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THE 2025 AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL ELECTION

Results from the Australian Election Study

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November, 2025



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Cover image: James Brickwood/SMH. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese (right) and Opposition Leader Peter Dutton at the third leaders' debate, April 22, 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents findings from the 2025 Australian Election Study (AES). The AES has surveyed a nationally representative sample of voters after every federal election since 1987. The 2025 study is the 14th in the series, enabling the results to be placed in long-term perspective. This report provides insights into what informed voter behaviour in the election and voter attitudes towards policy issues, political parties, leaders and Australian democracy. The main findings are summarised as follows:

Public policy

- Labor was the preferred party on nine of ten policy issue areas examined, covering a range of economic, social and environmental policy issues. The exception was national security where the Coalition had a narrow lead over Labor.
- Labor overtook the Coalition as the preferred party on economic management and taxation. This is the first time since these items have been tracked that Labor has been the preferred party on economic policy.
- Economic issues were highly salient in this election, with two in three voters indicating an economic issue was their top election concern. The cost of living was the top concern overall, and across all major voter groups.
- Nuclear energy divided voters, with similar proportions in favour (38 percent) and opposed (37 percent) to nuclear power being used to generate electricity in Australia.
- Housing affordability was the fifth highest election concern overall, although the second highest election issue among renters.

Leaders

- Labor had a strong advantage over the Liberals based on leadership. Anthony Albanese was the more popular leader overall and attracted a greater proportion of votes based on leadership.
- Albanese was evaluated as the preferred leader across all of nine leader characteristics examined, including compassion, trustworthiness and competence.

Minor parties and independents

- Long-term trends of partisan dealignment continued in 2025. The proportion of voters who do not feel close to any political party reached 25 percent, the highest level on record. Partisan dealignment has provided the conditions for the rising non-major party vote and the success of independent candidates.
- For the first-time on record, non-partisans (25 percent) surpassed Liberal partisans, which declined to 24 percent, the lowest level recorded.

- Around half of those voting for an Independent voted for Labor or the Greens in 2022. This suggests a degree of tactical voting to support the candidate with the best chance of unseating the incumbent.

Generation and gender

- Younger generations are more likely to vote for Labor and the Greens, and less likely to vote for the Coalition, compared to older generations.
- Millennials, a group now in their 30s and 40s, are not shifting to the right as they age, rather they have been shifting to the left. Millennials' support of the Coalition has fallen from 38 percent in 2016 to 21 percent in 2025.
- There is a modern gender gap in voting, whereby women are more likely to vote for parties on the left and men for parties on the right. The Coalition attracted 9 percent more votes from men than women, while Labor attracted 5 percent more votes from women than men.
- The decline in the Coalition vote share over the past decade has been driven by both women and men shifting their votes to other parties.

Political trust and democratic reform

- Trust in government (32 percent) and satisfaction with democracy (70 percent) have remained stable since the last election. This represents a modest recovery from historic lows in political trust observed in the 2010s.
- The proportion of Australians who report that they would still vote if it were voluntary, at 74 percent, reached its lowest point on record.
- Support for Australia becoming a republic is trending upwards, attracting support from a narrow majority of Australians (56 percent).
- On democratic reform, more Australians would prefer four-year parliamentary terms (42 percent) to three-year parliamentary terms (30 percent). There is also high public support for the idea of a Citizens' Assembly in Australia (48 percent in favour, 20 percent not in favour).

Foreign policy

- Confidence in the United States to come to Australia's defence dropped from 73 percent in 2022 to 54 percent, its lowest point on record.
- More Australians thought the AUKUS agreement made Australia more safe (43 percent) than less safe (9 percent).
- In response to US government trade tariffs, introduced during the election campaign, Australians were most supportive of strengthening Australia's trading relationships with other countries and were divided on the prospect of a retaliatory tariff.

This report highlights just some of the findings from the 2025 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 1987-2025*. The Australian Election Study makes the data available for researchers to conduct their own analysis: www.australianelectionstudy.org

INTRODUCTION

The 2025 election resulted in a landslide victory for the incumbent Labor government, securing 94 seats in a 150 seat parliament — 17 more seats than it won in 2022. However, the voting figures suggest Labor's success was more fragile. Labor's primary vote was only 2 percent higher than the previous 2022 election, itself the lowest Labor vote since 1934. The Liberal Party fared even worse in the election. Their vote was the lowest since the party was founded in 1944 and for the first time since then, more voters cast a ballot for a minor party or an independent than for the Liberal-National Coalition.

This unprecedented election result represents the confluence of two sets of factors, one short-term the other long-term. Short-term factors that supported the Labor win include leadership, the party policies, and the international context. In an era of personalised politics, Anthony Albanese was the preferred leader by a considerable margin. The campaign and associated policy offering also set the two major parties apart for voters. Labor was the preferred party across almost all policy areas, for the first time overtaking the Coalition as the preferred party on economic management and taxation. There was also major international volatility, including the imposition of trade tariffs by the United States during the election campaign.

The long-term factors provide a backdrop to these short-term factors and helped to shape the election result. Younger generations are more likely to vote for parties on the left, and each election they make up a greater proportion of the electorate. There was also a continuing gender gap, with women voters being less likely to vote for the Coalition than at any time in the past. Moreover, the long-term drift away from the major political parties has contributed to the success of independent candidates, which has affected the Coalition more so than Labor.

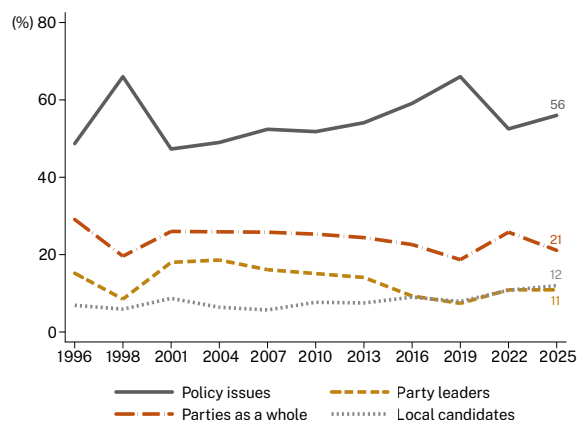
Using the 2025 Australian Election Study, a major national post-election survey which has been conducted at each federal election since 1987, this report traces and explains these and other factors shaping the election. The report proceeds in six sections to unpack the survey findings across the following areas: public policy; leaders; minor parties and independents; generational change and gender; political trust and democratic reform; and foreign policy. Details on the survey methodology are provided in the appendix.

In addition to this report on the 2025 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 1987-2025*. These reports and a range of other resources including data and technical reports are available on the AES website: www.australianelectionstudy.org

PUBLIC POLICY

As in all previous elections, policy issues were the main consideration in deciding a person's vote. In the 2025 election, Figure 1.1 shows that 56 percent mentioned the policy issues as their main consideration, a slight — 3 percent — increase on the 2022 figure. This figure has remained relatively unchanged since the question was first asked in 1996, with minor peaks in 1998 (an election dominated by the issue of the GST) and 2019 (Labor's extensive taxation plans). In 2025, just over one in five mentioned the parties as a whole as their main consideration, followed by the local candidates (12 percent) and the party leaders (11 percent).

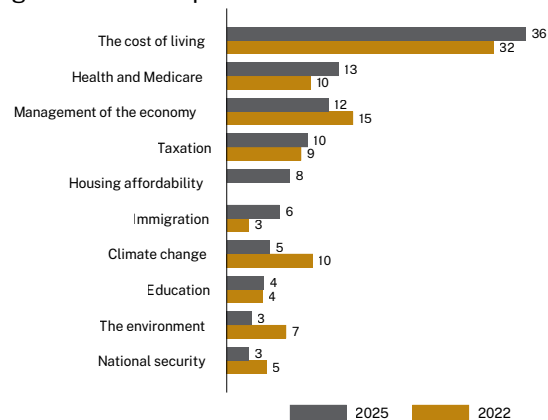
Figure 1.1 Most important consideration in the voting decision



Election issue priorities

What were the election issues that most concerned voters? The respondents were given a list of 10 issues which were widely debated during the election and asked to say how important each was in deciding their vote. As was the case in the 2022 election, Figure 1.2 shows that the economy was of most concern to voters, reflected in the cost of living. This was mentioned by 36 percent of voters as their most important election issue, a 4 percent increase on the same figure in 2022. It is rare for a single issue, particularly one that is relatively new, to dominate an election. This illustrates the level of concern cost of living pressures have generated for voters. Health and Medicare was ranked as the second most important issue and was mentioned by 13 percent of the respondents. Management of the economy was ranked third in importance, with mentions by 12 percent of the respondents. The remaining seven issues attracted one in 10 mentions or less. Taking these items together, economic issues were highly salient in the 2025 election, with two-thirds of voters indicating an economic issue was their top concern.

Figure 1.2 Most important election issues



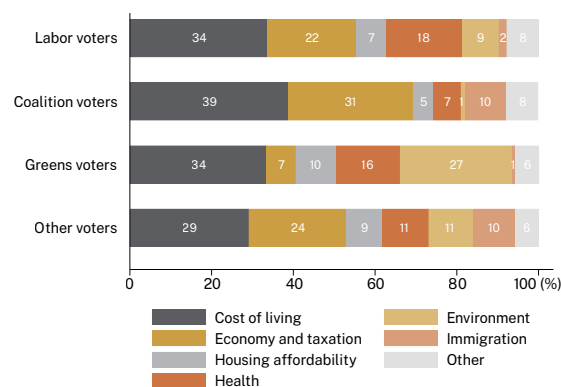
Note: Estimates are percentages.

The election issues that dominated the 2025 election show relatively little change from 2022, with two exceptions. First, mentions of climate change and the environment declined in importance, largely due to voters' preoccupation with immediate cost of living concerns. In 2025, 5 percent mentioned climate change as their most important concern, compared to twice that figure in the previous election. Second, immigration increased as the most important issue, from 3 to 6 percent, the highest proportion since the question was first asked in 1996. This follows concerns about the post-pandemic influx of immigrants and the resulting pressure on housing and infrastructure.

There is considerable variation in the issue priorities of voters for different political parties (Figure 1.3). At the same time, the cost of living is an issue that cut across all voter groups in 2025. Voters for all of the party groups identified that this was their top concern. The cost of living was slightly more of a concern for Coalition voters (39 percent) compared to Labor voters (34 percent). Labor voters were significantly more concerned about health and Medicare (18 percent) compared to Coalition voters (7 percent). For Coalition voters, after the cost of living, their most important issues were economic management (18 percent) and taxation (13 percent).

Immigration was salient for Coalition voters and voters for a minor party or an independent (the 'Other' category), with one in ten identifying it as their top concern, whereas this was not a priority for Labor or Greens voters. The proportion of Greens voters identifying an environmental issue as their top concern (27 percent) was significantly lower than in previous elections when at least half of Greens voters were motivated by the environment. This reflects the heightened salience of economic issues and the Greens becoming a multi-issue party.

