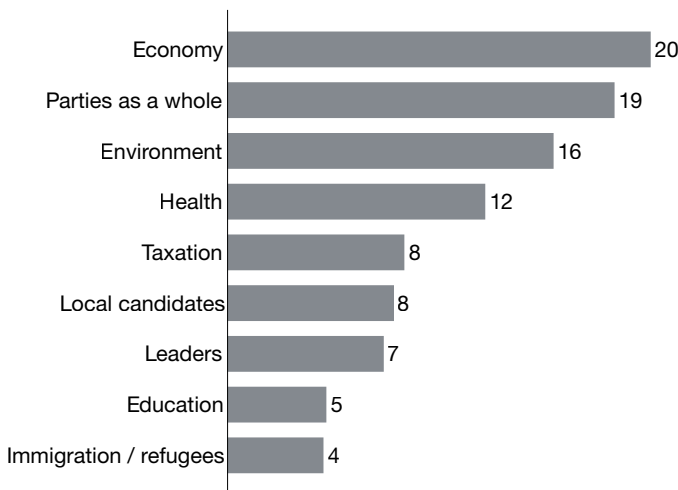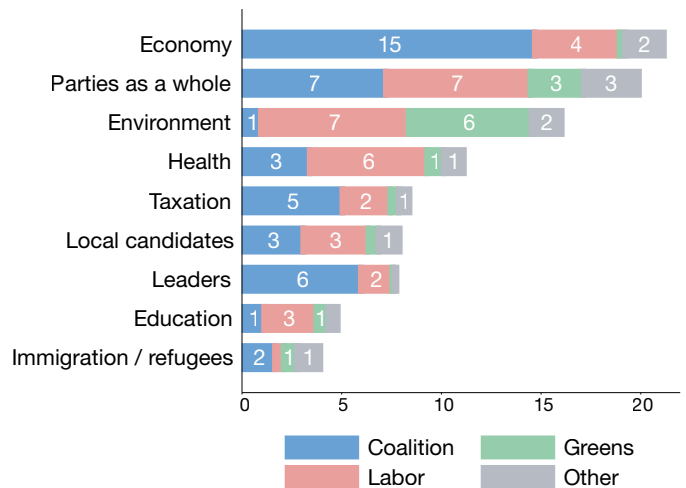

Note: Estimates are percentages.

To further understand voting behaviour in the election, information on the reasons for the vote and respondents' first preference votes in the House of Representatives can be combined to show why people voted for particular parties. This overview is presented in Figure 5.2. The results show that voting for the Coalition based on economic issues was the single biggest factor driving voting behavior in the election. Of the 20% of voters for whom the economy was the most important consideration, 15% gave their vote to the Coalition, compared to 4% for Labor. An additional 5% voted for the Coalition on the basis of taxation.

In terms of the other factors that affected the vote, both Labor and Liberal benefited equally from those voting on the basis of the political parties as a whole. Those voting based on the environment voted primarily for Labor (7%) or the Greens (6%). The Coalition gained more votes from those voting based on leadership, while Labor gained more votes from those voting based on health and education.

Figure 5.2: Most important consideration in the vote and vote choice
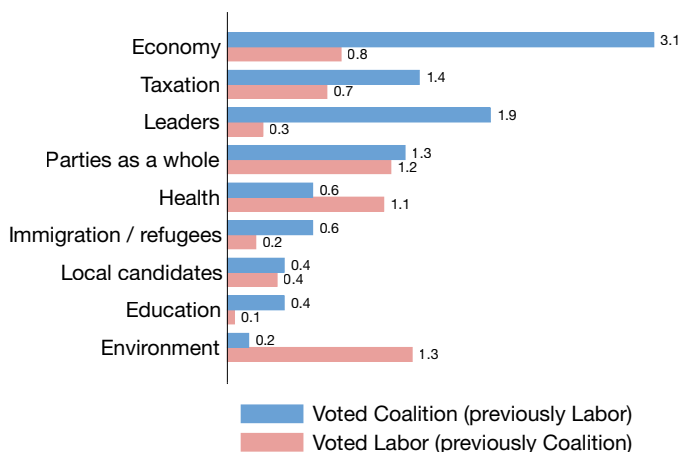

Note: Estimates are percentages.

