

Class

A major influence on politics and voting behaviour is the class position of individual voters in Australia.

Class refers to the different social strata or levels in society, eg. Upper, middle and working class. People are 'placed' within these class according to certain criteria such as status, education, income, wealth, family background and even place of residence. For example,

- an upper class in Australia (very wealthy, rural pastoralists, wealthy business elites, graziers, company directors);
- a middle class (largely white collar workers, such as doctors and lawyers, and those occupying clerical positions);
- and a working class (manual workers, eg. Urban and rural labourers)

A classless society?

Certain trends in Australia since WWII

- 1) an increasingly middle class nation
 - a) more people see themselves as middle class
 - b) evidence of this shift form increased SOL and home ownership
- 2) working class is decreasing in size
 - a) a structural shift in employment
 - b) more reluctant to see themselves as working class
 - c) want to believe we have an egalitarian society
 - d) want to think we live in a classless society
- 3) Australia is probably egalitarian compared to many other countries
 - a) Different classes do share many items of a common platform; eg. Consumer goods
 - b) We live in hope of being upwardly mobile

BUT

There are permanently poor and disadvantaged sectors

An elite minority maintains its position through built in advantages

- 1) Permanently poor
 - a) Aborigines
 - b) Immigrants without English language
 - c) Single parents
 - d) Unemployed with families
 - e) Sick breadwinners
 - f) Aged people
 - g) Women

2) Elites – people within a group or groups occupying superior positions in society because members of these groups have qualities of ‘excellence or distinction’.

OR

- a) Members of the elite themselves as having these qualities
 - i) Political elites (state and federal – even local – politicians)
 - ii) Administrative elites (senior public servants)
 - iii) Business elites (managing directors of companies)
 - iv) Cultural elites (opera singers, film makers, musicians)
 - v) Knowledge elites (university staff)
 - vi) Trade unions elites (TU leaders of powerful trade unions)

Perhaps together these elites form a **ruling class** –
 And also perhaps all of them are in conflict with each other –

The **ruling class** concept may be misleading – maybe the more likely situation in Australia is a continuing saga of conflict and compromise between different pressure groups and between differing values, attitudes and beliefs.

Chances are

Person A	Person B	Person C
Live in Dapto Brickies labourer 25 years old Female Year 10 certificate	Live in Balgownie Clerical for Integral Energy 25 years old Male Year 12 HSC	Lives in Austinmer Computer programmer at the University 25 years old Male Uni degree

Who do you think has a better **chance** and why?

Complete the following table as a class activity

Indicator	Response
Best suburb	
Best job	
Best clothes	
Best holiday location	
Best night spot	
Best race	
Best qualification	
Best gender	
Best cultural background	
Best religion	

Class

- Social class is an important social division – but what is social class?
- Society is comprised of groups of people in different jobs, earning different incomes, leading different lifestyles

- 1) How many different classes are there?
- 2) How are they different?
- 3) How do they change over time?
- 4) How are they created?
- 5) Is it possible to move from one class to another?
- 6) Evidence form individuals' incomes, wealth, lifestyle and occupation
- 7) Some jobs and some suburbs are more desirable
- 8) Ranking is easy on a social hierarchy
- 9) Richest people in Australia in 2000's
 - a) few women
 - b) **No** Aborigines
 - c) Rural industry representation was high
 - d) More listing appearing under the banners of
 - i) speculators
 - ii) Media telecommunications
 - iii) Internet
 - iv) travel
 - v) Property
 - e) A significant representation of people who were political refugees from the '40's and '50's

Have a Guesstimate

Estimate the salary for the following occupations:

Occupation	Salary/Wage
Psychologist	
School teacher	
Bricklayer	
Plumber/dunny diver/drain surgeon/ blind mullet trainer	
Clerk	
Check out chick/dude	
Economist	
Environmentalist	
Lawyer	
Horticulturalist	

What criteria would be useful to estimate these incomes?

What would **you** expect to be judged on if you were trying to establish your credentials?

- 40,000 people (in Australia) sleep on the street each night
- Church and charitable groups run hostels
- 1/7 of our children live in poverty – that's ½ million kids
- In poorer economic times, like now and into the near future, there can be 360,000 – 400,000 families in this country with one or more children under the age of 15 years who had no family member employed