

Understanding Non-Voters of Victorian State and Council Elections

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Foreword

Political scientists generally assume that citizens use a cost-benefit calculus when deciding whether to vote. When the benefits of voting outweigh the costs, we expect individuals to cast a ballot. However, the relative costs and benefits of voting vary across political systems and across individuals. A vast literature of empirical research has identified a wide range of factors that contribute to the decision to vote, grouped loosely at two different levels: the institutional level, and the individual level.

Institutional-level factors that shape citizens' decision to vote include electoral systems, type of legislature, level of government, and electoral administration. For instance, electoral systems that produce fewer 'wasted votes' – i.e. more proportional systems, such as the Victorian Legislative Council – tend to attract higher voter turnout. 'First past the post' or plurality systems attract lower turnout, presumably because citizens understand that the likelihood of their particular vote making a difference to the outcome is too small to bother voting. In federal systems, elections for the national legislature attract more voters than state or local elections, and in presidential systems elections for the presidency attract more voters than legislative election. In short, when citizens perceive their vote as affecting who is elected to powerful bodies or roles, the benefits of voting outweigh the costs.

Electoral administration can also increase or decrease the cost of voting. Australian electoral management is among the world's most efficient and well-regarded. Elections on Saturdays, expansive pre-poll and election-day voting options, and public information campaigns (in a range of languages beyond English) all lower the costs of voting for individuals. Compulsory voting laws work in conjunction to increase the costs of not voting, meaning that for most Australians, the cost-benefit calculus leads them to vote as a habit.

We can also apply the cost-benefit calculus to differences in voter turnout at the individual level. All else being equal, citizens with higher education qualifications and greater household income are more likely to vote, as the costs of acquiring information about the election and getting to a polling booth are comparatively lower. Older citizens are more likely to vote, probably due to a combination of accumulated education and wealth, greater confidence in their political decision-making, and free time to attend a polling booth. We are starting to learn more about the role of personality in the decision to vote: people with high rates of civic duty, altruism, conscientiousness, extroversion, and disagreeableness vote at higher rates than their opposites. Least surprisingly, those interested in politics or who strongly identify with a political party vote at the highest rate: engaged citizens gain larger benefits from the act of voting.

This report commissioned by the Victorian Electoral Commission aligns closely with the international literature on voter turnout, while contributing some unique insights. We know very little about why people choose not to vote even under strongly enforced compulsory voting laws. The findings that lack of knowledge about elections, poor health and distance from a polling booth (be it across seas or just down the road) decrease voter turnout place Victorian elections alongside elections all over the world. Because of compulsory voting, we see only few non-voters describe themselves as 'unwilling to vote'. Unwillingness is the most difficult barrier for electoral management bodies to help voters overcome.

The findings and recommended responses outlined in this report draw on international best practice electoral administration: lower the costs of attending a polling booth (whether on Australian soil or abroad), provide sufficient public information that all voters can easily learn about upcoming elections, and focus resources on underrepresented groups such as young citizens, residentially mobile citizens, and those in poor health. The research is of outstanding quality and should inform targeted and effective policies to increase both aggregate voter turnout but also participation in groups that are often overlooked in the electorate. I commend the research to the Commission.

Dr Jill Sheppard

School of Politics and International Relations

The Australian National University

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from the study into Understanding Non-Voters of Victorian State and Council Elections, conducted for the Victorian Electoral Commission. This research comprised two stages – an initial stage of exploratory research of six qualitative focus groups conducted in February 2018, followed by a quantitative mixed-mode survey, combining online and telephone data collection, conducted during March and April 2018.

The research participants were selected from the VEC's database of non-voters from the 2014 Victorian State election and from the 2016 Victorian council elections. The qualitative component of the research comprised of three focus groups in each of Melbourne and Traralgon. There were 1,033 non-voters who participated in the quantitative survey, including 439 who didn't vote in the 2016 council elections, 392 who didn't vote in the 2014 State election, and 202 who did not vote in both of those elections.

Reasons for not voting

The reasons for not voting in State and/or council elections fall into three broad areas: lack of availability, lack of knowledge, and unwillingness to vote.

Nearly one in three 2014 State election non-voters were overseas during that election

For the 2014 State election, lack of availability was the main reason for not voting, applying to 58% of State non-voters. The main reasons underpinning this lack of availability were being overseas (32%), being interstate (9%), and being busy (7%) at the time of the election. The next most common reason for not voting in the 2014 State election was an unwillingness to vote (14%). The specific reasons that underpin this unwillingness include not believing in voting such as for religious reasons (9%), and not being interested in voting (4%). Reasons encompassing a lack of knowledge apply to 12% of non-voters from the 2014 State election. Lack of knowledge includes not knowing about the election (5%), forgetting about the election (4%), and not knowing who to vote for (2%).

Lack of availability and knowledge the main reasons for not voting in the 2016 council elections

For the 2016 council elections, both lack of availability (38%) and lack of knowledge (35%) were key reasons for not voting. The specific reasons that underpin lack of availability were being overseas (15%) and being busy (10%), while for lack of knowledge they were not knowing about the election (15%) and forgetting about the election (10%). Lack of willingness played a minor role in not voting in the 2016 council elections (6%). Out of date enrolment details was a more common reason for not voting in the 2016 council elections (15%) as compared to the 2014 State election (9%).

The largest demographic differences for not voting were metro non-voters being more likely than regional non-voters to be overseas during the 2014 State election and, for the 2016 council elections, younger non-voters being more likely to not know the elections were on, as compared to older non-voters.

Factors that make voting difficult

Lack of familiarity with candidates a larger barrier to voting in council elections

The main factor that makes it difficult to vote in both State and council elections is lack of familiarity with local candidates. Lack of familiarity with candidates is a more challenging factor for voting in council elections where 73% of council non-voters agree that lack of familiarity with candidates makes voting difficult, as compared to 49% for State

elections. Similarly, while not knowing when elections are held and not being familiar with State and council issues are the next two most prevalent factors that make voting difficult, these two factors are more of a barrier to voting in council elections, as compared to State elections.

For State elections this lack of familiarity with both candidates and issues, as well as not knowing when elections are held, are more common for non-voters aged 18 to 34 as compared to voters aged 35+. For council non-voters, these three challenges are more common for non-voters aged 18 to 54, as compared to non-voters aged 55+, and for metro non-voters as compared to regional non-voters.

Awareness of election date

Low awareness of scheduled election dates

There is low awareness of the scheduled election dates, particularly for council elections. 27% of State non-voters know when the scheduled election date is for State elections, while only 12% of council non-voters know when the scheduled council elections date is. Non-voters aged 18-34 are less likely to know when the State and council elections dates are, as compared to non-voters aged 35+.

Interest in, and knowledge of, politics and elections

Less interest in council politics and elections than that for State level

Non-voters' level of knowledge and interest in council, State, Federal and overseas politics and elections was assessed. Non-voters report the least amount of interest in, and knowledge of, council government, as compared to the other three levels of government. Federal government attracts the highest level of interest and non-voters also expressed being more knowledgeable of that level of government. While regional non-voters have a similar level of interest in, and knowledge of, council politics and elections as metro non-voters, their level of interest in State, Federal and overseas politics and elections is lower than that of metro non-voters.

Engagement with voting, politics and government

Voting seen as an important part of the democratic process

A majority of non-voters (86%) agree that voting is an important part of the democratic process, with a minority (29%) agreeing they only vote because they will receive a fine if they don't vote. More than half of non-voters claim to be engaged with politics with 56% agreeing that they often discuss politics and political issues. Approximately one quarter of non-voters appear to be disengaged with politics with 26% agreeing that 'it makes no difference who you vote for'. Older non-voters appear to be more politically engaged than younger non-voters as they are more likely to agree that they enjoy reading about politics and government. Metro non-voters also appear to be more politically engaged than regional non-voters. Older non-voters and metro non-voters are more likely to agree that State government politicians clearly understand the issues in their local area as compared to younger and regional non-voters respectively.

Compulsory voting and fines

More support for compulsory State elections than council elections

Of the total non-voting population, 65% agree that State elections should be compulsory while 46% agree that council elections should be compulsory. Metro non-voters are significantly more likely than regional non-voters to agree that State elections should be compulsory, but this is not the case for council elections where metro and regional non-voters have similar levels of agreement about compulsory voting. 37% of non-voters agree that there should

be a fine for non-voting. Support for fining non-voters is higher among metro non-voters (39%) as compared to regional non-voters (29%).

Four strategies to increase voter participation

1. Better enable eligible voters who are outside of Victoria during State elections to vote

41% of non-voters from the 2014 State election didn't vote because they were overseas (32%) or interstate (9%) at the time of the election. This group of non-voters tend to be politically engaged, from Melbourne and with higher than average household income. Assist this group to vote via online voting, SMS reminders on election day and an app with information about elections and candidates. The messages that would most encourage this group to vote are 'Every Vote Counts' and 'Vote – it's your responsibility'.

2. Facilitate greater engagement with State elections among regional non-voters.

16% of non-voters from the 2014 State election are from regional areas who have expressed lack of willingness reasons for not voting in previous State elections. This group of non-voters have low political engagement, below average education and income, and are more common in regional areas. Increase State election participation among this group by engaging them in the election process to generate a willingness to participate. Use SMS reminders on election day and use the message 'Vote in time to avoid a fine' to encourage voting.

3. Target younger non-voters through digital channels to equip them with the information they need to participate in elections

48% of non-voters from the 2014 State and 2016 council elections are aged under 45 and have expressed lack of knowledge as being a barrier to voting in previous State and council elections. This group of younger non-voters are moderately engaged with politics and elections. A majority are not familiar with their State election candidates and don't know when council elections are held. Less than half report reading all or most of their post. Of this group, 46% find it difficult to vote on State election day. Assist this group to vote by using digital and online channels such as online voting, SMS reminders, an election app, and social media to inform and engage this group. The message that would most encourage this group to vote is 'Vote in time to avoid a fine'.

4. Raise awareness of council elections and candidates

35% of non-voters from the 2016 Council elections cited lack of knowledge reasons for failing to vote. This group of non-voters has a similar demographic profile to the total non-voter population and is moderately politically engaged. Of this group, 75% don't know when council elections are held. Increase council election participation with this group through raising awareness of the council election date and sending an SMS reminder when the election is taking place. A one-page comparison of candidates and issues would assist this group to overcome lack of awareness of candidates and issues.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) has a vital role in upholding the democratic political system in Victoria, with a remit to conduct elections for State parliament, local councils as well as certain statutory elections and polls, and commercial and community elections. The VEC's strategic outcomes are focussed on maximising participation by (eligible) Victorians in the democratic process.

Despite voting in Federal, State and local council elections being compulsory (and non-voting potentially punishable) for all eligible and enrolled citizens under the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, a sizeable portion of the enrolled population in Victoria fail to 'turn out' and vote in State and Council elections. The database provided by the VEC indicates that 265,756 electors failed to vote at the 2014 State election; while a much higher number of 1,191,025 did not vote at the 2016 council elections.

Aside from the impact non-participation in elections has on the integrity of the democratic process, the administrative burden on the VEC to contact non-voters to ascertain reasons for non-participation and (where necessary) serve infringement notices is substantial, as well as being an impost on non-voters themselves. In the interest of minimising the scale of this burden, the VEC commissioned the Social Research Centre (SRC) to conduct a comprehensive survey of Victorian eligible non-voters.

This report presents the results of the 2018 Research into Non-Voters at Victorian State and Council Elections

1.1.1. Research Objectives

The main aim of this project was to identify opportunities for initiatives the VEC could implement to encourage non-voters to change their behaviour and vote in future elections.

1.2. Methodology

This research comprised two stages, undertaken sequentially – an initial stage of exploratory qualitative focus groups and discussions, followed by a quantitative mixed-mode survey – combining online and telephone.

The six qualitative focus groups were conducted between 13 February and 24 February 2018. The quantitative survey was conducted between 19 March and 16 April 2018.

1.2.1. Qualitative sample structure and recruitment

The database of non-voters held by the VEC is extensive, providing for all non-voters their names and addresses, alongside an assessment of which non-voter category they fall into (for state election non-voters there is more extensive segmentation based on participation in the last four State elections, whilst for council non-voters, we only know that they did not vote at their last council election).

Three groups were held in central Melbourne (comprising non-voters resident across Metro Melbourne) and three in Traralgon (comprising non-voters resident in the LaTrobe Valley towns). In each location, the three groups comprised one group of voters who had not voted in the 2014 State Election (but who had voted in previous State elections, or who would have been first time voters at that State election), one group who had not voted in multiple State elections, and one group who had not voted in the 2016 Council elections.

Table 1 **Qualitative sample structure**

Group	Location	Non-voter type
1	Melbourne	2014 State one-off
2	Melbourne	State habitual
3	Melbourne	2016 council
4	Traralgon	2014 State one-off
5	Traralgon	State habitual
6	Traralgon	2016 council

The sample drawn comprised non-voters for whom VEC has a record of both an e-mail address and a telephone number. Prior to telephone contact, a Primary Approach Letter (PAL) was sent by e-mail to potential respondents. After the PALs were despatched, and sufficient time allowed for these to be received, read and absorbed, telephone contact was made to recruit them into a focus group. The recruitment of qualitative respondents followed a detailed ‘script’ developed by the Social Research Centre to ensure that the SRC work to industry standards (regarding, for example, informed consent, confidentiality and data protection). Individuals recruited for a group were sent a confirmation e-mail or letter, containing the time and date of the interview or group and providing supporting information.

1.2.2. Qualitative discussion guide and analysis

The SRC worked closely with the VEC to develop a discussion guide for the focus groups, aiming for content which could be covered in 75-90 minutes. When designing the discussion guide, the SRC were mindful of a number of issues, particularly:

- accepting that some respondents may have little interest in, knowledge of, or negative attitudes towards VEC
- ensuring that respondents feel that they can be candid about their views and concerns. This means that we will need to be careful to reassure respondents about anonymity, about the data we share with VEC, and about how we will report the survey findings – so that results will not be attributable or identifiable to individual respondents.

The groups were, with the consent of respondents, digitally recorded. The recordings of interviews and groups were subsequently transcribed (by a professional transcription agency), with the written transcript first anonymised, and then coded for analysis purposes using specialist NVivo software. The defined analysis process develops from the transcripts. The key themes and topics were identified through the discussion guide and through an initial review of the qualitative data to develop an analysis coding hierarchy. A summary report of the qualitative findings was provided to the VEC on March 8, 2018. A fundamental aspect of the analysis of qualitative data was to directly inform the quantitative survey instrument.

1.2.3. Quantitative sample structure and recruitment

The quantitative survey was conducted as a mixed-mode survey – combining online and telephone – in order to maximise the availability of the survey to be accessed (thereby minimising coverage error) and to gather information that allowed for the calibration of the sample to overcome any coverage error that arose due to difference in profile between the groups with varying contact details.

The sample design for the VEC Non-Voter study was developed to ensure that the respondents contacted for each of the modes (CATI, online, push2web) represent the non-voter population in terms of non-voter type (council, state habitual and state one-off) as well as location for Council non-voters. The first step in drawing the sample was to split the combined non-voter database into one of three cohorts - telephone, online and push2web - based on what type of contact details are available for each record. Records that include a telephone number are allocated to the telephone cohort. Records that include an email address, and weren't allocated to the telephone cohort, are allocated to the email cohort. Records without both a telephone number and email address are allocated to the push2web cohort.

Non-voter Type	Population	Selected		
		CATI	Online	Push2Web
Council only	459,587	2,243	2,317	820
Mixed	78,112	1,237	1,022	592
State Habitual	42,799	217	215	162
State One-off	131,723	1,303	1,446	426
Total Sample	712,221	5,000	5,000	2,000
Completed Surveys	1,033	833	184	16

For the telephone component targets of n=500 completed surveys were set for each of State non-voters and council non-voters. As respondents who were both State and council non-voters were allocated to both quotas n=833 interviews were required to achieve the State and council non-voter quotas.

Each person in the online sample was sent a survey invitation via an email which contained a unique survey click. The wording used in this email was based on the qualitative Primary Approach Letter, and refined based on the findings from the focus groups. Two reminders emails were sent to people who hadn't completed the survey, in order to maximise the response rate. A total of n=184 email recipients completed the online survey.

The push-to-web sample were posted a letter inviting them to participate in the survey. As per the email invitation, the wording used in this letter was based on the qualitative Primary Approach Letter and contained a simple study URL where respondents could enter their unique 6-character login code to participate in the survey online. A total of n=16 push-to-web recipients completed the online survey.

1.2.4. Questionnaire design and development

The questionnaire content was informed directly from the preliminary qualitative stage. Input and feedback from the VEC was used to finalise the questionnaire. After the first day of telephone interviewing a debriefing session was held with the project interviewers and supervisor. Feedback from this debrief was used to guide final refinements to the questionnaire.

At the start of the questionnaire respondents were asked to confirm whether they had voted in either/or the 2014 Victorian State election or the 2016 Victorian council elections. Respondents who could confirm that they had not voted in either of these elections, or were not sure if they had voted in either election, were allowed to complete the survey.

The average questionnaire length (completion time) for the survey was 14.3 minutes. The full questionnaire is provided as Appendix 1.

1.3. Analysis

The reasons for not voting in State elections are compared with the reasons for not voting in Council elections, to offer a point of comparison. Throughout the report, comparisons are also made between different demographic groups where significant differences occur between those groups. The most frequent demographic differences were found to occur between older and younger age groups, and between metro (Melbourne) and regional non-voters. When comparing results for different demographic groups only results where there are statistically significant differences are commented upon.

1.3.1. Weighting

The final survey sample was weighted to ensure the sample is representative of the full population of non-voters (as defined by the database provided by the VEC). The variables used to weight were age, gender, non-voter type and the SA4 location classification. Refer to Appendix 3 for the weighting benchmarks.

1.3.2. Significance testing

Statistical testing was undertaken to establish whether the responses of subgroups were statistically significant. A z-test statistical test is used to test the difference in proportions for the same survey question for two mutually exclusive sub-groups. Where differences across subgroups are highlighted in the report commentary, unless otherwise noted, it implies that a statistically significant difference at a 95% confidence level has been established.

1.4. About this report

Unless otherwise specified, all tables and figures presented in this report show survey estimates. In some tables and figures, it may be noted that totals shown and / or mentioned in the accompanying text differ slightly from the apparent sum of their component elements. This is due to the effects of rounding.

Where significant differences are presented in tables, an asterisk (*) indicates values that are significantly higher than the value it is being compared to

1.5. Ethics and quality assurance

All data collection activities were undertaken in accordance with ISO 20252 quality standards, the Australian Market and Social Research Society code of ethics, and the Market and Social Research Privacy Principles.

