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## Population Characteristics

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# Voting and Registration in the Election of November 1984 (Advance Report)

The election of 1984 marked the first rise in voter turnout for a Presidential election since the rate began to fall following the 1964 election. According to results from the November 1984 Current Population Survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census, 60 percent of the voting-age population reported that they had voted. This figure represents a rise of 1 percentage point over the rate in the election of 1980 and 1976 and

continues an upward trend that began with the Congressional election of 1978 (table A). All regions of the Nation except the Midwest showed similar gains of around 1 percentage point in overall turnout (table B).

The 1984 increase in voter turnout was a result of the increased turnout among women: 61 percent of all women of voting age reported that they had voted, 2 percentage points

**Table A. Percent Reported Voting, by Region, Race, Spanish Origin, Sex, and Age: November 1964 to 1984**  
(Numbers in thousands. Civilian noninstitutional population)

Region, race, Spanish origin, sex, and age	Presidential elections						Congressional elections				
	1984	1980	1976	1972	1968	1964	1982	1978	1974	1970	1966
<b>UNITED STATES</b>											
Total, voting age.....	169,963	157,085	146,548	136,203	116,535	110,604	165,483	151,646	141,299	120,701	112,800
Percent voted.....	59.9	59.2	59.2	63.0	67.8	69.3	48.5	45.9	44.7	54.6	55.4
White.....	61.4	60.9	60.9	64.5	69.1	70.7	49.9	47.3	46.3	56.0	57.0
Black.....	55.8	50.5	48.7	52.1	57.6	<sup>1</sup> 58.5	43.0	37.2	33.8	43.5	41.7
Spanish origin <sup>2</sup> .....	32.6	29.9	31.8	37.5	(NA)	(NA)	25.3	23.5	22.9	(NA)	(NA)
Male.....	59.0	59.1	59.6	64.1	69.8	71.9	48.7	46.6	46.2	56.8	58.2
Female.....	60.8	59.4	58.8	62.0	66.0	67.0	48.4	45.3	43.4	52.7	53.0
18 to 24 years old.....	40.8	39.9	42.2	49.6	<sup>3</sup> 50.4	<sup>3</sup> 50.9	24.8	23.5	23.8	<sup>3</sup> 30.4	<sup>3</sup> 31.1
25 to 44 years old.....	58.4	58.7	58.7	62.7	66.6	69.0	45.4	43.1	42.2	51.9	53.1
45 to 64 years old.....	69.8	69.3	68.7	70.8	74.9	75.9	62.2	58.5	56.9	64.2	64.5
65 years and over.....	67.7	65.1	62.2	63.5	65.8	66.3	59.9	55.9	51.4	57.0	56.1
<b>NORTH AND WEST</b>											
Total, voting age.....	112,376	106,524	99,403	93,653	81,594	78,174	110,126	102,894	96,505	83,515	78,355
Percent voted.....	61.6	61.0	61.2	66.4	71.0	74.6	51.9	48.9	48.8	59.0	60.9
White.....	63.0	62.4	62.6	67.5	71.8	74.7	53.1	50.0	50.0	59.8	61.7
Black.....	58.9	52.8	52.2	56.7	64.8	<sup>1</sup> 72.0	48.5	41.3	37.9	51.4	52.1
<b>SOUTH</b>											
Total, voting age.....	57,587	50,561	47,145	42,550	34,941	32,429	55,357	48,752	44,794	37,186	34,445
Percent voted.....	56.8	55.6	54.9	55.4	60.1	56.7	41.8	39.6	36.0	44.7	43.0
White.....	58.1	57.4	57.1	57.0	61.9	59.5	42.9	41.1	37.4	46.4	45.1
Black.....	53.2	48.2	45.7	47.8	51.6	<sup>1</sup> 44.0	38.3	33.5	30.0	36.8	32.9

NA Not available.

<sup>1</sup>Black and other races in 1964.

<sup>2</sup>Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race.

<sup>3</sup>Prior 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 383.

