

Crowd Workers

Crowdsourcing and Human Computation

Instructor: Jérémie Lumbroso

Fall 2024

Ethical questions about Mechanical Turk

- Who are the workers?
- Why would they work for pennies?
- Is it a digital sweatshop?

Think-Pair-Share

- This interactive learning activity is designed to **enhance your engagement and deepen your understanding** of the lecture material and **help you meet people**.
- **Expectations:**
 - Initially, you will reflect on a given question independently, ensuring you develop your own perspective.
 - Next, you will pair up with a classmate to discuss and compare your thoughts.
 - *Also introduce yourself (name, major, and exchange emails).*
 - Finally, each pair will share a summary of their discussion, either through Google Forms, Sli.do or voice (depending on format).
- **Purpose:** The goal of Think-Pair-Share is to promote critical thinking, enhance communication skills, and allow for diverse viewpoints to surface and enrich our discussion. This method ensures that all voices are heard and that you can collaboratively explore complex issues in depth.

Think-Pair-Share

- What ethical responsibilities do platforms like Amazon Mechanical Turk have towards their workers, and how can these be enforced?

Summary

Fair Compensation and Labor Practices

- Ensure fair wages and timely payments to workers, ideally meeting local minimum wage standards
- Provide transparency about expected time, effort, and pay for each task
- Allow workers to rate employers to promote accountability
- Consider offering benefits to workers

Protecting Workers from Exploitation and Harm

- Safeguard against employer abuse and unfair practices (e.g. blackmail, underpayment)
- Screen tasks to prevent illegal, unethical or emotionally harmful work
- Provide content warnings for graphic or disturbing material
- Obtain informed consent before exposing workers to traumatic content
- Limit repetitive tasks that could impair cognitive abilities
- Ensure working hours and conditions don't jeopardize worker health and wellbeing

Maintaining Legal and Ethical Standards

- Carefully moderate work to ensure legality and appropriateness of all tasks
- Use AI models and human verification to detect suspicious or illicit activity
- Establish clear contracts and communication channels between workers and requesters
- Regularly monitor the platform to prevent it from being used for illegal purposes

Promoting Transparency and Worker Agency

- Give workers visibility into task requirements, pay, and time estimates upfront
- Allow workers freedom to choose tasks that match their preferences and constraints
- Implement rating systems so workers can assess requesters and make informed decisions

Ethical questions about Mechanical Turk

Amazon Mechanical Turk: Gold Mine or Coal Mine?

Karën Fort*
INIST-CNRS/LIPN

K. Bretonnel Cohen†
U. Colorado School of Medicine/U.
Colorado at Boulder

Gilles Adda**
LIMSI/CNRS



Recently heard at a tutorial in our field: “It cost me less than one hundred bucks to annotate this using Amazon Mechanical Turk!” Assertions like this are increasingly common, but we believe they should not be stated so proudly; they ignore the ethical consequences of using MTurk (Amazon Mechanical Turk) as a source of labour.

Manually annotating corpora or manually developing any other linguistic resource,

Here's an excerpt from an IRB application Chris Callison-Burch posted - "We will pay participants small sums of money to complete our tasks, ranging from \$0.01 to \$1. All participants can choose for themselves whether the compensation is fair, and opt not to do it if they deem the compensation to be too low. Amazon's Mechanical Turk has many other researchers and companies offering tasks, so we will offer compensation that is similar to what others offer."

He first refers to Amazon's Mechanical Turk as "an online labor market." And that, I agree with. It is an online labor market.

Requesters like him, and CrowdFlower, **collude**, explicitly or implicitly, **to keep wages at a substandard level** that is compatible with existence standard.

Unlike Jewels, I don't blame workers for taking low paying jobs. I can't blame a person for being needy enough to take what amounts to a crust of bread. **I blame Chris Callison-Burch, and others like him, for keeping the standard wage at crust of bread level.**

I feel like Maria in "Metropolis."

I tried one of those to see, I gave it up at 4 minutes in and about 2/3 of the way through. For the whole hit, I'd have taken about 6 minutes. 10 hits an hour - **\$1.70 an hour.** Restricted to U.S. residents.

This is far too low to be considered a fair wage for a U.S. resident. My performance may be very far off from what others can do. Perhaps I took 4 times or more as long as an average worker would.

My complaint is that any U.S. requester knows what wage rate is required for a U.S. resident to survive. We may not agree on an exact number. But as they say, I know a fair wage when I see it, and this is not it.

Mturk is actually much smaller than what it can appear to be. Something close to requester monopoly has the power to keep wages low. Requester co-operation, explicit or implicit, reinforces this.

Chris Callison-Burch is not unaware, I think, of the mechanics of the wage structure of Mturk.

**WORKERS
OF THE WORLD
UNITE!**



Web Workers Unite! Addressing Challenges of Online Laborers

Bederson and Quinn (ALT CHI 2011)

The ongoing rise of human computation has created an environment where human workers are often regarded as nameless, faceless computational resources. Some people have begun to think of online tasks as a “remote person call”.

Unfortunately, as with any labor market, once humans and money are involved, a host of problems surface. From privacy breaches to unpaid or underpaid labor, there are real social risks that arise with the use of these technologies

It is our responsibility to address them since it is designers, not ethicists or policy makers, who have the power to influence what is built and to mitigate risks before any harm is done.

MTurk for Workers

Find HITs that pay at least \$ 0.00

HITs for 1-10 of

Sort by:

- HIT Creation Date (oldest first)
- HIT Creation Date (newest first)
- HITs Available (fewest first)
- HITs Available (most first)
- Reward Amount (least first)
- ✓ Reward Amount (most first)
- Expiration Date (soonest first)
- Expiration Date (latest first)
- Title (A-Z)
- Title (Z-A)
- Time Allotted (least first)
- Time Allotted (most first)



Show all details | Hide all details

Transcription

Requester

understand, would be useful to know how to clean up aud

HIT Expiration Date: Sep 4, 2013 (1 day 21 hours) **Reward:**

Time Allotted: 24 hours **HITs Available:**

Transcription of approximately 15 minutes of audio

Requester: [Amelia Jones](#)

HIT Expiration Date: Sep 5, 2013 (2 days 23 hours) **Reward:**

Time Allotted: 8 hours **HITs Available:**

By Invitation Only: Answer a few questions in a brief survey

Requester: [Qualtrics Survey](#)

HIT Expiration Date: Sep 5, 2013 (2 days 21 hours) **Reward:**

Time Allotted: 30 minutes **HITs Available:**

Take a geo-tagged photo of a landmark in North Dakota

Requester: [Crowdsourcing at Thomson Reuters](#)

HIT Expiration Date: Sep 5, 2013 (2 days 16 hours) **Reward:**

Time Allotted: 3 days **HITs Available:**

Dashboard - Chris Callison-Burch (If you're not Chris Callison-Burch, [click here.](#))

Your Worker ID: A23KO2TP7I4KK2

Total Earnings [\(What's this?\)](#)

Rewards You Have Earned	Value
Approved HITs	\$44.29
Bonuses	\$0.00
Total Earnings Show earnings details ▾	\$44.29

Your HIT Status [\(What's this?\)](#)

Date	Submitted	Approved	Rejected	Pending	Earnings
Today	2	1	0	1	\$0.05
Sep 2, 2013	8	8	0	0	\$0.24

[View more...](#)**HIT Totals** [\(What's this?\)](#)

HITs You Have Accepted	Value	Rate	HITs You Have Submitted	Value	Rate
HITs Accepted	1303	—	HITs Submitted	1095	—
... Submitted	1095	84.0%	... Approved	1081	98.8%
... Returned	119	9.1%	... Rejected	13	1.2%
... Abandoned	89	6.8%	... Pending	1	—

HITs



containing

that pay at least \$

Status Detail - Chris Callison-Burch (If you're not Chris Callison-Burch, [click here.](#))

Show:

**HITs You Worked On For September 02, 2013** ([What's this?](#))

Requester	Title	Reward	Status	Feedback
Project Gandolph (Speech)	You need a microphone on your computer - you will record a word or phrase in your own voice	\$0.03	Approved - Pending Payment	
Project Gandolph (Speech)	You need a microphone on your computer - you will record a word or phrase in your own voice	\$0.03	Approved - Pending Payment	
Project Gandolph (Speech)	You need a microphone on your computer - you will record a word or phrase in your own voice	\$0.03	Approved - Pending Payment	
Project Gandolph (Speech)	You need a microphone on your computer - you will record a word or phrase in your own voice	\$0.03	Approved - Pending Payment	
Project Gandolph (Speech)	You need a microphone on your computer - you will record a word or phrase in your own voice	\$0.03	Approved - Pending Payment	
Project Gandolph (Speech)	You need a microphone on your computer - you will record a word or phrase in your own voice	\$0.03	Approved - Pending Payment	
Project Gandolph (Speech)	You need a microphone on your computer - you will record a word or phrase in your own voice	\$0.03	Approved - Pending Payment	
Project Gandolph (Speech)	You need a microphone on your computer - you will record a word or phrase in your own voice	\$0.03	Approved - Pending Payment	
Project Gandolph	You need a microphone on your computer - you will record a word or phrase in your own voice	\$0.03	Approved -	

What sucks about the MTurk worker interface?

- No way to search by expected hourly rate
- No way to estimate the difficulty or length of time that it will take to do a task
- No way to know how reputable a requester is in advance
- No way to know how long until they will pay
- information asymmetry, imbalance of power

Manage Batches


Click on the name of the batch to see more details

▼ Batches in progress (1)

[Compression HIT - grammar/meaning_10](#)

Results

Cancel th

Created:	July 04, 2013	Assignments Completed:	2,468 / 2,468
Time Elapsed:	1 day	Estimated Completion Time:	COMPLETE
Average Time per Assignment:	3 minutes 40 seconds	Effective Hourly Rate:	\$4.091
Batch Progress:			
	100% submitted	100% published	

▼ Batches ready for review (143)

« Previous 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 ...

[Word Alignment - Trusted Workers - Dev 0.7](#)

Results

Delete

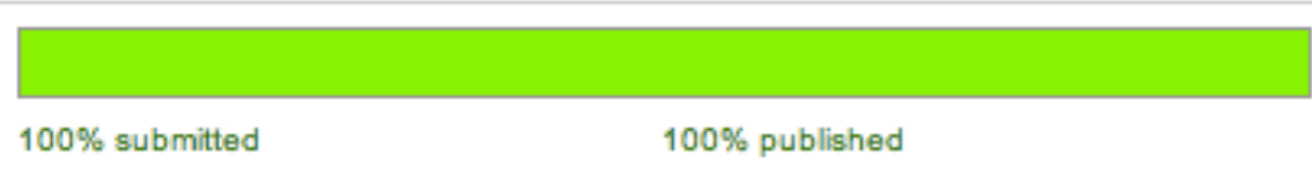
Created:	July 02, 2013	Assignments Completed:	1,995 / 2,000
Time Elapsed:	15 days	Estimated Completion Time:	September 03, 2013 4:41 PM
Average Time per Assignment:	1 minute 58 seconds	Effective Hourly Rate:	\$4.576

HIT - grammar/meaning 10

is batch, make changes, or get results.

ces and decide how grammatical they are

Cancel this batch



2,468 / 2,468 Average Time per Assignment: 3 minutes 40 seconds Average Hourly Rate: \$4.091
July 04, 2013 1:03 PM PDT Estimated Completion Time: COMPLETE

HIT - grammar/meaning

Read a group of sentences and decide how grammatical they are
English, writing, editing, language, research, language, paraphrasing,
paraphrases, summarization, summaries, text, comprehension, reading
HIT Approval Rate (%) for all Requesters' HITs greater than or equal to 85
(Required for preview)
Number of HITs Approved greater than 100 (Required for preview)
Location is UNITED STATES (Required for preview)

per HIT: 2
\$0.250
compression-evaluation.dev.csv

Results

Results

Assignments pending review:	0
Assignments approved:	2,070
Assignments rejected:	398

Cost Summary

Estimated Total Reward:	\$500.000
Estimated Fees to Mechanical Turk:	\$50.000 (fee details)
Estimated Total Cost:	\$550.000

These costs are only an estimate until all of the assignments have been submitted and reviewed.

Approve

Reject



<u>Worker ID</u>	<u>Work Time In Seconds</u>	<u>Lifetime Approval Rate</u>	<u>Input.System Names 0</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Region</u>
A1H11P4QSM08Y1	145	100% (59/59)	pos_control neg_control /export/common/SCALE13/...		
A3O7D2TTK99UK5	3	12% (119/1007)	pos_control neg_control /export/common/SCALE13/...		
ASB13NJKTGCYB	122	100% (44/44)	pos_control neg_control /export/common/SCALE13/...		
A1BM57TUNAQIXM	478	100% (3/3)	pos_control neg_control /export/common/SCALE13/...	Los Angeles	California
A3445FTO62DGIX	231	100% (78/78)	pos_control neg_control /export/common/SCALE13/...		
AYSX5GNO640MZ	141	13% (5/39)	pos_control neg_control /export/common/SCALE13/...		
A21U64TBRENETA	158	100% (17/17)	pos_control neg_control /export/common/SCALE13/...	Orlando	Florida
A23AFAXSEYH61S	241	100% (177/177)	pos_control neg_control /export/common/SCALE13/...	Los Angeles	California
A1GYXHW4YCOJ0H	154	100% (77/77)	pos_control neg_control /export/common/SCALE13/...		
A3O7D2TTK99UK5	21	12% (119/1007)	pos_control neg_control /export/common/SCALE13/...		
AUGRDUEDEUXUS	184	100% (12/12)	pos_control neg_control /export/common/SCALE13/...		
AYSX5GNO640MZ	182	13% (5/39)	pos_control neg_control /export/common/SCALE13/...		

Think-Pair-Share

- If you were a worker on Mechanical Turk, what changes would you propose to improve the fairness and transparency of the platform?

TurkOpticon plugin

Workers rate Requesters based on a Requester's:

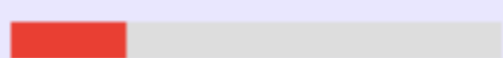
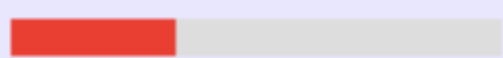
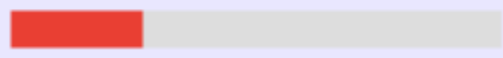
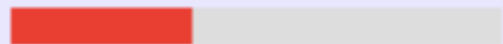
- **communicativity:** How responsive has this requester been to communications or concerns you have raised?
- **generosity:** How well has this requester paid for the amount of time their HITs take?
- **fairness:** How fair has this requester been in approving or rejecting your work?
- **promptness:** How promptly has this requester approved your work and paid?

Choose the best category for this government project (good english important)

Requester:

 [The Public Group](#)

HIT Expiration Date: Sep 10, 2013 (6 days)

communicativity:  1.17 / 5
generosity :  1.73 / 5
fairness :  1.39 / 5
promptness :  1.86 / 5

Time Allotted: 60 minutes

[What do these scores mean?](#)

Scores based on [81 reviews](#)

Terms of Service violation flags: 0

[Report your experience with this requester »](#)

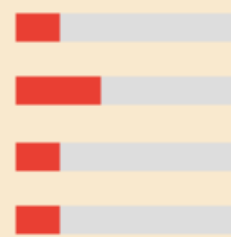
[Contact Us](#) | [Careers at Amazon](#) | [Developers](#) |

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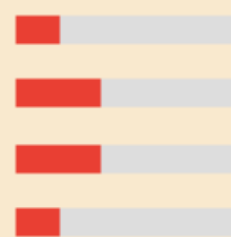
Took a leap of faith on this requester and was rewarded with a %50 reject rate and a broken search feature and no feedback. Would not recommend, even if you have thousands of HITs under your belt to cushion the inevitable rejections.

Aug 29 2013 | [KBH19](#) | [flag](#) | [comment](#)



Arbitrarily rejected over half of the hits I submitted, and then banned me from submitting any more hits for them. I suppose that's a blessing in disguise though, as I had no intention of doing any for them again after the first batch of rejections.

Aug 21 2013 | [bour...@g...](#) | [flag](#) | [comment](#)



Their HIT is very unclear. There is an option to browse for the result, but it does not work.





Aug 20 2013 | [jeff...@g...](#) | [flag](#) | [comment](#)

Word Alignment

Requester:

▼ [Chris Callison-Burch](#)

HIT Expiration Date: Nov 12, 2013 (9 weeks)

communicativity:  4.05 / 5
generosity :  4.01 / 5
fairness :  4.25 / 5
promptness :  4.01 / 5

Time Allotted:

60 minutes

[What do these scores mean?](#)


Scores based on [95 reviews](#)

Terms of Service violation flags: 1

[Report your experience with this requester »](#)

[Contact Us](#) | [Careers at Amazon](#) | [Developers](#) |

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 For those of you who know Arabic, this is a very solid requester with a very fair pay. Highly recommended for those who want to make some real money Payment usually take one week depending on the HITs you are doing

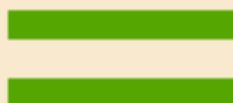
don't waste your time trying to submit machine translated crap, or random answers to multiple choice questions, you will get blocked instantly

Jul 27 2013 | [hala...@h...](#) | [flag](#) | [comment](#)



Chris is one of the better requesters on MTurk, if you meet his qualifications and actually do the work as he requires. Glad to see that someone out there can finally work on those Arabic translation HITs that we've all seen for months now.

Jul 27 2013 [baudelai...@m...](#)

 Good requester. Everything approved in a couple of days. I had no problems. This is a safe requester to work for.

Requester:

▼ [Chris Callison-Burch](#)

HIT Expiration D

Time Allotted:

Tag article

Requester:

What do these scores mean?

HIT Expiration D

Time Allotted:

communicativity:		3.36 / 5
generosity :		3.62 / 5
fairness :		3.92 / 5
promptness :		3.78 / 5

Scores based on [190 reviews](#)

Terms of Service violation flags: 2

[Report your experience with this requester »](#)

FAIR: NO DATA

FAST: NO DATA

PAY: 1 / 5

COMM: NO DATA

Did about 50 of these earlier and was a little weary based on reviews. They all approved which was good for me, but I hope the requester doesn't do the majority rule thing anymore. It seems that's why many got rejected and he doesn't seem to respond to others so do at your own risk.

Jan 19 2016 | [dancab...@y...](#) |

FAIR: 5 / 5

FAST: 5 / 5

PAY: 5 / 5

COMM: NO DATA

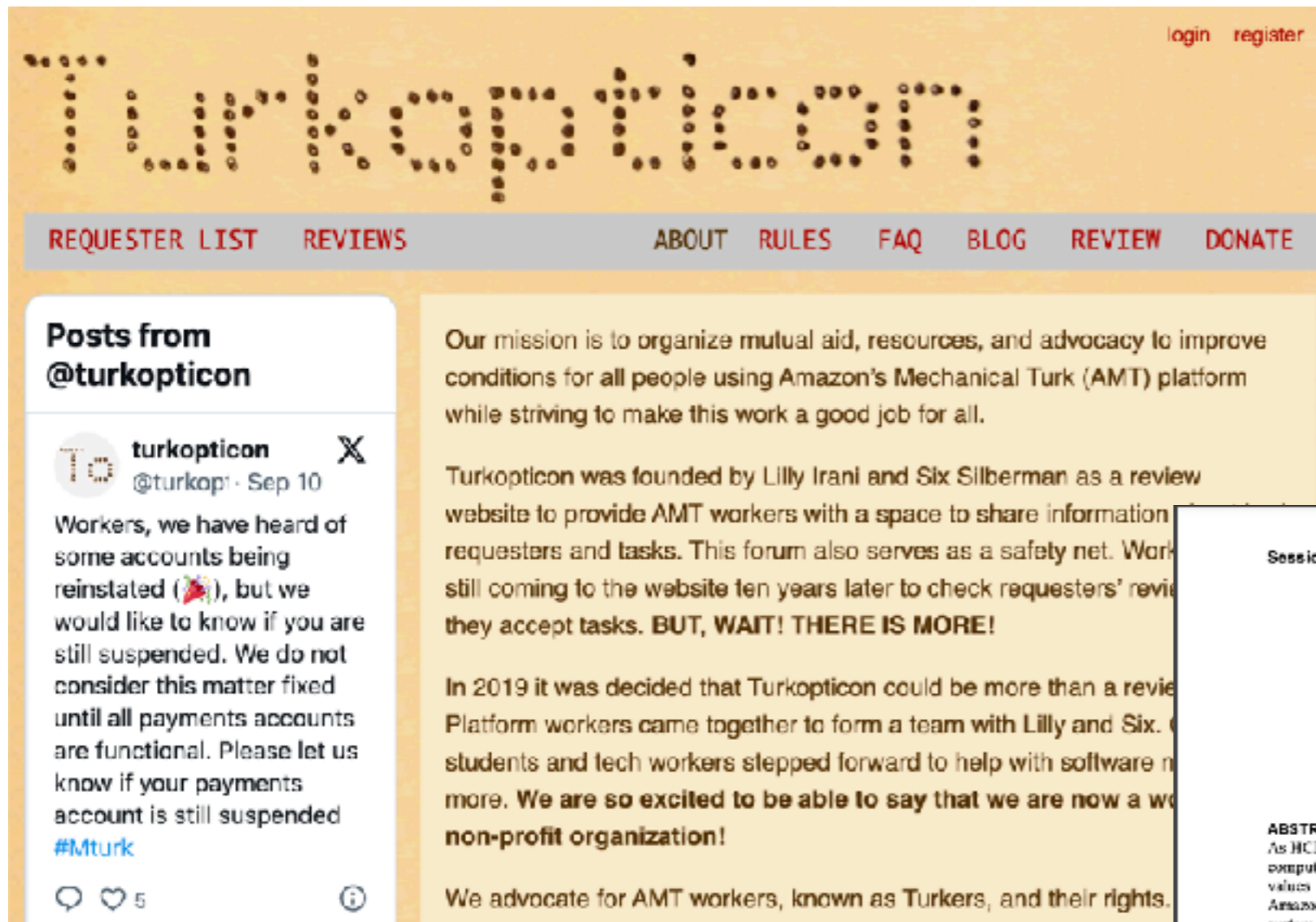
HIT(s):

Determine whether or not sentences are true; Translation from Russian to English

I've done a few of the "Determine whether or not sentences are true" HITs for this requester, which were great, paid fairly, in my opinion and took just a couple hours to approve and pay.

