



SEATTLE VOTES



2016 SURVEY RESULTS

IMMIGRANT CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT
IN SEATTLE-
KING COUNTY

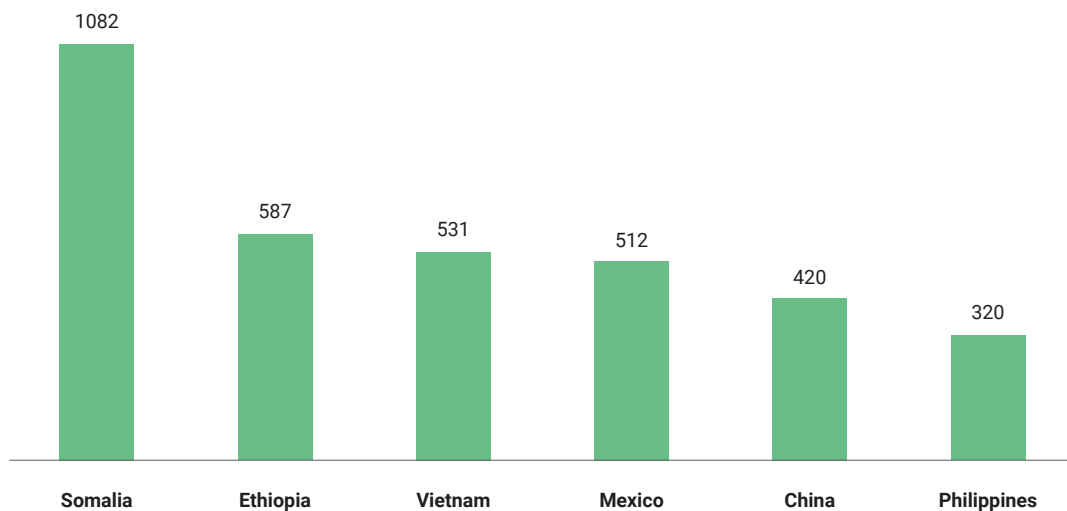
1. Summary of Findings

The United States is experiencing its “fourth wave” of mass immigration. Changes in immigration law created by the 1965 Immigration Act and changes to policies regarding refugees have opened the door to groups previously excluded by law. While there is considerable debate as to when the fourth wave began, we note significant increases in immigration during the 1980s. Between 1980 and 2015, over 31.8 million immigrants entered the country as lawful permanent residents. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the foreign-born population number is at 40 million persons, or 12.9% of the total U.S. population.

This fourth wave of mass immigration is distinct in that the largest sources of immigration are from Latin America and Asia. However, the fourth wave is also characterized by its diversity given that people are migrating from all parts of the globe. Finally, it is important to note that contemporary immigrants vary in their status from naturalized U.S. citizens to persons who are undocumented/unauthorized¹.

During periods of increased immigration, the manner by which immigrants are integrated or incorporated into the nation becomes paramount. To address the policy needs of immigrants and to facilitate their civic incorporation, the City of Seattle Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs has commissioned a study in partnership with Latino Decisions to survey the city’s foreign-born population. The City of Seattle began outreach in March and finished in mid-June 2016. The survey represents the views of 5,224 respondents. It includes large samples of immigrants from Somalia (1082), Ethiopia (587), Vietnam (531), Mexico (512), China (420), and the Philippines (320).

Fig. 1: Top 6 National Origin Groups of Seattle Votes Respondents



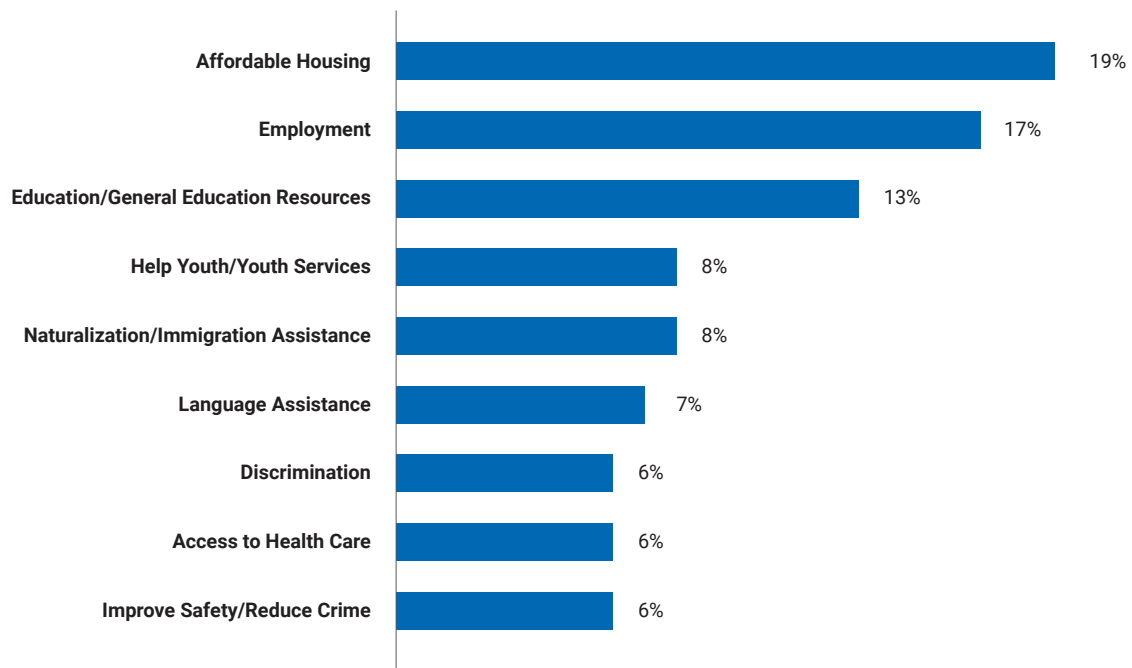
The large sample size allows for separate analysis of these national origin groups. Together these groups represent 66 percent of the survey respondents. The survey (see Appendix A) was administered online or through hard copies distributed by volunteers: 988 respondents or 18.9% completed the survey online, while the remaining 4,236 or 81.1% filled out a hard-copy version of the survey. The survey was administered in 13 different languages.² This report provides a brief overview of some of the key findings.

