WE ARE UNION

EVERY WORKER IN AUSTRALIA

A RACE CLASS NARRATIVE FOR AUSTRALIA

FOREWORD

ANAT SHENKER-OSORIO

With this research, Victorian Trades Hall Council has once again shown themselves to be at the forefront of standing with and for working people, of every color, origin, post code and industry. In conducting this research and providing this guidance, they are offering new inroads to build and sustain the solidarity required for a robust union movement and, most vitally, for working people to join in union to rewrite the rules to secure the resources, rights and respect every person merits.

Divide in order to conquer is the oldest trick in the right wing political playbook. And, sadly, an enormously effective one. In singling out some group of people deemed "other," the wealthy and powerful few - and the politicians doing their bidding - get working people to point their fingers in the wrong direction. This impedes the cross racial solidarity required for the many to stand up to the money.

What we have found in the U.S., most notably in the battleground states that we flipped to secure the White House in 2020, is that explicitly naming race and calling out how the right traffics in deliberate division is absolutely essential to blunting the appeal of the right wing narrative with conflicted voters and building motivation in our base. "Race neutral" messaging cannot exist because our voters do not hear only from us. They are subjected to the relentless race baiting and xenophobia of our opposition, thus making attempted colorblind appeals only to economic issues fail to penetrate the cloud of fear the right relies upon.

This guide offers a blueprint for building and sustaining the collective power needed for workplace and electoral wins. However, just like an architectural blueprint, lines on a page on their own do nothing. It is up to organizers, activists and elected leaders to take the guidance herein and apply it when and however you communicate. Only when enough folks have heard and begun to repeat themselves the desirable vision of what working people can accomplish in union will they truly believe it and act together to make it so.

-Anat Shenker-Osorio
Progressive Campaign Strategist and
Co-Creator of the Race Class Narrative

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RACIAL JUSTICE IS UNION BUSINESS

Why we need a race-class narrative

The success of the labour movement depends on the unity of the working class. But capital and conservative forces are successfully dividing workers along ethnic, religious and racial lines – distracting workers from achieving our objectives by stoking fear and hatred.

In our workplaces, employers exploit structural racism to pay migrant or offshore workers less than they would pay a local worker – creating a false sense of scarcity or "downwards pressure on wages" and further entrenching migrant worker disadvantage.

> *Restrictive working visa laws only succeed in pushing migrant worker exploitation "underground" and prevent migrants from speaking up against wage theft and abuse. Meanwhile, local workers cannot find secure jobs, and view the migrant worker – not their exploitative boss – as the cause of their woes.*

At the same time, right wing political forces capitalise on local workers' discontent by scapegoating ethnic and religious minorities. The effect is to divide working class political power.

Unions are gradually organising migrant communities, but are also answerable to their majority local (and disproportionately white) membership. Hence, unions' discussion of migrant employment may (unintentionally) reinforce negative framing that

suggests the migrant workers themselves are part of the problem; "support Aussie jobs"; "exploited foreign workers"; "import overseas workers".

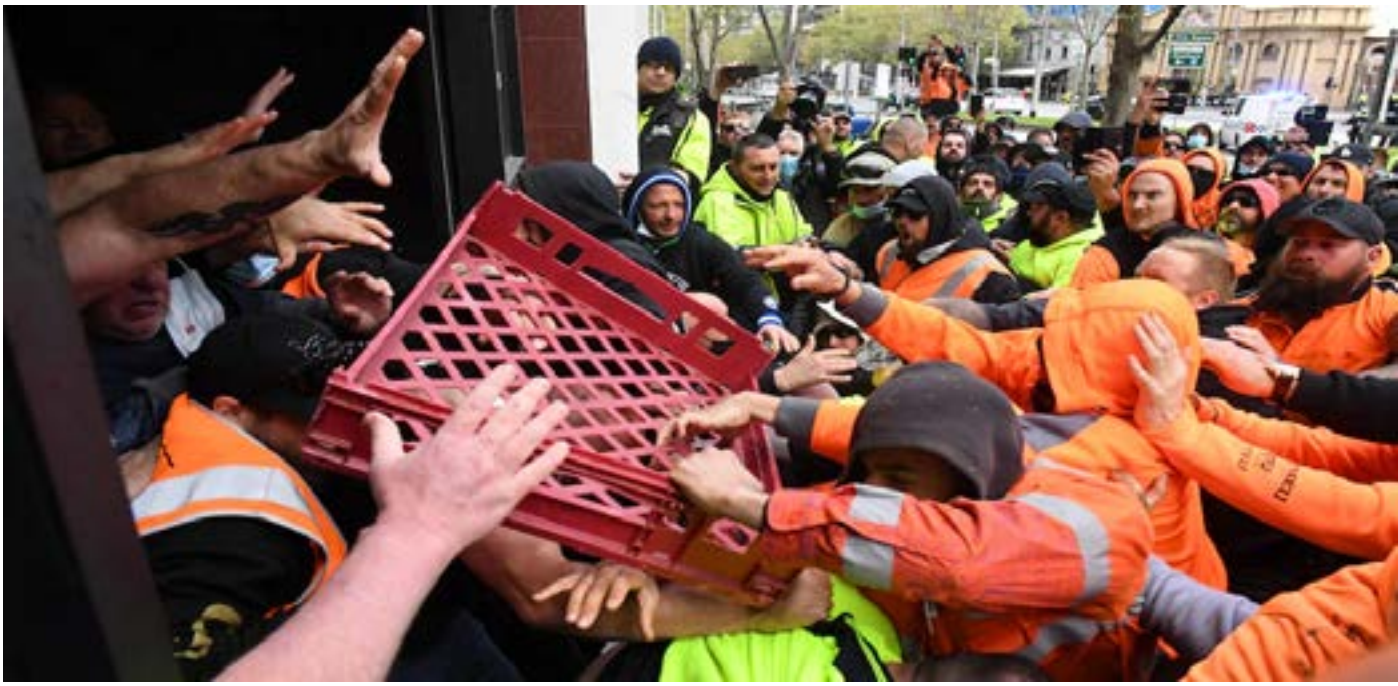
Unions need to rebuild a shared narrative of working-class solidarity – one that is more compelling than the fear-based and divisive narrative being pushed by right wing forces and capital.

In the United States, research by Anat Shenker-Osorio has demonstrated that progressive social movements can increase their appeal by directly evoking unity across racial difference.

> *That is, persuadable audiences (whether potential union members or undecided voters) feel more positive about class-based appeals when those appeals are linked to racial equality.*

For example, appeals to "put the interests of working people first, whether white, Black, or brown" outperform appeals to "put the interests of working people first".

Acknowledging the potential for cultural difference between audiences in the United States and Australia, Victorian Trades Hall Council set out to test ASO Communications' "race-class narrative" against traditional union appeals to identify the most persuasive and accurate language to communicate union messages.



AAP: James Ross

OVERVIEW

WHAT IS WHITE SUPREMACY?

"White supremacy is a racist ideology that is based upon the belief that white people are superior in many ways to people of other races and that therefore, white people should be dominant over other races... White supremacy is far from fringe. In white-centred societies and communities, it is the dominant paradigm that forms the foundation from which norms, rules and laws are created."[1]

THIS ISN'T ABOUT BAD APPLES

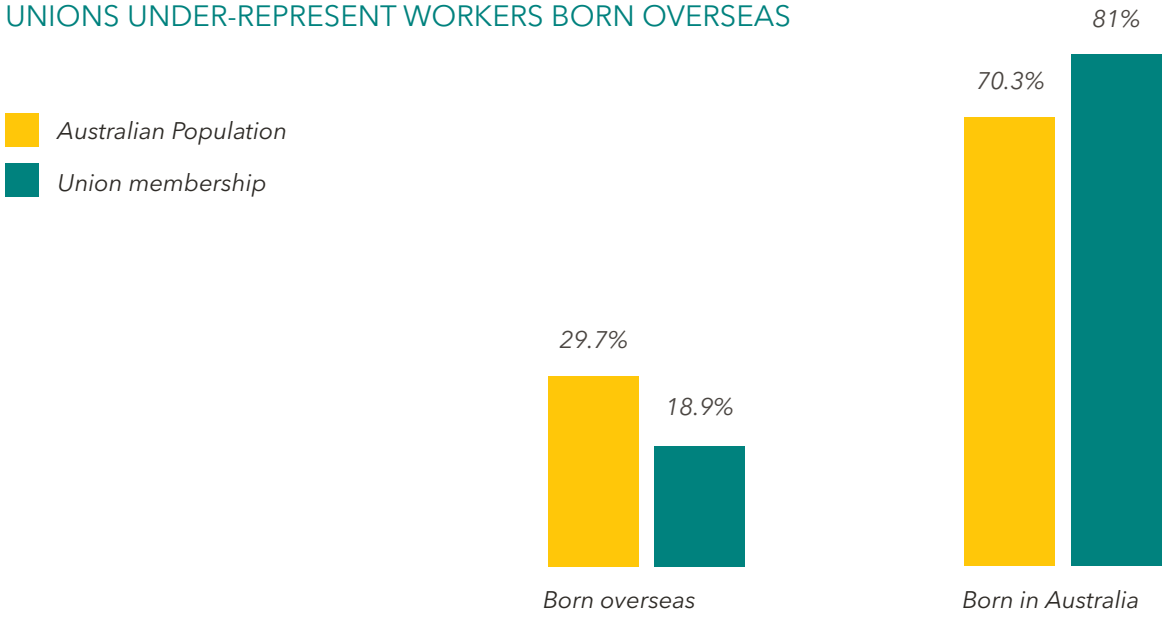
All white people benefit from white supremacy. All of us have been encultured with white-supremacist ideas that harm people of colour. Examining our own white supremacist beliefs and the language that exposes these beliefs is challenging but necessary work for all people who seek racial justice.

It is natural, when confronted with examples of our own white privilege or racism, to feel defensive. This is perhaps especially so for people who feel passionately about social justice. As union members, we are also defensive of our unions (or of union members). But being a good comrade to union members of colour involves confronting difficult truths about ourselves and our unions, and engaging with the work of anti-racism.

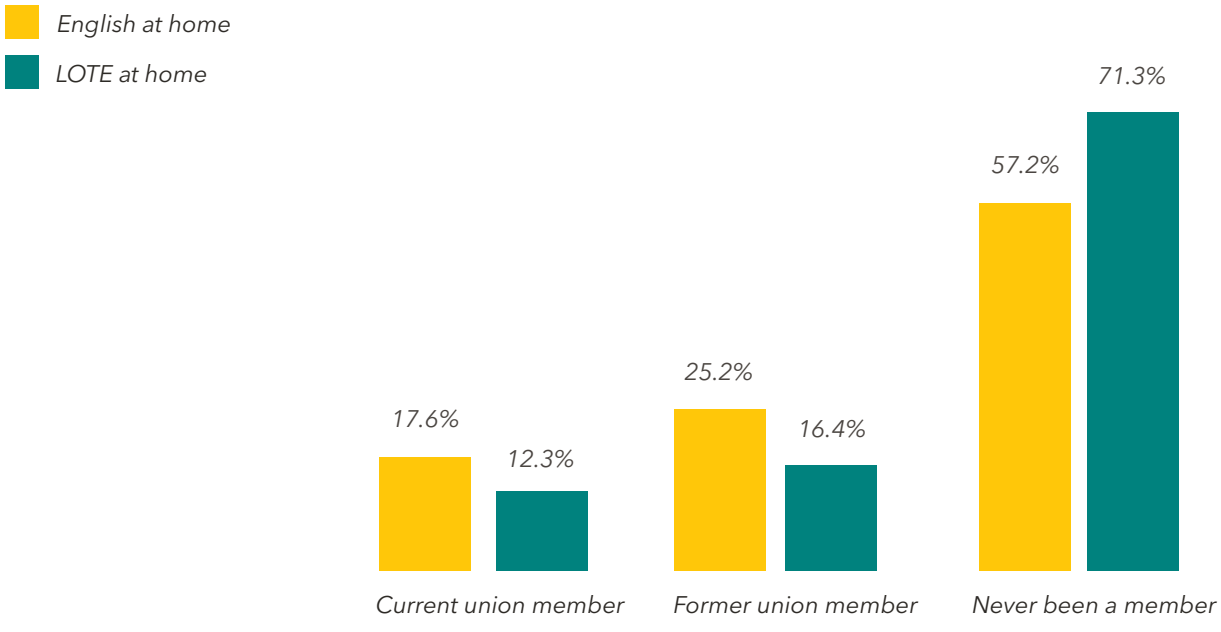
Seeing quotes from passionate unionists compared directly to quotes from Pauline Hanson is uncomfortable and feels unfair. But the discomfort you feel is not comparable to the discomfort of union members of colour who hear their unions engaging in anti-migrant or racist discourse. Resist the temptation to centre your own discomfort, or to compare (favourably or unfavourably) yourself or your union to another union. This is work for our entire movement, and we rise together.

THE UNION MOVEMENT IS LESS DIVERSE THAN THE AUSTRALIAN POPULATION

UNIONS UNDER-REPRESENT WORKERS BORN OVERSEAS



PEOPLE WHO SPEAK A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH AT HOME ARE LESS LIKELY TO BE A UNION MEMBER THAN THOSE WHO SPEAK MAINLY ENGLISH AT HOME



General population sample from Australian Census 2016.
Union membership sample from ACTU "Work Shouldn't Hurt" survey 2021.

ANALYSIS

LANGUAGE ANALYSIS

Victorian Trades Hall Council identified and coded over 100 typical examples of union communication about race and migration, as well as examples from news sources, allies, and our opposition's narrative.

The sample included data points from a broad cross section of the union movement including construction, manufacturing, maritime, education, health and services unions. Data were qualitatively analysed; the analysis sought to identify a wide variety of union messages without consideration of whether they were the most frequent messages. The analysis identified the following frames.

THEMES IDENTIFIED

- Professional responsibility
- Worker-first language
- Anti-racism as union business
- This is what a unionist looks like
- Every worker in Australia
- Victim blaming
- Scarcity
- Passive exploitation
- Helpless foreigner
- Objectification
- Slum-poverty
- Natural disaster
- Jobs as national possession
- Unskilled and unsafe

Anti-racism as professional responsibility
"MEAA is concerned that hate speech poses a threat to democracy, a free media and social equality."

Anti-racism is union business
"Our movement's history is one of working people of all racial backgrounds coming together to fight for a better life"

This is what a unionist looks like
"Do you feel as if you are being treated unfairly at work but are scared that your visa may be affected if you speak up?"

Scarcity
"while locals are being sacked, six Papua New Guinean workers brought in on 457 visas have kept their diesel fitting jobs"

Helpless Foreigner
"private pathology providers who are looking for another easily exploited group to use"

Natural Disaster
"the Government's plans to continue to flood the country with foreign workers"

Unskilled/Unsafe
"work on these jobsites is increasingly being done by foreign, often unlicensed workers."

Worker-first
"The crew, made up of Chinese and Burmese nationals..."

Every worker in Australia
"Every worker counts. If you work in Australia, you deserve a safe and dignified workplace, no exceptions."

Victim Blaming
"our government allows this international workforce to undermine Australian training and drive wages down."

Jobs as national possession
"Our Coast Our Fuel Our Security"

Business Imperative
"Businesses forced to choose between migrant workers and locals"

Objectification
"skilled workers leave their communities in search of work while foreign labour is brought in to fill jobs cheaply."

Slum-Poverty
"foreign workers who are treated and paid poorly and too often live and work in poor conditions"

MESSAGE TESTING

ACTU INSIGHTS

Having identified existing union frames for discussing race and migration, Victorian Trades Hall Council enlisted the support of ACTU Insights to test the efficacy of various messages.

