

# Motivations and Barriers: Exploring Voting Behaviour in British Columbia

January 2010



BCStats

## Executive Summary

Building on the *Post-Election Voter/Non-Voter Satisfaction Survey Executive Summary Report (Executive Summary Report)* released in August 2009, this report is an in-depth analysis focusing on voting behaviour in the 2009 provincial election in relation to previous voting behaviour. To achieve this end, five eligible voting profiles were established: Consistent Voters, 2005-only Voters, 2009-only Voters, Consistent Non-Voters, and Other Voters. These profiles are outlined in Table 1 (below).

**Table 1: Voting Profiles**

<i>Voter Type</i>	Were you eligible to vote and did you vote in the 2005 provincial election?	Did you vote in the May 12th (2009) provincial election?	Sample (Eligible Voters)	Registered Voters <sup>1</sup>	
			%	Count	%
Consistent Voters	Y	Y	40.5%	1,257,402	42.0%
2009-only Voters	N	Y	2.9%	393,073	13.1%
2005-only Voters	Y	N	26.7%	711,158	23.7%
Consistent Non-Voters	N	N	16.1%	633,829	21.2%
Other Voters	not eligible or "don't know"	either	13.9%	na	na

This report also highlights the motives and barriers to voting by examining the qualitative responses respondents provided when asked why they did or did not vote in the most recent provincial election (2009).

### Report Highlights:

#### *The majority intend to vote in 2013*

Even among voters who had voted in 2005 but not in 2009, the majority of respondents reported that they would likely<sup>2</sup> vote in the next election (68% of 2005-only Voters). When asked about future voting behaviour, Consistent Non-Voters were the only group wherein a large proportion (46%) indicated that it was unlikely that they would vote in the next provincial election.

<sup>1</sup> Note that the population breakdown is based on registered voters and the survey sample is based on eligible voters.

<sup>2</sup> These are respondents who answered either "5-Very likely" or "4" when asked, "based on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is "not at all likely" and 5 is "very likely" what is the likelihood that you will vote in the next provincial general election scheduled for May 2013?"

### ***Interest in the 2009 election was low, even among voters***

Compared to the other attitudinal questions that were asked in the survey, interest in the 2009 provincial election was low among all eligible voters – even Consistent Voters. Nearly one-quarter of all Consistent Voters indicated that they were either not interested or neutral about the most recent provincial election. Compared to this low interest in the provincial election (51%), interest in what is going on in politics was greater (63%) for all eligible voters regardless of voting behaviour.

### ***Knowledge of the process is not a major barrier***

The majority of all eligible voters agree with the statements, “I know what I need to do to vote in a provincial election” and “voting is easy”. As well, only 16% of the comments provided by respondents who didn’t vote in the 2009 election in response to the question, “What was the main reason you did not vote during the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election” included knowledge as the reason. Within the theme of knowledge, the majority of comments referred to a lack of knowledge about political parties and platforms rather than the process of voting. Knowledge is a more common barrier to voting among younger respondents (under 34 years of age) than older respondents.

### ***Non-Voters may be receiving inaccurate information about elections***

The Elections BC website is a common source of information for Consistent Voters but those who didn’t vote in the most recent election are more likely to have received their information about the election from *other* internet sources. This may have influenced the quality and accuracy of the information that these non-voters received.

### ***Personal Circumstances are a temporary barrier and engagement is a consistent barrier***

Respondents who didn’t vote in the 2009 election gave two main reasons for not voting in the most recent election: personal circumstances and engagement. Comments from 2005-only Voters were twice as likely as those from Consistent Non-Voters to suggest personal circumstances were their main reason for not voting. On the other hand, responses from Consistent Non-Voters were far more likely to indicate that engagement was the main barrier compared to comments from 2005-only Voters.

### ***Consistent Voters vote for a variety of reasons; 2009-only Voters care about the issues***

Compared to Consistent Voters, more comments from 2009-only Voters expressed issue-based reasons for voting; nearly half of the responses from this group indicated that it was particular issues raised in the campaign that motivated them to vote, compared to less than 40% of comments from Consistent Voters.

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## Post-Election Survey Detailed Analysis Report

Building on the *Post-Election Voter/Non-Voter Satisfaction Survey Executive Summary Report (Executive Summary Report)* released in August 2009, this report is an in-depth analysis focusing on voting behaviour in the 2009 provincial election in relation to previous voting behaviour.

Following the 2009 General Election, BC Stats administered the *2009 Post-Election Voter/Non-Voter Satisfaction Survey* on behalf of Elections BC. The survey had two goals:

1. to measure voters' satisfaction with the electoral process; and
2. To learn about non-voters (eligible voters who chose not to vote) and to identify barriers that may have hindered their participation in the electoral process.

For the detailed methodology of the Post-Election Voter/Non-Voter Satisfaction Survey see Appendix A.

This report examines the barriers that may have hindered participation in the electoral process by exploring the differences between those who voted in the 2009 general provincial election and those who didn't in terms of demographics, voting interests, attitudes about voting and politics, voting practices, exposure to Elections BC advertising and information, and stated reasons given for voting or not voting. The report consists of three main sections, each of which produces a more detailed analysis than that of the *Executive Summary Report*.

### Report Outline

- *Section A: Voting Profiles* explores five types of voters: Consistent Voters, 2009-only Voters, 2005-only Voters, Consistent Non-Voters and Other Voters. These voting profiles are used to situate different voting behaviours within demographic characteristics, attitudes about voting and politics, and exposure to Elections BC advertising and information.
- *Section B: Comment Analysis* explores the reasons eligible voters give for either voting or not voting in the 2009 election in light of their voting profile. Ten major themes are explored based on the responses to the key qualitative questions, "what was the main reason why you voted during the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election?" and "what was the main reason why you did NOT vote during the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election?". Respondents who didn't vote in the 2009 election in particular are highlighted through an analysis of their reasons for not voting and their responses to the question, "what, if anything, would encourage you to vote in the next provincial general election?". Exposure to Elections BC advertising is also cross-tabulated with reasons given for not voting.
- *Section C: Comments* provides detailed examples of the verbatim comments provided for the two key qualitative questions as well as an overall demographic analysis for each of the main comment themes.
- *Section D: Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Research.*

## Section A: Voting Profiles

The following section explores five typologies of voting behaviour. These profiles are used to compare different voting behaviours over time with perceptions about voting and elections and exposure to EBC advertising and information.

### Voting Past and Present

Every eligible voter has a voting history; they may or may not have voted in previous elections. Previous voting behaviour largely determines present (and future) voting behaviour; 93% of respondents who reported voting in the 2009 general provincial election also voted in the 2005 provincial election.

Based on the findings of the *2009 Elections BC Voter/Non-Voter Satisfaction Survey* as well as the findings of a demographic analysis of those who did and did not vote during the 2009 election using Elections BC administrative data, five eligible voting profiles were established:

1. Consistent Voters: respondents who reported having voted in both the 2005 and 2009 elections;
2. 2005-only Voters: those who voted in 2005 but not in 2009;
3. 2009-only Voters: those who did not vote in 2005 but did in 2009;
4. Consistent Non-Voters: those who did not vote in 2005 or 2009; and
5. Other Voters: respondents who were either not eligible to vote in 2005 or answered “don’t know” when asked if they voted in the 2005 election.

The details of these profiles are illustrated in the table below (**Table 2**).

**Table 2: Voting Profiles**

Voter Type	Were you eligible to vote and did you vote in the 2005 provincial election?	Did you vote in the May 12th (2009) provincial election?	Sample (Eligible Voters)	Registered Voters <sup>3</sup>	
			%	Count	%
Consistent Voters	Y	Y	40.5%	1,257,402	42.0%
2009-only Voters	N	Y	2.9%	393,073	13.1%
2005-only Voters	Y	N	26.7%	711,158	23.7%
Consistent Non-Voters	N	N	16.1%	633,829	21.2%
Other Voters	not eligible or "don't know"	either	13.9%	na	na

<sup>3</sup> Note that the population breakdown is based on registered voters and the survey sample is based on eligible voters.

Consistent Voters make up 41% of the total sample. As shown in Table 2, the survey sample fairly accurately represented the actual behaviour of eligible voters (42%) as found in administrative data provided by Elections BC.

Those who voted only in 2009 make up only 3% of the total sample. This group is under-represented in the survey sample compared to the actual eligible voter population in BC (13%).

Respondents who voted in 2005 but not in 2009, account for 27% of the total sample. This group is over-represented in the survey sample in comparison to the voting behaviour of the eligible voter population in BC (24%).

Consistent Non-Voters make up only 16% of the total sample. Consistent Non-Voters accounted for 21% of the eligible voter population in BC. The discrepancy between the proportion of Consistent Non-Voters in the survey sample and in the BC population may be in part because of a social desirability bias wherein respondents tend to answer in a manner that will be viewed favourably by others (in this case, not admitting that they did not vote) or because non-voters decline when asked to participate in a survey about voting.

Other Voters make up 14% of the total sample. Seventy-six percent of this group did not vote in the 2009 election, and 24% voted in the 2009 provincial election. Just under 10% of all respondents indicated that they were not eligible to vote in the 2005 election and 4% answered “don’t know” when asked about their voting behaviour in 2005.

## Demographic Analysis of Voting Profiles

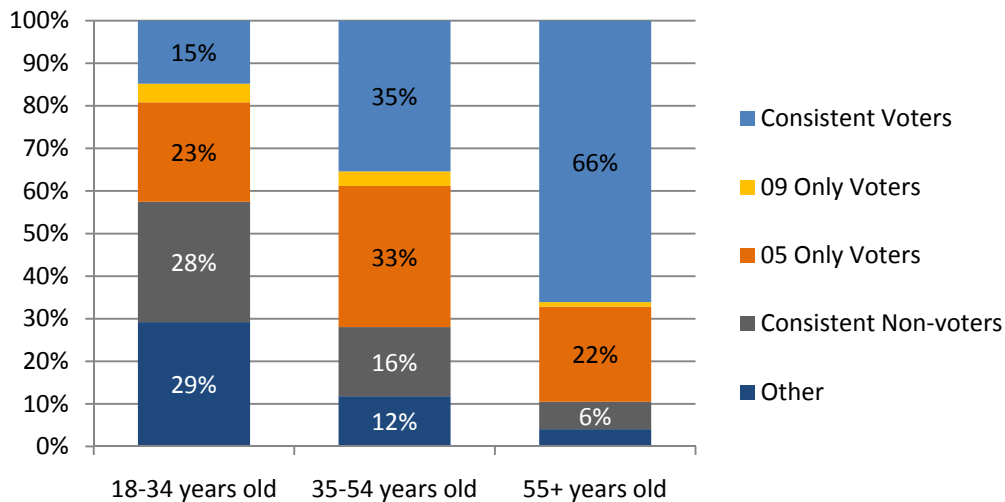
The following section looks at the demographic breakdown for the five voting profiles.

### Age

Younger respondents are less likely to be Consistent Voters and more likely to be 2009-only Voters. Approximately one-quarter (between 22% and 33%) of all respondents were 2005-only Voters, regardless of age. Less than 10% of all those who voted in the 2009 election over 55 years old were Consistent Non-Voters and nearly two-thirds were Consistent Voters.

Over one-quarter (29%) of respondents under 35 years of age were Other Voters; either they were not eligible to vote in 2005 or answered “don’t know” when asked whether they voted in 2005.<sup>4</sup> These Other Voters made up over half of all respondents under 24 years of age but less than 5% of the respondents over the age of 55.

Figure 1: Age by Voting Profile<sup>5</sup>



<sup>4</sup> The “Other” category, including respondents who either were not eligible to vote in 2005 or answered “don’t know” when asked if they voted in 2005, are excluded from the remaining demographic analysis because they make up a small proportion of the total sample.

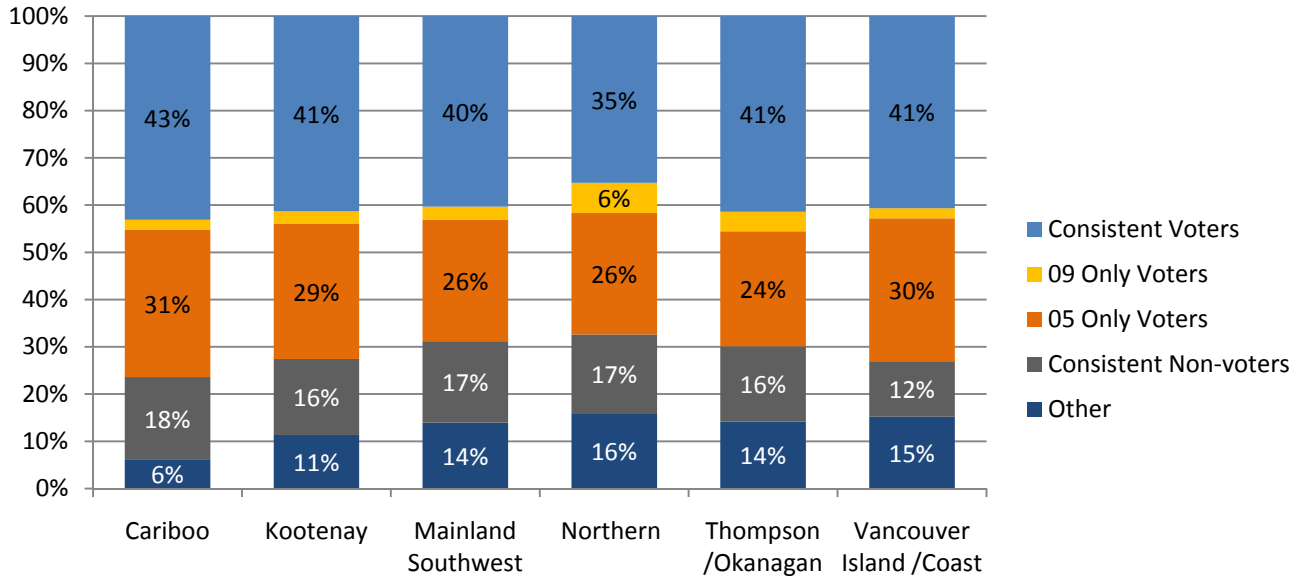
<sup>5</sup> Percentages less than 5% are not labelled in the figures in this report.



