Victorian Electoral Commission

Evaluation of services at the
24 November 2018 Victorian State election

Parties and
Candidates
Report
V4

colmar brunton.

Table of Contents

Index of Tables

»»→ colmar brunton.

Index of Figures

1. Executive summary

This report contains quantitative findings for candidates and qualitative findings for political parties based on a survey and in-depth interviews conducted for the Evaluation of Services at the 2018 Victorian State Election.

Findings for candidates

Suggestions for improvement

Overall, candidates were satisfied with VEC's services at the State election. However, some made suggestions for improvements for previous elections.

- Improving practical and logistical features at voting centres such as enabling easy and comfortable access for voters; and improving the flow of voters in and out of the centre. A particular issue was identified by some candidates for voters with mobility issues.

  "Limited parking but the main reason was safety for the volunteers but more particularly the voters - stressful to be watching always to stop people from getting in the path of traffic, cars (other voters), forklifts and trucks. This was also a location with no shelter at all for volunteers (had a thunderstorm with heavy rain once, another day of all day rain and was sunburnt twice. Standing on concrete for hours not great. Also no access to toilet facilities - either had to go look for facilities within walking distance or ration drinking which is not ideal for health."

  "Pakenham voting centre accessibility an issue for dropping off a voter with an impairment/difficulty in walking etc. the candidates/team had to sometimes move the portable accessibility sign barrier to allow access."

- 'Re-balancing' the availability of voting services to accommodate the large volume of early voters compared with Election day voters.

  "The VEC timeline needs to be amended to acknowledge that fifty percent of the electorate voted prior to election day. For example, less booths were needed on Election Day. Consideration should be given to moving forward the nomination process and ballot draw."

- Clarification about the rules and requirements of handing out Hot to Vote cards.

  "Remove the handing out of How to Vote Cards. Registered HTVCs to be made available within the election booth. Either mounted in cubicles or available from a rack or a table. VEC election staff to ensure HTVCs always available and not damaged."

- More information, particularly for newer parties, about the counting process.

  "Provide a more detailed timeline of what votes and rechecks get done and when – pre-publish so there is no guessing."

Overall satisfaction with management of election

The majority of candidates were satisfied with the efforts of the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) in managing the 2018 state election (86%). Positively, very few candidates were dissatisfied (2%). These results are also in line with previous state elections in 2014 and 2010 (82% and 93% respectively).

"It is a massive operation, and everyone worked really hard, were professional and assisted where possible with information." (Quote from a candidate.)

Election Manager

Candidates were satisfied with the effectiveness of their Election Managers on a number of dimensions. Nearly all candidates were satisfied with the draw of ballot positions (88%), the provision of accurate election information (85%) as well as the ability of the Election Managers to act impartially (85%).

In terms of opportunities for improvement, fewer candidates were satisfied with how the Election Manager kept scrutineers informed during vote counting (77%).

Voting services

Similar to previous elections, the great majority of candidates were satisfied with the operation of voting centres for voters in their electorate (79%). Most candidates consider them to be sufficiently staffed (77%). However, fewer consider all centres in their electorate to be accessible (67%) and to be suitably located (54%).

Seven in ten candidates were satisfied with the efficiency and effectiveness of early voting centres in their electorate (70%). As with voting centres on election day, the convenience of the location was seen to be the source of dissatisfaction (noting that the VEC has limited capacity to determine infrastructure and amenities for centres).

"Prepoll - No cover outside, limited accessibility for disabled, next to a school which caused issues during drop off and pick up times, tight cramped access, no good access from disabled car parks. uneven gutter and footpath for elderly etc."

Candidates were less likely to be satisfied with mobile voting services - just over half were satisfied (56%). Satisfaction with mobile voting is in line with past elections, with the source of this dissatisfaction largely due to the presentation of how-to-vote cards for those voting at mobile centres.

"This is one area where there is considerable confusion amongst candidates/political parties, VEC officials and voters in these centres as to what is allowable. Much more clarity needs to be provided about handing out How-to-vote and the folder with registered HTV cards."

Two in five candidates believe there is a need to improve services for voters with a disability (44%). Typically these improvements relate to improving parking (26%) and accessibility of centres (34%). Other candidates would like to see greater promotion of alternative voting methods for these voters such as telephone assisted voting (TAV), a service of which only two in five candidates are aware (39%).

A third of candidates also see a need to improve services for voters from non-English speaking backgrounds (34%). Candidates seeing a need for improvement would like to see more translated materials being offered, or translators being stationed at voting centres.

Three in four candidates were also satisfied with the process of counting votes (77%). One in nine candidates do report some dissatisfaction (11%), primarily due to a lack of updates on how the count was progressing.

The majority were satisfied with the co-operation with scrutineers and the accuracy of the count (95% and 89% respectively). Three quarters were also satisfied with the provision of results (78%).

Satisfaction however is slightly lower for the speed of the count (68%) and for receiving information about the counting timetable (62%).

Information provided – general population

Half of all candidates recall seeing the VEC's Election Guide prior to election day (54%) and the majority of those believed it is an effective tool for communicating with voters (89%). Suggestions for improvements included providing further elaboration on how preferential voting is administered.

A majority of candidates also saw advertising or communications from the VEC (85%), with most having seen this in either newspapers or on free to air TV (50% and 45% respectively). The most commonly recalled messages in these communications were information about the date of the election and enrolling to vote (64% and 61% respectively). Voter communications were considered to be effective communications by over three in five candidates (64%).

Four in five candidates were satisfied with the VEC website (78%). Specifically, they were satisfied with the clarity, accessibility and helpfulness of the site (85%, 85% and 81% respectively). Three in four were satisfied with the ease of navigation and finding information (75% each).

Further, four in five were satisfied with the usefulness of the VEC Hotline (84%), with nearly all candidates satisfied with the politeness of the operator (93%), and three in four satisfied with the knowledge of the operator and the speed of response (77% each).

Information provided – candidate specific

The majority of candidates received a copy of the Candidates Information Kit (80%). For those that did not receive the Kit, a fifth instead received the Handbook (18%). Most candidates perceived that the Kit and the Handbook were effective sources of information for most candidates (81%).

Most candidates recall being notified by the VEC regarding the change in signage rules at voting centres in 2018 (84%). Three in five candidates were satisfied with how this change was managed (60%). However, one quarter were not satisfied (25%).

Candidates bulletins and circulars were received by most clients (81%), and a majority who received them found these to be useful (72%). One in three independent candidates attended the information session in October (33%).

Findings for political parties

Political party representatives were generally very positive about the VEC's overall performance in the 2018 election.

> *"They are professionally run, fair, reasonable and firm. I have the upmost respect for the VEC."*

Some of the processes required by the VEC, particularly in relation to how-to-vote cards, were described as time-consuming and complex. However, there was a widespread understanding that such requirements are necessary to ensure that relevant legislation is complied with and to ensure a fair and well-run election.

Relatively few criticisms were made. The most commonly suggested areas of improvement for future elections relate to:

1. How to vote cards:

   o Provision of more time to prepare and submit how-to-vote cards;
   o Review of the process for rectifying mistakes or non-compliance issues encountered during the process of registering how-to-vote cards;
   o Consider allocation of greater resourcing during the registration period;

2. Early voting centres:

   o Review location/placement of early voting centres (accessibility issues were noted);
   o Consider allocation of greater resourcing during peak times for the operation of early voting centres);

3. Training for staff, particularly on clear communication:

   o Ensure that all booth officers and booth managers receive the same training and that rules related to campaign signage are applied consistently across the voting centres;
   o The importance of accurate completion of voting material should be communicated in future public messaging to reduce the incidence of informal voting;
   o Some user-experience work with the VEC website is recommended. Issues with website navigation and duplication of information across pages were identified.

2. Methodology

In order to evaluate the services to candidates and their parties at the 2018 Victorian state election both a quantitative questionnaire and qualitative depth interviews were used to capture data. The results of each component are presented together in this report.

2.1. Research Sample

The VEC provided the sample list to Colmar Brunton, who contacted parties and candidates via telephone. The quantitative survey was conducted with candidates via computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI), while depth interviews were conducted with party representatives.

- Fieldwork was conducted between 7 December and 17 December 2018
- n=87 quantitative surveys were completed, of which n=21 were independent candidates
- Qualitative depth interviews were conducted with n=10 party representatives

3. Reading this report

3.1. Single and multiple response questions

Respondents answering single response questions (SR) were only allowed to select one response option, so percentages in these charts will add to 100%. Respondents answering multiple response questions (MR) were allowed to select more than one response option if they desired, and as a result percentages in these charts may add to more than 100%.

3.2. Determining who answered a question

Information pertaining to who answered each question is presented below each chart or table, as indicated by the 'Base'.

3.3. Sorting of results

In all tables, rows are sorted from most frequent response to least, and columns are sorted by total responses. In all charts, statements are sorted from highest to lowest ratings.

4. Findings for candidates

4.1. Overall satisfaction with management of election

Overall, a majority of candidates in the 2018 State election were satisfied with the VEC's management of communicating and arranging the election for voters (86%), with three in ten reporting they were extremely satisfied with the management of the election (31%). Only a very small proportion reported dissatisfaction (2%).

Figure 1 - Overall satisfaction with management of election

| Extremely dissatisfied (1-2) | 3-4 | 5-6 | 7-8 | Extremely Satisfied (9-10) |
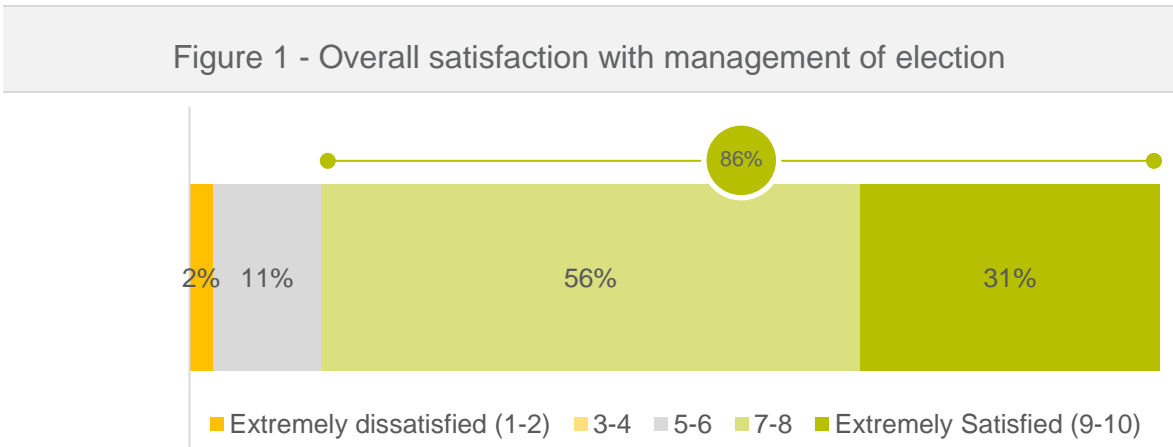
Q47   Please think about all the information provided and arrangements to assist voters on election day. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the efforts of the Victorian Electoral Commission in managing the election?
Base: All candidates, don't know responses excluded n=81

Overall satisfaction is in line with the previous state election in 2014, when four in five candidates were satisfied (82%). Results have recovered following a decline in satisfaction in 2014.

