Impact of New Media on General Election 2011
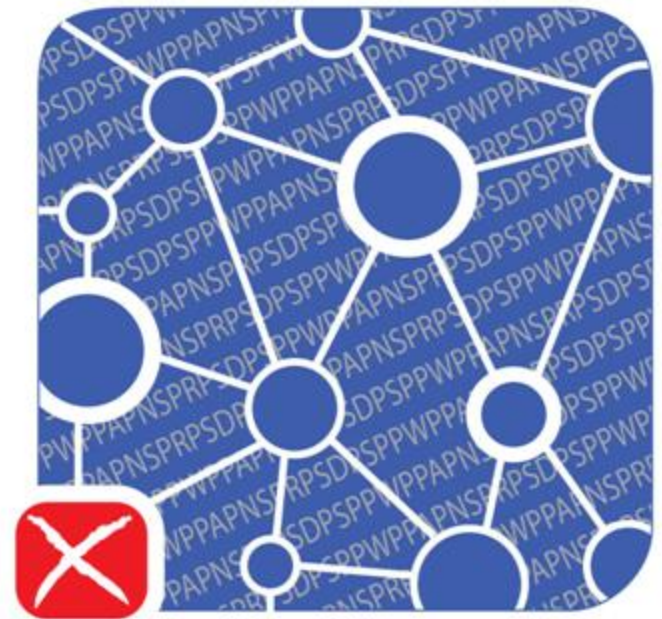
**MEDIA MYTHS AND REALITIES:
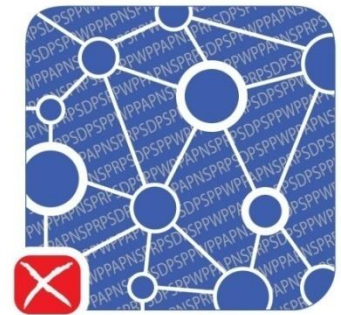FINDINGS OF NATIONAL SURVEY OF
MEDIA USE IN THE GENERAL
ELECTION**

Presentation by

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Engaging Minds, Exchanging Ideas

Just One Research Question

Was GE 2011 an "Internet election"?

Survey Background

- Aim of study: to conduct a nationwide survey to understand the media usage habits of Singaporeans along with their political activity during the recent elections.

- Fieldwork started two weeks after the general election and was conducted from 24 May to 17 July 2011.

- CATI phone survey

- 2000 respondents, Singapore citizens aged 21 and above were interviewed.

Methodology

- Respondents were selected based on quotas to set on race, gender, and age. Soft quotas for education and housing type were also used. The quotas were set based Census of Population 2010. The breakdown of each hard quota is stated in the following:

Age	Quota
21-29	324
30-39	368
40-49	444
50+	864
Total	2000

Gender	Quota
Male	986
Female	1014
Total	2000

Race	Quota
Chinese	1569
Malay	269
Indian/Others	162
Total	2000

Housing	Quota
1-3 room	378
4 room	679
5 room exec flats/ HUDC/Others	559
Condo/ Private flats/ Landed Property	384
Total	2000

All set quotas (Race. Gender, Age) were achieved within a ±3% point difference

Education	Quota
Primary or lower	499
Secondary (Upper/ lower secondary)	851
Polytechnic/Diploma	290
University	3620
Total	2000

Soft quotas on education and housing type were achieved within a ±5% point difference.

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What is an "Internet election"?

One in which the Internet "mattered"

- As channel for voters to communicate, exchange news and views
- As a channel for parties and candidates to move voters
- As a channel which influences voters' views and finally voting
  - (Sets agenda? Status quo change?)

- Soft aspects:
  - **Changes the experience of being in an election**
  - **Enhances engagement of citizens with the election process**
  - **Enlarging possibilities (e.g. subverting "seriousness")**
    - **Breaking through psychological barriers of fear, self-doubt and of being alone**
    - **Establishing a sense of community**
    - **Engendering or increasing the democratic impulse**
    - **Empowering by nurturing political mobilization and action**

Now the facts

Mass Media matrix:

(Internet <=/=> alternative online media; MSM =/=> old media)

. Content (Centrality/ Fringeness) . . . Type of . Channel .	Mainstream media (purveys 'mainstream' views)	Alternative media (purveys 'non-mainstream' views)
Traditional or old media	1: • ST, Today, TNP, ZB Print • CNA broadcast • Radio via air	3: • Hammer, • The Democrat • Catholic Informer • (Rainbow Times)
New media	2: •ST online •Razor TV •Stomp •CNA website	4: •TOC •Yawning Bread •Temasek Review • Public House

