

VOTING PERCEPTIONS



University of Maryland

2020 – Issue 3, March

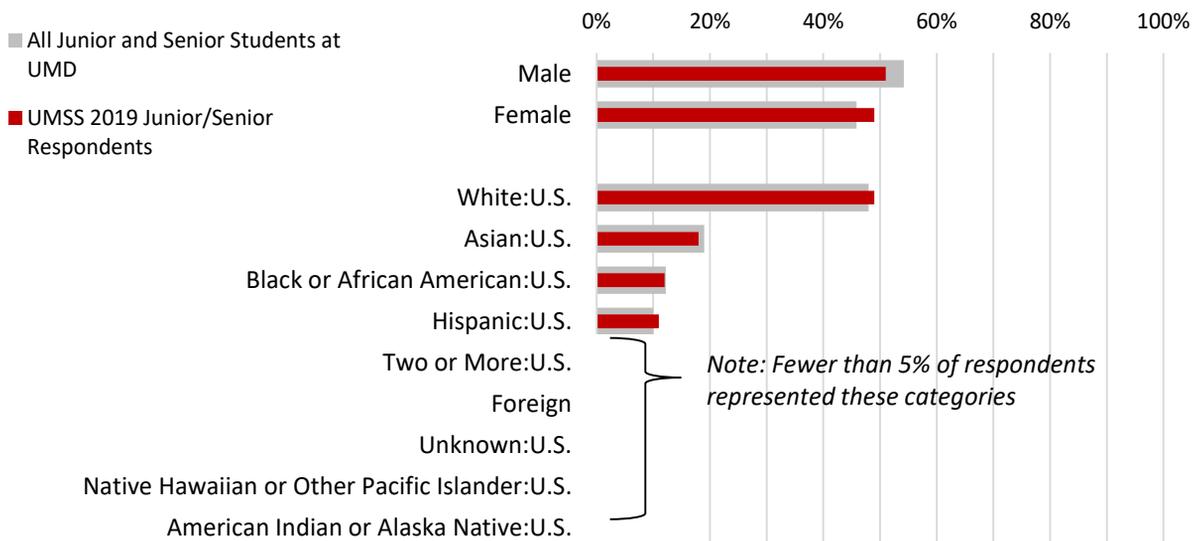
This Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) snapshot reports findings on junior and senior students' perceptions regarding voting in the 2018 general election. The data represent results from the University of Maryland Student Survey (UMSS), an annual survey administered by the CAWG Assessing Campus Experiences Subgroup (ACES). Respondents completed the survey during the 2019 spring semester in Professional Writing courses.

Project Context and Definitions

Recently published data* from the 2018 general midterm election indicates that 85% of all eligible UMD students (i.e., those who are U.S. citizens at least 18 years old) registered to vote in the November 2018 midterm election. Fifty-four percent of those registered voted, which is higher than 39%* of eligible university students nationwide who voted.

Of those who voted at UMD, 24% did so by absentee ballot, 18% did so early, 2% did so by mail, 46% did so in person on Election Day, and 11% did so by some other method. The data we gathered in the UMSS 2018 survey were self-reported by a sample of juniors and seniors.

During the Spring semester of 2019, 52% (1,834) of students in Professional Writing courses completed the survey. Respondents were filtered to only include junior and seniors. Demographics were available for 92% ($n = 1,681$) of these survey respondents. The demographic breakdown of respondents generally reflected that of all juniors and seniors.



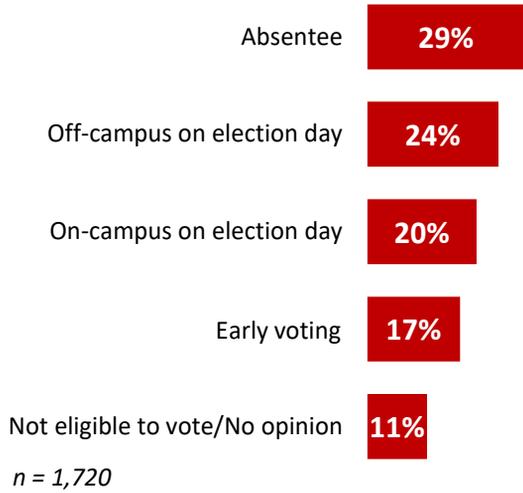
The data in this snapshot represent only survey respondents, not all UMD students; therefore, use caution when generalizing. Percentages may not sum to 100 throughout the report due to rounding.

