

Understanding Non-Voters of the 2018 Victorian State Election

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Social
Research
Centre

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from the study into Understanding Non-Voters of the 2018 Victorian State election, conducted for the Victorian Electoral Commission. This research comprised a quantitative mixed-mode survey, combining online and telephone data collection, conducted during June and July 2020.

The research participants were selected from the VEC's database of non-voters from the 2018 Victorian State election. There were 999 non-voters who participated in the quantitative survey.

Reasons for not voting

The reasons for not voting in the 2018 State election fall into three broad areas: lack of availability, lack of knowledge, and unwillingness to vote.

The most common reason for not voting was unavailability

For the 2018 State election, being unavailable was the most common reason for not voting (87%). The specific reasons underpinning this lack of availability were being overseas (42%), work commitments on the day of the election (18%), and being interstate (16%). Reasons related to a lack of knowledge was the next most common theme for not voting (42%), predominantly not knowing when the election was happening (28%) or not knowing that it was happening at all (22%). The proportion of non-voters who selected reasons related to unwillingness is smaller (30%), mostly comprising not wanting to vote for any of the candidates (15%) and objecting to voting being compulsory (14%).

Factors that make voting difficult

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

The main factor that makes it difficult to vote in State elections is lack of familiarity with local candidates. Not knowing when elections were held and being unfamiliar with State government issues are the next two most prevalent factors that make voting difficult.

The 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 44 compared to voters aged 45+; as well as those who are directly enrolled compared to those who are not.

Awareness of election date

Low awareness of scheduled election dates

There is low awareness of the scheduled State election dates, with only 20% of non-voters aware that that Victorian State elections are held every four years on the last Saturday in November. Non-voters aged 18 to 24 are less likely to know when the State election date is, compared to non-voters aged 25+.

Interest in, and knowledge of, politics and elections

Interest in State politics and elections lower than that for Federal level

Across the three levels of Government, non-voters expressed the highest level of interest in Federal government politics and elections, as well as highest level of knowledge about this level of government. The next highest level of interest and knowledge is expressed for State politics and elections. Non-voters aged 18 to 24 show less interest across all levels of politics, whereas older non-voters aged 45+ expressed higher knowledge across all levels of politics.

Engagement with voting, politics and government

Voting seen as an important part of the democratic process

A majority of non-voters (85%) agree that voting is an important part of the democratic process, with a minority (30%) agreeing they only vote because they will receive a fine if they do not vote. More than half of non-voters claim to be engaged with politics, 55% agreeing that they often discuss politics and political issues. Approximately one quarter of non-voters appear to be disengaged with politics with 28% agreeing that 'it makes no difference who you vote for'. Non-voters aged 18 to 24 appear to be less engaged, being less likely than older age groups to agree that voting is an important part of the democratic process (77%), and more likely to agree that they only vote because they will receive a fine if they do not (41%). Non-voters aged 25 to 44 are more likely than those aged 18 to 24 to enjoy reading about politics and government (45%).

Compulsory voting and fines

Two in three non-voters support for compulsory State elections

Overall, 66% of non-voters agree that voting in Victorian State elections should be compulsory. Agreement is higher amongst those who are not directly enrolled (68%) compared to those who are (60%). Non-voters aged 18 to 24 are less likely to agree than older age groups.

Initiatives for priority non-voter groups

Inform and engage younger non-voters

Non-voting amongst people aged under 45 is largely driven by a lack of knowledge about candidates, issues and election timing. This group also had difficulty in finding time to vote. They want technology used to provide them with information and for the process of voting itself. To increase election participation among non-voters there should be a focus on using digital and online channels to inform and engage this group (particularly of the election date). And, if possible, to implement online voting, SMS/email reminders, and/or an app to disseminate information. Our findings show, interest and engagement with politics is more established amongst non-voters aged 25 to 44. As such, the execution of any initiatives to encourage voting needs to be nuanced and tailored to target each age group differently.

Online voting and reminders for travellers during State elections

Half of non-voters said that being overseas or interstate contributed to them not voting in the 2018 State election. This is largely a politically engaged group that recognises the importance of voting within the democratic process. Enabling online voting would help increase participation among those who are overseas or interstate during State elections. However, the impact of online voting on behaviours of other groups (e.g. those who do vote) should be considered. Online and electronic reminders such as SMS or email reminders delivered in a timely manner would also be helpful to alert potential travellers of any upcoming elections. These communications could also include information about how to vote if travelling during an election.

Further support those who are directly enrolled

Non-voters who are directly enrolled are less interested, knowledgeable, and engaged in State politics than those who are not. Compared to those not directly enrolled, directly enrolled non-voters are more likely to be aged 18 to 24 and are more likely to have an education level of Diploma/Advanced Diploma or below. They are more likely to find voting difficult across many aspects compared to those not directly enrolled, and results indicate they are a passive group that will find any initiatives helpful.

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, a sizeable portion of the enrolled population in Victoria fail to 'turn out' and vote in State 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.

The voter turnout rate in the 2018 Victorian State election declined to the lowest levels since the 1945 State election; whereby 407,258 enrolled electors did not vote. The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) identified a number of factors that help explain the general downturn in voter turnout, specifically: direct enrolment, young people, and overseas travel.

The State Parliament's Electoral Matters Committee (EMC) observed the decline in voter turnout was most prominent in the 25 to 44 year old cohort, and requested the VEC to investigate this further.

The Social Research Centre conducted a relevant research study for the VEC in 2018, to understand 2014 State and council election non-voter behaviour. Given this experience, in 2020, the VEC commissioned the Social Research Centre (SRC) to conduct a comprehensive survey of Victorian eligible non-voters in the 2018 State election. This research forms a knowledge base of non-voters, and the 2020 survey builds on this, with a focus on the 2018 State election and non-voters aged 25 to 44 years of age.

This report presents the results of the 2020 research into non-voters at the 2018 Victorian State election.

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.

Specifically, the 2020 non-voters research had the objectives of understanding:

- why voter turnout declined in the 2018 Victorian State election, particularly in the 25 to 44 year old age group,
- what might encourage non-voters to vote in the future, and
- whether directly enrolled non-voters have different attitudes from other non-voters.

1.2. Methodology

This research comprised of a quantitative 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.

1.2.1. Quantitative sample structure and recruitment

The contacts provided to the Social Research Centre were assigned into one of two streams – online or telephone – based on what type of contact details are available for each record. The priority was as follows:

- Records that include an email address were allocated to the online first stream.
- Records that include a telephone number, and do not have an email address, were allocated to the telephone first stream.

A summary of the contacts provided by the VEC and the sample selected is shown in Table 1 Sample selection below.

Table 1 Sample selection

Contact type	Available		Selected	
	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion
Telephone only	32,857	34%	4,008	20%
Both telephone and email	62,577	64%	15,337	77%
Email only	2,601	3%	641	3%
Total	98,035	100%	19,986	100%

The fieldwork process for the online first stream involved an initial invitation via email followed by multiple email reminders over the fieldwork period. Non-voters who did not complete the online survey were contacted via telephone (where available) to complete the survey via telephone interview.

Each person in the online first stream was sent a survey invitation via an email signed by the Electoral Commissioner which contained a unique survey click. The wording used in this email was based on the one used in the 2018 research study. In order to maximise the response rate, people from the online first stream who did not complete the survey were sent five reminder emails and were contacted via telephone (where available) to complete the survey via telephone interview. Of the online first sample, 3,494 records were attempted to be contacted by telephone, 294 of which completed the survey over the phone. A total of n=453 email recipients completed the online survey.

The telephone first stream were contacted via telephone inviting them to participate in the survey via computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI). Of the n=546 respondents who completed the survey via CATI, a total of n=252 of these records came from the telephone first stream.

Table 2 Final survey completes

	Count	%
Online	453	45%
Telephone	546	55%
Total	999	100%

1.2.2. Questionnaire design and development

The 2018 Non-voters questionnaire was adapted for the 2020 survey, with minimal changes. The 2018 questionnaire content was informed directly from a preliminary qualitative stage as well as input

and feedback from the VEC. The changes from the 2018 questionnaire to the 2020 version included an emphasis on the 2018 State election, rather than State elections in general, the addition of two open-ended questions including a question to understand reasons for not voting among people aged 25 to 44 years. The 2018 questionnaire coverage of Council elections were also removed.

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 the 2018 Victorian State election. Respondents who could confirm that they had not voted in this election, or were not sure if they had voted in this election, qualified to complete the survey¹.

The average questionnaire length (completion time) for the survey was 13.7 for the online survey, and 16.5 minutes for the telephone interviews. The full questionnaire is provided as Appendix 1.

1.3. Analysis

Throughout the report, comparisons are 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, between directly enrolled voters and those who were not, 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. The sample breakdown of the key groups is shown in Table 3 Sample breakdown of key groups below.

Table 3 Sample breakdown of key groups

		Count	Proportion
Age	18 to 24	151	15%
	25 to 44	440	44%
	45+	408	41%
Gender*	Male	510	51%
	Female	488	49%
Direct enrolment status	Yes	326	33%
	No	673	67%
Location	Regional Victoria	282	28%
	Melbourne	717	72%
Total		999	100%

*n=1 respondent preferred not to disclose their gender.

The analysis found significant differences between non-voters who voted in the 2014 State election and non-voters for whom the 2018 election was the first election they were eligible to vote in. However, upon reviewing the age breakdown by non-voter type, it was found that, for the majority of those aged 18 to 24, the 2018 election was the first election they were eligible to vote in; and all those aged 25 years and over had voted in 2014. As such, the significant differences between non-voter types are not reported.

¹As set out in the report “2053 Understanding Non-Voters Study Report_V3.pdf”

Table 4 **Non-voter type by age**

	Voted in 2014	First Election	Total
18 to 24	8%	92%	100%
25 to 44	100%	0%	100%
45+	100%	0%	100%

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, enrolment mechanism, and geographic location (SA4, derived from postcode). Refer to Appendix 2 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 and figures, an asterisk (*) indicates values that are significantly different than the value it is being compared to. A double asterisk (**) indicates a difference to both other age groups.

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 to describe in their own words why they did not vote in the 2018 Victorian State election. Those who voted in the 2014 State election but not the 2018 election were also asked if there anything in particular about the State election that caused them not to vote.

After providing unprompted responses, non-voters were asked to nominate all the reasons that contributed to them not voting in the 2018 State election. For this question, all possible reasons were presented to respondents who could select all that applied to them.

Overall, reasons for not voting fall into three broad areas:

- Availability – this includes being overseas, interstate, or not in their local area during election; having work, social or family commitments; not having time or arriving late to vote, or being unwell, on the day of the election.
- Knowledge – this includes forgetting that the election was on; not knowing there was an election on; not knowing who to vote for; not knowing that voting is compulsory.
- Unwilling – including thinking that there is no point in voting; there being no-one the respondent wanted to vote for; not voting for religious or other personal beliefs.

2.1. Unprompted reasons for not voting in 2018 election

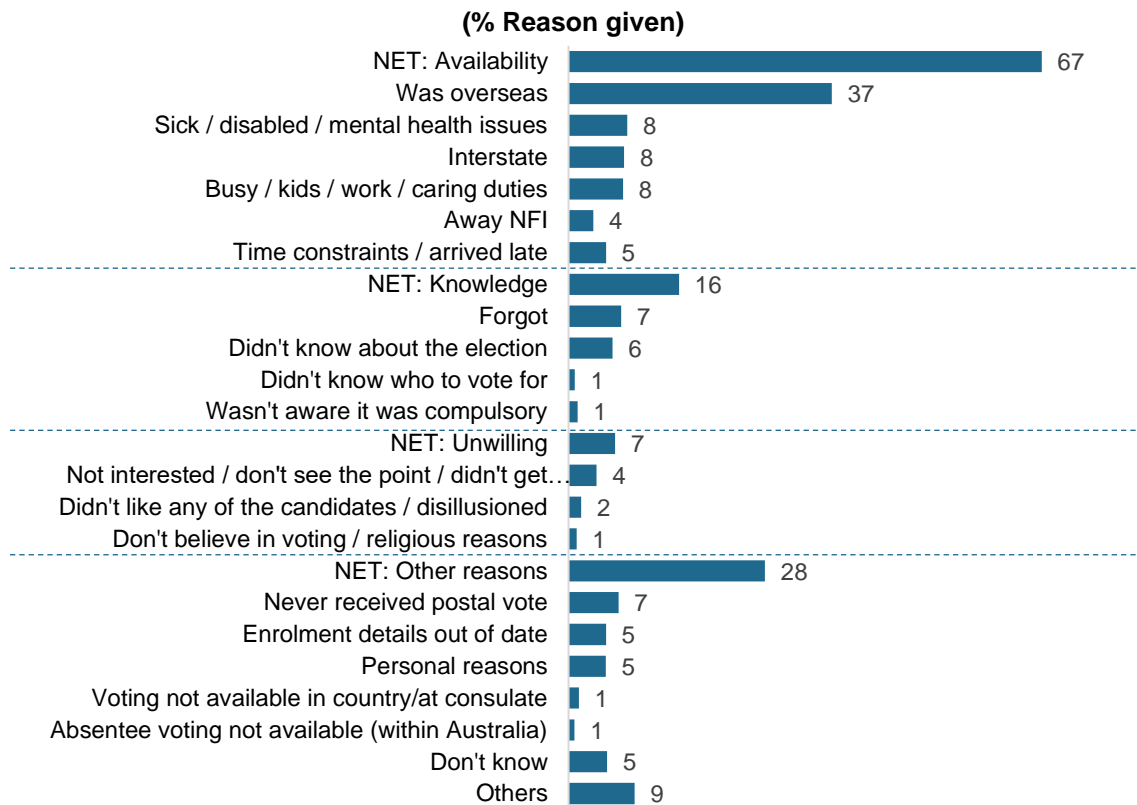
The main reason for not voting in the 2018 Victorian State election was not being available to vote (see Figure 1). Over one-third (37%) of non-voters claim they were overseas at the time of the election, with health issues (8%), being interstate (8%) and being busy (8%) the other main reasons for not being available to vote at the time of the election. Lack of knowledge (16%) and being unwilling (7%) were secondary reasons for not voting. Having not received a postal vote (7%) and having out of date enrolment details (5%) were other secondary reasons for not voting.

Availability was a more common reason for not voting for people aged 45+ (78%) as compared to those aged 25 to 44 (68%) and those aged 18 to 24 (52%). Conversely, lack of knowledge was a more common reason for people aged 18 to 24 (21%) and those aged 25 to 44 (17%) as compared to people aged 45+ (10%). Lack of knowledge was a more common reason for people who were directly enrolled (23%) as compared to those were not directly enrolled (13%).

Having out of date enrolment details was a more common reason for not voting for people who were directly enrolled (8%) as compared to those were not directly enrolled (4%). Having out of date enrolment details was also a more common reason among those for whom the 2018 State election was their first election (10%) as compared to those who voted in the 2014 State election (4%). Being unwilling to vote was a more common reason for men (9%) as compared to women (4%).

