Millennial Attitudes Towards Digital Voting

An Analysis of Interest and Concerns Regarding Digital Voting Technologies Among Students at American University

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Executive Summary

- Determine awareness, interest and concerns among millennials about digital voting technologies
- Millennials will participate in 2016 election
- Hard for millennials to overcome barriers of entry to the polls
- AU student sample: convenient, fall within age range, politically active & researchers are AU students
- Three significant findings
- One unique piece of supplemental information
- Three client recommendations

Introduction

OSET Foundation

- Founded in November 2006 in California
- Works to foster the creation of open-source and innovative solutions that make the process of voting easy, transparent and accessible (OSET Foundation).
- TrustTheVote™ is the OSET Foundation's first major initiative which encourages people to sign on as developers to create voting technologies, lead outreach efforts and donate.

E. John Sebes

- CTO TrustTheVote Project
- Co-Director OSET Foundation - TrustTheVote Project

Background Information

- 19 percent of voters in the presidential election were between ages 18 to 29 and Millennials are expected to be a large demographic for the upcoming 2016 election as well ([Kingkade](#)).
- Barriers of entry for millennials - i.e. students who live in different cities or states from their home residences, which requires them to apply for an absentee ballot.

Why Our Client Wants Research

- To gauge levels of awareness, willingness or interest in using voting technologies and potential concerns that voters may have.
- To determine which features or information the students would be looking for if they were to use an application developed by OSET.
- American University as the target group
    i. They are generally out of state students without the ability to vote locally who rely on out-of-state ballots.

    ii. This sample was selected out of convenience as the researchers are also American University students.

    iii. American University consistently has been ranked as having the most politically active students, with AU being ranked "No. 1" by the Princeton Review in 2010. (Unger)
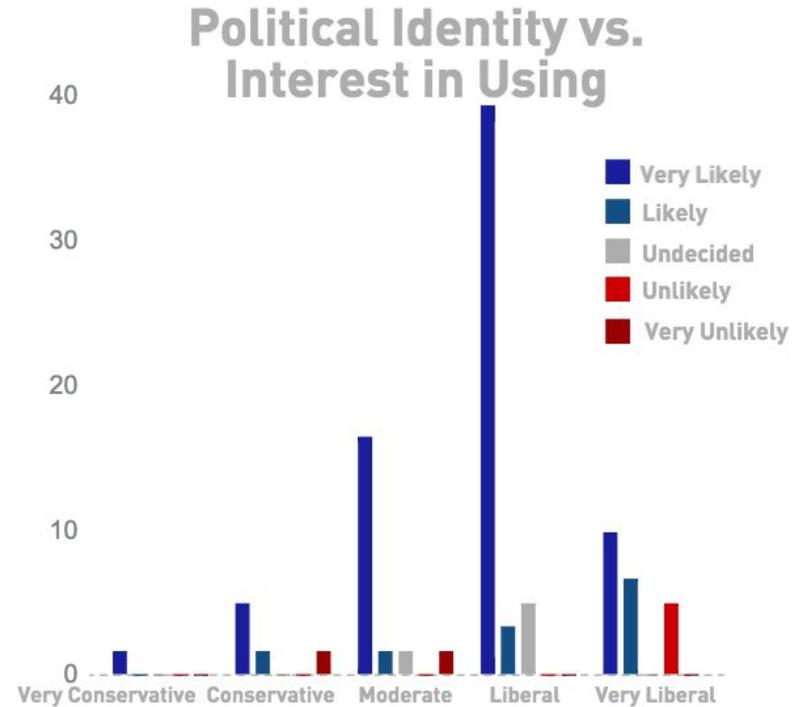
Our Research Questions

- What is the level of awareness among students on American University's campus of digital voting technology?

- Are students on American University's campus interested in using digital voting technology?

- What are the concerns among American University students regarding digital voting technology?

Methods

- 17 question online questionnaire using Qualtrics
- Primarily multiple choice
- Likert scale questions to determine how likely respondents would be to take certain actions
- 0-100 scale to gauge participant concerns about digital voting
- Open ended questions were only shown based on whether the user specified if they were voting in the election, not voting or unsure.
- Distributed through Facebook
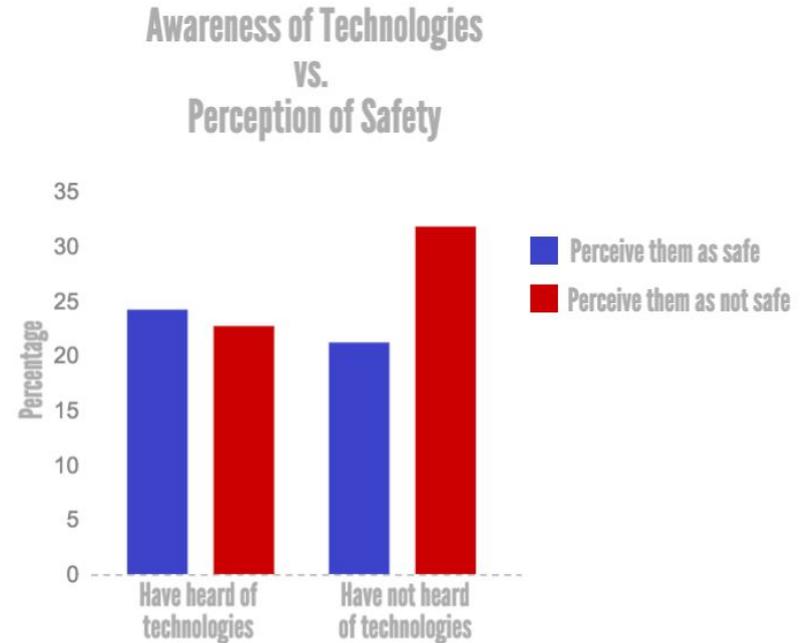- Data analyzed through SPSS

Finding #1

- Students who identify as liberal are more likely to be interested in using digital voting technology.
- Yet very liberal respondents do not fit this trend.
- Also sample size skew makes results unable to compare to general population beyond campus population.

