

Washington State Online Voter Registration

www.vote.wa.gov

Secretary of State
Sam Reed



“People already enjoy conducting most of their personal business online. For example, banking, filing taxes, renewing car tabs and driver licenses, making travel arrangements, and handling stock transactions.

The public expects these services to be online.

Giving citizens the option to register electronically brings voter registration into the digital age.”

- Sam Reed
Secretary of State



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Frequently Asked Questions: Registering Online

What is online voter registration?

Online voter registration allows Washington citizens to register to vote or transfer a registration to a new address through a secure internet site — just as that person would pay a bill or renew car tabs online. All that is needed is a Washington State driver license or Washington State ID card number.

How does online voter registration work?

An applicant enters his or her driver license or state ID card number, birthdate and name exactly as it appears on that license or ID card to gain access to the online voter registration system. The applicant then provides the same information as if filling out a paper voter registration form. The applicant must agree to the use of the license or state ID card signature as the voter registration signature.

THE GOAL

To make online voter registration user-friendly, while protecting the integrity of the statewide voter registration list.

And, just as with the paper voter registration form, the applicant must affirm via oath that the information provided is true and accurate.

How did online registration come about?

In 2006, Secretary of State Sam Reed formally requested that the Washington State

Legislature pass a law authorizing online voter registration to both increase and simplify voter registrations. The Legislature passed the law in 2007 and it took effect January 1, 2008.

Is online voter registration secure?

Yes. The online voter registration system uses the same technology that banks and retailers use to encrypt and protect a customer's personal information. In addition, a randomly generated security number is presented to each user to prevent an automated hacking program from fraudulently filling out voter registration applications via the website.

Since only people who have a driver license or state ID card can register online, the applicant has already proven his or her identity in-person in a state office.

The Secretary of State's Office receives the applicant's signature from the driver license or ID card for the voter registration record.

May a voter make an address change online too?

Yes, registered voters moving to a new address in the same county may submit address changes through “MyVote,” a personalized voter information system.

Voters moving to a new county must use the online voter registration system and submit a new voter registration application.

(continued on Page 10)

MyVote: Personalized Voter Information

In 2008, Washington state jumped to the next level of voter education by promoting an online one-stop, customized voter information feature called MyVote.

The free service is available 24/7 on the Secretary of State's website at www.vote.wa.gov. MyVote gives personalized, specific information to each voter who logs on by name and birthdate. This information includes voter registration status, a personalized voters' pamphlet, ballot dropbox sites, voting history and contact information for that voter's federal, state, local and judicial elected officials.

Citizens can also use MyVote to update a mailing address.

"MyVote is a very exciting advance for us in Washington, and something that is already drawing national attention," said Secretary of State Sam Reed.



Washington State Legislation

HOUSE BILL 1528, now codified as Revised Code of Washington 29A.08.123

Passed Legislature - 2007 Regular Session

AN ACT Relating to electronic voter registration; adding a new section to chapter 29A.08 RCW; and providing an effective date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. A new section is added to chapter 29A.08 RCW to read as follows:

- (1) A person who has a valid Washington state driver license or state identification card may submit a voter registration application electronically on the secretary of state's web site.
- (2) The applicant must attest to the truth of the information provided on the application by affirmatively accepting the information as true.
- (3) The applicant must affirmatively assent to use of his or her driver license or state identification card signature for voter registration purposes.
- (4) A voter registration application submitted electronically is otherwise considered a registration by mail.
- (5) For each electronic application, the secretary of state must obtain a digital copy of the applicant's driver license or state identification card signature from the department of licensing.
- (6) The secretary of state may employ additional security measures to ensure the accuracy and integrity of voter registration application submitted electronically.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. This act takes effect January 1, 2008.

—END—

Implementation Lessons Learned

1. Keep the user experience front and center when developing the interface; and balance safeguards and security measures to protect the integrity of the voter registration system.
2. Negotiate contracts early with voter registration system vendors.
3. Draw on existing relationships with the state licensing agency.
4. Involve county partners early.
5. Develop a thorough testing plan and leave sufficient time to follow that plan.



Agency Regulations

Washington Administrative Code 434-324-031

Electronic voter registration.

- (1) The secretary of state's electronic voter registration web page must have the capability to:
 - (a) Reject applicants without a Washington state driver license or state identification card;
 - (b) Require the applicant to affirmatively assent to the use of his or her driver license or state identification card signature for voter registration purposes;
 - (c) Require the applicant to attest to the truth of the information provided on the application;
 - (d) Retrieve a digital copy of each applicant's driver license or state identification card signature from the department of licensing and include it with the other information required for each applicant's voter registration; and
 - (e) Electronically transfer all information required for each applicant's voter registration to his or her county auditor for entry into the statewide voter registration data base through the county election management system.
- (2) Once election registration information is entered into county election management systems, the same timelines and processes used for registration by mail apply to electronic registration.