Figure 1 Unprompted reasons for not voting in the 2018 State election

A2. In your own words, please describe your reasons for not voting in the 2018 Victorian State election?

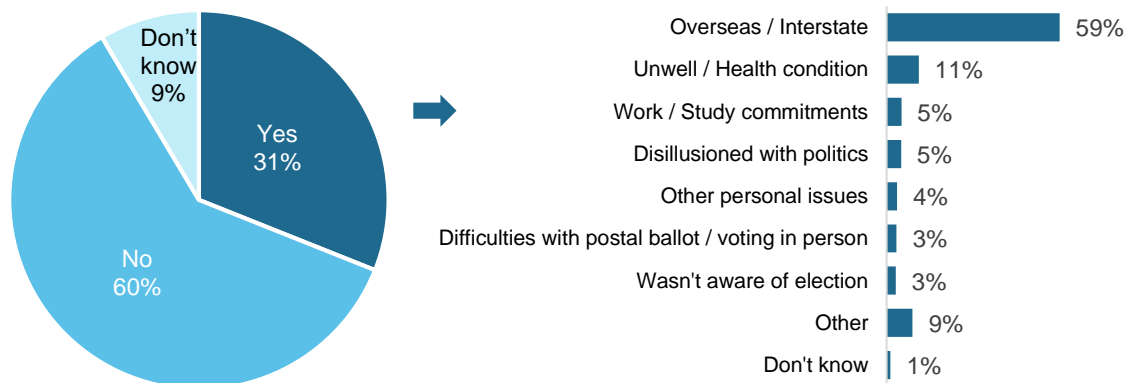


Base: All respondents (n=999)

Non-voters who had voted in the 2014 State election were asked if there was anything different about the 2018 State election compared to 2014 that caused them not to vote and, if so, what in particular about the 2018 State election caused them not to vote, as shown in Figure 2. Nearly one-third (31%) of these non-voters indicated that there was something different about the 2018 State election that caused them not to vote. Of those non-voters the main difference for the 2018 State election was that they were overseas or interstate (59%). Being disillusioned with politics was a more common reason for men (8%) as compared to women (2%).

Figure 2 2018 election considered to be different compared to 2014 election

A6. Now please think back to the 2014 Victorian State election. Was there anything different about the 2018 State election compared to 2014 that caused you not to vote? A7. What in particular about the 2018 State election caused you not to vote?



Base: Voted in the 2014 election (n=860)

Base: 2018 election considered to be different (n=281)

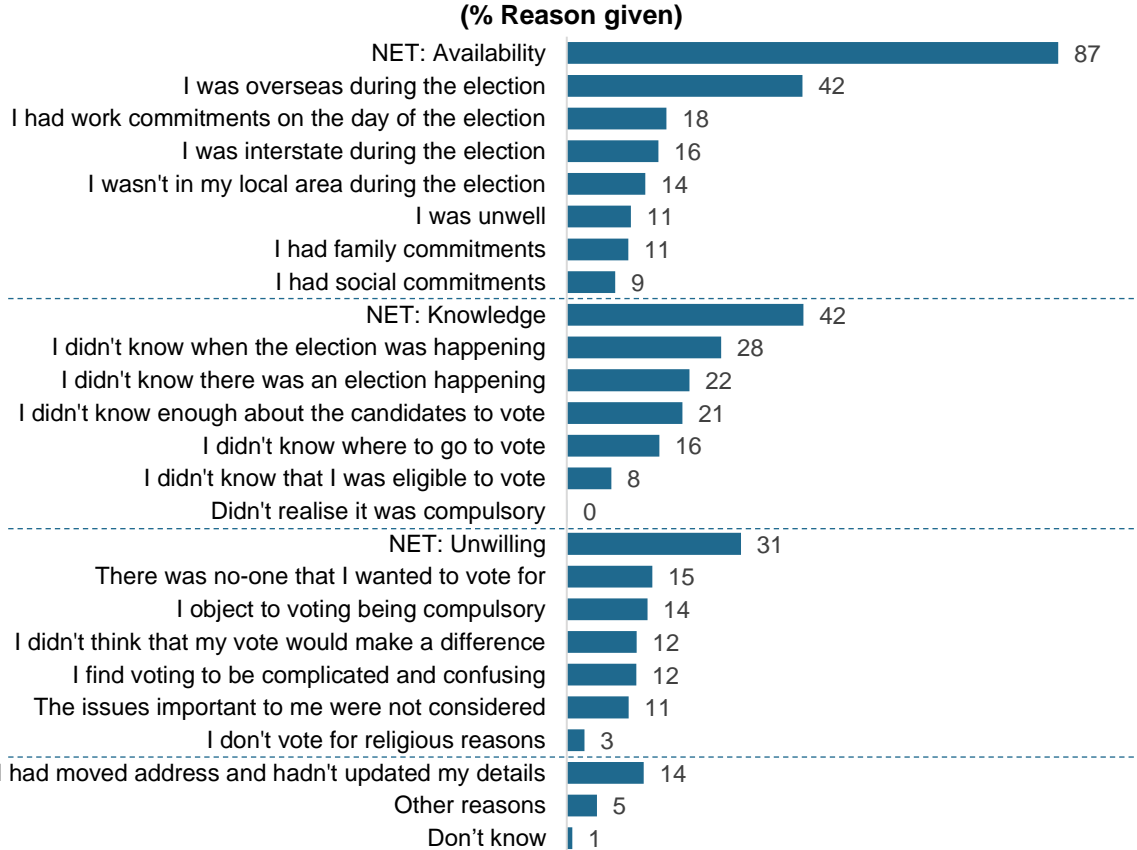
2.2. Prompted reasons for not voting in any past election

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

The main reason for not voting in State elections was lack of availability (87%) whereby over two-fifths of non-voters (42%) were overseas at the time of the election. Over two-fifths (42%) of non-voters indicated that reasons relating to a lack of knowledge contributed to them not voting. Not knowing the election was happening (28%), not knowing when the election was happening (22%), and not knowing enough about the candidates to vote (21%) were the key reasons that comprised this lack of knowledge

Figure 3 Prompted reasons for not voting in the 2018 State election

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 the 2018 Victorian State election.



Base: All respondents (n=999)

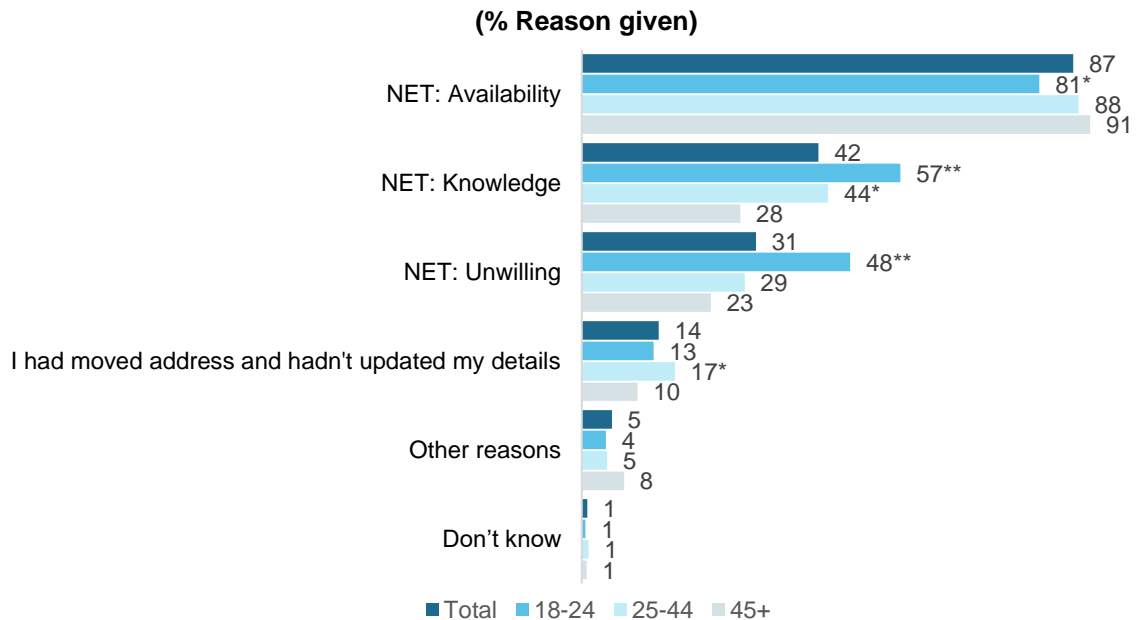
Being overseas was a more common reason for people aged 25+ (46%) as compared to those aged 18 to 24 (28%). Having work commitments on the day of the election was a more common reason for people aged 18 to 24 (22%) and those aged 25 to 44 (20%) as compared to people aged 45+ (11%).

Having moved address and not updated their details was a more common reason for people who were directly enrolled (20%) as compared to those were not directly enrolled (11%). Regional non-voters were more likely to have been interstate (26%) or not in their local area (19%) during the election as compared to Melbourne non-voters (12% for both reasons). Being unwilling to vote was a more common reason for men (35%) as compared to women (25%).

Lack of knowledge was a more common reason for people aged 18 to 24 (57%) than those aged 25 to 44 (44%) and those aged aged 45+ (29%). Lack of knowledge (54%) and unwillingness to vote (44%) were more common reasons for people who were directly enrolled as compared to those who were not directly enrolled (37% and 26% respectively).

Prompted reasons for not voting in the 2018 State election – By Age

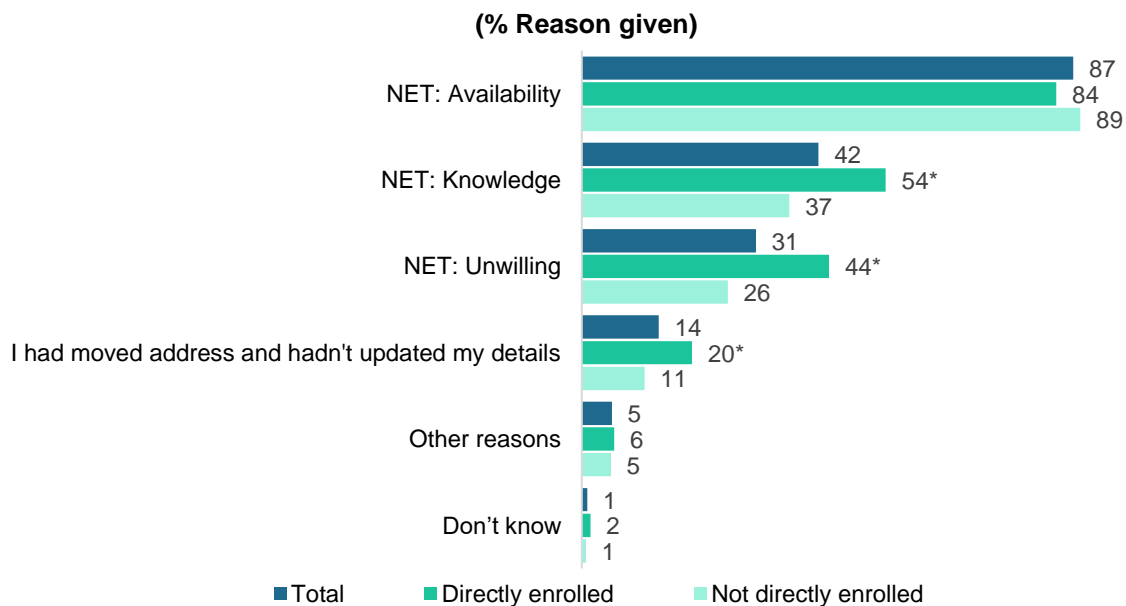
B1. Here are some reasons other people have given for not voting in Victorian State elections. Please indicate all the reasons that have contributed to you personally not voting in the 2018 Victorian State election.



Base: All respondents (n=999), Aged 18 to 24 (n=151), Aged 25 to 44 (n=440) Aged 45+ (n=408)
 *Significantly different to 45+, **different to both other age groups, at 95% confidence level.

Prompted reasons for not voting in the 2018 State election – By Enrolment Status

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 the 2018 Victorian State election.



Base: All respondents (n=999), Directly enrolled (n=326), Not directly enrolled (n=673)
 *Significantly different to other direct enrolment status at 95% confidence level.

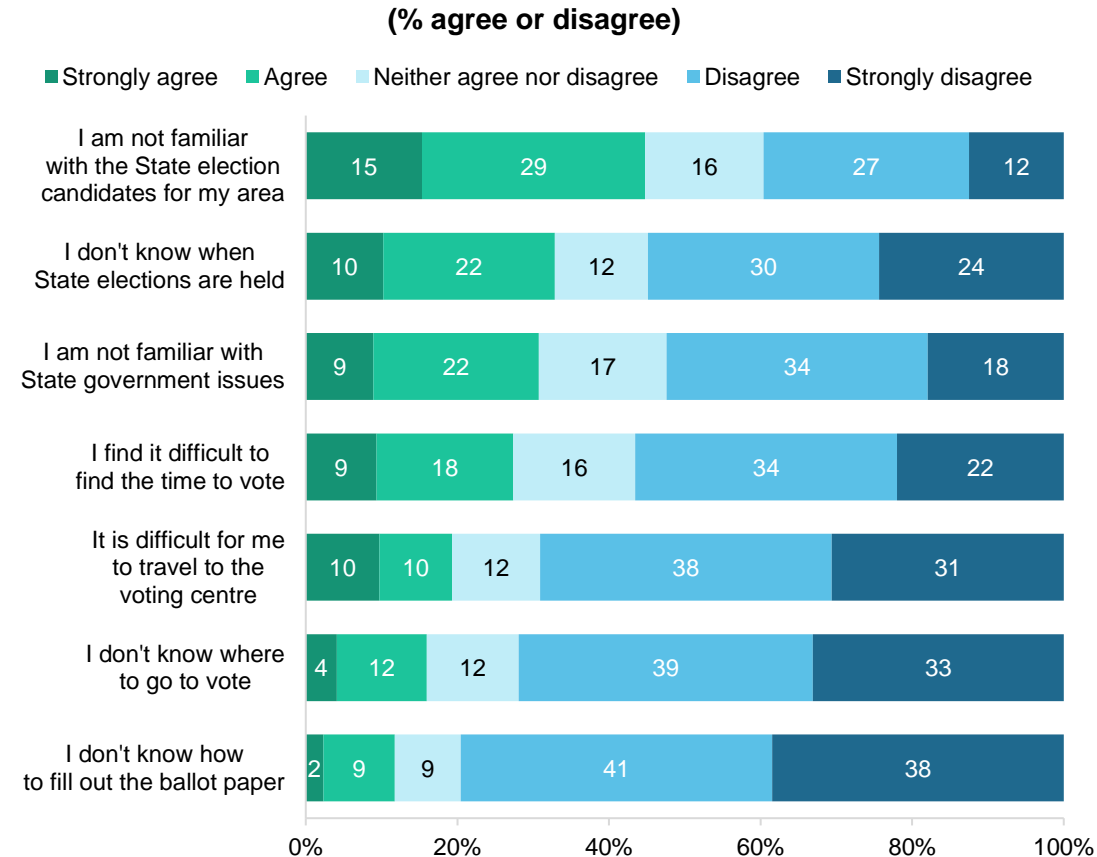
2.3. Factors that make voting difficult

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

Non-voters' lack of familiarity with candidates stands out as the main difficulty when voting in State elections (see Figure 4). The other four main factors that non-voters feel make it difficult to vote in State elections are: not knowing when they are held, lack of familiarity with State government issues, difficulty in finding the time to vote on election day and difficulty in travelling to a voting centre. Not knowing where to vote and not knowing how to fill out the ballot paper pose relatively low difficulty for voting.