Political Identity vs. Interest in Using

Legend:
- Very Likely
- Likely
- Undecided
- Unlikely
- Very Unlikely

Y-axis: 0, 10, 20, 30, 40

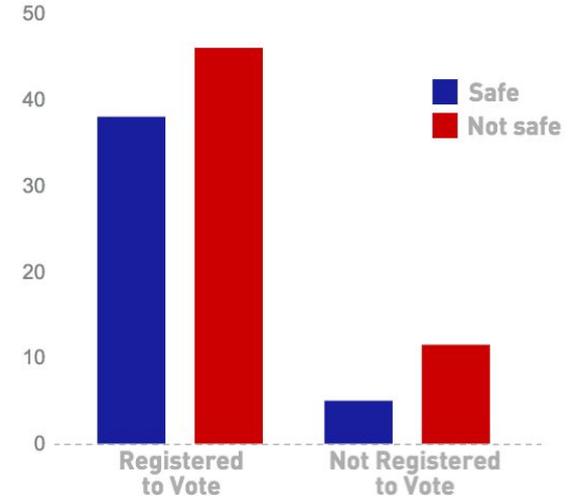X-axis: Very Conservative, Conservative, Moderate, Liberal, Very Liberal

Finding #2

- Respondents who had heard of digital voting technology previously were more likely to view it as safe.
- Those who had not heard of them were more skeptical of their safety.
- However knowledge of the technology did not confer a seizable boost to how safe they were viewed.

Awareness of Technologies
vs.
Perception of Safety

Finding #3

- The majority of respondents were already registered to vote, fitting AU's politically active campus.
- There was no clear difference between being registered and not registered and perceptions of safety.
- However this provides an interesting area of research to define a more concrete relationship.

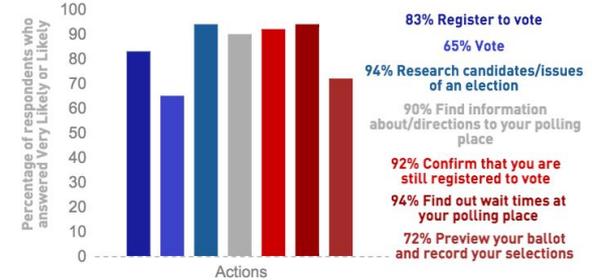

Registered to Vote vs. Perception of Safety

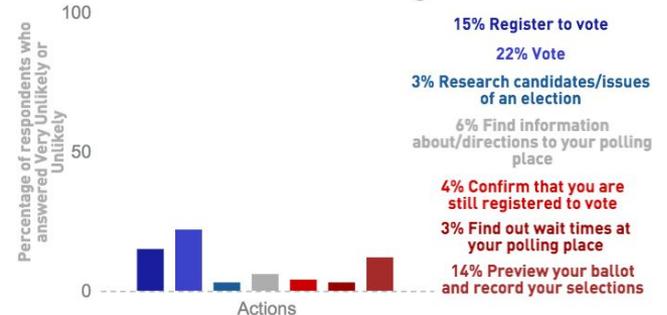Are you registered to vote in the United States?

Supplemental Information

- Out of the respondents who ranked whether they would use a mobile app to do the following, **52 percent** said they **did not** think digital voting technology is safe.

- This is an interesting observation, as so many of our participants expressed interest in using the technology.

- Cannot be counted as a finding due to the order of our questions

Would you use a mobile phone app to do any of the following?

Percentage of respondents who answered Very Likely or Likely

Actions

- 83% Register to vote
- 65% Vote
- 94% Research candidates/issues of an election
- 90% Find information about/directions to your polling place
- 92% Confirm that you are still registered to vote
- 94% Find out wait times at your polling place
- 72% Preview your ballot and record your selections

Would you use a mobile phone app to do any of the following?

Percentage of respondents who answered Very Unlikely or Unlikely

Actions

- 15% Register to vote
- 22% Vote
- 3% Research candidates/issues of an election
- 6% Find information about/directions to your polling place
- 4% Confirm that you are still registered to vote
- 3% Find out wait times at your polling place
- 14% Preview your ballot and record your selections

Recommendations

- Be transparent about security issues
- Communicate with American University students who said they were interested in using it, but had not heard of it previously
- Identify partnerships for voter registration through application integration as a marketable use for digital voting applications

VOTER REGISTRATION DEMO: http://va-demo.voterportal.trustthevote.org/

Future Research

- Demographic restrictions from sampling AU students - use a more diverse sampling.
- Question order as a source of error - leading questions that could be eliminated
- Use of examples of voting technology to create a more educated opinion on the technology

Citations

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