### Health Region

The Cariboo Region has the highest proportion of Consistent Voters and the lowest proportion (6%) of Other Voters. Those who only voted in 2005 (2005-only Voters), range from 24% in the Thompson/Okanagan Region to 31% in the Cariboo Region. Voters who only voted in 2009 make up a small proportion of the sample but are a somewhat larger proportion in the Northern Region compared to other regions.

Figure 2: Region by Voting Profile

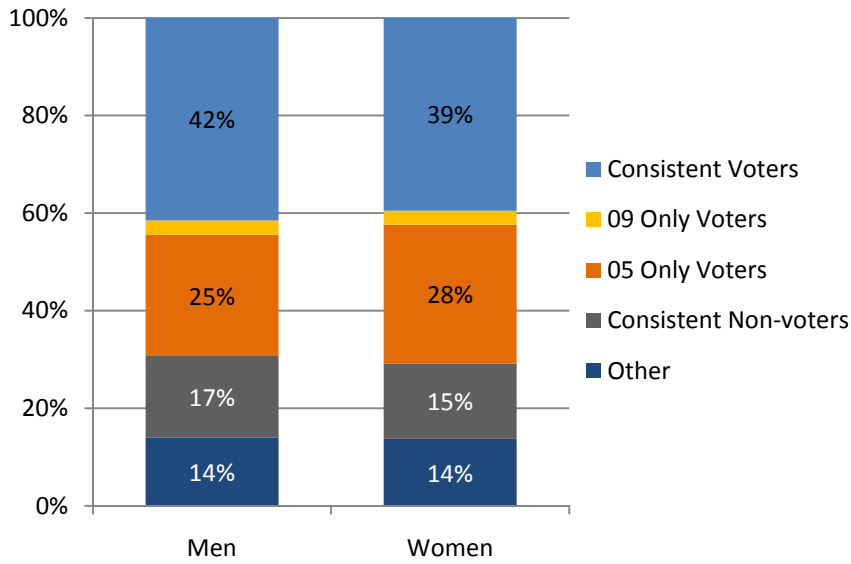


The region with the smallest proportion of Consistent Voters is the Northern Region (35%). However, this region also has the highest proportion of 2009-only Voters. If the trend of new voters continues, the Northern Region may match the other regions in Consistent Voters (voted twice over two consecutive elections) following the 2013 election.

**Gender**

Women are slightly less likely than men to be Consistent Voters or Consistent Non-Voters and slightly more likely to be 2005-Only Voters.

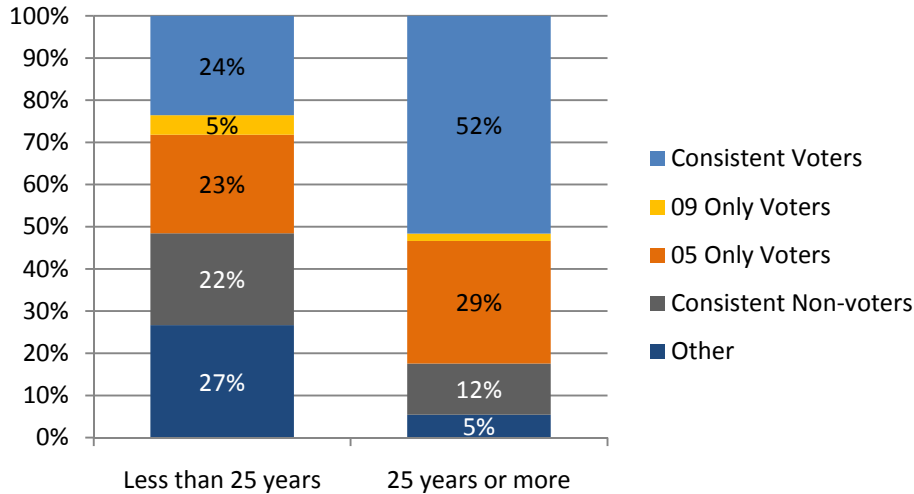
**Figure 3: Gender by Voting Profile**



### Years in BC

Years in BC is strongly related to years of age. As such, it is not surprising that those who have lived in BC less than 25 years were more likely to be Consistent Non-Voters due to the strong relationships between age and voting behaviour as well as age and residency. Over one-quarter of respondents who had lived in BC less than 25 years were not eligible to vote in 2005 or reported that they did not know if they voted in the 2005 election.

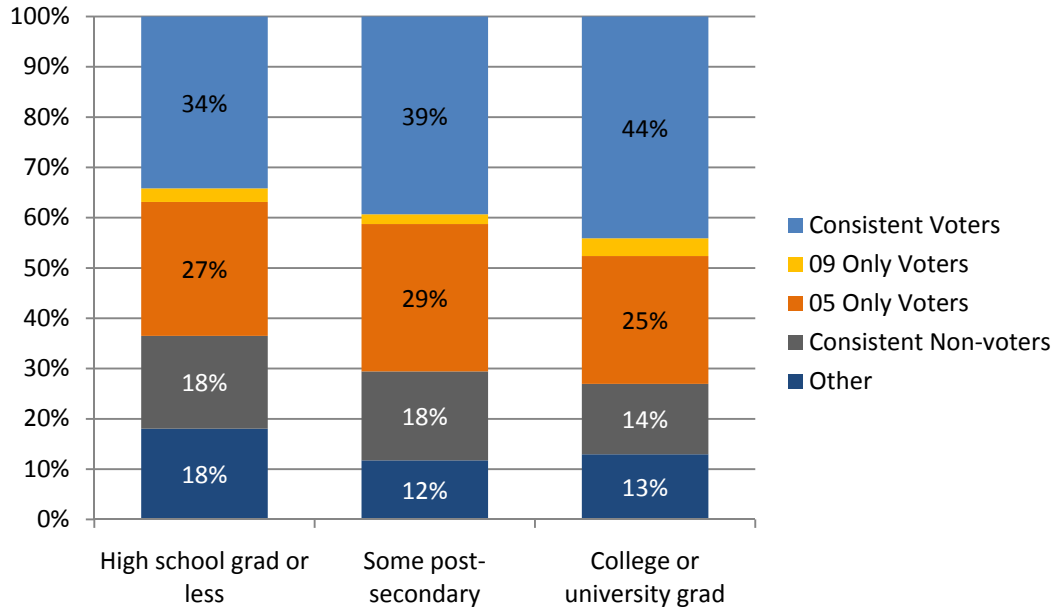
**Figure 4: Years in BC by Voting Profile**



### Highest Level of Education

Consistent voting ranged from 34% for respondents with high school graduation or less to 44% for those whose highest education level was college or university. Those with high school graduation or less had the highest proportion of “Other” voters. This is likely due to the large proportion of respondents who were too young to be eligible to vote in the 2005 election. No other statistically significant differences were found between respondents of differing education levels.

Figure 5: Education by Voting Profile



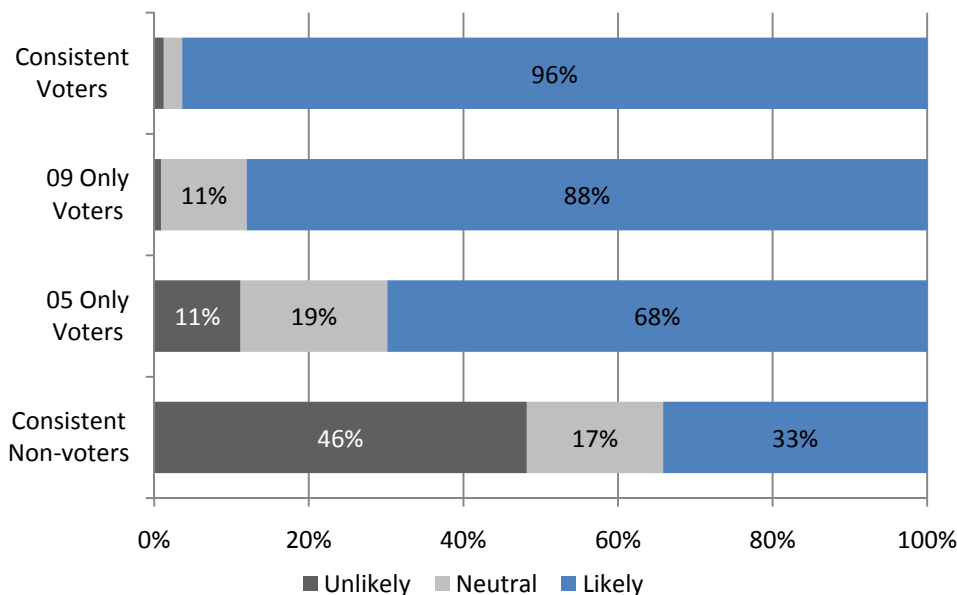
## Perceptions about Voting and Politics

The following section explores the five voting profiles by voting intentions and attitudes about voting and politics.

### Voting Intentions

Voting intentions seem to be related to past voting behaviour. The vast majority of Consistent Voters, those who had voted in both the previous elections (2005 and 2009), reported that they would likely vote in the next provincial election (96%). 2009-only Voters were the second most likely to indicate that they would likely vote in the 2013 election (88%). Two-thirds of 2005-only Voters claimed that they would likely vote in the next provincial election (68%). Only 33% of Consistent Non-Voters reported that they would likely vote in the 2013 election and nearly half indicated that it was **unlikely** that they would be at the polls in 2013. It is likely that a social desirability bias is at play among respondents, particularly consistent non-voters. The phrase, social desirability bias refers to the tendency of survey participants to respond in the manner that will be viewed most favourably by others, that is, over-report positive behaviour and un-report behaviour that is controversial or could be perceived negatively<sup>6</sup>. It is likely that a portion of the 33% of Consistent Non-voters who claimed they would likely vote in the 2013 election were providing an inaccurate answer that they believed was the most desirable answer. When social desirability bias among the Consistent Non-voters is accounted for, it appears that Consistent Voters and Consistent Non-voters are strongly committed to their voting behaviours.

Figure 6: What is the likelihood that you will vote in the next provincial general election?



<sup>6</sup> Stockdale, J. D et al. (2008). Same Respondents, Same Questions; Different Modes, *Different Responses*. *RTI International* (Presented at the AAPOR 2008, New Orleans, LA, May 2008). Retrieved February 15, 2010 from <http://www.amstat.org/sections/srms/Proceedings/y2008/Files/stockdale.pdf>.

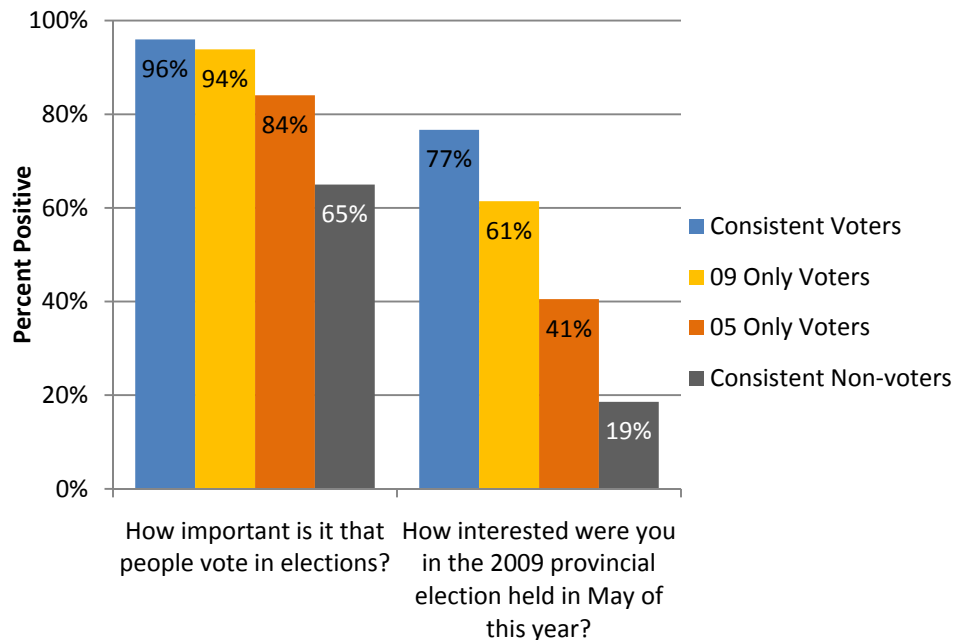
### Interest and Importance

Not surprisingly, the vast majority (96%) of Consistent Voters feel it is important that people vote in elections. Of note, however, is that although in smaller proportion, the majority of Consistent Non-Voters also agree that it is important for people to vote (65%).

For eligible voters who changed their voting behaviour in 2009 (2005-only Voters and 2009-only Voters), the majority of both groups feel that it is important that people vote in elections (84% and 94% respectively). In fact, 2005-only Voters are more similar to Consistent Voters than Consistent Non-Voters when it comes to rating the importance of voting.

Regardless of perceptions about the importance of voting, those who are interested in elections are more likely to vote. More than three-quarters (77%) of Consistent Voters reported that they were interested<sup>7</sup> in the 2009 election, compared to 19% of Consistent Non-Voters. As shown in Figure 7, 61% of 2009-only Voters reported being interested in the 2009 election, yet they voted. 2005-only Voters were 20 percentage points less interested in the election than 2009-only Voters.

Figure 7: Interest and Importance by Voting Profile



<sup>7</sup> These respondents answered either “5” or “4” on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is “not at all interested” and 5 is “very interested”.

