

# Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2000

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## Population Characteristics

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The right to vote is arguably one of the most important rights of citizenship in a democratic country, yet a substantial number of U.S. citizens choose not to exercise this right. This report examines the levels of voting and registration in the November 2000 Presidential election, the characteristics of people who reported that they voted or were registered for the election, as well as reasons why people did not vote.

In contrast to previous Census Bureau reports on voting, in which voting and registration rates were based on the voting-age population, this report presents voting and registration rates based on the citizen population of voting age. The reason for this change is the increase in the proportion of noncitizens in the voting-age population during the past three decades. The proportions of noncitizens in November 2000 were particularly high among Hispanics (of any race) and Asians and Pacific Islanders and reflect large-scale immigration to the United States. For further discussion of the differences in voting and registration rates based on the voting-age population and the citizen population of voting age, see the shaded box starting on page two of this report.

The first major section of this report discusses voting and registration of the citizen voting-age population in the November 2000 Presidential election. While data on voting and registration have been collected in the Current

Population Survey (CPS) since 1964, data on citizenship status have been collected on a consistent basis in the CPS only since 1994. Consequently, the second section of this report provides an overview of historical trends in voting and registration among the voting-age population, without regard to citizenship status.

### About this report...

Voting and registration rates historically have been higher in years with Presidential elections than in the "off" years. In this report, the 2000 data (a Presidential election year) are compared with data for previous Presidential election years (1996, 1992, 1988, etc.).

The information on voting and registration in this report comes from the November supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS), which asked respondents whether they were registered and whether they voted in the election held on Tuesday, November 7, 2000. The figures presented in this report may differ from figures based on administrative data or data from exit polls. For more information, see the *Measuring Voting in the Current Population Survey* section on page 11.

## Current Population Reports

By Amie Jamieson,  
Hyon B. Shin, and  
Jennifer Day

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## CITIZENSHIP IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF VOTING STATISTICS.

One of the primary criteria for being eligible to vote is age. Since 1972, every state stipulates that a person must be at least 18 years of age to be eligible to vote. Thus, the voting-age population, or the 18 and older population, is a fundamental population base used in presenting voting statistics. In the election of November 2000, 111 million people, or 55 percent, of the voting-age population voted. The Census Bureau has historically estimated voting and registration rates using this population.

A second criteria for voting eligibility is citizenship. Only citizens of the United States (either native or naturalized) are allowed to vote in elections. By removing the ineligible noncitizens from the voting-age population pool, the voter turnout rate is higher. The voter turnout rate for citizens was 60 percent in 2000.<sup>1</sup>

A third criteria is registration. Every state requires eligible voters to register to vote with the exception of North Dakota. Most people who are registered to vote do vote — 86 percent in the 2000 election.

<sup>1</sup> Data for country of birth, citizenship status, and year of entry have been collected in the basic Current Population Survey since 1994.

Figure 1 illustrates the three kinds of voting rates. In November 2000, of the 203 million people who were 18 and older, 186 million were citizens, and 130 million were registered. In the election, 111 million people voted. Thus, the voting rates for the population 18 and older were 55 percent of the total population, 60 percent of the citizen population, and 86 percent of the registered population.

### Citizenship and voting participation rates of racial/ethnic groups.

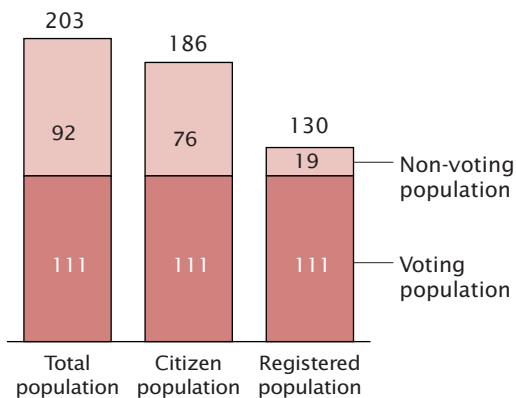
Citizenship is especially important in the consideration of racial and ethnic differences in voting rates. Recent immigration has differentially affected the proportion of noncitizens in these groups — 2 percent of White non-Hispanics

were not citizens, compared with 6 percent of Blacks, 41 percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders, and 39 percent of Hispanics in 2000 (see Figure 2).<sup>2</sup> Thus, voting rates based on the voting-age population and citizen population differ substantially for the groups with large proportions of noncitizens. For example, the voting rate for Asians and Pacific Islanders was 25 percent of the

<sup>2</sup> The proportions of noncitizens for Hispanics and for Asians and Pacific Islanders were not significantly different.

Figure 1.  
**Voters Among the Total, Citizen, and Registered Voting-Age Populations: 2000**

(Population 18 and older, in millions)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2000.

## VOTING AND REGISTRATION OF THE VOTING-AGE CITIZEN POPULATION

### Reported voter turnout was slightly higher than in 1996...

In the election of November 2000, the 60 percent of citizens who voted was slightly higher than the

58 percent of citizens who voted in 1996.<sup>4</sup> Registration of the citizen

<sup>4</sup> The estimates in this report are based on responses from a sample of the population. As with all surveys, estimates may vary from the actual values for the entire population because of sampling variation or other factors. All statements made in this report have undergone statistical testing and meet Census Bureau standards for statistical accuracy.

population was 70 percent, slightly lower than the 71 percent of citizens registered in 1996.

The number of people who voted in 2000, 111 million, fell short of the record high, 114 million, set in 1992 (see Figure 3). In fact, with the exceptions of 1984 and 1992

voting-age population and 43 percent of the voting-age citizen population, while for Hispanics, these proportions were 28 percent and 45 percent.<sup>3</sup>

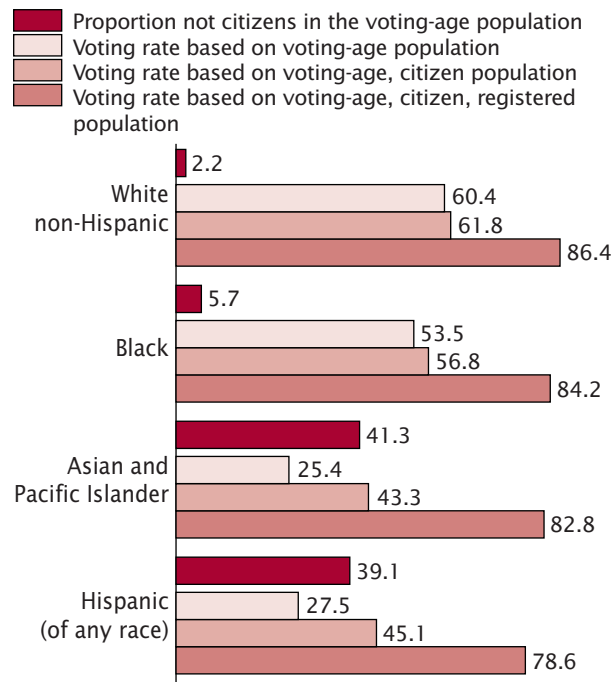
### Citizenship and voting participation among states.

The distribution of citizens and noncitizens throughout the United States influences voting rates among states. For states with a higher proportion of noncitizens, voting rates based on the voting-age population are notably lower than comparable rates based on the citizen population. For states with few noncitizens, the two rates are similar.

