California Secretary of State

Supplementary Report:

Voter's Choice Act: 2023 California State Voter Experience Report

California State University, Sacramento

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About the California Secretary of State

The California Office of the Secretary of State is committed to adhering to the highest standards of integrity and transparency, supporting businesses, strengthening democracy, protecting individual rights, preserving our state's history, delivering quality services, and providing accessible resources and trusted information.

The California Secretary of State's responsibilities include:
- Serving as the state's Chief Elections Officer
- Implementing electronic filing and Internet disclosure of campaign and lobbyist financial information
- Maintaining business filings
- Commissioning notaries public
- Operating the Safe at Home confidential address program
- Maintaining the Domestic Partners and Advance Health Care Directive Registries
- Safeguarding the State Archives
- Serving as a trustee of the California Museum

Background

The Voter's Choice Act (VCA), established by Senate Bill 450 (Allen, Hertzberg, et al., Chapter 832, Statutes of 2016), aims to enhance voting accessibility in California. This legislation introduces a voter-centered model designed to increase electoral participation and provide voters with more flexible options for civic engagement.

Key features of the VCA's modernized election system include:
- Automatic mail-in ballots for all active, registered voters
- Extended in-person early voting periods of up to 10 days
- County-wide vote centers allowing ballot casting at any location within the voter's county
- Convenient, secure ballot drop box locations throughout each county

To implement this system, the VCA mandates that counties develop a comprehensive Election Administration Plan (EAP). This plan serves two primary purposes:

1. Informing voters about their expanded voting options
2. Outlining strategies for voter education and community outreach

The VCA emphasizes community involvement in the electoral process. It requires county election officials to actively seek and incorporate community input in planning and administering elections, ensuring that diverse voices are heard in shaping local voting systems.

Introduction

As part of measuring the effectiveness of the VCA, the Secretary of State's Office commissioned the 2023 Voter Experience report from California State University, Sacramento to better understand the experiences of California's diverse voting population and provide insight into the VCA experience. This report includes data from 1,350 survey respondents living in California and registered to vote as of July 2023 and provides insight into voter disparities in the areas of voter awareness, voter engagement, and voter perceptions. The survey asked Californians how they view and participate in the voting process, barriers they have faced in relation to elections, from where they receive election information, and the voting participation as a multi-racial and multi-ethnic population. The ethnic groups surveyed for this report include Asian American, Black, Latinx, Native American, and White, and those who self-designated as Spanish Speakers.

Findings

Voter Education and Outreach: The survey results underscore a critical need for enhanced voter education and outreach in counties implementing the Voter's Choice Act (VCA). A significant awareness gap exists, with over half of the respondents unable to determine whether they resided in a VCA county. Moreover, only a small fraction of participants accurately identified their residence in a VCA county.

The findings reveal that many residents of VCA counties are unaware of the expanded voting methods available to them. Respondents demonstrated varying levels of knowledge about the VCA and its implications for registered voters in participating counties.

These insights highlight the importance of developing targeted educational campaigns. Such initiatives should focus on informing residents about their county's VCA status, the specific voting opportunities afforded by the Act, and the potential benefits of its flexible voting options.

Voter and Election Knowledge: Survey results reveal a distinct hierarchy in election information sources:

- The Internet stands as the primary medium, with Facebook as the most utilized platform.
- Social media and television are deemed the most credible sources overall.
- Text messages and emails rank lowest in perceived trustworthiness.

These findings indicate that election campaigns should prioritize online and broadcast strategies, particularly leveraging social media platforms, while reducing emphasis on direct messaging methods.

Voter Participation: Voter participation can be impacted for many reasons, but lack of interest was listed as the most prominent reason for not voting during the 2020 and 2022 elections. Survey results suggest that Black, Asian American, Latinx, and Native American respondents are less likely to be registered to vote when compared to White respondents. The survey also reveals

that about 40% of respondents expressed some concern about whether their ballot is being counted. When viewed by race, Latinx and Native American respondents expressed a lot of concern about ballots being counted. However, when respondents were asked about their confidence in the voting process, most respondents were extremely or somewhat confident in the voting process.

Recommendations

- **Voter Education**: Provide education on updating signatures and benefits of living in a VCA county. (More than half of the survey respondents did not know if they lived in a VCA county.)
- **Voter Outreach**: Prioritize online and broadcast strategies, particularly leveraging social media platforms, while reducing emphasis on direct messaging methods.
- **Voter Participation**: Lack of interest was listed as the most prominent reason for not voting, however an emphasis about the trustworthiness of the election process can help especially amongst certain groups.

Conclusion

This report provides comprehensive insights into the experiences of California voters. Key findings include:

1. **Ballot counting**: While most voters express confidence in the vote-counting process, certain demographic groups remain concerned, indicating a need for targeted outreach.
2. **Voter participation**: Notably, lack of interest emerged as the primary reason for non-voting, suggesting a need to address civic engagement.
3. **Information sources**: Voters predominantly rely on social media and television for election information, while viewing emails and text messages as less credible sources.
4. **Voter's Choice Act (VCA) awareness**: The survey indicates that counties implementing the VCA may need to enhance their educational efforts to inform voters about their VCA status and associated benefits.

These findings underscore the importance of tailored communication strategies and voter education initiatives to improve electoral participation and awareness.

2023 California State Voter Experience Report

Executive Summary

California is considered a leader in democracy and voting in the United States for a number of reasons, including but not limited to expanded voter access, high voter turnout, inclusive electoral politics, redistricting reforms, campaign finance regulation, and technological innovations.[1] More specifically, California has taken steps to make voting more accessible such as allowing same-day voter registration, universal vote-by-mail, and expanding early voting options, leading to turnout rates in California elections that tend to be higher than the national average. California has also enacted policies aimed at increasing the representation and participation of historically underrepresented groups. (Examples include the Voter's Choice Act [VCA], which increased ways to cast a ballot, language assistance, and the 2020 Primary Promise, which allowed unaffiliated voters to participate in the Democratic Presidential Primary.)[2] Furthermore, California has tried to reduce partisan gerrymandering of Congressional districts by creating an independent citizens redistricting commission, and regulations like donation limits, disclosure requirements, and a voluntary public financing program aim to even the playing field between candidates and reduce the influence of money in politics. Finally, California has promoted innovations like online voter registration and ballot tracking to modernize the voting process and increase convenience for voters.

All of these advances place California at the forefront of democratic participation in the United States, and even the world; however, California is also one of the most diverse states in the union, and building a multi-racial and multi-ethnic inclusive democracy is a requisite goal.[3] The 2023 California State Voter Experience Survey report seeks to better understand and identify voter disparities in the areas of voter awareness, voter engagement, and voter perceptions. Specifically, the report focuses on how California voters view and participate in the voting process, barriers they report facing in relation to elections, and multi-racial and multi-ethnic voting participation.

In collaboration with California State University, Sacramento, the California Secretary of State commissioned a survey in July 2023, which ultimately included 1,350 Californians. The survey included respondents from fifty-eight counties across the state, including 380 responses from Black respondents, 199 Asian-American respondents, 332 Latinx respondents, 200 White respondents, 78 respondents who identify as Native American, and 132 additional interviews completed in Spanish.[4,5] The research examined issues of voter engagement and access, voter knowledge and information, trust and confidence in systems of voting, and knowledge about the Office of the Secretary of State. The following Executive

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[1] For more, see the voting and election information page of the California Office of the Secretary of State. https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/voting-california.

[2] The 2020 Primary Promise allowed for California voters registered with "no party preference" to choose among the Democratic, Libertarian, and American Independent parties to vote for a 2020 primary candidate. The Republican, Green, and Peace and Freedom parties, however, have opted to keep their primaries solely for voters registered with their respective parties. For more, see https://www.cnn.com/2019/10/22/politics/california-2020-primary-independent-voters/index.html.

[3] For more on the most diverse states, see: https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/slideshows/the-10-most-racially-diverse-states-in-the-us?onepage; urban politics scholars highlight the need to work toward an inclusive model of governance that allows for decisions to be made with the "public good" in mind. For more, see the work of Judd and Swanstrom (2012), *City Politics: The Politics Economy of Urban America*, and Myron Orfield, "Conflict or Consensus? Forty Years of Minnesota Metropolitan Politics," *The Brookings Review* (1998): 31-34.

[4] The 132 Spanish interviews were conducted with respondents that self-identified as dominant Spanish-speaking and are not a subset of the Latinx interviews.

[5] The remaining 30 or so respondents either identified as "other" when asked about their racial/ethnic identity or refused to identify at all.

Summary will offer broad, overall findings for each of the aforementioned topics, and the full report will provide a detailed analysis, including examinations across racial and ethnic groups as well as the role of the VCA.

Key Findings

Voter Awareness

Voter/Voting Knowledge and Election Information
All 1,350 respondents were asked whether or not they believed they resided in a VCA county. Of the 1,350 respondents, approximately 22 percent (297 respondents) said they live in a VCA county and 22 percent (297 respondents) said they live in a non-VCA county. Of those respondents who said they did live in a VCA county, about 26 percent (77 respondents) were correct. This is compared to 23 percent (68 respondents) who correctly said they *did not* live in a VCA county. Moreover, of the 756 respondents who did not know if they lived in a VCA county, 53 percent (400 respondents) actually did.

When all respondents were asked to describe how aware they were of various voting options and resources, anywhere between 40 percent to 60 percent of respondents (depending on racial/ethnic group) said they were "very aware" of vote-by-mail options, drop box returns for ballots, vote centers, early voting options, and the ability to vote in person.

Respondents reported little awareness toward conditional voting (29 percent; 354 respondents), receiving a replacement ballot (29 percent; 343 respondents), or receiving a ballot in multiple languages (38 percent; 446 respondents).

On the other hand, the vast majority of respondents said they were aware that you needed to sign your ballot for it to count. Comparatively, only half of respondents admitted they were aware that they needed to update their signature and/or name if it had changed since the last election.

Knowledge about the California Office of the Secretary of State (SOS)
The final section of the survey examined respondents' self-reported knowledge of the Office of the California Secretary of State (SOS). Respondents were asked whether or not they believed that they knew about "the role of the SOS office," and approximately 44 percent (580 respondents) of the respondents admitted to not knowing the role of the SOS. When it comes to differences among racial and ethnic groups, knowledge gaps about the SOS do exist, and differences were exacerbated in non-VCA counties. As a final set of measures, respondents were asked to identify which of the following elections services (if any) are provided by the SOS: register to vote in California, check voter registration status, track the status of submitted ballots, and provide voter information in many, non-English language formats. Approximately 30 percent of the respondents (418 respondents) identified all the services in question as offered by the SOS, however, dramatic differences emerged based on racial and ethnic differences. Unfortunately, not much difference appears between respondents who live in VCA counties when compared to those who do not, suggesting that simply residing in a VCA county is not enough to increase awareness about the role of the office of the SOS for any of the racial or ethnic groups in particular.

Voter Engagement

Voter Engagement and Access
Results suggest that non-White respondents are less likely to be registered to vote with 85 percent (1,102 respondents) of all respondents reporting they were registered to vote; 90 percent (221 respondents) of White respondents reported being registered, with no other racial or ethnic group reporting registration at over 86 percent. Similarly, when asked about voting in the 2020 Presidential election and in the 2022 Midterm elections, significantly fewer Black and Native American respondents reported voting. Of those who did not vote (in either 2020 or 2022, or both), a lack of interest was cited as the most influential reason. Additionally, almost three-quarters or 70 percent (94 respondents) who voted in person said they felt "very comfortable" doing so. These results varied in significant ways depending on a respondent's racial and ethnic identity as well as whether or not they lived in a VCA county, with the majority of non-White respondents who do not live in VCA counties reporting less political engagement overall.

Social Media and Sources of Election Information
As far as election information goes, a plurality of respondents reported getting most of their information from the internet (online), and of all the major social media outlets available, Facebook is the most used by respondents for election information. On the other hand, respondents rarely rely upon text messages, email messages, or television for election information. In addition, social media and television are reported as the *most trusted* sources of information, while people express little trust in text messages and email. Further examination of these results by race and ethnicity suggests significant differences separating Californians based on their racial and ethnic identity as well as the type of county they reside in (VCA county versus non-VCA county).

Voter Perceptions of Participation

Trust and Confidence in Systems of Voting
The survey also included questions that measure trust and confidence in the voting system and politics in general. When asked, "Are you concerned that your ballot is *not* counted," a little less than half of the respondents (45 percent; 586 respondents) said that they are not concerned at all. However, of those remaining, the plurality (22 percent; 271 respondents) reported that they were very concerned about their ballot being counted, with another 18 percent (226 respondents) admitting they were somewhat concerned, and 17 percent (212 respondents) said they were a little concerned that their ballot was not counted. The following question asked, "Do you have confidence in the voting process?" Here, over two-thirds of respondents reported they were confident in the voting process itself. Not surprisingly, race and ethnicity play an important role in interpreting these results. On the other hand, when examining trust and confidence by whether or not a respondent lives in a VCA county, few trends emerge.

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This voter experience survey examining Californians' attitudes and knowledge related to voting and elections found several key differences across racial/ethnic groups. As this Executive Summary makes all too clear, the results suggest non-White groups, especially Black and Native American respondents, were less engaged and knowledgeable about voting options and the California Secretary of State's role. However, simply living in a VCA county did not consistently predict higher awareness or participation.

Recommendations
To build on these findings, future research should explore the barriers to voting faced by different minority groups through focus groups or interviews. Adding a qualitative component will add insight into where to direct resources to increase participation and awareness about politics. Additionally, the effects of targeted outreach and education efforts in VCA counties could be evaluated through pre/post surveys. A

more nuanced analysis of geographic and socioeconomic factors is also recommended. Overall, this survey provides a useful baseline that highlights disparities, while follow-up qualitative and quantitative research can provide deeper insight into improving equitable access and knowledge regarding voting for all Californians.

List of Figures and Tables

2023 California State Voter Experience Report

The California Voter's Choice Act (VCA) became law in 2016 and went into effect in 2018. It fundamentally changed how elections are conducted in California by transitioning from neighborhood polling places to a vote center model. The main provisions of the VCA include:

- All registered voters receive a mail-in ballot and in-person voting is optional.
- Counties replace traditional neighborhood polling places with consolidated regional vote centers. These are open for in-person voting for at least 11 days leading up to Election Day.
- Vote centers allow voters to cast ballots in person, drop off completed mail-in ballots, register to vote or update registrations, receive replacement ballots, vote using accessible voting machines, and get help and voting materials in multiple languages.
- Counties must also provide ballot drop-off locations open leading up to and on Election Day.