### Attitudes about Voting and Elections

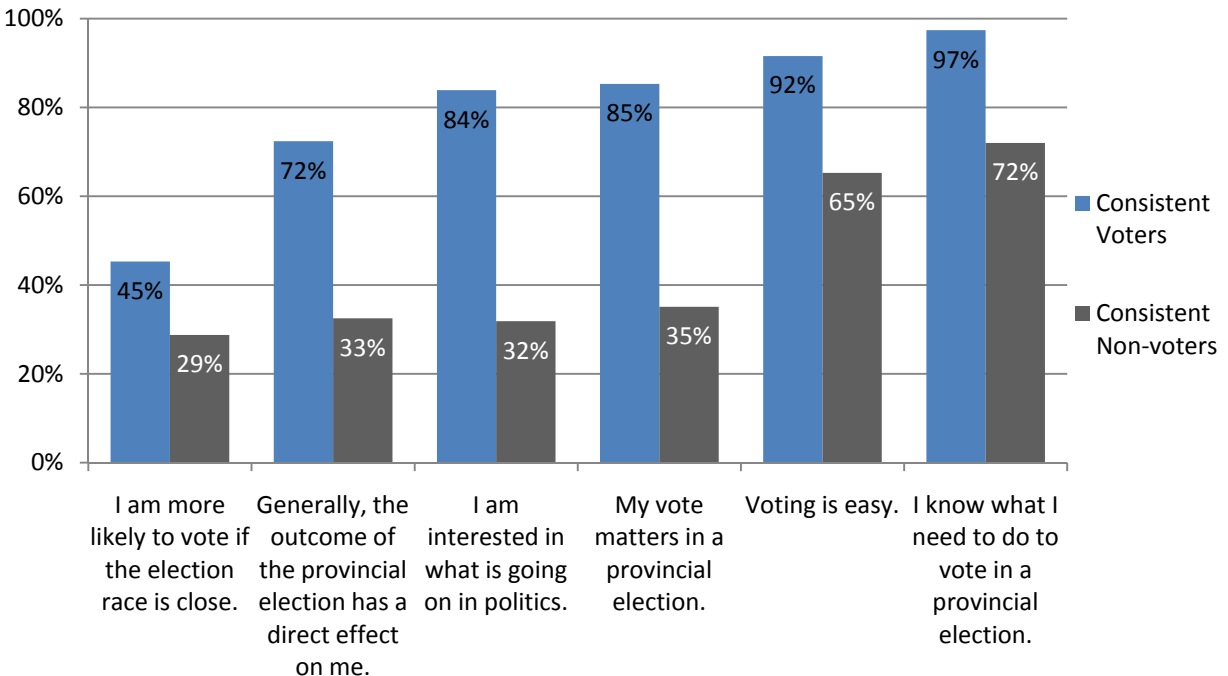
Overall, Consistent Voters and Consistent Non-Voters have the most extreme and divergent attitudes about voting and elections. Respondents with inconsistent voting behaviours (2005-only and 2009-only Voters) had more similarities in their opinions about voting, and responses from these groups tended to fall between Consistent Voters and Consistent Non-Voters.

Fewer than half of all respondents, regardless of voting history, said that they would be more likely to vote in an election if the race was close (45% of Consistent Voters and 29% of Consistent Non-Voters)<sup>8</sup>.

The majority of Consistent Voters had positive perceptions about voting and elections while significantly fewer Consistent Non-Voters had similarly positive perspectives. For example, where 72% of Consistent Voters agreed that “generally, the outcome of the provincial election has a direct effect on me”, only 33% of Consistent Non-Voters agreed with the same statement. The range between Consistent Voters and Consistent Non-Voters with regard to the statements, “I am interested in what is going on in politics” and “My vote matters in provincial elections” was over 50% in both cases.

The majority of Consistent Non-Voters agreed with the statements “voting is easy” and “I know what to do to vote in a provincial election” (65% and 72% respectively) however these proportions remained well below that of Consistent Voters.

**Figure 8: Agreement with Statements about Voting and Elections by Consistent Voters and Non-Voters**

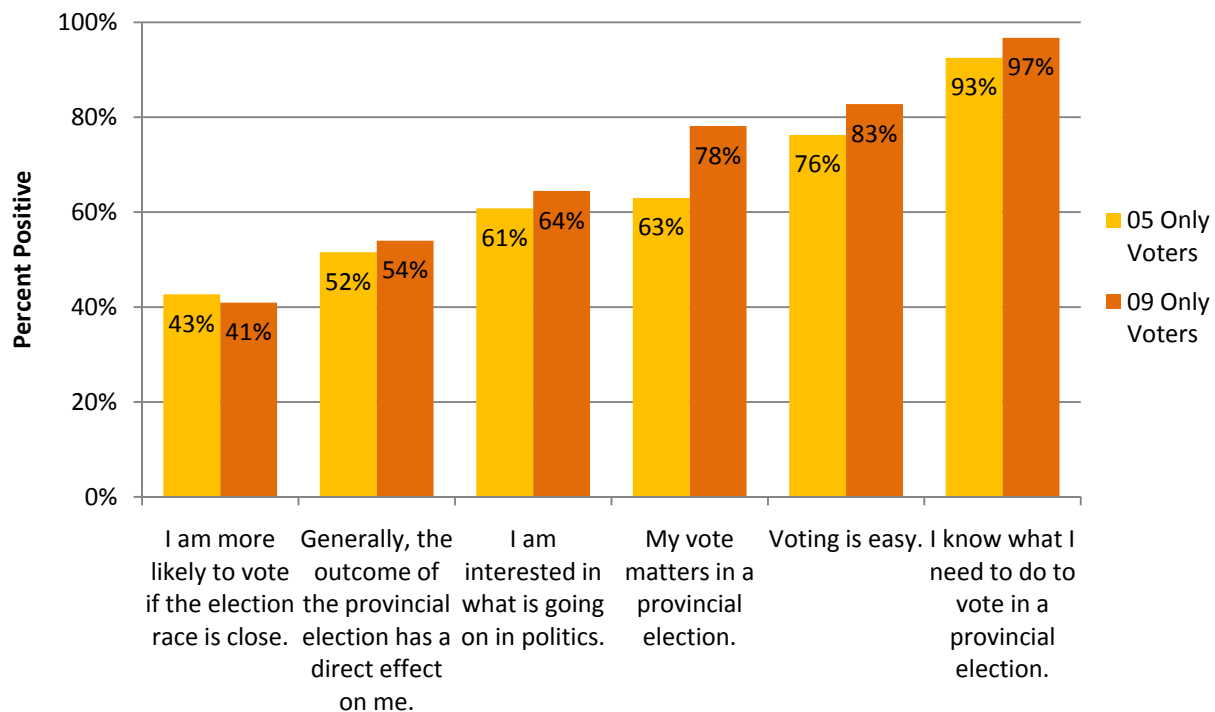


<sup>8</sup> This contradicts research reported in, “Who Heads to the Polls? Exploring Voting Demographics in British Columbia” written by BC Stats for Elections BC (March 2010).

As shown in Figure 9, 2009-only Voters and 2005-only Voters have surprisingly similar perspectives about voting and elections. When asked a series of agreement questions about their perspectives, for the most part 2009-only Voters and 2005-only Voters had similar opinions (within 4 percentage points of each other). The two statements where there was some difference between the groups were, “My vote matters in a provincial election”, and “Voting is easy”. Nearly 80% of 2009-only Voters agreed that their vote matters in a provincial election, compared to 63% of 2005-only Voters (a difference of 15 percentage points). Similarly, more 2009-only Voters agreed that “voting is easy” than 2005-only Voters.

For the statement, “my vote matters in a provincial election”, 2005-only Voters are more similar to Consistent Voters than to Consistent Non-Voters. Compared to only 35% of Consistent Non-Voters, 63% of 2005-only Voters agree that their “vote matters in a provincial election”. This suggests that while 2005-only Voters chose not to vote in the most recent election they have not disengaged from the electoral process as much as respondents who chose not to vote in both the 2005 and 2009 elections.

**Figure 9: Agreement with Statements about Voting and Elections by 2005-only and 2009-only Voters**



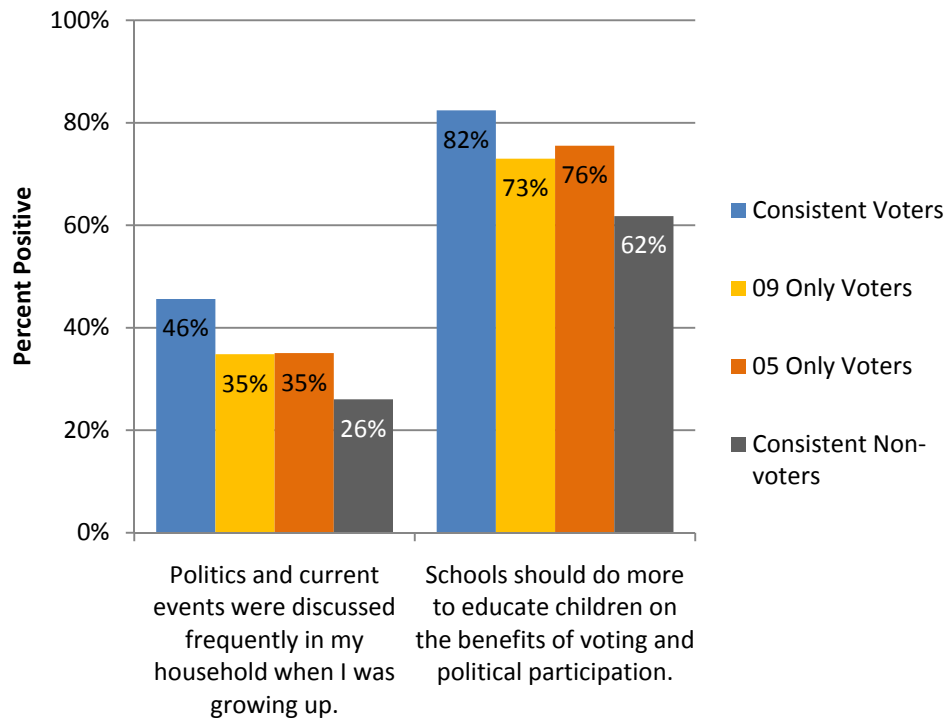


### Attitudes about Voting and Education

When asked if politics and current events were discussed frequently in their household growing up, Consistent Voters were 20 percentage points more likely to agree with the statement than were Consistent Non-Voters, while 2005-only and 2009-only Voters fell between the two.

Similarly, there was a 20 percentage point divide between Consistent Voters and Consistent Non-Voters in their agreement with the statement, “schools should do more to educate children on the benefits of voting and political participation”. The difference between 2005-only Voters and 2009-only Voters with regard to this statement is minimal.

Figure 10: Agreement with Statements about Politics and Education by Voting Profile



## Exposure to Elections BC Advertising and Information by Voting Profiles

Respondents were asked, “In the weeks leading up to the election, did you see, hear or read any Elections BC information or advertising from the following sources?” Respondents were read a list of choices and were able to choose as many responses as were applicable. The following section examines exposure to Elections BC information and advertising across voting behaviours.

**Table 3: Elections BC Advertising**

In the weeks leading up to the election, did you see, hear, or read any Elections BC information or advertising from the following sources?	Percent
TV	73%
Newspaper	67%
'Where to Vote' info card	63%
Enumeration notice	60%
Radio	55%
Information flyer	52%
Elections BC website	14%
Other Internet source	13%
Movie ads	8%
Facebook	7%
Other	4%
Did not see, Hear or Read Anything from EBC	4%

\* percentages add up to more than 100 due to multiple responses allowed per respondent

### *Elections BC Ads by Voter Type*

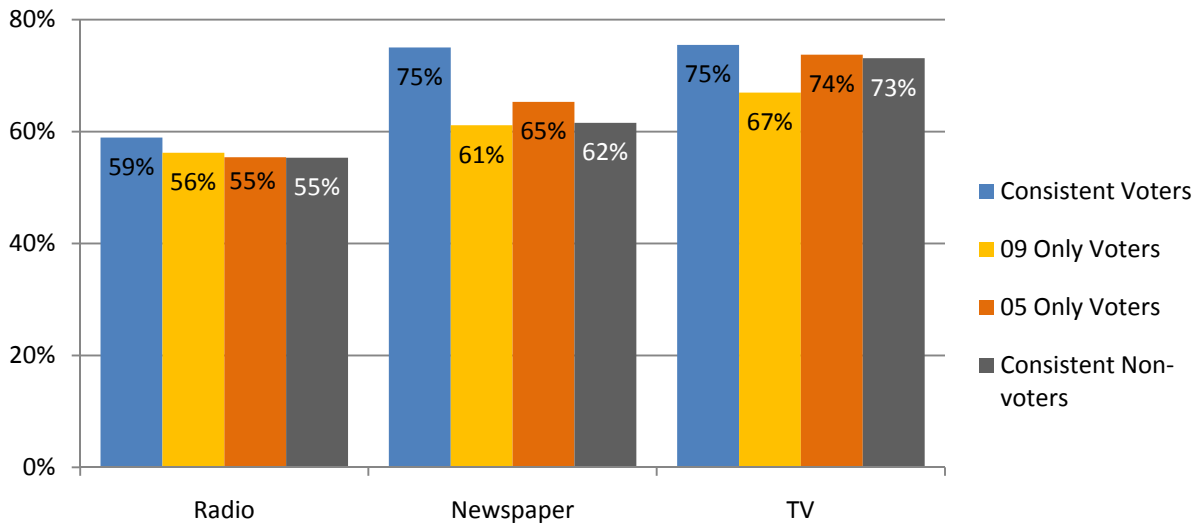
Over three-quarters of respondents reported that they had seen or heard three or more types of Elections BC (EBC) advertising. TV advertisements were the most common source, followed by newspaper, and then direct information from EBC including the yellow “where to vote” card and enumeration notices. For the sake of analysis, EBC advertising and information can be categorized into 3 main types: media<sup>9</sup> (including TV, newspaper and radio), direct EBC information (including ‘where to vote’ information cards, enumeration notices and information flyers), and finally Internet sources (this includes the Elections BC website, Facebook and other internet sources). Figures 11, 12 and 13 present the proportions within each voting type who saw particular types of EBC advertising or information (media, direct information, and internet sources).

<sup>9</sup> Movie ads are excluded due to small sample size.

### ***EBC Media Advertising***

As shown in Figure 11, 2009-only Voters are the type of voters least likely to have seen EBC ads in the newspaper or on TV. Consistent Voters were the most likely to have seen EBC advertising in the newspaper or on TV. Less than 10% of respondents, regardless of voting behaviour, saw EBC information or advertisements at the movies.