2. Reasons for not voting

Survey respondents were asked why they didn't vote in the most recent State and/or council elections. They were also asked to provide all the reasons that contributed to them not voting in any previous State and/or council election. Reasons for not voting fall into three broad areas:

“I didn't know there was one on, I was living overseas for a year and a half, so just oblivious” (Group 1: Melbourne State one-off)

- Availability – this includes being overseas, interstate, or not in their local area during election; having work, social or family commitments, or being unwell, on the day of the election.
- Knowledge – this includes not knowing there was an election on, the date of the election or when to return their vote; not knowing where to go to vote; not knowing who to vote for; not knowing that they were eligible to vote.
- Unwilling – including there being no-one the respondent wanted to vote for; thinking their vote would not make a difference; voting being confusing and complicated; objections to compulsory voting; not voting for religious reasons

2.1. Reasons for not voting in State vs council elections

2.1.1. Reasons for not voting in the last election

The main reason for not voting in the 2014 Victorian State election was not being available to vote (see Figure 1). Nearly one-third (32%) of State non-voters claim they were overseas at the time of the election, with being interstate (9%) and being busy (7%) the other reasons for not being available to vote at the time of the election. While availability is also the main reason for not voting in the 2016 Victorian council elections it is not as pronounced a reason as with the State election. Being overseas (15%) and being busy (10%) were the main reasons for being unavailable for the recent council elections.

“I didn't vote in the last election was because I actually didn't know that an election was happening, which means it wasn't very well advertised” (Group 3: Melbourne council)

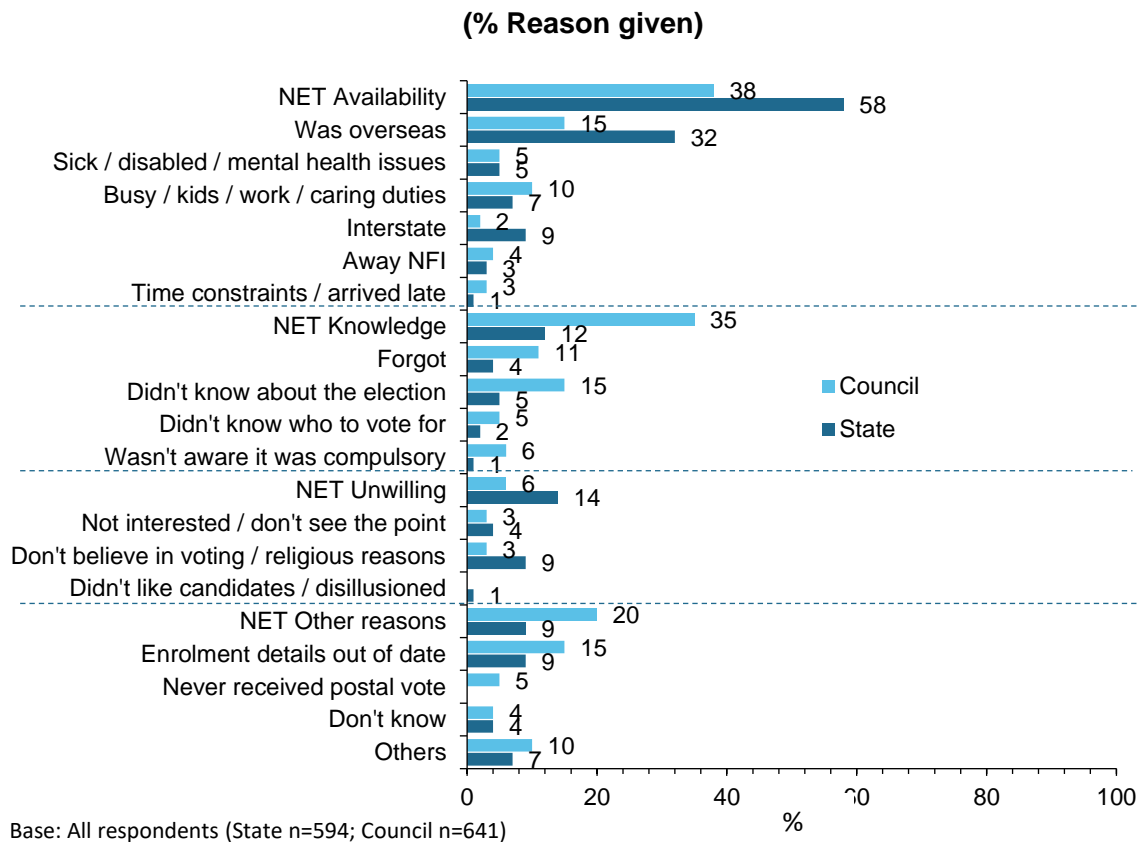
Lack of knowledge is the other main reason for not voting in the most recent council elections. Over one in seven (15%) Victorians didn't know that the council elections were taking place, while 11% forgot that it was happening. For the 2014 State election, lack of knowledge (12%) was a relatively minor reason for not voting.

Lack of willingness (14%) to vote is a secondary reason for not voting in the 2014 State Election, primarily driven by a lack of belief in voting (9%), such as for religious reasons. Lack of willingness is a minor reason for not voting in the 2016 council elections (6%).

Out of date enrolment details is a relatively minor issue for both council non-voters (15%) and State non-voters (9%), while 1 in 20 council non-voters say they did not receive their postal vote.

Figure 1 Reasons for not voting in the last State and council elections

A2. In your own words, please describe your reasons for not voting in the 2014 Victorian State election? A4. In your own words, please describe your reasons for not voting in the 2016 Victorian council election for (INSERT LGA)?



Differences between demographic groups, including age, gender and locations, have also been examined to see if there are any statistically significant differences for not voting among these groups.

For the 2014 State election, being overseas at the time of the election was a more common reason for not voting among metro non-voters (39%) as compared to those from regional areas (13%).

Conversely, for regional non-voters, having out of date enrolment details (14%) was a more common reason than for metro non-voters (7%). Older non-voters aged 55+ were more likely to not have voted because they don't believe in voting, for example for religious reasons (17%), as compared to non-voters aged under 35 (6%). Not believing in voting was a reason for 11% of non-voters aged 35 to 54. The only statistically significant difference for not voting between female and male non-voters was women were more likely to have been unable to vote due to having health issues (10%), such as being sick, as compared to men (2%).

For the 2016 council elections, being overseas was a more common reason for those aged 55+ (24%) as compared to those aged 35-54 (12%). Being overseas was the reason for not voting among 15% of those aged 18 to 34. Not knowing about the election was a more common reason for not voting among those aged 18 to 34 (15%) and 35 to 54 (19%) as compared to voters aged 55+ (3%). There were no significant differences between metro and regional Victorians for not voting in the 2016 council elections. Women were more likely to not have known that the election was on (20%) and to have not received their postal vote (8%), as compared to men (10% and 3% respectively).

Dr Jill Sheppard: *The effect of poor health on voting turnout remains understudied. This finding that women are more likely than men to abstain due to poor health goes some way to redressing that. Broadly, we know that chronic sickness, mental illness, and disability lead to lower rates of voting, but we do not know much about how this affects electoral outcomes. Further, we do not know – but might assume – that being unable to vote leads to other poor outcomes for individuals with health conditions. However, we do know that being disenfranchised generally leads people to feel less satisfied with the democratic system, less able to have their voice heard, and less likely to vote in the future.*

2.1.2. Reasons for not voting in any past election

Non-voters were asked to nominate all the reasons that contributed to them not voting in any previous State and council elections. For this question, all possible reasons were presented to respondents who could select all that applied to them.

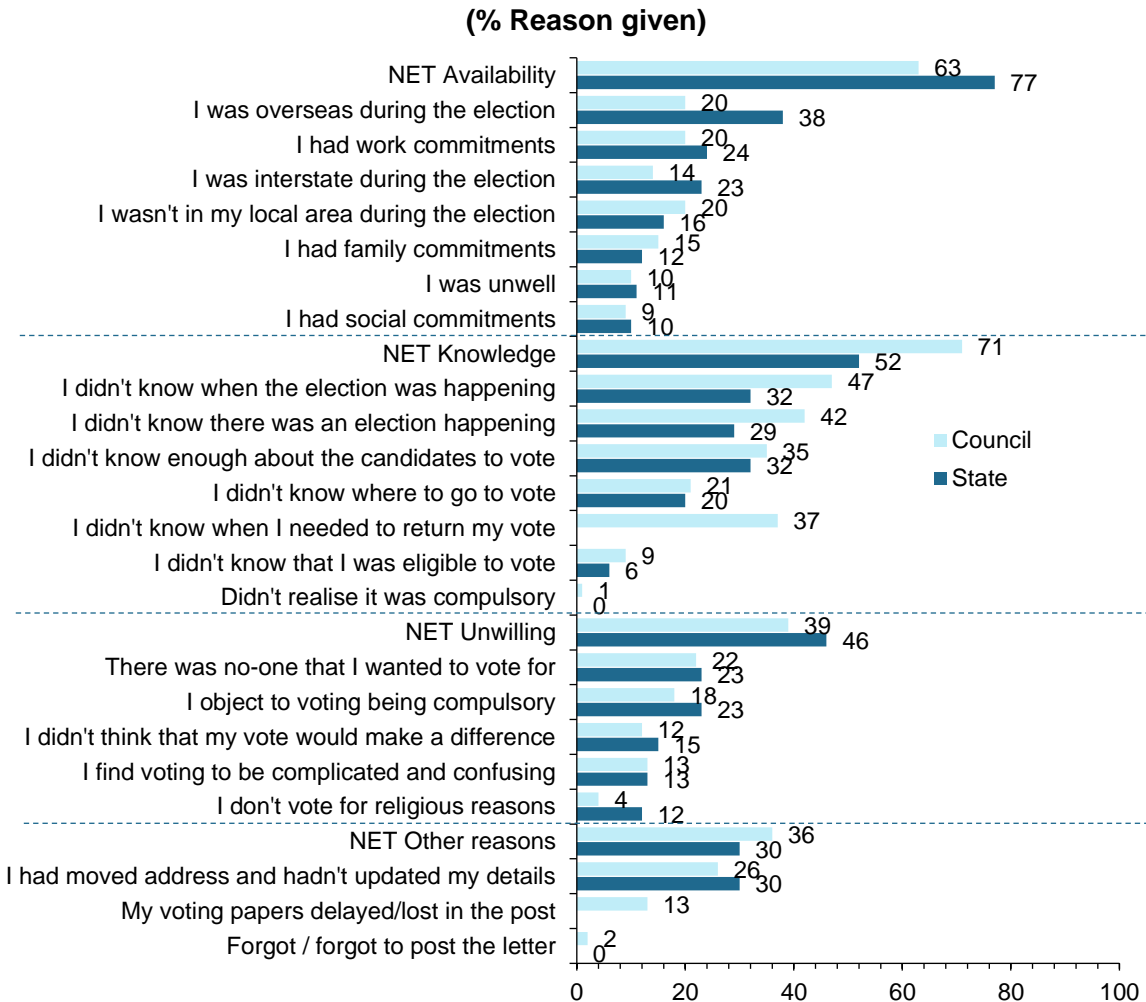
“When you don’t see anyone that you would want to put your vote behind, and your time is valuable and you can afford the fine.” (Group 1: Melbourne State one-off)

The main reason for not voting in previous State elections is lack of availability (77%) whereas for council elections, lack of knowledge is the main reason for not voting. For State elections, being overseas (38%) is the main factor limiting availability. While lack of availability is also a key reason for council non-voters not voting (63%), the main reason for this group not voting is a lack of knowledge (71%). For council non-voters, lack of knowledge includes not knowing when the election was happening (47%), not knowing there was an election on (42%), not knowing when to return the vote (37%) and not knowing enough about the candidates (35%). Lack of willingness played a role in not voting for both State (46%) and council (39%) non-voters. The main reasons for lacking the will to vote was there being no-one they wanted to vote for and objecting to voting being compulsory, for both State and council non-voters. Moving address and not updating details is also a prominent reason for not voting for both State (30%) and council (26%) non-voters.

“I normally do overtime on Saturday... I’m like I’ll just pay the fine.” (Group 2: Melbourne State non-voter)

Figure 2 Reasons for not voting in previous State and council elections

B1/C1. Here are some reasons other people have given for not voting in Victorian < State / council > elections. Please indicate all the reasons that have contributed to you personally not voting in previous Victorian < State / council > elections



Base: All respondents (State n=594; Council n=641)

When comparing demographic groups some reasons for not voting stand out. Having work commitments is a more common reason for younger Victorians not voting in State elections with this being a reason for 24% of those aged 18 to 34, 26% of those aged 35 to 54, as compared to 9% for those aged 55+. Thinking that their vote won't make a difference is a more common reason (19%) for Victorians aged 18-34 as compared to those aged 35 to 54 (9%). For Victorians aged 18 to 34 lack of knowledge reasons (66%) are more common as compared to those aged 35 to 54 (49%) and aged 55+ (31%). The main reasons for lack of knowledge among those aged 18 to 34 are not knowing when the election was happening (44%), not knowing enough about the candidates (43%), not knowing there was an election happening (37%), and not knowing where to vote (29%). Men were more likely to be working on the day of the election (27%) as compared to women (17%), while women were more likely to have been unwell on the day of the election (17%) as compared to men (7%). Metro non-voters were more likely to be overseas (44%) as compared to regional non-voters (20%). Lack of willingness to vote is more common among regional (56%) non-voters as compared to metro non-voters (43%). The reasons underpinning this lack of willingness among regional non-voters was there

being no-one they wanted to vote for (33% vs 19%), objection to compulsory voting (33% vs 20%), and religious reasons (20% vs 10%).

The main demographic differences for not voting in council elections have occurred between different age groups, as well as some differences by gender. It should be noted that while there were varying reasons between metro and regional non-voters for not voting in State elections, as noted above, there are no significant differences for not voting in council elections for these two groups. While regional voters, for example, were more likely to express an unwillingness to vote in State elections (56%) than metro voters (43%), there was no greater unwillingness to vote in council elections for regional non-voters (39%) as compared to those from metro areas (40%).

“I didn’t even know it was happening and someone said, “Did you vote?” and I said, “No.” And so I was annoyed.” (Group 2: Melbourne State non-voter)

For Victorian council non-voters aged under 55, lack of knowledge is a more common reason for not voting, 79% of those aged 18 to 34 and 69% of those aged 35 to 54 mentioned a lack of knowledge reason as compared to 55% of those aged 55+. The most prominent lack of knowledge reasons for younger voters were not knowing when the election was happening (18 to 34 = 53%, 35 to 54 = 49%), not knowing there was an election on (18 to 34 = 47%, 35 to 54 = 44%), not knowing when to return the vote (18 to 34 = 44%, 35 to 54 = 35%) and not knowing enough about the candidates (18 to 34 = 42%, 35 to 54 = 30%).

Female council non-voters were more likely to have not known there was an election on (47%) and to find voting to be complicated and confusing (17%) than male non-voters (37% and 9% respectively). Male council non-voters were more likely to have had work commitments (25%) or social commitments (13%) as compared to female non-voters (15% and 5% respectively).

2.1.3. Factors that make voting difficult

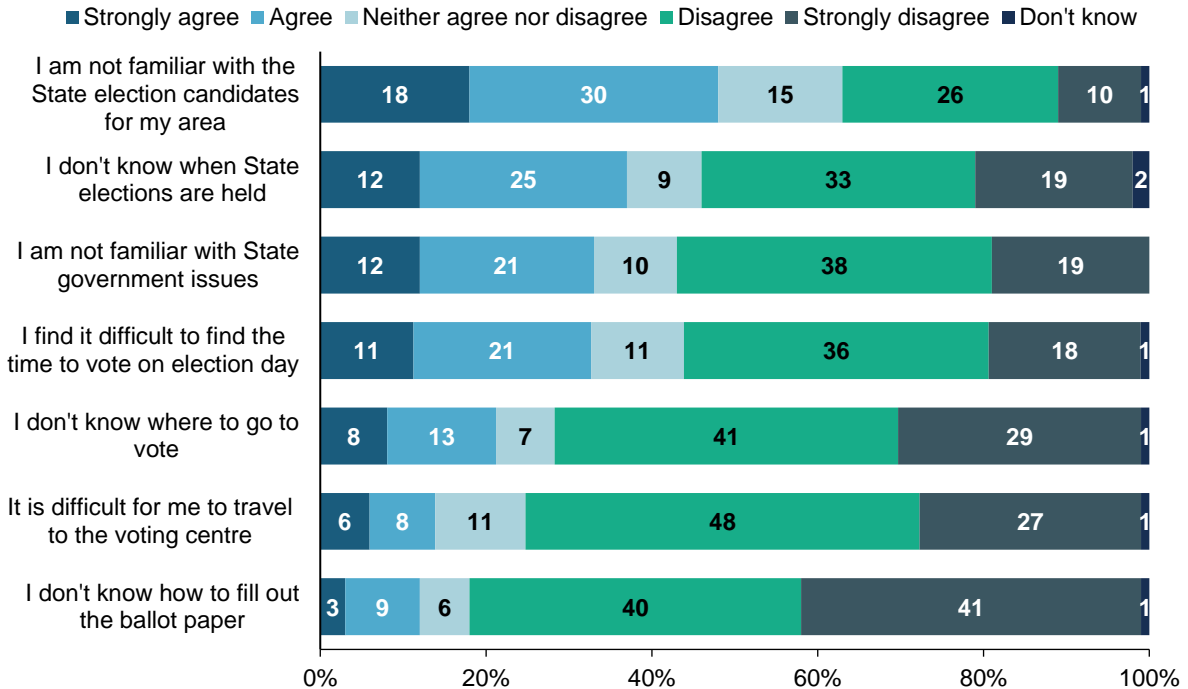
Non-voters were asked for their level of agreement or disagreement on a range of factors that can make voting in State and council elections difficult.

State non-voters’ lack of familiarity with candidates stands out as the main difficulty when voting in State elections (see Figure 3). The other three main factors that make it difficult to vote in State elections are not knowing when they are held, lack of familiarity with State government issues and difficulty in finding the time to vote on election day. Not knowing where to vote, difficulty in travelling to a voting centre, and not knowing how to fill out the ballot paper pose relatively low difficulty for voting.

Dr Jill Sheppard: The Australian electoral system – with its multi-level structure, and bicameral parliaments at both state and federal levels – is widely considered one of the most complicated in the world. Voting in Australian elections is comparatively complicated. This research finds that our complex ballot paper is less of a concern than we previously thought, with only 12 per cent of Victorian non-voters agreeing that the ballot paper has contributed to their abstention.

