

# VOTING AND REGISTRATION IN 2004

Two weeks after congressional and Presidential elections, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts a special November supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS) to determine the social and economic characteristics of the voting population.

The percentage of voting-age citizens participating in the 2004 Presidential election was higher than the percentage voting in the previous Presidential election (2000), 64 percent compared with 60 percent (Figure 1). The turnout was the highest since 1992, when 68 percent of voting-age citizens participated. The 126 million voters in the November 2004 election was a record number for a Presidential election.

In the 2004 election, 80 percent of voters reported that they voted on Election Day itself. Another 20 percent voted before Election Day either in person or by mail. All states offer voters the option of voting prior to the election.

Married people, veterans, people with more education, and those with higher incomes were more likely to vote than others. In 2004, 65 percent of female citizens of voting age voted, compared with 62 percent of their male counterparts. Women's voting rates surpassed those of men for the first time in the 1984 Presidential election.

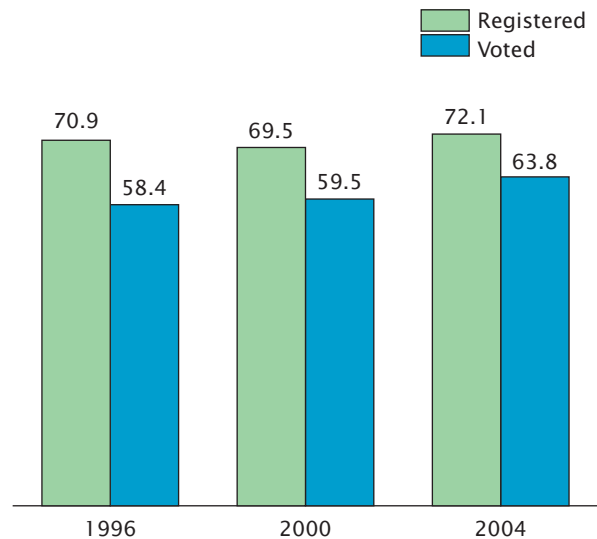
## Voting by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Nativity

Looking at the proportion of voting-age citizens in 2004, non-Hispanic White citizens had the highest

### Words That Count

**Voting and registration rates** have been based on the number of citizens aged 18 and older since 1994. Previously, they were based on the total number of people aged 18 and older. Voting and registration rates historically have been higher in years with Presidential elections. For the purpose of this report, the 2004 data (a Presidential election year) will be compared with other Presidential election years.

Figure 1.  
**Registration and Voting Rates in Presidential Elections: 1996 to 2004**  
(Percent of U.S. citizens aged 18 and older)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 1996, 2000, and 2004.

level of voter turnout—67 percent. They were followed by Black citizens (60 percent), Hispanic citizens (47 percent), and Asian citizens (44 percent).

Of the estimated 216 million people of voting age in November 2004, 32 million were not citizens at birth, but 13 million of these people had been naturalized and were therefore eligible to vote. While the voting rate for natives was 65 percent, the rate for naturalized citizens was 54 percent.<sup>1</sup>

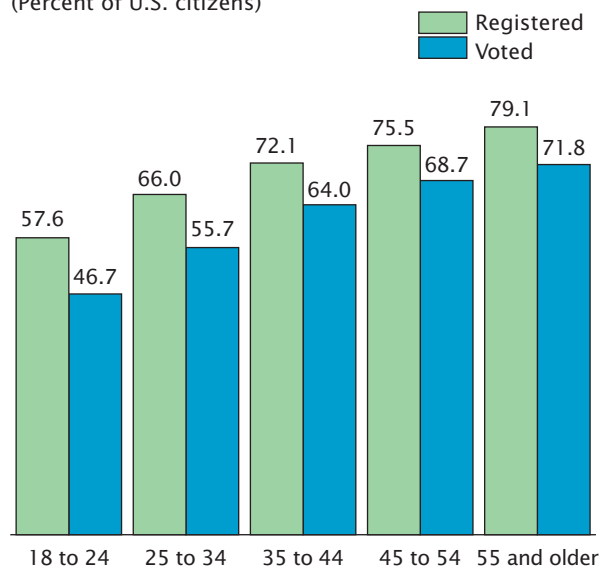
## Voting by Region and State

Citizens in the Midwest were more likely to register and to vote than those who resided in other regions. In 2004, 68 percent of citizens in the Midwest voted, compared with 64 percent in the Northeast and the West and 61 percent in the South. In 2004, the

<sup>1</sup> Natives are people who were born in the United States, Puerto Rico, or any of the U.S. island areas or were born abroad to a U.S.-citizen parent.

Figure 2.  
**Registration and Voting Rates  
 by Age: 2004**

(Percent of U.S. citizens)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 1996, 2000, and 2004.

citizen-voting rate ranged from 51 percent in Hawaii to 79 percent in Minnesota.

### Voting by Age

Older citizens were more likely to vote than younger ones, as shown in Figure 2. While 72 percent of citizens aged 55 and older voted, 47 percent of citizens aged 18 to 24 did. The key difference between these groups was registration—79 percent of citizens 55 and older were registered, compared with 58 percent of those aged 18 to 24.

### Registration Rates

Of the 142 million registered voters in 2004, 89 percent reported voting, up slightly from the 86 percent

of registered voters who went to the polls in 2000. Even though young adults had the lowest rates for voting and registration, their rates experienced the largest increases of any age group between 2000 and 2004. Their registration rate increased 7 percentage points and their voter participation rate increased 11 percentage points.

### Reasons for Not Voting

Sixteen million registered voters did not cast a ballot in the 2004 election. Of these registered nonvoters, 20 percent explained they were too busy or had a conflicting work or school schedule. Another 15 percent said they were ill, disabled, or had a family emergency, and 11 percent said they were not interested in the election or felt their vote would not make a difference. Other reasons for not voting included being out of town, not liking the candidates, confusion about voting or registration, forgetting to vote, and having transportation problems.

### The Census Bureau Can Tell You More

For more detailed information, consult the following Census Bureau Current Population Report: *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2004* (P20-556) by Kelly Holder.

Look for complete reports and detailed tables on the Census Bureau's Web site <[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)>. Go to the top of the Census Bureau's home page and click on "Subjects A to Z." Click on "V" and select "Voting and Registration Data."

Contact the Census Bureau's Customer Services Center at 301-763-INFO (4636) or e-mail <[pop@census.gov](mailto:pop@census.gov)>.

For information on the accuracy of the estimates, see Appendix A.