



# MISSING VOTERS PROJECT: Washington 2016

Elizabeth B. Pathak, PhD and Beverly G. Ward, PhD

## 1.7 MILLION CITIZENS IN WASHINGTON did not vote on November 8, 2016



### DESCRIPTION OF MISSING VOTERS

Introduction	page 1	Race and Hispanic Origin	page 5
Summary of Voting	page 2	Method of Registration	page 6
Age	page 3	Reasons for Not Registering	page 7
Gender	page 4	Resources	page 8

### REMARKS

Missing voters were last seen across Washington 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 Washington voters missing from the November 2016 elections. Concerned individuals with an interest in locating these citizens and aiding their future participation in Washington elections are urged to share this alert widely.

### Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the following individuals who have provided invaluable support to WiiSE and the Missing Voters Project: Adam Guth, Amit Pathak, Camila Ozores Silva, Carles Muntaner, Didier Menard, Ellie Margolis, Janelle Menard, John Heimburg, Julie Rioux, Kim Wilson, Nina Basu, Phyllis Barnett, Rebecca Garcia, Robert Barnett, and Sarah Projansky.

### How to Cite This Report

Pathak EB and Ward BG. *Missing Voters Project: Washington 2016*. Olney, MD: Women's Institute for Independent Social Enquiry, 2018. <https://www.wiise-usa.org/mvp/mvp-2016-states>

### About the Authors

**Elizabeth B. Pathak, PhD** is the President and Chair of the Board of WiiSE. She is a population health scientist whose research focuses on geographic, socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, and gender disparities in health outcomes in the United States. She is a passionate advocate for methodologically rigorous scholarship which seeks to uncover the power relations that perpetuate socioeconomic and health inequalities.

**Beverly G. Ward, PhD** is a member of the Board of Directors of WiiSE. She is the Field Secretary for Earthcare for the Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Throughout her career, Dr. Ward has conducted research and provided technical assistance to communities and local, state, and federal agencies on social justice, environmental, housing, and transportation issues. She is deeply involved with the Alternatives to Violence Project as a facilitator and helps to provide community and prison workshops.

### 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 Washington's Missing Voters?

Missing voters are voting age citizens who did not vote in November 2016. Missing voters reflect the diversity of Washington as a whole. They are men and women of all ages and races. Nonetheless, voting participation in Washington varies considerably across specific population groups. The purpose of this report is to provide a detailed description of the characteristics of missing voters in Washington 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.



## 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 Washington sample of over 1,600 adult respondents. Data in response categories for which the estimated Washington 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

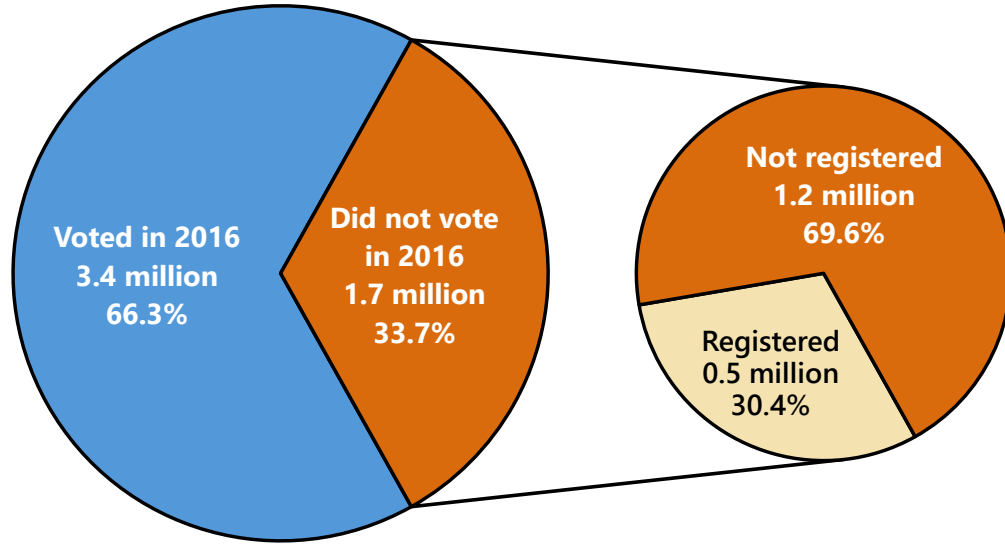
We recognize that there are important voting justice issues that can not be addressed directly through the data analyzed in our report. These issues include voter suppression and intimidation, purging of voter registration rolls, partisan gerrymandering, and other direct and indirect tactics that result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

