

Utah voters content with voting methods

Two larger Utah counties, Davis and Cache, have joined multiple other rural Utah counties in changing to a primarily vote by mail system. Should Utah join Oregon, Washington and Colorado in an entirely vote by mail ballot system across the state?

In the KBYU Utah Colleges Exit Poll voters were asked how they like to vote on Election Day. Utah voters are satisfied with the way they now vote. Of those who voted in a booth on Election Day, 66 percent of them said that was their preferred method. Nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of early voters cited voting early as their preferred method of voting. When all voters are combined, nearly half of all voters say they prefer voting in person, while just over one-third said they would prefer to vote by mail. In Utah on Election day 68 percent of voters voted in person, while 33 percent voted early, an increase in early voting from the last midterm election in 2010 (27 percent voting early or by mail).

If Utah does decide to follow Oregon, Washington and Colorado and move to an entirely vote by mail system they must take into account how that effects voters who prefer to vote in the voting booth on Election Day. Some find that voting in person on Election Day is their duty as citizens and brings a sense of community. We asked those who voted in person on Election Day why they did so and 50 percent of voters said it was their duty, 27 percent said they voted in person because it was what they had always done, and while 25 percent thought voting in person was the most convenient way to cast their ballot. One third of in-person voters said voting at a polling location contributed to sense of community. Respondents were allowed to select all options that applied to them.

Counties moving to a vote by mail system prompted the Utah Colleges Exit Poll to ask about opinions of vote by mail. Respondents could select on a scale of 1-4, (1 being strongly

disagree and 4 being strongly agree) how much they agreed with statements regarding vote by mail. The average response was a 2.8 when told that voting in person was the most convenient way to vote. The statement that voting by mail might encourage fraud in the election gathered an average response of 2.5 and learning new information that would cause you to change your vote gathered a response of 2.4. Finally, of those that voted by mail, 86 percent found the instructions very easy to follow and the process simple, showing that respondents do not seem concerned with the added complexity a vote by mail system would put on the voters.

Utah voters were asked about voting via the Internet as an alternative to the two standard ways of voting: by mail and in person. Internet voting has been experimented with in some states for Americans in the military. Nearly one-in-five Utah voters (18 percent) preferred the internet and of this group over 50 percent had attended college, and a quarter of voters under the age of 50 cited voting over the internet as their preferred method of voting. In contrast, only 6 percent of those over 65 would want to vote this way. Morgan Williams, a senior at BYU doing a project on voting method did not find these results surprising.

“These results are just what we thought we would find, the older generations are much more hesitant to voting over the internet while younger generations are open to this new idea,” Williams said. “There preferences are probably closely correlated with how comfortable voters feel using the internet.”

Below you will see a complete table of voting preferences and age group, demonstrating which age groups were most favorable to the various voting methods.

	Age and Voting Preference (Column Percentages)			
	18-34	35-50	51-64	65+
Voting in a booth on Election Day	57.8	58.6	57.5	55.8
Voting over the Internet	25.1	26.2	18.7	6.3
Voting through the mail	8.8	7.1	13.8	24.3
Voting early at a voting center	8.3	8.1	10.0	13.6