**Figure 11: Percent who saw, heard or read Media Advertising from EBC prior to the Election, by Voting Profiles**

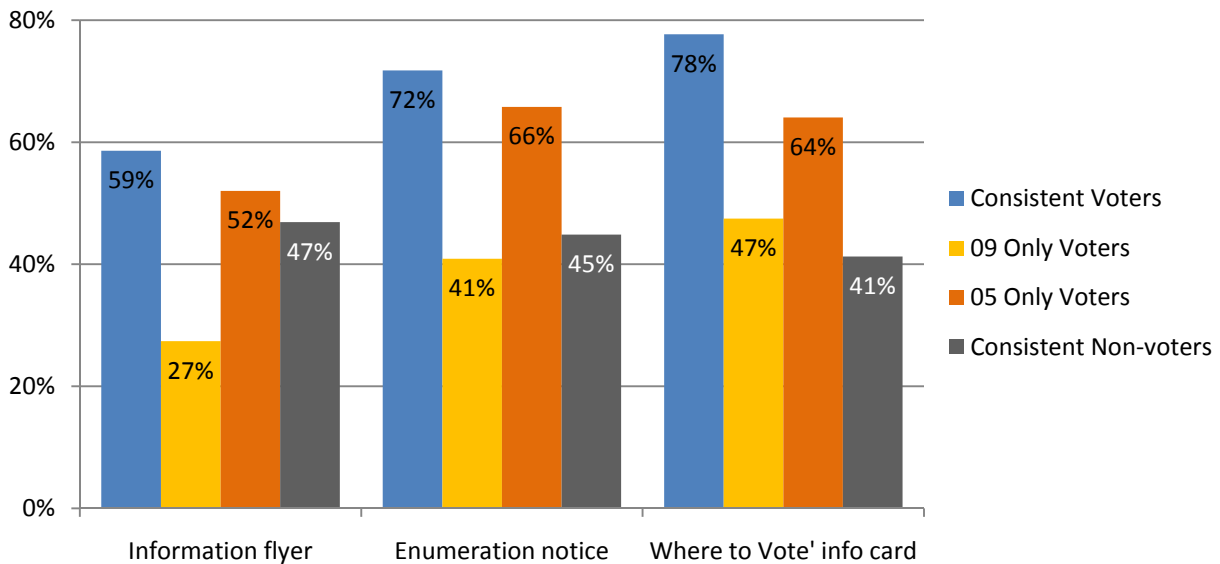


### Direct EBC Advertising or Information

Respondents were asked which types of EBC advertising or information they saw or heard in the weeks leading up to the election. Direct Elections BC information included information flyers, enumeration notices and 'where to vote' information cards. Within the survey sample, 2005 voting behaviour is the key indicator of whether respondents received direct information from Elections BC. This may be because those who voted in 2005 would have provided EBC with updated contact information at the polling station or through voter registration; as such, 2005-only Voters were more likely to have received information from Elections BC than 2009-only Voters.

Although EBC ensures that all registered voters are sent Election information material, some of the non-voting respondents may not have been registered to vote in either the 2005 or 2009 election. Fewer than half of all Consistent Non-Voters and 2009-only Voters reported receiving direct information from EBC, this may suggest that if these groups decided to vote in future elections, they may experience further barriers if they are not registered to vote or the address information EBC has for them is not accurate.

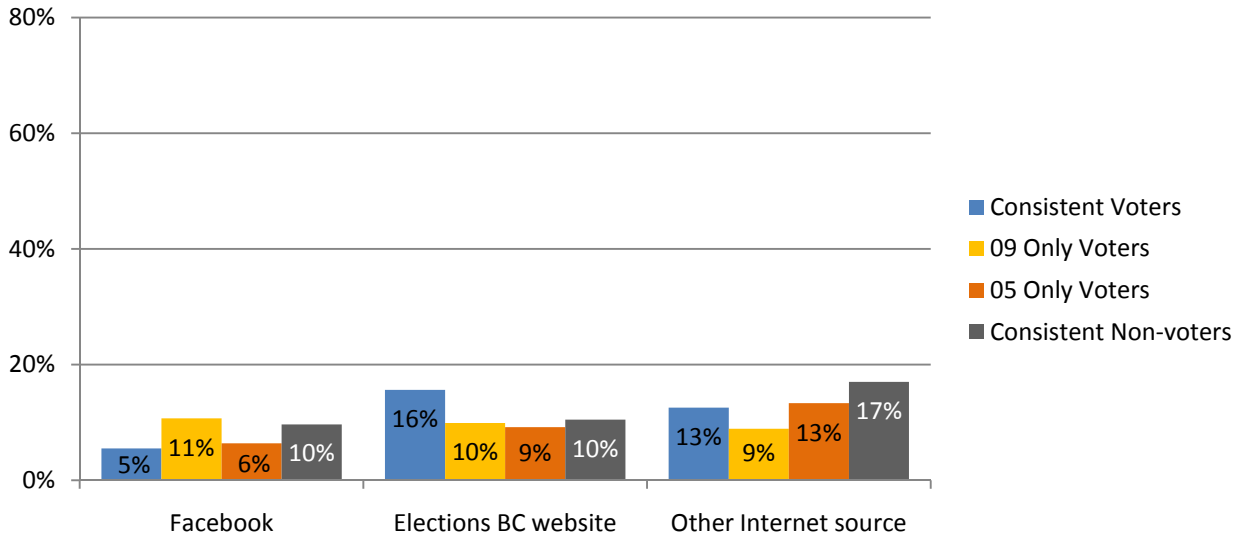
Figure 12: Percent who saw or read Direct EBC Information prior to the Election, by Voting Profile



### *EBC Advertising from Internet Sources*

Consistent Voters are the most likely of the groups to have obtained information or advertising from the Elections BC website (16%). Consistent Non-Voters and 2009-only Voters were the most likely to have accessed EBC information on Facebook (10% and 11% respectively). Nearly 20% of Consistent Non-Voters accessed elections information from an internet source other than the EBC website, which may have influenced the quality and accuracy of the information they obtained.

**Figure 13: Percent who saw or read Internet Sources prior to the Election, by Voting Profiles**



## Section B: Comment Analysis by Voting Profile

Eligible voters provided many reasons for why they decided whether or not to vote on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009. This section uses the voting profiles in analyzing these reasons eligible voters gave for their 2009 voting behaviour.

### Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative results (the answers provided to open-ended questions) were read and coded (categorized) into one or more minor themes. After all the comments were coded, the minor themes were grouped into broader aggregate themes. This thematic analysis serves as a descriptive tool that can be used in conjunction with the quantitative data. However, care should be taken when generalizing the qualitative results to the study population. This is due, in part, to the fact that the unit of qualitative analysis is the comment – not the respondent. Many respondents provided comments which were coded into multiple themes. Further, the absence of a comment does not imply that a particular theme is irrelevant or not applicable; rather, the thematic analysis serves to represent only those who took the time to provide information. The analysis of comments serves to highlight the quantitative findings and assists in their interpretation.

## Comments by Respondents who Voted in the 2009 Provincial Election

Eligible voters were asked to provide the main reason why they voted during the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election. Although the question specifically asked for the *main* reason, many respondents provided more than one reason and all reasons were coded.

**Table 4: What was the main reason why you voted during the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election?<sup>10</sup>**

<i>Because of ...</i>	<b>(n=677)</b>
The issues	39%
It is my responsibility	28%
I believe in democracy	28%
Other	6%
<i>Total number of comments</i>	773

People vote for a variety of reasons. Some vote to support a particular party or candidate, others feel it is their responsibility and others vote to exercise their civic rights. Table 4 outlines the main reasons individuals gave for voting. More than one-third of the reasons given had to do with the issues or the desire to support a particular political agenda. Another 28% of the comments provided by respondents who voted in the 2009 election indicated a feeling of responsibility or duty. That is, voting was emphasized as something that “should” be done rather than something voters did because of their political beliefs. Over one quarter (28%) of the reasons given were democracy-based or rights-based explanations.

Compared to the large number of Consistent Voters surveyed, 2009-only Voters make up only a small proportion of the sample (2.9% were 2009-only voters while 40.5% were Consistent Voters). 2009-only Voters accounted for only 41 of the total responses in the survey. As such, caution should be taken when comparing these two groups or making generalizations about 2009-only Voters. Due to the small sample size of 2009-only Voters, only the major comment themes for this group are analyzed in the sections below.

The reasons eligible voters gave for voting vary depending on their voting type. Less than four in ten (36%) of the comments from Consistent Voters suggested that issues were why they voted, while the comments provided by 2009-only Voters were more issue-based (63% of the comments from 2009-only Voters). Examples of these reasons include: *wanting to support a candidate or party, being concerned about specific issues, wanting change, voting against a candidate or party, having an opinion on electoral reform, or simply caring about the outcome.*

The comments provided by Consistent Voters were almost equally divided between issue-based, democracy-based and responsibility-based reasons (36%, 29% and 29% of the comments

<sup>10</sup> Percentages reported in this table are calculated out of the total number of responses rather than the total number of respondents. Many respondents provided comments which were coded into multiple categories.

respectively). Democracy-based reasons for voting included: “it’s my right”, “I wanted to have my voice heard” or, “I wanted to protect democracy,” and accounted for 15% of the comments provided by 2009-only Voters. Responsibility-based reasons such as “it’s my duty”, “it’s important” or, “if you don’t vote you can’t complain,” made up 17% of the comments provided by 2009-only Voters.

**Figure 14: Reasons for Voting in the 2009 Provincial Election by Voting Profiles**

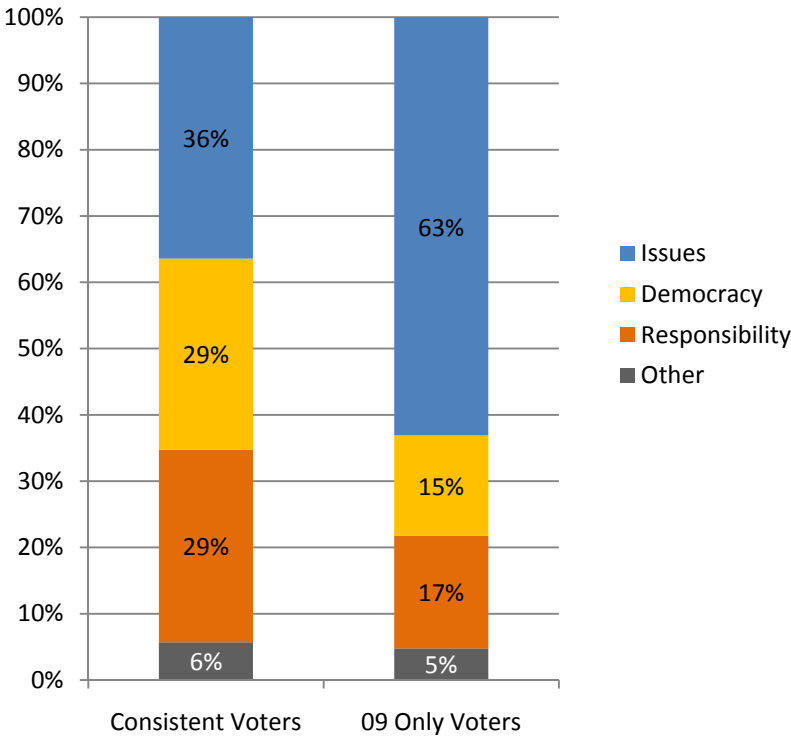
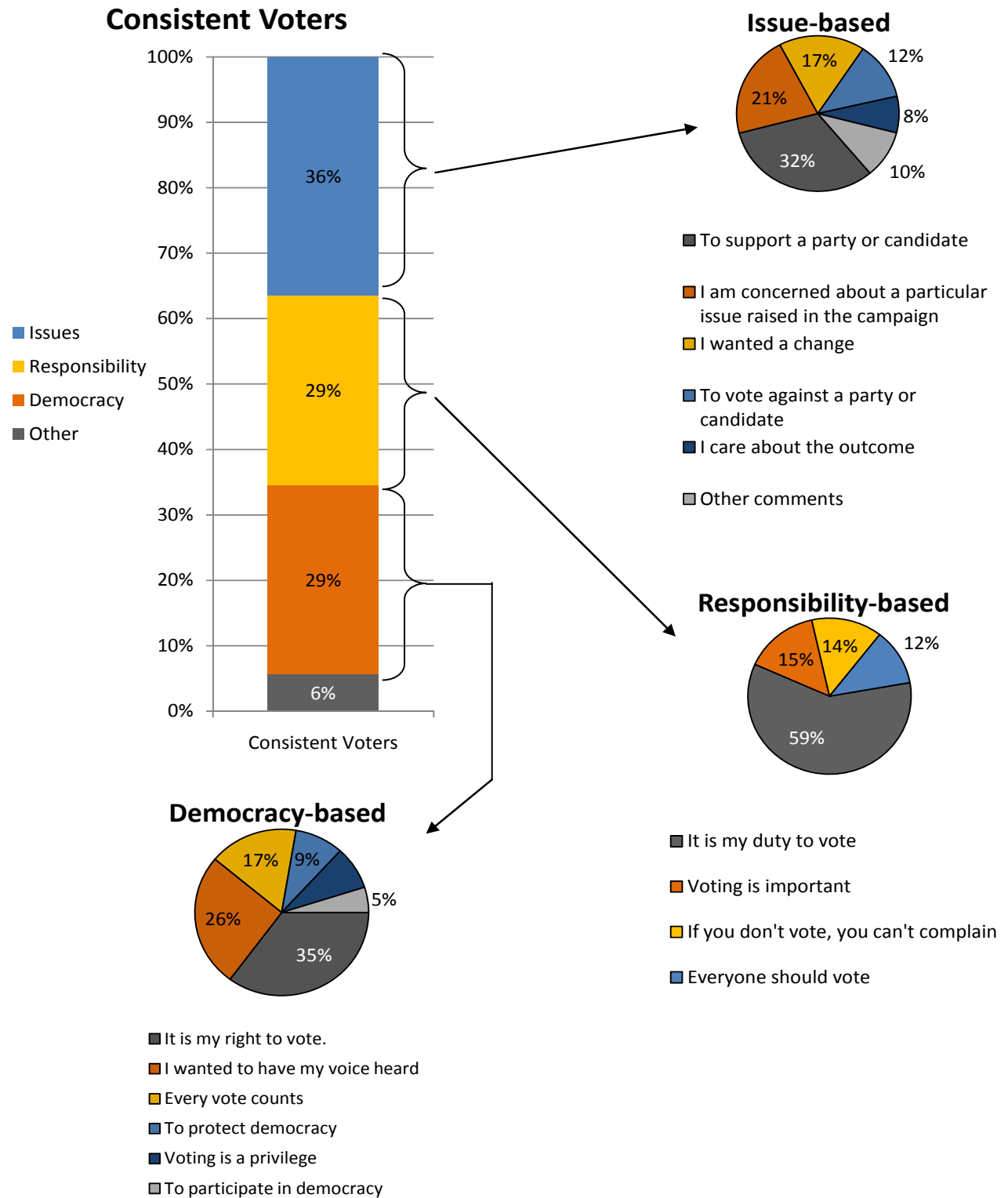


Figure 15 details the minor themes of responses provided to the question, “what was the main reason why you voted during the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election?” for Consistent Voters.



