

The internet, society and politics: political participation in Australia

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This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any tertiary institution, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signed
Jillian Eve Sheppard

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Abstract

This thesis examines the effects of internet use on Australian citizens' propensity to participate in political activity. The study applies the 'civic voluntarism' model of political participation to the Australian case, theorising that internet use comprises a resource. It hypothesises that participation in Australia is a factor related to an individual's free time, time spent using the internet, money, civic skills, internet-related skills, recruitment and engagement.

Australia is an appropriate case study due to its institutional and cultural similarities with other advanced democracies, as well as its notable differences. Voting is compulsory for Australian citizens, and they are compelled to vote frequently and in complex systems. Previous research has found that compulsory voting has positive effects on participation between elections, as well as on the stability of the country's political parties. Australians have ample opportunity to participate in politics.

The thesis analyses 2010 (and earlier) Australian Election Study data, supplemented by data from previous Australian Election Studies, the World Values Survey and Comparative Study of Electoral Systems. Descriptive, logistic regression and ordinary least squares regression analyses find that internet use leads to participation earlier in life than would occur otherwise, but that participants possess the high socioeconomic status of participants in other advanced democracies. Skills are particularly important: across a range of behaviours including electoral, campaign, communal and protest participation, the positive influence of internet proficiency over time spent online is evident. However, the determinants vary greatly between types of participatory act, revealing lowered costs of entry, and opportunities for low-resourced citizens to equip themselves to participate. The findings have implications for understanding how the internet impacts the changing face of participation in Australia, how citizens can be mobilised in the future and the prognosis for the health of Australia's participatory democracy.

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List of abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AEC	Australian Electoral Commission
AES	Australian Election Study
AG	Australian Greens
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANES	American National Election Study
ANPAS	Australian National Political Attitudes Survey
BES	British Election Study
CSES	Comparative Study of Electoral Systems
EMB	Electoral management body
LPA	Liberal Party of Australia
NESB	Non-English-speaking background
SES	Socioeconomic status
WVS	World Values Survey

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Introduction

The rapid rise in global internet access and use has changed many assumptions about how citizens engage with politics. Much has been written on internet effects, from optimistic predictions of the mass sharing of political information online and the mobilisation of new generations of political activists, to fears about the atomisation of desk-bound internet users and the overabundance of political information. The implications for democracy are largely viewed positively, as new opportunities emerge to share information, discuss politics and participate online.¹ To date, research has not found overwhelming evidence of any specific effects. The literature on political participation, by contrast, is large and well established. A broad, accepted definition of participation exists: “those legal acts by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and /or the actions they take” (Verba et al., 1978, p. 1).

Participation is a critical element in a democratic system (Dahl, 2000, 1994; Lijphart, 1999, 1997). Dahl (2000) contends that the capacity to participate, rather than the observed rates of participation, is a measure of a system’s democratic health. Where the opportunity to participate is extended, as in liberal democracies, who chooses to participate – including both the profile and the number of participants - has implications for the quality of representation and the welfare of minorities and disadvantaged groups (Fiorina, 1999; Schlozman et al., 2012; Verba et al., 1995). Further, citizens who participate in civic and political life are shown to accrue positive feelings of (internal and external) political efficacy, political trust and satisfaction with their democratic system (Fennema and Tillie, 2001; Finkel, 1985; Kaase, 1999; Kenski and Stroud, 2006). By potentially making it easier for all citizens to participate, the internet’s effects on participation in Australia may resonate throughout the political system.

A history of political participation can be traced through the seminal studies of Almond and Verba (1963), Milbrath (1965), Verba and Nie (1972), Verba, Nie and Kim (1978) and Rosenstone and Hansen (1993). The 1995 study by Verba, Schlozman and

¹ For example Norris (2002), Jennings and Zeitner (2003), Gibson and Römmele (2004), Anduiza et al., (2009), Boulianne (2009), Cantijoch, (2009), Hirzalla et al., (2010), Schlozman et al., (2010), Bimber and Copeland (2013) and Scarrow, 2013.

Brady draws on its own findings as well as those before it to propose a consolidated model of political participation. The accumulated knowledge of participation argues that the most active citizens are not just socioeconomically advantaged but that they also possess specific resources that enable them to participate. Could this theory explain the role of the internet in political participation? Does internet access – and by extension, exposure to information online and proficiency at using the internet to its full capacity – constitute a resource? Importantly, does possessing that resource affect whether an individual will participate in political activity?

Drawing on Verba et al.'s (1995) 'civic voluntarism' model of political participation, this thesis proposes that 'internet use' is a resource that increases the likelihood that internet users will participate in political activity. There are two specific components to this resource: the amount of time spent online and proficiency at using the internet. The study analyses the effects of these 'internet resources' on a range of participatory acts: voting, political party membership, donations of time and money to parties, contacting a government official, working with others to express a view, signing a petition and marching or demonstrating. Further, it explores the different effects of internet resources on acts with an equivalent online and offline form, such as online and offline donating or online and offline petition signing.

Online participation can work as a gateway to offline participation, as it is cheaper, faster and often easier to perform than offline participation (Schlozman et al., 2010). For example, the act of sending an email takes less time and is cheaper than its offline equivalent, sending a letter. The effects of internet use on both the processes of political engagement and political participation are consequently expected to be positive. The barriers to entry should be lower than in the pre-internet era, as explained by Schlozman et al.:

"... political participation is inhibited when individuals face deficits in time, money or skills, thus making it difficult for them to take part; when they lack the motivation to be active because they are not politically interested or knowledgeable and are not concerned about political issues and outcomes; and when they are not exposed to attempts to mobilize them to political action. Because the internet lowers each of these barriers to citizen political activity, it would seem to provide multiple avenues by which political participation might be enhanced. With respect to the capacity to participate, certain forms of political participation are simply easier on the Internet" (2010, p. 488).

Two hypotheses are proposed, based on existing research: first, that the internet, through the civic voluntarism framework, can substitute for offline resources in enabling participation, or; second, that the internet, through this framework, cannot substitute for offline behaviours but can supplement them. The study presents a comprehensive picture of the effects of internet use on a wide range of participatory behaviours, using Australian data to test the hypotheses. Australia is chosen as an ideal case for several reasons. Australia offers a similar case to the more commonly studied United States, British and Canadian context, meaning that findings from those cases can be reasonably hypothesised in Australia, too. Australia has an established democratic system, with strong and stable parties and high rates of voter turnout, due to compulsory voting laws.

Australia also has high rates of internet penetration (83 per cent of the population in 2010), allowing for analysis of how Australians have incorporated the internet into their civic lives (McAllister et al., 2010). Internet use found mainstream popularity in Australia throughout the 1990s, with the development of the World Wide Web and downloadable browser software at the start of that decade (Norris, 2001a). It can consequently be considered the 'early adoption' period of internet use in Australia, characterised by users' mean high incomes and educational qualifications (Willis and Tranter, 2006). At the turn of the century, internet adoption entered a period of 'transition', as more than half the population embraced the medium, socioeconomic biases among users declined and it became a more frequent part of everyday life (McAllister et al., 2010a). By 2007, two important developments in internet technology had changed the nature and reach of the medium: Web 2.0 applications and smartphones. The interactivity and portability afforded by these developments brought with it the next, and current, period of internet use in Australia, 'social internet'. This study analyses the first data from the period of social internet in Australia, with a high rate of internet penetration, plus established interactivity and portability.

Aims of this study

This study measures the effects of two dimensions of internet use on political participation in Australia, at the individual level: time spent online, and internet skills.

It assumes that the relationship is not necessarily direct, nor is it simple. Therefore, using the framework of political participation proposed by Verba et al. (1995), it is expected that a range of factors will predict participation: time, money, civic skills, recruitment and political engagement. The internet is expected to interact with time (as internet use both takes time to perform and has the capacity to reduce the time taken to participate) and civic skills (as proficiency in using the internet should smooth the path to particularly online participation, in the same way that language proficiency or experience writing letters smooths the path to offline participation). If it is shown that internet-related resources can substitute for traditional resources, a conclusion can be made that the internet is not just reinforcing the existing profile of participants, but mobilising previously disengaged citizens into action (Norris, 2000).

Data and methodology

The empirical study of Australian politics is a comparatively small field, but the Australian case has much to offer political science. Institutionally, it is comparable to the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand in having Westminster-style parliaments, with election of representatives to the legislature and appointment by the head of state of an executive government from within that legislature. Australia compares well with Canada, the United Kingdom and United States in having a bicameral legislature, and with Canada and the United States in having a federal system of government. Australia stands on its own among the major advanced democracies in having compulsory voting laws. Outside of South America, very few democracies have enforceable compulsory voting. Compulsory voting laws have effects beyond just sustaining high levels of voter turnout: they ensure that, at least every two years or so, citizens have to become at least mildly engaged with the political process, including the parties, candidates and issues of the day (Mackerras and McAllister, 1999).

There are sound reasons to expect that compulsory voting also leads to higher rates of political participation than would occur otherwise (Hill, 2001). Further, Australia has a history of innovation in its electoral institutions (Sawer, 2001). The bicameral national parliament is elected by two different electoral systems, while the various state elections are conducted using minor variations of majoritarian and proportional representation systems. The result is that Australians vote frequently, in diverse and complex ways. However, voter-friendly innovations such as Saturday elections and simple registration processes work to maintain high levels of voter

turnout. The Australian electoral system is considered among the world's most voter-friendly (Birch, 2009; Mackerras and McAllister, 1999).

Culturally, Australia shares a post-colonial history with the United States, Canada and New Zealand, adding to the similarities with those cases. The assumptions and expectations contained in this study are based on evidence predominantly gathered from the United States and Europe. A single case was chosen for study to allow for deep, rather than broad, examination of internet use and participation. Moreover, little comparative data exist on internet use and political participation, and what does (for instance in the World Values Survey) gives little insight to the different facets and purposes of internet use. The Australian Election Study dataset contains measures that correspond to those used by Verba et al. (1995) in their civic voluntarism study.

Since 1967, the Australian National Political Attitudes Survey (ANPAS), and from 1987 the Australian Election Study (AES), has documented the political attitudes, behaviours and demographic characteristics of Australian citizens following federal elections. The 2010 AES dataset contains several batteries of measures relevant to this study, including – for the first time in the series – measures of respondents' free time, internet skills and job-related skills, as well as ongoing measures of time spent online, household income, educational attainment, organisational membership and language proficiency. The range of dependent variable measures includes offline and online forms of each of partisan, communal and protest participation. As the ANPAS and AES samples are drawn from the Australian electoral roll, they do not measure individuals' failure to enrol. To fill this gap, Australian data from the World Values Survey (WVS) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census are used.

This study offers an in-depth analysis of the different forms of political participation in Australia both cross-sectionally and longitudinally. Trend data provides an overview of how participation rates have changed over time, showing (for example) declines in membership numbers among the major Australian parties or the increase in e-petition signing at the apparent expense of offline petition signing in recent years. Descriptive, cross-sectional analysis of the mean characteristics of online participants, offline participants and abstainers reveals the prime facie differences between each of the groups, for example the youth bias among internet users compared with non-users. Descriptive data on the real world traits of participants allow the

reader to visualise and compare them easily. The descriptive analysis makes use of the 2010 AES dataset.

Detailed multivariate analysis of the 2010 AES data examines the partial effects of each of the predictive factors on the different forms of participation. Depending on how the dependent variable is measured and coded, ordinary least squares regression and binary logistic regression techniques are employed. Specifically, two models are tested to predict participatory behaviours. First, a restricted model consists of measures of money, recruitment and the control variables, and a range of offline or online time and civic skills, depending on whether the model is predicting an offline or online behaviour. A second, unrestricted model consists of measures of money, recruitment, controls, and both offline and online measures of time and civic skills. This two-step analysis shows the partial effects of offline and online resources in the absence and then the presence the other. Interpretation of the two sets of results helps to answer the question of whether the internet can substitute for or merely complement traditional, offline resources in predicting participation. The software employed for the analysis is IBM SPSS Statistics 19 (SPSS). Chapter 1 provides more detail on the multivariate analyses, including model specification.

Thesis outline

Chapter 1 begins with an overview of the political participation literature, tracing a history through the landmark studies of Almond and Verba (1963), Milbrath (1965), Verba and Nie (1972), Verba, Kim and Nie (1978), Rosenstone and Hansen (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993) and Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995). It explains the path that led to the civic voluntarism model proposed in 1995, and why that is chosen as the theoretical basis for this study. Next, the study proposes the inclusion of internet use as a resource, per the civic voluntarism model. Internet use is disaggregated into two particular aspects: time spent online and internet skills. It is theorised that the internet has diminished the predictive value of the civic voluntarism factors, and that time spent online and internet skills will both positively predict participation. The effects of these internet resources will either exist alongside or in the place of the positive effects of traditional resources. The chapter concludes by detailing the data and methodology used throughout the study, including why they are the most appropriate choices and how they will answer the research question.

Chapter 2 describes the Australian case. As a single case study, the detailed description in this chapter assists with the interpretation of the findings presented later, as well as comparison with international research. First, the chapter explains Australia's institutional characteristics: its federal system of government, including bicameral legislatures at the federal and most state levels of government; compulsory voting laws and the associated features of Australian politics; and the electoral system generally. These three institutional characteristics work together to create a stable political culture. Australians demonstrate comparatively high levels of satisfaction with democracy and trust in government. They similarly display overwhelming support for compulsory voting, including a willingness to vote even if not compelled. The chapter explores the history of political participation in Australia in detail. Trend survey data show changes in electoral, campaign, communal and protest participation. These changes are explained by political events but also by institutional effects, such as changes to the electoral system and the roll-out of internet access across the country.

The study next considers the independent variable, internet use. Chapter 3 explains why the internet is expected to affect political participation in Australia. It first compares the diffusion of internet access across Australia and globally, noting the high rates of penetration in Australia compared with the rest of the developed world. It also observes the recent, rapid diffusion of mobile internet access among developed countries, providing internet users with unprecedented opportunities to be online. Here, the typology of internet adoption is described using AES data. The chapter examines the 'digital divide' within Australia, comparing the socioeconomic characteristics of internet users and the remaining non-users. It goes into more detail describing the relationships between individuals' internet use and factors from the civic voluntarism model, namely time, money and civic skills. Here the concept of multidimensional internet use is explored, differentiating between what Australians do online, how much time they spend online and how proficient they are at using the internet. These categories of internet use are employed throughout the study's quantitative analyses.

Chapter 4 analyses the effects of internet use on participation in Australia by focusing on electoral participation: enrolling to vote and casting a ballot. Due to compulsory voting laws sustaining comparatively high levels of voter turnout, turnout is not used as a dependent variable in the study. Instead, electoral enrolment (which is

compulsory, but not sanctioned) and informal voting (in which citizens spoil their ballot papers to avoid casting a vote) are studied. First, the chapter sets out the hypothesised effects of the civic voluntarism model, including time spent online and internet skills alongside Verba et al.'s (1995) 'offline' predictors, on electoral enrolment and voter turnout. Next, it turns to the supply side of the equation, looking at how political parties and electoral management bodies in Australia use the internet to mobilise citizens to enrol and vote. The quantitative analysis of internet effects on participation begins with ecological regression analysis predicting enrolment and then voter turnout at the federal electoral division level, using data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australian Electoral Commission.

Chapter 5 explores the effects of internet use on campaign participation, measured by political party membership and contributions of time and money to parties and candidates and using AES data. The chapter focuses on the concept of democratic linkage between parties and citizens. It considers the competing arguments made by Katz and Mair (1995) and Dalton, Farrell and McAllister (2011) on how well parties are currently fulfilling their linkage function, noting that Australian parties have comparatively low rates of membership but that they are beginning to embrace online communications and more flexible membership and supporter networks. Quantitative analysis in this chapter uses AES and WVS data to examine the effects of the online and offline predictors on strength of individuals' party identification, party membership and contributions of time and money to parties' or candidates' campaigns.

Chapter 6 analyses the effects of internet use on communal participation: contacting a government official and working with like others to express a view. Two approaches to predicting communal participation are discussed. The first considers the costs and benefits of working for an outcome where benefits are shared among a group, the costs outweigh the benefits and people who do not help to achieve the benefit are nonetheless able to claim the same benefits as those who did help. In this case – a typical collective action problem – the costs of participation *vis a vis* the benefits are so large that only very few, if any, people are likely to participate. Those that do are likely to be the most able to bear the costs of participating; in other words, participants will be characterised by their high socioeconomic status. Alternatively, people who engage in communal participation will be characterised by their high levels of social capital, being embedded in social networks and demonstrating social trust. The chapter uses AES data to explore how internet use can both produce and reduce social capital among

Australian citizens, and how internet resources, social capital and the offline civic voluntarism measures each affect communal participation in Australia.

The final section of the analysis, Chapter 7 examines the effects of internet use on protest participation, namely petition signing and demonstrating or marching. The civic voluntarism model is compared with the 'relative deprivation' theory of protest, which contends that protestors are characterised by their lack of resources, in contrast with more conventional forms of political activists. The chapter examines the role of internet use as a resource per the civic voluntarism model, comparing its effects with more traditional, offline resources. Next, drawing on Dalton, van Sickle and Weldon's (2010) finding that opportunity is the most important determinant of protest, the chapter discusses the mobilisation campaigns of online organisations such as GetUp!. Quantitative analysis focuses on the effects of internet use on petition and e-petition signing, and demonstrating.

Finally, Chapter 8 concludes the thesis by summarising the four main findings from the analysis. It situates the Australian findings within the international context, finding notable similarities with like countries, but divergences which can be traced to Australia's institutional characteristics. A range of implications for Australian democracy are posited, from the effects of further internet access roll-out to the capacity of the political parties to mobilise citizens. The findings also have implications for the academic literature, particularly the debate surrounding the internet's mobilisation or reinforcement of political participation. The findings also inform the large literature on the apparent decline of political engagement across advanced democracies, and questions about whether the observed trends reflect generational or life-cycle changes. The analysis constitutes the most comprehensive study of political participation in Australia to date and contributes substantially to the study of Australian politics.

Chapter 1 – theory, context and methodology

1.1 Introduction

The study of political participation has changed relatively little over the past 50 years. Many findings from early studies still stand, for example the important role of education as a pathway to participation or the mobilising effect of belonging to a church congregation. Over time, the explanations for those findings have become more sophisticated and more nuanced, providing a comprehensive, thoroughly tested and much debated body of research from which to derive hypotheses about participation in Australia. What is meant by participation? Verba and Nie (1972, p. 2) define participation as “acts that aim at influencing governmental decisions”, but are “interested more abstractly in attempts to influence the authoritative allocations of values for a society, which may or may not take place through governmental decisions”. Indeed, the contrast between the discrete and abstract concepts of participation is easy to demonstrate. Voting is an instrumental act of participation that seeks to influence governmental decisions, by affecting who forms government. Signing a petition, on the other hand, may be more value-laden than instrumental and moreover may target extra-governmental decisions, for instance a petition on the portrayal of women in the mass media. While the discrete definition is an appropriate touchstone for thinking about participation, this study does deviate from it occasionally.

Why is participation important? Two reasons stand out: the relationship between participation and representation, and the role of participation in civic life. Using the example of political party membership, the effects of participation on representation are straightforward. The members of a political party select (to varying degrees) that party's candidates to stand at general elections. Should that candidate win the election, she will hold public office and may in time gain ministerial responsibility or become Prime Minister. However, she is always at the mercy of a small constituency of party members. Who those members are, and how closely they represent the population of the electorate, matters. To use another example, who votes – deciding who forms government – matters. Participation has effects on civic life at

both the individual and aggregate levels. The process of participating helps to create and sustain social capital, which is vital to a functioning democracy. An individual who participates in political life is expected to also express higher levels of trust in his peers and politicians (Putnam, 2001). At a broader level, the greater the number of citizens who participate, the more vibrant and cooperative a society is expected to be.

Finally, what is known about participation? The various models of participation (theorising the variables that affect an individual's propensity to participate) are discussed, before arguing that Verba, Scholzman and Brady's (1995) civic voluntarism model is the most valuable. It then examines the normative problems of participation, specifically declining rates of participation across advanced democracies and socioeconomic inequalities between participants and non-participants. Evolving forms of participation are discussed next, with reference to the argument that observed declines in participation rates are artefacts of poor measurement and not political apathy (Dalton, 2008a). The chapter then operationalises the dependent variable by specifying various forms of political participation to be studied, based on the mainstream literature as well as emerging behaviours. Finally, the methodology is outlined, first by detailing the quantitative data used, the process of sorting and preparing the data for analysis, and the analytical techniques chosen.

1.2 Determinants of participation: who participates and why

The empirical political participation literature can be traced chronologically from Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America* (1835), through to the first major survey-based study of the modern era, Almond and Verba's (1963) *Civic Culture*. Comparing United States, Britain, Germany, Italy and Mexico, *The Civic Culture* was both the first major empirical study of participation and the first research to categorise types of participation and citizens. The study identifies three types of citizens: participants, who are politically aware, politically engaged and active; subjects, who engage primarily with government institutions, and; parochials, only dimly aware of government and politics (Almond and Verba, 1963). Democracy is optimised by a mix of citizen types; too much citizen activity hinders government representatives trying to identify genuine issues or crises. The typical citizen has:

“... a reserve of influence. He is not constantly involved in politics, he does not actively oversee the behavior of decision makers ... He is rarely active in politics. But he thinks that he can mobilize his ordinary social environment, if necessary, for political use. He is not the active citizen: he is the potentially active citizen” (Almond and Verba, 1963, p. 480).

Published two years after *The Civic Culture, Political Participation* (Milbrath, 1965) proposes a more complex typology of participation. Milbrath defines participation as only that behaviour intended to affect government decisions; participation in this sense is strictly instrumental. Like Almond and Verba (1963), he argues that “there is doubt that a society as a whole would benefit if intense interest and active involvement in politics became widespread throughout the population... such a permeation of politics into all aspects of life is antithetical to the basic principle of limited government in a constitutional democracy” (Milbrath, 1965, p. 147). Milbrath (1965) proposes a hierarchy of activities rather than citizens: acts are gladiatorial (for example volunteering for a political campaign, active party membership, or nominating for or holding political office); transitional (donating to a campaign or attending a rally), or; spectator (voting, persuading others how to vote or displaying political paraphernalia). Citizens who engage in none of these are ‘apathetics’: a group which commands little attention. Milbrath does anticipate several later developments in participation, namely expressive participation, while cautioning that participatory behaviours likely mean different things to different citizens (1965, p. 12).

The role of socioeconomic status (SES) in political participation has been a common thread throughout the discipline. Milbrath (1965) theorises participation as a function of stimuli, personal characteristics, social position and political setting, but notes that finding a correlation between SES and participation is a “simple matter” (1965, p. 110). Verba and Nie’s (1972) *Participation in America* concurs, finding that 59 per cent of the least politically active American citizens were from either the middle or lower classes. In contrast, 57 per cent of the most active citizens were from the upper class (Verba and Nie, 1972). Both Verba and Nie (1972) and Milbrath (1965) observe the effects of on political engagement, the antecedent of participation; after controlling for political interest, efficacy and political, the effects of SES on most participatory activities are only marginal (Verba and Nie, 1972, p. 135).

The *Participation in America* model was then tested across different political systems and cultures: in Austria, India, Yugoslavia, Nigeria, the Netherlands, Japan and the United States (Verba et al., 1978). The comparative findings concur with earlier works. Holders of political office are likewise disproportionately from upper social classes and have higher educational qualifications than the population at large. Moreover, socioeconomic inequality between participants and non-participants is common to all seven countries, but the larger effects in Yugoslavia, India and the United States, and smaller effects in Austria and Japan suggest country-level factors at work. Verba et al. observe that “where there is explicit contestation among social groups and where that contestation is reflected in the institutional structure of politics, the implicit class bias in political activity can be diminished” (1978, p. 307).

The focus on SES stems from rational choice theories of social action, which emphasise the different costs and benefits of participation (or any other activity) to the individual. Downs (1957a, 1957b) popularised a model of voting in which potential voters have imperfect information about which candidate or party would provide them with the most utility, according to their own calculation, and that to gather the requisite information to make a rational choice is prohibitively expensive for most citizens. Moreover, with the very small relative value of each vote ($1/n$, where n is all voters in an election), a rational citizen should choose to stay home, and turnout should be confined to citizens with ample information or clear preferences in terms of utility maximisation. This basic equation informs later research on rational choice and voting (Aldrich, 1993; Blais, 2000).

However, as Downs himself notes, the equation underestimates both voter turnout and participation in other forms of political activity. Subsequent rational choice studies have considered the effects of citizens' sense of civic duty and desire to express their political beliefs or partisanship on the decision to vote (Blais, 2000; Riker and Ordeshook, 1968). These and similar factors help to explain why citizens overcome the collective action problem inherent to most forms of participation, whereby the benefits gained (e.g. a change of government, policy innovation or electoral reform) accrue to all citizens, and not just participants. Downs' (1957a, 1957b) equation concludes that most citizens should 'free ride' rather than participate: reap the benefits of participation without having to actually participate. This is likely to be most observable among citizens with low SES, for whom participating is relatively costly (for example Ostrom, 1998).

Beyond civic duty and political expression, social capital can also explain why citizens participate in spite of their apparent rational interests. The social capital explanation accords with Riker and Ordeshook (1968) and Blais' (2000) theories of civic duty and voting. Where a citizen possesses feelings of social trust, confidence in generalised reciprocity among society, and is embedded in social networks (per the common definitions of social capital), she is more likely to vote in spite of the rational calculation (Coleman, 1988; La Due Lake and Huckfeldt, 1998; Putnam, 1995, 2001; Stolle, 2007). Likewise, the civic duty thesis argues that although citizens are heterogeneous in their civic duty, "the belief that in a democracy every citizen should feel obliged to vote induces many people to vote in almost all elections" (Blais, 2000, p. 113). In both the social capital and civic duty explanations, the voter maximises his utility by contributing to society and/or democracy, rather than accruing a personalised benefit.

Other major participation studies have explored apparent negative relationships between SES and participation, arguing the effects of factors similar to civic duty and social capital. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) propose a 'political logic' model of participation. Political logic attempts to explain why, for instance, participation among African-Americans in the United States increased in the 1960s, before decreasing in the 1970s, in contrast to slow increases in their socioeconomic resources. Participation is instead hypothesised as the product of strategic interactions between citizens, politicians and institutions, and not just the spontaneous outcome of accumulated socioeconomic resources. Particularly, Rosenstone and Hansen observe the effects of mobilisation, both by political institutions (such as candidates and political parties) and social networks (family, friends and colleagues; this reinforces the social capital explanation). Citizens tend not to participate spontaneously, but need to be asked. The political logic model also goes some way to explaining easily observable phenomena, for instance the relationship between levels of participation and the tightness of an election contest, or the organisational activities of African-Americans preceding the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

The next major study of participation in the United States, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Verba et al., 1995) follows Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) by proposing a 'civic voluntarism' model, combining socioeconomic factors and exposure to recruitment to explain participation. Civic voluntarism

encompasses three broad factors: resources, which include socioeconomic-related resources such as money and education, but also free time and civic skills; engagement, which describes a citizen's attitudes towards politics; and recruitment, namely the social networks and institutional mechanisms which can draw a citizen into political activity. The first notable feature of the civic voluntarism model is that it broadens the traditional conception of socioeconomic resources to include some that affect participation but are not distributed along socioeconomic lines, including free time and civic skills. Second, Verba et al. (1995) are open about the trade-off between parsimony and variable omission, arguing that models that exclude mobilisation ignore vital determinants of participation. Many participation studies since 1995 have drawn on the civic voluntarism model as the bases or justification for their own models (Mutz 2002; Stolle et al. 2005; Best & Krueger 2005; Zukin et al. 2006).

A 'long list' of theorised determinants of political participation can be compiled by drawing on the major empirical studies (see Table 1.1).² Grouping the wide range of theorised determinants categorically, there is clear overlap between studies and over time. Socioeconomic status is the most enduring factor, although the more recent studies have paid increasing attention to the effects of institutions, political circumstances and social networks in mobilising citizens into action. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) summarise the move away from a primarily socioeconomic model of participation by observing that very few citizens participate in politics spontaneously. Socioeconomic resources can consequently be described as necessary but not sufficient conditions of participation. Mobilising forces are common but not necessary or sufficient conditions of participation. Citizens have the capacity participate in politics without being mobilised, but they rarely do. On the contrary, even an enthusiastic, heavily mobilised citizen will find participation difficult without basic resources.

To consolidate the established determinants of participation in the form of a comprehensive but workable model, this study applies three categories of independent variables: resources, engagement and mobilisation. These categories are broadly in line with Verba et al.'s (1995) civic voluntarism model. The first category – resources – includes socioeconomic status (i.e. education, occupation, income and wealth, and social class), free time and civic skills. Free time in this context describes "the residual

² Rational choice and social capital theories of participation are not included in this list, as they have largely been incorporated into the theoretical assumptions of the major participation studies. Moreover, studies such as by Verba et al. (1995) specifically seek to overcome the problem with rational choice models (i.e. underestimation).

Table 1.1: theorised determinants of political participation in six major academic studies

	<i>Almond and Verba (1963)</i>	<i>Milbrath (1965)</i>	<i>Verba and Nie (1972)</i>	<i>Verba, Nie and Kim (1978)</i>	<i>Rosenstone and Hansen (1993)</i>	<i>Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995)</i>
Resources	Education Decision-making skills Gender	Social position	Social status Age Race	Social status		Money Time Civic skills
Engagement	Family socialisation	Personal factors			Attitudes Interests Identification Beliefs	Psychological engagement
Mobilisation (by institutions)		Political setting		Social/ political conflict	Direct mobilisation	
Mobilisation (by social networks)		Stimuli	Organisation membership Community membership		Indirect mobilisation	Recruitment

time available to an individual after accounting for the hours spent doing necessary household tasks of all sorts including child care, working for pay including commuting and work taken home (for those in the work force), studying or going to school (for those taking courses towards a degree), and sleeping” (Verba et al., 1995, p. 289). It becomes apparent that free time is not necessarily associated with socioeconomic status. For instance, a retired pensioner is likely to have more free time than money. On the contrary, a 35 year old with full-time employment and two young children may have a relatively high household income but little free time.

Civic skills are likewise not necessarily related with socioeconomic status. They comprise language, decision-making, public speaking, letter writing and planning competencies (Verba et al., 1995). The measurement of civic skills takes into account more variance and nuance than the more blunt measurement of socioeconomic status. Civic skills can be attained independently of socioeconomic resources. Church

attendance, for example, is more popular among African-Americans and women than Anglo males, who are the embodiment of high socioeconomic status. Membership of a church is also unrelated to family income; instead, it is distributed evenly among across all income categories (Verba et al., 1995 et al). However, job-related skills and educational attainment are associated with socioeconomic status, and more heavily concentrated among the wealthy. Indeed, educational attainment is commonly one of the major measures of socioeconomic status. Overall, civic skills are differentially distributed, just as they are differentially useful among types of participatory behaviours (Verba et al., 1995): letter writing is aided by job-related skills, while working with others is aided by church-related skills, for instance.

The second category of participatory factors is engagement. Engagement describes how a citizen feels about politics: the subjective feelings of political efficacy, identification with a party, interest in politics generally, attitudes towards civic life, including civic duty and citizenship, and how much he knows about politics. Political efficacy measures the extent to which a citizen feels that he can achieve something within the political system, whether that protesting can effect a change in policy, or voting can be an expression of a political preference. Party identification – or partisanship – is a simple measure of a citizen's attachment to any of the major political parties in a system. Political interest is likewise a straightforward measure of engagement and awareness of politics. Civic attitudes are more complicated, measured commonly by the importance a citizen places on aspects of citizenship. Dalton (2008a, p. 30), for example, uses attitudes towards voting, military service, taxation, obedience to the law, social activity, government accountability, parochialism, consumerism and social understanding as proxies for citizenship norms. Political knowledge describes how much factual information someone possesses. While some measures of engagement – particularly efficacy and knowledge – increase with socioeconomic status, they nonetheless have a significant role in predicting participation after controlling for resources and civic skills (Verba et al., 1995, p. 352)³. Resources and engagement are interdependent in the process of participation:

“It is not sufficient to know and care about politics. If wishes were resources, then beggars would participate. Political engagement, however, does not produce resources, and the resource-poor are less politically active than those who are better endowed with resources” (Verba et al., 1995, p. 355).

³ Verba et al.'s (1995: 352) ordinary least squares regression finds beta scores of 0.24 for political interest, 0.12 for political efficacy and 0.6 for partisan strength, with $p < 0.01$ for each.

Resources and mobilisation share a similar interdependence in the participation model: “people participate in politics for a host of reasons, but mobilization makes citizen participation both more common and more consequential” (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993, p. 37). There are two broad types of mobilisation: direct and indirect. Direct mobilisation describes the provision by political actors of opportunities to participate which would not otherwise exist: political party meetings, rallies, circulation of petitions and ‘get out the vote’ phone calls, for instance. This kind of mobilisation is contingent upon the political and institutional environment, including voter registration laws, electoral systems and political party structures. Laws that mandate voting, such as in Australia, have arguably the largest mobilising effect (Lijphart, 1997). Indirect mobilisation refers to informal social networks: the influence of friends, family, colleagues and neighbours in encouraging participation. One example is an invitation to go along with a friend to a political party meeting. The internet, by enabling quick, easy and cheap diffuse communications, has the capacity to mobilise large numbers of citizens across time and space (Norris, 2002).

1.3 Normative approaches to political participation

The study of political participation tends to take two normative positions: that rates of participation should be high (although not ubiquitous), and that those who participate should be as representative of the citizenry as possible. Arguments abound that democracy is failing on both fronts. Participation rates are falling across a range of measures, but most notably with regard to voter turnout. Putnam (2001) argues that a golden era of high levels political participation is rapidly behind us. Democracy also appears to be failing on the second position: that participants should be as representative as possible (Altman and Pérez-Liñán, 2002; Fiorina, 1999; Lijphart, 1997; Putnam et al., 1994; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980). Lijphart’s (1997) address to the American Political Science Association, in which he calls for solutions to ‘democracy’s unresolved dilemma’, the upper-class bias among participants, suggests compulsory voting – among other reforms – to redress to inequality. This section explores evidence of international trends in political engagement and participation and of socioeconomic biases among the politically engaged and active, noting that the larger the number of participants, the more representative they are of the population.

Declines in engagement and participation

Falling voter turnout among citizens in advanced democracies is the most widely cited example of larger, downward trends in rates of political participation.⁴ Figure 1.1 shows the compelling nature of the data: average voter turnout (as a proportion of the voting aged population) in the largest advanced democracies has clearly declined over the past 70 years. The same trend holds among registered voters, with Blais (2007) observing that turnout in a sample of advanced democracies has fallen 83.1 per cent of registered voters in the 1970s to 73.9 per cent in the 2000s. Declines in turnout – and other, non-electoral forms of participation – have two possible sources.

The first is generational; that rates of political participation have possibly peaked, and as current generations die out they will be replaced by apathetic successors. This position is typified by Putnam, who observes that participation rates decline among every generational cohort born later than 1930: “every year the Grim Reaper removes another swath of the most politically engaged generation in the American electorate” (2001, p.34–5). Other studies to find evidence for generational declines in turnout include Miller (1992), Blais, Gidengil, Nevitte and Nadau (2002) and Franklin (2004). Given evidence that voting is habit-forming, falling numbers of young people voting now will lead to lower turnout rates in the future (see for example Gerber et al. 2003; Denny & Doyle 2009; Cutts et al. 2009; Aldrich et al. 2011). Franklin warns that “elections that do not stimulate high turnout among young adults leave a ‘footprint’ of low turnout in the age structure of the electorate as many individuals who were new at those elections fail to vote at subsequent elections” (2004, p. 115).

The second possible source of declining turnout is a lifecycle effect, whereby citizens do not vote when they are young, but will become active later in life. While the first signs of generational effects on turnout are seen in the growing numbers of young people not voting, some researchers argue (for example Wattenberg, 2008) that young people have never voted in the same numbers as their parents or grandparents, but that trend data suggest that they do end up voting eventually. However, it is also the case that young people are not inactive, but are choosing more expressive acts not traditionally considered ‘participation’, such as working with others in their

⁴ Voter turnout is used here as a typical example of political participation for the sake of parsimony, but it must be noted that other, nonconventional forms of participation such as protests and consumer boycotts are increasingly in popularity. They are discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

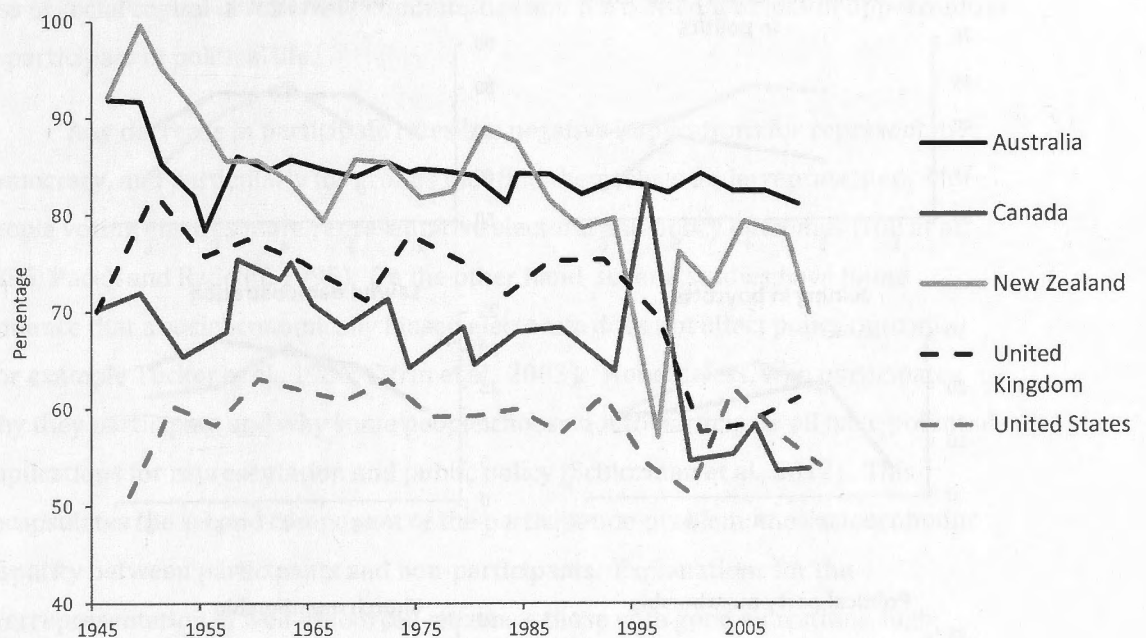


Figure 1.1: voter turnout in first order (presidential in the US; parliamentary in others) elections as a percentage of voting-age population in five western democracies, 1945 to 2012
Source: International IDEA (2012)

community, boycotting a consumer product or expressing political beliefs and ideas online (Bang, 2004; Dalton, 2008a; Vromen, 2008a, 2007, 2003a; Wattenberg, 2008). Outside of the polling booth, other forms of political participation have experienced different trends in popularity in recent times.

Figure 1.2 provides an overview of a range of attitudes, political activities and civic behaviours in Australia and the United States, to situate the Australian case both against another major (and the most studied) democracy, as well as over time. A person's political interest is generally stable over his lifecycle (Prior, 2010), and so this appears to be a generational decline in interest. The reasons for this are not clear; while lifecycle events can affect political interest, generally people return to the level of political interest into which they were socialised (Jennings and Niemi, 1968; Langton and Jennings, 1968; Prior, 2010). Among the political behaviours graphed in Figure 1.2, rates of petition signing and boycott activity have downward trends, while lawful demonstration behaviour is stable. The civic behaviours have a more consistent pattern, with active membership of a political party, church congregation, labour union

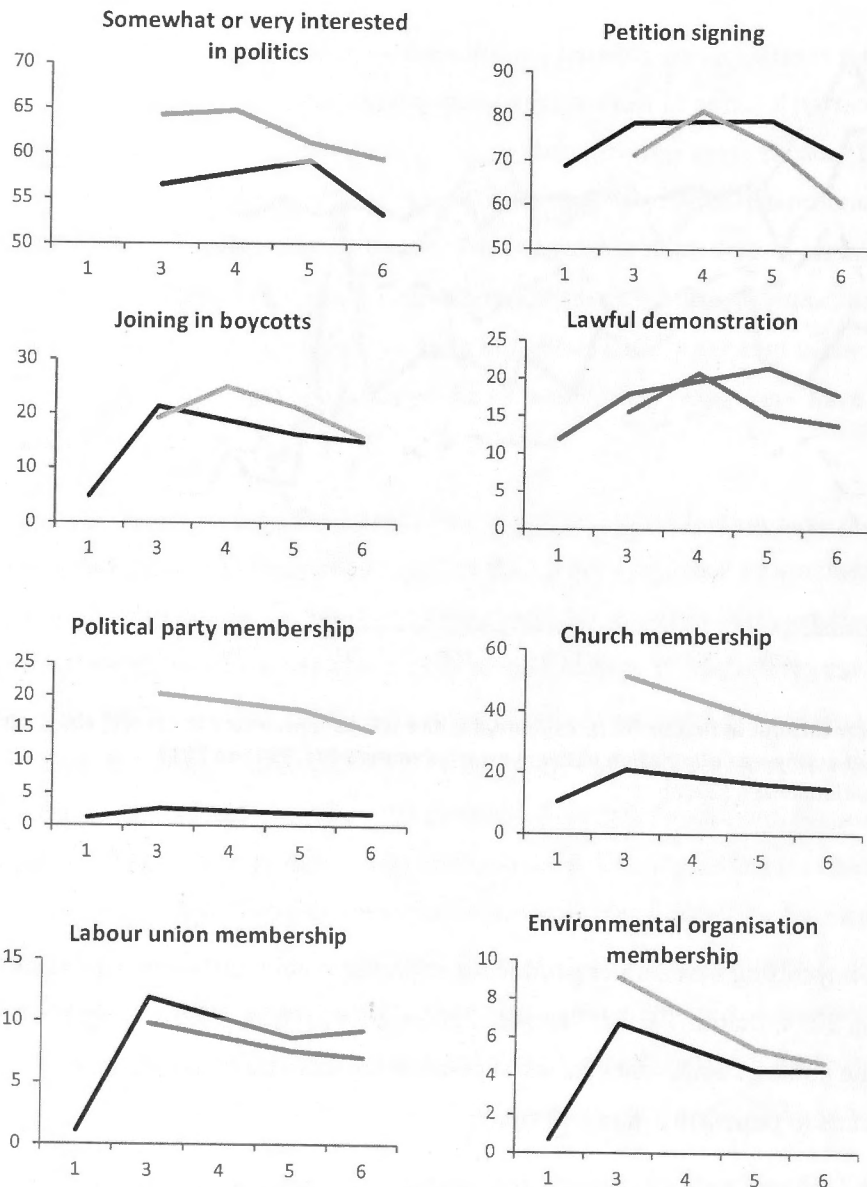


Figure 1.2: Trends in political interest and non-electoral forms of political and civic participation, 1981 to 2013

Data points on the x-axes represent WVS waves: 1=1981-84, 2=1994-99, 3=1999-2004, 4=2005-07 and 5=2009-13. Y-axes represent percentage of population. Lines represent Australian data (black) and United States data (grey).

Source: World Values Survey (World Values Survey Association 2009; 2013).

and environmental organisation all becoming less common since 1991. These, and other examples of civic activities, form the basis of Putnam's (2001) argument on the

loss of social capital in American communities and the consequent loss of opportunities to participate in political life.

Any decrease in participate rates has negative implications for representative democracy, and particularly for groups that find themselves underrepresented. More people voting ensures more representative electoral and policy outcomes (Hill et al., 1995; Pacek and Radcliff, 1995). On the other hand, several studies have found evidence that a socioeconomically biased electorate does not affect policy outcomes (for example Tucker et al., 1986; Citrin et al., 2003). Nonetheless, who participates, why they participate and why some people choose not to participate all have potential implications for representation and public policy (Schlozman et al., 2012). This encapsulates the second component of the participation problem: the socioeconomic disparity between participants and non-participants. Explanations for the overrepresentation of well-resourced citizens – those with good educations, high incomes and well-developed civic skills – are discussed at length throughout the study. What matters in the first instance is that the “systematic class bias” exists (Lijphart, 1997, p.1).

Increasing inequality between participants and abstainers

Compounding the problems of overall decline in turnout and inequality among those who do participate is their inverse relationship. For instance, when voter turnout is lower, inequality between voters and non-voters is higher (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). Likewise, the positive relationship between socioeconomic status, particularly education, and voting turnout is both strong and enduring, being first documented in the United States in the 1920s (Lijphart, 1997 p.2). Rational choice theory argues that the costs of participating, while generally outweighing the benefits, have less impact on the wealthy and educated than other citizens in a population. The collective action problem of participation therefore sees those citizens without ample time or money the first to abstain from participating. While arguments are made elsewhere (for example Dalton 2008a) that socioeconomic deprivation is a factor in mobilising a citizen to participate in political activity, the socioeconomic bias among participants suggests that under-resourced citizens free-ride, or abstain while enjoying the policy outcomes gained by participants. Lijphart (1997) argues forcefully that compulsory voting is the only antidote to the free-riding problem.

Four key socioeconomic differences between politically active and inactive citizens populate the literature: education, income, age and gender. As the two key measures of socioeconomic status, this section discusses education and income together. Alternatively, Milbrath (1965) describes them as measures of 'social position', which encompasses what many researchers have found regarding the effects of education and income: that participants in political life are established in their communities, financially comfortably and have enough formal education to form and express their views confidently (for example Almond & Verba 1963; Milbrath 1965; Verba & Nie 1972; Verba et al. 1995; Putnam 2001). Verba et al. (1995) extend the description of participants to include having not just money and education, but free time (and are therefore commonly retired) and civic skills including language proficiency and experience organising meetings, among others.

The second major difference between participants and non-participants is their mean age. However, the age gap varies with the type of activity. Formal modes of participation such as voting and political party membership tend to be the domain of the middle aged and elderly, while protestors are on average young (Dalton, 2008). The age bias is consequently not as problematic as the socioeconomic bias among participants, as young citizens instead represent their views in other, non-traditional ways (for example Vromen 2003; Dalton 2008; Wattenberg 2008). Finally, participants are for the most part disproportionately male, reflecting the political socialisation process – within the family, but also in the workplace and among peers – which has entrenched higher levels of political knowledge and interest among men than women (Bennett and Bennett, 1989; Coffé and Bolzendahl, 2010; Schlozman et al., 1994; Verba et al., 1997).⁵ Gender may come to differentiate participants and non-participants less, particularly as increasing numbers of women attain university education and ongoing professional employment.

Any skew in the characteristics of those who participate in politics has implications for electoral, representative and policy outcomes. First, there is evidence that low voter turnout affects parties' electoral fortunes: some argue that left-wing voters are the most likely to stay home, and right-wing parties benefit as a consequence (DeNardo, 1980; McAllister, 1986), others that low turnout benefits the challenger over

⁵ However, Dolan (2011) finds that the gender gap in political knowledge decreases when female respondents are asked questions about women's representation; the gap as it stands reflects the corresponding gap in representation. Other researchers have noted methodological problems with the measurement of political knowledge (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1997; Luskin, 1990; Mondak, 2001).

the incumbent (Tucker et al., 1986). Others still have argued that any effects follow random patterns and are inconsequential (Lutz and Marsh, 2007). Electoral outcomes in turn have effects on the representation of certain groups and individuals in an electorate. In a non-compulsory system such as the United States, an institutional design as small as voter registration requirements can keep citizens without an adequate education or with poor civic skills from voting, resulting in electoral outcomes against their interests (Lijphart 1997, p.6).

Research suggests automatic registration alone could increase voter turnout by as many as 15 percentage points (Lijphart 1997), and potentially change electoral results. Further, while some evidence exists that turnout directly affects policy outcomes (with higher turnout leading to greater spending on social welfare, for example (Fowler, 2013; Hill et al., 1995) most effects on policy are expected to be mediated by electoral outcomes. Most research finds little or no difference in policy opinions between voters and non-voters (see Lutz & Marsh 2007 for examples). In terms of non-electoral participation, the representation of the opinions and concerns of a plurality of citizens is vital to democracy (Schlozman et al., 2012). Or, in another way:

“the blunt truth ... that politicians and officials are under no compulsion to pay much heed to classes and groups of citizens that do not vote” (Key, 1949, p. 147, in Lijphart, 1997, p. 4).

Who participates therefore has implications for the quality of representative democracy. Any effects of the internet in reducing the socioeconomic bias among participants will likewise have far-reaching consequences for democratic health.

1.4 *‘Traditional’ and ‘emerging’ forms of participation*

Dalton (2008, p.3) argues that behind the concern about declining rates of participation turnout is old-fashioned inter-generational angst: younger generations not living up to their elders’ expectations of proper civic duty. Also feeding into this angst is discomfort with changing social attitudes, technological innovation, and what is widely described as the generalised apathy of ‘Generations X and Y’ (Dalton 2008, p.37). To describe and measure participation as a static concept – as something that can be measured and tracked over a long period of time, across different countries,

regimes, systems of government, socioeconomic conditions and experiences of conflict or war – is misleading. Almond has described political culture as a “many dimensioned variable, [which] responds quickly to structural change” (1995, p.5). Accordingly, research needs to move towards a more fluid concept of participation, focusing on what citizens do rather than on what researchers necessarily expect them to do (Vromen, 2003).

It is therefore necessary to disaggregate what is meant by the term ‘participation’. It is instructive to think about participation in a practical context. Political scientists have traditionally adopted measures of participation with inherent emphasis on what constitutes active citizenship. For Putnam (2001), group membership and the associated social capital is central to being a good citizen; he famously laments the decline of bowling leagues in the United States, but also the decline of voluntary civic and political organisations. On the other hand, Norris (2002) and Dalton (2008) broaden the measurement of participation to include new behaviours based on what is observable on an *a priori* basis. Consequently, the Norris-Dalton conceptualisation of participation involves illegal protest and exclusively online associations – political behaviours that are a world away from the voluntary associations described by Putnam.

The distinction between Putnam (2001), on the one hand, and Norris (2002) and Dalton (2008a) on the other, is not new. Traditional and emerging forms of participation have variously been described as materialist and post-materialist (Inglehart, 1977), conventional and unconventional (Barnes and Kaase, 1979), institutional and non-institutional (Kaase, 2007) and duty-based and engaged (Dalton, 2008b). These labels generally describe the same phenomenon: a cultural shift and consequent decline of political participation that is supportive of a regime or institution, and the concurrent increase in participation which supports institutional reform or regime change. Inglehart (1977, 2008) describes a culture shift among citizens of Western democracies based on theories of needs found in the psychology literature. Citizens, Inglehart argues, place the highest value on what they most desperately need. With the advent of expansive access to education (including higher education) and post-war economic prosperity across advanced nations, citizens saw their most primal needs – of physical security – filled, and could look to have less material needs filled. Moreover with increasing rates of tertiary education, citizens began to express broad, thoughtful, ‘postmaterial’ needs.

Postmaterialist value shifts permeate much political participation literature, even where they are not mentioned. Dalton (2008a) describes the consequent shift in citizenship norms, based on the postmaterialist expression of needs, as moving from duty-based to engaged citizenship. Measures of the two types of citizenship norm are shown in Table 1.2. According to Dalton (2008b, p.38), traditional notions of citizenship are widespread among citizens born before 1960 and exist in equal measure to emerging notions of citizenship among members of Generation X (those born after 1960 and before 1972, per Dalton's categorisation). Among Generation Y, born after 1972, the "erosion of duty-based norms... is offset by increased support for engaged citizenship, which stresses alternative forms of political participation, concern for the less privileged, and attention to the views of others" (Dalton 2008b, p.38). Viewing the same phenomenon from the opposite perspective, Putnam (2001) laments the decline of instrumental, community-based forms of political participation in place of individualised, expressive and in many cases unmeasured forms of participation.

A critical approach to the study of emerging modes of participation congregates around Bang's (2004) conception of 'elite citizens' and 'everyday makers'. Bang argues that participants increasingly "do not address their participation specifically towards the state, as either state driven or civil society driven, but rather engage in the building and running of governance networks and reflexive political communities" (Bang, 2004, p. 5). Professional, full-time members of these communities – for example lobbyists for welfare organisations – are termed 'expert citizens', and volunteers, supporters and others who work toward similar ends 'everyday makers'. Unlike traditional conceptualisations of participation, wherein citizens agitate in favour or opposition to a government decision, elite citizens (who comprise the 'new republican elite') and everyday makers form around common projects.

As with Dalton's (2008a; 2008b) measures of engaged citizenship, existing mass surveys and datasets have not measured participatory behaviour as envisaged by Bang and others; rather, a literature consisting of qualitative and survey research has emerged to explore these new concepts (O'Toole et al., 2003). Li and Marsh (2008) find that the demographic and socioeconomic profile of British expert citizens resembles those of traditional participants: they are predominantly male, middle-aged and highly educated. British everyday makers tend more towards Dalton's (2008a) engaged citizens: younger, female and not married. In the Australian context, Vromen (2003a)

Table 1.2: Measures of two types of citizenship, per Dalton (2008a)'s 'good citizen' thesis

<i>Citizen duty</i>	<i>Engaged citizen</i>
Vote in elections	Active in association/voluntary groups
Never evade taxes	Understand others
Serve in military	Choose products (i.e. consumer boycotts)
Obey the law	Help worse off in the world
Report a crime	Help worse off in America
Serve on a jury	Form own opinions

Source: Dalton 2008a, p.7, based on 2004 General Social Survey and 2005 Center for Democracy and Civil Society survey data from the United States.

finds that 22 per cent of Australian members of Generation X have been involved with an activist group, while 69 per cent have had an involvement with a community organisation (excluding sport and recreation groups). Elsewhere (2003b), Vromen observes that female members of Generation X are more participatory than males, based on acritical definition of participation. However, while expert citizens and everyday makers can be identified among young Australians, researchers and policy makers tend to give more weight to the voices of expert citizens, to the exclusion of everyday makers (Vromen and Collin, 2010).

For other researchers, the more remarkable shift in participatory behaviours is shaped by the internet. Eschewing the 'Generation Y' label as premature – "generations are shaped by shared experiences and are clear only in history's rear-view mirror" – Zukin et al. (2006, p.15) refer to citizens born after 1976 as 'DotNets': the first citizens whose defining characteristics will be shaped by the internet. The internet is placed at the forefront of these citizens' lives:

"Information has always been virtually costless and universally available to them; technology cheap and easily mastered; community as much a digital place of interest as a shared physical space" (Zukin et al., 2006, p. 15).

The advent of online political participation demands even further disaggregation of participation measures (Gibson and Römmele, 2004). It further requires ongoing revision of what constitutes 'good' citizenship, and the role of social capital and community in the political process. To begin, does community among members of

Generation Y mean online participatory spaces of many (Vromen, 2007) or the “anomic bedroom community” of one (Nie, 2001, p. 420)? A rapidly growing literature has emerged around these issues: the potential of online networks to lead to offline engagement (Rojas and Puig-i-Abril, 2009; Gil de Zúñiga and Valenzuela, 2011); political expression online (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2009; Macnamara, 2012; Park, 2013; Shah et al., 2005); and the creation of social capital on the internet (Best and Krueger, 2006; Robinson and Martin, 2010).

This study contributes to the emerging literature, but draws on the traditional models of participation for its empirical basis. The measures of participation draw from both the traditional and emerging literatures: electoral and campaign acts reflect Milbrath (1965), Verba and Nie (1972), Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980), and Rosenstone and Hansen (1993), among others; measures of communal and protest participation are taken from Verba and Nie (1972), Verba et al. (1995), Dalton, (2008a), Dalton et al., (2010), Caren et al., (2011) and Schlozman et al., 2012. Measures of political discussion and other forms of expression are excluded to restrict the focus on participation. Similarly, forms of protest such as political consumerism, boycotts, and building occupations are omitted due to a lack of available data. There is some debate over the classification of participatory acts, both as participation and as particular types of participation (Claggett and Pollock, 2006; Teorell, 2006). However, by drawing from the major participation studies in delimiting and categorising participation, this study contributes to a literature well established over both time and breadth of cases.

1.5 Research on the different forms of participation

‘Political participation’ describes a diverse range of politics-related behaviours. Each behaviour in turn encompasses a different set of participants, intentions, processes and outcomes. The act of voting, for example, in Australia occurs according to legislation passed by the legislature and the executive, and the act itself serves to elect members of the legislature. Voting is inextricably nested within those institutions. Participating in a demonstration, on the other hand, can be an act of defiance towards those institutions. A demonstration may seek to overthrow the executive’s power or to remove members from the legislature. It has the capacity to undermine state

institutions, in direct contrast to voting. Accordingly, there are different theories as to who engages in different forms of participation, and why. This section looks at what is known about electoral, campaign, communal and protest participation.

It is well established that electoral participation, as measured by voter turnout at general elections, is declining internationally. This is not just an empirical but also a normative problem: writing about the US, Wolfinger and Rosenstone observe that

“... elections are at the core of the American political system. They are the way we choose government leaders, a source of the government’s legitimacy, and a means by which citizens try to influence public policy. And for most Americans, voting is the only form of political participation” (1980, p. 1).

Declining turnout means fewer citizens deciding the vital questions of who governs and how. Moreover, declining turnout is associated with a more socioeconomically biased voter base, as the less educated and lowest income earners are the most likely to abstain (Lijphart, 1997; Verba et al., 1978). The theoretical literature on electoral participation centres on rational choice theory: there are costs incurred in voting but also benefits to be gained, and that a rational citizen will weigh those costs and benefits in making the decision whether it is worth voting (see for example Downs 1957; Blais 2000). Certainly, this is evident at the aggregate level, as the wealthiest and most educated citizens, for whom voting has relatively few costs, turn out in the highest numbers in many democracies (Blais, 2000; Verba and Nie, 1972; Verba et al., 1995, 1978; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980).

