



Driving without a licence: voters' views on Labor's immigration agenda

Based on the September 2022 Tapri survey of voters' attitudes to population issues

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Table of contents

Executive Summary.....	v
The 2022 Tapri survey.....	1
<i>Voters views on a return to Big Australia immigration levels</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Most voters do not think Australia needs more people</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Do voters views on immigration and population issues matter politically?</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Flaws in the electoral-tide argument</i>	<i>8</i>
Tapri findings on voter dissent	9
<i>Cultural issues</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Most voters dissent from the prevailing progressive cultural positions.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Economic issues.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Most voters do not support Labor's neoliberal agenda</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Population stress</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Most voters are concerned about the consequences of population growth.....</i>	<i>16</i>

<i>Views of those who think Australia needs more people</i>	18
Is voter dissent likely to have electoral consequences in Australia?	21
<i>Perhaps not, because concentrated disadvantage is not evident in Australia</i>	21
<i>High financial insecurity and its sources in Australia</i>	22
<i>Labor's immigration policies are making financial insecurity worse</i>	25
Potential sources of political mobilisation of dissent in Australia	26
<i>Challenges from the right</i>	26
<i>Challenges from the left</i>	27
<i>Labor decides to listen (selectively) to the electorate</i>	29
Appendix A	31
<i>Attitudes to immigration numbers and population growth by education, age, and country of birth</i>	31
<i>The population question: suspicions of racism and their possible effects on free speech</i>	34
<i>Economic hardship: level of education, and housing for non-home owners</i>	36
<i>The long-term crossover trend</i>	38
Appendix B: Method	39
Appendix C: Questionnaire	40
Notes	49

Index of Tables and Figures

Table 1: Desired level of immigration — Which of the following is closest to your views? %2	
Table 2: Overall, do you think Australia needs more people? %	4
Table 3: Vote in the 21 May 2022 election by graduate and non-graduate status: Australian Election Study (AES) %	6
Table 4: If a federal election for the House of Representatives were held today, which one of the following would you vote for? By graduate status %	8
Table 5: Some people argue that a woman is anyone who identifies as a woman, regardless of their sex when born. What do you think? By graduate status %	11
Table 6: A number of people who were born male now identify as female. Do you think they should be allowed to compete in women's sports? By graduate status %	11
Table 7: Some people argue we should increase immigration in order to increase our ethnic and other forms of diversity. What is your view? By graduate status %	11
Table 8: If the referendum were held today would you vote 'Yes' or 'No'? By graduate status %	12
Table 9: Would you support or oppose changing the date on which Australia Day is celebrated? By graduate status %	12

Table 10: The share of manufacturing in Australia's economy is less than half of what it was forty years ago. Do you think... By graduate status %	14
Table 11: In recent years Federal and State governments have privatised services such as electricity, gas, and telecommunications. What is your view? By graduate status %.....	14
Table 12: Many employers argue that we must open the borders as soon as possible to allow temporary and permanent migrant workers to help fill job vacancies. Which of the following is closest to your views? %.....	15
Table 13: Labor and the Coalition both say they support lower taxes for individuals and for businesses. Others say we should increase taxes for the rich and big business. This would reduce inequality and help to pay for better services. What is your view? By graduate status %.....	15
Table 14: We don't need more people because... – 'Our cities are overcrowded and there is too much traffic.' By graduate status %	17
Table 15: We don't need more people because... – 'Our hospitals are overcrowded.' By graduate status %.....	17
Table 16: We don't need more people because... – 'The natural environment is under stress with the number of people we already have.' By graduate status %.....	18
Table 17: We don't need more people because... – 'Adding more people will push up the cost of housing.' By graduate status %.....	18
Table 18: We need more people because... – 'We need more people to boost the economy.' By graduate status %	19
Table 19: We need more people because... – 'We need more babies to be born so that we can offset the ageing of the population.' By graduate status %.....	19
Table 20: We need more people because... 'We need more migrants so that we can offset the ageing of the population.' By graduate status %	20
Table 21: We need more people because... 'We should have a strong humanitarian policy and bring in more refugees.' By graduate status %.....	20
Table 22: How well are you getting on financially these days? By graduate status %	23
Table 23: How well are you getting on financially these days? By location %	24
Figure 1: Financial wellbeing by homeownership %	24
Table 24: Overall do you think Australia needs more people? By how well are you getting on financially these days?.....	26
Table 25: Labor and the Coalition both say they support lower taxes for individuals and for businesses. Others say we should increase taxes for the rich and big business. This would reduce inequality and help to pay for better services. What is your view? By intended vote %	28
Table 26: In recent years Federal and State governments have privatised services such as electricity, gas and telecommunications. What is your view? By intended vote %.....	28
Table A1: Desired level of immigration by graduate status %.....	31
Table A2: Overall, do you think Australia need more people? By graduate status %	31
Table A3: Desired level of immigration by age group %	32
Table A4: Overall do you think Australia needs more people? By age group%.....	32
Table A5: Desired level of immigration by birthplace %	33
Table A6: Overall do you think Australia needs more people? By birthplace %	33
Table A7: Guardians against racism and other voters %.....	34
Table A8: Desired level of immigration by Guardians and other voters %	35
Table A9: Overall, do you think Australia needs more people? By guardians and other voters %.....	35
Table A10: Financial wellbeing by highest qualification since leaving school %.....	36
Table A11: Financial wellbeing by Do you (or you and a partner) own the place where you usually live? %	36

Table A12: Which of the following best describe your housing situation? By age group (non-home owners only) %	37
Table A13: How well are you getting on financially? By Which of the following best describes your housing situation? (Non-home owners only)	37
Table A14: Votes for parties of the right and the left by educational status, 1984 to 2019, and 2022, Australian Election Study data	38

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Executive Summary

This national survey of Australian voters was conducted by The Australian Population Research Institute (Tapri) in September 2022. Respondents were asked their views about population growth and immigration at a time when there was much publicity about skill shortages. It was also just after the August Jobs and Skills summit when Labor Government announced its intention to increase Australia's immigration level. This was a prospect that had not been raised by either of the major parties during the campaign for the May 2022 election.

The Tapri survey provides an opportunity to assess whether voters support this post-election Labor policy.

Two questions were asked that are relevant. One concerned voters' support for a restoration of pre-pandemic levels of immigration and the other asked whether voters think that Australia needed more people.

The answers were negative on both counts. Only 18 percent of voters favored a return to the pre-pandemic level ([Table 1](#)), and only 35 percent thought that Australia needed more people ([Table 2](#)).

These attitudes were similar for both Australian- and overseas-born voters (Appendix A, [Tables A5](#) and [A6](#)). They set the scene for this report.

The Labor Party's immigration policies are likely to deliver a sustained net overseas migration level of 235,000 per annum. This is equivalent to the 'Big Australia' levels recorded prior to the pandemic. According to the Treasurer, Jim Chalmers, the number could reach 300,000 p.a. in 2022-23. Over the next decade they will add 4.9 million to the population, almost the current population of Melbourne.

These policies were not put to the voters prior to the election and Tapri's data show that Labor does not have a social licence for them.

But does this matter politically? That is, is the gap between voters' views and the Government's immigration policy likely to lead to the mobilisation of voters opposed to it?

According to most expert and senior media analysts, it does not matter. Labor's electoral position is strong relative to the Coalition, particularly amongst voters under 40 years of age.

This commentary also assumes that elites in the media, education and political circles, who predominantly share Labor's progressive social and economic agenda (including on immigration), will continue to shape the electorate's views.

Our analysis of the Australian National University's 2022 Australian Election Study data shows that a clear majority (53 per cent – see [Table 3](#)) of graduates

voted for left-of centre parties (Labor and The Greens). In effect elites, almost all of whom are graduates, are deserting the Coalition. Only 26 percent of graduates gave their primary vote to the Coalition parties.

These findings support the proposition that the left-of-centre progressive policy agenda and Labor as its political representative, are impregnable.

This notwithstanding, results from the 2022 Tapri survey are not consistent with this proposition. The survey gathered information on voters' views about the progressive values featuring in Labor's policies and about Labor's neoliberal economic agenda. We refer here to its inheritance from the Hawke/Keating era, notably the opening up of Australia's economy to global competition, open-ended foreign investment, and the primacy of the market place in determining Australia's industry structure.

First, a majority of voters do not share Labor's progressive values agenda. For example, only 25 percent agreed with the proposition that 'a woman is anyone who identifies as a woman, regardless of sex at birth' ([Table 5](#)). Second, most voters do not endorse Labor's neoliberal agenda. For example, 70 percent think Australia should support local manufacturing by providing tariff protection ([Table 10](#)).

Third, most voters do not support Labor's immigration and population agenda. We hypothesise that such dissent may be a consequence of Australia's difficulties in coping with the quality-of-life consequences of rapid metropolitan population growth. These include congestion, overcrowded hospitals, escalating house prices and environmental deterioration.

In the case of the quality-of-life issues, we separated voters into two blocks. One was the 65 percent who thought Australia did not need more people. They were asked whether they thought high levels of population growth were affecting the various aspects of urban quality of life. The great majority of these voters did think that this was the case. For example, 82 percent agreed with the proposition that 'adding more people will push up the price of housing' ([Table 17](#)).

But does voters' dissatisfaction with Labor's population policy matter politically? The comparative literature suggests that this is only likely to be the case if large numbers were also experiencing serious economic insecurity.

One view is that this is unlikely to develop in Australia because there are no left-behind communities. Australia does not have a rust belt such as that in the Mid-West of the US, a region that supported Trump's anti-globalisation and anti-immigration agenda. These themes paved the road to his victory in 2016.

Nonetheless, the Tapri survey shows that despite this absence, and despite Australia's recent record of high economic growth and low unemployment, a high share of voters reports significant financial insecurity.

Tapri asked ‘How well are you getting on financially these days’. Forty-five per cent of respondents ([Table 22](#)) said they were just getting by or finding it quite difficult or very difficult.

Not surprisingly, the highest level of economic insecurity was reported by non-home owners, most of whom were renting ([Figure 1](#)). This group was also the most likely to oppose high population growth ([Table 24](#)).

Given the global economic slowdown and the action of the Reserve Bank in raising interest rates, the stressors that have generated economic insecurity will not abate. The Labor Party is making matters worse via its high immigration policy, a policy that will make the housing situation for aspiring home owners and renters much worse.

We conclude that there is a high level of dissent from Labor’s progressive values, its neoliberal policies, and its population growth agenda. There is also a reservoir of financial discontent which could fuel political mobilisation from parties either to the left or to the right of Labor.

An alternative prospect flagged by Labor’s recent measures on energy is that the Labor Party itself could change direction. This has been telegraphed by the Treasurer, Jim Chalmers’ recent writing. He acknowledges that in order to stay in power the Party will have to listen to the electorate’s concerns.

The Labor government has already deviated from the Hawke/Keating neoliberal legacy by its action to control coal and gas prices and by requiring producers to divert some of their product from export to domestic markets.

However, it has shown no sign of moderating its progressive values agenda. Nor is it listening to voters’ concerns about its ‘Big Australia’ policy. Rather, it is pressing ahead with this policy despite the evidence that this will add to the scale of economic insecurity. It will add to economic insecurity because ‘Big Australia’ will add massively to housing needs at time when there are serious shortages, especially in the rental market.

Labor has also recently announced that it will treat overseas students as an integral part of Australia’s skilled worker supply. This will be at the expense of domestic opportunity. Voters have repeatedly indicated that we should prioritise domestic training over reliance on immigration. This clash will also provide tinder for voter concerns and thus the potential for political mobilisation.

The 2022 Tapri survey

The 2022 Survey is the fifth initiated by Tapri. It was conducted in September 2022. It was an online poll drawn from a large internet panel, with a sample size of 3019 voters. This is a larger sample than the main commercial polls: Newspoll is around 1500, as is Roy Morgan and Resolve.

