Political Voices Past, Present and Future

From ADS Founder John Black

Forming long-term stable majorities for Labor or the Liberals in the House of Representatives has been challenged by the loss of their historical bases of primary vote support during the past 40 years, among Tradies and Miners for Labor, and among Professionals for the Liberals
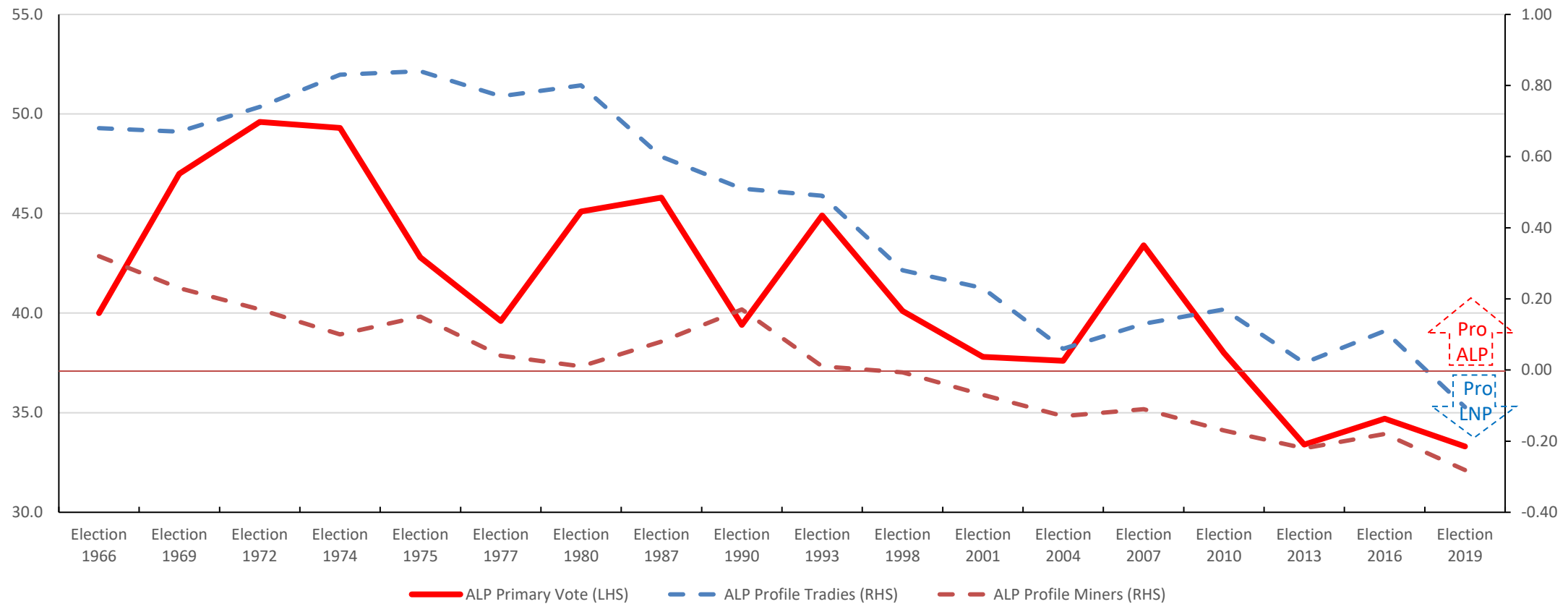
The Liberals absorbed the Labor 2PP losses among Tradies in urban, blue collar seats but eventually these gains were outweighed by the loss of the fast-growing urban group of Professionals, especially female Professionals

Liberal factional heavies welcomed the Tradies as Howard Battlers in the outer suburbs, but derided the loss of female Professionals as Doctors Wives, not apparently realising that Doctors were becoming a female-dominated Profession

Decline in Labor's working-class Urban profile among Tradies and its Regional profile among Miners has dragged down Labor's national primary vote since the 1970s

Per capita Labor votes from Tradies and Miners book-ended Labor's Primary vote

Legend: ALP Primary Vote (LHS) — ALP Profile Tradies (RHS) — ALP Profile Miners (RHS)

The Liberal Party absorbed these Labor losses in blue-collar seats, but eventually these gains were outweighed by its loss of Professional voters

Since 2004 Liberal losses among fast growing Female Professionals outweighed Tradie gains

Legend: —— Lib Primary Vote (LHS)   - - - Coalition Profile Female Professionals (RHS)
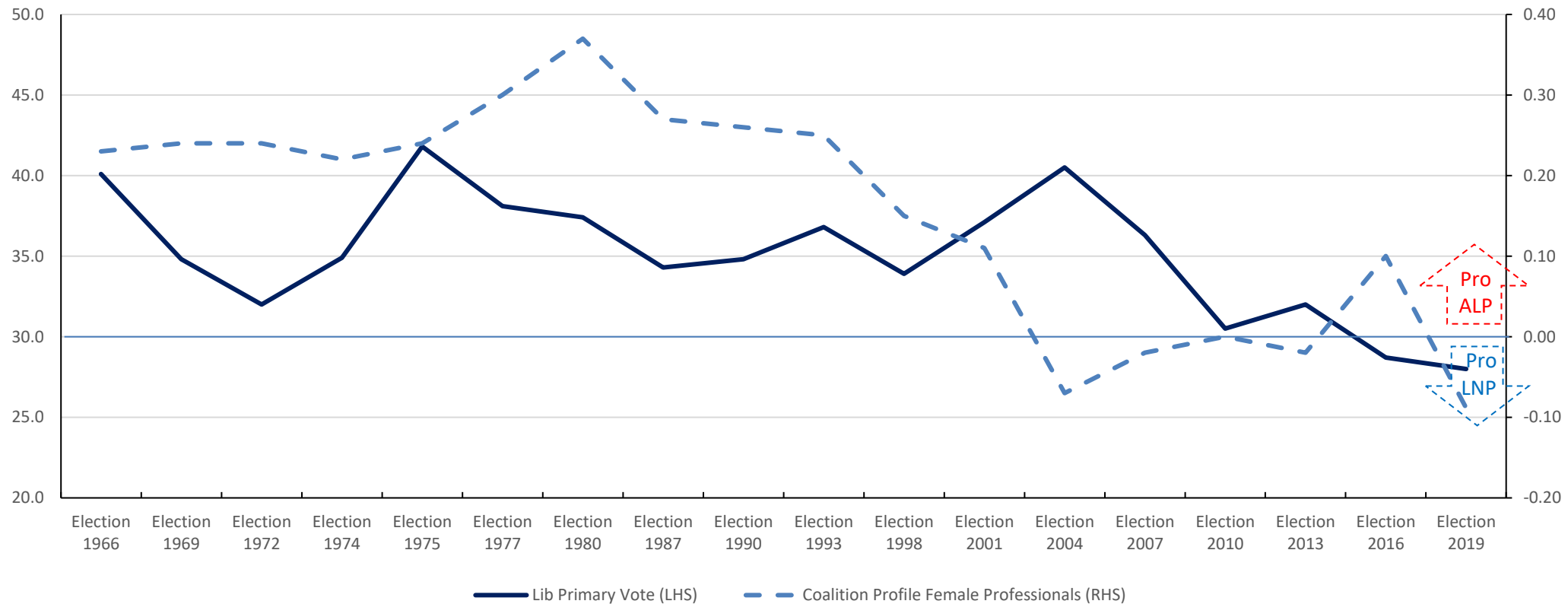
As Tradies began to split their votes 50/50 between Labor and the Coalition, their growth began to slow, minimising Liberal gains. Numbers of Miners continued to grow sharply to 2012, but sent their votes to the National Party

Growth in male Tradies* slowed as their Labor profile evaporated, neutralizing their political clout

