



MISSING VOTERS PROJECT: Pennsylvania 2016

Elizabeth B. Pathak, PhD and Ellie Margolis, JD

3.6 MILLION CITIZENS IN PENNSYLVANIA did not vote on November 8, 2016



DESCRIPTION OF MISSING VOTERS

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REMARKS

Missing voters were last seen across Pennsylvania on the morning of November 8, 2016. These are civilian, non-military, non-institutionalized adults who were aged 18 years or older at the time of the election.

DETAILS

The Women's Institute for Independent Social Enquiry (WiISE), a nonpartisan think tank, is issuing this report to alert the public to the millions of Pennsylvania voters missing from the November 2016 elections. Concerned individuals with an interest in locating these citizens and aiding their future participation in Pennsylvania elections are urged to share this alert widely.



Acknowledgements

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About the Authors

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About WiISE

The Women's Institute for Independent Social Enquiry (WiISE) is a nonpartisan, progressive think tank whose mission is to foster a just society through independent social science, humanities, arts, and public policy research. We believe that rigorous evidence-based research, when effectively translated for a broad spectrum of audiences, can be a catalyst for transformational social change. We champion the ideas of women by cultivating and supporting women scholars and leaders.

Connect with us!

We welcome your feedback and comments on the Missing Voters Project, as well as on other timely issues relevant to our mission. Please reach out to us online at <https://www.wiise-usa.org/connect>.



Who Are Pennsylvania's Missing Voters?

Missing voters are voting age citizens who did not vote in November 2016. Missing voters reflect the diversity of Pennsylvania as a whole. They are men and women of all ages and races. Nonetheless, voting participation in Pennsylvania varies considerably across specific population groups. The purpose of this report is to provide a detailed description of the characteristics of missing voters in Pennsylvania and to inform the widespread grassroots efforts to increase voter participation in the 2018 mid-term elections and the 2020 presidential election.

What is the Missing Voters Project?

We believe that civic disengagement represents a fundamental threat to the separation of powers in our government, and to American democracy itself. Unfortunately, low rates of voter participation have persisted in the United States for many years, and a culture of complacency has ossified around this political reality. We chose the design motif of an FBI Missing Persons poster for the Missing Voters Project with the goal of eliciting feelings of unease and alarm to fracture this culture of complacency.



The purpose of the Missing Voters Project (MVP) is to present rigorous, impartial data about the demographic characteristics of missing voters in a format that can be easily accessed and used by a wide range of educational, community-based, faith-based, and worker-friendly organizations in their efforts to increase civic engagement. MVP national reports and reports for other states can be found on our website (<https://www.wiise-usa.org/mvp>).

Data and Methods

The Missing Voters Project data are from a special supplement to the Current Population Survey, administered in November 2016 immediately following the election by the Bureau of the Census. This report includes statistically-weighted estimates of percentages and population counts derived from a Pennsylvania sample of over 2,700 adult respondents. Data in response categories for which the estimated Pennsylvania population was fewer than 75,000 citizens have been suppressed per Census Bureau recommendation.

Full technical details for the Missing Voters Project, links to the original census data, and other valuable resources are available at <https://www.wiise-usa.org/mvp>.

Limitations

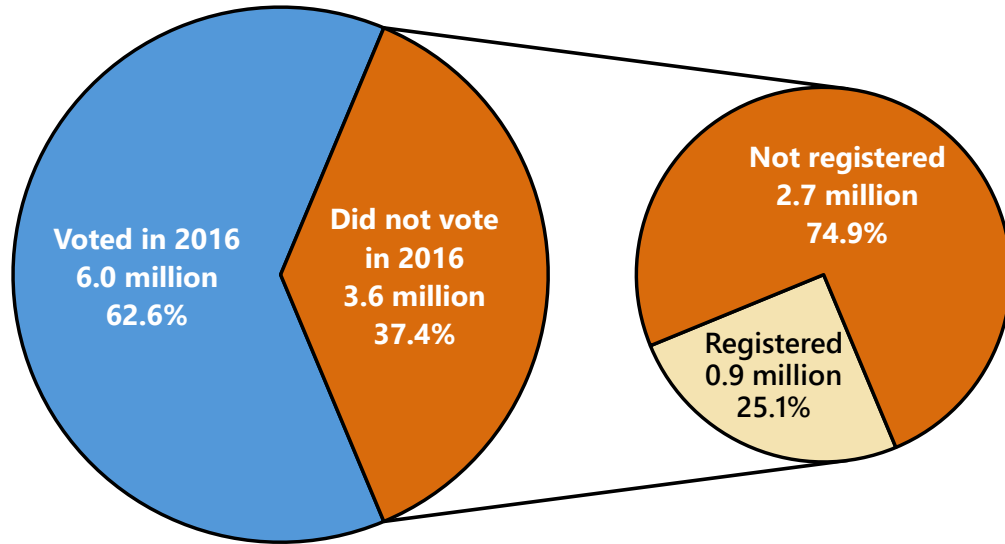
We recognize that there are important voting justice issues that can not be addressed directly through the data analyzed in our report. These issues include voter suppression and intimidation, purging of voter registration rolls, partisan gerrymandering, and other direct and indirect tactics that result in citizen disenfranchisement. Readers are encouraged to consult the Resources at the end of this report (pages 8-9) for links to organizations working directly on these issues.