—END—

Notes about the numbers

1. Interest in registering to vote dropped sharply after the 2008 Presidential Election Year, but so did the use of paper voter registration forms. By 2010 voters were overwhelmingly using online tools to change their addresses and register to vote instead of sending in paper forms.
2. In September 2009, the state redesigned its paper voter registration form and required voters to send the forms directly to counties instead of the Secretary of State's Office. This elimination of the state as the middle man in the processing of paper forms also contributed to the low number of paper forms reflected in the chart on the facing page.

Online Registration & MyVote by the numbers

In the table below, you can see the number of voter registration and address change transactions, separated by type, for 2010, 2009 and 2008.

In 2008, Washington State held a Presidential Primary in February, a state Primary in August, and the General Election in November. All three of these elections generated heavy public interest

and increased participation in the process.

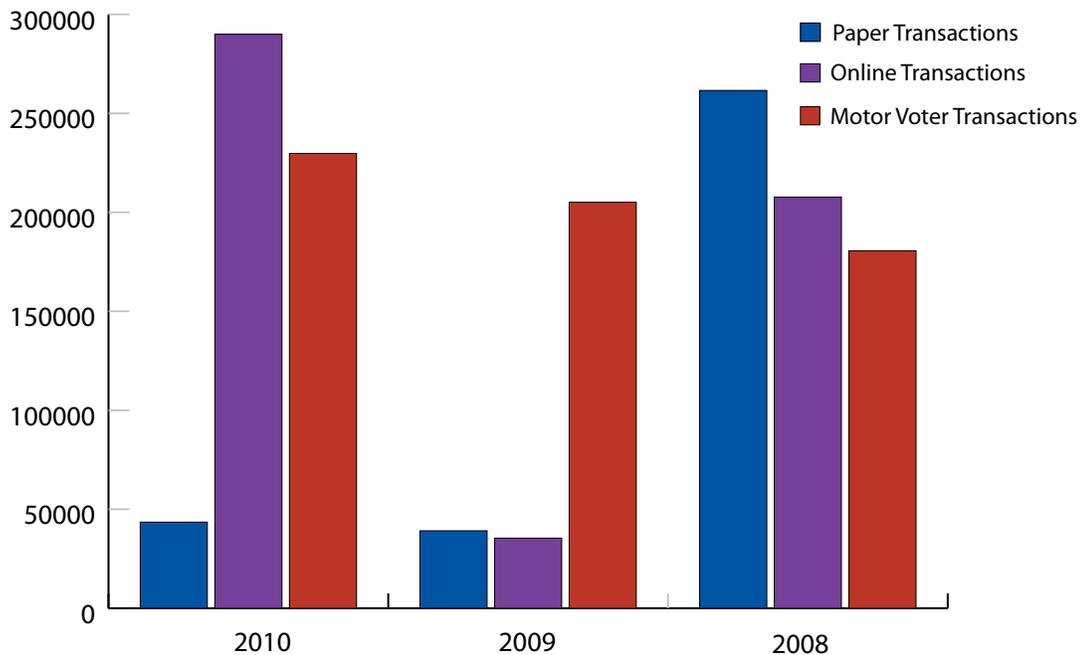
Online Voter Registration and MyVote allow voters the convenience of interacting with government on their time from the comfort of their own homes. Registering to vote and updating registration information becomes something that can be done in a matter of minutes.

2010			
Month	Paper Transactions	Online Transactions	Motor Voter Transactions
January	1929	5788	18931
February	1764	4428	17644
March	2005	3805	22377
April	2019	19369	16965
May	5500	21307	16208
June	16742	40387	22656
July	1842	23121	17705
August	2064	23721	17820
September	2844	69438	33233
October	3987	40427	16079
November	1671	19714	12231
December	1149	18476	17929
Totals	43516	289981	229778
2009			
Month	Paper Transactions	Online Transactions	Motor Voter Transactions
January	2357	2232	14392
February	4921	1886	16530
March	3041	1194	12669
April	2605	1467	17670
May	1812	1121	13683
June	2602	1454	16264
July	3445	2488	18036
August	4567	5808	25328
September	5994	5761	23853
October	4097	7866	17834
November	2126	2030	14240
December	1582	2137	14583
Totals	39149	35444	205082

2008			
Month	Paper Reg	Online totals	Motor Voter totals
January	23996	24020	8443
February	28759	23599	11116
March	17201	4706	17777
April	10118	3728	13309
May	17184	3446*	13986
June	20401	4406*	17909
July	13910	7225*	14916
August	18804	17697	19409
September	72601	66668	26128
October	32261	44709	11722
November	3922	6639	10969
December	2429	879	14930
Totals	261586	207722	180614

*Online address change was offline for the last week of May, all of June, and the first three weeks of July 2008.