¹ In this report, we use the terms “undocumented” and “unauthorized” interchangeably to denote a foreign-born person who is residing in the United States without legal immigration status. ² The languages were: Amharic, Arabic, Chinese (Traditional), English, Indonesian, Khmer, Korean, Oromo, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Tigrinya, and Vietnamese.

2. Public Policy Needs

To address the policy needs of immigrants, respondents were asked: What is the most important issue facing your immigrant and refugee community that you think our public officials should address? **The top three issues listed were: access to affordable housing (19%); access to jobs (17%); and access to education/educational resources (13%).** Helping young people/providing youth services and assistance with naturalization and immigration services were tied at 8%. Language assistance was an issue for 7% of respondents. Finally, discrimination, access to health care, and crime prevention were tied at 6%.

Fig. 2: Top Social Issues for Immigrant and Refugee Respondents



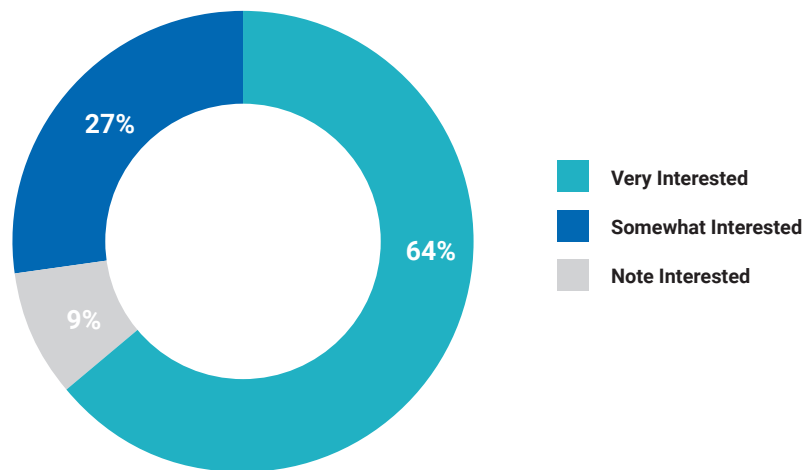
The policy needs varied across the top six groups by national origin. For example, **Somalis ranked education (23%) as their top policy issue while affordable housing (23%) was the top issue for Ethiopians. Vietnamese respondents listed language help (21%) as their top need. Mexicans ranked difficulty in immigration/obtaining citizenship (20%) as their priority issue. Improving safety and reducing crime was ranked highest (15%) by Chinese immigrants while the number one issue for Filipinos was access to more jobs (19%).** This variety in priority issues indicates that although the survey can demonstrate the overall policy needs of immigrants and refugees in Seattle, those policy issues are likely to vary across different immigrant and refugee groups. for 7% of respondents. Finally, discrimination, access to health care, and crime prevention were tied at 6%.

3. Civic Engagement

The survey reveals an immigrant and refugee community that is politically interested and engaged, though the levels of interest and engagement vary across different national origin groups. A critical factor that explains differences in interest in civic engagement is the level of English language proficiency. However, immigrants who have access to political information from ethnic media appear to be more civically engaged than immigrants who lack this access. We will consider the role of language and ethnic media in the next sections of this report.

Respondents displayed a high level of interest in the 2016 Presidential Election, with 64% saying they were very interested in the election, 27% said they were somewhat interested, and only 9% said they were not interested.

Fig. 3: Percentage of Seattle Votes Respondents Interested in the 2016 Presidential Election



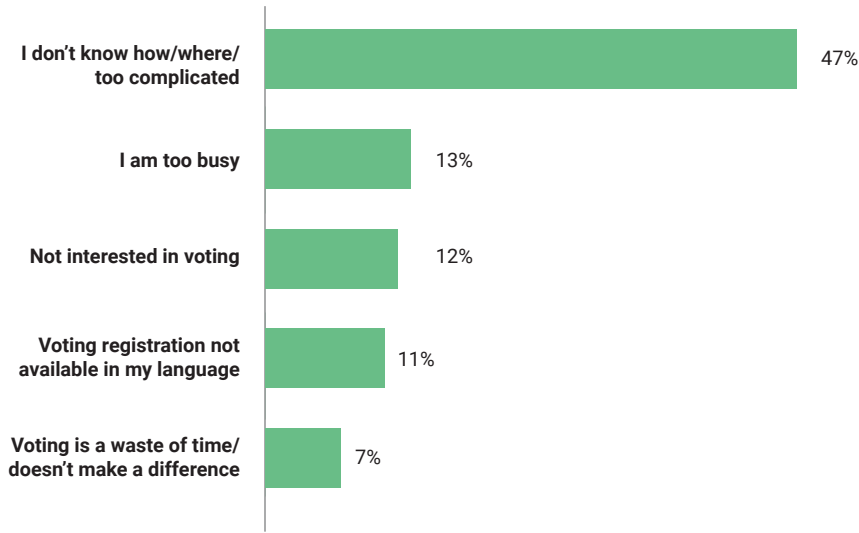
Voter registration is a critical prerequisite to voting, and **only 54 percent of respondents said they were registered to vote.**

