



Calgary



# Voting Equity Research – Presentation

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# Agenda

Project Background and Methodology

Key Findings

Detailed Findings

- Awareness and Knowledge

- Voting Behaviours and Experiences

- Barriers to Voting

- Improvements and Communication Opportunities



# Background & Methodology



# Background & Objectives

## Project Background

- Equity action and resourcing plan was approved by Council in 2021
- Opportunity was identified to understand how equitable access to voting can be improved for immigrants in Calgary

## Research Objectives

- Understanding perceptions of and opinions about voting in elections
- Identifying and exploring aspects of barriers to voting in municipal elections
- Learning what reasons some immigrants have for voting in municipal elections
- Learning what they think might help inspire other immigrants to vote
- Understanding opportunities to support immigrants to improve voter turnout





## Phase 1: Focus Groups with Immigrants

- A total of eight (8) online focus groups (3-7 participants per group)
- October 11<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022
- Conducted in English online on Microsoft Teams by a Leger moderator
- Immigrants to Canada, aged 18 years or older, living in Calgary and are Canadian Citizens
- Mix of voters and non-voters, country of origin, recency of arrival in Canada, gender and age.

## Phase 2: In-depth Interviews with Community Influencers

- A total of ten (10) online in-depth interviews were conducted in English
- October 11<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022
- Interviews were conducted online on Microsoft Teams by a Leger moderator
- Mix of immigrant communities they work with and the types of non-profits/organizations

## Phase 3: Online Survey with Immigrants

- Immigrants in Calgary, aged 18 years or older (n=340).
- Data collection took place from November 16, 2022 – December 3, 2022.

Open link survey was available in : Punjabi, Tagalog, Mandarin, Yue, Spanish, Urdu, Arabic, Vietnamese, Korean, French, Russian, Hindi, and Gujarati (results shown separately)

## Focus of this Presentation



Highlighting **key learnings** from **all phases** of research (findings were highly consistent between all phases)

Highlighting **most insightful differences** between subgroups (e.g., income, age, recency of arrival, etc.)

Detailed results are in the **full reports** – tons of data and insights!

# Key Findings





## Key Findings and Opportunities

- 1** There is an opportunity to **increase interest and engagement** in municipal government among.
- 2** Providing **accessible educational opportunities** that fit with immigrants' lives (e.g., while working multiple jobs, learning English, etc.) will likely be most effective at improving knowledge.
- 3** **Over seven-in-ten (72%)** say they voted among those eligible to vote in Calgary's last municipal election in 2021 or will vote in in the next municipal election in Calgary in 2025 (79%).
- 4** There is an opportunity to encourage voting among those **18-55, recent immigrants (past 10 years), and low income (under 60k)**.
- 5** **Few improvements** are needed to the voting process. The vast majority of voters find the voting process quick, easy, and straightforward.





## Key Findings and Opportunities Continued

- 6 A lack of awareness, knowledge, and interest in municipal government are the **primary barriers** that immigrants face to voting in municipal elections.
- 7 Strategies that are focused on **increasing awareness of and interest** in the municipal government will be most impactful in encouraging immigrants to vote.
- 8 Reducing the **challenges** immigrants face in their **daily lives** will help give them more time to be engaged with municipal matters.
- 9 **Ongoing information/engagement** and showing the **relevance to people's lives** is recommended.
- 10 This is an opportunity to **increase media coverage** and engagement with **cultural organizations**. There is significant interest in communications about government and elections.
- 11 Immigrants say knowing who gets elected/their roles, **knowing the candidates better**, and hearing about city government more often will make them more likely to vote.

# Detailed Results



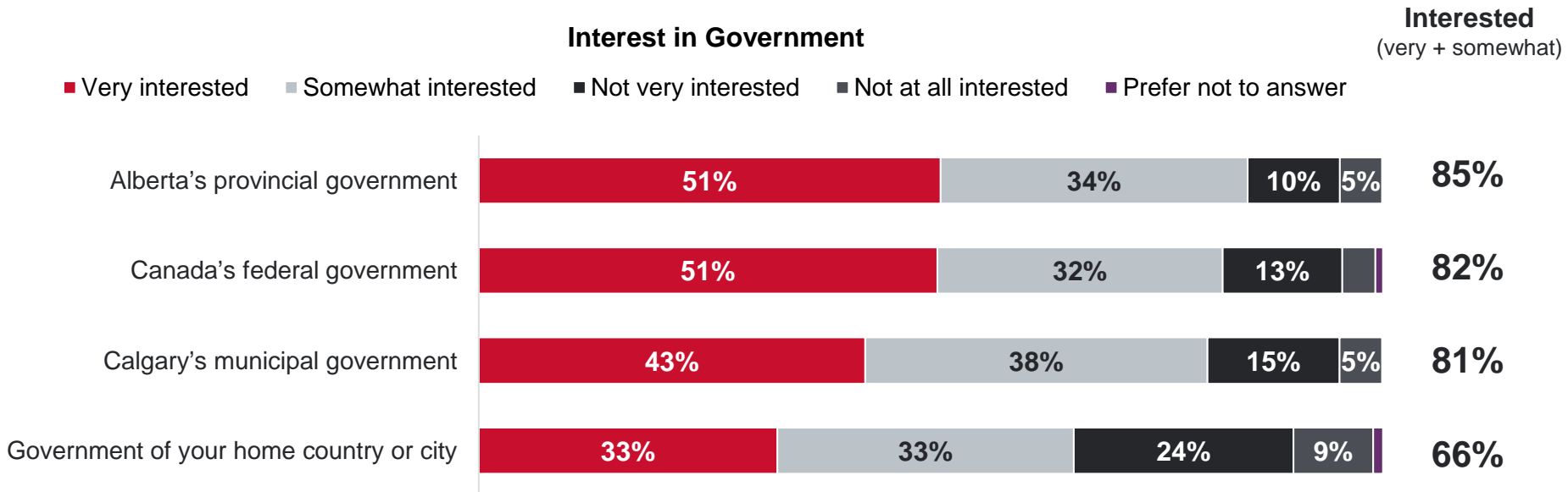


## Interest and Knowledge



# Interest in Government

- Interest is high in government
- Differs from the focus group learnings, as participants had mixed levels of interest and engagement
- Lower interest in municipal government among ages 18-55 and low-income



Note: 4% and lower not labelled

Q1. Overall, how interested are you in the roles, responsibilities, or outcomes of...  
 Base: All respondents (n=340)



# What We Heard

“

*These newcomers usually see the government as detached from them. It's a myth to be able to talk to government representatives. Even the police too and that's what we try to demystify.*

- Community Influencer



“

*It's almost like we were let down by the political system [in] whichever countries we may have come from. And so when you come here you don't naturally default to being super interested in the affairs.*

- Non-voter



“

*When it comes to anything like related to politics, I would say, I'm more like basic interested.*

- Voter



“

*“There is some interest from Philipinos on city government, but they need to know how it impacts their everyday livelihood... the topics must be relevant.”*

- Community Influencer

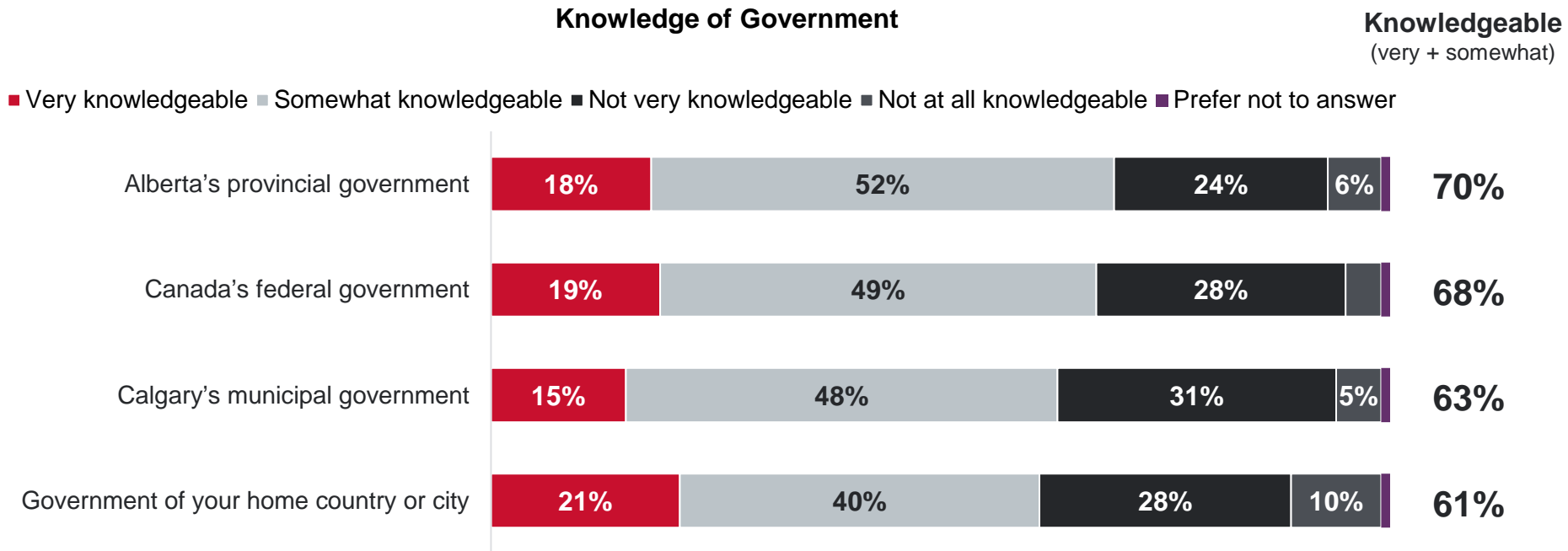


Focus group and interview learnings



# Knowledge of Government

- Knowledge levels in government are lower compared to interest levels.
- Lowest knowledge of municipal government, which aligns with focus groups.
- Lower knowledge of municipal government among ages 18-55 and low-income.



