

Political advertising on social media platforms during the 2022 federal election

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SUMMARY

The Australia Institute studied paid political ads published on Facebook and Instagram over a two-month period between 21 March 2022 and 20 May 2022. The analysis includes political ads published on pages administrated by candidates and parties contesting the 2022 federal election.

- A total of \$12.5 million was spent to run 26,945 political ads on Facebook and Instagram by parties and candidates over the two months leading up to the election.
- The Labor Party had the highest ad spend across all its candidate and party pages, spending a total of \$5 million in the two months leading up to the election, 62 per cent higher than the Liberal party which came in second at \$3 million.
- Among candidate pages, Clive Palmer's ad spend was the highest at \$462,500.
- Among party pages, the highest ad spend was recorded at \$2.6 million by the Australian Labor Party page.
 - By contrast, the United Australia Party channel accounted for the highest spending on Google ads (including those shown on YouTube)- \$11.8 million over the same period.¹ On Meta platforms, however, the official United Australia Party page came in second to the Australian Labor Party page.
- Candidates running for the seat of Kooyong collectively spent \$339,450 on social media ads, the highest ad spend of candidates in any electoral division.
- 28 per cent of political ads were seen by people between the ages of 25-34, making them the age group with the highest share of impressions.
- Females accounted for a higher proportion of ad impressions than males across ads of all parties.

¹ Included for comparison; Google ads have not been studied for this report.


- Across states and territories in Australia, New South Wales accounted for the highest share of ad impressions.

AD SPEND

In the two months leading up to the election, 26,945 ads were published on Facebook and Instagram by 608 pages belonging to political candidates and/or their parties. The total ad spend over this period was \$12,516,950.

The ad with the highest spend overall was published by the United Australia Party page (**Ad 1**), running from 14 May to 18 May 2022, costing \$162,500 in total, or \$32,500 per day. The most expensive Labor ad cost \$22,500 (**Ad 2**), while the same figure the costliest Coalition and Greens ads stood at \$42,500 and \$8,500 respectively (**Ad 3** and **Ad 4**). Dr. Monique Ryan ran the most expensive ad among all independent candidates, costing \$6,500 (**Ad 5**).

Ad 1: Most costly ad overall (\$162,500)

**United Australia Party**
Sponsored • Paid for by United Australia Party
ID: 459929815892974

This is a must watch video with all the information about the United Australia Party and how we will Save Australia.


Check it out today and watch this before you vote.



WWW.UNITEDAUSTRALIAPARTY.ORG.AU
Don't Vote until you watch this.

[Learn more](#)

Ad 2: Most costly ad, Labor (\$22,500)



Australian Labor Party
Sponsored • Paid for by Australian Labor Party
ID: 673951737009711

...


No one gets it right all the time, but Scott Morrison gets it wrong too often, and makes too many excuses.



[NOMOREMORRISON.COM](https://www.nomoremorrison.com)
No More Morrison
No More Morrison

Learn More

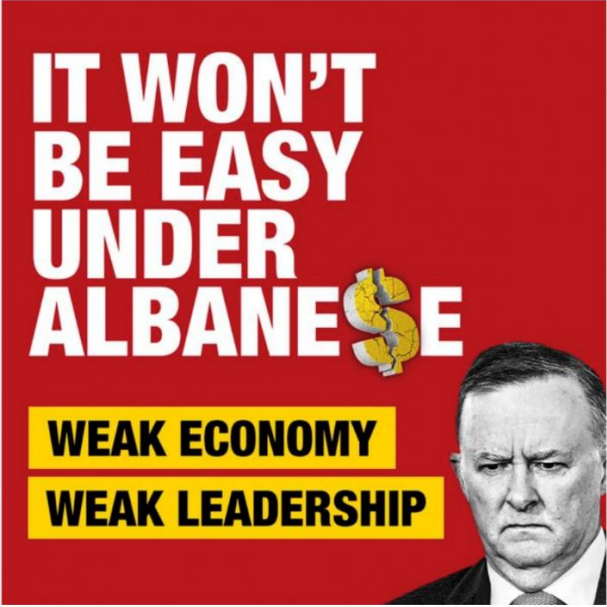
Ad 3: Most costly ad, Coalition (\$42,500)



Liberal Party of Australia
Sponsored • Paid for by Liberal Party of Australia
ID: 339244261647597

...


Labor can't manage money. That's why they come after yours



[NOTEASYALBANESE.COM](https://www.noteasyalbanese.com)
Labor = higher deficits & higher taxes
Don't risk Labor.

Learn More


Ad 4: Most costly ad, Greens (\$8,500)



The Greens SA
Sponsored • Paid for by The Greens SA
ID: 310112944437314

...

The Greens will replace coal & gas with renewables and build a world-leading renewable energy industry.



THE GREENS

They take millions from big polluters.

GREENS.ORG.AU
Vote [1] Greens
For real climate action.

