


A large green square is positioned in the top left corner of the page. A thin horizontal line extends from its right edge, and a thin vertical line extends from its bottom edge. At the intersection of these two lines, there is a small yellow square.

# **DC Voting Rights: A Survey of AARP Members**

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August 2006



# **DC Voting Rights: A Survey of AARP Members**

**Data collected by Woelfel Research  
Report Prepared by Erica L. Dinger, J.D.**

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AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. We produce *AARP The Magazine*, published bimonthly; *AARP Bulletin*, our monthly newspaper; *AARP Segunda Juventud*, our bimonthly magazine in Spanish and English; *NRTA Live & Learn*, our quarterly newsletter for 50+ educators; and our website, [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org). AARP Foundation is our affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Background**

Nearly 600,000 residents live in the District of Columbia. Under the Constitution, Congress has exclusive legislative authority over the District government. District citizens were granted the right to vote in presidential elections in 1961. In 1970, Congress granted the District a non-voting delegate. In 1993, the District of Columbia delegate was granted limited voting rights. Beginning in 1974, District residents have been able to elect a limited home rule government that is paid for mostly through local taxes. District residents pay federal and local taxes, and serve in the armed forces, but do not have a full voting representative in Congress.

This survey was commissioned by AARP District of Columbia to explore how AARP members from all 50 states feel about the District's lack of voting representation. The survey also explored messages which might persuade members to support voting representation for the District.

## **Methodology**

The present report is based on data from a telephone survey of 1,000 AARP members nationwide, excluding members in the District of Columbia. It was conducted by Woelfel Research for AARP in July 2006. The sample was weighted by age to represent the population of AARP members. The error rate is plus or minus 3.1 percent. The full annotated questionnaire is contained in the appendix of this report. Percents may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

## **Highlights**

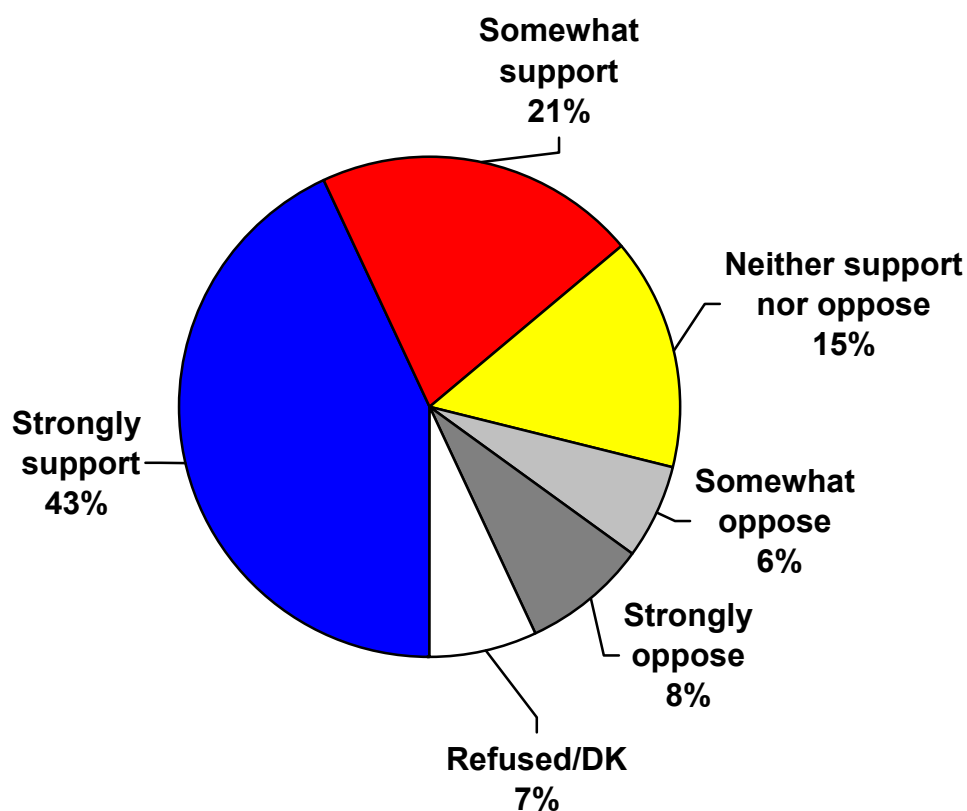
- Almost two-thirds of AARP members support giving District residents full voting rights in Congress.
- More than six in ten (62%) members are unaware that District residents currently do not have full voting representation in Congress. However, 61 percent are aware that District residents pay federal income taxes.
- After being read three statements concerning voting representation in Congress for residents of the District, almost eight in ten members felt that each of the statements was a convincing reason to support full voting representation.

