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# Voter Experience Survey November 2020

The November 2020 Voter Experience Survey was administered online using the Survey Monkey platform and distributed via email to Seventy's 25,000+ election news subscribers, through social media and on www.seventy.org, and to the media. The survey was open from Monday, October 26 to Monday, December 7, available before Election Day for voters who submitted absentee or mail-in ballots. Respondents were limited to one submission per IP address.

*Seventy appreciates the support of the community, civic and media organizations who assisted in disseminating the survey – and to the 1,800+ citizens who participated.*

| Did you vote in person on Election Day or by mail? | | |
|---|---|---|
| I voted in person on Election Day. | 329 | 18% |
| I voted by mail. | 1472 | 82% |

| How confident are you that the current election process in your particular county produces accurate outcomes? | | | | | | | | | | | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | **9.1** |
| 29 | 24 | 10 | 10 | 12 | 34 | 25 | 31 | 93 | 309 | 1,193 | |
| 2% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 2% | 1% | 2% | 5% | 17% | 67% | |

**Mail-in Voting (MV) Responses**

| MV Question 1: Did you encounter any issues in the absentee or mail-in voting process? | | |
|---|---|---|
| No. | 1,107 | 88% |
| Yes. I had an issue REQUESTING an absentee or mail-in ballot. | 66 | 5% |
| Yes. I had an issue COMPLETING my absentee or mail-in ballot. | 41 | 3% |
| Yes. I had an issue RETURNING my absentee or mail-in ballot. | 51 | 4% |

| MV Question 2: If at any point you encountered issues, did you contact your county election office for help? | | |
|---|---|---|
| No. I didn't know who to contact. | 15 | 11% |
| No. I could not reach the elections staff. | 17 | 12% |
| Yes. I reached the elections staff, but they could not resolve the issue. | 13 | 9% |
| Yes. I reached the elections staff, and they helped me resolve the issue. | 39 | 27% |

| MV Question 3: Did you use a satellite election office? | | |
|---|---|---|
| No. | 637 | 42% |
| Yes, to register to vote. | 2 | 0.1% |

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| | | |
|---|---:|---:|
| Yes, to sign up for a mail-in ballot | 60 | 4% |
| Yes, to drop off my mail-in ballot | 766 | 51% |
| Yes, to receive a replacement ballot | 38 | 3% |

| MV Question 4: Did you use a satellite election office? | | |
|---|---:|---:|
| None at all | 473 | 59% |
| Less than 10 min | 212 | 26% |
| 10 to 30 min | 55 | 7% |
| 31 min to 1 hour | 19 | 2% |
| More than 1 hour | 44 | 5% |

| MV Question 5: Was the staff able to address any question or issue you encountered in the voting process? | | |
|---|---:|---:|
| Yes | 311 | 39% |
| No | 8 | 1% |
| Not applicable since no question or issue came up. | 485 | 60% |

| MV Question 6: Rate the job performance of the satellite election office staff. | | |
|---|---:|---:|
| Excellent | 721 | 86% |
| Good | 114 | 13% |
| Fair | 7 | 1% |
| Poor | 0 | 0% |

| MV Question 7: Please rate the absentee/mail-in voting process given your experience. | | |
|---|---:|---:|
| Excellent | 1,116 | 76% |
| Good | 259 | 18% |
| Fair | 56 | 4% |
| Poor | 29 | 2% |

**In-person Voting at Polling Place (PP) Responses**

| PP Question 1: Approximately how long did you wait in line to vote? | | |
|---|---:|---:|
| Do not know | 2 | 1% |
| Not at all | 111 | 34% |
| Less than 10 minutes | 59 | 18% |
| 10 to 30 minutes | 54 | 17% |
| 31 minutes to an hour | 67 | 21% |
| More than an hour | 31 | 10% |

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**PP Question 2: Did you encounter any individuals campaigning or distributing partisan flyers, buttons or posters inside the polling place (i.e., the space or room where the voting systems are located)?**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 22 | 7% |
| No | 301 | 93% |

**PP Question 3a: Was there a problem with your voter registration when you tried to vote?**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 11 | 3% |
| No | 312 | 97% |

**PP Question 3b: Were you allowed to vote?**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| No, I was not allowed to vote | 0 | 0% |
| Yes, I used a provisional ballot | 2 | 18% |
| Yes, I used the voting system | 9 | 82% |

**PP Question 4a: Were you asked to show identification at the polling place (e.g., driver's license, student or government ID, voter registration card)?**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 60 | 19% |
| No | 261 | 81% |

**PP Question 4b: Did you change your voter registration address before this election, or was this your first time voting in your county?**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 14 | 23% |
| No | 46 | 77% |

