

Recent Trends in Australian Politics

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Exam Question

- Recent instability in Australia's political leadership highlights the 'coup culture' of South Pacific politics. Discuss.

Ballarat's Prime Ministers Avenue can't afford to keep up with the quick succession of leaders



The busts of every Australian prime minister can be found in Ballarat's Prime Ministers Avenue, but the recent quick succession of leaders has dried up funds and left Ballarat council two busts behind.

MAP: [Ballarat 3350](#)



With the recent brutality of Australian politics, which has seen five prime ministers dispatched from office in almost as many years, the money ran out after Australia's first female prime minister, Julia Gillard.

REMEMBER AUSTRALIA



**CHANGE OF PRIME MINISTER MEANS
CHANGE YOUR SMOKE ALARM BATTERY**

mematic.net



AUSTRALIA
travelmap.com

15°S INDIAN OCEAN 15°E

30°S 30°E

120°E 135°E 150°E

- LEGEND**
- State Boundary
 - Major Road
 - Rail
 - River
 - Major City
 - Sea Port
 - Country Capital
 - Airport
 - Point of Interest
 - Salt Lake
 - Mt. Peak

Australian Overseas Territories

Marshall Islands Christmas Islands Heard and McDonald Islands Phoenix (Cooking) Islands Coral Sea Islands Northern Antarctic Territory

Map not to Scale



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(Updated on 17th May 2013)

Australia – Distribution of Population and Representation

State	Population '000	% of Population		Representation	
		2015	1901	House	Senate
New South Wales	7,596.6	32.0	35.9	47	12
Victoria	5,914.9	24.9	31.8	37	12
Queensland	4,766.7	20.1	13.0	30	12
Western Australia	2,587.0	10.9	4.9	16	12
South Australia	1,696.2	7.2	9.6	11	12
Tasmania	516.1	2.2	4.6	5	12
Australian Capital Territory	389.7	1.6	..	2	2
Northern Territory	243.8	1.0	..	2	2
Australia	23,714.3			150	76

Self-Government

- Five eastern states were granted self-government on Durham Report guidelines in 1856, Western Australia followed in 1890
- All six states were established with bicameral parliaments
- All states adopted full male franchise with the secret ballot at once, years ahead of the rest of the world.
- Simple majority voting used, either in single or multi-member seats.
- Female franchise first introduced in South Australian in 1894 and adopted as the law for the new Commonwealth parliament in 1902
- State upper houses were either appointed chambers or elected by restricted franchise. Staggered terms and separate election dates kept them 'Independent' chambers largely controlled by landed interests

Federation

- First major conference and draft constitution in 1891
- Second push in 1898 based on a popularly elected convention followed by approval referendums before legislation creating the Commonwealth was passed by the UK Parliament
- Learning from the British North America Act, the constitution included amending provisions.
- Constitution was a deal dividing powers between the Commonwealth and the States. Constitution contains no charter of rights.
- Senate created with the same electoral franchise as the House of Representatives, but all six states represented equally.

Basic Electoral Toolkit of Australian Politics

- Bicameral Parliaments. Upper houses impossible to abolish so eventually democratised.
- Compulsory electoral enrolment (Federal 1911)
- Compulsory voting (Federal 1923)
- The universal use of preferential voting in either single member (AV) or multi-member (STV) form.
- A dominant 2-party system in existence for a century with a centre-right Coalition between the Liberal and National (formerly Country) parties opposed by the Australian Labor Party.
- Party system the same in all states

Dear [SALUTATION-NAME]

I am writing to you as, according to my records, it appears that you failed to vote at the [ELECTION-DESC-HDR] held on [ELECTION-DATE-HDR].

Under the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* and *Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984* it is a criminal offence to fail to vote without a valid and sufficient reason.

If you **did vote**, please provide details on the form on the back of this notice so that voting records can be rechecked, and corrected if necessary.

If you **did not vote**, you have two options:

1. If you have a valid and sufficient reason for not voting, please provide that reason on the form on the back of this notice by the due date. I will consider your reason and you will be notified if it is not considered valid and sufficient. In this case you will be required to pay the \$20.00 penalty;

OR

2. If you do not have a valid and sufficient reason for not voting, please pay the penalty of \$20.00 to the Australian Electoral Commission by one of the methods listed below by the due date. No further payment will be required.

Should you require any further information, please contact this office on the phone number above.

If you do not either reply to this notice or pay the \$20.00 penalty by the due date, the matter may be referred to a court. There is a maximum penalty of \$180.00 (plus court costs) if the matter is dealt with by the court and a criminal conviction may be recorded against you. If you are unable to respond someone else can complete the form or pay the penalty on your behalf.

**AEC**

Australian Electoral Commission

**Pay By Phone**

Using Mastercard, Visa or Amex Credit Card.

Government EasyPay

Phone No: 1300 453 579

Customer Ref. No. [PAY-BY-REF-ID-HDR]

**Pay By Mail**

Send this form with your cheque or money order, made payable to Collector of Public Monies, in the single window reply-paid envelope provided.

Ensure that the return address on the back of the form appears in the window.

**Pay In Person**

Present this form with your payment (cash, or a cheque or money order made payable to the Collector of Public Monies) at any Australian Electoral Commission office.

or



Present this form with your payment at any Australia Post office.

