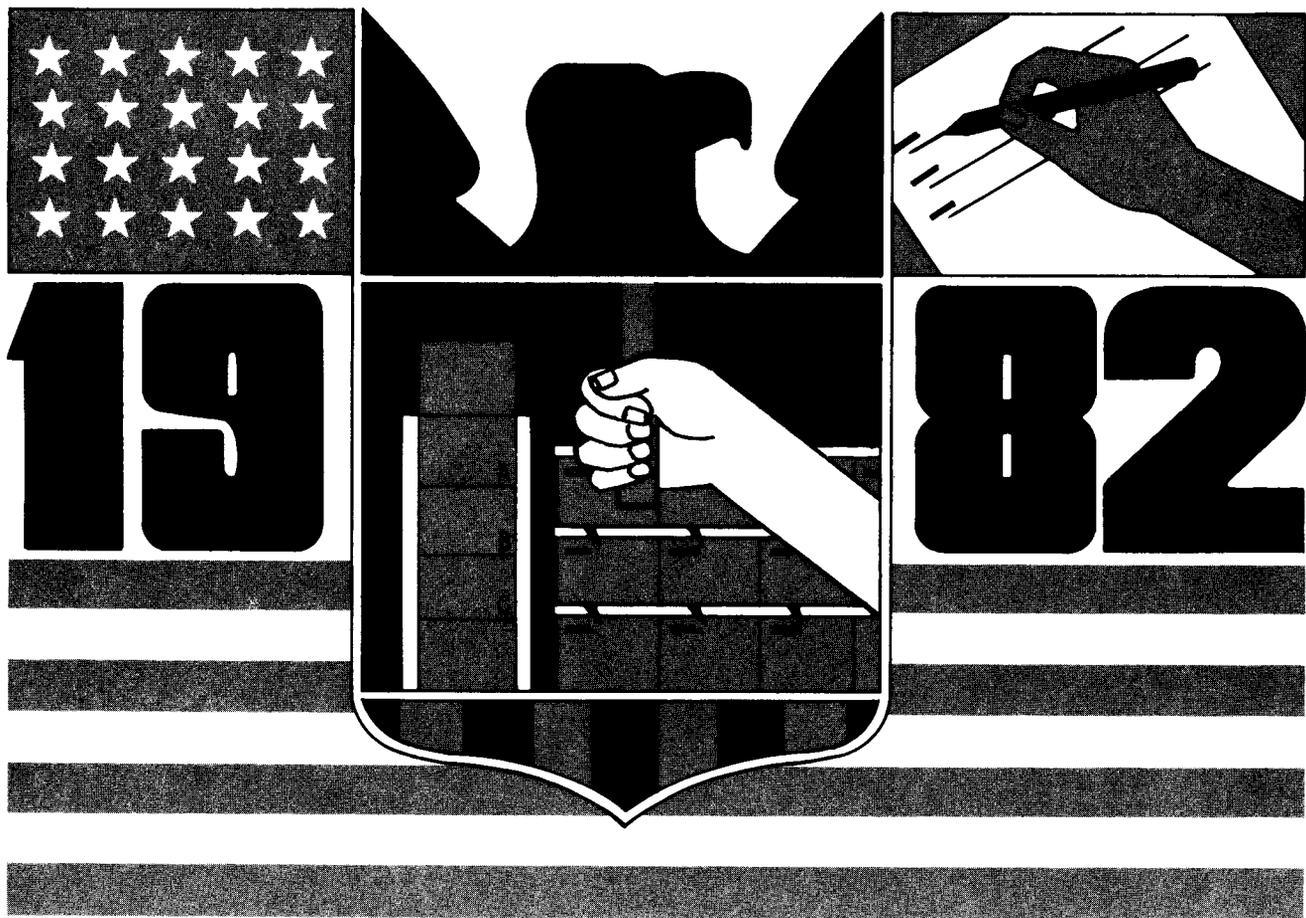


Population Characteristics

Series P-20, No. 383

Voting and Registration in the Election of November 1982



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Series P-20, No. 383
Issued November 1983

**Voting and
Registration
in the Election of
November 1982**

By Jerry T. Jennings



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Contents

| | Page |
|--|------|
| Introduction | V |
| Highlights | V |
| Characteristics of voters | VI |
| Trends in voter turnout | VII |
| Citizenship status | X |
| Evaluation of the accuracy of the data | XI |
| Related reports | XII |

CHARTS

Figure

| | | |
|----|--|------|
| 1. | Percentage of persons of voting age who reported having voted: November 1964 to November 1982 | VIII |
| 2. | Percentage of persons of voting age who reported having voted in Congressional elections, by sex and age: November 1966 to November 1982 | IX |

TEXT TABLES

| | | |
|----|---|-----|
| A. | Percent reported having voted, by region, race, and Spanish origin: November 1964 to 1982 | VI |
| B. | Characteristics of the voting-age population reported having registered or voted: November 1982 | VII |
| C. | Percentage of persons registered to vote who reported having voted, by race, Spanish origin, and age: November 1982 | VII |
| D. | Percent reported having voted in the Congressional elections, by age and sex: November 1966 to 1982 | IX |
| E. | Percent reported having voted in the Presidential elections, by age and sex: November 1964 to 1980 | X |
| F. | Percent reported having registered and voted, by citizenship status: November 1982 | X |
| G. | Comparisons of CPS voting estimates and official counts of votes cast: November 1964 to 1982 | XI |