Table 1 - Satisfaction with management of election over time

2010 (n=70)	2014 (n=70)	2018 (n=81)
93%	82%▼	86%

Specific comments about the management of the election overall suggested some issues with the location of election day voting and early voting centres. Others commented on the difficulty of changed arrangements at the 2018 election, such as being confused by the new signage laws, or the difficulty for independents to cover many more voting centres than in previous years.

> *It is a massive operation, and everyone worked really hard, were professional and assisted where possible with information. The VEC website had updated results throughout till declaring however they were not updated - as an example votes on one day remained the same two days later but the VEC website had 'updated and time' but I thought this must be a generic sweep across all electorate. Comment - update results where they actually change rather than not."*

> *Better located EVCs at central location in electorates, not on fringe e.g. Bentleigh, Sandringham, Brighton. Oakleigh was a good location, accessible. Thought should also be given to the volunteers at EVC. Large contested seats attract larger numbers of volunteers and street access for pedestrians, and lack of space can be problematic and lead to stress and issues amongst volunteers. Access to toilets for them is also needs to be taken into account".*

> *Terrible candidates advice line - I could never get through and I continually received contradictory advice. Personnel were definitely not trained."*

> *The VEC timeline needs to be amended to acknowledge that fifty percent of the electorate voted prior to election day. For example, less booths were needed on Election Day. Consideration should be given to moving forward the nomination process and ballot draw."*

> *The number of voting centre in the Seat of Bass (24 booths) was overwhelming to resource for Candidates. With 2 weeks of pre-polling (3 centres) this was impossible to cover with volunteers for an Independent Candidate. I felt this was very discriminating and unfair for Independent Candidates."*

> *Remove the handing out of How to Vote Cards. Registered HTVCs to be made available within the election booth. Either mounted in cubicles or available from a rack or a table. VEC election staff to ensure HTVCs always available and not damaged. This will remove the awful harassment of voters at polling booths. It will also increase the 'fairness' of elections because smaller, newer, emergent parties and /or independents cannot 'staff' polling booths in a manner to effectively compete with the established parties. Remove candidate posters from outside booths. These two measures will improve the election experience, remove bias and enhance our democratic process."*

> *Better signage around booth locations that had changed from 2014. Many voters were confused had not read the information posted to them by VEC and were confused when they arrived at either the wrong location, or the correct location, but the wrong building."*

4.2. Election Manager

The majority of candidates were satisfied with the performance of their Election Manager. Over four in five were satisfied with the conduct of the computerised draw for ballot positions (88%), provision of accurate information about election arrangements (85%), and always acting impartially (85%).

Considering aspects that candidates were less satisfied with, three quarters were satisfied with how the Election Manager kept scrutineers informed during vote counting (77%), the lowest of all measures considered.

Considering independents specifically, all independent candidates were satisfied with the arrangements for nomination to stand (100%). The majority were also satisfied with the registration of their 'how to vote' cards (76%).

Figure 2 - Effectiveness of Election Manager

| | Extremely dissatisfied (1-2) | 3-4 | 5-6 | 7-8 | Extremely Satisfied (9-10) |
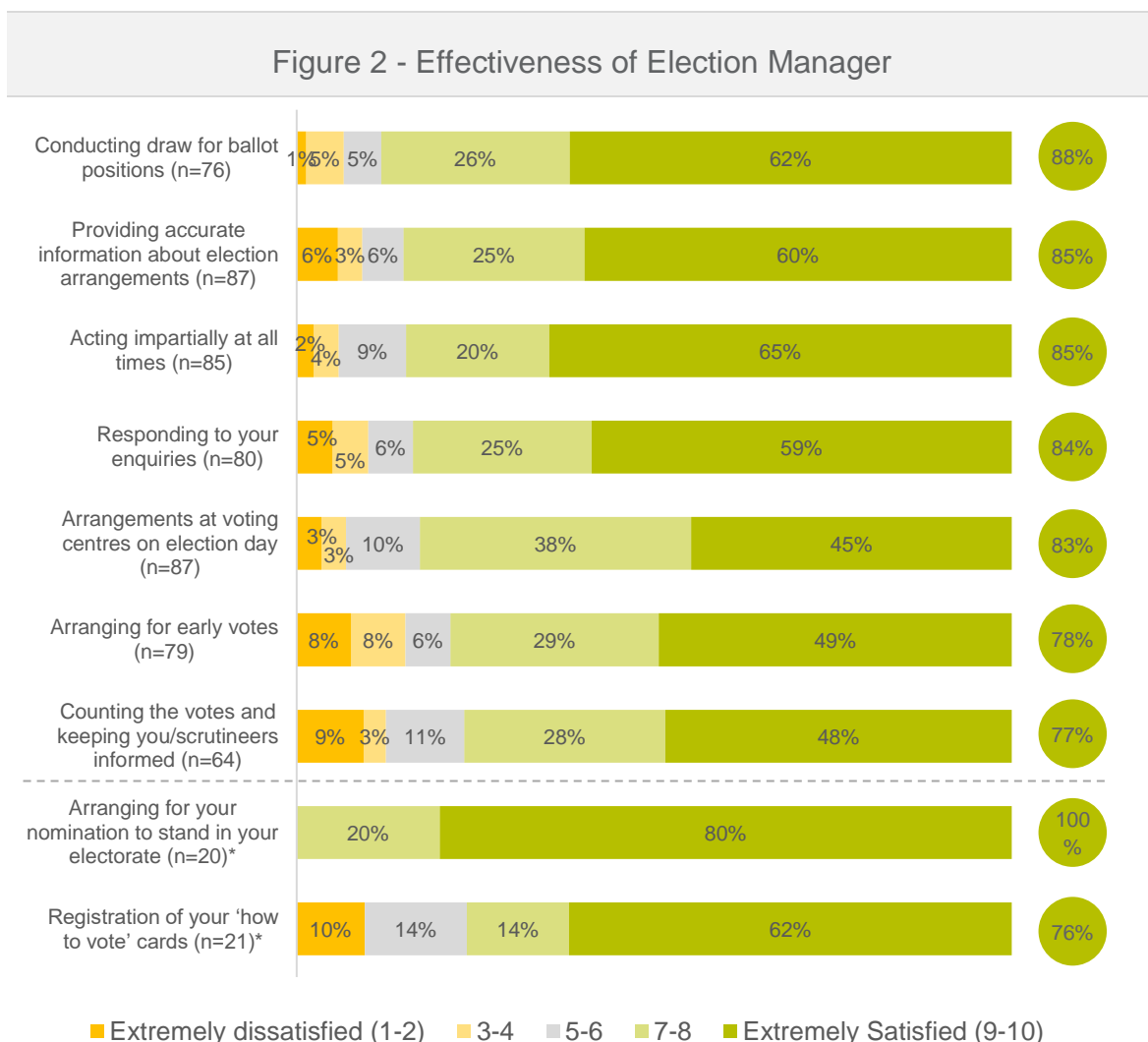
Q1   The Election Manager for your electorate had a range of responsibilities during the election. To evaluate the role of an Election Manager from a candidate's perspective, I am going to mention some of these responsibilities and ask how satisfied you were with their performance. Using a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is 'extremely dissatisfied' and 10 is 'extremely satisfied', how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the Election Manager in terms of...
Base: All candidates, don't know responses excluded, (*) only asked of independents. Refer to chart for n size.

9

Some candidates were dissatisfied with the handling of specific issues by their Election Manager. Others expressed frustration at a system which they believe favours the bigger parties.

	Reasons for dissatisfaction with Election Manager	Suggestions for improvement
"	*The pre-poll Election Manager ignored my requests for help when I was being intimidated by far-right thugs. For about 10 days he ignored my requests to take action and to ask the police to move them on."*	*"Listen to people of colour when they complain that they are being intimidated and harassed. especially if it is a candidate."*
"	*Dissatisfied with responses to complaints - they were considered in a biased, 'let's give in to the loudest voice' way. I was forced to take a complaint to the police because the staff would not take the harassment I was experiencing seriously."*	*"Know the rules! I was the one citing the (new) legislation - which they had no idea about."*
"	*Ballot delay was odd but out of her control."*	*"Provide a more detailed timeline of what votes and rechecks get done and when – pre-publish so there is no guessing."*
"	*I believe the whole election process favours the bigger parties. The Election Manager could use his decisions and how he organises the meetings and meeting dates to balance the process for smaller parties. I think he did that a bit but could have done more."*	*"By doing everything in his or her power to make the process fairer for small parties."*

Satisfaction with the Election Manager on a number of aspects has decreased significantly between 2014 and 2018. Particular areas for concern include registration of 'how to vote' cards (95% vs. 76%), acting impartially at all times (97% vs. 85%) and responding to your enquiries (95% vs. 84%).

Table 2 - Satisfaction with Election Manager over time

	2010 (n=52-68)	2014 (n=29-61)	2018 (n=20-87)
Conducting draw for ballot positions	90%	97%	88% ▼
Providing accurate information about election arrangements	85%	94%	85% ▼
Acting impartially at all times	97%	97%	85% ▼
Responding to your enquiries	90%	95%	84% ▼
Arrangements at voting centres on election day	78%	82%	83%
Arranging for early votes	80%	85%	78%
Counting the votes and keeping you/scrutineers informed	-	72%	77%
Arranging for your nomination to stand in your electorate	100%	97%	100%
Registration of your 'how to vote' cards	100%	95%	76% ▼

Note: ▲ / ▼ Indicates significant increase / decrease between 2014 and 2018.

4.3. Voting services

Voting centres

Overall, the majority of candidates were satisfied with the operation of voting centres on election day (79%), with three in ten extremely satisfied (30%). Only one in ten reported some dissatisfaction (8%).

Figure 3 - Satisfaction with operation of voting centres
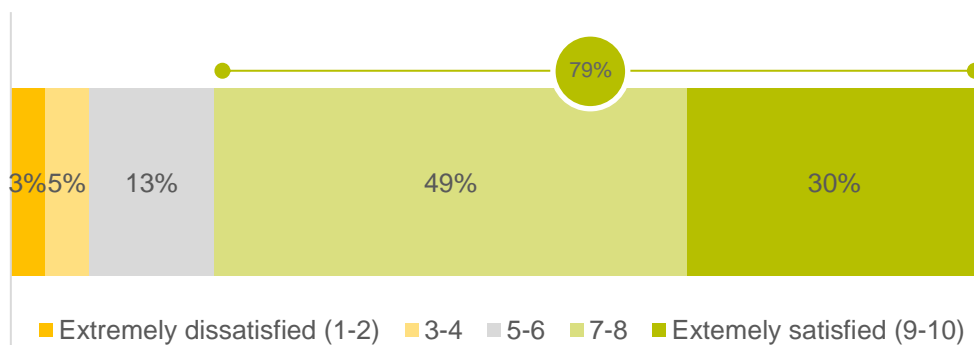
| Extremely dissatisfied (1-2) | 3-4 | 5-6 | 7-8 | Extemely satisfied (9-10) |

| Q29 | Thinking about experiences of voters in your electorate at all the voting centres, overall were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the operation of the voting centres? Please use a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is 'extremely dissatisfied' and 10 is 'extremely satisfied'
Base: All candidates, don't know responses excluded, n=86 |

Satisfaction with the operation of voting centres showed small, non-significant fluctuation over the last three year elections.

