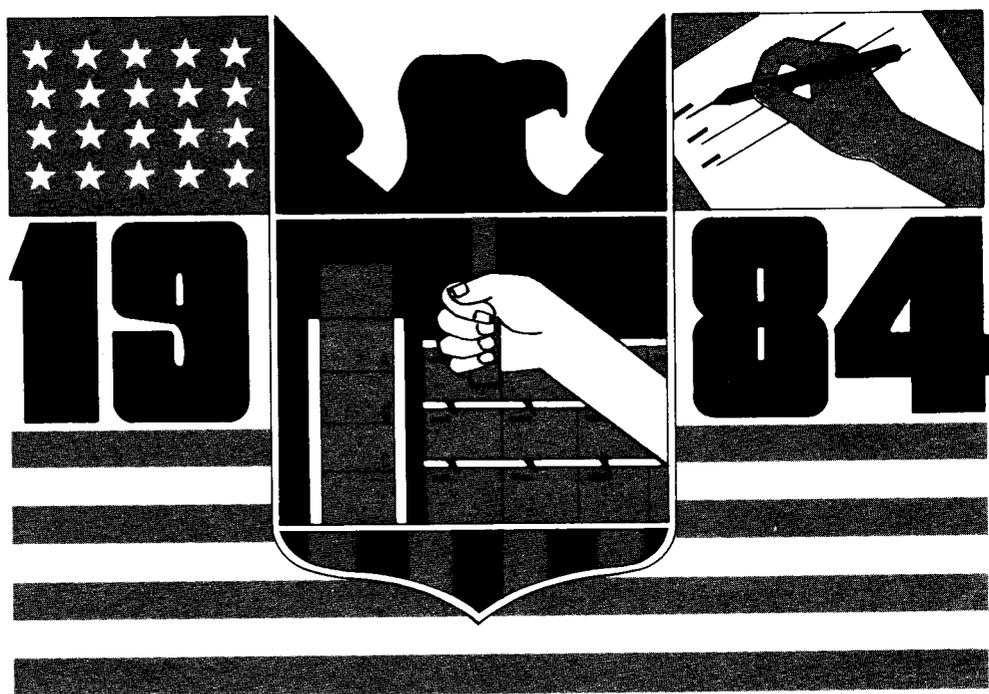


**Population
Characteristics**

Series P-20, No. 405

**Voting and
Registration
in the Election
of November
1984**



U.S. Department
of Commerce
BUREAU OF
THE CENSUS

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Characteristics**

Series P-20, No. 405
Issued March 1986

**Voting and
Registration
in the Election
of November
1984**

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Symbols Used in Tables

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

Voting and Registration in the Election of November 1984

In 1984, voter turnout rose for the first time in a Presidential election since it began falling during the mid-1960's. Results from the November 1984 supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS) show that 60 percent of persons 18 years old and over reported that they had voted. This is 1 percentage point higher than in both 1980 and 1976 and clearly marks a reversal of the downward trend from 1964 to 1976 (table A). Registration similarly showed a modest gain, rising to 68 percent in 1984, up from 67 percent in 1980 (table B). Although these net increases at the national level are slight, they conceal substantial gains made by some demographic and social groups.

The voter participation rate declined for successive Presidential elections between 1964 and 1976 and successive Congressional elections between 1966 and 1974.

Results from the 1978 survey showed a cessation of the decline during Congressional elections, and results of the 1980 survey showed that the decline had also stopped in Presidential elections. As the 1984 survey indicates, turnout in the Presidential as well as the Congressional elections is now on the rise. Assuming no drop in the rates for individual age groups, overall voter participation rates will rise through the rest of this century, as the large baby boom cohorts age and move into older groups, which traditionally have higher voter turnout.

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 conducted by the Bureau of the Census. The data in this report relate to the civilian noninstitutional population 18 years old and over. The CPS supplement

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

Region, race, Spanish origin, sex, and age	Presidential elections						Congressional elections					
	1984	1980	1976	1972	1968	1964	1982	1978	1974	1970	1966	
United States												
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	58.5	43.0	37.2	33.8	43.5	41.7	
Spanish origin ¹	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	40.8	39.9	42.2	49.6	² 50.4	² 50.9	24.8	23.5	23.8	³ 30.4	³ 31.1	
25 to 44 years	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	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	
North and West												
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	³ 72.0	48.5	41.3	37.9	51.4	52.1	
South												
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	³ 44.0	38.3	33.5	30.0	36.8	32.9	

NA Not available.

¹Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race

²Prior to 1972, includes persons 18 to 20 years old in Georgia and Kentucky, 19 and 20 in Alaska, and 20 years old in Hawaii.

³Black and other races in 1964.

Source: Current Population Reports, Series P-20, Nos. 143, 174, 192, 228, 253, 293, 322, 344, 370, 383, and table 2 of this report.

Table B. Percent Reported Registered, by Region, Race, Spanish Origin, Sex, and Age: November 1966 to 1984
(Numbers in thousands)

Region, race, Spanish origin, sex, and age	Presidential elections					Congressional elections				
	1984	1980	1976	1972	1968	1982	1978	1974	1970	1966
United States										
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 ¹	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	² 56.0	42.4	40.5	41.3	² 40.9	² 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
North and West										
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
South										
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.