The VCA aims to increase voter turnout and modernize elections in California by making voting more flexible and accessible. Proponents argued the neighborhood polling place model limited voting options and that vote centers with expanded days and services would remove barriers to voting.[6] The VCA was implemented in 2018 on a rolling basis in counties that opted in. While the VCA is relatively new, county participation has quickly expanded in a few short years. In 2018, five counties adopted the VCA as part of the initial pilot. This number tripled from five counties in 2018 to 15 counties in 2020. During 2022, 12 new counties were added to the VCA election model. In advance of the 2024 election cycle, two counties adopted the VCA model for a total of 29 counties.[7]

While the VCA is an important step toward creating a more Democratic California, the provisions of the VCA are especially important for non-White voters. Specifically, the VCA appears to have positively affected Black voter turnout and participation in California elections. In 2018, the first year the VCA was widely implemented, voter turnout rose significantly in counties that adopted the model compared to previous similar elections, including higher increases among African Americans.[8] The VCA also made voting more convenient; vote centers are open for multiple days before Election Day, allowing for more flexibility for voters. This makes it easier for those with rigid work schedules or transportation issues.[9] Similarly, Vote Centers consolidated neighborhood polling places, reducing the average distance African American voters had to travel by over 20 percent in some counties. This helped remove transportation barriers.[10]

Furthermore, same-day voter registration is allowed at vote centers. This eliminated missed registration deadlines as an obstacle for African Americans and Latinx voters who historically turn out at lower rates than other groups. Also, vote centers provide voting materials and assistance in multiple languages,

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[6] https://www.cbsnews.com/gooddaysacramento/news/what-is-the-voters-choice-act.

[7] https://www.sos.ca.gov/voters-choice-act

[8] A 2020 study by the Public Policy Institute of California found that voting by mail in VCA elections saw a higher increase in turnout among African Americans compared to other groups. https://www.ppic.org/event/how-greater-vote-by-mail-influences-california-voter-turnout/

[9] A review of the CA voter experience by the California Civic Engagement Project showed the average distance to vote centers decreased by over 20% for African Americans in some counties. https://regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/sites/g/files/dgvnsk986/files/inline-files/UCDavisCCEPIssueBrief3VoteCenterStatewideSurveyFactSheet%2B%282%29.pdf.

[10] In a 2021 policy brief by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), African Americans were more likely than other groups to take advantage of same-day registration at vote centers. https://www.ppic.org/publication/implementing-the-california-voters-choice-act.

improving access for non-native English speakers.[11] Lastly, mail-in ballots, in-person voting, and ballot drop boxes give Black voters more ways to cast their ballots. Thus, while turnout gaps still persist, data indicates that VCA statutory requirements such as expanding voter access have benefited Black participation in California elections.

While the VCA is especially important for Black Californians, trends suggest the VCA has also influenced other non-White groups in similar ways, as knowledge and participation are associated with residing in a VCA county. And, even with the benefits of the VCA, some reports suggest that despite election reforms the [turnout] "gap between White and diverse voters" in California remains significant.[12] To this end, the current study will help expand our understanding of the VCA, this time through the opinions and attitudes of Californians themselves, moving toward an analysis of the full impact of the VCA as more counties transition to the vote center model.

The following contains a full research report for the voter experience survey, containing analyses of all the results included in the data collected. The survey, administered in July 2023, includes 1,350 Californians from all 58 counties across the state, including 380 Black respondents, 199 Asian-American respondents, 332 Hispanic or Latinx respondents, 200 White respondents, and 78 respondents who identify as Native American, and 132 additional interviews completed in Spanish.[13] The survey was administered online based on randomly selected email addresses from lists of panel respondents.[14] The research examined issues of voter awareness, voter engagement, and voter perceptions of participation.

Voter Awareness

Voter/Voting Knowledge and Information
The survey also included variables that measured respondents' levels of voter knowledge and awareness.

To start, respondents were asked if they believed they resided in a VCA county. Of the 1,350 respondents, 22 percent (297 respondents) said they lived in a VCA county and 22 percent (297 respondents) said they did not. Another 56 percent (756 respondents) said they did not know (see Figure 1). Interestingly, of the respondents who said they did live in a VCA county, about 26 percent (77 respondents) were correct. Comparatively, 23 percent (68 respondents) correctly stated they *did not* live in a VCA county.

On the other hand, 53 percent (400 respondents) of the 756 respondents who said that they did not know if they lived in a VCA county actually did live in a VCA county. Further examination of these results by race and ethnicity shows that, compared to other racial and ethnic groups, more White and Black respondents correctly identified living in VCA county (37 percent [92 respondents] and 31 percent [123

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[11] A review of the VCA by the Election Administration Research Center highlighted improvements in multilingual voting materials under the act. https://earc.berkeley.edu/index.html.

[12] https://calmatters.org/politics/2020/12/california-election-reform-diverse-voters/

[13] As mentioned, due to the small sample of Native Americans, results will only be presented and not used to draw broad conclusions; the remaining 30 or so respondents either identified as "other" when asked about their racial/ethnic identity or refused to identify at all. Of the 132 Spanish-speaking respondents, half identified as Latinx when asked about their racial or ethnic identity. The remaining Spanish-speaking respondents identified as mixed-race or White.

[14] Panels are often used in survey sampling to create a pool of potential respondents. Panels are recruited by market research firms to create large pools of potential survey takers with diverse demographics. Companies maintain their own proprietary panels. When a new survey is fielded, a sample is drawn from the broader panel based on the target demographic. This allows surveying a consistent sample that represents the target population.

respondents], respectively) (see Figure 2). Rather, only 19 percent (38 respondents) of Asian Americans correctly stated that they lived in a VCA county. Lastly, of all the groups, respondents who took the survey in Spanish were the most informed, with 53 percent (70 respondents) correctly stating that they currently live in a VCA county.

Do you live in a VCA county (self-identify)?
(N=1,347)
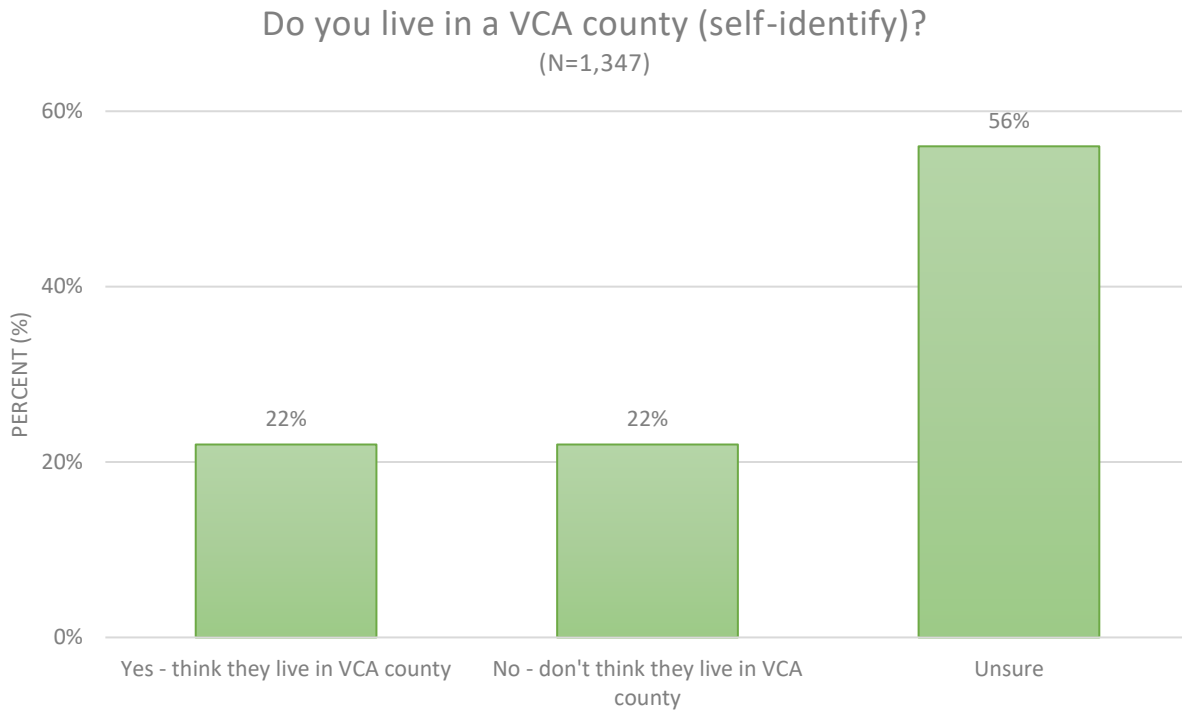
Figure 1. Whether or not respondents report living in a VCA county, by race/ethnicity

Correctly identify if reside in VCA county, by race/ethnicity & language
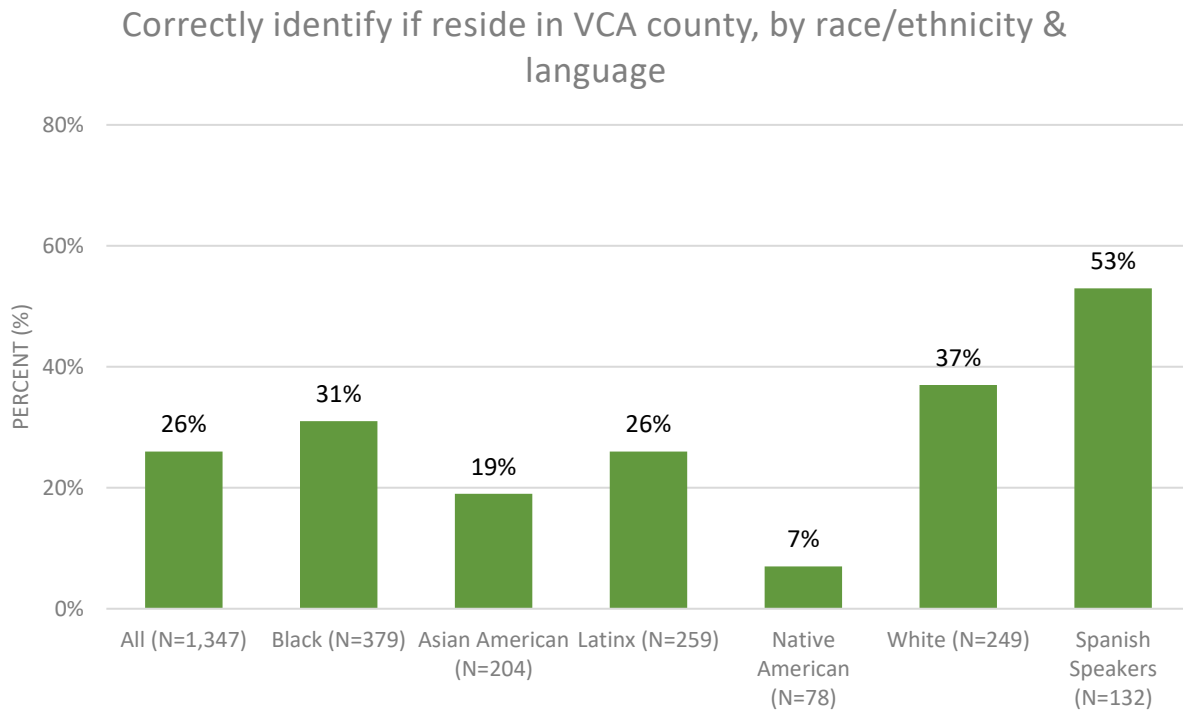
Figure 2. Respondents' accuracy when identifying their type of county, by race/ethnicity

When respondents were asked to describe how aware (from "not aware at all" to "very aware") they were of various voting options and resources during the 2022 Midterm elections, several trends emerged. To start, approximately 55 percent (694 respondents) said they were "very aware" of vote-by-mail options, 45 percent (558 respondents) were "very aware" of drop box returns for ballots, 49 percent (613 respondents) for vote centers, 44 percent (552 respondents) for early voting options, and 51 percent (637 respondents) were "very aware" of the ability to vote in person (see Figure 3A). Not as many respondents were very aware of resources, such as the ability to vote conditionally (29 percent; 354 respondents), receive a replacement ballot (29 percent; 343 respondents), or receive a ballot in multiple languages (38 percent; 446 respondents) (see Figure 3B).

Comparatively, a larger number of White respondents reported being "very aware" of these options and resources (in some cases a gap as large as 10 percent separates White respondents from other groups [see Table 3]) and residing in a VCA county did little to change how people felt (see Table A7-A8).[15] Similarly, 42 percent (536 respondents) of respondents said they were "very aware" of ballot return deadlines and postal pick-up deadlines (476 respondents); again, more White respondents reported being "very aware" (see Table 4). However, as it pertains to deadlines, significantly more respondents who live in VCA counties reported they were very aware (particularly, Black respondents) (see Table A7). Additionally, aside from voting early by mail, respondents report less familiarity with other options to vote early (see Figure 4), and a greater number of respondents who live in a VCA county were familiar with voting early at a 10- or 4-day vote center (see Table A8). Furthermore, approximately 84 percent (1,127 respondents) of respondents say they are aware they need to sign their ballots, but fewer (52 percent; 707 respondents) report knowing they need to update their ballot signature if it has changed (see

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[15] With the exception of native Americans, respondents' awareness varied little based on the type of county they live in (VCA or not) – and, due to small sample size, we cannot draw generalizable conclusions.

Figures 5 & 6). Lastly, the type (VCA or not) of county a respondent lives in fails to influence their awareness of voting options (Table A9).