Learn more

Ad 5: Most costly ad, independent (\$6,500)



Dr Monique Ryan
Sponsored • Paid for by Monique Ryan
ID: 696157781604673

...

Vote 1 Dr Monique Ryan for strong, sensible action on climate, integrity and the economy.

Polling booths are open from 8am to 6pm. To find your nearest polling place click here: <https://www.aec.gov.au/election/voting.htm>

IT'S ELECTION DAY!

VOTE 1

DR MONIQUE RYAN **2022**

OUR INDEPENDENT FOR KOORYONG

You must number EVERY box for your vote to count.

CLIMATE ACTION | STRONG ECONOMY | INTEGRITY

Overall spending by party

As seen in **Figure 1**, this section shows the combined spending on ads by pages of political parties and their candidates.

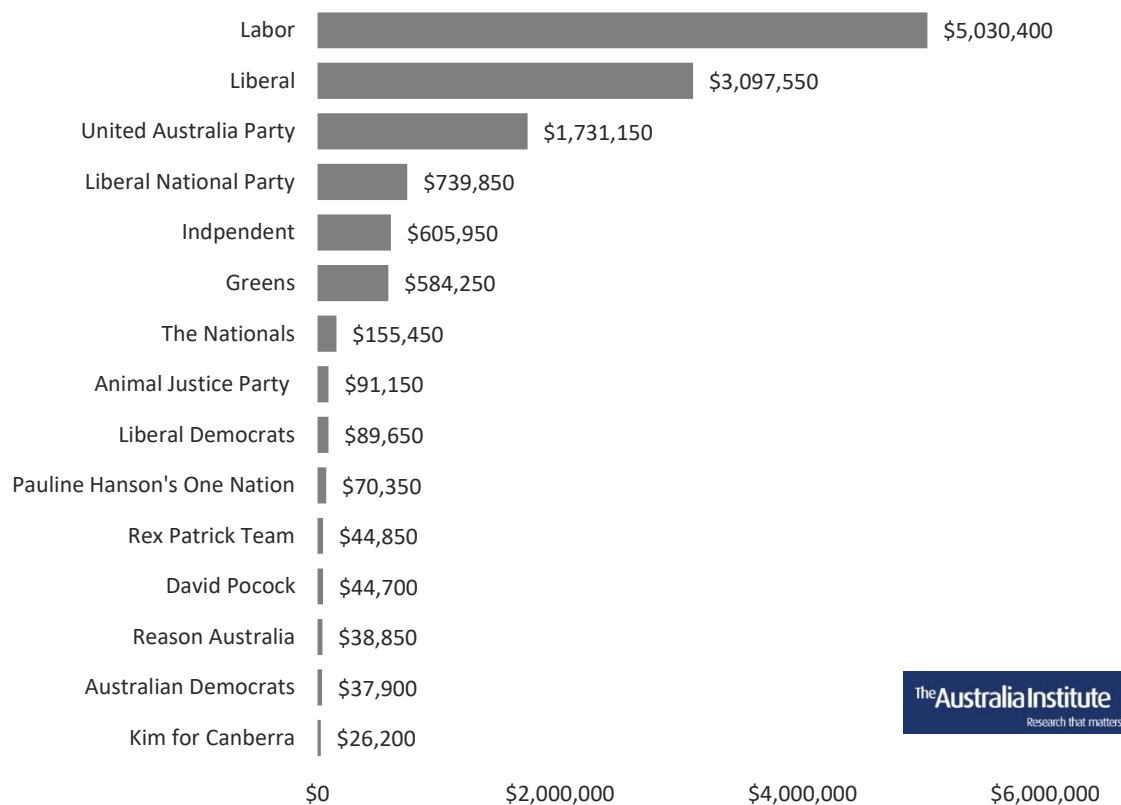
- The spending on political ads was the highest for the Australian Labor Party, totalling more than \$5 million for the two months immediately preceding the election, and 62 per cent higher than the Liberal Party spend, which came in second at \$3 million.
 - With a total of 11,910 ads run between 21 March and 20 May 2022, Labor candidate and party pages together accounted for 40.2 per cent of all political spending on ads. On the other hand, Labor's primary vote stands at 32.6 per cent.²
 - The significant ad spend is reflective of findings in the Labor Party's internal review following the 2019 election defeat that pointed to a weak social media strategy, particularly in response to false campaigns focused on the so-called death tax.³
- Spending by all pages affiliated with the United Australia Party and its candidates came in at third place, with an ad spend of \$1.7 million over the two-month period.
- Pages of the Liberal National Party of Queensland ranked fourth overall at \$739,850.
- The ad spend by the Coalition as a whole stood at \$3,515,350, or 28 per cent of the total spending on political ads. By contrast, the Coalition's primary vote in the 2022 federal election stands at 35.7 per cent.⁴

² As of 8th June 2022, with 89.3 % of the votes counted.

