



# VOTER ENGAGEMENT RESEARCH FOR STATES OF JERSEY

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# INTRODUCTION

The most recent election in Jersey revealed a challenge in encouraging voter turnout; the island-wide turnout was 43.4%, with this dropping to as low as 33.0% in one St Helier district. Although this was an increase on 2014 where turnout dropped to just 39.9%<sup>1</sup>, in previous elections, turnout has been around 45%. These low turnout figures have exposed a need for States of Jersey to gain a better understanding of voter behaviour and voter turnout in order to address any barriers to engagement with Jersey's electoral system.

The 2018 election was observed by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, who were present in Jersey from 5<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> May 2018 to review the election process ahead of a final report in July. Their preliminary report reveals that while the 2018 Jersey election was 'well executed, competitive and enabled the electorate to cast their votes in secret', the report also highlighted the 'overly complicated and cumbersome' nature of the system which may have affected voter turnout and potentially 'undermines the principle that the elections in Jersey are fully genuine'<sup>2</sup>. The report raises concerns about nomination and candidate forms, low voter turnout and the number of members elected unopposed which questions the competitiveness of the election. It also concluded that serving Members may have an 'unfair advantage' over election rivals, as they remain in office until the new Assembly is sworn in.

There is a disparity in the equality of the vote across the districts as only approximately half of the population in St Helier are registered voters as compared to the Island's rural parishes, where up to 80% of the population are registered to vote. The electoral system is criticised for voters' 'lack of understanding' as the island is divided into three forms of constituencies for public elections. There is also a huge difference in the size of the Island's parishes – from 1,752 in St Mary to 33,522 in St Helier – 'challenging the principles of equal suffrage', and whilst boundaries are regularly reviewed to reflect demographic changes, this is currently not the case in regard to Deputies' constituencies<sup>3</sup>. The make-up of the States has been a controversial subject for many years, with a number of attempts at reform and a 2012 referendum, however, no marked change to the constitution of the Assembly has been made.

Elements of the election were praised in the report, including the States Greffe's efforts to reach out to the Portuguese and Polish communities to encourage them to register and take part in the elections, and the diversity of the candidates from the Island's only political party, *Reform Jersey*. However, there is clearly a need to better grasp voters' understanding of the electoral process and what candidates stand for, levels of engagement from different communities, and the disparity in equality of voting across the rural and urban districts of Jersey.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cdn.vote.je/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Senators-Election-Statistics-1990-2014.pdf?x37420>

<sup>2</sup> [https://cdn.vote.je/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/CPA-BIMR-Final\\_Preliminary-Statement.pdf?x37420](https://cdn.vote.je/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/CPA-BIMR-Final_Preliminary-Statement.pdf?x37420), p.1

<sup>3</sup> [https://cdn.vote.je/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/CPA-BIMR-Final\\_Preliminary-Statement.pdf?x37420](https://cdn.vote.je/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/CPA-BIMR-Final_Preliminary-Statement.pdf?x37420), p.3

# METHODOLOGY

The research has followed a two-stage programme of a quantitative survey followed by qualitative interviews. Respondents in both phases of research were interviewed about their feelings towards elections generally, their experiences of the Jersey General Election Campaign in May 2018, their perceptions of the system of governing in Jersey and of the States Assembly.

**Quantitative survey:** 1,006 adults (aged 16+) living in Jersey were interviewed via telephone between 22<sup>nd</sup> August and 20<sup>th</sup> September 2018. Data were weighted to be representative of the Jersey population.

**Qualitative interviews:** 15 qualitative telephone interviews, lasting 15 minutes each, conducted with Jersey residents who are eligible to vote, but did not vote in the latest general election in May 2018. Participants were recruited separately to the quantitative survey and a spread of ages was included, to reflect the differences in voting attitudes associated with age. These interviews, by the nature of being qualitative, were free-flowing and provided an opportunity to probe respondents further about the issues that emerged from the quantitative phase of the research.

## GUIDELINES FOR THE PUBLIC USE OF SURVEY RESULTS

ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council<sup>4</sup> and abides by its rules. This commits us to the highest standards of transparency.

The BPC's rules state that all data and research findings made on the basis of surveys conducted by member organisations that enter the public domain must include reference to the following:

- The company conducting the research (ComRes)
- The client commissioning the survey
- Dates of interviewing
- Method of obtaining the interviews (e.g. in-person, post, telephone, internet)
- The universe effectively represented (all adults, voters etc.)
- The percentages upon which conclusions are based
- Size of the sample and geographic coverage.

Published references (such as a press release) should also show a web address where full data tables may be viewed, and they should also show the complete wording of questions upon which any data that has entered the public domain are based.

