

# QUEENSLAND ONE NATION VOTE - A DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

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The One Nation vote at the last Queensland election was largely the creation of increasingly successful marginal seat campaigns by the three major Queensland parties.

The latest research supports the hypothesis that the Labor, Liberal and National Parties had become so focused on winning volatile voters in marginal seats, that their loyalist supporters simultaneously jettisoned their previously 'rustled on' allegiances and joined forces in an unstable One Nation demographic coalition which now has to cannibalise one of the major parties if it is to survive.

If the major parties want to destroy this new political entity, this task can only be achieved by a painstaking rebuilding of their own traditional support bases.

Historically, the Labor Party's political campaigns used to be derived from union style campaigns – where union officials started from basic strengths and moved outwards to more difficult targets, traditionally from large, urban, male-dominated, blue-collar, unionised workplaces, to smaller, rural, white-collar workplaces, where the boss and the employee tended to share responsibility for profit generation.

In practice this meant most of Labor's 1970s style candidates thought they were doing a good job by bashing the boss at factory gate meetings and doorknocking Labor's public housing strongholds.

This was great for the morale of the Labor candidates, but it compounded a pre-existing problem which saw Labor amass large wasted majorities in safe seats, while the marginals went to Coalition candidates who started with the advantage of a decentralised party power structure which was more strongly rooted in non-union community-based networks.

From the early 1970s, state and federal Labor machines successfully overcame these natural disadvantages by asserting the primacy of the volatile voters in the marginal lower house seats, at the expense of loyal blue collar workers in safe seats, and at the expense of Labor's Senate campaigns.

Marginal seat committees were formed, called Prime Ministerial Task Forces to make them sound important, and given a major say in sensitive policy areas. The pork barrel was then rolled out to these MPs, in the form of specialist campaign staff, marginal seat polling, computer-driven telephone banking of household voting patterns, linked to specialised direct mail and still more 'phone banking'. Central advertising campaigns, including slogans and television advertisements, were tested to ensure they were liked by focus groups from marginal seats.

If this led to a reduction in the winning margins in the 'safe' seats, and in the Senate, well, then, that was a price Labor tended not to worry about, during 13 long years in Government.

After a decade or so of losing, the Liberal and National parties came to adopt these techniques from the ALP, and their soulmates in the US Republican Party.

With the three major parties now throwing virtually all of their available resources at an increasingly fussier group of volatile voters, the rusted on party faithfuls gradually worked out that the political parties were rewarding disloyal voters at their expense.

And on to this particular stage, wandered Pauline Hanson. As a candidate rejected by the Liberal machine, the local Coalition voters liked her. And she was in a 'safe' Labor seat, where the local blue collar workers felt they had been punished by 'their' Government for their loyalty.

It seems that the much-maligned competition policy of the past decade had served to educate these previously 'rusted on' voters that if they didn't like the product they were being offered, one sure way to improve market alternatives on offer was to dump their long-standing supplier, whether it was a telephone company, a bank, or a political party.

Even if the service doesn't get any better, you sure feel good about it for a while.

Any discussion of the One Nation vote should acknowledge three additional factors.

Firstly, for the last 50 years, there has always been a disproportionately-large group of Queenslanders who are older, predominantly rural, Australian-born, less-well educated, with low-income, blue collar jobs. During this time, this group has voted for the pre-split ALP, for the DLP's Vince Gair, for the Joh Nationals, and again for Goss Labor. This group formed the core of the One Nation vote, but does not explain all of it.

Secondly, the Queensland State election, provided a timely referendum on the current Coalition Government. The major decisions that affect Australians' lives, concerning employment, inflation, income tax levels, interest rates, welfare, trade, defence and (increasingly), industrial relations, health and education, are controlled by the National Government. So there was an element of an anti-Coalition protest vote, or a by-election if you like, in the Queensland poll, which would also have served to inflate the Queensland One Nation vote.

Thirdly, this sort of mood swing does not translate easily to Federal voting intentions, where individual voting decisions tend to be based more on perceptions about the impact of Federal Government decisions, particularly those dealing with taxes and spending. In state campaigns, Leaders can get away with a fair bit of waffle, but with a Federal campaign, taxation and spending policies tend to be subjected to more realistic scrutiny.