Fig. 4: Seattle Votes Respondents Who are Registered to Vote



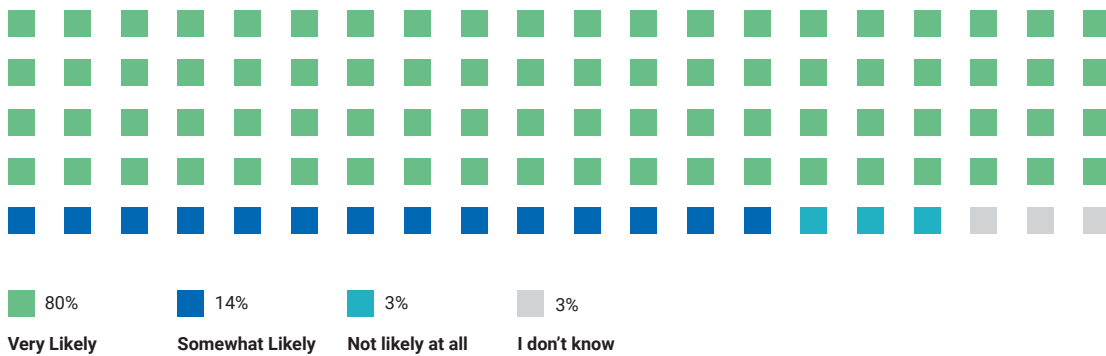
For those who were eligible, when asked why they were not registered, nearly half said they don't know how, where, or that it is too complicated. Voter registration presents an important challenge and opportunity for broader political engagement.

Fig. 5: Barriers to Voter Registration for Unregistered Seattle Votes Respondents



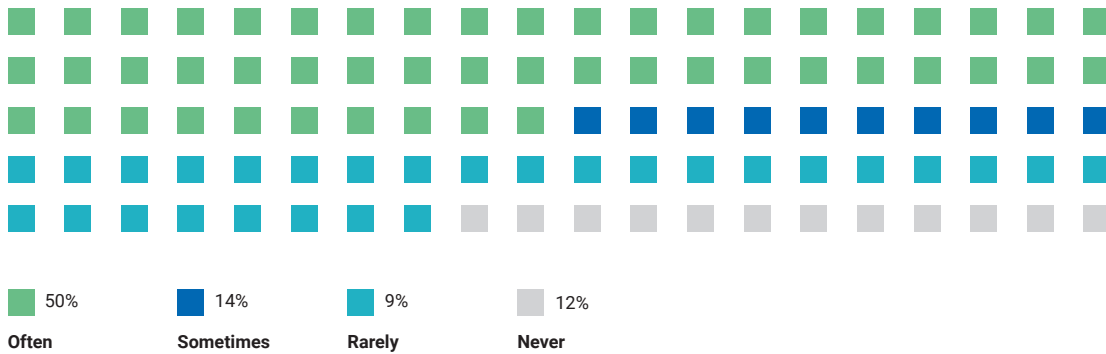
Among respondents that are currently registered to vote, **80% say they were very likely to vote in the 2016 election. However, only 54% of the entire sample reported being registered to vote at the time of the survey.**

Fig. 6: How Likely Seattle Vote Respondents Will Vote in the 2016 Presidential Election



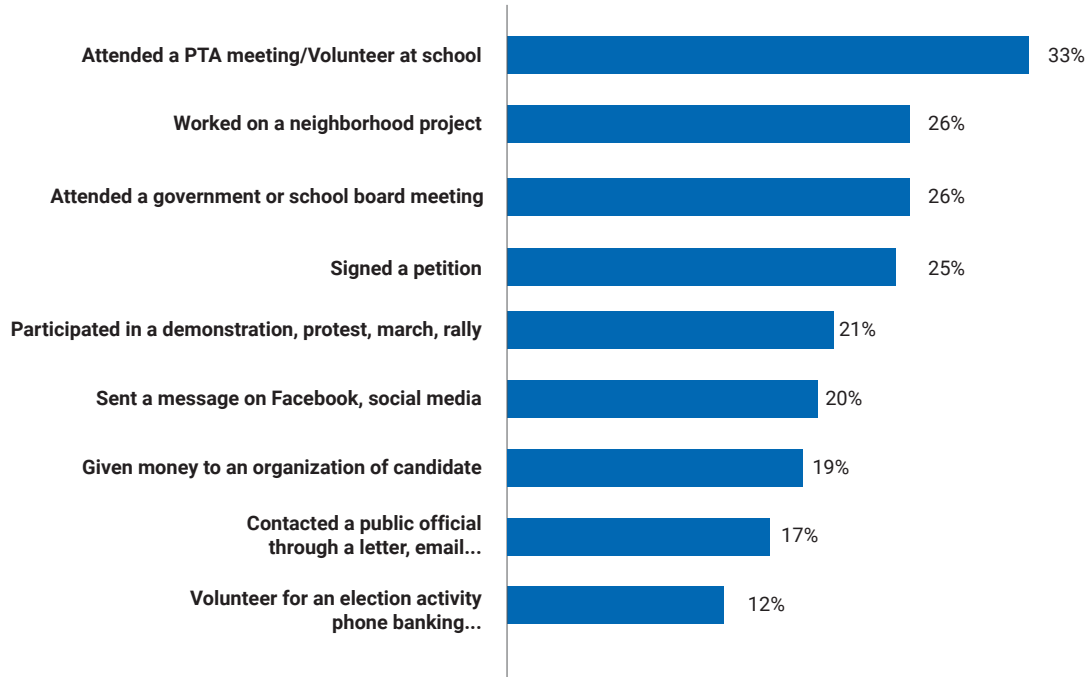
Among registered voters, half say they vote often in a state and local election.

Fig. 7: How Often Seattle Vote Respondents Vote in Elections



Voting is not the only avenue for being politically engaged. Respondents were asked if they had engaged in the past two years in nine different types of civic activities ranging from volunteering at a school to engaging in protests and demonstrations. We find relatively high levels of civic engagement.