Note: 4% and lower not labelled

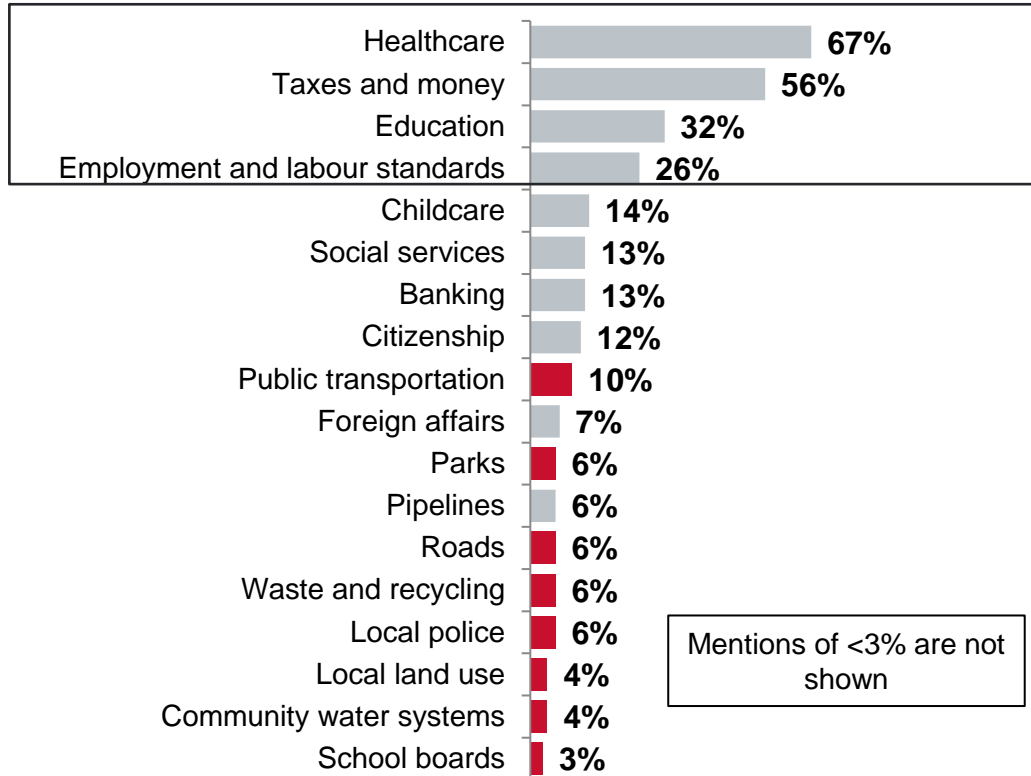
Q2. Overall, how knowledgeable do you feel about each of the following governments roles and responsibilities?  
 Base: All respondents (n=340)



# Topics of Interest

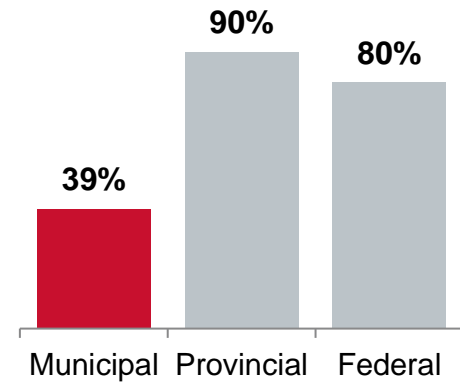
Finding a way to pique interest is important but may be challenging, as there is less interest in municipal topics.

**% Ranked Top 3**



Mentions of <3% are not shown

**Share of Top 3 Interests by Jurisdiction**



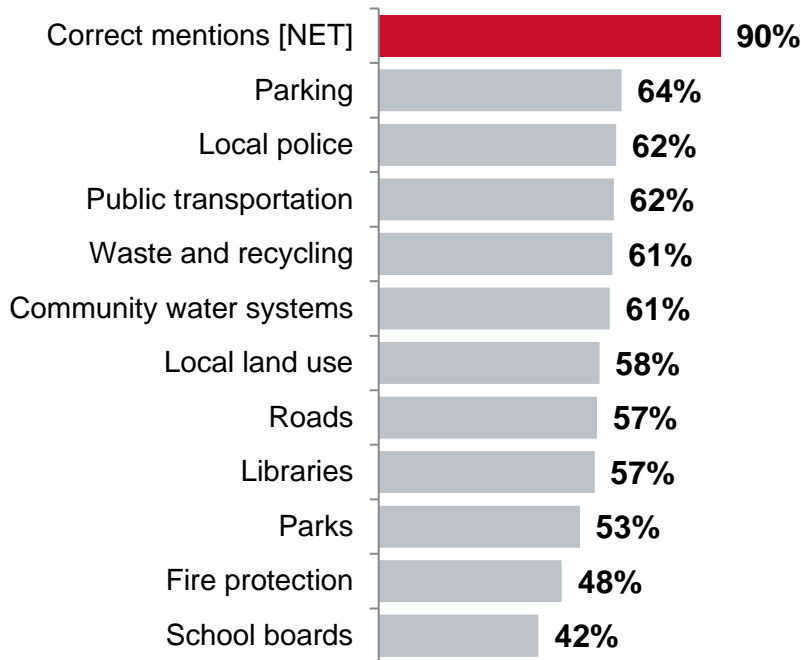
Q3b. Of the top choices you just indicated, which of those are you MOST interested in?  
 Base: All respondents (n=334)



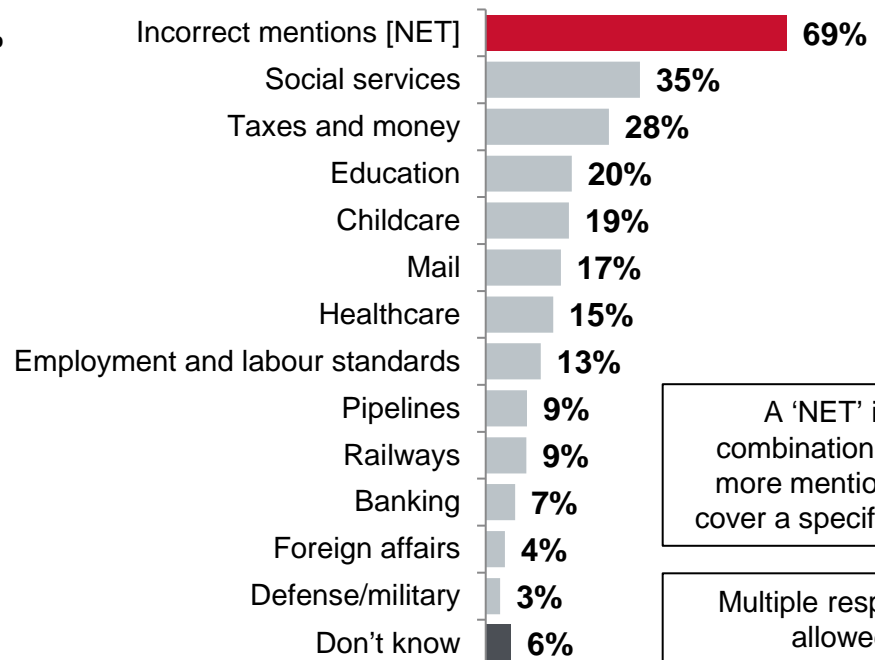
# Awareness of Municipal Government Responsibilities

- There is confusion around the responsibilities of a municipal government.
- Seven-in-ten (69%) incorrectly selected one or more item that they believe is the responsibility of a municipal government (but is not).

## % Selected – Correct Mentions



## % Selected - Incorrect Mentions



A 'NET' is a combination of 2 or more mentions that cover a specific theme

Multiple responses allowed

Q4. Which of the following items do you believe are the responsibility of a municipal government?

