



**League of Women Voters – Internal Survey
Interim Membership Report – Draft – May 18, 2022
Francis Benjamin and Nicholas Lovrich, WSU**

Overview

The LWVWA adopted a Strategic Plan in 2017 aimed at achieving three principal goals: *Increase Impact*, *Facilitate Local League Work*, and *Strengthen Organizational Capacity*. To evaluate how the LWVWA is doing in these three areas, the League leadership undertook a research plan which addresses both internal and external (stakeholders and potential members) LWVWA environments, using both qualitative and quantitative research assessment tools to gain insight.

The Internal Survey was the second step in this strategic plan-related research effort. The first step, reported earlier this year ([report link](#)), focused on the initial *appreciative inquiry* (AI) interviews of 100 League members. The outcomes from the AI interviews were used to develop the questions for this second step in the research effort. These questions were posed to all League members to develop recommendations for continuing, discontinuing, or modifying strategies and tactics utilized in the pursuit of the LWVWA's three main goals.

The Internal Survey was comprised of twenty-nine questions. Most of the questions limited the participant to a specific set of possible answers or a fill-in-the-blank option. The possible answers were based on the results of the AI interviews. The answers to the fill in the blank questions were analyzed through a coding process. This process involved two researchers independently reviewing participants' answers and identifying themes for each participant's answer. A third researcher then reviewed the two researchers' selected themes and broke any ties where the two researchers had a coding disagreement. This coding process resulted in theme assignments for each participant's answers. The themes were then tabulated.

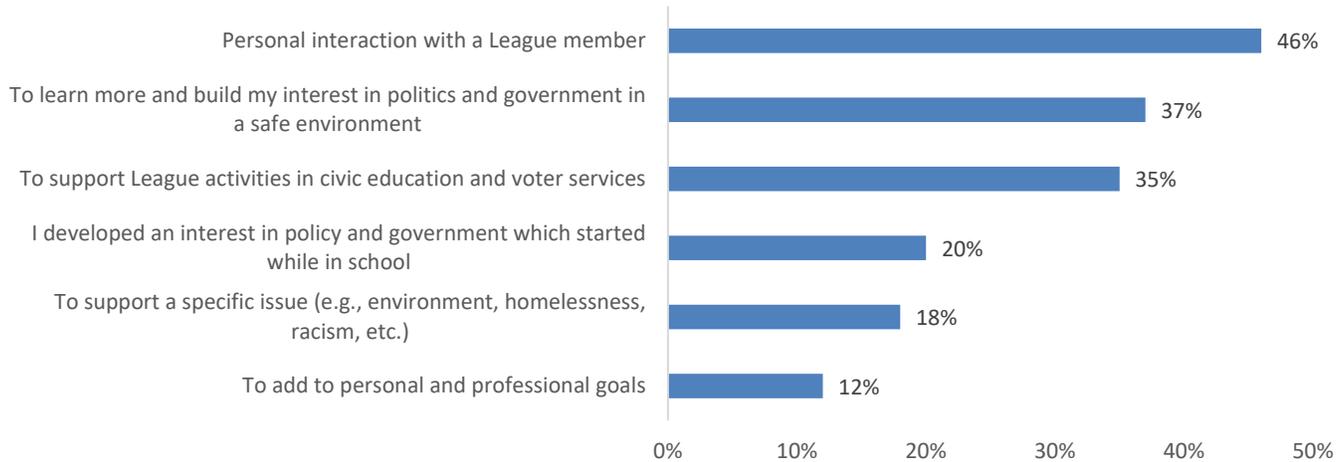
This report sets forth initial findings derived from the Internal Survey and represents the next step in the LWVWA making use of evidence-based recommendations for continuing, discontinuing, or modifying strategies and tactics utilized in the pursuit of the LWVWA's three main goals. The full report of this effort that includes all the data and correlations will be published separately. Future research being planned for the next year includes the use of a combination of surveys and interviews related to the external environment scan aspect of the assessment.

When evaluating the data from each question, one caveat should be considered. The data are not a representative sample of the entire state League, but representative of those members who chose to participate in the survey. League members had the opportunity during November and December of 2021 to participate in the survey. During this time, to encourage participation, the state League sent members several reminders about the opportunity to participate. The state League has an approximate membership of 2500. Of the membership, 672 people followed the link to access the survey site, 569 started the survey and 425 completed the 29-question survey. This represents 23% of the membership starting the internal survey and 17% of the membership completing the survey. This participation rate is very common in current survey research. The drop off rate with 569 starting the survey and only 425 finishing is also very common with longer surveys that require more than 5 minutes and include several text questions.

