**Institute of Policy Studies**

# Symposium
# on
# Media and Internet Use
# During General Election 2015

## Wednesday, 27 January 2016

## Conference Room, Level 1, Oei Tiong Ham Building

**Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy**

National University of Singapore

# Posted and Shared:
# Personalised Communication and Knowledge Gap in Singapore's General Election 2015

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# Posted and Shared: Personalised Communication and Knowledge Gap in Singapore General Election 2015

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# Media use during GE2015…

- Intensified coverage by legacy and alternative media, start-ups and individuals

- Smartphones, social media, IM apps

- Greater diversity of content

- Voters access, share and post election information on numerous social media apps

# Is there a knowledge gap?

- As mass media information increases, there will be an increasing knowledge gap between higher and lower social economic status segments of the population (Donahue, Tichenore & Olien, 1973)
- Better educated can acquire information faster
  - mass media caters to their interests and needs
  - better access to media and information resources
  - more media literate and greater prior knowledge
  - have higher literacy in processing complex topics such as politics

# Internet & knowledge gap

- Internet reduced access barriers
- GE2011…
  - Alternative online media filled information gaps and narrowed knowledge gap between social status groups
  - Lower educated voters gained knowledge more rapidly from increased alternative media use than more highly educated voters
  - Greater relevance and authenticity of citizen-generated political information

# Can personalised communication reduce knowledge gap?

- Production and sharing of political content based on personal values through various personal communication technologies (Bennett & Sergerberg, 2012)
- Information co-produced and co-distributed will be more relevant, based on personal interests

# Survey Measures

Questions on production and distribution on social media (IM, SNS, online forums, blogs or YouTube sites):

- Started a thread discussing a candidate, political party, the election, and/or issue
- Wrote a post or made a video expressing my opinions on a candidate, political
- Commented on a post or video on a candidate, political party, the election, and/or issue
- Shared relevant information and/or political commentary related to the post/video or discussion
- Liked a page or a post about a candidate, political party, the election and/or issue
- Used social network sites to connect to people related to my interests in the election
- Sought/asked for information about a candidate, political party, election news and/or issue
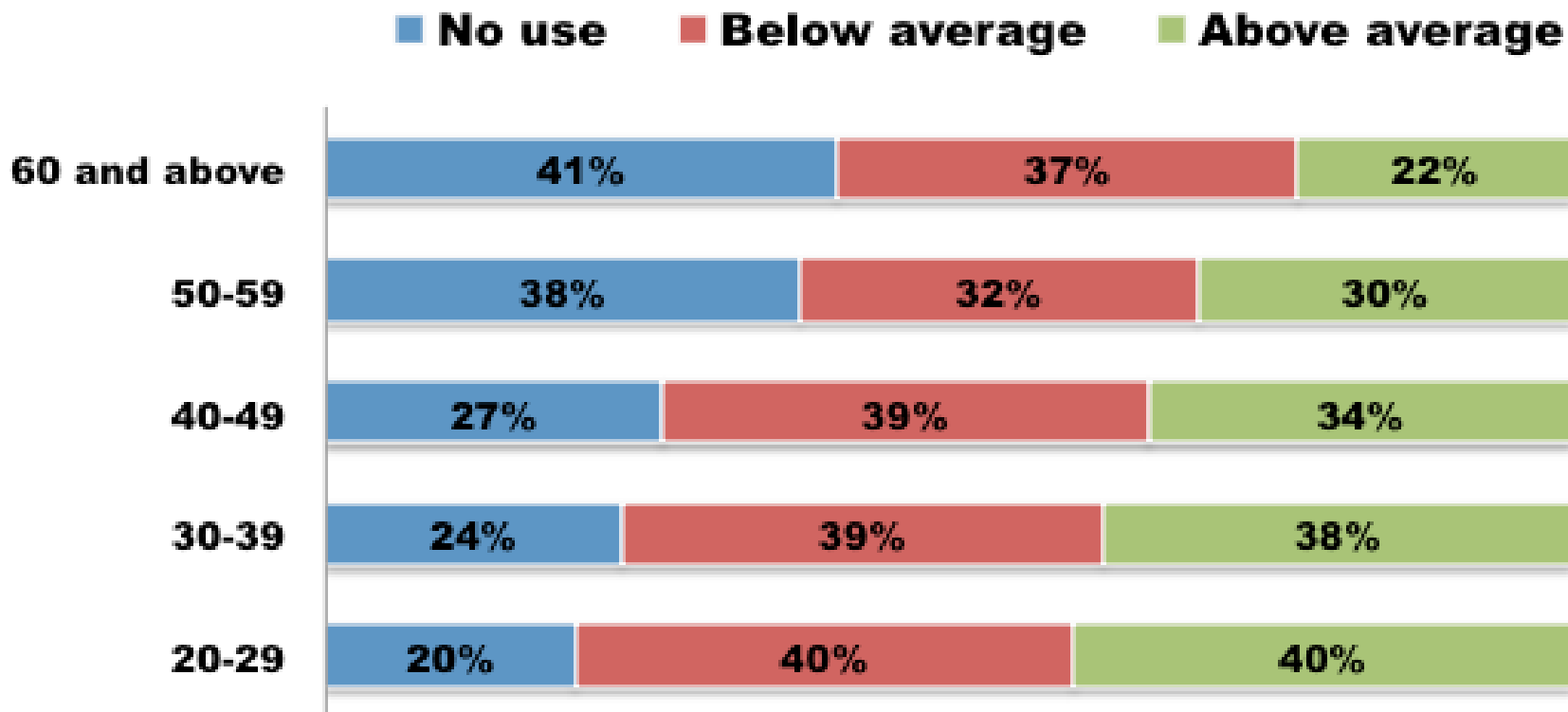
# Survey Measures

