

Current Population Reports

Population Characteristics

Voting and Registration in the Election of November 1996

By Lynne M. Casper and Loretta E. Bass

C E N S U S B U R E A U

P20-504
Issued July 1998

Introduction

The right to vote is arguably one of the most important rights of citizenship in a democratic country like the United States, yet a substantial minority of U.S. citizens chooses not to exercise this right. In this report, we examine how reported voting and registration in the 1996 Presidential election compare with turnout and registration in previous elections. Since a large minority of registered citizens do not vote, we also examine their reasons for not doing so.

For the first time in this report series, we are able to include a section which looks at reported voting and registration, by selected socioeconomic and demographic characteristics among the *citizen* population, instead of among the voting-age population as presented in previous reports. We also present data which compare voting and registration among native-born and naturalized citizens. The report concludes with a section investigating registration occurring since the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 went into effect in 1995.

The information on voting and registration contained in this report is based on survey data. In the November supplement to the Current Population Survey, we ask respondents questions about whether they registered and voted in the election held on Tuesday, November 5th, 1996. The figures presented in this report may differ from figures based on administrative data or data from exit polls.

Table 1.

Reported Voting, by Region, Race, Hispanic Origin, Gender, and Age: November 1964 to 1996

(Numbers in thousands. Civilian noninstitutional population)

Region, race, Hispanic origin, gender, and age	Presidential elections of—								
	1996	1992	1988	1984	1980	1976	1972	1968	1964
United States									
Total, voting age	193,651	185,684	178,098	169,963	157,085	146,548	136,203	116,535	110,604
Percent voted	54.2	61.3	57.4	59.9	59.2	59.2	63.0	67.8	69.3
White	56.0	63.6	59.1	61.4	60.9	60.9	64.5	69.1	70.7
Black	50.6	54.0	51.5	55.8	50.5	48.7	52.1	57.6	² 58.5
Hispanic origin ¹	26.7	28.9	28.8	32.6	29.9	31.8	37.5	(NA)	(NA)
Male	52.8	60.2	56.4	59.0	59.1	59.6	64.1	69.8	71.9
Female	55.5	62.3	58.3	60.8	59.4	58.8	62.0	66.0	67.0
18 to 24 years	32.4	42.8	36.2	40.8	39.9	42.2	49.6	³ 50.4	³ 50.9
25 to 44 years	49.2	58.3	54.0	58.4	58.7	58.7	62.7	66.6	69.0
45 to 64 years	64.4	70.0	67.9	69.8	69.3	68.7	70.8	74.9	75.9
65 years and over	67.0	70.1	68.8	67.7	65.1	62.2	63.5	65.8	66.3
Northeast, Midwest, and West									
Total, voting age	125,571	122,025	117,373	112,376	106,524	99,403	93,653	81,594	78,174
Percent voted	55.3	62.5	58.9	61.6	61.0	61.2	66.4	71.0	74.6
White	57.4	64.9	60.4	63.0	62.4	62.6	67.5	71.8	74.7
Black	51.4	53.8	55.6	58.9	52.8	52.2	56.7	64.8	² 72.0
South									
Total, voting age	68,080	63,659	60,725	57,587	50,561	47,145	42,550	34,941	32,429
Percent voted	52.2	59.0	54.5	56.8	55.6	54.9	55.4	60.1	56.7
White	53.4	60.8	56.4	58.1	57.4	57.1	57.0	61.9	59.5
Black	50.0	54.3	48.0	53.2	48.2	45.7	47.8	51.6	² 44.0

NA Not available

¹ Hispanics may be of any race.

² Black and other races in 1964.

³ Prior to 1972, data are for people 21 to 24 years of age with the exception of those aged 18 to 24 in Georgia and Kentucky, 19 to 24 in Alaska, and 20 to 24 in Hawaii.

Source: Current Population Reports, Series P20, Nos. 143, 192, 253, 322, 370, 405, 440, 466, and the November 1996 Current Population Survey.

Table 2.
Reported Registration, by Region, Race, Hispanic Origin, Gender, and Age:
November 1968 to 1996
 (Numbers in thousands. Civilian noninstitutional population)

Region, race, Hispanic origin, gender, and age	Presidential elections of—							
	1996	1992	1988	1984	1980	1976	1972	1968
United States								
Total, voting age	193,651	185,684	178,098	169,963	157,085	146,548	136,203	116,535
Percent registered	65.9	68.2	66.6	68.3	66.9	66.7	72.3	74.3
White	67.7	70.1	67.9	69.6	68.4	68.3	73.4	75.4
Black	63.5	63.9	64.5	66.3	60.0	58.5	65.5	66.2
Hispanic origin ¹	35.7	35.0	35.5	40.1	36.3	37.8	44.4	(NA)
Male	64.4	66.9	65.2	67.3	66.6	67.1	73.1	76.0
Female	67.3	69.3	67.8	69.3	67.1	66.4	71.6	72.8
18 to 24 years	48.8	52.5	48.2	51.3	49.2	51.3	58.9	256.0
25 to 44 years	61.9	64.8	63.0	66.6	65.6	65.5	71.3	72.4
45 to 64 years	73.5	75.3	75.5	76.6	75.8	75.5	79.7	81.1
65 years and over	77.0	78.0	78.4	76.9	74.6	71.4	75.6	75.6
Northeast, Midwest, and West								
Total, voting age	125,571	122,025	117,373	112,376	106,524	99,403	93,653	81,594
Percent registered	65.9	68.7	67.1	69.0	67.9	67.7	73.9	76.5
White	68.1	70.9	68.5	70.5	69.3	69.0	74.9	77.2
Black	62.0	63.0	65.9	67.2	60.6	60.9	67.0	71.8
South								
Total, voting age	68,080	63,659	60,725	57,587	50,561	47,145	42,550	34,941
Percent registered	65.9	67.2	65.6	66.9	64.8	64.6	68.7	69.2
White	67.0	68.5	66.6	67.8	66.2	66.7	69.8	70.8
Black	64.7	64.7	63.3	65.6	59.3	56.4	64.0	61.6

NA Not available

¹ Hispanics may be of any race.

