RCV for Overseas Voters

Survey Data Report

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Report on Online Survey conducted in April and May, 2020

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Survey Design & Recruitment

Research Goals for Survey

Our Research Goals for the Survey are a subset of the research goals for the RCV Overseas project as a whole.

- **Learn about non-military overseas voters**
  - Gather demographic data
  - Learn about their voting history
  - Understand their motivations for voting

- **Understand the unique experiences of overseas voters**
  - What brings them overseas
  - How do they continue to engage in elections
  - What barriers have they encountered with voting

- **Find out if/how various factors affect their experiences,** such as time spent overseas, location overseas, home state, and support from employers or other organizations

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User Analysis

When designing any form or survey, **the most important first step is to create trust** between the user who is giving their information and the organization who wants that information.

Following the advice from the book **_Forms That Work_** (Jarrett & Gaffney, 2009) we conducted a **User Analysis** *(see appendix)* with the goal of understanding how users would perceive the survey.

Through this analysis we identified **important touchpoints** to keep in mind as we designed the survey:

- Make sure users feel their privacy is protected.
- Pose questions in a way that will be easy to understand, and are not difficult for participants to answer.
- Break down questions into meaningful chunks so it won't be overwhelming, and users can follow the flow of topics.

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Survey Design

With the understanding gained from our User Analysis in mind, we put together a **Question Protocol** *(see appendix)* which served as the basis for building the final survey.

The Question Protocol includes:

- Exact wording for each question and its answer options
- Details about each question like question type, and any conditional questions to be amended
- Anticipated user answer strategies (how much effort it takes to come up with an answer to the question)
- Connecting each question back to our research goals

We chose a **WordPress website** as the platform for the survey so that we could customize the **design** and use **conditional logic** within the survey.

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Recruitment Process

From the start we knew that finding overseas voters would be a challenging task. Not only is this a relatively niche group of people, but finding them requires searching the whole globe.

We developed a plan to contact organizations whose members would be likely to be overseas voters (study abroad alumni networks, expat communities, companies that offer services to digital nomads, and others). We also used CCD Twitter to broadcast messages timed for audiences in different time zones.

At first, responses were slow, and we felt like we were hitting a brick wall. But thanks to a connection with the Peace Corps alumni network, over the course of a few days we went from about 20 responses to over 100 responses.

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Participants & Data Overview

We had **79 complete survey responses.** (107 total responses, with 28 participants disqualified by the screener questions.)

Because our greatest recruitment success was through the Peace Corps Alumni network, it is important to note that a majority of our participants are former Peace Corps volunteers.

The following slides present the data collected in the survey.

Quantitative data is presented using graphs or charts, each with an explanation of the implications and significance of the data.

Qualitative data is presented through selected quotes from survey questions posed with open-ended entry for participants.

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Participant Demographics

Age Ranges

We asked participants to select their age range (rather than asking for a specific age, to protect privacy).

The majority (66%) of our participants were **under the age of 40** (members of the generation commonly referred to as "Millennials").

However, we did have a decent number of older participants:

- **27% between 40-60**
- **6% over the age of 60**

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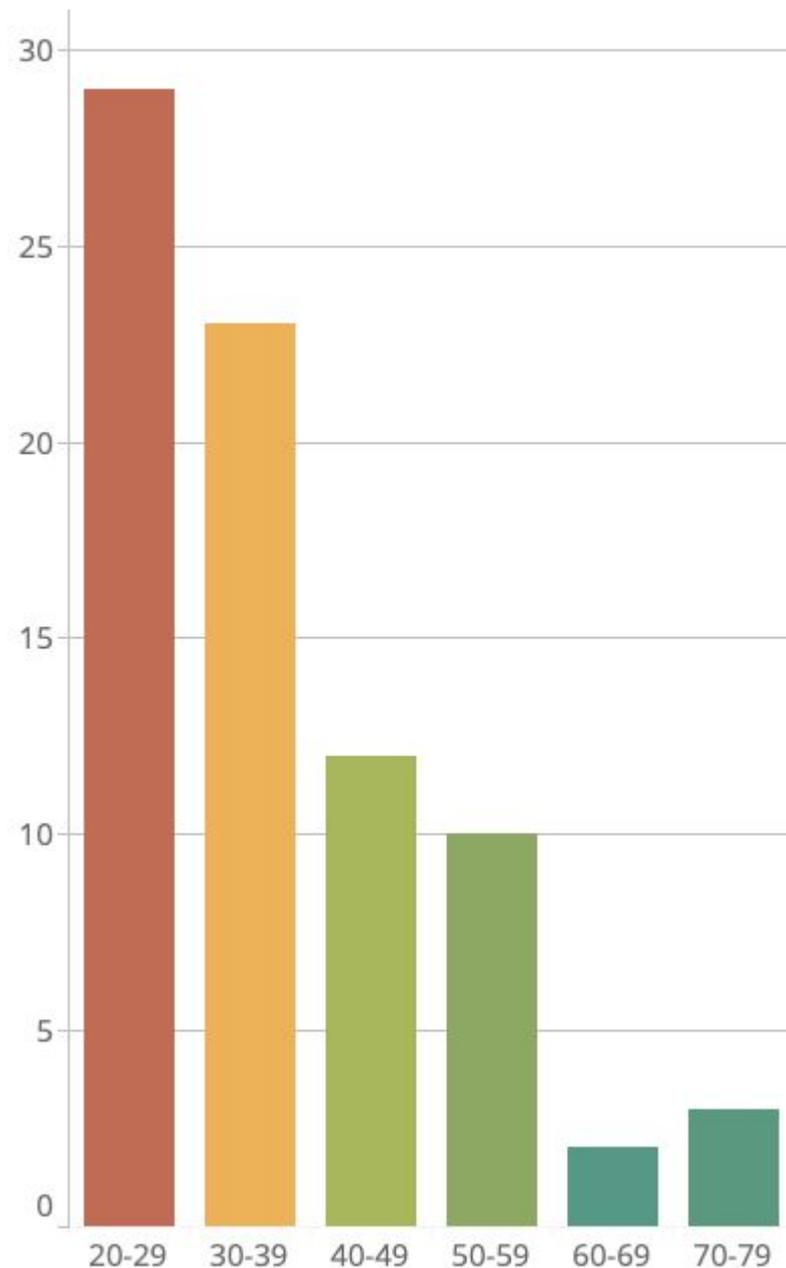
US States Registered

We had participants from **27 states.**

The states with the most participants are **California, New York**, and **Texas.**

This map is labeled with the number of participants per state.