Figure 3 Factors that make voting in State elections difficult

B3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that each factor makes voting in State elections difficult for you?



Base: All State non-voters (n=594)

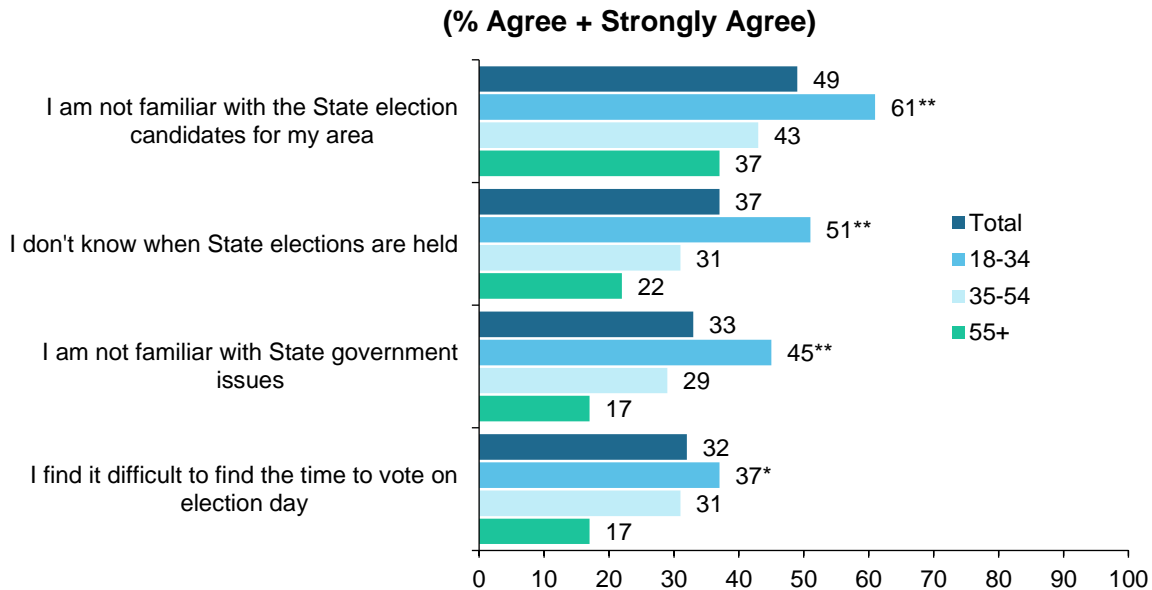
“I don't know who my representative is... I wouldn't know. There's no face.”

(Group 2: Melbourne State non-voter)

Younger non-voters find it more difficult to participate in State elections (see Figure 4). State non-voters aged 18-34 find it more difficult due to lack of familiarity with candidates and issues, and not knowing when state elections are held, as compared to those aged 35+. Additionally, non-voters aged 18-34 have more difficulty finding the time to vote as compared to those aged 55+.

Figure 4 Factors that make voting in State elections difficult

C3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that each factor makes voting in State elections difficult for you?



Base: All state non-voters (Total n=594; 18-34 n=280; 35-54 n=212; 55+ n=98)

*Significantly higher than 55+, **higher than both other age groups, at 95% confidence level

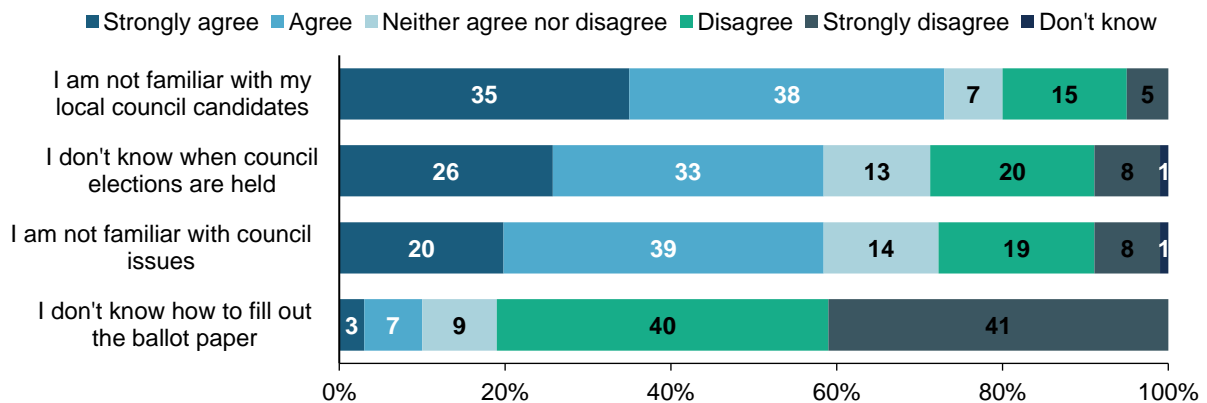
“Particularly maybe at council level, you really just don’t know well enough the policies, and what that person is aiming to deliver for you against someone else they’re up against” (Group 3: Melbourne council)

Dr Jill Sheppard: Electoral authorities and political parties in every advanced democracy struggle to convince eligible voters to cast a ballot in all but the most salient, prominent elections. In the United States, presidential elections attract turnout of around 55 per cent of the voting aged population, while mid-term congressional elections only attract 35 per cent turnout. Mayoral elections in the United States regularly attract less than 20 per cent of eligible voters. In short, the problem of lower order election turnout is widespread, and the difference between Victorian state and council election turnout is comparatively benign.

For council non-voters (see Figure 5) lack of familiarity with candidates is the factor that makes it most difficult to vote, with a much higher proportion of council non-voters (agree/strongly agree = 73%) expressing it as a factor as compared to State non-voters (48%). Not knowing when council elections are held and lack of familiarity with council elections also stand out as being stronger contributors to making voting in council elections difficult, as compared to State elections.

Figure 5 Factors that make voting in council elections difficult

C3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that each factor makes voting in council elections difficult for you?

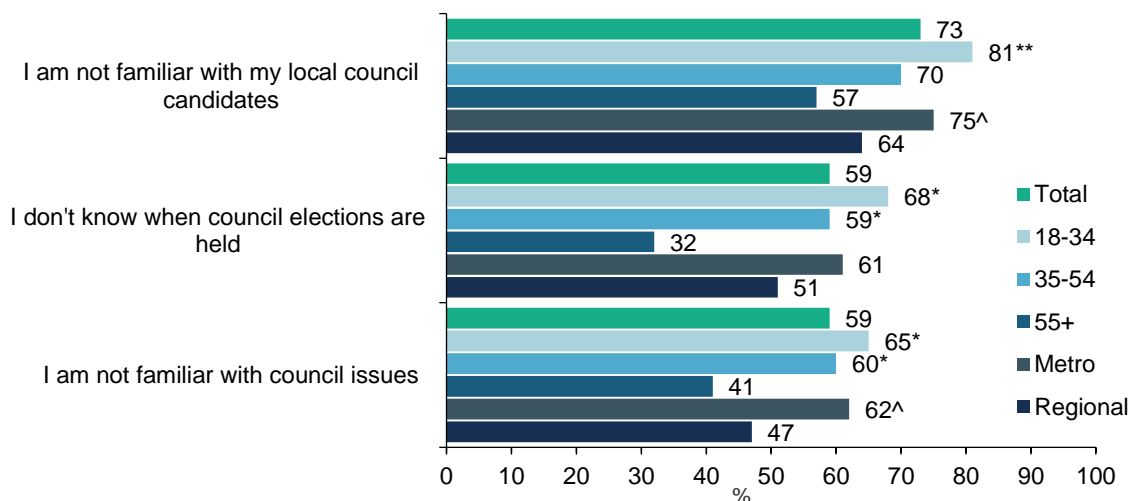


Base: All council non-voters (n=641)

Like State elections, non-voters aged 18-34 find it more difficult to vote in council elections due to lack of familiarity with candidates and issues (81%), as compared to non-voters aged 35 to 54 (70%) and 55+ (57%) (see Figure 6). Council non-voters, both those aged 18 to 34 and 35 to 54, find voting in council elections more difficult than those aged 55+ due to not knowing when council elections are held (68% and 59% vs 32%) and not being familiar with council issues (65% and 60% vs 41%). Metro non-voters find voting in Council elections more difficult than regional non-voters due to lack of familiarity with candidates (75% vs 64%) and not being familiar with council issues (62% vs 47%)

Figure 6 Factors that make voting in council elections difficult

(% Agree + Strongly Agree)



Base: All state non-voters (Total n=641; 18-34 n=274; 35-54 n=262; 55+ n=103; Metro n=519; Regional n=121)

**Significantly higher than 55+, *higher than both other age groups, ^higher than regional, at 95% confidence level

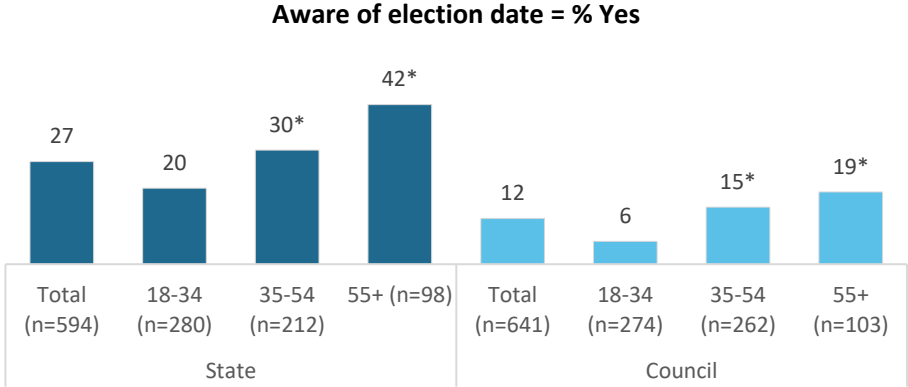
2.1.4. Awareness of election date

State non-voters were asked if they are aware that Victorian State elections are held every four years on the last Saturday in November. Council non-voters were asked if they are aware that Victorian council elections are held every four years on the fourth Saturday in October.

While there is greater awareness of the State election date (27%) than of the date of council elections (12%), most non-voters don't know when the elections dates are (see Figure 7). For both State and council elections non-voters aged 18-34 are less likely to know the date of the elections as compared to voters aged 35 to 54 and 55+.

Figure 7 Awareness of election dates

B5. Before today were you aware that Victorian State elections are held every four years on the last Saturday in November? / C5. Before today were you aware that Victorian council elections are held every four years on the fourth Saturday in October?



Base: All respondents
 *Significantly higher than 18-34 at 95% confidence level

2.1.5. Interest in, and knowledge of, politics and elections

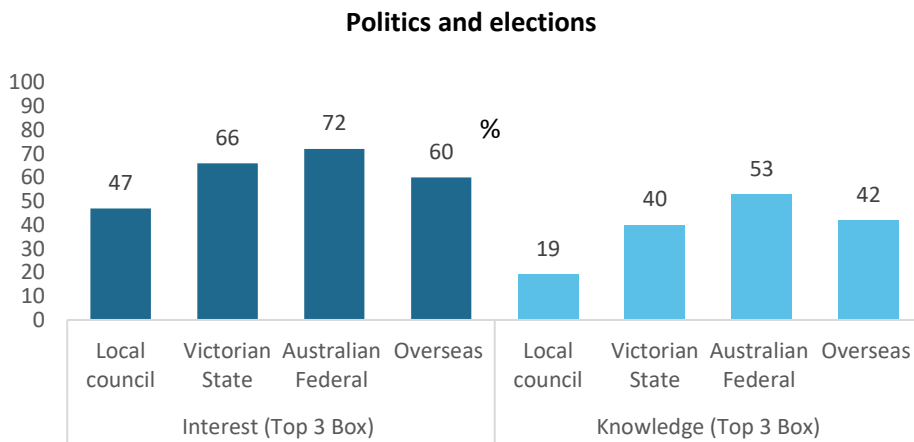
“The output in your daily life, the impact they have in your daily life, my local council has less of an impact, apart from the essentials they have to provide. But when it goes to state and federal they can make a huge difference to my livelihood”

(Group 1: Melbourne State one-off)

Non-voters were asked to indicate their level of interest in, and knowledge of, four types of government – local council, Victorian State, Australian Federal and overseas. While interest in local council (47%) is not as strong as in State (66%) and Federal (72%) government, there is a greater discrepancy when it comes to knowledge of local council vs State and Federal politics and elections, where knowledge in State (40%) and Federal (53%) is more than twice as strong as it is in local council (19%) (see Figure 8).

Figure 8 Interest in, and knowledge of, politics and elections

D1a/D1b. When it comes to politics and elections, how < interested / knowledgeable > would you say you are < in / about >...

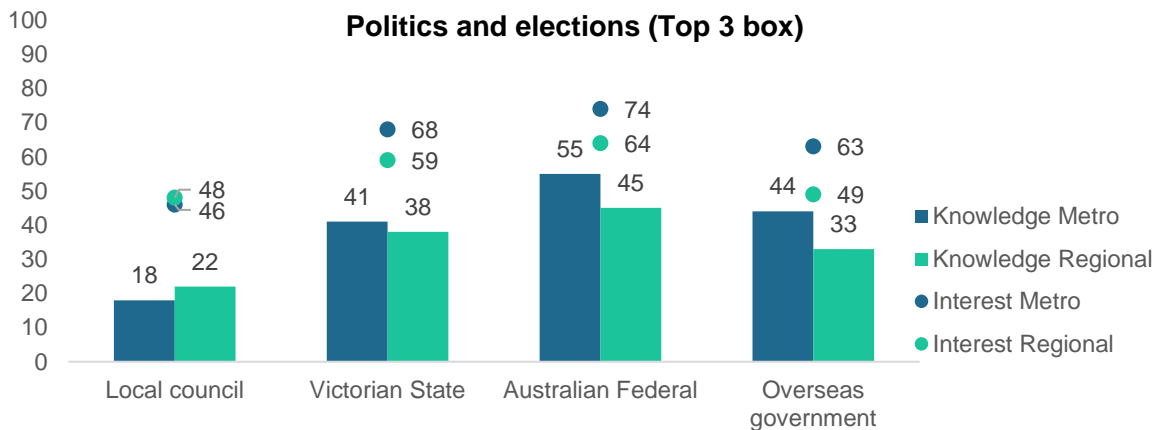


Base: All respondents (n=1033)

Note: % Interested = Extremely, Very or Moderately interested. % Knowledgeable = Know everything, A lot or A fair bit.

When comparing interest in, and knowledge of, politics for metro vs regional non-voters it was found that while non-voters in both of these areas express similar levels of interest and knowledge in council politics and elections, metro non-voters say they are more interested in, and knowledgeable of, all other levels of government, as compared to regional non-voters (see Figure 9).

Figure 9 Interest in, and knowledge of, politics and elections (D1a/D1b)



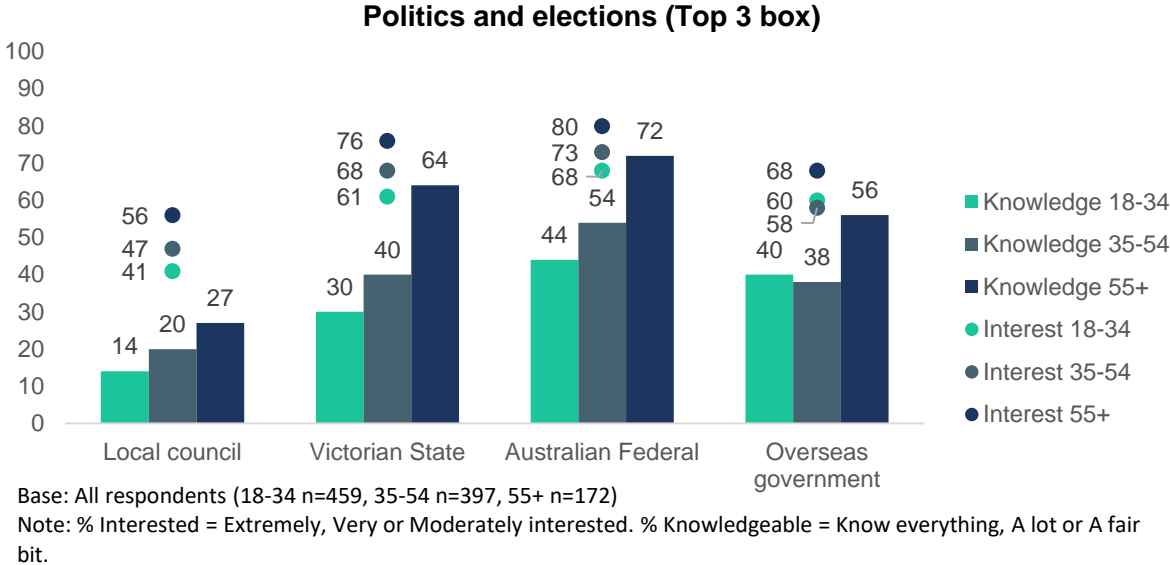
Base: All respondents (Metro n=818, Regional n=213)

Note: % Interested = Extremely, Very or Moderately interested. % Knowledgeable = Know everything, A lot or A fair bit.

Older non-voters express both greater interest in, and greater knowledge of, all levels of government as compared to younger non-voters (see Figure 10). Additionally, while older voters aged 55+ express much greater knowledge of State, Federal and overseas politics as compared to younger voters, their knowledge of council politics and elections is only marginally higher than younger non-voters. While younger non-voters aged 18-34 express less interest in, and knowledge of council, State and Federal

politics and elections than those aged 35 to 54, their interest in, and knowledge of, overseas politics and elections is on par with those aged 35-54.