- Political interest
- Internal and external political efficacy
- Political and civic engagement
- Political and campaign knowledge

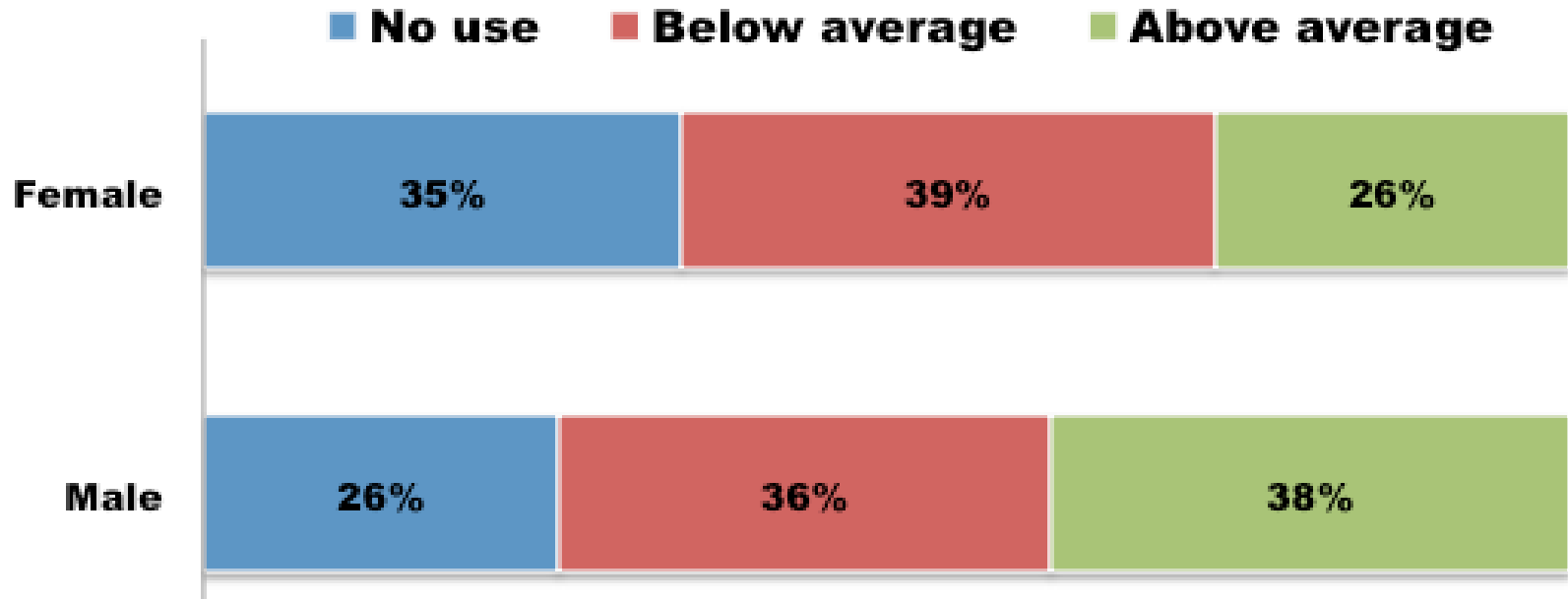