DETAILED TABLES

| | | |
|-----|--|----|
| 1. | Reported voting and registration, by single years of age and sex | 1 |
| 2. | Reported voting and registration, by race, Spanish origin, sex, and age, for the United States and regions | 4 |
| 3. | Reported voting and registration, by race, Spanish origin, and metropolitan—nonmetropolitan residence, for the United States and regions | 14 |
| 4. | Reported voting and registration of primary family householders, by race, Spanish origin, sex, tenure, and presence of own children under 18 years | 18 |
| 5. | Reported voting and registration of primary family householders, by race, Spanish origin, age, tenure, and presence of own children under 18 years | 23 |
| 6. | Reported voting and registration of householders, by race, Spanish origin, sex, age, and tenure | 32 |
| 7. | Reported voting and registration, by age, sex, and marital status | 37 |
| 8. | Reported voting and registration, by race, Spanish origin, sex, and marital status | 40 |
| 9. | Reported voting and registration, by age, sex, and years of school completed | 42 |
| 10. | Reported voting and registration, by race, Spanish origin, sex, and years of school completed | 46 |
| 11. | Reported voting, by sex, age, employment status, and class of worker | 49 |

DETAILED TABLES—Continued

| | | |
|-----|--|----|
| 12. | Reported voting, by race, Spanish origin, sex, employment status, and class of worker | 54 |
| 13. | Reported voting and registration of employed persons, by race, Spanish origin, sex, and major occupation group. | 57 |
| 14. | Reported voting and registration of primary family members, by age and family income. | 61 |
| 15. | Reported voting and registration of primary family members, by race, Spanish origin, and family income. | 62 |
| 16. | Reported voting and registration, by race and Spanish origin, for States. | 63 |
| 17. | Reported voting and registration, by race and Spanish origin for 30 selected standard metropolitan statistical areas | 65 |
| 18. | Reported voting and registration, by race, Spanish origin, sex, and type of residence | 67 |

APPENDIXES

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| A. | Definitions and Explanations. | 69 |
| B. | Source and Reliability of Estimates | 73 |
| | Source of data | 73 |
| | Reliability of estimates | 73 |
| C. | Facsimile of November 1982 Supplemental Questionnaire. | 79 |

APPENDIX TABLES

| | | |
|------|--|----|
| B-1. | Standard errors of estimated numbers: Total or White | 75 |
| B-2. | Standard errors of estimated numbers: Black | 75 |
| B-3. | Standard errors of estimated percentages: Total or White | 76 |
| B-4. | Standard errors of estimated percentages: Black | 76 |
| B-5. | Factors to be applied to generalized standard errors in tables B-1 through B-4 and "a" and "b" parameters for various characteristics: 1972 to present | 77 |

Symbols Used in Tables

| | |
|----|--|
| | Represents zero or rounds to zero. |
| B | Base is too small to show derived measure. |
| NA | Not available. |
| X | Not applicable. |

Voting and Registration in the Election of November 1982

INTRODUCTION

According to official counts, 67.6 million Americans voted in the November 1982 national elections. This is the largest number of voters ever in a nonpresidential election in the United States, exceeding by 8.1 million the number of votes cast in the 1978 elections. This official figure for 1982 represents 40 percent of the voting-age population (18 years and over), higher than the 38 percent voting in 1978.

Results from the November 1982 Current Population Survey (CPS) indicate a reported voter turnout rate of 49 percent, also slightly higher than the 46 percent reported in the survey for the November 1978 elections. These figures represent a continuation in the nationwide increase in reported turnout since the 1974 Congressional elections. (The Census Bureau began collecting voting and registration data in November 1964.)

Most of the findings in this report are based on answers to a series of questions asked of persons of voting age in the Current Population Survey approximately 2 weeks after the election of November 2, 1982. The data in this report relate to the civilian noninstitutional population 18 years old and over. The CPS supplement on voting and registration is designed primarily to facilitate comparisons of voter turnout among different population groups and is the principal source of such data for the Nation. Data from the November 1982 CPS indicate that 80.3 million persons reported voting in the November 1982 election, some 12.7 million more than actually voted in 1982, according to official returns. Some of the factors accounting for differences between official election returns and the CPS results are discussed in the section of this report entitled "Evaluation of the Accuracy of the Data."

Between 1964 and 1976 for Presidential elections and between 1966 and 1974 for Congressional elections, the Current Population Surveys have shown a decline of 10 percentage points in turnout for Presidential elections and an 11 percentage-point decline in turnout for Congressional elections (table A). However, this decline appears to have ended with the 1974 Congressional elections and the 1976 Presidential election. In the November 1978 election, voter turnout increased by one percentage point from the 45 percent level recorded for the 1974 election, while turnout for the 1980 Presidential election remained at the 1976 level of 59 percent. The increase in the 1982 turnout rate over the 1978 Congressional turnout rate suggests that the voting rate may now be turning upward. Because of the tendency

for voter turnout to increase among older age groups, demographic changes, such as the gradual aging of the electorate as the last of the "baby boom" generation begins to move through the voting-age population, point toward the possibility of a continuing rise in turnout over the next several elections.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Voter turnout in the 1982 Congressional election rose slightly to 49 percent from the 1978 rate of 46 percent. The increase occurred among all population groups except the very young (those 18 to 20 years old).
- Turnout rates for Blacks (43 percent) rose by 6 percentage points over the 1978 rate (37 percent), while the rate for Whites rose from 47 percent in 1978 to 50 percent in 1982.
- Turnout rates for men and women, which equalized in the 1980 Presidential election, did not differ in 1982. There is some evidence that the rates for women 18 to 44 years old (40 percent) in 1982 were slightly higher than for men the same age (39 percent), while the rates for men 45 years old and over (64 percent) were significantly higher than for women of comparable age (59 percent).
- Voter participation rates were higher among Whites (50 percent) than among Blacks (43 percent) or persons of Spanish origin (25 percent). The very low participation rate for the Hispanic population is primarily due to the large proportion of this population who reported that they were not citizens (32 percent) and, therefore, were not eligible to vote.
- Voter participation was found to be higher among white-collar (58 percent) than blue-collar (39 percent) workers, among college graduates (67 percent) than among those with exactly 4 years of high school (47 percent), and among homeowners (62 percent) than among renters (32 percent).
- Voting among unemployed persons (34 percent) rose 7 percentage points over the 1978 rate of 27 percent.¹