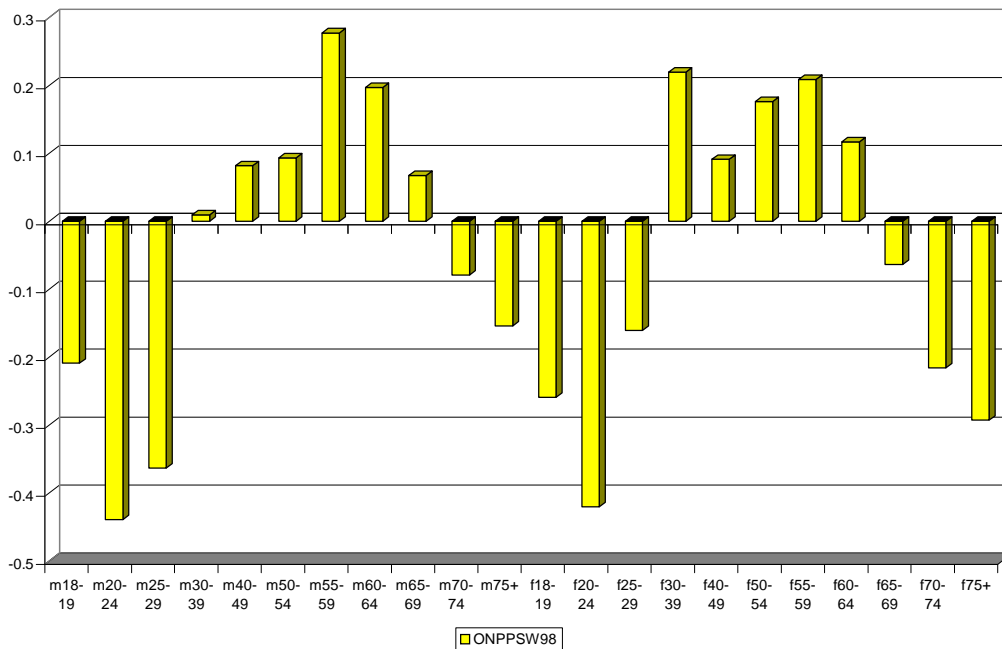
The analysis employed in the current study uses computer-driven correlational and regression based statistical packages to analyse voting patterns in each electorate

according to the 1996 Census returns. The methodology was pioneered in Australia by then South Australian academics Dean Jeansch and Neal Blewett in the early 1970s, and refined by Adelaide Statistician John Lockwood and your current humble authors, to include a detailed analysis of every Australian election since 1966. On the Liberal side, Dr David Kemp has also written on the subject. The technique is less timely than conventional attitudinal public opinion polling and it requires a great deal of caution to separate cause and effect, but it can be an extremely useful and objective descriptive tool.

The analysis begins with a diagrammatic description of the 1998 Queensland One Nation voter profile and then proceeds to try to untangle some of implications of this vote for the three major parties.

Table 1 shows the alignment of the various age groups, by sex, with the One Nation vote. (For the purposes of analysis, the One Nation 1998 vote, is also considered to be the One Nation 1995 to 1998 Swing, as the One Nation vote was zero in 1995). The bars above the middle zero line show age groups which voted for One Nation, those below the line, voted against. The longer the bar, the stronger the relationship. The strongest One Nation supporters were Males and Females aged between 50 and 60, while the very young and the very old, voted strongly against One Nation. Younger females, aged 30 to 40, were fare more supportive of One Nation, than males the same age.

Table 1 - ONP Swing (Age & Sex)



Tble 2a ONP (Occu. & Sex.)