How to Use This Report

Each page of this report has been designed with a dual purpose: as an integrated part of the whole report, and as a stand-alone "Fact Sheet." Organizations working to increase voter registration can pull out individual pages to reproduce and share. On our website (<https://www.wiise-usa.org/mvp>), readers can download the whole report, or choose to download single page fact sheets on their topics of interest.

Figure 1: Voting in Pennsylvania

Citizens 18+ years old in 2016
Total = 9.6 million



Pennsylvania Voting in 2016

In 2016, there were an estimated 9.6 million civilian voting age citizens in Pennsylvania. The citizen population estimates shown in this report include only the *non-institutionalized* population. This means that prisoners, nursing home residents, and other institutionalized persons are not included in any of our reported statistics. However, voting age citizens who may be legally ineligible to vote in Pennsylvania are still included in the estimates in this report.

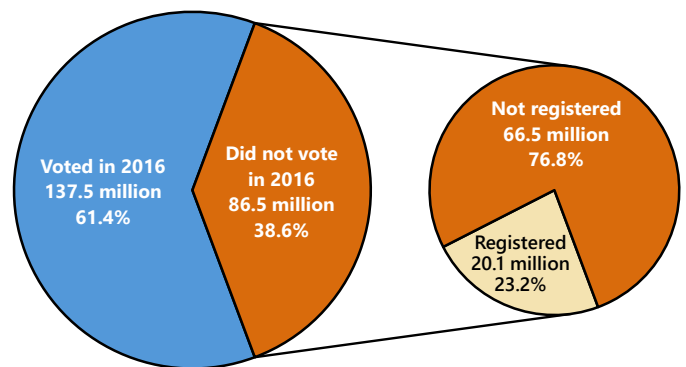
A majority (62.6%) of voting age citizens in Pennsylvania reported voting in November 2016. There were 3.6 million missing voters, 2.7 million of whom (74.9%) were not registered to vote before the election (Figure 1).

Pennsylvania's Voting Rate Similar to U.S. Rate

Nationwide, 61.4% of adult citizens voted in 2016, compared with 62.6% of citizens in Pennsylvania (Figure 2). Only a minority of missing voters were registered to vote before the election (23.2%, Figure 2); in Pennsylvania the proportion who were registered (25.1%, Figure 1) was slightly higher than the national average.

Figure 2: Voting in the United States

Citizens 18+ years old in 2016
Total = 224 million



Notes

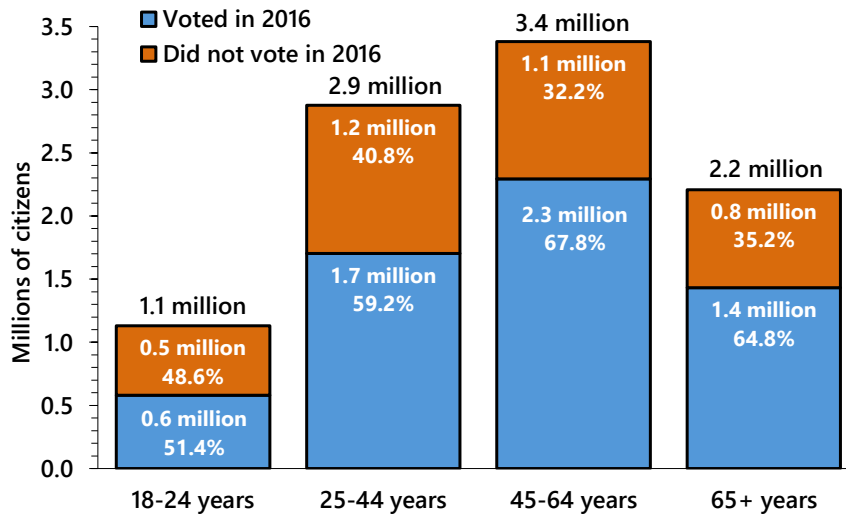
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Middle-Aged Citizens in Pennsylvania Most Likely to Vote