Male Tradies
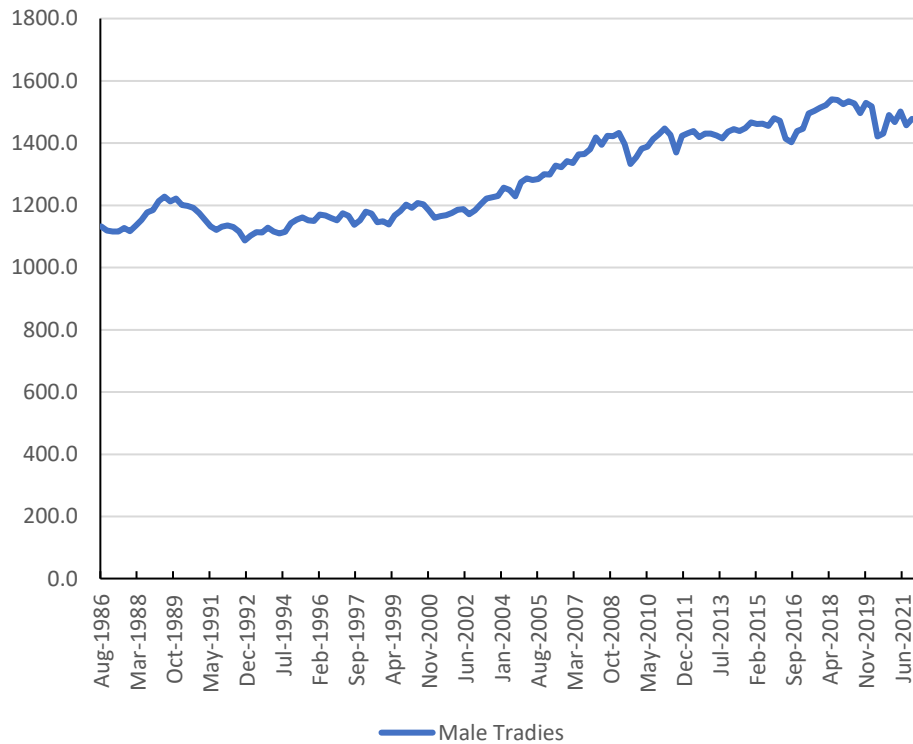
Due to the collapse of their Labor profile, growth in Miners* made big gains for the National Party

Miners Persons

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Female Professionals increasingly found themselves living in higher-SES suburbs, voting for Labor or Centre Left parties, initially the Democrats in the 1980s, then the Greens in the cities and Independents in the regions
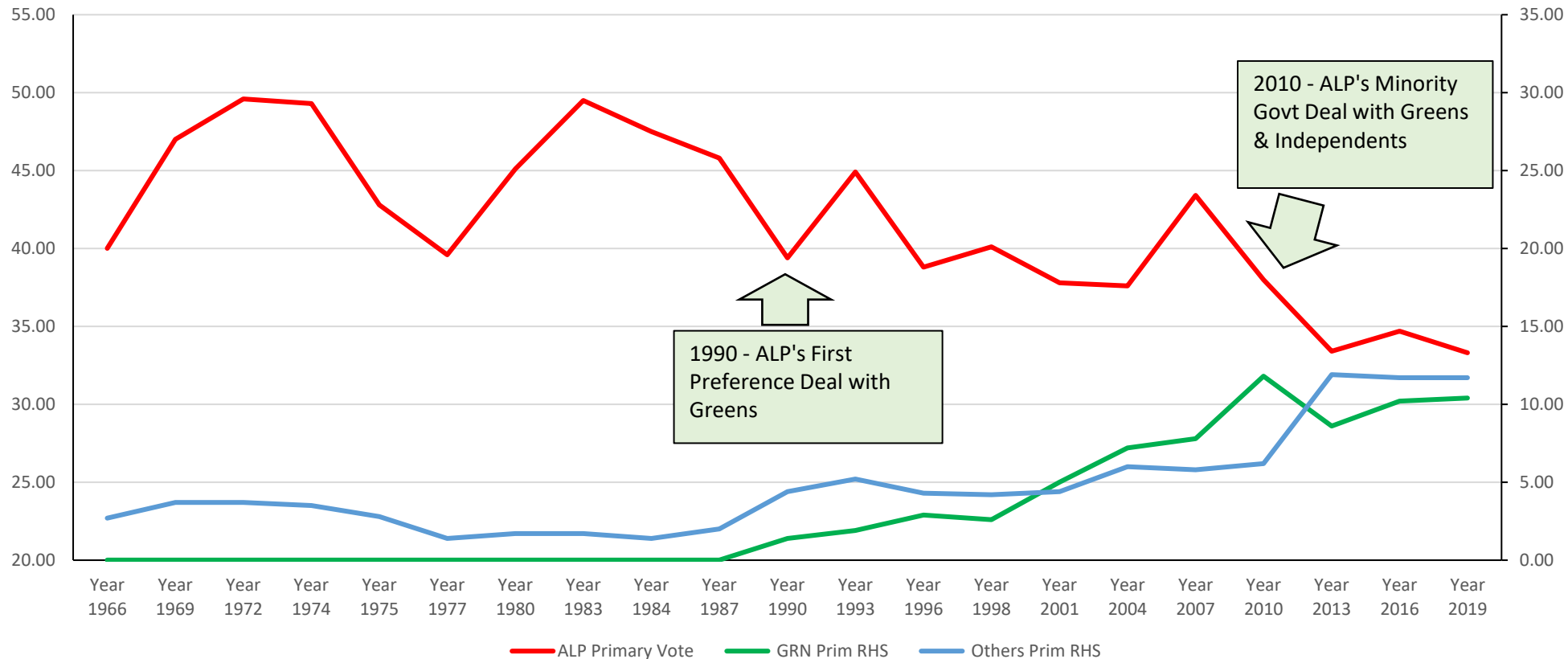
When living in the same inner suburban seats with Green-voting students, often in the same house, this combined demographic came to dominate the Labor Party vote, terrifying the ALP factions and emerging as a growing existential threat to Labor MPs from the Left

In the regions, sitting National Party MPs had already benefited from Labor's loss of support among Tradies. The loss of more Labor votes among Miners, just as this group began a spectacular growth phase, breathed life into the Nationals, and made them a threat from the right to the Liberals

The Labor primary vote began to leak to the Greens after Labor deals for Green support in 1990 and again after the 2010 deal with Greens and Others
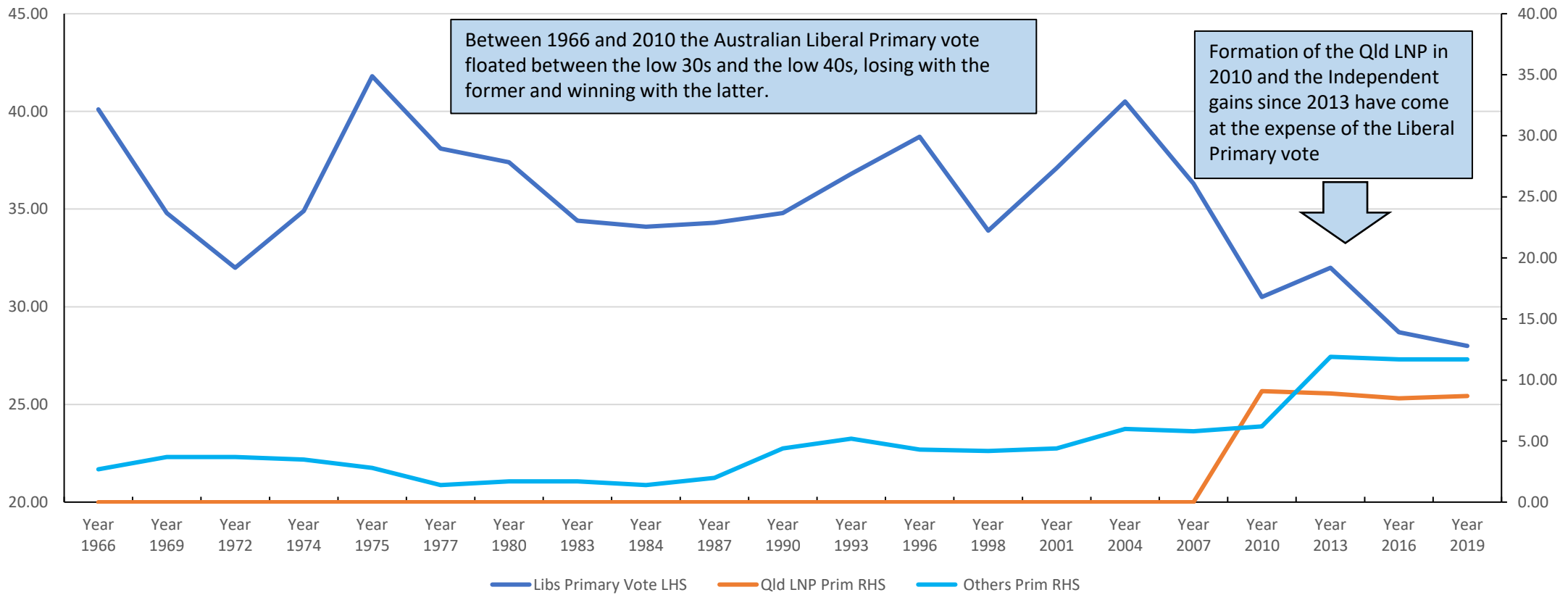
Labor Primary Votes leaking to Greens and Independents