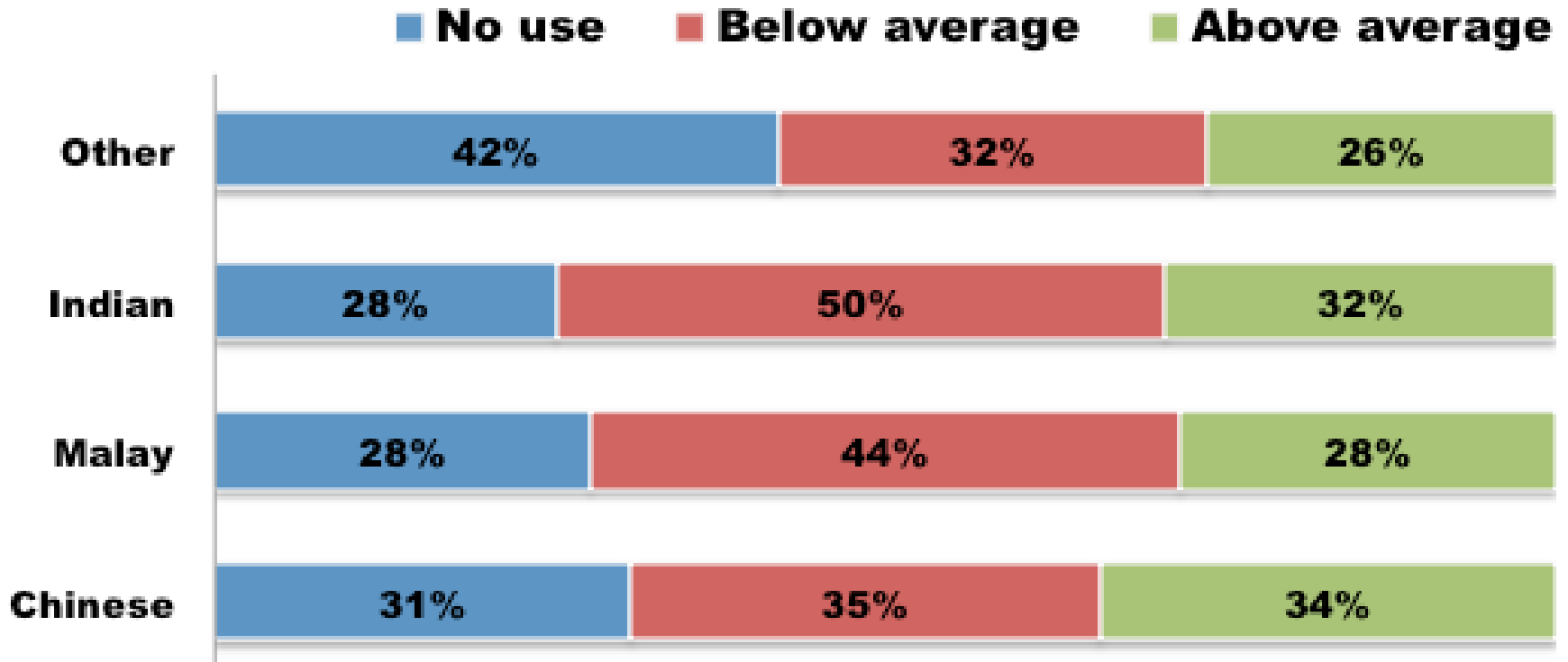# Most Singaporeans were engaging in personalised communication
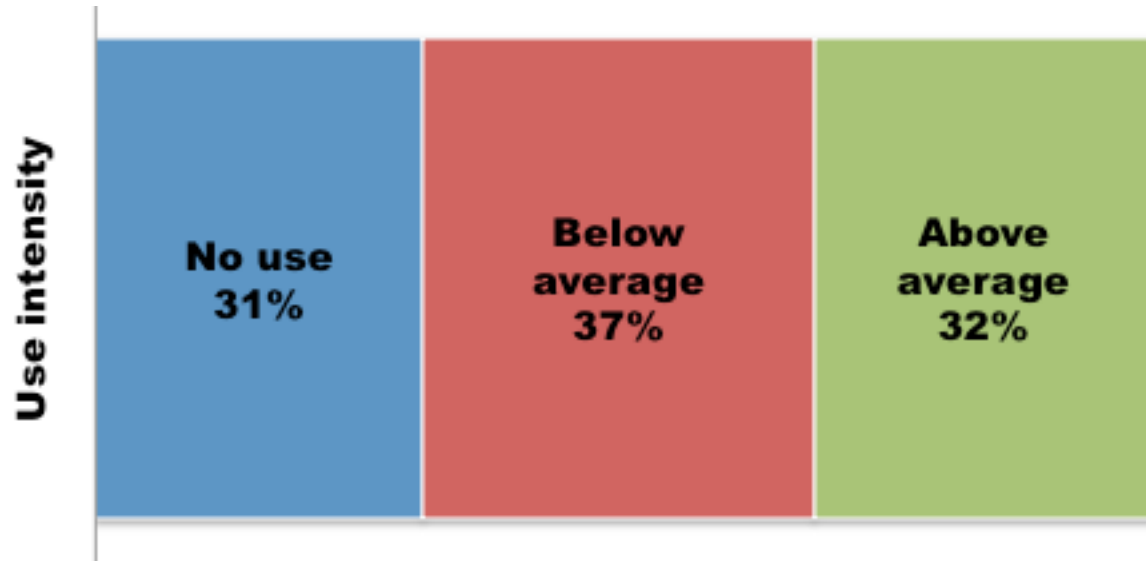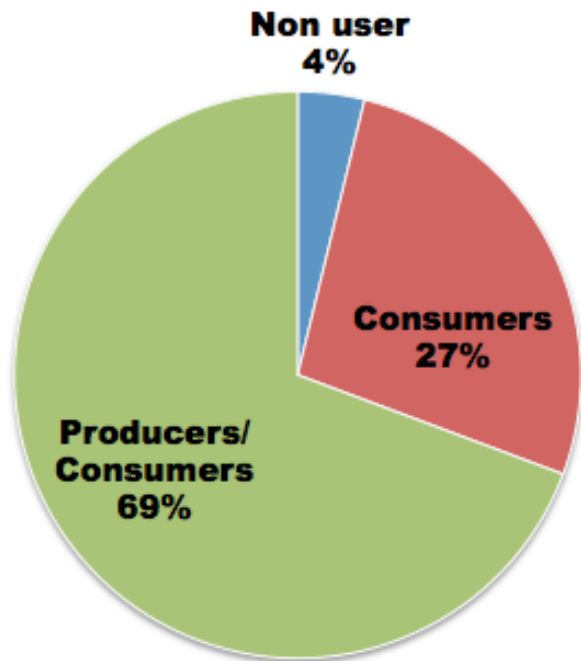
# PC by Age