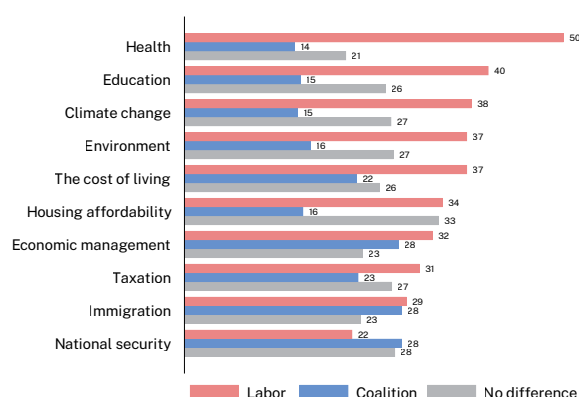
Figure 1.3 Most important election issues by vote



Preferred party policies

The Australian Election Study has tracked which political party people prefer on different policy issues for over three decades. This has revealed reasonably stable preferences, whereby more voters tend to prefer the Coalition on economic policy areas and Labor on social and environmental policy areas. The 2025 Australian federal election marks a significant departure from these usual trends. Figure 1.4 shows the preferred party across 10 election issues. Labor policy was preferred over the Coalition on all but one of the 10 policy areas examined, the exception being national security. Even on national security, the Coalition's advantage over Labor was only 6 percentage points. This is the first time such a reversal has taken place since the AES began examining election behaviour in 1987. On nine of the ten issues, Labor has an advantage over the Coalition, in the case of health and Medicare by a massive 36 percentage points. There is also a significant Labor advantage over the Coalition on housing affordability (18 percentage points) and the cost of living (15 percentage points).

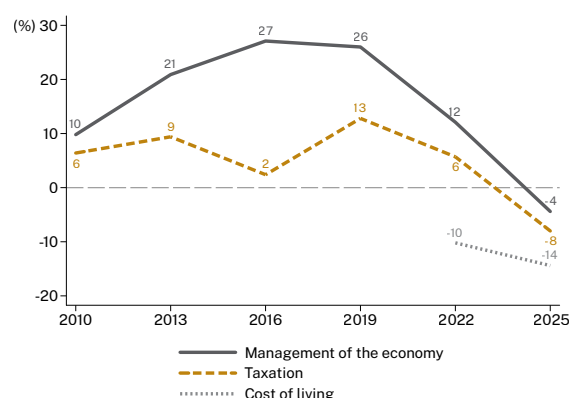
Figure 1.4 Preferred party policies



Note: Estimates are percentages.

Historically, the Coalition has been viewed by voters as the preferred party on a range of economic issues, from taxation to superannuation and government debt. In the 2025 election, the Coalition ceded its dominance of economic policy to Labor. Figure 1.5 shows the extent of this important shift in opinion. In 2016, the Coalition had a 27 percentage point advantage over Labor as the preferred party to manage the economy. This declined to 12 percentage points in 2022, and in 2025 this became negative as Labor was preferred over the Coalition. Even on taxation, on which the Coalition has traditionally campaigned as the party of lower taxes, Labor is now seen as having the better policy, reversing a decades-long trend. Remarkably, it was Labor that went into the 2025 election offering a tax cut for voters, which the Coalition said they would repeal. This unusual positioning of the major parties on tax, is reflected in shifting voter preferences between the parties on taxation.

Figure 1.5 Coalition advantage over Labor on economic issues

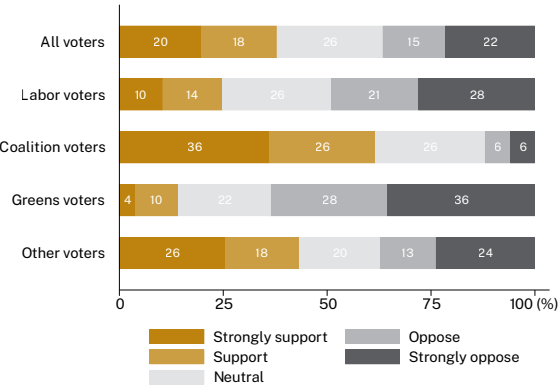


Nuclear power

One of the Liberal-National Coalition's key policies was a plan to introduce nuclear power as part of Australia's energy mix. The proposal was to build seven nuclear power stations, mostly located on the sites of coal-fired power stations. This proposal was situated as part of the Coalition's plans to address voter concerns around high energy prices and to decarbonise. Labor's campaign criticised the anticipated high cost of the nuclear proposal and questioned what would be cut to fund it.

Voters were divided on the issue of nuclear power. While 38 percent indicate support for introducing nuclear power as part of the energy mix in Australia, a corresponding 37 percent were opposed (Figure 1.6). Breaking this down by vote, it was only Coalition voters who indicated a good deal of support for nuclear power (62 percent). Support for nuclear power was low among Labor voters (25 percent) and lowest among Greens voters (14 percent). The results also suggest that nuclear power attracts stronger views than many other issues, as more voters indicated that they 'strongly oppose' nuclear power, than merely 'oppose' it.

Figure 1.6 Voter attitudes towards nuclear power

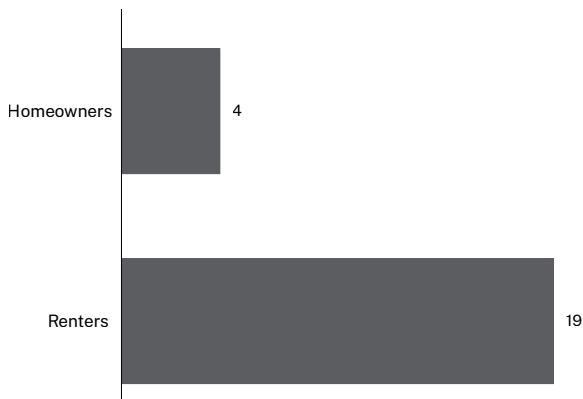


Housing affordability

Increasing house prices have made housing affordability a major policy challenge for Australia. Renters are increasingly priced out of pathways to homeownership, particularly in major cities.¹ The two major parties put forward a collection of policies to address housing affordability. The Coalition offered first home buyers the option to access their superannuation to help fund a deposit. They also proposed that first home buyers of new builds could claim a portion of interest payments as a tax deduction. Labor policies on housing included building 100,000 homes for first home buyers and allowing first home buyers to purchase a home with a 5 percent deposit. Critics argued that these policies were too focused on stimulating demand rather than addressing supply, and therefore would be likely to push property prices up.²

While housing affordability was only identified as the top election concern by 8 percent of voters overall, this was a more significant issue for renters and younger people. Among renters, housing affordability was mentioned by one in five voters as their top concern, compared to just 4 percent among homeowners (Figure 1.7). For renters, it was the second most cited concern after the cost of living. Moreover, 80 percent of renters indicated that housing affordability was ‘extremely important’ to them in their vote choice, compared to 54 percent of homeowners. A similar trend is apparent across age groups, housing was the top issue for 14 percent of those aged under 30, compared to 4 percent among those 65 and over.

Figure 1.7 Housing affordability as most important election issue



Note: Estimates are percentages.

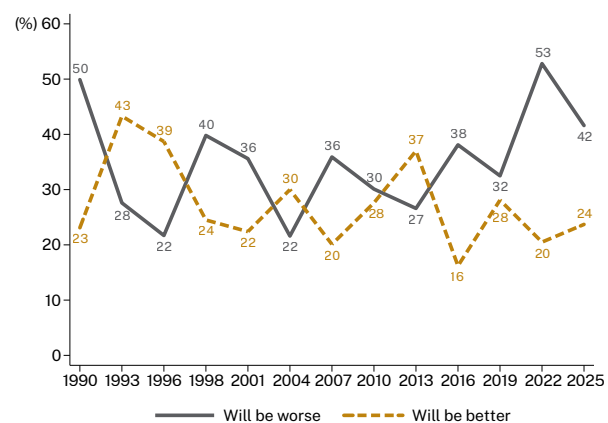
The Economy

Economic conditions are an important determinant of voter behaviour. Voters can be influenced by the retrospective economic performance of the incumbent government. They also make prospective judgements about which party is better placed to manage the economy.³ Since 2022, economic growth has been slow and increasing housing costs, record energy prices, and record levels of migration have contributed to significant cost of living pressures. Inflation peaked at over 7 percent in late 2022, declining to just over 2 percent in mid-2025.⁴ The net effect of these economic trends is that since 2022 Australian households have experienced the greatest decline in disposable income of any OECD country.⁵

While the 2025 Australian federal election took place amidst continuing concerns about the cost of living, there were signs that the economy may be turning a corner. In the lead up to the campaign in February 2025, the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) announced its first interest rate cut since 2020. By comparison, in the lead up to the 2022 election the RBA introduced the first interest rate rise in over a decade. These interest rate rises and cuts, respectively, provided different signals about the direction of the economy.

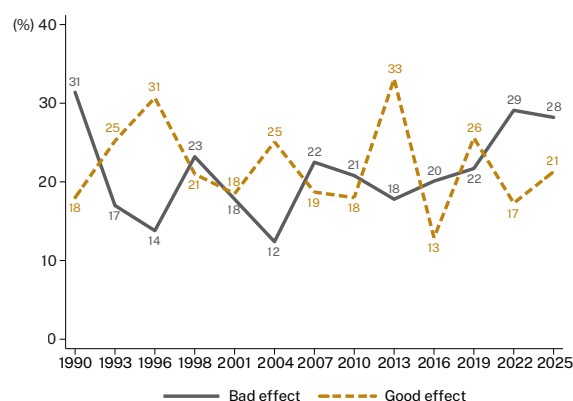
The AES data shows that while attitudes about the economy were pessimistic, most indicators have slightly improved since 2022. The weak performance of the economy was a major factor in voting in the 2022 election, with Figure 1.8 showing that just over half of voters believed that the economy would be worse over the next year. That was the highest figure on record, surpassing 1990, an election that was held in the midst of a recession. In 2025, pessimism about the economy moderated slightly; 42 percent of voters considered that the national economy would be worse, almost twice the proportion who believed that it would be better.

Figure 1.8 The national economy in a year's time



Pessimism about the performance of the economy in the future was matched by a widespread belief that the government would have little positive effect on the national economy over the next year. Figure 1.9 shows that just 21 percent considered the government's policies would have a good effect, while 28 percent believed the effect would be worse. The remaining 51 percent thought the government's policies would make no difference. The proportion who took a negative view of the government's impact on the economy was similar to 2022.

Figure 1.9 Government effect on national economy in a year's time



Notes

Figure 1.1: Most important consideration 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 2025 election, in comparison to 2022. Question wording: '...which of these issues was the most important to you and your family during the election campaign?' There is some variance in the list of items included in each election study, 'housing affordability' was only asked in 2025.

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 2025 election by first preference vote in the House of Representatives. Economy and taxation combines 'management of the economy' and 'taxation'. Environment combines 'the environment' and 'climate change'.

Figure 1.4: Preferred party on election issues

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: Coalition advantage over Labor on economic issues

Estimates are percent Coalition preferred party minus percent Labor preferred party on each issue.

Figure 1.6: Voter attitudes towards nuclear power

Question wording: 'Do you support or oppose Australia using nuclear power to generate electricity, alongside other sources of energy?'

Figure 1.7: Housing affordability as most important election issue

Question wording: '...which of these issues was the most important to you and your family during the election campaign?'

Figure 1.8: The national economy in a year's time

Estimates combine 'a lot better' and 'a little better', and 'a lot worse' and 'a little worse'. Question wording: 'Compared to now... what do you think the general economic situation in Australia as a whole will be in 12 months' time?'