POST billpay**[BPOST-BCODE]**

[BPOST-TEXT]

NOTE: PART PAYMENT NOT ACCEPTED.**DUE DATE: [DUE-DATE-HDR]****AMOUNT DUE: \$20.00**

Polling Day Campaigning

- Canvassing for votes is vigorous in Australia on polling day outside of polling places.
- How-to-vote material is distributed to insure a formal vote is cast, and also to allow parties and candidates to influence how preferences will flow.
- Party members are involved in active campaigning on polling day rather than ensuring the vote is turned out.

Electoral Administration

- Commonwealth and states have independent electoral bodies
- Voting can be at any polling place in a district on polling day, or by absent vote in any polling place in another district
- Easy options to vote by post or before polling day in person.
- Recent introduction of internet voting in one state
- All first preferences and an indicative preference counts by polling place released on election night
- All votes re-checked and non-polling day votes added in fortnight after election.
- It is easier to vote than not vote and deal with the fine notice.
- Australia 'gold-plates' its counting processes.

Australian Political Parties

- Until 1890 Australian politics was largely free of parties, dominated by 'factional' politics surrounding prominent members of parliament. Ministerial versus Opposition parties. No party structure outside of parliament.
- First real party was the Australian Labor Party, established in 1891 as the political wing of the union movement.
- Labor Party quickly adopted tied party votes based on party policy, with party MPs tied to vote with the majority of caucus members
- Labor Party adopted candidate selection procedures choosing candidates in each seat by ballots of party members
- Generally the party of opposition until the 1980s

The Non-Labor Parties

- First Commonwealth parliament had three parties, Labor, Free Trade and Protection.
- After the settlement of the fiscal issue, Free Trade and Protection merged as the first Liberal Party in 1909.
- Country Party (Later Nationals) formed around time of First World War, in permanent Coalition with Liberals (and predecessors) since 1923, though sometimes more independent at state level.
- Traditionally the parties of government.

Labor Party Splits

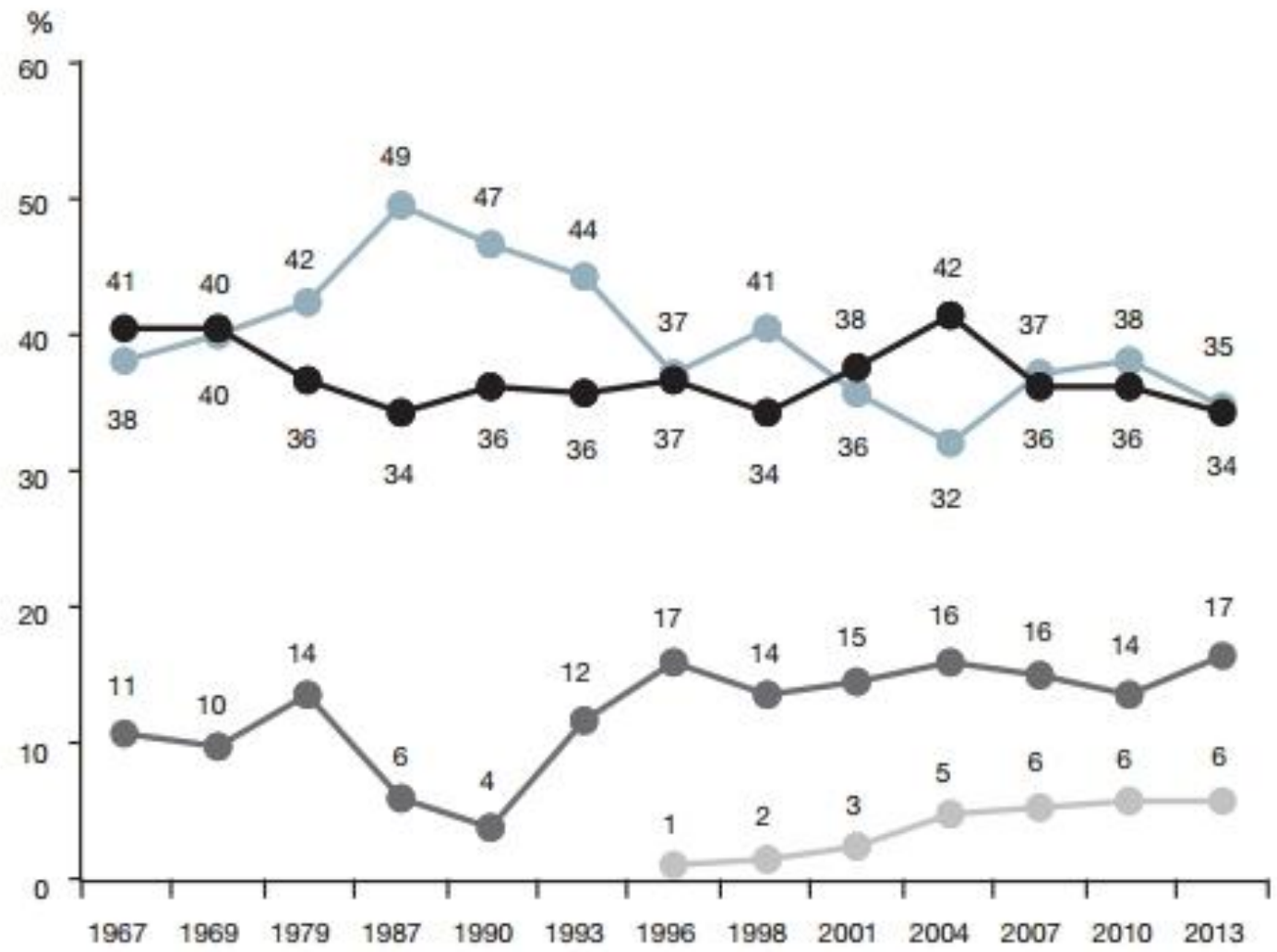
- Major split in 1916 over conscription, saw Labor Party Prime Minister Billy Hughes cross the floor and become new Nationalist PM
- Splits in 1931 over dealing with the Great Depression, another leading Labor figure in Joe Lyons crossed floor to lead conservative government
- 1955 split with party loosing significant Catholic support over the issue of Communist influence in the Unions, formation of the breakaway Democratic Labor Party (DLP)

