



Population Characteristics

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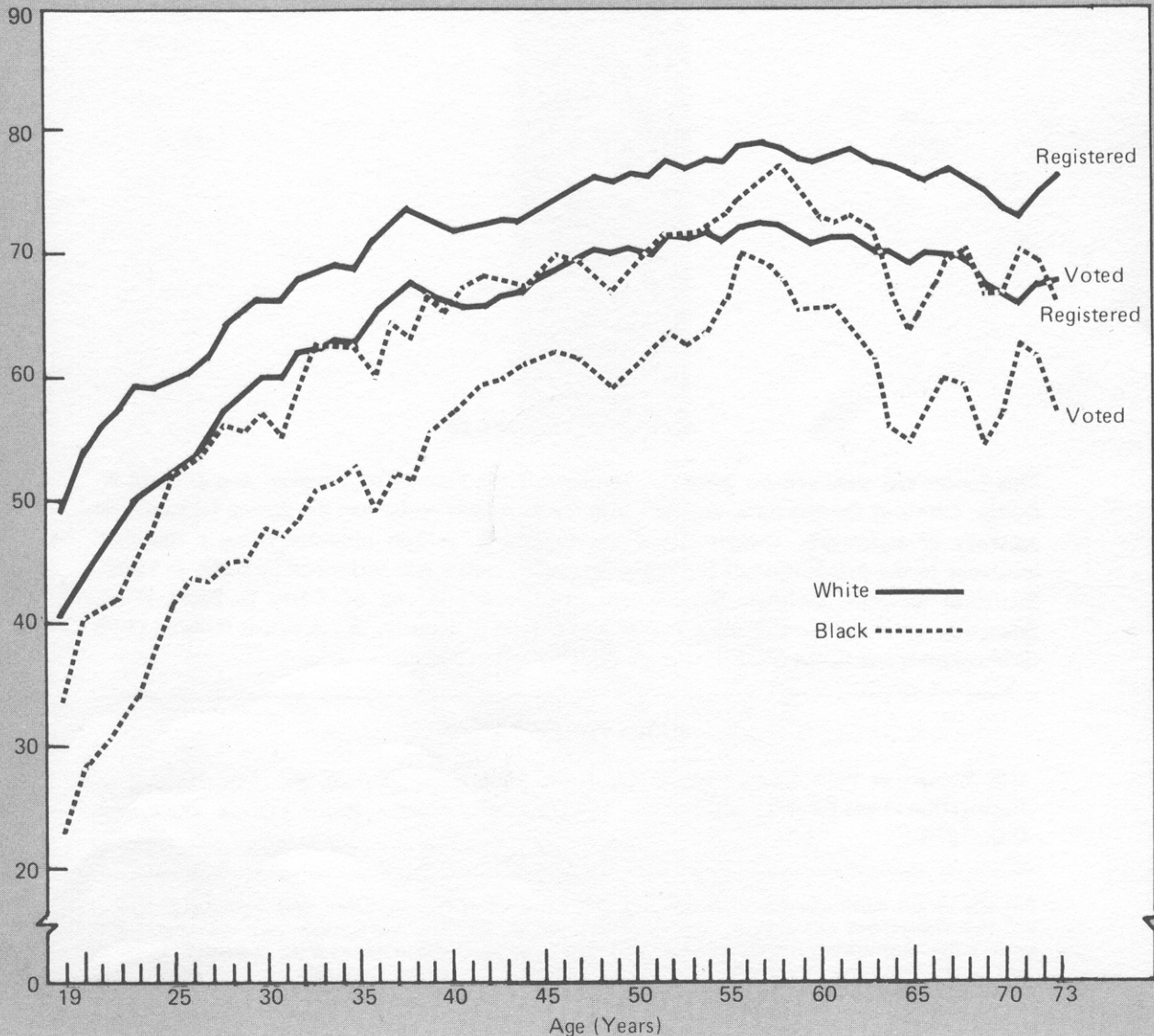
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Voting and Registration in the Election of November 1976

Figure 1. Percent Reporting Registering and Voting of Persons of Voting Age, by Race and Single Years of Age: November 1976

(Three-year moving average. Civilian noninstitutional population)

Percent



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**Population
Characteristics**

Series P-20, No. 322
Issued March 1978

**Voting and Registration
in the Election
of November 1976**

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SYMBOLS USED IN TABLES

- Represents zero.
- B Base less than 75,000.
- NA Not available.
- ... Not applicable.
- Z Less than 0.05 percent.