## Findings

### **Almost two-thirds of AARP members support giving District residents full voting representation in Congress.**

Almost two-thirds (64%) of AARP members support giving District residents full voting representation in Congress. Presently, District residents can vote in presidential elections and vote for a congressional delegate with voting power on seated committees. District residents cannot vote in elections for members of the US Congress with full voting power, and have no complete voting representation in either the House of Representatives or the Senate.

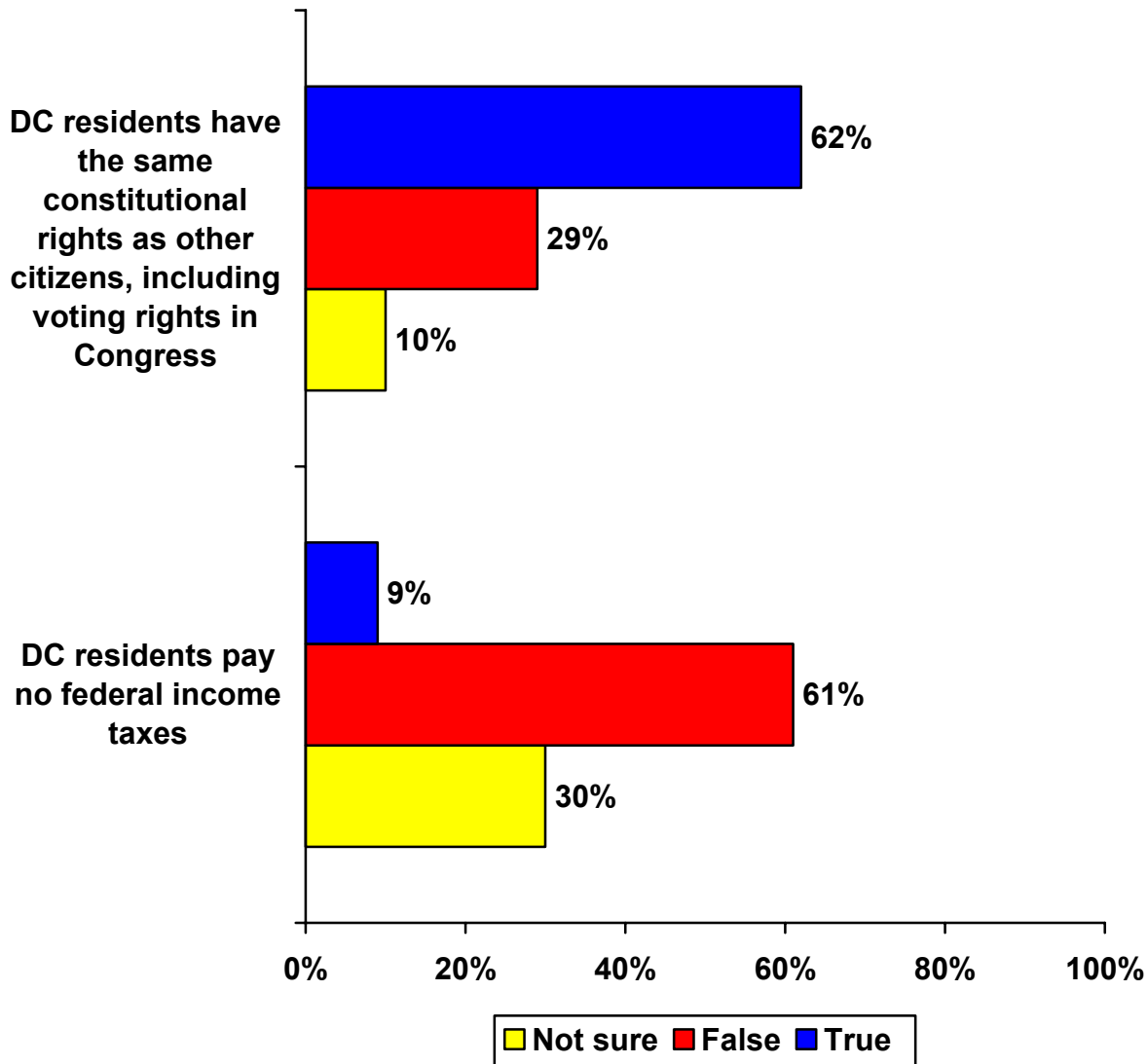
### **Support for District of Columbia Voting Representation in Congress (N =1,000)**



