

COLORADO
**CRIMINAL
JUSTICE
REFORM**
COALITION

A SURVEY COMPLETED BY THE COLORADO
CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM COALITION

**DENVER
CONFINED
VOTER
SURVEY**

Survey Completed March 2023

RESULTS & RECOMENDATIONS



STATEMENT FROM CCJRC

In Colorado, any person serving a misdemeanor sentence or a pre-trial detainee in a detention center is eligible to vote.¹ Pursuant to Rule 7.4 from the Colorado Secretary of State, each county election clerk is required to collaborate with the local sheriff's department to develop a plan to ensure that eligible voters confined in a jail or detention center can register to vote and vote.

Since 2016, the Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition (CCJRC) in partnership with the Denver Elections Division, League of Woman Voters, and the Denver Sheriff's Department has been working to register eligible voters and hold in-person voting events from inside the Denver jail and detention center.

Seven years and several elections later, CCJRC decided it was important to check in with eligible voters in the Denver County Jail (DCJ) and Denver Detention Center (DDC) and see what progress has been made, and what work still needs to be done.

So, in March of 2023, CCJRC conducted a survey of people inside DCJ and DDC to learn more about how important voting is to them, their voting history, the reason(s) if they didn't vote in the last election, and whether adequate voting-related information is available to them while incarcerated.

CCJRC hopes the results of this survey, as well as the recommended next steps, will strengthen the impact of the partnership in Denver and provide useful information and guidance to county election officials and sheriff's departments in the development of their jail-based voting program.

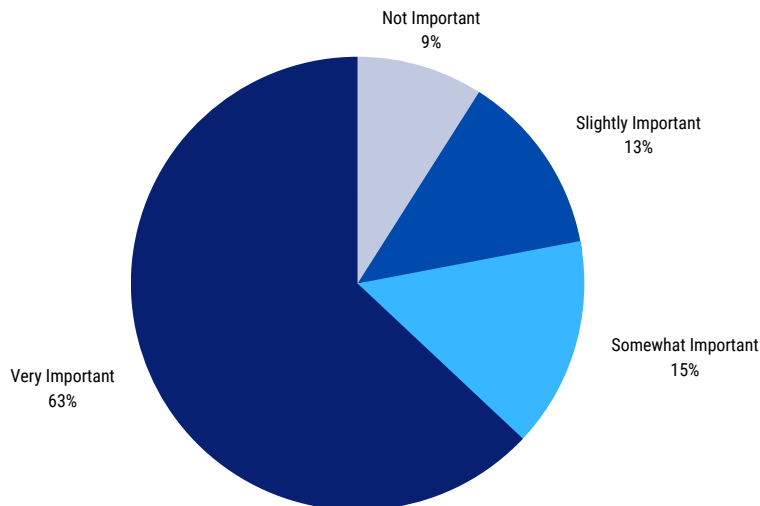
-Jasmine Ross & Kyle Giddings, CCJRC

**"A man without a vote is
a man without
protection."**

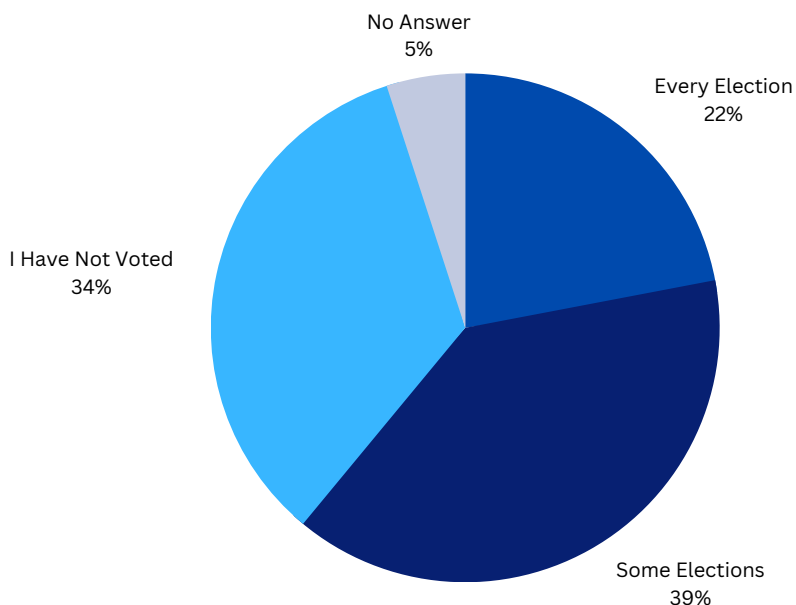
-Lyndon Johnson

HOW IMPORTANT IS VOTING?