Swing voters

While some voters consistently support the same party in every election, others vary who they vote for. In the 2019 election, 42% of voters said that they had always voted for the same party, whereas 58% had either previously voted for a different party or were voting for the first time. Evidence from Australian Election Study trends over time shows that voter instability is rising, with fewer voters staying loyal to the one party.[21]

The behaviour of swing voters is critical to election outcomes. Those whose votes are not fixed in advance may be influenced by the election campaign, the leaders, and the policy issues. Figure 5.3 shows the reasons voters switched between the two major parties. Among those who had previously voted Labor, the main reasons for switching to the Coalition included the economy (3% of voters, or 4.5% including taxation), and leadership (2% of voters). The main reason former Coalition voters voted Labor was the environment (1.5%), followed by health (1%). Although the effect of these factors on shaping voting behaviour may be small, elections are often won or lost on small margins. In this election there were a greater number of voters that switched from Labor to the Coalition based on economic issues, than from the Coalition to Labor based on environmental issues.

Figure 5.3: Most important consideration in the vote – swing voters

Voted Coalition (previously Labor)
Voted Labor (previously Coalition)

Note: Estimates are percentages.

Support for minor parties

Measured by first preference votes, there was a swing against both the Liberal-National Coalition (-0.6%) and Labor (-1.4%) in the election. The Coalition managed to secure a greater number of seats than in 2016, despite the lower primary vote. The Coalition won the election through preferences flowing from the minor parties. The proportion of primary votes going to minor parties rose from 23% in 2016 to 25% in 2019. The Greens vote was virtually unchanged since 2016, at 10.4%, although United Australia Party and Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party increased their vote share to a combined 6.5%.

The drift away from the major political parties reflects a continuation of long-term trends. The Australian Election Study has asked a question on political partisanship, "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as Liberal, Labor, National or what?" The long-term trends are presented in Figure 5.4. Partisanship for the two major political parties reached its lowest level on record in 2019, with 30% of Australians identifying as Labor partisans, and 32% as Liberal partisans. Partisanship for the Greens has risen over time, reaching 9% in the 2019 election. The proportion of voters who do not align with a political party has reached a record high of 21%.

Figure 5.4: Political partisanship

Liberal   Labor   Greens   None
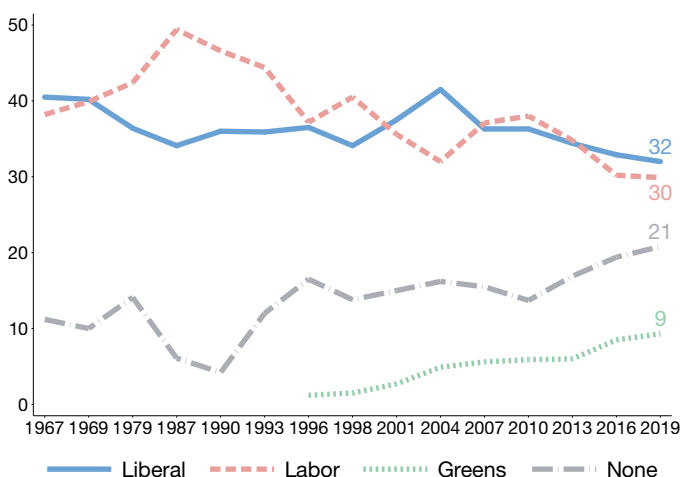
Note: Estimates are percentages.

Given the increasing role of minor parties in determining election outcomes, understanding the 2019 election involves identifying what drove voters' decisions to give their first preference to a minor party or independent candidate. Figure 5.5 shows the reasons that the survey respondents gave for voting for minor parties and independents. For each reason mentioned, the chart shows the percentage of votes that went to the Greens, other parties which preferenced the Coalition and Labor, and other parties where the respondent did not remember which of the major parties got preferences. As we would expect, environmental concerns drove voting for the Greens, and for other parties with preferences directed to Labor. Those who voted based on economic concerns or on immigration were more likely to vote for minor parties with preferences going to the Coalition.