Voting and Registration in the Election of November 1976

INTRODUCTION

Although more people voted than ever before, the actual voting rate in the 1976 Presidential election was lower than in any Presidential election since 1948. The ratio of official votes cast for President to the voting age population was 54 percent, down from 55 percent in 1972 and a high of 63 percent in 1960.

This report presents findings on the social and demographic characteristics of the civilian noninstitutional population of voting age in the 1976 election from the Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the Bureau of the Census. (Preliminary results were published in P-20, No. 304.) Comparisons of reported voter turnout are made with the first CPS survey on voting in 1964 and with the previous Presidential election of 1972.

The low official turnout for 1976 is also reflected in results of the CPS. Voter participation in 1976, as reported by the survey, was around 4 percentage points below the 1972 Presidential election and 10 points below the election of 1964.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Changes in the age distribution of the voting age population have contributed to the decline in voter turnout since the 1964 Presidential election.
- The voting rates of men and women are now approximately equal. Between 1964 and 1976 the reported rate for men dropped from 72 percent to 60 percent, while the rate for women fell from 67 to 59 percent.
- Voting turnout for both Whites and Blacks in 1976 was about 10 percentage points below their respective levels in the 1964 election, whereas the figure for persons of Spanish origin was 6 points below that of 1972, the first year the Bureau of the Census obtained voting data for this group separately.

Voting by Age. A significant part of the decline in the voting rate since 1964 can be attributed to an increase in the proportion of the electorate under 35 years old—traditionally, a low-turnout age group. During the 12 years since 1964, this portion of the voting age population increased from 28 percent to 40 percent of the total, an increase of 28 million persons. About 11 million of these young persons entered the electorate for the first time for the 1972 Presidential election, following ratification of the 26th Amend-

ment. In addition, the under 35-year-old age group grew by 7 million between 1972 and 1976 because of natural increase (tables A and 1).

Besides the large increase in the number of young eligibles, voter turnout has been affected by the relatively small (10 percent) increase since 1964 in the number of persons in the high turnout, over 35, age group. In 1976, the number of persons 35 to 54 years old was nearly the same as in 1964—about 46 million in each year—while the number of persons 55 years old and over increased by about 8.1 million. The modest increase in the size of the older age group, combined with a drop in their reported voting rate, resulted in a total turnout for persons 35 and over in 1976 that was nearly identical with the turnout for persons of this age in 1964 (about 58 million voters in each year). Thus, despite the lower voting rate of persons under 35 years old, the increase in the number of persons of that age contributed nearly all of the 10 million increase in the total reported votes cast in 1976 over 1964.

The net effect on voter turnout of all changes in the age distribution of the voting age population since 1964 indicates that about 3 out of the 10 percentage point drop in turnout since 1964 can be attributed to changes in the age distribution of the electorate.

Voting by Education and Employment. The decline in turnout between 1964 and 1976 occurred among men and women, both Black and White races, all age groups, and persons of every educational level and almost every occupational level (tables A and B). The drop in reported turnout for persons who attended high school but not college was 17 percentage points. Among college graduates, turnout was about 8 points lower in 1976 than it had been in 1964. However, during this time, there had been an increase in the proportion of the voting age population in the upper educational categories (high school graduates and above) and a decrease in the proportion in the lower educational levels, where turnout is generally low.

Between 1964 and 1976, the proportion of employed persons in white-collar occupations increased from 45 to 51 percent, while the proportion in blue-collar occupations declined from 37 to 33 percent. During the same period, the reported voting rate dropped by 10 percentage points for white-collar workers and by 16 points for blue-collar workers. Even though changes occurred in the educational and occupational distribution of workers that could have contributed to a higher turnout in 1976, no such increase occurred.

