Trends in Australian Political Opinion
Results from the Australian Election Study
1987–2019

Sarah Cameron & Ian McAllister
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</table>
The Liberal-National Coalition win in the 2019 Australian federal election came as a surprise to the nation. The media and the polls had provided a consistent narrative in the lead up to election day that Labor was headed for victory. When we have unexpected election results, how do we make sense of why people voted the way they did?

The Australian Election Study (AES) provides the most sophisticated and comprehensive source of evidence ever collected on political attitudes and behaviour in Australia. A representative public opinion survey, the AES has been fielded after every federal election since 1987. The survey asks a wide range of questions to discover what shaped voters’ choices at the ballot box—including considerations in the vote decision, the importance of different policy issues, and attitudes towards the political parties and leaders. This provides a wealth of information to understand voter behaviour and how that feeds into election results.

This monograph presents the long-term trends over time in voter attitudes and behaviour in Australia. Situating the 2019 election in historical context highlights unique factors in this election. Many indicators point to citizen detachment from the major political parties, including record low political partisanship (p. 28), rising voter instability (p. 21) and voter distrust in government (p. 99). Compared to previous elections, voters saw clear differences between the parties (p. 27).

The results also highlight how voter attitudes contributed to the election result. Factors advantaging the Coalition in the 2019 election include: the focus on economic issues (p. 32), an area in which the Coalition has a strong advantage over Labor (p. 34); and Bill Shorten’s low popularity in comparison to other party leaders over the past thirty years (p. 88). Although the Coalition won the election, there were factors benefitting Labor. Climate change and the environment were more important issues in this election than in any other election on record (p. 33), an area where Labor's policies are preferred to the Coalition’s (p. 39). And a majority of voters disapproved of the way the Liberal Party handled the 2018 leadership change from Malcolm Turnbull to Scott Morrison (p. 95).

In most cases, our trends run from 1987 until 2019; in some cases, the same questions have been asked in surveys conducted in 1967, 1969 and 1979, allowing us to extend the time series back another two decades. The 1987 to 2019 trends are based on the Australian Election Study (AES) surveys, comprehensive post-election surveys of political opinion that have asked the same questions and used substantially the same methodology. The 1967, 1969 and 1979 surveys are also comprehensive academic surveys of political opinion; all three surveys were conducted by Don Aitkin, who pioneered the use of mass public opinion surveys in the academic study of politics in Australia.
Many individuals have contributed to the Australian Election Study over its more than thirty year history. The current team of investigators includes Ian McAllister, Jill Sheppard, Clive Bean, Rachel Gibson and Toni Makkai. Previous contributors include David Denemark, David Gow, Roger Jones, Anthony Mughan and Juliet Pietsch. Anna Lethborg at the Social Research Centre fielded the 2019 survey. Steven McEachern, Marina McGale and Lawrence Rogers at the Australian Data Archive prepared the data for public release. Emily Downie, Ralph Kenke, Ron Woods and Small Multiples have contributed to the graphic design of this report. Martin Heskins in the ANU School of Politics and International Relations has provided support with project management. The Australian Election Study is funded by the Australian Research Council (details on p. 149). Last but not least, 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.
Followed the election in the mass media

- Television
- Radio
- Newspapers
- Internet

Watched the leaders' debates

- Watched debate
- Did not watch debate

8. The election campaign
9. The election campaign
Interest in the election
- Care a good deal who wins the election
- A good deal of interest in the election

Contacted by candidate or political party
- Contacted by a party during the campaign

10 The election campaign
11 The election campaign
Websites accessed during the election campaign
- Party or candidate campaign sites
- Mainstream news media
- Federal Parliament
- Australian Electoral Commission
- Unofficial online videos

Online activity during the election campaign
- Signed up to receive information from a party or candidate
- Shared unofficial political content online
- Joined a political group on a social networking site
Notes

Followed the election in the mass media

Watched the leaders’ debate
Watched debate includes respondents who watched one or more of the debates in the election campaign. Elections 1990 and 1998-2016 each had one leaders’ debate, in 1993 and 1996 there were two debates, and in 2019 there were three debates.