**All press releases or other publications must be checked with ComRes before use. ComRes requires 48 hours to check a press release unless otherwise agreed.**

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<sup>4</sup> [www.britishpollingcouncil.org](http://www.britishpollingcouncil.org)

# HEADLINE FINDINGS

This research has identified that while voter engagement is relatively low across the population of the States of Jersey, this is particularly so amongst younger people and amongst those who were not born in either Jersey or the British Isles. Both voters and non-voters express a desire for candidates which reflect their values and priorities and who they feel confident would make a difference. There is also a desire for information about the candidates to be made widely available.

Qualitative interviews with non-voters indicate that disengagement is related to the lack of education on the system and candidates, and a degree of scepticism about the difference their vote makes. That said, there was generally an interest in Jersey news and politics, suggesting that there is potential to shift this from a passive to more active engagement with current affairs.

## QUANTITATIVE SURVEY: CURRENT VOTING ENGAGEMENT IN STATES OF JERSEY

The representative survey amongst Jersey residents confirmed some internal hypotheses about the relationship between age and likelihood to vote.

- Over half of adults living in Jersey say they voted in the Jersey general election in May 2018 (55%)<sup>5</sup>.
- Approaching three quarters of 55+ year olds say they voted in the Jersey general election in May 2018 (73%), whilst only one third of 16–34-year olds say they voted (32%).
- Place of origin also has an influence on turnout; six in ten of those who were born and live in Jersey, or born elsewhere in the British Isles and live in Jersey say they voted in the Jersey general election (57% and 63% respectively), compared to one in six of those who were born in Portugal or Madeira (17%) and half of those born outside of Europe (46%).

While access to a polling station is given as the main reason for not voting in May, the public express a desire for candidates who they feel are aligned with their values and who will make a difference in their community.

- Of those who did not vote, nearly one quarter did not vote because they could not get to a polling station (23%).
- More than four in five Jersey adults would be made more likely to vote in the next election if there were candidates who better represented their values and the things that are important to them (84%). For the same proportion of Jersey adults, evidence that elected representatives can make a real difference in the community would make them more likely to vote in the next election (84%).

Non-voters express less motivation to vote and satisfaction with the current status of Jersey. However, they also express interest in having more information about the electoral process, and agree that more should be done to improve voter registration.

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<sup>5</sup> Note that our study reports a 55.3% voter turnout, compared to a 43.4% actual voting turnout. While the survey is demographically representative of the population, there may be an implicit bias towards those who voted in the recent elections, with lower participation in the survey by non-voters potentially reflective of a general disengagement amongst those who did not vote.

- Three in ten non-voters say that they are happy with how things are in Jersey and so don't care much for voting at elections compared with just one in ten voters (30% vs 8% respectively).
- Two in three voters say that everyone has a responsibility to engage with the political system irrespective of how long they have lived in Jersey compared with six in ten non-voters (66% vs 59%).
- Around one in three voters say voting should be made compulsory (32%), compared with one in four non-voters (26%).
- Non-voters are more likely to want official information about the electoral process (61%) compared with voters (52%). They are also more likely to want official information about the candidates compared with voters (67% vs 59% respectively).
- Three in four voters say more should be done to boost voter registration (74%) compared with two in three non-voters (67%).

## QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS: UNDERSTANDING ENGAGEMENT AMONGST NON-VOTERS

While most respondents express an interest in politics and the news, this interest is passive; respondents regularly consume the news but the desire to participate in political life in Jersey is low, driven by an impression that the States Assembly are feeling disconnected from the general public, and large and somewhat old-fashioned, although democratic. Respondents claim interest in the States Assembly, but are disengaged due a lack of connection with the States Assembly and low awareness of how it works. There is a need for clearer ways of informing the general public about the decision-making process and the outcomes of the States Assembly's deliberations.

The main barriers to voting for the majority of those interviewed are related to distrust of the system of governing in Jersey, a lack of connection with the issues under debate, insufficient understanding of the system, and logistical challenges in the process of voting itself. Those who received manifestos deemed them overly long and complex, door knocking was generally not welcomed and most respondents claimed not to discuss the election with their families who were also non-voters. Most respondents do not know anyone who had stood for election and claim that they would not stand themselves due to concerns that their voice would not be heard, the stigma surrounding being a politician, the lack of money on offer, the perception that the candidates are older, or lack of knowledge about the system.

Respondents suggested a number of things which might encourage more engagement in voting. They called for candidates that better represent respondents' values, and communicate these values effectively using digital and social media, or other local media. Related to this, they were also interested in clearer communication of what candidates stand for, especially given the lack of a party-political system which can allow a degree of cognitive short-cutting. Potential voters seek reassurance that their voice is regularly being heard, with an ongoing dialogue, rather than feeling that exposure to the candidates is limited to the election period.

Some also suggested practical steps which might be taken to make voting easier such as offering online voting to engage younger voters, and improve convenience and ease of voting especially for those who need to arrange a proxy vote. There was some support for compulsory voting to encourage voters to find out more about candidates, although naturally this would have to be accompanied by improved education to help people understand what they are voting for. The suggestion of offering weekend voting was met by a split response between those who would welcome it and those who were ambivalent. Respondents were also divided on the merits of moving polling stations from parish halls to

alternative locations such as supermarkets or doctor's surgeries. Whilst some potential voters felt this would be more convenient, others feel the parish halls are already very accessible.