Figure 10 Interest in, and knowledge of, politics and elections (D1a/D1b)



2.1.6. Engagement with voting, politics and government

“It’s either compulsory and that way you have a true democracy or it’s not compulsory and the vocal minority or the vocal whatever perhaps get their way, but there’s no point complaining about it after the fact.” (Group 2: Melbourne State non-voter)

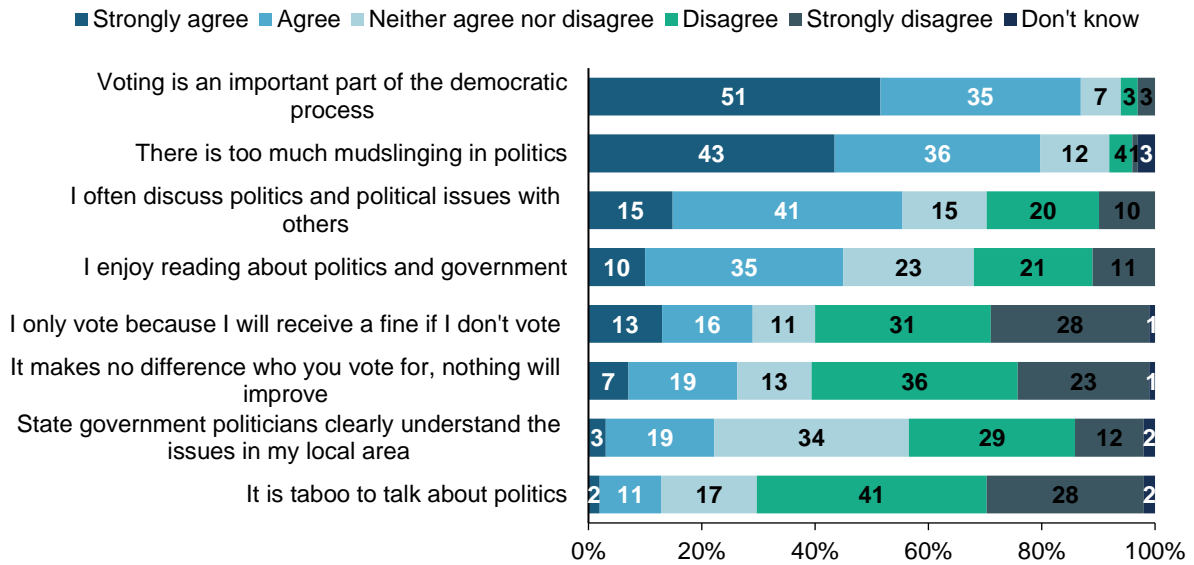
All non-voters, both State and council, were asked for their level of agreement with a range of statements about engagement with voting, politics and government. A strong majority of non-voters (86%) agree that voting is an important part of the democratic process, with a minority (29%) agreeing they only vote because they will receive a fine if they don’t. There is also strong agreement (79%) with the suggestion that ‘there is too much mudslinging in politics’. A majority of non-voters appear to be engaged with politics with 56% agreeing that they often discuss politics and political issues, and only 12% agreeing that it is taboo to talk about politics. Approximately one quarter of non-voters appear to be disengaged with politics with 26% agreeing that it makes no difference who you vote for. Similarly, only 23% of non-voters agree that State government politicians clearly understand issues in their local area.

“And I find that a lot of it is actually mudslinging. You only find out what the other person has done wrong and then you’re not really sure how much of that is really true in any case.” (Group 2: Melbourne State non-voter)

Dr Jill Sheppard: *These results reflect ongoing trends in Australians’ political attitudes. Recent major surveys of public opinion, such as the Australian Election Study, show that our trust in politicians, political parties, and the democratic system broadly are all in long-term decline. These trends are also evident internationally, in both established and newer democracies. Australia had been largely quarantined from the international ‘democratic malaise’ due to our stable political system, reliable electoral administration, and innovations such as compulsory voting. However, the emergence of this malaise on home soil represents a challenge for Australian policy-makers.*

Figure 11 Engagement with voting, politics and government

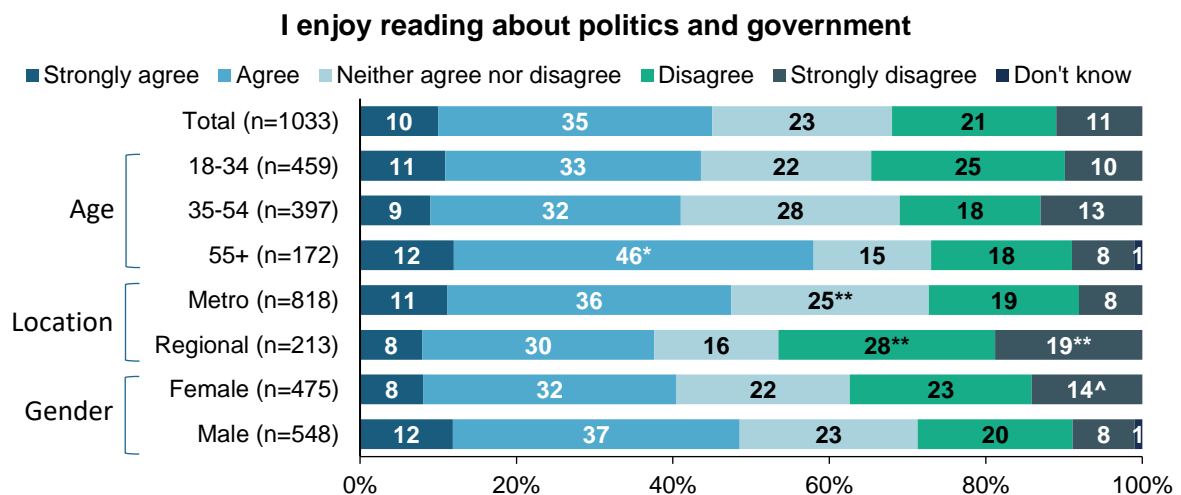
D2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that...



Base: All respondents (n=1033)

There are a couple of areas where there are significant differences between demographic groups on their level of political engagement. Non-voters aged 55+ are more likely to agree (58%) that they enjoy reading about politics and government compared to younger non-voters. Metro non-voters are more likely (47%) to enjoy reading about politics and government as compared regional non-voters (37%), as are men (49%) when compared to women (40%).

Figure 12 Engagement with voting, politics and government



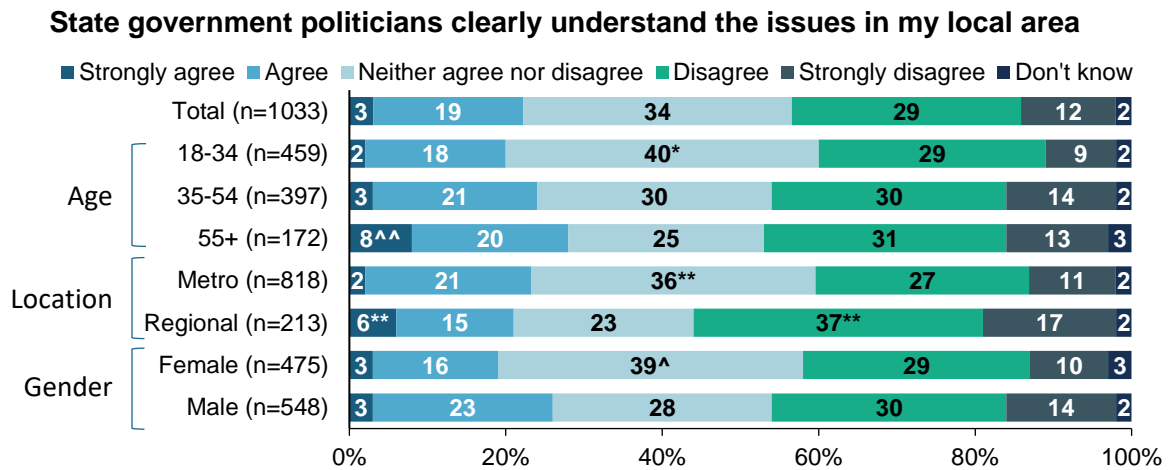
Base: All respondents

*Significantly higher than other age groups, **higher than metro/regional, ^higher than male, at 95% confidence level

There are also attitudinal differences between demographic groups on the belief that State government politicians understand local issues (see Figure 13). Older non-voters aged 55+ are more likely to strongly agree to this statement (8%) as compared to those aged 35 to 54 (3%) and 18 to 34

(2%). Regional non-voters are more likely to disagree (54%) to this statement as compared to metro non-voters (38%).

Figure 13 Engagement with voting, politics and government



Base: All respondents

*Significantly higher than other age groups, ^^higher than 18-34, **higher than metro/regional, ^higher than male, at 95% confidence level

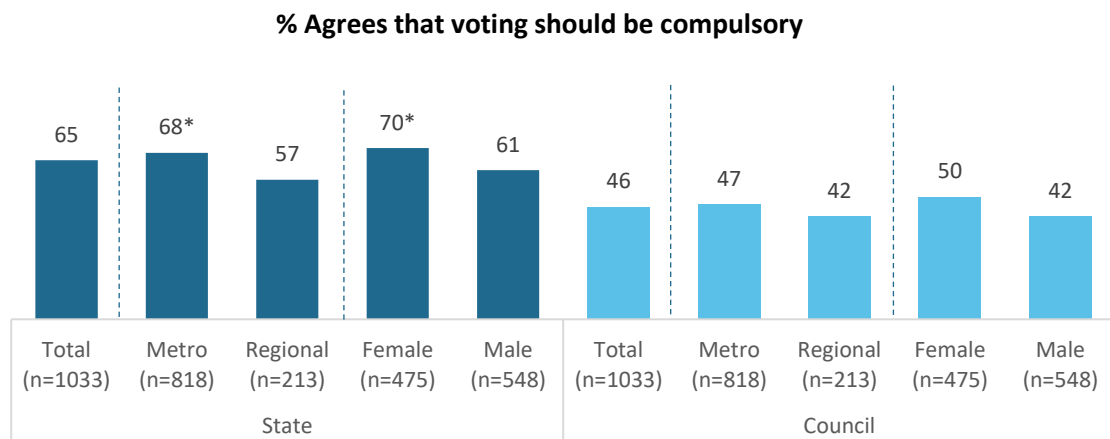
2.1.7. Compulsory voting and fines

Non-voters are more likely to agree that voting in State elections should be compulsory (65%) than they are to agree that voting in council elections should be compulsory (46%) (see Figure 14). For State elections metro non-voters are more likely to agree (68%) that they should be compulsory as compared to regional non-voters (57%), as are women (70%) when compared to men (61%). There is no significant difference between metro and regional non-voters, and between male and female non-voters, when it comes to agreeing that council election voting should be compulsory.

Dr Jill Sheppard: *Australians have long shown remarkable support for compulsory voting laws. Even as other attitudes and opinions wax and wane, the majority belief that compulsory voting is better than the voluntary alternative has remained stable since the 1960s. Further, since 1996 at least eight in ten Australians have said they would vote even if it were voluntary.*

Figure 14 Agreement that voting should be compulsory

D3a/b. Do you agree or disagree that voting in Victorian < State / council > elections should be compulsory?



Base: All respondents

*Significantly higher than regional or male at 95% confidence level

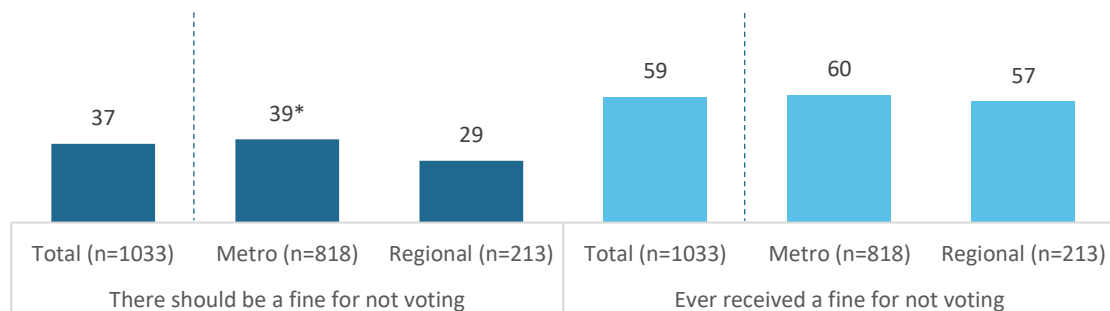
“I’m not really here nor there about it. I tend to vote mainly so I don’t get a fine.”

(Group 5: Traralgon State non-voter)

There is limited support for being fined for not voting (37%) amongst non-voters (see Figure 15). Support for fines for not voting is greater among metro non-voters (39%) as compared to regional non-voters (29%). 59% of non-voters claim to have received a fine for not voting, with no significant difference between metro and regional non-voters.

Figure 15 Fines for not voting

D4. Do you agree or disagree that there should be a fine for not voting? D5. Have you ever received a fine for not voting?



Base: All respondents

*Significantly higher than regional at 95% confidence level

3. Increasing voter participation

Four strategies for increasing voter participation in State and council elections are outlined in this section. These are based on the reasons for not voting in State and council elections, the challenges faced to vote, and the levels of engagement in politics and government outlined in Section 2, as well as the demographic differences on these measures. For each of the strategies the size of the target group has been determined. While the target group for the first and second strategies are mutually exclusive, there is a degree of overlap for all other combinations of target groups.

3.1. Four strategies to increase voter participation

3.1.1. Better enable eligible voters who are outside of Victoria during State elections to vote

“We have the online one, it’s a bit of a no brainer. We have other things that are connected to MyGov, like Centrelink and services that are quite private, so we don’t see how it would be hard to set up a further thing.” (Group 1: Melbourne State one-off)

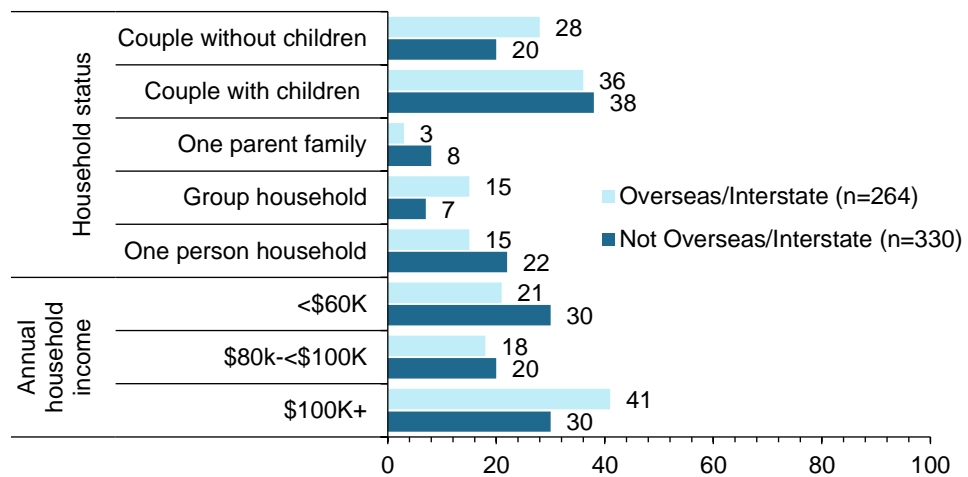
“And then you could have that app send reminders like, okay, like a daily reminder, “Yep, you still need to vote. You still need to vote. You still need to vote.”” (Group 3: Melbourne council)

Lack of availability (58%) was the main reason for not being able to vote in the 2014 State election (see Figure 1). The main reasons for not being available to vote among the total State non-voting population were being overseas (32%) and being interstate (9%). Being overseas or interstate at the time of the 2014 State election was a more common reason for not voting among metro non-voters (47%) as compared to those from regional areas (25%). Given that metro non-voters account for 75% of all Victorian non-voters in the 2014 State elections, and that 47% of these metro non-voters didn’t vote due to being overseas or interstate, these metro non-voters represent 36% of all non-voters from the 2014 State election, and therefore should be a priority for increasing voter participation in State elections.

The following analysis examines the opportunities to increase participation in State elections among the metro based State non-voters who have said that being overseas or interstate has been a barrier to them voting in any previous State election.

The demographics that distinguish this group of State non-voters from other State non-voters are household status and income. State non-voters who were overseas or interstate during a previous election are more likely to be couples without children, group households, and have a higher income than other state non-voters (see Figure 16).

Figure 16 Demographic comparison

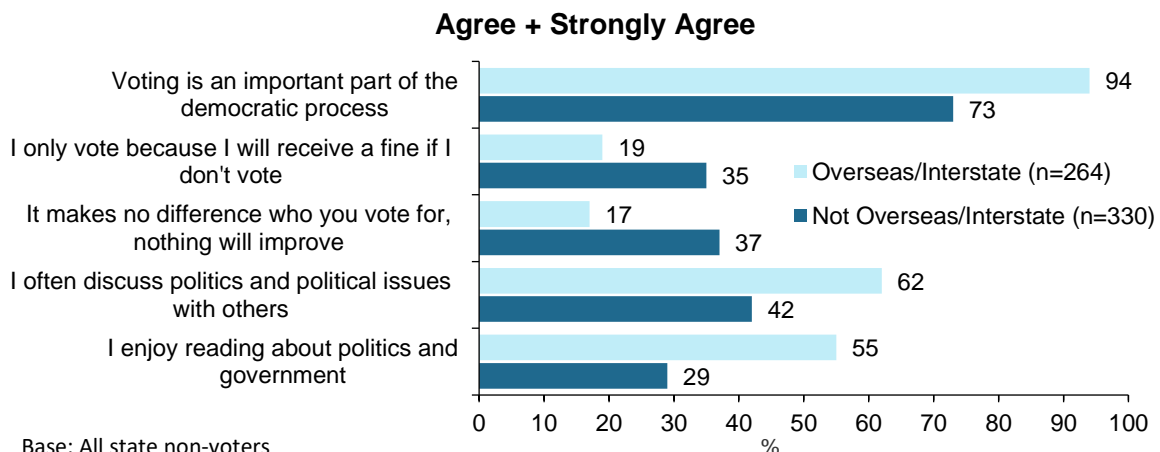


Base: All state non-voters

*Significantly different to the other group at 95% confidence level

Figure 17 displays the results for the areas of engagement with voting, politics and engagement where ‘overseas/interstate’ non-voters have different attitudes and beliefs than other State non-voters. ‘Overseas/interstate’ non-voters are more likely to agree that voting is an important part of the democratic process, that they often discuss politics, that they enjoy reading about politics and government, and less likely to agree that it makes no difference who you vote for, suggesting they are a politically engaged group of non-voters. It is their lack of availability during elections that needs to be overcome in order to increase their voting participation.