Contacted by candidate or political party

Discussing the election campaign with others
For 2001 – 2016 estimates combine ‘frequently’ and ‘occasionally’.

Involvement in the election campaign
For attend meeting, the response categories are: (1969) ‘yes’; (1993-2019) ‘go to any political meetings or rallies’. For work for a party or candidate, the response categories are: (1969) ‘yes’; (1993-1998) ‘do any work for a political party or election candidate’; (2001- 2019) ‘show your support for a particular party or candidate by, for example (2019: e.g.), attending a meeting, putting up a poster, or in some other way’. For contribute money to a political party or election candidate, the response categories are: (1969) ‘yes’; (1993-2007, 2013-2019) ‘contribute money to a political party or election candidate’; (2010) combined responses to ‘contribute money to a political party or election candidate by mail or phone’ and ‘contribute money to a political party or election candidate using the internet’. For 2001-2019 all estimates combine ‘frequently’ and ‘occasionally’.

Websites accessed during the election campaign
For party or candidate campaign sites, the response categories are: (2004-2007) ‘party site’, ‘your own MP’s site’, ‘individual candidate site in your electorate’ and ‘other candidate/MPs sites outside your electorate’; (2010-2013) ‘party or candidate campaign sites’; (2016) ‘official party or candidate campaign sites’; (2019) ‘official party or candidate campaign sites (e.g. home pages, blogs, official Facebook profiles, official YouTube channels)’. For unofficial online videos, the response categories are (2007) ‘YouTube; (2010-2013) ‘unofficial online videos’; (2016) ‘unofficial online content (i.e. non-party produced campaign material (e.g. YouTube))’; and (2019) ‘unofficial online content (i.e. non-party campaign material e.g. YouTube)’.

Online activity during the election campaign
For ‘signed up to receive information from a party or candidate’ this includes registering as their follower/friend/supporter on social media.

The election campaign
Voting and partisanship
Election issues
The economy
Politics and political parties
The left-right dimension
The political leaders
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Social issues
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Appendix: Methodology
A long time ago

During the election campaign

Timing of the voting decision

- A long time ago
- During the election campaign

The use of voter prompts on polling day

- Followed ‘How to Vote’ card for House of Representatives
- Voted above the line for Senate

Voting and partisanship
Considerations in the voting decision

- Party leaders
- Policy issues
- Candidates in your electorate
- Parties taken as a whole

Destination of minor party votes in the House of Representatives

- Liberal-National
- Labor
- Not sure / don't know


Notes

Timing of the voting decision
For 1990–2019 during the election campaign combines ‘in the first few weeks of the campaign’, ‘a few days before election day’ and ‘on election day’.

Split ticket voting
Estimates are based on voters preferring a different party in the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Liberal and National parties are treated as a single group.

The election campaign
Voting and partisanship
Election issues
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Appendix: Methodology
preferred party policy on management of the economy

- ALP
- Coalition
- No difference

- 2010
- 2013
- 2016
- 2019

preferred party policy on education

- ALP
- Coalition
- No difference

- 1990
- 1993
- 1996
- 1998
- 2001
- 2004
- 2007
- 2010
- 2013
- 2016
- 2019
Preferred party policy on taxation

Preferred party policy on health

36 Election issues

37 Election issues
Preferred party policy on the environment

Preferred party policy on global warming
Importance of management of the economy in vote decision

- Extremely important
- Quite important
- Not very important

Importance of education in vote decision

- Extremely important
- Quite important
- Not very important
Importance of taxation in vote decision

- Extremely important
- Quite important
- Not very important

Importance of health in vote decision

- Extremely important
- Quite important
- Not very important

45  Election issues
Notes

Most important economic election issues
‘Taxation’ was not included in 1993.

Most important non-economic election issues
In 1996–2019 estimates for health are for ‘Health and Medicare’.
‘Refugees and asylum seekers’ was not included in 2007.

