



Public Impressions of Communication Methods and the Voting Process

Conducted March—April 2016

Final Report

Presented to the
Multnomah County Elections Division



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1

Report of Findings

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Multnomah County Elections Division sponsored this study to deepen its understanding of voters' experience with the voting process. This research assesses voters' knowledge of voting procedures, evaluates their impressions of the openness and trustworthiness of the process and those who administer it, and explores the most effective methods of communicating with them about voting.

Research Method

This study consisted of two major elements:

1. A representative countywide random sample survey of 602 Multnomah County registered voters, conducted by telephone in March 2016. Both landline and wireless telephones were included in the sampling frame, and the results of this survey have a maximum potential sampling error of $\pm 4.0\%$ at the 95% confidence level.

The countywide survey provides a quantitative overview of the experiences, perceptions, and preferences of a cross-section of voters across Multnomah County. As an important objective of this project, the survey also enables analysis of under-served segments within the overall voter population. Within the body of this report, those differences are highlighted where they are statistically significant, both in table form and in the report's narrative summary.

2. Three focus groups conducted among distinct segments of registered voters in the County. A total of 22 voters participated in these groups, which were held in April 2016 and were facilitated by a professional moderator.

As a third element, the telephone survey questions were programmed for online administration, and the Elections Division shared that link through social media and on its website to allow other members of the public to weigh in on these issues; 120 people did so during March and April 2016. The online survey results are reported in an appendix, but are not being treated in the body of this report as a representative survey because of the self-selected nature of the sample, and the possibility that some survey participants were not voters or even residents of the County.

This research was conducted by OpinionWorks LLC, an independent research organization based in Annapolis, Maryland.

Details on the Focus Group Process

Focus groups are structured discussions, typically lasting 90 to 120 minutes and facilitated by a professional moderator. The discussion follows a pre-determined topical outline, but the participants are encouraged to comment in depth and to bring up relevant topics of interest and concern to them, as well. This methodology is useful to understand impressions, depth of feeling, and to uncover unanticipated concerns and interests. Focus groups are especially helpful when developing outreach and engagement strategies, which rely on understanding the most relevant and palpable needs and perceptions of the constituency.

Unlike a survey, focus groups by design include a relatively small number of participants. The focus group technique relies on creating a comfortable and trusting environment for all participants and looking for areas of consensus and common experience. Within each focus group session, the goal is to

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uncover what experiences and ideas resonate for *most* members of the group in order to maximize the potential for engagement, rather than measuring the exact balance of opinion within the group.

In keeping with this technique, it is typical to segment the overall audience into relatively cohesive clusters. The purpose of that segmentation is to maximize the comfort for the discussion participants, so that they feel they are in conversation with people whose outlook and experience are similar to their own. It is that comfort and common perspective that produces the most productive and revealing discussion.

It was the goal of the Elections Division through these focus groups to hear from voters who are often under-represented in the process. Therefore, focus group participants were screened to ensure that they met at least one of these criteria:

- People of color
- No more than a 12th Grade education
- Under the age of 30
- Annual household income under \$50,000

Two focus groups were held among people who said they voted “sometimes” or “seldom,” and one group was held among more frequent voters who said they “always” or “usually” vote. The less frequent voters were further stratified geographically, with one focus group dedicated to Gresham and the eastern part of the County, and the other group focused on Portland and points west.

The sessions were recorded and transcribed, and project sponsors and project team members observed live through a closed circuit video feed from an adjoining room. The fact that the sessions were being recorded and observed was disclosed to participants, and confidentiality was ensured. First names only were used in the focus group setting, and except where names appear in the transcripts or the attendance grids, individuals’ names will not appear in this report of findings.

Exhibits

Included as exhibits in this report are the survey questionnaire, detailed cross-tabulations of the survey responses for a variety of voter subgroups, the focus groups recruitment screening questionnaire, a sample recruitment poster, the moderator’s discussion guide, and full transcripts of the focus group sessions.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Multnomah County voters find voting by mail to be convenient. Even more important, they said they appreciate the ability to take the time to study the ballot and the Voters' Pamphlet, and to make thoughtful decisions about their vote. They find this particularly useful when it comes to ballot measures, which may require time to read and understand.

The Voters' Pamphlet has very wide recognition among voters, who find it useful. Despite its great value, participants in the focus groups offered several suggestions for improving its readability. In particular, they hoped to cut down on the amount of verbiage and provide a more visually interesting and uncluttered presentation of the information.

Overwhelmingly, voters endorse the timeliness of the ballot arriving at their home, and the accuracy of their address information. The ballot package is recognizable, and the instructions are generally considered clear. Focus group participants had several specific improvements to suggest, such as a clearer statement of the response deadline on the ballot envelope.

Ballot tracking is a desirable feature for many voters, and seems to build confidence in the voting process when voters learn that it is available today. A number of traditionally under-served voter subgroups, such as those who move frequently and younger voters, have an especially high interest in ballot tracking.

Knowledge of the basic requirements of voting, such as signing the ballot, is strong. But there are gaps in that knowledge, including the requirements that the signature on the ballot must match a signature on file, that a stamp is needed to mail back the ballot, and that the ballot must be *received* (not just postmarked) by 8:00 PM on Election Day. These requirements will need to be communicated more clearly to the public.

Confidence in the voting process and in the people administering elections is solid, at about four out of five voters. In part, there seems to be an underlying appreciation that the process in Oregon is fairer and more open than the process in many other states, and that seems to translate into strong confidence. But many of the same subgroups that feel less engaged and knowledgeable about the process also display lower confidence in the voting process, such as lower-income and younger voters, and voters of color. There is also some partisanship that creeps into these perceptions, with Democrats exhibiting robust confidence, and members of other parties somewhat less so.

The Elections Division website received very positive reviews in the focus groups. Participants were pleased to see specific information such as answers to process questions, how-to-videos, and ballot tracking information. They offered a number of specific suggestions for streamlining the content and improving the look and feel of the site to be even more accessible. A reality of today's Internet behavior, which was validated by this research, is the near disappearance of the digital divide, and the heavy use of mobile devices to access the Web, making mobile-friendly sites all the more important.

Through both the survey and the focus groups, this study provides detailed information on the communications preferences of key audiences, particularly voters who are less engaged or less confident about the voting process. These communications preferences, and the many specific suggestions of the voters themselves, are outlined in the pages that follow.

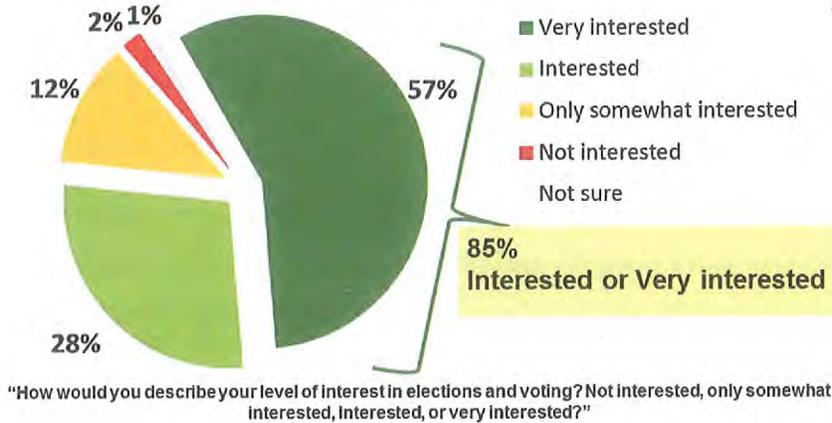
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INTEREST IN ELECTIONS AND VOTING

Throughout this project, voters indicated a strong interest in voting, and a curiosity about the voting process. As measured on the survey, 85% of registered voters countywide said they were either “interested” or “very interested” in elections and voting, with a solid majority (57%) saying they were “very interested.”

Level of Interest in Elections and Voting

Countywide Survey Response



As illustrated in the table below, interest in elections and voting is much higher among older, more highly-educated, and higher-income voters. Among racial and ethnic groups, African-American voters participating in the survey exhibited lower than average levels of interest in voting.

Level of Interest in Elections and Voting

By Voter Subgroup*

	Very Interested	Interested	Total
All Voters	57%	28%	85%
Under Age 30	41%	39%	80%
30 – 44	50%	32%	83%
45 – 54	60%	26%	86%
55 – 64	70%	22%	91%
65 or older	73%	17%	90%
High School Educated or Less	47%	32%	78%
Attended Some College	57%	26%	83%
Four-Year Degree	57%	32%	89%
Graduate Work	72%	20%	92%
Income Less than \$30,000	49%	30%	79%
\$30,000 – 49,999	57%	28%	84%
\$50,000 – 74,999	52%	32%	84%
\$75,000 – 99,999	58%	32%	90%
\$100,000 or More	65%	26%	91%
White	59%	27%	87%
African-American	26%	33%	59%
Latino	44%	44%	88%
Asian	46%	34%	79%
All Others	61%	25%	86%

*Numbers may not always appear to add correctly due to rounding.

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Voters' Perceived Advantages of Mail Voting

Focus group participants were quick to talk about the convenience of voting by mail. With only the exception of the few who thought fondly of the communal aspects of in-person voting in a former time or another state, nearly all the Multnomah County voters participating in the focus groups felt that voting by mail was easier and more convenient than voting in-person.

Most focus group participants agreed that there are many drop box locations spread throughout the County and that they are convenient. One frequent voter, however, did suggest that there could be more drop locations in downtown Portland because so many people rely on public transportation.

But perhaps an even greater advantage of voting by mail, focus group participants said, is the ability to take time to read over the voting materials and make careful decisions. Many focus group participants said they would feel rushed in a voting booth, whereas they could take the time they need to consider issues carefully when voting from home. This is particularly true, they said, with respect to ballot measures, which are often complicated and require some thought to sort out and understand.

"With your voters' pamphlet you can study it. And you can fill it out at your leisure."

"...you can fill it out in the comfort of your house. You get the voter's pamphlet so you can read about what everything is. ...decipher what you're really voting for. What does the yes vote mean, and what does the no vote mean?"

– Frequent voters

"I like that you can do it in private and take your time. Yeah, there's no hurry. ... if you have any questions, you can refer to the pamphlet, or just take your time to help make good decisions based on what you feel is right." – Infrequent voter

THE VOTING PROCESS

Impressions of the Voters' Pamphlet

Recognition of the Voters' Pamphlet is very strong among registered voters in Multnomah County. More than nine out of ten voters (92%) can recall receiving a Voters' Pamphlet in the mail. Seven percent of voters cannot remember receiving the Voters' Pamphlet, and 2% are not sure.