The focus on population is justified by its' role in shaping social, economic, and environmental outcomes, and by the fact that attitudes to population size and growth are rarely covered in the commercial polls. This is unsatisfactory. Australia's rate of immigration and population growth is the highest in the developed world and, as a consequence, has profound implications for Australia's culture and economy and for Australians' quality of life.¹

This report focusses on electoral views on the issues. It does not explore the respective costs and benefits of a high migration policy. Our judgements on these consequences are published in earlier Tapri Research Reports.²

The Tapri results have particular significance in 2023 because, since Labor won office at the May 2022 Federal election, it has committed to a resurgence of the immigration program. The topic had not been mentioned during the election campaign. But during the Skills Summit in August 2022, the Government announced that increased immigration would be a core component of its policies to deal with skill shortages. The official outcomes of the Summit included an increase in the permanent entry program to 195,000 in 2022-23 (compared with an annual figure of 160,000 prior to the pandemic) and an intention to open up temporary-entry pathways for overseas students and skilled workers.³

The Government's Office of Population has indicated that these measures will result, as soon as 2022-23, in net overseas migration (NOM) of 235,000 p.a., which is close to the level occurring prior to the pandemic. This level was referred at the time as a 'Big Australia' outcome, a shorthand tag we will use during this report.

According to the Australian Government's Office of Population, at this rate, Australia's population will increase from 26.0 million in 2021-22 to 29.9 million in 2032-33, an extra 4.9 million, almost the current population of Melbourne. During this period the population will be growing (as before the pandemic) by over 350,000 a year or at an annual rate of 1.4 percent a year.⁴ By comparison, the population of the United States has been growing at about 0.5 percent a year and the UK at about 0.6 percent. Only Canada has approached the Australian level.

It may be that these estimates have already been overtaken by events, especially by the recent surge in arrivals of migrants holding temporary entry visas. The

Treasurer, Jim Chalmers, has indicated that NOM could reach 300,000 in 2022-23.⁵

Prior to the May 2022 Federal Election, the Labor Party gave no indication it would embark on a revival of the ‘Big Australia’ agenda. Indeed, it maintained a careful silence on the subject.⁶ Abul Rizvi, former deputy secretary in the Department of Immigration, claims that this silence was deliberate.⁷

These observations raise the question of whether the Government has a social licence from the electorate for its policy. (The term ‘social license’ was used in the Discussion Paper issued for the new Government’s current review of immigration policy, entitled *A Migrant System for Australia’s Future*.⁸)

The Tapri survey focused on two key issues in summarising voters’ views about Australia’s population. The first asked about the level of immigration voters supported in the aftermath of the pandemic (when NOM had slipped into negative territory). The second was whether voters thought Australia needed more people.

Voters views on a return to Big Australia immigration levels

Table 1 shows that only a minority of voters – 18 percent – support a return to pre-pandemic levels of immigration while a quarter would prefer nil net migration. (In the last three financial years before the pandemic NOM averaged just under 248,00 p.a.)⁹

Table 1: Desired level of immigration — Which of the following is closest to your views? %

	%
1 We should return to net migration of around 240,000 a year or higher	18
2 We should return to net migration at somewhat lower levels	28
3 We should return to net migration at much lower levels	17
4 We should keep migration low enough so that new arrivals just balance out departures	25
5 Don’t know	13
Total %	100
Total N	3019

This finding has been repeated in other surveys, as in the 2022 Australian Election Study (AES) conducted by researchers at the Australian National University (ANU). This asked voters whether they thought the number of immigrants allowed into Australia should be reduced or increased? They were given the options of ‘increased a lot’, ‘increased a little’, ‘remain about the same’, ‘reduced a little’ and ‘reduced a lot’. The result was that 10 percent of

voters wanted immigration to be increased a lot, 22 percent for it to be increased a little, 37 percent for it to remain about the same, 15 percent for it to be reduced a little, and 15 percent for it to be reduced a lot. Two percent skipped the question.¹⁰

The ANU survey was conducted in May/June 2022, at a time when there was high publicity about skills shortages and about the considerable drop in immigration levels during the pandemic. If we take the group preferring immigration to be increased a lot as supporting a revival of ‘Big Australia’ levels, they only number 10 percent in the AES. This is hardly a vote for a ‘Big Australia’.

The Age and the *Sydney Morning Herald* pollster, Resolve, published a similar luke-warm voter response in September 2022. In the context of probing voters attitudes to the Skills Summit it asked whether they supported the increase in the permanent migration intake by 35,000. Only 34 per cent did. The director of Resolve, Jim Reed, is quoted as saying: ‘Australians are nervous about too much immigration’.¹¹

Nonetheless, a senior editor at the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Michael Koziol, felt confident enough to write, on January 16, 2023, that ‘Australians are overwhelmingly positive about immigration.’ Citing the result of the Scanlon survey on the issue, Koziol asserted that ‘Australians’ concerns about immigration and population growth have essentially disappeared’.¹² The Scanlon survey was in the field from 11-24 July 2022. The question on immigration was: ‘What do you think of the number of immigrants accepted into Australia at present?’ Twenty-four percent said too high, 52 percent said about right and 22 percent too low.¹³ At that time the new Government’s plans to increase immigration were not yet formalised and much of the media was full of complaints about the dearth of skilled migrant workers.¹⁴ At a time of unusually low immigration only 22 per cent said the numbers were too low.

In Koziol’s case the wish may be father to the thought. People holding progressive views tend to disapprove of any expression of opposition to migration. This observation is documented in [Tables A7-A9](#) in Appendix A, which explores the experience of respondents who have expressed such dissent.

Most voters do not think Australia needs more people

The response to the second question about population in the Tapri survey is set out in Table 2. It shows that nearly two thirds of the electorate do not support the high growth thrust of the Labor Government’s current immigration policy.

Table 2: Overall, do you think Australia needs more people? %

	%
Yes	35
No	65
Total %	100
Total N	3019

During the election campaign the then opposition seems to have had every reason to hide its immigration intentions from the electorate.

Moreover, this dissent has a wide social base. [Tables A1](#) to A3 in Appendix A show that university students and university graduates are rather more inclined to favour growth than are non-graduates. But in no case does a majority of any educational group agree that Australia needs more people.

The same is true of Australia's birthplace groups, in none of whom (including the Asia-born) does a majority say that Australia needs more people (see [Tables A5](#) and A6 in Appendix A).

Do voters views on immigration and population issues matter politically?

To date, there has been little critical comment on the Government's initiatives. By contrast, there has been huge publicity given to business submissions to the Government's Immigration Review (expected to report in March 2023), almost all of which advocate an immigration uplift.

Nor have there been any attempts by other political parties to mobilise voters' concerns about the issue, including by the Coalition. Prior to the May 2022 election the Coalition had itself pursued policies designed to increase the flow of temporary entrants. Notably, this was via an announcement in January 2022 which allowed overseas students to work unlimited hours, rather than 40 hours per fortnight, as had previously long been the case. (Overseas students have now become a key driver of NOM.)¹⁵

The Coalition ran on a belief that it could win by scaring the electorate with the prospect of an Albanese government, just as it had done with its focus on the prospect of a Bill Shorten-led Labor government in 2018.¹⁶ It made little effort to mobilise voter discontent on Labor's agenda. Instead, it put its focus on the appeal of its leader, Scott Morrison. With his electoral standing weak, this proved to be a disastrous strategy.

In any case, according to elite media opinion, it would not matter if the public did now register any disquiet about Labor's immigration policy. This is because from their point of view the Labor Government's electoral position is secure, at least relative to the Coalition.

Those holding this view have been able to cite the report of the ANU Australian Election Study in support. This report writes that the Coalition's share of the younger aged voting population has dropped significantly. Take the case of millennials, those born between 1981 and 1996 and, in 2022, aged between 26 and 41. Support for the Coalition among this age group fell from 38 percent in 2016 to just 25 percent in 2022.¹⁷ The report states that 'changes of this magnitude and this pace are rare in Australian electoral history,' and present the Coalition with a serious problem. Findings by the RedBridge polling company in April 2022 echo this judgement.¹⁸

This younger cohort is crucial, not just because it is now as large as the older 'Baby Boomer' cohort (a cohort which had become a bastion of conservative support in recent years). The ANU study writes that the voters now aged under 40 are likely to carry their voting preferences with them as they age.

What are these voting preferences? These are distinctively progressive. This is most obvious with cultural issues, where younger voters, especially those who are university students or graduates, largely mirror the zeitgeist dominant among left-of-centre elites and the media directed towards these elites. This focuses on political support for social justice, for the advancement of minority groups (notably Aborigines) and the removal of constraints against individual assertion of identity. All of these positions are against the thrust of Coalition policy but are generally supported by Labor.

On this account Paul Kelly, the leading *Australian* opinion writer, has concluded that 'The Coalition's future is in doubt'.¹⁹

Closer analysis of the ANU report supports Kelly's argument. Though this is not shown in the published version of the report, our calculations from the unpublished data highlight just how poorly the Coalition's polled at the 2022 election. (The ANU authors generously provide public access to the data file for the Australian Election Study.)²⁰

In Table 3 we show the level of primary vote support each party received, split by voters who were non-graduates and graduates. (The data are from the survey respondents' own reports of how they voted.)

Table 3: Vote in the 21 May 2022 election by graduate and non-graduate status:
Australian Election Study (AES) %

<i>Party voted for, May 2022 Federal election</i>	<i>AES Non-graduate</i>	<i>AES Graduate</i>	<i>AES Total</i>
Coalition	38	26	34
One Nation	6	4	5
UAP	3	5	4
<i>Right-leaning parties</i>	47	35	43
Labor	33	35	34
Greens	10	18	12
<i>Left-leaning parties</i>	43	53	46
Other party	6	4	5
Independents	5	8	6
Total %	100	100	100
Total N	1475	662	2137

Note: The Australian Election Study (AES) data are from McAllister, I., Sheppard, J., Cameron, S., Jackman, S. (2022). Australian Election Study 2022 [computer file], December 2022. Analysis is by K. Betts and B. Birrell. We have excluded missing values and respondents who reported ‘no party’ from the table.

The table shows just how disastrous the Coalition’s primary vote was at the May 2022 election. According to the AES results, the Coalition’s primary vote was just 34 per cent (the actual vote was just under 36 percent). The Liberal partner in the Coalition fared worse than the National Party, winning its lowest share of seats since 1946.²¹

Data from the Australian Electoral Commission on votes as counted by the Commission show that the Coalition won 35.7 percent of the primary vote, Labor 32.6 percent, The Greens 12.3 percent, other minor parties 14.2 percent and independents (including the Teals) 5.3 percent.

Labor benefitted from nearly 86 percent of Greens second preference votes, while the Coalition received just over 64 percent from One Nation voters and nearly 62 percent from UAP voters.²² But transfers from these and other minor parties were not enough to win them many seats. The final outcome for the 151 seats in the House of Representatives was Labor 77, Coalition 58, independents 10, Greens four, Centre Alliance one, and Katter’s Australia Party one.²³

While the Coalition lost some votes to other right-of-centre parties, including One Nation, many of these came back to it via second preferences. Its main losses were to left-of-centre parties, that is, Labor, the Greens, and the Teal independents. The Australia Electoral Commission’s spreadsheets do not separate the Teal independents from the others but, overall, Labor attracted just on 64 percent of second preferences from voters who had given their first

preference to an independent. Despite Labor's lower primary vote this, together with Greens voters' preferences, was more than enough to bring it over the line.

However, one must keep in mind that Labor, too, performed poorly. As noted, its share of the primary vote was 32.6 percent. This was lower than the Coalition's and was also its lowest primary vote since 1934.²⁴ Most of the primary vote moving to left-of-centre parties went to the Greens and to independents.

An even more striking finding revealed by our analysis of the AES data is that this drift to the left-of-centre was stronger among graduate voters than among non-graduate voters. Table 3 shows that 53 per cent of graduates' primary vote went to Labor or the Greens compared to only 43 percent of non-graduate votes. Labor, the party founded to represent workers, got a higher share of the vote from graduates (who dominate elite ranks) than it did from non-graduates (who comprise most of those conventionally regarded as working class).

The findings shown in Table 3 would have excited Paul Kelly if he had known about them. They would have bolstered his argument that the electoral tide has turned against the Coalition. Though graduates currently make up around 35 per cent of voters, they dominate media, education, political and business circles. Yet a majority voted for left-of-centre parties.

Indeed, a far higher share did so than amongst non-graduate voters. By comparison, Table 3 shows that 47 percent of non-graduates said that they gave their vote to one of the right-of-centre parties and only 43 per cent to Labor or the Greens.

This 'crossover' phenomena where the graduate vote has trended left and that of non-graduates trended right has been evident in previous elections in Australia.²⁵ But this movement was also strong in 2022.