Survey Questions and Data

1. What brought you to join the League?

- **A friend, political interest, or civic education interest are the main reasons for joining the League.**

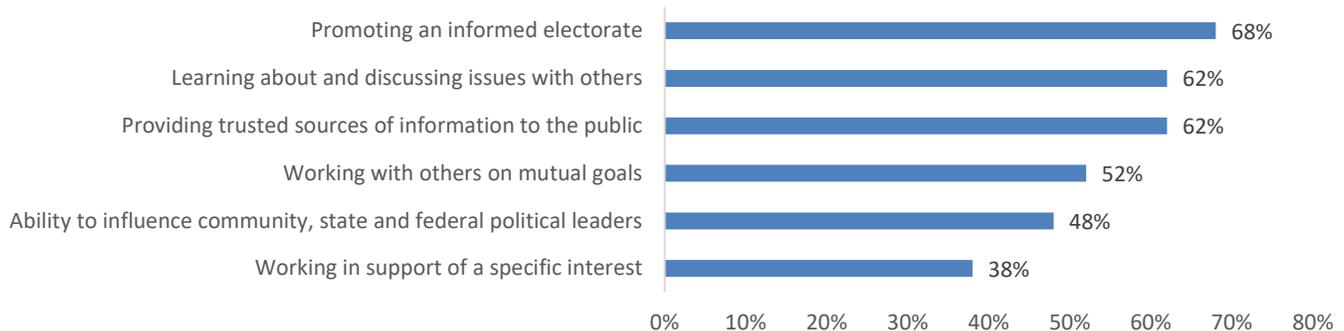


(The question asked participants to select all that apply so the total % will not equal 100%)

Additional areas that didn't exceed 10% include: family history in LWV, political election, previous knowledge of LWV mission and values, meet new people, and defend democracy.

2. What motivates you to keep involved in the local League?

- **Promoting an informed electorate, learning, and discussing issues and being a trusted source of information are the primary motivations to keep involved in the League.**



(The question asked participants to select all that apply so the total % will not equal 100%)

Additional areas which didn't exceed 30% include: feeling of enjoyment, and importance and comradery.

3. What life experience or change coincided with joining the League?

- **Almost 2/3 of the League members identified a particular life experience or change coinciding with joining the League. Of the 2/3, over 30% identified a specific political issue or election, retirement, or moving as coinciding when they joined the League.**

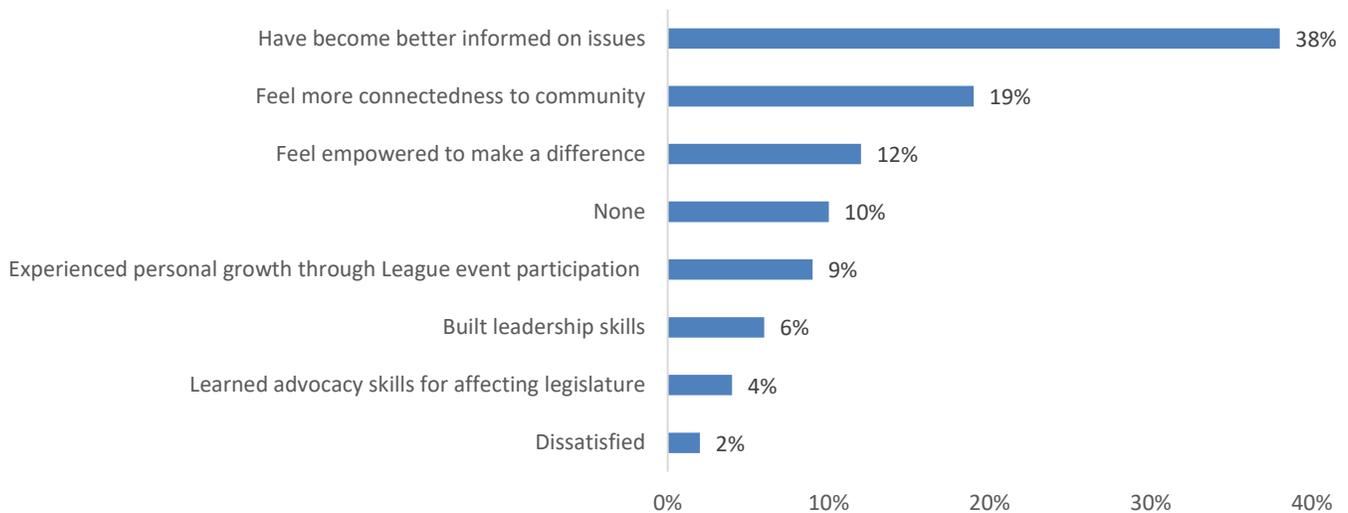


(The question asked participants to select all that apply so the total % will not equal 100%)

Additional areas which didn't exceed 30% include: became an empty nester, death of a loved one, committed to full-time child or elder care, completed academic program, job loss, became a new citizen, had more free time, and ran for office.

