



Fact Sheet – Past Early Voting Trends

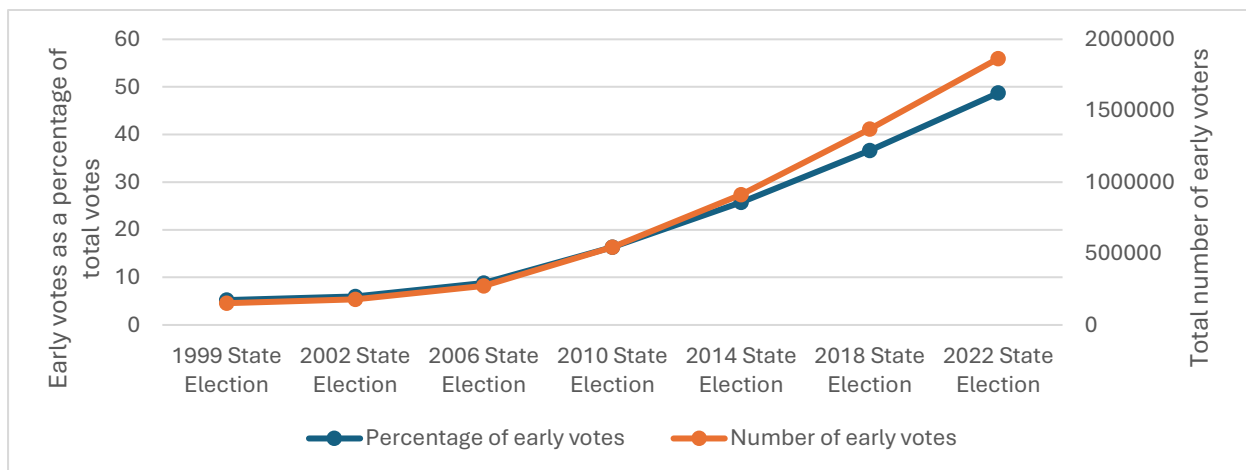
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Introduction

Early voting has increased at each Victorian State election since the two-week early voting period was implemented in 1999. In 2022, 48.72% of voters turned out to vote in-person ahead of election day. This proportion is expected to increase again at the 2026 Victorian State Election, with the VEC preparing for up to 60% of all eligible Victorians to vote in-person ahead of election day. We examined past early voting data from State elections to make linear predictions of early voting rates at SE2026, and of past State general and by-elections, and the 2025 Federal election, to predict voter behaviour across the early voting period.

Past trends

The rate of change of early voting has also been increasing. Since 2010, early voting has increased by 32.39%, from 16.33% to 48.72% at the 2022 State Election. This is an average of 10.8% per election, but the rate of change is increasing.