# CURRENT VOTING ENGAGEMENT IN STATES OF JERSEY

Q. How interested would you say you are in Jersey politics?

	All%
NET: Interested	67%
NET: Not Interested	33%
Very interested	20%
Fairly interested	46%
Not very interested	19%
Not at all interested	15%
Don't know	–

Base: All Respondents (n=1,006)

- Two thirds of adults living in Jersey are interested in Jersey politics, whilst a third are not interested (67% vs 33%).
- Two in five Jersey adults who did not vote in the Jersey general election in May 2018, say they are interested in Jersey politics (41%), this compares with almost nine in ten people who did vote (87%).
- Half of 16–34 year olds say they are not interested in Jersey politics, this is significantly higher than the other age groups (16–34 51% vs 35–54 28% vs 55+ 24%).
- Three quarters of adults living in Jersey, but born elsewhere in the British Isles, are interested in Jersey politics (75%). In comparison, two thirds of adults born and living in Jersey (64%), as well as six in ten adults born in Portugal, or Madeira, but living in Jersey (58%), are interested in Jersey politics.
- Those who have a higher education are more likely to be interested in Jersey politics (78%) than those who have no formal qualifications (53%) or those who are educated up to the age of 16 (61%).
- Those who are retired or self-employed are more likely to be interested in Jersey politics (72% and 73%) than those who are working for an employer (65%).



**Q. How interested would you say you are in UK politics?**

	All %
NET: Interested	57%
NET: Not Interested	42%
Very interested	17%
Fairly interested	41%
Not very interested	26%
Not at all interested	17%
Don't know	–

*Base: All Respondents (n= 1,006)*

- Four in ten adults living in Jersey are not interested in UK politics (42%), this compares with one third of Jersey adults who are not interested in Jersey politics (33%).
- Two thirds of 55+ year olds living in Jersey are interested in UK politics (65%), compared to four in ten 16–34 year olds who are interested in UK politics (40%).
- Men living in Jersey are more interested in UK politics than women living in Jersey are (61% vs 54%).
- Seven in ten adults living in Jersey, but born elsewhere in the British Isles, are interested in UK politics (69%), compared to half of adults who were born in Jersey (50%) or who were born in Portugal or Madeira (48%).
- Those who have a higher education are more likely to be interested in UK politics (72%) than those who are educated up to the age of 16 (48%) or those who have no formal qualifications (49%).
- Those who are retired are more likely to be interested in UK politics (66%) than those who are working for an employer (57%).

**Q. Did you vote in the Jersey general election in May 2018?**

	All %
Yes	55%
No	44%
Can't remember	1%

*Base: All Respondents (n= 1,006)*

- Over half of adults living in Jersey say they voted in the Jersey general election in May 2018 (55%).
- Approaching three quarters of 55+ year olds say they voted in the Jersey general election in May 2018 (73%), whilst only one third of 16–34 year olds say they voted (32%).
- Seven in ten of Jersey adults interested in Jersey politics say they voted in the Jersey general election (72%), whilst two in ten Jersey adults not interested in Jersey politics voted (22%).
- Six in ten adults living in Jersey and born in Jersey, or born elsewhere in the British Isles, say they voted in the Jersey general election (57% and 63%), compared to one in six adults who were born in Portugal or Madeira (17%) and half of adults born outside of Europe (46%).
- Those who have a higher education are more likely to say they voted in the Jersey general election (67%) than those who have no formal qualification or those whose highest qualification is education up to 16 or post 16 (49%).
- Those who are retired or self-employed are more likely to say they voted in the Jersey general election (71% and 63%) than those who are working for an employer (51%).

**Q. What were your main reasons for not voting?**

	All%
I could not get to a polling station	23%
I was not interested in the election	11%
I didn't know enough about the candidates	11%
I was unsatisfied with the quality of the candidates	10%
I deliberately decided not to vote	9%
I was not eligible to vote	9%
My vote wouldn't change things in Jersey	7%
I don't trust the political system in Jersey	6%
There was no one who reflected my views	5%
I was not registered to vote	5%
I wouldn't have made a difference to the election result	4%
I didn't know where or when to vote	3%
I don't understand the political system in Jersey	3%
Other	13%

*Base: All who did not vote in the Jersey general election in May 2018 (n=410)*

- Of those who did not vote, nearly one quarter did not vote because they could not get to a polling station (23%).

<sup>6</sup> Note that our study reports a 55.3% voter turnout, compared to a 43.4% actual voting turnout. While the survey is demographically representative of the population, there may be an implicit bias towards those who voted in the recent elections, with lower participation in the survey by non-voters potentially reflective of a general disengagement amongst those who did not vote.