² Prior to 1972, data are for people 21 to 24 years of age with the exception of those 18 to 24 in Georgia and Kentucky, 19 to 24 in Alaska, and 20 to 24 in Hawaii.
 Source: Current Population Reports Series P20, Nos. 192, 253, 322, 370, 405, 440, 466, and the November 1996 Current Population Survey.

Trends in Reported Voting and Registration

Reported voter turnout was at an all time low in 1996.

According to data from the Current Population Survey, only 54.2 percent of the voting-age population reported voting in the 1996 general election (Table 1).¹ This percentage is the lowest turnout recorded since the Census Bureau began collecting voting and registration data in the Current Population Survey in

¹ Our reported voter turnout rate of 54.2 percent is higher than the "official" turnout rate of 49.8 percent, as reported by the Clerk of the House. The official turnout rate is calculated by dividing the actual number of votes cast for President by the voting-age population, while the CPS rate calculates reported voting for any office or public issue. CPS figures routinely overestimate voter turnout in Presidential election years by between 5 and 12 percent when compared with the official rate. Possible reasons for this discrepancy include an understatement of the total votes cast; overreporting of voting by CPS survey respondents who want to demonstrate their civic responsibility; misreporting of voting in the CPS due to refusals or lack of knowledge of voting on the part of proxy respondents; and survey undercoverage. For a more detailed explanation of these reasons, see Jennings, Jerry T. 1992. "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 1992." *Current Population Reports P20-466*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

1964, when 69.3 percent reported voting. Data from the Congressional Research Service confirm this finding and indicate that the 1996 turnout for President was actually the lowest since 1948 when they began compiling figures.²

Turnout decreased by 7.1 percentage points from 61.3 percent in 1992 to 54.2 in 1996, representing the largest decline between consecutive Presidential elections since 1964. The number of people reported to have voted also declined from the 1992 to the 1996 election from 114 million to 105 million. Turnout declined for people of all ages, for both males and females, and for Whites and Blacks. However the drop was greater for some groups than for others—voting declined by much more for Whites (8 percentage points) than for Blacks (3 percentage points) over this period. Voting rates did not change significantly for Hispanics between

² Crocker, Royce. 1996. "Voter Registration and Turnout: 1948-1994." 96-932 Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service.

³ Data for Hispanics shown in Tables 1 and 2 include people of any race.

1992 and 1996.³ The decline was also greater among younger people than older people. For example, voter turnout fell by 10 percentage points among those aged 18 to 24, but only by 3 percentage points for those over 65.

Voter turnout estimates from the CPS are in stark contrast to exit poll estimates from the Voter News Service survey that reported an increase in voter turnout among Hispanics and black males in the 1996 Presidential election.⁴ Rather than an increase, CPS data show that voter turnout did not change for Hispanic males and decreased by 4 percentage points for black males, from 1992 to 1996.⁵ CPS estimates differ from the exit poll estimates in part because of differences in how the surveys are administered. The CPS is a nationally representative sample survey with very low nonresponse rates

⁴ Teixeira, Ruy. 1998. "The Real Electorate." *The American Prospect*. March-April.

⁵ Jennings, op. cit. (Table 2); and Casper, Lynne M. and Loretta E. Bass. 1996. "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 1996." PPL-89. Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census (Detailed Table 2).

Table 3.
Reported Reason for Not Voting Among Those Who Reported Registering But Not Voting, by Race, Gender, Age, and Education: November 1996
 (Numbers in thousands. Percent distribution)

Characteristics	Reasons Given for Not Voting											
	Number	Total Percent	No transportation	No time off/too busy	Out of town	Ill/disabled/emergency	Didn't like candidates	Not interested	Forgot	Lines too long	Other reasons	Don't know/refused
Total	21,340	100.0	4.3	21.5	11.1	14.9	13.0	16.6	4.4	1.2	10.3	2.7
Race and Hispanic Origin¹												
White, not Hispanic	16,660	100.0	3.5	21.4	12.0	14.8	14.7	16.5	3.9	1.2	9.7	2.4
Black, not Hispanic	2,579	100.0	7.9	22.3	6.4	17.1	5.9	18.2	6.5	1.2	10.6	3.8
Hispanic	1,459	100.0	6.3	20.4	9.2	13.0	9.2	14.4	7.0	0.3	15.9	4.4
Asian and Pacific Islander	413	100.0	6.8	21.4	15.6	8.7	9.4	14.3	2.8	3.6	12.4	5.0
Gender												
Male	9,948	100.0	3.2	24.5	14.7	9.6	13.2	17.0	3.8	1.3	9.6	3.1
Female	11,392	100.0	5.3	18.8	8.1	19.5	12.9	16.1	4.9	1.1	10.9	2.4
Age												
18 to 24 years	3,587	100.0	4.3	25.8	13.4	3.5	9.4	16.5	6.4	0.5	14.4	5.7
25 to 44 years	9,990	100.0	3.1	27.3	10.5	8.7	13.1	18.0	4.2	1.2	11.3	2.6
45 to 64 years	4,640	100.0	3.7	18.6	12.8	16.7	17.0	15.9	4.0	1.7	7.8	1.9
65 years and over	3,123	100.0	9.5	2.0	8.3	45.1	11.0	13.1	3.3	0.8	5.9	0.9
Education												
Less than high school	4,300	100.0	8.1	11.9	5.8	25.3	11.2	20.4	5.4	0.5	8.9	2.3
High school graduate or GED equivalent	8,045	100.0	4.2	22.7	8.9	13.7	14.8	17.7	4.8	1.2	8.6	3.3
Some college or Associate's degree	5,872	100.0	2.9	25.1	13.3	11.7	13.1	14.4	4.4	1.2	11.6	2.5
Bachelor's degree	2,341	100.0	2.1	23.9	20.4	8.7	10.9	13.2	1.9	2.0	14.2	2.8
Advanced degree	782	100.0	3.2	26.1	19.6	13.1	10.9	9.6	2.4	1.3	12.8	1.1

