2023
INTERNET VOTE STUDY
REPORT FOR ELECTIONS NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jared Boles is a Political Science graduate student at Brock University. Studying under the supervision of Dr. Tim Heinmiller, Jared's research focuses on Policy Process Theory.

Dr. Nicole Goodman is an associate professor at Brock University, where she holds the Chancellor's Chair in Research Excellence. She is recognized internationally as a leading expert on electoral modernization.

Executive Summary

In 2023 the Northwest Territories deployed online voting in its General Elections for the second time. This deployment, along with its use in 2019, marks the first time that higher-order government elections deployed online voting in its elections. The election was conducted in conjunction with wildfires that saw 70% of the population forced to evacuate their homes. With residents able to return to their homes by mid-September, the election proceeded with comparable numbers of online voters as in the 2019 NWT territorial election.

To better understand how voters feel about the online voting option in NWT elections, Elections NWT partnered with Dr. Nicole Goodman from Brock University to conduct a survey with individuals who have registered to vote in the 2023 general election.

This report draws upon a total of 395 electors registered to vote online (of 20,550 eligible electors) with 375 actually casting an online ballot. A total of 392 valid email invitations were sent and 171 persons completed the survey for a response rate of 44%. The survey was programmed and distributed via the Qualtrics interface in English and French and was administered via email between April 9 and April 30, 2024.

Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 78 years old, with a mean age of 48 years. There is a similar age distribution among the full population of online voters. Respondents reported on average having "some university" education and an annual household income between $110,001 and $150,000. Geographically, there was representation from across the territory, with the majority of respondents residing in the capital city, Yellowknife (67%). About 25% of respondents reside in communities that are considered to be regional centres (Hay River, Inuvik, Fort Smith), and 9% in smaller, more rural communities. This geographic breakdown is closely aligned with the population of online voters in the territory (58.4% from Yellowknife, 27.7% in regional centres, and 13.9% from small communities).

Survey questions probed perceived satisfaction with voting online, reason for use, concerns, desirability to see the voting mode used in the future, trust, perceived risk, digital access and literacy, previous voting history, and standard socio-demographic items. This report presents the survey results by providing a table and chart for each question posed in the survey.

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Executive Summary

The following are some key findings from the study:

Voter Demographics

- Young people aged 18 to 34 were more likely to cast an online ballot, while voters 45+ were less likely to do so.
- 58.4% of online ballots were cast for Yellowknife districts, 27.7% for regional centre districts, and 13.9% for small community districts.
- Respondents have strong digital access and use: all respondents reported having an Internet connection and 99.4% of respondents reported using the Internet daily.

Voter Perceptions

- Accessibility (53%) as the main reason respondents expressed for voting online.
- A majority (96.4%) expressed being satisfied with the online voting process with 73% being 'very satisfied'.
- 75.3% of respondents said that it is very important to them that Election NWT offer online voting in its elections.
- The largest proportion of respondents (37.7%) reported having no concerns with online voting.
- A total of 42.8% of respondents said that they likely would not have voted without the online voting option.

Conclusions

- Online voters in the NWT sample have strong digital literacy measured by reported access, frequency of use, and confidence in their ability to use the Internet.
- Online voting respondents in the NWT are relatively supportive of online voting. They report being satisfied with the online voting process, are willing to recommend it to others, and the largest proportion of respondents report having no concerns.
- This report finds that online voting serves as a positive voting alternative voting method for electors seeking to cast an absentee ballot in the NWT. It is especially important for accessibility and participation for those voting in districts outside of the capital city.

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Q1 - Did you vote ONLINE in the 2023 NWT territorial election?

|		
Yes	97.6%	166
No	2.4%	4
Total		170

Q1 - Did you vote ONLINE in the 2023 NWT territorial election?

■ Choice Count
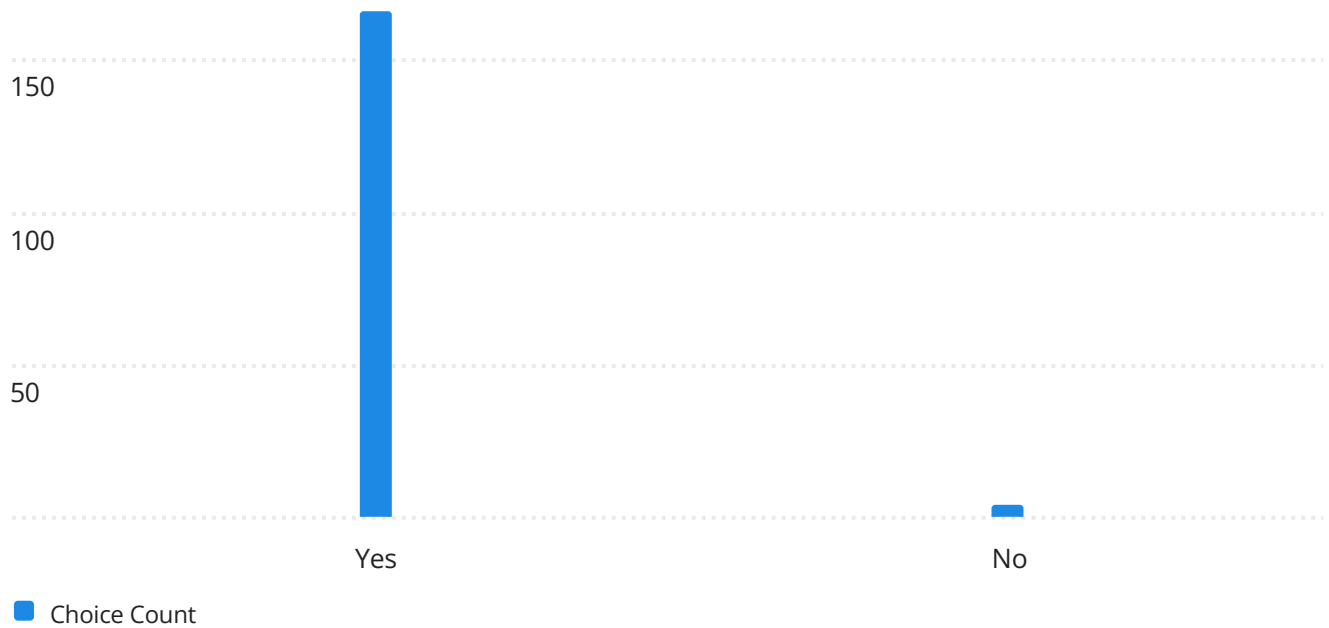
Q2 - What is the main reason you chose to vote online in the 2023 NWT territorial election?