- Of those who did not vote, 55+ year olds were significantly more likely to not vote because they could not get to a polling station (29%) than those aged 16–34 year olds (18%).
- Of those who did not vote, adults living in Jersey, but born in Portugal or Madeira, are more likely to not vote because they did not know where or when to vote (11%), compared to those who are living in Jersey and born in Jersey (1%) or those born elsewhere in the British Isles (2%).
- Of those who did not vote, adults with a higher education were most likely to say they were not eligible to vote (18%) and were least likely to say that they deliberately decided not to vote (2%).
- Of those who did not vote, adults with no formal qualifications were more likely to say that their vote wouldn't change things in Jersey (17%) compared to those with a higher education (2%).
- Of those who did not vote, retired people are more likely to not vote because they could not get to a polling station (33%) compared to those who are working for an employer (19%).

**Q. During the last General Election campaign did you do, or observe, any of the following?**

	All%
<b>NET: Any</b>	90%
Follow news about the election, the issues and candidates	75%
Discussed the election or candidates with family or friends	74%
Read the manifestoes of candidates in the election booklet posted through the door	68%
Read the manifestoes of candidates online	41%
Canvassed by a candidate or candidates on the doorstep	36%
Watch videos of the candidate meetings online	25%
Attend any candidate meetings	14%
None of the above	10%

*Base: All Respondents (n=1,006)*

- During the last general election campaign, three quarters of Jersey adults followed news about the election, the issues and candidates (75%).
- A further three quarters of Jersey adults discussed the election or candidates with family or friends (74%).
- More than eight in ten 55+ year olds followed the news about the election, the issues and candidates during the general election campaign (85%), whilst six in ten 16–34 year olds did the same (59%).
- Two thirds of 16–34 year olds discussed the election or candidates with family or friends, this was the main way this age group engaged with the general election in May 2018 (64%).
- One quarter of Jersey adults who voted in the general election attended candidate meetings (25%).
- Those who are living in Jersey, but were born in Portugal or Madeira, are less likely to read the manifestoes of candidates in the election booklet posted through the door (51%), compared to those who are living in Jersey and born in Jersey (66%), born elsewhere in the British Isles (75%) or born outside of Europe (71%).
- Approaching one in five of adults living in Jersey but born in Portugal or Madeira did not do or observe any of the activities tested during the last General Election campaign (18%).
- One in seven of adults living in Jersey without formal qualifications did not do or observe any of the activities tested during the last General Election campaign (15%).

**Q. Which, if any, of the following would make you more likely to vote in the next election?**

	All%
<b>NET: Any</b>	95%
Candidates who better represent my values and the things that are important to me	84%
Evidence that elected representatives can make a real difference in the community	84%
Being able to vote online	69%
Ability to rank the candidates on the ballot paper (from least to most preferred)	64%
Better access to information about the candidates and their policies	62%
A longer pre-poll period (being able to vote before election day)	50%
Being able to vote by post	48%
The option to select 'none of the above' on the ballot paper	47%
A change to more political parties instead of individual candidates	44%
Better information on the process for how to register and to vote	43%
None of these	5%

*Base: All Respondents (n=1,006)*

- Amongst non-voters, three in four would be more likely to vote if they could do so online (75%) this compares with two in three people who did vote in the last elections (66%).
- More than half of non-voters also mentioned that a longer pre-poll period would help to boost turnout (56%), compared with 46% of people who did vote.
- Better information on the process for how to register and vote will also help boost turnout amongst non-voters, mentioned by almost half (49%), this was mentioned by 38% of voters.
- Finally a move to a political party system was mentioned by almost half of non-voters (48%) as helping to encourage turnout, it was also mentioned by two in five voters (41%).
- More than four in five Jersey adults would be more likely to vote in the next election if there were candidates who better represent their values and the things that are important to them (84%). For the same proportion of Jersey adults, evidence that elected representatives can make a real difference in the community, would make them more likely to vote in the next election (84%).
- Fix in six 16-34-year olds (83%) and three quarters of 35-54 year olds (77%) say that being able to vote online would make them more likely to vote in the next election, compared to only half of 55+ year olds (49%).
- A longer pre-poll period was mentioned by significantly more 16-34 and 35-54-year olds (62% and 50%) than 55+ year olds (41%).
- Having better access to information about the candidates and their policies was mentioned by significantly more 16-34-year olds (75%) than it was by 35-54 and 55+ year olds (61% and 54%).

- Five in six adults living in Jersey, but born in Portugal or Madeira, say that having better access to information about the candidates and their policies would make them more likely to vote in the next election (84%). This compares to six in ten adults living in Jersey and either born in Jersey (60%) or elsewhere in the British Isles (57%).
- Seven in ten adults living in Jersey, but born in Portugal or Madeira, say that having better access to information about the candidates and their policies would make them more likely to vote in the next election (70%). This compares to four in ten adults living in Jersey and born in Jersey (42%) and one third of those living in Jersey and born elsewhere in the British Isles (34%).