¹ For selected race categories. Note that the race category used in Tables 3-6 differs from that used in Tables 1 and 2. Because more detailed race and ethnic categories became available in 1996, we are able to include the following categories in Tables 3-6: White, not Hispanic; Black, not Hispanic; Hispanic; and Asian and Pacific Islander. Also, the Hispanic category includes Whites and Blacks, but not Asians and Pacific Islanders, or American Indians, Aleuts, or Eskimos. Instead, the category of Asians and Pacific Islanders includes both Hispanics and non-Hispanics. To keep data comparable for prior years, the former race and Hispanic origin classifications are used in the historical tables (Tables 1 and 2).
 Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey (CPS).

which collects information two weeks after the election in November, while exit polls collect data at polling places on election day. Results obtained from exit polls tend to be more biased because certain groups of people, like those with higher education, are more willing to fill out survey forms at polling places.⁶

More people voted by absentee ballot in 1996 than in 1980.

In 1996, almost 9 out of every 10 voters reported that they voted in person on election day, 8 percent voted by absentee ballot, and the remaining 3 percent voted in person at a designated election office or bureau before election day. In contrast, in 1980, 96 percent voted in

person and only 4 percent voted by absentee ballot.⁷

Registration was also at its lowest point in 1996.

Approximately 128 million people or 65.9 percent of the voting age population reported that they were registered to vote in 1996 (Table 2 on page 2)⁸. This proportion was the lowest it has been for any Presidential election since 1968. Since the last Presidential election in 1992, registration dropped by 2.3 percentage points.⁹ Registration fell among many demographic groups between 1992 and 1996 — Whites, people of all ages, and

both men and women all experienced registration declines. In contrast, Blacks and Hispanics did not experience a significant decrease in their reported registration rates between these two elections.

The drop in the overall registration rate is somewhat surprising given that the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) went into effect in 1995 requiring states to lighten the burden of registration by allowing people to mail in their registration forms, or to register when they obtain or renew their drivers' licenses or apply for AFDC, Food Stamps, Medicaid, WIC, or disability services. The 1996 Presidential election is the first to have taken place since the enactment of the NVRA. The decline in reported registration was not as large as the decline in voting (2 percentage points compared with 7 percentage points), and therefore, could not have accounted for all of the drop in voter turnout. So, why didn't those who were registered turn out to vote in 1996?

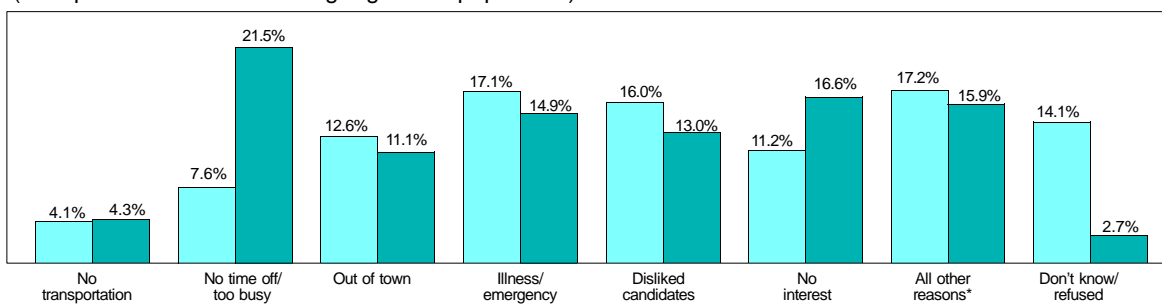
⁶ Teixeira, op. cit.

⁷ In 1980, no distinction was made between voting in person on election day and voting in person before election day. Jennings, Jerry T. 1982. "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 1980." *Current Population Reports P20-370*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

⁸ In contrast, the Federal Election Commission (FEC) reported that 137 million people were actively registered for the 1996 election. However, incomplete data and a failure of some states to purge ineligible registrants may have inflated this number. Federal Election Commission. 1998. "The Impact of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993." Report to the U.S. Congress.

⁹ The FEC reported a 1.8 percentage point increase in registration in the 43 states and the District of Columbia covered by the National Voter Registration Act, compared with the CPS figure of a 2.3 percentage point decline for the nation. (Federal Election Commission, op. cit.).

Figure 1.
Reasons Given for Not Voting Among Those Registered: 1980 and 1996
(As a percent of the non-voting registered population)



*The category "All other reasons" includes the responses "forgot," "lines too long," and "other reasons" for 1996.
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey (CPS).

Reasons for Not Voting

More than one in five reported that they did not vote because they couldn't get time off work or were too busy.

Of the 21.3 million people who reported that they registered, but did not vote in the 1996 election, more than one in five reported that they did not vote because they could not take time off of work or school or because they were too busy (Table 3). Another 17 percent did not vote because they were not interested or didn't care about the elections. Fifteen percent reported that they didn't vote because they were ill, disabled, or had a family emergency. Thirteen percent did not prefer any of the candidates. Other specified reasons for not voting included out of town (11 percent); forgot to vote or no way to get to the polls (4 percent each); and the lines were too long (1 percent).

Reasons for not voting vary by race, gender, age and education level.