¹Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race.

²Prior to 1972, includes persons 18 to 20 years old in Georgia and Kentucky, 19 and 20 in Alaska, and 20 in Hawaii.

Source: Current Population Reports, Series P-20, Nos. 174, 192, 228, 253, 293, 322, 344, 370, 383, and table 2 of this report.

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 1984 CPS indicate that 101.9 million persons reported voting in the November election, some 9.2 million more than the vote count for President in 1984, according to official returns reported by the Clerk of the House, U.S. Congress. Some of the factors accounting for differences between official election returns and the CPS results are discussed in the section "Evaluation of the Accuracy of the Data."

HIGHLIGHTS

Overall voter turnout rose to 60 percent in 1984. Although this represents only a 1 percentage point gain over the rates in 1980 and 1976, it clearly indicates a break in the long downward trend.

- All regions except the Midwest, where turnout is traditionally high, showed gains of around 1 percentage point.
- Turnout for women exceeded that for men in 1984 (61 percent versus 59 percent) for the first time since the Bureau began collecting voting and registration data in the Current Population Survey in 1964.
- Black voter turnout reached 56 percent in 1984, substantially higher than the rate in 1980 (51 percent). This was

its highest level since 1968 when 58 percent of the Black population reported voting. There was no significant change in voter turnout for the White population between 1980 and 1984 (61 percent in both years).

- Particularly striking gains were made in registration and voting between 1980 and 1984 for Blacks 18 to 24 years old. The registration rate increased from 41 to 54 percent, while voter turnout increased from 30 to 41 percent.
- Among persons 65 years old and over, turnout rose about 3 points, from 65 percent in 1980 to 68 percent in 1984.
- Turnout among persons 25 to 64 years old, who represent two-thirds of the electorate, remained unchanged at 63 percent in 1984.
- Voter turnout among young persons attending college is much higher than among young persons not in college. In 1984, 54 percent of all 18-to-24-year-olds attending college reported that they voted; among persons of this age not in college, 36 percent reported that they voted.

RECENT CHANGES IN TURNOUT

Changes in turnout of men and women. During the past 20 years, there has been a reduction in the gap of voter turnout in Presidential years between men and women. In 1964, the

first year the Bureau of the Census began collecting voting and registration data in the CPS, the voting rate for men exceeded that for women 72 to 67 percent. The rates for both groups then began dropping, the rate for men not only fell more rapidly than that for women, but continued to decline through the election of 1980, when it reached 59 percent, the same as in 1984. The rates for women, however, stopped falling in 1976 at 59 percent, then rose to 61 percent in 1984, exceeding the turnout rate for men for the first time (table C).

Although women now report higher voter turnout rates than do men in the CPS, they do not uniformly report higher voter turnout rates at both younger and older ages. In 1984, the voting rate for young women 18 to 44 years old was ahead of that for young men, 56 to 51 percent; rates for women 45 years and over trailed those of older men, 68 to 71 percent.

At the time of the first CPS voting survey in 1964, voting rates for young men and young women under 45 years of age were not greatly different, with men ahead by 67 to 65 percent (figure 1). Among older persons, however, the difference between the rate for men and women was 8 points, with men leading 77 to 69 percent. Between 1964 and 1972, the rate for young men dropped around 9 percentage points, from 67 to 58 percent, while the rate for young women dropped 6 points, from 65 to 59 percent. At this point, the rates for young men and young women were still similar, 58 and 59 percent, respectively. A part of this decline between 1964

and 1972 for both sexes can be attributed to the extension of the franchise to all citizens 18 to 20 years of age, ages with typically the lowest turnout rates.

Between 1972 and 1976, the rate for young men fell another 6 points, to 52 percent, while the rate for young women dropped 5 points, to 54 percent, and, for the first time, the rate for young women significantly exceeded the rate for young men. There is some evidence that by 1984, the rate for younger men declined to 51 percent, while the rate for young women rose 1 point to 56 percent, placing young women about 4 percentage points ahead of young men in turnout.

Among the older segment of the electorate, those 45 years and over, the declines between 1964 and 1972 were also substantial. By 1972, the turnout rate for men had fallen to 72 percent and for women to 66 percent. The turnout rate for both older men and women further declined in the 1976 election, but subsequent increases in voter turnout by 1984 placed the turnout rates of older women only 3 percentage points behind that of men (71 to 68 percent).