Table A. Percent Reported Voting, by Sex, Race, Spanish Origin, and Age: November 1976 and 1964

(Civilian noninstitutional population. For meaning of symbols, see text)

Sex, race, Spanish origin, and age	1976	1964	Difference
Both sexes.....	59.2	69.3	-10.1
Men.....	59.6	71.9	-12.3
Women.....	58.8	67.0	-8.2
White.....	60.9	70.7	-9.8
Black.....	48.7	58.5	-9.8
Spanish origin ¹	31.8	(NA)	...
Under 35 years.....	49.3	60.3	-11.0
18 to 20 years.....	38.0	² 39.2	-1.2
21 to 34 years.....	52.3	60.5	-8.2
35 years and over.....	65.7	72.9	-7.2
35 to 54 years.....	65.6	74.4	-8.8
55 years and over.....	65.8	70.8	-5.0

¹Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race.²Comprised of the populations 18 to 20 years old in Georgia and Kentucky, 19 and 20 years in Alaska, and 20 years in Hawaii.

Table B. Percent Reported Voting by Years of School Completed and Occupation of the Employed: November 1976 and 1964

(Civilian noninstitutional population. For meaning of symbols, see text)

Years of school completed and occupation	1976	¹ 1964	Difference
All educational levels.....	59.2	69.4	-10.2
Elementary: 0 to 7 years.....	37.3	51.2	-13.9
8 years.....	51.4	67.0	-15.6
High school: 1 to 3 years.....	47.2	65.4	-18.2
4 years.....	59.4	76.1	-16.7
College: 1 to 3 years.....	68.1	82.1	-14.0
4 years or more.....	79.8	87.5	-7.7
Not reported.....	...	34.1	...
Total employed.....	62.0	73.1	-11.0
White-collar workers.....	72.1	82.1	-10.0
Blue-collar workers.....	49.8	65.6	-15.8
Service workers.....	52.8	65.9	-13.1
Farm workers.....	62.5	63.8	-1.3

¹Persons 21 years old and over in 1964.

Black-White Voting Rates.

In the 1976 survey, the reported voting rate for Blacks was 49 percent and for Whites, 61 percent. Most of this 12 point difference, however, can be attributed to differences in the age, education, and income distributions of the Black and White populations. For example, by applying Black voting rates and White voting rates within education and age groups to a standard population (all persons 18 years old and over), the voting rates for Blacks and Whites become much closer—58 and 60 percent, respectively (table C). A similar standardized computation for age and family income of primary family members produces Black and White voting rates that also differ by only about 4 points. Further, if both education and income are standardized, the difference in voting rates is reduced to about 2 percentage points.

Voter Consistency Between 1972 and 1976.

A comparison of the two most recent Presidential elections reveals that the lower turnout of 4 percentage points in 1976 was not evenly distributed among demographic and social categories. Persons under 35 years of age reported a voting turnout rate in 1976 which was about 6 points below

their participation rate in the earlier election. High school graduates and those with some college education dropped more than the national average, whereas non-high school graduates and college graduates declined by about the same amount. The rates for men declined more than the rates for women, while Blacks and Whites declined about the same amount. Counter to the national trend, nonmetropolitan areas of the South showed increased voter participation by 4 percentage points (table 3).

A net change figure for turnout between two elections may imply more stability in voting patterns than exists in reality. Although the potential electorate is made up of approximately the same persons from one election to the next, some changes do occur: people die, a new 4-year cohort becomes eligible to vote, some people leave the country, others move in, and some enter the Armed Forces and institutions while others are discharged. (The CPS is restricted to the civilian noninstitutional population.) Aside from these changes, people who vote in one Presidential election may not vote in the next one for a variety of reasons, such as, dislike of the major candidates, failure to register in time, and ill health; they may vote in a later election when they had previously abstained. When persons 22 years of age or older in 1976 (who were eligible on the basis of age to vote in 1972) were asked about their voting in that election,

Table C. Reported and Standardized Percent Voting of Person of Voting Age, by Race and Education: November 1976

(Numbers in thousands. Civilian noninstitutional population)