I also did many translations from Russian to English and all of them got approved. Pay on these varies because it's 4 sentences per HIT for 30c but sometimes sentences are very long, sometimes very short.

Long term impact



The screenshot shows the Turkopticon website. At the top right, there are links for 'login' and 'register'. The main header features the word 'Turko**p**ticon' in a dot-matrix font. Below this is a navigation bar with links: 'REQUESTER LIST', 'REVIEWS', 'ABOUT', 'RULES', 'FAQ', 'BLOG', 'REVIEW', and 'DONATE'. On the left, there is a section titled 'Posts from @turko**p**ticon' featuring a tweet from 'turko**p**ticon' dated Sep 10. The tweet text reads: 'Workers, we have heard of some accounts being reinstated (👍), but we would like to know if you are still suspended. We do not consider this matter fixed until all payments accounts are functional. Please let us know if your payments account is still suspended #Mturk'. The main content area contains a mission statement: 'Our mission is to organize mutual aid, resources, and advocacy to improve conditions for all people using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (AMT) platform while striving to make this work a good job for all.' Below this is a paragraph: 'Turko**p**ticon was founded by Lilly Irani and Six Silberman as a review website to provide AMT workers with a space to share information about requesters and tasks. This forum also serves as a safety net. Workers still coming to the website ten years later to check requesters' reviews they accept tasks. **BUT, WAIT! THERE IS MORE!**' Another paragraph follows: 'In 2019 it was decided that Turko**p**ticon could be more than a review website. Platform workers came together to form a team with Lilly and Six. Other students and tech workers stepped forward to help with software development more. **We are so excited to be able to say that we are now a worker-owned non-profit organization!**' The final paragraph states: 'We advocate for AMT workers, known as Turkers, and their rights.'

Session: Smart Tools, Smart Work

CHI 2013: Changing Perspectives, Paris, France

Turko**p**ticon: Interrupting Worker Invisibility in Amazon Mechanical Turk

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ABSTRACT

As HCI researchers have explored the possibilities of human computation, they have paid less attention to ethics and values of crowdsourcing. This paper offers an analysis of Amazon Mechanical Turk, a popular human computation system, as a site of technically mediated worker-employer relations. We argue that human computation currently relies on worker invisibility. We then present Turko**p**ticon, an activist system that allows workers to publicize and evaluate their relationships with employers. As a common infrastructure, Turko**p**ticon also enables workers to engage one another in mutual aid. We conclude by discussing the potentials and challenges of sustaining activist technologies that intervene in large, existing socio-technical systems.

Author Keywords

Activism; infrastructure; human computation; Amazon Mechanical Turk; design; ethics

ACM Classification Keywords

H.5.m. Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI): Miscellaneous.

INTRODUCTION

Crowdsourcing and human computation are often described

year of deployment. The system receives 100,000 page views a month and has become a staple tool for many AMT workers, installed over 7,000 times at time of writing.

Turko**p**ticon allows workers to create and use reviews of employers when choosing employers on AMT. Building and maintaining the system, as well as communicating about the system with workers, has offered us a distinct vantage point into the social processes of designing interventions into large-scale, real world systems. Turko**p**ticon supports a thriving collective of workers engaged in mutual aid, brought together by our simple browser extension and web-based technology.

This paper makes several contributions. First, it offers a case study designing an intervention into a highly distributed micro labor system. Second, it shows an example of systems design incorporating tools feminist analysis and reflexivity. Rather than conducting HCI research to reveal and represent values and positions, and then building systems to resolve those political differences, we built a system to make worker-employer relations visible and to provoke ethical and political debate. Third, this paper contributes lessons learned from intervening in existing, large-scale socio-

Turker Nation discussion boards

- Founded by Christy Milland
- A watering hole for Turkers to discuss MTurk and Requesters
- Has a Requester Hall of Fame / Shame
- Lots of engaging conversation
- Sometime people vent their frustration

crowd-workers.com

- CCB developed a browser plug-in that will improve the MTurk UX for Workers
- The idea is to track and aggregate statistics across many workers, so that they have better information
- Academically, was interested in these questions
 - a) How much time does the average Turker spend working?
 - b) What is their hourly rate?
 - c) How reputable are requesters (what fraction of the HITs do they approve v. reject)?
 - d) How much time to workers spend searching v working?

qualitative v quantitative

TurkOpticon's qualitative attributes	CrowdWorker's quantitative equivalents
promptness: How promptly has this requester approved your work and paid?	Expected time to payment: On average, how much time elapses between submitting work to this Requester and receiving payment?
generosity: How well has this requester paid for the amount of time their HITs take?	Average hourly rate: What is the average hourly rate that other Turker make when they do this requester's HITs?
fairness: How fair has this requester been in approving or rejecting your work?	Approval/rejection rates: What percent of assignments does this Requester approve? What percent of first-time Workers get any work rejected?
communicativity: How responsive has this requester been to communications or concerns you have raised?	Reasons for rejection: Archive of all of the reasons for Workers being rejected or blocked by this Requester.

Search for HIT Minimum hourly rate Rate

Discover

Here are HITs that other Crowd Workers completed. You can sort by the hourly rate averaged across all workers, and other features.

Hitgroup name, description and keywords	Requester	HITs available	Hourly rate	Reward
<p>Parents of 11- to 18-month-olds: Complete an online study with your child about intuitive probability! go to MTurk page</p> <p>For parents/guardians to complete with child aged 11 to 18 months ONLY: participate in a web-based experiment about how your child makes predictions. baby,babies,infant,children,child,parenting,kids,parents,causal,reasoning,probability,cognitive,development,learning,psychology,experiment</p>	Lookit	1	\$590.55	\$2.50
<p>Website Content Review 6 go to MTurk page</p> <p>Search "warburg pincus healthcare". List the 1st option in the top navigation bar, of the 1st search result for payment. warburg,pincus,healthcare</p>	Cam Elizabeth Harvey	1	\$29.03	\$0.03
<p>App Usage Study go to MTurk page</p> <p>Testing new apps for mobile devices over a 12-day period survey,apps,mobile</p>	Gracy P.	1	\$25.18	\$8.00
<p>Website Content Review 43 go to MTurk page</p> <p>Search 'cramercy emerging markets high yield fund'. List the title of the 2nd option in the website navigation menu of the 1st search result for</p>	Cam Elizabeth	1	\$23.79	\$0.03

The Advantage of a Clear View

TurkerView is designed to bridge the gap between workers & requesters through data & communication.



Wage Aggregates



Reward Sentiment



Communication Scores



Approval Tracking

Wage Aggregate Tracking

This is fairly straightforward: we take the completion time & the reward amount (where available) and calculate the average hourly rate for the task. We then apply that number to a simple range based on US minimum wage standards to color-code the data for easy to digest numerical data.

Color	Pay Range (Hourly)	Explanation
RED	< \$7.25 / hr	Hourly averages below US Federal minimum wage
ORANGE	\$7.25 - \$10.00 / hr	Hourly averages between Federal & highest statewide (CA) minimum wages.
GREEN	> \$10.00 / hr	Hourly averages above all US minimum wage standards

Data Driven by TurkerViewJS

TurkerViewJS is the engine behind TurkerView. An efficient collection process combined with a user-friendly interface encourages more frequent worker input & allows for the refinement of aggregate data in real time.

Our API also allows users access to real-time data about HITs and requesters. Users can feel confident with the knowledge that our platform has vetted thousands of requesters who treat workers fairly.

Requester: **The Wharton School** Title: **Complete a 5 minute survey for \$0.10 plus**

TurkerView The Wharton School Ratings (2429)

Pay Rate: \$15.73 / hr
 Pay Sentiment: Good (3)
 Approval: 1-3 days
 Communication: Excellent

✓ No Rejections ✓ No Blocks

[Overview](#) [Reviews](#)

Your Review Ratings (33)

Pay Rate: \$18.01 / hr

TurkerView HIT Ratings (23)

\$10.38 / avg hr
 00:10:62 avg time

▼ \$4.12 / hr (lowest)
 ▲ \$28.42 / hr (highest)

Workers' concerns

- Wage issues: unfairly rejected work, slow payment, and payments that do not fairly reflect the work that they performed
- No appeals process for unfairly rejected work. Requestors can be unresponsive.
- Grass roots tools, user-maintained ratings/blacklist of requestors

Requesters' concerns

- Quality: Workers may do substandard work or more blatantly cheat
- Cheating by randomly clicking or typing, using scripts to enter useless input, or giving answers that are not useful, but just relevant enough to get payment
- No ability to judge workers' skills or qualifications in advance
- Often difficult to automatically judge the quality of work

Market for Lemons

When a buyer cannot accurately judge the quality of an individual product prior to committing to its purchase, this leads the buyer to average the quality of all similar products in their decision as to how much to pay. This creates an incentive for sellers to lower the quality of their goods, since they will be paid an average price in any case, and thus they can benefit more from each transaction if the payment they receive is greater than the value of what they gave in return. Good workers, on the other hand, tend to leave the market because they get paid less than their actual value. The result is that the market decreases in overall quality, resulting in a market that sells only poor quality items, i.e., lemons.

Think-Pair-Share

- Consider the balance of power between requesters and workers on Mechanical Turk. How might this impact **the quality and reliability** of the work done on the platform?

System Design Guidelines

Bederson and Quinn (ALT CHI 2011)

- Provide **hourly pay** and **disclose the expected wage**
- **Value workers' time** and optimize tasks to use worker's time effectively
- Use **Objective quality metrics** to approve or reject
- **Give immediate feedback** to workers on their quality, and warnings to problematic workers

System Design Guidelines

Bederson and Quinn (ALT CHI 2011)

- Define **payment terms** including how quickly payments will be paid, and follow them.
- **Provide a grievance process** for workers who were treated unfairly. Removes the imbalance of power.
- **Provide task context**: Makes work more satisfying to workers, and lets them make informed ethical choices about what work to do
- **Limit anonymity**: Anonymity of requestors enables them to reject work with impunity. Anonymity for workers enables them to cheat with nearly no risk

Who are the Turkers?

<u>Worker ID</u>
A1H11P4QSM08Y1
A3O7D2TTK99UK5
ASB13NJKTGCYB
A1BM57TUNAQIXM
A3445FTO62DGIX
AYSX5GNO640MZ
AQ4U04TRENETA

- Requesters are given very little information about Turkers - basically just a serial number
- No names, no demographic information (like what languages they speak)
- Who are these people who work for us?

Implications for anonymity of crowd workers

- Cannot assume that they have a particular set of skills
- They should be treated as non-experts
- It important to design tasks to be simple and easy to understand
- Quality control is a significant challenge

Question

- How could you learn more about who exactly is Turking?

Who are the Turkers?

- Post a HIT to interview them!
- Panos Ipeirotis has a nice demographic survey on his blog “A Computer Scientist In Business School”
- Age, Gender, Education Levels, Marital Status, Household Income, Weekly earnings. **Why do you it?**
- India versus USA

Demographics of Mechanical Turk

Panos Ipeirotis

Department of Information, Operation, and Management Sciences

Leonard N. Stern School of Business

New York University

Abstract

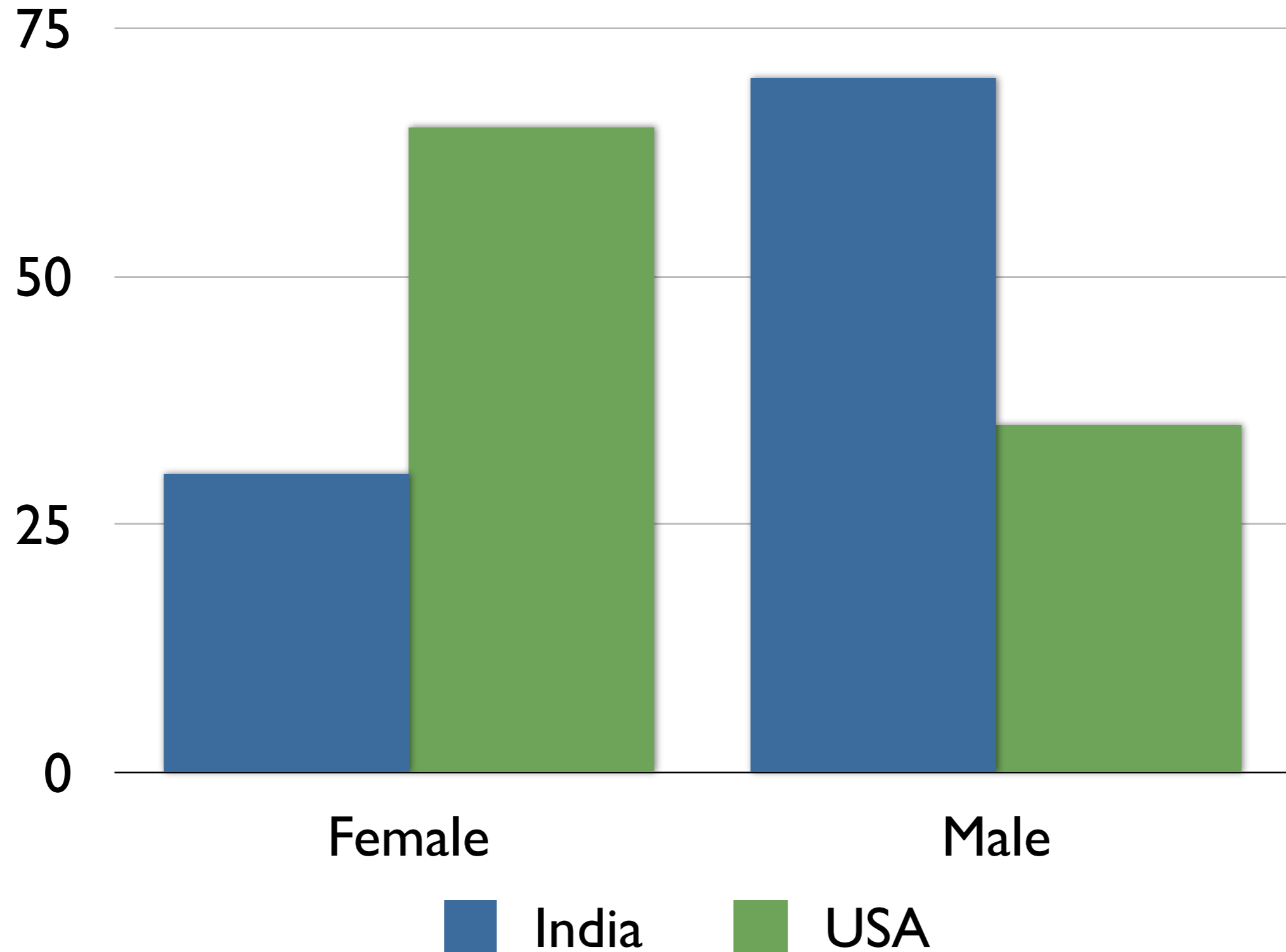
We present the results of a survey that collected information about the demographics of participants on Amazon Mechanical Turk, together with information about their level of activity and motivation for working on Amazon Mechanical Turk. We find that approximately 50% of the workers come from the United States and 40% come from India. Country of origin tends to change the motivating reasons for workers to participate in the marketplace. Significantly more workers from India participate on Mechanical Turk because the online marketplace is a primary source of income, while in the US most workers consider Mechanical Turk a secondary source of income. While money is a primary motivating reason for workers to participate in the marketplace, workers also cite a variety of other motivating reasons, including entertainment and education.

Prior Findings

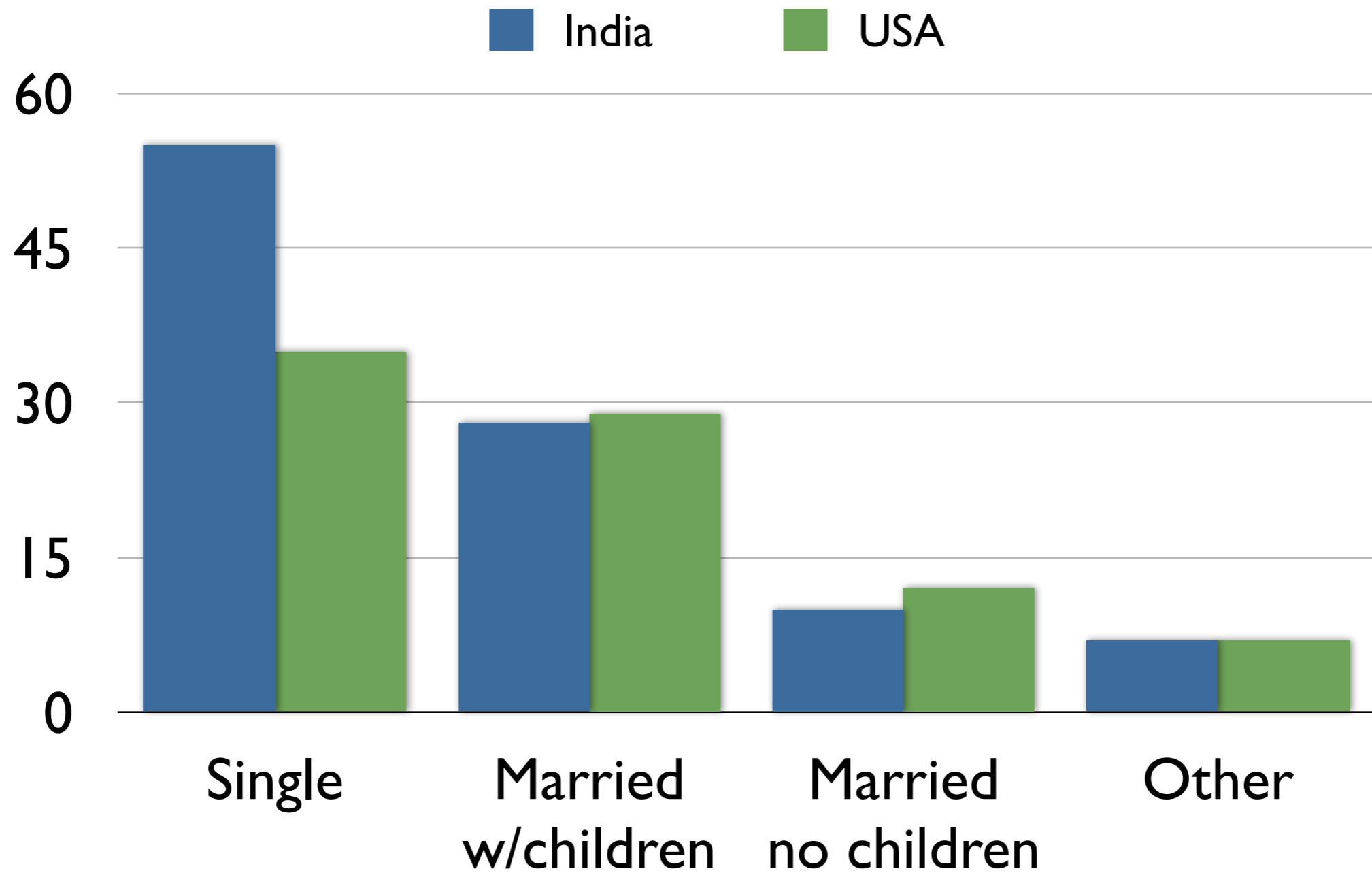
Amazon.com, until recently, was paying in cash only workers that had a bank account in the US. All other workers could still participate on Amazon Mechanical Turk but the only way to be compensated was to get paid using an Amazon.com gift card. This policy discouraged workers from other countries, and the majority of the workers were from the United States (typically 70%-80% of the participants – see <http://behind-the-enemy-lines.blogspot.com/2008/03/mechanical-turk-demographics.html>). Extensive surveys, conducted by multiple parties, confirmed that finding. The main findings of earlier surveys indicated that Mechanical Turk workers are relatively representative of the population of US Internet users (<http://behind-the-enemy-lines.blogspot.com/2009/03/turker-demographics-vs-internet.html>), but with the following biases:

- Turkers are younger. 54% of Turkers are between 21-35 years old, compared to 22% of the general population.
- Turkers are mainly female. 70% of the Turkers are female, compared to 50% of the general population.
- Turkers have lower income. 65% of Turkers have household income less than 60K, compared to 45% of the general population.
- Turkers have smaller families. 55% of Turkers do not have children, compared to the 40% of the general population.
- Geographical distribution of Turkers and Internet users is similar.
- Race composition of Turkers and Internet users is similar, although there are slightly more Asians on Mechanical Turk.