³ Emerson & Weatherill (2019) *Review of Labor's 2019 Federal Election Campaign*, <https://alp.org.au/media/2043/alp-campaign-review-2019.pdf>

⁴ As of 8th June 2022, with 89.3 % of the votes counted.

Figure 1: Top-15 parties by ad spend (candidate and party pages)



Source: Author's calculations based on results obtained from the Meta Ad Library API

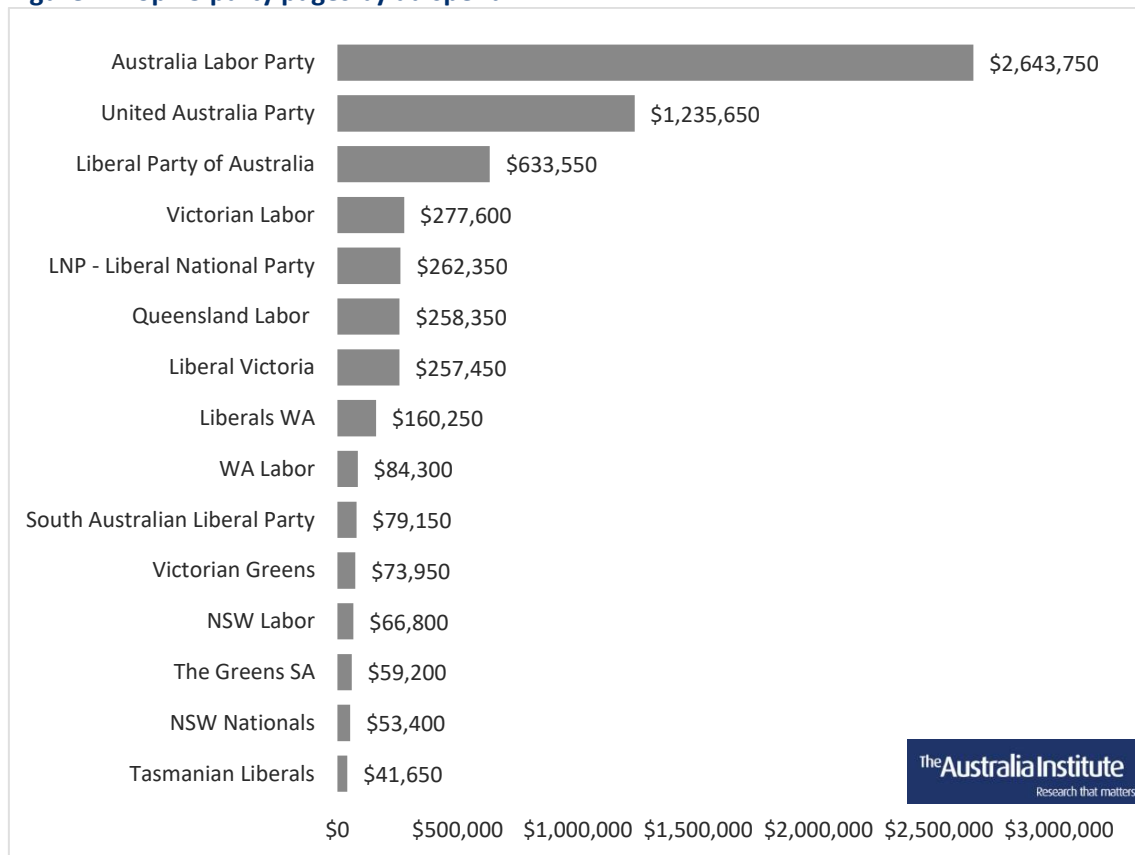
Ad spend by party pages

Figure 2 shows ad spend by individual pages administered by political parties, decoupled from the pages of their candidates.

The top 15 party pages ranked by ad spend comprise five pages belonging to the Labor party and five Liberal party pages, two Australian Greens' pages and one page belonging to The Nationals, United Australia Party and the Liberal National Party of Queensland each.

- The Australian Labor Party page topped spending on ads, having spent a total of \$2,643,750 between 21 March 2022 and 20 May 2022.
- The United Australia Party page accounted for the second highest spending on ads among party pages, at \$1,235,650.
- The Liberal Party of Australia page came in at third place among all party pages, with the total ad spend over the two-month period of \$633,550.
- The highest-spending page run by the Australian Greens was the Victorian Greens page, ranking 11th in the list of top party pages by ad spend.

Figure 2: Top 15 party pages by ad spend



Source: Author's calculations based on results obtained from the Meta Ad Library API

Notably, for the same two-month period, the United Australia Party channel emerged as the highest spender on Google ads, including YouTube ads (not included in this analysis). The party spent a total of \$11.8 million on Google ads between 21 March and 20 May 2022. On Google platforms, the United Australia Party outspent its closest competitor, a Labor Party channel, by a factor of more than 5. On Meta platforms, Facebook and Instagram, however, the highest spending United Australia Party page came in second to the Australian Labor Party page.