For the majority of states, more than 95 percent of their voting-age populations were citizens. Certain states were exceptions — 20 percent in California were not citizens, and 13 percent were not citizens in New York and Florida.

<sup>3</sup> The voting rates were not significantly different for either the total voting-age populations or the citizen populations of Hispanics and of Asians and Pacific Islanders.

Figure 2.  
**Citizenship and Voting Rates by Race and Ethnicity: 2000**  
(Percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2000.

when voter participation rates rose, increases in the number of people voting since 1964 have been due solely to the increased number of people 18 and older.<sup>5</sup>

### ... and voter turnout remains up among registered voters.

Most people who are registered to vote actually vote. Among people who were registered to vote for the November 2000 Presidential election, 86 percent reported they voted, up from 82 percent in the 1996 election. Historically, the likelihood of actually voting once registered has remained high, with the peak at 91 percent in 1968.

<sup>5</sup> The numbers of people voting in 1984 and 1988 were not significantly different.

### Who votes?

The characteristics of people who are most likely to go to the polls are a reflection of both the racial/ethnic composition of the citizen population and the attributes of people with the biggest stakes in society: older individuals, homeowners, married couples, and people with more schooling, higher incomes, and good jobs.

### White non-Hispanics top citizen voting-age population.

The racial/ethnic distribution of the registered population and of the actual voting population reflect the distribution of the voting-age citizens in the United States. In 2000, the White non-Hispanic population (78 percent) constituted the majority of voting-age citizens,

followed by Blacks (12 percent), Hispanics (7 percent), and Asians and Pacific Islanders (3 percent).<sup>6</sup>

The likelihood of voting differed among the racial/ethnic groups (see Table A). As a proportion of all voting-age citizens, White non-Hispanic citizens had the highest level of voter turnout in 2000 — 62 percent, followed by Black

<sup>6</sup> Because Hispanics may be of any race, data in this report for Hispanics overlap slightly with data for the Black population and for the Asian and Pacific Islander population. Based on the November 2000 Current Population Survey, 2 percent of the Black population 18 and older and 1 percent of the Asian and Pacific Islander population 18 and older were of Hispanic origin. Of citizens, 2 percent of both Blacks and of Asians and Pacific Islanders 18 and older were of Hispanic origin. Data for the American Indian and Alaska Native population are not shown in this report because of their small sample size in the November 2000 Current Population Survey.

citizens at a rate of 57 percent, Hispanic citizens at 45 percent, and Asian and Pacific Islander citizens at 43 percent.<sup>7</sup>

Between 1996 and 2000, voting rates for White non-Hispanics increased by 1 percentage point whereas voting rates for Blacks increased by 4 percentage points, thus decreasing the gap between these two groups by 3 percentage points. In contrast, the voting rates for Asian and Pacific Islander citizens and Hispanic citizens did not change significantly. The numbers of Asian and Pacific Islander voters and Hispanic voters, however, increased about 20 percent, reflecting the increase in the voting-age citizen population in these two groups.

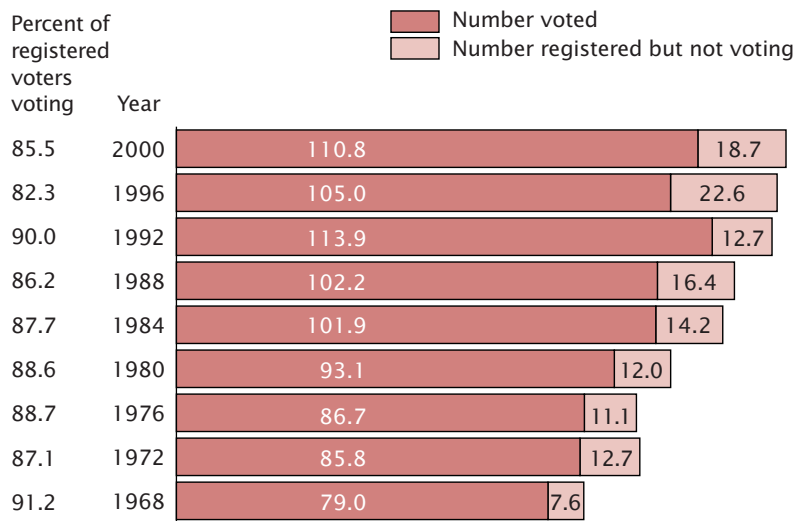
White non-Hispanic citizens had the highest registration rate in 2000 at 72 percent, a slight drop from their 1996 registration rate of 73 percent. Asians and Pacific Islanders also experienced a drop from 57 percent in 1996 to 52 percent in 2000. In comparison, the 2000 registration rates for Blacks (68 percent) and Hispanics (57 percent) remained unchanged from the previous Presidential election.

Among those registered to vote, the racial/ethnic differences in citizen voting rates diminish sharply — 86 percent of White non-Hispanics voted, followed by Blacks (84 percent) and Asians and Pacific Islanders (83 percent), which were not statistically different from each other, and Hispanics (79 percent). The key to voter turnout is registration, an important factor in the willingness and ability of citizens to vote.

<sup>7</sup> Voting rates for Asians and Pacific Islanders and for Hispanics were not significantly different.

Figure 3.  
**Voting in Presidential Elections:  
1968 to 2000**

(Population 18 and older, in millions)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Surveys, November 2000 and earlier years.

### Women, older people, and married people are more likely to vote.

As shown in Table B, women were more likely than men to vote in the 2000 election (61 percent compared with 58 percent). Although men historically have voted at higher rates than women, women's rates surpassed those of men in the entire 18 and older population for the first time in the Presidential election of 1984. This trend coincides with a number of social changes for women over the past few decades. Educational attainment and the labor force participation rate, both strong correlates of voting, have risen significantly among women. Together these trends point to significant levels of political involvement of women, including voting behavior.

The voting rate is much higher among older age groups than younger age groups (see

Figure 4).<sup>8</sup> The peak age group for voting participation is 65 to 74 years, where 72 percent of citizens voted in the 2000 election. The lowest voting rate (36 percent) is for 18- to 24-year-old citizens, who were half as likely to vote as people 65 to 74 years. A key difference between these two groups is registration — while 79 percent of older citizens were registered, 51 percent of younger citizens were registered. Young adults, especially people in their twenties, are the most transient and must re-register after each move, possibly leading to lower registration levels.<sup>9</sup>

Marital status is also associated with voting patterns. Married individuals (67 percent) are more

<sup>8</sup> Voting rates were not significantly different between those 45-54 years of age and those who were 75 years and older.

<sup>9</sup> See Jason Schachter, "Geographic Mobility: March 1999 to March 2000." Current Population Reports P20-538. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2001.

Table A.

