

UCLA

UCLA Previously Published Works

Title

Californians' Views on Lowering the Voting Age

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2w94s3wg>

Author

Wray-Lake, Laura

Publication Date

2025

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Californians' Views on Lowering the Voting Age

Laura Wray-Lake, PhD., UCLA Professor of Social Welfare, wraylake@luskin.ucla.edu

There is growing interest in lowering the voting age in the U.S. and internationally. Most recently, in July 2025, the United Kingdom granted 16-year-olds the right to vote in all UK elections¹. A main goal of enfranchising younger adolescents is to strengthen democracy by getting more young people engaged in elections. International evidence shows that lowering the voting age increases voter turnout and political interest and knowledge over the short- and long-term².

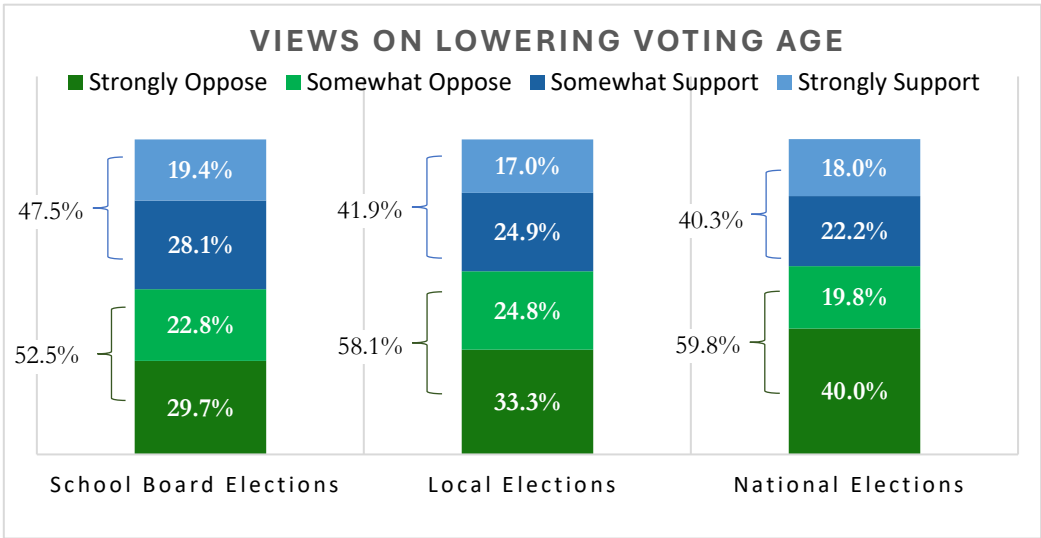
In California, Oakland and Berkeley allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in school board elections and Albany approved a measure to lower their local voting age to 16 in 2024. Other municipalities in California such as San Francisco, Palo Alto, and Culver City are actively considering this policy change. Statewide, California has considered measures to lower the voting age 12 times since 1995, with legislature and public support not reaching sufficient levels³.

Given the growing number of California municipalities considering a lower voting age, it is important to hear the opinions of current California voters and understand who is likely to support and oppose lowering the voting age for school board, local, and national elections.

The Luskin Poll surveyed 2,420 Californians ages 18 and older from March through May of 2025. Sample weights were applied to ensure the data better represented the California population⁴.

GENERAL VIEWS ON LOWERING THE VOTING AGE

Californians showed more opposition than support for lowering the voting age. The strongest opposition was for national elections. Lowering the voting age for school board elections has significantly more support (47.5%) than other types of elections (40.3-41.9%).

