

# The Future of Voting?

A survey about the current and future state of registration and voting



The #1 reason why people *did not* vote in 2014, nor in the 2016 primary, is solved by technology

Moreover, allowing people to vote securely online or via their smartphone could increase voter turnout by ~20%

# Survey Background

In late June 2016, the non-profit OurTime.org and Votem partnered to conduct a survey about the current and future state of registration and voting.



OurTime is focused on getting young voters to register to vote and actually make it to the polls.



**votem**

Votem is focused on building the world's most secure mobile voting platform.

Our joint thesis was that by making both registration and voting easier for citizens, that we could truly increase voter turnout. OurTime and similar organizations have done a tremendous job of getting new voters to register. There is some conclusive evidence that getting voters to register will increase voter turnout, but we believe there is still much work to be done.

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The following questions were asked regarding past and future intentions to register and vote, past and future methods of voting, and demographics:

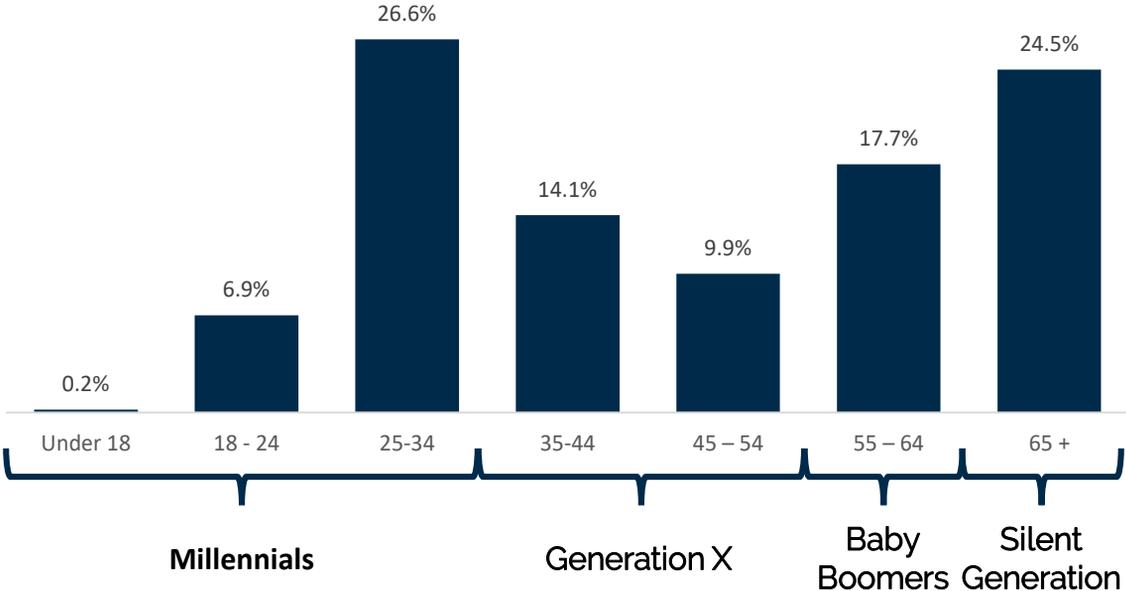
- *Are you currently registered to vote?*
- *If you answered "no", what is the primary reason that you are not registered?*
- *Did you vote in the general election in 2014?*
- *If you did not vote in 2014, what was the primary reason that you didn't?*
- *Did you vote in the recent 2016 Primary / Caucus in your state?*
- *If you didn't vote in the 2016 Primary or Caucus, what was your primary reason you did not?*
- *Do you intend to vote in the 2016 general election in November?*
- *If you are not going to vote in the 2016 General Election, what is the primary reason for not voting?*
- *What method did you typically use to vote?*
- *If you were confident that your vote was truly anonymous and completely secure, how likely would you be to vote via the following methods?*
- *How much more likely would you be to vote if you could vote electronically (via phone / online)?*
- *Age, Gender, Political Affiliations?*