**Reported Voting and Registration by Citizenship, Race, and Hispanic Origin: November 1996 and 2000**

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Total population				Citizens				Registered	
	Total	Citizen	Reported registered	Reported voted	Percent reported registered	90 percent C.I. (±) <sup>1</sup>	Percent reported voted	90 percent C.I. (±) <sup>1</sup>	Percent reported voted	90 percent C.I. (±) <sup>1</sup>
<b>2000</b>										
<b>Total, 18 years and over ..</b>	<b>202,609</b>	<b>186,366</b>	<b>129,549</b>	<b>110,826</b>	<b>69.5</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>59.5</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>85.5</b>	<b>0.3</b>
<b>Race and Hispanic origin</b>										
White .....	168,733	157,291	110,773	95,098	70.4	0.3	60.5	0.4	85.8	0.3
White non-Hispanic....	148,035	144,732	103,588	89,469	71.6	0.4	61.8	0.4	86.4	0.3
Black .....	24,132	22,753	15,348	12,917	67.5	1.1	56.8	1.2	84.2	1.1
Asian and Pacific Islander .....	8,041	4,718	2,470	2,045	52.4	2.7	43.3	2.7	82.8	2.9
Hispanic (of any race) ...	21,598	13,158	7,546	5,934	57.3	2.0	45.1	2.0	78.6	2.2
<b>1996</b>										
<b>Total, 18 years and over ..</b>	<b>193,651</b>	<b>179,935</b>	<b>127,661</b>	<b>105,017</b>	<b>70.9</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>58.4</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>82.3</b>	<b>0.3</b>
<b>Race and Hispanic origin</b>										
White .....	162,779	153,057	110,259	91,208	72.0	0.3	59.6	0.4	82.7	0.3
White non-Hispanic....	145,343	142,597	104,101	86,604	73.0	0.3	60.7	0.4	83.2	0.3
Black .....	22,483	21,486	14,267	11,386	66.4	1.2	53.0	1.2	79.8	1.2
Asian and Pacific Islander .....	6,775	3,865	2,210	1,741	57.2	3.0	45.0	3.0	78.8	3.3
Hispanic (of any race) ...	18,426	11,209	6,573	4,928	58.6	2.2	44.0	2.2	75.0	2.5

<sup>1</sup> This figure added to or subtracted from the estimate provides the 90-percent confidence interval.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2000 and 1996.

likely to vote than widowed (59 percent), divorced (54 percent), separated (46 percent), and never-married individuals (44 percent).<sup>10</sup> Separated and never-married individuals are generally younger, which also influences their voting patterns.

**People with more education, higher incomes, and jobs are more likely to vote.**

Education is a key socioeconomic characteristic in understanding voting rates because it is related to a person's occupation and income. Educational level may also influence an individual's interest in and commitment to the political process. As

<sup>10</sup> Voting rates were not significantly different between those who were "separated" and those who were "never married."

shown in Figure 5, citizens who had bachelor's degrees were twice as likely (75 percent) to report that they voted as those who had not completed high school (38 percent). At each level of educational attainment from high school completion and above, voting rates increase significantly. People with bachelor's and advanced degrees made up 31 percent of those who reported voting in the election, compared with only 9 percent for those who did not graduate from high school.

Citizens with higher incomes were more likely to vote. The voting rate among people living in families with annual incomes of \$50,000 or more was 72 percent, compared with 38 percent for people living in families with incomes of under \$10,000. Together, about

one-half of those who voted in the November 2000 election lived in families with incomes of \$50,000 or more.

A person's employment status is another key indicator of voting participation. In the 2000 Presidential election, 61 percent of employed citizens reported voting, compared with only 40 percent of those who were in the labor force but not employed. Citizens who were not in the labor force, a group that included many retired people, reported the second highest voter-participation rate (59 percent).

**Homeowners and longtime residents are more likely to vote.**

Individuals with more established residences, as measured by home

Table B.  
**Reported Voting and Registration by Selected Characteristics: November 2000**

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Total population	Total citizen						
		Total citizen	Reported registered			Reported voted		
			Number	Percent	90 percent C.I. (±) <sup>1</sup>	Number	Percent	90 percent C.I. (±) <sup>1</sup>
<b>Total, 18 years and over</b> .....	<b>202,609</b>	<b>186,366</b>	<b>129,549</b>	<b>69.5</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>110,826</b>	<b>59.5</b>	<b>0.3</b>
<b>Sex</b>								
Men .....	97,087	88,758	60,356	68.0	0.5	51,542	58.1	0.5
Women .....	105,523	97,609	69,193	70.9	0.4	59,284	60.7	0.5
<b>Race, Hispanic Origin, and Sex</b>								
White .....	168,733	157,291	110,773	70.4	0.3	95,098	60.5	0.4
Men .....	81,720	75,728	52,299	69.1	0.5	44,879	59.3	0.5
Women .....	87,014	81,564	58,473	71.7	0.5	50,219	61.6	0.5
White non-Hispanic .....	148,035	144,732	103,588	71.6	0.4	89,469	61.8	0.4
Men .....	71,531	69,930	49,103	70.2	0.5	42,359	60.6	0.6
Women .....	76,503	74,801	54,485	72.8	0.5	47,110	63.0	0.5
Black .....	24,132	22,753	15,348	67.5	1.1	12,917	56.8	1.2
Men .....	10,771	10,048	6,416	63.9	1.7	5,327	53.0	1.8
Women .....	13,361	12,705	8,932	70.3	1.4	7,590	59.7	1.6
Asian and Pacific Islander .....	8,041	4,718	2,470	52.4	2.7	2,045	43.3	2.7
Men .....	3,767	2,213	1,199	54.2	4.0	980	44.3	4.0
Women .....	4,274	2,505	1,272	50.8	3.8	1,065	42.5	3.7
Hispanic (of any race) .....	21,598	13,158	7,546	57.3	2.0	5,934	45.1	2.0
Men .....	10,653	6,085	3,375	55.5	3.0	2,671	43.9	3.0
Women .....	10,945	7,073	4,171	59.0	2.7	3,263	46.1	2.8
<b>Age</b>								
18 to 24 years .....	26,712	23,915	12,122	50.7	1.0	8,635	36.1	0.9
25 to 34 years .....	37,304	32,233	20,403	63.3	0.8	16,286	50.5	0.8
35 to 44 years .....	44,476	40,434	28,366	70.2	0.7	24,452	60.5	0.7
45 to 54 years .....	37,504	35,230	26,158	74.2	0.7	23,362	66.3	0.7
55 to 64 years .....	23,848	22,737	17,551	77.2	0.8	15,939	70.1	0.9
65 to 74 years .....	17,819	17,233	13,573	78.8	0.9	12,450	72.2	1.0
75 years and over .....	14,945	14,582	11,375	78.0	1.0	9,702	66.5	1.2
<b>Marital Status</b>								
Married-spouse present .....	113,723	104,744	79,824	76.2	0.4	70,885	67.7	0.4
Married-spouse absent .....	2,710	1,899	1,168	61.5	3.3	982	51.7	3.4
Widowed .....	13,736	13,124	9,258	70.5	1.2	7,756	59.1	1.3
Divorced .....	19,809	19,055	12,403	65.1	1.0	10,199	53.5	1.1
Separated .....	4,427	3,960	2,316	58.5	2.3	1,815	45.8	2.4
Never married .....	48,204	43,584	24,581	56.4	0.7	19,189	44.0	0.7
<b>Educational Attainment</b>								
Less than 9th grade .....	12,894	8,784	4,655	53.0	1.6	3,454	39.3	1.6
9th to 12th grade, no diploma ...	20,108	17,801	9,235	51.9	1.1	6,758	38.0	1.1
High school graduate or GED ...	66,339	62,426	39,869	63.9	0.6	32,749	52.5	0.6
Some college or Associate degree .....	55,308	52,800	38,700	73.3	0.6	33,339	63.1	0.6
Bachelor's degree .....	32,254	30,063	24,619	81.9	0.7	22,661	75.4	0.7
Advanced degree .....	15,706	14,492	12,472	86.1	0.9	11,865	81.9	1.0

Table B.  
**Reported Voting and Registration by Selected Characteristics: November 2000**—Con.