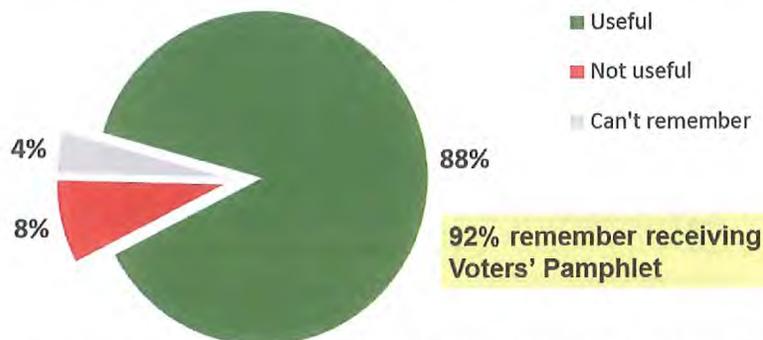
The seven percent who could not remember the Pamphlet jumped to 18% of voters under age 30, 13% of those in households earning less than \$30,000 per year and 12% of those with a High School education or less. Among racial and ethnic subgroups, all of the African-American and Latino voters in the survey could remember the Pamphlet, but 26% of the Asian voters could not.

Among voters who remembered receiving the Voters' Pamphlet, an overwhelming 88% said they found the Pamphlet useful. Only 8% said they did not find it useful, and 4% were not sure. The percentage who found the Pamphlet useful reached or exceeded 80% for every voter subgroup in the survey.

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Usefulness of the Voters' Pamphlet

Countywide Survey Response, among Those Who Recall Receiving It



"The last time there was an election, do you remember receiving a Voters' Pamphlet in the mail about a week before your ballot arrived, containing information about voting? By that I mean the Voters' Pamphlet that includes candidate statements and information on ballot measures."

(If yes): "Did you find the Voters' Pamphlet useful or not useful?"

The Voters' Pamphlet plays a particularly valuable role with regard to the ballot measures. Voters greatly appreciate the opportunity to read the ballot language in advance, and to consider the pros and cons of each measure carefully. Sometimes this process results in a changed vote, as pointed out by this focus group participant.

"Some of the ballot measures are really confusing because there are so many. When you get your ballot mailed to you, you get the pamphlet...and it explains the pros and cons of the ballot (measure)s in it too. So many times, I was so set, 'I'm 'no' on this.' Then I read it, then it was the complete opposite of what I was thinking it was. For me to be able to read that, it made a big difference of what vote I was going to make." – Infrequent voter

"I like having the information at hand, I can read it at my own leisure, I can read it in parts. ...I read about the measures on the ballot. I mean some of them I've never even heard of. So I'm just standing there, what do I think of that? So it's better to have more time to review." – Frequent voter

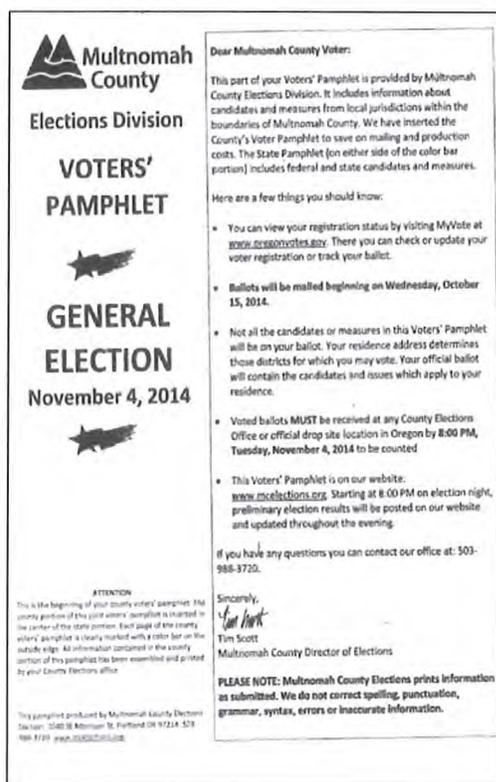
The factual, informational nature of the Pamphlet is very appealing to most voters interviewed for this study. Some appreciated the clarity the Voters' Pamphlet helped bring to the ballot measures, and others enjoyed reading about candidates.

"I like it for the measures...because they're so confusing, that I use (it) to go and look at and study."

"I just think it's interesting to look at peoples' backgrounds. A brief resume, somebody you might see that he's a farmer, that's it. What kind of degrees they have, what other job have they picked to reveal about themselves."

– Frequent voters

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Voters do have some difficulty finding the Multnomah County information buried within this large pamphlet of over 160 pages produced by the State. They wished there were a way that the local information could be made more immediately visible within the large pamphlet.

Furthermore, the overall bulk and dense nature of the Voters' Pamphlet is off-putting to some voters. In a moment of candor, two voters in the frequent voters group admitted they find the Pamphlet too cumbersome and would tend to rely instead on easier methods of getting information, such as social media or word of mouth, which they acknowledge may be inaccurate or biased.

"I don't usually read the pamphlet because it's too big. It's bulky. I generally get my information through social media or what you see, or what you hear from around town. I know I don't like to read thick books of pamphlets."

"I have to agree with Kevin, although it's probably easier to get biased information through those methods, it's definitely the method I rely on more

than actually reading the pamphlets. I try to get through them as much as I can but it's definitely a thick pamphlet."
– Frequent voters

This exchange underlines the importance of brevity of language and clarity of presentation in the Voters' Pamphlet and other external communications. In a problem-solving mode, voters in the focus groups suggested that the Pamphlet would be improved through better use of visual emphasis, whether that be bullet points, bold text, illustrations, icons, or selective use of color. Key ideas could be stated more simply, they said, as "just real bold statements."

"It's just too much. In our culture we don't do that much (with) words anymore."
– Infrequent voter

As an example, focus group participants considered the information on the voting process, "Voting is as easy as 1 – 2 – 3," to be important, and deserving of more emphasis in the Voters' Pamphlet. They suggested that the information should be presented more simply and visually. One participant tried to sum it up for others:

"So voting is as easy as 1 2 3, and it says 1 2 3, that's pretty much just one giant paragraph, with just a 1, 2 and 3 next to it. It doesn't emphasize the steps, doesn't make it clear at all, what the 1, 2 and 3 are. It's slightly bold, but it's not anything that stands out..." – Frequent voter

Another voter emphasized the point and continued:

"Okay, so this step 1, 2 and 3 for example, that number 1 for the first step is smaller than any print on the entire page for some reason. You can't even see ... It says voting is as easy as 1, 2

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and 3 at the top, like a kid's book, it's really simple. And then you look at this page and it's just sloppy and messy, and you can't see what step 1, 2 and 3 is." – Frequent voter

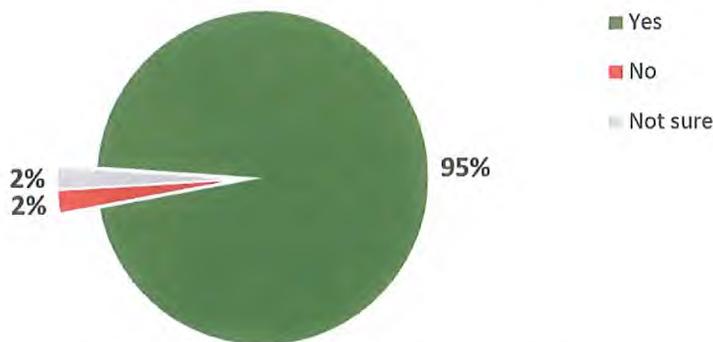
Clearly, they are saying, visual presentation of the information in the Voters' Pamphlet can be improved.

Impressions of the Ballot

There is strong satisfaction with the timeliness of the ballot. More than nine out of ten registered voters (95%) said the "ballot arrive(s) at your home with plenty of time for you to vote and return your ballot by the deadline."

Ballot Arrives in Plenty of Time

Countywide Survey Response



"Before an election, does your ballot arrive at your home with plenty of time for you to vote and return your ballot by the deadline?"

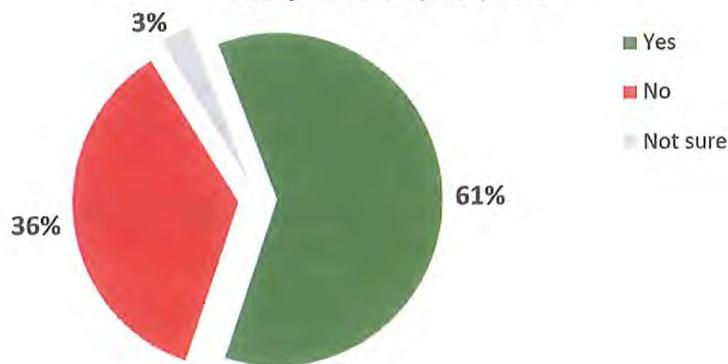
Considering voter subgroups, there are no significant concerns anywhere within the electorate about when ballots arrive at voters' homes. Even among those who change residences frequently, in other words voters who have moved at least twice in the last five years, 94% said their ballot arrives in "plenty of time."

Despite those strong numbers, however, there is a gap in awareness about how to request a ballot if one did not arrive at home in time. More than one-third of voters (36%) said that they would not know how to request a new ballot, and another 3% said they were not sure, as reflected in the chart on the next page.

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Would Know How to Request a Ballot if One Did Not Arrive in Time

Countywide Survey Response



“Would you know how to request a ballot if one did not arrive in time?”

Younger voters and the least-educated expressed greater uncertainty about how to request a ballot, as did voters who move more frequently. By income, it is the middle-income voters who expressed somewhat higher uncertainty. Lack of knowledge about how to request a ballot reached comparatively high levels among Latino (67%) and African-American voters (53%).

Would Know How to Request a Ballot

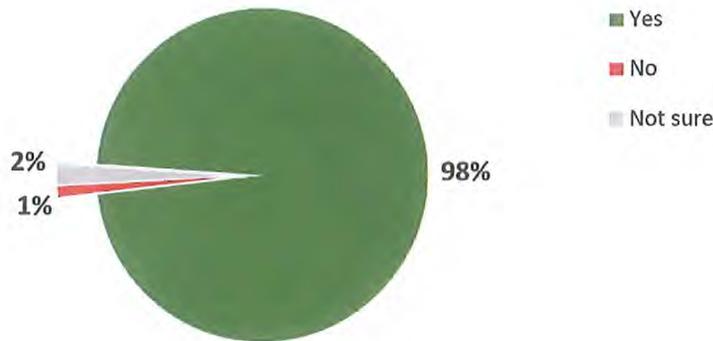
By Voter Subgroup

	Would Not Know Or Not Sure
All Voters	39%
Under Age 30	51%
30 – 44	45%
45 – 54	37%
55 – 64	27%
65 or older	29%
High School Educated or Less	51%
Attended Some College	37%
Four-Year Degree	33%
Graduate Work	34%
Income Less than \$30,000	38%
\$30,000 – 49,999	43%
\$50,000 – 74,999	45%
\$75,000 – 99,999	38%
\$100,000 or More	34%
White	38%
African-American	53%
Latino	67%
Asian	25%
All Others	50%
Have not Moved in Last 5 Years	36%
Moved One Time	42%
Moved Two or More Times	54%

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There appears to be no significant issue with the accuracy of address information on the ballot, as 98% of voters said the address information on their own ballot is correct.