Figure 1.9: Government effect on national economy in a year's time

Question wording: 'Do you think that, 12 months from now, the Federal government's policies will have had a good effect, a bad effect, or that they really will have not made much difference... on the general economic situation in Australia as a whole?'

LEADERS

Leaders have become increasingly important in democratic societies, as part of a trend known as the personalisation of politics.⁶ Governments are increasingly referred to by the leader's name, rather than the party name. The media focuses attention on leaders during the campaign. Parties use leaders to communicate their policies and appeal to voters. And voters hold leaders accountable for their performance in government. How voters perceive the party leaders is therefore an important factor to understand the election result.

After the leadership instability of the 2010s, the past two terms of government have been characterised by a return to stability.⁷ Both the major parties made changes to the rules around party leadership, which have made it more difficult to replace a sitting prime minister. Scott Morrison served a full term as prime minister, until the Liberal-National Coalition was voted out of government in 2022. Anthony Albanese became the first Labor leader to serve a full term as prime minister since Paul Keating in the 1990s.

In the 2025 election, the major party leadership contest was between incumbent Prime Minister Albanese and Liberal leader Peter Dutton, who had served as Leader of the Opposition since 2022. Opinion polls showed that Albanese's popularity declined during his first term of government, particularly following the unsuccessful Voice to Parliament referendum.⁸ Approval of Albanese improved during the campaign, in part the result of a 'rally round the flag' effect from United States President Donald Trump's introduction of global trade tariffs.⁹

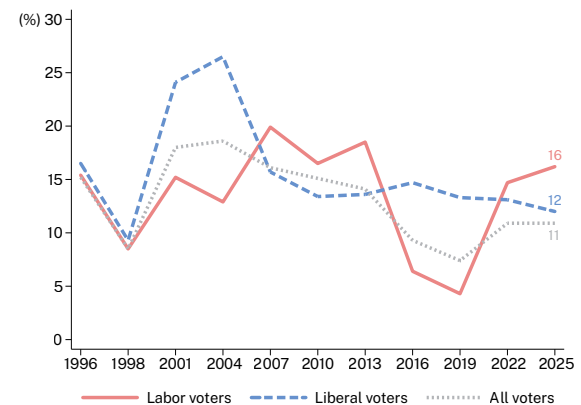
The impact of leadership on the vote

Leadership is an important influence on voter behaviour. The Australian Election Study asks voters which of four factors was the most important in their decision: the policy issues; the political parties; the party leaders; or the local candidate. In the 20-year period that this has been asked, an average of 13 percent of voters indicate that the party leaders were the most important factor driving their choice. Whilst leadership is not the top driver of voter behaviour, it is a significant one, not least as swing voters are more likely to be influenced by the party leaders.¹⁰

Figure 2.1 shows the proportion of voters who reported that leadership was the most important factor shaping their vote, for Labor voters, Liberal voters, and all voters, respectively. In 2025, 16 percent of Labor voters cited party leadership as the main reason for their vote, compared to 12 percent of Liberal voters. Since Albanese became leader, Labor has attracted a greater share of votes based on leadership. The long-term trends show the boost a party can receive from a popular leader, for example the Liberal party

benefited from John Howard's leadership in 2001 and 2004. Conversely, unpopular leaders can have the opposite effect.

Figure 2.1 Voting based on the party leaders

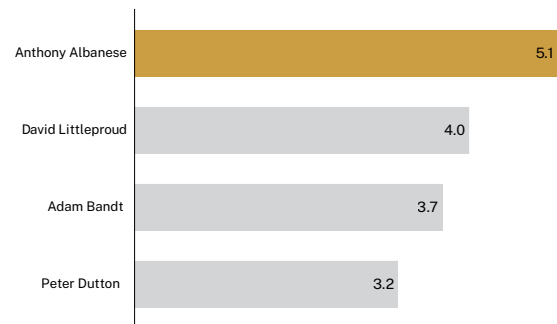


Leader popularity

To evaluate the popularity of leaders, the Australian Election Study asks respondents to rate the party leaders on a scale from 0 (strongly dislike) to 10 (strongly like), with a midpoint of 5 for those who do not know much about the leader. The most popular leader in the 2025 Australian federal election was incumbent prime minister Albanese, with an average score of 5.1 on the ten-point scale (Figure 2.2). Nationals leader David Littleproud was the next-highest rated, with a mean score of 4.0, although almost half of respondents indicated that they did not know much about him. Greens leader Adam Bandt received a rating of 3.7, lower than his 2022 score of 4.1. Liberal leader Dutton received an average rating of 3.2 on the ten-point scale.

An unusual element of the 2025 election was that two of the party leaders lost their seats in parliament. Liberal leader Dutton lost the Queensland seat of Dickson, which he had held since 2001. Dickson was the Liberal National Party of Queensland's most marginal seat. The seat was won by three-time Labor candidate Ali France following a concerted campaign, including two visits from Albanese. Greens leader Bandt lost the seat of Melbourne, also to Labor, which Bandt had held since 2010. When Bandt won the seat in 2010 this was the first lower house seat won by the Greens, and their only lower house seat until 2022, when the party picked up an additional three seats in Brisbane. Alongside greater support for Labor, an electoral boundary redistribution was a factor in Bandt's loss.

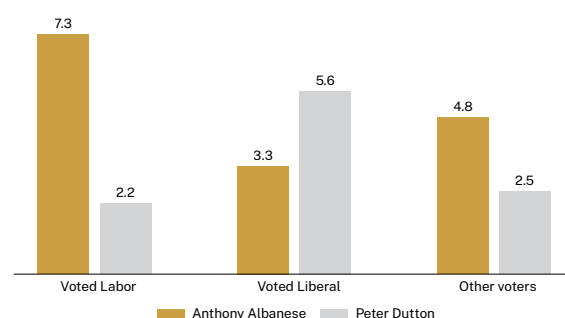
Figure 2.2 Leader popularity



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

The overall levels of popularity mask significant variation in how different groups of voters evaluate the leaders. Figure 2.3 shows how Labor, Liberal, and other voters evaluated Albanese and Dutton. Albanese scored 7.3 on average among Labor voters, even more popular than he was in 2022. By contrast, Dutton scored not much higher than the mid-point of 5 among Liberal voters, indicating that he did not have strong support among voters for his own party. Unsurprisingly, both leaders are rated poorly among voters for the opposing party. Albanese was perceived much more favourably than Dutton among those that did not cast a vote for either of the two major parties.

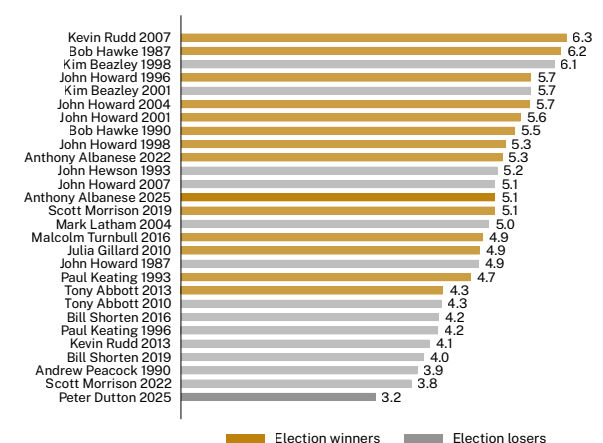
Figure 2.3 Vote choice and leader popularity



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

The popularity of major party leaders can be compared over time, as the same question on leaders has been asked in each survey since 1987. Figure 2.4 shows the average ratings of the major party leaders for every election from 1987 to 2025, distinguishing the leader of the party that won each election, from the leader of the party that lost. Situating the 2025 leaders in longer term perspective shows Albanese ranks 13th out of 28 major party leaders, slightly lower than in 2022 when he ranked 10th. Dutton, with an average score of 3.2 on the ten-point scale, was the least popular major party leader in the history of the study. In part, this reflects a long-term trend of declining leader popularity in Australia.¹¹ Of the four lowest leader ratings on record, three come from the last three Australian federal elections. The context of the 2025 election was also unique. A factor in evaluations of Dutton, was his perceived similarity to Trump.

Figure 2.4 Leader popularity, 1987-2025

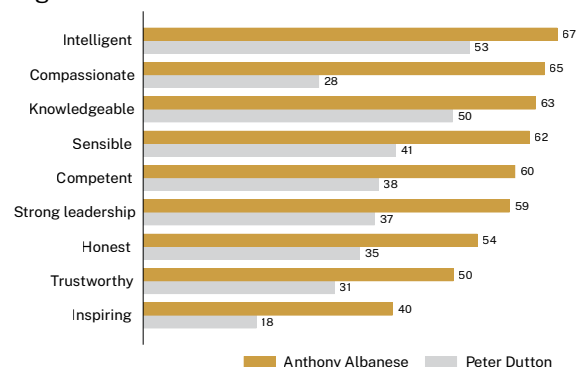


Note: Estimates are means. Scale 0 (strongly dislike) to 10 (strongly like).

Leader characteristics

The survey also asks respondents to evaluate the two major party leaders on a number of characteristics, including trustworthiness, competence, intelligence, and whether the leader is inspiring. Research on leadership traits shows that some traits are more important than others, particularly whether the leader is perceived as honest, trustworthy and competent.¹² Figure 2.5 shows the proportion of respondents who thought the various traits described the leader 'quite well' or 'extremely well'. Albanese outperformed Dutton on all nine leader traits included in the survey. The biggest gap between the two leaders was on compassion. This reflects a consistent pattern whereby Labor leaders are perceived as being more compassionate than Liberal leaders. The weakest trait for both leaders was that they were not considered particularly inspiring. This is similar to previous elections, it is rare for Australians to be inspired by the nation's leaders.

Figure 2.5 Leader characteristics



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

Notes

Figure 2.1: Voting based on the party leaders

Estimates show the percentage of different voter groups 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 2.2-2.4: Leader popularity

Estimates are means. Question wording: 'Again using a scale from 0 to 10, please show how much you like or dislike the party leaders. If you don't know much about them, you should give them a rating of 5.'

Figure 2.5: Leader characteristics

Question wording: '[Thinking first about Anthony Albanese / Now thinking about Peter Dutton], in your opinion how well does each of these describe him – extremely well, quite well, not too well or not well at all?'

MINOR PARTIES AND INDEPENDENTS

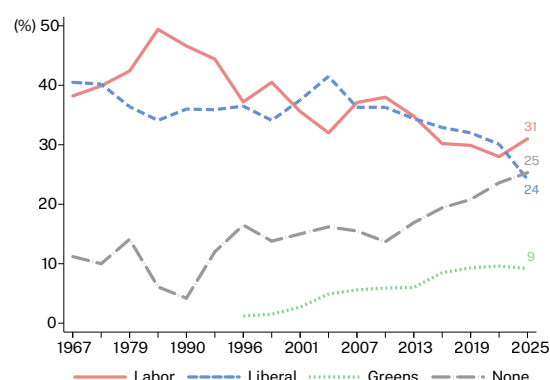
The 2022 federal election was marked by the success of ‘teal’ independents in traditionally Liberal-held seats, particularly in inner-suburban Melbourne and Sydney, and the Greens’ victories in three Brisbane seats. Fundraising organisation Climate 200 expanded its ambitions in 2025, helping to fund 35 independent candidates in lower house contests (including eight incumbents). The Greens focused on retaining their four lower house seats and potentially adding a fifth in north Melbourne. Meanwhile Pauline Hanson’s One Nation negotiated a preference deal with the Coalition during the campaign in a bid to expand their Senate presence beyond the two incumbents. In the end, the independents suffered one defeat of an incumbent but added a new member, the Greens lost three of their four existing seats and did not add any, and One Nation won two new Senate seats.