# Respondent & Survey Information

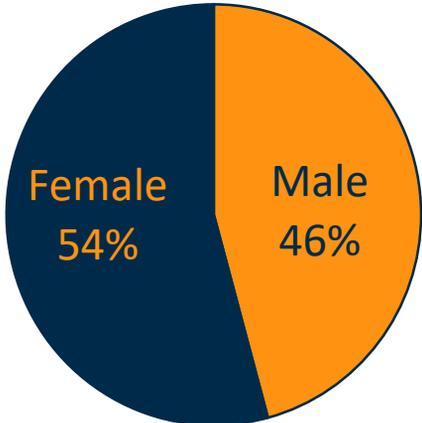
- June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016 – July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016
- Sent to 252,011 people from OurTime's extensive email database
- 16% Open Rate
- # of Survey Respondents: 3,586

## Age Distribution

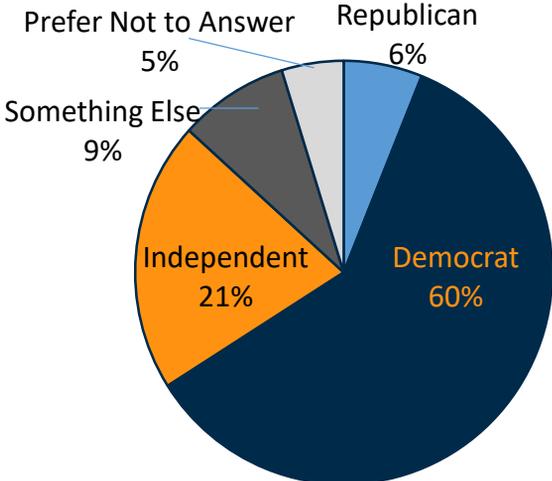
Total Count: 3,401



## Gender



## Political Affiliation



# Disclaimers

## Survey Disclaimer

*We are keenly aware that one might consider these results “suspect” since they are coming from a mobile voting company, however the email list that was provided, and the subsequent survey that was sent out came from the non-profit organization, OurTime.org with no attribution to Votem.*

## Respondent Disclaimer

*Bare in mind, based on the demographic and background information available on our survey’s participants, that in no way is the respondent pool representative of the national population pool. This is evident from the information gathered, but think it is important to explicitly state that we are not drawing generalized conclusions about the domestic population, but rather about the respondent pool.*

## Margin of Error

*At a 95% confidence interval, the margin of error is +/- 2 percentage points.*

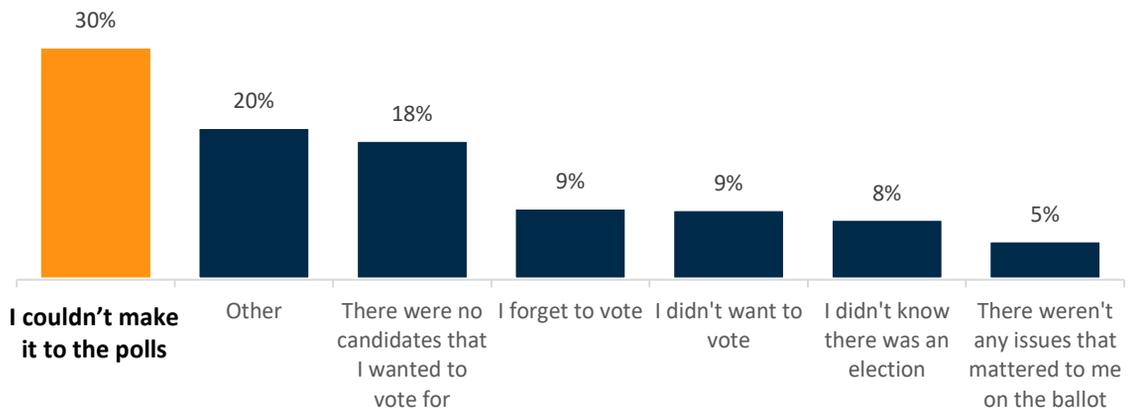
# Why People Don't Vote?

If you were legally allowed to and did not vote, what was the primary reason?

The respondents to the questions above are the aforementioned sub-set of those who did not vote in the 2014 general and 2016 primary elections respectively.