With 78% of respondents saying that voting is "Very Important" or "Somewhat Important" it's clear that individuals in DCJ and DDC believe that it's important to vote. This is also reflected in the fact that registered voters in DCJ and DDC had a 51% voter turnout rate in the April Denver Mayor's race, whereas the turnout of the general population in Denver was only 33% for registered voters. ²



HOW FREQUENTLY DO YOU VOTE?



Of those surveyed, 61% reported voting in "Every Election" or "Some Elections" which in CCJRC's experience is comparable to the general population. Therefore, it's evident that confined voters are similarly engaged, as well as interested in voting.

TOP THREE REASONS WHY PEOPLE DIDN'T VOTE

To help better understand the barriers to voting for people in jail, we offered a selection of twelve different reasons for people to select why they had not voted, below are the top three reasons:

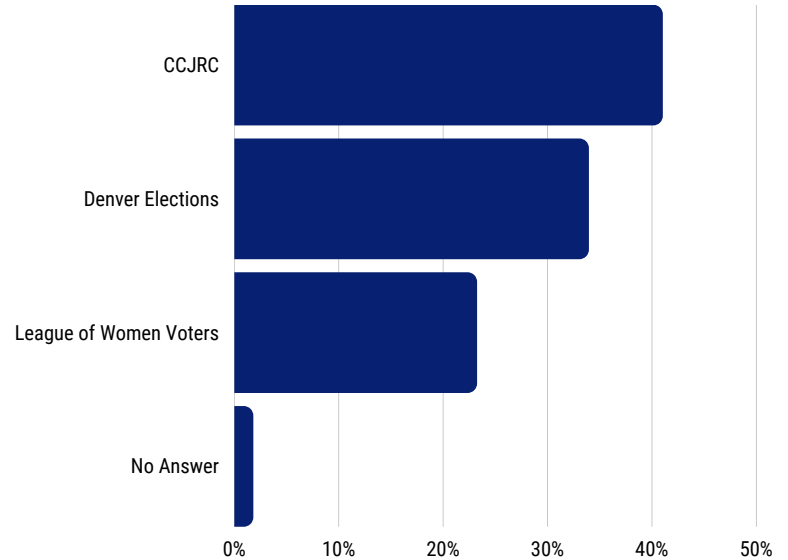
1. Being in jail made it too difficult.

2. I didn't know enough about the issues I would be voting on.

3. I didn't know enough about the candidates.

DID YOU GET ANY ASSISTANCE FROM ANY OF THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS LISTED BELOW WITH GETTING REGISTERED TO VOTE?

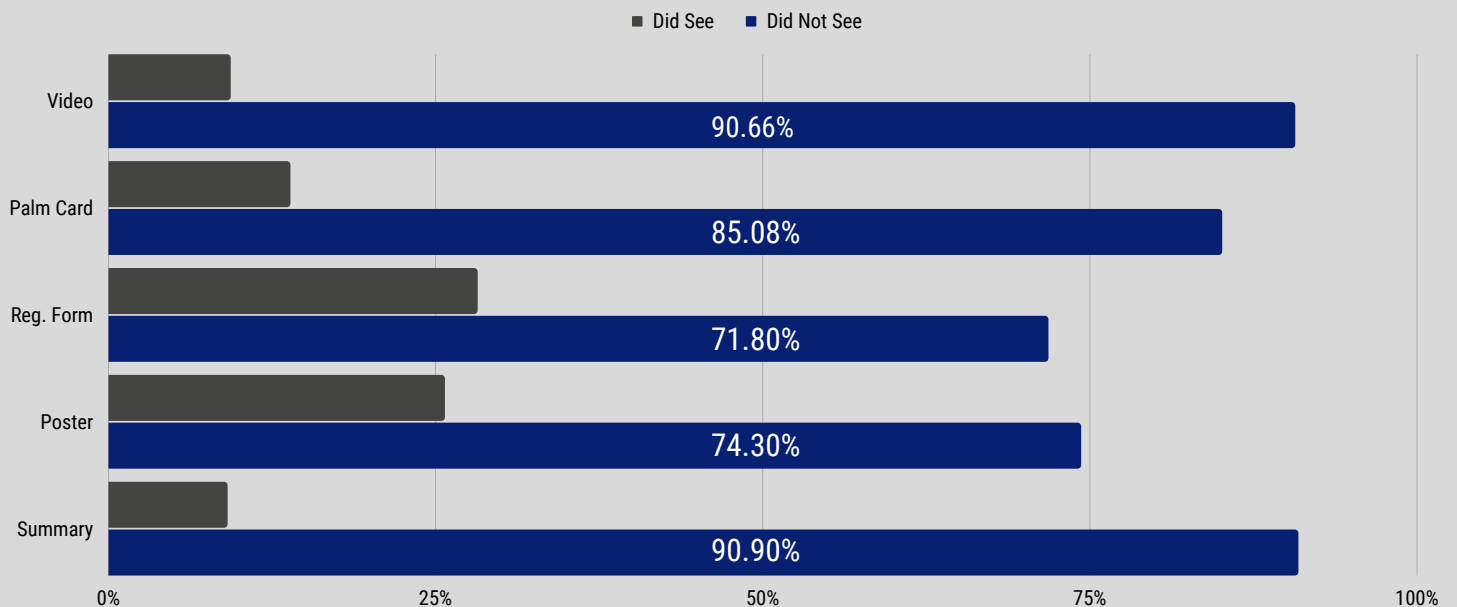
Amongst those who were registered to vote, a majority of them were registered by community partners who worked with the Denver Elections Division. This shows the importance of collaboration between government entities and non-partisan community organizations in enhancing the jail-based voting program.



