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# Submission to the inquiry into civics education, engagement and participation in Australia



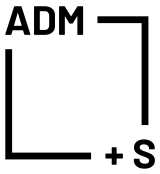
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ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated  
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30 August 2024



### **Acknowledgement of Country**

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

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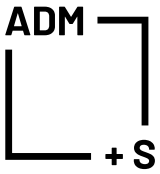
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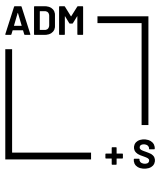
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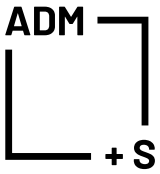
## Executive Summary

Dr Fan Yang, from the University of Melbourne and the ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society (ADM+S), and Associate Professor Sukhmani Khorana, from the University of New South Wales, appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this important inquiry into civics education, engagement and participation in Australia.

Since June 2023, the research team has been studying the political participation, political literacy and media literacy of Chinese and South Asian communities in Australia through a survey and focus groups. This submission is based on data from a survey of 192 participants including 76 Chinese respondents and 116 South Asian respondents and insights from 7 focus groups conducted with 14 members of both Chinese and South Asian communities. For the purpose of the Committee, it is significant that most of these participants identified as 'first-generation migrants.'

From the survey, the team found that:

- More than 90% of participants were actively engaged in political activities. Their levels of participation varied, ranging from consuming political news, expressing political opinions publicly and attending protests and rallies, to running political campaigns themselves. Less than 8% of participants showed reluctance or negative attitudes towards political participation. Chinese respondents reported higher levels of political participation in activities such as political news consumption, publicly expressing political opinions and supporting campaign organisations. In contrast, a higher percentage of South Asian respondents tend to be directly involved in running political campaigns themselves.
- Despite the majority of participants having lived in Australia for over 10 years, nearly half reported not fully understanding how the country's voting systems worked. This knowledge gap creates room for exploitation, particularly in the face of organised misinformation and disinformation campaigns.
- Challenges arose from migrants' socio-political backgrounds (which differ from those of people born and educated in Australia), language barriers, limited access to reliable information and civics education and the prevalence of misinformation online.
- Participants maintained a medium level of trust in Australian national media sources. On a scale from 0 (no trust) to 5 (most trust), both Chinese and South Asian participants, on average, rated Australian national media outlets a 3 for trustworthiness. The ABC was the dominant news source among the participant cohort. Participants reported a higher degree of distrust towards information encountered on social media.

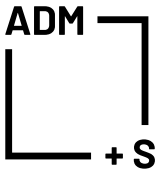


- In political decision-making during state or federal elections, both Chinese and South Asian participants considered advocated policies, the socio-political background of candidates and the influence or visibility of political campaigns as important in deciding who they voted for. The survey results also revealed differences between Chinese and South Asian communities, suggesting that cultural and linguistic diverse (CALD) communities should not be treated as a monolithic group. Chinese respondents prioritised their partisan preferences, while South Asian participants were more concerned with a candidate's reputation. Notably, shared ethnicity did not emerge as a significant preference among our participants, indicating that tokenistic representation is likely ineffective.
- Both Chinese and South Asian communities shared concerns about the economy, immigration, education, investment and property and taxation. However, there were notable differences between the two communities: Chinese participants were particularly interested in international relations, Australian politicians and housing, while South Asian participants placed more emphasis on human rights, gender equity, social welfare, the environment, jobs and employment and aged care.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings from the survey and the insights from the 14 focus group participants, we make the following top-level recommendations:

- Addressing the cultural and linguistic challenges associated with broad political participation: Although language is a barrier to effective communication for some participants, government agencies' communication efforts should be embedded within the social and cultural norms of migrant communities. To achieve this, agencies should explore and experiment with communication strategies for CALD communities that go beyond simple information translation and tokenism.
- Recognising and understanding the diversity within migrant cohorts: Government agencies should recognise the limitations of viewing and communicating with each ethnic community as a homogeneous group. Even migrant cohorts hailing from the same country are diverse in terms of social class, gender, political beliefs, time of migration, and religion.



- Avoid cultural and ethnic tokenism: The lack of diversity in Australia’s political and media landscapes can lead to the exploitation and misuse of cultural and ethnic identities for political gain. A tokenistic approach may appear to fulfil the requirement for diverse representation, but it undermines the meaningful grassroots representation of ethnic communities’ issues by prioritising certain candidates for their visible difference rather than their track record within an electorate. True diversity must be realised: the voices and participation of Indigenous peoples and CALD communities should be genuinely acknowledged, heard and actioned by Australian public institutions.
- Combatting misinformation and disinformation within CALD communities: Preventative mechanisms to combat misinformation and disinformation that anticipate knowledge gaps should be established and effectively communicated to CALD communities prior to significant political events.
- For example, government bodies such as the Australian Electoral Commission, the Australian Communication and Media Authority, and national media outlets, particularly the non-English channels of ABC and SBS, could identify and report narratives of political misinformation and disinformation based on existing findings prior to significant electoral events. This would enable members of CALD communities to make informed judgements and critically evaluate misleading elements in the information they encounter. Moreover, experts from CALD communities could be more effectively consulted and leveraged by political parties, electoral authorities and national media organisations to understand how to identify and debunk misinformation in culturally resonant ways.
- Civics education is not a one-time effort: It must evolve with the changing political landscape, which is increasingly complicated by emerging technologies – for example, generative AI and large language models – and the diversity of, and polarisation in, public opinion. There is a need for ongoing resources dedicated to civics education and political engagement. The scope and depth of civics education should be broadened beyond merely instructing new citizens on voting systems to encompass a wider range of topics, including electoral laws, the functioning of parliamentary democracy and strategies for critically assessing the credibility of information sources.

# Introduction

Migrants' participation in Australia's voting systems, their understanding of Australian democracy and the information that they gather to make political decisions remain under-researched areas. Existing research has identified the prevalence of political misinformation both online and offline within culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities during electoral cycles and referendums.<sup>1</sup> The non-English nature and private circulation of misinformation have often placed it outside the purview of the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC). In addition, the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023 (Cth) does not encompass the diverse range of social media platforms used by both migrants and non-migrants and both English and non-English speakers.

There has been a lack of support and intervention from Australian public institutions to address the political participation and media literacy of CALD communities, as well as to understand how their grasp of Australian democracy and media consumption shapes their voting decisions. Frequently, peer education on civic participation takes place on social media platforms popular within migrant communities.<sup>2</sup> The limited visibility and closed nature of these interpersonal communications often intersect with national debates about foreign interference on non-English platforms, such as WeChat, raising suspicions about migrants' loyalty to the country, Australia's national interest, and their citizenship.<sup>3</sup> In Australia, the lack of awareness about the disparities in civics knowledge and political participation among CALD communities and other groups systematically disadvantages these communities and increases their vulnerability to political exploitation.

Our study of political participation and media literacy among Chinese and South Asian communities in Australia began in June 2023, in the context of the public debate surrounding the 2023 Indigenous Voice to Parliament referendum. During this time, misinformation and disinformation were reportedly prevalent within these and non-migrant communities,<sup>4</sup> and communication from the AEC and the Australian Government proved to be less than effective.