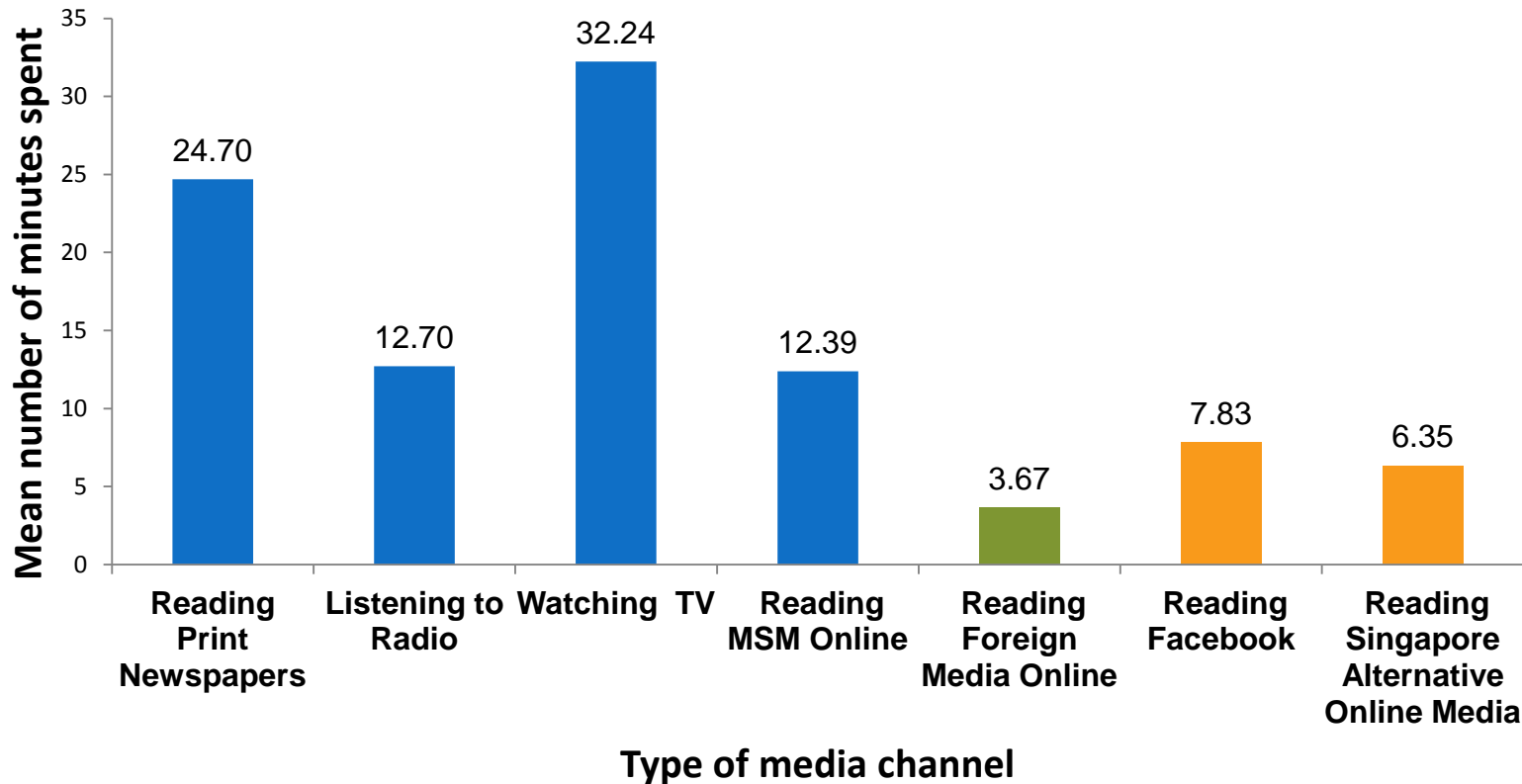Yahoo News, NYT Online? Twitter/Facebook?
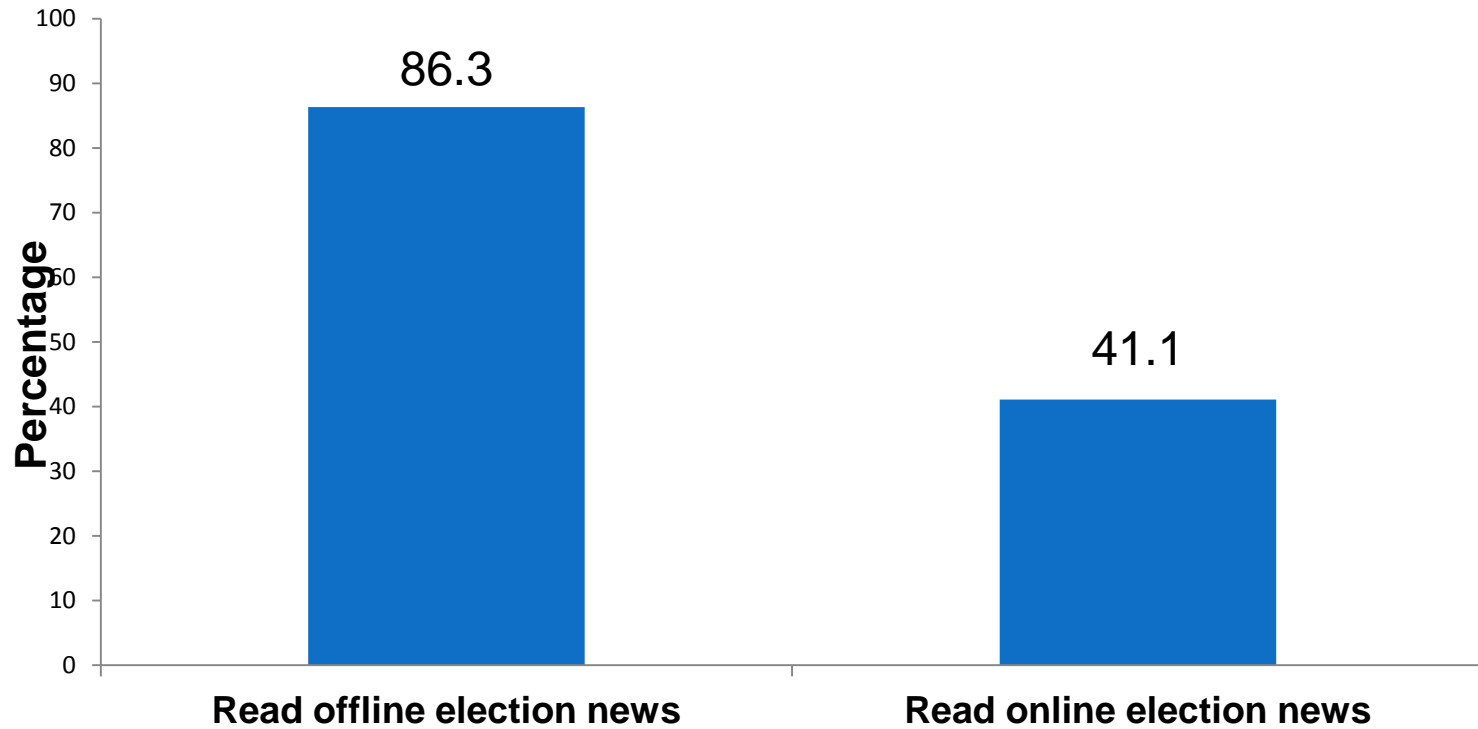
Media penetration
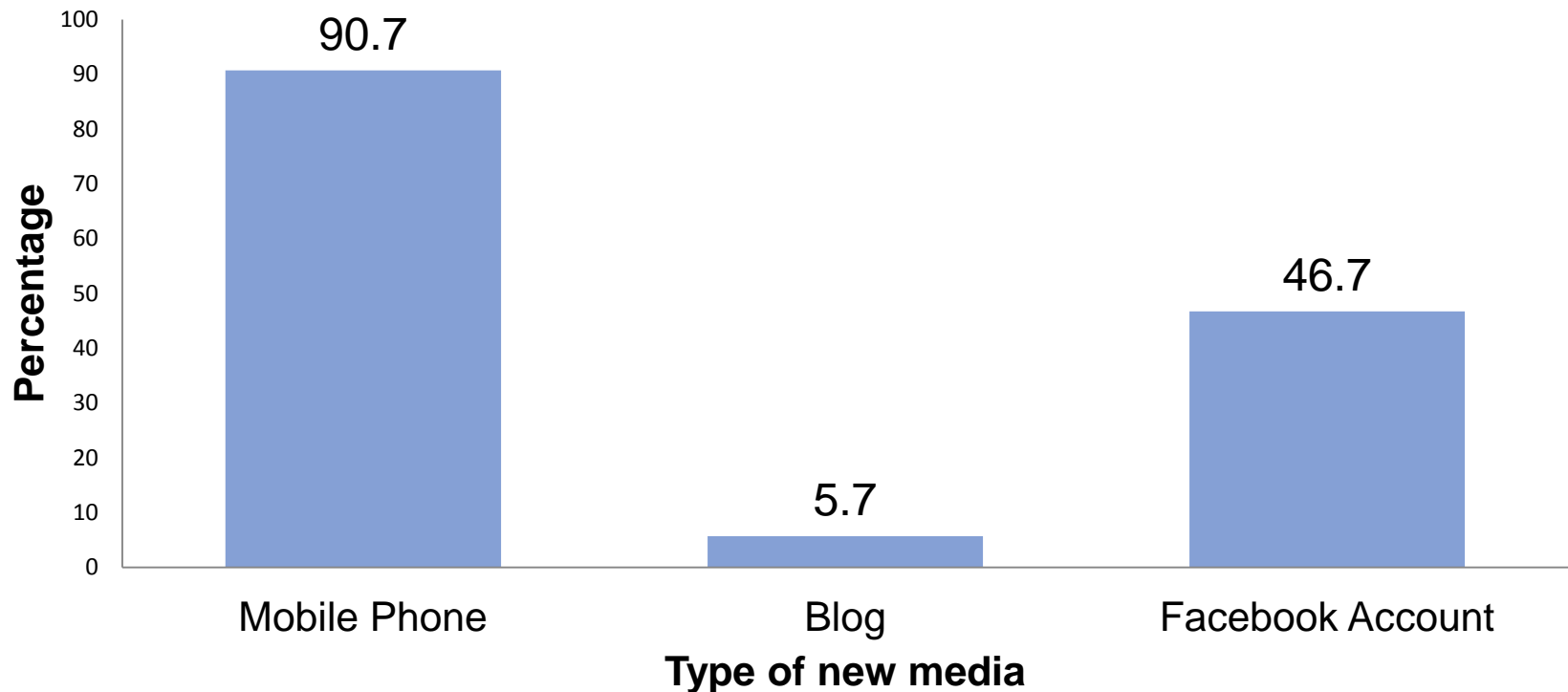
Percent of sample who had mobile phone, a blog and FB account

Media consumption of content still largely mainstream

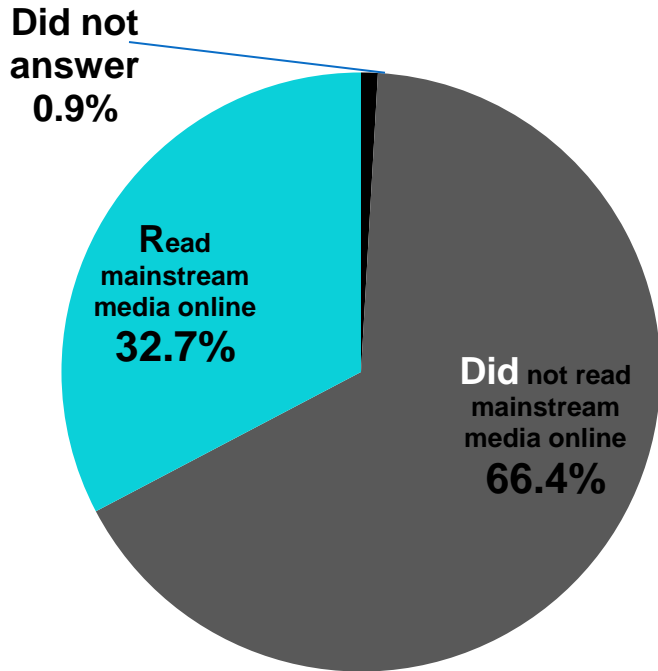Question: Minutes a day spent on election news during election