Blacks, women, the elderly, and those with less education were more likely to report that they didn't vote because they had no transportation to get to the polls compared with Whites, men, younger people, and those with more

education¹⁰. In contrast, men, younger people, and those with more education were more likely to report they couldn't get time off from work or school, or were too busy to vote than others. Not surprisingly, women and the elderly were more likely than men and younger people to report that they didn't vote because they were ill or disabled, or had a family emergency; women attend to more family obligations than do men, and the elderly are more likely to be ill or disabled. Those with only a high school degree and those not completing high school were more likely than those with more education to respond that they were not interested in or didn't care about voting in the elections. Whites were more likely than Blacks and Hispanics to report that they didn't prefer any of the candidates. Those under the age of 25 were more likely than old-

¹⁰ Note that the race category used in Tables 3-6 differs from that used in Tables 1 and 2. Because more detailed race and ethnic categories became available in 1996, we are able to include the following categories in Tables 3-6: White, not Hispanic; Black not Hispanic; Hispanic; and Asian and Pacific Islander. Also, the Hispanic category includes Whites and Blacks, but not Asians and Pacific Islanders, or American Indians, Aleuts, or Eskimos. Instead, the category of Asians and Pacific Islanders includes both Hispanics and non-Hispanics. To keep data comparable for prior years, the former race and Hispanic origin classifications are used in the historical tables (Tables 1 and 2).

er people to report that they forgot to vote.

Non-voters were about three times as likely to report they couldn't get time off work or were too busy to vote in 1996 compared with 1980.

Perhaps it's a sign of the times—the hectic schedules and increasing demands of employers in the 1990s may have contributed to the substantial increase in the percentage of people reporting that they didn't vote. Twenty-two percent of those who registered reported that they couldn't get time off from work or school or were too busy to vote in 1996 compared with only 8 percent in 1980 (Figure 1). Likewise, the proportions reporting that they were not interested or did not care about the elections increased from 11 percent in 1980 to 17 percent in 1996. It appears a significant proportion of those who are registered are more apathetic about the political process these days. In contrast, fewer people reported that they didn't vote in 1996 than in 1980 because they didn't like the candidates (13 percent compared with 16 percent).

Characteristics of People Who Vote

In previous years, the Census Bureau reported voting and registration rates for the total U.S. resident population (including noncitizens)

because citizenship status was neither directly asked nor consistently edited in prior surveys. For the first time in a Presidential election year, the Census Bureau collected detailed data on citizenship status and is now able to show voting and registration rates for the limited and more appropriate citizen-based population.¹¹ Because citizenship levels may vary among different population groups (e.g., by race and ethnicity), most of the dis-

¹¹ The CPS began asking detailed questions on country of birth, citizenship status, and year of entry in 1994.

cussion in this section refers to the reported voting and registration patterns of citizens.

Of the 193.7 million people 18 years and older in November 1996, 179.9 million were estimated to be citizens (Table 4). Separating the citizen population from the resident population increases the voter turnout rate in the 1996 presidential election to 58 percent of the citizen population up from 54 percent of the resident population. Presenting voter turnout rates based on the citizen population 18 years and

over compared with the resident population also significantly increases the voter turnout levels of both Hispanics and Asians and Pacific Islanders — by nearly 20 percentage points for each group — because so many of them are not citizens. Obviously, voter participation rates for these two groups have been underrepresented historically.

Generally, people with the biggest stakes in society are the most likely to go to the polls: older individuals, homeowners, married couples, and

Table 4.
Reported Voting and Registration, by Selected Characteristics: November 1996
(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristics	All persons	Total Population				Citizen Population		
		Reported registered		Reported voted		Total Citizens	Percent registered	Percent voted
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent			
Total, 18 years and over	193,651	127,661	65.9	105,017	54.2	179,936	70.9	58.4
Gender								
Male	92,632	59,672	64.4	48,909	52.8	85,753	69.6	57.0
Female	101,020	67,989	67.3	56,108	55.5	94,183	72.2	59.6
Race, Hispanic origin, and Gender¹								
White, not Hispanic								
Total	145,343	104,101	71.6	86,604	59.6	142,597	73.0	60.7
Male	69,919	49,374	70.6	41,027	58.7	68,663	71.9	59.8
Female	75,424	54,726	72.6	45,577	60.4	73,933	74.0	61.7
Black, not Hispanic								
Total	21,918	13,991	63.8	11,156	50.9	21,040	66.5	53.0
Male	9,733	5,881	60.4	4,554	46.8	9,282	63.4	49.1
Female	12,184	8,110	66.6	6,603	54.2	11,758	69.0	56.2
Hispanic								
Total	18,002	6,435	35.8	4,834	26.9	10,906	59.0	44.3
Male	8,995	2,964	33.0	2,188	24.3	5,265	56.3	41.6
Female	9,007	3,471	38.5	2,645	29.4	5,641	61.5	46.9
Asian and Pacific Islander								
Total	6,775	2,210	32.6	1,741	25.7	3,865	57.2	45.0
Male	3,247	1,048	32.3	838	25.8	1,851	56.6	45.3
Female	3,528	1,161	32.9	902	25.6	2,015	57.7	44.8
Age								
18 and 19 years	7,302	3,167	43.4	2,202	30.2	6,788	46.7	32.4
20 to 24 years	17,348	8,851	51.0	5,794	33.4	15,686	56.4	36.9
25 to 29 years	19,048	10,457	54.9	7,653	40.2	17,050	61.3	44.9
30 to 34 years	21,017	12,321	58.6	9,613	45.7	18,801	65.5	51.1
35 to 44 years	43,327	28,828	66.5	23,785	54.9	39,935	72.2	59.6
45 to 54 years	32,684	23,559	72.1	20,360	62.3	30,828	76.4	66.0
55 to 64 years	21,037	15,930	75.7	14,255	67.8	19,959	79.8	71.4
65 to 74 years	18,176	14,218	78.2	12,748	70.1	17,559	81.0	72.6
75 to 84 years	10,790	8,369	77.6	7,147	66.2	10,533	79.5	67.9
85 years and over	2,922	1,960	67.1	1,461	50.0	2,797	70.1	52.2
Marital Status								
Married — spouse present	111,694	79,349	71.0	68,136	61.0	103,466	76.7	65.9
Married — spouse absent	1,956	949	48.5	732	37.4	1,456	65.2	50.3
Widowed	13,400	9,419	70.3	7,727	57.7	12,814	73.5	60.3
Divorced	18,278	11,576	63.0	8,861	48.5	17,647	65.6	50.2
Separated	4,777	2,657	55.6	1,926	40.3	4,357	61.0	44.2
Never married	43,546	23,712	54.5	17,635	40.5	40,195	59.0	43.9
Educational Attainment								
Less than high school	34,988	15,756	45.0	11,287	32.3	29,078	54.2	38.8
High school graduate or GED equiv.	65,208	40,542	62.2	32,019	49.1	61,931	65.5	51.7
Some college or Associate's degree	50,939	37,160	72.9	30,835	60.5	48,838	76.1	63.1
Bachelor's degree	28,829	22,752	78.9	20,256	70.3	27,339	83.2	74.1
Advanced degree	13,688	11,451	83.7	10,621	77.6	12,750	89.8	83.3