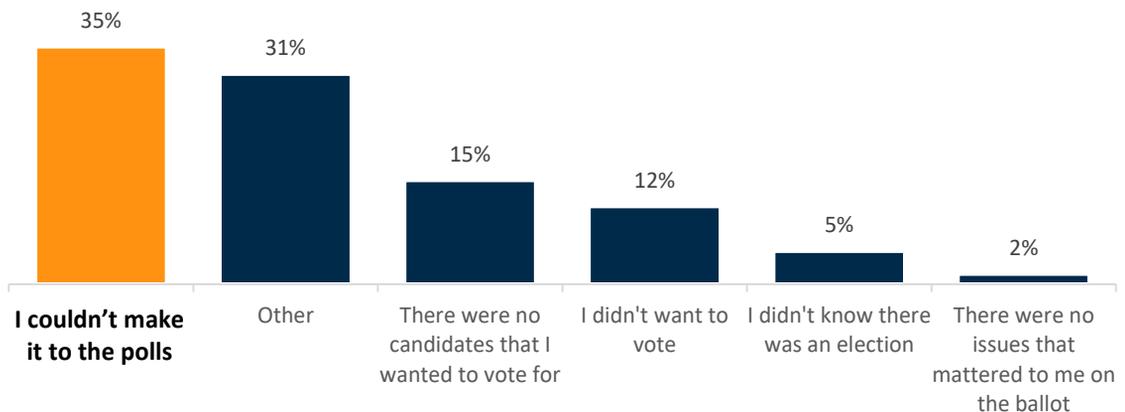
## 2016 Primary or Caucus

Total Count: 558 \*



## 2014 General Election

Total Count: 1,129 \*



\* 84.7% of 3,401 survey respondents answered that they voted in the 2014 general election and 76.6% of 3,401 survey respondents answered that they voted in the 2016 primary / caucus.

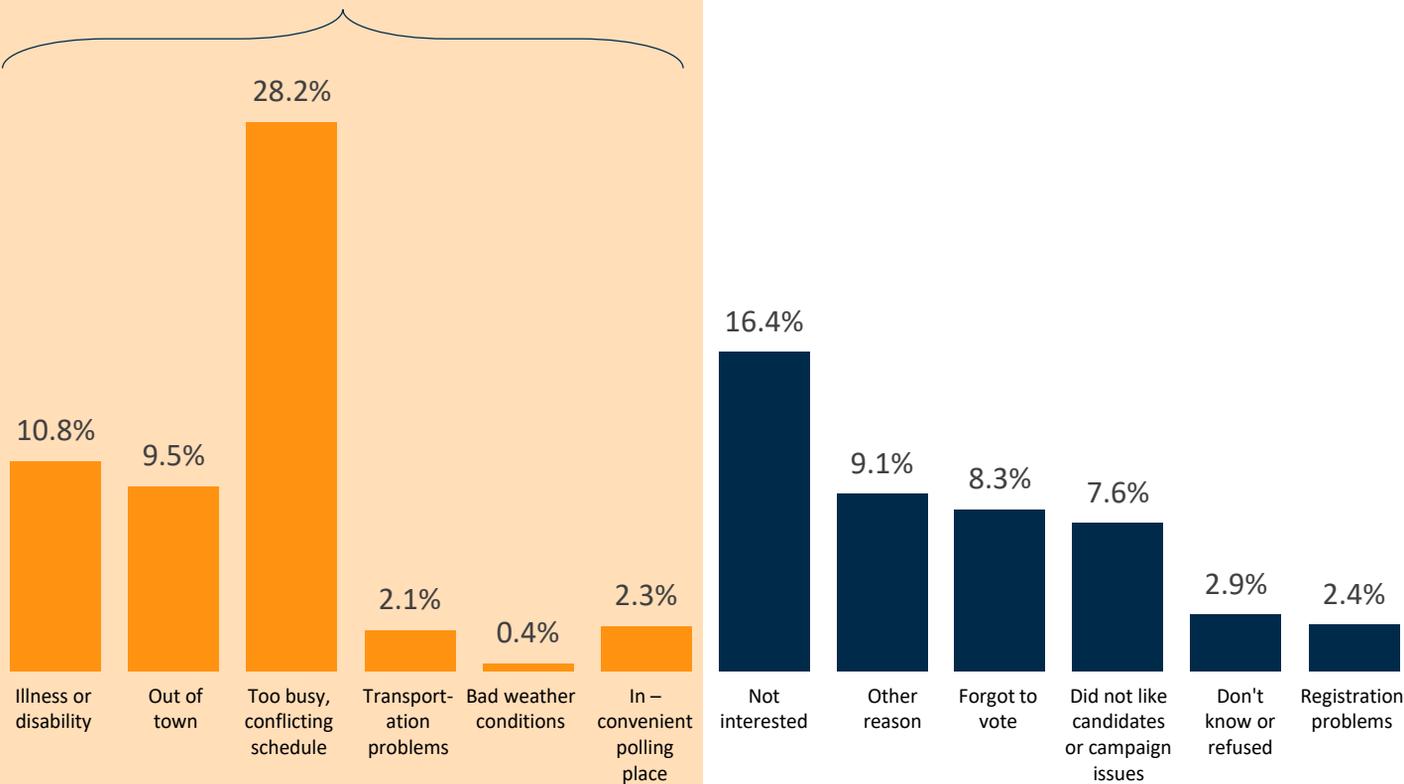
In both the 2014 general election and 2016 Primary/Caucus, respondents who did not vote cited inability to get to the polls as the #1 reason why they didn't vote