## 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 Washington

Citizens 18+ years old in 2016  
Total = 5.1 million



#### Washington Voting in 2016

In 2016, there were an estimated 5.1 million civilian voting age citizens in Washington. 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 our statistics. However, voting age citizens who may be legally ineligible to vote in Washington are still included in the estimates in this report.

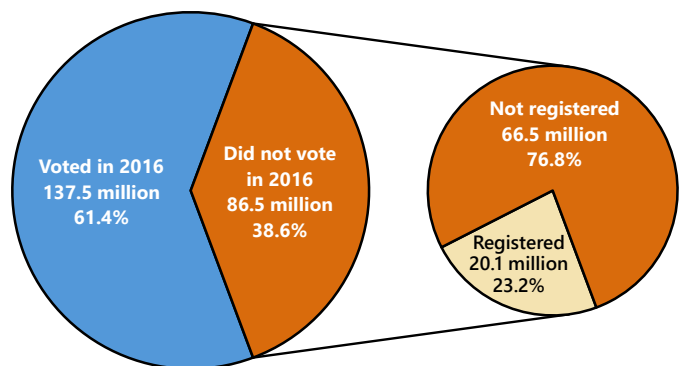
The majority (66.3%) of voting age citizens in Washington reported voting in November 2016. There were 1.7 million missing voters, 1.2 million of whom (69.6%) of whom were not registered to vote (Figure 1).

#### Washington’s Voting Rate Higher Than National Average

Nationwide, 61.4% of adult citizens voted in 2016, compared with 66.3% of citizens in Washington (Figure 2). Only a minority of missing voters were registered to vote before the election (23.2%, Figure 2); in Washington the proportion who were registered (30.4%, Figure 1) was higher than the national average.

### Figure 2: Voting in the United States

Citizens 18+ years old in 2016  
Total = 224 million



#### Notes

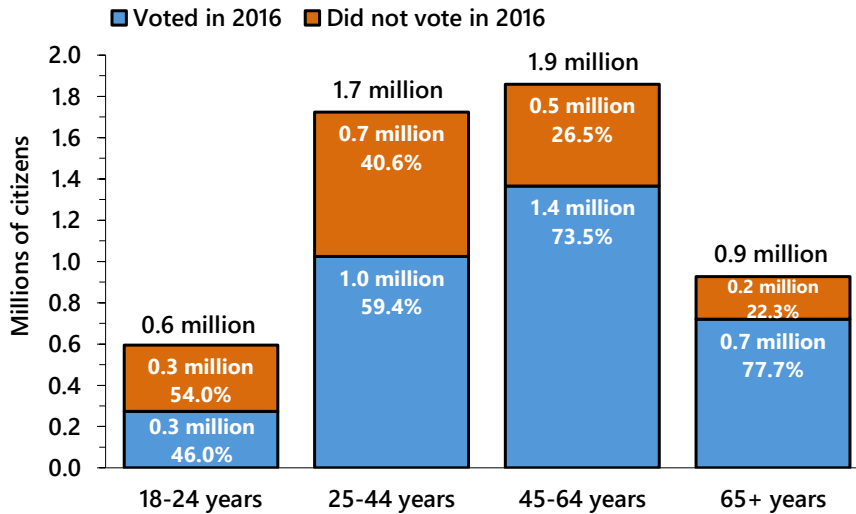
Please note that some numbers may appear not to add up correctly due to rounding. Voting data are from the Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey (November 2016). This report includes statistically-weighted estimates of percentages and population counts derived from a Washington sample of over 1,600 adult respondents. Data in response categories for which the estimated Washington 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>.