Table 3 - Satisfaction with operation of voting centres over time

2010 (n=70)	2014 (n=64)	2018 (n=86)
83%	88%	79%

Common issues raised by dissatisfied candidates with regard to voting centres included comments about how complaints were handled and aggressive distributing of how to vote cards.

Take away people aggressively handing out and 'spruiking'."

Have about 6 to 8 instead of 17 or more."

Handling of complaints, conduct of candidates and parties outside electoral booths, understanding of VEC advertising law."

Candidates were most satisfied with the staffing at centres, though less satisfied with the choice of location. The majority of candidates considered the voting centres in their electorate to have been sufficiently staffed (77%). However, one in ten (12%) were dissatisfied with the staffing.

Two thirds were also satisfied with the accessibility of the centres in their electorate (67%). However, a quarter (24%) were dissatisfied with the accessibility of centres.

Fewer candidates again were satisfied with the locations chosen for voting centres with just over half stating they were satisfied (54%), while a third were dissatisfied with the locations of voting centres (33%).

Figure 4 - Suitability of electorate voting centres
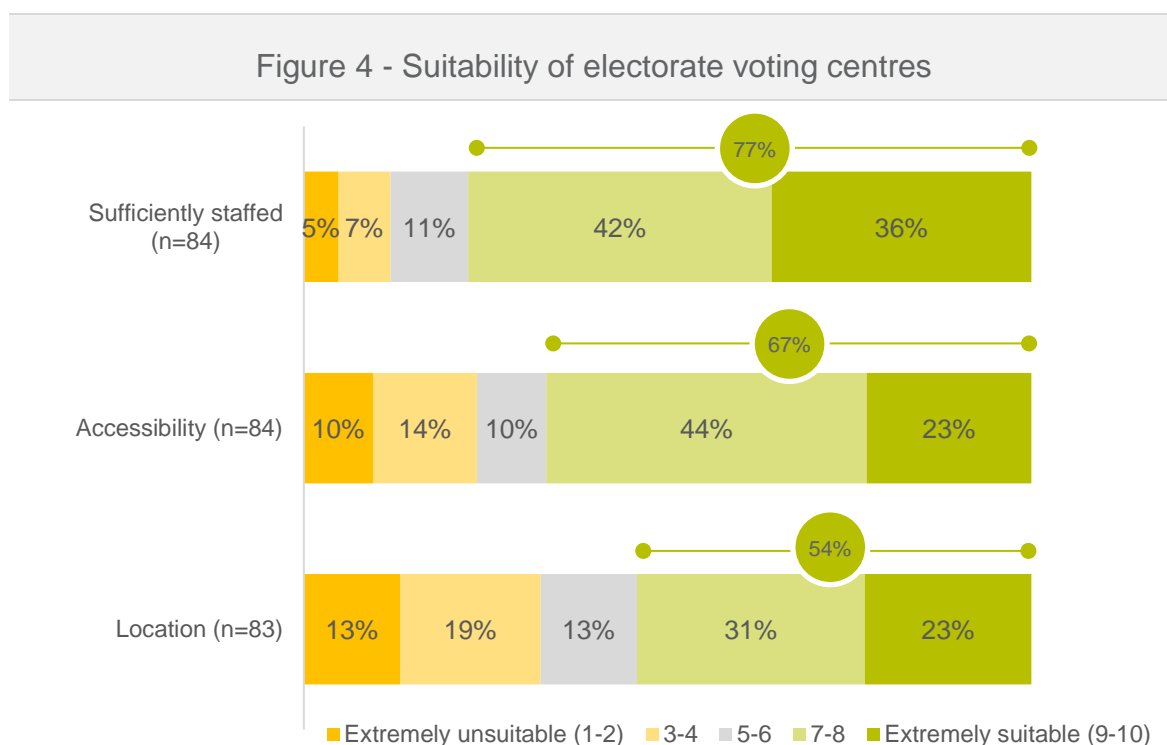
Q31   Thinking about all the voting centres in your electorate, were any unsuitable on the following aspects? Please use a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is 'extremely unsuitable' and 10 is 'extremely suitable',
Base: All candidates, don't know responses excluded. Refer to chart for n size.

Compared to 2014, significantly fewer candidates in 2018 believe that the location of voting centres in their electorate was suitable (77% vs. 54%).

Table 4 – Suitability of voting centres over time

	2014 (n=69)	2018 (n=83-84)
Sufficiently staffed	77%	77%
Accessibility	79%	67%
Location	77%	54% ▼

Candidates highlighted a number of issues about accessibility and locations of voting centres related to issues with parking, accessibility features, signage or a lack of outdoor cover.

Other locations were seen to be inadequate because they were located in close proximity to areas that could become busy at certain times - such as a school and a shopping centre that impact on access and safety, particularly when large amount of voters were arriving[1].

> " *Pakenham voting centre accessibility an issue for dropping off a voter with an impairment/difficulty in walking etc. the candidates/team had to sometimes move the portable accessibility sign barrier to allow access, in a few cases were told off for doing so but were just trying to be helpful."*

> " *Limited parking but the main reason was safety for the volunteers but more particularly the voters - stressful to be watching always to stop people from getting in the path of traffic, cars (other voters), forklifts and trucks. This was also a location with no shelter at all for volunteers (had a thunderstorm with heavy rain once, another day of all day rain and was sunburnt twice. Standing on concrete for hours not great. Also no access to toilet facilities - either had to go look for facilities within walking distance or ration drinking which is not ideal for health. (Basically lovely staff -apart from no toilet access but abysmal site)."*

> " *Accessibility to the prepoll was difficult for elderly and disabled. It was placed between a busy café and a travel agency. The foot path was just slightly larger than the 6 metre zone from the entrance. We were not covered when it rained which prompted the booth manager to reduce the exclusion zone to just 3 metres which was an improvement."*

> " *Inadequate access, poorly signed and poor parking provision. Stairs to access unlikely to be standards compliant. Etc Etc."*

> " *In my view, every voting centre that does not have shelter for volunteers handing out HTVCs is not suitable. The sun and rain in November can both be extremely unpleasant, recalling that the volunteers can be there for many hours. Some voting centres did not have reasonable access for persons with a disability to simply arrive and gain ready access without having to navigate difficult paths and/or throngs of other voters."*

> " *Prepoll - No cover outside, limited accessibility for disabled, next to a school which caused issues during drop off and pick up times, tight cramped access, no good access from disabled car parks. uneven gutter and footpath for elderly etc."*

---

[1] In some instances, it is possible that candidates were referring to early and/or on-the-day voting centres.

Early voting

Seven in ten candidates were satisfied with the efficiency and effectiveness of early voting centres (70%). However, one in six were dissatisfied with the operation of early voting centres (17%), while one in eight were neutral on the matter (13%).

Figure 5 - Satisfaction with efficiency and effectiveness of early voting centres

| 8% | 9% | 13% | 30% | 40% |

■ Extremely dissatisfied (1-2) ■ 3-4 ■ 5-6 ■ 7-8 ■ Extemely satisfied (9-10)
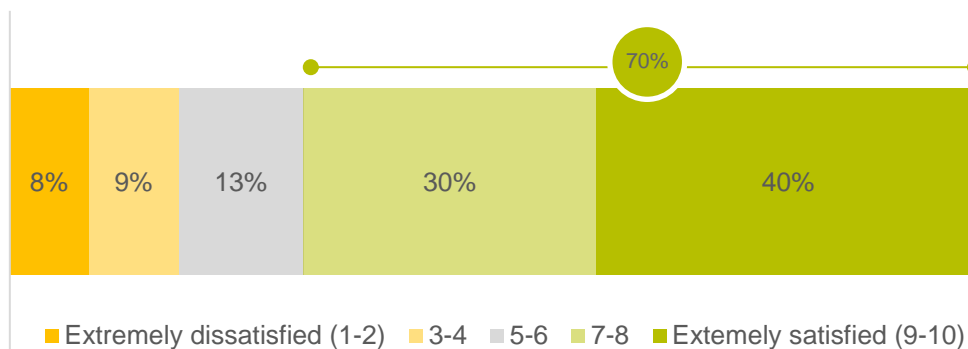
Q19   How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service to voters in terms of how efficiently and effectively the early voting centres were managed? Please use a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is 'extremely dissatisfied' and 10 is 'extremely satisfied',.
Base: All candidates, don't know responses excluded, n=86

Satisfaction with early voting centres is consistent with the previous state election.

Table 5 - Satisfaction with early voting centres over time

2010 (n=65)	2014 (n=67)	2018 (n=86)
78%	69%	70%

The one in six candidates who were dissatisfied with early voting centres, raised concerns about harassment of voters by volunteers and the candidates themselves. Similar to voting centres, comments were also made regarding the ineffective location of early voting centres. Expanding on this, candidates mentioned that certain early voting centres, particularly those close to electoral boundaries, did not always carry sufficient ballot papers to cover both the electorates they bordered.

	Reasons for dissatisfaction	Suggestions for improvement
"	*Voters were constantly harassed by volunteers and candidates on the way into the early voting centre. Numerous complaints were made. The VEC staff made empty threats about what they would do if it did not stop - but never enforced any of it.”*	*“Enforce the rules - they are there for a reason.”*
"	*The prepoll centre constantly ran out of ballot papers for Brighton (Caulfield) and other areas. In Pakington Street they kept running out of Prahran ballots. The location of the Brighton prepoll centre meant residents from Brighton were going to the other prepoll centres like Pakington St and Caulfield.”*	*“Have more ballot papers.”*
"	*The early voting centre was on one edge of the electorate. Nobody drives from Ballarat West to Stawell. Hence Ripon had the lowest or near lowest incidence of early voting and very large numbers of absent early voting which was people mainly voting in Wendouree.”*	*“See last question. Put the early voting centre where people will actually use it.”*

Mobile voting

Compared to other methods of voting, satisfaction with mobile voting was lower, with just over half of satisfied (56%) and one quarter dissatisfied (24%).

It should also be noted that one fifth are neutral on how mobile voting was provided (19%) - presumably due to low engagement with mobile voting for some candidates.

Figure 6 - Satisfaction with provision of mobile voting centres

| Extremely dissatisfied (1-2) | 3-4 | 5-6 | 7-8 | Extremely satisfied (9-10) |
| 13% | 11% | 19% | 37% | 19% |

56%
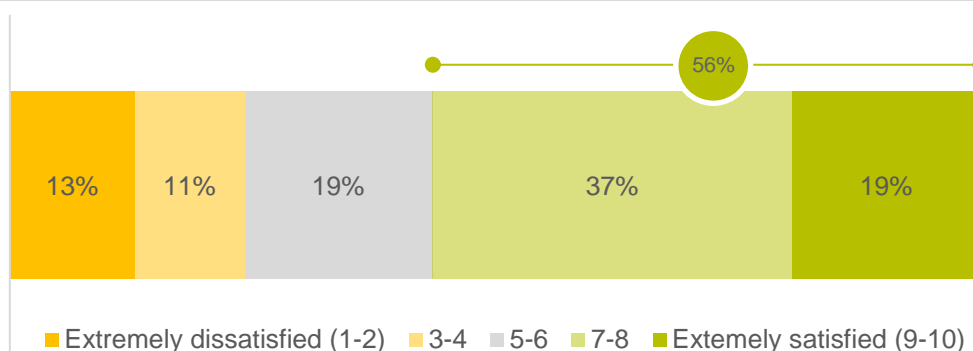
Q22   How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the provision of mobile voting service in your electorate? Please use a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is 'extremely dissatisfied' and 10 is 'extremely satisfied',
Base: All candidates, don't know responses excluded, n=62

Satisfaction with mobile voting also remained consistent across election years, with a similar proportion satisfied with the service in 2014 as the recent 2018 election (59% and 56% respectively).

