

Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2002

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Population Characteristics

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This report examines the levels of voting and registration in the November 2002 Congressional election and the characteristics of people who reported that they voted or were registered for the election, as well as the reasons why registered voters did not vote.

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. Hence, the first major section of this report discusses voting and registration of the citizen voting-age population in the November 2002 Congressional election. The second section of this report provides a broader overview of historical trends in voting and registration among the voting-age population without regard to citizenship status.

The data in this report are based on responses to the Voting and Registration Supplement to the November 2002 CPS, which is limited to the civilian noninstitutionalized population of the United States.¹

¹ People in the military, U.S. citizens living abroad, and people in institutionalized housing such as correctional institutions and nursing homes were not included in the survey. See page 14 for a discussion of the differences between the "official counts" of votes cast and the CPS data.

About this report

Voting and registration rates historically have been higher in years with Presidential elections than in the "off" years. For the purposes of this report, the 2002 data (a non-Presidential election year) are compared with previous non-Presidential election years (1998, 1994, 1990, etc.).

To avoid confusion with the Presidential elections, this report refers to non-Presidential elections as Congressional elections.

VOTING AND REGISTRATION OF THE VOTING-AGE CITIZEN POPULATION

Reported voter turnout was slightly higher in 2002 than in 1998...

In the Congressional election of November 2002, the 46 percent of citizens who voted was slightly higher than the 45 percent of citizens who voted in 1998.² Registration of the citizen

² 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 are significant at the 90-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted.

Current Population Reports

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UNDERSTANDING VOTING RATES

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 Congressional election of November 2002, 89 million people, or 42 percent of the voting-age population, voted. The Census Bureau has historically estimated voting and registration rates using this population.

A second criterion for voting eligibility is citizenship. Only citizens of the United States (either native or naturalized) are allowed to vote in elections. Removing ineligible noncitizens from the voting-population pool raises the voter turnout rate — 46 percent in 2002.³

A third criterion is registration. Every state, with the exception of North Dakota, requires eligible voters to register to vote. A majority of people who are registered to vote do vote — 69 percent in the 2002 Congressional election. However, 65 million eligible voters were not registered for the 2002 election.

Figure 1 illustrates the three kinds of voting rates. In November 2002, of the 210 million people who

were 18 and older, 193 million were citizens and 128 million were registered. In the Congressional election, 89 million people voted. Thus, the voting rates for the population 18 and older were

42 percent of the total population, 46 percent of the citizen population, and 69 percent of the registered population.

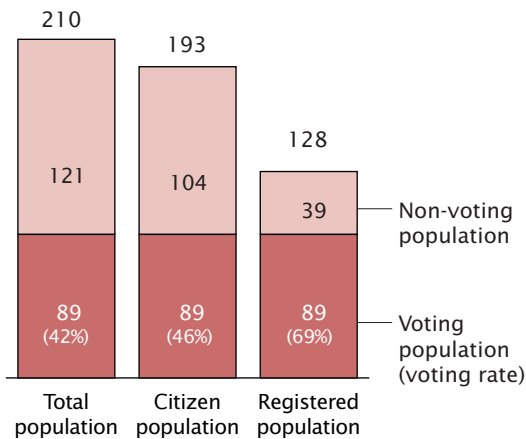
Citizenship and voting participation rates of racial and ethnic groups.

Citizenship is especially important in the consideration of racial and ethnic differences in voting rates. Immigration has differentially affected the proportion of noncitizens in various groups — 2 percent of non-Hispanic Whites were not citizens, compared with 6 percent of Blacks, 38 percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders, and 38 percent of Hispanics (of any race) in 2002 (Figure 2). Thus,

voting rates based on the voting-age population and the voting-age citizen population differ the most for the latter two groups. The voting rates for both the Asian and Pacific Islander group and Hispanics were 19 percent of the voting-age population, and 31 percent and 30 percent, respectively, of the voting-age citizen population in each group.⁴

Figure 1.
Voters Among the Total, Citizen, and Registered Voting-Age Populations: 2002

(Population 18 and older, in millions)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2002.

³ Data for country of birth, citizenship status, and year of entry have been collected in the basic Current Population Survey since 1994.

⁴ The difference in voting rates between Hispanics and Asians and Pacific Islanders was not statistically significantly based on the voting-age citizen populations.

population, 67 percent, dropped by 0.6 percentage points from 1998.

The overall number of people who voted in the 2002 Congressional election was 89 million, a record

high for a non-Presidential election (Figure 3). In fact, most of the increase in the number of people voting since 1966 has been due to the increased number of people 18 and older.

... and voter turnout went up among registered voters.

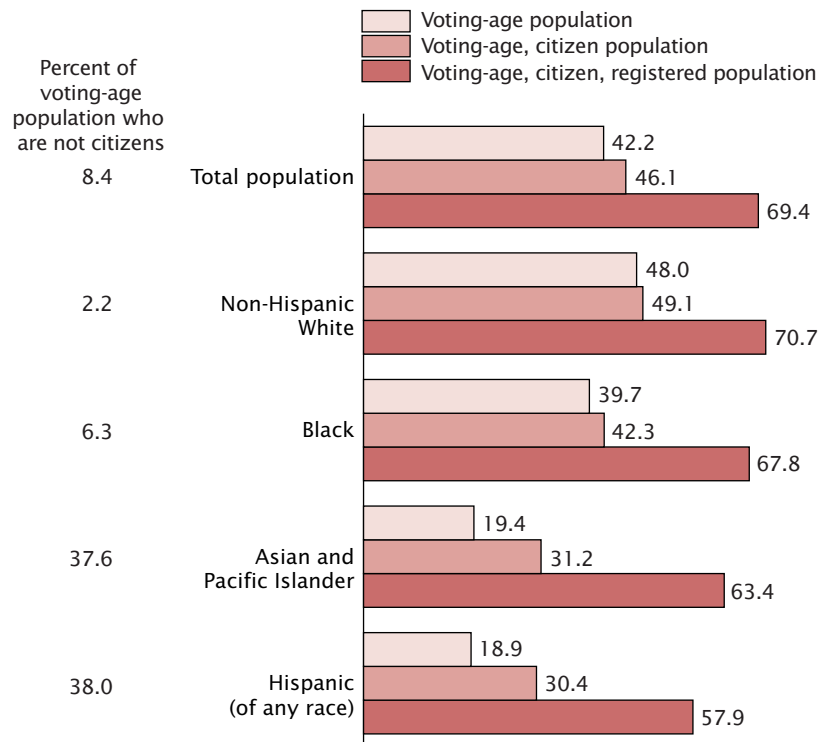
The majority of people who are registered to vote actually vote. Among people who were

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 voting-age citizen population. For states with low proportions of noncitizens, the two rates are similar.

At least 95 percent of the voting-age populations in the majority of states were citizens. The leading exceptions were California (with 80 percent citizens) and Texas, Arizona, Nevada, New York, and New Jersey (each with about 87 percent citizens).

Figure 2.
Type of Voting Rate by Race and Ethnicity: 2002
(Percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2002.

registered to vote in the November 2002 Congressional election, 69 percent reported they voted, up slightly from 68 percent in the 1998 election. Historically, the likelihood of actually voting once registered has remained high, with the peak at 80 percent in 1970.

Who votes?

The likelihood of voting reflects the racial and ethnic composition of the citizen population and people’s characteristics. Older individuals, homeowners, married couples, and people with more schooling, higher incomes, and jobs all have higher voting rates.

Non-Hispanic Whites constitute most of the voting-age citizen population.

The racial and ethnic distributions of the registered population and of the actual voting population reflect the distribution of voting-age citizens in the United States.⁵ In

⁵ Because Hispanics may be of any race, data for Hispanics in this report overlap slightly with data for the Black population and for the Asian and Pacific Islander population. Based on the November 2002 Current Population Survey, 4 percent of the Black voting-age population and 3 percent of the Asian and Pacific Islander voting-age population were of Hispanic origin. Of the voting-age citizen population, 3 percent of Blacks and of Asians and Pacific Islanders 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 2002 Current Population Survey.

2002, the non-Hispanic White population (76 percent) constituted the majority of voting-age citizens, followed by Blacks (12 percent), Hispanics (8 percent), and Asians and Pacific Islanders (3 percent).

The likelihood of voting differed among racial and ethnic groups (Table A). As a proportion of all voting-age citizens, non-Hispanic White citizens had the highest level of voter turnout in 2002 — 49 percent, followed by Black citizens at 42 percent, Asian and Pacific Islander citizens at 31 percent, and Hispanic citizens at 30 percent.⁶

⁶ The difference in citizen voting rates between Asians and Pacific Islanders and Hispanics was not statistically significant.