Ad spend by candidate pages

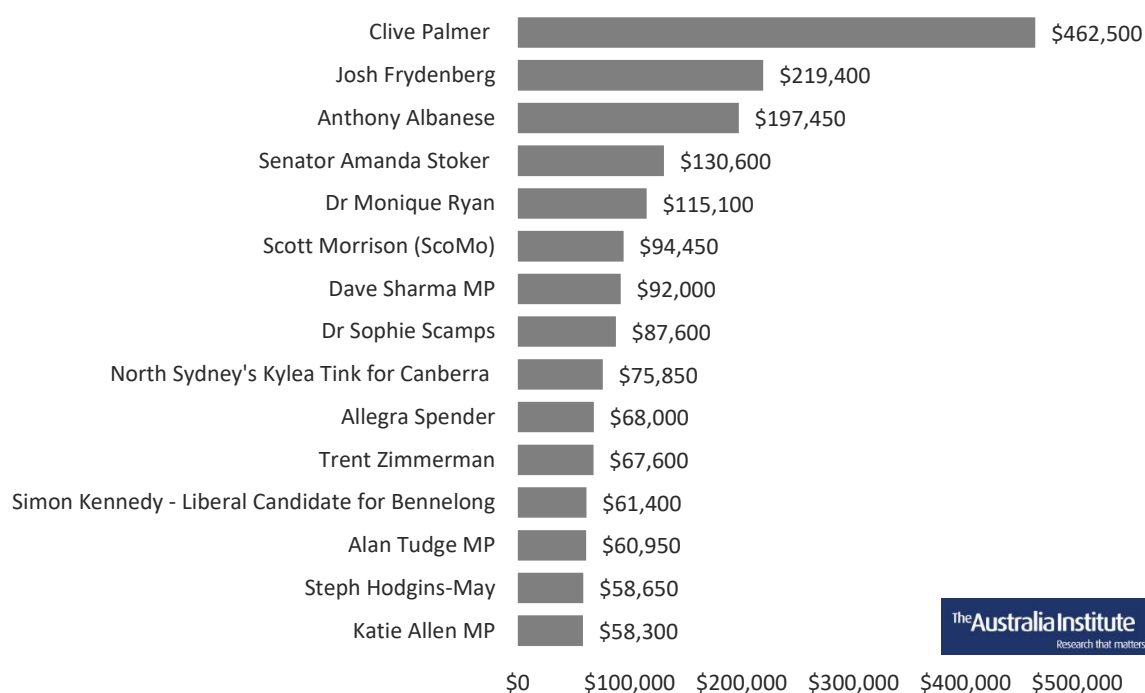
Figure 3 shows ad spend by individual pages of candidates contesting the federal election.

- Among candidate pages, Clive Palmer's page took the top spot with a total ad spend of \$462,500 in the two months immediately preceding the election. Clive Palmer outspent Josh Frydenberg, the second highest spending candidate page with an ad spend of \$219,400, by more than double.
- In third place was the page run by the newly elected Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, with an ad spend of \$197,450 over the two-month period.

- Dr Monique Ryan accounted for the fifth-highest ad spend among all candidate pages, and the highest among independents.
- The page authorised by former Prime Minister Scott Morrison came in sixth with an ad spend of \$94,450.

Notably, of the eight incumbent Coalition MPs and Senators whose pages feature in the top 15 candidate pages by ad spend, only two won their bid for re-election, namely Scott Morrison and Alan Tudge.

Figure 3: Top 15 candidate pages by ad spend



Source: Author's calculations based on results obtained from the Meta Ad Library API

Ad spend by electorates

Australia is currently divided into 151 electoral divisions for the House of Representatives, each represented by one member. **Figure 4** shows the total ad spend in each electoral division. The results have been calculated based on the amount spent by candidate pages running in each electoral division. Ads published by pages administered by parties have not been considered.

Candidates running for the seat of Kooyong in Melbourne's east poured more money into political ads on Meta platforms than candidates in any other electoral division - \$339,450 in total. With an ad spend of \$219,400, outgoing Treasurer and incumbent Liberal MP Josh Frydenberg's page accounted for 65 per cent of all spending in the electoral division of Kooyong. Frydenberg's closest rival and incoming independent

MP, Dr. Monique Ryan spent slightly over half that amount - \$115,100 over the two-month period.

In second place was the seat of Grayndler, where the page of newly elected Prime Minister Anthony Albanese accounted for over 96 per cent of all ad spend in the electorate with an ad spend totalling \$197,450. The highly skewed proportion is attributable to Anthony Albanese's appeal to a wider audience given his nomination as a Prime Ministerial candidate unlike other candidates that were more narrowly focused on their own electorates.

The division of Wentworth ranked third in terms of ad spend by candidates, ahead of North Sydney, Mackellar, Macnamara and Bennelong which took up the subsequent spots.

Similar to Anthony Albanese, Scott Morrison's spending on ads accounted for nearly 100 per cent of the ad spend by candidates running for the seat of Cook which featured eighth in the list of electoral divisions ranked by combined candidate ad spend.