**PP Question 4c: Were you allowed to vote?**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| No, I was not allowed to vote | 0 | 0% |
| Yes, I used a provisional ballot | 5 | 8% |
| Yes, I used the voting system | 55 | 92% |

**PP Question 5: Did you encounter any problems with the voting equipment or the ballot that may have interfered with your ability to cast your vote as intended?**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 19 | 6% |
| No | 289 | 91% |
| Don't know | 9 | 3% |

**PP Question 6a: Did you need help or assistance voting due to a disability?**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 4 | 1% |
| No | 313 | 99% |

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| **PP Question 6b: How did you receive help or assistance voting at the polling place?** | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A person of my choosing (e.g., friend, relative, another voter) assisted me. | 2 | 50% |
| I used the audio keypad/headphone device on the voting system. | 0 | 0% |
| The voting system was adjusted or lowered so I could reach the ballot face. | 0 | 0% |
| I did not receive help or assistance | 0 | 0% |
| Other form of assistance | 2 | 50% |

| **PP Question 7: Did the poll workers have and use personal protection equipment (face masks, gloves, sanitary wipes)?** | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Yes | 300 | 95% |
| No | 16 | 5% |

| **PP Question 8: Were the poll workers able to address any question or issue you encountered in the voting process?** | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Yes | 138 | 44% |
| No | 13 | 4% |
| Not applicable since no question came up | 163 | 52% |

| **PP Question 9: Please rate the job performance of the poll workers at the polling place where you voted.** | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Excellent | 207 | 66% |
| Good | 81 | 26% |
| Fair | 19 | 6% |
| Poor | 7 | 2% |

## Open-ended Responses

The open-ended responses listed below were selected as representative examples or because of detail or clarity provided by the respondent. All text is verbatim as received, except that identifiable information to individuals and candidates has been redacted.

### Mail-in Voting Respondents

*Did you encounter any issues in the absentee or mail-in voting process? If yes, please specify what problem(s) you had:*

- My mail in ballot worked great for the primary, but never arrived for the general election. County website showed it was mailed on 9/28/20. I ended up doing early voting at the election office. They were able to reprint my ballot and instructed me to destroy the other ballot if it ever arrived, which it did not.

- Lack of clarity about when the drop box would be available for dropping off ballots. After it was installed I was there twice only to find it locked. I had to dig in to the subject on the internet in order to find out when it would be available and the cause for the delay. On my third try, the box was unlocked and I dropped off my ballot.
- It took a long time for the mail-in ballot form to arrive. So, I went to a satellite office and in early October. I cancelled my mail-in application and then voted on-site. It took three weeks for the on-line ballot tracking site to acknowledge my ballot. It was stressful.
- Because I voted by mail in the primary, I was able to automatically get a mail-in ballot. I was advised on this months before I actually got the ballot, which didn't arrive until deep into September. I understand why but it highlighted for me the need to scrutinize and synchronize timing for the myriad of steps required more realistically and carefully.
- Filled out info on wrong lines on mailing envelope. Waited an hour for Election Board to take my call and tell me I needed to visit satellite office to get new envelope. At satellite office, they said I simply needed to make corrections and initial them. Great help at G. Washington HS satellite office.

***What feedback do you have on the process? What would you change?***

More than 800 respondents provided feedback on their mail-in voting experience. Many comments were positive, but delays between submitted applications and received ballots were not an uncommon experience.

The following changes or improvements were frequently raised:

- More Ballot drop-off locations
- Counting ballots as they arrive, or before election day
- Allowing more people to vote by mail in the future
- Better communication about ballot applications and when they are sent out and received
- Clearer directions, and less steps to ensure votes are counted

**Selected responses:**

- I would have preferred to mail my ballot via USPS as I had in the primary; however, given the delays with USPS I thought hand delivery at county office was a safer way to go.
- Allowing counties to start counting ballots as they're received and not having to wait until election day to even start would vastly improve the process.
- I would like to see no-excuse absentee voting become standard practice in the future. It was great not to have to wait in line and to be able to fill out my ballot at my leisure, without having to worry about taking time off from work or the weather being bad or the other things that can interfere with in-person voting.

- It took longer than I would have expected to get my ballot and it was impossible to check or understand why. But it came in time and I'm glad I dropped it off!
- Send ballots to everyone, or at least to ALL registered voters. Allow people to return them at their polling place on election day, if they want. Start counting before election day.
- Bullet point instructions and less steps would be ideal. For example, extra envelope seemed unnecessary. Clearer differentiation between the standard area to fill out and the one for those needing help with ballot would be nice clarity. The lawsuits and confusion about the laws and if court rulings might change them made it unsettling.