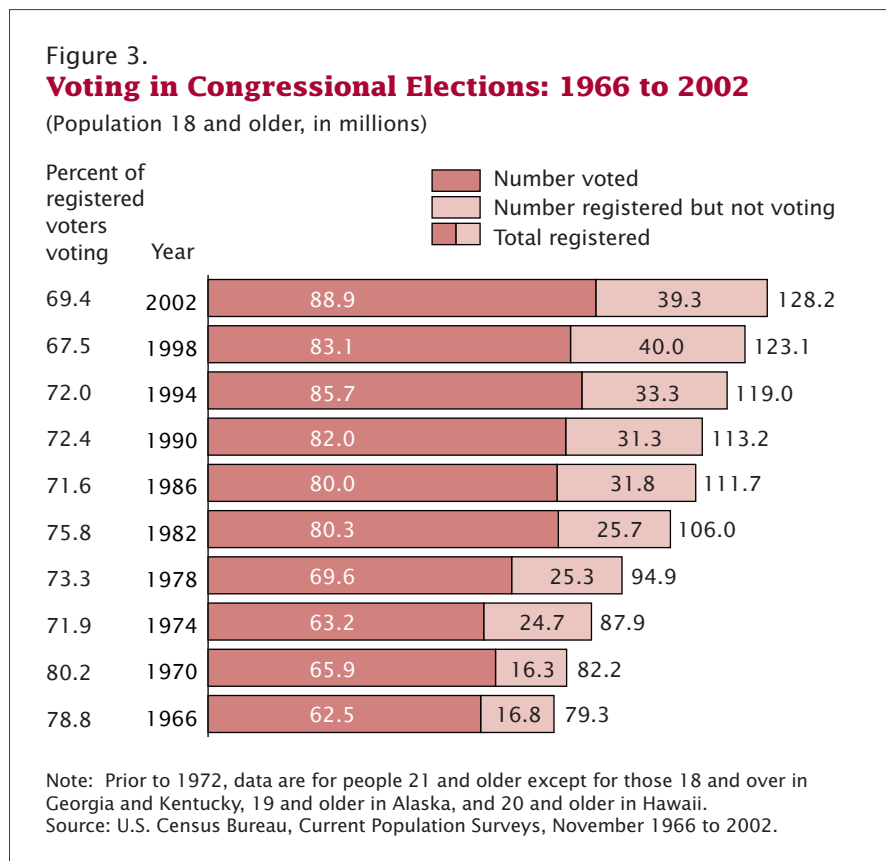
Between 1998 and 2002, voting rates for non-Hispanic White citizens increased by nearly two percentage points while voting rates for Black, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Hispanic citizens did not change. The numbers of Asian and Pacific Islander voters and Hispanic voters, however, increased about 33 percent and 17 percent respectively, reflecting the increase in the voting-age citizen population in these two groups.

Registration rates among racial and ethnic groups in 2002 remained unchanged from 1998. Non-Hispanic White citizens had the highest registration rate at 69 percent. Sixty-two percent of Black citizens, 49 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander citizens, and 53 percent of Hispanic citizens were registered.

A key to voter turnout is registration. Among those registered to vote, voting rates by race and ethnic origin also differed — 71 percent of non-Hispanic Whites voted, 68 percent of Blacks, 63 percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders, and 58 percent of Hispanics.

Native citizens are more likely to register and vote than naturalized citizens.

In 2002, most citizens of voting age, 94 percent, were native (that is, born in the U.S. or its territories or born abroad to a U.S. citizen), and thus automatically had U.S. citizenship at birth. Of the estimated 210 million people of voting age in November 2002, 30 million were not citizens at birth, having immigrated to the United States. Of those, 12 million (41 percent) had become naturalized citizens and were eligible to register and vote in the November 2002 election. The remainder of immigrants,



18 million people, were of voting age but not citizens.

Voting and registration rates were higher among native citizens (Table B). In the Congressional election of 2002, 67 percent of native citizens were registered and 47 percent voted. In comparison, 54 percent of naturalized citizens were registered and 36 percent voted.

The naturalized-citizen voting-age population is composed of non-Hispanic Whites, Asians and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics (each about 30 percent), and Blacks (9 percent).⁷ Among these groups,

⁷ Because Hispanics may be of any race, the percentage of naturalized Hispanics overlaps with the percentages for naturalized Blacks and Asians and Pacific Islanders. Thirteen percent of the Black naturalized population and 1 percent of the Asian and Pacific Islander naturalized population were of Hispanic origin. Less than 1 percent of the naturalized population were of another race.

Hispanics have the largest number of noncitizens of voting age (10 million people) — about 70 percent of foreign-born Hispanics of voting age were not eligible to vote because they were not U.S. citizens. Of the 7 million foreign-born Asians and Pacific Islanders, about one-half were not U.S. citizens.

Registration and voting rates did not differ between native and naturalized citizens for each racial and ethnic group, with the exception of non-Hispanic Whites (Figure 4). Within this group, natives' registration rates were higher than those of naturalized citizens (70 percent compared with 63 percent), as were their voting rates (49 percent compared with 45 percent).

Among people who were registered to vote, only the Hispanic population showed a difference in voting

Table A.
**Reported Rates of Voting and Registration, by Citizenship, Race, and Hispanic Origin:
 1994 to 2002**

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Total population				Citizens				Registered	
	Total	Citizen	Reported registered	Reported voted	Percent reported registered	90-percent confidence interval	Percent reported voted	90-percent confidence interval	Percent reported voted	90-percent confidence interval
2002										
Total, 18 years and over	210,421	192,656	128,154	88,903	66.5	66.2 - 66.8	46.1	45.8 - 46.4	69.4	69.0 - 69.8
Race and Hispanic Origin										
White	174,099	161,694	109,808	76,730	67.9	67.6 - 68.2	47.5	47.1 - 47.9	69.9	69.5 - 70.3
White non-Hispanic	150,499	147,171	102,154	72,259	69.4	69.1 - 69.7	49.1	48.7 - 49.5	70.7	70.3 - 71.1
Black	24,445	22,912	14,304	9,695	62.4	61.3 - 63.5	42.3	41.2 - 43.4	67.8	67.5 - 68.1
Asian and Pacific Islander	9,631	6,009	2,955	1,873	49.2	46.9 - 51.5	31.2	29.1 - 33.3	63.4	63.2 - 63.6
Hispanic (of any race)	25,162	15,601	8,196	4,747	52.5	50.7 - 54.3	30.4	28.8 - 32.0	57.9	57.5 - 58.3
1998										
Total, 18 years and over	198,228	183,450	123,104	83,098	67.1	66.8 - 68.6	45.3	44.9 - 45.7	67.5	67.1 - 67.9
Race and Hispanic Origin										
White	165,821	155,369	105,985	71,871	68.2	67.8 - 68.6	46.3	45.9 - 46.7	67.8	67.4 - 68.2
White non-Hispanic	146,501	143,651	99,510	68,068	69.3	68.9 - 69.7	47.4	47.0 - 47.8	68.4	68.0 - 68.8
Black	23,305	22,074	14,031	9,223	63.6	62.4 - 64.8	41.8	40.6 - 43.0	65.7	64.3 - 67.1
Asian and Pacific Islander	7,327	4,344	2,133	1,404	49.1	46.2 - 52.0	32.3	29.6 - 35.0	65.8	61.9 - 69.7
Hispanic (of any race)	20,321	12,395	6,843	4,068	55.2	53.1 - 57.3	32.8	30.8 - 34.8	59.4	56.6 - 62.2
1994										
Total, 18 years and over	190,267	177,260	118,994	85,702	67.1	66.8 - 67.4	48.3	48.0 - 48.6	72.0	71.6 - 72.4
Race and Hispanic Origin										
White	160,317	151,432	103,614	75,769	68.4	68.1 - 68.7	50.0	49.6 - 50.4	73.1	72.7 - 72.4
White non-Hispanic	145,027	142,357	98,763	72,614	69.4	69.1 - 69.7	51.0	50.6 - 51.4	73.5	73.1 - 73.9
Black	21,799	20,829	12,762	8,095	61.3	60.1 - 62.5	38.9	37.2 - 40.1	63.4	61.9 - 64.9
Asian and Pacific Islander	4,849	2,684	1,394	1,057	51.9	48.5 - 55.4	39.4	36.0 - 42.8	75.8	71.6 - 80.0
Hispanic (of any race)	17,476	10,350	5,473	3,522	52.9	50.6 - 55.2	34.0	31.8 - 36.2	64.4	61.3 - 67.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 1994, 1998, and 2002.

rates between native and naturalized citizens. Registered Hispanics who were naturalized citizens were more likely to vote than their native counterparts (64 percent compared with 56 percent).