**Table B. Characteristics of the Voting-Age Population Reported Registered or Voting: November 1984 and 1980**

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	1984			1980		
	Number of persons	Percent registered	Percent voted	Number of persons	Percent registered	Percent voted
Total, 18 years and over.....	169,963	68.3	59.9	157,085	66.9	59.2
Region:						
Northeast.....	36,868	66.6	59.7	35,500	64.8	58.5
Midwest <sup>1</sup> .....	42,136	74.6	65.7	41,542	73.8	65.8
South.....	57,587	66.9	56.8	50,561	64.8	55.6
West.....	33,372	64.7	58.5	29,483	63.3	57.2
Years of school completed:						
Elementary: 0 to 8 years.....	20,580	53.4	42.9	22,656	53.0	42.6
High school: 1 to 3 years.....	22,068	54.9	44.4	22,477	54.6	45.6
4 years.....	67,807	67.3	58.7	61,165	66.4	58.9
College: 1 to 3 years.....	30,915	75.7	67.5	26,747	74.4	67.2
4 years or more.....	28,593	83.8	79.1	24,040	84.3	79.9
Labor force status:						
In civilian labor force.....	111,562	68.4	60.5	101,934	67.4	60.4
Employed.....	104,173	69.4	61.6	95,041	68.7	61.8
Not employed.....	7,389	54.3	44.0	6,893	50.3	41.2
Not in labor force.....	58,401	68.1	58.9	55,151	65.8	57.0
Tenure: <sup>2</sup>						
Owner occupied.....	45,433	79.1	71.8	44,212	77.8	71.1
Renter occupied.....	16,679	53.4	43.7	14,859	50.8	42.1

<sup>1</sup>Formerly the North Central Region.<sup>2</sup>Restricted to family householders.

Source: Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 370.

greater than their 1980 rate of 59 percent. Turnout for men in 1984 remained at 59 percent, which was not different from that reported in 1976 or 1980.

Although the 1984 voter turnout among persons 18 to 24 years old (41 percent) showed no significant change from the 1976 and 1980 rates, the turnout did increase among persons 65 years old and over from 65 to 68 percent between 1980 and 1984. Turnout for persons 25 to 64 years old, currently two-thirds of the electorate, has changed little since 1976, with the rate for 25-to-44 year-olds remaining around 58 percent, and the rate for those 45 to 64 remaining around 69 percent.

Black turnout showed a substantial rise, reaching 56 percent in 1984, an increase from 51 percent in 1980 and 49 percent in 1976. In the North and West Regions combined, voter turnout among Blacks rose 6 percentage points between 1980 and 1984, reaching 59 percent; in the South it rose from 48 percent to 53 percent. Among persons of Spanish origin, the voting rate in 1984 was 33 percent which was not statistically different from the rate reported in 1980. The low turnout rate for the Hispanic population results partly from the large proportion of this group (32 percent) who report themselves as not being citizens and, therefore, are ineligible to register. The exclusion of persons identified in the 1984 survey as noncitizens (about 3 million) raises the voter turnout rate for Hispanics to 48 percent, still somewhat lower than the rate for Blacks or Whites after excluding noncitizens (58 percent and 64 percent, respectively).

In addition, the increasing proportion of the electorate of other races (neither White nor Black) may have also contributed to minimizing further increases in the overall rate of

voter turnout. Persons of other races (American Indians, Eskimos, and Asian and Pacific Islanders) increased from 1.9 to 2.8 percent of the voting-age population 18 and over between 1980 and 1984, although in both years, only 30 percent of the people in the group reported voting. Again, a high proportion of persons of other races reported themselves as being noncitizens (37 percent in both years), undoubtedly reflecting recent immigration trends in the United States from Asian countries.<sup>1</sup>

Data in table B indicate that the typical voter profile remained unchanged between 1980 and 1984. People in the Midwest reported the highest regional voter turnout rate, and persons with 4 years or more of college reported the highest turnout among all education groups. In addition, family householders who own their own homes vote at a much higher rate than do persons who rent. And, while in both 1980 and 1984 employed persons reported considerably higher turnout rates than those who were unemployed, voter turnout for unemployed persons increased from 41 percent to 44 percent, while no change was reported by employed persons (62 percent in both years).

## REGISTRATION

Changes in registration since 1980 have paralleled those in voter turnout (table C). For the 1984 Presidential election, 68 percent of the voting-age population reported that they were registered, compared with 67 percent in 1980. As with

<sup>1</sup>Percentages of the population of other races voting and reporting non-citizenship status are derived from table 1 of this report and from Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 370, table 2.

voter turnout, a 2 percentage-point rise in registration was reported by women, from 67 percent in 1980 to 69 percent in 1984; the rate for men remained substantially unchanged from the 1980 rate of 67 percent. Registration rose about 2 points among persons under 25 years old (from 49 to 51 percent) and also among persons 65 years old and over (from 75 to 77 percent).