It is useful to note that it was not only the rise in turnout among young women since 1976 that has brought the overall rates for women ahead of those for men, but a significant contribution came from the increase in turnout among older women as well. Of the 5.2-million increase in women voters between 1980 and 1984, 3.1 million were women 18 to 44 years old, while 2.1 million were women 45 years and over. In fact, the voting rates for older women began to rise earlier

Table C. Percent Reported Voted in Presidential Elections, by Age and Sex: November 1964 to 1984

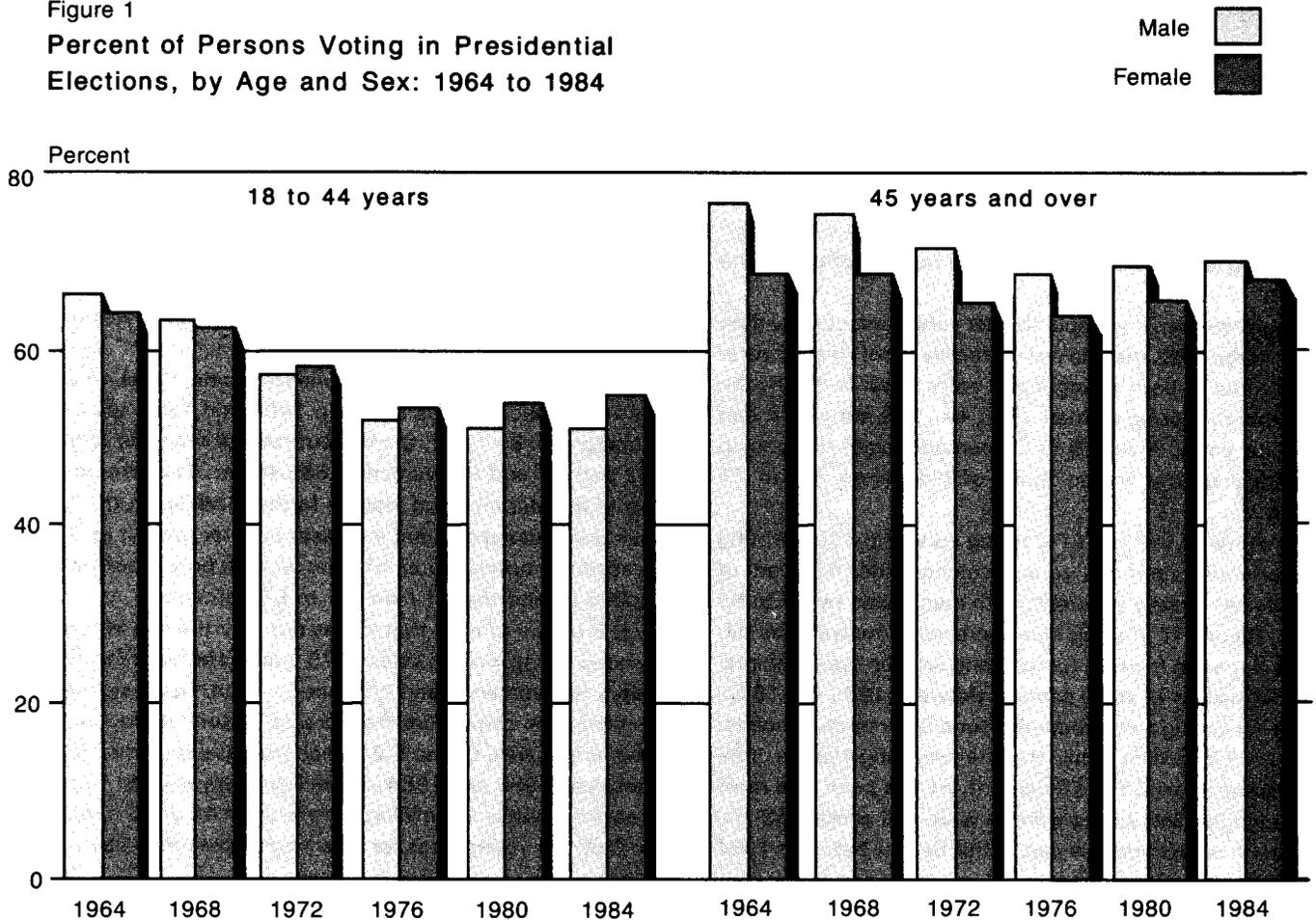
(Numbers in thousands)

Year	18 years and over		18 to 44 years		45 years and over	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
1984						
Number	80,327	89,636	48,429	50,570	31,899	39,065
Percent voted	59.0	60.8	51.3	55.5	70.6	67.8
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, 21 years old and over in most States prior to 1972.

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

Figure 1
Percent of Persons Voting in Presidential
Elections, by Age and Sex: 1964 to 1984



Source: Table C of this report.

and rose more sharply than those for young women, about 4 points for the older women since 1976, compared with a 1-point gain for younger women in this same period.

Changes in turnout among racial groups. White voter turnout dropped 10 percentage points, between 1964 and 1976 (71 to 61 percent) and has remained at 61 percent through 1984 (table D). Almost all of this decline occurred between the 1968-72 and 1972-76 elections. During the entire 1964-84 period, Black turnout showed only a 3-point net loss. However, a 9-point decline occurred between the 1968 and 1976 elections, with voter turnout reaching a low of 49 percent in the 1976 election. There is some evidence that turnout rose by 2 points to 51 percent in 1980 followed by a 5-point gain in the 1984 election to 56 percent, representing the highest Black turnout recorded in the last four elections.

