

# Cementing Labor's majority: generational turnover & the 2025 Australian federal election

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The 2025 election saw first preference vote shares for major parties continue to decline, with an especially poor result for the Coalition parties, winning just 31.8% of formal first preferences. The 2025 election extended trends we drew attention to in 2022, with the fall in Coalition support disproportionately concentrated among younger segments of the electorate. In 2022, we estimated that the Coalition won just 25% of formal first preferences among voters under 40 years of age. In 2025 that figure fell to 23% and to just 21% among Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996).

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

The 2025 election revealed continued significant slowing and even reversals of this pattern, reinforcing discoveries we drew attention to in the 2022 AES. [Figure 1](#) highlights the distinctiveness of 2025. Each line shows the level of support for the indicated party by birth year, with one line or “age profile” per election since the first AES in 1987, with 2025 highlighted. The Coalition’s age profiles fall over time, as major party support erodes, and – within that broader trend — newer cohorts with more recent birth years enter the electorate and are less likely to support the Coalition than older voters. The same is true for Labor with age profiles falling over time, except with the anticipated reverse relationship with birth year from that observed for the

Coalition (younger voters with most recent birth years in any given AES being more likely to support Labor than the Coalition).

Figure 1 shows the Coalition’s 2025 age profile (bold blue line, top right panel) sitting lower than any of its previous age profiles, consistent with the broad fall in the Coalition’s vote across almost all age groups. But it is the fall in Coalition support among younger cohorts that is especially noteworthy. Even under the conventional theory of drift towards conservative parties over the life course, the trajectory for these cohorts is starting from an unprecedented low level of support for the Coalition. Slightly older cohorts — Millennials in particular — are defying the conventional “conservative maturation” theory, their support for the Coalition falling over the last four elections.

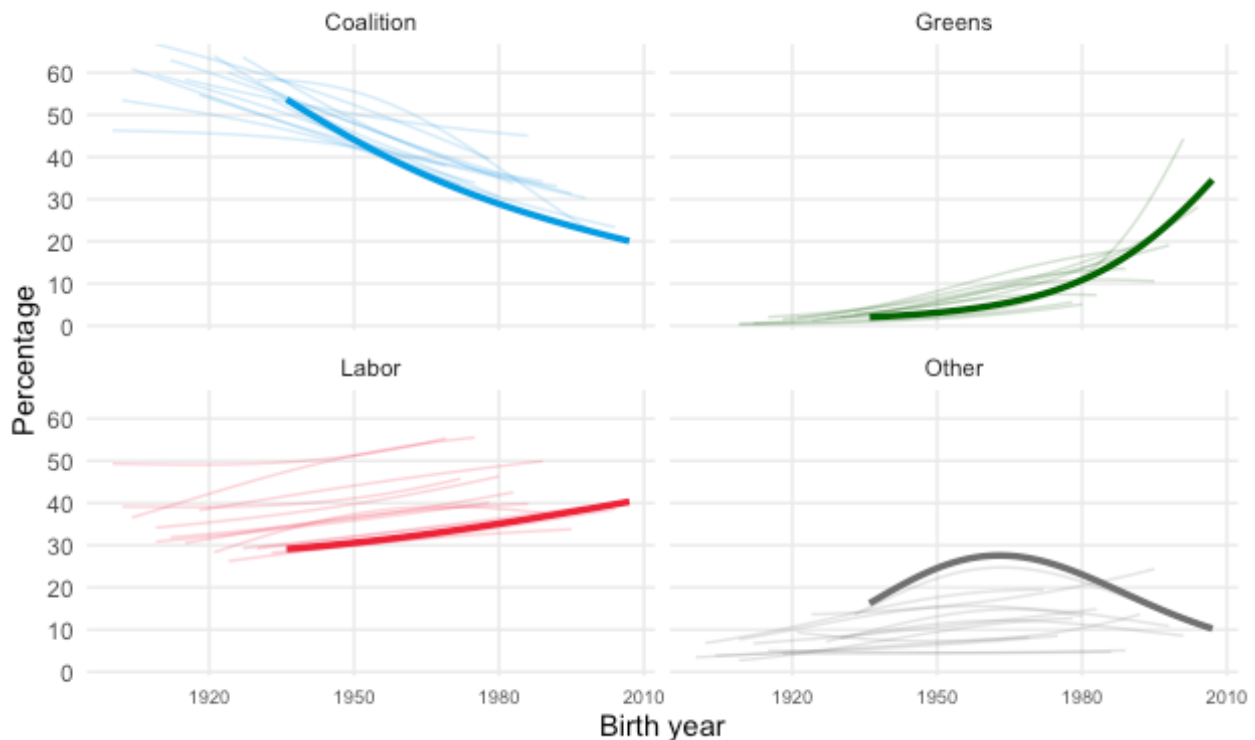


Figure 1: Age and reported House of Representatives vote in AES surveys 1987 to 2025; 2025 results are highlighted with the bold line in each panel.

In Figure 2 we segment each AES survey by generation, from the “Greatest Generation” (born before 1928) — the oldest generation of voters in the first AES study in 1987, then aged sixty or older — through to Gen Z, born after 1996 and whose oldest members began voting in 2016, but not appearing in meaningful numbers in AES surveys until 2019 and 2022. We plot shares of

formal first preferences for the Coalition (blue lines), Labor (red), Greens and other parties and candidates (grey) for each generation and for each AES survey, with the present 2025 study appearing on the right hand side of each panel. Careful analysis of the AES data — ensuring that respondent-reported preference flows match those reported in Australian Electoral Commission tabulations — lets us also estimate two-party preferred vote shares for each generation in 2025.