2010 - ALP's Minority Govt Deal with Greens & Independents

1990 - ALP's First Preference Deal with Greens

ALP Primary Vote — GRN Prim RHS — Others Prim RHS

Source: AEC

The regional Liberal primary vote was split by the formation of the Qld LNP in 2010 and then eroded by growing loss of support from urban professionals

Liberal Primary votes lost to Qld LNP and eroded by Independents

Between 1966 and 2010 the Australian Liberal Primary vote floated between the low 30s and the low 40s, losing with the former and winning with the latter.

Formation of the Qld LNP in 2010 and the Independent gains since 2013 have come at the expense of the Liberal Primary vote

Legend: Libs Primary Vote LHS — Qld LNP Prim RHS — Others Prim RHS

As major parties lose their 'Safe' seats to Independents, their more marginal seats increasingly rely on minor party preferences to win ...

Labor and Lib Primary Votes and Seats Won on First Preferences

Legend: ■ Seats won on First Preferences — Combined ALP/Lib vote RHS

Source: AEC & ADS

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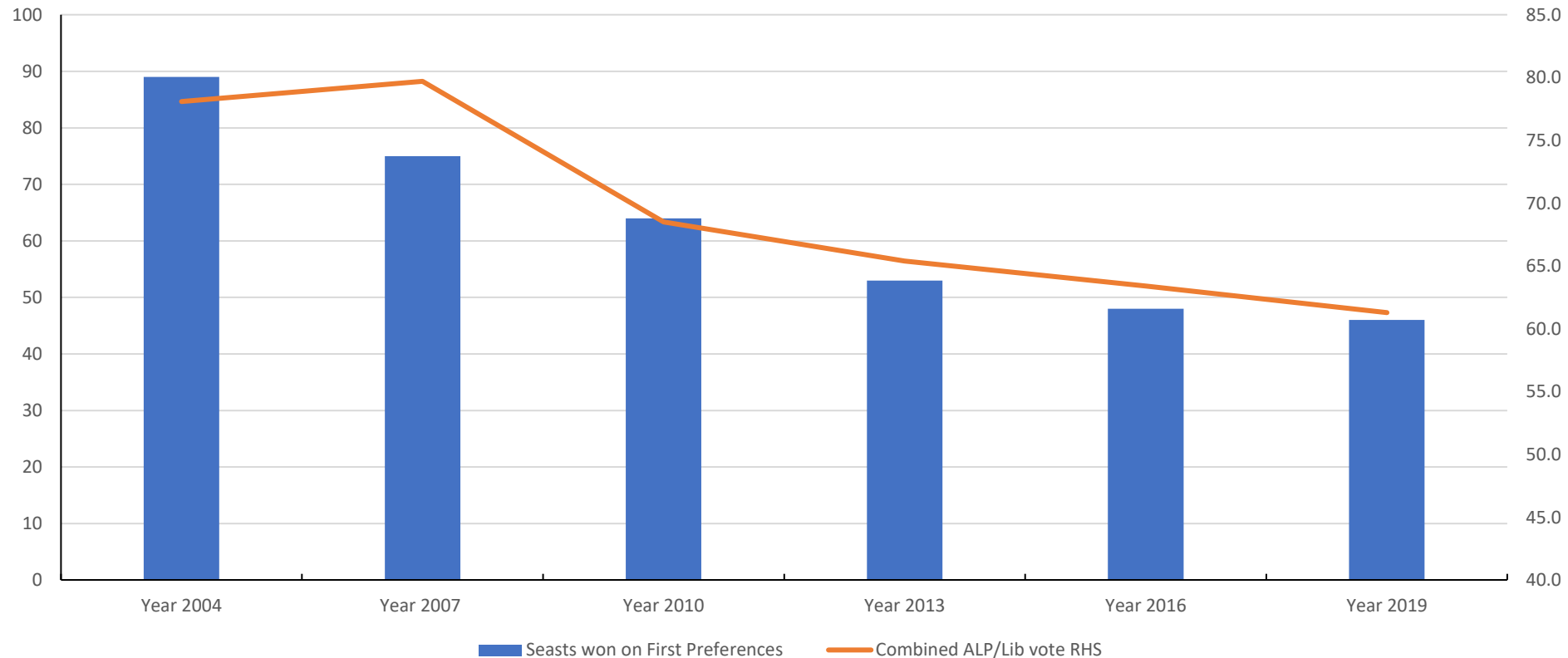
Labor and Liberals took for granted their demographic bases in their safe seats and relied on Greens and minor parties to retain their marginal seats. Then the Greens and minor parties began to win their safe seats

Labor and Lib Primary Votes and Seats lost to Independents and Greens

Source: AEC & ADS

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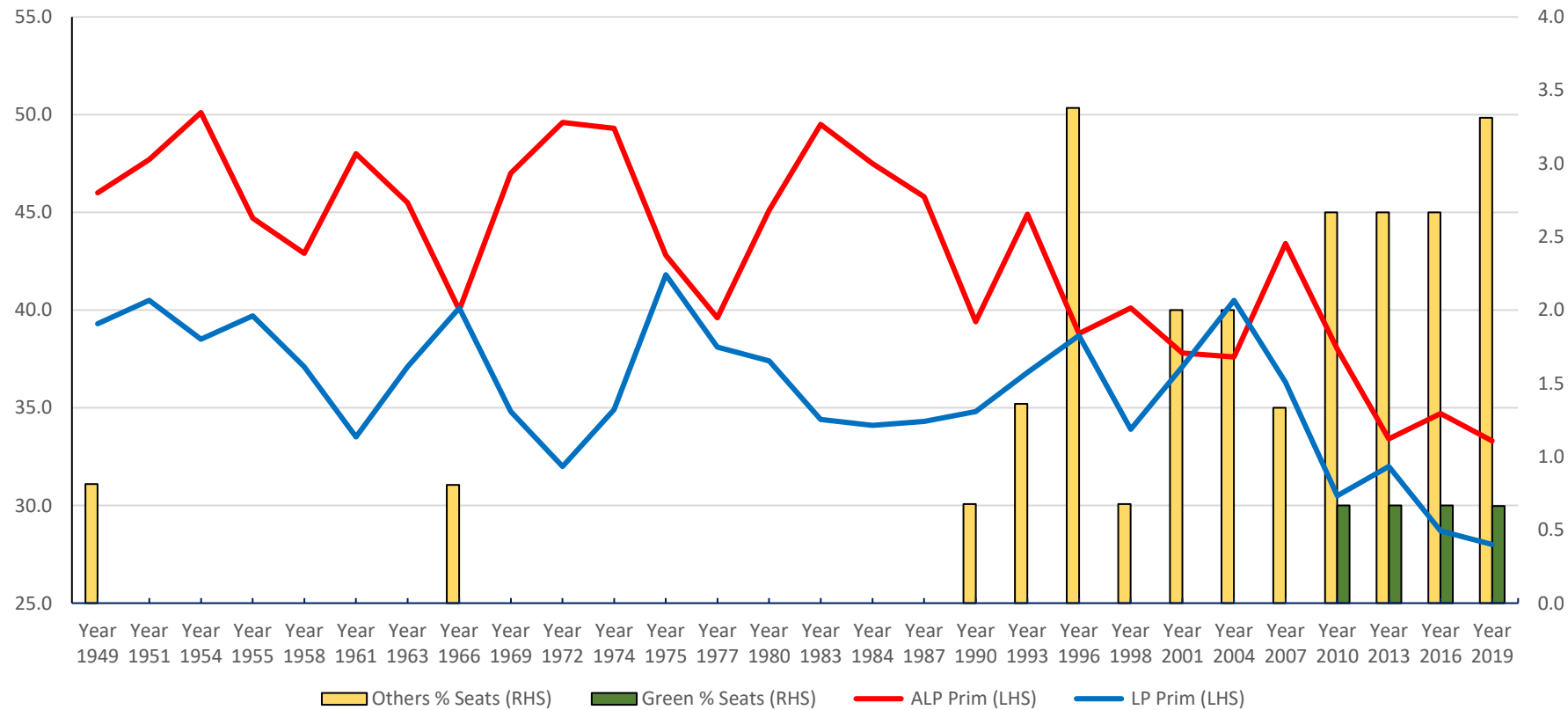
ADS has been modelling votes over the past 50 years to track the shifting demographic personas which define the Labor and non-Labor Two Party Preferred (2PP) voters. Who are these voters and what makes them tick?