(The crossover effect has been analysed in earlier Tapri reports, where the less privileged swing to the right, and the more privileged move left. It is clearly still apparent. [Table A14](#) in Appendix A brings the time series based on AES surveys from 1984 up to date.)

To judge from the Tapri respondents' answer in September 2022 to the question of how they would vote at the next election, the swing has become even greater. These voter intentions are shown in Table 4. This shows that Labor's primary vote has improved to 40 percent and the Coalition's gone further backward to 28 percent. The share of the graduate vote going to left-of-centre parties has morphed into a deluge (excluding university students, it reached 61 per cent).

Table 4: If a federal election for the House of Representatives were held today, which one of the following would you vote for? By graduate status %

	Non-graduate	University student	Graduate	Total
Liberals	20	15	17	19
Nationals	4	6	2	3
Liberal National Party	5	8	6	6
Country Liberals	0	0	0	0
Total Coalition	29	29	25	28
One Nation	7	5	5	6
United Australia Party	3	3	2	3
Total right leaning	39	37	32	37
Labor	41	23	42	40
Greens	9	35	19	14
Total left-leaning	50	58	61	54
Other	10	6	9	9
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	1955	193	871	3019

Flaws in the electoral-tide argument

The case put by those who believe we are entering a new era of progressive ascendancy, led by the Labor party, looks strong. But it is flawed.

Our critique is based on the results of the 2022 Tapri survey on matters concerned with cultural causes, economic policies, and the quality of life. The survey includes a range of questions on each of these three dimensions. On all three, as we will show, most voters dissent from Labor's stance.

The first dimension concerns progressive values on core cultural issues. The second is economic issues. We refer to the Labor Party's neoliberal agenda which readers will easily recognise as deriving from the Hawke/Keating heritage. This saw Australia embracing open borders (for goods, finance and ideas), free trade, and the abolition of protection (including discouragement of government support for industry policy). It also included encouraging foreign investment, deregulation, and the prioritisation of private enterprise.

The third domain concerns the quality of life. This relates to voters' responses to the negative consequences of rapid population growth. These consequences include urban congestion, competition for public services, especially hospital services, the rising cost of housing and environmental degradation. This latter group of issues did not feature in the May 2022 election. But as we will show, voters' unhappiness on these matters is significant and appears to be a key determinant of attitudes towards immigration numbers.

The implication is that Labor is far from being electorally secure. Rather, its priorities are at odds with most voters' preferences on each of the three sets of issues sketched above. Dissent on these concerns could provide the basis for political mobilisation against Labor's agenda.

This is hardly idle speculation. The immigration question has been a focal point for challenges to progressive and/or neoliberal parties across Western Europe and the United States. This is demonstrated by Brexit in the UK, the flourishing of Trump in the US and the rise of Marine Le Pen's National Rally party in France.

Whether the Australian situation parallels that of these countries is explored later.

Nonetheless, voter disquiet about Labor's immigration agenda is very evident in Australia, particularly relating to pressures from population growth. With Sydney now just over 40 percent foreign-born, and Melbourne approaching this level, house prices escalating, and rental vacancies vanishing, a revived immigration program is likely to add to this disquiet.²⁶

Should voters mobilise on these issues, the Coalition need not be the beneficiary. Voter dissatisfaction could be gathered up by other parties, perhaps new parties on the right. As regards Labor's neoliberal economic agenda, mobilisation could come from other left-of-centre parties. The Greens could play a role here. Or, as the Labor Treasurer, Jim Chalmers' recent reflections telegraph, Labor may itself have to adjust policy to accommodate voter disquiet. (Chalmers' paper is discussed below.)

Before exploring these possibilities, we first substantiate the claim that Labor's agenda is at odds with most voters' preferences.

Tapri findings on voter dissent

Cultural issues

It might seem that progressive views on social and cultural issues have largely prevailed. This is not surprising as any resistance to them is treated as a moral defect within progressive media, cultural and educational circles.

As we and other commentators have shown, graduates are more likely to hold progressive views than are non-graduates. Given their rising share of the electorate and their influence in shaping public views, it is understandable that recent commentary presumes that progressive views will continue to prevail within the electorate.

The Labor Government, with the support of the Greens, have nailed their colors to the wall, with their leadership on social justice issues, including Aboriginal advancement and gender equality.

By contrast, those opposed to the progressive agenda tend to base their views on a conservative, patriotic stance which prioritises national over sectional interests.

The following detail on voters' opinions on these questions shows that most voters either do not support, or register strong minority opposition to, the prevailing progressive stance. As a consequence, there is a much larger potential constituency open to mobilisation on these matters than is implied by current media commentary.

We have separated the responses from voters who are graduates, current university students, and non-graduates in the following tables. They confirm the expectation that graduates are more likely to support progressive views than are non-graduates. However, while it may surprise, on some of these issues, majorities of graduates also do not support the progressive agenda.

Most voters dissent from the prevailing progressive cultural positions

On the first three of the issues considered only a minority of voters were supportive of current progressive cultural preferences. Tables 5 to 7 report attitudes to gender fluidity and cultural diversity by educational status.

Only 25 per cent of the sample strongly agree or agree that a woman is anyone who identifies as a woman, a view that is stronger among graduates and especially students. When it comes to trans women participating in women's sports only 15 percent are in favour. Most are against, including a majority of graduates.

As regards the idea of increasing immigration in order to enhance Australia's ethnic diversity (Table 7), only 28 percent are in favour. Sixty-one percent are opposed, including 50 percent of graduates and university students. Some 11 percent chose the 'don't know' option.

Table 5: Some people argue that a woman is anyone who identifies as a woman, regardless of their sex when born. What do you think? By graduate status %

	Non-graduate	University student	Graduate	Total
Strongly agree	6	15	12	8
Agree	14	35	21	17
<i>Strongly agree and agree</i>	20	49	32	25
Neither agree nor disagree	25	29	25	26
Disagree	22	5	18	20
Strongly disagree	32	17	25	29
<i>Disagree and strongly disagree</i>	55	22	43	49
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	1956	192	871	3019

Table 6: A number of people who were born male now identify as female. Do you think they should be allowed to compete in women's sports? By graduate status %

	Non-graduate	University student	Graduate	Total
Yes	11	35	20	15
No	75	47	61	69
Don't know	13	18	19	15
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	1956	194	871	3019

Table 7: Some people argue we should increase immigration in order to increase our ethnic and other forms of diversity. What is your view? By graduate status %

	Non-graduate	University student	Graduate	Total
Yes. More diversity will give Australia a more vibrant society and economy.	23	32	38	28
No. We have enough diversity. We need to encourage national unity and a shared Australian identity.	67	50	50	61
Don't know	10	19	12	11
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	1956	193	871	3019

On the following two cultural questions, the voice to parliament for Indigenous Australians and changing the date of Australia Day, support was stronger, but in both instances it was still less than 40 percent for the sample as a whole. And a substantial minority of voters dissented.

The question on the referendum for establishing an Indigenous voice to parliament (Table 8) was preceded by a question asking respondents how much

they had heard about the voice. More than half (55 percent) said they had heard ‘hardly anything’ (34 percent) or ‘nothing at all’ (21 percent). This was in September 2022. No doubt, more voters would have heard about it by early 2023.

The survey then went on to ask how respondents would vote in the referendum. Thirty-nine percent said they would vote ‘Yes’, 29 percent said they would vote ‘No’ and nearly a third (32 percent) did not know how they would vote. Students and graduates were more likely to plan to vote ‘Yes’, but half or more would vote ‘No’, or were still to make up their minds.

Table 8: If the referendum were held today would you vote ‘Yes’ or ‘No’? By graduate status %

	<i>Non-graduate</i>	<i>University student</i>	<i>Graduate</i>	<i>Total</i>
I would vote ‘Yes’	35	44	49	39
I would vote ‘No’	31	23	25	29
I don’t know how I would vote	34	33	27	32
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	1956	193	871	3019

Table 9: Would you support or oppose changing the date on which Australia Day is celebrated? By graduate status %

	<i>Non-graduate</i>	<i>University student</i>	<i>Graduate</i>	<i>Total</i>
Strongly support	13	21	25	17
Support	15	47	20	19
<i>Strongly support and support</i>	29	68	45	36
Oppose	19	14	12	16
Strongly oppose	35	5	24	30
<i>Oppose and strongly oppose</i>	54	19	36	46
No opinion	17	13	19	18
Total	100	100	100	100
Total	1955	194	870	3019

Table 9 shows that there is support for changing the date of Australia Day especially among university students. Some 45 percent of graduates endorsed a change of date. In contrast, more than half of the non-graduates are opposed and only 29 percent are supportive. Overall, only 36 percent of voters supported the change, 46 percent of voters opposed it and 18 percent had no opinion.

Taking the cultural questions as a whole, we can see that support for gender fluidity, increasing diversity, the voice to parliament and changing the date of

Australia Day is a minority view. This is especially true as far as non-graduates are concerned, a group that constitutes 65 percent of the sample. These shares closely reflect ABS estimates. In May 2022, 32.1 percent of the general population aged 15 to 74 were graduates and 67.9 percent were non-graduates.²⁷

Economic issues

Labor came to power as the legatee of the Hawke/Keating transformation of Australia's economy along neoliberal lines. Labor's position on economic neoliberalism has some features that distinguish it from the conservative parties. Its support for this agenda also includes some social welfare initiatives, of which Medicare in 1984, compulsory superannuation in 1992, and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in 2013 are emblematic.

Nonetheless this social welfare strand should not obscure the reality that Labor's economic agenda has been strongly neoliberal. The core is open borders for trade. As a result, those embracing this agenda strongly believe that Australia's economic wellbeing depends on the competitiveness of private enterprise in the international marketplace. This imperative explains why Labor politicians who inherit the Hawke/Keating mantle support incentives for capitalist enterprises so strongly. This support includes keeping corporate tax levels low and encouraging foreign capital and enterprise.

The Hawke/Keating legacy also included an embrace of Asia. This was an imperative, given their judgement that Australia's economic progress depended on the openness of Asian markets to our exports. It followed that not only should economic protection be abandoned, but that all traces of ethnic prejudice should be eradicated as well. Instead, Asian products and migrants should be welcomed.

This stance helps explain why Labor has led in embracing progressive cultural positions and relatively high immigration levels.

It may seem confronting to bracket the apparent harshness of neoliberalism with progressive cultural views. Yet as the previous comments indicate, for Hawke and Keating and their successors, such views were regarded as crucial to winning support for their globalising agenda from progressive elites and from graduates. Their advocacy of cultural diversity, immigration, and cosmopolitanism all helped them gain approval for opening up the Australian economy from such quarters.

These values also helped Labor's leaders legitimate their confrontation with, and defeat of, Menzies-era protectionism. This had been a stance that prioritised Australia's autonomy and self-reliance.

Most voters do not support Labor's neoliberal agenda

Nevertheless, the Tapri survey indicates that strong opposition to the neoliberal economic agenda remains, including opposition to Labor's current version of it.

While most of this agenda is shared by the Coalition, the focus here is on Labor's alleged electoral strength. (The question of where those voters who do not support this agenda might go if neoliberalism were challenged is considered later.)

In presenting our survey results, as with opinions on progressive values, we have separated results from non-graduates, university students and graduates.

Here are the results of four questions designed to tap voters' views on Labor's neoliberal agenda.