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

Among citizens, women were more likely than men to vote in the 2002 election (47 percent compared with 46 percent), as shown in Table B. 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 other social changes for women in recent decades. Educational attainment and the labor force participation rate, both strong correlates of voting, have risen dramatically among women. These trends point to increased levels of political involvement by women, including voting participation.

The voting rate was much higher among older age groups than younger age groups (Figure 5).⁸ The peak age group for voting participation was 65 to 74 years, where 65 percent of citizens voted in the

⁸ The difference in voting rates between those 55-64 years of age and those who were 75 years and older was not statistically significant.

2002 Congressional election. The lowest voting rate (19 percent) was for 18- to 24-year-old citizens, who were less than one-third as likely to vote as people 65 to 74 years. A key difference between these two groups was registration — while 79 percent of the older citizens were registered, only 43 percent of the younger citizens were. Young adults, especially people in their twenties, are the most transient, which may lead to lower registration levels because moving usually requires re-registering.⁹

⁹ Jason Schachter. "Geographic Mobility: 2002 to 2003." Current Population Reports P20-549. Washington, DC: US Census Bureau, 2004.

Table B.
Reported Rates of Voting and Registration by Selected Characteristics: November 2002

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Total population	Total citizen						
		Total citizen	Reported registered			Reported voted		
			Number	Percent	90-percent confidence interval	Number	Percent	90-percent confidence interval
Total, 18 years and over	210,421	192,656	128,154	66.5	66.2 - 66.8	88,903	46.1	45.8 - 46.4
Sex								
Men	100,939	91,644	59,422	64.8	64.4 - 65.2	41,801	45.6	45.1 - 46.1
Women	109,481	101,011	68,732	68.0	67.6 - 68.4	47,102	46.6	46.2 - 47.0
Race, Hispanic Origin, and Sex								
White	174,099	161,694	109,808	67.9	67.6 - 68.2	76,730	47.5	47.1 - 47.9
Men	84,466	77,850	51,769	66.5	66.0 - 67.0	36,784	47.2	46.7 - 47.7
Women	89,633	83,844	58,039	69.2	68.7 - 69.7	39,946	47.6	47.1 - 48.1
White non-Hispanic	150,499	147,171	102,154	69.4	69.1 - 69.7	72,259	49.1	48.7 - 49.5
Men	72,368	70,735	48,198	68.1	67.6 - 68.6	34,668	49.0	48.5 - 49.5
Women	78,132	76,438	53,957	70.6	70.1 - 71.1	37,591	49.2	48.7 - 49.7
Black	24,445	22,912	14,304	62.4	61.3 - 63.5	9,695	42.3	41.2 - 43.4
Men	10,811	9,998	5,758	57.6	55.9 - 59.3	3,815	38.2	36.5 - 39.9
Women	13,634	12,914	8,546	66.2	64.8 - 67.6	5,879	45.5	44.0 - 47.0
Asian and Pacific Islander	9,631	6,009	2,955	49.2	46.9 - 51.5	1,873	31.2	28.9 - 33.5
Men	4,569	2,827	1,428	50.5	47.1 - 53.9	931	32.9	29.7 - 36.1
Women	5,062	3,182	1,527	48.0	44.8 - 51.2	941	29.6	26.7 - 32.5
Hispanic (of any race)	25,162	15,601	8,196	52.5	50.7 - 54.3	4,747	30.4	28.8 - 32.0
Men	12,855	7,594	3,783	49.8	47.3 - 52.3	2,225	29.3	27.0 - 31.6
Women	12,307	8,007	4,413	55.1	52.6 - 57.6	2,522	31.5	29.2 - 33.8
Nativity Status of Citizens								
Total citizens	192,656	192,656	128,154	66.5	66.2 - 66.8	88,903	46.1	45.8 - 46.4
Native	180,473	180,473	121,526	67.3	67.0 - 67.6	84,490	46.8	46.5 - 47.1
Naturalized	12,183	12,183	6,628	54.4	53.1 - 55.7	4,413	36.2	35.0 - 37.4
Age								
18 to 24 years	27,377	24,334	10,470	43.0	42.1 - 43.9	4,697	19.3	18.6 - 20.0
25 to 34 years	38,512	32,854	19,339	58.9	58.1 - 59.7	10,450	31.8	31.1 - 32.5
35 to 44 years	43,716	39,241	26,214	66.8	66.1 - 67.5	17,569	44.8	44.1 - 45.5
45 to 54 years	40,043	37,593	27,006	71.8	71.1 - 72.5	20,088	53.4	52.7 - 54.1
55 to 64 years	26,881	25,679	19,424	75.6	74.8 - 76.4	15,432	60.1	59.2 - 61.0
65 to 74 years	17,967	17,415	13,681	78.6	77.7 - 79.5	11,339	65.1	64.1 - 66.1
75 years and over	15,925	15,540	12,020	77.3	76.9 - 77.7	9,328	60.0	58.9 - 61.1
Marital Status								
Married-spouse present	117,772	107,702	79,524	73.8	73.3 - 74.3	59,214	55.0	54.5 - 55.5
Married-spouse absent	2,761	1,855	1,013	54.6	50.5 - 58.7	617	33.3	29.4 - 37.2
Widowed	14,080	13,538	9,677	71.5	70.1 - 72.9	6,864	50.7	49.2 - 52.2
Divorced	20,835	20,045	12,321	61.5	60.3 - 62.7	7,941	39.6	38.4 - 40.8
Separated	4,597	4,008	2,238	55.8	53.0 - 58.6	1,203	30.0	27.4 - 32.6
Never married	50,376	45,508	23,381	51.4	50.6 - 52.2	13,064	28.7	27.9 - 29.5
Educational Attainment								
Less than 9th grade	12,333	8,004	3,999	50.0	49.7 - 51.3	2,393	29.9	28.7 - 31.1
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	20,908	18,238	8,699	47.7	46.8 - 48.6	4,875	26.7	25.9 - 27.5
High school graduate or GED	68,866	64,503	39,315	61.0	60.5 - 61.5	25,565	39.6	39.1 - 40.1
Some college or Associate degree	57,343	54,752	38,236	69.8	69.3 - 70.3	26,239	47.9	47.4 - 48.4
Bachelor's degree	34,095	31,669	24,985	78.9	78.3 - 79.5	19,165	60.5	59.8 - 61.2
Advanced degree	16,877	15,490	12,919	83.4	82.7 - 84.1	10,667	68.9	68.0 - 69.8
Annual Family Income¹								
Total family members	157,892	144,287	98,797	68.5	68.1 - 68.9	69,768	48.4	47.9 - 48.9
Less than \$5,000	2,159	1,801	975	54.1	50.0 - 58.2	476	26.4	22.8 - 30.0
\$5,000 to \$9,999	4,051	3,420	1,680	49.1	46.1 - 52.1	837	24.5	22.0 - 27.0
\$10,000 to \$14,999	6,696	5,691	3,325	58.4	56.1 - 60.7	2,041	35.9	33.7 - 38.1
\$15,000 to \$24,999	14,665	12,175	7,521	61.8	60.3 - 63.3	4,699	38.6	37.1 - 40.1
\$25,000 to \$34,999	16,868	14,741	9,485	64.3	62.9 - 65.7	6,459	43.8	42.4 - 43.0
\$35,000 to \$49,999	21,945	19,904	13,605	68.4	67.3 - 69.5	9,369	47.1	45.9 - 48.3
\$50,000 to \$74,999	28,921	27,253	20,190	74.1	73.2 - 75.0	14,496	53.2	52.2 - 54.2
\$75,000 and over	40,309	38,433	30,434	79.2	78.5 - 79.9	22,796	59.3	58.4 - 60.2
Income not reported	22,278	20,868	11,582	55.5	54.3 - 56.7	8,595	41.2	40.0 - 42.4

see footnotes at end of table

Table B.
Reported Rates of Voting and Registration by Selected Characteristics: November 2002—Con.