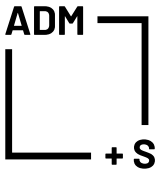
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<sup>1</sup>F Yang, R Fordyce and L Heembsergen, '[Towards a translational news ecology: covering the 2022 Australian federal election on WeChat](#)', *International Journal of Communication*, in press, doi:10.31235/osf.io/wcps3; F Yang, R Fordyce and L Heembsergen, '[WeChat and the 2023 Australian Indigenous Voice Referendum: key actors, public opinions, misinformation and disinformation](#)' [working paper], SocArXiv database, 2024, doi:10.31235/osf.io/76uqf

<sup>2</sup>W Sun and H Yu, '[WeChatting the Australian election: Mandarin-speaking migrants and the teaching of new citizenship practices](#)', *Social Media + Society*, 2020, January–March:1–11, doi:10.1177/2056305120903441

<sup>3</sup>D Lim and N Kassam, '[Loyalty tests make Australia weaker, not stronger](#)', *The Interpreter*, 21 October 2020, accessed 16 August 2024.

<sup>4</sup>T Graham, '[I studied how rumours and misleading information spread on X during the Voice referendum. The results paint a worrying picture](#)', *The Conversation*, 7 August 2024, accessed 18 August 2024.



## Research Design

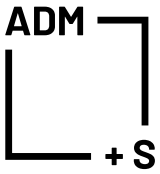
As of 30 June 2023, India and China were the most common countries of birth within the overseas-born population, after England.<sup>5</sup> The research was initially designed with a broader cultural scope by focusing on migrants who self-identify as having Chinese and/or South Asian cultural heritage. This scope includes individuals characterised by shared cultural traditions, geographic origins, literature, and language, irrespective of their country of birth.

The study was conducted in two phases. In Phase 1, from October 2023 to February 2024, in collaboration with our research partner Allies in Colour, we distributed quantitative surveys to Chinese and South Asian communities. To ensure effective communication, the survey was designed to be bilingual with the Chinese-language version distributed to Chinese migrant communities and the English-language version provided to South Asian communities. This approach was intended to eliminate linguistic barriers that might discourage Chinese-speaking participants from responding. The research team, along with our research partner and a bilingual volunteer, ensured the survey's accessibility and maintained consistency and accuracy in the English-Chinese translation. The 12 survey questions aimed to explore aspects of civic participation and engagement, understanding of Australian voting systems (i.e., political literacy), and media consumption and trust in relation to political news and issues of concern to Chinese and South Asian communities. The survey is included in the Appendix at the end of the Submission.

Building on the first phase, Phase 2 was conducted from May 2024 to August 2024 and involved the use of 7 focus groups with 14 participants to understand the nuances and complexities of the survey results. Discussions with focus group participants were conducted in English, with a bilingual English-Chinese researcher present to provide translation as required. The composition of the focus group participant cohorts was based on the survey participants' expressed interest and willingness to continue to Phase 2, as indicated in their responses to the Phase 1 survey. In this phase, Chinese and South Asian participants were assembled. The research team carried out qualitative online group interviews to delve deeper into participants' experiences with civic participation in Australia, their self-reported sense of belonging (**or lack thereof**) in Australia, the challenges they encountered in civic participation, their media consumption habits and strategies for mitigating misinformation and disinformation in their communities.

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<sup>5</sup>Australian Bureau of Statistics, '[Australia's population by country of birth](#)', Australian Bureau of Statistics, 24 April 2024, accessed 29 August 2024.



## Limitations and Representation

As a pilot research project, the survey distribution was confined to the social networks of the research team and our research partner, Allies in Colour. This likely means the sample of participants was skewed towards those who possess a higher level of willingness to undertake political participation and academic research and who are more media literate than the average newer migrant. This was confirmed in our Phase 2 focus groups.

We acknowledge the limitations of our survey design, particularly in seeking information on participants' social class, local electorate, geolocation and gender – all factors that could provide a more nuanced understanding of Chinese and South Asian communities in Australia. This research gap will be addressed in an expanded future study.

Despite these limitations, we emphasise the representativeness of the study due to the diverse locations and occupations of the respondents as noted in the focus groups. The discussions in our focus groups extended beyond the participant cohorts and their current civic participation to include their observations of how their fellow migrants engaged with the Australian voting system and the challenges they had previously faced.

## Participants

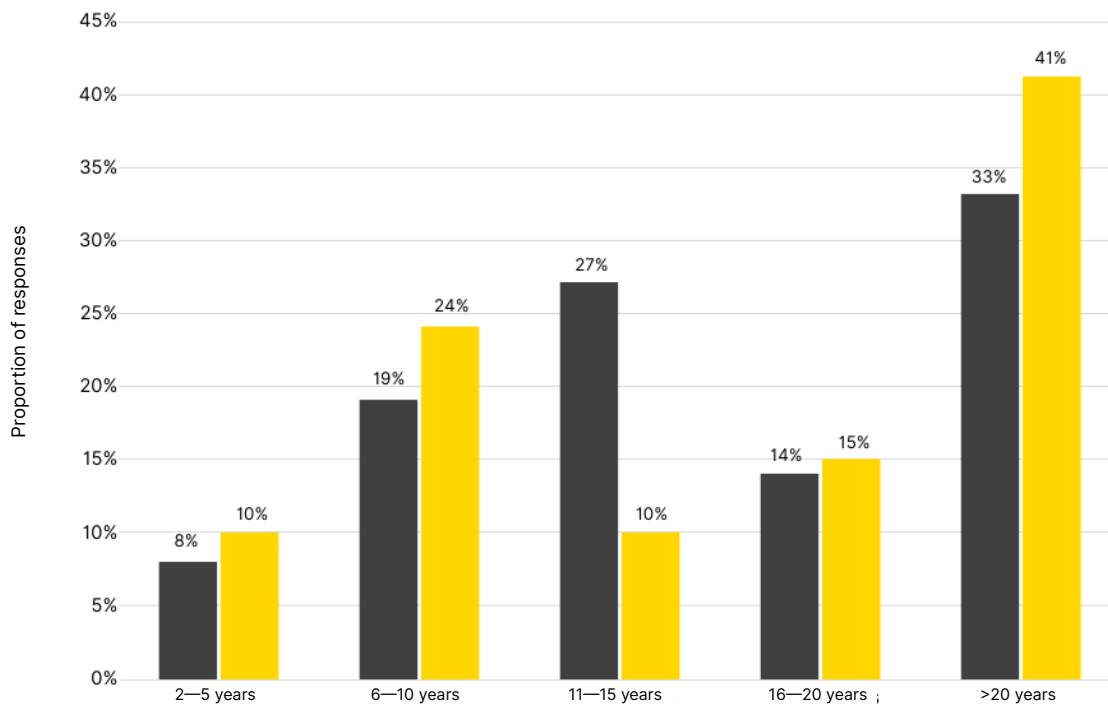
The participant cohort for this study comprised Chinese and South Asian migrants residing in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia. The research team approached the idea of Chinese or South Asian migrants from a broad cultural perspective rather than as a matter of nationality or citizenship.<sup>6</sup> For example, participants who identified as South Asian may come from countries such as Sri Lanka, India or Singapore, while those identifying as Chinese may have immigrated to Australia from Singapore, Hong Kong, China or Malaysia but nonetheless identify as having Chinese cultural heritage.