DID YOU FIND ANY OF THE VOTER INFORMATION THAT WAS DISTRIBUTED IN THE JAILS HELPFUL?

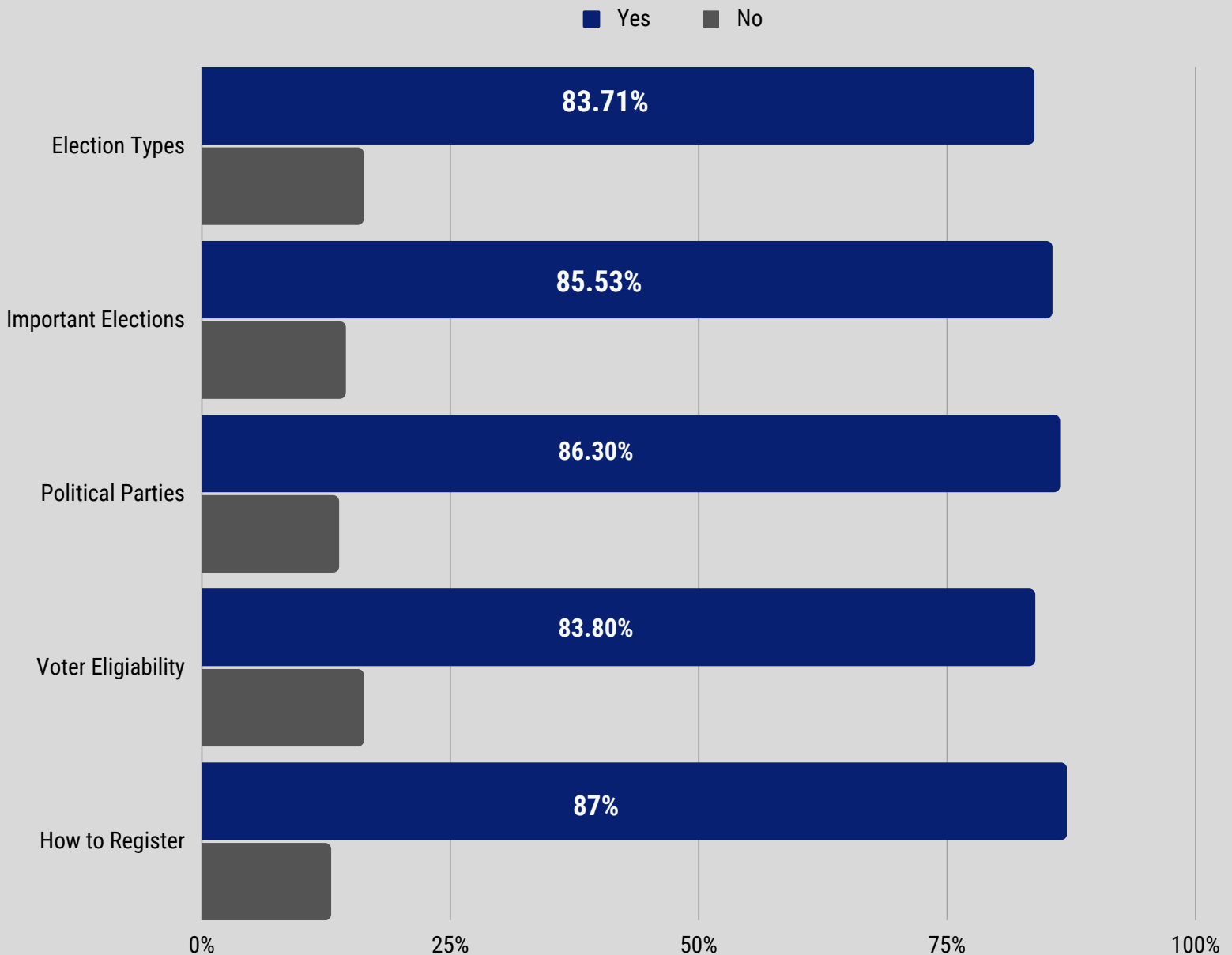
Since 2016, CCJRC has prepared a number of voting-related materials for the Sheriff’s Department to distribute to people inside of DCJ and DDC. While we know that these materials were given to the Sheriff’s Department, we wanted to see how accessible the materials were to those inside DCJ and DDC. From the data we collected, it’s clear that more needs to be done to increase access to these materials.