Voting participation varied noticeably by age in Pennsylvania in 2016. Only 51.4% of young adult citizens voted, compared with 67.8% of adults aged 45 to 64 years (Figure 3). Middle-aged adults were the largest group of voters, but the largest age group among missing voters was 25 to 44 years old. For all ages, the majority of missing voters were not registered to vote prior to the 2016 election (Figure 4).

Figure 3: Voting by Age
Citizens 18+ years old in Pennsylvania in 2016
Total = 9.6 million



Young Adults

Slightly more than half (51.4%) of the 1.1 million citizens aged 18 to 24 years in Pennsylvania voted in 2016 (Figure 3). This resulted in 0.5 million missing voters, 0.4 million (74.7%) of whom were not registered to vote before the election (Figure 4).

Adults 25-44 Years

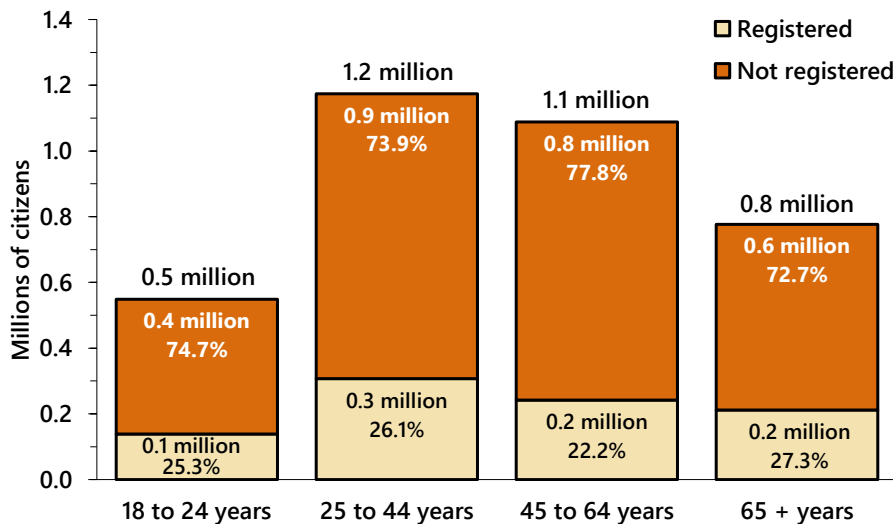
More than half (59.2%) of adults 25 to 44 years old voted in 2016 (Figure 3). This resulted in 1.2 million missing voters (Figure 4). Only 26.1% of these missing voters were registered to vote before the election.

Middle-Aged Adults

The largest number of voting age citizens in Pennsylvania were middle-aged adults (3.4 million) and 67.8% reported voting (Figure 3). There were 1.1 million missing middle-aged voters (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Missing Voters by Age

Citizens 18+ years old who did not vote in Pennsylvania in 2016
Total = 3.6 million



Seniors

There were 2.2 million senior citizens in Pennsylvania in 2016 and 64.8% of them voted (Figure 3). Of the 0.8 million missing voters, 72.7% were not registered to vote prior to the 2016 election (Figure 4).