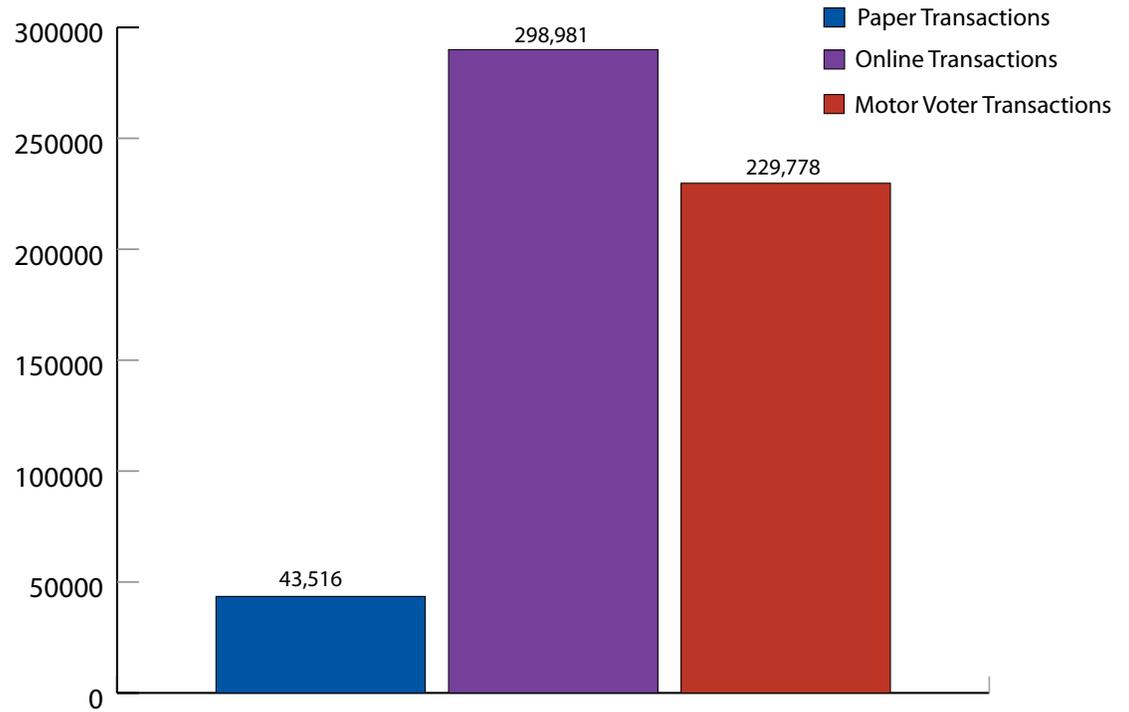
Year-by-year comparison of transactions



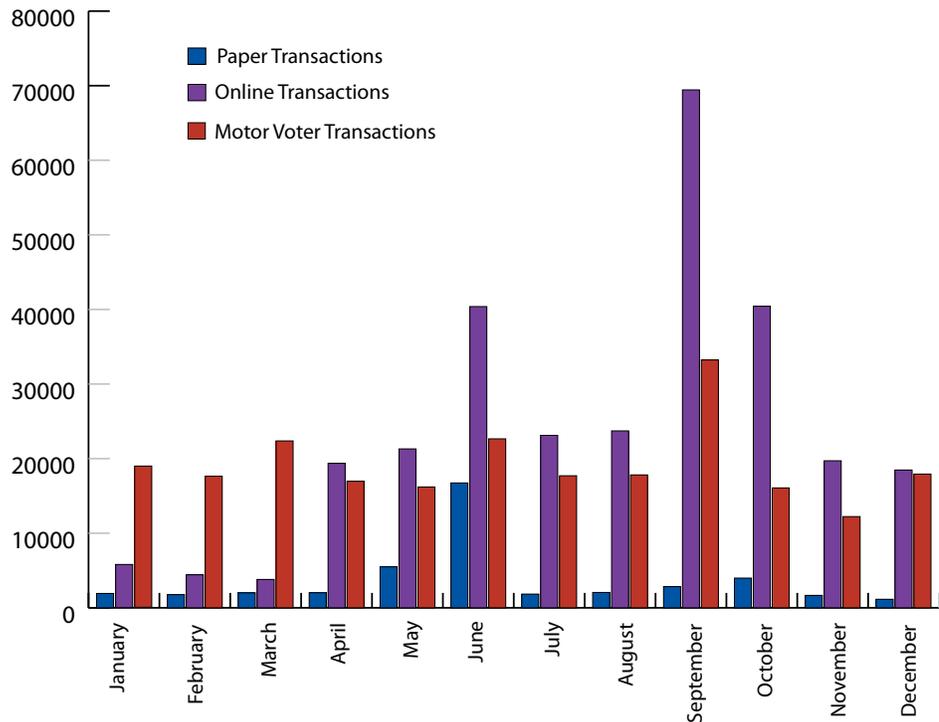
Notes about the numbers

1. In the Transactions by Month chart on this page, notice that June and September experienced the heaviest traffic. The June spike can be attributed to a large number of registration forms submitted by groups collecting signatures for initiative petitions. The September increase is likely due to the fact that people want to make sure they are registered for the General Election in November.