Of additional interest has been the demographics which consistently swing between the major parties every election and the demographics which consistently place greater weight on the quality of their candidates, rather than on their party affiliation. Who are Swinging Voters? Who are Personal Voters?

The use of these statistical techniques allows ADS to track changes in underlying demographics, such as the loss of unskilled jobs due to Digital Disruption and the growth of Professional jobs, particularly for women. How did these demographic changes impact the 2019 Vote? What of 2022?

Strong Labor and Coalition demographics in 2019, despite in some cases* starting to swing their vote to the other major party. Given February 2022 polls those traditional ALP groups lost in 2019 are returning to Labor

Labor 2PP 2019 Profile

Wage and Salary Earners*
Long term ALP voters*
Persons aged 20-44
Third Income Quartile
Female Graduates Society & Culture
Couples with no kids or 1 kid
Non-English speaking migrants
Male Clerks
Muslims
Gay Persons
TAFE students

LNP 2PP 2019 Profile

English speaking Persons
Long term Coaliton voters
Persons aged 45 and over
Protestants
Managers*
Self Employed
Retirees on Investment Income*
Health Care Card holders
Agricultural workers
Females working Health
Females Trained in Education

* Still strong Labor or Liberal Demographics, despite swinging to other party

Source: AEC & ADS https://www.elaborate.net.au/category/election-profiles/

In 2019, high SES groups dominated seats swinging to Labor, while the Libs moved in on Labor's blue-collar heartland. In 2022, its heartland could return to ALP and high SES groups to more Voices candidates

Swinging to Labor 2PP Profile in 2019

High SES persons who voted Liberal in 2016
Under 44 years or over 80 years
Very well educated male and female Profs
Parents with kids at Independent schools
Architects, Scientists, Artists, Lawyers etc
Very high income Earners
Wealthy Families high investment incomes
Self-employed with high incomes
Migrants from Western Europe & USA
Gay Persons
Big spenders at Dentist and Optometrist

Swinging to LNP 2PP Profile in 2019

Many long term Labor Demographics
Working Families from former ALP base
Unskilled blue collar - Truckies, Labourers
Digitally Disrupted - jobs under threat
Young couples with up to three children
Skilled blue collar workers
Lots of Welfare Churn from Tax A and B
Last of Male Tradies leaving Labor
TAFE Grads with Certificates
Small Activist Faiths, eg Pentecostals, Salvos
Single Parents

And with fading national profiles, marginal seat wins increasingly rely on popular local candidates and factional gaffes by opposing major parties …

2019 seats won by Labor, despite national model predicting non-Labor win

Electorate	State	ALP 2016 2PP	ALP 2PP 2019	Predicted ALP 2PP 2019	Residual ALP 2PP 2019 *	Comments pre-selections and campaigns
Richmond	NSW	53.96	54.08	44.80	9.28	Justine Elliot - won for ALP in 2004 and held ever since. Assisted by big Green primary vote. ALP is in trouble here when she retires, as this is a huge personal vote for Elliot.
Gilmore	NSW	49.27	52.61	45.86	6.75	Won by ALP's Fiona Phillips. Sitting Liberal MP Ann Sudmalis retired. Scott Morrison parachuted former Labor Party President Warren Mundine in as Candidate over local Grant Schultz who ran as Independent.
Eden-Monaro	NSW	52.93	50.85	44.25	6.60	Won by ALP's Mike Kelly, former MP from 2007 to 2013 and since 2016. Retained by equally popular Kristy McBain in 2020 by-election.
Lingiari	NT	58.19	55.46	48.53	6.93	Won by long standing sitting ALP MP Warren Snowden with seven percent personal vote above predictions. His retirement will impact 2022 outcome and not in a good way for Labor.
Lyons	Tas	53.83	55.18	49.40	5.78	Retained by ALP sitting MP since 2016 Brian Mitchell, despite predicted close Liberal win. Lib candidate was sacked after anti-Muslim comments, shedding votes to Nats and to ALP.
Bendigo	Vic	53.87	59.04	48.63	10.41	Retained by sitting ALP MP 2013, Lisa Chesters, despite computer predicting narrow Coalition win. This is another huge personal vote for a Labor female MP.
McEwen	Vic	56.00	55.02	48.93	6.09	Retained by sitting ALP MP since 2010 Rob Mitchell, despite computer predicting narrow Coalition win.
Corangamite	Vic	50.03	51.07	45.24	5.83	Won by ALP candidate Libby Coker against high profile Liberal MP Sarah Henderson, despite predicted Coalition win.
Brand	WA	61.43	56.66	49.92	6.74	Comfortable win for sitting ALP MP since 2016 Madeleine King, despite prediction of a narrow Liberal win.

* NOTE: Model used here explained 84% variance and had standard error of estimate of 4.5%.

Labor lost half as many seats as the Coalition due to a spectacular own goal in Lindsay, a popular Liberal candidate in Banks and two lucky rolls of the dice

2019 seats won by Liberals, despite national model predicting Labor win

Electorate	State	ALP 2016 2PP	ALP 2PP 2019	Predicted ALP 2PP 2019	Residual ALP 2PP 2019 *	Comments pre-selections and campaigns
Lindsay	NSW	51.11	44.96	54.52	-9.56	Won by Liberal Melissa McIntosh after leaks re office of local ALP MP Emma Husar. ALP residual slumped to minus 9.6 percent, electing Libs.
Banks	NSW	48.56	43.74	52.92	-9.18	Won by Libs sitting MP since 2013 David Coleman despite model predicting Labor win. This is a big bonus for Coleman due to local factors.
Bass	Tas	55.42	49.59	51.83	-2.24	Won by Lib Bridget Archer despite computer predicted a close ALP victory. This was a smaller residual, less than one Standard Error of Estimate, so could simply be statistical error.
Chisholm	Vic	47.09	49.43	51.49	-2.06	Won by new Liberal candidate Gladys Liu, despite computer predicting Labor win and resignation of former Lib MP Julia Banks. This was a smaller residual, less than one Standard Error of Estimate, so could simply be statistical error.

* NOTE: Model used here explained 84% variance and had standard error of estimate of 4.5%.

ADS has carried out ongoing testing and modelling over the past 50 years to get best estimates of a successful campaign and/or a popular candidate, using available State and Federal seat data, from both houses.

The strongest and most objective assessment found by ADS for modelling individual Federal seat performance at an election is based on the current underlying national demographic profiles predicting 2PP votes in each seat.

This computer predicted 2PP vote for each seat is then subtracted from the actual 2PP vote to give an objective estimate of the impact of local factors.

A good ALP campaign is one that takes 2PP votes from the opposing Coalition candidate and Vice Versa. As the 2PP votes total 100 percent, these residuals sum to zero.

