

**A SURVEY OF GEORGIA VOTERS
IN THE 2008 GENERAL ELECTION**

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Executive Summary

Following the 2008 general election we surveyed voters in three Georgia counties about their voting experiences. Prior to the 2008 election, Georgia expanded opportunities for early in-person voting to 45 days before the election and made this option available to any registrant. Previously, in-person voting had been restricted to the week before the election. In 2008 voters could also request an absentee ballot without having to meet traditional conditions such as being out of the county on election-day. Record numbers of Georgians took advantage of early voting in 2008 with most ballots being cast prior to election-day. The vast bulk of the early voters, almost 90%, chose early in-person voting.

Our survey focuses on voters from Forsyth, Lee, and Clarke Counties where election administrators agreed to provide the data necessary to construct the sample frame. Random samples of voters in these three counties were drawn and stratified by voting method—precinct, early, or absentee—and 2,000 telephone interviews were completed in late November. We queried respondents about the reasons they chose the method of voting they selected and their evaluation of the process. For those who cast ballots prior to election-day, we asked how they learned about the alternative they selected. For election-day voters, we asked about their awareness of alternatives and conditions that might prompt them to vote early. We also collected basic socio-demographic and political information about each respondent.

Although recent in coming to Georgia, non-precinct voting has proven extremely popular, accounting for just over a majority of votes cast in the 2008 election (53%). The percentage of voters choosing to vote early in-person compared to those voting at precincts was essentially equivalent. The results of our survey indicated that voters overwhelmingly prefer their chosen method of voting and have indicated that they are very likely to continue voting in the same manner in future elections. Despite the fact that most voters were aware of non-precinct options many still preferred to vote at their precinct on election-day. These findings would seem to indicate that there may be very little future growth in the non-precinct (especially early) voting area. Respondents also indicated very high levels of satisfaction and confidence across all three voting methods. In terms of socio-demographic relationships we found that older voters and women were more likely to choose a non-precinct voting option (absentee or early) over precinct voting and that blacks were more likely to vote early compared to whites. There were no discernible differences across income and education categories and voting method.

In terms of policy implications the state should look to make voting overall more convenient, efficient, and cost effective. As more than a majority of Georgians are now casting ballots prior to the date of the election policy should be reformulated that recognizes this fact. For example, the number and location of early voting sites, especially in urban counties should be re-evaluated, along with days and hours of operation. On the other side of the fence the number of precincts on election-day should be reduced in many counties to compensate for the large percentage of voters who have already voted during the early voting period. As such, efficient use of personnel, equipment, and other physical assets should become the focal point in future election administration in Georgia.

Background Information on Non-Precinct Voting in Georgia

In recent years, Georgia has taken steps to permit voters to participate prior to election-day. Traditionally, absentee voting (excuse required) was the only exception to balloting on election-day allowed in Georgia. The first modification which took effect in 2004 allowed voters to cast ballots at the office of the county supervisor of elections during the week before a regularly scheduled election.

Prior to the 2008 election cycle, the General Assembly passed legislation that allowed early voting to begin 45-days before an election. In most counties early voting could take place only at the office of the registrar (some urban counties have multiple registrar's offices). During the last week before the election, advanced voting remained an option and some counties opened additional sites. Advanced voting sites, while not confined to county registrar's offices are confined to government buildings by statute. While the law treats early and advanced voting as separate activities, it is unlikely that most voters recognize the difference. Traditional absentee voting has remained in place even with the addition of these alternative ways of registering preferences prior to election-day.¹ Absentee balloting by mail begins at the start of the early voting period forty-five days prior to the date of the election. Figure 1 presents a graphical display of the manner in which Georgia's 2008 general election was configured.

[Figure 1 goes here]

The opportunities to cast ballots before election-day proved extremely popular. Non-precinct voting options for the 2008 general election begin on September 23rd. The final audit by Georgia's Secretary of State shows 75.7% of the state's 5.2 million registrants participated in the election. Of the 3.9 million who cast ballots, 2,084,179 did so prior to election-day. Thus, 53% of the votes cast by Georgians took place prior to November 4th, while 47% of the votes were cast at precincts on election-day.

Of those who did vote prior to election-day, 300,016 utilized mail absentee ballots. Absentee voters accounted for 7.6% of the total ballots cast and 14.4% of the votes expressed before November 4th. Georgia's Republican Party, as it had done in previous elections, encouraged its supporters to vote early. Likely Republican supporters received mailings that included a form that could be filed out and signed to request an absentee mail ballot.

The Secretary of State's office carefully monitored early voting and released statistical profiles of participants on a daily basis. These data indicate that African Americans were heavy users of early in-person voting. Figure 2 reports the cumulative share of votes tallied cast by blacks on a daily basis.² Early in the 45-day period, blacks had cast almost 40% of the ballots. By the time that early voting ended, the share of the ballots coming from African Americans came in just below 35%. To put this figure in perspective,

¹In 2006 the Georgia General Assembly passed legislation to make absentee voting by mail no-excuse.

²Data in Figures 2 and 3 are for *all* ballots cast prior to election-day as racial breakouts are not available by voting method prior to November 4th.

African Americans composed 30.01% of those eligible to vote in the general election, which approximates the share of African-American adults of voting age in Georgia.

[Figure 2 goes here]

Figure 3 shows the share of African-American voters who chose to vote before election-day just exceeded the 60% mark. Of whites who voted in the 2008 general election, barely half cast ballots prior to November 4th. Throughout the early voting period, a larger share of blacks, compared to whites, availed themselves of the opportunity to vote prior to the date of the general election.

[Figure 3 goes here]

Survey of Georgia Voters

Survey Methodology

The research undertaken seeks to examine the reasons why voters in Georgia choose one method of voting over another in the 2008 general election. To determine why voters opted to vote absentee by mail, vote in-person before election-day, or wait until November 4th and vote at their precinct we surveyed Georgia voters following the 2008 general election.

Following the election, we collected information on voters by voting method from election officials in three counties: Clarke, Forsyth, and Lee. From this data we could establish the population of voters by voting method for these three counties. These breakdowns are recorded in Appendix B and displayed graphically in Figure A (Appendix). In addition, cross-referencing with the voter registration database allowed us to determine the age, gender, and race/ethnicity for the population of voters in these counties.³ We randomly surveyed a total of 2,000 voters stratifying on voting method and county of residence. The telephone survey began on November 21st and ended on November 29th.⁴ The final sample distribution by county and voting method can also be viewed in Appendix B. It was necessary to oversample absentee mail voters in order to obtain a representative stand-alone sample for this group. With full knowledge of the population parameters however, we were able to easily construct a set of weights to adjust our sample to be back in line with the full population of voters. More specifically, we created a set of post-stratification weights to adjust the survey data by county of residence and race/ethnicity where each voter group (absentee, early, and precinct) is analyzed separately. In addition, a second post-stratification weight corrects for voter type (precinct, early, and absentee), county of residence, and race/ethnicity where the entire sample is pooled for analysis.

Depending on the type of voting method they chose, voters asked to participate in the survey were administered slightly different survey instruments. A copy of all three survey instruments can be found in Appendix A at the end of the document. More specifically, the

³Georgia is one of a handful of states that records information on the race and ethnicity of registrants.

⁴Using the American Association of for Public Opinion Research RR1 formula, the survey response rate was 12.1%.

survey asked respondents about the importance of a series of factors that might have influenced their decision as to the type of voting method they chose. Following this series of questions, respondents indicated which of the various factors was the most important for their decision. Thus, at one stage multiple items could have received evaluations as being *very important* or *somewhat important* when deciding how to vote, but only one consideration was later identified as being the most important. Other information was also collected concerning previous voting behaviour and socio-demographic and political information.

Counties Surveyed

We secured the assistance of election officials in three counties which was instrumental in being able to construct the sampling frame for our survey in a timely manner. A profile of the three counties surveyed—Clarke, Forsyth, and Lee—is presented below.

Clarke and Forsyth counties are located in north Georgia where approximately two-thirds of Georgia's population lives. Clarke is the home of the University of Georgia, an institution with approximately 34,000 students. The county's population was estimated to be just over 104,000 in 2005.⁵ The 2000 census showed Clarke's population to be 27.4% black, which is very close to the percentage of blacks state-wide. Clarke's population also closely matches the state's population in the share of residents native to Georgia. The 2000 Census figure for Clarke at 57.3% hovers just below the state figure of 57.8%. In addition, the poverty rate for Clarke is fairly high with 29% of residents estimated to be living below the poverty level according to the 2006-2008 American Community Survey.

Forsyth County is a growing, affluent outer-ring suburb (exurb) of Atlanta. From 2000 to 2005, its population shot up by more than 40% to 140,000. For many years Forsyth was an all-white county and in 2000 its black population stood at less than one percent. As a result of its rapid growth and the appeal of its golfing communities, just under half of Forsyth's 2000 population were native Georgians. Forsyth is also fairly affluent with the 2000 Census putting the median family income level at \$74,003 compared to only \$49,280 for the state as a whole.

Lee County is the primary suburban bedroom county for Albany in southwest Georgia. During the first five years of the new millennium its population grew by a quarter to 31,000. In 1930, Lee contained the highest concentration of blacks in the state with more than three-fourths of its population being African American. Decades of black out-migration coupled with white spill over from Dougherty County have resulted in Lee's 2000 population being only one-sixth black. According to the latest decennial census almost 70% of Lee's population was born in Georgia.

⁵All socio-demographic data cited in this section are derived from U.S. Census statistics.

