



VOTING SYSTEMS ASSESSMENT PROJECT

Quarterly Newsletter

September 2015

Volume 1, Number 2

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MESSAGE FROM DEAN

This year, we commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. This anniversary reminds us of the importance of creating an accessible, transparent and trustworthy voting process as we develop the County's new voting system. The future of voting depends on the ability of this system to adapt to the demands of a diverse electorate, and ensuring that the act of voting remains a fundamental right of every citizen.



We have made great strides in the development of a new voting system for Los Angeles County voters in the past few months. The user testing research results gave us significant insights into voting behavior of the County's electorate. As a result, the Ballot Marking Device (BMD) and Interactive Sample Ballot (ISB) were updated to accommodate suggestions and ideas from key stakeholders, especially the voters.

In this newsletter, we provide you with the latest VSAP developments and milestones that have occurred since the previous issue of this quarterly newsletter. Among these are updates on system engineering, results from the user testing research, a new design concept for Vote By Mail, community engagement, media coverage, and other project-related activities.

DEAN C. LOGAN

Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk
Los Angeles County

SYSTEM ENGINEERING UPDATE

The Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC) and IDEO conducted a series of user testing sessions in May to test various features and functions of the proposed voting system at multiple locations throughout Los Angeles County. An important part of the process is incorporating feedback from various sectors and using this in refining the prototype. The photo below shows the most recent appearance model. A full report on the BMD Appearance Model is available on our website at <http://www.lavote.net/Documents/vsap/5.2%20BMD%20appearance%20model.pdf>



WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THE RESEARCH

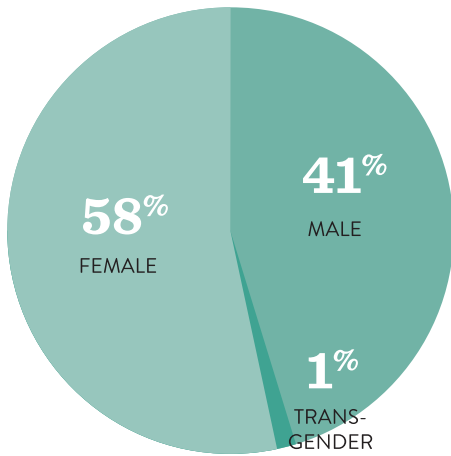
In this section, you will find some of the important findings from the extensive user testing conducted by the RR/CC and IDEO. With the help of our partner organizations, the Korean Resource Center, League of Women Voters, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO), the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and the Department of Community and Senior Services, we were able to get representatives from diverse backgrounds to participate in the research. If you would like to see the full research findings, visit the VSAP website at http://www.lavote.net/Documents/vsap/LA%20Research%20Report_final_sl_v05.pdf



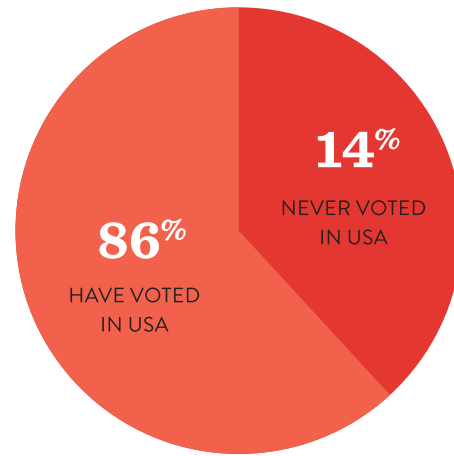
Participants

167 individuals participated in the user testing sessions. The following charts show the demographic characteristics of the participants. The data shows the sample population's gender, race/ethnicity, access challenge, age, financial situation, and educational attainment. It also includes their access to technology including computer and mobile phone usage.