The election campaign
Voting and partisanship
Election issues

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Appendix: Methodology
Government effect on household finances over past year

- Good effect
- Not much difference
- Bad effect

Government effect on country’s finances over past year

- Good effect
- Not much difference
- Bad effect

The economy
Government effect on household finances in a year's time

Government effect on country's economy in a year's time

The economy
Government spending on health

More than now
The same as now
Less than now

Government spending on education

More than now
The same as now
Less than now

60 The economy

61 The economy
Government spending on unemployment benefits

- More than now
- The same as now
- Less than now

Government spending on defence

- More than now
- The same as now
- Less than now

The economy
Government spending on old-age pensions

- More than now
- The same as now
- Less than now

Government spending on business and industry

- More than now
- The same as now
- Less than now

The economy

64 The economy

65 The economy
Government spending on police and law enforcement

- More than now
- The same as now
- Less than now

If lost job how easy to find another in 12 months

- Easy
- Difficult
If spouse / partner lost job how easy to find another in 12 months

- Easy
- Difficult
- Do not have a partner
Notes

Financial situation of household over past year
For become better, estimates combine ‘a lot better’ and ‘a little better’. For become worse, estimates combine ‘a little worse’ and ‘a lot worse’.

Financial situation of country over past year
For become better, estimates combine ‘a lot better’ and ‘a little better’. For become worse, estimates combine ‘a little worse’ and ‘a lot worse’.

Financial situation of household in a year’s time
For will be better, estimates combine ‘a lot better’ and ‘a little better’. For will be worse, estimates combine ‘a little worse’ and ‘a lot worse’.

Financial situation of country in a year’s time
For will be better, estimates combine ‘a lot better’ and ‘a little better’. For will be worse, estimates combine ‘a little worse’ and ‘a lot worse’.

Government spending
Estimates show whether respondents think there should be more or less public expenditure in various policy areas. For more than now, estimates combine ‘much more than now’ and ‘somewhat more than now’. For less than now, estimates combine ‘somewhat less than now’ and ‘much less than now’.

If lost job how easy to find another in 12 months
In 2019 ‘Do not have a job’ was included in the list of responses although was dropped from the analyses for comparability with 2013 and 2016.

If spouse / partner lost job how easy to find another in 12 months
In 2019 ‘Do not have a job’ was included in the list of responses although was dropped from the analyses for comparability with 2013 and 2016.

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Interest in politics

- A good deal
- Some
- Not much
- None

Compulsory voting and likelihood of voting if voluntary

- Supports compulsory voting
- Would have voted if voluntary


72 Politics and political parties

73 Politics and political parties
Political participation in the past five years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Contacted official via email</th>
<th>Contacted official in person or in writing</th>
<th>Worked together with others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Political participation in the past five years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Taken part in a protest</th>
<th>Signed a written petition</th>
<th>Signed an online petition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

74 Politics and political parties
75 Politics and political parties
Feelings about political parties

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

Liberal
Labor
National

Feelings about political parties (continued)

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

Greens
Democrat
One Nation
Perceptions of the role of political parties

- Good deal of difference between parties
- Parties care what people think
- Parties necessary to make political system work

![Graph showing the percentages over time for the role of political parties, with data points at various years and percentages.]

Political participation in the past five years (continued)

Perceptions of the role of political parties
For parties care what people think and parties necessary to make political system work, estimates combine ‘1’ and ‘2’ on the five point scale.

Notes
Compulsory voting and likelihood of voting if voluntary
For supports compulsory voting, estimates are: (1967-1979) ‘compulsory better’; (1987-2019) ‘favour compulsory voting’ and ‘strongly favour compulsory voting’. For would have voted if voluntary, estimates combine ‘definitely would have voted’ and ‘probably would have voted’.

Political participation in the past five years
For contacted official via email the response category is: (2010-2019) ‘contacted a politician or government official by email’. For contacted official in person or in writing the response categories are: (2001-2007) ‘contacted a politician or government official either in person, or in writing, or some other way’; (2010-2019) ‘contacted a politician or government official either in person, or in writing’. For worked together with others the response category is: (2001-2019) ‘worked together with people who shared the same concern’.
Voters' left-right position

Where voters place the parties on the left-right scale

Estimates are means
The political left-right scale runs from 0 (far left) to 10 (far right) with a designated midpoint of 5 (neither left nor right).