## Washington Young Adults Least Likely to Vote, but Most Missing Voters 25+ Years Old

Voting participation varied sharply by age in Washington in 2016. Only 46.0% of young adult citizens voted, compared with 77.7% of elders aged 65 years and older (Figure 3). Middle-aged adults (45 to 64 years old) were the largest group of voters (1.9 million) and adults 25 to 44 years old were the largest group of missing voters. For all ages, the majority of missing voters were not registered to vote prior to the election (Figure 4).

**Figure 3: Voting by Age**  
Citizens 18+ years old in Washington in 2016  
Total = 5.1 million



### Young Adults

Only 46.0% of the 0.6 million citizens aged 18 to 24 years in Washington voted in 2016 (Figure 3). This resulted in 0.3 million missing voters, 0.2 million (75.7%) of whom were not registered to vote before the election (Figure 4).

### Adults 25-44 Years

More than half (59.4%) of adults 25 to 44 years old voted in 2016 (Figure 3). This resulted in 0.7 million missing voters. Only 34.1% of these missing voters were registered to vote before the election (Figure 4).

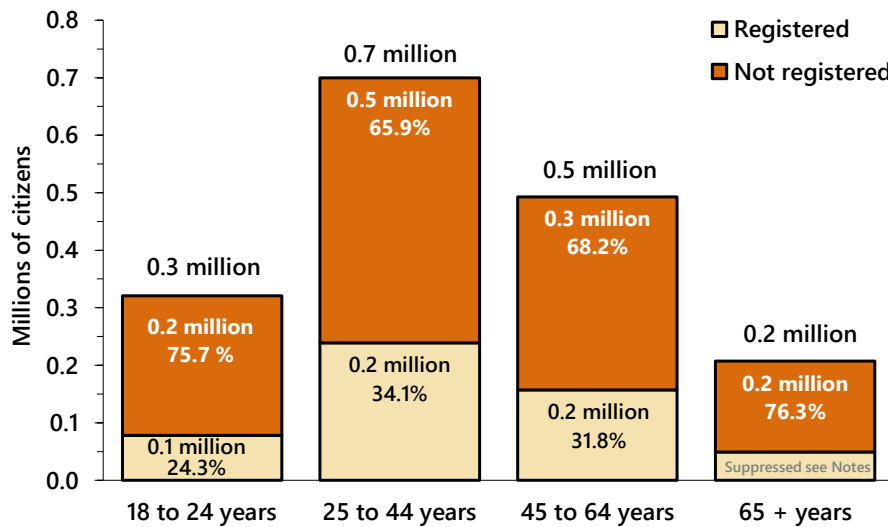
### Middle-Aged Adults

The largest number of voting age citizens in Washington were middle-aged (45 to 64 years) (1.9 million), and 73.5% reported voting (Figure 3). There were 0.5 million missing middle-aged voters (Figure 4).

### Seniors

There were 0.9 million senior citizens in Washington in 2016 and 77.7% of them voted (Figure 3). Of the 0.2 million missing voters, 76.3% were not registered to vote prior to the 2016 election (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Missing Voters by Age**  
Citizens 18+ years old who did not vote in Washington in 2016  
Total = 1.7 million



### Notes

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 Washington sample of over 1,600 adult respondents. Data in response categories for which the estimated Washington 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>.