However, Blais (2000) argues that reliance on rationality as a predictor of voter turnout omits other important factors and is often entirely wrong. First, the benefits of voting are remarkably small: the probability of any individual’s vote determining an electoral outcome is too miniscule as to be worth incurring the costs of participating (Blais, 2000). Further, there is a range of other factors that have been found to affect voter turnout, including electoral laws (Powell, 1982), mobilisation by political parties (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993) and a learned sense of civic duty (Blais, 2000). Compulsory voting laws mandate that all eligible citizens both enrol to vote and cast a ballot in federal and state parliamentary elections, or pay a fine. Lijphart (1997) commends compulsory voting as a panacea to the socioeconomic bias among voters in voluntary systems, however little research has examined the characteristics of Australian voters. With more than 80 per cent of the voting age population casting a ballot at the 2010 election Australia’s turnout rate is comparatively high, but not

complete. The majority of abstainers in Australia are not enrolled to vote (Australian Electoral Commission, 2012a). Very little is known about these citizens, except that they are disproportionately young and residentially mobile (Australian Electoral Commission, 2012a).

Research into the internet's effects on voting has focused on two main questions: whether generalised internet use increases the likelihood than an individual user will vote in an election; and whether internet-based voting has the potential to increase turnout. The first question takes into account the increased volume of political, election and campaign information circulated online as more citizens become internet users. Online campaigns by political parties and other interested groups to mobilise voters have been found to be as effective as offline mobilisation campaigns (Hooghe et al., 2010), but arguably most effective among those likely to vote anyway, producing a reinforcing effect (Krueger, 2006a). The second focus among the literature is the potential of online voting to increase turnout. The lack of available data has limited the field to date, however Stromer-Galley (2004) observes that electoral laws allowing citizens to vote *in absentia* have increased turnout among traditionally underrepresented populations in a range of jurisdictions, while Bochsler (2010) finds the opposite effect in Estonia.

Campaign participation is defined in this study as acts performed by citizens to support the cause of a particular political party or candidate. It is measured by strength of party identification, membership of a party and the contribution of money or time to a party or candidate. The proportion of citizens identifying with a party, usually an antecedent condition of these behaviours, is declining globally (Dalton, 2002). Increases in mean educational attainment across advanced societies has seen corresponding increases in postmaterial values and cognitive mobilisation, and decreases in the need to rely on socialised party identification as a shortcut when deciding whom to vote for (Inglehart 1990; Dalton 1984, 2002). Accordingly, rates of party memberships among the populations of advanced democracies are also in decline (Mair and van Biezen, 2001; van Biezen et al., 2012). At the same time, parties internationally have exerted less effort mobilising voters, and in turn campaign supporters (Karp et al., 2008; Wattenberg, 2000; Whiteley and Seyd, 1994).

In Australia, rates of party identification are comparatively high (Birch, 2009; Mackerras and McAllister, 1999). Mackerras and McAllister attribute this to compulsory voting:

“... [it] ensures that voters cast a ballot and the act of voting means that they are forced to think, at least superficially, about the major parties” (1999, p. 229).

However, with little need to mobilise citizens to get out and vote, it may be expected that actively recruiting party members (who in voluntary systems provide a ‘get out the vote’ service) is of relatively low importance to Australian parties. For the same reason, electoral campaigns in Australia (and other compulsory voting systems) are believed to be less costly and less intensive than in advanced democracies with voluntary systems (Birch, 2009).

Like electoral participation, research on the effects of the internet on partisan participation fall into two categories: the generalised effect of increased exposure to political information and recruitment by parties and candidates, and the advent of formal online political networks, including online membership options. It has been consistently found that online communications reinforce political engagement among the already engaged, rather than mobilising the disengaged into political action (including partisan participation) (Lusoli and Ward, 2004a; Norris, 2003a, 2001b, 2000). Whitely (2011) finds no evidence that internet use – particularly online political participation – is substituting for party membership among would-be members. In Australia, research has found that parliamentary representatives and political parties make only minimal use of the internet to communicate with citizens (Ward et al, 2007), and that the citizens most likely to engage with parliamentarians online are for the most part already politically engaged (Gibson et al., 2008).

Communal participation describes acts performed by citizens alongside others seeking change that would benefit more than one person, and usually avoiding confrontation (Verba and Nie, 1972). This study measures communal participation in two ways: first, by experience working with others to express a view and second, by contacting a government official to express a view. They incur different costs and benefits to those institutionalised forms of participation: the costs of becoming informed about an issue or cause must be added to the costs of actually participating, including any travel required and time spent meeting with other participants, while the benefits are often split among a group. The communal outcomes also encourage ‘free riding’, or abstaining from participation while accruing the same benefits as

participants (see for example Putnam 2001). Research has found that communal activists have above average educational qualifications, income and are disproportionately based in suburbs or rural areas (Verba and Nie, 1972). They also display high levels of social trust, and minimal partisanship (Almond and Verba, 1963). The subjects of communal activity cluster around the environment, education and law and order issues (Verba et al., 1995).

Specific research into the effects of internet use on communal participation is similarly scarce. Jensen, Danziger and Venkatesh (2007) find that participants in online communal participation are empirically different from offline participants, displaying lower socioeconomic status on average and possessing fewer resources. Lusoli and Ward's (2004b) find an activist organisation's use of websites and online communications can deepen the engagement of its members, but not that online participants would necessarily participate offline. Internet use is associated with many causes and organisations spanning national borders, such as anti-globalization campaigns (Van Aelst and Walgrave, 2002), the government transparency movement based loosely on the work of Wikileaks (Hood, 2011), and the international supporters of Mexican Zapatista revolutionaries (Martinez-Torres, 2001) among others. In many cases, the internet has enabled the formation of cross-national and cross-cultural organisations where traditional media would fail. For instance, Capling and Nossal (2001) and Vromen (2008a) note that the internet has allowed Australian citizens to participate in virtual protest communities despite large geographic distances.

Protest participation is similar to communal participation in that it occurs outside of the electoral and partisan institutions of a democratic society, but it tends to explicitly conflict with those institutions. This study measures two types of protest: petition signing and demonstrating or marching. Two theories about who protests and why populate the literature: that citizens protest because they have the means and the opportunity (McCarthy & Zald 1977; Verba et al. 1995), or alternatively because they are deprived and seek reparation (Kaase and Marsh, 1979a; Orum, 1974; Sayles, 1984). Comparative evidence shows that, among developing and advanced democracies, protestors possess more socioeconomic resources than not (Dalton et al., 2010). In Australia, Bean (1991) finds that protestors are younger, less interested in politics and hold more postmaterial values than the rest of the population, including participations in more orthodox political activity. The role of the internet in protest participation is

largely covered by the research on internet use and communal participation, as they are often conflated.

1.6 Methodology

Conceptual framework

This study is based on the civic voluntarism model of political participation laid out by Verba et al. (1995). The model draws on a collection of empirical data and theory based on political and civic behaviour published in a long line of influential studies. This study accepts the assumptions implicit in Verba et al.'s (1995) study, even though the earlier work was formulated and tested using data from the United States and not Australia. There are two reasons for this. First, no specifically Australian model of political participation exists and second, even if it did, testing the Australian case against international findings embeds this study within an international literature, not just the Australian literature. Comparing Australian findings to those elsewhere will also point to possible institutional effects on participation in Australia (and in other cases), suggesting future research questions.

The framework applied here models a range of independent variables predicting participatory behaviours one at a time. While many of the larger studies of participation aggregate acts of participation into a single scale of participation (or at times a binary condition of having participated), this study compares the effects of independent variables on different acts. The general model (see Figure 1.3) tested throughout this study predicts the effects of time, money, civic skills and recruitment on participatory behaviours, controlling for age and sex.⁶ Measures of engagement, such as political interest, are excluded from the model as they control for (and detract from) the variables of interest.

Internet use is conspicuously absent from this list, despite its place at the heart of the study. Instead of comprising its own category, internet use is first disaggregated into two components – time spent online and internet-related skills – and categorised as measures of time and civic skills respectively. This measurement of internet use achieves two aims. First, it tests whether internet use is interacting with the civic voluntarism model, rather than having effects on participation in isolation to the civic

⁶ The specific measures of time, money, civic skills and recruitment are described in the following section, as they pertain to the data used for the analyses.

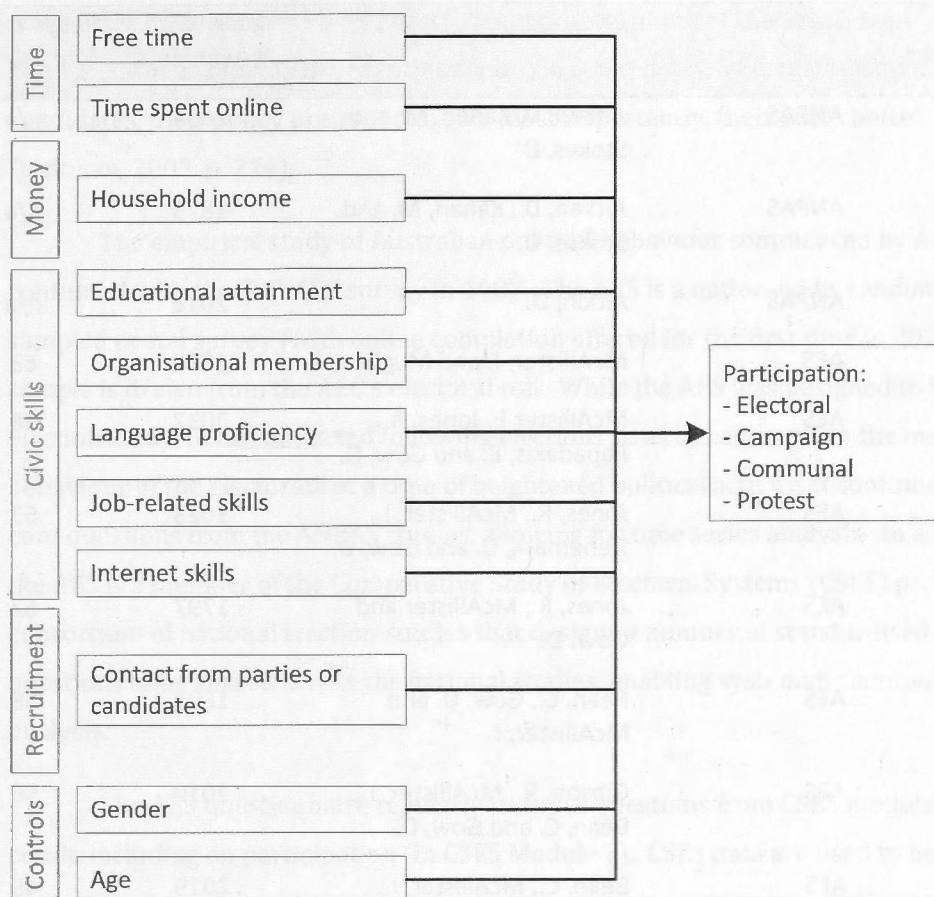


Figure 1.3: Path diagram of the hypothesised effects on participation

voluntarism factors of time, money and civic skills. This is a logical position, as internet use is expected to affect those factors as well as having direct effects on participation (see Chapter 3 for more details). Moreover this question goes to the heart of the study's aims, namely whether the internet constitutes a resource that assists a citizen to become politically active. Second, measuring internet use in two parts tests whether those parts – time and skills – have distinct and different effects on participation.

Data sources and preparation

This study employs data collected by the ANPAS conducted between 1967 and 1979, and the AES surveys conducted between 1987 and 2010 (see Table 1.3). The ANPAS studies arose through a partnership between Australian academic Don Aitkin

Table 1.3: ANPAS and AES dataset information

<i>Year conducted</i>	<i>Survey</i>	<i>Investigator/s</i>	<i>Total respondents</i>	<i>Response rate (%)</i>
1967	ANPAS	Aitken, D, Kahan, M. and Stokes, D.	2054	n/a
1969	ANPAS	Aitken, D., Kahan, M. and Stokes, D.	1873	n/a
1979	ANPAS	Aitkin, D.	2016	n/a
1987	AES	McAllister, I. and Mughan, A.	1830	63
1990	AES	McAllister I., Jones, R. Papadakis, E. and Gow, D.	2037	58
1993	AES	Jones, R., McAllister, I., Denemark, D. and Gow, D.	3023	63
1996	AES	Jones, R., McAllister and Gow, D.	1797	62
1998	AES	Bean, C., Gow, D. and McAllister, I.	1897	58
2001	AES	Gibson, R., McAllister, I., Bean, C. and Gow, D.	2010	56
2004	AES	Bean, C., McAllister, I., Gibson, R. and Gow, D.	2019	45
2007	AES	Bean, C., McAllister, I. and Gow, D.	1873	40
2010	AES	McAllister, I., Bean, C., Gibson, R. and Pietsch, J.	2214	43

and the American co-author of *The American Voter* (Campbell et al., 1960), Donald Stokes. Australia was late to the fore in this regard – the United States’ National Election Study (ANES) commenced in 1952 and the British Election Study (BES) in 1964 – but now has a more established dataset of political behaviour than exists for many other advanced democracies. The ANPAS project represented a shift in Australian political science towards the ‘Michigan model’ of political behaviour, emphasising party identification as “a relatively stable characteristic of an individual, usually inherited from one’s parents in much the same way as one might be socialised into a particular

religious self-identification; and that for most voters, more of the time, given knowledge of a voter's party identification, one can reliably infer their evaluations of candidates, their policy preferences, and, most importantly, their vote choice" (Jackman, 2003, p. 274).

The empirical study of Australian political behaviour commenced by Aitkin was continued with the first AES survey in 1987. The AES is a nation-wide, randomly-sampled postal survey (with online completion offered for the first time in 2010). The sample is drawn from the AEC's electoral roll. While the AES was designed to be an election study, to be conducted following elections so as to best capture the mood and behaviour of the electorate at a time of heightened political activity, it continued some core questions from the ANPAS studies, allowing for time series analysis. In addition, the AES is a member of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) project, the consortium of national election studies that designs a number of standardised core questions to be shared across the national studies, enabling systematic comparative analysis.

The AES questionnaire regularly includes questions from CSES modules as a result, including on participation (in CSES Module 2). CSES data are used to benchmark Australian data where appropriate, for instance with regard to comparative protest behaviour. Where the AES does not measure relevant behaviours, for example political party membership, World Values Survey (WVS) data are used instead. The WVS is a comparative survey of attitudes and behaviours of citizens in a socially, economically and politically diverse range of countries, including Australia. Five waves of the WVS have been made publically available; the fifth wave is used for analysis at times throughout this study.⁷

The study uses the 2010 AES for the majority of its analyses. That study surveyed 2214 Australian voters in the aftermath of the 2010 federal election, in which the incumbent Australian Labor Party was re-elected. The respondents comprise a systematic random sample, with a response rate of 42.5 per cent. A second, online-only version of the study was conducted to achieve a complete sample of young voters. The data in Version 2 are weighted by gender, age, state-territory and 2010 voting

⁷ More information, including technical details, on the WVS is available at the WVS website (www.worldvaluessurvey.org; accessed 26 August 2013) (World Values Survey Association, 2009).

behaviour (McAllister et al., 2010a). In total, 9.5 per cent of respondents completed the questionnaire online, with the rest completing a mail-back survey.⁸ Details of the AES variables used throughout the study, including question wordings and recoding information, are at Appendix 1. Where variables come from other datasets, question wording is available throughout the study.

There is ongoing debate regarding the merits and pitfalls of survey research. Curtice (2007) makes three arguments in defence of surveys: they allow scholars to assess the empirical generalisability of a study's claims; they enable comparative study of contextual influences on political behaviour which are invariant within a country but which vary between countries; and survey data from other countries or contexts provide useful points of comparison for single-country studies. A common criticism of comparative survey research is measurement error across different countries,⁹ however cross-national projects such as the CSES and European Social Survey (ESS) are working to overcome this pitfall. Criticism of single-case survey research tends to likewise focus on measurement and design: acquiescence bias describes respondents' "tendency to endorse any assertion made in a question, regardless of its content"; response order bias describes the effects of a question's position in a survey on how that question is answered; and social desirability bias describes the "overreporting of admirable attitudes and behaviors and underreporting those that are not socially respected" (Krosnick, 1999). Moreover, respondents to a voluntary survey are inherently biased: apathetic citizens are not likely to return postal surveys, nor are they likely to engage in political behaviour (Jackman, 1999; Krosnick, 1999).

Despite these problems, surveys are exemplary in measuring mass attitudes and behaviours. Further, postal and internet questionnaires such as those used in the AES incur less response bias than phone or face-to-face surveys (Johnston, 2008). They are also easy to administer, allowing the high number of responses (and consequent enhanced generalizability) of the AES. The combined ANPAS/AES dataset used in this study is statistically representative of the national population, longitudinal with regard to some variables and cross-sectional in other areas, and comparable to other CSES surveys in core areas. It is the most comprehensive dataset on Australian politics, and

⁸ Further technical details of the study, and others in the AES series, are available via the Australian Data Archive website (www.ada.edu.au; accessed 26 August 2013) (McAllister et al., 2010).

⁹ Survey research in China, for example, is restricted by political sensitivities (Kittilson, 2007); likewise translation and semantic differences between countries can pose reliability problems (Curtice, 2007).

readily accessible. Even with the problems inherent in conducting secondary research, much less using a dataset largely focussed on election campaigns and not political behaviour generally, AES data are ideal. Where measures of the behaviours studied here are not available in the AES dataset, census and WVS data provide appropriate measures, and CSES data assist the external validity and benchmarking of AES data.

Measures in the 2010 AES are particularly appropriate to this study. Some newly included measures refer directly to the civic voluntarism model, for instance a question on respondents' free time and a battery of questions on experience with job-related activities. Tables in Appendix 1 show how survey questions have been matched to behaviours throughout the analysis, with explanations of the measures where proxy measures or recoded data have been used. Variables have been recoded where original coding was in the inverse order to that required for analysis here, for instance the variable measuring 'political interest' has been recoded so that the highest value represents the highest level of interest. Further information on recoded variables is available in Appendix 1.

Elsewhere, variables have been recoded to turn ordinal or categorical data into binary measures to maximise the *n* on that measure, for instance the small number of respondents reporting as active and inactive members of political parties have been combined in a binary measure. Where scale variables have been created from binary and categorical measures, confirmatory factor analysis has been used to assess the internal validity of the new variable. Each of the newly created scale variables was found to associate across each factor at statistically significant levels. The measure of language proficiency has likewise been recoded from a broad range of countries of birth into a binary category of English-speaking countries *vis a vis* all others. Other amendments to AES and WVS data are detailed in Appendix 1. Missing data have been excluded listwise, maximising the validity of the data while retaining relatively large sample sizes. At all times, variables have only been amended from the original data to assist with analysis.

Analysis

This study employs a range of techniques to analyse and present the quantitative data detailed above. The analyses follow a general pattern, wherein attitudes and behaviours are explained using frequency and descriptive data, before

the specific effects of internet use on different forms of participation are explored using either binary logistic or ordinary least squares regression analysis methods, as best suits the dependent variable. This format reflects the fact that without a broad, overarching sense of how people in the population have been behaving, the later regression analysis has no meaningful context. Accordingly, the study chooses simple analytical techniques over complicated ones where possible, to convey what is happening at an aggregate level in a way that is easy to comprehend. Combined with theoretical explanations and hypotheses, frequency and descriptive data tell us much about changes in behaviour over time. Early chapters, including this one, demonstrate trends such as the proportion of voting aged citizens who have participated in elections, changes in individual-level interest in politics or the diffusion of internet access throughout Australia over time. The AES data are well suited to this purpose, as many measures have been repeated over several surveys.

After the context of each dependent variable is described with data and theoretical explanation, t-test analyses are used to examine the statistical differences between the mean characteristics of different groups. For the most part, t-test analysis here details the differences in mean characteristics between Australians who do participate in a certain activity and those who do not. These analyses show a *prime facie* picture of the differences between participants and non-participants without controlling for various factors. For instance, t-test analysis finds significant differences in how frequently demonstrators and non-demonstrators use the internet. These findings do not reveal anything about the effects of the internet – there is no specification within the test that denotes the direction of the relationship – but allows the reader to visualise a typical demonstrator *vis a vis* a typical non-demonstrator. Knowing the internet habits, as well as other characteristics such as educational attainment, household income, employment status and political interest, provides important context for the following multivariate regression analysis.

Multivariate regression methods are employed throughout the study to measure the linear relationships between a range of independent variables, as specified in Figure 1.3, and the dependent variable, a measure of specific forms of participation (for example Achen, 1982). The model specification is based on Verba et al.'s (1995) civic voluntarism model of participation, controlling for age and gender. Logistic regression models predict binary dependent variables, assuming a curvilinear, chi-square distribution wherein y does not breach the parameters of 0 and 1 (for example Long, 1997). Logistic regression is used for the majority of analyses throughout the

study, notably where scale or categorical measures have been compressed into binary measures to maximise the number of cases being predicted. By comparison, OLS regression analysis is only used to predict the effects of a range of factors at the federal electoral division level, including rates of broadband and dial-up internet access, on voter enrolment and turnout. OLS regression is used for this particular analysis as it assumes that the dependent variable has a linear distribution, which turnout and enrolment both have, within the broad range of 0 to 100 per cent. This study uses OLS techniques at the aggregate (or ecological) level. Ecological regression analysis applies the same assumptions as when OLS regression is used to predict individual level data, but instead predicts data aggregated at any level larger than the individual. In this instance, federal electoral division level data comprise both the independent and dependent variables.

Specific problems pertaining to the data and methodology have arisen during the analyses, and are accounted for in various ways. First, missing data are excluded listwise, as the sample size is large enough to allow to the omission of cases as required. While this avoids the problems inherent to imputing missing data values, it at the same time encounters the problem of non-response bias, whereby respondents intentionally avoid providing certain responses (Allison, 2001). On balance, excluding cases with missing data in the model specification is chosen to maintain reliability and validity. Second, the small number of variance among responses to some ordinal measures (for example, the small number of respondents who report contributing money to political parties or candidates) means that, in order to conduct a valid analysis, they have been compressed to dichotomous measures. In so doing, information is lost that would otherwise add explanatory power to the analysis. However, to explore different dimensions of participation in Australia the variables have been recoded as appropriate, and logistic regression analysis used to predict the dependent variable.

A third methodological problem encountered by this study is the availability of specific measures. With regards to campaign participation, this is resolved by analysing WVS data rather than AES data. As a result, the findings from Chapter 5 may differ in substance from those in Chapters 6 and 7 due to measurement differences, but theoretical explanations of the analyses helps to overcome that problem. Similarly, the lack of individual-level electoral enrolment and turnout data means that some analyses in Chapter 4 predict electoral division-level behaviour. Inferring individual-level

behaviour, for instance by comparing these results with the individual-level analysis of party identification in Chapter 4, is fraught with problems. Accordingly, the discussion of results in Chapter 4 contains that caveat. Finally, the cross sectional analyses in this study restrict the causal inferences that can be made from the findings. With this in mind, the findings do not make strictly causal claims. However, the statistical results coupled with the vast literature and accumulated theories of participation inform the findings, including the direction of relationships and exogeneity of independent variables. Consequently, regression coefficients are referred to as 'effects' where appropriate.

1.7 Conclusion

This study draws heavily on the political participation literature in studying the effects of internet use on participation in Australia. Tracing the study of participation through the seminal works by Almond and Verba (1963), Milbrath (1965), Verba and Nie (1972), Verba, Nie and Kim (1978) and Rosenstone and Hansen (1993), the model of participation proposed by Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) is described as the most comprehensive to date. Accordingly, the civic voluntarism model described in that study has been appropriated for use in this study. The main difference of that model from those of previous studies is the specification of resources – namely time, money and civic skills – in the place of straightforward measures of socioeconomic status. Resources are differentially associated with socioeconomic status, explaining the high numbers of low-income earning church-attendees who participate in political activity in the United States, for example (Verba et al., 1995). In this study, the civic voluntarism is expanded to include internet use. Internet use is first disaggregated into two components: time spent online and internet-related skills. Time spent online constitutes a second measure of time, alongside free time (after sleep, work and family care commitments), while internet skills are a fourth measure of civic skills here, alongside educational attainment, language proficiency, active membership of non-political organisations and job-related skills.

The definition of political participation has undergone considerable change since Almond and Verba's (1963) 'civic culture' study. Primarily, the value shift witnessed in advanced democracies and described by Inglehart (1977) as 'postmaterialism' has seen a corresponding shift from instrumental forms of participation (such as voting or party membership) to express behaviours such as

petition signing and demonstrating (Dalton, 2008). At the same time, the importance of political parties, and their place at the centre of citizens' political activity, has arguably waned (Dalton, 2002; Katz and Mair, 1995; Mair and van Biezen, 2001; van Biezen et al., 2012). Taking these changes in behaviour into account, the forms of participation studied here include both instrumental and expressive activities and the different factors that affect them. This chapter details what is known about electoral, partisan, communal and protest participation, including why internet use is expected to affect each of them respectively.

Finally, this chapter describes the methodology chosen for the study. The data come mostly from the 2010 Australian Election Study post-election survey on Australians' attitudes and behaviours. Earlier data from the AES series as well as comparative data from the World Values Survey and Comparative Study of Electoral Systems and census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics complement the 2010 AES data as required. The analysis is primarily quantitative in nature, employing a range of methods to present a comprehensive picture of Australian political participation in 2010. Frequency and descriptive analysis of AES, WVS, CSES and census data provides an overview of trends and cross-sectional snapshots of behaviour. T-test analysis compares the mean characteristics of participants and non-participants to paint a *prima facie* portrait of who participates in Australian political life and who abstains. Finally, multivariate regression analysis – both binary logistic and OLS regression techniques – examines the partial effects of a range of factors (per the civic voluntarism model) on different participatory behaviours in Australia using 2010 AES data, 2005-2007 WVS data and 2011 ABS census data. The following chapter draws on the AES data series to describe the Australian case.

Chapter 2 – the institutional characteristics and history of participation in Australia

2.1 Introduction

Research on political participation in Australia suggests that Australia sits within the 'cross-national mainstream' of predictive factors (Bean, 1989a). However, no study has specifically applied Verba, Schlozmann and Brady's (1995) civic voluntarism model of participation in the Australian context. Moreover, Australia provides an advantageous case for such a study: it is relatively understudied; its political processes and institutions are broadly similar to other advanced democracies such as the United States and United Kingdom, which have been studied in far greater depth and can offer some *a priori* assumptions; yet it stands apart from those countries by having a system of compulsory voting (among other factors). More instrumentally, the Australian case provides a large and representative data source in the Australian Election Study (AES). The availability of such comprehensive data allows the opportunity to redress the imbalance of participation research, currently weighed heavily in favour of the US, UK and Europe:

"An initial problem is that Australia has lent itself too easily to analysis in terms of other countries' experiences, eg those of Britain and America, rather than its own" (Emy, 1972, p. 13).

Australian politics presents something of a puzzle in political behaviour. The country demonstrates trends in behaviours and attitudes that broadly mirror the United States, United Kingdom and Canada, yet of this group only Australia has compulsory voting laws in place. Much is made of 'Australian exceptionalism': its early adoption of preferential voting systems, secret ballots, universal suffrage and compulsory voting, and its ongoing adoption of new techniques. The most outstanding feature of political participation in Australia, however, is how little is known about it; it seems to have been broadly accepted that generalisations from the US, UK and Canadian cases have sufficed. Moreover, the research that has focused on Australia is invariably preoccupied with electoral participation: McAllister notes that "the study of political participation in Australia has been dominated by the special characteristics of

the political system, most notably the system of compulsory voting" (2009, p. 166). This study seeks to make two advances to the existing literature: a systematic, comprehensive study into participation in Australia; and an update of the US literature – particularly the arguments synthesised in Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) and Verba et al (1995) – taking into account the emerging ubiquity of the internet. To that end, it is vital to understand the nature of Australian politics.

This chapter details the institutional, cultural and behavioural characteristics of Australia's polity, and how they are likely to shape the effects of internet use on Australians' political participation. Section 2.2 discusses Australia's political institutions and their likely effects on national rates of participation. It examines the role of federalism, and consequently large numbers of political representatives on a per capita basis, in mobilising citizens to participate. It then looks at the significant impact of Australia's complex electoral system, particularly the law compelling all voting aged citizens to cast a ballot at all state and federal elections but also the electoral outcomes and proportionality associated with the system. Section 2.3 explores Australia's political culture and how it may explain Australians' political behaviour. Section 2.4 outlines the forms of participation within this study's focus. It looks at the history of those behaviours in Australia, using data from the AES and comparative datasets and setting the scene for cross-sectional analysis of 2010 data in later chapters.

2.2 *Institutional characteristics*

Australia's political institutions shape who participates in political life. Three particular institutional characteristics stand out as being particularly important: federalist governance, compulsory voting and the electoral system more generally. Australia's system of federalism comprises a large number of parliamentary representatives who act as entry points to dealing with government. This should facilitate comparatively high levels of participation, particularly in forms such as political contacting and communal work that specifically target representatives (Verba et al., 1995, p. 7). On the other hand, regular elections at the local, state and federal levels may lead to voter fatigue, and fatigue with politics more generally (for example Rallings, Thrasher, & Borisyuk, 2003). Compulsory voting laws in Australia work to negate any voter fatigue effects (as far as electoral participation is concerned), as well as having potential flow-on effects to other, non-electoral forms of participation (Hill, 2001). Finally, Australia's electoral system is comparatively proportional (particularly

compared to plurality electoral systems such as in Britain), leading to few wasted votes and enhancing the benefits of voting.

Legislature and governance

Australian federalism is the product of “sixty years of spasmodic official effort and fluctuating public interest to bring the Commonwealth into being” (Crisp, 1983, p. 1). The establishment of the constitution of the Commonwealth in 1901, enshrining powers to the new states, was a bloodless, stoic process. It brought together six colonies to create a federation of six states, that today still comprise the Commonwealth of Australia. The United States of America, by contrast, was only federated following those colonies’ bloody independence from the United Kingdom in 1776. Indeed, a 1998 Federal Government television advertising campaign to mark the imminent centenary of Australian federation suggested that the Commonwealth’s bloodless, peaceful foundations may be to blame for its citizen’s relatively low levels of political knowledge. In other words, who wants to learn about a stable, peaceful democracy?

There are three inherently conservative consequences of Australian federalism: major party dominance; constitutional stability; and the checks and balances inherent to divided sovereignty. Mackerras and McAllister (1999) observe that federalism places a large burden on Australian voters, requiring them to vote frequently and in as many as three different jurisdictions, each of which has responsibility for provision of different services and policies and the capacity to procure different taxes.¹⁰ Lovell et al. (1998) likewise argue that by engaging in the act of voting so frequently (on average approximately once each year) the power of the existing major parties is entrenched through media exposure and party identification. Crisp (1983, p. 51) notes another stabilising aspect of Australia’s constitutional federalism, namely the requirement of a majority of voters in a majority of states to agree (via referendum) to any changes to the constitution; a large obstacle in the way of constitutional reform, compounded further by compulsory voting. Indeed, only eight of Australia’s 44 referenda between 1906 and 2011 have been successful (Bennett, 2003).

¹⁰ Voting is compulsory at both federal and state elections, as well as many local government elections. Federal elections are held on average every three years; state and local government elections between three and four years.

As regards the division of sovereignty between the federal and state governments in Australia, debate rages over whether democracy is enhanced or diminished by multi-level governance (Sawer et al., 2009, p. 295). The question of whether it underpins stable, conservative government is less ambiguous: “the tortuous and legalistic decision-making processes associated with federalism have been favourably interpreted as slowing governments down and hence ensuring due process or at least a brake on arbitrary action” (Sawer et al., 2009, p. 295). As will be detailed later in this chapter, this view of federalism – as a calming influence on government activity – is congruent with the prevailing political culture in Australia.

Besides federalism, the other key institutional factor in Australia’s political stability is bicameralism, inherited from the UK’s Westminster traditions on which the Australian parliament is based. The federal parliament comprises a lower house (the House of Representatives, to which Members are elected) and an upper house (the Senate, to which Senators are elected), and with the exception of Queensland, each of the states has a similarly structured bicameral parliament. Comparatively, the federal parliament is a particularly strong example of bicameralism: the two houses are elected by different methods and have different term lengths, but similar legislative powers. Indeed the Australian Senate has evolved to be more powerful than its antecedents in the UK and US (Money and Tsebelis, 1992; Patterson and Mughan, 2001). The incongruent methods of electing Members and Senators have meant that, between 1981 and 2004,¹¹ and since 2007, the party with a majority of seats in the House of Representatives did not have a majority in the Senate. The party in government must in that case negotiate the passage of legislation with independent and minor party Senators, or else ensure the support of the opposition party.

Much of the time, however, the two major parties work together inside the parliament. For instance, of 202 divisions on which Senators were called to vote in 2009, the ALP and LPA voted as a bloc. Likewise, between February 2008 and April 2010, 438 bills passed through the House of Representatives, of which only 80 required a division, with the others not requiring members to vote (Singleton, 2010); in other words, the federal parliament for the most part runs smoothly with bipartisan cooperation. Tiffen and Gittins (2004) argue that Australia’s parliamentary and electoral structures constitute one of the most strongly bicameral systems internationally. With legislative power divested between both the federal and state

¹¹ The Liberal-National parties in coalition held a majority in both houses for only one term of their four terms in government between 1996 and 2007.

governments, and at each level (excluding Queensland) between lower and upper houses of parliament (and with the additional stability of compulsory preferential voting), stability and conservatism are inherent to Australian political institutions.

Electoral characteristics

The Australian political system is characterised by both innovation and stability (Bryce, 1921; Mackerras and McAllister, 1999; Sawyer, 2001). Throughout its short history as a nation Australia has been a moderniser in regard to electoral reforms. It has been said that “much of Australia’s early identity as a nation revolved around its democratic experiments and the belief that while it was a young nation, it was a relatively old democracy” (Sawyer, 2001, p. 1). Crisp (1983, p. 137) identifies eight electoral and parliamentary reforms initiated in Australia prior to the more established Westminster democracies of the United Kingdom (and Canada, in Sawyer 2001, p. 3): manhood suffrage; adult suffrage; abolition of plural voting; the secret ballot; payment of members of parliament; compulsory registration of voters; compulsory voting; and preferential voting. While innovation and stability may seem incompatible at first blush, the willingness of Australian governments to attempt electoral experiments has resulted in a generally stable and well-regarded polity (for example McAllister, 2011, p. 3; Sawyer, 2001, p. 26).

Each of the aforementioned reforms was largely popular among voters when introduced, ensuring smooth implementation. Moreover, they have remained popular. The passage of bills legislation in 1924 to enact compulsory voting at the federal level attracted bipartisan support and a mere 138 minutes of scrutiny across both the lower and upper house (McAllister, 2011, p. 21). Likewise, proportional representation (by means of an alternative voting system in the lower house and single transferable vote with group voting in the upper house) and associated electoral laws, for instance compulsory preferences and the capacity of political parties to publish and distribute ‘how-to-vote cards’ directing voters how to use their preferences to the benefit of their favoured party, have worked to consolidate the electoral dominance of Australia’s two major parties (McAllister, 2011). This section examines the two most salient features of Australia’s electoral system, namely compulsory voting and party consolidation. Later chapters will explore how these features constrain or facilitate participation in Australia.

Compulsory voting and voters

In 1924 the Australian parliament passed legislation requiring all citizens to enrol to vote and to attend a polling booth on election days and submit a vote. It arguably represents the single greatest difference between not just the electoral systems but also the political and civic cultures of Australia and similar countries, particularly the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand. However, as Hill (2001) notes, it attracts little interest within Australia, despite being “probably Australia’s best known electoral institution, a long-standing rarity among the world’s democracies, that has helped push turnout in Australian federal elections well above ninety per cent since its introduction in 1924, a level unparalleled among the world’s mature democracies” (Jackman, 1999, p. 29). The disparity between international and domestic interest likely has a simple explanation: the crises of voting turnout across the northern hemisphere, typified by the preoccupation with apparent declining turnout in the United States and campaigns to mobilise voters.

In Australia, voter turnout is rarely considered due to compulsory voting. For the same reason, it is not a particularly useful measure for comparison with other advanced democracies. Instead, Australians’ attitudes towards the principles of compulsory voting hint at how they would behave was voting a voluntary act. Figure 2.1 shows that more Australians indicate that they would vote under a voluntary electoral system than actually turned out to vote. There are survey respondents who presumably did not vote, but indicated that they would either definitely or probably have voted were voting not compulsory (see for example Burden 2000; Karp & Brockington 2005). Jackman (1997) attributes this apparent discrepancy to ‘social desirability bias’: a survey respondent’s desire not to appear uneducated or unmotivated, which is particularly acute in face-to-face and telephone interviews. Even with this bias in mind, and as Jackman notes elsewhere, compulsory voting is popular among Australians: “the Australian public has grown accustomed to compulsory voting, and, for the most part, internalized it as a more or less permanent and desirable feature of the Australian political landscape” (1999, p. 37). Hill concurs: “that compulsory voting is a curious or ‘eccentric’ phenomenon has never, apparently, bothered Australians” (2001, p. 130).

Despite compulsory voting, it is relatively easily – and common – for Australian citizens to abstain. Robert Jackman (1987) points out that, by comparison to their expressed attitudes, a substantial number of Australians do not vote; non-voters

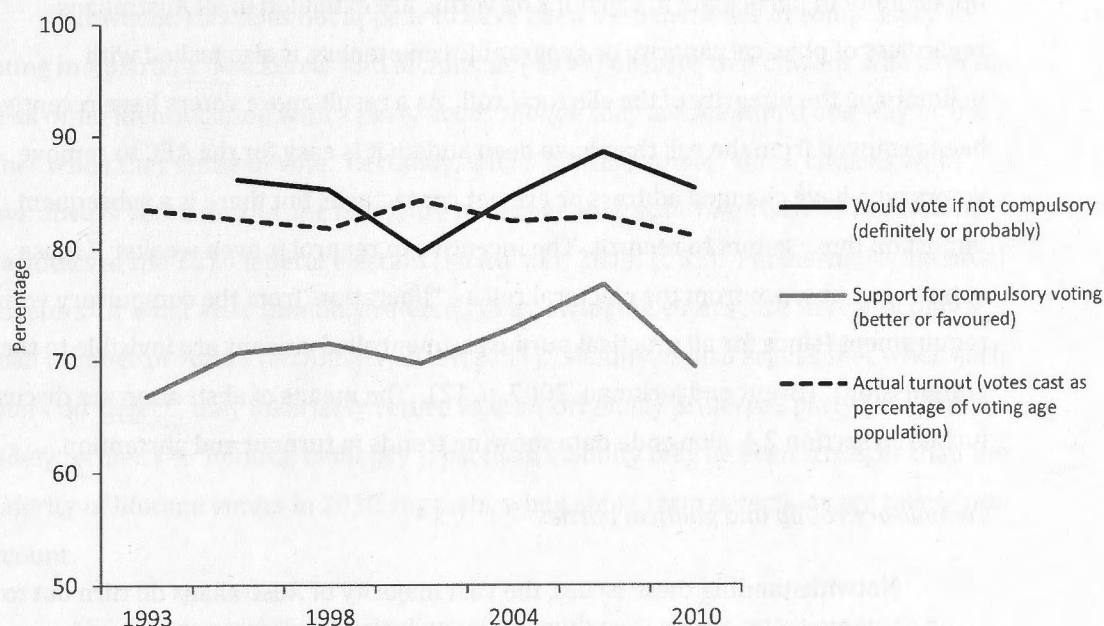


Figure 2.1: Electoral attitudes and behaviour in Australia, 1993-2010

Source: International IDEA, 2012; McAllister, Bean, Gibson, & Pietsch, 2010

Questions (AES): Would you have voted in the election if voting had not been compulsory? Do you think that voting at Federal elections should be compulsory, or do you think that people should only have to vote if they want to?

comprised almost 20 per cent of the voting age population in 2010. Jackman attributes the existence of these non-voters to an inadequate system of disincentive and compliance, noting that “while the presence of mandatory voting laws does provide a disincentive to non-voting that should increase turnout, there is no good reason to anticipate that such laws generate total compliance (1987, p. 409). Brent and Simon Jackman (2007) concur, adding that enforcement of the compulsion on voting-aged Australians to enrol with the Australian Election Commission (AEC) is non-existent. If a citizen does not enrol to vote, he will receive no punishment for not voting, or for not enrolling in the first place. As a consequence, non-enrolment is used as measure of electoral abstention throughout this study, in the place of non-voting. Deliberate informal voting (spoiling a ballot in order to avoid casting a vote) comprises the second measure of abstention.

The AEC, while working to ensure the largest possible franchise and that the opportunity to participate in elections by voting are extended to all Australians regardless of physical capacity or geographic remoteness, is also tasked with maintaining the integrity of the electoral roll. As a result, more voters have recently been removed from the roll than have been added: it is easy for the AEC to remove voters who have changed address or are not contactable, but there is a subsequent impost on those voters to reenrol. The incentive to reenrol is even weaker if those voters view absence from the electoral roll as “‘liberation’ from the compulsory voting requirement (since for all practical purposes, unenrolled citizens are invisible to the Commission)” (Brent and Jackman, 2007, p. 12). The means of abstention are discussed further in section 2.4, alongside data showing trends in turnout and abstention.

Compulsory voting and political parties

Notwithstanding these issues, the vast majority of Australians do turn out to vote as required at federal elections (see Figure 2.1). One important consequence of such consistently high turnout – compounded by frequent elections at the state and federal levels – is party stability, or the “large number of voters who identify with one or other of the major parties, and in the preponderance of representatives of the major parties in the federal and state parliaments” (Mackerras and McAllister, 1999, p. 229). In Australia this has manifested as the long term dominance of the major parties, the ALP and LPA. Mackerras and McAllister describe the relationship between compulsory voting and party identification as a cognitive prompt:

“Compulsory voting ensures that voters cast a ballot and the act of voting means that they are forced to think, however superficially, about the major parties. The frequency of elections at the state and federal levels further reinforces the high visibility that parties enjoy within the electorate” (1999, p. 229).

Recent analysis suggests that the relationship between compulsory voting and party stability is not so straightforward, and that compulsory voting, independently of high turnout (i.e. in theoretical models with high turnout and voluntary voting) can actually facilitate a greater number of parties represented in a parliament (Jensen & Spoon 2011). Jensen and Spoon (2011) argue that compulsion leads to a greater number of “new, less informed” voters with less predictable motives and more randomly distributed support for the entire range of parties nominating for office.

However, this does not appear to have been the experience of compulsory voting in Australia. Mackerras and McAllister (1999) observe that citizens who express weak or no identification with a party act *as though* they are identified one way or the other when they come to vote. Certainly, while 'lifetime voters', those citizens who have always voted for the one party, are in decline they still comprised 52 per cent of the voters at the 2010 federal election (McAllister, 2011, p. 52). Furthermore, 'habitual defectors' or what are commonly referred to as 'swinging voters', are in reality only a small number of voters (McAllister, 2011, p. 53). McAllister also argues that when such voters do 'defect', they invariably return to their originally preferred party (or what is widely termed the 'homing tendency'); partisan stability may be even stronger than the majority of lifetime voters in 2010 suggests, when short-term defections are taken into account.

AES data suggest that Australian voters with very strong attachments to a political party are decreasing in number, but the decline is occurring later and more gently than in the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States (Bean, 1997). For instance, Dalton (2002) observes that an increasing number of European voters express no feelings of partisanship while American voters are increasingly ambivalent toward both the major parties in that country. By 1992, those without partisan allegiance had replaced party 'sympathizers' as the largest group of European voters (Dalton, 2002, p. 27). At the same time in Australia (that is, following the 1993 federal election), although 'very strong' partisans were in decline, 'fairly strong' partisans still comprised 49 per cent of the electorate (McAllister, 2011, p. 41). McAllister (2011; with Mackerras 1999) in effect argue that compulsory voting proves the differentiating characteristic of the Australian case.

Compulsory voting works in concert with Australia's systems of alternative voting (AV) for lower house elections and a modified form of single-transferable voting (STV) for upper house elections. Farrell and McAllister (2006) observe that the two electoral mechanisms are in fact antipathetic; that while compulsory voting bestows benefits on the parties, preferential systems are explicitly designed to benefit voters. Preferential voting systems "enable voters, if they wish, to vote both strategically and 'sincerely'" (Farrell and McAllister, 2006, p. 145). A voter can, for example, award his first preference vote to a minor party, in support of a single issue or emerging political

entity, and his second, third and onward preferences in such a way as to ensure that the vote is eventually exhausted with his preferred major party.

The reality, however, is that parties nonetheless dominate not only through media exposure and more sophisticated campaigning, but also through the provision of how-to-vote cards and negotiation of inter-party deals to determine preference flows.¹² While the number of voters ignoring party-sanctioned how-to-vote cards in favour of ordering candidates of their own accord is increasing, on average approximately half of Australian voters follow their favoured party's lead; this number is probably inflated by the compulsion on unaligned and apathetic citizens to vote. Further, voting to elect senators to the upper house of the federal parliament uses a single transferable vote system with the option of marking only one preference, in which case the vote is transferred at a declining value according to the parties' pre-announced preferences¹³. In sum, "no other electoral system provides parties with that degree of control over events in the ballot box" (Farrell and McAllister, 2006, p. 146). The internet is a potential counterpoint to this control. Evidence suggests that minor parties have made the most gains from online campaigning to date (Gibson & McAllister 2006; 2009; 2011), while the abundance of political information available online further loosens the major parties' hold on what voters read and discuss. This study furthers the understanding of these internet effects.

2.3 Political culture

Understanding Australia's political culture is integral to understanding how and why Australians participate in politics, and how likely they are to incorporate the internet into their political activity; it constitutes one determinant of individual behaviour, alongside institutions, social structure and elite behaviour (Bean, 1993). Studies of political culture largely draw on either one of the two mainstream frameworks: Almond and Verba's (1963) civic culture framework or Inglehart's (1977) postmaterialism thesis. Almond and Verba (1963) contend that political (or civic)

¹² This is particularly acute in Senate elections. Voters are presented with a ballot, under which candidates are grouped by party (or as a 'non-aligned' group of independents). Voters can then choose to award one party a single vote, in which case the voter's preferences are distributed according to his chosen party's preference, which are negotiated with the other major parties in advance of the election and registered with the AEC. This is referred to as group ticket voting.

¹³ Voters have the option to vote 'below the line', specifying how they wish their vote to be transferred (i.e. their preferences), but few voters (<five per cent) choose this option.

culture describe citizens' psychological orientations toward political objects, particularly to the state, political system, policies and himself as a political actor. In their own words, "political culture is the pattern of individual attitudes and orientations toward politics among the members of a political system. It is the subjective realm which underlies and gives meaning to political actions (Almond and Verba, 1963, p. 50). Those orientations have three forms: cognitive orientations (namely political knowledge), affective orientations (feelings of attachment or involvement) and evaluative orientations (political judgments and opinions). The distribution of those orientations, according to the 'civic culture' model developed by Almond and Verba (1963) then informs the political culture of a nation as either a parochial, subject or participant (or combination of those) culture.

Cognitive orientation describes what an individual knows about an object, in this case, knowledge about politics. Since 1996 the AES has measured political knowledge with 'quiz' questions asking respondents to identify statements as true or false. Of six questions in each survey, the mean number of correct answers differed by only 0.2 across the four survey cycles, ranging from 2.2 to 2.4, or less than 40 per cent correct. The strongest predictors of an individual's political knowledge are, perhaps unsurprisingly, political interest ($r^2=.27$, $p<.01$) and tertiary education ($r^2=.23$, $p<.01$), with gender, age and socioeconomic factors held constant (McAllister, 2011, p. 70). On a comparative basis however, McAllister (2011, p. 69) points out that "Australian citizens would appear to be no better or no less well informed than their international counterparts", with specific reference to the US and UK.

Affective orientations comprise the various ways that an individual thinks about a political system, institution or actor based on 'gut feeling' or emotion, while evaluative orientations comprise the ways that he thinks about a system, institution or actor based on particular criteria or a value standard. Emy's portrait of Australian political culture observes three central, defining characteristics: "the ambivalent attitude towards political authority, the instrumentalist conception of the state, the urban-rural division and the roots of parochialism" (1972, p. 26). These observations lead Emy to describe Australia's political culture as 'subject-participant', wherein "the majority of the population are still oriented towards the output-aspects of system (ie towards the results and benefits they expect and demand from the Government), and where relatively few people have developed a strong orientation towards the input

aspects (i.e. have not developed a motivation towards the system in terms of their reciprocal duties and obligations as active participatory citizens), but still incline to the passive role associated with a subject culture" (1972, p. 27).

Accordingly, Australian citizens know what the state can provide and expect that it gets provided, but either do not understand or do not fulfil their roles as citizens: they "display only a limited competence; their sense of their own political significance (i.e. their ability to affect government policy), their inclination to seek information and the information placed at their disposal, are all minimal" (Emy, 1972, p. 27). Almost a century ago, Bryce observed the persistent image of Australians as laconic regarding civic and political life: "A great cricket match is a more important event than a change of ministry" (1921, p. 244). Empirical data suggest otherwise, however. Immediately obvious in the longitudinal AES data presented in Figure 2.2 is that Australians, contrary to Emy's (1972) thesis, are confident that their vote makes a difference in deciding which party will govern. In other words, they display external political efficacy. Excepting the downturn following the 2010 federal election,¹⁴ Australians display generally favourable positive attitudes towards government and the political system. While trust in government to do the 'right thing' is relatively scarce, with only 37 per cent of the population trusting the government 'usually' or 'sometimes' in 2010, satisfaction with democracy is very high.¹⁵ The discrepancy between prevailing levels of trust in government and satisfaction with the democratic system suggests that Australian citizens are sceptical about the people who inhabit government, but confident that political institutions such as the parliament and electoral system keep them in check. To put it another way, Australians are 'conservatively cynical' (Bean, 1993).

A large body of research has shown that feelings of political efficacy, trust and satisfaction are associated with party support; namely, if your preferred party is in power, you will feel more positively towards government generally (for example Anderson and Tverdova, 2001; Bean and Denmark, 2007; Iyengar, 1980; Wells and Kriekhaus, 2006). This effect is mediated by institutions, primarily electoral systems. Majoritarian systems favour supporters of the winner, resulting in the loss of efficacy, trust and satisfaction among supporters of the opposition party; in consensus-based

¹⁴ The 2010 federal election produced a rare result in Australian politics: neither the ALP nor Liberal/National coalition won a clear majority of seats in the House of Representatives and consequently could not govern in their own right.

¹⁵ However, Donovan, Denmark and Bowler note that Australians' trust in government is comparatively high (2007, p. 89).

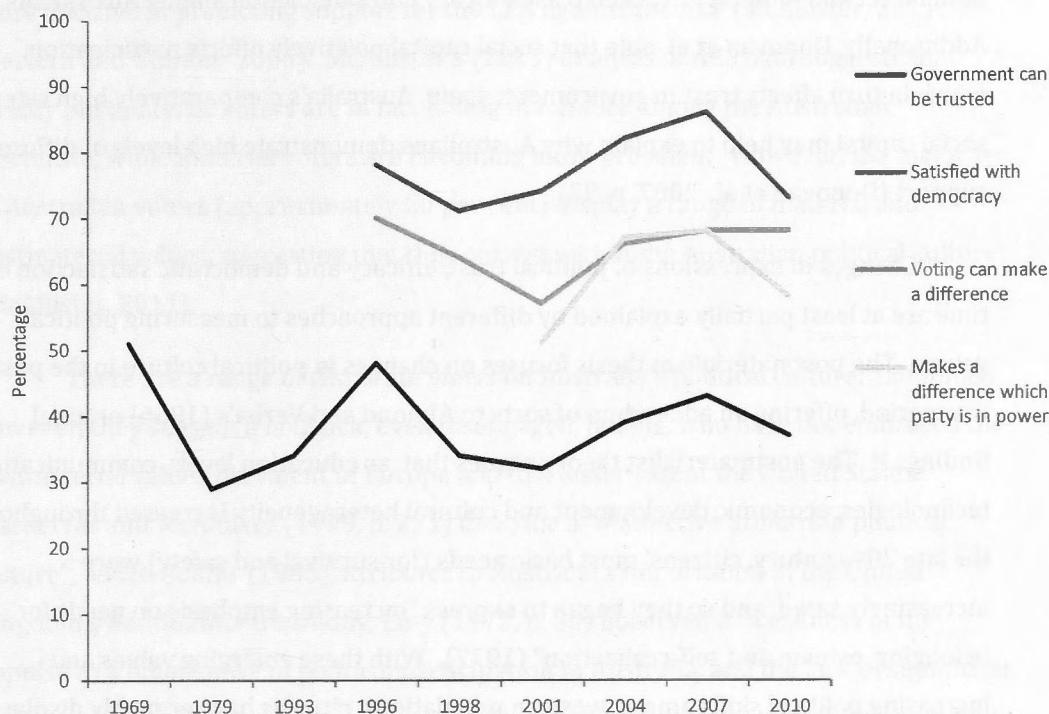


Figure 2.2: Australian citizens' attitudes towards democracy and politics, by percentage of population

Source: 1969 and 1979 Australian National Political Attitudes Surveys; 1993, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2010 Australian Election Studies (Aitkin, 1979; Aitkin et al., 1969; Bean et al., 2007, 2004, 1998; Gibson et al., 2001; Jones et al., 1996, 1993; McAllister et al., 2010a)

systems, these expressions of 'diffuse support' for political system tend to be more stable (Anderson, 2007; Anderson and Guillory, 1997). This cycle of 'winners' and 'losers' displaying trust based on their party support is evident in Australia, with supporters of the government consistently reporting higher trust since 1993 (Bean, 2001; McAllister, 2011, p. 75). Australia's majoritarian political system, then, cannot explain Australia's comparatively high rates of trust and efficacy (Donovan et al., 2007).

An alternative explanation for the Australian case is that "higher trust is evidence where people find participatory opportunities more adequate" (Donovan et al., 2007, p. 89). In this regard, compulsory voting may explain why Australian citizens demonstrate diffuse support for government, regardless of the majoritarian outcomes of the electoral system. By compelling citizens to vote in state and federal elections, the government sustains support for its legitimacy. If compulsory voting also encourages

citizens to participate in other ways, as has been theorised (Hill, 2001), it may have both direct and indirect effects on trust, efficacy and satisfaction among Australians. Additionally, Donovan et al. note that social capital positively affects participation, which in turn affects trust in government; again, Australia's comparatively high rates of social capital may help to explain why Australians demonstrate high levels of diffuse support (Donovan et al., 2007, p. 97).

Changes in expressions of political trust, efficacy and democratic satisfaction over time are at least partially explained by different approaches to measuring political values. The postmaterialism thesis focuses on changes in political culture in the post-war period, offering an addendum of sorts to Almond and Verba's (1966) original findings.¹⁶ The postmaterialist theory argues that, as education levels, communications technologies, economic development and cultural heterogeneity increased throughout the late 20th century, citizens' most basic needs (for survival and safety) were increasingly sated, and so they began to express "increasing emphasis on needs for belonging, esteem and self-realization" (1977). With these emerging values and increasing political skills among western populations, citizens have arguably displayed new political inclinations and behaviours, as well as demanding reforms at the system level: the salience of 'life-style', rather than economic, issues has increased; class has declined as a basis for political conflict; the perceived legitimacy of the nation state has declined; and the popularity of issue-based and elite-challenging participatory behaviours have increased (Inglehart, 1977). As a result of this and other related cultural shifts (including declining social capital), Norris (2011) finds that in many nations, citizens' expectations of democratic governance are not matched by democratic performance, particularly where educational attainment is high and citizens have well-defined aspirations.

Australian studies have found little evidence of generational change in values, and little support for Inglehart's prediction that intergenerational value change (from materialist to postmaterialist) is correlated with economic prosperity (Western and Tranter, 2005). Elsewhere research has suggested that postmaterial values can predict major and minor party voting in Australia, but that materialist considerations are still

¹⁶ The 'civic culture' and 'postmaterialism' approaches to studying values are not universal. Schwartz (1992; Schwartz et al., 2006, 2010) proposes an alternative typology of values, encompassing 'openness to change', 'self transcendence', 'conservation' and 'self-enhancement'. He argues that values are relatively stable over an individual's lifecycle, inferring that changes over time are artefacts of measurement error. Caprara et al. (2006) do observe some signs towards a 'general individualising' of society, coinciding with greater rates of education and residential mobility.

more decisive in predicting support for the LPA against the ALP (McAllister, 2011; Western and Tranter, 2005). McAllister's (2011) analysis of AES data suggests that strictly postmaterial voters are in fact falling in number among the Australian electorate, while material voters are becoming more prevalent. However, the majority of Australian voters (approximately 60 per cent) display a range of material and postmaterial values, suggesting that they coexist within the Australian political culture (McAllister, 2011).

There are a range of disparate views on Australia's political culture. Combined, however, they suggest a laidback, even disengaged, people, who have not embraced the postmaterial values prevalent in Europe and to a lesser extent the United States. Mackerras and McAllister (1999, p. 231) describe a "distinctive utilitarian political culture", which Collins (1985) attributes to Australia's importation of the United Kingdom's Benthamite traditions; Emy (1972, p. 30) observed a "weakness of the impulse to a fuller sense of political participation in Australia, and the lack of significant motivating factors for creating a positive orientation amongst individuals towards their own roles as political participants". Bean (1993) describes these phenomena as a general trait of 'conservative cynicism', but further argues that it is dominated by a stronger feature of Australia's political culture, namely respect for authority: "on the question of whether Australians are an authoritarian people, the answer would appear to be a resounding 'yes'" (1993, p. 66). It is within this culture – a mixture of utilitarianism and authoritarianism plus the confidence that participation can make a difference, or what within the civic culture framework could tentatively be termed a subject-participant political culture – that the study explores political participation in Australia.