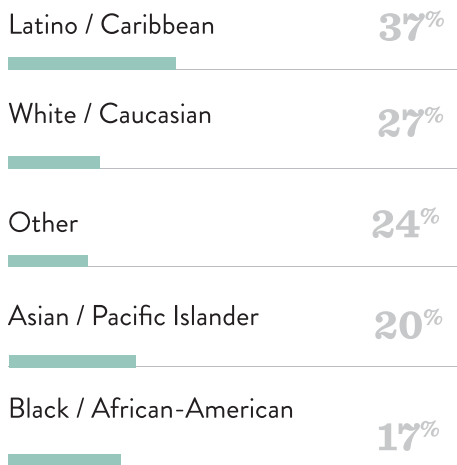
GENDER



VOTING EXPERIENCE

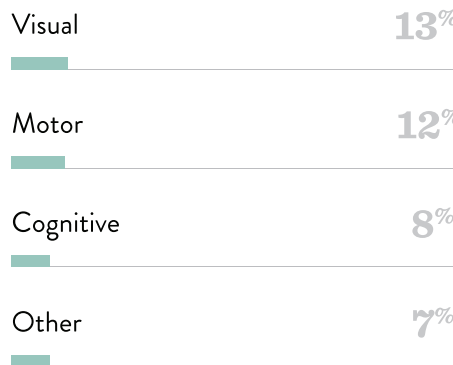


RACE / ETHNICITY

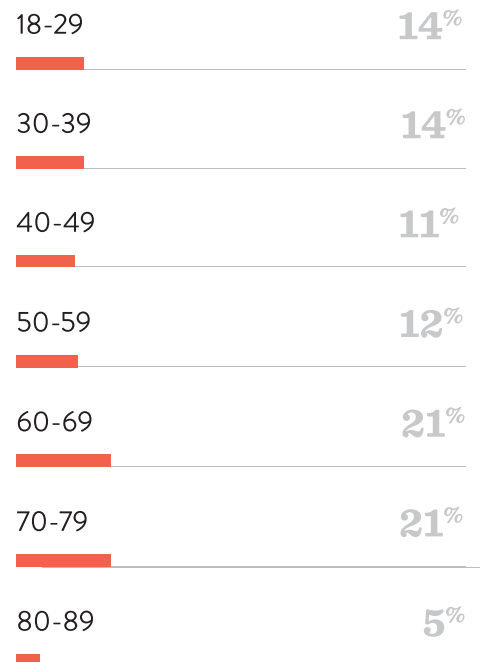


Results add up to greater than 100% as several participants reported mixed racial/ethnicity.