Base: All respondents (n=340)

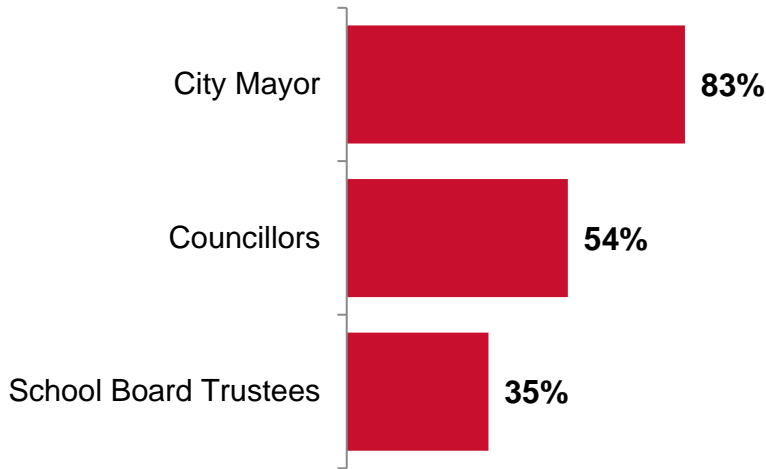




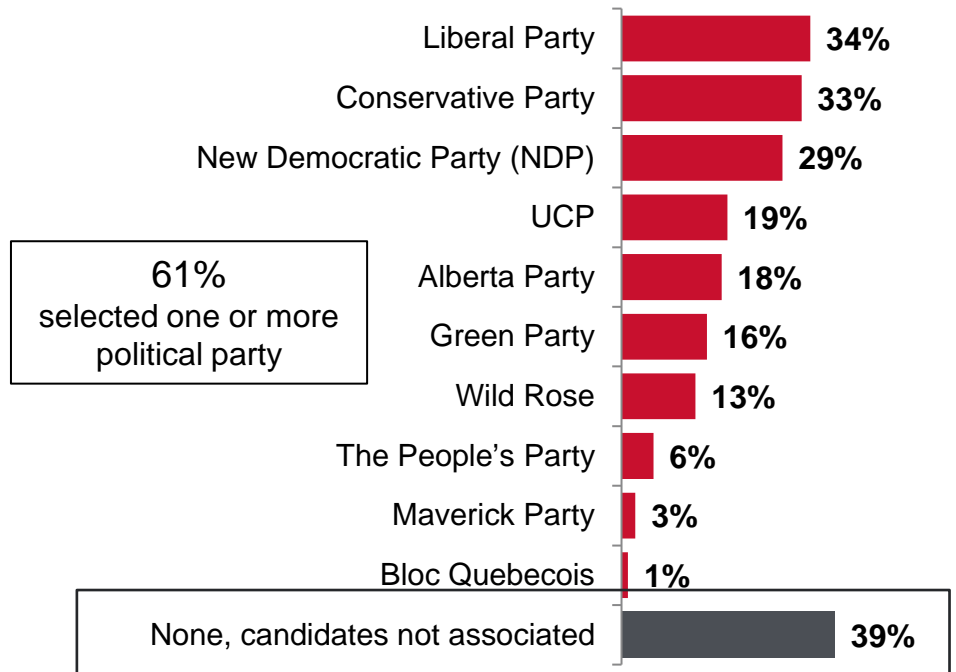
# Understanding of Municipal Elections

- Only a third (35%) know that School Board Trustees are elected.
- Three-in-five (61%) immigrants have the misconception that municipal candidates are associated with political parties.

**% Know Each is Elected**



**% Selected**



61% selected one or more political party

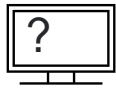
Q5. In a municipal election, who do you believe gets elected?  
Base: All respondents (n=340)

Q6. In a municipal election in Calgary, what do you believe are the options for political parties?  
Base: All respondents (n=340)



# Lack of Information and Media Coverage

Many believe a **lack of information and communications** is why they did not have a strong idea of what municipal government does or were not aware or interested in the municipal election when it happened.



## Lack of media coverage

Not enough communications and media coverage on municipal affairs and elections.



## Quiet around election time

Unlike in many home countries, it is very “quiet” around election time.



## Need more “noise” and continuous information

There is a desire for there to be more “noise” about elections and municipal government.



# What We Heard

“

*“[Municipal government] is one of those things that, unless you're really watching the news for that, you're not really seeing unless the scandal comes up.”*

- Voter

“

*“On a broader spectrum, I don't know [municipal government's] plan and what they're going to do in future.”*

- Non-voter

“

*“[What was confusing] the voting regarding those board of directors for school.”*

- Voter

“

*“I didn't find any buzz around me like no one was even talking about it. No one ever.”*

- Non-voter



Focus group learnings



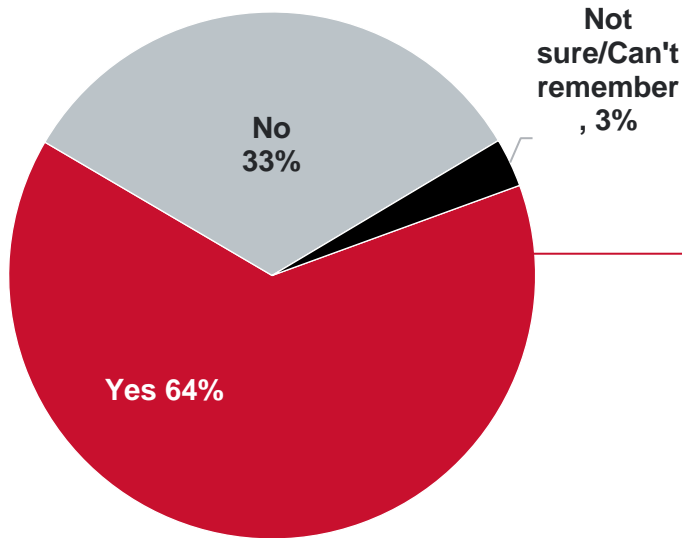
# Voting Behaviours and Experiences



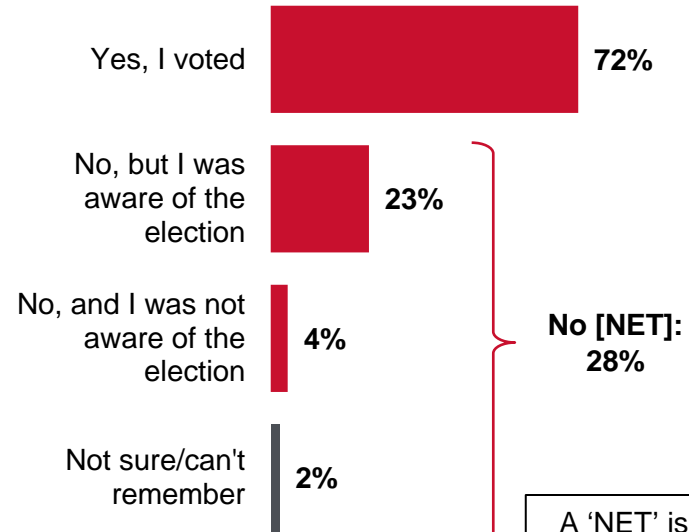
# Eligibility and Voting in Last Municipal Election

Among those eligible, seven-in-ten (72%) say they voted in Calgary's last municipal election in 2021.

**Eligible to Vote in the Last Municipal Election**



**Voted in Last Municipal Election**



A 'NET' is a combination of 2 or more mentions that cover a specific theme

Q9. The last municipal election in Calgary was in October 2021. Were you a Canadian Citizen and eligible to vote at this time?

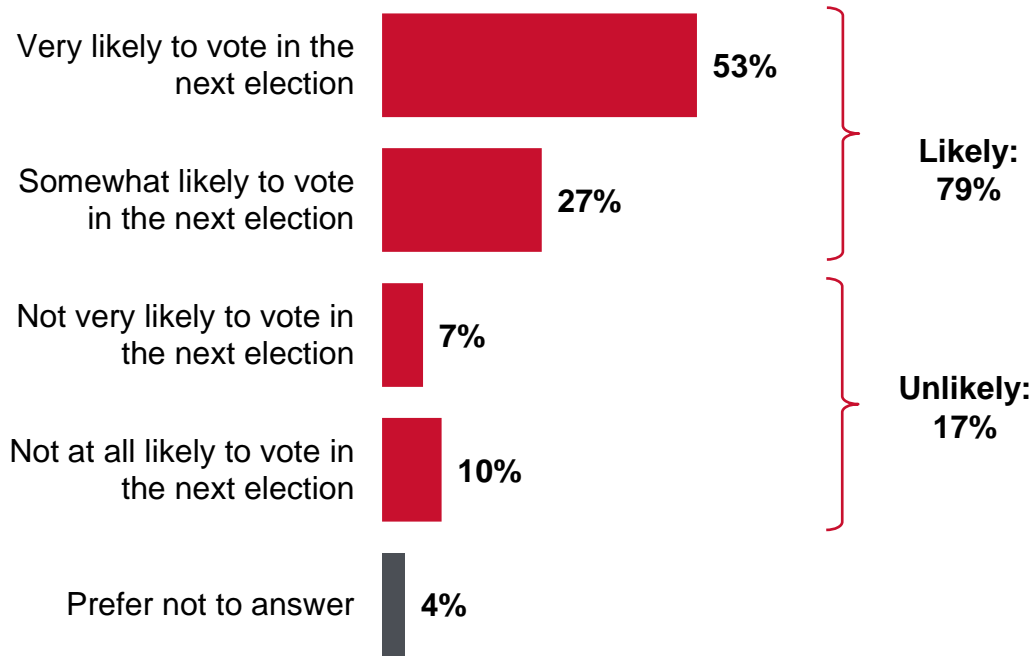
Base: All respondents (n=340)

Q10. The last municipal election in Calgary was in October 2021 when Jyoti Gondek was elected as mayor. Did you vote in this election?

Base: Those who were eligible to vote in the last municipal election (n=248)



# Likelihood of Voting in the Next Election



**Recent immigrants are less likely to vote** (71% vs. 84% arrived 10+ years ago).

**Low-income immigrants are less likely to vote** (68% \$60,000 vs. 89% income of \$120,000+).

Q6b. The next municipal election in Calgary is in 2025, how likely or not are you to vote in that election?  
 Base: All respondents (n=340)



# Voting Experiences from the Focus Groups

Among those who did vote, **almost all had positive experiences** and felt it was a quick, easy, and straightforward process.