Table 10: The share of manufacturing in Australia's economy is less than half of what it was forty years ago. Do you think... By graduate status %

	<i>Non-graduate</i>	<i>University student</i>	<i>Graduate</i>	<i>Total</i>
We should protect Australia's manufacturing, using tariffs if necessary.	71	74	68	70
We should get rid of all tariffs so that we can buy goods more cheaply from overseas.	10	16	15	12
Don't know	19	9	17	17
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	1955	194	870	3019

Table 11: In recent years Federal and State governments have privatised services such as electricity, gas, and telecommunications. What is your view? By graduate status %

	<i>Non-graduate</i>	<i>University student</i>	<i>Graduate</i>	<i>Total</i>
Privatisation is a good idea.	11	24	17	14
Privatisation has gone too far.	74	58	71	72
Governments should play a greater role in owning and managing such services.				
Don't know	14	18	12	14
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	1955	193	871	3019

Table 12: Many employers argue that we must open the borders as soon as possible to allow temporary and permanent migrant workers to help fill job vacancies. Which of the following is closest to your views? %

	<i>Non-graduate</i>	<i>University student</i>	<i>Graduate</i>	<i>Total</i>
They are right. We should let in as many migrant workers as employers want to employ.	30	47	39	34
They are wrong. We should deal with worker shortages by raising wages and improving skills training for locals.	58	46	52	56
Don't know	12	7	10	11
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	1955	193	870	3019

Table 13: Labor and the Coalition both say they support lower taxes for individuals and for businesses. Others say we should increase taxes for the rich and big business. This would reduce inequality and help to pay for better services. What is your view? By graduate status %

	<i>Non-graduate</i>	<i>University student</i>	<i>Graduate</i>	<i>Total</i>
We should reduce taxes for both rich and poor.	21	25	22	22
We should stop reducing tax levels. The existing rates are appropriate.	17	32	14	17
We should increase tax rates for high income earners and big business.	52	37	56	52
Don't know	11	6	8	10
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	1954	193	870	3019

Overall, there is little electoral enthusiasm for the key policies constituting the neoliberal agenda. This is especially the case for economic protection, and for winding back privatisation of public utilities. In those instances, there is strong support across the board for alternative policies. Majorities also prefer training our own to importing skilled migrants (though students are less convinced).²⁸ As well, there is little support for reducing taxes for both rich and poor, with strong support for either keeping existing tax rates or increasing them for high income earners and big business (69 percent support one or other of these alternatives).

As with the cultural issues, there is clearly a significant potential voter constituency on these economic issues.

For the cultural and economic themes we did not explore whether there was any direct link to attitudes concerning population growth.

We now turn to issues which relate to the consequences of rapid growth. This is where a link can be drawn.

Population stress

Though the question of population growth did not feature in the May 2022 Federal election, there is strong evidence of voter concern about the quality-of-life implications of rapid growth. These concerns stem from the difficulties that major cities are having in providing the transport, health care and other forms of infrastructure required to keep up with the needs of a growing population, as well as their impact on housing prices and availability.

Most voters are concerned about the consequences of population growth

The 2022 Tapri survey was constructed around the hypothesis that, to the extent that voters think Australia does not need more people and that a revival of ‘big Australia’ migration levels is not justified, this judgement is likely to be influenced by problems experienced in their own lives.

The strategy used to tease out the influence of lifestyle issues was to isolate the voters who think that Australia does not need more people and then explore why it is that they hold this view. (As set out in [Table 2](#), 65 percent of voters said Australia did not need more people.)

This group of voters were asked a batch of questions on their concerns (if any) about urban congestion, access to public services and housing, the natural environment, and the like. In each case the question followed directly after the question ‘Overall, do you think Australia needs more people?’, where those who answered ‘No’ were asked follow-up questions prefaced by the phrase ‘This is because:’— ‘...our cities are overcrowded and there is too much traffic’ etc. (See the full questionnaire in [Appendix C](#).) There were seven follow-up questions. We include here the four that gained the strongest level of agreement among this group. See Tables 14 to 17 below.

Table 14: We don't need more people because... – 'Our cities are overcrowded and there is too much traffic.' By graduate status %

	<i>Non-graduate</i>	<i>University student</i>	<i>Graduate</i>	<i>Total</i>
Agree strongly	40	14	37	38
Agree	42	45	46	43
<i>Agree strongly and agree</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>83</i>	<i>81</i>
<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>15</i>
Disagree	2	19	3	4
Disagree strongly	0	1	0	0
<i>Disagree and disagree strongly</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>4</i>
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	1345	119	508	1972

Note: This table refers to the 65 percent of the sample who said 'No' to the question: 'Overall, do you think Australia needs more people?' They were then offered a number of questions beginning with 'This is because...' (Those who said 'Yes' were offered a different set of follow-up questions. See Tables 18 to 21.)

Table 15: We don't need more people because... – 'Our hospitals are overcrowded.' By graduate status %

	<i>Non-graduate</i>	<i>University student</i>	<i>Graduate</i>	<i>Total</i>
Agree strongly	55	27	52	53
Agree	35	53	39	37
<i>Agree strongly and agree</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>90</i>
<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>
Disagree	2	1	1	2
Disagree strongly	0	0	0	0
<i>Disagree and disagree strongly</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	1346	118	507	1972

See note to Table 14

Table 16: We don't need more people because... – 'The natural environment is under stress with the number of people we already have.' By graduate status %

	Non-graduate	University student	Graduate	Total
Agree strongly	40	33	39	39
Agree	38	32	43	39
<i>Agree strongly and agree</i>	<i>78</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>78</i>
<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>17</i>
Disagree	3	6	3	3
Disagree strongly	1	0	3	2
<i>Disagree and disagree strongly</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>5</i>
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	1346	119	508	1972

See note to Table 14

Table 17: We don't need more people because... – 'Adding more people will push up the cost of housing.' By graduate status %

	Non-graduate	University student	Graduate	Total
Agree strongly	47	27	42	44
Agree	36	50	39	38
<i>Agree strongly and agree</i>	<i>83</i>	<i>76</i>	<i>81</i>	<i>82</i>
<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>14</i>
Disagree	2	4	5	3
Disagree strongly	0	2	0	1
<i>Disagree and disagree strongly</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>3</i>
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	1345	119	507	1972

See note to Table 14

There is almost complete agreement within this 65 percent of the electorate. Australia does not need more people because of lifestyle concerns including: struggling hospital services, overcrowded cities, a natural environment under stress and escalating housing costs.

Views of those who think Australia needs more people

Thirty-five percent of respondents thought that Australia did need more people. Their reasons are largely those endorsed by mainstream immigration advocates. The preface to their questions took the same form as above. After they had said 'Yes' to 'Overall, do you think Australia needs more people?' there were seven follow-up questions about why they might have taken this position. 'This is because...'

Here are the four main issues that a majority of these voters said they agreed with.

Table 18: We need more people because... – ‘We need more people to boost the economy.’ By graduate status %

	<i>Non-graduate</i>	<i>University student</i>	<i>Graduate</i>	<i>Total</i>
Agree strongly	23	17	24	23
Agree	56	53	59	57
<i>Agree strongly and agree</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>83</i>	<i>80</i>
<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>16</i>
Disagree	4	11	2	4
Disagree strongly	0	0	0	0
<i>Disagree and disagree strongly</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>4</i>
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	609	75	363	1047

Note: This table refers to the 35 percent of the sample who said, ‘Yes’ to the question: ‘Overall, do you think Australia needs more people?’ They were then offered a number of questions beginning with ‘This is because...’

Table 19: We need more people because... – ‘We need more babies to be born so that we can offset the ageing of the population.’ By graduate status %

	<i>Non-graduate</i>	<i>University student</i>	<i>Graduate</i>	<i>Total</i>
Agree strongly	18	20	16	17
Agree	48	36	49	47
<i>Agree strongly and agree</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>65</i>
<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>24</i>
Disagree	9	4	11	9
Disagree strongly	2	3	2	2
<i>Disagree and disagree strongly</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>11</i>
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	609	75	363	1047

See note to Table 18

Table 20: *We need more people because... 'We need more migrants so that we can offset the ageing of the population.'* By graduate status %

	Non-graduate	University student	Graduate	Total
Agree strongly	12	8	17	13
Agree	47	35	48	46
<i>Agree strongly and agree</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>30</i>
Disagree	7	16	8	8
Disagree strongly	3	3	1	2
<i>Disagree and disagree strongly</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	609	75	363	1047

See note to Table 18

Table 21: *We need more people because... 'We should have a strong humanitarian policy and bring in more refugees.'* By graduate status %

	Non-graduate	University student	Graduate	Total
Agree strongly	16	21	23	19
Agree	42	49	44	43
<i>Agree strongly and agree</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>Neither agree not disagree</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>28</i>
Disagree	9	7	9	9
Disagree strongly	2	0	1	1
<i>Disagree and disagree strongly</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	609	75	363	1047

See note to Table 18

For this group of voters, the promise of a more vigorous economy is attractive. Apprehension about demographic ageing also leads them to support population growth (albeit with a preference for babies over migrants). Support for growth as a means of bringing in more refugees is also salient.

Nonetheless, apart from the promise of economic growth, none of the reasons for preferring population growth are as strongly endorsed as are the reasons for avoiding it.

Moreover, the reasons for saying that Australia needs more people are based on future promises: prosperity and demographic youth. Growth may occur, but the promises may not be fulfilled. By contrast the reasons attracting those saying Australia does not need more people are based in the here and now, and are much more strongly held. The critics of growth are focused on congested cities, overcrowded hospitals, a stressed natural environment, and the escalating cost

of housing. They are also more invested in these negative effects of growth than are the supporters in its possible benefits.

These are striking findings. Sixty-five percent of voters hold dissenting views about 'Big Australia' (in that they do not think Australia needs more people) and the great majority of these are worried about quality-of-life outcomes. Thus, most voters do not support the thrust of the Labor Government's immigration agenda.

This is a similar finding to the analysis of voter views on cultural and economic issues. For those questions too, most voters did not share the Labor Party's position. Given this level of dissent, Labor hardly looks as electorally secure as the dominant media view assumes.

Whether the voters expressing this dissent are open to political mobilisation on their dissent is another matter, one which we now address.

Is voter dissent likely to have electoral consequences in Australia?

Perhaps not, because concentrated disadvantage is not evident in Australia

We need to begin by acknowledging that the thrust of the comparative literature on the political response to concerns about neoliberalism (and high immigration) implies that Australia is an unlikely hot spot. This is because Australia does not display the conditions present in the countries where high immigration has met serious challenges.

As noted earlier, Western Europe and the US, have seen serious challenges to the neoliberal order. In the case of the UK, three years after the Brexit referendum a new Conservative Government was elected, led by Boris Johnson, which then legally exited the European Union. Its strongest voter support came from non-graduates. These voters tended to oppose progressive values and were much more likely to be hostile to high immigration than were voters who were graduates. They also supported policies favoring greater national self-reliance. The Johnson Government largely followed this script.

There was a similar pattern with Trump's policy agenda prior to his win in the 2016 presidential election. His voter support came predominantly from non-graduates who were noticeably hostile to the neoliberal open-borders agenda and to high immigration levels.

Given this pattern there might seem to be some potential for similar political mobilisation in Australia. The Tapri survey shows that a majority of non-graduate voters do not support the prevailing progressive value set, nor the Labor Government's revival of 'Big Australia' immigration levels (Appendix A, [Tables A1](#) and A2). There has been a parallel tendency, seen in [Table 3](#), for non-graduates to move towards right-of-centre political parties in Australia.

However, in the literature reviewing protests against neoliberalism in Western Europe and the US, there is no consensus that views about immigration were the catalyst of either the Brexit or Trump outcomes. Jonathan Hopkin puts it best in his monograph, *Anti-System Politics: The crisis of market liberalism in rich democracies*.²⁹ He argues that this protest would not have amounted to much without the parallel existence of economic insecurity. That is, the economic insecurity came first and provided the motivational base for both the Brexit and Trump insurgencies. In this account, voters worried about economic insecurity were persuaded that a rejection of globalist policies, including high immigration, was the answer to their problems.³⁰

Hopkin's thesis is validated by empirical analyses of the voters supporting these insurgencies. Support was very strong in regional areas that had once featured manufacturing and mining enterprises but which, as a result of off-shoring and high imports, have since become rust belts. The key feature of these locations is that they are regionally concentrated, allowing the consolidation of voters sufficient to win parliamentary representation.

There are no parallels to this situation in Australia. True, in the 1960s and 1970s some 25 percent of Australia's workforce was employed in manufacturing. By 2021, this share had fallen to just six percent. However, this transition has been accompanied by continued strong economic growth and growth in jobs, driven by a resources export boom. There has been massive job growth in the service industries, which has more than compensated for the collapse in the share of workers employed in manufacturing. For example, though employment in manufacturing has remained fairly stable over recent years (it was 714,000 in 2021) employment in the health, care and social assistance industry reached 1,751,000 in 2021, up by 400,000 or 30 percent in the five years since 2016.³¹ The result is that there are no rust belts in Australia like those in the UK and the US.