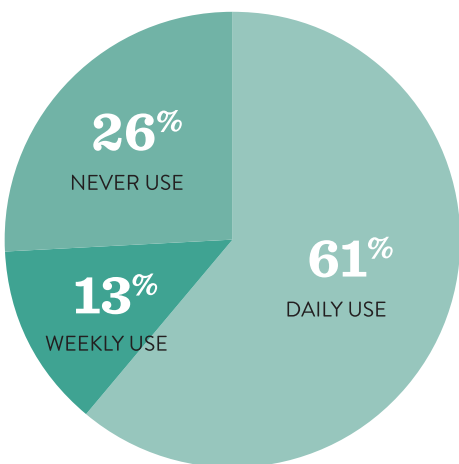
ACCESS CHALLENGE



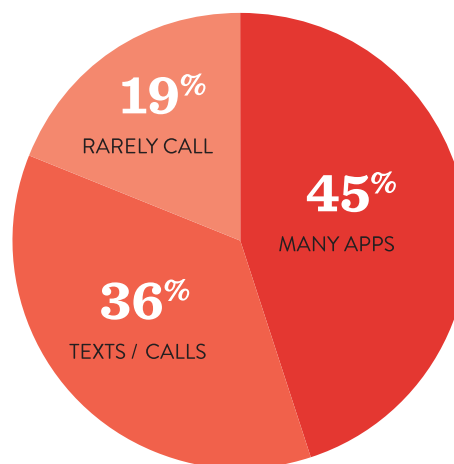
AGE



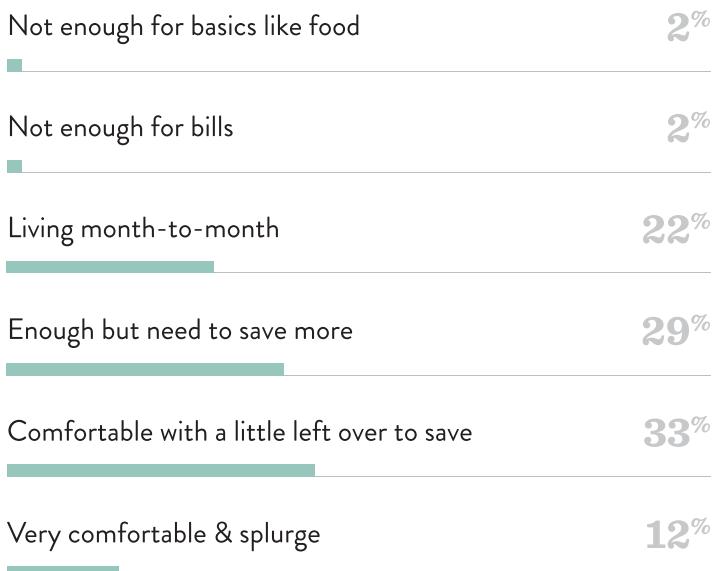
COMPUTER USAGE



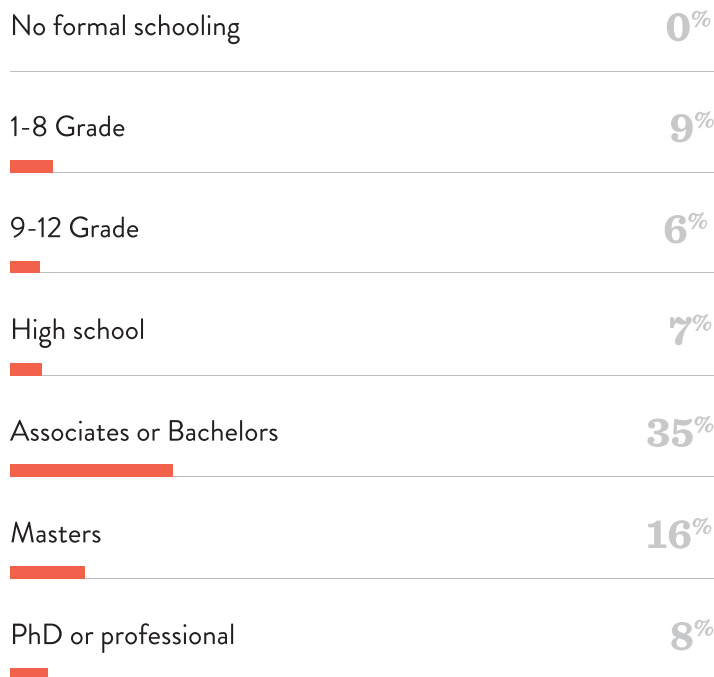
MOBILE PHONE USAGE



FINANCIAL SITUATION



EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



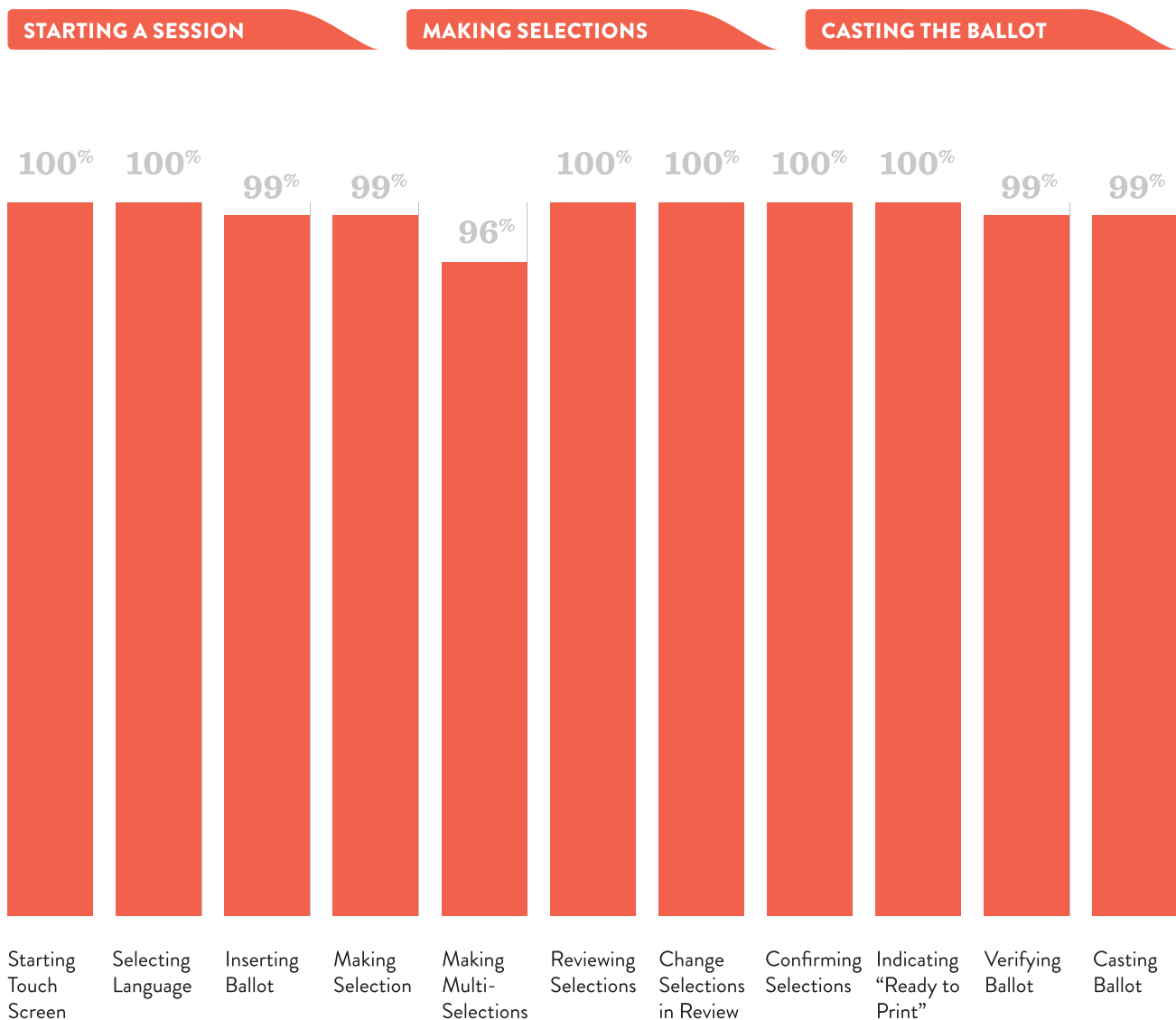
“ I am a veteran of two wars and this is the first time the government has ever asked my opinion on something. ”

Accessibility

An important purpose of the research was to measure the accessibility of the BMD. 132 participants with specific needs rated the Touch Screen and Immersive Audio features of the model. They rated the accessibility of the device in three stages of voting—“Starting a Session”, “Making Selections”, and “Casting A Ballot”. The research findings show the BMD as 99% accessible across the board.

Touch Screen Experience

Accessibility during voter experience
% of Voters who found step accessible



Immersive Audio Experience



“ It was easy. And I think this will get more young people out. It’s time to make room for the next generation. But, you know, it works for me too. ”