Address Information Correct on Ballot Countywide Survey Response

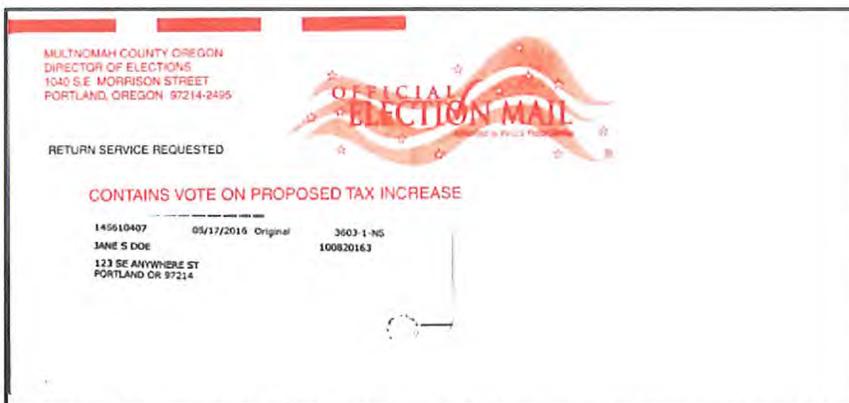


“Is your address information correct on your ballot?”

There are no voter segments where the accuracy of address information is a concern. Even among voters who have moved two or more times in the last five years, 93% said their address information is correct, only 2% said it is incorrect, with the remainder unsure.

In the focus groups, participants indicated that the design of the outside envelope of the ballot package was distinctive and recognizable. The use of the color red and the graphic treatment were generally pleasing to voters and called attention to the ballot within a stack of mail.

“I like the red and the white, and the logos. It stands out in the mail. I’ve seen this before, I recognize it.” – Frequent voter



Not as favorable was the reaction to a teaser found on the outside of the envelope that the ballot contains a “proposed tax increase.” Participants wondered why that issue was being singled out among everything that was on the ballot, and thought the wording on the

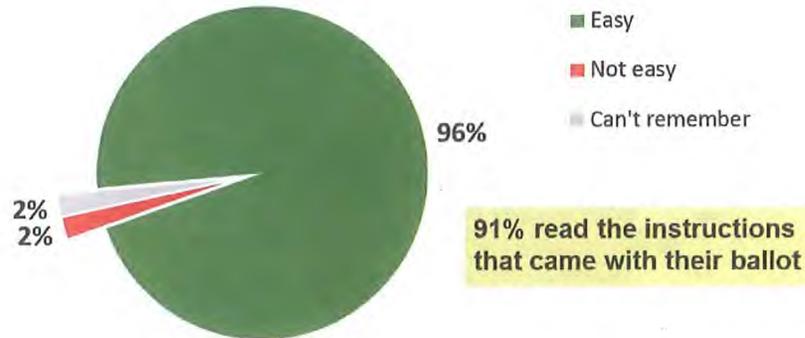
outside of the envelope “has a tone to it” and “puts a negative connotation on what you’re going to vote for.” They suggested a more general teaser on the envelope would be enough to motivate voters to open the envelope.

Overall, voters overwhelmingly believe that the instructions that come with the ballot are easy to understand. Ninety-one percent of registered voters said they read the instructions that come with their ballot. Of those, 96% said the instructions are easy to understand.

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Ballot Instructions Easy to Understand

Countywide Survey Response, among Those Who Read the Ballot Instructions



"Do you read the instructions that come with your ballot?"
(If yes): "Do you find the instructions easy or not easy to understand?"

Only one voter subgroup was significantly more likely to say that the instructions that come with their ballot are not easy to understand: less frequent voters. Among those who said they vote only "sometimes," "seldom," or "never," 14% said they do *not* find the ballot instructions easy, compared to 2% of the registered voter population overall.

Ballot Instructions Easy to Understand

By Voter Subgroup

	Yes	No	Not sure
All Voters	96%	2%	2%
Vote "Always"	98%	1%	1%
Vote "Usually"	98%	1%	2%
Vote "Sometimes," "Seldom," or "Never"	84%	14%	2%

Two items within the ballot package bear more emphasis, focus group participants said.

- Voters did not feel that the response deadline was clearly stated. In multiple focus groups, they were searching for a specific date by which they must respond and did not find it. Saying "Election Day" was not specific enough, they said.
- There was interest and concern that the signature requirement be even more strongly emphasized, perhaps through a larger or bolder font, or use of color. "That's a pretty important part, if not the most important part of this," one said.

Several people commented that the font size on the insert describing the ballot measures was difficult because of its very small size. They understood that increasing the size would introduce more volume to the ballot packet, but felt that would be a helpful change nonetheless.

"I'd rather have something of larger size to be able to peruse through than have to get this (and) pull out my magnifying glass." – Infrequent voter

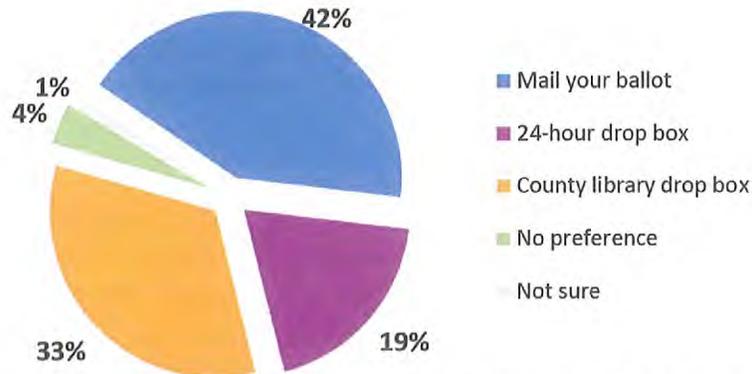
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Returning the Ballot

The countywide registered voter survey measured people’s preferences for returning their ballots. One should note this is an expression of preference, and may not match actual voting practice. As measured on the survey, 42% said they prefer to mail their ballot, 33% said they prefer using a County Library drop box, and 19% said they prefer a 24-hour drop box.

Preferred Method of Returning Ballot

Countywide Survey Response



“When you vote, do you prefer to...? (Read and randomize options): Mail your ballot, drop off your ballot at a 24-hour drop box, (or) drop off your ballot at a County library drop box.”

There are significant differences in preference based on the age of the voter. In contrast to all other age groups, nearly six in ten voters (59%) over the age of 65 prefer to mail their ballot. Voters aged 45 to 54 prefer the library in slightly greater numbers than other age groups (42%). Other age groups track fairly closely with the overall averages.

By County Commissioner District, there is a stronger preference for mailing ballots in District 1 (49%) and District 4 (46%). District 4 voters have a markedly lower preference for using 24-hour drop boxes (5%), with a higher percentage opting for County Libraries (42%).

Preferred Method of Returning Ballot

By Voter Subgroup

	Mail	24-Hour Drop Box	County Library
All Voters	42%	19%	33%
Under Age 30	42%	17%	34%
30 – 44	38%	23%	33%
45 – 54	38%	16%	42%
55 – 64	41%	26%	28%
65 or older	59%	11%	27%
Commissioner District 1	49%	22%	23%
District 2	37%	26%	32%
District 3	39%	22%	35%
District 4	46%	5%	42%

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As stated above, voters appreciate the convenience of receiving the ballot at home and returning it on their own schedule. Concerns about the vote-by-mail process were few. One specific concern, though, was expressed in all three groups – a worry about whether the drop box was actually secure.

“I took it to the library. I put it in a box and after I did that, I questioned myself, ‘How secure is that box sitting there...in the open lobby?’” – Infrequent voter

As an innovation to increase response, several participants hoped the County could offer a postage-paid reply mechanism. In part, they said, it can be inconvenient to find a stamp. But as one frequent voter said, if the intention is to encourage widespread voting,

“That should be a no-brainer. It's not even about the price of the stamp, it's just the principle of it. Why would you not?” – Frequent voter

Ballot Tracking

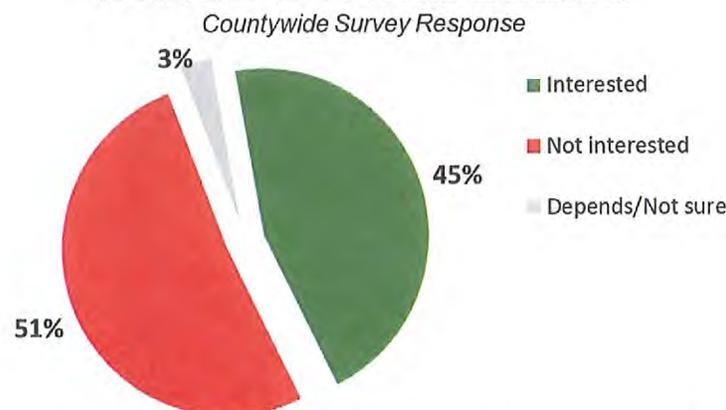
Focus group participants strongly affirmed the concept of ballot tracking. Knowing that their ballot has been received is not just a curiosity. Participants said that receiving such a notification would ease their concerns and build confidence in the voting process. A voter explained the rationale this way:

“They should give you some kind of confirmation that, ‘Hey, we got your (ballot). You turned it in.’ You're wondering, ‘Wow. This person lost. I voted...’” – Infrequent voter

Infrequent voters attending the focus groups were pleased and even excited to find out that ballot tracking exists today. The Gresham focus group, in fact, returned to the topic several times during the discussion, and even suggested that an entire public outreach campaign be built around the ability to track one's ballot.

Overall, as measured in the survey, almost half of registered voters countywide (45%) expressed interest in the concept of ballot tracking.

Interest in Receiving Ballot Tracking Messages from the Elections Division



“Are you interested or not interested in receiving messages from the Elections Division such as “your ballot has just been mailed to you,” and “your completed ballot has been received and counted by the Elections Division?”

