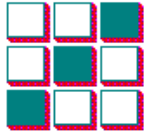


Democracy at Risk: The 2004 Election in Ohio

Section III
Voting Experience Survey





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TO: The Democratic National Committee

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RE: DNC Voting Experience Survey

Our recent survey of voters in Ohio¹ shows that many Ohioans experienced problems voting on Election Day, and that these difficulties were particularly acute among African American voters. Indeed, the Election Day experience for most African American voters was starkly different from that of most white voters in Ohio. Nevertheless, the survey also indicates that the difficulties experienced by African American and other voters at the polls did not, in and of themselves, cost John Kerry the election in Ohio.

More than one quarter of all voters in Ohio reported some kind of problem voting in the November election. For the bulk of voters, these problems had to do with long waits on line to vote. Smaller but significant minorities of voters also experienced problems with absentee ballots, problems with their registration statuses, problems finding polling places, and problems due to voter suppression and intimidation tactics. In addition to these problems, millions of Ohio voters were subjected to unlawful identification checks at the polls.

Though more than one in four Ohio voters experienced some sort of problem, the incidence of voting problems across demographic groups and geography was far from

¹ Conducted 1/30-2/2 among 1,201 Ohioans who voted (or went to the polls with the intention of voting) in the 2004 general election on November 2nd.

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uniform. African Americans were far more likely to have experienced voting problems, as were voters in Franklin and Cuyahoga counties.

African Americans experienced more ballot and polling place problems than whites, and were more likely to have felt intimidated on Election Day. The high number of newly registered African American voters does not explain the disparity in experiences between white voters and African American voters. In fact, registration history had little to do with the different experiences, as African Americans registered to vote before 2004 were far more likely to have experienced problems than white voters who were registered before 2004. The disparity is also not a function of party registration, as African American Democrats had far more problems than white Democrats.

Voting problems also varied widely by geography. Polling place problems and long lines were heightened in Franklin County, which used DRE voting machines, as well as in the other counties that used this electronic voting equipment. Voters in Cuyahoga County also experienced significant voting problems, particularly in terms of ballot problems and intimidation.

Despite the problems on Election Day, there is no evidence from our survey that John Kerry won the state of Ohio. Two (2) percent of voters who went to the polls on Election Day decided to leave their polling locations due to the long lines. This resulted in approximately 129,543 lost votes. However, these potential voters would have divided evenly between George Bush and John Kerry. A smaller group of potential voters (0.08 percent) were not given ballots at all due to registration challenges. These approximately 4,798 voters favored Kerry, according to the poll (extreme sample size caution).

Finally, a third group of voters (equivalent to 0.83 percent of the voting population) did not go to the polls at all because they did not receive their absentee ballots, or had heard about long lines, registration challenges, and confusing polling sites. We do not know the voting preferences of these approximately 47,979 voters. However, even if they had all chosen Kerry, his overall gain of 52,777 votes would not have erased Bush's 118,000 vote margin in the state.

Polling Place Problems

More than one-fourth (26 percent) of voters experienced polling place problems.² These problems included going to more than one poll, waiting on line to vote for more than twenty minutes, or leaving the polling place without voting. African Americans and voters using DRE machines experienced the most polling place problems.

African Americans were twice as likely to experience polling place problems as white voters. As Table 1 shows, nearly half (46 percent) of African Americans

² There were two subdivisions of voters in the survey: Those who voted by absentee and those who went to the polls to vote. Most percentages cited in this memo refer voters *who went to the polls*, rather than all voters. Exceptions include the "Ballot Problems" and "Demographic Differences" sections, which use percentages referencing *all* voters.

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encountered problems at their polling locations, as compared with only 23 percent of white voters. Again, this difference had nothing to do with registration history, as previously registered African Americans were just as likely (43 percent) to have experienced problems at the polls. The difference also had little to do with party identification, as far fewer white Democrats (26 percent) reported experiencing troubles at the polls.

Other groups of voters, including those under 45, those who rent their homes, and those who voted before 8 AM, also ran into more polling place problems than the rest of the electorate. Nearly one-third (32 percent) of voters under 45 had some problem at the polls, slightly more than older voters. Renters experienced more problems (35 percent) than home owners (24 percent). Finally, problems swelled earliest in the day, with one-third (33 percent) of voters who voted before 8 AM experiencing some voting problems. The problems tapered off later in the day, with only 21 percent of voters who came to the polls after 3 PM experiencing some problems.

	Polling Place Problems
Total	26
Whites	23
Af Am	46
Punch Card	17
DRE	54
Optical Scan	17
Cuyahoga	24
Franklin	73
Hamilton	18
Under 45	32
Over 45	22
Rent home	35
Own home	24
Before 8 AM	33
After 8 AM	24

Lines were long on Election Day, as nearly one-fourth (23 percent) of voters waited more than twenty minutes and 8 percent of voters waited more than an hour. African Americans waited on line far longer than white voters. Forty-four (44) percent of African American voters waited for more than twenty minutes while only 20 percent of white voters waited that long. African Americans waited an average of 51.8 minutes before voting while white voters waited only 17.9 minutes.