# Why People Don't Vote?

*A 2<sup>nd</sup> Opinion & Nationally Representative Perspective*

The U.S. Census Bureau asked 47,593,000 Americans why they did not vote in 2014 and here's what they found:

53.3% of U.S. Census Respondents' reasons they didn't vote can be tied to inability to make it to the polls



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2014.

On a far more statistically significant scale, our takeaway holds true – namely, inability to make it to the polls is a hugely important factor in why people ultimately do not vote

# Why People Don't Vote?

Some of the comments that respondents included as reasons why they didn't:

"I Live in Switzerland and underestimated the process of voting as an absentee."

"I was traveling abroad and missed the date before hand to cast an absentee ballot."

"I was traveling and forgot to request an absentee ballot."

"I had a mail ballot but didn't mail it in time. I am disabled. I wanted to vote it's important to me."

"I was moving around a lot and had changed addresses many times in a year. Since in Washington state we have ballots mailed to us only, I could not track down my ballot. and, I did not know how else to vote. I was very disappointed."

"Too lazy – forgot / not easy enough"

"Out of the country for five months and traveling 30 days before election."

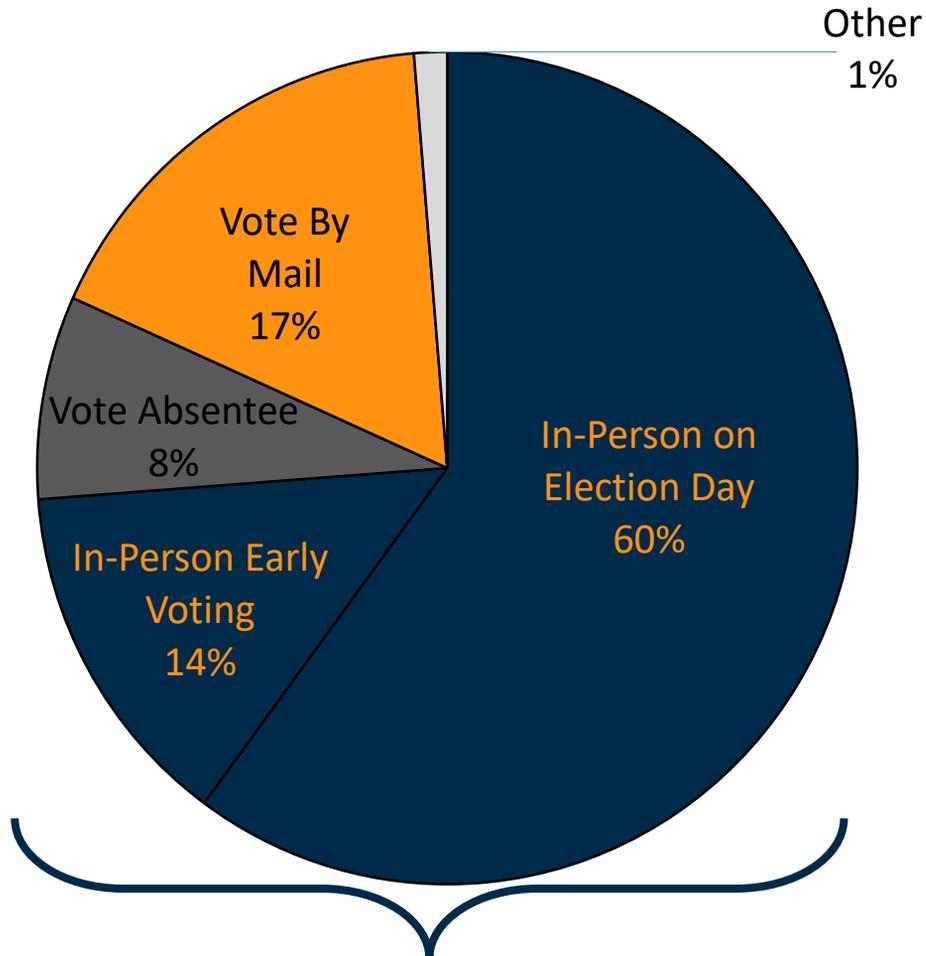
"I couldn't make it because I had work all day and I couldn't drive at the time being."

...and there are hundreds of similar responses to the ones above.

# How People Who Do Vote, Vote

## What Method Did You Typically Use To Vote?

Total Count: 3,459



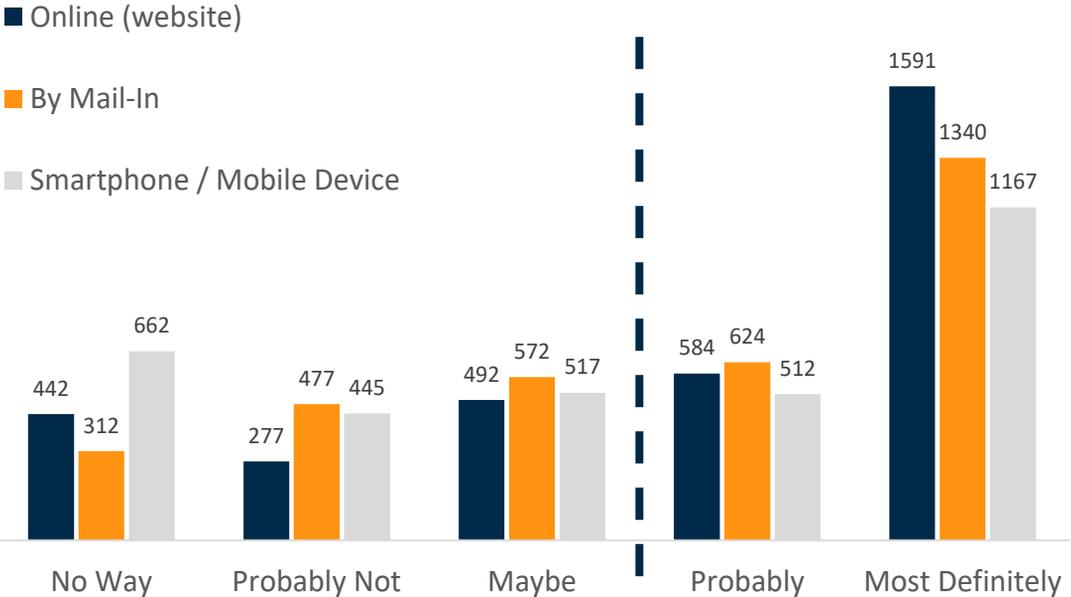
**74% In-Person Voting**

Traditionally, voters in our survey voted primarily in-person on election day. We suspect this is a function of past behavior (it's simply how we've done it for hundreds of years) and legislative mandate. Furthermore, because so many respondents' comments focused on not being able to get to the polls...