2.4 *A history of political participation in Australia*

Research into political participation in Australia is scant (McAllister 2009; Passey & Lyons, 2005). What literature does exist focuses on three broad areas: electoral behaviour; social movements; and the qualitative nature of participation. A small number of publications have included brief, quantitative overviews of non-electoral participation, usually in relation to other behaviours and attitudes. Reports of the 2003 and 2005 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes, for instance, includes chapters

on postmaterial values and participation (Western and Tranter, 2005); voluntary association membership and participation (Passey and Lyons, 2005); and trust, efficacy and participation (Bean & Denmark, 2007; Donovan, Denmark, & Bowler, 2007). This study sorts and considers the range of participatory behaviours by four categories: electoral, partisan, communal and protest. Citizens' attitudes towards political systems, institutions and actors are discussed concurrently in as much as they interact with the behaviours; however the preceding section on political culture largely informs the analysis and discussion of the AES data in chapters four, five, six and seven. This format follows Verba, Nie and Kim (1978) in defining four modes of political participation: electoral, campaign, communal and protest.

Electoral participation

The fourth chapter of this study considers electoral participation in Australia. As discussed previously in this chapter, Australia's system of compulsory voting makes voter turnout a less clear measure of political participation than in, for instance, the United States, where declining turnout is an ongoing concern. Figure 2.1 demonstrates that turnout in Australia is consistently high, while the number of citizens who indicate that they would still vote if they were not compelled to do so hovers between 85 and 90 per cent of the population. This latter figure, however, has been questioned, as it defies trends in similar democracies which do not mandate voting. Jackman (1999) cautions that surveys such as the Australian Election Study invariably contain a self-selection bias: the types of randomly-contacted citizens who respond to the survey are probably also more likely to vote without compulsion. Moreover, the imperative to appear socially desirable may lead some respondents to overestimate their propensity to vote voluntarily. The Australians most likely not to vote are more elusive, since they are accordingly less likely to respond to requests to participate (truthfully) in survey research. McAllister (2011, p. 24) disagrees, arguing that the Australian case, where AES data suggest turnout would fall to around 88 per cent, is more comparable with the Netherlands, where compulsory voting was abolished in 1967. There, turnout dropped to 84.1 per cent over subsequent voluntary elections.

Australia's compulsory voting laws have resulted in a growing number of 'missing abstainers': those who ignore the law (and Australian Electoral Commission's campaigns reminding them to enrol) and consequently never appear on the electoral roll, are not punished for failing to vote, and do not exist in official AEC statistics of (enrolled) non-voters (Brent and Jackman, 2007). As many scholars (for example Brent

& Jackman, 2007; Hill, 2002) have noted, Australia's administration of its compulsory voting laws has made evasion particularly easy; the 'compulsory' element of Australia's electoral system is by no means absolute. Further, enrolled voters are compelled to attend a polling booth, but not necessarily to cast a valid vote for any candidate (see Pringle (2012) for a discussion of compulsion). There are therefore three types of abstainers among Australian citizens: non-voters, non-enrollers and deliberate informal voters.

The first category of Australian abstainer – the non-voter – comprises those citizens who have enrolled with the AEC but do not attend a polling booth and cast a vote, whether it be valid or invalid. Under Australia's system of compulsory voting, failure to attend at a polling booth – either on election day, via a postal ballot or at a 'pre-polling booth' in the weeks before the election – is punishable by a small fine. However, many fines are waived on appeal to the AEC. Details on the AEC's decisions to issue an infringement notice and then either pursue prosecution on non-payment or waive the infringement are not made public. The AEC reports that at the 2007 election, 5300 non-voters were sent warning letters rather than being fined in the first instance, due to the characteristics of the voters in question (i.e. first-time voter and newly settled immigrants) (Australian Electoral Commission, 2008). In short, while the financial incentive to attend a polling booth is both clear and strong, it is often avoided, and the AEC shows no great vigour in pursuing non-voters (for example Martin 2013). Nonetheless, the numbers of this type of abstainer is small in the Australian system, particularly when compared to in the United States and other voluntary voting systems. The costs of attending a polling booth appear to outweigh the punishments for non-attendance for most enrolled Australians.

The second category of Australian abstainer is the non-enroller: the citizen who is not enrolled with the Australian Electoral Commission, and consequently does not appear on the official electoral roll and can therefore not be punished for not voting. Non-enrollers can be further broken down by type: apathetic citizens who avoid enrolling at all; and former voters who are removed from the roll upon changing address or becoming uncontactable, and who do not reinstate their enrolment. Brent and Jackman's analysis suggests that the number of former voters who do not reenrol is growing: "it is reasonable to surmise that, no doubt in large part due to technological advances, the AEC is getting better at taking people off the electoral roll" (2007, p. 9).

What cannot be extrapolated from the data are the reasons why former voters do not re-enrol. Brent and Jackman (2007, p. 2) offer a tentative estimate that between September 2002 and October 2006, the Australian population grew by 4.66 per cent, while the number of enrolled voters over that period grew by only 3.12 per cent. The figures are, as the authors admit, not indicative of the fuller picture of enrolment in Australia. Likewise, the number of never-enrolled citizens is elusive, as are their reasons for not enrolling. Quantifying and explaining unenrolled citizens constitute genuine gaps in the literature on Australian political behaviour.

A citizen not wanting to vote in Australia is better off not enrolling at all than enrolling, not voting and being required to pay a (small) fine for failing to comply with the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*. While non-enrolment is punishable with a fine, it is not enforced in practice (Brent and Jackman, 2007). Nonetheless, a small number of enrolled Australians fail to vote at each election. The difference between the number of enrolled abstainers and unenrolled abstainers is evident in Figure 2.3: turnout among enrolled citizens has sat at an average of 94.5 per cent, and turnout amongst the entire voting aged population (enrolled citizens plus unenrolled citizens) more than ten points lower at 84 per cent. The number of enrolled citizens who have not voted in federal elections since 1946 has been relatively stable, averaging 4.9 per cent of the enrolled population. Only in 1955 did fewer than 90 per cent of enrolled citizens turn out to vote.¹⁷

The third type of abstainer in Australian politics is the intentional informal voter. While there is some debate as to whether Australian voters are compelled to cast a valid ballot paper (Pringle, 2012), the reality is that as many as five per cent of all lower house votes cast are informal or invalid. There are several possible reasons why a vote may be invalid. Australia's system of exhaustive preferential voting requires voters to understand a complex electoral system and complete their ballots accordingly, and likely contributes to relatively high numbers of voters attempting and failing to cast a valid vote. McAllister and Makkai (1993) find that these constitute the majority of informal votes cast in Australian elections, and that they are prevalent among ethnic migrants who have little understanding of the preferential voting procedure. The

¹⁷ The 1955 federal election came only one year after the previous election, and was marked by the advent of the anti-Communist Democratic Labor Party (which originated from a split within the Australian Labor Party). The confluence of factors likely explains the relatively low turnout (among enrolled voters and the VAP) in that election.

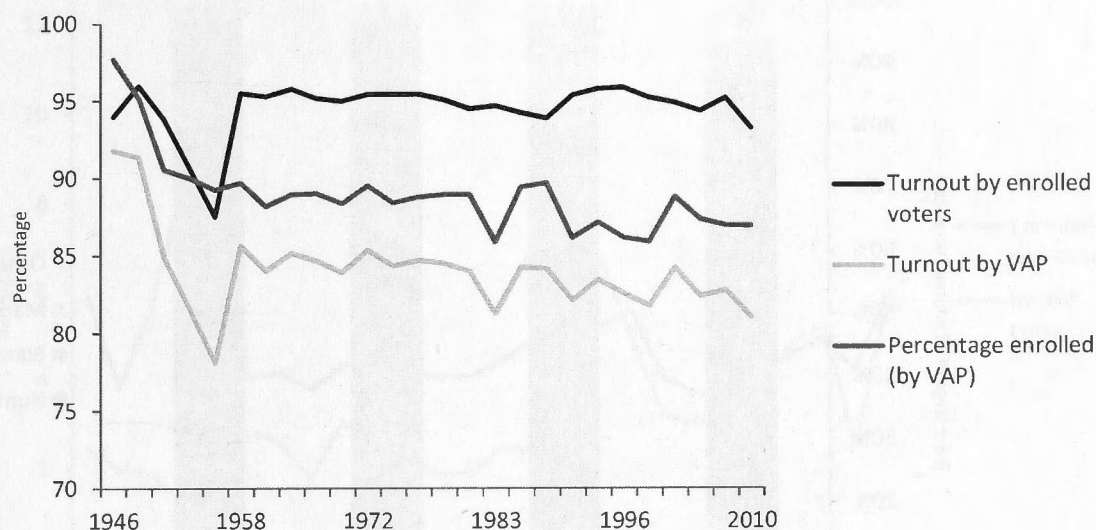


Figure 2.3: Two measures of voter turnout in Australia from 1946 to 2007

Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance voter turnout database (International IDEA, 2012).

second type of informal vote is intentional, wherein a voter either leaves a ballot paper blank or marks it in some way that does not represent an attempt to vote validly. Where a voter has made no attempt to cast a formal vote, it is categorised here as an example of abstention; the voter has deliberately removed himself from an act that is designed to influence governmental decision making, per Verba and Nie's (1972) description of political participation.

To determine the extent to how many informal votes constitute acts of protest (by abstention), Figure 2.4 shows the breakdown of informal votes cast for the House of Representatives at the 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2010 federal elections. All voted spoiled by incorrect numbering, including incomplete and non-sequential numbering and ticks or crosses instead of numbers, are combined under 'numbering'. Marks, comments and other overt signs of protest comprise 'marks/scribbles'. While Hill and Young (2007) maintain that it is impossible to be certain that blank ballot papers are an expression of protest, they are nonetheless an expression of abstention, with the voter making no effort to express a preference for any candidate. Consequently, the combined number

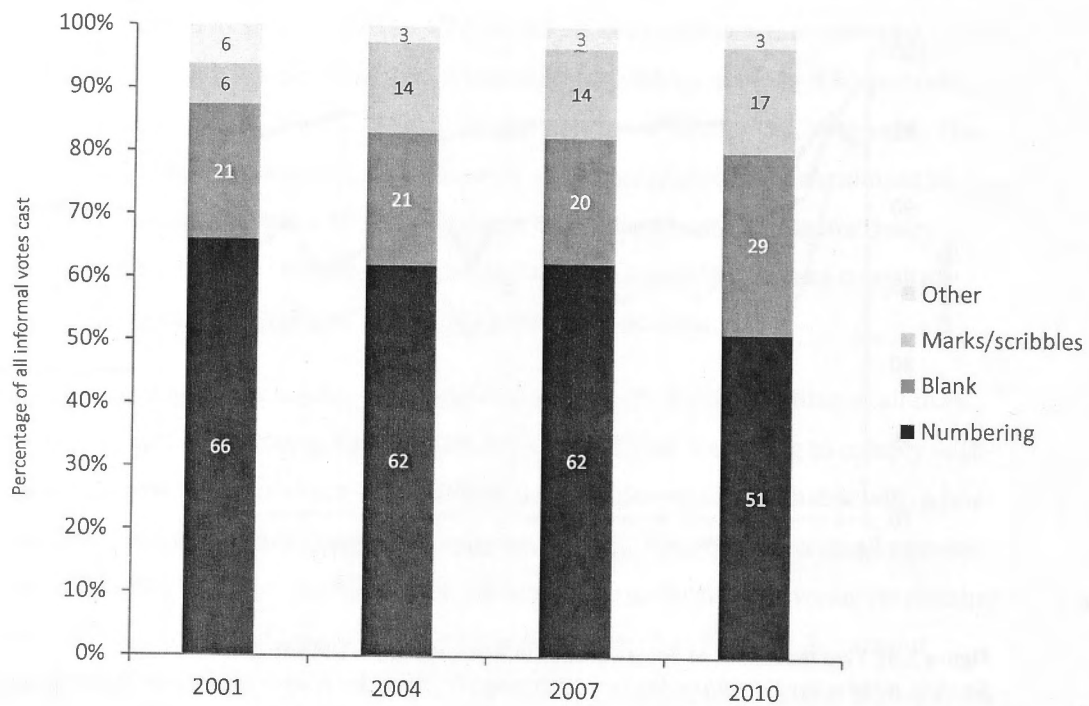


Figure 2.4: Breakdown of informal votes by category at 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2010 Federal Elections
 Source: Australian Electoral Commission, 2011.

of blank and marked votes is used to represent the total number of enrolled abstainers here. Since 2001, the percentage of abstainers among informal voters has increased from less than 30 per cent to approximately 46 per cent in 2010.

Further, International IDEA data from Australian elections suggest that a strong relationship ($r=.69$, $p=.000$) exists between the percentage of enrolled citizens who do not turn out to vote and the percentage of informal votes cast in elections since 1946 (International IDEA, 2012). That relationship is evident in Figure 2.5. Two peaks and three troughs are also notable. The 1955 spike in abstention due to the split in the Australian Labor Party, formation of the new anti-Communist Democratic Labor Party and short time following the previous (1954) election. The spike at the 1984 in informal votes is a result of electoral reform that changed the procedure for completing Senate ballot papers, confusing voters and leading to spoiled ballots. On the other hand, the 2007 trough in abstention came at the end of the Liberal Party/Nationals

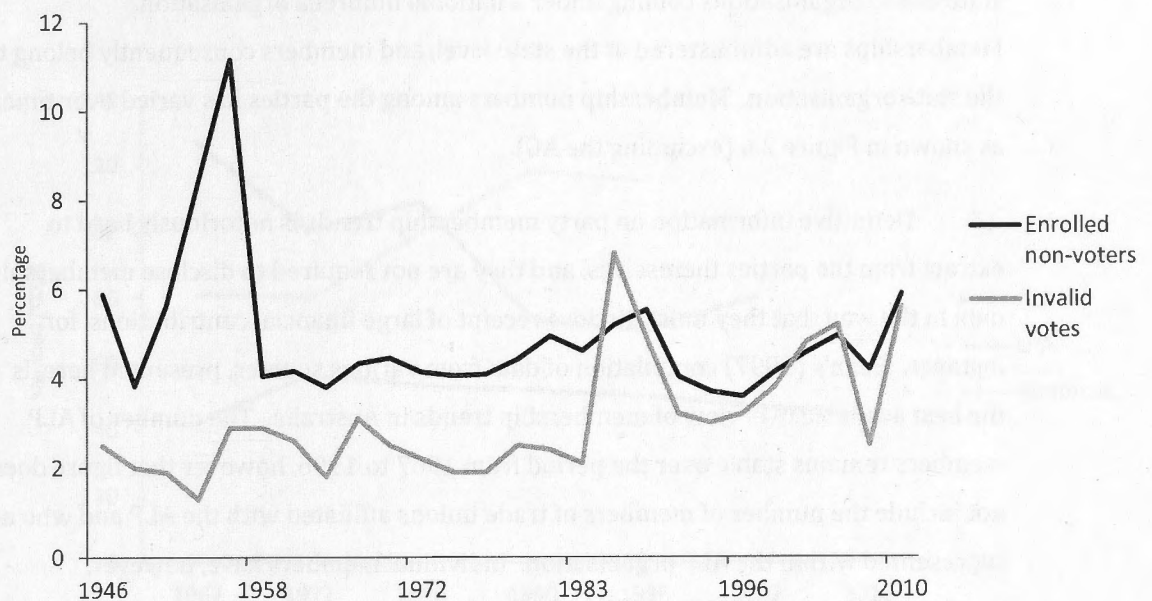


Figure 2.5: Trends in abstention among enrolled voters and informal votes cast from 1946 to 2010.
Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance voter turnout database online (International IDEA, 2012).

coalition’s 11-year government and marked the election of a new, revitalised Labor government (Bean & McAllister, 2009). It follows that contextual factors work to discourage voting, which manifests as either not turning out or attending but intentionally spoiling the ballot.

The major parties discussed in this study are the ALP, LPA, the Nationals, and AG. They are characterised as ‘major’ by being the only parties represented in the federal House of Representatives (i.e. the lower house) at the 2010 election, from when the data used here were collected. The AG would not ordinarily be considered a major party, however they were an early adopter of internet technology and so is included for the purpose of comparison. It also broadens the scope beyond the three more established parties. The ALP had 71 members elected in 2010, the LPA 64,¹⁸ the Nationals 6 and the AG one, with the ALP forming government in coalition with the AG

¹⁸ The Liberal Party of Australia total here includes seats won by candidates registered under the Liberal National Party (LNP) name. The LNP is an amalgam of the Queensland-based divisions of the LPA and Nationals. LNP candidates campaign as members of the LNP, and if elected to the federal parliament, choose whether they will join the LPA or Nationals caucus.

and two independent members. Each of the parties has a federalist structure, with state-based organisations coming under a national umbrella organisation.

Memberships are administered at the state level, and members consequently belong to the state organisation. Membership numbers among the parties has varied over time, as shown in Figure 2.6 (excluding the AG).

Definitive information on party membership trends is notoriously hard to extract from the parties themselves, and they are not required to disclose membership data in the way that they must disclose receipt of large financial contributions, for instance. Bean's (1997) compilation of data from various sources, presented here, is the best available overview of membership trends in Australia. The number of ALP members remains stable over the period from 1967 to 1996, however that figure does not include the number of members of trade unions affiliated with the ALP and who are represented within the ALP organisation. Individual members have, however, numbered between 42,000 and 57,000 over the 30 years. The coalition of the LPA and Nationals has maintained a remarkably stable number of members. However, within the coalition the LPA has seen a marked decline in members and the Nationals a concurrent increase. There is no obvious reason for this; however there appears to be a rural bias among other forms of participation in Australia, including voting (see for example Sheppard, 2012).

Where Jaensch et. al (2004) describe declining partisan activity as a global trend, McAllister (2011) describes a particularly Australian phenomenon. The crucial difference between Australia and like nations is, again, compulsory voting: parties in the United States or example mobilise citizens to vote – hoping that mobilising voters will also attract their support – and instrumental to that process is providing resources to local branches of the party organisation which can then forge relationships with potential voters. Table 2.1 shows rates of political party membership as a percentage of population among a range of advanced democracies, from a collection of sources. Those data have two notable features: most countries have experienced a decline in rates of party membership, including Australia, and that Australia has a comparatively low rate of party membership. There is a range of explanations for variation in party membership rates, including the age of a democracy, political culture and electoral system, but what is clear is that Australians are comparatively uninterested in joining a party. Australians participate in other campaign activities to varying degrees. Comparative data show that the number of Australians attending party meetings and

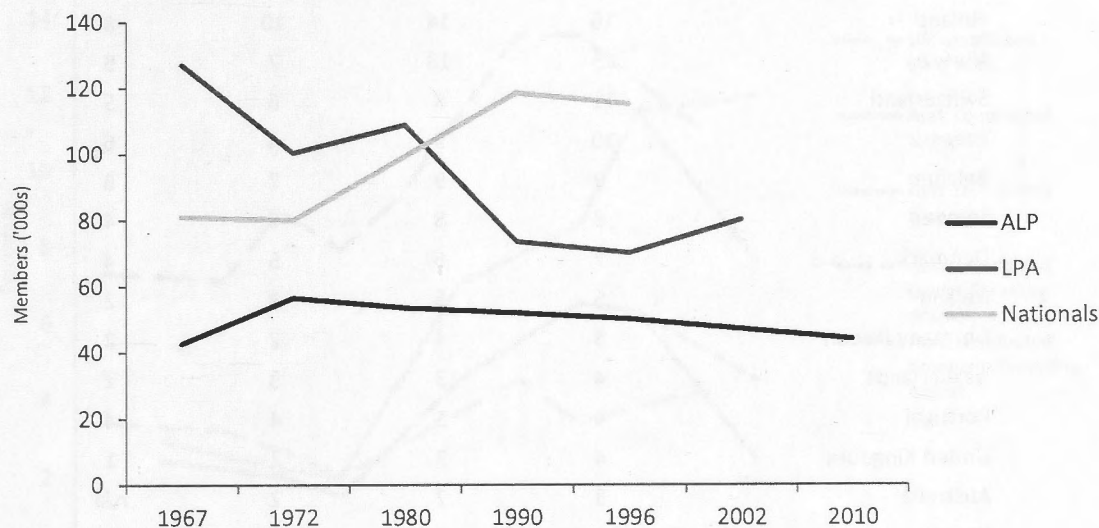


Figure 2.6: Membership of political parties in Australia, 1967 to 1996

Source: Bean, 1997; Jaensch, Brent, & Bowden, 2004; Rudd, 2013

rallies or donating money to parties or candidates is much lower than in the United States. In 2008, 10 per cent of US citizens (compared with five per cent of Australians in 2010) attended a political meeting and 13 per cent (compared with 1.9 per cent of Australians in 2010) donated money to a party or candidate (McAllister, 2011, p. 99).

Comparing US and Australian data reveals some notable differences between the countries (Figure 2.7). First, American citizens are more likely to contribute money than to volunteer for a party or candidate (a contribution of time) during an election campaign. Australians are more likely to contribute time than money. This likely reflects the large amounts of money spent on American campaigns compared with Australia and the subsequent focus on attracting donations. Second, the number of Australians contributing time has increased dramatically since 1998, compared with stability in the US over the same period. Finally, over the long term, both activities have seen fairly stable popularity in both countries, save the recent decline in contributions of money in Australia (which is stabilised somewhat by the addition of online donations). Overall, Australians' campaign participation has trended similarly

Table 2.1: Political party membership as percentage of population in a range of European countries and Australia, 1980 to 2008

	1980	1990	1999	2008
Austria	29	24	18	17
Finland	16	14	10	8
Norway	15	13	7	5
Switzerland	11	8	6	5
Italy	10	9	4	6
Belgium	9	9	7	6
Sweden	8	8	6	4
Denmark	7	6	5	4
Ireland	5	5	3	2
Germany (West)	5	4	2	2
Netherlands	4	3	3	2
Portugal	4	5	4	4
United Kingdom	4	3	2	1
Australia	3	2	2	n/a
Greece	3	6	7	7
Spain	1	2	3	4
Mean	9	8	6	5

Sources: Bean, 1997; Mair & van Biezen, 2001; van Biezen, Mair, & Poguntke, 2012

to that of the United States. They appear unwilling to take the next step of actually joining a political party, however.

Communal participation

Communal participation comprises contacting a government official to express views and working with others who share a view to express that view. This conceptualisation of communal participation is based on Verba and Nie's (1972) study, but other major studies of participation (for instance Verba et al., 1978, 1995) use similar measures. Despite being an ostensibly solo activity, an individual contacting a government official to express his view tends to seek a collective outcome, rather than an outcome which will specifically and only benefit themselves (Verba and Nie, 1972). The different types of political contacting are described in Chapter 6. Contacting and working with others differ from other forms of non-partisan participation such as protest or petition signing by being generally non-confrontational. More

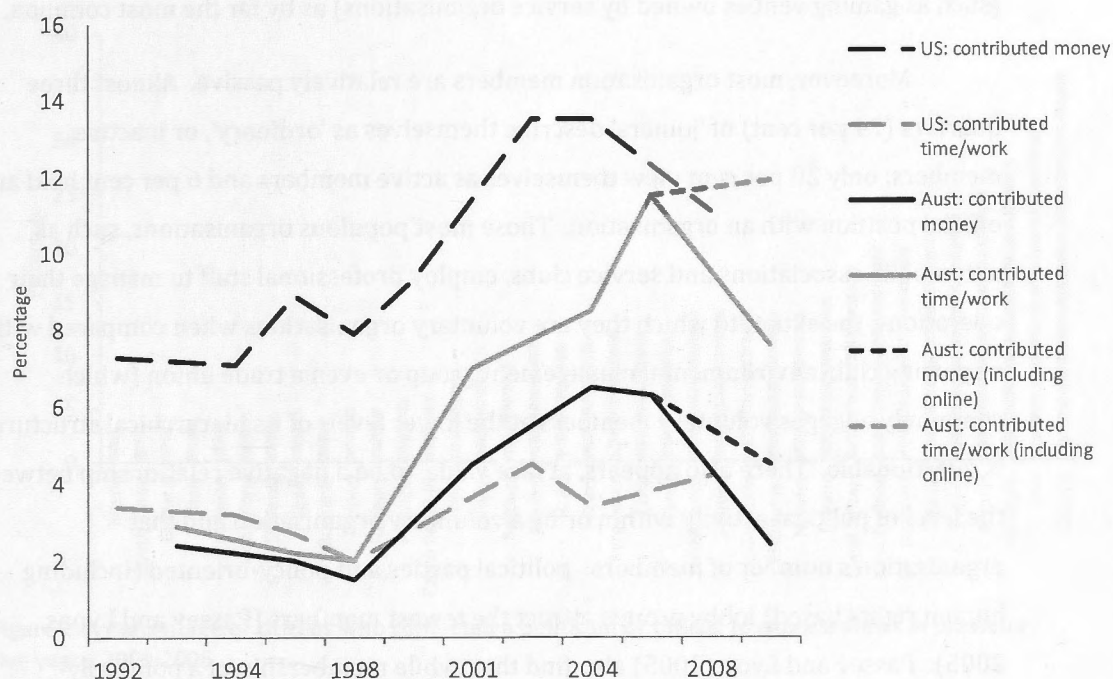


Figure 2.7: Trends in contributions of money and time during (presidential and parliamentary) election campaigns as a proportion of the population, US and Australia, 1992 to 2008

Source: 1993, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2010 Australian Election Studies; American National Election Study cumulative file, 1992-2008 (American National Election Studies, 2010; Bean et al., 2007, 2004, 1998; Gibson et al., 2001; Jones et al., 1996, 1993; McAllister et al., 2010a)

Questions (ANES): During an election year people are often asked to make a contribution to support campaigns. Did you give money to a political party during this election year? Did you give money to an individual candidate running for public office? Did you do any {other} work for one of the parties or candidates? Did you wear a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on your car, or place a sign in your window or in front of your house?

confrontational forms of participation are discussed later in this section.

The most comprehensive empirical analysis of communal participation in Australia draws on cross-sectional Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (ASSA) data, and finds that “Australia is a nation of joiners” (Passey and Lyons, 2005, p. 66). Earlier comparative research concurs, finding that, of 15 nations, only American, Dutch and Norwegian citizens were more likely to join a voluntary association (Curtis et al., 1992). The ASSA analysis ranks membership of consumer and automobile associations (the latter providing a road-side mechanical assistance service, with advocacy on behalf of

drivers (arguably a secondary service) and sporting organisations or service clubs (such as gaming venues owned by service organisations) as by far the most common.

Moreover, most organisation members are relatively passive. Almost three quarters (74 per cent) of 'joiners' describe themselves as 'ordinary', or inactive, members; only 20 per cent view themselves as active members and 6 per cent hold an official position with an organisation. Those most populous organisations, such as automobile associations and service clubs, employ professional staff to manage their operations; the extent to which they are voluntary organisations when compared with a sporting club, environmental management group or even a trade union (which commonly engages voluntary members at the lower levels of its hierarchical structure) is questionable. There also appears, at face value, to be a negative relationship between the level of political activity within or by a voluntary organisation and that organisation's number of members: political parties and policy-oriented (including human rights based) lobby groups attract the fewest members (Passey and Lyons, 2005). Passey and Lyon (2005) also find that, while membership of a politically-oriented organisation is a strong predictor of other forms of political behaviour, even an inactive member of an automobile association is more likely than a non-member to be politically active.

Cross-sectional data from the Comparative Survey of Electoral Systems survey (2007) show that Australians are more likely to contact government officials and work with like others to express their views than citizens of many other nations (Figure 2.8).¹⁹ There are several probable explanations for this. Primarily, the countries with the three highest rates of citizens contacting officials in the previous five years – Canada, the US and Australia – have federal systems of government, with at least two levels of government and a consequently high number of politicians per capita. The division of policy responsibility between state and federal level governments increases the number of points of contact available to citizens with opinions or concerns. It is no great surprise that federal countries such as Australia have high rates of contacting among citizens.

Federalism does not explain the different rates of citizens working together to express their views. Accordingly, the most communally active nations are not

¹⁹ CSES module 2 data are used here as the core survey consisted of comparative questions on contacting and working with like others; these same questions have been asked by the AES since 2001. The CSES data therefore provide the best benchmark against which to measure Australia's rate of communal participation.

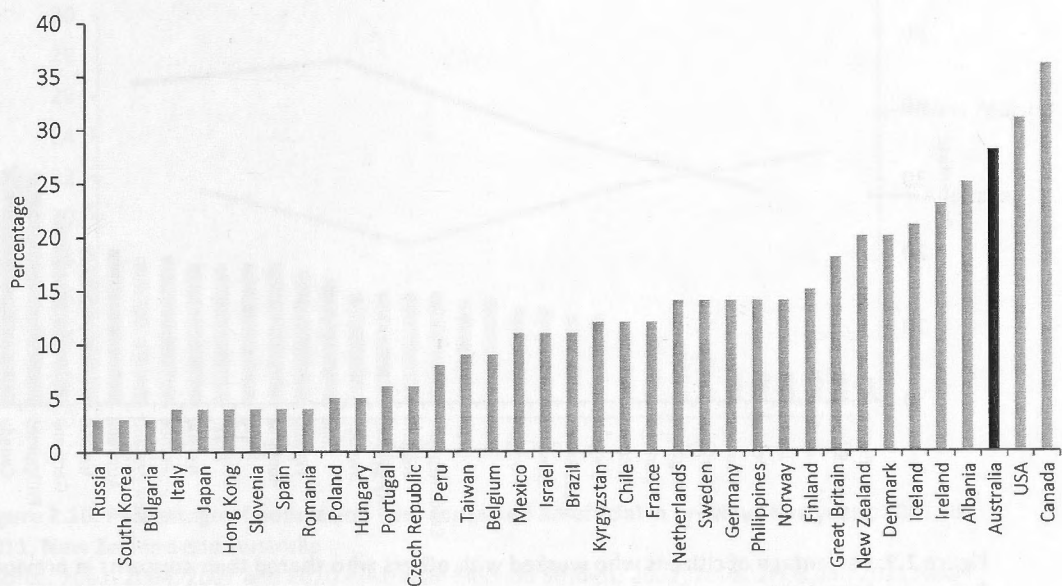


Figure 2.8: Percentage of citizens who contacted a politician or official to express views in previous five years, 2005-2006

Source: The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (2007)

Question: Over the past five years or so, have you done any of the following things to express your views about something the government should or should not be doing? (Have you) contacted a politician or government official either in person, or in writing, or some other way?

federations. In Figure 2.9, the US ranks behind Albania, and Canada by Denmark and Norway. Australia is still further down the table; ninth among the countries included in the CSES dataset. Curtis, Grabb and Baer (1992) observe the high rates of association membership among relatively ‘new’ Anglo nations such as Australia and the US, which as Passey and Lyons (2005) show, is a pathway to some forms of political (including communal) participation. There are likely also specific political culture effects on the observed rates of communal work. The US, for example, has high rates of religious observance as well as an established sector of professional associations, which may combine to produce high rates of participation (Curtis et al., 1992). Certainly, there is nothing particularly remarkable about Australia’s standing among the nations presented in Figure 2.9.

Over time, the rate of communal participation in Australia compares closely with its nearest neighbour, New Zealand. Election studies in both countries began asking respondents about contacting and working with others in the early 2000s,

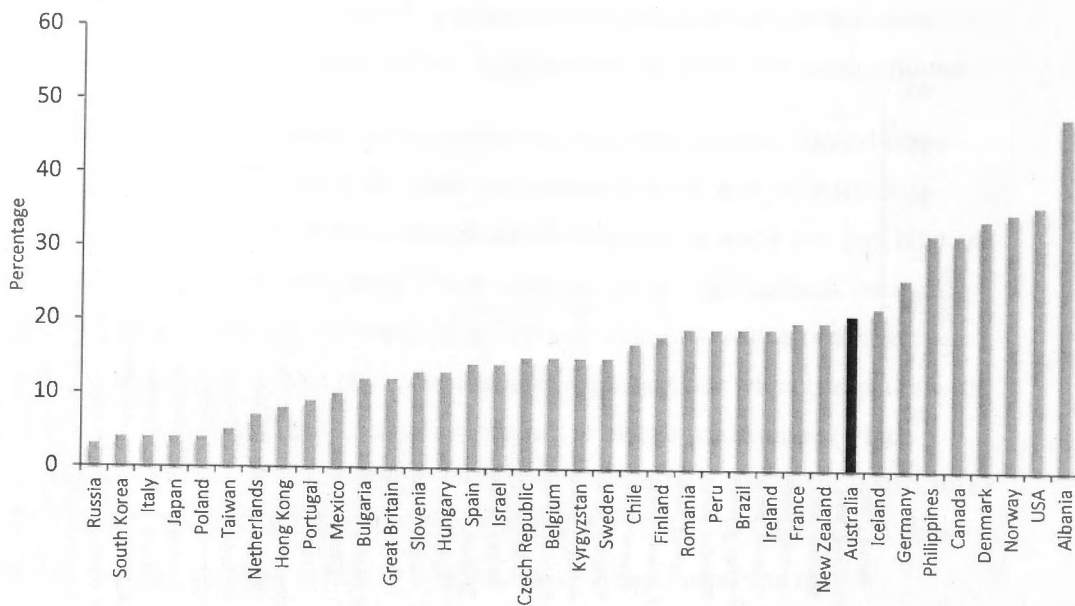


Figure 2.9: Percentage of citizens who worked with others who shared their concerns in previous five years, 2005-2006

Source: The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (2007)

Question: Over the past five years or so, have you done any of the following things to express your views about something the government should or should not be doing? (Have you) worked together with people who shared the same concern?

providing a useful comparative dataset. Institutionally, the countries differ in several ways: Australia has compulsory voting, New Zealand has voluntary voting; Australia has a bicameral federal parliament, New Zealand has a unicameral, unitary parliament;

Australia has an alternative vote, single member electoral system in its lower house, while New Zealand has a highly proportional, mixed member electoral system. They do share a Westminster-based parliamentary system as well as a history of English settlement. They also share similar trends in communal participation. It would stand to reason that Australia has higher rates of contacting, given the effects of federalism discussed above. Fewer New Zealand citizens (Figure 2.10) report contacting officials to express their views, although that trend was reversed between 2008 and 2010. The number of Australians working with like others (Figure 2.11) decreased between the 2007 and 2010 elections, but is otherwise stable between 20 and 25 per cent of the population. New Zealand's rate of participation is likewise stable, but lower at between 17 and 22 per cent of the population. In terms of at least recent trends, Australia appears to be tracking similarly to New Zealand. Future study

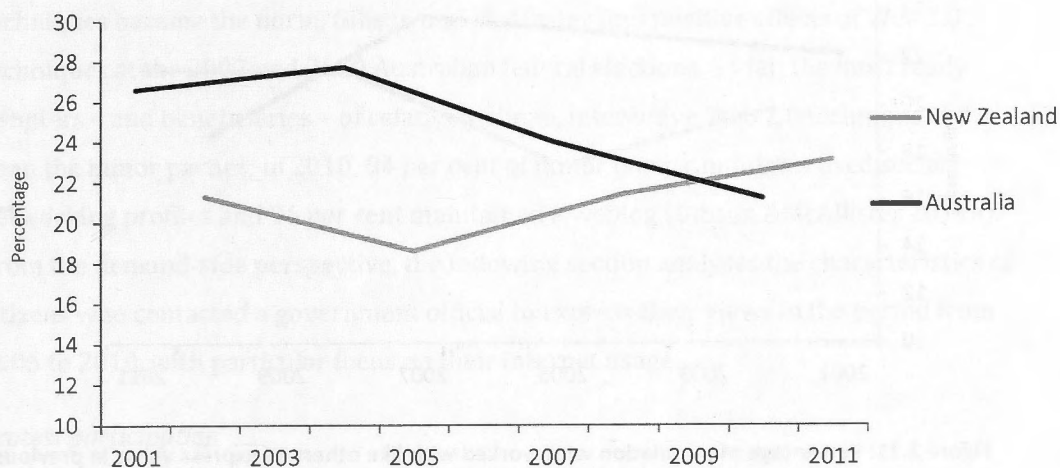


Figure 2.10: Percentage of population who contacted an official in previous five years, 2001 to 2011, New Zealand and Australia

Source: 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2010 Australian Election Studies; 2002, 2005, 2008 and 2011 New Zealand Election Studies (Bean et al., 2001, 2004, 2007; McAllister et al., 2010; Vowles, Banducci, Karp, Aimer, & Miller, 2002; Vowles, Banducci, Karp, Miller, & Sullivan, 2005; Vowles et al., 2008; Vowles, Cotterell, Miller, & Curtin, 2011).

Question (NZES): There are various forms of political action that people take to express their views about something the government should or should not do. For each one, have you: Contacted a politician or government official in person, in writing, or other way.

will confirm whether or not recent changes in rates of contacting are long term phenomena or short term responses to political stimuli.

The lack of data on political contacting in Australia prior to 2001 makes it difficult to determine whether the internet has affected the amount of overall correspondence to officials. Gibson, Lusoli and Ward's (2008) study of Australian citizens finds a gap between what constituents say they want with regard to online communications with their representatives, and the rate at which they have taken up those options:

"...on-line contacting in Australia is not currently leading to any significant reconnection or even possibly deepening of existing connections citizens have to their representatives and representative institutions. Contacting one's MP on-line is largely a result of having done so already and being a high user of the Internet" (2008, p. 128).

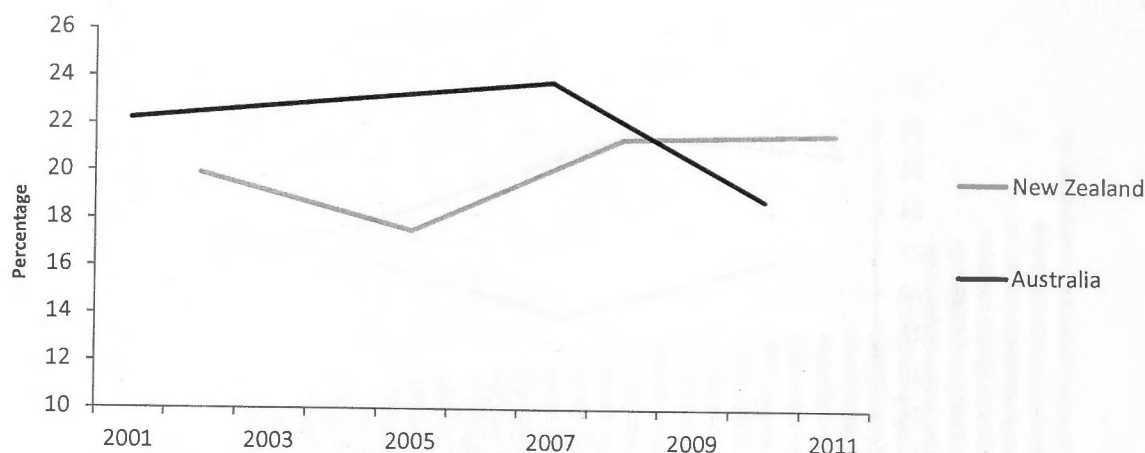


Figure 2.11: Percentage of population who worked with like others to express views in previous five years, 2001 to 2011, New Zealand and Australia

Source: 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2010 Australian Election Studies; 2002, 2005, 2008 and 2011 New Zealand Election Studies (Bean et al., 2001, 2004, 2007; McAllister et al., 2010; Vowles, Banducci, Karp, Aimer, & Miller, 2002; Vowles, Banducci, Karp, Miller, & Sullivan, 2005; Vowles et al., 2008; Vowles, Cotterell, Miller, & Curtin, 2011.)

Question (NZES): There are various forms of political action that people take to express their views about something the government should or should not do. For each one, have you: Work together with people who shared the same concern.

With little evidence available, either from Australia or internationally, it seems reasonable to expect that the diffusion of internet access to date has had little effect on the total number of citizens contacting government officials to express their views. It is also important to note that, as with the diffusion of access throughout the general population, it took Australian representatives some time to embrace the internet. For example, only 54 per cent of MPs had a working website in 2005 (Ward et al., 2007).

In a series of studies, Gibson and McAllister (2006; 2009; 2011a; 2011b) have explored Australian representatives and candidates' use of online campaign techniques in terms of their electoral outcomes. At the 2001 election, 37 per cent of candidates maintained a personal campaign website, climbing only slightly to 39 per cent at the 2004 election (Gibson & McAllister 2006). At the 2007 election, 64 per cent of major party candidates maintained a personal website, while 42 per cent also maintained social networking profiles (Gibson & McAllister 2009). By the 2010 election, those figures had risen to 73 per cent and 68 per cent respectively (Gibson & McAllister 2011a).

Noting that early electoral gains from online campaign presences, including party and candidate websites, and email newsletters, have diminished as these

techniques became the norm, Gibson and McAllister find positive effects of Web 2.0 techniques at the 2007 and 2010 Australian federal elections. So far, the most ready adopters – and beneficiaries – of relatively cheap, interactive Web 2.0 techniques have been the minor parties; in 2010, 84 per cent of minor party candidates used social networking profiles and 96 per cent maintained a weblog (Gibson & McAllister 2011a). From the demand-side perspective, the following section analyses the characteristics of citizens who contacted a government official to express their views in the period from 2005 to 2010, with particular focus on their internet usage.

Protest participation

While communal forms of participation are generally non-confrontational – in that they do not usually turn violent or engage directly with opposing forces, including police – protest participation often is. Communal and protest participation are further differentiated by generational trends: communal participation is in decline while protest participation has increased in popularity since the 1970s (Dalton, 2008a, 2008b). This study measures protest as signing a petition (either offline or online) and joining in a march or demonstration. Other measures of protest not discussed at length here include boycotting (or buying) a consumer product, joining a legal or illegal strike and occupying a building or public place. Petition signing straddles aspects of communal and protest participation, but is discussed as a measure of protest here in line with Dalton's (2008a) 'good citizen' study. Chapter 7 explores the characteristics of protest participation in more detail. First, however, this section examines the history of protest in Australia.

There has been little systematic research on protest in Australia. Bean's (1991) analysis of Australian data shows that participation in communal and partisan acts has a causal effect on participation in both 'low-level' and radical acts of protest, but also finds that socioeconomic factors, particularly education, have little direct effect on protest participation. Vromen (2003a) finds significant associations between educational attainment and participation in consumer boycotts – an act of protest not studied here – and attendance at rallies. She also finds that rally attendees are more likely to live in cities than not, which stands to reason as the overall time of attendance is lower when travel is minimal. Two publicly available datasets (the Australian Electoral Study and the World Values Survey) contain data on protest participation in Australia, which are largely unresearched.

As an advanced liberal democracy, Australians have perhaps little reason to protest but the freedom to do so if they wish. Due to that freedom from sanctions for protesting, Dalton et al. find

“... striking evidence that a nation’s economic and political conditions strongly influence that aggregate levels of protest. It is immediately apparent that protest is more common in advanced industrial democracies... the ten highest-ranking nations are all advanced industrial democracies – this is hardly evidence of protest as a tool of a poor and disenfranchised public” (2010, p. 13).

Accordingly, Australia’s relative economic prosperity and socio-political freedoms see the country as being among the leaders in mean protest activities per capita: seventh among 79 nations in Dalton et al.’s (2010) analysis of World Values Survey data. Table 2.2 presents frequency data on petition signing from the World Values Survey Waves 1 to 5, comprising the period from 1981 to 2005.²⁰ Again, Australia is near the top of the table, with just less than 80 per cent of the population reporting having signed a petition in the five years prior to the Wave 5 survey (conducted in 2005). Only New Zealand and Switzerland report higher rates of petition signing. Moreover, the rates reported here are exceptionally high: since 1990 (i.e. Wave 3) more than 78 per cent of voting age Australians have signed a petition. That number is higher than the current number of internet users and higher than the voting age population turnout in recent federal elections in Australia. Petition signing is almost ubiquitous among the population.

The number of demonstrators in Australia – citizens who have attended a lawful demonstration – is markedly lower, ranging from 12 per cent in the 1981 survey to 22 per cent of the population in 2005. Here Australia sits in sixth place among 221 countries, and again the countries at the top of the table are advanced democracies. The split between advanced democracies and authoritarian regimes or developing democracies evident in Table 2.3 is not as clear in Table 2.2. For instance there is a nominal difference of 79 percentage points between petition signing in New Zealand and Russia in the Wave 5 data, but only 5 points difference between rates of lawful demonstration in those countries. Likewise, the rate of petition signing in Australia is 50 points above the mean of all countries reported in Table 2.2, and only 5 points above the mean rate of lawful demonstration in Table 2.3. This is in part due to

²⁰ Countries are included in this analysis on the basis of available data, with at least two data points the minimum for inclusion.

Table 2.2: Percentage of population who signed a petition in previous five years, WVS countries between 1981 and 2005

	Wave 1 1981-84	Wave 2 1989-93	Wave 3 1994-99	Wave 4 1999-2004	Wave 5 2005-08
New Zealand			91		87
Switzerland		63	68		80
Australia	70	50	79		80
Sweden			72	87	79
United States			71	81	74
Canada				74	73
Norway			65		69
Great Britain			58		68
Japan	48	62	55	63	60
Brazil			47		56
Finland	30		39		50
Germany			62		47
South Korea	20	42	40	52	34
Argentina	34	22	31	23	32
Serbia			19	27	30
Uruguay			36		30
India		25	27	29	29
Peru			21	22	25
Poland		14	20		24
Spain		19	22	26	23
Mexico	10	35	32	19	21
Chile		23	17	20	19
South Africa	20	34	19	27	15
Turkey		14	20	16	13
Russia		30	11		8
Mean score	33	31	30	25	30

Blank cells represent data not collected by WVS.

Source: World Values Survey cumulative file, Wave 1-5 (World Values Survey Association 2009)

Question: Waves 1-4: Now I'd like you to look at this card. I'm going to read out some different forms of political action that people can take, and I'd like you to tell me, for each one, whether you have actually done any of these things, whether you might do it or would never, under any circumstances, do it. Wave 5: Have you or have you not done any of these activities in the last five years? Signing a petition.

Table 2.3: Percentage of population who participated in a lawful demonstration in previous five years, WVS countries between 1981 and 2008

	Wave 1 1981-84	Wave 2 1989-93	Wave 3 1994-99	Wave 4 1999-2004	Wave 5 2005-08
Spain		26	22	26	36
Sweden			30	36	31
Norway			26		29
Switzerland		16	17		28
Serbia			8	22	22
Australia	12		18		22
New Zealand			21		21
Argentina	23	15	16	13	20
India		17	13	23	19
Moldova			8	18	18
Chile		30	15	16	18
Mexico	9	22	11	4	16
Russia		33	21		15
United States			16	21	15
South Africa	8	15	11	14	15
South Korea	7	20	15	28	11
Poland		12	12		11
Finland	14		13		10
Japan	9	13	10	13	10
Turkey		6	9	8	6
Jordan				3	4
Mean score	12	19	15	14	17

Blank cells represent data not collected by WVS.

Source: World Values Survey cumulative file, Wave 1-5 (World Values Survey Association 2009)

Question: Now I'd like you to look at this card. I'm going to read out some different forms of political action that people can take, and I'd like you to tell me, for each one, whether you have actually done any of these things, whether you might do it or would never, under any circumstances, do it.
Attending lawful demonstrations.

the smaller distribution of rates of protesting, but also to a weaker relationship between democracy and lawful demonstration. Nonetheless, Australia still has high rates of protestors, higher than New Zealand (in 2005), the United States and Japan.

Having established that Australia has a higher proportion of demonstrators and petition signers compared to other WVS countries, Figure 2.12 shows recent trends in those behaviours. Data from the AES date back to 2001 for protest or march attendance, and only to 2004 for petition signing. Importantly, e-petition signing is measured separately. The trends over that short period are fairly stable, although written petition signing falls by 11.2 points between 2004 and 2010. In the same

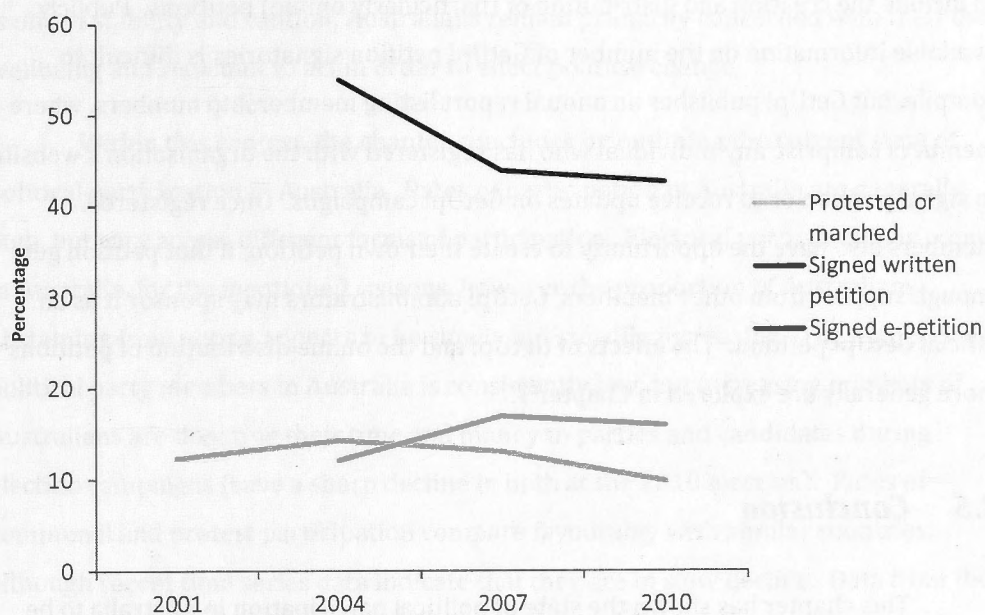


Figure 2.12: Percentage of Australian population who participated in protest activity in previous five years, 2001 to 2010

Source: 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2010 Australian Election Studies (Bean et al., 2001, 2004, 2007; McAllister et al., 2010)

period e-petition signing increases slightly, from 12.1 per cent of the population to 2004 to 15.9 per cent in 2010. This coincides with the continuing diffusion of internet access throughout Australia, which should explain at least part of that increase. As more Australians begin to use the internet, their exposure to e-petitions will rise accordingly. Increased internet use across the population is also likely to lead to more e-petitions being created and distributed. Likewise, the decrease in written petition signing suggests that creators are choosing to circulate their petitions online rather than offline. In other words, the supply of petitions has led the demand online, and not the other way around.

The (albeit small) increase in e-petition signing since 2004 has likely been prompted one particular event in Australian civic life. Advocacy group, GetUp! was formed in 2005 to promote progressive public policy by helping citizens to contact

government representatives via email and letter.²¹ GetUp's activities then broadened to include the creation and distribution of (particularly online) petitions. Publicly available information on the number of GetUp! petition signatories is difficult to compile, but GetUp! publishes an annual report listing membership numbers, where members comprise any individual who has registered with the organisation's website to sign a petition or to receive updates on GetUp! campaigns. Once registered, members also have the opportunity to create their own petition; if that petition gets enough support from other members, GetUp! administrators may sponsor it as an official GetUp! petition. The effects of GetUp! and the online distribution of petitions more generally are explored in Chapter 7.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown the state of political participation in Australia to be relatively healthy. First, the country's political institutions facilitate participation in several ways. The system of federal government has resulted in a high number of political representatives among the population, at the local, state and national levels of government. The electoral system with its combination of alternative vote and single transferable vote counting methods leads to a high degree of proportionality, reducing wasted votes and increasing the benefits of voting. Most importantly, compulsory voting laws maintain a high level of voter turnout. Compulsory voting is also thought to have the flow-on effects of stimulating political interest, party identification and political stability more generally. Moreover, Australian citizens are overwhelmingly supportive of compulsory voting laws, indicating high levels of turnout would be sustained was the compulsion removed.

Australia's political culture is a factor of its institutional arrangements. Accordingly, the Australian electorate demonstrates similar features to those institutions: its citizens have been described as 'subject-participant', with little motivation to agitate or change the existing order (Emy, 1972). They have elsewhere been described as possessing a "distinctive utilitarian" outlook towards their role in political life (Mackerras and McAllister, 1999). Analysis has found that instrumental, materialist attitudes – as opposed to more expressive, postmaterialist values – predominate among Australians (Western and Tranter, 2005). The consistent message

²¹ GetUp! was founded by two Australian citizens who modelled the website and organisation on *MoveOn.org*, an American online progressive advocacy group.

is one of stability and caution; Australians remain primarily concerned with their own wellbeing and reluctant to act in order to effect political change.

Within this context, the chapter concludes by outlining the current state of political participation in Australia. Rates of participation in Australia are generally high, but vary across different forms of participation. Electoral participation is popular in Australia, for the mentioned reasons, however the proportion of Australians abstaining from voting appears to be slowly but steadily increasing. The number of political party members in Australia is consistently low, but increasing numbers of Australians are donating their time and money to parties and candidates during election campaigns (save a sharp decline in both at the 2010 election). Rates of communal and protest participation compare favourably with similar countries, although recent time series data indicate that they are in slow decline. Data from the AES show some early increases in the number of Australians participating online, in accordance with increasing rates of internet use across the country.

Finally, the online campaigning is becoming a regular feature of Australian political campaigns, among both major and minor parties (2006; 2009; 2011a; 2011b). Any electoral advantage that was once possible from having an online presence is decreasing, as voters come to expect campaign information to be available online. Moreover, the use of Web 2.0 techniques, such as weblogs and social networking profiles, is almost ubiquitous among minor party candidates, pointing to their increasing use in future campaigns in Australia. The following chapter looks at Australians' internet use in greater depth, from the perspective of the "demand" side. Australians have shown their willingness to adopt the internet, with swift diffusion of access leading to high current rates of usage. The chapter looks also at what Australian users do online, with particular reference to their political browsing, internet-related skills and the time they spend online, *vis a vis* doing other, offline activities. It is well to show that Australia's political elites are using the internet, but in this case it is as important that citizens are using it, too.

Chapter 3 – Internet use and civic voluntarism

3.1 Introduction

Since the introduction of dial-up internet access in the 1990s, Australians have been avid adopters of internet technology. Three in four Australians now have access to the internet at home, work or via their mobile phones, making them almost permanently connected to the World Wide Web (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). The emergence of Web 2.0 applications, including social networking, collaboration and peer-to-peer information sharing makes for a communications medium drastically different from anything seen previously. The interactivity of the internet is vastly different to broadcast television radio and mass distribution newspapers and magazines. The implications for politics are substantial, particularly with regard to how people become interested in politics, inform themselves about current issues, discuss events and participate in political life (Kruikemeier et al., 2013). The internet allows for faster, cheaper and easier political participation, opening politics up to citizens previously deterred by the high costs of entry (Krueger, 2002).

This chapter has two broad focuses: the first explores who uses the internet in Australia, including the history of internet diffusion; the second situates internet use within the theory of political participation, particularly the civic voluntarism model. Section 3.2 details the rise of internet use in Australia and globally, comparing the Australian case with like countries. Next, Section 3.3 compares the characteristics of Australian internet users and non-users, focusing on socioeconomic and demographic biases differences. Section 3.4 considers the likely effects of internet use on participation, per the civic voluntarism model (Verba et al., 1995). The internet has the potential to both increase an individual's free time, by making tasks including political participation easier and faster to complete, as well as reduce his free time, by taking up time that could be spent on offline activities (Nie, 2001). Internet use is not likely to affect an individual's income or wealth directly, but online forms of participation should require less money to engage in than offline equivalents (Krueger, 2002). Where civic skills give an individual the competence and confidence to participate, the

online equivalent – proficiency in using the internet, or ‘internet skills’ – is expected to have the same effect on e-participation (Best & Krueger 2005; Anduiza et al. 2010). In sum, it is expected that internet use makes it easier for Australians to participate in both offline and online forms of participation by mediating the effects of the civic voluntarism model. Finally, the chapter summarises the implications for the civic voluntarism model and its effects on participation in Australia.

3.2 Internet use in Australia and globally

Internet use has expanded rapidly since the development of the World Wide Web (WWW) in the early 1990s, both in terms of numbers of users and the time they spend online. As the medium has transitioned from its original ‘read-only’ form to the interactive, open-source technologies associated with Web 2.0, it has played a growing role in everyday social activities and transactions – from the mechanics of family and peer relationships to online shopping, banking and news consumption – among an increasing number of citizens internationally. In 2013 however, internet use is not yet ubiquitous. This section discusses the advent of internet use globally through the lens of the ‘digital divide’: those characteristics that distinguish internet users from non-users, a contemporary form of information ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’. The digital divide, according to Norris (2001a), comprises three aspects:

“The *global divide* refers to the emergence of Internet access between industrialized and developing societies. The *social divide* concerns the gap between information rich and poor in each nation. And finally within the online community, the *democratic divide* signifies the difference between those who do, and do not, use the panoply of digital resources to engage, mobilize, and participate in public life (p. 4; emphasis in original).”

Understanding how internet use was developed in the 1990s and proliferated during the first decade of the 21st century helps to explain how the digital divide has emerged and why it persists.

The first internet browser software, enabling users to access material on the WWW at home (including a network of information previously accessible only to computer scientists and academics) was released in 1991 (Norris, 2001a). The earliest adopters of the browsing technologies were in “possession of high income, and occupational and educational resources” (Willis and Tranter, 2006, p. 45). Moreover,

they lived in wealthy countries: until 1993, only 20 countries were connected to the WWW. Norris (2001a, p. 28) describes the internet in the 1990s as “email and Web pages delivered through wired umbilical cords to beige desktop boxes”, and the imagery of static information being transmitted to passive users sitting at a desk says much about the early WWW. Elsewhere, Norris (2000, p. 122) describes this phenomenon as characteristic of “the information society”. The internet was, in its first ten years of life, an information medium, in the same sense that newspapers, radio and television are information media, concerned with the broadcast of news, opinion and entertainment to a mass audience (Madden and Fox, 2006). The combination of the socioeconomic bias among internet users – at the individual and country levels – and the medium’s focus on information transmission served to reinforce the existing gaps between information ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’. Patterns of internet adoption reflected patterns of traditional media consumption: regular newspaper readers, for example, were more likely to be online in the first decade of the WWW (Chinn and Fairlie, 2007; Norris, 2000). In Australia, this ‘early adoption’ period lasted throughout the 1990s.

