9

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES RESULTS

Ben Raue

The Liberal–National Coalition Government obtained a small swing towards it at the 2019 Australian federal election, gaining a handful of seats. This result restored the government's narrow majority, which now stands at 77 (of 151) seats. This is an increase of one from 2016, although the government had subsequently lost that majority through various by-elections in the final months of the previous parliament. This chapter covers the results of the 2019 election in the House of Representatives (the House), in individual seats and looking at the overall trends in terms of preference flows, the impact of early voting and the varying swings across the country.

2016 election

To place the 2019 House results in context, it is worth recapping the main results of the previous election. In 2016, the first-term Coalition Government went into the election with a sizeable majority, but the loss of 14 seats left it with the slimmest of majorities. The Coalition won 76 seats in the House of Representatives. Labor won 69 seats, which was a net gain of 14 seats. The Greens and Katter's Australian Party (KAP) retained one seat each, as did two Independent MPs. The Nick Xenophon

Team (NXT) also gained a single seat in the House of Representatives. The Coalition suffered a swing of 3.5 per cent against it on primary votes. Labor gained a 1.3 per cent swing, alongside a 1.6 per cent swing to the Greens. The NXT gained 1.9 per cent in its first outing. The Palmer United Party (PUP), which had polled 5.5 per cent in 2013, ran in only one electorate and polled 0.4 per cent in that seat.

Table 9.1 Results of the 2016 federal election by party

Party	Votes	Percentage	Swing	Seats	Seat change
Liberal–National Coalition	5,693,605	42.04	–3.51	76	–14
ALP	4,702,296	34.73	1.35	69	14
Greens	1,385,650	10.23	1.58	1	0
NXT	250,333	1.85	1.85	1	1
KAP	72,879	0.54	–0.50	1	0
PUP	315	0.00	–5.49	0	–1
Independents	380,712	2.81	1.44	2	0
Other	1,055,311	7.79	3.28	0	0

Source: Compiled by author from Australian Electoral Commission data (AEC 2016g, 2016c).

Redistribution of electoral boundaries

Redistributions in Australia are conducted independently of political parties and partisan officials, and electoral boundaries are drawn with little regard to their political impact. Australia does not see the partisan decision-making that is present in many States in the United States or the gerrymandered electoral boundaries those decisions produce (see Newton-Farrelly 2015).

Electoral redistributions are required when one of three criteria is met:

- The number of members to which a State or Territory is entitled changes.
- Seven years has elapsed since the last redistribution process.
- The number of electors in more than one-third of electorates deviates from the average divisional enrolment by more than 10 per cent for a period of more than two months.

In the term of parliament prior to the 2019 federal election, the House of Representatives electoral boundaries were redrawn in six of eight jurisdictions: Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. The changes were minor in Queensland, Tasmania and the Northern Territory, but were much more dramatic in Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory.

Redistributions in Queensland, Tasmania and the Northern Territory were triggered due to seven years passing since the last redistribution. The number of electorates did not change in any of these jurisdictions, and no seat experienced sufficient changes to shift the electorate's notional status from one party to another. The Hobart-based electorate of Denison in Tasmania was renamed 'Clark'. In Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory, redistributions were necessary as these jurisdictions' entitlements for members had changed. The entitlement of members for each State and Territory was calculated in August 2017, and it was found that Victoria's entitlement had increased from 37 to 38 members, while South Australia's entitlement dropped from 11 to 10 and that of the Australian Capital Territory increased from two to three.

This change in entitlements necessitated significant redrawing of the electoral boundaries in these three jurisdictions. Two new notionally Labor electorates were created: the seat of Canberra in the Australian Capital Territory and the seat of Fraser in Victoria. The Labor-held seat of Port Adelaide in South Australia was abolished. Two Liberal-held seats in Victoria were redrawn as notionally Labor seats: Corangamite and Dunkley. These changes resulted in a net gain of three seats for Labor and a net increase of one seat overall. This left the governing Coalition with just 74 seats, alongside 72 for Labor and five for minor parties and Independents.

By-elections

Nine federal by-elections were held during the 2016–19 parliamentary term. This was the second-largest number of by-elections held during a single parliamentary term, only exceeded by the 10 held during the term of the 20th parliament from 1951 to 1954. Seven of these nine by-elections were triggered by the sitting member falling foul of the prohibition on candidates being elected if they held foreign citizenship (see Chapter 3, this volume), while the two others were caused by the local member's retirement.

Table 9.2 By-elections held during the 2016–19 parliamentary term

Electorate	Date	Outgoing MP	Result
New England	2 December 2017	Barnaby Joyce (NAT)	+7.2% to NAT (2CP)
Bennelong	16 December 2017	John Alexander (LIB)	+4.8% to ALP (2CP)
Batman	17 March 2018	David Feeney (ALP)	+3.4% to ALP (2CP)
Braddon	28 July 2018	Justine Keay (ALP)	+0.1% to ALP (2CP)
Fremantle	28 July 2018	Josh Wilson (ALP)	+11.6% to ALP (primary)
Longman	28 July 2018	Susan Lamb (ALP)	+3.7% to ALP (2CP)
Mayo	28 July 2018	Rebekha Sharkie (CA)	+2.6% to CA (2CP)
Perth	28 July 2018	Tim Hammond (ALP)	+2.0% to ALP (primary)
Wentworth	20 October 2018	Malcolm Turnbull (LIB)	51.2% to Ind. (2CP)

CA = Centre Alliance

2CP = two-candidate preferred

Source: Compiled by author from AEC data.