Figure 4 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?

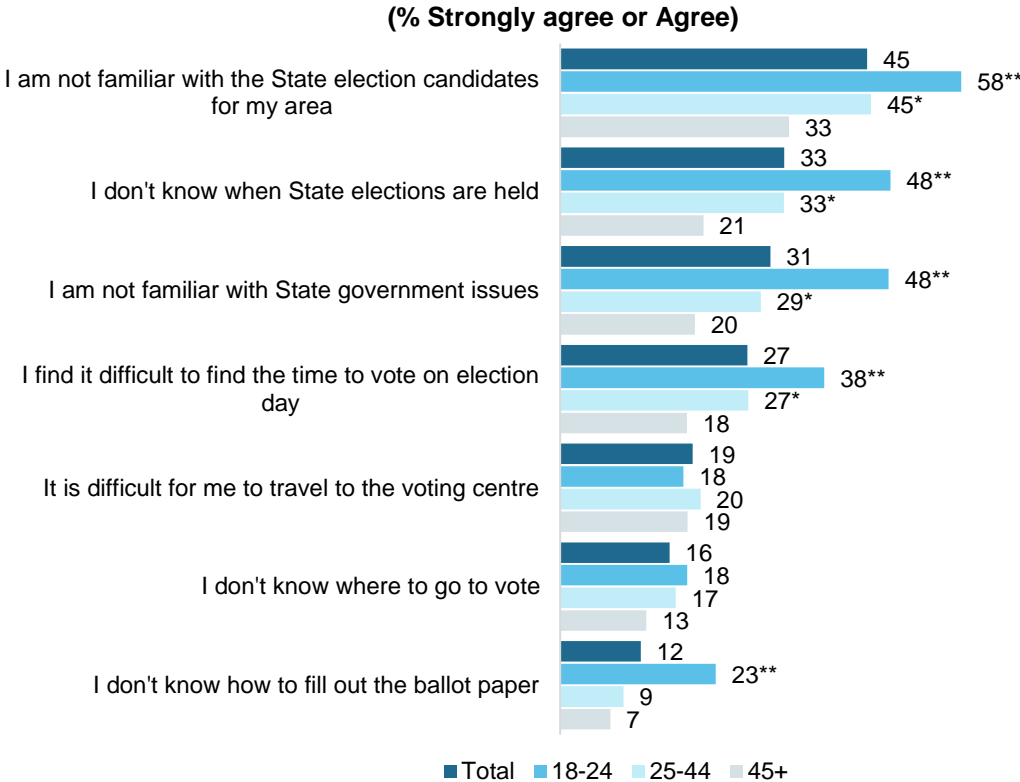


Base: All respondents (n=999)

State election non-voters aged 18 to 24 find it more difficult due to lack of familiarity with candidates and issues, not knowing when state elections are held, not being familiar with State government issues and finding it difficult to find the time to vote on election day, as compared to those aged 25+ (see Figure 5). Additionally, non-voters aged 25 to 44 find it more difficult to vote for all of these reasons than those aged 45+. Not knowing how to fill out the ballot paper is a factor that makes voting more difficult for non-voters aged 18 to 24 as compared to those aged 25+.

Figure 5 Factors that make voting in State elections difficult – By age

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

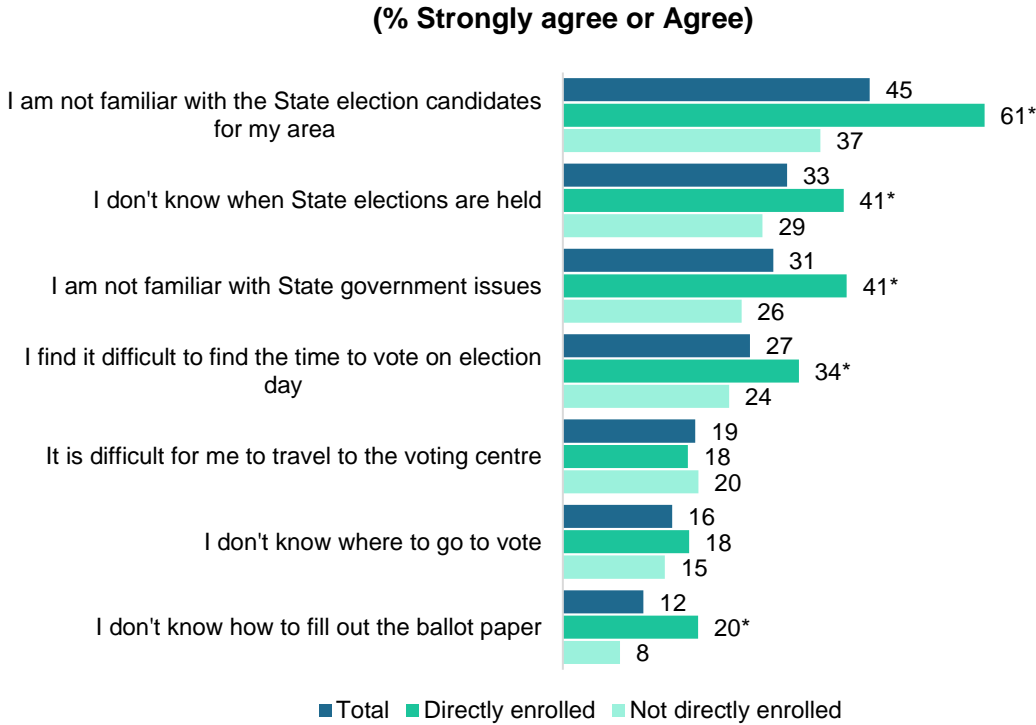


Base: All respondents (n=999), Aged 18 to 24 (n=151), Aged 25 to 44 (n=440) Aged 45+ (n=408)
 *Significantly different to 45+, **different to both other age groups, at 95% confidence level.

Non-voters who were directly enrolled find it more difficult to vote due to lack of familiarity with candidates and issues, not knowing when state elections are held, not being familiar with State government issues, finding it difficult to find the time to vote on election day, and knowing how to fill out the ballot paper as compared to those who were not directly enrolled (see Figure 6).

Figure 6 Factors that make voting in State elections difficult – By direct enrolment status

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



Base: All respondents (n=999), Directly enrolled (n=326), Not directly enrolled (n=673)
 *Significantly different to other direct enrolment status at 95% confidence level.

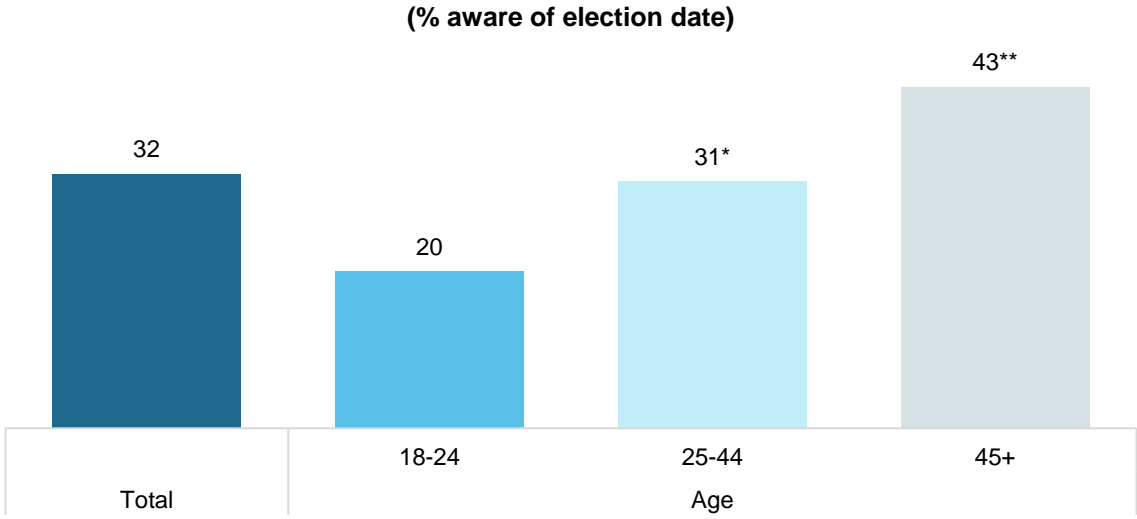
2.4. Awareness of election date

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

Less than a third (32%) of non-voters know when the election date is (see Figure 7). Non-voters aged 18 to 24 are less likely to know the date of the elections as compared to voters aged 25+, as are those aged 25 to 44 as compared to those aged 45+.

Figure 7 Awareness of State election date

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



Base: All respondents (n=999), Aged 18 to 24 (n=151), Aged 25 to 44 (n=440) Aged 45 (n=408)

*Significantly different to 18 to 24+, **different to both other age groups, at 95% confidence level.

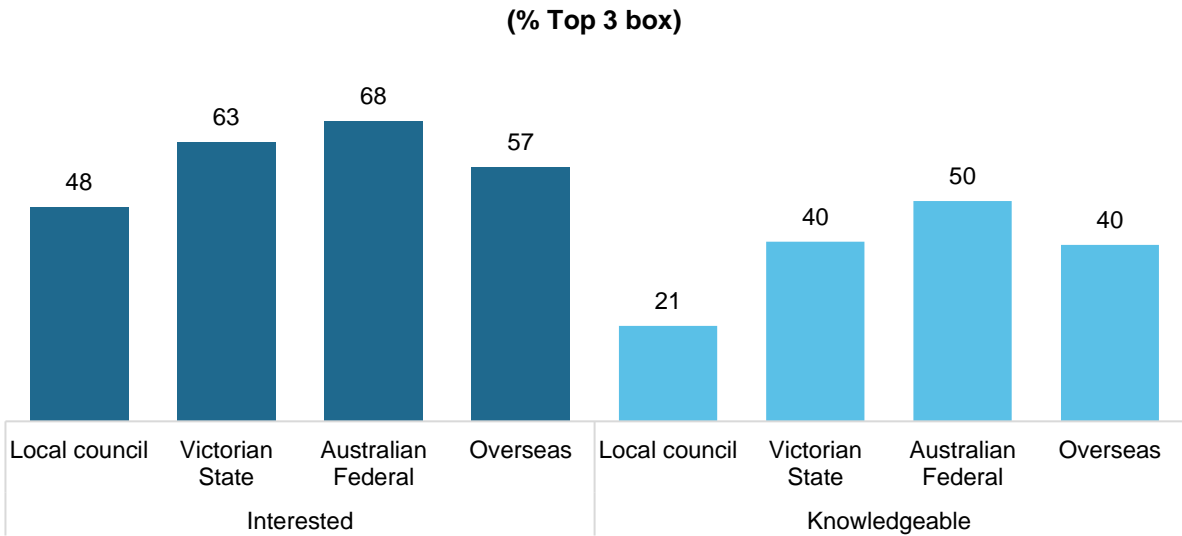
3. Attitudes towards voting and Government

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

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 (see Figure 8). Interest in State government (63%) is second to that for Federal government (68%). There is a greater discrepancy when it comes to knowledge of State vs Federal politics and elections, where knowledge of State politics and elections is on par with knowledge of overseas politics and elections (both 40%).

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 >...

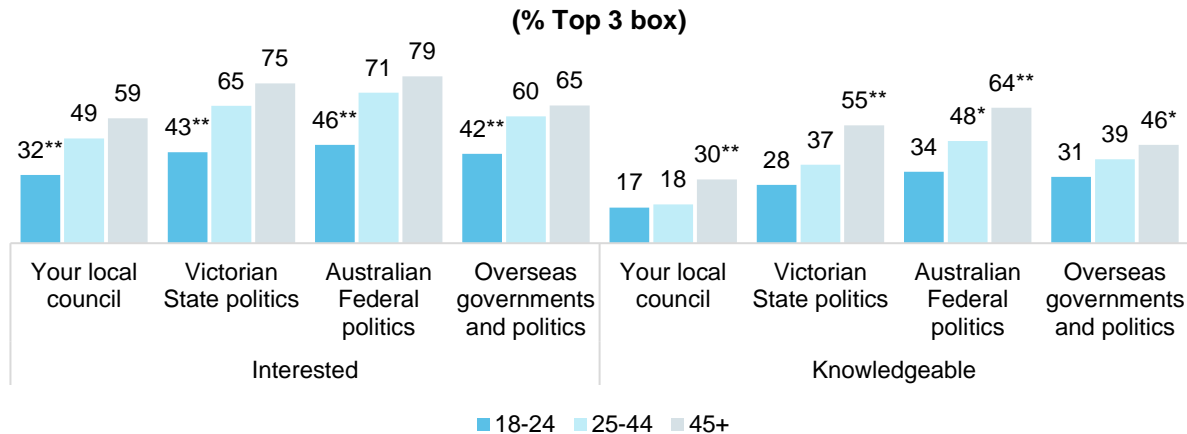


Note: 'Interested (Top 3 box)' includes 'Extremely', 'Very' or 'Moderately' interested. 'Knowledgeable (Top 3 box)' includes 'Know everything', 'Know a lot', and 'Know a fair bit'.
 Base: All respondents (n=999)

Older non-voters express both greater interest in, and greater knowledge of, all levels of government as compared to younger non-voters (see Figure 9). Voters aged 25 to 44 express greater interest in council, State, Federal and overseas politics as compared to voters aged 18 to 24. Voters aged 25 to 44 self-reported knowledge of council, State and overseas politics and elections is not significantly higher than that for the younger cohort.

Figure 9 Interest in, and knowledge of, politics and elections – By age

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



Note: 'Interested (Top 3 box)' includes 'Extremely', 'Very' or 'Moderately' interested. 'Knowledgeable (Top 3 box) includes 'Know everything', 'Know a lot', and 'Know a fair bit'.