Race and education	All persons	Percent reported voted	
		Not standardized	Standardized by age and education ¹
WHITE			
Total.....	129,316	60.9	59.9
Elementary: 0 to 4 years.....	3,295	26.4	26.7
5 to 7 years.....	6,581	41.5	41.4
8 years.....	10,803	51.9	51.3
High school: 1 to 3 years.....	18,435	48.3	47.3
4 years.....	50,275	61.0	60.5
College: 1 to 3 years.....	21,298	69.8	69.6
4 years or more.....	18,628	81.4	81.4
BLACK			
Total.....	14,927	48.7	55.8
Elementary: 0 to 4 years.....	1,210	38.6	36.9
5 to 7 years.....	1,558	46.3	46.1
8 years.....	1,056	50.5	53.0
High school: 1 to 3 years.....	3,529	42.8	48.3
4 years.....	4,747	46.9	52.5
College: 1 to 3 years.....	1,855	57.3	59.7
4 years or more.....	971	77.4	78.6

¹ U.S. total population used as standard.

**Table D. Percent Reported Voting, by Race, Spanish Origin, Sex, Age, and Years of School Completed:
November 1976 and 1972**

(Civilian noninstitutional population)

Race, sex, age, and education	1976	1972	Difference
All races.....	59.2	63.0	-3.8
White.....	60.9	64.5	-3.6
Black.....	48.7	52.1	-3.4
Spanish origin ¹	31.8	37.4	-5.6
Both sexes.....	59.2	63.0	-3.8
Male.....	59.6	64.1	-4.5
Female.....	58.8	62.0	-3.2
Total, 18 years and over.....	59.2	63.0	-3.8
18 to 24 years.....	42.2	49.6	-7.4
25 to 34 years.....	55.4	59.7	-4.3
35 to 44 years.....	63.3	66.3	-3.0
45 to 64 years.....	68.7	70.8	-2.1
65 years and over.....	62.2	63.5	-1.3
All educational levels.....	59.2	63.0	-3.8
Elementary: 0 to 7 years.....	37.3	40.1	-2.8
8 years.....	51.4	55.2	-3.8
High school: 1 to 3 years.....	47.2	52.0	-4.8
4 years.....	59.4	65.4	-6.0
College: 1 to 3 years.....	68.1	74.9	-6.8
4 years or more.....	79.8	83.6	-3.8

¹Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race.

a substantial majority reported the same behavior in 1972 as in 1976 (table E). Thus, 62 percent claimed to have voted in both elections and 20 percent did not vote in either. Another 18 percent reported different voting patterns; 10 percent said they had voted in 1972, but not in 1976, while 7 percent reported they had voted in 1976, but not in the earlier election.¹

Higher educational levels were highly correlated with a tendency to have voted in both elections. Eighty-five percent of those who completed 5 years or more of college reported that they voted in both the 1972 and 1976 elections, whereas only 4 percent reported that they did not vote in either election. In contrast, of persons who did not go beyond the 4th grade, 34 percent reported that they had voted in both elections and 50 percent reported not voting in either election.

Similarly, older persons 55 to 64 years old were more likely to have voted in both elections. Younger persons 22 to 24 years of age, besides having a greater proportion not voting in either election (37 percent) than in both elections (34 percent), also had the largest proportion (17 percent)

who voted in 1976 but did not vote in 1972. This fact illustrates the gradual way in which the young, in general, involve themselves in the political process. However, this statement should be qualified by noting the substantial difference that education makes in increasing the voting participation of those under 25 years of age. Young college graduates voted at a rate of 72 percent, compared with 38 percent for high school graduates, and 18 percent for those with less education (table 10).

Nonvoters (citizens only) in 1976 were asked if they had ever voted in a national, State, or local election and, if so, when they last voted. Among the 22 percent of nonvoters who were registered in 1976, 61 percent were reported to have voted at least once between 1972 and 1976; 10 percent had last voted before 1972, and 17 percent had never voted. Of the nonvoters in 1976 who were also not registered, there was considerably less involvement in elections. Only about 19 percent had voted in recent years (1972 or more recently); 16 percent had not voted since before 1972, and 54 percent had never voted (table 21).

The group who had voted before 1972, but not since, in contrast to those who had never voted, was predominantly older and likely to have had less schooling. Thus, those who had never voted by 1976 appear to be younger and gradually working their way into the political process, whereas the more recent nonvoters are older and slowly dropping out.

¹These percentages are based on those reporting for 1976 and 1972; 11 percent were not reported or did not know whether they had voted in 1972.