83 The left-right dimension
How politicians were rated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Politician</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Bob Hawke*</td>
<td>6.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Howard*</td>
<td>4.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andrew Peacock</td>
<td>4.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Janine Haines</td>
<td>4.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paul Keating</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ian Sinclair</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joh Bjelke-Petersen</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Bob Hawke*</td>
<td>5.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andrew Peacock*</td>
<td>3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Janine Haines</td>
<td>5.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Howard</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paul Keating</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Charles Blunt</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paul Keating*</td>
<td>4.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Hewson*</td>
<td>5.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tim Fischer</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Coulter</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>John Howard*</td>
<td>5.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paul Keating*</td>
<td>4.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cheryl Kernot</td>
<td>5.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tim Fischer</td>
<td>4.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Howard*</td>
<td>5.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kim Beazley*</td>
<td>6.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tim Fischer</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cheryl Kernot</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peter Costello</td>
<td>4.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gareth Evans</td>
<td>3.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pauline Hanson</td>
<td>2.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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).
- * election winners
- main party leaders
### How politicians were rated (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Political Leader</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Tony Abbott*</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kevin Rudd*</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Warren Truss</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Julia Gillard</td>
<td>4.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christine Milne</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Malcolm Turnbull*</td>
<td>4.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bill Shorten*</td>
<td>4.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barnaby Joyce</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Richard Di Natale</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tony Abbott</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Scott Morrison*</td>
<td>5.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bill Shorten*</td>
<td>3.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malcolm Turnbull</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Michael McCormack</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Richard Di Natale</td>
<td>4.02</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Leader characteristics

Estimates are percentages
Estimates combine the percentage who responded that the characteristic described the leader extremely well or quite well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Howard</td>
<td>Paul Keating</td>
<td>John Hewson</td>
<td>Kim Beazley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensible</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>80</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong leadership</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compassionate</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiring</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>36</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decent</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dependable</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>52</td>
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</table>

Estimates are percentages
Estimates combine the percentage who responded that the characteristic described the leader extremely well or quite well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kim Beazley</td>
<td>Paul Keating</td>
<td>John Howard</td>
<td>John Hewson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
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<td>66</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiring</td>
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<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Strong leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dependable</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Leader characteristics

**2004**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>John Howard</th>
<th>Mark Latham</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensible</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong leadership</td>
<td>81</td>
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<td>Competent</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Honest</td>
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<tr>
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**2007**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Kevin Rudd</th>
<th>John Howard</th>
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<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
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**2010**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
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**2013**

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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Strong leadership</td>
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</table>

**Estimates are percentages**

Estimates combine the percentage who responded that the characteristic described the leader extremely well or quite well.

- **election winners**
### Leader characteristics

Estimates are percentages

Estimates combine the percentage who responded that the characteristic described the leader extremely well or quite well.

- **Malcolm Turnbull**  
  - Intelligent: 84%  
  - Knowledgeable: 70%  
  - Sensible: 64%  
  - Competent: 67%  
  - Strong leadership: 50%

- **Bill Shorten**  
  - Intelligent: 55%  
  - Knowledgeable: 64%  
  - Sensible: 64%  
  - Competent: 54%  
  - Strong leadership: 56%

#### 2016

<table>
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#### 2019

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<tr>
<td>Inspiring</td>
<td>40</td>
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</table>

### Attitudes towards the leadership changes

Estimates are percentages

Question asked whether respondents approved or disapproved of the way the party (Labor, 2010 & 2013; Liberal 2016 & 2019) handled the respective leadership changes. For approve, estimates combine ‘strongly approve’ and ‘approve’. For disapprove, estimates combine ‘disapprove’ and ‘strongly disapprove’.