SURVEY RESULTS

Absentee Voters

Of almost 2.1 million votes cast state-wide before election-day, only 14.4% came from individuals casting traditional mail absentee ballots. Because of the constraints of the size of the electorates in the three counties and the relatively few residents casting absentee ballots, every voter who had requested a ballot be sent to a mailing address within their county of residence was included in the sample frame for our survey. Thus, we excluded military personnel with APO addresses as well as those stationed at sites that necessitated an address outside the county. This decision also excluded students attending schools outside the county in which they were registered if the absentee ballot went to their college address. In order to obtain a representative sample of absentee voters we oversampled from this group. In our sample of 2,000 voters, 17.6% of respondents voted absentee by mail.

Under Georgia law, voters over the age of 75 can request that they be automatically sent an absentee ballot for all elections within a single calendar year. This request must be renewed annually. Other voters must make a separate request prior to each election in order to receive an absentee ballot. To be tabulated, an absentee ballot must be received by the elections office no later than the close of election-day. Since state law facilitates absentee voting by the elderly, it is not surprising that senior citizens dominated the ranks of those casting absentee ballots by mail. As reported in Table 1a, almost two in five (38.7%) of the absentee voters in our sample were 70 years of age or older, with another 18.2% falling into the 60–69 age range. Only 3.5% of the absentee voters were younger than 30, with another 6.6% in the 30-39 age range. Among the oldest group of voters, three in eight cast absentee ballots by mail. For other age groups approximately one in eight voted absentee except for those in their 30's, where fewer than one-twelfth chose this voting method [Age comparisons for early and precinct voters can be found in Tables 1b and 1c respectively].

[Table 1a goes here]

Most voters who participated through the absentee route (59.8%) had availed themselves of this option in the past. The absentee voters continued to find this an attractive option and 92.6 % of them said they were likely to vote absentee in the future, with three-quarters indicating that they were very likely to use this option again.

The political parties, and especially the GOP, have encouraged their supporters to cast absentee ballots by mail. About a quarter (25.2%) of the absentee voters reported receiving an absentee ballot application in the mail from a party. Of those encouraged to vote absentee by a party, 80.4% had contact from the Republican Party while 35.1% reported contact from the Democratic Party.⁶

⁶These figures sum to more than 100% since 15.6% of the respondents said that both parties had encouraged them to vote absentee.

Almost 70% of the absentee voters recalled hearing or seeing an advertisement encouraging absentee or early voting. The most frequently reported medium for this message was television with 54% of absentee voters reporting having seen an advertisement for early voting ($N=190$).⁷ As reported in Table 2, following television in frequency came the local newspaper at 40% ($N=141$) and radio at 36% ($N=125$). Receipt of mail announcing the availability of options for voting ranked fourth in percentage terms at 24% ($N=84$). Seeing a sign ranked fifth at 22% ($N=78$), while 14% of absentee voters saw an announcement on a government website.

[Table 2 goes here]

Television, not surprisingly was the most widely cited medium for absentee voters in every age category. Most of the other sources did not strongly correlate with age, with one exception. As might be expected, mention of a government website decreased with the age of the voter. While few respondents in any age category relied on this medium, two-thirds of the under 30 voters and half of those 30-39 who responded mentioned this source.

We asked mail absentee voters why they chose not to cast their ballots on election-day. Respondents were offered nine explanations and asked how important each was in their decision to vote absentee by mail. As reported in Table 3, the most often cited reason was convenience as identified by 83% of the sample. This reasoning appealed to almost all of the voters younger than 40, while those over 70 cited this factor less often, although 72.6% saw it as *very* or *somewhat important* in their decision.

[Table 3 goes here]

Almost as many absentee voters, 77%, indicated that their eagerness to cast their votes constituted a *very* to *somewhat important* consideration. This factor increased with age as 88.5% of the oldest voters and 80.9% of those 60-69 cited this factor as important in their decision. Approximately 60% of voters younger than 50 cited eagerness to vote as *very* or *somewhat important*.

The third most cited reason, a desire to avoid anticipated long waits on election-day, was mentioned by 60% of absentee voters. There was no apparent correlation between this factor and the age of the voter. Almost half the respondents (45.6%) said that physical problems played an important role in their decision to vote absentee. Of the 154 individuals who said physical disabilities deterred them from voting in person, 86 (56%) were 70 or older. This number constituted more than two-thirds of all of those in the oldest cohort. Physical concerns registered with almost half (45.3%) of those 60 to 69 years old. For younger cohorts, physical limitations influenced just over a quarter of the respondents.

Low turnout in the US is often attributed to the scheduling of elections on Tuesdays which may conflict with some voters' job responsibilities. Fewer than half the respondents (45%) mention conflict with work as an important factor. As might have been anticipated, most

⁷Only approximately two-thirds of the absentee voters responded to this portion of the survey.

older voters, some of whom have left the work force, did not see that as important while at least 60% of each cohort younger than 60 judged it important.

What used to be the only legal basis for voting absentee, being out of the county on election-day, was important to the behaviour of 34% of respondents. Approximately 40% of those under 50 reported absence from the county as important compared with just over a quarter of those who had celebrated their 60th birthday.

Georgia has restricted the kinds of documentation that voters can present to identify themselves to election officials. The state limited the acceptable materials to one of six kinds of government issued photo IDs, such as a driver's license, passport, military identification card, or student ID card from a state-supported institution of higher education. An analysis of records concerning which voters had a driver's license or identification card issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles in lieu of a driver's license, found evidence that the elderly less often have one of these types of identification.⁸ Because of a series of court challenges to this requirement, the 2008 election cycle marked the first full implementation of this law. Individuals who vote absentee can avoid the requirement altogether however. Concern about having an acceptable photo ID proved important for only 20% of those voting absentee (see Table 3). However, in line with our earlier research, those concerned about having proper identification were largely restricted to the 70-and-over age category, more than a third of whom saw this as important. Among younger voters, more than 80% viewed this factor as *not at all important*. Of the 67 respondents worried about the new identification requirement, 44 (66%) were over 70 years old.

The legal challenges to Georgia's stiffer photo ID requirement alleged that minorities, particularly African Americans would suffer more than whites. A federal judge enjoined the initial version of the statute on the grounds that because a person who lacked an acceptable photo ID would have to pay a fee to obtain one the requirement constituted a modern form of the outlawed poll tax. The same law firm that brought the initial suit has continued to challenge the requirement and asserts that a larger share of blacks than whites lack an acceptable photo ID.⁹ In our sample of absentee voters, a third of the African Americans (30%) compared with about a fifth of white voters (19%) cited lack of a photo ID as an important reason for voting absentee.¹⁰

Only 16% (54 voters) voted absentee because of worries that they might forget to do so on election-day with just over half of these voters being 70 years of age or older.

⁸See Hood, M.V., III and Charles S. Bullock, III. 2008. "Worth a Thousand Words? An Analysis of Georgia's Voter Identification Statute." *American Politics Research* 36:555-579.

⁹Two of eleven absentee voters whose race was unknown identified lack of a photo ID as an important consideration.

¹⁰Ten out of thirty black respondents in the absentee voting sample, or 30%, indicated that not having proper photo ID was *very important* or *somewhat important* in their decision to vote absentee. The number of black voters within the sample of absentee voters is fairly small, so inferences drawn from this subgroup should be made with caution.

As the discussion above indicates, many voters identified more than one factor as important in motivating them to vote absentee by mail. When asked which item had the greatest influence, convenience ranked first, cited by 27.4% of the respondents. Physical disabilities came second being mentioned by 22.6% of those voting absentee. A sixth of our sample cited avoiding long lines on election-day, one in seven indicated that they would be out of the county on election-day, and one in eight voted absentee because of work responsibilities. Only two individuals, one who was 77 and the other 90, identified concern about the photo ID as being their single greatest concern (neither of these voters was black).

Convenience and possible conflict with work were disproportionately the strongest motivating factors for younger voters. The elderly dominated those who pointed to physical problems as the chief factor in their decisions to vote absentee by mail. Being out of the county was disproportionately cited by voters 30 to 60 years of age. Avoiding a long wait on election-day was the third most frequent reason cited, but this factor did not correlate with age.

Because Republicans have encouraged their supporters to cast absentee ballots in each of the last several general elections, we hypothesized that absentee voters in the survey might be disproportionately McCain supporters. This proved not to be the case. While 62.2 % of the absentee voters picked the GOP presidential candidate, this figure is almost identical with McCain's 61.9% support in the full sample. We should also note that there was more than minimal variation in the incidence of absentee voting across the 7-point party self-identification scale.

Early Voting

As noted earlier, Georgia voters had two ways in which to cast ballots in-person prior to election-day. Beginning 45 days prior to November 4th they could participate in what was designated as *advanced voting*, an option initiated in 2008. During the week prior to the election voters could participate in what was termed *early voting* first instituted in 2004. For purposes of the analysis we combine these two approaches and will refer to both as early voting. It is unlikely that most voters differentiated between the two and, other than some jurisdictions opening additional sites for the final week, there were no differences in the way in which the process operated

A plurality of Georgians and a majority of the participants in our sample partook of early voting. State-wide 45.3% voted early compared with 57.1% of the respondents in our survey. Given the recent expanded opportunities to register preferences prior to election-day, it was not surprising that most (59.5%) of the early voters in the sample reported having voted early prior to the 2008 general election.

Simply stated, early voters in our sample enjoyed the process. All but 2.3% of the early voters said they would likely avail themselves of this option in the future, with 82.7% saying they were very likely to vote early again. One factor in the overwhelmingly positive experience reported was the speed with which the activity was completed. A solid

majority, 62%, reported voting in less than 15 minutes as shown and 80% voted in less than half an hour (See Table 4a). At the upper limit, three respondents reported waiting more than four hours to complete the process, nonetheless each of these individuals reported being very likely to vote early in the future. We can only speculate, but in the future they may choose to go vote earlier in the time window when press reports indicate shorter lines. Overall, 20.1% of early voters in the sample waited 30 minutes or more and 6.3% waited an hour or more.