In the second decade of the 21st century, internet use continues to proliferate steadily, and not just in developing countries – which were later adopters of the technology – but at a similar rate among developed, early adopting countries. For example, 83 per cent of Australian voters described themselves as internet users in 2011 (McAllister et al., 2010a); with allowances made for the very elderly and the infirm, there is not much scope for further growth in that number. This is termed here the ‘transitional’ phase of internet use in Australia, as the profile of users moved from early adopters to a mainstream mass. Likewise, 80 per cent of American citizens had internet access in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), while across the developed world, 74 per cent of citizens reported having access in 2011 (see Figure 3.1). At the top end of diffusion, more than 90 per cent of citizens in Iceland, Norway, Netherlands, Luxembourg and Sweden have internet access (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2011). Figure 3.1 shows a similar trajectory of internet diffusion between developed and developing countries; although the large numbers of internet users in developed countries will invariably see growth slow in those countries, while access in developing countries should continue to expand. In regard of the social divide, there is evidence that it persists in developed countries, despite data suggesting that access is almost ubiquitous in many nations.

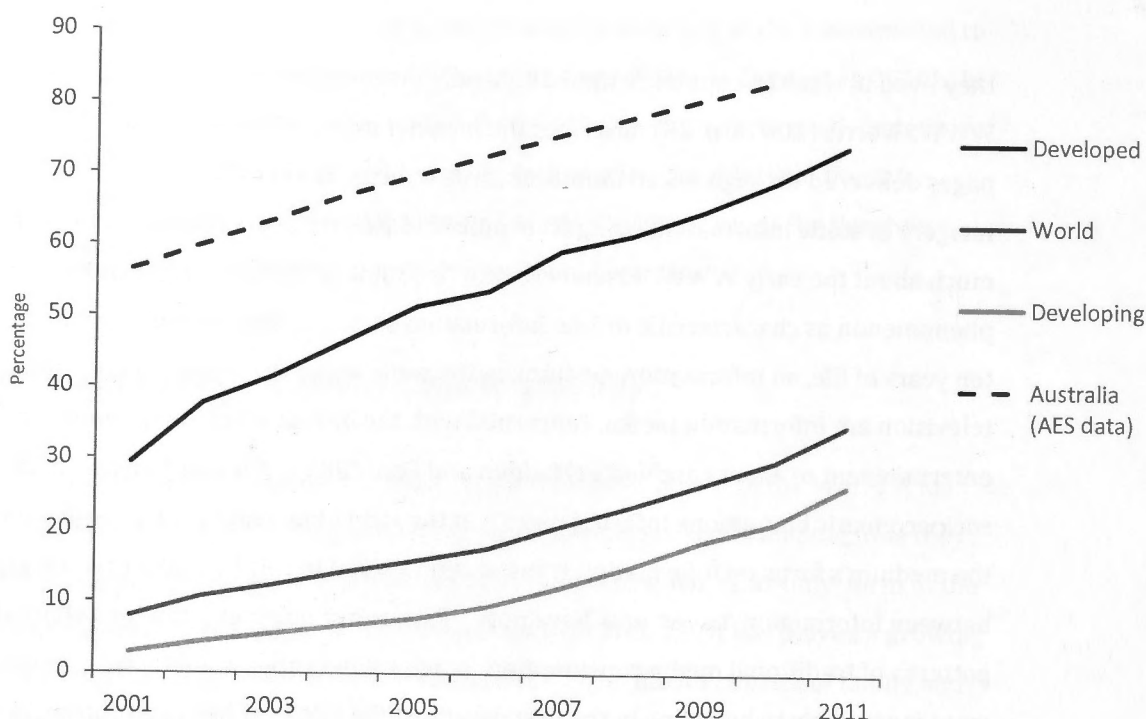


Figure 3.1: The diffusion of internet access: percentage of population with access to the internet, 2001 to 2011

Source: International Telecommunications Union 2011; McAllister et al. 2010

Question (ITU): Suggested model question: Have you used the Internet from any location in the last 12 months? Where did you use the Internet in the last 12 months? (International Telecommunications Union, 2009).

According to diffusion theory (Rogers, 1962), global and social divides should become less stark as diffusion of a new technology continues, and as consumers of lower socioeconomic status follow the lead of the early adopters. Norris (2001a, p. 33) observes this effect in the diffusion of telephone, radio, television, cable television, video cassette recorder and personal computer technologies. However, as Willis and Tranter (2006, p. 45) note, the social divide between internet users and non-users has persisted into the new century. In Australia, age and gender gaps have consistently declined throughout the 2000s, as the internet became a mainstream medium. Willis and Tranter (2006) observe, however, that household composition, geographic location and educational gaps between users and non-users persisted into the new century. Moreover, "the Australian situation does not appear to be unusual. Global inequalities in Internet use remain substantial... however, the nature of disparities between users varies between countries" (Willis and Tranter, 2006, p. 47). Moreover, a divide persists

in many countries between types of internet users, namely skilled, active users and under-skilled, passive users (Anduiza et al., 2010; Deursen and Dijk, 2011; Kruikemeier et al., 2013).

The mid-2000s marked the advent of the 'social internet', the third – and current – stage of internet diffusion in Australia. It is marked by two things: Web 2.0 interactivity and the portability of smartphones. 'Web 2.0' is an umbrella term for the range of internet applications and websites that moved away from the broadcasting functions of the early WWW toward a more collaborative, interactive medium (Grossman, 2006; O'Reilly, 2007). Examples of original WWW functions being replaced by Web 2.0 equivalents include: the Encyclopaedia Britannica Online *versus* Wikipedia (a collaborative, open source encyclopaedia); personal websites *versus* personal blogs (with capacity for reader input); and online sales of digital media files *versus* peer to peer file sharing (O'Reilly, 2007). In other words, static internet applications replaced by interactive ones. For many internet users, the development of Web 2.0 applications meant an upsurge in online social networking: sharing photos online with friend via email, or with the public via photo-sharing websites such as Flickr; creating a personal website or blog; joining mass social networking websites like MySpace, LinkedIn or Facebook (for example Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011).

Another commonly used feature of Web 2.0 – and one vital to understanding how people participate in politics in this era – is the delivery of news and current affairs reporting online. With the use of customised news websites, including the websites of traditional mass media outlets, rich site summary (RSS) feeds and websites that exist solely to aggregate the content of other news websites, a consumer can insulate himself almost entirely from any news outside his range of interests (Iyengar and Hahn, 2009; Slater, 2007; Stroud, 2010). He can customise his news consumption to limit exposure to only those subjects, journalists, opinions and commentators of his choosing. At the same time, the internet has allowed for relationships to be formed and maintained across the previously prohibitive social boundaries of race, socioeconomic status, location, religion and partisan identification (Gibson & McAllister 2009; Kittilson & Dalton 2011; Dalton & Kittilson 2012). The effect of this phenomenon on political behaviour – namely the accumulation of political knowledge, attitudes towards politics and the propensity to participate – is explored in later chapters.

Email-enabled smartphones were first popularised in the early 2000s, with the release of the 'Blackberry' devices. However, the release of the Apple iPhone in 2007 saw a shift in smartphone technology from email device to pocket-sized personal computer capable of running internet-connected applications, and with it a corresponding shift in how consumers conceive of and access the internet (Charlesworth, 2009). As with fixed internet access, the diffusion of smartphone devices was limited at first to early adopters, characterised by their high socioeconomic status (Smith, 2011; Zheng, 2011). The mark of difference between fixed and mobile internet adoption is in speed: in 2007, 19 per cent of residents in developed countries had mobile broadband access, increasing steadily to 57 per cent in 2011 (see Figure 3.2). In developing countries, access increased from one per cent in 2007 to nine per cent in 2012. In 2011, mobile broadband penetration was highest in Europe (54 per cent of residents), followed by the Americas (31 per cent), with Africa lagging at four per cent.

Take-up rates in the different geographic regions mirrored those for internet access more broadly, as shown in Figure 3.2 (International Telecommunications Union, 2011); it seems that, once accustomed to 'being online', the addition of a new platform to a consumer's suite of internet technologies occurs more readily than the initial adoption (Aron and Burnstein, 2003). It might be expected that the diffusion of mobile broadband in developing countries will lag behind the diffusion of fixed internet access but, once established among a critical mass, will proliferate at a faster rate (Lee et al. 2011). The importance of mobile internet access lies in its capacity to make users constantly connected – not only to the WWW, but to their family, friends, colleagues, and broader social networks (McAllister & Pietsch, 2011; Park et al., 2009; Pénard and Poussing, 2010). Further, it has the capacity to increase the amount of information to which a smartphone user is exposed. However, it also has the potential to widen the 'knowledge gap' between the already engaged and the disengaged, by allowing existing participants to learn more, engage more widely and deeply, and to participate more (Anduiza et al., 2009b; Bonfadelli, 2002; McAllister and Gibson, 2011).

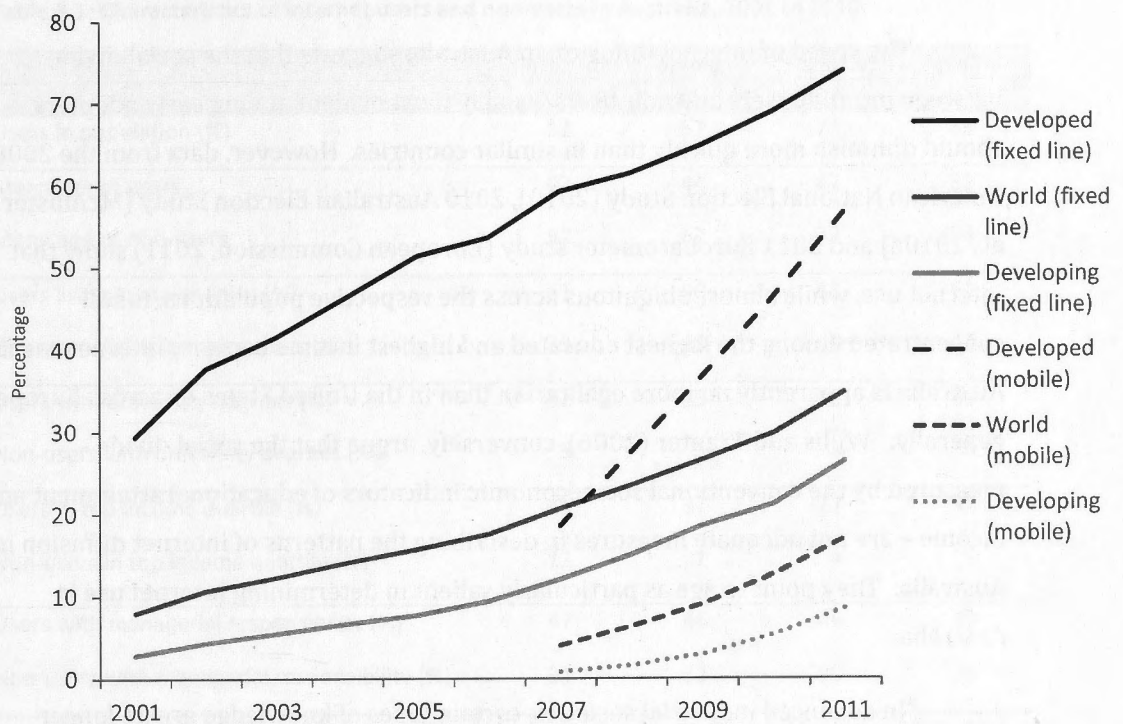


Figure 3.2: Diffusion of mobile compared with fixed broadband access: percentage of population with access to mobile and fixed line internet, 2001 to 2011

Source: International Telecommunications Union 2011

The implications of these changes in internet use for political participation in Australia are far-reaching. First, increasing numbers of internet users spending increasing amounts of time online have unprecedented opportunities to participate online and greater exposure to information about offline participation, but perhaps less time available to participate offline. Second, access to mobile internet connections via a smartphone or other portable device allows a citizen to learn about politics in any situation, at any time. He can likewise sign an e-petition or email a member of parliament while on public transport. On the other hand, increased opportunities to access the internet may reinforce the engagement of those who are already interested and participate, as they will likely make the most use of the internet for political purposed. The following section explores who uses the internet in Australia, who does not, and consequently who is more inclined to participate as a result.

3.3 Australian internet users and the 'digital divide'

The speed of internet diffusion in Australia suggests that the social divide between internet users and non-users, usually most evident among early adopters, should diminish more quickly than in similar countries. However, data from the 2008 American National Election Study (2010), 2010 Australian Election Study (McAllister et al., 2010a) and 2011 Eurobarometer study (European Commission, 2011) show that internet use, while almost ubiquitous across the respective populations, is still concentrated among the highest educated and highest income earners; internet use in Australia is apparently no more egalitarian than in the United States or across Europe generally. Willis and Tranter (2006), conversely, argue that the social divide – measured by the conventional socioeconomic indicators of educational attainment and income – are not adequate measures in describing the patterns of internet diffusion in Australia. They point to age as particularly salient in determining internet use in Australia:

“In advanced industrial societies, certain types of knowledge are no longer gained through an accumulative process associated with ageing. Instead, knowledge of new technologies, such as the Internet, is strongly associated with youth” (Willis and Tranter, 2006, p. 55).

What Willis and Tranter do not mention explicitly is that knowledge is not only traditionally associated with age, but with education and occupational status. Based on diffusion theory and Willis and Tranter's empirical study, then, it is expected that internet use in Australia is decreasingly influenced by educational attainment and household income, but that age – which is usually positively correlated with both of the socioeconomic factors mentioned – should have either negligible or negative effects.

Analysis of AES data from 2001 to 2010 supports Willis and Tranter's (2006) observations, as Table 3.1 demonstrates. Over that period, the number of internet users in the Australian population has increased from 52 per cent in 2001 to 74 per cent in 2010, with steep growth between the 2001 and 2007 elections. At this stage of the diffusion process, there are increasing differences between the educational, geographic, age, occupational and income profiles of users and non-users. They are not necessarily systemic, however, but generational. The remaining internet 'hold outs' are getting older, and retiring and earning less. In the diffusion process, it appears that elderly city dwellers have yielded and now use the internet, while the truly resistant

Table 3.1: Characteristics of internet users and non-users in Australia, 2001 to 2010

	<i>Transitional period</i>		<i>Social internet period</i>	
	2001	2004	2007	2010
Users in population (%)	52	67	73	83
Mean age of users	42	44	47	52
Mean age of non-users	52	67	73	74
Users living in major cities (%)	61	60	58	62
Non-users living in major cities (%)	39	48	46	44
Users with university degrees (%)	32	33	32	31
Non-users with university degrees (%)	5	5	4	4
Users in top income quartile (%)	45	37	27	31
Non-users in top income quartile (%)	13	7	4	5
Users with managerial responsibility (%)	47	46	46	46
Non-users with managerial responsibility (%)	31	32	33	28

Source: 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2010 Australian Election Studies (Bean, Gow & McAllister 2001; Bean et al. 2004, 2007; McAllister et al. 2010). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

overwhelmingly live in regional and rural areas. Those who do use the internet are increasing in age, as the bright young early adopters become outnumbered by the late-adopting majority. The percentage with university degrees has remained steady after starting high, while the number of all Australians with a degree has increased slowly over the same period. In total, the profile of internet users is becoming closer to the profile of the Australian population at large.

More detail on the relationships between these characteristics and internet access is gleaned from binary logistic regression analysis, presented in Table 3.2. The model predicts whether individuals have access to the internet. Age has a consistently negative effect, in as much as the proclivity to use the internet declines with age, but that effect is greatly outweighed by those of income, educational attainment and the respondent's position in his or her organisation, measured by supervisory and managerial responsibility. The influence of income appears to diminish over time, from a regression coefficient of .189 in 2001 to .102 in 2010. On the contrary, the effects of

Table 3.2: Predictors of internet access among Australian citizens, 2001 to 2010

	Transitional period						Social internet period					
	2001			2004			2007			2010		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
Age	-.047**	.005	0.954	-.052**	.005	.949	-.082**	.008	0.921	-.083**	.007	.920
Gross annual household income	.189**	.018	1.209	.127**	.018	1.135	.151**	.023	1.163	.084**	.019	1.088
Educational attainment	.268**	.038	1.307	.303**	.042	1.354	.296**	.057	1.345	.364**	.053	1.439
Seniority of position in workplace	.147**	.050	1.158	.164**	.051	1.178	.176**	.064	1.193	.211**	.062	1.190
Residential location (by population)	.148**	.048	1.160	.009	.050	1.009	.147*	.061	1.159	.011	.063	1.011
Constant	-.860**	.335		1.338**	.370		2.947**	.552		5.330**	.479	
χ^2	457.708			398.520			462.802			524.615		
-2 log likelihood	1246.093			1198.800			808.199			921.018		
Nagelkerke r^2	.421			.364			.474			.458		

Binary logistic regression analysis. ** = $p < .01$ * = $p < .05$ (two-tailed). $n = 1267$ (2001), 1402 (2004), 1369 (2007), 1729 (2010).

Source: 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2010 Australian Election Studies (Bean, Gow & McAllister 2001; Bean et al. 2004, 2007; McAllister et al. 2010).

See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

managerial responsibility and educational attainment increase over the same period. There is therefore still a socioeconomic element to the internet access divide, but it is not strictly a wealth divide.

Whether a person lives in a remote location or a major city has little effect on whether he uses the internet. In fact, data suggests that the effect of location is not significant in 2004 or 2010, and only marginally in 2007. This is perhaps an artefact of Australian federal government initiatives to expand internet access in rural and remote areas via satellite delivery.²² Certainly, all other things being equal, distance from a major town or city does not appear to impede access to internet services (although Table 3.1 shows that non-users disproportionately live outside of major towns). In sum, Willis and Tranter's (2006) predictions get mixed results. The effect of age is not as important when controlling for other factors, particularly socioeconomic ones. Likewise income is not as important as education and seniority of position in the workplace, while any rural/urban effects are close to non-existent. To read Willis and Tranter (2006) in another way, it could be said that there is a persistent digital divide in Australia, but the factors that explained it in 2006 do not hold the same weight in 2012.

In a similar analysis of internet users in the United States, Talukdar and Gauri (2011) find that the positive effects of income, education, gender, race, age or residential location in predicting internet access persisted between 2002 and 2008. In fact, gaps in the mean incomes, educational attainments and proximity to a major city became larger in that period. Data from Europe suggest similar effects there: the strongest predictors of internet access are education and income, while the factors preventing internet access are overwhelmingly income, the presence of children in a household and unemployment (Montagnier and Wirthmann, 2011). Montagnier and Whirtmann (2011) also find that Europeans' reasons for not having internet access are strongly influenced by income: those in the lowest income quartile are the most likely to respond that they do not need, do not want or do not have adequate skills or money. Households with dependent children, on the other hand, are more likely to report that

²² The Higher Bandwidth Incentive Scheme subsidised fixed broadband (where available) and satellite internet connections to residents of rural areas in Australia, with the intent of lowering the previously prohibitive cost of satellite internet connections to the average broadband connection rates charged in cities and regional centres. The program ran from 2004 to 2005, before being replaced by similarly rural-focussed programs.

they cannot afford an internet connection, rather than that they do not need or want it (Montagnier & Wirthmann 2011). The social digital divide therefore seems to have persisted both in Australia and internationally, although there are strong signs of its abatement in Australia.

3.4 *Internet use, the civic voluntarism model and political participation*

The previous chapter outlined what is known about political participation, focusing on the major studies in the field and culminating with Verba, Scholzman and Brady's (1995) civic voluntarism model of participation. Not only is that model arguably the most comprehensive aggregation of all the research conducted prior to 1995, it is also the first to argue the positive effects of an individual's resources and skills, and not simply his or her socioeconomic status. With the advent of the internet as a communications medium, citizens of advanced democracies have acquired new skills which are likely to aid them in participating in politics. Moreover, the medium itself allows for new and emerging acts of participation that can be conducted entirely over the internet, reducing the need for a citizen to possess large amounts of time, money or civic skills. The civic voluntarism model can therefore not only assist in understanding who participates in Australia and why, but also how internet use among Australian citizens is changing their proclivity to participate.

The relatively rapid diffusion of a medium so unlike television, radio or newspapers, coupled with the development of Web 2.0 applications allowing internet users to share information quickly and easily, is likely to have had some effect on citizens' exposure to political information and opportunities to participate. The literature on internet effects focuses largely on two key questions: does internet use mobilise apathetic citizens to participate in politics, or does it reinforce the habits of those who already participate; and do online forms of participation – or 'e-participation' – attract citizens who would normally participate offline, or new participants? The civic voluntarism model of participation, which was developed in 1995 (before the internet became a mainstream communications medium) contends a citizen with civic skills, money, free time, and exposure to mobilisation to participate is more likely to participate than other citizens (Verba et al., 1995). By drawing on that model, the different strands of the internet and participation literature can be brought

together and explained through citizens' access to the resources necessary to participate.

The question of whether the internet can mobilise citizens into participation or whether it reinforces the participatory habits of the already engaged is widely referred to as the 'normalisation/mobilisation' thesis (Hirzalla et al., 2010; Norris, 2000; Van Laer, 2007). 'Normalisation' refers to the hypothesis that the internet (or any medium) merely reinforces existing divides between the engaged and disengaged, by giving the engaged more opportunities for engagement and participation; it deepens their existing activities. This hypothesis is similar to the 'knowledge gap' thesis of media communications, which posits that rather mass media do not diminish the knowledge gap between people who are interested and uninterested in public affairs, but expands it by allowing the knowledgeable to learn even more (for example Genova & Greenberg 1979). In other words, the relationship between news consumption and political engagement is non-recursive:

"The most politically knowledgeable, trusting, and participatory are most likely to tune into public-affairs coverage. And those most attentive to coverage of public affairs become more engaged in civic life" (Norris 2000, p. 317).

Further, Norris shows evidence that the internet produces similar normalising effects: "the people most likely to be motivated to seek out election information on party Web pages, or to communicate and organize via the Net, are those who would be most engaged in traditional forms of political activism in parties, discussion groups, and lobbying activities" (2000, p. 277). Similar findings dominate the literature on internet effects on political engagement (for example Krueger 2002; Norris 2003; Best & Krueger 2005; Anduiza et al. 2009; Hirzalla et al. 2010).

Conversely, the 'mobilisation' hypothesis asks whether citizens who previously have little or no engagement with politics can be mobilised by using the internet. The theory underpinning this hypothesis argues that exposure to information and discussion on the internet can persuade someone to participate where, in the counterfactual scenario with no internet, he would not normally participate. Early proponents of the mobilization hypothesis predicted that the internet would be used to facilitate direct democracy functions, expanding the public sphere to include those who are unable or unaccustomed to participating traditionally (Ferdinand, 2000; Norris,

2002, 2000). For the most part, empirical studies have not supported theories of internet mobilisation. Where they have, the effects are marginal: concentrated amongst the young (Hirzalla et al., 2010) and specific forms of participation (Van Laer, 2010).

After the normalisation/mobilisation debate, the second major focus of the internet effects literature is e-participation: who participates online, whether they have previously participated offline, and whether the act of participating online mobilises citizens to then participate in an offline capacity. Researchers, including Oser, Hooghe and Marien (2013), Vissers, Hooghe, Stolle and Maheo (2012) and Cantijoch and Gibson (2011) have found only small, if any, differences between online and offline participants. Oser et al. (2013) observe that there is a particular type of activist who prefers to participate online, but who has also participated offline previously. Moreover, online activists demonstrate similar socioeconomic biases as offline activists. Schlozman, Verba and Brady (2010) likewise note that online activists have ample socioeconomic resources but are younger than traditional protestors. Research from Spain suggests that experience using the internet increases the likelihood that users will use the medium for participation (Anduiza et al., 2010). Cantijoch and Gibson (2011) take a bottom-up approach, examining e-participation and finding that distinct forms of online activism exist, different from each other as well as from offline participation.

Despite asking different questions, these two broad focuses of the literature on internet use and participation share an interest in what citizens require in order to participate. They are also agree in so much as the internet, including the ability to participate online, has not been so far shown to have strong mobilising effects (Anduiza et al., 2009a; Vissers et al., 2012). Fundamentally, they ask whether the internet provides citizens with a vital resource, outlet or medium to take the step into participation. To bring these two questions together in a systematic and researchable way, this study applies the civic voluntarism framework to whether internet use is mobilising Australians into participation or normalising the behaviour of existing participants. The questions are reframed to ask whether the internet can replace any of the traditional predictors of participation, thereby mobilising previously disengaged citizens into participation. Alternatively, the internet may only supplements traditional predictors, reinforcing and normalising the profile of existing participants. This section examines each of the predictors in the civic voluntarism model in turn, discussing what is known about their relationship with internet use and hypothesising that relationship

in the context of Australia. It also introduces data from Australia and internationally to provide some initial evidence for those hypotheses.

Civic skills

The civic voluntarism model argues that civic skills enable citizens to participate by making them more confident and better able to express their views (Verba et al., 1995). This is an intuitive explanation for the dominant role of socioeconomic status (SES) in predicting participation, as the same characteristics that measure SES – wealth, education and employment status – are also associated with imparting civic skills. This study asks whether civic skills retain their importance to the process of participation in the internet era. The reason for the question can be demonstrated with an example cited by Schlozman et al. (2010): in 2003, a group of online activists (predominantly computer scientists) sought stronger government regulation of electronic voting systems in the United States. The authors note that

“... there is nothing unexpected about the political success of what began as an Internet-based movement among computer professionals. While computer nerds are hardly the most visible group in American politics, they have characteristics – in particular, high levels of education – that predispose them to take part in politics should the occasion arise” (2010, p. 487).

However, would those ‘nerds’ have become sufficiently concerned about the issue, organised a campaign, and taken it through to its completion – in this case, lobbying 27 states to legislate in their favour – if the internet did not exist? Without the internet, the activists would not have been able to transmit their message to a diffuse audience so quickly and cheaply. That they could organise so efficiently is likely due to their (particularly) high computer and internet literacy.

As internet use becomes more popular, the traditional civic skill predictors of participation, according to Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995)’s model, are expected to become less important. Technological and social changes, such as the increased use of email over postal mail, should affect what skills a citizen requires to be able to participate. Advanced internet skills will comprise, as in the case of the electoral activists, the ability to create a website and communicate effectively on a medium that is qualitatively different to traditional mass media. At the other end of the range of internet skills is sending an email, more common among the population but less

effective in expressing views to a large audience. This study is expected to find that internet resources are at least as effective in predicting online participation as traditional civic skills. They are also expected to be significant in predicting offline participation, as per Schlozman et al.'s (2010) observation that online participation is a likely precursor to offline participation.

Data from Australia show that the vast majority of Australians possess at least some internet skills. The Australian Election Study has only measured internet skills in 2010, but the resulting cross-sectional data provide a snapshot of the types of skills possessed by Australians. First, 86 per cent of internet users have sent an email with an attachment – a skill one step above the most basic online activities. Further, 63 per cent reported downloading software to their computers, a number which has likely increased with the proliferation of software applications – or ‘apps’ – designed to enhance the experience of online social networks and smartphones. Similarly, a high number of users – 46 per cent – have uploaded photos, pictures or videos to a website. This is likely associated with the advent of online social networking services (SNS) such as Facebook, which claimed 901 million users internationally in March 2012 (Facebook Inc, 2012). The Facebook website and an increasing range of SNS such as Twitter and Tumblr are designed to make sharing photos and videos particularly easy. Finally, the 2010 AES found that 14 per cent of Australian internet users have designed a personal website or weblog. These users must possess the confidence and skills to create their own website as well as the motivation to produce their own content for public consumption.

The different measures of internet proficiency are distributed in various ways among the population, but the defining characteristic of internet users is their youth. The average age of someone who has designed a website (38 years) is 20 years younger than someone who has not (58 years). Only 12 per cent of users report having done each of the four activities measured by the AES; their mean age (38 years) is 23 years less than those who use the internet but have not done any of the four activities (61 years). Indeed, age is negatively correlated with internet proficiency, per the AES measures ($r = -.388$, $p = .000$). Internet proficiency is positively correlated with years of internet use ($r = .395$, $p = .000$), income ($r = .234$, $p = .000$) and education ($r = .246$, $p = .000$). Unsurprisingly, the most proficient internet users are also those who are online the most, and those who are online several times a day are likely to have experience with at least three of the four measured skills. Overall, it appears that Australian internet users for the most part feel comfortable performing simple internet activities, but that the

most proficient users are younger and better educated than are relatively novice users (McAllister et al., 2010a).

Internet proficiency is also related to traditional civic skills, as per the civic voluntarism model (Best and Krueger, 2005; Krueger, 2002). Measuring proficiency as a scale of experience in the four different skill acts, ranging from zero (having experience in none of the acts) to four (having experience in all four acts), relationships between proficiency and civic skills become clear. Internet skills and job skills, a scale of experience in job-related acts such as organising meetings and writing letters, are correlated at $r=.357$ ($p=.000$). Likewise internet skills are moderately correlated with educational attainment ($r=.387$, $p=.000$), and another measure of civic skills, memberships in non-political organisations ($p=.216$, $p=.000$). Individuals who possess civic skills are therefore expected to possess at least some internet skills, while it has already been shown that both are related to high incomes and high educational attainment. While that creates the possibility of multicollinearity within the multivariate model (for example Best and Krueger, 2005; Krueger, 2002), the relationships between the two variables are not strong enough to invalidate the model.

Money

Not only were traditional civic skills not necessary to the success of the American computer scientists-turned-electoral activists, they did not require any substantial amounts of money (Schlozman et al., 2010). Wealth on its own is not a particularly robust predictor of participation, rather it enables an otherwise well resourced, skilled and interested citizen to participate (Verba et al., 1995). It is a necessary but sufficient condition of participatory acts. While the advent of e-participation nullifies the high costs of some forms of participation – such as political party membership, attendance at party functions, travel to protest events, or the donation of money to a candidate or party – online forms of participation are not always transferable with offline forms (Bimber, 1999; Cantijoch and Gibson, 2011). For instance, a citizen who lacks the money to attend a protest in another city may not be interested in participating in an online equivalent. He may choose not to sign an e-petition due to its perceived lack of efficacy, or not want to join an online group of ‘hacktivists’ due to the illegality of what they do. E-participation should therefore not be considered a panacea to the wealth bias among political participants.

Moreover, this chapter has already shown that, while decreasing, a socioeconomic digital divide persists in Australia. The income profile of internet users is increasingly reflective of the general population; most citizens, irrespective of income, have some form of internet access. This is demonstrated in the binary regression analysis of Australian internet users between 2001 and 2010 in Table 3.2. To the extent that a digital divide persists in Australia, it is Income should still matter for any acts of donation, as a citizen must have some degree of disposable wealth to indeed dispose of it. It likewise should still matter for any acts of participation offline that require travel or some form of expense. It will likely still predict online participation, but only as an artefact of pre-internet participation; wealthy citizens who participate offline, both before the internet and now, are likely to participate online as well. At this stage of the internet diffusion process, there are surely those citizens who participated offline before they even thought of having internet access. It should be less important among younger citizens, who are at the beginning of their political life and less coloured by the traditional participant biases.

Free time

Schlozman et al.'s (2010) 'computer nerds' began their campaign online. Given their occupations, they may easily have operated during work hours. Another possibility is that a person employed as a computer programmer or technician would spend at least some of his 'free time' on the internet anyway, and so operating an online campaign would dovetail with an existing hobby. The impact of a citizen's free time in predicting participation would be diminished in both scenarios; if a citizen possesses a high level of internet skills, he should require less free time to participate online than any citizen – skilled or unskilled – should require to participate offline.

This gives rise to a vital question: are internet use and 'free time' different things? If a survey respondent reports having no free time, but spending a lot of time using the internet, has he simply filled his free time with internet usage? Indeed, 2010 AES data show that frequency of internet use is negatively correlated with the number of hours a person has to himself ($r = -.199, p = .000$). Further, free time is more closely related to annual income ($r = -.291, p = .000$) than to occupational status, as measured by position in an organisation ($r = -.037$, not statistically significant). Free time is also concentrated more heavily among men ($r = .117, p = .000$), appears to increase with age ($p = .259, p = .000$), and, unsurprisingly, those without full time employment ($p = .269, p = .000$). AES respondents were not asked about their free time prior to 2010, so there

is no precise way of knowing whether these data are part of a trend, although they do reflect Verba et al.'s (1995) findings from the US. In the almost 20 years since that study, it does not appear that the distribution of free time among citizens has changed substantially, even with the proliferation of internet use.

There are only so many hours in any citizen's day, and internet use invariably takes up some of those. Nie (2001) makes two points to this end: time spent using the internet has invariably replaced time that citizens used to spend on other activities; and that the nature of the internet is such that it requires a user's complete attention, unlike television, which often provides the 'white noise' to a family's time together. Further,

"... many of us are familiar with that unique Internet characteristic of surfing that leads Internet junkies to sit down to do a single task and end up, hours later, with a loss of sense of time, place, and original purpose" (Nie, 2001, p. 431).

Nie's instinct on internet use is a compelling one: he was not only an early adopter of the internet, but a distinguished political scientist with a vast knowledge of who participates in politics and why. Indeed it is supported by the 2010 AES which shows a strong negative correlation between respondents' reported free time and the frequency of their internet use ($r = -.262$, $p = .000$). It is possible that survey respondents are including the time they spend online (outside of work hours) as 'free time'. If so, it is expected that 'free internet time' would be to online participation as 'free time' is to offline participation. That is, they are not reflective of the types of citizens who become engaged and active in politics, rather they are a necessary resource if a citizen wishes to participate. Furthermore, if free time is increasingly spent online, less free time should in theory be available for offline participation; free time would instead lend itself to online participation, if any. If the data show that to be true – that free time better predicts online participation than offline participation – then the idea of free time as something other than time spent online may require rethinking.

More Australians using the internet each year, and they are online with increasing frequency (see Figure 3.3). Internet use in 2001 appears to have been more *ad hoc* than in 2010: one in two users went online each day, compared with three in four users in 2010. The largest growth has been among those who use the internet several times a day. The percentage of users who log on once a day has remained

consistent at around one quarter of all users, while the most sporadic internet users – those who do not go online every day – appear in long term decline. There are several possible explanations for the increased intensity of internet use in Australia. First is the diffusion of internet access in workplaces, and the incorporation of internet technologies into daily occupational tasks, for example organising meetings, communicating with colleagues, ordering supplies and banking. Second is the development of broadband internet access, which research suggests has stronger effects on participation than earlier types of internet connection (Kwak et al., 2004; Ward and Vedel, 2006). Earlier technology – referred to as dial-up internet access – used telephone lines to connect to an internet service provider, and as a consequence could only be used when the telephone landline was not in use.²³ Use of a dial-up connection was a more structured activity than using a broadband connection: not only did the telephone landline need to be free, but the process of getting online was often slow, connections were less robust and would regularly ‘drop out’, and connection charged at the cost of a phone call (on top of fixed access charges). Broadband access provides constant connectivity to the World Wide Web, allowing for quick, short bursts of internet use.

A third explanation for the increased frequency of internet use is the diffusion of mobile broadband access, in this ‘social internet’ period. Since the release of the Apple iPhone in 2007 – at which time smartphones became a mass consumer product – Australian mobile broadband subscriptions have risen to 5.5 million in December 2011, comprising almost half of the 11.6 million broadband subscriptions (both fixed and mobile) across the country (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). In March 2007 mobile broadband subscriptions made up less than five per cent of all internet connections in Australia. The consequent shift in internet access from a strictly desktop environment to the portability of internet access in a person’s pocket is staggering: the act of using the internet has been transformed from a very deliberate, structured exercise to something that can be done at any time, and in almost any place. It is therefore not surprising that Australians are increasingly describing themselves as very frequent internet users.

²³ At December 2011, only four per cent of all Australian internet connections used dial-up technology (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

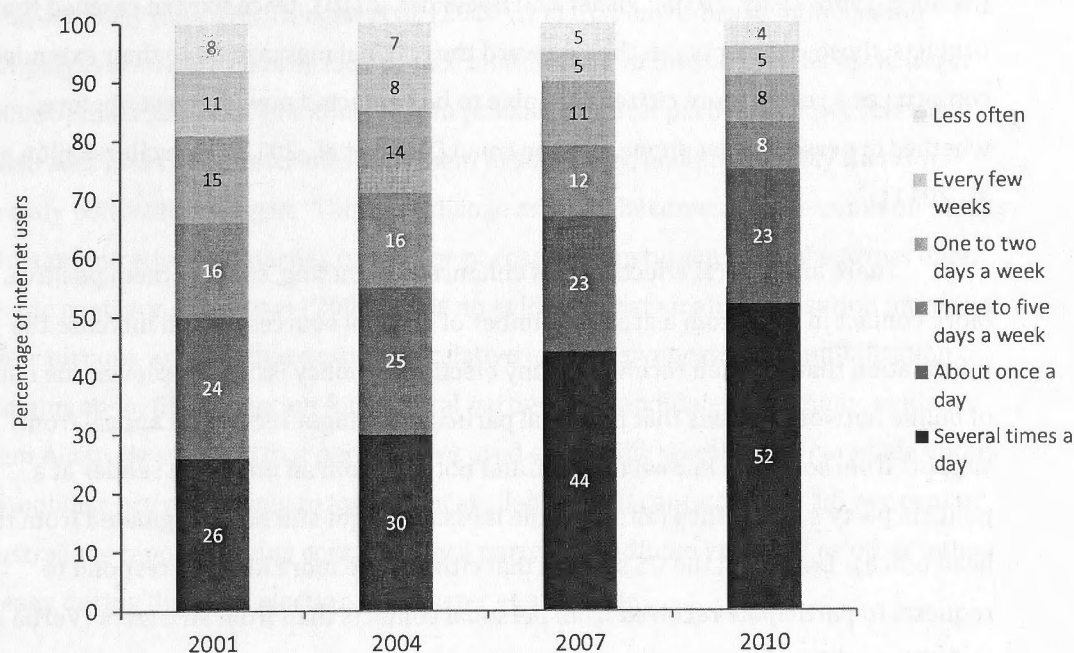


Figure 3.3: Frequency of internet use in Australia between 2001 and 2010, excluding non-users
 Source: 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2010 Australian Election Studies (Bean, Gow & McAllister 2001; Bean et al. 2004, 2007; McAllister et al. 2010).

Mobilisation

Beyond possessing adequate resources, citizens generally need to be asked to participate (Verba et al. 1995). Schlozman et al.’s (2010) computer programmers-turned-activists were mobilised to participate by what they viewed as a policy failure; their campaign gained momentum as they contacted other citizens, who in turn contacted further citizens, with an appeal to support their cause. Had the originators of the campaign never contacted them, the campaign’s supporters are less likely to have expressed their views publicly (Krueger, 2006a; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Van Laer, 2007; Verba et al., 1995). The internet has certainly made the kind of narrowcast or directed communications used by political actors to mobilise citizens cheaper, faster and more diffuse. Previously, campaigners had limited options: direct, addressed mail to a known contact; unaddressed household mail; television advertising or unpaid coverage; or radio advertising or unpaid coverage. Local campaigns could mobilise by going door-to-door or to community meetings or events to persuade citizens to support their cause. Now, campaigners – whether partisan, grassroots or organised lobbyists –

can contact possible supporters with unprecedented directness, and with reduced cost (Bimber, 1998; Carty, 2010a; Fisher and Boekkooi, 2010). Once they've reached their contacts, those recipients can then forward the original message on to their extended contacts; as a result, more citizens are able to be contacted now than ever before, whether in person, or by phone, mail or email (Bond et al., 2012a; González-Bailón et al., 2011).

There are several effects of this enhanced contacting, some of them positive. More contact in total from a greater number of original sources should increase the information that a citizen receives on any election or policy issue. Moreover, the nature of online networks means that potential participants might receive an appeal from support from someone known to them, and not just from an unknown sender at a political party's head office (although the message might still have originated from that head office). Data from the US suggest that citizens are more likely to respond to requests to participate received from personal contacts than from strangers (Verba et al. 1995, p. 157). However, the majority of requests to participate go unheeded (Verba et al. 1995).

Another effect of internet communications on mobilisation is that political actors have the capacity to disseminate appeals for support quickly, allowing them to capitalise on public interest in an issue or event. It is difficult to predict the extent, if any, of these effects on Australian political participation. However it is reasonably safe to expect that the overall number of Australians being contacted by political parties, candidates and other groups increases with internet use. Contact via email is also more likely to lead to online participation, due to the capacity to very quickly and easily go from reading an email to signing an e-petition or emailing an official (for example Vissers et al. 2012). It must be noted, however, that the direction of the relationship between internet use and recruitment is not always clear. Email contacts are not publicly available in Australia, while phone numbers and addresses; for many citizens to be contactable by a party or candidate online, they must have had previous contact, either by signing up for an email newsletter, emailing a representative or party official, or making their email address available in some other way. In other words, the citizen needs to already be active before they have the potential to be mobilised online.

Large scale campaigns in the United States have made more systematic use of email address databases, compiled from various sources. Research shows that, despite their often diffuse nature, subsequent online mobilisation campaigns have been

comparatively effective. Hooghe et al. (2010) find that email-based mobilisation campaigns are as effective as face-to-face mobilisation in the medium term. Krueger (2006b) finds similarly, but notes that in practice political parties only possess the email addresses of citizens known to them in some way, and presumably therefore already politically engaged. This may change as email becomes a more common means of communication and parties collect (or purchase) constituents' email address data. On the contrary, Nickerson (2007) finds no evidence that email mobilisation increases voter turnout, arguing that despite its relative inexpensiveness, email mobilisation remains an inefficient option for political parties and candidates. Certainly, evidence from Australia suggests that parties have used email only sparingly to persuade voters or mobilise activists, likely to the lack of available email contacts: only 1.5 per cent of Australians reported being contacted by a party or candidate via email or other online means during the 2010 election (McAllister et al., 2010a).

Engagement

Rather than mobilising political engagement, the internet may facilitate an enclave of highly engaged citizens, broadening the gap between the interested and uninterested. Norris (2000) observes that the relationship between media consumption, including on the internet, and engagement is non-recursive; the effects run from consumption to engagement as well as from engagement to consumption. Data from the US and Europe show that "news media... serve primarily to further activate activism" (Norris, 2000, p. 277). Bimber (2001) likewise finds no effects on engagement, noting that any effects may be difficult to detect at the individual level, but more apparent at the society or community level. McAllister and Gibson (2011) have found that the internet has reinforcing effects on the political knowledge of Australians. On the contrary, Jennings and Zeitner (2003), Shah, Cho, Eveland and Kwak (2005) and Kenski and Stroud (2006) each find that internet use has a small, positive effect on mobilising civic engagement, as does Boulianne's (2009) work. What binds these studies together is their focus on what citizens do online. Specifically, exposure to political information or discussion is expected to foster political engagement, if only among the already engaged. This section examines how Australians use the internet, with an emphasis on exposure to political content. Chapter 4 looks more closely at the effects of internet use on various measures of their political engagement.

The most popular online activity among Australian internet users is emailing, followed closely by general browsing, including news and other research (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Social networking constitutes the third most popular activity, however unlike emailing and browsing which are equally popular among age groups, it tapers off as age increases. Neither general browsing nor social networking appears greatly affected by socioeconomic status, employment status, educational attainment, or rural/urban location. Beyond those three broad activities, Australians are most likely to use the internet to study, listen to music or watch videos, shop or create their own content to share. In fact, more Australians create their own content online than download videos, movies or music, providing further evidence of the 'user as producer' phenomenon associated with Web 2.0.

The vast majority of internet use in Australia can therefore be categorised as emailing, browsing and social networking. Having assumed that internet use is having some effect on political participation, it stands to reason that there should also be a difference between emailing political content, browsing websites for election news, and adding a politician to a social network and, for example, emailing your mother, browsing websites for sports news, and adding a high school friend to a social network. In short, if the internet is having any effect on political participation, it is likely to be most obvious in cases where the internet is being used as a source of political information (see for example Jennings & Zeitner 2003; Kenski & Stroud 2006). AES data complement the ABS data with greater detail on any political aspects of each of the three broad online activities. The data also assist in making clear distinctions between political internet use and online political participation.

While using the internet for political purposes – or political internet use – has some crossover with online political participation, there is one key point of distinction between them. Political internet use involves informing oneself about politics, either for a specified purpose or as a part of general internet browsing. It does not seek to have any political outcome, such as persuading a friend how to vote, contacting an official to express an opinion, or adding a name to an online petition. E-participation, like offline forms of participation, comprises "acts that aim at influencing the government, either by affecting the choice of government personnel or by affecting the choices made by government personnel" (Verba and Nie, 1972, p. 2). Political discussion inhabits a grey area: there is no distinction in the available data between discussing politics with a friend for the sake of informing oneself, and discussing politics with a view to changing that friend's mind, which constitutes a political effect

(Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2010). Following Verba and Nie (1972, p. 29) this study defines political discussion as a determinant of participation, not an act of participation. The first need for this distinction arises in the case of email activity.

Emailing is by definition an interpersonal activity, involving a sender, a receiver, and content usually targeted at the receiver (or receivers). There are two main forms of political emailing: sharing political content or discussion with peers via email, or contacting an official via email. The first is not a participatory act, while the second *is* participatory, and will be discussed in chapter seven as a form of political participation. In 2001 and 2010 the AES has asked respondents whether they have discussed politics with others online during the preceding election period.²⁴ The numbers of online political discussants are stunningly low: four per cent of internet users in 2001 and seven per cent in 2010. Even with the diffusion of internet access and the soaring popularity of social networking in 2010, fewer than one in ten internet users used the medium to discuss politics with their peers. Those seven per cent are slightly above the average age of all internet users ($r=.185$, $p=.000$), with no significant relationships between online political discussion and education or income.

Where emailing can constitute either a non-participatory or participatory act, general browsing – the second most popular online activity among Australian internet users – is for the most part not participatory.²⁵ Browsing is redolent of the Web 1.0 internet, which consisted largely of static, information heavy websites that had more in common with newspapers than the interactive features of Web 2.0. Since 2001 the AES has asked respondents which kinds of political websites they have visited, most of which can be described as informative, for instance mainstream news and official government websites. There is one grey area between informative browsing and participation, namely the use of weblogs, which by design invite readers to engage in discussion by leaving a comment. The distinction between reading a weblog and commenting on it has only been made since the 2010 AES; data on weblog readership before that are treated as non-participatory.

²⁴ As 2001 preceded the rise of social networking as a popular online activity, this measure is categorised as an email activity.

²⁵ The description of web browsing as non-participatory is changing with the increasing number of online news articles allowing readers to comment on the page, recommend the article to friends via social networking websites, or simply to vote whether they 'like' or 'dislike' the article. However, these participatory tools are still emerging, and comprehensive data on readers' use of them does not exist at this time.

The most common form of political internet browsing among Australians is following election news online (AES data are shown in Figure 3.4). Alongside the use of mainstream news websites, which has increased at a similar rate, they comprise the vast majority of political browsing by Australian internet users. More specific browsing, such as visiting the website of a political party, federal parliament or the Australian Electoral Commission, constitute only a small proportion of all browsing activity. Emerging forms of online political content, such as weblogs and satirical or humorous websites, have attracted similarly small numbers during the election campaign period: five per cent of respondents reported visiting 'fun or humorous' political websites in 2004 and five per cent watched unofficial campaign videos online (including on YouTube) in 2010.

Overall, political browsing activity appears to be concentrated among a minority of internet users: three measures in the 2010 AES – following election news on the internet, using the internet to get news on the 2010 election, and visits to mainstream news media websites – are all strongly correlated at .654 ($p=.000$) or higher. Further, the number of political websites visited, as measured by the AES, is negatively correlated with age ($r = -.234$, $p=.000$). Among all internet users, 65 per cent did not use the internet for any of the political purposes measured, including the use of mainstream news media (for any purpose). While political browsing is increasing in popularity among Australian internet users, its influence is hampered by the fact that it is concentrated amongst a small number of relatively young users, and that 65 per cent of all users appear not to use the internet for political browsing at all.

The third most popular online activity among Australian internet users is social networking. Online social networking services (SNSs) are defined as

“... web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd and Ellison, 2007, p. 211).

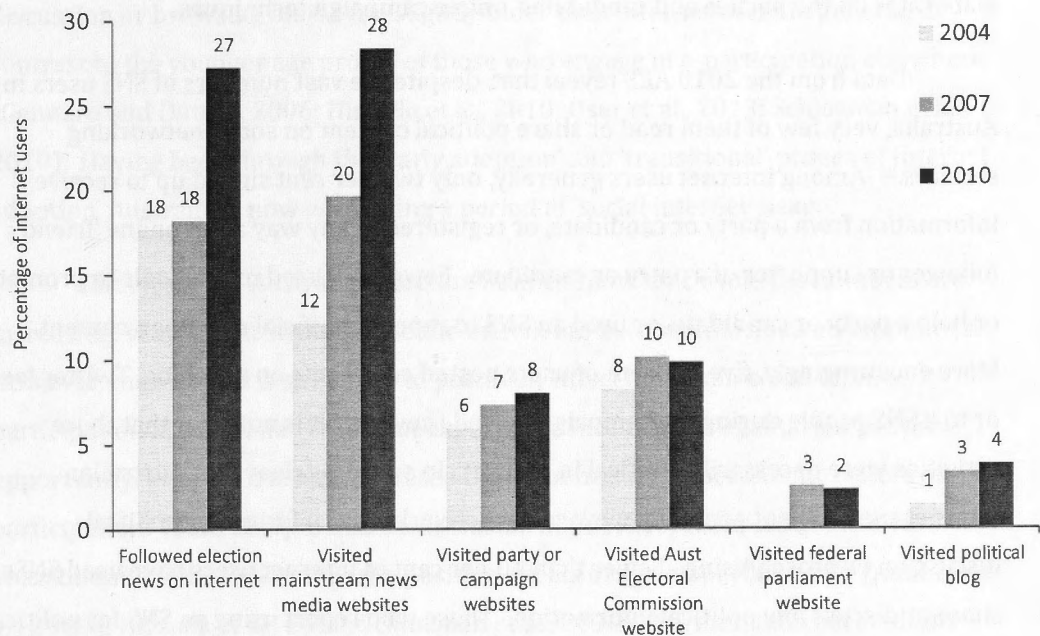


Figure 3.4: Political browsing by Australian internet users, 2004 to 2010 (AES data).
 Source: 2004, 2007 and 2010 Australian Election Studies (Bean et al. 2004, 2007; McAllister et al. 2010)

SNS users create their own webpage (or profile), based on a template provided and hosted by the SNS. The user nominates other users who can view his profile and whose profile he can view in return. Alternately, the user can choose to allow anyone – including internet users without a profile of their own – to view his profile. The user can accordingly use his profile either to share information with nominated friends, family and others, or he can use his profile as a personal broadcast platform. Users can interact with any content published on a profile, whether by commenting elsewhere on the page (usually underneath the original content), by replying directly to the content producer, and in some cases by sharing the original content on their own profiles. An increasing number of Australian political parties and candidates are using SNSs to disseminate information quickly, cheaply and widely (Chen and Smith, 2010; Gibson and Ward, 2008). Increasing the supply of campaign-related information on SNSs will likely increase the demand among citizens; Australians cannot visit the social

media profiles of their representatives and candidates if they do not exist. Chapter 4 elaborates on the parties and candidates' online campaign techniques.

Data from the 2010 AES reveal that, despite the vast numbers of SNS users in Australia, very few of them read or share political content on social networking services.²⁶ Among internet users generally, only two per cent signed up to receive information from a party or candidate, or registered in any way as an online 'friend', follower or supporter of a party or candidate. Fewer still used online tools to promote or help a party or candidate, or used an SNS to repost unofficial campaign content. More encouragingly, five per cent of users posted comments on a weblog, Twitter feed or to a SNS profile during the campaign period (however it is not clear that those activities were necessarily political in nature). In sum, it is clear that Australian internet users do not generally view social networking as a forum for political discussion or proselytising. Fewer than 10 per cent of internet users have used SNSs to share or discuss any political information. Those who report using an SNS for political discussion or campaigning are younger than internet users on average, although this likely reflects the youth bias among SNS users generally (for example Hampton et al. 2011).

3.5 Conclusion

Compared to other, similar countries, the diffusion of internet access in Australia happened early and rapidly. Currently, more than 85 per cent of Australians have access in some form, and lack of access is increasingly concentrated among the very elderly (McAllister et al., 2010b). In short, anyone who wants to use the internet in Australia, does. Despite the late stage of diffusion of internet access, there is still a strong socioeconomic bias among users: they are richer, better educated and younger than non-users. Most Australian internet users possess at least a basic level of proficiency with the technology, but only a very small number use it to share or discuss political information. Many of the biases associated with internet access generally are either maintained or amplified by specific activities: internet users are generally younger than non-users, and those users who engage in political social networking are generally younger than those users who do not. Australians who engage in political

²⁶ Various sources point to more than 10 million Facebook users in Australia (see for example Google AdPlanner data; Dobbie 2012), while other data suggest that one in every six website visits in Australia is to Facebook (Lee, 2012).

discussion or browsing online are slightly older than internet users in general, in contrast to the younger age profile of those who engage in e-participation elsewhere (Gennaro and Dutton, 2006; Hirzalla et al., 2010; Oser et al., 2013; Schlozman et al., 2010). Having been through the 'early adoption' and 'transitional' phases of internet adoption, Australia is now witnessing a period of 'social internet' usage.

Data from the Australian Election Studies show that while the numbers are increasing, very few Australians use the internet to become informed about politics. However, the internet is still likely to positively affect both online and offline participation in Australia. While not expected to be a place of egalitarian political opportunity, internet use may decrease the influence of socioeconomic factors on participation. More likely is that the inclusion of internet resources in the civic voluntarism model will reduce the positive effects of age on participation (Anduiza et al., 2009a; Hirzalla et al., 2010; Schlozman et al., 2010). Further, internet skills are expected to replace or at least complement the role of civic skills (Krueger 2002; Best & Krueger 2005; Kruikemeier et al. 2013). Chapter four commences the analysis of participation in Australia over time, and how the internet is changing who participates, why they participate and how they participate.

Chapter 4 – internet use and electoral participation

4.1 Introduction

The first form of participation studied here, electoral participation comprises electoral enrolment and voter turnout. Voting is the “most widespread and regularized political activity, and in terms of the overall impact of the citizenry on governmental performance it may be the single most important act” (Verba et al., 1995, p. 46). Voting is a highly structured act: elections are held on predetermined dates, and citizens are mobilised via media campaigns, political parties and electoral authorities. Voting is also easily accessible as a political act, the cost of participating is low relative to other participatory behaviours. As a consequence of its low barriers to entry, voting “embodies the most fundamental democratic principle of equality” (Putnam, 1995a, p. 35). Moreover, voting generally does not require a high level of political knowledge or understanding of democratic processes, even in countries where voting is made difficult by complicated electoral registration procedures, such as in the United States. For the most part, voting is the easiest act of political expression, and as a consequence is the most common act. This chapter examines the effects of internet use on both electoral turnout and enrolment, which is a necessary condition of voting.

The various reasons why citizens do or do not vote in elections are well studied.²⁷ The literature on voter turnout largely centres on rational choice theories, but increasingly at psychological explanations for individual behaviour. This chapter looks at electoral participation in Australia through the framework of Verba, Scholzman and Brady’s (1995) civic voluntarism framework of participation. Specifically, it looks at how individuals’ time, money, civic skills, political engagement and exposure to recruitment influence their propensity to vote, and how internet use mediates that influence. However, any effects at the individual level are shaped and constrained by political institutions. This chapter therefore also explores the likely effects of Australia’s political institutions on its citizens’ individual-level behaviour. Foremost

²⁷ For example Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980), Jackman (1987), Aldrich, (1993), Jackman and Miller (1995), Blais and Dobrzynska (1998), Franklin (1999, 2004), Blais (2000, 2006), and Aldrich et al. (2011).

among those is compulsory voting, which substantially affects the costs and benefits of participating in Australian elections. Other institutional-level effects on voter turnout include the electoral system, electoral administration and the conduct of elections and the governance structure (namely federal government split between a national-level and eight state-level governments). The range of individual- and institutional-level factors is discussed in Section 4.2.

When considering the effects of internet use on individual behaviour, it is necessary to understand the particular opportunities that the internet affords citizens. Those opportunities are not limited to increased exposure to information or faster means of communicating, but include the ability to complete electoral enrolment processes online and potential to vote online in the future. Section 4.3 discusses how political parties and electoral management bodies are using the internet to increase voter enrolment and turnout in Australia, from parties' embrace of candidate websites to electoral management bodies' (EMB) social media campaigns to remind young Australians to enrol. Considering the range of individual-level factors, institutional-level factors and the supply of information and opportunities to participate on the internet, Section 4.4 analyses the internet's influence on electoral enrolment in Australia. Individual-level data are not available, as the major, publically available survey datasets (such as the Australian Election Study, World Values Study and Australian Survey of Social Attitudes) do not measure enrolment and turnout behaviour. Data instead come from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australian Electoral Commission, but are not available at the individual level. The analysis therefore predicts enrolment and turnout behaviour at the federal electoral division level. Methodological details are discussed in Section 4.4. Section 4.5 examines the effects of internet use on voter turnout (again, aggregated at the federal electoral division level).

4.2 Theorising the effects of internet use on civic voluntarism and electoral participation

Research on voter turnout has clustered around two main factors: institutions, and individual-level factors. Institutional-level influences include electoral systems (including compulsion but also the type of ballot and counting method used), the closeness of an electoral competition, the ease with which a citizen can vote, the integrity of the political system and the age of a democracy (Anderson, 2007; Birch,

2009; Blais, 2007; Franklin, 2004; Norris, 2004). These influences are generally theorised – perhaps wrongly – as being homogenous across a population and unable to be altered by individual citizens (Anderson, 2007). Certainly, they do influence voter turnout both directly, as well as indirectly through individual-level factors. These have been introduced through discussion in earlier chapters, and include such measures as age, gender, income, educational attainment, political engagement and recruitment into the political process. This section discusses the institutional and individual-level factors that affect voter turnout in Australia and internationally. It also considers how those factors may work together to affect turnout.