On the face of it, this is not an environment likely to generate regionally concentrated economic insecurity. It seems to lack the potential for aggregations of aggrieved voters likely to support voter insurgences similar to those in the UK and the US. Germany too can be included in this list as far as the electorates previously governed by the East German Communist regime are concerned.

Nevertheless, as the following discussion indicates, there is a significant level of financial insecurity in Australia, though not deriving from the sources discussed above.

High financial insecurity and its sources in Australia

The Tapri survey asked questions concerning financial insecurity which enables an assessment of economic insecurity and its origins in Australia. This review is based on the question: *How well are you getting on financially these days?*

Table 22: How well are you getting on financially these days? By graduate status %

	Non-graduate	University student	Graduate	Total
Living comfortably	14	19	17	15
Doing alright	39	30	45	40
Just about getting by	29	38	27	29
Finding it quite difficult	12	6	8	10
Finding it very difficult	7	7	3	6
<i>Sub-total: just about getting by or finding it quite or very difficult</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>45</i>
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	1954	193	870	3019

Some 55 per cent of respondents said they were living comfortably or doing alright. But, despite Australia's elite position in the global income and welfare stakes, 29 percent said they were just getting by, and another 16 percent said they were 'finding it quite difficult' or 'very difficult'. This group adds to some 45 per cent of respondents. We include the 'just getting by' group within the category of those who feel insecure, because it implies they are living on the margins and thus vulnerable to any increases to their cost of living or threats to the income they need to maintain their lifestyle.

As would be expected graduates assess their situation more favorably than non-graduates. Forty-eight percent of non-graduates say they are just about getting by, or finding it quite difficult or very difficult, compared with 38 per cent of graduates.

The Tapri financial security finding is not an outlier. It was replicated in the 2022 Scanlon Mapping Social Cohesion Report. O'Donnell classifies 37 percent of his respondents as: Struggling (to pay their bills)/poor or 'just getting along'.³² The latest Essential Report also finds that 26 per cent of its respondents were 'somewhat dissatisfied' with their financial situation and 18 per cent were 'very dissatisfied'. In total, 44 percent were dissatisfied. (The samples in both surveys were drawn from all people aged 18 plus, both non-voters and voters.)

As to the geographical distribution of those feeling financially insecure, the following table, derived from the Tapri survey, shows that they are spread across the continent. There are no notable concentrations of the insecure category. By contrast, the ACT and WA stand out in their relatively high concentrations of those 'living comfortably' or 'doing alright'.

Table 23: How well are you getting on financially these days? By location %

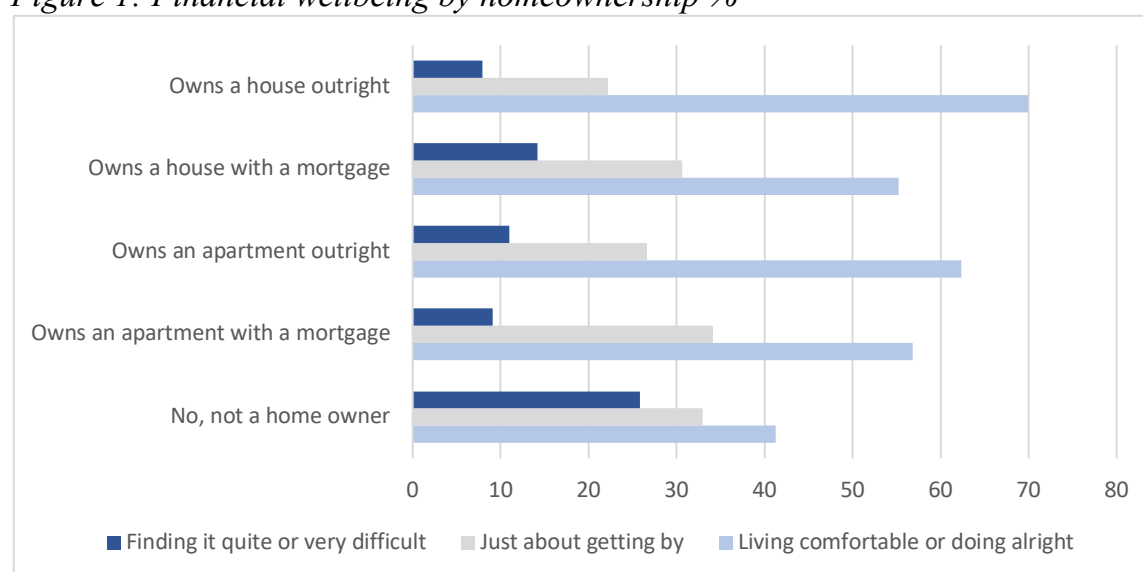
	<i>Living comfortably or doing alright</i>	<i>Just about getting by</i>	<i>Finding it quite or very difficult</i>	<i>Total %</i>	<i>Total N</i>
ACT	71	25	4	100	51
Perth	61	23	16	100	249
Rest of WA	64	23	14	100	66
Adelaide	56	29	16	100	171
Rest SA	65	25	10	100	51
Sydney	57	28	15	100	625
Rest of NSW	48	35	17	100	343
Melbourne	56	29	15	100	583
Rest of VIC	53	28	19	100	186
Brisbane	51	32	18	100	289
Rest of QLD	56	26	18	100	308
Tasmania	50	30	20	100	66
Northern Territory	46	32	21	100	28
Total	55	29	16	100	3019

The survey provided information on variables associated with this high level of financial insecurity.

One contributing factor stood out: the respondents' housing situation.

Those who were not homeowners, reported very high levels of financial insecurity. Some 59 percent were 'just about getting by' or finding it 'quite or very difficult'.

Figure 1: Financial wellbeing by homeownership %



Source: [Table A11](#) in Appendix A. The type of housing experienced by non-home owners is set out, by age group, in [Table A12](#).

[Table A13](#) in Appendix A allows further investigation of the non-homeowning segment of the sample shown in Figure 1. It shows the housing situation of non-home owners. Most (79 percent) were renting while 17 percent, mostly young people, were living with parents. It shows that voters who were renting are much more likely to be financially stressed than were those living with parents. Sixty-three percent of renters were either just about getting by or finding it quite or very difficult. By comparison only 36 percent of those living with parents were in this situation. (The group living with parents were, overall, a trifle more likely to be living comfortably or doing alright than were the larger group of graduates shown in Table 22.)

The high incidence of economic insecurity in Australia may surprise given that it coincides with the economic boom through 2021 and 2022 and the associated very low unemployment level. It looks less of a surprise when considered in the light of the state of the housing market.

The boom itself was driven by unprecedented money printing by the Reserve Bank, which included massive lending to the private banks at very low interest rates. It also included a huge government stimulus and an equally huge surge in private debt, mainly to fund housing purchases. This contributed to a surge in house prices. As Michael Janda, the ABS business reporter put it: ‘The stimulus was so large that it not only righted the ship but propelled it at a rate of knots into a boom the likes of which Australia hadn’t seen since at least the heady years of the original mining boom in the early 2000’s’.³³

There have been numerous beneficiaries of this boom, but also many losers. The most conspicuous of the latter are those who do not own property and those who purchased their home at very low interest rates during the recent house-price boom.

Labor’s immigration policies are making financial insecurity worse

Economic conditions for these losers are about to get tougher. Most obviously, this is because the Reserve Bank continues to raise interest rates. It’s less well known that later this year the private banks will have to begin paying back their loans from the Reserve Bank. They will have to pay more for the funds that they will need to do this, implying higher rates for borrowers.

This means that aspiring home owners face an even tougher outlook. So do recent home buyers. They face both increasing interest payments and a likely fall in the value of their property.

There is not much that the Labor government can do to ameliorate this situation given its commitment to support the Reserve Bank in reducing inflation levels.

However, it can make the situation worse, and indeed is resolutely going about doing just this. It is making the situation tougher for the financially insecure, especially renters, by its revival of ‘Big Australia’ levels of immigration. This

will give an impetus to the demand side of the housing market. As we have shown in previous studies, this is particularly the case for Sydney and Melbourne. These studies showed that ‘Big Australia’ levels of immigration contributed to some 50 per cent of the annual growth in households in each city (all of whom need a dwelling to rent or buy).³⁴

This situation indicates that economic insecurity is highly likely to be accentuated, as are accompanying worries about immigration-fueled population growth and the quality of life.

We make this point advisedly. Table 24 shows that the respondents who say they are struggling financially are much more likely to say ‘Australia does not need more people’ than those who are comfortably off. The latter group are, in relative terms, more likely to be sanguine about the prospect of population growth.

Table 24: Overall do you think Australia needs more people? By how well are you getting on financially these days?

	<i>Living comfortably</i>	<i>Doing alright</i>	<i>Just about getting by</i>	<i>Finding it quite difficult</i>	<i>Finding it very difficult</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yes	43	38	32	26	20	35
No	57	62	68	74	80	65
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	454	1218	869	310	169	3019

We conclude that there are sufficient conditions for political mobilisation against the Labor agenda in Australia.

There is significant voter dissent from Labor’s progressive values as well as from its neoliberal economic agenda. There are also high levels of voter concern about the quality-of-life outcomes of Labor’s immigration policies. As well as this, there is a foundation of economic insecurity, a foundation which could provide the motivation for voters to switch support to parties offering alternative policies.

We have to speculate in this discussion because there is currently no significant political party offering voters an alternative policy agenda that includes low immigration. Here are our observations.

Potential sources of political mobilisation of dissent in Australia

Challenges from the right

The Coalition, because of its business constituency, may be reluctant to mobilise voter concerns about Labor’s neoliberal agenda and its ‘Big Australia’ immigration polities. But other parties on the right are likely to be less inhibited.

New entrants willing to exploit the gaps are sure to arise, including the newly minted Conservative Party.

This party's positions on progressive values and Labor's neoliberal agenda are close to those of the voters surveyed by Tapri. It is also an acerbic critic of 'Big Australia' migration policies.³⁵ Not a bad start for a party looking for a constituency. It may not have long to wait because of the pressing current rental crisis in Australia's cities. It is surely only a matter of time before the Government's unwillingness to acknowledge the link between this crisis and the extra households flowing from its immigration policies is brought to account.

Challenges from the left

There is another possible source of voter dissent, in this instance deriving from the operation of the neoliberal order. It stems from left-leaning concerns about inequality and about the consequences for industry and the environment of the order's open-border policies. Political mobilisation from centre/left sources is already evident in the US. We hasten to add, however, that this dissent owes nothing to concerns about progressive cultural attitudes or immigration.

Here we refer to the movement led by Bernie Sanders, the self-styled 'socialist' senator from Vermont during the Democratic primaries in 2016. Sanders took on Hilary Clinton with a platform that condemned Clinton as an agent of the neoliberal elites. Sanders' campaign attracted graduates enthused by his attack on corporate tax privileges together with neoliberal neglect of public services (especially education and health) and underclass disadvantage.

This movement has flourished since 2020 when the Democrat, Joe Biden, defeated Donald Trump in the Presidential election. Since that time, the Biden administration has succeeded in passing massive spending packages directed at restoring America's infrastructure. It has also provided support for the return of manufacturing industry and greater self-sufficiency in green-energy industries. As well as this, it has provided subsidies to industries thought capable of stalling China's competitive threats to America's hi-tech industries. The legislation has been accompanied by 'Buy American' provisions. Collectively, these measures represent a direct challenge to the neoliberal order.³⁶

There are clear echoes of the Sanders movement in Australia in the Greens' embrace of some socialist policies. The Greens' policy agenda features sharp tax increases for the rich and multinational corporations, a widening of public sector responsibility for services, including dental care and childcare, and public ownership of some energy utilities.

In the Tapri survey there was evidence of relatively strong support among Greens voters for such issues (especially on tax) as indicated in the following two tables.