[Table 4a goes here]

While the vast bulk of the voters surveyed had short waits, in some large urban counties in metro Atlanta, voters waited for hours to cast ballots. The local nightly news on Atlanta television regularly showed long lines of early voters and stories on this topic were also highlighted in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*.¹¹ If voters in these counties had been included in our survey sample we would likely have a distribution quite different from that shown in Table 4a.

When those respondents who reported they were *very likely* and *somewhat likely* to vote early in the future are combined, no relationship exists between length of time to vote and positive intentions for the future. However, as the wait times to vote increased, the percentage saying they were highly likely to vote early declined, while the share only somewhat likely to vote early rose. Of those voting within 15 minutes, 86.6% were very likely to vote early again, compared with 69.2% of those who waited one to two hours. Of those waiting more than an hour, 27.2% were somewhat likely to vote early versus 11.3% of those who cast a ballot in less than 15 minutes.¹²

Election officials in a number of counties feared that the 2008 election would generate unprecedented turnout. These officials wanted to reduce election-day turnout since they feared long waits if absentee and early voting rates remained what they had been in previous years. Election officials indicated that processing absentee voting requires a substantial time commitment for their offices, so they tend to prefer that ballots cast before election-day come via early voting. Along these lines election officials indicated that they undertook a variety of efforts to encourage this practice. It appears that they succeeded since three-fourths of the respondents who voted early indicated they had seen or heard an advertisement promoting this option. Comparing this figure to all voters in our sample, regardless of method, 72% report that that they had been exposed to advertising for non-precinct voting. This indicates that high numbers of precinct voters and mail absentee voters were also aware of this option.

Results reported in Table 5 show television to be the most prevalent source of information about non-precinct voting mentioned by the early voters in our sample (82.9%). Most also had heard about these options as a result of newspaper stories (66.5%) and radio reports (63.4%). Less frequently mentioned were seeing signs (48.2%) and receipt of a postcard or

¹¹For example see: Pickel, Mary Lou. 2008, October 29. "Countdown 2008: Voter Lines Faster." *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (1A).

¹²Only 16 respondents took more than two hours to vote.

letter from the elections office (47.5%). The least common source of information for voters involved government websites which only 19.4% of the sample mentioned.

[Table 5 goes here]

The likelihood of getting information off the web decreased with age as 41.7% of under-30 voters compared with 13.7% of those over 60 citing the internet as a source of information about early voting. Although not as clearly related, getting information from the radio also decreased with age. More than 70% of those under 50 mentioned this source in contrast with 42.9% of those older than 70. Other advertising mediums showed little correlation with the age of the voter.

Almost all of the early voters (89.4%) turned out before election-day because they found this more convenient than waiting until November 4th. Three-fourth of the voters pointed to convenience as being *very important* while another 12.4% considered it an *important* factor. An aspect of convenience, avoiding anticipated long waits on election-day, appealed to four-fifths (81.5%) of these voters with almost two-thirds saying this was *very important*. As Table 6 reports, a similar share of these voters reported going to the polls early because they were so eager to express their preferences.

[Table 6 goes here]

Fewer than half the early voters identified the other possible factors as being very or somewhat important. Among these secondary factors, adherence to the urban myth that absentee ballots get counted *only* if needed to resolve an election was most frequently cited with 45.2% of the respondents ascribing some importance to this consideration. A slightly smaller share of the electorate (41.8%) voted early as a way to resolve conflicts with their work schedule. Still less relevant for early voters was fear that they might forget to go to the polls on election-day cited as important by 16.4% of the respondents. Absence from the county on election-day was the least significant consideration among the seven possibilities, being mentioned by only 27.4% of the respondents.

Convenience was especially relevant for the youngest voters, with 97.2% of those under 30 viewing this factor as important. Those early voters over 70 mentioned this as their primary motivation least often, although even for this age group the figure stood at 82.2%. Work conflict was also related to age, but on this item 42% to 50% of the voters in age cohorts under 60 cited this factor, while the figure drops to less than a third for those early voters sixty and over. The fear that absentee ballots get counted only in very close contests resonated most strongly with those 70 years of age and older, 57.7% of whom mentioned this as important. The youngest voters were least concerned about this factor (21.2%), while for other age cohorts the figure ranged from 38.5% to 49.7%.

The oldest voters most often identified being out of the county on election-day and fear of forgetting to go to the polls on election-day as important factors for casting their ballots on early. More than a quarter of those over 70 identified forgetting about the election as important compared with no more than 19% of any other age cohort. More than a third of

the oldest voters (37.3%) cast early votes fearing that they might be out of the county on November 4th, a figure ten percentage points higher compared to any other age cohort.

Long waits registered most significantly among voters aged 30 to 69. More than three-quarters of the voters in this age range saw avoiding long waits as important. In contrast, only half of the voters under 30 and 56% of those over 70 cited avoiding waits as being *very important*.

Obviously many voters identified multiple factors that had some importance in their decision to vote early. When asked to identify the most important factor, two items emerged as dominant. Just over a third of the respondents pointed to convenience (34.8%) as the foremost consideration, while another third (35.5%) emphasized avoiding waits on election-day. Eagerness to perform their civic duty proved to be the foremost consideration for a seventh of the respondents. Conflicts with work assignments and being out of the county ranked as a primary consideration for only 6 to 8% of respondents. Fewer than one percent of the early voters acted chiefly for fear that they might forget to vote on election day or because they believed an absentee ballot might go uncounted.

Party affiliation was associated with voters' choice concerning the most important reason cited for voting early in an expected way. As commentators noted repeatedly throughout the election season, Democrats displayed much greater enthusiasm for their party's presidential nominee than did Republicans. Democratic enthusiasm became manifest when more than a fifth of Democratic identifiers pointed to eagerness as the most significant explanation for voting early.¹³ The incidence of eagerness to vote as the top factor was twice as great among Democrats as for Republicans or independents. As Democrats disproportionately pointed to eagerness to vote as the most important factor in their decision to vote early, this group was less likely to cite convenience considerations compared to others in the sample. A quarter of the Democrats compared with almost half (47.2%) of independents and more than a third (36.4%) of Republicans considered convenience the most important item.¹⁴

Avoiding long wait times seemed to be more of a Democratic than a Republican characteristic. Just over 40% of the Democrats compared with 34.7% of Republicans reported voting early primarily to avoid long waits on election-day.

Given the excitement generated by presidential candidate Obama it is not surprising that eagerness to vote was more often cited among black voters (30.7%), as compared to white voters (11.7). As a trade off, a larger share of white early voters (36.8%) than blacks (20.8%) thought convenience the most important item. These differences also carried over to gender as a larger share of women (16.5%) than men (10.5%) pointed to their eagerness to vote as the most important factor, while 39.4% of men versus 31.4% of women rated convenience as the foremost consideration.

¹³Democrats include those identified as both strong and weak Democrats, but not Democratic leaners using the standard seven-point scale.

¹⁴Here independent refers to pure independents and Republican/Democrat includes leaners.

Precinct Voters

Like early voters, voters who waited until election-day to do their civic duty viewed precinct voting as their preferred option. While 96.7% were aware of the alternatives, 96.2% said they were very unlikely to change and 99.8% were *very likely* or *somewhat likely* to continue going in-person to vote on election-day.

The survey asked election-day voters why they opted not to register their preferences prior to November 4th (see Table 7). The most common reason for waiting until election-day, cited as *very* or *somewhat important* by 69.5% of the respondents, was convenience narrowly followed by a desire to participate in the democratic celebration of joining neighbors at the polls (67.8%). In addition, half of those who waited until election-day said that the early voting sites in their county were not conveniently located.

[Table 7 goes here]

Atlanta television stations frequently showed long lines of voters queued up during the early voting period. Respectively, 46% and 42% of the respondents said avoiding long lines at early voting or the fear that if they voted absentee it might not be counted were *somewhat* or *very important* to their decision to wait until election-day. Just under a third of the respondents delayed voting because they did not decide on their preferences among candidates until the last moment or because they thought new, decisive information might come out in the closing days of the campaign.

The perceived convenience of voting on election-day was related to age with this factor most often noted by the youngest voters (83.6% of whom saw it as *very* or *somewhat important*) and least often among older voters, 58.3% of whom it carried some significance. Not surprisingly, the youngest voters most often pointed to the inconvenience of the early voting locations. Of voters younger than 30, 62.6% saw this as important; for other age groups approximately half the respondents saw this factor as important.

While wanting to vote with others on election-day was important to at least 60% of all age groups, it resonated loudest with the older age cohorts. More than 75% of voters over 60 cited this as an important consideration as did 70% of those 50 to 59.

Avoidance of lengthy waits to vote early might be a greater concern for voters living in areas within the Atlanta metropolitan area given the frequency of media reports discussing long wait times during the early voting period. Even in areas outside of the Atlanta area that are covered by the Atlanta media market such as Athens (Clarke County) were not unaffected by such media coverage. In the sample of election-day voters from Clarke County, 53.3% mentioned fear of long lines as being an important factor in deciding to vote at their precinct. Forsyth is also in the Atlanta market, but only 42.5% of the voters in that suburban county cited long the same concern. This lower percentage may have been due to the ability of Forsyth voters to go on line and determine what the likely wait would be at various early voting sites in the county. In Lee County, in the southwest corner of the state far from Atlanta, fear of long lines was cited by just a third of the respondents.

Those who turned out on election-day 2008 rarely experienced lengthy delays. Just 10.3% had to wait more than 30 minutes and the vast majority (78.9%) waited less than 15 minutes (see Table 4b). Among those who voted early, 61.8% reported waiting no more than 15 minutes (see Table 4a).