The testing examined the impact on message appeal of evoking race in a class narrative, and of comparing message frames that are either victim-blaming or employer-blaming (particularly in relation to migration). The research design drew on extant research on race-class narrative such as the Minnesota Dial Survey,[2] and on moral foundations theory as a predictor of attitudes[3] and to shift attitudes.[3]

The ACTU's existing work examining moral foundations allowed the team to analyse results with reference to previously identified audience segments - that is, the union movement's target audiences and our opponents.

Researchers administered an online survey to a panel sample of the general population in Nov-Dec 2021.

1,023 Australian residents over the age of 18 years submitted a complete response. Quotas were set to ensure coverage across age groups, genders and states.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The message testing research provides a stunning endorsement of union messages based on a race-class narrative, mirroring the effects seen in the United States.

Messages that express cross-racial solidarity and clearly identify the boss as the villain are judged as more accurate - and are also preferred - across nearly all demographics.

Based on this research, victim-blaming messages are not going to resonate in a credible way with the most likely targets of union campaigns and media communications. This is clearly borne out through the profiles and preferences of the union segments and cohorts of interest.

Encouragingly, union rejectors and those who support fringe right-wing party actively disslike the messages based on race-class. To be clear, this result does not suggest that unions should abandon race-class messages where they perceive that their audience may harbour white-supremicist views. Instead, we should be encouraged that race-class messages are effectively alienating our political opponents from the general Australian public. In doing so, race-class messages may prove effective in innoculating union members against the fear-based appeals of the far-right.

As hypothesised, clear links can be drawn between moral foundations or racial tolerance, and political position or vote intentions, as well as to a host of other attitudinal and demographic characteristics. This means that a few well-selected traits can be used as a surrogate for a more detailed persona, facilitating a greater degree of targeting for communications and campaigns.

CRAFTING A RACE-CLASS NARRATIVE FOR YOUR ISSUE

A narrative isn't a message you can fit on a coreflute. Instead, it's the values and philosophy that sits behind your messaging. Being clear about your narrative helps you communicate effectively on the fly, so that you're never at a loss for words.

1. VALUES

- Speak to the shared values of your campaign
- Name (and show) race and class - not "everyone" but "everyone - no matter where you were born". Think of creative and relevant ways to describe the diversity in the community you're describing.
- Unpack jargon, policy and ambiguity - a 6 year old should be able to explain your values to another 6 year old.

2. VILLAIN

- Name your villain, but imply they are in the minority. Eg., “a few greedy corporations” or “certain politicians” - not whole systems like “government” or “capital”
- Use active voice - describe their actions and hold them accountable for their choices. Eg., “bosses are driving down wages” rather than “wages are slipping”.
- Name racial scapegoating and/or class war as a deliberate weapon they use to cause harm. Eg., “Conservative politicians rip funding from our TAFEs, and then blame teachers and communities when young folks can’t find work”.
- Refer to specific actions or outcomes, rather than “racism” or “discriminatory policies”. Where disparity exists, name the cause of the disparity eg. “Community health programs stripped of funding” rather than “life expectancy gap”.

3. VISION

- Name and/or show the desired outcome of our campaign (what the future will look like when we win - not just the policy but what it means for all of us)
- Re-emphasise that your “everyone” includes migrants/people of colour/first nations people

EXAMPLE NARRATIVES

MIGRANT WORKERS IN AUSTRALIA

Whether you've been working the Mallee for generations, or you're new to this beautiful country, all of us want to a fair return for our work.

But a few dodgy bosses think they can divide our community. They think they can get away with treating migrant workers as disposable; stealing wages and disrespecting workers. They refuse to pay minimum wages, and then they call Australians "lazy" for not taking jobs that won't pay the bills. They want us to blame eachother instead of questioning their business model.

But we see through them. By uniting together migrant and local workers can win good jobs for everyone. We can demand fair wages - no matter where you're from - and pathways to residency so that workers can set down roots and help our region prosper.

OFFSHORING

No matter where you live or what you look like, everyone at Company X should be paid a decent wage that reflects the value of the important work we do.

But Company X has recently decided to make workers in Australia redundant, and worse, they expect us to train our replacements in call-centres overseas. It's not only disrespectful to us; they're hoping we'll take out our anger on our overseas brothers and sisters. They want to pit us against eachother - so that we ignore who's pulling the strings.

Together, we can call out Company X's divisive tactics, and their efforts to exploit global poverty. We can demand that wherever Company X is answering calls - be it in Melbourne or Mumbai - the callers are paid wages and employed under conditions that meet the standards we expect of an Australian company.

AGED CARE

Nana, Gran, Yiayia, NaiNai, or Bubbe - no matter what we call them, we all want our older folks to live comfortably and safely in aged care.

But a few greedy private aged care companies are putting profit ahead of care; cutting back on staff and leaving residents without the care they need. The Minister for aged care could fix this problem, but he'd prefer to distract us with division and fear, blaming welfare recipients and new migrants for the problems his Government has failed to fix.

As voters, we have the power to pick politicians who will prioritise our health and the health of our loved ones. By joining together, we can make sure all of our families can get the care we need at a price we can afford.

PUBLIC SERVICES

From Kathrine to Canberra, whether we're Aussie-born or newly arrived, we all want to keep building a better Australia. We want to better resource our schools, support healthier communities, protect our natural environment and connect our regions to the services they need. We know there is plenty of work to be done.

But some politicians are putting political ideology ahead of people - starving our social institutions of the funding they need. They slash funding to x, y, and z, cutting public sector jobs. Then they turn around and blame new migrants and unemployed people when our services are stretched to breaking point.

Instead of turning on each other, we can unite to demand more of the politicians we elect. We can restore funding to our community services and solve social problems like homelessness - just like we did during the pandemic. There is so much work to be done - and Australians of all races and places are up to the challenge.

THEMES TO INSPIRE

LANGUAGE TO KEEP USING

EVERY WORKER IN AUSTRALIA

"Every worker counts. If you work in Australia, you deserve a safe and dignified workplace, no exceptions."

"All people working in Australia, including foreign workers, are entitled to basic rights and protections in the workplace."

"Yeah, attacking the foreigners is the wrong end... Attacking the exploitative employers who abuse say... 457 visas - or attacking the government that has FAILED (both labor and liberal) to implement and maintain quality job skills training, or, pushing for living wages for ALL employees regardless of their birth place, citizenship standing, religion or skin colour are all reasonable things to attack."

In contrast to language defending "Australian jobs" (or "jobs for all Australians"), Australian unions are increasingly broadening their remit to the defence of wages and conditions for all workers in Australia.

This slight change of phrasing might seem trivial, but organisers in the migrant workers centre spoke movingly of their constant frustration with [white] union organisers who have come to view themselves as responsible only for Australian-born or naturalised workers on a worksite.

The way we talk about our own work matters. Union leaders who implicitly and explicitly take responsibility for every worker in Australia will encourage organisers and members to adopt a more inclusive mental frame of unionism, and ultimately grow cross-racial union solidarity.

"Wharfies support equal rights for Aborigines" *Maritime Union of Australia,* 1966.

ANTI-RACISM AS UNION BUSINESS

"(Company) wants to duck Australian laws so it can deny jobs to thousands of citizens on the basis of their nationality or race."

"Our movement's history is one of working people of all racial backgrounds coming together to fight for a better life"

"The AWU is assisting Korey and has a legal representative supporting him throughout this ordeal. Violence is not okay. Racism is not okay."

"MEAA Media members should have the right to withhold their labour on the grounds of their obligations under the Code if their employers are providing a platform for racism or hate speech."

"Support your work colleagues who may be subject to hate speech and ensure a safe workplace."

While quantitative analysis identified that relatively few union messages explicitly reference race, a number of racial-justice commentators are explicitly linking race and class, particularly in reference to experiences of the pandemic.

Critically, our opposition knowingly link race and class in an attempt to divide us; for example, by reference to "the white working class".

THIS IS WHAT A UNIONIST LOOKS LIKE

"Shout outs to Barinder Singh, one of our Members doing high access ropes work."

A message from Thomas Mayor, National Indigenous Officer regarding Black Lives Matter. "Thank you comrades, get behind the movement, touch one touch all"

"Jaswinder is a station manager and RTBU Australia member. He says his favourite part of his job is making passengers smile."

Unions actively seek to depict their membership as diverse; commonly through portraits or profiles of non-white union members doing ordinary work. This is important work that helps union members of colour to feel seen.[4]

However, a quantitative analysis of union facebook and twitter posts by Sami Shah found that only 4% explicitly talked about race. Sami noted:

"it shows an aversion to address issues of race directly. Interesting to note that while Black Lives Matter protests were happening across Australia and dominating the news cycle, there was almost no mention of them on Australian Unions page. Where race is mentioned, it tends to be indirectly – for e.g. through the use of multicultural imagery rather than saying anything explicitly about race. Some would argue that this is a good thing: that the union movement is about getting us all to focus on our shared identity as workers. But others may point out that this obscures the experiences of people who are dealing with oppression that is based on class and race."[5]

While unions should continue to visually represent diversity in their memberships, there also needs to be more willingness to name race as an issue that affects union members and the class struggle more generally.

ANTI-RACISM AS A PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

"MEAA is concerned that hate speech poses a threat to democracy, a free media and social equality."

"This (study) is a wake-up call that all schools must play a role. It's a cautionary message to politicians to be careful about how they deal with issues linking Muslims with terrorism."

"We will, of course, continue to provide the very best care we can, and we will not give up on the fight for humanity and dignity for all, especially those less fortunate than us who desperately need Australia's care and compassion not Australia's condemnation."

Some unions successfully frame anti-racism or advocacy for migrant communities as a professional responsibility. Unions appeal to their members' professionalism to include them in anti-racist work.

Notably, MEAA has produced professional resources and standards for media members to address the negative social impact of racially-charged news reporting.

This approach links the union's anti-racist position to the work union members do for the community.

WORKER-FIRST LANGUAGE

"Without a visa amnesty, too many farmworkers will remain unemployed and the high quality, local fresh fruit and vegetables Australians need will be left to rot in the fields."

"Her idea of fun? Reading anatomy and physiology textbooks because she loves knowing more about the human body. Oh, and she's also a refugee."

"The crew, made up of Chinese and Burmese nationals, have been on board the ship for 14 months and claim they are being intimidated into signing contract extensions."

Worker-first or person-first language encourages a union audience to feel affinity with the migrant worker.

THEMES TO RETIRE

LANGUAGE TO AVOID

VICTIM BLAMING

"Audits by the Fair Work Ombudsman have found up to 40 per cent of foreign workers employed under 457 visas were underpaid, not performing the jobs they were supposed to do or no longer employed by the person who sponsored their entry into Australia."

"Until the 1980s we didn't have to rely on overseas workers, and the only reason we do so now is because our government allows this international workforce to undermine Australian training and drive wages down."

"the extension of their visas in May also coincided with Austal laying off 30 WA workers, sparking concerns the company may have been seeking to slash its wages bills."

A few examples showed union language that actively blames migrant workers for "undermining" or "driving down" wages and conditions. The migrant worker, in this construction, is deliberately choosing their own low wages – scabbing on the local workforce.

Either actively, or passively by omission of language that names either employers or government policy as the villain, this language blames migrant workers for injury to local workers' jobs and conditions.

Most unions consciously avoid these constructions and attempt to name government policy or employer greed as the issue, often expressing a degree of solidarity with "exploited foreign workers". However, this language frequently evokes the concept of scarcity.

BUSINESS IMPERATIVE

"Businesses forced to choose between migrant workers and locals"

"concerns the company may have been seeking to slash its wages bills."

Choosing to exploit workers in favour of maximising profits is an active choice for which employers should be condemned. News reporting of union disputes frequently characterises that choice as a business imperative – absolving the employer of responsibility.

SCARCITY

"while locals are being sacked, six Papua New Guinean workers brought in on 457 visas have kept their diesel fitting jobs maintaining the site's trucks."

"If the company keeps on its migrant workers, rather than Australian workers who benefit from the government's $1500 a fortnight JobKeeper payment, the company will save more than $1.1 million in wages over the next six months."

"The union favours permanent migration but ... we do not support the continuation of skilled migration in circumstances where locally trained nurses and midwives are unable to find employment"

"Federal Government continues to support this race to the bottom by issuing temporary licenses to use foreign vessels with exploited crews on coastal shipping routes

"Pathology companies... want to be able to exploit overseas scientists on lower visa rates because experienced scientists will no longer apply for their jobs and have to accept a 30% pay reduction."

"we need a migration program that puts Australian workers first."

"239,000 immigrants per year which was published by the ABS is to[sic] many especially when we have high unemployment & underemployment, housing affordability & lack of water & other infrastructure!"

"Is it too easy to get someone from overseas than to use someone home grown. Is it easier to import skilled people than to train them."

The concept of scarcity – of resources, jobs, wages – is a favourite of capitalists who seek to divide workers and drive down our wages and conditions. Union officials are accustomed to reading claims of scarcity sceptically. As unionists we know there is enough wealth and enough work for everyone; "Poverty exists not because we cannot feed the poor but because we cannot satisfy the rich".

But when we discuss migration, our language frequently concedes to employers' claims of scarcity, accepting the premise that there aren't enough jobs or wages to go around. Migrant workers are thereby positioned as a threat to Australian jobs and wages - even if unintentionally.

Employers and governments have created the conditions in which Australian workers (and their unions) fear jobs are under threat from migrant workers. Policies that allow employers to pay migrant workers less than local workers, or that make it easier to exploit migrant workers in black-market conditions, mean that some industries – notably agriculture – are essentially closed-off to Australian workers.

The scarcity frame is best countered with solidarity between local and migrant workers in demanding fair wages and safe workplaces for every worker in Australia.

Expressions of concern for the "exploited foreign worker" often accompany local-foreign oppositional constructions. While these expressions admirably attempt solidarity, they are read as window dressing.[6]

Instead, the union movement must hold corporate interests to account for their decision to exploit poor labour conditions overseas.

"Every worker in Australia should have a good job with a living wage - no matter where we were born. Greedy corporations operating in our country cannot be allowed to exploit the poverty of our regional neighbours and flout the labour laws and conditions we have built together. Together, workers from every background are making sure that corporations in Australia pay fair wages and treat workers with respect."

HELPLESS FOREIGNER

"the Australian Government has fallen for empty rhetoric from private pathology providers who are looking for another easily exploited group to use."

"a few courageous 457 workers who have come forward have come to us for help because of shocking exploitation that they have suffered"

"They're often too scared to speak up because their visa depends on them completing the work for the very employer that is abusing them"

"Helpless Foreigner" deprives migrant workers of their agency, and others them from union members who actively assert their workplace rights.

Regardless of whether a worker is local or a migrant, unions must locate the power of union within workers themselves, rather than rhetorically positioning "the union" as an external saviour.

In reality, migrant workers and union members of colour are fierce advocates for their own rights and safety. Migrant workers in union overcome structural barriers – including institutional racism, lack of rights information in language, and intentional visa status exploitation – to demand fair workplaces. Describing that heroic struggle in union language will both inspire cross-racial class solidarity, and allow migrant communities to see themselves reflected in union stories.

OBJECTIFICATION

"This leads to displacement as skilled workers leave their communities in search of work while foreign labour is brought in to fill jobs cheaply."

"employers who are bringing in cheap labour from other countries, while local workers are struggling to find work.

"Local workers lose too when bosses exploit foreign labour in broken work visa system

"the workers, who were brought over from the Philippines in May, were subject to conditions which amounted to "modern day slavery".