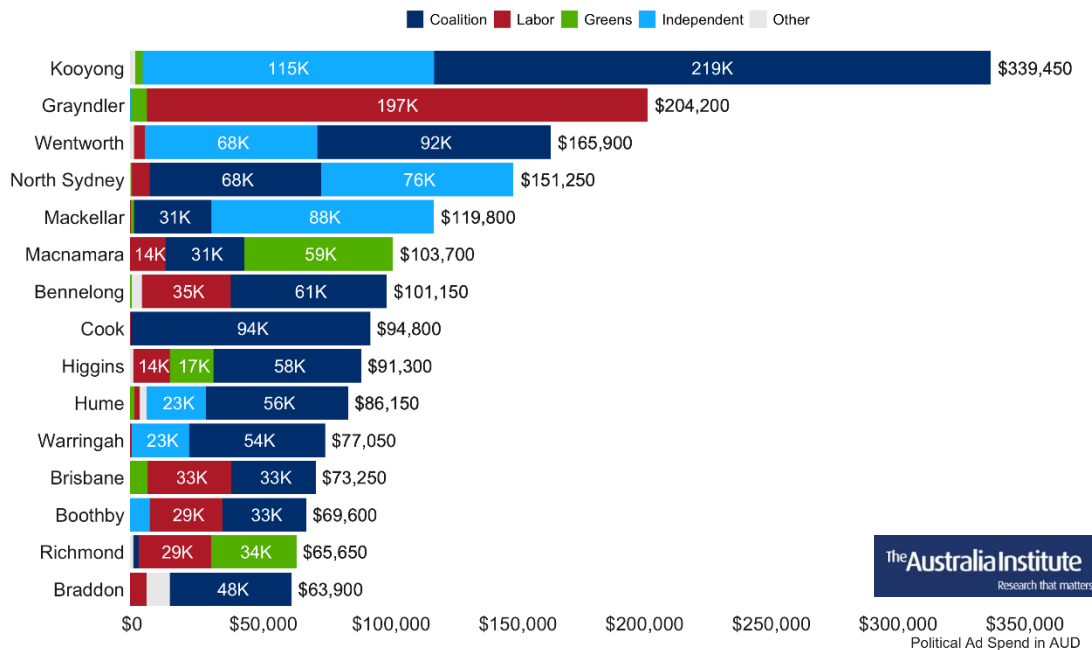
Four out of the top five electoral divisions for ad spend were also those that witnessed stiff high-profile contests between independents and incumbent Coalition MPs including Mackellar (Sophie Scamps defeating Jason Falinski), North Sydney (Kylea Tink defeating Trent Zimmerman), Wentworth (Allegra Spender defeating Dave Sharma) and Kooyong (Monique Ryan defeating Josh Frydenberg).

In the electorate of Brisbane, while the winning Greens candidate Stephen Bates spent a total of \$7,100 on ads, his rival Labor and LNP candidates Madonna Jarrett and Trevor Evans outspent him by factor for more than 4, each spending \$33,000 on their respective ad campaigns.

Among the top 15 electorates ranked by ad spend, Macnamara and Richmond were the only two electorates with a Greens candidate as the highest spender on ads. In Macnamara, Greens' Steph Hodgins-May outspent the second highest spending candidate, Liberal's Colleen Harkin, by more than double, \$59,000. The winning candidate, Labor's Josh Burns, spent \$14,000 on his ad campaign.

In Richmond, while Greens candidate Mandy Nolan spent \$34,000 on her ad campaign, winning candidate and Labor MP Justine Elliot spent \$29,000 on ads.

Figure 4: Top 15 electoral divisions by candidate ad spendss



Source: Author's calculations based on results obtained from the Meta Ad Library API

AD IMPRESSIONS

Political ads run by pages of candidates and their parties from 21 March 2022 and 20 May 2022 produced over 645 million impressions Australia-wide. Each ad impression represents a single instance of the ad having been viewed. A single viewer can account for more than one ad impression for the same ad.

- Impressions were highest for the Labor party and their candidates', which together accounted for 42.5 per cent of all impressions across parties, or 273.3 million impressions in total.
- The Coalition and their candidates (Liberal Party of Australia, National Party, Liberal National Party of Queensland) received the second highest number of impressions (205.2 million impressions), with 31.9 per cent of the total share.
- Ad impressions for candidate and party pages of the Australian Greens totalled 31.4 million.

The highest number of impressions for an ad stood at 950,000, gained by four different ads, each run by the pages Australian Labor Party, LNP Liberal National

Party, Susie Bower – Liberal for Lyons and the United Australia Party (Ad 6, Ad 7, Ad 8 and Ad 9).

Ad 6: Most viewed ad overall and among all Labor ads (950,000 impressions)



Australian Labor Party
Sponsored · Paid for by Australian Labor Party
ID: 681625122947703

...