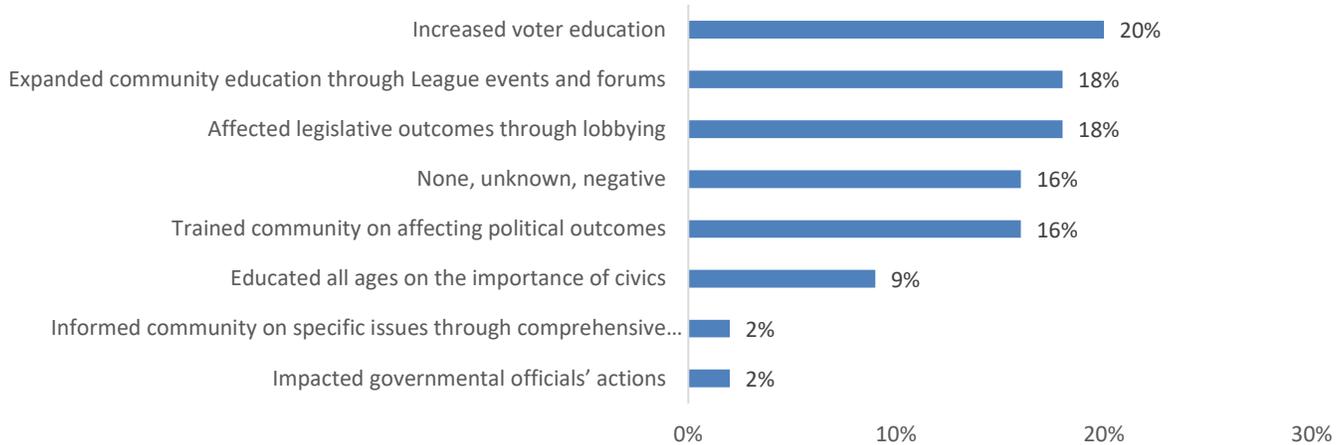
4. What difference or impact has the state League made in your life?

- **Informing members on issues, increasing community connections, and member empowerment are how the state League has made a difference in members' lives.**



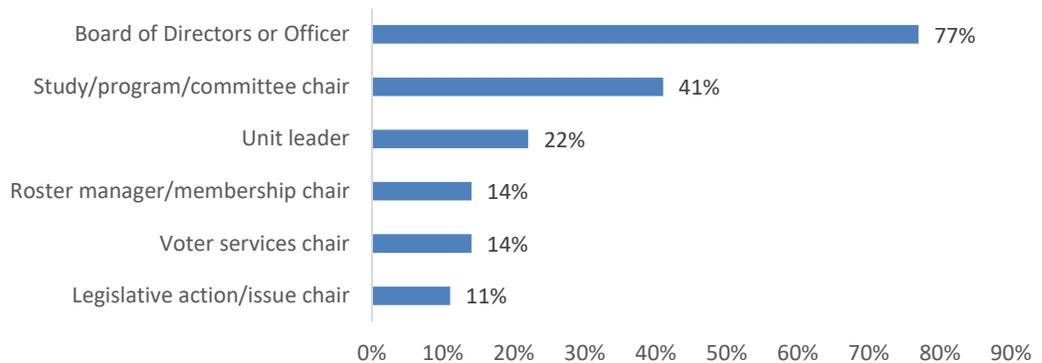
5. What difference or impact has the state League made in your community?

• **Increasing voter education, influencing legislative outcomes, and expanding League education events are how the state League has made a difference in members' communities.**



6a. In which of these local League leadership roles have you participated?

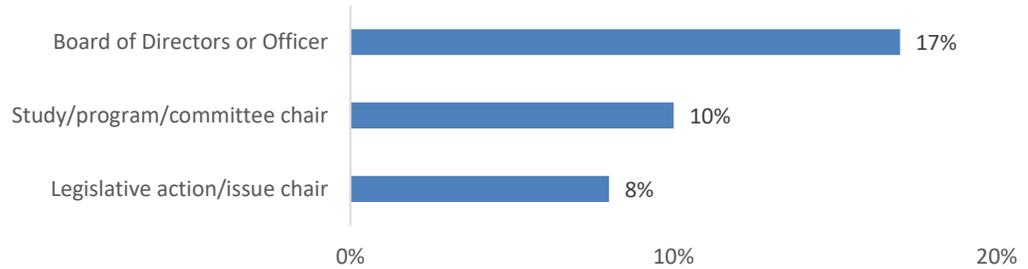
• **Board of Directors or Officer, study/program/committee chair, and unit leader are the most common local League leadership roles respondents have occupied.**



(The question asked participants to select all that apply so the total % will not equal 100%)

6b. In which of these state League leadership roles have you participated?