## Successes

- ✓ Voting stations were close and easy to get to
- ✓ Short waiting times
- ✓ Organized process
- ✓ Helpful staff and volunteers
- ✓ Any questions were answered

## Challenges

- Many were **not aware** they would have to vote for school board trustees and answer additional questions
- Some felt it took **significant effort to learn about the candidates** due to the high number of candidates, and because they are not associated with political parties

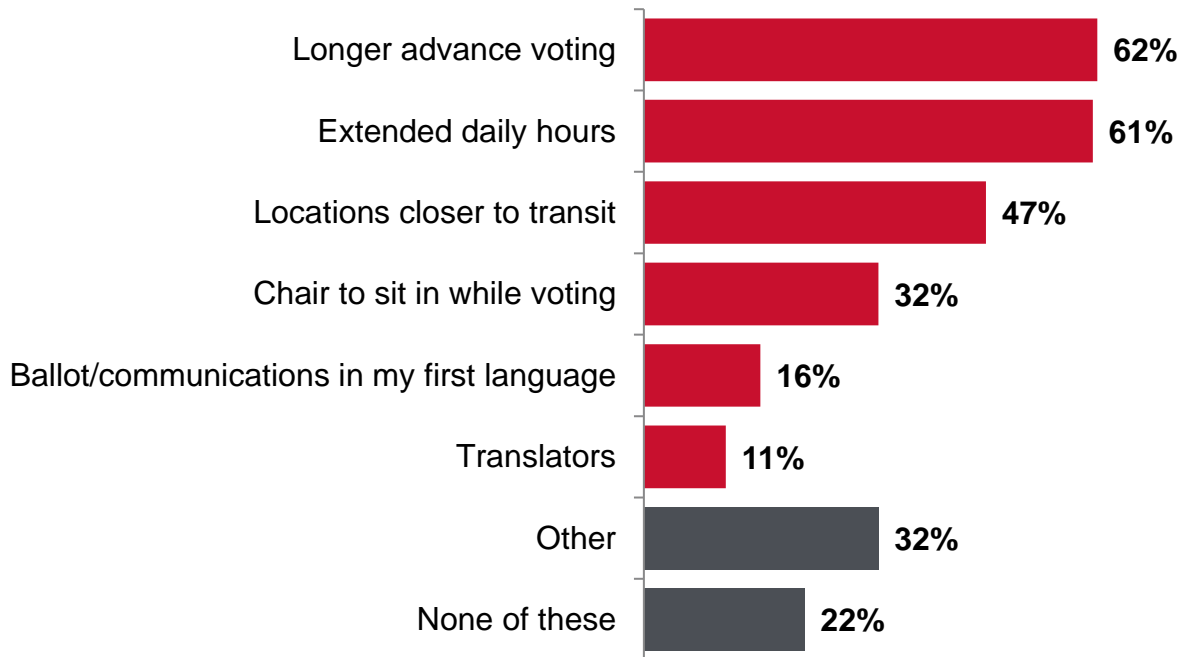
## Improvements

- **Educate** Calgarians that municipal elections involve voting for school board trustees and answering additional questions *prior* to getting to the voting stations
- Consider ways to make it **easier to learn about the candidates**, what they stand for, and their reputation



# Improvements to Municipal Voting Process

**% Ranked Top 3**



*“It was an easy process, line wasn’t too long. Nothing could have been done better.”*  
- Voter

*“[What was confusing] the voting regarding those board of directors for school.”*  
- Voter

*“I thought it was pretty seamless actually.”*  
- Voter

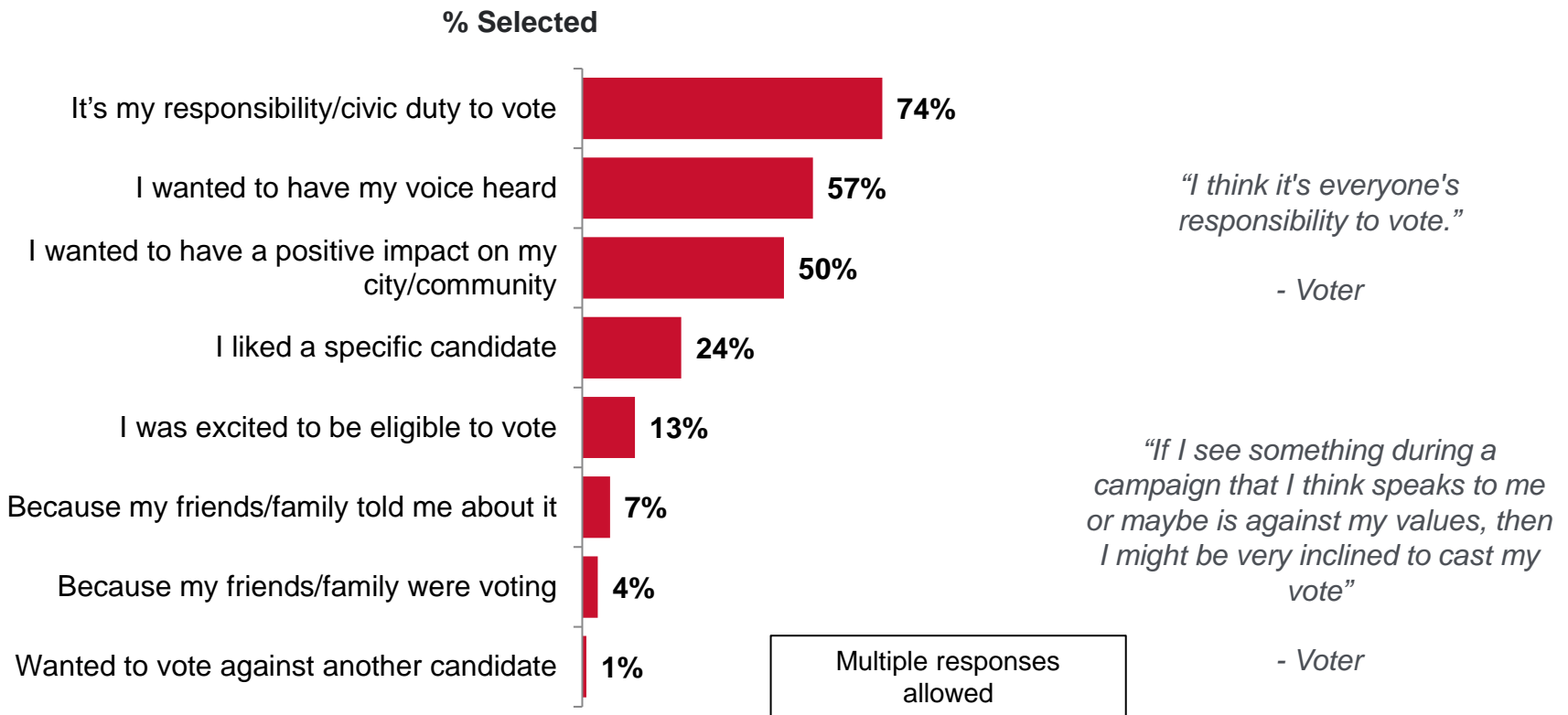
Q15. What do you think should be improved about the municipal voting process, if anything? RANK TOP 3  
Base: Those who voted in the last municipal election (n=185)





# Main Reasons for Voting

The top reasons for voting present opportunities for messaging to encourage non-voters to vote.

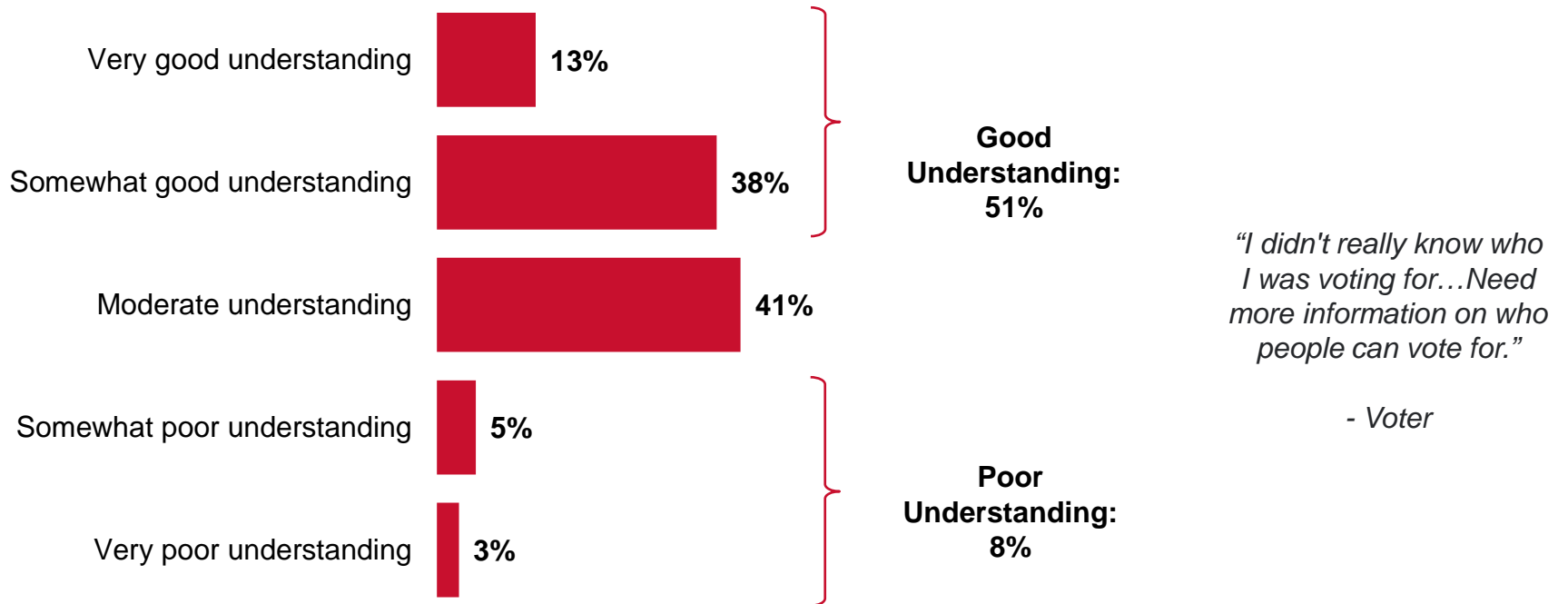


Q11. You indicated you voted in the last municipal election. What were the main reasons you voted?  
Base: Those who voted in the last municipal election (n=185)