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Total population	Total citizen						
		Total citizen	Reported registered			Reported voted		
			Number	Percent	90 percent C.I. (±) <sup>1</sup>	Number	Percent	90 percent C.I. (±) <sup>1</sup>
<b>Annual Family Income</b>								
Total family members .....	152,294	140,079	99,950	71.4	0.4	86,443	61.7	0.4
Less than \$5,000 .....	2,230	1,834	981	53.5	3.5	628	34.2	3.3
\$5,000 to \$9,999 .....	4,242	3,623	2,068	57.1	2.4	1,470	40.6	2.4
\$10,000 to \$14,999 .....	7,286	6,197	3,631	58.6	1.9	2,745	44.3	1.9
\$15,000 to \$24,999 .....	14,600	12,337	8,013	65.0	1.3	6,330	51.3	1.3
\$25,000 to \$34,999 .....	17,692	15,629	10,788	69.0	1.1	9,026	57.8	1.2
\$35,000 to \$49,999 .....	22,349	20,759	15,007	72.3	0.9	12,853	61.9	1.0
\$50,000 to \$74,999 .....	28,144	26,683	20,775	77.9	0.8	18,341	68.7	0.8
\$75,000 and over .....	35,030	33,442	27,450	82.1	0.6	25,060	74.9	0.7
Income not reported .....	20,721	19,574	11,237	57.4	1.1	9,990	51.0	1.1
<b>Employment Status</b>								
In the civilian labor force .....	138,378	126,863	88,575	69.8	0.4	75,802	59.8	0.4
Employed .....	133,434	122,508	86,297	70.4	0.4	74,068	60.5	0.4
Unemployed .....	4,944	4,355	2,278	52.3	2.3	1,734	39.8	2.2
Not in the labor force .....	64,231	59,503	40,974	68.9	0.6	35,023	58.9	0.6
<b>Tenure</b>								
Owner-occupied units .....	145,362	138,929	102,442	73.7	0.4	89,886	64.7	0.4
Renter-occupied units .....	54,475	44,877	25,454	56.7	0.7	19,637	43.8	0.7
No cash rent units .....	2,773	2,561	1,653	64.5	2.8	1,302	50.8	0.3
<b>Duration of Residence<sup>2</sup></b>								
Less than 1 month .....	3,009	2,520	1,363	54.1	3.0	915	36.3	2.9
1 to 6 months .....	17,389	14,797	8,929	60.3	1.2	6,682	45.2	1.2
7 to 11 months .....	8,435	7,180	4,426	61.6	1.7	3,405	47.4	1.7
1 to 2 years .....	28,856	24,948	17,475	70.0	0.9	14,482	58.0	0.9
3 to 4 years .....	26,003	23,327	17,508	75.1	0.8	14,806	63.5	0.9
5 years or longer .....	99,886	96,192	78,767	81.9	0.4	69,638	72.4	0.4
Not reported .....	19,031	17,401	1,081	6.2	0.5	898	5.2	0.5
<b>Region and Race and Hispanic Origin</b>								
Northeast .....	38,881	35,472	24,759	69.8	0.7	21,447	60.5	0.7
White .....	32,810	30,883	21,895	70.9	0.7	18,955	61.4	0.8
White non-Hispanic .....	30,194	29,175	20,916	71.7	0.7	18,179	62.3	0.8
Black .....	4,418	3,788	2,440	64.4	2.6	2,141	56.5	2.7
Asian and Pacific Islander .....	1,533	682	382	56.0	6.6	313	45.9	6.6
Hispanic (of any race) .....	2,978	1,930	1,094	56.7	4.9	873	45.2	4.9
Midwest .....	46,430	44,692	32,615	73.0	0.6	28,262	63.2	0.7
White .....	40,912	39,714	29,165	73.4	0.7	25,272	63.6	0.7
White non-Hispanic .....	39,426	38,903	28,698	73.8	0.7	24,885	64.0	0.7
Black .....	4,380	4,275	3,034	71.0	2.5	2,639	61.7	2.7
Asian and Pacific Islander .....	881	456	255	55.9	8.9	224	49.1	8.9
Hispanic (of any race) .....	1,561	870	500	57.5	8.0	418	48.0	8.0
South .....	71,835	67,153	46,321	69.0	0.6	38,441	57.2	0.6
White .....	56,912	53,420	37,109	69.5	0.6	30,859	57.8	0.7
White non-Hispanic .....	49,316	48,532	34,173	70.4	0.6	28,693	59.1	0.7
Black .....	13,080	12,542	8,534	68.0	1.6	7,049	56.2	1.7
Asian and Pacific Islander .....	1,322	698	365	52.3	7.4	293	42.0	7.3
Hispanic (of any race) .....	7,859	5,045	3,048	60.4	3.3	2,257	44.7	3.4
West .....	45,463	39,050	25,854	66.2	0.7	22,676	58.1	0.8
White .....	38,098	33,274	22,604	67.9	0.8	20,012	60.1	0.8
White non-Hispanic .....	29,099	28,121	19,801	70.4	0.8	17,711	63.0	0.9
Black .....	2,254	2,147	1,340	62.4	3.9	1,087	50.6	4.1
Asian and Pacific Islander .....	4,305	2,852	1,469	51.5	3.7	1,214	42.6	3.6
Hispanic (of any race) .....	9,201	5,314	2,904	54.6	3.3	2,386	44.9	3.3

<sup>1</sup> This figure added to or subtracted from the estimate provides the 90-percent confidence interval.

<sup>2</sup> Data on duration of residence were obtained from responses to the following question: "How long has (this person) lived at this address?"

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2000.

ownership and duration of residence, were more likely to vote than those who rented housing or recently moved into their homes. Sixty-five percent of homeowners reported voting in 2000, compared with 44 percent of citizens who rented housing.

Similarly, citizens who had lived in the same home for 5 or more years had a voting rate of 72 percent, significantly higher than rates for individuals who had lived at their current residence for a shorter time (see Figure 6). Citizens who had lived in their home for less than one month were least likely to vote (36 percent).

Registration may play a role in the variation of voting rates by duration of residence, as most states have length of residency requirements for registration. In 2000, registration rates rose as the length of residence increased — from 54 percent for citizens who had lived in their home for less than one month to 82 percent for those who had lived in their home for 5 years or longer.