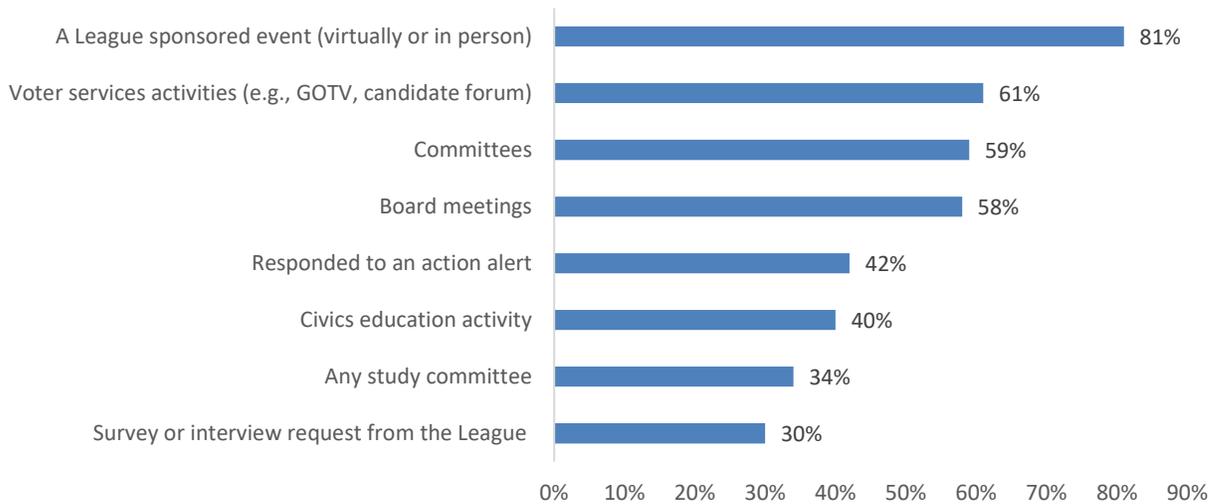
• Board of Directors or Officer, study/program/committee chair, and legislative action/issue chair are the most common state League leadership roles respondents have occupied.



(The question asked participants to select all that apply so the total % will not equal 100%)

7a. In which of the following local League activities have you participated?

• League sponsored events, voter services activities, committees, and board meetings are the most common local League activities in which respondents participated.



(The question asked participants to select all that apply so the total % will not equal 100%)

Additional areas which didn't exceed a 25% participation rate: observer corps, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) event, fundraising, and Membership Engagement Leadership Development (MELD).

7b. In which of the following state League activities have you participated?

- **Responding to an action alert, and participation in convention or council, a League sponsored event, and an advocacy/action workshop are the most common state League activities in which respondents participated.**

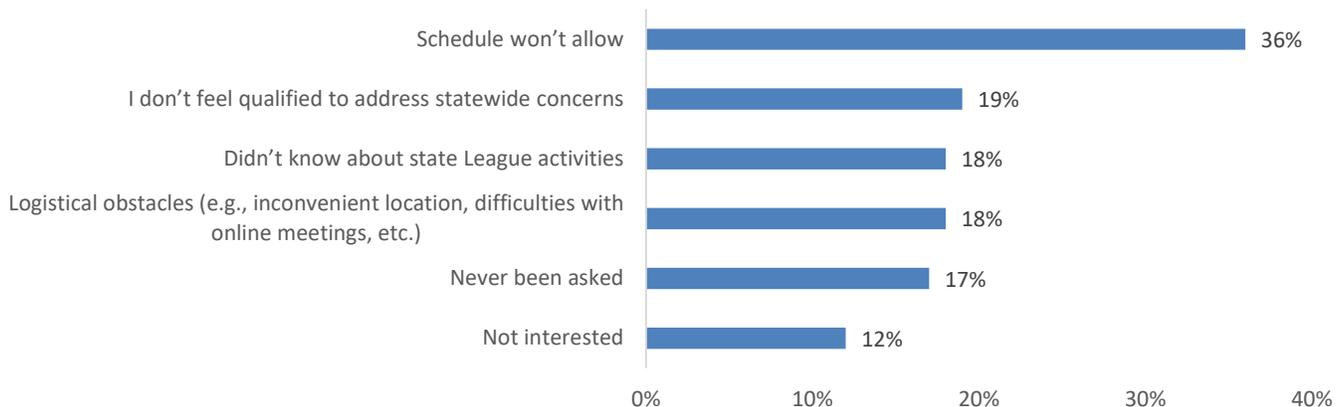


(The question asked participants to select all that apply so the total % will not equal 100%)

Additional areas that didn't exceed a 25% participation rate: affinity group, study committee, fundraising, board meetings, Membership Engagement Leadership Development (MELD), civics education activity and voter services activities (e.g., GOTV, candidate forum), and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) event.

