'Exploring the Voter Journey in the Context of Jersey: Engagement, Barriers and Recommendations'

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13th June 2023

Author Bio

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Author Publication List - [Recent Studies]

- Pich, C. and Reardon, J. (2023), ''A huge political experiment' – exploring the Political Brand Positioning of political parties in Jersey from an internal-external perspective". The conference was organized by Cranfield Management School, UK and the Journal of Marketing Communications. The paper won the 'Best Working Paper Award 2023'.
- Pich, C. and Reardon, J. (2023), "A Changing Political Landscape: The 2022 General Election in Jersey", Journal of Small States and Territories, November 2023, 6 (2).
- Poorrezaei, M. Pich C., Armannsdottir G., Branco-Illodo, I. and Harvey J., (2023), "Exploring Young Voter Engagement and Journey Mapping across Political Events2, International Journal of Market Research, DOI: 10.1177/14707853231151890.
- Pich, C. (2022), "The Duality of Boris Johnson's Political Brand Identity", In Kitchen, P. and Tourky, M. (2020). Integrated Marketing Communications: A Global Brand-Driven Approach, 2nd edition (2022), Palgrave MacMillan, pp 233-235.
- Reardon, J. and Pich, C. (2021), "The strangest election in the world? The October 2020 general election in Guernsey", Journal of Small States & Territories, 4(1), 137-156.
- Pich, C. Armannsdottir, G. Dean, D. Spry, L. and Jain, V. (2020), "Problematizing the presentation and reception of political brands: The strategic and operational nature of the political brand alignment model", European Journal of Marketing DOI (10.1108/EJM-03-2018-0187).

*The six articles above are the most recent publications. Additional article/citations can be provided upon request.

Contents

Executive Summary

This study investigated voter engagement, attitudes, and perceptions associated with the political system and electoral process in the context of Jersey from the perspective of islanders. Further, this study explored the voter journey and identified barriers of voter engagement. Finally, this study highlighted short-term and long-term recommendations that could be adopted to strengthen voter engagement. Following a recruitment drive, thirteen focus group discussions and five one-to-one interviews were carried out from November 2022 to February 2023. In total, 59 participants engaged with this project. This project was led by an independent researcher (Dr Christopher Pich) from Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University who carried out all focus group discussions and one-to-one interviews. Dr Christopher Pich did not/does not work for any political party, independent candidate or research organisation from Jersey. Data collection ceased when common themes were identified, and no new themes or dimensions were uncovered. All focus group discussions and one-to-one interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed resulting in 725 pages of text. All transcripts were thematically analysed by the independent researcher (Dr Christopher Pich).

The key findings from this report are summarised below.

- The voter journey is complex and dynamic.
- The voter journey is subject to change for example many engaged voters revealed a sense of growing frustration, cynicism, and disconnection with the political system and/or electoral process, which could lead to disengagement in future elections.
- Similarly, this study also demonstrates that several previously disengaged voters re-engaged with the electoral process.
- This demonstrates that people can meander between engagement-disengagement from election to election and this reinforces that it is crucial to continue to monitor this dynamic journey and engagement levels of voters.
- 59% of participants voted in Jersey's General Election of June 2022
- 41% of participants did not vote in Jersey's General Election of June 2022. A variety of reasons were put forward by participants for not voting including ineligibility, illness, off-island on vacation, perceived irrelevance, disillusion and disconnect with the electoral process and political system.
- Of the non-voters (in June 2022), 75% of participants stated they would vote in future elections compared with 25% of participants stating they would not vote in future elections.
- Participants adopted a range of methods to support their decision-making process in the 2022 General Election ranging from traditional methods such as hustings and manifestoes published in the Jersey Evening Post (JEP) and digital methods such as social media platforms.
- Participants revealed a variety of reasons for engaging with the electoral process (voting), including voting brings about 'change', part of civic duty and demonstrates a healthy democratic society.

- Participants recited that it is important to 'stand up or shut up' and failure to take part in the democratic process 'forfeits your right to complain'.
- Participants argued that 'Jersey people and Channel Islanders for 5 years we lost the right to voter' during the occupation and people have 'fought for the right to vote' (P2FG3) and this should not be forgotten.
- Many barriers of engagement were identified including the perceived irrelevance and impact of politics, the political system and/or engaging in the electoral process and political issues, the calibre of candidates-politicians, the confusing nature of the electoral process, lack of differentiation of candidates-politicians, and a transient-divided population.
- Eight recommendations are presented and include a series of short-term and long-term strategies and initiatives that should be debated and potentially adopted by elected officials. Some of the strategies and initiatives could easily be adopted by the Jersey Electoral Authority well ahead of the 2026 General Election. However, other recommendations may require a change in legislation and may have to be introduced over a long-term period.
- The eight recommendations include 1) designing-implementing tailored education-civic programmes targeted towards different groups including newly, young voters, registered voters, newly qualified voters, returning islanders, apathetic voters and engaged voters. 2) Create a positive culture for voting/engaging in the electoral process. 3) The introduction of 'myth buster campaigns' to address misperceptions and raise awareness of misunderstood barriers of engagement. 4) Support and resources for new candidates and campaigns to encourage a diversity of candidates standing in the States. 5) Consider the introduction of mandatory voting. 6) Introduce creative and eye-catching omnichannel strategies and tactics to communicate the importance of engagement and impact of politics during and outside elections. 7) Continue with political reform. 8) Finally, ongoing independent research should be carried out on a routine basis to monitor the attitudes, feelings, perceptions, and trends associated with voter engagement, disengagement, and re-engagement. This long-term approach will ensure appropriate strategies and tactics and programmes are introduced to maintain engagement, encourage re-engagement, and continue to reach out to disengaged voters.
- This report acknowledges that strategies and tactics should be designed to reach out to disengaged voter with the aim of engagement or re-engagement. However, it is important remember that maintaining and appealing to currently engaged voters is important as this report identified that currently engaged voters could become disengaged, disconnected and disenchanted if neglected.
- Policy makers should not forget to continue reaching out to engaged voters. Otherwise, the strategies and initiatives introduced to appeal to disengaged voters may be counterproductive particularly if engaged voters become disengaged in the future, which would have an adverse impact on voter turnout in future elections.

Introduction

Despite it being emphasised that the *voter experience* is a key factor for political parties to win elections (Pickard 2019; Sloam and Henn 2017), *voter engagement*, as an important pillar of this approach, has received little attention from scholars (Poorrezaei et al. 2023). Further, *voter engagement* represents a complex and dynamic area of study. For example, researchers have acknowledged that voter engagement involves not only behavioural but also emotional and cognitive dimensions and different levels of engagement. In addition, voters often develop their political attitudes, feelings and behaviour through time and embark on a reflective journey often transitioning from different levels of engagement across political events, which in turn can impact engagement at future political events (Harrison 2020; Poorrezaei et al. 2023; Russell et al. 2002; Sloam and Henn 2017). Understanding voter engagement over time is crucial for researchers and practitioners as it has the potential to identify strategies and solutions to address the rise in apathy, cynicism and disillusion with the electoral process (Pich and Reardon 2023; Simons 2016). Therefore, further research is needed to investigate how voters engage with political events, identify barriers of engagement and explore their (dis)engagement with the political process, (Lees-Mashment 2019; Pich and Reardon 2023; Pickart 2019, Poorrezaei et al. 2023).

The Crown Dependency of Jersey served to contextualise this study and was selected for several reasons. Firstly, Jersey's General Election on 22nd June 2022 was historic. In the first election since wide-ranging reforms to the island's voting system were implemented, ninety-two candidates contested the forty-nine seats in the island's States Assembly. For the first time, voters had a choice of four political parties to vote for. Chief minister John Le Fondre lost his seat, alongside ten other high profile and long-serving members; twenty-one first time deputies were elected. Beatrix Poree became Jersey's first minority ethnic deputy, women made up fifty one percent of newly elected deputies, and on 27 June Kristina Moore became the island's first female chief minister. A recognisably centre-left party doubled its representation from five to ten seats, whilst the three other parties, a combination of centrist and centre-right groupings, failed to make any significant breakthroughs in a political landscape where the States Assembly would still be dominated by thirty-five independents. Table 1 [below] provides a broad overview of the outcome of the 2022 General Election.