Table 4. (Continued)
Reported Voting and Registration, by Selected Characteristics: November 1996
 (Numbers in thousands)

Characteristics	Total Population					Citizen Population		
	All persons	Reported registered		Reported voted		Total Citizens	Percent registered	Percent voted
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent			
Employment Status								
In the civilian labor force	132,043	87,532	66.3	71,682	54.3	122,791	71.3	58.4
Employed	125,634	84,166	67.0	69,300	55.2	117,048	71.9	59.2
Unemployed	6,409	3,365	52.5	2,383	37.2	5,743	58.6	41.5
Not in the labor force	61,608	40,129	65.1	33,335	54.1	57,146	70.2	58.3
Occupation²								
Total employed	125,634	84,166	67.0	69,300	55.2	117,048	71.9	59.2
Managerial and professional	37,462	29,889	79.8	26,309	70.2	35,975	83.1	73.1
Technical, sales, and admin.	36,973	26,068	70.5	21,530	58.2	35,366	73.7	60.9
Service occupations	16,238	9,083	55.9	6,992	43.1	14,336	63.4	48.8
Farming, forestry, and fishing	3,171	1,893	59.7	1,557	49.1	2,713	69.8	57.4
Precision product, craft, and repair	13,647	7,811	57.2	5,988	43.9	12,598	62.0	47.5
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	18,143	9,423	51.9	6,923	38.2	16,060	58.7	43.1
Annual Family Income³								
Total persons in families	149,487	100,599	67.3	83,734	56.0	138,582	72.6	60.4
Less than \$5,000	3,590	1,719	47.9	1,179	32.8	3,109	55.3	37.9
\$5,000 to \$9,999	6,302	3,025	48.0	2,064	32.8	5,384	56.2	38.3
\$10,000 to \$14,999	10,281	5,494	53.4	4,057	39.5	8,692	63.2	46.7
\$15,000 to \$24,999	19,135	11,169	58.4	8,778	45.9	16,886	66.2	52.0
\$25,000 to \$34,999	20,187	13,059	64.7	10,499	52.0	18,541	70.4	56.6
\$35,000 to \$49,999	25,319	18,008	71.1	15,037	59.4	24,019	75.0	62.6
\$50,000 to \$74,999	27,451	21,169	77.1	18,347	66.8	26,440	80.1	69.4
\$75,000 and over	23,348	19,243	82.4	17,177	73.6	22,531	85.4	76.2
Income not reported	13,875	7,712	55.6	6,598	47.6	12,981	59.4	50.8
Tenure								
Owner-occupied units	135,104	98,562	73.0	83,579	61.9	129,906	75.9	64.3
Renter-occupied units	55,762	27,450	49.2	20,107	36.1	47,458	57.8	42.4
Occupied without payment of cash rent	2,785	1,649	59.2	1,332	47.8	2,572	64.1	51.8
Duration of Residence								
Less than 1 month	3,126	1,410	45.1	849	27.2	2,766	51.0	30.7
1 to 6 months	19,249	9,910	51.5	7,149	37.1	16,871	58.7	42.4
7 to 11 months	8,255	4,426	53.6	3,220	39.0	7,184	61.6	44.8
1 to 2 years	28,986	17,319	59.7	13,671	47.2	25,523	67.9	53.6
3 to 4 years	25,263	16,855	66.7	13,965	55.3	22,921	73.5	60.9
5 years or longer	97,804	77,216	78.9	65,759	67.2	94,456	81.8	69.6
Not reported	10,969	525	4.8	404	3.7	10,215	5.1	4.0
Metropolitan Residence								
Metropolitan	155,735	101,042	64.9	83,984	53.9	142,641	70.8	58.9
In central cities	57,934	35,414	61.1	29,181	50.4	51,003	69.4	57.2
Outside central cities	97,801	65,627	67.1	54,803	56.0	91,638	71.6	59.8
Nonmetropolitan	37,916	26,619	70.2	21,033	55.5	37,294	71.4	56.4
Region								
Northeast	38,263	24,772	64.7	20,852	54.5	35,147	70.5	59.3
Midwest	45,177	32,364	71.6	26,798	59.3	43,861	73.8	61.1
South	68,080	44,891	65.9	35,550	52.2	64,726	69.4	54.9
West	42,131	25,634	60.8	21,816	51.8	36,202	70.8	60.3

¹ For selected race categories. Note that the race category used in Tables 3-6 differs from that used in Tables 1 and 2. Because more detailed race and ethnic categories became available in 1996, we are able to include the following categories in Tables 3-6: White, not Hispanic; Black, not Hispanic; Hispanic; and Asian and Pacific Islander. Also, the Hispanic category includes Whites and Blacks, but not Asians and Pacific Islanders, or American Indians, Aleuts, or Eskimos. Instead, the category of Asians and Pacific Islanders includes both Hispanics and non-Hispanics. To keep data comparable for prior years, the former race and Hispanic origin classifications are used in the historical tables (Tables 1 and 2).