The Personal Vote: those stable, local demographics voting for the familiar Candidate ahead of their Party and those mobile aspirationals, who vote for the Party, but can change Parties readily, including to Voices

Personal voters who typically know their MP

Mainstream Australian Born
Catholic/Anglican/Uniting
Occasional Church Goers
Public Servants: Teachers and Health Care
Private: Admin Support/Utilities/Services
Some Disabled and Carers
Lower SES/Income under $50k
Older retired persons with Health Care Card
Living in the same house for long period
Separate home, fully-owned
Married Empty Nesters

Voters sticking with the Party System

Aspirational Parents, often migrants
Pentecostals/Hindus/Muslims
Two full-time jobs
Typically aged in late thirties
One or Two Kids in Independent schools
Professional Consultants
Wholesale/Construction/Real Estate/Admin
Mobile/Renters
Time-poor with jobs, kids & cricket coaching
Higher SES and Incomes
Swinging Voters on the way up

With their demographic bases of support eroded, poor candidate selection by factional bosses has left both major parties vulnerable to defeat in what were once their safest seats

2019 seats won by Independents or Greens, despite national model predicting Coalition or Labor wins

Electorate	State	ALP 2016 2PP	ALP 2PP 2019	Predicted ALP 2PP 2019	Residual ALP 2PP 2019 *	Comments pre-selections and campaigns
Kennedy	Qld	43.26	35.49	39.91	-4.42	Won in 1993 by Nationals' Bob Katter who became Independent in July 2001. Model infers Kennedy should still be safe National on 60 percent plus 2PP. But tell that to the Man in the Big Hat.
Mayo	SA	46.73	47.46	39.96	7.50	Won in 2016 by Rebekha Sharkie and retained in 2019 against Liberal Georgina Downer on her second attempt. Model predicts should be safe Lib.
Indi	Vic	44.90	37.27	40.02	-2.75	Won by Independent Helen Hayes on first attempt after endorsement from former Ind MP Cathy McGowan and despite computer predictions of safe Liberal seat. This seat was won on the emerging Voices' profile.
Warringah	NSW	38.91	47.88	39.60	8.28	Won by Independent Zali Steggall against local MP and former PM Tony Abbott, whose 2PP vote was 8.3 percent below computer predictions. This negative 2PP for Abbott gave Steggall a boost, but Voices' profile also impacted here.
Clark	Tas	65.33	66.17	62.50	3.67	Won in 2010 by Left Wing Independent Andrew Wilkie and retained since. Model says should be safe Labor and infers Labor could be as vulnerable as the Liberals to a grassroots Left Wing campaign opposed to gaming.
Melbourne	Vic	67.00	67.06	73.81	-6.75	Retained by Green Adam Bandt despite computer predicting very safe ALP seat. Labor preference deals with Greens since 1990 - and growth in professional demographics have left Labor as vulnerable as the Liberals in 'safe' seats.

* NOTE: Model used here explained 84% variance and had standard error of estimate of 4.5%.

The Coalition and Labor parties in 2022 are vulnerable to well-funded and more professionally-managed "Voices" campaigns run by local activists, particularly when factionalised party machines select a favourite candidate with a negative personal vote, as this gives a leg-up to a Voices campaign

ADS Modelling of booth-level profiles in a selection of Urban and Rural 2019 seats won or strongly contested by Independent or Green candidates, shows Voices candidates attracted support from some fast growing demographics, including Agnostics and better-educated, professional women

Economic trends infer the current demographic base of Voices candidates is likely to grow over time and, with a Labor win likely in 2022, this base could prove a bigger threat to Labor in 2025 than it is to the Liberals in 2022

Voices Candidates Two Candidate Preferred (2CP) demographic profiles, based on booths in Kooyong*, Warringah, Wentworth, Indi and Mayo**

Profile of booths voting for Voices 2CP

No Religion Stated
Well-educated female Professionals
Highly paid, aged 25-44, mainly female
Younger women often married, one child
Older women often not married, no kids
Urban couples with two full time jobs
ALP and Green voters
Mobile voters/Renters
Gay Persons
Hospitality/Media/Admin/Arts
Male Public Admin & Teachers

Profile of booths sticking with Libs or Nats

Wealthy, older, retired couples
Living in large, fully-owned homes
Seniors Card holders
Managers/Farmers/Self Employed
Real Estate/Retail/Health/Education
Female Part Time Clerical & Sales Workers
Children in Independent Schools
Churchgoers including
Anglican/Uniting/Presbyterian
Orthodox/Jewish/Pentecostals
Migrants Middle East and China

* Green Julian Burnside's votes and hence his profile came from Greens, ALP and Voices candidates and hence is the same as the other Seats here.

**Rebekha Sharkie was Centre Alliance in 2019 but her profile then included the Greens and ALP (and in 2022 she is support by the Voices team).

The 25 seats in 2022 which contained the highest Computer Predicted 2CP Votes for Voices candidates

	State	Voices Predicted 2CP votes	2019 2PP ALP Vote on 2022 seats	2019 2PP LNP on 2022 Seats	Female Professionals	No Religion Stated Persons
Sydney	NSW	63.5	68.7	31.33	38.06	60.0
Melbourne	Vic	63.2	67.8	32.20	40.87	61.8
Grayndler	NSW	58.9	73.8	26.17	41.16	53.0
Macnamara	Vic	58.5	56.1	43.90	40.43	52.7
Clark	Tas	57.3	66.2	33.83	29.06	52.9
Cooper	Vic	56.2	76.2	23.80	33.75	46.0
Brisbane	Qld	56.2	45.1	54.92	37.26	47.8
Canberra	ACT	55.1	67.1	32.92	39.26	53.3
Boothby	SA	55.0	48.6	51.38	32.71	46.7
Griffith	Qld	54.6	52.9	47.14	37.97	45.3
Adelaide	SA	54.5	58.2	41.82	31.79	43.9
Kingston	SA	54.3	61.9	38.06	19.13	51.9
Higgins	Vic	54.3	46.3	53.70	40.01	46.7
Wills	Vic	54.2	75.7	24.30	33.48	40.9
Perth	WA	54.0	53.2	46.80	33.05	45.7
Wentworth	NSW	54.0	40.2	59.85	41.70	47.2
Bendigo	Vic	53.3	58.9	41.10	25.28	48.8
Franklin	Tas	53.2	62.2	37.79	24.66	50.5
Richmond	NSW	53.2	54.1	45.92	23.47	46.8
Ballarat	Vic	53.1	60.3	39.70	24.58	48.5
Solomon	NT	53.0	53.1	46.92	26.25	46.8
Warringah	NSW	52.8	47.9	52.12	36.17	45.8
Mayo	SA	52.8	47.5	52.54	25.39	52.4
Kooyong	Vic	52.7	43.6	56.40	40.36	46.2
Moncrieff	Qld	52.7	34.6	65.36	21.69	43.6

There are 25 seats listed here, in diminishing order of predicted Voices Two Candidate Preferred (2CP) vote.

These seats contain large proportions of key drivers of the Voices votes in 2019: Female Professionals and those with No Religion provided or Stated.

The 2PP vote shown here is a theoretical construct from the AEC to split the Preferred Vote between the major political groups: Labor and Liberal.

The 2CP vote actually determines the winner.

Five of these seats are currently or recently represented/endorsed by Greens (Melbourne) or by Voices (Clark, Wentworth, Warringah and Mayo).
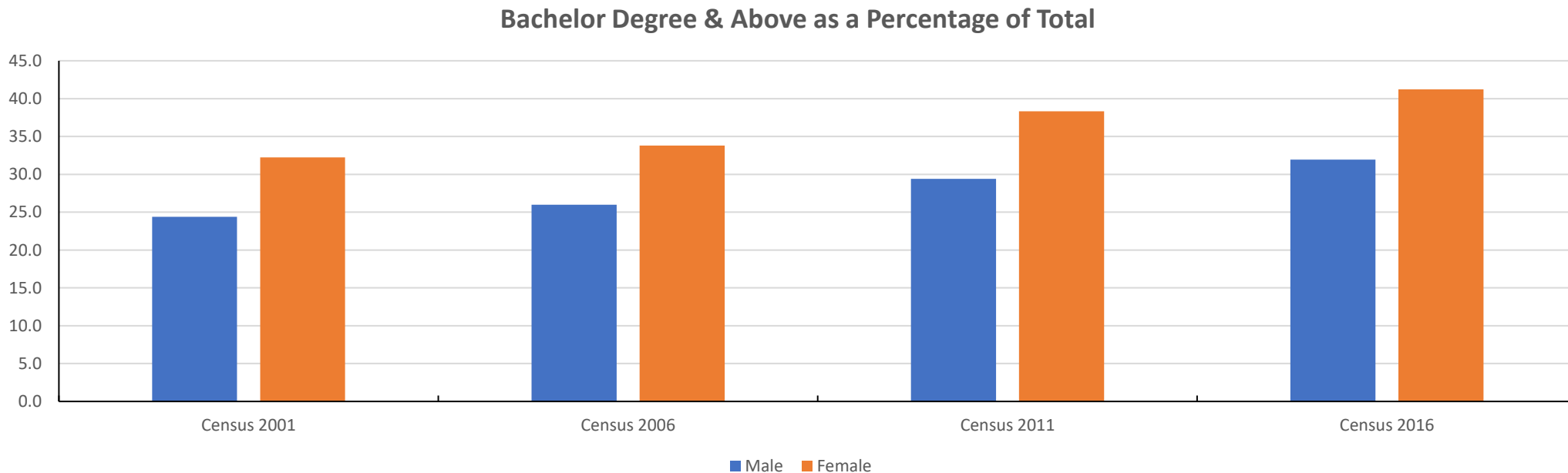
The distribution of the predicted Voices 2CP votes is strongly biased towards the inner-city, high-SES seats and includes the seats of a number of current and former Opposition Leaders and Prime Ministers