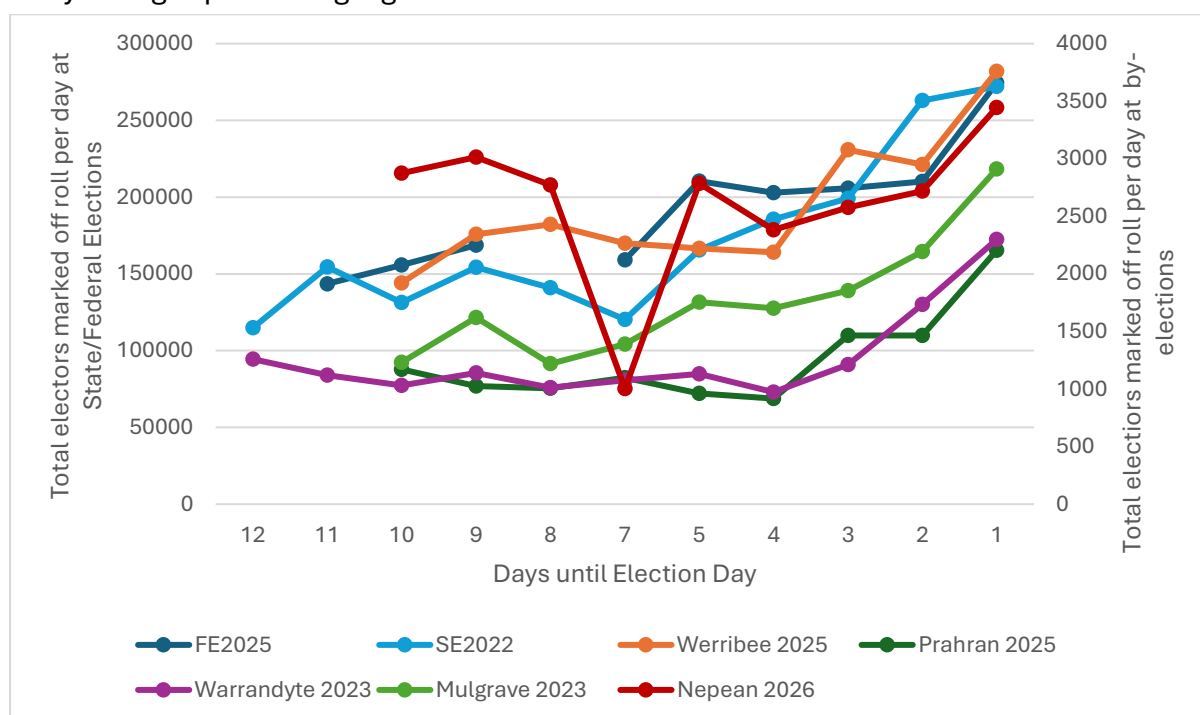


Victorian voting trends at federal elections show a similar pattern, despite early voting rates being lower than at Victorian state elections. Victorians voting in-person ahead of election day at federal elections has increased from 8.73% in 2010 to 40.89% in 2025. This rate of change has slowed since reaching 37.22% in 2019. The lower proportion may be due to both legislative differences, and the lower number of early voting centres operated at federal elections which reduces the convenience factor of early voting. Voters require a legitimate reason to vote early at federal elections, but not at Victorian State Elections. Recent federal elections have also seen a reduction to the early voting period, from 3 weeks historically to two weeks in 2022 and to effectively 9 days in 2025 due to the timing of public holidays. This suggests that a reduction to the early voting period may moderate the rate at which early voting increases, but is unlikely to stop electors from voting ahead of election day.

Implications for State Election 2026

An initial linear prediction based on the last 7 Victorian State Elections suggests a potential increase between 10-15 percentage points, or 58.72-63.72% of all Victorian voters casting an in-person vote ahead of election day in 2026. The VEC is preparing for 60% of all eligible Victorians to vote early. While the 10-day (9 voting days, excluding Sunday) early voting period adopted for SE26 may cause a reduction in its rate of increase, early voting will likely continue grow, albeit at more modest rates.

Evidence from recent by-elections where the reduced early voting period was trialled (Mulgrave and Warrandyte 2023, Prahran and Werribee 2025, Nepean 2026), as well as the 2025 federal election, indicates that early voting will not decrease due to this change. As the graph below shows, although fewer votes are cast at the start of the early voting period, removing these days causes demand to redistribute, with the final days of early voting experiencing highest demand.



Early voter markoff by days remaining until election day. Federal election (FE) data is early votes cast in Victoria at federal elections. Nepean 2026 by-election day 7 was Anzac Day, with EVCs only open from 1pm-8pm on Saturday.

The combination of voters' increasing preference for early voting, a compression of the early voting period, and an increase in the number of eligible voters as Victoria's population continues to grow, has led the VEC to expand the number of early voting centres (EVCs). The VEC plans to provide over 200 EVCs for the 2026 State Election, up from 155 in 2022. This is to cater for expected demand within a condensed early voting period. A higher number of EVCs, with a targeted distribution across Victoria's population, aims to improve accessibility and limit wait times for voters. At the same time, modelling shows that any further reduction to the early voting period would require significant increases in the number of EVCs.