"theatrical producers can cast culturally diverse Australian performers without having to import from overseas."

"One Indian international student said she felt the federal government "doesn't think of temporary visa holders as human beings but merely a money-making machine".

Union officials will usually intuitively frame their language to humanise working people, often in opposition to companies that treat workers as a commodity or resource. We know that union members are more than "labour", they are "working people".

Likewise, progressive movements in the disability, racial justice, and LGBTIQ+ space have sought to normalise "people-first" language; we don't call someone "a disabled", "a black", or "a gay".

Referring to "foreign labour" or "457 visas" reduces the worker to an object that can be "imported". Such language undermines the agency of the workers themselves, and excuses the dehumanising behaviour of employers.

SLUM POVERTY

"International students providing reverse foreign aid to Australia."

"foreign workers who are treated and paid poorly and too often live and work in poor conditions"

"their two dollar punnet of blueberries could actually be the result of modern slave labour."

"Its been the dirty secret of the sector that universities are treating international students as cash cows and using the fees to cross-subsidise their other activities."

Some of our language evokes a connection between migrants and dirty, slum-like conditions in developing countries. Frequently, this language is found in arguments decrying poor conditions and speaking up for safety. However the association is unhelpful – we recognise, for example, that describing [white] union members' homes as dirty and overcrowded would be inappropriate!

Calling out poor conditions is of course essential to our work. However, unions should clearly assign blame for the conditions – and not implicitly blame the workers.

Consider the difference between:
"foreign workers who are treated and paid poorly and too often live and work in poor conditions"

and "Greedy employers treat the workers poorly, steal their wages, and force them to live on-site in uninsulated shipping containers."

In the first phrasing, the situation of workers is passive. In the second, we identify a villain and a cause of poor conditions, and thereby identify a clear solution to the problem.

NATURAL DISASTER/PLAGUE

"the backpacker program was rife with exploitation"

"the Government's plans to continue to flood the country with foreign workers"

"Having flooded into Australia to experience a different culture and gain a quality education"

"As word spread, TAFE Queensland's campuses have been bombarded with acts of kindness and inundated with donations in support of international students from their communities."

Equating the movements of human beings with a natural disaster or plague is dehumanising, stokes fear, and plays into the scarcity frame. The "flood" visual metaphor is often evoked by the far right to imply an infinite source of would-be migrants flowing in, inundating our infrastructure.

Equating positive acts of charity with a bombing or flood probably speaks to a very tired union official!

UNSKILLED/UNSAFE

"Disturbingly, many of our members are reporting that the increase in students who need assistance, especially international students, means that university staff simply cannot provide that help."

"[Union official] said despite the high numbers of Australian workers looking for work in these regions...work on these jobsites is increasingly being done by foreign, often unlicensed workers."

"This leads to displacement as skilled workers leave their communities in search of work while foreign labour is brought in to fill jobs cheaply."

"The campaign is also concerned about the offshoring of Australian's sensitive personal data which follows the jobs going offshore."

"The union has repeatedly warned the Australian Government that the reliance on poorly-regulated foreign flag-of-convenience vessels to carry dangerous goods around the coast poses a significant safety risk."

"While Australian seafarers are required to undergo thorough security checks before being issued Maritime Security Identification Cards, foreign workers on flag-of-convenience vessels are exempt from these checks, instead being issued a Maritime Crew Visa without any background checks."

Unions have genuine and valid safety concerns surrounding migrant workers. The safety regulations that union members have fought for over generations must not be circumvented or ignored - no matter who is employed in the work.

Migrant workers are not inherently a safety risk. While qualification or certification requirements may differ between states, it is unfair to generalise that all migrants are unqualified or produce substandard work.

As with wages, it is important to locate the responsibility for compliance with employers, and insist that Australian safety standards be met (irrespective of the visa status of employees). Every worker on site must receive the training necessary to work safely - no exceptions.

JOBS AS (STRATEGIC) NATIONAL POSSESSION

"Our trains our jobs"

"Our Coast Our Fuel Our Security"

"It is time for the government to end its reliance on the population ponzi scheme and ensure our nation rebuilds its own industries, its own self-reliance, and takes back control of our own destiny."

"It is very difficult to control an economy when you have massive numbers of people transiting. National regulation has a place, as does international regulation."

"The Maritime Union of Australia is outraged that in the middle of a pandemic, when many Australian seafarers are out of work, the Australian Government has granted exemptions allowing foreign crews from COVID hotspots to take these jobs."

The appealing logic of matching "our [resources]" with "our jobs" is that as a nation, we should be able to decide what we do with our resources and the employment they create. But when a job is an object, it can be given and taken away at will. It is, ultimately, bestowed by the company on whomever they wish. The job-as-possession frame ends up sounding like a juvenile protest; "Mine!".

A similar appeal to collective ownership can be better spelled out as a moral obligation, social contract, or debt to the nation: If you make money from Australians or our resources, you should pay Australian wages.

"CSL makes its millions from Australians importing and exporting goods. The least they can do is provide jobs we can count on."

Notes

1 Saad, Layla F. Me and White Supremacy: How to recognise your privilege, combat racism and change the world. Quercus, London 2020.
2 Haney López et al (2018). Race-Class Narrative Minnesota Dial Survey Report. Source: https://www.demos.org/research/race-class-narrative-minnesota-dial-survey-report
3 Day et al (2014) Source:https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mday/files/day_fiske_downing_trail_inpress_shifting_attitudes_using_moral_foundations_0.pdf
4 Elicitation interviews with Migrant Workers Centre staff 2020.
5 Shah, Sami. Race/Class Messaging:Landscape Analysis. Melbourne 2020.
6 Ibid.

MESSAGE TESTING

RESULTS

Table 1 – Demographic profile

Category	Cohort		Category	Cohort	
Gender	Female	49%	**State**	NSW	27%
	Male	51%		VIC	24%
				QLD	20%
Age	18-29	24%		WA	12%
	30-44	26%		SA	8%
	45-59	25%		TAS	4%
	60 plus	25%		ACT	3%
				NT	2%

Table 2 – CALD profile

Category	Cohort		Category	Cohort	
Migration	Born in Australia	75%	**Citizenship**	Australian Citizen	90%
	Emigrated to Australia within the last 5 years	3%		Permanent Resident	7%
	Emigrated to Australia 5-10 years ago	4%		Applied for Permanent Residency	1%
	Emigrated to Australia 10+ years ago	18%		Temporary Resident	1%
				Prefer not to say	1%
LOTE	Speak only English at home	75%			
	Speak a language other than English at home	15%			
	Speak mainly English at home	10%			

Table 3 – Union membership

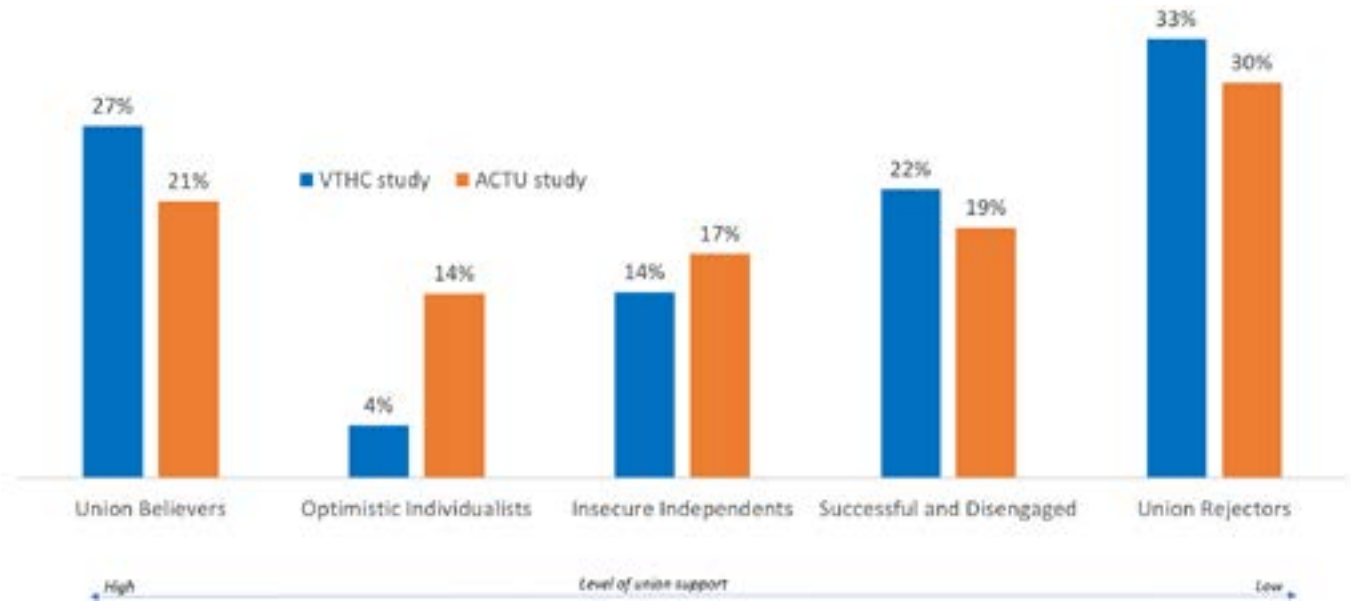
Category	Cohort	
Union membership	Never a member	57%
	Former member	33%
	Current member	11%

Table 4 – Employment and education profile

Category	Cohort		Category	Cohort	
Industry	Administration and professional services	14%	**Industry**	Transport	4%
	Health	11%		Warehousing & logistics	3%
	Retail	10%		Property & other services	3%
	Education	9%		Community & disability services	3%
	Public services	8%		Media & communications	2%
	Hospitality, tourism & food	7%		Mining	2%
	Finance, banking & insurance	7%		Agriculture, forestry & fishing	2%
	Construction	6%		Entertainment, arts & recreation	2%
Current work status	Full time paid work (permanent)	40%	**Education (highest)**	Years 10-12 or equivalent	26%
	Retired	22%		Bachelor degree	23%
	Not currently working/not being paid	15%		Certificate III/IV	17%
	Part time paid work (permanent)	12%		Diploma / Advanced Diploma	13%
	Casual paid work	7%		Masters / Doctoral Degree	9%
	Full time paid work (fixed term contract)	2%		Graduate Certificate / Graduate Diploma	5%
	Independent contractor	2%		Certificate I/II	4%
	Part time paid work (fixed term contract)	1%		Year 9 or below	3%
	Gig worker, e.g. Uber driver	1%		Never attended school	0.3%

As part of a broader segmentation strategy, the ACTU uses a battery of attitudinal questions to segment respondents according to their propensity to support and join the union movement. Comparing the distribution of segments between this study and the broader ACTU population estimates, the profiles are similar, though there are fewer than expected Optimistic Individualists. While there is a slight over-representation of both Union Believers and Union Rejectors (at each end of the spectrum), this is not a significant difference.

Figure 1 – Distribution of segments



POLITICAL VIEWS

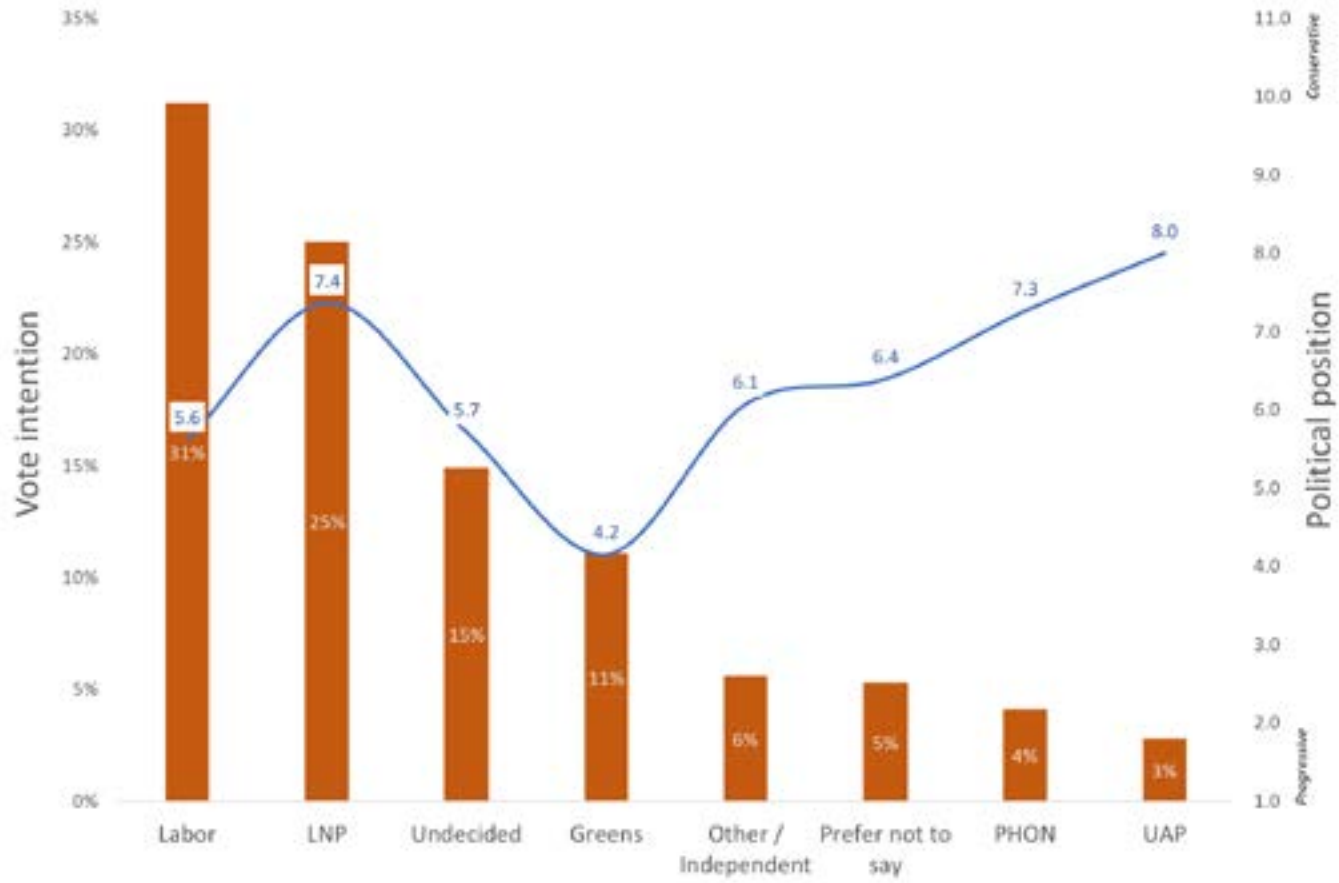
Respondents were probed about their political views in several different ways:

- Describing their own political position on a spectrum from progressive to conservative
- Anticipating their voting intention for the next federal election
- Agreeing or disagreeing with a battery of statements about migration and cultural differences.

The battery of statements was used to calculate a racial tolerance index for each respondent, discussed in the next section.

Figure 2 shows both respondents' vote intentions, and their self-reported political position (on a scale where 1 = progressive and 11 = conservative).

