

How Labor lost the 2019 election

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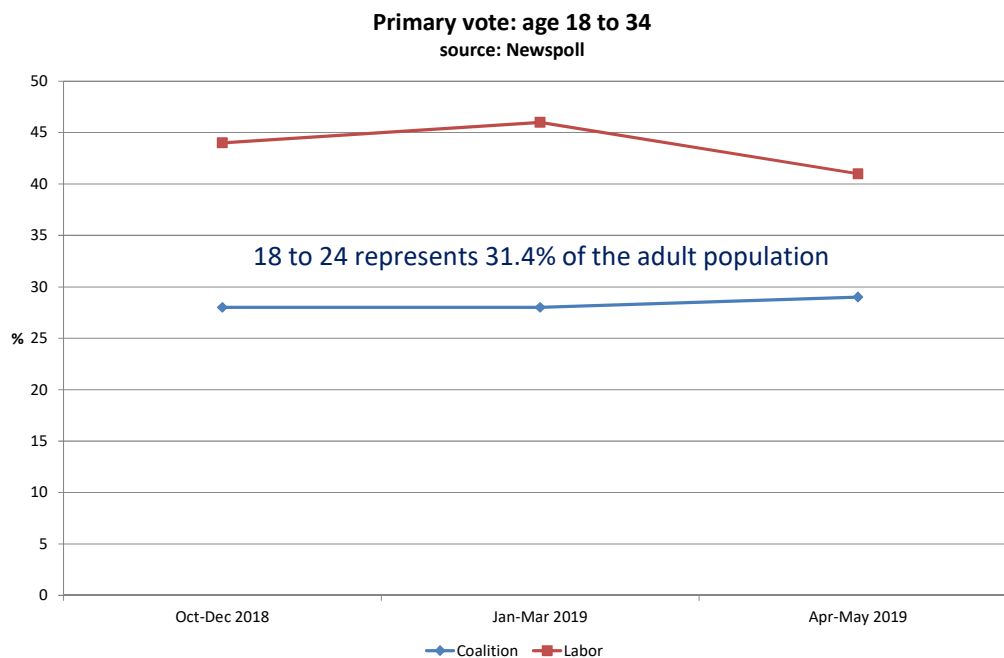
In what some are describing as a miracle, the Coalition won Saturday's election.

All of the polls were wrong, including an exit poll. The betting markets were wrong. How is this possible?

The trend was not Labor's friend!

The following three charts show how in every broad age group reported by Newspoll, Labor's primary vote was falling and the Coalition's was rising. The trend obviously continued on to election day.

Chart 1: age 18 to 34



Labor had a handy lead amongst people aged 18 to 34 and Greens preferences would have boosted their two-party preferred vote. But this age group represents less than one-third of the population.

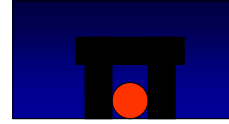
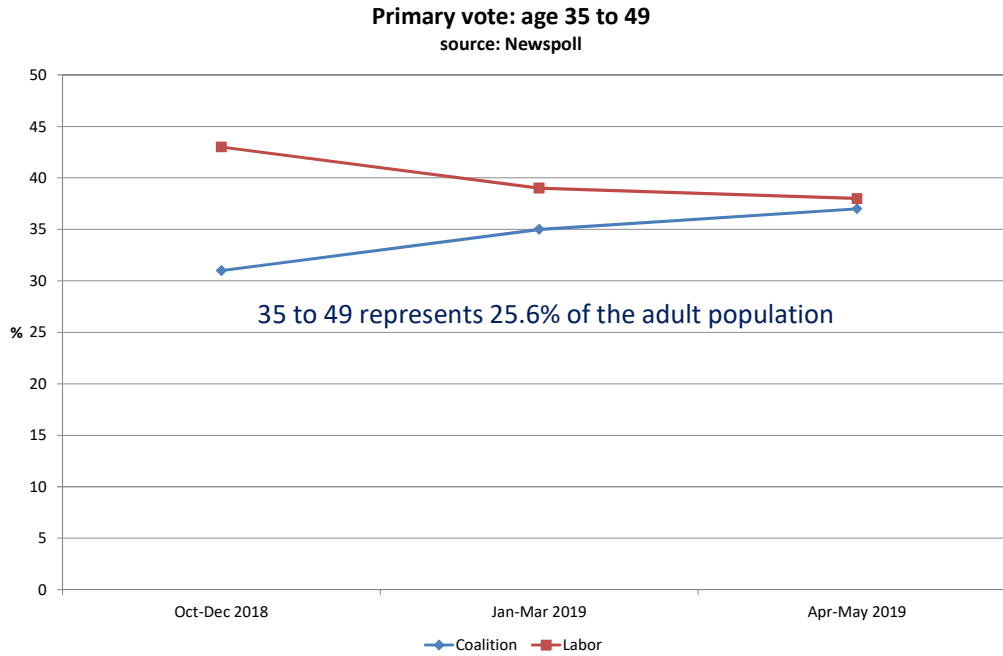


Chart 2: age 35 49



Labor's primary vote lead was rapidly shrinking amongst the 35 to 49 age group, which represents just over one quarter of the adult population, and the Coalition may well have been ahead on election day.