Table 6 - Satisfaction with mobile voting centres over time

2010 (n=46)	**2014** (n=67)	**2018** (n=62)
65%	59%	56%

The quarter of candidates who were dissatisfied with mobile voting raised issues about the administration of how to vote cards during mobile voting. Candidates believed that greater training and information should be provided on this means of voting. Others highlighted concerns about potential interference by others in the process.

This is one area where there is considerable confusion amongst candidates/political parties, VEC officials and voters in these centres as to what is allowable. Much more clarity needs to be provided about handing out how-to-vote and the folder with registered HTV cards."

The VEC needs to provide a clear training and briefing session in the lead up to the mobile voting to a representative of the candidate. Different institutions behave differently about how they assist people to vote. Some 'nursing staff' are very political and strongly influence voting behaviour. The VEC needs to be clearer to its own staff and scrutineers and candidate representatives on how the process works. The current situation is very open to abuse."

How-to-vote cards were never displayed to voters. They were in a book in the corner of room where most people didn't know existed."

The first day - no how-to-vote cards were shown as they folder had been left behind. The second day - the folder was out of order and there was obvious bias shown towards one candidate whose how-to-vote card was put on top of the folder which was in clear breach of the VEC rules. Staff did not take complaints on board."

Disability and CALD services

Almost half of candidates believed there is a need to improve services to voters with a disability (44%), one third believed there is no need (36%) and one fifth do not know (21%).

Figure 7 - Improvements required for voters with a disability

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know
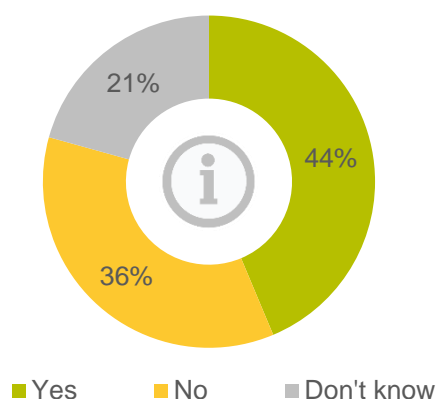
Q24   Do you see a need to improve services to voters with a disability?
       Base: All candidates n=87

Of the 44% who believe improvements could be made, candidates would like to see better disabled parking facilities at centres, while others describe specific accessibility improvements (i.e. ramps, sealed paths) needed at voting centres. Less commonly mentioned were better communication of alternative voting options such as postal voting.

> *Briefing candidates on how disability access can be accessed would be useful to help spread the information. Greater promotion of preregistered postal options for isolated rural areas so people with limited mobility can be organised in advance."*

> *It's more about the sites where early voting centres are held. Understand the difficulties of short term leasing but accessibility at the centre of my electorate (Tarneit) was poor. Little parking and voters had to manoeuvre through a carpark where businesses were trying to do their work. Forklifts trucks and voters should not mix -also bad for candidates and volunteers!"*

> *The actual site selection is critical in ensuring there is easy parking access to facilitate pick up and drop off for the elderly and disabled. In Essendon we were in the middle of a very busy shopping strip which made drop off collection and helping elderly and disabled difficult."*

> *Briefing candidates on how disability access can be accessed would be useful to help spread the information. Greater promotion of preregistered postal options for isolated rural areas so people with limited mobility can be organised in advance."*

One third of candidates believe improvements are needed for voters from a non-English speaking background (34%). The same proportion however disagree improvements are required (34%). The remaining third (31%) do not know, suggesting low engagement with CALD voters for some candidates.

Figure 8 - Improvements for voters from a non-English speaking background

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know
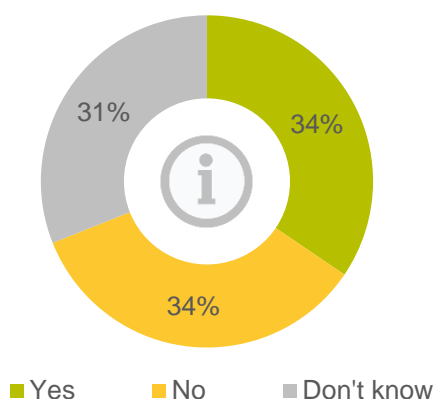
Q26   Do you see a need to improve services to voters who are from a non-English speaking background?
       Base: All candidates n=87

Suggestions for improvements to improve the experience for voters from non-English speaking backgrounds include providing more materials in languages other than English and to provide these at voting centres. Other candidates also saw an opportunity to have bilingual attendants who could assist voters directly at centres.

" *Multilingual instructions and/or instructions slips in languages other than English about how to fill out both Assembly and Council ballot papers are highly desirable. Many informal votes are cast by new citizens who don't understand the requirements and/or get confused between Assembly and Council voting rules."*

" *More translated materials could be available and offered in language to the voters at booths if they have a clear language barrier. The VEC staff did their best but I noticed some elderly people with poor English were quite confused when provided ballot papers. This will have likely have led to a high informal vote."*

" *Better info for candidates on the languages likely to be encountered within electorates."*

" *An attendant who can speak with main demographic communities to instruct them on voting."*

Two fifths of candidates are aware of Telephone Assisted Voting (39%), with just over half unaware of the service (54%).

Figure 9 - Awareness of Telephone Assisted Voting

7%

39%

54%

■ Yes   ■ No   ■ Don't know
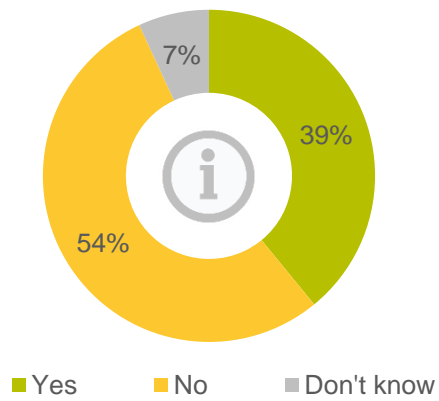
Q28   Were you aware that Telephone Assisted Voting was available?
       Base: All candidates n=87

Counting

Three-quarters of candidates were satisfied with the process of counting votes (77%), and one third were extremely satisfied (35%).

One in ten were dissatisfied with the counting process (11%) and a further one in ten were neutral on the matter (11%).

Figure 10 - Satisfaction with process of counting votes

Extremely dissatisfied (1-2)	3-4	5-6	7-8	Extemely satisfied (9-10)
6%	6%	11%	42%	35%
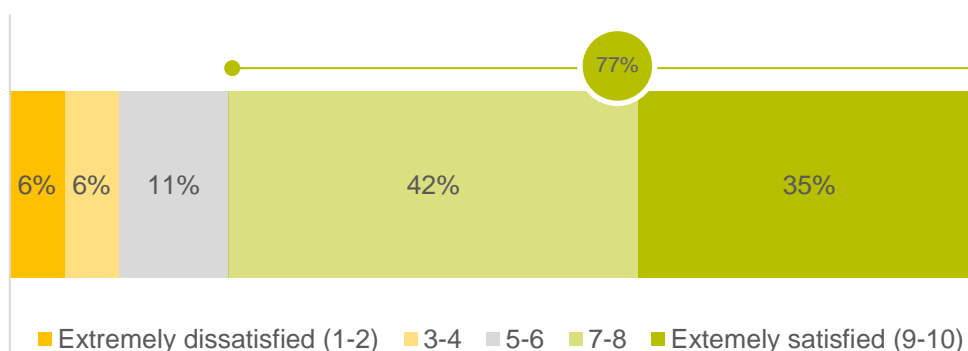
Q36   Once voting had closed, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the processes involved in counting the votes? Please use a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is 'extremely dissatisfied' and 10 is 'extremely satisfied'
Base: All candidates, don't know responses excluded, n=71

Satisfaction with the process of counting votes has remained stable over time and does not vary significantly from previous elections.

Table 7 - Satisfaction with process of counting votes over time

2010 (n=55)	2014 (n=61)	2018 (n=71)
69%	72%	77%

Dissatisfaction with the process of counting votes was primarily due to feeling uninformed about how voting counting was progressing.

> *Lack of information about how many votes were still to be counted, when they would be counted and what type of votes. Felt like it was 2 weeks of a lucky dip of what, when and where."*

> *I received several report from several voting centres where the election officials had no idea about what they were doing and therefore relied on the experience of scrutineers to assist them in doing their job."*

> *Counting and the lack of info on what was being counted and where."*

Satisfaction was lower for speed of counting and the counting timetable, while the majority of candidates were satisfied with all aspects of the counting process. Nearly all were satisfied with co-operation with scrutineers (95%), while a similar proportion were satisfied with the accuracy of the count (89%).

Almost four-fifths were satisfied with the provision of results (78%), two-thirds were satisfied with the speed of the count (68%) and a smaller proportion were satisfied with information about the counting timetable (62%).

Approximately one in six candidates mention they were dissatisfied with either the speed of the count or the counting timetable information (17% and 16% respectively).

Figure 11 - Satisfaction with counting process

Q39   Still thinking about the counting process, were you dissatisfied or satisfied with the following?
Base: All candidates, don't know responses excluded. Refer to chart for n size.
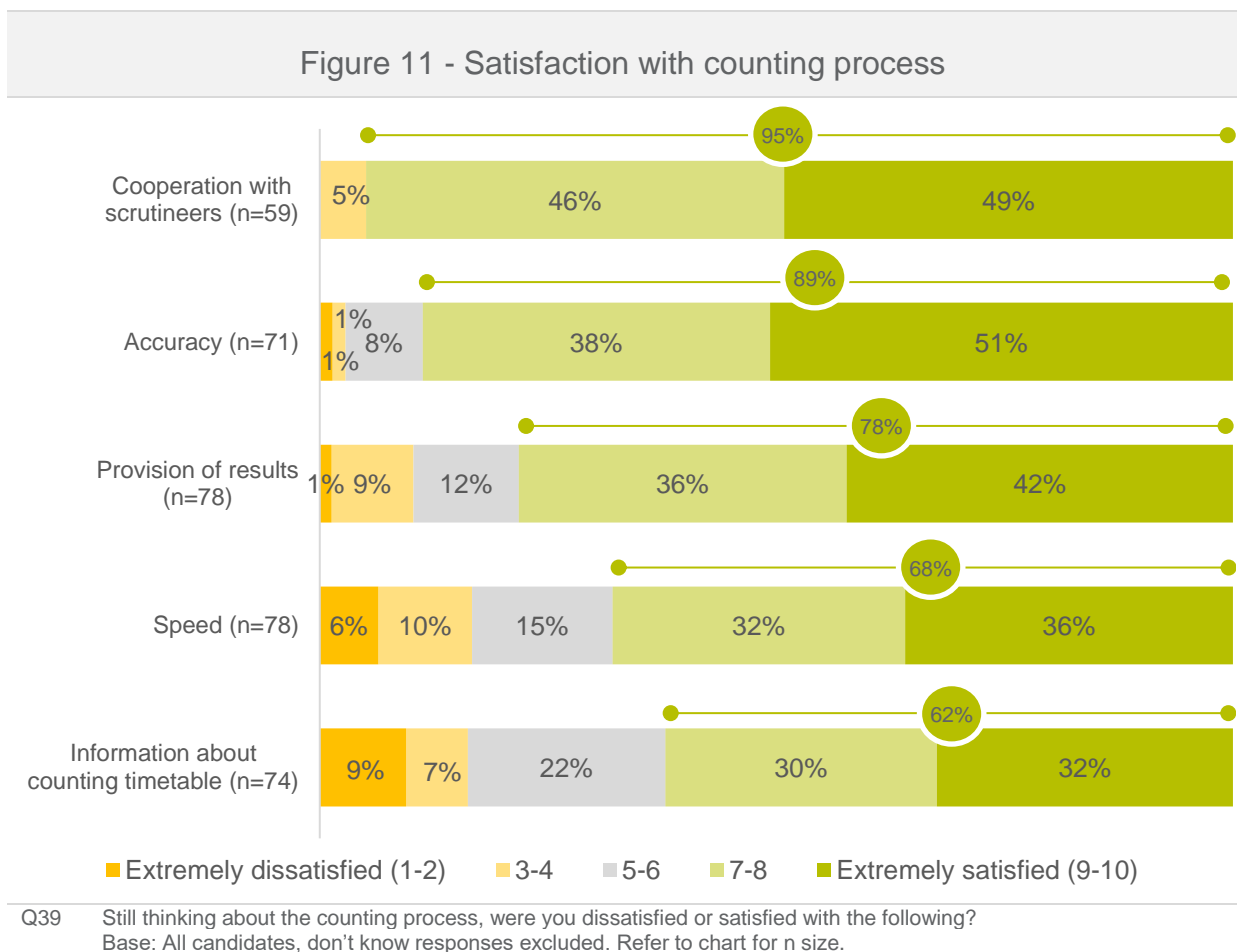
Significantly more candidates at the 2018 State election are satisfied with the speed in which the votes were counted when compared to 2014 (68% vs. 51%).