8. If you have chosen NOT to participate in state League activities, why not?

- **Schedule conflicts, not feeling qualified, logistical obstacles, not enough knowledge about the activities, and not being asked are the main reasons for not participating in state League activities.**



(The question allowed participants to identify more than one reason so the total % will not equal 100%)

Additional areas that did not exceed a 10% selection rate: frustrations with state League processes or structure, personality clashes with people in the state League, new/recently joined League, participate as much as possible, does not seem relevant, no longer share the views of the League, personal/family health, personal choice, and transportation.

9. As a result of the work of the state League, how much change in these areas have you observed during the past two years?

• Increased legislative information, voter education, and state League communication, during the last two years, showed the greatest state League change.

1. Increased information about legislation
2. Increased voter education
3. Improved state League communication and access to information
4. Increased local League collaborations
5. Increased number of state League leaders (e.g., state committee chairs and affinity groups)
6. Increased member involvement in state League activities
7. Increased state League Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) awareness and action

Ranked on a 4 point scale with the most change answer ranked as #1.

Additional areas not identified above include: reduced membership financial barriers (e.g., membership payments and travel to League events), increased new member recruitment, increased new member support (e.g., orientation, new member training), membership more representative of the whole community, and increased membership retention.

10. The state League has several focus areas. Please rate the effectiveness of each area's impact.

• Influencing legislative actions and strengthening voter services and civic education were the state League focus areas with the greatest effectiveness.

1. Influencing state legislative actions
2. Strengthening state-wide voter services
3. Strengthening state-wide civic education
4. Communication of state League activities
5. Influencing state agency actions
6. Strengthening partnerships/coalitions with organizations where we have shared visions
7. Conducting studies of relevant issues

Ranked on a 4 point scale with the most effective action ranked as #1

Additional areas not identified above include: increasing membership, fundraising, and engaging with more diverse groups.

**11. Rank each strategy in terms of how it will help LWVWA achieve the following state League goal:
Increase LWVWA Impact.**

• Strengthening civic education and voter services and enhancing public policy advocacy are the best strategies to increase LWVWA Impact.

1. Strengthening state-wide civic education
2. Strengthening state-wide voter services
3. Enhance advocacy outcomes affecting public policy, both legislative and executive levels
4. Motivate attitudes toward the value of civic involvement
5. Build stronger relationships with League allies and partners
6. Communication of state League activities
7. Conduct studies of relevant issues

Ranked on a 4 point scale with the most effective action ranked as #1.

**12. Rank each strategy in terms of how it will help LWVWA achieve the following state League goal:
Facilitate Local League Work.**

• Increased diversity of membership and group collaborations and support of local League's leadership development and membership recruitment are the best strategies to Facilitate Local League Work.

1. Increase diversity of ethnicity, age, gender and socio-economic status at all levels of League/Engaging with more diverse groups
2. Help local Leagues with new leadership development
3. Help local Leagues increase membership
4. Support on-going training and exchange of ideas
5. Strengthen communication across local Leagues and between local Leagues and state League

Ranked on a 4 point scale with the most effective action ranked as #1

**13. Rank each strategy in terms of how it will help LWVWA achieve the following state League goal:
Strengthen Organizational Capacity.**

• Investment in technical support, dedicated funding structure, and hiring additional staff are the best strategies to Strengthen Organizational Capacity.

1. Invest in technical support needed to support state and local Leagues
2. Develop necessary funding to achieve League goals
3. Hire additional staff to strengthen state support
4. Establish policies and procedures needed to assure organizational effectiveness and continuity

Ranked on a 4 point scale with the most effective action ranked as #1.

Additional areas not identified above include: increase convention participation and understanding, increase Council participation and learning, increase usefulness of This Month in the League (TMIL) newsletter, provide support for local technology issues, inform members about availability of Education Fund grants to local leagues (received 16 #1 votes), make website easier to use (received 26 #1 votes), and inform members about LWVWA investments.

14. Do you believe that the League is nonpartisan in practice?

• Members, believe that the local (84%) and state (71%) Leagues are nonpartisan in practice. However, there were members who were unsure and answered “Don’t Know” about the local (9%) and state (23%) Leagues so there is opportunity to improve communication on this issue.

Local League

84% identified the local League as nonpartisan

9% not sure

State League

71% identified the state League as nonpartisan

23% not sure

Examples of how the League is Non-partisan included: reminders at every meeting and forum about sticking to facts and being non-partisan, positions on issues being thoroughly studied, candidate forums including all parties and just facts, not endorsing any candidates and material being edited to be non-partisan.

Examples of how the League is partisan included: partisan appearances due to parties changing, the League being viewed as liberal, today’s political environment making it difficult to be non-partisan, and educational material having a partisan bias.

15. Do you believe the state League is on the right track as it works to grow Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI)?