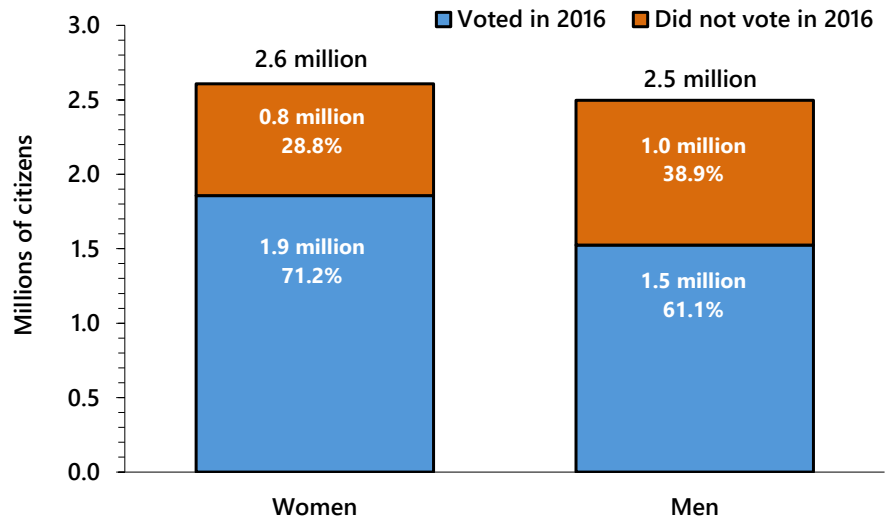
### Washington Women were Larger Share of Electorate and Much More Likely to Vote

In 2016, there were 2.6 million voting age women citizens in Washington, compared with 2.5 million men. Women were much more likely to vote (71.2% vs. 61.1%) (Figure 5). There were more missing voters among men than among women (1.0 million vs. 0.8 million). Voter registration rates among missing voters were low overall, but higher for men than for women (33.6% vs. 26.4%) (Figure 6).

**Figure 5: Voting by Gender**  
Citizens 18+ years old in Washington in 2016  
Total = 5.1 million

#### Women

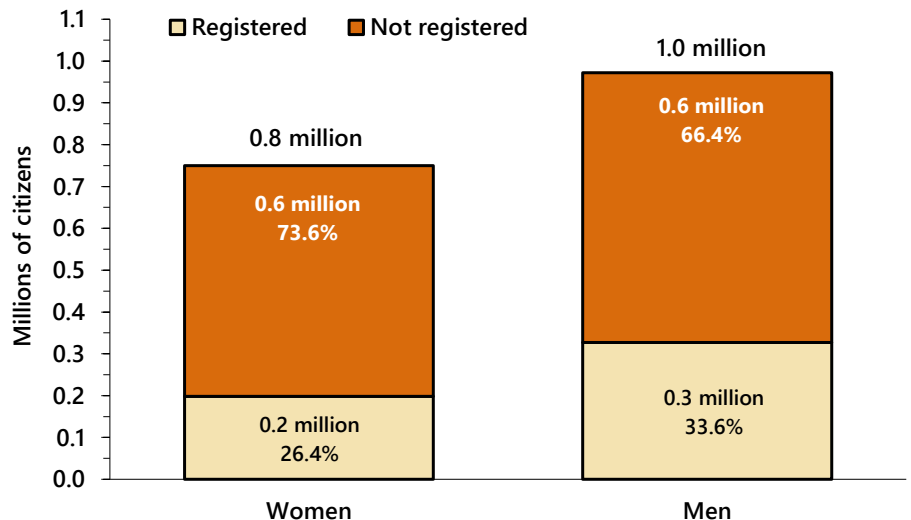
There were 2.6 million voting age women citizens in Washington in 2016. The majority (71.2%) of them voted (Figure 5). There were 0.8 million missing women voters, and the majority (73.6%) were not registered before the election (Figure 6). There were 0.2 million women who reported being registered but who did not vote.



#### Men

There were 2.5 million voting age men citizens in Washington in 2016, and more than half of them voted (61.1%) (Figure 5). There were 1.0 million missing men voters, and 66.4% of them (0.6 million) were not registered to vote before the election (Figure 6). There were 0.3 million men (33.6%) who reported being registered but who did not vote.

**Figure 6: Missing Voters by Gender**  
Citizens 18+ years old who did not vote in Washington in 2016  
Total = 1.7 million



#### Notes

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 Washington sample of over 1,600 adult respondents. Data in response categories for which the estimated Washington 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>.