Answer	%	Count
Accessibility (e.g., could not make it to a poll in time, away from the NWT)	53%	88
Convenience	28.3%	47
Other (please specify)	7.8%	13
No in-person polls near me	4.2%	7
Found it interesting/wanted to try something new	4.2%	7
Positive past experience with voting online	1.2%	2
Privacy	0.6%	1
Concerns with mail delivery time	0.6%	1
Suggestion from friend(s) or family member(s)	0%	0
Suggestion from a candidate	0%	0
Health and safety concerns (e.g., COVID-19)	0%	0
Total		166

Q2 - What is the main reason you chose to vote online in the 2023 NWT territorial election?
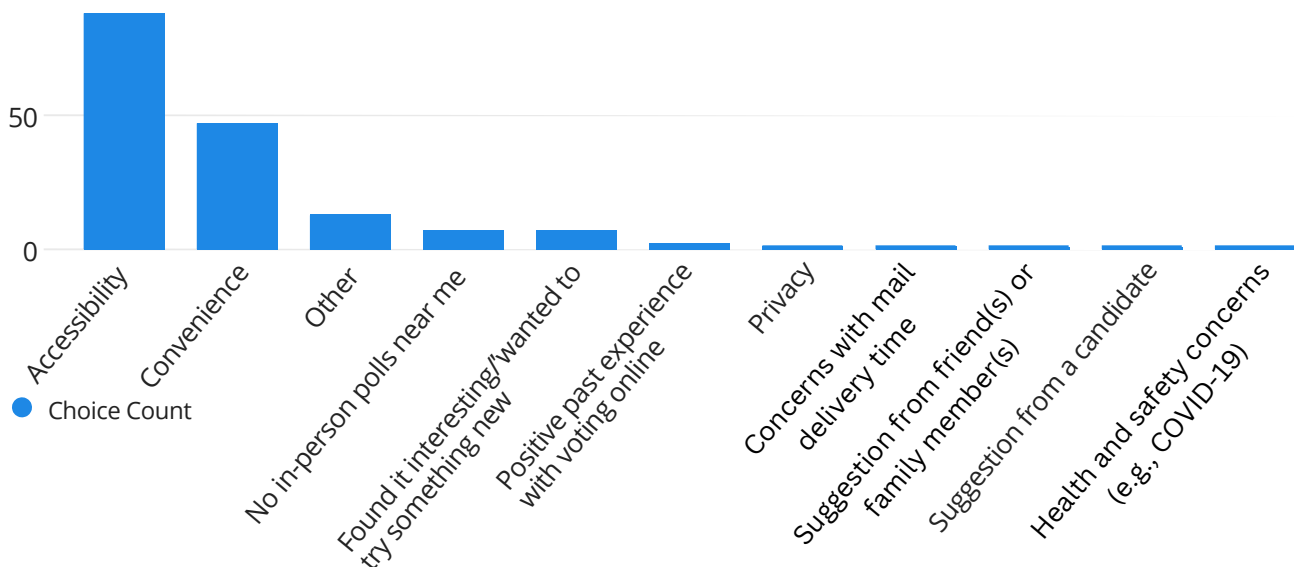
Q3 - If you didn't have the option to vote online, would you still have voted?

Field	Choice Count	
Definitely yes	38.6%	64
Probably yes	16.9%	28
Probably no	20.5%	34
Definitely no	22.3%	37
Don't know/Prefer not to answer	1.8%	3
Total		166

Q3 - If you didn't have the option to vote online, would you still have voted?

● Choice Count
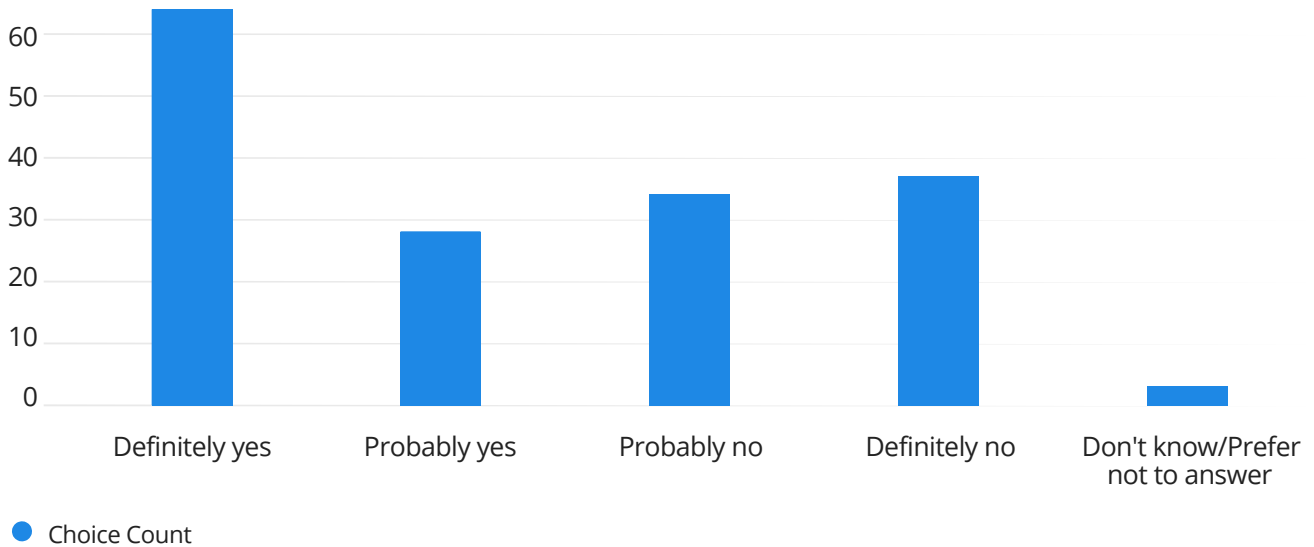
Q4 - How satisfied were you with the online voting process?

Very satisfied	72.9%	121
Fairly satisfied	23.5%	39
Not very satisfied	3%	5
Not satisfied at all	0.6%	1
Total		166

Q4 - How satisfied were you with the online voting process?

Choice Count
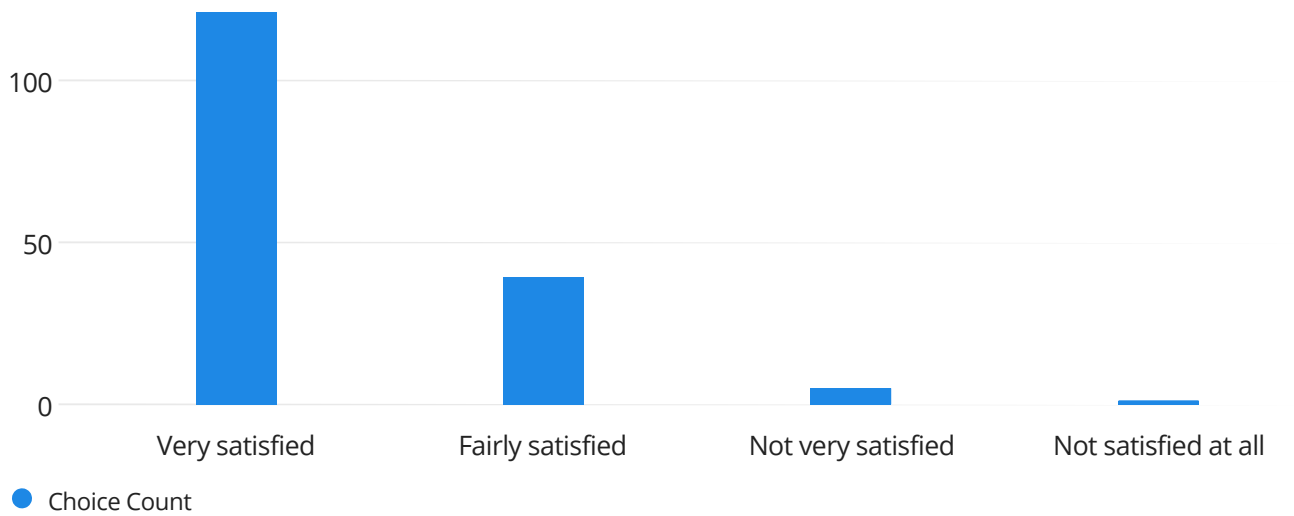
Q5 - How important is it for you personally that Elections NWT offer online voting?