*We also had **1 participant from Hawaii,** not shown on this map.*

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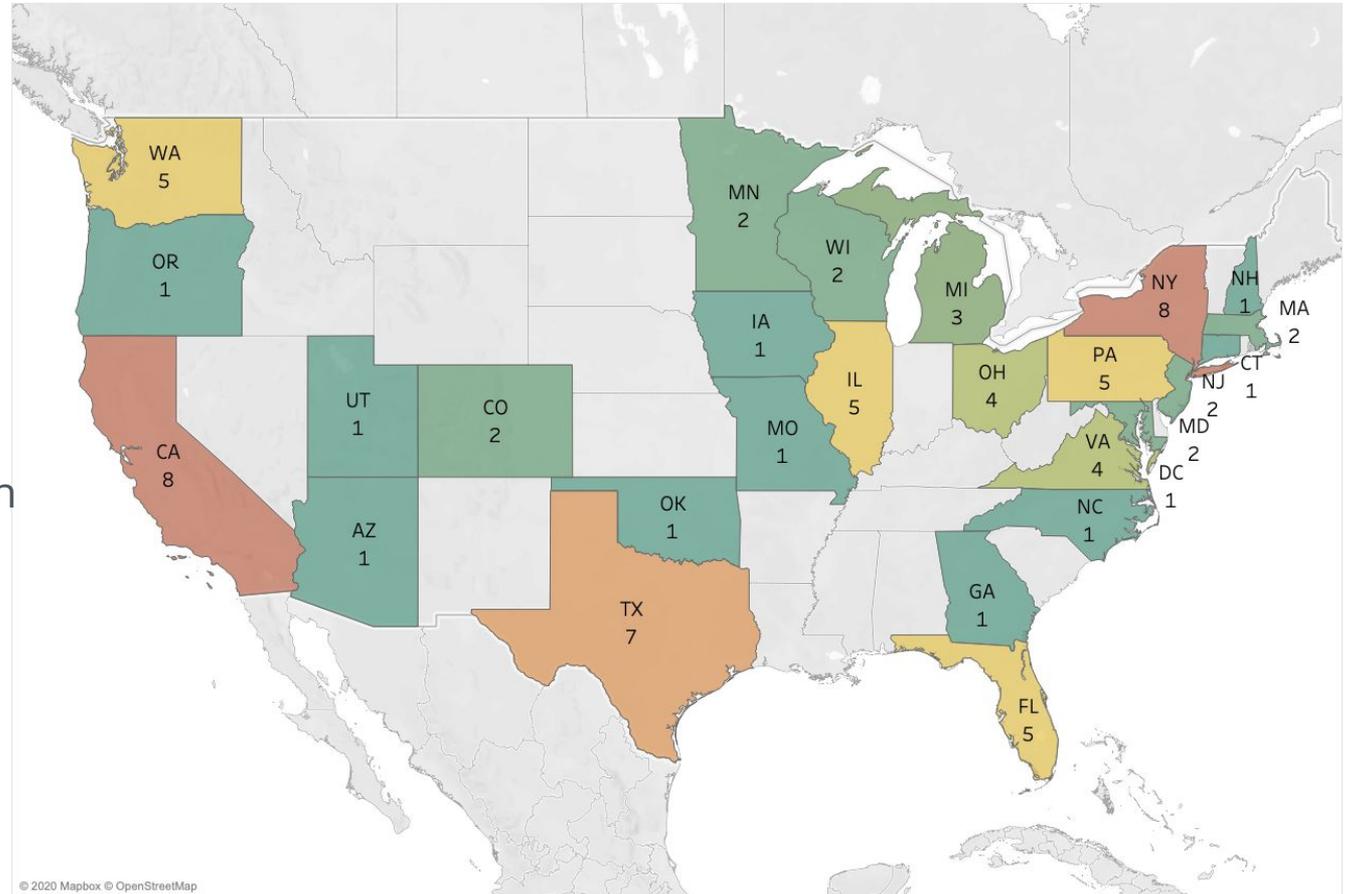
Careers & Occupations

We posed this question to participants with a short open-ended entry.

Based on their entries, we assigned the career **categories shown in the chart.**

Examples of careers included:

- **Professional:** lawyer, architect, diplomat, consultant, administrator

- **Education:** professor, ESL teacher

- **Creative:** designer, filmmaker

- **Communications:** marketing, journalism, international relations

- **Health:** public health, social work

- **Technology:** developer, tech sales

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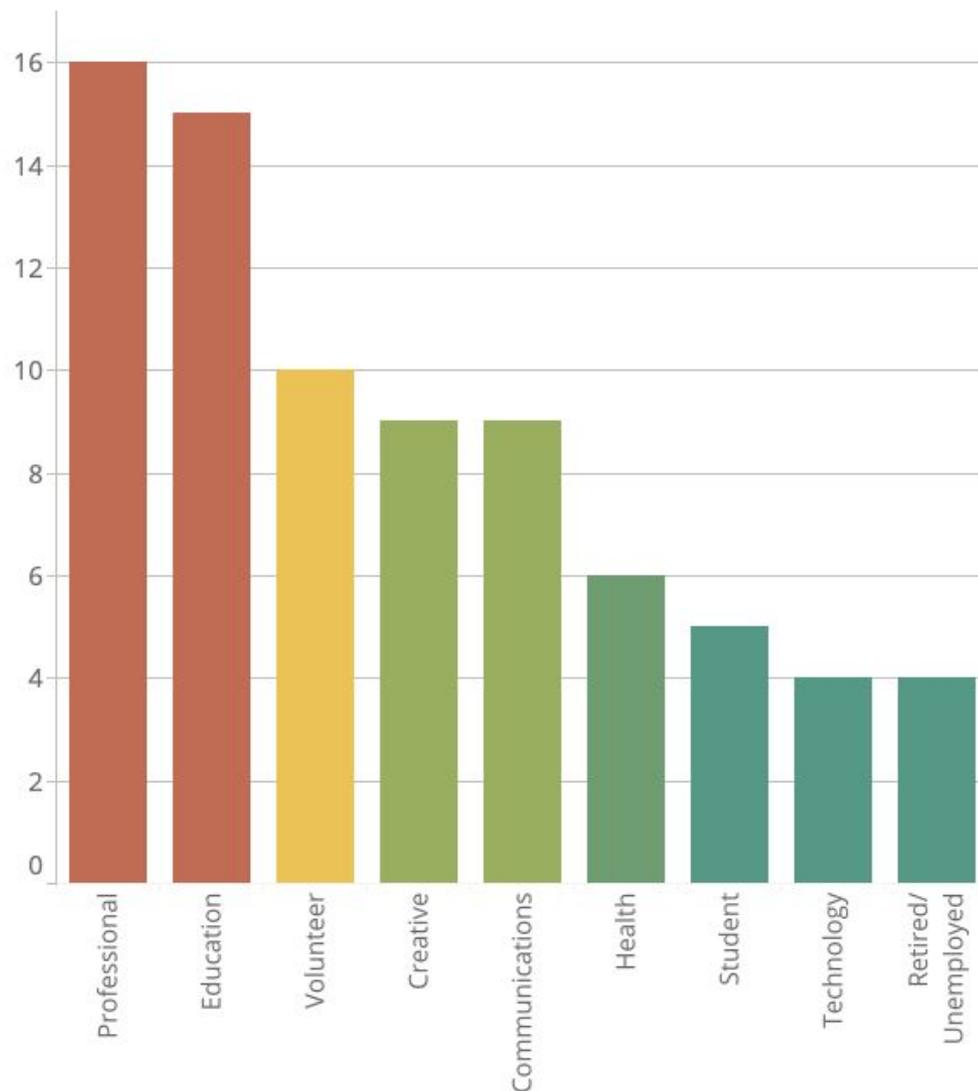
Languages

58% of participants are **fluent in at least one language** other than English.

The chart shows the **number of languages** (in addition to English) in which participants are fluent.

The most common additional languages spoken by participants are:
- **Spanish** (24%)
- **French** (16%)
- **Mandarin Chinese** (6%)
- **German** (4%)

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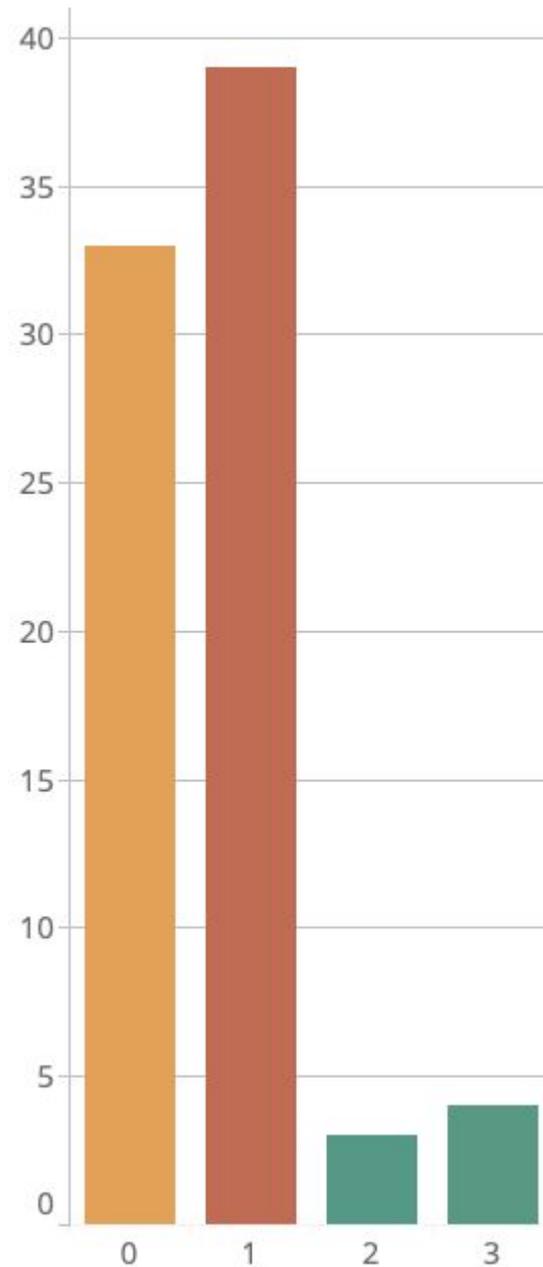
Living & Voting Overseas

Overseas Locations

Countries where participants reported **currently living are shown in red.**

65% of participants had also lived in other countries. These are shown on the map in yellow.