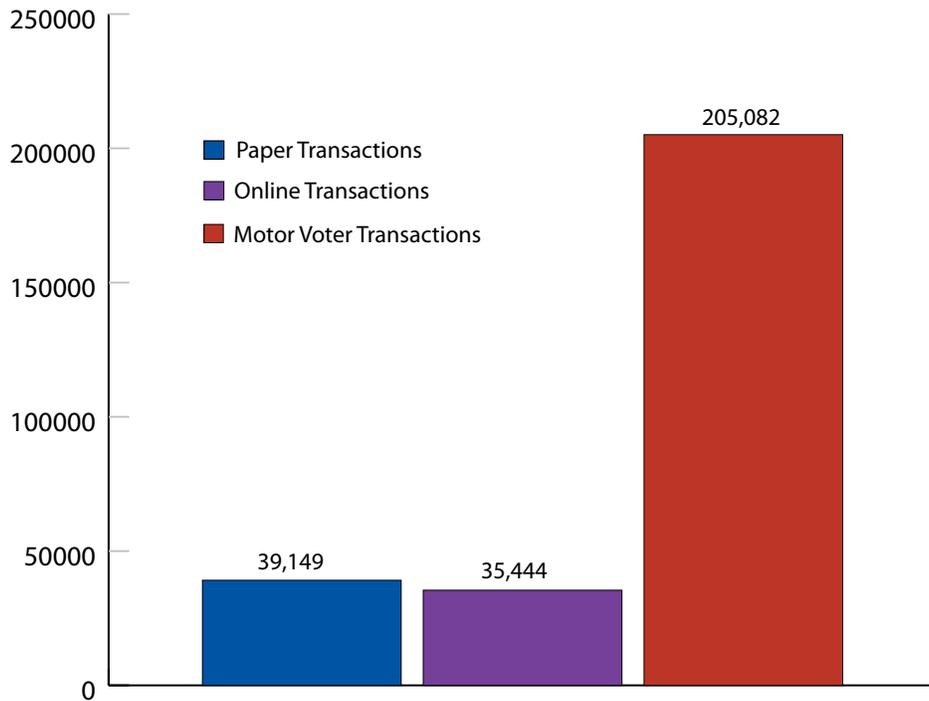
2010 Registration and Address Changes



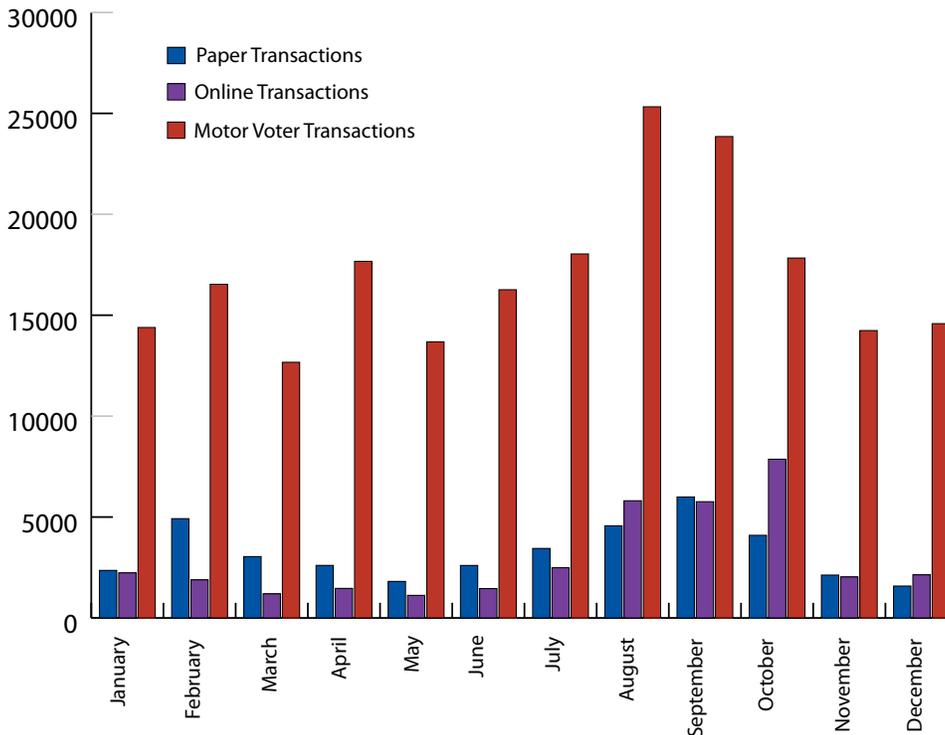
2010 Registration Transactions by Month



2009 Registration and Address Changes



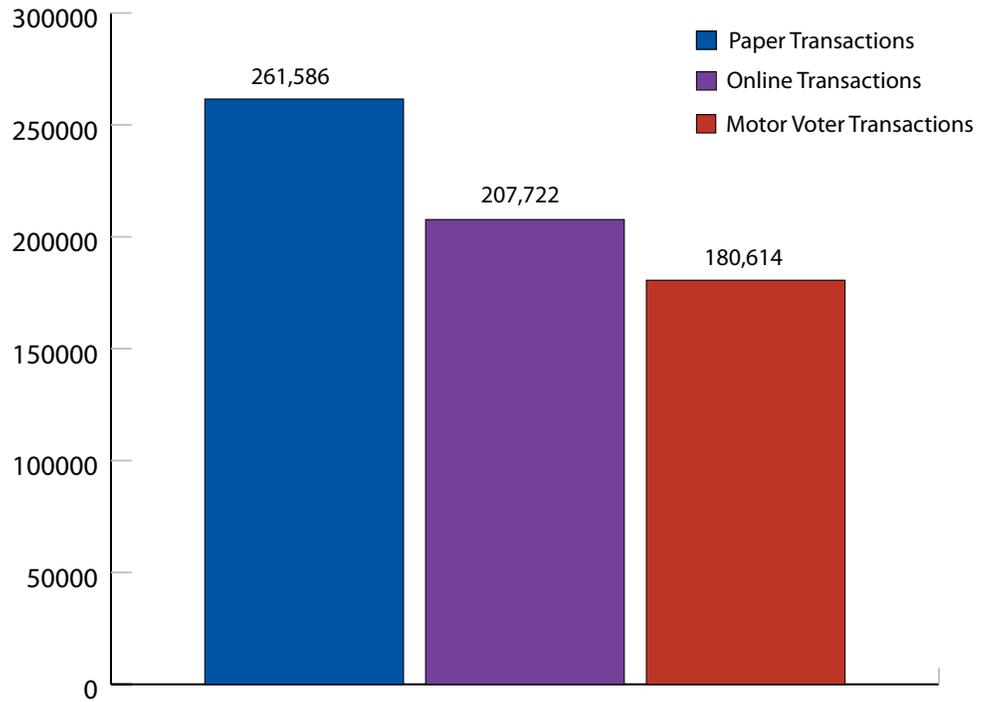
2009 Registration Transactions by Month