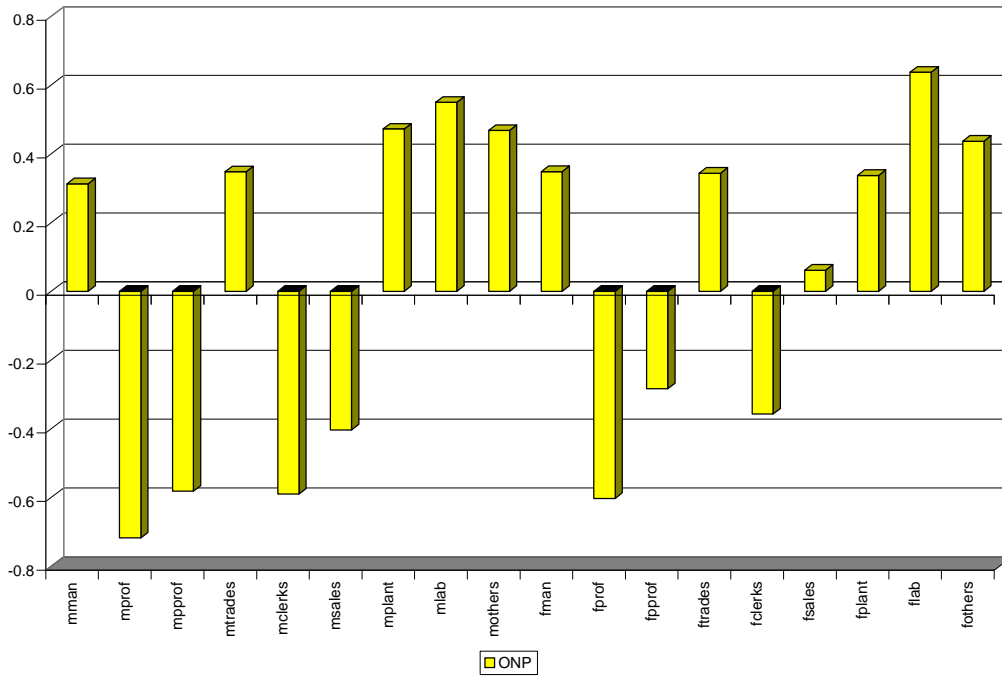
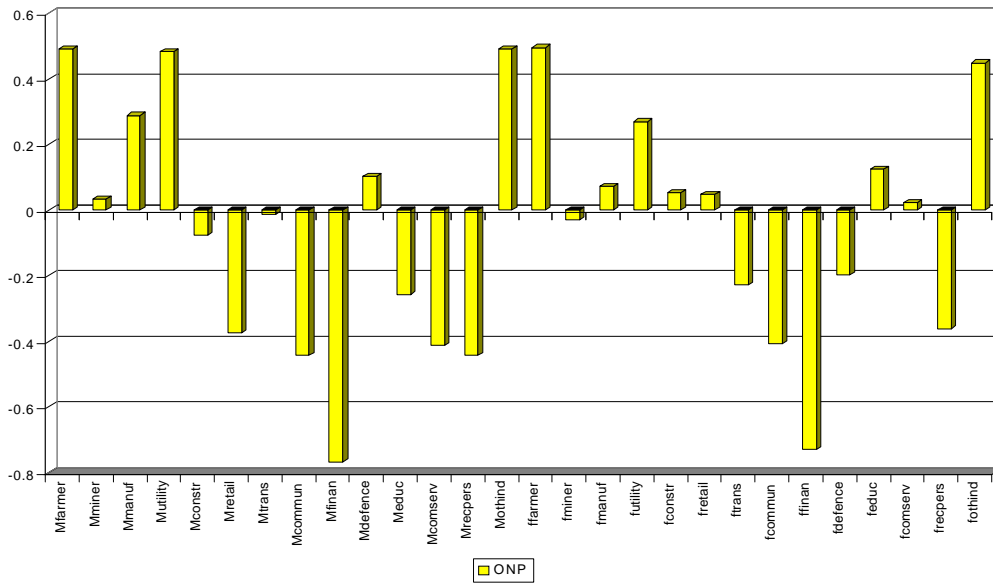


Table 2b ONP (Ind. & Sex)



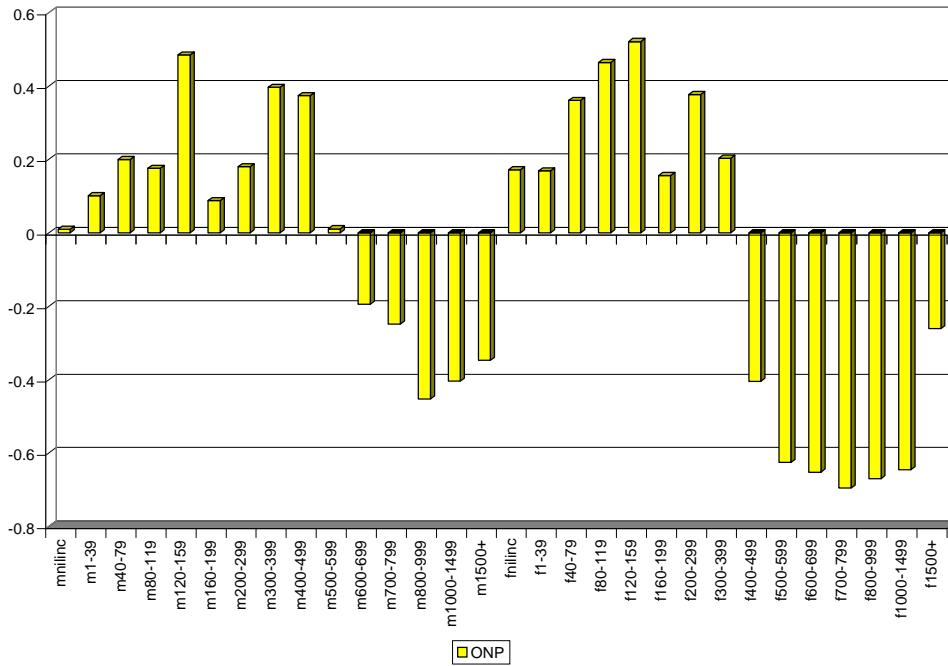
Tables 2a and 2b, show the second, and most significant dynamic of long-term voting behaviour: Occupation and Industry, by sex. The One Nation party derived its support from white-collar Managers, and the blue-collar tradespersons, plant operators, labourers and others.