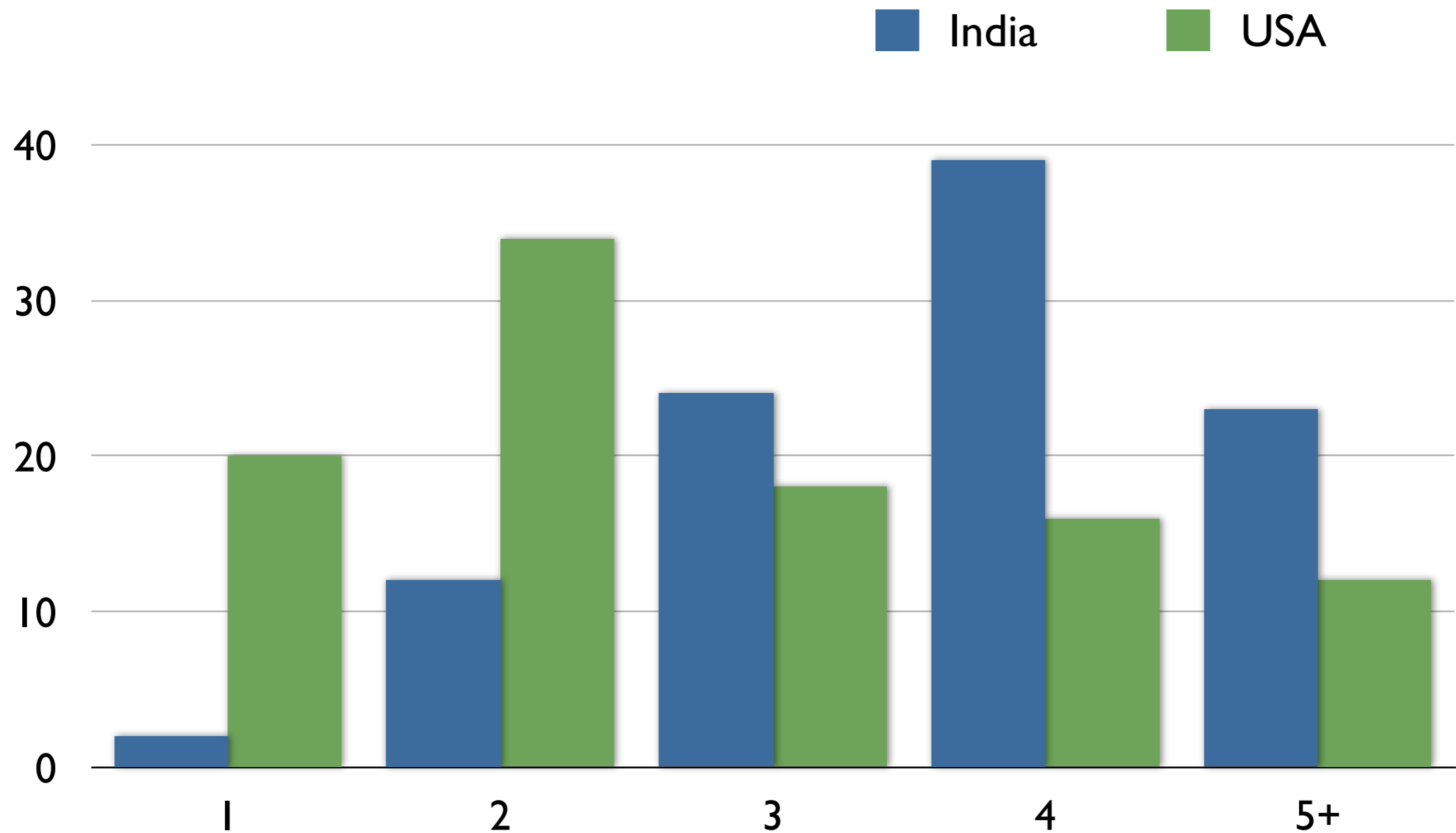
Gender breakdown



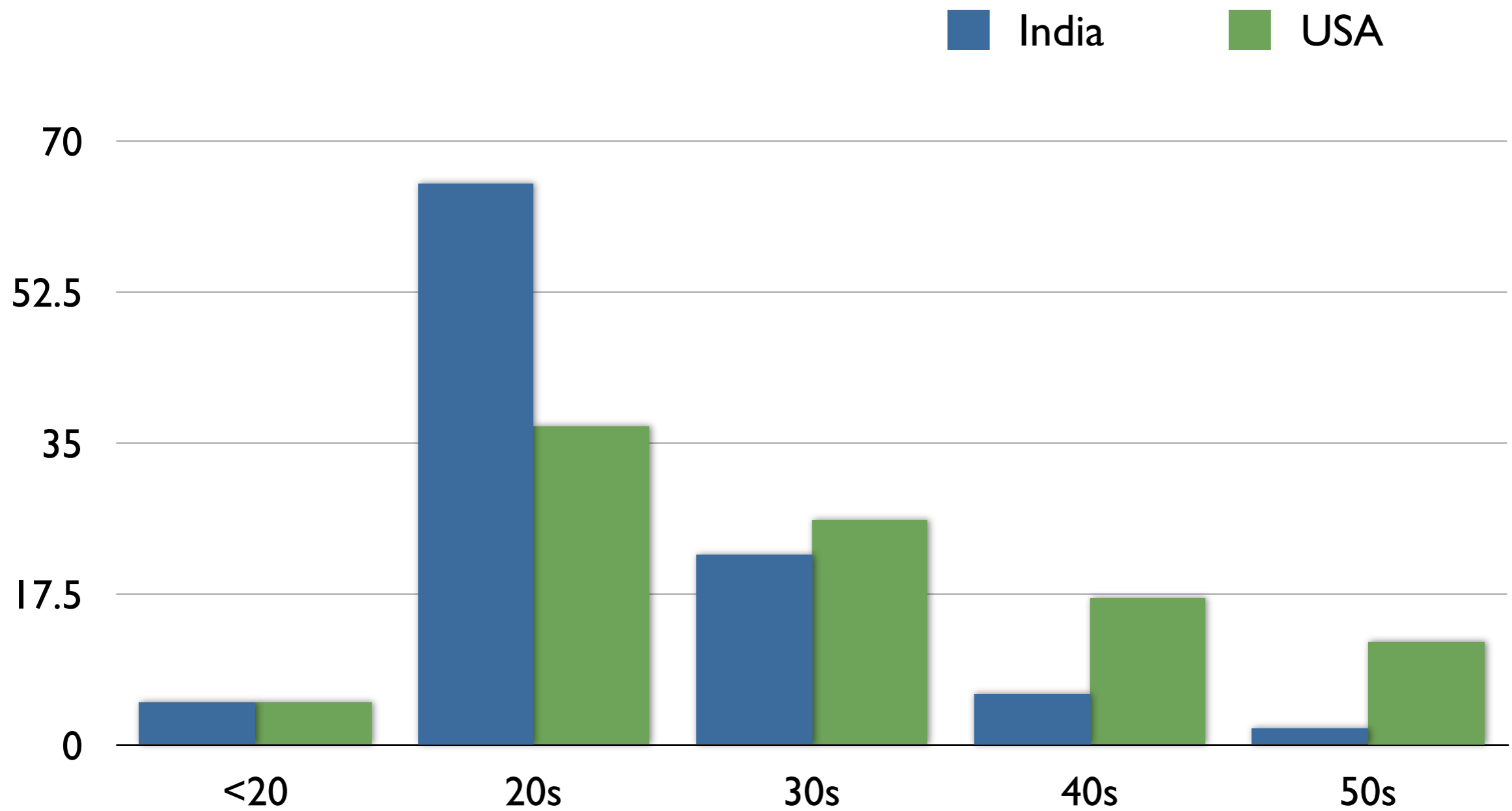
Marital status



Household sizes

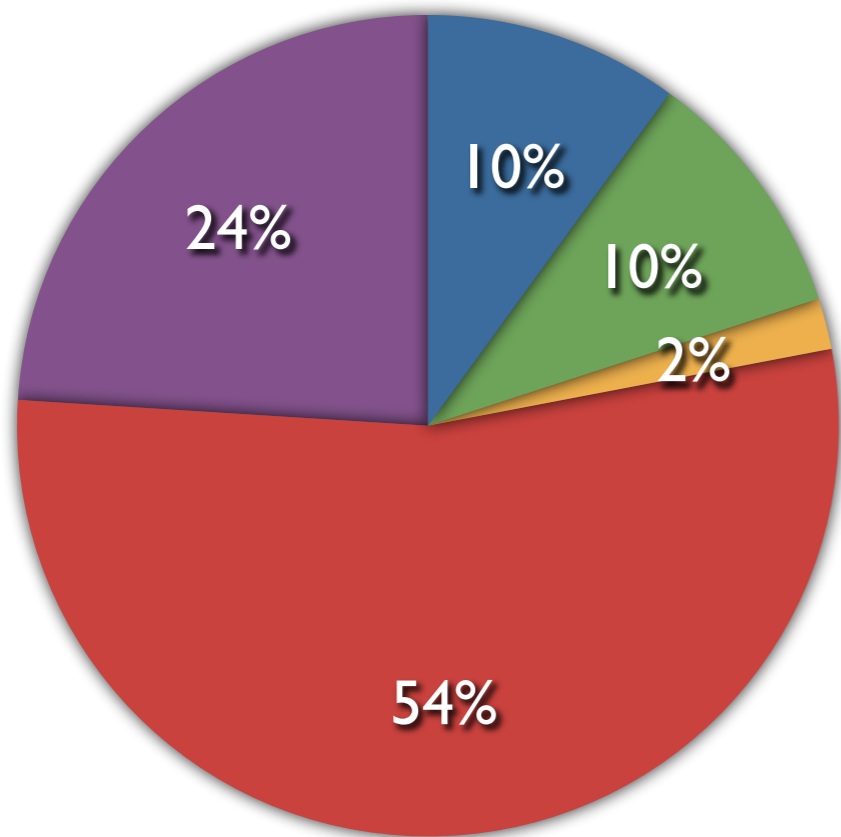


Age distribution

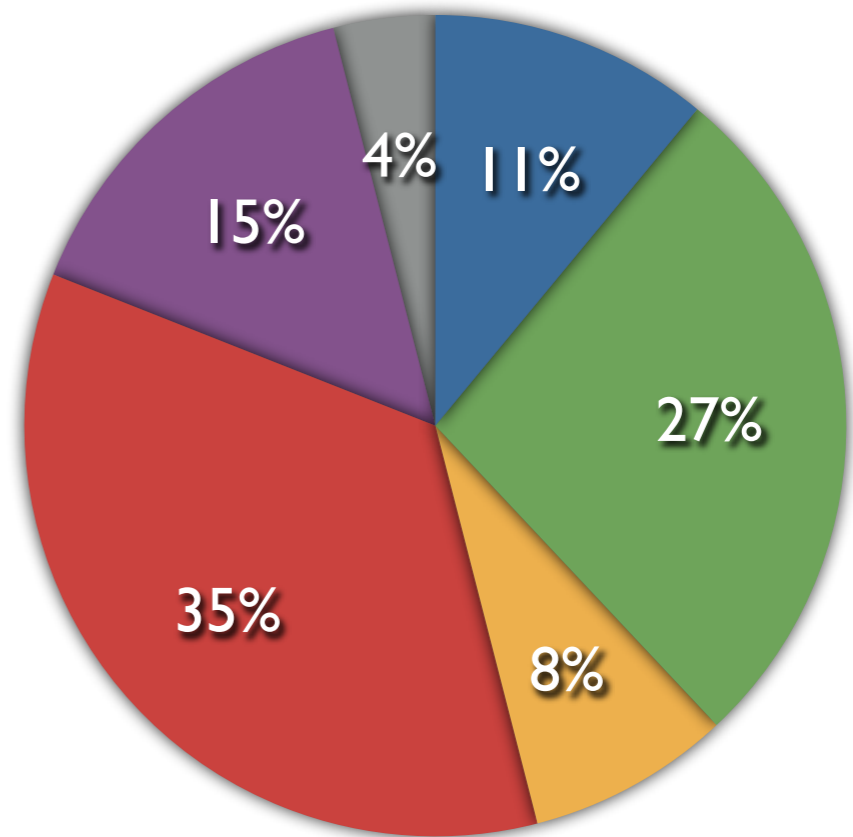


Education level

India

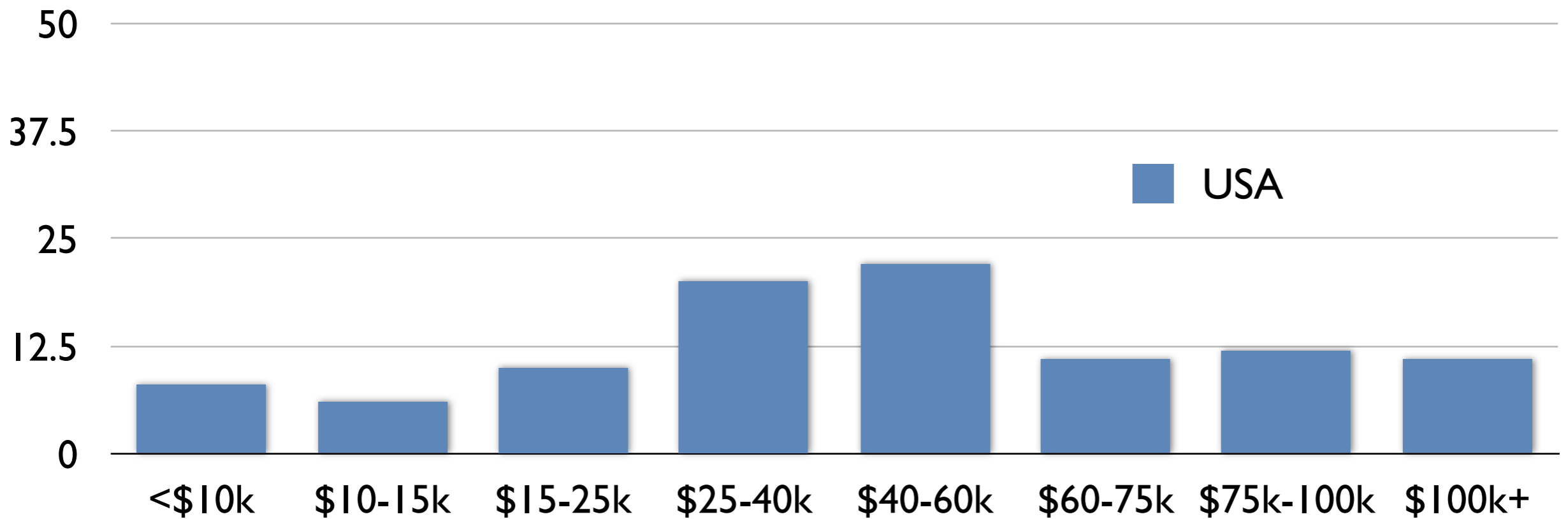
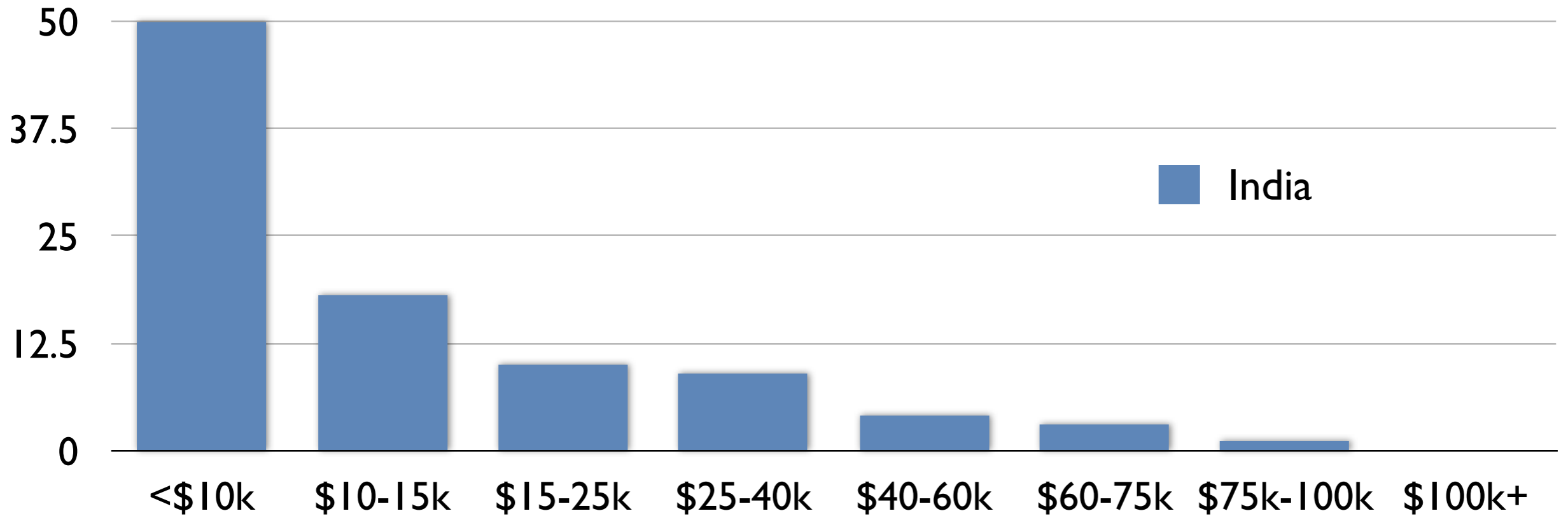


USA

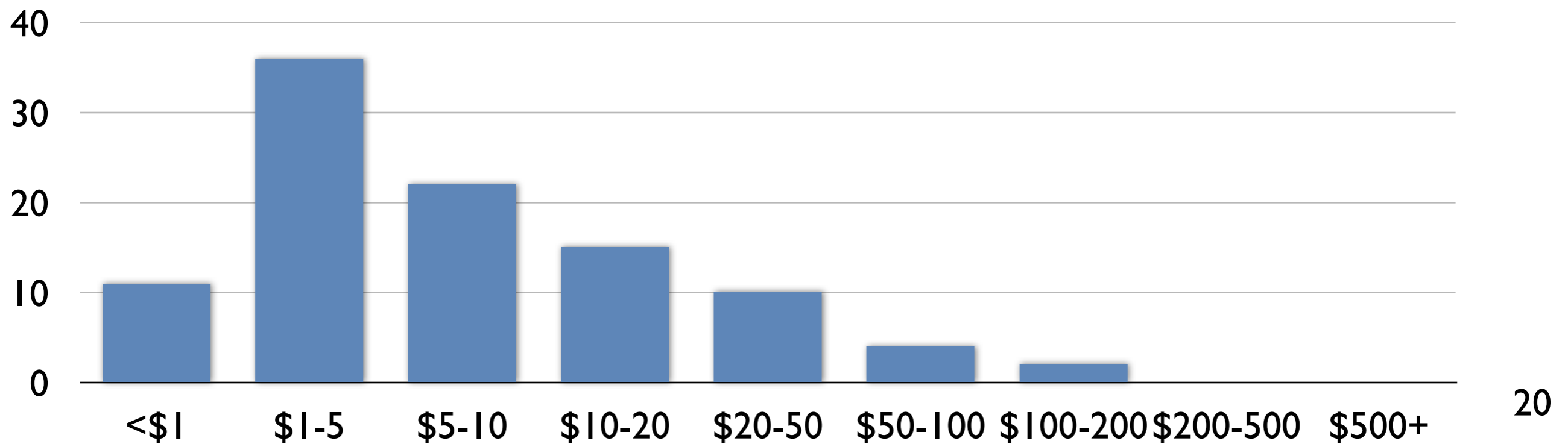
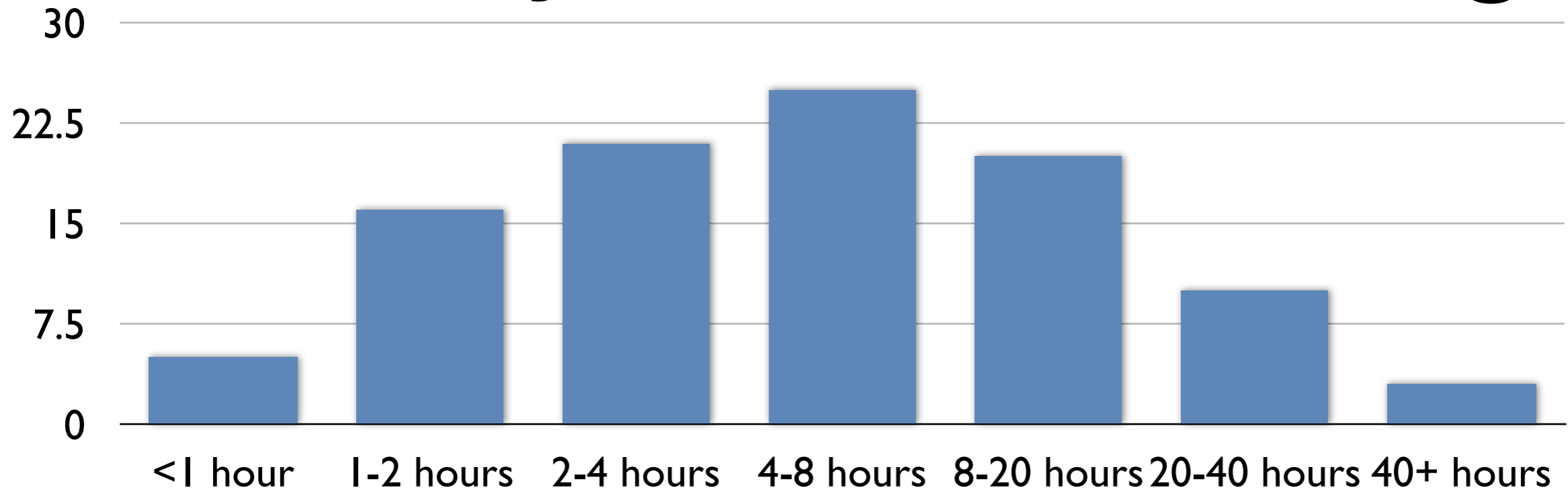


- High School
- Some college
- Associates
- Bachelors
- Masters
- PhD

Household Incomes



Weekly hours, earnings

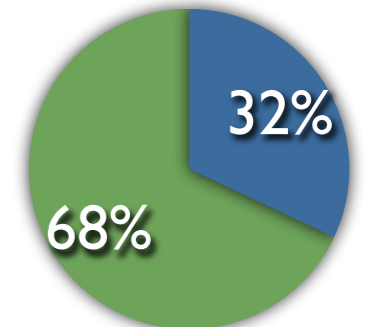
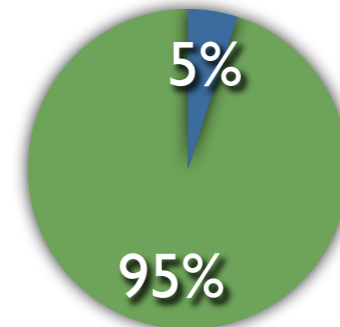


Why do you do it?