The youngest voters were more likely to put credence in the urban myth that absentee ballots get counted only when they might decide an election with almost 60% of voters under 30 mentioning this worry as significant. Among other age cohorts the figure never exceeded 40%.

The oldest and the youngest voters reported they had delayed voting because they had not decided on which candidate they preferred. Almost 40% of those under 30 and 45.6% of those over 70 listed this factor as an important consideration. For those in the 30 to 59 age bracket, only about a quarter of the respondents considered this a significant factor.

When asked to identify the *most* important factor in their decision to wait until election-day to vote, the most common consideration cited by more than a third of respondents, was their preference to vote on election-day. The youngest voters were the least likely to list this reason (22.2%), with those over 70 being the most likely (47.1%). For other age cohorts, about three-eighths of the respondents cited this factor as being the most important in their calculus to vote on election-day with the exception of those 40 to 49 (28.8%). Across the three counties in our survey the preference to vote on election-day was the top consideration.

Convenience was the second most common element, cited by just over a quarter of the respondents. Convenience resonated most strongly with those voters under 30 where it was cited by 42.9% and mattered least to those over 70, 14.7% of whom ranked this as their top consideration. Between 20% and 30% of the other age cohorts ranked convenience as the most important factor for choosing to vote at their precinct.

Approximately a tenth of election-day voters in our sample cited mentioned three additional items as being the most salient in their decisionmaking calculus. One of these was the flip side of election-day convenience (the inconvenience of the early voting sites). The location of early voting sites got mentioned about twice as often in Lee (17.7%) as in the other two counties surveyed.¹⁵ Forsyth County had five early voting locations for the 2008 general election. Clarke, which is geographically Georgia's smallest county, had two sites while Lee County also contained two sites.

Avoiding long lines at early voting was a second item cited by a tenth of the respondents (10.0%). This factor was mentioned more often in Forsyth than in the other counties—somewhat surprising as voters could go on line to determine current wait times.

¹⁵In Clarke 9.8% of respondents ranked location of early voting sites as their most important factor. The comparable figure for Forsyth respondents was 7.7%.

The third element mentioned by 10.9% of respondents concerned the wait for any new information that might come about prior to election-day. This factor was not related to the age of the voter, but was especially widespread in Lee County (17.7%). Voters in the south Georgia county were also twice as likely (8.3%) than voters in the other two counties to point to indecision of preferences until election-day.

Generally, indecision on the part of voters (Lee County excluded) and concern that absentee ballots might not be counted were cited by fewer than 4% of voters respectively as being their chief concern for choosing to vote in their precinct on election-day.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Voters who selected each of the three options explored in this study reported high levels of satisfaction with the method they selected. This fact is evident when one examines the results of Table 8 which display voter evaluations by voting method. Voters were asked: *How would you evaluate your overall experience with voting early in-person on a 1-5 scale with one being poor and five being excellent?* Over 80% of voters, regardless of method, rated their 2008 voting experience as a 5 or *excellent*. Fully 92% of absentee voters, 95% of early voters, and 96% of precinct voters rated their experience as either a 4 or 5. Likewise, a majority of voters across voting method were also *very confident* that their vote was properly counted. Table 9 indicates that 76% of early voters and 81% of precinct voters displayed the highest level of confidence in the process. Absentee voters lagged below the other two groups with slightly more than a majority (56%) indicating they felt *very confident* about the process.

[Table 8 about here]
[Table 9 about here]

In summary, most voters, regardless of the method chosen, evaluated their voting experience very highly. In addition, a majority of absentee voters and three-quarters of early and precinct-voters also expressed a great deal of confidence in the electoral process. Voters appear content with the method they have chosen and the survey responses indicate they are likely to stick with the same method in future elections. One implication of this finding is that the incidence of non-precinct voting may not increase dramatically beyond current levels.

The one caveat to this conclusion may involve those larger counties in the Atlanta area where long wait-times were encountered. It is highly possible that early voters in these counties may not have rated their voting experience quite as high. Conversely, the large number of voters who did vote during the early voting period may have allowed precinct-voting on election-day to be far less congested. In Fulton County for example, almost half (44.6%) of those who voted in the 2008 general election cast their ballots either early or absentee.¹⁶

¹⁶Fulton County had only 5 early voting sites, compared to 341 precinct locations open on election-day.

Election-day voters who considered the placement of early voting sites inconvenient hints at one change that might spur increased early voting. Establishment of additional early voting locations, allowing early voting to occur at non-governmental sites, or making existing sites more accessible might encourage more voters to take advantage of this option. Greater accessibility might involve the location of sites vis-à-vis major transportation routes and/or adjacent to areas with adequate parking. These policy suggestions might be especially relevant to metro Atlanta counties which operate few early voting locations compared to the number of election-day precincts. Shifting resources to open and staff additional early voting sites in these counties in particular may work to increase the numbers of non-precinct voters in the state.

Table 10a provides a comparison by voting method and educational attainment. Looking at the table education does not appear to be related to the type of voting method selected. For example, across all educational categories the percentage of voters choosing to vote at their precinct varies only six points from 34.7% (some college) to 40.6% (high school degree). A majority of all voters, regardless of educational attainment, chose to vote early. Table 10b compares voting methods with income levels. Again, it appears from the table that there is little evidence that income is related to what method a voter may select. As in Table 10a, a majority of voters across all income levels opted to vote early. Only the lowest income category, those making \$20,000 or less, showed a slight deviation from this pattern with 50% choosing to vote early. The low and high range across all remaining income categories was only two points, ranging from 55.7% to 57.7%.

[Table 10a about here]

[Table 10b about here]

Tables 10c and 10d examine the choice of voting method by race and gender respectively. Looking at Table 10c there is only a 2.8 point difference in the percentage of whites and blacks choosing to vote early (57.7% versus 60.5%). There is a drop-off, however, for the *Other Minority* category where just under a majority (49.1%) opted to vote prior to election-day.¹⁷ In terms of gender women were slightly more likely than men to vote early (59.2% compared to 55.4%).

[Table 10c about here]

[Table 10d about here]

In addition, we specified a multivariate statistical model designed to explain the choice of vote method while simultaneously controlling for income, education, race, sex, age, and county of registration.¹⁸ Results of the analysis that compared early voters with precinct voters indicated that women, blacks, and the elderly were statistically more like to choose early voting over election-day voting. A second equation comparing absentee voters to those choosing to vote at their precinct found only sex and age to be statistically significant

¹⁷The *Other Minority* category includes Asians, Hispanics, American Indians, and other registrants where race or ethnicity was unknown.

¹⁸The model was estimated using multinomial logit where precinct voters (base category) were compared to absentee voters and early voters in separate equations. Statistical results available from authors.

predictors. Not surprisingly, women and older registrants were more likely to vote absentee.

In the end there seems to be few connections with socio-demographic factors and choice of voting method, especially in terms of income and education. The elderly and women do appear to select non-precinct voting options more often than men and younger registrants. In addition, black Georgians do favor early voting over election-day voting when compared to whites.

Georgia has recently expanded the range of options available for registrants to cast ballots. From our voter survey we have learned that voters overwhelmingly prefer their chosen method of voting and have indicated that they are very likely to continue voting in the same manner in future elections. It is highly unlikely then that Georgia will be able to reduce or significantly alter these established choices, nor are we arguing that it should. In terms of policy implications the state should look to make voting overall more convenient, efficient, and cost effective. As more than a majority of Georgians are now casting ballots prior to the date of the election policy should be reformulated that recognizes this fact. For example, the number and location of early voting sites, especially in urban counties should be re-evaluated, along with days and hours of operation. On the other side of the fence the number of precincts on election-day should be reduced in many counties to compensate for the large percentage of voters who have already voted during the early voting period. As such, efficient use of personnel, equipment, and other physical assets should become the focal point in future election administration in Georgia.

Appendix A: Non-Precinct Voting in Georgia Telephone Survey Instrument, 2008

<p>Q1. Voter Type ID (Note: This information is already known)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Precinct Voter 2. Early In-Person Voter 3. Absentee Voter <p>Surveyor will follow branch below based on type of voter.</p>		
<p>Precinct Voter (Response 1 in Q1.)</p>	<p>Early Voter (Response 2 in Q1.)</p>	<p>Absentee Voter (Response 3 in Q1.)</p>
<p>QP2. About when did you decide which candidate you were going to vote for in the presidential election? [Read response options.]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Before Labor Day 2. Between Labor Day and the Presidential Debates 3. During the Debates 4. The last two weeks of the election 5. On election day 98. Don't remember 99. Refused 	<p>QE2. About when did you decide which candidate you were going to vote for in the presidential election? [Read response options.]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Before Labor Day 2. Between Labor Day and the Presidential Debates 3. During the Debates 4. The last two weeks of the election 98. Don't remember 99. Refused 	<p>QA2. About when did you decide which candidate you were going to vote for in the presidential election? [Read response options.]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Before Labor Day 2. Between Labor Day and the Presidential Debates 3. During the Debates 4. The last two weeks of the election 98. Don't remember 99. Refused
<p>QP3. On the day you voted, how long did you wait to cast your ballot? [Read response options.]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fifteen minutes or less 2. Fifteen to thirty minutes 3. Thirty minutes to an hour 4. Between one and two hours 5. Between two and three hours 6. Between three and four hours 7. Over four hours 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>QE3. On the day you voted, how long did you wait to cast your ballot? [Read response options.]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fifteen minutes or less 2. Fifteen to thirty minutes 3. Thirty minutes to an hour 4. Between one and two hours 5. Between two and three hours 6. Between three and four hours 7. Over four hours 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	