Table 8 – Satisfaction with counting process over time		
	2014 (n=44-66)	**2018** (n=59-78)
Cooperation with scrutineers	94%	95%
Accuracy	92%	89%
Provision of results	75%	78%
Speed	51%	68%▲
Information about counting timetable	65%	62%

4.4. Information provided – General population

Election Guide

One half of candidates saw the VEC's Election Guide prior to election day (54%), while one third did not (36%). A further one in ten candidates were unsure (10%).

Figure 12 - Saw the Election Guide

■ Yes   ■ No   ■ Don't know
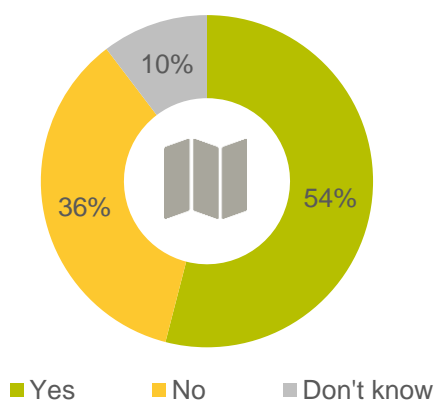
Q16   Did you see the Victorian Electoral Commission Election Guide sent to Victorians prior to election day?
Base: All candidates n=87

Following a significant decline in seeing the Election Guide in 2014 (65%), at the 2018 State Election readership stabilised in line with 2010 results (54% and 65% respectively).

Table 9 – Saw the Election Guide over time

2010 (n=71)	2014 (n=62)	2018 (n=87)
65%	39% ▼	54%

Nearly nine in ten candidates who saw the Election Guide agreed it was effective at providing information and answering questions voters may have about voting in 2018 State election (89%).

Figure 13 - Believed Election Guide was effective

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
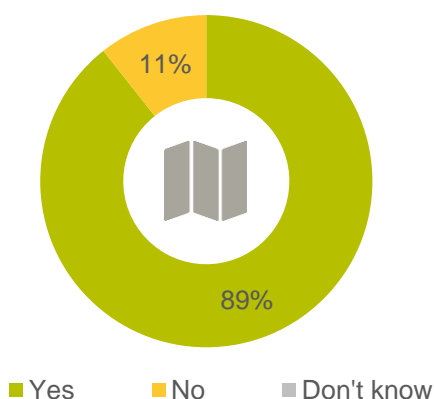
Q17   Do you believe the Victorian Electoral Commission Election Guide provided effective information and answered questions voters may have had about voting?
Base: Candidates who saw the Election Guide n=47

Further, over two thirds of candidates who saw the guide believed it contained the right amount of information (68%).

Candidates who thought voters needed more information wanted to see information on how preferential and proportional voting works included, as well as how preferences are distributed in order to clarify perceived public confusion on these issues.

" *The guide should have been personally addressed to each voter, not household mail where one person in a household gets it if they are lucky."*

" *The importance of the preferential voting system and how important it is to number every box."*

" *The table setting out the times for early voting, read along with the paragraph preceding it, was ambiguous. Much more information needs to be given to voters regarding the preferential voting systems that we use in the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council elections. Group tickets need to be explained. This might take a deal of words/paper. But I believe that there is a great deal of confusion amongst the general public about these matters."*

" *Proportional voting and the distribution of preferences in the Upper House was vague and not well explained."*

Perceived effectiveness of the Election Guide is in line with the previous State Election in 2014.

Table 10 – Believed Election Guide to be effective over time

2014 (n=24)	2018 (n=47)
75%	89%

VEC advertising

The majority of candidates recalled seeing advertising from the VEC (85%). Only a small proportion either saw no advertising or were unsure (13% and 2% respectively).

Figure 14 - Saw Victorian Electoral Commission advertising

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
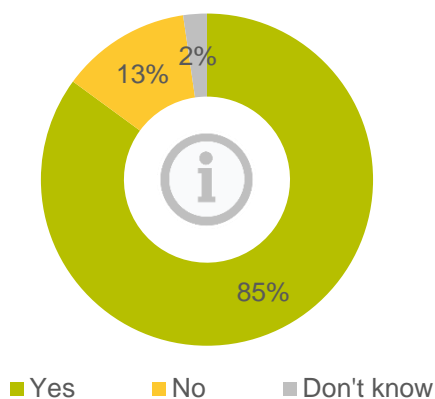
| Q11 | During the election did you see or hear any communications or advertising by the Victorian Electoral Commission about enrolling to vote, the importance of voting, the date of the election, where to vote, how to vote or what to do if voters were away from home on election day?
Base: All candidates n=87 |

Awareness of Victorian Electoral Commission advertising is in line with the previous State Election in 2014.

Table 11 – Saw Victorian Electoral Commission advertising over time

2014 (n=70)	2018 (n=87)
89%	85%

Newspaper advertisements and articles were the most commonly recalled sources of election information for candidates (50%), followed by free to air TV (45%).

Three in ten candidates also saw information online, including general websites, social media and the VEC's website (30% each). A similar proportion also heard radio advertisements from the VEC (27%).

General searches of the internet, as well as the VEC Hotline were the least common sources of information (3% and 1% respectively).

Figure 15 - Sources of Victorian Electoral Commission information

Source	Percentage
Newspaper advertisements and articles	50%
Free to air TV (e.g. Channel 7, Channel 9, Channel 10, SBS)	45%
Internet - general	30%
Social media	30%
Victorian Electoral Commission website	30%
Radio	27%
The Victorian Electoral Commission Election Guide	23%
VoterAlert	18%
Outdoor advertising (billboards or tram/train stops)	16%
Posters	9%
Catch up TV	4%
Video-sharing websites	4%
Internet search	3%
Victorian Electoral Commission hotline	1%
Elsewhere	5%
Don't know	1%

Q12   Where did you see that information?
        Base: Candidates who saw communications n=74

The majority of candidates recall that VEC messaging contained the date of the election (64%), encouraging enrolment (61%) as well as the message 'Your vote will shape Victoria'.

The least recalled messaged included assistance for voting via an app or by taking someone to the booth (8% and 7% respectively). As well, few recalled seeing information about close elections (7%).

Figure 16 - Information of Victorian Electoral Commission advertising

Category	Percentage
The date of the election	64%
Enrolling to vote	61%
Your vote will help shape Victoria	57%
How to vote before election day	51%
Where to vote	47%
The importance of voting	47%
Where to find more information about the election	34%
Instructions for completing ballot papers correctly	28%
Assistance for Voting - In a different language	20%
Assistance for Voting - By telephone	14%
Assistance for Voting - By downloading an app	8%
Assistance for Voting - Taking someone to the booth	7%
Close elections	7%
Other	3%
Don't know	8%

Q13   Thinking about the Victorian Electoral Commission communications/advertising, what information did it contain? What other information?
Base: Candidates who saw communications n=74

Three in five candidates who saw communications targeted at voters considered them to be effective (64%). Fewer than one in ten considered these communications to be ineffective (8%).

Figure 17 - Effectiveness of voter communications

| Extremely ineffective (1-2) | 3-4 | 5-6 | 7-8 | Extemely effective (9-10) |
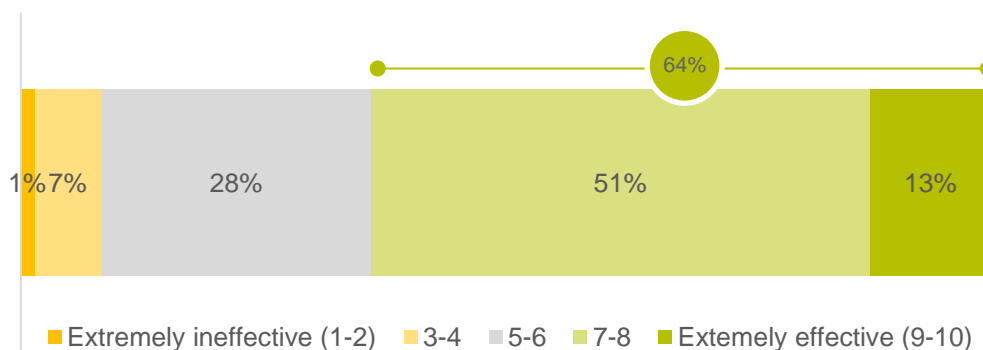
Q14   In your view how effective or ineffective were those communications in providing voters with all the information they needed about the election? Please use a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is 'extremely ineffective' and 10 is 'extremely effective'
Base: Candidates who saw communications, don't know responses excluded, n=72

Perceived effectiveness of voter communications has experienced small, non-significant fluctuation between elections.

Table 12 - Effectiveness of voter communications over time

2010 (n=62)	2014 (n=62)	2018 (n=72)
69%	72%	64%

The VEC website

Over three-quarters of candidates were satisfied with the usefulness of the VEC website (78%), and over a fifth were extremely satisfied (23%).

Very few candidates were dissatisfied with the usefulness of the website (5%).