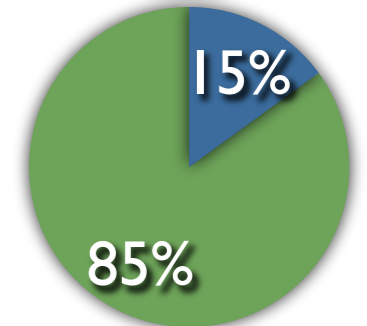
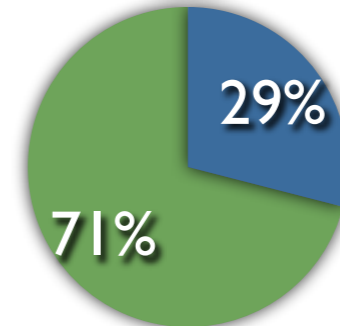
India

USA

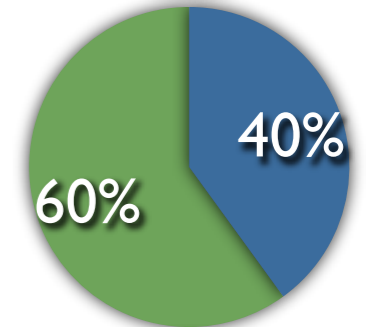
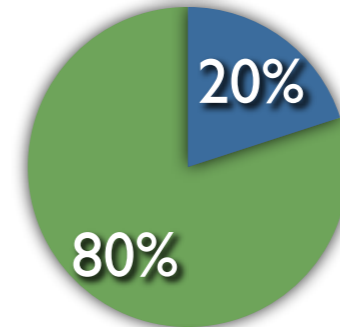
I use MTurk to kill time



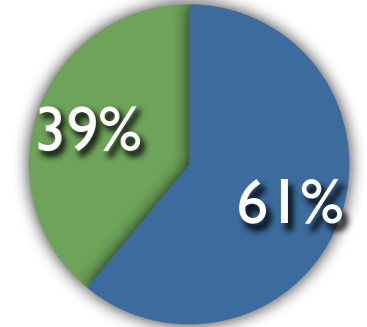
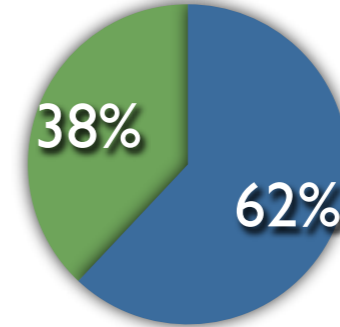
Primary source of income



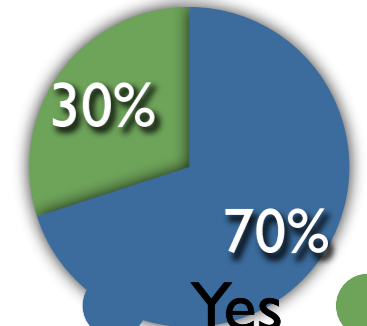
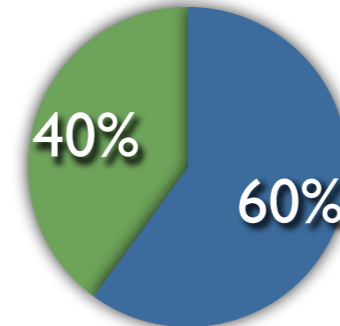
I participate on MTurk for fun



Secondary source of income or for pocket change



Fruitful way to spend free time and get cash (instead of TV)



● Yes ● No

Survey Methodology

- Ask 1000 Turkers to fill out questionnaire
- Pay them each \$0.10 for ~3 minutes
- Do you think that the methodology was good?
- Do you think it yields an accurate sample of Turkers?
- **Any bias? (pause to reflect)**



American National Election Studies

<http://www.electionstudies.org>

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To serve the research needs of social scientists, teachers, students, policy makers and journalists, the ANES produces high quality data from its own surveys on voting, public opinion, and political participation.



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Is there something that would make you vote for a Republican presidential candidate? Please list as many reasons as you can think of.



<http://www.electionstudies.org>

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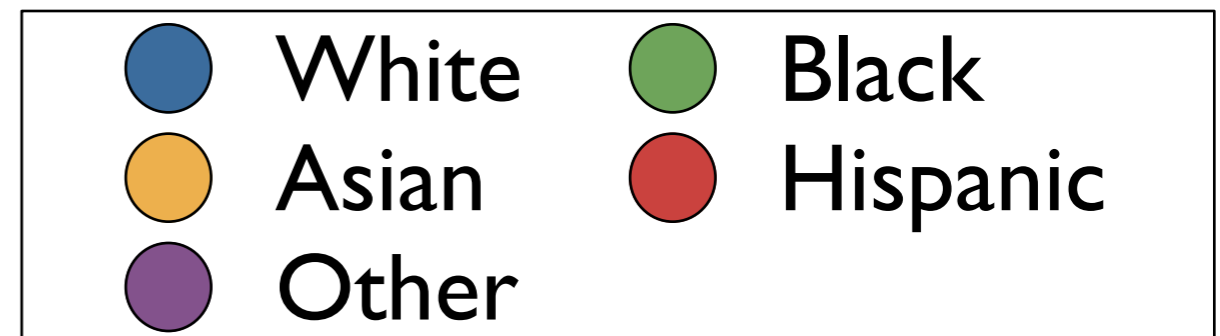
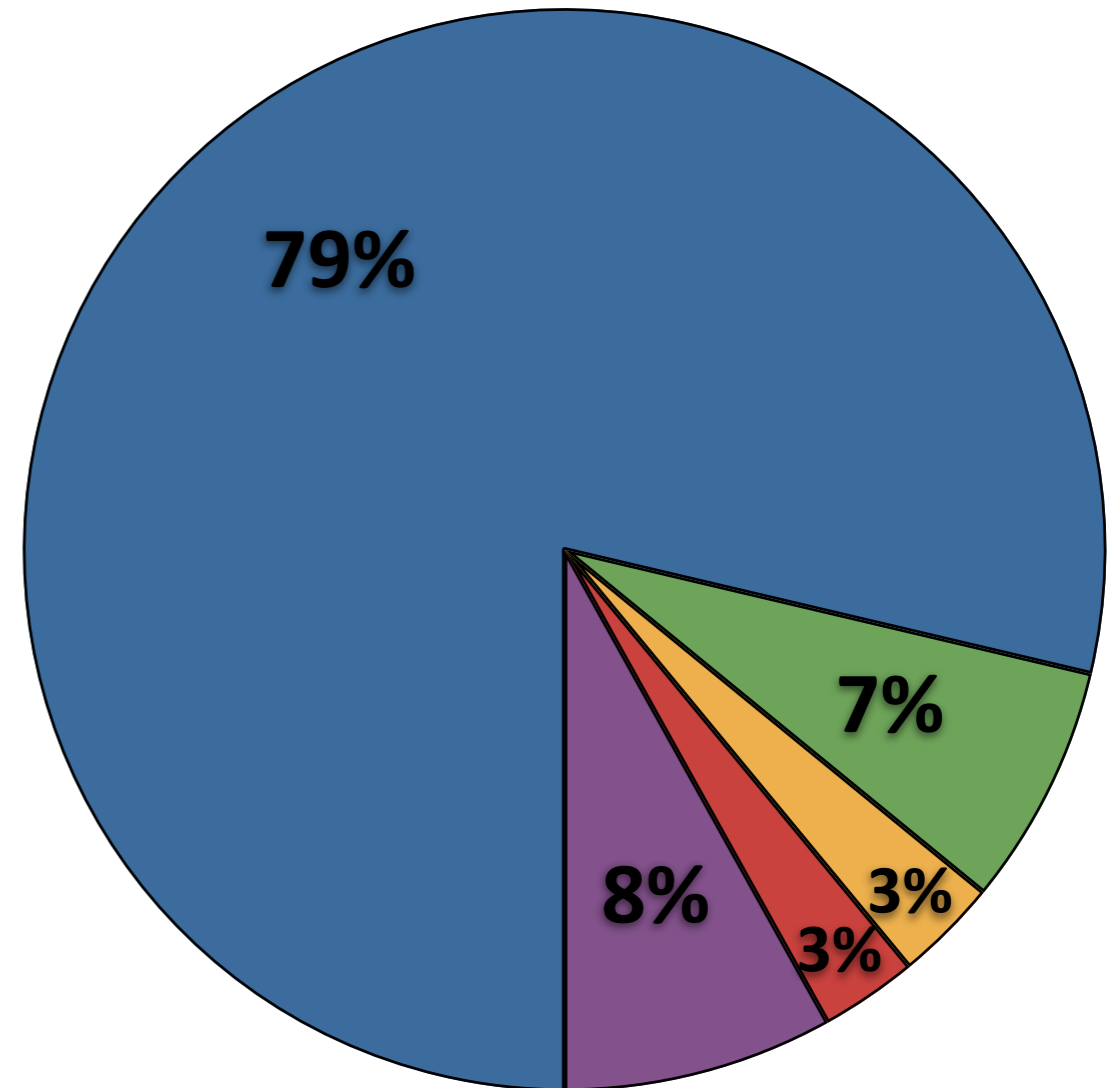
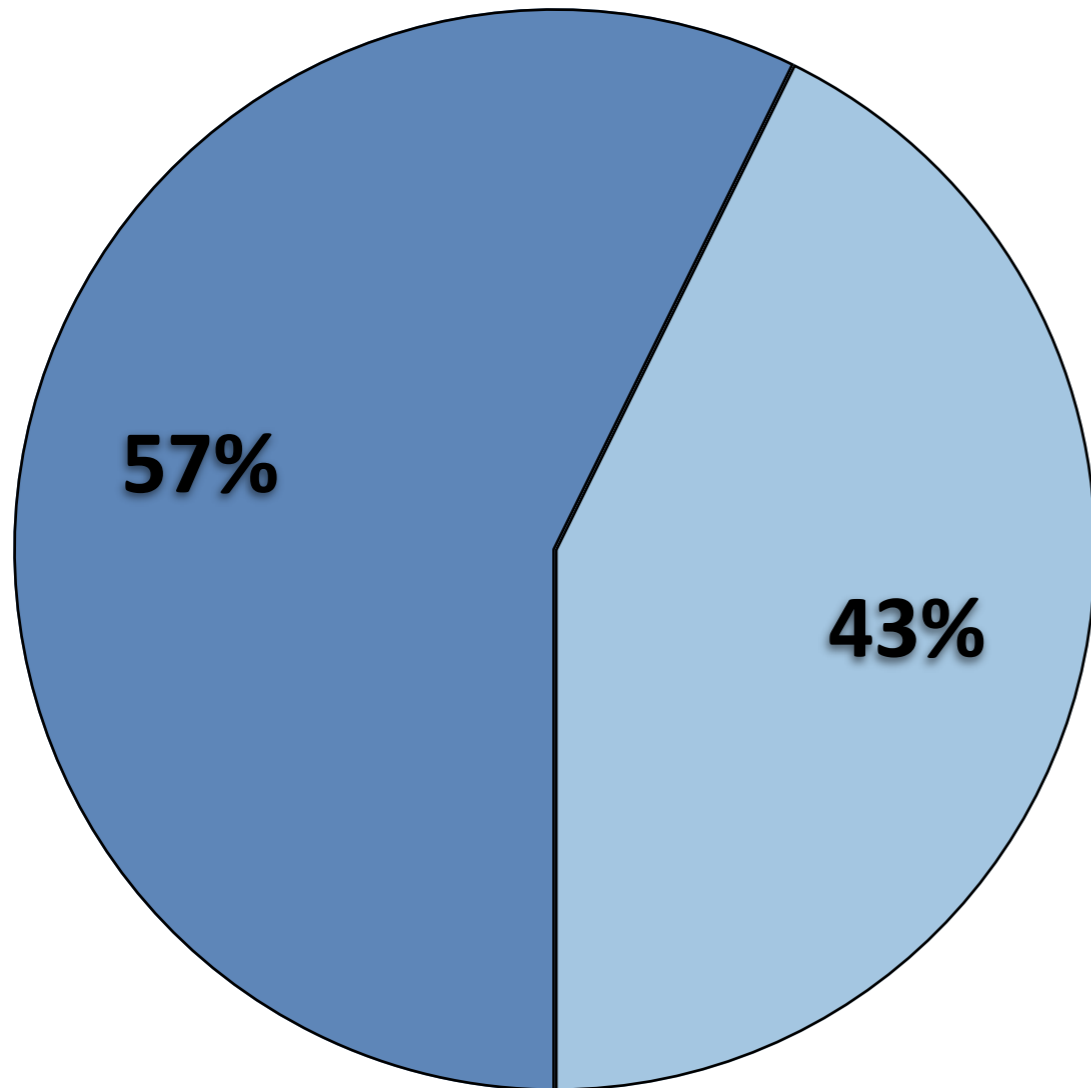
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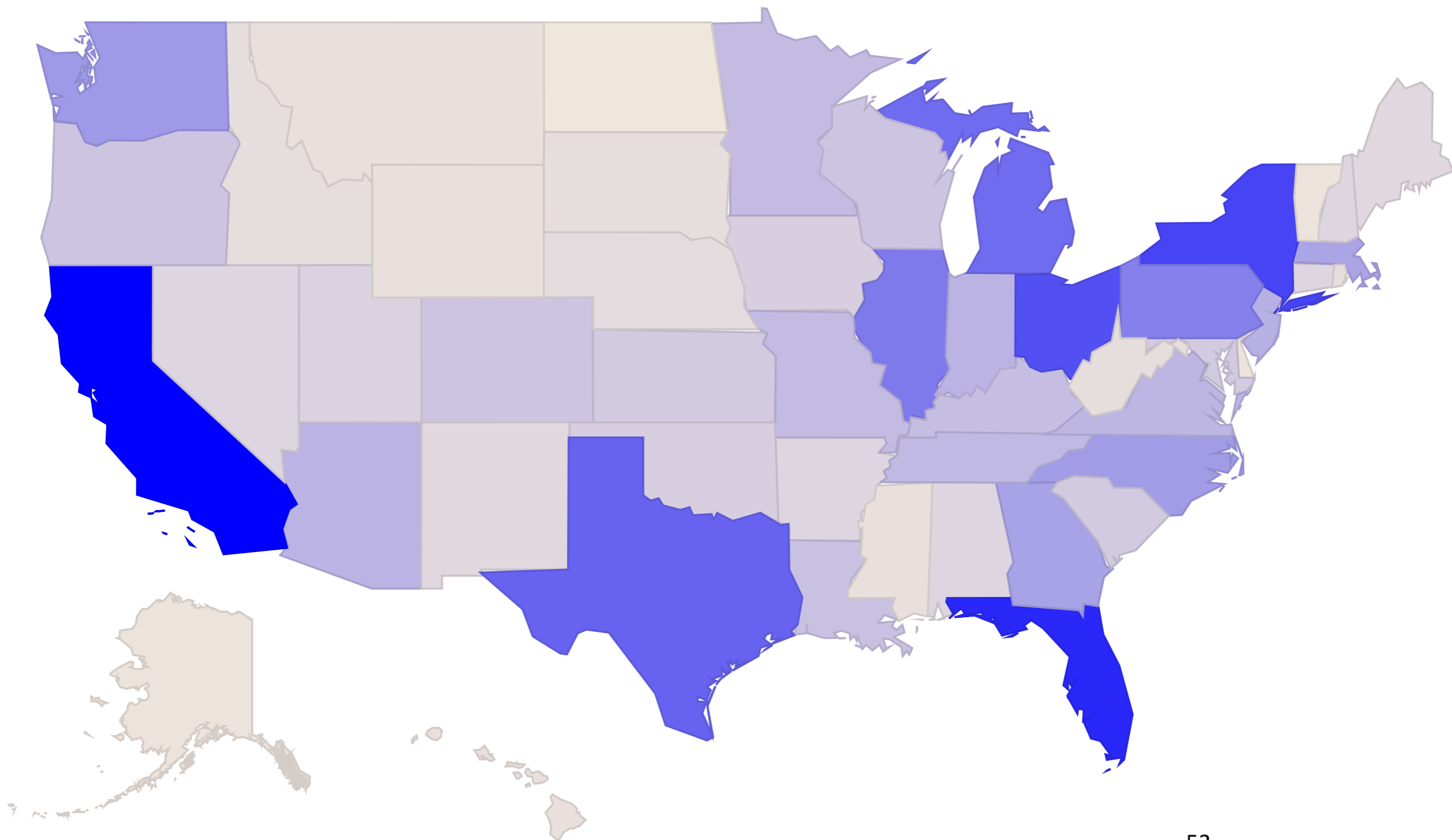
Is there something that would make you vote for a Republican presidential candidate? Please list as many reasons as you can think of.

We are interested in how people are getting along financially these days. Would you say that you / you and your family are **BETTER** off or **WORSE** off than you were a year ago?