- 1: Jail-Based Voting Education Video 2: Voter Eligibility Palm Card 3: Voter Registration Form
4: Voter Information Poster 5: Summary of Ballot Measures

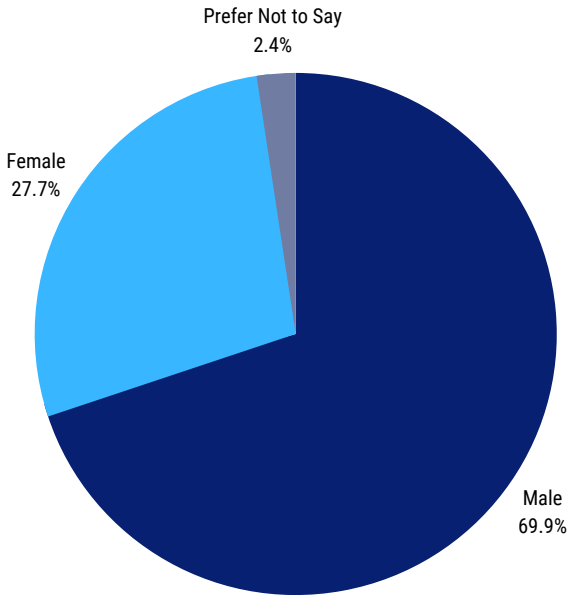


CCJRC IS IN THE PROCESS OF FINALIZING A CIVIC ENGAGEMENT BOOKLET TO BE DISTRIBUTED IN COUNTY JAILS IN COLORADO. THOSE SURVEYED WERE ASKED TO RESPOND IF THEY WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING TOPICS.

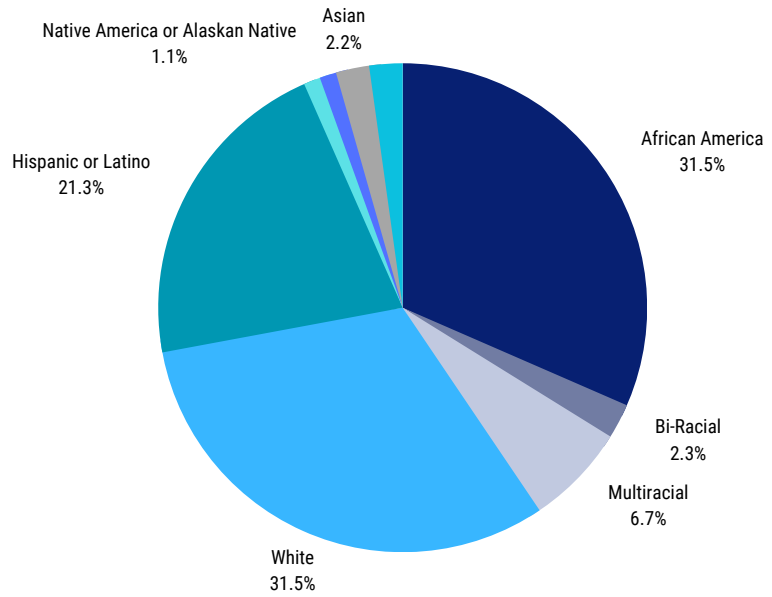
- 1.) Information on various types of elections.**
- 2.) Important Election.**
- 3.) Definitions of the types of political parties.**
- 4.) Voter Eligibility for people with criminal backgrounds.**
- 5.) Steps on how to register to vote once someone is released from jail.**