#### 2010

- **Julia Gillard replaced Kevin Rudd**  
  - Approve: 25%  
  - Disapprove: 74%

#### 2013

- **Kevin Rudd replaced Julia Gillard**  
  - Approve: 42%  
  - Disapprove: 58%

#### 2015

- **Malcolm Turnbull replaced Tony Abbott**  
  - Approve: 49%  
  - Disapprove: 51%

#### 2018

- **Scott Morrison replaced Malcolm Turnbull**  
  - Approve: 26%  
  - Disapprove: 74%
The election campaign
Voting and partisanship
Election issues
The economy
Politics and political parties
The left-right dimension
The political leaders

**Democracy and institutions**
Trade unions, business and wealth
Social issues
Defence and foreign affairs
References
Appendix: Methodology
Who the government is run for

- Few big interests
- All the people

Political efficacy and the use of the vote

- Who people vote for can make a big difference
- Who people vote for won't make any difference

Democracy and institutions
It makes a big difference who is in power

Politicians know what ordinary people think
Notes

Satisfaction with democracy

Trust in government
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’ combined. 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.

Who the government is run for
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’.

Political efficacy and the use of the vote
For who people vote for can make a big difference, estimates combine codes ‘1’ and ‘2’. For who people vote for won’t make any difference, estimates combine codes ‘4’ and ‘5’.

Makes a difference who is in power
For it makes a big difference who is in power, estimates combine codes ‘1’ and ‘2’. For it doesn’t make any difference who is in power, estimates combine codes ‘4’ and ‘5’.

Politicians know what ordinary people think
For politicians know what ordinary people think, estimates combine codes ‘1’ and ‘2’. For politicians don’t know what ordinary people think estimates combine codes ‘4’ and ‘5’.

The Queen, the flag and republicanism
For Queen important, estimates combine ‘very important’ and ‘fairly important’. For favour republic, estimates combine (1993–2019) ‘strongly favour becoming republic’ and ‘favour becoming republic’. For favour flag change, estimates combine ‘strongly for flag change’ and ‘for flag change’.

Government control of parliament
The question was not asked in 1996.
Redistribution of income and wealth

- Income and wealth should be redistributed
- Income and wealth should not be redistributed

High tax makes people unwilling to work

- Agree
- Disagree


0 10 20 30 40 50 60% 100%


0 10 20 30 40 50 60% 100%
Notes

The power of trade unions and big business
For unions have too much power, estimates for 1990–2019 combine ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’. For big business has too much power, estimates for 1990–2019 combine ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’.

Class self-image
From 2010–2019 ‘none’ was included in the list of responses and percentages adjusted accordingly.

Trade union membership and support for industrial action
Estimates for stricter laws for unions combine ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’.

Government spending: less tax or more social services
For favours less tax, estimates combine ‘strongly favour reducing taxes’ and ‘mildly favour reducing taxes’. For favours spending more on social services, estimates combine ‘mildly favour spending more on social services’ and ‘strongly favour spending more on social services’.

Redistribution of income and wealth
For income and wealth should be redistributed, estimates combine ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’. For income and wealth should not be redistributed, estimates combine ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’.

High tax makes people unwilling to work
‘Agree’ combines ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’. ‘Disagree’ combines ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘disagree’.

Social issues
Attitudes towards sex and nudity in films and magazines

- Gone too far
- Not gone far enough
- About right

Attitudes towards abortion

- Obtain readily
- Special circumstances
- Banned

Years:
Attitudes towards the legal status of marijuana

- Marijuana should be a criminal offence
- Marijuana should not be a criminal offence

Attitudes towards jail sentences and capital punishment

- Stiffer sentences for criminals
- Reintroduce death penalty for murder


1990: Marijuana should be a criminal offence - 50%
1993: Marijuana should not be a criminal offence - 44%
1996: Stiffer sentences for criminals - 60%
1998: Reintroduce death penalty for murder - 43%
2001: Marijuana should be a criminal offence - 50%
2004: Marijuana should not be a criminal offence - 44%
2007: Stiffer sentences for criminals - 70%
2010: Reintroduce death penalty for murder - 65%
2013: Marijuana should be a criminal offence - 50%
2016: Marijuana should not be a criminal offence - 47%
2019: Stiffer sentences for criminals - 88%
Attitudes towards asylum seeker arrivals by boat

- Boats should be turned back
- Boats should not be turned back

Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration

- Equal opportunity for migrants gone too far
- Number of migrants allowed into Australia gone too far
Attitudes towards the level of immigration into Australia