## In-person Voting Respondents

*Did you encounter any individuals campaigning or distributing partisan flyers, buttons or posters inside the polling place (i.e., the space or room where the voting systems are located)? If yes, please specify what you observed:*

- People supporting one particular candidate for state representative were in and out of the polling place with literature in hand. They were also too close to the polling place handing out literature.
- Many of the poll workers were wearing candidate gear. One of the poll watchers was wearing candidate gear.

**Was there a problem with your voter registration when you tried to vote? If yes, please specify what problem(s) you had:**

- Previous name change...luckily I brought all valid identification.

**Did you encounter any problems with the voting equipment or the ballot that may have interfered with your ability to cast your vote as intended? If yes, please specify what problem(s) you had:**

- They said I had requested a mail in ballot. They said I could not vote. After I was insistent that I did not have a ballot at home they said I could probably vote provisionally.
- When I first touched the screen, nothing happened and I thought I was doing something wrong, but it just took a couple of seconds of my finger being on the screen to light up. Maybe it was because of the plastic glove they gave me; maybe it took a second longer because the glove caused a minor insulation-delay. But that was no BIG problem. I voted.
- I was at the polling place shortly after it opened. One of the two machines for our division was not working. I was the 9th person to use the other machine and when the paper was inserted, the machine did not work at all for me. Someone in the polling place had to open the machine and reset the machine and I was able to vote.

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*What health or safety issues did you observe while in the polling place?*

- Hand sanitizer, masks, distance markers, different exits than usual.
- Plastic barriers. All personnel had PPE. The voting machine was cleaned between each use.
- All were masked, but one woman's mask kept slipping down under nose.
- The only thing I saw was my voter registration sign in book had only one pen, which was being reused without being sanitized
- Many people in the room with masks, but not sufficiently social distanced

## Methodology

Seventy's Voter Experience Survey was piloted in November 2015 to identify issues that the electorate may be encountering during the voting process. Most questions have been collected from academic studies conducted in other states and have been kept consistent each election season. Responses are anonymous.

These results are not drawn from a random and representative sample of Philadelphia-area and Pennsylvania voters. Despite the large number of respondents, only rough generalizations can be inferred about the experiences of the 1,800+ survey participants – not the broader universe of voters.

Please contact Policy Director Patrick Christmas at pchristmas@seventy.org with questions or feedback on the survey. Find past results at: www.seventy.org/get-involved/voter-experience-survey

**Demographics of November 2020 Respondents***

**Zip Codes**

| Philadelphia | **1350** | |
|---|---|---|
| Center | 299 | 22% |
| North | 118 | 9% |
| Northeast | 154 | 11% |
| Northwest | 361 | 27% |
| South | 275 | 20% |
| West/Southwest | 143 | 11% |
| **Suburban Counties** | **451** | |
| Bucks | | |
| Chester | | |

**Race, Ethnicity or Origin****

| Asian | 32 | 2% |
|---|---|---|
| Black or African American | 199 | 11% |
| Hispanic or Latino/a | 24 | 2% |
| Native American | 7 | <1% |
| Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander | 1 | <1% |
| White or Caucasian | 1,447 | 81% |
| Other race or ethnicity | 28 | 2% |
| Multiracial | 42 | 2% |

**Age**

| 18-35 | 174 | 10% |
|---|---|---|

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| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Delaware | | | 36-55 | 444 | 26% |
| Montgomery | | | 56-74 | 876 | 50% |
| | | | 75+ | 247 | 14% |
| Other zip codes | 42 | | Blank | 60 | |
| No data | 31 | | | | |
| TOTAL | 1,801 | | **Gender**** | | |
| | | | Female | 1,023 | 59% |
| | | | Male | 694 | 40% |

*Philadelphia regions: Center (19102, 19103, 19106, 19107, 19123, 19130), North (19120, 19121, 19122, 19124, 19125, 19132, 19133, 19134, 19140), Northeast (19111, 19114, 19115, 19116, 19135, 19136, 19137, 19149, 19152, 19154), Northwest (19118, 19119, 19126, 19127, 19128, 19129, 19138, 19141, 19144, 19150), South (19112, 19145, 19146, 19147, 19148), West/Southwest (19104, 19131, 19139, 19142, 19143, 19151, 19153)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Non-binary | 9 | <1% |
| Prefer not to say | 8 | <1% |
| Prefer to self-describe | 2 | <1% |

*Respondents were not required to include demographic information.
**Respondents could select multiple categories.

*This project is supported by the Thomas Skelton Harrison Foundation.*