Why does this party history matter?

- The early rise of the Labor Party and its ability to select single candidates created a problem with vote splitting between competing conservative candidates under simple majority voting.
- All of the electoral experimentation in Australia between 1892 and 1930 concerned attempts by non-Labor parties to avoid the problem caused by vote splitting in single member electorates
- Many experiments included second ballots, the contingent vote (paper second ballots) PR-STV and compulsory preferential voting. Compulsory voting can also be viewed as an anti-Labor measure.
- Recent shifts to optional preferential introduced by Labor to undermine Coalition parties have proved to have a mixed impact.

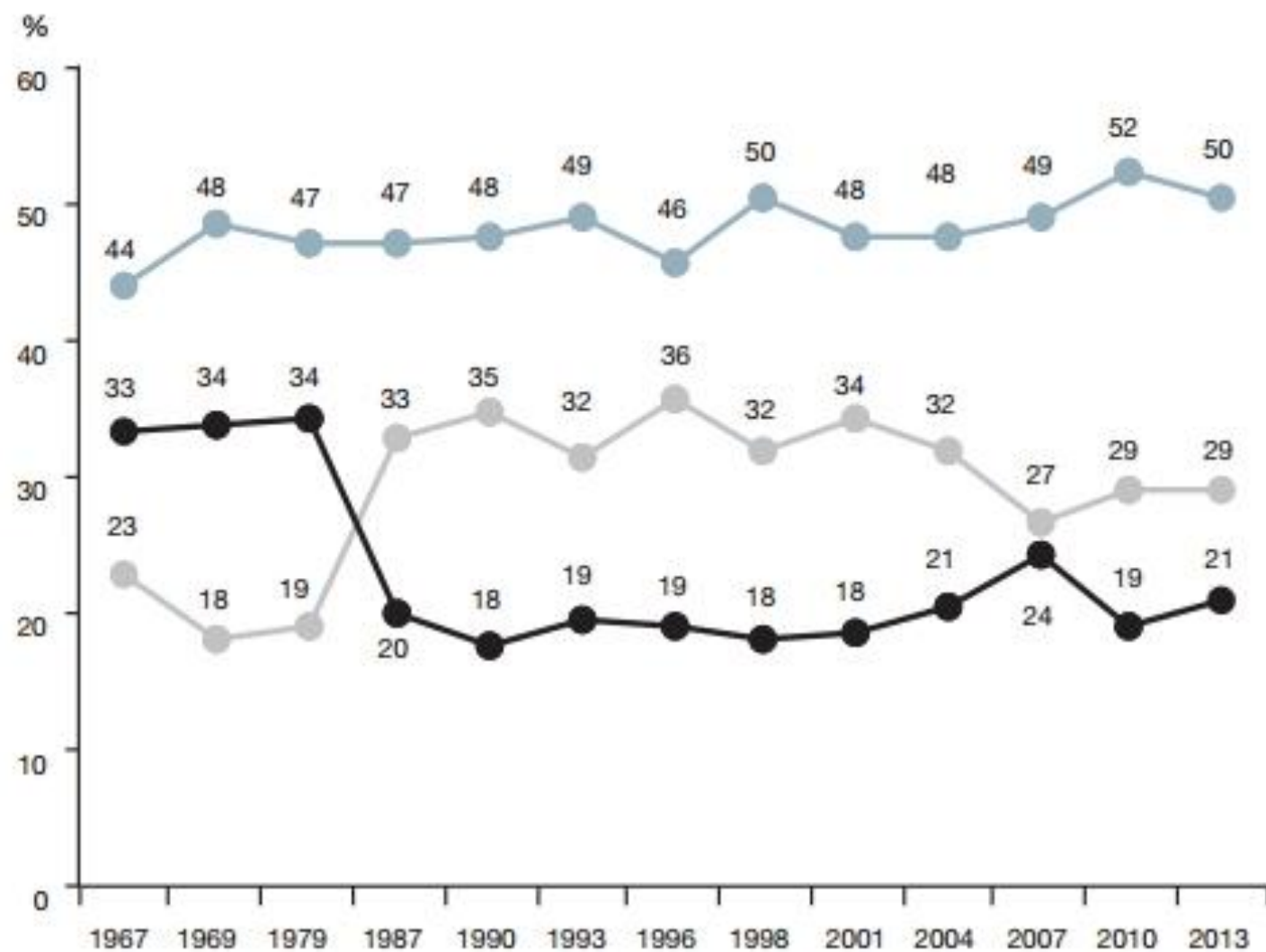
Direction of political partisanship

- Liberal
- Labor
- Greens
- None



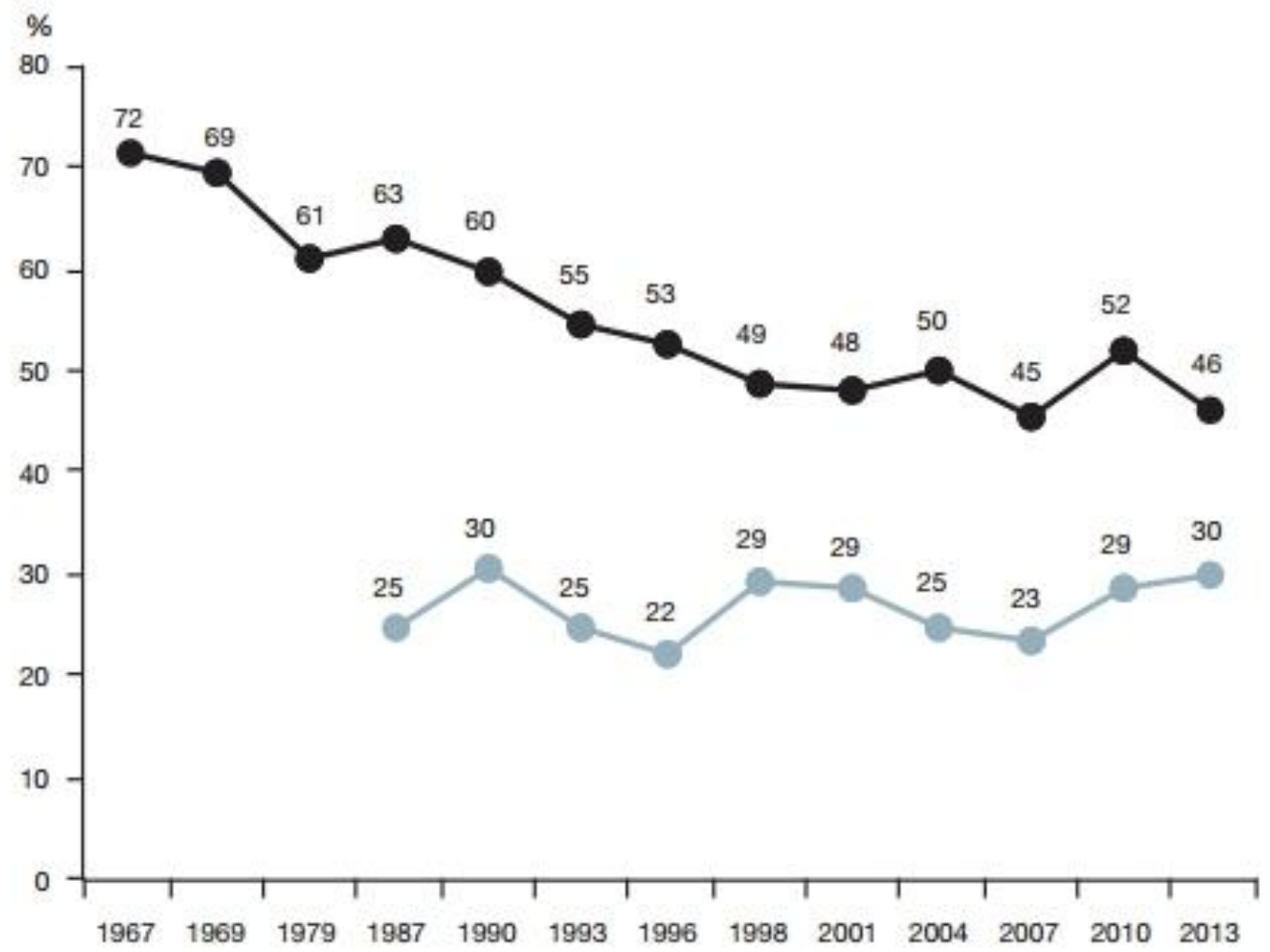
Strength of political partisanship

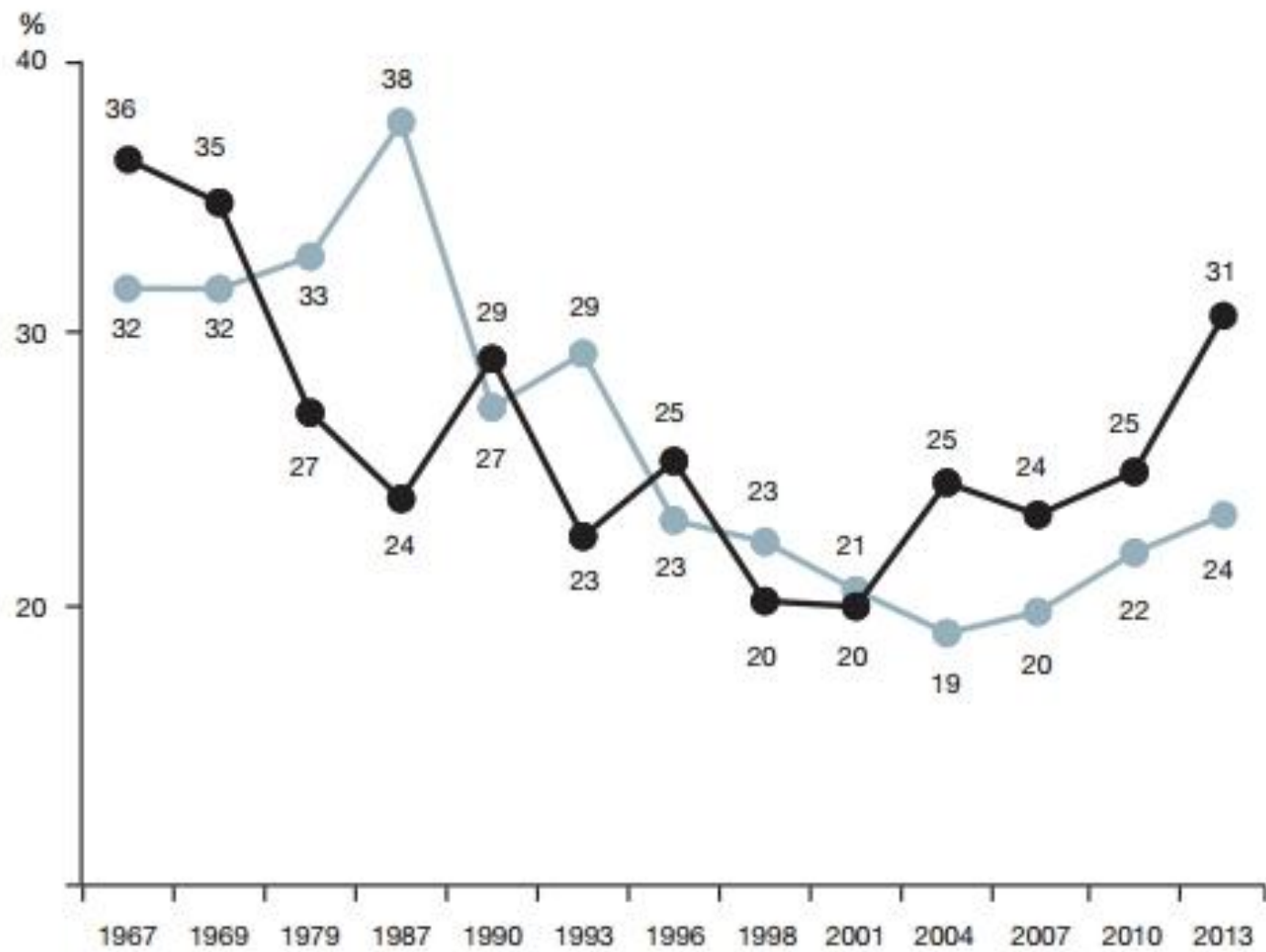
- Very strong
- Fairly strong
- Not very strong