¹ Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 344.

Table A. Percent Reported Having Voted, by Region, Race, and Spanish Origin: November 1964 to November 1982

(Numbers in thousands. Civilian noninstitutional population)

| Region, race, and Spanish origin | Congressional elections | | | | | Presidential elections | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|---------|---------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|---------|---------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | 1982 | 1978 | 1974 | 1970 | 1966 | 1980 | 1976 | 1972 | 1968 | 1964 |
| UNITED STATES | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total, voting age..... | 165,483 | 151,646 | 141,299 | 120,701 | 112,800 | 157,085 | 146,548 | 136,203 | 116,535 | 110,604 |
| Percent voted..... | 48.5 | 45.9 | 44.7 | 54.6 | 55.4 | 59.2 | 59.2 | 63.0 | 67.8 | 69.3 |
| White..... | 49.9 | 47.3 | 46.3 | 56.0 | 57.0 | 60.9 | 60.9 | 64.5 | 69.1 | 70.7 |
| Black..... | 43.0 | 37.2 | 33.8 | 43.5 | 41.7 | 50.5 | 48.7 | 52.1 | 57.6 | ¹ 58.5 |
| Spanish origin ² | 25.3 | 23.5 | 22.9 | (NA) | (NA) | 29.9 | 31.8 | 37.5 | (NA) | (NA) |
| Male..... | 48.7 | 46.6 | 46.2 | 56.8 | 58.2 | 59.1 | 59.6 | 64.1 | 69.8 | 71.9 |
| Female..... | 48.4 | 45.3 | 43.4 | 52.7 | 53.0 | 59.4 | 58.8 | 62.0 | 66.0 | 67.0 |
| 18 to 24 years old..... | 24.8 | 23.5 | 23.8 | ³ 30.4 | ³ 31.1 | 39.9 | 42.2 | 49.6 | ³ 50.4 | ³ 50.9 |
| 25 to 44 years old..... | 45.4 | 43.1 | 42.2 | 51.9 | 53.1 | 58.7 | 58.7 | 62.7 | 66.6 | 69.0 |
| 45 to 64 years old..... | 62.2 | 58.5 | 56.9 | 64.2 | 64.5 | 69.3 | 68.7 | 70.8 | 74.9 | 75.9 |
| 65 years and over..... | 59.9 | 55.9 | 51.4 | 57.0 | 56.1 | 65.1 | 62.2 | 63.5 | 65.8 | 66.3 |
| NORTH AND WEST | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total, voting age..... | 110,126 | 102,894 | 96,505 | 83,515 | 78,355 | 106,524 | 99,403 | 93,653 | 81,594 | 78,174 |
| Percent voted..... | 51.9 | 48.9 | 48.8 | 59.0 | 60.9 | 61.0 | 61.2 | 66.4 | 71.0 | 74.6 |
| White..... | 53.1 | 50.0 | 50.0 | 59.8 | 61.7 | 62.4 | 62.6 | 67.5 | 71.8 | 74.7 |
| Black..... | 48.5 | 41.3 | 37.9 | 51.4 | 52.1 | 52.8 | 52.2 | 56.7 | 64.8 | ¹ 72.0 |
| SOUTH | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total, voting age..... | 55,357 | 48,752 | 44,794 | 37,186 | 34,445 | 50,561 | 47,145 | 42,550 | 34,941 | 32,429 |
| Percent voted..... | 41.8 | 39.6 | 36.0 | 44.7 | 43.0 | 55.6 | 54.9 | 55.4 | 60.1 | 56.7 |
| White..... | 42.9 | 41.1 | 37.4 | 46.4 | 45.1 | 57.4 | 57.1 | 57.0 | 61.9 | 59.5 |
| Black..... | 38.3 | 33.5 | 30.0 | 36.8 | 32.9 | 48.2 | 45.7 | 47.8 | 51.6 | ¹ 44.0 |

NA Not available.

¹Black and other races in 1964.

²Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race.

³Prior to 1972, includes persons 18 to 20 years old in Georgia and Kentucky, 19 and 20 in Alaska, and 20 years old in Hawaii.

Source: Current Population Reports, Series P-20, Nos. 143, 174, 192, 228, 253, 293, 322, 344, 370, and table 2 of this report.

CHARACTERISTICS OF VOTERS

It is evident from the survey data that once people make the effort to register to vote, they usually vote. As shown in table B, the difference in the percentage of the total 1982 population of voting age that voted ranges from a high of 50 percent for the White population to 43 percent for the Black population to 25 percent for the Spanish-origin population. However, among those who registered to vote, 76 percent of the White, 73 percent of the Black, and 72 percent of the Spanish-origin population, reported having voted (table C).

