



CAMPUS ASSESSMENT WORKING GROUP

Juniors and Seniors' Perceptions of the 2022 Midterm Election

June 2023

This report was written by the Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) ACES subcommittee. The 2023 University of Maryland Student Survey (UMSS23) was administered online from March 6 to March 24, 2023, to juniors and seniors enrolled in Professional Writing courses. This report summarizes respondents' perceptions of the 2022 midterm election and their opinions on civic engagement more broadly. In March 2023, 1,119 students completed the survey (30% of all students enrolled in Professional Writing courses).¹

Confidence in the fairness and effectiveness of the system for voting in the U.S. remains low, but in contrast to previous years, there is more consistency across racial/ethnic groups.

- Similar to the UMSS21, almost all respondents (94%) said it's important for college students to vote.
• Less than half of respondents said the system for voting in the U.S. works well (45%) and is fair to all candidates (37%).
• We continue to monitor differences in perceptions about fairness in the system for voting among students by federal reporting racial/ethnic groups. In contrast to the 2020 presidential election, differences between federal reporting racial/ethnic groups were much smaller on this survey (see Figure 2). We will continue to look at differences among groups in future surveys.

94% of respondents said it is important for college students to vote.



45% of respondents said the system for voting in the U.S. works well.



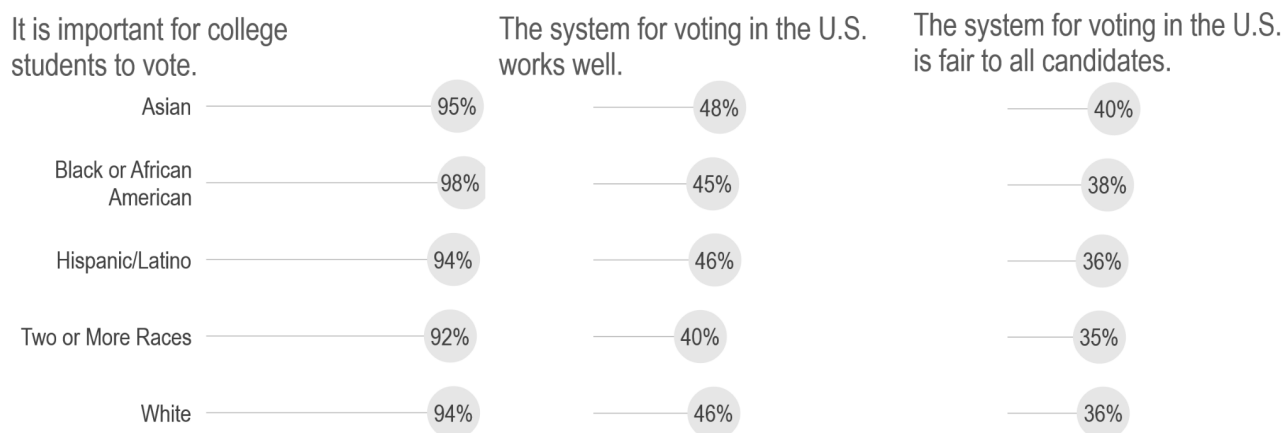
37% of respondents said the system for voting in the U.S. is fair to all candidates.



n = 1,062-1,065

Figure 1. Percentage of UMSS23 respondents who said "yes" to items about voting in the U.S.

1 The distribution of respondents by race/ethnicity and gender was similar to that of the UMD population. White respondents were slightly overrepresented (46% of respondents vs 42% of juniors and seniors). Fifty-two percent of respondents were female, compared to 48% of all juniors and seniors; 48% of respondents were male, compared to 52% of the population. University records reflect current federal reporting guidelines for gender (male/female).



n = 52-499

Figure 2. Percentage of respondents who said “yes” to items about voting in the U.S. by federal reporting racial/ethnic groups, UMSS23. For more information on how these racial/ethnic groups are defined, please visit the [Office of Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment website](#). Data are not shown for the following groups, due to small cell sizes: American Indian or Alaska Native respondents, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander respondents, U.S. nonresidents, and respondents whose race/ethnicity is unknown.