**People in the Midwest are most likely to register and to vote.**

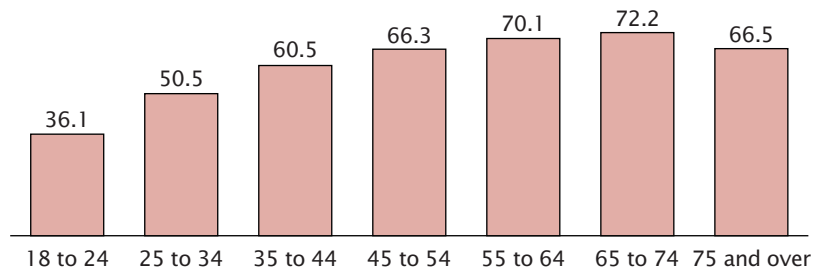
Citizens residing in the Midwest were more likely to register and to vote than those in other regions. In 2000, 73 percent of citizens in the Midwest were registered to vote, and 63 percent of citizens voted. The high levels of registration and voting recorded in the Midwest may be due in part to the fact that people are able to register on election day in some of these states.<sup>11</sup> The voting rate in the Northeast was 60 percent, and the lowest voting rates were in the West (58 percent) and South (57 percent).<sup>12</sup> The West

<sup>11</sup> Idaho, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Wisconsin, and Wyoming have election day registration. North Dakota has no voter registration.

<sup>12</sup> The rates for the South and the West were not significantly different from one another.

Figure 4.  
**Voting by Age: 2000**

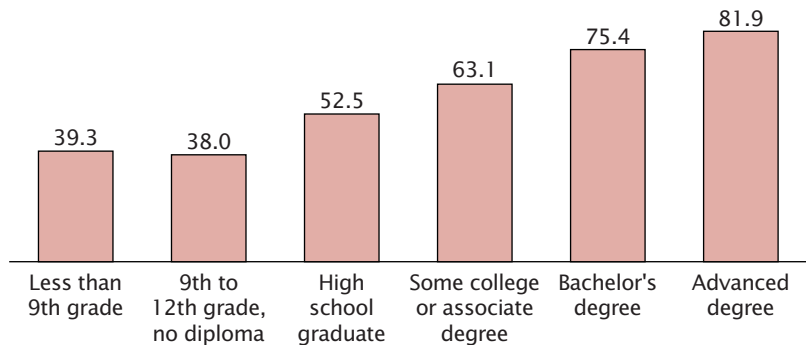
(Percent who voted of the voting-age citizen population)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2000.

Figure 5.  
**Voting by Educational Attainment: 2000**

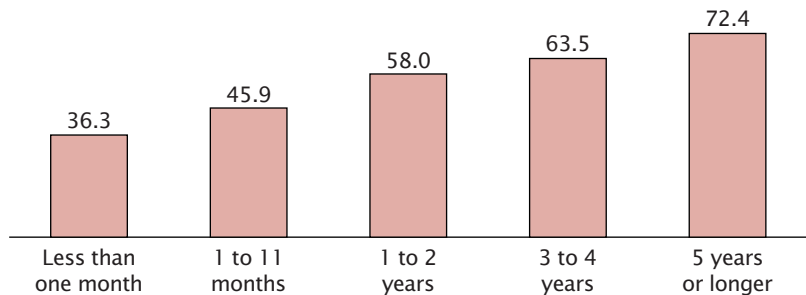
(Percent who voted of the voting-age citizen population)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2000.

Figure 6.  
**Voting by Duration of Residence: 2000**

(Percent who voted of the voting-age citizen population)

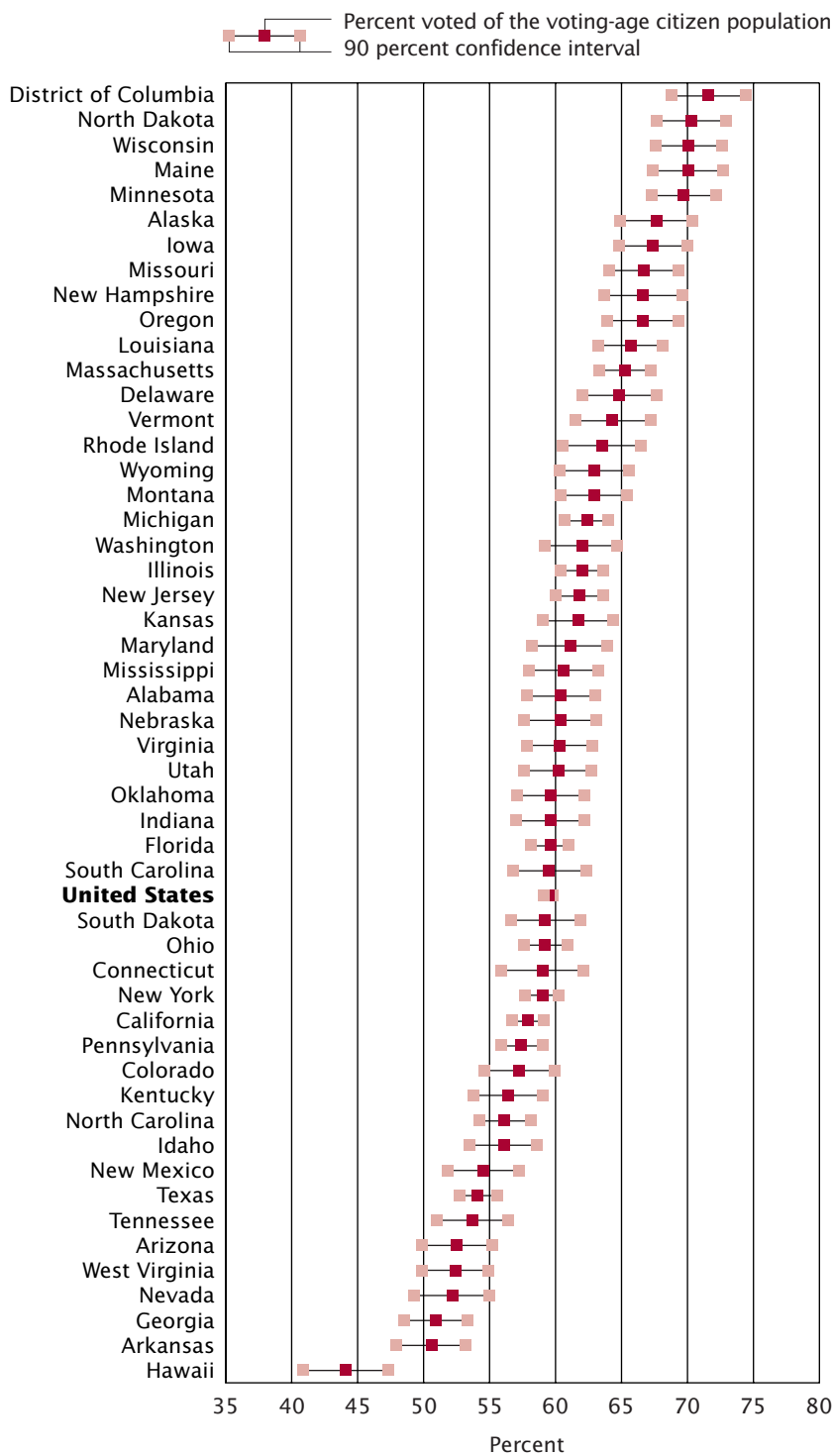


Note: Data on duration of residence were obtained from responses to the following question: "How long has (this person) lived at this address?"

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2000.



Figure 7.  
**Voting by State: 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2000.

also had the lowest registration rate (66 percent).

The proportion of total votes from the South has increased steadily from 24 percent in 1964 to 35 percent in 2000. Some, but not all, of the increased share is due to the population shift to the South during this period (from 29 percent to 35 percent of the voting-age population).