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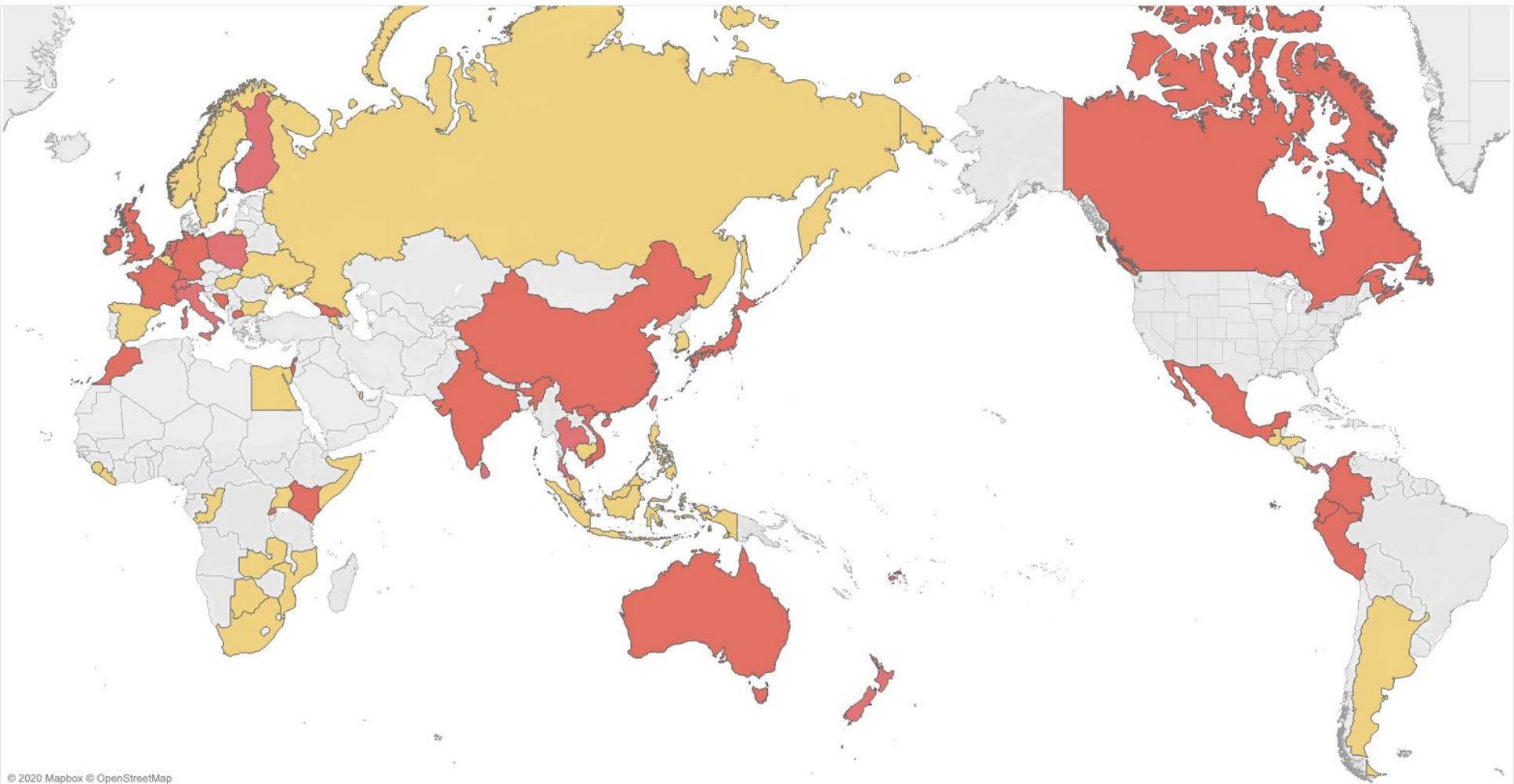
Years of Living Overseas

We asked how long participants have lived overseas with an open-ended entry. These entries were translated to distinct numbers for this graph.

The largest group of participants, **38%** have spent **1-3 years overseas.**

23% have been overseas for **4-10 years.**

28% have been living overseas for **more than 10 years.**

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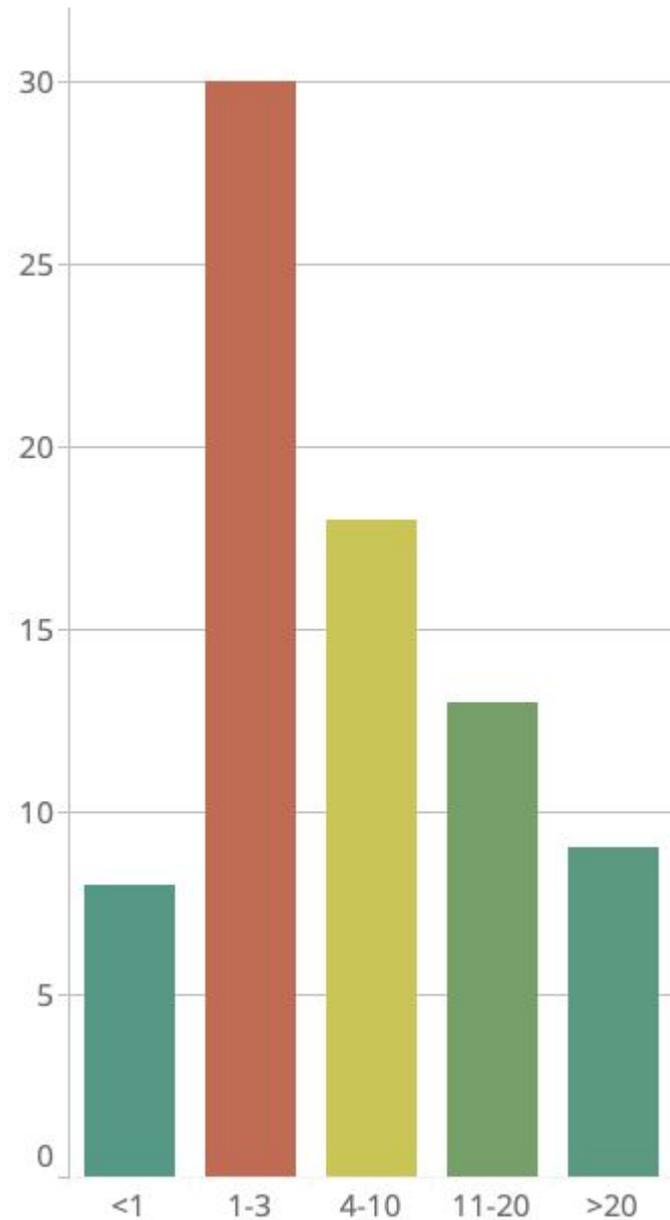
Plans to Continue Living Overseas

We also asked (with open-ended entry) how long participants anticipated continuing living overseas.

16% of participants reported an exact number of years. Of these entries, the **average is 5.5 years.**

35% said they plan to **stay overseas forever**, or for the foreseeable future.

35% said they were unsure, due to COVID, or for other reasons

Here are a representative selection of quotes from participant responses.

"I was evacuated back to the USA because of COVID-19 so don't know if/when I'll be able to go back overseas" *-p181*

"As long as I can find meaningful employment abroad" *-p218*

"Depends on husband's immigration status" *-p250*

"For a long time. I have healthcare abroad ;)" *-p261*

"At least until Trump is out of office. " *-p268*

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Motive for Moving Overseas

We allowed participants to **choose multiple options** from a list of potential motivations for moving overseas.

The chart shows the number of participants who selected each option.

53% were motivated by **Personal Desire** to move overseas.