Voter participation rates are also related to the demographic and social characteristics of the electorate. Education is one of the most important socioeconomic characteristics related to voting since it affects not only the person's occupation and related economic characteristics, but may also influence the individual's knowledge of and commitment to the political process. In 1982, college graduates were nearly twice as likely to have voted (67

percent) as persons who had attended only elementary school (36 percent); persons with 4 years of high school had an intermediate voter participation rate of 47 percent. Overall, persons with at least 4 years of college constituted only 16 percent of the total voting-age population 18 years and over, but they made up 22 percent of the persons who reported having voted.

Employment is an important indicator of a person's likelihood of voting in an election. In the November 1982 election, 50 percent of employed persons reported that they voted, compared with only 34 percent of unemployed persons. Among employed persons in nonagricultural industries, government workers (Federal, State, and local) reported voting at a significantly higher level (67 percent) than either wage or salary workers in private industry (46 percent) or self-employed workers (57 percent). Persons not in the labor force, a group which includes many retired persons, reported a voter participation rate of 49 percent, which was not significantly different from the 48 percent reported by all persons in the labor force (employed and un-

Table B. Characteristics of the Voting-Age Population Reported Having Registered or Voted: November 1982

(Numbers in thousands. Civilian noninstitutional population)

| Characteristic | Number of persons | Percent registered | Percent voted | Characteristic | Number of persons | Percent registered | Percent voted |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------|---|-------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Total, 18 years and over... | 165,483 | 64.1 | 48.5 | Labor force status and class of worker: | | | |
| Race of Spanish origin: | | | | In civilian labor force..... | 107,985 | 63.9 | 48.4 |
| White..... | 143,607 | 65.6 | 49.9 | Employed..... | 97,225 | 65.5 | 50.0 |
| Black..... | 17,624 | 59.1 | 43.0 | Agriculture..... | 3,253 | 63.5 | 48.1 |
| Spanish origin ¹ | 8,765 | 35.3 | 25.3 | Nonagricultural industries | 93,972 | 65.6 | 50.1 |
| Sex: | | | | Private wage and salary workers..... | 70,869 | 61.7 | 45.7 |
| Male..... | 78,046 | 63.7 | 48.7 | Government workers..... | 15,548 | 79.8 | 66.5 |
| Female..... | 87,437 | 64.4 | 48.4 | Self-employed workers ² .. | 7,555 | 72.1 | 57.0 |
| Age: | | | | Unemployed..... | 10,760 | 49.8 | 34.1 |
| 18 to 24 years..... | 28,823 | 42.4 | 24.8 | Not in labor force..... | 57,499 | 64.3 | 48.7 |
| 25 to 44 years..... | 66,881 | 61.5 | 45.4 | Occupation: ³ | | | |
| 45 to 64 years..... | 44,180 | 75.6 | 62.2 | White-collar workers..... | 53,408 | 72.7 | 57.8 |
| 65 years and over..... | 25,598 | 75.2 | 59.9 | Blue-collar workers..... | 28,220 | 55.8 | 39.1 |
| Region: | | | | Service workers..... | 13,000 | 56.9 | 41.1 |
| Northeast..... | 36,356 | 62.5 | 49.8 | Farm workers..... | 2,597 | 66.7 | 51.3 |
| North Central..... | 41,891 | 71.1 | 54.7 | Family income: ⁴ | | | |
| South..... | 55,357 | 61.7 | 41.8 | Under \$5,000..... | 7,973 | 47.9 | 30.5 |
| West..... | 31,879 | 60.6 | 50.7 | \$5,000 to \$9,999..... | 17,441 | 54.5 | 38.7 |
| Residence: | | | | \$10,000 to \$14,999..... | 19,587 | 59.4 | 43.1 |
| Metropolitan..... | 113,061 | 62.6 | 48.3 | \$15,000 to \$19,999..... | 17,194 | 62.8 | 47.5 |
| In SMSA's of 1 million or more..... | 64,442 | 62.8 | 48.5 | \$20,000 to \$24,999..... | 15,669 | 68.2 | 52.3 |
| In SMSA's of under 1 million..... | 48,619 | 62.3 | 48.0 | \$25,000 to \$34,999..... | 23,429 | 70.6 | 55.6 |
| Nonmetropolitan..... | 52,422 | 67.2 | 49.1 | \$35,000 and over..... | 27,930 | 76.8 | 62.0 |
| Years of school completed: | | | | Income not reported..... | 8,212 | 62.1 | 49.4 |
| Elementary: 0 to 8 years..... | 22,365 | 52.3 | 35.7 | Tenure: ⁵ | | | |
| High school: 1 to 3 years..... | 22,324 | 53.3 | 37.7 | Owner occupied..... | 44,536 | 77.2 | 62.2 |
| 4 years..... | 65,186 | 62.9 | 47.1 | Renter occupied..... | 16,016 | 47.4 | 31.9 |
| College: 1 to 3 years..... | 28,751 | 70.0 | 53.3 | | | | |
| 4 years or more.. | 26,858 | 79.4 | 66.5 | | | | |

¹Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race.

²Includes unpaid family workers.

³Includes all employed persons in the civilian labor force.

⁴Restricted to members of families.

⁵Restricted to householders.