**Q. You said that none of these things would make you more likely to vote. Why is this?**

	All %
I never / hardly ever vote	70%
I always vote	24%
Other	6%

*Base: All who said 'none of these' at Q6 (n=44)*

- Of those who said that none of the suggested actions to encourage voter turnout who make them more likely to vote (5% of all respondents, asked in the previous question), the majority (70%) explain that this is because they never or hardly vote, while a quarter (24%) say that this is because they always vote.

**Q. Which of these statements best describes your opinion on the present system of governing Jersey?**

	All %
Works extremely well and could not be improved	1%
Could be improved in small ways but mainly works well	28%
Could be improved quite a lot	37%
Needs a great deal of improvement	31%
Don't know	2%

*Base: All respondents (n=1,006)*

- Nearly two in five adults living in Jersey think the present system governing Jersey could be improved quite a lot (37%).
- One third of adults living in Jersey now, but born elsewhere in the British Isles, think that the present system of governing Jersey needs a great deal of improvement (34%).
- 16–34-year olds are less likely to think that the present system of governing Jersey needs a great deal of improvement (21%), compared with 35–54-year olds (34%) and 55+ year olds (37%).

Q. Which of the following statements do you agree or disagree with?

	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Don't know %
The States should do more to boost voter registration	71%	14%	14%	1%
Everyone has a responsibility to engage with the political system irrespective of how long they have lived on Jersey	63%	11%	26%	1%
There should be more official information about the candidates	63%	15%	22%	–
When people are only on the island for a relatively short time there is less reason for them to engage with the political system	62%	12%	26%	–
There should be more official information about the election process	56%	17%	27%	–
Candidates standing for election should make more effort to knock on my door and talk to me about why I should vote for them	45%	14%	40%	–
Voting should be made compulsory	29%	9%	61%	1%
I am generally happy with things as they are in Jersey and not looking for change, so I don't care much for voting when elections come around	18%	10%	71%	1%

Base: All respondents (n=1,006)

- Three in ten non-voters say that they are happy with how things are in Jersey and so don't care much for voting at elections compared with just one in ten voters (30% vs 8% respectively).
- Two in three voters say that everyone has a responsibility to engage with the political system irrespective of how long they have lived on Jersey compared with six in ten non-voters (66% vs 59%).
- Around one in three voters say voting should be made compulsory (32%), this compares with one in four non-voters (26%).
- Non-voters are more likely to want official information about the electoral process (61%) compared with voters (52%). They are also more likely to want official information about the candidates compared with voters (67% vs 59% respectively).
- Three in four voters say more should be done to boost voter registration (74%) compared with two in three non-voters (67%).
- Seven in ten Jersey adults agree that the States should do more to boost voter registration (71%).
- Six in ten Jersey adults agree that when people are only on the island for a relatively short time there is less reason for them to engage with the political system (62%).
- Approaching two thirds of adults living in Jersey say they agree that everyone has a responsibility to engage with the political system irrespective of how long they have lived in Jersey (63%).
- Six in ten adults in Jersey disagree that voting should be made compulsory (61%).
- One in five Jersey adults say they are generally happy with things as they are in Jersey and not looking for change, so don't care much for voting when elections come around (18%).
- Two thirds of 16–34-year olds say they agree that there should be more official information about the election process (67%), compared with 56% of Jersey adults overall.
- Seven in ten 16–34-year olds say they agree that there should be more official information about the candidates (70%), compared with less than two thirds of Jersey adults overall (63%).
- Half of adults living in Jersey but born in Portugal or Madeira agree that voting should be made compulsory (50%), compared to a quarter of those born in Jersey or born elsewhere in the British Isles (26% for both).

- Eight in ten adults living in Jersey but born in Portugal or Madeira agree that everyone has a responsibility to engage with the political system irrespective of how long they have lived on Jersey, compared to six in ten adults born in Jersey (56%) or elsewhere in the British Isles (63%).
- Four in ten adults living in Jersey but born in Portugal or Madeira agree that they are generally happy with things as they are in Jersey and are not looking for change, so they don't care much for voting when elections come around (42%). This compares to 18% of adults living in Jersey and born in Jersey as well as 12% of those living in Jersey but born elsewhere in the British Isles.

# UNDERSTANDING ENGAGEMENT AMONGST NON-VOTERS

## ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNING IN JERSEY

The majority of people interviewed believe that the present system of governing in Jersey would benefit from being updated. Those who do not believe this feel unable to offer an opinion because of their perceived lack of knowledge about the political system.

*"I don't know enough about it. It's not very clear how it all works."*

**Female, younger**

*"The general public, like myself, do we understand 100% what's going on, or is there a better way of communicating that information to us? We are trying to understand what they're trying to implement."*

**Male, younger**

Many believe that the present system of governing is too complicated to understand, and that this also makes it difficult to comprehend a clear message from any of the candidates. Respondents, particularly male respondents, stated their belief that a clearer system was needed, including the potential introduction of a party-political system.