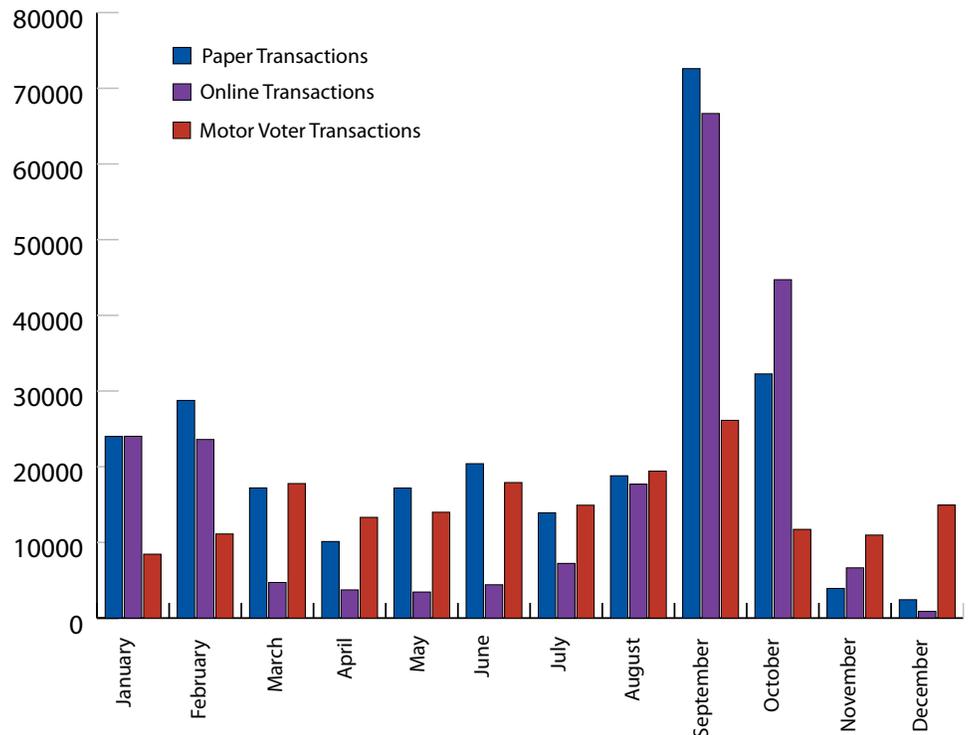
Notes about the numbers

1. In 2008 Washington held a Presidential Preference Primary in February, which caused spikes in both address change and registration forms submitted. Online Voter Registration was not