Australia's political institutions, perhaps even more than other advanced democracies, are designed to facilitate voter turnout (Hill, 2001; Sawyer, 2001). Foremost among them is the electoral system, which compels citizens to vote or pay a fine to the government. Compulsory voting laws shift the responsibility of mobilising voter turnout from parties to citizens themselves; the choice for enrolled citizens is whether to vote or to abstain, and risk incurring a fine. The less costly option for most Australian citizens is to vote, which is inverse to the equation in most voluntary systems (Blais, 2000). Comparative research has found that compulsion only has significant effects on turnout when the law is enforceable, as it is in Australia (Norris, 2004). As Birch (2009) observes, Australia is generally considered a 'strict' enforcer of compulsory voting, although in practice the fines payable for not voting are quite small and in many cases waived entirely on appeal. Nonetheless the existence of a sanction appears to be enough to maintain comparatively high levels of turnout (Birch, 2009, p. 94). As shown in Chapter 3, even with increasing numbers of Australian citizens choosing not to enrol (and consequently not having to vote but avoiding any sanctions), turnout as a percentage of the voting aged population remains high.

A second way in which the Australian electoral system mobilises voter turnout is in how votes are cast and counted. Systems of preferential voting similar to that in Australia (which has an alternative voting system in the lower house and single transferable voting system in the upper house) have long been held to encourage turnout (Blais, 2007; Franklin, 2004; Norris, 2004; Powell, 1986). This effect has two particular explanations. First, preferential electoral systems tend to draw higher numbers of candidates than other systems, providing voters with more choice when casting their ballot (for example Karvonen 2004). Second, in preferential systems

designed to achieve high electoral proportionality the number of 'wasted votes' – votes that are not needed to achieve a winning result – is minimised, and as a consequence the benefits of voting are increased (Aldrich, 1993; Blais, 2000). In a plurality electoral system, where the candidate with the largest number of first-preference votes is the winner, votes cast for a losing candidate may not even be counted. In a preferential system, votes cast for losing candidates are transferred to the voters' next most preferred candidate, until only two candidates remain. Taking these two features of Australia's electoral system together, the institutional effects on turnout are positive, in total.²⁸

One further institutional feature of the Australian enrolment system likely to increase electoral participation in the future is direct enrolment. Legislation was passed through the federal parliament in July 2012 allowing the AEC to enrol citizens who are known to them, rather than citizens needing to take the initiative to enrol for the first time or update their enrolment. The process "use[s] administrative data from other agencies to enrol an individual or update the details of an already enrolled elector without the intervention of that individual" (Australian Electoral Commission, 2012b). For instance, when an 18 year old applies for her drivers' licence, her details could be made known to the AEC, which then enters her on the electoral roll. She will then receive election information from the AEC and be expected to attend a polling booth on election day. Each time she advises her state licensing authority of a change in address that change will automatically update her electoral roll details. This minor reform to the electoral system is expected to help reverse the decline in the size of the electoral roll, which has been caused at least in part by citizens failing to update their address details with the AEC and subsequently being removed from the roll (Brent and Jackman, 2007; Brent, 2008). It will also ensure that upon reaching voting age, Australia citizens will be compelled to vote, rather than avoiding enrolment and any subsequent fines for abstention on election day. The efficacy of this reform will be known in time.

The extent to which individual-level factors affect voter turnout often depends upon constraints at the institutional level. For example, voting in the United States takes place on a Tuesday and often requires waiting in line for extended periods of time (Highton, 2006; Levitt, 2010; Spencer and Markovits, 2010). The costs of attending a polling booth might therefore include the foregone income of a self-employed

²⁸ This is not an exhaustive list of institutional-level factors affecting turnout. Other factors include district magnitude, voting age and ease of voting (Blais, 2006).

tradesman, the price of childcare for small children or just the general cost in time spent lining up and voting that cannot be spent doing other things. However for some citizens, including retirees or those with flexible employment conditions, the costs are less burdensome. The same differences in burden exist across countries. In Australia, voting is conducted on a Saturday, most local primary schools are used as polling booths and waiting times are minimal. Voters are not required to present identification when they vote, and the process is, for many voters,

“... a social occasion. Pamphleteers and party volunteers jostle at the entrances to polling booths, exchanging competitive but good-natured banter as incoming voters pause to join the conversational festivities on their way to the booths” (Hill, 2001, p. 136).

Of course, Australians who work, study or have family commitments on Saturdays do experience the time costs of voting, but they are minimised by how elections are conducted. Moreover, pre-poll and postal voting options are available. The institutional level effects on the costs of voting are therefore different in Australia and the United States, as one example.

Having the time to vote is not the only individual level factor affecting voter turnout. As discussed previously, the civic voluntarism model sets out time, money, civic skills, engagement and recruitment as the most important individual-level determinants of participation (Verba et al., 1995). Their effects on voter turnout are mediated by institutional-level factors – such as the conduct of elections – but it is also expected that they are mediated by citizens’ internet use. For instance, the time costs of voting are not restricted to the act of attending a polling booth, as described above. They also include the time spent learning about the election, the candidates and their various policies in order to cast an informed vote. Some citizens will vote for candidates from the same party at every election, reducing the time spent collating information. However, these lifelong voters are declining in number (Dalton, 2012, 1984; McAllister, 2011). As the demands for political information have increased with the ongoing partisan dealignment of voters, the supply of information online has increased accordingly. This section examines how the internet has affected voter turnout through the framework of citizens’ time, money, civic skills, engagement and recruitment.

It is possible that the internet has lowered the transaction costs of learning about politics. Gathering information on candidates or issues online – as opposed to offline – is potentially less expensive, takes less time and is easily searched and organised (Tewksbury and Rittenberg, 2010). An internet user is therefore expected to be less burdened by the time and financial costs of voting, as well as possessing greater civic skills to allow them to participate with confidence. However, data from Australia (McAllister and Gibson, 2011) and the United States (Prior, 2005) have shown that the positive effects of online political information are concentrated among the already engaged, widening the gap between the engaged and uninterested. Further, Dalton (2008a) notes that increases in political resources in the United States have been associated with increases in non-electoral forms of participation such as contacting political representatives and protesting, but not voting. The internet and its ever-growing repository of political information has instead provided citizens with new avenues of participation, focusing on expression and individuality, according to Dalton.

Of course, voting is not entirely a function of a citizen's resources. Blais (2000) observes that rational choice theory does not explain why many voters seemingly act irrationally, spending time and money to vote despite the very small benefits the act bestows. Rather, Blais contends that many citizens demonstrate a sense of civic duty, and that the costs associated with voting are outweighed by the satisfaction of having done the 'right' thing. Although Dalton (2008a) argues that civic duty holds diminishing weight among each generational of American citizens, Blais' (2000) analysis finds that as many as 50 per cent of Canadian citizens view voting as a moral obligation. It is not clear that the internet affects this facet of voting. Alternatively, it may well be affecting it negatively, by opening up new participatory opportunities that allow citizens to express themselves and fulfil their citizenship obligations (Dalton, 2008a).

Although the weight of evidence on voter turnout suggests that the internet will likely have only a small – if any – positive impact on voting in Australia, it is an important relationship to study. Given what is known about the reasons why citizens do or do not vote, the traditional constraints on voting are likely to be shifted for internet users. Those changes should be overwhelmingly positive, but may be concentrated among the already engaged. If so, the internet might be contributing to the divide in engagement among citizens, rather than healing it. To put it in other terms, the internet may be normalising the engagement of existing voters, rather than mobilising non-voters (Norris, 2000). Of course, the extent of internet effects on

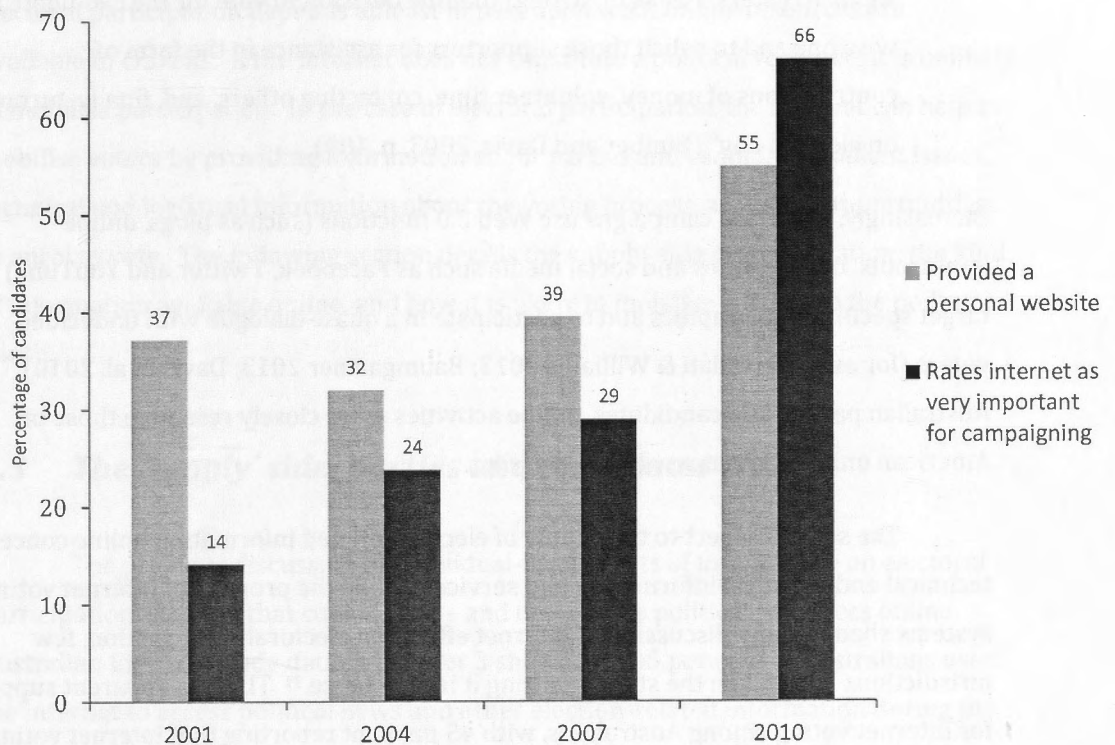


Figure 4.1 Candidates' attitudes towards and use of internet online campaigning, 2001 to 2010
Australian federal elections
 n=477 (2001), 535 (2004), 470 (2007), 247 (2010).
 Source: 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2010 Australian Candidate Studies (Gibson et al. 2001; Gibson, Bean & McAllister 2004; McAllister, Bean & Gibson 2007; McAllister et al. 2010a)

Australia's tardiness in adopting internet campaigning techniques is likely attributable to the compulsory voting system, which releases parties and candidates from having to mobilise voters to turnout, instead only needing to persuade them how to vote. However, Chen (2013) observes that Australian campaigners borrow online strategies from overseas, adjusting them to suit the local environment. The contagion of techniques can be seen in the presentation and targeting of party and candidate websites. For the most part, online campaigning has been relatively conservative, mirroring and complementing 'offline' and traditional media campaigns. Early candidate websites in first-order American elections were pitched primarily at existing supporters, rather than at undecided voters:

“The presentation of material, particularly on the front page, is designed to signal to voters (weak or strong) that the decision to vote for the candidate is a wise one and to solicit those supporters for assistance in the form of contributions of money, volunteer time, contacting others, and, finally, turnout on election day” (Bimber and Davis, 2003, p. 100).

Increasingly, American campaigns use Web 2.0 functions (such as blogs, online ‘grassroots’ communities and social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) to target specific demographics and to participate in a quasi-dialogue with undecided voters (for example Gulati & Williams 2013; Baumgartner 2013; Davis et al. 2010). Australian parties and candidates’ online activities more closely resemble those of American online campaigns a decade earlier.

The second aspect to the supply of election-related information online concerns technical and logistical information and services. While the promise of internet voting systems shadows any discussion of internet effects on electoral participation, few jurisdictions have taken the step of putting it into practice.³¹ There is apparent support for internet voting among Australians, with 45 per cent reporting that internet voting would be “much easier” than the current process of polling booth attendance (McAllister et al., 2010b). However, any move towards internet voting seems distant (Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand, 2013). Currently online elector registration or enrolment is much more common than internet voting. By introducing an online enrolment system in June 2013, Australia joined Canada, the UK, New Zealand and several states in the US in allowing citizens to enrol to vote entirely over the internet.

4.4 Electoral enrolment

Electoral enrolment, like voting, is compulsory in Australia.³² Once enrolled, citizens are required to vote, and easily traced and fined if they do not vote (and do not have a valid reason for not voting). However those who do not enrol are for practically unpunishable. This is because they only become known to the electoral commission if

³¹ Only Estonia has adopted an internet voting system. Several jurisdictions – Finland, India and Switzerland – have hosted trials but made no commitment to ongoing use, while the United States hosted the Arizona Democratic Party primary election trial in 2001.

³² In fact, enrolment was made compulsory in 1912, six years before compulsory voting was enacted.

electoral participation depends at least in part upon what online resources are available to citizens. If the internet does not constitute a political resource, it is unlikely to mobilise participation. In the case of electoral participation, the internet can help to mobilise voters by providing information about parties and candidates, salient issues, technical and logistical information about the voting process, as well as opportunities to enrol to vote. The following section details the supply-side of this equation: the kind of information available online, and how it is likely to mobilise citizens to the polling booth.

4.3 The 'supply' side: parties and candidates online

The previous discussion of individual-level effects of internet use on electoral participation assumes that citizens can – and do – access political resources online. Australian Election Study data in Chapter 3 shows that 35 per cent of Australians used the internet to access political news and other election-related information during the 2010 federal election campaign. This section examines the kinds of political information available online, drawing on research on online campaigning and other 'supply-side' uses of the internet in Australia (with international benchmarks). Australian political parties were quick to adopt the internet for communicating with the electorate. Gibson and McAllister (2008) note that the Australian Labor Party was among the first parties in the world to have a website, in 1994. However, in the almost 20 years since then, the rate of online progress among Australian political institutions has slowed (Gibson and McAllister, 2008). Indeed, research on the intervening period in Australian politics almost invariably comments upon the small numbers of voters accessing parties' and candidates' online campaigns, and the simplicity of those campaigns compared with those in the United States and elsewhere (Gibson & McAllister 2009; Chen & Smith 2010; Chen 2013). The purpose of online political resources in the context of electoral participation is two-fold: that potential voters can learn about parties, candidates and issues, and that they can find out technical and logistical information about the voting process.

To learn about parties, candidates and issues, potential voters need to be able to access relevant information online. This is most likely to come from media outlets, online news services such as political blogs, and the official websites of parties and

candidates. Each of the major parties has an established web presence, with official websites including pages dedicated to individual candidates (Gibson and Ward, 2002). By 2010 the major parties each had established online presences (Chen, 2012). During the 2010 election campaign, eight per cent of Australians reported visiting parties' or candidates' websites (McAllister et al., 2010a). That number has increased only minimally from six per cent at the 2004 election. Data from the Australian Candidate Study (ACS),²⁹ conducted alongside the Australian Election Study (AES), show that in the same period, the number of candidates with personal websites has increased disproportionately (Figure 4.1). Aside from a small decrease at the 2004 election, the use of personal candidate websites in campaigns has increased steadily, from 37 per cent of candidates in 2001 to 55 per cent in 2010. Positive attitudes towards the importance of using the internet in campaigns have expanded from 14 per cent of candidates in 2001 to 64 per cent in 2010.³⁰ The respective increases far outweigh the slow growth in Australian citizens visiting these sites (per Chapter 3). In other words, supply has grown faster than demand.

The ACS data reflect findings from elsewhere in the literature. Australian research shows that the Australian parties and candidates made increasing use of online media such as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook between the 2007 and 2010 elections, but that the audiences remained relatively small (Chen and Smith, 2010; Chen, 2012). Gibson and McAllister (2011b) observe similar trends in Web 2.0 campaigning in Australia. Looking internationally, Australia appears to lag behind the internet campaigning developments seen in the United Kingdom, Canada and United States, but have adopted personal candidate websites earlier than New Zealand parties and candidates (Chen and Smith, 2010; Davis et al., 2010; Gibson and Cantijoch, 2011). Gibson and Cantijoch (2011) declare that the 2010 Australian election was *not* an 'internet election', despite expectations that the internet could affect the outcome. Indeed, new online techniques had no effect on the vote (Gibson and McAllister, 2011b).

²⁹ The ACS surveys all federal election candidates from the major parties following the election. Since 2001, the ACS has included questions on candidates' use of online campaign techniques.

³⁰ The 2010 measure includes an additional response category of 'extremely'; the 64 per cent figure consequently includes responses of 'very important' and 'extremely important'.

they apply to enrol, in which case they are exempted from punishment by federal law.³³ The easiest way to abstain from voting in Australia is therefore not to enrol, but the relative anonymity of unenrolled Australians also makes them difficult to study. Reflective of downward trends in voter turnout across advanced democracies, the percentage of voting aged Australians who are enrolled to vote has fallen in the post-war period (Figure 4.2). This section looks at the factors affecting electoral enrolment. To do so, it analyses data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) 2006 Census of Population and Housing, an Australia-wide census conducted every five years. Survey samples drawn from the electoral roll, including the Australian Election Study and the World Values Study, exclude the unenrolled, while a targeted study would require more resources than are available to this project. As the ABS data are confidential at the individual level, the data have been aggregated here to the level of federal electoral divisions.

The Australian Electoral Commission (2013) reports that 85 per cent of enrolments in the final week before the electoral roll was closed in preparation for 2013 federal election were submitted online. The remarkably high proportion of online enrolments suggests that at least some of those citizens would not have enrolled offline, or that they would have attempted to enrol by post but missed the roll closure deadline. Beyond allowing online enrolment, EMBs at the state and federal levels in Australia have used the internet (including social networking services) to encourage citizens to enrol (Macnamara et al., 2012). Research into EMBs in Australian and New Zealand has found "a high level of interest and willingness within the government bodies studied and a commitment to ongoing trials and further learning", but that "there is still some way to go before social media significantly increase citizens' voice and democratic participation" (Macnamara, et al. 2012, p. 636).

One such internet-based campaign was conducted in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) in 2012. With an election imminent, the relevant EMB – Elections ACT – launched a social media campaign in August 2012 to improve voter enrolment rates:

"Less than half of the ACT's 18 and 19 year olds are enrolled to vote for October's Legislative Assembly election ... The ACT Electoral Commission is hoping to lift this participation rate by using social media to engage with young

³³ Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012).

people about enrolment and voting in the lead up to the election, with the launch today of the Elections ACT facebook page" (Elections ACT, 2012a).

Between the launch of the campaign and a subsequent announcement on 18 September 2012, enrolment rates had increased from 48 to 60 per cent of eligible 18 year olds, 42 to "under 50" per cent of 19 year olds, and 78 to "around 80" per cent of 20 to 24 year olds (Elections ACT, 2012b). While any increase in the size of an electoral franchise should be viewed as positive, the role of the internet in any increase is uncertain. However, the campaign – and others like it – appears to assume that the internet can help to overcome at least some of the obstacles to electoral registration. To assess whether this is possible first requires consideration of those obstacles.

This study hypothesises that a range of factors, based broadly on Verba et al.'s (1995) civic voluntarism model, can predict electoral enrolment in Australia. The first factor is educational attainment. This is measured by the percentage of people currently attending a tertiary education and who already possess a bachelor degree or higher within an electoral division. The second factor is socioeconomic status. To the extent that it is not measured by educational attainment, SES is measured here by the percentages of low-income earning households (i.e. between \$7800 and \$18148 annually) and high-income earning households (ie \$52000 annually and higher). The income metrics applied here follow the ABS' model of Socioeconomic Indexes for Areas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006a).

The third of those factors in this model is age. Age is measured in the model by the percentages of residents below 30 and 50 or older in an electorate. Internationally, young people are least likely to vote (see for example Wattenberg 2008). Whether this is the effect of patterns in participation over the lifecycle (e.g. where participatory behaviour peaks around an individual's middle age, when they have the most resources) or whether it is a generational effect (in which young people in this generation are less likely to vote, and are also not likely to vote as they age) is debated. Most studies have found that lifecycle and generational effects co-exist to varying degrees to cause an observable decline in electoral participation; that young people *today* are less likely to vote than in previous generations, although young people have traditionally been the least likely to vote (for example Blais et al. 2002; Blais et al. 2004; Rubenson et al. 2004; Blais 2007; Gallego 2009; Bhatti & Hansen 2012; Bhatti et al. 2012; Persson et al. 2013).

The respective causal mechanisms of each effect are not established, but two broad schools of thought have emerged. First, that young people possess less political knowledge than their elders, and are less likely to be politically engaged and active as a result (Rubenson et al., 2004). This lifecycle effect has turned into a generational effect, as values have changed over time and general levels of political interest have declined in many countries; while the young and disengaged once grew to become engaged, cultural changes have seen them stay disengaged, and their children likewise (Blais, 2007; Inglehart, 1977, 2008). The second school of thought is related, but focuses on that habit of voting rather than engagement. Franklin (2004) finds a confluence of circumstances that helps to explain turnout declines through the second half of the 20th century. First, the character of individual elections did little to mobilise voters, but particularly new voters, to turn out to vote. Second, electoral reforms lowering the voting age in many countries meant those new voters were younger than ever, and more prone to become either habitual voters or non-voters. Finally, by not turning out for the first two or three elections once they achieved voting age, were far more likely to continue not to vote as they aged. Once young citizens learn not to vote, they become stuck in their ways (Aldrich et al., 2011; Franklin, 2004; Gerber et al., 2003). Whether either – or both – of these causes exists in the Australian context is uncertain, and beyond the scope of this particular study. In the meantime, age is measured and controlled for, to isolate the effects of internet access.

The fourth factor is ethnicity, measured here by the percentage of Australian-born residents and those who have little proficiency in the English language, which influences several aspects of the voting process. First, electoral enrolment in Australia is restricted to citizens, thus excluding permanent residents (who are extended the franchise in New Zealand, for example). Immigrants to Australia are required to be granted citizenship before they can enrol to vote. Second, language proficiency is a civic skill, which Verba et al. (1995) argue is a key predictor of participation. Proficiency in English is useful to completing the relevant enrolment processes, as well as being a skill which gives its owner the confidence to participate in a political act such as voting.

The fifth factor predicting enrolment is residential mobility. The enrolment process in Australia requires any citizen aged 18 or over to submit a hardcopy form to the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC). Once enrolled, he is required to keep his

address details updated in order to be eligible to vote. The AEC periodically 'cleans' the electoral roll, deleting those whom they have reason to believe no longer live at their enrolled address (Brent and Jackman, 2007). The effect of residential mobility on enrolment and turnout is not contained to the AEC's processes, however. Studies from the United States have found that one third of American citizens move every two years, and requirements that they update their electoral registration following each change of address 'impede' their turnout (Brians and Grofman, 2001; Highton, 2000; Squire et al., 1987; Timpone, 1998). Turnout rates among citizens who have moved in the previous two years is as low as "young people or the uneducated" (Squire et al., 1987, p. 46). Mobility is therefore a hypothesised predictor of enrolment: individuals who have recently moved house are more likely to be deleted from the roll, or be incorrectly enrolled, than those with a stable residence (pending the introduction of direct enrolment procedures).

The internet has the potential to positively affect electoral enrolment, perhaps primarily by overcoming the problem of residential mobility. As shown in Elections ACT's (2012a, 2012b) use of a social media campaign to enrol voters before the 2012 ACT election, the internet can negate the need for a current, fixed address or home phone line in order to contact citizens. Prior to the parallel diffusions of internet access and mobile phones, staying in contact with residentially mobile citizens – such as university students and tenants – was logistically more difficult. Internet access is measured as the percentage of households in an electorate with either no internet access, broadband access, dial-up access or other, unspecified forms of access.

The distribution of internet access reveals a strong rural influence: the more rural an electorate is, the fewer residents will have any internet access, and those who do are more likely to have dial-up than broadband access (Figure 4.2). As discussed in Chapter 3, the relationship between location and type of internet access is likely the result of lower availability of broadband technology outside of metropolitan areas, although income could also be a factor. Figure 4.2 shows the relationships between the type of connection and the demographic ranking of electorates, where 'inner metropolitan' is coded as 1 and 'rural' as 4 on a scale.³⁴ The concentration of broadband access in metropolitan areas is clear. It is expected that, because of its potential to negate the negative effects of mobility on electoral enrolment, the levels of

³⁴ Demographic rankings are taken from the Australian Parliamentary Library, which used 2006 ABS Census of Population and Housing data to construct demographic profiles of each federal electoral division (Bennett and Barber, 2008).

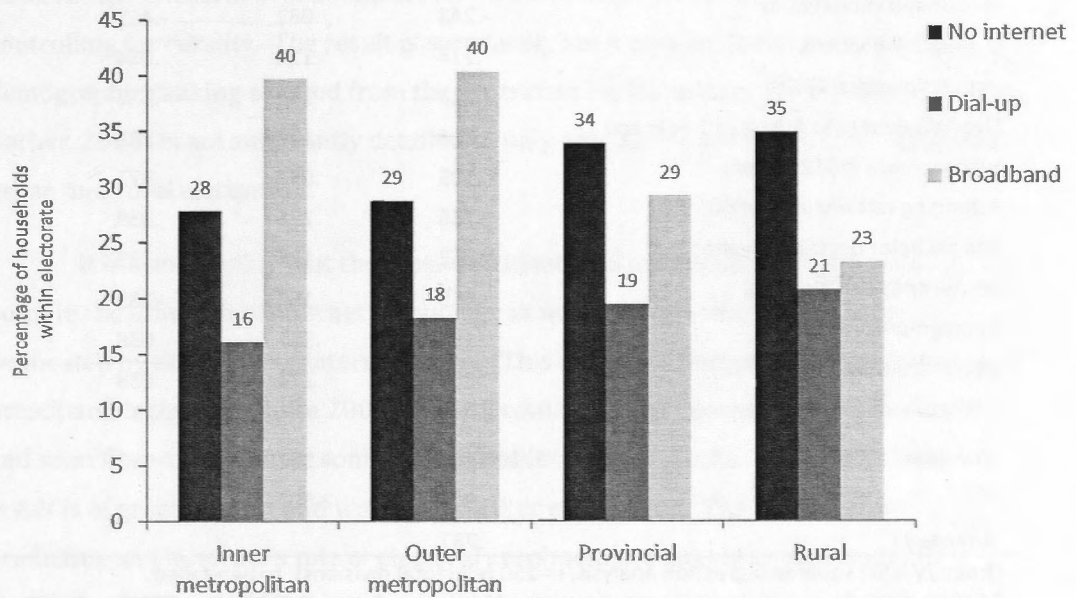


Figure 4.2: Percentage of households with no internet access, dial-up internet access and broadband internet access by demographic ranking of electorate

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006b); Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Australia (Bennett & Barber 2008). n=150.

both broadband and dial-up internet access should positively affect enrolment in Australia.

The impact of these five broad predictors on electoral enrolment – plus internet access – in Australia is presented in Table 4.1. Looking first at the effects of internet access, broadband access appears to have a negative effect on the level of enrolment in an election. This finding holds even though rurality is controlled for with the demographic ranking measure, suggesting that the negative effects of broadband access and no internet access are not proxy effects for rurality. The dial-up access coefficient, while insignificant, is nonetheless positive. The different measures of internet access therefore move accordingly with their place on the urban-rural scale, but appear to have an impact over and above the demographic ranking.

Table 4.1: Predictors of enrolment in Australia, 2006: data aggregated by federal electoral division

	B	SE	b	p
Broadband connections	-.243	.082	-.415	.004
Dial-up connections	.114	.124	.064	.363
Population aged 17-29	-.718	.105	-.532	.000
Lived elsewhere in Australia 1 year ago	-.398	.112	-.218	.001
High incomes (>\$52000 pa)	.505	.097	.577	.000
Attending tertiary institution	.780	.275	.339	.005
Has bachelor degree or higher	-.362	.124	-.319	.004
Do not speak English well	-.415	.153	-.189	.007
Demographic ranking	.185	.357	.038	.604
Electoral status	.257	.274	.038	.350
Constant	100.294	4.367		.000
r ²	.801	2.607		
Adjusted r ²	.787			

Ordinary least squares regression analysis. n=150 (electoral divisions). p=two-tailed.

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006b) ; Certified List Elector Count (Australian Electoral Commission, 2007). Dependent variable: Percentage of residents enrolled by federal electoral division (elector count/census count).

A rural electorate which has a relatively stable and older population is therefore already more likely to have a higher rate of enrolment than an inner metropolitan electorate with a more mobile, younger population, for instance a city-based electorate. However it appears that, even in inner metropolitan electorates where electoral enrolment is already relatively low, the diffusion of broadband access can predict even lower rates of enrolment. It is likely that this effect says more about the characteristics of electorates with high broadband diffusion than it does about the actual effects of internet use. For example, the measurement of broadband access may actually reflect some other features of inner metropolitan electorates, for example youth, tertiary education, professional employment and high residential mobility. This is an inherent problem of aggregate regression analysis, and is encapsulated by the notably high coefficient of determination (or *r*-squared figure) (see for example Kelley & McAllister 1983).

Electoral enrolment in Australia is negatively affected by rates of broadband internet access in an electorate. Figure 4.2 shows that rural electorates are far less

likely than inner metropolitan electorates to have high rates of broadband access, however the effects of broadband access on enrolment rates persists even after controlling for rurality. The result is surprising, but it may be, for instance, that the demographic ranking sourced from the Australian Parliamentary Library (Bennett and Barber, 2008) is not sufficiently detailed to fully account for the differences between urban and rural electorates.

It is also possible that the cross-sectional data presented here capture a specific point in the diffusion of internet technology in which geographic regions were delineated by their type of internet access. This has likely changed with the diffusion of broadband technology since 2006, and will continue to change as mobile broadband and soon fibre-to-the-home connections proliferate in Australia. Nonetheless, the result is of great interest and worthy of further exploration. The other factors predicting an electorate's rate of electoral enrolment are largely as expected: the proportions of youth, non-English speakers and recent arrivals to an electorate have negative effects on the enrolment rate (although the negative effect of educational attainment is more surprising), while the proportion of high income earners and the closeness of the electoral contest have positive effects. The next section looks at voting behaviour, and particularly those Australians who, having registered to vote, fail to do so.

4.5 Voter turnout

As with Elections ACT's (2012a; 2012b) 'remember to enrol' campaign on social media, EMBs in Australia are increasingly using the internet as a platform for 'remember to vote' campaigns (Macnamara et al., 2012). Access to the internet can increase a potential voter's exposure to political information, including news about current affairs and information about how and where to vote. Even if they do not seek out such information, it is likely that they will inadvertently come across it while browsing. For example, Facebook users are exposed to political advertisements targeted to their geographic location. Some will also be exposed to direct appeals from EMBs to turn out to vote. Exposure to information should, as when predicting enrolment rates, have a positive impact. But whether any effects are sufficiently strong to show up in a multivariate analysis is unknown. There should be no significant

difference between the effects of broadband and dial-up internet access after controlling for electorate demographics (i.e. inner metropolitan, outer metropolitan, provincial and rural).

The multivariate analysis of voter turnout (by enrolled population) in Australia reveals that neither the rate of broadband or dial-up internet access in an electorate has a significant effect on how many of its residents vote (see Table 4.2). Those factors that are significant are mostly as would be expected: the higher the proportion of young people, recent arrivals to the electorate and non-English speakers, the lower the turnout. These effects exist in addition to the effects that they have on enrolment, shown in Table 4.1; non-English speakers are less likely than English speakers to enrol, but even those who are enrolled appear less likely to turn out to vote. Less obvious was the significant negative effect of bachelor degree attainment on turnout, particularly when compared with the strong positive effect of the rate of students currently attending a tertiary institution. Turnout among tertiary students is probably a factor of exposure to voting information on campus and encouragement from fellow students. The characteristics of tertiary attendance in this way reflect the characteristics of internet use. These results show, however, that by themselves the characteristics of internet access do not directly affect voter turnout.

Rather than abstaining by not attending a polling booth, and incurring a fine as a result, an Australian who does not wish to cast a vote can instead cast an informal vote and avoid being fined (Hill and Young, 2007; Pringle, 2012). There are no obvious reasons why internet access would be expected to affect overall levels of informal voting besides the additional exposure to information about voting, including access to candidate information and sample ballot papers prior to election day. This is not to say that any meaningful number of voters seek out this information, rather that it is more accessible online than offline. Again, it is not expected that either broadband or dial-up access should have a significant effect, but if there is any sign of a relationship, it should be positive. The results presented in Table 4.3 support this expectation: neither measure of internet use in an electorate has a significant effect on the rate of informal votes. Moreover, the significant factors affecting informal voting are largely as expected, namely the strong positive effects of the proportion of people not proficient in English and the number of candidates standing for election (see for example Hill & Young 2007). The proportion of high income earners in an electorate makes informal

Table 4.2: Predictors of turnout (by enrolled population) in Australia, 2006: data aggregated by federal electoral division

	B	SE	b	p
Broadband connections	.033	.040	.181	.405
Dial-up connections	.081	.060	.145	.180
Population aged 17-29	-.225	.051	-.531	.000
Lived elsewhere in Australia 1 year ago	-.265	.054	-.463	.000
High incomes (>\$52000 pa)	-.001	.047	-.005	.976
Attending tertiary institution	.533	.133	.739	.000
Has bachelor degree or higher	-.216	.060	-.607	.000
Do not speak English well	-.259	.074	-.375	.001
Demographic ranking	-.232	.173	-.152	.183
Electoral status	-.005	.133	-.002	.969
Constant	101.636	2.121		.000
r ²	.524	1.259		
Adjusted r ²	.486			

Ordinary least squares regression analysis. n=150. p=two-tailed.

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006b) ; Certified List Elector Count (Australian Electoral Commission, 2007).

Dependent variable: Turnout among enrolled population.

votes slightly less likely, while the proportion of tertiary students and the tightness of the contest (measured by the difference between the final two candidates at the previous election) make informal votes substantially less likely. In sum, the results – including the lack of any effects of internet use – are unsurprising.

Breaking the rate of informal votes down into intentional (i.e. protest) and unintentional votes yields similar results. Table 4.4 shows the result of multivariate regression analysis predicting informal protest voting by electorate, and the factors listed have very little predictive power. Only the rates of residents holding a bachelor degree (negative) and who are not proficient in English (positive), as well as the rurality of the electorate (negative) have significant effects on how many protest votes were cast in 2007. Given the small numbers of voters who cast a protest ballot (from between 0.13 and 1.1 per cent of voters in an electorate), these results are again as expected. There is not likely to be any characteristics or relationships that can describe such a small group in any significant way. So few Australians use their vote as an opportunity to express any sort of protest against their political institutions

Table 4.3: Predictors of informal voting in Australia, 2006: data aggregated by federal electoral division

	B	SE	β	p
Broadband connections	.043	.025	.318	.097
Dial-up connections	.011	.038	.027	.769
Population aged 17-29	.082	.032	.267	.012
Lived elsewhere in Australia 1 year ago	-.072	.035	-.171	.041
Attending tertiary institution	-.277	.084	-.527	.001
Do not speak English well	.286	.047	.569	.000
High incomes (>\$52000 pa)	-.060	.030	-.299	.047
Has bachelor degree or higher	-.045	.038	-.174	.237
Demographic ranking	-.015	.109	-.013	.893
Electoral status	-.146	.084	-.094	.086
Number of candidates	.272	.045	.331	.000
Constant	2.916	1.352		.033
r^2	.646	.798		
Adjusted r^2	.618			

Ordinary least squares regression analysis. n=150. p=two-tailed.

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006b) ; Certified List Elector Count (Australian Electoral Commission, 2007).

Dependent variable: Percentage of informal votes cast by electorate (Australian Electoral Commission).

– be it the electoral system, the candidates, parties or the parliament – that any empirical connection between them is unlikely to be found. They are, most likely, uncorrelated.

Compulsory voting has many effects on the Australian political system, not least in maintaining consistently high voter turnout. Once a citizen is enrolled, he retains two options for abstaining: not attending a polling booth (and risk being fined), or voting informally. Neither of these appears to be affected by rates of internet access at the aggregate level, however no effects were theorised. When breaking informal voting down to include only protest voting (namely blank and ‘scribbled’ votes), none of the expected determinants has a significant effect. The analysis suggests that protest voting in Australia is not a factor of any of the usual determinants of abstention, and perhaps not a factor of anything in particular. The analysis moreover confirms that most Australians enrol to vote, attend a polling booth, and cast a valid ballot. However, individual-level data would shed much greater light on which enrolled voters abstain in Australia, and how they choose to abstain.

Table 4.4: Predictors of informal protest voting in Australia, 2006: data aggregated by federal electoral division

	B	SE	b	p
Broadband connections	-.002	.005	-.093	.714
Dial-up connections	-.001	.007	-.015	.905
Population aged 17-29	-.001	.006	-.034	.809
Lived elsewhere in Australia 1 year ago	-.001	.007	-.014	.901
Attending tertiary institution	-.000	.016	.000	1.000
Do not speak English well	.031	.009	.424	.001
High incomes (>\$52000 pa)	-.004	.006	-.130	.513
Has bachelor degree or higher	-.016	.007	-.437	.026
Demographic ranking	-.050	.021	-.316	.017
Electoral status	-.022	.016	-.098	.177
Number of candidates	.014	.009	.122	.095
Constant	.961	.259		.000
r ²	.372	.153		
Adjusted r ²	.322			

Ordinary least squares regression analysis. n=150. p=two-tailed.
Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006b) ; Certified List Elector Count (Australian Electoral Commission, 2007).
Dependent variable: Percentage of combined 'blank' and 'scribble/slogan' votes cast by electorate (Australian Electoral Commission).

4.6 Conclusion

Using census data, the chapter has explored the role of internet access in electoral participation in Australia. Aggregated at the level of federal electoral divisions, the data showed that rates of broadband access are highly correlated with urban electorates and dial-up access with rural electorates, reflecting a cross-sectional picture of technology use in Australia in 1996. The rate of broadband connections in an electorate negatively predicted electoral enrolment (calculated as the number of residents enrolled as a proportion of the voting aged population of the electorate according to the census), even when controlling for the urban-rural character of the electorate. This does not dismiss the possibility of internet effects, however. While not significant, rates of dial-up connections had a positive effect on electoral enrolment. The difference between the two types of internet access indicates that the measures in the census data may be accounting for other effects, possibly rurality, which is captured here in a relatively blunt, four-measure scale. Neither form of internet access had any

significant effects on voter turnout, rates of informal voting or rates of protest voting at the electorate level. However, individual level survey data would allow for more minute examination of the effects of internet use on electoral participation in Australia.

Voting in Australia is not merely a civic duty, but a compulsion backed up by federal legislation. By voting, an Australian citizen is not necessarily expressing her support for her country's democratic institutions; she is just as likely seeking to avoid being fined for not attending a polling booth. Accordingly, multivariate analysis in this chapter suggests that Australian voting behaviour is more instrumental than expressive. The key examples here are the effects of mobility and English language proficiency. Federal electorates with a more transient population, characteristic of university students and those without children or families to support, have lower voter enrolment and turnout. Likewise, electorates with high proportions of non-English speakers have low participation rates.

This does not assume that those populations are less interested in politics or a less developed sense of civic duty (although, according to Dalton (2008a), civic duty is less prevalent among the young), but that they have chosen to opt out of the voting process. Perhaps the costs of voting are prohibitive, either in terms of time, money or civic skills (Verba et al., 1995). Perhaps, on the other hand, they do not fully understand the consequences of abstention under Australian law. Individual level data would help to map the process of informal voting, teasing out the degree of intention behind a blank or spoil ballot, but without such data the analysis here provides some headway into understanding electoral participation in Australia. Next, this study explores the effects of internet use on partisanship and campaign participation in Australia, the other major example of formal political participation.

Chapter 5 – political parties, the internet and campaign participation

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the effects of internet use on party identification, membership of political parties and contributions of time and money to parties and candidates among Australian citizens. Each of these activities comprises engagement with conventional political institutions: the electoral system and political parties. Through these actions, individuals help to maintain the political structures that are a feature of a functioning democracy.³⁵ Political party membership and contributions to parties and candidates – described here collectively as ‘campaign participation’ – works to maintain the dominance of formal political parties in the democratic processes of seeking election and governing. By supporting political parties, individuals are reinforcing political norms and preventing the introduction of new political competitors. The internet has arguably made it easier for citizens in advanced democracies to support political parties, including during campaigns: new opportunities to belong to online networks of supporters (Dalton et al., 2011; Scarrow, 2013, forthcoming), donate money online (Levenshus, 2010; Schlozman et al., 2010) and declare support for a preferred party or candidate online (Bekafigo and McBride, 2013; Bond et al., 2012b)

The number of Australians belonging to political parties has never been large, although rates of party identification are consistently high (McAllister, 2011). Due largely to compulsory voting laws, Australian political culture has not engendered party membership in the same way as in countries such as Austria, where parties provide high rates of patronage to their members (Muller, 1994). The rate of party membership in Australia has stayed consistent at around two per cent of the population in the postwar period (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010; Bean, 1997). The largest dataset of political behaviour in Australia, the Australian Election Study,

³⁵ Political protest, on the contrary, can and often does seek to reform or dismantle those political structures.

does not measure party membership (with the exception of the 1996 survey). Why, then, is it worth studying at all?

Party membership serves five vital functions beyond just being an outlet for individuals' political expression (Dalton et al., 2011). First, party members perform the important intra-party role of selecting candidates for nomination at general elections. Membership is also necessary for individuals wishing to represent any of the Australian parties as a candidate at a general election. Members moreover help to organise elections, including scrutineering ballot counts at Australian elections. Second, in voluntary voting systems, party organisations provide vital mobilising services, encouraging and assisting citizens to vote. In Australian elections, this function is instead provided by the Australian Electoral Commission, and the enforcement of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*. Third, party members help to shape their parties' ideological positions on governance and policy, providing voters with clear choices when they go to vote. In the final two linkage functions identified by Dalton et al. (2011), parties – via their candidates – are elected to represent constituencies in a legislature, forming stable governments and oppositions, before implementing the policies communicated before the election.

With so few Australians wielding a large degree of power in Australia's process of nominating and selecting candidates for public office, it is valuable to understand who joins political parties, and why. This study examines whether the advent of the internet has changed the profile of Australian political party members. Theory suggests there are two main ways in which the internet could play a role. First, internet technologies have reduced the cost and time required for parties to contact both existing and potential members and donors (Schlozman et al., 2012). For example, members of Australian parties can renew their party subscriptions online and new members can sign up online without having to attend a party meeting or meet with party officials (Australian Labor Party, n.d.; Liberal Party of Australia, n.d.). Supporters can donate to parties or specific candidates from their desktop. Further, parties elsewhere in the world are developing online-only levels of membership, in which members need never leave the comfort of their home to still be an active member (Dalton et al., 2011; Scarrow, 2013). Second, but as importantly, the internet is expected to have indirect effects on party membership, by enhancing exposure to political information and recruitment by political actors and peers (Bimber, 2003; Römmele, 2003).

This chapter extends the analysis of party membership to include those who align themselves with a party, but do not necessarily join the organisation, as well as those who volunteer their time to parties and candidates (for example by handing out flyers during an election campaign) and donate money to parties and candidates. The internet is expected to affect these contributions through the framework of civic voluntarism (Verba et al. 1995), particularly the types of resources required to participate in political activity. Contributions of time are expected to be more easily made online: an individual with little free time should be more likely to distribute political content to his peer network than to volunteer to hand out flyers for two hours on a Saturday. Likewise, the types of civic skills required to speak to potential supporters and persuade voters are probably as useful in predicting the distribution or creation of online political material. People with little free time should likewise be more likely to donate money online than offline.

This chapter begins by revisiting the role of the internet in the civic voluntarism framework of participation (Verba et al. 1995). It tests the hypothesis that online resources will either substitute for the traditional resources of time, money and civic skills, or they will complement them in predicting campaign participation (Section 5.2). Section 5.3 explores the linkage between Australian parties and citizens, and the role of party websites and online communications. Section 5.4 examines levels of party identification in Australia: the extent to which Australians align with any particular party, and the expected role of the internet in strengthening or weakening that alignment. Section 5.5 analyses the effects of internet use on party membership in Australia in 2010. Section 5.6 explores contributions of time and money to Australian parties over time, before analysing the effects of internet use in 2010. Finally, this chapter discusses the implications of the findings on Australian democracy.

5.2 *Internet resources, civic voluntarism, engagement with parties and campaign participation*

Verba et al.'s (1995) civic voluntarism model argues the positive effects of an individual's resources, political engagement and recruitment by political actors on the likelihood that he participates in political activity. The resources described by Verba et al. (1995) are free time, money and civic skills. This chapter compares the effects of online and offline resources on individuals' campaign participation. Engagement with

parties is measured here by strength of party identification, party membership, financial contributions to parties or candidates and voluntary work for a party or candidate. Resources are categorised as either offline or online: free time offline, free time online, traditional civic skills, and internet skills.

Where an act can only be performed offline – for example joining a political party in Australia – it is expected that while civic skills should be the stronger predictor, internet skills will retain a small positive effect. The implications for the civic voluntarism model of political participation are substantial, but most important is the question of whether internet resources – online time and online skills – can substitute for the traditional resources of free time and civic skills, or whether they merely complement those traditional skills. In other words, does an individual with ample online resources, but few traditional resources, have the same likelihood of participating in politics as someone with ample traditional resources, and no internet access, or at least few online resources? Do those possessing offline resources participate offline, and those with online resources participate online?

Existing research suggests that the internet partially mitigates the need for an individual to have ample free time in order to participate in politics (see for example Bimber 2003; Best & Krueger 2005). Time has a cost, and traditional acts of political participation have required a relatively high investment of time. An individual interested in joining a political party requires free time, first to find out the requirements for party membership, then to complete those requirements, and finally to actively participate in the party. If the individual decides to take an official position within the party, be it as an officer of the local branch of the party, or as an officer at the electorate, state or federal level, an even greater investment of time is required. The same applies to voluntary contributions of time or money to a party, but particularly, obviously, with regards to time. Contributing to a political campaign by handing out 'how to vote cards' to voters on election day requires the donation of usually several hours, generally ruling out those who have responsibility for young, elderly or infirm family members or who are engaged in paid employment on weekends.

Free time is operationalised in this analysis in two different ways: as the hours an individual has to himself each day, allowing him to participate in offline activities; and the frequency of an individual's internet use, allowing him to participate in online activities. These measurements reflect the nature of time as a resource that an individual must possess in order to participate. To act offline, an individual needs time

free from work, family or study commitments. To act online, an individual needs to spend at least some time online. The more time an individual has – either offline or online – to spend, the less costly an act of participation becomes. The 2010 Australian Election Study (AES) is the first in the series to ask respondents about both the time they have to themselves on an average day and the time they spend online in an average week.

Both offline and online free time should positively affect party membership, particularly as parties increase their online presence. While much of the literature on party organisations' use of internet technologies is rapidly overtaken by events, the key assumptions about the effects of having an online presence should hold. Access to information online makes it easier for potential members to learn about and contact parties, while membership subscriptions can often now be paid and registered online (see for example Römmele 2003). Likewise, the increasing use of the internet to transfer money has seen the increase of convenient 'e-donations' in favour of cheque or cash donations, particularly among those making small financial contributions to parties. Margetts (2006) describes such developments as symptomatic of an organisational shift away from mass parties and toward 'cyber parties'. In a cyber party,

“...members [are] afforded more flexible channels for participation and opportunities to form and join looser issue- and policy-based networks... Such easy exit and entry barriers [are] also seen to create the possibility for a massive and floating support base less able to hold leaders accountable, and the emergence of a narrower digital elite that displaces the more traditional activist base” (Gibson et al. 2012, p. 32).³⁶

Similarly, Scarrow (forthcoming) observes that political parties are already beginning to offer varying levels of affiliation. Among the less formal modes of membership is 'cyber member', “formally registered party supporters who are generally recruited through a party's web page” and who “are encouraged to campaign on the party's behalf, and to help spread the party message to others” (Scarrow, forthcoming). In Scandinavia, some parties have trialled 'online-only' forms of party

³⁶ Parallels between Margetts' (2006) theory of 'cyber parties' and the mainstream parties literature, characterised by Katz and Mair's (1995) theory of cartelisation are discussed in Section 5.3.

membership in response to declining numbers of traditional (i.e. 'offline') members (Dalton et al., 2011). At the extreme ends of this observed spectrum of party affiliations lie traditional party membership and one-way news audiences. The internet has the potential to expand that news audience via social media such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as through subscription to email newsletter services (Gibson and McAllister, 2009a).

Internet use is also expected to affect the predictive role of money, the second determinant of participation in Verba et al.'s (1995) model, by lowering the financial costs of some forms of participation. Money is measured in the AES by gross annual household income; there is no equivalent online measurement of money. However, Chapter 3 shows that money is a barrier to having internet access – the persistent social 'digital divide' – and so there is an antecedent positive effect of wealth in any online act of participation. In regard to monetary contributions, an individual's wealth is more likely to affect his propensity to donate money than to join or volunteer for a political party (see for example Verba et al., 1995, p. 190). Monetary contributions, or 'chequebook participation', are often made in conjunction with other forms of participation in campaign activity,³⁷ however that relationship seems to have diminished over time (Claggett and Pollock, 2006).

Much has been made of the success of Howard Dean's 2004 and Barack Obama's 2008 US presidential campaigns in attracting new, previously disengaged donors, who used the internet to contribute relatively small amounts of money (Hindman, 2005; Wilcox, 2008). While Claggett and Pollock's (2006) factor analysis of modes of participation spans 1980 to 2004, it is likely that the connection between contributions and other campaign acts has continued to erode as the low costs of email communication allows parties to solicit enormous numbers of people for small amounts of money. This approach to fundraising is typified by the Dean and Obama presidential primary campaigns, and contrasts with early American presidential campaigns which relied on a small number of carefully selected and prolific donors (Hindman, 2005; Wilcox, 2008). However other research notes that while the amount of money donated increases, the distribution of small *versus* big donors has largely remained stable (Smith, 2013). Donation trends are examined further in section 5.5.

³⁷ The bivariate correlation between attendance at political meetings or rallies and donation of money to a party or candidate during the 2010 Australian federal election was strong, for example ($r=.590$, $p=.001$) (McAllister et al., 2010).

Internet use is not expected to affect the civic skills described by the civic voluntarism model so much as internet proficiency should be considered a civic skill in its own right. Verba et al. (1995) measure civic skills as language proficiency, verbal ability, educational attainment, experience with organisational skill acts either at work, in non-political associations or at church. Krueger argues that internet skills should be added to the civic voluntarism model: "online skills help an individual overcome the technical hurdles associated with navigating the internet, just as civic skills help individuals act in a complex social and political world" (2002, p. 485). Further, internet skills and 'offline' civic skills are likely to be concentrated among different groups in a society, as discussed in Chapter 3. Krueger (2002) finds that internet skills are strong predictors of online political participation, while civic skills have no predictive power; on the other hand, civic skills are strong predictors of offline participation, but internet skills have no predictive power there. Accordingly, this study includes an independent variable measuring internet skills using the 'internet proficiency' scale discussed in Chapter 3 (section 3.5).

While time, money and civic skills are strong predictors of political participation, they do not explain it. Political engagement and recruitment by peers or political actors explains why individuals with the necessary resources choose to expend them on political activity. Engagement is not included in multivariate analyses throughout this study, as the aim is to instead analyse the effects of resources and recruitment on participation, both of which get obscured by the inclusion of measures of engagement. One measure of engagement in Verba et al.'s (1995) model is party identification, which is presented here as a dependent variable. The reasons for this are twofold. First, party identification can predict engagement with political parties, but it is not necessarily endogenous to party-related participation. Instead, party identification can be conceived as the antecedent attitude towards a political party which may or may not lead to participation. This analysis casts light on that larger group of identifiers, including participants and non-participants. Second, party identification is expected to be strengthened by internet use, through increasing opportunities for individuals to 'self-select' the media to which they expose themselves (for example Kenski & Stroud 2006; Stroud 2008; Iyengar & Hahn 2009).

Finally, the civic voluntarism model highlights the role of recruitment in the process of becoming active in politics. Recruitment takes two forms: informal

approaches from peers, and formal approaches from parties or candidates. Individuals who spend time online, particularly using social networking services such as Facebook or Twitter, are likely to have a larger network of informal contacts than those who do not (see for example Dalton & Kittilson 2012; Kittilson & Dalton 2011; Hampton et al. 2011). It is therefore expected that general internet use – measured by frequency of time spent online – should have a positive, but small, impact on donations of time and money. Internet use should increase the opportunities to be formally recruited by a political party or candidate. Australian and American political parties' use of sophisticated databases containing information on enrolled voters enables highly targeted, personalised and inexpensive communications with potential party activists. In 2010, only a small number of Australians were contacted by parties or candidates online: only 33 AES respondents (n=2214), or 1.5 per cent, reported receiving emails persuading them to vote for a particular candidate (McAllister et al., 2010a). Compulsory voting in Australia relieves parties from the burden of mobilising party activists, and hence innovating mobilisation techniques like those used in campaigns internationally (Karp et al., 2008).

5.3 Parties, citizen linkage and campaign participation: the use of internet communications

One of the central functions of political parties in civic life is the linkage they provide between a government and its citizens (Dalton et al., 2011). Even as parties have become cartelised, solidifying the relationship between parties and the state while reducing the need for grassroots organisation, contact between parties and citizens is still a central function of parties (Dalton et al., 2011; Katz and Mair, 1995). While party membership numbers continue to decline across advanced democracies, many parties have adapted by embracing new technologies to enable more targeted methods of voter mobilisation and make more efficient use of their grassroots volunteers (Dalton et al., 2011; Gibson et al., 2012; Scarrow, 2013). This section examines how the Australian parties are using the internet to connect with citizens, but particularly with their supporters and prospective volunteers.³⁸

³⁸ This section does not discuss the Australian parties' use of electronic databases of constituents, which have been studied in depth elsewhere (for example Onselen & Errington 2004; van Onselen & van Onselen 2008). The primary function of those databases is to target undecided voters on salient issues or policies, rather than to mobilise campaign volunteers.

With the exception of the LPA, the Australian parties appear to have resisted the trend of falling party membership as a proportion of the population of advanced democracies (see Chapter 2). This likely comes from the same source as many other aspects of Australia's political exceptionalism: compulsory voting. Not having to mobilise voluntary voters to turn out on election day, the Australian political parties also take a relatively indifferent approach to recruiting party members. Parties in other advanced democracies have moved away from mass party organisational models towards cartel party models, with greater public funding for party activities and greater reliance on large donors rather than members' subscription fees for campaign funding (Johns, 2006; Katz and Mair, 1995; Ward, 2006), Australian parties have not required the great amounts of money required to mobilise potential voters. Any financial or human capital at an Australian party's disposal has traditionally been reserved for the official election campaign; for purposes of persuasion rather than mobilisation (Johns, 2006). Parties in the US, for example, campaign to both mobilise and persuade different sections of the population, and a much larger population at that (Green and Gerber, 2010; Karp et al., 2008). Accordingly, Australian campaigns have always been relatively inexpensive operations. The Australian parties have slipped easily into Katz and Mair's (1995) cartelised organisational model, having never relied on large numbers of members to mobilise voters or fund campaigns (Marsh, 2006, 1995; Ward, 2006).

Each of the major Australian parties offers only one form of official membership. However, in 2013 the ALP implemented organisational reforms including a range of ways in which supporters and other interested parties can become involved in the party. Those interested in ALP politics and with access to the internet can join the party's 'Labor Connect' network or contribute to the online 'ThinkTank' forum, neither of which require any payment or ongoing commitment. However, involvement in these forums does not provide the individual with any say in intra-party politics, such as a vote in preselecting candidates or at any level of the party organisation. The ALP also publishes a page on its website directing supporters to call talkback radio or write letters to newspaper editors in support of ALP policies. In terms of actual membership options, the four major parties have for the most part embraced internet technology. The Nationals allow prospective members to submit expressions of interest online, to be contacted by the party organisation later. The AG provide full online membership services in each of their state divisions. The ALP and LPA offer

state-based memberships, with only some states allowing online registration: five state or territory divisions of the LPA, and three state divisions of the ALP. Where online registration is not available, prospective members can submit the required forms by post, fax or email.

Other obstacles to party membership, beside the administrative requirements of registration, include the cost of membership subscriptions and the time required to be an active, rather than passive, member. The ALP and AG offer progressive rates of membership subscription based on income. The LP and Nationals offer concessional rates to pensioners and students, as well as to members of their respective youth divisions. As mentioned, the ALP and AG also facilitate online political networks via their websites, in which network members can communicate with other supporters and with party officials. In both parties, this avenue for participation is separate from official party membership. Drawing on what is known about the internet – particularly Web 2.0 applications – and online participation, the advantages of online political networks are that they do not require a financial contribution (beyond possessing internet access) or attendance at meetings at a particular date or time, or even place. The social democratic parties, then, ostensibly encourage mass participation, with the traditional barriers to political party membership lowered. The conservative parties – the LPA and Nationals – still require pre-internet levels of time and money to become engaged with and/or participate in their party organisations.