The computed predicted Voices 2CP votes for Sydney (left) and Melbourne (right)
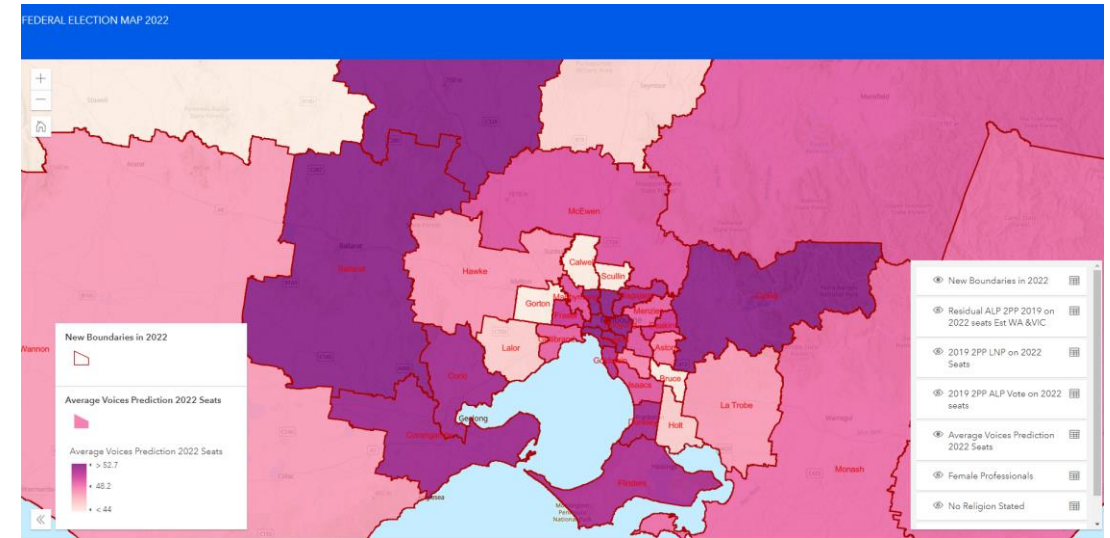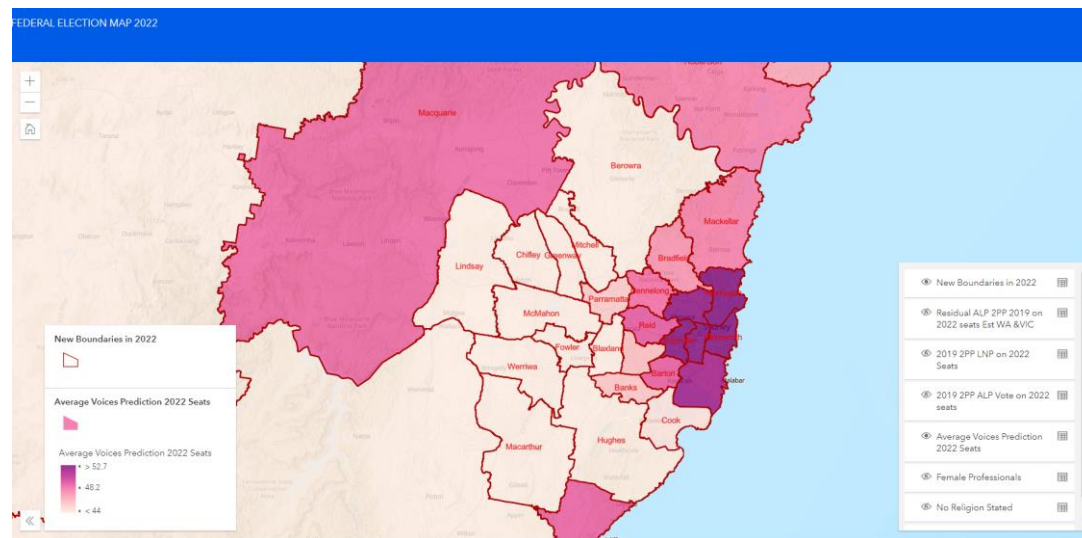
Between Census 2001 and Census 2016, the percentage of women with a qualification of Bachelor Degree and above rose by nine percent, compared to 7.6 percent for men, driving growth in Professional Women
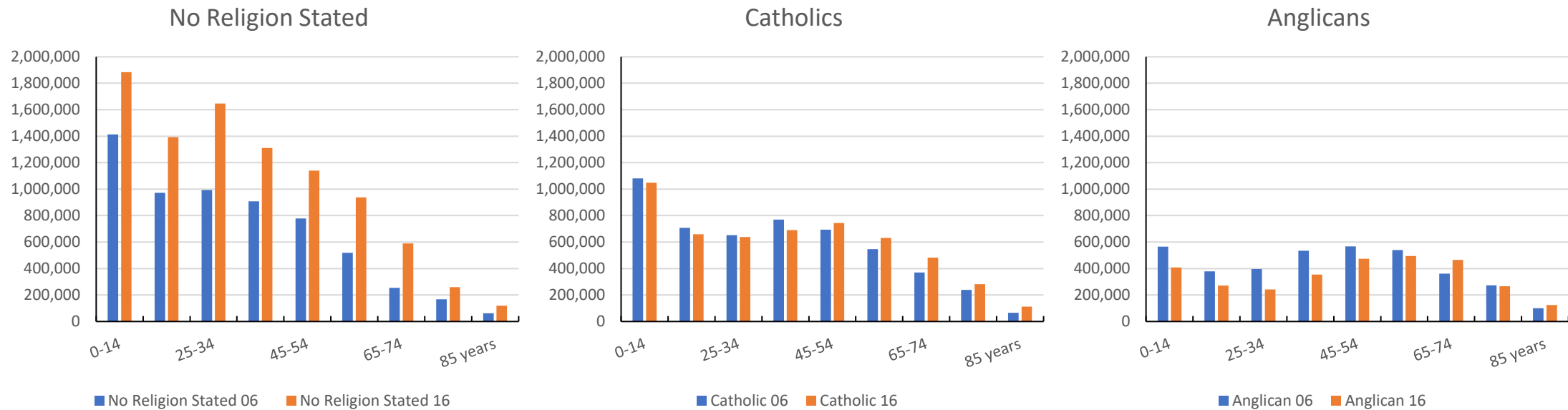
Bachelor Degree and above for Males and Females between 2001 and 2016

Bachelor Degree & Above as a Percentage of Total

Source: AEC & ADS

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Between Census 2006 and Census 2016, those persons with No Religion Stated* grew by 9.1 percent, at the expense of Catholics (down 3.2 percent and Anglicans (down 5.4 percent).