- At least 60% across age groups engage in PC
- Young voters in their 20s are most active users
- Highest percentage of non-users are in the 50 and above groups
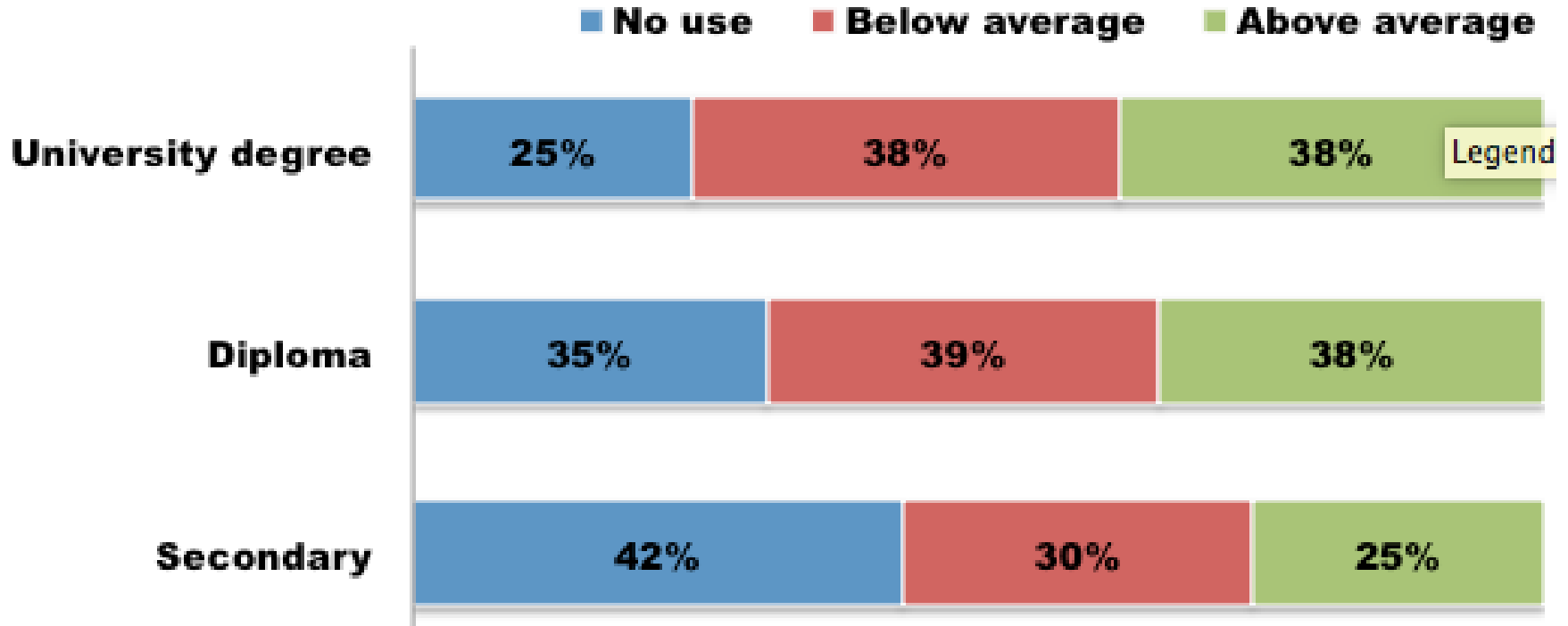
# PC by Gender