Of the 192 survey participants, over 80% identified as first-generation migrants; however, this generational classification can be ambiguous because some participants had migrated to Australia as children with their parents. Although they were born outside Australia and would be classified as first-generation migrants by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, they received their primary and high school education in Australia and perceived their cultural identity and values as distinct from that of their parents. The majority of participants (over 66% from both communities) had resided in Australia for more than 10 years (Figure 1). The research study

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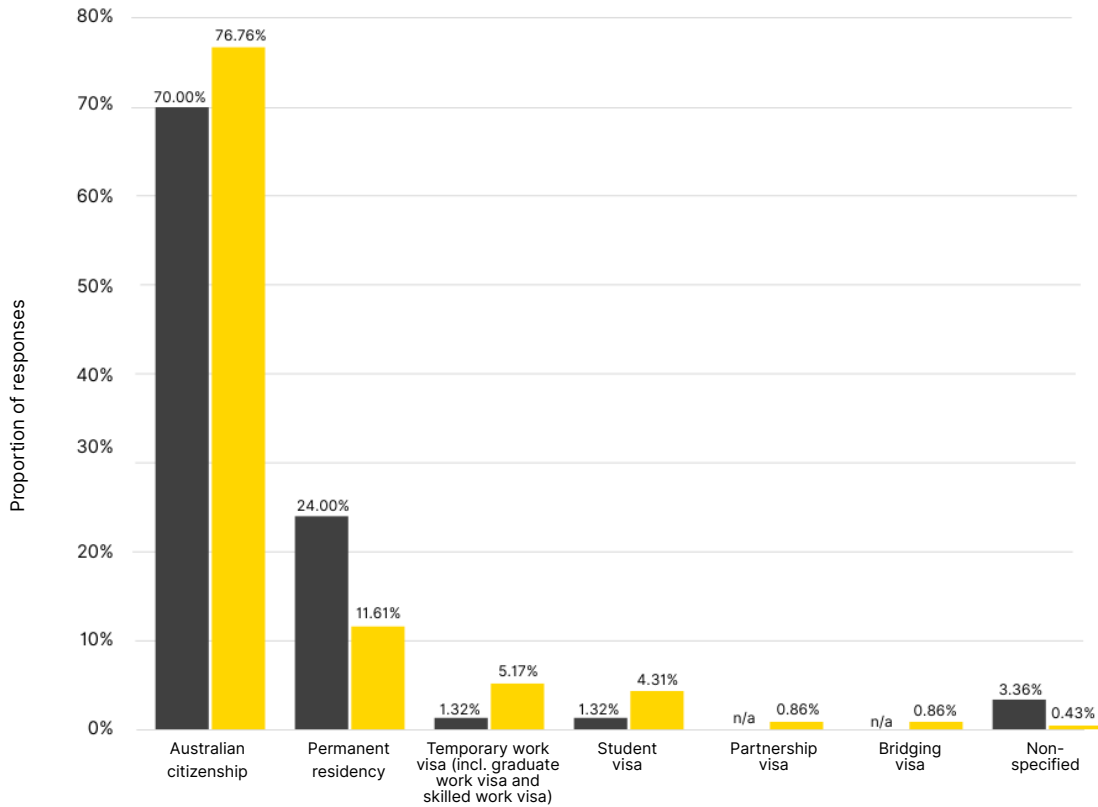
<sup>6</sup> Khorana, '[Census data shows we're more culturally diverse than ever. Our institutions must reflect this](#)', The Conversation, 29 June 2022, accessed 18 August 2024.

examined political participation, political literacy and media literacy among Chinese and South Asian communities. Recognising that it typically takes at least two years for individuals to migrate to Australia and obtain citizenship – and thereby voting rights – the survey design excluded an option for respondents who had been in Australia for less than two years, instead offering a text box for those who did not find suitable response options.



**Figure 1. The number of years that participants had spent in Australia.**

More than 70% of participants were Australian citizens, which entailed a legal obligation to vote; the remaining participants held permanent residency or temporary visas towards permanent visas (Figure 2). The analysis of our surveys included non-citizen participants, who are considered prospective citizens. The research team consider their perspectives, political engagement and media literacy as relevant to this study and influential in determining the trajectories of the broader community.



**Figure 2. The types of visas that participants held.**

The following section will explore our findings from the survey, contextualised with insights from the focus groups.

## *Civic participation*

In our survey, we listed a range of activities that reflect the notion of ‘civic participation’ (Figure 3) encompassing both everyday individual practices and the formal definition of civic engagement, with a particular focus on electoral matters.<sup>7</sup> Each participant was allowed to select multiple options to represent their circumstances. Overall, participants reported active consumption of political news, understood the significance of voting, publicly expressed their political opinions and participated in political events such as petitions and demonstrations

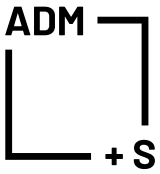
<sup>7</sup>Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, [Civics and electoral education](#), Parliament of Australia, 2007, ch 2.



**Figure 3. The forms of political participation, from not active (left) to engaged and active (right).**

We observed differences between the two groups of participants. Compared to South Asian participants, a higher proportion of Chinese participants understood the significance of their vote, conducted extensive research to make informed political decisions and were active in organising and supporting political campaigns on behalf of parties or politicians. In contrast, a higher proportion of South Asian participants were engaged in running political campaigns as candidates themselves.

Participants in our focus groups confirmed that active political participation was shaped by their past and present experiences with contrasting political systems, the birth of their children, transition from temporary visas or permanent residency to Australian citizenship and their overall sense of settlement and life stage. Many embraced the value of compulsory voting and freedom of speech in Australia, especially if they had experienced living in an authoritarian regime.



The survey invited participants to briefly summarise the reasons for their reluctance to engage in political activities in Australia if applicable. These reasons included disappointment due to global political corruption, frustration with the ineffectiveness of Australia's major political parties and their capacity to engage with migrant communities, fear of speaking out and the challenges of maintaining a balanced work–life dynamic. Our focus group participants, who are actively engaged in civic participation, reflected on the reluctance of migrants known to them to participate in civic activities, particularly during the early stages of resettlement. They expressed empathy for the political inactivity observed among their fellow migrants.