Fig. 8: Activities Seattle Vote Respondents had Engaged in during the Past 2 Years



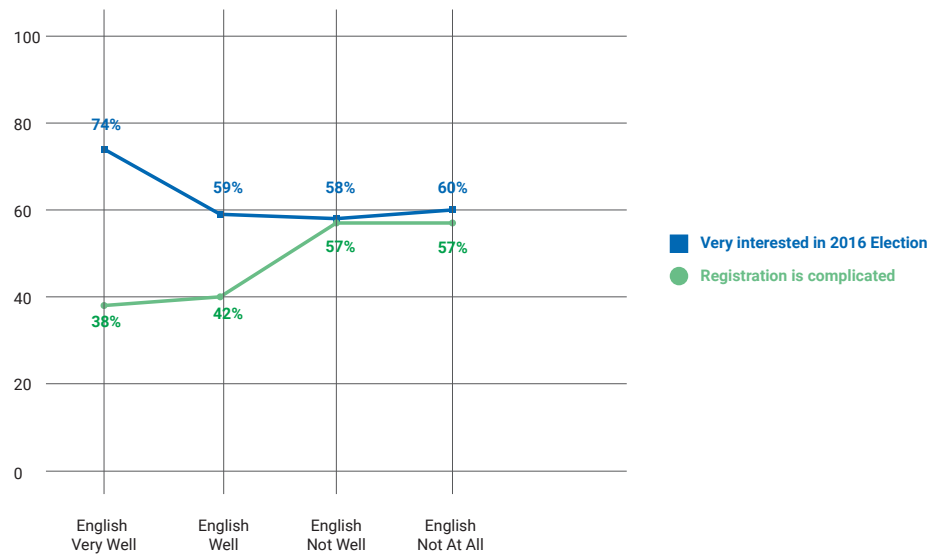
The most common activity was attending a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meeting/volunteering at school (33%). A quarter of respondents participated in the following three activities: (1) worked on a neighborhood project; (2) attended a government or school board meeting; and (3) signing a petition. Respondents were engaged with other civic activities at lower levels.

4. The Impact of Limited English Proficiency

Variations in levels of political interest and political engagement are driven by the degree to which respondents are proficient in the English language, as measured by their ability to speak English. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of respondents who speak English “very well” said they were very interested in the 2016 Presidential Election. **As English proficiency dropped, levels of political interest also dropped by about 14 points.**

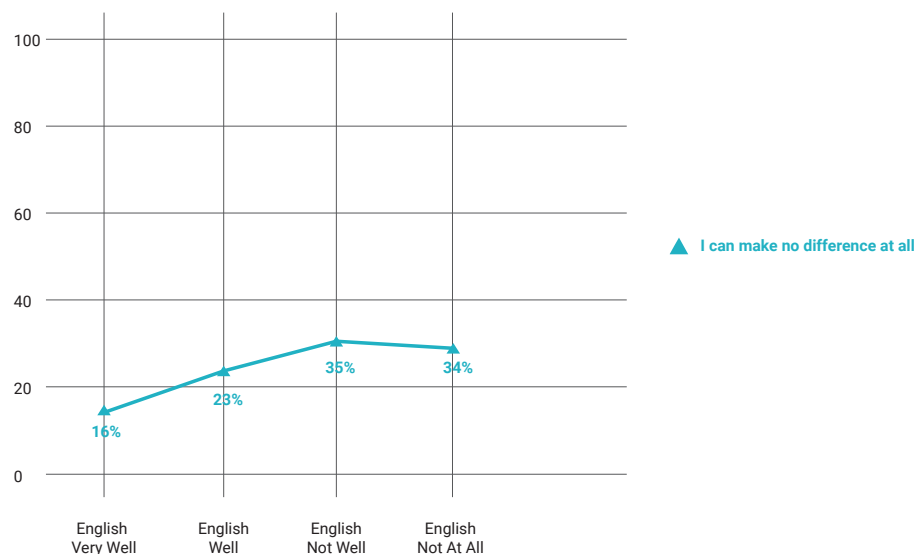
Over half (57%) of respondents who either speak English “not well” or “not at all” noted that registering to vote was too complicated. By comparison, among respondents who speak English “very well”, only 38% said that registering to vote was too complicated.

Fig. 9: Political Interest and voter registration perceived to be “too complicated” Correlated to English Language Competency



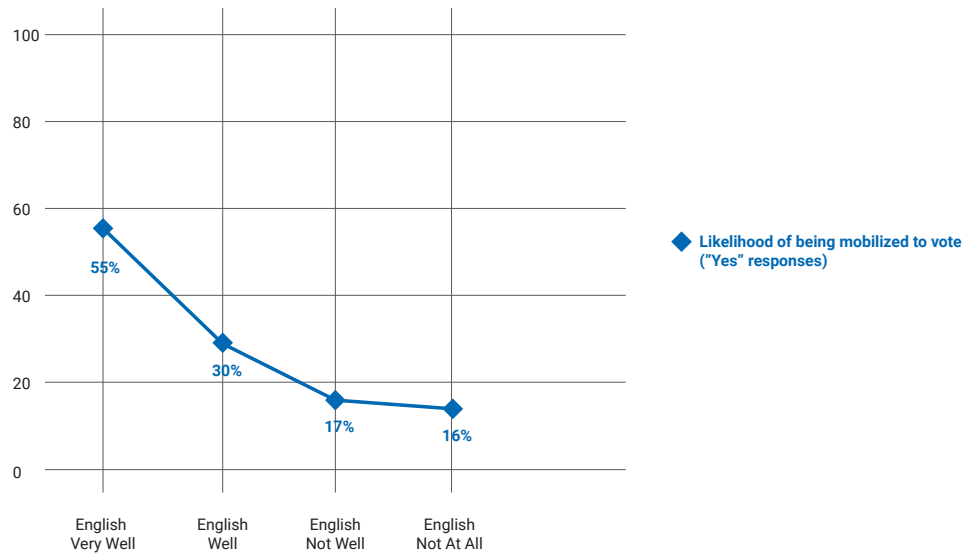
When asked, “How much of a difference do you think you can have in making your neighborhood a better place to live?” proficiency in the English language reduced feelings of powerlessness; there was an 18-point gap between respondents who knew English well and those who did not.