Figure 2 – Vote intention and political position



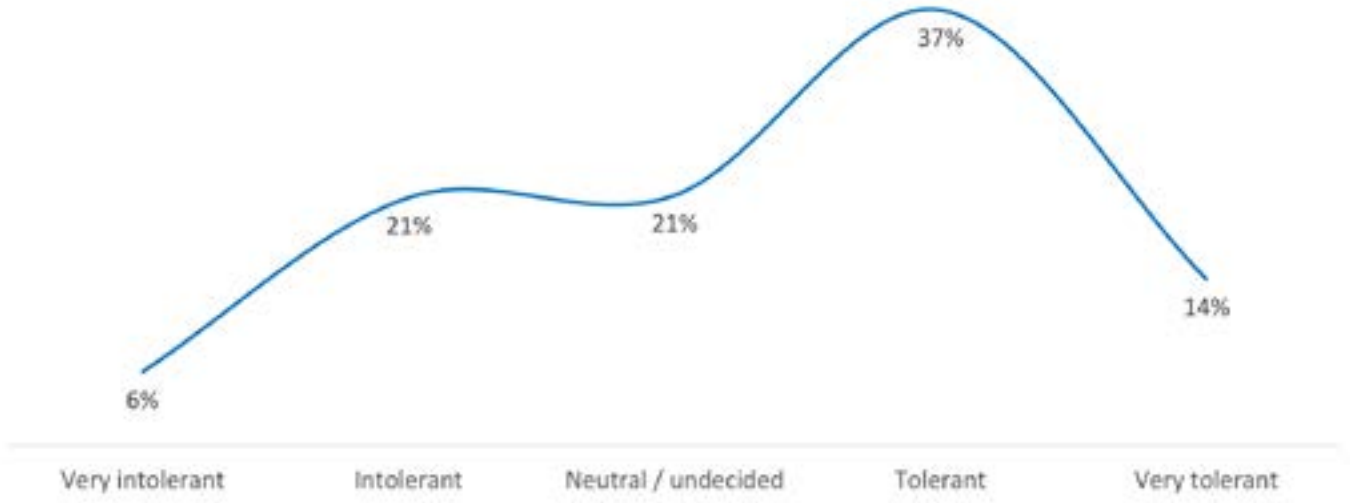
RACIAL TOLERANCE INDEX

Respondents were asked to consider the extent to which they agreed with a battery of statements about migration and race. The battery consisted of two positive (tolerant) and two negative (intolerant) statements:

- Australia's migrant intake was much too high (prior to the COVID-19 crisis)
- People from racial, ethnic, cultural and religious minority groups should behave more like mainstream Australians
- It is a good thing for Australian society to be made up of different cultures
- All migrants should be accepted regardless of where they came from

Based on these responses, an index score was calculated for each respondent. More than a third (37%) were deemed to be racially tolerant, with an additional 14% as very tolerant. Almost one in three (27%) were intolerant or very intolerant.

Figure 5 – Distribution of racial tolerance index

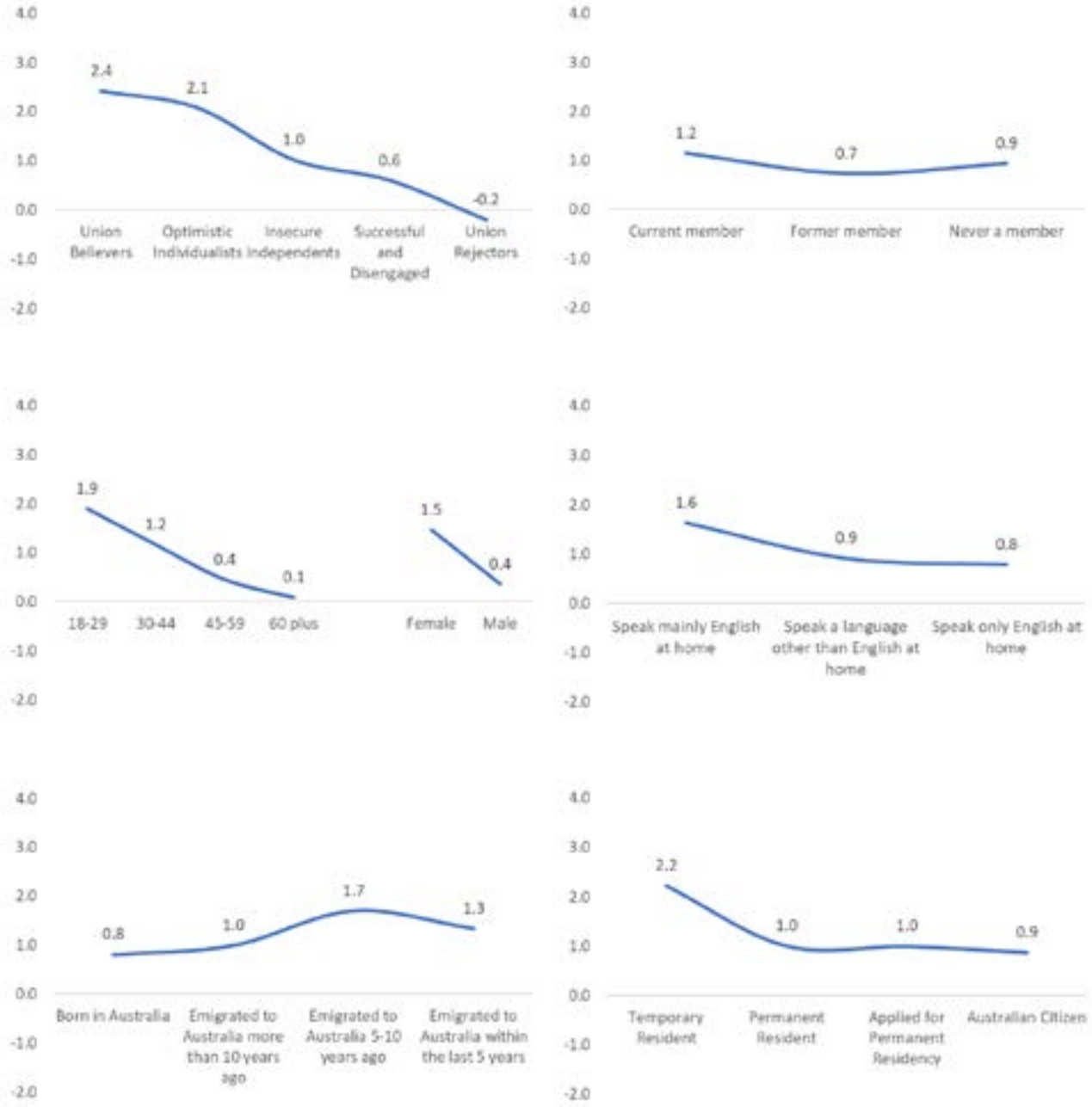


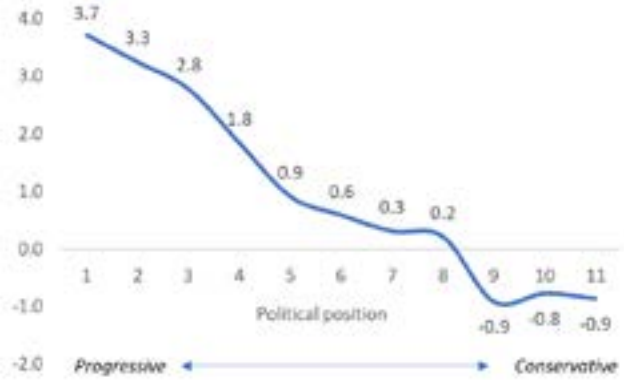
In summary, the main trends for racial tolerance demonstrate the following:

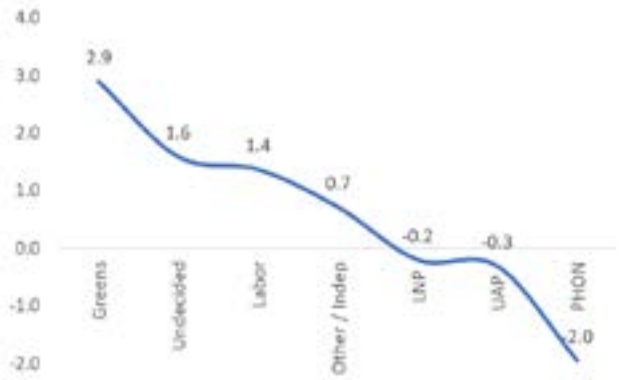
- Higher tolerance is linked to greater union support (segment)
- Higher tolerance is linked to current union membership
- Tolerance decreases with age and with political conservatism
- Tolerance increases with education
- Women are more likely to be tolerant than men
- Tolerance is highest amongst temporary residents, amongst those who mainly speak English at home, and amongst emigrants who arrived in Australia 5-10 years ago.

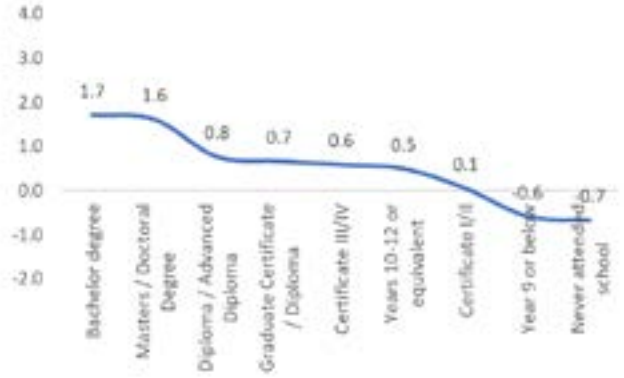
The following charts show the racial tolerance trends for various cohorts, with a higher score indicating greater tolerance.

Figure 6 – Average racial tolerance index by different cohorts









MORAL FOUNDATIONS

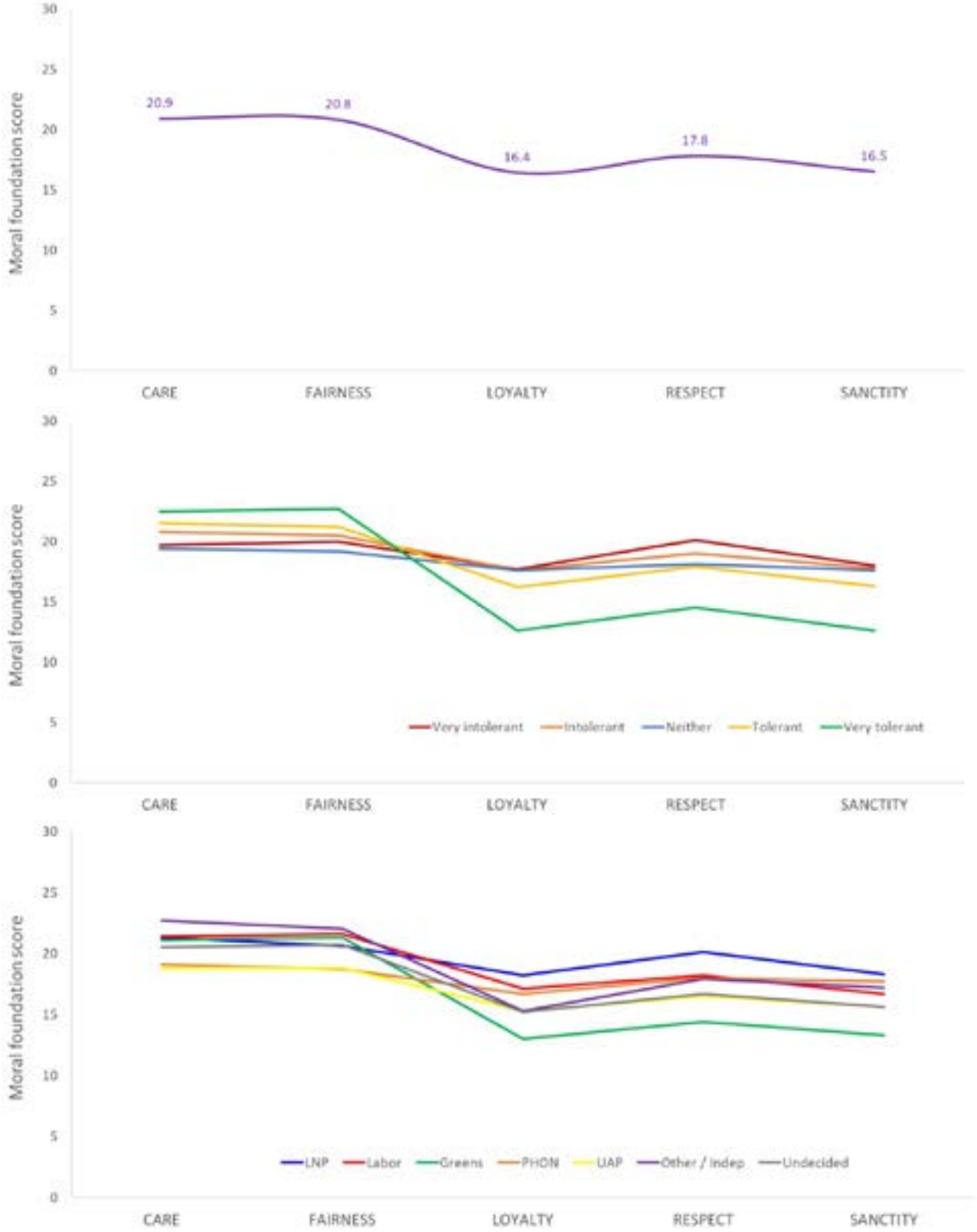
Moral Foundation Theory explores the origins and variation in human moral reasoning and why people determine certain things to be wrong or right. Using two batteries of statements, scores for five separate foundations are calculated for each respondent:

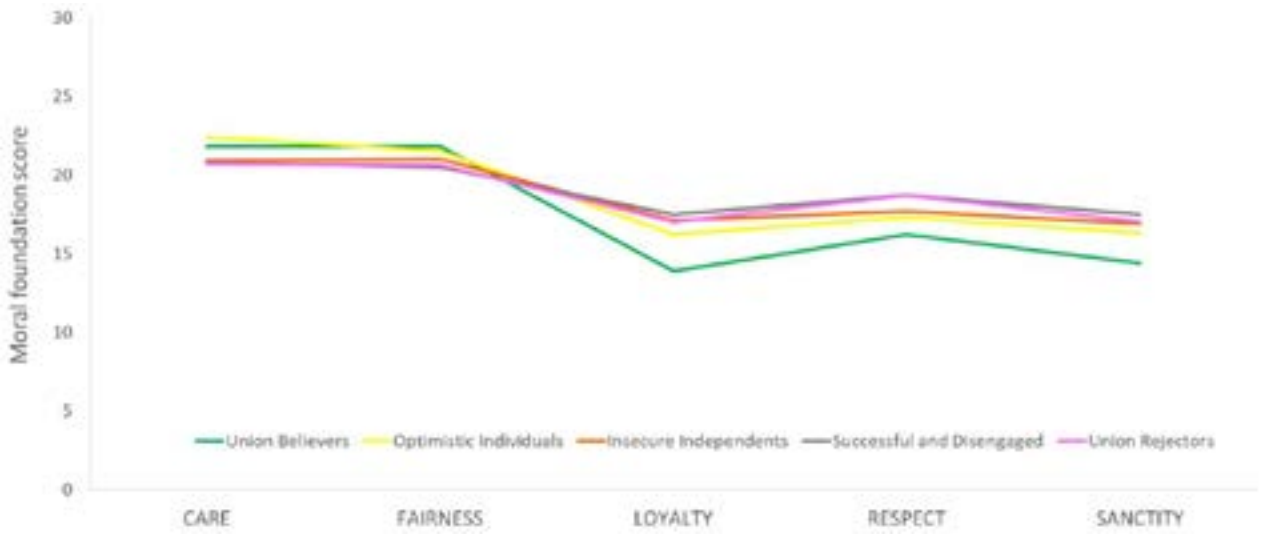
- Care
- Fairness
- Loyalty
- Respect
- Sanctity.