• **Members, believe (42%) that the state League is on the right track as it works to grow Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI). However, 50% of total respondents were unsure and answered “Don’t Know” so there is opportunity to improve communication on this issue.**

State League

42% identified the state League as on the right track to grow DEI

50% not sure

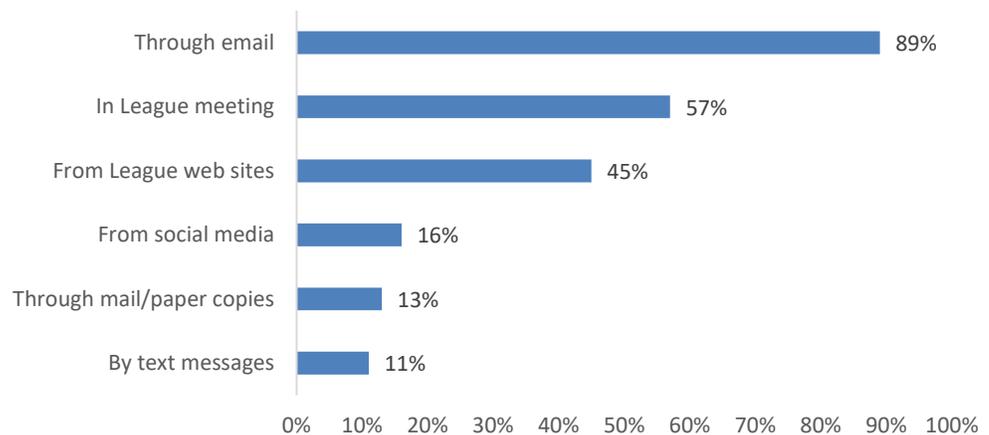
Examples of how the League is on the Right Track included: focusing on DEI both at the state and local League and bringing in DEI presentations/speakers.

Examples of how the League is on the Wrong Track included: no clear evidence of action or plan-, lack of partnerships, poor communication, and focusing more on external than internal League structures.

Examples of how participants are unsure if the League is on the Right or Wrong Track included: lack of clear communication of what is being done.

16a. What is your preferred method to get communications about local League activities?

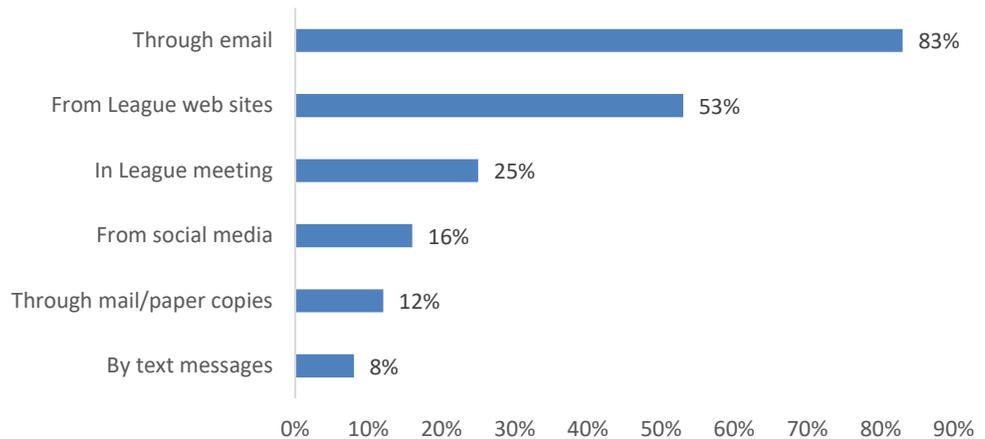
• **From email, during League meetings, and the local League website are members preferred local League communication methods.**



(The question allowed participants to identify more than one reason so the total % will not equal 100%)
Additional areas not identified above include: League newsletter, phone, not on social media.

16b. What is your preferred method to get communications about state League activities?

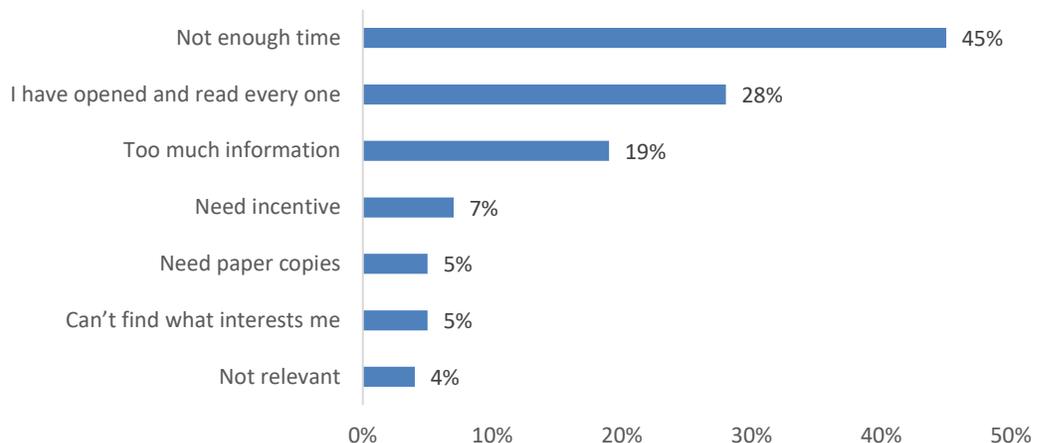
- From email, the League website, and during League meetings are members preferred state League communication methods



(The question allowed participants to identify more than one reason so the total % will not equal 100%)
Additional areas not identified above include: League newsletter, phone, not on social media.