Very aware of voting options/deadlines

- Return ballot through mail
- Return ballot through county drop box
- Return ballot at official vote center drop box
- Vote in-person early
- Vote in-person on election day
- Vote in-person using accessible vote machine

All (N=1,254)
- 55%
- 45%
- 49%
- 44%
- 51%
- 43%

Black (N=348)
- 49%
- 41%
- 49%
- 43%
- 49%
- 40%

Asian American (N=195)
- 60%
- 46%
- 48%
- 40%
- 50%
- 38%

Latinx (N=242)
- 55%
- 42%
- 45%
- 41%
- 44%
- 39%

Native American (N=68)
- 44%
- 43%
- 53%
- 35%
- 50%
- 38%

White (N=241)
- 57%
- 49%
- 48%
- 49%
- 53%
- 45%

Spanish Speakers (N=129)
- 40%
- 31%
- 32%
- 35%
- 40%
- 29%

PERCENT (%)

Figure 3A. Awareness of voting options and deadlines, by race/ethnicity

Very aware of voting options/deadlines

- **Register and vote conditionally on same day** (dark blue)
- **Receive a replacement ballot** (dark green)
- **Receive ballot/voting materials in multiple languages** (yellow)
- **Ballot must be returned to drop box by 8 pm** (light blue)
- **Ballot must be picked up by mail carrier by 8 pm** (light green)

All (N=1,254)
- Register and vote conditionally on same day: 29%
- Receive a replacement ballot: 29%
- Receive ballot/voting materials in multiple languages: 38%
- Ballot must be returned to drop box by 8 pm: 43%
- Ballot must be picked up by mail carrier by 8 pm: 38%

Black (N=348)
- Register and vote conditionally on same day: 30%
- Receive a replacement ballot: 28%
- Receive ballot/voting materials in multiple languages: 35%
- Ballot must be returned to drop box by 8 pm: 41%
- Ballot must be picked up by mail carrier by 8 pm: 35%

Asian American (N=195)
- Register and vote conditionally on same day: 22%
- Receive a replacement ballot: 22%
- Receive ballot/voting materials in multiple languages: 38%
- Ballot must be returned to drop box by 8 pm: 37%
- Ballot must be picked up by mail carrier by 8 pm: 32%

Latinx (N=242)
- Register and vote conditionally on same day: 29%
- Receive a replacement ballot: 26%
- Receive ballot/voting materials in multiple languages: 36%
- Ballot must be returned to drop box by 8 pm: 40%
- Ballot must be picked up by mail carrier by 8 pm: 37%

Native American (N=68)
- Register and vote conditionally on same day: 25%
- Receive a replacement ballot: 25%
- Receive ballot/voting materials in multiple languages: 33%
- Ballot must be returned to drop box by 8 pm: 45%
- Ballot must be picked up by mail carrier by 8 pm: 33%

White (N=241)
- Register and vote conditionally on same day: 35%
- Receive a replacement ballot: 37%
- Receive ballot/voting materials in multiple languages: 39%
- Ballot must be returned to drop box by 8 pm: 52%
- Ballot must be picked up by mail carrier by 8 pm: 46%

Spanish Speakers (N=129)
- Register and vote conditionally on same day: 24%
- Receive a replacement ballot: 29%
- Receive ballot/voting materials in multiple languages: 30%
- Ballot must be returned to drop box by 8 pm: 29%
- Ballot must be picked up by mail carrier by 8 pm: 30%

PERCENT (%)

Figure 3B. Awareness of voting options and deadlines, by race/ethnicity (continued)

Very aware of options to vote early

- Vote early at 10-day vote center
- Vote early at 4-day vote center
- Return ballot early through mail
- Return ballot early to county drop box
- Return ballot early at official vote center drop box

Figure 4. Awareness of options to vote early, by race/ethnicity

Are you aware you need to sign ballot before mailing?

Figure 5. Awareness of ballot signature requirement, by race/ethnicity

Are you aware you need to update signature if changed?
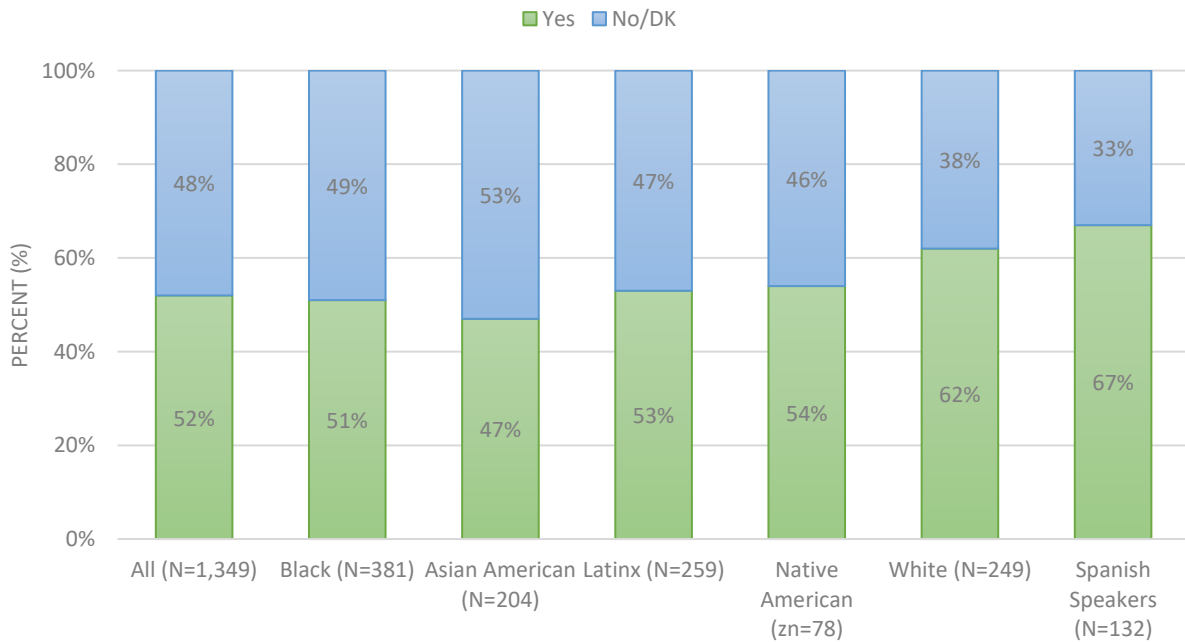
Figure 6. Awareness of the need to update ballot signatures, by race/ethnicity

Knowledge about the California Office of the Secretary of State (SOS)
The following section of the survey examined respondents' self-reported knowledge of the California Office of the Secretary of State (SOS). To start, all respondents were asked whether or not they believed that they knew *"the role of the SOS office."* This question is solely to understand how much respondents *think they know* about the SOS, and if – even from their own perception – they know a lot or a little about the office (see Figure 7). As it turns out, 44 percent (580 respondents) of the respondents admitted to not knowing the role of the SOS. Another 33 percent (439 respondents) of respondents said they *think they know the role*, with only 23 percent (310 respondents) expressing confidence. When it comes to differences among racial and ethnic groups, knowledge gaps about the SOS exist. For instance, 38 percent (94 respondents) of White respondents reported that they are *confident* they know the role of the SOS, only 22 percent (58 respon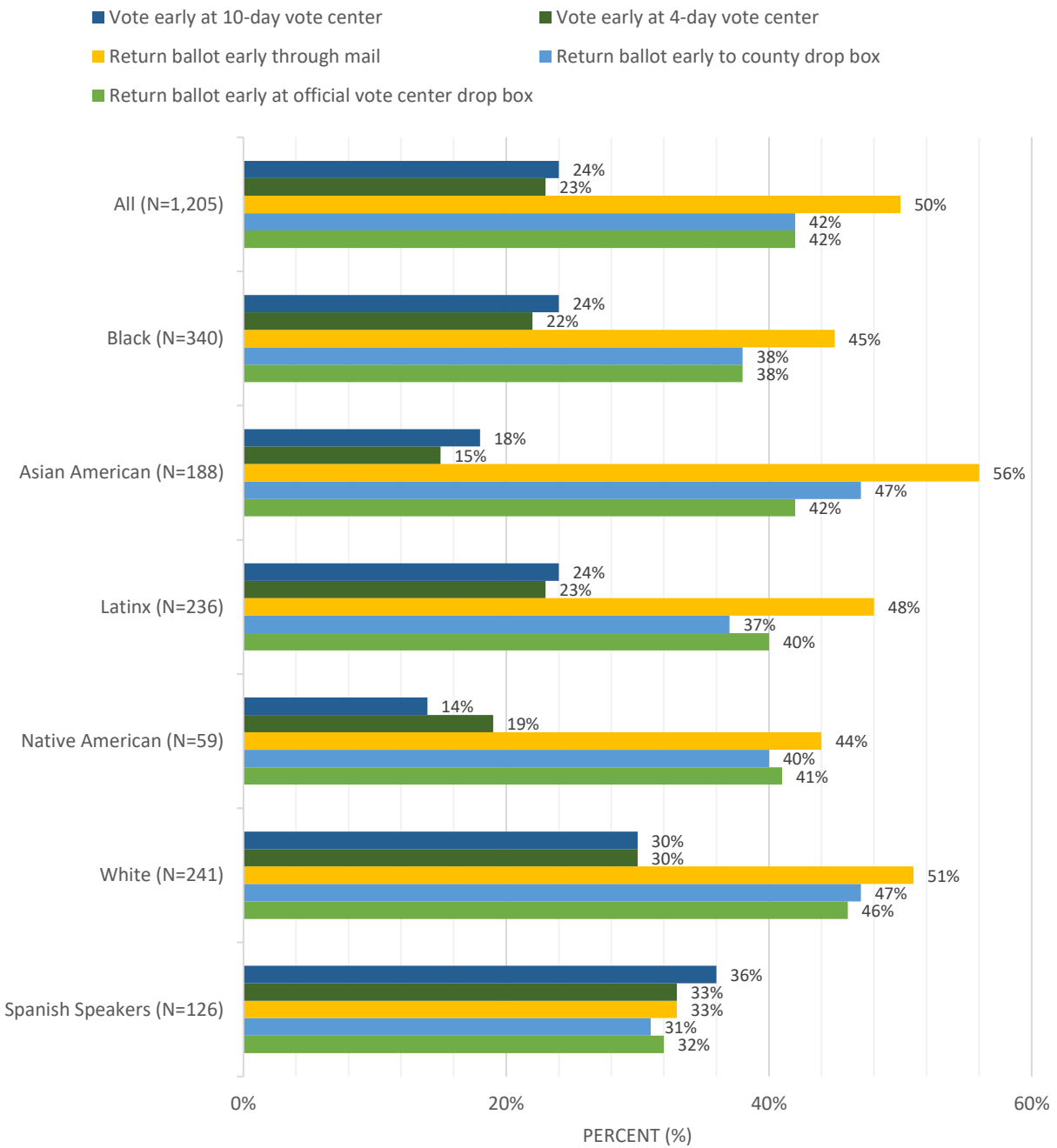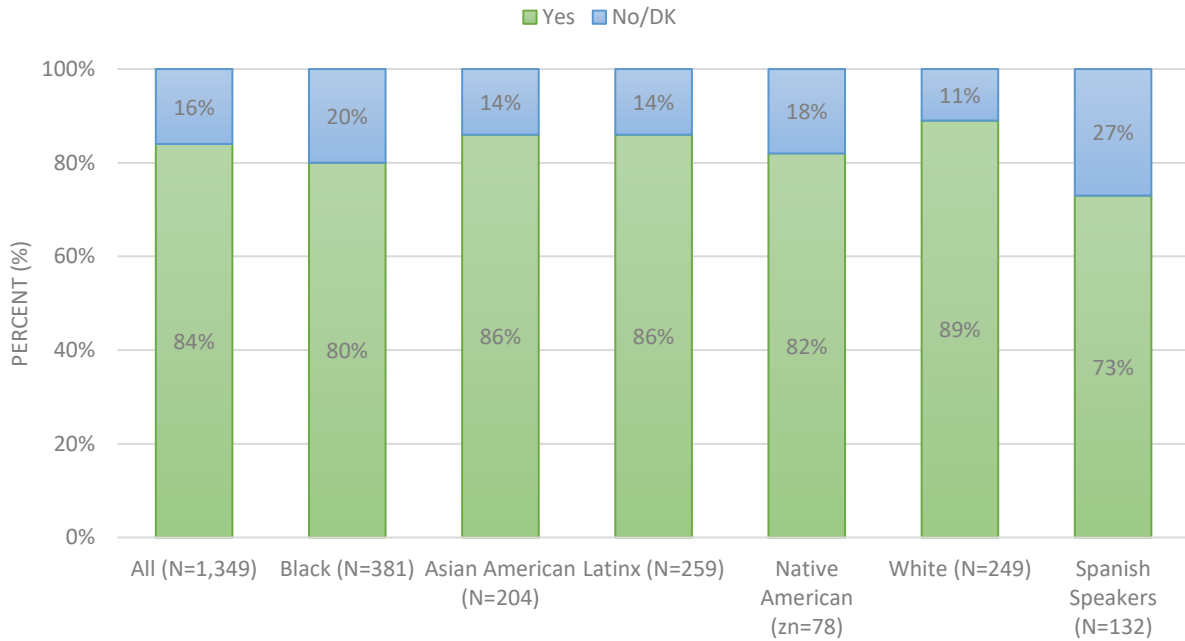dents) of Latinx, 21 percent (80 respondents) of Black, 15 percent (12 respondents) of Native American, and 13 percent (25 respondents) of Asian American respondents said the same. Moreover, non-White respondents who do not live in VCA counties report the least confidence in their knowledge of the SOS, with a gap of at least five percentage points separating them from their counterparts who live in VCA counties (see Table A15).

Relatedly, as a final set of measures, respondents were asked to identify which of the following elections services (if any) are provided by the SOS: register to vote in California, check voter registration status, track the status of submitted ballots, and provide voter information in many, non-English language formats (see Figure 8). While some variation occurs as to which services respondents identify more than others, the most striking results emerge when examining which respondents identified all of the services in question as offered by the SOS (only 31 percent did so; 418 respondents). In this case, 38 percent (78 respondents) of Asian American and 34 percent (84 respondents) White respondents identified all four services with 24 percent (91 respondents) of Black and 24 percent (63 respondents) of Latinx respondents reporting the same. Unfortunately, not much difference appears between respondents who live in VCA counties when compared to those who do not, suggesting that simply residing in a VCA is not enough to increase awareness about the SOS for any of the racial or ethnic groups in particular (see Table A16).

Do you know the role of the Secretary of State (SOS)?