Figure 15: What was the MAIN reason why you voted during the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election?



### ***Issue-based Voting***

The top two issue-based reasons provided by Consistent Voters were to support a party or candidate or because of a particular issue raised in the campaign. Nearly half of the comments from Consistent Voters stated that they were supporting a party or candidate or were concerned about a campaign issue, while 17% suggested that they voted because they wanted change, and 8% of the comments indicated that the respondent cared about the outcome of the election.

Twelve percent of the comments provided by Consistent Voters were related to voting against a party or candidate. Very few (3%) of the comments from Consistent Voters mentioned their opinions on Electoral Reform as one of the main reasons they voted in the 2009 election.

### ***Responsibility-based Voting***

A large proportion of the comments within the responsibility theme referred to voting as a duty (59% of those provided by Consistent Voters). "Voting is important" was a sentiment prevalent in 15% of the responsibility-based comments from Consistent Voters. Fourteen percent of the comments from Consistent Voters referred to a general position that, "if you don't vote, you can't complain".

### ***Democracy-based Voting***

Within the comments provided for democracy-based voting, 35% of those provided by Consistent Voters related to voting being a right, 26% suggested that they wanted to have their voices heard, and 17% of the comments suggested that "every vote counts". Whereas responsibility-based reasons for voting emphasized the duty or obligation of voting, democracy-based explanations highlighted voting as a right or privilege that must be exercised and protected.

### Comments by Respondents who Did Not Vote in the 2009 Provincial Election

Respondents who reported that they did not vote in the 2009 general provincial election were asked to provide the main reason why they didn't vote. Again, many respondents provided multiple reasons and the following proportions are calculated out of the total number of responses rather than the number of respondents. The most common main reasons provided by those who did not vote in the 2009 election were personal circumstances (35%), engagement (29%), knowledge (16%), pessimism (7%) and accessibility (5%).

**Table 5: What was the main reason why you did not vote during the May 12th provincial election?<sup>11</sup>**

Because of...	(n=761)
Specific personal circumstances	35%
Engagement	29%
Knowledge	16%
Pessimism	7%
Accessibility	5%
Other	9%
<i>Total number of comments</i>	818

Consistent Non-Voters and 2005-only Voters differed considerably in the answers they provided. Nearly half (44%) of all comments from 2005-only Voters reflected the personal circumstances theme compared to just 21% of responses from Consistent Non-Voters. The personal circumstances theme included such reasons as *being too busy, being out of town or province, being ill or unusual circumstances*.

Forty percent of all the reasons given by Consistent Non-Voters fell within the theme of engagement. Engagement-themed comments, such as *disliking politics, not being concerned about the issues, or not liking any of the candidates or parties*, accounted for 25% of the reasons provided by 2005-only Voters. These findings illustrate the attitudinal differences presented in Figures 7, 8, and 9 of this report; 2005-only Voters have opinions similar to Consistent Voters in their belief that voting in elections is important and that their vote matters in the provincial election.

<sup>11</sup> Percentages reported in this table are calculated out of the total number of responses rather than the total number of respondents. Many respondents provided comments which were coded into multiple categories.

The comments provided by Consistent Non-Voters are more likely to express knowledge as a barrier to voting compared to 2005-only Voters (17% of comments from Consistent Non-Voters compared to 9% of those from 2005-only Voters). Again, these findings support the assertion in Section B: *Perceptions about Voting and Politics* that the majority of all eligible voters know what they need to do to vote in a provincial election and that voting is easy. For the small proportion of eligible voters who disagree with these statements, knowledge may be a significant barrier to voting.

Pessimism, accessibility and other themes individually accounted for no more than 11% of the comments provided by either group. Other Voters (those respondents who either weren't eligible to vote in 2005 or reported that they didn't know whether they voted in the previous election) were the group most likely to report that they didn't vote because of their lack of knowledge (30%). Many of the comments provided by these Other Voters also indicated that personal circumstances kept them from the polls (32%).

**Figure 16: Reasons for Not Voting in 2009 by Voting Profile**

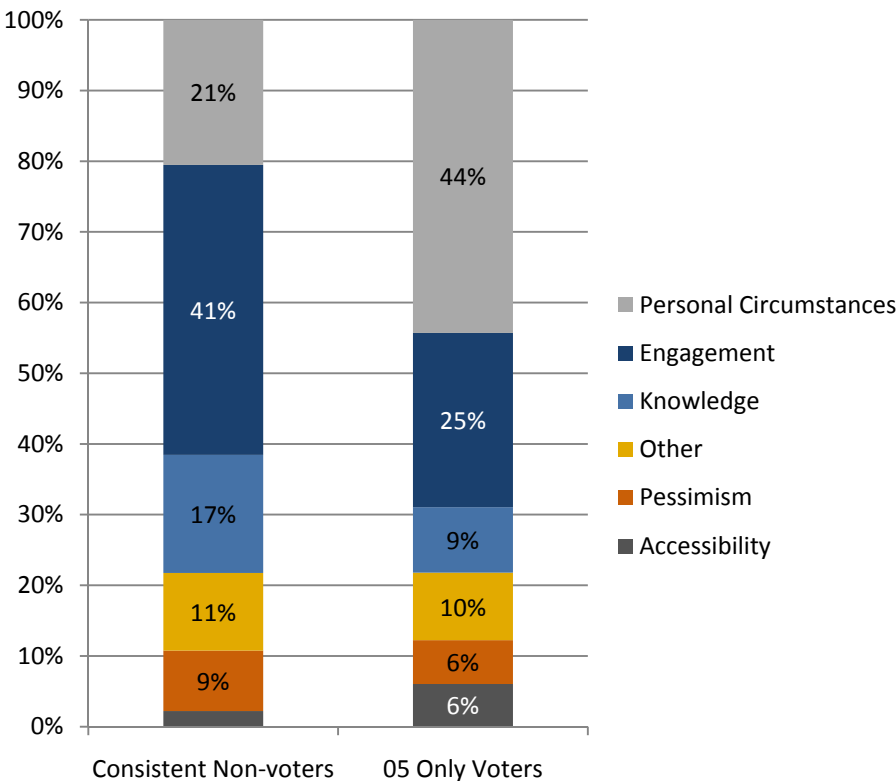
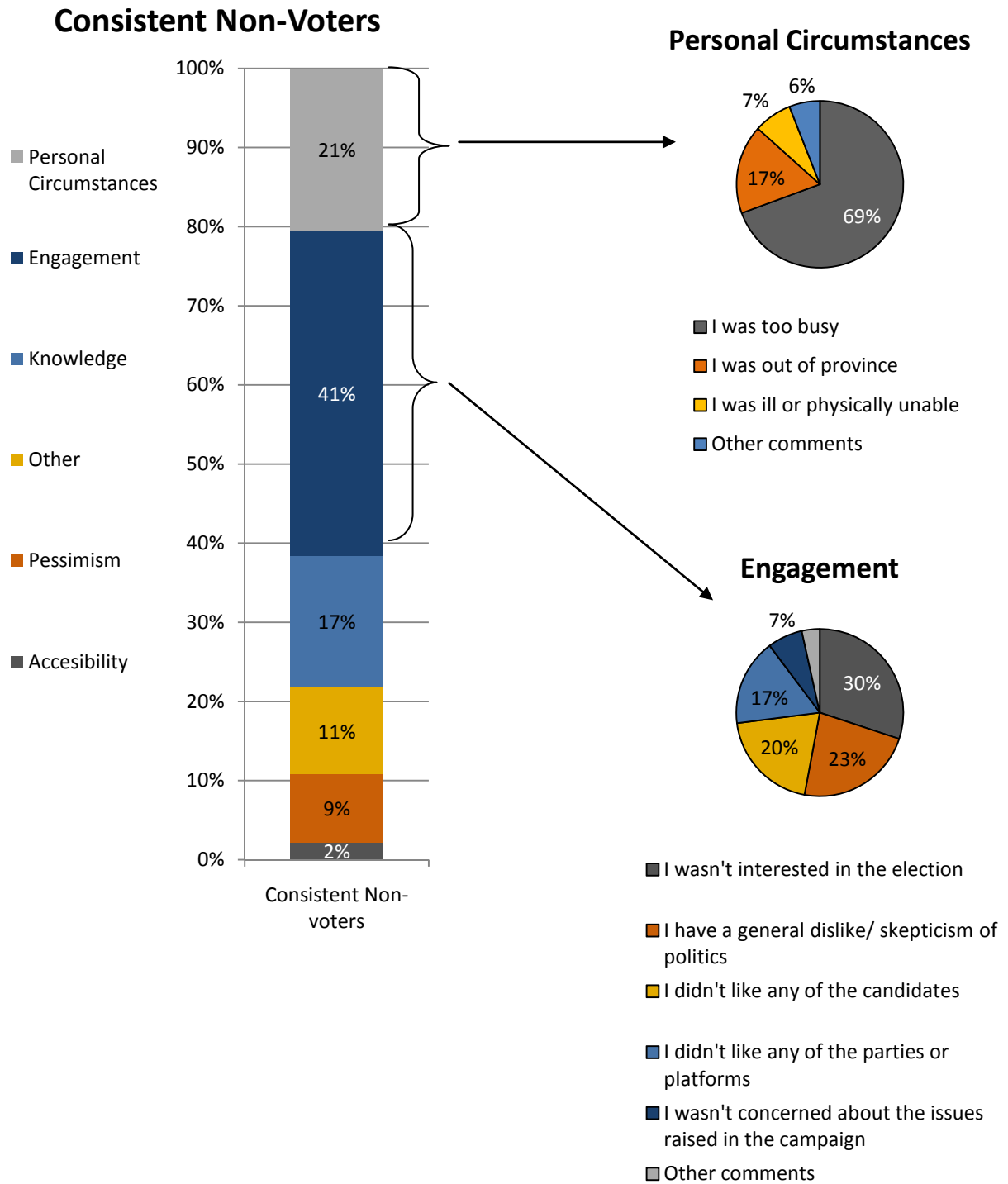


Figure 17 and Figure 18 detail the minor themes for the question, “what was the main reason why you did NOT vote during the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election” for Consistent Non-Voters and 2005-only Voters.

Figure 17: What was the main reason you did NOT vote during the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election?



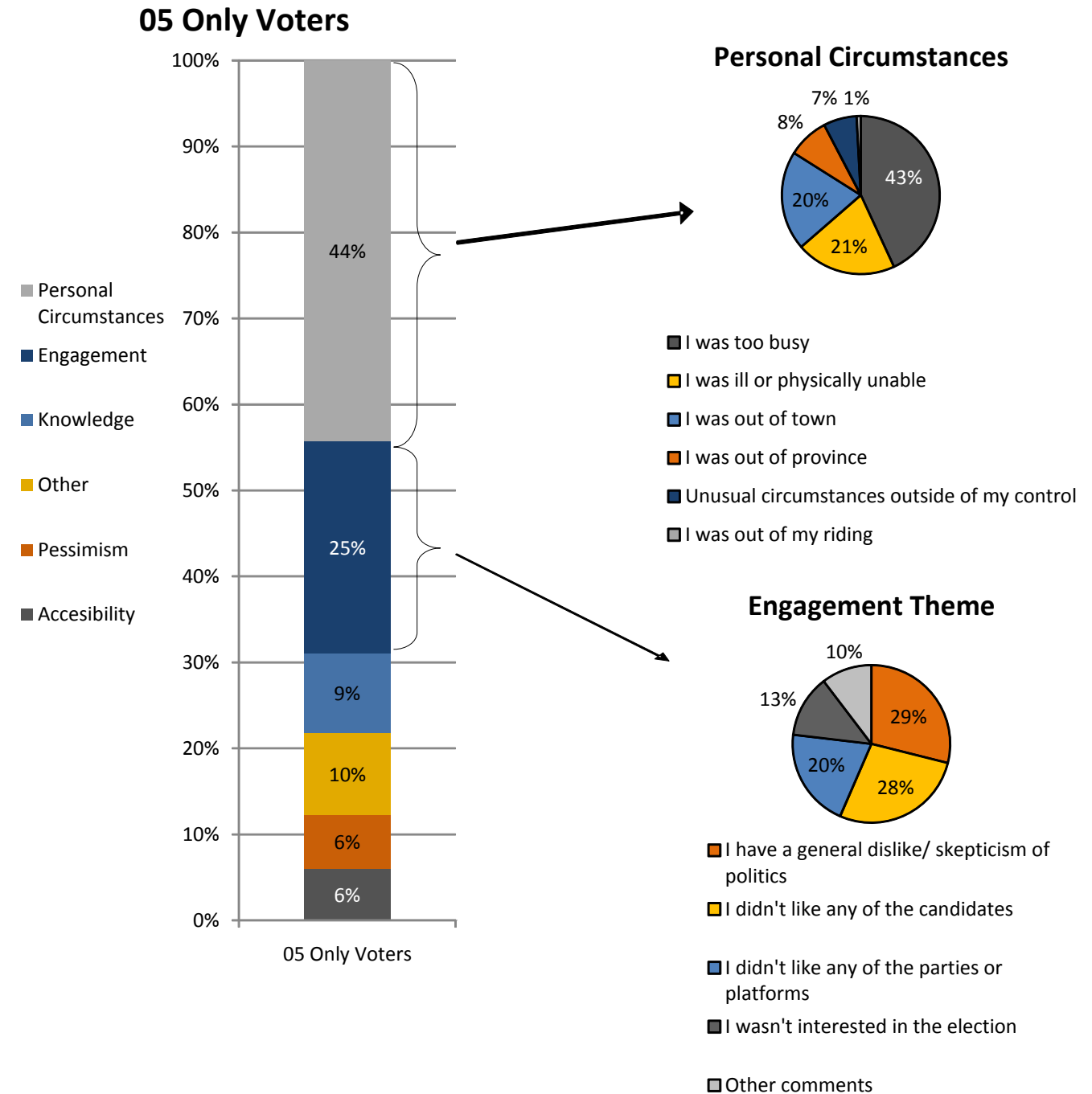
### ***Personal Circumstances***

Within the broad theme of personal circumstances, over two-thirds of the comments provided by Consistent Non-Voters suggest that they were “too busy” compared to slightly fewer than half of the comments from 2005-only Voters. This would suggest that Consistent Non-Voters do not make voting a priority. 2005-only Voters are more likely than Consistent Non-Voters to report that they were ill or physically unable to attend on voting day (21% of comments compared to just 7% for Consistent Non-Voters). 2005-only Voters provided a broader range of detailed examples of the personal circumstances that resulted in them not voting (such as being physically ill, out of town, out of province, and unusual circumstances outside of their control) compared to Consistent Non-Voters. This may suggest that being “too busy” is a consistent state whereas the barriers of specific circumstances on voting day may be more variable.