² Limited to employed people.

³ Limited to people in families.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey (CPS).

people with more schooling, higher incomes, and good jobs.¹²

Whites, women, older people, and those who are married are more likely to vote.

The voter turnout rate among citizens is higher for Whites (61 percent) than for Blacks (53 percent). Hispanic citizens continued to vote at lower levels (44 percent) than Whites and Blacks; Asians and Pa-

¹² Lewis, Pierce, Casey McCracken, and Roger Hunt. 1994. "Politics: Who Cares?" *American Demographics*. Vol. 16, No. 10.

cific Islanders voted at levels similar to Hispanics (45 percent). Blacks and Hispanics have lower educational levels, are younger, and are more likely to be in poverty than are Whites — these characteristics have been associated with lower turnout rates.¹³

Among citizens, women were significantly more likely than men to vote in the 1996 Presidential election (60 percent compared with 57

¹³ Lewis, et al., op. cit.

percent). Although historically men have voted at higher rates than women, the gap has been narrowing, and women's voting rates surpassed those of men for the first time in the Presidential election of 1984 (see Table 1). This trend coincides with more women entering the workplace and, thus, having higher stakes in election outcomes. The women's movement also grew, encouraging women to become more politically active. These

Table 5.
Reported Voting and Registration Among Native-Born and Naturalized Citizens, by Race, and Region of Origin: November 1996
 (Numbers in thousands)

Nativity Status	Number	Percent registered	Percent voted
Native Born Citizens			
Total	171,713	71.3	58.6
Race and Hispanic origin ¹ :			
White, not Hispanic	139,370	73.1	60.8
Black, not Hispanic	20,531	66.6	53.0
Hispanic	8,683	58.6	42.2
Asian and Pacific Islander	1,620	57.1	45.0
Naturalized Citizens			
Total	8,223	63.0	52.7
Race and Hispanic origin ¹ :			
White, not Hispanic	3,226	68.5	57.9
Black, not Hispanic	509	63.6	55.8
Hispanic	2,223	60.7	52.5
Asian and Pacific Islander	2,245	57.3	45.1
Region of Origin:			
Europe	2,247	68.4	57.6
Other North America ²	274	77.7	67.3
Latin America ³	2,824	61.6	53.8
Africa	146	57.8	52.1
Asia	2,560	59.2	46.9
Other ⁴	172	50.6	35.5

¹ For selected race categories. Note that the race category used in Tables 3–6 differs from that used in Tables 1 and 2. Because more detailed race and ethnic categories became available in 1996, we are able to include the following categories in Tables 3–6: White, not Hispanic; Black, not Hispanic; Hispanic; and Asian and Pacific Islander. Also, the Hispanic category includes Whites and Blacks, but not Asians and Pacific Islanders, or American Indians, Aleuts, or Eskimos. Instead, the category of Asians and Pacific Islanders includes both Hispanics and non-Hispanics. To keep data comparable for prior years, the former race and Hispanic origin classifications are used in the historical tables (Tables 1 and 2).

² Excludes Mexico and the United States and its territories.

³ Includes Mexico.

⁴ Includes citizens from Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, the Pacific Islands, and other countries.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey (CPS).

advanced college degree, relatively low registration and turnout rates among those who did not complete high school resulted in almost as many people with advanced degrees going to the polls (10.6 million) as those with no high school diploma (11.3 million). Together, people with bachelor's and advanced degrees made up 29 percent of those who reported that they voted, compared with 11 percent for those who did not graduate from high school.¹⁵

The greater the income and occupational status of an individual, the higher the propensity to vote.¹⁶ Over 70 percent of citizens living in families whose total income was \$50,000 or more reported voting in the election, compared with less than 40 percent of those with a family income of less than \$10,000. All together, more than two-fifths of those living in families who voted in the November 1996 election had family incomes over \$50,000.

¹⁵ The CPS estimate of the proportion of voters who had at least a Bachelor's degree (29 percent) is much lower than the estimate based on the Voter News Service exit poll data (43 percent). (Teixeira, op. cit.)

¹⁶ Lewis, et al., op. cit.

A person's employment status is a principal indicator of voting participation. In the 1996 Presidential election, 59 percent of employed individuals reported voting compared with only 42 percent of those who were unemployed. Individuals who are not in the labor force, a group that includes many retired people, reported a voter participation rate of 58 percent, which is the same as the 58 percent reported by those in the labor force, both employed and unemployed combined.

Homeowners and longtime residents are more likely to vote.

Individuals with more established residences, as measured by homeownership and duration of residence in the community, were more likely to vote than those who rented housing or recently moved into their homes. Sixty-four percent of homeowners reported voting compared with 42 percent of citizens who rented housing. Similarly, citizens who had lived in the same house for five or more years had a voter participation rate of 70 percent, significantly higher than rates for individuals who had lived at their

current residence for shorter durations of time.

People living in southern states are the least likely to register and vote.

In general, people residing in southern states were less likely to register than those in other regions (Table 4 and Figures 2 and 3). Similarly, southern states also tended to experience the lowest voting rates. Midwestern states recorded the highest level of registration, due in part to the fact that people are able to register on election day in some of these states.¹⁷ Almost 3 out of every 4 citizens in the midwest were registered to vote.

Voting and Registration Among Native-born and Naturalized Citizens

Immigrants to the United States who become naturalized citizens gain an important right — the right to vote. Of the estimated 193.7 million people of voting age in November 1996, 21.9 million were foreign-born (excluding people born

¹⁷ Note that Idaho, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Wisconsin, and Wyoming have election day registration. North Dakota has no voter registration.

abroad of American citizens). Of those, 8.2 million (38 percent) had become naturalized citizens and were eligible to register and vote in the November 1996 election (Table 5). Data from the November 1996 CPS for the first time answer the question if these newly enfranchised citizens are more likely to exercise their right to vote than their native-born counterparts who have had that right from birth.