17. What are the most common reasons for why you have not opened TMIL (This Month In League) or The Voter?

- Lack of time and too much information are the main reasons for members not opening This Month In the League or The Voter. Over ¼ of membership indicate that they open and read every one.



(The question allowed participants to identify more than one reason so the total % will not equal 100%)
Additional areas not identified above include: never received, didn't know about them, and rely on another resource.

18. How can the state League make itself more visible to League members?

• **Increasing state Leaders' visibility and improving communication about state League activities are the preferred ways the state League can be more visible to membership.**



Additional recommendations to improve League visibility to the members include:

Increased Leader Visibility: state leadership attend local meetings, connect with local Leagues, and share information.

Improved Communications: increase communication of League accomplishments and develop positions on issues and communicate them to members.

Improved Email: increase the number of emails but change email design so that they are more executive summary style that includes less information and is more direct.

Specific Program Improvement: increase number of affinity groups, increase zoom utilization, explore using club express, and promote 411.

Improved Training: train new members and volunteers and increase video training.

Convening In-Person events: transition back from COVID with in-person meetings.

19. How can the state League make itself more visible to the public?

• **Increasing non-paid public activities, expanding the range of public event topics, and development of more partnerships and collaborations are the main ways the state League can be more visible to the public.**



Additional recommendations to improve League visibility to the public include:

Non-paid publicity: get interviews on the TV and write letters to the editor.

More League events: more public forums which are not just around elections.

Partnerships: Develop partnerships and collaborations.

Paid publicity: advertise events and how to join local Leagues.

Attend outside events: increase visibility and presence at public events.

20. What are 3-5 words that you would use to describe the state League?

• **Resource, dedicated, active, influential, and advocate are the most common words to describe the state League.**

1. Resource
2. Dedicated
3. Active
4. Influential
5. Advocate
6. Engaging
7. Thorough
8. Unknown (outside the League)
9. Organized
10. Non-Partisan
11. Educational
12. Relevant

Listed by the most commonly stated attribute, with #1 being the most common.

Demographics of participants

21. Where do you live?

- **84% live West of the Cascades and 16% East of the Cascades.**

Where you live	%
West of the Cascades	84%
East of the Cascades	16%

22. How populated is the place where you live?

- **27% live in a Rural area, 37% in a Suburban area, and 36% in an Urban area.**

Population	%
Rural	27%
Suburban	37%
Urban	36%

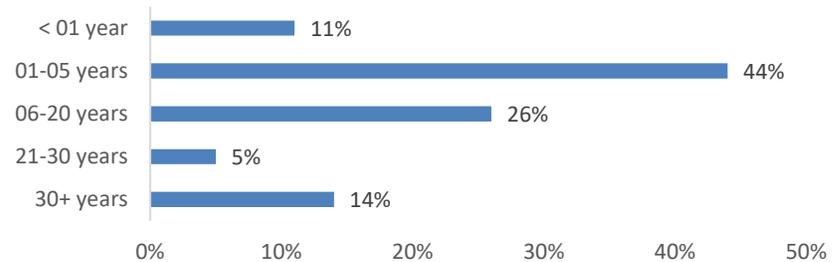
23. Were you born in WA state?

- **26% were born in Washington state.**

Born in WA	%
No	74%
Yes	26%

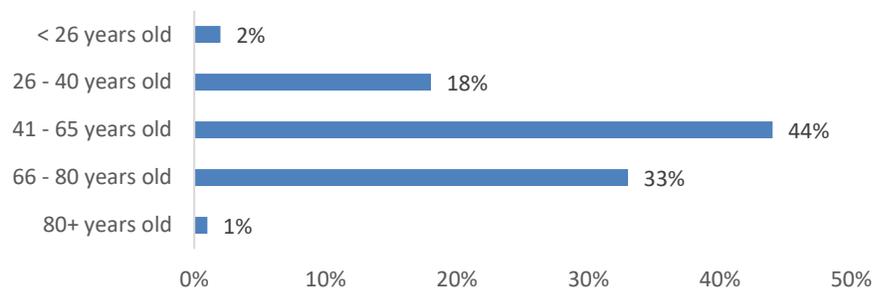
24. How long have you been involved in the League?