The first by-election, in the NSW seat of New England, was triggered in October 2017 when the High Court ruled that four senators and Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce were ineligible to be elected at the time of their nomination in 2016. Joyce was comfortably re-elected in December with almost 65 per cent of the primary vote and 73.6 per cent of the two-party-preferred vote, which was a swing of 7.2 per cent since 2016. Liberal MP John Alexander and Labor MP David Feeney both resigned from parliament prior to any High Court ruling that would have disqualified them. Alexander was re-elected to his seat of Bennelong (NSW) in December 2017 despite a 4.8 per cent two-candidate-preferred swing that halved his margin. Feeney did not run for re-election and his seat of Batman (in Victoria) was won by Labor candidate Ged Kearney with a 3.35 per cent two-candidate-preferred swing against the Greens from the March 2018 by-election.

A series of five by-elections was triggered for 28 July 2018. Four of the sitting members resigned due to irregularities with their renunciation of citizenship prior to the 2016 election, while the fifth member (Tim Hammond in Perth) chose to retire for reasons unrelated to any citizenship problem. All five of these by-elections saw the incumbent party gain a swing towards it. Sitting Labor MPs Justine Keay (Braddon), Josh Wilson (Fremantle) and Susan Lamb (Longman) all gained swings, as did new Labor candidate Patrick Gorman in Perth and Centre Alliance (CA) MP Rebekha Sharkie in Mayo.

The final by-election of the term was triggered in late 2018 by the removal of Malcolm Turnbull as Liberal leader and thus as prime minister. Turnbull resigned from parliament a week after his removal from office, necessitating a by-election in his seat of Wentworth in New South Wales. The subsequent by-election was won by Independent candidate Kerryn Phelps with 51.2 per cent of the two-candidate-preferred vote.
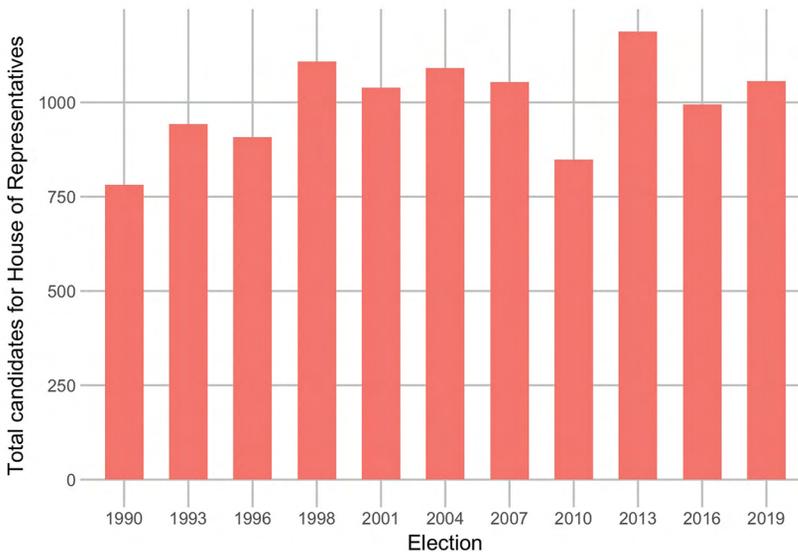
Candidate nominations

Figure 9.1 Total House of Representatives candidates per election, 1990–2019

Sources: Raue (2013); AEC data (2016e, 2019h).

Despite an increase in the nomination deposit for the House of Representatives, from $1,000 to $2,000 (see Chapter 3, this volume), 1,056 candidates nominated to run for the 151 House of Representatives seats at the 2019 federal election. This was roughly in line with the norm for elections since 1998, although it was an increase of 62 candidates from 2016 (see Figure 9.1). Labor, the Greens and the UAP each nominated a full slate of 151 candidates. The Liberal–National Coalition ran 162 candidates, thanks to the Liberal and National parties running candidates against each other in 11 seats. A total of 97 Independents ran for election, along with 344 members of other parties, including 59 members of

PHON, 48 members of Fraser Anning's Conservative National Party and 46 members of the Animal Justice Party. The 2019 Australian federal election was notable for the abnormally large number of candidates disendorsed by their party, either before or after the close of nominations, with 10 candidates disendorsed by their party following the close of nominations (see further, Chapters 3 and 4, this volume).

National result

The election produced a mixed result. Both the Coalition and Labor suffered negative primary vote swings. A majority of seats swung towards the Coalition on a two-party-preferred basis, but a substantial number of seats swung towards Labor. The Coalition polled 51.53 per cent of the two-party-preferred vote, which was a swing of 1.17 per cent from 2016 (Table 9.3). The Greens' primary vote stayed steady at 10.2 per cent, while there was a vote of more than 3 per cent each for the UAP and PHON (a swing of 1.8 per cent for the latter). More than one-quarter of all formal votes were cast for minor parties or Independents, which is the highest recorded in the House of Representatives under the modern party system, exceeding the previous record of 23.5 per cent at the 2016 election (see Chapter 17, this volume).