5.4 Party identification

Party identification describes whether a person identifies as closer to one particularly political party, and if so, how strongly they identify with that party. As a measure of closeness to a party, it is generally viewed as a determinant of other political behaviours and characteristics: “once an individual becomes psychologically attached to a party, he or she tends to see politics from a partisan perspective” (Dalton, 2002). Moreover, party identification is often used as a frame through which the world is presented to citizens via the media and political actors (see for example the ‘political framing’ literature; Dalton 2002). Fiorina (1981) argues that party identification represents a rational decision on the part of a voter, based on parties’ previous performances and expected future performances, that allows the voter to make inexpensive, low-information decisions on political issues. Where once party identification – in terms of strength and direction – was highly socialised, passed from

Table 5.1: Mean characteristics of Australian citizens by strength of party identification, 2010

	Not very strong (n=510)	Fairly strong (n=913)	Very strong (n=334)
<i>Money</i>			
Household income ⁺	11.47 (5.43)	11.50 (5.90)	10.18 (5.74)**
<i>Time</i>			
Time to self (hours/day)	6.39 (5.82)	6.69 (7.45)	6.77 (6.90)
Time spent on internet ⁺	5.37 (2.21)	5.20 (2.28)	4.99 (2.40)*
Employment status	5.01 (2.33)	4.70 (2.36)	4.71 (2.36)*
<i>Civic skills</i>			
Educational attainment ⁺	3.41 (2.15)	3.47 (2.15)	3.10 (2.18)**
Born in Australia (1=yes)	0.77 (0.42)	0.78 (0.41)	0.78 (0.42)
Membership of non-political organisations	0.47 (0.77)	0.49 (0.76)	0.54 (0.82)
Job skills	1.42 (1.49)	1.51 (1.50)	1.40 (1.47)
Internet skills	1.92 (1.34)	1.90 (1.41)	1.69 (1.38)*
<i>Recruitment</i>			
Contact by parties/candidates	0.99 (0.29)	1.05 (0.32)	1.05 (.36)**
<i>Engagement</i>			
Interest in politics ⁺	3.18 (0.77)	3.20 (0.79)	3.21 (0.77)
Political knowledge	2.12 (1.66)	2.57 (1.76)	2.65 (1.74)**
<i>Controls</i>			
Sex (female)	0.51 (0.50)	0.51 (0.50)	0.51 (0.50)
Age	47.38 (17.36)	49.67 (17.32)	50.82 (18.15)*

One-way ANOVA. Standard deviations in parentheses. Between-group differences: **p<.01 *p<.05 (two-tailed).

Source: 2010 Australian Election Study (McAllister et al. 2010). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

generation to generation on the basis of socioeconomic status and racial or religious identification, those nexuses are dismantling (with corresponding generational increases in educational attainment and postmaterialist attitudes) (Dalton, 2002; Inglehart, 1990; Kemp, 1978).

The profile of party identifiers in Australia accords with international literature (Converse, 1969; Dalton, 2002).³⁹ The mean characteristics of 'not very strong', 'fairly strong' and 'very strong' party supporters in Table 5.1 suggest that party identification increases with age, and decreases with income, educational attainment and employment status. Very strong party identifiers are likewise the least likely to use the internet. This is not to suggest causal relationships between any of these factors. Rather, party identifiers are concentrated among the elderly in Australia; this is either a lifecycle or generational phenomenon, although drawing on the literature there are likely elements of both at work (Converse, 1969; Dalton, 2002; McAllister, 2011; Milbrath, 1965; Putnam, 2001). The other characteristics which appear to decline as partisanship increases – income, employment status, educational attainment and internet use – are artefacts of age, rather than expected negative determinants of party identification.

Those with very strong party identification display greater factual political knowledge and report having been contacted by parties and candidates in the previous election campaign at greater rates than those with weaker identification. This supports the thesis that contacting citizens comprises a core linkage function of political parties (Dalton et al., 2011). More interestingly, very strong party identifiers display no more political interest than weaker identifiers, suggesting that party identification in Australia serves as an ideological cue enabling low-cost political decision making, and also that political interest and party support are decoupling in Australia, as elsewhere (Dalton, 2012, 2002; Fiorina, 1981; Milbrath, 1965).

Looking more closely at the predictors of party identification among Australian citizens, multivariate regression results in Table 5.2 show the overwhelming influence of contacting. When controlling for other factors the effect of age becomes negligible, as do the related effects of household income, employment status, educational attainment, and internet use. Instead, only being contacted by parties or candidates

³⁹ This section examines the strength of party identification among Australians, and not the direction of party identification. While interesting, particularly in terms of the breakdown of class and other effects on direction of party support, the direction of identification does not matter in this instance.

Table 5.2: Predictors of strength of party identification in Australia, 2010

	<i>Online resource model</i>			<i>All resource model</i>		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>Money</i>						
Household income	-.005	.003	-.041	-.004	.004	-.031
<i>Free time</i>						
Frequency of internet use				-.017	.012	-.055
Hours to self	.001	.003	.009	.001	.009	.009
<i>Civic skills</i>						
Internet skills				.009	.020	.019
Educational attainment	-.011	.009	-.035	-.009	-.028	-.028
Born in English-speaking country	.026	.042	.016	.026	.016	.016
Organisational memberships	.033	.024	.037	.035	.024	.040
Job skills	.004	.013	.009	.005	.013	.011
<i>Recruitment</i>						
Contact by party/candidate	.147**	.055	.067	.150**	.055	.069
<i>Controls</i>						
Age	.002*	.001	.053	.002	.001	.040
Sex (female)	.008	.034	.006	.007	.035	.005
Constant	1.670	.120		1.743	.134	
r^2	.013	.682		.010	.682	
Adjusted r^2	.008			.008		

Ordinary least squares regression analysis. ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$ (two-tailed). $n = 1609$.

Source: 2010 Australian Election Study (McAllister et al. 2010). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

during the previous campaign holds any predictive power. The model therefore says little about the distribution of party identification among Australians or the effects of specific factors, but it does point to the importance of Australian parties in keeping citizens psychologically attached to their preferred party. It also suggests that any lifecycle or generational declines in party identification can be overcome by the parties themselves.

The two measures of internet use in this model – time spent online and internet skills – have no significant effect on the strength of individuals' party identification (although time spent online has a small negative effect, with a relatively small standard error). Despite the comparatively low rates of internet use among the strongest party identifiers (Table 5.1), there is reason to hypothesise that the internet will have positive effects on party identification in the future. A range of studies on the effects of cable television news have found that as media outlets have proliferated and begun to target specific audience demographics based on ideological dispositions, the news audience – and in turn the electorate at large – has become more polarised ideologically (Iyengar and Hahn, 2009; Morris, 2007, 2005; Stroud, 2010, 2008). The same hypothesis applies to online news consumption; in fact, polarisation is arguably more likely to follow online news consumption, as the internet enables acute self-selection of news consumption (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2011; Nie et al., 2010). In Australia, for now at least, it appears that the internet has little effect on party identification. Moreover, in 2010 only 10 per cent of the population reported using the internet 'a good deal' to follow election news, compared with 20 per cent who used newspapers, 36 per cent television and 17 per cent radio (although online election news consumption has grown steadily since 1998) (McAllister et al., 2010a).

In Australia, there is no direct relationship between strength of party identification and political interest ($r=.004$, $p=.869$).⁴⁰ This can likely be attributed to Australia's system of compulsory voting, where citizens are required to vote in spite of any lack of interest or attachment to a party. Mackerras and McAllister (1999) observe that although party identification has been declining in Australia, both in the number of Australians who identify with a party and the average strength of the voter-party relationship, it remains strong against international benchmarks. Further, "unlike the mass publics in many other societies, ordinary voters provide little questioning of their

⁴⁰ When added as a predictor to the ordinary least squares regression analysis models presented in Table 5.1, political interest has small positive, non-significant effects ($b=.014$ and $.015$, $p>.10$ respectively).

role” as political institutions (McAllister 2011, p.37). The explanation for high party support in Australia, Mackerras and McAllister argue, is that “compulsory voting ensures that voters cast a ballot and the act of voting means that they are forced to think, however superficially, about the major parties” (1999, p. 229). If this holds, it can also explain the (lack of a) relationship between party identification and political interest in Australia: by using partisanship as a cue when voting, an apathetic voter requires very little interest in politics at all (c.f. Fiorina 1981). By contrast, the numbers of Australians going on to actually join the party with which they identify remains low.

5.5 *Predicting party membership: the role of internet resources*

Schattschneider observes that “the party is divided into two entities: (1) an organized group of insiders who have effective control of the party, and (2) a mass of passive ‘members’ who seem to have very little to say about it” (1942, p.58). This chapter has already discussed how the era of the mass party is in decline, with fewer citizens looking to join political parties. Despite the declining numbers of party members and the passive nature of most memberships, party membership remains an important measure of campaign participation. There are two persistently important reasons to study party membership, per Schattschneider (1942): to understand who is controlling political parties and the various powers assigned to those parties, such as preselecting candidates, and to understand who the passive members are, and why they choose to join a political party instead of spending their resources on other tasks or activities.

Most studies of political party membership have focused on why parties either seek or are ambivalent towards mass membership and the associated problem of democratic linkage between parties and citizens. The focus here is why people decide to join political parties. Eldersveld (1964, p. 529) argues that “citizens join the party... to fulfil basic motivational drives and needs”: primarily instrumental motivations such as career or economic advancement, but also for social interaction and friendship. Similarly, Whiteley et al. (1994) note three motivations for party activism: ambitions to hold public office, interest in influencing policy outcomes, and as an expression of partisanship. More recently, Bruter and Harrison (2009) find that the majority of

young party members across Europe join political parties for moral purposes, including feeling like a good citizen, helping others and “influencing others”; a smaller number join to make social connections, and a small minority have professional motivations, namely organisational positions and honours, money, or careers in politics. It is possible that opening up new avenues for party affiliation – such as online supporters’ networks – will, by reducing both the costs potentially the benefits of joining, induce new types of members, including ‘fans’, those who will disseminate information online, and others who seek no occupational or social gain from membership (Scarrow, 2013, forthcoming).

Depending on the intent of the member or prospective member, membership of Australian parties can take on different forms. Membership can be an expressive act of participation, providing the member with a membership number and card, and allocating them to a local branch of the party organisation. That branch then usually encourages the new member to participate in their activities, including meetings, social events and fundraising. Even if the member does not become active, he has at least paid a subscription fee and can claim full membership. In cases where membership does not require a subscription fee, as with the ‘LaborConnect’ supporters’ network, the act is presumably entirely expressive (Australian Labor Party, n.d.; Scarrow, 2013). Where membership requires the payment of a subscription fee it also has an instrumental component, in that the fee paid is usually higher than the cost to the party of administering that membership. Paid memberships comprise both an instrumental component (donation) and an expressive component (the act of joining).

The other instrumental aspect of party membership may also be the most important: the right to vote in the preselection of a party’s general election candidates (Dalton et al., 2011; Gauja, 2010; Jaensch, 2006). Parties in Australia afford their members varying levels of influence in candidate preselection, ranging from allowing each member to vote individually to members voting for branch delegates who subsequently vote in the preselection ballot on behalf of the branch (Gauja, 2012). The parties, and within them the different state organisations, also have different provisions for members in the most senior organisational positions to veto or override preselection decisions made at the electorate level on an ad hoc basis. Branch members can therefore exert total or no influence on candidate selection, depending on the party, state division and individual circumstance of the preselection. Party members typically have higher socioeconomic status, are older, and more commonly male than non-members (Cross and Young, 2008; Scarrow, 2007; Verba and Nie, 1972;

Whiteley, 2009). With party members participating in the selection of election candidates, the effects of socioeconomic bias among those members has the potential to skew who stands for and wins election to public office. Again, by reducing the costs of party membership, both directly and indirectly, the internet has the potential to reduce both socioeconomic and age biases among members (see, for example, Scarrow, 2013).

Bivariate analysis of World Values Survey data shows that Australian party have on average lower socioeconomic status than non-members (Table 5.3).⁴¹ Both average wages and educational attainment are lower among party members than non-members, defying the theory based on American data. The difference in average incomes is both large and statistically significant. Likewise, party members are less likely to be in full-time employment, however when viewed as a proxy for free time, this supports the civic voluntarism thesis. Adding to the profile of a typical party member is the mean age of 54, compared with the mean age of non-members at 46. Party members are older, more likely to be retired or work part-time, have lower incomes but higher educational attainment. There is no meaningful gender bias among party members, nor are they more likely to speak English at home.

Given their mean age, it follows that party members display a preference for traditional media consumption. Table 5.3 shows that, among a range of different options measured by the WVS, online sources of political information are particularly unpopular among party members. Party members are instead more likely to get their information from television, newspapers and interpersonal discussion. Non-members use computers more frequently than party members, however this is again unsurprising in light of the different age profiles. Among party members, 15 per cent 'never' use a computer, compared with 10 per cent of non-members and the population respectively (World Values Survey Association, 2013). It appears therefore that the internet, and computer use generally, has made few inroads into party membership in Australia. According to data from the 1981-84 wave of the WVS, the mean age of Australian party members has increased from 45 years to 54 years in 2010 (World Values Survey Association 2009; 2013). The digital era, and with it the introduction of more accessible (including online) forms of party membership, seems not to have attracted younger members in significant numbers.

⁴¹ World Values Survey (WVS) Wave 6 data are used in this section in the place of the 2010 Australian Election Study. The Australian subset in the WVS dataset comprises 1477 cases.

Table 5.3: Mean characteristics of Australian party members and non-members, 2010

	Non-members (n=1330)	Party members (n=147)
<i>Money</i>		
Household income (deciles)	4.93 (2.04)	4.66 (2.02)*
<i>Time</i>		
Employment status	4.65 (2.61)	4.20 (2.58)*
Frequency of PC use	2.64 (0.65)	2.48 (0.75)*
<i>Civic skills</i>		
Educational attainment	4.81 (2.96)	5.13 (2.90)
Language spoken at home	0.93 (0.26)	0.92 (0.28)
Information source: daily newspaper	2.71 (1.33)	2.93 (1.23)*
Information source: printed magazines	1.41 (1.06)	1.39 (1.06)
Information source: TV	3.53 (0.89)	3.70 (0.71)*
Information source: radio	3.26 (1.24)	3.23 (1.29)
Information source: mobile phone	2.02 (1.77)	2.00 (1.76)
Information source: email	2.32 (1.70)	2.32 (1.77)
Information source: internet	2.87 (1.52)	2.55 (1.66)*
Information source: talk with friends or colleagues	3.36 (0.92)	3.42 (0.83)
<i>Engagement</i>		
Interest in politics	2.77 (0.70)	3.27 (0.69)
<i>Controls</i>		
Sex	0.49 (0.50)	0.48 (0.50)
Age	45.59 (17.48)	53.69 (18.40)**

Independent samples t-test. Standard deviations in parentheses.

Between-group differences: ** p<.01 *p<.05

Source: World Values Survey (Australian subset), Wave 6 (Wave World Values Survey Association 2013). See Appendix 2 for variable coding.

Multivariate regression analysis reveals no socioeconomic bias among party members (see Table 5.4). Applying the same model used previously in this study, and drawing on the civic voluntarism model of participation (Verba et al., 1995), party membership has been modelled as a factor of money (household income), time (employment status, reflecting the free, non-work time available to an individual) and civic skills (educational attainment, language spoken at home and use of newspapers and television as sources of political information, *vis a vis* the internet), controlling for age and sex. The use of the internet as a political information source (another measure of civic skills) and frequency of general personal computer (PC) use (a measure of how

Table 5.4: Predictors of party membership in Australia, 2010

	Offline resource model			All resource model		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
<i>Money</i>						
Household income (deciles)	-.059	.050	0.942	-.045	.051	0.956
<i>Time</i>						
Employment status	.023	.042	1.023	.029	.043	1.029
Frequency of PC use				-.183	.182	0.833
<i>Civic skills</i>						
Educational attainment	.085**	.034	1.089	.095**	.036	1.100
Speak English at home	.100	.380	1.105	.125	.381	1.133
Information source: daily newspaper	.019	.077	1.019	.020	.077	1.020
Information source: TV	.120	.135	1.113	.127	.135	1.120
Information source: internet				-.010	.081	0.990
<i>Controls</i>						
Age	.029**	.007	1.029	.026**	.007	1.027
Sex (female)	-.007	.190	0.994	.001	.190	1.001
Constant						
X ²	33.410			35.056		
-2 log likelihood	837.840			836.193		
Nagelkerke r ²	.051			.054		

Binary logistic regression analysis. **p<.01 *p<.05 (two-tailed). n=...

Source: World Values Survey (Australian subset), Wave 6 (Wave World Values Survey Association 2013). See Appendix 2 for variable coding.

Dependent variable: a068 Belong to political parties ('active' or 'inactive'=1).

much time an individual spends using a computer, from each day to less frequently) are included in the second, 'all resource' model. There are no sufficient measures of recruitment by political actors in the dataset.

Both the offline resource and full resource models predict party membership quite poorly. Table 5.4 shows the very small degree of difference in model fit after the internet measures are added. As in the t-test results in Table 5.3, party members on average earn less than non-members but educational attainment has a positive effect. Age has the only other significant effect on party membership: the picture that emerged in Table 5.2 of party members as well-educated retirees is reinforced here. Elsewhere in the model, the predictors have no significant effects on membership. Even the use of offline and online sources for political information, which could be expected to pick up some measure of political interest, have no positive effect. In fact the use of internet as an information source has a very small (insignificant) effect. What seems to matter for party membership in Australia is therefore education and age and not – so far – internet use.

The lack of significant results in Table 5.4 is not surprising, as the model only predicts offline party membership. Neither the WVS nor any similar study (yet) asks respondents about their membership of online party networks. The measures of computer and internet use would be expected to have significant positive effects on online party membership. Like online party networks, study of them is only beginning, and existing data difficult to source. Australia has also been relatively slow to act in regard to online memberships; only the ALP has more than a skeleton online presence in 2013. The lag between other countries adopting a trend and Australia following suit is, as with so many other facets of political behaviour, likely due to compulsory voting in Australia. As discussed, there is less incentive for Australian parties to actively promote party membership with innovations such as online-exclusive memberships or supporter networks, as the parties do not need the sorts of formal recruitment networks required by parties in voluntary voting systems.

As internet use becomes more diffuse, and online communications become the norm in intraparty organisation, it should be expected that internet resources will become as important as, if not superseding, traditional resources as a requisite for political party membership. With greater diffusion will also come more data on individuals' membership of online party networks, and greater opportunities for testing the effects of internet use. For the moment, however, political party

membership in Australia is not the domain of the well-resourced – the rich, well-educated or Australian-born. Rather, party members are likely to have lower incomes than the rest of the population, they are more likely to get political information from traditional media than the internet, and there are indications that they are less likely to speak English at home than non-members. The profile of party members is likewise vastly different to the profile of internet users drawn in Chapter 3, where it was shown that a socioeconomic digital divide persists, even with internet diffusion at around 85 per cent of the population.

5.6 *Parties, time and money: new opportunities to campaign*

The two other elements of campaign participation explored here – contributions of time and money – are more closely related to the civic voluntarism model of participation (Verba et al. 1995) than belonging to a political party. In order to donate time (through voluntary work) or money requires an individual to possess that resource. Further, an individual will likely have ample quantities of that resource, enabling them to donate it to a political party. The relationships unearthed in the following analysis should be straightforward: the more money an individual has, measured by annual household income, the more likely he should be to donate money to a party or candidate. That relationship should hold for donations made both online and offline, as there is no online substitute for financial resources. The more free time an individual has, the more likely he should be to volunteer his time to a party or candidate. Contributing online assistance to a political party generally requires less time than offline assistance, but does require that an individual spends at least some time online. Therefore, the more time he spends online, the more likely he should be to contribute time online.

There are several significant differences in the mean characteristics of people who donate time to a party or candidate, and those who don't (Table 5.5).⁴² Further, there are differences between those who contribute time online and offline. As expected, those who report receiving, discussing or distributing political information

⁴² 2010 Australian Election Study data are analysed throughout the rest of this chapter.

Table 5.5: Mean characteristics of types of voluntary campaign workers in Australia, 2010

	No campaign work (n=1764)	Worked 'offline' only (n=295)	Worked 'online' only (n=95)	Worked 'offline' & 'online' (n=60)
<i>Money</i>				
Household income	10.42 (5.93)	9.27 (5.68)	12.36 (6.00)	9.69 (6.08)**
<i>Time</i>				
Time to self	7.19 (7.00)	7.85 (7.96)	6.57 (6.89)	6.07 (5.92)*
Time spent on internet	4.53 (2.53)	4.76 (2.43)	6.35 (1.41)	6.50 (1.72)**
Employment status	4.14 (2.52)	4.14 (2.52)	4.77 (2.44)	5.17 (2.16)**
<i>Civic skills</i>				
Educational attainment	3.11 (2.13)	3.16 (2.05)	4.13 (2.27)	4.14 (2.35)**
Born in English-speaking country	.75 (.44)	.68 (.47)	.82 (.39)	.80 (.40)**
Job skills	1.32 (1.50)	1.51 (1.52)	1.81 (1.56)	1.78 (1.46)**
Membership of non-political organisations	.43 (.71)	.60 (.81)	.55 (.81)	.67 (1.13)*
Internet skills	1.37 (1.35)	1.60 (1.34)	2.78 (1.15)	2.53 (1.28)**
<i>Recruitment</i>				
Contact by parties/candidates	1.01 (.29)	1.06 (.40)	1.13 (.42)	1.03 (.32)**
<i>Engagement</i>				
Interest in politics	3.16 (.80)	3.27 (.73)	03.16 (.75)	3.30 (.81)
Political knowledge	2.42 (1.78)	2.72 (1.82)	3.02 (1.75)	3.25 (1.76)**
<i>Controls</i>				
Sex (female)	1.54 (.50)	1.45 (.50)	1.56 (.50)	1.55 (.50)*
Age	57.50 (15.62)	56.87 (17.69)	46.09 (19.43)	44.30 (19.59)**

One-way ANOVA. Standard deviations in parentheses.

Between-group differences: **p<.01 *p<.05.

Source: 2010 Australian Election Study, n=1876 (McAllister et al. 2010)

online spend much more time online than those who participated either offline or not at all. They likewise report possessing greater internet skills: an average of 2.78 from a range of five skills, compared with 1.60 reported by offline participants. Differences are also evident in income, educational attainment, employment status, free time, job skills, membership of non-political organisations, as well as age and sex. Those who assisted a party or candidate online have much higher average annual household incomes (between \$70,000 and \$80,000) than those who volunteered offline assistance (between \$45,000 and \$50,000). Those who did not volunteer at all also have higher incomes than offline volunteers.

Respondents who assisted online were far more commonly born in an English-speaking country, have higher educational attainment, greater political knowledge, more job skills, and less free time than offline volunteers. They are also younger than their offline counterparts, and more commonly female. The inverse relationship between free time and time spent online stands ($r=-.199$, $p=.000$) is observable in this table. Online volunteers spend a lot of time online, but do not report having much time to spend on non-work and non-family related activities. They are also more likely to have jobs in which they organise meetings. Offline volunteers, on the other hand, are older, with more free time on their hands and less time spent online. They are, accordingly, more likely to also be retired. Those who volunteered both online and offline work have the least amount of time to themselves, and have the most time-consuming employment. They are also the most likely to belong to non-political organisations, drawing a profile of particularly active, engaged citizens. Interestingly, they also have lower household incomes than online-only volunteers.

When controlling for all these characteristics, do the related factors of time spent online and internet skills still matter? The hypothesis is that they should have a positive impact on both online and offline contributions of time to a party or candidate, but particularly for online contributions. The results of a binary logistic regression analysis in Table 5.6 confirm this hypothesis. Frequency of time spent online and the number of accumulated internet skills each increases the odds of participating in online work by 40 per cent. Moreover, both measures retain their predictor power when the traditional resources of free time and civic skills are added to the model. Overall, the addition of traditional resources adds very little to the model fit or the partial effects of the predictors. Of the traditional civic skills, only education is a positive predictor of

Table 5.6: Predictors of contributions of online campaign work in Australia, 2010

	Online resource model			All resource model		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
<i>Money</i>						
Household income	-.054**	.015	0.947	-.079**	.016	0.924
<i>Free time</i>						
Frequency of internet use	.380**	.096	1.463	.355**	.097	1.426
Hours to self				-.005	.011	0.995
<i>Civic skills</i>						
Internet skills	.327**	.093	1.387	.276**	.095	1.318
Educational attainment				.099*	.040	1.104
Born in English-speaking country				.013	.223	1.013
Organisational memberships				.022	.105	1.023
<i>Recruitment</i>						
Contact by party/candidate	.544*	.219	1.723	.505*	.222	1.657
Job skills				.128*	.062	1.137
<i>Controls</i>						
Age	-.023**	.006	0.978	-.027**	.006	0.973
Sex (female)	.228	.160	1.256	.161	.164	1.175
Constant	-4.649	.745		-4.327	.800	
χ^2	177.446			191.785		
-2 log likelihood	1091.690			1077.351		
Nagelkerke r^2	.183			.197		

Binary logistic regression analysis. **p<.01 *p<.05 (two-tailed).

Source: 2010 Australian Election Study, n=1876 (McAllister et al. 2010). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

online work. The analysis suggests, then, a profile of online party activists as young, well-educated but only starting out their careers (and earning relatively low incomes), regularly online and well versed in the ways of the internet. None of these results are particularly surprising, but they do confirm that the internet provides a pathway to participation for younger citizens, those who do not possess traditional civic skills and, perhaps most importantly, those without a great deal of free time.

Modelling the effects of offline resources on contributions of offline party work reveals the importance of organisational membership and job skills (see Table 5.7). It also confirms what was hinted at in Table 5.5: the strong negative effects of coming from an English-speaking country. This phenomenon first emerged in Bean's (2012) analysis of 2007 AES data, and appears to be explained by what Zappala (1998) describes as a clientelist political culture among many ethnic communities in Australia. The regression results also reaffirm previous results showing the negative effect of annual household income, even after controlling for age and educational attainment. Free time has no influence on whether an individual contributes time to a party or candidate, which is surprising; surely it is the one resource particularly required to participate in this way. The offline resources model fits the data relatively poorly. With online resources added to the model, the number of non-political organisational memberships retains predictive power, but job skills lose importance and internet skills have a significant and positive influence. The addition of offline resources to the model adds little to the overall model fit. However, the important result here is that internet proficiency is more important than traditional job-related proficiencies in predicting contributions of traditional, offline campaign work.

This result represents the study's first substantial piece of evidence that online resources can substitute for the traditional resources in the civic voluntarism model of participation. The factors predicting offline campaign workers paint a vastly different profile to that found by Verba et al. (1995) in the US: an Australian campaign volunteer is less likely to come from an English-speaking background, he has below average income, and while he does belong to non-political organisations, he is more likely to possess internet skills than job-related skills. Although internet skills are currently concentrated among the young and well educated, they are more easily attained than job skills, which come from having responsibilities in the workplace. Even the unemployed, let alone those employed in non-professional occupations or who

Table 5.7: Predictors of contributions of offline campaign work in Australia, 2010

	Offline resource model			All resource model		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
<i>Money</i>						
Household income	-.096**	.013	0.908	-.099**	.013	0.906
<i>Time</i>						
Hours to self	.014*	.008	1.014	.014*	.008	1.014
Frequency of internet use				.014	.047	1.014
<i>Civic skills</i>						
Educational attainment	.047	.033	1.048	.036	.033	1.037
Born in English-speaking country	-.678**	.149	0.508	-.680**	.149	0.506
Organisational memberships	.291**	.087	1.338	.289**	.087	1.335
Job skills	.058	.049	1.060	.042	.050	1.043
Internet skills				.084	.074	1.088
<i>Recruitment</i>						
Contact by party/candidate	.601**	.183	1.824	.577**	.183	1.780
<i>Controls</i>						
Age	-.025**	.004	0.975	-.021**	.005	0.979
Sex	-.073	.128	0.566	-.064	.128	0.938
Constant	.109	.412		-.233	.476	
X ²	121.733			124.459		
-2 log likelihood	1625.797			1623.060		
Nagelkerke r ²	.103			.106		

Binary logistic regression analysis. **p<.01 *p<.05 (two-tailed).

Source: Australian Election Study 2010, n=1878 (McAllister et al., 2010a). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

elsewhere do not have responsibility for organising meetings or speaking in public, et cetera, can become internet proficient.

Combined, the analyses of contributions of time online and offline to Australian parties and candidates in 2010 show the relative importance of online resources over traditional offline resources. Among the traditional resources, only educational attainment positively predicts online work, while income has a negative effect on the propensity to contribute online work. Online workers are slightly younger than the mean, use the internet much more frequently and possess many more internet skills than those who worked offline and those who do not contribute any campaign work. The profile of offline workers is starkly different. They are less likely to be born in Australia or any other English-speaking country than the population mean, they are likely to belong to non-political organisations, are more likely to have been contacted by a party or candidate, and – importantly – it seems they are more likely to possess internet skills than traditional civic skills. Continuing the profile of online workers, offline workers are younger and earn less household income than the population mean.

It is hypothesised that donors to Australian parties or candidates will have above average household incomes, allowing them greater latitude to donate to a partisan cause. Of course, the flipside to income is expenditure: a young person with a low household income likely also has fewer expenses than, for instance, a mother of three teenage children. There will likely be some distribution of donors between the wealthy, as measured by income, and the young, with their relatively ample disposable incomes.⁴³ The comparison of the mean characteristics between non-donors, offline donors and online donors in Table 5.8 begins to draw a profile of distinct types of financial donors to political parties or candidates. First, it must be noted that only seven respondents to the 2010 AES reported donating online only. Most people who donated via the internet also donated in person or by mail. The overall number of people who donated via the internet – those who donated online only and those who donated both online and offline – are more likely to be in full-time employment than both offline donors and non-donors. Offline donors and non-donors display similar employment profiles. Donors, both offline and online, are less likely to be born in an English-speaking country than non-donors (68 per cent of offline donors and 69 per

⁴³ The AES data contain no comprehensive measure of personal or household expenditure. The measure of free time however does offer a proxy measure of personal commitments, including parenting and other factors which positively affect household expenditure.

cent of online donors compared with 74 per cent of non-donors). Offline donors (61 years) are on average older than non-donors (57 years), and much older than the average online donor (41 years).

With regard to resources, offline donors display the most political knowledge, but the lowest educational attainment, fewest job skills, internet skills, hours of free time and hours spent on the internet. Online donors possess the lowest household incomes of the three groups (reflecting their relative youth), but have the highest educational attainment, which as has been discussed is characteristic of internet users generally. They likewise possess the most internet skills and job skills, spend the most time online and have the most amount of free time. Again, these are all characteristics associated with youth and internet use. Those who do not donate to any party or candidate have the highest household income, relatively low educational attainment, and the lowest rate of membership of non-political organisations. They are the least attached to political life and civil society. In terms of other resources – job skills, internet skills, free time and time spent online – non-donors sit in a middle ground between offline donors (with less) and online donors (with more). Donors are collectively more likely to be male: 56 per cent of offline donors and 60 per cent of online donors. The majority of non-donors are female (53 per cent).

The multivariate analysis of factors predicting online donations to parties and candidates in 2010 replicates the analysis of online campaign work in Table 5.8. The results, however, show that online resources, namely frequency of internet use and internet skills, have little predictive value on online donations (see Table 5.9). Only the time an individual spends online has a significant and positive effect. Internet skills have a strong significant negative effect on online donations. Moreover this is reinforced when offline resources – education, language skills, organisational membership, job skills and free time – are added to the model. The frequency of internet use is no longer significant, but still positive, while internet skills retain a negative (but not significant) effect. The important factors in predicting online donation are youth, educational attainment, and, with negative effects, household income and being born in an English-speaking country.

The types of individuals who donated to a party or candidate online in the lead up to the 2010 election therefore confound the civic voluntarism model of political participation in several ways (Verba et al, 1995). They are young, with below average incomes, above average educational attainment, and commonly born in a non-English

Table 5.8: Mean characteristics of types of campaign donors in Australia, 2010

	Did not donate (n=1954)	Donated 'offline' only (n=42)	Donated 'online' only (n=7)	Donated 'offline' and 'online' (n=58)
<i>Money</i>				
Household income	10.39 (5.90)	9.59 (6.33)	15.00 (7.98)	7.70 (5.88)**
<i>Time</i>				
Time spent on internet	4.68 (2.50)	4.42 (2.65)	6.67 (0.82)	5.67 (2.12)*
Time to self	7.22 (7.12)	7.08 (6.14)	4.17 (2.93)	8.00 (7.15)*
Employment status	4.17 (2.52)	4.15 (2.44)	5.67 (1.51)	5.67 (1.91)*
<i>Civic skills</i>				
Educational attainment	3.17 (2.14)	3.10 (2.20)	6.33 (0.82)	3.72 (2.35)**
Born in English-speaking country	0.74 (0.44)	0.68 (0.47)	0.50 (0.55)	0.72 (0.45)**
Membership of non-political organisations	0.45 (0.74)	0.65 (0.82)	0.83 (0.75)	0.66 (1.15)
Job skills	1.38 (1.51)	1.27 (1.30)	2.50 (1.64)	1.26 (1.43)*
Internet skills	1.49 (1.38)	1.29 (1.30)	3.00 (1.55)	1.92 (1.53)*
<i>Recruitment</i>				
Contact by parties/candidates	1.03 (0.31)	1.07 (0.44)	1.00 (0.50)	0.99 (0.30)
<i>Engagement</i>				
Interest in politics	3.17 (0.79)	3.27 (.70)	3.83 (.41)	3.18 (0.80)
Political knowledge	2.50 (1.80)	3.16 (1.79)	4.50 (1.38)	2.11 (1.52)**
<i>Controls</i>				
Age	56.75 (16.29)	60.71 (6.32)	49.50 (17.24)	39.77 (19.37)**
Sex (female)	0.53 (0.50)	0.44 (0.50)	0.33 (0.52)	0.42 (0.50)

One-way ANOVA. Standard deviations in parentheses. Between-group differences: **p<.01 *p<.05 (two-tailed).
Source: Australian Election Study 2010 (McAllister et al., 2010a). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

Table 5.9: Predictors of online donations to parties or candidates in Australia, 2010

	Online resource model			All resource model		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
<i>Money</i>						
Household income	-.107**	.025	0.899	-.122**	.028	.886
<i>Time</i>						
Hours to self				.030*	.012	1.031
Frequency of internet use	.171*	.105	1.186	.112	.110	1.119
<i>Civic skills</i>						
Educational attainment				.100	.073	1.106
Born in English-speaking country				-1.350**	.317	.259
Organisational memberships				.142	.176	1.153
Job skills				.198*	.113	1.220
Internet skills	-.399**	.144	0.671	-.384*	.151	.681
<i>Recruitment</i>						
Contact by party/candidate	-.435	.540	0.647	-.140	.459	.870
<i>Controls</i>						
Age	-.072**	.012	0.930	-.088**	.013	.915
Sex	-.076	.268	0.927	-.120	.280	.887
Constant	1.482	.888		1.900	1.051	
X2	98.641			105.810		
-2 log likelihood	445.987			439.447		
Nagelkerke r2	.203			.216		

Binary logistic regression analysis. **p<.01 *p<.05 (two-tailed).

Source: Australian Election Study 2010, n=1987 (McAllister et al., 2010a). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

speaking country. Table 5.7 shows that individuals born in a non-English speaking country were more likely to contribute campaign work offline than online; this analysis suggests that they are, net of all other factors, also inclined to contribute money online. However, more important to the overarching research question in this study is that while online donors possess more internet skills and spend more time online than offline donors and non-donors, when controlling for other factors these online skills and activities do not have positive effects on online donation. While internet skills and time are important, they do not alter the existing profile of the types of people who engage with politics. The more salient question here moves from the effects of internet resources to the larger one of whether, without the internet, the types of people who donate online would donate at all. The first step in answering that question is to analyse the predictors of offline donation in 2010.

The model does a poor job of explaining offline donations in Australia, suggesting that resources generally do not affect who donates (Table 5.10). Within the offline resource-only model, only membership of non-political organisations (positive) and being born in an English-speaking country (negative) have significant effects on offline donation. None of the other resources – education, job skills or free time – has a significant effect; for those three resources, the standard error of the coefficient is higher than the regression coefficient itself. The results do suggest the (non-significant) negative effects of both education and job skills, however. With online resources added to the model, non-political organisational memberships and being born in an English speaking country retain their significant effects, in line with Bean's (2012) findings from the 2007 AES.

The internet has varied effects on the contributions of time (as work) and money to Australian political parties and candidates. There is evidence that internet skills can substitute for traditional civic skills in predicting offline campaign work. If this initial evidence holds, it suggests that the internet does have the potential to break down the conventional barriers to entry into (offline) political participation. It would likewise suggest that the conventional frameworks used to explain political participation (e.g. Verba et al. 1995; Rosenstone & Hansen 1993; Verba & Nie 1972) should be rethought in light of advances in communications technology. Similarly, the profiles of online and offline participants are markedly different, particularly in terms of socioeconomic status and resources. It is tempting, but incautious, to infer that the

Table 5.10: Predictors of offline donations to parties or candidates in Australia, 2010

	Offline resource model			All resource model		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
<i>Money</i>						
Household income	-.047	.034	0.954	-.041	.034	0.960
<i>Time</i>						
Hours to self	-.032	.030	0.969	-.034	.031	0.967
Frequency of internet use				-.103	.112	0.902
<i>Civic skills</i>						
Educational attainment	-.020	.087	0.981	-.008	.089	0.992
Born in English-speaking country	-.751*	.344	0.472	-.759*	.345	0.468
Organisational memberships	.374*	.210	1.453	.400*	.213	1.492
Job skills	-.187	.137	0.829	-.188	.140	0.829
Internet skills				.093	.200	1.097
<i>Recruitment</i>						
Contact by party/candidate	.561	.436	1.753	.571	.438	1.770
<i>Controls</i>						
Age	.012	.010	1.012	.010	.011	1.010
Sex	-.179	.331	0.836	-.197	.332	0.821
Constant	-3.458	1.070		-3.086	1.191	
X ²	18.860			19.757		
-2 log likelihood	366.256			365.359		
Nagelkerke r ²	.054			.056		

Binary logistic regression analysis. **p<.01 *p<.05 (two-tailed).

Source: Australian Election Study 2010, n=1876 (McAllister et al., 2010a). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

internet is providing a pathway to participation for individuals who would otherwise not bother to become active. This is particularly acute with regard to online donations, as only seven respondents reported donating online, but not offline. However, given the high educational profile of online workers and donors, however, it is perhaps more reasonable to suggest that they are not necessarily the types of people who would never get involved in politics, but that the internet is hastening that involvement. Further analysis in following chapters will advance this argument.

5.7 Conclusion

Theory suggests that internet use should be expanding political party membership in Australia, as the internet makes it increasingly cheap and fast for parties to contact large numbers of existing and prospective members. Online organisation of party administration, including joining and renewing subscription fees online, should make party membership an easier and therefore more popular form of political expression than previously, particularly among the young and well-educated, who comprise the most frequent and skilled internet users. Similarly, being able to donate money to parties or candidates via the internet, or to distribute campaign material online rather than have to volunteer to physically hand out flyers, should make it easier for people not typically active in political life to become so.

Multivariate analyses testing these hypotheses reveal that participants are younger, less wealthy, and less likely to be born in an English-speaking country than previously expected. Moreover, the importance of traditional resources, particularly the kinds of skills attained in the workplace, is mitigated by the attainment of equivalent internet skills, such as familiarity with downloading software or sending files by email. Internet use shows little effect on political party membership in Australian in 2010, but internet skills can substitute for traditional civic skills in opening up pathways to volunteering for a political party or candidate, both online and offline.

One notable feature of the Australian analysis is the large proportion of individuals from non-English speaking countries who have donated time or money to a party or candidate. This was first noted by Bean (2012), although earlier research has described a political culture among ethnic communities in Australia wherein members

of parliament and ethnic constituents exchange representation for financial and other forms of support (Zappalà, 1999, 1998). Alternatively, this effect may be a result of strong social networks and social capital – and consequently potential for recruitment – among Australians from a non-English-speaking background (Barreto and Muñoz, 2003; Bevelander and Pendakur, 2009; Fennema and Tillie, 1999, 2001). Members of an ethnic diaspora may face policy or political threats which spur them to mobilise (Cho et al. 2006). Further, mobilisation levels vary between both between ethnic groups and according to how long an immigrant is established in his chosen country (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade, 2001). The literature generally agrees that, within close social networks, 'structured mobilisation' by political actors is easier and more effective. Close networks among ethnic diasporas in Australia may be facilitating their participation in campaign activity, and particularly in joining and contributing time to parties.

Analysis of Australian donors of time and money to parties and candidates reveals dramatic differences to donors in other countries. Verba et al.'s (Verba et al., 1995) analysis of American political donors finds that the highest income earners contributed ten times as much money to political campaigns as the lowest income earners (as a percentage of their family income). Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) find that income and education positively affected political donations from 1956 to 1988. They also note that "the wealthy are much more likely than the poor to share the social circles of the candidates, the fundraisers, and the organized supporters" (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993, p. 134). Verba, Nie and Kim's (1978) comparative study finds that campaign participants in each of Austria, India, Japan, the Netherlands and United States – all of the countries measured – had a positive socioeconomic bias. Australian evidence suggests the opposite: campaign participants do have high educational attainment, but below average income. They also tend to be younger than in other advanced democracies. The implications so far for Australian democracy are positive: citizens beginning to participate earlier in life eases fears of a generational decline in participation.

Chapter 6 – The internet, social capital and the costs and benefits of participation

6.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the effects of internet use on two informal modes of political participation: contacting a government official and working with others to solve a problem. The defining characteristic of communal, or cooperative, participation is that “when a citizen cooperates with others – either in informal groups or informal organisations – it reduces the likelihood that the political activity will be aimed at some benefit particularized to him alone” (Verba and Nie, 1972, p. 53). Moreover, communal participation, including contacting and working with like others, is considered non-conflictual and not directly related to electoral politics (Verba and Nie, 1972). However, communal participation incurs a collective action problem, reducing the potential benefits of taking part. Collective action describes an activity seeking an outcome that will benefit a group of people, not just those people who participate in the activity.⁴⁴ It is therefore predicted that communal participants in Australia possess greater amounts of time, money and civic skills than the rest of the population. However, one solution to the collective action problem, in which citizens are able to ‘free ride’ on the activity of others, is social capital: the networks and levels of social trust present in both individuals and communities. High levels of social trust can counter the disparity between those with the resources to participate and those without, as low-resourced participants can trust that their participation will be reciprocated in some way and at some time. Accordingly, this chapter examines the effects of internet use on communal participation, within both civic voluntarism and social capital frameworks.

Based on similar studies in Australia and the United States, it is hypothesised that Australian citizens are producing social capital through online social interactions (Dalton and Kittilson, 2012; Gibson and McAllister, 2009; Kittilson and Dalton, 2011). In turn, that social capital should increase the likelihood that they participate in

⁴⁴ For instance, community action protesting the closure of a local school might benefit all local parents of school-aged children, but only those with the time and other resources to do so will actually protest.

communal activities. Similarly, it is expected that, through the framework of the civic voluntarism model of political participation (Verba et al., 1995), the internet has lowered the barriers to entry for both contacting and communal work. Given the time required to write a letter to or meet with a representative, or to work with other people to achieve a political goal, it is expected that participation will be restricted to individuals with ample free time.⁴⁵ By reducing the time required to complete tasks such as composing and sending a letter or learning about an issue, the internet is hypothesised to positively affect the propensity that somebody will contact an official to express his views. It is less likely to affect communal participation – either positively or negatively – although indirect effects may exist through the accumulation of political information and recruitment via online networks.

This chapter first discusses the civic voluntarism model with respect to communal participation, expanding on the expected effects of online and offline resources (section 6.2). Section 6.3 looks at the current state of communal participation in Australia, with trend data from within Australia and cross sectional comparison to a range of other countries. Sections 6.4 and 6.5 examine who engages in communal participation in Australia, looking first at political contacting and then communal work. Descriptive analysis of participants and non-participants is followed by multivariate analysis exploring the effects of time spent online and internet proficiency. Section 6.6 considers the implications of the findings for Australian democracy, while 6.7 summaries the analysis.

6.2 *Resources, collective action and communal participation*

As with the acts of partisan participation described in Chapter 5, it is expected that internet use is changing the profile of individuals who engage in communal acts of participation. The context of communal participation is different in some important ways, and the effects of internet use and the effectiveness of the civic voluntarism model should differ accordingly. The intended outcomes of communal participation are usually collective in nature, benefiting more people than just those who participate. Further, communal participation may not benefit those who participate at all, but a different group entirely. In these cases – where there is little or no direct benefit to the individual participant – participants are likely to have ample amounts of time and

⁴⁵ This assumption is based on American evidence (namely Verba et al. 1995; Krueger 2002; Best & Krueger 2005) and has not previously been tested in the Australian context.

money; the costs are similar as in other acts of participation, but the material rewards are lower. Civic skills are expected to be important in predicting contact with a government official in person or in writing, and working with like others to express views. Emailing a government official should require fewer interpersonal skills and less free time, and should be more popular among those with fewer resources. This section outlines the predicted effects of internet use on communal participation in Australia through the framework of Verba et al.'s (1995) civic voluntarism model. First, however, it considers the collective action problem of communal participation.

Most acts of political participation have a 'collective action' problem, which is akin to the problem of 'public goods' in economics (Ostrom, 1998; Stiglitz, 2000; Tarrow, 2011). Public goods have two characteristics that mean they will generally not be efficiently provided in the market. First, they are 'non-excludable', meaning that once they have been produced, it is not feasible to stop someone from receiving the benefits of them. Second, they are 'non-rivalrous', meaning that the consumption by one individual does not reduce the amount available for others. Because anyone can benefit from the goods once produced, and the same amount of benefit is available to all, individuals have an incentive to 'free ride' (Blais, 2000). Instead of working to produce a good themselves, they wait for others to do so and reap the rewards without cost. In the context of petitions or demonstrations, the 'public good' is not a physical product, but the benefit that would accrue to the group of individuals who desire a particular change in legislation or policy.

For example, a citizen who voted in the division of Fraser, in the Australian Capital Territory, at the 2010 Australian federal election had only a one-in-111,541 chance of determining the outcome of that division's election. The costs of voting – informing oneself about the candidates, relevant issues, legal requirements, and then finally turning out to vote – rarely outweigh the benefits of voting, which are spread among many voters. Likewise, the costs of participating in order to achieve benefits to be shared among a group of people will not always outweigh the benefits. Blais (2000) observes that, upon weighing the relative costs and benefits of joining an environmental action group, a rational citizen will invariably abstain from joining. Rather, she leaves the work to others:

"She free rides. She hopes to reap the benefits of the group getting formed and contributing to the reduction of pollution without paying the cost" (pp.115–6).

Given the basic calculation of the costs and benefits of writing to a government official, or joining a community group, the resources of money and free time should have a high impact on the propensity to participate. Where the costs in terms of time and money are lower –when an official can be emailed, rather than having to write and post a letter or visiting a member of parliament in her office – the amount of time and money a person has should have less influence on whether he participates.

The flipside to this problem of collective action is when a participant expresses views or seeks change to benefit only them. Such appeals to government officials are common: letters seeking expedition of immigration processing, assistance dealing with bureaucratic agencies, and other individual requests broadly defined as 'casework'. While there is evidence that the casework component of a political representative's workload is increasing in other countries (Ward and Lusoli, 2005), there is little available evidence on how much casework Australian representatives undertake. Heitshusen, Young and Wood (2005) suggest that Australian representatives perform less casework than their Canadian, British and New Zealand counterparts. Bean (1989b) likewise observes that most approaches to representatives concern community rather than personal problems:

"It may be that some societies (Australia among them) see the community based grievance as a more legitimate cause for political action than problems of a personal nature while others take the opposite view. On the other hand in affluent societies people may encounter fewer situations which cause them personal difficulties" (1989b, p. 461).

The AES data used here do not specify whether respondents contacted a government official to express their views on a collective problem or an individual (casework) problem. For the purposes of the analysis, the measure of contacting will be treated as an act of communal participation (with collective benefit), but the two possible intents of contacting will be considered in the discussion.

It is hypothesised that internet use mediates the effects of time, money and civic skills on communal participation (Verba et al., 1995).⁴⁶ Working with like others is the most time intensive act considered, and based on previous studies from the United

⁴⁶ The fourth factor in the civic voluntarism model, recruitment, is excluded as the only available data on recruitment covers the election campaign (i.e. 30 to 40 days) preceding the survey only, while the measures of communal participation in the same dataset cover the five years prior to the survey; the time order makes the recruitment measure incapable of affecting the participation measures and its inclusion would invalidate the model.

States (see for example Oliver 1984; Verba et al. 1995; Krueger 2002), a lack of free time should be a barrier to participation. The closest thing here to an 'online' measure of time – frequency of internet use, which reports how often an individual is online – is not expected to affect whether an individual works with like others offline.

The importance of free time on contacting an official should depend on the mode of contact: free time should positively affect whether someone writes to or meets with a representative in person, as both are relatively time intensive acts, while the amount of time spent online should positively affect whether someone emails a representative. The more time an individual spends online, the less costly it is for him to quickly send off an email to his local member of parliament or to a Minister, for example. If he spends little time online, the relative cost of the time it takes to send an email is higher. The effects of free time on emailing an official, and of 'online' time on writing to or meeting with an official, should be negligible.

The second predictive factor in the civic voluntarism model is money: a citizen must be able to afford the financial costs of participating, including the income foregone by not working, the costs of travelling to a demonstration or the financial contributions which often come with voluntary work. On the other hand, 'deprivation theory' argues that participation can result from an absence of resources; where there is inequality between a class who have resources and a class who do not, those without may be impelled to engage in non-electoral forms of political action (Dalton and van Sickle, 2005). Existing evidence however contends that wealth is generally a positive predictor of participation, including non-electoral modes such as communal work (for example Dalton & van Sickle 2005; Krueger 2002; Verba et al. 1995). Money, as measured by gross annual household income, is expected to positively affect all three forms of participation here: expressing views to an official in writing or person, emailing an official and working with like others.

Civic skills, the third predictive factor in the model, should have the largest effect on communal participation, particularly for working with like others. An individual who forms or joins an activist group likely has some existing political

knowledge, confidence speaking in public and experience in attending and possibly convening meetings.⁴⁷ It takes a certain level of knowledge and confidence to engage with other people on a communal effort. The civic skills of education, language (measured by country of birth) and job skills are therefore expected to have significant positive effects on working with like others. For the same reasons, but to a lesser degree, they should have positive effects on expressing views to an official in writing or in person. Civic skills are not expected to be as important a factor in predicting email contact with officials: email allows for anonymity, quick drafting and immediate transmission. Moreover, email is the dominant format for mass mail campaigns among Australian activist groups, as it allows supporters to 'copy and paste' prewritten text into an email and send an unlimited number of emails to representatives and other officials (Peatling, 2005). The implications of mass email contacting are discussed in Section 6.6.

The barriers to engaging in communal participation are expected to be broadly in line with Verba et al.'s (1995) civic voluntarism model: civic skills should be a necessary requirement of contacting officials and working with like others; time should be necessary to write to officials or work with others; and anyone participating in collective action is likely to have more money than those who do not participate. Having shown in Chapter 5 that citizens born in non-English speaking countries have a propensity to join political parties and contribute time and money to parties and candidates, their engagement in communal participation is of some (secondary) interest here. Based on the likely explanations given for their partisan participation – namely strong social networks and consequently strong recruitment networks – those born in non-English speaking countries are expected to be overrepresented in communal participation as well.

6.3 *Collective action, social capital and the internet*

Reducing the transaction costs of communal participation is not the only solution to the collective action problem. Social capital, variously defined, incorporates

⁴⁷ One of the measures of civic skills – memberships of non-political organisations – is not included in the model to predict working with like others, because of the similarities between it and the dependent variable. Although they are only correlated at $r=.179$ ($p=.000$), they are theoretically similar enough for autocorrelation to be a potential issue. There is also time order problem: the organisational membership variable measures current memberships, while the dependent variable covers the previous five year period.

levels of interaction with and trust in other members of a society – can induce an individual to seek outcomes for others than themselves. The more embedded a person is within his society, the more likely he is to work on behalf of others in that society (for example Putnam 2001). With increasing social and geographic mobility, workforce participation and use of single-audience communications media – Putnam uses the examples of television and video cassette recorders – societies are arguably becoming more fragmented (Putnam, 1995a; 1995b). The advent of the internet was initially believed to compound the fragmentation of societies and the decline of social capital (Huysman and Wulf, 2004; Nie, 2001; Norris, 2001a; Putnam, 2001). However more recent studies have found evidence that the internet, particularly interactive Web 2.0 features, allows for online sociability and can enhance users' levels of social capital (Dalton and Kittilson, 2012; Gibson and McAllister, 2009; Kittilson and Dalton, 2011).

Putnam (2001) defines social capital as encompassing social networks and social trust: the former meaning interactions between people, which can give rise to the latter, namely, feelings of generalised reciprocity. Social interactions can be categorised as producing either 'bonding' or 'bridging' social capital. Bonding social capital describes the thick, within-group interactions that citizens share with their family, friends, neighbours and peers. Bridging social capital describes those interactions that 'build bridges' between the citizen and individuals and groups who do not regularly come into contact. For instance, a citizen volunteering at a migrant resource centre or travelling to Africa to work in a local community exhibits bridging social capital. The categorisation of the 2007 AES online social interaction measures as producing either bonding or bridging social capital in this analysis follows Gibson and McAllister's (2009b) study. 'Bonding social capital' comprises using the internet to interact with people the respondent feels close to such as family and friends, and people who share the respondent's hobbies, or religious or political beliefs. 'Bridging social capital' comprises using the internet to interact with people of different ages, ethnic backgrounds and countries to the respondent.

An expression of social trust – "the belief that others will not deliberately or knowingly do us harm, if they can avoid it, and will look after our interests, if this is possible" – is the most appropriate proxy for measuring social capital (Newton 2007, p. 342). In survey research, this is measured by the extent to which a respondent can trust other people, or believes society is becoming more or less trustworthy in general.

The importance of social trust to democracy is its capacity to “oil the wheels of... democratic politics”; the assumption of reciprocity eases collective action problems, allowing democratic institutions to function efficiently and economic markets to grow (Stolle, 2007, pp. 655–6). Without social capital – particularly the generalised trust in other citizens’ capacity to think civically and not exclusively selfishly – democratic and economic processes which require decision-making for the benefit of not just the decision-maker would be fundamentally impaired. The same holds for citizens’ decision-making processes: without that trust that behaviours will be reciprocated in some form, there is no incentive to act any other way but selfishly. In Putnam’s words,

“a society characterized by generalized reciprocity is more efficient than a distrustful society, for the same reason that money is more efficient than barter. If we don’t have to balance every exchange instantly, we can get a lot more accomplished” (2001, p. 21).

Accordingly, societies with high levels of social trust should experience correspondingly high rates of communal participation, with less socioeconomic bias among participants than in low social capital societies. Early studies of the internet’s effects on society feared that internet users would retreat to their bedrooms, engage with ever fewer ‘real’ people and even withdraw from society, resulting in a general depletion of social capital (Nie, 2001; Putnam, 2001). More recent studies have found the reverse, however (Best and Krueger, 2006; Pasek et al., 2009; Pénard and Poussing, 2010; Robinson and Martin, 2010; Williams, 2007). Kittilson and Dalton’s (2011) study of American internet users finds that online social interactions, for instance on social media or email, produce the same levels of social capital as offline social interactions. More importantly, the authors (Dalton and Kittilson, 2012) find similar effects among Australian citizens, as do Gibson and McAllister (2009b). The internet therefore appears not to erode social capital, but to have the capacity to produce social capital, in terms of social trust and offline involvement in social networks, as traditional, offline social interactions. This is an important finding as it applies to communal participation, which as discussed has a collective action problem that social capital can help to overcome.

Australians use the internet in a number of ways to create social capital. Data from the 2007 AES reveal the distribution of online social interactions among

Australian internet users.⁴⁸ Interacting with friends and family online is easily the most popular activity, with 26 per cent of respondents reporting that they do so 'a lot'; 11 per cent report interacting online with people who share their hobbies, 10 per cent with people from other countries and 10 per cent use the internet to become more involved with groups to which they already belong. Smaller numbers use the internet to interact 'a lot' with people of different ages (6 per cent), different ethnic backgrounds (3 per cent), shared religious beliefs (2 per cent) and shared political beliefs (2 per cent). Adding respondents who use the internet for these purposes 'some' and 'only a little' of the time increases the percentages of respondents to as many as 58 per cent (for interacting with family and friends) of the population, but still large numbers of internet users in Australia do not engage in any of these interactions online.

The strongest predictors of engaging in bonding or bridging interactions online are educational attainment, youth, and being born in a non-English-speaking country (Table 6.1). The models predicting bonding and bridging interactions are quite similar: household income has no effect on either bonding or bridging interactions; educational attainment has strong positive effects on both; and age as a small negative effect on both. Being born in an English-speaking country – a measure of language proficiency – has a strong negative effect on both types of interaction, but particularly on bonding social capital. Australian citizens with ethnically diverse backgrounds are much more likely to interact with family, friends, neighbours and peers online than Australians from English-speaking backgrounds. However, they are also more likely to engage in bridging interactions online, net of all other factors. This finding has important implications for the diversity of participants in all forms of political behaviour in Australia (including campaign participation, as discussed in Chapter 5), but particularly for communal participation.

To explore how levels of bonding and bridging social capital affects communal participation in Australia, binary logistic regression models predict whether citizens worked to others to express a view about a government decision or policy between

⁴⁸ Social capital measures in the 2007 AES were a feature of that study, and not repeated in 2010.