Seventy-one percent of respondents said they were registered to vote in the November 2022 midterm election, and of those respondents, 62% said they voted.

- Seven out of 10 respondents said they were registered to vote in the 2022 midterm election; this was 16 percentage points higher than the last midterm election, but 15 percentage points lower than in the 2020 presidential election.
- Among respondents who were registered to vote, 62% said they voted in 2022, up from 55% in the last midterm election.

Percentage of respondents across three surveys who said they were registered to vote and voted in the **2018 midterm election (UMSS19)**, the **2020 presidential election (UMSS21)**, and the **2022 midterm election (UMSS23)**

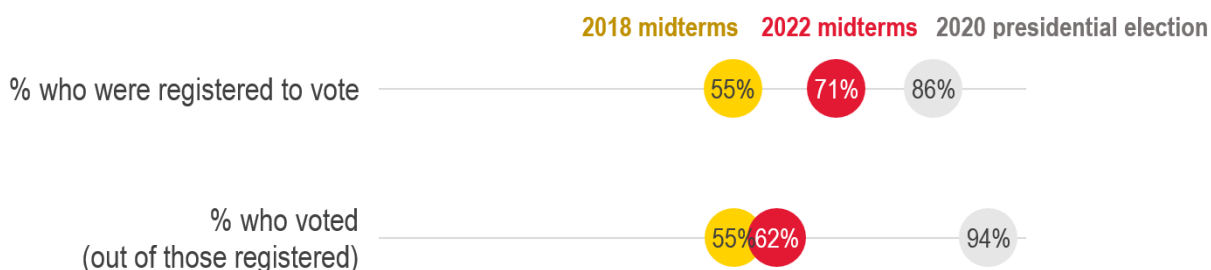


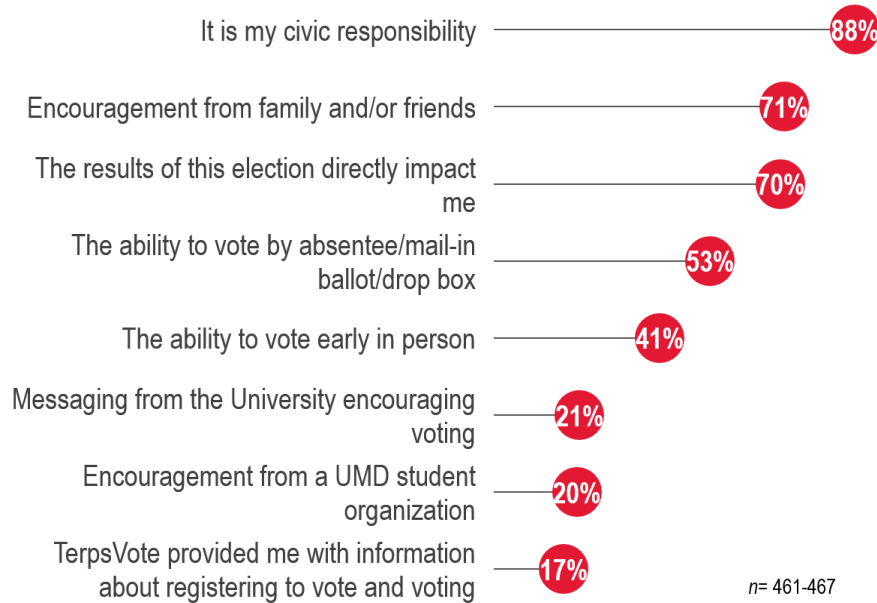
Figure 3. Percentage of respondents who registered to vote and voted in the 2018 midterm election (UMSS19), 2020 presidential election (UMSS21), and 2022 midterm election (UMSS23).

Behind the findings

- Typically, voter turnout is higher in presidential elections than in midterm elections. According to a [report from The Brookings Institution](#), in the 2022 midterm elections, the national voting rate (voters per 100 eligible voters) was 52.2%, slightly lower than the rate in 2018, which was 53.4%. The voting rate in the 2020 presidential election was 66.3%.