The first group normally votes Liberal, the others Labor. The other white-collar groups which normally vote Liberal, the professionals and para-professionals, were strongly opposed to One Nation. Clerks and sales workers, who normally split their allegiance between the Labor and Liberal parties, but have been trending slowly to the ALP for the past 30 years, gave a big thumbs down to One Nation.

In term of industry, One Nation voters are found in the farm sector, manufacturing and the utilities.

The trend emerges for One Nation voters to be identified as much by who they aren't as who they are. Table 2b clearly shows that finance workers to be the industry group

Table 3 ONP (Income & Sex)



with the lowest level of support for One Nation.

Table 3 shows income earners in the welfare dependency range to be big supporters of One Nation. Males earning, in 1996, more than \$600 and females earning more than \$500 (income discrimination against women, means these are normally in the same jobs, and the voting is more a function of the job, than the income), were strongly opposed to One Nation.

Table 4 ONP (School Leaving Age)

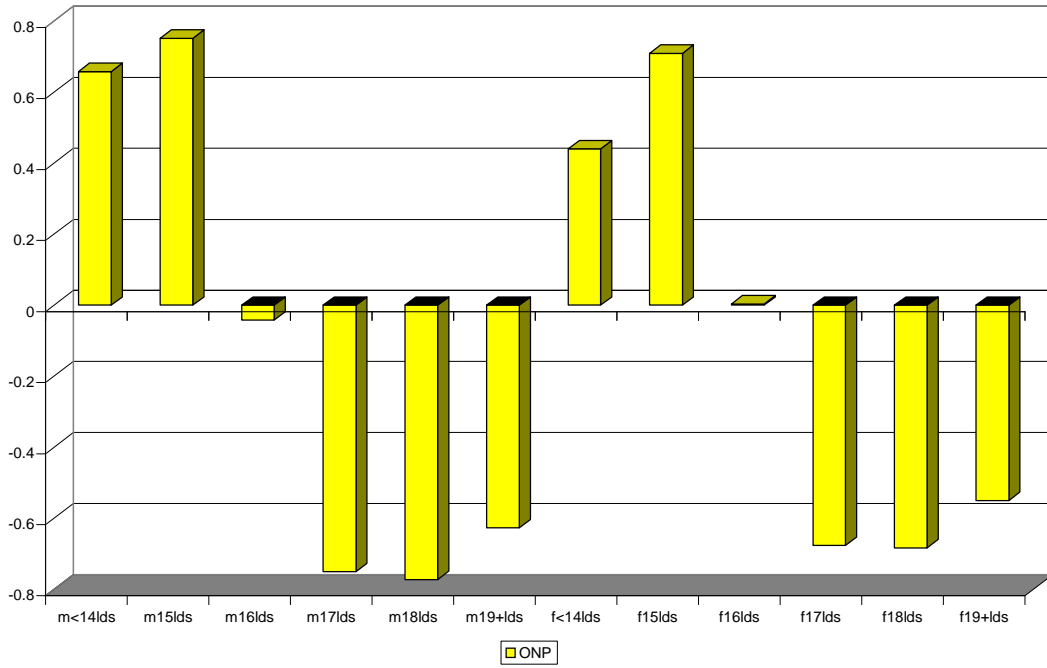
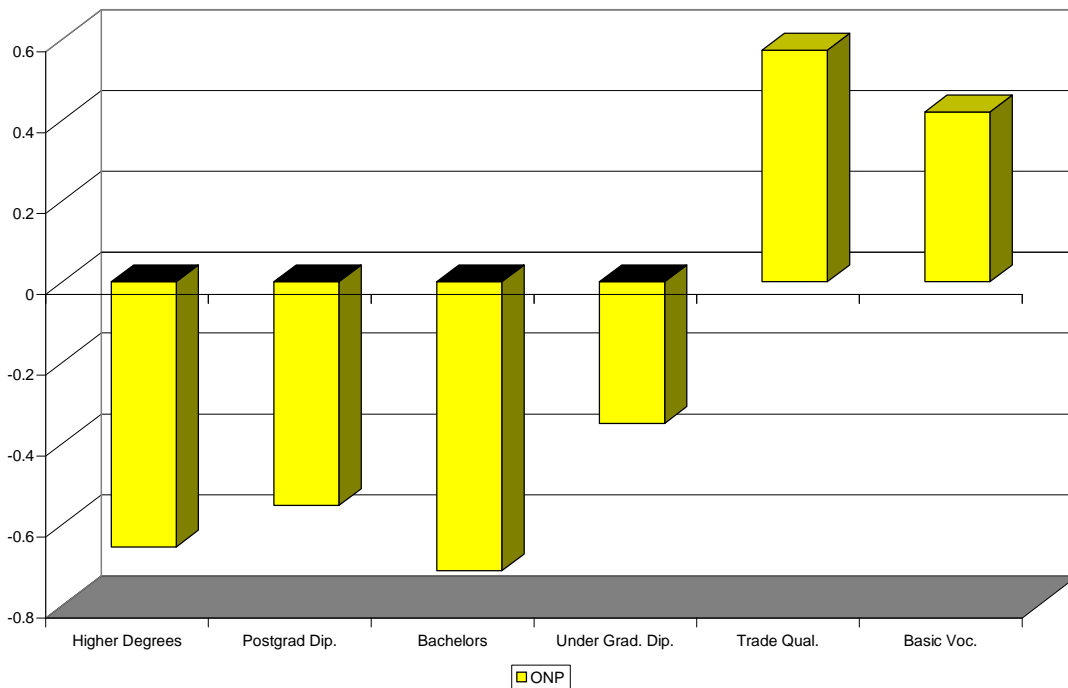