52% were motivated by their **Work or Employer** to move overseas.

The number motivated by Volunteer Work might be inflated given our high volume of Peace Corps alumni participants.

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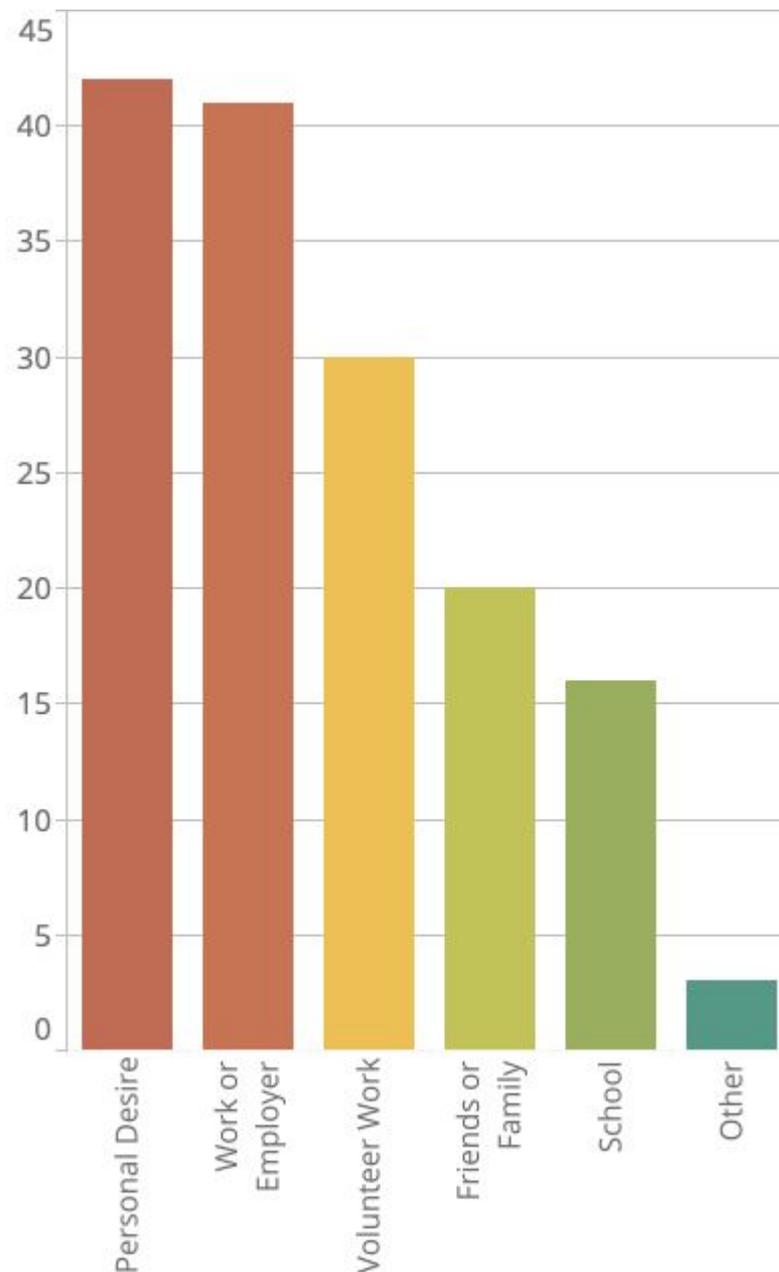
Info on How to Vote

We asked participants if anyone had provided them with information on how to vote overseas. Participants were allowed to select multiple responses.

The largest group, **42% said that nobody helped them**, they had to figure it out on their own.

Several noted that **votefromabroad.org** was a resource they found helpful.

Others found help from official election websites, their employers or the institutions that they are associated with, friends and family, government officials such as local clerks or embassy employees, and/or from social media.

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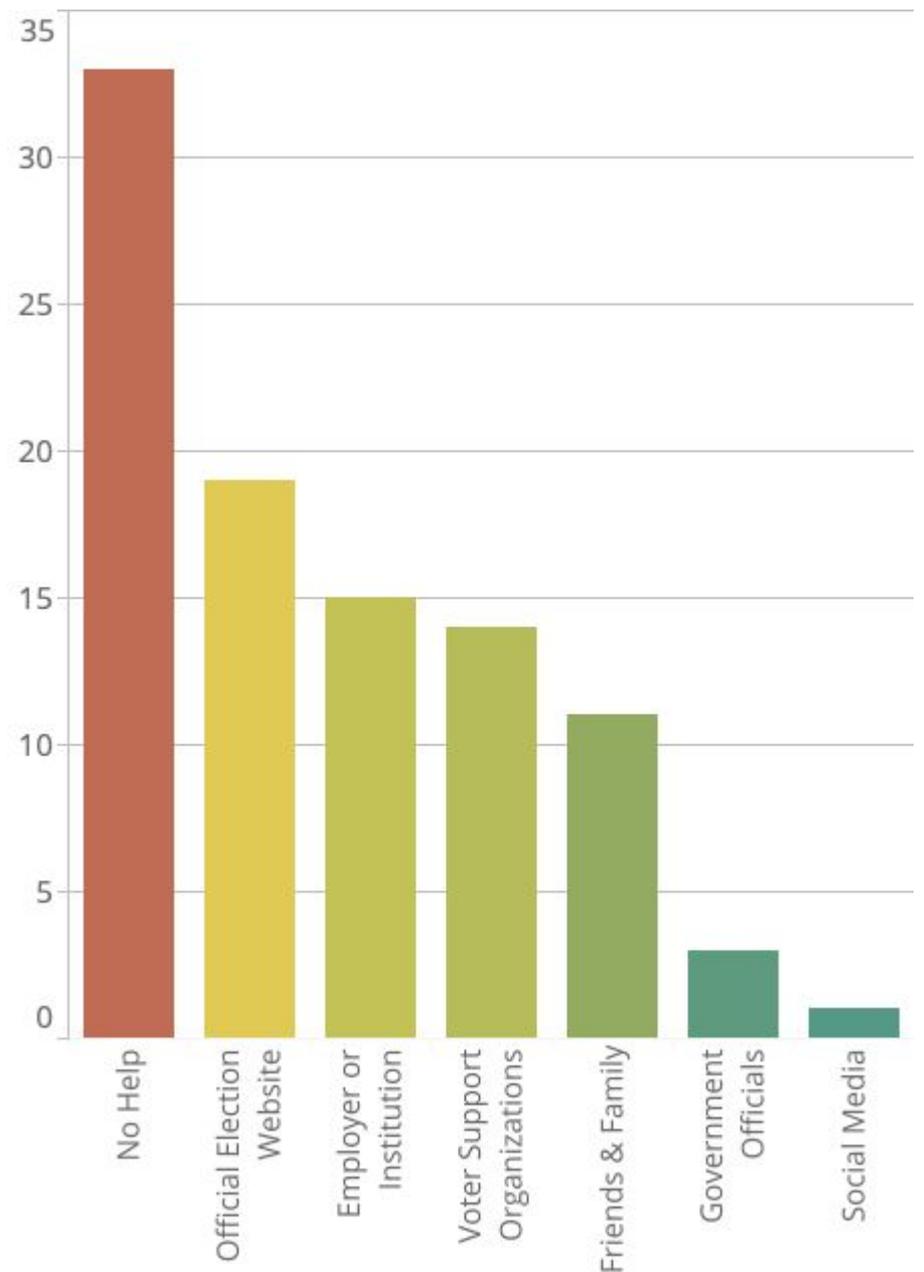
Most Recent Election

We asked participants to select from a list the most recent election they had voted in.

82% said they **were overseas** for this most recent voting experience.

67% have voted **in the last 2 years.**

The chart shows how many participants chose each year as their most recent voting experience.

