California’s Exclusive Electorate
Who Votes and Why It Matters

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California’s citizens make critical policy decisions at the ballot box

- California’s electorate does not reflect the state’s diversity, attitudes, or preferences
- This trend has persisted for at least 10 years
  - Earlier PPIC work found similar patterns
- Economic and political inequality is a powerful theme this presidential election year
  - Many important national, state, and local decisions
Our data come from a variety of sources

- Voter registration and election statistics from the Secretary of State (October 2000 to January 2016)
- Demographic and economic trends from the U.S. Census and California Department of Finance
- Profiles and public opinion from the 2015 PPIC Statewide Surveys
  - Includes 11,936 adults and 7 monthly surveys
Voter eligibility is high, but participation lags
Political participation has not kept up with population growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adults 18+</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible to vote</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered to vote</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered to major party</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election voters</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Voters do not represent state’s racial diversity

Likely Voters

- White: 60%
- Latino: 18%
- Asian: 12%
- Black: 6%
- Other: 4%

Not Registered to Vote

- White: 59%
- Latino: 22%
- Asian: 3%
- Black: 1%
- Other: 1%
Likely voters tend to be more affluent

- College graduate
- $60K or more annual income
- Homeowner

Likely voters
- College graduate: 42%
- $60K or more annual income: 55%
- Homeowner: 68%

Not registered to vote
- College graduate: 17%
- $60K or more annual income: 20%
- Homeowner: 27%
“Should the government do more to reduce the gap between the rich and poor in this country, or is this something the government should not be doing?”

Significant gaps between likely voters and nonvoters on addressing income inequality . . .

- Likely voters: 51% saying government should do more
- Not registered to vote: 70% saying government should do more
- All adults: 61% saying government should do more
“Do you think that in California today all people have an equal opportunity to get ahead or that the government should do more to make sure that all Californians have an equal opportunity to get ahead?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>% Saying Government Should Do More</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Likely Voters</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Registered to Vote</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Adults</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Do you favor or oppose providing health care coverage for undocumented immigrants in California?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>% saying favor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Likely voters</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not registered to vote</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All adults</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Do you think the state budget situation in California, that is, the balance between government spending and revenues, is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem for the people of California today?”

- Likely voters: 50%
- Not registered to vote: 34%
- All adults: 45%
“If the state had a bond measure on the ballot to pay for school construction projects, would you vote yes or no?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>% saying yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Likely voters</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not registered to vote</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All adults</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nonvoters are more approving of elected officials than likely voters

“Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the California Legislature is handling its job?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Approve</th>
<th>Disapprove</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Likely voters</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not registered to vote</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All adults</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An important election is ahead

- California’s electorate does not reflect the growth or diversity of its population
- Initiative process does not express different preferences of voters and nonvoters
- Changes to electoral processes will bring in new voters, but economic and political forces will limit their impact
- Broader solutions include
  - Building trust in government, providing civics education, increasing economic mobility, initiating citizenship drives, changing federal immigration policy
These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

survey@ppic.org

Thank you for your interest in this work.