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Interest in ballot tracking varies greatly by voter subgroup. As illustrated in the table below, interest is significantly higher – as much as 19 percentage points higher – among voters under age 55 compared to those over that age. Interest in ballot tracking jumps all the way to 62% of voters who have moved at least twice in the past five years. By race and ethnicity, interest is significantly higher among Asian voters (60%), but much lower among Latino (32%) and African-American voters (16%) compared to others. It happens that there is much less interest in ballot tracking among people who vote infrequently.

Interest in Receiving Ballot Tracking Messages

By Voter Subgroup

	Interested	Not Interested or Not Sure
All Voters	45%	55%
Under Age 30	54%	46%
30 – 44	47%	53%
45 – 54	52%	48%
55 – 64	35%	65%
65 or older	35%	65%
White	47%	53%
African-American	16%	84%
Latino	32%	68%
Asian	60%	40%
All Others	57%	43%
Have not Moved in Last 5 Years	43%	57%
Moved One Time	46%	54%
Moved Two or More Times	62%	36%
Vote “Always”	48%	52%
Vote “Usually”	45%	55%
Vote “Sometimes,” “Seldom,” or “Never”	31%	69%

A frequent voter went a step further and said that a personal reminder to vote, whether by email or text or some other means, would be useful so one is not left trying to find a ballot at the last minute.

In discussion, some privacy concerns did emerge around ballot tracking and the public nature of voter registration information. A handful of voters became confused by the ballot tracking concept, wondering if others would know not just *that* they voted, but *how* they voted. This concern was not widespread. Nonetheless, it points up that communications around ballot tracking will need to be carefully and clearly stated.

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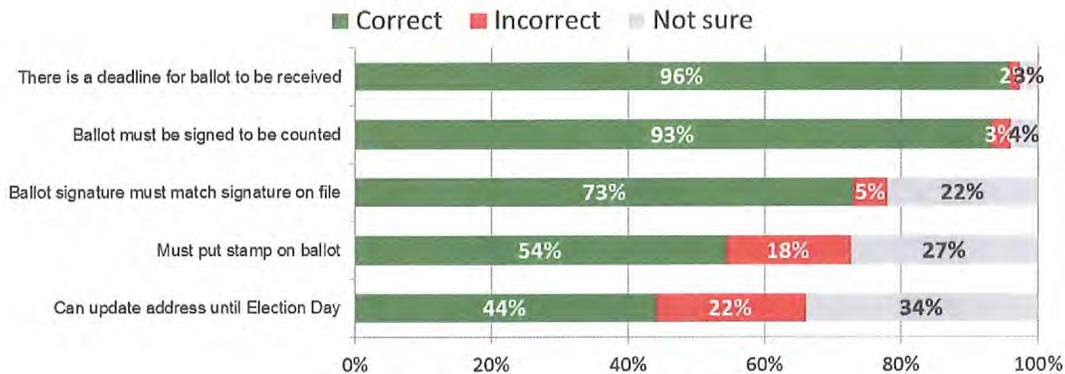
KNOWLEDGE OF THE PROCESS

How Well Voters Know the Voting Process

In addition to measuring attitudes and testing preferences related to the voting process, the countywide survey also assessed voters’ knowledge of several basic elements of the process. Overall, knowledge was very good, though several gaps exist.

Knowledge of the Voting Process

Countywide Survey Response



- An overwhelming 96% of registered voters correctly know that there is a deadline for their ballot to be received. Knowledge of this requirement is very strong across all voter subgroups.

- Nearly as many (93%) are correctly aware that their ballot must be signed to be counted.

Awareness of the signature requirement is consistent in the low to mid-90s for nearly all voter subgroups, with these notable exceptions: voters under age 30 (84% aware of the signature requirement), renters (87%), Asian voters (86%), infrequent voters (81%), voters in households earning less than \$30,000 annually (87%), and voters without a party affiliation (84%).

- Knowledge is not as strong that the signature on their ballot must match the signature that is on file with the Elections Division. Only 73% said they knew their ballot would be rejected if the signatures did not match, while 22% admitted they were not sure about that. Another 5% of voters asserted incorrectly that the signatures do not need to match for the ballot to be accepted.

While awareness of this requirement dips slightly among voters who are younger, renters, lower-income, and non-partisan, the big drop-off is among voters who vote only “sometimes” or less often. Among those infrequent voters, only 56% are aware that their signature must match what is on file with the Elections Division.

- A majority of voters (54%) are correctly aware that one cannot mail a ballot without affixing a stamp. Almost one voter in five (18%) believes incorrectly that a ballot can be mailed without a stamp, with more than one-quarter of voters (27%) not sure if that is true.

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The 18% number who incorrectly think a ballot can be mailed without a stamp rises significantly among these voter subgroups: voters under age 45 (26%), renters (30%), voters who have moved two or more times in the past five years (37%), voters of color (28%), African-American voters in particular (40%), and infrequent voters (41%). Clearly this is a requirement that needs to be better explained.

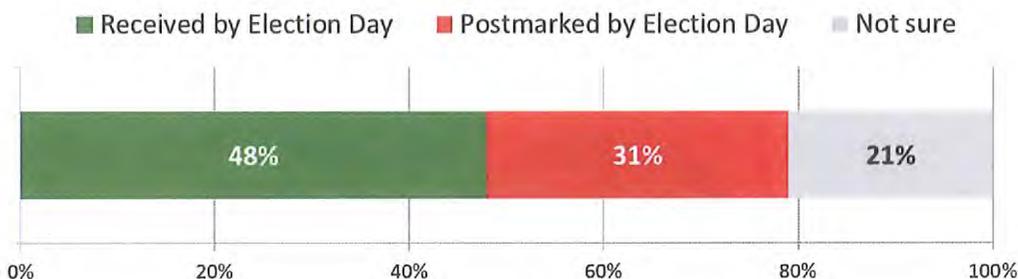
- Forty-four percent know correctly that they can update their address and vote until 8:00 PM on Election Day if they are already registered. One-third of voters (34%) are not sure if this is true, and 22% believe they cannot do that.

In a finding that is unique in the survey, traditionally under-represented voters are *more* likely than average to give the correct answer to this question: voters under age 30 (52% correct), voters with no more than a high school diploma (51%), voters not affiliated with a political party (51%), voters of color (53%), Asian voters (70%), and those who have moved at least twice in the last five years (57%).

When it comes to returning the ballot, there is a large knowledge gap surrounding the important topic of when the ballot is due. Fewer than half of voters (48%) know correctly that their ballot must be *received* by Election Day in order to be counted. Nearly one-third of voters countywide (31%) incorrectly believe that the ballot just needs to be postmarked by Election Day to be counted. Another one-fifth of voters (21%) are not sure which is the correct answer.

Knowledge of Ballot Deadline

Countywide Survey Response



"Will your ballot be counted if it is postmarked by Election Day, or does it need to be received by Election Day to be counted?"

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On the question of knowing when ballots are due, there are only minor differences in knowledge among demographic and socio-economic voter subgroups such as age or education level. Frequency of voting makes a major difference, however, with less frequent voters much less likely to know the correct answer, as illustrated in the table below.

Knowledge of Ballot Deadline
By Voter Subgroup

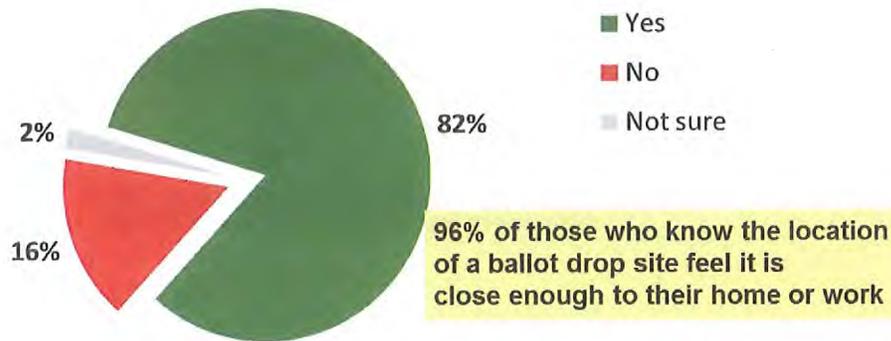
	Received by Election Day	Postmarked by Election Day	Not sure
All Voters	48%	31%	21%
Vote "Always"	52%	29%	19%
Vote "Usually"	43%	36%	21%
Vote "Sometimes," "Seldom," or "Never"	37%	33%	29%

Knowledge of ballot drop sites is good. More than four voters out of five (82%) said they know the location of a ballot drop site near them. One in six (16%) said they do not know the location of a drop box, while another 2% were unsure whether they knew the location or not.

Among those who indicated that they prefer to use a drop box to return their ballot, 91% said they know the location of a nearby drop box. But 9% of voters who would prefer to use a drop box said they did not know the location of a drop box near them.

Satisfaction with drop box locations is very high. Among those who can identify the location of a drop box near them, 96% feel that the ballot drop site is "close enough" to their home or work.

Know the Location of a Ballot Drop Site
Countywide Survey Response



"Do you know the location of an official ballot drop site near you?"
(If yes): "Do you feel that your official ballot drop site is close enough to your home or work?"

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Lack of knowledge about the location of ballot drop sites follows many of the usual fault lines in the voting population. Compared to the 82% overall who said they know the location of a ballot drop site near them, knowledge is lower among younger, less educated, lower income, more transient, and less frequent voters as illustrated in the table below. Older voters also display somewhat less awareness of nearby ballot drop sites, but they also have a much higher preference for mailing their ballots.