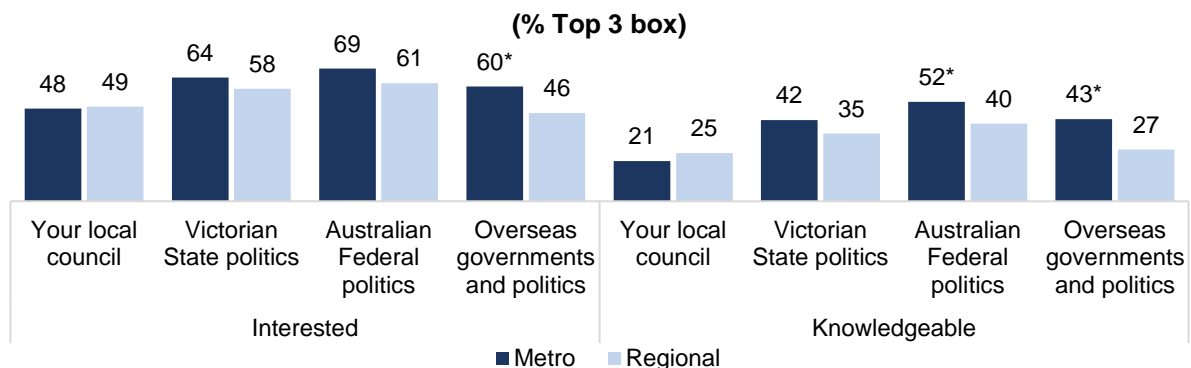
Base: Aged 18 to 24 (n=151), Aged 25 to 44 (n=440) Aged 45+ (n=408)

*Significantly different to 18 to 24, **different to both other age groups, at 95% confidence level.

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 and State politics and elections, metro non-voters say they are more interested in overseas, and more knowledgeable in Federal and overseas, politics and elections (see Figure 10).

Figure 10 Interest in, and knowledge of, politics and elections – By location

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



Note: 'Interested (Top 3 box)' includes 'Extremely', 'Very' or 'Moderately' interested. 'Knowledgeable (Top 3 box) includes 'Know everything', 'Know a lot', and 'Know a fair bit'.

Base: Metro (n=724), Regional (n=228)

*Significantly different to other location, at 95% confidence level.

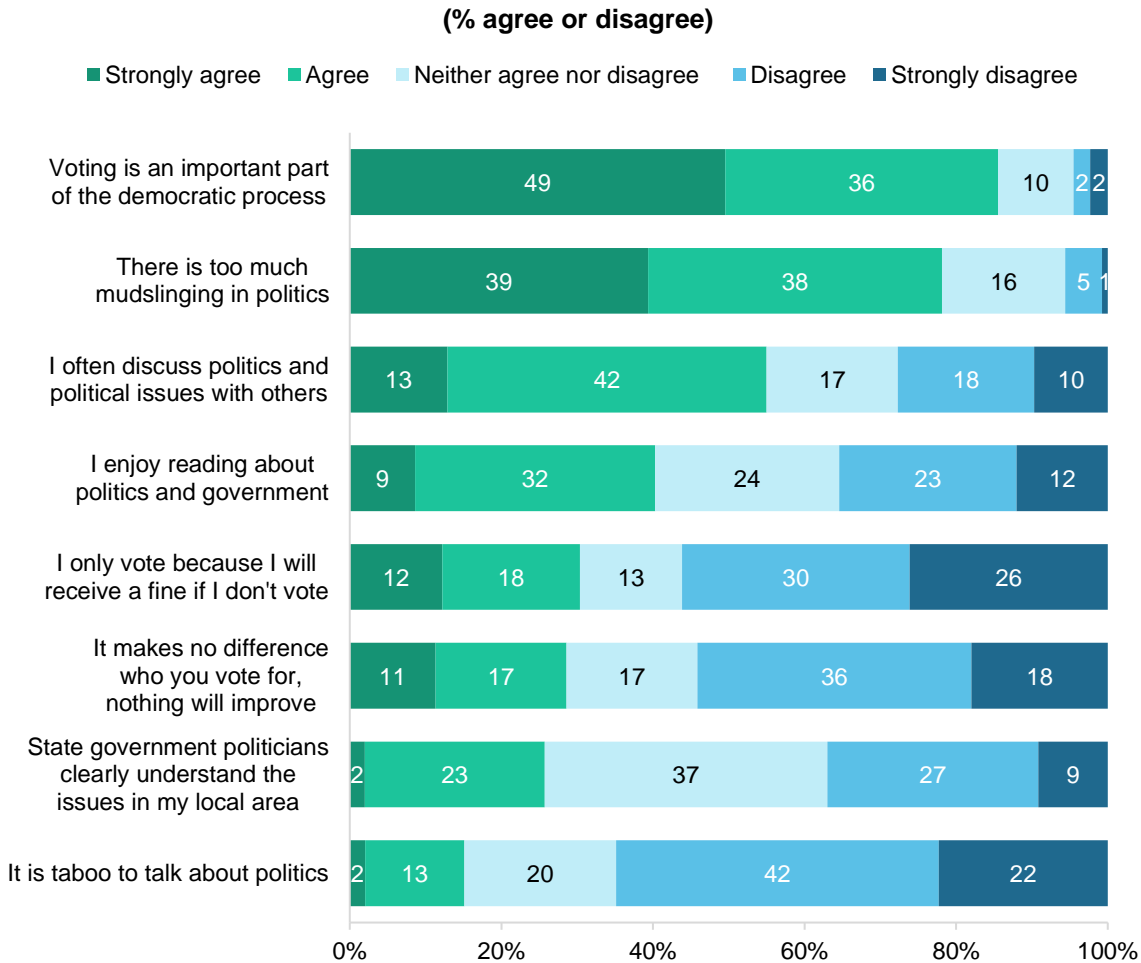
3.2. Engagement with voting, politics and government

Non-voters were asked for their level of agreement with a range of statements about engagement with voting, politics and government. As shown in Figure 11, the statement that resonated with the majority (85%) of non-voters is that 'voting is an important part of the democratic process'. There is also strong agreement (77%) with the suggestion that 'there is too much mudslinging in politics'. One in two (55%) non-voters agree that they often discuss politics and political issues, and only a minority (15%) agree that it is taboo to talk about politics; indicating the majority of non-voters have some level of engagement with politics. Also, those who agree that they only vote because they will receive a fine if they don't (30%) are outweighed by those who disagree (56%), further demonstrating there is some interest in politics amongst non-voters.

In contrast, one in four (28%) agree 'it makes no difference who you vote for', indicating that there is a proportion of non-voters who are disengaged or disillusioned with politics. Furthermore, there are low levels of agreement with the statement 'State government politicians clearly understand issues in my local area', indicating an opportunity for improvement.

Figure 11 Engagement with voting, politics and government

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



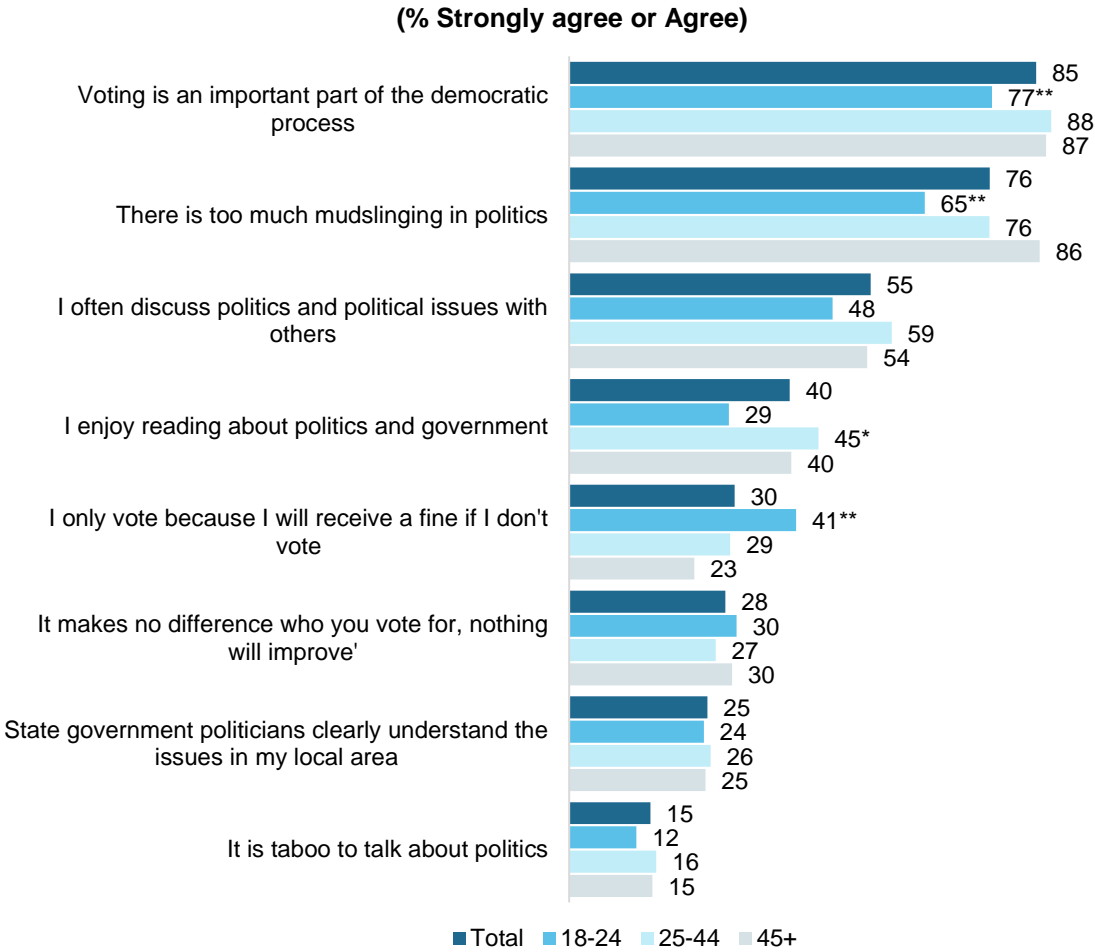
Base: All respondents (n=999)

There are some areas where there are significant differences between age groups on their level of political engagement. The youngest non-voters aged 18 to 24 appear to be disengaged, being significantly less likely than older age groups to agree that voting is an important part of the democratic process (77%), but more likely to agree that they only vote because they will receive a fine if they do not (41%).

In contrast, non-voters aged 25 to 44 are more likely than those aged 18 to 24 to enjoy reading about politics and government (45%), indicating a higher level of engagement with politics.

Figure 12 Engagement with voting, politics and government – NET Agree by Age

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

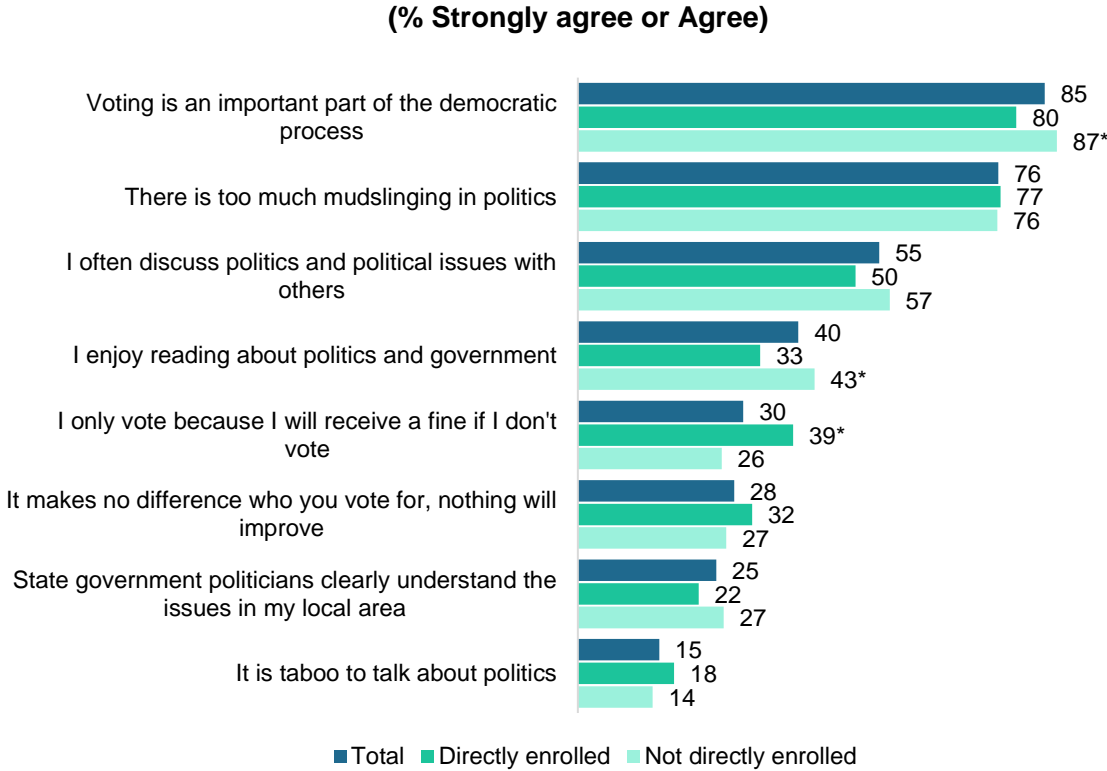


Base: All respondents (n=999), Aged 18 to 24 (n=151), Aged 25 to 44 (n=440) Aged 45+ (n=408)
 *Significantly different to 18 to 24, **different to both other age groups, at 95% confidence level.

Non-voters who are directly enrolled also demonstrate different attitudes to those who are not (see Figure 13). Those not directly enrolled are significantly more likely to agree that voting is part of the democratic process (87%), and also enjoy reading about politics and government (43%). Whereas those who are directly enrolled are more likely to agree that they only vote because they will receive a fine if they do not (39%). These differences suggest that non-voters directly enrolled are less engaged in voting and politics than those who are not.

Figure 13 Engagement with voting, politics and government – NET Agree by direct enrolment status

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



Base: All respondents (n=999), Directly enrolled (n=326), Not directly enrolled (n=673)
 *Significantly different to other direct enrolment status at 95% confidence level.

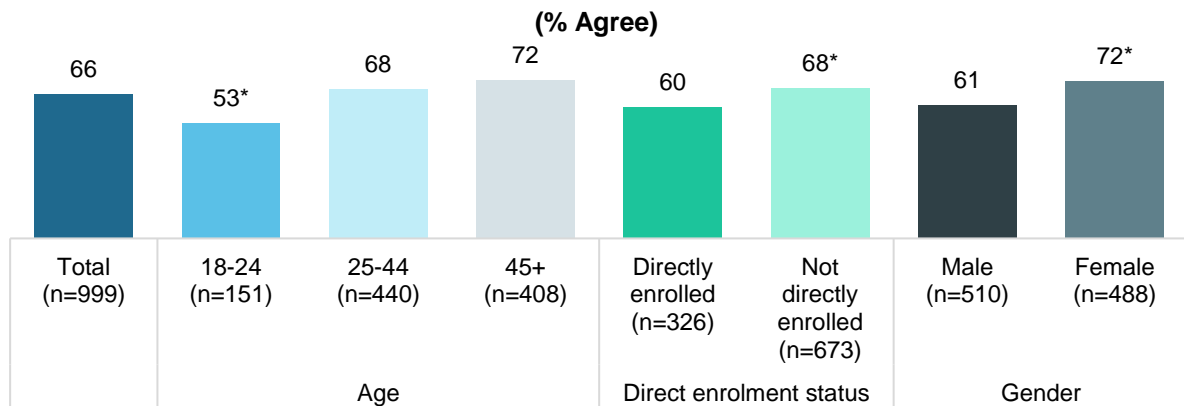
There are also attitudinal differences between non-voters living in metropolitan areas compared to those in regional areas. Those who live in metro areas are more likely to agree that voting is an important part of the democratic process (87% metro vs. 78% regional). Whereas regional non-voters are more likely to only vote because they will receive a fine if they don't (38% regional vs. 28% metro).