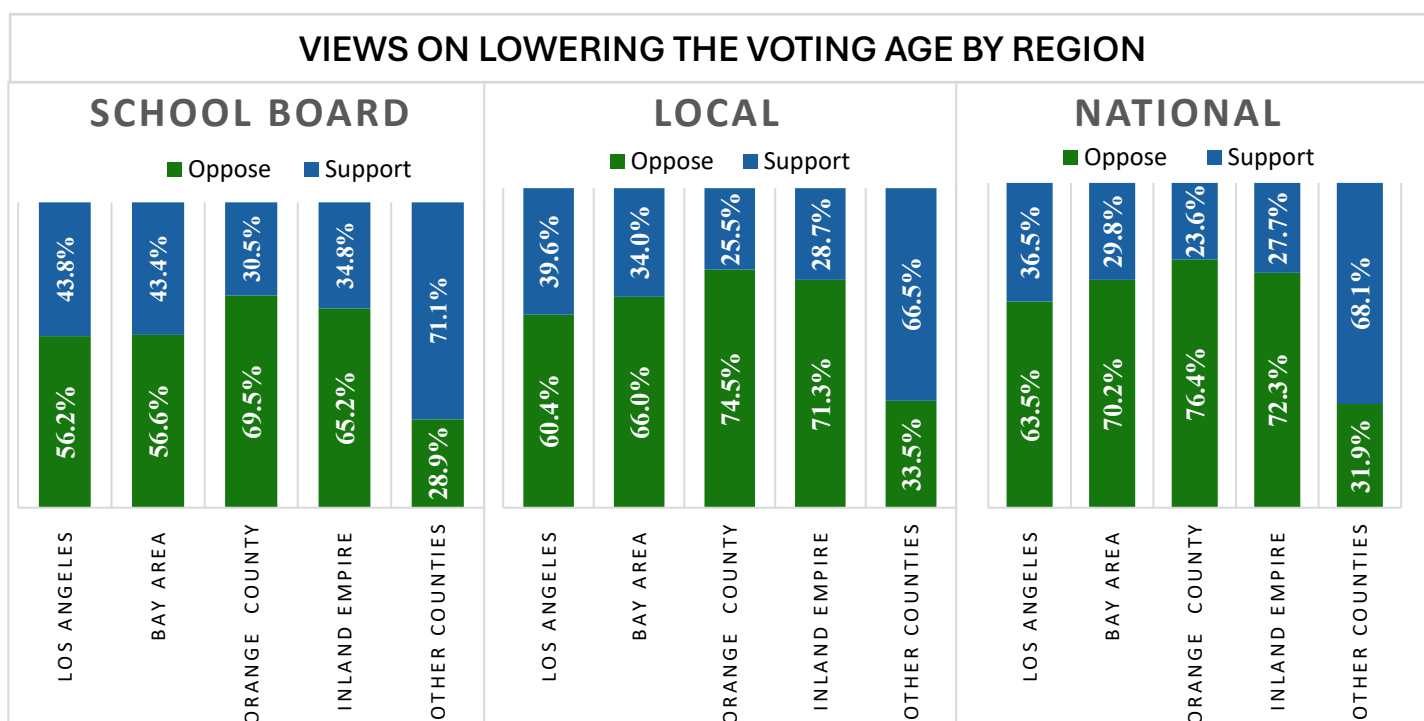


¹UK Government (2025, July 17). [Press release: 16-year-olds to be given right to vote through election reforms](#).
²Eichhorn, J. & Bergh, J. (2020). (Eds.). [Lowering the Voting Age to 16: Learning from Real Experiences Worldwide](#). Palgrave Macmillan.
³Wray-Lake, L., Wilf, S., & Oosterhoff, B. (2020). [Reconsidering the voting age in Los Angeles and California](#). In D.J.B. Mitchell (Ed.), California Policy Options 2020 (pp. 209-245). UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs.

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

Opinions on lowering the voting age varied across regions of California, and a consistent pattern was found across school board, local, and national elections.

- Bay Area and Los Angeles residents were more supportive of lowering the voting age than Orange County and Inland Empire residents.
- Respondents from other areas of California showed high levels of support for lowering the voting age, on average.



Smaller sample sizes mean that the level of support in other California counties should be interpreted with caution. However, across four other counties with at least 80 participants in the poll – Fresno, Kern, Sacramento, and San Joaquin Counties – the majority of respondents expressed support for lowering the voting age.

Percentage of Respondents who Support Lowering the Voting Age

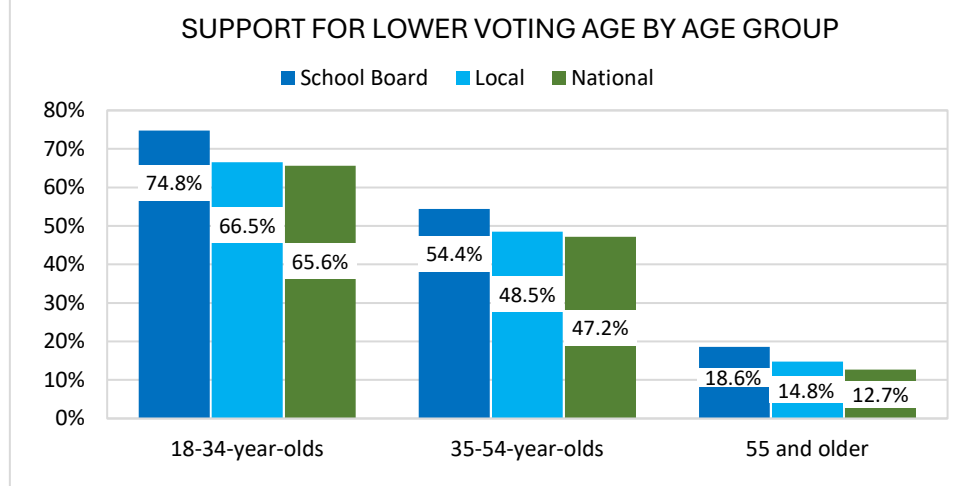
	School Board	Local	National
Fresno County	77.0%	69.2%	73.8%
Kern County	71.4%	73.5%	73.1%
Sacramento County	66.3%	61.4%	63.1%
San Joaquin County	73.8%	71.5%	76.3%