Party	2018 General Election	2022 General Election
Independent	44	35
Reform Jersey	5	10
Liberal Conservatives	Party not formed	2
Jersey Alliance	Party not formed	1
Progress Party	Party not formed	1

Table 1: Distribution of the 49 seats in the States of Jersey Assembly – (www.vote.je)

Secondly, turnout at the 2022 General Election was also slightly lower than the 2018 General Election. For example, turnout for the 2022 General Election [Deputy elections] was 41.6%, down from 42.3% in 2018 (www.vote.je). Therefore, the consistent low turnout in elections continues to be a key issue that needs to be considered and addressed to strengthen

engagement at future political events/elections. Subsequently, this study aimed to investigate the voter journey and engagement from the perspective of islanders in the context of Jersey.

Research Objectives

- o To investigate voter engagement, attitudes and perceptions associated with politics and the political process in the context of Jersey.
- o To explore the voter journey and identify barriers of voter engagement [non-engagement]
- o To highlight short-term and long-term recommendations to strengthen voter engagement

Research Design

As this study aimed to investigate the voter journey and engagement from the perspective of islanders in the context of Jersey, a qualitative interpretive methodological approach was adopted. A qualitative interpretive methodology was an appropriate approach as it enables researchers' to inductively recover and gather rich information to deepen our understanding of the subject area (Singh 2015; Trochim and Donnelly 2007). Indeed, a qualitative interpretive approach 'is committed to understanding social phenomena from the actor's own perspective' (Taylor and Bogdam 1984:2) and endeavours to explore the meaning attributed to situations, experiences, behaviours, perceptions and associations (Gambetti et al. 2015).

Two methods were adopted as part of this study – focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. *Focus group* discussions often referred to as group-based interviews served as the principal method for this study as they are 'unpredictable…organic in nature' (Bloor et al. 2001:19), ideal for exploratory research and have the ability to explore feelings, reveal experiences, uncover associations and identify attitudes (Daymon and Holloway 2011). In addition, political practitioners regularly use focus group discussions to capture insight into attitudes and perceptions of political parties, party leaders and policies. *Semi-structured interviews* served as the second method for this study. Semi-structured interviews are ideal to explore, discover and generate a deep enquiring conversation about a topic at hand on a one-to-one basis and are 'potentially a Pandora's box generating endlessly various and abundant data' (McCracken 1988:12). Further, a small sample of semi-structured interviews were carried as the method provided accessibility for participants who do not feel comfortable taking part in the group-based interviews. Focus groups and semi-structured interviews were carried out in person (face-to-face) in Jersey from November 2022 to February 2023. Table 2 provides the sample profile for all participants in this study.

Focus Group	Age group	Dates	Place of birth	Eligible to vote in June 2022	Voted in June 2022?
FG1					
P1FG1	65-74	10/11/22	Jersey	Yes	Yes
P2FG1	65-74	10/11/22	Germany	Yes	Yes
P3FG1	75+	10/11/22	UK	Yes	Yes
P4FG1	35-44	10/11/22	Canada	Yes	Yes
P5FG1	65-74	10/11/22	Jersey	Yes	Yes
P6FG1	55-64	10/11/22	UK	Yes	No
FG2					
P1FG2	25-34	10/11/22	Jersey	Yes	Yes
P2FG2	55-64	10/11/22	Jersey	Yes	No
P3FG2	55-64	10/11/22	Jersey	Yes	Yes
P4FG2	35-44	10/11/22	Romania	Yes	No
FG3					
P1FG3	55-64	30/11/22	Jersey	Yes	Yes
P2FG3	65-74	30/11/22	England	Yes	Yes
P3FG3	35-44	30/11/22	Jersey	Yes	Yes
P4FG3	55-64	30/11/22	Jersey	Yes	Yes
P5FG3	18-24	30/11/22	Jersey	Yes	No
FG4					
P1FG4	65-74	01/12/22	Jersey	Yes	Yes
P2FG4	18-24	01/12/22	Jersey	No	No
P3FG4	55-64	01/12/22	England	Yes	Yes
P4FG4	55-64	01/12/22	Jersey	Yes	Yes
P5FG4	18-24	01/12/22	Wales	Yes	Yes
FG5					
P1FG5	55-65	01/12/22	Jersey	Yes	Yes
P2FG5	55-64	01/12/22	Jersey	Yes	Yes
P3FG5	35-44	01/12/22	Jersey	Yes	Yes
P4FG5	35-44	01/12/22	Germany	Yes	Yes
P5FG5	55-65	01/12/22	Jersey	Yes	Yes
FG6					
P1FG6	35-44	8/12/22	England	Yes	Yes – 1st time
P2FG6	55-65	8/12/22	England	Yes	Yes
P3FG6	55-65	8/12/22	Jersey	Yes	Yes
P4FG6	55-65	8/12/22	Jersey	Yes	Yes
P5FG6	65-74	8/12/22	Jersey	Yes	Yes
FG7					
P1FG7	55-65	8/12/22	Jersey	Yes	Yes
P2FG7	55-65	8/12/22	England	Yes	Yes
P3FG7	45-54	8/12/22	Jersey	Yes	No - Personal
P4FG7	55-65	8/12/22	Jersey	Yes	Yes
FG8					
P1FG8	45-55	8/12/22	England	Yes	Yes
P2FG8	55-65	8/12/22	Jersey	Yes	Yes
P3FG8	55-65	8/12/22	Jersey	Yes	Yes
FG9					

P1FG9	55-65	22/2/23	Jersey	Yes	No
P2FG9	35-44	22/2/23	England	Yes	Yes
FG10					
P1FG10	18-24	23/2/23	Jersey	No	No
P2FG10	18-24	23/2/23	England	No	No
P3FG10	35-44	23/2/23	Poland	No	No
FG11					
P1FG11	17	24/2/23	Jersey	No	No
P2FG11	17	24/2/23	Jersey	No	No
P3FG11	17	24/2/23	Jersey	No	No
P4FG11	17	24/2/23	Jersey	No	No
P5FG11	17	24/2/23	England	No	No
P6FG11	17	24/2/23	Jersey	No	No
FG12					
P1FG12	25-34	25/2/23	Jersey	No	No
P2FG12	25-34	25/2/23	Nigeria	No	No
P3FG12	25-34	25/2/23	Zimbabwe	No	No
FG13					
P1FG13	55-65	25/2/23	Scotland	Yes	No
P2FG13	25-34	25/2/23	Nigeria	No	No
P3FG13	45-54	25/2/23	England	No	No
Interview 1	75+	23/2/23	England	Yes	Yes
Interview 2	75+	23/2/23	Jersey	Yes	No
Interview 3	55-65	23/2/23	Jersey	Yes	Yes
Interview 4	83	24/2/23	Jersey	No	No
Interview 5	45-54	25/2/23	Madeira	Yes	Yes

Table 2: Profile of Sample

Participants were recruited via several approaches. Firstly, an overview of the project and participant information was communicated on the vote.je website and social media platforms, posters placed in prominent positions in shops, restaurants, and cafes across Jersey. Secondly, awareness of the project and information how to get involved in the project was communicated during media appearances on local radio. Third, a pop-up street stall was set up with participant information, banners, and leaflets with QR codes to encourage sign-up/participation. Participant information documentation (posters and leaflets) were also translated in various languages to encourage participation. 179 individuals expressed an interest in taking part in the study. All 179 individuals were given the opportunity to sign up to a focus group discussion and a variety of times and dates were put forward this included focus group discussions during the working week and weekend [Saturday]. In addition, a variety of times were put forward to ensure individuals could attend one of the focus group discussions for example sessions were organised for 90-120 minutes from 10am – 9pm. This was designed to make the focus group discussions as accessible and convenient as possible. If individuals did not feel comfortable with a group-based interview, a one-to-one interview was offered. Individuals were also offered the option of an online one-to-one interview if required. 59 out of 179 individuals proceeded and confirmed participation. In total, thirteen focus group discussions (each lasting 90-120 minutes) and five one-to-one interviews (each lasting 60 minutes) were carried out by the researcher from 10th November 2022 to 25th

February 2023. Participants received a £25 voucher of their choice as a small thank you for their contribution and time.