In 2000, White non-Hispanics had lower voting rates in the South than in the other three regions. For Blacks, voting rates were lowest in the West and highest in the Midwest. In fact, in the Midwest, voting rates for Blacks were not statistically different from those for White non-Hispanics. Sample sizes of Asian and Pacific Islander voters and Hispanic voters were not large enough to show any significant differences in voting rates by region.

**Voting rates are higher in states with same-day or no registration.**

In 2000, the highest voting rates were found in the District of Columbia, North Dakota, Wisconsin, Maine, and Minnesota (see Figure 7). Although the District of Columbia had the highest estimated citizen voting rate at 72 percent, its value was not statistically different from the four states listed below that estimate. Hawaii was the state with the lowest level of voter participation (44 percent). Florida, whose voting results and processes were scrutinized following the 2000 election, had a citizen voting rate of 60 percent, equal to the national average. In Oregon, where all ballots were mailed in for the first time, the citizen voting rate was 67 percent, higher than in most other states.

A group of states — Idaho, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Wisconsin, and Wyoming —

allowed potential voters to register on the day of the election. With the exception of Idaho (56 percent), these states had voting rates significantly higher than the national level of 60 percent for citizens.

Excluding North Dakota, which has no voting registration, Maine, Wisconsin, the District of Columbia, and Minnesota had the highest levels of voter registration in the country. All of the states that allow registration on election day had registration rates that were at or above the national average, with the exception of Idaho. Hawaii had the lowest registration level in the country at 52 percent.

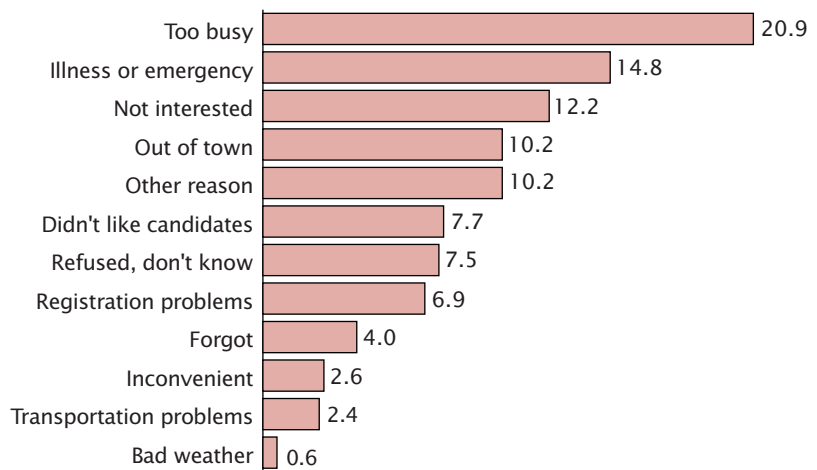
### Most people vote in person on election day.

In the 2000 Presidential election, 86 percent of voters reported that they voted in person on election day, and 14 percent voted by absentee ballot or voted in person at a designated election office or bureau before election day. Because each state has its own state laws governing the election process, these rates differed dramatically by region and state. In the West, absentee and early voting were quite popular. Oregon required all voters to cast their ballot through the mail by absentee ballot. High rates of absentee and early voting occurred in other Western states — Washington (52 percent); Colorado, Nevada, and Arizona (all about 35 percent); and New Mexico and California (both about 22 percent). Interestingly, about one-third of voters in both Texas and Tennessee (the home states of the two Presidential candidates) voted before election day or by absentee. In Florida, 91 percent of the votes were cast in person on election day.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Because the CPS sample includes only the resident noninstitutionalized population, the data do not include military overseas.

Figure 8.  
**Reasons Given for Not Voting: 2000**

(Percent of registered non-voters)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2000.

### Why didn't some people vote?

Of the 130 million people who reported that they were registered to vote, 19 million (14 percent) did not vote in the 2000 election. Of these registered non-voters, 21 percent reported that they did not vote because they were too busy or had conflicting work or school schedules (see Figure 8). Another 15 percent reported that they did not vote because they were ill, disabled, or had a family emergency, 12 percent did not vote because they were not interested or felt their vote would not make a difference, and 10 percent were out of town. Other specified reasons for not voting included not liking the candidates or campaign issues (8 percent), confusion or uncertainty about registration (7 percent), forgetting to vote (4 percent), and transportation problems (2 percent).<sup>14</sup>

Men, younger adults (18 to 44 years), Hispanics, and those with more

<sup>14</sup> The percentage of people responding that they did not vote because they did not like the candidates and because they had registration problems were not significantly different.

education were more likely to report that they did not vote because they were too busy or had conflicting work or school schedules compared with women, the elderly, White non-Hispanics, Blacks, and less educated people. Women, the elderly, and those with less education were more likely than men, younger people, and people with more education to report that they did not vote because they were ill or disabled or had a family emergency. Those with a high school education or less were more likely than those with more education to respond that they were not interested in the election or felt their vote would not make a difference. White non-Hispanics were more likely than Blacks and Hispanics to report that they did not prefer any of the candidates. Blacks were more likely than White non-Hispanics and Hispanics to have transportation problems. Men, White non-Hispanics, and more educated people were more likely to report that they were out of town.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The report does not discuss the reasons for not voting for the Asian and Pacific Islander population since this group's sample size is too small to derive reliable estimates.

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## **HISTORICAL TRENDS IN VOTING AND REGISTRATION AMONG THE VOTING-AGE POPULATION**

Historically, the Current Population Survey collected data on voting and registration for the voting-age population without regard to citizenship status. Since 1994, however, the CPS has been routinely capturing information on citizenship status. Using the citizen population as the denominator in the calculation of voting rates seems preferable since only citizens are eligible to vote. The population base used — the population 18 and older, the citizen population, or the registered population — affects voting and registration rates (for more information on voting eligibility criteria, see the shaded box beginning on page 2).

Despite having better voting and registration rates using the citizen population base, using the voting-age population base is still a viable and important analytical tool, especially when looking at historical trends. The data that have been collected since 1964 give a good overview of how Americans vote in both Presidential and Congressional elections. This section of the report presents historical voting and registration trends using the total voting-age population.

### **Voting rates in the 2000 Presidential election inched just above the all-time low set in 1996...**

Only 55 percent of the voting-age population reported voting in the 2000 Presidential election, just slightly above the record-low 54 percent recorded for the 1996 Presidential election (see Table C). In the past ten Presidential elections, the highest proportion voting was 69 percent in 1964, the earliest year the Census Bureau began collecting voting data. Since 1976, voting rates have remained near or below

60 percent. The largest increase (4 percentage points) in voter turnout occurred between the 1988 and 1992 elections, thus making the 1992 election the most participated-in election since 1972. Turnout dropped again by 7 percentage points in the 1996 election.

The slight increase in voter turnout between 1996 and 2000 was driven primarily by women, White non-Hispanics, and Blacks. Turnout rates did not differ significantly between the two election years for men, any age group, Asians and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics.<sup>16</sup>

### **... while the national registration rate dropped to a record low.**

The percent of the voting-age population who were registered to vote in the 2000 election was at an all-time low of 64 percent (see Table D). Historically, registration rates have dropped from 74 percent in 1968 (the first year data are available), and ranged from 66 percent to 68 percent from 1976 to 1996. Even so, because of the overwhelming population growth of the voting-age population, the 2000 election had a record number of people registered to vote — 130 million.