Know the Location of a Ballot Drop Site

By Voter Subgroup

	Yes	No or Not Sure
All Voters	82%	18%
Under Age 30	70%	30%
30 – 44	85%	15%
45 – 54	89%	11%
55 – 64	89%	11%
65 or older	78%	22%
High School Educated or Less	73%	27%
Attended Some College	79%	21%
Four-Year Degree	90%	10%
Graduate Work	88%	12%
Income Less than \$30,000	73%	24%
\$30,000 – 49,999	84%	16%
\$50,000 – 74,999	81%	19%
\$75,000 – 99,999	84%	16%
\$100,000 or More	86%	14%
Have not Moved in Last 5 Years	86%	14%
Moved One Time	72%	28%
Moved Two or More Times	63%	37%
Vote "Always"	87%	13%
Vote "Usually"	79%	21%
Vote "Sometimes," "Seldom," or "Never"	61%	39%
Commissioner District 1	82%	18%
District 2	89%	11%
District 3	81%	19%
District 4	75%	25%

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CONFIDENCE IN THE PROCESS

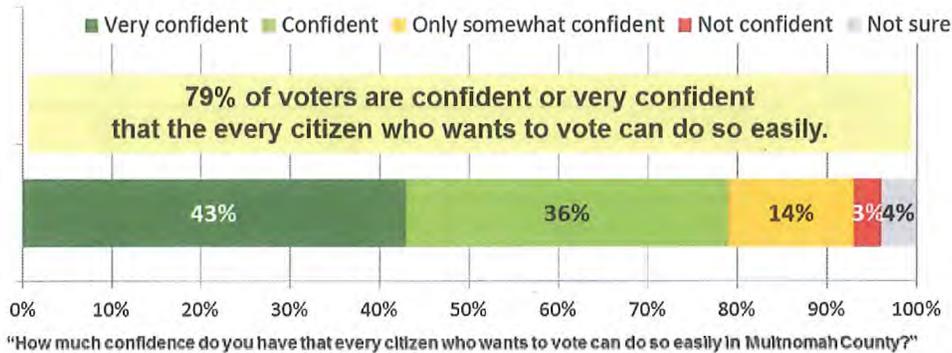
Confidence That Everyone Who Wants to Vote Can Vote

A large majority of voters feel confident that every citizen in Multnomah County who wants to vote can do so easily. Nearly four out of five voters (79%) feel “confident” or “very confident,” with 43% feeling “very confident,” and 36% feeling simply “confident.”

About one voter in six has some doubts. Fourteen percent said they are “only somewhat confident” that everyone who wants to vote can do so easily, while 3% are “not confident” of that. Four percent are not sure.

**Confidence That the Every Citizen
Who Wants to Vote Can Do So Easily**

Countywide Survey Response



As illustrated in the table on the following page, the overall confidence of 79% dips slightly to 72% among both Latino voters and voters of all ethnicities who have a post-graduate level of education. Confidence is also slightly lower among voters in households earning less than \$30,000 per year (74%), and among voters under the age of 30 (76%).

Compared to people who vote “always” or “usually,” less frequent voters are much less likely to say they are “very confident” that every citizen who wants to vote can do so easily. While 45% of “always” voters and 46% of “usually” voters are very confident, only 25% of those who vote sometimes or less are very confident.

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Confidence That Every Citizen Who Wants to Vote Can Do So Easily
By Voter Subgroup

	Very Confident	Confident	Total
All Voters	43%	36%	79%
Under Age 30	31%	46%	76%
30 – 44	43%	35%	79%
45 – 54	46%	36%	82%
55 – 64	49%	30%	80%
65 or older	48%	33%	81%
High School Educated or Less	42%	37%	79%
Attended Some College	44%	36%	80%
Four-Year Degree	41%	42%	83%
Graduate Work	45%	27%	72%
Income Less than \$30,000	38%	36%	74%
\$30,000 – 49,999	47%	35%	82%
\$50,000 – 74,999	52%	30%	82%
\$75,000 – 99,999	52%	28%	80%
\$100,000 or More	43%	41%	85%
White	43%	35%	78%
African-American	44%	38%	83%
Latino	36%	35%	72%
Asian	48%	34%	82%
All Others	43%	35%	78%
Vote “Always”	45%	35%	80%
Vote “Usually”	46%	33%	78%
Vote “Sometimes,” “Seldom,” or “Never”	25%	54%	79%

Asked about their own experience, 12% of the County’s voters said that there was a time during the past few elections when they could not vote, even though they wanted to.” That number rose slightly higher among voters under age 29 (18%), among those with less than a four-year college degree (14%), African-American voters (17%), and those in households earning less than \$30,000 (21%).

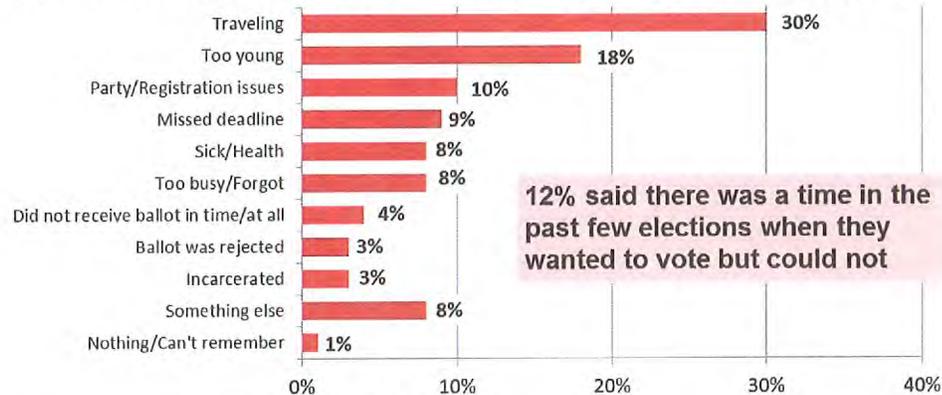
As illustrated in the chart on the following page, the leading barrier for these voters was travel that they felt prevented them from voting (30%). Eighteen percent said they could not vote because they were too young. Eight percent said they missed an election due to sickness or disability, and another 8% said they just forgot to vote.

Several process issues became barriers for some voters: difficulty switching parties or getting registered (10%), missing deadlines (9%), not receiving a ballot (4%), or having a ballot rejected (3%). Three percent of those who had experienced a barrier said it was because they had been incarcerated.

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Reasons that Kept People from Voting

Asked of Voters Who Said There Was a Time When They Wanted to Vote But Could Not



12% said there was a time in the past few elections when they wanted to vote but could not

“What was it that kept you from voting?”

(If no answer initially): “Is there something that could have been done differently so that you could vote successfully?”
(Open-ended; categorized responses shown above.)

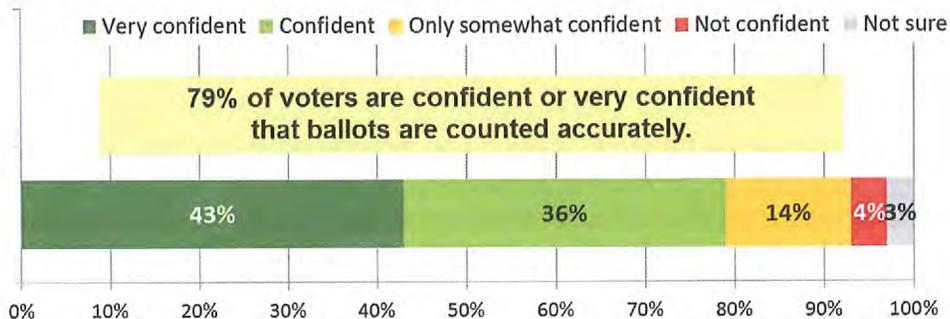
Confidence That Ballots Are Counted Accurately

There is a healthy confidence among voters in Multnomah County that their ballots are being counted accurately. Thirty-six percent of voters are “confident,” and 43% are “very confident” that the ballots are being counted accurately. That totals four out of five voters (79%) who feel a solid confidence that the vote count is accurate.

At the lower end of the scale, 14% of voters are “only somewhat confident,” and 4% are outright “not confident” that the count is accurate, while 3% are not sure how they feel about it.

Confidence That Ballots are Counted Accurately

Countywide Survey Response



79% of voters are confident or very confident that ballots are counted accurately.

“How much confidence do you have that the ballots in Multnomah County are counted accurately?
Not confident, only somewhat confident, confident, or very confident?”

One’s own level of education has an enormous impact on confidence in the accuracy of the vote count. While only 67% of high school-educated voters are confident in the accuracy of the vote count, that number rises dramatically to 92% among the college-educated.

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Similarly, voters in households earning more than \$75,000 per year have confidence in the vote count near 90%, while voters in households earning less than \$50,000 have much lower confidence near 70%.

By race and ethnicity, confidence in the vote count is extremely high for Latino voters (91%), and surpasses 80% for both white and Asian voters. African-American voters express much lower confidence at 66%.

Unlike most other issues in the survey, there is a partisan dimension to confidence in the vote count. While Democratic confidence in the vote count is high (86%), Republicans are much less confident (62%), as are Independents (69%). Unaffiliated voters fall between those two extremes (78%).

Confidence That Ballots are Counted Accurately
By Voter Subgroup

	Very Confident	Confident	Total
All Voters	43%	35%	79%
High School Educated or Less	34%	32%	67%
Attended Some College	36%	33%	69%
Four-Year Degree	46%	46%	92%
Graduate Work	61%	32%	93%
Income Less than \$30,000	38%	34%	72%
\$30,000 – 49,999	33%	38%	71%
\$50,000 – 74,999	41%	35%	77%
\$75,000 – 99,999	55%	34%	89%
\$100,000 or More	53%	37%	91%
White	45%	35%	81%
African-American	29%	37%	66%
Latino	52%	39%	91%
Asian	41%	41%	82%
All Others	30%	30%	60%
Democrats	50%	35%	86%
Independents	32%	38%	69%
Republicans	27%	35%	62%
Unaffiliated	38%	40%	78%
Minor Parties	42%	40%	81%

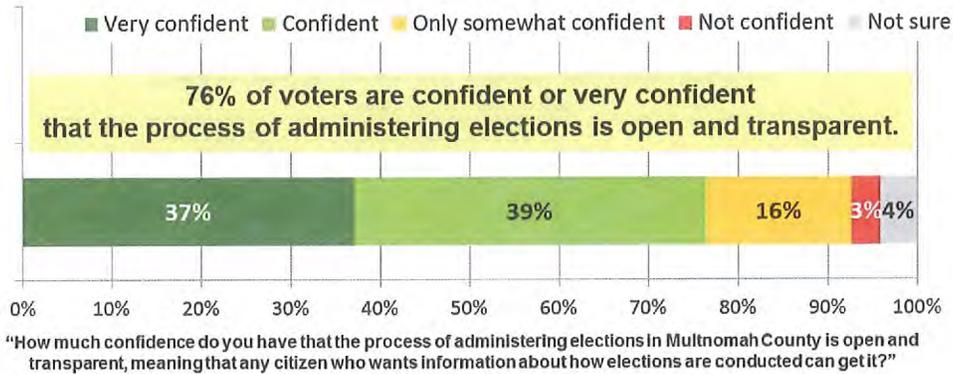
Despite the relatively high overall confidence in the accuracy of the vote count, there was a great deal of interest in the focus groups to see better transparency of the ballot counting process. Focus group participants said that it “would be nice if the people can actually see the counters counting.” Tongue-in-cheek, it was suggested that there be a “live ballot web cam” so people could follow the counting from home. They acknowledged that this was not an entirely serious idea, but also suggested that the mere act of broadcasting the counting process would bring an added level of accountability.