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Consumption by channel still largely offline
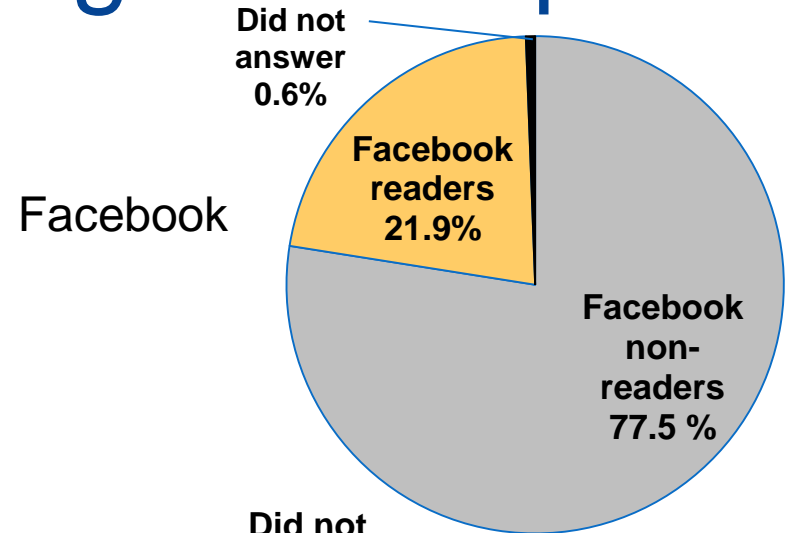

Offline and online election news consumption

Percentage who used old channels (print newspapers, TV, radio) versus new channels (MSM online, foreign websites, blogs, Facebook)

MSM online consumption more than Facebook, blog consumption

Did not answer 0.9%

Read mainstream media online **32.7%**
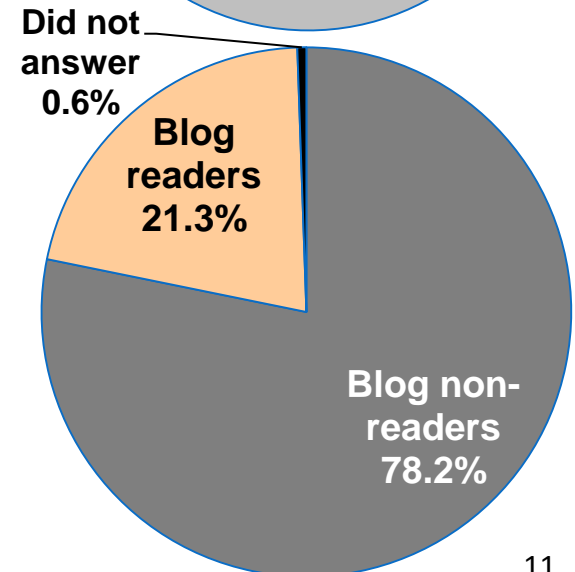
Did not read mainstream media online **66.4%**

Mainstream media online

VS

Facebook

Did not answer 0.6%

Facebook readers 21.9%

Facebook non-readers 77.5 %

Did not answer 0.6%
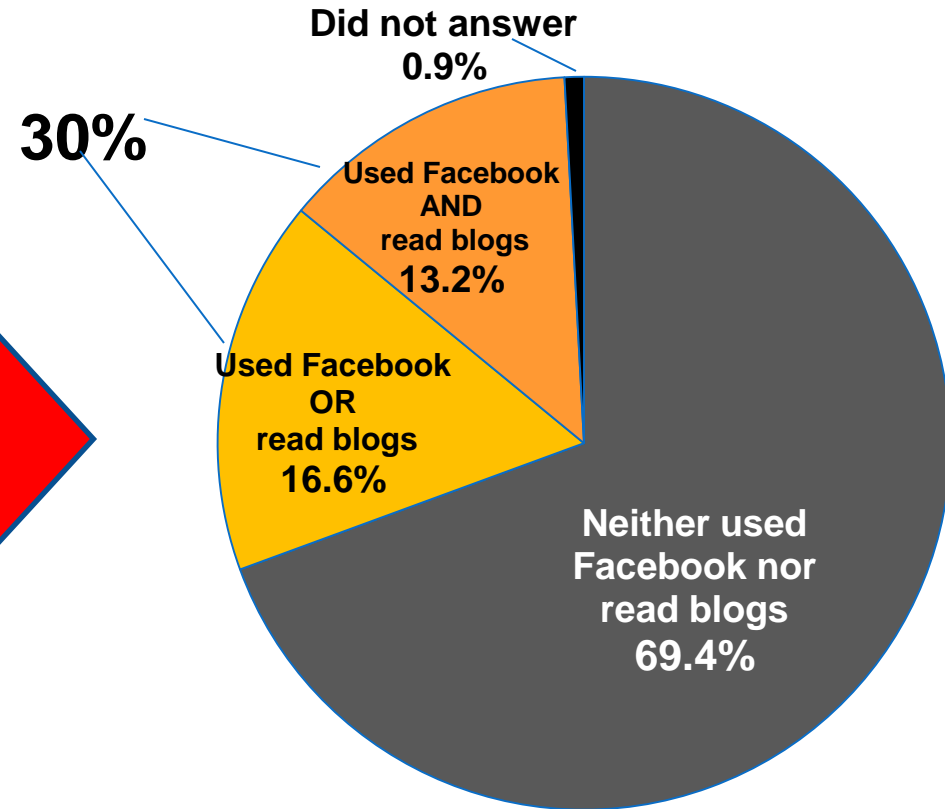
Blog readers 21.3%
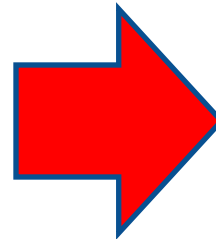
Blog non-readers 78.2%

Blogs

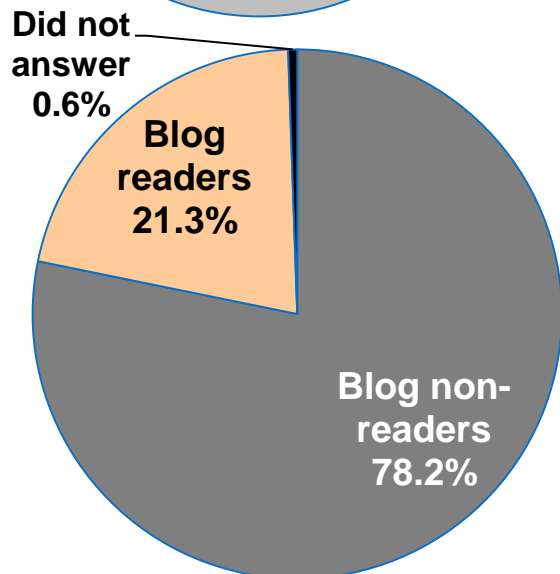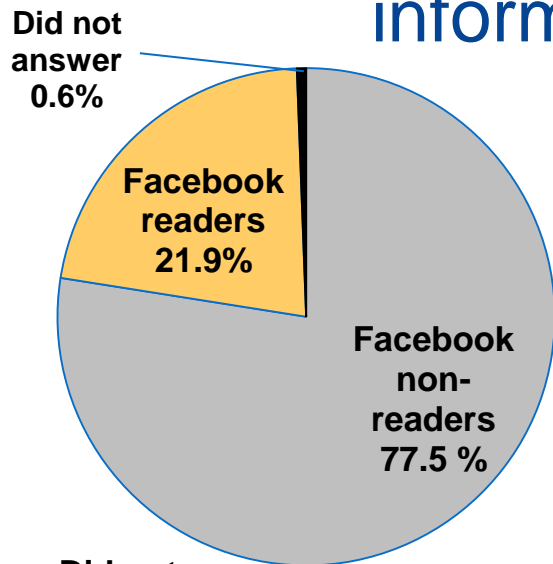# Rising use of non-MSM content

Something happened in year leading to polls

- Media survey (3rd quarter 2010)
    - **12.8%** read blogs on politics
      (eg, TOC, TR, Yawning Bread)

- This survey
    - **17.3%** read blogs on election issues
      in the last six months

- This survey
    - **21.3%** read blogs on election issues
      during election

(No Facebook figures for media survey 2010)

Consumers of non-MSM (FB and/or blogs) for election information in 30% minority

Did not answer 0.6%

Facebook readers 21.9%

Facebook non-readers 77.5 %

Did not answer 0.6%

Blog readers 21.3%

Blog non-readers 78.2%

30%

Did not answer 0.9%

Used Facebook AND read blogs 13.2%

Used Facebook OR read blogs 16.6%

Neither used Facebook nor read blogs 69.4%

Percent is over 2000 sample

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But non-MSM Internet NOT a ghetto

- **95.5%** of those who read Facebook and blogs for election media also consumed at least some mainstream media

- Re-confirms media survey of 2010: Those who read alternative, online blogs for political info also consumed mainstream media
  1. 93% also read print newspapers
  2. 84% also watched TV
  3. 89% also read MSM online

FB and blog users: Most Consumers of non-MSM also consumed MSM
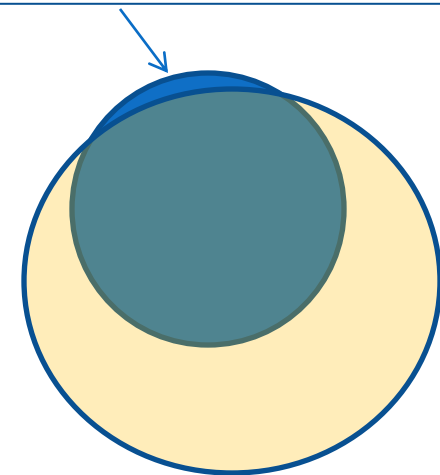
MSM consumers

Who are the 30%?