This tells us that **the majority of our participants are active voters.**

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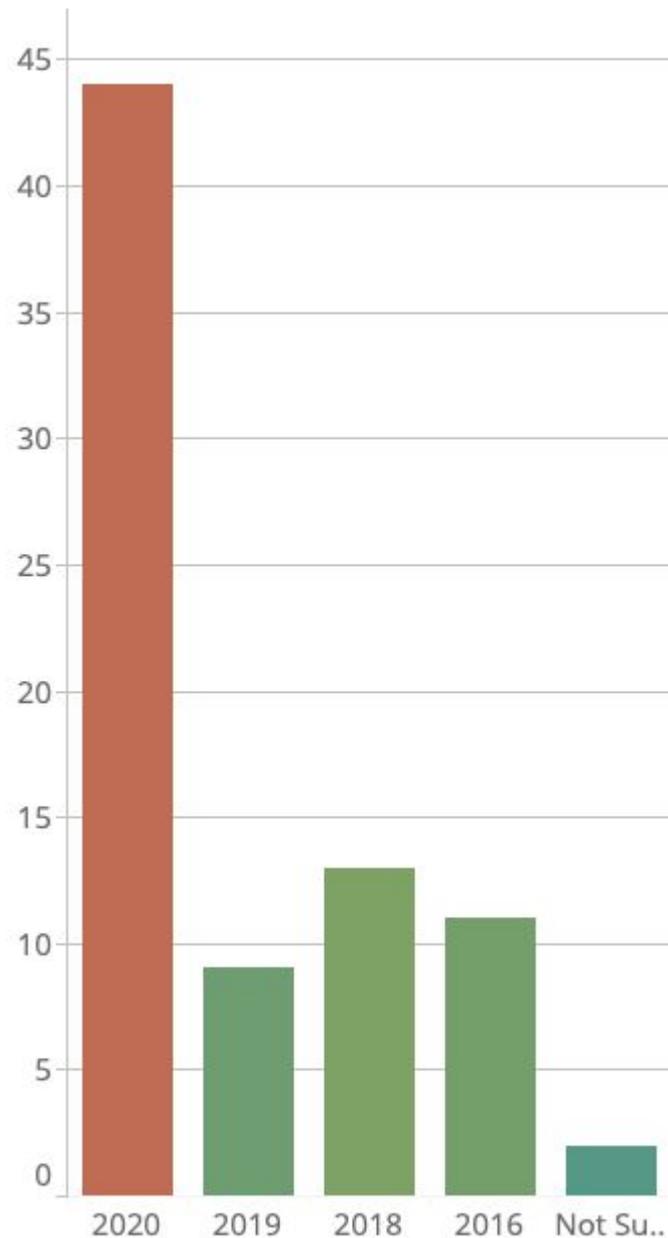
Voting Experience

We asked participants to rate their most recent overseas voting experience on a **scale of 1 (easy) to 7 (difficult).**

The **average rating is 3.57** (with a margin of error ±0.68 and standard deviation of 2.07).

This means that experiences were **widely varied, and the average is right in the middle.** As you can see in the box chart, the ratings are all over and mostly inconsistent.

Many states also only have one or two participants, which also makes those ratings less meaningful overall.

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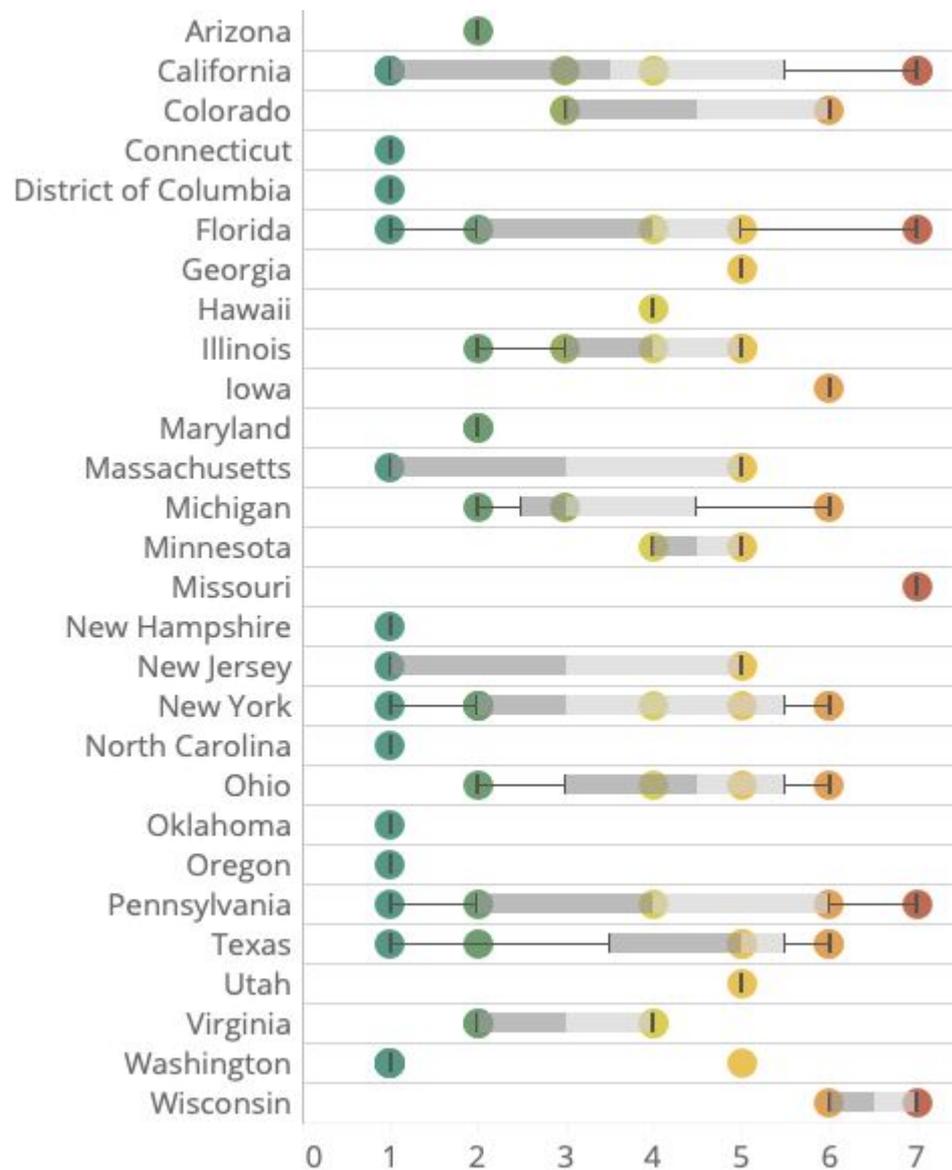
Voting
History & Habits

First Time Voting

In order to get an idea of the length of our participants' voting history we asked what year they first voted

The chart shows how many participants first voted in each decade.

Given that 66% of our participants are under the age of 40, it's no surprise that **60% first voted in the last 20 years.**

32% of our participants had **more than 20 years of voting experience.**

Bonus Fun Fact: Our most experienced participant first voted for John F. Kennedy!