Dealignment from the major parties

The backdrop to these campaigns was an ongoing decline in both major party vote share and political partisanship. While 2022 was a watershed election for independent candidates, the conditions for their election have been building over a long period of time. The percentage of Australians reporting no closeness towards any political party – non-partisans – has increased rapidly since 2010, from 14 percent to 25 percent (Figure 3.1). Non-partisans have now overtaken the percentage of Liberal partisans (24 percent, and trending down). Labor partisanship rebounded slightly in 2025, although has trended down for the past two decades. Greens partisanship appears to have hit a ceiling at 9 percent of respondents, just as their electoral success has similarly stalled.

Partisan dealignment is happening all over the democratic world; indeed, if anything, Australians have retained their partisan ties much longer than voters in similar countries.¹³ In countries with voluntary voting systems, non-partisan – or *dealigned* – voters would be more likely to stay home on election day. In Australia, they are compelled to turn out and vote for someone. In 2025 (and 2022), independent and minor party candidates have benefited.

Figure 3.1 Political partisanship among Australian voters



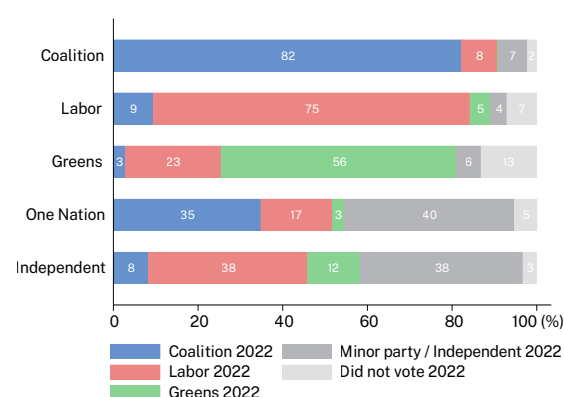
Who votes independent and minor party?

When voters leave their usual party, they can either dealign from all parties or realign to a new party. Given voting is compulsory, most disaffected Australian voters end up realigning to a new party or independent candidate – at least for election day. Some voters realign for ideological or policy reasons, some because they no longer trust the major parties, and others because they would rather vote *against* their least preferred candidate than *for* their preferred candidate (sometimes called tactical voting).

The 2025 Australian Election Study results in Figure 3.2 show that independent voters are evenly split between repeat voters (38 percent who voted for an independent or other minor party in 2022) and Labor defectors (38 percent, up from 31 percent in 2022). Only 8 percent of independent voters report having voted for the Coalition in 2022; at the 2022 election, 18 percent of independent voters reported voting for the Coalition in 2019.¹⁴

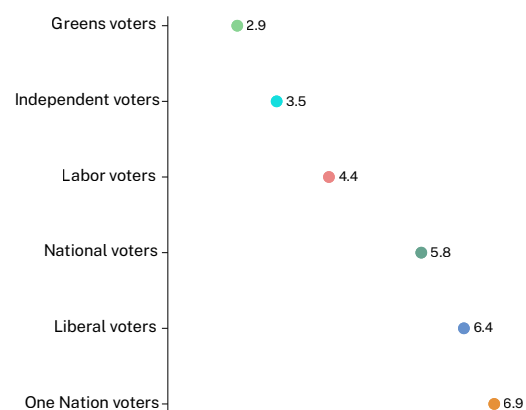
Without context, this may suggest that independents are benefiting from disaffected Labor voters. Given that Climate 200 has explicitly targeted Liberal-held seats, a more plausible explanation is that a large proportion – perhaps up to a third – of independent voters are using their vote to remove disliked Liberal incumbents (i.e. voting tactically). We might expect that these voters resume voting Labor if the party can mount a viable campaign in these seats. On the other hand, it appears that tactical voting is becoming a habit for some voters and may be difficult to reverse.

Figure 3.2 Previous vote (2022), by 2025 House of Representatives vote



Ideologically, independent voters tend to be left of centre (Figure 3.3). On a self-reported scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is most left and 10 is most right, independent voters have a mean score of 3.5; Labor voters have a mean of 4.4 and Greens voters 2.9. This suggests that many independent voters are similar to Labor voters, defecting for tactical reasons. It also suggests that Labor can win these voters back in time. In 2022, independent voters were slightly closer to the centre, with a mean ideology score of 4.4.

Figure 3.3 Self-reported ideology by vote

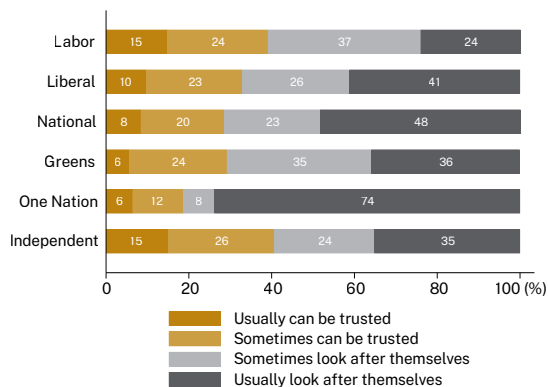


Note: Estimates are means. The scale runs from 0 (left) to 10 (right).

Independent and minor party voters' views on politics

Contrary to some media reporting, independent voters are not particularly distrustful of politics or politicians (Figure 3.4). They are the second least likely to say that politicians 'usually look after themselves' (35 percent), after Labor voters (24 percent). They are also the most likely to believe that politicians can sometimes or usually be trusted to do the right thing (41 percent in total, compared to 39 percent of Labor voters). One Nation voters are by far the least trusting of politicians, with 74 percent of the sample believing that politicians usually look after themselves. This is perhaps to be expected from a party with populist tendencies and style, but also a potential challenge for the party if they want to become a mainstream parliamentary presence.

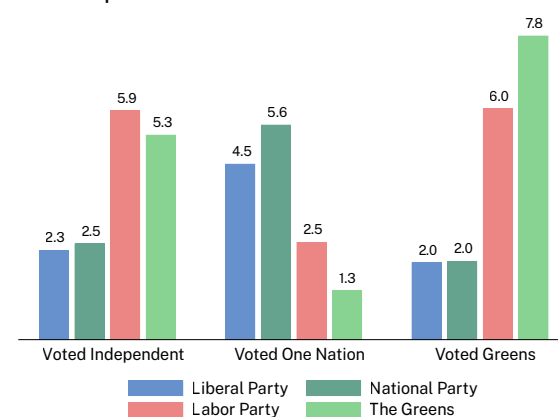
Figure 3.4 Trust in government by vote



Independent voters in 2025 were significantly more favourable towards Labor and the Greens than towards the Liberals and Nationals (Figure 3.5). On a 0-10 'likeability' scale, independent voters' mean score was 5.9 for Labor and 5.3 for the Greens. In contrast, the Liberals only scored 2.3 and Nationals 2.5. This further suggests that independent voters are not 'Liberal lite' or even Liberal defectors, but people with a progressive ideology casting a vote against the centre-right parties. More favourably for the Coalition, One Nation voters rated the party 4.5 on average and the Nationals 5.6.

Greens voters dislike the Coalition parties fairly equally (mean scores of 2.0 for Nationals and for the Liberals), although a small number of Greens voters appear favourable towards the Nationals specifically. Unsurprisingly, they are most favourable towards the Greens themselves (mean score of 7.8), but Labor is not far behind with a mean score of 6.0. Greens voters appear less critical of the Labor Party than do Greens parliamentarians.

Figure 3.5 Independent and minor party voter views of other parties



Note: Estimates are means. The scale runs from 0 (strongly dislike party) to 10 (strongly like party).

Notes

Figure 3.1: Political partisanship among Australian voters

Estimates are percentages. 1967, 1969 and 1979 data is from the Australian National Political Attitudes Survey; 1987-2025 data is from the AES. AES question wording: 'Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as Liberal, Labor, National or what?'

Figure 3.2: Previous vote (2022), by 2025 House of Representatives vote

Estimates show the percentage of first preference votes in the House of Representatives in 2022 for different 2025 voter groups.

Figure 3.3: Self-reported ideology by vote, 0 (left) to 10 (right)

Estimates are means. Question wording: 'Where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?' Voter categories are based on first preference votes in the House of Representatives.

Figure 3.4: Trust in government by vote

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?' Voter categories are based on first preference votes in the House of Representatives.

Figure 3.5: Views on other parties

Estimates are means. Question wording: 'We would like to know what you think about the Nationals/Liberal/Labor/Greens party on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means you strongly dislike that party and 10 means that you strongly like that party. Please give a rating of 5 if you are neutral or don't know.' Voter categories are based on first preference votes in the House of Representatives.

GENERATION AND GENDER

One of the major shifts observed by tracking trends in voter behaviour over time, has been the emergence of new cleavages shaping vote choice. Whereas voter behaviour used to be driven to a large degree by social class, newer cleavages have emerged including generation and gender.¹⁵ These newer cleavages shaping voter behaviour have been observed in both Australia and other democracies.¹⁶ The 2025 Australian Election Study results can be situated in a longer-term perspective to understand how voting patterns have changed over time, across generations, and between genders.

Generational change

The 2025 election saw first preference vote shares for major parties continue to decline, with an especially poor result for the Coalition parties, winning just 32 percent of formal first preferences. The 2025 election extended trends observed in 2022, with the fall in Coalition support disproportionately concentrated among younger segments of the electorate. In 2022, it was estimated that the Coalition won just 25 percent of formal first preferences among voters under 40 years of age; in 2025 that figure fell to 23 percent and to just 21 percent among Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996).

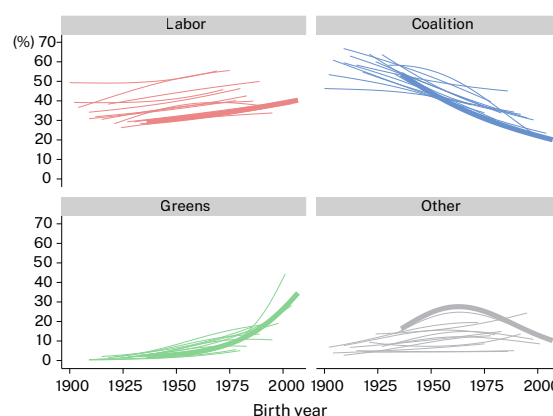
In 2022 we noted how unusual — and how portentous — this development was for Australian politics. Across the democratic world younger voters generally tend to prefer parties and candidates of the left and centre-left more so than older voters; over the life course, the typical pattern is for voters to slowly gravitate towards voting for more conservative parties. Each Australian Election Study from 1987 generally supports this conclusion: at least as a first approximation, as age increases, support for Labor modestly declines.