Fig. 10: Feelings of “Making a Difference” Correlated to English Language Competency



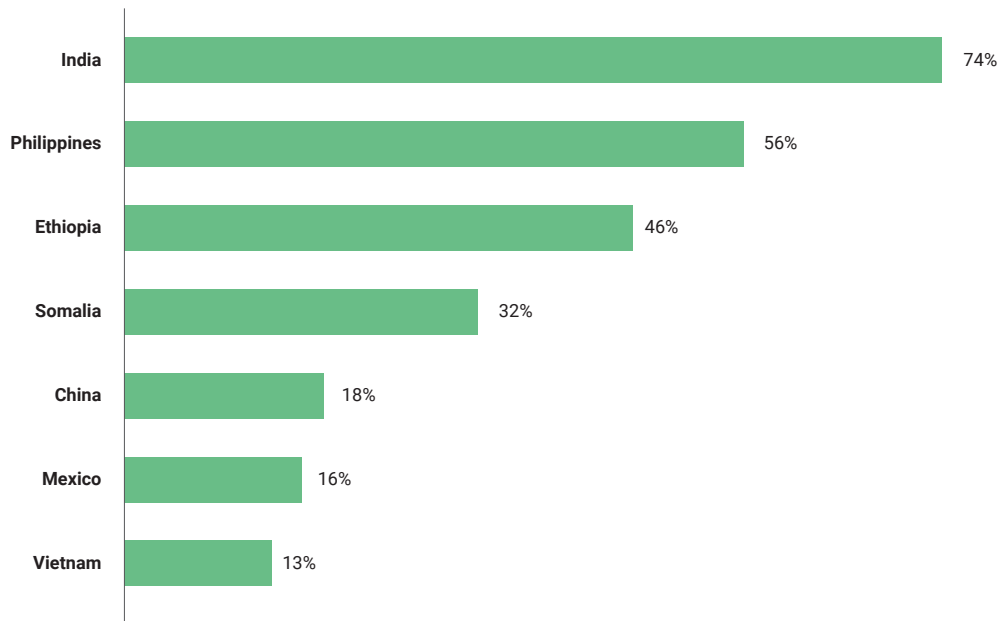
English proficiency increased the likelihood of being mobilized to vote; 55% of respondents who spoke English very well said that they have been contacted and encouraged to vote. By comparison, a mere 16% who said they did “not at all” speak English well were contacted and encouraged to vote.

Fig. 11: “Yes” Responses to How Often a Candidate, Political Party, or Other Organization Contacted Correlated to English Language Proficiency



Clearly, proficiency in the English language is a critical factor shaping levels of political interest and civic engagement. Among the top six national origin groups we sampled, we observed a high degree of variation when it came to proficiency of the English language. Respondents from the Philippines had the highest rate of speaking English very well (56%), while those from Vietnam had the lowest rate (13%).

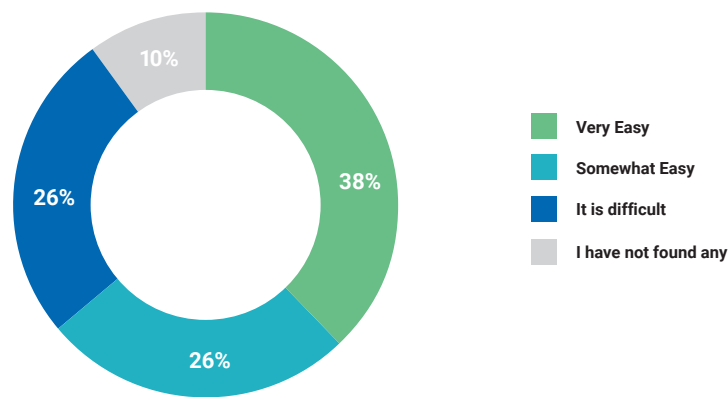
Fig. 12: Percentage of Top 6 National Origin Groups Who Self-Identified as “Speaking English Very Well”



5. Ethnic Media

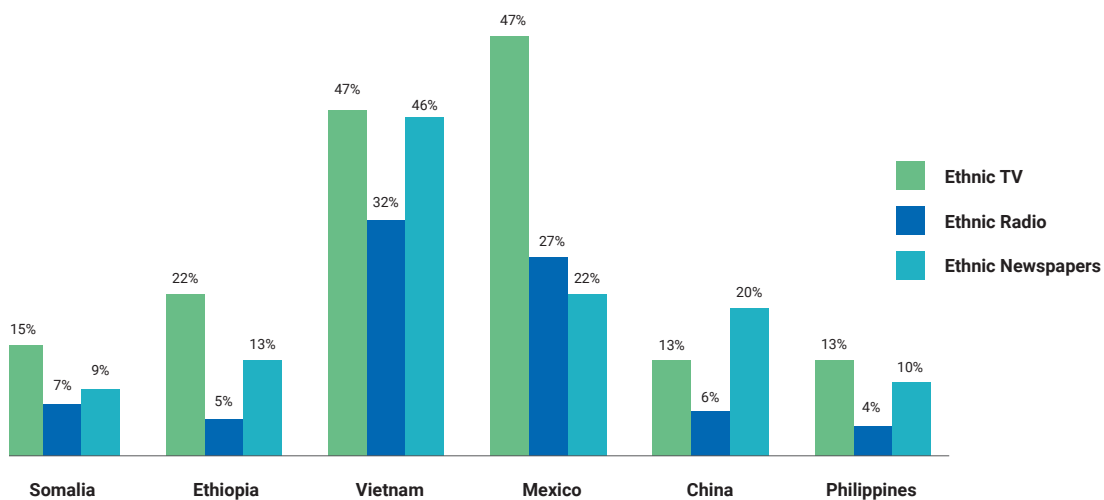
English proficiency is an important resource that shapes civic engagement among immigrants and refugees living in Seattle. Nonetheless, having access to political content in ethnic media³ can help boost levels of political interest, knowledge, and engagement. In the survey, we asked respondents whether it was easy or difficult to find information about the candidates in their preferred language. **Six in ten (62%) of respondents have varying levels of difficulty in finding information about the candidates in their preferred language.**

Fig. 13: Percentage of Respondents Who Identified How Easy it was to Find Information about Elections and Candidates in Their Preferred Language



When examining access to ethnic media, we see significant variations among the six national origin groups.