**More than six in ten AARP members think that District citizens have the same constitutional rights as other United States citizens, including voting representation in Congress.**

Over six in ten (62%) members surveyed incorrectly believe that citizens who live in Washington DC have the same constitutional rights as other citizens, including equal voting rights in Congress. However, about the same number (61%) were aware that District residents pay federal income taxes.

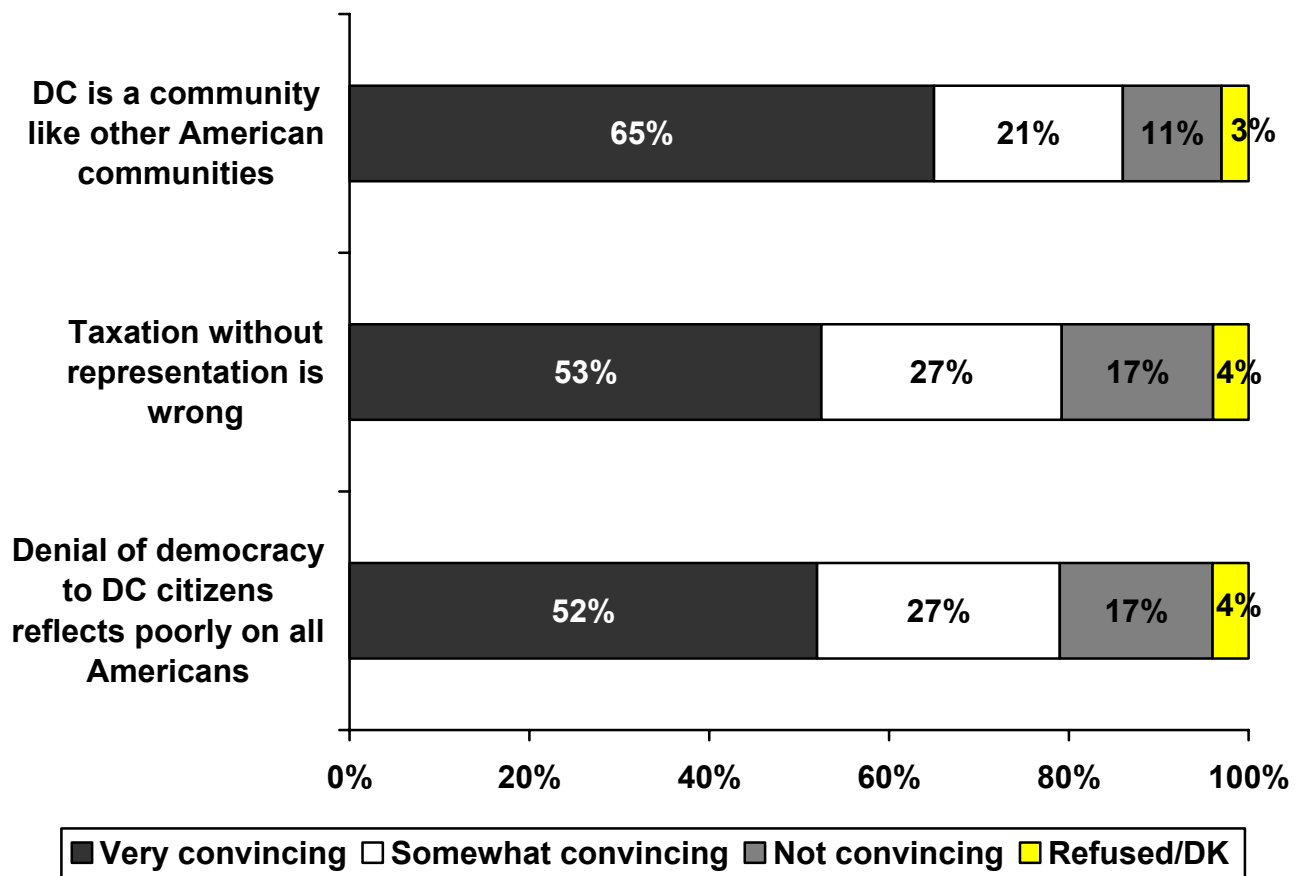
**Knowledge of the District of Columbia's Political Status  
(N =1,000)**



**Almost eight in ten members found each of three statements to be a convincing reason to support District voting representation in Congress.**

Respondents were read three statements concerning voting representation in Congress for residents of the District. They were then asked whether they felt the statement was a convincing reason to support giving District residents' full voting representation in Congress. Almost eight in ten members felt that each of the three statements was a convincing reason to support such voting rights. For the complete wording of each statement, please see Appendix A.