Figure 5.5: Most important consideration in the vote - minor party voters

Greens   Other (Labor 2PP)
Other (Coalition 2PP)   Other (Unknown 2PP)
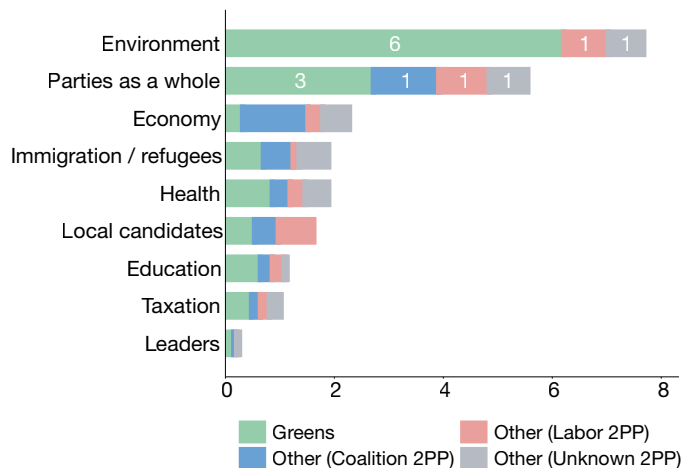
Note: Estimates are percentages.

Summary

Overall, three factors stand out as shaping electoral behavior at the national level in the 2019 election. First, management of the economy and taxation were key issues in the election that benefitted the Coalition. These were highly salient and since voters have traditionally preferred the Coalition on economic management, this worked to the Coalition's advantage. At the end of the day, Labor was unable to convince voters that the increased taxation they proposed would lead to greater economic prosperity.

A second factor was Labor's unpopular leader, Bill Shorten, who cost the party significant votes. There was a wide gap in the popularity of the two leaders, and this is reflected in voter behavior with very few voters being drawn towards Labor based on leadership alone. Moreover, voters' lack of trust in Shorten also fed into skepticism about the impact of Labor's economic policies.

Finally, the environment was one of the major issues in the election, and an area in which voters have consistently preferred Labor's policies over the Coalition's. However, this issue on its own was not enough to shift the election in Labor's favour by outweighing the disadvantages it faced on economic policy and leadership.

Notes

Figure 5.1: Most important consideration in the voting decision

Estimates are percentages. Question wording: "In deciding how you would vote in the election, which was most important to you?" For those who responded 'policy issues', answers from the following question are incorporated: "Still thinking about the same 10 issues, which of these issues was the most important to you and your family during the election campaign?" Economy combines 'management of the economy', 'superannuation', and 'government debt'. Environment combines 'environment' and 'global warming'. Immigration / refugees combines 'immigration' and 'refugees and asylum seekers'.

Figure 5.2: Most important consideration in the vote and vote choice

Estimates are percentages. Bars show the percentage of voters who thought each consideration was the most important in shaping their vote, and which party they voted for in the House of Representatives.

Figure 5.3: Most important consideration in the vote – swing voters

Estimates are percentages (of all voters) showing reasons for the vote decision among two types of voters: those who voted for the Coalition in the House of Representatives in 2019 and have sometimes voted for Labor in the past; and those who voted for Labor in the House of Representatives in 2019 and have sometimes voted for the Coalition in the past.

Figure 5.4: Political partisanship

Estimates are percentages. 1967, 1969 and 1979 data is from the Australian National Political Attitudes Survey; 1987-2019 data is from the AES. AES question wording: "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as Liberal, Labor, National or what?"

Figure 5.5: Most important consideration in the vote - minor party voters

Estimates are percentages. Bars show the percentage of minor party and independent voters (as a proportion of all voters) who thought each consideration was the most important in shaping their vote, and which minor party they voted for in the House of Representatives. 'Other (Coalition 2PP) / (Labor 2PP)' refers to votes for a minor party other than the Greens or an independent candidate with preferences directed to either the Coalition or to Labor. Some voters did not know which main party they directed preferences to.