The 2025 election revealed continued significant slowing and even reversals of this pattern. Figure 4.1 highlights the distinctiveness of 2025. Each line shows the level of support for the indicated party by birth year, with one line or ‘age profile’ per election since the first AES in 1987, with 2025 highlighted. The Coalition’s age profiles fall over time, as major party support erodes, and – within that broader trend – newer cohorts with more recent birth years enter the electorate and are less likely to support the Coalition than older voters. The same is true for Labor with age profiles falling over time, except with the anticipated reverse relationship with birth year from that observed for the Coalition (younger voters with most recent birth years in any given AES being more likely to support Labor than the Coalition).

Figure 4.1 shows the Coalition’s 2025 age profile sitting lower than any of its previous age profiles, consistent with the broad fall in the Coalition’s vote across almost all age groups. But it is the fall in Coalition support among younger cohorts that is especially noteworthy.

Even under the conventional theory of drift towards conservative parties over the life course, the trajectory for these cohorts is starting from an unprecedented low level of support for the Coalition.¹⁷ Slightly older cohorts — Millennials in particular — are defying the conventional ‘conservative maturation’ theory, their support for the Coalition falling over the last four elections.

Figure 4.1 Birth year and House of Representatives vote in AES surveys 1987-2025



Note: 2025 results are highlighted with the bold line in each panel.

In Figure 4.2 each AES survey is segmented by generation, from the ‘Greatest Generation’ (born before 1928) — the oldest generation of voters in the first AES study in 1987, then aged sixty or older — through to Gen Z, born after 1996 and whose oldest members began voting in 2016, but not appearing in meaningful numbers in AES surveys until 2019 and 2022. The shares of formal first preferences for the Coalition, Labor, Greens and other parties and candidates are plotted for each generation and for each AES survey, with the present 2025 study appearing on the right hand side of each panel. Careful analysis of the AES data — ensuring that respondent-reported preference flows match those reported in Australian Electoral Commission tabulations — lets us also estimate two-party preferred vote shares for each generation in 2025.

Some support for the ‘conservative drift’ theory is evident in the gradual fall in Labor support apparent in the four oldest generations in the data, the Greatest Generation, the Silent Generation (1928-45), Boomers (1946-64) and Generation X (1965-80), over the 1987-2025 period spanned by the AES surveys. Less apparent is a corresponding increase in Coalition support; minor parties and independents (labelled ‘Other’ in Figure 4.2) are more the beneficiaries of falls in Labor support over the life course than gains for the Coalition or the Greens.

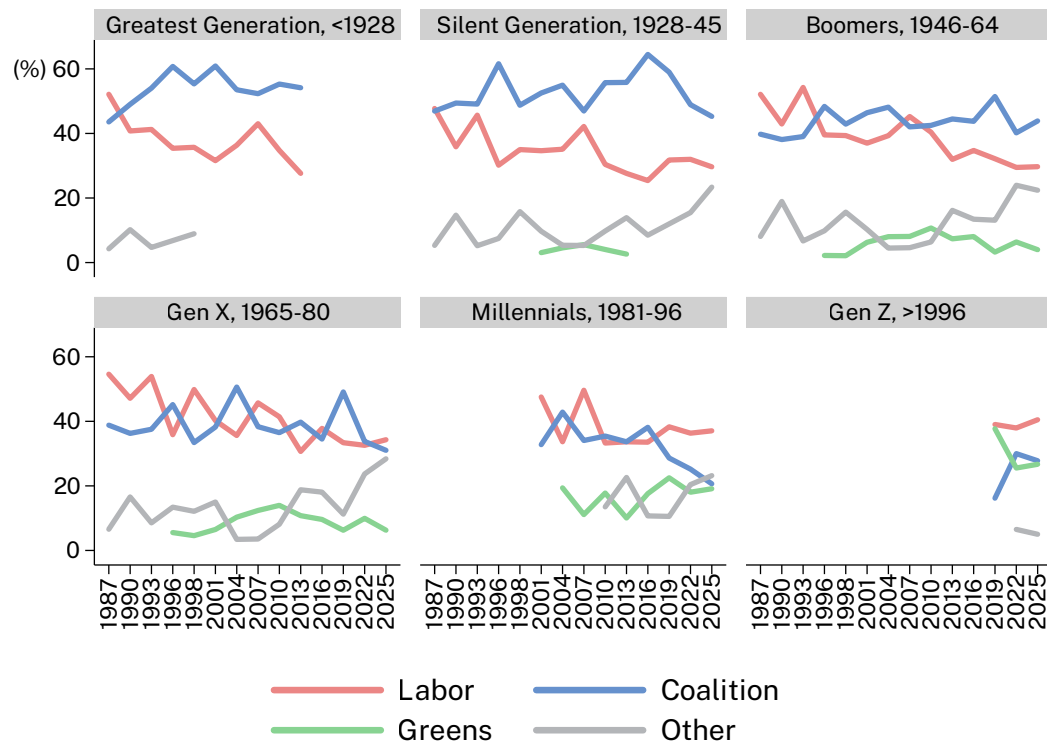
By contrast, Millennials (1981-96) and Generation Z (post-1996) reveal some marked differences with older cohorts. First, note that these two generations constitute large and growing segments of the electorate: Millennials comprised 27 percent and Generation Z 15 percent of the 2025 electorate, for a combined 42 percent. The 'Silent Generation' – in which the Coalition enjoys a 16 point first preference lead over Labor and a 58/42 two-party preferred split – is just 7 percent of the 2025 electorate. Boomers make up 25 percent of the electorate and preferred the Coalition to Labor 55-45 in 2025. Labor won Gen X (24 percent of the electorate) 52-48 in 2025. Note that each of these generations are smaller than Millennials alone.

Millennials' support of the Coalition has fallen steadily from 38 percent in 2016 to 21 percent in 2025, while Labor's support has risen from 33 percent to 37 percent. Labor won 64 percent of the two-party preferred vote among Millennials in 2025.

This is no longer a cohort of fickle young voters, but a generation at a 'steep' part of the life course with respect to earning power, family responsibilities and wealth accumulation. Precisely as this cohort has transitioned from early adulthood to their 30s and 40s, their support for the Coalition has fallen by almost one-half. Millennials will range from 32 to 47 years of age at the time of the 2028 election and will constitute a larger share of the electorate as older generations exit via losses to mortality.

Gen Z (born after 1996) has appeared in three AES surveys: 2019, 2022 and 2025, with just a handful of observations from 2019. Coalition support was 28 percent in this group in 2025, a significantly stronger result than among Millennials, while still lagging the Coalition's 32 percent overall result. But Gen Z is also the strongest cohort for both the Greens (27 percent) and Labor (41 percent), yielding a massive 67-33 two-party preferred win for Labor in this cohort.

Figure 4.2 House of Representatives vote choice, by generation and survey year



For a second election in a row, the age structure of Australian politics is marked by two important and remarkable features. One is simply the historically low level of Coalition support in the youngest cohorts in the electorate: Millennials and Gen Z, whom — when joined by the leading edge of Gen Alpha — will be very close to constituting a majority of the 2028 electorate. Second, and at least as significant, is the fact that commonly observed patterns of drift towards conservative parties over the life course are *not* occurring among Millennials; indeed, the opposite is occurring, with Labor first preference support steady or slightly increasing and preferences from Greens supporters yielding overwhelming majorities for Labor among Millennials.

The portents for Australian politics and the party system are clear. Politicians and political parties cannot halt the steady march of cohorts over the life course nor the age structure of the electorate. But they can control the content of their policies and messaging, their reactions to global events and surprises. Unchecked, the current levels and trajectories of party support revealed here point to Labor dominating Federal politics for the foreseeable future.

The modern gender gap in voting

Over time, patterns of voting in Australia have shifted from what is known as the traditional gender gap to the modern gender gap in voting.¹⁸ Whereas women used to be further to the right of men, in their attitudes and vote choices, now we see the opposite where men, on average, are further to the right of women. The 2025 Australian Election Study results reveal significant gender differences in voting (Figure 4.3). While 37 percent of men gave their first preference vote to the Coalition, only 28 percent of women did so. Labor attracted 5 percent more votes from women, than men. The Greens had the most significant gender gap of all, attracting 10 percent more votes from women than men. A greater proportion of men cast their vote for a minor party or an independent. This pattern of voter behaviour reflects the modern gender gap, whereby women are further to the left of men. This has been observed in other advanced democracies around the world.¹⁹

Figure 4.3 House of Representatives vote choice, by gender



The proportion of men and women who have voted for the Coalition at each federal election since 1987 is presented in Figure 4.4. This illustrates the shift from the traditional to the modern gender gap in the Australian context. While the Coalition has not done better among women since the 1990s, it has only been over the past ten years that a wide and persistent gender gap has emerged, reaching up to 10 percentage points in some years. In 2025, 9 percent more men than women voted for the Coalition. The decline in support for the Coalition has not only been driven by women. These trends show the overall proportion of men voting for the Coalition has also declined in each election since 2019. While there is a wide gender gap, both men and women taking their votes elsewhere has contributed to the decline in support for the Coalition parties.

Figure 4.4 Gender differences in the Coalition vote

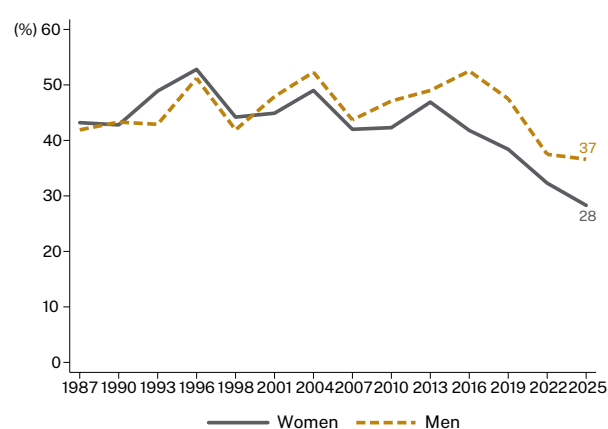
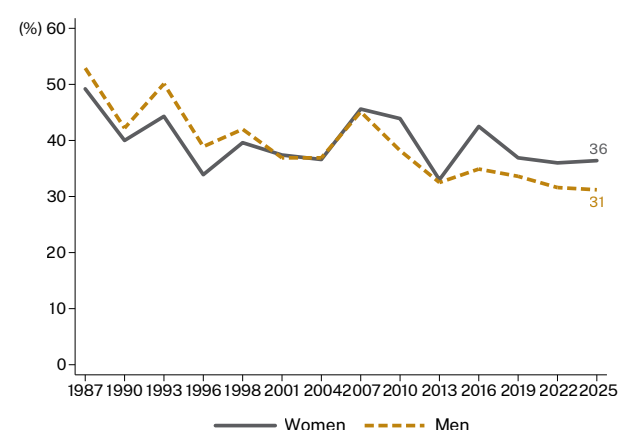


Figure 4.5 Gender differences in the Labor vote



For Labor we also see evidence of the shift towards a modern gender gap, where Labor attracts a greater proportion of votes from women, with a gap of 5 percentage points in 2025 (Figure 4.5). Labor attracted more votes from men throughout the 1990s, there was no gender gap during the 2000s. Then from 2016 a modest yet persistent gender gap has emerged, consistent with what has been observed in other democracies whereby more women tend to support parties on the centre-left.²⁰ The size of the gender gap for Labor is a good deal smaller than that of the Coalition.