available until late January 2008, but adoption of the new option to register to vote was swift and strong.

2008 Registration and Address Changes



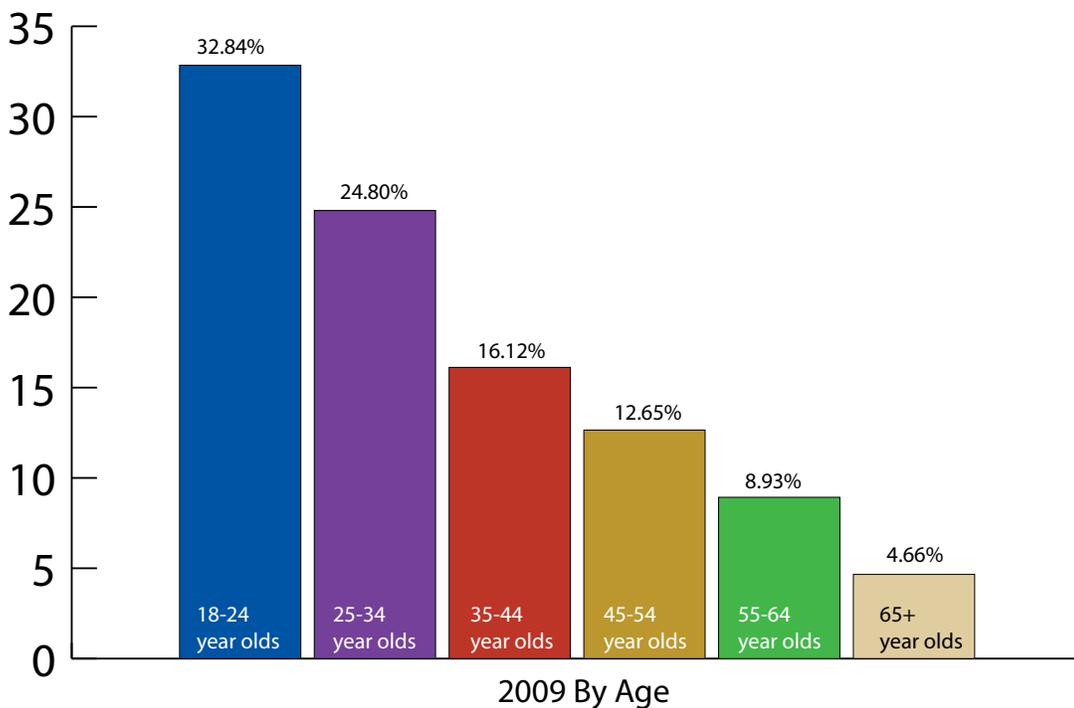
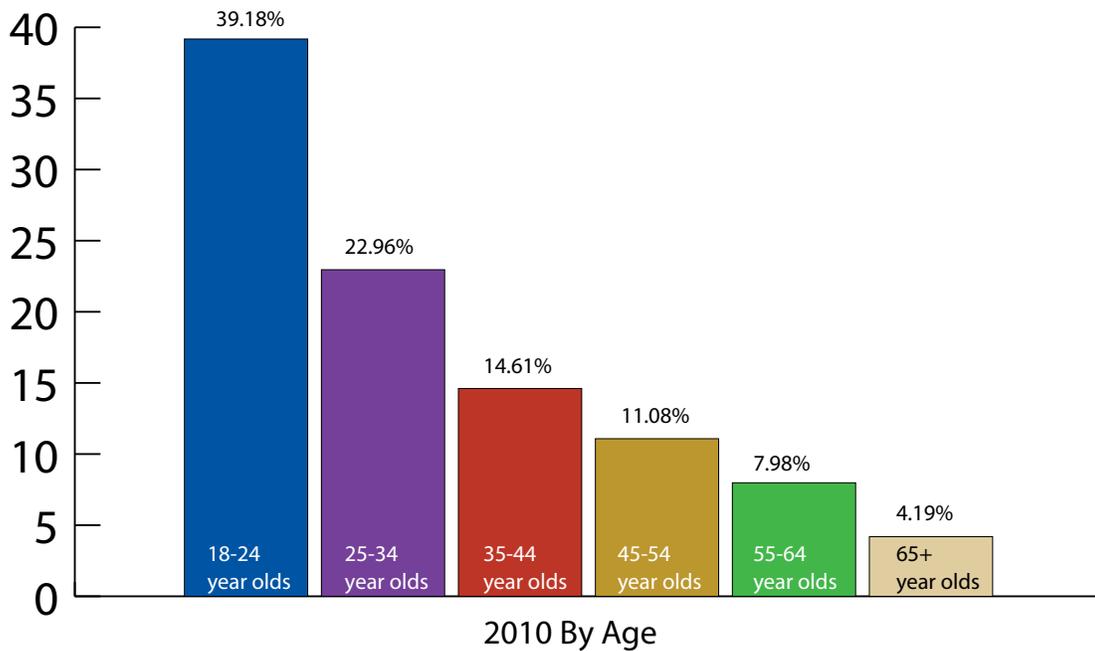
2008 Registration Transactions by Month