Typically, the foundations of loyalty, authority, and sanctity are thought to appeal to conservative principles of morality, while care and fairness appeal to progressives. This link is borne out in this study.

Overall, care and fairness were the strongest foundations, with loyalty and sanctity the weakest. Set against the racial tolerance index, the very tolerant and very intolerant cohorts are in clear opposition.

Figure 7 – Moral foundations scores





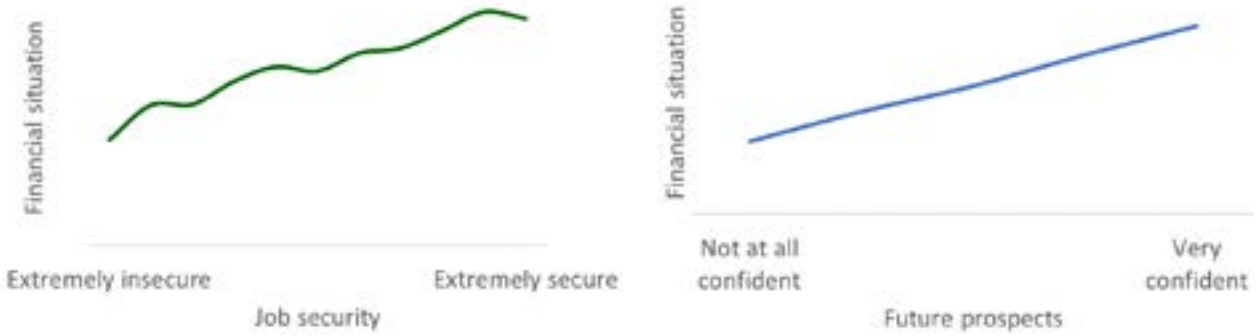
FINANCIAL PROSPECTS & JOB SECURITY

One in five (21%) working respondents felt that their current job was insecure or extremely insecure. A similar proportion (19%) felt not at all or not very confident about their prospects over the next 12 months. About two in five (43%) reported that they felt that financially they were just getting along, were poor or very poor. The figures below show that there is a clear link between current financial status, and the perceptions of both job security and confidence in future prospects.

Table 6 – Financial prospects and job security

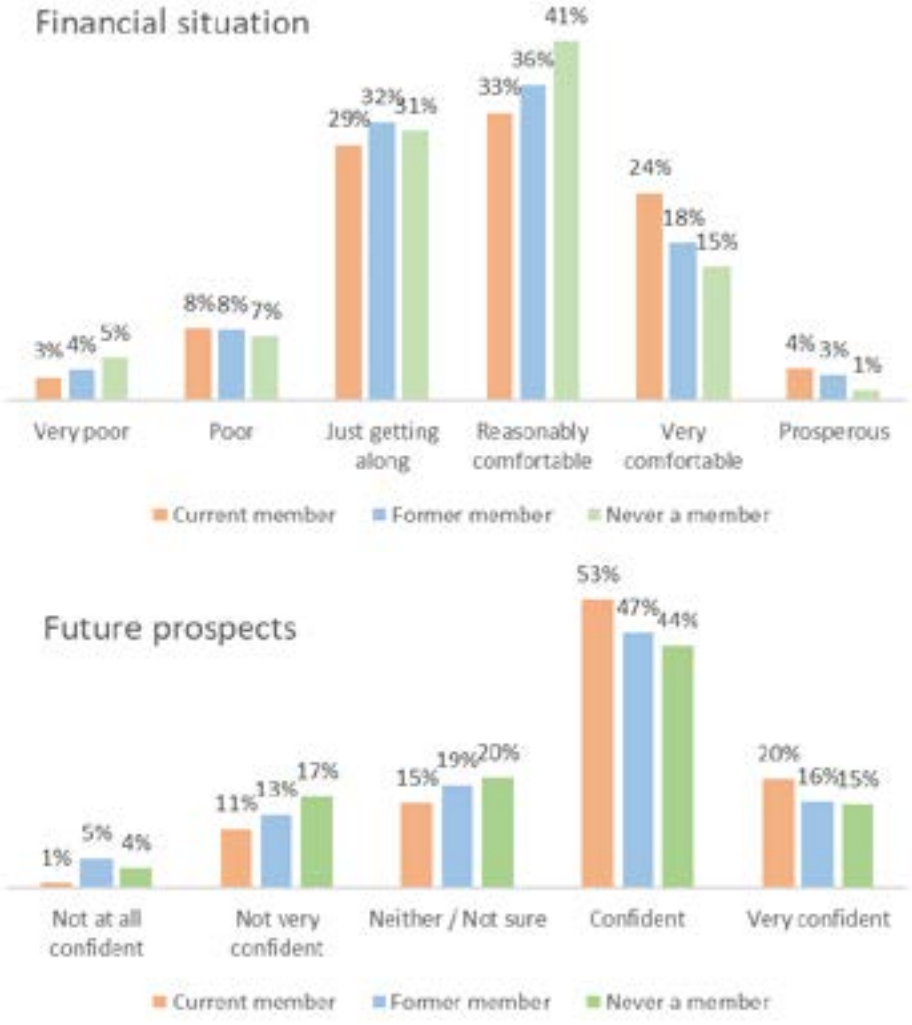
Category	Cohort		Category	Cohort	
Job security	Extremely insecure	4%	**Confidence**	Not at all confident	4%
	Insecure	17%	**in future**	Not very confident	15%
	Neither	8%	**prospects**	Neither / Not sure	19%
	Secure	46%		Confident	46%
	Extremely secure	26%		Very confident	16%
Current	Very poor	4%			
financial	Poor	8%			
situation	Just getting along	31%			
	Reasonably comfortable	38%			
	Very comfortable	17%			
	Prosperous	2%			

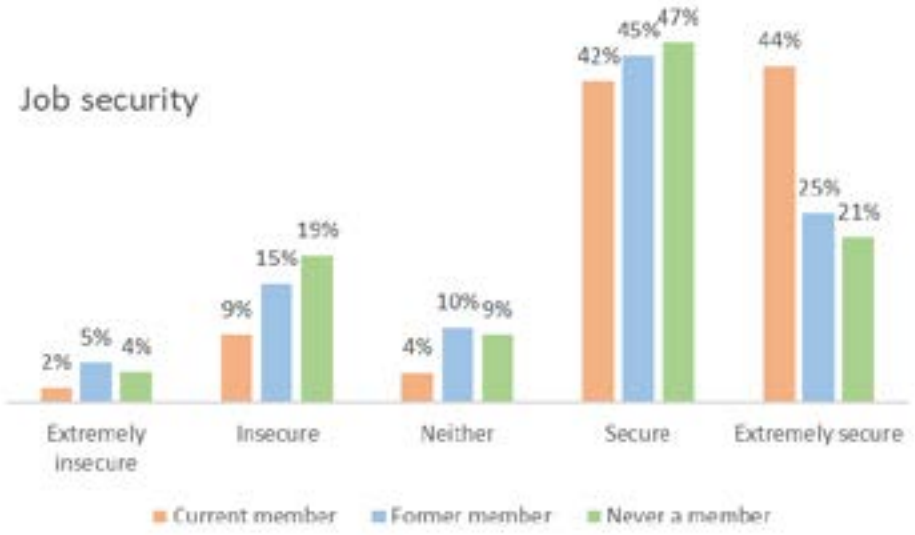
Figure 8 – Current financial situation by job security, by future prospects



These three measures all demonstrate the positive impact of union membership.

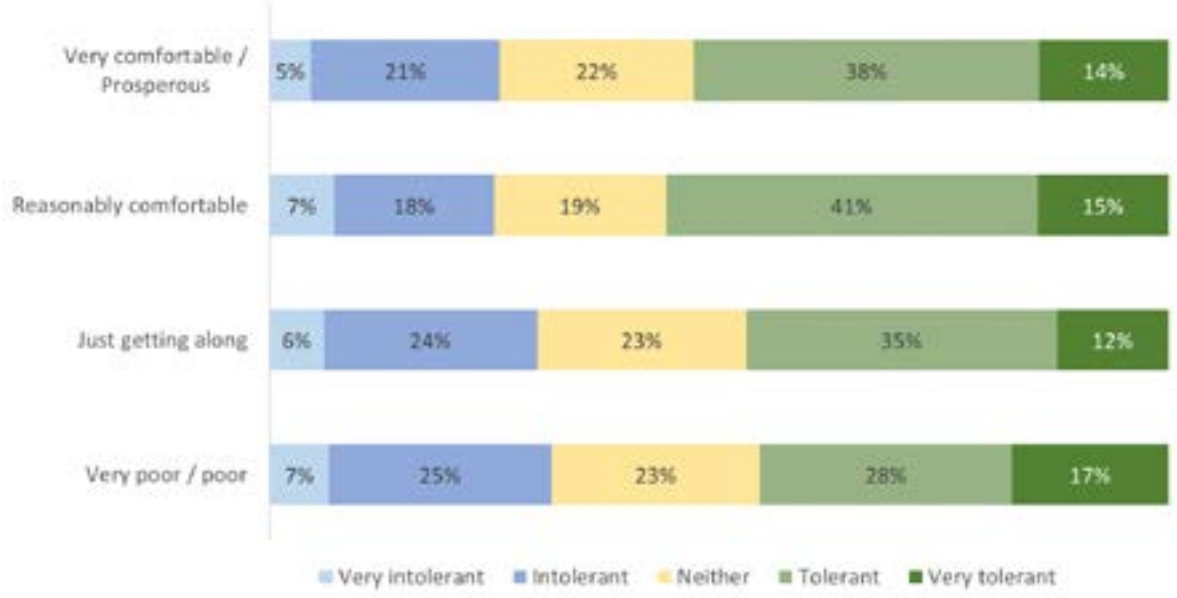
Figure 9 – Financial prospects and job security, by union membership





Racial intolerance (blue end of the scale in the chart below) tends to decrease as financial situations improve, though this trend is not strictly consistent. Similarly, racial tolerance (green end of the scale) tends to increase as financial situations improve, though the trend is not linear.

Figure 10 – Racial tolerance by financial situation



MESSAGE TESTS

Two sets of message frames were designed to test the two research questions of interest, namely the impact on message appeal of evoking race in a class narrative, and of victim-blaming or employer-blaming message frames.

In order to minimise order bias, respondents were randomly allocated to one of three treatments for each set, in which the order and combination of statements was varied.

Respondents were asked variously about which statement they preferred, and for one question, how accurate they thought the statement was.

Message set 1

In this set, respondents were asked to consider four separate statements about making life better for working people:

- 1A. To make life better for working people we need better paying, secure jobs and quality education and healthcare for everyone.
- 1B. To make life better for working people we need better paying, secure jobs and quality education and healthcare for everyone ***no matter where you're from or what language you speak***.
- 1C. To make life better for working people we need better paying, secure jobs and quality education and healthcare for everyone ***no matter your skin colour***.
- 1D. To make life better for working people we need to cut taxes, reduce regulations, and make it easier for businesses to employ people.

Overall, Statement 1B was the preferred statement from this set, selected through an iterative process in 39% of decisions. Support for this statement:

- Is higher for union members
- Is higher for Union Believers and Optimistic Individualists
- Is higher for ALP and Greens, and is lower for LNP
- Increases with political progressiveness
- Increases with LOTE
- Increases with recent immigration (<10 years)
- Decreases with age.

There was a preference among PHON / UAP voters for the plain statement (1A), and this statement also recorded a slight preference in WA.

Given the low level of support for Statement 1D (8% overall), this statement has been excluded from further analysis. However its selection was highest in the following cohorts:

- Union Rejectors (11%)
- SA / NT (10%)
- Prosperous (13%)
- UAP voter (16%)
- Very conservative (13%).

Low bases are indicated with an asterisk, meaning that n < 20. These results are therefore indicative only.