### ***Engagement***

The theme of engagement contained responses that indicate a lack of interest in issues, politics, candidates and parties. Thirty percent of the explanations provided by Consistent Non-Voters suggest that the main reason they didn't vote was because they weren't interested in the election compared to 13% of comments from 2005-only Voters. Responses from 2005-only Voters were more likely to cite a dislike or scepticism about politics or the candidates or parties than the comments from Consistent Non-Voters.

Figure 18: What was the main reason you did NOT vote during the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election?



## What would encourage respondents who didn't vote in the 2009 Election to Vote in the Next Provincial Election?

Those who didn't vote in 2009 were asked, "What, if anything would encourage you to vote in the next Provincial election, scheduled for May 2013?" Many people provided qualitative responses that contained multiple themes and as such, the proportions in the following analysis are calculated out of the total number of comments rather than the number of respondents.

**Table 6: What, if anything would encourage you to vote in the next Provincial election, scheduled for May 2013?**

<i>I would be more likely to vote if ...</i>	Percent
Changes to the political system or parties	40%
Improved Campaign	22%
My personal circumstances changed	19%
Improved convenience and accessibility	11%
Nothing, not sure	7%
Other reasons	4%

While over half (55%) of respondents who did not vote in the 2009 election claimed they would likely vote in the next election<sup>12</sup>, these respondents were also asked to provide qualitative insight into what would encourage them to vote in the next election. Forty percent of the comments provided by those who didn't vote in the 2009 election suggested changes to the political system or parties would encourage them to vote in the next election. Over 20% of the comments suggested changes or improvements to the campaign, and an additional 19% of the comments indicated that the respondent would vote (or that they plan on voting) if their personal circumstances changed at the time of or before the next election.

Twice as many of the comments provided by the Consistent Non-Voters compared to the comments from 2005-only Voters indicated that "nothing" could encourage them to vote in the next provincial election; 21% of comments from Consistent Non-Voters compared to 10% of those provided by 2005-only Voters. Overall, 90% of the comments from 2005-only Voters and 80% of comments from Consistent Non-Voters suggested that something could be done that would encourage them to vote in the next provincial election. Figure 20 shows the comments provided by Consistent Non-Voters and 2005-only Voters when asked what would encourage them to vote in the next election.

<sup>12</sup> Respondents who answered either "5-Very likely" or "4" when asked, "based on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is "not at all likely" and 5 is "very likely" what is the likelihood that you will vote in the next provincial general election scheduled for May 2013?"

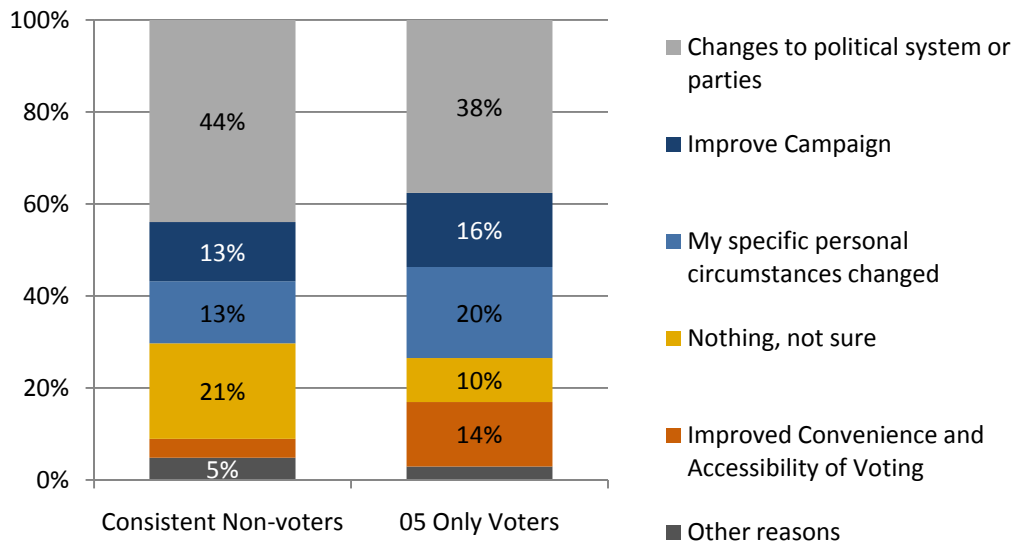


For Consistent Non-Voters, nearly half (44%) of the comments provided claimed that changes to the political system or parties would encourage them to vote in the next election. Two-out-of-five of the comments from 2005-only Voters suggested that changes to the political system or parties would encourage them to vote in 2013.

Comments from 2005-only Voters were slightly more likely (16% compared to 13%) to suggest that an improved campaign would encourage them to vote.

The responses provided by 2005-only Voters, compared to Consistent Non-Voters, more commonly indicated that they would vote if their specific personal circumstances changed. This would include such changes as *being healthy, not being busy, having access to a car, being in their home riding or wanting to have a say in the election* (20% compared to 13%). A larger proportion of the comments from 2005-only Voters suggested that improved convenience and accessibility would encourage them to vote compared to Consistent Non-Voters (14% of the responses from 2005-only Voters compared to less than 5% from Consistent Non-Voters). Again, these findings suggest that Consistent Non-Voters may be committed to not voting whereas 2005-only Voters explain their lack of voting as circumstantial and temporary.

**Figure 19: What Would Encourage Voting by Voting Profiles**



## Section C: Comments

This section focuses on the reasons eligible voters gave for voting or not voting in the 2009 provincial election. First, the six major themes that non-voters expressed when asked why they did not vote in 2009 election are explored through verbatim responses. Second, the demographic characteristics of non-voters are explored through cross-tabulations of their reasons for not voting by the key demographic variables age, region and gender.

### Non-Voter Comments

Non-voters expressed six major themes why they did not vote in 2009 election; those themes are explored through verbatim responses below.

#### Personal Circumstances

Over one-third (33%) of the comments provided by respondents who didn't vote in the 2009 election describe specific personal circumstances as the main reason why they did not vote.

**Table 7: Personal Circumstances Theme - What was the main reason you did not vote during the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election?**

Themes:	Examples:	Main Reason %
Personal Circumstances		35%
Busy	<i>I got caught up with work and was unable to make it.</i>	18%
	<i>It was unexpected issues from work that had to be dealt at a time when my window of opportunity was there; what I would appreciate is more prior opportunities to cast your vote</i>	
	<i>The main reason is the time. We're immigrants and we have to work all the time in order to support our family.</i>	
Out of town	<i>I was on vacation</i>	6%
Ill or physically unable to attend a voting place	<i>I was in hospital. I wish they would send somebody to the hospital to take your vote</i>	6%
	<i>Bad headache; we're talking migraine</i>	
	<i>I wasn't able to get there and I was sick</i>	
Out of province	<i>I didn't know if it was possible to do it online, it was a 17 hour time difference so it was hard to do if it was possible</i>	3%
Out of my riding	<i>I couldn't get back to my riding because I was in another municipality</i>	2%
There were unusual circumstances outside of my control	<i>Death in family</i>	0.20%
	<i>My house burned down</i>	
	<i>I was in the emergency room with my son</i>	

### Engagement

Nearly one-third of the responses indicate that engagement was the major barrier to voting in the 2009 election. The engagement theme included comments that revealed that the non-voter was skeptical of politics, lacked interest in the issues, or disliked the candidates or parties.

**Table 8: Engagement Theme - What was the main reason you did not vote during the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election?**

Themes:	Examples:	Main Reason %
Engagement		29%
General dislike of politics / skeptical of politics	<i>Because I don't trust politicians for that reason. They don't keep their promises during the campaign.</i>	7%
	<i>Well because I believe that they are all the same one is no better than the other, when they get elected everything they promise goes on the backburner and does not get done anyway.</i>	
Not concerned about the issues raised in the campaign	<i>I just did not have any interest or feel any connection to any political party this time around</i>	2%
Didn't like any of the candidates	<i>It was probably who I had to choose from. The people, candidates who were running. I didn't particularly care for any of them.</i>	7%
	<i>There was not a conservative individual in this country, otherwise I would have been there</i>	
	<i>There's nobody to vote for.</i>	
Didn't like any of the parties or platforms	<i>Mostly because the 2 leading parties did not interest me</i>	5%
	<i>Didn't see any difference between them</i>	
Not interested in the election	<i>I'm not interested in politics</i>	7%
	<i>I was too lazy</i>	
	<i>Wasn't interested...didn't hold my interest whatsoever!</i>	
Didn't like any party's stand on a particular issue	<i>2010 Olympics</i>	1%
	<i>Because of the child poverty and no one seems to care.</i>	
	<i>I didn't think anybody would stand up for ranchers.</i>	
Had negative experiences with voting	<i>It was a poor station and the lady was so unfriendly ,so that I could not vote</i>	0.20%

### *Pessimism*

Pessimism was cited as a reason for not voting for 7% of responses. In these cases, respondents indicated that they felt their vote did not matter or that it was clear which party or candidate would win.

**Table 9: Pessimism Theme - What was the main reason you did not vote during the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election?**

<b>Themes:</b>	<b>Examples:</b>	<b>Main Reason %</b>
<b>Pessimism</b>		<b>7%</b>
My vote didn't matter	<i>Because my vote wouldn't matter. It's about the votes from the south</i>	5%
	<i>I just thought it would be a waste of my personal time, and that it wouldn't matter anyways.</i>	
	<i>I don't know, I give up voting quite a while ago. It just didn't seem like my vote really counted.</i>	
It was clear which party would win	<i>I figured the liberals would win so I didn't even vote, wasn't a close enough race for me.</i>	2%
It was clear which candidate would win	<i>I live in the NDP riding with no possibility of the liberals winning here - I didn't bother voting</i>	0.4%
	<i>In this riding it was a guaranteed sweep for the BC Liberals.</i>	

### **Knowledge and Accessibility**

Of all the reasons given for not voting, only 21% of the responses were clearly within EBC's mandate. These comments included references to knowledge, or lack thereof, (16%) and accessibility (5%).

**Table 10: Knowledge Theme - What was the main reason you did not vote during the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election?**

<b>Themes:</b>	<b>Examples:</b>	<b>Main Reason %</b>
<b>Knowledge</b>		<b>16%</b>
Didn't know enough about the parties or platforms	<i>Just because of scheduling, with my life, as busy as I am I wasn't able to follow the campaign. So when election day came around, I wasn't going to have an educated opinion so I decided not to vote.</i>	9%
	<i>I cannot make clear decisions on which person to vote, cause I don't know their campaign content, etc.</i>	
	<i>Uneducated-not knowing a lot of the people, their views and stuff. You learn a lot about it in the 30 days, but it's not a lot of time to get situated with everything.</i>	
	<i>Not enough information on the candidates and what they stood for.</i>	
Didn't get my voters card	<i>Because I was not prepared. I didn't have my piece of paper - I left it in Bella Coola.</i>	2%
	<i>I didn't know the date and I did not receive anything in the mail about the day of the election.</i>	
	<i>We just didn't know how to vote without the card</i>	
Didn't know where to vote	<i>Because I didn't know where to vote</i>	2%
	<i>Couldn't find polling station</i>	
Needed help registering	<i>I don't know how to register</i>	1%
	<i>I had not registered to vote</i>	
Didn't know when to vote	<i>I found out a half hour before the election was closing</i>	1%
Didn't think I was eligible	<i>Didn't know I was old enough, didn't realize it was time to</i>	1%
Uncomfortable with the process of voting	<i>I've just never voted before</i>	0.4%
Didn't have proper ID or had recently moved	<i>Didn't have proof of address</i>	0.2%

**Table 11: Accessibility Theme - What was the main reason you did not vote during the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election?**

Themes:	Examples:	Main Reason %
Accessibility		5%
Voting location was not convenient	<i>Just because I do not like to go to town. I just wanted to go home.</i>	2%
	<i>The parking was full</i>	
	<i>I live out in a rural area, and I was working and it was just inconvenient to get out to the polls</i>	
Needed more time to vote (including the advanced polls were not convenient)	<i>More advance polls would be helpful</i>	1%
	<i>The advance polls had to be sooner.</i>	
Needed a ride	<i>Because I lost my license and I have no transportation for getting around</i>	1%
	<i>Couldn't get a ride and I have my children on the weekends so I'm kind of tied up in that way. If I would have been able to get a ride I probably would've voted. I was told I was going to get a ride but nobody showed up and I'm disabled.</i>	

### **Other Reasons Not to Vote**

The following reasons were provided by respondents who didn't vote in the 2009 election and were not included in the main 5 themes included.