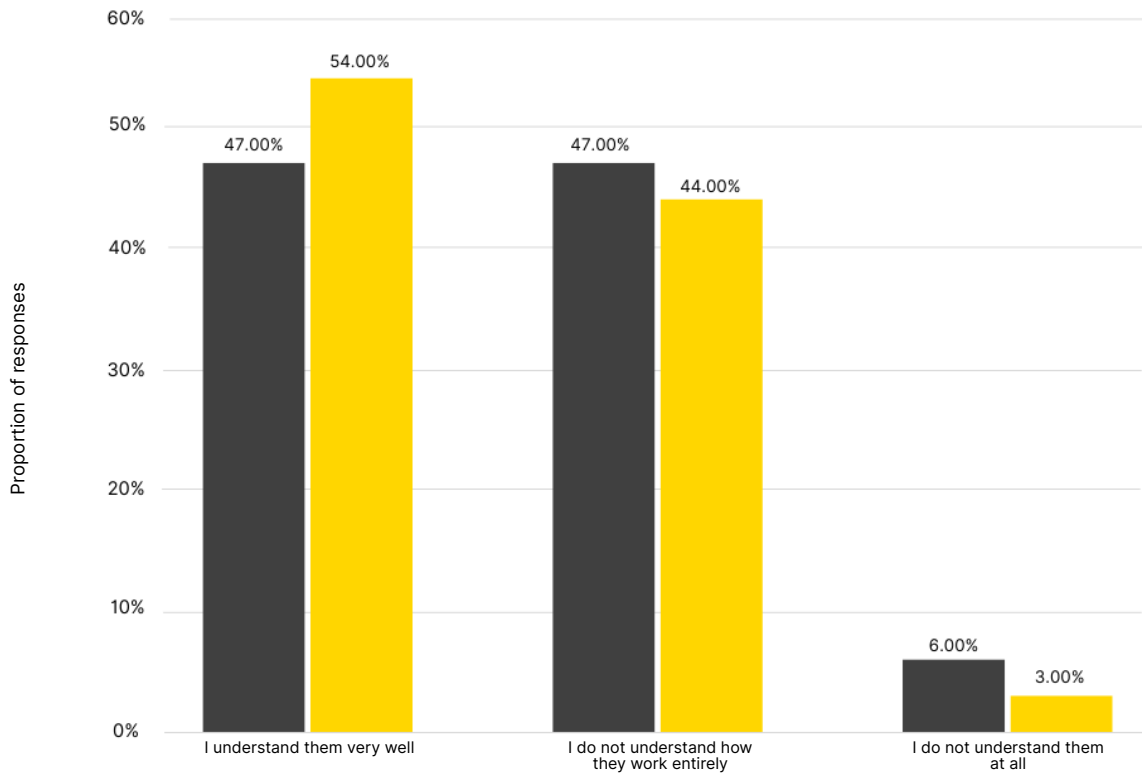
The (past) fear of speaking out was a recurring theme in our focus groups. The anxiety often arose from factors such as patriarchal family dynamics that discourage women from public engagement, the political ideology of one's country of origin – where freedom of speech may be restricted and voting is not compulsory or even available – and peer pressure to avoid discussing political issues. At the same time, many focus group participants reported becoming politicised due to past or recent experiences in the country of origin, such as participation in a political event or passion for a cause.

However, for our participants, collective civic participation – such as running advocacy campaigns or standing for election themselves – was reportedly often impeded by experiences of racism and micro-exclusion. Participants who were highly engaged had experienced racism from members of major political parties in Australia and had felt unable to integrate into communities or campaigns led by individuals from Anglo backgrounds.

Such negative experiences in political participation are likely to lead to increased distrust in governments, parties, and politicians, as indicated by the discussions in the focus groups.

## *Political literacy*

We defined 'political literacy' as the knowledge and skills that participants obtain to inform their decision-making during state or federal elections in Australia. Our survey results indicate that nearly 50% of participants do not believe they fully understand the Australian voting system, with a slightly higher proportion (53%) among Chinese respondents than South Asian respondents (Figure 4).

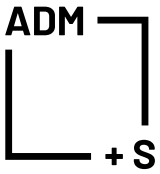


**Figure 4. The level of understanding of Australian voting systems.**

Focus group participants attributed the lack of understanding of Australian voting systems to the insufficient information provided in the Australian citizenship test booklet, Australian citizenship: our common bond, and noted that the information on the AEC website was not linguistically or culturally accessible to new migrants. Indeed, research has identified that the AEC’s engagement with prominent Chinese-language media on WeChat received limited user engagement despite efforts to provide credible information to the Chinese diaspora.<sup>8</sup>

As a case in point, research on the coverage of the 2023 Voice referendum on WeChat revealed that informational text-based content from the AEC and the Australian Government received low engagement from Chinese-speaking voters despite being available in Chinese translation. The interview with Carina Garland, MP for Chisholm, and Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus published on WeChat’s short video feature through the Victorian Labor Party’s account garnered only 25 shares despite having Chinese subtitles. In contrast, a pro-No campaign video in the form of casual conversation produced by a Chinese migrant received 10,000 reposts within 24 hours of publication.

<sup>8</sup>F Yang, [“No” campaign is dominating the Voice debate among Chinese Australians on WeChat: new research](#), The Conversation, 7 October 2023, accessed 19 August 2024.



The example above suggests that linguistic barriers alone do not fully account for ineffective communication. Rather, the primary issue appears to be that the information was translated and presented in a formal and rigid manner by authoritative personnel or sources that lacked familiarity with or accessibility to CALD communities, thereby failing to align with the cultural and linguistic norms of the Chinese diaspora on social media services.

For some participants who had come from authoritarian regimes, their first voting experience took place in Australia in their mid-30s or later. Their initial decisions and understanding of Australia's voting systems were largely guided by their immediate family members, friends and information obtained from dominant search engines, where algorithms could potentially skew the information presented.

## *Political decision-making and representation*

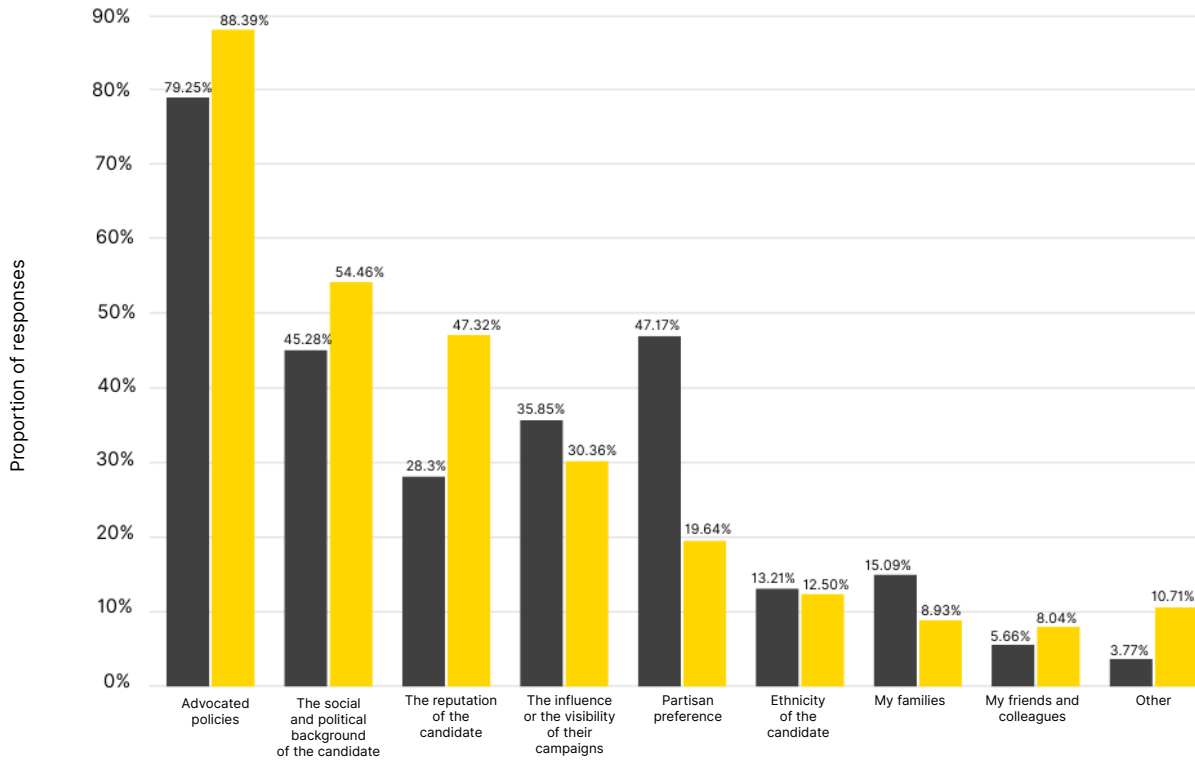
In response to the survey question 'When it comes to the state or federal elections, what are the 3 main factors that influence your voting decisions,' survey participants considered 'advocated policies,' 'the socio-political background of candidates' and 'the influence or visibility of political campaigns' (Figure 5). However, Chinese respondents tended to prioritise their 'partisan preferences,' whereas South Asian participants were focused more on a 'candidate's reputation.'