3.3. Compulsory voting and fines

Overall, two in three (66%) non-voters agree that voting in Victorian State elections should be compulsory (see Figure 14). Agreement is higher amongst those who are not directly enrolled (68%) compared to those who are (60%), and higher amongst females (72%) compared to males (61%). On the contrary, non-voters aged 18 to 24 are less likely than older age groups to agree with this statement.

Figure 14 Agreement that voting should be compulsory

D3a. Do you agree or disagree that voting in Victorian State elections should be compulsory?



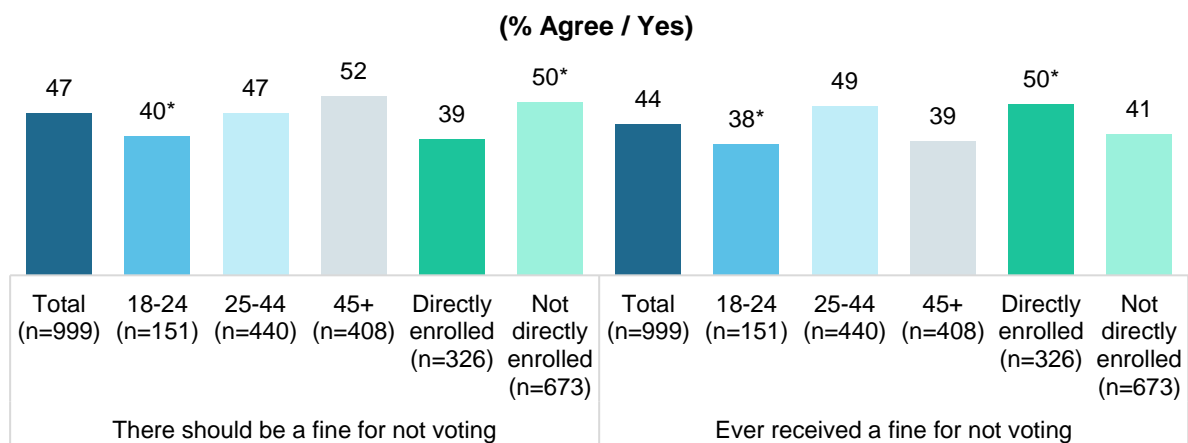
Base: Sample sizes vary, as shown in chart.

*Significantly different to other sub-groups at 95% confidence level.

One in two (47%) non-voters support being fined for not voting (see Figure 15); support is stronger amongst those not directly enrolled (50%) but weaker amongst those aged 18 to 24 (40%). 44% of non-voters claim to have received a fine for not voting, with 18 to 24 year olds less likely to say they have ever been fined.

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: Sample sizes vary, as shown in chart.

*Significantly different to other sub-groups at 95% confidence level.

4. Increasing voter participation

4.1. Initiatives to encourage voting

Survey respondents were asked to select initiatives that they would find helpful in voting in Victorian State elections, as well as provide their own suggestions on what would encourage them to vote in the Victorian State election to be held in November 2022.

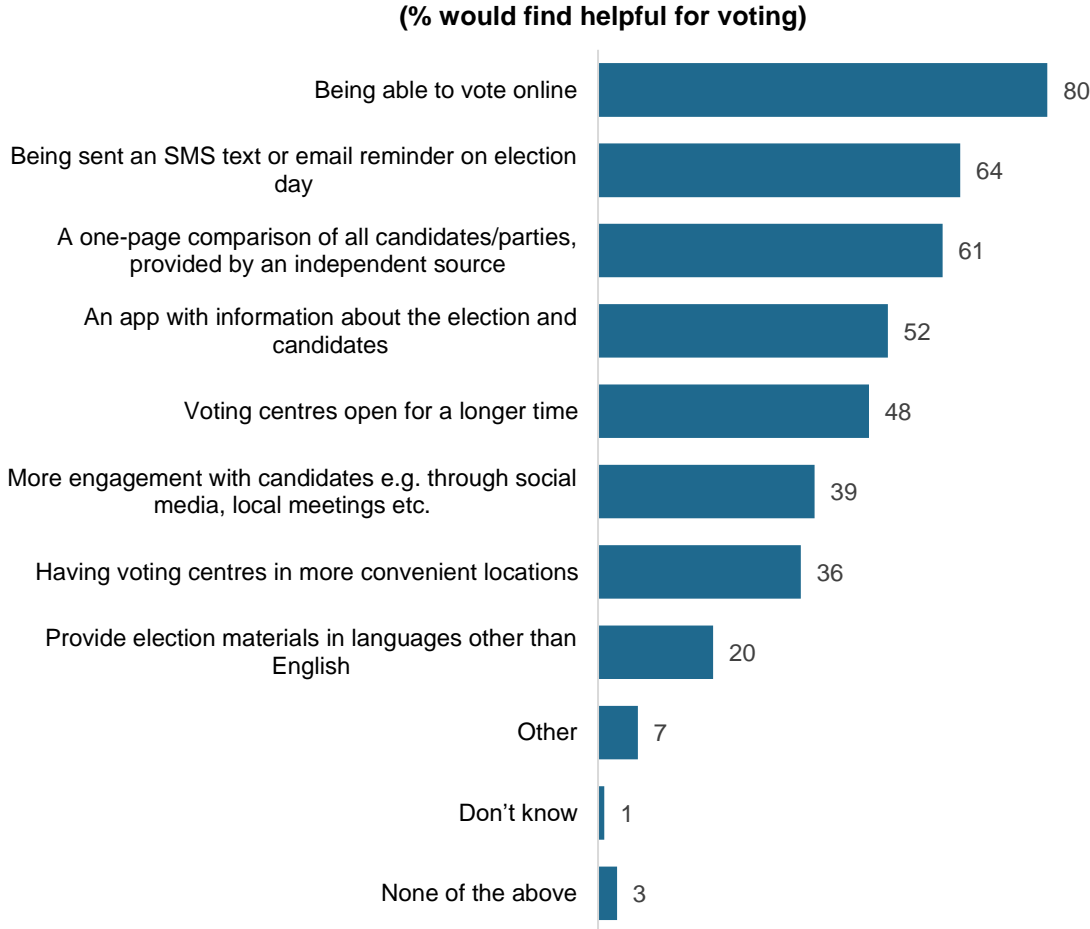
The initiative considered as helpful by the majority (80%) of non-voters is the option to vote online. While this is a popular initiative, the impact of this on voting behaviours should be considered (e.g. how would this impact those who currently do vote?).

A reminder SMS or email on Election day is the second most selected initiative (64%), with significantly more non-voters who speak LOTE (language other than English) selecting this than non-LOTE respondents (70% vs. 62%). LOTE non-voters are also more likely to consider voting centres in more convenient locations (43% vs. 34%) and election materials in languages other than English (28% vs. 18%) helpful.

Information about candidates/parties in the form of a one-page comparison (61%) or via an app along with information about the election (52%) is also considered helpful by many non-voters.

Figure 16 Initiatives that would assist voting in Victorian State elections (prompted)

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

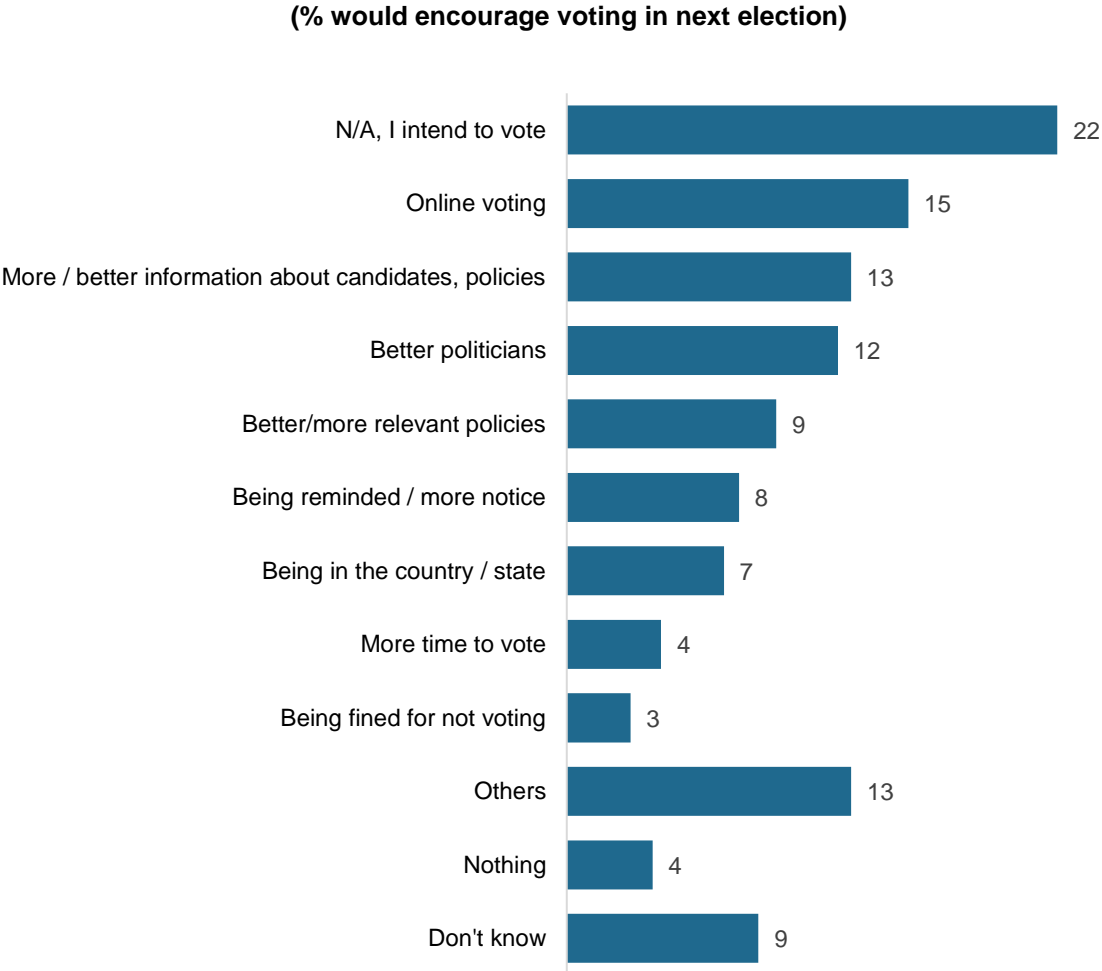


Base: All respondents (n=999)

When given the opportunity to provide their own suggestions that would encourage voting in the next State election, online voting comes up again, being second most commonly mentioned recommendation, only behind expressions of intention to vote.

Figure 17 Unprompted suggestions to encourage voting in next election

D6. The next Victorian State election will be held in November 2022. In your own words, what would encourage you to vote in this next election? (Coded)

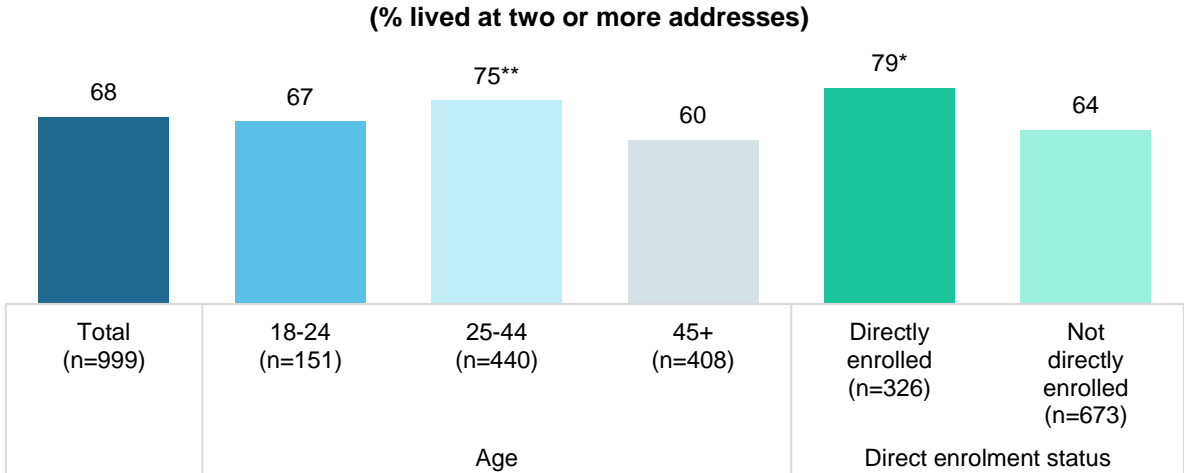


Base: All respondents (n=999)

Non-voters in the survey were asked how many different addresses they have lived at in the past five years. Overall, two-thirds (68%) of non-voters lived at two or more addresses in the past five years. Non-voters aged 25 to 44 (75%) are more likely than those aged 45+ (60%) to have lived in more than one address; and those directly enrolled (79%) are more likely compared to those not directly enrolled (64%). This indicates relocating may play a role in non-voting.

Figure 18 Number of addresses in past 5 years

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

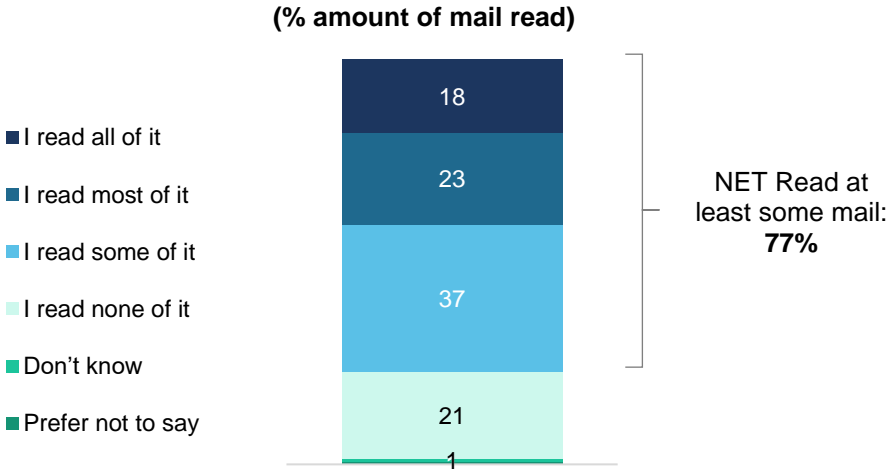


Base: Sample sizes vary, as shown in chart.
 *Significantly different to other sub-groups, **different to 45+, at 95% confidence level.

When asked how much of household mail received in the post box is read, three quarters (77%) of non-voters read at least some of it. There are no significant differences in mail readership across key demographics or level of interest in or knowledge about politics, indicating that household mail may not influence voting behaviour.

Figure 19 Amount of mail read

POST 1. 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?