Table E. Percent Reported Voting in 1976 and 1972 of Persons 22 Years Old and Over, by Age and Years of School Completed: November 1976

(Numbers in thousands. Civilian noninstitutional population)

Age and education	Persons 22 years and over ¹	Voted in 1976		Did not vote in 1976	
		Percent voted in 1972	Percent did not vote in 1972	Percent voted in 1972	Percent did not vote in 1972
Total, 22 years and over.....	111,765	62.1	7.4	10.3	20.2
22 to 24 years.....	9,221	34.2	17.2	11.6	37.0
25 to 34 years.....	26,795	50.5	11.5	11.9	26.0
35 to 44 years.....	19,403	65.0	6.9	9.9	18.2
45 to 54 years.....	20,142	72.2	4.4	8.8	14.6
55 to 64 years.....	17,454	73.7	4.2	8.7	13.4
65 years and over.....	18,752	67.6	3.5	10.7	18.1
All educational levels.....	111,765	62.1	7.4	10.3	20.2
Elementary: 0 to 4 years.....	3,259	34.0	4.5	11.3	50.3
5 to 7 years.....	6,448	45.5	5.5	12.3	36.7
8 years.....	9,685	55.8	5.3	11.2	27.7
High school: 1 to 3 years.....	16,379	51.3	7.0	11.2	30.6
4 years.....	41,571	62.0	8.2	10.3	19.6
College: 1 to 3 years.....	16,682	69.0	8.8	11.0	11.2
4 years.....	10,803	77.6	8.4	8.1	5.9
5 years or more.....	6,939	84.9	5.1	6.0	3.9

¹Persons reporting on voting for 1976 and 1972.

Women and Voting. The gap between men and women in reported voting participation has narrowed significantly since this series of voting surveys began in 1964. In that year, the reported voting rate for men was 72 percent and for women 67 percent. This difference diminished to about 1 percentage point by 1976.² In fact, women under age 45 voted at a slightly higher rate than men in these same age groups. Among the elderly, those 65 and older, however, men voted at a rate that was 10 percentage points higher than women (68 to 58 percent). There was some evidence that among Black voters, women voted at a higher rate than men; this was clearly true for the age group 25 to 54 where the voting turnout for females was 5 percentage points above that for males (table 1).

Despite the near equality in voting rates between men and women, overall, there is some variation between the sexes according to educational attainment. The voting participation rates for those with an elementary school education or less have traditionally been low,³ but women

who did not go beyond the 8th grade voted at a rate which averaged about 9 percentage points lower than men with comparable education. The voting participation of women at higher educational levels increased so that for high school graduates and above, women reported voting at a higher rate than men. However, among the small group of persons with more than 4 years of college, comparison of the voting rates of men and women revealed some evidence of a higher voting rate for women. When age and educational attainment are considered together, women under 45 with at least a high school education voted at a higher rate than comparable men in the 1976 election (see table 10).

Except in the age groups under 25 and among women over 65, married persons, were more likely to report voting in 1976 than were never-married persons. Married men voted at slightly higher rates than married women, whereas widowed and divorced women, and never-married women were more likely to vote than their male counterparts. At age 65 and above, married men voted at a level that was 6 percentage points above that for married women. Widows and widowers, who among the elderly dominate the combined widowed and divorced category, voted at about the same rates, around 50 percent. The fact that there are more than five times as many widows who are age 65 and above helps to explain the disparity in voting turnout between elderly men and women (table 8).

²In terms of actual numbers, women cast more ballots than men in 1976, 45.6 million to 41.1 million, according to the survey estimate.

³See *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, Nos. 293, 253, 228, 192, 174, and 143.

Husbands and wives were more likely to have exhibited similar voting behavior in the 1976 election, in the sense of either both voting (61 percent) or both not voting (25 percent), than to have behaved differently⁴ (table F). In about 8 percent of the husband-wife households, the husband voted but his wife did not, and in about 6 percent, the wife voted while her husband did not. These figures varied considerably by the amount of education of the husband. If the husband had not completed elementary school, only 39 percent of both spouses voted in the election. If the husband was a college graduate, 80 percent of both husbands and wives voted. As their level of education increased, the proportion of marital partners who differed in their voting participation declined. For husbands with less than 8 years of schooling, about 20 percent of husbands and wives reported different voting activity on election day, whereas the comparable figure for households in which the husband had attended college was only 9 percent. Where there was a disparity in education, and only one of the spouses had voted, the partner with the greater amount of education was the one more likely to vote. For example, women who had completed high school, attended some college, or completed college and whose spouses had not received as much schooling, were more likely than their husbands to have voted in the 1976 election.