METHODOLOGY. Data were collected by Qualtrics using non-probability sampling from existing panels to achieve a sample demographically representative of California's population. Sampling weights were calculated using the 2023 American Community Survey and were applied to achieve state population-level representation by age, gender, race and ethnicity, education level, household income, and California region. However, the sample is not representative of political party affiliations in California, and young Republicans were inadvertently oversampled.

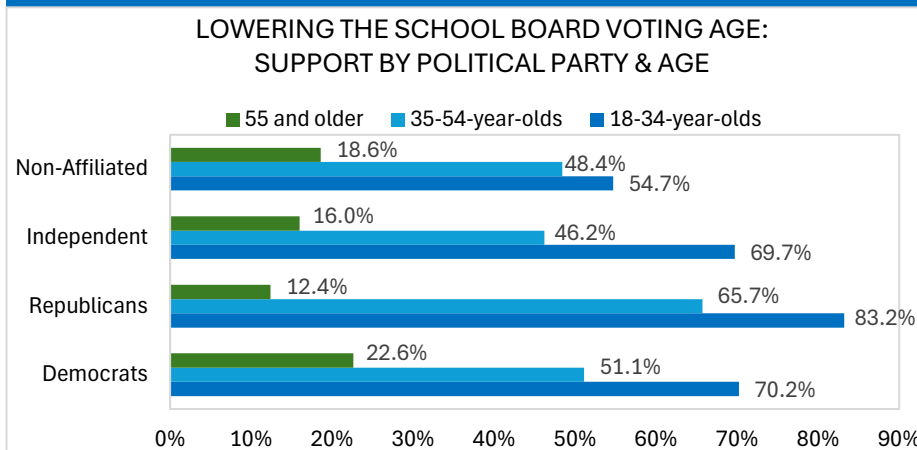
WHO SUPPORTS AND OPPOSES LOWERING THE VOTING AGE

Age was the strongest determinant of support or opposition for lowering the voting age.

The majority of 18–34-year-olds support lowering the voting age. Californians aged 35–54 show moderate support. Those 55 and older are strongly opposed. **Most Californians under age 55 support lowering the voting age for school board (64%), local (57.1%) and national (55.7%) elections.**



Political party affiliation was associated with views on lowering the voting age.



Political party affiliation relates differently to views on the voting age depending on age group.

For 18–54-year-olds, Republicans showed stronger support for lowering the voting age than other groups*.

For those 55 and older, Democrats expressed the

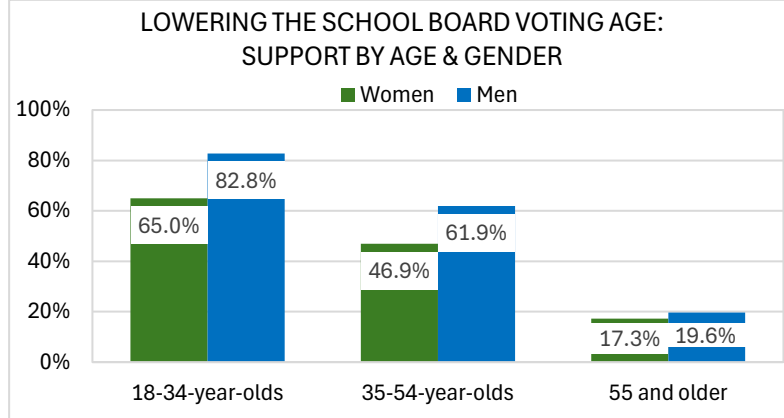
most support and Republicans the least support for lowering the voting age.

Men expressed more support than women for lowering the voting age.