A comparison of voter turnout among younger and older Blacks and Whites also reveals some interesting differences (figure 2). Among younger persons, those under 45 years, turnout dropped more for Whites, from 67 percent in 1964 to 55 percent in 1984 (12 points) than for Blacks, whose rates dropped from 58 percent to 51 percent, or 7 points. Both groups of younger persons showed their most severe declines in the two elections of 1972 and 1976, reflecting, in part,

the enfranchisement of all 18-to-20-year-olds in 1972. However, there is some evidence that the voting rates for young Blacks rose about 3 points in 1980 and clearly rose 7 points in 1984, while rates for young Whites did not turn upward in either 1980 or 1984. Thus, the trend for young Whites was downward from 1964 to 1976 and then leveled off at around 55 percent. The trend for young Blacks was also downward from 1964 to 1976, but then began rising, reaching 51 percent in 1984, a level within 4 points of the rate for young Whites.

A particularly noteworthy finding of the 1984 survey is the striking increase in turnout among young Blacks, those 18 to 24 years old, in the 1984 election (table E and figure 3). Registration increased for this group from 41 percent in 1980¹ to 54 percent in 1984. Much of this increase is undoubtedly attributable to the vigorous registration drive targeted at this group prior to the 1984 election. That the increase in registration was not just a listing of names on registration rolls is indicated by the 11-point gain in actual voting by these young Blacks; their turnout rate rose from 30 percent in 1980 to 41 percent in 1984, a rate no different from that reported by Whites of the same age.

¹U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 370.

Table D. Percent Reported Voted in Presidential Elections, by Age and Race: November 1964 to 1984

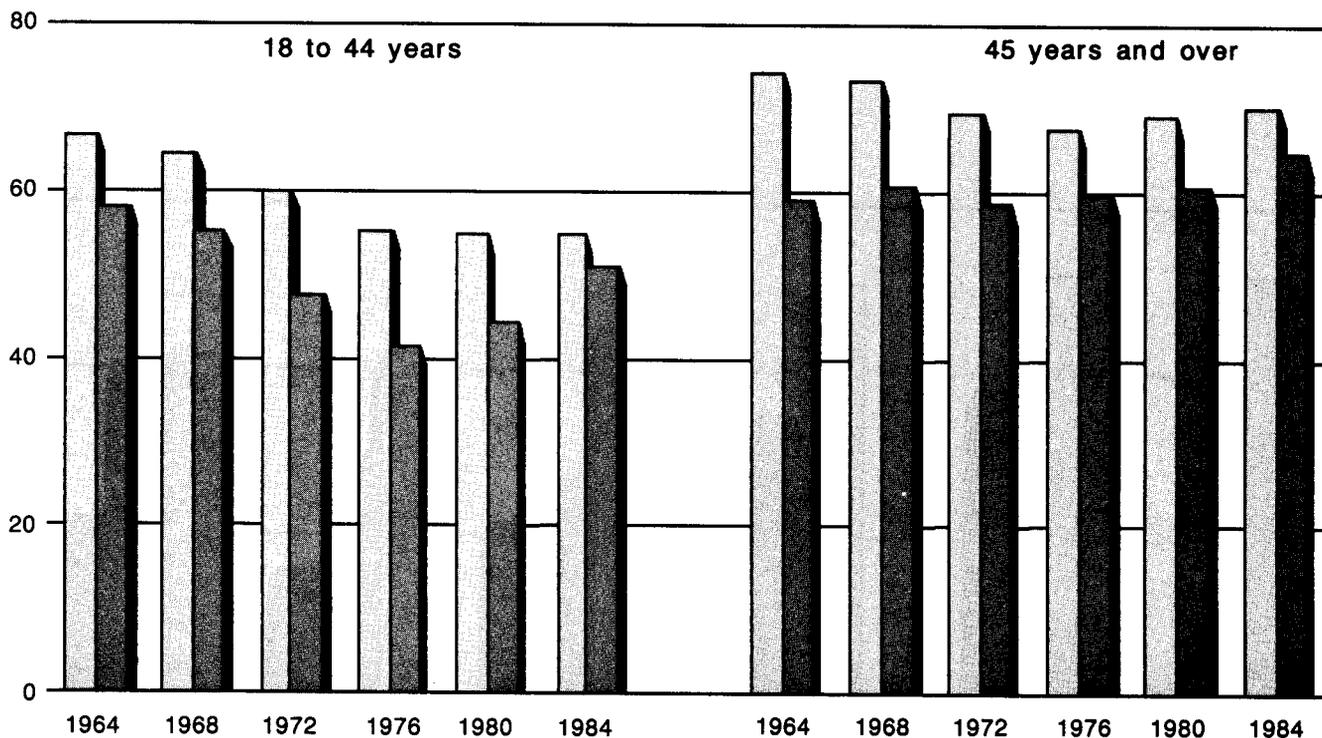
(Numbers in thousands)

Year	18 years and over		18 to 44 years		45 years and over	
	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black
1984						
Number	146,761	18,432	83,752	11,952	63,009	6,479
Percent voted	61.4	55.8	54.9	51.1	70.1	64.6
1980						
Number	137,676	16,423	77,225	10,224	60,451	6,198
Percent voted	60.9	50.5	54.6	44.3	69.0	60.6
1976						
Number	129,316	14,927	70,600	9,101	58,717	5,826
Percent voted	60.9	48.7	55.4	41.6	67.6	59.8
1972						
Number	121,243	13,493	64,733	8,124	56,508	5,370
Percent voted	64.5	52.1	60.0	47.9	69.6	58.5
1968¹						
Number	104,521	10,935	51,013	6,057	53,508	4,878
Percent voted	69.1	57.6	64.6	55.4	73.3	60.4
1964¹						
Number	99,353	10,340	48,911	5,711	50,443	4,630
Percent voted	70.7	58.5	66.9	58.1	74.3	58.9

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

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, Series P-20, Nos. 143, 192, 253, 322, 370, and table 2 of this report.