We need a government that leads and takes responsibility, we need a Labor government.



JOSHBURNS.COM.AU

Josh Burns | A better future

We must do better than Scott Morrison

Learn More

Ad 7: Most viewed ad overall and among all Coalition ads (950,000 impressions)



Susie Bower - Liberal for Lyons
Sponsored · Paid for by Liberal Party of Australia Tas Division
ID: 679294646552724

...

The Liberals have a plan for a Strong Economy and a Stronger Future. Learn more about my plan for Lyons.




TAS.LIBERAL.ORG.AU

Hi! I'm your Liberal candidate for Lyons

Learn more

Ad 8: Most viewed ads overall and among all Coalition ads (950,000 impressions)



LNP - Liberal National Party

Sponsored · Paid for by Liberal National Party of Queensland

ID: 1170516393771217

...

In uncertain times, Australia can't risk Labor.

30 YEAR
ECONOMIC
COMPARISON

NOTEASYALBANESE.COM

It won't be easy under Albanese.

Learn More

Ad 9: Most viewed ad overall and among all United Australia Party ads (950,000 impressions)



United Australia Party

Sponsored · Paid for by United Australia Party

ID: 1102537587270534

...

The United Australia party is taking up the fight to the Liberal, labor, Nationals and the Greens who are actively involved in the abuse of human rights in Australia. We will protect and defend our Freedom and ensure that our children and our childrens children can have Freedom Forever.

This election vote for the United Australia Party.



Ad 10: Most viewed ad, Greens (275,000 impressions)



The Greens SA

Sponsored · Paid for by The Greens SA

ID: 2193689514134254

...

Meet the Greens Senate team for SA. [Senator Sarah Hanson-Young](#) and Senate candidate [Barbara Pocock](#) - an advocate for women & climate change action.

Together, they're a strong voice for South Australia 🌱



[GREENS.ORG.AU](#)
Vote 1 Greens in the Senate

Learn more

Ad 11: Most viewed ad, independent (112,500 impressions)



Georgia Steele, Independent for Hughes

Sponsored · Paid for by Georgia Steele

ID: 531511688413304

...

We need 30,000 people to Vote 1 Georgia Steele if we want to give our community the Federal representative it deserves. Volunteer today.



[GEORGIASTEELE.COM.AU](#)
Join hundreds who care
Grab an orange t-shirt and join the movement!

Sign Up

[GEORGIASTEELE.COM.AU](#)
We can't do this without you

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Grab an orange t-shirt and join the ...

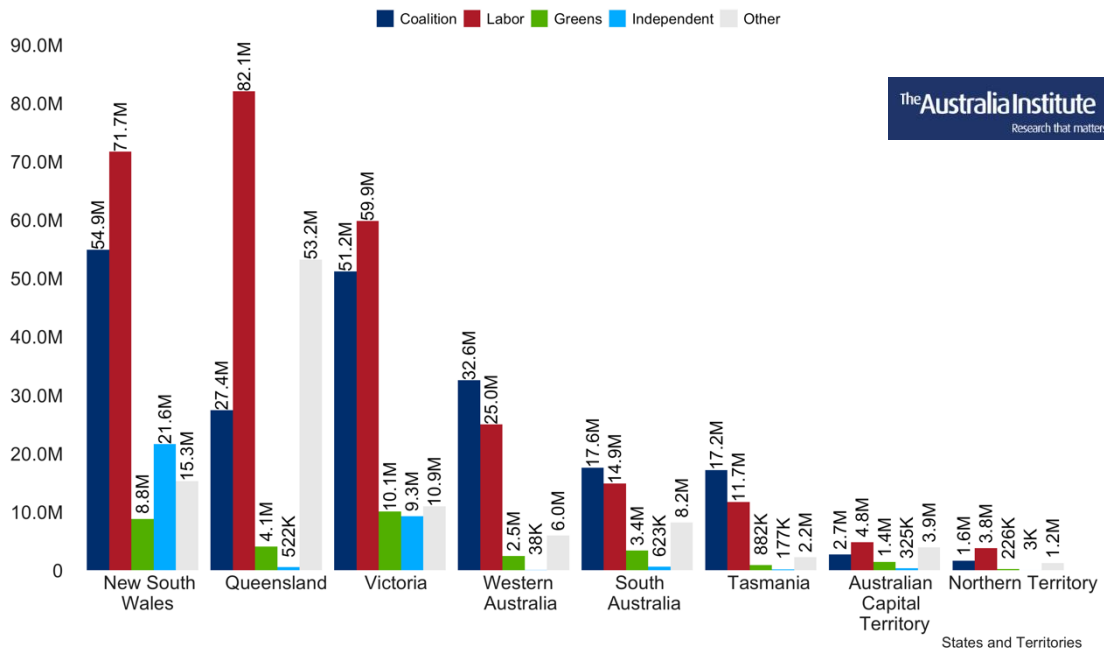
Impressions by state

Figure 5 breaks down impressions garnered by the candidate and party pages of particular parties by state.