The extent of voting volatility

- Always voted for the same party
- Considered voting for another party

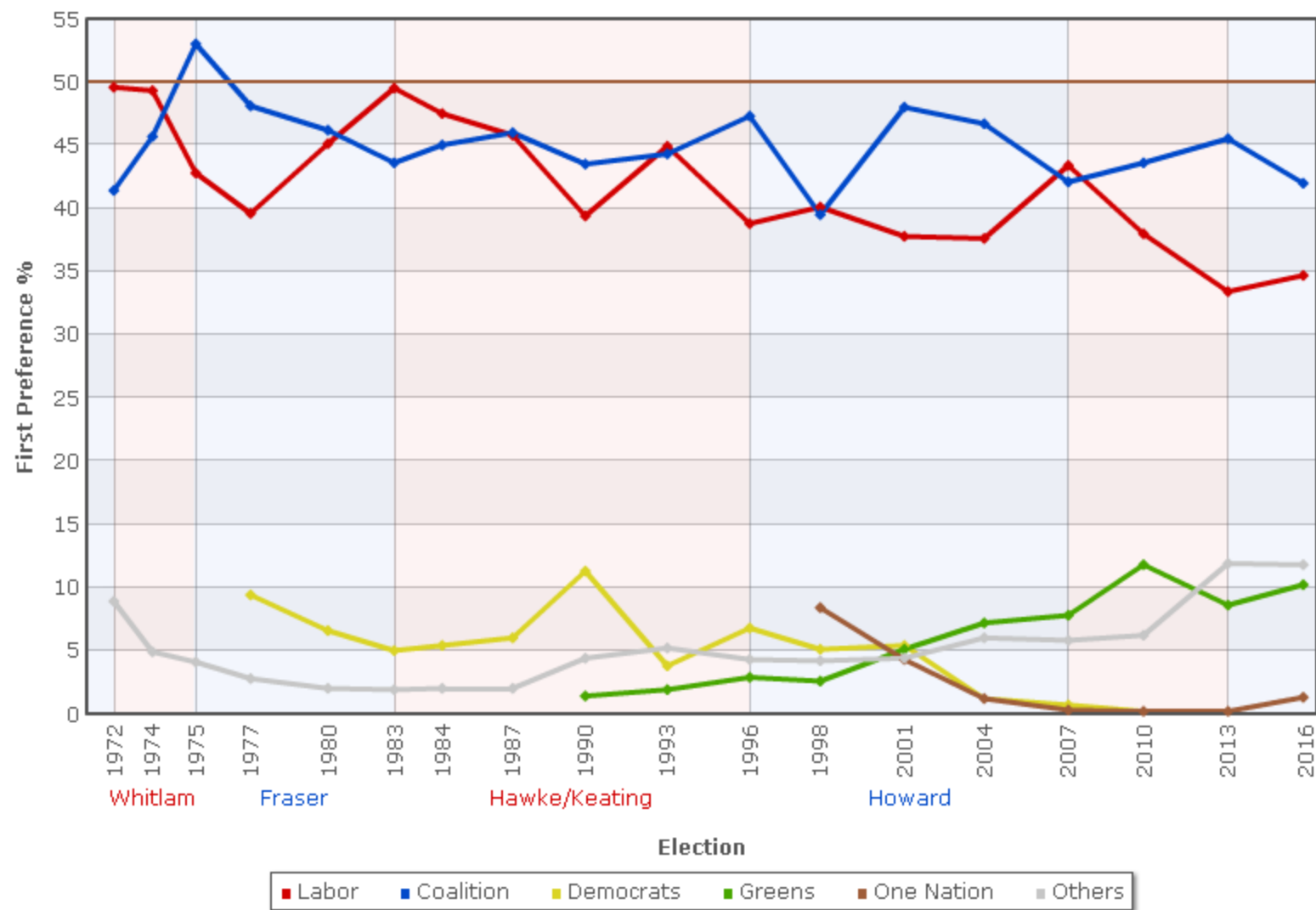




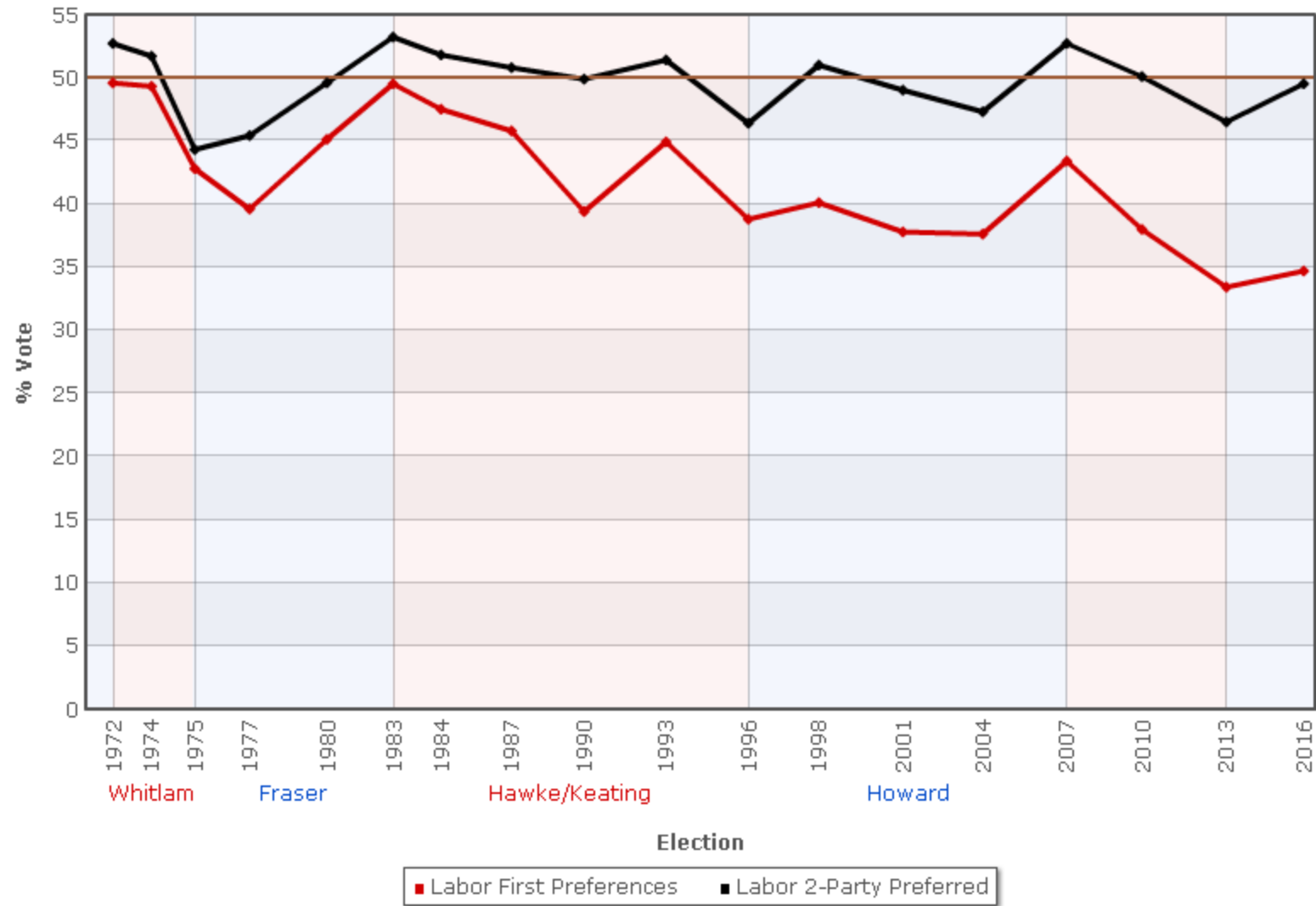
Lifetime voting

- Stable Liberal-National