Demographics of consumers of non-MSM

- Younger

- More educated

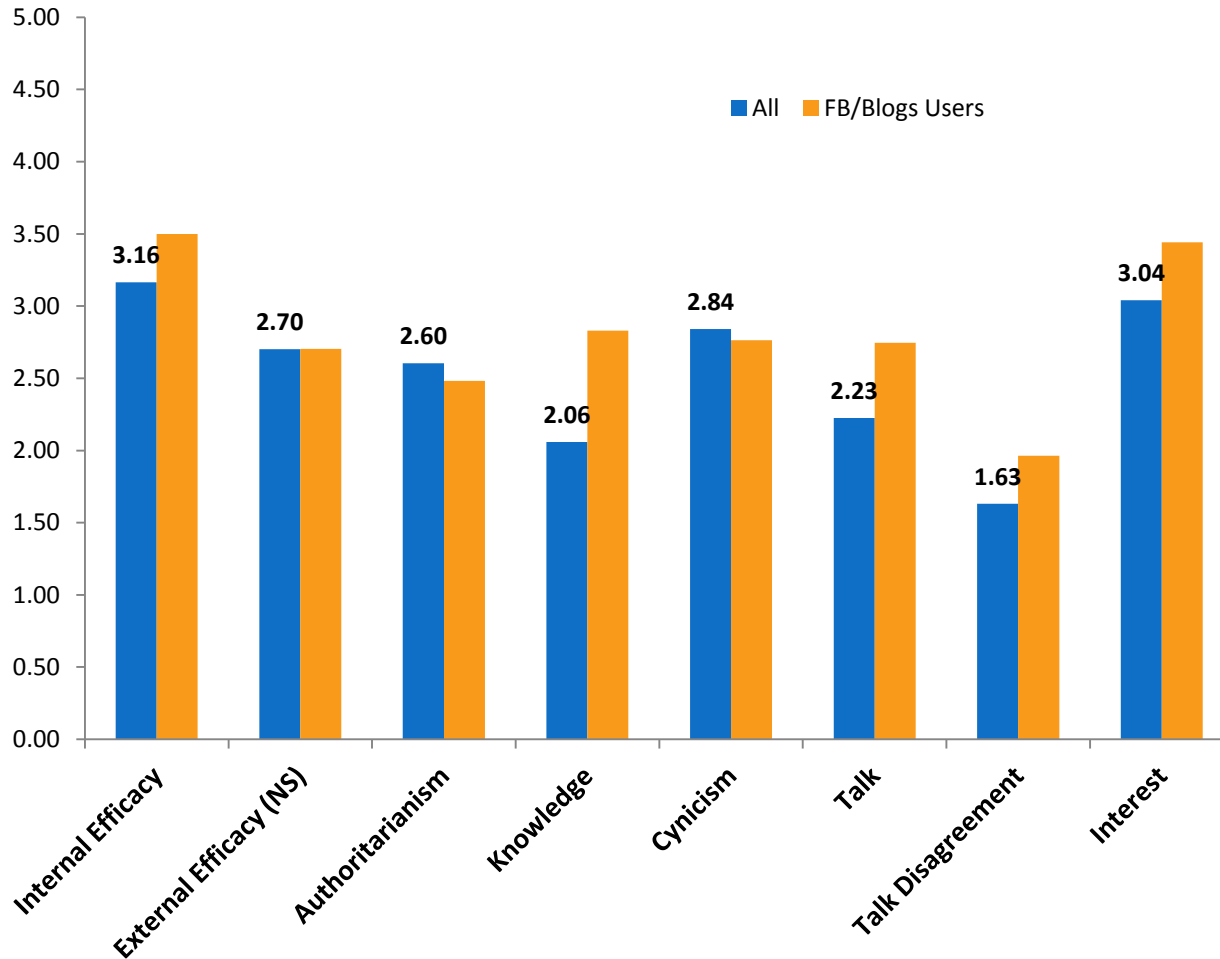- Higher household income

- More males

Who are the 30%?

Political traits of consumers of non-MSM

Compared to 70%:

- Talked more with others, disagreed more on politics

- More politically knowledgeable

- Less politically cynical (distrust of politicians' motives)

- Higher political internal efficacy (belief that one can understand and hence take part in politics)

Political Traits

Legend: ■ All ■ FB/Blogs Users

Trait	All
Internal Efficacy	3.16
External Efficacy (NS)	2.70
Authoritarianism	2.60
Knowledge	2.06
Cynicism	2.84
Talk	2.23
Talk Disagreement	1.63
Interest	3.04

NS= Not Significant

Political external efficacy = belief that government is responsive

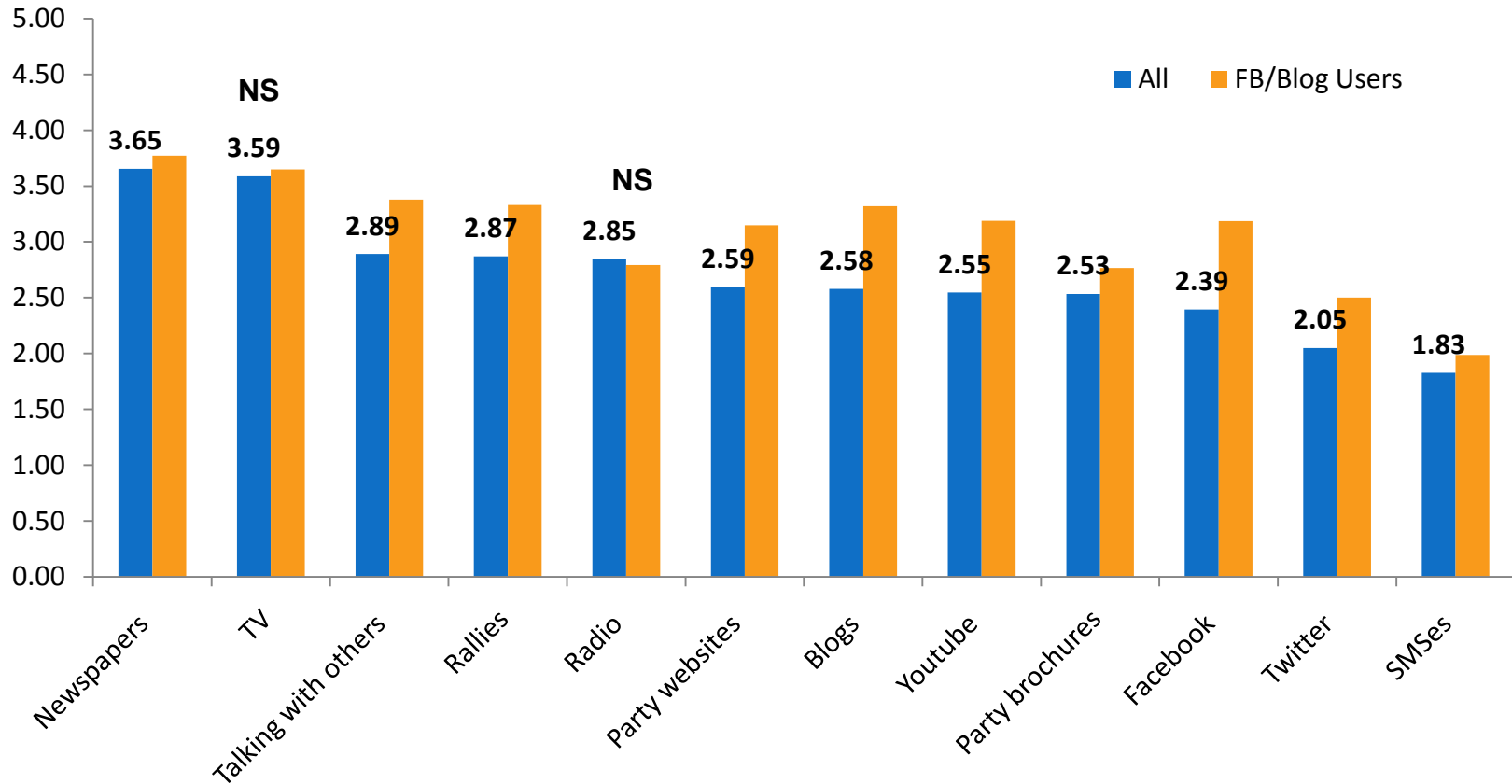Political authoritarianism = does not believe in freedom of expression

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Who are the 30%?