All focus groups and interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed resulting in 725 pages of text. Data collection ceased when common themes were identified, and no new themes or dimensions were uncovered. To analyse the transcripts, thematic analysis was adopted as part of the analytical strategy. Thematic analysis can be seen as a flexible approach adopted by researchers to identify patterns and distinct themes in the data (Bell et al. 2019). The goal of thematic analysis is to 'construct a plausible and persuasive explanation of what is transpiring from the emergent themes, recognising again all the explanations are partial by nature, and there are always multiple ways that experiences and/or phenomena can be explained' (Butler-Kisber 2010:31). Further, this study adhered to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phased framework of thematic analysis. This simplistic framework represented a systematic process starting with familiarisation with the transcripts, followed by creating codes and developing themes, reflecting on and amending themes within and across transcripts and finally consolidating themes ahead of reporting the findings (Braun and Clarke 2006).

Key Findings

The aim of this study was to investigate the voter journey and examine voter engagement from the perspective of islanders following the 2022 General Election in Jersey. Three core themes were uncovered from the focus group discussions and interviews including *the dynamic journey of voters, barriers of engagement,* and *key recommendations to improve voter engagement* highlighted in figure 1 (below). The dynamic journey theme was also divided into several related yet distinct several sub-themes including *retrospective, current and prospective engagement, did you vote in 2022, how did you vote in 2022,* and *why did you vote*. The findings section will be followed by a concise conclusion section which will also set out areas for further research.
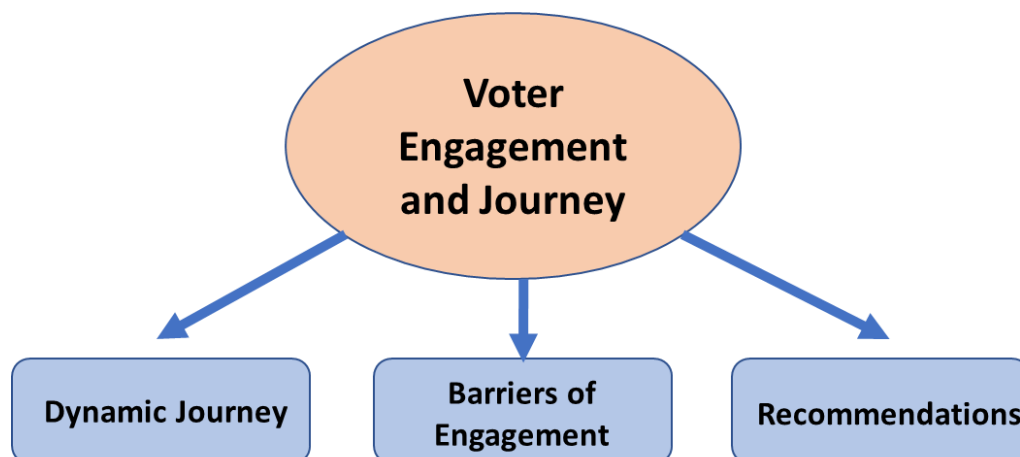

Figure 1 – Three Themes uncovered from focus group discussions and interviews

Retrospective, current and prospective engagement

Most participants revealed personal first-hand accounts about their retrospective, current and prospective voting habits. This served as sub-theme one. Each participant provided a detailed narrative their journey often recalling their 'first election' and often revealed how they voted and how they changed their voting habits from election to election [is some cases elections on island and off island]. For instance, one voter (55-65 years) revealed that they had not voted for over forty years and after voting in their '20s' stopped voting due to 'pressures of work, family life and other priorities' (P1FG9). However, prior the 2022 General Election, the participant declared that she was all set to vote although found the electoral system and process 'complicated, overwhelming and candidates underwhelming' (P1FG9). This resulted in the participant abstaining from voting in June 2022. Nevertheless, the participant highlighted that they had recently retired, 'felt guilty about not voting' and it was their mission to re-engage with the electoral process and vote in the 2026 General Election as they conceded it was important to vote and 'have your say' (P1FG9).

The second example of the dynamic and emotive journey was revealed by a lifelong voter and one that had traditionally always voted for independent candidates and centre-right candidates. For instance, the participant voted for 'Reform candidate. I voted for her, and it was the first time I voted for a Reform candidate. She was brilliant. She spoke from the heart, she did not have any notes, she convinced me she was the right person. She wanted to work collaboratively. But her real focus was people like you [referring to the story of a fellow participant] in your circumstances and I was going around telling people "you need to listen to that girl because she has the right ideas"...she came across with passion, and one thing you need to do in politics is to have some passion, but it has to be genuine passion' (P1FG7). Further, this participant provided emotive and cognitive rationale to his voting journey, and this illustrates the changeable nature of voting habits. Therefore, most participants provided detailed insight into their voting journey or rationale for disengaging with the electoral process. This in turn highlighted the complexity, dynamic and multifaceted nature of the voter journey.

Did you vote in 2022?

The second sub-theme identified from the transcripts focused on ascertaining if individuals voted in 2022. This point of discussion was not designed to determine *how* participants voted for example the line of questioning did not seek to know the candidate or party participants voted for. However, this information was often revealed freely by participants as they explained how they engaged at the ballot box. Table 3 presents the how participants voted [or not] at the 2022 General Election.

	Percentage	Number of Participants
Voted in June 2022 GE	59%	35
Did not vote in June 2022 GE	41%	24
Of non-voters	75% - Yes	18
- Will you vote at the next GE?	25% - No	6

Table 3: Did you vote in 2022 and will you vote at the 2026 Jersey General Election

In total, 35 (59%) of the 59 participants voted in the 2022 General Election compared with 24 (41%). Rationale for not voting in 2022, ranged from not being eligible (P5FG3; P6FG1; P1-6FG11; P2FG12; P3FG12; P2FG13; P3FG13), ill -unable to vote (P1FG13), off-island on vacation (P4FG2), 'disillusioned' (P7FG3; I2; I4), 'not my priority' (P1FG9) 'disconnected' (P2FG10; P3FG10) 'voting would make no difference' (P2FG4; P1FG10; P1FG12). One participant did not want to divulge why they had not voted in 2022 citing 'personal reasons' (P2FG2). In terms of 'eligibility' participants were either too young to vote in 2022 or islanders had not been on island for the required number of years. The participant 'off-island on vacation' was unaware that they could have taken advantage of pre-polling or postal voting and only became aware of both options during the focus group discussion from other participants. Upon hearing this, the individual argued that they feel 'frustrated' and 'annoyed' and if they had known this option was available then they would have pursued this and voted (P4FG2). In addition, the non-voters of 2022 were asked if they would vote at the next General Election, and this included 75% stating 'yes' compared with 25% stating 'no'. Rationale for non-voters voting in 2026 can be grouped into 'disillusioned-voting would make no difference'. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that there is still potential to convert non-voters (including the 25% prepared to vote in 2026) into engaged voters and this will be discussed later in the report (recommendations and conclusions).

How did you vote in 2022?

The third sub-theme identified from the analysis relates *how* participants voted. Again, the aim of this line of discussion was not to capture the candidate or party selected at the ballot box but to understand more about the decision-making processes adopted by participants. Participants adopted a range of methods to support their decision-making process in the 2022 General Election. A list of different methods/tactics used to help participants decide who to vote for can be seen in table 4 (below).