■ Don't know role ■ I think I know role ■ Confident I know role
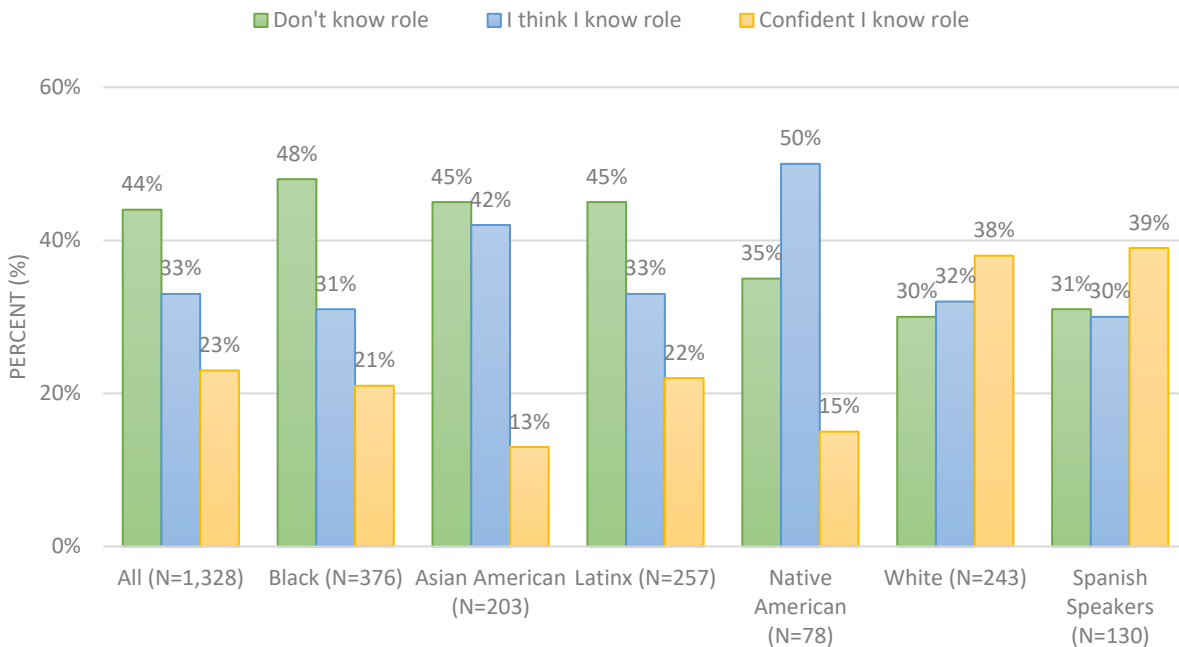

Figure 7. Respondents' knowledge about the California SOS, by race/ethnicity

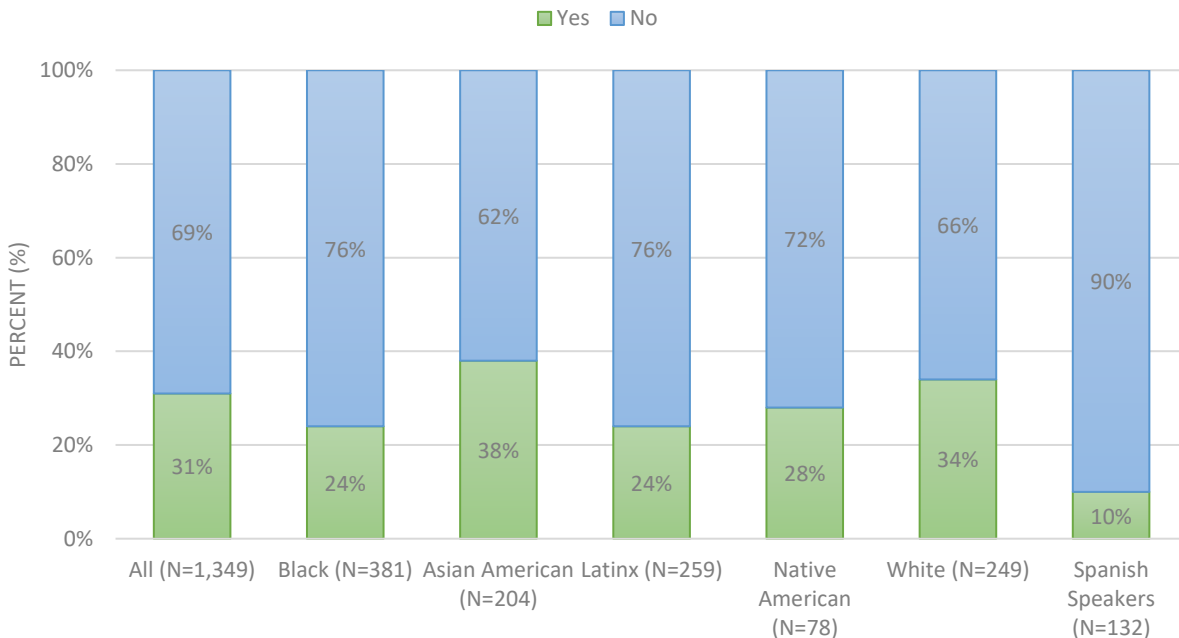## Percent that know ALL SOS services

■ Yes ■ No

Figure 8. Respondents' knowledge about the services of the SOS, by race/ethnicity

Voter Engagement

Voter Engagement and Access

The survey opened with a series of questions probing past and present voter behavior, including self-reported voting participation. While we know self-reported answers are often inflated due to social desirability, comparisons across racial and ethnic groups (and Spanish-speaking respondents) can still offer useful conclusions.[16] Therefore, results suggest that Black and Native American respondents are significantly less likely (than White respondents) to be registered to vote (see Figure 9). For example, among all respondents, 85 percent (1,102 respondents) report being registered. Comparatively, Whites report the highest registration rates at 91 percent (221 respondents), while Blacks (83 percent; 304 respondents), Asian Americans (86 percent; 171 respondents), Latinx (86 percent; 274 respondents), and Native Americans (76 percent; 55 respondents) all lag behind.[17]

Moreover, when asked if one voted in the 2020 Presidential Election, 76 percent (993 respondents) said they did (see Figure 10). Once again, White respondents led the way at 87 percent; 213 respondents), more than eight percent higher than any other racial or ethnic group (Black: 73 percent, 269 respondents; Asian Americans: 79 percent, 160 respondents; Latinx: 78 percent, 246 respondents; Native Americans: 69 percent, 50 respondents). Lastly, when asked about voting in the 2022 Midterm Elections, similar trends emerged albeit less turnout overall across all groups (see Figure 11). (Throughout the survey, due to the small sample size, results presented for Native American respondents should be read with caution.)
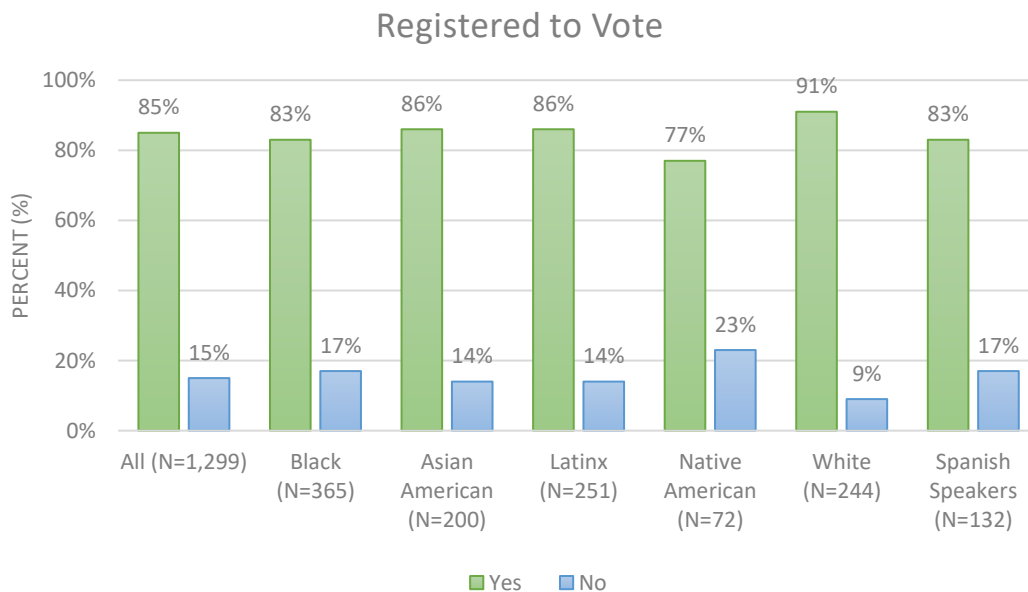
Figure 9. Respondents who say they are registered to vote, by race/ethnicity

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[16] While reporting bias may occur due to self-reporting, research suggests that self-reported biases only explain a small proportion of variance in multi-ethnic samples See, Bauhoff, S. (2014). Self-report bias in estimating cross-sectional and treatment effects. *Encyclopedia of quality of life and well-being research*, 5798-5800; Teh, W. L., Abdin, E., P.V., A., Siva Kumar, F. D., Roystonn, K., Wang, P., ... & Subramaniam, M. (2023). Measuring social desirability bias in a multi-ethnic cohort sample: its relationship with self-reported physical activity, dietary habits, and factor structure. *BMC Public Health*, *23*(1), 1-10.

[17] When presenting results graphically, the number of respondents for each racial/ethnic group may not always equal the total number of respondents displayed (as ALL) as some respondents identified their racial/ethnic identity as other and are not included in any of the racial/ethnic groups displayed.

Vote in 2020 Presidential Election
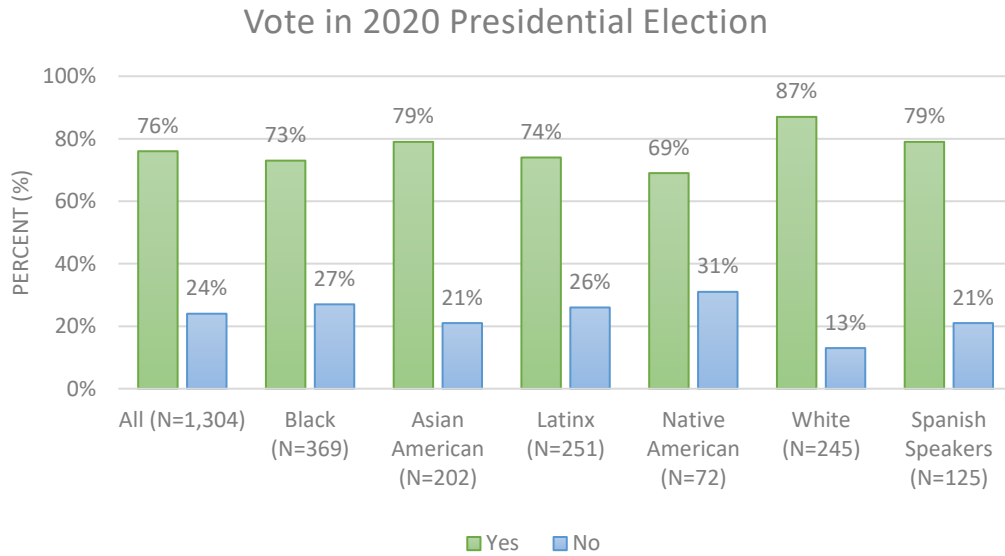
Figure 10. Respondents who say they voted in 2020, by race/ethnicity

Vote in 2022 Midterm Elections
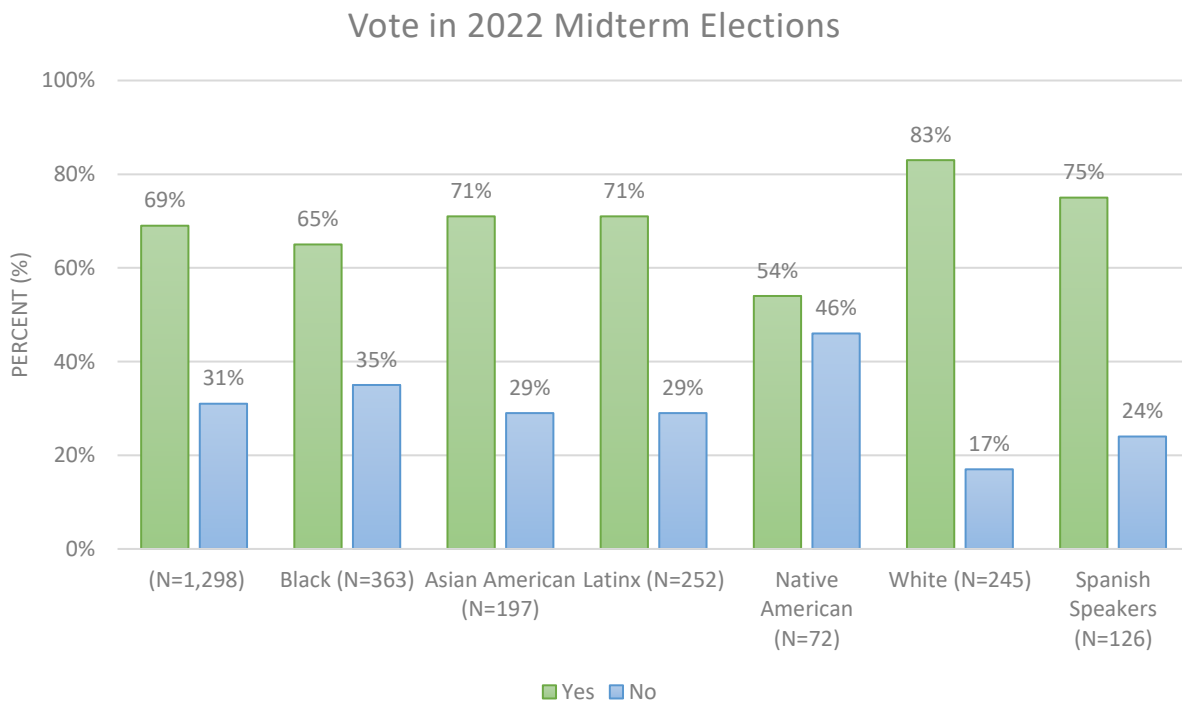
Figure 11. Respondents who say they voted in 2022, by race/ethnicity

Similar patterns emerged when examining voting behavior by whether or not a respondent lives in a VCA county as both Black and Native American respondents were significantly *more* likely to vote if they resided in a VCA county (see Table A2)[18]. Significant differences in overall voting behavior failed to emerge for respondents who opted to complete the survey in Spanish; however, the respondents who completed the survey in Spanish were significantly more likely to have voted in 2020 and 2022 if they lived in VCA counties.[19]

Of those who did not vote (in either 2020 or 2022, or both), 31 percent (104 respondents) cited a lack of interest as the most influential reason, 14 percent (47 respondents) stated they never got their ballot, 10 percent (34 of respondents) didn't know where to vote, and 10 percent (34 respondents) did not have adequate transportation (see Figure 12). For the respondents who voted, 47 percent (423 respondents) said that they mailed in their ballot, with 26 percent (234 respondents) saying they returned their ballot to an official county drop box, and another 12 percent (108 respondents) reported returning their completed ballot to an official vote center on election day (see Figure 13). While a larger proportion of Black and Latinx voters reported returning their completed ballot to an official vote center on election day, little differences emerge depending on whether or not the respondent lives in a VCA county (see Table A3).