Table C. Percentage of Persons Registered to Vote Who Reported Having Voted, by Race, Spanish Origin, and Age: November 1982

(Numbers in thousands)

| Race, Spanish origin, and age | Reported registered | Reported voted | Percent of those registered who voted |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Total..... | 105,996 | 80,310 | 75.8 |
| Race: | | | |
| White..... | 94,205 | 71,679 | 76.1 |
| Black..... | 10,422 | 7,581 | 72.7 |
| Spanish origin ¹ .. | 3,091 | 2,217 | 71.7 |
| Sex: | | | |
| Male..... | 49,723 | 38,025 | 76.5 |
| Female..... | 56,273 | 42,285 | 75.1 |
| Age: | | | |
| 18 to 24 years... | 12,227 | 7,139 | 58.4 |
| 25 to 44 years... | 41,103 | 30,343 | 73.8 |
| 45 to 64 years... | 33,422 | 27,491 | 82.3 |
| 65 years or over.. | 19,245 | 15,336 | 79.7 |

¹Spanish origin may be of any race.

Source: Table 2 of this report.

employed combined). Persons who were in white-collar occupations were also more likely to vote (58 percent) than persons in blue-collar occupations (39 percent).

Data shown in table B indicate also that the relatively wealthier segments of the population are more likely to vote than other population groups. Sixty-two percent of the voting-age population living in families with incomes of \$35,000 or more voted in the 1982 election, double the percentage (31) for persons with family incomes of less than \$5,000.

Persons who had more established residences, as indicated by homeownership, were more likely to vote than persons who rented housing; 62 percent of homeowners reported voting in 1982, compared with 32 percent of renters.

TRENDS IN VOTER TURNOUT

Since 1964, when the Bureau of the Census first began collecting voting and registration data in its Current Population Survey, the general trend in turnout has been downward. In Congressional elections, the voter turnout declined from 55 percent in 1966 to 45 percent in 1974; in Presidential election years, turnout declined from 69 percent in 1964

to 59 percent in 1976 and 1980 (figure 1). A significant part of the decline in turnout since 1964 is attributable to the entry into the voting-age population of the large post-World War II "baby boom" birth cohorts, born between 1946 and 1964. The earliest of these cohorts began entering the electorate around 1964, substantially raising the number of persons in the low-turnout youthful ages. Following ratification of the 26th Amendment which lowered the voting age in national elections to age 18,² about 11 million of these baby boom youths entered the electorate for the first time for the 1972 Presidential election. By November 1980, 18-to-34-year-olds made up 41 percent of the total electorate, an increase of 33 million potential voters in this age group over the number in 1964. These young people had a voting rate of 48 percent in the 1980 Presidential election, compared with 67 percent for those 35 years and over.

In 1982, the last of the large baby boom cohorts entered the voting-age population, bringing the "baby boomers," now persons 18 to 36 years old, to 74.7 million, or to 45 percent of the total voting-age population. The voting rate for this young group was 35 percent in the 1982 Congressional election, compared with 59 percent for those of all older ages.

Substantial increases in the voter turnout of Blacks for Congressional election years have been recorded since 1974. After the turnout for Blacks sharply declined from 44 percent in 1970 to 34 percent in 1974, the rate increased to

37 percent in 1978 and 43 percent in 1982. Although the voter turnout rates for Whites also declined 10 percentage points from 56 percent in 1970 to 46 percent in 1974, their recovery has been less dramatic, rising to only 50 percent in 1982 (table A).

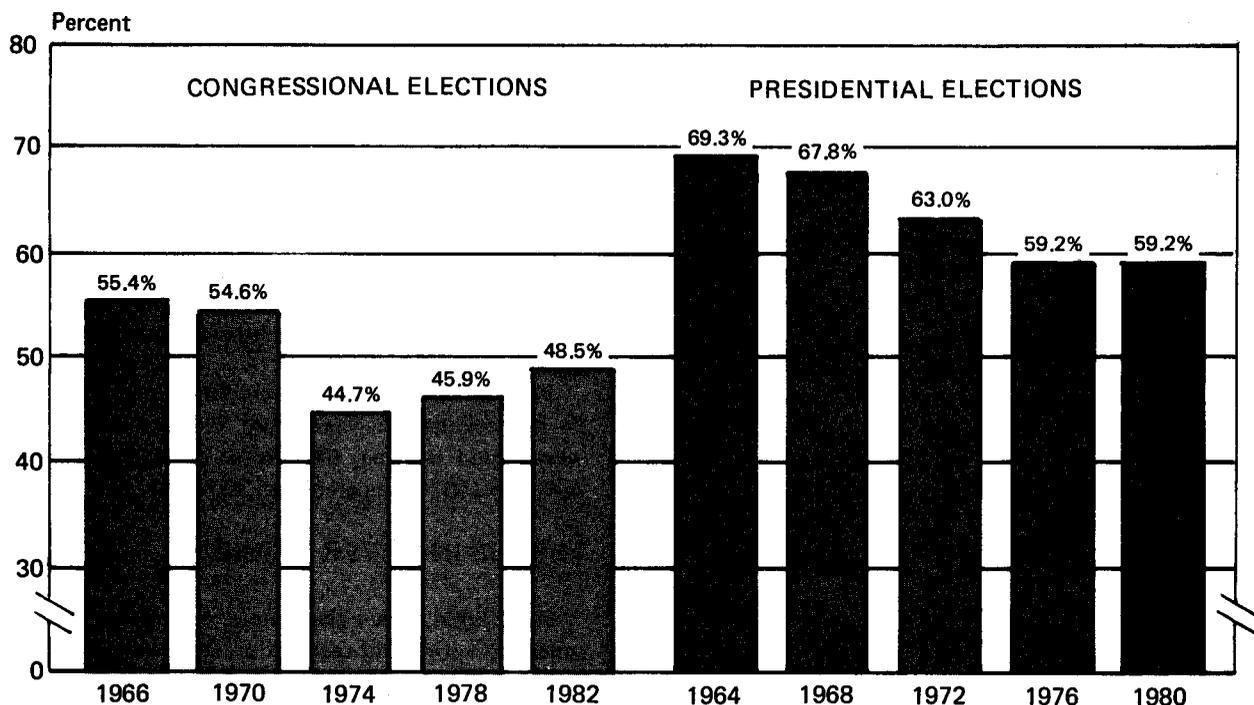
Although there is no longer any significant difference between the overall voter turnout rates of men and women, tables D and E show that age does make a difference in voter turnout. The rates for young men currently are lower than the rates for young women, while the rates for older men are higher than the rates for older women. In the Presidential election of 1980, young women 18 to 44 years old voted at a rate of 54 percent, while young men of this age voted at a rate of 51 percent. Among persons, 45 years and over, men voted at a rate of 70 percent in 1980, compared with 66 percent for women the same age. This gap in turnout rates for older men and women has narrowed since 1964 when 77 percent of the men 45 years and over, and 69 percent of the women, reported that they had voted.