*"You've got 24 candidates each with their own ideas. Some of them cross, some of them don't. It's a bit mad really in this day and age. I mean, it was okay when Jersey worked under the feudal system, but those days are long since gone."*

**Male, older**

*"I think because there are no political parties in Jersey, you're just voting for a personality. Okay they may have good morals that, you know, you might agree with some of their views or, you may disagree, but you don't really know what you're voting for, so I think that's, you need more party politics brought into Jersey. Whether you agree with those parties or not is irrelevant, but people need to understand what they're voting for and I don't think they do."*

**Male, older**

*"It feels like a lot of it is quite inflated egos, whereas I know it's probably a criticism of UK politics where you could say, like, it's all about money and power and stuff like that, but at least it's for a wider political reason. There are party politics and affiliations where if you vote, it's going to lead towards something if your vote is successful, if that makes sense. With Jersey politics, it just feels like someone's getting a job for a couple of years, and getting a bit of money out of it, and maybe a little bit of seeing the power for themselves."*

**Male, older**

Another key theme was the need for a more open and effective dialogue between the public and those in office, on an ongoing basis, rather than just at the time of elections. Respondents did not feel that those in office were in touch with their needs or their concerns and they did not feel listened to. One



respondent, for example, complained that she rarely heard any feedback from the petitions that she regularly signed;

*“I sign a lot of petitions that I see that are shared online, with Jersey and government petitions... but I don’t actually see much movement happening with the system. So, what would be helpful is... to see in the news that these petitions are being brought ... and that they’re being addressed. You know, listening to the people more.”*

**Female, younger**

Another expressed her concern that there was a need to keep in touch with the public’s needs in all decision making, to ensure that they are taken into account.

*“I think it needs to go out to the general public more. It seems, when it’s coming up to an election, everyone’s all about that, and then, as soon as that stops, no-one talks to the public again .... just keeping in touch with the working-class person.”*

**Female, older**

## PERCEPTIONS OF THE STATES ASSEMBLY

Respondents were asked to sum up their perceptions of the States Assembly, using a single word. Responses concentrated on the distance they felt existed between the assembly and the public, using words such as ‘elitist’, ‘disassociated’ and ‘patronising’. Others focussed on the size and organisation of the Assembly, using terms such as ‘circus’, ‘chaos’ and ‘classroom-like’. There were also those who referred to its old-fashioned image, employing the descriptions ‘out-dated’ and ‘stuffy’. Positively it was described as ‘democratic’, referring to the multiple views represented by the large number of members.

When questioned about their understanding and interest in the States Assembly, respondents express an interest in what the States Assembly does, but because they feel disconnected with the process of decision-making and because there is low awareness of what the States Assembly does, their engagement is reduced.

*“I’d be interested if I had any input. I don’t have any input. I can’t contact a minister. Very rarely can you contact a deputy”*

**Male, older**

While some communication from the States Assembly, such as Twitter, is welcomed, there is a need identified for clearer ways of informing the general public about the decision-making process and the outcomes of the States Assembly’s deliberations.

*“I think they should maybe do more of a summary of what decisions are actually made and what they’re planning to do, and if the meeting actually was effective, because sometimes I think some of their meetings go on for a very long time, and that’s just pointless.”*

**Female, older**

One respondent suggests televised debates could increase engagement.

*“They don’t do exactly live recordings, you know, like BBC Parliament? Really, something like that would be ideal to get more people engaged and actually see what’s happening in the island.”*

**Male, younger**

A clear, easily accessible way to educate as well as inform people about the work of the States Assembly would be welcomed. One respondent suggested that the local papers were partly responsible for the lack of information about the States Assembly;

*“I think it’s probably partly to do with the local media, the JEP, who just tend to report on anything that they feel is worthy of news, which often isn’t...bad stories in the non-news things, which isn’t particularly conducive to, kind of, educating people.”*

**Female, younger**

However, some respondents believe that the States Assembly do communicate well, although could focus more on listening to the public.

*“I think they say what they’re doing really well, but maybe they don’t take in what people have to say that well. “*

**Female, younger**

## ENGAGEMENT WITH JERSEY GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN MAY 2018

While respondents’ engagement with the political system in Jersey is low, many respondents interviewed express an interest in following the news and in Jersey, as well as international news. Most are getting their news from local papers such as the Bailiwick Express and Jersey Evening Post, either via social media or in printed form. Younger respondents follow Jersey-based journalists on Twitter. Television news is also a popular source for older respondents.

Respondents largely had little exposure to the election campaign, campaigning, or via their personal networks. Few discussed the election with their family as they did not vote either and election news was watched passively and not followed in any detail.

*“Bits and bobs, so on the night I might have, I wouldn’t say I followed it. I saw bits and bobs about people will-, some of the politicians were waiting, weren’t they for, you know, results, but I wouldn’t say I followed it with any great, I don’t know, fervour or anything.”*

**Male, older**

The majority of those interviewed did not attend meetings or hustings. Some had been visited at home by candidates, but this was not always welcomed as there was a sense that candidates’ messages were negative towards others, or that they were merely there to distribute free materials with their slogans. Manifestos were received and read by a minority, although they appeared long and not relevant enough on the issues they wanted to read about to engage them.