The shift from the traditional to the modern gender gap can be understood in part through changes in society, including the role of secularisation, higher education and higher workforce participation among women.²¹ Australia's political parties have also transformed over the past few decades in the degree to which their representatives reflect the broader community. After the 2025 election, the gender balance of federal Labor MPs and Senators is 56 percent female, compared to 31 percent for the Coalition.²² The differing levels of women's representation are a consequence of Labor's adoption of a gender quota, which transformed the level of women's representation in parliament since it was first introduced in the 1990s.²³

The 2025 election results show the continuation of trends that have been developing over a long period of time. Younger generations are less supportive of the Coalition, while making up a greater proportion of the electorate in each successive election. The Coalition have lost a lot of support from women, with the proportion of women voting for the Coalition declining by 19 percent over the past 12 years. Such a significant group of voters cannot be overlooked. While campaign dynamics, policies and leaders are factors in the 2025 result, these longer-term changes are gradually reshaping the composition of the electorate and voter behaviour. Both generational change and women's largescale drift away from the Coalition are key to understanding the historic loss for the Coalition in 2025.

Notes

Figures 4.1-4.5

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

POLITICAL TRUST AND DEMOCRATIC REFORM

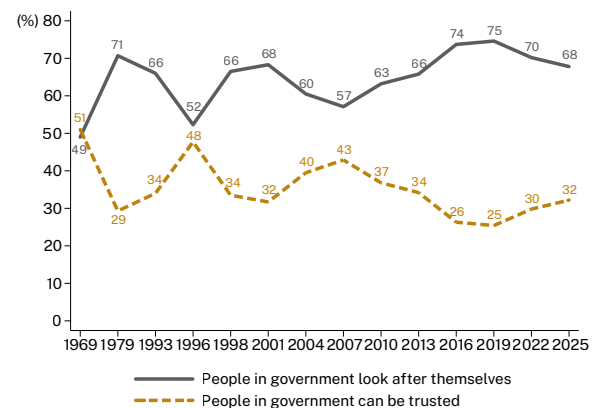
During the 2010s there were steep declines across a range of indicators capturing voter attitudes towards democracy in Australia, including political trust and satisfaction with democracy.²⁴ The 2025 results show that levels of trust have improved from the record low observed in 2019. Despite modest improvements, it is still only one in three Australians who believe people in government can be trusted. Other indicators highlight newer concerns. For example, there have been declines in the proportion of respondents who report that they would still vote if it were voluntary, reaching a record low in 2025.

Declines in political trust have stimulated discussion and debate on what can be done to strengthen Australia's democracy. The Labor government established a Strengthening Democracy Taskforce in 2023 to address challenges facing Australian democracy and opportunities for innovation.²⁵ The 2025 Australian Election Study incorporated a range of questions to explore citizen attitudes towards proposals to reform Australia's democracy. This provides new evidence on what citizens think about proposals to strengthen Australia's democracy.

Political trust and satisfaction with democracy

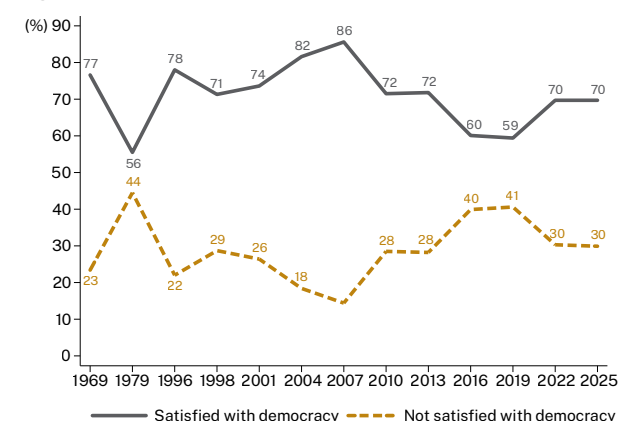
Political trust has been explored in surveys of Australians for more than half a century, enabling trends to be tracked over time. The question in the Australian Election Study has asked: 'In general, do you feel that the people in government are too often interested in looking after themselves, or do you feel that they can be trusted to do the right thing nearly all the time?' The responses suggest Australians have a degree of cynicism about Australian politicians. The proportion of respondents who think people in government usually or sometimes look after themselves, comfortably exceeds those who believe people in government can be trusted, in all years except 1969 (Figure 5.1). Levels of political trust have usually increased when there is a change in government, including in 1996 and 2007. There was an exception to this trend following the election of a new Coalition government led by Tony Abbott in 2013, at which time trust declined. There was a modest bump in trust following the 2022 Labor election win, albeit from the lowest level of trust ever recorded in 2019. In 2025 around one in three respondents indicate that people in government usually or sometimes can be trusted to do the right thing. Exploring the responses at an individual level shows that Millennials are the least trusting of government, while the Baby Boomer generation has higher levels of overall trust.

Figure 5.1 Trust in government



Satisfaction with democracy captures how well voters perceive democracy is working in practice.²⁶ This is distinct from support for democracy. People can be supportive of democracy while the performance of democracy in practice may fall short of their expectations. Satisfaction with democracy reached its lowest level since the 1970s constitutional crisis in 2019 at 59 percent (Figure 5.2). Democratic satisfaction recovered to 70 percent in 2022, a level it has maintained following the 2025 election. Similar to political trust, trends in satisfaction with democracy usually receive a boost when a new government is elected, although the level of satisfaction with democracy in 2022 was a good deal lower than other changes of government, including 1996 (78 percent) and 2007 (86 percent). The higher levels of democratic satisfaction now, compared to the late 2010s, correspond with a return to more stable government. The era of frequent changes of prime minister outside of elections has thus far been left behind in the 2010s. Those leadership changes undermined citizens' role in determining who forms government and led to greater dissatisfaction with democracy.²⁷

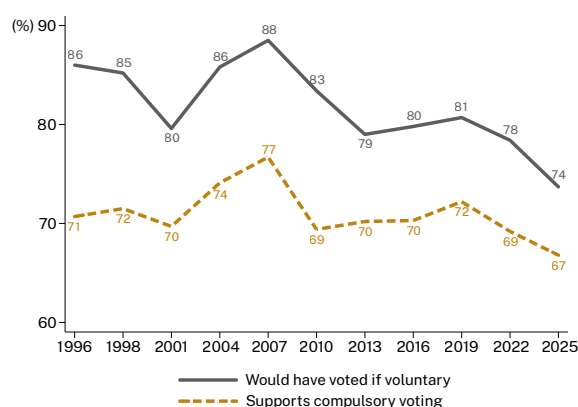
Figure 5.2 Satisfaction with democracy



Support for compulsory voting

While attitudes towards democracy and government have recovered to some degree from the record lows seen in the late 2010s, other indicators suggest some concern for Australia's democratic political system. Compulsory voting is a core feature of Australia's democracy, and a relatively rare feature of democratic institutional design. It is thanks to compulsory voting that Australia has one of the highest voter turnout rates in the democratic world.²⁸ Support for compulsory voting has declined to a degree, although remains supported by a clear majority of two in three voters (Figure 5.3). The proportion of voters who report that they would still vote if it were voluntary has been in steady decline since 2007, reaching its lowest point on record in 2025 at 74 percent. Younger generations are much more likely to report that they would not vote if it were voluntary.

Figure 5.3 Support for compulsory voting

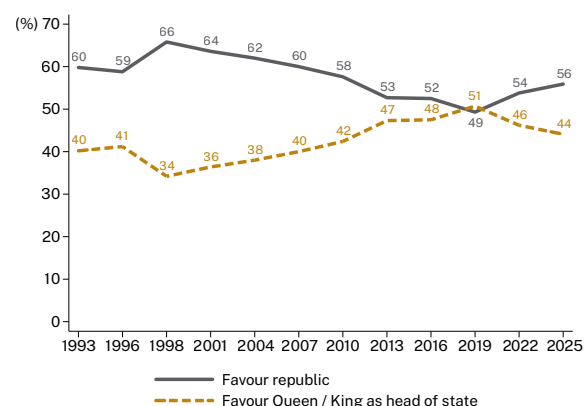


Democratic reform

Australia has a unique set of political institutions, including compulsory voting and preferential voting. Democratic innovations in the Australian context have in many cases been adopted overseas.²⁹ At the same time, the low levels of political trust observed over the past decade have prompted questions regarding the suitability of Australia's current political institutions to meet the democratic challenges of the 21st century. Democratic reforms and innovations are ideas for changing 'the structures or processes of democratic government and politics in order to improve them'.³⁰ The distinction between a reform and an innovation is not easily drawn, although relates to the degree of the change.³¹ The Australian Election Study incorporates a number of questions about potential reforms to Australia's democratic political institutions, some of which have been tracked over a long period of time, while others were introduced for the first time in 2025. This includes citizen attitudes towards Australia becoming a republic, lowering the voting age, and four-year parliaments, among others.

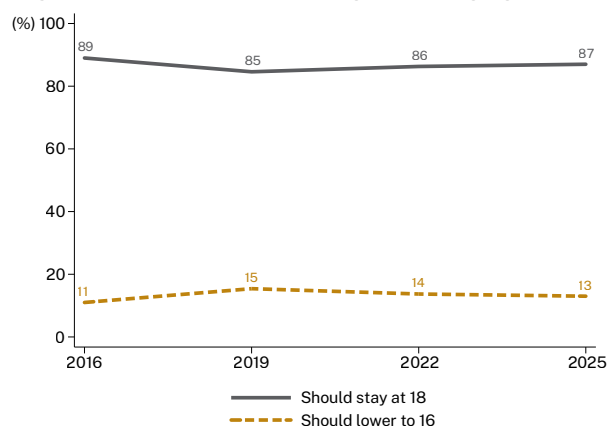
A longstanding question concerns whether Australia should become a republic with an Australian Head of State. Back in the 1990s, support for Australia becoming a republic reached a peak of 66 percent, in the lead up to the 1999 republic referendum (Figure 5.4). The republic referendum, despite this high level of public support, was ultimately unsuccessful as people were divided over the method for appointing the President.³² Since the unsuccessful referendum, support for a republic gradually declined reaching a low of 49 percent in 2019. Since then, support for the republic has started trending upwards, reaching 56 percent in favour in 2025. Since the last election in 2022, a major change in Australia's relationship with the monarchy was King Charles III becoming Australia's Head of State in September 2022, following the death of Queen Elizabeth II. In the past, some politicians including Malcolm Turnbull had suggested the time to reconsider the republic question would be after the death of Queen Elizabeth II.³³ Following the unsuccessful Voice to Parliament referendum in 2023, Albanese has indicated that he intends for the Voice to be the only referendum of his prime ministership.³⁴ This sets the republic question aside for now, although a majority of Australians do indicate that they would favour Australia becoming a republic.

Figure 5.4 Support for Australia becoming a republic



A handful of countries around the world have lowered the voting age to 16, including Austria, Brazil and Argentina. Most recently, the United Kingdom announced they will lower the voting age to 16 at the next general election. This reform has been introduced in other contexts in response to low voter turnout among young people. Lowering the voting age to 16 is occasionally debated in Australian politics and the policy is supported by the Greens. The results from the Australian Election Study show that very few Australians support lowering the voting age to 16 (Figure 5.5). In the four surveys that this has been tracked over the past decade, support has not exceeded 15 percent. In 2025, 13 percent of voters indicated that they would support lowering the voting age. Even among younger voters, this proposal attracts a low level of support, with 18 percent of those under 30 in favour. This reform proposal is a long way from attracting majority support. A key consideration for the Australian context is what lowering the voting age would mean for compulsory voting, with some proposals suggesting voting be optional for 16 and 17 year-olds.

