



Election Day – November 7, 2006

Election Day occurs on the Tuesday following the first Monday of November. This rule was instituted by the US Congress in 1845, and the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November was chosen to keep the Election Day from falling on November 1st, All Saint's Day, which is a holiday for Roman Catholics. Tuesday was chosen to allow voters one day to travel to their polling place, as most residents at the time could not travel on Sundays because of religious obligations. November was chosen because it was after the crops were harvested.

Voter Registration- 2004

- In 2004, 216 million people were of voting age (18 years and older). Of these, 197 million were citizens, or “potential voters,” and 142 million were registered to vote.
- Voter registration rates were slightly higher in the 2004 election, 72 percent, than in the 2000 election, 70 percent of voting age citizens. This was an increase of 12.5 million registrations since the 2000 election.
- Historically, the majority of people who are registered to vote actually do. In the 2004 elections, 89 percent of registered voters actually voted, up from 86 percent in 2000. The peak was 91 percent in 1968.
- More women, 74 percent, than men, 71 percent, among the voter-eligible population were registered to vote in the 2004 election.
- Of the 32 million people who reported that they were not registered to vote in 2004, 47 percent, about 15 million, said they were not interested in the election or were not involved in politics; 17 percent, about 6 million, said they did not meet the registration deadlines; 6 percent reported an illness or disability; and, 5 percent said they did not know where or how to register.

Voter Turnout- 2004

- A record high 126 million people voted in the November 2004 elections, representing 58 percent of the voting-age population; 64 percent of the voting-age citizen population; and, 89 percent of the registered population.
- From the 2000 to the 2004 election, the voter-eligible population increased by 11 million people, but voter turnout increased by 15 million voters in that four year period.

- Voter turnout rates have been consistently higher in presidential than mid-term Congressional election years. In the 2004 presidential election, 64 percent of voting-age citizens voted while only 39 percent voted in the 2002 Congressional elections.
- The United States average voter turnout rate of 45% for Presidential and Congressional elections between 1991 and 2004 is low in comparison with other industrialized countries, including Italy at 90%, Brazil at 76%, the United Kingdom at 72%, and Canada at 60%. Furthermore, the U.S. is 20th out of 21 in voter turnout among established democracies -- only Switzerland has lower voter turnout.
- Of the 142 million people who were registered to vote, about 12 percent, or 16 million, did not vote in the 2004 presidential election. Of these, 20 percent reported they did not vote because they were too busy or had conflicting schedules; 15 percent did not vote because they were ill, disabled or had a family emergency; 11 percent because they were not interested or felt their vote would not make a difference; and, 10 percent did not like the candidates or the issues.

Profile of Voters in the 2004 Election

- Women's rates among the voting-age population have surpassed those of men (65 percent of women compared to 62 percent of men among voting-age, citizens in 2004.)
- The voting rate was higher among the older citizen population than younger age cohorts in the 2004 elections (72 percent compared to 47 percent).
- Registration rates were also higher among older citizens with 79 percent of citizens 55 years and older registered to vote in 2004 while 58 percent of 18 to 24 year olds were registered.
- However, while young adults had the lowest voting and registration rates in 2004, they had the largest increase in both rates since the 2000 presidential election: registration rates increased by 7 percentage points and voting rate increased by 11 percentage points between those four years.
- Married individuals, representing 57 percent of potential voters, had higher voting rates in 2004 (71 percent), than widowed (62 percent), divorced (58 percent), separated (48 percent), or never-married persons (52 percent). Married individuals also had the highest registration rate at 78 percent.
- Although married men and women had the same registration rate in 2004 (77 percent), married women had a slightly higher voting rate (71 percent), than married men (70 percent). Women who were not married had higher voting and registration rates (59 percent and 69 percent), than single men (50 percent and 61 percent).
- In 2004, Citizens who had earned a bachelor's degree had a voting rate nearly twice as high as those who had not completed high school (78 percent compared to 40 percent). Citizens with a bachelor's degree or higher represented 32 percent of the voters, while those who did not complete a high school diploma comprised 8 percent of the voting population.
- Young adults, ages 18 to 24, with at least a bachelor's degree had a higher voting rate (67 percent) than those in the same age cohort with lower levels of educational attainment (25 to 57 percent). Moreover, those young adults also had a higher

voting rate than adults ages 25 to 44 with some college education (64 percent) and those 45 to 64 years old with only a high school education (63 percent). Young adults (18-24) with a college education had the same pattern of higher voting rates than their less educated peers.

- Citizens with higher incomes were more likely to register and vote. Nearly 77 percent of individuals in families with annual incomes over \$50,000 voted in 2004 compared to only 48 percent of those living in families with annual incomes under \$20,000.
- Citizens who were employed were more likely to vote in the 2004 elections (66% compared to 51%).
- Voting and registration rates (65% compared to 54%) were higher among native than naturalized citizens (73 percent compared to 61 percent).
- While only 2 percent of non-Hispanic whites and 6 percent of African-Americans were not citizens, nearly 33 percent of Asians and 41 percent of Hispanics were not citizens, and thus not eligible to vote in 2004.
- The majority of registered voters among all racial and ethnic groups voted: 89 percent of non-Hispanic whites, 87 percent of African-Americans, 85 percent of Asians, and 82 percent of Hispanics who were registered actually voted in the 2004 election.
- Seventy-three percent of veteran citizens cast ballots, compared with 63 percent of their non-veteran counterparts.
- The national average registration rate was 72 percent and the national average voting rate was 64%. North Dakota had the highest citizen-registration rate at 89 percent, and Minnesota the highest voting rate. Hawaii had the lowest registration and voting rates.

2006 Congressional Elections

- It is estimated that in the 2006 Congressional elections, the nation-wide voting age population will be about 226 million and the voting-eligible population will be about 207 million.
- Voter turnout in the 2006 statewide mid-term primaries fell 17 percent from the turnout level in 2002. Only 15 percent of the voting-eligible population went to the polls, a record low for mid-term primaries. The prior low was in both 1998 and 2002 when roughly 19 percent of the eligible electorate voted.
- A report by American University's Center for the Study of the American Electorate predicts that despite the sharp decline in voter turnout in the 2006 primaries, it is likely that turnout in the November general election will be higher than the 40 percent of eligible voters who voted in 2002.

This fact sheet was updated in October 2006 by the Population Resource Center. Sources include the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the American Community Survey, the Federal Election Commission and the Center for Voting and Democracy. For further information, please contact the Center at (202) 467-5030, 1725 K Street NW, Suite 1102, Washington, D.C. 20006, prc@p