

UNDERSTANDING VOTING EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this study was to examine the barriers and facilitators surrounding the voting process as experienced by persons with disabilities. Methods included semi-structured interviews and structured observations of polling sites, conducted both independently and while accompanying voters to the polls. We interviewed 41 persons who voted in-person, 4 persons who voted absentee, and 4 persons who had not voted in at least 5 years. Facilitators and barriers were broken down into three major categories: 1) social environment, 2) pre-election information, and 3) physical environment. Results revealed three broad problems: ignorance about how to interact with individuals with disabilities in the context of the voting process; problems with voting technology design; and inaccessible features of the built environment, which effectively marginalizes voters with disabilities

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