

The Washington Poll
King County Exit Poll, November 7, 2006

The exit poll was conducted by the University of Washington at a random sample of 65 polling place precincts throughout King County. At each polling place, a random selection of voters were asked to complete a self-administered survey and was available in English, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Tagalog, Russian and Spanish. The sample design included an over-sample of precincts with traditionally low vote-by-mail rates, as well as minority and low-income precincts, in an effort to compare attitudes on vote-by-mail across different groups of voters. A total of 2,518 interviews were conducted with a margin of error of +/- 1.9%. Prof. Matt A. Barreto, department of Political Science, was the director of the exit poll.

Part 1 of the vote-by-mail survey results are available here:
http://www.washingtonpoll.org/results/king_vbm.pdf

Table 1.2

In the future, King County is planning to conduct its elections in what manner?

Using the Internet	5%
At polling place precincts	8%
Only using vote-by-mail	67%
In the same manner as today	20%

Thinking about all the past elections in King County, have you ever had a hard time getting to your polling place because you were just too busy that day?

Yes	19%
No	76%
Can't remember	3%

It's hard to vote in every single election. When you have missed voting in a past election, what would you say was the main reason you did not vote?

Was not interested	13%
Could not get to the polls	19%
Forgot it was election day	11%
Some other reasons	36%
NA / I always vote	21%

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Table 2.2

Even though you are voting at the polling place today, have you ever voted by mail or absentee in the past?

Yes	41%
No	57%
Don't know	2%

Do you think you will be more likely, or less likely to vote in future elections, when all ballots must be cast by mail?

More likely to vote	25%
Less likely to vote	7%
Will have no impact on me	61%
Don't know	6%

The results for polling place voters suggest a greater role for outreach and education about the vote-by-mail process. Two out of three voters who went to a polling place on November 7 were aware that King County was planning to transition to all vote-by-mail, however one of three voters did not know that future voting would be through the mail. Related to this, there could be an opportunity to include more voters through a flexible vote-by-mail system. About 20% of King County polling place voters indicate that their busy schedules have created problems getting to the polls on election day, and an additional 11% stated that they simply forgot that it was election day. The data do not conclude that these 30% of polling place voters would vote in a vote-by-mail system, but the findings do suggest that about one-third of the election-day electorate faces obstacles to precinct voting that vote-by-mail has the potential to eliminate. When asked directly, one-quarter of polling place voters stated they would be more likely to vote in an all vote-by-mail system, compared to just 7% who said they would be less likely, with most voters saying vote-by-mail would not effect their propensity to turnout. Finally, about 40% of election day voters have voted by mail or absentee in some prior election.

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