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[18] Here, significance denotes statistical relationships that are significant at Chi2<0.05, giving reason to believe a *real* rather than a spurious relationship exists.

[19] Of Spanish speaking respondents, 80 percent (N=77) of those who lived in a VCA county reported voting in 2020 and 78 percent (N=75) reported voting 2022, compared 76 percent (N=22) in 2020 and 67 percent (N=20) in 2022 of respondents who did not live in a VCA county.

Vote in 2022 Midterm Elections
(Why motivated to NOT vote)
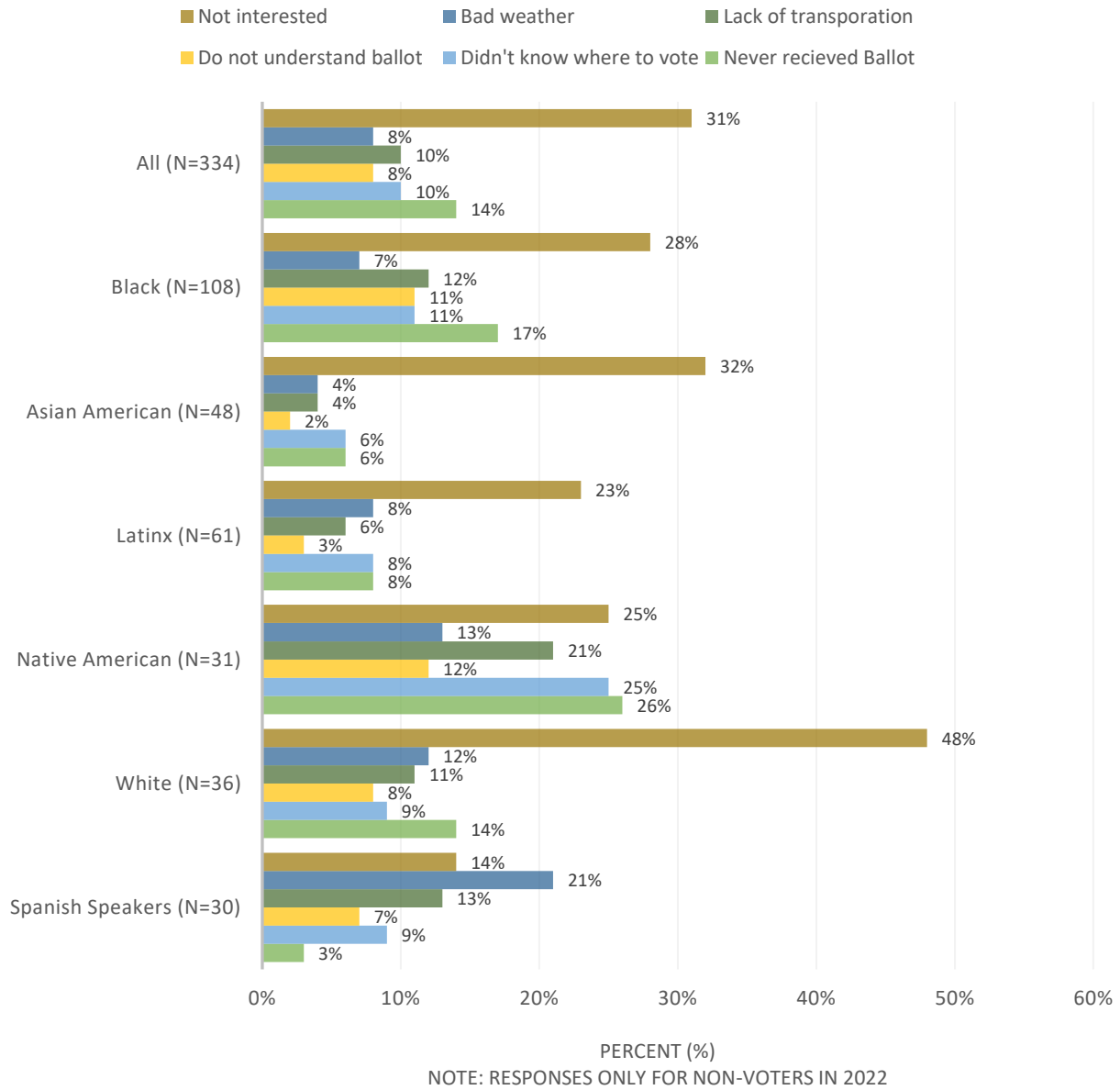
Figure 12. Why respondents did NOT vote in 2022, by race/ethnicity

When it comes to how voters felt about their in-person voting experience, 70 percent (94 respondents) of respondents said they felt "very comfortable" voting (see Figure 14).[20] When asked how easy (or difficult) it was to locate the place they dropped their ballot off or voted, 73 percent (742 respondents) said it was "very easy" (see Figure 15). Racial and ethnic differences do emerge here, as the largest proportion of White respondents' 78 percent (169 respondents) found it "very easy" to locate where to vote; significantly fewer Black (70 percent; 166 respondents), Asian American (66 percent; 92 respondents), and Native American (67 percent; 26 respondents) respondents felt the same. Surprisingly, voters who *did not* live in VCA counties report an easier time locating where to vote – the only exception is Spanish-speaking voters, of which a larger proportion in VCA counties reported it easier to find where to vote (see Tables A4-A6). Lastly, in terms of how respondents located their voter center, 63 percent (656 respondents) relied upon the sample county ballot, and this holds across racial and ethnic groups (see Figure 16).

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[20] With only 135 respondents reporting they voted in person, analyses of such a small population by either race/ethnicity or VCA county are not useful.

How Did You Vote in 2022?

Legend:
- Voted in-person early
- Voted in-person at vote center on election day
- Voted in-person at polling center on election day
- Returned ballot to vote center on election day
- Returned ballot to county drop box
- Mailed in completed ballot

All (N=899)
- Voted in-person early: 3%
- Voted in-person at vote center on election day: 4%
- Voted in-person at polling center on election day: 8%
- Returned ballot to vote center on election day: 12%
- Returned ballot to county drop box: 26%
- Mailed in completed ballot: 47%

Black (N=237)
- Voted in-person early: 4%
- Voted in-person at vote center on election day: 4%
- Voted in-person at polling center on election day: 9%
- Returned ballot to vote center on election day: 15%
- Returned ballot to county drop box: 25%
- Mailed in completed ballot: 43%

Asian American (N=139)
- Voted in-person early: 3%
- Voted in-person at vote center on election day: 4%
- Voted in-person at polling center on election day: 4%
- Returned ballot to vote center on election day: 7%
- Returned ballot to county drop box: 31%
- Mailed in completed ballot: 51%

Latinx (N=179)
- Voted in-person early: 2%
- Voted in-person at vote center on election day: 4%
- Voted in-person at polling center on election day: 11%
- Returned ballot to vote center on election day: 15%
- Returned ballot to county drop box: 25%
- Mailed in completed ballot: 43%

Native American (N=39)
- Voted in-person early: 5%
- Voted in-person at vote center on election day: 0%
- Voted in-person at polling center on election day: 10%
- Returned ballot to vote center on election day: 5%
- Returned ballot to county drop box: 34%
- Mailed in completed ballot: 46%

White (N=203)
- Voted in-person early: 4%
- Voted in-person at vote center on election day: 7%
- Voted in-person at polling center on election day: 5%
- Returned ballot to vote center on election day: 12%
- Returned ballot to county drop box: 22%
- Mailed in completed ballot: 50%

Spanish Speakers (N=95)
- Voted in-person early: 2%
- Voted in-person at vote center on election day: 5%
- Voted in-person at polling center on election day: 9%
- Returned ballot to vote center on election day: 27%
- Returned ballot to county drop box: 16%
- Mailed in completed ballot: 41%

PERCENT (%)
NOTE: RESPONSES ONLY FOR 2022 VOTERS

Figure 13. How respondents report voting in 2022, by race/ethnicity

Did you feel comfortable voting in person?
(Note: ONLY if voted in person in 2022)

Figure 14. How comfortable respondents report voting in-person, by race/ethnicity

Did you locate your vote center?
(Note: ONLY if voted in 2022)

Figure 15. Ease to which respondents report locating their vote center, by race/ethnicity

How did you locate your vote center?
(Note: ONLY if voted in 2022)

Figure 16. How respondents report locating their vote center, by race/ethnicity

Social Media and Sources of Election Information

As far as election information goes, 32 percent (433 respondents) of respondents reported getting most of their information from the internet (online), followed by television (27 percent; 364 respondents), and social media (16 percent; 212 respondents), rather than from email (5 percent, 60 respondents) or text messages (2 percent; 26 respondents).[21] In addition, results suggest that different racial and ethnic groups get their election media from different sources; for instan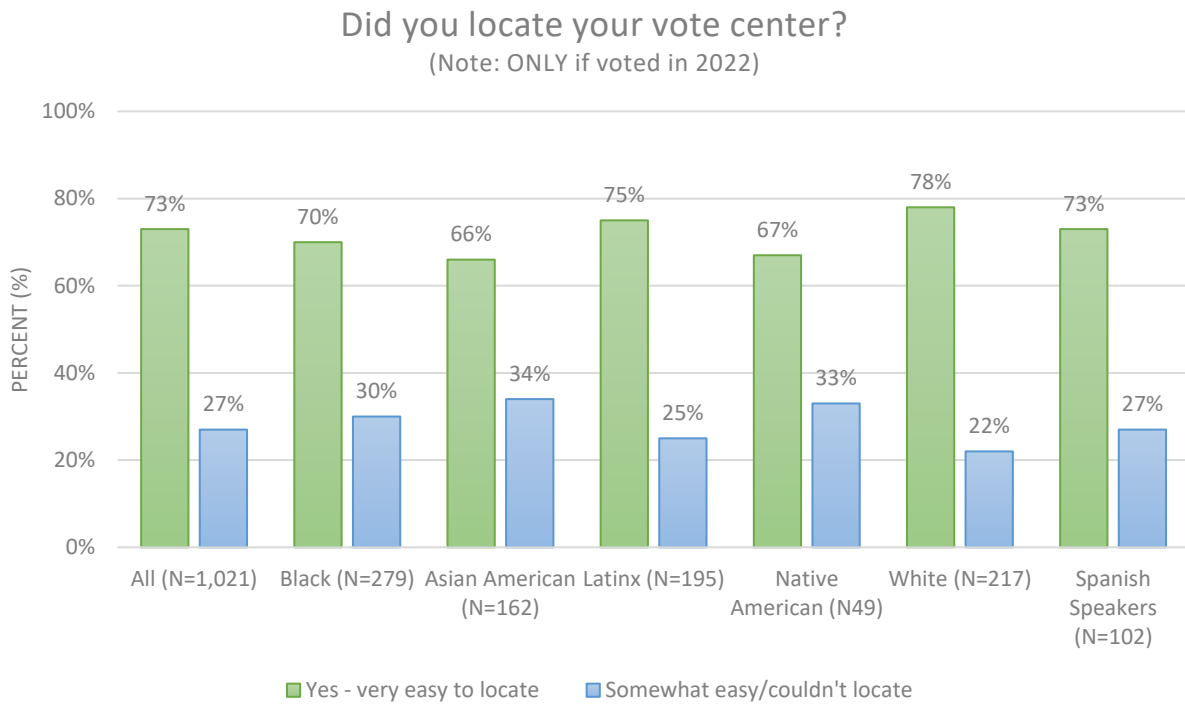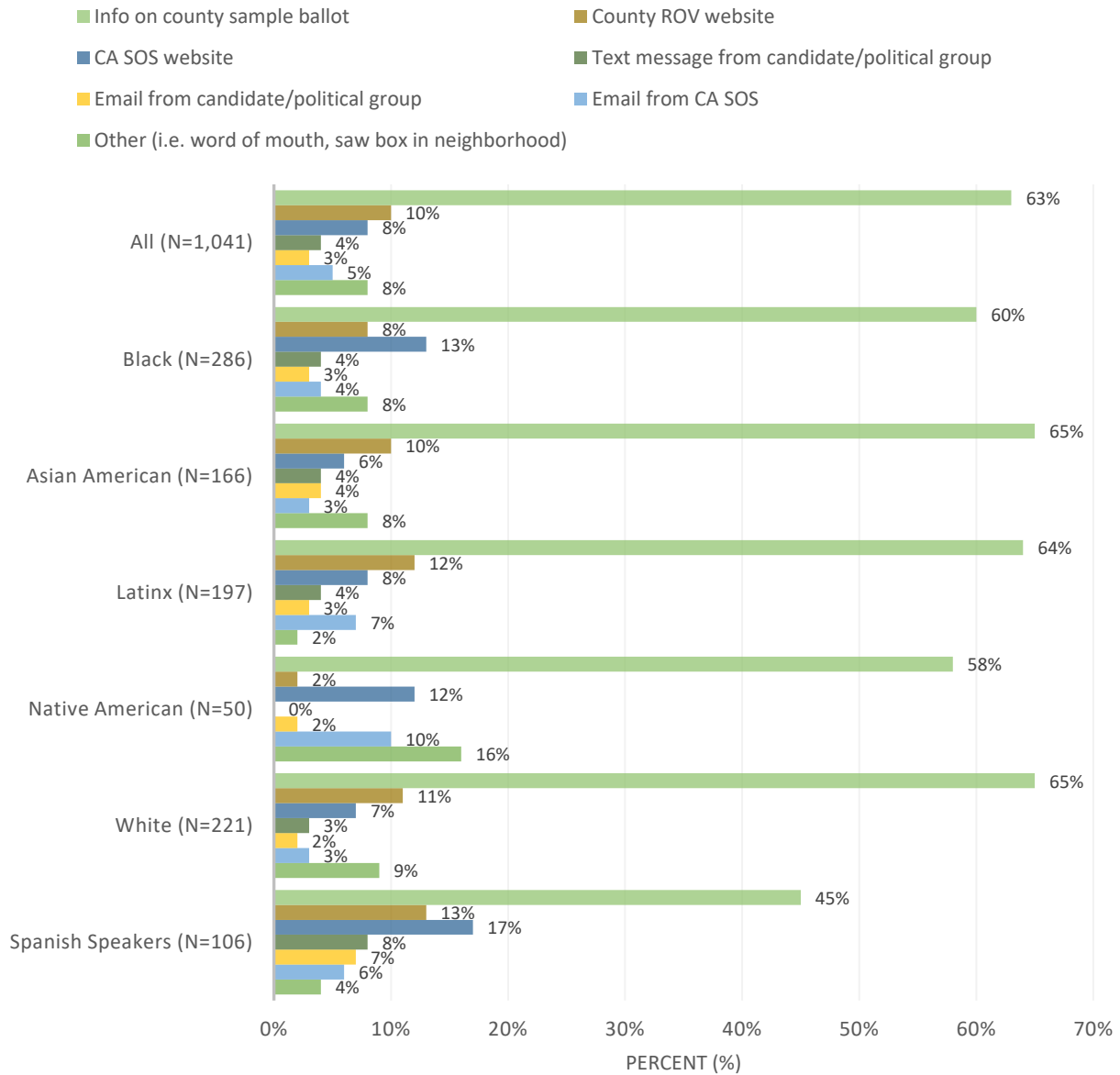ce, Asian American, Latinx, Native American, and White respondents all reported getting most of their information from online sources (see Figure 17).