How did you make your decision on who to vote for in the 2022 GE?
Attend Hustings face-to-face and/or online
Reading the manifestoes/leaflets/campaign cards
Reading the JEP [Jersey Evening Post]
Social media platforms [including Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and Youtube]
Vote.je website
Street posters/posters in windows/stores/ restaurants
Canvassing/Door-Knocking
Talking to family and/or friends
Local radio coverage
Alignment of personal values with candidate values
Reflecting on track record of candidates/politicians
Based solely on their 'personality' and 'character'
Based on a combination of 'pledges and 'personality' [style and substance]

Table 4: How did you vote in 2022 and will you vote at the 2026 Jersey General Election

Hustings (face-to-face and/or online) and reviewing the manifestoes in the Jersey Evening Post (JEP) were revealed as the most popular methods used by voters to support their

decision-making process. Hustings were considered 'crucial' (P4FG5), and 'really important' (P4FG3), in election campaigns as they offered candidates the opportunity to 'ask questions' (P3FG1), 'interrogate candidates' (P4FG7) and allow voters to judge candidates in terms of how they responded to questions (content and delivery) and how they interacted with competitors and the audience. One participant argued the hustings were key political events as 'they allow voters to present questions to candidates, and we get to see the white of their eyes and see if they perform well' (P4FG5). However, several participants believed that hustings were 'staged events' where 'questions were often planted' (I2; I3; P2FG7) by candidates and asked by supporters in the audience. Secondly, hustings were 'not entirely useful' events as candidates are given very little time to provide meaningful and detailed responses (P1FG6). Nonetheless, most participants believed hustings (face-to-face and/or online) were informative and key political events. Reviewing the manifestoes in the JEP was considered a 'tradition' (P1FG2) in elections and 'a one-stop shop' for voters as it would provide all the necessary information on candidates and pledges (P4FG3). Voters knew where to access the manifestoes (hard print and online) as it allowed participants to have all the information in a consistent and accessible format. However, several participants discussed the believability, ambiguity, and similarity of manifestoes (P1FG1; P4FG2). Nevertheless, the manifestoes published in the JEP was considered an important election method and key point of contact with political information.

Despite hustings and manifestoes (published in the JEP) were considered significant and supportive campaign methods, the focus group discussions and interviews also revealed that some participants adopted different approaches to support their decision-making. For instance, a small proportion of participants refrained from carrying out any 'research' on candidates prior/during the election and based their decision on who to vote for on the 'track record of candidates/politicians' (P2FG1), their 'gut-instinct' (I1) or based on the 'personality-character' (I3) of candidates opposed to pledges-policies. In addition, voting for a candidate based on an 'existing friendship' (P2FG3), 'familiarity' (P6FG1), 'word-of-mouth' (P3FG4) or an 'established connection' (P1FG7) were other common reasons. Further, 'starting with the least-worst option' and removing prospective candidates until a final list of desired candidates was determined was another strategy followed by three participants (P4FG7; P1FG13). It was also highlighted that over half of the self-proclaimed engaged voters would take time to arrive at their final decision on who to vote for – often spanning several weeks. Alternatively, the other half of engaged voters claimed to have a firm idea of who to vote for before the start of the General Election campaign. Finally, only a small number of participants (two) acknowledged they had made their decision 'last-minute' (I1) in the voting booth with one stating even at that late stage they 'still didn't know who to vote for' and cast their vote on familiarity of the candidate's 'name' and 'character' rather than pledges-policies (P2FG5; I5). Nevertheless, over half of the engaged voters stated that style and substance (personality-character and pledges) were important factors in shaping their decision of who to vote for.

Interestingly, many of the disengaged participants (including the 'disillusioned' - P7FG3; I2; I4, 'disconnected' - P2FG10; P3FG10, and 'voting would make no difference' P2FG4; P1FG10) did carry out some form of research into the election, candidates and/or political issues such as

Pich, C. (2023). 'Exploring the Voter Journey in the Context of Jersey: Engagement, Barriers and Recommendations'

reading some of the manifestoes, watching some of the YouTube videos and keeping up to date with the election campaign coverage. This in turn demonstrates some cognitive and emotional engagement however behavioural disengagement (voting). Therefore, this demonstrates that the voter journey is dynamic, complex, and structured around cognitive and emotive characteristics.

Why did you Vote?

The fourth sub-theme uncovered from the focus group discussions and interviews related to why participants voted in June 2022 and engaged in the electoral process. Some key rationale uncovered from the focus group discussions and interviews can be seen in figure 2 (below).
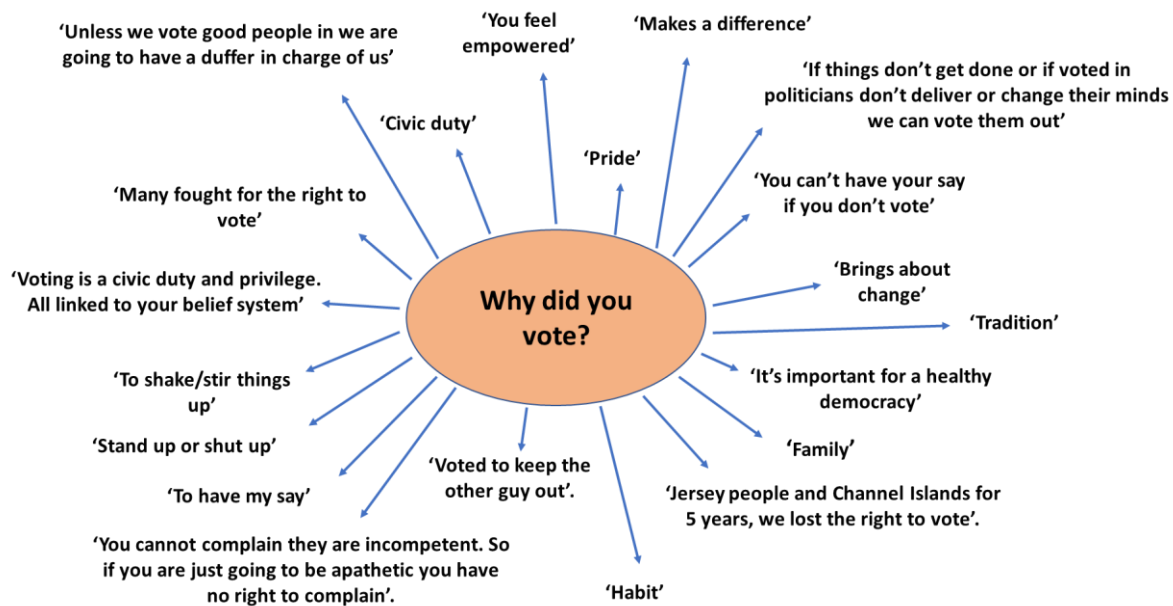
Figure 2 – Why did you/do you vote?

Participants revealed a variety of reasons for voting ranging from 'it is important to have my say' (P3FG13), voting brings about 'change' (P3FG10), and part of civic duty and a healthy democratic society were common points conveyed across discussions. In addition, participants across focus groups often recited that it is important to 'stand up or shut up' (P1FG2) and failure to take part in the democratic process forfeits your right to complain about the outcome or comment on decisions taken by elected officials. For example, 'So if you are just going to be apathetic you have no right to complain' (P1FG13). Further, several participants passionately argued that 'Jersey people and Channel Islanders for 5 years we lost the right to voter' during the occupation (P5FG1) and people have 'fought for the right to vote' (P2FG3) and this needs to be remembered and not forgotten. However, this study also uncovered that several engaged voters (individuals that voted in 2022) highlighted that in recent years they had started to become 'disconnected' (P3FG7), 'cynical of politicians' (P6FG1), and 'disillusioned' with the electoral process (P1FG1; P3FG4). Further, it was reported that voter 'apathy is on the rise' (P2FG9) and is a result various factors including the perception of a lack of 'accountability', 'transparency' (I3; P1FG13; P3FG13) and candidates

'sweettalk people into promising all the great things' (P1FG2). This should be of concern to policy makers as this represents a potential change to future voting intention and voter engagement in future elections. The next section provides more insight into voter disengagement.