Very important	75.3%	128
Fairly important	21.8%	37
Not very important	1.2%	2
Not important at all	1.8%	3
Total		170

Q5 - How important is it for you personally that Elections NWT offer online voting?

Choice Count
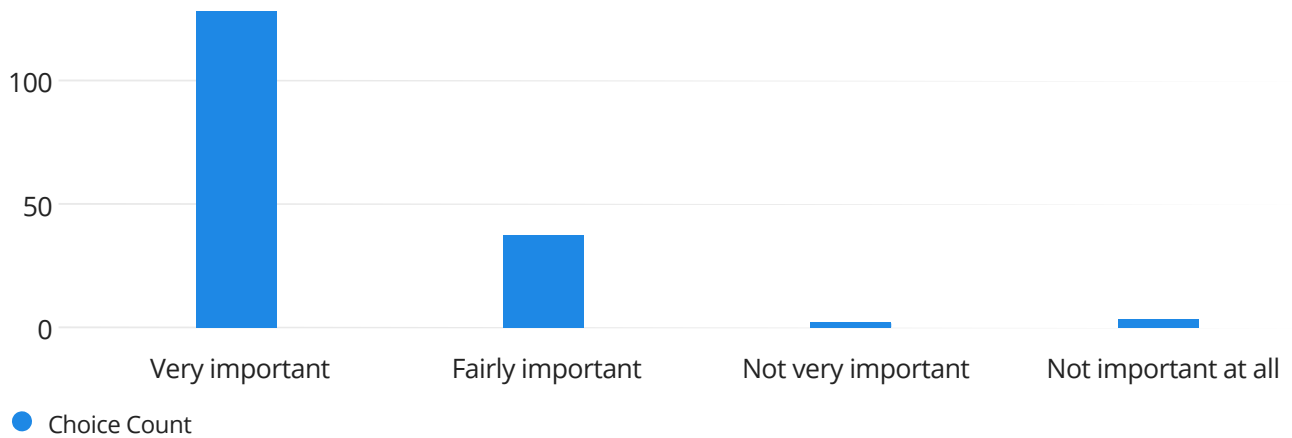
Q5a - To what extent did the COVID-19 pandemic influence your decision to vote online?

A lot	4.8%	8
Somewhat	5.5%	9
A little	3.6%	6
Not at all	82.4%	136
Don't know/Prefer not to answer	3.6%	6
Total		165

Q5a - To what extent did the COVID-19 pandemic influence your decision to vote online?

● Choice Count
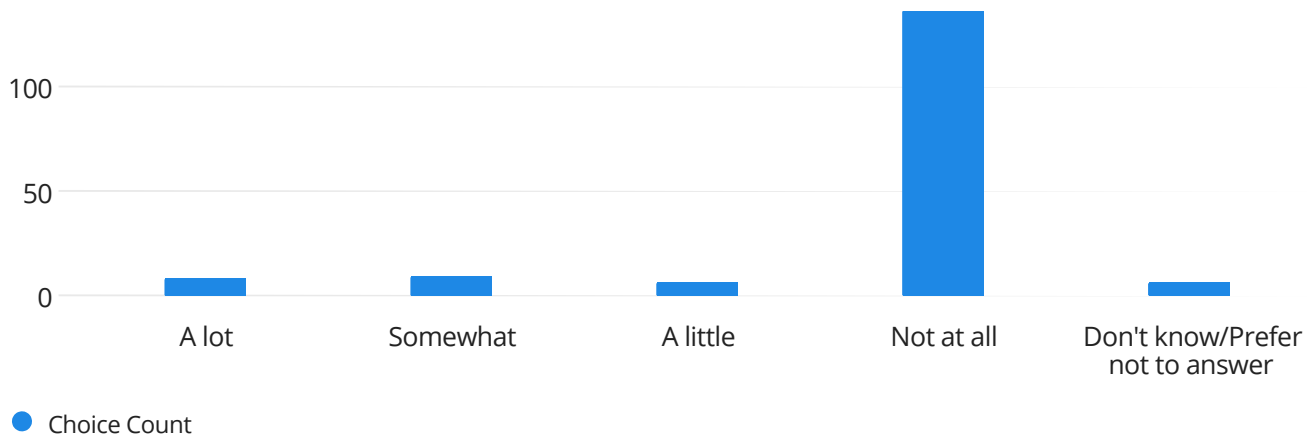
Q6 - Would you recommend Internet voting to others?

|		
Definitely yes	71.5%	118
Probably yes	26.7%	44
Probably no	0.6%	1
Definitely no	0.6%	1
Don't know/Prefer not to answer	0.6%	1
Total		165

Q6 - Would you recommend Internet voting to others?

Choice Count
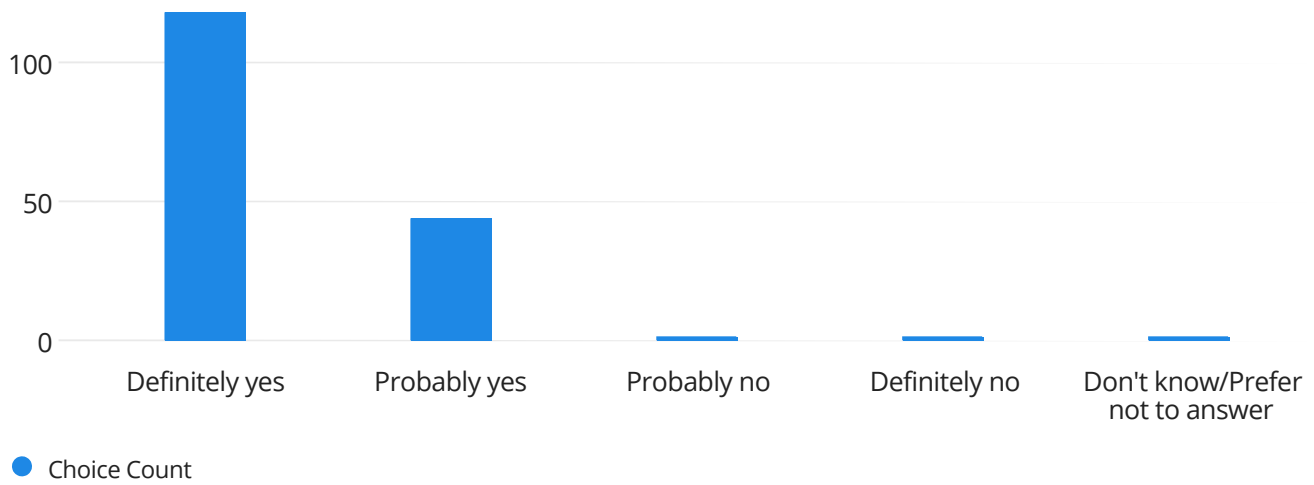
Q7 - Do you have concerns about voting by Internet? If so, what is your top concern?