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Total population	Total citizen						
		Total citizen	Reported registered			Reported voted		
			Number	Percent	90-percent confidence interval	Number	Percent	90-percent confidence interval
Employment Status								
In the civilian labor force	142,635	130,221	86,904	66.7	66.3 - 67.1	58,918	45.2	44.8 - 45.6
Employed	134,900	123,429	83,186	67.4	67.0 - 67.8	56,813	46.0	45.6 - 46.4
Unemployed	7,735	6,792	3,718	54.7	53.0 - 56.4	2,105	31.0	29.4 - 32.6
Not in the labor force	67,785	62,434	41,250	66.1	65.6 - 66.6	29,985	48.0	47.4 - 48.6
Tenure								
Owner-occupied units	151,777	144,534	103,290	71.5	71.2 - 71.8	75,416	52.2	51.8 - 52.6
Renter-occupied units	55,994	45,736	23,442	51.3	50.6 - 52.0	12,627	27.6	27.0 - 28.2
No cash rent units	2,649	2,415	1,422	58.9	56.1 - 60.7	861	35.7	32.9 - 38.5
Duration of Residence²								
Less than 1 month	3,323	2,805	1,355	48.3	44.9 - 51.7	576	20.5	17.8 - 23.2
1 to 6 months	18,022	15,179	8,097	53.3	51.9 - 54.7	4,030	26.5	25.2 - 27.8
7 to 11 months	8,929	7,482	4,054	54.2	52.1 - 56.3	2,189	29.3	27.4 - 31.2
1 to 2 years	30,448	26,037	16,435	63.1	62.0 - 64.2	9,980	38.3	37.2 - 39.4
3 to 4 years	27,200	24,199	17,489	72.3	71.3 - 73.3	11,842	48.9	47.8 - 50.0
5 years or longer	104,047	100,275	79,773	79.6	79.1 - 80.1	59,692	59.5	58.9 - 60.1
Not reported	18,451	16,677	952	5.7	5.1 - 6.3	594	3.6	3.1 - 4.1
Region and Race and Hispanic Origin								
Northeast	41,109	37,405	24,997	66.8	66.1 - 67.5	17,027	45.5	44.8 - 46.2
White	34,520	32,304	22,050	68.3	67.6 - 69.0	15,136	46.9	46.2 - 47.6
White non-Hispanic	31,402	30,260	21,057	69.6	68.9 - 70.3	14,547	48.1	47.3 - 48.9
Black	4,585	3,947	2,413	61.1	58.6 - 63.6	1,615	40.9	38.4 - 43.4
Asian and Pacific Islander	1,499	837	384	45.9	40.0 - 51.8	199	23.8	18.8 - 28.8
Hispanic (of any race)	3,751	2,510	1,234	49.2	45.0 - 53.4	712	28.4	24.6 - 32.2
Midwest	48,842	46,784	32,467	69.4	68.8 - 70.0	22,986	49.1	48.5 - 49.7
White	42,951	41,536	29,192	70.3	69.7 - 70.9	20,761	50.0	49.3 - 50.7
White non-Hispanic	40,880	40,306	28,553	70.8	70.2 - 71.4	20,401	50.6	49.9 - 51.3
Black	4,467	4,356	2,806	64.4	62.0 - 66.8	1,976	45.4	42.9 - 47.9
Asian and Pacific Islander	892	476	236	49.6	41.7 - 57.5	123	25.8	18.9 - 32.7
Hispanic (of any race)	2,183	1,286	671	52.2	46.2 - 58.2	375	29.2	23.8 - 34.6
South	74,208	68,769	45,706	66.5	60.0 - 67.0	30,857	44.9	44.3 - 45.5
White	58,216	54,325	36,802	67.7	67.1 - 68.3	24,958	45.9	45.3 - 46.5
White non-Hispanic	49,474	48,722	33,663	69.1	68.5 - 69.7	23,194	47.6	46.9 - 48.3
Black	13,330	12,628	7,973	63.1	61.5 - 64.7	5,323	42.2	40.6 - 43.8
Asian and Pacific Islander	1,669	961	459	47.8	41.7 - 57.5	287	29.9	24.3 - 35.5
Hispanic (of any race)	9,178	5,889	3,302	56.1	46.2 - 58.2	1,846	31.3	28.4 - 34.2
West	46,261	39,697	24,983	62.9	62.2 - 63.6	18,033	45.4	44.6 - 46.2
White	38,412	33,529	21,765	64.9	64.1 - 65.7	15,875	47.3	46.5 - 48.1
White non-Hispanic	28,744	27,884	18,881	67.7	66.9 - 68.5	14,117	50.6	49.7 - 51.5
Black	2,063	1,981	1,113	56.2	52.1 - 60.3	780	39.4	35.4 - 43.4
Asian and Pacific Islander	4,424	3,038	1,537	50.6	47.1 - 54.1	1,052	34.6	31.3 - 37.9
Hispanic (of any race)	10,050	5,916	2,989	50.5	47.4 - 53.6	1,815	30.7	27.8 - 33.6

¹Limited to people in families.

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

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2002.

Marital status is also associated with voting patterns. Married individuals (55 percent) are more likely to vote than widowed (51 percent), divorced (40 percent), separated (30 percent), and never-married individuals (29 percent).¹⁰ Separated and never-married individuals are generally younger, which may influence their voting patterns.

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

As shown in Figure 6, the voting rate of citizens who had bachelor's degrees (61 percent) was over twice as high as that of citizens who had not completed high school (28 percent). At each successive level of educational attainment, voting rates increased. People with a bachelor's degree or more education made up 34 percent of those who reported voting in the Congressional election, compared with only 8 percent for those who did not graduate from high school.

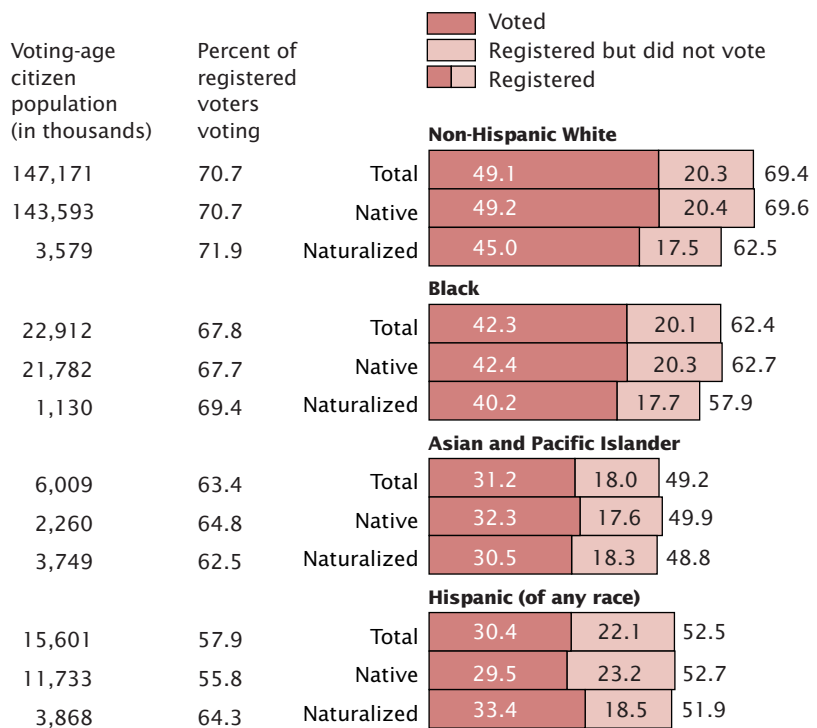
Citizens with higher incomes were more likely to vote. The voting rate among citizens living in families with annual incomes of \$50,000 or more was 57 percent, compared with 25 percent for citizens living in families with incomes of under \$10,000. Almost one-half of those who voted in the November 2002 Congressional election lived in families with incomes of \$50,000 or more.

Employment status is another key indicator of voting participation. In the 2002 Congressional election, 46 percent of employed citizens reported voting, compared with only 31 percent of those who were in the labor force but not employed.

¹⁰ The difference between voting rates of those who were "separated" and those who were "never married" was not statistically significant.

Figure 4. **Voting by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Nativity of Citizens: 2002**

(Percent of voting-age citizen population)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2002.

Citizens who were not in the labor force, a group that included many retired people, reported the highest voter-participation rate (48 percent).

Homeowners and longtime residents are more likely to vote.

