California’s Likely Voters
Mark Baldassare, Dean Bonner, Alyssa Dykman, and Rachel Ward

Eight in ten are registered to vote; independent registration continues to increase.
As of February 2019, 19.9 million of California’s 25.3 million eligible adults were registered to vote. At 79.1% of eligible adults, this is an increase from the registration rate in 2015 (72.7%), the last year preceding a presidential election. The share of registered voters who are Democrats (43.1%) is similar to what it was in 2015 (43.2%), while the share of Republicans (23.6%) has declined (28.0%). 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 28.3%, up from 23.6% in 2015.

Likely voters and unregistered adults lean Democratic and are ideologically mixed.
Among likely voters in our surveys over the past year, 45% are Democrats, 27% are Republicans, 23% are independents, and 5% are registered with other parties. Of those we consider infrequent voters, 41% are Democrats, 36% are independents, 20% are Republicans, and 4% are registered with other parties. Among independent likely voters, 42% lean toward the Democratic Party, compared to 31% who lean toward the Republican Party and 26% who volunteer that they lean toward neither major party or are unsure. Among unregistered adults, 47% lean Democratic and 21% lean Republican; 32% lean toward neither party or are unsure. Ideologically, 37% of likely voters are politically liberal, 29% are moderate, and 34% are conservative. Among infrequent voters, 32% consider themselves liberal, 36% consider themselves moderate, and 32% consider themselves conservative. Unregistered adults are also ideologically mixed: 33% are liberal, 35% are moderate, and 32% are conservative.

Likely voters are disproportionately white.
Whites make up only 42% of California’s adult population but 58% of the state’s likely voters. In contrast, Latinos comprise 35% of the adult population but just 19% of likely voters. Asian Americans make up 15% of adults and 13% of likely voters, while 6% of both adults and likely voters are African American. “Other race” and multiracial adults make up 3% of the adult population and 4% of likely voters. About four in ten (38%) infrequent voters are white, and 35% are Latino. Nearly six in ten unregistered adults are Latino (56%); fewer are white (21%), Asian American (18%), or African American (3%).

Likely voters tend to be older, more educated and affluent, homeowners, and US born.
Californians ages 55 and older make up 32% of the state’s adult population but constitute 47% of likely voters. Young adults (ages 18 to 34) make up 33% of adults but only 20% 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%); 18% have no college education. Almost half of likely voters (46%) have annual household incomes of $80,000 or more, while 27% earn between $40,000 and $80,000 and 27% earn $40,000 or less. A strong majority of likely voters (67%) are homeowners, while one-third (33%) are renters. In contrast, 69% of unregistered adults and 64% of infrequent voters are renters. The vast majority of likely voters (83%) were born in the United States (17% 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 (26% of adults, 26% of likely voters), the San Francisco Bay Area (20% of adults, 22% of likely voters), Orange/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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party registration</th>
<th>Registered voters</th>
<th>Not registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likely voters</td>
<td>Infrequent voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Major party leanings among independents and those not registered**
  - Democratic Party: 42%
  - Republican Party: 31%
  - Neither/Don’t know: 26%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political ideology</th>
<th>Registered voters</th>
<th>Not registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Race/Ethnicity**
  - African American: 6%
  - Asian American: 13%
  - Latino: 19%
  - White: 58%
  - Other/Multiracial: 4%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Registered voters</th>
<th>Not registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Valley</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inland Empire</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles County</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange/San Diego Counties</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco Bay Area</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Gender**
  - Men: 47%
  - Women: 53%

- **Age**
  - 18 to 34: 20%
  - 35 to 54: 33%
  - 55 and older: 47%

- **Education**
  - No college: 18%
  - Some college: 41%
  - College graduate: 41%

- **Income**
  - Under $40,000: 27%
  - $40,000 to under $80,000: 27%
  - $80,000 or more: 46%

- **Own/rent**
  - Own: 67%
  - Rent: 33%

- **Nativity**
  - US-born: 83%
  - Immigrant: 17%

**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/wp-content/uploads/SurveyMethodology.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/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.


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