Usability

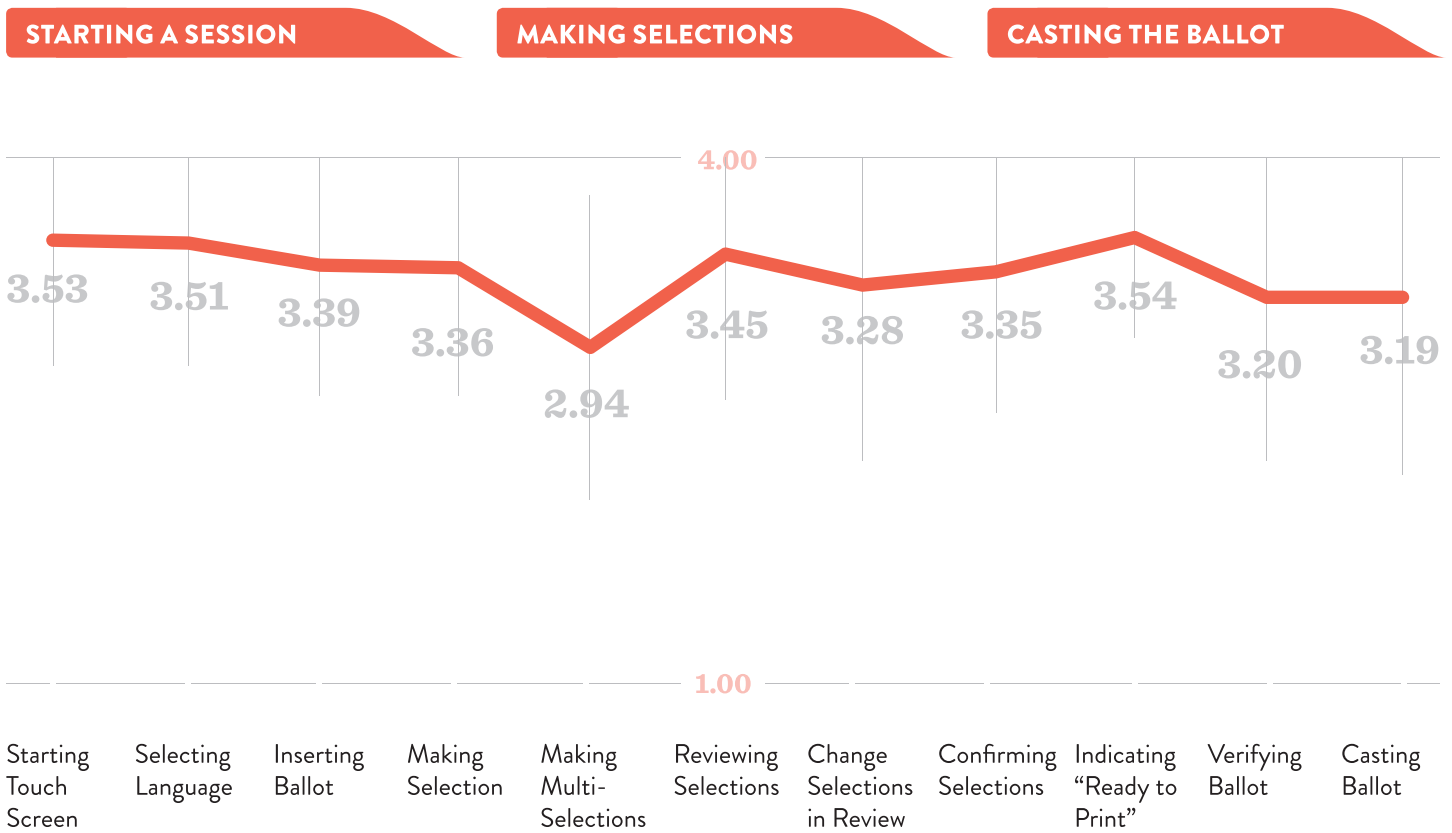
The BMD was also tested in terms of how accurate, easy, efficient and satisfied users were with their Touch and Audio Experience. The participants rated the experience using the following scale: 1 – impossible, 2 – hard, 3 –ok and 4 – easy. The findings show that the touch experience had a mean score of 2.94 – 3.67, while the audio experience had a mean score of 2.8 – 3.67.