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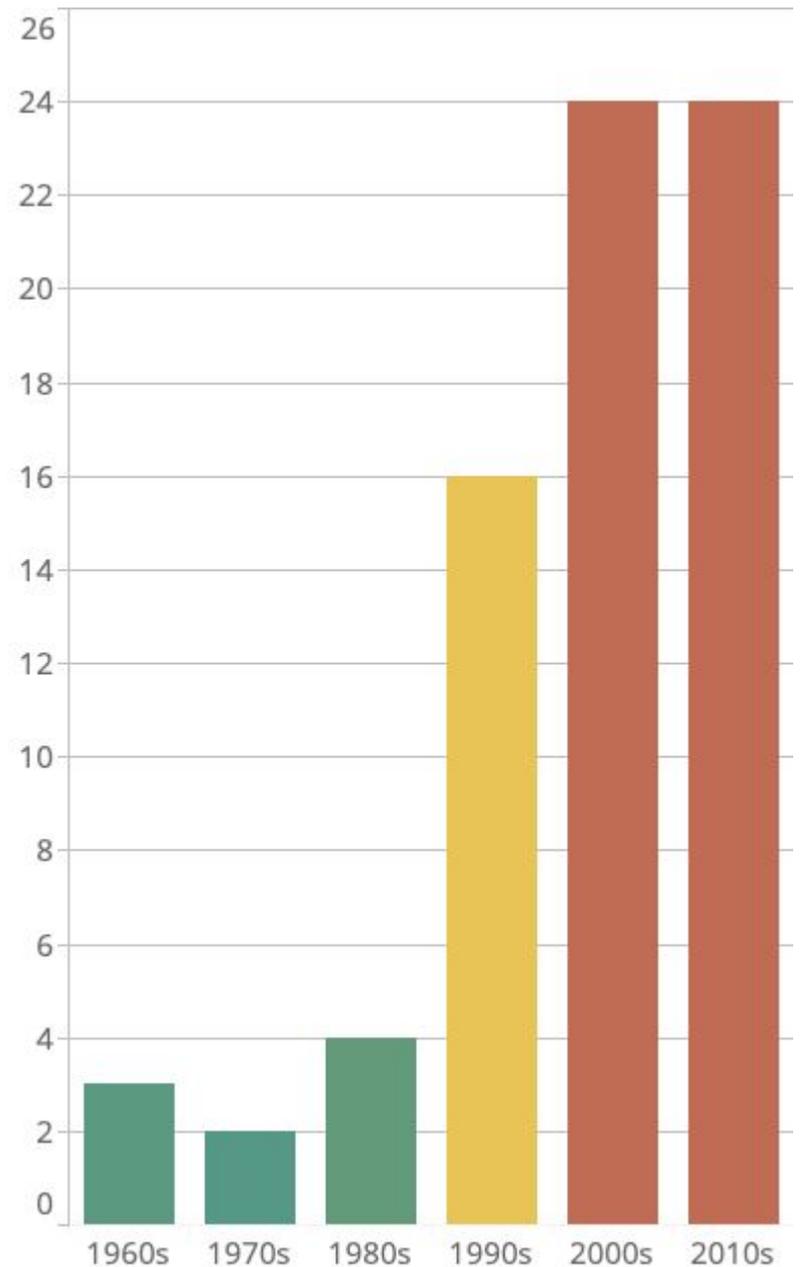
Voting Frequency

We asked participants how often they vote to get a sense of their voting habits.

86% said they vote in **every election** or **most elections.**

This shows that the majority of our participants are very **active and dedicated voters.**

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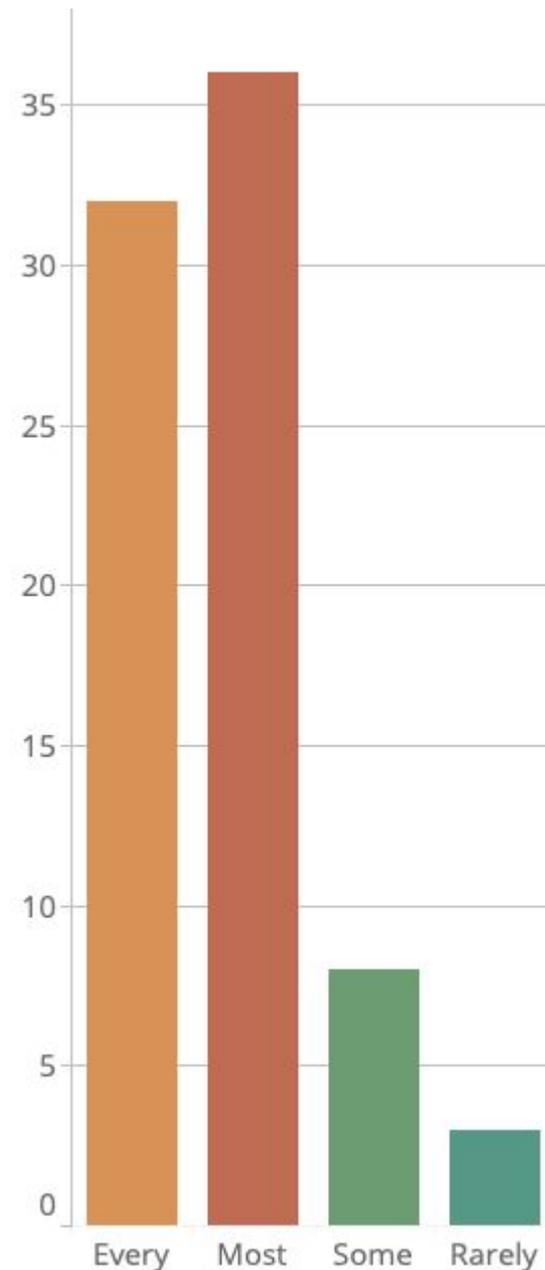
Election Workers

25% of participants said they had **worked on an election** before.

The chart shows the number of participants who served different types of roles.

This shows that many participants are **passionate about voting and elections.**

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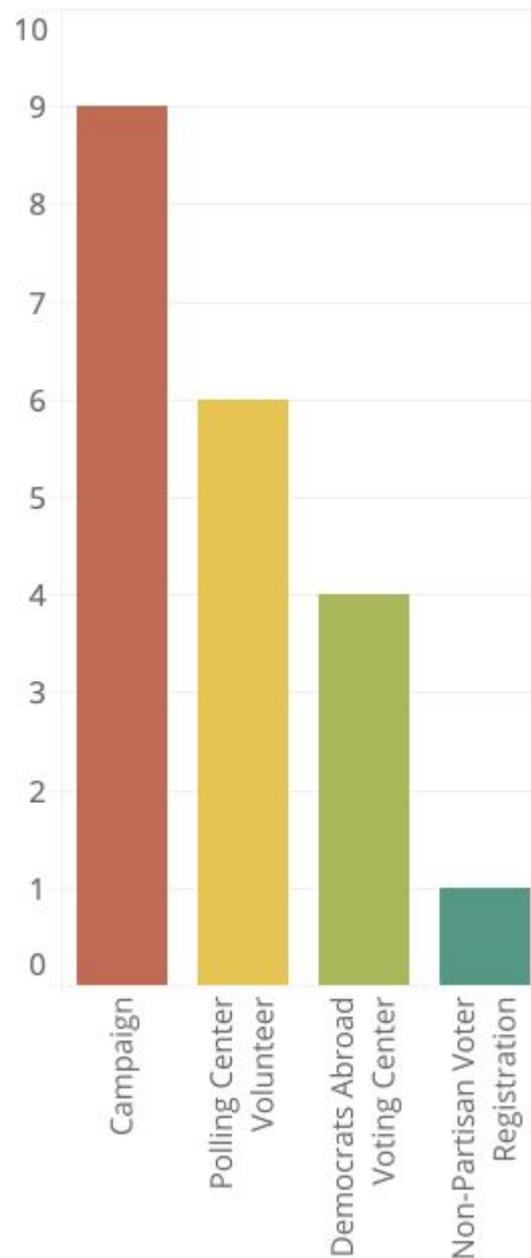
Preferred Voting Method

It's no surprise that **54% chose Vote by Mail** as their preferred voting method.

43% preferred voting in person, either on Election Day or Early Voting.

Some reasons for their preferences are:

"[Vote by Mail is] easy and gives me time to read and consider the candidates on the ballot" *-p163*

"Doing it in person makes me feel more confident I've done it right and the vote has been received." *-p169*

"I like feeling civic duty (and getting a sticker), but I live abroad so [in person is] usually not an option and I vote by mail." *-p218*

"I have lived abroad or out-of-state for so long, [vote by mail] is now the way I am most familiar/comfortable with voting." *-p123*