...this supports the idea that there exists an opportunity to increase voter turnout by providing a more convenient alternative to in-person voting.

# Exploring Alternative Voting Methods

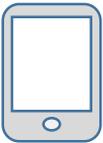
If you were confident your vote was truly anonymous and completely secure, how likely would you be to vote via the following methods?



Online / Secure Web Browser — 64 % of respondents likely to vote online



By Mail - In — 59 % of respondents likely to vote by mail



Smartphone / Mobile Device — 51 % of respondents likely to vote by Smartphone

People are more open than not to alternative electronic voting methods

# A Qualitative Look

If you were confident your vote was truly anonymous and completely secure, how likely would you be to vote via the following methods? (Online / Mail / Mobile)

→ more than 2,000 people commented on this question!

Here's what people had to say:

"Online voting is the future"

"The internet isn't secure"

"Voting needs to be made MUCH easier"

"There is NO way to verify online voting!!!"

"Electronically is the most convenient for me"

"Believe there could be ways to hack the system"

"I would really love the option to vote on a secure website"

"I do not trust the integrity of online voting"

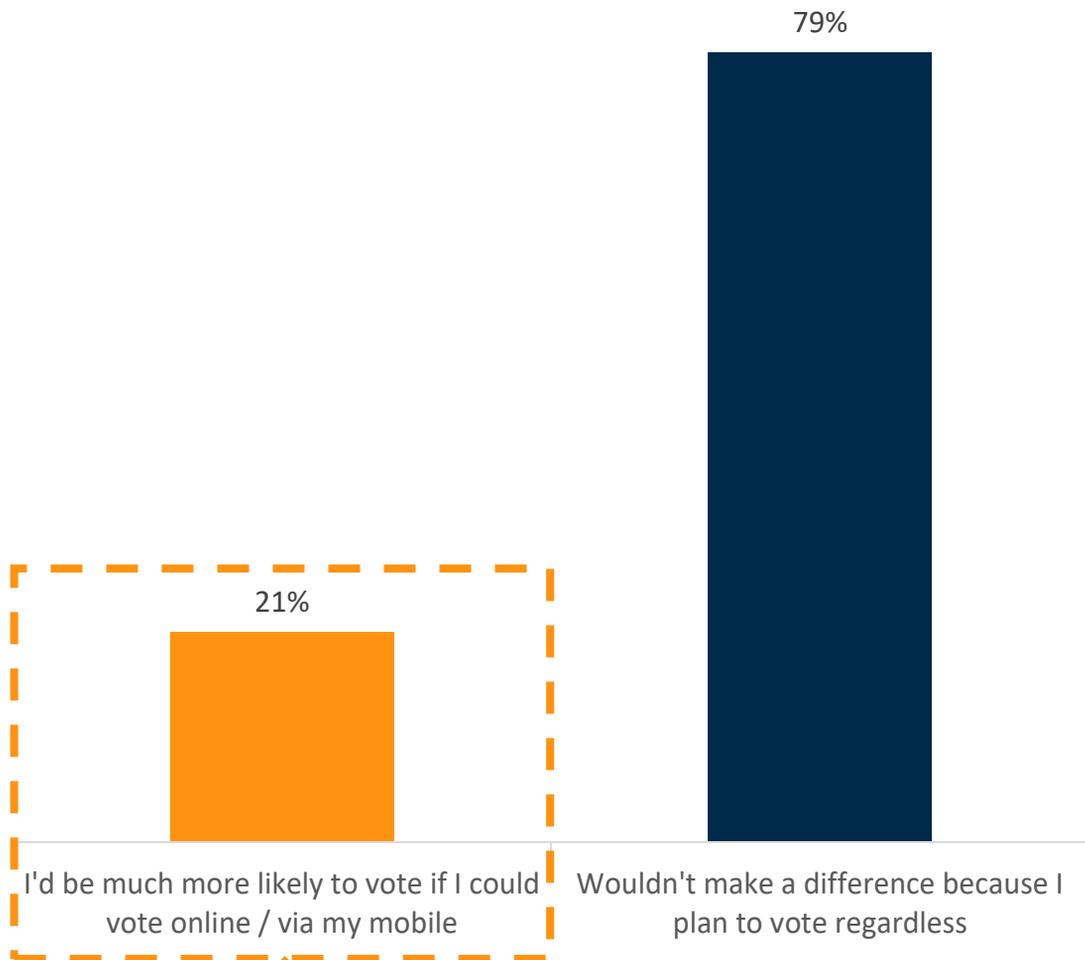
There emerges a clear tension amongst respondents trying to balance the accessibility and convenience of online voting with the security and integrity of it.