While registration rates for Whites increased only about 1 percentage point, the rate for Blacks rose 6 points, from 60 percent in 1980 to 66 percent in 1984. There was some evidence of an increase in registration among persons of Spanish origin from 36 percent in 1980 to 40 percent in 1984.

## RELIABILITY OF ESTIMATED STATISTICS

These data are based on answers to a series of questions asked of a sample of persons of voting age in the Current Population Survey (CPS) 2 weeks after the election of November 6, 1984. The questions were designed to provide information on voting behavior of the various segments of the population of voting age. This report presents advance statistics on voting and registration; more detailed tabulations and analysis will be presented in a forthcoming report.

Official counts of the number of votes cast in the 1984 election are not yet available, however, press reports on the number of votes cast for President indicate that about 93 million persons, or approximately 53 percent of persons of voting age, voted in the 1984 election. Estimates from the 1984 November CPS reported 102 million people voting in the 1984 election.

Despite the difference found in surveys and actual votes cast, the data presented in this report can be regarded as providing useful measures of differences in voting behavior among subgroups of the population. Factors which may account for the differences between the Current Population Survey and official counts were published in the report, *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 1982, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 370*.

Since the data in the report are based on a sample of the population, they are also subject to sampling variability, i.e., to variation that occurred by chance because a sample rather than the entire population was surveyed. Sampling variability is measured by the standard error. All statements of comparison in this report have passed a hypothesis test at the 10-percent level of significance or better, and most have passed a hypothesis test at the 5-percent level of significance or better. This means that, for most differences cited in the text, the estimated difference between population parameters is greater than twice the standard error of the difference. For other differences mentioned, the estimated difference between parameters is between 1.6 and 2.0 times the standard error of the difference. When this is the case, the statement of comparison is qualified in some way, e.g., by the use of the phrase "some evidence." However, the reader still should be cautious in interpreting small differences in the percentage reported voting and registering in different election years. Estimates of the size of the standard errors will be included in the forthcoming detailed report.

**Table C. Percent Reported Registered, by Region, Race, Spanish Origin, Sex, and Age: November 1966 to 1984**

(Civilian noninstitutional population)

Region, race, Spanish origin, sex, and age	Presidential elections					Congressional elections				
	1984	1980	1976	1972	1968	1982	1978	1974	1970	1966
<b>UNITED STATES</b>										
Total, voting age.....	68.3	66.9	66.7	72.3	74.3	64.1	62.6	62.2	68.1	70.3
White.....	69.6	68.4	68.3	73.4	75.4	65.6	63.8	63.5	69.1	71.6
Black.....	66.3	60.0	58.5	65.5	66.2	59.1	57.1	54.9	60.8	60.2
Spanish origin <sup>1</sup> .....	40.1	36.3	37.8	44.4	(NA)	35.3	32.9	34.9	(NA)	(NA)
Male.....	67.3	66.6	67.1	73.1	76.0	63.7	62.6	62.8	69.6	72.2
Female.....	69.3	67.1	66.4	71.6	72.8	64.4	62.5	61.7	66.8	68.6
18 to 24 years.....	51.3	49.2	51.3	58.9	56.0	42.4	40.5	41.3	40.9	44.1
25 to 44 years.....	66.6	65.6	65.5	71.3	72.4	61.5	60.2	59.9	65.0	67.6
45 to 64 years.....	76.6	75.8	75.5	79.7	81.1	75.6	74.3	73.6	77.5	78.9
65 years and over.....	76.9	74.6	71.4	75.6	75.6	75.2	72.8	70.2	73.7	73.5
<b>NORTH AND WEST</b>										
Total, voting age.....	69.0	67.9	67.7	73.9	76.5	65.2	63.8	63.3	70.0	73.8
White.....	70.5	69.3	69.0	74.9	77.2	66.7	64.9	64.6	70.8	74.5
Black.....	67.2	60.6	60.9	67.0	71.8	61.7	58.0	54.2	64.5	68.8
<b>SOUTH</b>										
Total, voting age.....	66.9	64.8	64.6	68.7	69.2	61.7	60.1	59.8	63.8	62.2
White.....	67.8	66.2	66.7	69.8	70.8	63.2	61.2	61.0	65.1	64.3
Black.....	65.6	59.3	56.4	64.0	61.6	56.9	56.2	55.5	57.5	52.9

NA Not available.

<sup>1</sup>Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race.

Source: Current Population Report, Series P-20, Nos. 383, 370, 344, 322, 293, 253, 228, 192, and 174.