Figure 5.5 Support for lowering the voting age



In 2025 we asked four additional questions about potential democratic reforms for Australia: four-year parliaments; term limits for politicians; more/less referendums; and a Citizens' Assembly. The results are presented in Figure 5.6. The selection of items was based on debates particular to the Australian context, such as whether terms of parliament should be extended, as well as democratic reforms that have been enacted in other democracies. A challenge on asking members of the public about specific democratic reforms, is that this something most voters would not have given a great deal of thought to. The questions therefore provided some brief information to respondents on the benefits and trade-offs of the options under consideration. Respondents could also select a no preference option if they did not have a view.

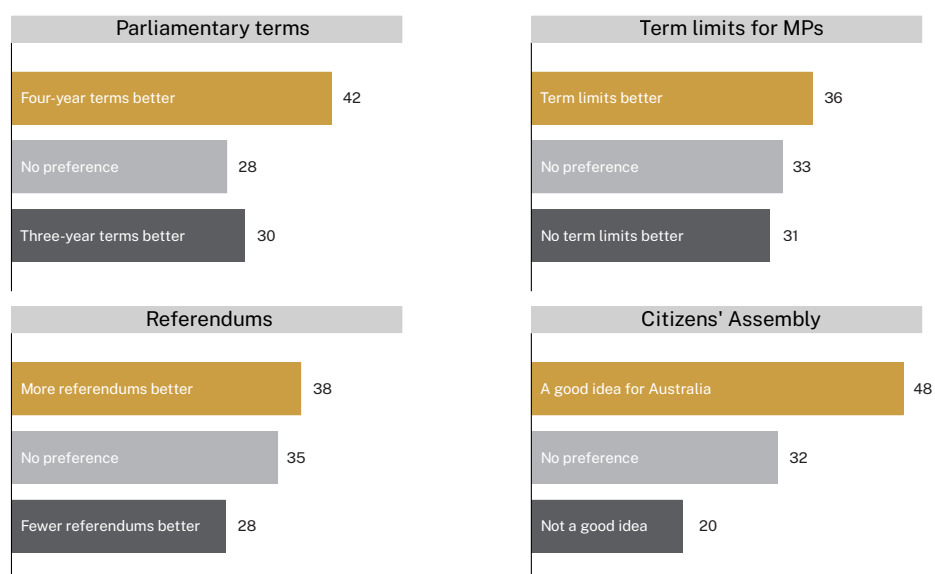
Australia has unusually short parliamentary terms of up to three years. While this facilitates regular opportunities for voters to hold politicians to account in elections, a notable drawback is that it provides limited time for governments to govern in between

elections. As governments have limited time to enact their agenda, this also makes it harder for voters to evaluate the performance of governments. Extending parliamentary terms to a maximum of four years was the subject of a 1988 referendum, which was ultimately unsuccessful with only one in three Australians voting in favour. The 2025 survey asked respondents whether they thought three-year or four-year parliaments were better. Support for four-year parliamentary terms, at 42 percent, now surpasses those who think three-year terms are better (30 percent), with 28 percent indicating no preference.

A concern often raised in Australian politics is the rise of career politicians. Increasingly, one of the major pathways to becoming an elected representative is through work as a political staffer.³⁵ Once elected to parliament, politicians can stay there for much of their careers, so long as they are re-elected by voters. This limits the diversity in the professional backgrounds of politicians. A possible democratic reform would be to introduce term limits for elected representatives. The potential benefit would be to have a parliament that is more reflective of the broader community rather than a professionalised political class. A downside would be that politicians would be less experienced in the work of government. When the question of term limits was put to voters, 36 percent indicated that it would be better to have term limits, for more community representation, compared to 31 percent who believed it would be better to have no term limits, for more experienced politicians.

The other two reform proposals voters were asked to consider in the survey, were focussed on increasing opportunities for citizens to provide input to government decisions. One question asked whether respondents thought it would be better to have more referendums or fewer referendums. Support for more referendums, at 38 percent, was 10 percentage points higher than support for fewer referendums. The reform proposal which attracted the greatest support of all, at 48 percent, was to have a Citizens' Assembly, described to respondents as 'a body made up of randomly selected citizens who consider important policy issues and advise the government'. This follows from democratic innovations in citizen assemblies around the world, for example the Irish Citizens' Assembly. Overall, these results show variation in the degree to which different proposals to reform Australian democracy are supported. Significant proportions of Australians are open to ideas to change and improve the way democracy works in Australia.

Figure 5.6 Support for democratic reforms



Note: Estimates are percentages.

Notes

Figure 5.1: Trust in government

1969 and 1979 data is from the Australian National Political Attitudes Survey (ANPAS); 1993-2025 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'; (1993-2025) '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'; (1993-2025) 'sometimes can be trusted to do the right thing' and 'usually can be trusted to do the right thing' combined.

Figure 5.2: Satisfaction with democracy

1969 and 1979 data is from ANPAS; 1996-2025 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, 1998-2025) 'very satisfied' and 'fairly satisfied'; (1996) 'satisfied' and 'fairly satisfied'. For not satisfied with democracy, the response categories are: (1969-1979) 'not satisfied'; (1996-2025) 'not very satisfied' and 'not at all satisfied'.

Figure 5.3: Support for compulsory voting

For would have voted if voluntary, estimates combine 'definitely would have voted' and 'probably would have voted'. Question wording: 'Would you have voted in the election if voting had not been compulsory?' For supports compulsory voting, estimates combine 'favour compulsory voting' and 'strongly favour compulsory voting'. Question wording: 'Do you think that voting at Federal elections should be compulsory, or do you think that people should only have to vote if they want to?'

Figure 5.4: Support for Australia becoming a republic

Estimates for 'favour republic' combine 'strongly favour becoming republic' and 'favour becoming republic'. Estimates for 'favour [Queen / King] as head of state' combine 'strongly favour retaining the [Queen / King] as head of state' and 'favour retaining the [Queen / King] as head of state'. Question wording: 'Do you think that Australia should become a republic with an Australian head of state, or should the [Queen / King] be retained as head of state?'

Figure 5.5: Support for lowering the voting age

Estimates for 'should lower to 16' combine 'definitely lowered to 16' and 'probably lowered to 16'. Estimates for 'should stay at 18' combine 'probably stay at 18' and 'definitely stay at 18.' Question wording: 'Do you think that the voting age in elections should be lowered to 16, or should it stay at 18?'

Figure 5.6: Support for democratic reforms

Estimates are percentages. The question wording for each of the four items is available in the 2025 Australian Election Study questionnaire on Dataverse.

FOREIGN POLICY

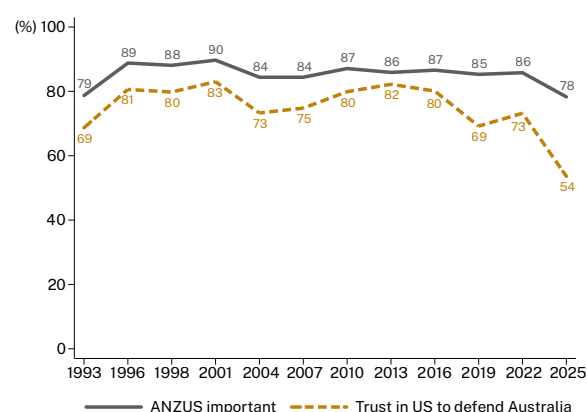
Voters' interest in foreign and defence policy has gained greater prominence in Australian public debate in recent years, and is currently the highest than at any time since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. Public awareness has been triggered by the increasing rivalry between the United States and China, and Australia's relative position between these two Great Powers. At the same time, the war in Ukraine and the ongoing conflict in the Middle East have reinforced concerns about Australia's ability to provide an adequate defence. In response to these security concerns, the then Coalition government signed the AUKUS Agreement in September 2021.

Over the past half century, foreign and defence policy have been marked by a high level of bipartisanship, with little difference between the parties on major policy.³⁶ This was particularly notable with the AUKUS Agreement, when Labor supported this significant departure in defence policy while in opposition, and has promoted it since 2022 while in government. While the parties have exhibited bipartisanship, there have been significant changes in public opinion in response to external events, most notably the Trump presidency in the United States, the rise of China and ongoing concerns about Australia's defence capabilities.

Relations with the United States

The ANZUS Treaty has, since it was signed in 1951, formed the cornerstone of Australia's defence policy and was reinforced by successive US presidents until the election of Donald Trump in his first presidency in 2016. From the public's perspective, the Treaty has two dimensions: its importance to Australian foreign policy; and trust in the US to come to Australia's defence in the event of a threat. Figure 6.1 shows that the ANZUS Treaty remains important to the large majority of the public, varying little since the question was first asked in the AES in 1996. There is a slight decline in its importance — from 86 percent in 2022 to 78 percent in 2025 — but the overall trend suggest widespread and sustained public support.

Figure 6.1 Australia's defence and the United States

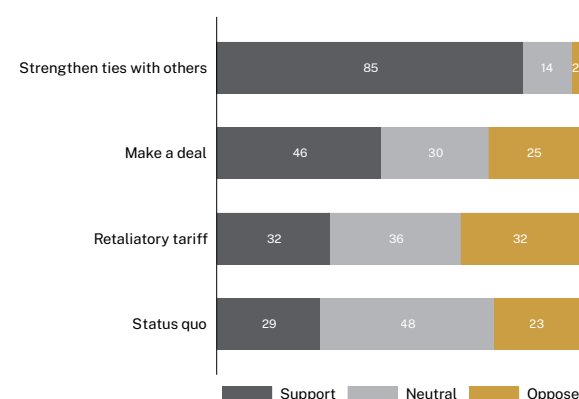


On the second dimension to Australia-US relations — trust in the US to come to Australia's defence — the impact of both Trump presidencies is clear. In 2019, towards the end of the first Trump presidency which brought a meaningful change in postwar US global leadership, trust in the US declined from 80 percent in 2016 to 69 percent in 2019. Trust was partially restored in 2022, in the wake of the AUKUS Agreement and the Biden presidency, climbing to 73 percent. However, with the election of Donald Trump in 2024, trust in the US shows a very significant decline in 2025, to 54 percent. While public support for the ANZUS Treaty remains firm, the public's belief that the US would honour the terms of the Treaty have declined significantly.

The second Trump presidency has also been notable for the introduction of extensive trade tariffs, which were announced on 2 April 2025, or what Trump called 'Liberation Day'. This occurred during the election campaign, just weeks before the May 2025 election. The respondents were asked how the government should respond to the Trump presidency, either by Australia remaining close to the US or by distancing itself. Opinions were equally divided, with half of the respondents opting for a policy of remaining close to the US and half choosing a greater distance. However, there was a strong partisan element underlying these views, and while 61 percent of Labor voters thought Australia should distance itself from the US, 70 percent of Coalition voters thought Australia should remain close.