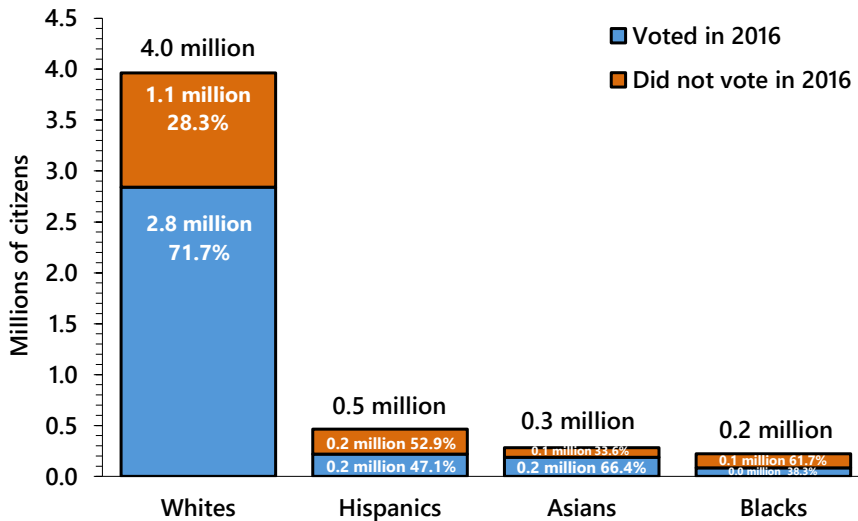


## Lowest Voting Rates Among Blacks and Hispanics, but Majority of Missing Voters White

Voting participation varied markedly by race and Hispanic origin in Washington in 2016. The majority of non-Hispanic white citizens (71.7%) voted, compared with 66.4% of Asians, 47.1% of Hispanics, and only 38.3% of Blacks (Figure 7). The majority of missing voters were white (3.3 million). The majority of missing voters were not registered before the election (Figure 8).

**Figure 7: Voting by Race and Hispanic Origin**

Citizens 18+ years old in Washington in 2016  
Total = 5.1 million



### Whites

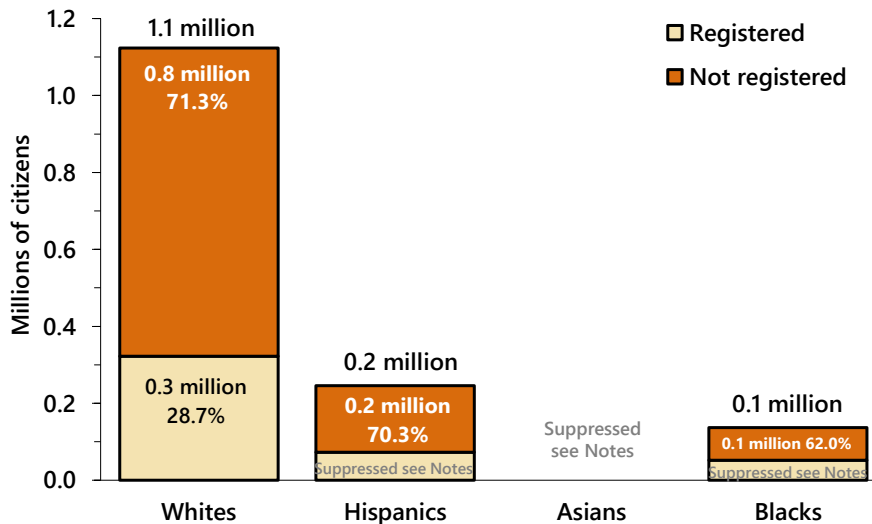
Non-Hispanic whites were the largest group of citizens in Washington (4.0 million) and the majority (71.7%) voted in 2016 (Figure 7). There were 1.1 million missing voters, including 0.8 million (71.3%) who were not registered to vote prior to the election (Figure 8).