Table 9.3 Results of the 2019 federal election by party

Party	Votes	Percentage	Swing	Seats	Seat change
Liberal–National Coalition	5,906,875	41.44	–0.60	77	1
ALP	4,752,160	33.34	–1.39	68	–1
Greens	1,482,923	10.40	0.17	1	0
UAP	488,817	3.43	3.43	0	0
PHON	438,587	3.08	1.79	0	0
KAP	69,736	0.49	–0.05	1	0
CA	46,931	0.33	–1.52	1	0
Independents	479,836	3.37	0.56	3	1
Other	587,528	4.12	0.25	0	0

Source: Compiled by author from AEC data (2019c, 2019g).

Seats changing hands

As discussed, the redistributions that occurred prior to the election resulted in the Coalition losing two notional seats and Labor gaining three notional seats. As shown in Table 9.4, at the 2019 election, the Coalition gained five seats from Labor, while Labor gained one seat from the Coalition, resulting in a net gain of four seats for the Coalition. The Coalition also won back the seat of Wentworth, which was lost to an Independent in the 2018 by-election, but lost the nearby seat of Warringah to another Independent. Therefore, compared with the 2016 election result, there was a net increase of one seat for the Coalition and a net loss of one seat for Labor. The Greens, KAP and Centre Alliance each retained one seat, while two other seats were retained by Independents.

Table 9.4 Seats that changed party at the 2019 election

Seat	State	Incumbent	Winner	Margin (%)
Bass	Tas.	ALP	LIB	0.4
Braddon	Tas.	ALP	LIB	3.2
Corangamite*	Vic.	LIB	ALP	1.0
Dunkley*	Vic.	LIB	ALP	2.6
Gilmore	NSW	LIB	ALP	2.5
Herbert	Qld	ALP	LNP	8.4
Lindsay	NSW	ALP	LIB	5.2
Longman	Qld	ALP	LNP	3.3
Warringah	NSW	LIB	Independent	7.2
Wentworth	NSW	Independent	LIB	1.5

* Seat was redistributed prior to the 2019 election.

Source: Compiled by author from AEC data (2019l).

Differences between States

There were big differences in the election results between different States, with swings in different directions producing larger than normal gaps between the larger States (Table 9.5). Labor won the two-party-preferred vote in three States, with Labor polling particularly strongly in Victoria. The Coalition also won a majority in three States, with a particularly strong result in Queensland. This result was the continuation of a recent trend

that had seen Victoria pull ahead as a strong Labor State, while Queensland moved towards the Coalition and New South Wales positioned itself as close to the centre of Australian politics (see further, Chapter 11, this volume).

Table 9.5 Two-party-preferred vote by State

State	ALP TPP	Coalition TPP	Swing to Coalition
NSW	48.22	51.78	1.26
Vic.	53.14	46.86	−1.30
Qld	41.56	58.44	4.34
WA	44.45	55.55	0.90
SA	50.71	49.29	1.57
Tas.	55.96	44.04	1.40
ACT	61.61	38.39	−0.49
NT	54.20	45.80	2.87
Australia	48.47	51.53	1.17

Source: AEC (2019i).

Figure 9.2 shows the difference between Labor's two-party-preferred vote in each State and its two-party-preferred vote in the remainder of the nation since 1958 for the three largest States.
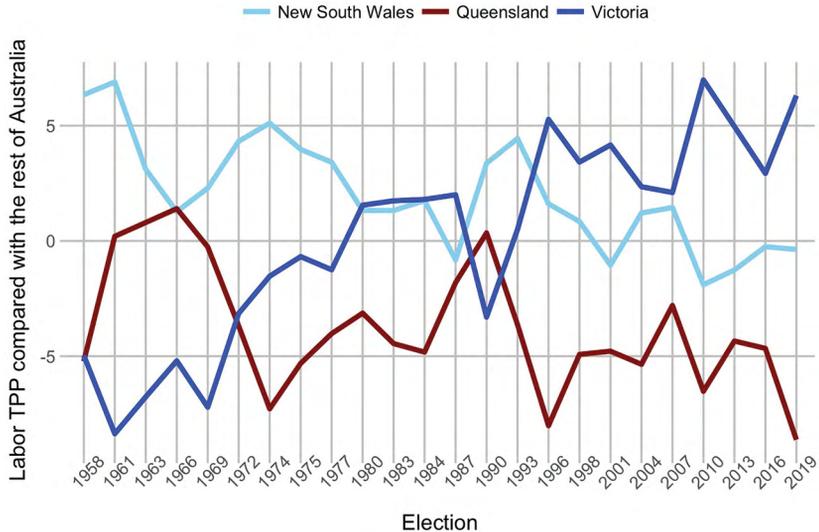

Figure 9.2 Labor two-party-preferred vote in each State compared with the remainder of the country, 1958–2019

Source: Constructed by the author from data provided by Antony Green.