I don't have any concerns about voting by Internet	37.7%	63
Security (e.g., security of the vote, resistance to hacking)	31.1%	52
Other (please specify)	9.6%	16
Fraud (e.g., vote theft)	8.4%	14
Lack of Internet access	5.4%	9
Privacy	5.4%	9
Replacing voting traditions	2.4%	4
Don't know/Prefer not to answer	0%	0
Total		167

Q7 - Do you have concerns about voting by Internet? If so, what is your top concern?
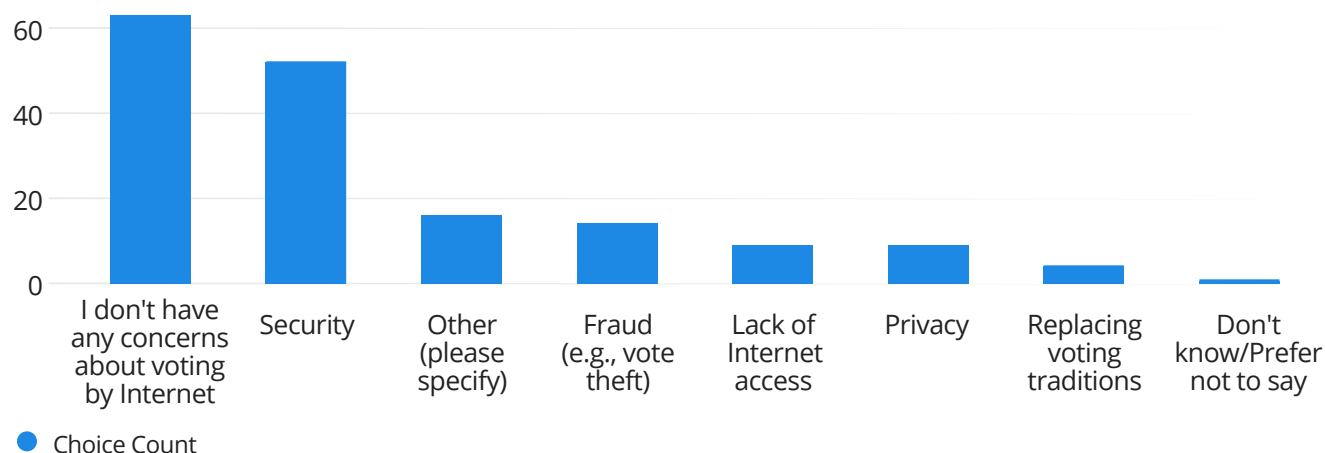

● Choice Count

Q8 - If Internet voting were available in all elections, how likely is it that you would use it to vote in:

166 Responses

| Field	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	Don't know/Prefer not to answer
Referendums	123	28	4	3	8
Municipal elections	123	29	6	3	2
School elections	106	27	7	8	14
Territorial elections	121	30	5	3	3

Q8 - If Internet voting were available in all elections, how likely is it that you would use it to vote in:

Legend: ● Referendums ● Municipal elections ● School elections ● Territorial elections
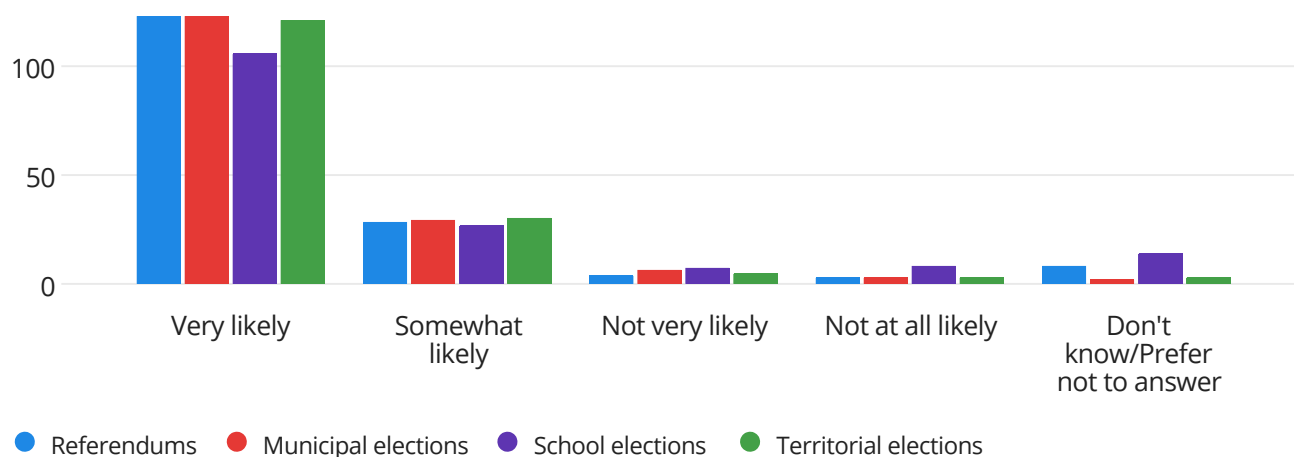
Q9 - Considering elections at all levels of government, since you became eligible to vote, have you voted...

|		
In all elections	62%	103
In most elections	30.1%	50
In a few elections	5.4%	9
Never before this election	2.4%	4
Total		166

Q9 - Considering elections at all levels of government, since you became eligible to vote, have you voted...

● Choice Count
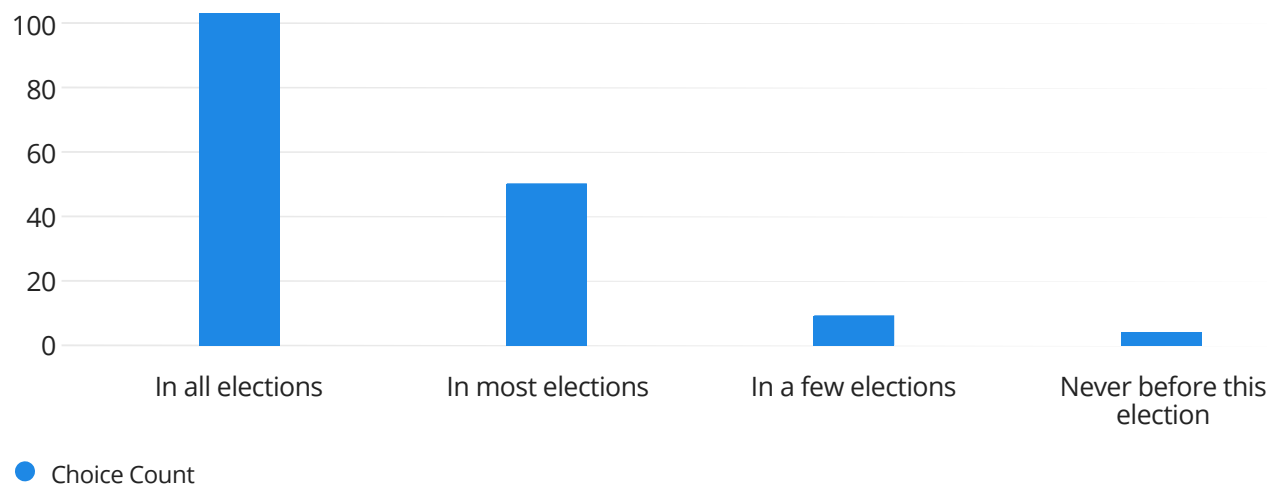
Q10 - What type of Internet connection do you have at home?

|		
Cable, DSL or Fiber (e.g. NorthwesTel)	81.8%	135
Satellite dish (e.g., StarLink, etc.)	13.3%	22
Mobile (e.g., cell phone, hot spot, sticks, etc.)	4.2%	7
Don't know/Prefer not to answer	0.6%	1
Another type of connection (please specify)	0%	0
I do not have Internet access at home	0%	0
Total		165

Q10 - What type of Internet connection do you have at home?