*Data from the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement, September, 2019

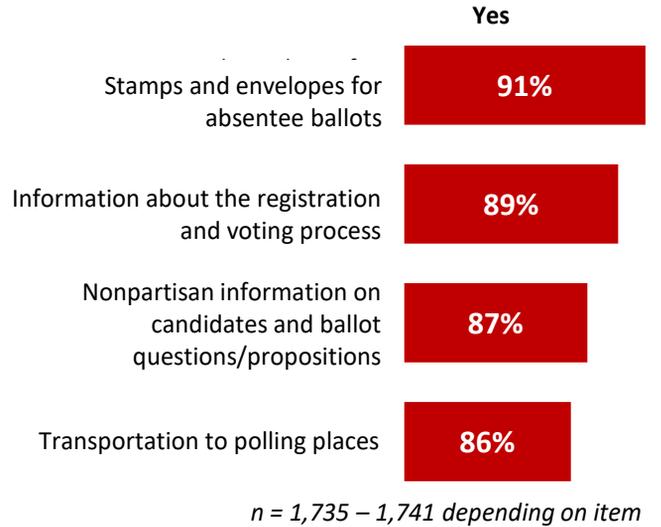
Student Voting Preferences

Students were asked if they voted in the November 2018 U.S. midterm elections, their voting preferences, and what services would encourage other students to vote.

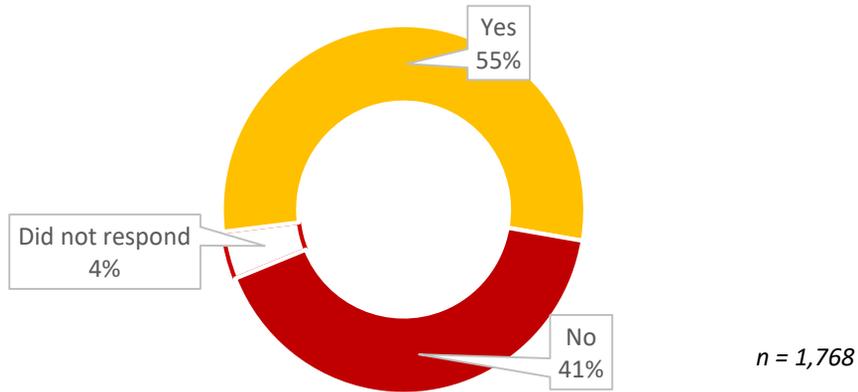
How do you prefer to vote?



Would these services help/encourage students to vote if provided by UMD?



Did you vote in the November 2018 U.S. midterm elections?



Absentee voting was the most popular voting preference (29%). Respondents agreed that a variety of different services would encourage students to vote.

Questions to consider

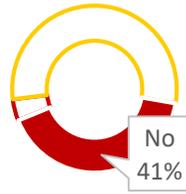
Why would 4% not respond to whether they voted in the 2018 election? What does that say about the voting culture on campus?

How can we make it easier for students to vote off-campus?