# Understanding of Mayoral Candidate

A lack of knowledge about the candidates was a common theme in the research.



Q14a. When it comes to the candidate you voted for mayor, how much of an understanding do you feel you had about who they are and what they stand for?

Base: Those who voted in the last municipal election (n=185)

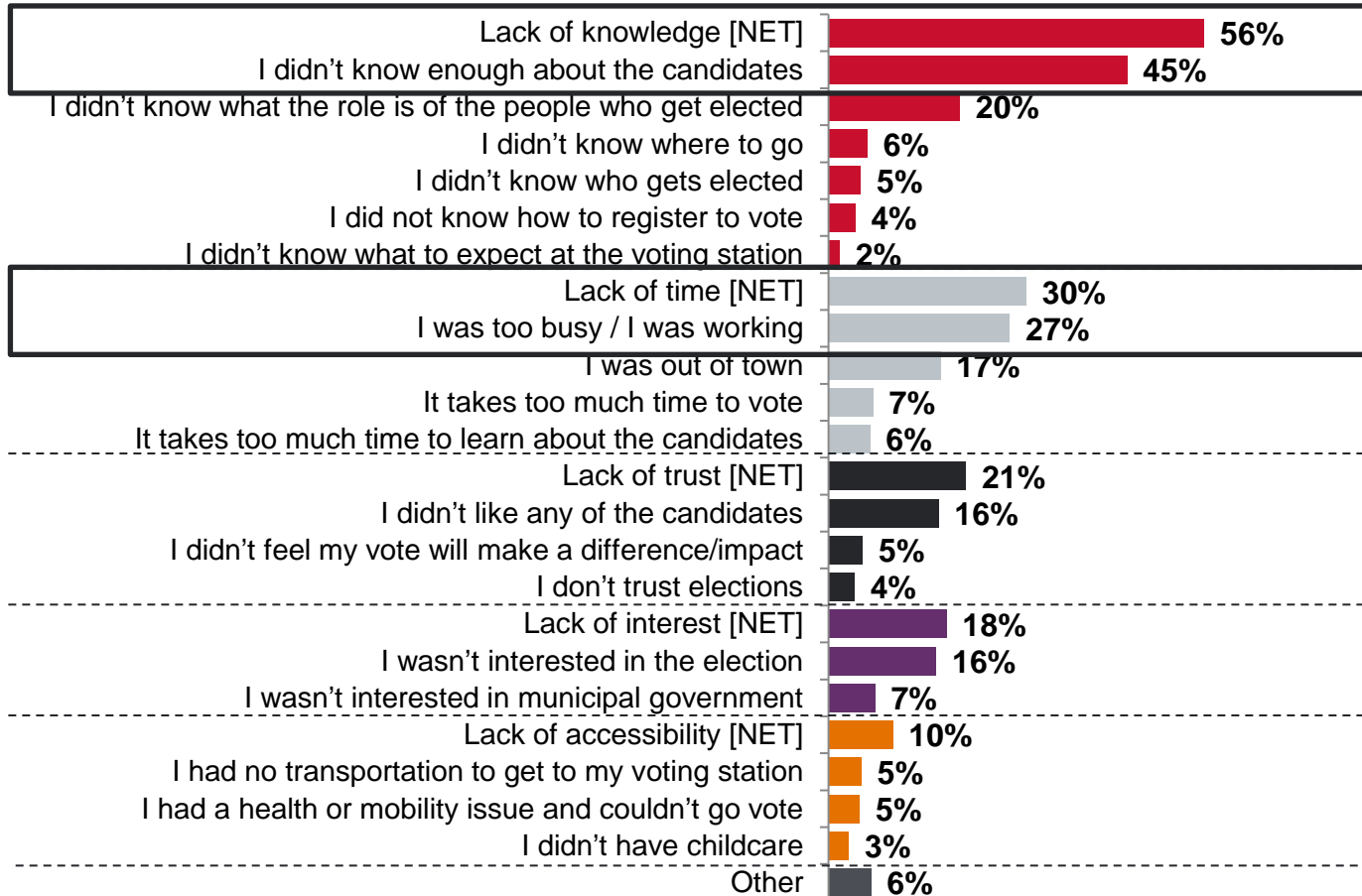


## Barriers to Voting



# Main Reasons for Not Voting\*

% Selected



Multiple responses allowed

Q12. You indicated you did not vote in the last municipal election. What were the main reasons you did not vote? SELECT UP TO 5.

\* Caution low sample size

Base: Those who were aware of election but didn't vote (n=50)



# Barriers to Voting According to Focus Group Participants

A **lack of awareness and interest** are the primary barriers that participants faced to voting in municipal elections, which outweighed all other barriers.



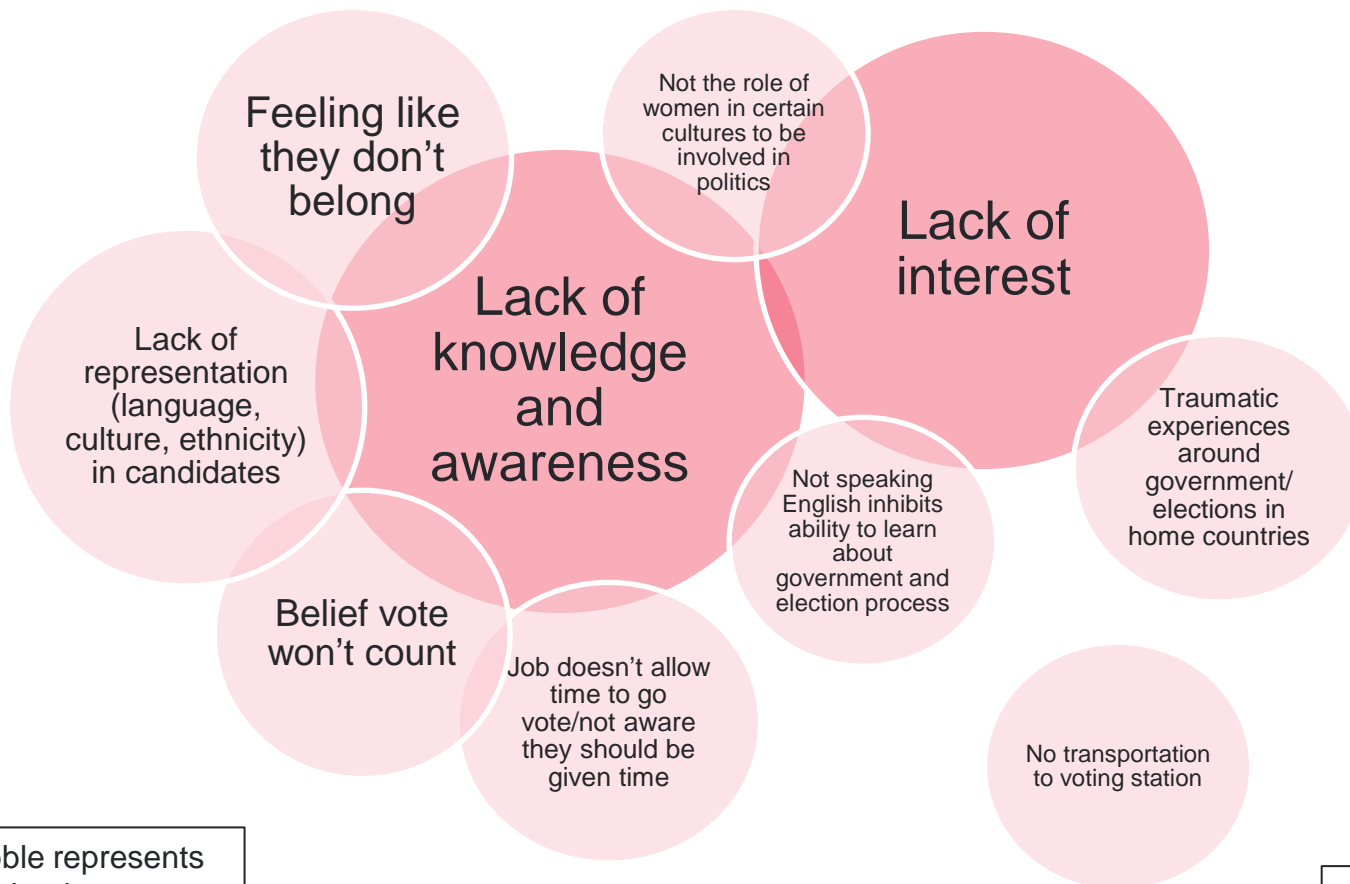
Size of the bubble represents the strength of the theme.