*“Yes, I read most of them, I just read the ones that came through the letterbox... I would actually sit down and have a read of a few of them. I was hoping to find a little info concerning the environment, but ... the ones that I read weren't really that.”*

**Female, younger**

## CURRENT BARRIERS TO VOTER ENGAGEMENT

The majority of respondents interviewed had never voted or had only voted once. The main barriers to voting for those interviewed are a low confidence in the system of governing in Jersey, insufficient understanding of the system and candidates, a lack of connection with the issues under debate and, for a minority, logistical challenges in the process of voting itself.

### Low confidences in the system

Amongst those interviewed, the majority expressed concerns about politicians and the system of governing in Jersey. This is partly down to a lack of confidence that things will change as a result of their vote. The politicians in Jersey are perceived by many to be too invested in the status quo. One older respondent, for example, expressed his disappointment that the recent Jersey-wide referenda had been, in his view, ignored.

*“The main reason for not voting was the States of Jersey have held two referendums over a number of years both of which they've ignored. I've been in Jersey just over 30 years and always voted. This time it's more out of annoyance than anything else that nothing will be done, unfortunately.... It's a lack of trust, I think, amongst the electorate.”*

**Male, older**

Another older respondent, who did not vote regularly, expressed his lack of confidence that the incumbent politicians would change as a result of his vote, due to the close-knit nature of the relationships on the island.

*“I've only ever voted once, and it kind of seemed like a landslide for the people that were [there] already, I don't know, had already received the brown envelopes, if you know what I mean? I was concerned, mates of mates that receive their brown envelopes. It doesn't matter who you vote for...”*

**Male, older**

### Insufficient knowledge of the system and candidates

Confusion about the system of governance hinders voting for some respondents. Those new to the island and younger potential voters in particular can feel overwhelmed by the plethora of viewpoints expressed by the many candidates. There is also a lack of confidence about how their vote will affect change, given the lack of a party-political system. Not being able to easily understand candidates' policies hinders engagement in the voting process.

Respondents also expressed a limited knowledge of the candidates who were standing and what they stood for. The majority of respondents did not know anyone who had stood for election. A minority of the younger respondents knew the younger candidates through school, or through mutual

acquaintances. They commented that they were not confident that these younger candidates were qualified enough to do the job.

*“I’ve actually seen a couple of other people that I went to school with...who said, ‘Vote for me, vote for me,’ and I’m like, ‘You’ve got literally no knowledge of politics whatsoever.’ It was quite embarrassing actually.... it was almost like a popularity thing. Yes, I don’t actually think they got many votes in the end, I think everyone realised they were doing it for the wrong reasons. I would never do it, I wouldn’t know enough about it.”*

**Female, younger**

### Connection with issues under debate

Younger respondents, in particular, claim their interests are not being adequately represented by the elected politicians and that they are out of touch with their concerns, for example on issues around the environment or housing.

*“I felt a lot of the politicians were really out of touch with our generation, my generation. They’re a lot older, they seem to be only interested in making the rich richer and don’t really seem to be interested in many topics that matter to me, the environment for example.”*

**Female, younger**

Some younger respondents perceive the majority of the members of the States Assembly as older, with the notable exception of younger candidates such as Sam Mezec, who they feel they can connect with more directly, whether or not they agree with his politics. Younger politicians’ ability to effect change is questioned by some, however, due to the perception that the system is weighted towards the status quo.

*“There’s basically been a few candidates... branding themselves as quite liberal and very socially conscious and progressive ...you’re not going to really see much change in regards to actual Jersey society of community through voting for them, even if they do get into power. There’s very, really a limited amount of change that Jersey can undertake.”*

**Male, younger**

Additionally, respondents who are not permanent residents in Jersey, or who travel regularly, express a sense of disconnection with the issues on the island and take less interest in the issues themselves, leading to a lower likelihood of voting.

*“I think if I was permanently living there I’d probably just naturally have...more of an interest in it because I actually don’t spend...a lot of my time there, like a lot of jersey residents.”*

**Female, younger**

### Logistical challenges

Certain practical inconveniences are barriers to voting for some. However, there is a sense that if this distrust were addressed, some of the other logistical barriers such as access to polling stations and the days elections are held could be overcome:

*"I don't think it's the difficulty of the voting, I think it's the people...I think people, just in general, aren't motivated to vote. That's the issue, it's not where it is."*

**Female, younger**

When asked whether being able to vote in alternative locations such as supermarkets or doctors' surgeries would encourage them to vote, most felt it would not, as the parish locations were felt to be local enough. There were suggestions, however, that being able to vote anywhere on the island, rather than just being tied to voting in their own parishes, would aid those who worked elsewhere on the island.