# So...

What effect would electronic voting have on voter turnout?

How much more likely would you be to vote if you could vote electronically (via phone / online) ?

Total Count: 3,401



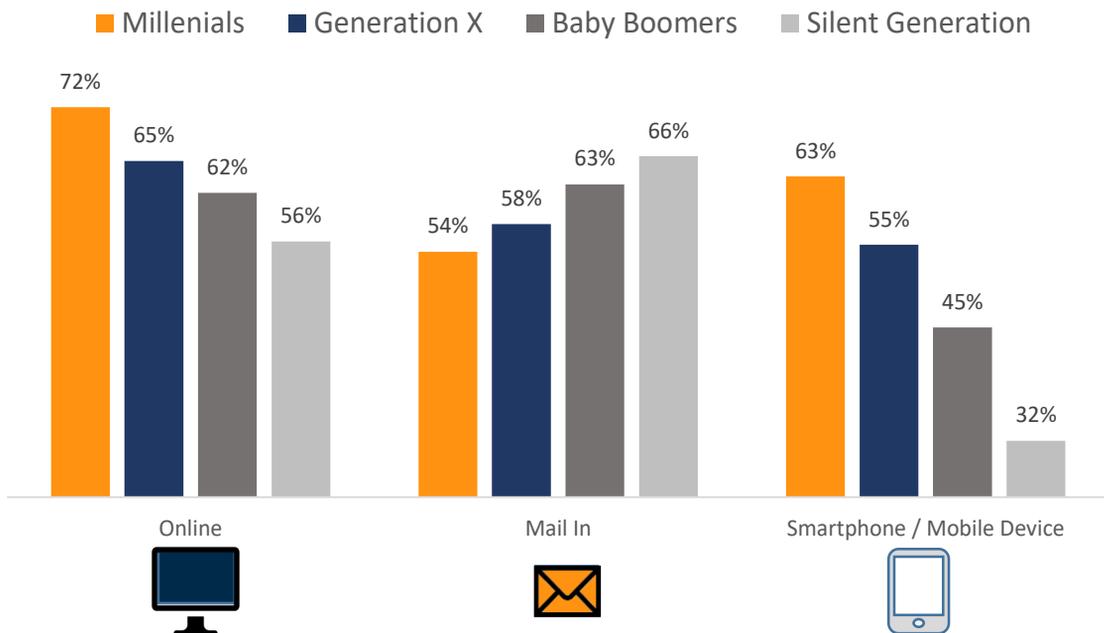
**21%**

Of respondents would be more likely to vote if they could do so electronically

# Does Age Matter?

Let's revisit: If you were confident your vote was truly anonymous and completely secure, how likely would you be to vote via the following methods?

% of respondents (at least) probably to use:



The overall affinity toward electronic voting options is high – across the age spectrum, by an almost uniform majority (with the exception of those older than 65 for smartphone usage):