Table 25: Labor and the Coalition both say they support lower taxes for individuals and for businesses. Others say we should increase taxes for the rich and big business. This would reduce inequality and help to pay for better services. What is your view? By intended vote %

	<i>We should reduce taxes for both rich and poor</i>	<i>We should stop reducing tax levels. The existing rates are appropriate</i>	<i>We should increase tax rates for high income earners and big business</i>	<i>Don't know</i>	<i>Total %</i>	<i>Total N</i>
Coalition	29	25	37	9	100	836
One Nation	40	14	39	8	100	192
UAP	24	41	30	5	100	81
Labor	18	15	59	8	100	1216
Greens	11	11	70	8	100	408
Other	37	15	36	12	100	287
Total	15	9	57	19	100	3019

Table 26: In recent years Federal and State governments have privatised services such as electricity, gas and telecommunications. What is your view? By intended vote %

	<i>Privatisation is a good idea</i>	<i>Privatisation has gone too far. Governments should play a greater role in owning and managing such services</i>	<i>Don't know</i>	<i>Total %</i>	<i>Total N</i>
Coalition	20	68	12	100	836
One Nation	11	76	13	100	192
UAP	15	70	15	100	81
Labor	12	75	12	100	1216
Greens	9	74	17	100	408
Other	11	66	23	100	287
Total	14	72	14	100	3019

Should Australia's economy be subject to the shocks of a global economic slowdown and reduced commodity demand or lower prices, the Tapri survey indicates that the Greens have a ready-made wider constituency. This is likely to expand beyond the party's core of younger voters as most voters express support for such initiatives.

Labor decides to listen (selectively) to the electorate

It seems likely that the Federal Labor party will not stand still while the Greens or other left-of-centre parties, or parties on the right, erode its electoral constituency.

This is already evident with Labor's energy policy measures. Its recent action requiring gas and coal companies to supply the domestic market at prices below those they can get on international markets is a fundamental challenge to neoliberal orthodoxy.

The Treasurer, Jim Chalmers, has recently put a principled case in the February issue of *The Monthly* magazine for such interventions.³⁷ He argues that Labor has a moral duty to make markets reflect Australians' underlying values. Since this duty includes wellbeing metrics (such as the fair distribution of the benefits of economic growth) it legitimates reform of the neoliberal order.

The political imperative behind Chalmers advocacy is evident. He is aware that dissent from neoliberalism is rising and that, if the Party does not respond, it risks its electoral survival. As he puts it: 'In well-functioning democracies, leaders listen or lose power'.³⁸

Depending on your view about the merits of the neoliberal order this response will be welcomed or abhorred. Most Australian voters, however, will approve.

Should Labor move in the direction Chalmers flags, it will not mean the end of any political mobilisation against its agenda. This is because, although Chalmers promises to listen closely to the electorate's views, he is highly selective as to which views are worth attending to.

For Chalmers, the progressive values agenda is not in play. Those challenging on this front are classified as bigots.³⁹

Nor is Labor's 'Big Australia' immigration agenda being reassessed. Labor's policies indicate that it has made a moral and economic judgement on the matter. Voters' opinions, and their concerns about their quality-of-life implications, do not count.

In another significant development, the Minister for Home Affairs, Clare O'Neil, has recently announced that overseas student graduates from Australian universities will be treated as an integral part of Australia's skilled manpower policy.⁴⁰ As we have argued elsewhere, this policy will be at the expense of opportunities for domestic students.⁴¹ Australian universities already graduate

more overseas students in IT and engineering than they do domestic students. Labor is in effect inviting our universities to augment their finances by training more overseas students and greenlighting that they will be given priority in an enlarged skilled migration program. Voters have repeatedly indicated that they oppose this option.⁴²

On all these issues the new Government is intent on driving without a licence.

Appendix A

This appendix includes tables on attitudes to immigration and population growth by education, age, and birthplace, concerns about racism and freedom of speech, renters and economic hardship, and the long-term crossover trend in voting.

Attitudes to immigration numbers and population growth by education, age, and country of birth

Tables A1 and A2 show data on attitudes to population size and growth by graduate and non-graduate status.

Table A1: Desired level of immigration by graduate status %

	<i>Non graduate</i>	<i>University student</i>	<i>Graduate</i>	<i>Total</i>
1 We should return to net migration of around 240,000 a year or higher	15	28	21	18
2 We should return to net migration at somewhat lower levels	26	29	32	28
3 We should return to net migration at much lower levels	18	11	15	17
4 We should keep migration low enough so that new arrivals just balance out departures	29	4	20	25
5 Don't know	12	28	12	13
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	1955	193	871	3019

Table A2: Overall, do you think Australia need more people? By graduate status %

	<i>Non graduate</i>	<i>University student</i>	<i>Graduate</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yes	31	39	42	35
No	69	61	58	65
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	1955	193	871	3019

Graduates and university students are rather more in favour both of immigration and of population growth but in neither case do pro-growth attitudes reach 50 percent. By contrast, strong majorities of the non-graduates (who constitute 66 percent of the sample and, approximately, of the electorate) are opposed on both counts.

Table A3: Desired level of immigration by age group %

	<i>18-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60-69</i>	<i>70+</i>	<i>Total</i>
1 We should return to net migration of around 240,000 a year or higher	22	21	14	15	17	15	18
2 We should return to net migration at somewhat lower levels	33	28	30	25	22	26	28
3 We should return to net migration at much lower levels	10	16	18	20	20	18	17
4 We should keep migration low enough so that new arrivals just balance out departures	12	19	25	32	35	34	25
5 Don't know	22	16	13	8	6	7	13
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	622	553	522	493	416	414	3019

Table A4: Overall do you think Australia needs more people? By age group%

	<i>18-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60-69</i>	<i>70+</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yes	32	37	33	32	37	39	35
No	68	63	67	68	63	61	65
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	622	553	522	493	415	414	3019

Table A3 shows that there is a modest bias in favour of high migration among the young, countered by a stronger preference for nil net migration among mature voters. In contrast Table A4 shows that younger voters are even less likely to support a bigger Australia than are older voters.

Irrespective of small differences by education and age, it is clear that the Labor is well out of step with public opinion.

Table A5: Desired level of immigration by birthplace %

	<i>Aust.</i>	<i>ESB</i>	<i>Europe</i>	<i>Asia</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
We should return to net migration of around 240,000 a year or higher	18	15	12	19	15	18
We should return to net migration at somewhat lower levels	28	28	18	31	22	28
We should return to net migration at much lower levels	17	19	17	10	27	17
We should keep migration low enough so that new arrivals just balance out departures	24	29	43	21	22	25
Don't know	13	8	10	18	14	13
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	2469	267	82	141	59	3019

Note: ESB stands for English speaking background countries and Other includes Oceania, the Middle East, Africa and South America.

Table A5 shows that migrants from English-speaking-background (ESB) countries have very similar attitudes to further immigration as do the Australian born, while those from Europe are even more resistant to the idea. By contrast, migrants from Asia and from 'Other' countries (mainly the Middle East, Africa, Oceania, and South America) are, like the ESB born, quite similar in their attitudes to the Australian-born.

Table A6: Overall do you think Australia needs more people? By birthplace %

	<i>Australia</i>	<i>ESB</i>	<i>Europe</i>	<i>Asia</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yes	33	38	33	52	52	35
No	67	62	67	48	48	65
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	2468	267	82	141	60	3019

Note: See Table A5.

Table A6 shows a different pattern. Only a third of the Australian-born, as well as the ESB- and Europe-born respondents say that Australia needs more people. But on this question the Asia and 'Other' born are more enthusiastic about population growth.

The population question: suspicions of racism and their possible effects on free speech

Respondents to the Tapri survey were asked if they thought that people who raise questions about immigration being too high were sometimes thought of as racist. The response categories were 'Yes', 'No' and 'Don't know'. If they said, 'Yes', they were then asked a follow-up question: 'This is because they usually are racist', or 'This is unfair because very few of them are racist'.

Those who said 'Yes', and followed up with agreeing that 'This is because they usually are racist' are termed 'guardians against racism'. Those who said, 'Yes' but chose the follow-up response 'This is unfair...' are termed 'the threatened', while those who said 'No' are 'the fearless' and the 'Don't knows' are 'the confused'.

Table A7: Guardians against racism and other voters %

	<i>Percent</i>
Guardians against racism	19
The threatened	33
The fearless	36
The confused	13
Total %	100
Total N	3019

Notes to Table A7:

Guardians against racism said, 'Yes', to the question: 'Do you think people who raise questions about immigration being too high are sometimes seen as racist?' They were then presented with a second question and agreed that this is 'because they usually are racist'.

The threatened said 'Yes', to the first question and chose the response to the second question, that this is 'unfair because very few of them are racist'.

The fearless said 'No' to the first question. 'Do you think people who raise questions about immigration being too high are sometimes seen as racist?'

The confused said 'Don't know' to the first question.

Table A8: Desired level of immigration by Guardians and other voters %

	<i>Guardians</i>	<i>The threatened</i>	<i>The fearless</i>	<i>The confused</i>	<i>Total</i>
1 We should return to net migration of around 240,000 a year or higher	41	11	11	20	18
2 We should return to net migration at somewhat lower levels	34	25	28	24	28
3 We should return to net migration at much lower levels	6	22	20	12	17
4 We should keep migration low enough so that new arrivals just balance out departures	7	33	29	20	25
5 Don't know	12	10	12	24	13
Total %	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	568	980	1091	380	3019

Note: For explanations of the column headings see note to Table A7.

Table A9: Overall, do you think Australia needs more people? By Guardians and other voters %

	<i>Guardians</i>	<i>The threatened</i>	<i>The fearless</i>	<i>The confused</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yes	61	26	27	40	35
No	39	74	73	60	65
Total %	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	568	980	1091	381	3019

Note: For explanations of the column headings see note to Table A7.

Tables A8 and A9 show that a majority of voters who deem criticism of high migration to be racist are also much more likely to favour high migration themselves. A strong majority of this group also believe that Australia needs more people. They are quite unlike other voters in these respects.

Despite the fact that they constitute less than 20 percent of voters they may be well placed to influence such public debate as is allowed on these topics.

Economic hardship: level of education, and housing for non-home owners

Table A10: Financial wellbeing by highest qualification since leaving school %

<i>Highest qualification...</i>	<i>Living comfortably</i>	<i>Doing alright</i>	<i>Just about getting by</i>	<i>Finding it quite difficult</i>	<i>Finding it very difficult</i>	<i>Total %</i>	<i>Total N</i>
None	14	38	27	13	8	100	834
None but currently studying at VET college	10	35	33	12	10	100	164
None but currently studying at university	19	30	38	6	7	100	193
Vocational college diploma	14	44	29	9	4	100	570
Other vocational diploma	14	37	28	13	7	100	166
Trade qualification	16	36	29	15	4	100	221
University degree	17	45	27	8	3	100	870
Total sample	15	40	29	10	6	100	3019

Note: VET stands for vocational education and training.

Table A11: Financial wellbeing by Do you (or you and a partner) own the place where you usually live? %

<i>Financial wellbeing</i>	<i>Yes, I/we own a house outright</i>	<i>Yes, I/we own an apartment outright</i>	<i>Yes, I/we own a house with a mortgage</i>	<i>Yes, I/we own an apartment with a mortgage</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Total</i>
Living comfortably	25	18	10	11	10	15
Doing alright	45	44	45	45	31	40
Just about getting by	22	27	31	34	33	29
Finding it quite difficult	5	6	10	8	15	10
Finding it very difficult	3	6	4	1	11	6
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	920	109	911	88	992	3019

Table A12: Which of the following best describe your housing situation? By age group (non-home owners only) %

	<i>18-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60-69</i>	<i>70+</i>	<i>Total</i>
Renting	61	86	91	92	93	91	79
Living with parents	37	9	5	5	2	0	17
Homeless	1	1	1	0	0	2	1
Have some other housing arrangement	2	5	2	3	4	8	3
Total non-home owners %	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total non-home owners N	359	198	128	150	89	66	990

Table A13: How well are you getting on financially? By Which of the following best describes your housing situation? (Non-home owners only)

<i>Financial wellbeing</i>	<i>Renting</i>	<i>Living with parents</i>	<i>Homeless</i>	<i>Have some other housing arrangement</i>	<i>Total non-home owners</i>	<i>Total sample</i>
Living comfortably	9	15	0	15	10	15
Doing alright	28	50	0	18	31	40
<i>Living comfortably or doing alright</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>55</i>
Just about getting by	35	22	33	36	33	29
Finding it quite difficult	16	11	50	12	15	10
Finding it very difficult	12	3	17	18	11	6
<i>Finding it quite difficult or very difficult</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>16</i>
Total non-home owners %	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total non-home owners N	787	167	6	33	990	3019

The long-term crossover trend

Table A14: Votes for parties of the right and the left by educational status, 1984 to 2019, and 2022, Australian Election Study data

Year	% Graduates in each sample	% Non- graduates voting Coalition or 'other'	% Graduates voting Coalition or 'other'	% Non- graduates voting Labor or Greens (Greens from 1996 on)	% Graduates voting Labor or Greens (Greens from 1996 on)
1984	7.3	41	36	60	64
1987	9.6	48	53	51	47
1990	10.2	58	68	42	33
1993	14.3	51	54	50	46
1996	19.1	63	58	38	42
1998	17.1	56	62	44	38
2001	19.2	59	49	41	51
2004	22.3	57	47	43	53
2007	24.4	49	37	50	62
2010	27.3	50	41	50	59
2013	30.8	61	50	39	50
2016	36.1	58	51	42	49
2019	25.0	55	47	45	53
2022*	31.0	47*	35*	43*	53*

Notes: The data are all from the Australian Election Studies (AES). These were first published in this form in Katharine Betts and Bob Birrell, '[A big Australia: why it may all be over](#),' TAPRI, 2020, p. 21 and pp. 39-41. One Nation is grouped with 'other' in Table A14. The Table was republished in Betts and Birrell, in 'Politics and the population question during the pandemic', The Australian Population Research Institute, 2021, p. 18

* The 2022 data row groups One Nation and the UAP voters with the Coalition under *Coalition or 'other'*, and does not assign those voting for independents and other minor parties to any column. The 2022 data are taken from the AES data set out in [Table 3](#) in the current report.