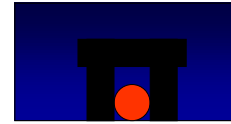
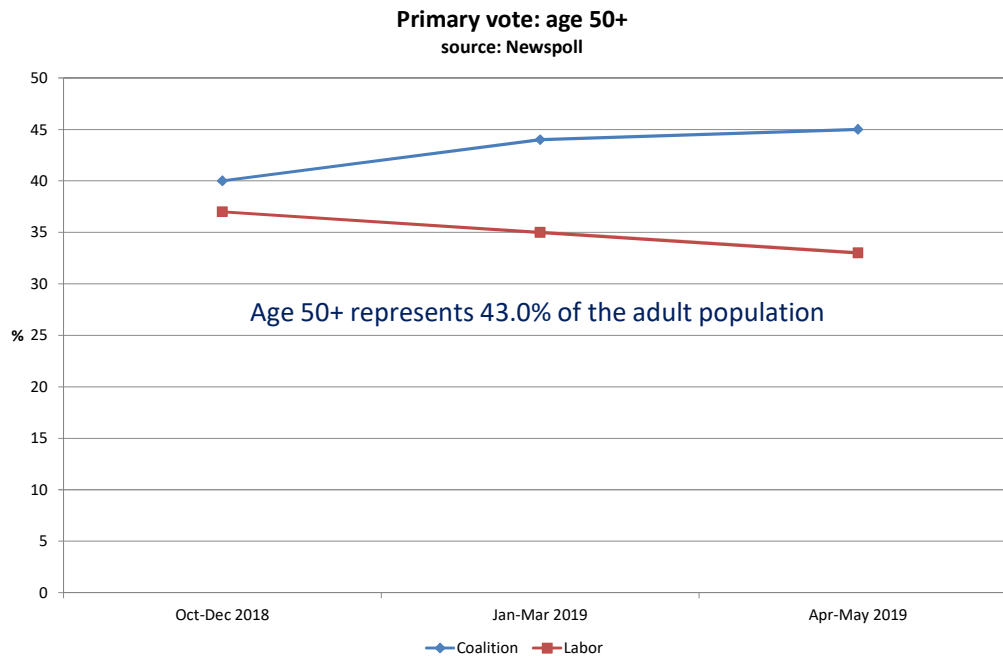


Chart 3: age 50+



Labor was competitive amongst the population aged 50+ in late 2018, but their position was worsening rapidly in 2019. This age group represents 43% of the population and Labor would have had little boost to its two-party preferred vote from the Greens.

It would be expected that Labor would do very badly in electorates where there is a higher proportion of people aged 50 and over than the national average.

Examples of such electorates include Braddon and Bass in Tasmania. The former has 53.7% of adults aged 50+ compared with the national average of 33.2% and the latter has 49.8%. The Liberals gained both seats from Labor.

Taking money away from people, via the withdrawal of cash franking credits for retirees may have been good economic policy, but was not a vote winner.

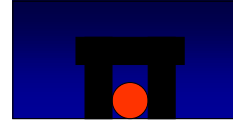
The headline in The Age on Friday May 10 may have been the final straw “Shorten vows to fix ‘bias against young’”. He was reported as saying that “Younger Australians are getting a dud deal from a system that is stacked against them”. He spoke of an intergenerational bias in the taxation system against people aged under 40. How would people aged over 40, who represent 59.6% of the adult population react?

Whitlam and Hawke stormed into power when the large Baby Boomer generation were coming of voting age. Rudd seized power in 2007 by reaching close to parity with the Coalition amongst the older population while being more attractive amongst the younger population.

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Labor was more popular with all age groups in the immediate aftermath of the dumping of Malcolm Turnbull in August 2018. But they did not hold on to this unearned gain.

Labor cannot win a federal election without becoming much more attractive to the older voter. They now have three years to come to grips with this reality.

The trends away from Labor reported above by age group were replicated in all mainland states and in the five capital cities and outside them.

The inaccurate prediction methods failed to project the evident trends and Labor was unable to halt them.