- Increase immigration
- Keep immigration levels the same
- Reduce immigration

The consequences of immigration

- Immigrants increase crime rate
- Immigrants good for economy
- Immigrants take jobs away from Australian born
- Immigrants make Australia more open to ideas and cultures
Materialist and postmaterialist values

- Materialist
- Mixed
- Postmaterialist

Threat of global warming

- Serious threat
- Not a serious threat

Social issues
Notes

Attitudes towards policies on Indigenous Australians
For government help for Indigenous Australians gone too far, the estimates for 1993–2019 combine ‘much too far’ and ‘too far’. For transfer of land rights to Indigenous Australians gone too far, the estimates for 1990–2019 combine ‘too far’ and ‘not gone far enough’. For transfer of land rights to Indigenous Australians not gone far enough, estimates for 1990–2019 combine ‘not gone far enough’ and ‘not gone nearly far enough’.

Attitudes towards abortion
From 2010–2019 ‘Don’t know’ was included in the list of responses and percentages adjusted accordingly.

Attitudes towards the legal status of marijuana
For marijuana should not be a criminal offence, estimates combine ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’. For marijuana should be a criminal offence, estimates combine ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’.

Attitudes towards asylum seeker arrivals by boat
For stiffer sentences for criminals, estimates combine ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’. For reintroduce death penalty for murder, estimates combine ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’.

Attitudes towards immigration into Australia
For increase immigration, estimates combine ‘increased a lot’ and ‘increased a little’. For keep immigration levels the same, estimates are for ‘remain about the same’. For reduce immigration, estimates combine ‘reduced a little’ and ‘reduced a lot’.

The consequences of immigration
For immigrants increase crime rate, immigrants good for economy, immigrants take jobs away from Australian born, immigrants make Australia more open to ideas and cultures, the response categories are (1996–2019) ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’.

Threat of global warming
Question asks ‘How serious a threat do you think global warming will pose to you or your way of life in your lifetime?’ ‘Serious threat’ combines ‘very serious’ and ‘fairly serious’. ‘Not a serious threat’ combines ‘not very serious’ and ‘not at all serious’.

Attitudes towards the level of immigration into Australia
For equal opportunity for women gone too far, the estimates for 1993–2019 combine ‘much too far’ and ‘too far’. For women should be given preferential treatment, estimates combine ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’.

Attitudes towards asylum seeker arrivals by boat
For stiffer sentences for criminals, estimates combine ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’. For reintroduce death penalty for murder, estimates combine ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’.

The consequences of immigration
For immigrants increase crime rate, immigrants good for economy, immigrants take jobs away from Australian born, immigrants make Australia more open to ideas and cultures, the response categories are (1996–2019) ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’.

Threat of global warming
Question asks ‘How serious a threat do you think global warming will pose to you or your way of life in your lifetime?’ ‘Serious threat’ combines ‘very serious’ and ‘fairly serious’. ‘Not a serious threat’ combines ‘not very serious’ and ‘not at all serious’.

References
Appendix: Methodology
Attitudes towards Australia’s defence capability

- Australia able to defend itself if attacked
- Australia’s defence stronger than 10 years ago

Support for war on terrorism

- Agree
- Disagree
Indonesia as a security threat to Australia

China as a security threat to Australia
Japan as a security threat to Australia

- Very likely
- Fairly likely
- Not very likely

Malaysia as a security threat to Australia

- Very likely
- Fairly likely
- Not very likely


Very likely: 68, 69, 80, 82, 79, 81, 86, 84
Fairly likely: 21, 21, 15, 14, 17, 14, 11, 12
Not very likely: 11, 9, 5, 4, 4, 4, 3, 4


Very likely: 66, 63, 65, 62, 70, 76, 76, 79, 79
Fairly likely: 26, 30, 29, 31, 27, 24, 19, 19, 18
Not very likely: 8, 8, 7, 7, 7, 6, 6, 5, 4
Attitudes towards defence links with the United States
- United States alliance under ANZUS important
- Trust in the United States to come to Australia's defence

Attitudes towards closer relations with Asia
- Relations with Asia gone too far
- Relations with Asia about right
- Relations with Asia not gone far enough
Attitudes towards more trade relations with Asia

- Agree
- Not sure
- Disagree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td></td>
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<td>2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Defence and foreign affairs
Notes

Attitudes towards Australia's defence capability
For Australia able to defend itself if attacked and Australia's defence stronger than 10 years ago, estimates combine 'strongly agree' and 'agree'.

