

UC Berkeley

IGS Poll

Title

Release #2024-20: Election Turnout and Voting Methods

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7pq6f1ms>

Author

DiCamillo, Mark

Publication Date

2024-11-05



Institute of Governmental Studies
102 Philosophy Hall, #2370
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720-2370
Tel: 510-642-1473
Email: igs@berkeley.edu

Release #2024-20

Tuesday, November 5, 2024

Voter turnout in California expected to be broad-based. Most will vote by mail or by bringing their completed ballot to drop box or voting center; fewer will be voting in person.

by Mark DiCamillo
Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*

According to the latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* completed one week before Election Day, the characteristics of Californians voting in today's election will be fairly broad-based, with two-thirds or more participating across virtually all major segments of the registered voter population.

However, the poll also finds that relatively few Californians (14%) will be voting in person today on Election Day. Instead, the large majority will either be returning their completed ballots by mail (43%) or simply dropping them off in a drop box or at a voting center on or before Election Day (43%).

While the poll finds turnout rates will likely be highest among the state's older registrants, whites, homeowners, and those with higher levels of education and income, two thirds of more of registered voters of color, as well as the state's renters and those with lower levels of education or income will also be participating. This far exceeds the participation rates of these groups in statewide primary elections and general elections held in gubernatorial elections, when turnout is less.

Some segments of the voting public are more likely than others to say they will be voting in person on Election Day. For example, 22% of Republicans and 23% of conservative voters say they will vote in-person, far greater than the proportions of Democrats (8%) or strongly or moderately liberal voters (6% and 9%, respectively) who will be casting their ballots this way. Younger and middle-aged voters are also more likely to say they will vote in person than voters ages 65 or older. Voting by mail is now the most common way for California's seniors ages 65 or older to be casting their ballots.

IGS Co-Director G. Cristina Mora notes, "the results show that the California electorate has become larger and more diverse with increasing percentages of voters of color engaging in the process. Younger Latino and Asian Americans seem to be making much more of an impact, as their voting engagement has increased significantly in each presidential election since 2016."

Voter registration and turnout statistics in California general elections since 1990

A review of the state's official voting statistics from the California Secretary of State shows that there are now nearly 27 million adult citizens in California eligible to register and vote. Of these, about 22.3 million, or nearly 83 percent, are currently on the voter rolls.

The number of Californians participating in today’s presidential election will not be known for many weeks because of the millions of late arriving mail and drop off ballots that need to be verified by county election officials before they can be counted. According to Political Data, Inc., a leading California supplier of voting information and voter listings to the state’s political campaigns, over 7 million ballots had already been received by county registrars across the state one day prior to Election Day.

Table 1 below tracks the growth in the state’s citizen-eligible adult population and its registered voters since 1990 and reports the number of Californians who have participated in statewide general elections over the past 35 years.

Table 1
Estimates of California’s citizen eligible and registered to vote populations, and voter turnout and participation rates in general elections since 1990

Election year	Eligible to vote	Voter Registration		Voting		
	Citizen- eligible adults ¹ (in 000’s)	Total registered (in 000’s)	% of citizen-eligibles	Total voters (in 000’s)	% of registered	% of citizen-eligibles
2024^P	26,907	22,310	82.9			
2022	26,876	21,940	81.6	11,146	50.8	41.5
2020 ^P	25,091	22,047	84.5	17,785	80.7	70.1
2018	25,200	19,696	78.2	12,713	64.6	50.4
2016 ^P	24,875	19,412	78.0	14,611	75.3	58.7
2014	24,288	17,804	73.3	7,514	42.4	30.9
2012 ^P	23,803	18,246	76.7	13,202	72.4	55.5
2010	23,552	17,286	73.7	10,300	59.6	43.7
2008 ^P	23,209	17,304	74.6	13,743	79.4	59.2
2006	22,652	15,837	69.9	8,899	56.2	39.3
2004 ^P	22,075	16,557	75.0	12,590	76.0	57.0
2002	21,466	15,303	71.3	7,739	50.6	36.1
2000 ^P	21,461	15,707	73.2	11,143	70.9	57.9
1998	20,806	14,969	71.9	8,618	57.6	41.4
1996 ^P	19,527	15,602	80.2	10,260	65.6	52.5
1994	18,496	14,724	77.7	8,901	60.5	47.0
1992 ^P	20,864	15,101	72.6	11,374	75.3	54.5
1990	19,245	13,478	70.0	7,899	58.6	41.0

¹ Estimates from the California Secretary of State.