Participation of Non-MSM consumers

- Higher offline political participation
  - Took part in online forums, wrote comments online

- Higher online and offline political participation
  - Member of VWO, attended election rallies, attended dialogues, took part in charity event

But participation still low in absolute terms

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Media Importance

How **important** each of the following was as a source of information about the recent election? 1=Unimportant; 5 Very Important. "I don't knows" range from 7 to 36%

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Media Trust
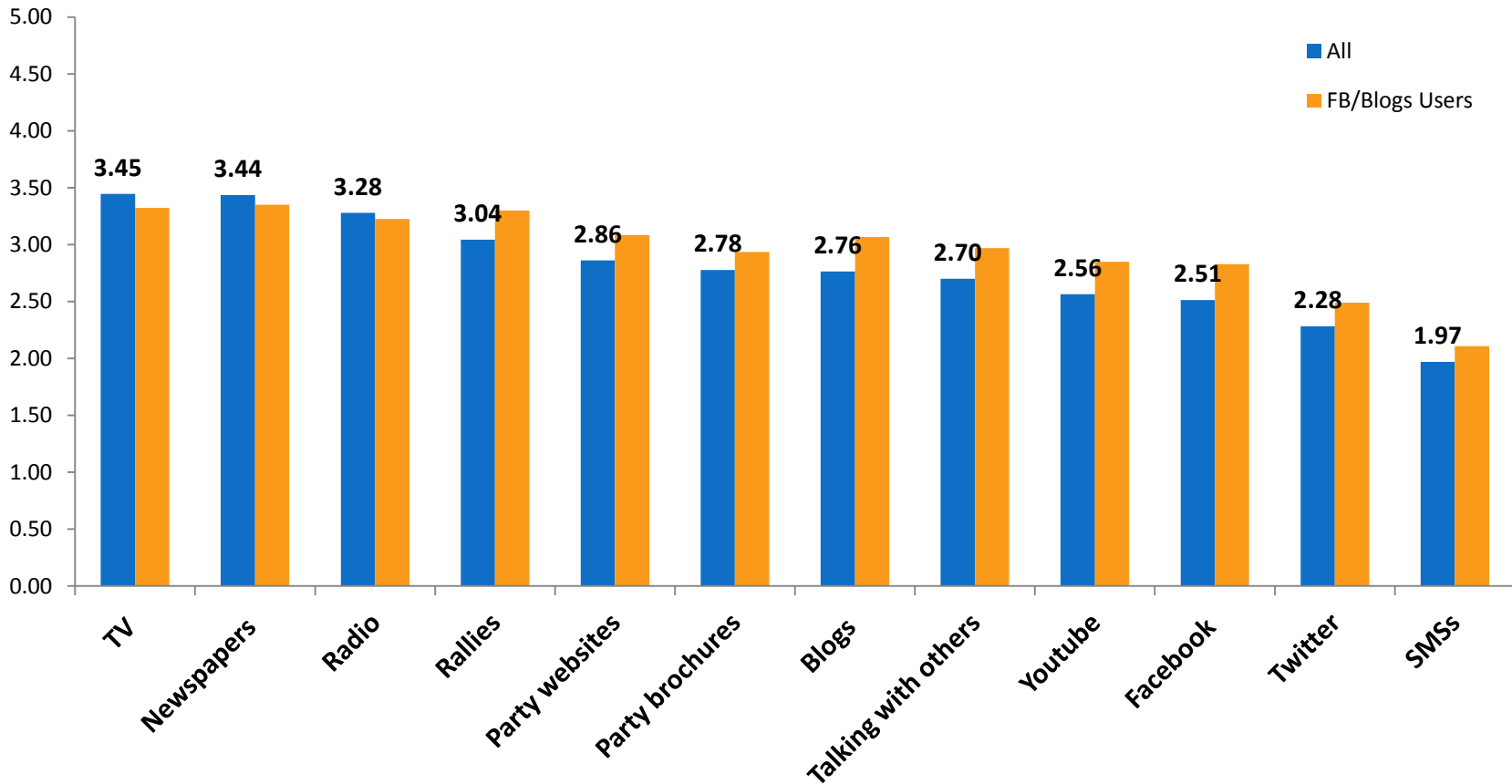
How **trustworthy** was each of the following as a source of information about the election? 1=Untrustworty; 5=Very Trustworth; "I Don't Knows" range from 10 to 45%
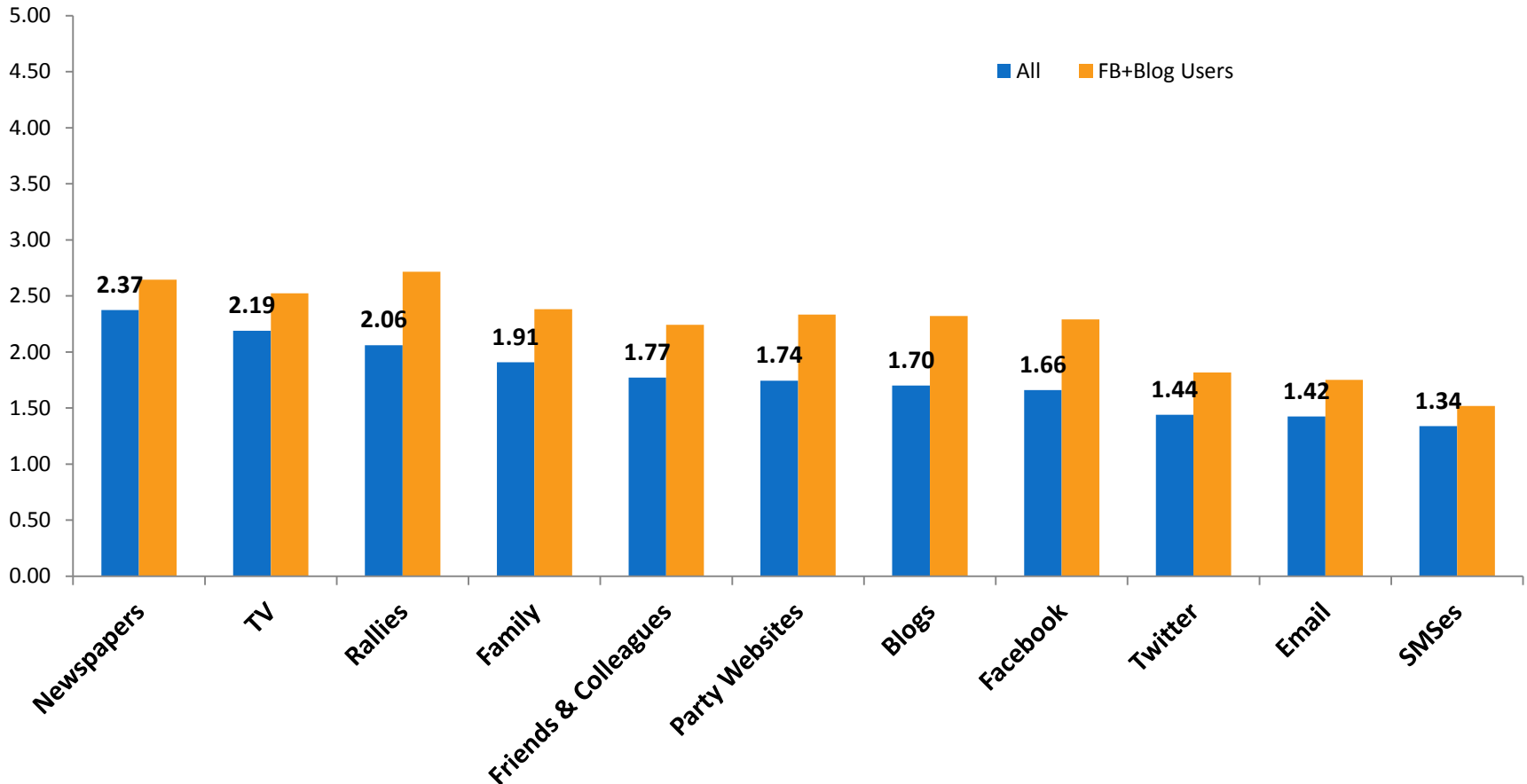
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Who are the 30%?