Touch Experience

EASE OF VOTING

Mean Usability Scores Across Voter Experience with Standard Deviations

1.00-4.00 SCALE:
1.00=Impossible | 4.00=Easy

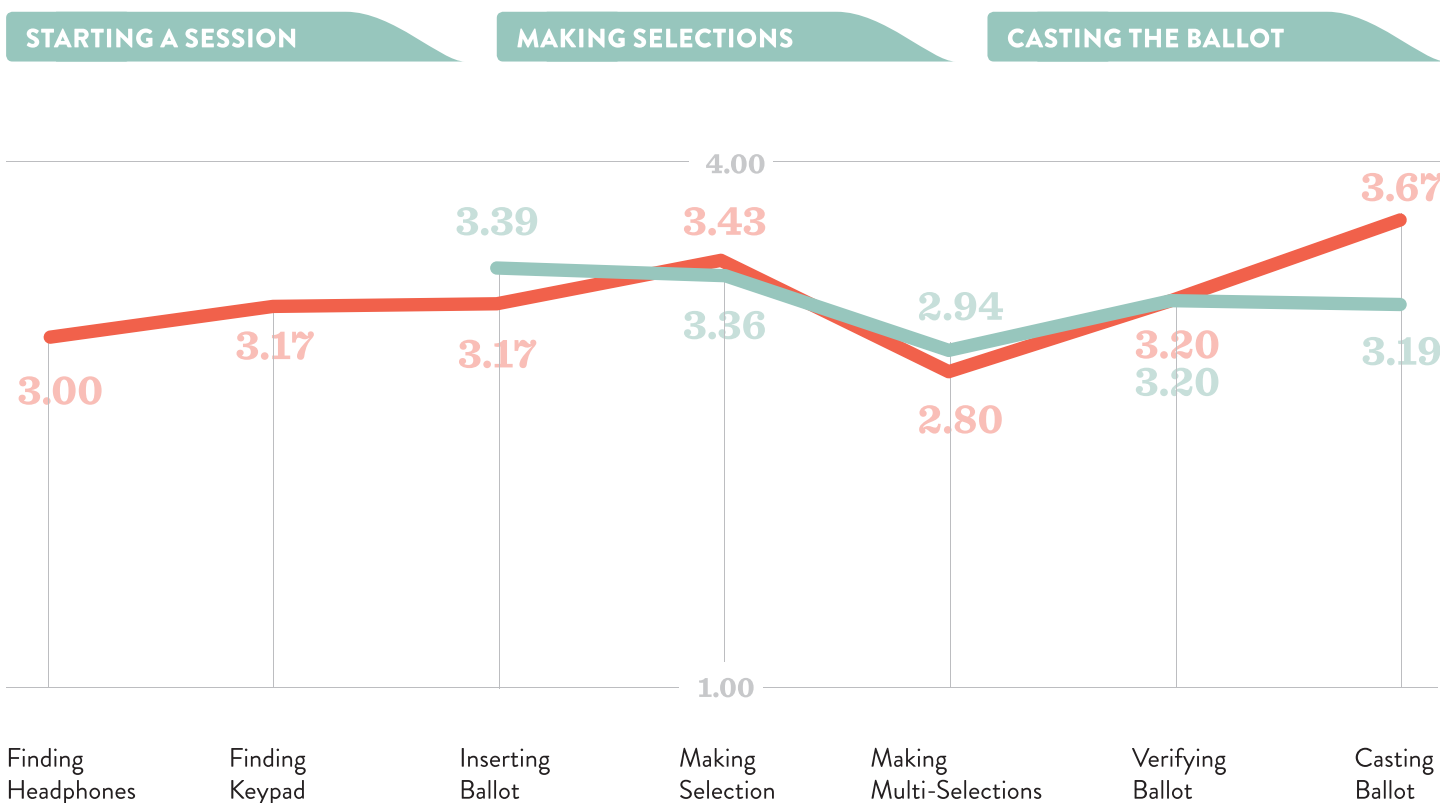


Audio Experience

EASE OF VOTING

Comparing Ease of Voting Across Audio and Touch Experience.