^P Indicates Presidential election year, all others are gubernatorial election years.

Figures rounded.

Characteristics of Californians likely to be voting in this year’s election

The demographic characteristics of registered voters who will likely be participating in this year’s general election are reported in Table 1 below. These estimates come from the *Berkeley IGS Poll’s*

final pre-election survey completed among random samples of 4,837 California registered voters one week before the election.

The results indicate that turnout will be fairly broad-based. While it is likely that turnout will be greater among older registrants, whites, homeowners, and those with higher levels of education and income as is typically the case, two-thirds or more of the state’s voters of color, renters, as well as those with lower levels of education and income will also be participating according to the poll. If borne out on Election Day, this will result in a generally more broad-based electorate than what is typically seen in statewide primary elections or in general elections held in gubernatorial election years.

Table 2
Characteristics of registered voters likely to vote
in California’s 2024 general election

	Likely to vote %	Not likely to vote %
<u>Party registration</u>		
Democrats	80	20
Republicans	85	15
No Party Preference/other	70	30
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>		
White	85	15
Latino	69	31
Asian/Pacific Islander	73	27
Black	74	26
<u>Gender</u>		
Female	79	21
Male	78	22
<u>Age</u>		
18-29	55	45
30-39	69	31
40-49	81	19
50-64	87	13
65 or older	92	8
<u>Tenure</u>		
Homeowner	88	12
Renter/other	68	32
<u>Education</u>		
High school graduate or less	65	35
Some college/trade school	76	24
College graduate	84	16
Post-graduate education	85	15
<u>Annual household income</u>		
Less than \$20,000	65	35
\$20,000-\$39,999	70	30
\$40,000-\$59,999	74	26
\$60,000-\$99,999	81	19
\$100,000-\$199,999	83	17
\$200,000 or more	86	14

Source: Late October 2024 Berkeley IGS Poll

Methods being used by California voters when casting their ballots

Recent changes in California election law whereby official voting materials are mailed to all registered voters up to four weeks in advance of the election have produced a big shift in the methods that most voters use when casting their vote in state elections. Prior to 2012, more than half of the state's voters cast their ballots in-person at their local voting precinct or voting center on Election Day.

However, the latest poll shows that only about 14% of the state's voters will likely be voting in person on Election Day. Instead, the large majority will either be returning their completed ballot by mail (43%) or simply dropping it off in a drop box or at a voting center prior to or on Election Day (43%).

The poll finds that some segments of the voting public are more likely to vote in person on Election Day than others. For example, nearly a quarter of the state's Republicans (22%) and its conservatives (23%) say they will be casting their ballot in person today, significantly greater than the proportions of the state's Democrats or liberals.

Younger and middle-aged voters are also more likely to say they will vote in person than voters ages 65 or older, as 50% of California's seniors ages 65 or older say they will be casting their ballots by mail, while 42% will drop off their completed ballot in a drop box or voting center.

In addition, a somewhat larger proportion of the state's Latinos intend to vote in person today than the state's whites, blacks and Asian Americans.

Table 3
Methods California voters are using to vote in this year's
election
(among likely voters)

