

Hughes Center at Stockton: Lack of Interest, Disenfranchisement Cited in South Jersey as Reasons for Not Voting

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Galloway, NJ - Registered voters who said they did not plan to vote in Tuesday's election cited lack of interest in the races as the major reason for not voting, according to an analysis released today by the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University.

Just more than half (51 percent) of non-voting respondents in Stockton polls taken in Legislative Districts 1 and 2 over the past month cited reasons related to the low-interest nature of the election, in which state Assembly was the top race on the ballot. Other reasons given for not voting included negative feelings about the candidates or the political system (20 percent) and being too busy to vote (20 percent).

The Stockton Polling Institute of the Hughes Center screened for likely voters in polls conducted in the 1st and 2nd Districts. Respondents who said they were registered to vote at their current address but were not likely to vote or definitely not voting were asked to explain their reasons. The 312 open-ended responses were grouped into categories for analysis.

Election experts estimated that voter turnout across New Jersey hit a record low of 21 percent of eligible voters. Turnout was slightly higher in the 1st and 2nd Districts, which were competitive races, with 25 percent of registered voters coming out to vote, according to Hughes Center analysis of election records.

"Even in districts with competitive races and advertising on TV, the elections did not motivate a majority of registered voters to go to the polls," said Daniel J. Douglas, director of the Hughes Center.

Fifty-one percent of non-voting poll respondents gave reasons related to low interest, including a lack of information about the election (26 percent), a personal lack of interest (14 percent), interest in voting only in major elections (9 percent) and no knowledge that an election was even being held (2 percent).

Typical of the statements made by non-voters were: "I don't follow local politics" and "I don't know anything about the candidates." One said: "Well, I'm just not all that interested in it." **-more-**

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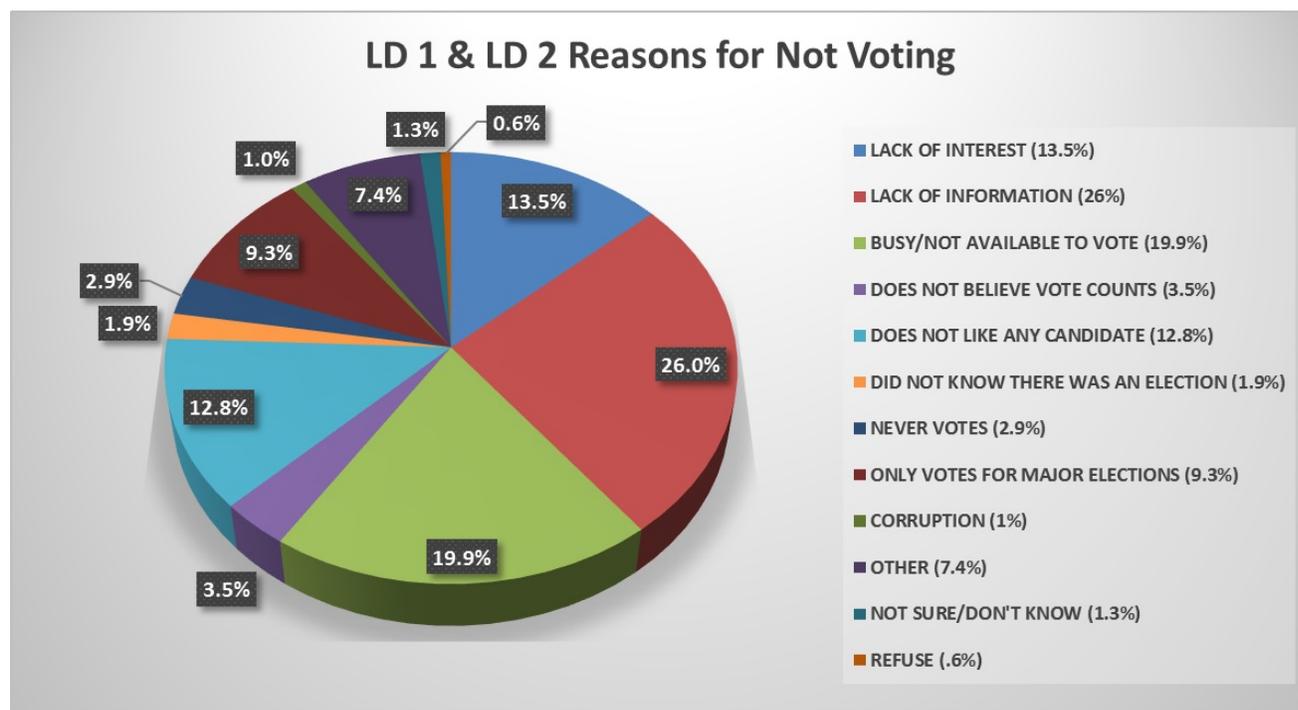
One in five respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the candidates or the system, including not liking any candidate (13 percent), not believing their vote counts (4 percent), never voting (3 percent) and believing the political system is corrupt (1 percent).

“It’s a waste of time,” one respondent said. “They’re going to do what they want anyway.”

“I’m 75, and I don’t believe in politicians anymore,” said another. “It always turns out the same.”

“I can’t stand all the commercials for the elections,” one non-voter said.

Twenty percent said they were too busy or would be unavailable to vote, even though New Jersey has a vote-by-mail option. Another 9 percent cited other reasons, were unsure or refused to say why they would not vote.



About the Hughes Center

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy (www.stockton.edu/hughescenter) at Stockton University serves as a catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on the economic, social and cultural issues facing New Jersey, and promotes the civic life of New Jersey through engagement, education and research. The Center is named for William J. Hughes, whose distinguished career includes service in the U.S. House of Representatives, Ambassador to Panama and as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Stockton. The Hughes Center can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/StocktonHughesCenter> and can be followed on Twitter @hughescenter.