Audio Experience —
 Touch Experience —



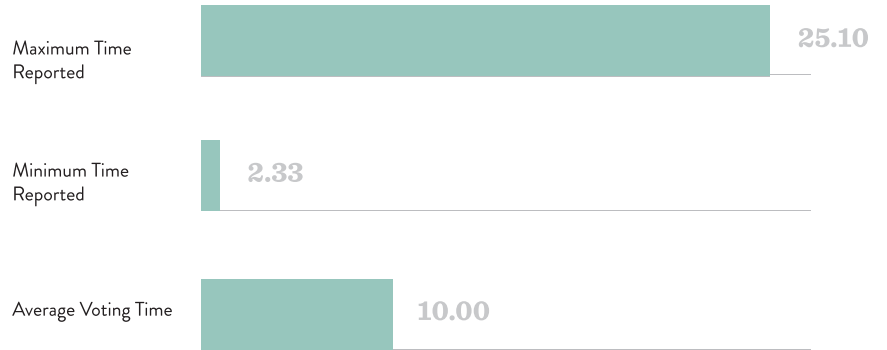
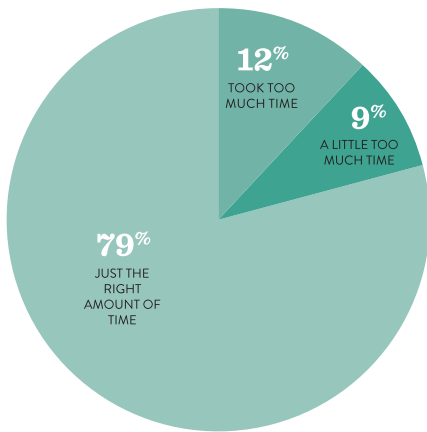
“ This new system can do wonders if they perfect it the way it needs to be perfected, the right way, no one can go behind and change anything, it can't be tampered with... It's a great tool, I love it. ”

On a 22-contest mock election, participants were asked to rate the ease of voting experience and to identify the length of time it takes to vote using the BMD. The findings show that it takes a voter an average of 10 minutes, with a range between 2-26 minutes. Seventy-nine percent of the participants felt it was just the right amount of time needed to cast their votes.

Time Experience

How did you feel about the amount of time it took to vote?

Time in minutes to finish voting.



TIMED EXPERIENCE

79%

“Felt like just the right amount of time to me.”

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

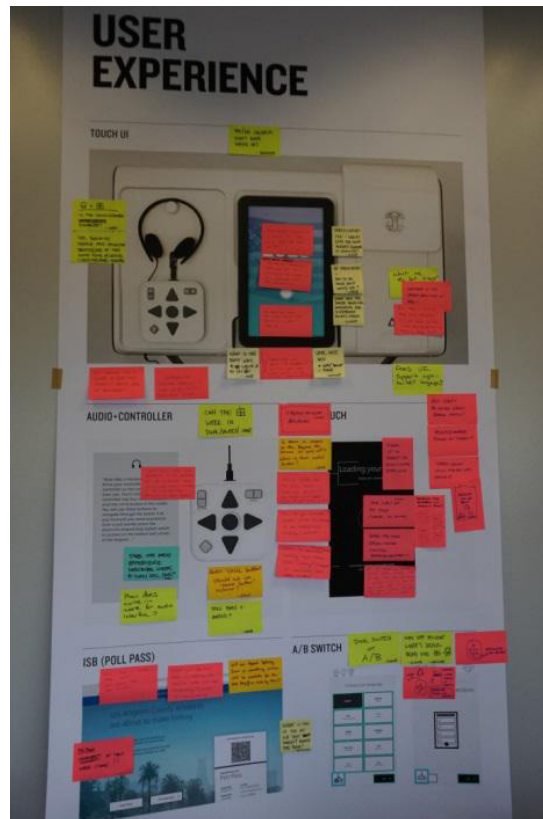
To continue meeting our goal of maintaining transparency with the public during the VSAP development process, we have continued to meet with and present to community organizations. During the Community Voter Outreach Committee (CVOOC) meeting on June 10, 2015, the newest prototype appearance model was presented and members were given the opportunity to provide feedback. On June 18, 2015, we met with the Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC) to present the newest voting system prototype and gather their feedback. Additionally, we presented the newest voting system prototype to the Native American Veteran’s Association (NAVA) on June 13, 2015 and received feedback.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

July 23, 2015 – VSAP Advisory Committee Meeting

August 28, 2015 – VSAP Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

Following the multiple sessions of user testing in May, we refined the Ballot Marking Device concept and presented a prototype appearance model with these modifications. The report of findings and a refined prototype appearance model were presented to the VSAP team and VSAP Advisory Committee on July 23, 2015. These findings and the updated appearance model were presented to the VSAP Technical Advisory Committee members on August 28, 2015.