Barriers of Engagement – why don't people vote?

The final sub-theme which underpinned the dynamic voter journey relates to barriers of engagement and provides understanding as to why people don't vote. Despite most participants revealing they had voted in 2022 and would potentially vote again in 2026, participants (including voters and non-voters) revealed many barriers of engagement illustrated in figures 3, 4 and 5.

Some of the key points for disengagement can be grouped together in terms of the *perceived irrelevance and impact of politics and political issues, the calibre of candidates-politicians, the confusing nature of the electoral process, lack of differentiation of candidates-politicians,* and *a transient-divided population*. Further, some of the points below also feature as part of potential recommendations and represent strategies to encourage-maintain engagement and/or re-engage voters and this is discussed later in the report.
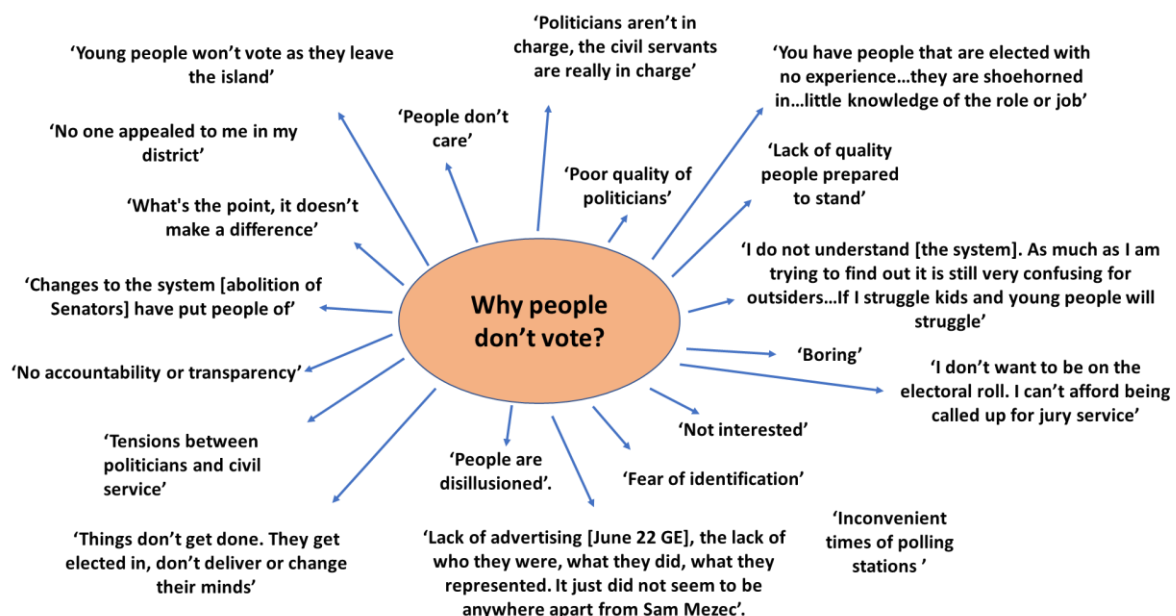

Figure 3 – Why people don't vote?

More specifically, this study uncovered participants believed 'voting doesn't make a difference…it doesn't affect me' (P1FG2), 'voting does not count' (P1FG13), 'voters do not care' (P6FG1) and the island will continue to function without engaging in elections (P4FG11). Similarly, 'disengagement [is] high unless people can see the personal relevance' (P4FG2).

Further, it was acknowledged that there was growing cynicism across the island (P1FG1) especially as there was a growing perception that once elected, politicians fail to make decisions or back-track on policies or pledges already agreed (P4FG3) for example there are 'so many people who feel their vote will not make a difference…so what's the point' (P2FG1). In addition, several participants also argued that politics and voting has very little impact on individuals and is irrelevant (P2FG4; P5FG11). This point was expanded on by two non-Jersey born participants (P4FG5; I5) and one Jersey born participant (P1FG9). It was revealed that many non-Jersey born people especially from the Portuguese, Italian, Spanish and Polish communities do not 'plan to stay in Jersey' and as Jersey was not 'home…what's the point in voting' (I5).
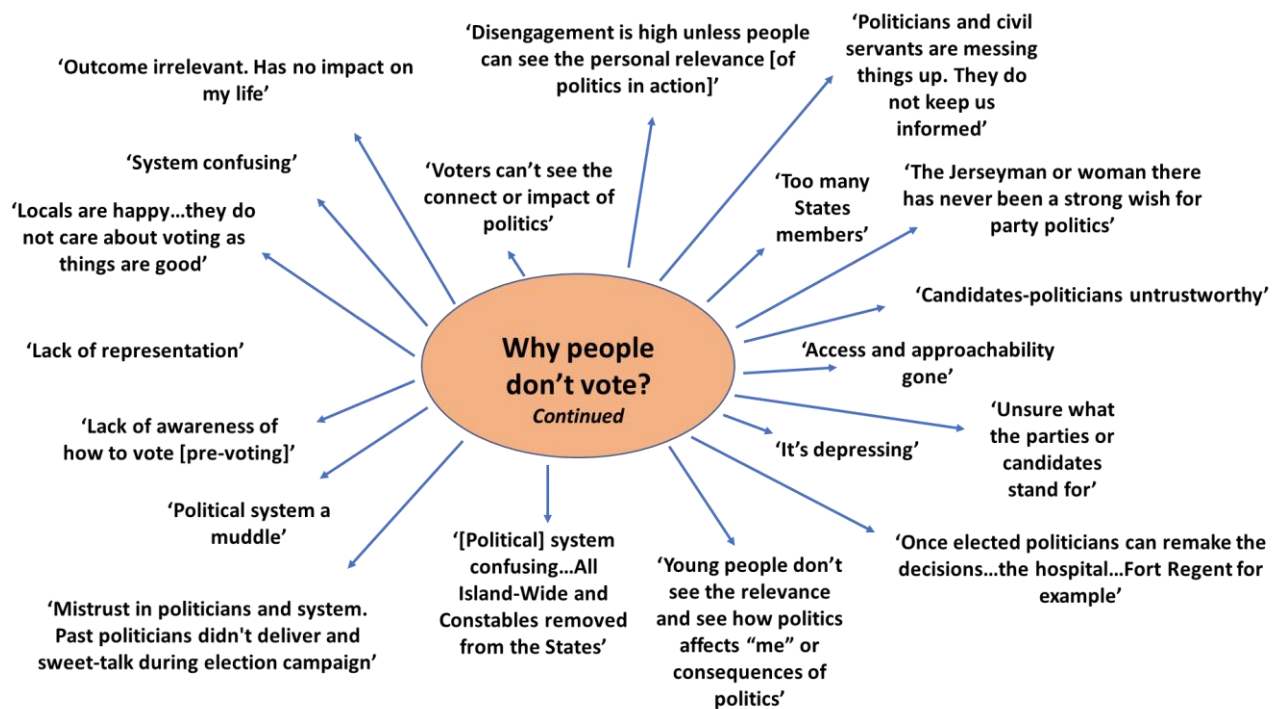

Figure 4 – Why people don't vote?

The calibre of candidates-politicians was also recorded as a common factor for participants disengaging with the electoral process. For instance, participants in most focus groups and interviews argued the rise of 'career politicians' (P1FG13), the limited number of 'quality of candidates' (P3FG7; P1FG3) with little knowledge, experience, or skills suitable for the elected office (P4FG1). In addition, it was argued that at there is a 'poor quality of politicians' (P3FG1) in the States who 'do not do their homework or are briefed properly' (P3FG1), have little experience of public office (P1FG1) and are 'shoehorned' into ministerial positions after the election (P3FG1; I1; P3FG4). Several candidates were also considered 'insincere', not genuine (P1FG7) and inaccessible (P1FG7).