Notes

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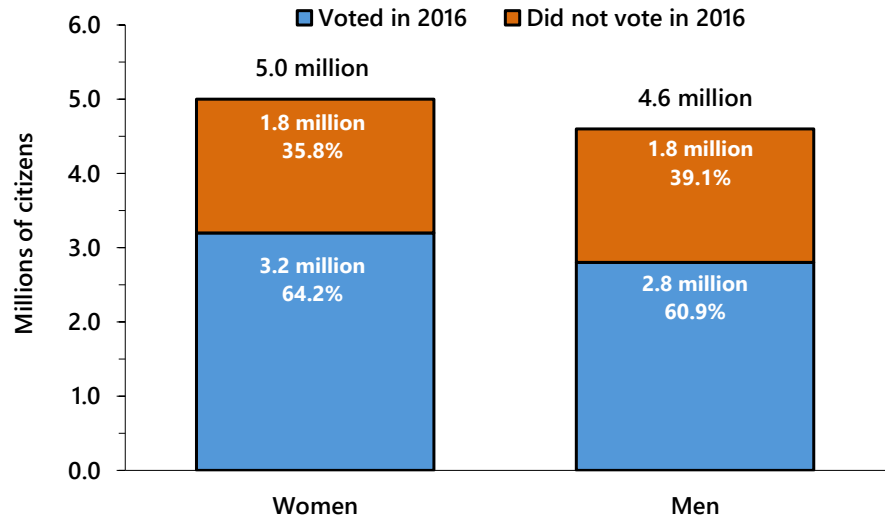
Pennsylvania Women were Larger Share of Electorate and More Likely to Vote

In 2016, there were 5.0 million voting age women citizens in Pennsylvania, compared with 4.6 million men. Women were more likely to vote (64.2% vs. 60.9%), but the number of missing voters was the same for women and men (1.8 million) (Figure 5). Voter registration rates among missing voters were low, and lower for men than for women (22.6% vs. 27.6%) (Figure 6).

Figure 5: Voting by Gender
Citizens 18+ years old in Pennsylvania in 2016
Total = 9.6 million

Women

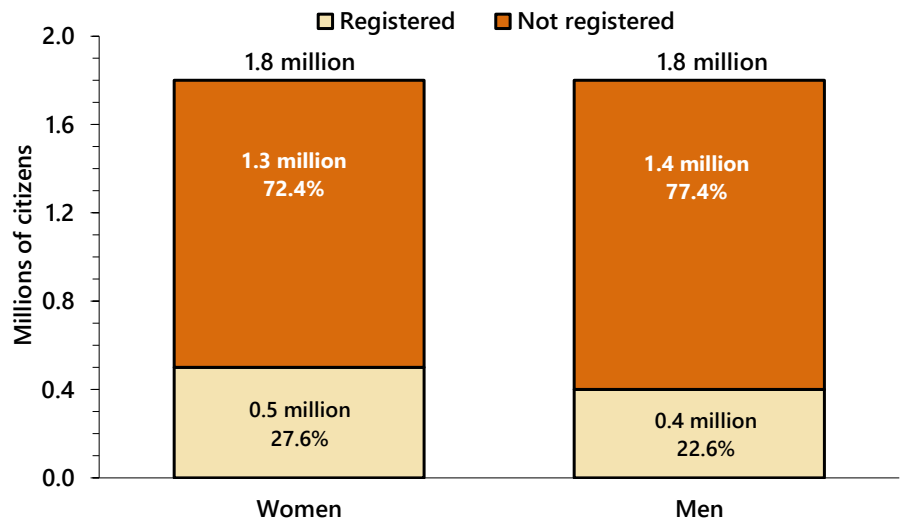
There were 5.0 million voting age women citizens in Pennsylvania in 2016. The majority (64.2%) of them voted (Figure 5). There were 1.8 million missing women voters, and the majority (72.4%) were not registered before the election (Figure 6). There were one-half million women who reported being registered but who did not vote.



Men

There were 4.6 million voting age men citizens in Pennsylvania in 2016, and more than half of them voted (60.9%) (Figure 5). There were 1.8 million missing men voters, and 77.4% of them (1.4 million) were not registered to vote before the election (Figure 6). There were 0.4 million men (22.6%) who reported being registered but who did not vote.