Demographics

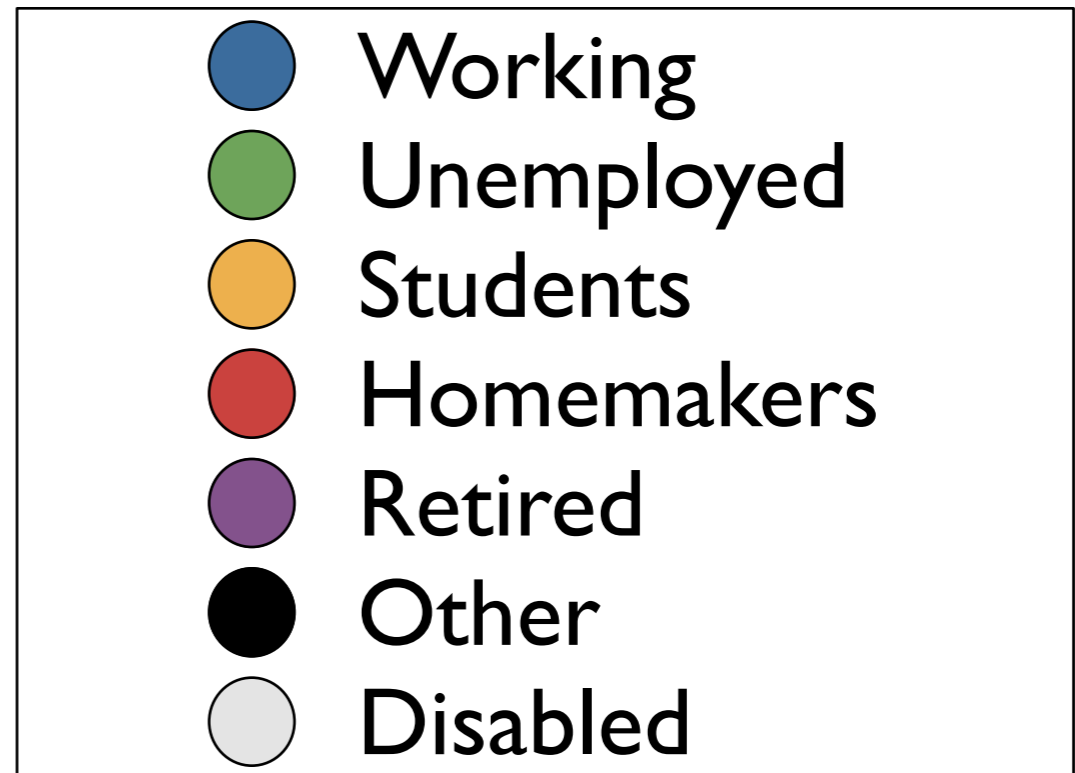
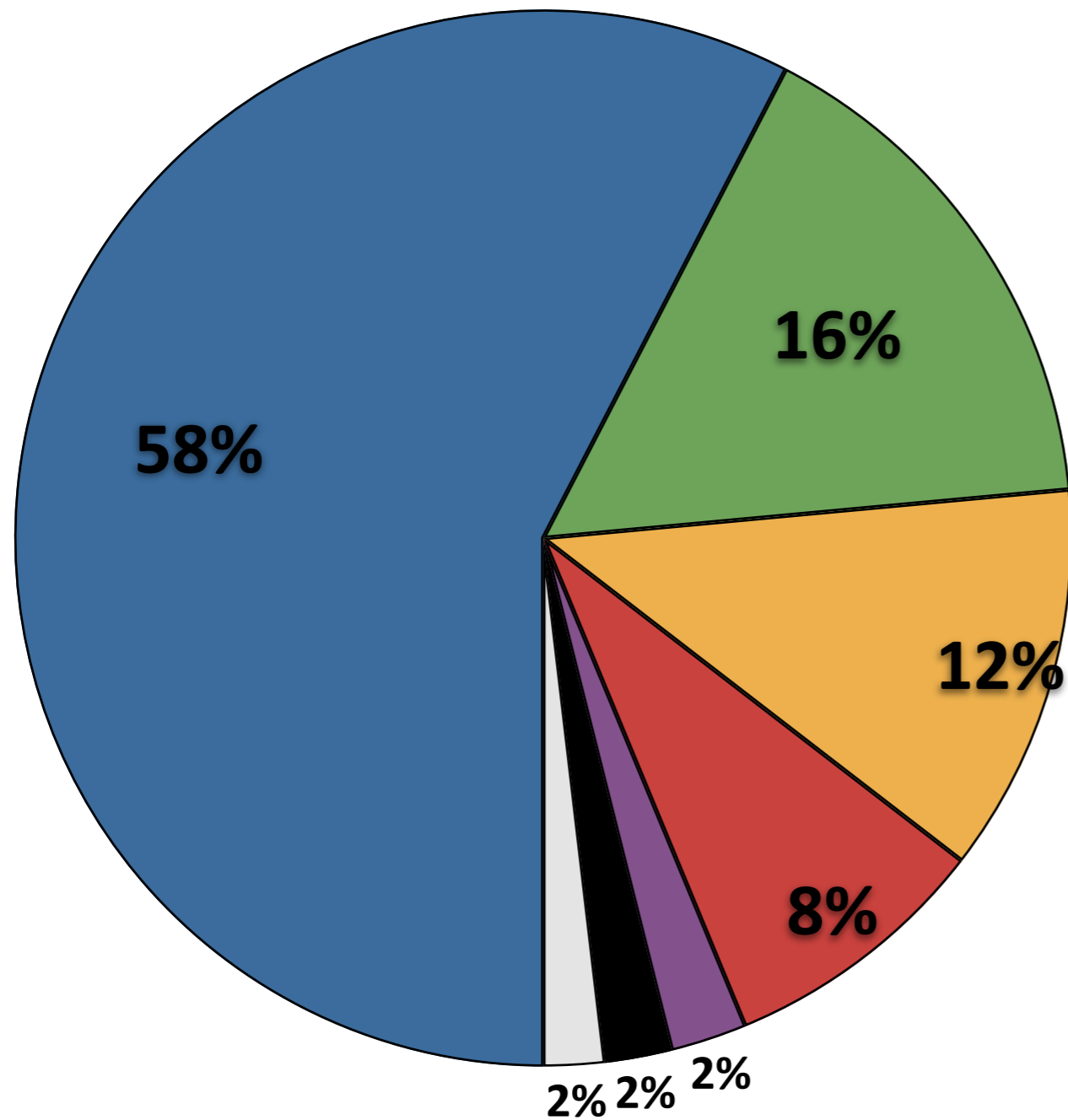


Geographic distribution

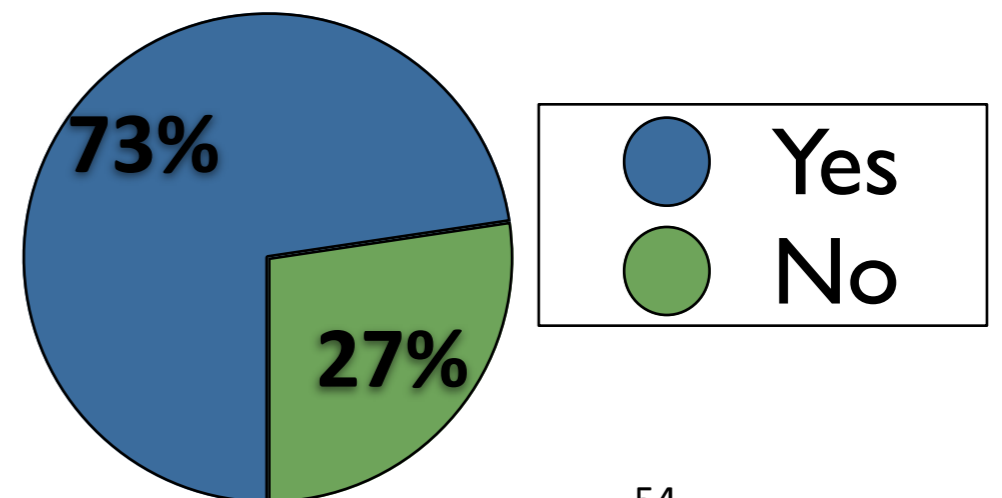


0 81

Employment status



Had a job in last 6 months?



My jobs have always consisted of customer service, cashier at a gas station, grocery store, etc. Currently, I am not employed. I stay at home and care for my disabled son.

I am an event planner for a non-profit organization. I plan events, coordinate auctions, solicit donations from corporations and individuals

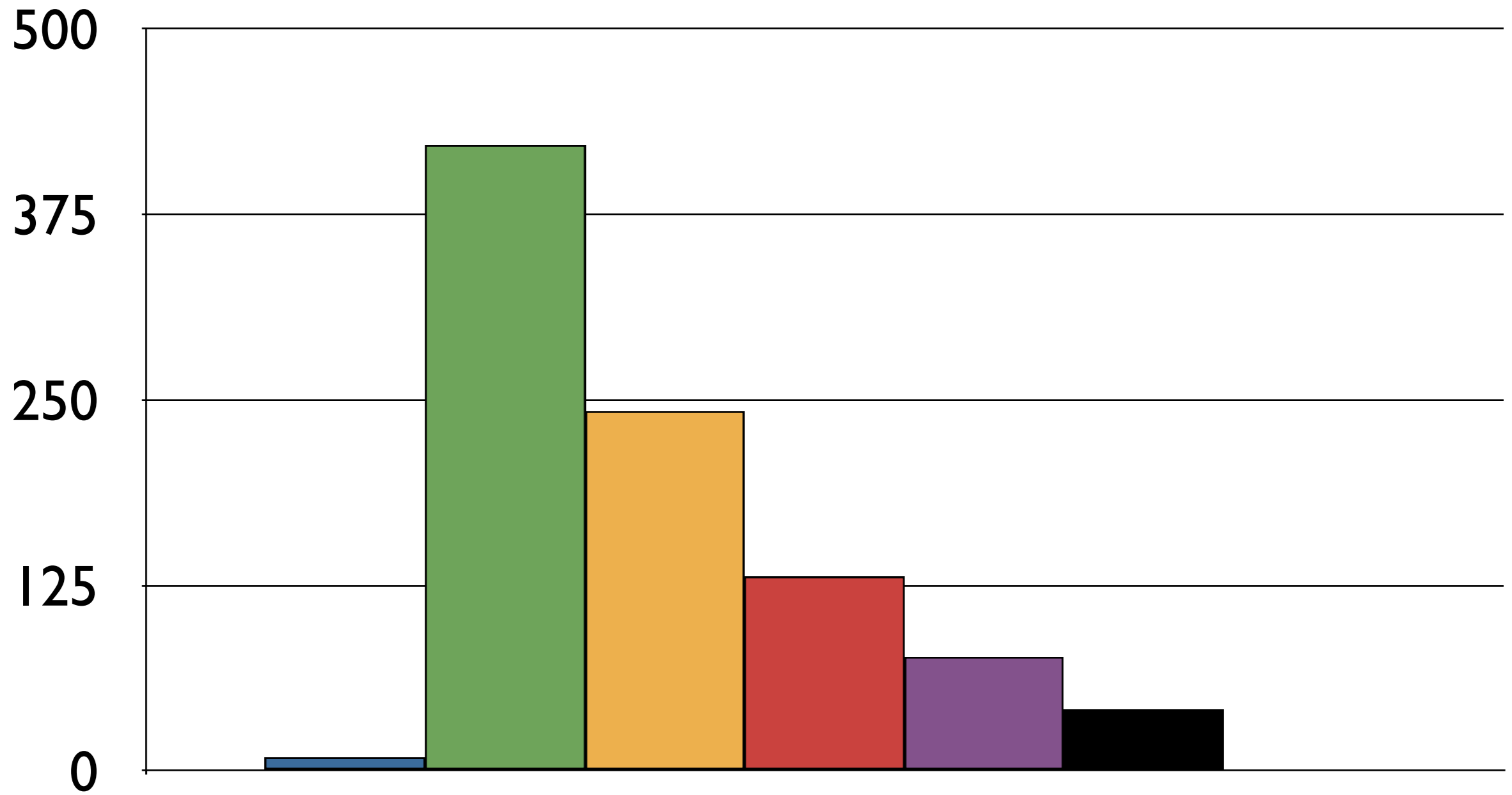
My last job was working in a subshop called Jimmy Johns. My duties were to make subs, as well as cleaning up during my shift and at close

My last regular job was for the U.S. Census Bureau. My job involved going door to door in my town and neighboring towns in my county and interviewing residents

My last job was at Walgreens. I was a cashier overnight. Now, I am unemployed and I make very little money on mturk.

I am an energy efficiency analyst working at a utility. I oversee evaluation of our energy efficiency programs so that their impact can be accurately estimated

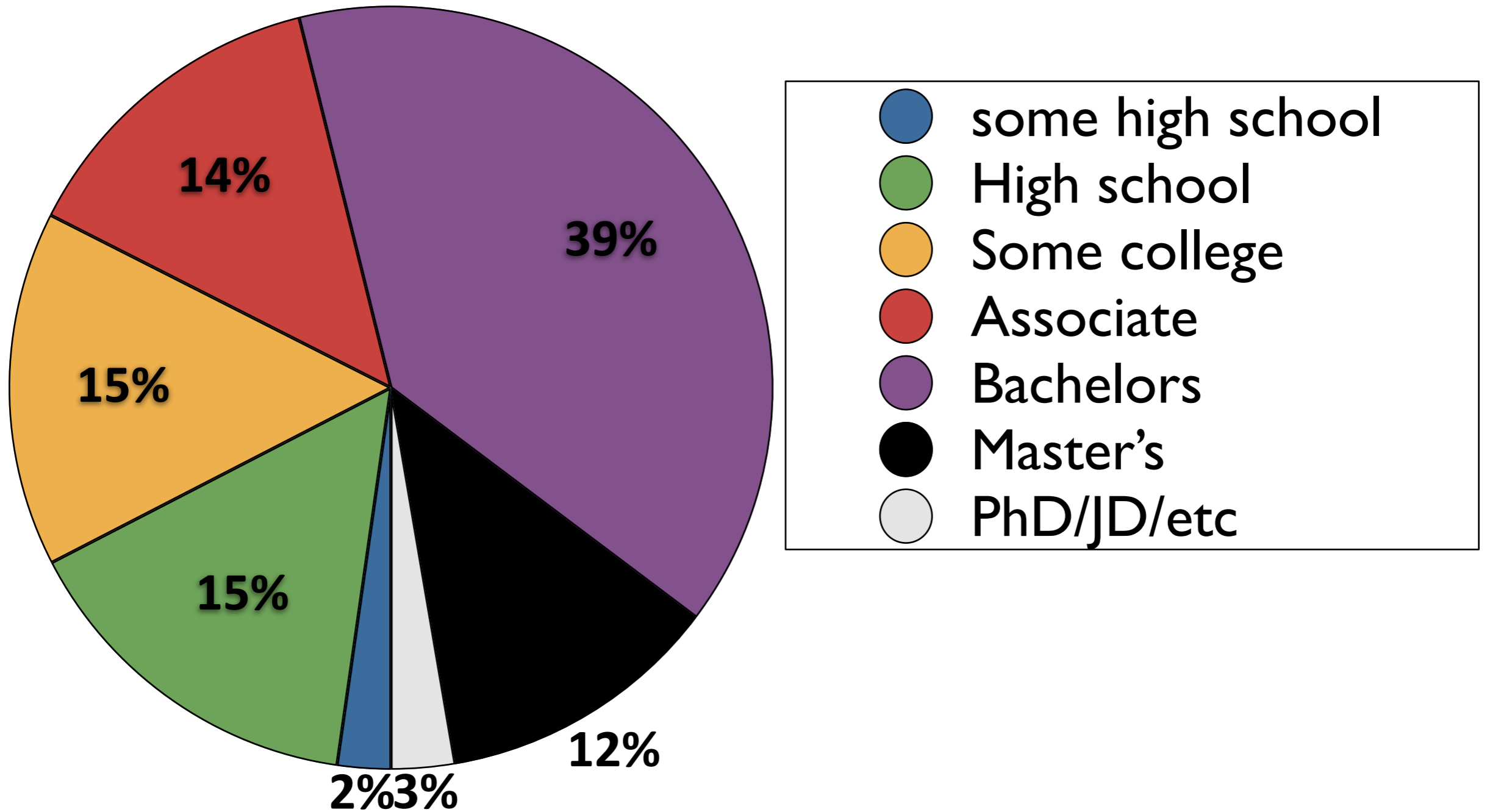
Age



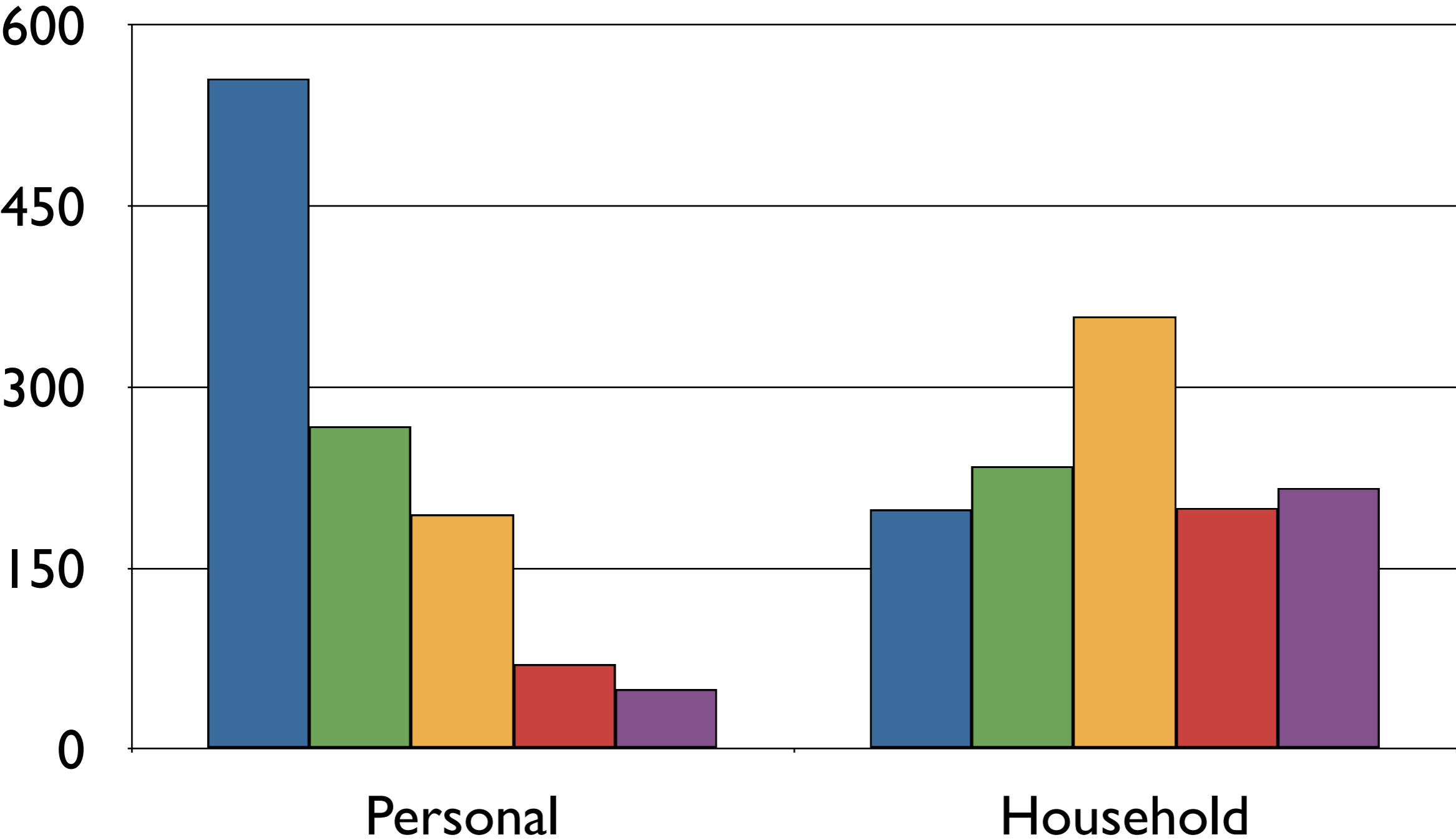
Age group



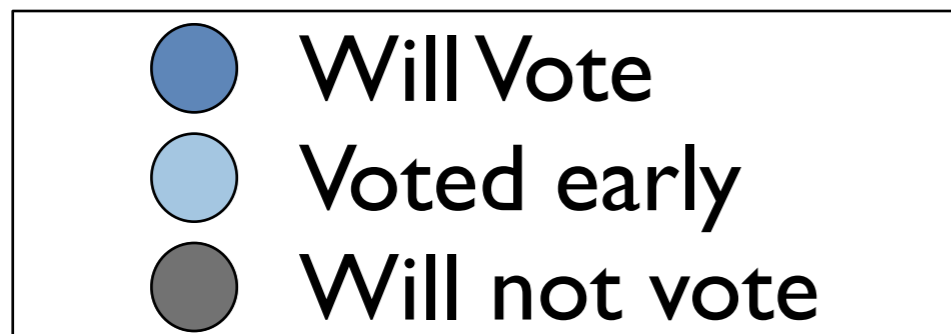
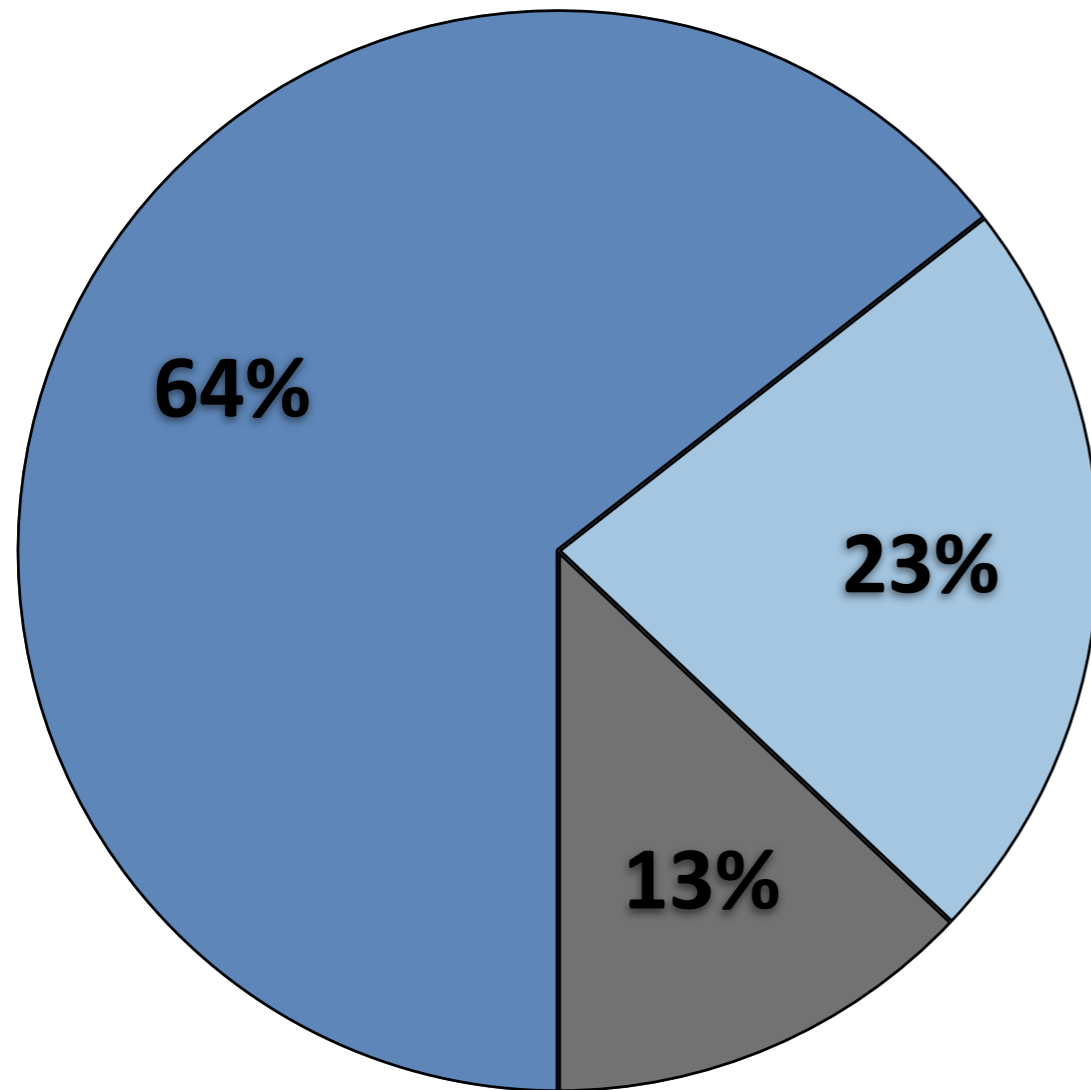
Education level