● Choice Count
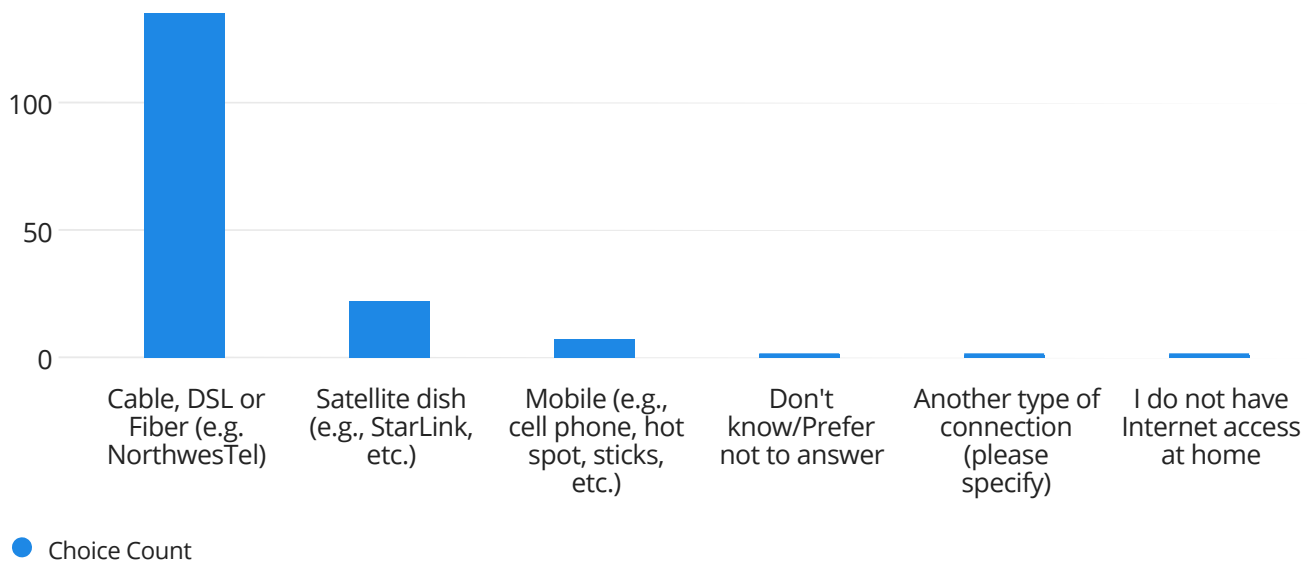
Q11 - How often do you access the Internet?

Several times a day	85.2%	138
Every day	14.2%	23
Several times a week	0%	0
About once a week	0%	0
Several times a month	0%	0
About once a month	0%	0
None/Never	0%	0
Other (please specify)	0.6%	1
Total		162

Q11 - How often do you access the Internet?

● Choice Count
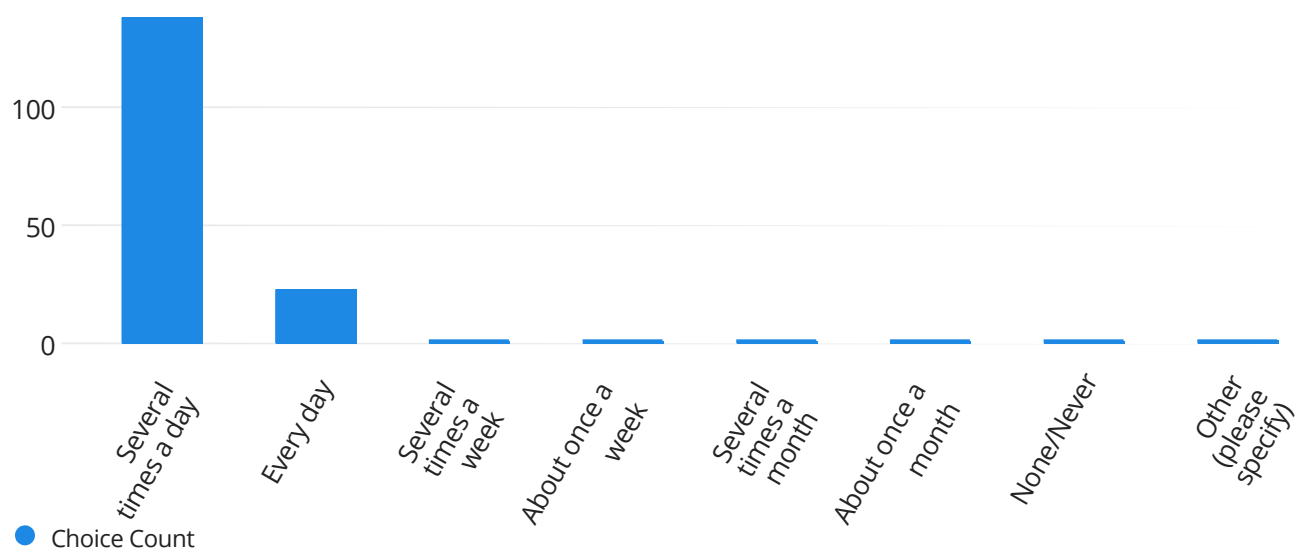
Q12 - How would you describe your ability to use the Internet? Is it...

Very good	66.1%	109
Good	28.5%	47
Fair	4.2%	7
Poor	0.6%	1
Don't know/Prefer not to answer	0.6%	1
Total		165

Q12 - How would you describe your ability to use the Internet? Is it...
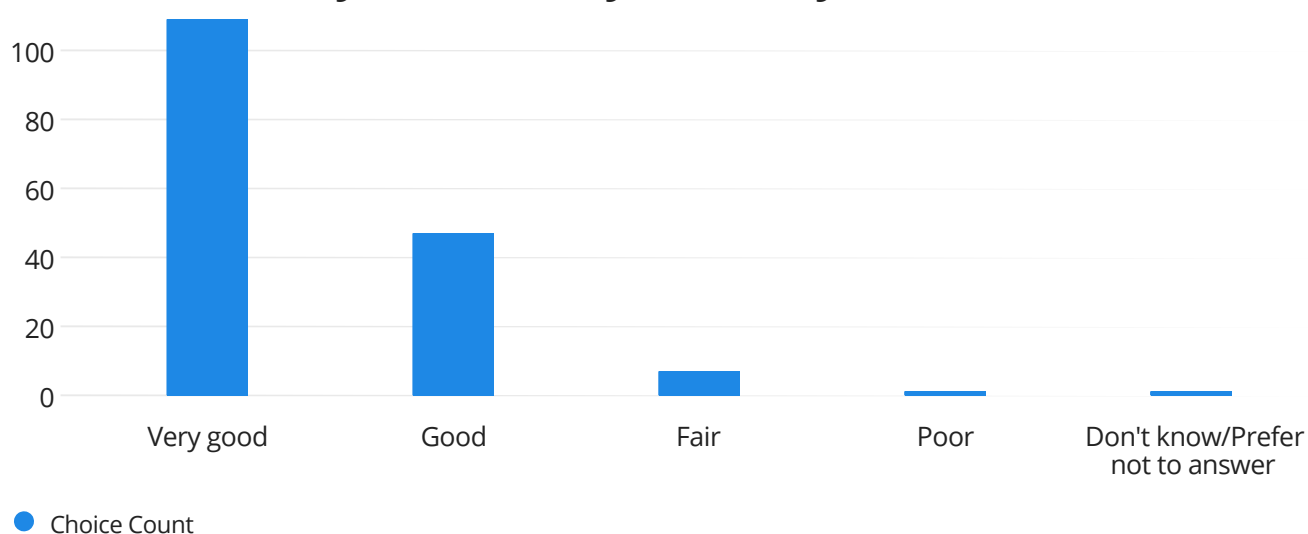

● Choice Count

Q13 - On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means "not at all" and 10 means "trust completely" how much do you trust...