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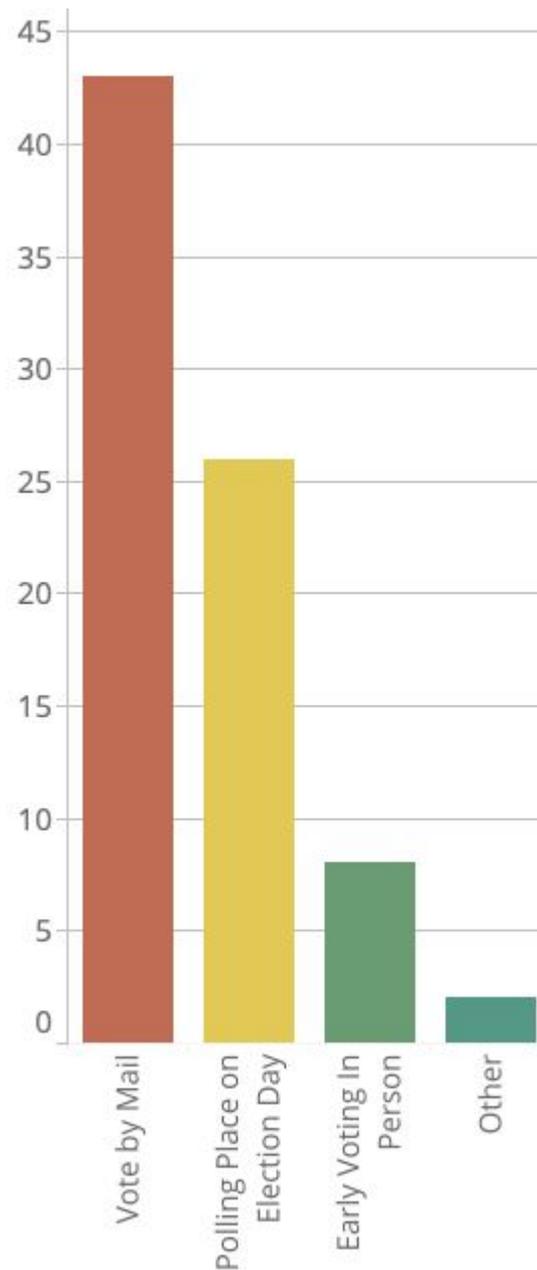
Motivation to Vote

We asked participants what usually motivated them to vote, and allowed selection of multiple responses.

86% vote because its their **Civic Duty.**

72% vote for/against specific **candidates.**

68% vote because it's their **right** as an American citizen.

66% vote for/against a specific **issue.**

13% vote because **someone told them to, or expects them to vote.**

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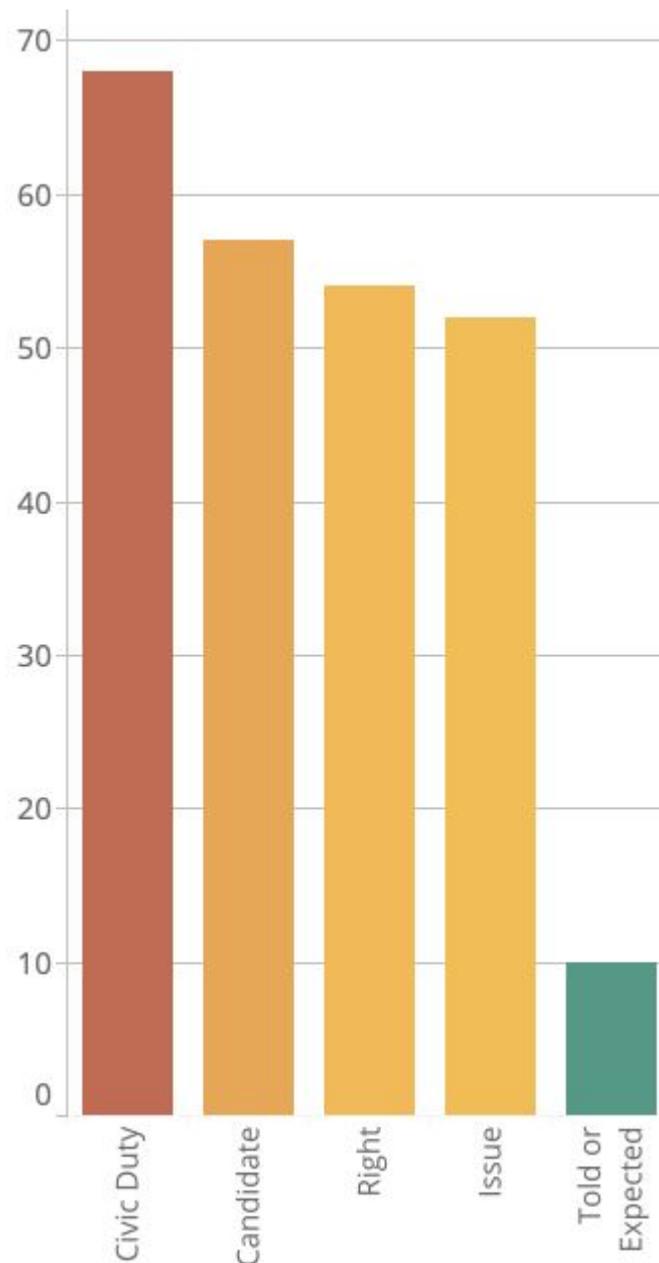
Preparing for Voting

We asked participants how they usually prepare for voting, we allowed them to choose multiple responses.

96% watch, read, or listen to the **news.**

68% hear from **candidates directly**, in debates, campaign materials, etc.

48% pay attention to **Social Media.**

38% read their **Official Voter Guide.**

35% learn from **friends and family.**

29% are involved in **political clubs or groups.**

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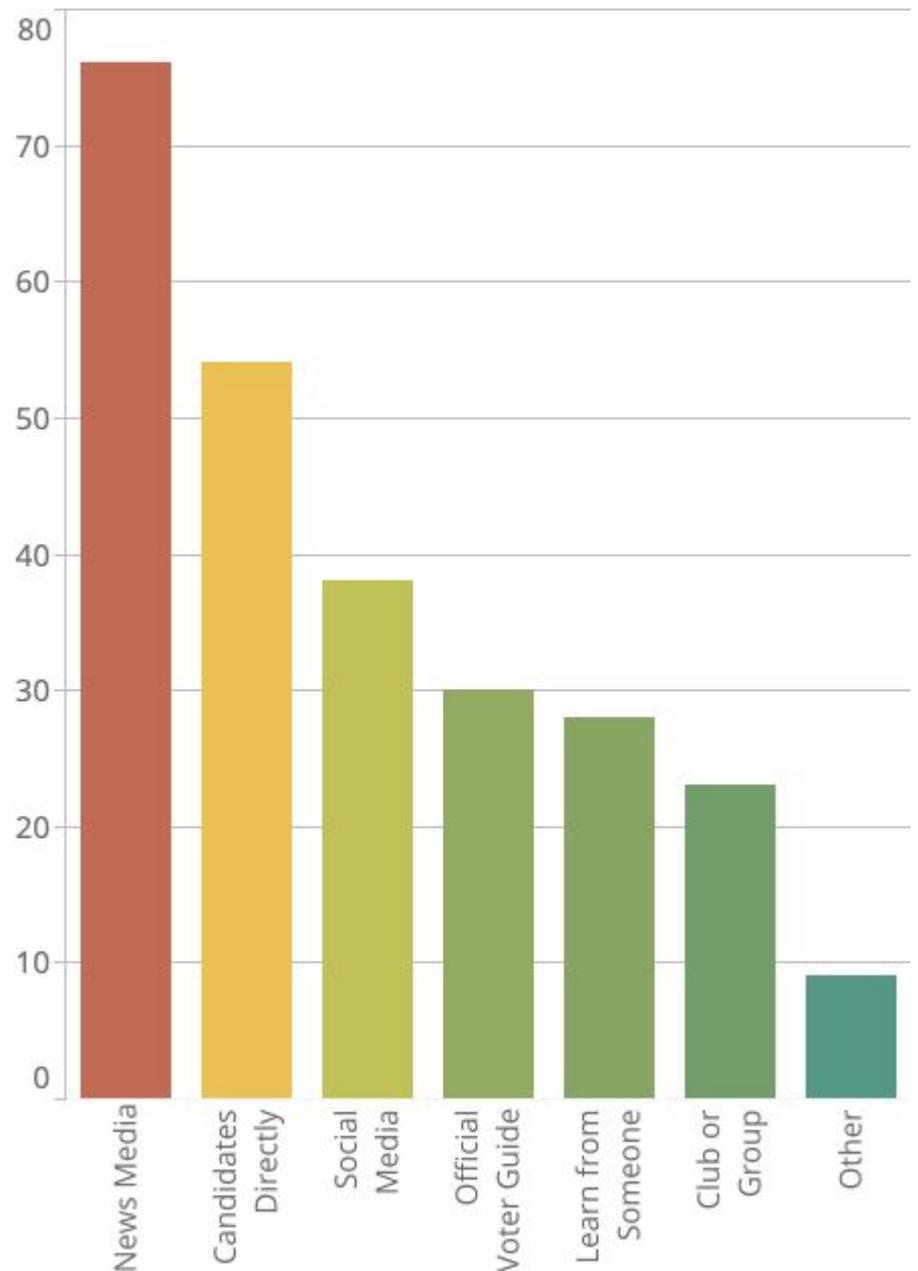
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Appendix