Asked on Importance,Trust of following sources:

TV, radio, newspapers, party websites, brochures, rallies, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, blogs, SMSes, talking with others

- Compared to the 70%, non-MSM users rated all above media (except for TV and radio) as more important sources of election info

- Compared to the 70%, they rated all above as more trustworthy, except for newspaper **and TV** (less trustworthy) and radio (no difference)

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Low influence on voting

During the election, how much did the following influence how you decided to vote? 1 = no influence at all; 5 = a lot of influence. "I Don't Knows" from 7 to 28% of all.

Who are the 30 %

Other attitudes towards media

–Compared to 70%, more in 30% influenced by ALL media in how they voted ("persuadable" consumer: or "more aware" consumer?)
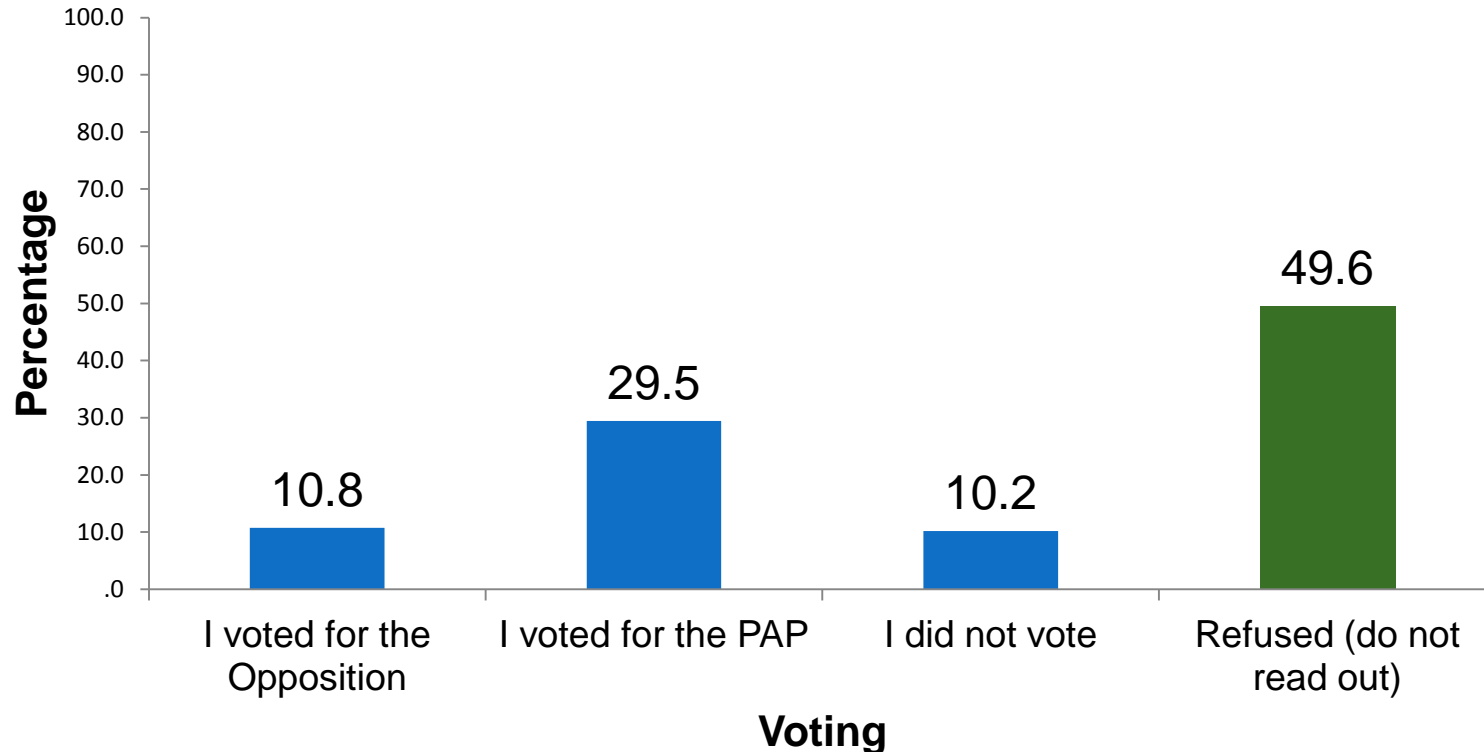
–More likely to think there was too much government control of MSM, but not more likely to think there are too many restrictions on online expression

–Among 2,000, MSM was seen to be slightly less fair than FB/blogs/Twitter when reporting the election.

•But the 30% less likely than rest to think MSM was fair when reporting election

•Interestingly, also a little less likely than rest to think blogs, Facebook and Twitter were fair! **('skeptical consumer')**

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"How I voted": All

In 2010 media survey one quarter refused to answer
when asked this question about voting in 2006

Who are the 30%?

- This 30% were more likely than the 70% to say they voted for Opposition. Also less likely to say they voted for PAP

- Among this 30%, more said they voted for PAP than Opposition

- Less likely than 70% to refuse to say how they voted
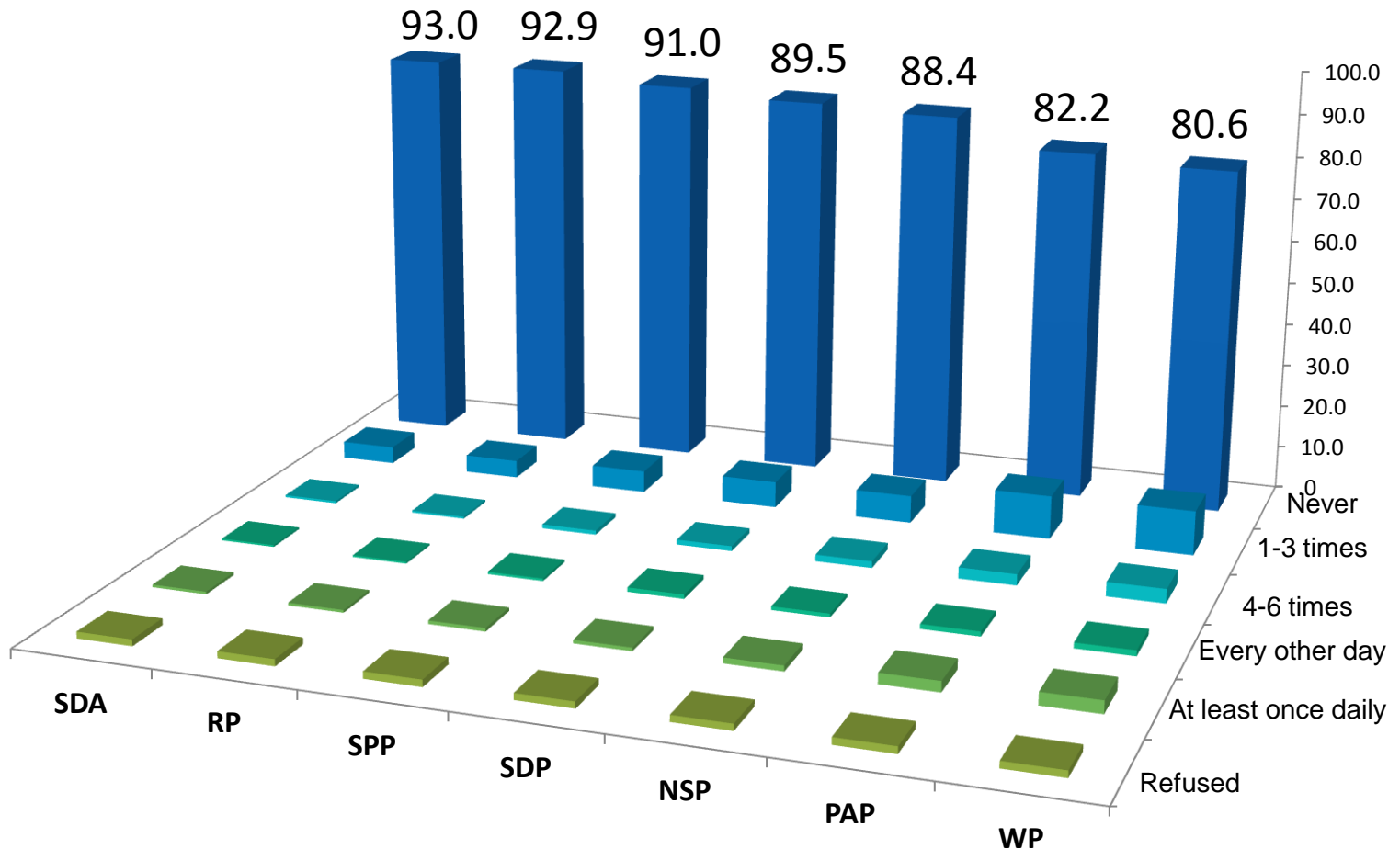
Not an SMS election