Another key factor identified from the transcripts linked to the perceived confusion with Jersey's electoral system and electoral process. For instance, it was argued that 'from my point of view, I do not understand Constables, Deputies Ministers. I do not understand the difference. I do not understand the system. As much as I am trying to find out it is still very confusing' (P6FG1). Similar points were made by participants across focus groups including the 'system is confusing' (P2FG2), 'the whole electoral system is madness and baffling…Jersey's system is completely bonkers…outsiders do not understand the culture…people do not understand how it works…complicated different types of politicians. Constable's baffling whereas Senators straightforward' (P2FG9), and 'I do not completely understand the politics of Jersey…I do not understand the system' (P3FG13). 'In the UK, voting is straight forward [political parties communicate a clear offering in terms of policies, values and ideology]…do not understand the system in Jersey' (P1FG9). A small number of non-Jersey born participants revealed that they desired to 'know more' about the system and process, they desired to become engaged but didn't want to come across as 'stupid' if they were to ask for guidance or support (P6FG1; P3FG10; I5). Misunderstanding and confusion was also associated with candidates-politicians and political parties. Many participants argued that candidates-politicians and/or political parties lacked clear positioning in terms of policy, values and what they 'stand for' or represent (FG2; FG3; FG10; FG13).
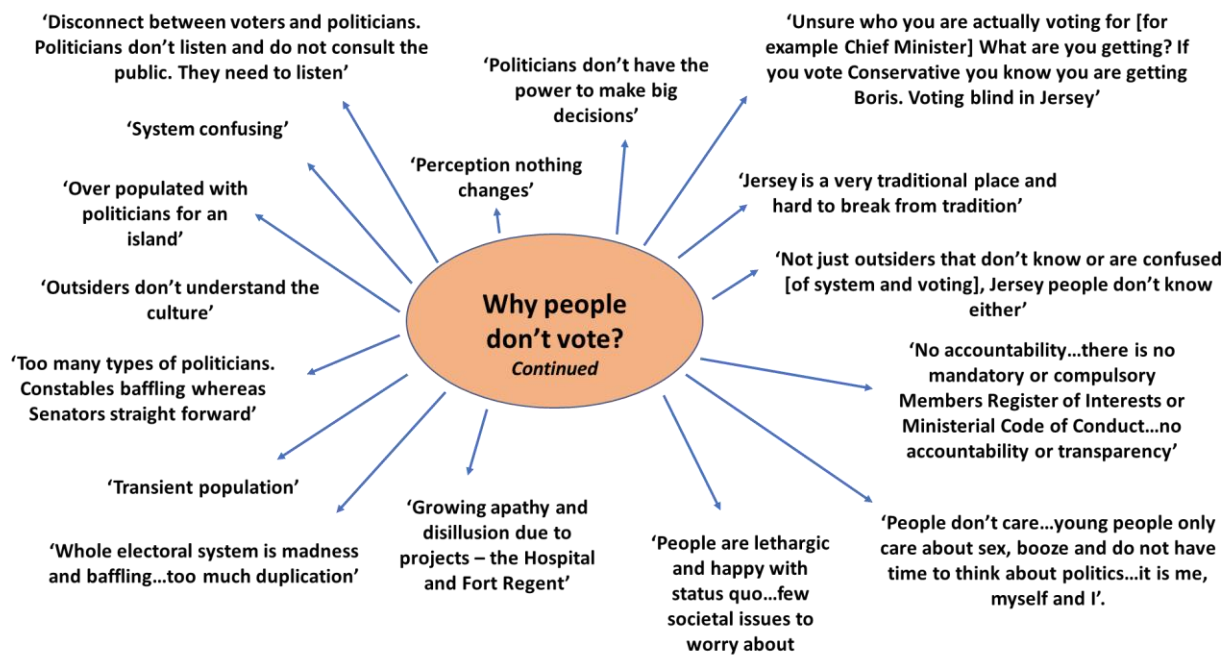

Figure 5 – Why people don't vote?

The final notable factor reported why people fail to engage and vote in elections was due to the transient-divided population of Jersey. Many participants across focus groups and interviews argued that groups of people do not see Jersey as their long-term 'home' and fail

to establish community links across the island. The distinct groups that make up the 'transient' population ranged from young islanders who believe there is no future on island as the 'young (islanders) won't vote as they will leave the island, (they think) what's the point and don't care' (P6FG1), the 'young do not really see the relevance' (P4FG2) and 'I'm not planning on staying so no need to get involved' (P3FG11). The 'transient population…many do not see Jersey as their home' (P1FG9). The transient population also includes non-Jersey born individuals that are on island for '3-5 years' in tourism, hospitality, or finance positions and will 'probably move on…they never think of Jersey as their home' (P1FG8). 'Many people do not plan on staying in Jersey', do not consider Jersey 'their home…what's the point' in voting' (I5). However, one [Portuguese] participant revealed that they arrived in Jersey over 30 years ago. The participant had not planned to stay on island and over the years at built up a successful business, has a strong standing within the local community and has now come to regard Jersey as 'home' (I5). Further, up until the 2022 General Election, the participant shared similar feelings and experiences about engaging such as a belief that her 'vote didn't count, didn't understand the system…experienced a lack of connection and visibility of candidates-politicians…didn't know who to vote for' (I5). However, the participant revealed they always had a strong belief in 'the importance of voting' but failed to actively engage and vote. The transition from inactive to active engagement came about following a visit from a candidate in 2022. The candidate 'called in to her business, introduced themselves…appeared genuine and established a personal connection' (I5). This demonstrates the importance of candidates-politicians reaching out to voters and establishing a personal connection. The participant concluded that they would continue to vote in future elections and for politicians not to underestimate 'visibility in the community', 'building long-term relationships' and the potential of the 'human-touch' (I5).

This section revealed deep insight into the dynamic nature of voter journey structured around five sub-themes including *retrospective, current and prospective engagement, did you vote in 2022, how did you vote in 2022, why did you vote in 2022,* and *barriers of engagement - why don't people vote*. As this section demonstrated, some journeys spanned numerous elections both on and off island and most participants often felt 'empowered' at the end of the focus group discussions and interviews. Participants believed they had been given the 'opportunity to speak out'. We must remember that the voter journey is ongoing and evolves over time and is also subject to change. The next section provides a list of potential barriers of engagement, which we have touched upon in this section. The report concludes by offering a series of key recommendations underpinned by the opinions, feelings and testimonies captured in the focus group discussions and interviews. The report concludes by offering a series of key recommendations underpinned by the opinions, feelings and testimonies captured in the focus group discussions and interviews.

Recommendations
This section sets out eight broad recommendations. The first seven recommendations were put forward by participants from the focus group discussions and one-to-one interviews designed to strengthen voter engagement in Jersey (outlined in table 5). The eighth recommendation is put forward by the author.