- **11% have been less than 1 year with the League, 44% 1-5 years, 26% 6-20 years, 5% 21-30 years, and 14% over 30 years.**



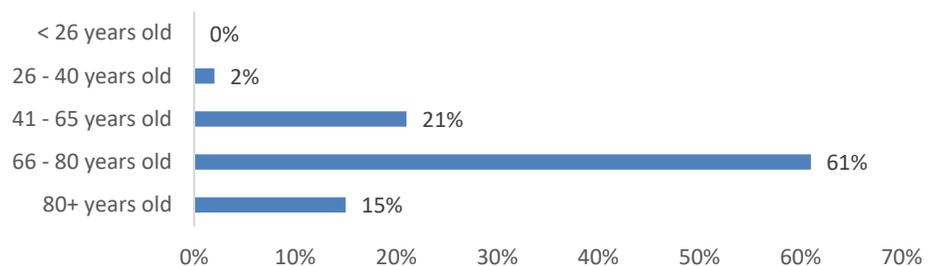
25. How old were you when you joined the League?

- **2% were under 25 when they joined the League, 18% 26-40 years old, 44% 41-65 years old, 33% 66-80 years old, and 1% over 80 years old.**



26. Which of the following age groups reflects your current age?

- **2% of participants were under 41 years old, 21% 41-65 years old, 61% 66-80 years old, and 15% over 80 years old.**



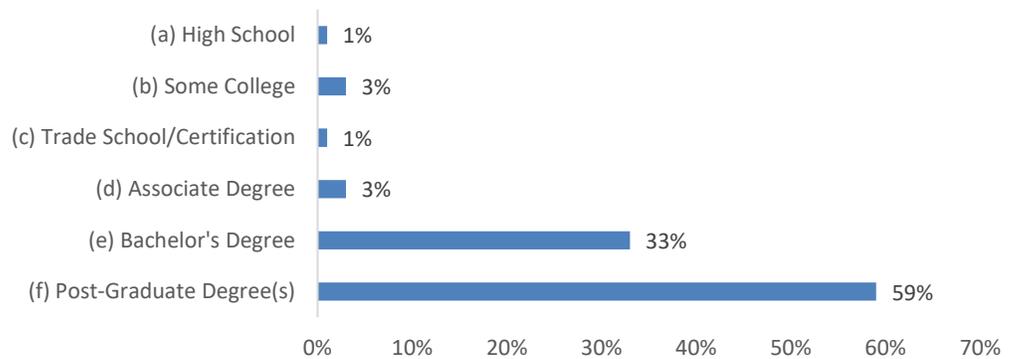
27. Which of the following do you identify as?

- **91% identified a female, 8% as male, and 2% as other.**

Gender	%
Female	91%
Male	8%
Other	2%

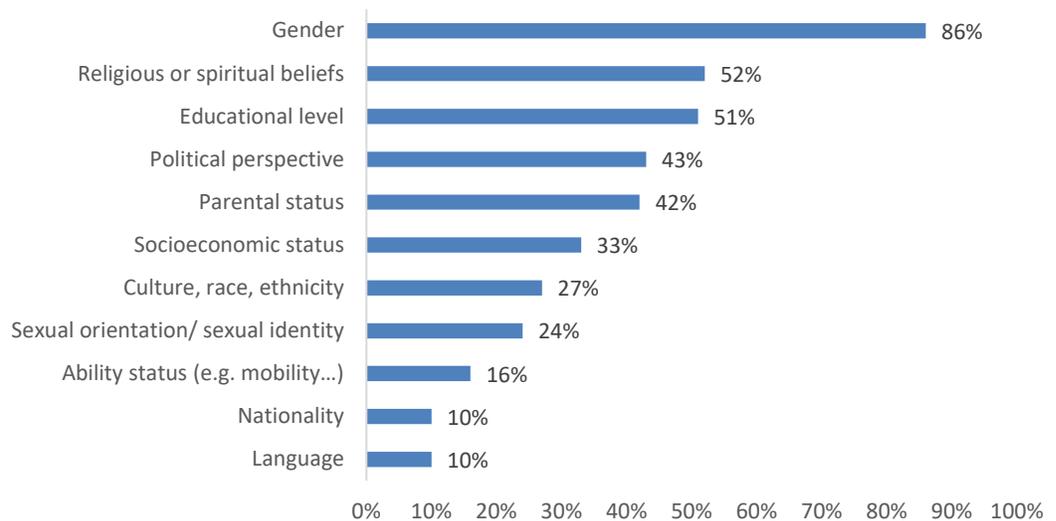
28. What is the highest level of education you have attained?

- **92% of participants have a Bachelor's or higher degree.**



29. Think about your "family", however you define it. Indicate the areas where your family members are different than you.

- **Members indicated that they belong to very diverse families.**



(The question allowed participants to answer each area separately so the total % will not equal 100%)