Figure 2

Percent of Persons Voting in Presidential Elections, by Age and Race: 1964 to 1984White 
Black 

Source: Table D of this report.

Table E. Percent of Persons 18 to 24 Years Old Voting in Presidential Elections, by Race and Spanish Origin: November 1964 to 1984

(Numbers in thousands)

Race and Spanish origin	1984	1980	1976	1972	1968	1964
White						
Total, 18 to 24 years	23,227	23,976	23,141	21,339	10,158	8,715
Voted	9,667	10,027	10,344	11,074	5,305	4,539
Percent	41.6	41.8	44.7	51.9	52.2	52.1
Black						
Total, 18 to 24 years	3,875	3,559	3,323	2,994	1,344	1,115
Voted	1,572	1,071	926	1,040	512	493
Percent	40.6	30.1	27.9	34.7	38.1	44.2
Spanish Origin¹						
Total, 18 to 24 years	2,064	2,047	1,559	1,338	(NA)	(NA)
Voted	452	326	340	414	(NA)	(NA)
Percent	21.9	15.9	21.8	30.9	(NA)	(NA)

NA Not available.

¹Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race.

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

Looking at changes in turnout during the last two decades among Blacks 45 years old and over, the voting rate for older Blacks, in sharp contrast to most population groups, rose 6 points, from 59 percent in 1964 to 65 percent in 1984 (table D). The relative standing in voter turnout between

Whites and Blacks has changed proportionately. Older Whites in 1964 led older Blacks in turnout—74 to 59 percent, a 15 point difference; by 1984 this difference had diminished to 5 points (70 percent for Whites and 65 percent for Blacks).

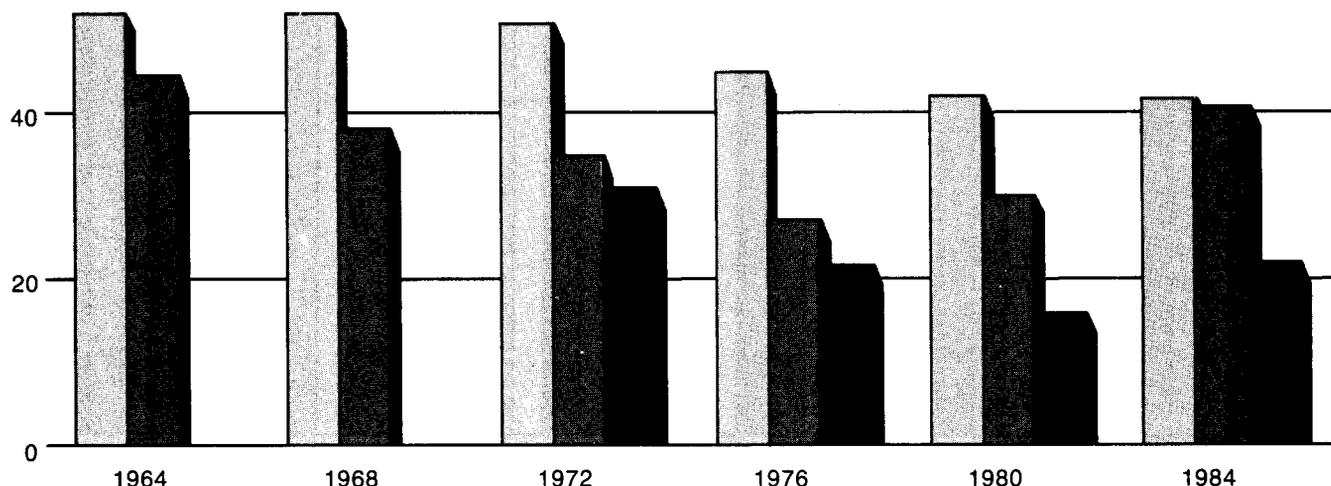
Figure 3

Percent of Persons 18 to 24 Years Old Voting in Presidential Elections, by Race and Spanish Origin: 1964 to 1984

Percent

80

60



Source: Table E of this report.

CHARACTERISTICS OF VOTERS

Voting and registration rates remain closely related to the social and demographic characteristics of the electorate (table F). Turnout in 1984 was higher among Whites (61 percent) than among either Blacks (56 percent) or Hispanics (33 percent), higher among middle-aged persons, those 45 to 64 years, (70 percent) than older or younger age groups, and highest among residents living in the Midwest (66 percent).