Figure 17 Engagement with voting, politics and government



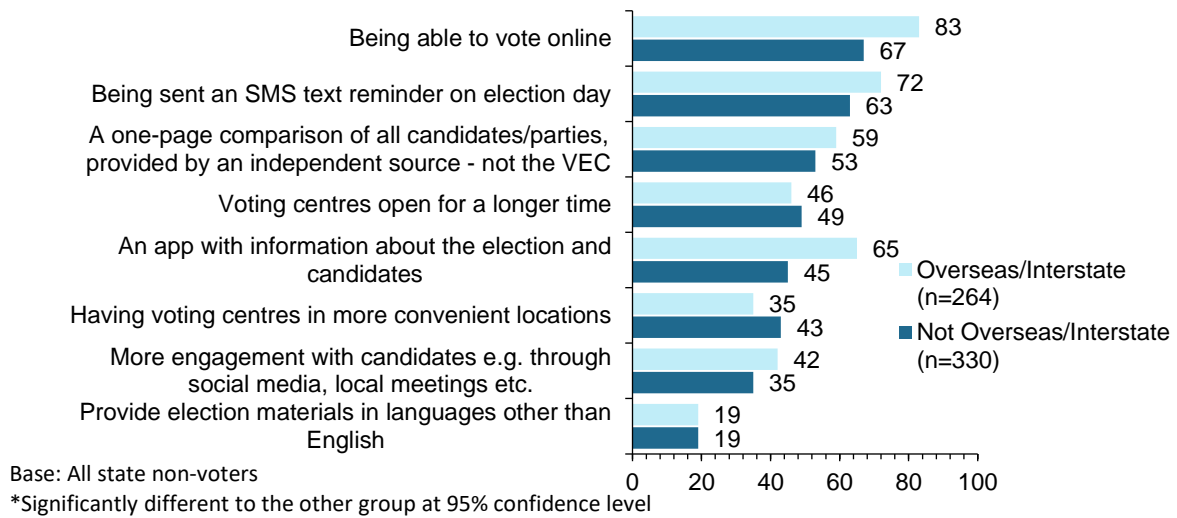
Base: All state non-voters

*Significantly different to the other group at 95% confidence level

All State non-voters were asked what they would find helpful for voting in State elections. Figure 18 compares the results for this question for those who expressed being overseas or interstate as a barrier to voting in previous elections as compared to those who had other reasons for not voting. While being able to vote online would be the most helpful change for all State non-voters, it would be considered significantly more helpful for ‘overseas/interstate’ non-voters. Being sent an SMS text reminder on election day would be the second most helpful change for this group, while an app

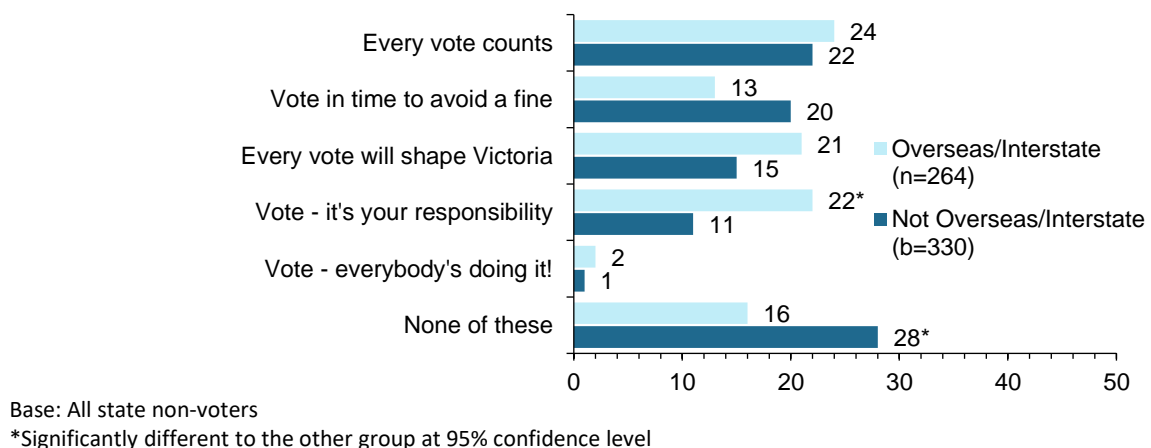
containing information about the elections and candidates would be more helpful for this group as compared to other State non-voters.

Figure 18 Changes that would assist voting in Victorian State elections



All respondents were asked which message would most encourage them to vote in State and council elections. State non-voters who expressed being overseas or interstate as a barrier to voting in previous elections responded that 'Every vote counts', 'Vote – it's your responsibility' and 'Every vote will shape Victoria' would most strongly encourage them to vote. They were significantly more likely to say that the message 'Vote – it's your responsibility' would encourage them to vote as compared to other State non-voters, reinforcing their affinity for the voting process and latent propensity to participate in elections.

Figure 19 Messages that would encourage voting



In summary, this group of metro State non-voters who have been overseas or interstate during elections is largely a politically engaged group that recognises the importance of voting within the democratic process. The key to increasing their election participation is to engage them to vote through online and electronic mechanisms such as SMS reminders and an app with information about elections and candidates. These communications could include information about how to vote if

travelling during an election. Enabling online voting would make a big difference in increasing participation among those who are overseas or interstate during State elections. The message that will most effectively increase their participation is one that reminds them of the value of voting, and that it is their responsibility to do so.

3.1.2. Facilitate greater engagement with State elections among regional non-voters

“A lot of them - unless they stand up like Ricky Muir or Jackie Lambie, unless they push themselves forward and they put up a fight, you don't even know they exist.”

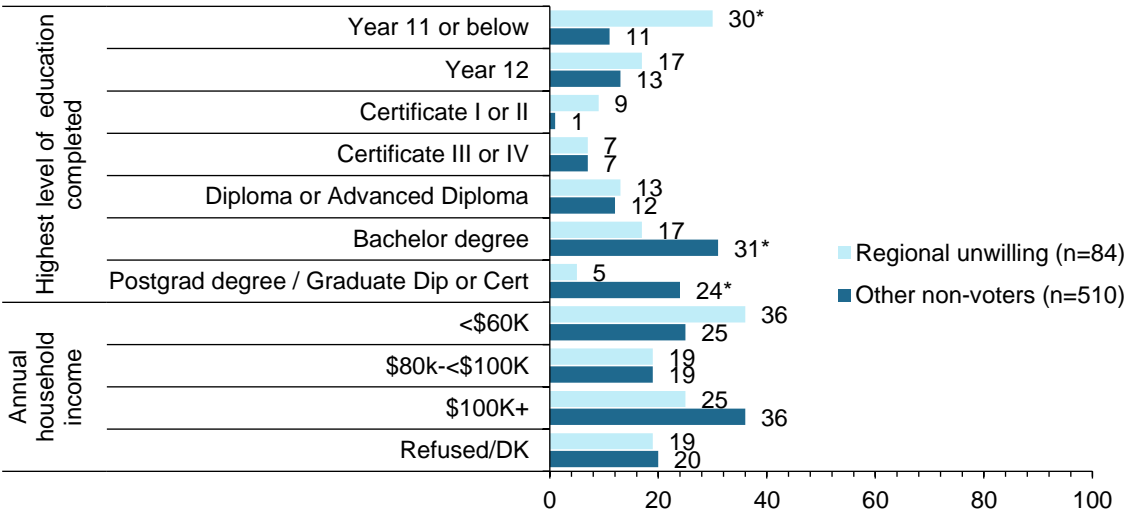
(Group 5: Traralgon State non-voter)

As per Section 2.1.2, lack of willingness to vote in State elections is more common among regional (56%) non-voters as compared to metro non-voters (43%). The specific reasons that underpin regional non-voters' lack of willingness to vote include there being no candidates they wanted to vote for (33%) and objections to voting being compulsory (33%). While not voting for religious reasons was given as a reason by 20% of regional State non-voters, non-voters who stated this as the only reason for not voting are not included in this analysis, as this barrier is unlikely to be overcome by the VEC.

The following analysis examines the opportunities to increase participation in State elections among regional State non-voters who were unwilling to vote for reasons other than religious reasons and/or who don't think voting should be compulsory. This group accounts for 16% of State non-voters.

The demographics that distinguish this group of State non-voters from other State non-voters are education level and household income. 'Unwilling' regional non-voters are more likely to be less educated with 30% having Year 11 or below as their highest education level, as compared to 11% of all other State non-voters. While the differences in household income are not statistically significant it appears that unwilling regional non-voters have lower incomes with 36% earning less than \$60,000 per year, as compared to 25% of all other state non-voters.

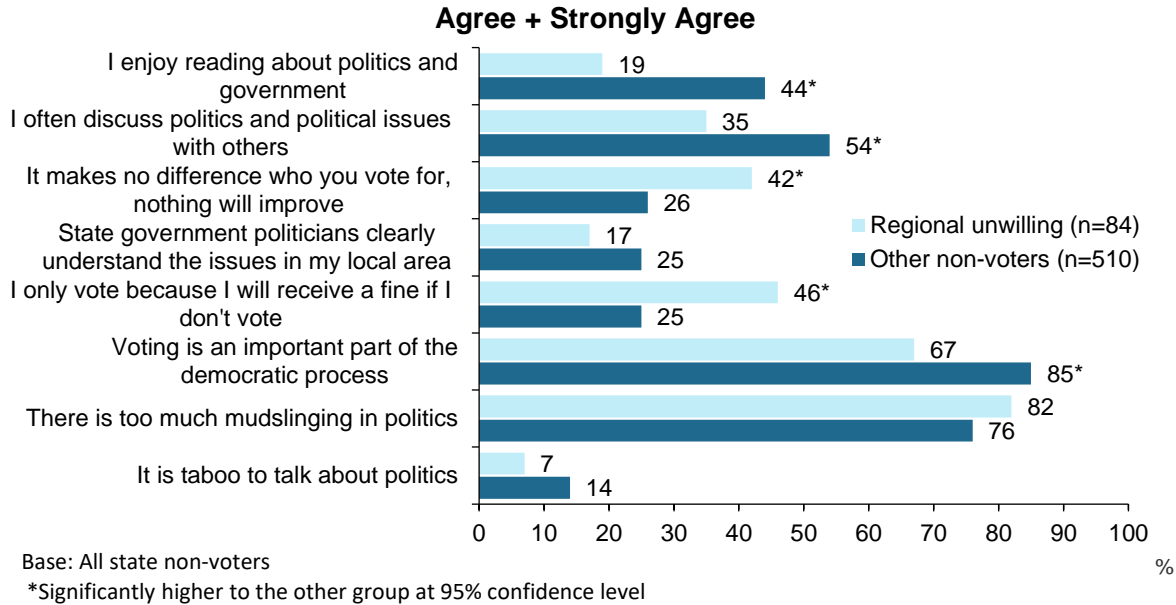
Figure 20 Demographic comparison



Base: All state non-voters
 *Significantly different to other group at 95% confidence level

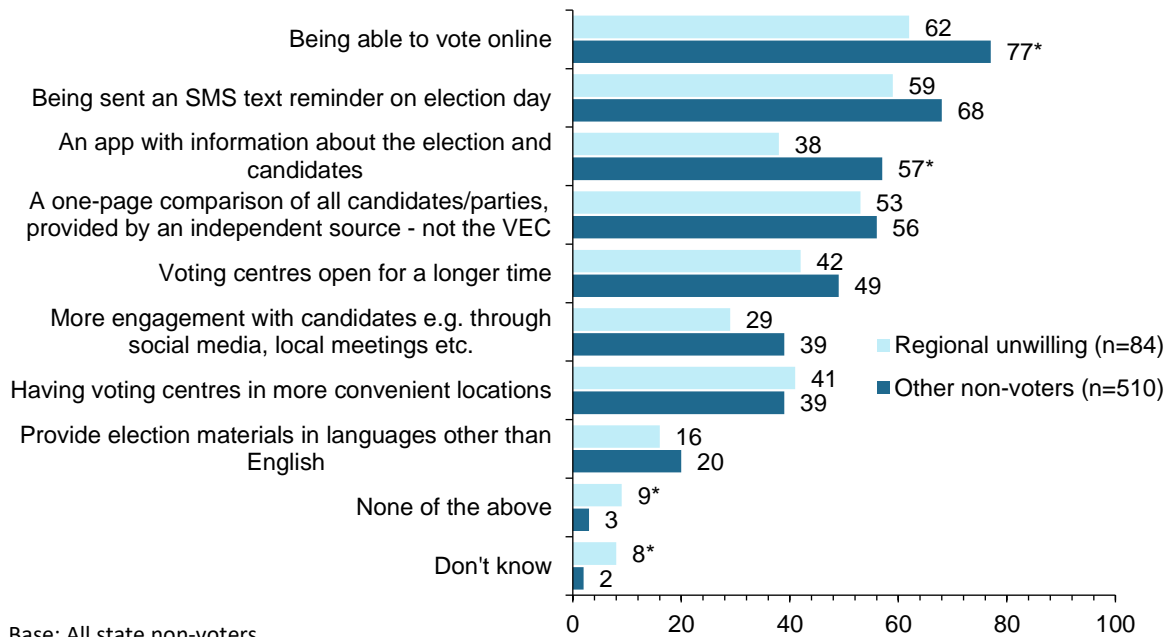
Figure 21 displays the results for engagement with voting, politics and engagement for 'regional unwilling' voters compared to all other State non-voters. These results demonstrate that regional unwilling non-voters are less likely than other state non-voters to enjoy reading about politics and government (19% vs 44% respectively), to discuss politics with others (35% vs 54%) and to agree that voting is an important part of the democratic process (67% vs 85%). Regional unwilling non-voters are more likely than other non-voters to agree that they only vote because they will receive a fine if they don't (46% vs 25%), and it makes no difference who you vote for (42% vs 26%). In addition to these results it was also found that regional unwilling non-voters are more likely than other non-voters to disagree that State government politicians clearly understand the issues in my local area (57% vs 37% respectively). These results highlight a lack of engagement with politics and the voting process, and a sense that participating in State elections is pointless.

Figure 21 Engagement with voting, politics and government



When asked what they would find helpful to assist them voting in State elections, regional unwilling non-voters were less likely (62%) than other non-voters (77%) to choose to be able to vote online. Nonetheless this is the change that they would find most helpful, closely followed by being sent a reminder SMS on election day (59%).

Figure 22 Changes that would assist voting in Victorian State elections

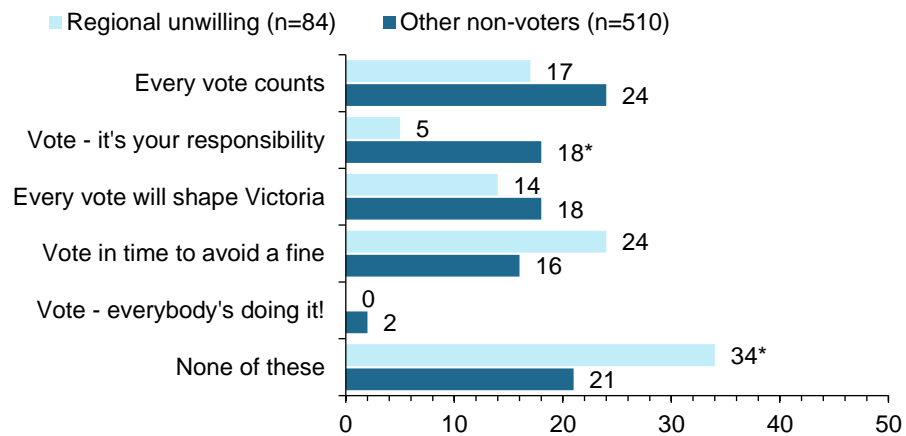


Base: All state non-voters

*Significantly different to the other group at 95% confidence level

When asked which message would most encourage them to vote in State and council elections, regional unwilling voters were more likely (34%) than other non-voters (21%) to select the 'none of these' option. The message that would most encourage this group to vote is 'vote in time to avoid a fine' (24%).

Figure 23 Messages that would encourage voting



Base: All state non-voters

*Significantly different to the other group at 95% confidence level

In summary, this group of regional State non-voters who have been unwilling to vote in State elections are largely disengaged with politics and government, showing limited interest in reading about, or discussing politics, and believing nothing will change regardless of who you vote for. Nearly half of this group agree that they only vote because they will receive a fine if they don't. The two main changes

that the VEC could affect that will increase State election participation among this group are online voting and SMS reminders on elections day. Target increased election participation for this group with SMS reminders on election day that include the message 'Vote in time to avoid a fine'. A one-page comparison of candidates and parties would also assist this group to vote. There is an overarching need to engage this cohort in the election process and generate willingness to participate. This is likely to require concerted effort from the political parties, media and other entities, as well as the VEC.

3.1.3. Target younger non-voters through digital channels to equip them with information needed to participate in elections.

“I think for a young group, for me, like, just, no, it was a bit of a nightmare. Like all the bills now are switched to getting online. So you really get very little in the post. That’s why we’re not checking the mail as much. There’s a lot of junk in there. So I just find I just do everything now online. So that, well, certainly for me, would - if it was available online, like everything else, then I would probably - I would do it a lot easier.” (Group 3: Melbourne council)

As per section 2.1.2, lack of knowledge is the main reason for not voting in council elections (71%), as well as being a common reason for not voting in State elections (52%). Lack of knowledge is underpinned by factors such as not knowing there was an election happening, or when it was happening, not knowing enough about the candidates to vote, not knowing where to go to vote and, for council elections, not knowing when to return the vote. Lack of knowledge was more commonly expressed as a reason by voters aged under 45, for both State and council elections.

The following analysis examines the opportunities to increase participation in both State and council elections among voters aged under 45 who expressed lack of knowledge being a barrier to voting in previous State and council elections, either as the only barrier, or in addition to other barriers. This group accounts for 48% of the total State and council non-voting population.

Other than age, the demographics that distinguish this group of non-voters are household status and main occupation. This group of non-voters who are aged under 45 and who lack knowledge are more likely to live in group households (16%) and to be students (12%) as compared to all other non-voters (11% and 4% respectively). That said, like all other non-voters, those aged under 45 who lack knowledge are most likely to be couples and employed.

Figure 24 Demographic comparison

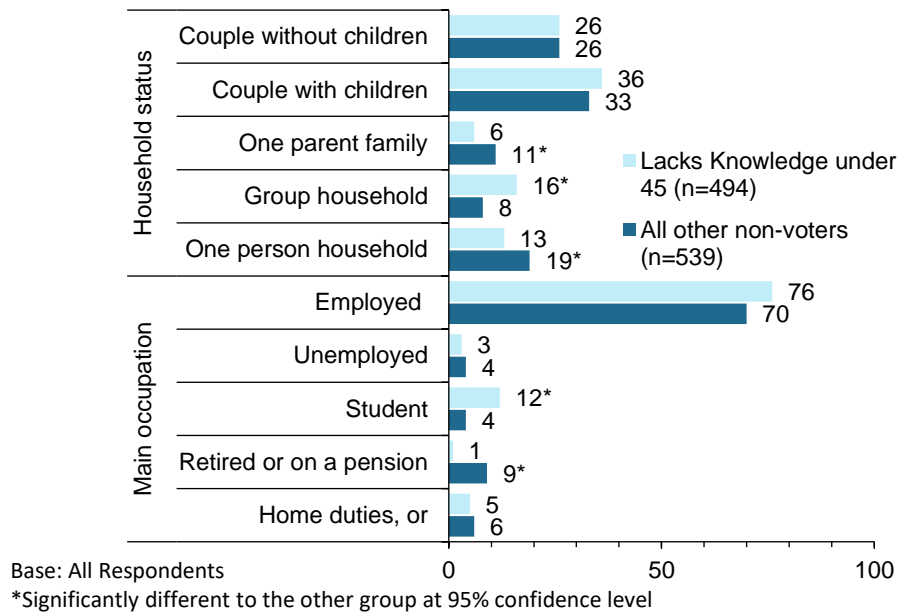


Figure 25 displays the results for engagement with voting, politics and engagement. There is little difference in agreement with these statements between those aged under 45 who lack knowledge as compared to all other non-voters. This indicates that lack of engagement with politics doesn't underpin this groups' lack of knowledge with voting and elections.