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Confidence in the Open and Transparent Administration of Elections

As measured in the survey, voters overall feel positive about the openness and transparency of the administration of elections in Multnomah County. Three-quarters of voters (76%) said they are confident or better, with 37% saying “very confident” and 39% saying “confident.”

Confidence That the Process of Administering Elections is Open and Transparent
Countywide Survey Response



Like many other issues, confidence in the process of administering elections is related to a voter’s level of education. Confidence is 75% for high school-educated voters, climbing into the 80s at the higher education levels, accompanied by a dramatic rise in the percentage who said they are “very confident.” Confidence is also lower at the lowest income levels, with only 67% of voters in households earning less than \$30,000 saying they are confident in the process.

As with other issues of confidence in elections in Multnomah County, partisanship plays a role. Republicans (67%) and Independents (62%) expressed much lower confidence in the administration of elections than did Democrats (81%), with unaffiliated voters finding themselves in between.

Confidence That the Process is Open and Transparent
By Voter Subgroup

	Very Confident	Confident	Total
All Voters	37%	39%	76%
High School Educated or Less	32%	43%	75%
Attended Some College	31%	39%	69%
Four-Year Degree	38%	42%	81%
Graduate Work	53%	29%	82%
Income Less than \$30,000	30%	37%	67%
\$30,000 – 49,999	30%	50%	80%
\$50,000 – 74,999	40%	40%	80%
\$75,000 – 99,999	48%	30%	79%
\$100,000 or More	44%	39%	83%
Democrats	41%	40%	81%
Independents	23%	39%	62%
Republicans	29%	39%	67%
Unaffiliated	37%	36%	73%
Minor Parties	45%	34%	79%

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Confidence in the People Who Administer Elections

Voters in the focus groups articulated a basic faith in the integrity of the people that are handling and counting ballots. In general, their confidence in the integrity of the process is based on voters' willingness to give ballot counters the benefit of the doubt. As one frequent voter said,

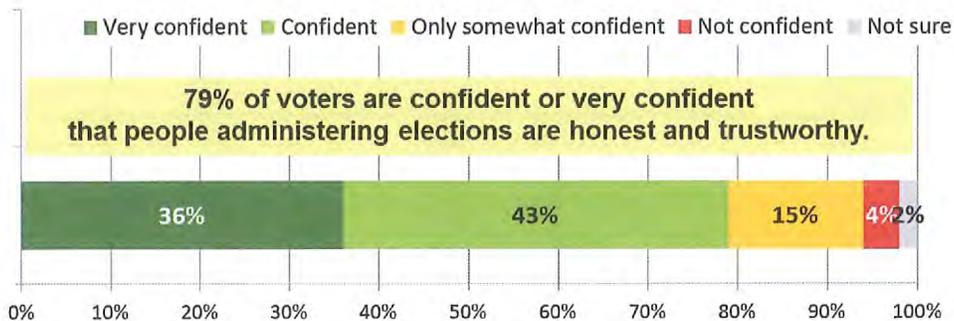
"...there's only so much I feel like you can do besides just kind of hope for the best. Yeah, they're probably counting it accurately." – Frequent voter

A number of focus group participants had a frame of reference from living in other states. In nearly every case, their assumption was that the voting process in Oregon was fairer and more open than any other place they had lived. This presumption of fairness carried over into a broad confidence in the electoral process in Multnomah County.

As measured in the survey, confidence in the people administering elections is similar to several other measures of confidence in the integrity of the voting process. Seventy-nine percent of voters are confident or very confident "that the people involved in administering elections in Multnomah County are honest and trustworthy," with 36% very confident and 43% confident.

Confidence That People Administering Elections are Honest and Trustworthy

Countywide Survey Response



"How much confidence do you have that the people involved in administering elections in Multnomah County are honest and trustworthy? Not confident, only somewhat confident, confident, or very confident?"

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When it comes to having confidence in the honesty and trustworthiness of the people administering elections in the County, once again a voter’s level of education is a strong predictor of their perceptions. Only 64% of voters who attended some college but did not finish their degree are confident, compared to 94% of people who have completed some post-graduate work. Income is also a strong predictor, with confidence growing by almost 20 percentage points as one climbs the income ladder.

White, Latino, and Asian voters all express confidence in the 80s, while African-American voters are much less confident (61%) in the people administering elections.

Finally, there is a strong partisan divide on this issue, with only 59% of Republicans saying they are confident that the people administering elections are honest and trustworthy, compared to 85% of Democrats, 71% of Independents, and 82% of unaffiliated voters.

Confidence That People Administering Elections are Honest and Trustworthy

By Voter Subgroup

	Very Confident	Confident	Total
All Voters	36%	43%	79%
High School Educated or Less	30%	42%	72%
Attended Some College	29%	35%	64%
Four-Year Degree	36%	53%	89%
Graduate Work	54%	40%	94%
Income Less than \$30,000	30%	40%	70%
\$30,000 – 49,999	25%	48%	73%
\$50,000 – 74,999	29%	50%	79%
\$75,000 – 99,999	48%	40%	87%
\$100,000 or More	51%	38%	89%
White	39%	41%	80%
African-American	22%	39%	61%
Latino	33%	54%	87%
Asian	34%	51%	85%
All Others	22%	42%	64%
Democrats	39%	46%	85%
Independents	26%	44%	71%
Republicans	27%	32%	59%
Unaffiliated	34%	48%	82%
Minor Parties	49%	37%	86%

Who Runs Elections in Multnomah County

Many voters are unsure who administers the elections in Multnomah County. Voters frequently guessed that most of the workers are volunteers, who are involved out of a sense of civic duty. Voters typically consider this to be admirable and selfless, helping to ensure the impartiality of elections.

Most of the infrequent voters in the Portland focus group admitted that they “have no idea” who administers elections in the County. They hoped that the administrator would be independent.

“An independent party would be good news, I guess...someone who has no direct hand in the outcome of the election.” – Infrequent voter

On the other hand, some focus group participants were prone to guess elections are run by “elected officials,” the Mayor, County Commissioners, or others with a stake in the process. These guesses

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suggested somewhat less impartiality, but in fact most voters interviewed really did not have a firm idea at all who is administering elections in the County.

There was little specific awareness of the Elections Division exhibited in the focus groups, though a handful knew about the Morrison Street location from visiting there. The Gresham infrequent voter group became very interested in the question of accountability and lines of authority, going so far as to say they would like to see an organizational chart in the Elections Division’s materials so they were clear about the reporting relationships. As they said,

“I think the reason why we would all want to know who is taking care of it is so we know who is responsible if something messes up.”

“Also who to call and ask if you have questions.”

– Infrequent voters

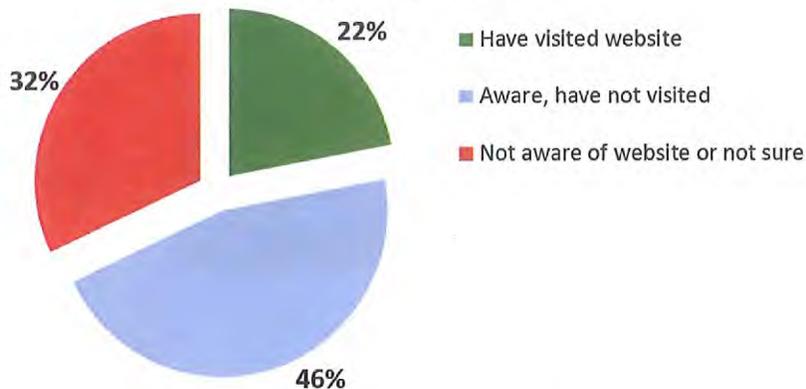
COMMUNICATION MECHANISMS

Reactions to the Elections Division Website

The survey measured voters’ awareness and visitation of the Elections Division website. Two-thirds of voters (68%) said they were aware of the website, with about one-third of those (22% of voters overall) saying they had visited. Visitation is significantly higher among voters aged 30 to 54, those with higher levels of education, and those who vote more frequently.

Awareness and Use of Elections Division Website

Countywide Survey Response



“Is there a website specifically for Multnomah County Elections?”
(If yes): “Have you visited the Multnomah County Elections website.”

The focus groups provided a richer picture. Many, if not most, of the voters interviewed in the focus groups were unaware that there was a website related to voting in Multnomah County. Prior to looking at the website, some doubted fervently whether there would be any value in such a website.

In one of the two infrequent voter focus groups, in fact, prior to looking at the Elections Division’s website there was skepticism that a website would even be of value. Participants doubted that the information found there would be of any interest to them.

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"I don't think you're going to find a whole lot. You may find the names of the people who are counting. You would probably find the head of it, and if it's a board, you'll see all those names. You don't know who they are."

*"I want to say that in my circle of friends and people that I associate with, I don't think any of us have spent very much time, if any at all, on the website or going there. ... I would venture to guess that that happens to a lot of people, that we don't really get super-super involved in finding out all the ins-and-outs. We just vote or we don't vote."
– Infrequent voters*

But when the moderator invited the participants to bring out their electronic devices and navigate to the website, the impact was overwhelmingly positive. Any skepticism or doubt about the value of the website was transformed.



Menu Search Services Departments

Site

Multnomah County Elections Division

Multnomah County > Department of Community Services

Tim Scott, Director of Elections

Address: 1040 SE Morrison St, Portland, OR 97214 (map)
phone [503-988-3720](tel:503-988-3720) | fax 503-988-3719 | TTY relay [1-800-735-2900](tel:1-800-735-2900)
webform [comments](#) | email elections@multco.us | [Holiday schedule](#)
Office hours Mon - Fri 8 AM - 5 PM

I want to find out... [if I'm registered to vote?](#) - [what's on the ballot?](#) - [what my voting options are?](#) - [who's in office now?](#)

- [Learn more about the May 2016 Primary Election](#)
- [Turnout](#) - ballot returns for the May 17 Primary Elections
- [Election results](#) - unofficial results in Multnomah County for the May 17 Primary Election
 - [Statewide results](#)
- [Request for List of Ballot Challenges SEL 534 \(72.2 KB\)](#)



Elections Menu

- [Current & Upcoming Elections](#) with information on the May 2016 Primary and November 2016 General Election.
- [Information for Voters](#) including voter registration information, elected officials and election laws and rules.
- [Information for candidates, campaigns & jurisdictions](#) including candidate forms and requirements and measure information.

Connect

Elections Quick Links

- [Register to Vote or update your registration here](#)
- [Current and Upcoming Elections](#)
- [Multnomah County official ballot drop sites](#)
- [Military and Overseas Voter Information](#)
- [Elections Frequently Asked Questions](#)

People made these observations about the website:

- In all three groups, people were struck by the immediate presence of Tim Scott's name and contact information. This was impressive and reassuring to people. They were glad to know that someone they could identify was taking responsibility for the elections process, and was

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accessible. If anything, they suggested, this could be carried a step further, showing a picture of Tim to lend a greater sense of warmth and accessibility.