Figure 6: Missing Voters by Gender
Citizens 18+ years old who did not vote in Pennsylvania in 2016
Total = 3.6 million



Notes

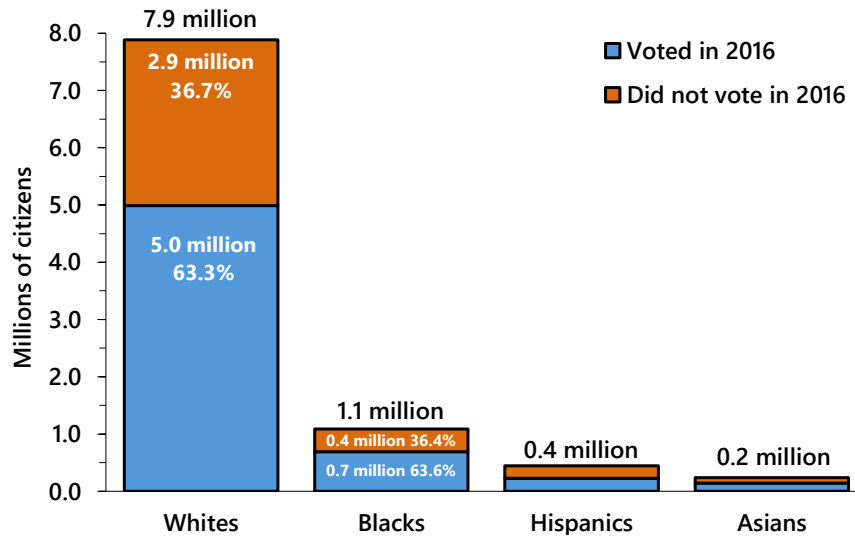
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Lowest Voting Rate Among Hispanics but Majority of Missing Voters were White

Voting participation varied markedly by race and Hispanic origin in Pennsylvania in 2016. The majority of non-Hispanic white (63.3%) and Black (63.6%) citizens voted, compared with only 51.7% of Hispanic citizens. Asians had an intermediate voting rate of 60.5% (Figure 7). The majority of missing voters were white and were not registered to vote before the election in 2016 (Figure 8).

Figure 7: Voting by Race and Hispanic Origin
Citizens 18+ years old in Pennsylvania in 2016
Total = 9.6 million



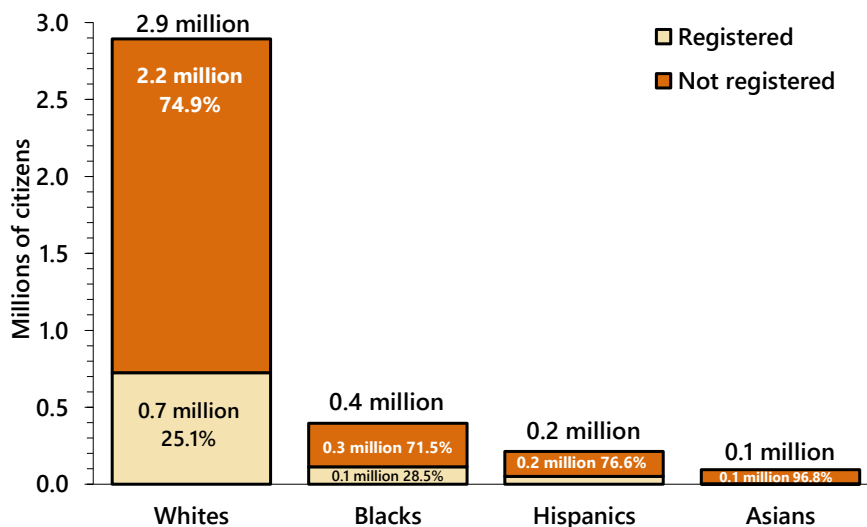
Whites

The majority (63.3%) of non-Hispanic white citizens voted in 2016 (Figure 7). There were 2.9 million missing voters, including 2.2 million (74.9%) who were not registered to vote prior to the election (Figure 8).

Blacks

The majority (63.6%) of Black citizens voted in 2016 (Figure 7). There were 0.4 million missing voters. Over one-quarter (28.5%) of Black missing voters in Pennsylvania were registered to vote before the election (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Missing Voters by Race and Hispanic Origin
Citizens 18+ years old who did not vote in Pennsylvania in 2016
Total = 3.6 Million



Hispanics

Only 51.7% of Hispanic citizens voted in 2016 (Figure 7), resulting in 0.2 million missing voters. The majority of Hispanic missing voters (0.2 million, 76.6%) were not registered to vote before the election (Figure 8).