Appendix B: Method

The survey ran from 9 September 2022 to 19 September 2022. Questions were chosen, and the analysis done, by Tapri.

Respondents were a random national sample of 3019 people drawn from Pureprofile internet panel, a source of over 450,000 panel members.

The sample was restricted to voters. Quotas were set with a 10 percent leeway in line with the ABS distribution for age, gender, and location. The final data were then weighted to the population's actual age, gender, location and graduate/non-graduate status distribution as according to the ABS Census.

Respondents were offered points as token rewards (these could be used to gain access to a cash raffle, taken as a \$1 payment, or donated to charity). The survey took them approximately ten minutes to complete.

The fieldwork was managed by Andrew Elturk and the project was financed by Tapri donors. The authors of this paper are responsible for the choice of questions and the interpretation of the findings.

Appendix C: Questionnaire

Tapri questionnaire 2022 (Final)

[Questions on age, sex, and location were framed by Tapri's field agent, Andrew Elturk, and incorporated into the web version of the questionnaire used by Pureprofile, plus a screening question on being enrolled to vote.]

1 The share of manufacturing in Australia's economy is less than half of what it was forty years ago. Do you think—

- 1 We should protect Australia's manufacturing, using tariffs if necessary. ☐
- 2 We should get rid of all tariffs so that we can buy goods more cheaply from overseas. ☐
- 3 Don't know ☐

2 In the Federal election for the House of Representatives on Saturday the 21st of May which party did you put first?

- 1 Centre Alliance ☐
- 2 Country Liberal (NT) ☐
- 3 Jacqui Lambie Network ☐
- 4 Katter's Australia Party ☐
- 5 Labor Party ☐
- 6 Liberal National Party (Qld) ☐
- 7 Liberal Party ☐
- 8 National Party ☐
- 9 Pauline Hanson's One Nation ☐
- 10 Sustainable Australia Party ☐
- 11 The Greens ☐
- 12 United Australia Party ☐
- 13 Other party ☐
- 14 One of the 'teal' independents ☐
- 15 A different independent ☐
- 16 Other ☐
- 17 Didn't vote ☐

3 Are you worried about climate change?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Yes, very worried | 2 Yes, slightly worried | 3 Not at all worried | 4 No opinion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

4 Some business groups want Australia to return to pre-Covid levels of immigration, around 240,000 migrants net a year. This would take the population to about 39 million in 2050, 50% more than today's 25.7 million.

Which of the following is closest to your views?

- 1 We should return to net migration of around 240,000 a year or higher. ☐
- 2 We should return to net migration at somewhat lower levels. ☐
- 3 We should return to net migration at much lower levels. ☐
- 4 We should keep migration low enough so that new arrivals just balance out departures. ☐
- 5 Don't know ☐

5 Before the pandemic Australia's universities recruited large numbers of overseas students, making up 32 per cent of all new student enrolments in 2018.

Overseas students pay high fees and universities want governments to allow their numbers to be restored to their pre-Covid levels.

Which of the following is closest to your views?

1 Recruitment of overseas students should be restored. Their education here is an important export industry. They also contribute to the local economy and to university finances.

☐

2 Their recruitment should stay low. Universities have become too dependent on them, and some universities have neglected providing for local students.

☐

3 Don't know

☐

6 Many employers argue that we must open the borders as soon as possible to allow temporary and permanent migrant workers to help fill job vacancies.

Which of the following is closest to your views?

1 They are right. We should let in as many migrant workers as employers want to employ.

☐

2 They are wrong. We should deal with worker shortages by raising wages and improving skills training for locals.

☐

3 Don't know.

☐

7 Overall, do you think Australia needs more people?

1 Yes ☐ [Go to question 8]

2 No ☐ [Go to questions 15]

[For those who answered 1, 'yes', to Q 7 — All of questions 8 to 14 are for those who said 'yes' to Q7]

This is because—

8 We need more people to help defend Australia

1 agree strongly
☐

2 agree
☐

3 neither agree
nor disagree
☐

4 disagree
☐

5 disagree strongly
☐

9 We need more babies to be born so that we can offset the ageing of the population.

1 agree strongly
☐

2 agree
☐

3 neither agree
nor disagree
☐

4 disagree
☐

5 disagree strongly
☐

10 We need more migrants so that we can offset the ageing of the population.

1 agree strongly
☐

2 agree
☐

3 neither agree
nor disagree
☐

4 disagree
☐

5 disagree strongly
☐

11 We should have a strong humanitarian policy and bring in more refugees.

1 agree strongly
☐

2 agree
☐

3 neither agree
nor disagree
☐

4 disagree
☐

5 disagree strongly
☐

12 We need more people to boost the economy.

1 agree strongly
[]

2 agree
[]

3 neither agree
nor disagree
[]

4 disagree
[]

5 disagree strongly
[]

13 Australia's population can grow without causing serious environmental damage.

1 agree strongly
[]

2 agree
[]

3 neither agree
nor disagree
[]

4 disagree
[]

5 disagree strongly
[]

14 We can increase our population and also achieve a reduction in Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions.

1 agree strongly
[]

2 agree
[]

3 neither agree
nor disagree
[]

4 disagree
[]

5 disagree strongly
[]

[Then go to question 22]

[Questions 15 to 21 are for those who said 'no' to Q7]

We don't need more people because—

15 Our cities are overcrowded and there is too much traffic.

1 agree strongly
[]

2 agree
[]

3 neither agree
nor disagree
[]

4 disagree
[]

5 disagree strongly
[]

16 Our hospitals are overcrowded.

1 agree strongly
[]

2 agree
[]

3 neither agree
nor disagree
[]

4 disagree
[]

5 disagree strongly
[]

17 Our schools are overcrowded.

1 agree strongly
[]

2 agree
[]

3 neither agree
nor disagree
[]

4 disagree
[]

5 disagree strongly
[]

18 The natural environment is under stress with the number of people we already have.

1 agree strongly
[]

2 agree
[]

3 neither agree
nor disagree
[]

4 disagree
[]

5 disagree strongly
[]

19 Adding more people will drive down wages.

1 agree strongly
[]

2 agree
[]

3 neither agree
nor disagree
[]

4 disagree
[]

5 disagree strongly
[]

20 Adding more people will push up the cost of housing.

1 agree strongly
[]

2 agree
[]

3 neither agree
nor disagree
[]

4 disagree
[]

5 disagree strongly
[]

21 Adding more people will make it harder for Australians to reduce our total greenhouse gas emissions.

1 agree strongly
[]

2 agree
[]

3 neither agree
nor disagree
[]

4 disagree
[]

5 disagree strongly
[]

[All respondents answer Q22]

22 Do you think that people who raise questions about immigration being too high are sometimes seen as racist?

- 1 Yes ☐ *[Go to question 23]*
- 2 No ☐ *[Go to question 24]*
- 3 Don't know ☐ *[Go to question 24]*

23 This is:

- 1 Because they usually are racist ☐
- 2 Unfair because very few of them are racist ☐

[Then go to Q24]

[All respondents answer Q24]

24 Have you yourself ever felt uncomfortable raising questions about immigration, for example with friends or co-workers?

- 1 Yes, people can get the wrong idea about you if you do. ☐
- 2 I haven't wanted to question it; I'm okay with things as they are. ☐
- 3 I'm happy to speak against it, even if others don't agree. ☐
- 4 I'm happy to speak in favour of it, even if others don't agree. ☐
- 5 I don't know enough about immigration to discuss it. ☐

25 Are you worried about the ageing of Australia's population?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Yes, very worried | 2 Yes, slightly worried | 3 Not at all worried | 4 No opinion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

26 Housing prices have risen since the pandemic began, making it harder for first home buyers to buy a home. How important is this issue to you?

- 1 It's Australia's most serious social problem ☐
- 2 It's one of a number of important problems ☐
- 3 It's not an important problem ☐
- 4 It's not a problem at all ☐
- 5 Don't know ☐

Which of the following policies do you think should be followed to improve first-homebuyers' access to housing? For each policy chose one of the responses.

27 Remove negative gearing tax concessions for people who buy houses as investments.

(Explanation: Sometimes owners of investment properties don't make enough money from rents to cover the cost of their mortgage on the property and other expenses. If this happens, investors can claim the loss as an income tax deduction. It's called 'negative gearing'.)

A policy to remove this concession is:

- 1 Very important ☐, 2 Important ☐, 3 Should not be followed ☐, 4 don't know ☐

28 Encourage the development of more high-rise apartments.

1 Very important [], 2 Important [], 3 Should not be followed [], 4 don't know []

29 Encourage extending housing development in the outer suburbs.

1 Very important [], 2 Important [], 3 Should not be followed [], 4 don't know []

30 Keep immigration low to reduce competition for existing housing.

1 Very important [], 2 Important [], 3 Should not be followed [], 4 don't know []

31 If a federal election for the House of Representatives were held today, which one of the following would you vote for? If "uncommitted" to which one of these do you have a leaning?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| 1 Liberals | [] |
| 2 Nationals | [] |
| 3 Liberal National Party | [] |
| 4 Country Liberals (NT) | [] |
| 5 Labor | [] |
| 6 Greens | [] |
| 7 One Nation | [] |
| 8 Sustainable Australia Party | [] |
| 9 United Australia Party | [] |
| 10 Other | [] |

And now a few questions on some different topics

32 A number of people who were born male now identify as female. Do you think they should be allowed to compete in women's sports?

- | | |
|--------------|-----|
| 1 Yes | [] |
| 2 No | [] |
| 3 Don't know | [] |

33 Some people argue that a woman is anyone who identifies as a woman, regardless of their sex when born. What do you think?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| 1 Strongly agree | [] |
| 2 Agree | [] |
| 3 Neither agree nor disagree | [] |
| 4 Disagree | [] |
| 5 Strongly disagree | [] |

34 The Australian Government is planning a referendum on having a separate 'voice to parliament' for Indigenous Australians (Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders). This voice would be written into the Australian Constitution.

In the past month, how much have you heard about the proposed 'voice to parliament'?

- 1 A lot ☐
- 2 A fair amount ☐
- 3 Hardly anything ☐
- 4 Nothing at all ☐

35 If the referendum were held today would you vote 'Yes' or 'No'?

- I would vote 'Yes' ☐
- I would vote 'No' ☐
- I don't know how I would vote ☐

36 Thinking of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, what would you do as an Australian if we faced a similar invasion?

- 1 Leave Australia ☐
- 2 Stay and fight ☐
- 3 Stay and help the fighters ☐
- 4 Don't know ☐

37 Labor and the Coalition both say they support lower taxes for individuals and for businesses.

Some people say this would boost economic growth.

Others say we should increase taxes for the rich and big business. This would reduce inequality and help to pay for better services.

What is your view?