The Coalition performed better in Queensland than in the remainder of the nation in 2019 than at any other election in the past six decades. Labor polled 6 per cent better in Victoria than in the remainder of the nation, which was just slightly below its relative performance in that State in 2010. Labor has traditionally underperformed in Victoria and overperformed in New South Wales, but there has been a long-term trend that has seen Labor improve in Victoria and lose ground in New South Wales, which now looks about average compared with the remainder of the country. Meanwhile, Queensland has become a State in which Labor consistently underperforms, with a particularly large gap in the two-party-preferred vote in 2019.

Reversal of 2016 swings

There was variation in swings not just between States, but also between different electorates within each State. The Coalition gained a swing on two-party-preferred votes in 92 electorates, while Labor gained a swing in the other 59 electorates. Labor generally gained more of a swing in more affluent and better-educated areas, while the Coalition tended to gain ground in less affluent areas (Evershed 2019). This manifested geographically in swings to Labor in more inner-city electorates (both Labor and Liberal seats), while the Coalition gained ground in outer suburban areas and rural electorates (such as northern Tasmania and northern Queensland) (see Chapter 11, this volume). These swings in part reversed some of the stronger trends at the 2016 election, which saw the Coalition do particularly badly in some of the same areas where they gained ground in 2016. For example, a 10.1 per cent swing to Labor in Bass in 2016 was partly cancelled out by a 5.9 per cent swing to the Liberal Party in 2019.

The impact of preferences

The continued increase in support for minor parties and Independents means that preferences are becoming increasingly important in deciding winners in individual electorates. One-quarter of all formal votes in the House of Representatives were cast for candidates other than the Coalition or Labor, which is the highest it has been under the modern party system. This figure has been steadily climbing from just 14.5 per cent in 2007.

Labor won 58.6 per cent of preference flows, which is down from 62.2 per cent in 2016. This partly reflects the increased vote for right-wing minor parties such as PHON and the UAP. About 65 per cent of preferences from voters who gave their first preference to these two parties favoured the Coalition over Labor, while 82 per cent of Greens voters favoured Labor over the Coalition. As a comparison, just over 50 per cent of PHON voters preferenced the Coalition in 2016, while less than 54 per cent of voters for the PUP preferenced the Coalition over Labor in the PUP's last iteration in 2013.

Figure 9.3 shows there was a slight increase in the number of seats for which it was necessary to distribute preferences. The winning candidate polled less than half of the formal vote in 105 of 151 seats—up from 102 of 150 seats at the 2016 election. While preferences were necessary to decide the result in more than 100 seats, the candidate leading on primary votes went on to win in almost every case. There were 12 electorates where the candidate leading on primary votes did not win. In 10 of these seats, the Labor candidate overtook the Coalition candidate. The Liberal candidate was overtaken by the Centre Alliance candidate in Mayo and by an Independent candidate in Indi.
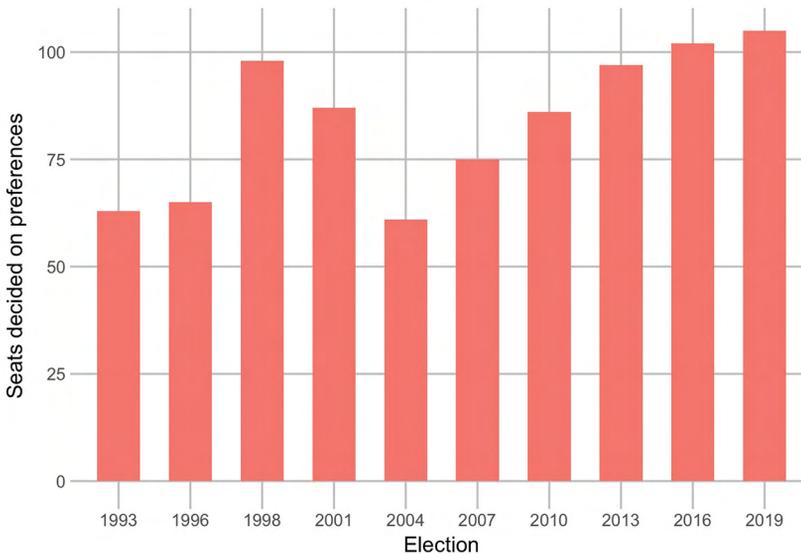

Figure 9.3 Seats decided on preferences, 1993–2019

Sources: Constructed by the author from AEC data (1998, 2001, 2004d, 2007d, 2010e, 2013e, 2016h, 2019h).

Difference between election day and early votes

There has been a significant increase in the proportion of votes cast before election day, primarily via pre-poll voting. The proportion of formal votes cast via pre-poll increased from 4.9 per cent in 2001 to 32.7 per cent in 2019. Postal voting also experienced an increase, from 4.1 per cent in 2001 to 8.5 per cent in 2019, with most of the growth taking place between 2007 and 2013 (see Chapter 3, this volume).

The Coalition has tended to do consistently better among early voters, and the increasing volume of early voters has not shifted this trend. The gap between the two-party-preferred vote among voters who cast their votes early and that among those who voted on election day was wider in 2019 than in any election since at least 2001 (Table 9.6). The Coalition polled 5.3 per cent better on the early vote than on election day, which compares with a gap of 4.8 per cent in 2016 and a gap as low as 3.8 per cent in 2007.