164 Responses

| Field	Not at all (0)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Trust completely (10)
Paper voting in-person?	1	0	1	1	3	3	3	10	26	35	81
Internet voting?	1	1	0	0	3	9	7	32	26	41	39
Voting by mail?	11	3	2	7	6	18	16	22	20	26	25

Q13 - On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means "not at all" and 10 means "trust completely" how much do you trust...

● Paper voting in-person?　　● Internet voting?　　● Voting by mail?
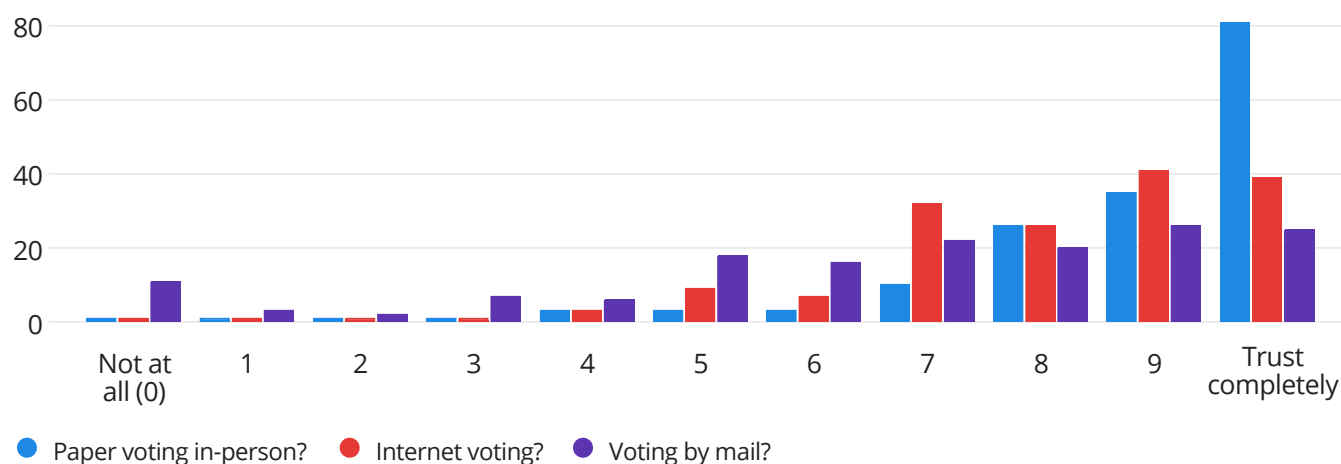
Q14 - Which statement comes closest to your own view?

Voting on the Internet is risky (0)	1.8%	3
1	1.8%	3
2	0.6%	1
3	0%	0
4	4.2%	7
5	6%	10
6	2.4%	4
7	15.7%	26
8	21.1%	35
9	16.9%	28
Voting on the Internet is safe (10)	27.1%	45
Don't know	2.4%	4
Total		166

Q14 - Which statement comes closest to your own view?
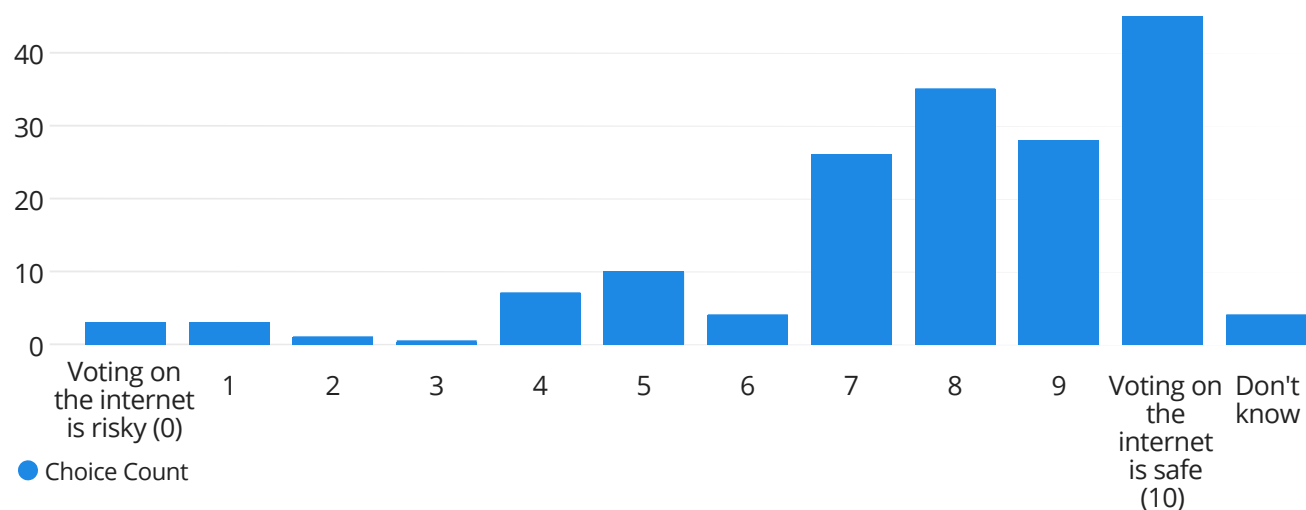
Q15 - What is your age?

18-24	9%	14
25-34	17.4%	27
35-44	16.1%	25
45-54	16.1%	25
55-64	25.8%	40
65-74	12.9%	20
75-84	2.6%	4
85-94	0%	0
94+	0%	0
Total		155

Q15 - What is your age?
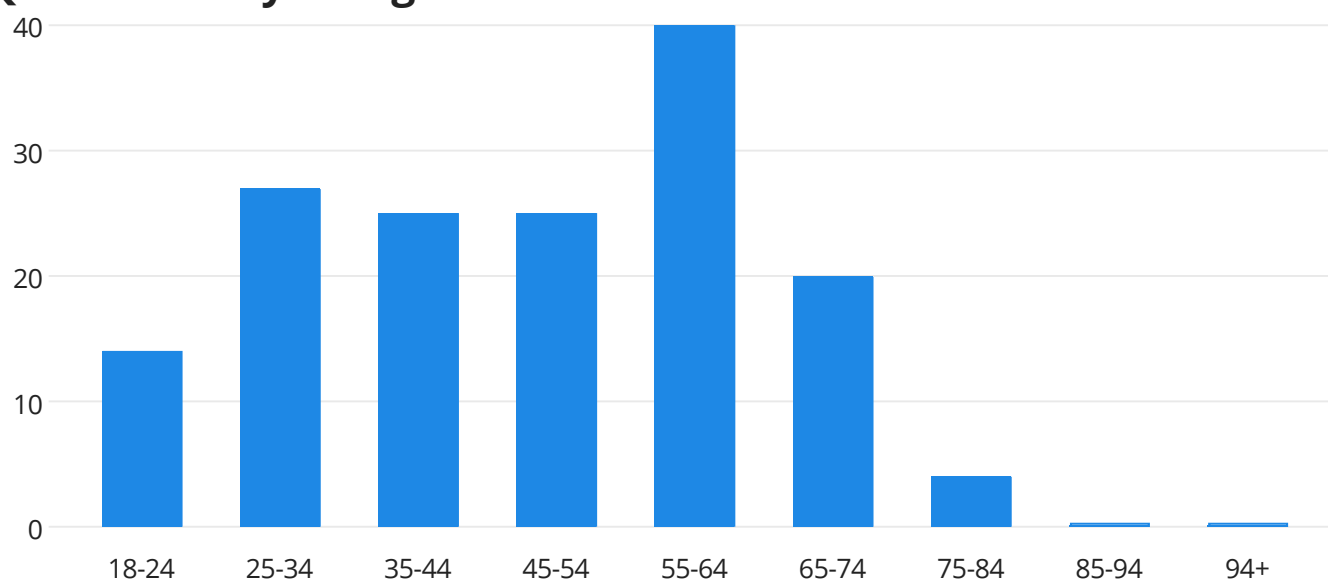
Q16 - Do you identify as:

Field	Choice Count	
Female	56%	93
Male	41%	68
Prefer to self-identify	1.2%	2
Prefer not to answer	1.2%	2
Non-binary	0.6%	1
Total		166

Q16 - Do you identify as:

● Choice Count
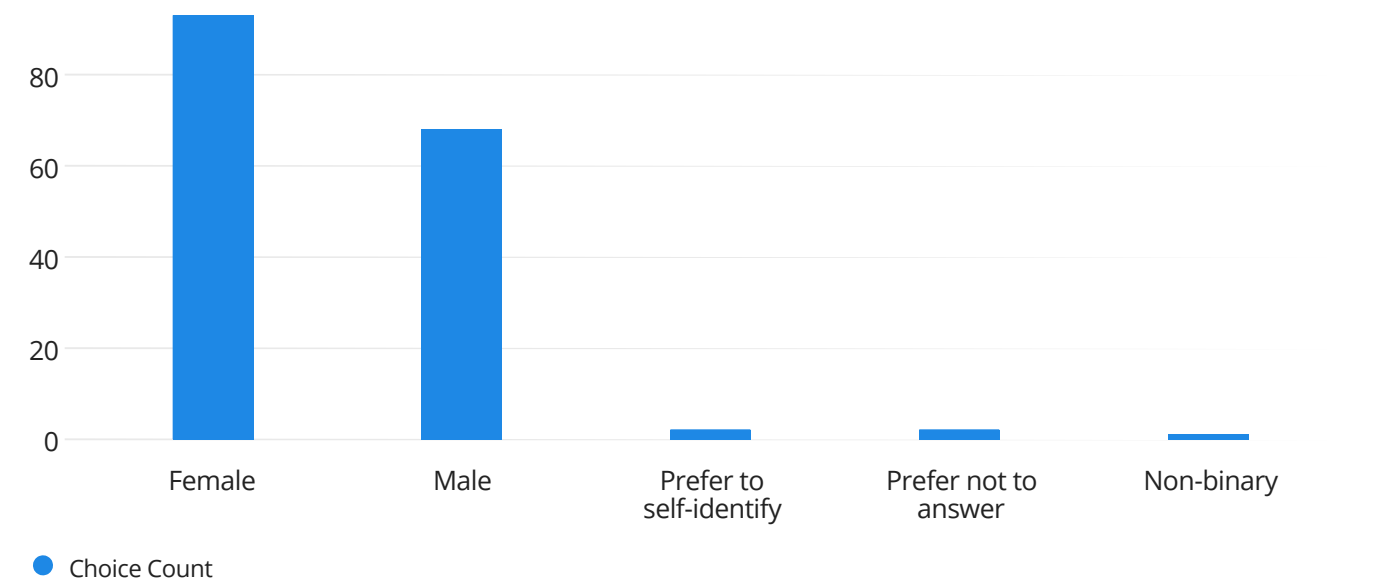
Q17 - What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

Bachelor's degree	33.3%	55
Master's degree	19.4%	32
Completed technical, community college	17.6%	29
Some university	13.9%	23
Professional degree or doctorate	7.9%	13
Completed secondary/high school	4.8%	8
Some technical, community college	1.8%	3
Some secondary/high school	0.6%	1
Don't know/Prefer not to answer	0.6%	1
Completed elementary school	0%	0
Some elementary school	0%	0
No schooling	0%	0
Total		165

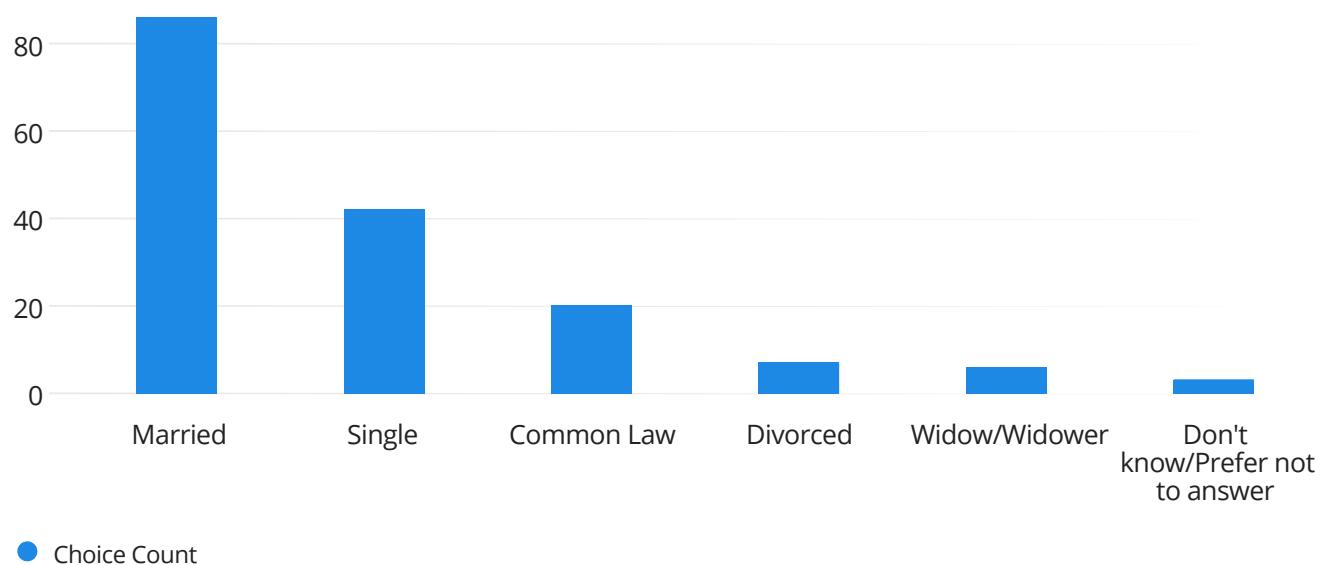# Q17 - What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
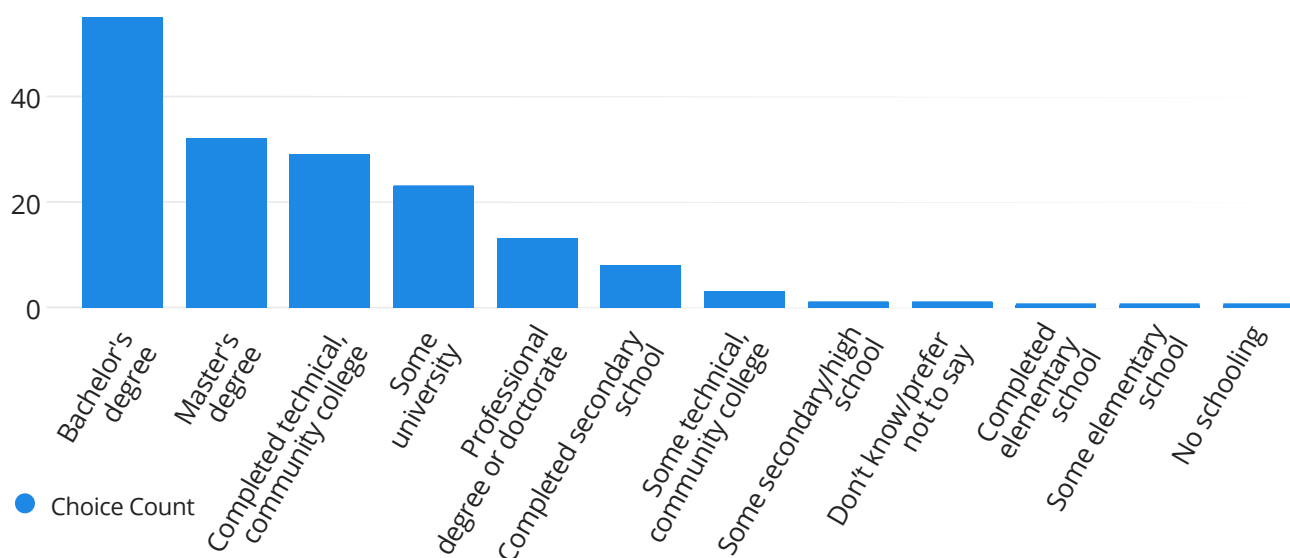
Q18 - Which of the following represents your current marital status?