Similar patterns also occurred in Congressional election years. In 1982, young women under 45 years old voted at a rate of 40 percent, while young men of this age voted at a rate of 39 percent; among persons 45 years and over, the rate for men (64 percent) was higher than the rate for women (59 percent). Significant differences in changes in the turnout rates for older men and women, however, have occurred in Congressional elections. Between 1966 and 1970, the rate for men 45 years and over remained unchanged at 66 per-

² Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 230 (table 1).

FIGURE 1.

Percentage of Persons of Voting Age Who Reported Having Voted: November 1964 to November 1982



Source: Table A.

Table D. Percent Reported Having Voted in the Congressional Elections, by Age and Sex: November 1966 to 1982

(Numbers in thousands)

| Year | 18 years and over | | 18 to 44 years | | 45 years and over | |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------|----------------|--------|-------------------|--------|
| | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| 1982: | | | | | | |
| Number..... | 78,046 | 87,437 | 46,656 | 49,049 | 31,389 | 38,388 |
| Percent voted..... | 48.7 | 48.4 | 38.7 | 39.7 | 63.7 | 59.5 |
| 1978: | | | | | | |
| Number..... | 71,465 | 80,181 | 41,228 | 43,986 | 30,238 | 36,196 |
| Percent voted..... | 46.6 | 45.3 | 36.2 | 37.2 | 60.7 | 55.1 |
| 1974: | | | | | | |
| Number..... | 66,393 | 74,906 | 37,260 | 40,123 | 29,133 | 34,782 |
| Percent voted..... | 46.2 | 43.4 | 36.2 | 36.0 | 59.0 | 51.9 |
| 1970: | | | | | | |
| Number..... | 56,431 | 64,270 | 28,583 | 31,503 | 27,848 | 32,767 |
| Percent voted..... | 56.8 | 52.7 | 47.8 | 46.7 | 66.1 | 58.4 |
| 1966: | | | | | | |
| Number..... | 52,799 | 60,001 | 26,290 | 29,522 | 26,509 | 30,479 |
| Percent voted..... | 58.2 | 53.0 | 50.1 | 47.8 | 66.1 | 58.1 |

Source: Current Population Reports, Series P-20, Nos. 143, 174, 192, 228, 253, 293, 322, 344, 370, and table 2 of this report.

cent, while the rate for women remained at 58 percent, a difference of 8 percentage points. In the 1974 election, the rate for men of this age dropped to 59 percent and the rate for women to 52 percent. In elections subsequent to 1974, the rates for both men and women rose, reaching 64 percent for men and 59 percent for women in 1982. Thus, after de-

clining in Congressional elections from 1966 to 1974, the years since 1974 have witnessed an increase in turnout that was sharper among older women than among older men, the overall effect of which has reduced the difference in turnout between men and women from 8 percentage points in 1966 and 1970 to around 4 percentage points in 1982.

FIGURE 2.

Percentage of Persons of Voting Age Who Reported Having Voted in Congressional Elections, by Sex and Age: November 1966 to November 1982