- Stable Labor

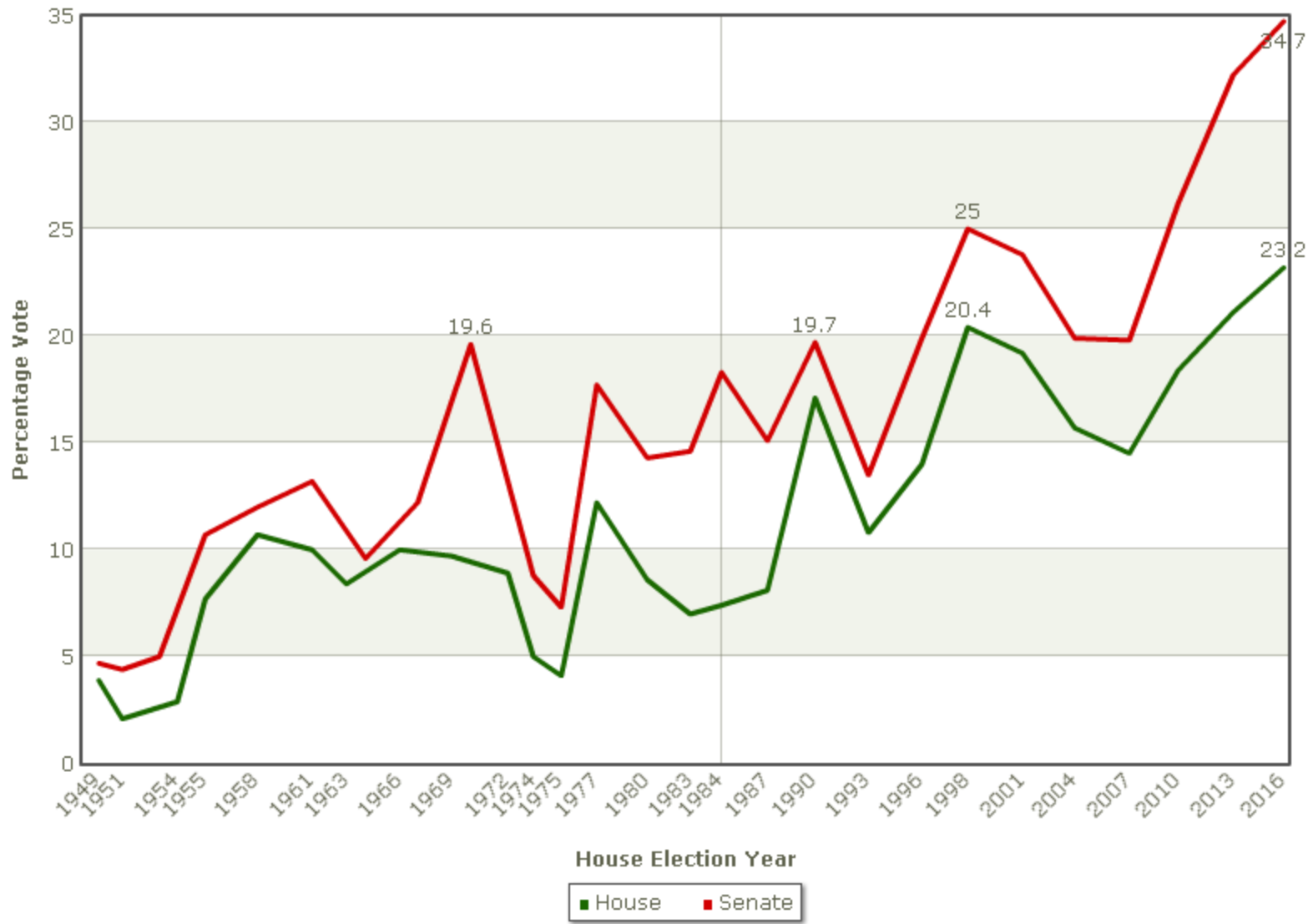
House of Representatives Elections 1972-2016
 (% First Preference Vote by Party)



House of Representatives Elections 1972-2016
(% Labor First Preferences and 2-Party Vote Compared)