	<p>QE4. Have you voted early in-person prior to this election?</p> <p>1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused; NA (First-time voter)</p>	<p>QA4. Have you voted absentee prior to this election?</p> <p>1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused; NA (First-time voter)</p>
<p>QP5. How likely are you to vote on election day in the future? Are you very likely, somewhat likely, not likely or not likely at all?</p> <p>1. Very likely 2. Somewhat likely 3. Not likely 4. Not likely at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p>	<p>QE5. How likely are you to vote early in-person in the future? Are you very likely, somewhat likely, not likely or not likely at all?</p> <p>1. Very likely 2. Somewhat likely 3. Not likely 4. Not likely at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p>	<p>QA5. How likely are you to vote absentee by mail in the future? Are you very likely, somewhat likely, not likely or not likely at all?</p> <p>1. Very likely 2. Somewhat likely 3. Not likely 4. Not likely at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p>
<p>QP6. Were you aware that you could cast a ballot prior to election-day?</p> <p>1. Yes, I was aware of that option. 2. No, I was not aware of that option. 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p>		
<p>If response 1 in QP6: QP7. Did you consider voting early in-person?</p> <p>1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p>		

<p>If response 1 in QP6: QP8. Did you consider voting absentee by mail?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused 		
		<p>QA9. Did you receive an absentee ballot application in the mail from a political party?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused
		<p>QA10. If response 1 in QA9: Was it the Republican Party, the Democratic Party, or both?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Republican Party 2. Democratic Party 3. Both parties 98. Don't know 99. Refused
		<p>QA11. Did you receive an absentee ballot application in the mail from a campaign or candidate?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused

<p>QP12. Were you contacted by a political party or campaign about whether you planned to vote?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes, a political party 2. Yes, a campaign 3. Both [party and campaign] 4. Neither 98. Don't know 99. Refused <p>If response is 1 in QP12: QP13. Which political party contacted you about voting? [Read response options.]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Republican 2. Democrat 3. Both parties 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>QE12. Were you contacted by a political party or campaign about whether you planned to vote?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes, a political party 2. Yes, a campaign 3. Both [party and campaign] 4. Neither 98. Don't know 99. Refused <p>If response is 1 in QE12: QE13. Which political party contacted you about voting? [Read response options.]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Republican 2. Democrat 3. Both parties 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>QA12. Were you contacted by a political party or campaign about whether you planned to vote?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes, a political party 2. Yes, a campaign 3. Both [party and campaign] 4. Neither 98. Don't know 99. Refused <p>If response is 1 in QA12: QA13. Which political party contacted you about voting? [Read response options.]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Republican 2. Democrat 3. Both parties 98. Don't know 99. Refused
<p>If response is 1 in QP6: QP14. Did you see or hear any advertisements about voting early in-person or by mail absentee ballot?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>QE14. Did you see or hear any advertisements about voting early in-person or by mail absentee ballot?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>QA14. Did you see or hear any advertisements about voting early in-person or by mail absentee ballot?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused

<p>If response 1 in QP14: I'm going to list a number of possible sources that may have been used to advertise alternatives to voting on election day. Please indicate whether you saw or heard advertisements for voting alternatives for each of the following (read all):</p> <p>QP15. Local newspaper 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QP16. Postcard/letter from elections office 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QP17. Television 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QP18. Radio 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QP19. Government website 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know</p>	<p>If response 1 in QE14: I'm going to list a number of possible sources that may have been used to advertise alternatives to voting on election day. Please indicate whether you saw or heard advertisements for voting alternatives for each of the following (read all):</p> <p>QE15. Local newspaper 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QE16. Postcard/letter from elections office 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QE17. Television 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QE18. Radio 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QE19. Government website 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know</p>	<p>If response 1 in QA14: I'm going to list a number of possible sources that may have been used to advertise alternatives to voting on election day. Please indicate whether you saw or heard advertisements for voting alternatives for each of the following (read all):</p> <p>QA15. Local newspaper 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QA16. Postcard/letter from elections office 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QA17. Television 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QA18. Radio 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QA19. Government website 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p>
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<p>99. Refused</p> <p>QP20. Signs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>99. Refused</p> <p>QE20. Signs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>QA20. Signs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 98. Don't know 99. Refused
<p>What reasons were important in determining why you decided to vote on election day instead of early in-person or by absentee ballot? [Read response options once or twice, repeat as necessary.] [Note: For this battery of question randomize order.]</p> <p>QP21. It was more convenient for your schedule</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. very important 2. somewhat important 3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused <p>QP22. You wanted the experience of casting a ballot in-person on election day.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. very important 2. somewhat important 3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused <p>QP23. You were concerned about wait times during the early voting period</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. very important 	<p>What reasons were important in determining why you decided to vote early in-person instead of on election day or by absentee ballot? [Read response options once or twice, repeat as necessary.] [Note: For this battery of question randomize order.]</p> <p>QE21. It was more convenient for your schedule</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. very important 2. somewhat important 3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused <p>QE22. You had work conflicts on election day</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. very important 2. somewhat important 3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused <p>QE23. You were eager to cast a ballot</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. very important 2. somewhat important 	<p>What reasons were important in determining why you decided to vote by absentee ballot instead of on election day or early in-person? [Read response options once or twice, repeat as necessary.] [Note: For this battery of question randomize order.]</p> <p>QA21. It was more convenient for your schedule</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. very important 2. somewhat important 3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused <p>QA22. You had work conflicts on election day</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. very important 2. somewhat important 3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused <p>QA23. You were physically unable to get to the polls</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. very important 2. somewhat important

<p>2. somewhat important 3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QP24. You heard absentee ballots are not counted unless the election outcome is close</p> <p>1. very important 2. somewhat important 3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QP25. The location of early voting sites in your county are not convenient</p> <p>1. very important 2. somewhat important 3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QP26. You had not decided who to vote for until just prior to election day.</p> <p>1. very important 2. somewhat important 3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QP27. You were was waiting to see if any new information came out before the day of the election.</p>	<p>3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QE24. You were concerned you might forget to vote on election day</p> <p>1. very important 2. somewhat important 3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QE25. You were going to be out of the county on election day</p> <p>1. very important 2. somewhat important 3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QE26. You heard absentee ballots are not counted unless the election outcome is close</p> <p>1. very important 2. somewhat important 3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QE27. You were concerned about wait times on election day</p> <p>1. very important 2. somewhat important</p>	<p>3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QA24. You were eager to cast a ballot</p> <p>1. very important 2. somewhat important 3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QA25. You did not have proper photo identification to vote in-person.</p> <p>1. very important 2. somewhat important 3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QA26. You were concerned you might forget to vote on election day</p> <p>1. very important 2. somewhat important 3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p> <p>QA27. You were concerned about wait times on election day</p> <p>1. very important 2. somewhat important 3. not too important 4. not important at all</p>
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<p>1. very important 2. somewhat important 3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p>	<p>3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p>	<p>98. Don't know 99. Refused QA28. You prefer not to use electronic voting machines 1. very important 2. somewhat important 3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused QA29. You were going to be out of the county on election day 1. very important 2. somewhat important 3. not too important 4. not important at all 98. Don't know 99. Refused</p>
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<p>QP30. Which of the reasons would you consider the most important in your decision to vote on election day? I will read the reasons again if you need them repeated. [Eliminate any option coded as 3 or 4 in QP21-27. Ask in same order as presented in QP21-27.]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It was more convenient for your schedule 2. You wanted the experience of casting a ballot in-person on election day. 3. You were concerned about wait times during the early voting period 4. You heard absentee ballots are not counted unless election outcome is close 5. The location of early voting sites in your county are not convenient 6. You had not decided who to vote for until just prior to election day. 7. You were waiting to see if any new information came out before the day of the election. 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>QE30. Which of the reasons would you consider the most important in your decision to vote early in-person? I will read the reasons again if you need them repeated. [Eliminate any option coded as 3 or 4 in QE21-27. Ask in same order as presented in QE21-27.]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It was more convenient for your schedule 2. You had work conflicts on election day 3. You were eager to cast a ballot 4. You were concerned you might forget to vote on election day 5. You were going to be out of the county on election day 6. You heard absentee ballots are not counted unless election outcome is close 7. You were concerned about wait times on election day 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>QA30. Which of the reasons would you consider the most important in your decision to vote absentee by mail? I will read the reasons again if you need them repeated. [Eliminate any option coded as 3 or 4 in QA21-29. Ask in same order as presented in QA21-29.]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It was more convenient for your schedule 2. You had work conflicts on election day 3. You were physically unable to get to the polls 4. You were eager to cast a ballot 5. You did not have proper photo identification to vote in-person. 6. You were concerned you might forget to vote on election day 7. You were concerned about wait times on election day 8. You prefer not to use electronic voting machines 9. You were going to be out of the county on election day 98. Don't know 99. Refused
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<p>QP31. How would you evaluate your overall experience with voting on election day on a 1-5 scale with one being poor and 5 being excellent?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Poor 2. 3. 4. 5. Excellent 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>QE31. How would you evaluate your overall experience with voting early in-person on a 1-5 scale with one being poor and 5 being excellent?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Poor 2. 3. 4. 5. Excellent 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>QA31. How would you evaluate your overall experience with voting absentee by mail with voting early in-person on a 1-5 scale with one being poor and 5 being excellent?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Poor 2. 3. 4. 5. Excellent 98. Don't know 99. Refused
<p>QP32. How confident are you that your vote in the November 2008 general election was counted as you intended? Are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. very confident 2. somewhat confident 3. not too confident 4. not at all confident 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>QE32. How confident are you that your vote in the November 2008 general election was counted as you intended? Are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. very confident 2. somewhat confident 3. not too confident 4. not at all confident 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>QA32. How confident are you that your vote in the November 2008 general election was counted as you intended? Are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. very confident 2. somewhat confident 3. not too confident 4. not at all confident 98. Don't know 99. Refused