- Highest percentage of men were in the above average use group
- Highest percentage of women were in the non-user group

# PC by Race



- Chinese were almost equal across the three categories of use
- Malays and Indians had the largest groups of below average use
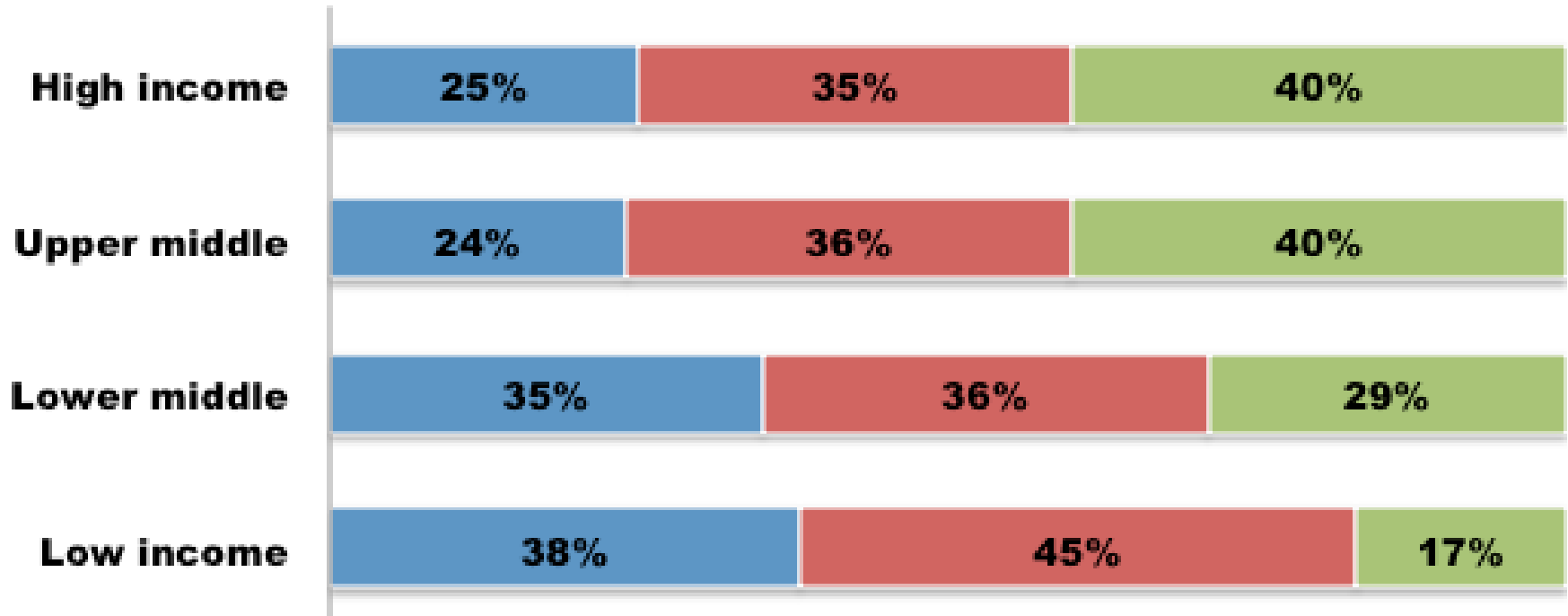- Other races had the largest group of non-users

# PC by Education



- Secondary and below had the largest group of non-users
- Diploma holders had almost equal users across groups
- University degree holders were equally distributed in the above and below average use group

# PC by Income



- Low and lower middle income had the largest non-user groups
- Upper middle and high income had largest groups of active users