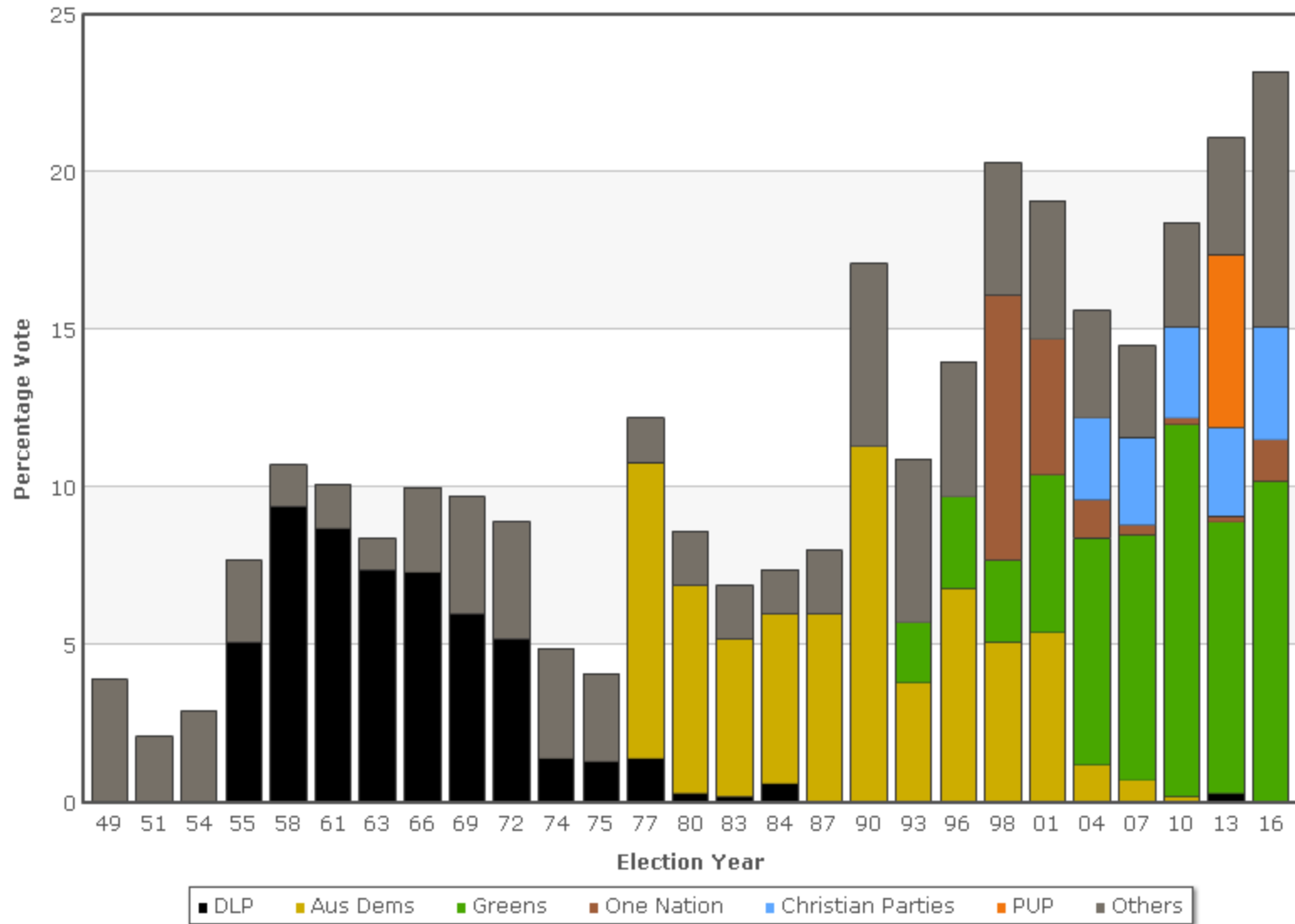
Minor Party Vote at Federal Elections 1949-2016



Minor Parties

- DLP, 1955-72, a party of transition that saw many middle class Catholics shift allegiances from Labor to Liberal
- Australian Democrats, 1977-2001, centre party that acted as a transition path of middle class radicals from Liberal to Labor
- Pauline Hanson's One Nation in 1998, brief outbreak of an anti-immigrant right-wing party.
- Australian Greens since 1990, to the left of the Labor Party and in some views representing an out-sourcing of the Labor Left
- The Greens are the first new party with an identifiable social base based on socialisation of young people into a new party.

House of Representatives - Vote by Minor Party 1949-2016



Recent Political Instability

- Only four Prime Ministers in 32 years, Malcolm Fraser 1975-83, Bob Hawke 1983-91, Paul Keating 1991-96 and John Howard 1996-2007.
- Since then Kevin Rudd 2007-2010 (deposed)
- Julia Gillard 2010-13 (deposed)
- Kevin Rudd (July-September 2013 defeated)
- Tony Abbott 2013-15 (deposed)
- Malcolm Turnbull – narrowly re-elected July 2016

Causes of Instability

- Party leadership elected by MPs
- Labor's instability in office has led to changes in party rules giving 50% voting power to party membership.
- Senators take part in electing leaders, and Senators are less centrist, more factional, than lower house members.
- Senators, like each party's membership, is more to the left (Labor Party) and right (Liberal Party) than voters for each party

Problems for the Turnbull Government

- Has only 76 seats in the 150 member House
- A weak Senate position dependent on populists such as Pauline Hanson, Derryn Hinch Jacqui Lambie
- On-going factionalism in the Liberal Party, on-going Liberal versus disputes in the party.
- The nation's budget deficit, an inability to create consensus on changing the tax mix, dealing with inequities in tax 'loopholes', or what areas of spending to cut.
- Vertical fiscal imbalance, where the Federal government raises most taxes but the states do most of the spending.

The Senate Dilemma

- Australian Senate almost co-equal in power with the House
- Designed as a state's house but largely a second party chamber
- Changes introduced in 1984 have made it virtually impossible for a government to obtain a Senate majority. Government majority of only two of the last 35 years.
- Senate balance of power has not been held by a centrist party since the demise of the Australian Democrats.
- The Senate has become the Chamber where Oppositions combine with populists to frustrate the mandates of governments.