### Hispanics

Fewer than half (47.1%) of Hispanic citizens voted in 2016 (Figure 7), resulting in 0.2 million missing voters. The majority of missing voters (0.2 million, 70.3%) were not 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 Washington in 2016  
Total = 1.7 million



### Blacks

Fewer than half (38.3%) of Black citizens voted in 2016 (Figure 7). This resulted in 0.1 million missing voters, the majority (62.6%) of whom were not registered to vote before the election (Figure 8).

### Asians

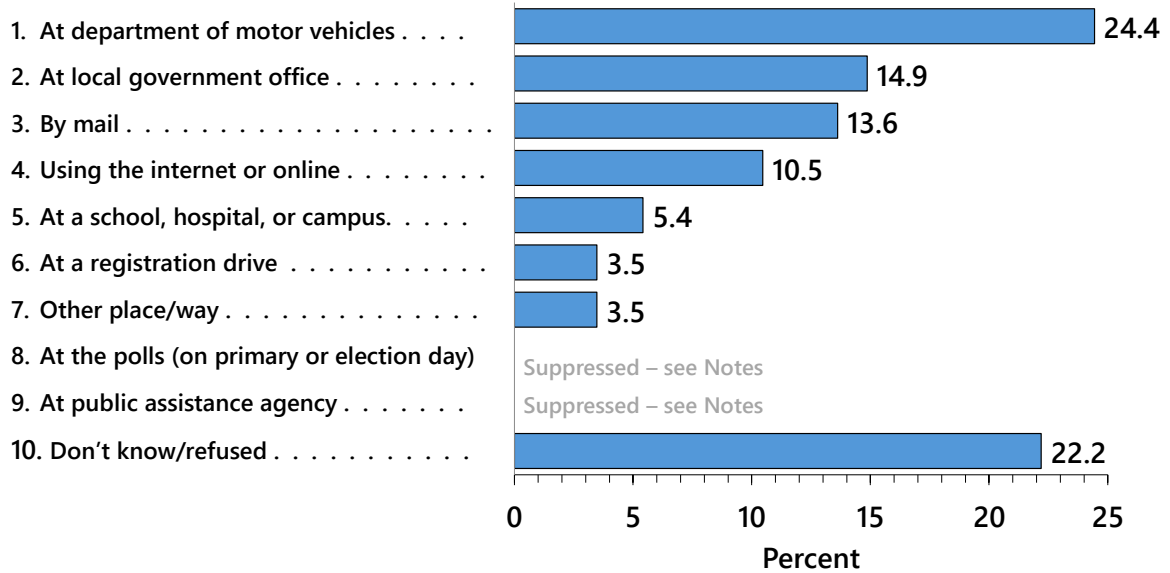
The majority (66.4%) of Washington's 0.4 million Asian citizens voted in 2016 (Figure 7). Registration results were suppressed for the 0.1 million missing Asian voters (Figure 8).

### 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 4% of Washington'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 Washington sample of over 1,600 adult respondents. Data in response categories for which the estimated Washington 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 Washington, 2016  
 Total = 3.9 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-fifth (22.2%) of registered citizens in Washington 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 (24.4%), local government offices (14.9%), and public assistance agencies (suppressed) accounted for at least 39.3% of voter registrations prior to the November 2016 elections. An additional 13.6% of registered citizens reported that they mailed their voter registration form to a government election office.

**Voter Outreach Efforts**

In total, 8.9% of registered citizens reported registering as a result of voter outreach efforts at a registration drive (3.5%), or at a school, hospital, or college campus (5.4%).

**Internet**

The internet was the fourth most common method of voter registration in Washington. In November 2016, 10.5% of registered citizens reported that they had registered online.