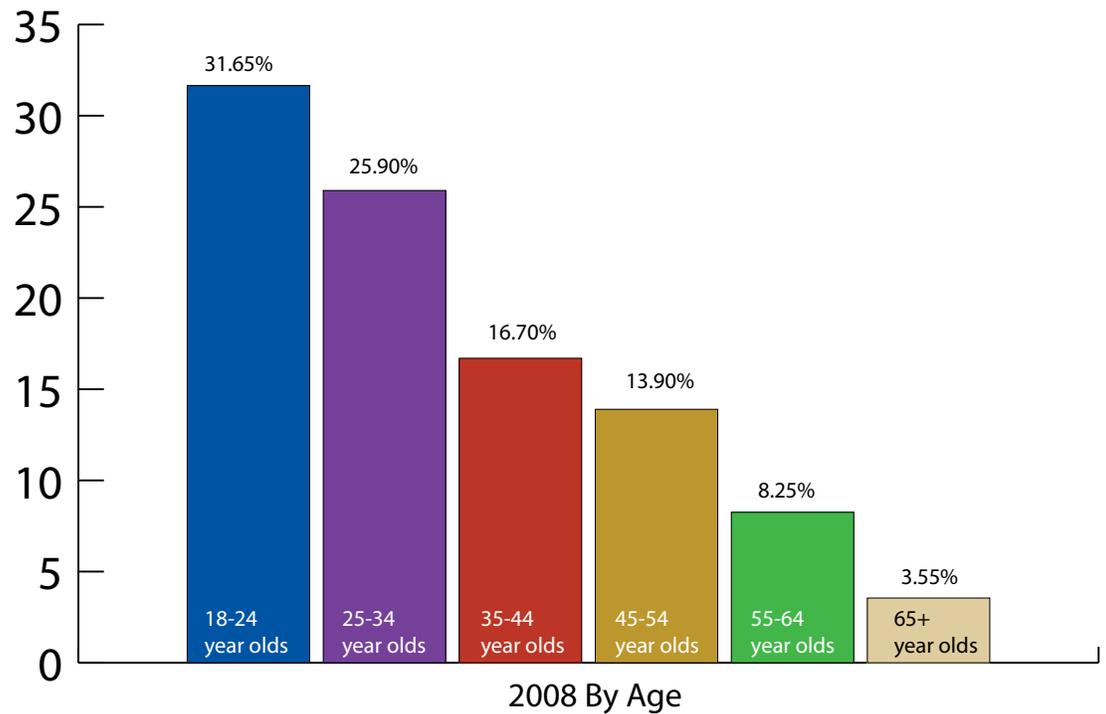
Who uses Online Registration and MyVote?