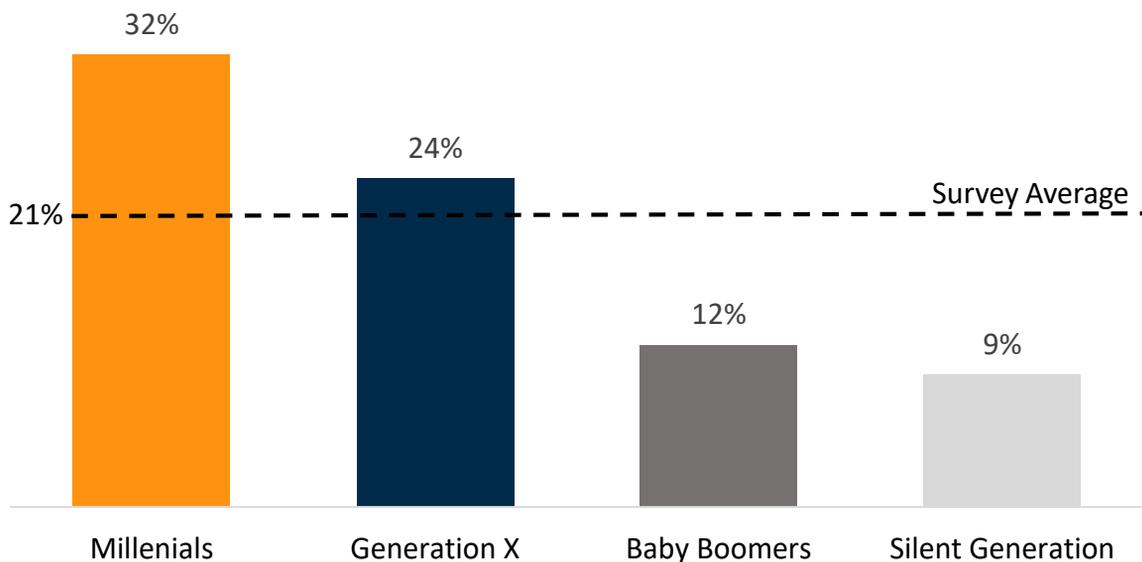
people are more likely than not to use a secure web browser or their mobile device as a means of voting if it were available, regardless of age.

With that being said, the proliferation of electronic voting options may affect voter participation rates differently across different age groups.

Simply, it seems younger folk are more amenable to electronic voting whereas older folk are more amenable to relatively traditional voting methods like mail-in ballots. This is not too surprising – we know younger people tend to be very tech-savvy and major proponents of mobile technology. What is surprising though, is that older generations were not far behind their younger counterparts – which we think is more a function of the ease of voting than it is a comfort with technology.

# More on Age...

% of respondents who'd be more likely to vote if they could vote online



While ~ 95% of all respondents in aggregate intend to vote come November, for those older than 55 (Baby Boomers and Silent Generation), the percentage is more like 98%.

In contrast, 8% of millennials (opposed to 2% of the older generations) are not absolutely sold on participating in the vote come November.

Tying in the results that novel electronic voting options may have a relatively greater effect on millennials than on older generations, it's a fairly sound assumption to make that electronic voting would likely have a larger impact on millennial turnout than on older generations turnout.

The data supports this - this assumption is in total accordance with how each generation self-identifies as reported above:

- 32% of millennials, relative to the survey average of 21%, would be more likely to vote if they could do so online.
- In contrast, only 12% and 9% of Baby Boomers and Silent Generation respectively would be more likely to vote if they could do so online (relative to the survey average of 21%).

# Some Final Thoughts

There does exist a disconnect between intention to vote and actual turnout rates.

As we mentioned before, 95% of all respondents in whole intend to vote come November. What we haven't discussed though is that:

- 76% *of those surveyed*\* actually got out and voted during their state's 2016 primary - a 24% discrepancy.
- 85% *of those surveyed*\* voted in the 2014 general - a 10% discrepancy.

\*survey respondent turnout rates, not national voter turnout rates

Intend to Vote

95 %

VS.

Actually Vote

76 %

in 2016 primary / caucus

85 %

in 2014 general

What accounts for this difference?

*It is a combination of many factors, one key reason being:*

**the inability to make it to the polls.**

By merely increasing the number of ways people can vote, we expect to increase participation and turnout. Specifically, by introducing a method of voting that is markedly more convenient and accessible, like online or mobile voting, we expect the gap between intent and reality will narrow by a statistically significant margin,

# The Takeaway

Technology, in the form of online and mobile voting, will make voting easier for a significant proportion of the voting population.

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\* Assuming secure implementation and guarantees of anonymity, verifiability, and auditability.

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Any Questions Regarding this Survey?



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