“I think it's important to know who's in charge of your government agencies...” – Frequent voter

“It's very transparent. I didn't have to go looking for it. I don't have to go digging around for who this person is. Not only the fact that it's there, the contact information...” – Infrequent voter

- Voters liked the availability of “Videos on the voting process in Multnomah County.” The impact of just knowing that the videos were available was overwhelmingly positive, and clearly important given some of the misunderstandings of the process that became evident in the focus group discussion. An infrequent voter, who had not even known that the website existed, talked about the impact it had on boosting her confidence in the voting process:

“Once the website is found, all the information in here – because I've been browsing while everybody was talking – is good information. I now have more confidence in the process because it has videos on some of the process. I know who to talk to if I have a question. There (are) ways to be able to ask questions and get my answers immediately now. Would make my confidence in my elected officials, and in the process, much easier to handle.” – Infrequent voter

People found the Elections Quick Links and the “I want to find out” links to be intuitive and extremely useful.

“That it's right there, it says, “I want to find out if I'm registered, what's on the ballot, who is in office.” Then right underneath it is, “Do you want to track your voting?” This website has tons of info that I didn't even know existed.” – Infrequent voter

*“I like that there's a bold ‘I want to find out’ different things, and one of them was just what my voting options are. ...For me that's kind of how I think... For me, it was very intuitive.”
– Frequent voter*

Constructive Suggestions to Improve the Website

Voters found certain pages of the website to be somewhat dense and wordy. They said some condensing of the text on the website is needed to make it more accessible to people like them.

The search function on the website proved to be bothersome to some participants. During the live navigation of the website in the focus groups, a number of voters demonstrated that their first inclination is to put something into the search box rather than scan the available links. As the search function is not limited to the Elections Division website but ties to the broader County website, voters were puzzled where they ended up.

“Just asked how do I know my vote was counted and the marriage license thing came up. And on the same page is dental fillings. Not what you need when searching for information on voting.”

*“We tried to put in how to register to vote, and the first thing that came up was for state domestic partnership. So you get these new people that move in to Multnomah County...and they want to register, and stick that in there, they're not going to be able to find it.”
– Frequent voters*

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Voters also suggested that the graphical style of the website looks out-of-date.

“It doesn’t have enough style.”

“It’s not exciting.”

– Infrequent voters

How People Access the Internet

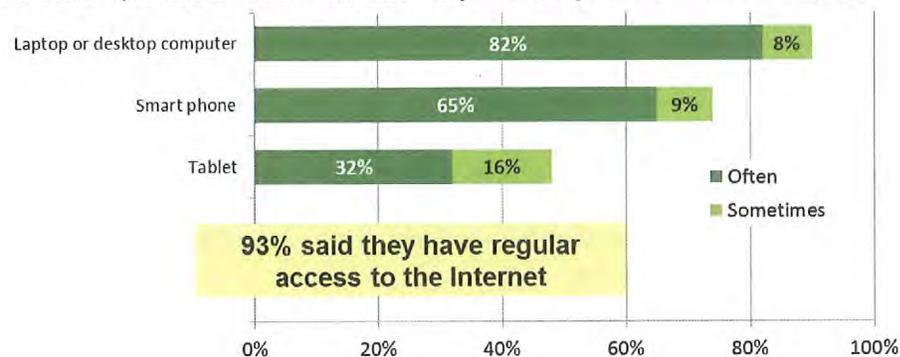
Today, the question is much less *whether* people access the Internet, but rather *how* they access it, in what settings, and on what kinds of devices. The answers to these questions speak to web design, addressing topics such as the importance of being mobile-friendly, and how topics are organized on the page.

The survey makes clear that Internet access is now nearly ubiquitous among registered voters in Multnomah County. Ninety-three percent said they now have “regular access” to the Internet. There is very little of a digital divide remaining in the County, with more than 90% of every racial and ethnic group saying they have regular Internet access. The lowest penetration numbers are among seniors (80%) and voters with household incomes under \$30,000 per year (81%).

Beyond simply having access, the survey makes clear that voters are accessing the Internet on a variety of devices. While the most common portal of access to the Internet remains laptop and desktop computers, the chart below illustrates how frequently people are accessing the Web through smartphones and tablets. Now, 74% of voters in the County are accessing the Internet often or sometimes through a smartphone, with smartphone access reaching 88% of voters under age 30. Meanwhile, 48% are accessing the Web often or sometimes on a tablet. These realities are changing the way people relate to the Internet.

Method of Accessing the Internet

Often + Sometimes; Asked of Those Who Said They Have Regular Access to the Internet



“Do you access the Internet from each of these sources never, rarely, sometimes, or often?”

Asking Multnomah County voters in a focus group setting to describe how they typically access the Internet, one understands how web browsing is no longer strictly a focused session, sitting down at a laptop or desktop computer at home or work. People are web browsing constantly and in small bursts, mainly on handheld devices, and as they have time. Focus group participants said they are using tablets or phones to access the Internet frequently in places such as these:

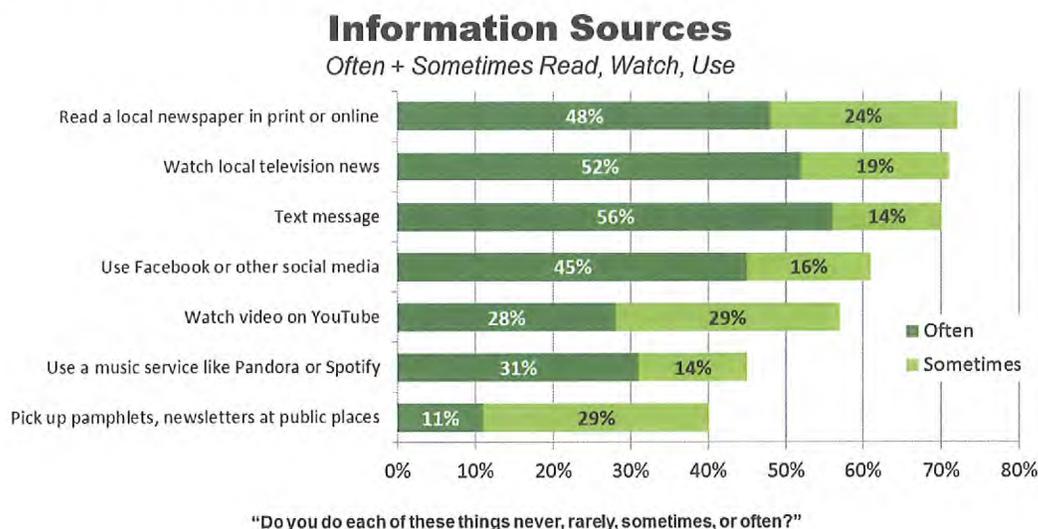
- “At the mall, waiting for my wife to finish shopping”

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- “At home, in the kitchen”
- “In the living room, probably on the couch”
- “Home, bedroom, watching TV”
- “Taking care of kids and playing on my phone at the same time”
- “In transit, while I go to work”
- “Couch at home, bed”
- “In the bedroom”
- “I could be anywhere. On my smartphone, walking at lunchtime, I’m googling something, I’m looking up something. So it’s mobile, totally mobile.”

Other Sources of Information

Looking more broadly at information consumption habits, the survey tested voters’ frequency of reading, watching, or using a variety of media. The graphic below shows the percentage of voters who “often” or “sometimes” use each source.



- Newspaper readership among Multnomah County voters is high. When combining print and online, local newspapers top all other media channels, with 72% of voters reading them often or sometimes. As is true nationally, newspaper readership in the County is stronger among older and more-educated voters.
- Local television news generates similar numbers, with 71% often or sometimes viewing it. Television news reaches 83% of seniors “often” but only 36% of voters under age 45. Meanwhile, local television news skews low on the education scale and effectively penetrates communities of color in the County.
- Text messaging is widespread. A majority of voters (56%) text often, and another 14% text sometimes, for a total of 70%.

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- Social media including Facebook are used by 61% often or sometimes. The cutoff for social media appears to be age 55, with 71% of all voters under age 55 using social media, including 77% of households with children.
- Videos on YouTube reach 57% of voters often or sometimes, with a heavy skew towards younger and more transient voters.
- Music services like Pandora or Spotify are used by 45% often or sometimes. Usage reaches 70% among voters under age 30, and 75% among those who have moved two or more times in the past five years.
- Forty percent pick up pamphlets and newsletters in public places like libraries, but only 11% said they do so often. Voters over age 55 are slightly more likely to pick up pamphlets, as are more frequent voters.

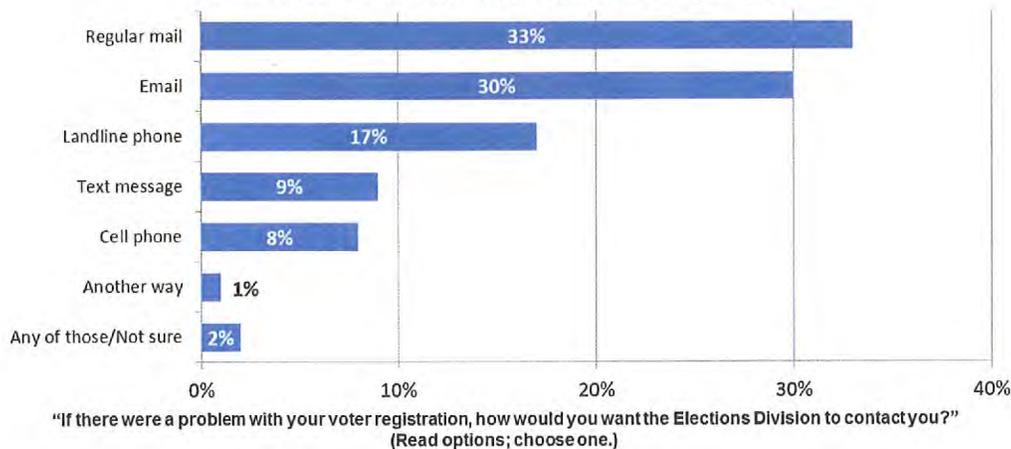
Preferred Method of Contact by the Elections Division

Survey participants were asked how they would want the Elections Division to contact them “if there were a problem with your voter registration.”

- The two leading responses were regular mail, preferred by 33%, and email, chosen by 30%.
- Seventeen percent specified their landline phone, and 8% would want to be called on their cell phone.
- Nine percent would prefer a text message.