The passing of time will mean a greater loss of Catholics and Anglicans, compared to No Religion Stated


No Religion Stated

Catholics

Anglicans

■ No Religion Stated 06   ■ No Religion Stated 16

■ Catholic 06   ■ Catholic 16

■ Anglican 06   ■ Anglican 16

In the mid 1980's, male Tradespersons was the biggest single male or female occupation group in Australia and Tradies dominated the ALP voting profile. By November 2021, Tradies had been outgrown by Female Professionals

Big jobs growth for men: Services & Professionals*
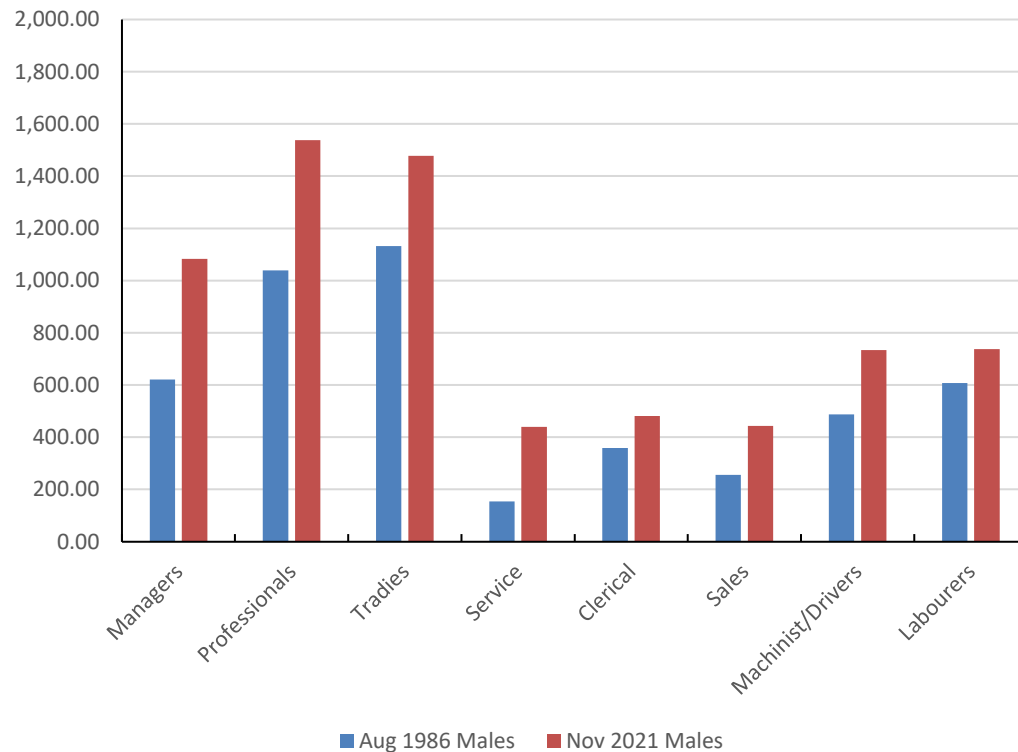
Female Professionals now largest Occupation Group*
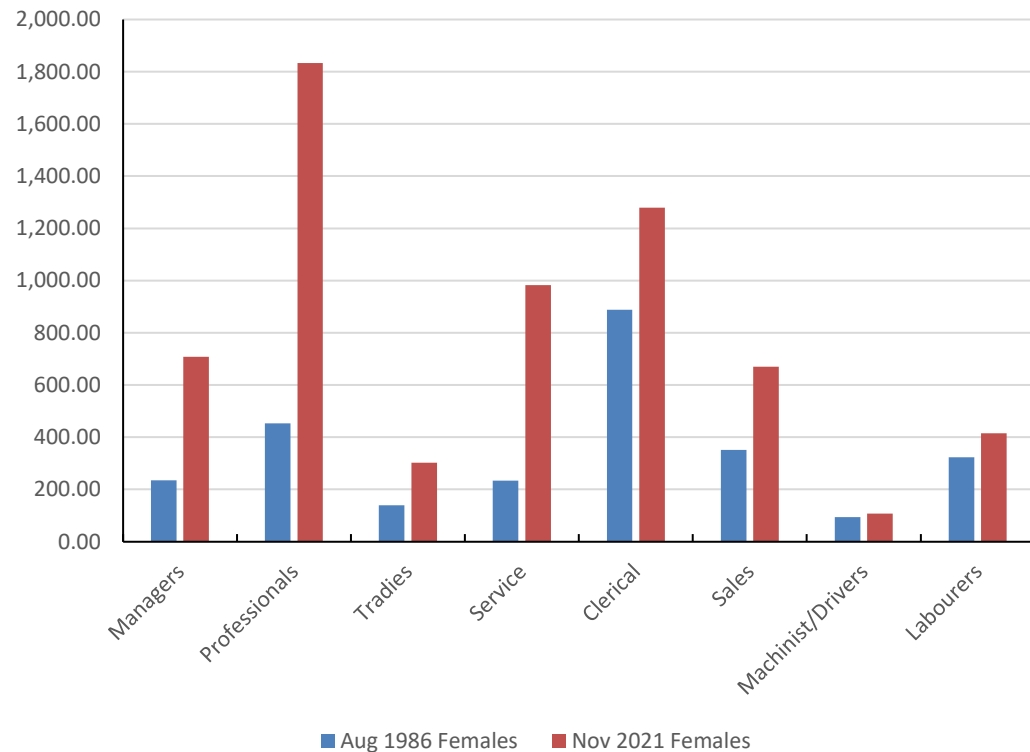
■ Aug 1986 Males ■ Nov 2021 Males

■ Aug 1986 Females ■ Nov 2021 Females

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In November 2021, Female Professionals was the biggest single male or female occupation group in Australia and there were twice as many Professional Persons as Tradespersons, Clerks or Service Workers

The 1.8 million female Professionals now make up nearly one in three female Australian workers

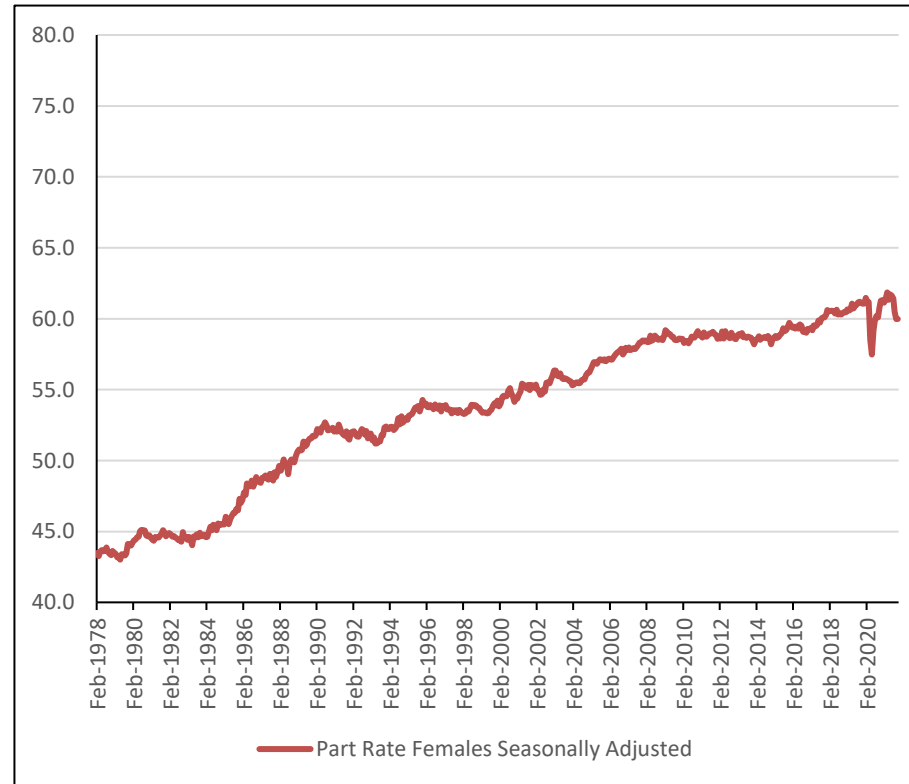| Occupation Group	Aug 1986 Males	Nov 2021 Males	Aug 1986 Females	Nov 2021 Females	Aug 1986 Persons	Nov 2021 Persons	Nov 2021 minus Aug 1986 Persons
Units	'000s	'000s	'000s	'000s	'000s	'000s	'000s
Managers	621.13	1,082.62	234.64	707.45	855.77	1,790.07	934.30
Professionals	1,038.44	1,537.78	452.60	1,833.20	1,038.44	3,370.98	2,332.54
Tradies	1,131.74	1,477.48	139.55	301.84	1,271.28	1,779.32	508.03
Service	154.46	439.65	233.15	982.62	387.62	1,422.27	1,034.66
Clerical	358.47	481.27	887.85	1,279.23	1,246.32	1,760.50	514.19
Sales	255.76	443.68	351.56	669.58	607.32	1,113.26	505.95
Machinist/Drivers	487.57	733.82	93.40	107.29	580.97	841.10	260.14
Labourers	607.59	737.94	323.22	415.14	930.82	1,153.08	222.26
Total	4,202.55	6,934.24	2,715.97	6,296.36	6,918.53	13,230.60	6,312.07