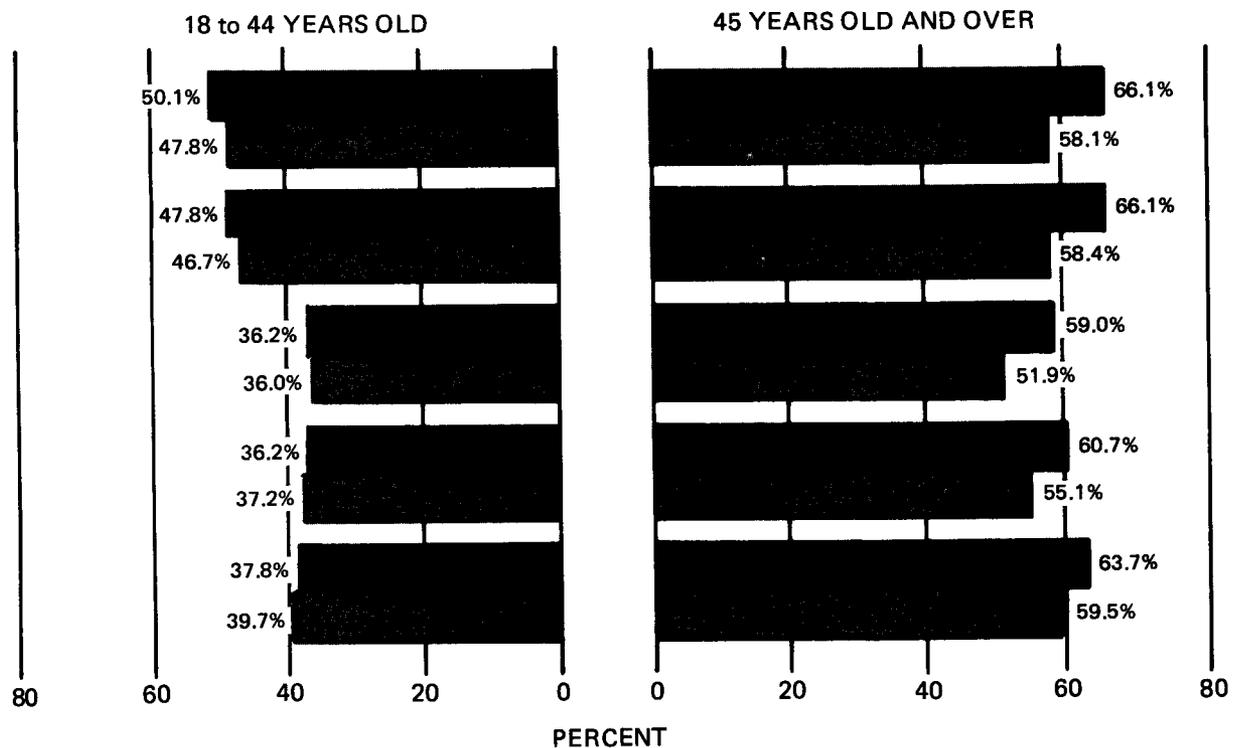


Table E. Percent Reported Having Voted in the Presidential Elections, by Age and Sex: November 1964 to 1980

(Numbers in thousands)

| Year | 18 years old and over | | 18 to 44 years old | | 45 years old and over | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------|--------------------|--------|-----------------------|--------|
| | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| 1980: | | | | | | |
| Number..... | 74,082 | 83,003 | 43,326 | 46,097 | 30,757 | 36,906 |
| Percent voted..... | 59.1 | 59.4 | 51.3 | 54.2 | 70.0 | 66.0 |
| 1976: | | | | | | |
| Number..... | 68,957 | 77,591 | 39,259 | 41,995 | 29,699 | 35,596 |
| Percent voted..... | 59.6 | 58.8 | 52.3 | 54.1 | 69.2 | 64.3 |
| 1972: | | | | | | |
| Number..... | 63,833 | 72,370 | 35,395 | 38,390 | 28,439 | 33,979 |
| Percent voted..... | 64.1 | 62.0 | 57.9 | 58.7 | 71.7 | 65.7 |
| 1968¹: | | | | | | |
| Number..... | 54,464 | 62,071 | 27,284 | 30,420 | 27,180 | 31,651 |
| Percent voted..... | 69.8 | 66.0 | 64.0 | 62.8 | 75.6 | 69.0 |
| 1964¹: | | | | | | |
| Number..... | 52,123 | 58,482 | 26,144 | 29,070 | 25,977 | 29,413 |
| Percent voted..... | 71.9 | 67.0 | 66.8 | 64.8 | 77.1 | 69.2 |

¹Data are for persons of voting age, usually 21 years old and over in most States prior to 1972.

Source: Current Population Reports, Series P-20, Nos. 143, 192, 253, 322, and 370.

CITIZENSHIP STATUS

In the 1982 survey, the introductory question asked of respondents was "Is (this person) a citizen of the United States?" The exclusion of persons identified as noncitizens in the 1982 survey (7.1 million) from the denominator in the computation of voting and registration rates, raises the national registration rate slightly from 64 to 67 percent and the national voter participation rate from 49 to 51 percent

(table F). For persons of Spanish origin, the registration rate increased from 35 percent to 52 percent and the voter participation rate increased from 25 to 37 percent when the reported number of noncitizens (2.8 million) was removed from the denominator before calculating the voting rate. Voter participation rates based on total population statistics are of sociological and political importance since they indicate the degree to which different population groups play a role in the electoral process.

Table F. Percent Reported Having Registered and Voted, by Citizenship Status: November 1982

| Race, Spanish origin, and age | Percent reported registered | | Percent reported voted | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|------------------------|---|
| | All persons | All persons, excluding noncitizens ¹ | All persons | All persons, excluding noncitizens ¹ |
| Total..... | 64.1 | 66.9 | 48.5 | 50.7 |
| Race: | | | | |
| White..... | 65.6 | 67.9 | 49.9 | 51.6 |
| Black..... | 59.1 | 61.1 | 43.0 | 44.5 |
| Spanish origin ² | 35.3 | 51.7 | 25.3 | 37.1 |
| Sex: | | | | |
| Male..... | 63.7 | 66.5 | 48.7 | 50.9 |
| Female..... | 64.4 | 67.3 | 48.4 | 50.5 |
| Age: | | | | |
| 18 to 24 years..... | 42.4 | 44.6 | 24.8 | 26.0 |
| 25 to 44 years..... | 61.5 | 65.0 | 45.4 | 48.0 |
| 45 to 64 years..... | 75.6 | 78.1 | 62.2 | 64.2 |
| 65 years and over..... | 75.2 | 77.0 | 59.9 | 61.3 |

¹Includes a small percentage of persons (2 percent) with no report on citizenship status.

²Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race.

Source: Derived from table 2 of this report.

