

California's Likely Voters

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➤ **Eight in ten are registered to vote; independent registration continues to increase.**

As of February 2017, 19.4 million of California's 24.9 million eligible adults were registered to vote. At 77.9% of eligible adults, this is a slight increase from the registration rate in 2013 (75.7%), the year preceding the last midterm election. The share of registered voters who are Democrats (44.8%) is up slightly from 2013 (43.9%), while the share of Republicans (25.9%) has declined since 2013 (28.9%). At the same time, the share of voters who say they are independent (also known as "decline to state" or "no party preference") has been increasing and is now 24.5%, up from 20.9% in 2013.

➤ **Likely voters and unregistered adults lean Democratic and are ideologically mixed.**

Among likely voters in our surveys over the past year, 46% are Democrats, 29% are Republicans, 21% are independents, and 5% are registered with other parties. Of those we consider infrequent voters, 39% are Democrats, 35% are independents, 20% are Republicans, and 5% are registered with other parties. Among independent likely voters, 43% lean toward the Democratic Party, compared to 29% who lean toward the Republican Party and 29% who volunteer that they lean toward neither major party or are unsure. Among unregistered adults, 49% lean toward the Democratic Party and 19% toward the Republican Party; 32% lean toward neither party or are unsure. Ideologically, 38% of likely voters are politically liberal, 27% are moderate, and 35% are conservative. Among infrequent voters, 35% consider themselves liberal, 33% consider themselves moderate, and 33% consider themselves conservative. Unregistered adults are also ideologically mixed: 36% are conservative, 33% are liberal, and 30% are moderate.

➤ **Likely voters are disproportionately white.**

Whites make up only 43% of California's adult population but 61% of the state's likely voters. In contrast, Latinos comprise 34% of the adult population but just 18% of likely voters. Asian Americans make up 15% of the population and 12% of likely voters, while 6% of both the population and likely voters are African American. "Other race" and multiracial adults make up 3% of the population and 3% of likely voters. Four in ten (38%) infrequent voters are white, and 31% are Latino. Six in ten unregistered adults are Latino (59%); fewer are white (20%), Asian American (17%), or African American (3%).

➤ **Likely voters tend to be older, more educated and affluent, homeowners, and US-born.**

Californians age 55 and older make up 31% of the state's adult population but constitute 45% of likely voters. Young adults (age 18 to 34) make up 33% of the population but only 22% of likely voters, while adults age 35 to 54 are proportionally represented. Eight in ten likely voters either have some college education (42%) or are college graduates (41%); 17% have no college education. Forty-four percent of likely voters have annual household incomes of \$80,000 or more, while 29% earn between \$40,000 and \$80,000 and 28% earn \$40,000 or less. A solid majority of likely voters (64%) are homeowners, while a third (33%) are renters. In contrast, 66% of unregistered adults and 62% of infrequent voters are renters. Eighty-four percent of likely voters were born in the United States (16% are immigrants). Women (53%) and men (47%) make up similar shares of California's likely voters.

➤ **The regional distribution of likely voters matches the state's adult population.**

The share of likely voters in each region mirrors the region's share of the state's overall adult population: Los Angeles County (27% of adults, 27% of likely voters), the San Francisco Bay Area (20% of adults, 21% of likely voters), Orange and San Diego Counties (17% of adults, 17% of likely voters), the Central Valley (17% of adults, 17% of likely voters), and the Inland Empire (11% of adults, 9% of likely voters). The largest shares of infrequent voters (29%) and unregistered adults (25%) live in Los Angeles County.



California's likely voters

		Registered voters		Not registered
		Likely voters	Infrequent voters	
Party registration	Democratic	46%	39%	–
	Republican	29	20	–
	Independent	21	35	–
	Other	5	5	–
Major party leanings among independents and those not registered	Democratic Party	43	41	49%
	Republican Party	29	28	19
	Neither/Don't know	29	31	32
Political ideology	Liberal	38	35	33
	Moderate	27	33	30
	Conservative	35	33	36
Race/Ethnicity	African American	6	9	3
	Asian American	12	18	17
	Latino	18	31	59
	White	61	38	20
	Other/Multiracial	4	4	1
Region	Los Angeles County	27	29	25
	San Francisco Bay Area	21	18	19
	Central Valley	17	18	18
	Orange/San Diego Counties	17	15	17
	Inland Empire	9	12	13
	Other	9	7	7
Gender	Men	47	51	50
	Women	53	49	50
Age	18 to 34	22	48	39
	35 to 54	33	31	44
	55 and older	45	21	17
Education	No college	17	52	64
	Some college	42	31	19
	College graduate	41	18	17
Income	Under \$40,000	28	54	67
	\$40,000 to under \$80,000	29	25	18
	\$80,000 or more	44	21	15
Own/rent	Own	64	30	28
	Rent	33	62	66
Nativity	US-born	84	79	30
	Immigrant	16	21	70

Notes: “Likely voters” are registered voters meeting criteria on interest in politics, attention to issues, voting behavior, and intention to vote; “infrequent voters” are registered voters who do not meet these criteria. For a full description of these criteria and regional definitions, visit www.ppic.org/content/other/SurveyMethodology.pdf. For race and ethnicity, results are presented for non-Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic Asian Americans, non-Hispanic African Americans, and non-Hispanic “other race” and multiracial adults.

Sources: Eight PPIC Statewide Surveys from September 2016 to July 2017, including 8,528 likely voters, 2,581 infrequent voters, and 2,414 unregistered adults. California Secretary of State, Report of Registration, February 2017. US Census, 2011–15 American Community Survey.

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