Base: All respondents (n=999)

4.2. Initiatives for priority non-voter groups

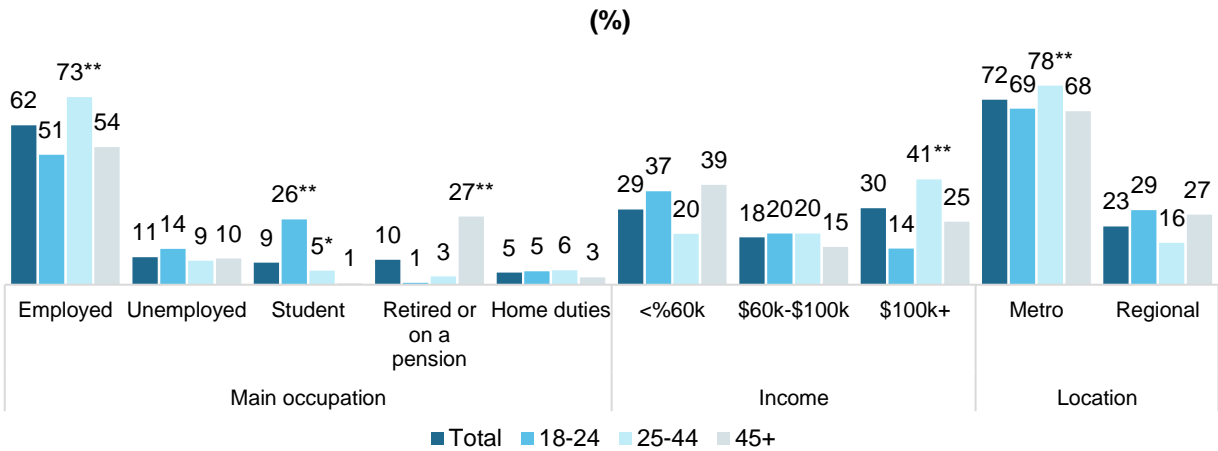
The next sections identify the types of non-voters that offer the greatest opportunities to increase voter participation in State elections. There are three priority non-voter groups identified, based on the reasons for not voting in State elections and the levels of engagement in politics and government outlined earlier in the report, as well as the demographic differences on these measures. Initiatives to increase voter participation amongst these groups are also outlined in the following sections.

4.2.1. Inform and engage younger non-voters via digital channels

As noted in the introduction, the State Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee (EMC) observed the decline in voter turnout was most prominent in the 25 to 44 year old cohort, and requested the VEC to investigate this further. This research study aims to show why voter turnout declined in the 2018 Victorian State election, particularly amongst this age group. The following section examines the opportunities to increase participation in State elections amongst younger voters aged under 45, with a focus on those aged 25 to 44.

Other than age, the demographics that distinguish this group of non-voters are main occupation and income. Younger non-voters aged 25 to 44 are more likely to be employed (73%) and have a higher income (41% earn over \$100k); and those aged 18 to 24 are more likely to be students (26%). Non-voters aged 25 to 44 are more likely to be living in metropolitan areas (78%). On the other hand, older non-voters aged 45+ are more likely to be retired or on a pension (27%).

Figure 20 Demographic profile of age groups



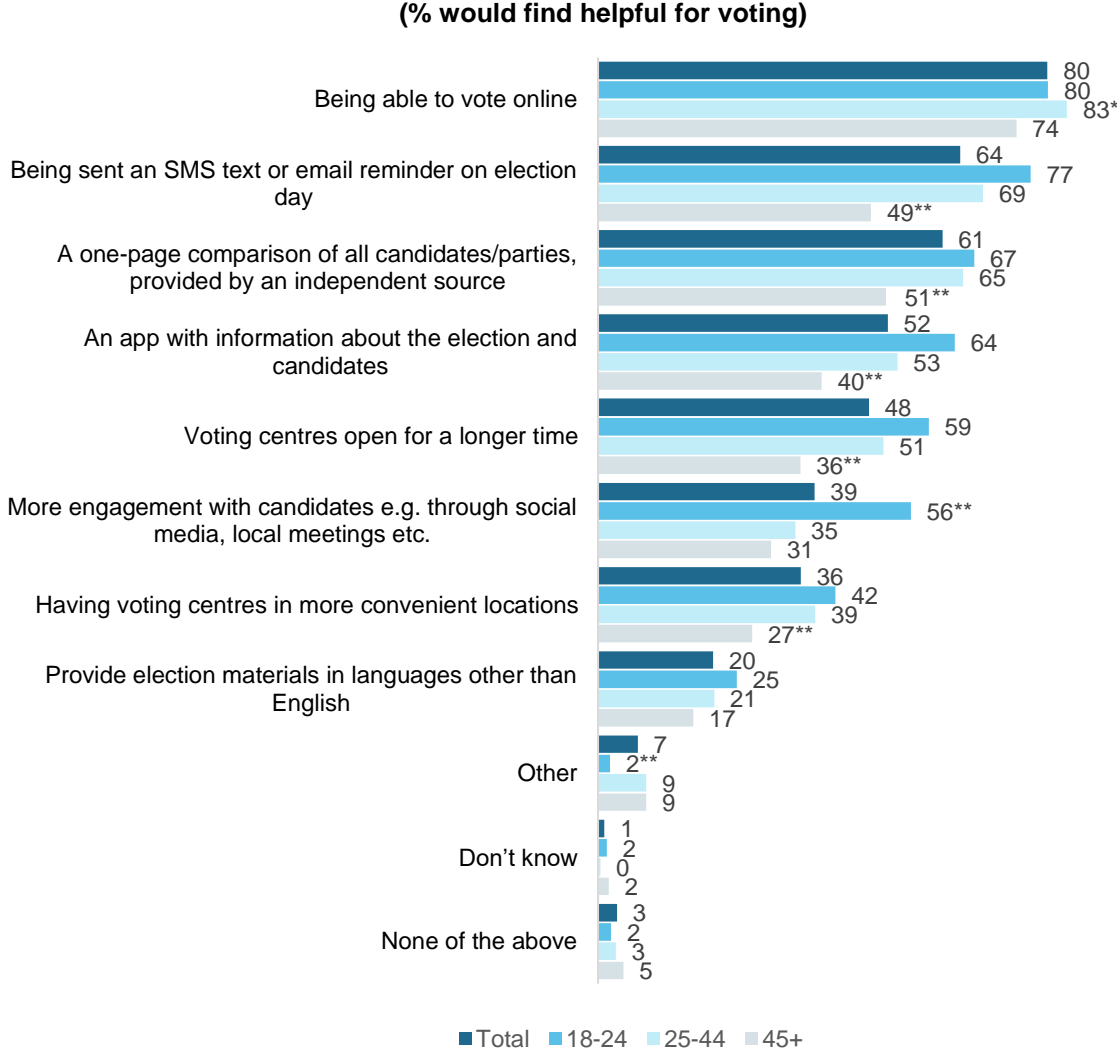
Note: 'Other', 'Don't know', and 'Prefer not say' results are not shown.
 Base: All respondents (n=999), Aged 18 to 24 (n=151), Aged 25 to 44 (n=440) Aged 45+ (n=408)
 *Significantly different to 45+, **different to both other age groups, at 95% confidence level.

When asked what would assist them to vote in State elections, non-voters aged 25 to 44 are more likely than those aged 45+ to select online voting as a helpful initiative (see Figure 21). As reported in Section 2.2, 25 to 44 year olds are more likely than those 45+ to cite work commitments making voting difficult; and online voting may be an appealing solution to address this barrier.

It was also found in Section 2.3 that non-voters aged 18 to 44 are more likely than those who are older to find voting difficult due to lack of knowledge (unfamiliar with State election candidates and State Government issues, do not know when state elections are held), and challenges with finding time to vote on election day. It may be due to these challenges that these younger non-voters are more likely to consider helpful the initiatives that provide information (i.e. reminder SMS or emails, one-page comparison of candidates/parties, app with information about the election and candidates) or making voting more accessible (i.e. longer voting centre hours, voting centres in more convenient locations).

Figure 21 Initiatives that would assist voting in Victorian State elections – By Age

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

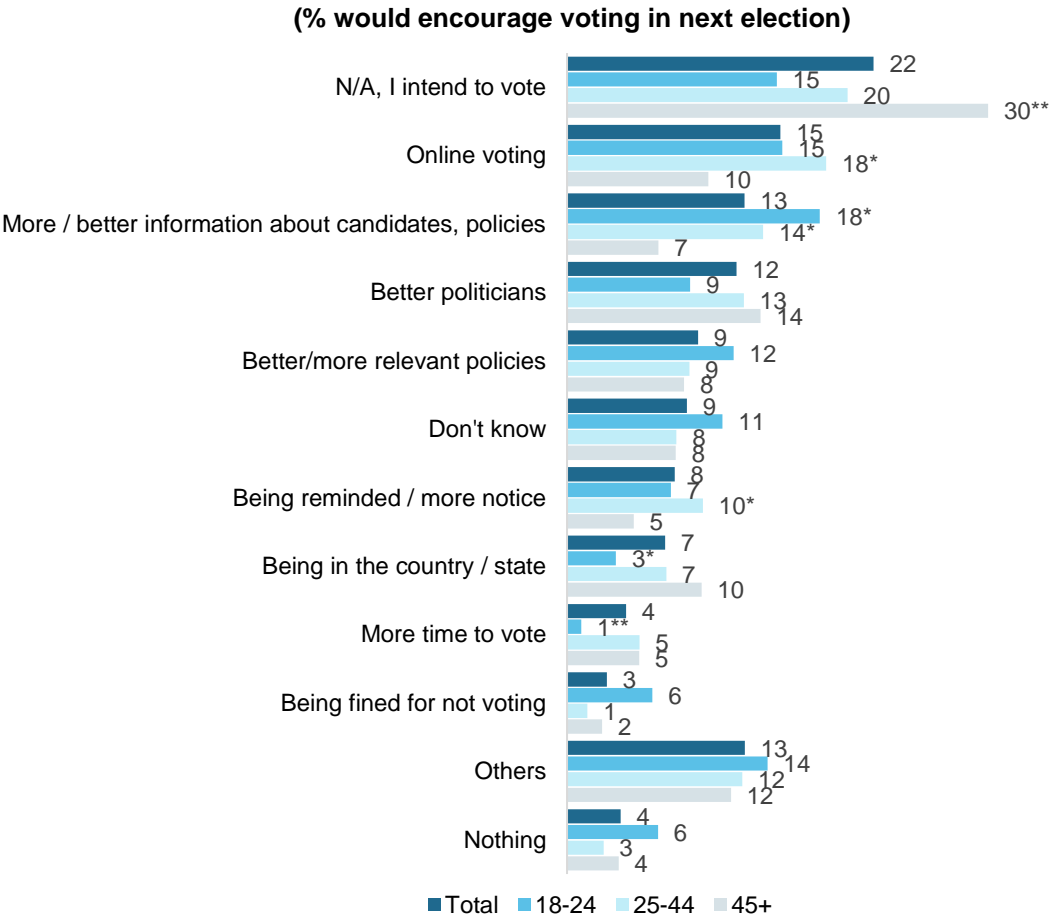


Base: All respondents (n=999), Aged 18 to 24 (n=151), Aged 25 to 44 (n=440) Aged 45+ (n=408)
 *Significantly different to 45+, **different to both other age groups, at 95% confidence level.

When asked to describe in their own words what would encourage voting in the next election, older non-voters aged 45+ are more likely to spontaneously mention they intend to vote. This indicates there is an opportunity to increase top-of-mind voting intention amongst non-voters aged 18 to 44.

Figure 22 Suggestions to encourage voting in next election – By Age

D6. The next Victorian State election will be held in November 2022. In your own words, what would encourage you to vote in this next election? (Coded)



Base: All respondents (n=999), Aged 18 to 24 (n=151), Aged 25 to 44 (n=440) Aged 45+ (n=408)
 *Significantly different to 45+, **different to both other age groups, at 95% confidence level.

In summary, non-voting amongst those aged 18 to 44 is largely driven by a lack of knowledge about candidates, issues and election timing and difficulty in finding time to vote. They want to use technology for information and for the process of voting itself. To increase election participation there should be a focus on using digital and online channels to inform and engage this group (particularly of the election date). And, if possible, to implement online voting, SMS/email reminders, and/or an app to disseminate information.

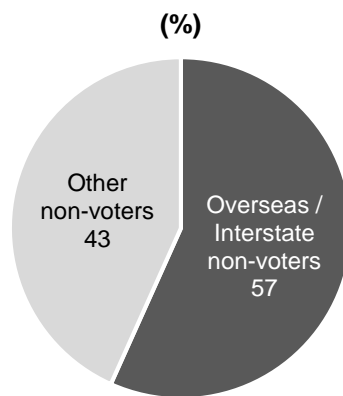
However, while there are similarities between non-voters aged 18 to 24 and those aged 25 to 44, these two age groups have different levels of engagement with politics. Compared to those aged 18 to 24, non-voters aged 25 to 44 are more interested in Victorian State politics (see Section 3.1), are more engaged, and are more likely to value the role of voting in democracy (see Section 3.2). This indicates that interest and engagement with politics is more established amongst non-voters aged 25 to 44, and more effort would be required to increase interest and engagement amongst those aged 18 to 24. As such, the execution of any initiatives to encourage voting needs to be nuanced and tailored to target each age group differently.

4.2.2. Online voting and reminders for travellers during State elections

Lack of availability was the main unprompted (67%) and prompted (87%) reason for not being able to vote in the 2018 State election (see Figure 1 and Figure 3). The main reasons for not being available to vote among the total State non-voting population were being overseas (42%) and being interstate (16%). Figure 23 below shows that half non-voters said that being overseas or interstate contributed to them not voting in the 2018 State election. Therefore, this issue should be a priority to address in future State elections and the following section examines the opportunities in more detail.

Figure 23 Non-voters who were overseas or interstate during State elections

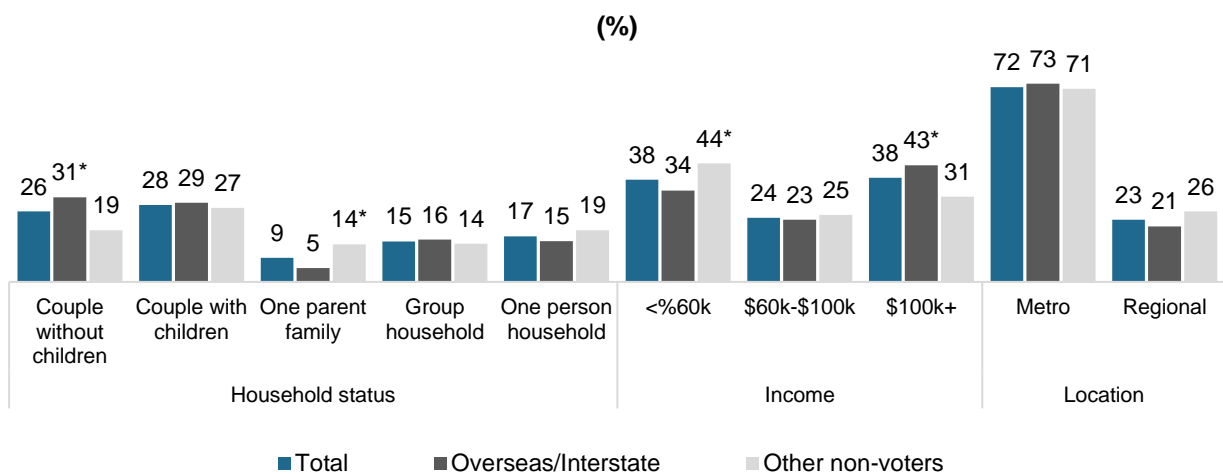
B1. Please indicate all the reasons that have contributed to you personally not voting in the 2018 Victorian State election – ‘I was overseas during the election’ or ‘I was interstate during the election’.