Figure 18 - Satisfaction with usefulness of the VEC website

1%	4%	17%	55%	23%

■ Extremely dissatisfied (1-2)   ■ 3-4   ■ 5-6   ■ 7-8   ■ Extemely satisfied (9-10)
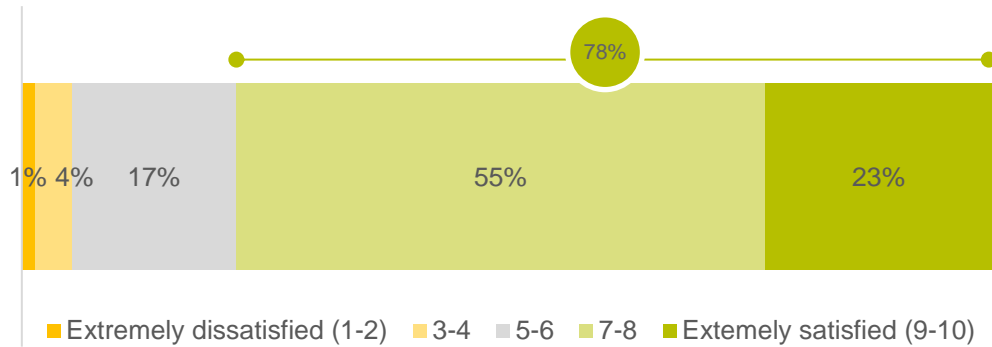
Q43   Were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the usefulness of the website? Please use a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is 'extremely dissatisfied' and 10 is 'extremely satisfied'.
Base: All candidates, don't know responses excluded, n=77

Usefulness of the website remains very consistent compared to the 2014 state election (79%).

Table 13 - Satisfaction with usefulness of the VEC website over time

2010 (n=68)	2014 (n=61)	2018 (n=77)
70%	79%	78%

The majority of candidates are satisfied with the VEC's website, in particular its clear, helpful content that is considered easy to access. Over four in five candidates were satisfied with the clarity of the content and the accessibility features offered (85% each), and a slightly smaller proportion were also satisfied with the helpfulness of the content (81%).

Three quarters of candidates were also satisfied with navigation on the site, as well as the ease of finding election information (75% each). However, one in nine candidates were dissatisfied with these aspects of the website (11% each).

Figure 19 - Satisfaction with aspects of the VEC's website

	Extremely dissatisfied (1-2)	3-4	5-6	7-8	Extremely satisfied (9-10)
Clarity of content (n=80)		5%	10%	56%	29%
Accessibility features (n=65)		2%	14%	54%	31%
Helpfulness of content (n=80)	1%	3%	15%	55%	26%
Ease of navigation (n=80)	3%	9%	14%	56%	19%
Ease of finding election information (n=80)	4%	8%	14%	49%	26%

Q44   Thinking about each of the following aspects relating to the Victorian Electoral Commission website. Were you dissatisfied or satisfied with the …?
Base: All candidates, don't know responses excluded. Refer to chart for n size.
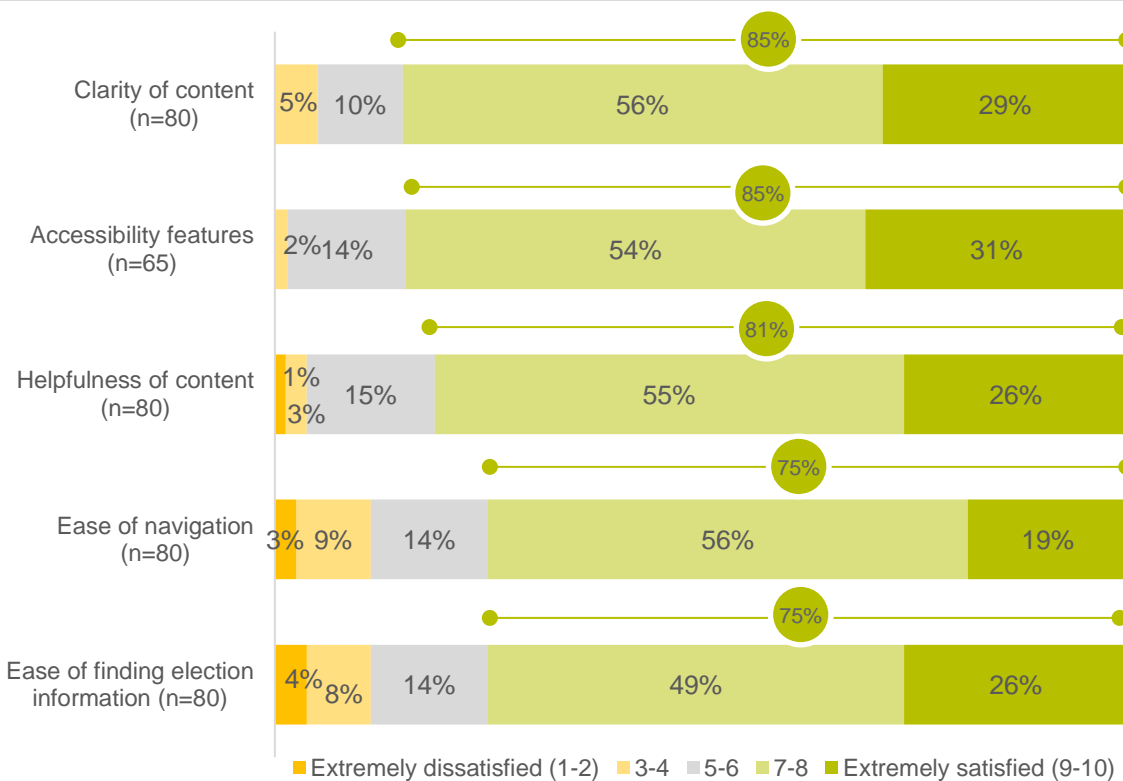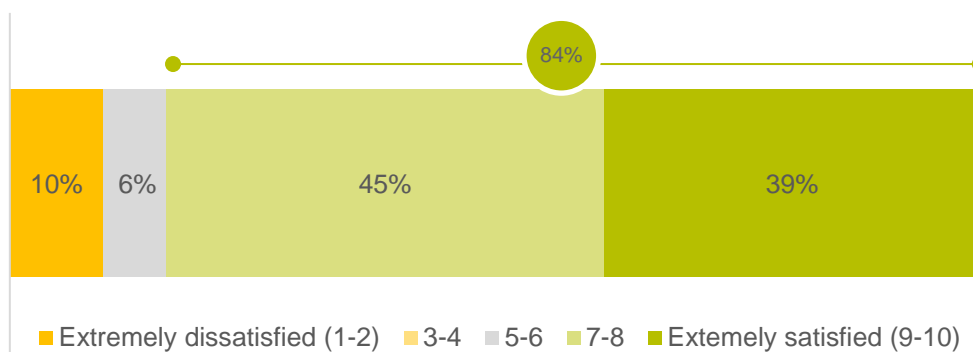
The VEC Hotline

The majority of candidates were satisfied with the usefulness of the VEC Hotline (84%), with only one in ten stating they were extremely dissatisfied (10%).

Figure 20 - Satisfaction with usefulness of the VEC Hotline

Legend: Extremely dissatisfied (1-2) ■ 3-4 ■ 5-6 ■ 7-8 ■ Extemely satisfied (9-10)

Segments: 10% | 6% | 45% | 39% | 84%

Q45   The Victorian Electoral Commission provided a phone enquiry line for the election. Using the same scale, were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the usefulness of the enquiry line?
Base: All candidates, don't know responses excluded, n=31

However, it is important to note that three in five candidates did not know if they were satisfied with the usefulness of the VEC Hotline (64%).

Satisfaction with the hotline is similar to previous elections, showing only non-significant fluctuations.
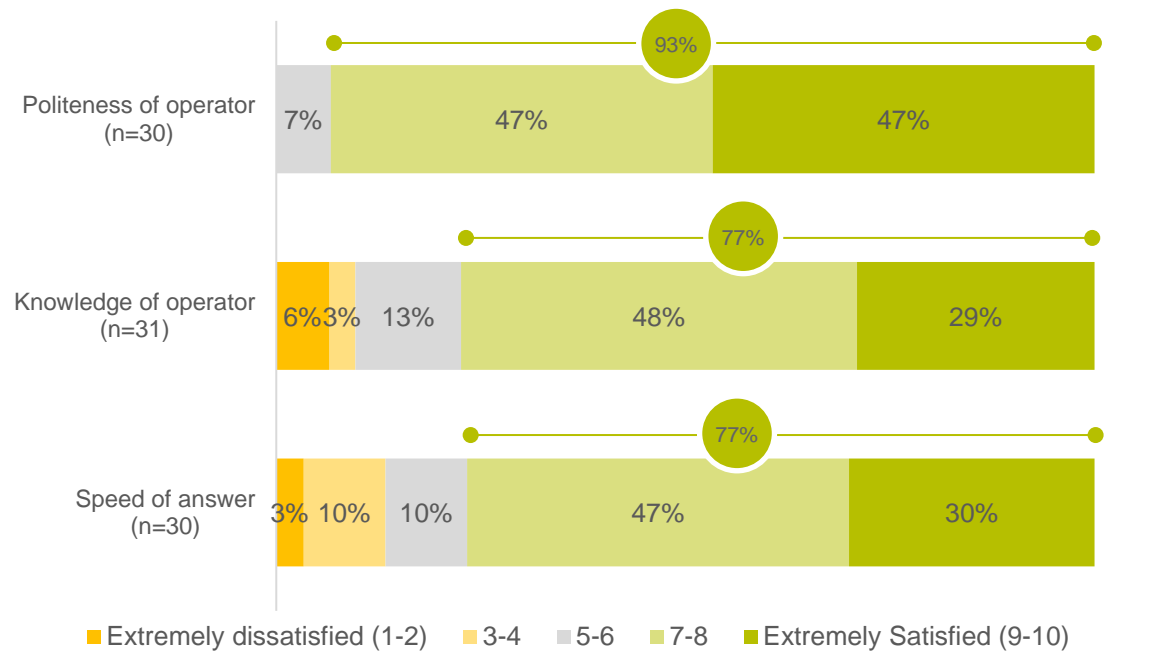
Table 14 - Satisfaction with usefulness of the VEC Hotline over time

2010 (n=24)	2014 (n=25)	2018 (n=31)
67%	76%	84%

Satisfaction is also high with multiple aspects of the VEC Hotline. Almost all candidates who could comment on the hotline were satisfied with the politeness of the operator (93%).

Three quarters were also satisfied with both the knowledge of the operator and the speed of the answer they received (77%). Speed of answer has the most potential for improvement with one in eight dissatisfied on this metric (13%).

Figure 21 - Satisfaction with aspects of the VEC Hotline

|	Extremely dissatisfied (1-2)	3-4	5-6	7-8	Extremely Satisfied (9-10)
Politeness of operator (n=30)			7%	47%	47%
Knowledge of operator (n=31)	6%	3%	13%	48%	29%
Speed of answer (n=30)	3%	10%	10%	47%	30%

Q46   Thinking about each of the following aspects relating to the Victorian Electoral Commission's phone enquiry line. Were you dissatisfied or satisfied with the…?
Base: All candidates, don't know responses excluded. Refer to chart for n size.

4.5. Information provided – Candidate specific

Independents information sessions

One third of independent candidates surveyed attended the information session held on the 28th of October (33%). All candidates that attended agreed this session was helpful (100%).