Focus group learnings



# Barriers to Voting according to Community Influencers

Community Influencers were more likely to mention other barriers: feeling like they do not belong/a lack of representation in candidates, language barriers, that politics is not a woman’s role in certain cultures, and no transportation.



Size of the bubble represents the strength of the theme.

Interview learnings



# Challenges Immigrants Face that Heighten Barriers to Voting

Having the **time and attention** to learn about the voting system, and consider voting, is a barrier for immigrants, as their focus is on settling and adjusting to life in Canada.



Size of the bubble represents the strength of the theme.

Focus group and interview learnings



# What We Heard

“

*“I think one thing is the language barrier.”*

- Community Influencer



“

*“Women are not as motivated to vote. In their home countries, it is not something women do, men take the decision, women are busy with the house.”*

- Community Influencer



“

*“They are working hard in their life and they don’t find enough time to think about all the other stuff... there may be some socioeconomic factors as well.”*

- Community Influencer



“

*“They've had a lot of negative and traumatic experiences with the government, especially those countries that are heavily militarized.”*

- Community Influencer



Interview learnings



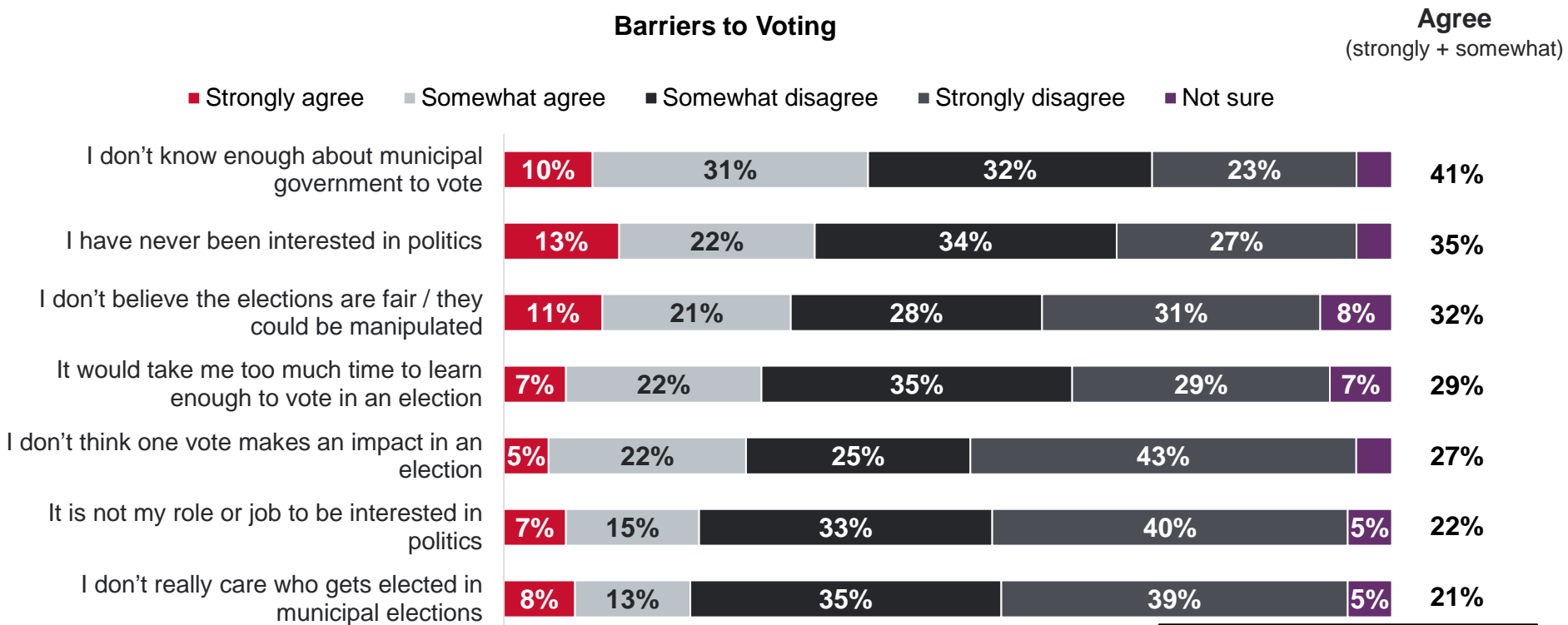


## Improvements and Communication Opportunities



# Barriers to Voting

**Immigrants 18-55 years old were more likely to face barriers** such as: not knowing enough about municipal government, not believing one vote makes an impact, not their role or job to be interested in politics, and not caring who get elected in municipal elections.



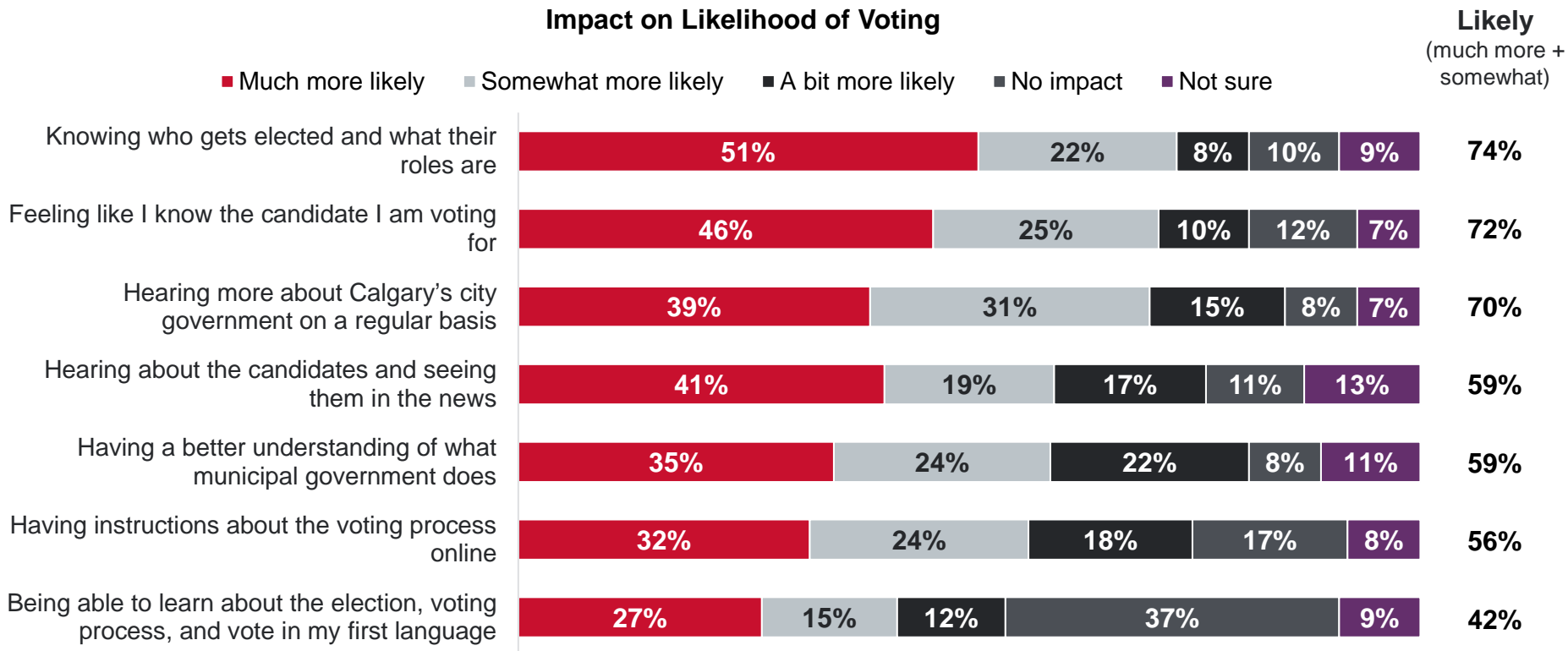
Note: 4% and lower not labelled

Q17. When it comes to politics and municipal elections specifically, how much do you agree or disagree with the following?  
 Base: All respondents (n=340)



# Strategies to Improve Likelihood of Voting

There is an opportunity to increase media coverage, make municipal matters more top-of-mind, and provide education on the roles.