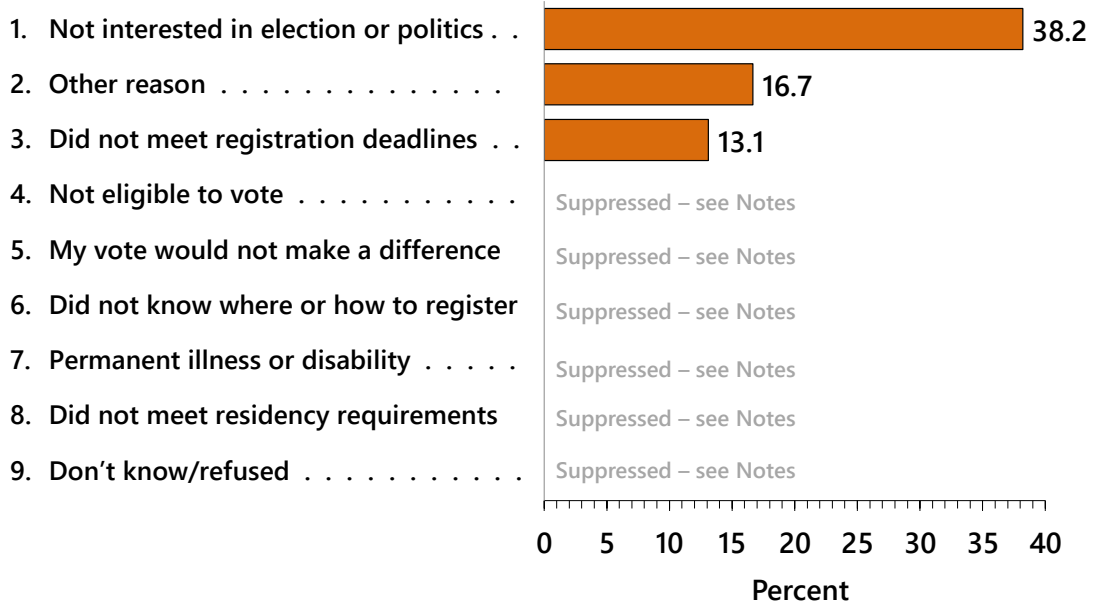
**Notes**

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 Washington sample of over 1,600 adult respondents. Data in response categories for which the estimated Washington 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 10: Reasons for Not Registering to Vote**  
 Citizens 18+ years old who were not registered in Washington, 2016  
 Total = 0.6 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 (0.6 million adults) is smaller than the total number who were not registered (1.2 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 (38.2%) that citizens in Washington stated for not registering was that they were *not interested in the election or they were not involved in politics* (Figure 10).

**Deadlines**

A notable minority (13.1%) of citizens in Washington stated that they did not register to vote because they *did not meet registration deadlines* (Figure 10).

Results for all other reasons for not registering to vote were suppressed (see Notes).

**Notes**

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 Washington sample of over 1,600 adult respondents. Data in response categories for which the estimated Washington 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>.





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>.

## Washington Organizations

### *American Civil Liberties Union of Washington*

<https://www.aclu-wa.org/voting-rights>

The ACLU of Washington is a private, nonpartisan organization that works to protect and defend the civil rights and civil liberties of the people of Washington.

### *League of Women Voters of Washington*

<https://www.lwwa.org>

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political membership organization which builds citizen participation in the democratic process and engages communities in promoting positive solutions to public policy issues through education and advocacy.

### *Vote.org*

<https://www.vote.org/state/washington>

The Vote.org Washington Election Center website provides comprehensive, up to date information about voter registration, poll sites, absentee ballots, early voting and Washington Voter ID requirements. Washingtonians can also register to vote, check registration status and request an absentee ballot from this website.

## 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.

**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.

**UNIDOS US**

<https://www.unidosus.org/issues/voting/>

UNIDOS US (formerly National Council of La Raza) and its network of nearly 300 affiliates serve the Hispanic community through research, policy analysis, and state and national advocacy, and community programs.

**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.

**Disability Organizations****The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)**

<https://www.aapd.com/advocacy/voting/>

The AAPD advocates for policies that allow people with disabilities to fully participate in the political process, including accessibility of polling locations and voting technology.

**National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)**

<http://www.ndrn.org/en/public-policy/voting.html>

The NDRN provides legal advocacy services for individuals with disabilities including access to voting, through the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy Systems and the Client Assistance Programs.

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

<https://www.aft.org>

The AFT is a union of professionals who champion fairness, democracy, economic opportunity, high-quality public education, and 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.