DRE counties also witnessed longer waits, with more than half (52 percent) of voters in these counties waiting more than twenty minutes. Franklin County was the most troublesome, with fully three-fourths (74 percent) of voters waiting more than twenty minutes. African Americans in Franklin County had more polling place problems (91 percent) than their white counterparts there (67 percent), although extremely low sample sizes make that conclusion speculative.

Three (3) percent of voters who went to the polls left their polling places and did not return due to the long lines. Although African Americans were more likely to leave their polling places due to long lines, they were also more likely to return to vote later in the day. Thus, an equal share (3 percent) of African Americans and whites did not vote due to the long lines.

Two (2) percent of voters had to go to more than one polling place before finding the correct location. As might be expected, transient voters had the most trouble finding the correct polling location. Four (4) percent of voters who had lived in their house for less than a year went to more than one polling place, as did 3 percent of home renters.

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Meanwhile, voters in Franklin County experienced the most problems finding their location, with 3 percent going to more than one polling place. Franklin County voters were also least likely to have been to their polling place in previous elections. Thirty-seven (37) percent of Franklin County voters had never been to their polling place in the past, as compared with 26 percent of all voters.

Identification Checks

Nearly half of African American voters were asked to present identification in order to vote. Poll workers in Ohio did not properly administer the law on checking identification on Election Day. The law states that poll workers should only ask identification of newly registered voters who did not present identification when they registered. However, while only 7 percent of voters were newly registered, more than one-third (37 percent) of the electorate report being asked to show identification. In addition, 36 percent of *previously* registered voters were asked to show identification.

Table 2: Asked to Present Identification		
	ID Checked	Newly Registered
Total	37	7
Newly registered	56	100
Previously registered	36	0
White	35	7
African American	47	9
Men	43	8
Women	32	7
Under 30	67	22
30 to 44	47	8
45 to 54	33	6
55 to 64	26	4
65 and older	23	3
Cuyahoga	46	8
Franklin	47	13
Hamilton	37	9

As Table 2 shows, 47 percent of African Americans were asked to present identification, as compared with only 35 percent of whites. Previously registered African Americans encountered similar conditions, as 46 percent had to show identification. African American men, in particular, faced identification checks, as a clear majority (61 percent)³ were asked for identification.

The gender gap nearly equaled the racial gap, as 43 percent of men and only 32 percent of women were asked to show identification. Younger voters, who were more likely to be newly registered, were also more likely to be asked for identification. Poll workers in Cuyahoga and Franklin were most overzealous in asking for identification.

Intimidation

Six (6) percent of voters who went to the polls reported feelings of intimidation. This group includes voters who heard that police would be at the polls to arrest people who had outstanding child support or car payments, and voters who said they felt intimidated on Election Day.

³ Extreme sample size caution

Again, African Americans reported more feelings of intimidation than white voters. As Table 3 shows, 16 percent of African Americans reported feelings of intimidation while only 5 percent of white voters report similar sentiments. African American men (29 percent) felt particularly intimidated at the polls. Unlike with the polling place problems, intimidation occurred more often in Cuyahoga County (13 percent) than in Franklin County (6 percent).

	Intimidation
Total	6
Whites	5
Af Am	16
Cuyahoga	13
Franklin	6
Hamilton	10
Dem	9
Rep	3
Kerry voter	9
Bush vote	4

Democrats and Kerry supporters also reported more intimidation. Nine (9) percent of Democrats, including 7 percent of white Democrats, reported feelings of intimidation while only 3 percent of Republicans felt the same way. Similarly, Kerry voters (9 percent) were more likely to feel intimidated than Bush voters (4 percent).

Polling problems had only a very small correlation with feelings of intimidation. Only 9 percent of those with polling place problems report feelings of intimidation while a similar 6 percent of voters who did not have polling place problems reported feelings of intimidation.

Ballot Problems

Two (2) percent of voters experienced ballot problems in Ohio. These voters either had trouble receiving their absentee ballots or had their registration status challenged at the polls.

African American voters experienced more ballot problems than white voters. Four (4) percent of African Americans had problems with their ballots while only 1 percent of white voters experienced similar problems. Registration history had nothing to do with this racial disparity. Four (4) percent of previously registered African Americans experienced ballot problems while only 1 percent of previously registered white voters encountered similar obstacles. African American women and younger African Americans experienced the most ballot problems.

Ballot problems varied across counties, with Cuyahoga (3 percent) experiencing the most trouble. Younger voters and newly registered voters experienced the same proportion of ballot problems as older and previously registered voters. Similarly, ballot problems occurred evenly throughout the day.