Figure 11 – Overall preferences for Set 1 statements

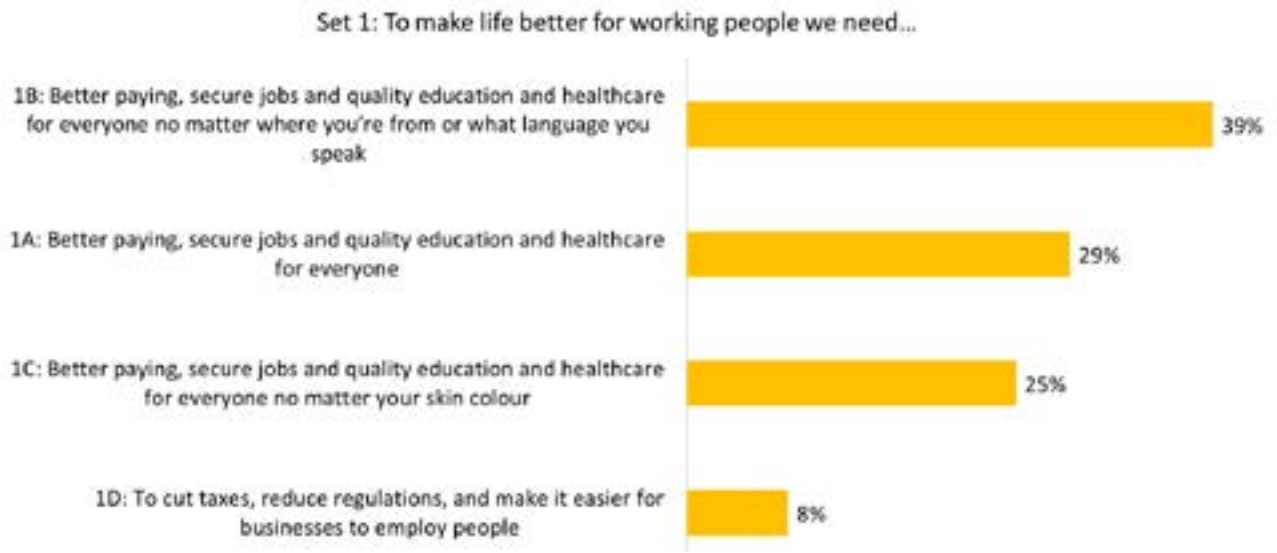
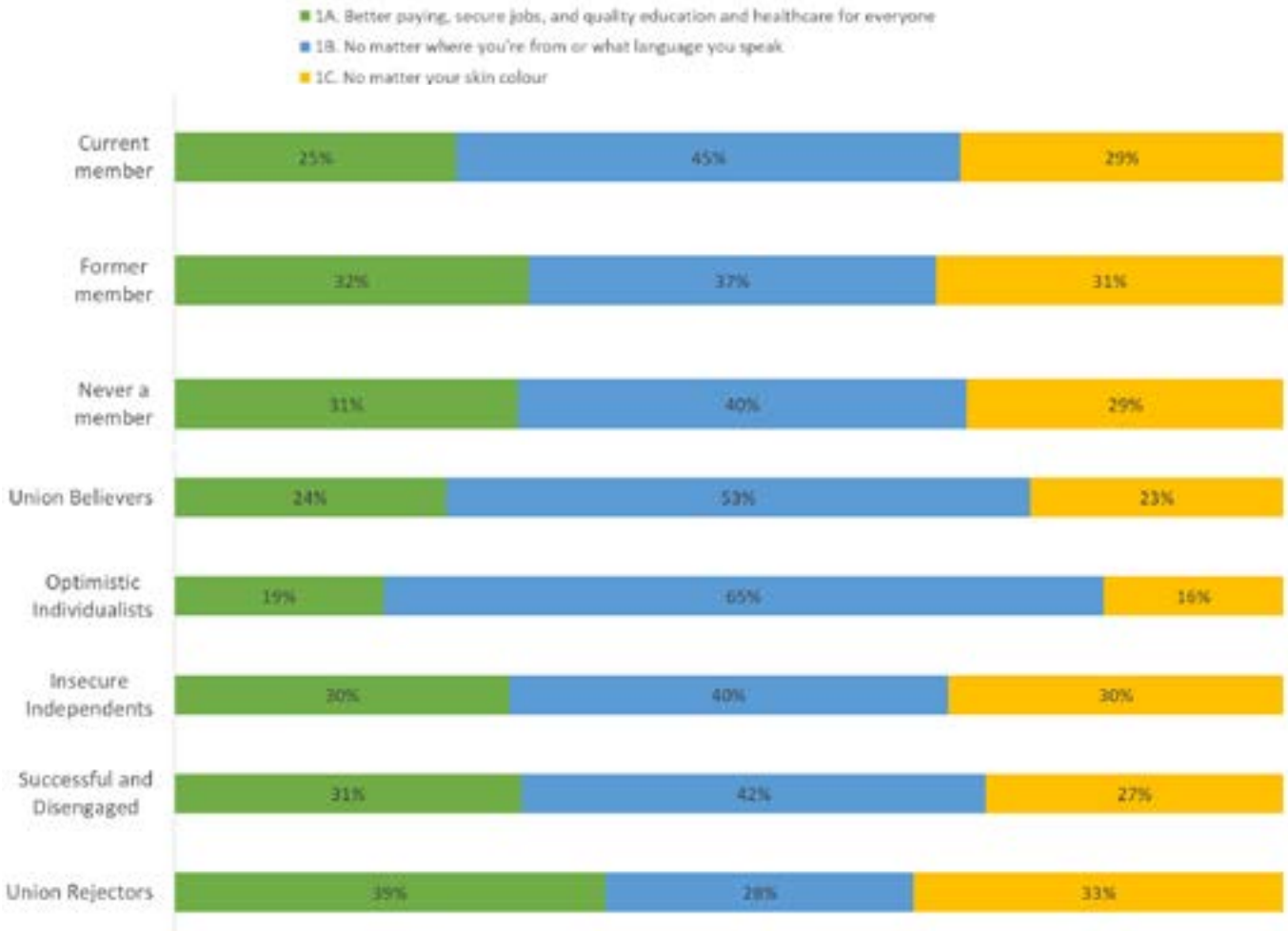
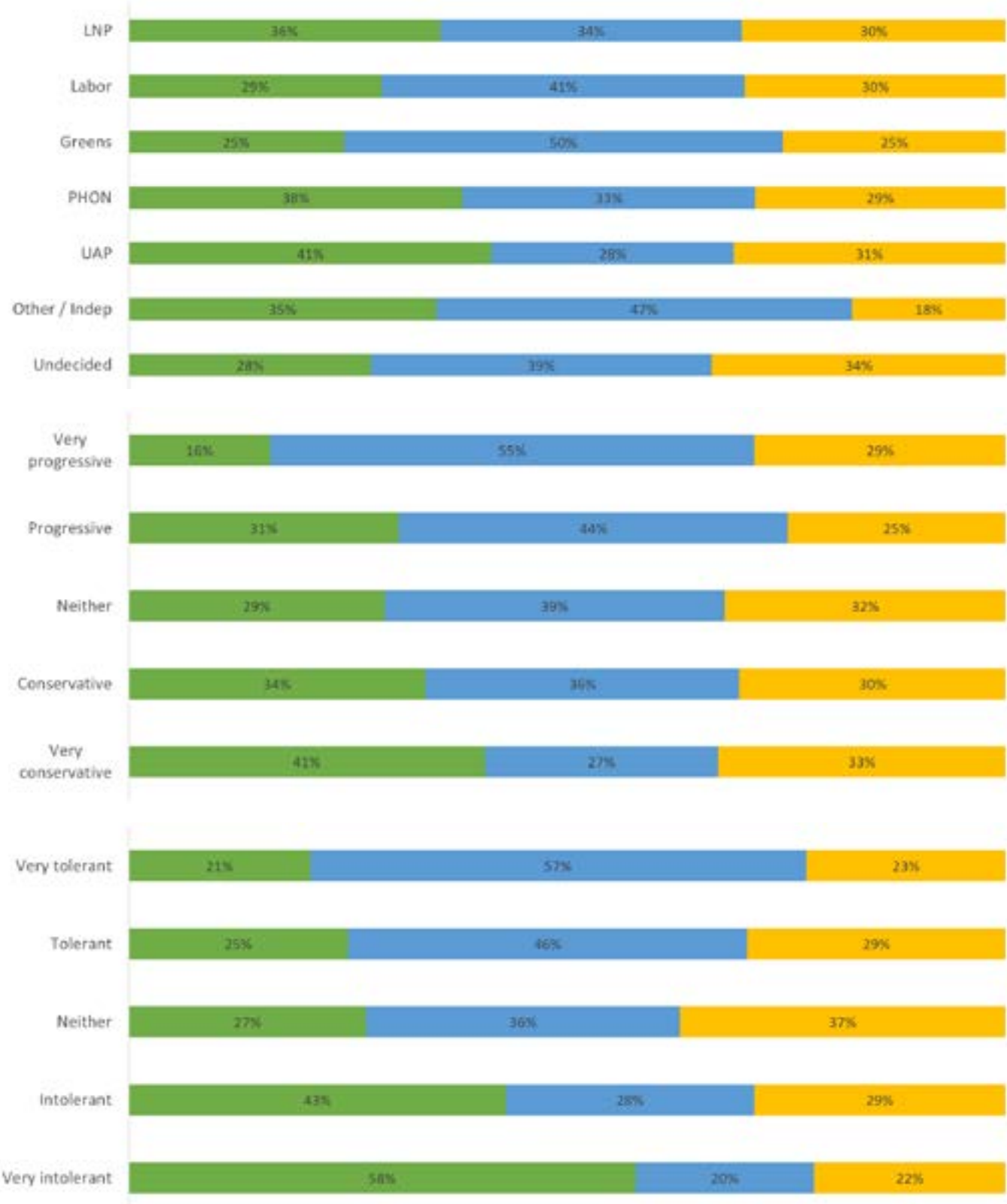
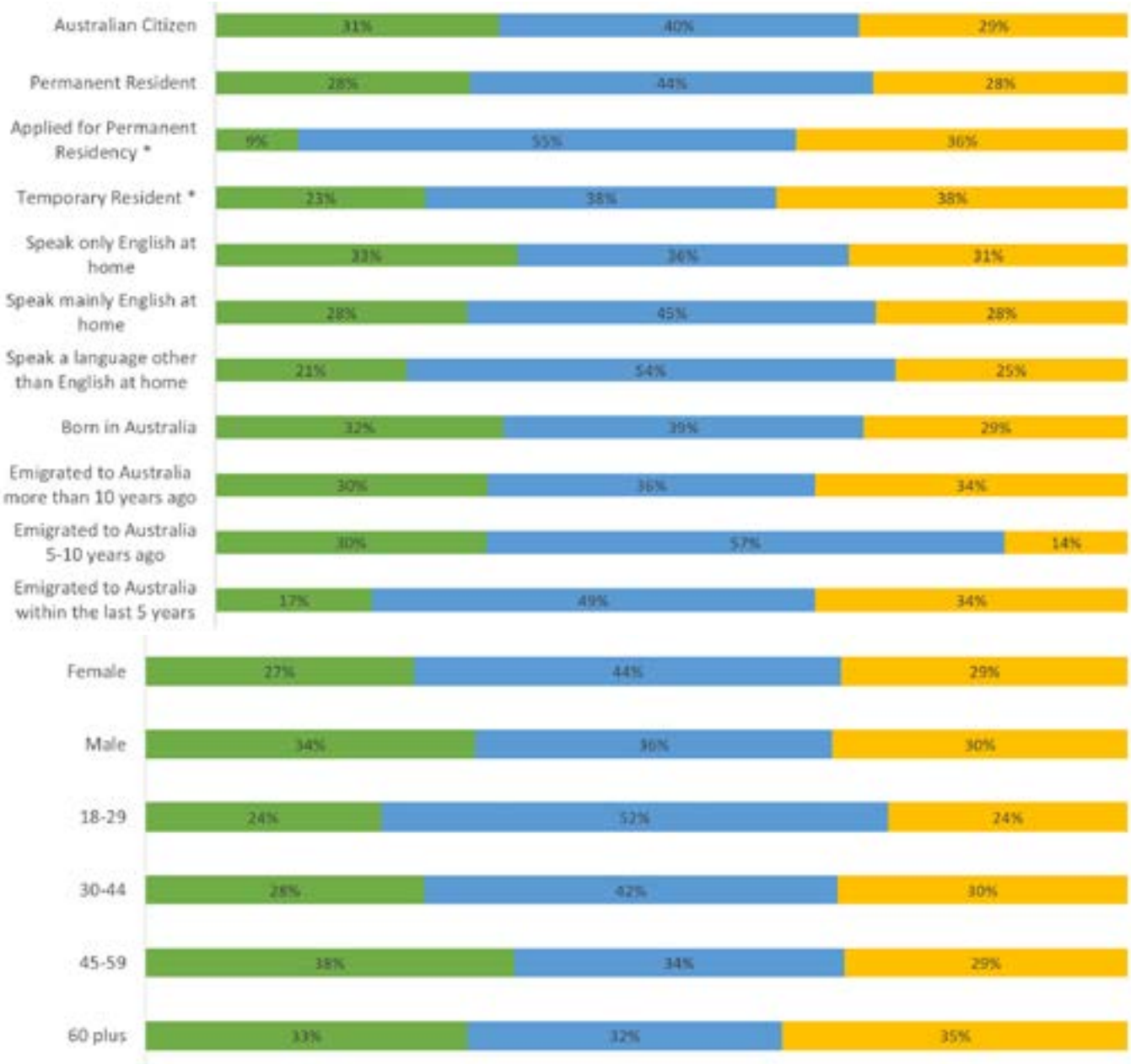
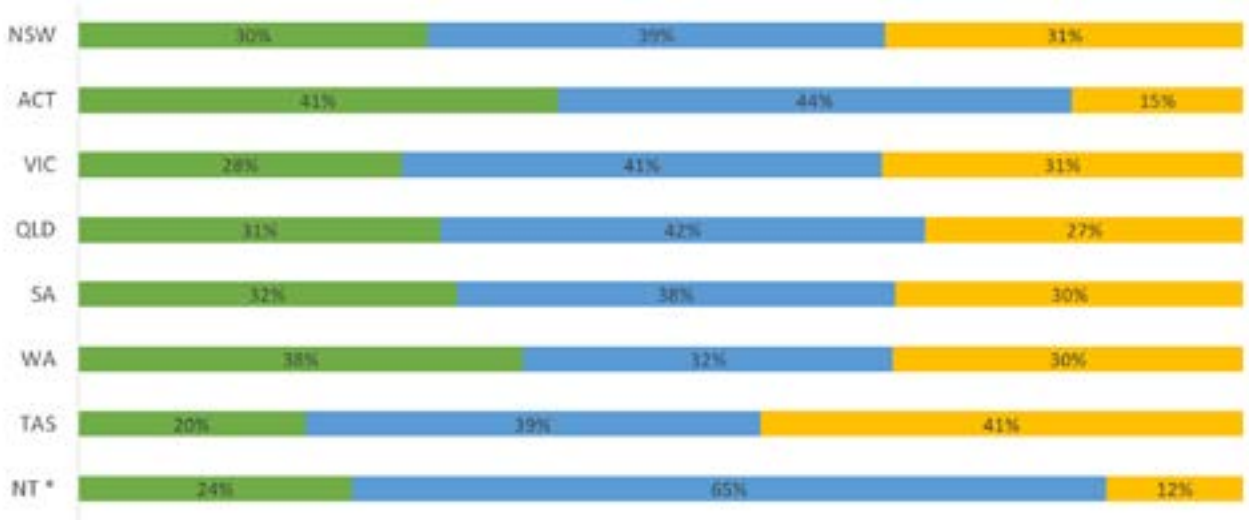


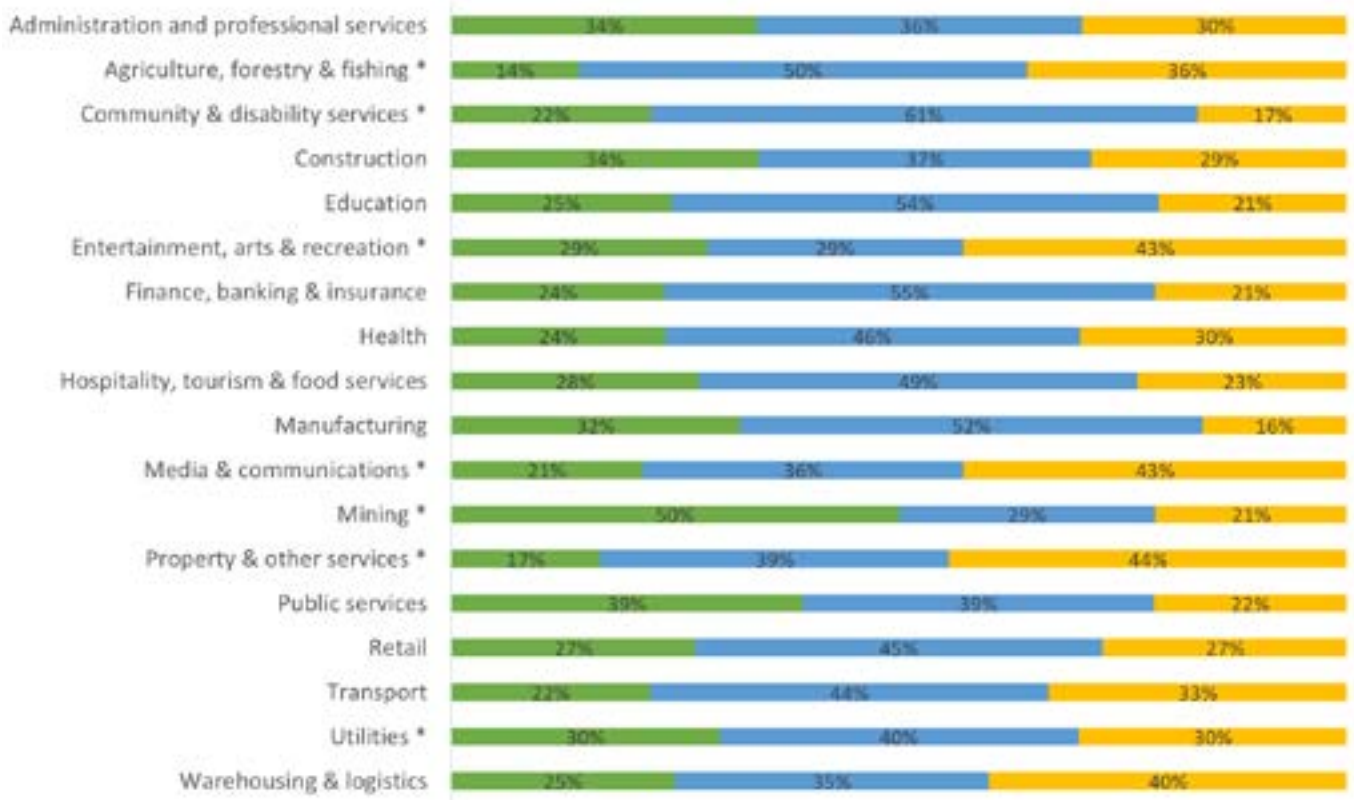
Figure 12 – Set 1 statements preferences by different cohorts