When asked why they voted, most respondents cited civic responsibility and the election’s personal impacts. Respondents who did not vote cited logistical barriers most frequently.

Percent of respondents who said the following were reasons they **voted**:



Percent of respondents who said the following were reasons they **did not vote**:

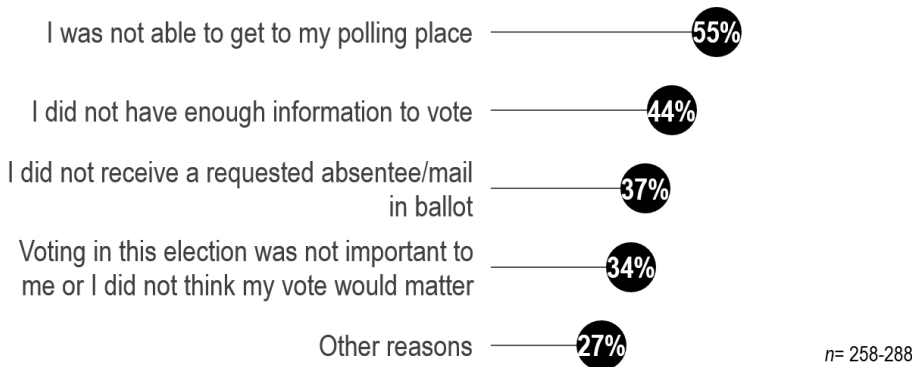


Figure 4. Percentage of respondents who said each factor was a reason they did or did not vote in the 2022 midterm election, UMSS23.

- Eighty-eight percent of respondents who voted said they did so because it was their civic responsibility.
- Seventy percent said they voted because the results of the election directly impacted them, down from 80% in the 2020 presidential election.
- Far fewer respondents who voted cited reasons connected to UMD: 21% said a reason they voted was messaging from UMD encouraging them to vote; 20% cited encouragement from a UMD student organization and 17% said TerpsVote provided them with information about registering to vote and voting. These percentages were similar to results from the UMSS21.
- For respondents who did not vote, the most common reasons were logistical: a little over half of respondents (55%) said they were not able to get to their polling place. However, one-third (34%) said they thought voting was not important to them or they thought their vote would not matter.

Questions to Consider

- How can TerpsVote increase the perception that all elections matter, including midterm and local elections, and how can TerpsVote help address reported barriers to voting?
- How can we help students become better informed about elections? What information are students looking for?
- Twenty-seven percent of respondents who were registered but did not vote cited “other reasons.” What other barriers exist that we could learn about in the future?
- What can UMD do to strengthen engagement with out-of-state voters in particular?

Conclusion

The data presented here show how some juniors and seniors at UMD participated in the 2022 midterm election and their perceptions of our electoral process. The majority of these students are registered to vote, though the percentage of respondents who reported that they voted in the 2022 election is lower than the percentage of respondents who reported they voted in the 2020 presidential election. Less than half of respondents indicated that the system of voting in the U.S. works well and is fair to all candidates, a concerning finding that could be addressed through TerpsVote outreach programs to UMD students, perhaps connecting with students' reported sense of civic responsibility when it comes to voting and addressing perceived barriers to voting, including access to polling places and lack of information to vote.

This report was written by the Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) ACES subgroup: Robert E. Crane, College of Arts & Humanities; Jonathan Engelberg, Division of Information Technology; Danielle Glazer, Office of Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment (IRPA); Shannon Hayes Buenaflor, A. James Clark School of Engineering; Julie Kromkowski, Chair, Division of Administration Office of the VP; Scott Moses, Department of English; Sharon Ousman, Career Center; Charlene Ploetz Savoy, College of Information Studies; Alan Socha, IRPA; Ronald Zeigler, Nyumburu Cultural Center. For more information, to view past reports, or to join a CAWG subgroup, visit <http://ter.ps/CAWG>.