**Table 12: Other Comments - What was the main reason you did not vote during the May 12th provincial election?**

Themes:	Examples:	Main Reason %
Other reasons		9%
Forgot	<i>I forgot. I had every intention to vote, but I forgot.</i>	6%
	<i>Basically I forgot about the date and I missed it. I'm working 2 jobs. Missed the day on the calendar.</i>	
Religious or political reasons	<i>Religious reasons</i>	1%
	<i>Because I don't feel it's my job to choose a government, that's Gods' job</i>	
Other reasons	<i>It was not appropriate as I'm in the process of becoming an Alberta resident</i>	1%
	<i>No encouragement. No one else does it [votes] around here</i>	
Undecided on voting day	<i>Because I couldn't make up my mind over the two parties</i>	1%

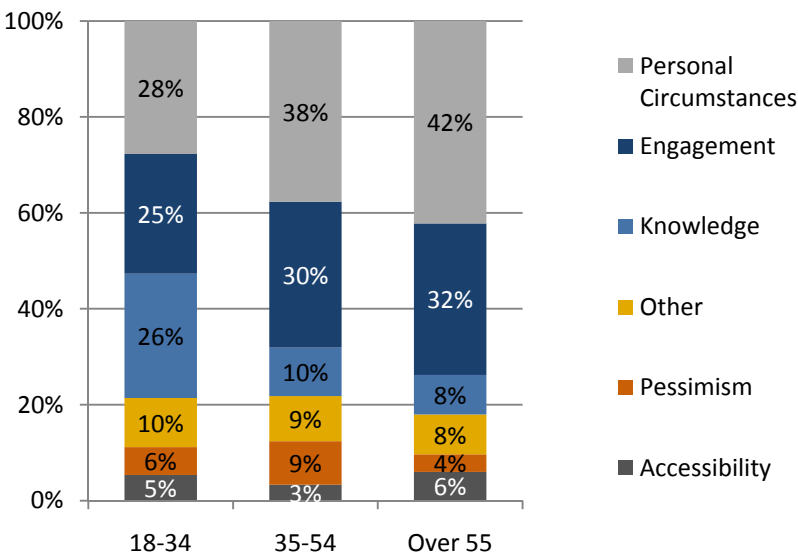
## Demographic Analysis of Non-Voters

Eligible voters provided many reasons for not going to the polls on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009; some were busy with family emergencies, others reported that they forgot, some didn't like any of the candidates or parties and others didn't know where or when to vote. The following section explores the demographic characteristics (age, region and gender) of respondents in light of the six major themes found in their answers to the question, "what was the main reason you did not vote during the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election?"

### Age

Over one-quarter of the comments provided by non-voters under 35 years of age suggested that knowledge is the main reason they didn't vote in the 2009 provincial election. In comparison, less than 10% of the comments from voters over 35 referred to knowledge as the main barrier. Personal circumstances and engagement are common reasons for not voting among all ages but more so among non-voters over 35 years of age. Comments expressing pessimism are slightly more common among the middle age category, those between 35 and 54.

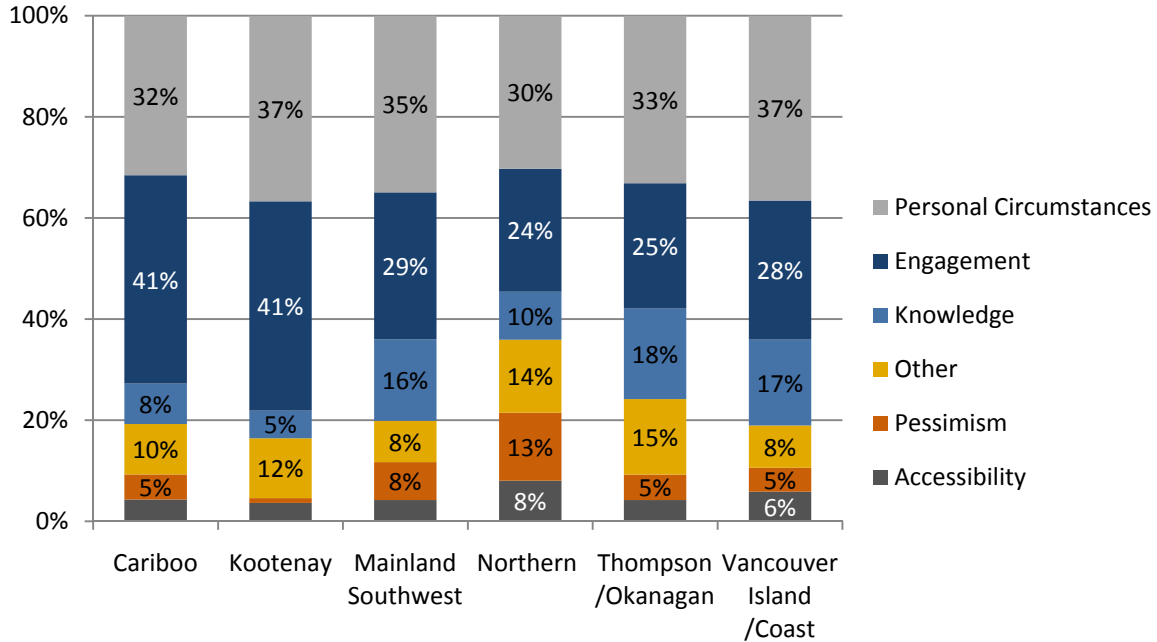
Figure 20: Age by Reason for Not Voting



### Health Region

Personal circumstances account for between 30% (in the Northern Region) and 37% (in the Kootenay and Vancouver Island/Coastal Regions) of the comments provided around the province. In the Cariboo and Kootenay Regions, the proportion of comments from non-voters that refer to knowledge is low, and engagement reasons for not voting contribute to over 40% of comments. Over 15% of the comments provided in the Mainland Southwest, Thompson/Okanagan and Vancouver Island /Coastal Regions pertain to knowledge.

**Figure 21: Region by Reason for Not Voting**

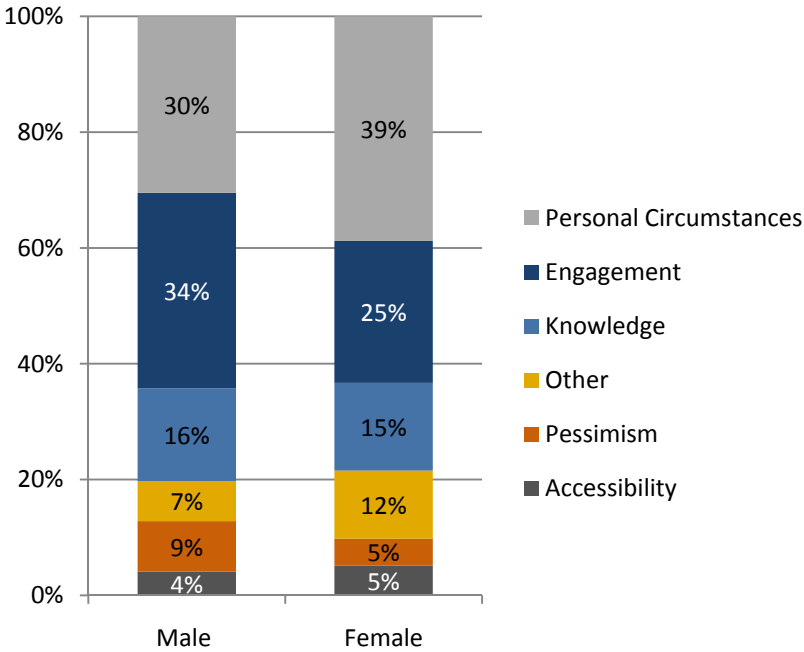




## Gender

Women are more likely than men to cite personal circumstances as the reason they did not vote in the 2009 election (39% of the comments provided by women compared to 30% of reasons given by men). Comments from men, on the other hand, contain more references to engagement and pessimism-related reasons for not voting.

**Figure 22: Gender by Reason for Not Voting**



## Voter Comments

The comments provided by respondents who voted in the 2009 election when asked the main reason why they voted, fell into four broad categories: issues, responsibility, democracy and other. The two sections below provide examples of the verbatim comments provided by voters then cross-tabulation of their reasons for voting by the key demographic variables.

### Issue-based Reasons

Almost 40% of all the comments from 2009 voters about why they voted were issue-based.

**Table 13: Issues Theme - What was the main reason why you voted during the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election?**

Themes:	Examples:	Main Reason %
Issues		39%
I wanted to support a party or candidate	<i>To get the party I agree with into power.</i> <i>Because I wanted to support the local candidates that I choose.</i> <i>To keep the Liberals in power</i>	12%
I am concerned about a particular issue raised in the campaign	<i>Whoever is going for education, is going to get my vote more or less</i> <i>My concern about the level of taxation.</i> <i>I'm voting against the sell out of the loss of water, our wild salmon, basically our natural resources to big business.</i>	10%
I wanted a change	<i>I wanted a change in my riding.</i> <i>For a change in government</i>	6%
I wanted to vote against a particular party or candidate	<i>To get Campbell out of office.</i> <i>Because I didn't want a certain party to get in.</i> <i>Did not want the other two to get in.</i>	4%
I care about the outcome	<i>Care about the direction of the Province and our future generations</i> <i>I guess I care about the province I live in I wanted to make sure I was involve and the choices we made in our leadership</i>	3%
Particular issues raised in the campaign effect me directly	<i>Cause it affects me</i> <i>To protect my lifestyle of hunting and fishing</i>	2%
My opinions on Electoral Reform	<i>To vote for proportional representation</i> <i>The referendum</i> <i>Because I was interested in the referendum question about STV.</i>	2%
I wanted a particular person or idea represented in the Legislature	<i>For local representation</i> <i>To get proper representation for the North and Interior of BC</i>	1%

### **Responsibility-based Reasons**

Voters were considered to have responsibility-based reasons for voting when their comments emphasized a duty or obligation, feeling it was important to vote, or thinking everyone should vote. Respondents whose comments stated that *if you don't vote you cannot complain* also fell within the responsibility theme. Just under one-third (28%) of the comments provided by respondents who voted in the 2009 election referred to the responsibility aspect of voting.

**Table 14: Responsibility Theme - What was the main reason why you voted during the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election?**

<b>Themes:</b>	<b>Examples:</b>	<b>Main Reason %</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>		<b>28%</b>
It is my duty to vote	<i>Because it is an obligation, we should be obligated to vote</i>	17%
	<i>Because it's my civic duty to do that</i>	
	<i>I think it's a responsibility that I have</i>	
I think voting is important	<i>It's just important to vote.</i>	4%
	<i>Because it is very important to me. I think it's very important for everybody to vote.</i>	
I think that if you don't vote, you can't complain	<i>If you don't bother to vote than you can't complain about the government you get</i>	4%
	<i>So I could hope that my vote would mean something. I was doing my part. Too many people don't vote and they complain. They are not doing their part.</i>	
	<i>If you don't participate, you can't complain.</i>	
I think everyone should vote	<i>Because everyone should vote.</i>	3%
	<i>People should be involved and interested</i>	

### **Democracy-based Reasons**

Democracy-based reasons accounted for another 28% of the comments provided. Democracy was the main theme cited when voters referred to their rights, wanting to have their voice heard, believing that every vote counts, wanting to protect or exercise democracy, or when respondents spoke of the privilege of voting.

**Table 15: Democracy Theme - What was the main reason why you voted during the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election?**

<b>Themes:</b>	<b>Examples:</b>	<b>Main Reason %</b>
<b>Democracy</b>		<b>28%</b>
It is my right to vote.	<i>Because it's our democratic right, it's a privilege; some people don't have that right in certain countries.</i>	10%
	<i>Democratic right to vote</i>	
I wanted to have my voice heard	<i>Because it's the only way to have your voice heard.</i>	7%
	<i>To express myself and to support who is the best for the job</i>	
I think every vote counts	<i>It is the way to express myself and have an effect on the government.</i>	5%
	<i>Every vote counts</i>	
	<i>To have a say</i>	
	<i>My vote may be nothing on a large scale but it still means something</i>	
I wanted to protect democracy	<i>Because I grew up in a country that not everyone has the right to vote so it is important that I vote.</i>	2%
	<i>As a women they fought hard to get the right to vote, so I don't intend to toss that aside</i>	
I think voting is a privilege	<i>It is a privilege to vote</i>	2%
	<i>The privilege of voting because some people do not have that privilege.</i>	
I wanted to participate in democracy	<i>To be part of the democratic process</i>	2%
	<i>If you don't vote then you have anarchy and it's not participatory democracy,</i>	

### ***Other Reasons for Voting***

Other reasons for voting provided in the comments included typical *behaviour, having the choice, a general interest in politics or being persuaded by others*. Six percent of the comments suggest that the main reason for voting falls outside of issues, responsibility and democracy.

**Table 16: Other Comments - What was the main reason why you voted during the May 12th provincial election?**

<b>Themes:</b>	<b>Examples:</b>	<b>Main Reason %</b>
<b>Other</b>		<b>6%</b>
I always vote	<i>Because I always vote.</i> <i>I guess habit</i>	3%
I chose to / I wanted to	<i>I wanted to</i> <i>just because I could</i>	1%
I am generally interested in politics	<i>I'm interested in politics</i>	1%
I was persuaded by others	<i>Because my parents encouraged it</i> <i>My relatives want me to support a candidate.</i>	0.28%

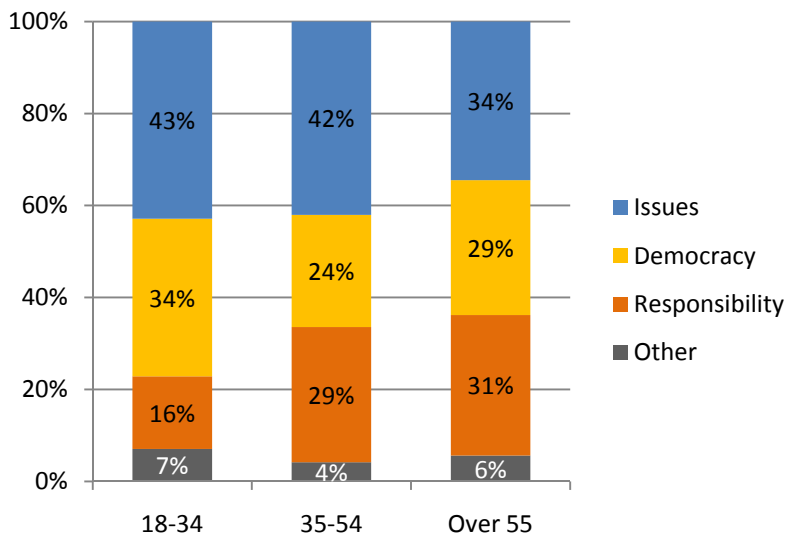
## Demographic Analysis of Voters

Those who voted in the 2009 election, like those who didn't, provided a wide array of reasons for voting in the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election. Some were concerned about the issues, others wanted to exercise or protect democracy, and some felt voting was a responsibility. These reasons vary by age, region and gender as shown in the section below.