1. User Analysis
2. Question Protocol

Questions copied from _Forms That Work_

Relationship with the user determines if and how well they answer. These are important relationship questions to ask users before they fill in the form (here I've tried to guess at what their answers would be). **Goal: understand how users will perceive the form.**

Question	Overseas Voter	Interview Participant
What are you trying to **achieve** by filling in this form? Is it a step in an overall process, or will you be **finished once you've finished the form**?	I'm willing to help CCD because they want to learn more about me as part of an under researched group. I'm not from one of the special states, (or willing to do an hour interview), so I'll be done when I finish the survey	I'm interested in helping CCD with this research project. Plus the $40-50 incentive (extra cash is always nice). After the form I'll have to schedule my 1 hour interview, which will take some coordinating efforts.
What information are you **expecting** to provide?	Information about my past voting history, my experiences specifically as an overseas voter, and some of my feelings about voting in general.	Personal contact info for scheduling the interview. The survey will ask about my voting history, experiences and feelings.
Would you **worry** if you had to give **personal info** on this form?	They've explained how and why my information will be used and how it will be kept private, so I feel comfortable.	They've explained how my info will be used, including how my contact info will be used to schedule my interview
Do you **expect** to answer questions from **what's in your head**? Or do you **expect** to have to **ask** other people or to **look things up**?	Since they're just asking about my experience it will mostly be from my memory. It's possible I'll have to look something up to jog my memory	Talking about my experience will be from memory Scheduling the interview will require looking at my schedule planner, including some coordination with my work and home schedules.
How long are you expecting to take to fill in this form? **How much time** can you spare?	They've told me it will take about 10-15 minutes to fill out the form. I trust them with that estimate, I have that much time to spare.	They said the survey portion will take 10-15 minutes, then the interview will take an hour. I can commit to that amount of time since expectations are clear.
What else is happening when you fill in this form? For example, do you get **interrupted**? Is it **quiet** or **noisy**?	I probably won't get interrupted in the next 15 minutes. Hopefully it doesn't time out or anything if I do get interrupted, I can just leave the window open and come back to it.	They've asked me to find a quiet space, and try to minimize interruptions. Some things are out of my control, but hopefully they'll be understanding.

Section	Question Text	Conditions (if any)	Question Type	Answer Choices	Required or optional?	User Answer Strategy	Question Purpose / Research Goal
Screener	Do you currently live overseas (outside of the USA)		radio buttons	yes, no	required	know	Disqualify if no
	Are you registered to vote in the USA		radio buttons	yes, no	required	know	Disqualify if no
	Have you ever submitted a ballot for a US Election from overseas		radio buttons	- yes - I'm planning to - no	required	know	Disqualify if no
Voting History	What was the first election you voted in		short answer	open ended	optional	gather from memory	Voting behavior - estimate how long they've been voting, how many elections
	Have you worked on an election before		radio buttons	yes, no	optional	know	Possibly disqualifying from interview? From survey?
	What was your role	if worked on election	short answer	open ended	optional	gather	To understand more, help decide if it is grounds for elimination
	What is generally your favorite or preferred way to vote		radio buttons	- Polling place on election day - Early Voting in person - Vote by Mail - Other ___	optional	create (choices guide)	Voting behavior - preferences, past experience
	Do you have a reason why you prefer this method of voting		short answer	open-ended	optional	gather, create	
Voting Habits	How often do you vote		radio buttons	- never - rarely - sometimes - consistently	optional	know	Voting habits
	What usually motivates you to vote		checkboxes	- voting for/against particular issue - voting for/against particular candidate - because it's my civic duty - because it's my right - someone I care about told me to/expects me to - other ___	optional	create (choices guide)	Voting behavior - motivations
	How do you generally prepare for voting		checkboxes	- read official voter guide issued by election board - paying attention to social media - learn things from someone you know (friend or relative) - hearing from the candidates directly - participating with a political club or group - listening/reading the news - other ___	optional	create (choices guide)	Voting behavior - research
Recent Voting Experience	What's the most recent election you've voted in		radio buttons	- Primary election 2020 - General election 2019 - Primary election 2019 - General election 2018 (Midterms) - Presidential general 2016 - Don't remember - Other ___	optional	know (choices guide)	Voting behavior - recency
	Were you overseas for that election		radio buttons	yes, no	optional	know	
	How did you tetyurn your ballot?	if yes overseas fo short answer	open ended	optional	know	

Section	Question Text	Conditions (if any)	Question Type	Answer Choices	Required or optional?	User Answer Strategy	Question Purpose / Research Goal
	Did anyone provide you with information about how to vote from overseas		checkboxes	- my employer or institution helped me - a friend or relative else helped me - I figured it out mostly by myself - official election website - social media - other (open ended)	optional	gather from memory	Understanding voting process overseas, what it takes to get it going
	What information did ___ provide	if each option - employer, freind, social media, other	short to medium answer	open ended	optional	gather, create	Understand what help they are getting from others
Recent Voting Experience	How difficult was it to vote *Rate on a scale of 1 (easy) to 7 (difficult)*		rating scale	1 (easy breezy) through 7 (nearly impossible)	optional	know, quick gather	Get a general rating on difficulty
	What made your most recent voting experience easy or difficult?		short to medium answer	open ended	optional	gather, create	Illuminate some of the difficult touchpoints
	What state are you registered to vote in		drop down	All US States	optional	know	Determines whether user is asked to be an interview participant
	Describe your connection to the state where you're registered *Write about the address you use, and if you have any family, property, emotional, or other ties to the state.*		medium answer	open ended	optional	create	Location specific effects on voting process
Living Overseas	How long have you lived overseas		short answer	open ended	optional	know	Duration of time overseas
	How long do you think you'll continue to live overseas		short answer	open ended	optional	know	Overseas living plans for the future
	Where do you currently live *City and Country*		short answer	open ended	optional	know	where do they live
	Have you ever lived anywhere else overseas		radio	yes, no	optional	know	Do they have multiple or long overseas living experiences
	Where else have you lived	if yes lived elsewhere overseas	short answer	open ended	optional	know	
	What was your ptimary motivation for moving overseas		checkboxes	- Work - Volunteer work - School - Personal desire - Other	optional	know	Why do people live overseas, what brings them
About You	What kind of work do you do? If you are a student, what is your major		short answer	open ended	optional	know	What brings people overseas, what kind of work or education
	Do you speak more than one language fluently		radio buttons	yes, no	optional	know	Interest
	Which languages	if yes >1 lang	short answer	open ended	optional	know	
	What is your age range		radio buttons	<20, 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, >80	optional	know	Demographics
Would you do anb interview with us?	We've designed some ballots that we need to get feedback on. If you're willing, we'd like to invite you for video or phone interview so we can show them to you. This will take about an hour, and we'll compensate you $50 for your time. Your participation helps us improve the experience of voting while overseas.						

Section	Question Text	Conditions (if any)	Question Type	Answer Choices	Required or optional?	User Answer Strategy	Question Purpose / Research Goal
	Can we interview you?		radio buttons	yes, no	optional	create, take a moment to consider	Want to know if they would be a willing participant
Contact Info	What's your first name		short answer	open ended	optional	know	For contact if we want to follow up
	What's your email address		short answer	email addresss	optional	know	
	How did you find us	no interview	short answer	open ended	optional	know	Tracking back to recruiting efforts?
	Do you know someone else who should fill out this survey	no interview	short answer	email address?	optional	gather (memory), find contact info)	Help us find more participants, grassroots
	Do you have consistent and reliable internet and email access	yes interview	radio buttons	yes, no	required	know, may have to explain	check they aren't in an area with spotty access
	Can you explain a little more to help us figure out how we could connect with you	yes interview, no internet	short to medium answer	open ended	required	create	
	What time zone are you in?		drop-down select?	find list of all time zones	optional	probably know, maybe gather	Aid in interview scheduling process
	Could you give us a general description of what times you would be available with internet connection		short to medium answer (maybe long for some)	open-ended	optional?	know, gather	Aid in interview scheduling process