Base: All respondents (n=999)

The demographics that distinguish overseas/interstate non-voters are household status and income. Compared to other non-voters, those who were overseas or interstate during the 2018 State election are more likely to be couples without children, and are likely to have an income of \$100k+ than other state non-voters (see Figure 24). While the majority of non-voters who were outside of Victoria during the 2018 State election are from metropolitan areas, this is not significantly different to the total non-voter population.

Figure 24 Demographics of those outside of Victoria during election



Note: 'Other', 'Don't know', and 'Prefer not say' results are not shown.

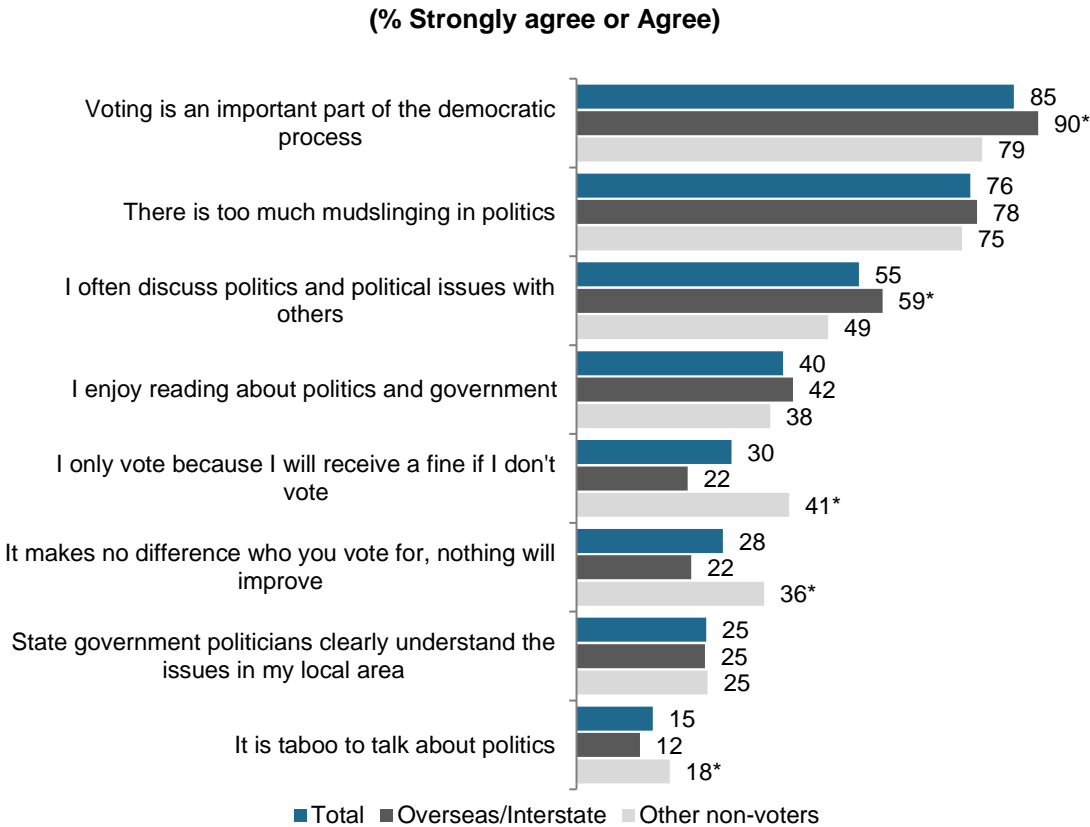
Base: Respondents excluding 'Other', 'Don't know', and 'Prefer not say' - All (n=777), Overseas/Interstate (n=472), Other non-voters (n=305)

*Significantly different to other sub-group, at 95% confidence level.

Figure 25 displays the results for the areas of engagement with voting, politics and engagement where non-voters who were overseas/interstate have different attitudes and beliefs than other non-voters. Overseas/interstate non-voters are more likely to agree that voting is an important part of the democratic process and that they often discuss politics; and are less likely to agree that they only vote to avoid a fine, and with the statement 'it makes no difference who you vote for'. This indicates that this is a politically engaged group of non-voters, and it is their lack of availability during elections that needs to be overcome in order to increase their voting participation.

Figure 25 Engagement with voting, politics and government – By those who were overseas/interstate during the 2018 State election

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



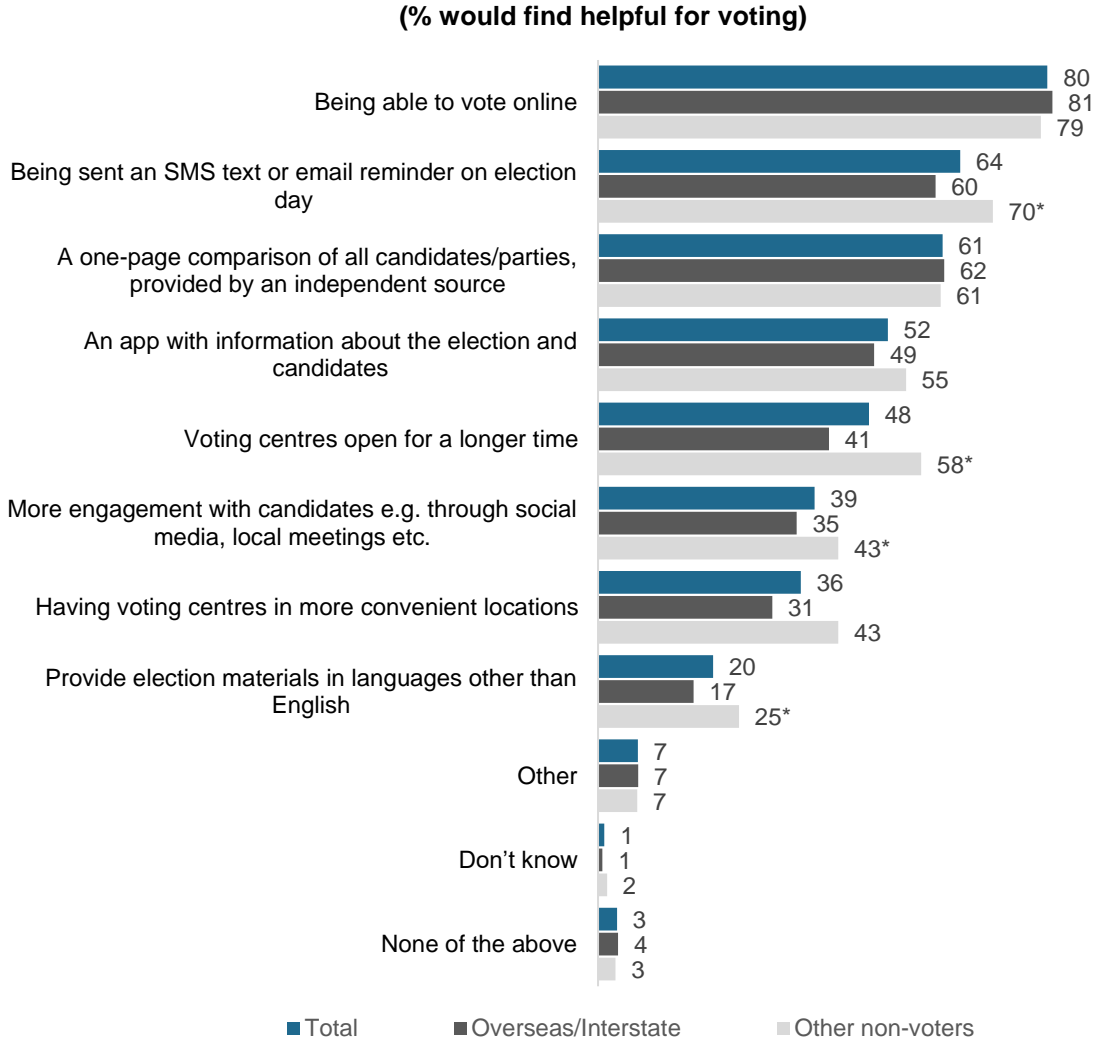
Base: All respondents (n=999), Overseas/Interstate (n=580), Other non-voters (n=419)

*Significantly different to other direct enrolment status at 95% confidence level.

When provided with a list of initiatives to assist in voting in State elections, online voting was the most commonly selected initiative by overseas/interstate non-voters, followed by SMS or email reminders. However, there are no significant differences in initiatives considered to be helpful by overseas/interstate non-voters compared to other voters. This reinforces that the inherent reason for non-voting (i.e. being overseas/ interstate) is the main obstacle to voting that needs to be addressed.

Figure 26 Initiatives that would assist voting in Victorian State elections – By those who were overseas/interstate during the 2018 State election

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

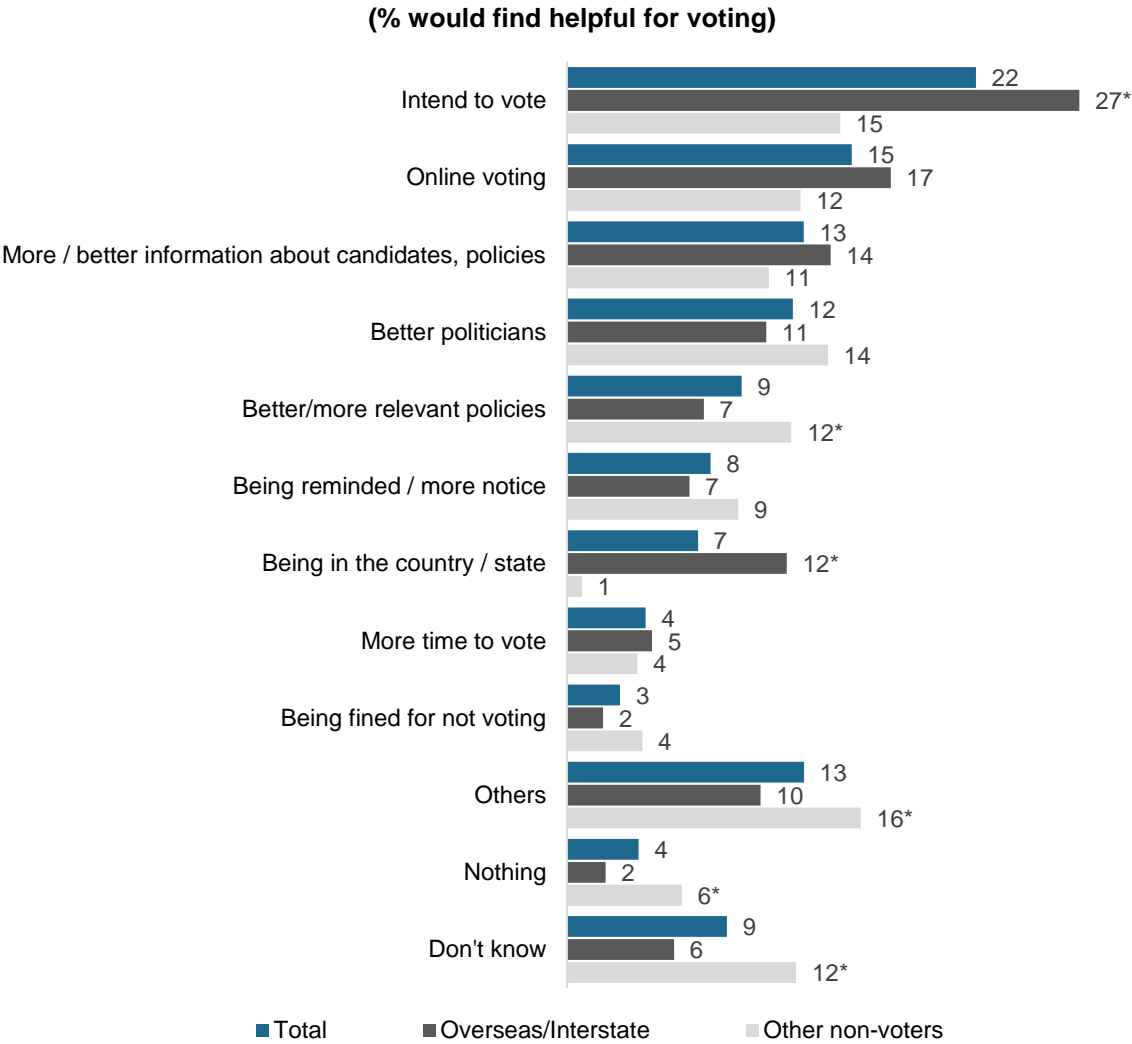


Base: All respondents (n=999), Overseas/Interstate (n=580), Other non-voters (n=419)
 *Significantly different other sub group, at 95% confidence level.

When asked to describe in their own words what would encourage voting in the next election, intention to vote is top-of-mind for a quarter (27%) of overseas/interstate non-voters – significantly higher than other non-voters (15%). They are also more likely to state that being in the country/state would enable them to vote in the next election. This further strengthens that it is their lack of availability during elections that needs to be overcome in order to increase their voting participation

Figure 27 Suggestions to encourage voting in next election – By those who were overseas/interstate during the 2018 State election

D6. The next Victorian State election will be held in November 2022. In your own words, what would encourage you to vote in this next election? (Coded)



Base: All respondents (n=999), Overseas/Interstate (n=580), Other non-voters (n=419)
 *Significantly different other sub group, at 95% confidence level.

In summary, the group of 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. Enabling online voting would make a big difference in increasing participation among those who are overseas or interstate during State elections. Online and electronic reminders such as SMS or email reminders delivered in a timely manner would also be helpful to alert potential travellers of any upcoming elections. These communications could also include information about how to vote if travelling during an election.