<p>QP33. Where would you place yourself on this scale? [Read response options].</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extremely liberal 2. Liberal 3. Slightly liberal 4. Moderate; middle of the road 5. Slightly conservative 6. Conservative 7. Extremely conservative 90. Haven't thought much about this 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>QE33. Where would you place yourself on this scale? [Read response options].</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extremely liberal 2. Liberal 3. Slightly liberal 4. Moderate; middle of the road 5. Slightly conservative 6. Conservative 7. Extremely conservative 90. Haven't thought much about this 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>QA33. Where would you place yourself on this scale? [Read response options].</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extremely liberal 2. Liberal 3. Slightly liberal 4. Moderate; middle of the road 5. Slightly conservative 6. Conservative 7. Extremely conservative 90. Haven't thought much about this 98. Don't know 99. Refused
<p>QP34. How interested were you in news related to this year's presidential election? Were you very interested, somewhat interested, somewhat uninterested, very uninterested?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Very interested 2. Somewhat interested 3. Somewhat uninterested 4. Very uninterested 98. DK/ it depends (vol.) 99. Refused (vol.) 	<p>QE34. How interested were you in news related to this year's presidential election? Were you very interested, somewhat interested, somewhat uninterested, very uninterested?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Very interested 2. Somewhat interested 3. Somewhat uninterested 4. Very uninterested 98. DK/ it depends (vol.) 99. Refused (vol.) 	<p>QA34. How interested were you in news related to this year's presidential election? Were you very interested, somewhat interested, somewhat uninterested, very uninterested?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Very interested 2. Somewhat interested 3. Somewhat uninterested 4. Very uninterested 98. DK/ it depends (vol.) 99. Refused (vol.)

<p>QP35. Do you call yourself a Republican, a Democrat, or Independent?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Republican 2. Democrat 3. Independent 4. Other Party 5. No Preference 98. Don't know 99. Refused <p>If response is 1 in QP35:</p> <p>QP36. Would you call yourself a strong Republican or a not very strong Republican?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong 2. Not very strong 98. Don't know 99. Refused <p>QP37. If response is 2 in QP35: Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or a not very strong Democrat?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong 2. Not very strong 98. Don't know 99. Refused <p>QP38. If response is 3,4,5 in QP35: Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or Democratic Party?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Closer to Republican Party 2. Closer to the Democratic Party 3. Neither 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>QE35. Do you call yourself a Republican, a Democrat, or Independent?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Republican 2. Democrat 3. Independent 4. Other Party 5. No Preference 98. Don't know 99. Refused <p>If response is 1 in QE35:</p> <p>QE36: Would you call yourself a strong Republican or a not very strong Republican?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong 2. Not very strong 98. Don't know 99. Refused <p>If response is 2 in QE35:</p> <p>QE37: Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or a not very strong Democrat?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong 2. Not very strong 98. Don't know 99. Refused <p>QE38: If response is 3,4,5 in QE35: Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or Democratic Party?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Closer to Republican Party 2. Closer to the Democratic Party 3. Neither 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>QA35. Do you call yourself a Republican, a Democrat, or Independent?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Republican 2. Democrat 3. Independent 4. Other Party 5. No Preference 98. Don't know 99. Refused <p>If response is 1 QA35:</p> <p>QA36: Would you call yourself a strong Republican or a not very strong Republican?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong 2. Not very strong 98. Don't know 99. Refused <p>If response is 2 in QA35:</p> <p>QA37: Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or a not very strong Democrat?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong 2. Not very strong 98. Don't know 99. Refused <p>If response is 3,4,5 in QA35:</p> <p>QA38: Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or Democratic Party?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Closer to Republican Party 2. Closer to the Democratic Party 3. Neither 98. Don't know 99. Refused
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<p>QP39. Are you currently on active duty in the military?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 99. Refused 	<p>QE39. Are you currently on active duty in the military?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 99. Refused 	<p>QA39. Are you currently on active duty in the military?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 99. Refused
<p>QP40. What is the highest grade of school or year in college you have completed? [Read response options].</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Less than High School 2. High School Diploma or GED 3. Some college 4. College degree 5. Some post graduate work 6. Post-graduate degree 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>QE40. What is the highest grade of school or year in college you have completed? [Read response options].</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Less than High School 2. High School Diploma or GED 3. Some college 4. College degree 5. Some post graduate work 6. Post-graduate degree 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>QA40. What is the highest grade of school or year in college you have completed? [Read response options.]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Less than High School 2. High School Diploma or GED 3. Some college 4. College degree 5. Some post graduate work 6. Post-graduate degree 98. Don't know 99. Refused
<p>QP41. What category best describes your total household income for 2007? [Read response options.]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$20,000 or less 2. \$20,00 to \$30,000 3. \$30,000 to \$50,000 4. \$50,000 to \$75,000 5. \$75,000 to \$100,000 6. More than \$100,000 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>QE41. What category best describes your total household income for 2007? [Read response options.]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$20,000 or less 2. \$20,00 to \$30,000 3. \$30,000 to \$50,000 4. \$50,000 to \$75,000 5. \$75,000 to \$100,000 6. More than \$100,000 98. Don't know 99. Refused 	<p>QA41. What category best describes your total household income for 2007? [Read response options.]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$20,000 or less 2. \$20,00 to \$30,000 3. \$30,000 to \$50,000 4. \$50,000 to \$75,000 5. \$75,000 to \$100,000 6. More than \$100,000 98. Don't know 99. Refused

<p>QP42. Which presidential candidate did you vote for? [Read response options.]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Barack Obama, the Democratic candidate2. John McCain, the Republican candidate3. Bob Barr, the Libertarian candidate4. Did not vote for president <p>98. Don't know 99. Refused</p>	<p>QE42. Which presidential candidate did you vote for? [Read response options.]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Barack Obama, the Democratic candidate2. John McCain, the Republican candidate3. Bob Barr, the Libertarian candidate4. Did not vote for president <p>98. Don't know 99. Refused</p>	<p>QA42. Which presidential candidate did you vote for? [Read response options.]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Barack Obama, the Democratic candidate2. John McCain, the Republican candidate3. Bob Barr, the Libertarian candidate4. Did not vote for president <p>98. Don't know 99. Refused</p>
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Appendix B: Survey Sampling Information

The distribution of the population of voters by county and voting method for the 2008 general election is displayed below:

	Forsyth	Lee	Clarke	Total
Early	48,219	5,838	22,515	76,572
% EV by County	65.0%	45.1%	50.4%	
Absentee	2,978	394	2,737	6,109
% AV by County	4.0%	3.0%	6.1%	
Precinct	23,002	6,711	19,416	49,129
% PV by County	31.0%	51.9%	43.5%	
Total	74,199	12,943	44,668	131,810

The distribution of voters in the sample by county and voting method is displayed below:

	Forsyth	Lee	Clarke	Total
Early	533	75	288	896
% EV by County	49.4%	37.5%	39.9%	
Absentee	152	17	183	352
% AV by County	14.1%	8.5%	25.4%	
Precinct	394	108	250	752
% PV by County	36.5%	54.0%	34.7%	
Total	1,079	200	721	2,000