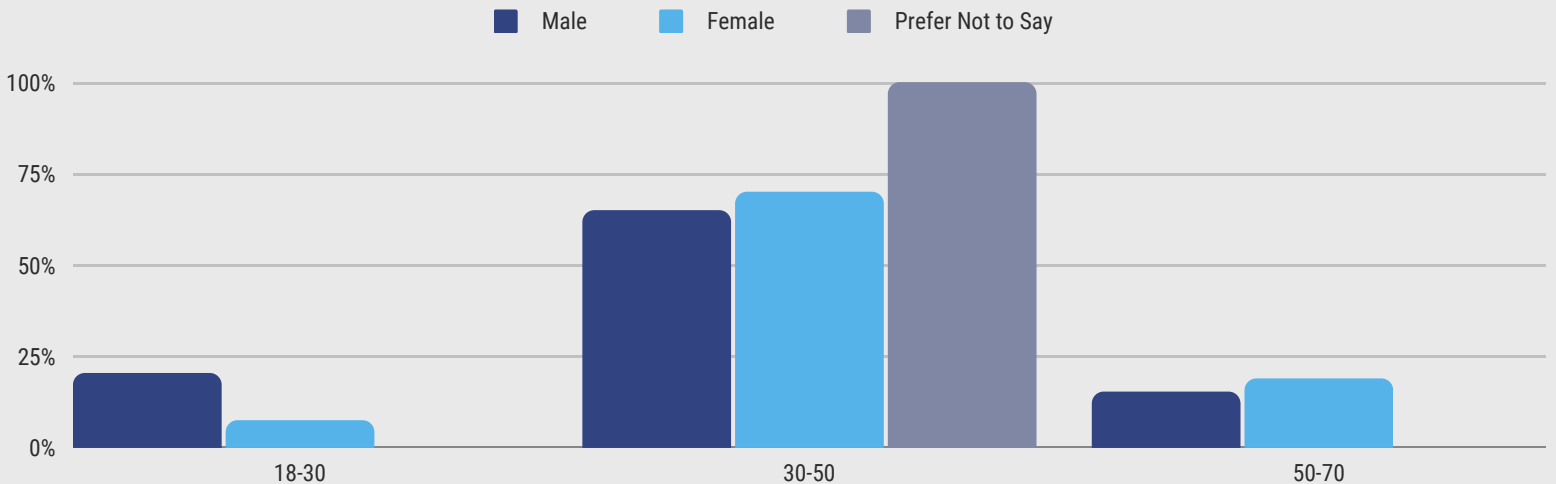
GENDER DEMOGRAPHICS



RACE DEMOGRAPHICS



AGE DEMOGRAPHICS





REFLECTIONS & NEXT STEPS

The simple and clear conclusion from this survey is that: The majority of people in jail want to vote and want to be educated voters. However, there are still substantial gaps despite the hard work of the staff of DCJ, DDC, the Denver Elections Division, CCJRC, and the LWV.

Colorado is one of only a few states to take on in-person jail-based voting, and for all involved, it is a constant learning process. Based on the above results, CCJRC recommends the following be done to increase voter engagement and turnout at DCJ and DDC.

- **Provide voter registration forms to all pretrial detainees at the time of admission.**
- **Have current non-partisan voter information guides on candidates and issues available in DCJ and DDC pods during all elections.**
- **Increase the frequency of voter registration drives inside DCJ and DDC in partnership with non-partisan community organizations.**
- **Offer an in-person voting and civic education class that people in jail can be awarded earned time for completing.**
- **Jail administrators provide a list of eligible voters to allow for better outreach when it comes to voter registration, voter engagement, and education.**

Endnotes & Methodology

CCJRC completed this survey in March of 2023. Ninety-four individual surveys were submitted to CCJRC by willing participants from DDC and DCJ. All surveys are anonymous outside of tracking gender, age and race. The findings from this survey have informed this analysis and reflect the insights and recommendations that it contains. Jasmine Ross, Civic Engagement Manager at CCJRC conducted the surveys. Kyle Giddings completed the survey analysis.

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Endnotes

1 1-2-103(4), Colorado Revised Statute

2 Swanson, C. (2023, April 5). Denver Election Results: Turnout low, mayoral race faces runoff. The Denver Post. <https://www.denverpost.com/2023/04/05/denver-elections-results-municipal-2023-takeaways-politics>

3 Beaty, Kevin J., *Inside Denver's downtown detention center*. Oct. 11, 2018, Denverite <https://denverite.com/2018/12/12/whos-inside-denvers-jails-the-city-reveals-the-stats-for-the-first-time/>