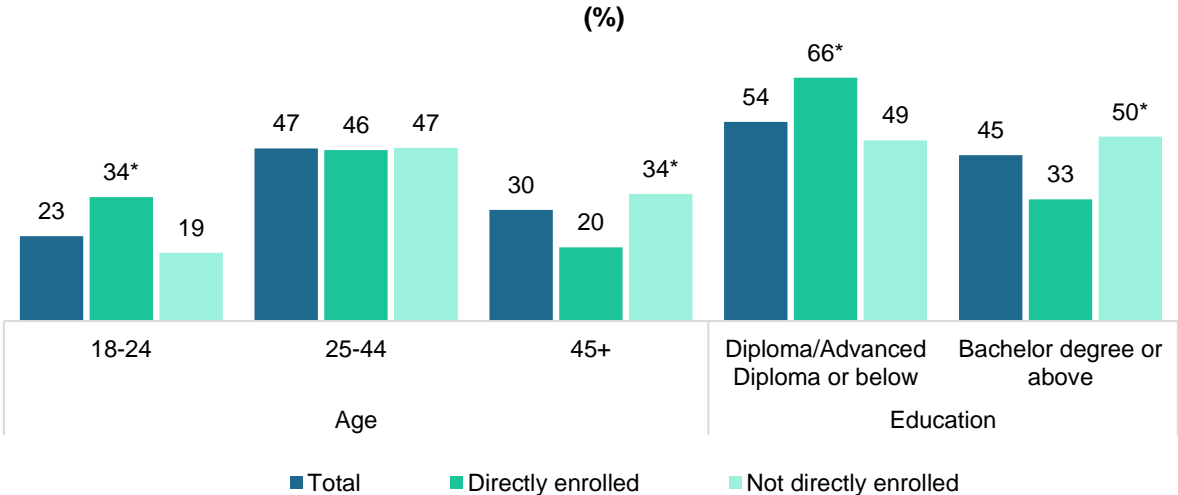
4.2.3. Further support those who are directly enrolled

One of the research objectives is to understand whether directly enrolled non-voters have different attitudes from other non-voters. As outlined in Section 3.1, non-voters who are directly enrolled are less interested and knowledgeable in Victorian State politics than those who are not. They are also less engaged with politics attitudinally (Section 3.2) and less likely to support being fined for not voting (see section 3.3). These results confirm that these two types of voters hold different attitudes.

The polarisation between this type of non-voter compared to those not directly enrolled indicates this there may be unique traits about this group that can be targeted to encourage voting. The following section examines this group in more detail.

The demographics that distinguish directly enrolled non-voters are age and education. Compared to those not directly enrolled, they are more likely to be aged 18 to 24 and less likely to be aged 45+; and are more likely to have an education level of Diploma/Advanced Diploma or below (see Figure 28).

Figure 28 Demographics of directly enrolled non-voters

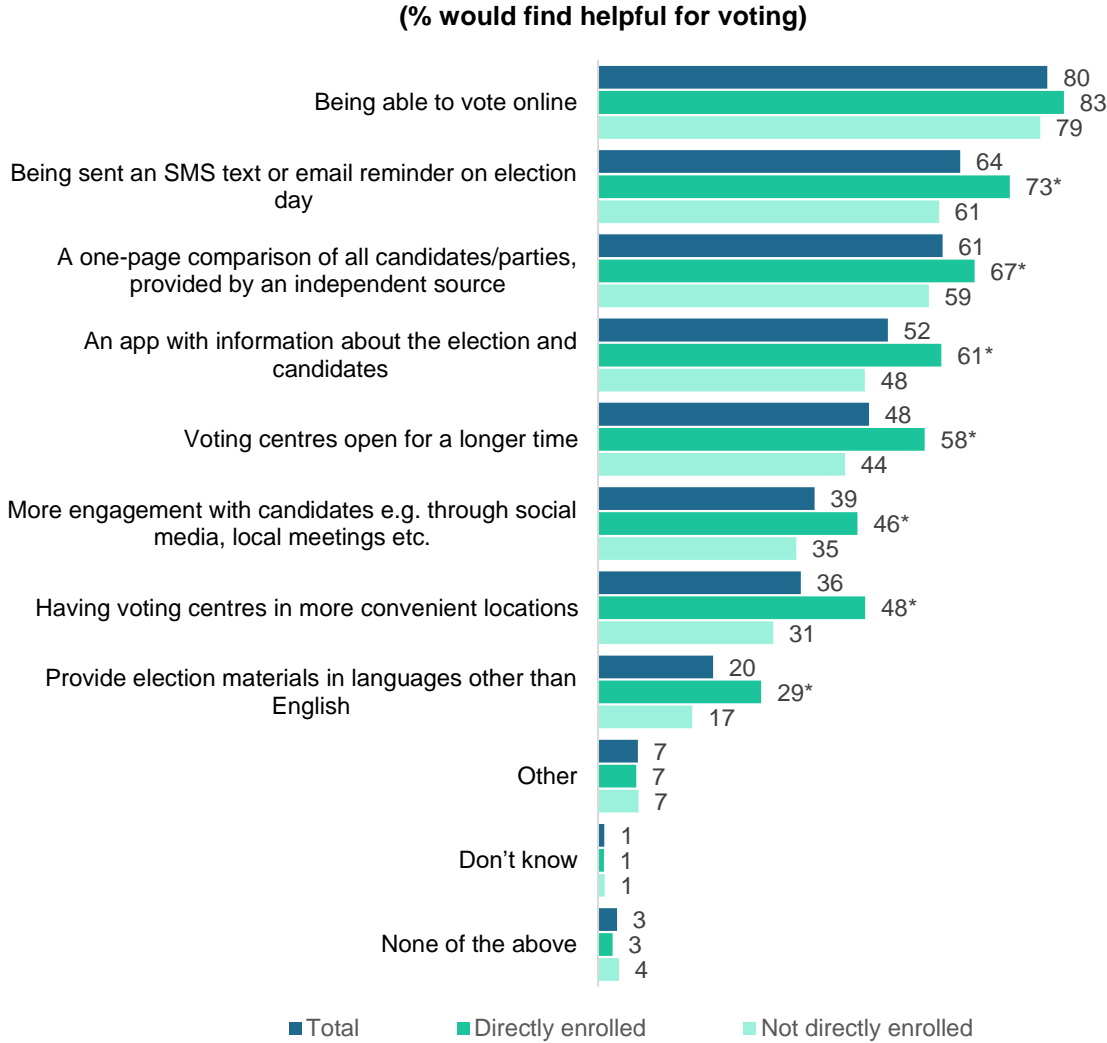


Note: 'Other', 'Don't know', and 'Prefer not say' results are not shown.
 Base: All respondents (n=999), Directly enrolled (n=326), Not directly enrolled (n=673)
 *Significantly different to other sub-group, at 95% confidence level.

As reported in Section 2.2, non-voters who were directly enrolled find it more difficult to vote across a wide variety of factors compared to those who were not directly enrolled. Aside from the widely popular initiative of online voting, directly enrolled non-voters are significantly more likely to find all the presented initiatives to assist in voting helpful compared to those who were not directly enrolled. These results indicate that this group of non-voters have more difficulties with voting, and would find value from any support with voting.

Figure 29 Initiatives that would assist voting in Victorian State elections – By directly enrolled non-voters

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



Base: All respondents (n=999), Directly enrolled (n=326), Not directly enrolled (n=673)
 *Significantly different other sub group, at 95% confidence level.

In summary, directly enrolled non-voters are more likely to be disengaged than non-voters who were not directly enrolled. Directly enrolled non-voters have more difficulties with voting than non-voters who were not directly enrolled and therefore will be more likely to benefit from initiatives that help with voting.

Appendix 1 Questionnaire

VEC Non-Voter Questionnaire 2020

Version 2 (Final) – 6 June 2020

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 the 2018 Victorian State election, but didn't vote in that election.

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 the 2018 Victorian State election, but didn't vote in that election.

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

*(ALL)

A1 Thinking now about the 2018 Victorian State election...

The records provided by the Victorian Electoral Commission indicate that you didn't vote in the 2018 Victorian State election. Please confirm that this sounds correct.

1. That sounds correct, **I don't think I voted** in the 2018 Victorian State election
2. That is incorrect, **I did vote** in the 2018 Victorian State election
3. I don't recall if I voted in the 2018 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 2018 Victorian State election?

(IF A1 = 3)

In your own words, please describe your reasons for why you may not have voted in the 2018 Victorian State election?

PROBE: Please enter as much detail as possible

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

IF A1 ≠ 1 OR 3 GO TO TERM1

*(ONLY SHOW IF FLAGGED IN SAMPLE AS VOTED2014 = 1)

A6 Now please think back to the 2014 Victorian State election. Was there anything different about the 2018 State election compared to 2014 that caused you not to vote?

1. Yes
2. No
98. (Don't know)

*(ONLY SHOW IF A6=1)

A7 What in particular about the 2018 State election ~~that~~ caused you not to vote?

PROBE: Please enter as much detail as possible

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

*(TIMESTAMP3)

B. STATE ELECTION VOTING

*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 the 2018 Victorian State election.

*(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
18. The issues that were important to me were not considered in the election

Other reasons

19. I had moved address and hadn't updated my details
20. Other (please specify)
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
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 or email 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)

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
D4

Currently people who are eligible to vote in Victorian State 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)

*ALL

D6 The next Victorian State election will be held in November 2022. In your own words, what would encourage you to vote in this next election?

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

*(TIMESTAMP6)

E. DEMOGRAPHICS

GEN, AGEYR & AGEGRP deleted

*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)

LOTE Do you speak a language other than English at home?

1. Yes
2. No
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: 1920-2020)
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 Approach to weighting

Overview

Sample surveys are a commonly used method for drawing inferences about a population based on responses from just a subset of it. Some units in the population may not have a chance of selection (for instance, persons without contact details), however, and there may be different rates of selection and response across unit characteristics. Many surveys therefore yield subsets that imperfectly cover their target populations despite the best possible sample design and data collection practices (Valliant *et al.*, 2013). In such situations, calculating weights for respondents can reduce the extent of any errors introduced through not being able to survey the whole population.

For the Survey of Non-Voters, our approach for deriving weights consisted of the following steps:

1. Compute a base weight for each respondent as the inverse of their chance of selection, accounting for the survey response rate.
2. Adjust the base weights so that they align with population distributions for several key characteristics.

The first step is essential in providing the statistical framework necessary for making population inferences from a sample survey. The second step accounts for non-response bias and ensures that survey estimates are consistent with population totals. Each step will now be covered in turn.

Base weights

At the time that non-voters were selected to take part in the survey, all cases were allocated to groups (strata) according to their age (18 to 24 years, 25 to 44 years, 45+ years), their non-voter type (Voted in 2014, New voter) and their enrolment mechanism (Directly enrolled, Other). Compared to just sampling from the population as a whole, selecting from strata in this way guarantees that each group of interest is represented in the survey.

The sampling strata are shown in Figure 30, along with the sizes of the population (A), selections (B) and respondents (D) for each. The selection weight (C) is the ratio of population to selections in each stratum. Dividing the selection weight by the response rate (E) yields the base weight (F). The base weights account for the different rates of selection and response across strata.

Adjusted weights

To ensure that estimates made from the dataset are representative of Victorian non-voters, the base weights were adjusted so that they align with the population distributions for key administrative parameters. The adjustment parameters were determined from a number of considerations:

- Which variables were used in the selection process?
- Which variables are most associated with the likelihood of response?
- Which variables are most associated with key outcome variables?
- Which variables were used for adjustment the last time the survey was conducted?

With these in mind, the following were used as adjustment variables for the 2020 survey:

- Age;

- Gender
- Non-voter type;
- Enrolment mechanism;
- Geographic location (SA4, derived from postcode)².

Population and responding distributions for these parameters are shown in Figure 31. As in the 2018 survey, the method of adjusting the base weights was raking (also known as rim-weighting or iterative proportional fitting). This method successively adjusts the weights, one variable at a time, with the adjustments from one step serving as the starting values for the next. When this process cycles through all variables a number of times, the adjustments no longer change, and the weights simultaneously match the population distributions of all included characteristics.

For more details on survey sampling and weighting, refer to Valliant *et al.* (2013).

Final comments

Mention should be made of the high proportion of cases (almost 30%) without any contact information and who consequently could not be selected to participate in the survey. The usual approach in survey research is to assume that persons who are selected and provide a survey response can be used to represent those who could not be selected or who did not respond (that is, the contact information is missing at random). Inasmuch as the reason for missing contact information is associated with characteristics unrelated to the adjustment characteristics, survey estimates may differ from those for the whole population (had we been able to select them).

References

Valliant, R., J. Dever, and F. Kreuter (2013). *Practical Tools for Designing and Weighting Survey Samples*. New York: Springer.

² There are large variations in response rate across Electorates so this would be an obvious candidate for use as an adjustment parameter. Given the occurrence of very low numbers of respondents in some Electorates, however, we would recommend that a higher level of geography be used to avoid undesirable variation and extremes in the weights.

Tables

Figure 30 Population, selected and responding sizes, by selection stratum

Stratum (Age x Voter type x Enrolment)	Population (A)	Selections (B)	Selection weight (C = A / B)	Respondents (D)	Response rate (%) (E = D / B * 100%)	Base weight (F = 100 * C / E)
18 to 24 years x Voted in 2014 x Direct enrolled	3175	3013	1.054	5	0.166	635.0
18 to 24 years x Voted in 2014 x Other	8047	7189	1.119	7	0.097	1149.6
18 to 24 years x New voter x Direct enrolled	12129	9563	1.268	77	0.805	157.5
18 to 24 years x New voter x Other	10480	10143	1.033	62	0.611	169.0
25 to 44 years x Voted in 2014 x Direct enrolled	20022	17304	1.157	156	0.902	128.3
25 to 44 years x Voted in 2014 x Other	44155	30164	1.464	284	0.942	155.5
45+ years x Voted in 2014 x Direct enrolled	6678	5305	1.259	88	1.659	75.9
45+ years x Voted in 2014 x Other	34356	15354	2.238	320	2.084	107.4
Total	139042	98035	-	999	-	-

Figure 31 Population distributions for adjustment characteristics, with responding distributions for comparison

Characteristic	Respondents (#)	Respondents (%)	Population (#)	Population (%)
Age group as at 2018-11-24				
18 to 24 years	151	15.12	33831	24.33
25 to 44 years	440	44.04	64177	46.16
45+ years	408	40.84	41034	29.51
Gender				
Male	511	51.15	75537	54.33
Female	488	48.85	63505	45.67
Direct enrolment status				
Direct enrolled	326	32.63	42004	30.21

Other	673	67.37	97038	69.79
Non-voter type				
Voted in 2014	860	86.09	116433	83.74
New voter	139	13.91	22609	16.26
SA4 (derived from postcode)				
Ballarat	33	3.30	3521	2.53
Bendigo	30	3.00	3477	2.50
Geelong	48	4.80	6335	4.56
Hume	28	2.80	3946	2.84
Latrobe - Gippsland	50	5.01	6283	4.52
Melbourne - Inner	159	15.92	17214	12.38
Melbourne - Inner East	68	6.81	8116	5.84
Melbourne - Inner South	78	7.81	8475	6.10
Melbourne - North East	76	7.61	11047	7.95
Melbourne - North West	52	5.21	9893	7.12
Melbourne - Outer East	82	8.21	10354	7.45
Melbourne - South East	97	9.71	17070	12.28
Melbourne - West	105	10.51	17366	12.49
Mornington Peninsula	47	4.70	7015	5.05
North West	19	1.90	3339	2.40
Shepparton	17	1.70	3138	2.26
Warrnambool and South West	10	1.00	2453	1.76
Total	999	100.00	139042	100.00