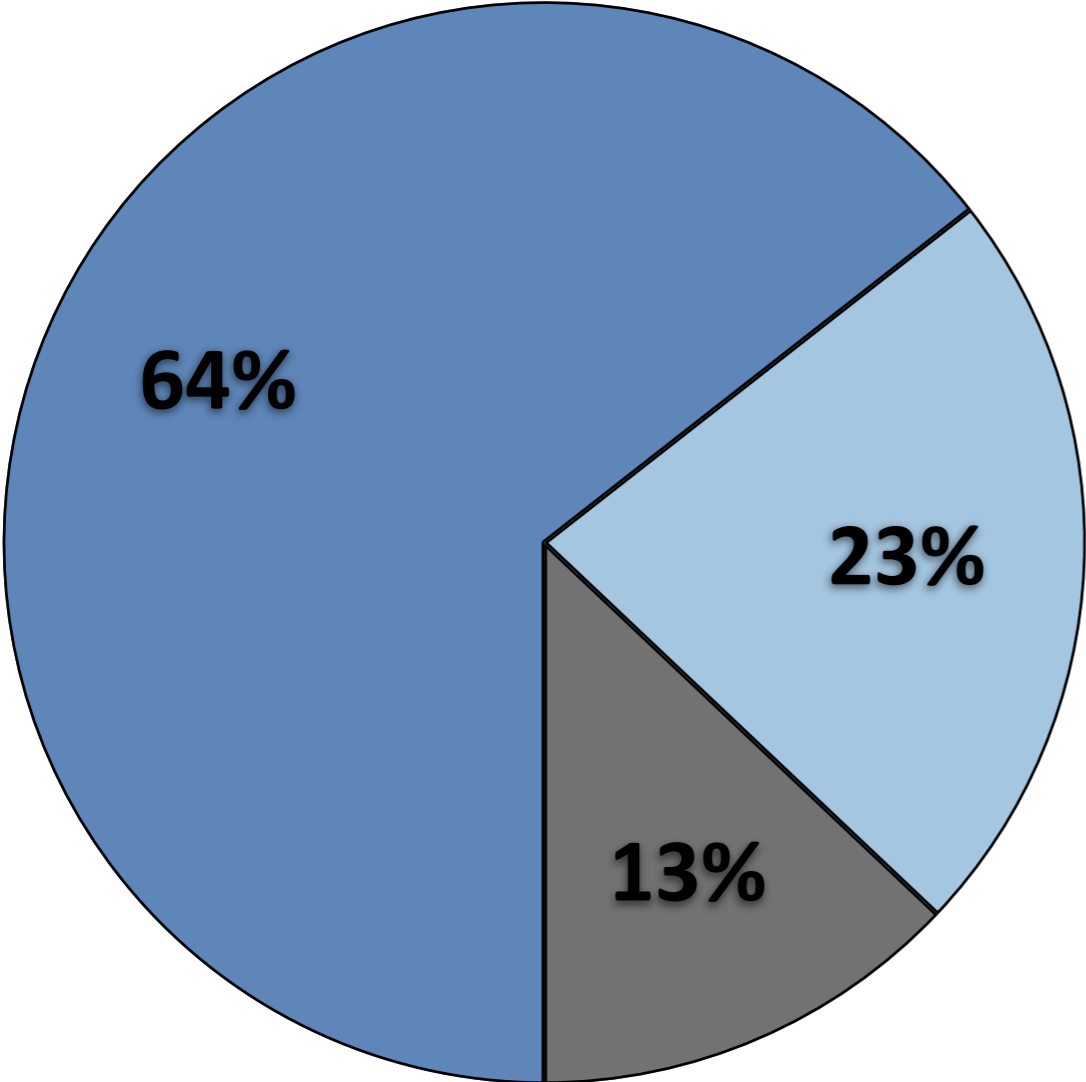
Annual Income



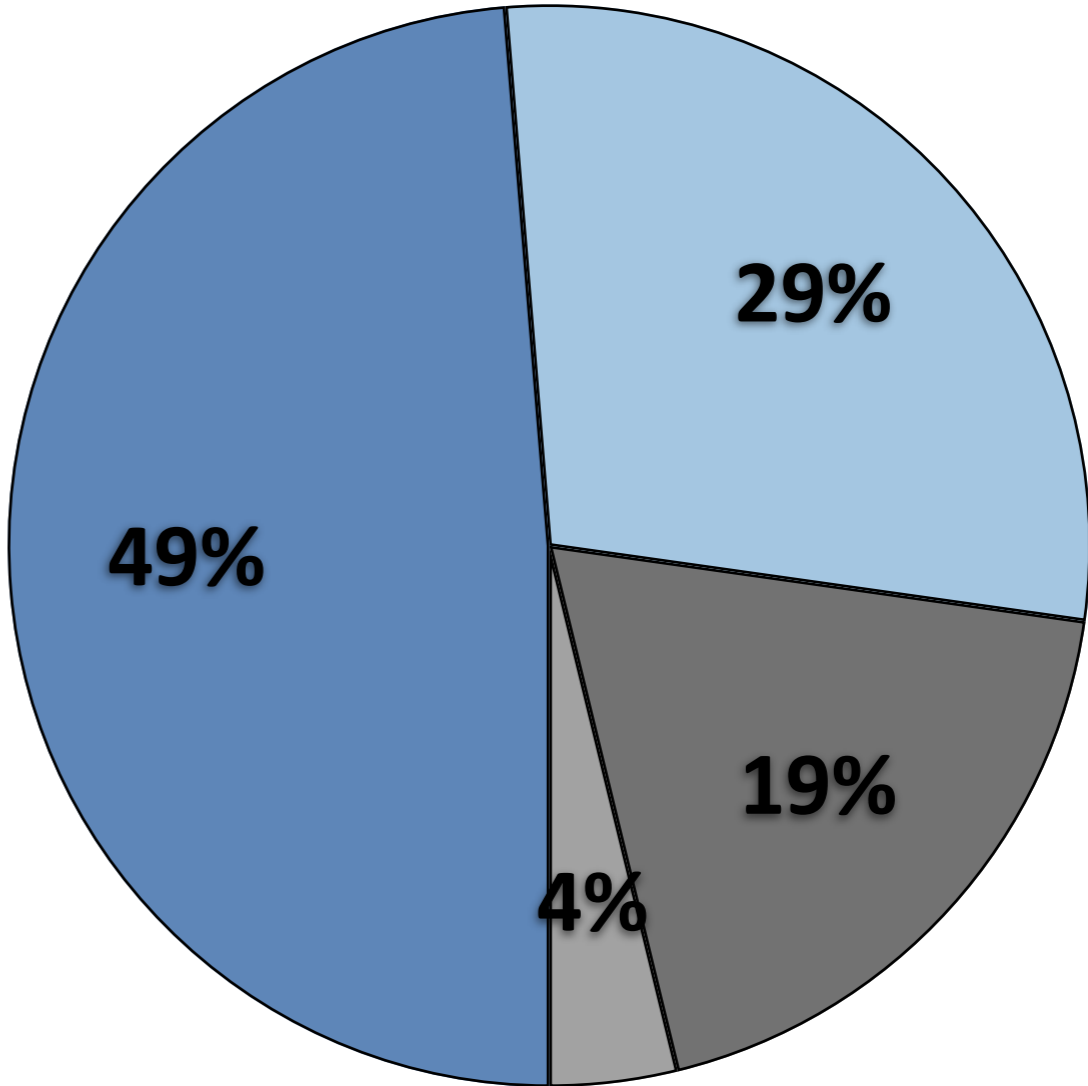
Plans to vote / Party Affiliation



Plans to vote / Party Affiliation

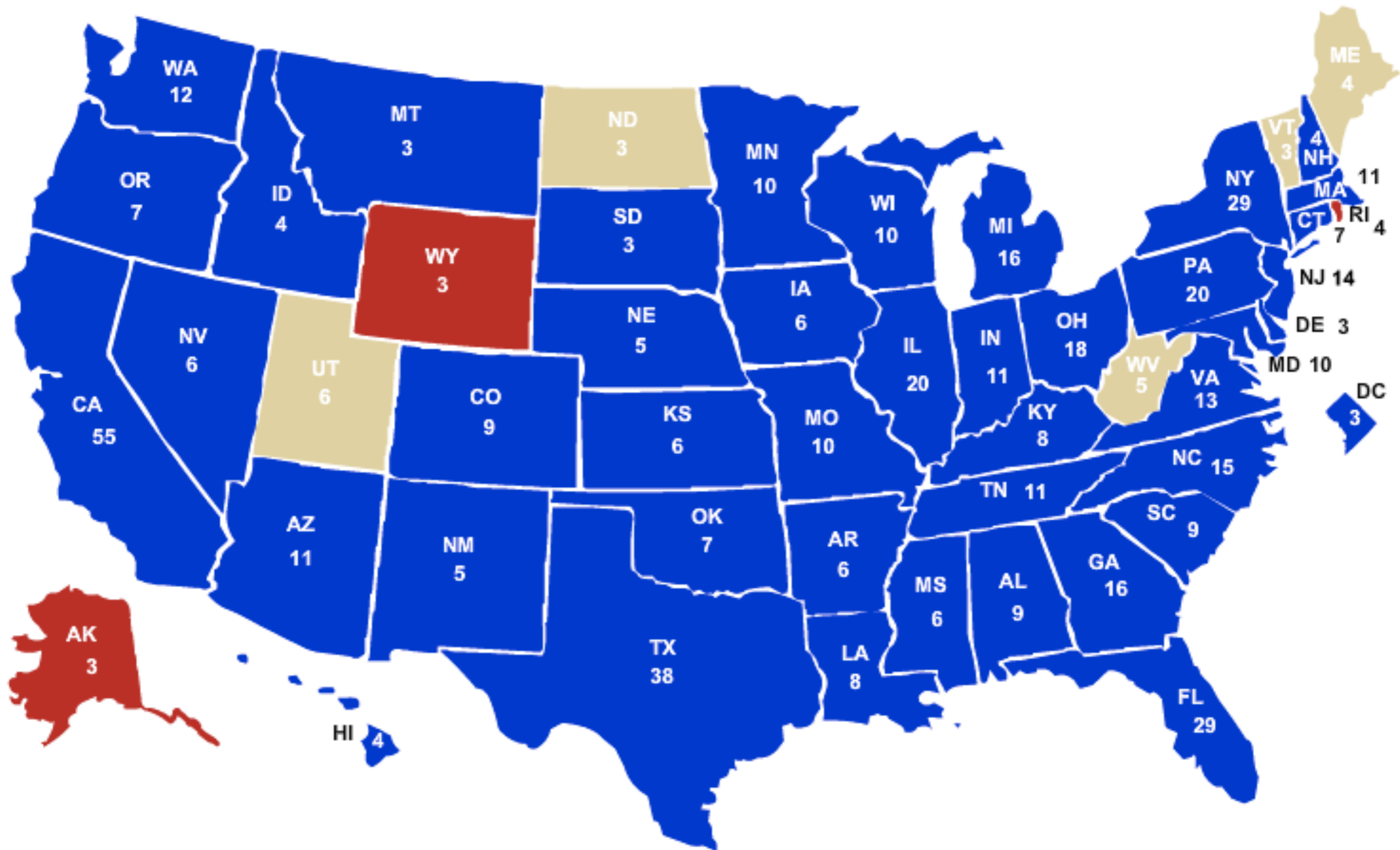


- Will Vote
- Voted early
- Will not vote

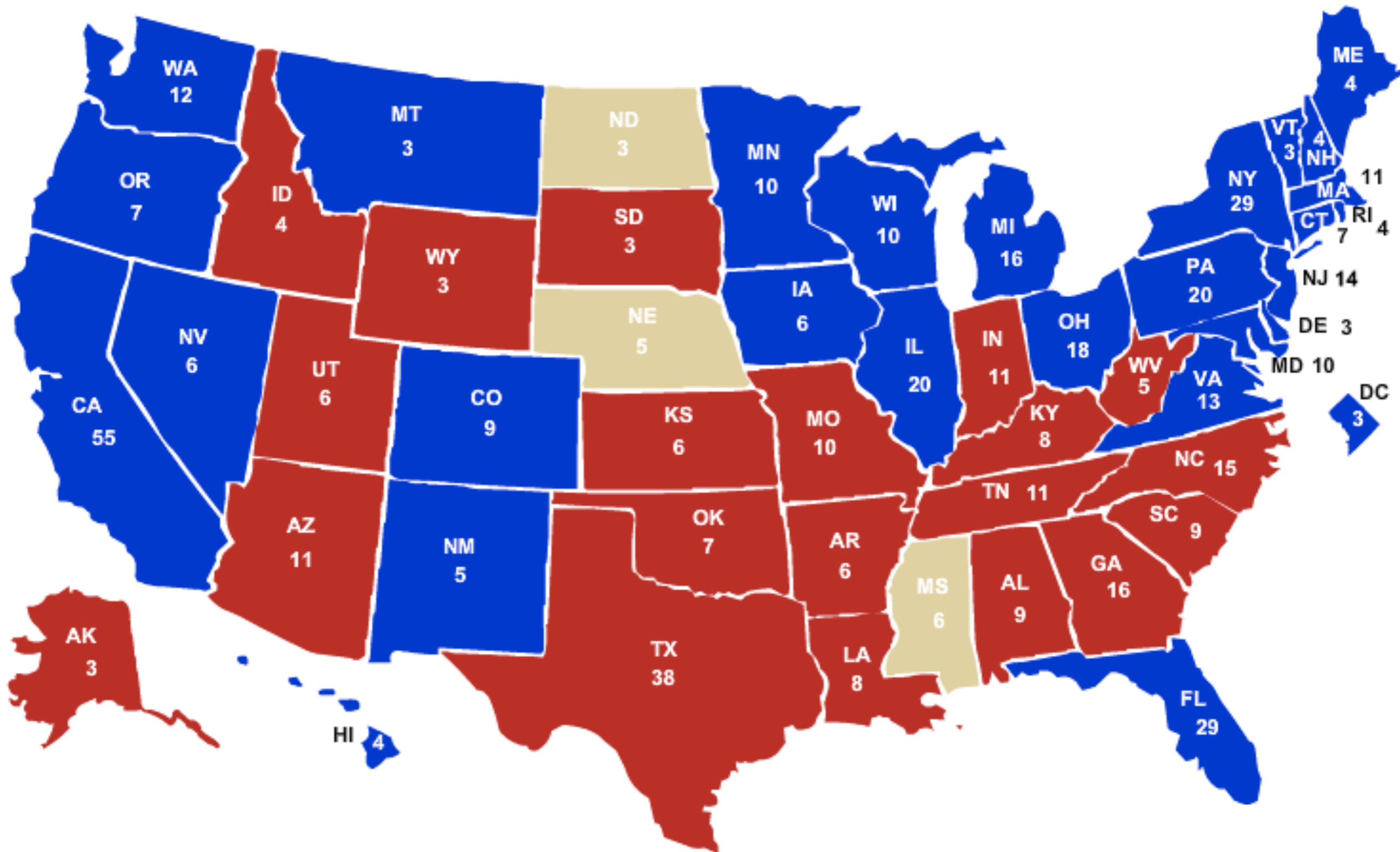


- Democrat
- Independent
- Republican
- Other Party

Obama Landslide if only Turkers voted

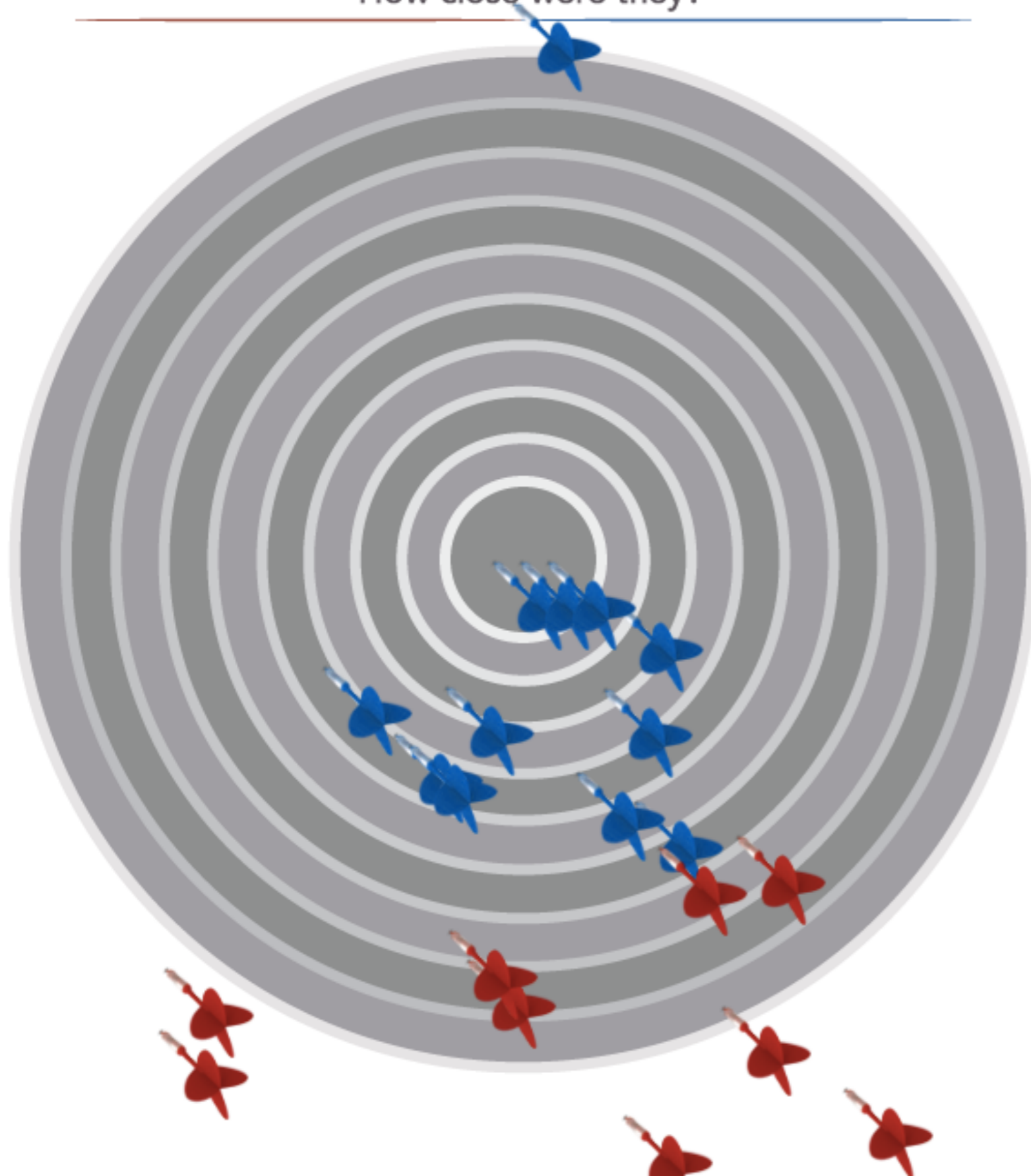


Turkers accurately predict their states



PUNDARTS

How close were they?

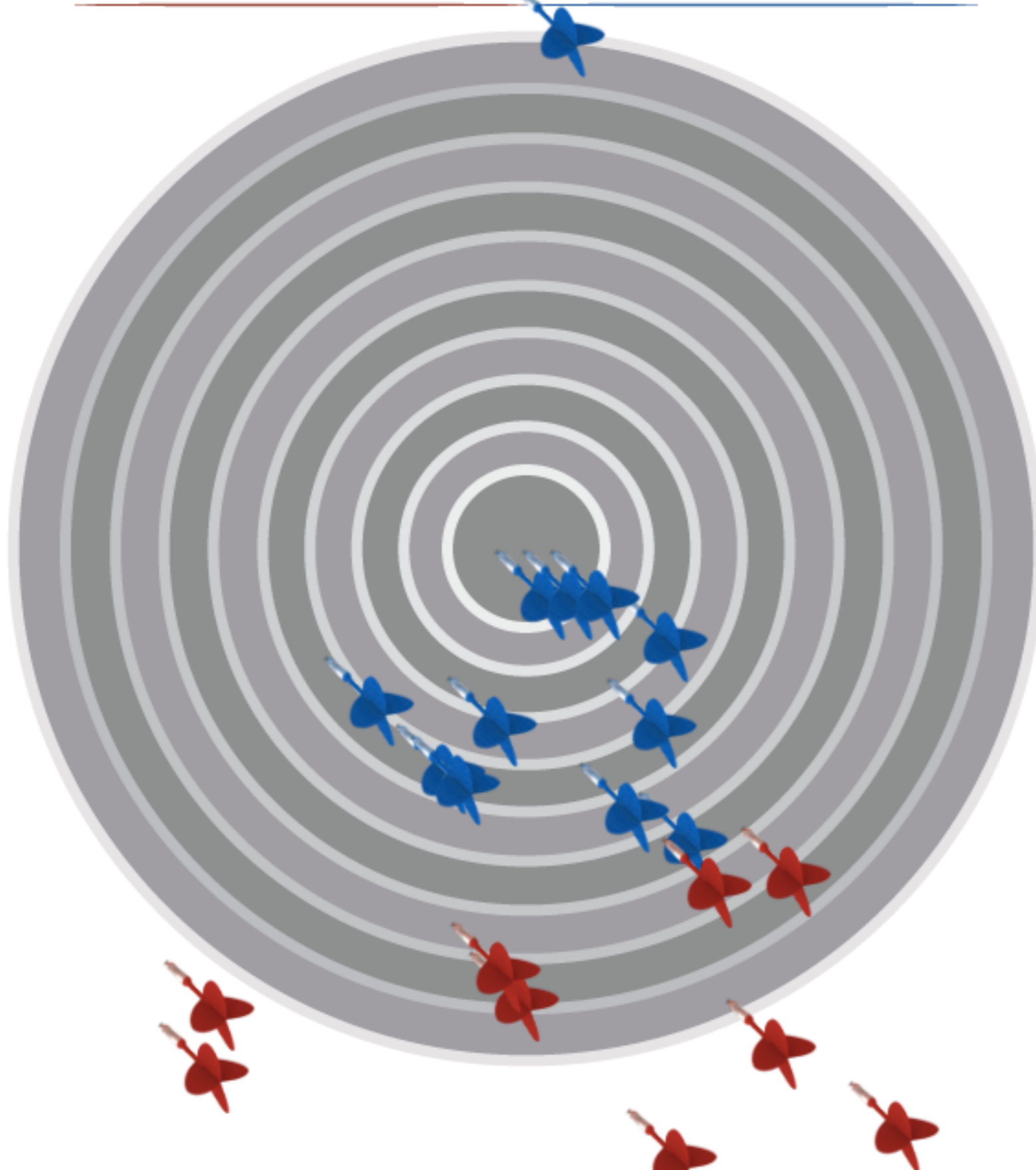


PUNDARTS

How close were they?