Fig. 14: Percentage of Ethnic Media Types Seattle Votes Respondents Were Likely to Use



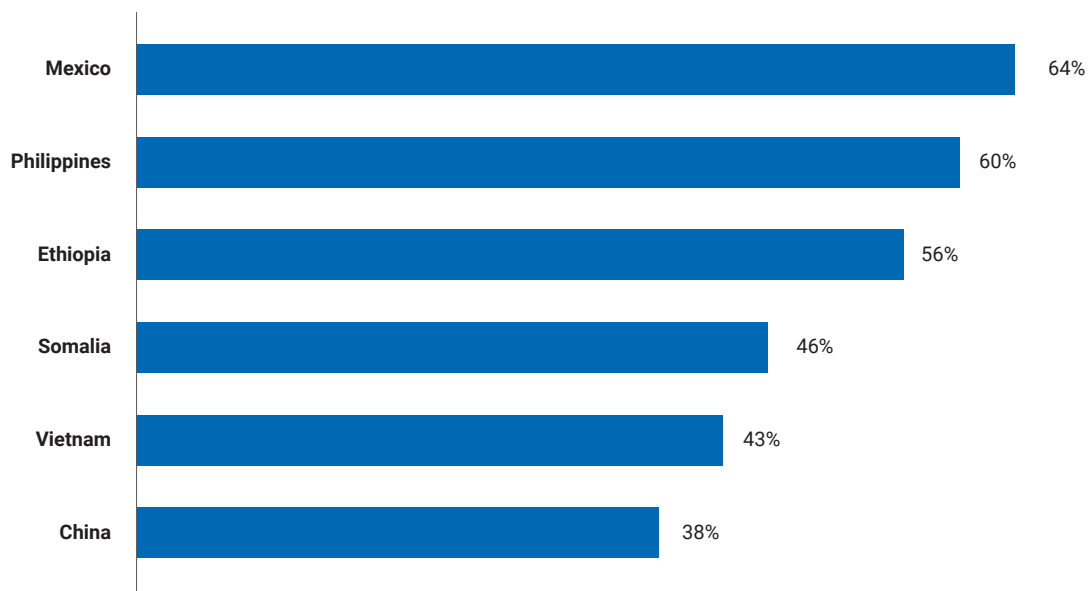
³ We define ethnic media as, “any communications outlet that intentionally produces news stories and other content for a particular ethnic minority group or ethnic minority community.”

***PLEASE NOTE: This page contains the corrected version of Fig. 16.
The Fig. 16 on the original report features an error.***

Respondents from Mexico and Vietnam appear to have the highest levels of access to ethnic media relative to the other groups. In the case of Vietnamese respondents, there are similar rates of consumption for ethnic television (47%) and newspapers (46%). For Mexican immigrants, television viewership (57%) surpasses consumption of ethnic radio (27%) and ethnic newspapers (22%). Thus, the outreach strategies employed by the ethnic media should vary depending on the targeted population. For Vietnamese immigrants, political information conveyed through television and newspapers may be equally effective. For Mexican immigrants, television is likely to have a greater impact relative to other sources.

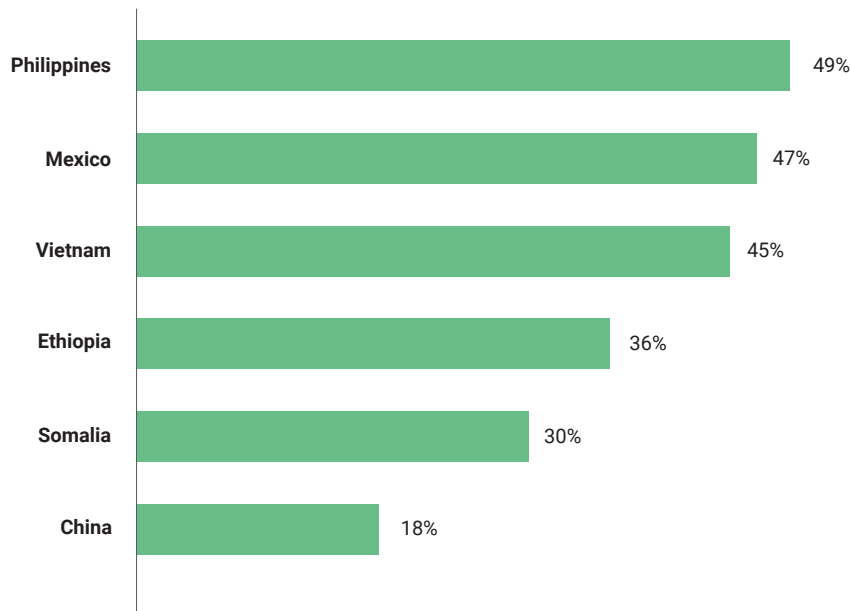
Based on the findings, ethnic media appears to significantly boost civic engagement. Mexican immigrants have one of the lowest rates of persons who speak English very well (see pg 8, fig 12). Yet, they have the highest levels of feelings of community empowerment (see below).

Fig. 15: Feelings of “Making Your Neighborhood a Better Place to Live” Correlated to Top 6 National Origin Groups of Seattle Vote Respondents



Mexican immigrants also have one of the highest rates of receiving a get-out-the-vote (GOTV) message.