- Across states and territories, regional distribution of ad impressions shows that at 171.1 million impressions, New South Wales accounted for 26.8 per cent of all impressions – the highest share across states.⁵
 - By contrast, 31.9 per cent of people in Australia live in New South Wales.
- The second and third highest share of impressions were by people in Queensland and Victoria – 167.4 million and 141.4 million impressions, or 26 per cent and 22 per cent of the total share of impressions, respectively.
 - However, Queensland and Victoria account for 20.4 per cent and 25.8 per cent of Australia’s population.
- The Northern Territory accounted for 6.8 million impressions – the least of all states/territories, which is proportionate to the distribution of Australia’s population
- The Labor party’s political ads received the most impressions in Queensland, with (82.1 million impressions.
- For Coalition pages, the most impressions came from New South Wales – 54.9 million.
- Despite impressions garnered by the Greens in Queensland being lower than those in New South Wales as well as Victoria by a factor half, the three additional lower house seats won by the Greens were in Queensland.

⁵ Regional distribution of impressions was not available for every ad. This figure only includes those for which it is available. State totals therefore will not add up to the total number of aforementioned impressions.

Figure 5: Ad impressions by states and territories



Source: Author's calculations based on results obtained from the Meta Ad Library API

- Assuming that relative state-wide ad impressions are indicative of the resources and efforts devoted to reaching out to audiences in each state via ads, the Labor party's efforts in Western Australia yielded better results for the party despite Coalition ad views in the state being higher.
 - Labor gained four Coalition-held seats in WA: Swan, Tangney, Pearce and Hasluck with a swing of more than 10 per cent in each case.
 - The Coalition failed to gain any new WA seats.
- On the other hand, while the impressions accruing to Labor pages in Queensland were three times higher than those for Coalition ads in the state and Labor's own ad impressions in WA, the advertising efforts failed to translate into significant victories.
 - Labor failed to gained any new seats in Queensland.

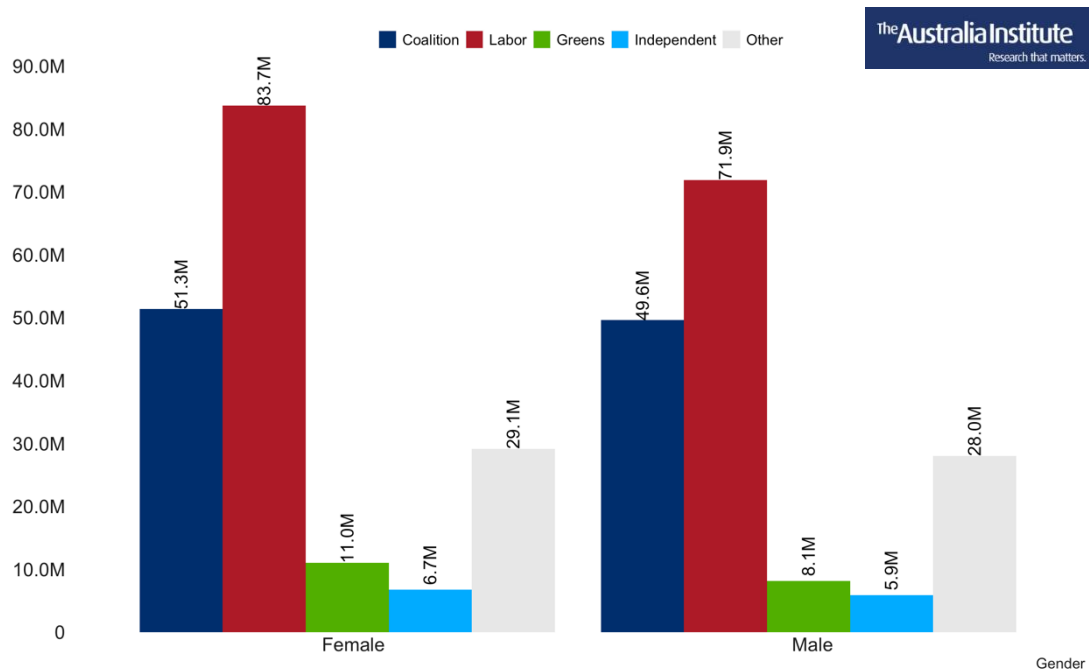
Ad Impressions By Gender

Demographic distribution of ads by gender showed that female audiences accounted for 181.8 million impressions in total and impressions among male audiences stood at 163.5 million.

Between females and males, the former accounted for 54.2 per cent of impressions compared with 45.8 per cent for the latter.

On average, the female share of ad impressions was higher for ads published by pages of all political affiliations - Coalition, Labor, Greens and independents.

Figure 6: Ad impressions by gender



Source: Author's calculations based on results obtained from the Meta Ad Library API

While the proportion of females viewing ads exceeded that of the males for ads of every political affiliation, this difference was the highest for the Greens, at 7.6 per cent. The share of female viewers exceeding their male counterparts was 3.8 per cent for Labor ads and under 1 per cent for Coalition ads.