Figure 22 - Attended 28 October - Independents information session

33%

67%

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know
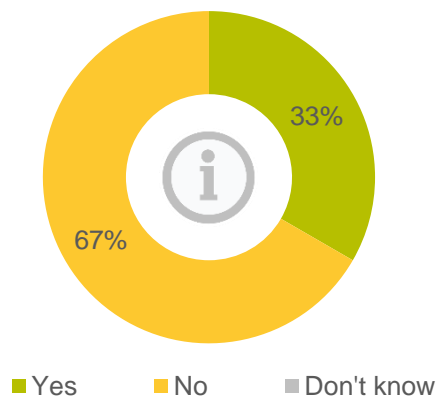
Q9   Did you attend the information session for Independent candidates held on 28 October?
        Base: All independent candidates n=21

Information Kit

Four in five candidates recall receiving a copy of the Candidate's Information Kit (80%), while one in six do not recall receiving the Kit (16%).
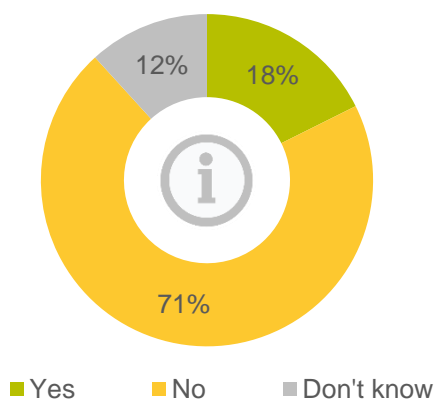
Figure 23 - Received a copy of Candidates Information Kit

3%
16%
80%

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know
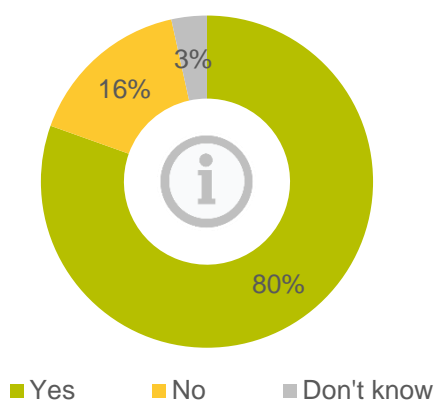
Q4   Did you receive a copy of the Candidate's Information Kit prepared by the Victorian Electoral Commission?
       Base: All candidates n=87

Of those who did not receive a copy of the Kit, one fifth received a copy of the Candidates Information Handbook (18%). The majority of this group however do not recall receiving the Handbook either (71%).

Figure 24 - Received a copy of Candidates Information Handbook

12% 18%
71%

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

Q5   If you did not receive the Candidate's Information Kit, did you receive a copy of the Candidate's Information
       Handbook prepared by the Victorian Electoral Commission?
       Base: Candidates who did not receive a copy of the Candidates Information Kit n=17

Four in five candidates who received either the Candidates Information Kit or Handbook considered it to be effective in providing information about standing as a candidate (81%). Less than one in ten thought the Kit or Handbook was ineffective (6%).

Figure 25 - Effectiveness of the Kit or Handbook providing information

6%	13%	52%		29%

81%

■ Extremely ineffective (1-2) ■ 3-4 ■ 5-6 ■ 7-8 ■ Extemely effective (9-10)
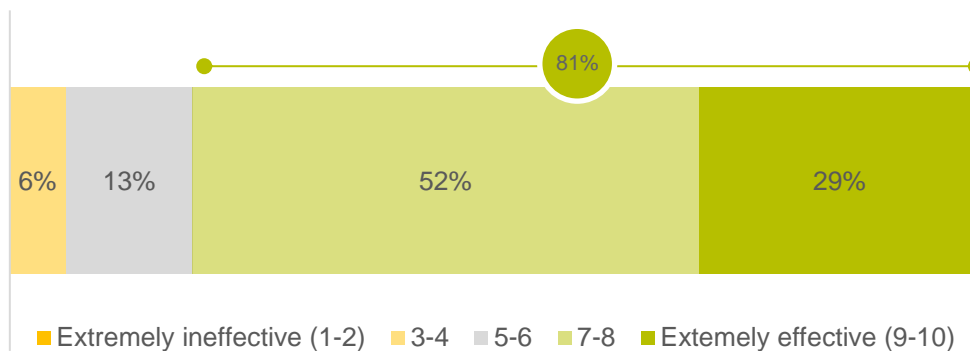
Q6   How effective or ineffective was the Candidates Information [Kit/Candidate Handbook] in providing you with information about standing as a candidate? Please use a scale where 1 is extremely ineffective and 10 is extremely effective.
Base: Candidates who received either Kit or Handbook, don't knows excluded n=73

Only a very small proportion of candidates (6%) considered the Kit or Handbook to be ineffective. Open ended comments suggest the materials did not meet their specific requirements with one desiring more information and the other believing the materials were too detailed.

" *There was too much information. As a candidate, looking at all information provided towards the pointy end of the campaign was almost impossible. There were too many things going on, simplified presentation, even for points would have been better, with links or a live chat offered for further details."*

" *Did not have enough information in it."*

New signage rules

New signage rules were introduced for the 2018 State election, that is allowing a maximum of two signs of a limited size within 100 metres of a voting centre.

A majority of candidates recall being notified of this change by the VEC (84%), while one in eight believe they were not informed (13%).

Figure 26 - Received notification of new signage rule

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
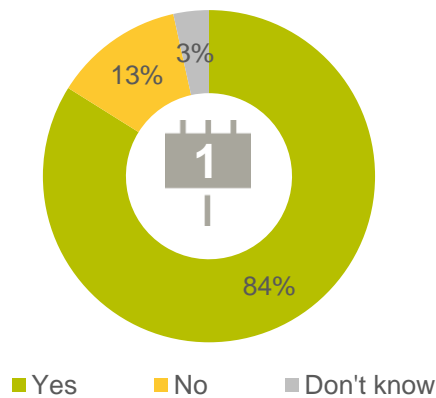
Q32   In 2018, candidates were allowed to place a maximum of 2 signs of a limited size within 100 metres of a voting centre. Did VEC notify you of this prior to election day?
Base: All candidates n=87

While a majority of candidates aware of the change were satisfied with how this change was managed (60%), one quarter were dissatisfied with the management (25%).

Figure 27 - Satisfaction with management of signage change

| Extremely dissatisfied (1-2) | 3-4 | 5-6 | 7-8 | Extemely satisfied (9-10) |
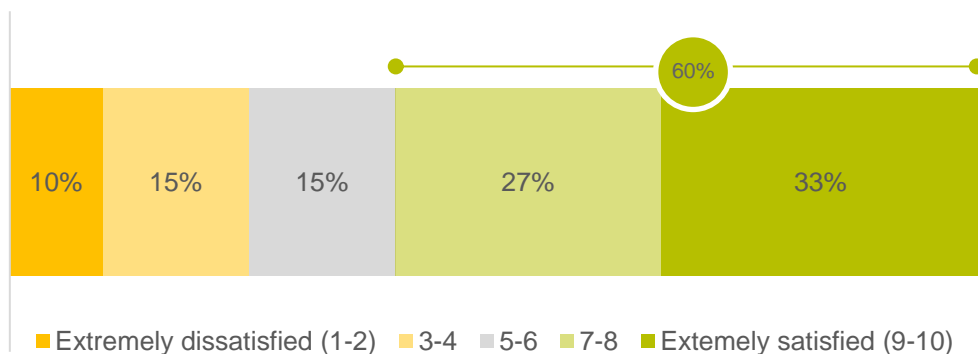
Q33   And how satisfied were you with how this change was managed by VEC at voting centres? Please use a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is 'extremely dissatisfied' and 10 is 'extremely satisfied'
Base: Candidates aware of signage change n=73

4.6. Candidates bulletins and circulars

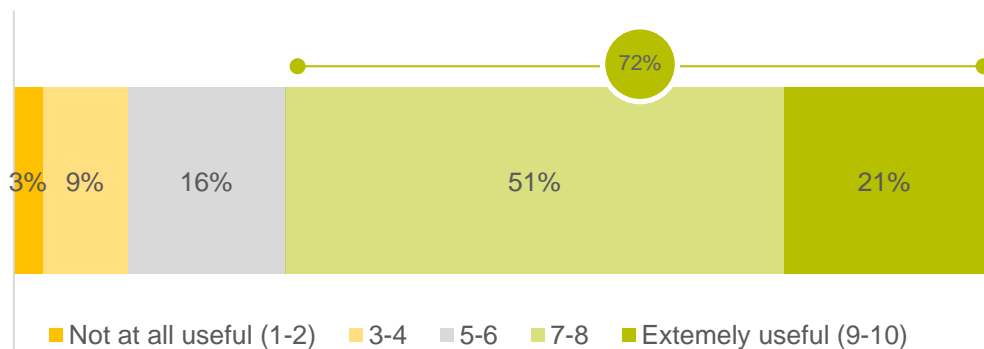A majority of candidates (81%) recall receiving candidates bulletins and circulars. On average, candidates reported having received 4.5 bulletins. (Five bulletins were actually sent.)

Seven in ten of those candidates who received bulletins considered them to be useful to themselves (72%).

Figure 28 - Usefulness of the VEC's bulletins and circulars

Q41   Overall, how useful were the Bulletins/Circulars from VEC to you as a candidate during the election? Please use a scale where 1 is not at all useful and 10 is extremely useful.
Base: Candidates that received VEC's bulletins and circulars, don't knows excluded n=68

Considering the one in eight candidates who did not find the bulletins and circulars useful (12%), specific improvements desired include the bulletins being more succinct and to use simple language. Whereas others would like to see more frequent updates on prepoll voters.

Provide easy to understand information. Short and accurate. Simple English. Not pages of irrelevant stuff that needs to be deciphered."

Update on daily prepoll voters."

5. Findings for political parties

5.1. Overall satisfaction

In the first part of each interview, Colmar Brunton obtained a 'top of mind' reaction to the VEC's management of the 2018 State election (i.e. we asked about party representative's overall satisfaction, without probing into specific aspects of the election).

Overall, representatives were very satisfied with the VEC's management of the election. Representatives spoke very highly of the VEC's organisational and process management skills. Several representatives commented on the VEC's management of the election in light of the recent amendments to the Act. They noted that these amendments resulted in quite substantial changes to systems and processes at this election. They believed that the legislative changes were handled seamlessly by the VEC and that they ran the election to the organisation's usual high standard.

Interactions with VEC staff were reported to have been positive and effective. VEC administrative staff were described as approachable, transparent and supportive. Representatives indicated that VEC staff always provided well-informed responses to queries in the lead up to and during the election.

> *"Their responses to our queries were very thorough and detailed. All staff we dealt with had a very thorough understanding of systems and processes."*

Overall, the feedback received on interactions with the Electoral Commissioner was very positive. In particular, the Commissioner was praised as being very responsive, approachable, well-informed about issues and as being politically impartial.

One representative recalled that the Commissioner was unable to answer one of their queries, and while he took it on notice, he never got back to the party. This appeared to be an isolated incident and poor responsiveness was not reported by any other representatives.

While overall satisfaction with the VEC's management of the election was high, two issues were raised during the 'top of mind' stage of the interview. They may indicate areas that are in need of review.

- Two party representatives felt that during peak times in the lead up to the election (e.g. throughout the process of registering how-to-vote cards) the VEC staff member's response to queries was somewhat delayed. These delays were said to have a negative and compounding impact on the party's internal workflow. A review of resource allocation during peak times was recommended.
- A party representative from a new party felt that VEC communication pieces were often based on assumed knowledge and were more suited to experienced parties. As a new party, they felt that the VEC did not provide them with adequate support to navigate the system. It should be noted that this was a singular view point held by a minor party representative. However, it may indicate an area in need of review.