Fig. 16: Rates of GOTV Contact Among Top 6 National Origin Groups of Seattle Vote Respondents



Chinese immigrant respondents are similar to Mexican immigrant respondents in that there were few who spoke English very well. Yet, unlike Mexican immigrants, the Chinese respondents indicate having limited access to ethnic media. Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA) staff found this statistic particularly unusual, as OIRA tracks ethnic media outlets that serve immigrant communities. As of this writing, King County is home to several locally-run outlets: six Chinese-language print newspapers, two radio programs, two television networks, and a countless number of Internet-based news sites located both in mainland China and the U.S., which compared to many other immigrant groups in Seattle is quite a robust media landscape. However, the survey did find depressed levels of civic engagement among this group. OIRA believes further research is needed to determine the factors influencing this paradox.

A perhaps more interesting finding was that immigrants from China have the lowest rates of persons receiving a GOTV message. Campaign managers and political consultants might be overlooking Chinese immigrants in outreach and campaign materials. This oversight might explain the lower civic engagement rates and hence may be a lesson to organizers and campaigners.

6. Recommendations

The survey of 5,224 immigrants and refugees living in Seattle-King County allows policymakers and community organizations to develop both targeted and comprehensive strategies to address the policy needs and improve rates of political engagement among these growing populations. This report provides a brief overview of some of the major findings from the study. **First, these respondents have high levels of interest in politics and engagement in other types of civic activities. Second, there are significant variations in levels of interest, voter participation, and civic engagement that are influenced by varying levels of English language proficiency. Finally, access to ethnic media can boost political participation among groups with limited English proficiency.** Given these observations, below we outline some recommendations for broadening rates of political engagement among immigrants and refugees residing in Seattle.

Only 54% of the sample is registered to vote, thus efforts to increase voter registration should be undertaken. One-third of the sample indicated they were not eligible for registration, hence programs to provide citizenship and immigration support are critical for some groups. Among the six groups, immigrants from the Philippines have the largest number of persons (56%) who speak English very well. The number of people who speak English very well for the other groups drops dramatically. **Given this fact, civic engagement efforts should be undertaken in the ancestral language for immigrants/refugees from Ethiopia (46% speak English very well), Somalia (32% speak English very well), China (18% speak English very well), Mexico (16% speak English very well), and Vietnam (13% speak English very well).**

Ethnic media plays an important role in boosting political interest, voting, and civic engagement. Yet, not all groups have access to ethnic media. According to respondents, immigrants from Mexico and Vietnam are the highest consumers of ethnic media. This presents a challenge to policymakers and community organizations. When developing more inclusive outreach strategies, Spanish and Vietnamese media outlets are available to disseminate that information. For other groups, the lack of access to ethnic media presents an additional barrier when developing an outreach strategy.

The data allows policymakers and community organizations to develop effective outreach strategies by performing a microanalysis of particular immigrant and refugee communities. A next step in the Seattle Votes project will be in-depth case studies for each of the three major groups where local knowledge helps contextualize the survey data.

Appendix A - Sample of Seattle Votes Survey English, Side 1



Please take a moment to share with the **City of Seattle Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs** your experience as a U.S. immigrant/refugee resident. Please only fill out this survey if you are a foreign-born resident, you currently live in Seattle-King County, and you are at least 18 years of age. Your answers to this survey will be kept anonymous. Go to www.seattle.gov/seattlevotes for more information. Complete the survey by marking the circle like this: OR

1 / In what country were you born?

2 / In what year were you born?

3 / In what year did you move to the United States?

4 / In what ZIP code do you live?

5 / What is your preferred language?

6 / How well would you say you speak English?

- Very well Not well
 Well Not at all

7 / What is the most important issue facing your immigrant and refugee community that you think our public officials should address?

8 / Overall, how much of a difference do you think you can have in making your neighborhood a better place to live?

- I can make no difference at all I can make a moderate difference
 I can make a small difference I can make a big difference

9 / How interested are you in the presidential election this year?

- I am very interested I am somewhat interested I am not interested

10 / If you wanted to find information about elections, issues, and candidates, which of the following would you most likely use? **Choose all that apply.**

- Internet Ethnic television Friends and family
 Television in English Ethnic newspapers My place of worship
 Newspapers in English Ethnic radio My union or work place
 Radio in English My community organization(s)/ service provider(s) Other: _____
 Library

11 / How easy is it to find information about elections and candidates in your preferred language?

- Very easy Somewhat easy It is difficult I have not found any

12 / Please tell us if you have done any of the following activities in the past 2 years. **Choose all that apply.**

- I have signed a letter about a social or political issue
 I attended a government or school board meeting in my city
 I have worked on a project or attended a meeting in my neighborhood
 I participated in one or more demonstrations, protests, marches, or rallies
 I contacted a public official through a letter, email, phone, or in-person
 I sent a message on Facebook or other social media about a social or political issue
 I attended a PTA meeting or other volunteer group at my child's school
 I have given money to an organization or a candidate
 I volunteered for an election activity, such as a phone bank or registering people to vote

13 / Some people are registered to vote, while others are not. Which of the following best describes you?

- I am a registered voter I am currently not eligible to register to vote
 I am eligible to register, but have not registered yet Other: _____

Location/Organization:

Date administered:

TO BE FILLED OUT BY ADMINISTRATOR ONLY

SURVEY CONTINUED ON THE OTHER SIDE

Appendix A - Sample of Seattle Votes Survey English, Side 2

14 / If you are eligible (U.S. citizen over the age of 18), but have not yet registered to vote, what is the main reason you have not registered to vote? If you are a registered voter, go to question 15.

- I don't know how/I don't know where to register/it's too complicated
- I am worried that voting is not safe
- I am not interested in voting
- I am too busy
- Voting is a waste of time/it doesn't make a difference
- Voter registration information is not available in my preferred language
- Other: _____

15 / Did you vote in the presidential election last November 2012?