LNP
36%
34%
30%
Labor
29%
41%
30%
Greens
25%
50%
25%
PHON
38%
33%
29%
UAP
41%
28%
31%
Other / Indep
35%
47%
18%
Undecided
28%
39%
34%
Very progressive
16%
55%
29%
Progressive
31%
44%
25%
Neither
29%
39%
32%
Conservative
34%
36%
30%
Very conservative
41%
27%
33%
Very tolerant
21%
57%
23%
Tolerant
25%
46%
29%
Neither
27%
36%
37%
Intolerant
43%
28%
29%
Very intolerant
58%
20%
22%

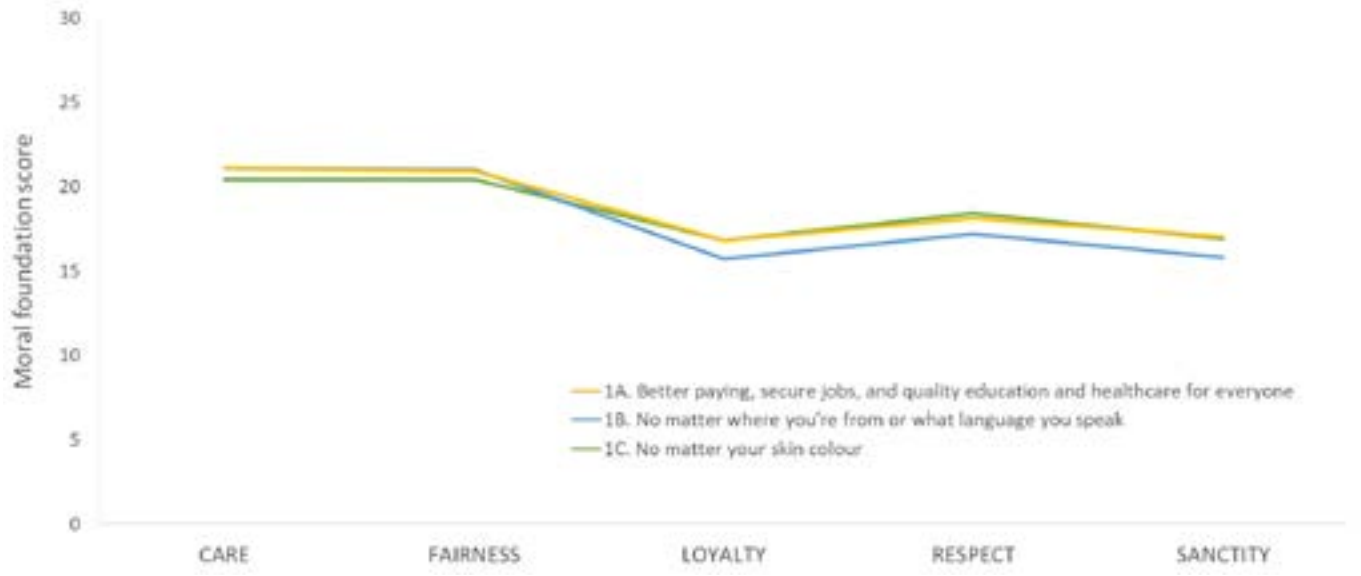

Australian Citizen
31%
40%
29%
Permanent Resident
28%
44%
28%
Applied for Permanent Residency *
9%
55%
36%
Temporary Resident *
23%
38%
38%
Speak only English at home
33%
36%
31%
Speak mainly English at home
28%
45%
28%
Speak a language other than English at home
21%
54%
25%
Born in Australia
32%
39%
29%
Emigrated to Australia more than 10 years ago
30%
36%
34%
Emigrated to Australia 5-10 years ago
30%
57%
14%
Emigrated to Australia within the last 5 years
17%
49%
34%
Female
27%
44%
29%
Male
34%
36%
30%
18-29
24%
52%
24%
30-44
28%
42%
30%
45-59
38%
34%
29%
60 plus
33%
32%
35%





Respondents who displayed a preference for Statement 1B were slightly more likely to follow the progressive profile for the moral foundations model, though the differences between the preferred statement profiles were not significant.

Figure 13 – Moral foundation scores by preferred Set 1 statement



Message set 2

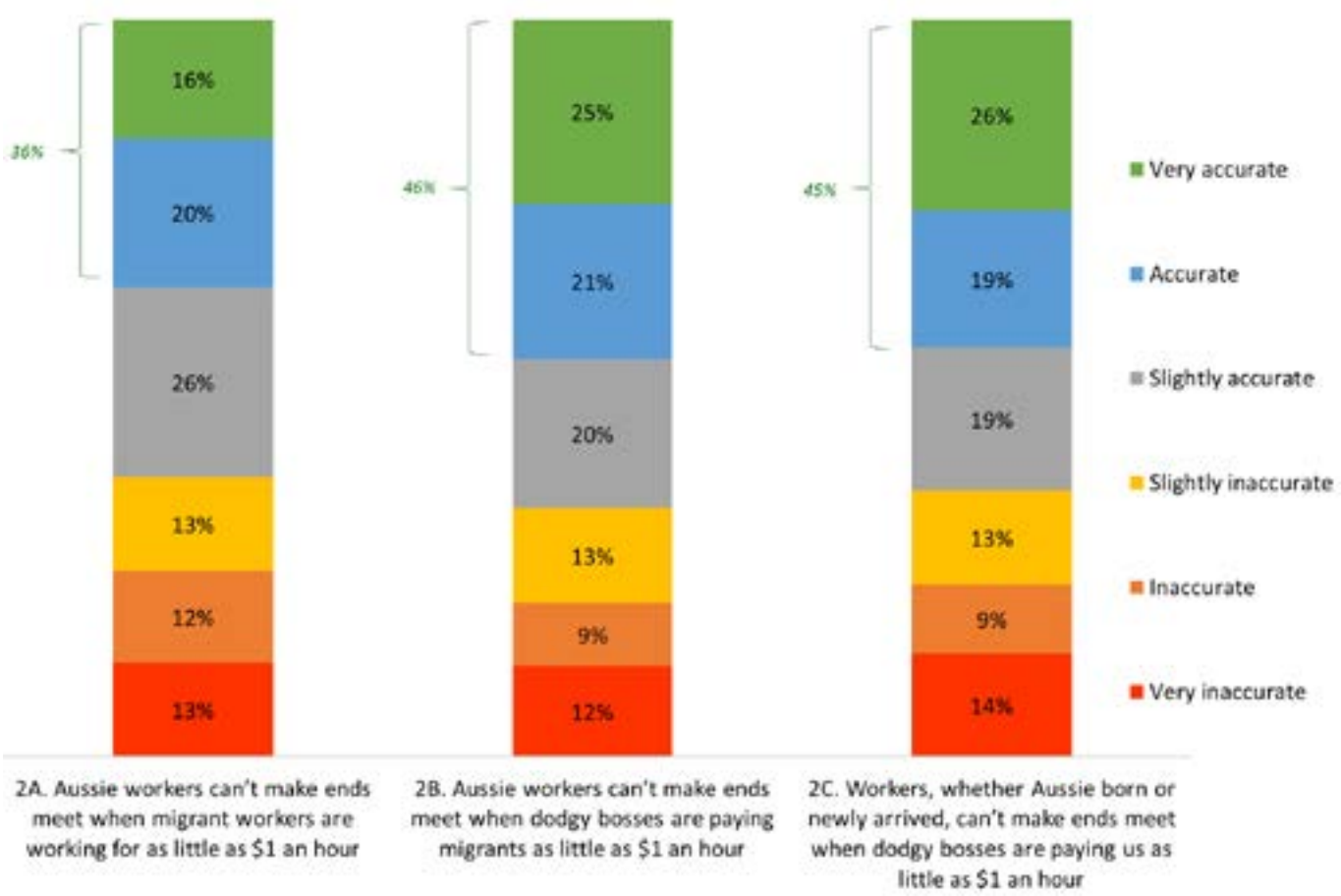
In this set, respondents were asked to consider three statements which shifted blame from employer to worker:

- 2A. Aussie workers can't make ends meet when migrant workers are working for as little as $1 an hour.
- 2B. Aussie workers can't make ends meet when dodgy bosses are paying migrants as little as $1 an hour.
- 2C. Workers, whether Aussie born or newly arrived, can't make ends meet when dodgy bosses are paying us as little as $1 an hour.

In the first part of this test, respondents were asked to judge the accuracy of one of these statements (presented according to their treatment allocation).

The statements 2B and 2C using the 'dodgy bosses' framing were judged to be more accurate than the victim-blaming frame of statement 2A.

Figure 14 – Overall accuracy for Set 2 statements



Respondents then selected their preferred statement – almost half (47%) nominated Statement 2C, the most inclusive of the frames.

Trends for Set 2 were less linear than those exhibited for Set 1. While Statement 2C was the preferred statement across the majority of demographic segments, Statement 2B was slightly preferred by the following cohorts:

- Racially intolerant
- 18-29 years old
- WA
- PHON voters
- Permanent residents
- Speakers of mainly English or LOTE at home
- Emigrated to Australia within the last 5 years
- Very conservative.