Table 5 ONP - Education



Tables 4 and 5 are pretty stark. Low education standards are synonymous with One Nation support. People who leave school at an early age (14 to 15 years) tend only to progress to trade qualifications or basic vocation skills. The One Nation education profile is starkly 'blue collar' in nature.

Table 6 ONP - Mortgage

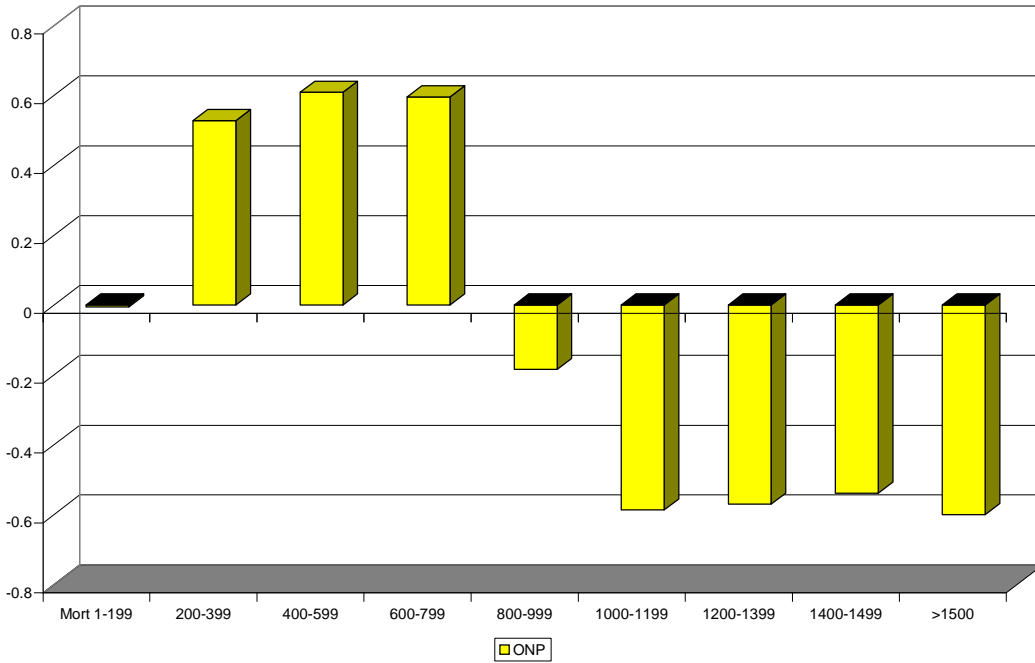


Table 6 clearly shows that the One Nation supporters are those who tend to pay low mortgages, which reflects the level of income of the party's voters. These mortgage figures are also confirmed by correlations with rental costs.