# PC and Political Knowledge

- How knowledgeable were voters?
- Strong awareness of candidates, less on issues

| Questions | % correct |
|---|---|
| Identify which party the candidate is from: Teo Chee Hean | 88 |
| Lee Li Lian | 84 |
| Chee Soon Juan | 82 |
| Kenneth Jeyaretnam | 72 |
| Which of the following political parties used the election campaign slogan "Your Voice in Parliament"? | 30 |
| In the 2011 election, what percentage of the votes cast did the PAP win? | 51 |
| According to the law, what do you think "your vote is secret" means? | 57 |

# Personalised communication decreased knowledge
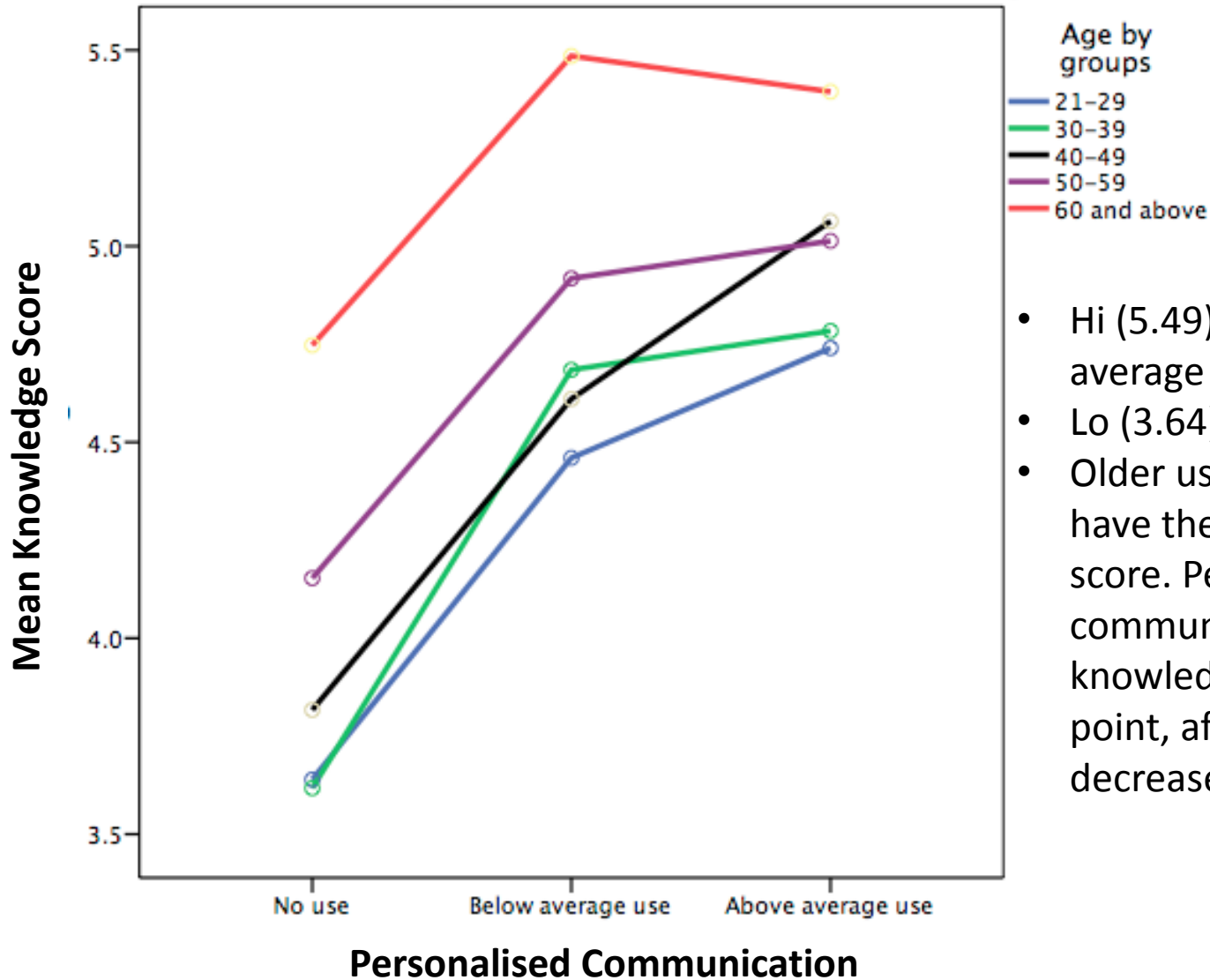Regression analysis, $R^2$=.22, p<.001

**Significant predictors**

- Political interest .314**
- Age 162**
- Media consumption .153**
- Personalised communication -.107*
- Education .098**
- Gender -.057*
- Income .051*

**Non-significant predictors**

- Political efficacy
- Political engagement
- Personalise communication x Education

# PC, Age & Knowledge



- Hi (5.49): 60 and above below average user
- Lo (3.64): 20 year-old non-user
- Older users (50 and above) have the highest knowledge score. Personalized communication increased knowledge only up to a certain point, after which knowledge decreased