Table 9.6 Labor two-party-preferred vote before and on election day (percentage)

Election	ALP TPP election day	ALP TPP early vote	Difference	Proportion voting on election day
2001	49.5	44.8	4.6	90.4
2004	47.7	43.8	3.9	88.3
2007	53.2	49.5	3.8	85.5
2010	50.9	46.7	4.2	81.6
2013	47.8	43.1	4.7	72.4
2016	51.2	46.4	4.8	67.6
2019	50.7	45.4	5.3	58.0

Sources: Compiled by the author from AEC data (2004a, 2004b, 2007a, 2007b, 2010a, 2010b, 2013a, 2013b, 2016a, 2016b, 2019a, 2019b).

As Table 9.6 and Figure 9.4 illustrate, Labor has not won the early vote at any of the past seven elections, coming closest when they polled 49.5 per cent of the two-party-preferred vote in 2007. Yet that constituency has become much larger since 2007, and this growth in the early vote has not made these voters look any more like election-day voters. Labor managed to win a majority of the election-day vote in both 2016 and 2019, despite losing the overall two-party-preferred vote at both elections, thanks to a large differential with the early vote. This emphasises the importance of the early vote for deciding elections. With almost half of voters casting their vote early, a dominant position for the Coalition on the early vote can win elections even when Labor wins a majority on election day.
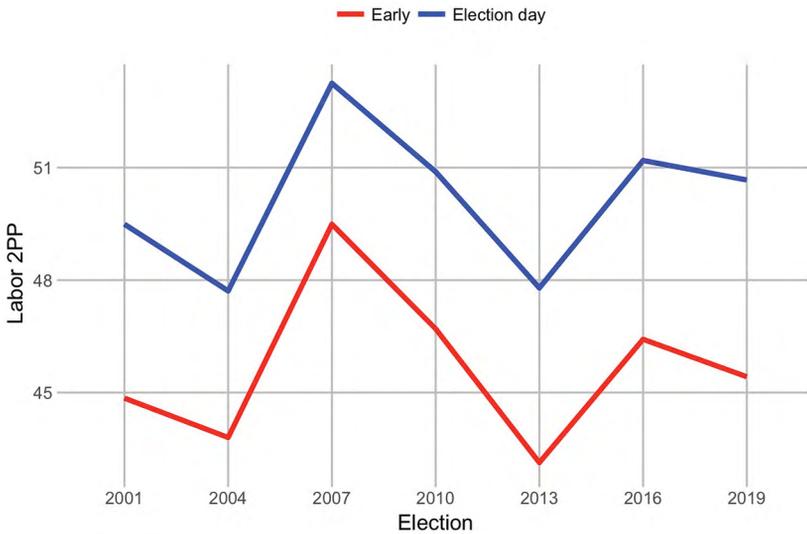

Figure 9.4 Labor two-party-preferred vote before and on election day

Notes: Election-day votes include ordinary, absent and provisional votes. Early votes include remote, mobile, special hospital, pre-poll and postal votes.

Sources: Compiled by the author from AEC data (2004a, 2004b, 2007a, 2007b, 2010a, 2010b, 2013a, 2013b, 2016a, 2016b, 2019a, 2019b).

Informal votes

There was an increase in informal votes at the 2019 election compared with the previous election, although the rate was still lower than it was at the 2010 and 2013 elections (Figure 9.5). The rate of informal voting in 2019 was 5.54 per cent of all votes cast for the House of Representatives. This was an increase from a rate of 5.05 per cent in 2016, but still less than the 5.55 per cent and 5.91 per cent recorded at the 2010 and 2013 elections, respectively. Despite an increase in informal votes, the effective participation rate increased again, as it did at the 2013 and 2016 elections. Some 84 per cent of all Australians who were eligible to vote cast a formal ballot in 2019—up from 80 per cent in 2010.
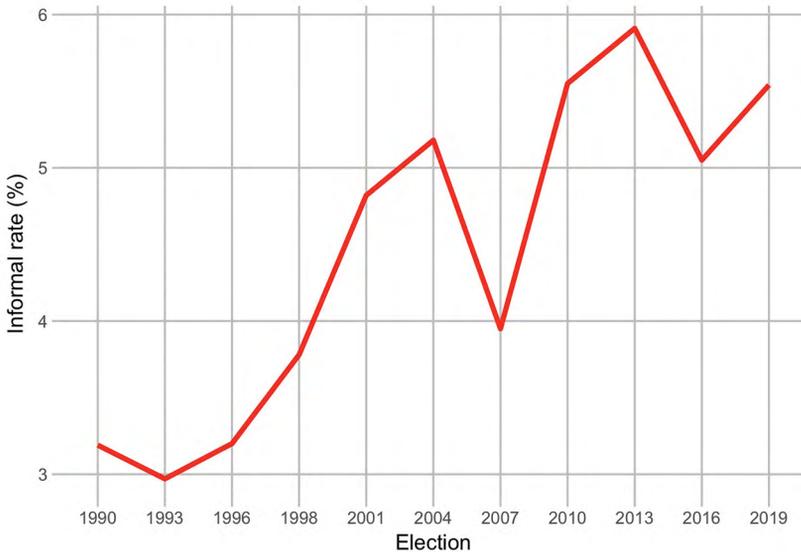

Figure 9.5 Informal voting rate at federal elections, 1990–2019

Sources: Constructed by the author from Carr (1990); and AEC (1998, 2001, 2004c, 2007c, 2010c, 2013c, 2016d, 2019d).