Individuals with more established residences, as measured by home ownership and duration of residence, were more likely to vote than those who rented housing or recently moved into their homes. Fifty-two percent of homeowners reported voting in 2002, compared with 28 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 60 percent, higher than rates for individuals

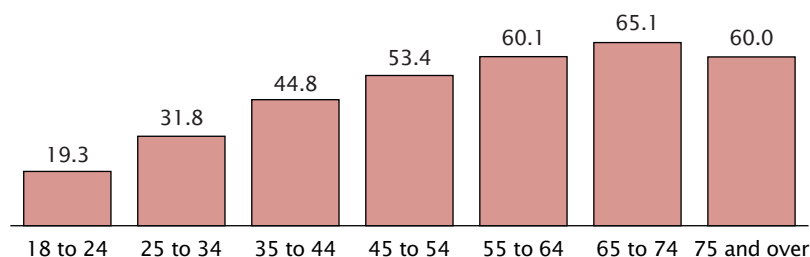
who had lived in their current residence for a shorter time (Figure 7). Citizens who had lived in their home for less than one month were least likely to vote (21 percent).

The registration process 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 2002, registration rates rose as the length of residence increased — from 48 percent for citizens who had lived in their home for less than one month to 80 percent for those who had lived in their home for five years or longer.

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

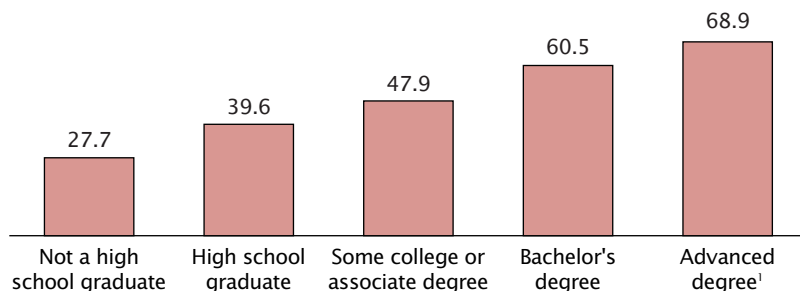
Citizens residing in the Midwest were more likely to register and to

Figure 5.
Voting by Age: 2002
 (Percent who voted of the voting-age citizen population)



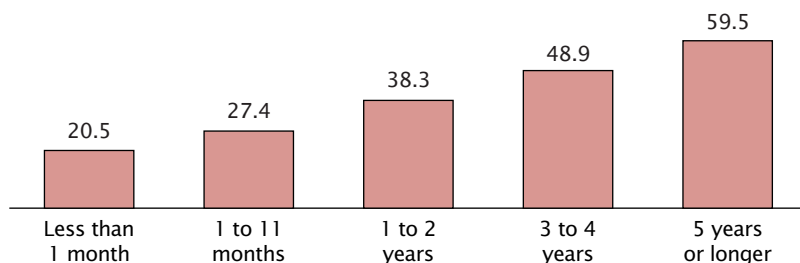
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2002.

Figure 6.
Voting by Educational Attainment: 2002
 (Percent who voted of the voting-age citizen population)



¹ Advanced degree includes master's, professional, or doctoral degree.
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2002.

Figure 7.
Voting by Duration of Residence: 2002
 (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 2002.

vote than those in other regions (Table B). In 2002, 69 percent of citizens in the Midwest were registered to vote and 49 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.¹¹ The voting rates in the Northeast, the South, and the West were each about 45 percent.¹² The West had the lowest registration rate (63 percent).

The proportion of total votes from the South has increased steadily from 24 percent in 1966 to 35 percent in 2002. Some, but not all, of the increased share is due to the population shift to the South during this period (from 31 percent to 35 percent of the voting-age population).

In 2002, non-Hispanic Whites had higher voting rates in the Midwest and the West than they did in the other two regions. Among Blacks, voting rates were highest in the Midwest, although their rates were still lower than those of non-Hispanic Whites in each of the four regions. Sample sizes of Asian and Pacific Islander voters and Hispanic voters were not large enough to show any differences in voting rates by region.

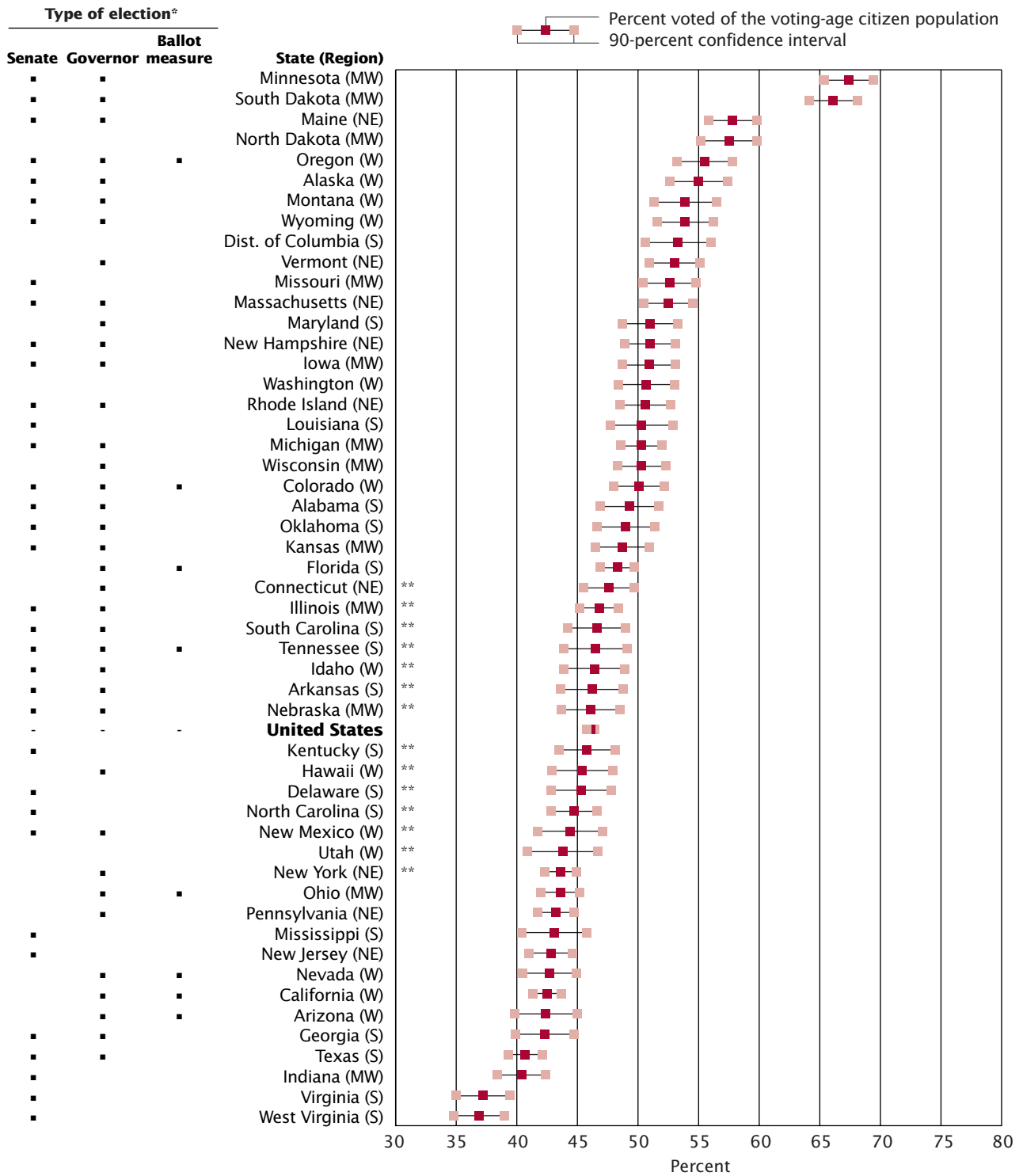
Most people vote in-person on election day.

In the 2002 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

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

¹² The differences among the rates for the Northeast, the South, and the West were not statistically significant from one another.

Figure 8.
Voting by State: 2002



Note: Region Codes: NE - Northeast, MW - Midwest, S - South, W - West.
 * The U.S. House of Representatives has 435 members who are elected to 2-year terms, with elections held in each state in the fall of every even-numbered year.
 **Not statistically different from the national average.
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2002; National Committee for an Effective Congress <www.ncec.org> and Cable News Network <www.cnn.com>.

state has its own laws governing the election process, these rates differed dramatically by region and state. In the West, absentee and early voting were quite popular. Oregon requires all voters to cast their ballot through the mail by absentee ballot. High rates of absentee and early voting also occurred in other Western states — Washington (62 percent); Arizona (42 percent); Nevada, Colorado, and New Mexico (all about 35 percent).¹³

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

In 2002, the highest voting rates were found in Minnesota and South Dakota (both about 67 percent, as shown in Figure 8).¹⁴ West Virginia and Virginia were the states with the lowest level of voter participation (37 percent). In Oregon, where all ballots have been mailed-in since the 2000 Presidential election, the citizen voting rate was 56 percent, higher than in most other states.¹⁵

A group of states — Idaho, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Wisconsin, and Wyoming — allowed potential voters to register on the day of the election. These states had voting rates higher than the national level of 46 percent for citizens, with the exception of Idaho, which was at the national average.