Notably, 'shared ethnicity' did not emerge as a significant factor among our participants, suggesting that tokenistic representation is likely ineffective.

Our focus groups revealed that according to several participants' observation of their communities, individuals unfamiliar with the Australian voting systems were more likely to vote for candidates who shared proximate cultural, ethnic or religious identities, without considering those candidates' advocated policies or political stances. However, politically literate citizens were less likely to be influenced by tokenistic representation of candidates. In fact, they often had an adversarial attitude towards parties that exploited cultural and ethnic diversity for instrumental purposes, citing the examples of Tu Le, Andrew Charlton and Gladys Liu in past Australian federal elections.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>J Boscaini, '[How Tu Le turned being dumped by Labor to run for the seat of Fowler into an opportunity](#)', ABC News, 5 October 2022, accessed 19 August 2024; S Khorana, '[Preselection and parachuting candidates: 3 reasons parties override their local branch members, despite the costs](#)', The Conversation, 5 April 2022, accessed 18 August 2024; BBC, '[Gladys Liu: the row over a trailblazing Chinese-Australian MP](#)', BBC, 17 September 2019, accessed 18 August 2024.



**Figure 5. Factors that determine one's political decision-making during state or federal elections**

A focus group participants identified:

We don't need another Harvard paper on how to engage with people of colour. It's just about putting more people of colour out there. We'll listen to each other because we know how to communicate with each other.

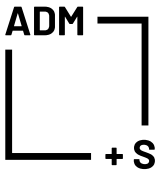
We understand what's important to the communities as well. As long as it's not tokenistic, because some parties also do it just out of like, cynically, because they think

it'll get more people of colour votes ... I mean, don't pull a Tu Le, and don't fly Andrew Charlton into the city like the seat of Parramatta. That's obviously tokenistic.

Specifically, regarding who represents migrants in the media and other institutional spaces, a South Asian woman-identifying participant in their 20s from focus group #5 who had lived in Australia for less than 10 years, but was highly politically engaged and media literate stated:

if you sort of look up a few people in this space, you will see a very few lists of people who always keep speaking up about migrant experiences ... I'm like, wonderful. I'm so glad you're speaking for the billionth time because you haven't been a migrant for the last 10 years.

What are you speaking about? You know, you've become a citizen. Are you employing migrants? Do you have a special advisory? Do you have services that interact with migrants? And a lot of these people don't. And, while I do appreciate that people have lived experience, it's just like, it's 10 years old.



The participant noted that migrants' experiences in Australia vary significantly influenced by factors such as the timing of their immigration, which reflects the impact of the prevailing immigration policies at the time, and the specific visa streams under which they arrived, which often indicate their social class.

In terms of policies and issues of interest to our participants, the Chinese participants reported being particularly concerned with issues relating to 'international relations', 'the economy (including interest rates, exchange rates, inflation and the cost of living)', 'Australian politicians', and 'immigration.' In contrast, South Asian respondents reported greater concern about issues, such as 'the economy', 'human rights and gender equity (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and LGBTQIA+ communities)', 'social welfare', and 'international relations' (Figure 6).

CALD communities tend to have different sets of concerns compared to people from Anglo backgrounds. Past research on discussions related to #auspol and #ausvotes (i.e., Australian federal elections) on X (formerly Twitter) has shown that the general public is concerned about the national economy, infrastructure construction, climate change, health care, education, gender equity, humanitarian immigration and border control.<sup>10</sup>

The differences in concerns were corroborated by participants in our focus groups. They noted that issues related to Australia's immigration policies and sentiments (such as rapid changes

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<sup>10</sup>A Bruns, D Angus and T Graham, '[Twitter campaigning strategies in Australian federal elections 2013-2019](#)', *Social Media + Society*, 2021, October-December:1-15, doi:10.1177/20563051211063462.