These trends varied significantly by State. In New South Wales, 7 per cent of all votes were informal, while the next highest rate was 5.4 per cent, in Western Australia. Victoria experienced a decline in the informal rate while the rate in Western Australia was a significant increase. New South Wales still has a higher effective participation rate than Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory despite a much higher informal rate (Table 9.7).

Table 9.7 Informal voting rate by State (per cent)

State/Territory	Informal rate	Informal rate change	Effective participation rate
NSW	7.01	0.84	84.14
Vic.	4.66	−0.11	85.39
Qld	4.95	0.25	82.81
WA	5.44	1.44	81.77
SA	4.81	0.63	85.97
Tas.	4.39	0.40	87.67
ACT	3.49	0.72	89.13
NT	4.69	−2.66	62.23
National	**5.54**	**0.48**	**84.04**

Sources: Compiled by the author from AEC (2019d, 2019j, 2019k).

Labor–Coalition contests: State by State

New South Wales

There were 10 NSW seats held by Labor and the Coalition on margins of less than 6 per cent prior to the 2019 election. Two of these seats changed hands, with the Liberal Party and the ALP each gaining one seat off the other. Labor's Fiona Phillips gained the South Coast electorate of Gilmore with a 3.3 per cent two-party-preferred swing, while Liberal candidate Melissa McIntosh gained the Western Sydney electorate of Lindsay with a 6.2 per cent swing, finishing up with 55 per cent of the two-party-preferred vote. Sitting member effects played out badly in both seats, with Emma Husar removed as the Labor candidate in Lindsay after one term and Ann Sudmalis stepping down as Liberal MP in Gilmore, leading to both Coalition parties running along with an ex-Liberal Independent.

The Liberal Party gained swings across Western Sydney and came close to winning the seat of Macquarie, where Labor's Susan Templeman won a second term by just 371 votes (with 50.2 per cent of the two-party-preferred vote), following a 2 per cent swing to the Liberal Party. Labor also suffered swings in other Western Sydney seats, with Greenway and Parramatta pushed into the marginal seat category. Labor also suffered swings on the Central Coast and in the Hunter region. Swings of 9.5 per cent, 5.7 per cent and 5.5 per cent in the seats of Hunter, Paterson and Shortland,

respectively, put all three of these Hunter region seats into the marginal seat category, while Labor's hold on Dobell was weakened and the Liberals' hold on Robertson was strengthened by a swing of just over 3 per cent. Labor frontbencher Joel Fitzgibbon was left with a margin of only 3 per cent in his seat of Hunter following a vote of 21.6 per cent for PHON—the highest vote for that party in any House of Representatives electorate.

Labor held hopes of making gains in two mid-suburban Liberal seats in more multicultural parts of Sydney, but made only modest gains in one of these seats, with a 1.5 per cent swing in Reid, where sitting Liberal MP Craig Laundy had retired. Liberal minister David Coleman did much better in the southern Sydney electorate of Banks, bolstering his 1.4 per cent margin with a 4.8 per cent swing. Labor retained two marginal seats in more regional parts of New South Wales, narrowly retaining the south-eastern seat of Eden-Monaro in the face of a 2.1 per cent swing, and also retaining the far north coast electorate of Richmond after a very small swing to Labor MP Justine Elliot. Nationals MP Kevin Hogan strengthened his hold on the neighbouring seat of Page with a 7.2 per cent swing.

Victoria

Most of the interesting contests in Victoria took place in seats held by the Liberal Party, but very few seats changed hands. Labor won two seats that had been redrawn into notionally Labor seats prior to the election and gained a 1 per cent swing in Corangamite and a 1.7 per cent swing in Dunkley, strengthening its hold in two Liberal-held seats that had been redrawn with Labor majorities. The Liberal Party suffered swings but held on to two key seats in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Liberal MP Michael Sukkar suffered a 1.7 per cent swing in Deakin, while in the neighbouring seat of Chisholm new Liberal candidate Gladys Liu was elected despite a 2.3 per cent swing to Labor.

A big boost in Labor's primary vote saw it pull ahead of the Greens in the inner eastern Melbourne seat of Higgins, where Liberal MP Kelly O'Dwyer had retired. Labor gained a 6.1 per cent swing on a two-party-preferred basis, leaving new Liberal MP Katie Allen holding her newly marginal seat by just 3.9 per cent. Three other marginal seats, on the outer fringe of Melbourne, did not move as much. Senior Liberal minister Greg Hunt suffered a 1.4 per cent swing against him in Flinders, while fellow Liberals gained small swings towards them in the outer eastern seats of Casey and La Trobe.