- 13.2% received election-related SMS

- 4.6% shared election-related SMS

- 6.5% wrote election-related SMS

No Unchained Melody

– *despite change in chain mail/SMS regulation*
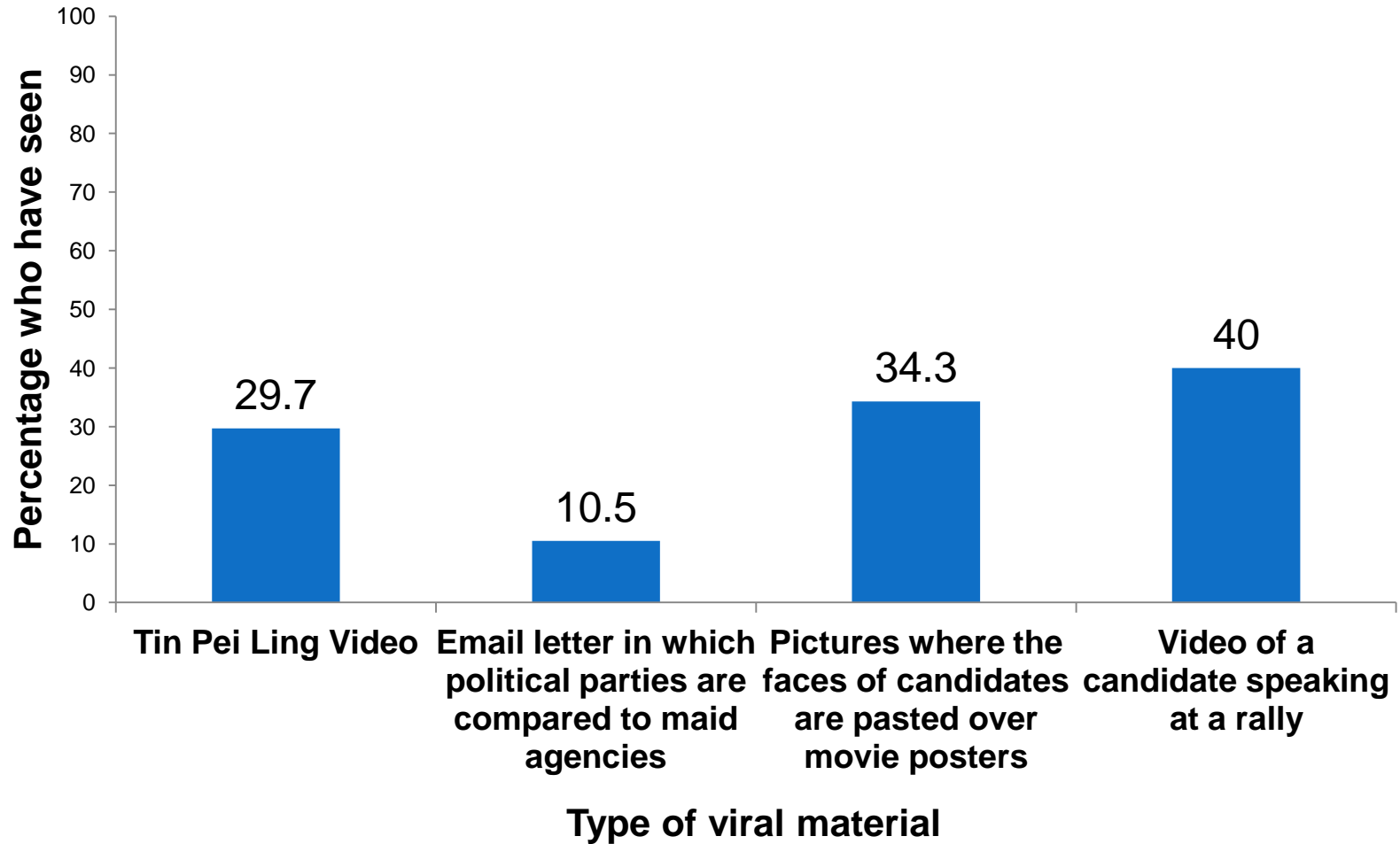
Compare: Only 9.9% shared election material by email, Facebook or Twitter
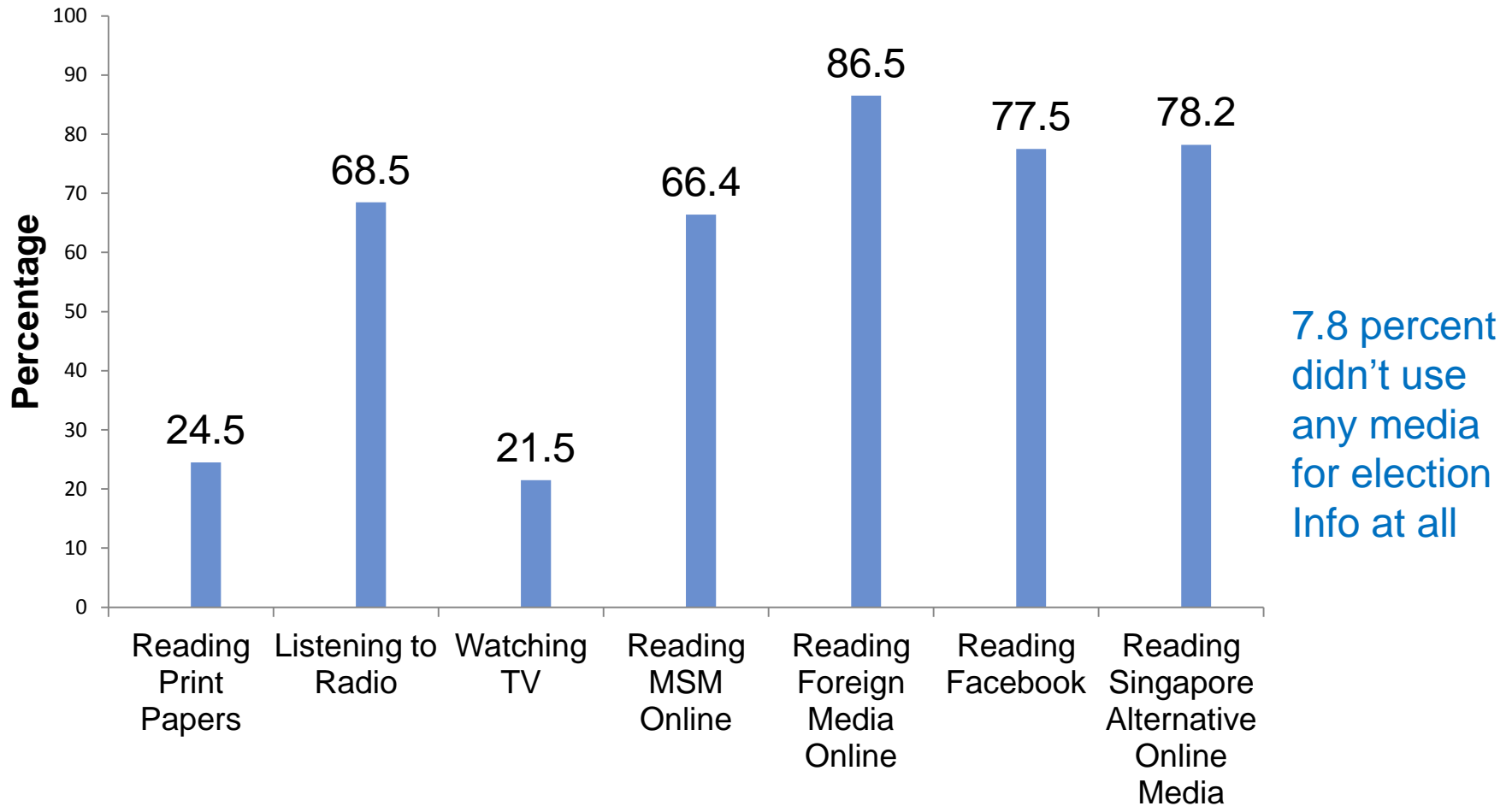
Coolness to party websites