Excluding North Dakota, which has no voter registration, Maine and Minnesota had the highest levels of

voter registration in the country (both about 80 percent).¹⁶ Three of the states listed in the paragraph above that allow registration on election day had registration rates that were above the national average of 67 percent. Two states, New Hampshire and Wyoming, were close to the national average, while Idaho was lower (62 percent). Hawaii had the lowest registration level in the country at 53 percent.

Four out of ten people benefited from the “motor voter” provision of the NVRA.

Effective in most states in 1995, the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) was designed by Congress to simplify the registration process and, in turn, increase voter participation by incorporating registration into other transactions.¹⁷ The NVRA has three provisions: “motor voter” registration, agency-based voter registration, and mail-in voter registration. Motor voter registration allows individuals to register to vote when applying for or renewing a driver’s license or personal identification card at a state’s department of motor vehicles. The NVRA also requires that individuals be given the opportunity to register to vote when applying for or receiving services or assistance at certain specified state offices that provide public assistance. These include offices providing Aid to Families with

Dependent Children (AFDC); Food Stamps; Medicaid; the Women, Infants, and Children program (WIC); and various disability services. Finally, voter registration must be accepted by mail-in forms which are developed by the states and the Federal Election Commission.¹⁸

In November 2002, 36.9 million people reported that they registered to vote at least once since January 1, 1995. The most popular NVRA method reported was registering to vote when obtaining or renewing a driver’s license, at 41 percent — up from 28 percent in 1996 (Figure 9). Only 1.3 percent of registered voters reported registering at a public assistance agency. This low proportion is not surprising since public assistance offices serve a relatively small number of people compared with motor vehicle offices. About 10 percent of people took advantage of the third provision of the NVRA — mailing a registration form to their local election office. Many people also reported using the more traditional method of registering in person at a county or government registration office (14 percent).

Though registering to vote while obtaining or renewing a driver’s license was one of the most popular methods mentioned by all the demographic groups shown in Table C, other methods were also favored by some. The younger population (those 18 to 24 years) had high rates of registration at a school, hospital, or college campus (14 percent). The older population (people 65 years and over) had a high percentage who registered at a county or government registration office (26 percent).

¹³ The difference in the rates of absentee and early voting between Arizona and Nevada was not statistically significant.

¹⁴ Although Minnesota had the highest estimated citizen voting rate in 2002 at 67 percent, the difference in its value and that of South Dakota’s was not statistically significant.

¹⁵ There were two states (Minnesota and South Dakota) with voting rates higher than Oregon and 11 states whose difference in voting rates was not statistically significant from Oregon’s.

¹⁶ The difference in voter registration rates between Maine and Minnesota was not statistically significant. Voter registration data by state are available in Table 4 of the detailed tables for this report at <www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/voting.html>.

¹⁷ Six states which as of August 1, 1994, had either no voter registration or permitted election-day registration were exempt from the NVRA provisions. These states were North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Wyoming, New Hampshire, and Idaho. A later effective date was allowed for Vermont, Virginia, and Arkansas because they needed to change their constitutions in order to comply with NVRA.

¹⁸ For more information about the NVRA, see <www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/nvra/activ_nvra.htm>.

Naturalized citizens were more likely than native citizens to register by mail (17 percent compared with 9 percent).

Of the four regions, the South had the highest percentage of people registering at a motor vehicle department (48 percent). In addition, people in the Northeast also favored registering in person at county or government registration offices (21 percent), and some people in the West favored registration booths (16 percent). The Midwest had the highest percentage of citizens registering to vote at the polls on election day (14 percent). Minnesota and Wisconsin, in particular, allow voters to register on the day of the election.

Socioeconomic background also influences the method of registration.

The registration behavior of low income and less educated individuals differed from that of high income and more educated people. People in families with incomes of less than \$15,000 per year or those with less than a high school diploma had higher percentages of registration at public assistance agencies (7 percent and 4 percent, respectively) than those with higher family incomes or higher levels of education. People in families with incomes of \$15,000 and over favored registering while obtaining a driver's license (42 percent) more than did those with lower incomes (36 percent). Individuals with a bachelor's degree or more reported a higher level of registration by mail than those with some college or less.

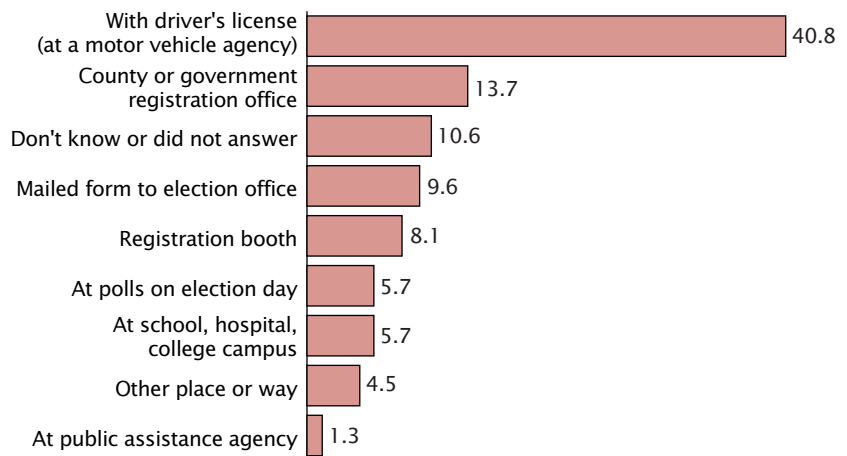
Why didn't registered voters vote?

Of the 128 million people who reported that they were registered to vote, 39 million (30 percent) did

Figure 9.

Method of Registration to Vote: 2002

(Percent distribution of those who registered to vote after January 1, 1995)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2002.

not vote in the 2002 Congressional election. Of these registered nonvoters, 27 percent reported that they did not vote because they were too busy or had conflicting work or school schedules (Figure 10). Another 13 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 (7 percent), forgetting to vote (6 percent), confusion or uncertainty about registration (4 percent), and transportation problems (2 percent).

Men, younger adults (18 to 44 years), Hispanics, and those with higher educations were more likely to report that they did not vote because they were too busy or had conflicting work or school schedules than women, the elderly, non-Hispanic Whites, 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 diploma or less education 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. Non-Hispanic Whites were more likely than Blacks and Hispanics to report that they did not prefer any of the candidates. Blacks were more likely than non-Hispanic Whites and Hispanics to have transportation problems. Men, non-Hispanic Whites, and more educated people were more likely to report that they were out of town.¹⁹

¹⁹ This report does not discuss the reasons for not voting for the Asian and Pacific Islander population since this group's sample size was too small to derive reliable estimates. For more information about reasons for not voting, see Table 12 of the detailed tables for this report at <www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/voting.html>.

Table C.

Method of Registration Among Citizens Who Registered to Vote After January 1, 1995 by Selected Characteristics: November 2002

