

Title: Voting accessibility survey of older adults in metro Atlanta

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As the rapidly growing population of older adults in the United States begins to experience the age-related declines in physical and perceptual capabilities (for example, limited mobility and declining visual acuity), it is important to understand how older adults can continue to exercise their right to vote and participate in political and civic activities. Thus, the need for accessible voting is increasingly pressing. A survey was conducted to examine the voting patterns and challenges of participants who are over the age of 50 and living in the Atlanta metropolitan area. There were 188 respondents; 67% were female. Participants' mean age was 73 years ($SD = 10.4$, range: 51-99).

Most participants in our sample who voted in the November 2012 election chose to do so at their polling location on Election Day (44%), with 25% citing the desire to participate in the community activity as a reason. Additionally, 22% voted via absentee ballot, and 34% voted early at a polling location. For participants aged 50-74 years ($n=87$), the most frequent method was voting on Election Day. For those participants aged 75+ years ($n=86$), however, the most common method of voting was via absentee ballot (35%). The most frequently cited reason for this was participants' eligibility to cast an absentee ballot due to their age. (In Georgia, individuals aged 75 years and up may cast an absentee ballot.) Of the participants that voted early at a polling location, most chose this method to avoid long lines on Election Day.

Despite the majority of the sample voting at a polling place, less than 2% used an accessible voting machine. Moreover, in the state of Georgia, voters who are over the age of 75 are eligible to vote immediately without waiting in line, yet only 53% of participants who are 75+ years were escorted to the front of the line. With increased voter education (only 30% of the sample received some form of voter education) about accessibility options, older adults' voting experiences could be improved.