Of all the major social media outlets available, Facebook is the most used by respondents for election information (33 percent; 444 respondents) (see Figure 18). To be specific, of just the respondents who use social media for election information, over 50 percent (444 respondents) report utilizing Facebook at one time or another. Furthermore, 40 percent (100 respondents) of white and 39 percent (102 respondents) of Latinx respondents reported using Facebook the most, and an overwhelming majority (57 percent; 75 respondents) of Spanish-speaking respondents reported using Facebook too. Furthermore, Facebook use (and social media use overall) for election information is greater in VCA counties (see Tables A10 & A11).

When asked which source of election information respondents trust the most, television (21 percent, 278 respondents) and social media (20 percent, 263 respondents) lead the way, followed by a "trusted community leader or organization" at 18 percent (246 respondents) (see Figure 19). On the other hand, text messages (1 percent, 14 respondents) and email (3 percent, 41 respondents) are *not perceived* as trustworthy at all.[22] This comports with the literature that overwhelmingly suggests a positive relationship between social media and trust.[23] Again, differences in trust toward the different media sources varied depending on racial and ethnic identity (see Figure 19). For example, Black respondents are more likely than other groups to report social media as the most trustworthy (at 24 percent; 92 respondents), while more Latinx and Native American respondents identify a community leader or organization as the most trustworthy (at 18 percent & 25 percent, respectively; 37 respondents & 20 respondents). Nonetheless, very few respondents (3 percent or less) across all racial groups report email and text messages as trustworthy sources of information.[24]

Lastly, the sources of election information are also associated with voter engagement. For example, respondents who report getting their election information from text messages and social media are significantly less likely to report voting in 2022 (at 56 percent & 58 percent, respectively; 13 respondents & 117 respondents) (see Table A12). On the other hand, significantly more respondents who get their election information from trusted community leaders and organizations reported voting (79 percent; 66 respondents). Not surprisingly, these results hold across all racial and ethnic groups, as there is little difference in the relationship between the source of election information and voter engagement depending on how one identifies.

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[21] Respondents' sources of election information also varied by age, such that the use of social media was significantly greater among younger respondents.

[22] Considering the various sources for election information are not directly related to VCA policy or county activities, the analysis only includes variation based on differences due to race and ethnicity.

[23] Håkansson, P., & Witmer, H. (2015). Social media and trust: A systematic literature review. *Journal of business and economics*, *6*(3), 517-524.

[24] It must be acknowledged that bias toward social media and online sources may be embedded in the research as the survey was conducted entirely online.
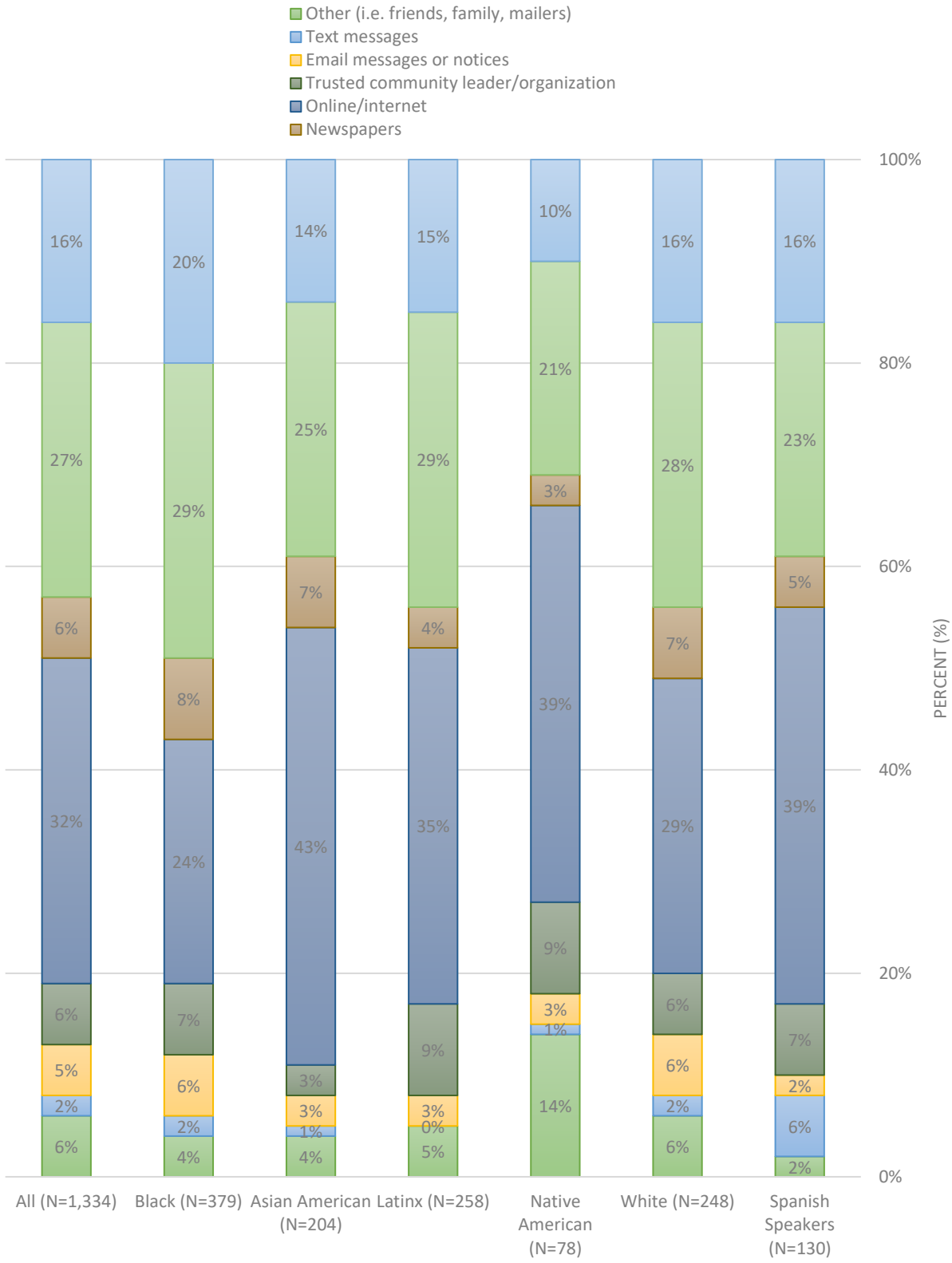
Figure 17. Reported sources of election information, by race/ethnicity

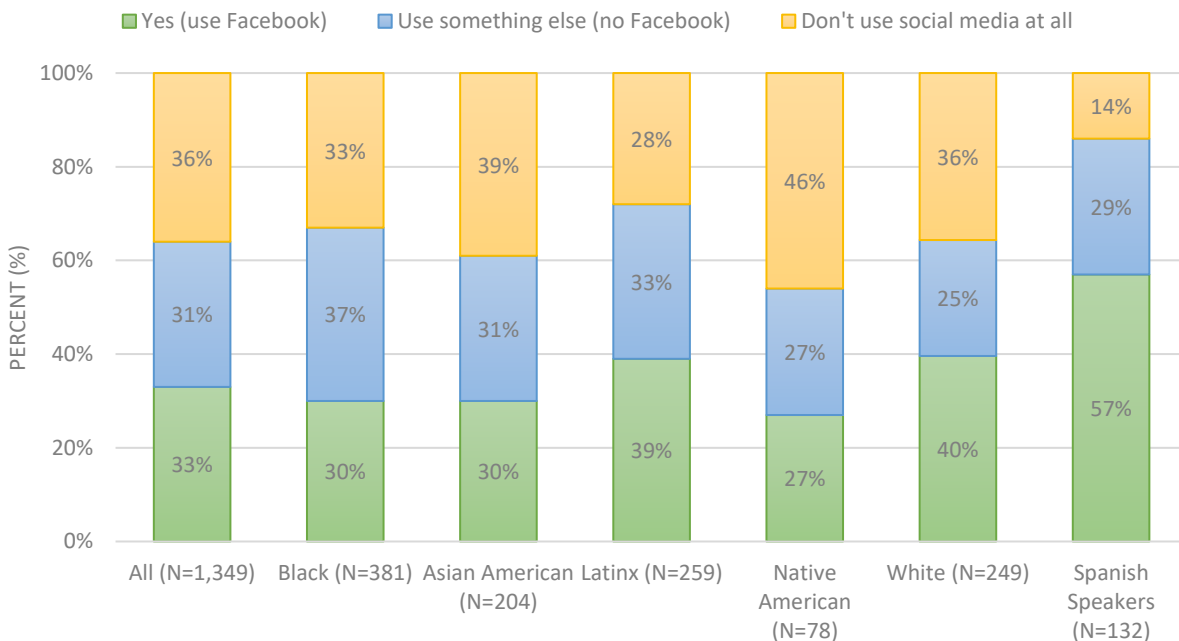## Social media use for election information

Figure 18. Social media sources used for election information, by race/ethnicity

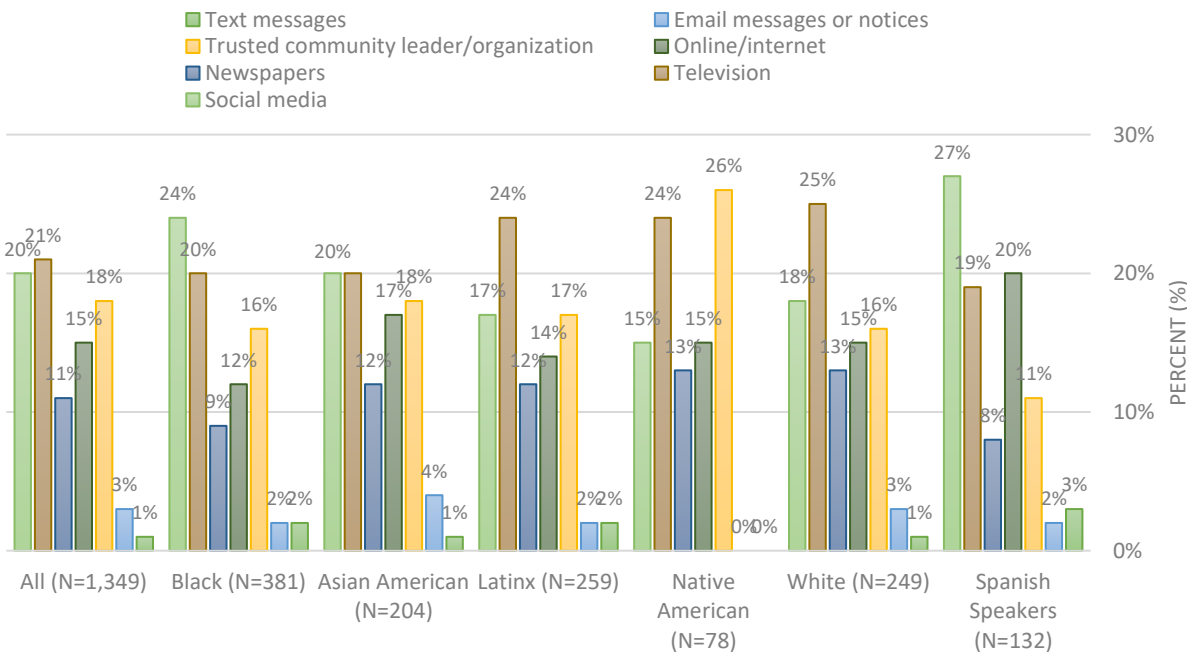## What is the MOST trusted source of information?

Figure 19. Reported use of social media for election information, by race/ethnicity

Voter Perceptions of Participation

Trust and Confidence in Systems of Voting

Along with voter knowledge and information, the survey also included questions that measure trust and confidence in the voting system. When asked, "Are you concerned that your ballot is *not* counted," 44% (568 respondents) of the respondents said that they were not concerned at all (see Figure 20). However, of those remaining, a plurality (21 percent; 271 respondents) reported that they were very concerned about their ballot being counted, with another 18 percent (226 respondents) admitting they were somewhat concerned (17 percent said they were a little concerned that their ballot was not counted; 212 respondents). Not surprisingly, race and ethnicity play an important role in interpreting these results.[25] Native American and Latinx respondents all have a large proportion of people *very concerned* that their ballot was not counted (32 percent, 22 respondents, and 28 percent, 90 respondents, respectively) when compared to White (at 21 percent; 50 respondents) and Black respondents (at 19 percent; 70 respondents).[26] Asian American respondents are the least likely to express concern as only 15 percent (30 respondents) reported being very concerned. When asked (through an open-ended follow-up question) to elaborate on why they believed their ballot would not be counted, the most common answers included the fear of a lost ballot, miscount regarding their votes, and outright fraud.[27]

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[25] Study after study shows that, due to a history of exclusion and alienation from politics, non-White populations tend to express higher levels of mistrust and far less confidence in voting systems and systems of election. See, Hetherington, M. J. (2005). *Why trust matters: Declining political trust and the demise of American liberalism*. Princeton University Press. Attitudes toward race also influence political trust, as is shown in: Aberbach, J. D., & Walker, J. L. (1970). Political trust and racial ideology. *American political science review*, *64*(4), 1199-1219.

[26] Although Black Americans historically express mistrust, recent research suggests that trust for Black people may be conditional on the level of government assessed (local v. national) and the opportunity for racial progress, both of which are unfortunately ambiguous in this measure. For more, see Wu, C., Wilkes, R., & Wilson, D. C. (2022). Race & Political Trust: Justice as a Unifying Influence on Political Trust. *Daedalus*, *151*(4), 177-199.

