

California's Likely Voters

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

As of May 2016, 17.9 million of California's 24.8 million eligible adults were registered to vote, which equates to a registration rate of 72.3%. This rate is identical to May 2012 and slightly higher than the rate before the presidential primary in February 2008 (68.5%). However, the share of eligible adults who are registered to vote is likely to increase as we have seen in the lead-up to elections in 2012 (76.7% in October) and 2008 (74.6% in October), the last presidential contest without an incumbent. The share of registered voters who are Democrats (44.8%) is up from 2012 (43.7%), while the share of Republicans (27.3%) is down (from 29.4%). 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: it is now 23.3%, up from 20.9% in 2012.

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

Among likely voters in our surveys over the past year, 45% are Democrats, 31% are Republicans, 20% are independents, and 4% are registered with other parties. Of those we consider infrequent voters, 41% are Democrats, 34% are independents, 21% are Republicans, and 5% are registered with other parties. Among independent likely voters, 42% lean toward the Democratic Party, compared to 32% who lean toward the Republican Party and 26% who volunteer that they lean toward neither major party or are unsure. Among unregistered adults, 51% lean toward the Democratic Party and 22% toward the Republican Party; 27% lean toward neither party or are unsure. Ideologically, 35% of likely voters are politically liberal, 29% are moderate, and 36% are conservative. Among infrequent voters 35% consider themselves liberal, 32% consider themselves moderate, and 32% consider themselves conservative. Unregistered adults are also ideologically mixed: 36% are conservative, 33% are liberal, and 31% are moderate.

➤ **Likely voters are disproportionately white.**

Whites make up only 43% of California's adult population but 60% 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 4% of likely voters. Four in ten (40%) infrequent voters are white, and 30% are Latino. Nearly six in ten unregistered adults are Latino (57%); fewer are white (22%), Asian American (17%), or African American (2%).

➤ **Likely voters are older, more educated, more affluent; they are homeowners and were born in the US.**

Californians age 55 and older make up 31% of the state's adult population but constitute 47% of likely voters. Young adults (18 to 34) make up 33% of the population but only 18% of likely voters, while adults ages 35 to 54 are proportionally represented. Eight in ten likely voters either have some college education (41%) 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 27% earn between \$40,000 to under \$80,000 and 29% earn \$40,000 or less. The vast majority of likely voters (69%) are homeowners, while three in 10 (31%) are renters. In contrast, 68% of unregistered adults and 63% of infrequent voters are renters. Eighty-four percent of likely voters were born in the US (16% are immigrants). Women (52%) and men (48%) make up similar shares of the likely voters in California.

➤ **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/San Diego Counties (17% of adults, 18% 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	45%	41%	–
	Republican	31	21	–
	Independent	20	34	–
	Other	4	5	–
Major party leanings among independents and those not registered	Democratic Party	42	41	51%
	Republican Party	32	25	22
	Neither/Don't know	26	33	27
Political ideology	Liberal	35	35	33
	Moderate	29	32	31
	Conservative	36	32	36
Race/Ethnicity	African American	6	10	2
	Asian American	12	15	17
	Latino	18	30	57
	White	60	40	22
	Other/Multiracial	4	4	1
Region	Los Angeles County	27	29	25
	San Francisco Bay Area	21	18	20
	Orange/San Diego	18	15	17
	Central Valley	17	18	18
	Inland Empire	9	11	13
	Other	9	9	8
Gender	Men	48	48	49
	Women	52	52	51
Age	18 to 34	18	46	43
	35 to 54	35	31	41
	55 and older	47	23	16
Education	No college	17	45	63
	Some college	41	33	20
	College graduate	41	22	17
Income	Under \$40,000	29	54	67
	\$40,000 to under \$80,000	27	22	19
	\$80,000 or more	44	24	14
Own/rent	Own	69	37	32
	Rent	31	63	68
Nativity	US-born	84	78	35
	Immigrant	16	22	65

Sources: Seven PPIC Statewide Surveys from September 2015 to July 2016, including 7,306 likely voters, 2,368 infrequent voters, and 2,128 unregistered adults. California Secretary of State, Report of Registration, May 2016. US Census, 2010–14 American Community Survey.

Note: “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 full description of this 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 Asians, non-Hispanic blacks, and for non-Hispanic other race and multiracial adults.

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