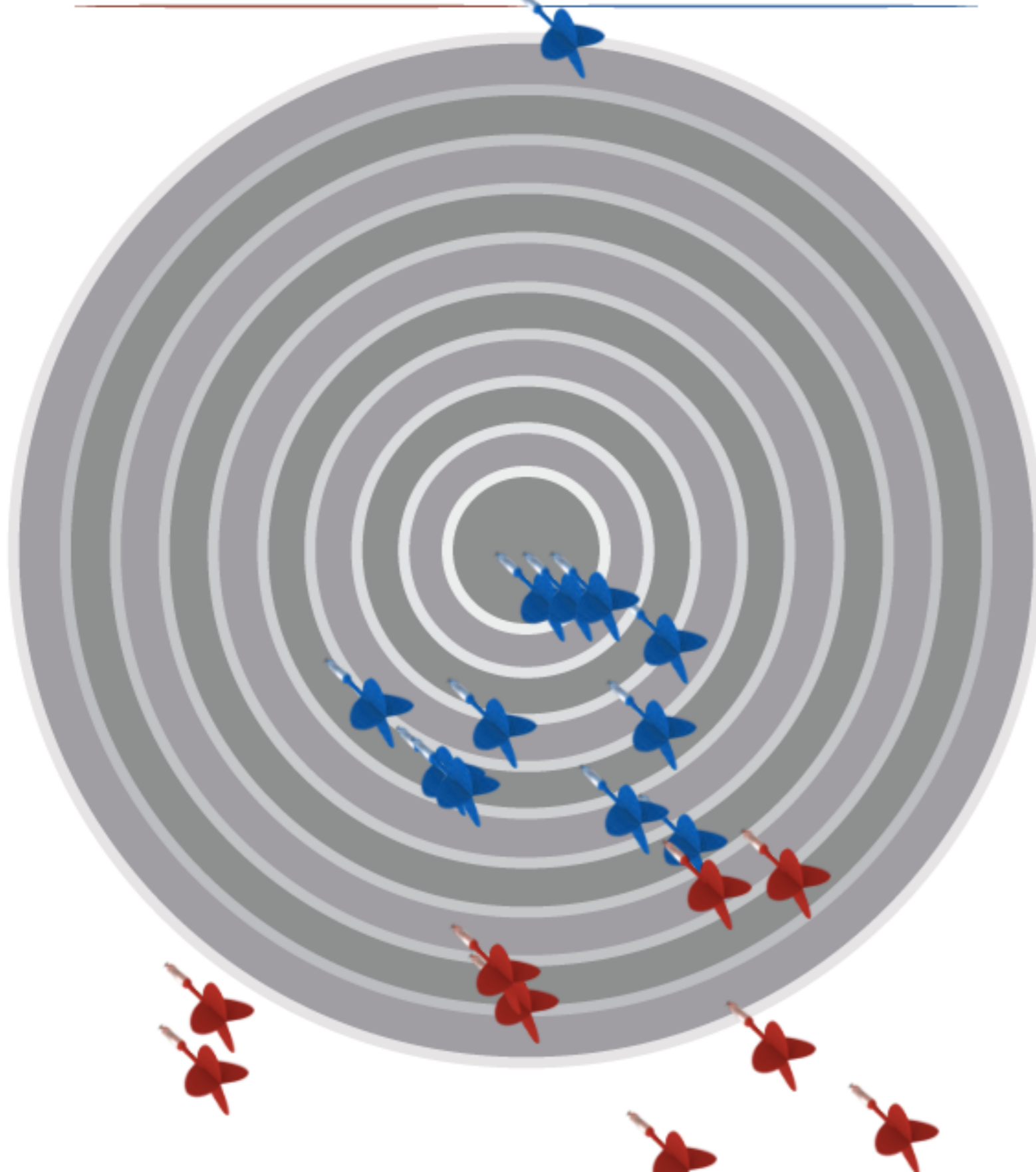


Nate Silver
The New York Times
Obama: 332
Romney: 206
Difference: 0



PUNDARTS

How close were they?



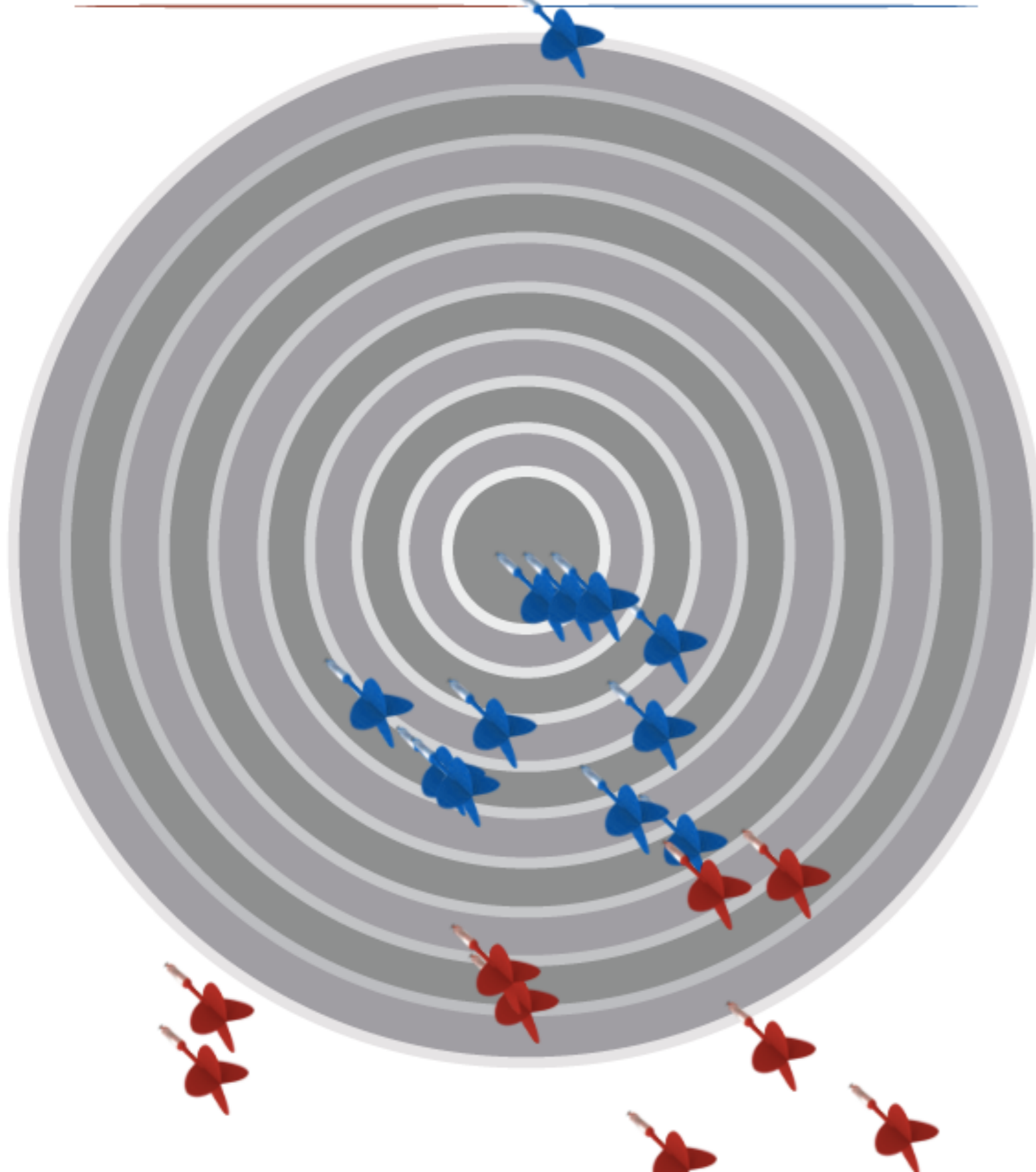
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amazonmechanical turk
beta Artificial Intelligence

Obama: 335, Romney: 189
Error: 3, Unallocated: 14

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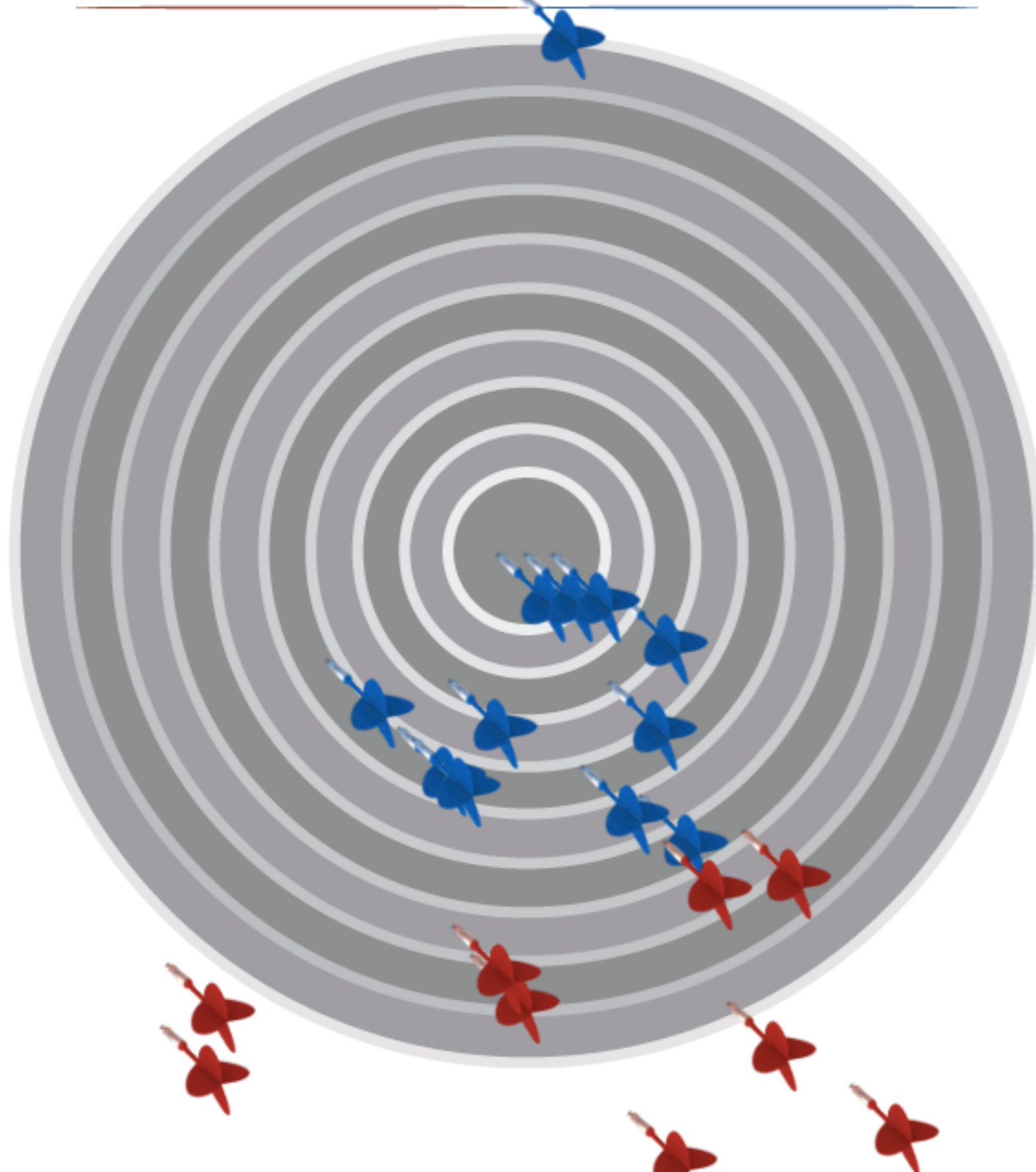
Obama: 335, Romney: 189
Error: 3, Unallocated: 14



Donna Brazile
*Vice Chairwoman of
the Democratic
National Committee*
Obama: 313
Romney: 225
Difference: -19

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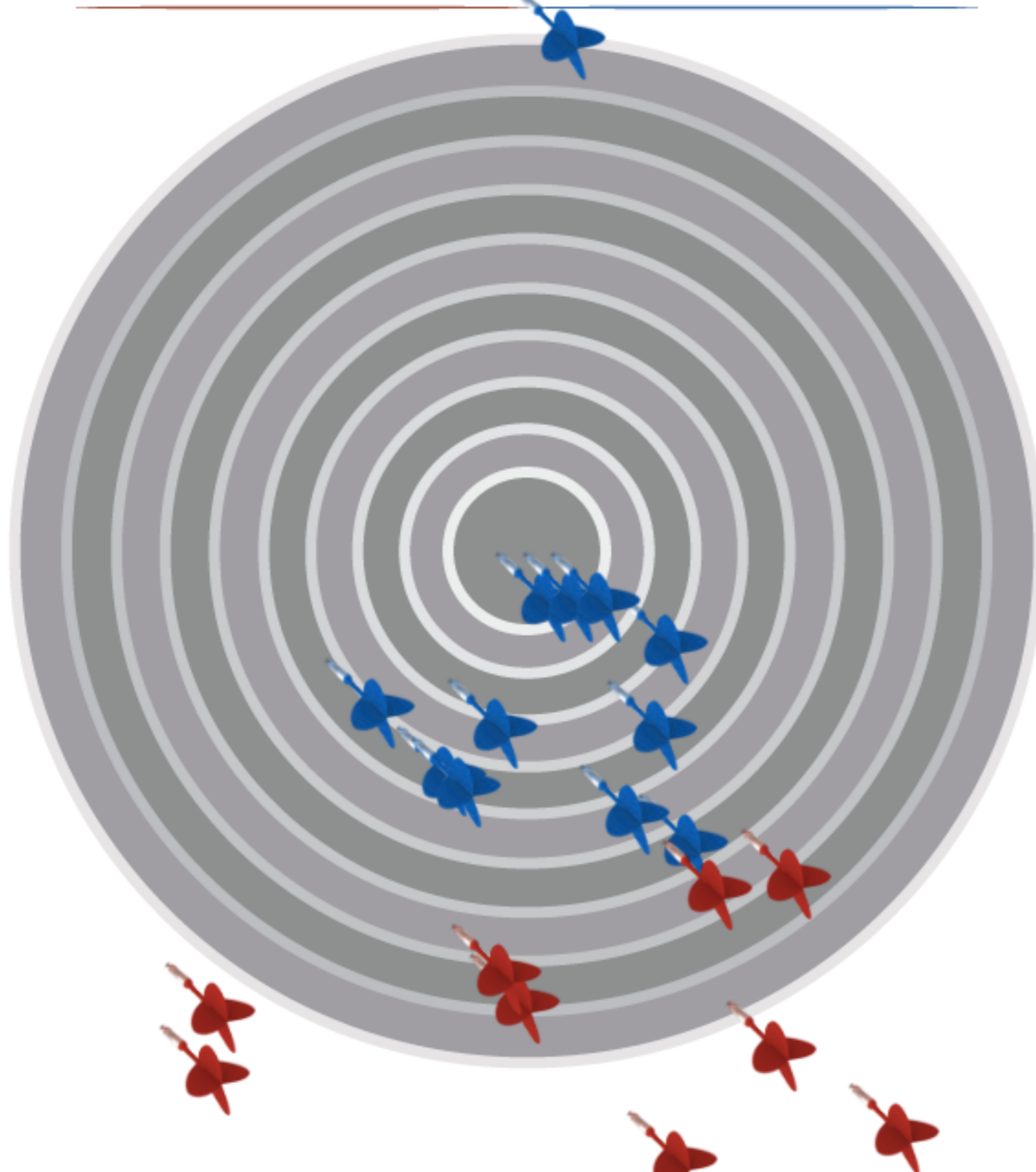
Donna Brazile
Vice Chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee
Obama: 313
Romney: 225
Difference: -19



Ann Coulter
Fox News
Obama: 265
Romney: 273
Difference: -67

PUNDARTS

How close were they?



Nate Silver
The New York Times
Obama: 332
Romney: 206
Difference: 0

amazonmechanical turk
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Romney: 225
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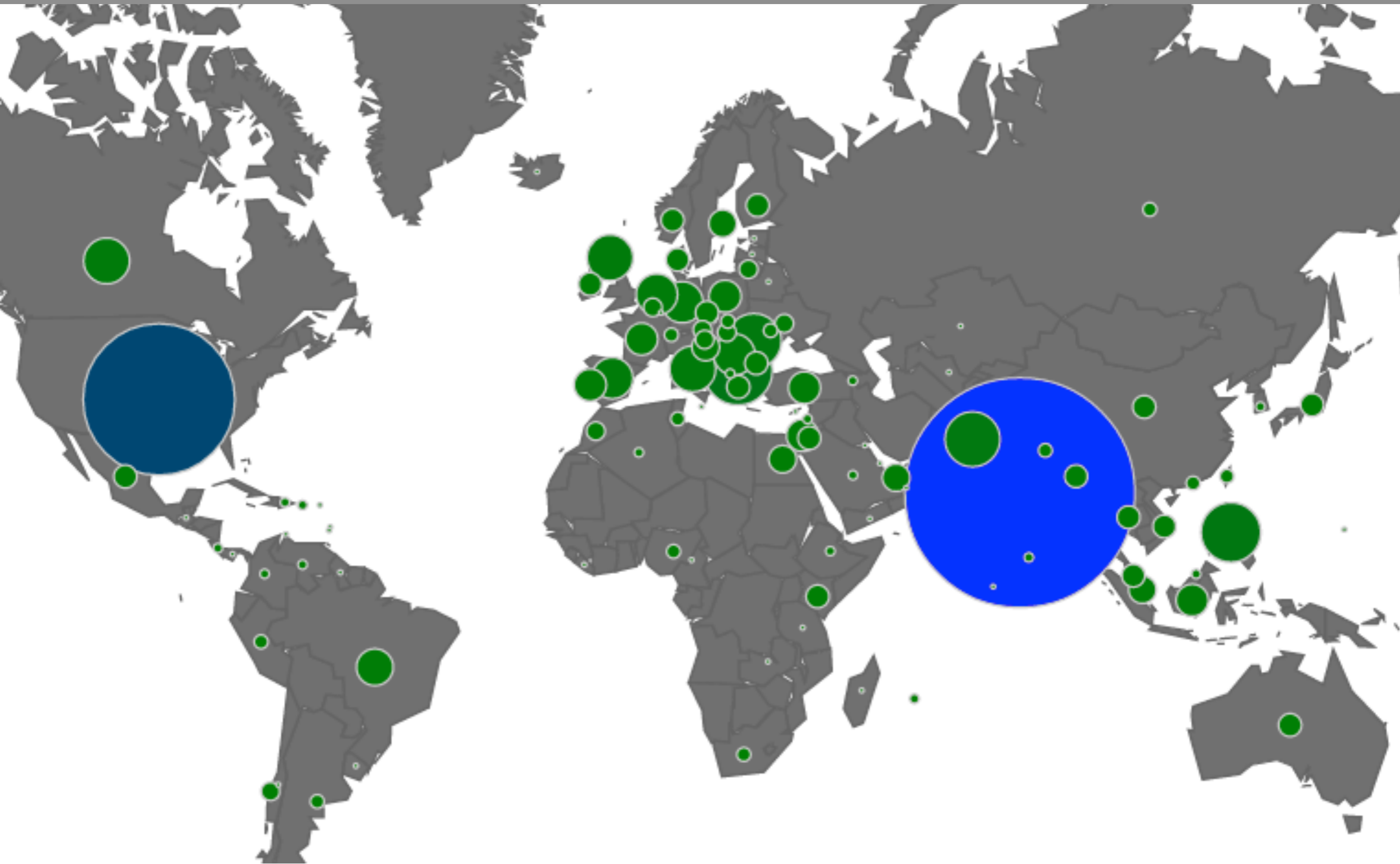