Registration rates among the voting-age population dropped significantly between the 1996 and 2000 elections for men, women, White non-Hispanics, and all age groups below 65. Registration rates remained unchanged between the two Presidential elections for Blacks, Asian and Pacific Islanders, Hispanics and the age group 65 and over.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Although voting rates for men and for all people ages 25 to 44 did not differ between 1996 and 2000 in the total population, when the population is limited to citizens, the voting rates for these two groups were higher in 2000 than in 1996.

<sup>17</sup> Registration rates for the total Asian and Pacific Islander population and the age group 65 and over population did not differ between 1996 and 2000, however when the population is limited to citizens, the registration rates for both groups were significantly lower in 2000.

## **MEASURING VOTING IN THE CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY**

The Current Population Survey is a nationally representative sample survey that collects information on voting two weeks after the election in November. The CPS estimates the number of people who voted and registered to vote from direct interviews with household respondents. The CPS estimates are an important analytic tool in election studies because they identify the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of people who report that they do, or do not vote.

“Official counts” are reported to Congress by the Clerk of the House and are tabulated by each state’s board of elections. These tallies show the number of votes counted for specific offices. In a Presidential election, the official count is the number of votes cast for President.

Significant discrepancies occur each election between the CPS estimates and the official numbers. In the November 2000 CPS, 111 million of the 203 million people of voting age in the civilian noninstitutional population reported that they voted in the 2000 election. Official counts showed 105.6 million votes cast, a difference of about five million votes (5 percent) between the two sources.<sup>18</sup> Over the years, the overestimation in Presidential election years has varied between 6 percent and 12 percent of the total number of people reported as having voted in the official tallies.

Differences between the official counts and the CPS may be a combination of an understatement of the official numbers and an

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<sup>18</sup> Official count of votes cast is from the Clerk of the House of Representatives and is found at <http://clerk.house.gov/elections/2000/2000Stat.htm>.

Table C.

**Reported Voting in Presidential Election Years by Region, Race, Hispanic Origin, Sex, and Age: November 1964 to 2000**

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Presidential elections of—									
	1964	1968	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
<b>United States</b>										
<b>Total, voting age</b> .....	<b>110,604</b>	<b>116,535</b>	<b>136,203</b>	<b>146,548</b>	<b>157,085</b>	<b>169,963</b>	<b>178,098</b>	<b>185,684</b>	<b>193,651</b>	<b>202,609</b>
Total voted .....	76,671	78,964	85,766	86,698	93,066	101,878	102,224	113,866	105,017	110,826
Percent voted .....	69.3	67.8	63.0	59.2	59.2	59.9	57.4	61.3	54.2	54.7
<b>Race and Hispanic Origin</b>										
White .....	70.7	69.1	64.5	60.9	60.9	61.4	59.1	63.6	56.0	56.4
White non-Hispanic .....	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	62.8	63.3	61.8	66.9	59.6	60.4
Black .....	<sup>1</sup> 58.5	57.6	52.1	48.7	50.5	55.8	51.5	54.0	50.6	53.5
Asian and Pacific Islander ..	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	27.3	25.7	25.4
Hispanic (of any race) .....	(NA)	(NA)	37.5	31.8	29.9	32.6	28.8	28.9	26.7	27.5
<b>Sex</b>										
Men .....	71.9	69.8	64.1	59.6	59.1	59.0	56.4	60.2	52.8	53.1
Women .....	67.0	66.0	62.0	58.8	59.4	60.8	58.3	62.3	55.5	56.2
<b>Age</b>										
18 to 24 years .....	<sup>2</sup> 50.9	<sup>2</sup> 50.4	49.6	42.2	39.9	40.8	36.2	42.8	32.4	32.3
25 to 44 years .....	69.0	66.6	62.7	58.7	58.7	58.4	54.0	58.3	49.2	49.8
45 to 64 years .....	75.9	74.9	70.8	68.7	69.3	69.8	67.9	70.0	64.4	64.1
65 years and over .....	66.3	65.8	63.5	62.2	65.1	67.7	68.8	70.1	67.0	67.6
<b>Northeast, Midwest, and West</b>										
<b>Total, voting age</b> .....	<b>78,174</b>	<b>81,594</b>	<b>93,653</b>	<b>99,403</b>	<b>106,524</b>	<b>112,376</b>	<b>117,373</b>	<b>122,025</b>	<b>125,571</b>	<b>130,774</b>
Total voted .....	58,282	57,970	62,193	60,829	64,963	69,183	69,130	76,276	69,467	72,385
Percent voted .....	74.6	71.0	66.4	61.2	61.0	61.6	58.9	62.5	55.3	55.4
<b>Race and Hispanic Origin</b>										
White .....	74.7	71.8	67.5	62.6	62.4	63.0	60.4	64.9	57.4	57.5
White non-Hispanic .....	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	64.3	65.0	63.3	68.5	61.0	61.6
Black .....	<sup>1</sup> 72.0	64.8	56.7	52.2	52.8	58.9	55.6	53.8	51.4	53.1
Asian and Pacific Islander ..	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	27.9	26.3	26.1
Hispanic (of any race) .....	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	29.8	32.8	26.8	27.4	26.3	26.8
<b>South</b>										
<b>Total, voting age</b> .....	<b>32,429</b>	<b>34,941</b>	<b>42,550</b>	<b>47,145</b>	<b>50,561</b>	<b>57,587</b>	<b>60,725</b>	<b>63,659</b>	<b>68,080</b>	<b>71,835</b>
Total voted .....	18,389	20,994	23,573	25,869	28,103	32,695	33,094	37,590	35,550	38,441
Percent voted .....	56.7	60.1	55.4	54.9	55.6	56.8	54.5	59.0	52.2	53.5
<b>Race and Hispanic Origin</b>										
White .....	59.5	61.9	57.0	57.1	57.4	58.1	56.4	60.8	53.4	54.2
White non-Hispanic .....	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	59.2	59.8	58.5	63.6	56.7	58.2
Black .....	<sup>1</sup> 44.0	51.6	47.8	45.7	48.2	53.2	48.0	54.3	50.0	53.9
Asian and Pacific Islander ..	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	24.5	22.6	22.2
Hispanic (of any race) .....	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	30.1	32.4	32.9	32.0	27.6	28.7

NA Not available

<sup>1</sup> Black category includes other races in 1964.<sup>2</sup> Prior to 1972, data are for people 21 to 24 years of age with the exception of those aged 18 to 24 in Georgia and Kentucky, 19 to 24 in Alaska, and 20 to 24 in Hawaii.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2000 and earlier years.

Table D.