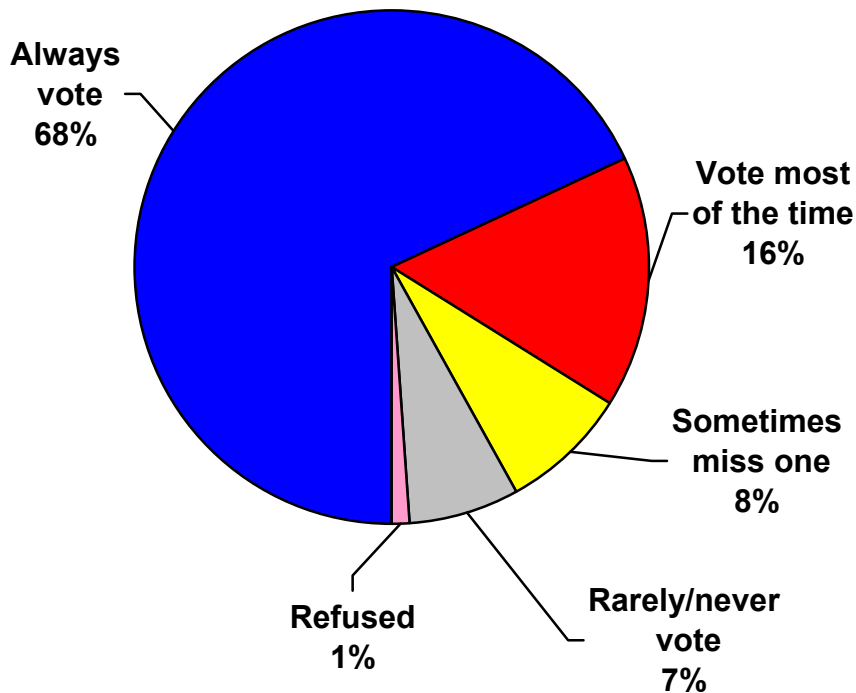
**Members Who Find Statements Convincing Reasons to Support District Voting Representation in Congress (N =1,000)**