Queensland

Queensland is famous for a large proportion of its electorates being marginal, and this was certainly true in 2019, although large swings in a series of Queensland's marginal seats means there will be fewer marginal seats in the State at the next election. A lot of attention was focused on a string of five marginal seats on the central and northern coast, stretching from Gladstone to Cape York. Four of these five seats were held by the Liberal National Party (LNP), with the Townsville-area seat of Herbert won by the slimmest of margins by Labor's Cathy O'Toole in 2016. Big swings to the LNP in four of these seats saw them regain Herbert with an 8.4 per cent swing and strengthen their hold in Capricornia (11.7 per cent swing), Dawson (11.2 per cent) and Flynn (7.6 per cent). The LNP's Warren Entsch was re-elected in the far northern seat of Leichhardt by a 4.2 per cent margin, with a swing of just 0.2 per cent.

The LNP also gained sizeable swings in three marginal seats on the outer northern fringes of Brisbane, regaining the Labor seat of Longman with a 4.1 per cent swing and retaining Petrie with a 6.8 per cent swing and Dickson with a 3 per cent swing. The LNP's Bert van Manen pushed his Logan-area seat of Forde out of the marginal seat category with a swing of 8 per cent.

Two Labor seats closer to central Brisbane were made more marginal thanks to swings to the LNP. Labor suffered a 2.1 per cent swing in Moreton and a 5 per cent swing in Lilley. Labor just held on, by a 0.4 per cent margin, in Lilley following the retirement of former treasurer and deputy prime minister Wayne Swan. Labor did better in the inner-city seats of Brisbane and Griffith. Labor MP Terri Butler increased her margin by 1.4 per cent in Griffith, while LNP MP Trevor Evans had 1.1 per cent shaved off his margin in Brisbane.

Western Australia

The Liberal Party gained a swing of just under 1 per cent of the two-party-preferred vote in Western Australia, but most seats experienced only small swings, with no seats changing hands. Of the five seats held by margins of less than 6 per cent prior to the election, there were swings to Labor in three and swings to the Liberal Party in the other two. Labor gained a swing in its two marginal seats but suffered negative swings in its safer seats. Anne Aly gained a small, 0.15 per cent swing in Cowan,

while Patrick Gorman gained a 1.6 per cent swing in Perth. The Liberal Party suffered a small, 0.9 per cent swing in Steve Irons's seat of Swan but gained swings in excess of 3 per cent in both Pearce and Hasluck.

South Australia

Both major parties gained large swings in South Australia due to the reduced presence of the Centre Alliance (previously called the Nick Xenophon Team), which polled 4.4 per cent, compared with more than 21 per cent at the 2016 election. No seats in South Australia changed hands. There was only one marginal seat, which was a contest between Labor and Liberal, in Liberal MP Nicolle Flint's seat of Boothby. She held this seat by a 2.7 per cent margin prior to the election, and this margin was reduced to 1.4 per cent.

Tasmania

The Coalition bounced back from a poor performance in Tasmania in 2016, gaining two seats and a two-party-preferred swing of 1.4 per cent Statewide. Liberal candidates Bridget Archer and Gavin Pearce, respectively, won their northern Tasmanian seats of Bass and Braddon with two-party-preferred swings of 5.8 per cent and 4.8 per cent. The Liberal candidate for Lyons, Jessica Whelan, was disendorsed shortly after the close of nominations, leading to the Liberal Party supporting the Nationals candidate, Deanna Hutchinson, who managed 15.7 per cent, but it was not enough to overtake the official Liberal candidate.

Australian Capital Territory

Labor retained all three ACT electorates, gaining a 4.1 per cent swing in the newly created inner-city electorate of Canberra while suffering swings of 1.3 per cent in the two outer suburban electorates of Bean and Fenner.

Northern Territory

Labor retained the two electorates in the Northern Territory but suffered swings to the Country Liberal Party (CLP) in both. The CLP gained a two-party-preferred swing of 3 per cent in the Darwin-area electorate of Solomon and gained a 2.7 per cent swing in the vast electorate of Lingiari.

Non-classic contests

The AEC defines a seat as 'non-classic' if the final two candidates after the distribution of preferences are not a Labor candidate and a Coalition candidate. Non-classic seats can include races where an Independent or minor party comes in the top two or where the final distribution of preferences is between two Coalition candidates.
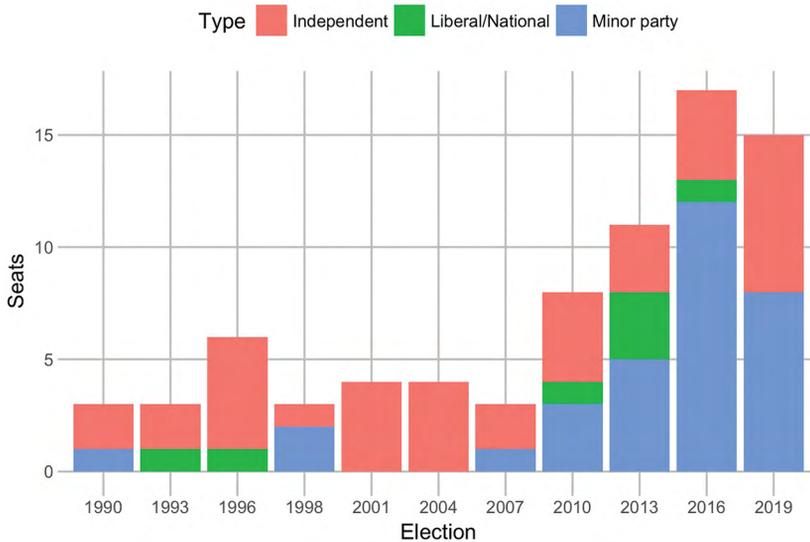

Figure 9.6 Non-classic races in federal elections, 1990–2019

Sources: Constructed by the author from Carr (1990); and AEC (1998, 2001, 2004a, 2007a, 2010d, 2013d, 2016f, 2019f).

