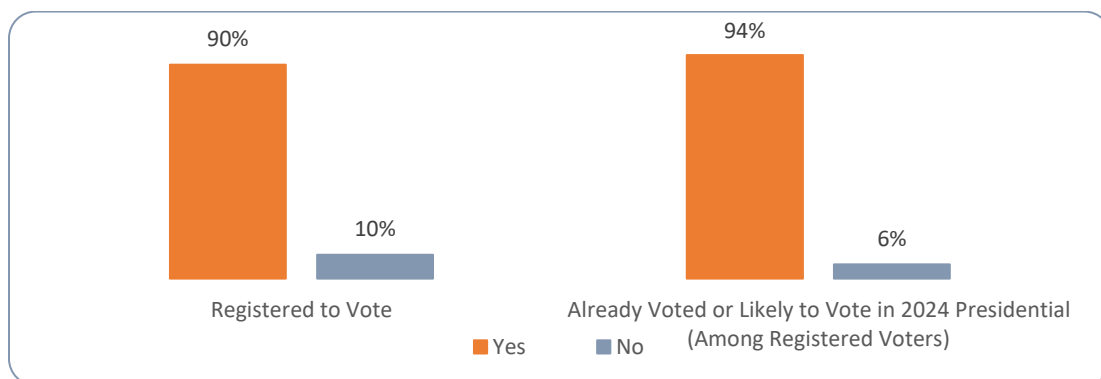


To: Easterseals and Easterseals Southern California
From: Pathfinder Opinion Research
Date: October 16, 2024
Re: Nationwide Survey of Adult Americans with Disabilities

A recent representative survey of adult Americans with disabilities, a group that comprises over 41 million people according to recent Census data, reveals a politically active and engaged community, ready to overcome significant structural barriers to voting in the upcoming Presidential election. The data suggests that nearly 35 million voters with disabilities are expected to cast ballots, driven by concerns over economic and health care issues specific to this community – issues they feel are not being adequately addressed by politicians, candidates, or the media in the lead-up to the election.

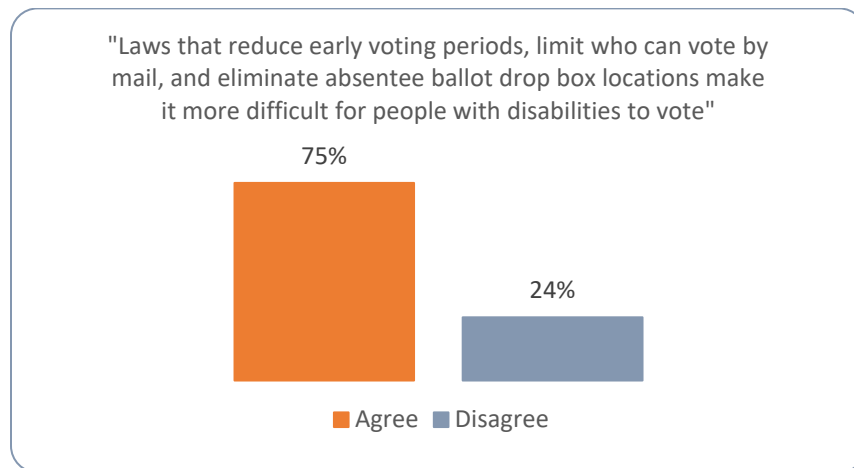
Despite Voting Barriers, Americans with Disabilities Poised for High Turnout in Presidential Election

Adults with disabilities make up a massive voter bloc in American politics. Among survey respondents, 90% report being registered to vote, indicating that nearly 37 million Americans with disabilities are registered voters. Of those, 87% say they are likely to vote, and 7% report having already voted early. This suggests that nearly 35 million voters with disabilities will participate in the upcoming Presidential election.



This high level of electoral participation is even more remarkable given the challenges voters with disabilities face in casting a ballot. Among registered voters with disabilities 46% report needing at least one accommodation to vote, including 21% who require transportation assistance, 17% who need in-person help from an election official, 16% who need assistance with absentee voting from someone they know, and 15% who require a wheelchair ramp at their polling location. These structural barriers are compounded by a lack of information – many voters are unaware if accommodations are even available at polling places in their area and about laws protecting their voting rights. For example, 44% of registered voters with disabilities say they are unaware “what accommodations are available in your area to help people with disabilities cast a ballot”, and 41% say they are unaware of “laws, like the Help America Vote Act, that protects voting rights for Americans with disabilities”.

Facing these challenges, most voters with disabilities will turn to early and absentee voting to participate in the upcoming election; however, they say that increasing restrictions on these methods will make the already difficult voting process even harder. Most voters with disabilities plan to vote early, including 7% of registered voters who have already cast ballots. Among remaining likely voters, more than half plan to vote early -- 19% in person before Election Day, 25% by absentee mail, and 8% using a ballot drop box. Given this community's dependence on early voting, it's notable that there is strong, bipartisan agreement that laws limiting early voting options make it more difficult for people with disabilities to vote. Three-quarters agree with the statement "Laws that reduce early voting periods, limit who can vote by mail, and eliminate absentee ballot drop box locations make it more difficult for people with disabilities to vote" (75% agree / 24% disagree; 40% strongly agree).