|		
Married	52.4%	86
Single	25.6%	42
Common Law	12.2%	20
Divorced	4.3%	7
Widow/Widower	3.7%	6
Don't know/Prefer not to answer	1.8%	3
Total		164

Q18 - Which of the following represents your current marital status?

● Choice Count

Q19 - In which of the following classifications does your total household income fall?

|		
No income	0.6%	1
$1 to $30,000	3.1%	5
$30,001 to $60,000	6.1%	10
$60,001 to $90,000	8.0%	13
$90,001 to $110,000	11.7%	19
$110,001 to $150,000	17.8%	29
$150,001 to $200,000	17.8%	29
More than $200,000	23.9%	39
Don't know/Prefer not to answer	11%	18
Total		163

Q19 - In which of the following classifications does your total household income fall?

Choice Count
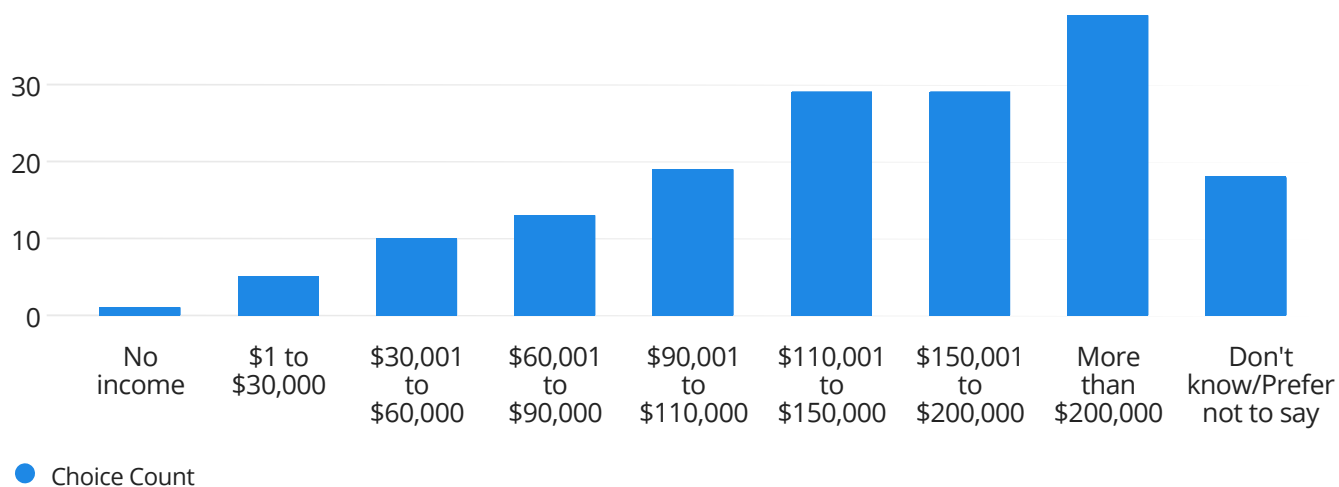
Q20 - Do you identify as any of the following?

White	66.9%	117
Visible minority (e.g., South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, Japanese, etc.)	8%	14
Prefer not to answer	6.3%	11
Métis	5.7%	10
Dene	4.6%	8
Other (please specify)	4.6%	8
Other First Nations	2.3%	4
Inuit	1.7%	3
Total		175

Q20 - Do you identify as any of the following?

● Choice Count
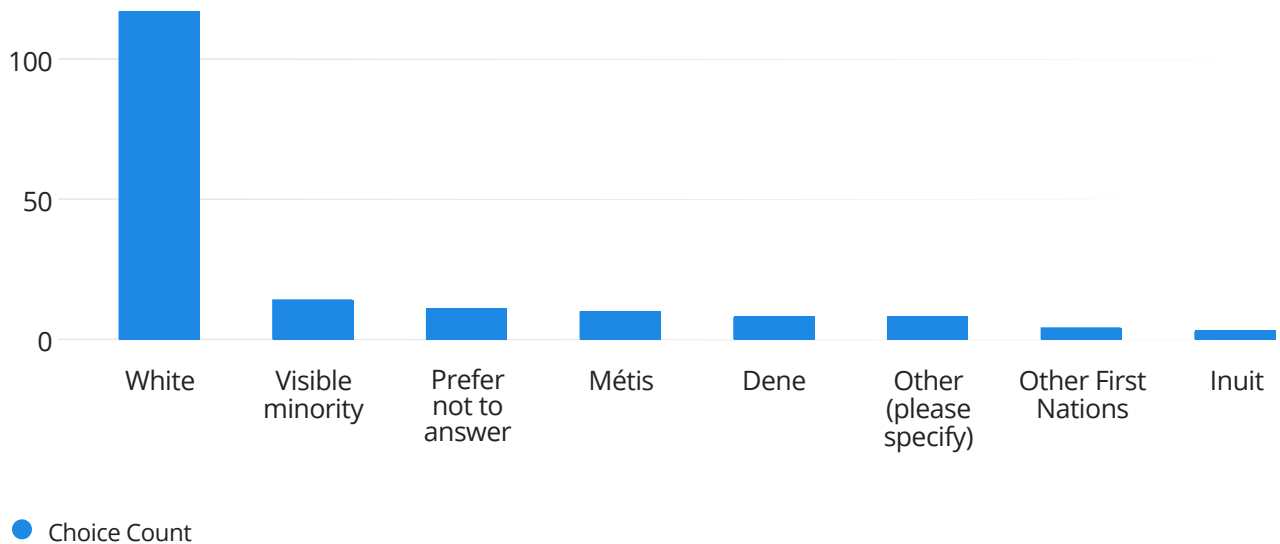
Q21 - Do you consider yourself a person with a disability?

No	86%	141
Yes	12.2%	20
Don't know/Prefer not to answer	1.8%	3
Total		164

Q21 - Do you consider yourself a person with a disability?

● Choice Count

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