Figure 25 Engagement with voting, politics and government

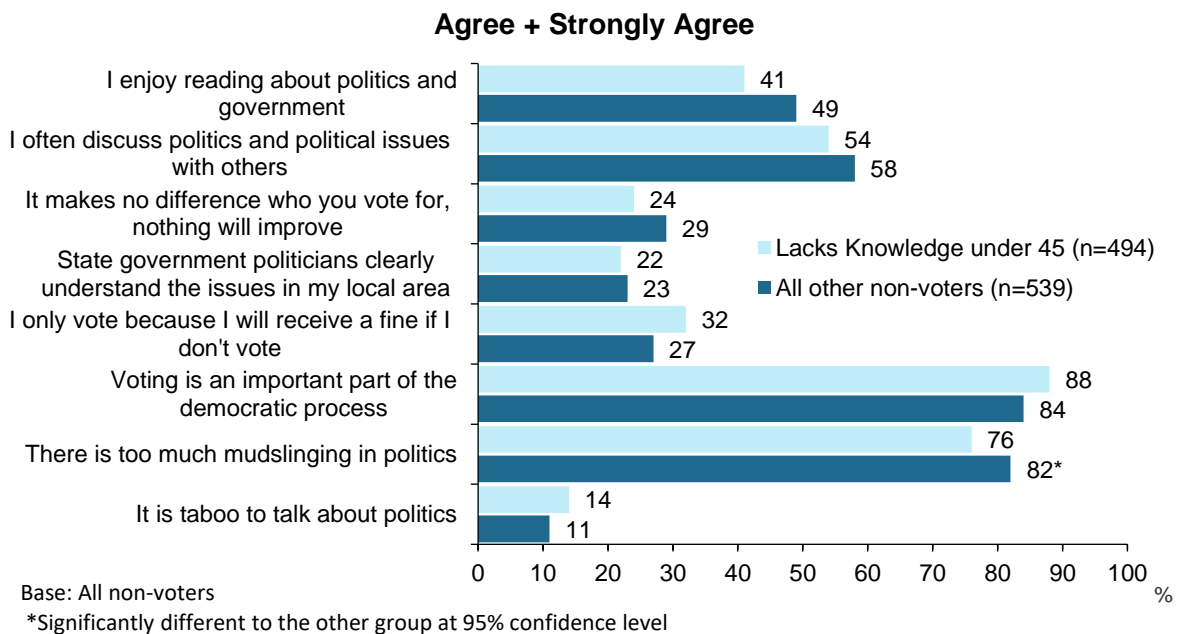
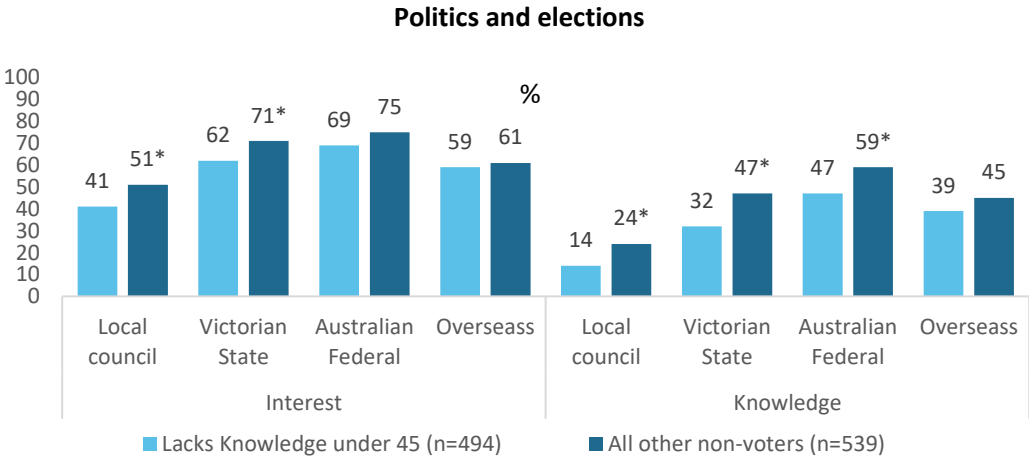


Figure 26 displays the results for interest in, and knowledge of, politics and elections. These results indicate that non-voters aged under 45 who express having a lack of knowledge as a reason for not voting have less interest in council and State level politics and elections than other non-voters. This is not the case for Federal and overseas politics and elections. A similar pattern emerges for knowledge of these levels of government, where this group of non-voters aged under 45 report lower knowledge of Federal politics and elections. As a younger cohort these lower levels of interest and knowledge may be an indicator of a shift away from traditional forms of media.

Figure 26 Interest in, and knowledge of, politics and elections (D1a/D1b)



Base: All respondents (n=1033); *Significantly different to the other group at 95% confidence level
 Note: % Interested = Extremely, Very or Moderately interested. % Knowledgeable = Know everything, A lot or A fair bit.

Figures 27 and 28 display the level of agreement with the various factors that make voting in State and council elections difficult. These results demonstrate that non-voters aged under 45 who express having a lack of knowledge as a reason for not voting are more likely than other non-voters to agree that that these factors make voting difficult. The difficulty factors that stand out for non-voters aged under 45 who lack knowledge are lack of familiarity with both State and council candidates and issues, not knowing when elections are held and, for State elections, finding it difficult to find the time to vote on election day.

Figure 27 Difficulties in voting in State elections

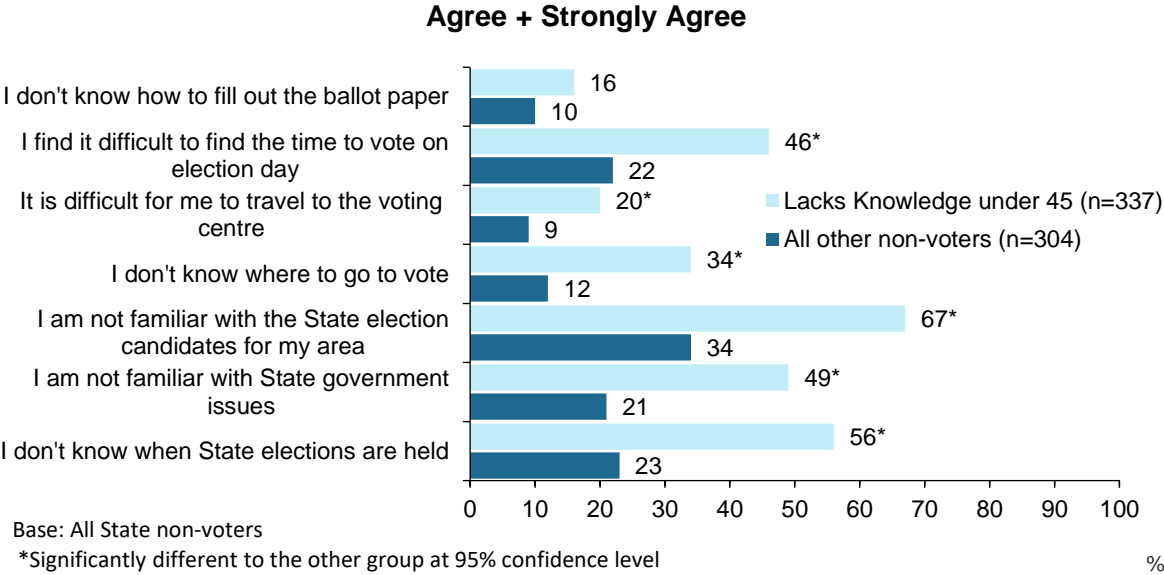


Figure 28 Difficulties in voting in council elections

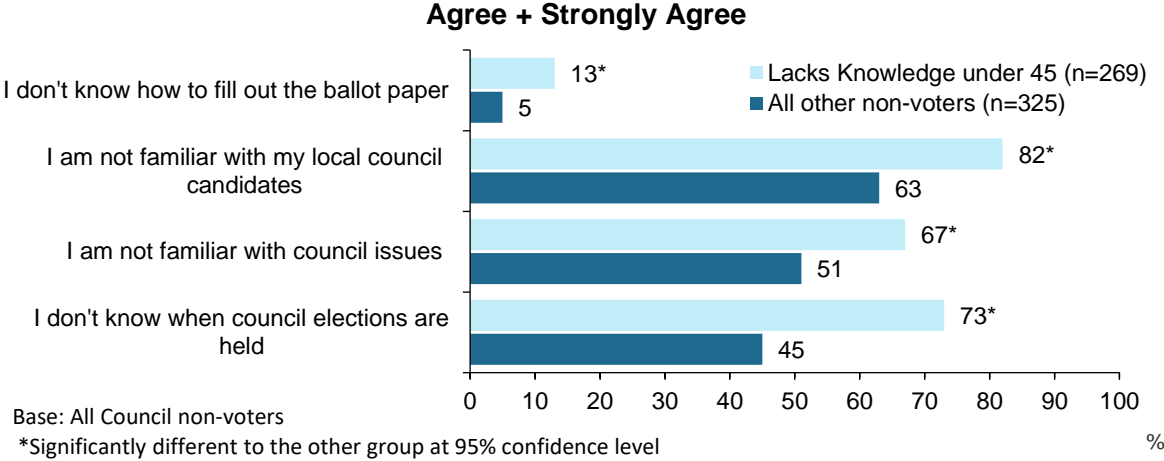
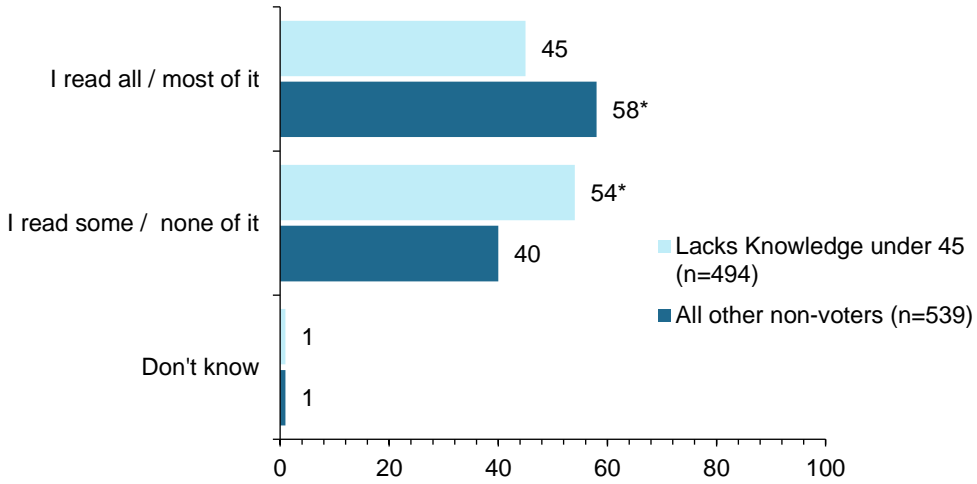


Figure 29 displays how much of the mail that is addressed to the non-voter is read by them, for non-voters aged under 45 who lack voting knowledge as compared to all other non-voters. These results illustrate that the 'lacking knowledge' non-voter group is less likely than other non-voters to read their mail with less than half have saying they read all or most of it (45%), and demonstrates the limitations of trying to raise knowledge about elections among the 'lacking knowledge' group via postal materials.

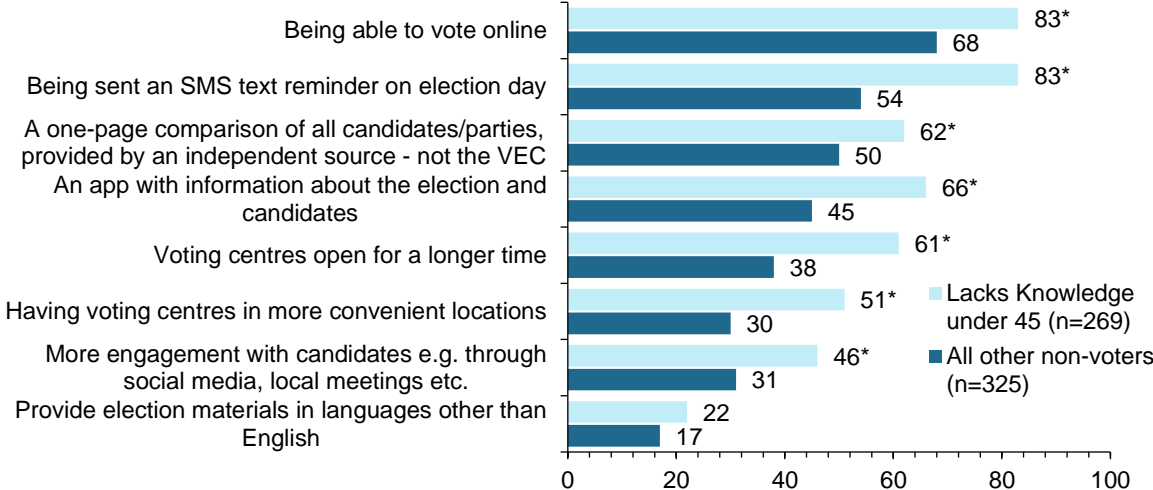
Figure 29 How much mail is read



Base: All respondents
 *Significantly different to the other group at 95% confidence level

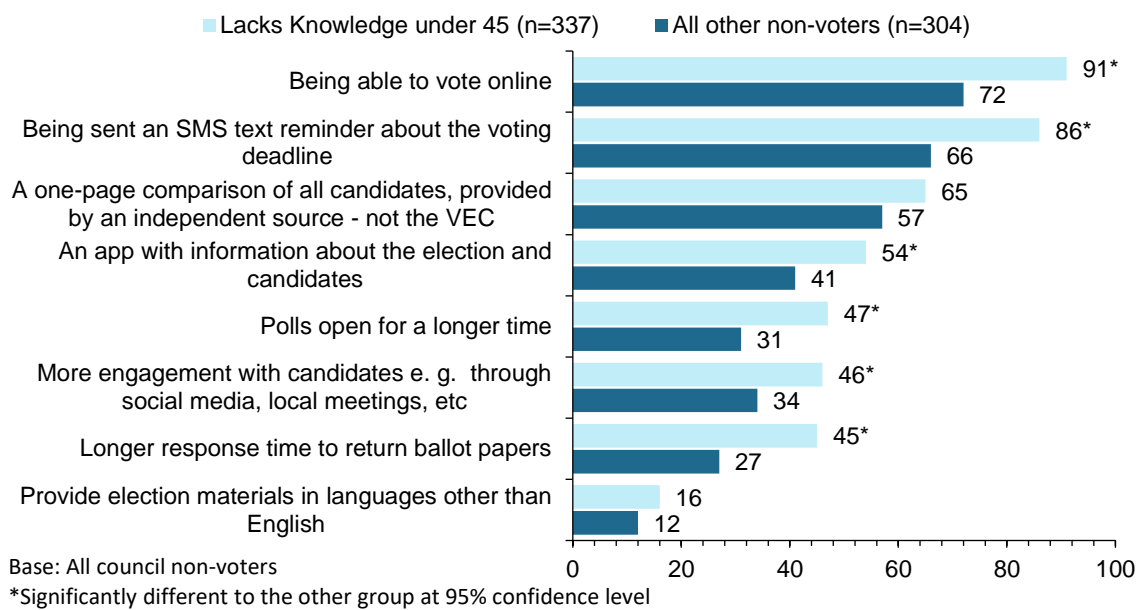
When asked what would assist them to vote in State and council elections, the ‘lacking knowledge’ non-voters were more likely to select most of these methods than other non-voters. Being able to vote online and SMS reminders on election day stand out as the top two methods to assist these non-voters to participate in elections. For State elections, an app with information about the elections and candidates is the third most preferred option to assist voting. Having voting centres open for a longer time in State elections, and a longer voting period for council elections, would assist the ‘lacking knowledge’ group, who have expressed greater difficulty in finding the time to vote as compared to other non-voters.

Figure 30 Changes that would assist voting in Victorian State elections



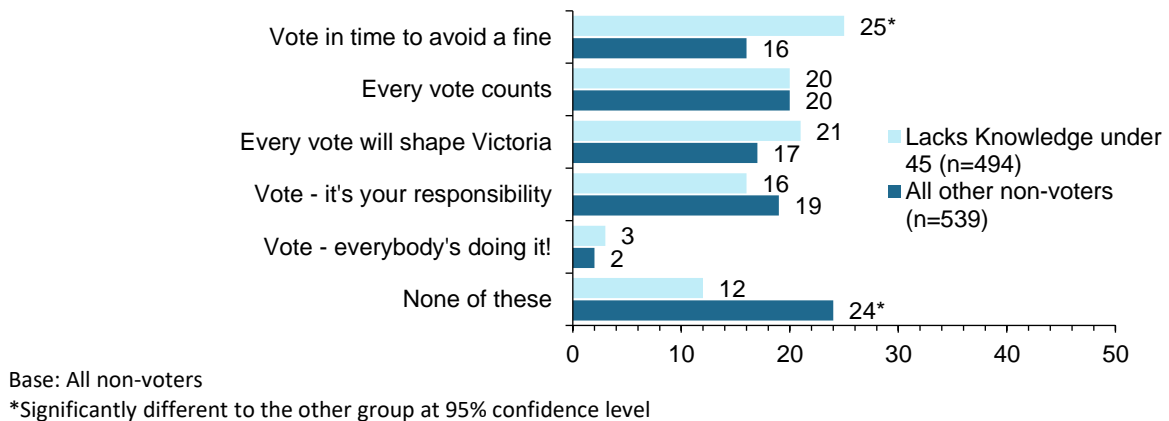
Base: All state non-voters
 *Significantly different to the other group at 95% confidence level

Figure 31 Changes that would assist voting in Victorian Council elections



When asked which message would most encourage them to vote in State and council elections, 'knowledge lacking' non-voters say that 'Vote in time to avoid a fine' would be the most encouraging message. 'Every vote counts' and 'Every vote will shape Victoria' would also encourage this group.