On the question of how best to respond to the tariffs introduced by the US, the respondents were given four options, ranging from maintaining the status quo to imposing retaliatory tariffs on US imports into Australia. By far the most supported response among the public was to strengthen trading ties with other countries; Figure 6.2 shows that this option was supported by 85 percent of voters. The next most popular option, supported by 46 percent, was to make a deal with the US to remove tariffs, even if it involved some compromise. Around one in three voters favoured retaliatory tariffs, with a similar proportion opposed.

Figure 6.2 Australian response to Trump's trade tariffs

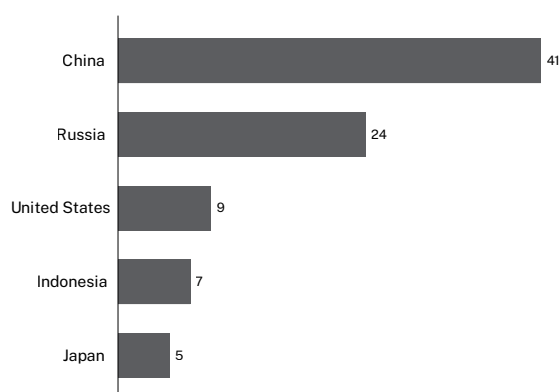


Security threats

Since 1945, few countries have been regarded by the public as representing a serious security threat to Australia. Partial and short-lived exceptions occurred following the Russian invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and Indonesia's role in the East Timor Crisis in 1999. This largely stable pattern changed in the 2000s, with the emergence of China as a major military power and its incursions into the South China Sea and threats to force reunification with Taiwan.

In the 2025 election, Figure 6.3 shows that 41 percent of the respondents said they thought China was 'very likely' to pose a security threat to Australia. Around one in every four respondents also viewed Russia as representing a security threat. Relatively few respondents perceived the US, Indonesia or Japan as possible security threats, though the 9 percent who mentioned the US is three times the proportion recorded in 2022, before the second Trump presidency. (In the first Trump presidency, the 2019 AES recorded a figure of 7 percent).

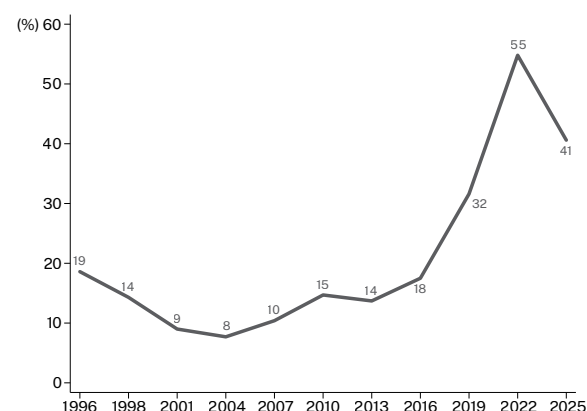
Figure 6.3 Perceptions of 'very likely' security threats to Australia



Note: Estimates are percentages.

While the proportion of respondents in 2025 who regarded China as a threat is large, it represents a decline from 2022, when the figure was 55 percent (Figure 6.4). In general, Coalition voters were more likely to view China as a threat than Labor voters, as were older rather than younger voters. These trends show a marked departure in public opinion over a relatively short period of time, with implications for views about Australia's place in the world and its ability to defend itself if attacked.

Figure 6.4 China as a security threat to Australia

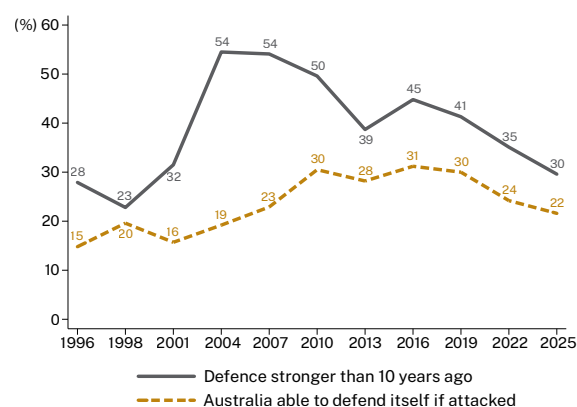


Australia's defence and AUKUS

There is a general recognition among the public that Australia alone would not be able to defend itself if attacked, and that any defence would require the support of the US through the ANZUS Treaty. This is reflected in the proportion who believe Australia could defend itself if attacked in Figure 6.5, which has ranged from 15 percent in 1996, when the question was first asked, to 30 percent in both 2010 and 2019. Since 2019, there has been a significant decline in positive views about Australia's defence, and in 2025 just 22 percent took a positive view.

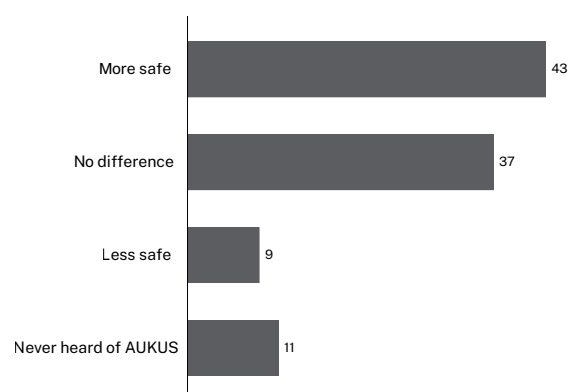
There is also pessimism about Australia's defence capabilities. The proportion who believed defence was stronger than 10 years before peaked in the early 2000s, following Australia's successful military response to the 1999-2000 East Timor Crisis. Since then, the proportion believing that defence was stronger than 10 years ago has declined consistently, dropping to 30 percent in 2025, the lowest figure since the late 1990s.

Figure 6.5 Australia's defence capability



In response to the military rise of China, the AUKUS Agreement was signed in 2021, bringing Australia, the UK and the US together in a co-operative defence arrangement. The centrepiece of the agreement was Australia's acquisition of nuclear powered submarines, in a major departure from previous defence policy. Figure 6.6 shows that 43 percent of the voters in 2025 believed that AUKUS would make Australia safer, with a further 37 percent believing that it would make no difference. Just 9 percent thought it would make Australia less safe. Reflecting the considerable debate about AUKUS in the mass media, only 11 percent said they had not heard of it.

Figure 6.6 AUKUS and Australia's safety



Note: Estimates are percentages.

In terms of partisanship, Coalition voters were most likely to believe that AUKUS would make Australia safer: 59 percent took this view, compared to 40 percent of Labor voters and 29 percent of Green voters. Older voters were more likely to believe AUKUS would make Australia safer, with 58 percent of those aged 60 or more taking this view compared to just 30 percent of those aged 30 or younger.

Notes

Figure 6.1: Australia's defence and the United States

Question wording: 'How important do you think the Australian alliance with the United States under the ANZUS treaty is for protecting Australia's security?' Estimates for ANZUS important combine 'very important' and 'fairly important'. 'If Australia's security were threatened by some other country, how much trust do you feel Australia can have in the United States to come to Australia's defence?' Estimates for trust in US to defend Australia combine 'a great deal' and 'a fair amount'.

Figure 6.2: Australian response to Trump's trade tariffs

Question wording: 'In response to trade tariffs imposed by the United States, would you support or oppose the Australian government taking the following actions on trade?' [Keeping things as they are now / Imposing a retaliatory tariff on imports from the United States / Strengthening Australia's trading relationships with other countries / Making a deal with the United States government to remove tariffs, even if it involves some compromise.]

Figure 6.3: Perceptions of 'very likely' security threats to Australia and Figure 6.4: China as a security threat to Australia

Question wording: 'In your opinion, are any of the following countries likely to pose a threat to Australia's security?' Estimates show the percentage of respondents who thought the country was a 'very likely' threat.

Figure 6.5: Australia's defence capability

Question wording: 'Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statements? Australia's defence is stronger now than it was 10 years ago.

Australia would be able to defend itself successfully if it were ever attacked.' Estimates combine 'strongly agree' and 'agree'.

Figure 6.6: AUKUS and Australia's safety

Estimates are percentages. Question wording: 'Do you think AUKUS, the security partnership between Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom, will make Australia more safe, less safe or make no difference?'

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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 2025 survey is funded by an Australian Research Council Discovery Project (DP210101517). 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, 1987–2025

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	ACSPRI/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
2022	Ian McAllister, Jill Sheppard, Sarah Cameron, Simon Jackman	ARC/ DP210101517	ADA 100114
2025	Ian McAllister, Sarah Cameron, Simon Jackman, Jill Sheppard	ARC/ DP210101517	ADA 100279

All the AES surveys are national, post-election 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 to 2025 surveys were based on samples drawn from the G-NAF. The 1993 AES oversampled in some of the smaller states and because of this the sample was weighted down to a national sample of 2,388 respondents. In 2001 and 2004 an online survey was conducted in parallel with the regular AES. From 2010 to 2016 an online option was available to the survey respondents. Since 2019 a ‘push-to-web’ methodology has been used, with hard copy completion also available to respondents. In 2013, 2022 and 2025 an additional youth sample was collected online in order to strengthen representation of younger voters. The 1993 and 2010–2025 surveys are weighted to reflect the characteristics of the national electorate. The 2025 AES also includes a panel component, based on respondents who were also interviewed in previous waves of the AES, since the panel was established in 2016. The response rate for the 2025 survey is 35 percent, with 2,070 survey responses. The AES survey data harmonised across different waves are available in the Australian Election Study Integrated Time Series Data.

Prior to the AES, three academic surveys of political behaviour were collected by Don Aitkin in 1967, 1969 and 1979, respectively, though 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 Dataverse 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 (www.cses.org). The AES is also a member of the Consortium of National Election Studies (www.cnes.community).

Any results from the AES should cite the Australian Election Study data or this report.

Further information: www.australianelectionstudy.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Australian Election Study (AES) is a major collaborative project and we would like to thank all those who have contributed to the study. The Principal Investigators on the 1987 to 2025 AES surveys include: Clive Bean, Sarah Cameron, David Denemark, Rachel Gibson, David Gow, Simon Jackman, Roger Jones, Toni Makkai, Ian McAllister, Anthony Mughan, Juliet Pietsch, and Jill Sheppard.

The 2025 AES is funded by an Australian Research Council Discovery Project (DP210101517), together with the Australian National University and Griffith University. At the Australian National University we would like to acknowledge and extend particular thanks to: Matthew Gray, Director of POLIS: The Centre for Social Policy Research; Nicholas Biddle, Head of the School of Politics and International Relations; Cathie Gough; Dylan Wang; Perri Chapman; and Jessica Fagan and her team. Dylan Wang from the ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences leads graphic design for this election report series. At Griffith University we acknowledge and thank the School of Government and International Relations Research Support Scheme as well as the following individuals: Juliet Pietsch, Head of School; Huiyun Feng, Deputy Head of School; Max Grömping, Research Director; and Ben Dobson and his team.

The Social Research Centre fielded the 2025 survey, with thanks to Anna Lethborg, Simran Kothiyal and Natasha Vickers on project management, as well as their broader team. The Australian Data Archive prepare the data for public release, support the Integrated Time Series Data, and provide web support, with thanks to Ryan Perry, Weifan Jiang, and Marina McGale.

This research is made possible by the thousands of Australians who completed the Australian Election Study surveys and shared their opinions as captured in this report.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and pay our respect to Elders past and present.