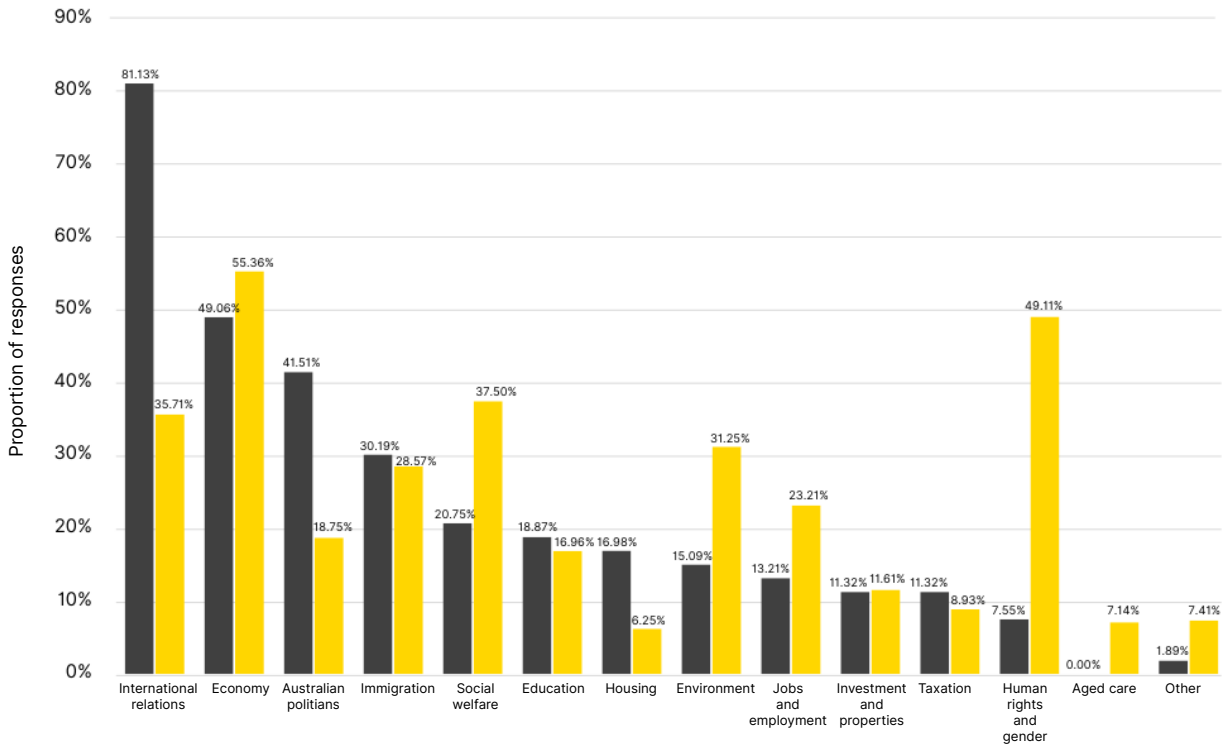
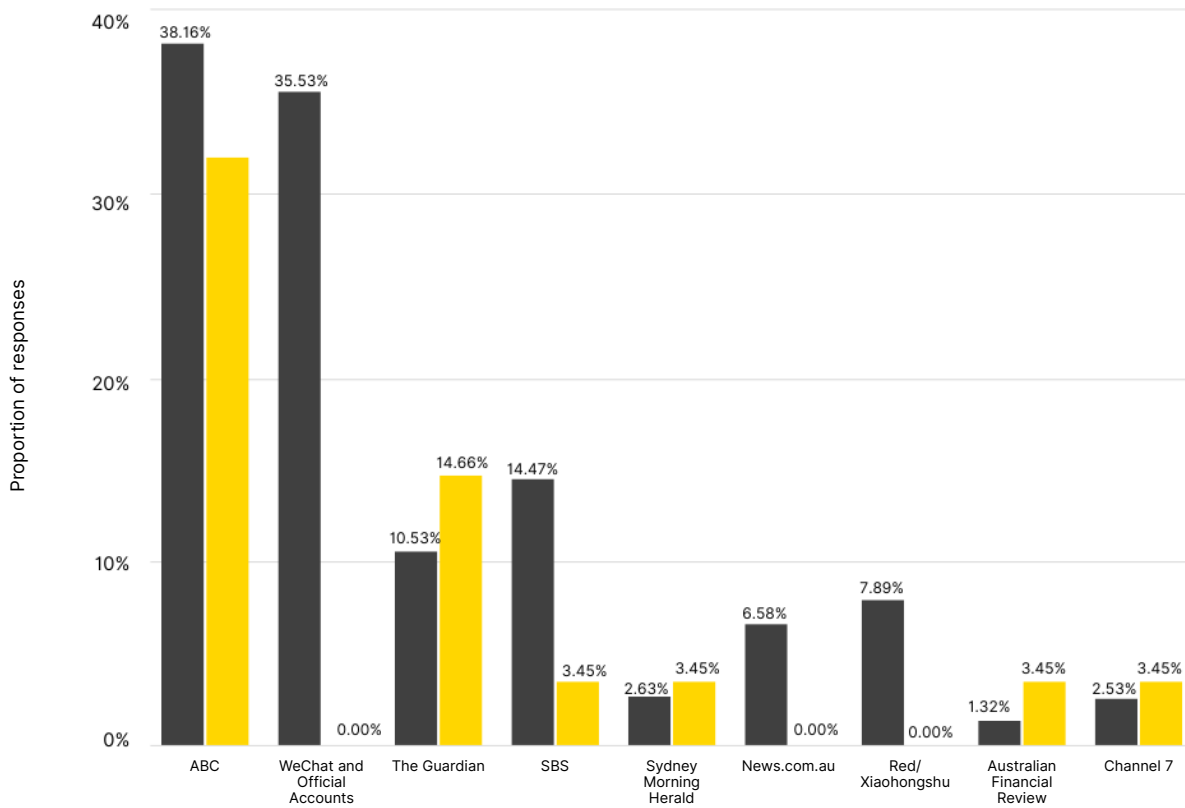


Figure 6. Main issues and concerns among Chinese and South Asian communities.

## Media consumption and trust

The research aimed to identify the platforms and sources through which migrants consume political news and information. The survey finds that migrants consume news and information across a range of traditional and digital media outlets. Our open-ended question revealed that a significant proportion of participants consume news from the ABC. WeChat and diasporic media outlets on the platform, however, were the dominant news providers among Chinese respondents. While a higher proportion of South Asian participants preferred The Guardian as their news source, we found that a larger proportion of Chinese migrants favoured news stories from SBS.

RED, or Xiaohongshu, the Chinese equivalent of Instagram, emerged as a growing source of news and information for Chinese participants (Figure 7).



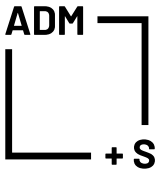
**Figure 7. Sources of news and information.**

Following the question of news and information consumption, the survey invited participants to rank 'to what extent do they think that Australian national media including without being limited to the ABC, SBS, The Age, Sydney Morning Herald, 9 News and 7 Network are effective and useful in keeping them updated on Australian politics.' Survey participants reported a medium level of trust towards Australian national media. When asked to rank their trust from 0 (no trust) to 5 (most trust), the median rating from both the Chinese and South Asian participant cohorts was 3.

On political news and media consumption, a second-generation South Asian migrant participant in their 30s from focus group #3 stated:

It feels like a lot of marketing with traditional media [in Australia]. At the moment, they use marketing language to persuade people in a certain way.

A first-generation South Asian migrant participant from focus group #5 was very discerning of the media they consumed due to their university studies in Australia:



I also look at the sort of political leanings and the context of all of these papers to figure out what's right, what's left and what the sort of associations are. So where's the money coming from? Who are the donors? That sort of stuff. Yeah, I feel like you've got this training from your degree or from, from your—I've just always been sceptical because, growing up in the Middle East, you have to be sceptical of what you're like propaganda and a lot of that control is just there.

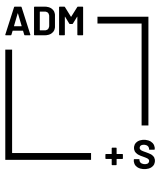
A higher level of political participation and literacy among participants is likely to lead to more critical consumption of news and information, resulting in a higher degree of media literacy. The participant noted that migrants' experiences in Australia vary significantly influenced by factors such as the timing of their immigration, which reflects the impact of the prevailing immigration policies at the time, and the specific visa streams under which they arrived, which often indicate their social class. Several participants mentioned that they tended to 'read everything' for professional, personal and advocacy purposes. They regularly read physical newspapers, such as the Sydney Morning Herald or online news from The Guardian, every morning, as well as news sources from their countries of former residence.

Participants from the focus groups further revealed that their trust in social media content, including news shared in online groups and opinions, was low and that they tended to avoid clicking on headline URLs, recognising them as traffic-driven content and lacking in depth. Some participants indicated a critical stance towards news and information online originating from authoritarian regimes, with the infodemic during the COVID-19 pandemic cited as a significant factor. A first-generation migrant of Chinese cultural identity, who recently acquired her Australian citizenship, shared in focus group #4:

I don't believe anyone [who publish news and information] based in China now. [...] A couple of years ago, during the COVID time, I found there was too much fake news. They were trying, you know, saying, 'Oh China is doing great,' you know. But while at the same time, my friends were telling me they were being, you know, locked down, they cannot leave home. There was no medicine. And that is a big difference.