ENDNOTES

1. Quoted in Matthew Stubbs and Adam Webster, "Eligibility of Dual Citizens: The Coming-of-Age of Section 44," *Bulletin (Law Society of South Australia)* 40, no. 1 (2018), 6.

2. Sarah Cameron and Ian McAllister, *Trends in Australian Political Opinion: Results from the Australian Election Study 1987-2019* (Canberra: The Australian National University, 2019), 32-33.

3. Ibid., 32-33.

4. Ibid., 34-41.

5. Ibid., 36, 39.

6. Quoted in Marc Hudson, "It's Ten Years since Rudd's 'Great Moral Challenge', and We Have Failed It," *The Conversation*, March 31, 2017.

7. Ian McAllister and Stephen Quinlan, "Leader or Party? Evaluating the Personalization Thesis and Vote Choice 1996-2016," in *American Political Science Association Annual Meeting* (Washington, D.C. 2019).

8. This estimate is based on 7% of the electorate voting based on party leadership with 76% of these votes going to the Coalition, while 21% went to Labor.

9. Cameron and McAllister, *Trends in Australian Political Opinion*, 90-94.

10. SBS News, "Julie Bishop: Australia Referred to as 'Coup Capital of the World'," *SBS News*, September 24, 2018.

11. Data on the Gillard to Rudd leadership change comes from an ANU Poll conducted just after the change, in August 2013, on electoral reform. See: https://csrm.cass.anu.edu.au/research/surveys/anupoll. Ian McAllister, "ANU Poll 2013: Electoral Reform," ADA Dataverse (2018).

12. Cameron and McAllister, *Trends in Australian Political Opinion*, 88.

13. American National Election Study data (up to 2016) and British Election Study data (up to 2017) in Sarah Cameron, "Government Performance and Dissatisfaction with Democracy in Australia," (Working Paper: The University of Sydney, 2019).

14. See for example: Bo Seo, "'Quiet Australians' Are Disaffected and Divided," *The Australian Financial Review*, May 24 2019; Matt Wade, "'We Have Two Australias': Election Results Show a Growing Divide within the Nation," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, May 25 2019.

15. Nick Evershed, "The Eight Charts That Help Explain Why the Coalition Won the 2019 Australian Election," The Guardian, 22 May 2019; Shaun Ratcliff, "It's a Myth That Aussie Battlers Handed the Coalition Its Election Victory," *The Guardian*, 27 May.

16. Upper class results not presented here due to a small number of observations as very few Australians (2%) identify as upper class.

17. See: Ian McAllister and Toni Makkai, "The Decline and Rise of Class Voting? From Occupation to Culture in Australia," Journal of Sociology 55, no. 3 (2019); Lisa Adkins, Melinda Cooper, and Martijn Konings, "Class in the 21st Century: Asset Inflation and the New Logic of Inequality," Economy and Space (2019).

18. McAllister and Makkai, *The Decline and Rise of Class Voting*.

19. Figures from the Australian Electoral Commission. See: https://results.aec.gov.au/24310/Website/HouseResultsMenu-24310.htm

20. Economy combines 'management of the economy', 'superannuation', and 'government debt'. Environment combines 'the environment' and 'global warming'. Immigration / refugees combines 'immigration' and 'refugees and asylum seekers'.

21. Cameron and McAllister, *Trends in Australian Political Opinion,* 23.

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APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY

The Australian Election Study (AES) surveys are designed to collect data following federal elections for academic research on Australian electoral behaviour and public opinion. The AES commenced operation in 1987 and has fielded surveys after every federal election since. The AES is mounted as a collaborative exercise between several Australian universities. The 1987 and 1990 surveys were funded by a consortium of universities and the 2007 survey by ANU; all of the intervening and subsequent surveys have been funded by the Australian Research Council as detailed in the table below.