Asians

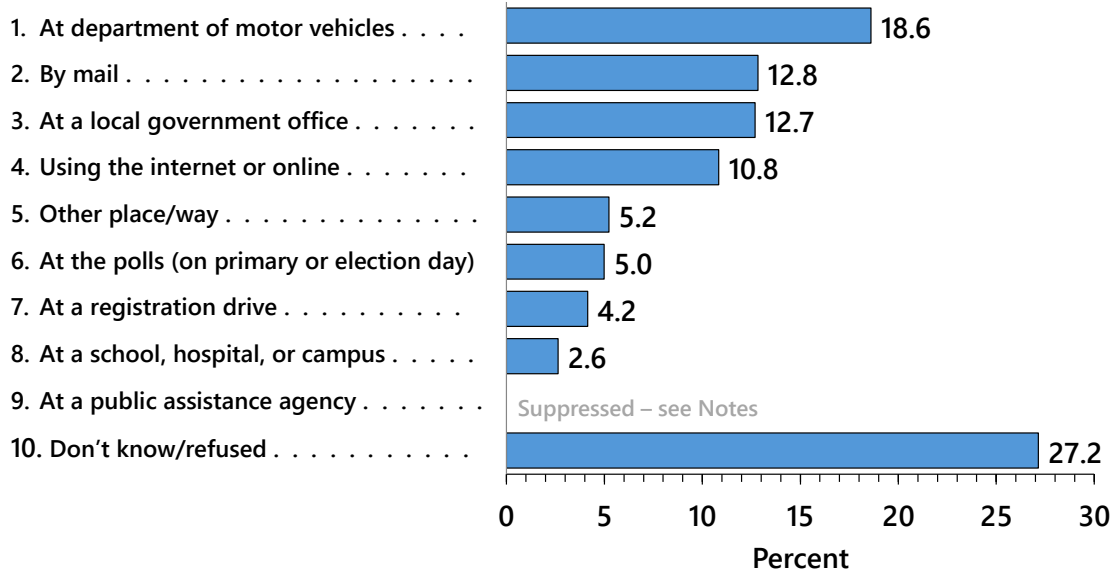
The majority (60.5%) of Pennsylvania's 0.2 million Asian citizens voted in 2016 (Figure 7). There were 0.1 million missing voters, almost all of whom (96.8%) were not registered to vote before the election (Figure 8).

Notes

Whites are non-Hispanic, and Hispanics may be of any race. Blacks and Asians include small numbers of multiracial individuals. Data are not shown for American Indians/Alaska Natives who were 1% of Pennsylvania's population. Please note that some numbers may appear not to add up correctly due to rounding. Voting data are from the Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey (November 2016). This report includes statistically-weighted estimates of percentages and population counts derived from a Pennsylvania sample of over 2,700 adult respondents. Data in response categories for which the estimated Pennsylvania population was fewer than 75,000 citizens have been suppressed per Census Bureau recommendation. Full technical details for the Missing Voters Project, links to the original census data, and other valuable resources are available at <https://www.wiise-usa.org/mvp>.



Figure 9: Where did Citizens Register to Vote?
 Citizens 18+ years old who were registered to vote in Pennsylvania, 2016
 Total = 6.9 million



What Does this Chart Show About Where Citizens Registered to Vote?

Respondents to the Voting Supplement of the Current Population Survey were asked in November 2016 about the method and location of their most recent registration to vote. Only people who said that they were currently registered were asked this question. More than one-quarter (27.2%) registered citizens in Pennsylvania did not know or remember how they had registered to vote (Figure 9). It is possible that citizens who had been continuously registered at the same residential address for several years were less likely to remember their method of registration.

Local Government Offices

Taken together, registration at department of motor vehicles (18.6%) and local government offices (12.7%) accounted for 31.3% of voter registrations prior to the November 2016 elections. In addition, 12.8% of registered citizens reported that they mailed their voter registration form to a government election office.

Voter Outreach Efforts

In total, 6.6% of registered citizens reported registering as a result of voter outreach efforts at a registration drive (4.2%), or at a school, hospital, or college campus (2.6%). Another 5.0% of citizens reported that they registered to vote when they reached the polls on primary or election day, despite the fact that Pennsylvania does not permit election day registration.