These same patterns of differences were also evident in the 1980 Presidential election.

Education is one of the most important socioeconomic characteristics related to voting, since it usually affects not only a person's occupation and related economic characteristics, but may also influence perception of the efficacy of voting and, hence, an individual's commitment to the political process. In 1984, college graduates were nearly twice as likely to have voted (79 percent) as persons who

Table F. Characteristics of the Voting-Age Population Reported Having Registered or Voted: 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
Race and Spanish origin:						
White	146,761	69.6	61.4	137,676	68.4	60.9
Black	18,432	66.3	55.8	16,423	60.0	50.5
Spanish origin ¹	9,471	40.1	32.6	8,210	36.3	29.9
Sex:						
Male	80,327	67.3	59.0	74,082	66.6	59.1
Female	89,636	69.3	60.8	83,003	67.1	59.4
Age:						
18 to 24 years	27,976	51.3	40.8	28,138	49.2	39.9
25 to 44 years	71,023	66.6	58.4	61,285	65.6	58.7
45 to 64 years	44,307	76.6	69.8	43,569	75.8	69.3
65 years and over	26,658	76.9	67.7	24,094	74.6	65.1
Region:						
Northeast	36,868	66.6	59.7	35,500	64.8	58.5
Midwest	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 and class of worker:						
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
Agriculture	3,132	64.3	55.9	3,015	68.1	60.0
Nonagricultural industries	101,042	69.6	61.8	92,026	68.7	61.9
Private wage and salary workers	77,160	66.7	58.6	69,161	65.1	57.9
Government workers	15,813	82.0	75.9	15,801	82.0	77.0
Self-employed workers ²	8,068	72.4	65.2	7,063	73.7	67.0
Unemployed	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
Family income: ³						
Under \$5,000	7,843	49.8	37.5	8,567	50.4	39.4
\$5,000 to \$9,999	14,594	56.8	46.2	18,873	58.4	48.8
\$10,000 to \$14,999	18,131	62.9	53.5	21,746	63.6	54.8
\$15,000 to \$19,999	15,997	65.5	57.1	18,359	66.8	60.3
\$20,000 to \$24,999	14,790	68.7	61.1	19,100	73.5	67.2
\$25,000 to \$34,999	25,322	74.2	67.0	35,427	79.2	73.8
\$35,000 and over	35,218	80.7	74.2	9,091	60.2	54.4
Income not reported	8,355	62.9	56.9			
Tenure: ⁴						
Owner occupied	45,433	79.1	71.8	98,362	75.3	68.3
Renter occupied	16,679	53.4	43.7	25,494	53.8	44.6

¹Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race.

²Includes unpaid family workers.

³Restricted to members of families. Income in current dollars.

⁴Restricted to family householders.

had attended only elementary school (43 percent); persons with 4 years of high school had an intermediate voting rate of 59 percent. Thus, more highly educated persons are disproportionately represented among voters; they made up 17 percent of the voting-age population in 1984 but cast 22 percent of all votes.

Whether a person is employed is also an important indicator of the likelihood of voting in an election. In the November 1984 election, 62 percent of employed persons reported that they voted, compared with only 44 percent of unemployed persons. Among persons employed in nonagricultural industries, government workers (Federal, State, and local) reported voting at a significantly higher level (76 percent) than either wage or salary workers in private industry (59 percent) or self-employed workers (65 percent). Persons not in the labor force, a group which includes many retired persons, reported a voter participation rate of 59 percent, slightly lower than the 61 percent reported by persons in the labor force (employed and unemployed combined). Persons in managerial and professional occupations had the highest turnout rates (76 percent), while persons who were in occupations classified as operators, fabricators, and laborers had the lowest rate, 46 percent (table 12).

Data shown in table F also indicate that the higher income segments of the population participate to a greater extent in the electoral process than groups with lower incomes. Approximately 3 out of every 4 persons 18 years and over living in families whose incomes were \$35,000 or more voted in the 1984 election, compared with only 38 percent of those living in families with incomes less than \$5,000. With income as with education, those at the upper end of the distribution make up a disproportionate share of voters; in the 1984 election, one-half of all voters were members of families with incomes in excess of \$25,000, while only 43 percent of all persons of voting age were members of families with incomes this high.

Homeownership is another characteristic highly related to voter turnout. In the November 1984 election, 72 percent of homeowners reported having voted, compared with 44 percent of renters. The difference between these two groups increased since 1980, as a result of a 4-percent increase in voter turnout among homeowners and a 1-percent decrease in turnout among renters.

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT AND VOTER TURNOUT

For the first time since 1972, the November 1984 voting supplement contained questions about the voting participation of young people enrolled in schools and colleges. Results of the survey show that in 1984, as in 1972, both registration and voter turnout are much higher among young people attending college than among young people of the same age not going to college.² In 1984, among persons 18 to 24 years old, 66 percent of both men and women attending college reported that they were registered and 54 to 55 percent reported that they had voted; among those not enrolled in college, 44 percent of men and 49 percent of women were registered, while 34 percent of men and 39 percent of women said they voted (table G)³ Data are also shown in table G on the differential association of college attendance on the voting rates of young Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics. In 1984, the turnout rate for young Whites in college (56 percent) was considerably above the rate for those not in college (37 percent). Among young Blacks, those attending college reported a voting rate of 51 percent, while the rate for those not in college was 39 percent; among young Hispanics turnout was 43 percent for those in college and only 18 percent for those not enrolled.