5.2. Enrolment & nominations

No issues were identified with the close of electoral roll arrangements or the accuracy of the electoral roll by any party representatives.

The process of lodging nominations via the USB key was praised by representatives - in particular by representatives from major parties with many candidates.

> *"It was a very smooth process. In the past we had reams and reams of paper work – because we have so many candidates. We much prefer the new process as it has minimised the amount of work we have to do – it has dramatically improved our workflow. It's very convenient and we were satisfied with the information that was provided by the commission."*

However, one smaller party representative indicated that the USB key method was just as time-consuming as the manual paper-based lodgement system. This indicates that the time-saving benefits of digital lodgement may only be afforded to parties with many candidates.

Further, some representatives from smaller parties indicated that they had some difficulties with the nomination process due to limited resources. The cumbersome nature was not seen to be the fault of the VEC, but rather a necessity of the political process.

> *"VEC makes every effort, but it is still cumbersome."*

Larger parties, with greater resourcing did not report this experience.

The VEC briefing sessions were viewed as effective and comprehensive. Representatives indicated that the sessions touched on every issue that could possibly arise throughout the process. VEC staff were praised for their thorough knowledge of all systems and processes. The written information and guidelines were also valued by representatives.

> *"The information they provided was very precise and very clear. There was absolutely no ambiguity."*

One representative found the timelines to be particularly helpful as they assisted the party in managing their internal workflow.

Despite this generally positive feedback, the following suggestions were made to further streamline the enrolment and nomination process.

- Some inflexibility within the nomination lodgement system was identified. For example, one representative indicated that the database would reject a candidate's application if an abbreviation for a candidate's name was used instead of their full name. Greater flexibility within the system was recommended.
- Another representative indicated that the VEC's policy to receive payments only via cash or cheque is inconvenient and that it would be ideal if parties could make payments online. Provision of online payment capability was recommended.

5.3. How-to-vote cards

The process of producing and registering how-to-vote cards was considered to be time consuming by most representatives. The stringent requirements were considered complex by some representatives from newer parties. While the process was viewed as arduous, representatives also indicated that they valued the authorisation process as it ensured fairness and consistency.

The following issues were identified in relation to how-to-vote cards:

- Many representatives found the timeframe for producing how-to-vote cards, including getting the formatting and artwork completed and the cards printed, to be tight. Provision of more preparation time was requested by many representatives.

- Many representatives felt that the timeframe between submitting a how-to-vote card and rejection due to non-compliance was too long and that the process for rectifying a mistake during registration is in need of review. Representatives indicated that after submission, it could take the VEC several days to get back to them to notify them of a rejection due to non-compliance. In a very time-sensitive period - this led to internal workflow issues for many parties. Representatives felt that this issue occurred due to under-resourcing of the particular VEC team who handled registration of how-to-vote cards.

- One representative indicated that the VEC uploaded incorrect versions of their how-to-vote cards. This created an issue for the party, because they didn't know which version of the cards they should arrange to have printed. Again, the party representative felt that this error occurred due to under-resourcing, not due to a lack of competence.

Despite these issues, the Candidate Services Team were praised for their assistance throughout this process. They were viewed as supportive and efficient. Furthermore, no issues were raised in regards to the presentation of how-to-vote cards on the VEC website. Representatives found it easy to locate this section of the website.

5.4. Postal votes

Representatives were generally positive about the VEC's processing of postal votes.

One party representative indicated they had reports that there were many voters who had applied for a postal vote, but did not receive one. The representative suspected this was due to non-compliance. The representative requested that the VEC provide parties with data on number of instances of this occurring, as well as the reasons why these voters were not registered successfully.

It was also suggested that postal votes be returned directly to the VEC, if possible.

5.5. Early voting centres

The marked increase in early votes since the last State election was universally attributed to two factors: greater levels of awareness of this provision amongst voters and relaxation of the requirement to provide a valid reason for voting before election day.

On the whole, the VEC is considered to have coped with the increase in early voting efficiently, and the number and location of early voting centres was generally believed to be appropriate.

However, there were some issues of concern in relation to early voting:

- The increased number of early voters led to queues at some voting centres. This was particularly evident during the first few days. This was attributed to a resourcing allocation issue, coupled with the VEC's underestimation of the number of early voters that would turn out during the first few days.
- The location of some of the early voting centres was questioned. Representatives indicated that some were on main roads with no parking and that they were not readily accessible via public transport. The decision to place early voting centres in industrial estates was also questioned. As these areas are regularly used by heavy transport vehicles, they had reports that the centres did not cope well with the influx of vehicles which ultimately led to traffic issues. There were reports that local businesses complained about this. The placement of early voting centres in shopping centres was also critiqued – as there were reports that some centre managers did not permit display of campaign materials or signage.
- The timeframe available for early voting was considered to be too long by some representatives. It was suggested that a shorter timeframe (such as one week) would relieve the pressure placed on volunteers who are responsible for campaigning at the early voting centres. This was identified as an issue by smaller parties with limited resources.
- One representative from a minor party felt that campaigners from larger parties were over-represented at early voting centres, which served as a disadvantage for smaller parties. The representative recommended that the number of campaigners per party should be capped at each centre to ensure fairness across all parties.

5.6. Mobile voting

Most representatives felt positive about the VEC's handling of this type of voting. In particular, representatives liked that the how-to-vote cards are compiled into a folder and provided to voters in this standardised format. They believed this process created fairness and consistency. One representative believed that this process should be extended to early voting centres and voting centres on election day, in place of the existing practice of having individual campaigners hand out individual cards in an inconsistent manner across centres. This view was held by a minor party representative and was not expressed by any other representatives that were interviewed.

Several of the research participants, particularly those from smaller parties, had no experience of mobile voting and could not provide any feedback.

5.7. Telephone Assisted Voting

Most representatives praised the VEC for offering Telephone Assisted Voting, and recommended that it should be opened up to as many under-served groups as needed. Other than the groups who already receive this voting service, representatives could not name off the top of their heads other groups that the service should be made available to. However, they would not be opposed to this if the VEC identified further groups that required this type of voting service.

Only one representative indicated some opposition toward Telephone Assisted Voting. They indicated that they preferred in-person-voting, as opposed to telephone assisted voting, as the former allows campaigners to directly engage with voters, whereas the latter does not.

5.8. Voting centres (on-the-day)

Overall, the provision and operation of voting centres received very positive feedback from candidates. Sentiment was particularly positive regarding the VEC's election staff. Representatives indicated that election officials (including booth officers and booth managers) were well-informed, supportive and courteous in their management and operation of voting centres and in their dealings with voters.

"They did an extraordinary job to ensure that everything went smoothly."

Despite the overall high level of satisfaction, several concerns were raised in relation to voting centres.

- Several party representatives observed instances of inconsistent application of rules and legislation across voting centres. In particular, centres were seen to be enforcing different standards in relation to the placement of campaign signage (when and where they could be placed). Ensuring that all officials receive the same training and that rules are applied consistently across the voting centres is recommended
- Some representatives thought that the number of on-the-day voting centres could potentially be reduced, given the high turn-out of early voters. One representative from a smaller party believed that fewer voting centres would allow less well-resourced parties to have better coverage – however, this was mentioned by only one representative.
- The number of leaflets and how-to-vote cards that were distributed by parties was seen to be excessive. One party representative recommended that the number for each party be capped by either spend or volume. Two minority party representatives also suggested that the procedure for distribution of how-to-vote cards on election day be changed so that each voter is provided with a single folder containing all how-to-vote cards. They felt that the current practice of individual party campaigners handing out materials on an ad-hoc basis to voters creates inconsistency in campaign coverage across centres.
- Several logistical issues were noted: some centres did not have enough parking and some centres did not have enough cover when it was raining.
- One representative received reports that some voters were confused about the location of voting centres – as the location of voting centres in the Victorian State election differed to that of the Federal election.

5.9. Communication

General communication about the election

Party representatives were very satisfied with the information provided by the VEC during the election period. The VEC's communication to parties was perceived to be excellent in terms of clarity, completeness, and transparency. All had found the briefings for parties useful and reported that the VEC staff were responsive and knowledgeable in dealing with any questions arising. There were a few suggestions for improving overall communication:

- Some representatives indicated they would like some extra clarity in communication regarding the how-to-vote card registration process.

- Some representatives also indicated they would have liked some more information about the rules and regulations regarding campaign signage at voting centres.
- Representatives also recommended that the VEC inform voters of the location of voting centres a lot earlier than they normally do. It was thought that this would reduce the number of absent voters.

Communication campaign

In general, the VEC was perceived to have carried out sufficient advertising over time and representatives felt that communication of key information to voters had been effective. The early voting message was viewed to have been particularly effective:

> *"The campaign about pre-polling worked very well as there was an increase in number of early votes this year."*

However, two representatives felt the campaign overall was *not decisive in* messaging about the importance of voting. For example, while overall voter turn-out was high, the rate of informal voting was also very high.

> *"Accurate completion of voting material needs to be communicated in future messaging. 'every vote counts' is not detailed enough – we need more information on how to make that vote count."*

Election Guide

Most of the representatives interviewed were aware of the Election Guide.   This was generally perceived to contain relevant and useful information. In particular, communicating the location of voting centres was believed to be effective in reducing the number of absent voters. It was also valued as a prompt for voters to check and update their enrolment details.

Messaging was perceived to be very clear.

> *"It was in plain English no fancy words, no things that could be taken in different ways and no ambiguity."*

Postal medium of distribution was also valued:

> *"We can't just send all communication via email or via a website. There are still lots of people who don't use those mediums, so I think they should keep putting things in the post to increase everyone's chance of seeing the information."*

Two issues were identified:

- One representative suggested that the Guide could place a greater emphasis on the importance and value of voting in addition to basic 'where and how' information. It was thought that this would reduce the number of absent voters and informal voters.
- One representative indicated that they received numerous reports that people didn't receive the Election Guide. This was attributed to the service provider (Australia Post) and was not seen to be the fault of the VEC.

The VEC Website

All interviewees had considerable experience in using the VEC website. While some found it to contain relevant and timely information, others had recommendations for improvement:

- Some identified navigation issues and recommended clearer sign posting. *The website provided lots of information – but it's hard to know where to find it all. You have to go through a maze of different pages to get through to the right information. I would recommend a bit of work on user-experience for the website.*
- Others also identified information duplication issues – whereby the same information was located on multiple pages within the website.
- One representative recommended the inclusion of an example how-to-vote card which could be used as a demonstration of appropriate design and content.

5.10. Provision of results

In general, party representatives were satisfied with the communication, timeliness and accuracy of election results. Some issues were noted:

- One representative was dissatisfied with the timeliness in communication regarding the count process.

  "In some cases we got notice of an hour and a half before counting was about to commence. We found it difficult to get scrutineers there in that short window. More notice and timeliness in communication is key here."

- Another representative also indicated that they would like the VEC to keep voters and parties informed of which subset of votes are being counted when (i.e. the postal votes and the pre-polling votes). Greater transparency in this regard would be valued.
- The time taken to count early votes was considered excessive by some representatives. It was suggested that the VEC address this by gearing up to cope with the volume of early votes in advance.
- Representatives from new parties thought that the current arrangements assumed too much knowledge, and better communications were required for newer parties. They requested more information on:
  - Clearer guidance on access to scrutineering and how to effectively scrutinise
  - The number of scrutineers that the party are allowed
  - The reasons for and process of a re-count.