Some support for the “conservative drift” theory is evident in the gradual fall in Labor support apparent in the four oldest generations in the data, the Greatest Generation, the Silent Generation (1928-45), Boomers (1946-64) and Generation X (1965-80), over the 1987-2025 period spanned by the AES surveys. Less apparent is a corresponding increase in Coalition support; minor parties and independents (labelled “Other” in [Figure 2](#)) are more the beneficiaries of falls in Labor support over the life course than gains for the Coalition or the Greens.

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

Millennials’ support of the Coalition has fallen steadily from 38% in 2016 to 21% in 2025, while Labor’s support has risen from 33% to 37%. Labor won **64%** of the two-party preferred vote among Millennials in 2025. Again we stress this is no longer a cohort of fickle young voters, but a generation at a “steep” part of the life course with respect to earning power, career and family responsibilities, and wealth accumulation. Precisely as this cohort has transitioned from early adulthood to their 30s and 40s, their support for the Coalition has fallen by almost one-half. Millennials will range from 32 to 47 years of age at the time of the 2028 election and will constitute a larger share of the electorate as older generations exit via losses to mortality.

Gen Z (born after 1996) has appeared in three AES surveys: 2019, 2022 and 2025, with just a handful of observations from 2019. Coalition support was 28% in this group in 2025, a significantly stronger result than among Millennials, while still lagging the Coalition’s 32%

overall result. But Gen Z is also the strongest cohort for both the Greens (27%) and Labor (41%), yielding a massive **67-33** two-party preferred win for Labor in this cohort.

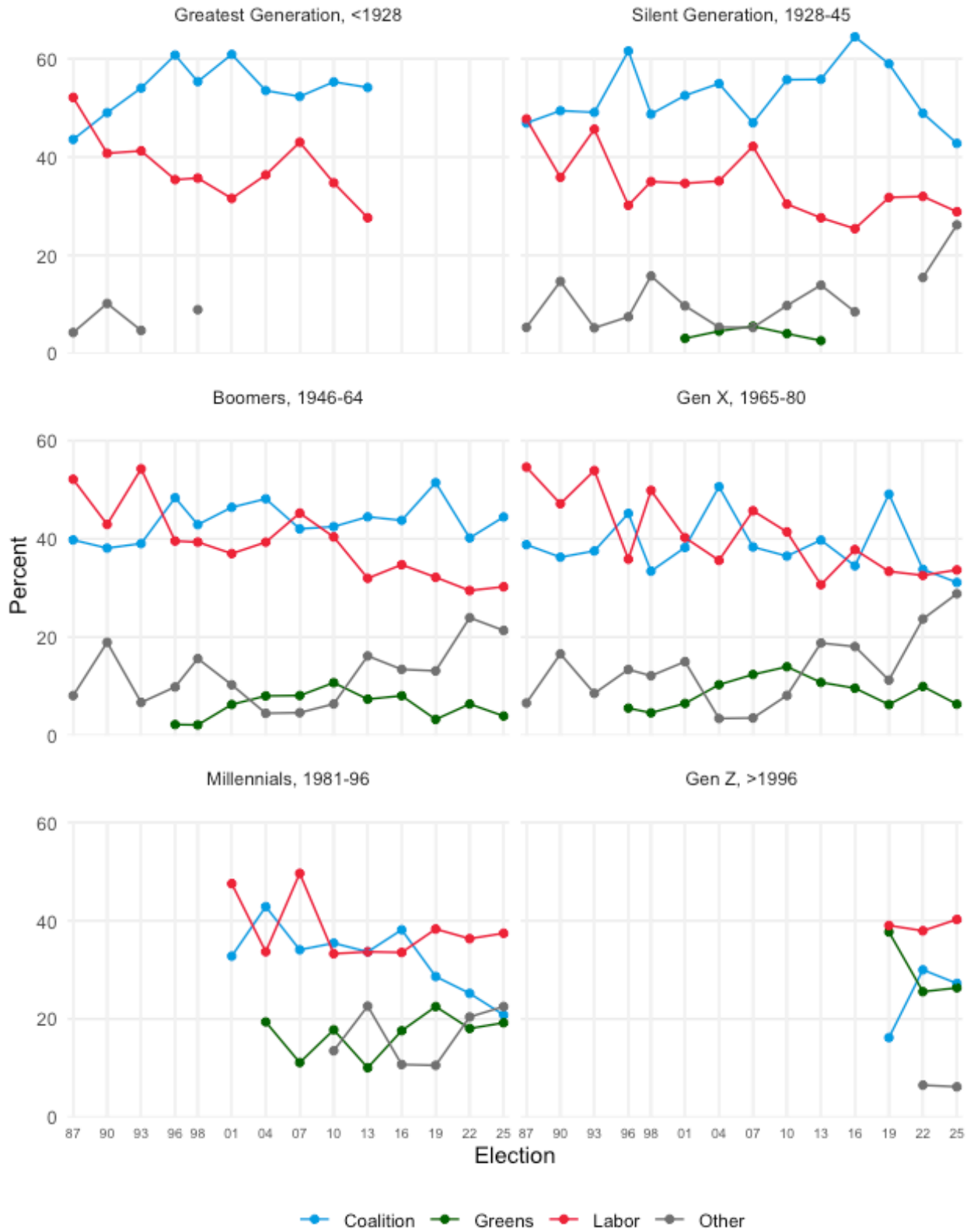


Figure 2: House of Representatives vote choice, by generation and survey year, AES surveys 1987

to 2022.

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

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

The challenge for both scholars and practitioners is to rigorously understand *why*. Other analyses of the AES data will address the extent to which the trends I present here reflects structural and more enduring characteristics of voters and their partisan dispositions, and what ought be attributed to the familiar, if fleeting, “short term forces” specific to a given election or campaign.