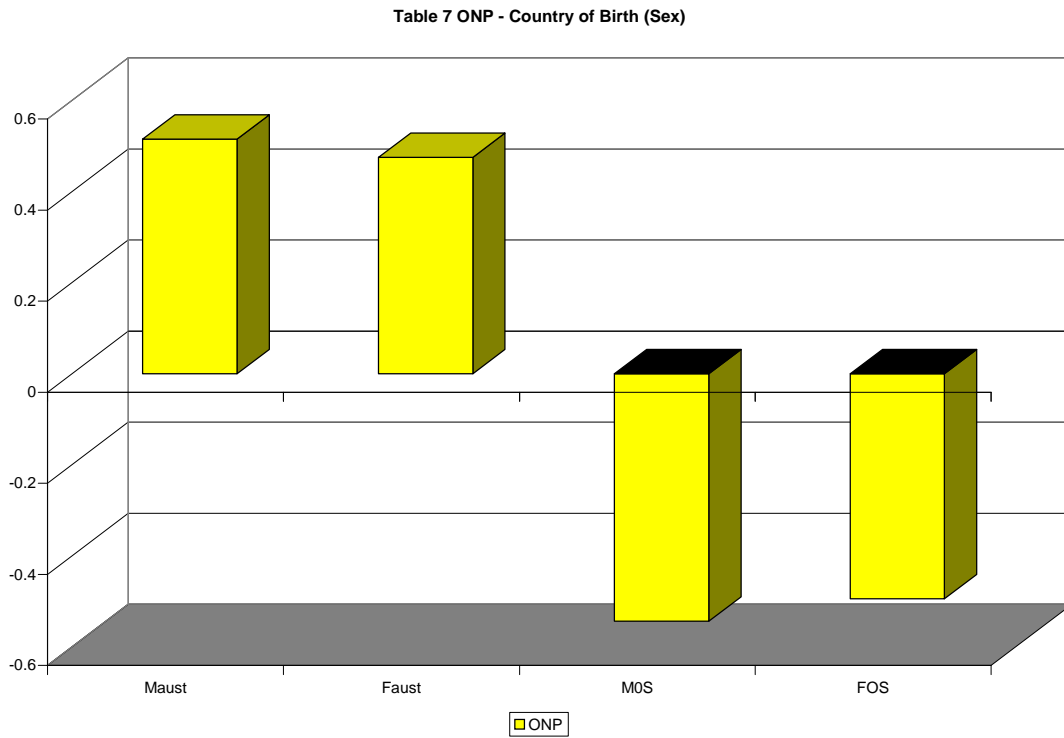


Table 7 shows that Australian born male and females provide the only statistically significant positive correlation between country of birth and One Nation support. The overwhelming majority of overseas born groups are negatively correlated to the One Nation vote to a significant degree, with Asian and Indian groups amongst the strongest negative correlates.



Table 8 ONP - Religion (Male)

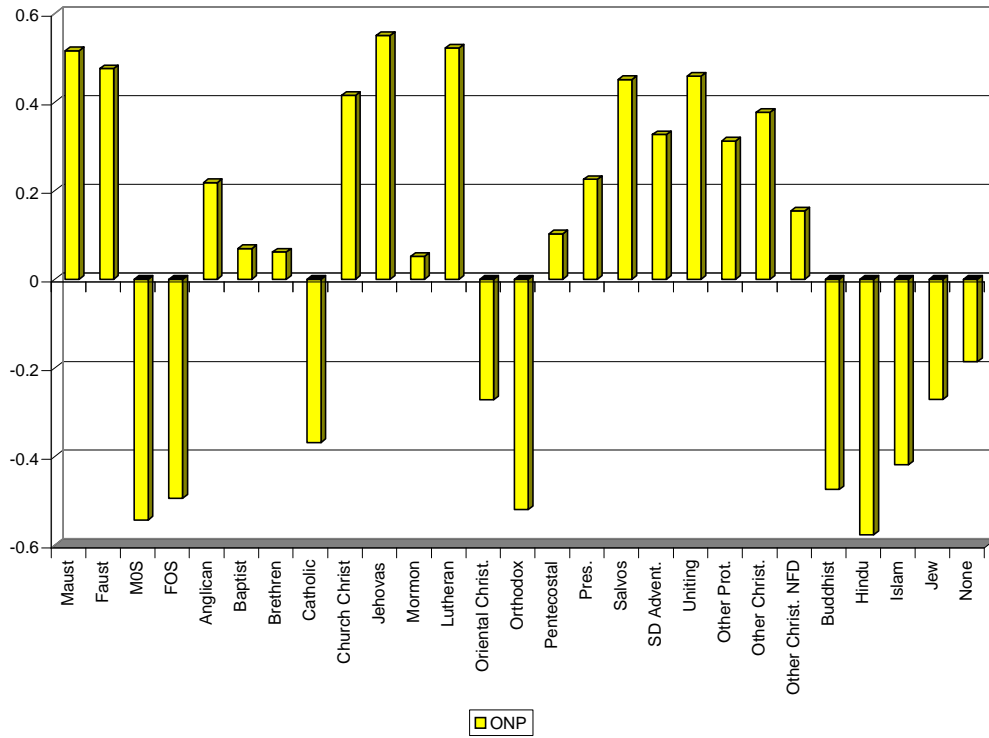
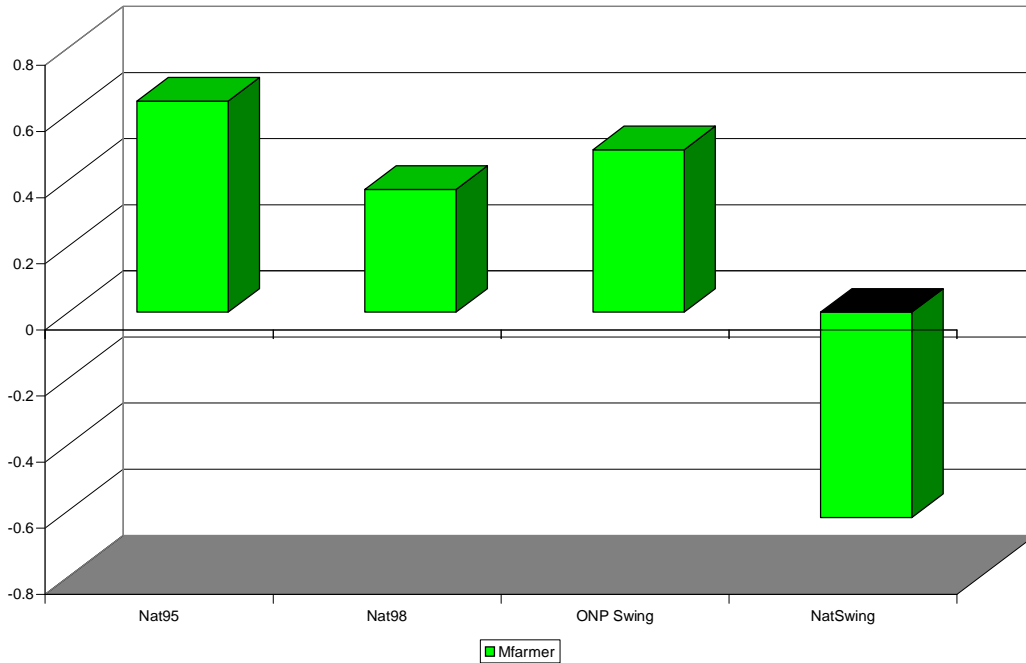