Australian Election Study Overview, 1987–2019

Year	Principal investigators	Funder	Study number
1987	Ian McAllister, Anthony Mughan	University of NSW, ANU	ASSDA 445
1990	Ian McAllister, Roger Jones, David Gow	University of NSW, ANU	ASSDA 570
1993	Roger Jones, Ian McAllister, David Denemark, David Gow	ARC/ A79131812	ASSDA 763
1996	Roger Jones, David Gow , Ian McAllister	ARC/ A79530652	ASSDA 943
1998	Clive Bean, David Gow, Ian McAllister	ARC/A79804144	ASSDA 1001
1999	David Gow, Clive Bean, Ian McAllister	ARC/ A79937265	ASSDA 1018
2001	Clive Bean, David Gow, Ian McAllister	ARC/ A00106341	ASSDA 1048
2004	Clive Bean, Ian McAllister, Rachel Gibson, David Gow	ARC/ DP0452898	ASSDA 1079
2007	Clive Bean, Ian McAllister, David Gow	ACPSPRI/ACSR	ASSDA 1120
2010	Ian McAllister, Clive Bean, Rachel Gibson, Juliet Pietsch	ARC/DP1094626	ASSDA 1228
2013	Ian McAllister, Juliet Pietsch, Clive Bean, Rachel Gibson	ARC/ DP120103941	ADA 1259
2016	Ian McAllister, Juliet Pietsch, Clive Bean, Rachel Gibson, Toni Makkai	ARC/ DP160101501	ADA 01365
2019	Ian McAllister, Jill Sheppard, Clive Bean, Rachel Gibson, Toni Makkai	ARC/ DP160101501	ADA01446

All the Australian Election Study (AES) surveys are national, postelection self-completion surveys. The 1987 – 2013 surveys were based on samples drawn randomly from the electoral register. The 2016 survey used a split sample method, with half of the sample coming from the electoral register, and half from the Geo-Coded National Address File (G-NAF). The 2019 survey was based solely on a sample drawn from the G-NAF. In 2010, 2013, and 2016 an online option was available to the survey respondents, and in 2013 an additional sample was collected online in order to correct for an under-representation of younger voters. In 2019 a 'push-to-web' methodology was used, with a hard copy completion being available to respondents who opted for it. The 1993 and post 2010 surveys are weighted to reflect the characteristics of the national electorate. The 2019 AES also included a panel component, based on respondents who were interviewed in both 2016 and 2019. Survey response rates are detailed in the table below.

Australian Election Study voter response rates, 1987–2019

Year	Total sample	Valid response	Effective response (%)
1987	3,061	1,825	62.8
1990	3,606	2,020	58.0
1993	4,950	3,023	62.8
1996	3,000	1,795	61.8
1998	3,502	1,896	57.7
2001	4,000	2,010	55.4
2004	4,250	1,769	44.5
2007	5,000	1,873	40.2
2010	4,999	2,003	40.1
2013	12,200	3,955	33.9
2016	12,497	2,818	22.5
2019	5,175	2,179	42.1

The response rate is estimated as: valid responses /(total sample–moved or gone away).

Prior to the AES, three academic surveys of political behaviour were collected by Don Aitkin in 1967, 1969 and 1979, respectively, but they are not strictly speaking election surveys. Where comparable measures exist from these earlier studies, they have been incorporated in this report in graphs showing long-term trends. Details on the earlier surveys are available on the Australian National Political Attitudes Survey Dataverse: dataverse.ada.edu.au/dataverse/australian-national-political-attitudes-survey

The Australian Election Study data are available from the Australian Election Study website (australianelectionstudy.org) and from Dataverse (dataverse.ada.edu.au/dataverse/aes). The AES website also includes further details on methodology and question wording, with questionnaires, codebooks and technical reports provided for each survey. Since 1998 the AES has been a member of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) group (see www.cses.org).

Any results cited from the AES should credit the Australian Election Study or this report.

Further information: www.australianelectionstudy.org

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