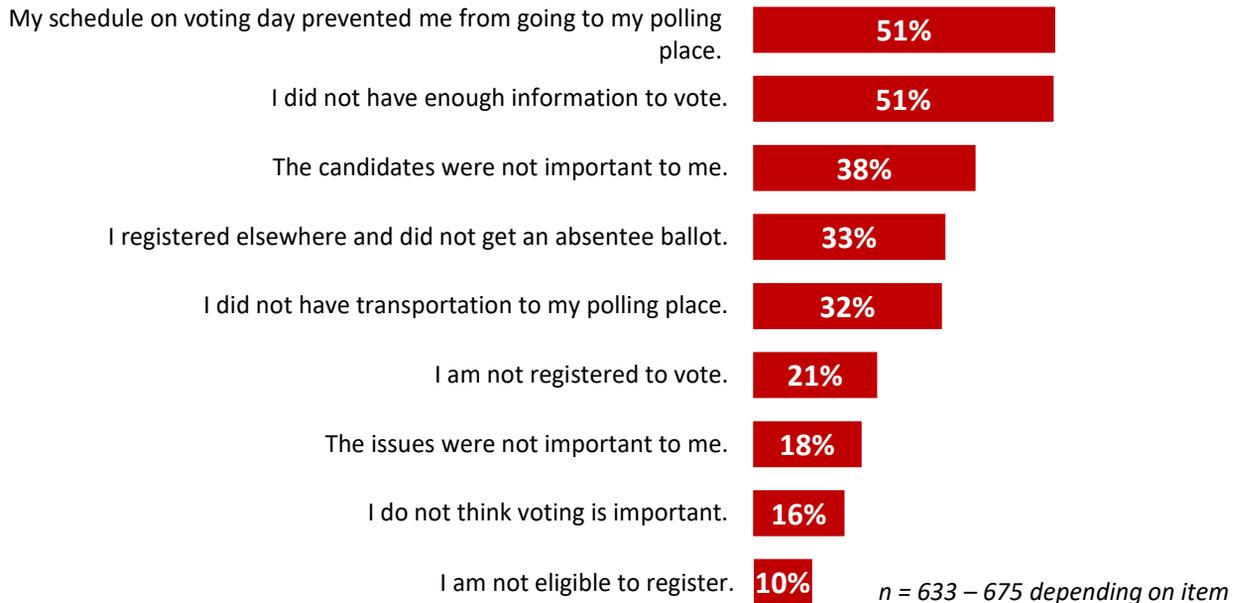


Reasons Students Did Not Vote

The students who indicated that they did not vote were for the reasons they did not vote.



If you did not vote in the November 2018 U.S. midterm election, please indicate which of the following affected your decision:



Of the 41% (728) of respondents who reported they did not vote, 51% said it was because their schedule prevented them from doing so. Fifty-one percent also reported that it was because they did not have enough information to vote, even though there was a concerted effort on-campus to educate students.

Questions to consider

What do students consider to be “enough” information to vote?

For students who reported they didn’t vote because of conflicting schedules, why didn’t they vote absentee or early?

How can the university overcome these barriers to voting? How can the university encourage students to be more interested in voting?

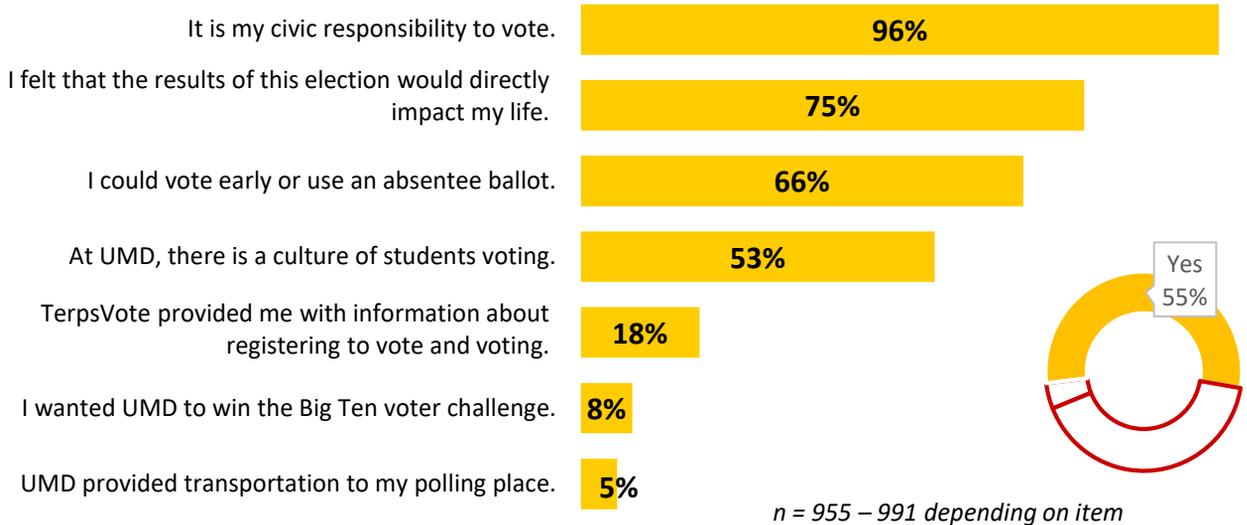


The Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) regularly gathers and exchanges information about UMD student and alumni experiences. The group is charged with developing a campus “Culture of Evidence”. For more information, to view past reports, or to join a CAWG subgroup, please visit <http://ter.ps/CAWG>.

Why Students Did Vote

The students who indicated that they did vote were asked which of the following encouraged them to vote.

If you did vote in the November 2018 U.S. midterm election, please indicate which of the following encouraged you to vote:



Of the 55% of respondents who reported that they did vote (966), 96% reported they did so because it's their civic responsibility to vote, compared to 92% in UMSS 2016. This is the most important factor for respondents.

Questions to consider

Eighty-six percent of respondents reported that transportation to polling places would help or encourage students to vote; however, only 5% of those who voted reported that availability of transportation encouraged them to vote. Why is there this discrepancy?

Considering that this was a mid-term election, could the students who decided to vote be more plugged in to how government beyond the presidential election impacts their lives?

What might these results suggest for the upcoming 2020 primary and general election?



ACES Subgroup Members

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