- Yes - go to question 17.
- No
- I don't remember

16 / If you did not vote in the 2012 presidential election, what was the main reason for not voting in that election? Please choose only one answer.

- I was not registered
- I did not know the location of the ballot box/I did not have access to a ballot box
- I did not have time/I was working
- I did not receive a ballot
- I was not interested in the election
- I tried to vote, but I was told I was not eligible
- I had a family emergency
- My vote would not matter
- I did not like the candidates
- I was sick
- I was out of town
- Voting is too complicated
- I forgot about the election
- Voting materials are not available in my preferred language
- I did not know how to fill out and submit my ballot
- Other: _____
- I did not have a stamp to mail in my ballot

17 / How likely is it that you will vote in the presidential election this November 2016?

- Very likely
- Not likely at all
- Somewhat likely
- I don't know

18 / How often have you voted in state and local elections?

- Often
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Never

19 / Have you ever been contacted and encouraged to vote by a candidate, political party, or other organization?

- Yes
- No
- I don't remember

20 / What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

- None
- High school graduate or GED
- College degree
- Eighth grade or below
- Some college
- Graduate or professional degree
- Some high school

21 / Do you and your family own the place where you are living now, or do you rent?

- We own our home
- We rent our home
- We live with relatives or friends
- Other: _____

22 / How many people (adults and children) currently live in your household?

23 / Gender

- Male
- Female
- Other: _____

24 / What was your total combined household income in 2015 before taxes?

- Less than \$11,880
- \$11,881 to \$24,300
- \$24,301 to \$40,890
- \$40,891 to \$64,999
- \$65,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$150,000
- More than \$150,000
- I don't know

25 / When it comes to getting around the city, which of these statements best describes your situation?

- I usually drive the car that I own
- I usually drive a car that I borrow
- I own a car, but I usually take public transportation
- I don't own a car, so I take public transportation
- I usually walk
- I usually use shared transportation, such as a carpool
- Other: _____

THIS IS THE END OF THE SURVEY. TO SUBMIT YOUR COMPLETED SURVEY BY MAIL, SEND TO: "OIRA - SEATTLE VOTES | PO BOX 94573 | SEATTLE, WA 98124."

Appendix B – Seattle Votes Partners

4Culture
 ACLU of Washington
 Administration of Children and Families
 Al Karim Islamic Center
 APACE Votes
 API Chaya
 Asian Counseling and Referral Service
 BAYAN Pacific Northwest
 Casa Latina
 Catholic Community Services of Western Washington
 Caya Dargado Oromo Seattle
 Change Counts! - Financial Empowerment Network Seattle-King County
 Chinese American Citizens Alliance
 Chinese Information and Service Center
 Chinese Meet Seattle
 City of Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission
 Coalition of Immigrants Refugees and Communities of Color
 Communities in Schools
 Consular Association of Washington
 Downtown Muslim Association of Seattle
 Downtown Public Health Center
 East African Community Services
 Eco8 Community Builders
 El Centro de la Raza
 Entre Hermanos
 Eritrean Association of Greater Seattle
 Ethiopian Community Center
 Ethnic Heritage Council
 FACES (Filipino Americans Civic Employees of Seattle)
 Faith Action Network
 Families of Color Seattle
 Filipino American Greater Seattle Seventh-day Adventist Church
 Filipino Community of Seattle
 Goodwill Bellevue
 Goodwill Burien
 Goodwill Seattle
 Goodwill Shoreline
 Healthy King County Coalition
 Highline Community College
 HOLA (Hispanic or Latino Affinity)
 Horn of Africa Services
 India Association of Western Washington
 International Community Health Services
 International Drop-In Center
 Iraqi Community Center of Washington
 InterIm CDA
 Japanese American Citizens League - Seattle Chapter
 Japanese Cultural Community Center of Washington Seattle
 Jewish Family Service of Seattle
 Justice for Women, Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center
 King County Housing Authority
 King County Immigrant and Refugee Task Force
 King County Library System
 Korean American Bar Association of Washington
 Korean American Coalition of Washington
 Latino City Employees
 Latino Community Development Fund
 Literary Source
 Low Income Housing Institute
 Lutheran Community Services Northwest
 Mexican Consulate in Seattle
 Museum of History and Industry
 Muslim Community Resource Center
 Muslim Housing Services
 National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum Seattle
 NEA Center for Organizing
 Neighborhood House
 OCA Asian Pacific American Advocates
 Office of Arts and Culture
 Office of Intergovernmental Relations
 OneAmerica
 Oromo Community of Seattle
 Puget Sound Training Center
 Rajana Society
 Renton Technical College
 Refugee Women's Alliance
 Residence Inn Seattle Downtown / Lake Union
 Sea Mar Community Health Centers
 Seattle Central College
 Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority
 Seattle CityClub
 Seattle Counseling Services
 Immigrant Outreach Project
 Seattle Education Association
 Seattle Housing Authority
 Seattle Public Library Civic Engagement Committee
 Seattle University College of Arts and Sciences Nonprofit Leadership Program
 Seattle University International Student Center
 SeattleChinaRen.com
 SEIU 775
 SEIU Local 6
 Simposio Latino de Mujeres
 Somali Community Services of Seattle
 Somali Health Board
 St. James Immigrant Assistance
 St. Pius X Catholic Church
 The Greater Seattle Chinese Chamber of Commerce
 Tongan Wesleyan Church of America
 TRAC Associates
 UFCW 21
 Ukrainian Community Center of Washington
 Unite Here! Local 8
 University of Washington
 Voices of Tomorrow
 Washington Bus
 Washington Chinese Arts & Culture Committee
 White Center Community Development Association
 Win/Win Network
 Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience



Seattle
Office of Immigrant and
Refugee Affairs