Table 6.1: Predictors of online interactions producing social capital among Australian citizens, 2007

	Bonding social capital			Bridging social capital		
	b	SE	B	b	SE	B
Household income	.002	.017	.003	-.002	.016	-.004
Educational attainment	.330**	.034	.220	.151**	.034	.131
Born in English-speaking country	-.187**	.204	-.019	-.603**	.208	-.081
Age	-.049**	.005	-.220	-.045**	.005	-.259
Sex (female)	.400	.143	.061	.209	.141	.041
Constant	10.070	.574		11.328	.689	
r^2	.113	3.082		.100	3.054	
Adjusted r^2	.109			.096		

Ordinary least squares regression analysis. ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$ (two-tailed). $n=1183$ (bonding), 1175 (bridging).
Source: 2007 Australian Election Study (Bean et al., 2007). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

2002 and 2007. The results in Table 6.2 show that, in the restricted model containing only offline predictive factors, only educational attainment and social trust (a binary value measuring the belief that ‘people can be trusted most of the time’) have significant (positive) effects. In the full model, with online resources (time spent online only, as internet skills were not measured in 2007) and social interactions included, educational attainment and social trust retain their significant effects, while both measures of online interaction also have positive, but smaller, effects. Notably, online social interactions have significant positive effects, while frequency of internet use has a significant, strong negative effect. For this form of communal participation, online social interactions, and the resulting bonding and bridging social capital, are vastly more important than general internet use.

Using the same model to predict whether Australians contacted a government official or representative to express their views between 2002 and 2007 yields similar results (Table 6.3). Educational attainment and social trust again have significant positive effects, while household income has a small negative effect and coming from an English-speaking country has a strong positive effect. The latter is not surprising, as contacting requires language skills that working with like others generally does not. With the inclusion of measures of time spent online and online social interactions, only online bonding interactions have a significant effect on contacting. Across the model, educational attainment, language skills and social trust have the most influence on whether an Australian contacts an official or representative. Online social interactions have only a small total effect on the behaviour. However, of the resources per the civic voluntarism model – time, money and civic skills – only civic skills have significant effects. The following section explores the role of resources on communal participation in further depth, using the wider range of predictors in the 2010 AES dataset.

6.4 Civic voluntarism, internet use and offline and online contacting

Social capital – including that produced online via virtual social interactions – has strong positive effects on communal participation in Australia. This section examines whether internet resources have similar effects. Verba and Nie’s (1972) US study found that communal participants have higher incomes, are more educated, more likely to be white, and more likely to be from rural or suburban areas than non-

Table 6.2: Predictors of working with like others to express a view, 2007

	Online resource model			All resource model		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
<i>Money</i>						
Household income	-.003	.018	0.997	.003	.019	1.003
<i>Time</i>						
Frequency of internet use				-.178**	.058	0.837
Employment status	.037	.040	1.038	.086*	.042	1.090
<i>Civic skills</i>						
Educational attainment	.154**	.035	1.167	.123**	.037	1.131
Born in English-speaking country	.011	.216	1.011	.162	.226	1.176
<i>Social capital</i>						
Online bonding				.144**	.031	1.154
Online bridging				.077*	.038	1.080
Social trust	.364*	.155	1.439	.300*	.159	1.351
<i>Controls</i>						
Age	.006	.006	1.006	.018**	.006	1.018
Sex	.090	.148	1.094	.003	.153	1.003
Constant	-2.518	.561		-4.034	.668	
X ²	33.141			85.497		
-2 log likelihood	1151.476			1099.120		
Nagelkerke r ²	.046			.116		

Binary logistic regression analysis. **p<.01 *p<.05 (two-tailed). n=1047.

Source: 2007 Australian Election Study (Bean et al. 2007). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

participants. Putnam (2001) observes that writing letters to congressman remained as popular among Americans aged 60 and over in 1997-98 as in 1973-74, but half as common among 18 to 29 year olds. Verba et al. (1995) note that the poorest Americans, including those receiving means-tested welfare, are much less likely to contact government officials. Based on these findings from a different country, it is very loosely expected that 'contactors' in Australia will have higher incomes, higher educational attainment and are older than the population average. Online contactors are likely to have even higher incomes and educational attainment – characteristic of internet users generally – but be closer to the mean population age, as internet uses and age are inversely related (Chapter 3).

In Australia, offline contactors are older, possess more formal education, more political knowledge, more job skills and earn a higher income than non-contactors (Table 6.4). They are slightly less likely to be in full time employment, but this is an artefact of the high number of retirees and part-time workers (53 per cent combined) among offline contactors rather than a reflection of the median position. Likewise, the average amount of free time available to non-contactors and offline contactors reflects the high number of older retirees and part-time workers. Offline contactors are the more likely to be born in an English-speaking country. There do not appear to be any of the 'diaspora effects' observed with regard to partisan participation in Chapter 5. Interestingly, the data show that offline is still the most popular mode of contacting an official, and that most online contactors also expressed their views to an official offline as well. There is likely a persistent belief that offline contacting is the most effective way of getting your view heard (this is discussed at greater length in section 6.6).

As anticipated, online contactors (including those who contact officials both online and offline) possess even higher educational qualifications and earn higher household income than offline contactors. Accordingly, they also possess more political knowledge, job skills and internet skills, and spend more time online. They are, in line with internet usage patterns, also younger (52 years) than both offline (58 years) and non-contactors (57 years), but not to a remarkable extent. The older age of online contactors in these results is slightly surprising: the advent of web-based activist groups such as GetUp! in Australia (which is described at more length in Chapter 7) has

Table 6.3: Predictors of contacting an official to express a view, 2007

	Online resource model			All resource model		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
<i>Money</i>						
Household income	-.046*	.019	0.955	-.048*	.019	0.953
<i>Time</i>						
Frequency of internet use				-.026	.059	0.974
Employment status	.015	.040	1.015	.037	.041	1.037
<i>Civic skills</i>						
Educational attainment	.185**	.036	1.204	.147**	.038	1.159
Born in English-speaking country	.392*	.230	1.480	.459*	.236	1.583
<i>Social capital</i>						
Online bonding				.120**	.031	1.127
Online bridging				.017	.039	1.017
Social trust	.405**	.159	1.499	.350*	.161	1.420
<i>Controls</i>						
Age	.021**	.006	1.021	.029**	.006	1.030
Sex	-.010	.150	0.990	-.070	.153	0.932
Constant	-2.999	.580		-4.367	.675	
X ²	56.601			83.453		
-2 log likelihood	1127.122			1100.270		
Nagelkerke r ²	.077			.112		

Binary logistic regression analysis. **p<.01 *p<.05 (two-tailed). n=1073.

Source: 2007 Australian Election Study (Bean et al. 2007). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

Table 6.4: Mean characteristics of Australians who did and did not contact a government official to express views, 2010

	Did not contact (n=1697)	Contacted 'offline' only (n=206)	Contacted 'online' only (n=85)	Contacted 'offline and online' (n=153)
<i>Money</i>				
Household income	10.04 (5.92)	10.87 (5.66)	12.24 (5.66)	11.73 (6.14)**
<i>Time</i>				
Time to self	7.44 (7.38)	6.82 (5.79)	6.00 (6.00)	6.08 (5.73)**
Time spent on internet	4.47 (2.55)	4.79 (2.41)	6.15 (1.39)	6.27 (1.31)**
Employment status	4.16 (2.52)	4.10 (2.43)	4.60 (2.48)	4.61 (2.53)
<i>Civic skills</i>				
Educational attainment	3.01 (2.08)	3.58 (2.17)	3.92 (2.27)	4.19 (2.33)**
Born in English-speaking country	.73 (.44)	.77 (.42)	.76 (.43)	.76 (.43)
Membership of non-political organisations	.38 (.68)	.74 (.89)	.80 (.92)	.82 (.92)**
Job skills	1.20 (1.45)	1.84 (1.55)	2.03 (1.53)	2.36 (1.50)**
Internet skills	1.35 (1.36)	1.47 (1.28)	2.40 (1.16)	2.60 (1.09)**
<i>Engagement</i>				
Interest in politics	3.17 (.79)	3.17 (.84)	3.20 (.68)	3.37 (.73)
Political knowledge	2.33 (1.79)	3.11 (1.73)	3.19 (1.65)	3.39 (1.57)**
<i>Controls</i>				
Sex (female)	.53 (.50)	.50 (.50)	.53 (.50)	.52 (.50)
Age	56.81 (16.65)	58.36 (15.46)	52.01 (15.39)	53.67 (16.07)**

One-way ANOVA. Standard deviations in parentheses. Between-group differences: **p<.01 *p<.05 (two-tailed).

Source: 2010 Australian Election Study (McAllister et al., 2010a). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

been accompanied by stereotypes of young, enthusiastic student online activists (see for example Gladwell 2010; Jenkins 2012; Carroll 2012). Examination of contact behaviour by age cohort, however, shows a different reality. Figure 6.1 shows the total numbers of people contacting officials peaks in middle age, starting from a low base among 18 to 24 year olds and declining among those 65 and over. While older contactors prefer offline modes of contacting, more Australians aged 55 to 64 than those aged 18 to 24 (12 per cent compared with 11 per cent) contacted an official online between 2005 and 2010.

As hypothesised, internet skills and frequency of time spent online both positively affect online contacting (Table 6.5). Being born in an English-speaking country has a significant negative effect on online contacting, and education a very small, non-significant positive effect. Membership of non-political organisations has a strong positive effect, which may be a result of direct mobilisation by those organisations and indirect mobilisation by others within them. The possession of job skills also positively predicts online contacting, even controlling for internet skills. The evidence here indicates that online contacting is not an act of whimsy performed by citizens who have put little thought into what they are sending, but an act performed primarily by highly skilled (in both online and offline competencies) internet users. The multivariate analysis also confirms that online contactors are slightly older than the population mean, other factors being equal.

It was hypothesised that online contacting would require fewer civic skills, either online or offline, than offline contacting. The extra pressure facing an offline contactor – particularly if contacting an official in person – compared with the ease of sending an email should mean that greater civic skills are required. However, the results in Table 6.5 indicate that online contactors display very high levels of internet skills, job skills and organisational membership. The partial effects from the restricted model shown in Table 6.6 suggest that offline contactors possess even more traditional civic skills than online contactors. They are more likely to belong to non-political organisations, have more job-related skills and higher educational attainment. They also have lower household incomes than the population mean, which might be explained by different motivations for contacting, be they appeals for casework assistance or expressions of opinion on a particular issue.

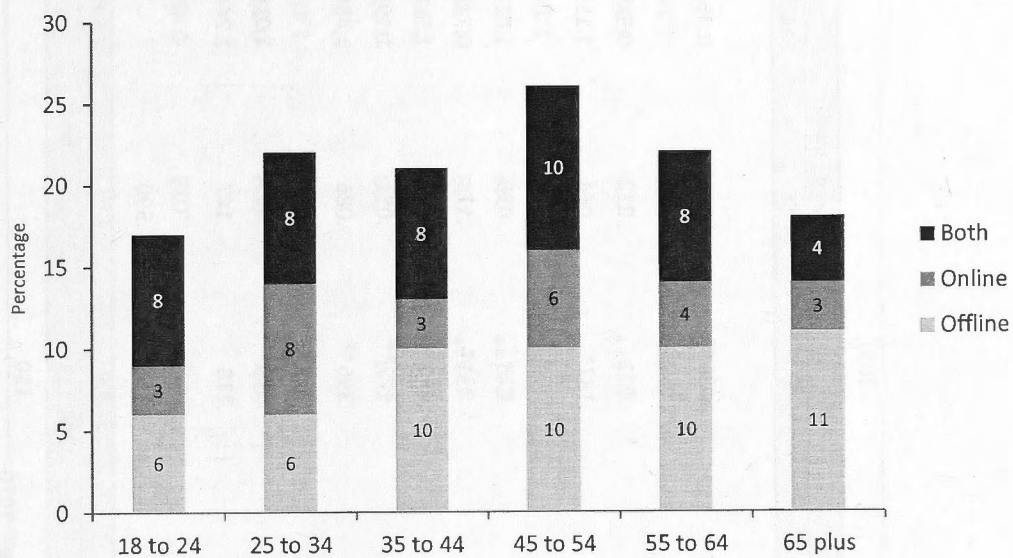


Figure 6.1: Contact type by age cohort (excludes non-contactors)
 Source: 2010 Australian Election Study (McAllister et al., 2010a)

Results from the full model analysis show that the addition of online resources does little to change the effects of offline resources on offline contacting. This is not surprising, as the time and particular civic skills required for offline contacting cannot be substituted (conceptually, at least) with online equivalents. More surprising is the strong effect of internet skills on offline contacting, suggesting that many individuals who are comfortable using the internet still choose to express their views either in writing or in person with a government official. Frequency of time online has no effect on offline contacting, throwing up a further possible explanation: regardless of how proficient somebody is in using the internet, if they do not spend a good deal of time online they will not contact an official over the internet. It may be that, with increased time online, the cost of sending an email instead of writing is so small as to be the preferable mode of contact. For those who spend less time online, the costs of email – in terms of time – are relatively high, and combined with the assumed higher payoff of writing over emailing an official, the preferred option is to write (or meet in person) instead.

Table 6.5: Predictors of contacting a government official via email to express views in Australia, 2010

	Online resource model			All resource model		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
<i>Money</i>						
Household income	-.006	.013	0.994	-.038**	.015	0.963
<i>Time</i>						
Hours to self				-.011	.012	0.989
Frequency of internet use	.183**	.062	1.201	.147*	.064	1.158
<i>Civic skills</i>						
Educational attainment				.013	.036	1.013
Born in English-speaking country				-.331*	.178	0.718
Organisational memberships				.450**	.088	1.568
<i>Job skills</i>						
Internet skills	.454**	.083	1.574	.177**	.054	1.193
<i>Controls</i>						
Age	.024**	.005	1.025	.016**	.005	1.016
Sex	.210	.142	1.234	.218	.147	1.244
Constant	-5.332	.538		-4.558	.590	
χ^2	97.380			157.336		
-2 log likelihood	1356.139			1296.183		
Nagelkerke r^2	.095			.150		

Binary logistic regression analysis. **p<.01 *p<.05 (two-tailed). n=1740.

Source: Australian Election Study 2010, n=1987 (McAllister et al., 2010a). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

Table 6.6: Predictors of contacting a government official in writing or in person to express views in Australia, 2010

	Offline resource model			All resource model		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
<i>Money</i>						
Household income	-.041**	.013	0.960	-.047**	.013	0.954
<i>Time</i>						
Hours to self	-.007	.010	0.993	-.006	.009	0.994
Frequency of internet use				.045	.047	1.461
<i>Civic skills</i>						
Educational attainment	.057*	.032	1.058	.034	.033	1.035
Born in English-speaking country	-.080	.158	1.923	.066	.159	0.936
Organisational memberships	.457**	.082	1.579	.448**	.083	1.565
Job skills	.243**	.047	1.275	.211**	.048	1.235
Internet skills				.167**	.075	1.182
<i>Controls</i>						
Age	.010*	.004	1.010	.019**	.005	1.019
Sex	.127	.128	1.135	.149	.129	1.160
Constant	-2.493	.398				
X ²	112.125			124.774		
-2 log likelihood	1615.665			1603.017		
Nagelkerke r ²	.097			.108		

Binary logistic regression analysis. **p<.01 *p<.05 (two-tailed). n=1755.

Source: Australian Election Study 2010, n=1987 (McAllister et al., 2010a). See Appendix 1 for coding.

The overwhelming message from these analyses of political contacting in Australia is that skills matter. Contactors possess more internet skills and job skills than the rest of the population, controlling for other factors. Income and education differences do not matter, except in the case of offline contacting, where contactors earn less than the population mean. Contacting is therefore not the domain of the socioeconomic elite, but of those with the skills and consequent confidence to express themselves to someone in a position of power. Further, these skills can be learnt by anyone, regardless of means. Internet skills are concentrated among the young. Job skills are a factor of employment, and to an extent professional employment, but organisational membership is open to all. Internet resources do not appear to be substituting for traditional resources with regard to online or offline contacting in Australia; rather they seem to be complementing each other. An individual possessing one job related skill is 24 per cent more likely than someone without to contact an official offline; possessing one internet-related skill can add 18 per cent to that likelihood (compared with somebody possessing neither internet or job skills). Combined, offline and online resources make a powerful difference to whether an individual is likely to contact an official to express his views.

6.5 *Civic voluntarism, internet use and working together*

There is likely to be some crossover between Australians who contact a government official to express their views and those who work with others to express their views; Australian data have shown that they are related acts (Bean, 1989). At their core, the intention of both activities is the same: to effect some kind of social or political change, either big or small. Free time is the one factor that is expected to separate contactors from communal workers. Time to oneself was not a significant factor in predicting either online or offline contacting; indeed, contactors reported having less free time than non-contactors. Among communal workers and non-workers, communal workers are likely to have more free time, in line with findings from the US (Verba et al. 1995; Krueger 2002; Best & Krueger 2005). The importance of free time to communal work (especially compared with contacting) is two-fold: work takes more time than contacting; and there is no online equivalent for communal work in this study, and so the time-saving benefits of the internet are not available to make participation easier.

The mean characteristics of communal workers and non-workers are listed in Table 6.7. Expectations about the distribution of free time among workers and non-workers are proven wrong: communal workers in Australia report less free time than non-workers (6.1 hours per day compared with 7.4). They also spend more time on the internet and possess more internet skills than non-workers, which is likely associated with their higher educational attainment and rate of employment. The differences in internet skills and usage are smaller between workers and non-workers here than between online contactors and non-contactors, however (see Table 6.4). Lacking internet skills and time online should not be a barrier to working with others to express a shared view. Communal workers are more likely to be born in an English-speaking country (80 per cent compared with 73 per cent), and are disproportionately male (54 per cent of workers are male, compared with 46 per cent of non-workers). In all, communal workers appear to be predominantly male, with high socioeconomic status, strong language competence, internet proficiency and little free time.

The results of the multivariate binary logistic analysis presented in Table 6.8 confirms that communal workers in Australia are more likely than not to be male, belong to non-political organisations and have a higher than average educational qualification. They also possess more job skills and internet skills than the population mean. Two things stand out in this analysis. First, communal workers report having less free time than non-workers, net of other factors. This suggests that those who work with others to express a view place a particularly high value on that activity, and are willing to forgo what free time they have to participate. Second, the amount of time spent online has a negative effect on whether somebody engages in communal work, whereas possessing internet skills has a positive effect. Much like in the analysis of offline contacting, this may be because the less time an individual spends online, the more valuable that online time becomes, and he will spend it doing things which are the most important to him and which can only be done online. Political activism then, to the extent that he will participate anyway, is therefore better undertaken offline, where his time is less valuable. Individuals with similar socioeconomic characteristics and interest in politics but who spend more time online are probably more inclined to participate online than offline.

Table 6.7: Mean characteristics of types of communal workers in Australia, 2010

	Did not work with others (n=1662)	Did work with others (n=385)
<i>Money</i>		
Household income	10.33 (5.86)	11.36 (6.13)
<i>Time</i>		
Time to self	7.38 (7.43)	6.13 (5.49)**
Time spent on internet	4.70 (2.52)	5.18 (2.19)*
Employment status	4.19 (2.52)	4.76 (2.36)
<i>Civic skills</i>		
Educational attainment	3.09 (2.15)	3.74 (2.14)**
Born in English-speaking country	.73 (.44)	.80 (.40)
Membership of non-political organisations	.41 (.71)	.73 (.87)**
Job skills	1.28 (1.47)	1.97 (1.55)**
Internet skills	1.48 (1.37)	1.91 (1.37)**
<i>Engagement</i>		
Political knowledge	2.46 (1.79)	2.92 (1.78)**
Interest in politics	3.18 (.80)	3.19 (.77)
<i>Controls</i>		
Age	56.36 (16.54)	53.47 (15.93)*
Sex (female)	.54 (.50)	.46 (.50)*

Independent samples t-test. Standard deviations in parentheses.

Between-group differences: **p<.01 *p<.05 (two-tailed).

Source: 2010 Australian Election Study (McAllister et al., 2010a). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

The portrait of communal workers drawn by this analysis is one of middle aged, employed, highly skilled men, who are proficient at using the internet but spend less than average time online. The obvious assumption, based on the descriptive data in Table 6.7 and the characteristics described here, is that communal workers are more likely to be employed. They also earn marginally less than the population mean, despite having a higher rate of employment. To draw out this profile, the reported

Table 6.8: Predictors of working with like others to express views in Australia, 2010

	Online resource model			All resource model		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
<i>Money</i>						
Household income	-.048**	.012	0.953	-.047**	.013	0.954
<i>Time</i>						
Hours to self	-.019*	.010	0.981	-.019*	.010	0.981
Frequency of internet use				-.074*	.046	0.928
<i>Civic skills</i>						
Educational attainment	.018	.031	1.018	.013	.031	1.013
Born in English-speaking country	-.013	.155	0.987	-.010	.156	0.990
Organisational memberships	.378**	.078	1.305	.388**	.079	1.473
Job skills	.203**	.045	1.225	.184**	.046	1.202
Internet skills				.182**	.072	1.200
<i>Controls</i>						
Age	-.010**	.004	0.990	-.006	.005	0.994
Sex (female)	-.243*	.122	0.784	-.237*	.122	0.789
Constant	-.471	.366		-.612	.440	
χ^2	84.114			90.613		
-2 log likelihood	1751.610			1745.111		
Nagelkerke r^2	.071			.076		

Binary logistic regression analysis. ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$ (two-tailed). $n = 1742$.

Source: Australian Election Study 2010, $n = 1987$ (McAllister et al., 2010a). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

issue salience of communal workers and non-workers is reported in Table 6.9. The most outstanding differences between the two groups concern the environment, industrial relations and refugees and asylum seekers. Research from the US shows that communal activity tends to be concerned with education, the environment and law and order issues (Verba et al., 1995). There is an established network of protest and lobby groups concerned with these issues, namely environmental activist groups such as Greenpeace, trade unions, and human rights organisations such as Amnesty International. The existence of organised networks infers the existence of strong recruitment networks to mobilise workers as well as contactors. The politics of communal workers help to explain their participation, then, but offers few clues as to the contradictory effects of internet skills and time online. Instead, the most fitting explanation seems to be the respective values placed on time online and offline, and the perceived effectiveness of offline participation over online participation.

Has the internet made contacting a local representative so easy that the representative is likely to disregard it? The flipside of lowering the cost of participation at the participant's end is that the act also has a lower value in the eyes of the recipient. Several Australian politicians have laid forth their views on the merits of constituents' letters versus emails; for instance, Malcolm Turnbull has stated that,

"When you get 1000 emails, all in exactly the same form, it's not exactly as persuasive as a bunch of emails people have written to independently express themselves" (in Peatling 2005).

New South Wales state representative Penny Sharpe advises constituents on how to lobby effectively:

"If you want your email read and responded to - original is better. When my blackberry filled up this morning with exactly the same email I did two things. I set up a rule so the emails are diverted into a folder that I won't look at again. I then drafted a standard response for automatic reply. For many MPs they will simply delete" (Sharpe, 2011).

With such examples of the low value representatives place on (particularly mass, pro forma) email contacting, it stands to reason that even citizens who have internet experience will still choose to communicate their views offline. For those who spend

Table 6.9: Issue salience among communal workers and non-workers, 2010

	Did not work with like others (n=1662)		Did work with like others (n=385)	
	% believe 'extremely important	Mean response (1=extremely; 3= not very)	% believe 'extremely important	Mean response (1=extremely; 3= not very)
Taxation	39	1.69 (.74)	41	1.72 (.80)
Education	61	1.46 (.61)	65	1.39 (.57)*
Unemployment	45	1.73 (.68)	40	1.75 (.68)
Environment	40	1.74 (.67)	49	1.63 (.69)**
Interest rates	44	1.70 (.69)	42	1.76 (.69)
Industrial relations	27	1.91 (.65)	30	1.88 (.73)
Health and Medicare	76	1.31 (.52)	78	1.29 (.52)
Refugees and asylum seekers	36	1.92 (.78)	44	1.79 (.79)**
Resources tax	31	1.95 (.73)	34	1.93 (.74)
Population policy	36	1.90 (.72)	33	1.91 (.71)

Independent samples t-test. Standard deviations in parentheses.
Between-group differences: **p<.01 *p<.05 (two-tailed).
Source: Australian Election Study 2010, (McAllister et al., 2010a).

little time in front of a computer or smartphone, the relative cost of their time online makes offline participation a preferable option. For frequent internet users, the very small cost – in terms of time – of online contacting makes it the preferred option.

The underrepresentation of low income earners among contactors is problematic for a healthy democracy: “contacting is, presumably, especially important for citizens who receive government benefits, since ensuring the flow to benefits may entail the need to deal with officials” (Verba et al., 1995, p. 213). More generally, if the correspondence a representative receives comes predominantly from high income earners and concerns their views and interests, the representative will receive a skewed portrait of the population. However, communal workers have lower household incomes than the population mean, suggesting that they make their voices heard in other ways. While the internet does not seem to be lowering the barriers of entry to political contacting so that more low income earners participate, it may be that low income earners are instead choosing other ways to express their views.

The pessimism of researchers such as Putnam (2001) regarding the generational decline in political participation and the death of a golden age of civic mindedness jars with optimistic media accounts of young people flocking to online activism (Carroll, 2012; Gladwell, 2010; Jenkins, 2012). The Australian reality seems to lie somewhere in between. Political contactors and communal workers are largely middle aged. Although email contactors are younger than the rest of the population on average, multivariate analysis shows that they have similar socioeconomic profiles to offline contactors and communal workers; young people are just more likely to be online than older people. As with the discussion of partisan participation in Chapter 5, it appears here that the internet is not changing the profile of political participants; it is not attracting the under-educated, the low income earning or the unemployed. Rather, it seems to be bringing well resourced citizens into the fray of political participation earlier than they otherwise would. In the long term, this likely has positive consequences for the rate of political participation in Australia.

An alternate explanation for this finding is that the current period is a transitional stage from offline to online participation. Where offline participation has been the domain of the middle-aged and retired, online participation is currently the domain of internet users (albeit those above the mean age of internet users generally). As generations are replaced, the average age of internet users will increase, and the average age of online participants may increase accordingly. A range of studies argue that the relationship between the internet and participation generally has become entrenched over time, and with increasing speed since the early 2000s and the advent of Web 2.0 functions (Bimber and Copeland, 2013; Boulianne, 2009; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2010; Gil De Zúñiga et al., 2009; Xenos and Moy, 2007). If this is both the case at the current time and continues going forward, it may be that any effects of the internet in bringing younger people into participation will dissipate over time.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined whether internet use – the amount of time an individual spends online and the internet related skills he possesses – has any effect on whether he engages in communal participation. Theory suggests that the most significant input to political contacting and communal work is opportunity, and specifically free time (Verba et al., 1995). It was expected that the internet, with its capacity to reduce the time required to participate would have positive effects. It was

theorised that the possession of civic skills would be necessary for participation, particularly the acts of writing a letter to or meeting with a government official or working with like others to express a view. The advantages that accrue to somebody with high educational attainment, English language competency and job-related skills should make those acts easy to perform. On the contrary, someone who speaks English as a second language, did not complete high school and has not written a letter as part of their job is likely to view an act of communal participation with trepidation.

Social capital has the capacity to overcome the collective action problem of communal participation (Putnam, 2001). It has been shown in this study and elsewhere that online social interactions have a positive effect both on the production of social capital and on individuals' propensity to engage in both political contacting and working with others to express a view about government policy (Dalton and Kittilson, 2012; Gibson and McAllister, 2009; Kittilson and Dalton, 2011). Data from the 2007 AES show that online social interactions are most common among the young, well-educated and those born in non-English-speaking countries. That profile is carried through to communal participation, where the bonding and bridging social capital produced in online social interactions is also important in predicting an individual's participation. Social trust is also a strong predictor of both forms of communal participation, suggesting that social capital plays an important role in the decision to contact a government official or representative or work with others in Australia.

Communal participants do not have high socioeconomic status, adding weight to the argument that social capital facilitates communal participation in Australia. The multivariate analyses of the effects of free time, money, civic skills, time spent online and internet skills on communal participation found that time is not an important predictor of communal participation in Australia. Rather, participants reported having less free time (before their participation in contacting or communal work) than non-participants. Online contactors – individuals who reported contacting a government official via email in the previous five years – spend more time online, possess more job and internet skills and belong to more non-political organisations than the rest of the population, all of which are in line with what is known about internet users generally.

More interestingly, internet skills positively predicted participation in offline contacting – via letter or in person – and offline communal work. The argument drawn

from these results is that frequent and infrequent internet users value the time they spend online differently, with frequent internet users more likely to engage in online modes of participation while light users, regardless of their proficiency in using the internet, choose to participate offline. Section 6.6 furthered discussion of this argument with early evidence that parliamentary representatives value written or personal contact over email contact, which is likely to inform participants' choice of offline over online modes of participation. The following chapter extends the discussion of informal, non-electoral modes of participation in Australia to protest activity.

Chapter 7 – information and opportunity: internet use and protest participation

7.1 Introduction

This chapter continues the analysis of informal modes of political participation in Australia, focusing on protest. In this context, 'protest participation' encompasses two specific activities: first, signing a petition and second, protesting, marching or demonstrating (described herein as 'demonstrating'). Petition signing can take place either offline or online (described hereafter as offline petition signing and e-petition signing respectively). Offline and e-petition signing are both non-confrontational ways of expressing one's views, in contrast to the confrontational nature of demonstrating. As with communal participation (Chapter 6), protest participation usually focuses on a single issue or goal (Dalton 2008b): participants engage on a sporadic basis, according to the salience of different issues and the opportunity to protest with others. Protest and communal participation do not differ so much conceptually as historically: Verba and Nie's (1972) study of participation observed communal participation as the more common form of informal (i.e. non-electoral or partisan) participation, while a subsequent study by Kaase and Marsh (1979b) showed the growing popularity of protest politics in advanced democracies.

The academic literature variously describes the advent of protest participation with regard to traditional forms of electoral, partisan and communal participation. Norris (2002) refers to 'new repertoires' of political activism fostered by new 'agencies' or collective organisations, and focused on new 'targets'. Dalton (2008a, 2008b) describes new citizenship norms as moving away from the focus on civic duty to interest in self-expression and engagement with society. He draws on Inglehart's (1990) observation of increasingly postmaterialist values in advanced democracies to argue, against Putnam (2001), that the concept of citizenship remains strong among Americans, at least, and that political engagement is not declining but taking on new, previously unmeasured, forms. In Australia, Vromen (2007, 2003a) likewise cites evidence that younger generations are as political engaged as their predecessors, but display their engagement through forms of protest not traditionally considered

'participatory'. Bean (1991) finds a mediated causal relationship between traditional (including communal) forms of participation and protest. He also finds evidence of a 'slippery slope' relationship between low-level protest, including petition signing, and more confrontational forms of protest in Australia.

More recently, research has focussed on emerging opportunities to participate online. Some studies, such as Bimber, Stohl and Flanagin's (2012) work on collective action in online organisations, focus on the opportunities created by the internet for mass, geographically diffuse protest. Carty (2010a, 2010b, 2002) observes the connections between grassroots mobilisation in traditional-style protests, for instance those against sweatshop labour and the corporate practices of multinational companies. Her findings suggest that the internet has allowed for the consolidation and expansion of existing protest movements. Similarly, Van Laer (2007; and Van Aelst 2009; 2010; and Kruikemeier et al. 2013) has studied the relationship between online mobilisation and offline protest. He and others find that protestors who also use the internet heavily become, by sharing information among a small channel of protestors and reinforcement of political engagement, 'superactivists' who engage in several forms of participation.

Protest participation here includes offline petition signing, e-petition signing and demonstrating. The Australian Election Study (AES) has collected data on both forms of petition signing since 2004 and demonstrating since 2001. Multivariate and descriptive analyses in this chapter use data from the 2010 AES. The three measures are straightforward, asking respondents whether or not they signed a petition or participated in a protest, march or demonstration (respectively) in the previous five years. The measures of petition signing are exact offline and online equivalents, providing useful data for comparison. There is no online equivalent of demonstrating within the data. The World Values Survey (WVS) has collected international comparative data on offline petition signing and demonstrating since 1981, including in Australia, and they are presented here to situate Australia in a global context. The WVS measures are not strictly comparable to the AES measures, but provide an informative overview.

This chapter draws primarily on Verba et al.'s (1995) civic voluntarism model of political participation in making assumptions about the effects of internet use on protesting in Australia. It also draws on Barnes and Kaase's (1979) *Political Action*. It is expected that petition signing is contingent on opportunity – being emailed a

petition, belonging to an organisation, etc – rather than particular resources. Internet use, in terms of both skills and time spent online, is expected to positively affect e-petition signing, while offline petition signing should be positively affected by membership of non-political organisations. There seems little reason that other factors would have specific effects on petition signing, according to the civic voluntarism model. Demonstrating is expected to be a factor of civic skills and opportunity, specifically of language proficiency and the social confidence associated with it. The time an individual spends online and his membership of non-political organisations are likely to increase the opportunities for exposure to information about a protest, and consequent recruitment. It is not expected that the internet resources of time spent online and internet skills will be able to substitute for traditional resources in participating in offline forms of protest. The time spent online should however be more important than offline free time in e-petition signing.

This chapter begins by expanding on these hypotheses in the context of the civic voluntarism model of participation (section 7.2). It discusses the competing theorised effects of resources and deprivation in mobilising protestors, noting that Dalton et al. (2010) argue persuasively that protestors are more often opportunistic than aggrieved. Section 7.3 examines the history of protest participation in Australia, with emphasis on empirical data from recent years. It also details the advent of online advocacy group GetUp!, which is expected to have had a positive effect on the overall rate of petition signing in Australia. Sections 7.4 and 7.5 conduct cross-sectional analyses of petition signing and demonstrating in Australia in 2010, using descriptive data and binary logistic regression analysis. There is a particular focus on the effects of internet resources on the three measures of protest behaviour, including whether they supplement traditional resources or can substitute for them in their absence. Section 7.6 concludes the chapter with a discussion of the implications of the findings for democracy in Australia.

7.2 Internet resources and protest: new opportunities to participate

Protest participation differs from conventional forms of participation in two ways. First, it tends to occur outside of traditional political structures, instead of within them. Protestors typically have low satisfaction with democracy and less trust in

government, leading them to go outside of those structures to make their voices heard (Kaase and Marsh, 1979a). Second, protestors have traditionally displayed 'relative deprivation' rather than high socioeconomic status (Kaase and Marsh, 1979b; Verba and Nie, 1972; Verba et al., 1995). Kaase and Marsh (1979b, p. 186) observed in the 1970s that "protest is very much the political style of the young and less educated – men and women equally". More recent research finds that 'new era' protestors, including anti-globalism and anti-racism activists, generally have high socioeconomic status (Norris, 2002; Norris et al., 2005). By the end of the 20th century, protestors were on average young, well-educated men (Norris, 2002, pp. 201–2; Volkov, 2012). This section explores whether, using the civic voluntarism (Verba et al., 1995) framework, Australian protestors match Kaase and Marsh's (1979b) profile. It is hypothesised that internet use will decrease the influence of free time and civic skills on protest participation. It is further hypothesised that the increasingly popularity of e-petitions is increasing the overall number of protestors in Australia.

Verba et al. (1995) theorise that free time is a necessary condition of all forms of political participation, including protest. Certainly, participation in demonstrations requires some time out of an individual's day, making it a less likely prospect for a parent of small children, someone caring for an elderly or disabled relative or those with work commitments. This effect (alongside value orientations and recruitment) may explain the high numbers of students among protestors (Dyke, 1998; McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Soule, 1997). However, this study has consistently shown that free time does not have the same positive effect in Australia that it does in the American case. Where it was theorised that citizens who volunteered their time to campaign for a political party would have more free time than the rest of the population, the opposite was found (see Chapter 5).

Therefore, while the bulk of existing research on the determinants of participation suggests that free time is necessary, it is reasonable to expect that free time will not have the same predictive effect on demonstrating or marching in Australia. Petition signing is not expected to be directly affected by whether an individual has free time or not, as the act itself is able to be completed quickly.⁴⁹ Signing e-petitions should require even less time to complete. Rather, e-petition signing will likely be a factor of time spent online: time spent online, independent of

⁴⁹ It is also assumed here that petition signing does not rely on travel to a particular location; anecdotally, petitions are often made available for signing at shopping centres, schools and community organisations or centres.

internet proficiency or other traditional civic skills, should positively affect whether an individual signed an e-petition between 2005 and 2010. Further, the more time a person spends online, the more likely it is that they will come across or have an e-petition sent to them.

Money is a theorised predictor of conventional forms of political participation; previous studies have generally found that demonstrators have less money than the rest of a population (Kaase and Marsh, 1979b; Verba et al., 1995). Kaase and Marsh (1979b) find that demonstrators in the Netherlands, Britain, United States, Germany and Austria are also younger and have less formal education than non-demonstrators, suggesting that the lack of money among protestors is as much an effect of lifecycle as of entrenched poverty. Certainly, a history of student protests from the 1968 strikes in Paris to the 'Arab Spring' uprisings of 2010 and 2011 supports the stereotype of student protestors, but there is an empirical basis to the popular image. Therefore, there is reason to expect that Australian petition signers and demonstrators will be younger than the population mean, but more importantly that they have lower annual incomes than the mean.

Political sociologists have long explored the concept of 'relative deprivation' – having less of something than others around you – as a pathway to political participation (for example Kaase & Marsh 1979a; Walker & Mann 1987; McVeigh & Smith 1999; Dalton & van Sickle 2005; Dalton et al. 2010). Deprivation theory runs counter to the resource theory espoused by Verba et al. (1995): deprivation theory looks at the socioeconomic factors that spur citizens to political action, whereas resource theory focuses on what citizens need in order to participate. Comparing the effects of deprivation and resources at both national and individual levels, Dalton, van Sickle and Weldon find that

“... it is certainly true individuals in lower income nations have greater objective grievances about their life conditions. Yet, without the resources and skills to become politically engaged, these grievances are typically not translated into political action... The general pattern is clear: protest does not occur primarily because people have a grievance and are blocked from other forms of action – people protest because they can” (2010, p. 22).

Further to this, internet users – who are the focus here – have higher average household incomes than non-users, and the most frequent and highly skilled internet users tend to have the highest incomes (see Chapter 3 for details). Accepting Dalton et al.'s (2010) evidence that resources are more important than deprivation in mobilising protestors, the internet presumably provides high income earners with more opportunities to protest.

The third factor in the civic voluntarism model (Verba et al., 1995) is civic skills, consisting of educational attainment, language competency, job-related skills and organisational memberships. They are expected to positively affect whether an individual demonstrated between 2005 and 2010. The importance of educational attainment to demonstration activity has been well established (Inglehart 1981; Norris 2002; Dalton 2008b; Dalton et al. 2010). Dalton et al. (2010) find that organisational memberships have a positive effect on demonstrating, which they ascribe to the increased likelihood of recruitment via those organisations. The other civic voluntarism factors of job skills, language competency and the additional internet skills have not been tested systematically for their effects on protest participation, but there is reason to expect that they will all be positive and strong for the same reasons as education. A demonstrator is likely to have well formed opinions on political and civic issues and the confidence to participate effectively, both artefacts of possessing civic skills.

Civic skills generally are likely less important to petition signing, an act that requires few civic skills. Petition signing is likely to be a factor of organisational membership; an individual already belonging to an active group should have more opportunities to sign a petition, either online or offline, than non-members. Educational attainment should have a positive role for the reasons stated above: a highly educated individual is likely to be more confident about their capacity to participate and influence political outcomes (see Chapter 2 for details). Language competency (measured by whether an individual was born in an English-speaking country) should increase someone's understanding of a petition and the consequent likelihood of signing it. Multivariate analysis revealed that Australians born in a non-English speaking country are, all else being equal, more likely to participate in partisan activity and less likely to participate in communal activity than the rest of the population, suggesting mixed effects of recruitment throughout diaspora networks. Given the similarities between communal activity and protest activity it is expected that Australians born in an English-speaking country will be the most likely to protest.

Internet skills have been shown throughout this study to have significant effects on whether an individual participates in political activity. Two possible effects of internet skills have been theorised: either that they complement traditional civic skills in making participation possible, or that they can substitute for traditional civic skills. Evidence so far has shown some signs of substitution, where the addition of internet skills to a model predicting an offline participatory behaviour has decreased the effects of traditional civic skills (see for example Sections 5.5 and 6.4). It is not expected that internet skills will have similar effects on participation in demonstrating or petition signing. Unlike the contribution of time or money to a political party or writing a letter to a government official, demonstrating and petition signing do not *require* specific civic skills; rather those skills increase the propensity for someone to participate. Demonstration seems to be a factor of a more general interest in politics, educational attainment and distrust of traditional political structures (Dalton et al., 2010). Internet skills, and time spent online, are likely to instead affect protest participation by bringing citizens into contact with other protestors and making them aware of opportunities to protest or sign a petition. Opportunity, according to Dalton et al. (2010), is the most important determinant of protest participation. Both measures of internet use are likely to capture the effects of increased protest and petition signing opportunities available to internet users.

The civic voluntarism factors of time, money and civic skills are each expected to affect whether Australians engaged in demonstration activity or petition signing in the five years prior to the 2010 AES. There are competing theories as to whether people protest because they have the capacity and the potential (resource theory) or because they are deprived of wealth or other resources and want to convey their dissatisfaction with government (deprivation theory). On the weight of existing evidence, it is expected that Australian demonstrators and petition signers will possess more time, money and civic skills than the rest of the population. More time spent online is likely to bring internet users into greater contact with information about protests and offline petitions, increasing their opportunities to participate. Frequent internet users should also have access to more e-petitions than light internet users and non-users. Internet skills likewise should increase the likelihood that a citizen comes into contact with individual activists and groups online, leading to their recruitment into demonstration activity and petition signing. In short, internet resources are not

expected to substitute for traditional resources with regard to protest participation, but to complement them by creating increased opportunities to participate.

Protest opportunities available exclusively to internet users are expanding. At the extreme end of protest and internet proficiency is 'hacktivism', in which internet users deface or disable targets' websites or internal networks as an act of protest. Protestors in the 'Arab Spring' uprisings beginning in 2010 used social media (particularly via mobile phones) to coordinate initial protest events, mobilise others and express their support for the various revolutionary movements (Hussain and Howard, 2013). In 2012, an existing, 'offline' charity used the internet to create international support for its campaign to find Ugandan guerrilla leader Joseph Kony, while major online media outlets replaced their regular content with messages protesting proposed United States government reforms to intellectual property laws (Carroll, 2012; Dailey, 2012; Fahrenthold, 2012). Since the early 2000s, social media has enabled the mass mobilisation of protestors in a range of regimes throughout the former Soviet bloc and the Middle East (White and McAllister, 2013). Previously, websites such as MoveOn.org provided a base for American citizens to connect with like-minded others and campaign for preferred political candidates and causes, while Change.org and similar websites allow registered users to create and distribute online petitions. In Australia, GetUp! (and its associated website, GetUp.org.au) originated in 2005 based on the MoveOn.org model. GetUp! offers free membership, and members are able to create and distribute petitions on the GetUp.org.au website. GetUp! also initiates and promotes its own campaigns on ideologically progressive causes (Vromen, 2008b).

GetUp!'s membership has reached a scale unmatched by many other groups in Australian civic life. Figure 7.1 shows the enormous growth in GetUp! members since 2005 (McClean, 2013).. Acknowledging some ongoing debate over the accuracy of these figures (see for example Andrews 2011), the total number of individual petition signatories in 2010-11 represents a sizable proportion of the Australian population. The increase in GetUp!'s membership figures suggests that data from the forthcoming 2013 AES will show a sharp increase in the number of Australians who have signed a petition in the previous five years. However, the steady increase in GetUp! memberships since 2005 has not been reflected in the AES data; the increase between the 2004 and 2007 studies presumably takes in the rise of GetUp!, but the subsequent (small) decline runs counter to the GetUp! figures. Contrary to this study's findings so

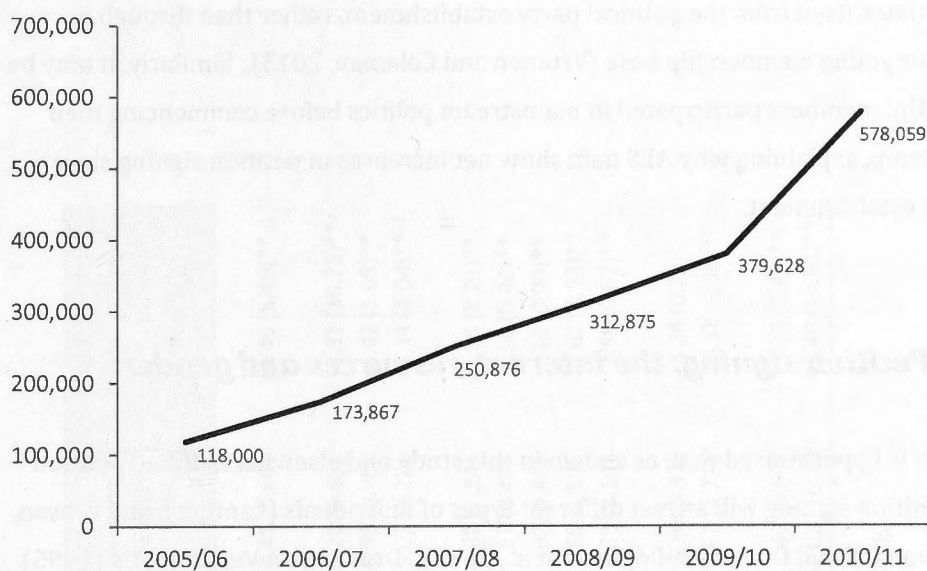


Figure 7.1: GetUp! membership, 2005/06 to 2010/11
 Source: Mclean, 2013

far, which suggest that the internet is mobilising citizens into political activity earlier in their life than would happen otherwise, published membership figures show that GetUp! members are older than the national population (Mclean, 2013). Indeed one third (33 per cent) of all members are aged between 50 and 64 years. GetUp! members are also disproportionately female: 58 per cent among members compared with 49 per cent of the Australian population. The typical GetUp! member is therefore female and above average age; not the stereotyped young, male internet activist.

By contrast, Vromen (2011) notes that GetUp! is operated by young people, and that their campaigns often focus on young Australians and youth-related issues. GetUp! was established with the view of replicating the processes and aims of social movements in mobilising as many citizens as possible, and channelling their participation into one (usually government-based) target (Vromen, 2008b). With time, however, GetUp's campaigns have become more mainstreamed, focused on election campaigns and 'moral urgency' (Vromen and Coleman, 2013, 2011). The subtle shifts in campaign style observed by Vromen and Coleman may either explain, or be explained by, the demographic profile of its members. Rather than an outsider-style social movement agitating for radical changes, the organisation has instead become a part of Australia's political, and even electoral, landscape. It is through an idiosyncratic

style of campaigning – using anecdotes and autobiographical story-telling – that GetUp! differentiates itself from the political party establishment, rather than through a diverse or young membership base (Vromen and Coleman, 2013). Similarly, it may be that GetUp! members participated in mainstream politics before commencing their membership, explaining why AES data show net increases in petition signing since GetUp!’s establishment.

7.3 *Petition signing, the internet, resources and gender*

It is hypothesised that, as shown in this study and elsewhere, offline petition and e-petition signing will attract different types of individuals (Cantijoch and Gibson, 2011; Gennaro and Dutton, 2006; Oser et al., 2013). Drawing on Verba et al.’s (1995) civic voluntarism model of participation, Table 7.1 explores the mean characteristics of Australians who did not sign a petition, signed an offline petition, signed an e-petition or signed both between 2005 and 2010. The most notable difference among the four groups concerns gender: the AES data here show that 68 per cent of Australians who signed both online and offline petitions are female, compared with 47 per cent of those who signed e-petitions only. It seems that males sign e-petitions, but not offline petitions; they may not be exposed to as many offline petitions. Alongside being predominantly male, the younger age, higher employment status, higher household incomes and higher educational attainment of e-petition signers are all characteristic of internet users generally.

Likewise, e-petition signers also possess greater internet skills and spend more time online than the rest of the population. Counter to this is that e-petition signers are the least likely to have been born in an English-speaking country, suggesting that language proficiency is not a barrier to signing online petitions. job and internet skills and are the least likely to belong to a non-political organisation. They are also the oldest group on average, with the least political knowledge, the lowest rate of employment (and the most free time) and the lowest household incomes. They are far less likely than offline petition signers to be born in an English-speaking country, but slightly more likely than exclusively online petition signers (70 compared with 67 per cent). As far as anything can be inferred from this descriptive analysis, it is expected that civic skills will be strong determinants of online petition signing, and less strong

Table 7.1: Mean characteristics of petition signers and non-signers in Australia, 2010

	Did not sign a petition (n=1331)	Signed 'offline' petition (n=563)	Signed 'online' petition (n=63)	Signed 'offline' and 'online' petition (n=257)
<i>Money</i>				
Household income	9.34 (5.82)	11.26 (5.91)	13.41 (5.60)	12.46 (5.49)**
<i>Time</i>				
Time to self	7.88 (6.53)	6.30 (6.09)	6.20 (5.65)	6.31 (10.73)**
Time spent on internet	4.12 (2.60)	4.98 (2.29)	6.66 (0.96)	6.47 (1.05)**
Employment status	3.89 (2.56)	4.40 (2.47)	5.03 (2.28)	5.14 (2.04)**
<i>Civic skills</i>				
Educational attainment	2.81 (1.99)	3.49 (2.18)	4.02 (2.24)	4.18 (2.29)**
Born in English-speaking country	.70 (0.46)	.82 (0.39)	.67 (0.47)	.80 (0.40)**
Membership of non-political organisations	.36 (0.66)	.58 (0.80)	.62 (0.96)	.70 (0.90)**
Job skills	1.10 (1.42)	1.73 (1.53)	1.56 (1.52)	2.02 (1.53)**
Internet skills	1.13 (1.29)	1.67 (1.33)	2.83 (1.10)	2.69 (0.97)**
<i>Engagement</i>				
Interest in politics	3.16 (0.79)	3.20 (.77)	3.16 (0.87)	3.24 (0.79)
Political knowledge	2.28 (1.81)	2.84 (1.73)	2.62 (1.77)	2.98 (1.68)**
<i>Controls</i>				
Sex (female)	.51 (0.50)	.50 (0.50)	.47 (0.50)	.68 (0.47)**
Age	59.73 (16.27)	55.96 (14.48)	42.02 (16.19)	45.49 (14.98)**

One-way ANOVA. Standard deviations in parentheses. Between-group differences: **p<.01 *p<.10.

Source: 2010 Australian Election Study (McAllister et al., 2010a). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

(but still positive) determinants of offline petition signing. In both cases, signers possess greater civic skills – both online and offline skills – than non-signers.

The results of a binary logistic regression analysis predicting e-petition signing show the importance of civic skills (Table 7.2). First, the results from the restricted model, with internet resources and control measures included only, reveals the strong positive effects of how much time an individual spends online and how internet proficient he is. Age has a small negative effect, even taking into account the relative youth of internet users generally, while household income – the measure of money in this model – has no effect at all. Testing the full model, with offline resources included, sees the effect of money become significant but negative. Frequency of time spent online retains a strong positive effect, while free time offline has no effect. The civic skills measures of educational attainment, organisational memberships and internet skills each have strong positive effects; combined, an individual possessing all of these skills has a much greater likelihood of signing an e-petition.

E-petition signers are less likely to be born in an English-speaking country, although the relationship is not significant (Table 7.3); language proficiency does not seem to be a barrier to e-petition signing. Further, the effects of gender are significant: a female is twice as likely to sign an e-petition as a male, with all other factors being equal. This reverses the univariate analysis in Table 7.3, which showed that e-petition signers were predominantly male. The multivariate result here indicates that men are more likely to be exposed to e-petitions because they are more likely to use the internet. However among internet users, and with all other factors held constant, females are much more likely to sign a petition. This confirms previous findings on the gender skew among petition signers, with the most common explanation being females' preference for non-confrontational modes of protest participation (for example Caren et al., 2011; Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010).

Importantly, the analysis shows that online resources are more important than traditional resources in predicting e-petition signing. An individual without formal educational qualifications, with no job-related skills and little language proficiency is almost as likely to sign an e-petition as somebody with all of those resources, so long as he spends time online and has at least some internet-related skills. When government

Table 7.2: Predictors of signing an e-petition, 2010

	Online resource model			All resource model		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
<i>Money</i>						
Household income	-.013	.012	0.987	-.029*	.013	0.972
<i>Time</i>						
Frequency of internet use	.510**	.081	1.666	.482**	.082	1.620
Hours to self				.012	.008	1.012
<i>Civic skills</i>						
Educational attainment				.080*	.031	1.083
Born in English-speaking country				-.067	.173	0.935
Organisational memberships				.273**	.083	1.314
Job skills				.031	.049	1.032
Internet skills	.377**	.081	1.458	.356**	.074	1.428
<i>Controls</i>						
Age	-.012**	.005	0.988	-.015**	.005	0.985
Sex	.768**	.129	2.156	.791**	.132	2.205
Constant	-5.926	.615		-5.944	.657	
χ^2	330.054			357.271		
-2 log likelihood	1544.498			1517.282		
Nagelkerke r^2	.258			.278		

Binary logistic regression analysis. **p<.01 *p<.05 (two-tailed). n=1725.

Source: Australian Election Study 2010 (McAllister et al., 2010a). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

official or parliamentary representative reads an e-petition, she can be confident that its signatories do not represent any particular socioeconomic bias. Rather, they represent the increasingly diffuse population of internet users in Australia. The effect of organisational memberships on e-petition signing is likely the result of members' increased exposure to e-petitions; belonging to both formal organisational networks as well as informal networks with like others should mean an individual is emailed or comes across more e-petitions than someone outside of those networks. Likewise educational attainment has a small positive effect on e-petition signing, probably reflecting the increased political knowledge and political efficacy that come with formal education (see Chapter 4 for details).

The adapted civic voluntarism model is tested here to predict offline petition signing in Australia (Table 7.3). The restricted model includes only the measures of offline resources: free time, money and civic skills. As expected, civic skills have strong positive effects on offline petition signing. While being born in an English-speaking country negatively predicted e-petition signing, here it increases the likelihood of signing an offline petition by 57 per cent. The other civic skills measures of educational attainment, organisational memberships and job skills have smaller effects, but all are positive and significant. The full model, with online resource measures added, does little to change the effects of civic skills. While educational attainment loses some predictive power, the language proficiency measure (being born in an English-speaking country) becomes more important. Job skills become slightly less important, while internet skills – the online alternate to job skills – have a strong, significant effect. Indeed in the unrestricted model, internet skills have a stronger effect than job skills on offline petition signing. The implication here is that internet skills can substitute for job skills as a barrier to signing a petition, but that job skills are still important. An individual who possesses job skills, and as such has always been a likely candidate for this form of political participation, is more than twice as likely to sign a petition if he also possesses internet skills.

The overwhelming result from these analyses predicting e-petition and offline petition signing is that civic skills are the largest barrier to entry, but that emerging forms of online skills can supplement the effects of offline civic skills. Online resources are the most important factors in predicting e-petition signing: signatories to an online petition are more likely to be frequent, proficient internet users than to have high socioeconomic status or to have job-related skills. Offline resources have almost no impact on whether or not somebody signs an online petition. On the contrary, online

Table 7.3: Predictors of signing an offline petition, 2010

	Offline resource model			All resource model		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
<i>Money</i>						
Household income	-.021*	.010	0.979	-.029**	.010	0.972
<i>Time</i>						
Frequency of internet use				.044	.036	1.045
Hours to self	-.005	.007	0.995	-.005	.007	0.995
<i>Civic skills</i>						
Educational attainment	.077**	.025	1.080	.047*	.025	1.048
Born in English-speaking country	.453**	.126	1.573	.474**	.127	1.606
Organisational memberships	.225**	.070	1.253	.218**	.071	1.244
Job skills	.164**	.037	1.178	.123**	.038	1.131
Internet skills				.235**	.057	1.264
<i>Controls</i>						
Age	-.005	.003	0.995	.007*	.004	1.007
Sex	.395**	.098	1.485	.424**	.099	1.528
Constant	-1.309	.297		-2.393	.363	
X2	111.924			148.914		
-2 log likelihood	2428.257			2391.268		
Nagelkerke R-squared	.079			.104		

Binary logistic regression analysis. **p<.01 *p<.05 (two-tailed). n=1779.

Source: Australian Election Study 2010 (McAllister et al., 2010a). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

resources – specifically internet skills – have a strong positive effect on whether an individual signed an offline petition in the previous five years. The combined results of these analyses indicate that not only do equivalent online forms of traditional acts of participation attract different types of participants – particularly ones without a systemic socioeconomic bias – but also that online resources can supplement and even substitute for offline resources in enabling offline participation. The findings here add further weight to the mounting evidence that internet use is materially changing the profile of who participates in political life. The following section replicates the analysis of offline petition signing to predict demonstration participation.

7.4 *Demonstrating, protesting and marching: student protestors in the internet age*

The most obvious difference between petition signing and demonstrating is that the former is a peaceful, non-confrontational act while the latter is often confrontational, with the potential for violence. However, as many studies have observed, demonstrating is an increasingly mainstream form of participation, and consequently less likely to involve violence or physical confrontation (for example Dalton, 2008b; Norris et al., 2005; Van Aelst and Walgrave, 2001). Accordingly, the predictors of petition signing and demonstrating are likely to be fairly similar. The positive effect of civic skills on petition signing should be replicated here; indeed, civic skills should be more important, as physical presence and interaction with other protestors are required of demonstrators. Measures of free time and money are also likely to be prevalent among protestors generally, as the weight of evidence now indicates that demonstrators are more commonly motivated by opportunity than by deprivation (for example Dalton et al. 2010).

The amount of time somebody spends online should have had a negative effect on demonstration activity, as the more time spent in front of a computer, the less time is available for offline activities (Nie, 2001; Putnam, 2001). However, the advent of smartphone technology means that somebody who uses the internet several times a day is not necessarily home- or office-bound. Instead, the more time spent online will increase an internet user's potential exposure to online information about offline demonstrations. There is no theorised reason why internet skills should have a direct effect on demonstration activity, except that, as with time spent online, an internet

proficient person is likely to come across demonstration information online that he would not have been exposed to without the internet.