Naturalized Hispanics are more likely to vote than native-born Hispanics.

Comparing total populations, 59 percent of native-born and 53 percent of naturalized citizens reported voting in the November 1996 election. Whites account for the main component of this difference as they constitute the majority of the citizen population; native-born Whites are more likely to have voted than naturalized Whites (61 percent compared with 58 percent).

However, naturalized Hispanics (53 percent) are more likely to vote than native-born Hispanics (42 percent), by about 10 percentage points. In contrast, native-born Blacks and Asians and Pacific Islanders voted at about the same rate as naturalized Blacks and Asians and Pacific Islanders.

Voting participation differs among naturalized citizens by region of origin.

Naturalized citizens from other North American countries, mainly Canadian-born, are more likely to vote than naturalized citizens from Latin America and Asia. Naturalized citizens from other North American countries are most likely to register compared with those from other regions. Naturalized citizens from Asia are the least likely to vote (47 percent).¹⁸

¹⁸ No comparisons can be made about naturalized citizens from Africa because the sample size is too small to yield accurate estimates.

Reported Registration Since January 1, 1995

Unlike most other major democratic countries, the United States requires citizen-initiated registration in order to vote.¹⁹ The complexities of the registration process in some states in the past have been implicated in the low voter turnout rate in the United States compared with that in other democracies. In an effort to lighten the burden of registration, and thereby increase voter participation, Congress passed the National Voter Registration Act of 1993. This act was designed to reduce the individual's costs associated with voting by incorporating registration into necessary transactions citizens must complete in order to comply with regulations at other public agencies. For example, in order to operate a motor vehicle, a driver's license must be

¹⁹ Highton, Benjamin and Raymond E. Wolfinger. 1995. "Anticipating the Effects of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993." Paper presented at the 1995 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago.

Table 6.
Method of Registration Among Those Who Registered After January 1, 1995, by Selected Characteristics: November 1996
(Numbers in thousands. Percent distribution)

Characteristics	Number	Total Percent	Method of Registration									
			With driver's license	At public assist. agency	Mailed form to election office	At school/hospital/campus	County or gov't regist. office	Registration booth	At polls election day	Other place/way	Don't know/refused	
Total, 18 years and over	19,451	100.0	28.0	3.0	18.8	5.0	19.6	16.2	2.6	1.1	5.6	
Race And Hispanic Origin¹												
White, Not Hispanic	14,972	100.0	30.0	2.2	18.9	4.6	20.6	14.5	3.2	1.0	5.1	
Black, Not Hispanic	2,287	100.0	22.3	6.7	15.1	6.4	18.6	23.9	0.6	1.0	5.4	
Hispanic	1,437	100.0	19.0	5.8	22.5	7.2	12.1	22.6	0.3	2.1	8.4	
Asian And Pacific Islander	540	100.0	25.2	0.1	23.3	4.6	16.2	13.3	2.5	2.6	12.3	
Nativity Status												
Native Born	18,337	100.0	28.6	2.9	18.2	5.1	19.8	16.3	2.7	0.8	5.5	
Naturalized	1,114	100.0	18.3	3.7	28.7	3.6	17.6	14.6	1.8	5.3	6.5	
Metropolitan Status												
Inside Central Cities	6,184	100.0	25.5	3.2	21.6	5.4	13.1	22.0	1.6	1.4	6.2	
Outside Central Cities	9,595	100.0	29.5	2.5	20.2	5.4	17.9	15.2	2.5	1.0	5.9	
Nonmetropolitan	3,672	100.0	28.6	3.7	10.6	3.4	35.3	9.0	4.9	0.9	3.7	
Duration Of Residence												
Less Than 1 Year	6,001	100.0	33.6	3.3	17.9	4.7	15.9	17.1	2.3	0.9	5.8	
1 To 2 Years	5,093	100.0	31.7	3.3	20.4	3.4	16.5	16.5	2.7	1.2	4.3	
3 Years Or Longer	8,321	100.0	21.8	2.6	18.6	6.2	24.3	15.4	2.7	1.2	7.4	
Not Reported	36	Na	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	
Education												
Not A High School Graduate	2,396	100.0	19.7	8.2	14.8	7.9	21.3	19.7	2.0	1.2	5.3	
High School Equivelant Or More	17,054	100.0	29.2	2.2	19.4	4.6	19.4	15.7	2.7	1.1	5.6	
Income²												
Below \$15,000	1,965	100.0	23.4	12.6	13.7	6.5	17.2	18.4	2.0	1.4	4.9	
\$15,000 And Over	12,271	100.0	28.5	1.6	19.5	5.2	20.5	14.9	2.7	1.0	6.2	
Income Not Reported	654	100.0	27.0	1.3	20.0	2.3	29.6	10.5	1.3	1.0	7.0	

(B) Base too small to show derived measure.
NA Not applicable.

¹ For selected race categories. Note that the race category used in Tables 3–6 differs from that used in Tables 1 and 2. Because more detailed race and ethnic categories became available in 1996, we are able to include the following categories in Tables 3–6: White, not Hispanic; Black, not Hispanic; Hispanic; and Asian and Pacific Islander. Also, the Hispanic category includes Whites and Blacks, but not Asians and Pacific Islanders, or American Indians, Aleuts, or Eskimos. Instead, the category of Asians and Pacific Islanders includes both Hispanics and non-Hispanics. To keep data comparable for prior years, the former race and Hispanic origin classifications are used in the historical tables (Tables 1 and 2).

² Limited to people in families.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey (CPS).

obtained. Also, in order to receive AFDC, Food Stamps, Medicaid, WIC, or disability services, forms must be filled out to determine eligibility. The NVRA sought to incorporate voter registration into each of these processes, thereby simplifying registration. NVRA also allowed all citizens the right to register by mail.