	By mail	Drop off*	In person
	%	%	%
Total statewide	43	43	14
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	46	46	8
Republicans	36	42	22
No Party Preference/other	47	37	15
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Strongly conservative	39	38	23
Somewhat conservative	40	37	23
Moderate	45	43	12
Somewhat liberal	49	42	9
Strongly liberal	41	53	6
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White	44	44	12
Latino	39	40	21
Asian/Pacific Islander	48	44	8
Black	41	46	13
<u>Gender</u>			
Female	42	46	12
Male	45	39	16
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	33	49	18
30-39	40	44	16
40-49	41	39	20
50-64	44	42	14
65 or older	50	42	8
<u>Tenure</u>			
Homeowner	45	44	11
Renter/other	42	42	16
<u>Education</u>			
High school grad or less	43	40	17
Some college/trade school	40	42	18
College graduate	47	44	9
Post-graduate education	45	45	10
<u>Annual household income</u>			
Less than \$20,000	53	30	17
\$20,000-\$39,999	41	44	15
\$40,000-\$59,999	50	41	9
\$60,000-\$99,999	38	43	19
\$100,000-\$199,999	42	44	14
\$200,000 or more	45	45	10

* Drop off voters include those dropping off their ballots in a drop box or at a voting center or their voting precinct prior to or on Election Day

Source: Late October 2024 Berkeley IGS Poll

About the Survey

The findings in this report are based on a *Berkeley IGS Poll* completed by the Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) at the University of California, Berkeley. The poll was administered online in English and Spanish October 22-29, 2024, among 4,838 registered voters in California, of whom 4,341 were considered likely to vote or had already voted in the state's November 2024 general election. Funding for the poll was provided in part by the *Los Angeles Times*.

The poll was conducted by distributing email invitations to stratified random samples of the state's registered voters. Each email invited voters to participate in a non-partisan survey conducted by the University and provided a link to the IGS website where the survey was housed. Reminder emails were distributed to non-responding voters and an opt out link was provided for voters not wishing to receive further email invitations.

The latest poll also included an oversampling of registered voters in Los Angeles County, administered using the same methods, to enable the poll to examine some election contests facing voters in Los Angeles County and to the *Times*. After the completion of data collection, the results were weighted to realign the Los Angeles County oversample to its actual share of the statewide registered voter population.

Samples of California registered voters with email addresses were derived from information contained on the official voter registration rolls and provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc., a leading supplier of registered voter lists. To protect the anonymity of respondents, voters' email addresses and all other personally identifiable information derived from the original voter listing were purged from the data file and replaced with a unique and anonymous identification number during data processing. In addition, after the completion of data collection, post-stratification weights were applied to the survey data file to align the sample of registered voters to population characteristics of the registered voters statewide and within major regions of the state.

The sampling error associated with the survey results is difficult to calculate precisely because of sample stratification and post-stratification weighting. Nevertheless, it is likely that findings from the overall sample have a sampling error of about +/-2 points at the 95% confidence level.

Question wording

As you may know, California will be holding a statewide election for president, U.S. Senate and other state and local offices on November 5th. Are you planning or not planning to vote in this election, or have you already voted early or by mail?

(IF ALREADY VOTED) Which of the following methods did you use to cast your ballot? (1) Mailed it in, (2) Dropped it off in an official drop box or voting center, (3) Voted in person at an official voting center.

(IF PLANNING TO VOTE, BUT HAVEN'T VOTED YET): Not everyone has the time or interest to vote in every election. On a scale of 1 to 10, where "1" means you definitely will NOT vote and "10" means you definitely WILL vote, how likely is it that you will vote in this year's election. Choose any number between 1 and 10 for your answer.

If you do vote in the election, how would you most likely cast your ballot? (1) By mailing it in prior to Election Day, (2) By dropping it off in a drop box or at a voting center prior to Election Day, (3) By dropping it off at a voting center on Election Day, (4) By voting in person on Election Day.

About the Institute of Governmental Studies

The Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) is an interdisciplinary organized research unit that pursues a vigorous program of research, education, publication and public service. A component of the University of California system's flagship Berkeley campus, IGS is the oldest organized research unit in the UC system and the oldest public policy research center in the state. IGS's co-directors are Professor Eric Schickler and Associate Professor Cristina Mora.

IGS conducts periodic surveys of public opinion in California on matters of politics and public policy through its *Berkeley IGS Poll*. The poll, which is disseminated widely, seeks to provide a broad measure of contemporary public opinion, and to generate data for subsequent scholarly analysis. The director of the *Berkeley IGS Poll* is Mark DiCamillo. For a complete listing of stories issued by the *Berkeley IGS Poll* go to <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.