Figure 15 – Overall preferences for Set 2 statements

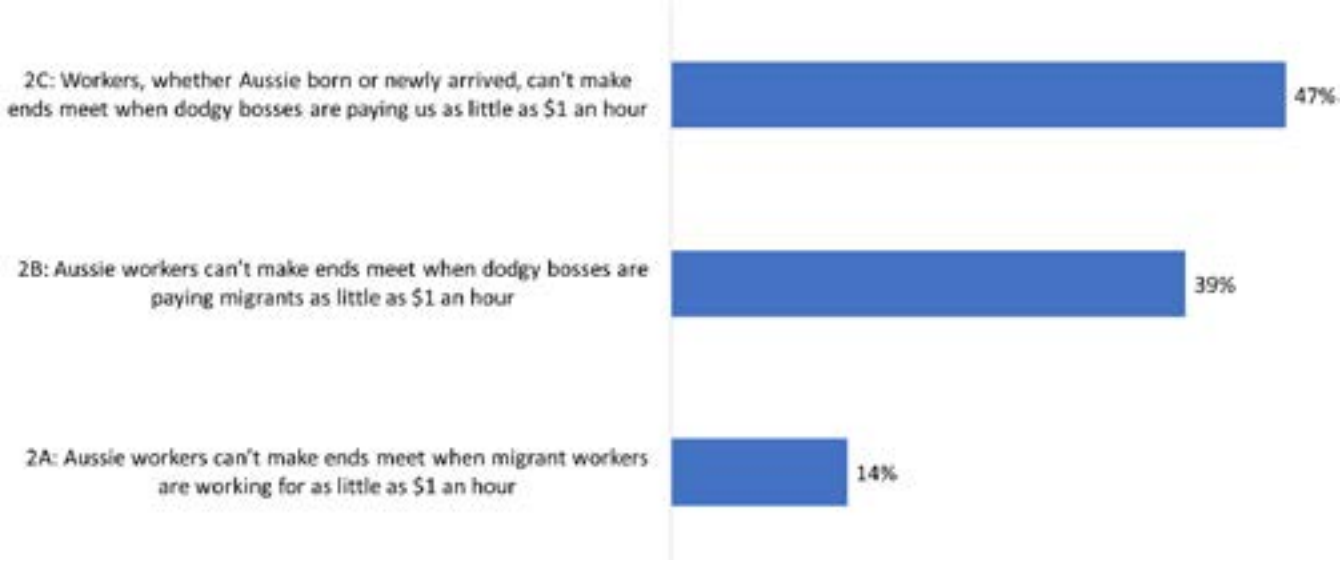
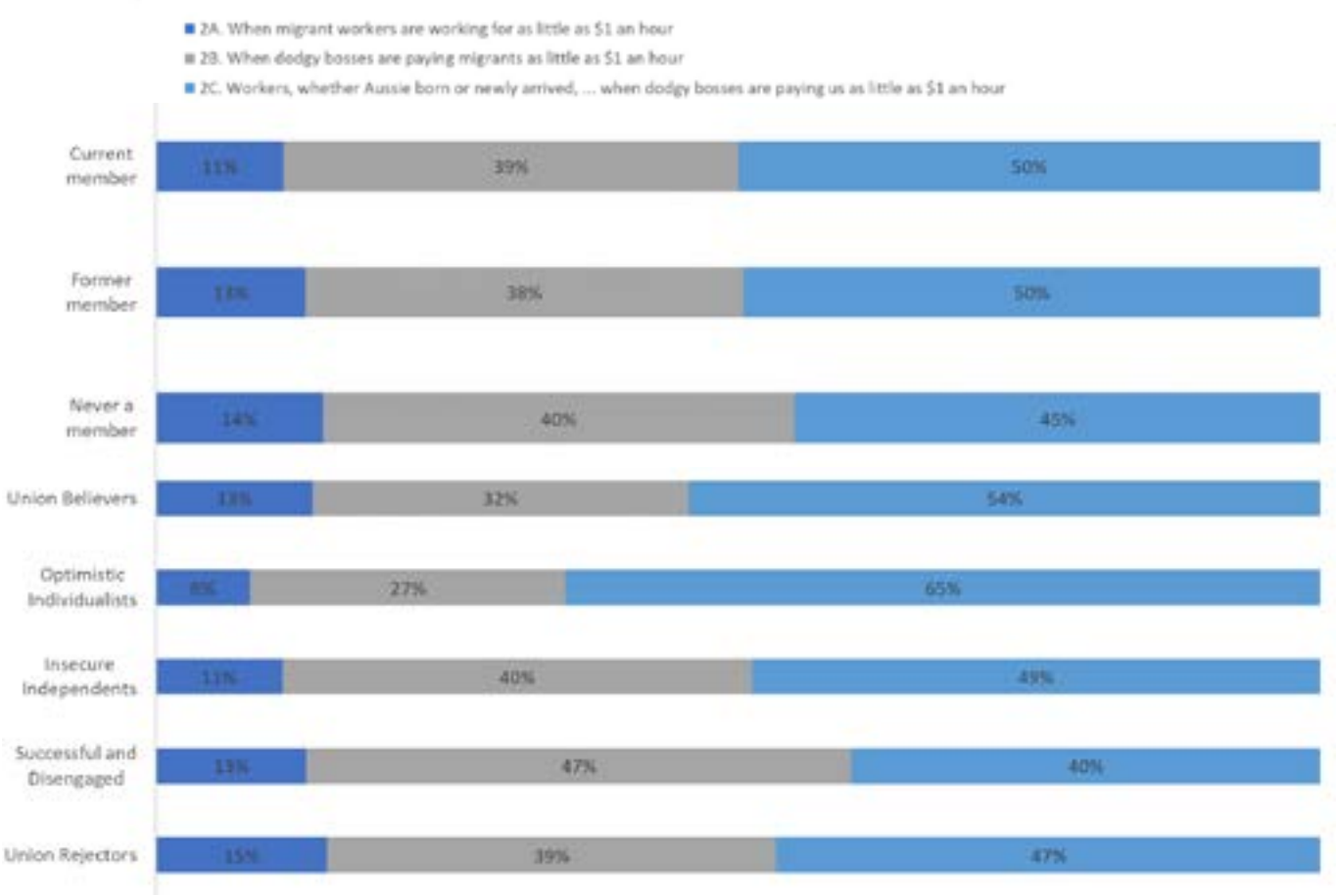
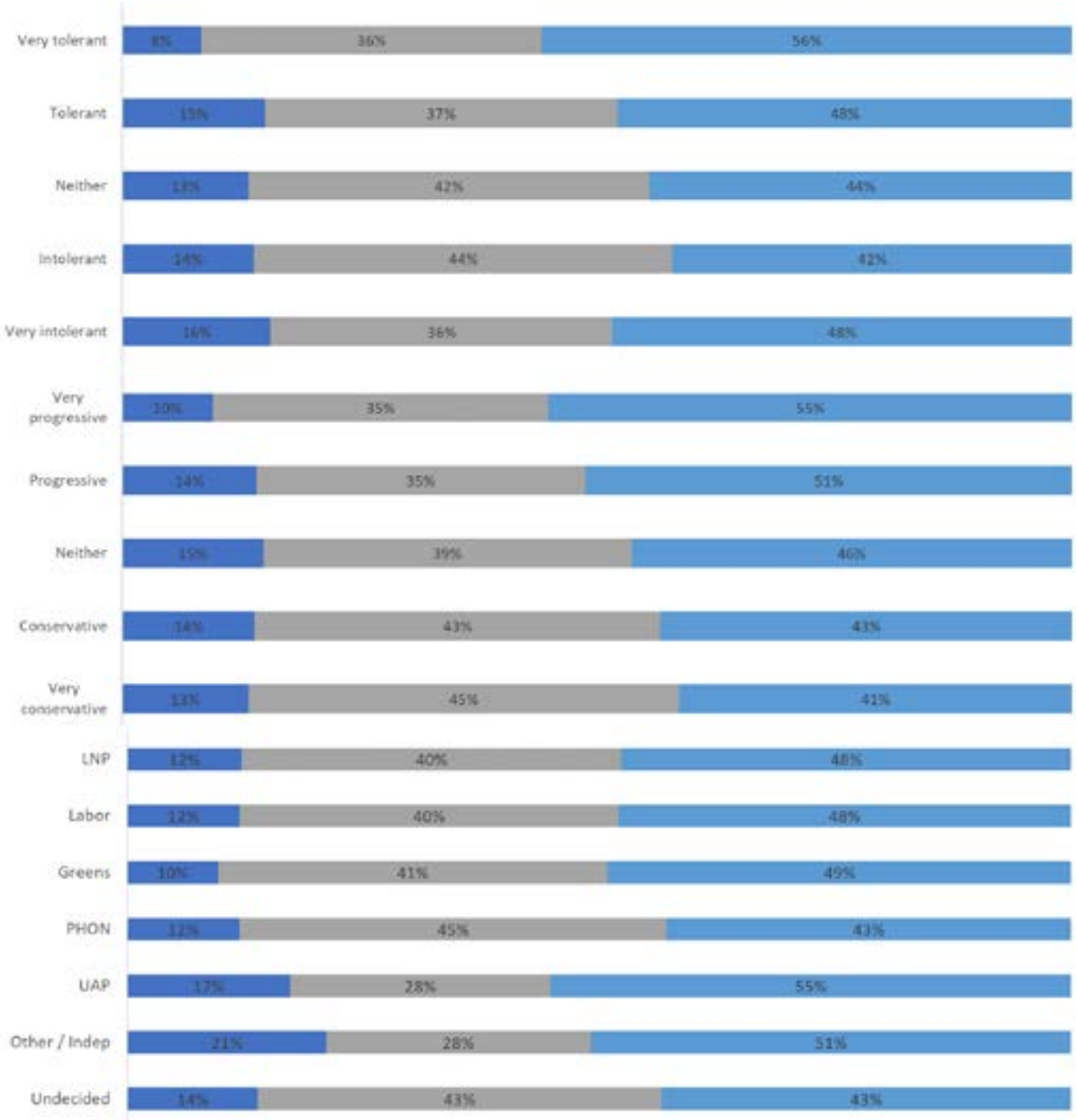
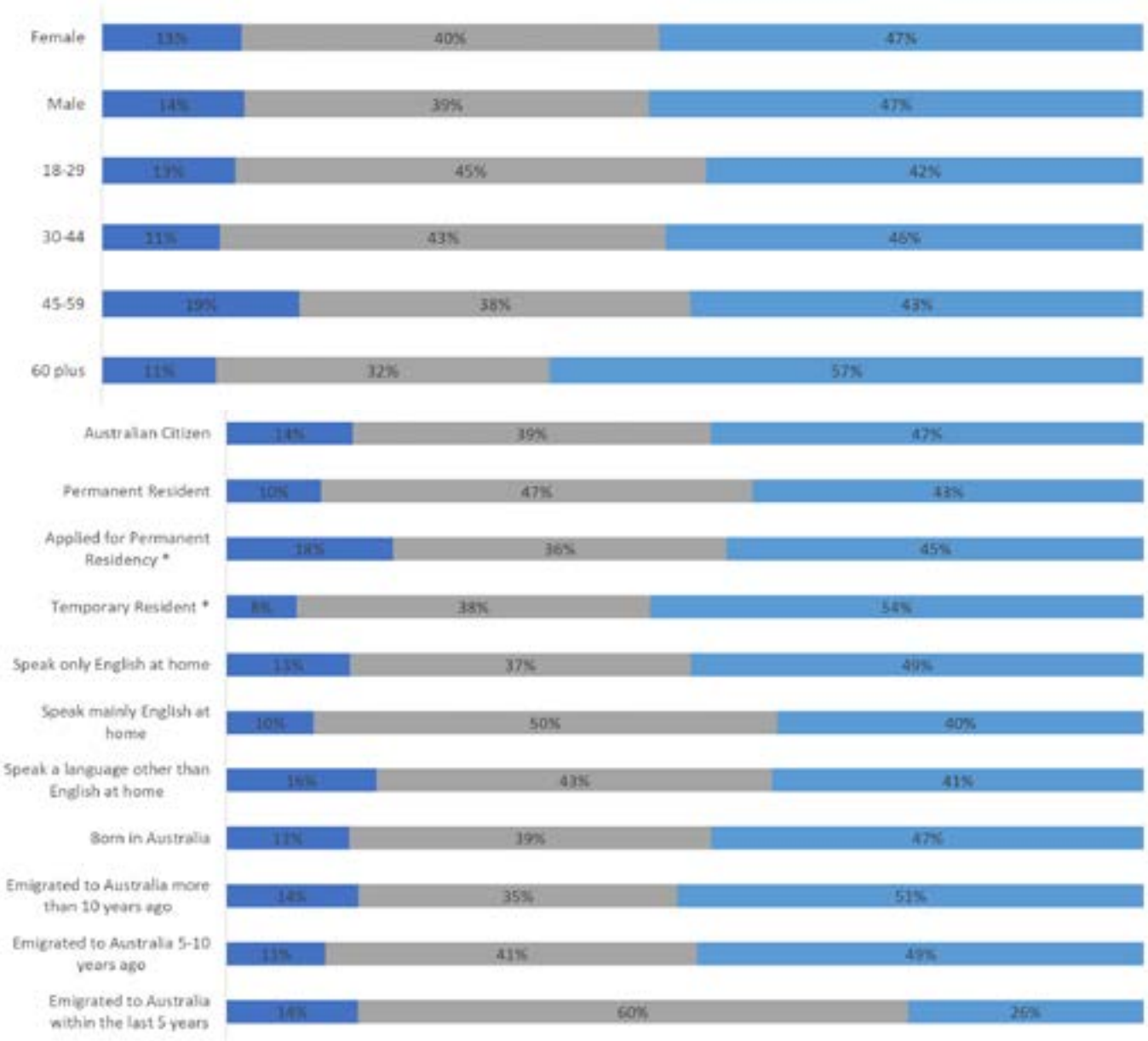
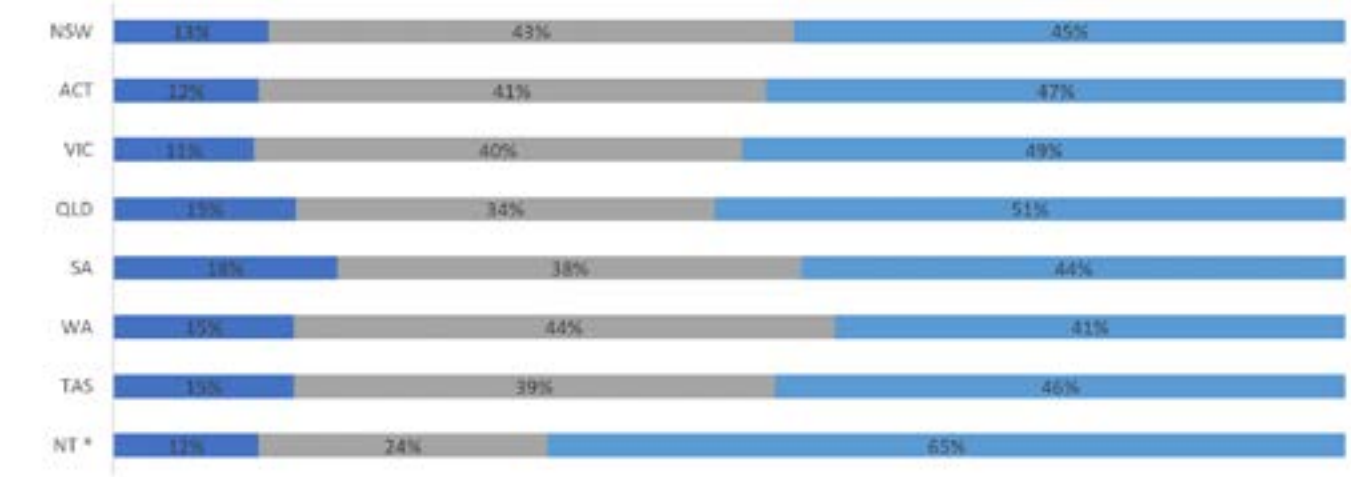


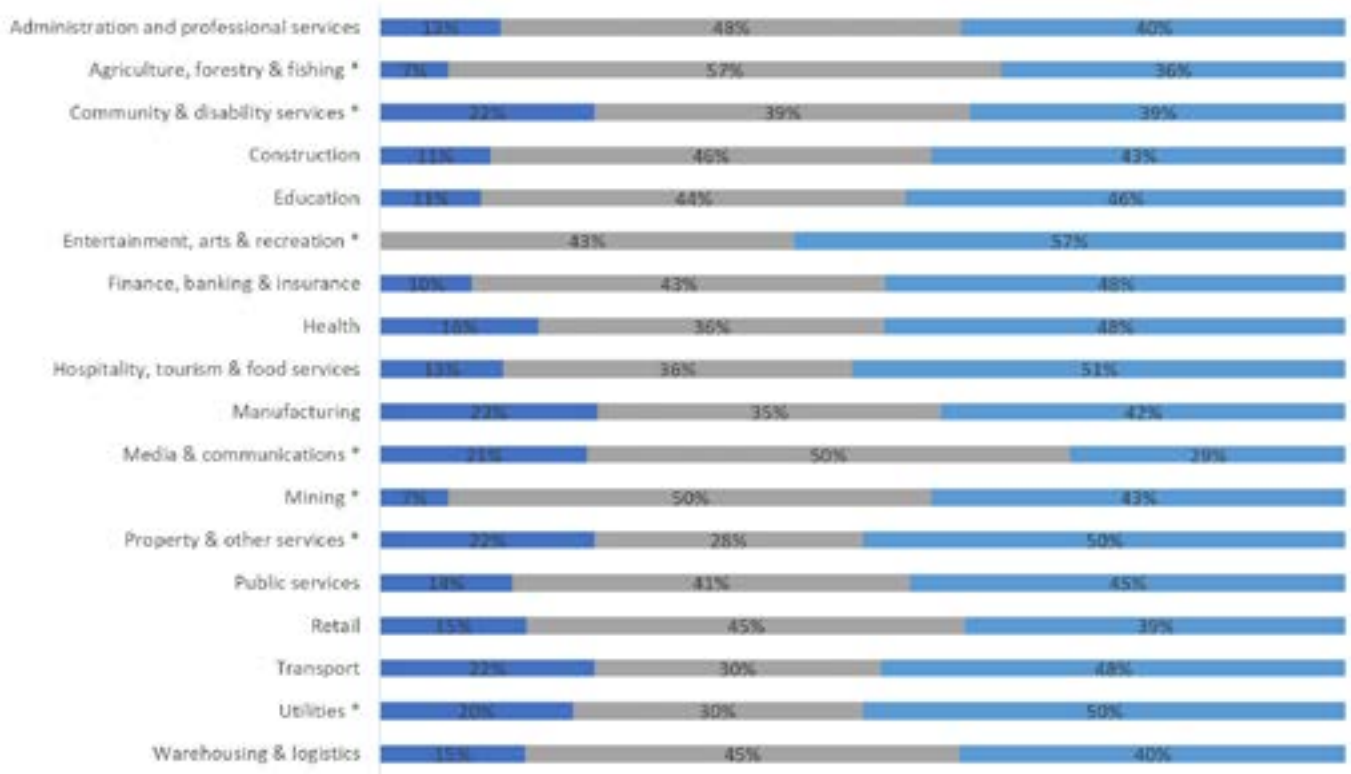
Figure 16 – Set 2 statements preferences by different cohorts




Very tolerant
8%
36%
56%
Tolerant
15%
37%
48%
Neither
13%
42%
44%
Intolerant
14%
44%
42%
Very intolerant
16%
36%
48%
Very progressive
10%
35%
55%
Progressive
14%
35%
51%
Neither
15%
39%
46%
Conservative
14%
43%
43%
Very conservative
13%
45%
41%
LNP
12%
40%
48%
Labor
12%
40%
48%
Greens
10%
41%
49%
PHON
12%
45%
43%
UAP
17%
28%
55%
Other / Indep
21%
28%
51%
Undecided
14%
43%
43%


Female
13%
40%
47%
Male
14%
39%
47%
18-29
13%
45%
42%
30-44
11%
43%
46%
45-59
19%
38%
43%
60 plus
11%
32%
57%
Australian Citizen
14%
39%
47%
Permanent Resident
10%
47%
43%
Applied for Permanent Residency *
18%
36%
45%
Temporary Resident *
8%
38%
54%
Speak only English at home
11%
37%
49%
Speak mainly English at home
10%
50%
40%
Speak a language other than English at home
16%
43%
41%
Born in Australia
13%
39%
47%
Emigrated to Australia more than 10 years ago
14%
35%
51%
Emigrated to Australia 5-10 years ago
11%
41%
49%
Emigrated to Australia within the last 5 years
14%
60%
26%





The differences in moral foundation scores between the preferred statement profiles for Set 2 were minimal.

TAKING OUR MESSAGE TO THE MOVEMENT

Our words only work if they're repeated - often - by our officials, delegates and members. We're up against powerful forces including the Murdoch media, the organised far right, conservative politicians and business lobbyists.

They have the money and the media. But we have our people.

By training our members to see through the divisive tactics of our opponents, we can effectively innoculate workers against far-right populism and austerity politics. We can smash racism with solidarity.

GET SUPPORT

For assistance developing race-class messages for your union campaign, or to request a race-class messaging workshop for your union's officials, delegates or members, contact Edwina Byrne, Communications and Media Lead, Victorian Trades Hall Council.

Edwina Byrne
(03) 9659 3554
ebyrne@vthc.org.au

ACTU INSIGHTS

The ACTU Insights Team can help your union better understand and grow your membership and to improve your member experience and messaging, and campaign effectiveness using insights and segmentation. Our insights can be delivered through a range of flexible support models, including one-off requests for analysis to deep and ongoing project design and implementation. Contact Simone Rosser, Insights, Member Experience and Data Manager; ACTU insights@actu.org.au.

WE ARE UNION

Printed on the lands of the Wurundjeri
people of the Kulin Nation