Figure 32 Messages that would encourage voting



In summary, this group of 'knowledge lacking' non-voters value the role of voting in democracy and their level of engagement with politics and government is similar to the total non-voting population. Their non-participation is due to a lack of knowledge about candidates, issues and election timing. Additionally, they find it difficult to find the time to vote. They want to use technology, as evidenced by a strong desire for online voting, and are less likely to engage with traditional methods of communication such as direct mail. To increase election participation there should be a focus on using digital and online channels to inform and engage this group, and, if possible, to implement online voting and SMS reminders.

3.1.4. Raise awareness of council elections and candidates

“Better advertising, more than just in newspapers and pamphlets. Because whenever I get a pamphlet in the mail it goes straight in the bin. I don’t look at it. So maybe if there was more on Facebook or other sorts of social media, more people would actually listen.” (Group 6: Traralgon council)

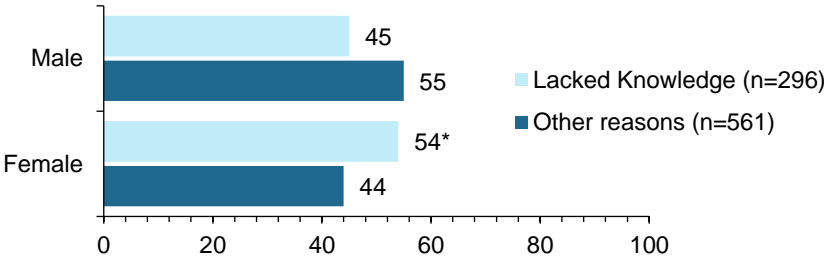
As demonstrated in Section 2.1.1 lack of knowledge is a key barrier to voting in council elections, being on par with lack of availability, and is a greater barrier to voting in council elections, as compared to State elections. Lack of knowledge reasons account for more than a third (35%) of reasons for not voting in the 2016 council elections (see Figure 1). The reasons that contribute to lack of knowledge are not knowing about the election (15%), forgetting about it (11%), not knowing that it was compulsory (6%), and not knowing who to vote for (5%).

As per Section 2.1.3 interest in, and knowledge of, council politics and elections is lower than for State, Federal and overseas politics and elections. This discrepancy in interest and knowledge between council versus other levels of government is more pronounced in metro areas. Awareness of the date of council elections (12%) is significantly less than for State elections (27%).

The following analysis examines the opportunities to increase participation in council elections among people who didn’t vote in the 2016 council elections due to lack of knowledge reasons. This group accounts for 35% of the council non-voter population.

In terms of demographics there are limited differences between the group of council non-voters who didn’t vote for lack of knowledge reasons as compared to those who didn’t vote for other reasons. The only significant difference is that the ‘lack of knowledge’ non-voters cohort comprises a higher proportion of women (54%) as compared to those who didn’t vote for other reasons (44%).

Figure 33 Demographic comparison



Base: All council non-voters
 *Significantly different to the other group at 95% confidence level

Figure 34 displays the results for engagement with voting, politics and engagement. There is little difference in agreement with these statements between those non-voters who lack knowledge as compared to all other non-voters. This indicates that lack of engagement with politics doesn’t underpin this group’s lack of knowledge with council elections.

Figure 34 Engagement with voting, politics and government

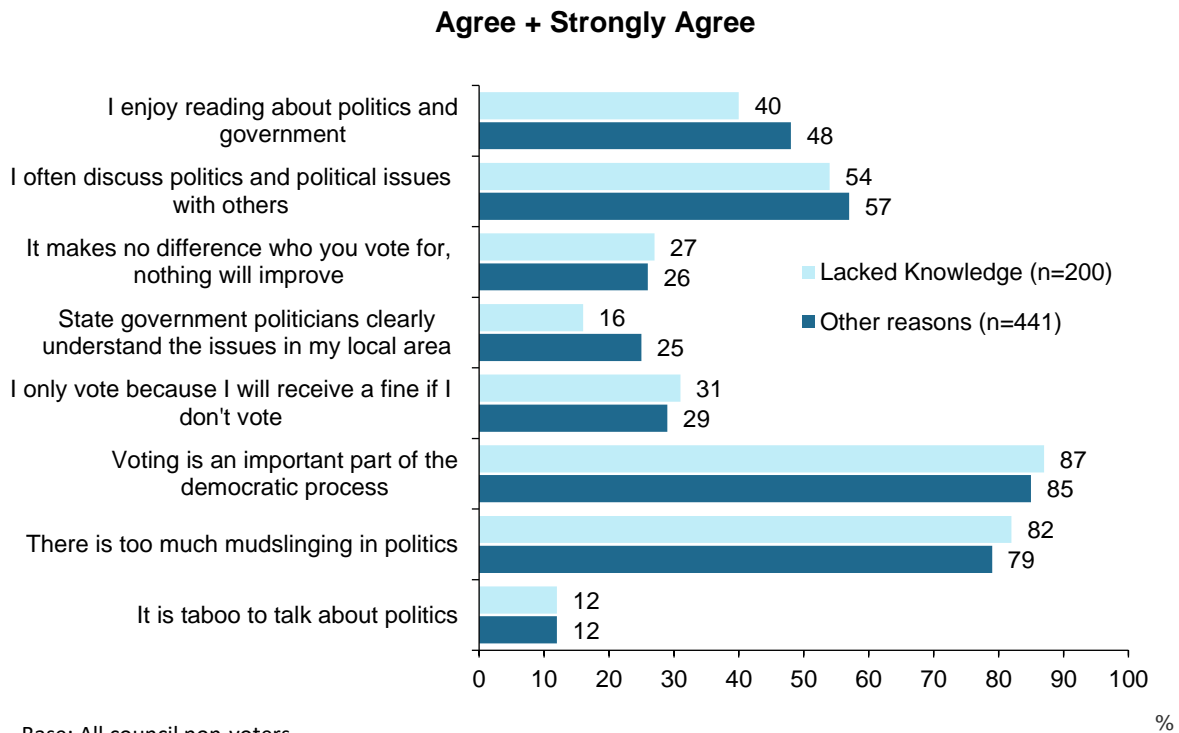
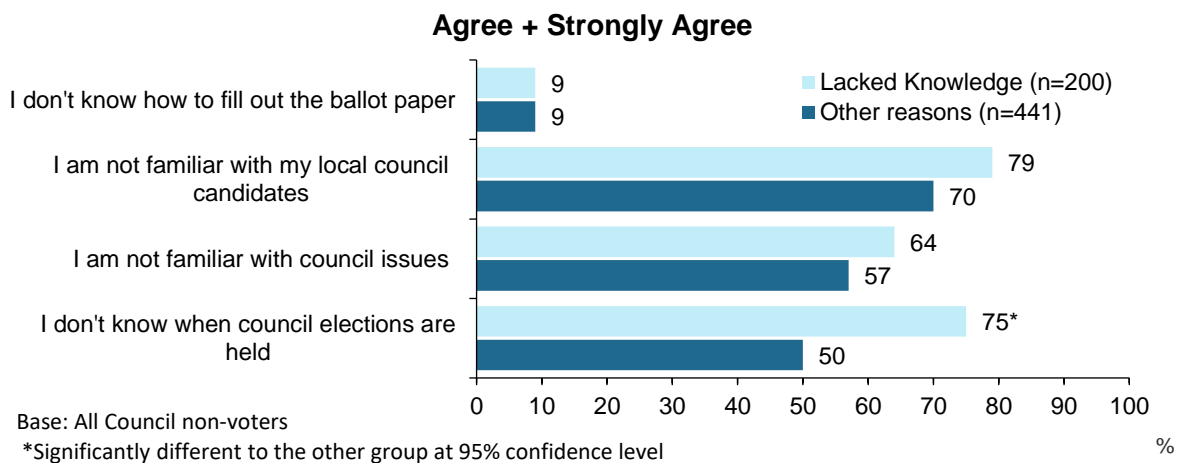


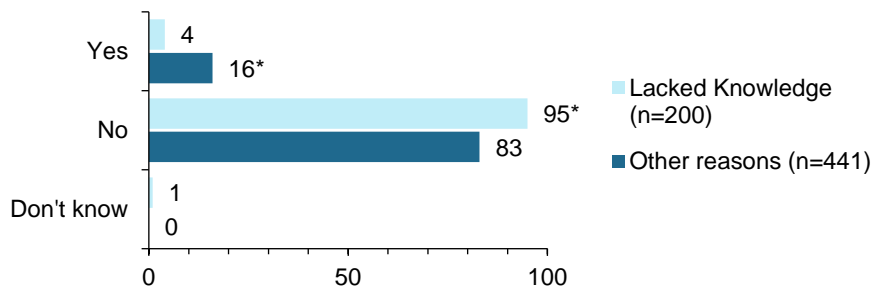
Figure 35 displays the level of agreement with the various factors that make voting in council elections difficult. These results demonstrate that the main difference between non-voters who express having a lack of knowledge as the reason for not voting in the 2016 council elections as compared to other council non-voters is that they are less likely to know when council elections are held.

Figure 35 Difficulties in voting in council elections



Of the council non-voters who claim lack of knowledge as the reason for not voting, 4% (see Figure 36) know when council elections are held, significantly lower than other council non-voters (16%).

Figure 36 Awareness of council election date

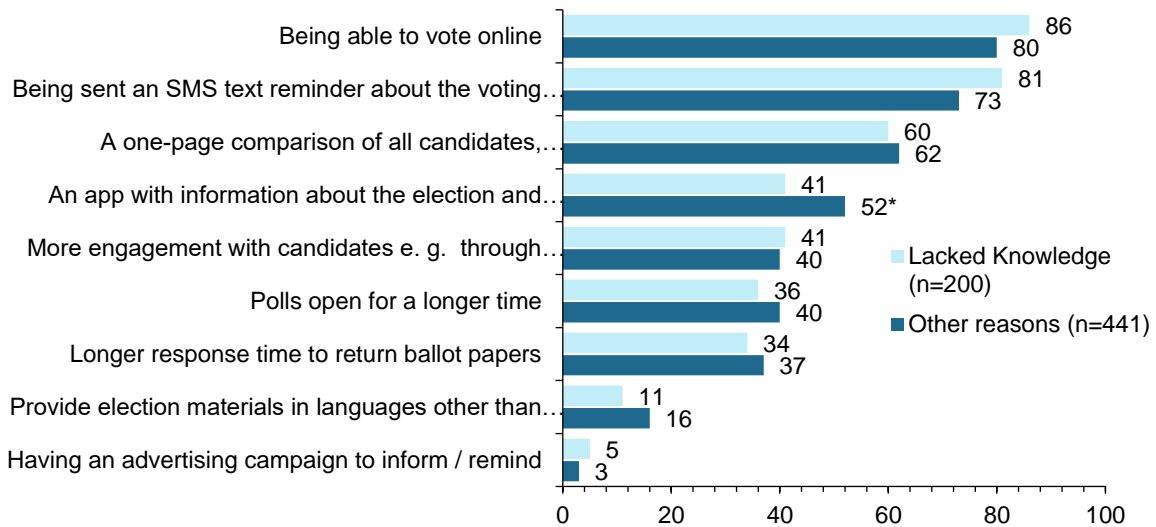


Base: All state non-voters

*Significantly different to the other group at 95% confidence level

When asked what would assist them to vote in council elections, the 'lacked knowledge' non-voters have similar needs as compared to other council non-voters. Being able to vote online and SMS reminders on election day are the top two methods that would assist these non-voters to participate in elections, while a one-page comparison of candidates would also be of assistance to most of these non-voters.

Figure 37 Changes that would find helpful for voting in Victorian council elections

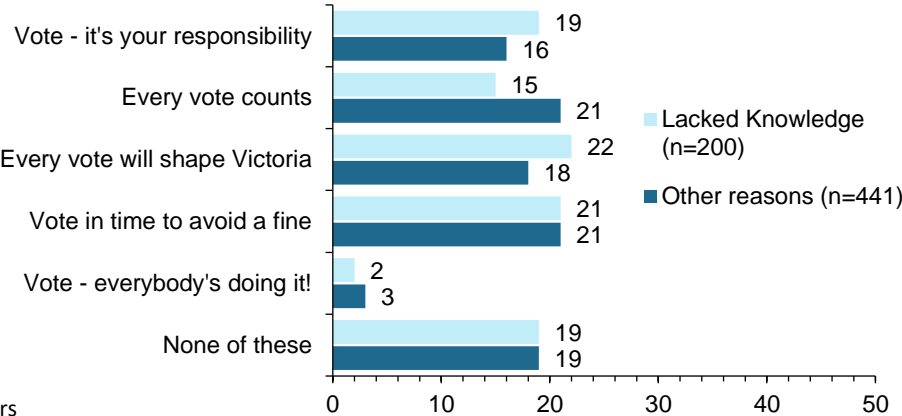


Base: All council non-voters

*Significantly different to the other group at 95% confidence level

When asked which message would most encourage them to vote in council elections, the 'lacked knowledge' non-voters say that 'Every vote will shape Victoria' would be the most encouraging message. 'Vote in time to avoid a fine' and 'Vote – it's your responsibility' would also encourage this group.

Figure 38 Messages that would encourage voting



Base: All state non-voters

*Significantly different to the other group at 95% confidence level

In summary, three main barriers need to be overcome to increase participation among council non-voters who 'lack knowledge'. Firstly, increase awareness of when council elections are being held. Secondly, SMS reminders would assist in raising awareness that council elections are taking place. Thirdly, lack of awareness of council candidates and council issues needs to be overcome. A one-page comparison of candidates would assist in raising awareness of council candidates and issues.

Appendix 1 Questionnaire



VEC Non-Voter Questionnaire 2018

Version 11 (Final) – 22 March 2018

INTRODUCTION

*(TIMESTAMP1)

WEB INTRO:

This survey is about voting and is being conducted by The Social Research Centre (SRC) on behalf of the Victorian Electoral Commission. The Victorian Electoral Commission has provided the Social Research Centre with a list of people who were eligible to vote in one or both of the 2014 Victorian State election and 2016 Victorian council elections, but didn't vote in one or both of those elections.

Your email address has been chosen at random from this list. The information you provide will only be used for research purposes, we will treat all information you give in strict confidence. It is estimated that this survey will take about 12 minutes to complete.

This survey is mainly about your opinions. There are no right or wrong answers. You do not have to answer any question if you do not feel comfortable doing so (if you would prefer not to answer, click on the 'next' button to proceed to the next question). Participation is voluntary and you are free to exit the survey at any time.

CATI INTRO:

*(ALL)

INTRO

Good afternoon/evening my name is <SAY NAME> and I'm calling on behalf of the Victorian Electoral Commission from the Social Research Centre. The Victorian Electoral Commission is doing a short survey about voting. May I please speak with <Name>?

REINTRODUCE IF NECESSARY: Good afternoon/evening my name is <SAY NAME> and I'm calling on behalf of the Victorian Electoral Commission from the Social Research Centre. The Victorian Electoral Commission is doing a short survey about voting.

The Victorian Electoral Commission has provided us with a list of people who were eligible to vote in one or both of the 2014 Victorian State election and the 2016 Victorian council elections, but didn't vote in one or both of those elections.

Your telephone number has been chosen at random from this list. The information you provide will only be used for research purposes, we will treat all information you give in strict confidence. We estimate that this survey will take about 12 minutes to complete.

This survey is mainly about your opinions. There are no right or wrong answers. If I come to any question you prefer not to answer, just let me know and I'll skip over it. Participation is voluntary and you are free to terminate the interview at any time.

Are you happy to continue?

1. Continue
2. Household Refusal (GO TO RR1)
3. Respondent Refusal (GO TO RR1)
4. LOTE – Identify language (no follow-up)

*(SAMTYP=2)

S7 Could I also just check whether it is safe for you to take this call at the moment? If not, we'd be happy to call back when it is more convenient for you.

1. Safe to take call
2. Not safe to take call
99. Refusal (GO TO RR1)

*(S7=2, MOBILE AND NOT SAFE TO TAKE CALL)

S8 Do you want me to call you back on this number or would you prefer I call back on your home phone?

1. This number (MAKE APPOINTMENT)
2. Home phone (MAKE APPOINTMENT, RECORD HOME PHONE NUMBER)
3. Respondent refusal (GO TO RR1)

(*PROGRAMMER NOTE: WRITE STATE / TERRITORY TO SAMPLE RECORD)

*(ALL)

MON This call may be monitored or recorded for quality assurance purposes. Is that ok?

1. Yes
2. No

*(TIMESTAMP2)

A NON-VOTING STATUS/REASON

ROTATE A1/A2 AND A3/A4 (IF ELIGIBLE FOR BOTH A1 AND A3 HALF OF RESPONDENTS SHOULD BE ASKED A1/A2 FIRST, THE OTHER HALF SHOULD BE ASKED A3/A4 FIRST.RECORD WHICH GROUP OF QUESTIONS WAS ANSWERED FIRST)

*IF STATE_NONVOTER = 1

A1 Thinking now about the 2014 Victorian State election...

The records provided by the Victorian Electoral Commission indicate that you didn't vote in the 2014 Victorian State election. Please confirm that this sounds correct.

1. That sounds correct, **I don't think I voted** in the 2014 Victorian State election
2. That is incorrect, **I did vote** in the 2014 Victorian State election
3. I don't recall if I voted in the 2014 Victorian State election or not
99. (Refused)

*IF A1 = 1 OR 3

A2 (IF A1 = 1)

In your own words, please describe your reasons for not voting in the 2014 Victorian State election?

(IF A1 = 3)

In your own words, please describe your reasons for why you may not have voted in the 2014 Victorian State election?

PROBE: Please enter as much detail as possible

1. (FULL TEXT BOX)
98. (Don't know)
99. (Refused)

*IF COUNCIL_NONVOTER = 1

A3 Thinking now about the 2016 Victorian council election for (INSERT LGA)...

The records provided by the Victorian Electoral Commission indicate that you didn't vote in the 2016 Victorian council election for (INSERT LGA). Please confirm that this sounds correct.

1. That sounds correct, **I don't think I voted** in the 2016 Victorian council elections
2. That is incorrect, **I did vote** in the 2016 Victorian council elections
3. I don't recall if I voted in the 2016 Victorian council elections or not
99. (Refused)

*IF A3 = 1 OR 3

A4 (IF A3 = 1)

In your own words, please describe your reasons for not voting in the 2016 Victorian council election for (INSERT LGA)?

(IF A3 = 3)

In your own words, please describe your reasons for why you may not have voted in the 2016 Victorian council election for (INSERT LGA)?