The number of non-classic contests peaked at 17 of 150 seats at the 2016 federal election after a steady climb since 2010 (Figure 9.6). It declined slightly in 2019, down to 15 of 151 seats. There were seven contests in which an Independent made it to the top two, which is the highest number over the period analysed. There was a decline in the number of contests involving a minor party in the top two—down from 12 to eight. This decline was primarily due to the absence of the NXT. The NXT had come in the top two in four electorates in 2016, while its successor party came in the top two in only a single seat. The Greens also made it to the final count in only five seats in 2019, down from six.

Contests between the Liberal Party and the Nationals

The Liberal Party and the Nationals ran against each other in 11 seats, but in most cases only one of the two candidates was a serious contender. In addition to Gilmore and Lyons (mentioned above), which were ultimately won by Labor, the only other seat worth mentioning is Mallee. Mallee covers the north-western corner of Victoria and was held by retiring Nationals MP Andrew Broad. His retirement opened the door for the Liberal Party to contest the seat, along with Labor and two relatively prominent Independents. The Liberal Party narrowly outpolled Labor on primary votes to come second but was narrowly overtaken by Labor on the distribution of preferences.

The Greens

The Greens contested every electorate, but there was only a handful of seats where they made the top two and had any chance of winning, most of them in a contiguous area in inner Melbourne. Greens MP Adam Bandt further solidified his hold on the seat of Melbourne, with 71.8 per cent of the two-candidate-preferred count. Julian Burnside came second in the inner eastern seat of Kooyong, trailing Liberal Party Deputy Leader, Josh Frydenberg, with 44.3 per cent of the two-candidate-preferred vote. The Greens had come second in the neighbouring seat of Higgins in 2016, but a big surge in the Labor vote and a small drop in the Greens vote saw them fall into third place here. The Greens also went backwards in two inner northern seats, which had been their closest chances in 2016. They suffered a 3.2 per cent swing in Wills and a much larger, 13.4 per cent swing in neighbouring Cooper (previously named Batman).

Other minor parties and Independents

Three other minor party candidates made it to the final two in the distribution of preferences. Bob Katter was re-elected for a 10th term as Member for Kennedy, representing his KAP, with a 2.3 per cent swing. Rebekha Sharkie won a second full term as Member for Mayo representing the Centre Alliance, with a 2.2 per cent swing (although this was less than the margin she achieved at the 2018 by-election). Rosemary Moulden, running for Pauline Hanson's One Nation, polled 27.5 per cent of the two-candidate-preferred vote in Maranoa.

Independents came in the top two in seven electorates and three of those Independents were elected. Incumbent MP Andrew Wilkie was easily re-elected in his Hobart-area electorate of Clark with a 4.4 per cent swing. Cathy McGowan retired from her northern Victorian electorate of Indi, and endorsed fellow Independent Helen Haines, who won the seat with 51.4 per cent of the two-candidate-preferred vote (a 4.1 per cent swing compared with McGowan in 2016). Zali Steggall defeated former Liberal prime minister Tony Abbott in his northern Sydney seat of Warringah, with 57.2 per cent of the two-candidate-preferred vote. Kerryn Phelps was unsuccessful in her eastern suburbs electorate of Wentworth, losing to Liberal candidate Dave Sharma after defeating him in the 2018 by-election. Phelps managed 48.7 per cent of the two-candidate-preferred vote in 2019.

Former Independent MP Rob Oakeshott made a second attempt at a comeback in the NSW north coast seat of Cowper but fell short with just 43.2 per cent of the two-candidate-preferred vote. Independents also challenged Coalition MPs in two other seats, along the Murray River. Albury Mayor Kevin Mack came second in the southern NSW electorate of Farrer, polling 39.1 per cent of the two-candidate-preferred vote. Two Independents ran in the north-western Victorian seat of Mallee, polling almost 20 per cent between them but falling short of winning the seat.

Conclusion

The 2019 federal election produced a result that was very similar to that of the previous election in 2016, with a slim majority for the Coalition counterpoised against a large crossbench and a relatively strong Labor Opposition. Yet the interpretation of this result has typically been very different, thanks to high expectations for Labor in the context of poor government polling. Apart from the slim victory for the Coalition, the other major development in the 2019 election was the continuing slow growth of the minor party vote, with a record high number of votes cast for minor parties or Independents and six crossbench members elected to the House of Representatives. This relatively close election result sets up the next election as one that is very winnable for either major party and leaves the government with a stable but not strong majority for the next three years.

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