## Voting Profile of Respondents

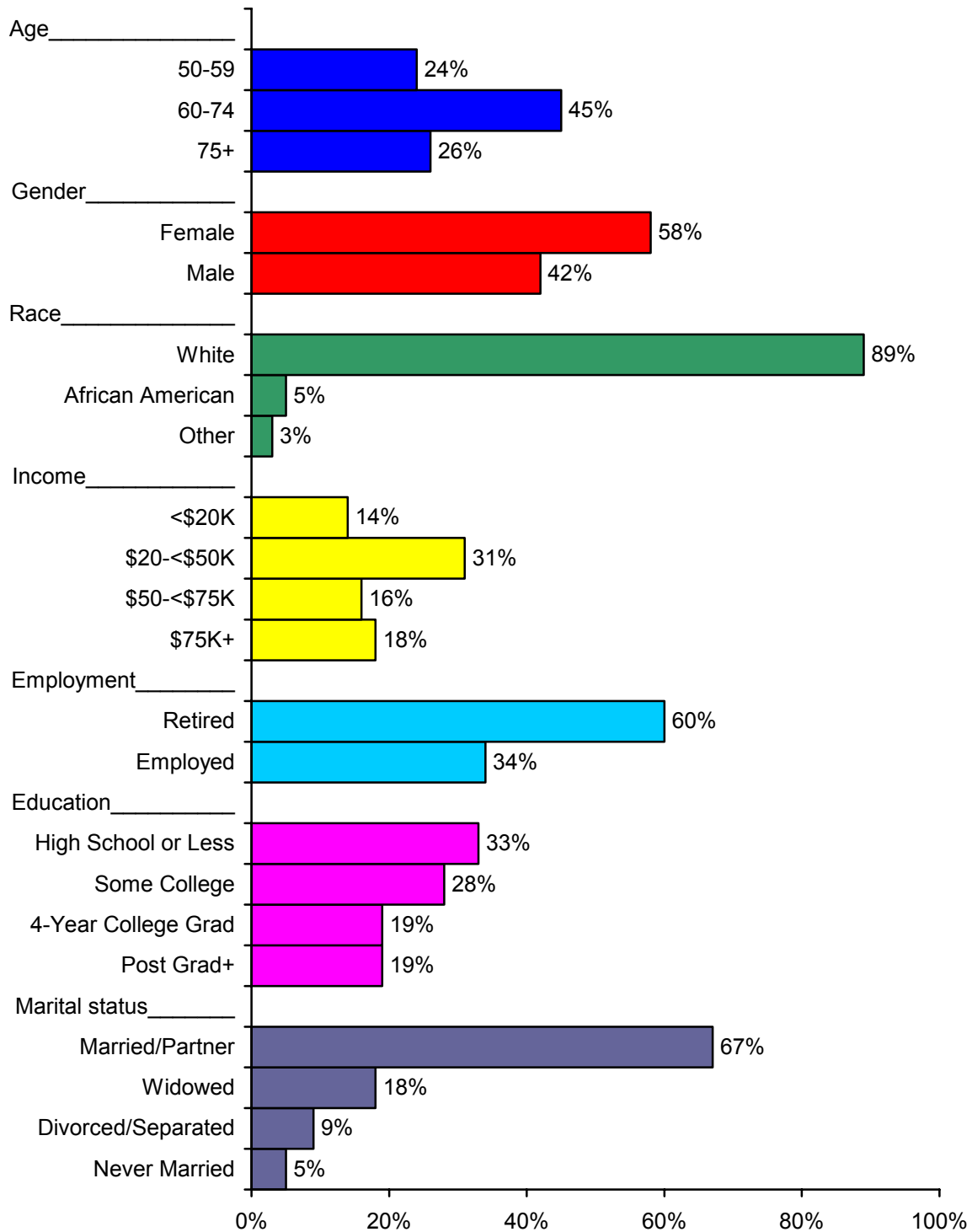
Nearly seven in ten (68%) of AARP members say they always vote in presidential elections, while 16 percent say they vote most of the time. A third (33%) of those surveyed said they consider themselves Democrats, while 28 percent consider themselves Republicans and a quarter (25%) consider themselves Independents. Ten percent are with another political party. Four in ten (40%) say they are conservatives and three in ten (31%) consider themselves moderate. Fifteen percent say they are liberal.

**AARP Members Who Say They Vote in Presidential Elections  
(N =1,000)**





## Demographic Profile of Respondents (N=1,000)



**APPENDIX A**  
**Annotated Questionnaire**

# DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA VOTING RIGHTS SURVEY

## *Introduction*

Hello, this is \_\_\_\_\_ calling from Woelfel Research, Inc., a national opinion research firm calling on behalf of AARP. We are not telemarketers and are not trying to sell you anything. We would like to find out your opinions on a national issue. Your views are important and we would greatly appreciate your participation. All of your responses are kept entirely confidential. The survey should take less than 10 minutes of your time.

### II. RECORD GENDER OF PERSON WHO ANSWERED PHONE:

- 1) Male
- 2) Female

### **Proposed N=1,000 respondents**

**Q1.** As far as you know, please tell me if the following statement is true or false:

- a) Citizens who live in Washington DC have the same constitutional rights as other U.S. citizens, including equal voting rights in Congress.

<u>%</u>	
62	True
29	False
10	Not sure
0	Refused (VOLUNTEERED)

- b) Washington DC citizens pay no federal income taxes.

<u>%</u>	
9	True
61	False
30	Not sure
<.5	Refused (VOLUNTEERED)

**Q2.** As you may know, the nearly 600,000 U.S. citizens who live in Washington, DC can vote in presidential elections. However, unlike other US citizens they cannot vote in elections for members of the US Congress and have no voting representation in either the House of Representatives or the Senate. How strongly do you support or oppose giving District residents voting representation in Congress?

<u>%</u>	
43	Strongly support
21	Somewhat support
15	Neither support nor oppose
6	Somewhat oppose
8	Strongly oppose
6	Don't know
1	Refused (VOLUNTEERED)

**Q3.** Now I'm going to list some things people have said about voting representation in Congress for citizens in Washington D.C. After each, please tell me whether you think it is a convincing, reason to support giving District residents voting representation in Congress.