**Reported Registration in Presidential Elections by Region, Race, Hispanic Origin, Sex, and Age: November 1968 to 2000**

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Presidential elections of—								
	1968	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
<b>United States</b>									
<b>Total, voting age</b> .....	<b>116,535</b>	<b>136,203</b>	<b>146,548</b>	<b>157,085</b>	<b>169,963</b>	<b>178,098</b>	<b>185,684</b>	<b>193,651</b>	<b>202,609</b>
Total registered .....	86,574	98,480	97,761	105,035	116,106	118,589	126,578	127,661	129,549
Percent registered .....	74.3	72.3	66.7	66.9	68.3	66.6	68.2	65.9	63.9
<b>Race and Hispanic Origin</b>									
White .....	75.4	73.4	68.3	68.4	69.6	67.9	70.1	67.7	65.6
White non-Hispanic .....	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	70.3	71.6	70.8	73.5	71.6	70.0
Black .....	66.2	65.5	58.5	60.0	66.3	64.5	63.9	63.5	63.6
Asian and Pacific Islander ...	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	31.2	32.6	30.7
Hispanic (of any race) .....	(NA)	44.4	37.8	36.3	40.1	35.5	35.0	35.7	34.9
<b>Sex</b>									
Men .....	76.0	73.1	67.1	66.6	67.3	65.2	66.9	64.4	62.2
Women .....	72.8	71.6	66.4	67.1	69.3	67.8	69.3	67.3	65.6
<b>Age</b>									
18 to 24 years .....	<sup>1</sup> 56.0	58.9	51.3	49.2	51.3	48.2	52.5	48.8	45.4
25 to 44 years .....	72.4	71.3	65.5	65.6	66.6	63.0	64.8	61.9	59.6
45 to 64 years .....	81.1	79.7	75.5	75.8	76.6	75.5	75.3	73.5	71.2
65 years and over .....	75.6	75.6	71.4	74.6	76.9	78.4	78.0	77.0	76.1
<b>Northeast, Midwest, and West</b>									
<b>Total, voting age</b> .....	<b>81,594</b>	<b>93,653</b>	<b>99,403</b>	<b>106,524</b>	<b>112,376</b>	<b>117,373</b>	<b>122,025</b>	<b>125,571</b>	<b>130,774</b>
Total registered .....	62,409	69,256	67,306	72,290	77,584	78,769	83,816	82,770	83,228
Percent registered .....	76.5	73.9	67.7	67.9	69.0	67.1	68.7	65.9	63.6
<b>Race and Hispanic Origin</b>									
White .....	77.2	74.9	69.0	69.3	70.5	68.5	70.9	68.1	65.9
White non-Hispanic .....	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	71.2	72.6	71.7	74.5	72.2	70.3
Black .....	71.8	67.0	60.9	60.6	67.2	65.9	63.0	62.0	61.7
Asian and Pacific Islander ...	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	31.6	33.5	31.3
Hispanic (of any race) .....	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	35.5	39.0	32.4	32.9	33.8	32.7
<b>South</b>									
<b>Total, voting age</b> .....	<b>34,941</b>	<b>42,550</b>	<b>47,145</b>	<b>50,561</b>	<b>57,587</b>	<b>60,725</b>	<b>63,659</b>	<b>68,080</b>	<b>71,835</b>
Total registered .....	24,165	29,224	30,455	32,745	38,522	39,820	42,762	44,891	46,321
Percent registered .....	69.2	68.7	64.6	64.8	66.9	65.6	67.2	65.9	64.5
<b>Race and Hispanic Origin</b>									
White .....	70.8	69.8	66.7	66.2	67.8	66.6	68.5	67.0	65.2
White non-Hispanic .....	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	68.1	69.5	68.8	71.3	70.5	69.3
Black .....	61.6	64.0	56.4	59.3	65.6	63.3	64.7	64.7	65.2
Asian and Pacific Islander ...	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	29.3	28.1	27.6
Hispanic (of any race) .....	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	38.0	42.3	41.9	39.3	39.3	38.8

NA Not available

<sup>1</sup> Prior to 1972, data are for people 21 to 24 years of age with the exception of those aged 18 to 24 in Georgia and Kentucky, 19 to 24 in Alaska, and 20 to 24 in Hawaii.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2000 and earlier years.

overstatement in the CPS estimates as described below:

*Understatement of total votes cast.* The official counts may not include all the votes cast because a number of ballots are invalidated in the counting (and thus thrown out), are mismarked, or do not include a vote for a Presidential candidate.

*Over reporting of voting in the CPS.* Some of the error in estimating turnout in the CPS is the result of misreports, population controls, or survey coverage. Previous analyses based on reinterviews of respondents showed that respondents and proxy respondents are consistent with their reported answers, and thus misunderstanding of the questions do not account for the overestimate of voting in the CPS. However, other studies that matched survey responses with voting records indicate that a significant part of the discrepancy between survey estimates and official counts is the result of respondent misreporting. Incorrect reports of having voted from survey participants may be due to a reluctance to admit being outside the mainstream of American culture or the desire to exhibit a civic responsibility.<sup>19</sup>

## **SOURCE OF THE DATA**

Most estimates in this report come from data obtained in November 2000 from the Current Population Survey (CPS). Some estimates are based on data obtained from the CPS in earlier years. The U.S. Census Bureau conducts this survey every month, although this report

<sup>19</sup> For more detailed explanations of the differences between the official counts and survey counts, see U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 168, *Studies in the Measurement of Voter Turnout*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1990.

uses only November data for its estimates.

## **ACCURACY OF THE ESTIMATES**

All statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling error and nonsampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and meet the Census Bureau's standards for statistical significance. Nonsampling error in surveys may be attributed to a variety of sources such as how the survey was designed, how respondents interpret questions, how able and willing respondents are to provide correct answers, and how accurately answers are coded and classified. The Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the production process — including the overall design of surveys, testing the wording of questions, review of the work of interviewers and coders, and statistical review of reports.

The CPS employs ratio estimation, whereby sample estimates are adjusted to independent estimates of the national population by age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for bias due to undercoverage, but how it affects different variables in the survey is not precisely known. Moreover, biases may also be present when people who are missed in the survey differ from those interviewed in ways other than the categories used in weighting (age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin). All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources. Please contact Fred Meier of the Demographic Statistical Methods Division via Internet e-mail at [dsmd\\_s&a@census.gov](mailto:dsmd_s&a@census.gov) for information on the source of the data, the

accuracy of the estimates, the use of standard errors, and the computation of standard errors.

## **MORE INFORMATION**

Detailed tabulations are available that provide demographic characteristics of the population on voting and registration. The electronic version of these tables is available on the Internet, at the Census Bureau's World Wide Web site ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)). Once on the site, in the "Subjects A-Z" area, click on "V," and then on "Voting and Registration Data."

A paper version of these tables is available as PPL-152 for \$24. To receive a paper copy, send your request for "PPL-152, Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2000," along with a check or money order in the amount of \$24 payable to Commerce-Census-88-00-9010, to U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, P.O. Box 277943, Atlanta, GA 30384-7943, or call the Statistical Information Office at 301-457-2422. A copy of these tabulations will be made available to any existing CPR P20 subscriber without charge, provided that the request is made within three months of the issue date of this report. Contact our Statistical Information Office at 301-457-2422.

## **CONTACT**

For additional information on these topics, contact Amie Jamieson, Hyon B. Shin, or Jennifer Day, Education and Social Stratification Branch, 301-457-2464 or via Internet e-mail ([amie.l.jamieson@census.gov](mailto:amie.l.jamieson@census.gov) or [hyon.b.shin@census.gov](mailto:hyon.b.shin@census.gov) or [jday@census.gov](mailto:jday@census.gov)).

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## **USER COMMENTS**

The Census Bureau welcomes the comments and advice of data and report users. If you have any suggestions or comments, please write to:

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U.S. Census Bureau  
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or send e-mail to: *pop@census.gov*

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