Recommendations – Way Forward	
1) Design and Implement Tailored Education-Civic Programmes	- **Short-term** mandatory programmes and events in schools/colleges during the election year. Education/guidance on the electoral system, roles of States members, role of Parishes and importance of voting. - **Long-term** mandatory programmes and events in schools/colleges outside the election year. System and importance of voting – relevance and impact of politics in action. Personal values and belief system. - Targeted programmes including newly registered voters, newly qualified voters, returning islanders, apathetic voters and engaged voters. - Cultural changed needed supported by the mandatory education programmes. - Personal-island-wide responsibility – reinforce that everyone has a duty to encourage voter engagement and remind friends, family, colleagues, employees etc the importance of voting.
2) Create a positive culture for Voting/Engaging	- Emphasis 'all islanders' are important, and Jersey is 'home' to an array of different groups - Time of General Election – Autumn 2026 to maximise number of people 'on island'. - Introduce Sunday voting - Extend opening times of polling stations – 7am-10pm like the UK - Introduce online voting - Invite newly eligible voters to an 'eligibility celebration event' organised each year to encourage inclusivity, emphasise 'Jersey is home for all types of islanders' [transient population] and establish a personal connection between islanders and elected officials. - Introduce the option of voting at any polling station across the island - Raise awareness of postal voting and reinforce postal voting is open to all eligible voters - Reflect and remind islanders about the heritage and right to vote – voting is a privilege - Bank Holiday for voting, however it may have the adverse effect - Supportive environment, marketing-communication strategies, and behaviours to encourage voting and get 'Jersey Talking'. - Incentivise voters/islanders to vote – a small amount from £5-£25 or prize-draw. - Reaffirm the social aspect of voting – voting with friends, family and attend post-voting events. - Candidates-politicians continue to engage inside and outside election periods to build a long-term connection with voters. and reach out to current and prospective voters
3) Myth Buster Campaigns	- Raise awareness of 'how to vote' – including pre-polling and postal voting - Reaffirm the anonymity and confidentiality of voting – cannot be traced and process of discarding voting cards - Address the perception of 'nothing changes' and 'my vote does not make a difference'.

Pich, C. (2023). 'Exploring the Voter Journey in the Context of Jersey: Engagement, Barriers and Recommendations'

	-	Introduce measures to emphasise transparency and accountability of elected officials and civil servants
4) Campaign and Support for Candidates-New States Members	-	Long-term marketing communication strategies to encourage more people standing in elections, which would lead to greater representation, diversity and inclusivity. However, support and training is needed as some new members may not be experienced in politics, ministries or processes associated with public office.
	-	Provide support and training for new/inexperienced members needed throughout lifecycle of Parliament
5) Mandatory Voting in Elections	-	Controversial recommendation across focus groups and interviews. An even split of supporters and opposes. However, if introduced then awareness and option of spoiling ballot papers needs to be communicated as an accepted [not desired] form of engagement.
6) New, eye-catching and engaging tactics during and outside elections	-	Current campaign tactics cherished yet seem to be of a begone era [door-knocking and posters]
	-	Introduce creative strategies and tactics to create energy and a buzz prior and during elections such as engaging events across the island, reintroduce campaign-battle buses-vans, 'Question Time' style broadcast on radio, online and television for prospective candidates and candidates for Chief Minister.
	-	Does not address the limited clarity, distinction, or engagement during/pre-elections.
	-	Expand current online strategies and tactics including online events [hustings and manifestoes, podcasts, social media posts etc
	-	Ensure traditional media [local television] is utilised by candidates and parties prior and during elections. Currently, traditional media [local television] seem absent from covering elections in detail.
7) Continue with Political Reform – System	-	Appetite for reform the political system to include two types of politicians – one with a focus on Island-Wide issues/responsibilities and one with a mandate for local-Parish issues/responsibilities. Roles need to be clarified, communicated to all islanders and embedded as part of the mandatory education programmes.
	-	Introduce Proportion Representation
	-	Reduce the number States Members
	-	Return of voluntary role rather than paid role [supported by expenses]. However, only a quarter of participants raised this issue.
8) Ongoing and Routine Research	-	Ongoing independent research should be carried out on a routine basis to monitor the attitudes, feelings, perceptions, and trends associated with voter engagement, disengagement and re-engagement.
	-	This will ensure appropriate strategies and tactics and programmes are introduced/maintained in order to maintain engagement, encourage re-engagement and continue to reach out to disengaged voters.

Table 5: Recommendations Identified from Focus Groups-Interviews

The eight recommendations include a series of short-term and long-term strategies and initiatives that should be debated and potentially adopted by elected officials. Some of the strategies and initiatives could easily be adopted by the Jersey Electoral Authority well ahead of the 2026 General Election for example the introduction of regular omnichannel marketing communication campaigns to remind voters *why* it is important to vote, *where* to vote, *how* to vote and '*myth-buster*' programmes to address misinterpretations and misunderstandings. However, other recommendations may require a change in legislation and may have to be introduced over a long-term period for example creating and rolling out a positive culture for voter engagement and electoral-political reform. Further, some strategies and initiatives could be seen as controversial and further research and consultation maybe needed to examine the feasibility of introducing such measures such as the introduction of online voting, mandatory-compulsory voting, and the use of incentives in elections. Nevertheless, one recommendation was prominent across all focus group discussion and interviews and positively discussed – *the design-introduction of a consistent island-wide mandatory civic education programme for schools-colleges*. For instance, participants argued 'everything starts with education' (P1FG9), 'education is key…all from an early age and all linked to civic duty' (P3FG2), and 'it has to be education' that drives a change in culture, engagement, and voter turnout and 'not only children, adults as well' (P2FG3). Further, the current on civic duty, the importance of voting and voter engagement curriculum in schools in Jersey was considered 'patchy' (P5FG3), 'inconsistent' (P1FG9), and in some cases 'non-existent' (P6FG1). Further, there was broad agreement that the introduction of tailored educational programmes on civic duty, the electoral system and voter engagement which would 'be quite useful' (P2FG13) and highly informative for people new to the island, people returning to the island, self-proclaimed disengaged voters (P2FG4; P3FG4; P3FG7), and people contemplating leaving the island in the future. Therefore, targeted, consistent, and accessible education programmes would demonstrate a move towards creating a positive long-term culture for voter engagement in Jersey.

The final recommendation (put forward by the author of this report) focuses on the importance of carrying out further and ongoing research on the topic of voter engagement and the voter journey. Voter engagement is a dynamic process which changes through time as voters change their level-degree of engagement from election to election. This research has not only highlighted there is potential to re-engage disengaged voters but also the chance that engaged voters could become disengaged in future elections due to growing apathy, cynicism, and disenchantment with the political and electoral process. This should be of concern for policy makers in Jersey. Therefore, ongoing independent research should be carried out on a routine basis to monitor the attitudes, feelings, perceptions, and trends associated with voter engagement, disengagement, and re-engagement. This long-term approach will ensure appropriate strategies and tactics and programmes are introduced to maintain engagement, encourage re-engagement, and continue to reach out to disengaged voters. Policy makers could adopt the six staged model entitled the '*voter engagement and journey mapping framework*' developed by authors Porrezzaei et al. (2023: 25) as a guide of how to gain access into the hidden world of the voter journey and periodically explore levels of engagement and audit the success (or not) of engagement programmes and initiatives