PROBE: Please enter as much detail as possible

1. (FULL TEXT BOX)
98. (Don't know)
99. (Refused)

IF A1 ≠ 1 OR 3 AND A3 ≠ 1 OR 3 GO TO TERM1

*(ALL)

A5 (IF A1=1 OR 3 & A3=1 OR 3)

Which one of the following messages from the Victorian Electoral Commission would most encourage you to vote in future Victorian State and council elections?

(IF A1=1 OR 3 & A3≠1 OR 3)

Which one of the following messages from the Victorian Electoral Commission would most encourage you to vote in future Victorian State elections?

(IF A1≠1 OR 3 & A3=1 OR 3)

Which one of the following messages from the Victorian Electoral Commission would most encourage you to vote in future Victorian council elections?

(ROTATE 1 TO 5) (FOR CATI PUT BRACKETS AROUND CODE 6 – NONE OF THESE)
(READ OUT EACH MESSAGE INCLUDING THE MESSAGE NUMBER E.G. 'MESSAGE

1....')

1. Vote - it's your responsibility
2. Every vote counts
3. Every vote will shape Victoria
4. Vote in time to avoid a fine
5. Vote - everybody's doing it!
6. None of these
98. (Don't know)
99. (Refused)

IF BOTH A1 = 1 OR 3 AND A3 = 1 OR 3 THEN ROTATE SECTIONS B AND C AND RECORD WHICH SECTION WAS ANSWERED FIRST

*(TIMESTAMP3)

B. STATE ELECTION VOTING

*A1 = 1 OR 3

INTROB The next set of questions are about Victorian State elections. Please think about **state elections only** when answering these questions....

*A1 = 1 OR 3

B1 Here are some reasons other people have given for not voting in Victorian State elections. Please indicate all the reasons that have contributed to you personally not voting in previous Victorian State elections.

*(MULTIPLE RESPONSE) (READ OUT)

*(CODES IN BOLD ARE GROUP HEADINGS AND CAN'T BE SELECTED – ROTATE GROUPS OF CODES AND CODES WITHIN EACH GROUP)

Knowledge

1. I didn't know there was an election happening
2. I didn't know **when** the election was happening
3. I didn't know where to go to vote
4. I didn't know enough about the candidates to vote
5. I didn't know that I was eligible to vote

Availability

6. I was overseas during the election
7. I was interstate during the election
8. I was in Victoria but I wasn't in my local area during the election
9. I had work commitments on the day of the election
10. I had social commitments on the day of the election (eg. visiting family/friends/at a wedding/funeral, etc.)
11. I had family commitments on the day of the election (eg. looking after children/family)

12. I was unwell on the day of the election

Unwilling

13. There was no-one that I wanted to vote for

14. I didn't think that my vote would make a difference

15. I don't vote for religious reasons

16. I find voting to be complicated and confusing

17. I object to voting being compulsory

Other reasons

18. I had moved address and hadn't updated my details

19. Other (please specify)

98. (Don't know/Can't say)

99. (Refused)

*A1 = 1 OR 3

B2 To what extent do your family and/or friends influence your voting behaviour in State elections?

(READ OUT)

1. Not at all

2. They are a small influence

3. They are a big influence

98. (Don't know/Can't say)

99. (Refused)

*A1 = 1 OR 3

B3 (CATI – SHOW FOR FIRST STATEMENT ONLY)

I will now read out a list of factors that other people have said make voting in State elections difficult.

(ONLINE – SHOW FOR FIRST STATEMENT ONLY)

Here are a list of factors that other people have said make voting in State elections difficult.

(BOTH CATI & ONLINE)

To what extent do you agree or disagree that each factor makes voting in State elections difficult for you?

(STATEMENTS) (READ OUT) (RANDOMISE)

a) I don't know how to fill out the ballot paper

b) I find it difficult to find the time to vote on election day

c) It is difficult for me to travel to the voting centre

d) I don't know where to go to vote

e) I am not familiar with the State election candidates for my area

f) I am not familiar with State government issues

g) I don't know when State elections are held

(RESPONSE FRAME) (READ OUT)

1. Strongly agree

2. Agree

3. Neither agree nor disagree

4. Disagree

5. Strongly disagree

98. (Don't know/Can't say)

99. (Refused)

*A1 = 1 OR 3

B4 Which of the following would you personally find helpful for voting in Victorian State elections?

(MULTIPLE RESPONSE) (READ OUT) (ROTATE 1-9) (NONE OF THE ABOVE SHOULD APPEAR FOR CATI ONLY)

1. A one-page comparison of all candidates/parties, provided by an independent source - not the VEC
2. More engagement with candidates e.g. through social media, local meetings etc.
3. Having voting centres in more convenient locations
4. Being able to vote online
5. Voting centres open for a longer time
6. Being sent an SMS text reminder on election day
7. An app with information about the election and candidates
9. Provide election materials in languages other than English
10. Any other suggestions? (please specify)
97. (None of the above)
98. (Don't know/Can't say)
99. (Refused)

*A1 = 1 OR 3

B5 Before today were you aware that Victorian State elections are held every four years on the **last Saturday in November**?

1. Yes
2. No
98. (Don't know/Can't say)
99. (Refused)

*(TIMESTAMP4)

C. COUNCIL ELECTION VOTING

*A3 = 1 OR 3

INTROC The next set of questions are about Victorian council elections. Please think about **council elections only** when answering these questions....

*A3 = 1 OR 3

C1 Here are some reasons other people have given for not voting in Victorian council elections. Please indicate all the reasons that have contributed to you personally not voting in previous Victorian council elections.

*(MULTIPLE RESPONSE) (READ OUT)

*(CODES IN BOLD ARE GROUP HEADINGS AND CAN'T BE SELECTED – ROTATE GROUPS OF CODES AND CODES WITHIN EACH GROUP)

Knowledge

1. I didn't know there was an election happening
2. I didn't know **when** the election was happening
3. I didn't know when I needed to return my vote (and I missed the deadline)
4. I didn't know where to go to vote
5. I didn't know enough about the candidates to vote
6. I didn't know that I was eligible to vote

Availability

7. I was overseas during the election
8. I was interstate during the election
9. I was in Victoria but I wasn't in my local area during the election
10. I had work commitments on the day of the election
11. I had social commitments on the day of the election (eg. visiting family/friends/at a wedding/funeral, etc.)
12. I had family commitments on the day of the election (eg. looking after children/family)
13. I was unwell on the day of the election

Unwilling

14. There was no-one that I wanted to vote for
15. I didn't think that my vote would make a difference

- 16. I don't vote for religious reasons
- 17. I find voting to be complicated and confusing
- 18. I object to voting being compulsory

Other reasons

- 19. I had moved address and hadn't updated my details
- 20. My voting papers or my completed vote were delayed/lost in the post
- 21. Other (please specify)
- 22. (Don't know/Can't say)
- 23. (Refused)

*A3 = 1 OR 3

C2 To what extent do your family and/or friends influence your voting behaviour in council elections?

(READ OUT)

- 1. Not at all
- 2. They are a small influence
- 3. They are a big influence
- 98. (Don't know/Can't say)
- 99. (Refused)

*A3 = 1 OR 3

C3 (CATI – SHOW FOR FIRST STATEMENT ONLY)

I will now read out a list of factors that other people have said make voting in council elections difficult.

(ONLINE – SHOW FOR FIRST STATEMENT ONLY)

Here is a list of factors that other people have said make voting in council elections difficult.

(BOTH CATI & ONLINE)

To what extent do you agree or disagree that each factor makes voting in council elections difficult for you?

(STATEMENTS) (READ OUT) (ROTATE)

- a) I don't know how to fill out the ballot paper
- e) I am not familiar with my local council candidates
- f) I am not familiar with council issues
- g) I don't know when council elections are held

(RESPONSE FRAME) (READ OUT)

- 1. Strongly agree
- 2. Agree
- 3. Neither agree nor disagree
- 4. Disagree
- 5. Strongly disagree
- 98. (Don't know/Can't say)
- 99. (Refused)

*A3 = 1 OR 3

C4 Which of the following would you personally find helpful for voting in Victorian council elections?

(MULTIPLE RESPONSE) (READ OUT) (ROTATE 1-9) (NONE OF THE ABOVE SHOULD APPEAR FOR CATI ONLY)

- 1. A one-page comparison of all candidates, provided by an independent source - not the VEC

2. More engagement with candidates e.g. through social media, local meetings, etc.
3. Longer response time to return ballot papers
4. Being able to vote online
5. Polls open for a longer time
6. Being sent an SMS text reminder about the voting deadline
7. An app with information about the election and candidates
8. Provide election materials in languages other than English
9. Any other suggestions? (please specify)
97. (None of the above)
98. (Don't know/Can't say)
99. (Refused)

*A3 = 1 OR 3

C5 Before today were you aware that Victorian council elections are held every four years on the **fourth Saturday in October**?

1. Yes
2. No
98. (Don't know/Can't say)
99. (Refused)

*(TIMESTAMP5)

D. ATTITUDES TO VOTING AND GOVERNMENT

*(ALL)

INTROD The next set of questions are about voting and elections in general.

*(ALL)

D1a When it comes to politics and elections, how **interested** would you say you are in...

(STATEMENTS) (READ OUT) (ROTATE)

- a) Your local council
- b) Victorian State politics
- c) Australian Federal politics
- d) Overseas governments and politics

(RESPONSE FRAME) (READ OUT)

1. Not at all interested
2. Slightly interested
3. Moderately interested
4. Very interested
5. Extremely interested
6. (Don't know/Can't say)
7. (Refused)

*(ALL)

D1b Still thinking about politics and elections, how **knowledgeable** would you say you are about...

(STATEMENTS) (READ OUT) (ROTATE)

- a) Your local council
- b) Victorian State politics
- c) Australian Federal politics
- d) Overseas governments and politics

(RESPONSE FRAME) (READ OUT)

1. I know nothing at all
2. I know a little
3. I know a fair bit
4. I know a lot
5. I know everything there is to know
98. (Don't know/Can't say)
99. (Refused)

*(ALL)

D2

(CATI – SHOW FOR FIRST STATEMENT ONLY)

I will now read out a list of statements that other people have said about engagement with voting, politics and government.

(ONLINE – SHOW FOR FIRST STATEMENT ONLY)

Next is a list of statements that other people have said about engagement with voting, politics and government.

(BOTH CATI & ONLINE)

To what extent do you agree or disagree that...

(STATEMENTS) (RANDOMISE)

- a) I enjoy reading about politics and government
- b) I often discuss politics and political issues with others
- c) It makes no difference who you vote for, nothing will improve
- d) State government politicians clearly understand the issues in my local area
- e) I only vote because I will receive a fine if I don't vote
- f) Voting is an important part of the democratic process
- g) There is too much mudslinging in politics
- h) It is taboo to talk about politics

(RESPONSE FRAME) (READ OUT)

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
98. (Don't know/Can't say)
99. (Refused)

*ALL

D3a

Do you agree or disagree that voting in Victorian **State** elections should be compulsory?

1. Agree
2. Disagree
98. (Don't know/Can't say)
99. (Refused)

*ALL

D3b

Do you agree or disagree that voting in Victorian **council** elections should be compulsory?

1. Agree
2. Disagree
98. (Don't know/Can't say)
99. (Refused)

*ALL

D4 Currently people who are eligible to vote in Victorian State and council elections, but don't vote, receive a fine for not voting. Do you agree or disagree that there should be a fine for not voting?

1. Agree
2. Disagree
98. (Don't know/Can't say)
99. (Refused)

*ALL

D5 Have you ever received a fine for not voting?

1. Yes
2. No
98. (Don't know/Can't say)
99. (Refused)

*(TIMESTAMP6)

E. DEMOGRAPHICS

*(ALL)

GEN Now some final questions about yourself to help analyse the results.

Can I please confirm your gender?

1. Female
2. Male
3. Other
99. (Refused)

*(ALL)

AGEYR What was your age last birthday?

1. Age given (RECORD AGE IN YEARS) (RANGE 18 to 99)
99. (Refused)

*(AGEYR=99, REFUSED AGE)

AGEGRP Which of the following age groups do you belong to...?

(READ OUT)

1. 18-24
2. 25-34
3. 35-44
4. 45-54
5. 55-64
6. 65-74
7. 75 and over
99. (Refused)

*ALL

LIFESTAGE. How would you describe your household?
(DISPLAY FOR CATI ONLY) For example, a couple, a couple with children, single person or something else.

1. Couple without children
2. Couple with children (includes children aged 18 years and older)
3. One parent family
4. Group household (all or most people in the household are non-related)
5. One person household
6. Other, please specify _____
98. Unsure *(DISPLAY ONLY FOR CATI)
99. Prefer not to say *(DISPLAY ONLY FOR CATI)

*ALL

BORN1. In which country were you born?

1. Australia
2. China
3. Greece
4. India
5. Italy
6. Lebanon
7. New Zealand
8. Turkey
9. United Kingdom / Ireland
10. Vietnam
11. Other (please specify)
98. Unsure *(DISPLAY ONLY FOR CATI)
99. Prefer not to say *(DISPLAY ONLY FOR CATI)

*IF BORN1=2/11, NOT BORN IN AUSTRALIA

AGEAUS. How old were you when you moved to Australia?

1. Age given (RECORD AGE IN YEARS) (RANGE 0 to 99) (LOGIC CHECK: RESPONSE MUST NOT BE GREATER THAN RESPONSE AT AGEYR)
99. (Refused)

*(ALL)

HEDU What is the highest level of education you have completed?

(DISPLAY CODE 7 AFTER CODE 2)
PROMPT IF REQUIRED

1. Year 11 or below
2. Year 12
3. Certificate III or IV
4. Diploma or Advanced Diploma
5. Bachelor degree
6. Postgraduate degree / Graduate Diploma or Certificate
7. Certificate I or II
98. (Don't know)
99. (Refused)

*(ALL)

MAINACT Which of the following BEST describes your main activity at the moment?

(READ OUT)

1. Employed (full-time, part-time, self-employed, casual)
2. Unemployed
3. Student
4. Retired or on a pension
5. Home duties, or
6. Something else

- 98. (Don't know)
- 99. (Refused)

*(ALL)

HINCOME Before tax or other deductions, what is your annual **household** income?

Please include wages and salaries, government pensions, benefits and allowances and income from interest, dividends, or other sources.

INTERVIEWER NOTE: Seeking estimate only – especially if unsure of income of other household members.

- 1. Less than \$20,000 per year
- 2. \$20,000 to less than \$40,000 per year
- 3. \$40,000 to less than \$60,000 per year
- 4. \$60,000 to less than \$80,000 per year
- 5. \$80,000 to less than \$100,000 per year
- 6. \$100,000 to less than \$150,000 per year
- 7. \$150,000 or more per year
- 8. Nil income
- 9. Negative income
- 98. (Don't know)
- 99. (Refused)

*(ALL)

PCODE Could you please confirm the postcode where you usually live?

*PROGRAMMER NOTE: DISPLAY SAMPLE POSTCODE

- 1. (CATI) Postcode from sample correct (ONLINE) The postcode above is correct
- 2. Collect postcode (Please specify) (RANGE: 200-299, 800-9999)
- 98. (Don't know) (SPECIFY suburb or town)
- 99. (Refused)

*(ALL)

CURADD In what year did you start living at your current address?

- 1. Collect year (RANGE: 1918-2018)
- 98. (Don't know)
- 99. (Refused)

*(ALL)

MOVADD Including your current address, how many different addresses have you lived at in the past 5 years?

- 1. Collect number (RANGE: 1-30)
- 98. (Don't know)
- 99. (Refused)

POST1

Thinking about the mail that your household receives in the post box but excluding mail that is addressed to someone other than yourself ...

(i.e. include mail not addressed to anyone in particular such as flyers, pamphlets, campaigning materials addressed to "the household" or not addressed at all)

Which of the following statements best describes how much of this mail you read?

(READ OUT)

- 1. I read all of it
- 2. I read most of it

3. I read some of it
4. I read none of it
98. (Don't know)
99. (Refused)

*(TIMESTAMP7)

CLOSE

*(ALL)
END1

*CATI ONLY: Thank you for taking the time to complete this interview. Just in case you missed it, my name is (...) and this survey was conducted by the Social Research Centre on behalf of the Victorian Electoral Commission.

*ONLINE ONLY: Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. This survey was conducted by the Social Research Centre on behalf of the Victorian Electoral Commission.

*BOTH CATI & ONLINE: This research is carried out in compliance with the Privacy Act and the Australian Privacy Principles, and the information you have provided will only be used for research purposes. Our Privacy Policy is available via our website, www.srcentre.com.au.

1. End survey

CLOSE SUITABLY

*(TIMESTAMP8)

TERMINATION SCRIPT

TERM1 (CATI) Thanks anyway, but to participate in this study I need to speak to people who didn't vote.

TERM1 (ONLINE) Thanks anyway, but to participate in this study you need to have not voted.

Appendix 2 Weighting Benchmarks

Weighting variables	Respondents (#)	Respondents (%)	Population (#)	Population (%)	Average weight
Age group					
18-24	123	11.9	71449	10.0	0.8
25-34	337	32.6	215476	30.3	0.9
35-44	250	24.2	179923	25.3	1.0
45-54	149	14.4	126997	17.8	1.2
55-64	131	12.7	78924	11.1	0.9
65+	43	4.2	35885	5.0	1.2
Gender					
Male	553	53.5	369356	51.9	1.0
Female	480	46.5	332402	46.7	1.0
SA4					
Ballarat	24	2.3	17619	2.5	1.1
Bendigo	16	1.5	17028	2.4	1.5
Geelong	30	2.9	13337	1.9	0.6
Hume	32	3.1	18133	2.5	0.8
Latrobe - Gippsland	46	4.5	31482	4.4	1.0
Melbourne - Inner	230	22.3	128530	18.0	0.8
Melbourne - Inner East	59	5.7	38440	5.4	0.9
Melbourne - Inner South	66	6.4	47724	6.7	1.0
Melbourne - North East	80	7.7	54846	7.7	1.0
Melbourne - North West	58	5.6	43058	6.0	1.1
Melbourne - Outer East	68	6.6	53213	7.5	1.1
Melbourne - South East	114	11.0	84111	11.8	1.1
Melbourne - West	108	10.5	87058	12.2	1.2
Mornington Peninsula	46	4.5	39496	5.5	1.2
North West	23	2.2	14066	2.0	0.9
Shepparton	14	1.4	13640	1.9	1.4
Warrnambool and South West	18	1.7	9918	1.4	0.8
Non-voter type					
Council only	422	40.9	517058	72.6	1.8
State one-off	327	31.7	94451	13.3	0.4
State habitual	52	5.0	22600	3.2	0.6
Mixed	232	22.5	78112	11.0	0.5