Figure A. Voter Distributions by Type, November 2008

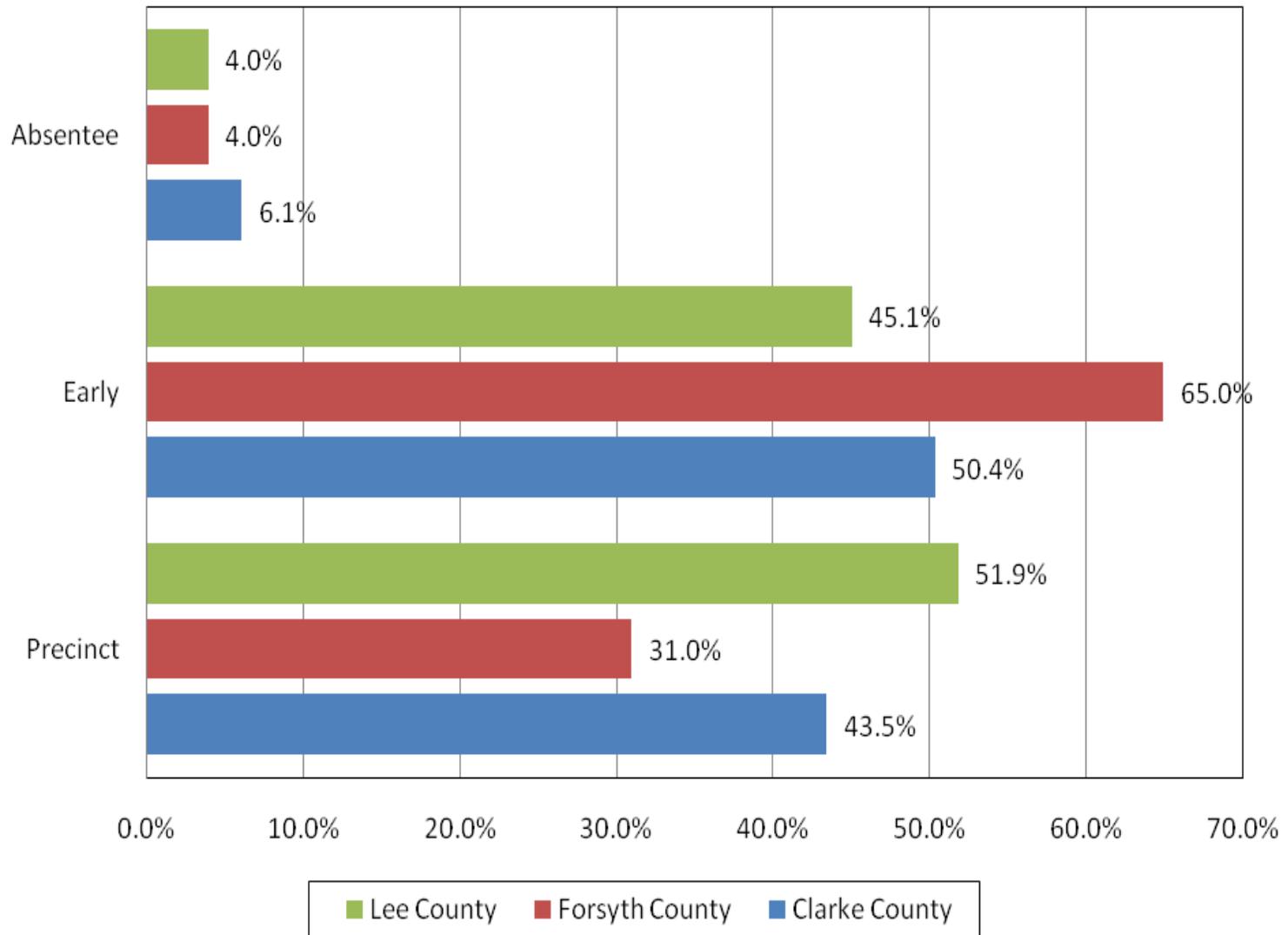


Figure 1. Georgia's Election Configuration, 2008

Early Voting

↑
Time: Forty-Five days prior to the date of the election
Locations: County Registrar's Offices