EVALUATION OF THE ACCURACY OF THE DATA

In the November 1982 Current Population Survey supplement on voting, 80.3 million of the 165.5 million persons of voting age in the civilian noninstitutional population were reported (by themselves or by members of their households) as having voted in the November 1982 election. Official counts showed 67.6 million votes cast, or a difference of 12.7 million votes between the two sources. This difference is greater than can be accounted for by sampling variability (table G). Moreover, the population covered in the survey excluded members of the Armed Forces and institutional inmates.³ Since the proportion of voters in these population groups is somewhat lower than in the rest of the population, their omission leads to a minor understatement of the size of the difference.

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

³ In the November 1978 Congressional election, the Department of Defense total voting rate for Armed Forces was 14 percent as compared with 45.9 percent for the civilian noninstitutional population; in the 1980 Presidential election, the corresponding voting rate for the Armed Forces was 49.7 as compared with 59.2 percent for the civilian noninstitutional population. Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Research Affairs). "The Federal Voting Assistance Program," Twelfth Report, 1981.

Table G. Comparisons of CPS Voting Estimates and Official Counts of Votes Cast: November 1964 to 1982

(Numbers in millions)

| Year | CPS vote for President | Official vote for President ¹ | Percent difference |
|-----------|------------------------|--|--------------------|
| 1980..... | 93.1 | 86.5 | 7.6 |
| 1976..... | 85.9 | 81.7 | 5.1 |
| 1972..... | 84.6 | 77.6 | 9.0 |
| 1968..... | 78.5 | 73.0 | 7.5 |
| 1964..... | 176.7 | 70.6 | 8.6 |

| Year | CPS vote for U.S. Representative | Official vote for U.S. Representative or highest office | Percent difference |
|-----------|----------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| 1982..... | 180.3 | 267.6 | 18.8 |
| 1978..... | 169.6 | 259.5 | 17.0 |
| 1974..... | 163.2 | 256.0 | 12.9 |
| 1970..... | 165.9 | 258.0 | 13.6 |
| 1966..... | 57.6 | 352.9 | 8.9 |

¹CPS estimate of total votes cast.

²The "Official vote" was obtained by summing the number of votes cast for U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative, or Governor in each state, depending on which office received the highest number of votes.

³Refers only to votes cast for U.S. Representative.

Source: Elections Research Center and U.S. Congress, Clerk of the House, Statistics of the Presidential and Congressional election.

ment varies between 5 and 15 percent of the total number of persons reported as having voted. Possible reasons for the differences follow.

1. *Understatement of total votes cast.* The only uniform count of the total number of voters available on a nationwide basis is the number of votes cast for President. This number is smaller than the total number of persons who voted because (a) a number of ballots are invalidated in the counting and (b) there are a number of valid ballots for which there was no vote cast for President. Precise estimates of the size of these sources of error are not available. Although the office of the President usually attracts the largest number of votes, not everyone who goes to the polls casts a vote for President. Some persons may, for example, vote for a U.S. Senator or member of the U.S. Congress but not for President. A tally of the data from the States which report information on the total number of votes cast shows that for 1976, there were about 2 percent fewer votes cast for President than the total number voting in the election. In 1980, the difference was less than 1 percent.

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

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

A test was conducted in conjunction with the December 1972 Current Population Survey to examine another facet of the overreporting problem. The hypothesis was that by asking the presumably less sensitive question on registration first, the tendency to overreport on voting might be lessened. The results of this test were somewhat confounded by a non-reporting rate in December that was twice as high as that in November, 4.2 percent compared with 1.9 percent. However, when the comparison was restricted to those who reported on voting, the study indicated that reversing the question order does not reduce the proportion of persons who report that they had voted.

3. *CPS estimating procedure.* A part of the difference between the official count of votes for President and the CPS

estimate could be due to the estimation procedures in the CPS which essentially attribute the characteristics of interviewed persons to persons in noninterviewed households of similar types—about 4 percent of the total. This procedure may have a substantial effect on the results of a survey of voting if the noninterviewed households have a higher proportion of nonvoting members than interviewed households.

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

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

6. Nonreports on voting. In 1966 a "do not know" category in each question of the voting survey was introduced (and retained in all subsequent surveys) on the theory that forcing people into a "yes-no" alternative might have been responsible for increasing the number of persons reported as voting. The introduction of the "do not know" category increased the overall proportion of those for whom a report on voting was not obtained from 1 percent in 1964

to 3 percent in 1966. Among Blacks the figure rose to almost 6 percent. The lower nonresponse figure from the 1964 report may have resulted in part from the fact that the "yes-no" alternative forced respondents to give answers which more properly should have been classified as "do not know."

Although there is no evidence that answers by proxy respondents account for the overreporting on voting, the value of asking people about their own behavior on such matters as voting and registering to vote can be shown by comparing the effect of self reports and reports by others on the "do not know" rate for whether voted in the election and whether registered to vote. For self-respondents, the "do not know" categories were almost nonexistent (0.1 percent of all reports). At the other extreme, 5 percent of respondents who reported on the voting behavior of other household members could not answer whether or not the other persons had voted (table 22).

RELATED REPORTS

Current Population Reports. Data on voter participation by social and economic characteristics of the population of voting age in the 1964, 1968, 1972, 1976, and 1980 Presidential elections and in the 1966, 1970, 1974, and 1978 Congressional elections were published in the reports Series P-20, Nos. 143, 192, 253, 322, 370, 174, 228, 293, and 344, respectively.

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

Projections of the population of voting age for the United States, regions, divisions, and States for November 1, 1982 were published in Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 916.

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

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