Longer Term, a new political movement based on working women rather than men, would appear to be a sound growth strategy and, for established parties, a trend rather unwise to ignore or patronise

Steady decline in male participation rates (%)
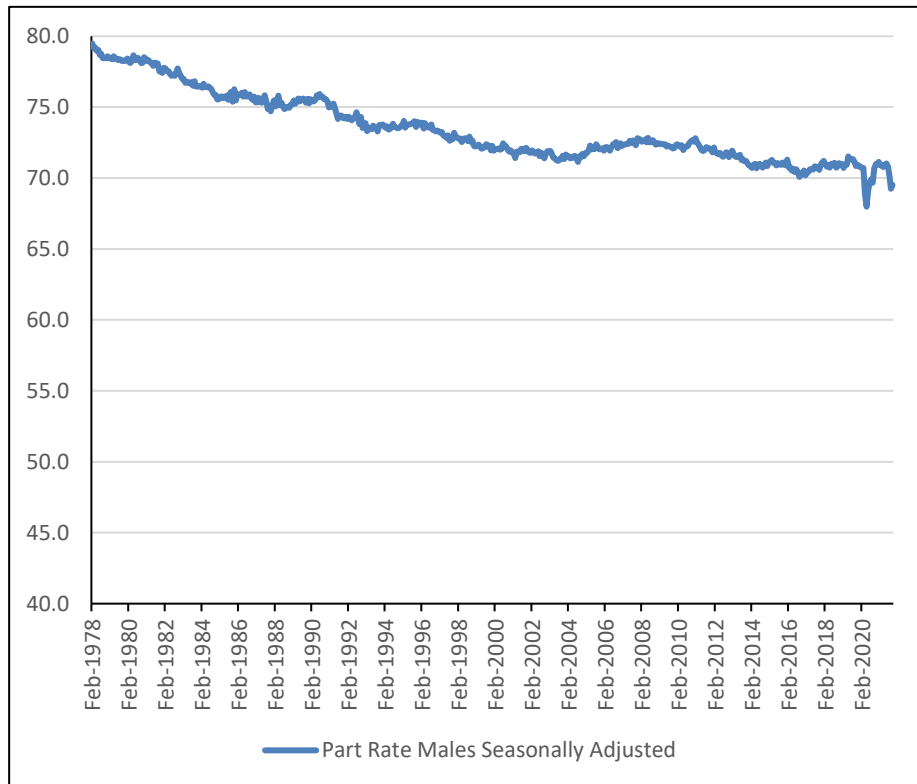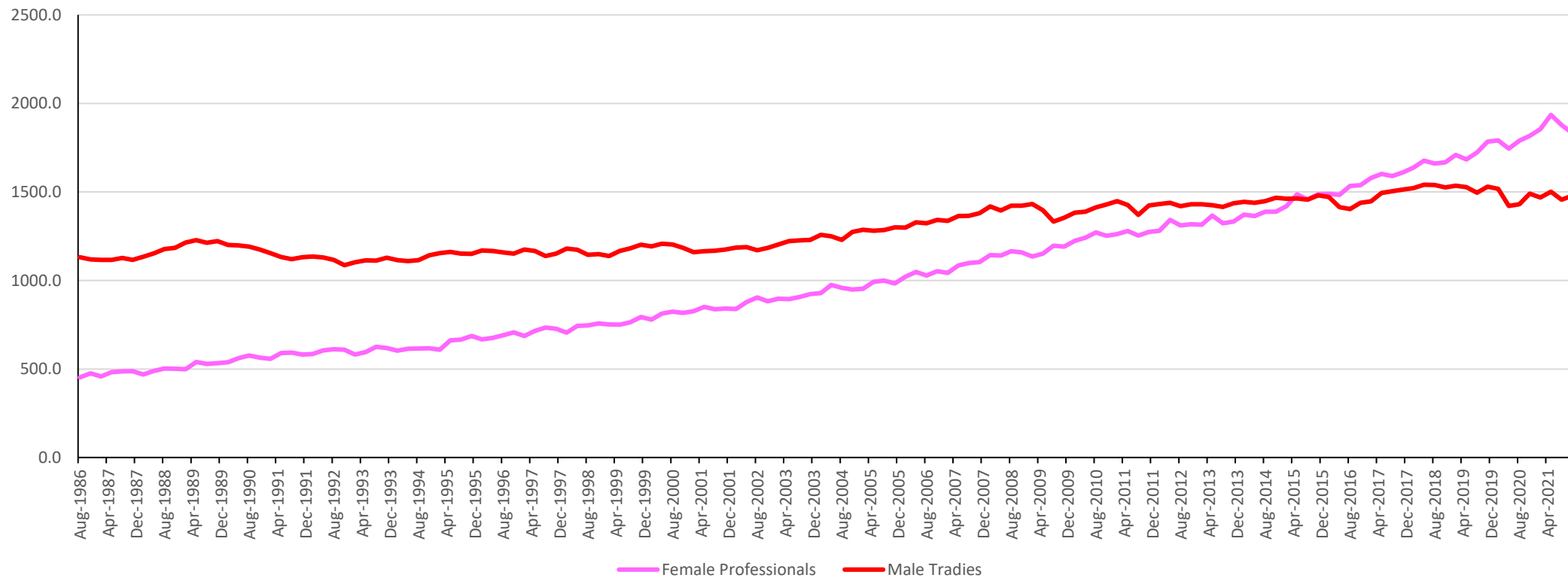
Rapid rise in female participation rates (%)

Since the GFC in 2008 the number of Male Tradies in Australia has flatlined, while numbers of Female Professionals continues to grow, outnumbering Tradies from 2015.

Male Tradie jobs now outnumbered by Female Professionals

Legend: ▬▬ Female Professionals ▬▬ Male Tradies

Acknowledgements

ADS currently has an outstanding team of professional statisticians and has been modelling and profiling election data for 50 years with the assistance of successive teams of statisticians. We stress a positive profile identifies an inferential relationship, showing where key groups can be located and does not identify individual behaviour.

The Australian Electoral Commission is the source for our Election Data, along with Antony Green, who carried out the painstaking work of re-calculating 2019 2PP votes on new boundaries for WA and Victoria, for which we acknowledge and thank him.

Dr Otto Hellwig of MDS prepared our Household Expenditure Survey Microsimulation datasets. Over recent years, in addition to our vote modelling, we have been modelling more of our own data on Transfer Payments, from Centrelink, Payrolls and Sources of Income, from the ATO and for Wealth modelling, from both the ATO and the ABS.

Two demographics used above could be explained. Gay Persons does not purport to represent LGBTIQA+ groups or individuals. Rather it is a demographic profile of Gay Persons as a political and consumer group, which we compiled more than a decade ago for commercial use, using Opinion Polls, ABS and HES data, and updated since from relevant state and federal election and plebiscite results. The current stereotype will be updated when the 2021 Census is released. See
https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/standards/standard-sex-gender-variations-sex-characteristics-and-sexual-orientation-variables/latest-release

No Religion Stated means no religion has been identified or no response was stated. These two variables tend to behave in a similar fashion in our profiles. The variable could be larger in 2016, due in part to a series break in the way the ABS questions were framed. See

https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Religion%20Data%20Summary~70#:~:text='No%20religion'%20is%20equivalent%20to,Australia%20%2D%20Stories%20from%20the%20Census