The different mean characteristics of demonstrators and non-demonstrators show a slight socioeconomic bias among demonstrators (see Table 7.4). Demonstrators are more likely to be employed, be born in an English-speaking country, have formal educational qualifications, be a member of a non-political organisation and have job-related skills. They have higher household incomes and more political knowledge than non-demonstrators, but significantly less free time. The gender distribution is similar between demonstrators and non-demonstrators. Demonstrators also spend more time online, have greater internet proficiency, and are on average six years younger than non-demonstrators. The overall profile of demonstrators is similar to that of frequent internet users: well educated, employed, high-income earning, skilled and young. This profile also highlights the evidence collected so far in this study pointing to the internet's role in mobilising citizens to political action earlier in their life than would happen otherwise. Demonstrators, per the descriptive data in Table 7.6, fit the socioeconomic profile of activists described by Verba and Nie (1972), Verba et al. (1995) and Dalton et al. (2010), among others. However they are younger than participants in more traditional political acts.

The bias towards youth among demonstrators holds even when other factors are held constant (see Table 7.5). Results from a binary logistic regression analysis predicting participation in a protest, march or demonstration reveal first the partial effects of offline resources in a restricted model. Educational attainment and job-related skills have significant positive effects on demonstration, while age has a small negative effect; no matter the resources possessed, demonstrating is still a young person's game. With online resources added to the model, the unrestricted analysis reveals the distinctive characteristics of Australian demonstrators. The frequency of an individual's internet use has a positive effect on demonstration activity, but internet proficiency has no effect at all. This is presumably a result of increased exposure to information about demonstrations online, and online contact with other demonstrators. However, the internet skills measure should pick up some of that effect, so there may be another causal mechanism at play here. The positive effects of educational attainment and job skills are diminished very

Table 7.4: Mean characteristics of Australians who did and did not protest, march or demonstrate between 2005 and 2010

	Did not demonstrate (n=1697)	Did demonstrate (n=206)
<i>Money</i>		
Household income	10.42 (5.89)	11.95 (5.92)**
<i>Time</i>		
Time to self	7.23 (6.96)	5.88 (7.97)*
Time spent on internet	4.71 (2.50)	5.70 (1.96)**
Employment status	4.24 (2.50)	4.86 (2.39)**
<i>Civic skills</i>		
Educational attainment	3.13 (2.14)	4.09 (2.22)**
Born in English-speaking country	.74 (0.44)	.81 (0.39)*
Membership of non-political organisations	.44 (0.73)	.70 (0.90)**
Job skills	1.34 (1.49)	2.04 (1.54)**
Internet skills	1.51 (1.37)	2.10 (1.31)**
<i>Engagement</i>		
Interest in politics	3.18 (.79)	3.22 (0.77)
Political knowledge	2.49 (1.79)	3.13 (1.76)**
<i>Controls</i>		
Age	56.22 (16.43)	50.49 (15.18)**
Sex (female)	.53 (0.50)	.53 (0.50)

Independent samples t-test. Standard deviations in parentheses.

Between-group differences: **p<.01, *p<.05 (two-tailed).

Source: 2010 Australian Election Study (McAllister et al., 2010a). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

slightly by the inclusion of online resources, but retain their significance.

It is worth noting the significant negative effect of income on participation in demonstrations in Australia. The relationship is negative but insignificant in the restricted model, but becomes stronger and significant ($p=.051$) in the full model. The inclusion of the measures of internet time and internet skills appears to reduce the importance of education and job skills, but increase the importance of household income. It may be that the youth bias among frequent internet users combined with the increasing amount of information (including on specific demonstrations but also on the types of issues that lend themselves to this kind of participation) mobilise a younger group of demonstrators, almost as educated and skilled but with lower household incomes than when measures of internet use are discounted. The small

Table 7.5: Predictors of protesting, marching or demonstrating to express views

	Offline resource model			All resource model		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
<i>Money</i>						
Household income	-.041**	.016	0.960	-.049**	.016	0.952
<i>Time</i>						
Frequency of internet use				.142*	.063	1.153
Hours to self	-.042**	.016	0.959	-.040*	.016	0.961
<i>Civic skills</i>						
Educational attainment	.101**	.039	1.107	.082*	.039	1.085
Born in English-speaking country	.092	.206	1.096	.098	.206	1.103
Organisational memberships	.152	.096	1.164	.138	.096	1.148
Job skills	.203**	.057	1.225	.190**	.058	1.209
Internet skills				-.007	.088	0.993
<i>Controls</i>						
Age	-.014**	.005	0.986	-.008	.006	0.992
Sex	-.099	.155	0.906	-.089	.156	0.915
Constant	-1.480	.474		-2.372	.597	
X ²	58.671			65.801		
-2 log likelihood	1209.198			1202.068		
Nagelkerke r ²	.063			.071		

Binary logistic regression analysis. **p<.01 *p<.05 (two-tailed). n=1734.

Source: Australian Election Study 2010 (McAllister et al., 2010a). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

decrease in the effect of youth in the full model supports this explanation: heavy internet users are generally younger than the rest of the population, so the effects of time spent online account for the youth bias among demonstrators evident in Table 7.6. Taking internet use into account therefore lessens the effects of education, job skills, household income and age. While heavy internet use is currently concentrated among the educated and employed, with higher than average household incomes and lower than average age, the ongoing diffusion of internet access suggests that this will decrease.

The combined effects of frequent internet use, high educational attainment, accrued job skills and relatively low household income paint a picture of demonstrators that conflicts with Dalton et al.'s (2010) rejection of the deprivation theory hypothesis. To triangulate the analysis of socioeconomic and resource factors, the different policy and issue interests, and attitudes towards institutions, of demonstrators and non-demonstrators are compared. Understanding more of the motivations behind demonstration behaviour helps to assess whether deprivation theory does apply in Australia, or not. The overarching picture from Table 7.6 is that demonstrators display more postmaterialist attitudes than non-demonstrators: they are interested in the environment, global warming and refugee policy, while the rest of the population demonstrates interest in taxation, economic management, interest rates and health policy. However, demonstrators do rate education and industrial relations as comparatively important, reflective of the large numbers of university students and trade union members among their ranks.⁵⁰

There are fewer differences in political confidence between demonstrators and non-demonstrators: demonstrators report relative confidence in the legal system, trade unions, universities and political system generally, but less confidence in the armed forces, police, major companies and banks. Overall, they appear to have more confidence in civil society institutions than non-demonstrators, but less confidence in formal institutions. Where differences exist in issue salience and political confidence exist, they are likely influenced by the same factors that influence demonstration behaviour, namely age, educational attainment and employment. All of these factors

⁵⁰ Current university students comprise 1.8 per cent of non-demonstrators and 2 per cent of demonstrators in the sample. However, individuals with a bachelor degree or higher comprise 22 per cent of non-demonstrators but 42 per cent of demonstrators. The measure of demonstration activity spans the five years prior to the survey, taking in both current and recently graduated students: the high number of graduates among demonstrators likely accounts for at least student demonstrators. Trade union members comprise 20 per cent of non-demonstrators but 44 per cent of all demonstrators.

Table 7.6: Mean issue salience and political confidence among demonstrators and non-demonstrators in Australia

	Did not demonstrate (n=1697)	Did demonstrate (n=206)
<i>Issue salience (3=most, 1=least)</i>		
Global warming	1.00 (.75)	1.36 (.73)**
Taxation	1.33 (.66)	1.10 (.70)**
Education	1.54 (.63)	1.66 (.55)**
Unemployment	1.28 (.68)	1.18 (.68)
Environment	1.25 (.69)	1.56 (.60)**
Interest rates	1.32 (.69)	1.01 (.75)**
Industrial relations	1.18 (.67)	1.25 (.72)**
Health and Medicare	1.70 (.49)	1.61 (.55)*
Refugees and asylum seekers	1.09 (.78)	1.19 (.76)*
Resources tax	1.06 (.72)	0.96 (.76)
Population policy	1.10 (.72)	1.06 (.73)*
Management of the economy	1.67 (.50)	1.57 (.57)**
<i>Political confidence (4=most, 1=least)</i>		
Armed forces	2.23 (.64)	2.06 (.69)**
Legal system	1.36 (.70)	1.47 (.76)*
Press	0.97 (.66)	1.03 (.72)
Television	1.13 (.66)	0.99 (.66)*
Trade unions	1.06 (.75)	1.47 (.71)**
Police	1.95 (.68)	1.86 (.74)*
Federal government	1.35 (.70)	1.37 (.69)
Political parties	1.21 (.64)	1.24 (.63)
Federal parliament	1.40 (.69)	1.43 (.64)
Public service	1.31 (.72)	1.55 (.78)**
Major Australian companies	1.55 (.68)	1.36 (.70)**
Banks and financial institutions	1.34 (.79)	1.24 (.84)
Universities	1.92 (.64)	1.98 (.67)*
Australian political system	1.50 (.76)	1.61 (.68)*

Independent samples t-test. **p<.01 *p<.05 (two-tailed).

Source: Australian Election Study 2010, (McAllister et al., 2010a). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

are likewise associated with postmaterialism (Inglehart, 2008). Demonstrators in Australia therefore match the profile observed by Van Alest and Walgrave (2001) and Norris et al. (2005) in Europe: they are not anti-state rebels, but traditional participants with an expanded repertoire of acts (Dalton, 2008b; Norris, 2003b). Moreover, they do not appear deprived; rather, relative deprivation among Australian demonstrators is likely a factor of their age (i.e. university student or early career stage) or occupation (i.e. tradespeople, as opposed to highly-skilled professionals).

One hypothesis on the relationship between internet use on political participation is that the medium has a reinforcing effect (Norris, 2000). There is evidence of reinforcement among Australian internet users' political knowledge: the politically knowledgeable use the internet more, they learn more about politics online, and the gap between the knowledgeable and the unknowledgeable widens (McAllister and Gibson, 2011). A similar effect is evident here. The profile of people who use the internet frequently largely matches the profile of people who demonstrate, except with regard to income. The combination of high educational attainment and low income seems to mobilise demonstrators. An individual with these traits has the skills and requisite confidence in their own political efficacy to demonstrate, but also presumably some sense of relative deprivation – of not earning as much as they could, or of not having the socioeconomic opportunities they may have expected – which mobilises them to demonstrate. The dual effects of resources and grievance is exacerbated by internet use, as shown when measures of internet resources are added to the multivariate analysis. Again, the internet does not appear to be mobilising the previously disengaged into action, but reinforcing the divide between demonstrators and the rest of the population.

7.5 *Internet use, protest and attitudes towards government*

If protestors in Australia possess both the necessary resources (including internet resources) to enable them and the grievances to mobilise them into protest activity, does it follow that they are aggrieved with the political system generally? In their study of participation across Europe, Farah et al. observe that

"Conventional participation was largely a function system responsiveness, or support for the rules of the game, while unconventional activity [i.e. protest] was attributable to unhappiness with the existing political agenda" (1979, p. 444).

In that case, Australian protestors will be marked by their lack of what Easton (1975) describes as 'diffuse support': political trust, efficacy and satisfaction with government that create legitimacy and consequently stability in a democracy. However, it has been confirmed here and elsewhere that protestors increasingly resemble conventional participants (Dalton and van Sickle, 2005; Dalton et al., 2010; Norris et al., 2005; Van Aelst and Walgrave, 2001). Norris et al. (2005) find that Belgian protestors are not 'anti-state rebels'; is it also the case that Australian protestors display positive attitudes towards government. Moreover, as Donovan et al. (2007) note, by having the opportunity to participate, protestors may increase their diffuse support. This section examines whether the internet, by facilitating protest behaviour, has positive implications for support for Australia's democratic system.

Analyses of the mean differences between protestors and non-protestors show that protestors exhibit greater external political efficacy than non-protestors. Beyond efficacy, however, there are almost no differences between the two groups: satisfaction with democracy and political trust exist in equal measure among protestors and non-protestors. Table 7.7 shows that offline petition signers, e-petition signers and demonstrators are more likely to believe that their vote matters, and who is in power matters. This study makes no claims as to the causality of the relationship between protesting and efficacy, instead noting considerable evidence that while efficacy can lead a citizen to his first act of participation, participating has positive effects on efficacy, creating a non-recursive relationship (Finkel, 1987, 1985; Kenski and Stroud, 2006). Based on those previous findings, it can be expected that participants in protest acts in Australia, while already demonstrating significantly higher levels of political efficacy than non-protestors, will become increasingly confident in their ability to have a say in political outcomes.

Table 7.7: Attitudes towards government among protestors and non-protestors

	Did not sign e-petition (n=1697)	Signed e-petition (n=206)	Did not sign written petition (n=1121)	Sign written petition (n=880)	Did not demonstrate, protest or march (n=1756)	Demonstrated, protested or marched (n=210)
Dissatisfaction with Australian democracy	2.23 (0.70)	2.21 (0.71)	2.25 (0.71)	2.19 (0.70)*	2.22 (0.70)	2.24 (0.75)
Governments look after themselves	2.07 (0.99)	2.10 (0.96)	2.06 (0.98)	2.11 (0.99)	2.07 (0.99)	2.13 (0.99)
Trust politicians generally	3.84 (2.33)	3.82 (2.24)	3.76 (2.36)	3.98 (2.29)	3.83 (2.31)	4.02 (2.37)
Doesn't make a difference who is in power	2.41 (1.22)	2.23 (1.00)**	2.49 (1.24)	2.22 (1.09)*	2.40 (1.19)	2.22 (1.12)*
Doesn't make a difference who you vote for	2.11 (0.95)	1.94 (0.90)**	2.18 (0.96)	1.95 (0.90)**	2.11 (0.95)	1.85 (0.87)**

Independent samples t-test. Standard deviations in parentheses.

Between-group differences: **p<.01 *p<.05 (two-tailed).

Source: 2010 Australian Election Study (McAllister et al., 2010a). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

Taking previous research and the evidence here that e-petition signers display high levels of political efficacy together, it can be argued that the internet has positive effects on citizens' attitudes towards government.⁵¹ Table 7.6 shows that, although lower than among those who signed written petitions, e-petition signers are significantly more likely than non-signers to believe that it matters who is in power, and that their vote matters. Moreover, analysis of the attitudes among communal participants, per the measures in Chapter 6, finds significant differences in efficacy and political trust among Australians who contacted a representative via email (Table 7.8). Furthermore, online contactors demonstrate greater efficacy than offline contactors, suggesting that any effects of participation on reinforcing efficacy will be most evident among online contactors.

The overarching message of these analyses is that protestors, as well as communal workers, in Australia have greater external political efficacy than non-participants, and that this pattern holds for both online and offline participants. By participating, they are likely to increase their political efficacy (Finkel, 1987, 1985; Kenski and Stroud, 2006). Accordingly, while the internet has been shown throughout this study to have mainly reinforcing effects on individuals' propensity to participate, it is also likely to have reinforcing effects on participants' political efficacy. This does not seem to hold for political trust or satisfaction with democracy, which are more evenly distributed among participants and non-participants. The implications for democracy in Australia – and in any advanced democracy where the same relationships between internet use, participation and efficacy are evident – appear grim, although isolated among efficacy. While internet users' participation will make them increasingly efficacious, the gap between individuals who believe they can impact political outcomes and those who do not will increase.

On a more positive note, the online participation of groups not normally associated with participation indicates that the internet is having indirect effects on efficacy among those traditionally underrepresented groups. The two most obvious examples are young people, who are more likely to participate online than offline both in Australia and internationally, and citizens from NESB in Australia (Hirzalla and Zoonen, 2010; Macnamara, 2012; Schlozman et al., 2012; Vromen, 2008a). By creating

⁵¹ There is no consistent evidence that internet use has a direct effect on attitudes towards government, including political efficacy (for example Jennings and Zeitner, 2003; Scheufele and Nisbet, 2002; Shah et al., 2002).

Table 7.8: Attitudes towards government among communal workers and non-workers

	Did not contact official via email (n=1616)	Contacted official via email (n=363)	Did not contact official in writing or person (n=1712)	Contacted official in writing or person (n=260)	Did not work with others (n=1582)	Worked with others (n=391)
Dissatisfaction with Australian democracy	2.21 (0.73)	2.27 (0.73)	2.24 (0.71)	2.22 (0.70)	2.22 (0.70)	2.22 (0.73)
Governments look after themselves	2.07 (0.98)	2.14 (1.03)	2.06 (0.98)	2.11 (0.99)	2.07 (0.99)	2.14 (0.98)
Trust politicians generally	3.79 (2.31)	4.19 (2.39)**	3.76 (2.36)	3.98 (2.29)	3.84 (2.33)	3.84 (2.33)
Doesn't make a difference who is in power	2.41 (1.19)	2.15 (1.12)**	2.49 (1.24)	2.22 (1.09)*	2.39 (1.12)	2.23 (1.19)*
Doesn't make a difference who you vote for	2.11 (0.95)	1.86 (0.87)**	2.18 (0.96)	1.95 (0.90)**	2.11 (0.94)	1.81 (0.87)**

Independent samples t-test. Standard deviations in parentheses.

Between-group differences: **p<.01 *p<.05 (two-tailed).

Source: 2010 Australian Election Study (McAllister et al., 2010a). See Appendix 1 for variable coding.

new opportunities for such groups to participate, the internet will indirectly enhance their political efficacy, and increase the likelihood that they will support the democratic regime:

“While no one should assume exact correspondence between efficacy and support, it nonetheless is surely true that when a supposedly democratic system is seen to have failed in its promise of citizen efficacy it is likely to lose the support of its disillusioned members” (Madsen, 1978, p. 868).

The implications for democratic support among these traditionally disengaged groups – with the caveat that both young and NESB Australians also participate offline, and were not fully disengaged prior to the internet – are therefore substantial. They are discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed protest behaviour, comprising petition signing and demonstrating, in Australia. The two measures provide a broad view of both nonconfrontational and confrontational forms of protest. Australians rank highly among similarly advanced democracies in both activities, but particularly in petition signing. Although rates of overall petition signing have remained relatively stable over recent years in Australia, the share of offline and e-petitions has shifted with e-petition signing on the rise. This is in part attributed to the advent of online progressive advocacy group GetUp! which reports that as many as 578,059 individuals have registered their support for their predominantly petition-centred campaigns (McClean, 2013). From trend data however, it appears that despite the mass organisation of GetUp! overall petition signing is not increasing. Demonstration activity has fallen very slightly in recent years; more complete time series data is required to make any assertions as to a real trend.

Petition signers in Australia possessed greater socioeconomic resources and civic skills than the rest of the population. E-petition signers in particular are younger than the population mean, and significantly less likely to be born in an English-speaking country. There is also a notable gender divide among petition signers, with offline signatories overwhelmingly female and online signatories predominantly male.

Combined with the high rates of non-political organisational memberships among offline and e-petition signers, the descriptive evidence suggests that exposure and opportunity are key factors in petition signing generally. Similarly, Dalton et al. (2010) argue that opportunity is more important than deprivation in the pathway to demonstrating, and the descriptive evidence here concurs. Demonstrators on average have higher incomes, educational attainment, employment status, job skills, internet skills and rates of organisational membership than non-demonstrators. They are not relatively deprived, in net terms. They display the skills necessary to participate and also belong to the types of recruitment networks that provide opportunities to participate.

Multivariate analyses shed more light on the relative resources and deprivations of Australian demonstrators. Internet skills had positive effects on both forms of petition signing, but no effect on demonstrating (which is positively affected by the frequency of time spent online). Educational attainment had significant and positive effects on each activity; this was also reflected in the high number of bachelor and postgraduate degree holders among demonstrators particularly. On the other hand, household income has negative partial effects on each activity, suggesting some role for relative deprivation in mobilising protestors. Specifically, there may be an effect of dissonance between educational attainment and actual earnings which leads to protest activity. The addition of internet resources to the respective models predicting offline and e-petition signing did little to reduce the effects of traditional civic skills. However, individuals born in English-speaking countries were less likely than those from non-English-speaking countries to sign online petitions, with other factors controlled. This unexpected result warrants further investigation.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion: internet use, participation and democracy

This study has examined the effects of internet use on Australians' participation in a comprehensive range of political activities. Internet use was operationalised as two distinct resources similar to time, money and civic skills (Verba et al., 1995): time spent online and internet-related skills. Two potential effects of internet use were hypothesised: that time spent online and internet skills can substitute for the traditional resources of time, money and civic skills in enabling participation, or that internet resources can only supplement traditional resources in enabling participation. If the first scenario held, it could be deduced that the internet is mobilising previously inactive citizens into action. If the second held, the study could be taken as further evidence for the argument that the internet – specifically the 'digital divide' between users and non-users – reinforces existing gaps between the active and the inactive (Norris, 2000). The findings inform the literature on internet effects on participation, socioeconomic quality among participants, and Australia's democratic health.

Using longitudinal and cross-sectional data from the Australian Election Study, the World Values Survey, the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, and the Australian Bureau of Statistics census, the study found limited evidence that the internet is mobilising citizens into political participation. While the internet has created new opportunities for citizens to participate, and that citizens are participating earlier in life than if they did not use the internet, internet use is largely reinforcing the socioeconomic divide between participants and non-participants. From the descriptive and multivariate analyses of this study, a range of findings emerged. They are categorised into four themes, based on existing academic literatures: the advent of online participation as a new mode of political activity; the reinforcing effect of internet resources on participation; the disaggregation of 'internet use' and the different effects of internet skills and time spent online; and the evidence of 'Australian exceptionalism' among political participants. After discussing each of these, this chapter goes on to consider the implications of the findings for democratic politics in Australia, with emphasis on how participation can be encouraged and any existing biases among participants can be reduced. Next, the limitations of this study are outlined and

discussed, and followed by recommendations for future research on the internet and political participation.

8.1 Main findings

This study asked how internet use is affecting political participation in Australia, at a time when internet adoption in Australia has transitioned into a mainstream medium characterised by interactivity and portability. Specifically, it examined whether internet use complements the effects of traditional resources (time, money and civic skills) or replaces them. The results can be grouped into four key findings: the rise of online participation; the complementarity of internet and traditional resources *vis a vis* the substitution of traditional resources for internet resources; the multidimensionality of internet use; and the notable differences between the socioeconomic profile of Australian participants and those in Europe and the United States. These findings touch on several different areas of research, including political participation, e-participation and e-governance, comparative electoral systems and representation. They also complement the existing empirical research on Australian political behaviour.

First, the advent of online forms of participation has increased the overall rate of participation in Australia. It has also changed the profile of participants. This is most obvious where offline forms of participation now have online equivalents, for example offline and e-petition signing, offline and online sharing of partisan information, and offline and online contacting of a government official. The different mean characteristics of online and offline participants suggests that some Australians who participate online might not participate at all in the counterfactual scenario (i.e. if the internet did not exist). Numerous studies have found significant differences between the profiles of offline and online participants, providing some external validity to these findings (Cantijoch and Gibson, 2011; Hirzalla and Zoonen, 2010; Krueger, 2006b, 2002; Vissers et al., 2012). However, it does not follow that the internet is mobilising previously disengaged Australians into action. Instead it appears that, by reducing the costs of participating in terms of time and money, the internet is hastening the engagement of the types of Australians who would participate at some point in their lives anyway. The effect of this is to reinforce the divide between people who participate, and those who do not. The mean profile of online participants showed that

they were young, had high educational attainment, possessed relatively low household incomes (reflecting both early career status and living either alone or sharing a house), did not necessarily possess job-related skills but were internet proficient and spend more time online than the rest of the population. Socioeconomically, they fit the profile of participants observed by many other researchers (Almond & Verba 1963; Verba & Nie 1972; Verba et al. 1995; Schlozman et al. 2012, among others), except that they were relatively young, starting out their careers and had not accumulated the high incomes and the skills that come with employment experience.

The lifecycle effects of online participation were evident among e-petition signers, for example. E-petition signers were on average 10 years younger than offline petition signers (see Table 7.3). They had significantly higher educational attainment, higher household incomes, were more likely to be employed, but had fewer job skills than offline petition signers. They had less time to themselves, but spent more time online and were far more internet proficient than offline signatories. With other factors controlled, the multivariate analysis (Table 7.4) showed that household income had a significant negative effect on e-petition signing while being female had a significant positive effect. All else being equal, e-petition signers had above average educational attainment, below average household income, were female and younger than the population mean. They were also active in non-political organisations. In time, it is likely that they will more closely resemble the archetype of participants in *Participation in America* (Verba & Nie 1972) and the other major studies of participation. Currently, e-petition signers resemble younger versions of offline petition signers: earning less and possessing fewer job skills, but with greater educational attainment and online skills, and on the path to becoming highly skilled and highly paid.

The second major finding is that internet use usually complements traditional resources in predicting who participates in Australian political life, but there is also evidence that internet resources can substitute for traditional ones. Testing a restricted and an unrestricted model predicting the different forms of participation parsed the effects of traditional resources in the absence of and then alongside online resources, and vice versa. The results showed that for the most part internet resources complement time, money and civic skills in increasing the propensity that an individual will participate. For example, job skills had a significant positive effect on participation

in offline volunteering for a party or candidate. When internet resources were added to the model, the effect of job skills decreased and became insignificant. The effect of internet skills, new to the model, was positive and significant, as well as larger than the effect of job skills in both the restricted and unrestricted analyses. Internet skills were the more important of the two determinants, and were seemingly able to substitute in the absence of job skills.

For the most part the analyses in this study showed internet resources complementing rather than replacing traditional resources. Norris (2000) refers to this process as 'a virtuous circle'; it is elsewhere called the 'knowledge gap' (Anduiza et al., 2009b; Genova and Greenberg, 1979; McAllister and Gibson, 2011; Tichenor et al., 1970). Citizens who are already politically engaged consume more media, and consequently more political information, than disengaged citizens. In the process, the engaged become even more engaged, and the gap between the engaged and disengaged widens. Here, citizens with money and civic skills (but not free time, which negatively predicts most forms of participation in Australia) were the most frequent internet users. An individual with high educational attainment, job skills, language proficiency and memberships of non-political organisations was already the most likely to participate in elections, work with others to express his views, contact a government official, sign a written petition and participate in a demonstration. If he also spent time online and is internet proficient – and it is likely that he was – he was more likely to participate. Accordingly, the divide in the propensity for him to participate and the propensity for someone who does not use the internet to participate widened. Much has been made of the capacity for the internet to make political activity more attractive by lowering the costs of entry. Currently, the evidence suggests that the internet is instead making the active more active and the inactive only slightly, if at all, active.

In regards to the reinforcing effects of the internet, Australia is no different from many other countries. The large majority of research on internet effects has looked for signs of mobilisation, but found only reinforcement (Mossberger, 2010). Results from the US closely resemble this study: internet use reinforces the socioeconomic bias among participants, while lowering their average age (Park, 2013; Schlozman et al., 2012; Weber et al., 2003). Some American studies have found evidence of limited mobilising effects of internet use, while noting the unfulfilled capacity for large scale mobilisation (Morris and Morris, 2013; Tolbert and Mcneal, 2003). Other evidence from the US isolates the mobilising effects of specific aspects of internet use on specific activities, but not consistent or large scale mobilisation (Best &

Krueger 2005; Kruikemeier et al. 2013). Elsewhere, reinforcement has been the consensus finding: in Australia (Gibson et al., 2008; Vromen, 2007), the UK (Gibson et al., 2005) and Belgium (Van Laer, 2007). The general findings of this study concur with this literature, suggesting that the findings here are valid and that Australia, despite the differences in electoral laws and early adoption of the internet, is experiencing the same effects of internet use on political participation as other advanced democracies.

The study's third major finding was that different aspects of internet use have different effects on political participation. Evidence has suggested that internet use mobilises citizens into online participation, but not necessarily offline participation (Gennaro and Dutton, 2006; Vissers et al., 2012). Accordingly, this study found that time spent online and internet skills work together in positively predicting the four measures of online participation in the study, namely distributing partisan information over the internet, donating to a party or candidate online, contacting a government official via email and signing an e-petition. By dividing internet use into two components – time and skills – this study found that the internet does affect offline participation. Specifically, online resources positively predicted offline partisan work (i.e. volunteering time to a party or candidate's campaign), offline petition signing and contacting a government official in writing or in person. Spending time online had no effect on any of these acts. However, time online did positively predict participation in a demonstration or march.

This reflects the fact that people use the internet in different ways, in different places and for different things. How long an individual spends in front of a computer screen has different impacts on his day than whether he can use the internet effectively. Nie (2001) notes that time is an inelastic commodity: it does not change in supply, no matter the demand for it. The internet, with the infinite abundance of information available on the World Wide Web, creates new demands on time which means that other activities miss out.⁵² Time spent online is time that cannot be spent doing something else, including participating in political acts. Accordingly, the time an individual spends online has a negative effect on whether he donates money to a party or candidate offline and works with others to express a view. By spending more time online, the opportunities to participate offline are reduced, as offline time becomes

⁵² This equation is not unique to the internet; Putnam (1995) observes that television monopolises the time of its audience.

scarce. Moreover, where an online equivalent to an offline activity exists, as with offline and online donating, an individual who is online several times a day has more online time at hand to use on e-participation activities. The relative abundance of online and offline time is dictated by how much time someone spends in front of a computer (or internet-enabled smartphone), and in turn dictates the opportunities for online and offline participation. Where online time is scarce, offline participation is more likely, and vice versa.⁵³

On the other hand, internet skills appear to accurately measure proficiency, and not just an artefact of frequent internet use. For instance, internet skills positively affected working with like others to express a view, while time spent online has a negative effect (Table 6.5). Skills had an effect distinct from time, and in this case, the completely reverse effect. That effect seems to be more closely related to the traditional civic skills in Verba et al.'s (1995) model; educational attainment, language proficiency, experience with job-related skills and in non-political organisations provide individuals with the tools and confidence to be able to participate, and internet skills appear to perform a similar role. Internet skills positively predicted whether an individual contacted a government official in person or writing between 2005 and 2010, which is arguably the most skills-intensive act included in this study. Likewise, internet skills positively predicted (offline) voluntary work for a party or candidate, which requires the confidence to work alongside other volunteers and at times persuade members of the electorate how to vote. Internet skills had no direct effect on an individual's ability to perform either of those tasks, but constituted an additional civic skill which added to the propensity to participate. They also likely reflected an individual's overall technological competence.

The fourth major finding from this study concerns Australia's place alongside the other advanced democracies of North America and Europe. For the most part, the results of this study resemble what has been found elsewhere: that internet use tends to reinforce existing socioeconomic divides between participants and the rest of the population, but that it decreases the average age of participants (see for example Best &

⁵³ The effect of time spent online on an individual's participation in a demonstration or march runs counter to this explanation. However, demonstration is a less time intensive activity than working with like others, for example, requiring a one-off commitment of time as opposed to ongoing activity. This might explain why time spent online does not negatively affect demonstration, but not necessarily why it has a positive effect. Further research would be required to provide a comprehensive explanation.

Krueger 2005; Cantijoch 2009; Schlozman et al. 2012; Park 2013). It also reflects previous findings from Australia (Gibson et al., 2008). However, two factors central to theories on who participates in politics, and foremost in the civic voluntarism model (Verba et al., 1995), have the opposite effects in Australia to the United States.

First, participants in Australia reported having less free time than the rest of the population, even before accounting for political activity. They had on average more intensive work and family commitments than non-participants. The theoretical justification for including free time in the model is sound, and has an empirical basis (Verba et al., 1995). It is reasonable that free time would negatively predict online participation, as one feature of the internet is its capacity to make tasks such as political participation less constrained by time and space (Quintelier and Vissers, 2008; Shah et al., 2002). A parent who is also employed full time should find it easier to sign an e-petition than an offline petition, for instance. However, offline participants also reported having less free time than other Australians. This is difficult to account for. It may have been an artefact of a slightly younger pool of participants than is reported in American studies, or perhaps a feature of Australia's political culture that participation is viewed as something performed outside of work hours, rather than in lieu of work. This finding warrants further research.

The second area in which Australian participants differed from the other advanced democracies is in language proficiency. Depending on the act, language proficiency – measured by whether an individual was born in an English-speaking country or not (a binary condition) – had a varied effect, moving from strongly positive to strongly negative and back. Being born in an English speaking country had a negative effect on the majority of acts studied: party membership, online partisan work (distributing partisan information via the internet), offline partisan work (volunteering for a party or candidate), online donations to a party or candidate, offline donations to a party or candidate and signing an e-petition (although the last effect was large, but not statistically significant at $p < .05$).

Being born in an English-speaking country positively affected electoral enrolment and voter turnout (aggregated at the federal electoral division level), working with like others, offline petition signing and demonstrating. It could be argued that language proficiency is particularly important to these acts; voting and petition signing require at least some language comprehension, while demonstrating and

communal work require interpersonal skills including language (unless the group consists entirely of non-English speakers). However, the same can be said of the acts negatively predicted by language proficiency. Party membership and online and offline partisan work particularly require some language comprehension.

The alternate explanation for the varied effects of being born in an English-speaking country is that the measure was not only accounting for the proxy effects of language proficiency but also demographic characteristics of non-Anglo immigrants. Specifically, it might be the case that the effects found here reflected strong recruitment networks among Australia's ethnic diasporas. There is an extensive literature on ethnic politics, group consciousness and mobilisation, social capital and political participation that cannot be covered adequately here, but it stands to reason that Australian citizens who identify closely with any particular group, ethnic or otherwise, have come across more opportunities to participate than individuals outside of a group. Moreover, there is at least anecdotal evidence of large numbers of immigrant and non-English speaking Australians being recruited to join the major political parties (Dryzek, 2002; Zappalà, 1998). Including the negative effects of being born in an English-speaking country on the partisan acts of party membership, online and offline partisan work and online and offline donations, the weight of evidence suggested that ethnic diasporas in Australia constitute strong networks for political recruitment. However, much more research would shed genuine light on the causal mechanisms at work; little can be inferred from the evidence presented here.

8.2 *Implications for democracy in Australia and internationally*

Australia's history of compulsory voting and electoral experimentation lends itself to modest claims of 'Australian exceptionalism' regarding political behaviour (Bryce, 1921; Sawyer, 2001). Declining participation rates are not viewed as crises, as in the United States and Europe. Indeed the 'crisis of democracy' thesis espoused by Lijphart (1997), Pharr, Putnam and Dalton (2000) and Putnam (2001) has found little sympathy in Australia (Gibson et al., 2008). Australia appears in good democratic health (McAllister, 2011; Norris, 2001b). However, beneath the surface are some signs of malaise within Australian democracy, from declining voter turnout as a proportion of the voting age population and an increasing number of Australians not enrolled to vote to recent (likely cyclical) falls in satisfaction with democracy and trust in

government (Australian Electoral Commission, 2012a; McAllister et al., 2010a). While the trend data in this study showed no systematic declines in participation rates in Australia, the biases among participants – even among internet users – constitutes some cause for concern.

Who participates is at the heart of the democratic system of government. Dahl (2000) contends that 'effective participation' is one of five crucial criteria for any democratic process: "before a policy is adopted by the association, all the members must have equal and effective opportunities for making their views known to the other members as to what policy should be" (p.37). All members of a democratic system must equal opportunities to vote, and "within reasonable limits as to time... equal and effective opportunities for learning about the relevant alternative policies and their likely consequences" (p.37). It is perhaps easy to declare that Australia has strongly democratic political institutions, which with the addition of compulsory voting facilitate very high levels of voter turnout. All citizens have equal opportunities to participate, at and in between elections, but from the evidence presented here (and in any study of participation), not all citizens do. Furthermore, those who do possess resources and socioeconomic characteristics that distinguish them from the rest of the population. With a view to expanding rates of participation among Australian citizens, this section discusses three specific implications of these findings: the importance of future internet diffusion, the role of educational attainment and the flow on effects (if any) of compulsory voting to non-electoral participation.

Early (optimistic) studies of internet use and participation predicted that the internet would both increase rates of participation and equality among participants and non-participants (for example Norris 2001b; Gibson et al. 2000; Bimber 2001; Agre 2002; Norris 2002). Studies since have tended to observe that while the internet has the capacity to increase participation, evidence has not materialised to match the optimism (for example Bimber et al., 2012; Boulianne, 2009). The major period of growth in internet usage occurred between 2000 and 2007 in Australia, during what is termed here the transitional phase of Australian internet adoption. In 2013, as the social phase of internet usage is well established, it is not plausible to argue that further diffusion of internet access in Australia can significantly affect participation rates. As discussed, approximately 80 per cent of Australian households already have access to the internet, while 87 per cent of households with children under 15 have access

(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). The technological barriers preventing access in rural and remote regions have largely been overcome due to federal government policies; further diffusion of internet access will rely on generational replacement. Relying on further roll-outs of broadband cable or optical fibre to increase access (and political engagement along with it) ignores the reality that any Australian who wants to be politically active likely already uses the internet. However, the roll-out of faster, more reliable broadband infrastructure may have the effect of increasing the amount of time that users spend online. It will also likely decrease the time taken to perform tasks online. The overarching effect would therefore be reinforcing, as existing users spend *more* time online, performing *more* activities online.

Future increases in participation rates as a result of internet use will instead be due to the consolidation of internet use among political organisations and citizens, and due to increasing use of social networking applications. As 'Generation X' becomes middle aged, and Baby Boomers become elderly, even the residents of retirement homes will have some internet experience. Time will tell whether the comparatively young participants in this study will continue to participate as they get older, or whether the responsibilities of work and family that come with age will take precedence. In other words, this study cannot say whether the relative youth of Australian participants is a lifecycle or generational phenomenon. In the meantime, it is likely that political parties and other civil society groups will continue to move more of their organisational processes and communications online, and as a consequence move offline participation online. For example, political party memberships can not only be initiated online (i.e. processed and paid), but carried out online. Branch meetings can be replaced by online forums, targeted at members with specific geographic or policy interests. Participating online may become the norm in many instances, reducing the costs of participation in terms of both time and money and attracting more participants as a result.

Any normalisation of online party and campaign participation will depend on the willingness of political organisations to innovate, not on further internet diffusion. As has been shown, parties in Australia are not incentivised to mobilise voters, as the task of getting voters to polling booths falls to the state. While the findings here do not suggest that online innovations will necessarily mobilise party members from within previously disengaged sections of the population, providing more membership options, including online, will likely attract younger members. Any organisational reforms to that effect will entrench the major parties' role at the centre of Australia's democracy.

Parties in other democracies are already innovating (Dalton et al., 2011; Scarrow, 2013); contagion to Australia is not assured, and will likely take some time. However, the relative ease and inexpensiveness of online mobilisation, compared with traditional grassroots recruitment efforts, makes it seem likely that contagion will occur eventually.

This study's findings have implications for other political institutions in Australia, but perhaps particularly for electoral management bodies. The analyses in Chapter 4 indicated that the roll-out of dialup internet access through rural areas had a positive effect on electoral enrolment. Likewise, it is shown here and in other studies that EMBs can successfully add social media campaigns to their repertoires of mobilisation strategies. Online enrolment was introduced in 2013, although internet voting is not feasible in the short term (Holmes, 2012; Trechsel, 2007). Only Estonia has implemented a system allowing citizens to vote over the internet (rather than electronically, at a polling booth). Internet voting is 'an unlikely prospect' in that country, due to its established and trusted electoral practices (Holmes, 2012; Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand, 2013). However, the concept of internet voting is popular among the population, with 45 per cent saying that being able to vote online would make voting 'much easier' (McAllister et al., 2010a). This number is concentrated among young Australians, who would perhaps be most likely to increase their electoral participation rate were more online options available.

In Australia, as elsewhere, education is consistently and highly important in predicting political participation. Again, this is not unique to the Australian case; in fact it is one of the notable similarities to studies such as Schlozman, Verba and Brady (2012). What is exceptional about the Australian analysis is that, while educational attainment has generally significant positive effects on participation, household income has generally negative effects. It suggests the mobilising effects of being highly educated but having less available income than the population mean. In practical terms, people with these characteristics might be underemployed, working in entry level jobs or occupations outside of their expertise, working in a low paid job of their choosing (such as in the community or not-for-profit sector) or temporarily out of the workforce due to family or other non-work related responsibilities.

As the proportion of Australians possessing a university degree increases⁵⁴ it can be expected that a greater number find themselves in one of these positions. Assuming that there is a causal mechanism at play – that is, a mobilising effect of being educated but underemployed or underpaid – participation rates in Australia should increase accordingly. To the extent that participation determines the quality of political representation, these Australians are the ones making expressing their views to members of Australia’s parliaments. Moreover, most acts of participation are affected by education and income in this way: party membership, online partisan work, online donation, contacting a government official in writing or person, working with like others, offline and e-petition signing and demonstrating.

The third implication for democracy in Australia concerns compulsory voting. Mandating voter turnout is said to have several benefits for democratic health, including buffering Australia from the global trend towards civic apathy, spillover effects on participation rates, ‘educative effects’ on citizens’ political knowledge and competence, and “cushion[ing] the impact of wealthy, vested interests on political agendas and outcomes” (Hill, 2001). Indeed, the negative effects of household income are evident in multivariate analyses, but the descriptive profiles of participants presented in this study show that politics in Australia suffers from the same socioeconomic biases as in other democracies where voting is voluntary. The view of compulsory voting as a panacea to disproportionate representation of citizens’ voices or as a pathway to non-electoral participation among high and diverse numbers of Australians is not supported in this study.

That is not a reason to discard this view entirely, however. First, compulsory voting, by mandating that all voting-aged citizens engage with the electoral process, provides a pathway to at least a small level of political engagement, if not to participation in further forms of participation. Second, the range of factors predicting participation in Australia is varied. From the inverse effects of education and household income to the strong effects (in both directions) of language proficiency, it is difficult to detect the kinds of patterns here that have leant themselves to typologies of participants elsewhere (for example Almond & Verba 1963; Verba & Nie 1972). It may be that compulsory voting has a more latent, less discussed effect of making participation in Australia less predictable: something to which the consistently poor model fit results throughout this study attest.

⁵⁴ The percentage of Australians with a Bachelor Degree or higher increased from 3.4 in 1967 to 23.8 in 2010, according to AES data (McAllister et al., 2010).

Finally, international evidence shows that political efficacy, and other positive attitudes towards government and politics, is both an input and an output of participation (Finkel, 1987, 1985; Kenski and Stroud, 2006). The relationship is non-recursive: efficacy positively affects participation, which positively affects efficacy. While the effects do not appear to extend to other attitudes, such as satisfaction with democracy and political trust, significantly higher rates of external efficacy among protestors and communal workers in Australia will likely be enhanced each time they participate. Consequently, the 'efficacy gap' between participants and non-participants will increase. However, by lowering the barriers to entry for many forms of participation, the internet has created participatory opportunities for traditionally underrepresented groups in Australian society. While young and NESB Australians participated before the advent of the internet, and continue to participate offline (for example the comparatively high rates of political donations among NESB Australians), this study indicates that online activities (such as e-petition c.f. offline petition signing) require fewer resources.

In all, the state of participatory democracy in Australia appears robust. While resources are important for participation, the resources required vary between participatory acts. If a citizen does not possess the language skills required to write a letter to or meet with a government official, he can – and apparently does – choose to donate time or money to his preferred candidate, and achieve his desired political outcome through those means. Further, internet skills have positive effects on almost all of the acts analysed in this thesis. Internet skills are easier to acquire than job skills, language proficiency or educational attainment, and in many cases had larger effects on participation than any of those more traditional civic skills. Thus, the costs of entry to participation have been lowered, but citizens must still be necessarily engaged to participate, and ideally recruited into participation.

8.3 *Directions for future research*

A range of possible directions for future research emerge from this study, informed by the limitations encountered in conducting this analysis. For instance, the data used here are general use datasets and not specific to the research question, some of the relevant measures are cross sectional only, and not all of the measures are

consistent with international data, limiting the possibility of cross-national replication. The study relies mostly on the publicly accessible and extensive Australian Election Study (AES) dataset, particularly those variables reflecting the civic voluntarism model of political participation in the 2010 AES. However, the data were not collected specifically for this study and as such do not always provide precise measures of the factors described here. For instance, respondents are not asked to report their language proficiency, and so country of birth is used as a proxy for that civic voluntarism measure. Questions on free time, job skills and internet skills were not asked before 2011, making accurate longitudinal analysis impossible. Similar problems were faced during the analyses of electoral enrolment, voter turnout and party membership. In each case, the study proceeded with the best available data and drew on theory and existing empirical evidence to assist with interpretation.

The implications for immigrant and ethnically diverse Australians' adaptation to the country's democratic system are substantial, and warrant further research. More extensive analysis of the reciprocal relationship between efficacy and participation, focusing on young or NESB Australians, will shed light on the strength and significance of the hypothesised non-recursive effects. Panel data would provide the best basis for analysis, per Finkel's (1987, 1985) studies of the US and West Germany. However, in lieu of panel data, future studies of large, cross-sectional datasets can explore the partial effects of efficacy on participation, and vice versa, using structural equation modelling. There is a range of possible outcomes for Australian democracy stemming from this study, and ample opportunities to look more closely at specific findings using the AES and similar national and cross-national datasets.

Despite this study's limitations, it constitutes a comprehensive, empirical account of political participation in Australia. The resources available have helped to answered the research questions, namely how the internet is directly affecting political participation in Australia, and whether the internet as a resource can substitute for or complement traditional resources. The analysis here constitutes the most comprehensive study of political participation in Australia to date. However, much more remains to be known. First, longitudinal study of the effects of internet use on participation over time, preferably with panel data, would add much needed detail to what is known. This has been undertaken elsewhere with regards to civic engagement (see for example Jennings & Zeitner 2003), but the long term material effects of internet use on participation are harder to identify.

Appendix 1

The diffusion of internet access in Australia provided opportunities for natural experimental studies, but those opportunities are easier to identify after the fact, when internet penetration spans the country. There may be opportunities for studies with similar designs in democracies where internet penetration is still low, such as India. Any study where the independent variable is allowed to vary within the unit of analysis will elicit the best information on long term effects. Specifically, panel data could help to answer whether online participants proceed to participate offline. There is some limited evidence that online participation can be a pathway to offline participation, but currently most research suggests that internet use mobilises e-participation and offline resources mobilise offline participation.

Second, the counterfactual scenario – where the internet does not exist – is hard to imagine, and harder to study empirically. Difference-in-difference analysis with larger datasets may provide some answers to the ‘what if’ question, but the window for contemporary study is closing as internet penetration continues apace across the world. Third, the unexpected effects of language proficiency in this study – particularly the high rates of Australians born in a non-English speaking country – suggest previously unasked questions about the capacity of the internet to mobilise specific demographic groups into participation. Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, more should be known about Australian political behaviour generally, but participation specifically. There is a dearth of systematic, empirical research on participation in Australia. Future research should place an emphasis on comparative datasets and cooperation with researchers internationally, with a view to enhancing the external validity of what we know about politics in Australia.

Appendix 1

Description and measurement of independent variables, 2007 and 2010 AES

Attribute	Measure	Survey question	Notes	Mean	SD
Civic skills	G3. Educational attainment	Have you obtained a trade qualification, a degree or a diploma, or any other qualification since leaving school? What is your highest qualification?	Recoded from least to most: 1=No qualification since leaving school 2=Non-trade qualification 3=Trade qualification 4=Associate Diploma 5=Undergraduate Diploma 6= Bachelor Degree (including honours) 7=Postgraduate Degree or Postgraduate Diploma	3.39	2.17
	H3OWN. Language proficiency	In which country were you born?	Variable recoded into 1=Australia, England, New Zealand, Ireland (i.e. all English-speaking countries listed); 0=all others. Recoded variable used as proxy for language proficiency.	.78	.41
	G7. Membership of non-political organisations	Are you an active member of any of the following organisations, an inactive member or not a member? - Business or employers' association - Farmers' association - Professional association - Charitable organisation - Sport or recreation organisation	Scale variable created using count of 'active member' responses	.49	.76
	G8. Job-related skills	In the last 12 months, have you done any of the following activities as part of your involvement with your job, community or other organisations you belong to? - Written a letter - Gone to a meeting where you took part in making decisions Planned or chaired a meeting	Scale variable created using count (value=1) of four binary variables	1.45	1.50

		- Given a presentation or speech			
	H12. Internet skills	Have you done any of the following tasks on the internet? - Sent an attachment with an email - Posted audio, video or image files - Personally designed a webpage or blog - Downloaded a software program to your computer	Scale variable created using count (value=1) of three binary variables	1.91	.40
Controls	H1. Sex	Are you male or female?	1=Female	.51	.50
	Age (derived)	In what year were you born?		48.17	17.62
Engagement	A1. Political interest	Generally speaking, how much interest do you usually have in what's going on in politics?	Recoded from least to most: 1=None 2=Not much 3=Some 4=A great deal	3.20	.78
	C14. Political efficacy (external)	Some people say that no matter who people vote for, it won't make any difference to what happens. Others say that who people vote for can make a big difference to what happens. Using the scale below, where would you place yourself?	Recoded from least to most: 1=Who people vote for won't make any difference 5=Who people vote for can make a difference	2.10	.94
	F13. Political knowledge	And finally, a quick quiz on Australian government. For each of the following statements, please say whether it is true or false. If you don't know the answer, cross the 'don't know' box and try the next one. - Australia became a Federation in 1901 - There are 75 members of the House of Representatives - The Constitution can only be changed by the	Scale variable created measuring number of correct answers	2.41	1.72

		<p>High Court</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Senate election is based on proportional representation - No one may stand for Federal parliament unless they pay a deposit - The longest time allowed between Federal elections for the House of Representatives is four years 			
Recruitment	A8. Contact by parties or candidates	<p>During the election campaign, did a candidate or anyone from a political party contact you to persuade you to vote for them?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - By telephone - By mail - By face-to-face - By email or through the web 	Scale variable created using count (value=1) of four binary variables	1.03	.31
Social capital	H12. Online bonding social capital	<p>H12. Thinking about the time you spend using the Internet, can you say how much it has helped you do each of the following things? Interact with people or groups who share your hobbies or interests. Interact with people or groups who share your religious beliefs. Interact with people or groups who share your political views. Interact more with the people I feel really close to such as family and very close friends.</p>	Count measure of 'yes' responses to H12. Range = 0 to 4.	9.45	3.37
	H12. Online bridging social capital	<p>H12. Thinking about the time you spend using the Internet, can you say how much it has helped you do each of the following things?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interact with people from different ethnic backgrounds - Interact with people from other countries - Interact with people of different ages or 	Count measure of 'yes' responses to H12. Range = 0 to 3.	5.19	2.54

		generations			
	F15. Social trust	Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?	0= Can't be too careful 1=Most people can be trusted	.57	.50
Time	H8. Free time per day (hours)	On an average weekday, how many hours per day do you have to yourself (that is, time awake without having to work, spend time at college or other educational programs, do housework, look after children or deal with other people's needs)? Please give your answer to the nearest hour.		6.80	7.58
	H10. Time spent online	In general, how often do you use the internet?	Recoded from least to most: 1=Do not use the internet 2=Less often 3=Every few week 4=One to two days a week 5=Three to five days a week 6=About once a day 7=Several times a day	5.28	2.27
	G4. Employment status	Now some questions about the work you are doing now. Last week, what were you mainly doing?	Recoded so that values reflect the time-intensity of employment: 1=Retired from paid work 2=Unemployed (looking for part-time work) 3=Unemployed (looking for full-time work) 4=Keeping house 5=Working part-time for pay 6=Full-time school or university student 7=Working full-time for pay	4.85	2.33

*Description and measurement of dependant variables,
2007 and 2010 AES*

<i>Behaviour</i>	<i>Measure</i>	<i>Survey question</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Political internet use	A15. Political internet use	During the 2010 election campaign did you read or access any of the following websites? - Party or candidate campaign sites (e.g. home pages, official Facebook profiles, official YouTube channels) - Mainstream news media (e.g. ABC Online, SMH site etc) - Unofficial online videos (i.e. non-party produced) with campaign or political content (e.g. YouTube) - Federal Parliament site - Australian Electoral Commission site - Political blog	Same question wording (excluding year) used in 2007, 2004 and 2001 AES	.56	.98
Partisan participation	B2. Party identification	Would you call yourself a very strong, fairly strong or not very strong supporter of that party?	'Party' refers to B1 response	1.90	.69
	Party membership	Now I am going to read off a list of voluntary organizations. For each one, could you tell me whether you are an active member, an inactive member or not a member of that type of organization? - Political party	World Values Survey data. Binary variable created of 'active member' and 'inactive member' responses.	.10	.30
	A5P5. Donation	How often did you do any of these things during the recent election? - Contribute money to a political party by mail or phone	Recoded (binary)	.02	.14
	A5P7. Online donations	How often did you do any of these things during the recent election? - Contribute money to a political party or election	Recoded (binary)	.03	.18

		candidate using the internet			
	A5P3. Offline partisan work	How often did you do any of these things during the recent election? - Show your support for a particular party or candidate by, for example, attending a meeting, putting up a poster, or in some other way	Recoded (binary)	.17	.38
	A16. Online partisan work	During the 2010 election campaign did you do any of the following activities online? - Posted comments on a blog, twitter feed or wall of a social network site (either yours or someone else's) - Shared unofficial campaign content (e.g. links to videos, news stories) with others via email, Facebook, twitter or SMS - Reposted unofficial campaign content (e.g. blog posts, links to videos) on your own page (Facebook or twitter profile, blog)	Scale variable created using count (value=1) of three binary variables; scale variable recoded to binary due to small number of positive answers	.10	.30
Communal participation	C11P1. Contacting a government official offline	Over the past five years or so, have you done any of the following things to express your views about something the government should or should not be doing? Contacted a politician or government official either in person, or in writing	Binary	.18	.39
	C11P6. Contacting a government official online	Over the past five years or so, have you done any of the following things to express your views about something the government should or should not be doing? Contacted a politician or government official by email	Binary	.13	.34
	C11P3. Working with like others	Over the past five years or so, have you done any of the following things to express your views about something the government should or should not be doing? Worked with people who	Binary	.20	.40

		shared the same concern			
Protest participation	C11P4. Petition signing	Over the past five years or so, have you done any of the following things to express your views about something the government should or should not be doing? Signed a written petition	Binary	.44	.50
	C11P5. E-petition signing	Over the past five years or so, have you done any of the following things to express your views about something the government should or should not be doing? Signed an online or e-petition	Binary	.20	.40
	C11P2. Demonstrating or marching	Over the past five years or so, have you done any of the following things to express your views about something the government should or should not be doing? Taken part in a protest, march or demonstration	Binary	.11	.31
Issue salience	D1. Issue salience	Here is a list of important issues that were discussed during the election campaign. When you were deciding about how to vote, how important was each of these issues to you personally?	Recoded from least to most: 1=Not very important 2=Quite important 3=Extremely important	n/a	
Attitudes towards government	E8. Confidence in a range of institutions	How much confidence do you have in the following organisations?	Recoded from least to most: 1=None at all 2=Not very much confidence 3=Quite a lot of confidence 4=A great deal of confidence	n/a	
	C7. Dissatisfaction with democracy	On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in Australia?	1=Very satisfied 2=Fairly satisfied 3=Not very satisfied 4=Not at all satisfied	2.22	.71

	C9/C1. Political trust	In general, do you feel that the people in government are too often interested in looking after themselves, or do you feel that they can be trusted to do the right thing nearly all the time?	1=Usually look after themselves 2=Sometimes looks after themselves 3=Sometimes can be trusted to do the right thing 4=Usually can be trusted to do the right thing	2.08	.99
		How much do you trust politicians generally? Please use a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means no trust and 10 means a great deal of trust.		3.87	2.35
	C13/C14. Political efficacy (external)	Some people say it makes a big difference who is in power. Others say it doesn't make any difference who is in power. Using the scale below, where would you place yourself?	1=It makes a big difference who is in power 5=It doesn't make any difference who is in power	2.37	1.19
		Some people say that no matter who people vote for, it won't make any difference to what happens. Others say that who people vote for can make a big difference to what happens. Using the scale below, where would you place yourself?	1=Who people vote for can make a big difference 5=Who people vote for won't make any difference	2.10	.94

Appendix 2

Description and measurement of independent and dependant variables, WVS Wave 6

Attribute/ behaviour	Measure	Survey question	Notes	Mean	SD
Money	Household income (deciles)	On this card is an income scale on which 1 indicates the lowest income group and 10 the highest income group in your country. We would like to know in what group your household is. Please, specify the appropriate number, counting all wages, salaries, pensions and other incomes that come in.		4.90	2.04
Time	Employment status	Are you employed now or not? If yes, about how many hours a week? If more than one job: only for the main job.	Recoded from least to most time-intensive: 1=Retired/pensioned 2=Unemployed 3=Housewife not otherwise employed 4=Part time employee (less than 30 hours a week) 5=Student 6=Self employed 7=Full time employee (30 hours a week or more)	4.61	2.61
	Frequency of PC use	How often, if ever, do you use a personal computer?	1=Never 2=Occasionally 3=Frequently	2.62	.67
Civic skills	Educational attainment	What is the highest educational level that you have attained? [NOTE: if respondent indicates to be a student, code highest level s/he expects to complete]	1=No formal education 2=Incomplete primary school 3=Complete primary school 4=Incomplete secondary school: technical/vocational type 5=Complete secondary school: technical/vocational type 6=Incomplete secondary:	4.84	2.95

			university-preparatory type 7=Complete secondary: university-preparatory type 8=Some university-level education, without degree 9=University-level education, with degree		
Internet as a source of information	Information source	People learn what is going on in this country and the world from various sources. For each of the following sources, please indicate whether you use it to obtain information daily, weekly, monthly, less than monthly or never: - Daily newspaper - Printed magazines - TV news - Radio news - Mobile phone - Email - Internet - Talk with friends or colleagues	Recoded from least to most: 1=Never 2=Less than monthly 3=Monthly 4=Weekly 5=Daily	n/a	n/a
Engagement	Interest in politics	How interested would you say you are in politics? Are you...	Recoded from least to most: 1=Not at all interested 2=Not very interested 3=Somewhat interested 4=Very interested	2.83	.72

Campaign participation	Party membership	Now I am going to read off a list of voluntary organizations. For each organization, could you tell me whether you are an active member, an inactive member or not a member of that type of organization?		.10	.30
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