Number of visits to websites in election fortnight

27

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Viral (?) material

Percentage of 2,000 who saw/read

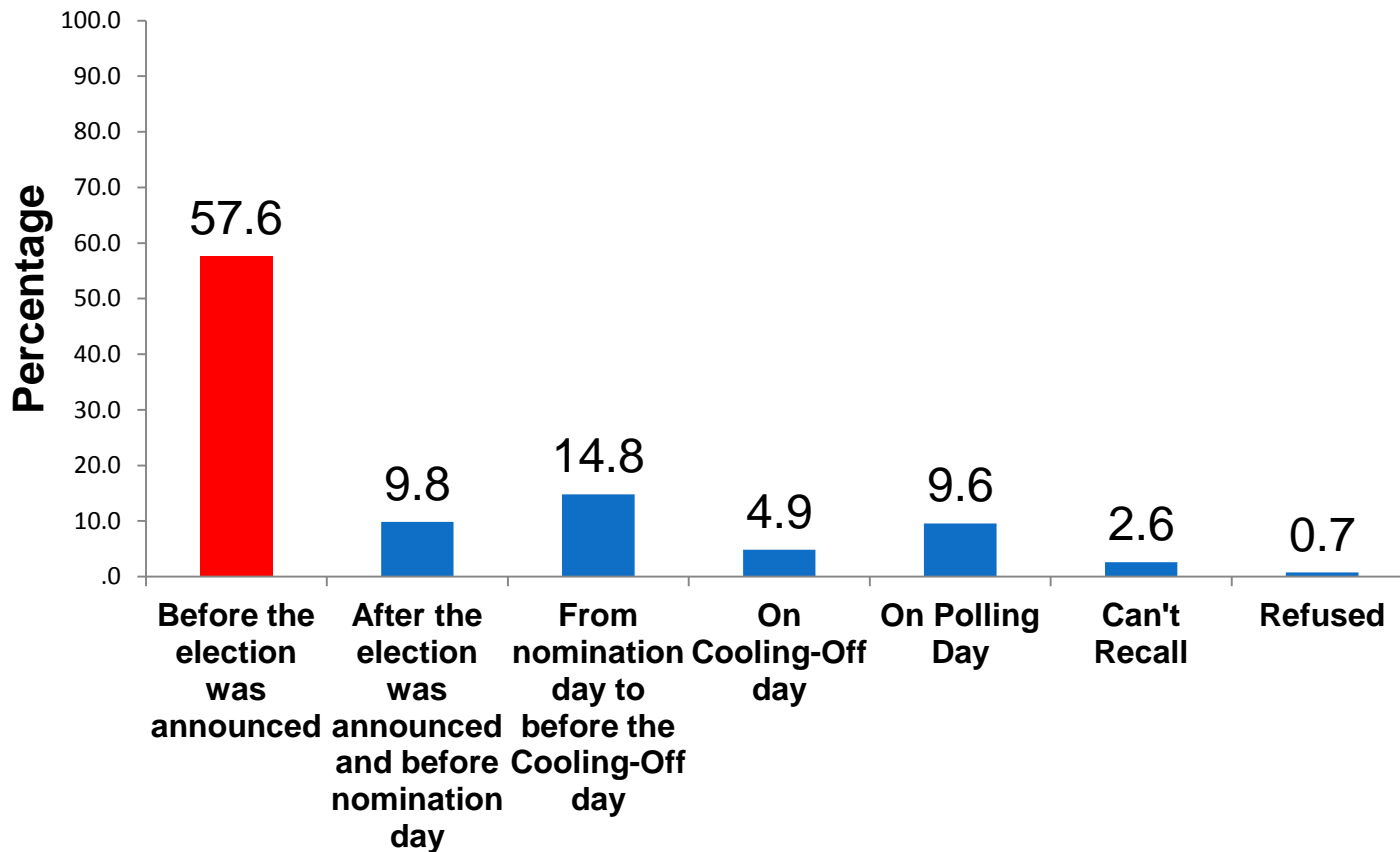**Engaging Minds, Exchanging Ideas**

Non-users of media

Proportion of all who did not use the above media for election information

When mind was made up:
Low impact of campaign, media during election fortnight

Of 57.6% who made up mind before the election was called, 77.3% said they voted for PAP & 22.3% for Opposition (ratio of 3.47, cf 2.73 for all)

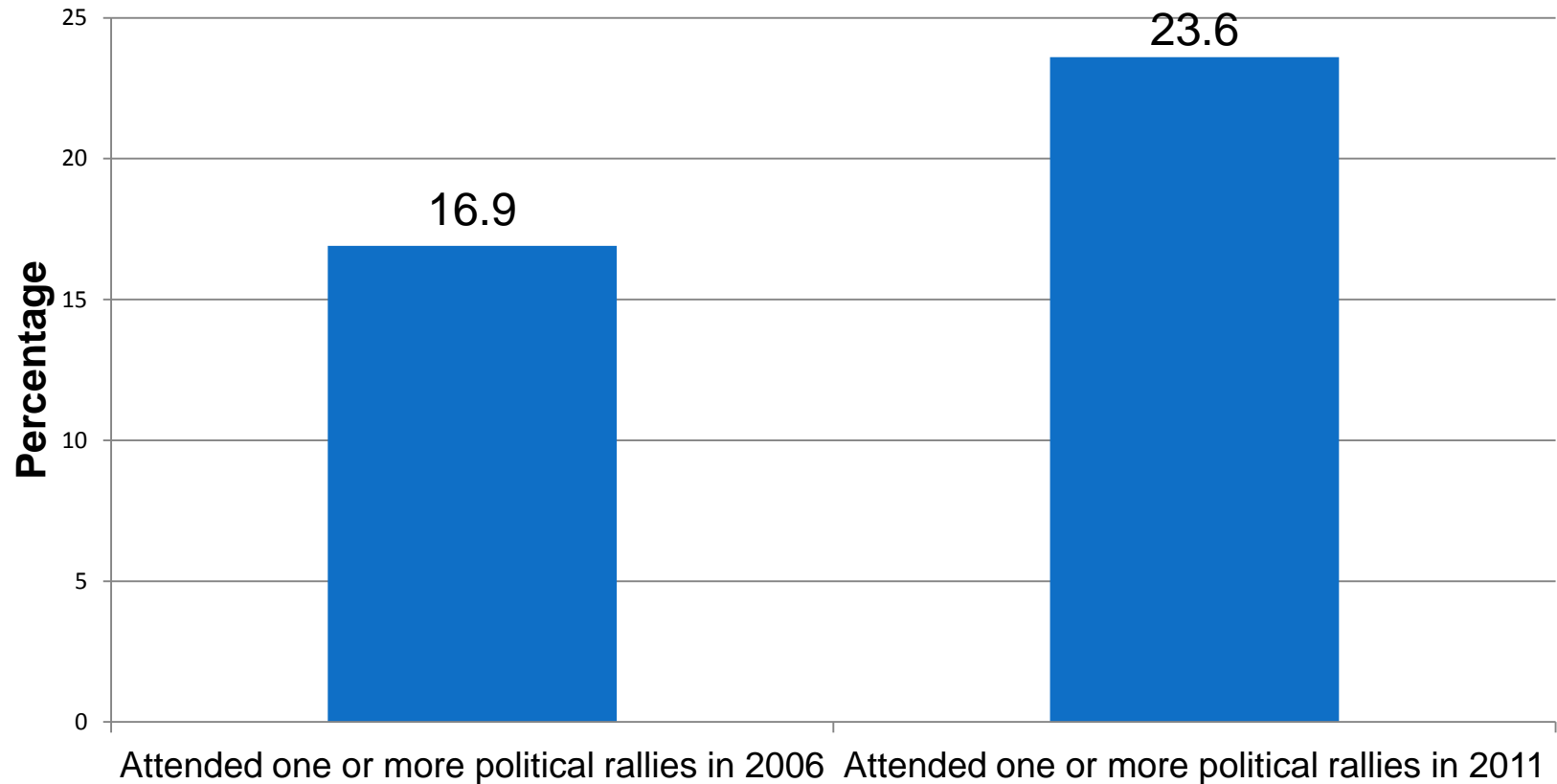**Above: Of 40.2% who said voted for PAP or Opposition, when they made up mind who to vote for.**

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Soft aspects of Internet Impact

– **Changes the experience of being in an election**

– **Enhances engagement of citizens with election process**

– **Enlarging possibilities (e.g. subverting "seriousness")**

- • **Breaking through psychological barriers of fear, self-doubt and of being alone**

- • **Establishing a sense of community**

- • **Engendering or enhancing the democratic impulse**

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Political rally attendance

Summary

Yes, some new media effect: Rising non-MSM consumption; non-MSM consumers different from the rest *(causal direction uncertain)*.

But

1. Consumption of non-MSM content lower than MSM content
2. Consumption via online channels lower than offline
3. Non-MSM consumers also consume MSM content
4. Party websites rarely visited
5. Email and SMS little used both by parties and voters
6. Low influence of non-MSM on voting; lower than MSM
7. Online media less trusted and important than MSM
8. Smaller than expected number saw online viral material
9. Low impact of all media during campaign

An "Internet Election" it was not