across different political events. The '*voter engagement and journey mapping framework*' is visualised in figure 6 and outlined in table 6.
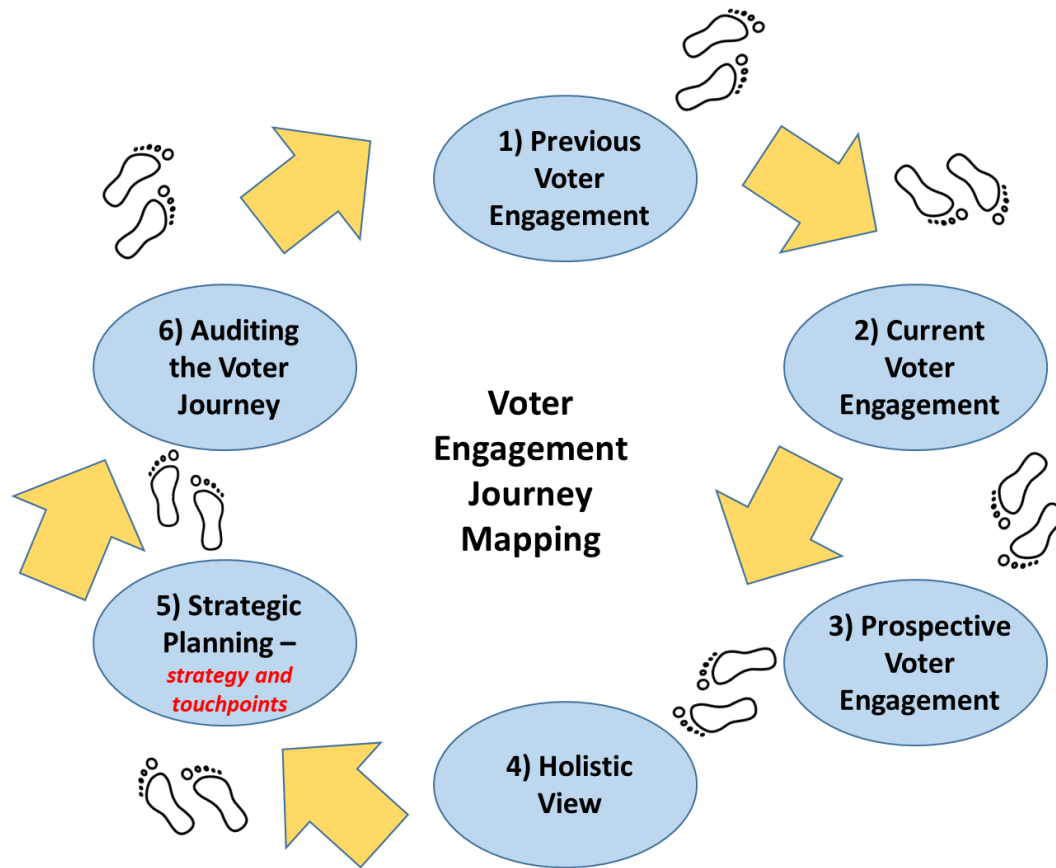

Figure 6 - The Six Staged Voter Engagement and Journey Mapping Framework developed from Porrezzaei et al. (2023: 25)

Steps	Key Components	Eight Characteristics of Engagement
Step 1 – Previous Engagement	Assessment of the previous engagement journey of voters in relation to the eight characteristics of engagement: *Responsive, Latent, Cynical, Disaffected, Instinctive, Reluctant, Floating, and Disengaged.*	**Responsive** - A responsive person is defined as being fully engaged cognitively, emotionally, and behaviourally with the political event.

Latent - A latent person is defined as being cognitively and emotionally engaged, but not behaviourally engaged.

Cynical - A cynical person is defined as someone cognitively engaged who fails to participate in behavioural engagement and lacks a discernible emotional response to any of the possible political outcomes. |
| Step 2 – Current Engagement | Stage two focuses on identifying the current engagement journey of voters in relation to the eight characteristics of engagement: *Responsive, Latent, Cynical, Disaffected, Instinctive, Reluctant, Floating, and Disengaged.* | **Disaffected** - A disaffected voter is defined as a person engaged emotionally, but not cognitively or behaviourally

Instinctive - An instinctive voter is defined as being behaviourally and emotionally engaged but lacking a clear and reasoned position. |
| Step 3 – Prospective Engagement | Stage three focuses on identifying the prospective engagement journey of voters in relation to the eight characteristics of engagement: *Responsive, Latent, Cynical, Disaffected, Instinctive, Reluctant, Floating, and Disengaged.* | **Reluctant** - The reluctant voter is defined as being behaviourally and cognitively engaged, but lacking an emotional commitment to any outcome in the political event

Floating - The floating engagement persona is defined as a person that exhibits some behavioural engagement but lacks cognitive and emotional engagement.

Disengaged - An individual who lacks cognition, behaviour or emotion in terms of political activity and engagement. |
| Step 4 – Holistic View of the Voter Journey | Stage four focuses on a holistic view of the voter journey reflecting on stages one, two and three. Stage four will also reveal engagement, disengagement, voter apathy and notion of civic responsibility. | This will indicate if and how the voter journey has changed over time in reference to the eight characteristics of engagement and provide a detailed understanding of how the first-hand experiences and touchpoints have impacted the voter journey. In addition, this will reveal whether voters are receptors of information, co-facilitators and/or co-creators. |

Step 5 – Strategic Planning – Operationalisation	Stage five focuses on strategic planning. This stage utilises the opportunities and addresses limitations identified from stages one to four which can be used to improve, maintain or strengthen voter engagement.	Political strategists should ensure communications/messages/brands emphasise personal impact and relevance. Further, this stage focuses on how strategists should respond to step 4. Strategists should determine whether voters will be classified as receptors of information, co-facilitators and/or co-creators in future political events. Appropriate touchpoints should be adopted to appeal and resonate with voters.
Step 6 – Auditing Voter Journey	Stage six focuses on auditing the voter journey stages one to four on a routine basis. Ideally every six to twelve months. However, the specific timeframe can be adjusted based on resources, political environment and political events.	Auditing the voter journey will support revisiting stage five and amending/refining if required. Stage six can be supported with additional primary or secondary research. Finally, stage six will reveal the consistency of engagement characteristics, highlight whether engagement characteristics need refining/updating and/or the addition of new engagement characteristics.

Table 6: Overview of the Voter Engagement and Journey Mapping Framework – reproduced from Poorrezaei et al. (2023: 26-27).

By investigating the voter journey across political events and exploring the experiences of voters in the 'political process, this in turn will provide policy makers with a greater understanding into the complexity of voter engagement and allow policy makers to maintain/strengthen engagement with citizens. In addition, policy makers will be able to adopt and apply the *voter engagement and journey mapping framework* to map out the degree of engagement-disengagement during past and present political events but also consider future political events/elections. This in turn will allow policy makers to use the framework strategically to understand and monitor the voter transition/journey and consider how they can strategically utilise political activities and tactics to improve engagement and build long-term relationships with citizens-voters. For more information on the *voter engagement and journey mapping framework* published in Porrezzaei et al. (2023: 25), please contact the author of this report – Dr Christopher Pich – <u>Christopher.pich@ntu.ac.uk</u>

Conclusions

This study aimed to investigate the voter journey and voter engagement in the context of Jersey from the perspective of islanders. More specifically, this study explored the voter engagement, attitudes and perceptions associated with politics and the political process. Second, this study identified barriers of voter engagement (non-engagement) and finally, this study highlighted a variety of short-term and long-term recommendations to strengthen voter engagement.

This report demonstrates that the voter journey is a complex, dynamic and multifaceted process and this topic deserves ongoing attention and routine investigation. The participants in this study demonstrated that voter engagement includes three dimensions (cognition, emotion and/or behaviour) and all or some of the dimensions were revealed by engaged and disengaged voters. Further, this study highlighted that the voter journey is subject to change for example many engaged voters revealed a sense of growing frustration, cynicism, and disconnection with the political process, which could lead to disengagement in future political events. Conversely, this study demonstrated that several previously disengaged voters were re-engaged into the electoral process and the potential to re-engage current disengaged voters through addressing some of the barriers identified in this study. All this demonstrates that individuals can meander between engagement-disengagement from political event to political event and it is crucial to continue to monitor this dynamic ever-changing journey. Future studies should not only maintain focus on voter engagement and the evolving nature of the voter journey however, but future studies should also consider different characteristics of voter engagement conceptualised in the *Voter Engagement and Journey Mapping Framework* (Poorrezaei et al. 2023). The voter engagement and journey mapping framework represents a mechanism comprising of six steps and eight characteristics of engagement for researchers and practitioners to gain access into the hidden world of the voter journey and periodically explore levels of engagement across political events (Poorrezaei et al. 2023). This report also wants to acknowledge that strategies and tactics should be designed to reach out to disengaged voter with the aim of engagement or re-engagement. However, it is important remember that maintaining and appealing to currently engaged voters is important as this report identified that currently engaged voters could become disengaged, disconnected and

disenchanted if neglected. Therefore, policy makers should not forget to continue reaching out to engaged voters. Otherwise, the strategies and initiatives introduced to appeal to disengaged voters may be counterproductive particularly if engaged voters become disengaged in the future, which would have an adverse impact on voter turnout in future elections.

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