However, despite the low trust, the role of social media in media consumption among participants cannot be underestimated. Some participants watched programs like Q&A and followed geopolitical experts on Twitter/X, or viewed political commentaries posted by influencers on YouTube. Several participants also followed pages or media accounts dedicated to assessing misinformation and disinformation.

Participants who are both critical of news and information sources and actively engaged in everyday and collective political activities often found themselves in situations where they



needed to debunk misinformation and disinformation circulating within their own families or close social networks. According to several focus group participants, this process is often emotionally draining. At the same time, a few participants also mentioned running online groups or forums with like-minded CALD community members in which they discussed Australian politics and policy and fact-checked stories.

According to a Chinese-Australian participant from focus group #2 who was a first-generation migrant, had lived in multiple countries and was highly politically engaged in Australia, online

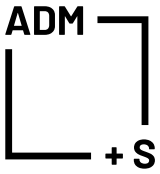
I run a WeChat group which is a forum for the people who are like-minded, interested in Australian politics and policies. So, no nonsense. No news I mean, no, no advertisement or no 'Good morning, goodbye, good nights' kind of things. It's just a hardcore discussion on politics and policy. So it is also an interesting forum for me to get to see what people are thinking, and I see my role as ... to check and confirm some of the news whether or not it is actually accurate. So, more than [...] often than not, we're able to spot fake news and opinion rather than news.

## Conclusion

This submission is based on an academic research study that examined political participation, political literacy, and media literacy within South Asian and Chinese communities in 2023-2024. The research team believes that the survey and focus group findings are pivotal in highlighting both the current state of, and necessary advancements for civics education, engagement and participation among CALD communities in Australia. Noting the sample size and the dearth of similar studies focused on newer CALD communities, the research team is committed to broadening the scope and questions in future research. We are also keen to ensure that the research output is accessible to a wide range of end-users and stakeholders. Should the Committee require further consultation, we remain available to assist.

## Acknowledgement

The research team wishes to thank all research participants for their valuable insights. We also acknowledge the contributions of Hao Zheng, Allies of Colour and Kathy Nickels.



## Glossary

**CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse):** This label is used in Australia to refer mainly to non-Indigenous ethnic groups other than the English-speaking Anglo-Celtic population.

**Chinese migrants:** In this study, this broadly refers to individuals who self-identify as having Chinese cultural backgrounds, regardless of whether they originate from the People's Republic of China.

**Civic participation and engagement:** In this research, we understand civic participation or engagement in a broader sense than just voting. Civic participation and engagement refer to the ways in which citizens take an interest in and actively participate in the life of a community, with the aim of improving conditions for others or shaping the community's future.

**Civics education:** The continual and systematic provision of information and learning experiences to all citizens to enable their effective participation in democratic life.

**Diasporic media outlets:** Media outlets that are established and run by members of CALD migrant communities.

**Focus groups:** A qualitative research method in which the research team and participants engage in discussions on issues related to the research topic.

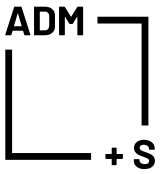
**Media literacy:** This refers to one's ability to access and use various media sources and critically consume media messages to evaluate their credibility and trustworthiness.

**Misinformation and disinformation:** Misleading information that is created and distributed intentionally by the content producer or publisher is usually identified as disinformation, while that which is disseminated without the intention to mislead but is nonetheless incorrect is understood as misinformation.

**Political literacy:** The knowledge and skills that citizens obtain to participate in Australian democratic systems.

**South Asian migrants:** In this study, this refers to individuals whose familial or cultural backgrounds originate from countries in the Indian subcontinent, including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka.

**Survey:** A quantitative research method wherein participants respond to a set of questions related to the research topic.



# Appendix

Intro This project aims to understand the kind of news and media that you consume on a daily basis, your understanding of Australian media and politics, and how the media and other factors influence your engagement with Australian issues.

IF You identify yourself as being of Chinese or South Asian cultural heritage, or mixed;  
You are or over 18 years old; You have been living in Australia for at least 2 years. Please continue the survey.

Otherwise, you are not eligible to participate in the survey and we thank you for your interest.

The survey will take around 10 minutes to complete. Kindly note that your information will be kept by UNSW safely and confidentially. If you have encountered any questions, please feel free to get in touch with the research team [s.khorana@unsw.edu.au](mailto:s.khorana@unsw.edu.au). We appreciate your time and contribution to this project.

*Please note that the following information will be part of our data and statistical analysis.*

---

Q1. How old are you?

---

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Q2. How long have you been in Australia

- o 2-5 years (1)
- o 6-10 years (2)
- o 11-15 years (3)
- o 16-20 years (4)
- o More than 20 years, please specify: (5)

---

---

Q3. Do you identify as a first or second-generation migrants?

- o First generation (born outside Australia) (1)
- o Second generation (born and/or raised in Australia) (2)

---

Q4. Are you an Australian citizen?

- Yes (1)
  - No, I am a PR holder (2)
  - No, I am a temporary visa holder. Please specify your current visa stream: (3)
- 

Q5. Please name the top 3 media outlets where you frequently consume news information. They can be Australian national media or the media outlets from your home country; they can be newspapers or news accounts on social media.

- Click to write Item 1 (1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - Click to write Item 2 (2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - Click to write Item 3 (3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q6. How would you describe your level of political participation?

- I am active in consuming news stories that are related to international relations, trade, domestic policy changes, and political campaigns and elections. (1)
  - I actively express my opinions about political news publicly or semi-publicly on social media and/or social events (i.e., friends/family gathering, communal events, interpersonal interactions). (2)
  - I don't think my vote or my opinion matters. (3)
  - I cannot or do not want to do extensive research to inform my political decision. (4)
  - I am active in organising political campaigns on behalf of a party or a politician. (5)
  - I am cautious about my votes during elections and would do extensive research to make my political decision. (6)
  - I am active in participating in political campaigns (i.e., petitions, protests, electoral campaigns etc) as I think I can make a change. (7)
  - I foresee that I will be an election candidate in the future. (8)
  - Please use a short sentence to describe your political participation if you don't find the options above suitable: (9)
- 

Q7. To what extent, do you think that you understand Australia's political system (i.e., electoral system, parliamentary system, local MPs)?

- I understand them very well (1)
- I do not understand how they work entirely (2)
- I do not understand them at all (3)

Q8. From 0 (the lowest) to 5 (the highest), to what extent do you think that Australian national media, including without being limited to the ABC, SBS, The Age, Sydney Morning Herald, 9 News, and 7 Network, are effective and useful in keeping you updated on Australian politics?

0      1      2      3      4      5

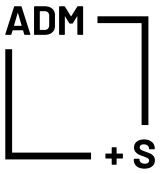
Click to write Choice 1 ( )

Q9. What are the top 3 issues that you are most interested in?