# PC, Gender & Knowledge
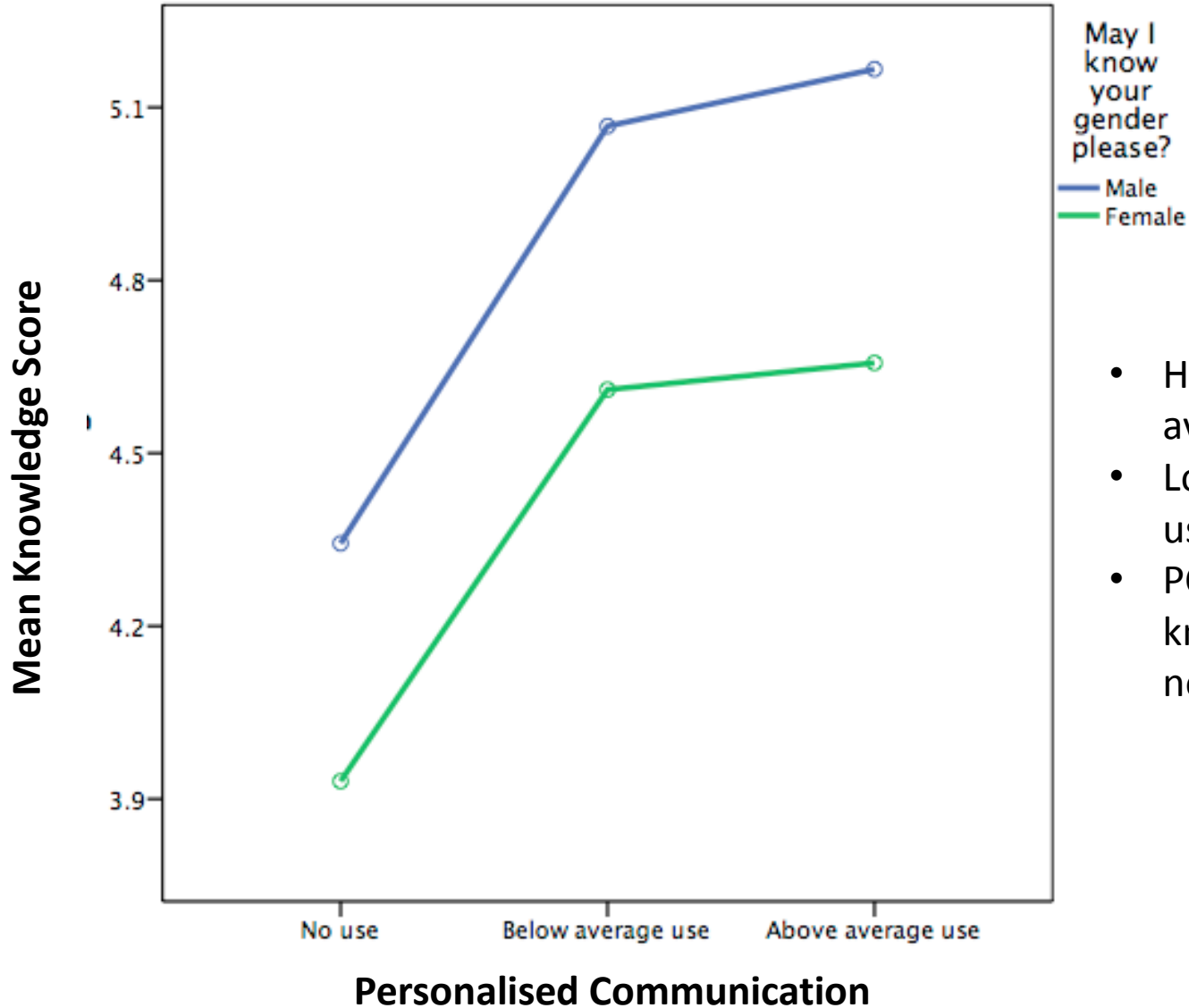


- Hi (5.17): Male, above average user
- Lo (3.93): Female, non-user
- PC increased knowledge only for non-users

# PC, Race & Knowledge



**Mean Knowledge Score**

**Personalised Communication**

What is your ethnicity/race?
- Chinese
- Malay
- Indian
- Others
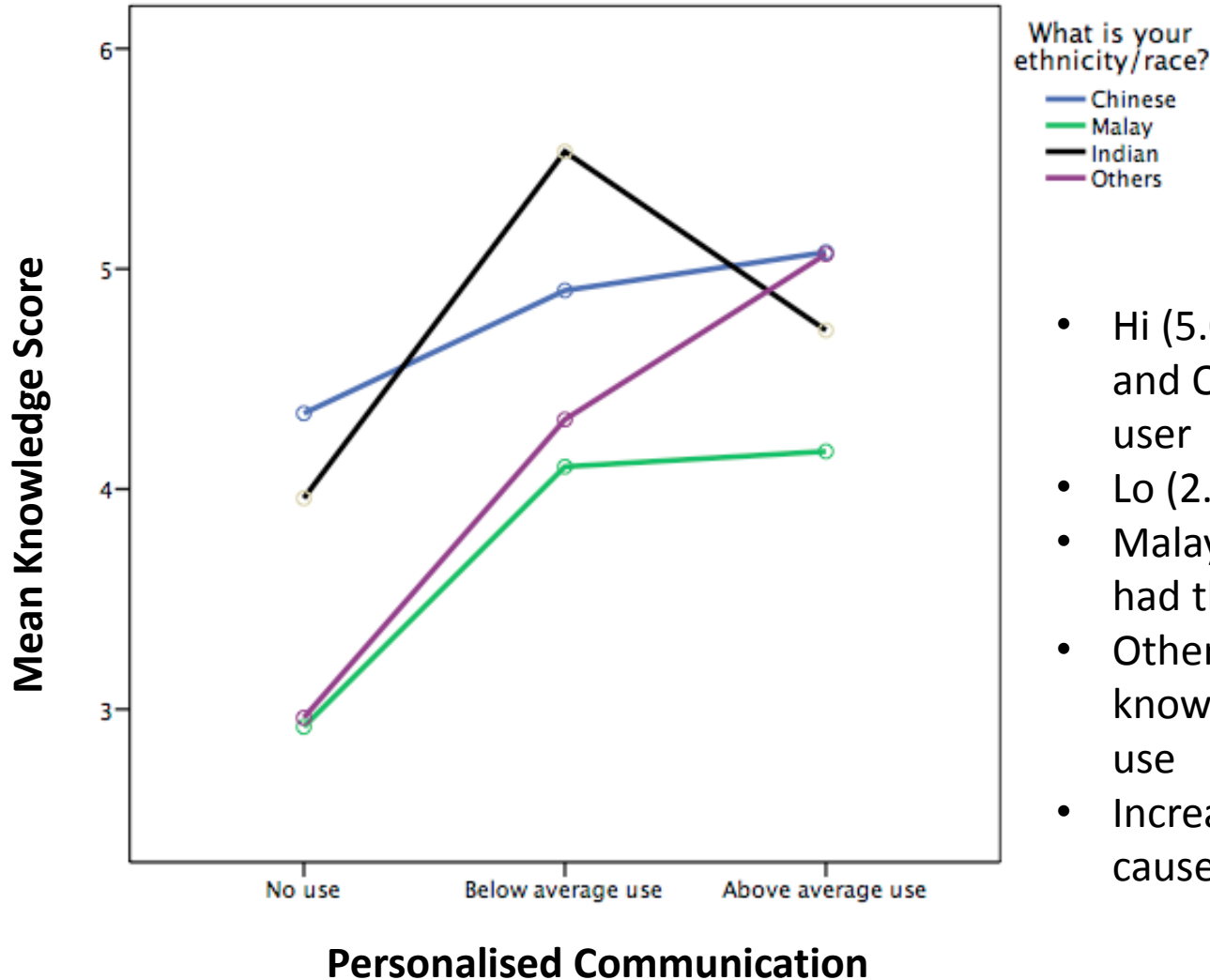
- Hi (5.08): Tie between Chinese and Others above average user
- Lo (2.92): Malay non-user
- Malay and Others non-users had the lowest score
- Others narrowed the knowledge gap with increased use
- Increased use by Indian voters caused their knowledge to fall