Support for war on terrorism
Question asks whether 'Australia should provide military assistance for the war on terrorism?'. 'Agree' combines 'strongly agree' and 'agree'. 'Disagree' combines 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree'.

Attitudes towards defence links with the United States
For United States alliance under ANZUS important, estimates combine 'very important' and 'fairly important'. For trust in the United States to come to Australia's defence, estimates combine 'a great deal' and 'a fair amount'.

Attitudes towards closer relations with Asia
For relations with Asia gone too far, estimates combine 'gone much too far' and 'gone too far'. For relations with Asia not gone far enough, estimates combine 'not gone far enough' and 'not gone nearly far enough'.

Attitudes towards more trade relations with Asia
Question asks whether 'Australia's trading future lies in Asia'. For agree, estimates combine 'strongly agree' and 'agree'. For disagree, estimates combine 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'.

References
To cite data from the Australian Election Study or the Australian National Political Attitudes Survey please use the following references:


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. Since 1998 the AES has been a member of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) group (see www.cses.org). 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 studies, they have been incorporated in the trends in this report. Details on the earlier surveys are available on the Australian National Political Attitudes Survey Dataverse.

The AES routinely collects data among a nationally representative sample of voters and among major party candidates standing for election. Both the voter and candidate instruments combine a common set of questions. 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. Each of the surveys conducted to date has had a central theme:

1987 The economy
1990 The environment and environmentalism
1993 Political culture
1996 National identity and citizenship
1998 Constitution, rights and minorities
1999 Constitutional referendum
2001 Challenges to governance
2004 The decline of political parties
2007 Democracy and representation
2010 The dynamics of political choice.
2013 Volatility and electoral change
2016 - 2019 Political engagement among the young

All of the data are publicly available from australianelectionstudy.org and from Dataverse (dataverse.ada.edu.au/dataverse/aes).
Voters

All the Australian Election Study (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 survey was based solely on a sample 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. The overall response rates are listed below. In 2001 and 2004 an online survey was conducted in parallel with the regular AES. 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.

### Australian Election Study voter response rates, 1987 – 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total sample</th>
<th>Valid response</th>
<th>Effective response (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1,825</td>
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<td>3,606</td>
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<td>4,950</td>
<td>3,023</td>
<td>62.8</td>
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<td>3,000</td>
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<td>61.8</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>3,502</td>
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<td>57.7</td>
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<td>2,010</td>
<td>55.4</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>4,250</td>
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<td>5,175</td>
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</table>

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

Candidates

The Australian Candidates Study (ACS) surveys are conducted in parallel with the surveys of voters. In 1987 all candidates for the House of Representatives and Senate were surveyed. Between 1990 and 2016 the surveys were restricted to all major party candidates, plus identifiable Greens and other environmental candidates. This restriction was designed to cut costs, since about half of the total number of candidates were minor party or independent candidates, almost all of whom lost their deposits. In 1993 the criteria were broadened to include non-major party candidates whom it was anticipated would obtain more than 10 per cent of the first preference vote. In 2019 all candidates were contacted if they supplied a valid email address on their nomination papers.

### Australian Candidate Survey response rates, 1987 – 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>House of Representatives</th>
<th>Senate</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total contacted</th>
<th>Valid response</th>
<th>Effective response (%)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>868</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>612</td>
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<td>943</td>
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<td>1,514</td>
<td>1,278</td>
<td>482</td>
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The 1987 and 2016 elections were double-dissolution elections for the Senate. Other elections are half-Senate. The response rate is estimated as valid responses / total contacted.

Full technical details of the sampling methodology and question wording is available in the survey codebooks, available at www.australianelectionstudy.org.
australianelectionstudy.org

> Access complete data files and documentation to conduct your own analysis

> Explore interactive charts to examine differences in political attitudes by age, gender, education level and vote

> Download Australian Election Study reports and articles

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