- a) Nearly 600,000 US citizens live in the District of Columbia and pay full federal taxes, yet they do not have voting representation in Congress: this is taxation without representation and it's wrong. [INTERVIEWER: Would you say that is extremely convincing, very convincing, somewhat convincing, not very convincing, or not at all convincing reason?]

<u>%</u>	
53	Very convincing
27	Somewhat convincing
7	Not very convincing
10	Not at all convincing
4	Don't know
<.5	Refused (VOLUNTEERED)

b) Washington DC is a community like other American communities. Its nearly 600,000 residents live in over 100 distinct neighborhoods. It is home to regular people including nurses, doctors, teachers, small business owners, and firefighters. They deserve the same voting rights – and the same democracy – as other Americans. [INTERVIEWER: Would you say that is extremely convincing, very convincing, somewhat convincing, not very convincing, or not at all convincing reason?]

<u>%</u>	
65	Very convincing
21	Somewhat convincing
5	Not very convincing
6	Not at all convincing
3	Don't know
<.5	Refused (VOLUNTEERED)

c) DC is our nation's capital and belongs to all Americans. We have an obligation to help its residents achieve full voting rights because the denial of democracy to DC citizens reflects poorly on all Americans. [INTERVIEWER: Would you say that is extremely convincing, very convincing, somewhat convincing, not very convincing, or not at all convincing reason?]

<u>%</u>	
52	Very convincing
27	Somewhat convincing
8	Not very convincing
9	Not at all convincing
4	Don't know
<.5	Refused (VOLUNTEERED)

**The following questions are for classification purposes only and will be kept entirely confidential.**

**D1.** Record Gender [If not known]

<u>%</u>	
42	Male
58	Female

**D2.** What is your age as of your last birthday? \_\_\_\_\_

<u>%</u>	
1	40-49
24	50-59
45	60-74
26	75+
4	Refused

**D3.** What is your current marital status?

<u>%</u>	
66	Married
1	Not married, living with partner
18	Widowed
9	Divorced
<.5	Separated
5	Never married
2	Refused

**D4.** Thinking about your state elections for Governor and Legislators in the last ten years, which of the following best describes your voting behavior?

<u>%</u>	
68	Always vote
16	Vote most of the time
8	Sometimes miss one
4	Rarely vote
3	Never vote
0	Not sure
1	Refused

**D5.** Do you consider yourself to be a Democrat, Independent, Republican, or something else?

<u>%</u>	
28	Republican
33	Democrat
25	An Independent
10	Something else
1	Don't know
3	Refused

**D6** Do you consider yourself to be a conservative, liberal, moderate, or something else?

<u>%</u>	
40	Conservative
15	Liberal
31	Moderate
7	Something else
6	Don't know
2	Refused

**D7.** What is the highest level of education that you completed?

<u>%</u>	
5	0-12 <sup>th</sup> grade (no diploma)
28	High school graduate or equivalent
15	Post high school education (no degree)
13	2 year college degree
19	4 year college degree
5	Post-graduate study (no degree)
14	Graduate or professional degree
1	Refused

**D8.** Which of the following best describes your employment status?

<u>%</u>	
2	Self employed part-time
4	Self employed full-time
8	Employed part-time
20	Employed full-time
60	Retired, not working at all
4	Not in labor force for other reasons
1	Unemployed but looking for work
1	Refused

**D9.** Are you of Hispanic, Spanish, or Latino origin or descent?

<u>%</u>	
2	Yes
96	No
<.5	Not sure
1	Refused

**D10.** What is your race?

<u>%</u>	
89	White or Caucasian
5	Black or African American
1	American Indian or Alaskan Native
<.5	Asian
<.5	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
2	Other
2	Refused

**D11.** For statistical purposes only, please stop me when I get to your household income level, before taxes, for 2005:

<u>%</u>	
3	Less than \$10,000
11	\$10,000 to less than \$20,000
15	\$20,000 to less than \$35,000
16	\$35,000 to less than \$50,000
8	\$50,000 to less than \$60,000
8	\$60,000 to less than \$75,000
6	\$75,000 to less than \$90,000
12	\$90,000 or more
22	Refused

**D12.** Please tell me your 5-digit zip code: \_\_\_\_\_



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**For more information contact Erica Dinger at (202) 434-6176.**