Ann Coulter
Fox News
Obama: 265
Romney: 273
Difference: -67

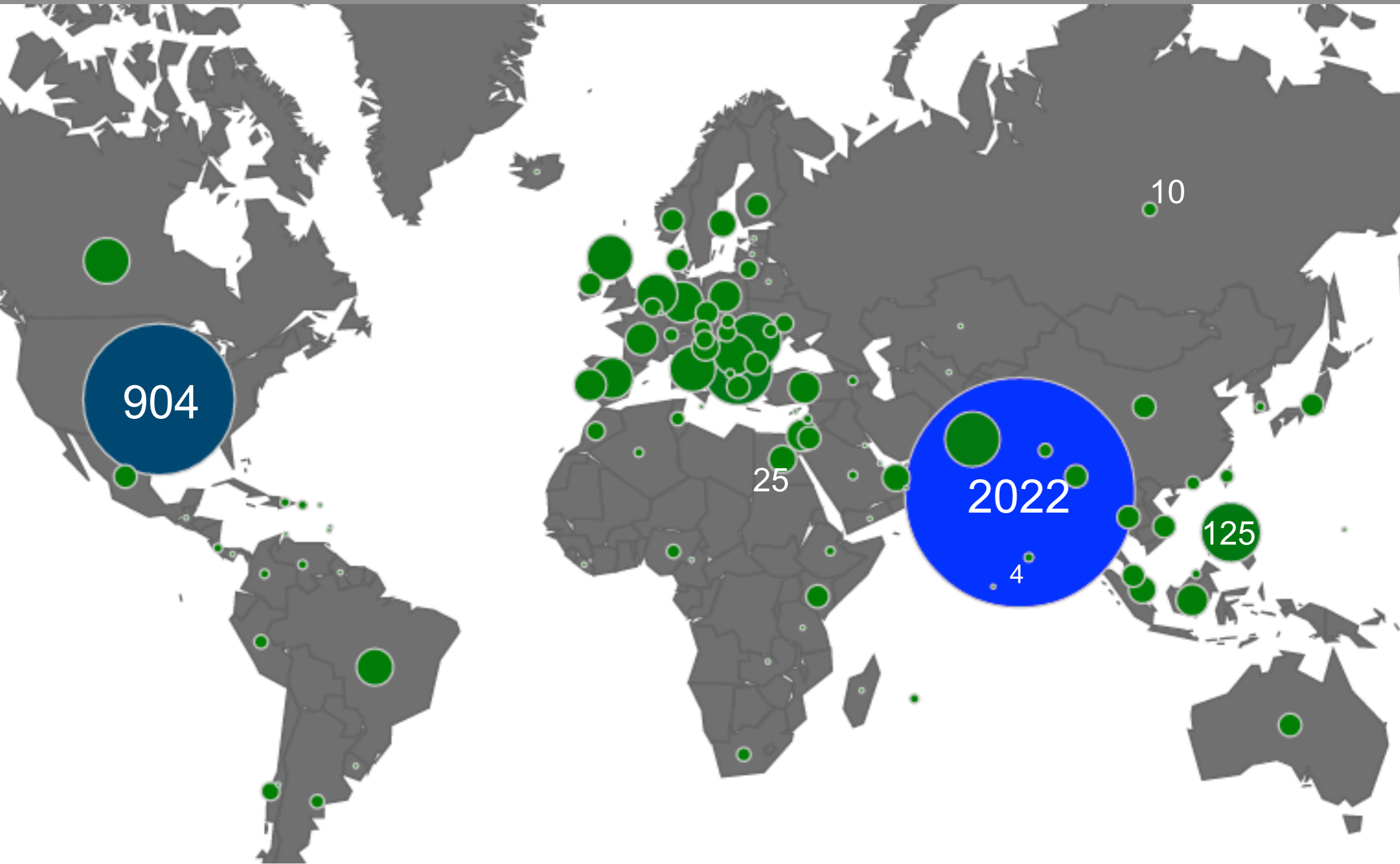


Karl Rove
Obama: 259
Romney: 279
Difference: -73

Worldwide Workforce



Worldwide Workforce



Ethnographic Study of Turker Nation

Being a Turker, Martin et al (CSCW 2014)

Observation: 40% of US-based Turkers said they did it for fun. (Ipeirotis study)

Conclusion: Turkers do HITs because they like them, regardless of what the pay is

Turking for Fun?

danturker

This attitude would be requesters dream come true. The workers come here to have fun and play and the lousy pay for work is not an issue. This attitude helps create low pay for the AMT work force that does care about fair pay.

Iarak56

I agree with most everyone here. While I do find some of the HITS fun and actually learn an incredible amount by doing HITS, I do it for the cash.

Ethnographic Study of Turker Nation

Being a Turker, Martin et al (CSCW 2014)

Assumption: MTurk is a pure form of market that falls into a fair equilibrium. Bad employers and workers are rooted out as their poor actions become visible. Wages or pricing settles to a 'natural' level.

Conclusion: "apparently half a million people find work at pay rates they're entirely happy with but pay rates that are below minimum wage"

–Tim Worstall, Forbes blogger

Pay Expectations

jimtexan79

I was hoping to make at least \$3,650.00 (you know, 10 bucks a day) but, alas, I fell short. I blame all those summer months that I slacked off. :[

So, how much didja make? Was it what you hoped?

mwanza57

I made \$1,179. Would love to double that for next year.

bubbles

\$14,476.93 Hoping to do better this year.

defectturk

It is a full part time job for me. I can turk during slow periods at my day job and from 4-10 during the week I turk. Because of pay cuts at my day job I would have to be working a part time job outside the home if I did not turk. And yes, my boss is aware of my activities and when they cut our pay the last time, he openly told us that if we can find other work that he would be flexible in allowing it. Just trying to hold on until the housing market rebounds and keep the company in business. It is cool of him to allow it, but I would much rather have my salary back and drop turking.

jane

I am having a hard time. Mentally, spiritually, physically, and especially financially. My roommate has been out of work for almost 2 months, and ran out of money a few weeks ago... I have to come up with \$\$ if he can't to keep this roof over my own head. And he does now have a job that he is in training for--tho he will not see any money from it for a few MORE weeks. In the meantime, rent is due today, and I don't have all of it. I am going to have to beg the office to take what I do have, and let me pay the rest next paycheck. I could stand that, if that were all there was, but the power and internet need to stay on, or NEITHER ONE OF US will have any income. I paid the power right before cut off last time--that means it can't be long before cut-off notice comes a-knockin again. I know the internet bill is like that too now... I have been beating my head in trying to do more turking, more anything online [... rest of post omitted...]

Jobs in the sharing economy



In Search of Uber's Unicorn

The ride-sharing service says its median driver makes close to six figures. But the math just doesn't add up.

By Alison Griswold



2.3k



223



An Uber driver waits for customers in his car in Beverly Hills, California.

Photo by Lupa Nisholova/Bouton



New York Uber Driver Refuses to Take Woman in Labor to Hospital, Charges Her \$13



Taxis Are Doomed and They Know It. Here's Why There's Nothing They Can Do.



Can a Field in Which Physicists Think Like Economists Help Us Achieve Universal Knowledge?

FROM THE WEEK



Report: Most of America's largest police departments allow officers to choke, strangle, and hog-tie people



The Economy Kind of Sucks for People Who Don't Drive

U B E R D R I V E R S

Read here about an important lawsuit brought by Uber drivers to recover the tips they should have received and reimbursement for expenses

Uber drivers have filed a class action lawsuit claiming they have been misclassified as independent contractors and are entitled to be reimbursed for their expenses that Uber should have to pay, like for gas and vehicle maintenance. The lawsuit also challenges Uber's former practice of telling passengers that the gratuity is included and not to tip the drivers, even though (until 2017) you were not getting a tip!!

LATEST NEWS:

In September 2018, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the District Court's decision which had certified a class of most Uber drivers in California and had declared Uber's arbitration clause to be unenforceable. As a result of the Ninth Circuit's decision, all Uber drivers who are covered by an arbitration clause cannot be part of the lawsuit in court but instead can only pursue their claims through individual arbitration. (We expect our court case will continue to include drivers who are not bound by Uber's arbitration clause.) We are pursuing arbitrations for thousands of Uber drivers. If you are signed up with us to pursue an arbitration if it became necessary, please watch your emails for any updates from us related to your arbitration.



In order to join our contact list of drivers interested in the case who want to receive updates, please email us at uberlawsuit@llrlaw.com and tell us your name, email address, and location where you have driven for Uber.

The attorneys representing the drivers are:

U B E R D R I V E R S

Read here about an important lawsuit brought by Uber drivers to recover the tips they should have received and reimbursement for expenses

Uber drivers have filed a class action lawsuit claiming they have been misclassified as independent contractors and are entitled to be

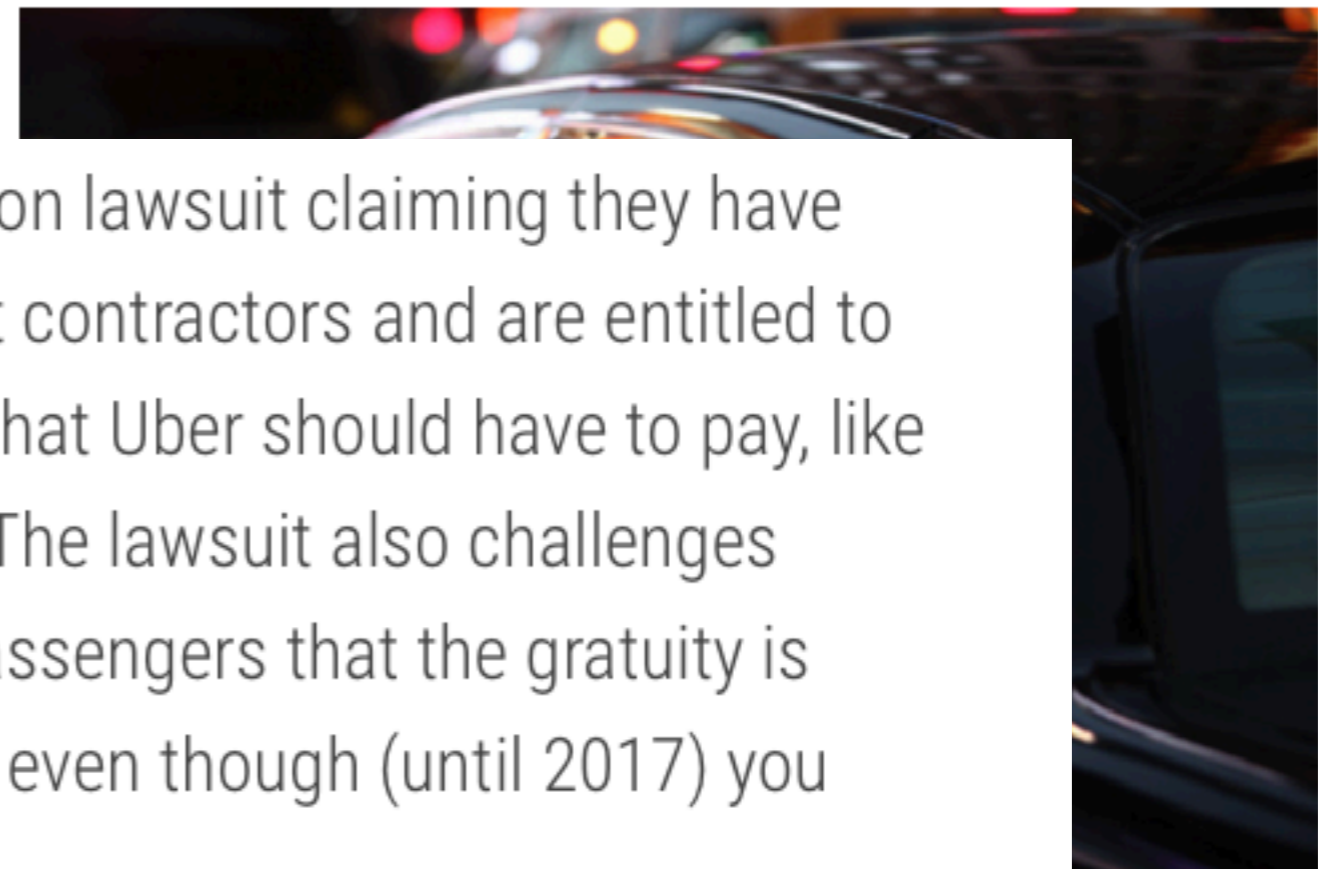
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LATEST NEWS:

**In September 2017, the
District Court's decision
drivers in California is
unenforceable.**

who are covered by
court but instead

arbitration. (We expect our court case will continue to include drivers who are not bound by Uber's arbitration clause.) We are pursuing arbitrations for thousands of Uber drivers. If you are signed up with us to pursue an arbitration if it became necessary, please watch your emails for any updates from us related to your arbitration.



Uber drivers have filed a class action lawsuit claiming they have been misclassified as independent contractors and are entitled to be reimbursed for their expenses that Uber should have to pay, like for gas and vehicle maintenance. The lawsuit also challenges Uber's former practice of telling passengers that the gratuity is included and not to tip the drivers, even though (until 2017) you were not getting a tip!!

case who

want to receive updates, please email us at uberlawsuit@llrlaw.com and tell us your name, email address, and location where you have driven for Uber.

The attorneys representing the drivers are:

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF CALIFORNIA

DYNAMEX OPERATIONS WEST, INC.,)
Petitioner,)
)
v.)
)
THE SUPERIOR COURT OF)
LOS ANGELES COUNTY,)
Respondent;)
)
CHARLES LEE et al.,)
Real Parties in Interest.)
_____)

S222732

Ct.App. 2/7 B249546

Los Angeles County
Super Ct. No. BC332016

Under both California and federal law, the question whether an individual worker should properly be classified as an employee or, instead, as an independent contractor has considerable significance for workers, businesses, and the public generally.¹ On the one hand, if a worker should properly be classified as an employee, the hiring business bears the responsibility of paying federal Social Security and payroll taxes, unemployment insurance taxes and state employment taxes, providing worker's compensation insurance, and, most relevant for the

¹ See United States Department of Labor, *Commission on the Future of Worker-Management Relations* (1994) page 64 ["The single most important factor in determining which workers are covered by employment and labor statutes is the way the line is drawn between employees and independent contractors"] <https://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/key_workplace/2/> (as of Apr. 30, 2018).

present case, complying with numerous state and federal statutes and regulations governing the wages, hours, and working conditions of employees. The worker then obtains the protection of the applicable labor laws and regulations. On the other hand, if a worker should properly be classified as an independent contractor, the business does not bear any of those costs or responsibilities, the worker receives none of the numerous labor law benefits, and the public may be required under applicable laws to assume additional financial burdens with respect to such workers and their families.

Although in some circumstances classification as an independent contractor may be advantageous to workers as well as to businesses, the risk that workers who should be treated as employees may be improperly misclassified as independent contractors is significant in light of the potentially substantial economic incentives that a business may have in mischaracterizing some workers as independent contractors. Such incentives include the unfair competitive advantage the business may obtain over competitors that properly classify its workers as employees and that thereby assume the fiscal and other responsibilities and burdens that an employer owes to its employees. In recent years, the regulatory agencies of both the federal and state governments have declared the misclassification of workers as independent contractors rather than employees is a very serious problem, depriving federal and state governments of billions of dollars in tax revenue and millions of workers of the labor law protections to which they are entitled.²

² See United States Department of Labor, Wage & Hour Division, *Misclassification of Employees as Independent Contractors* <<https://www.dol.gov/whd/workers/misclassification/>> (as of Apr. 30, 2018); California Department of Industrial Relations, *Worker Misclassification* <http://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/worker_misclassification.html> (as of Apr. 30, 2018).

like independent plumbers or electricians, who have traditionally been viewed as *genuine* independent contractors who are working only in their own independent business.

For the reasons explained hereafter, we conclude that in determining whether, under the suffer or permit to work definition, a worker is properly considered the type of independent contractor to whom the wage order does not apply, it is appropriate to look to a standard, commonly referred to as the “ABC” test, that is utilized in other jurisdictions in a variety of contexts to distinguish employees from independent contractors. Under this test, a worker is properly considered an independent contractor to whom a wage order does not apply only if the hiring entity establishes: (A) that the worker is free from the control and direction of the hirer in connection with the performance of the work, both under the contract for the performance of such work and in fact; (B) that the worker performs work that is outside the usual course of the hiring entity’s business; and (C) that the worker is customarily engaged in an independently established trade, occupation, or business of the same nature as the work performed for the hiring entity.

U.S. Department of Labor
Wage and Hour Division
Washington, D.C. 20210

Misclassification of employees as independent contractors is found in an increasing number of workplaces in the United States, in part reflecting larger restructuring of business organizations. When employers improperly classify employees as independent contractors, the employees may not receive important workplace protections such as the minimum wage, overtime compensation, unemployment insurance, and workers' compensation. Misclassification also results in lower tax revenues for government and an uneven playing field for employers who properly classify their workers. Although independent contracting relationships can be advantageous for workers and businesses, some employees may be intentionally misclassified as a means to cut costs and avoid compliance with labor laws.

The Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division (WHD) continues to receive numerous complaints from workers alleging misclassification, and the Department continues to bring successful enforcement actions against

New California AB 5 Law Expands Independent Contractor ABC Test

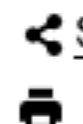


By [Aaron N. Colby](#) and [Janet Grumer](#)

09.19.19

Summary

On September 18, 2019, Governor Newsom signed California Assembly Bill 5 (AB 5) into law – codifying and expanding the California Supreme Court's decision in the *Dynamex* case and the "ABC test" for determining if a worker may be classified as an independent contractor, instead of an employee.



Uber and Lyft Drivers in California Will Remain Contractors

The victory of Proposition 22, the most expensive initiative in the state's history, could help gig companies remake labor laws throughout the country.



Drivers and other gig workers urging voters to reject California's Proposition 22 outside Uber's headquarters in San Francisco last month. Jim Wilson/The New York Times

Think-Pair-Share

- Discuss **the pros and cons** of classifying gig economy workers like those on Uber as independent contractors versus employees. How does this classification impact **the workers and the companies...** and the **consumer?**

Tipped Wage

Tipped wages are a system that allows employers to pay tipped employees less than the standard minimum wage, with the expectation that tips will make up the difference. The goal of this system is to incentivize employees to provide good service, while also allowing employers to save money on labor costs.

- Pros
 - Flexibility: Employers can save money on labor costs.
 - This may represent the threshold for business creation.
 - Higher earnings: Tipped employees can sometimes earn significantly more than the standard minimum wage through tips alone.
- Cons
 - Employees have no control over tips: Employees have no control over how much they are tipped, as that is based on the customer's discretion.
 - Women and people of color are overrepresented: Women and working people of color are more likely to be employed in tipped occupations and live in poverty.
 - Sexual harassment: Tipped women workers in states with a \$2.13 tipped minimum wage report twice the rate of sexual harassment as women in states with no tipped minimum wage.

Think-Pair-Share

- What are the benefits and drawbacks of surge pricing for both service providers (like Uber or Airbnb) and consumers? How does surge pricing affect consumer behavior and market demand?

Tipped Wage for Business Creation and Growth

Pros of Tipped Wages for Business Creation and Growth

- 1. Lower Initial Labor Costs:** For many startup businesses, particularly in the hospitality industry, labor costs can be prohibitively high. The tipped wage system allows these businesses to pay a lower base wage, which is supplemented by customer tips, thereby reducing initial wage expenses.
- 2. Scalability:** As businesses grow and their customer base increases, tipped employees potentially earn more in tips, which can help improve employee satisfaction and retention without additional cost to the employer.
- 3. Flexibility in Cost Management:** Tipped wages provide a buffer for businesses against fluctuating revenues. During slower periods, the business's labor costs can be somewhat variable, rather than fixed, helping to maintain profitability or reduce losses.
- 4. Incentivized Service Quality:** Tipped wages can motivate employees to provide better service in hopes of receiving higher tips, directly linking pay to performance from the customer's perspective.

Cons of Tipped Wages for Business Creation and Growth

- 1. Financial Instability for Employees:** The variability of tips can lead to financial instability for employees, which might impact their performance and reliability. This can affect staffing stability and customer service quality.
- 2. Public Perception and Policy Risk:** There is a growing public and legislative pushback against the tipped wage system, viewing it as exploitative or unfair. Businesses using this system may face reputational risks or future regulatory changes that could abruptly increase labor costs.
- 3. Administrative Complexity:** Ensuring that tipped employees meet minimum wage requirements when tips are included can add a layer of administrative complexity and potential legal risks. Employers must carefully track earnings and may need to top up wages, which can complicate payroll processes.
- 4. Potential for Inequity:** Tipped wages can lead to income disparities among employees, where front-of-the-house staff (like servers) earn significantly more than back-of-the-house staff (like cooks and dishwashers), potentially leading to staff dissatisfaction and turnover.

Public Interest Platforms?

- Should journalism be publicly funded?
- Should journalism infrastructure be publicly funded?

MARCH 1, 2024

Victor Pickard on the Crisis of Journalism

COUNTERSPIN



Journalism is a public good and should be publicly funded



Victor Pickard of the Annenberg School for Communication explains that the “positive” interpretation of the First Amendment focuses on government’s affirmative role to help guarantee the public access to a “diverse and informative media system.”

August 3, 2023 • From [Knews Media](#)