Advanced Voting

↑
Time: One week prior to the election
Locations: Any Government Building

Precinct Voting

↑
Time: Election-Day
Locations: Voting Precints

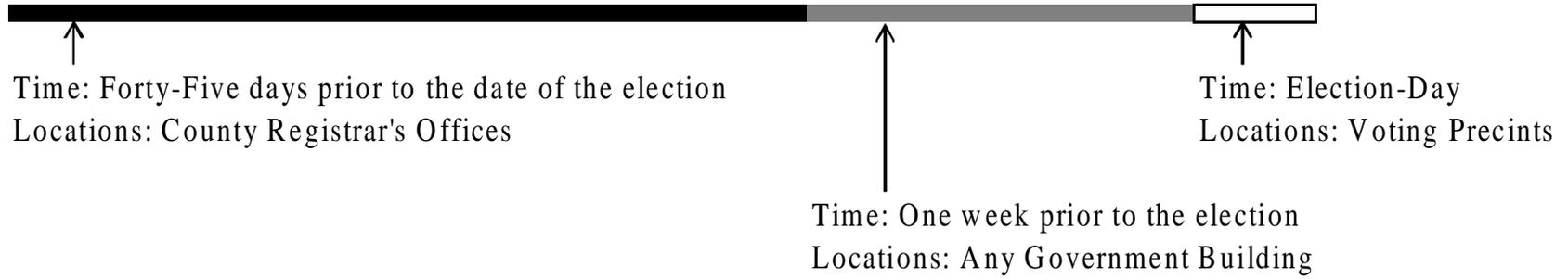


Figure 2. Non-Precinct Black Turnout in the 2008 General Election

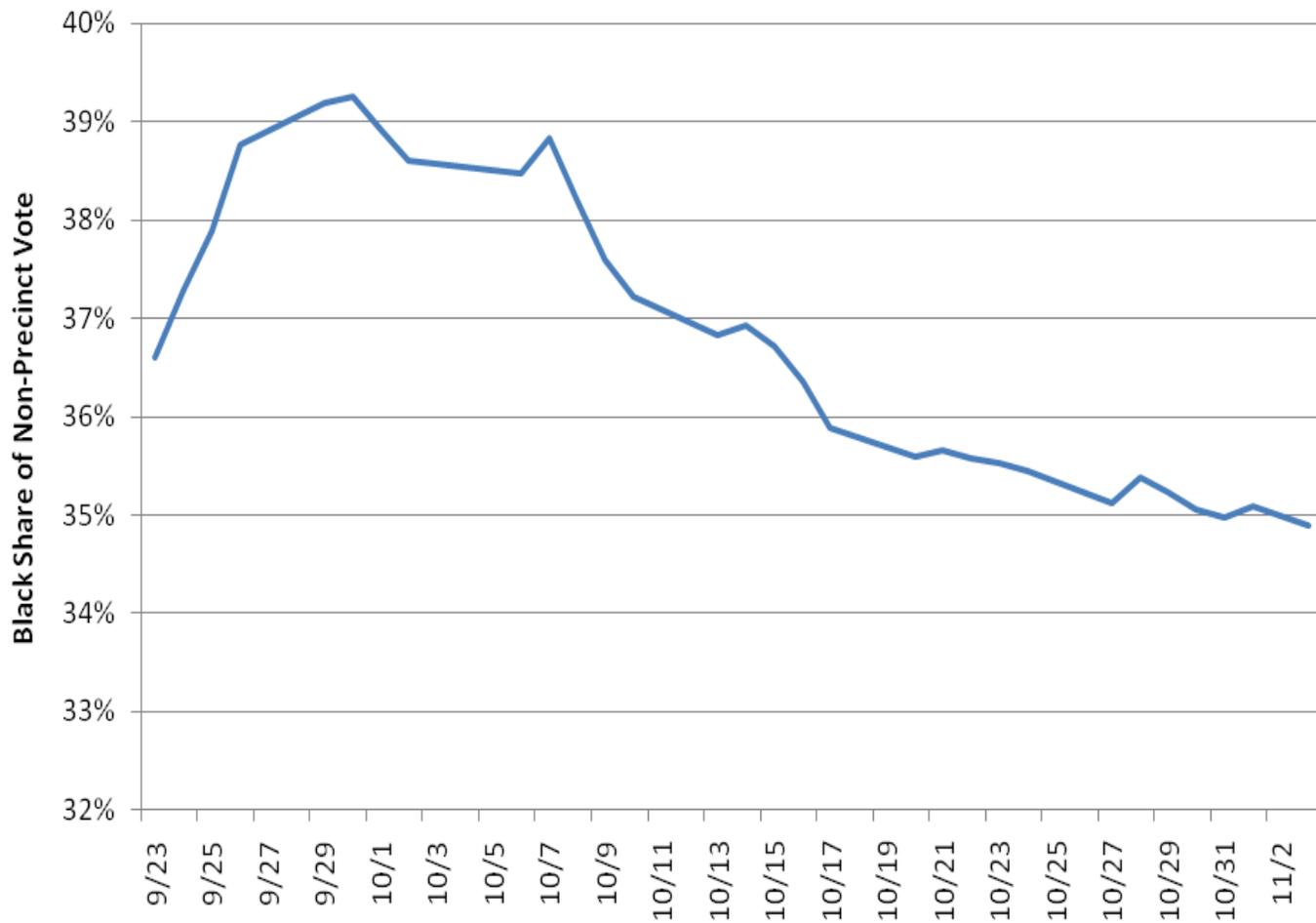


Figure 3. Black and White Non-Precinct Turnout in the 2008 General Election

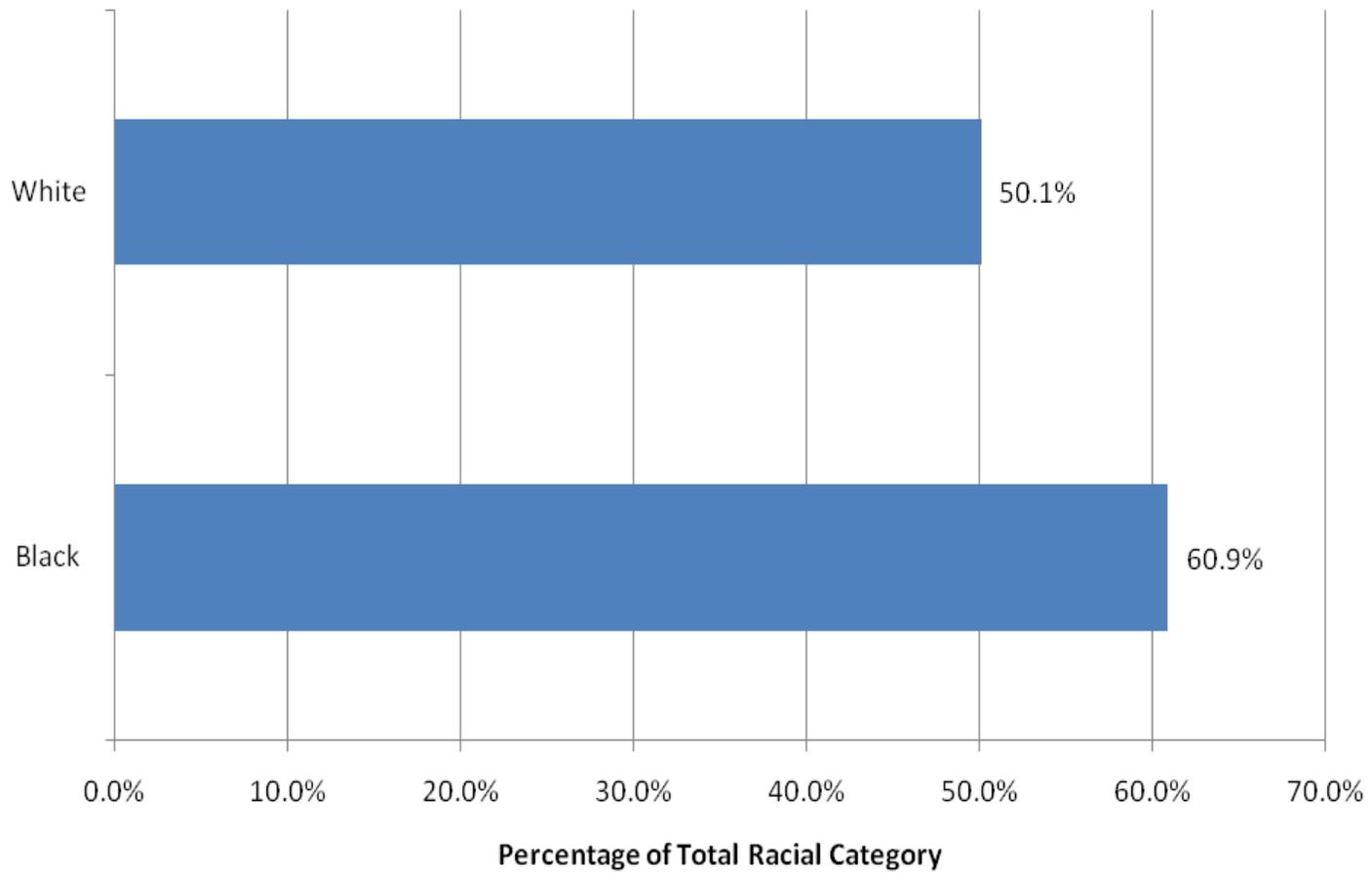


Table 1a. Absentee Voting by Age Category

Age Category	Percent of Absentee Voters	Frequency
18 – 29	3.5%	12
30 – 39	6.6%	23
40 – 49	13.6%	48
50 – 59	19.4%	68
60 – 69	18.2%	64
70 +	38.7%	136
<i>Total</i>		351

Note: Frequencies are weighted by county of residence and race.

Table 1b. Early Voting by Age Category

Age Category	Percent of Absentee Voters	Frequency
18 – 29	4.0%	36
30 – 39	12.8%	115
40 – 49	20.3%	182
50 – 59	22.7%	204
60 – 69	23.3%	209
70 +	16.8%	150
<i>Total</i>		896

Note: Frequencies are weighted by county of residence and race.

Table 1c. Precinct Voting by Age Category

Age Category	Percent of Absentee Voters	Frequency
18 – 29	8.5%	64
30 – 39	19.9%	150
40 – 49	24.3%	183
50 – 59	20.5%	154
60 – 69	15.5%	117
70 +	11.2%	85
<i>Total</i>		752

Note: Frequencies are weighted by county of residence and race.

Table 2. Information Sources for Absentee Voters

Source	Percent of Absentee Voters	Frequency
Television	53.9%	190
Newspaper	40.2%	141
Radio	35.5%	125
Mail from Elections Office	23.7%	84
Signs	22.0%	78
Government Website	13.5%	47

Note: Frequencies are weighted by county of residence and race.

Table 3. Reasons Mentioned for Voting Absentee by Mail

Reason	Percent Mentioning as <i>Very or Somewhat Important</i>	Frequency	Percent Citing as the <i>Most Important Reason</i>	Frequency
Convenience	83.0%	280	27.4%	91
Eagerness to Cast Ballot	77.3%	263	6.4%	21
Avoiding Long Lines	60.2%	205	16.2%	54
Physical Limitations	45.6%	154	22.6%	75
Work Conflicts	44.9%	149	11.9%	40
Out of County	34.4%	116	13.6%	45
No Photo ID	20.4%	6	0.5%	2
Might Forget to Vote	15.8%	54	0.3%	1
Dislike Electronic Voting Machines	15.6%	51	1.2%	4
<i>N</i>				333

Note: Frequencies are weighted by county of residence and race.

Table 4a. Time Required for Early Voters to Cast Ballots

Length of Time	Percent of Early Voters	Frequency
Less than 15 minutes	61.8%	547
15 – 30 minutes	18.2%	161
30 – 60 minutes	13.8%	122
1 – 2 hours	4.4%	39
2 – 3 hours	1.2%	10
3 – 4 hours	0.4%	3
More than 4 hours	0.3%	3
<i>N</i>		885

Note: Frequencies are weighted by county of residence and race.

Table 4b. Time Required for Precinct Voters to Cast Ballots

Length of Time	Percent of Early Voters	Frequency
Less than 15 minutes	78.9%	585
15 – 30 minutes	10.7%	79
30 – 60 minutes	8.4%	62
1 – 2 hours	1.2%	9
2 – 3 hours	0%	0
3 – 4 hours	0.1%	1
More than 4 hours	0.6%	4
<i>N</i>		742

Note: Frequencies are weighted by county of residence and race.

Table 5. Sources of Information about Early Voting

Source	Percent of Respondents Who Mentioned	Frequency
Television	82.9%	532
Newspaper	66.5%	431
Radio	63.4%	410
Signs	48.2%	312
Mailing from Elections Office	47.5%	296
Government Website	19.4%	125

Note: Frequencies are weighted by county of residence and race.

Table 6. Reasons Mentioned for Early In-Person Voting

Reason	Percent Mentioning as <i>Very or Somewhat Important</i>	Frequency	Percent Citing as the <i>Most Important Reason</i>	Frequency
Convenience	89.4%	791	34.8%	300
Eagerness to Cast Ballot	81.1%	721	14.0%	121
Avoiding Long Lines	81.5%	725	35.5%	306
Work Conflicts	41.8%	363	7.6%	66
Absentees not Counted	45.2%	376	.9%	8
Out of County	27.4%	236	6.6%	57
Might Forget to Vote	16.4%	143	.5%	4
<i>N</i>				861

Note: Frequencies are weighted by county of residence and race.

Table 7. Reasons Mentioned for Voting at Precinct on Election-day

Reason	Percent Mentioning as <i>Very or Somewhat Important</i>	Frequency	Percent Citing as the <i>Most Important Reason</i>	Frequency
Convenience	69.5%	510	26.8%	183
Prefer to Vote on Election-Day	67.8%	502	34.8%	238
Early Voting Sites Inconvenient	49.8%	355	9.9%	67
Avoiding Long Lines	45.5%	336	10.0%	68
Absentees not Counted	41.6%	289	3.7%	25
Awaiting New Campaign Information	32.5%	240	10.9%	74
Candidate Preferences Undecided	30.7%	213	3.8%	26
<i>N</i>				682

Note: Frequencies are weighted by county of residence and race.

Table 8. Voter Evaluations by Voting Method

Rating	Absentee	Frequency	Early	Frequency	Precinct	Frequency
1 (Poor)	3.0%	10	1.0%	9	2.2%	16
2	1.3%	4	.5%	5	.5%	4
3	3.7%	13	3.1%	27	1.1%	8
4	6.7%	23	12.3%	110	9.0%	68
5 (Excellent)	85.3%	291	83.1%	743	87.2%	653
<i>N</i>		341		894		748

Note: Column percentages calculated separately by voting type. Frequencies are weighted by county of residence and race.

Table 9. Voter Confidence by Voting Method

Confidence Level	Absentee	Frequency	Early	Frequency	Precinct	Frequency
Very Confident	56.3%	192	75.7%	672	81.4%	607
Somewhat Confident	35.4%	121	20.5%	182	15.2%	113
Not Too Confident	5.5%	19	1.8%	16	2.0%	15
Not at All Confident	2.8%	10	1.9%	17	1.5%	11
<i>N</i>		342		887		746

Note: Column percentages calculated separately by voting type. Frequencies are weighted by county of residence and race.

Table 10a. Education Levels by Voting Method

Voting Method	Education Level					
	Less than High School	High School	Some College	College Degree	Some Post-Graduate	Post-Graduate Degree
Absentee	6.4% [3]	7.2% [18]	4.9% [22]	5.3% [36]	5.0% [7]	5.9% [24]
Early	57.4% [27]	52.2% [130]	60.4% [273]	58.4% [400]	55.7% [78]	57.3% [232]
Precinct	36.2% [17]	40.6% [101]	34.7% [157]	36.4% [249]	39.3% [55]	36.8% [149]
<i>Column Totals</i>	47	249	452	685	140	405

Note: Entries are column percentages with frequencies in brackets. Pooled sample utilized where respondents were weighted by voting method, county of residence and race.

Table 10b. Income Levels by Voting Method

Voting Method	Income Level					
	\$20,000 or less	\$20,000 to \$30,000	\$30,000 to \$50,000	\$50,000 to \$75,000	\$75,000 to \$100,000	\$100,000 or more
Absentee	7.1% [9]	9.3% [11]	6.9% [17]	4.5% [14]	4.1% [11]	4.6% [27]
Early	50.0% [63]	56.8% [67]	56.5% [139]	55.7% [172]	56.5% [153]	57.7% [342]
Precinct	42.9% [54]	33.9% [40]	36.6% [90]	39.8% [123]	39.5% [107]	37.8% [224]
<i>Column Totals</i>	126	118	246	685	271	593

Note: Entries are column percentages with frequencies in brackets. Pooled sample utilized where respondents were weighted by voting method, county of residence and race.

Table 10c. Race by Voting Method

Voting Method	Race of Voter		
	White	Black	Other Minority
Absentee	5.9% [97]	4.3% [10]	3.5% [4]
Early	57.7% [953]	60.5% [141]	49.1% [56]
Precinct	36.4% [601]	35.2% [82]	47.4% [54]
<i>Column Totals</i>	1,651	233	114

Note: Entries are column percentages with frequencies in brackets. Pooled sample utilized where respondents were weighted by voting method, county of residence and race.

Table 10d. Gender by Voting Method

Voting Method	Gender of Voter	
	Female	Male
Absentee	6.5% [72]	4.5% [40]
Early	59.2% [655]	55.4% [495]
Precinct	34.3% [379]	40.2% [359]
<i>Column Totals</i>	1,106	894

Note: Entries are column percentages with frequencies in brackets. Pooled sample utilized where respondents were weighted by voting method, county of residence and race.