In summary, the difference between men and women in voting participation that was observed in the Presidential election of 1964 has virtually disappeared. Among young persons and high school graduates, women exceeded men in voting turnout in 1976. Only among the elderly did men maintain a higher voting rate. Most men who are 65 and over are married and maintain a high voting rate, whereas a larger proportion of elderly women are widows and exhibit a diminished participation in elections.

⁴This analysis is based on the reported voting behavior of husbands and wives and does not consider other household members of voting age.

EVALUATION OF THE ACCURACY OF THE DATA

In the November 1976 Current Population Survey supplement on voting, 86.7 million of the 146.5 million persons of voting age in the civilian noninstitutional population were reported (by themselves or by members of their households) as having voted in the November 1976 election. Official counts showed 81.7 million votes cast for President, or a difference of 5.0 million votes between the two sources. This difference is greater than can be accounted for by sampling variability. Moreover, the population covered in the survey excluded members of the Armed Forces and institutional inmates.⁵ Since the proportion of voters in these population groups is somewhat lower than in the rest of the population, their omission leads to a minor understatement of the size of the difference.

This bias has been noted in other surveys of voting behavior but both the methods of measuring it and estimates of its size have varied considerably.⁶ On balance, the over-

⁵In the November 1974 Congressional election, the Department of Defense total voting rate for Armed Forces was 18.0 percent as compared with 44.7 percent for the civilian noninstitutional population; in the 1972 Presidential election, the corresponding voting rate for the Armed Forces was 47.6 as compared with 63.0 percent for the civilian noninstitutional population. Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Research Affairs). "The Federal Voting Assistance Program," Tenth Report, 1975, and Ninth Report, 1973.

⁶Hugh J. Parry and Helen M. Crossley, "Validity of Responses to Survey Questions," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, XIV (1950), pp. 61-80; Mungo Miller, "The Waukegan Study of Voter Turnout Prediction," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, XVI (Fall 1952), pp. 381-398; and Helen Dinerman, "1948 Votes in the Making—A Preview," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, XII (Winter 1948-49), pp. 585-598. For a more complete listing of similar studies, see David Adamany and Philip Dubois, "The 'Forgetful' Voter and the Underreported Vote," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, (Summer 1975), pp. 227-231.

Table F. Percent Reported Voting of Family Heads and Wives, by Years of School Completed by Head: November 1976

(Numbers in thousands. Civilian noninstitutional population)

Education of family head	All heads and wives reporting on voting		Head voted		Head did not vote	
	Number	Percent	Wife voted	Wife did not vote	Wife voted	Wife did not vote
All educational levels.....	44,992	100.0	60.8	8.1	6.5	24.6
Elementary: 0 to 7 years.....	4,140	100.0	38.8	10.6	9.0	41.6
8 years.....	4,084	100.0	53.4	10.2	7.0	29.4
High school: 1 to 3 years.....	6,527	100.0	50.1	8.5	7.9	33.4
4 years.....	15,202	100.0	59.2	8.3	6.9	25.5
College: 1 to 3 years.....	6,672	100.0	68.5	7.9	5.6	18.1
4 years or more.....	8,367	100.0	80.2	5.5	3.9	10.4

Table G. Comparisons of CPS Voting Estimates and Official Counts of Votes Cast, November 1964 to 1976

(Numbers in millions)

Year	CPS vote for President	Official vote for President ¹	Percent difference
1976.....	85.9	81.7	5.1
1972.....	84.6	77.6	9.0
1968.....	78.5	73.0	7.5
1964.....	² 76.7	70.6	8.6
	CPS vote for U.S. Representative	Official vote for U.S. Representative or highest office ¹	Percent difference
1974.....	² 63.2	³ 56.0	12.9
1970.....	² 65.9	³ 58.0	13.6
1966.....	57.6	¹ 52.9	8.9

¹U.S. Congress, Clerk of the House, Statistics of the Presidential and Congressional Election.