- Australian politicians (1)
  - International relations (2)
  - Economy (e.g.interest rates, exchange rates, inflation, and cost of living) (3)
  - Investment and properties (4)
  - Taxation (5)
  - Jobs and employment (6)
  - Social welfare (7)
  - Property (8)
  - Education (9)
  - Age care (10)
  - Human rights and gender equity (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and LGBTQIA+ communities) (11)
  - Environment (12)
  - Immigration (13)
  - Other. Please specify: (14)
- 

Q10. When it comes to the state or federal elections, what are the 3 main factors that influence your voting decisions?

- My families (1)
  - My friends and colleagues (2)
  - My partisan preference (3)
  - Ethnicity of the candidate (4)
  - The social, political background of the candidate (5)
  - The reputation of the candidate (6)
  - The influence or the visibility of their campaigns (7)
  - Their advocated policies (8)
  - Others. Please specify: (9)
-



Q11. Have you found hard to participate in Australian politics?

- Yes (Please move to Q12) (1)
- No (2)

---

Q12. Please use one sentence to describe the challenge that you encounter(ed) in your political participations.

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Ending message *The following information will not be included in the data analysis, but it will be used for us to keep in touch should you wish to participate in the focus group or receive a copy of the final outcome.*

---

Q13 What is your name? (First name and Last name)

---

---

Q14 Would you like to participate in our online focus groups scheduled between **April and May 2024**?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Maybe (3)

---

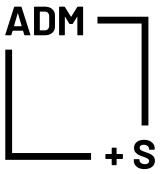
Q15 What is the best way to get in touch? (Choose one only)

- Email: (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- Mobile phone number: (2) \_\_\_\_\_

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End of Block: Default Question Block

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**Intro** 本项目旨在了解您日常阅读的新闻和媒体类型，您对澳大利亚媒体和政治的理解，以及媒体和其他因素如何影响您在澳大利亚的政治参与。

如果：

- 您具有中国 (包括中国大陆，香港，台湾，澳门以及海外华裔) 或南亚文化背景，或两者兼有；
- 您年满18岁；
- 您已在澳大利亚居住至少2年。

请填写这份问卷。

如果您不满足上述条件，我们抱歉，您不符合问卷调查需求，我们感谢您对本次调查的兴趣。

本次问卷预计需要约10分钟完成。请注意，您的信息将由悉尼新南威尔士大学 (UNSW) 安全且保密地保存。如果您遇到任何问题，请随时与研究团队联系 ([s.khorana@unsw.edu.au](mailto:s.khorana@unsw.edu.au))。非常感谢您在本项目中所花费的时间和您的无私贡献。

*请注意：以下信息将会用于我们的研究数据分析。*

---

**Q1.** 您的年龄是

\_\_\_\_\_

---

**Q2.** 您已经在澳大利亚长期居住了多久了？

- 2-5 年 (1)
- 6-10 年 (2)
- 11-15 年 (3)
- 16-20 年 (4)
- 20年以上。请具体说明 (5) \_\_\_\_\_

---

**Q3.** 您认为自己是第一代或者第二代澳大利亚移民吗？

- 第一代移民 (生于非澳大利亚的其他国家) (1)
- 第二代移民 (生长在澳大利亚) (2)

Q4. 您是澳大利亚公民吗？

- 是 (1)
- 不，我是永久居民 (2)
- 不，我持有临时签证，请明确您的签证类型： (3)

\_\_\_\_\_

Q5. 请列出您最频繁获取新闻信息的前三家媒体机构。可以是澳大利亚国内媒体，可以是您所在国家的媒体，也可以是国际媒体，可以是报纸或社交媒体上的新闻信息账号。

- 点击填写第一项 (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 点击填写第二项 (2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 点击填写第三项 (3) \_\_\_\_\_

Q6. 请描述您平时会参与的政治活动，我们会用于衡量您的政治参与水平

- 我积极关注与国际关系、贸易、国内政策变化以及政治竞选和选举有关的新闻报道。 (1)
- 我会在社交媒体上或社交活动中（例如朋友/家人聚会、公共活动、人际交往等）公开或半公开地表达对政治社会新闻的意见。 (2)
- 我认为我的选票或意见无关紧要。 (3)
- 在进行政治决策之前，我无法或不想进行深入研究。 (4)
- 我积极参与代表政党或政治人物组织政治活动。 (5)
- 我在选举中会谨慎投票，并会进行广泛研究来做出我的政治决定。 (6)
- 我积极参与政治活动（例如请愿书、抗议活动、选举活动等），因为我相信我的行动能带来改变。 (7)
- 我预计将来会成为一名候选人参加政治选举。 (8)
- 如果以上选项不适合您，请用一句简短的话来描述您的政治参与 (9)

\_\_\_\_\_

Q7. 您认为自己<sup>1</sup>对澳大利亚的政治体系（例如选举制度、议会制度、地方议员）了解的程度如何？

- 我非常了解 (1)
- 我并不完全了解它们的运作 (2)
- 我完全不了解它们 (3)

Q8. 从0（最低）到5（最高），您认为澳大利亚的国家媒体，包括但不限于ABC，SBS，The Age，Sydney Morning Herald，9 News和7 Network，在让您了解澳大利亚政治生活方面的效果和实效性如何？

0 1 2 3 4 5

请点击进行衡量 ()



Q9. 您最感兴趣的前三个政治议题是什么？

- 澳大利亚政要 (1)
  - 国际关系 (2)
  - 经济 (比如, 利率、汇率、通货膨胀和生活成本) (3)
  - 投资和房地产 (4)
  - 税收 (5)
  - 就业和就业机会 (6)
  - 社会福利 (7)
  - 房地产 (8)
  - 教育 (9)
  - 老年护理 (10)
  - 人权, 性别平等(包括原住民和托雷斯海峡岛民, 酷儿群体等) (11)
  - 环境 (12)
  - 移民 (13)
  - 其他, 请注明 (14) \_\_\_\_\_
-

Q10. 在州或联邦选举中，影响您投票决策的主要因素有哪三个？

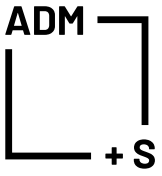
- 我的家人 (1)
  - 我的朋友和同事 (2)
  - 我的政党倾向 (3)
  - 候选人的族裔背景 (4)
  - 候选人的社会，政治背景 (5)
  - 候选人的声誉 (6)
  - 候选人的竞选影响力或可见度 (7)
  - 他们倡导的政策 (8)
  - 其他，请注明 (9) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q11. 您是否发现参与澳大利亚政治很困难

- 是 (请回答第12个问题) (1)
  - 否 (2)
- 

Q12. 请用一句话概括你在澳大利亚进行政治参与所遇到的困难与挑战

\_\_\_\_\_



**Ending message** 以下信息将不会包含在数据分析中，但如果您希望参加小组访谈或收到最终结果的副本，我们将通过以下提供的信息对您进行联系。

---

**Q13** 您的姓名

\_\_\_\_\_

---

**Q14** 你想要参与我们线上的小组论坛吗？时间暂定于2024年四月和五月

- 是 (1)
- 否 (2)
- 不确定 (3)

---

**Q15** 我们应该如何与您保持联系（二选一）？

- 邮箱 (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 电话 (2) \_\_\_\_\_

End of Block: Default Question Block

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