### Age

Comments from the youngest group of respondents who voted in the 2009 election, those under the age of 35, are more likely than older voters to report that the main reason they voted in the 2009 provincial election was because of democracy or democracy-related topics. Over 40% of the comments provided by respondents between the ages of 18 and 54 cite issue-based reasons for why they voted in the most current election. Responsibility is cited in the comments from respondents over 35 years of age more often than in comments from the young age group as the main reason why they voted in the 2009 election.

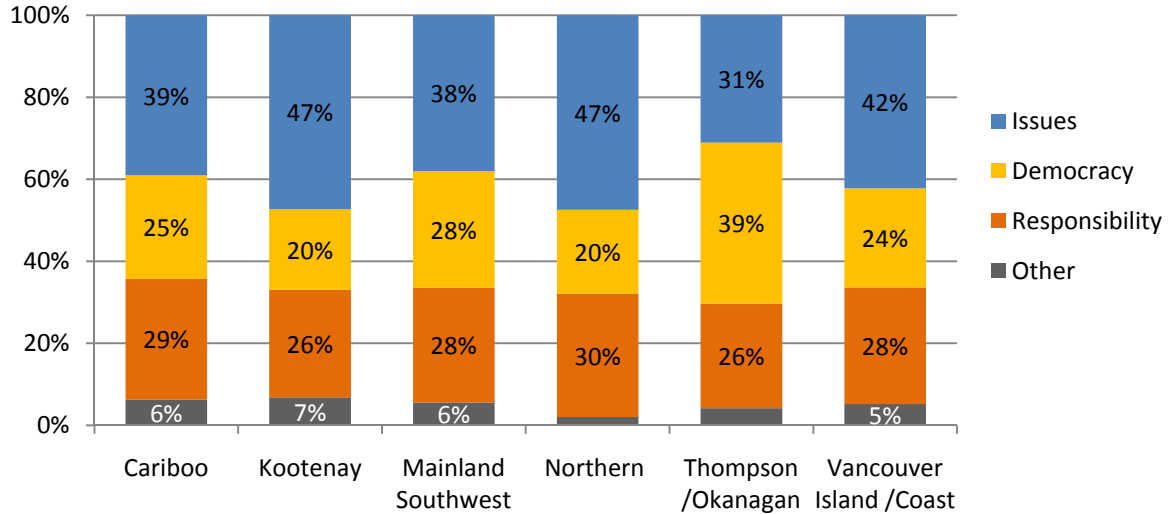
Figure 23: Age by Reason for Voting



### Health Region

Comparatively, the Northern and Kootenay health regions have more issue-based reasons for voting (47% of the comments provided for each region). Nearly 40% of the comments from those who voted in 2009 from the Thompson/Okanagan Region cited democracy-based reasons for voting; this is high compared to 28% or less of the comments from the other regions. Responsibility-based reasons range from 26% of the comments in the Kootenay and Thompson/Okanagan Regions to 30% of the comments from the Northern Region.

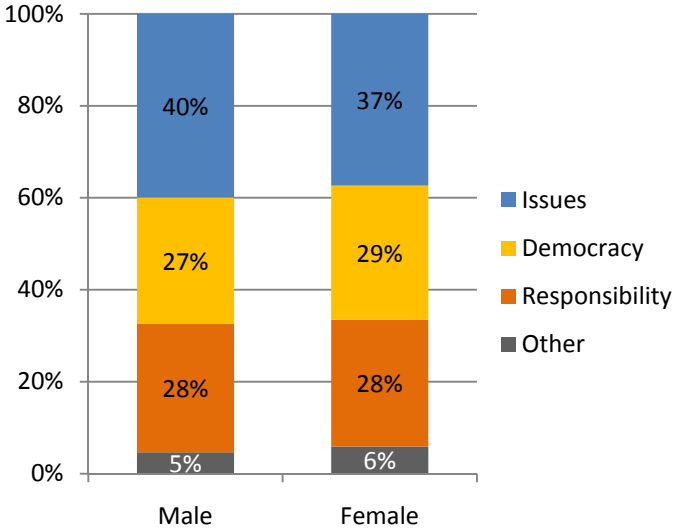
Figure 24: Region by Reason for Voting



### Gender

Comments from men are slightly more likely than those from women to cite issue-based reasons for voting. Meanwhile, comments from women are somewhat more likely to provide democracy-based explanations.

**Figure 25: Gender by Reason for Voting**





## **Section D: Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Research**

### **Attitudes of People Who Didn't Vote in the 2009 Provincial Election**

The majority of eligible voters believe that it is important for people to vote in elections.

Less than 40% of all 2005-Only Voters and Consistent Non-Voters reported being interested in the 2009 provincial election; however, over 60% of 2005-Only Voters agreed that they were interested in what is going on in politics.

2005-Only Voters are more similar to Consistent Voters than to Consistent Non-Voters in their beliefs about whether their vote matters in a provincial election.

When asked the main reason why they did not vote in the 2009 election, twice as many comments from Consistent Non-Voters were attitudinal (engagement or pessimism) rather than circumstantial (such as being out of town, ill, or busy). Comparatively, circumstantial reasons for not voting were the most common reasons provided by 2005-Only Voters.

Despite confidence among both Consistent Non-Voters and 2005-Only Voters that, "voting is easy" and, [they] know what [they] need to do to vote in a provincial election", knowledge comments accounted for 16% of the reasons provided by respondents who didn't vote in the 2009 election.

### **Elections BC Advertising and Information**

Fewer than half of all Consistent Non-Voters reported having seen direct EBC advertising or information prior to the election. Consistent Non-Voters are also the group most likely to have obtained election information from non-EBC internet sources. These findings suggest that although Consistent Non-Voters believe they know what they need to do to vote in a provincial election and that voting is easy, they may not be receiving accurate information about elections.

### **Characteristics of those who Vote and those who Don't**

In general, Consistent Voters are older, longer-term residents of BC with higher levels of education than Consistent Non-Voters. Comments from those in the youngest age group (under 35 years of age) who didn't vote in the May 12<sup>th</sup> election more commonly included lack of knowledge as the main reason for not voting, compared to comments from older eligible voters. Comments from younger respondents (under 55 years of age) more commonly include issue-based reasons for voting, while explanations from older respondents (55 and older) are more likely to be responsibility-based answers when asked, "what is the main reason why you voted during the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election?".

## Recommendations for Further Research

This report suggests that different voting behaviours (Consistent Voters, 2009-only Voters, 2005-only Voters, and Consistent Non-Voter) provide us insight into the motivations and barriers to voting in provincial elections. It is clear that Consistent Voters and Consistent Non-Voters differ in their attitudes about politics and elections. Inconsistent voters, such as 2009-only Voters and 2005-only Voters are particularly interesting because their attitudes and behaviours suggest that voting behaviour is not static. The circumstantial reasons why someone did not vote in 2009 may not persist in 2013, or the campaign issues that persuaded someone to vote in 2009 might not be raised in 2013. While more eligible voters who voted in 2005 chose not to vote in 2009 than the other way around, identifying the reasons people change their voting behaviour over time may be more important than examining Consistent Voters or Non-Voters. As such, increased exploratory research into inconsistent voters (described in this report as 2005-only Voters and 2009-only Voters) is recommended.

Young voters are also a population whose attitudes require further exploration. These British Columbians are the least likely to be Consistent Voters and have the most voting years ahead of them. Their propensity for issue-based and democracy-based voting compared to the responsibility-based voting more commonly cited by older eligible voters suggests that new approaches will be needed to ensure young British Columbians are engaged in politics and have access to accurate information about elections.

## Appendix A: Methods

Appendix A presents a detailed Methodology of the Post-Election Voter/Non-Voter Satisfaction Survey from which the data contained in this report is derived.

### Background

Elections BC is an independent, non-partisan Office of the Legislature responsible for conducting provincial general elections, by-elections and referendums. Elections BC is also responsible for administering the initiative and recall processes as detailed in provincial legislation. Elections BC's vision is to be "leaders in electoral administration."<sup>13</sup> It is their mission to "serve democracy in British Columbia through the fair and impartial administration of the provincial electoral process."<sup>14</sup>

As stated in the Elections BC *Service Plan 2009/10 – 2011/12*, fulfilling this mission and vision involves the following goals:

1. Ensure ongoing support and enhancement of the electoral process;
2. Ensure effective and efficient administration of electoral events;
3. Provide an inclusive and accessible electoral process; and
4. Be a learning organization that develops and shares best practices.<sup>15</sup>

To measure its performance on Goal 3, Elections BC has partnered with BC Stats to conduct two surveys. The first survey, the *2009 Pre-Election Voter Awareness Survey* sought to measure eligible voters' awareness of the electoral process in the period before the General Election on May 12, 2009. The second survey, the *2009 Voter/Non-Voter Satisfaction Survey*, was conducted after the General Election and had two key goals: (1) to measure voters' satisfaction with the electoral process; and (2) to learn about non-voters (eligible voters who chose not to vote) and identify barriers that may have hindered their participation in the electoral process. The results of the satisfaction survey are presented in a separate report.<sup>16</sup>

Prior to the 2005 General Election, BC Stats also administered a pre-election survey on behalf of Elections BC. The 2005 survey assessed eligible voters' voting interests and practices, awareness of and knowledge about the electoral process, voting intentions, and exposure to Elections BC advertising.<sup>17</sup>

This report presents the findings of the *2009 Pre-Election Voter Awareness Survey*.

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<sup>13</sup> Elections BC Service Plan 2009/10-2011/12, page 2.

<sup>14</sup> Elections BC Service Plan 2009/10-2011/12, page 2.

<sup>15</sup> Elections BC Service Plan 2009/10-2011/12, page 7.

<sup>16</sup> BC Stats (2009). *2009 Voter/Non-Voter Satisfaction Survey Executive Summary Report*.

<sup>17</sup> See BC Stats (2005). *Elections BC Election Awareness and Satisfaction Performance Measures Final Report, August 2005*. Available online:

<http://www.elections.bc.ca/docs/rpt/Awareness%20and%20Satisfaction%20Survey.pdf>

## Survey Design

The *2009 Pre-Election Voter Awareness Survey* was based on the *2005 Election Awareness Survey* that was conducted by BC Stats, on behalf of Elections BC, prior to the 2005 provincial election. Prior to launching the 2009 survey, BC Stats worked with Elections BC to review and modify the content and design of the survey.

## Questionnaire

The survey questions addressed the following areas (see Appendix C for the complete questionnaire):

- Demographics;
- Voting interests and practices;
- Awareness and perceptions of the electoral process;
- Knowledge of the electoral process;
- Voting intentions; and
- Elections BC advertising.

The majority of the questions asked in the 2009 survey were adopted from the 2005 iteration of the survey. Where possible, the results from the *2009 Pre-Election Voter Awareness Survey* have been compared to the 2005 survey results.

## Sample and Survey Administration

The *2009 Pre-Election Voter Awareness Survey* was conducted via telephone between April 29 and May 6, 2009 by NRG Research of Vancouver, B.C., on behalf of BC Stats.

The sample was compiled using a random digit dialing process. In order to ensure that the sample represented the geographic distribution of the population, quotas for the eight major regions of B.C.<sup>18</sup> were established at the onset of the survey.<sup>19</sup>

Further, as this was a survey intended for eligible voters, potential respondents were asked a series of questions to determine their eligibility to vote (that is, they were Canadian citizens, had lived in B.C. for the last 6 months, and were at least 18 years of age as of General Voting Day on May 12, 2009). Individuals who were deemed not eligible to vote were asked if there was anyone in their household who met the eligibility requirements. If there was, the interviewer asked to speak to that person and then confirmed their survey eligibility.

Using standard scientific statistical methods, the resulting random sample was weighted so that it is representative of all British Columbians, aged 18 or over. This weighted sample can be used to estimate the percentages and numbers of British Columbians who belong to any of the various categories covered by the survey, such as those who have certain opinions about voting.

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<sup>18</sup> Cariboo, Kootenay, Mainland/Southwest, Nechako, North Coast, Northeast, Thompson/Okanagan, and Vancouver Island/Coast.

<sup>19</sup> In addition, quotas were set for each of the census districts and for gender.

When they were contacted by NRG, respondents were informed that their participation was completely voluntary and, if they chose to participate, that they could withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. They were also told that they could decline to answer any question and end the interview at any time. Respondents were further informed that their identity would be kept confidential by BC Stats, as guaranteed under Section 9 of the *Statistics Act*.

## Survey Response

Of the 17,867 potential respondents in the initial sample, 14,418 were deemed out-of-scope (i.e., the phone number was illegitimate or the person was unreachable).<sup>20</sup> In total, 765 eligible voters completed the survey, providing an overall response rate of 22% (see

Table 17).<sup>21</sup>

BC Stats calculated the margin of error for the key question “Using a 5-point scale where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement: *I know what I need to do to vote in a provincial election.*” (see Table 17). The majority of survey respondents (88.9%) indicated agreement with this statement (by giving a ‘4’ or ‘5-Strongly Agree’ rating). The resulting margin of error was  $\pm 2.2$  percentage points at the 95% confidence level. This indicates that if the survey was repeated numerous times with the same sample size, 19 times out of 20 the proportion of respondents who agreed that they know what they need to do to vote in a provincial election would be between 86.7% and 91.1%.

**Table 17: Response Rate and Margin of Error**

In-Scope	Initial Sample	Out-of-Scope	Refusals	Respondents	Response Rate	Key Question*	Margin of Error
3,449	17,867	14,418	2,684	765	22%	88.9%	$\pm 2.2$ pts

\* Proportion of respondents who gave a score of ‘4’ or ‘5-Strongly Agree’ when asked: “Using a 5-point scale where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement... *I know what I need to do to vote in a provincial election.*”

<sup>20</sup> Records were deemed out-of-scope for the following reasons—the number given was: on the internal NRG Research Do-Not-Call list, a business number, a fax/modem number, a wrong number, not in service; when the number was called: there was no answer, the person was not available during survey period, there was a language barrier, or the scheduled call back could not be completed.

<sup>21</sup> The response rate is the number of respondents divided by the number of individuals considered in-scope. In contrast, the completion rate is the number of completed surveys divided by the number of calls made:  $765 \div 17867 = 4\%$ .