²CPS estimate of total votes cast.

³The "official vote" was obtained by summing the number of votes cast for U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative, or Governor in each State, depending on which office received the highest number of votes.

statement varies between 5 and 10 percent of the total number of persons reported as having voted.⁷ Possible reasons for the differences include:

1. **Understatement of total votes cast.** The only uniform count of the total number of voters available on a nationwide basis is the number of votes cast for President. This number is smaller than the total number of persons who voted because (a) a number of ballots are invalidated in the counting and (b) there are a number of valid ballots for which there was no vote cast for President. Precise estimates of the size of these sources of error are not available. Although the office of the President usually attracts the largest number of votes, not everyone who goes to the polls casts a vote for President. Some persons may, for example, vote for a U.S. Senator or member of the U.S. Congress but not for President. A tally of the data from the States which report information on the total number of votes cast shows that there were about 2 percent fewer votes cast for President than the total number voting in the election.

2. **Overreporting of voting in the survey.** Some persons who actually did not vote were reluctant to so report, perhaps because they felt it was a "lapse in civic responsibility" and some respondents reporting on the voting behavior of other members of their household assumed the person in question had voted when, in fact, he or she had not. This latter problem may be especially relevant to reported voting of 18- to 20-year-olds, inasmuch as only about a quarter of this age group reported for themselves. Those away at college were almost certainly reported for by their parents. In addition, since men are more likely to be employed and at their jobs when the enumerator visits their home, another household member, usually the wife, is likely to report for them.

As a check on the work of the interviewer, a subsample of the households in the 1964 survey was reinterviewed by the supervisory staff. This reinterview showed no net error in reporting on voting. However, since the reinterviewer usually talked with the same household respondent (or respondents) as originally interviewed the previous week, it is likely that an original reporting error of this type would go undetected during a reinterview.

A test was conducted in conjunction with the December 1972 Current Population Survey to examine another facet of the overreporting problem. The hypothesis was that by

⁷For a comprehensive discussion of the problem, including a comparison of the 1964 Bureau of the Census survey with that conducted by the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan, see Aage R. Clausen, "Response Validity: Vote Report," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. XXXII, No. 4, Winter 1968-69, pp. 588-606.

asking the presumably less sensitive question on registration first, the tendency to overreport on voting might be lessened. The results of this test were somewhat confounded by a nonreporting rate in December that was twice as high as that in November, 4.2 percent compared with 1.9 percent. However, when the comparison was restricted to those who reported on voting, the study indicated that reversing the question order does not reduce the proportion of persons who report that they had voted.

3. CPS estimating procedure. A part of the difference between the official count of votes for President and the CPS estimate could be due to the estimation procedures in the CPS which essentially attribute the characteristics of interviewed persons to persons in noninterviewed households of similar types—about 4 percent of the total. This procedure may have a substantial effect on the results of a survey of voting if the noninterviewed households have a higher proportion of nonvoting members than interviewed households.

4. CPS coverage. An additional factor that increases the estimate of voters derives from the coverage of the CPS sample. There is evidence that the sample is less successful in representing certain groups in the population in which nonvoting may be expected to be high, for example, Black-and-other-races males 21 to 24 years of age. In addition, the CPS results are adjusted to independent population estimates based on the decennial census. Insofar as the census was also subject to net undercounts in selected age groups, this source of error will be reflected in estimates from the CPS.⁸

5. Household respondent. A portion of the difference between the official count and the survey results might be attributable to the use of a household respondent to report on the registration and voting of all eligible household members. An experiment was conducted in conjunction with the November 1974 CPS to assess the effects of proxy respondents on the voting rate. In approximately one-eighth of the sample households, interviewers were instructed to obtain the voting supplement information from each individual directly. For the entire sample, 57 percent of all interviewed persons reported for themselves, as compared with about 76 percent for the test group. The differences between groups reporting for themselves or someone else were not significant. Thus, there is no evidence that obtaining voting and registration information for all household members from one respondent rather than from self-respondents only accounts for any part of the overestimates of voters obtained in household surveys.