Characteristic	Number in thousands	Percent Distribution									
		Total	With driver's license	At public assistance agency	Mailed form to election office	At school, hospital, college campus	County or government registration office	Registration booth	At polls election day	Other place/way	Don't know/refused
Total, 18 years and over	36,880	100.0	40.8	1.3	9.6	5.7	13.7	8.1	5.7	4.5	10.6
Age											
18 to 24 years	8,893	100.0	38.4	1.4	7.8	13.9	10.4	6.4	4.0	3.4	14.3
25 to 44 years	16,463	100.0	46.2	1.5	9.8	3.2	11.1	8.4	5.9	4.6	9.3
45 to 64 years	8,367	100.0	37.9	1.1	10.4	2.8	17.7	9.4	6.6	4.7	9.3
65 years and over	3,157	100.0	26.3	1.1	11.8	2.8	25.8	8.0	7.4	6.8	10.0
Race and Hispanic Origin											
White	31,061	100.0	41.5	1.0	9.5	5.4	14.3	7.5	6.2	4.4	10.3
White non-Hispanic	28,061	100.0	41.8	0.9	9.3	5.2	14.9	7.2	6.5	3.9	10.2
Black	4,171	100.0	38.2	3.6	8.6	7.7	10.3	11.3	3.3	4.8	12.2
Asian and Pacific Islander	1,251	100.0	31.6	1.4	18.1	6.2	10.5	11.1	2.3	6.9	11.8
Hispanic (of any race)	3,280	100.0	37.1	2.0	10.5	6.7	8.7	11.1	3.2	8.9	11.7
Nativity Status											
Native	34,500	100.0	41.7	1.3	9.1	5.7	13.7	7.9	5.9	4.1	10.5
Naturalized	2,380	100.0	26.9	1.6	16.9	5.3	13.1	11.0	3.5	10.7	11.1
Duration of Residence											
Less than 1 year	7,255	100.0	48.5	1.7	8.8	6.4	9.8	6.8	5.4	4.5	8.2
1 to 2 years	8,095	100.0	46.6	1.3	9.9	4.5	11.5	8.9	5.1	4.0	8.3
3 years or longer	21,398	100.0	35.9	1.3	9.8	5.8	15.9	8.3	6.1	4.8	12.1
Not reported	132	100.0	46.6	1.3	0.9	4.8	2.0	4.1	7.8	0.0	32.5
Region											
Northeast	6,253	100.0	29.1	1.5	13.8	5.8	21.0	6.2	4.5	4.4	13.7
Midwest	9,739	100.0	44.5	0.7	5.2	5.7	12.3	5.3	13.6	3.5	9.4
South	12,671	100.0	48.0	1.7	8.7	5.5	14.7	6.3	2.1	3.5	9.5
West	8,217	100.0	34.0	1.5	13.0	5.9	8.2	15.8	3.0	7.5	11.2
Education											
Less than high school graduate	3,209	100.0	35.1	4.2	9.4	4.6	14.9	10.3	6.3	6.3	8.9
High school graduate	10,210	100.0	42.4	1.8	8.2	5.2	14.4	7.3	5.8	4.7	10.2
Some college	12,886	100.0	39.9	1.1	8.5	7.6	13.0	8.5	5.8	4.0	11.8
Bachelor's degree or more	10,575	100.0	42.0	0.4	12.4	4.0	13.6	7.8	5.3	4.6	9.9
Family Income¹											
Under \$15,000	2,062	100.0	35.8	6.9	8.3	6.2	14.8	9.9	4.4	3.7	10.0
\$15,000 and over	23,496	100.0	41.8	0.9	9.7	5.3	14.4	7.8	5.9	4.2	10.3
Income not reported	2,305	100.0	38.0	1.0	8.4	4.8	15.3	6.6	4.5	5.2	16.2

¹Limited to people in families.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2002.

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

Historically, the Current Population Survey (CPS) 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 registration and voting rates seems preferable since only citizens are eligible to register and 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 the citizen population base providing a more direct measure of voting and registration rates, the voting-age population base still yields important insights, especially when looking at historical trends. The data 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 based on the total voting-age population.

For the total 18-and-over population, voting rates in the 2002 Congressional election remained at an all-time low...²⁰

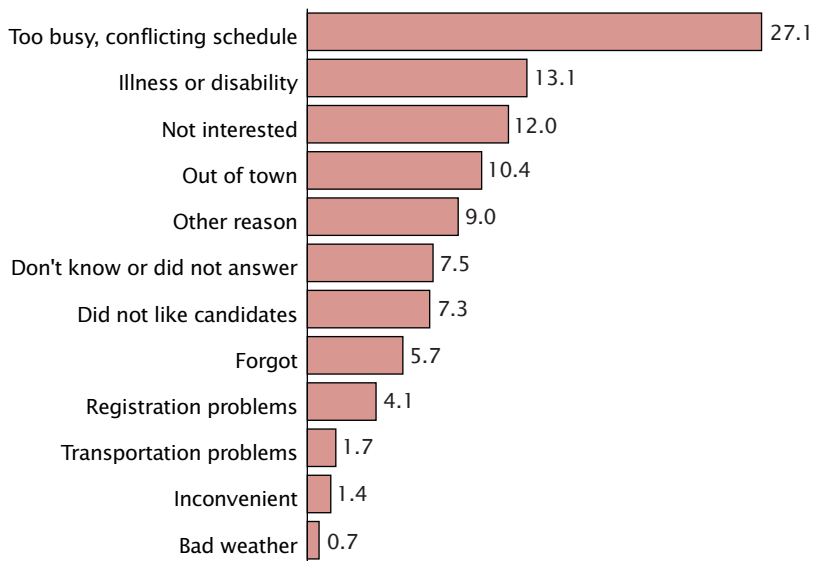
Only 42 percent of the voting-age population reported voting in the 2002 Congressional election, not statistically different from the record-low in the 1998 Congressional election (Table D). In the past 10 Congressional elections, the highest proportion voting was 55 percent in 1966, the first year the Census Bureau began collecting voting data for a Congressional election. Since then, the rate has declined in almost every Congressional election. Most notably, between 1970 and 1974, voter turnout dropped about 10 percentage points. The rates ticked up slightly for the 1978 and 1982 elections (1 percentage point and 3 percentage points), then dropped to around 45 percent for the 1986, 1990, and 1994 elections.

Though voting rates did not differ between the 1998 and 2002 elections, non-Hispanic Whites, people aged 65 and over, and people in the South had slightly higher turnout rates in 2002 than in the previous election. These gains were offset by decreases in voting rates for people aged 25 to 44 and in regions other than the South.

²⁰ Including or excluding noncitizens in the population base changes the comparison of voting and registration rates among elections. As the proportion of noncitizens increases, it deflates the voting and registration rates among the total voting-age population. The record lows in 2002 were due primarily to the increased number of noncitizens in the base.

Figure 10.
Reasons Given for Not Voting: 2002

(Percent distribution of registered non-voters)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2002.

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

The percentage of the voting-age population registered to vote in the 2002 Congressional election was an all-time low of 61 percent (Table E). Historically, registration rates dropped from 70 percent in 1966 (the first year data are available), and ranged from 62 percent to 64 percent between 1974 to 1998. Even so, because of the growth of the voting-age population, the 2002 Congressional election had a record number of people registered to vote — 128 million.

Registration rates among the voting-age population dropped between the 1998 and 2002 Congressional elections for men, women, Blacks, and people aged 25 to 64. Registration rates remained unchanged between the last two Congressional elections

for non-Hispanic Whites, Hispanics, and the age groups 18 to 24 and 65 and over.

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 registered to vote and voted 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.

The “official counts” are tabulated by each state’s board of elections and reported by the Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Table D.

**Reported Voting Rates in Congressional Election Years by Selected Characteristics:
November 1966 to 2002**

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	1966	1970	1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994	1998	2002
United States										
Total, voting age	112,800	120,701	141,299	151,646	165,483	173,890	182,118	190,267	198,228	210,421
Total voted	62,518	65,888	63,164	69,587	80,310	79,954	81,991	85,702	83,098	88,903
Percent voted	55.4	54.6	44.7	45.9	48.5	46.0	45.0	45.0	41.9	42.3
Race and Hispanic Origin										
White	57.0	56.0	46.3	47.3	49.9	47.0	46.7	47.3	43.3	44.1
White non-Hispanic	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	50.1	46.5	48.0
Black	41.7	43.5	33.8	37.2	43.0	43.2	39.2	37.1	39.6	39.7
Asian and Pacific Islander	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	20.3	21.8	19.2	19.4
Hispanic (of any race)	NA	NA	22.9	23.5	25.3	24.2	21.0	20.2	20.0	18.9
Sex										
Male	58.2	56.8	46.2	46.6	48.7	45.8	44.6	44.7	41.4	41.4
Female	53.0	52.7	43.4	45.3	48.4	46.1	45.4	45.3	42.4	43.0
Age										
18 to 24 years ¹	31.1	30.4	23.8	23.5	24.8	21.9	20.4	20.1	16.7	17.2
25 to 44 years	53.1	51.9	42.2	43.1	45.4	41.4	40.7	39.4	34.8	34.1
45 to 64 years	64.5	64.2	56.9	58.5	62.2	58.7	55.8	56.7	53.6	53.1
65 years and over	56.1	57.0	51.4	55.9	59.9	60.9	60.3	61.3	59.5	61.0
Northeast, Midwest, and West										
Total, voting age	78,355	83,515	96,505	102,894	110,126	114,689	119,740	123,903	128,104	136,212
Total voted	47,712	49,264	47,058	50,305	57,171	54,487	55,558	58,574	56,058	58,046
Percent voted	60.9	59.0	48.8	48.9	51.9	47.5	46.4	47.3	43.8	42.6
Race and Hispanic Origin										
White	61.7	59.8	50.0	50.0	53.1	48.7	48.2	49.3	45.4	44.7
White non-Hispanic	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	52.1	48.6	48.6
Black	52.1	51.4	37.9	41.3	48.5	44.2	38.4	40.2	40.4	39.3
Asian and Pacific Islander	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	22.1	22.5	21.1	20.0
Hispanic (of any race)	NA	NA	NA	23.9	25.8	23.8	20.5	20.8	21.4	18.2
South										
Total, voting age	34,445	37,186	44,794	48,752	55,357	59,201	62,378	66,365	70,124	74,208
Total voted	14,806	16,624	16,105	19,282	23,139	25,467	26,433	27,128	27,040	30,857
Percent voted	43.0	44.7	36.0	39.6	41.8	43.0	42.4	40.9	38.6	41.6
Race and Hispanic Origin										
White	45.1	46.4	37.4	41.1	42.9	43.5	43.5	43.0	39.2	42.9
White non-Hispanic	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	45.9	42.1	46.9
Black	32.9	36.8	30.0	33.5	38.3	42.5	39.8	34.6	38.9	39.9
Asian and Pacific Islander	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	8.4	17.7	10.1	17.2
Hispanic (of any race)	NA	NA	NA	22.5	24.2	25.0	22.1	19.1	17.3	20.1

NA Not available

¹Prior 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 Surveys, November 1966 to 2002.