VOTE BY MAIL DESIGN CONCEPT

The RR/CC acknowledges the growing number of voters who choose to Vote By Mail and their input is equally as important to the development of the new voting system.

The RR/CC and IDEO conducted a Vote By Mail workshop on August 27, 2015. During that workshop, IDEO presented their proposed design for the Vote By Mail ballot. The design concept was a result of qualitative research. Several members of the Department's Vote By Mail Section were in attendance and provided feedback on the design. IDEO is in the process of incorporating the input from the workshop. We will provide updates regarding the Vote By Mail ballot design as it continues to be refined.

IN THE NEWS**September 15, 2015 – California Tests Ballot Box of the Future**

<http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/california-tests-ballot-box-of-the-future/>

September 15, 2015 - America's Aging Voting Machines Could Present Election Problems

<http://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2015/09/15/440255752/report-americas-aging-voting-machines-could-present-election-problems>

September 15, 2015 – America's Voting Technology Crisis

<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/americas-voting-technology-crisis/405262/>

September 15, 2015 – The Dismal State of Americas Decade Old Voting Machines

<http://www.wired.com/2015/09/dismal-state-americas-decade-old-voting-machines/>

August 7, 2015 - What L.A. County Is Doing to Make Voting Suck Less

<http://www.citylab.com/cityfixer/2015/08/what-cities-are-doing-to-make-voting-not-suck/400637/>

July 15, 2015 - Tech Overhaul to Help Los Angeles Improve Voting Experience

<http://www.govtech.com/dc/articles/Tech-Overhaul-to-Help-Los-Angeles-Improve-Voting-Experience.html>

July 15, 2015 - Can LA County solve America's voting problem?

http://www.laobserved.com/archive/2015/07/can_la_solve_americas_vot.php

July 14, 2015 - Los Angeles is Redesigning The Voting Experience To Be Not Awful

<http://www.gizmodo.in/news/Los-Angeles-Is-Redesigning-the-Voting-Experience-To-Be-Not-Awful/articleshow/48062933.cms>

July 14, 2015 - Voting in Los Angeles is about to get a lot cooler

<http://la.suntimes.com/la-news/7/88/325013/los-angeles-county-voting-system-upgrade>

July 11, 2015 - In Los Angeles, Voting Is Getting the Silicon Valley Treatment

<http://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2015-07-11/in-los-angeles-voting-is-getting-the-silicon-valley-treatment>

June 13, 2015 - Los Angeles County voting to shift from inkblots to open source

<http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2015/06/los-angeles-county-moves-to-open-source-voting-technology/>

June 1, 2015 - New High-tech voting "Touch screen" system appears in Koreatown

http://www.koreadaily.com/news/read.asp?page=10&branch=NEWS&source=&category=society&art_id=3421325

PUBLICATIONS

“America’s Voting Machines At Risk”

https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/publications/Americas_Voting_Machines_At_Risk.pdf

This is a report produced by the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law that provides a detailed documentation of the problems associated with the aging voting machines and recommends steps that must be taken to resolve this “impending crisis”. The Center conducted interviews across states and local officials, experts in election technology, administration, and security, and utilized information from the Verified Voting website.

Some of the key findings in this report are: 1) the voting systems were not designed to last for decades due to the pace of rapid technological change, 2) most voting machines are close to, or have exceeded their expected life span of 10-20 years, 3) the delays in purchasing new equipment may lead to more risks - the risk of increased failures and crashes and serious security and reliability flaws, and 4) resources are insufficient to purchase new machines.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The newest prototype appearance model is on display at the LA County Fair from September 4-27, 2015. The display allows visitors to learn about our past through the history of the Voting Rights Acts of 1965, and look into the future of voting.

The VSAP will also be featured in a session at SXSW Eco on Monday, October 5, 2015. http://schedule.sxsweco.com/events/event_ECOP45623. This is the fifth year of the conference which engages business leaders, investors, innovators and designers with the goal of discussing solutions for economic, environmental and social issues.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Get the latest updates and project developments by visiting the Voting System Assessment Project (VSAP) website at www.lavote.net/vsap. We strongly encourage public input throughout the process and look forward to continuing to work with you on this critical project.