6. Nonreports on voting. In 1966 a "do not know" category in each question of the voting survey was introduced (and retained in all subsequent surveys) on the theory that forcing people into a "yes-no" alternative might have been responsible for increasing the number of persons reported as voting. The introduction of the "do not know" category increased the overall proportion of those for whom a report on voting was not obtained from 1 percent in 1964 to 3 percent in 1966. Among Blacks the figure rose to almost 6 percent. The lower nonresponse figure from the 1964 report may have resulted in part from the fact that the "yes-no" alternative forced respondents to give answers which more properly should have been classified as "do not know."

Although there is no evidence that answers by proxy respondents account for the overreporting on voting, the value of asking people about their own behavior on such matters as voting and registering to vote can be shown by comparing the effect of self reports and reports by others on the "do not know" rate for whether voted in the election and whether registered to vote. For self-respondents, the "do not know" categories were almost nonexistent. At the other extreme, 3 percent of respondents who reported on the voting behavior of other household members could not answer whether the other persons had voted. Among Blacks the corresponding figure was 9 percent (table H).

Table H. Percent of the Population of Voting Age Who Reported "Do Not Know" to the Question on Voting, by Race and Type of Respondent: November 1976

Type of respondent and race	"Do not know" responses	
	Whether voted	If did not vote, whether registered
All persons ¹ ...	1.4	2.7
White.....	1.1	2.6
Black.....	3.9	3.6
Reported by self...	0.1	1.2
White.....	0.1	1.2
Black.....	0.1	1.4
Reported by other..	3.1	4.5
White.....	2.5	4.3
Black.....	9.3	6.8

¹Includes persons not reported on type of respondent, not shown separately.

⁸See U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population: 1970*, Vol. 1, "Characteristics of the Population," App-65-67, for a discussion of errors in age groups in the 1970 census.

Voting in previous elections. Failure to remember is not considered to be a problem in the voting survey for a current election, since the data in each survey are collected during the week containing the 19th day of November, which is generally about 2 weeks after the election. However, since 1968, questions have also been asked in each survey about whether respondents had voted in the previous Presidential election. Asking retrospective questions of this kind introduces possible memory biases into the data, and the net effect would be expected to be a further overstatement of voter participation. That effect is fairly small with regard to the 1976 and 1972 Presidential elections, as table E shows.⁹ Some of the apparent changes in the voting rate shown in this table result from the combined effect of sampling differences and changes in the universe because of deaths, movement into and out of the Armed Forces or institutions, and international migration.

RELATED REPORTS

Current population reports. Advance data on reported voter participation and registration of the population of

⁹ See *Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 293*. "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 1974," table G, page 10 for a comparison of voting in 1972 and 1968 as reported in the year of the election and two years later.

voting age, by race and sex, for the United States and regions in the November 1976 election are contained in the report *Series P-20, No. 304*.

Data on voter participation by social and economic characteristics of the population of voting age in the 1964, 1968, and 1972 Presidential elections and in the 1966, 1970, and 1974 Congressional elections were published in the reports *Series P-20, Nos. 143, 192, 253, 174, 228, and 293, respectively*.

Data on the social and economic characteristics of persons 18 to 24 years old who became eligible to vote on the basis of age in 1972 were published in *Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 230*.

Projections of the population of voting age for the United States, regions, divisions, and States for November 1, 1976 were published in *Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 626*.

Data on the social and economic characteristics by reported voter participation of the population of voting age in the 1966 and 1964 elections and estimates of the population of voting age for the United States, regions, divisions, and States, as of November 1, 1968, were published in a composite report *Series P-20, No. 172*.

The number of persons of voting age in 1960 and the votes cast for President in the elections of 1964 and 1960 for the United States, by States and counties, are contained in the report *Series P-23, No. 14*.

NOTE

In the past the Census Bureau has designated a head of household to serve as the central reference person for the collection and tabulation of data for individual members of the household (or family). However, recent social changes have resulted in a trend toward recognition of more equal status for all members of the household (or family), making the term "head" less relevant in the analysis of household and family data. As a result, the Bureau is currently developing new techniques of enumeration and data presentation which will eliminate the concept of "head." While much of the data in this report are based on the concept of "head," methodology for future Census Bureau reports will reflect a gradual movement away from this traditional practice.