Almost 3 in 10 people registering to vote since January 1, 1995 did so when they obtained or renewed their drivers' licenses.

According to the CPS, 19.5 million people reported that they registered at least once since January 1995 (Table 6).²⁰ More people reported registering when they renewed or obtained their drivers' licenses than with any other single method — 28 percent.²¹ Clearly, people have been taking advantage of the opportunity to register when they apply for their drivers' licenses. Many people also benefitted by NVRA's mail-in provision, as 19 percent of people registered in this way. Not as many people have taken advantage of the component of the NVRA which creates opportunities to register at public assistance agencies and offices serving people with disabilities — only 3 percent registered in this way. This is expected since public assistance agencies serve many fewer people than do motor vehicle offices.

Many people reported taking advantage of the more traditional methods by registering in person at a county or government registration office (about 20 percent). About 16 percent reported that they had registered in a registration drive or at a

²⁰ The FEC reported that a total of 41 million voter registration transactions took place in the 43 states and the District of Columbia which are covered by the NVRA during 1995 and 1996 (Federal Election Commission, op. cit.). Some people may have registered more than once since 1995, but because the CPS only records the most recent registration occurring since 1995, the survey undercounts the total number of registration transactions. The FEC also estimates that 27 million of these 41 million registrations were added to the rolls during 1995 and 1996. Our data indicate that only about an additional 9 million potential voters were added to the rolls between the 1994 and 1996 elections. However, registration rates are always higher in Presidential election years. Comparing registration between Presidential election years, we find 1 million more people were registered to vote in 1996 than in 1992, the nearest Presidential year, compared with the FEC estimate of 3.4 million.

²¹ The FEC also reported that the most productive feature of the NVRA was voter registration in motor vehicle offices (Federal Election Commission, op. cit.).

booth. This response would include registering when someone came to your door, at a political rally, or at a registration drive at the mall, supermarket, fair, post office, library, or church, for example. Of the remaining people who reported having registered since 1995, 5 percent reported that they registered at school, on campus, or at a hospital; 3 percent registered at the polls on election day; and 1 percent registered in another way or at some other place.

The method of registration varies by race, nativity status, and metropolitan status.

Whites, native-born citizens, and those residing outside of central cities or in nonmetropolitan areas were more likely to have registered while obtaining or renewing their drivers' licenses than were Blacks, Hispanics, naturalized citizens, and those residing inside central cities. In addition, Whites, Hispanics, Asians and Pacific Islanders, naturalized citizens, and those residing in metropolitan areas were more likely to have mailed their forms to an election office than were Blacks, native-born citizens, and those residing in nonmetropolitan areas. Blacks, Hispanics, and those living in central cities were more likely than others to report that they registered at a registration booth, indicating that special registration drives are an especially important method of registration among these groups.

People with different socioeconomic backgrounds benefit from different NVRA provisions.

The registration behavior of low income and less educated individuals differs from that of high income and more educated individuals. People with family incomes below \$15,000 per year or less than a high school education are more likely to use public assistance agencies and voter registration booths, while those with family incomes above \$15,000 or at least a high school education are more likely to register while obtaining a driver's license or by mailing in a form.

Source of the Data

Most estimates in this report come from data obtained in the Voting and Registration Supplement to the

November 1996 Current Population Survey (CPS). Some estimates are based on data obtained from the November CPS in earlier years. The Bureau of the Census conducts the CPS every month, although this report uses only data from the November survey.

Accuracy of the Estimates

All statistics are subject to sampling error, as well as nonsampling error such as survey design flaws, respondent classification and reporting errors, data processing mistakes, and undercoverage. The Census Bureau has taken steps to minimize errors in the form of quality control and editing procedures to reduce errors made by respondents, coders, and interviewers. Ratio estimation to independent age-race-sex-Hispanic population controls partially corrects for bias attributable to survey undercoverage. However, biases exist in the estimates when missed individuals have characteristics different from those of interviewed individuals in the same age-race-gender-Hispanic group.

Analytical statements in this report have been tested and meet statistical standards. However, because of methodological differences, use caution when comparing these data with data from other sources. Contact Andy Zbikowski, Demographic Statistical Methods Division, at 301-457-4220 or on the Internet at azbikows@census.gov for information on the source of the data, the accuracy of the estimates, the use of standard errors, and the computation of standard errors.

More Information

A package of voting and registration tables including 14 detailed tables, 6 summary tables, 1 state table for citizens, and 23 historical tables (112 pages), providing voting and registration information by several demographic characteristics including, for example, gender and race by state, family income, metropolitan/nonmetropolitan residence, region, tenure of housing unit, and other variables is available as PPL-89 for \$29.00. This package includes the "Detailed tables" and "Appendix tables" that were presented in previous voting and registration reports in the P20 series. To

receive a paper copy, send your request for "PPL-89, Voting and Registration in the Election of November 1996," along with a check or money order in the amount of \$29.00 payable to Commerce-Census-88-00-9010, to U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, P.O. Box 277943, Atlanta, GA 30384-7943, or call our Statistical Information Office at 301-457-2422. A copy of these tabulations will be made available to any existing CPR P20 subscriber without charge, provided that the request is made within 3 months of the issue date of this re-

port. Contact our Statistical Information Office at 301-457-2422. Detailed tables and some time series data also are available on the Internet (<http://www.census.gov>); search for voting and registration data by clicking on the "Subjects A-Z" button and selecting "Voting" under "V" or "Registration" under "R."

Contacts

Statistical Information Staff
pop@census.gov
301-457-2422

Lynne Casper
lcasper@census.gov
301-457-2445

Loretta Bass
lbass@census.gov
301-457-2445

User Comments

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

Chief, Population Division
U.S. Bureau of the Census
Washington, DC 20233

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