Internet

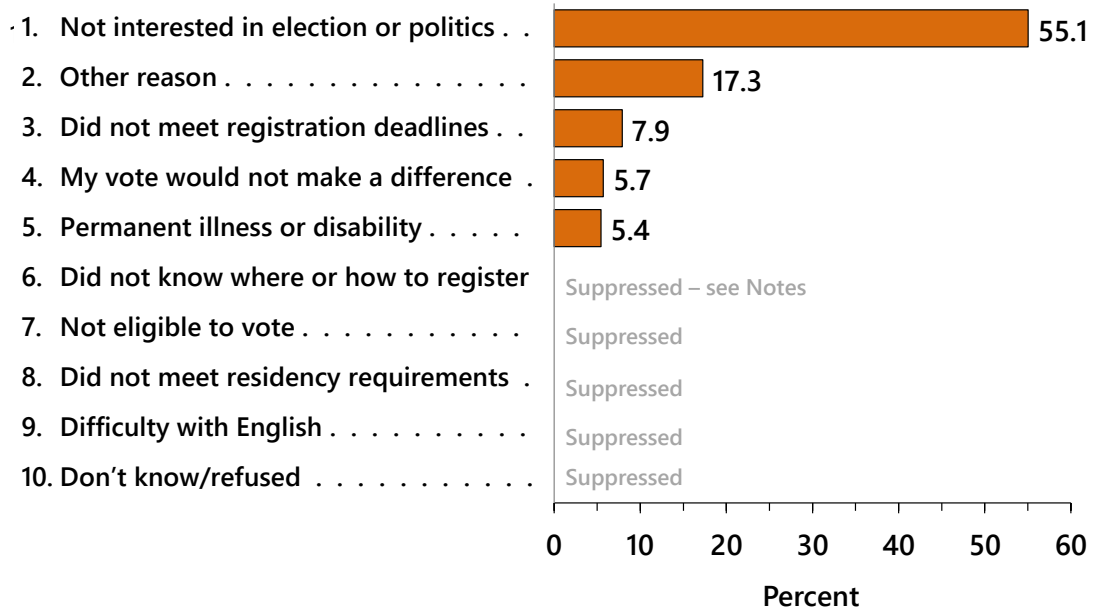
The internet was the fourth most common method of voter registration in Pennsylvania. In November 2016, 10.8% of registered citizens reported that they had registered online. Pennsylvania first allowed online voter registration in 2015.

Notes

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Figure 10: Reasons for Not Registering to Vote
 Citizens 18+ years old who were not registered in Pennsylvania, 2016
 Total = 1.5 million



What Does this Chart Show About Reasons for Not Registering?

Non-voting respondents to the November 2016 Current Population Survey were asked if they had registered to vote. Respondents who replied “no” were asked their reason for not registering. Self-reported reasons are shown in descending order by frequency in Figure 10.

Readers should be aware that respondents who refused to state whether or not they had registered were not asked about their reasons. Therefore, the respondent universe for this question (1.5 million adults) is smaller than the total number who were not registered (2.7 million) as shown in Figure 1. We classified people who refused to say whether or not they were registered as unregistered citizens.

Lack of Interest

The single largest reason (55.1%) that citizens in Pennsylvania stated for not registering was that they were *not interested in the election or they were not involved in politics* (Figure 10).

Barriers

Two reasons that can be considered structural or personal barriers together accounted for 13.3% of citizens in Pennsylvania not registering to vote (Figure 10). These reasons were *did not meet registration deadlines* (7.9%) and *permanent illness or disability* (5.4%). Responses for other structural barriers were suppressed due to data limitations (see Notes).

Beliefs

A notable minority (5.7%) of citizens stated that they did not register to vote because they believed that their *vote would not make a difference* to the outcomes of the election (Figure 10).

Notes

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Community-based, faith-based, and worker-friendly local organizations can use the resources listed below to aid in efforts to motivate citizen involvement, expand voter registration, combat voter suppression, eliminate election day logistical barriers to voting, and monitor local election procedures.

The webpage links in the listings below were active as of October 2018. Please visit our website for an expanded resources list with current links: <https://www.wiise-usa.org/mvp-resources>.

Pennsylvania Voting Rights Organizations

ACLU Pennsylvania

<https://www.aclupa.org/issues/votingissues>

The ACLU of Pennsylvania is committed to ensuring that all citizens are able to cast their votes and have them accurately counted. The ACLU has routinely represented voters and candidates in order to protect the right to vote and the right to participate in a fair election process.