Table 8 shows the correlations between religion and One Nation's voting support for men. The correlations for women are more or less the same. It is clear that the 'Eastern Religions' (Hindu, Islam, Buddhist) are negatively correlated to One Nation's support, as are Catholics and Jews.

The smaller active religious groups, typified by Jehovah's Witness and Lutherans, and the Uniting Church are positively correlated to One Nation's voting support.

While the preceding Tables describe the One Nation profile, the following Tables set out the origins of the 1998 Demographic base of One Nation support.

Table 9 Farmers - Nat/ONP



The first two bars on the left of Table 9 shows the drop in the level of support for the Queensland National Party from their heartland base of support – the farm industry group, which still support the National Party in 1998 though to a markedly lesser degree.

The two bars on the right shows the 1995 to 1998 swing to One Nation (the third bar from the left) and the complementary negative correlation showing the identical swing against the National Party amongst farmers.

Table 10 Swings (Occu.)

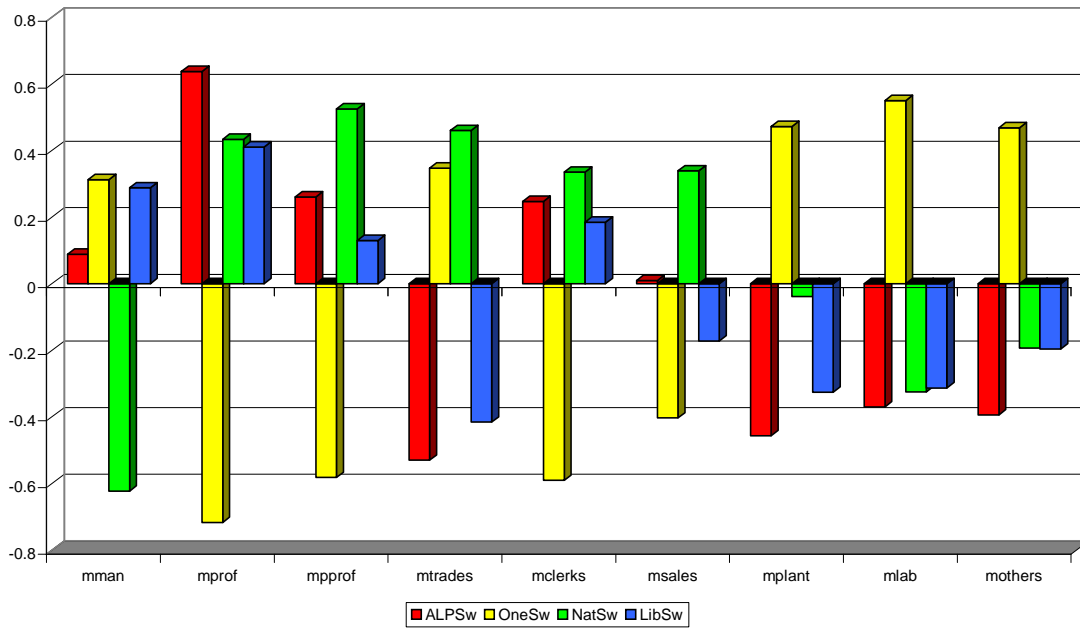


Table 10 shows the correlates for swings across occupation groups for the ALP, the Liberals, Nationals and One Nation. The dynamic that is immediately evident is that One Nation's voter support has emerged from the trades, plant and machinery operators, management and labourer categories, which corresponds directly with the swing away from Labor amongst these workers (with the exception of management where the Nationals were the big losers).