Notes about the numbers

1. As might be expected, younger voters tend to use the online voter registration and address change tools more frequently than do older voters. However, the fact that younger voters change addresses more often and are getting registered to vote for the first time should be taken into account when looking at these numbers.



Who uses Online Registration and MyVote?



Frequently Asked Questions: Continued

May someone register another person to vote or change another voter's address by using online voter registration?

No, only a new applicant or an existing voter may agree to the use of that voter's signature on file with the Department of Licensing for voter registration purposes.

Submitting a fraudulent voter registration application is a felony in Washington State.

If a voter changes address or other information using online voter registration, is that voter's state driver license or ID card record also updated?

No. Information is not transferred from the online voter registration system back to the Department of Licensing. The voter will need to independently contact the Department of Licensing to make any changes to his or her driver license or state ID records.

How does online registration address citizenship, age, and residency?

The first step in registering online requires applicants to indicate their eligibility to vote separately based on citizenship, age, residency, and felony convictions. Later in the process, applicants must accept the oath that reaffirms their eligibility.

This process fulfills all state legal requirements for registering to vote, and reflects the same process applicants use when registering to vote with a paper voter registration form.

Online Voter Registration: Fiscal Impact

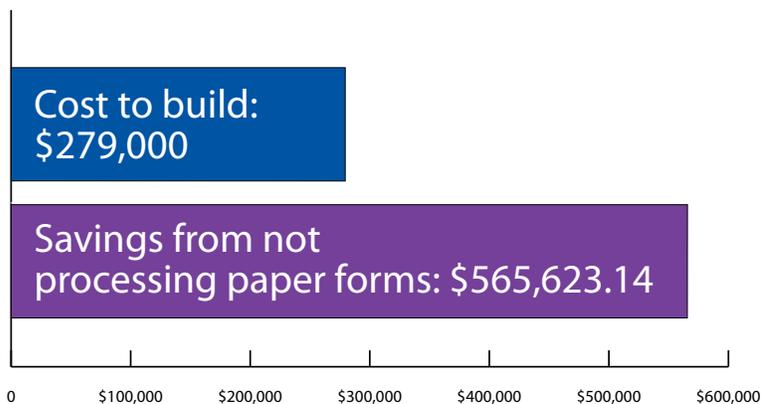
The fiscal impact for the 2007 legislation to authorize online voter registration was originally projected at approximately \$86,000. Once the project was fully scoped, including a thorough review of Arizona's online voter registration system, and all the system requirements and features were fleshed out, the actual cost came to approximately \$279,000.

Microsoft was paid \$170,000 to develop the statewide voter registration database (VRDB) to accept and process online voter registrations and to create the user interface found on www.vote.wa.gov. Microsoft modified the statewide voter registration database to accept electronic applications from the four different types

of voter registration systems operating in Washington.

The four voter registration system vendors were paid an additional \$109,000 to develop the software that would allow for the electronic transfer of voter registration information from each of Washington's 39 county voter registration systems to the statewide voter registration database. The vendors and the development costs were:

Vendor	Payment
DFM	\$12,000
DIMS	\$59,000
VOTEC	\$17,000
ES&S	\$22,000



Cost Savings

In the 2008 and 2010 calendar years the Secretary of State's Office conducted 217,232 online voter registration transactions and 280,471 online address change transactions.

It costs approximately 25 cents to process and forward each paper voter registration form. Each applicant using a paper voter registration form to register or change an address must spend 44 cents for the stamp to mail it in. This means that online voter registrations and online address changes saved the state of Washington about \$124,425.25 over the course of the two years. The postage savings to the electorate is calculated at \$214,834.88. The total combined savings

for not using paper to conduct these transactions equals \$339,260.

Previously it cost the Secretary of State's Office 43 cents to process each motor voter transaction from the Department of Licensing. Moving to an electronic system saved the state \$149,917.35 in the years 2008 and 2010 combined.

Taking into account the fact that there are still costs associated with paying computer programming staff and maintaining hardware such as servers, data lines and power supplies, the savings realized from moving away from paper registration and toward online transactions has more than covered the cost of building the system.

Notes about the numbers

1. The savings figures on this page and the following page do not take into account the cost of programming staff to maintain the Online Voter Registration and Online Address Change tools, and they also do not account for the hardware (servers, data lines, electricity, etc.) necessary to keep the systems running. That said, the cost to keep the electronic systems up and running remains considerably less than the cost of processing and mailing paper forms.

Notes about the numbers

1. While the savings from NOT processing paper registration forms is impressive, it is also interesting to note the substantial savings voters have experienced by not having to buy stamps to mail in voter registration forms. Voters in Washington have saved an estimated \$300,969.32 since 2008.

Online Voter Registration: Fiscal Impact