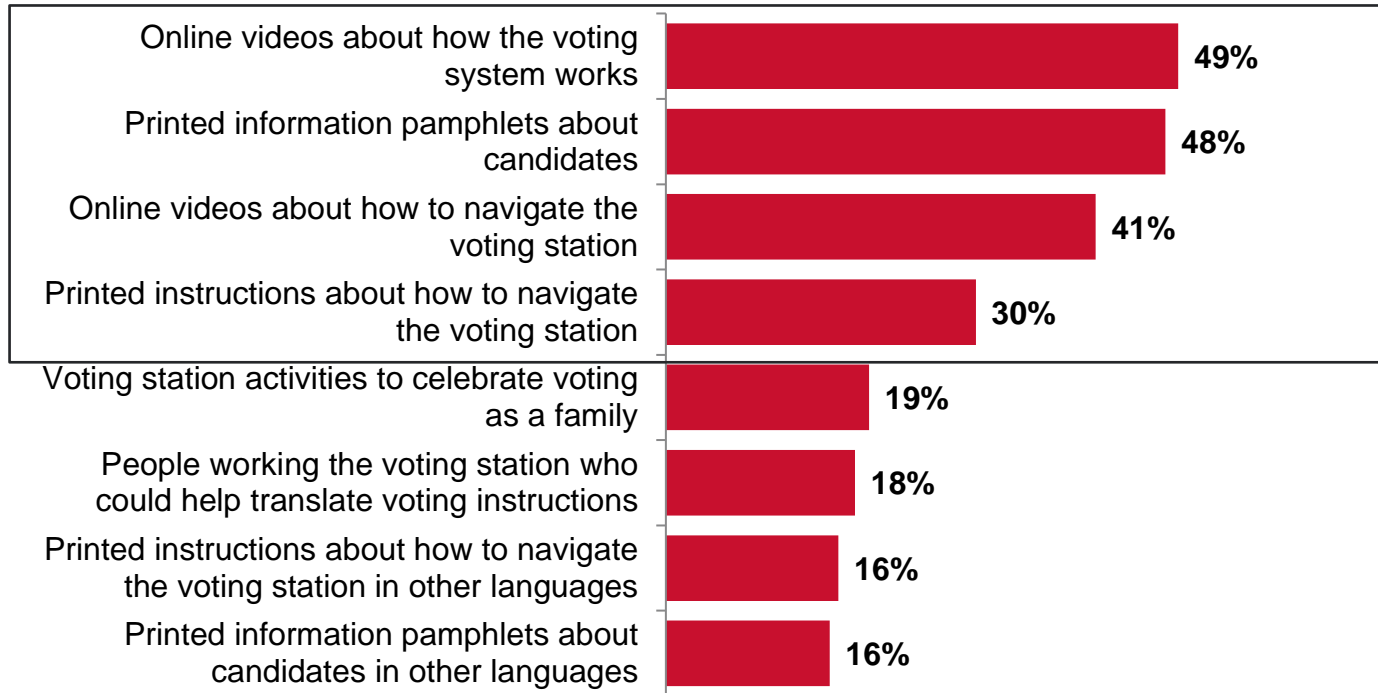
Q18. What impact would each of the following have on your likelihood to vote in the next municipal election in Calgary?  
 Base: Those who did not vote (or didn't recall voting) in the last municipal election (n=63)



# Services to Increase Voting Interest

A combination of online and printed materials is likely needed to cater to a broader audience of immigrants.

**% Ranked in Top 3**

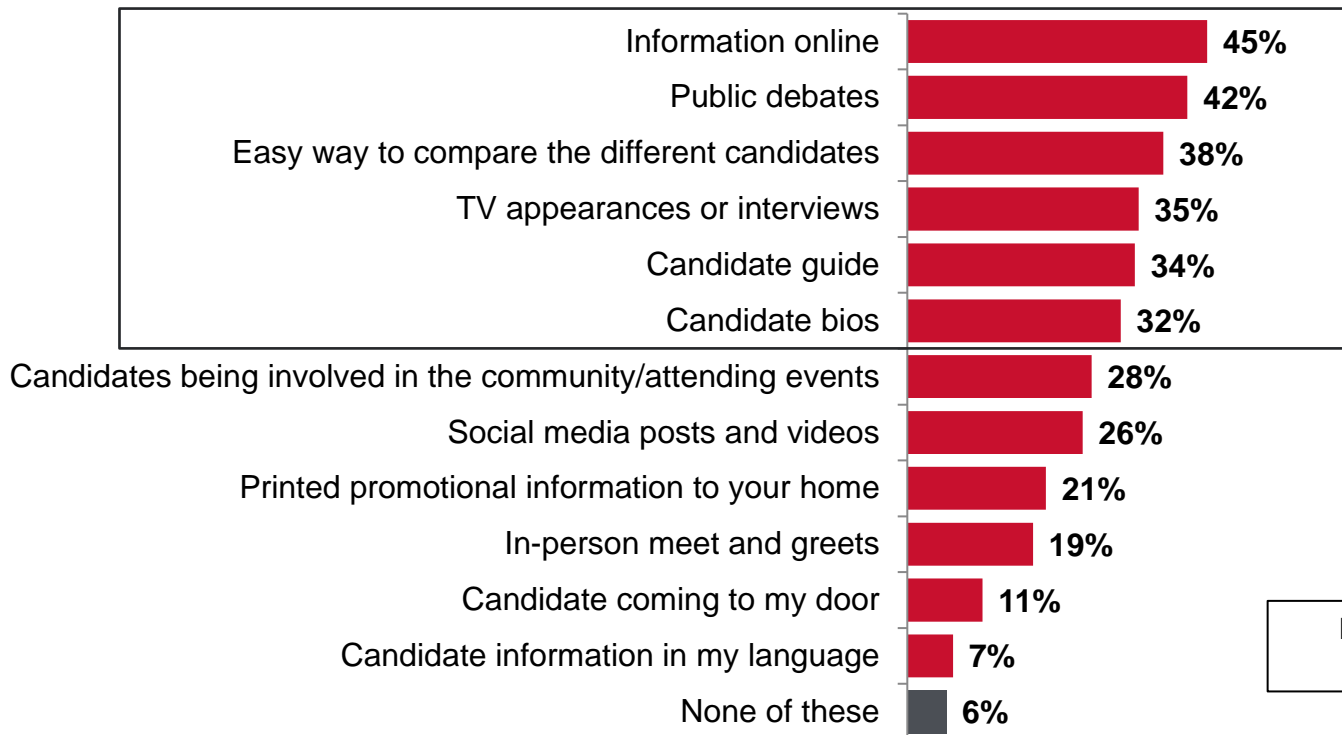


Q6c. Which of the following services would increase your interest in voting in the next municipal election in 2025, if any? RANK TOP 3  
 Base: All respondents (n=340)



# Material to Help Immigrants Understand Candidates

**% Selected**



*"[On municipal elections] You don't know what's going on here because it's quietly done... in our country... all the information is on the front page to be read on a daily basis."*

- Voter

Multiple responses allowed

Q14c. What do you believe would help you understand the candidates more? MULTI SELECT  
 Base: All respondents (n=340)



# What We Heard

“

*[About the candidates] I want to hear them. I want to see them...It gives me my opinion in terms of if this person is believable. it's great to hear them talk about what they stand for and what their visions are.*

- Voter



“

*Record some short tutorial videos, what to do and how to vote and that would break that language barrier as well, so you don't necessarily need to speak to know the process.*

- Non-Voter



“

*I have an association I belong to...This association is well known by the community...so I think programs should be done for people like us right where the community is.*

- Voter



“

*Coming to like...university lecture halls and informing us. Even a little bit. I think that would have interested me, having that information presented to me instead having to go out and look for it.*

- Non-Voter



Focus group learnings



# Interest in Government and Election Communications

**Recent immigrants** are more likely to be interested in in-person events where they can meet the candidates and information booklets before they become citizens.

## Likelihood in Using/Attending/Watching

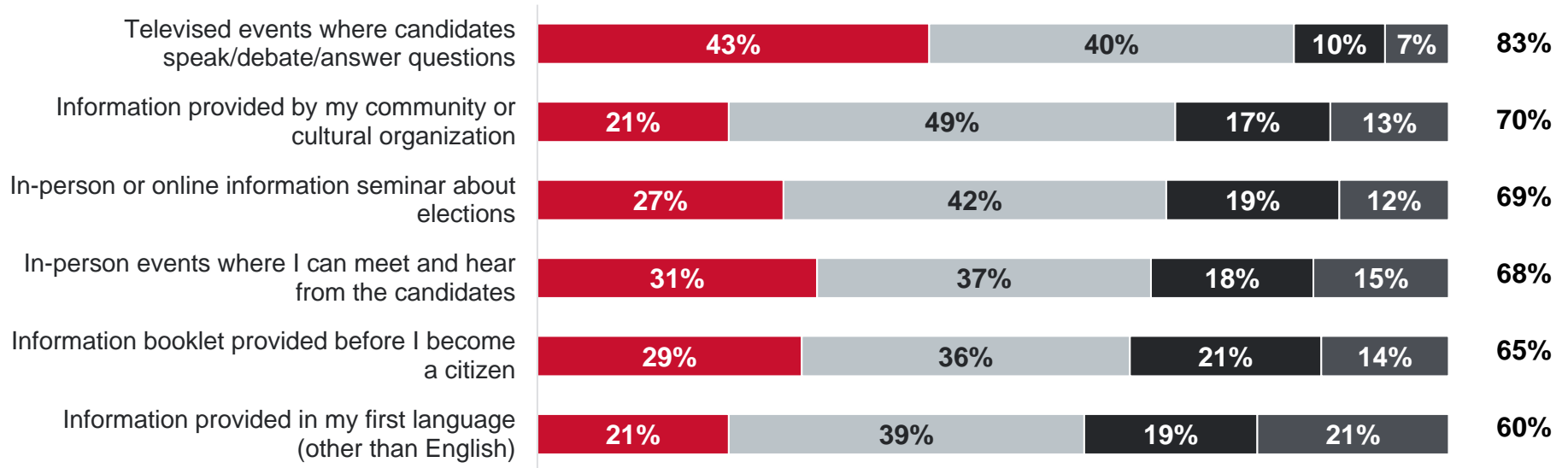
■ Very likely

■ Somewhat likely

■ Not very likely

■ Not at all likely

**Likely**  
(very+ somewhat)



Q21. Which of the following would you be most likely to use/attend/watch to learn about municipal government, elections and the candidates (Mayor, Councillors, School Board Trustees)?