[27] These responses are from an open-ended follow-up question where answer was not coded in a way to offer exact percentages.

How concerned are you that your ballot will NOT be counted?

■ Very concerned ■ Somewhat concerned ■ A little concerned ■ Not concerned at all
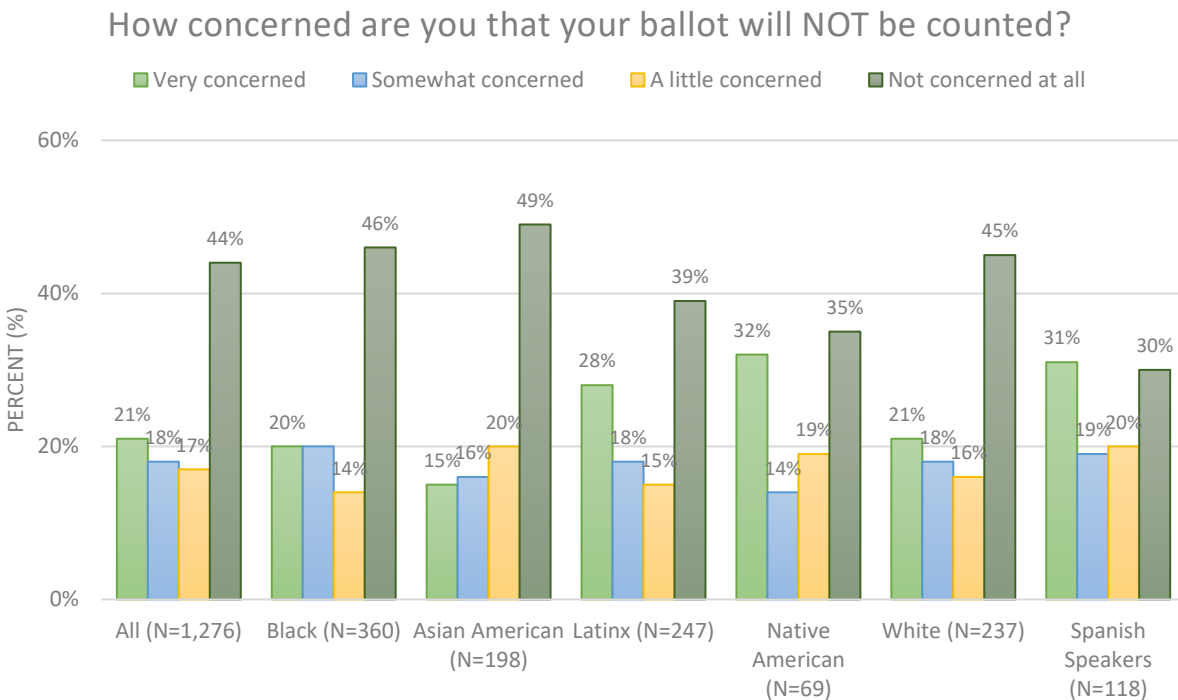
Figure 20. Concern about ballot being counted, by race/ethnicity

Following the question probing concerns about their ballot, respondents were then asked, "Do you have confidence in the voting process?" Here, 68 percent (866 respondents) of respondents reported they were confident (34 percent said *extremely confident* and another 34 percent said *somewhat confident*; 433 respondents, respectively). When examining confidence in the voting process by race and ethnicity, similar patterns emerge (see Figure 21). For instance, 48 percent (113 respondents) of White respondents report feeling extremely confident in the voting process, 36 percent (89 respondents) of Latinx respondents, 32 percent (62 respondents) of Asian American respondents, and 31 percent (112 respondents) of Black respondents also feel extremely confident in the voting process. Furthermore, a mere 19 percent (14 respondents) of Native American respondents expressed extreme confidence in the voting system, while 32 percent (23 respondents) of Native American respondents said they have only *a little confidence* and 22 percent (16 respondents) reported *no confidence at all*.[28]

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[28] Again, we must remember that we cannot generalize these results to any broad conclusions due to sample size; however, the dramatic gap in opinion here between White and Native American respondents suggests that even with more sample, these differences are unlikely to disappear, and Native American confidence in the voting process should be considered a legitimate concern that requires additional research and examination.

How confident are you in the voting process?
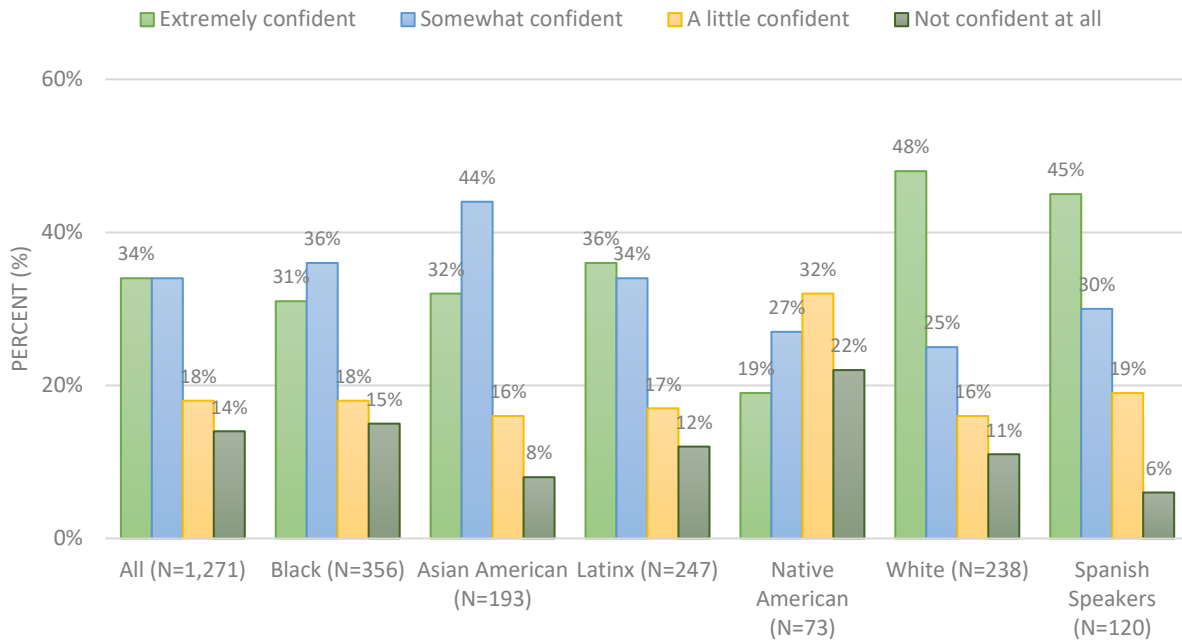
Figure 21. Reported confidence in the voting process, by race/ethnicity

When examining trust and confidence by whether or not a respondent lives in a VCA county, few trends emerge. However, for Native American respondents, living in a VCA county is significantly associated with higher levels of trust and confidence (see Tables A13 & A14). For instance, of the Native American respondents who live in a VCA county, 8 percent more of respondents who lived in a VCA county reported they felt very confident in the voting system when compared to those who do not live in a VCA county. Although the overall sample size is limited, these differences represent the largest gap (8 percentage point gap) in opinion of any racial or ethnic group depending on the type of county they reside in.

Conclusions and Final Recommendations

In conclusion, this comprehensive survey of Californians reveals several key findings regarding voter access, voter engagement, and voter perceptions of participation across racial/ethnic groups. While the California Voter's Choice Act (VCA) appears to have increased engagement for some minority voters, disparities persist in registration, turnout, awareness of voting options, and trust in the electoral process.

In summary, key findings from the public opinion survey on voting and elections in California include:

- Non-White groups, especially Black and Native American respondents, were less likely to be registered to vote, vote in the 2020 and 2022 elections, and be aware of voting options compared to White respondents.
- Of those who did not vote, the most cited was a lack of interest as the top reason, followed by not receiving their ballot or knowing where to vote.

- 70% of voters felt very comfortable voting in person while, fewer Black, Asian American, and Native American respondents found it easy to locate their voting center.
- Only about a quarter of respondents correctly identified if they lived in a VCA county. White and Black respondents were more accurate compared to other groups.
- Awareness of voting options like vote-by-mail and the availability of languages for voters who speak a language other than English was lower among non-White groups.
- The top sources of election info were online/internet, TV, and social media. Facebook was most used for election info, especially by Black, Latinx, and Spanish-speaking respondents.
- 21% of respondents were very concerned about their ballot not being counted, with higher rates among Native American and Latinx respondents. Comparatively, 45% were extremely confident in the voting process, fewer among non-white groups.
- Significant gaps existed in knowledge about the Secretary of State's role and services among racial/ethnic minorities and those not in VCA counties.

To build a more equitable democracy, the Secretary of State (SOS) could implement targeted outreach and education efforts, especially for Black, Latinx, Asian American, and Native American communities that already reside in VCA counties. This includes multilingual information about mail-in voting, voter centers, and registration – all services available to them through their county due to its VCA status. Additionally, partnering with trusted community organizations and ethnic media could help disseminate voting resources.

Finally, the SOS should focus on transparency around ballot counting and security to alleviate concerns over votes not being counted, particularly among minority groups. More voter education on signature verification and tracking ballot status is recommended.

In the State of California, most residents are aware and engaged when it comes to voting; yet racial and ethnic disparities do exist. Moreover, results (from the full report) do suggest that the implementation of the VCA is associated with higher levels of engagement and knowledge. Some final recommendations include:

(1) Voter outreach that utilizes social media and online platforms.
(2) A focus on building trust within the election process to alleviate concerns.
(3) More voter education on signature verification and tracking ballot status.
(4) Provide more education on the benefits of living in a VCA county.

Overall, inclusive participatory democracy requires ensuring all citizens have the knowledge, resources, and trust in the system to fully exercise their right to vote. An informed populace is essential for a thriving multiracial democracy.

Appendix A: Tables and Figures

Note: * denotes sample size too small (N<50) for analysis

Table A1. Survey Sociodemographic (total N=1,350)

Race	%	N
Black	28	380
Asian American	15	199
Latinx	24	332
Native American	6	78
White	15	200
Other	12	161
Gender		
Female	56	744
Male	44	590
Age		
18-34	32	423
35-49	32	425
50-64	20	255
65+	16	216
Education		
No college degree	53	714
College degree	47	636

Table A2. Voter turnout, by race/ethnicity and VCA county

		Registered (N=1,299)	Voted in 2020 (N=1,305)	Voted in 2022 (N=1,298)
Black	VCA county	85	78	73
	Non-VCA county	82	69	60
Asian American	VCA county	87	79	74
	Non-VCA county	83	81	64
Latinx	VCA county	86	74	70
	Non-VCA county	83	74	74
Native American	VCA county	79	74	58
	Non-VCA county	74	67	51
White	VCA county	90	87	82
	Non-VCA county	91	86	84
Spanish Speaking	VCA county	82	80	78
	Non-VCA county	83	76	67

Table A3. Why NOT vote, by race/ethnicity and VCA county (ONLY non-voters; N=375)

	Black	Asian American	Latinx	Native* American	White*	Spanish* Speakers
Never received ballot						
VCA county	18	6	8	25	20	5
Non-VCA county	16	7	9	26	0	0
Didn't know where to vote						
VCA county	15	6	8	27	12	10
Non-VCA county	9	7	8	23	0	9
Do not understand ballot						
VCA county	15	0	4	0	8	5
Non-VCA county	8	7	0	21	9	10
Lack of transportation						
VCA county	13	0	8	30	12	15
Non-VCA county	13	14	0	14	10	10
Bad weather						
VCA county	3	3	4	20	12	18
Non-VCA county	9	6	23	7	10	27
Not interested						
VCA county	31	34	21	33	41	8
Non-VCA county	27	25	31	20	64	27

Table A4. How did you vote, by race/ethnicity and VCA county (ONLY if voted in 2022; N=900)

	Black	Asian American	Latinx	Native* American	White	Spanish Speakers
Mailed in completed ballot						
VCA county	42	48	40	41	46	40
Non-VCA county	44	62	56	50	60	45
Returned ballot to county drop box						
VCA county	28	31	26	41	26	15
Non-VCA county	22	35	23	27	14	20
Returned ballot to vote center on election day						
VCA county	14	10	17	6	11	26
Non-VCA county	17	0	10	5	15	30
Voted in-person at polling center on election day						
VCA county	7	3	11	0	6	9
Non-VCA county	11	3	8	18	3	5
Voted in-person at vote center on election day						
VCA county	5	5	4	0	8	7
Non-VCA county	3	0	3	0	5	0
Voted in-person early						
VCA county	4	3	2	12	3	3
Non-VCA county	3	0	0	0	3	0

Table A5. Attitudes toward the voting process, by race/ethnicity and VCA county (ONLY if voted in-person in 2022; N=135 – Note: all response groups N<50, with too few Spanish Speaking respondents for analysis)

	Black	Asian American	Latinx	Native American	White
Feel very comfortable voting					
VCA county	88	54	72	50	60
Non-VCA county	12	46	28	50	40
Easily located vote center					
VCA county	69	64	73	70	75
Non-VCA county	31	36	27	30	25

Table A6. Method of locating vote center, by race/ethnicity and VCA county (ONLY if voted in 2022; N=1,022)

	Black	Asian American	Latinx	Native American	White	Spanish Speakers
Info on county sample ballot						
VCA county	61	65	62	60	66	45
Non-VCA county	60	67	73	57	60	44
County ROV website						
VCA county	8	9	13	5	13	16
Non-VCA county	8	13	7	0	6	4
CA SOS website						
VCA county	12	6	8	15	4	16
Non-VCA county	13	7	12	10	13	22
Text message from candidate/political group						
VCA county	4	4	4	0	3	7
Non-VCA county	4	2	2	0	3	13
Email from candidate/political group						
VCA county	4	4	4	0	2	5
Non-VCA county	3	2	0	3	3	13
Email from CA SOS						
VCA county	4	3	8	5	2	7
Non-VCA county	4	4	0	13	5	0
Other (i.e. word of mouth, saw box in neighborhood)						
VCA county	7	9	1	15	9	4
Non-VCA county	8	4	5	17	10	4

Table A7. Percent *VERY* aware of voting options, by race/ethnicity and VCA county (N=1,255)