²U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 253.

³Overreporting of voting behavior may be more prevalent among persons enrolled in college who are away from home and who have proxy respondents answering for them. See section, "Evaluation of the Accuracy of the Data."

Table G. Percent of Persons 18 to 24 Years Old Reported Having Voted and Registered, by Enrollment Status, Race and Sex: November 1984

Race and sex	Reported registered			Reported voted		
	Enrolled		Not enrolled	Enrolled		Not enrolled
	Total	College		Total	College	
Race						
Total	61.4	65.8	47.0	50.8	54.4	36.4
White	64.1	68.0	46.6	53.3	56.4	36.5
Black	56.3	63.8	52.6	44.3	50.8	39.2
Spanish origin ¹	37.3	47.3	27.4	32.7	43.4	18.4
Sex						
Total	61.4	65.8	47.0	50.8	54.4	36.4
Male	60.3	65.5	44.4	49.3	53.7	33.6
Female	62.6	66.0	49.3	52.4	55.1	39.0

¹Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race.
Source: Table 7 of this report.

EVALUATION OF THE ACCURACY OF THE DATA

In the November 1984 Current Population Survey supplement on voting, 101.9 million of the 170.0 million persons of voting age in the civilian noninstitutional population were reported as having voted in the November 1984 election. Official counts showed 92.7 million votes cast, or a difference of 9.2 million votes between the two sources. This difference is greater than can be accounted for by sampling variability (table H). Moreover, the population covered in the survey ex-

Table H. Comparisons of CPS Voting Estimates and Official Counts of Votes Cast: November 1964 to 1984

(Numbers in millions)

Year	CPS vote for President	Official vote for President	Percent difference
1984	101.9	92.7	9.9
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	76.7	70.6	8.6

Year	CPS vote for U.S. Representative	Official vote for U.S. Representative or highest office	Percent difference
1982	80.3	67.6	18.8
1978	69.6	59.5	17.0
1974	63.2	56.0	12.9
1970	65.9	58.0	13.6
1966	57.6	52.9	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.

cluded members of the Armed Forces and institutional inmates.⁴ 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 overstatement in the percentage voting.

The difference between survey results and actual vote counts has been noted in other surveys of voting but both the methods of measuring it and estimates of its size have varied considerably. On balance, the overstatement 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

⁴In the November 1984 Presidential election, the Department of Defense reported a total voting rate for the Armed Forces of 55.3 percent, compared with 59.9 percent for the civilian noninstitutional population. Federal Voting Assistance Program, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 13th Report, 1985.

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 nonreporting 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 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 non-voting 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.

4. *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 was no evidence from this test 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.

The 1984 survey included a more rigorous test for the effects of proxy responses on CPS estimates of the number of persons who vote. In the two outgoing rotation groups of the November survey (approximately one-fourth of the total sample), respondents whose voting and registration had been previously reported by another household member were followed up by the interviewer and asked the voting and registration questions directly. Table I, below, summarizes the results of this test. Among persons for whom re-interviews were obtained, 99 percent of the respondents who had been reported by another household member as having voted also reported for themselves that they voted; in addition, 99 percent of the interviews which initially reported that the respondent did not vote also confirmed a previous report of not voting. Proxy respondents incorrectly reported an

estimated 477,000 persons did not vote when they actually did vote. However, overreports on voting by proxy respondents only amounted to 290,000 persons.

A comparison of the voting rates for the two test groups within the one-quarter subsample shows a voting rate of 63.8 percent for respondents reported by a proxy (excluding don't know and no responses) and a rate of 65 percent when respondents reported for themselves. This difference in voter turnout rates for self and proxy respondents is not statistically significant, but the rates are higher for both groups than for the total CPS sample, indicating that turnout for persons successfully followed up is higher than for those not found for direct interview.

In summary, results of this proxy verification test confirm the previous finding of no evidence that misreports by proxy respondents account for the discrepancy between CPS estimates of voter turnout and the official count of the number of ballots cast by voters.

5. *Nonreports on voting.* In 1966, a "do not know" category in each question of the voting supplement 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 (table 18). For self-respondents, the "do not know"/"no report" categories were almost nonexistent. At the other extreme, 4.1 percent of respondents who reported on the voting behavior of other household members could not answer whether or not the other person had voted.

Table I. Comparison of Proxy Reports and Self-Reports on Voter Turnout in the November 1984 Election

(Numbers in thousands. Citizens 18 years old and over. Data are weighted to national estimates)

Proxy responses	Self responses			
	Total	Voted	Did not vote	No report
Total	56,727	24,958	13,453	18,316
Reported voted	34,620	24,481	290	9,849
Reported did not vote	19,664	180	12,676	6,808
Reported do not know	2,271	290	464	1,517
No report	172	7	23	142

Note: Data are based on the special follow-up supplement administered to two rotation groups.