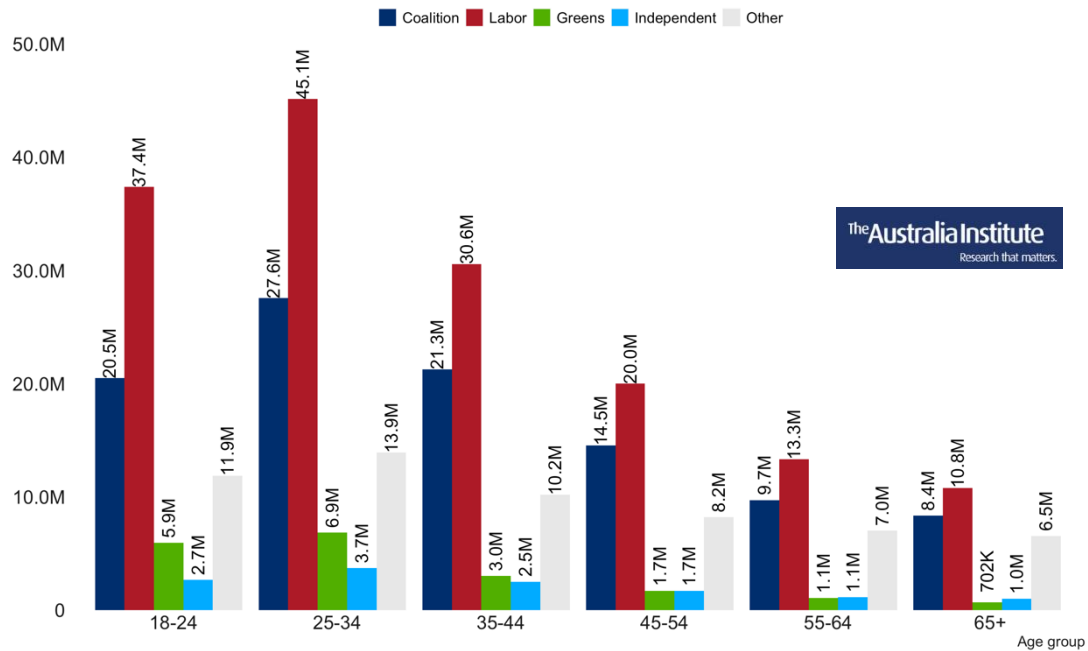
Ad impressions by age

The demographic distribution of impressions by age showed that audiences in the age group of 25 to 34 years accounted for the largest share of ad impressions at 28 per cent.

People between the age of 18 to 24 made up the second largest share of impressions of all age groups, viewing 22.65 per cent of political ads. Impressions gradually decline with age among people 25 and older.

Pages administered by the Labor party and their candidates accounted for the highest share of ad impressions across all age categories.

Figure 7: Ad impressions by age



Source: Author's calculations based on results obtained from the Meta Ad Library API

Method

The Australia Institute studied all ads published between 21 March 2022 and 20 May 2022 on Meta platforms Facebook and Instagram by pages of political candidates and their parties contesting the 2022 federal election.

Using the [Meta Ad Library API](#), a total of 26,945 ads from 608 pages were studied. The pages that the ads were drawn from were limited to the pages of the candidates contesting the 2022 federal election in both houses of parliament and the pages of the parties that gave them a ticket. For instance, the party pages of the Jacqui Lambie Network has been included as part of the analysis, but Jacqui Lambie's individual page has been left out since the Senator was not up for re-election. The names of all candidates and their parties were obtained from the Australian Election Commission website and matched with their respective facebook pages.

On submitting a query, the Meta Ad Library API returns, among other variables, the values on the upper and lower ends for impressions and ad spend for each ad. For the purpose of this analysis, the values for ad spend and impressions for each ad have been constructed as the mean of the lower and upper end values of these variables, rounded off to the nearest tenth.

The impressions by age, region and gender have been calculated by multiplying the mean impressions for each ad with the proportion of ad reach that each category of these variables e.g., those in the 18-24 age group, accounted for. Ads for which distribution by age, gender or region (state/territory) were unavailable were excluded from impressions distribution calculations for those impression categories (**Figure 5**, **Figure 6** and **Figure 7**).

In calculating the demographic distribution of ad impressions by age, audiences in the age group of 13-17 were found to comprise a miniscule proportion of all impressions and were therefore excluded.

In calculating the demographic distribution of ad impressions by gender, audiences in the category “unknown” were found to comprise a miniscule proportion of all impressions and were therefore excluded.

“Coalition” refers collectively to the following parties- Liberal Party of Australia, The Nationals and the Liberal National Party of Queensland. “Other” refers to all parties other than the Greens, Australian Labor Party, independent candidates and those included in the Coalition, unless otherwise specified