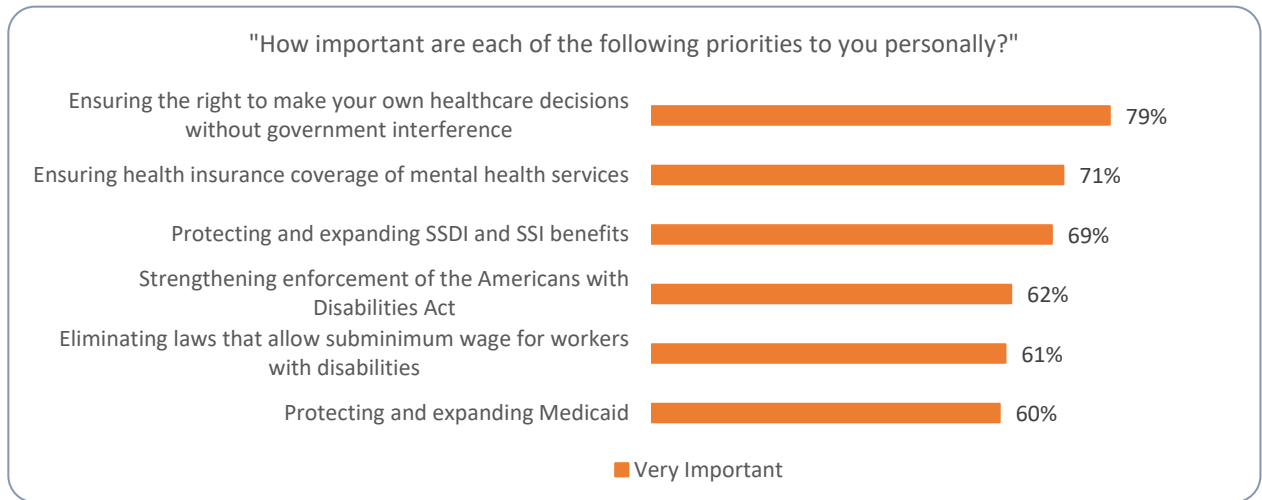


Americans With Disabilities have Policy Concerns Rooted in Unique Economic Challenges That They Feel Are Being Overlooked

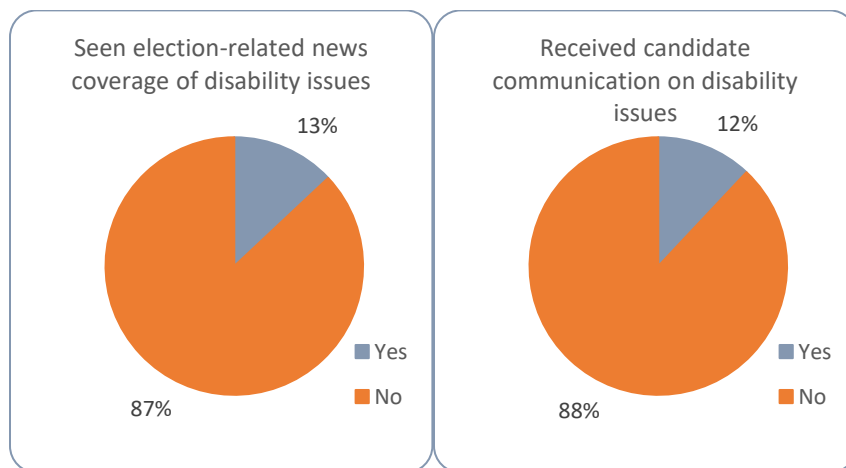
Adults with disabilities face unique economic challenges, including low employment rates and heavy reliance on government health and economic programs resulting in significant difficulty making ends meet. Just 30% of survey respondents are employed in any capacity, including fewer than half (48%) under age 65. More than three-quarters (77%) rely on some form of government assistance, including 49% receiving Medicare, 42% receiving Social Security, 26% receiving Medicaid, and 12% receiving SSDI. Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that nearly 60% of adults with disabilities say their household finances either "just meet your basic needs" (38%) or that they do "not have enough to meet basic needs" (21%).

The unique economic challenges of these voters have shaped a set of key issue concerns for the upcoming election that are primarily focused on meeting economic needs and strengthening health care. When asked to name the two most important issues they want candidates to address, these voters identified addressing inflation (47%) and strengthening and expanding Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, SSI, and home health services (41%) as their top priorities. Additionally, most adults with disabilities say that priorities like protecting Medicaid, ensuring insurance coverage for mental health services, medical autonomy, eliminating

subminimum wage for workers with disabilities, and expanding SSDI and SSI benefits are “very important” to them personally.



But, despite the size of this voter bloc and their unique concerns rooted in economic insecurity, adults with disabilities feel unheard by elected officials, political candidates, and the media. Their assessment of the job elected officials in Washington, DC, are doing addressing issues specific to the disability community is overwhelmingly negative (37% positive / 63% negative). And as the 2024 Presidential election approaches, the vast majority report not seeing any recent election-related news coverage addressing issues that impact people with disabilities (13% have seen / 87% have not seen). Similarly, most say they have not received any direct communication from candidates running for office that specifically addresses these issues (12% have received / 88% have not received).



Methodology

This memo reports on the findings of a survey conducted by Pathfinder Opinion Research from October 4-9, 2024, among a sample of n=800 adult Americans with disabilities.

This survey was conducted online using a national research panel. Each respondent self-identified as having at least one disability type, based on the definitional categories used by the U.S. Census Bureau (hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, or independent living difficulties).

Data were weighted by gender, age, race, education, and geographic region based on the 2023 American Community Survey population characteristics of Americans with disabilities.