	Black	Asian American	Latinx	Native American	White	Spanish Speakers
Return ballot through mail						
VCA county	46	57	53	41	60	46
Non-VCA county	52	69	61	46	51	20
Return ballot through county drop box						
VCA county	40	46	42	29	51	34
Non-VCA county	42	46	44	54	43	20
Return ballot at official vote center drop box						
VCA county	49	49	43	44	49	36
Non-VCA county	50	45	53	59	47	20
Vote in-person early						
VCA county	44	43	40	21	48	35
Non-VCA county	42	31	47	44	51	35
Vote in-person on election day						
VCA county	45	52	44	36	52	42
Non-VCA county	52	45	44	60	54	33
Vote in-person using accessible vote machine						
VCA county	37	38	39	28	47	32
Non-VCA county	43	38	40	44	42	21
Register and vote conditionally on same day						
VCA county	29	22	29	14	35	26
Non-VCA county	31	23	30	34	35	20
Receive a replacement ballot						
VCA county	27	21	25	18	38	32
Non-VCA county	28	24	28	31	34	17
Receive ballot/voting materials in multiple languages						
VCA county	33	39	35	32	41	35
Non-VCA county	36	38	41	34	34	17
Ballot must be returned to drop box by 8 pm						
VCA county	43	37	39	37	52	33
Non-VCA county	39	37	45	50	51	17
Ballot must be picked up by mail carrier by 8 pm						
VCA county	36	33	36	26	47	34
Non-VCA county	34	31	43	38	44	17

Table A8. Percent aware of options to vote early, by race/ethnicity and VCA county (N=1,250)

	Black	Asian American	Latinx	Native American	White	Spanish Speakers
Vote early at 10-day vote center						
VCA county	30	19	24	11	32	38
Non-VCA county	19	11	27	16	26	28
Vote early at 4-day vote center						
VCA county	26	14	23	11	32	35
Non-VCA county	18	19	22	26	24	23
Return ballot early through mail						
VCA county	42	55	47	30	54	36
Non-VCA county	48	60	52	52	45	24
Return ballot early to county drop box						
VCA county	39	46	36	30	50	36
Non-VCA county	37	49	43	47	40	17
Return ballot early at official vote center drop box						
VCA county	42	43	40	35	47	36
Non-VCA county	34	39	40	45	41	17

Table A9. Percent aware of signature process, by race/ethnicity and VCA county (N=1,350)

	Black	Asian American	Latinx	Native American	White	Spanish Speakers*
Percent AWARE that you must sign ballot before mailing						
VCA county	56	43	53	60	60	64
Non-VCA county	76	87	79	85	92	67
Percent AWARE that you must update signature if changed						
VCA county	56	43	54	60	60	64
Non-VCA county	48	57	48	50	65	74

Table A10. Source of election information, by race/ethnicity and VCA county (N=1,345)

	Black	Asian American	Latinx	Native American	White	Spanish Speakers
Social media						
VCA county	21	14	17	7	15	12
Non-VCA county	19	15	8	12	18	30
Television						
VCA county	24	26	26	13	28	25
Non-VCA county	32	22	38	25	29	20
Newspapers						
VCA county	4	8	4	3	8	4
Non-VCA county	9	6	4	4	6	7
Online/internet						
VCA county	28	41	36	44	29	39
Non-VCA county	21	46	34	35	31	37
Trusted community leader/organization						
VCA county	10	4	9	7	6	9
Non-VCA county	5	0	6	10	6	0
Email messages or notices						
VCA county	7	2	3	3	6	2
Non-VCA county	6	4	2	2	3	0
Text messages						
VCA county	2	2	1	0	2	6
Non-VCA county	3	0	0	2	3	7
Other (i.e. friends, family, mailers)						
VCA county	4	3	4	23	6	3
Non-VCA county	4	7	10	8	6	0

Table A11. Social media use for election information, by race/ethnicity and VCA county (N=1,345)

		Black	Asian American	Latinx	Native American	White	Spanish Speakers
VCA county							
	Yes (use Facebook)	31	31	40	23	40	57
	No Facebook (use something else)	43	34	33	33	33	25
	Don't use social media at all	25	34	26	43	35	18
Non-VCA county							
	Yes (use Facebook)	29	26	37	29	38	55
	No Facebook (use something else)	32	24	31	23	22	42
	Don't use social media at all	40	50	32	48	40	3

Table A12. Source of Election information by 2022 voter turnout

	Social media	Television	Newspaper	Online/ internet	Community leader	Email messages	Text messages
Voted in 2022	58	72	72	71	79	57	66
Did NOT vote in 2022	42	28	28	28	21	43	34

Table A13. Percent *VERY* concerned ballot is *NOT* counted, by race/ethnicity, and VCA county (N=1,277)

		Black	Asian American	Latinx	Native American	White	Spanish Speakers
VCA county							
	Very concerned	18	19	29	28	24	30
	Somewhat concerned	19	14	17	8	18	21
	A little concerned	14	18	14	28	14	17
	Not concerned at all	49	47	40	36	44	32
Non-VCA county							
	Very concerned	20	4	27	34	15	32

Somewhat concerned	21	21	21	18	18	12
A little concerned	15	25	19	14	21	32
Not concerned at all	44	50	33	34	47	24

Table A14. Confidence in the voting process, by race/ethnicity and VCA county (N=1,272)

		Black	Asian American	Latinx	Native American	White	Spanish Speakers
VCA county							
	Extremely confident	34	30	37	24	46	46
	Somewhat confident	39	45	35	21	26	30
	A little confident	15	16	18	35	16	20
	Not confident at all	13	9	11	21	11	4
Non-VCA county							
	Extremely confident	30	38	34	16	52	40
	Somewhat confident	35	42	32	32	21	32
	A little confident	20	13	16	30	15	16
	Not confident at all	16	5	18	23	12	12

Table A15. Know the role of CA SOS, by race/ethnicity and VCA county (N=1,329)

		Black	Asian American	Latinx	Native American	White	Spanish Speakers
VCA county							
	Confident I know role	34	39	32	47	32	32
	I think I know role	26	13	24	20	39	38
	Don't know role	40	48	44	33	29	30
Non-VCA county							
	Confident I know role	29	52	36	27	31	23
	I think I know role	18	9	17	13	39	43
	Don't know role	53	39	47	60	30	34

Table A16. Know ALL the services of the CA SOS, by race/ethnicity and VCA county (N=1,350)

		Black	Asian American	Latinx	Native American	White	Spanish Speakers
VCA county							
	Yes	26	38	24	20	35	12

	No	74	62	76	80	65	88
Non-VCA county							
	Yes	24	39	26	33	32	3
	No	76	61	74	67	68	97

Appendix B: Survey Questions

Question	Answer choice(s)
1. What is your current county of residence?	Drop box w/all counties
2. What do you consider your racial or ethnic background?	• Black/African American (1) • Asian American (2) • Hispanic or Latino (3) • Native American (4) • White/Caucasian (5) • Mixed race/multiple races (6) • Other (7) • [I don't know] (8) • [I prefer not to answer] (9)
3. What race, or mix of races do you consider yourself? Select all that apply.	☐ Black/African American (1) ☐ Asian American (2) ☐ Hispanic or Latino (3) ☐ Native American (4) ☐ White/Caucasian (5) ☐ Other (specify) (6) _____ ☐ [I don't know] (88) ☐ [I prefer not to answer] (99)
4. In what year were you born?	8888 = [I don't know] 9999 = [I prefer not to answer]
5. What is your gender identity?	• Female (1) • Male (2) • Transgender female (3) • Transgender male (4) • Gender variant/non-conforming (5) • [I don't know] (88) • [I prefer not to answer] (99)
6. What is the highest level of education you completed?	• Grades 1-8 (1) • Some high school (2) • High school graduate (3) • Some college or technical school (4) • College graduate (5) • Post-graduate (6) • [I don't know] (88) • [I prefer not to answer] (99)
7. Are you currently active military?	• Yes, I currently serve in the military • No • [I don't know] • [I prefer not to answer]
8. Are you currently registered to vote in the California?	• Yes, registered here (1) • No, not registered to vote (2) • Registered to vote in different state (3) • [I Don't Know] (88) • [I prefer not to answer] (99)

9. Have you moved or relocated to a new county since the 2022 midterm election?	• Yes - moved to new county (1) • No (2) • [I prefer not to answer] (99)
10. Do you live in a Voter's Choice Act (VCA) county?	o Yes (1) o No (2) o [I don't know] (88) o [I prefer not to answer] (99)
11. Did you vote in the November 8th, 2022 midterm elections?	• Yes - I voted (1) • No - I did NOT vote (2) • [I don't know] (88) • [I prefer not to answer] (99)
(If answered no, I don't know, or I prefer not to answer to question #11) 12. In a few words, please tell us why you did NOT vote in the 2022 midterm elections?	[Space to type in answer.]
(If answered no, I don't know, or I prefer not to answer to question #11) 13. Please tell me how much each of the following motivated your decision to NOT vote in the November 8th, 2022 midterm elections?	Likert scale 1-10 *(1 = not motivating at all and 10 = extremely motivating)* - I never received my ballot - I did not know where to vote - I did not understand my ballot - I had transportation issues - I encountered weather issues - I was not interested in voting
(If answered yes to #11) 14. Please tell me how much did each of the following motivated your decision to vote in the November 8th, 2022 midterm elections?	Likert scale 1-10 *(1 = not motivating at all and 10 = extremely motivating)* - I received my ballot with enough time before the election - I knew exactly where to vote - My ballot was easy to read and understand - Transportation to deliver my ballot was easy and accessible - I was motivated and interested to vote
(If answered yes to #11) 15. How did you return your ballot for the 2022 midterm elections?	• I mailed in my completed ballot (1) • I returned my completed ballot to an official county drop box (2) • I returned my completed ballot to an official vote center on election day (3) • I filled out a ballot in-person at a local polling center in my community on election day (4) • I filled out a ballot in-person at an official vote center on election day (5) • I filled out a ballot in-person at an early vote location prior to election day (6)
16. Did you vote in the 2020 Presidential election?	• Yes - voted (1) • No (2) • [I don't know] (88) • [I prefer not to answer] (99)

(If answer to #15 = I filled out a ballot in-person at a local polling center in my community on election day, I filled out a ballot in-person at an official vote center on election day, or I filled out a ballot in-person at an early vote location prior to election day) 17. How comfortable did you feel voting in-person at a local polling center or official vote center?	• Very comfortable (1) • Somewhat comfortable (2) • A little comfortable (4) • Not comfortable at all (5) • [I don't know] (88) • [I prefer not to answer] (99)
(If answered yes to #11) 18. How easily were you able to find the location where you voted or delivered you ballot?	• Very easily (1) • Somewhat easily (2) • Not too easily (3) • It was difficult to locate (4) • [I don't know] (88) • [I prefer not to answer] (99)
(If answered yes to #11) 19. What resource did you rely upon to find the location where you voted or delivered your ballot?	• Information on my county sample ballot (1) • Utilized the county ROV website (2) • Utilized the California Secretary of State (SOS) website (3) • I received a text message from a candidate or political group (4) • I received an email from a candidate or political group (5) • I received an email from the California Secretary of State (6) • Other: please specify (7) [space to type in answer]
20. There are a lot of different ways to vote. Please identify how aware you are of the following options to cast a vote that were available during the November 8th, 2022 midterm elections:	Likert scale 10-100 (10 = not aware at all, 50 = somewhat aware, and 100 = very aware] - Return your ballot through the mail - Return your ballot through a country drop box - Return your ballot to an official vote center drop box - Vote in-person early at an official vote center - Vote in-person on Election Day at a neighborhood polling place - Vote in-person at an official vote center using an accessible machine - Register and vote conditionally on the same day - Receive a replacement ballot - Receive voting material in multiple languages
21. How aware are you of the following deadlines for returning your ballot through the mail?	Likert scale 10-100 (10 = not aware at all, 50 = somewhat aware, and 100 = very aware) - Ballot must be returned to a country drop box by 8 pm on Election Day - Ballot must be picked up by mail carrier from mail box by 8 pm on Election Day
22. How aware are you of the following options to vote early?	Likert scale 10-100 (10 = not aware at all, 50 = somewhat aware, and 100 = very aware)

	0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
	Vote early at a 10-day vote center ()
	Vote early at a 4-day vote center ()
	Return your ballot early through the mail ()
	Return your ballot early at a country drop box ()
	Return your ballot early at an official vote center drop box ()

23. Were you aware that you needed to sign your ballot before mailing or returning it for it to count?	• Yes (1) • No (2) • [I don't know] (88) • [I prefer not to answer] (99)
24. Were you aware that if your signature has changed since the last election you need to update your voter registration signature on file?	• Yes (1) • No (2) • [I don't know] (3) • [I prefer not to answer] (4
25. Are you concerned that your ballot is **NOT** being counted?	• Yes - very concerned (1) • Yes - somewhat concerned (2) • Yes - a little concerned (3) • No - not concerned at all (4) • [I Don't Know] (88) • [I prefer not to answer] (99)
(If answer to #25 = yes, very concerned, yes, somewhat concerned, or yes, a little concerned) 26. In a few words, please explain why you are concerned about your ballot being counted.	[Space to type in answer.]
27. Do you have confidence in the voting process?	• Extremely confident (1) • Somewhat confident (2) • A little confident (3) • No confidence at all (4) • [I Don't Know] (88) • [I prefer not to answer] (99)
28. Where do you get most of your election information?	• Social media (1) • Television (news, commercials, public service announcements, etc...) (2) • Newspapers (3) • Online/Internet • Trusted community leader or organization (4) • Email messages or notices (5) • Text message notifications (6) • Other (please specify) (7) (space to type in answer)
29. When it comes to getting voter information from specific social media platforms, which do you use most for election information?	[Select all that apply] Facebook (1) Twitter (2) Tik Tok (3) Instagram (4)

	Snapchat (5) [I don't use social media for election information] (88) Other (please specify) (6) Space to write in answer.
30. Of the following sources of election information, please rank the list from MOST trustworthy and reliable to LEAST trustworthy and reliable:	_____ Social media (1) _____ Television (2) _____ Newspaper (3) _____ Online/Internet (7) _____ Trusted community leader or organization (4) _____ Email messages or notices (5) _____ Test message notifications (6)
31. Now, thinking about the California Office of the Secretary of State (SOS), do you know the role of the SOS Office?	• Yes - I am confident I know the role (1) • Yes - I think I know the role (2) • No - I do not know the role (3) • [I am not sure] (88)
32. Do you know which of the following election services are provided by the California Office of the Secretary of State (SOS)?	[Select all that apply] • Register to vote in the state of California (1) • Check voter registration status (2) • Track the status of submitted ballots (3) • Provide voter information in many, non-English language formats (4)