MEDIA EXPOSURE

An attempt was made in the 1984 CPS to find out to what extent survey respondents had been exposed *on election day* to radio and television projections of the winner in the Presidential election. Approximately one-quarter of the respondents in the total sample were contacted by the enumerator and asked about their exposure to media projections. Persons who had previously reported that they voted

were asked "Before you voted on election day, did you hear any media announcement of the projected winner of the Presidential election?" Respondents who reported that they were registered but had not voted were asked "Before 6 p.m. local time on election day, did you hear any media announcement of the projected winner of the Presidential election?"

This one-quarter special sample inflated to full-sample yielded an estimated 116 million citizens who reported themselves or were reported by proxies that they were registered. For approximately 12 million of these citizens, the enumerator was unable to personally interview them to confirm previous proxy reports. Thus, responses to the media questions in this analysis represent about 104.4 million citizens 18 years old and over who reported on media exposure for themselves. The following table shows the distribution of media reports for regions.

Region	Number registered (thousands)	Percent heard projection
United States	104,393	25.4
Northeast	21,737	27.7
Midwest	28,161	25.3
South	34,472	21.5
West	20,021	30.0

In order to improve the cogency of responses to the media questions, the 1984 survey also collected and tabulated information on whether respondents had voted in the morning, the afternoon (noon to 6 p.m.), or the evening. Among the 87.6 million persons who reported on the time of day they

voted, 46 percent voted before noon, 40 percent in the afternoon, and 14 percent after 6 p.m. (table J).⁵

Special attention is called to the data on time of day of voting because respondents' answers to these items raise questions about the validity of their responses to the media exposure questions. Large numbers of voters who reported having heard a media projection of the winner in the Presidential election also reported having voted before such projections were aired in their areas. For example, in the Eastern time zone, 25 percent of the 37 million voters who voted before 6 p.m. local time reported that they had heard a media projection of the winner in the Presidential election before they voted (table J). In other time zones the proportions of voters reported hearing a media projection before 6 p.m. their time did not vary greatly from the percentage reporting for Eastern time zone. In fact, a substantial percentage of those who voted before 12 noon (22 percent) also reported hearing an announcement of the winner of the Presidential election. Clearly such widespread reports of exposure to media projections before any were aired by the networks indicate misunderstanding of the intent of the media exposure questions on the part of CPS respondents. A part of this misunderstanding likely arose because respondents failed to differentiate between reports of a projected winner and reports of who was leading in the election. Further, even though enumerators were instructed to reinforce the time of

⁵Reports on time of day of voting discussed in this section are based on data from the special sample, and differ slightly from the estimates of time of day of voting shown in table 16, which includes reports of proxies when the actual respondents were not available. Percentages shown in table J are based only on persons voting in persons, excluding absentee ballots.

Table J. Percent Who Heard a Media Announcement of the Projected Presidential Winner, by Time of Day Voted and Time Zone

(November 1984. Numbers in thousands. Citizens 18 years old and over)

Time zone	Total	Before noon	Noon to 4 p.m.	4 p.m. to 6 p.m.	After 6. p.m.	Time of day not reported ¹
United States ²	92,578	40,138	17,675	17,246	12,544	4,975
Heard media projection	23,560	8,718	4,758	4,722	4,449	913
Percent	25.4	21.7	26.9	27.4	35.5	18.4
Eastern	45,815	19,852	8,869	8,238	6,696	2,160
Heard media projection	11,580	4,538	2,353	2,232	1,985	472
Percent	25.3	22.9	26.5	27.1	29.6	21.9
Central	28,436	12,585	5,680	5,595	3,158	1,418
Heard media projection	6,590	2,565	1,480	1,299	1,021	225
Percent	23.2	20.4	26.1	23.2	32.3	15.9
Mountain	4,700	1,977	1,096	840	535	252
Heard media projection	1,409	487	349	225	301	47
Percent	30.0	24.7	31.8	26.8	56.2	18.9
Pacific	13,082	5,439	1,930	2,467	2,130	1,116
Heard media projection	3,866	1,070	561	935	1,133	167
Percent	29.6	19.7	29.1	37.9	53.2	15.0

¹Includes 4.3 million persons who voted absentee.

²Includes Alaska and Hawaii, not included in the Pacific Zone.

Note: Reports on time of day of voting in this table are derived from responses to answers in the special sample in the CPS and differ from the estimates shown in table 16 of this report which include reports of proxy respondents.

the projection as having had to occur on election day, some respondents may have based their answers on media reports heard prior to election day. Therefore, purchasers of the November 1984 Public Use Tape should exercise great caution in attempting to analyze responses to the media questions.

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, 1978, and 1982 Congressional elections were published in Series P-20, Nos. 143, 192, 253, 322, 370, 174, 228, 293, 344, and 383, respectively.

A summary of results from the Current Population Survey supplement for Presidential election years 1964 to 1980 was published in Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 131.

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 resident population of voting age for the United States, regions, divisions, and States for November 1, 1984, were published in Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 948.

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.

Users wishing to obtain copies of the November Current Population Survey data tape should contact:

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