How Voters Want Contact from Elections Division

If There Were a Problem With Their Voter Registration



There are no surprises in the subgroup breakouts, with regular mail and landline telephone contact skewing older, and email, text messaging, and cell phone contact skewing somewhat younger.

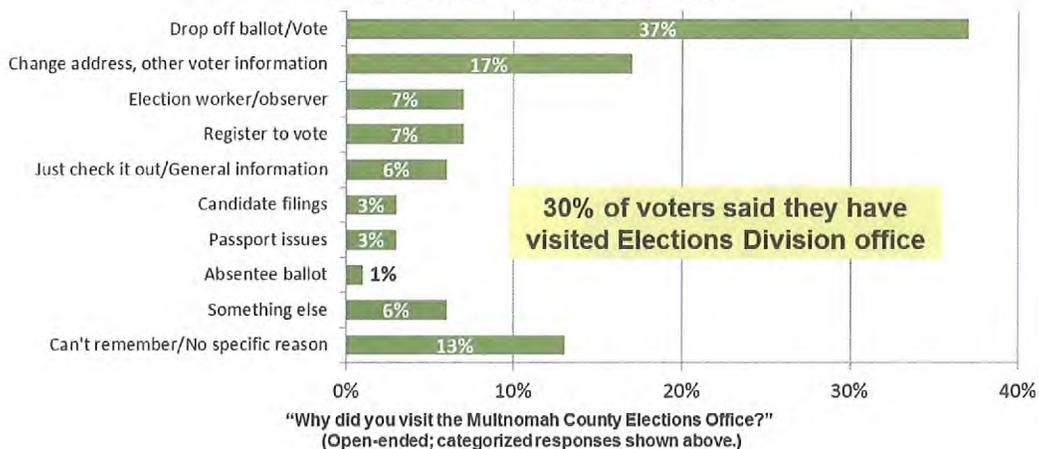
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Visiting the Elections Division Office

Almost one-third of registered voters countywide (30%) said they have visited the Multnomah County Elections Office in-person. Of those, the greatest reason (37%) was to vote or drop off a ballot. Seventeen percent visited to change their address or other voter information. Seven percent who visited said they had been an election worker, or were observing the process, and another seven percent said they visited the office in order to register to vote. Six percent said they were curious and just visited to see it or for general information. Smaller numbers had other specific issues as listed in the chart below.

Reasons for Visiting Elections Division Office

Asked of Those Who Said They Visited



Summing up the Impact of the Communication Mechanisms

Participants in an infrequent voters focus group were reassured and engaged after learning about the website and having the chance to look at it in some detail. Most said they had not known about the website previously, but found it “reassuring” to know that it contained answers to many of their questions.

More generally, after looking at the website and the Voters’ Pamphlet together, participants took away the impression that there is a careful, well-designed process of voting, administered by people who can help them. Asked if there was any information discussed in the focus group that was particularly helpful to them, infrequent voters in Gresham poured out a series of observations, all related to their increased comfort with the voting process, all as a result of having access to information about voting, and a glimpse of the people who are behind the process:

- “Just knowing about the website, in case I have any future questions”
- “Just knowing the name of that office”
- “Knowing that I can get on the phone and call somebody”
- “I can get answers in-person”
- “Knowing who is in charge”
- “It’s nice knowing that there is a commission and a division that handles it.”

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Outreach Materials from Other Jurisdictions

Several posters that are being used in Los Angeles and King Counties were tested to determine how they resonated with Multnomah County voters.



The Los Angeles County campaign was colorful with strong use of colors “that catch your eye for sure.” Focus group participants found the Los Angeles County pieces to be visually pleasing and “easy to digest.”

Infrequent voters felt that Multnomah County should mount a similar campaign. They would like to see a focused campaign built around ballot tracking. One participant imagined the headline, “See the status of your ballot.” They felt that information on ballot tracking would be one of the most useful and reassuring pieces of information that the Elections Division could communicate to the voting public.

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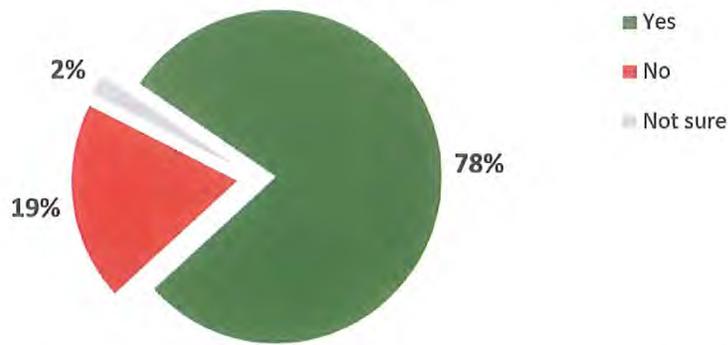
Sources of Information

More than three-quarters of registered voters countywide (78%) feel that they would know where to look for information about the voting process in Multnomah County. That leaves about one in five voters (19%) who admitted that they would not know where to look, and another 2% who were completely unsure.

As with so many other issues on the survey, the voter subgroups that were more likely to say they would not know where to look for information about the process of voting were these: high school educated or less (31%), African-Americans (41%), vote “sometimes” or less (31%), earn \$30,000 or less (25%).

Would Know Where to Look for Information about the Process of Voting

Countywide Survey Response

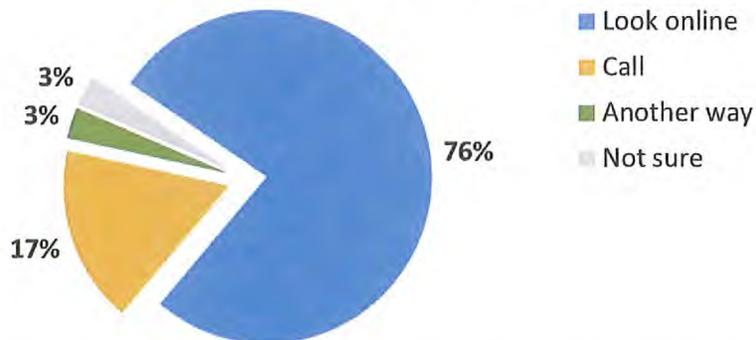


"If you needed more information about the voting process in Multnomah County, would you know where to look?"

As a basic preference, voters would overwhelmingly prefer to look online rather than call someone for information, with three-quarters (76%) saying they would prefer to look online, and 17% saying they would rather call.

Prefer to Call or Look Online for Information about the Process of Voting

Countywide Survey Response



"If you needed more information about the voting process, would you prefer to call someone or look online?"

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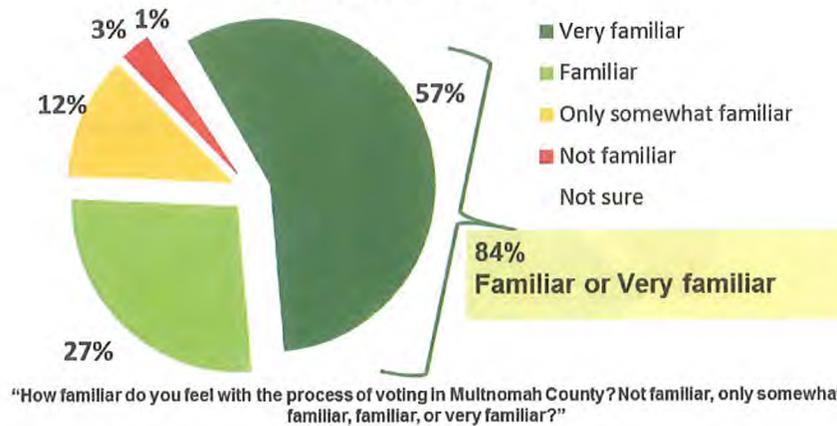
Not surprisingly, the number who would prefer to call rises dramatically with age, reaching 26% of voters between the ages of 55 and 64, and cresting at 49% – a plurality – of those over age 65. On this question, though, there is near consensus among voters under age 55, with the preference for online information averaging 88%.

Overall Feeling of Familiarity with the Process of Voting in Multnomah County

Overall, Multnomah County voters feel familiar with the process of voting. Based on the survey, 57% of voters countywide said they feel “very familiar” with the voting process. Another 27% said they feel “familiar,” for a total of 84%. Twelve percent said they feel “only somewhat familiar,” and a very small 3% said they “not familiar” with the voting process.

Feeling of Familiarity with the Process of Voting

Countywide Survey Response



As with so many issues in this survey, these voter subgroups feel notably less familiar with the voting process: voters under the age of 30, those with lower levels of education, lower-income voters, voters of color, those who have moved two or more times in the last five years, and those who vote infrequently. These differences are detailed in the table on the following page.

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Feeling of Familiarity with the Process of Voting
By Voter Subgroup

	Very Familiar	Familiar	Total
All Voters	57%	27%	84%
Under Age 30	31%	36%	67%
30 – 44	29%	55%	84%
45 – 54	27%	62%	89%
55 – 64	20%	74%	94%
65 or older	26%	62%	88%
High School Educated or Less	23%	47%	70%
Attended Some College	36%	45%	82%
Four-Year Degree	29%	64%	92%
Graduate Work	18%	76%	94%
Income Less than \$30,000	34%	40%	74%
\$30,000 – 49,999	28%	54%	82%
\$50,000 – 74,999	22%	60%	82%
\$75,000 – 99,999	25%	61%	85%
\$100,000 or More	23%	71%	94%
White	27%	60%	86%
African-American	35%	39%	74%
Latino	26%	32%	58%
Asian	50%	25%	75%
All Others	30%	58%	88%
Have not Moved in Last 5 Years	27%	61%	88%
Moved One Time	33%	48%	82%
Moved Two or More Times	24%	31%	55%
Vote “Always”	24%	66%	90%
Vote “Usually”	39%	46%	85%
Vote “Sometimes,” “Seldom,” or “Never”	26%	23%	49%

CONCLUSIONS

The outcome of this research project is to identify a variety of initiatives large and small that the Elections Division could implement to improve voter knowledge and engagement. Overall, the voters of Multnomah County demonstrate a high degree of interest and trust in the process. They have confidence that elections are administered fairly and on most issues they have strong knowledge of the voting process. Where there are gaps in that knowledge this report identifies them and provides direction on the best techniques for communicating with voters, and the voter subgroups who are most in need of outreach to improve their level of knowledge about the process.

OpinionWorks is pleased to submit this report and stands by ready to offer further interpretation of the findings as needed. We hope you find this work valuable in your continued outreach to voters in Multnomah County.

OpinionWorks LLC
Annapolis, Maryland
June 2016