

## California's Likely Voters

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

As of July 2020, 20.9 million of California's 25.1 million eligible adults were registered to vote. At 83% of eligible adults, this is an increase from the registration rate in July 2016 (73%), the year of the last presidential election. The share of registered voters who are Democrats (46.3%) has increased from 2016 (45.1%), while the share of Republicans (24%) has declined (27.1% in 2016). 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%, up from 23.3% in 2016.

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

Among likely voters in our surveys over the past year, 47% are Democrats, 26% are Republicans, 22% are independents, and 4% are registered with other parties. Of those we consider infrequent voters, 40% are independents, 36% are Democrats, 19% are Republicans, and 4% are registered with other parties. Among independent likely voters, 46% lean toward the Democratic Party, compared to 37% who lean toward the Republican Party and 17% who volunteer that they lean toward neither major party or are unsure. Among unregistered adults, 55% lean Democratic and 21% lean Republican; 24% lean toward neither party or are unsure. Ideologically, 37% of likely voters are politically liberal, 30% are moderate, and 33% are conservative. Among infrequent voters, 30% consider themselves liberal, 38% consider themselves moderate, and 32% consider themselves conservative. Unregistered adults are also ideologically mixed: 30% are liberal, 38% are moderate, and 31% are conservative.

### ➤ **Likely voters are disproportionately white.**

Whites make up only 41% of California's adult population but 55% of the state's likely voters. In contrast, Latinos comprise 35% of the adult population but just 21% of likely voters. Asian Americans make up 15% of adults and 14% 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. Four in ten (40%) infrequent voters are white, and 31% are Latino. Nearly six in ten unregistered adults are Latino (58%); fewer are white (22%), Asian American (15%), 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 33% of the state's adult population but constitute 46% of likely voters. Young adults (ages 18 to 34) make up 32% of adults but only 22% of likely voters, while adults ages 35 to 54 are proportionally represented. Eight in ten likely voters either have some college education (38%) or are college graduates (43%); 19% 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 (66%) are homeowners, while one-third (34%) are renters. In contrast, 68% of unregistered adults and 62% of infrequent voters are renters. The vast majority of likely voters (83%) were born in the United States (17% are immigrants). Women (51%) and men (49%) 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, 21% of likely voters), Orange/San Diego Counties (17% of adults, 18% of likely voters), the Central Valley (17% of adults, 16% of likely voters), and the Inland Empire (11% of adults, 9% of likely voters). The largest shares of infrequent voters (28%) and unregistered adults (25%) live in Los Angeles County.



## California's likely voters

		Registered voters		Not registered
		Likely voters	Infrequent voters	
Party registration	Democratic	47%	36%	–
	Republican	26	19	–
	Independent	22	40	–
	Other	4	4	–
Major party leanings among independents and those not registered	Democratic Party	46	45	55%
	Republican Party	37	26	21
	Neither/Don't know	17	29	24
Political ideology	Liberal	37	30	30
	Moderate	30	38	38
	Conservative	33	32	31
Race/Ethnicity	African American	6	8	3
	Asian American	14	18	15
	Latino	21	31	58
	White	55	40	22
	Other/Multiracial	4	3	2
Region	Central Valley	16	19	18
	Inland Empire	9	12	13
	Los Angeles County	26	28	25
	Orange/San Diego Counties	18	15	17
	San Francisco Bay Area	21	18	20
	Other	9	7	8
Gender	Men	49	49	48
	Women	51	51	52
Age	18 to 34	22	43	40
	35 to 54	32	32	41
	55 and older	46	25	19
Education	No college	19	46	62
	Some college	38	31	22
	College graduate	43	23	16
Income	Under \$40,000	27	44	57
	\$40,000 to under \$80,000	27	28	24
	\$80,000 or more	46	28	18
Own/rent	Own	66	38	32
	Rent	34	62	68
Nativity	US-born	83	80	34
	Immigrant	17	20	66

**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.

**Source:** Seven PPIC Statewide Surveys from September 2019 to July 2020, including 7,243 likely voters, 2,278 infrequent voters, and 2,100 unregistered adults. California Secretary of State, Report of Registration, August 2020. US Census Bureau, 2014–2018 American Community Survey.

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