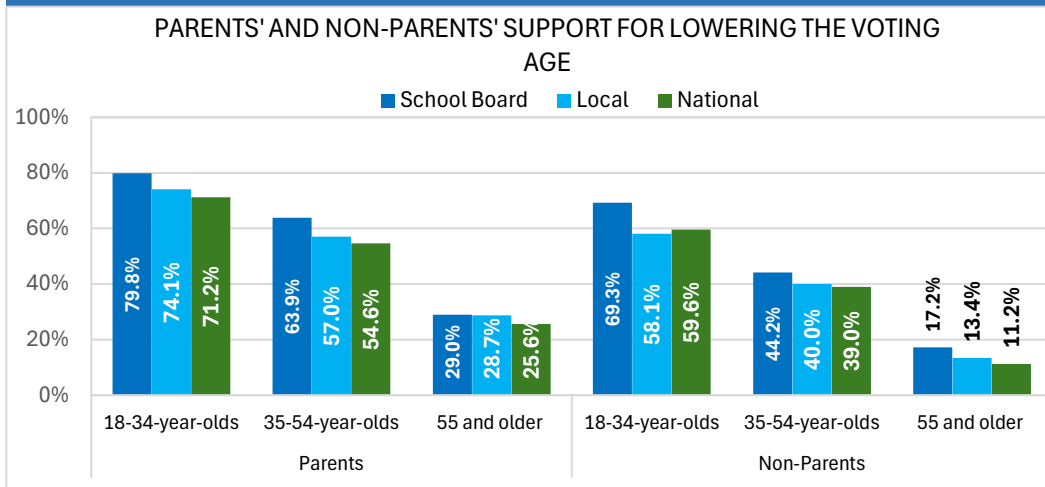
The majority of 18–34-year-olds (both men and women) support lowering the voting age.

Men expressed more support than women among Californians 54 and younger*. Views did not significantly differ for men and women ages 55 and older.

*Percentages shown for school board elections; patterns were the same across election types.



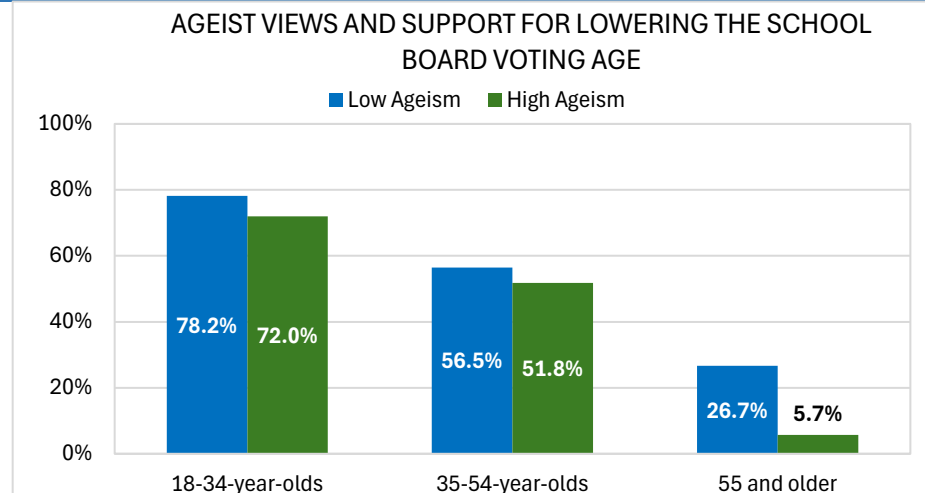
Parents are more likely to support lowering the voting age.



Parents – regardless of their age or their child’s age – were more supportive of lowering the voting age than non-parents. Parents may have important insights about teens that lead them to favor a lower voting age.

Those with ageist views of adolescents were more likely to oppose lowering the voting age.

Ageist views – negative stereotypes about adolescents – include believing adolescents are too impulsive to make important choices, their opinions cannot be taken seriously, and they lack experience to offer valuable insights. Californians who held these views were less supportive of lowering the voting age. This association was especially pronounced among Californians 55 and older*.



IMPLICATIONS FOR CALIFORNIA

- Opposition to lowering the voting age ranges from 52-60%, yet these overall numbers mask strong support in particular regions and among young adults and some middle-aged adults.
- Lowering the voting age for school board and local elections has the most public support, and thousands of 16- and 17-year-old Californians already have voting rights at these levels.
- The staunchest opposition is among older adults, and especially those who hold negative, ageist assumptions about adolescents.
- Gender and political party affiliation findings were unexpected based on prior research and a similar [poll in New Jersey](#). Patterns vary by age, showing that age is a key determinant of views on the voting age. California may also have unique political dynamics in relation to lower voting age policy.