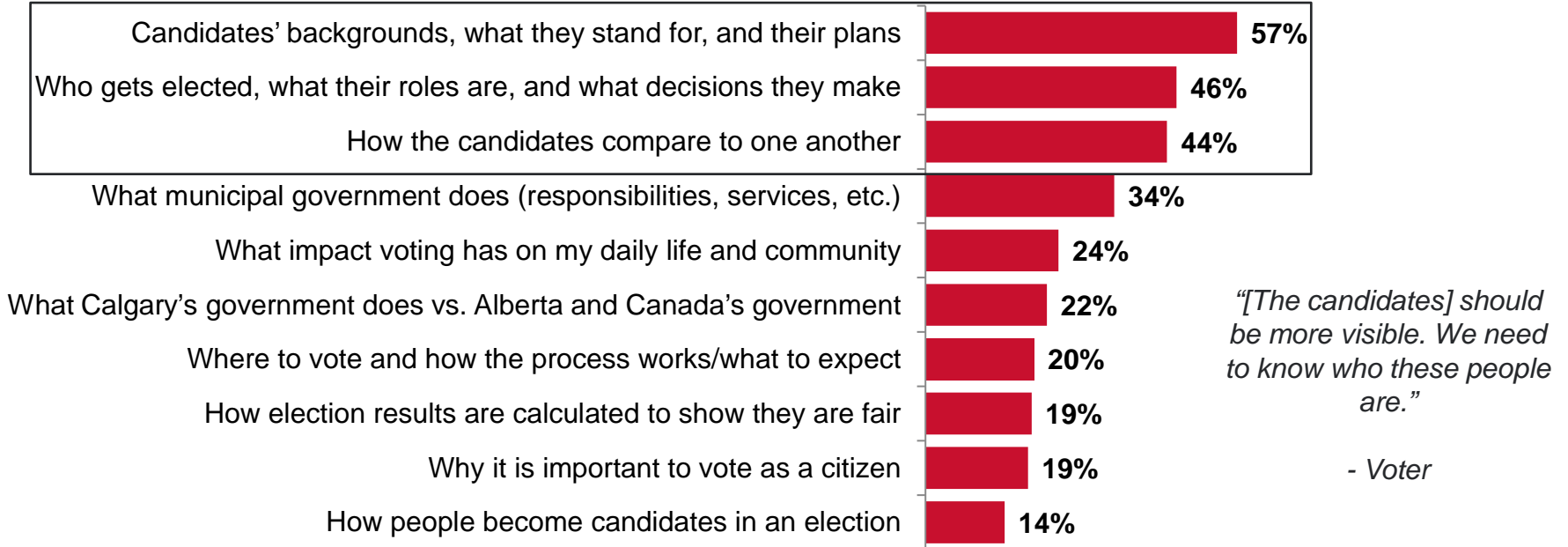
Base: Excluding "Not Applicable", (n=236-328)



# Desired Information about Municipal Government and Elections

**Recent immigrants** are more likely to be interested in what Calgary’s government does compared to other levels of government.

## % Ranked Top 3



Q22. What information are you MOST interested in knowing about Calgary’s municipal government and elections?

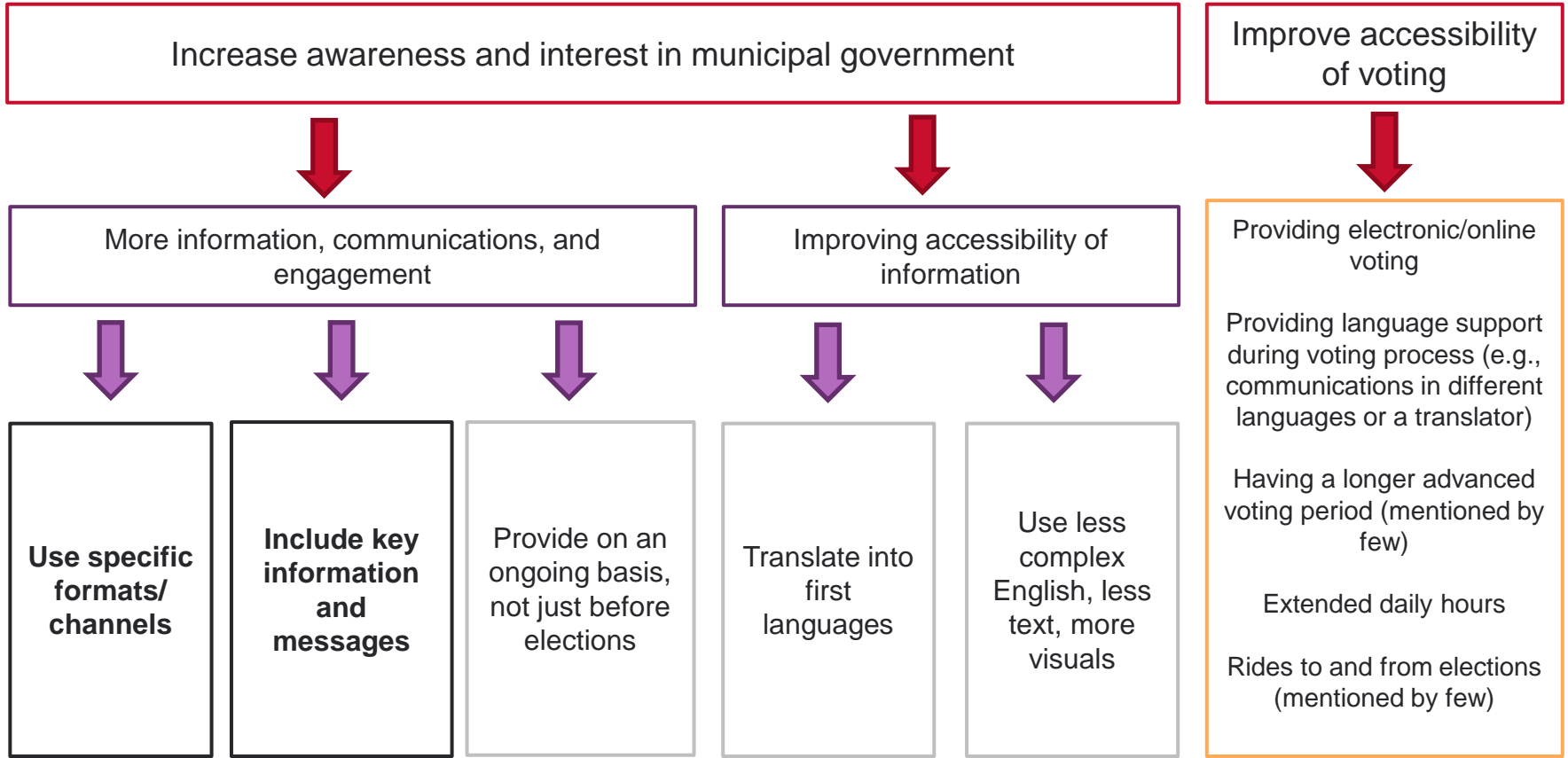
RANK TOP 3

Base: All respondents (n=340)





# How to Encourage Voting



Focus group and interview learnings

# Information Formats and Channels

Use specific  
formats/  
channels



- Communications on **social media** (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube)
- Information **on website**
- More **media coverage** and campaigns about the election and candidates, especially on TV
- More **public events** that can be attended or broadcasted - debates, talk shows, presentations from candidates
- Information in **video format**
- **Candidates** engaging door to door, at community events, and being more involved in the community
- Information being disseminated through **faith-based, cultural, or community organizations**, by working with faith-based and community leaders, as well as community brokers
  - Having City representatives present at cultural/community events
- **In-person events** (e.g., seminars, workshops, etc.) that participants can attend to learn about municipal government, municipal elections, and the candidates
- **Pamphlets** in mailbox
- Providing information **during process to obtain citizenship**, for example, a booklet on how the municipal government works and elections
- Educate **youth** at schools or universities

Focus group and  
interview learnings

# Key Information and Messages

Include key  
information  
and  
messages



- What **municipal government does** (responsibilities, services, etc.)
- **Who gets elected** in a municipal government and what each person does
- Addressing topics and issues **relevant to each community** and show how voting impacts their lives and their community (show specific examples)
- Why it is **important to vote** and what impact it has
- Information about **candidates** (such as background, what they stand for, easy way to compare each of them) – very important to encourage voting
- **Voting process** (where to vote, when to vote, how the process works/what to expect)
- How **election results** are determined to show they are legitimate and fair

*What makes them engaged is if we are able to connect day-to-day... if we are aware of the issues that they face in their lives that touch them, and if you are able to touch their hearts, we will be able to [encourage them to vote].*

*- Community Influencer*

Focus group and  
interview learnings