- 1 We should reduce taxes for both rich and poor. ☐
- 2 We should stop reducing tax levels. The existing rates are appropriate. ☐
- 3 We should increase tax rates for high income earners and big business. ☐
- 4 Don't know ☐

38 In recent years Federal and State governments have privatised services such as electricity, gas and telecommunications.

What is your view?

- 1 Privatisation is a good idea. ☐
- 2 Privatisation has gone too far. Governments should play a greater role in owning and managing such services. ☐
- 3 Don't know ☐

39 Australia Day is celebrated annually on 26th of January. This is the anniversary of the 1788 arrival of the First Fleet of British ships at Sydney Cove, New South Wales.

Would you support or oppose changing the date on which Australia Day is celebrated?

- 1 Strongly support ☐
- 2 Support ☐
- 3 Oppose ☐
- 4 Strongly oppose ☐
- 5 No opinion ☐

40 Some people argue we should increase immigration in order to increase our ethnic and other forms of diversity.

What is your view?

- 1 Yes, more diversity will give Australia a more vibrant society and economy. ☐
- 2 No. We have enough diversity. We need to encourage national unity and a shared Australian identity. ☐
- 3 Don't know ☐

And now a few questions about yourself:

41 What is the highest qualification you have gained since leaving school?

- 1 No qualification since leaving school, and not currently studying ☐
- 2 No qualification since leaving school, but currently studying at a university ☐
- 3 No qualification since leaving school, but currently studying at a TAFE or other vocational college ☐

Your qualification—check the box for your highest qualification only

- 4 University degree, bachelor or post grad ☐ *Go to Q42*
- 5 Vocational college diploma ☐
- 6 Other vocational diploma ☐
- 7 Trade qualification ☐

[All non-university graduate respondents skip Q42 and go to Q43]

[For those who said their highest qualification was a university degree, bachelor or postgrad, ie who chose 4 in Q41]

42 Which of the groupings below include the field of study of your highest university qualification?

- 1 Science, IT, Engineering, Architecture, and related studies ☐
- 2 Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, and related health studies ☐
- 3 Education ☐
- 4 Management and Commerce ☐
- 5 Law ☐
- 6 Society and Culture (including humanities and social science) ☐
- 7 Creative Arts ☐
- 8 Other ☐

43 Do you (or you and a partner) own the place where you usually live?

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Yes, I/we own a house outright | <input type="checkbox"/> [Go to question 44] |
| 2 Yes, I/we own an apartment outright | <input type="checkbox"/> [Go to question 44] |
| 3 Yes, I/we own a house with a mortgage | <input type="checkbox"/> [Go to question 44] |
| 4 Yes, I/we own an apartment with a mortgage | <input type="checkbox"/> [Go to question 44] |
| 5 No | <input type="checkbox"/> [Go to questions 45 and 46] |

44 Do you currently own an investment property or properties?

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1 Yes, outright | <input type="checkbox"/> [Go to Q47] |
| 2 Yes, with a mortgage (or mortgages) | <input type="checkbox"/> [Go to Q47] |
| 3 One (or some) outright, one (or some) with a mortgage | <input type="checkbox"/> [Go to Q47] |
| 4 No | <input type="checkbox"/> [Go to Q47] |

[For non-owners, those who chose 5 in Q43]

45 Which of the following best describes your housing situation?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Renting | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 Living with parents | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 Homeless | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 Have some other housing arrangement | <input type="checkbox"/> |

[For non-owners, those who chose 5 in Q43]

46 Which of the following is most true of you?

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1 I expect to own a home (a house or apartment) in the next 10 years. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 I would like to be a homeowner within the next 10 years but this will be hard to achieve. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 I'm not interested in being a homeowner. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 I have an investment property now but chose not to live in it. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 None of the above | <input type="checkbox"/> |

47 How well are you getting on financially these days?

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Living comfortably | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 Doing alright | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 Just about getting by | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 Finding it quite difficult | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 Finding it very difficult | <input type="checkbox"/> |

48 In which country or region were you born?

Please write the appropriate number in the space here ☐

Australia	1	[Go to 50]	Vietnam	14
New Zealand	2		The Philippines	15
Other Oceania	3		Other Asia	16
United Kingdom	4		Israel	17
Republic of Ireland	5		Other Middle East	18
Italy	6		North Africa	19
Germany	7		South Africa	20
Greece	8		Other Africa	21
Netherlands	9		North America	22
Former Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia)	10		Central America	23
Other Europe	11		South America	24
China	12		Other	25
India	13		Don't know	26

[All respondents who were not born in Australia answer Q49]

49 When did you arrive in Australia?

Year []

(For all respondents) In which country were your mother and your father born?

Australia	1	Vietnam	14
New Zealand	2	The Philippines	15
Other Oceania	3	Other Asia	16
United Kingdom	4	Israel	17
Republic of Ireland	5	Other Middle East	18
Italy	6	North Africa	19
Germany	7	South Africa	20
Greece	8	Other Africa	21
Netherlands	9	North America	22
Former Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia)	10	Central America	23
Other Europe	11	South America	24
China	12	Other	25
India	13	Don't know	26

50 Your mother []

51 Your father []

52 Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?

- 1 No []
- 2 Yes, Aboriginal []
- 3 Yes, Torres Strait Islander []
- 4 Yes, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander []

Thank you

Notes

- ¹ Australia's overall rate of population growth as of 2019 was nearly three times the OECD average. Calculated from <https://data.oecd.org/population>.
- ² The most recent of these reports is Bob Birrell and Ernest Healy, *The Skills Crisis, university culpability and the overseas student industry*, Tapri Research Report, December 2022.
- ³ Australian Government, *Jobs + Skills Summit, Outcomes*, 1-2 September 2022, p. 4
- ⁴ Australian Government, 2022 Population Statement, 2023, p. 2
- ⁵ Ronald Mizen, 'Immigration could surge to 300,000 in 2022-23', *Australian Financial Review*, 17 January, 2023
- ⁶ The Coalition was also silent on the topic. See: '...immigration and population policy has been virtually absent on either side's agenda during the federal election campaign' in Rachel Dexter, 'Why no one is talking about migration during the election campaign', *The Sydney Morning Herald online*, 19 May 2022; Phil Honeywood, 'The cone of silence on immigration just delays the inevitable', *The Australian online*, 18 May 2022; Judith Sloan, 'How the Libs could have won (easily): Five key mistakes of the government', *The Spectator Australia online*, 30 April 2022; '...neither party mentions migration in their formal economic election documents', in Editorial, 'Australia must join the global fight for talent', *The Australian Financial Review online*, 16 May 2022; '...two major issues at the forefront of many Australians' minds – immigration and population – were notable by their blatant absence', in Deborah Morrison, 'Letter: Conspicuously absent', *The Age online*, 21 May 2022.
- ⁷ Speaking to a journalist on 19 May 2022 Dr Rizvi said: 'If the prime minister [Scot Morrison] were to come out and say, "I'm going to increase my migration program to 190,000 per annum as assumed in my budget papers", he's gone, 100 per cent. He'll never say it – and neither will the opposition.' Quoted in Rachael Dexter, 'Why no one is talking about migration during the election campaign', *The Sydney Morning Herald online*, 19 May 2022. On 2 May 2022 Mr Albanese said '...One of things we are doing in this campaign is we are making all of our policies clear', Box Quote, *The Australian* (print edition), 22 February 2023, p. 4.
- ⁸ Australian Government, Department of Home Affairs, *A migration system for Australia's future*, Discussion Paper, November, p. 2
- ⁹ Data are from the years 2016/17 to 2018/19. The average (mean) was 247, 368. Calculated from the spreadsheet downloaded from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Migration Australia, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/migration-australia/latest-release#net-overseas-migration>
- ¹⁰ McAllister, I., Sheppard, J., Cameron, S., Jackman, S. (2022). Australian Election Study 2022 [computer file], December 2022. The AES question was: 'Do you think the number of immigrants allowed into Australia nowadays should be reduced or increased?' The Tapri question was 'Some business groups want Australia to return to pre-Covid levels of immigration, around 240,000 migrants net a year. This would take the population to about 39 million in 2050, 50% more than today's 25.7 million...' Which of the following is closest to your views?' (See questionnaire at Appendix C.)
- ¹¹ Anthony Galloway, 'A third of Australians back move to raise migration cap', *The Sydney Morning Herald online*, 25 September 2022
- ¹² Michael Koziol, 'Big Australia? We could double the size of our cities and they'd still be small', *The Age*, 14 January 2023
- ¹³ James O'Donnell, *Mapping Social Cohesion, The Scanlon Foundation Surveys*, 2022, p. 59. The large sample of 5,757 appears to have been of adult residents and, unlike the Tapri and ANU studies, was not restricted to voters. However, it was weighted for education. See p. 91.
- ¹⁴ See for example John Kehoe, 'Despite shortages, businesses sponsoring fewer foreign workers', *The Australian Financial Review*, 3 June 2022, and Greg Brown, 'Push to open gates for migrants to fix worker shortages', *The Australian online*, 4 July 2022.
- ¹⁵ See Stephen Lunn and Nicholas Jensen, 'Overseas students lead migration surge', *The Australian online*, 2 January 2023; Leith van Onselen, 'International student boom drives extreme rent inflation', *MacroBusiness*, 30 January 2023.
- ¹⁶ Niki Savva, *Bulldozed*, Scribe, 2022

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- ¹⁷ Sarah Cameron, Ian McAllister, Simon Jackman and Jill Sheppard, *The 2022 Australian Election Study*, 2022, p. 23
- ¹⁸ Quoted in James Campbell, 'Poll: Labor and Coalition neck and neck on economic issues in four key seats', *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 April 2022
- ¹⁹ Paul Kelly, 'Shifting nation leaves Coalition behind', *The Australian*, 7 December 2022
- ²⁰ See <https://dataverse.ada.edu.au/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.26193/W3U2S3>
- ²¹ Sarah Cameron, Ian McAllister, Simon Jackman and Jill Sheppard, *The 2022 Australian Election Study*, 2022, *The 2022 Australian Election Study*, 2022 p. 7
- ²² Election outcome data from downloads at:
<https://results.aec.gov.au/27966/Website/HouseDownloadsMenu-27966-Csv.htm>
- ²³ House of Representatives Final Results: <https://results.aec.gov.au/27966/Website/HouseDefault-27966.htm>
- ²⁴ Martin Scott, 'Australian Labor Party records lowest primary vote since 1934', World Socialist Web Site, 24 June 2022
- ²⁵ Katharine Betts and Bob Birrell, *Politics and the population question during the pandemic: Drawing on the July 2021 TAPRI survey*, The Australian Population Research Institute, 2021, Table 3
- ²⁶ Figures derived from the 2021 Census Community Profiles. They are approximate because some 5.0 percent of Census respondents did not provide birthplace information.
- ²⁷ Education and Work Australia, *May 2022, ABS, 'Highest educational attainment', Released 10 November 2022*. These data relate to the total population aged 15 to 74, the Tapri data are restricted to voters aged 18 plus.
- ²⁸ As all survey respondents were enrolled to vote, the students included in the sample are unlikely to have been international students.
- ²⁹ Jonathon Hopkin, *Anti-System Politics*, Oxford, 2018
- ³⁰ For Brexit, see Maria Sobolewska and Robert Ford, *Brexit Land*, Cambridge, 2020
- ³¹ ABS 2021 and 2016 Census, Community profiles
- ³² O'Donnell, *Mapping Social Cohesion*, 2022, op. cit., Table 28
- ³³ Michael Janda 'Has Australia's housing boom hit the end of the road and could it take the economy down with it?', ABC, 16 January, 2023
- ³⁴ Bob Birrell and Ernest Healy, *Immigration and the Housing Affordability Crisis in Sydney and Melbourne*, The Australian Population Research Institute, Research Report, July 2018
- ³⁵ www.conservativeparty.org.au/immigration/
- ³⁶ The best source on this is Gary Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order*, Oxford, 2022
- ³⁷ Jim Chalmers, 'Capitalism after the crises', *The Monthly*, February 2023
- ³⁸ Ibid., p. 5
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Patrick Durkin and David Marin-Guzman, 'The race for talent will be lost due to slow migration shake-up: firms', *Australian Financial Review*, 22 February 2023
- ⁴¹ Birrell and Healy, 2022, op. cit.
- ⁴² Katharine Betts and Bob Birrell, *Politics and the population question during the pandemic*, Tapri Research Report, October 2021, p. 4