Committee of Seventy

<https://seventy.org/>

The Committee of Seventy advocates for policies and programs that improve the voting experience, increase the competitiveness of elections and protect the integrity of elections. The organization focuses exclusively on Philadelphia.

Disability Voting Coalition of Pennsylvania

<http://www.padvc.com/>

The Disability Voting Coalition is a project of Disability Rights Pennsylvania. They work to promote voter registration, voting and civic engagement by people with disabilities, their families and allies. They have a strong focus on voting rights, access to voting, accessible polling places, and voter education.

Keystone Votes

<http://www.keystonevotes.org/>

Keystone Votes is a nonpartisan coalition of advocacy and community organizations joined together to launch a coordinated campaign to update Pennsylvania's election system. Its members represent communities across Pennsylvania from seniors and working people to immigrants, people with disabilities and faith leaders. Coalition members include leading Pennsylvania-based and national voting advocates and election administration experts.

Public Interest Law Center

<https://www.pubintl.org/>

The Public Interest Law Center is a legal advocacy organization to advance the civic, social and economic rights of communities in the Philadelphia area. They work to every citizen's right to vote by modernizing Pennsylvania's election system and challenging discriminatory barriers to the ballot box

FREE Resources for Local Organizations

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

<https://naacp.org/campaigns/fighting-for-democracy/>

The NAACP's Civic Engagement focus, Turn Out 2018, is a voter registration and mobilization program designed to reach voters and convey the message "Defeat Hate. Vote!" Extensive FREE resources for local organizations and individuals are available for download.

Vote411.org

<http://www.vote411.org/>

VOTE411.org is a FREE "one-stop-shop" for election related information. It provides state-specific nonpartisan information to the public. An important and very popular component of VOTE411.org is the polling place locator, which enables users to type in their street address and retrieve their poll location.

National Voting Rights Organizations

Advancement Project

<https://advancementproject.org/issues/voting-rights/>

Advancement Project is a next generation, multi-racial civil rights organization. Advancement Project is deeply involved in movement-based work aimed at blocking barriers to the ballot for voters of color and expanding access to the vote before Election Day.

**Common Cause**

<https://www.commoncause.org>

Common Cause is a nonpartisan grassroots organization with chapters in 35 states that works to promote government transparency, equal voting opportunities and fair representation in the political process.

Demos

<https://www.demos.org/issue/voting-rights-voter-registration>

Demos ("the people") is a public policy organization working to reduce political and economic inequality and to guarantee the freedom to vote, through research, advocacy, litigation, and strategic communications.

League of Women Voters (LWV)

<https://www.lwv.org>

The League of Women Voters of the United States encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. State and local leagues work to ensure equal participation in voting.

Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)

<https://www.splcenter.org/our-issues/voting-rights>

The SPLC is dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry and to seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of our society, using litigation, education, and other forms of advocacy for equal opportunity.

Voter Participation Center

<https://www.voterparticipation.org/>

The Voter Participation Center's mission is to increase civic engagement among the Rising American Electorate: unmarried women, people of color, and millennials.

Voto Latino

<http://votolatino.org/election-center/election-center/>

Voto Latino is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to civic engagement, issue advocacy, and leadership development. They provide extensive resources to promote voter participation among young Latinos.

Youth Organizations**Alliance for Youth Action**

<https://www.allianceforyouthaction.org/campaign/democracy-done-right/>

Alliance for Youth Action is a nationwide network of organizations building political power of young people. The Democracy Done Right campaign supports automatic voter registration for all citizens.

March for Our Lives

<https://marchforourlives.com/vote-for-our-lives/>

Created by, inspired by, and led by the students of Parkland High School, the mission of March For Our Lives is to assure that no special interest group or political agenda is more critical than the timely passage of legislation to effectively address the gun violence issues that are rampant in our country.

Rock the Vote

<https://www.rockthevote.org/voting-information/>

Rock the Vote is a nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to using pop culture, music, art, and technology to engage young people in politics. They provide extensive state-level information on voting requirements.

Education Organizations**American Federation of Teachers (AFT)**

<https://www.aft.org>

The AFT is a union of professionals who champion fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for students, their families and communities.

National Education Association (NEA) Education Votes

<https://educationvotes.nea.org/who-we-are/>

The NEA's Education Votes informs public education advocates on the issues, and supports the mission of providing every student—regardless of their ZIP code—with the strong public schools they need to succeed.