There is a fairly even split between those who would consider having the option to vote at the weekend an advantage and others who are ambivalent. For those with young children who are working full time it would be a benefit, however the option of voting online was often suggested as a more positive alternative to weekend voting, in order to make the process as easy and convenient as possible.

## LIKELIHOOD TO STAND FOR ELECTION

Respondents were also asked about whether they might be encouraged to stand for election. Only two respondents claimed that they might stand for election, although both expressed concern that their voices would not be heard and they doubted their likely effectiveness.

*"People have said to me perhaps I should...my reservation is...does one voice make any difference in the States...when we had the last election they had a number of people who stood and then stood down after their four-year stint... because they couldn't do anything...they just felt they were there...I don't think the States will ever change, unfortunately. "*

**Male, older**

*"I'd like to, but would my voice be heard? I don't have mates in the right places."*

**Male, older**

Another respondent claimed that they are put off by the perceived stigma attached to being a politician in Jersey.

*"No, I think, just because of the stigma that's associated with it, and the chap that I knew ... had a really good, kind of, character, and everything he stands for, and he's quite a modern man, as well, and not... dated. I was almost quite taken aback, because I was, like, 'Oh, my God, he's gone into politics. He must know what's associated with that, over here, because ... there is that stigma of, 'They're all absolute idiots and not in touch with the real world.' I don't know. I think, nowadays, I don't think so."*

**Female, older**

Others are deterred by the lack of money on offer, the perception that the candidates are older, or their lack of knowledge about the system in general.

## INCREASING VOTER ENGAGEMENT

On-going education and communication are at the heart of encouraging voter engagement – and turnout on election day. Respondents wish to have a better understanding of the system and how it works, and a clearer understanding of the difference made by candidates when they are voted in. Some suggested an overhaul of the existing system, driven by a wish for more clarity, understanding, and transparency of a system which they feel is opaque and complex. While structural changes to the system may follow at some point, giving residents better understanding and appreciation of the value of their political engagement is likely to address a number of existing barriers.

Respondents expressed a desire for clear, easily accessible policy information to engage potential voters. If the manifesto has been received, which it was not by all interviewed, it is seen as long and confusing. The sense of confusion is related to both the clarity of the information published, but also of the confusion surrounding what the candidates stand for, in the absence of a party-political system.

Being able to easily discuss issues close to their hearts, such as housing, finance, welfare and the environment with elected members is important to these respondents. The lack of dialogue between residents and candidates is an issue that they would like to see addressed, as there is a sense that hustings can use pre-asked questions, rather than being forums for open dialogue.

*“I attended... [a hustings] in St Brelade’s, the parish I live in. I sat through it, bored stiff with it. A lot of the questions are pre-asked. I’ve attended meetings before where you can’t actually raise questions.”*

**Male, older**

Respondents of all ages, but particularly younger respondents, want to be inspired by candidates who they can connect with and who they feel better represent their values. If these candidates were also to have a more visible online and social media presence, this could, they claim, encourage them to feel more informed about and potentially more engaged in voting.

*“...an improved social media presence for campaigners as well as more visible online profiles, with more easily obtainable information about their campaigns and promises, and what they could actually do in power.”*

**Male, younger**

A number of respondents suggested that online voting would make the process of voting easier, particularly for those who were off the island and left it too late to arrange a proxy vote.

Respondents put forward a number of practical suggestions to increase voter engagement and to encourage more people to vote in elections:

- **Online voting** – both for convenience and to encourage younger voters to vote and therefore to increase the number of younger candidates elected
- Allowing people to **vote in any location on the island**, not just in their parish
- **Communicating the results** of any consultation events held either during elections, or between elections effectively to make potential voters feel heard

- **Compulsory voting** to increase engagement. It is thought that voters would have to find out more about candidates, however this would need to go hand in hand with education to help people understand what they are voting for
- **Engaging young people** through targeted campaigns focussing on their future
- **Increasing education** about the political system and the importance of voting in schools pre-16 to help younger potential voters comprehend the voting process
- **Encouraging a greater social media presence** to engage younger voters and to allow those not on the island to engage with the election debates more easily

Of these suggestions online voting, education and an increased social media presence are felt to be the most important.







**WWW.COMRESGLOBAL.COM**

**LONDON**

Four Millbank  
London  
SW1P 3JA

**T:** +44 (0)20 7871 8660

**F:** +44 (0)20 7799 2391

**E:** [info@comresglobal.com](mailto:info@comresglobal.com)

**BRUSSELS**

Rond Point Schuman 6  
Box5, 1040  
Bruxelles

**T:** +32 (0)2 234 63 82

**F:** +32 (0)2 234 79 11

**E:** [info@comres.eu.com](mailto:info@comres.eu.com)

**SHANGHAI**

51/F Raffles City  
No.268 Xi Zang Middle Rd  
HuangPu District Shanghai  
200001 China

**T:** +86 (0)21 2312 7674

**E:** [info@comresglobal.com](mailto:info@comresglobal.com)