# PC, Education & Knowledge



**Mean Knowledge Score**

**Personalised Communication**
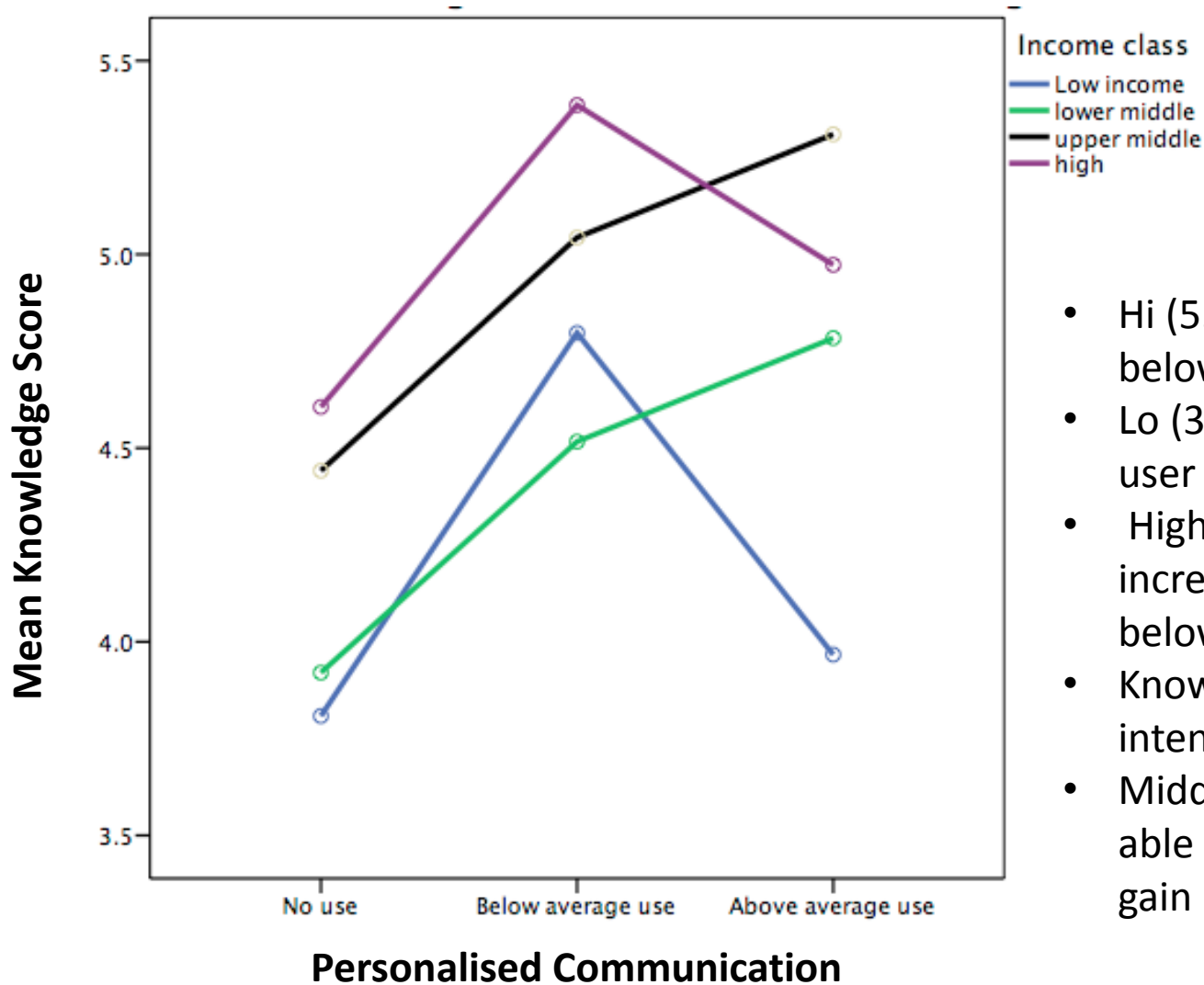
Education Level
— Secondary and below
— Diploma and professional cert
— University degree and above
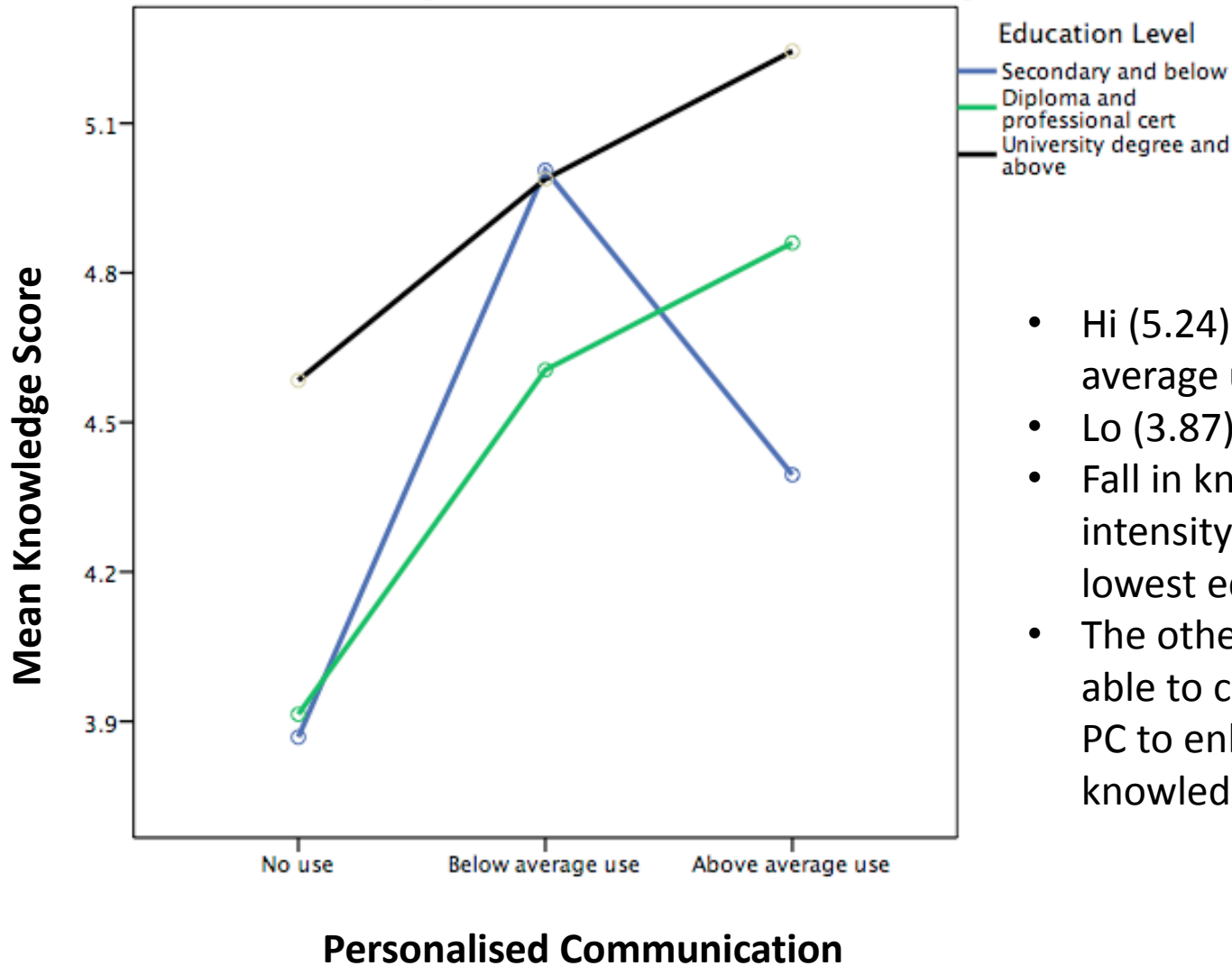
- Hi (5.24): University above average user
- Lo (3.87): Secondary non-user
- Fall in knowledge with high intensity use among the lowest educated group.
- The other two groups were able to control this and used PC to enhance their knowledge

# PC, Income & Knowledge



**Mean Knowledge Score** (y-axis)

**Personalised Communication** (x-axis)

Income class
- Low income
- lower middle
- upper middle
- high

x-axis labels: No use, Below average use, Above average use

- Hi (5.39): High income, below average user
- Lo (3.81): Low income, non user
- High and low income groups increased knowledge with below average use
- Knowledge plunged as use intensity increased
- Middle income groups were able to use PC for knowledge gain

# Summary

- Hi: 60 and above, below average user, 5.49
- Hi: High income, below average user, 5.39
- Hi: University degree, above average user, 5.24
- Hi: Male, above average user, 5.17
- Hi: Chinese and Others, above average user, 5.08
- Lo: Female, non user, 3.93
- Lo: Secondary, non user 3.87
- Lo: Low income, non user, 3.81
- Lo: 20 year-olds, non user, 3.64
- Lo: Malay, non user, 2.92

# Conclusion

- PC is popular and may carry election information of greater relevance

- It helped enhance knowledge for only certain groups

- Traditional internet digital inequalities persist

- Excessive use by some groups had negative influence on knowledge

**iPS** Institute of Policy Studies

**ENGAGING MINDS, EXCHANGING IDEAS**

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