These tallies show the number of votes counted for specific offices. In a Congressional election, the official count of comparison is the national total number of votes cast for the office of U.S. Representative.

Discrepancies occur each election between the CPS estimates and the official counts. In the November 2002 CPS, 89 million of the 210 million people of voting age in the civilian noninstitutionalized

population reported that they voted in the 2002 Congressional election. Official counts showed 75 million votes cast for a U.S. Representative, a difference of 14 million votes (19 percent)

Table E.

Reported Registration Rates in Congressional Election Years by Selected Characteristics: November 1966 to 2002

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	1966	1970	1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994	1998	2002
United States										
Total, voting age	112,800	120,701	141,299	151,646	165,483	173,890	182,118	190,267	198,228	210,421
Total registered	79,295	82,181	87,889	94,883	105,996	111,728	113,248	118,994	123,104	128,154
Percent registered	70.3	68.1	62.2	62.6	64.1	64.3	62.2	62.5	62.1	60.9
Race and Hispanic Origin										
White	71.6	69.1	63.5	63.8	65.6	65.3	63.8	64.6	63.9	63.1
White non-Hispanic	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	68.1	67.9	67.9
Black	60.2	60.8	54.9	57.1	59.1	64.0	58.8	58.5	60.2	58.5
Asian and Pacific Islander	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	28.4	28.7	29.1	30.7
Hispanic (of any race)	NA	NA	34.9	32.9	35.3	35.9	32.3	31.3	33.7	32.6
Sex										
Male	72.2	69.6	62.8	62.6	63.7	63.4	61.2	61.2	60.6	58.9
Female	68.6	66.8	61.7	62.5	64.4	65.0	63.1	63.7	63.5	62.8
Age										
18 to 24 years ¹	44.1	40.9	41.3	40.5	42.4	42.0	39.9	42.3	39.2	38.2
25 to 44 years	67.6	65.0	59.9	60.2	61.5	61.1	58.4	57.9	57.7	55.4
45 to 64 years	78.9	77.5	73.6	74.3	75.6	74.8	71.4	71.7	71.1	69.4
65 years and over	73.5	73.7	70.2	72.8	75.2	76.9	76.5	76.3	75.4	75.8
Northeast, Midwest, and West										
Total, voting age	78,355	83,515	96,504	102,894	110,126	114,689	119,740	123,903	128,104	136,212
Total registered	57,862	58,474	61,104	65,599	71,845	74,404	74,985	78,441	79,150	82,447
Percent registered	73.8	70.0	63.3	63.8	65.2	64.9	62.6	63.3	61.8	60.5
Race and Hispanic Origin										
White	74.5	70.8	64.6	64.9	66.7	66.2	64.4	65.6	63.9	63.0
White non-Hispanic	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	69.2	68.2	67.8
Black	68.8	64.5	54.2	58.0	61.7	63.1	58.4	58.3	58.5	57.0
Asian and Pacific Islander	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	30.2	29.5	30.4	31.5
Hispanic (of any race)	NA	NA	NA	32.0	33.9	33.2	30.4	29.1	31.9	30.6
South										
Total, voting age	34,445	37,186	44,794	48,752	55,357	59,201	62,378	66,365	70,124	74,208
Total registered	21,433	23,707	26,785	29,284	34,152	37,323	38,262	40,552	43,953	45,706
Percent registered	62.2	63.8	59.8	60.1	61.7	63.0	61.3	61.1	62.7	61.6
Race and Hispanic Origin										
White	64.3	65.1	61.0	61.2	63.2	63.2	62.5	62.6	63.9	63.2
White non-Hispanic	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	65.9	67.4	68.0
Black	52.9	57.5	55.5	56.2	56.9	64.6	59.0	58.8	61.5	59.8
Asian and Pacific Islander	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	17.0	24.7	22.8	27.6
Hispanic (of any race)	NA	NA	NA	34.9	38.3	41.0	36.1	35.3	37.3	36.0

NA Not available

¹Prior 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 1966 to 2002.

between the two sources.²¹ Over the years, the overestimation in Congressional election years has

varied between 9 percent and 25 percent of the total number of people reported as having voted in the official tallies.

the official numbers and an overstatement in the CPS estimates as described below.

Understatement of total votes cast.

The official counts may not include all the votes cast because ballots were invalidated in the counting

²¹ The official count of votes cast can be found on the webpage of the Clerk of the House of Representatives at <<http://clerk.house.gov/index.php>>.

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

(and thus thrown out) or because the ballots were mismarked, unreadable, or blank. In addition, when the total number of votes cast for U.S. Representative is used as the “official count,” some voters will not be included if they did not vote for this office.

Over-reporting of voting in the CPS. Some of the error in estimating turnout in the CPS is the result of misreporting, population controls, or survey coverage. Previous analyses based on reinterviews of respondents showed that respondents and proxy respondents are consistent in their reported answers and thus misunderstanding the questions does not account for the overestimate of voting in the CPS. However, other studies that matched survey responses with voting records indicate that part of the discrepancy between survey estimates and official counts is the result of respondent misreporting.²²

Voting not captured in the CPS. Although the official counts were generally lower than those shown in the CPS, they tallied votes from a broader population universe. The CPS covers only the civilian noninstitutionalized population residing in the United States, while the official counts list all votes cast by this universe plus citizens residing in the United States who were in the military or living in institutions and citizens residing outside the United

²² For more detailed explanations of the differences between 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.

States, both civilian and military, who cast absentee ballots.

SOURCE OF THE DATA

The population represented (the population universe) in the Voting and Registration Supplement to the November 2002 Current Population Survey is the civilian noninstitutionalized population living in the United States. The institutionalized population, which is excluded from the population universe, is composed primarily of the population in correctional institutions and nursing homes (91 percent of the 4.1 institutionalized people in Census 2000).

Most estimates in this report come from data obtained in November 2002 from the 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 uses only November data for its estimates.

The estimates in this report are derived from only the affirmative responses to the November supplement questions on voting and registration participation. Respondents were first asked if they voted in the election held on Tuesday, November 5, 2002. Those respondents who answered “no,” “do not know,” or who did not respond to this question were then asked if they were registered to vote in this election. Nonresponses and responses of “no” or “do not know” to either question were included in the respective categories of “not registered” or “did not vote.”

ACCURACY OF THE ESTIMATES

Statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling error and non-sampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level. This means the 90-percent confidence level for the difference between estimates being compared does not include zero. 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. To minimize these errors, the Census Bureau employs quality control procedures in sample selection, the wording of questions, interviewing, coding, data processing, and data analysis.

The CPS weighting procedure uses 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 biases may still be present when people who are missed by the survey differ from those interviewed in ways other than age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. How this weighting procedure affects other variables in the survey is not precisely known. All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources.

For further information on the source of the data and accuracy of

the estimates including standard errors and confidence intervals, contact Rebecca Olson of the Demographic Statistical Methods Division via Internet e-mail at <dsmd_s&a@census.gov>.

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>. Once on the site, in the "Subjects A-Z" area, click on "V," and then on "Voting and Registration Data."

CONTACT

For additional information on these topics, contact Kelly Holder or Jennifer Day, Education and Social Stratification Branch, 301-763-2464 or via Internet e-mail <kelly.a.holder@census.gov> or <jday@census.gov>.

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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Washington, DC 20233-8800

or send e-mail to: pop@census.gov