Labor's gains are evident in the professional and para-professional categories, and to a small extent management.

Table 11 Swings (Income & Sex)

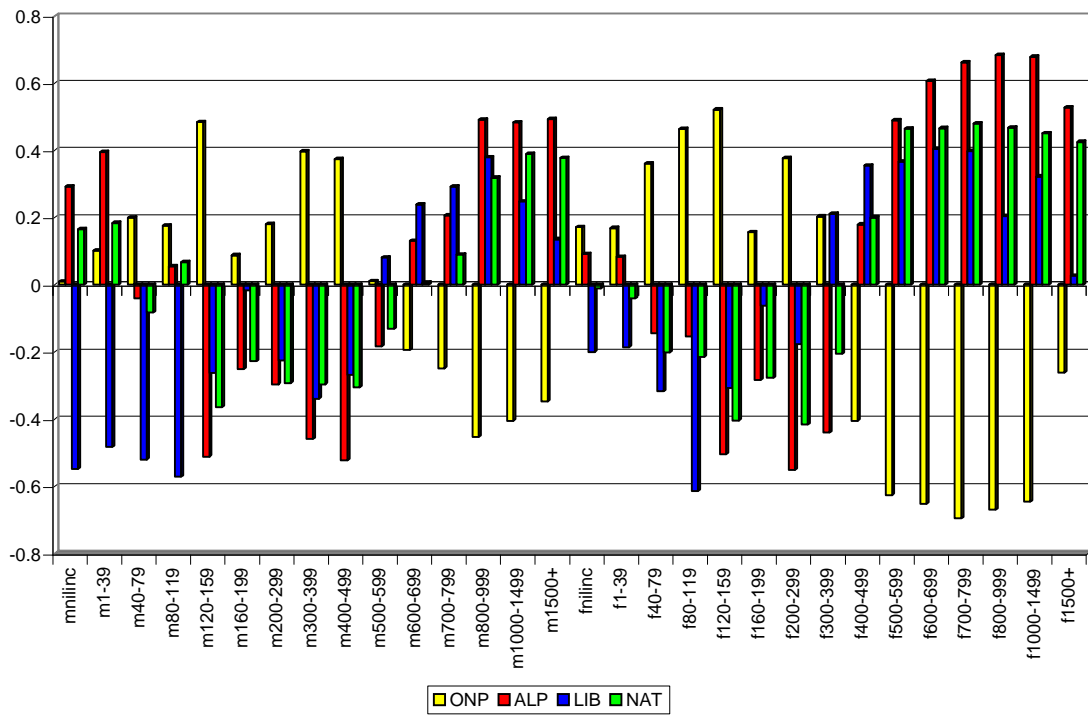


Table 11 shows swings for the four parties by income levels and sex. One Nation’s gains are apparent in below mean income categories for both men and women – for the most part at the expense of all major parties.

The exception to this general rule is the apparent swing to Labor and the Nationals amongst the two lowest levels of income. In these categories, the movement was clearly at the expense of the Liberals.

On the other side of the coin, Labor captured the strongest gains amongst higher income earners, particularly women.

In summary, the analysis indicates that the stereotype of the One Nation voter is:

1. They tend not to be the very young men and women (18-24) or senior women (70+);
2. They tend to be in blue collar occupation categories including trades, plant and machinery operators and labourers and the farm sector (and not professional or clerical and sales);
3. They tend to be low income earners – earning less than \$500 per week (and definitely not in high income groups) with a cluster around welfare recipients;
4. They tend to have left school by aged 15 and have not attained higher degrees;
5. They tend to have trade qualifications at the most;
6. They are overwhelmingly Australian born, and no overseas born group contains any pocket of support for One Nation;
7. In terms of religion, they tend to mirror the patterns of migration and settlement, and are found in the mainstream, conservative and predominantly rural religious groupings such as Lutherans, Jehovah's Witness and Church of Christ.

The evidence confirms One Nation effectively kidnapped the major class demographic from all three pre-existing political parties.

Labor has lost support in its blue collar base. The Liberals have lost support amongst managers. And the Nationals have lost out amongst farmers.

What remains to be seen from the Federal Election on October 3 is whether One Nation retains enough of these hitherto 'rusted on' major party loyalists.

The evidence of attitudinal surveys so far suggests that while the urban vote for One Nation may have declined, to the extent it is now only a consideration for preference campaigns, its country vote may prove more resilient and may yet provide a base for a small One Nation contingent in the Federal Parliament.

The challenge to major parties is to re-assess what they stand for in terms of their respective traditional support bases. They ignore the wake-up call of the Queensland election at their peril.

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