Demographic Differences

Overall, 28 percent of voters had problems with their voting experience, which includes ballot problems, polling place problems, and feelings of intimidation, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Total Voting Problems	
	Total Problems
Any voting problem	28
Any polling place problems	26
<i>More than 20 minute wait</i>	23
<i>Had to go to multiple polling places</i>	2
<i>Left without voting, did not return</i>	3
Any ballot problems	2
<i>Absentee ballot problems</i>	5 ⁴
<i>Registration challenge/ problem</i>	2
Feelings of intimidation	6

African Americans had the most difficult voting experience of any demographic group. As Table 5 shows, more than half (52 percent) of African Americans had problems during their voting experience, compared with one-fourth (25 percent) of whites. And registration history did not drive these problems as an equal 52 percent of newly and previously registered African American voters encountered problems. Younger African Americans (54 percent) and African American men (56 percent) dealt with more problems but obstacles existed in all parts of the African American community.

The polling place problems in Franklin County, and other counties using DRE machines, made these counties the most problematic. Seventy (70) percent of voters in Franklin County had problems with their voting experience, as did 56 percent of voters in all DRE counties.

Table 5: Total Problems	
	Total Problems
Total	28
Whites	25
Af Am	52
Punch Card	23
DRE	56
Optical Scan	24
Cuyahoga	31
Franklin	70
Hamilton	22
Under 45	37
Over 45	23
Rent home	36
Own home	26
Before 8 AM	36
After 8 AM	30

Similarly, voters under 45 (37 percent), home renters (36 percent), and voters who came to the polls before 8 AM (36 percent) encountered more problems than their respective counterparts.

Surprisingly, registration history and party identification had very small effects on the voting experience of Ohioans. Newly registered voters were only slightly more likely to have problems (34 percent) than previously registered voters (28 percent). Although Democrats had more problems (32 percent) than Republicans (23 percent), white Democrats experienced a similar level of problems (27 percent) as the rest of the electorate. Independents, in fact, encountered more problems (31 percent) than white Democrats or Republicans.

⁴ This means that 5 percent of voters who used absentee ballots had problems receiving them

Attitudes toward Voting Experience

On the whole, voters in Ohio believe their votes were counted correctly and report satisfaction with their overall voting experience. But African American voters and white voters have very different perceptions of their overall voting experience and the reliability of the election system in Ohio.

Nearly three-fourths of all voters (71 percent) say they are very confident their vote was counted correctly, and an additional 18 percent are somewhat confident, as shown in Table 6. Nine (9) percent are not confident. Similarly, two-thirds of voters (65 percent) are very satisfied with their overall voting experiences, 23 percent are somewhat satisfied, and 11 percent are dissatisfied.

Though large majorities of voters express confidence about the integrity of their *own* vote and satisfaction with their *own* personal experience, they are somewhat less likely to express confidence when it comes to a more generalized assessment of the reliability of elections in the state of Ohio. While 30 percent said that their 2004 experience made them much more confident and 32 percent said it made them somewhat more confident, nearly one quarter (23 percent) of voters said their experience in 2004 has made them less confident about the reliability of elections in Ohio. Not surprisingly, among voters who had some voting problem, 38 percent express a lack of confidence.

As Table 4 indicates, African Americans are considerably less confident that their vote was counted correctly, less satisfied with their voting experience, and less confident in the reliability of elections in the state.

Voters in Cuyahoga and Franklin counties also report less confidence and satisfaction after their voting experiences this year. The long lines especially affected Franklin County voters, as only 35 percent say they are very satisfied with their Election Day experience. Again, younger voters and home renters express more skepticism and less satisfaction about elections and voting.

	Vote Counted (Very Confident)	Voting Experience (Very Satisfied)	Reliability of Elections (Much More Confident)
Total	71	65	30
Whites	77	70	33
Af Am	19	26	5
Punch Card	73	70	33
DRE	62	48	28
Optical Scan	75	57	22
Cuyahoga	56	57	21
Franklin	57	35	22
Hamilton	71	74	27
Under 45	64	57	27
Over 45	75	70	33
Rent home	52	54	22
Own home	75	68	32
Democrat	50	50	15
Republican	93	83	49
Independent	74	67	30
Under \$30K	61	61	28
\$30K to \$50K	68	63	28
\$50K to \$75K	76	69	32
Over \$75K	79	70	34
Had problems	54	43	20
No problems	78	74	34

Democrats and Republicans have very different feelings about their Election Day experiences, likely reflecting their reaction to the election result itself. White Democrats have more confidence that their vote was counted properly (57 percent very confident) and report more satisfaction with their voting experience (56 percent very satisfied) than African Americans, but still are less optimistic than their Republican counterparts. Only 17 percent of white Democrats say they are much more confident in the reliability of elections in Ohio after voting in 2004.

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