## Chapter 2 Voter Registration

Most jurisdictions maintain a registry of persons who are eligible to vote. To be eligible to vote, a person must be a U.S. citizen, meet a residency requirement, and have attained the age of 18 by Election Day. Persons who have been legally declared insane or mentally incompetent or who have been convicted of a felony and have not had their civil rights legally restored generally cannot vote, depending on state law. Prior to HAVA (Help America Vote Act of 2002), voter registration rolls were administered by local election officials. HAVA required states to administer voter registration, although not all states have completed the transition to a statewide voter registration system. Only 17 states had a fully functional statewide voter registration system in place for the 2004 election.

To register to vote, a person must submit an application to the election authority of the local jurisdiction in which he or she resides. HAVA also requires that first-time registrants provide some form of identification. After the application has been processed, a voter registration, or confirmation, card is usually mailed to the registrant. The card assigns the registrant to a specific precinct and polling place. The registration remains "active" as long as the registrant lives at his or her original residence address. A person must reregister if he or he moves to a new place of residence or legally changes his or her name. The election authority will usually issue a new card if an assigned precinct or polling place is changed.

To keep voter registries current, state and federal laws allow election authorities to designate a registrant as "inactive" if, over a period of time, the registrant has not voted in a series of elections or has not had any contact with or responded to mailings by the election jurisdiction. The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA) prohibits election jurisdictions from removing a person from the voter registry for failure to vote [sec. 8(b)(2)] or failure to notify the registrar of a change of address within a jurisdiction [sec. 8(f)]. But the NVRA does not prohibit election jurisdictions from designating as "inactive", voters who have not responded to certain address confirmation mailings [sec. 8(d)(2) mailings to confirm whether registrants continue to reside in the jurisdiction] and who have not appeared at the polls or attempted to reregister. The designation of "inactive" status allows election jurisdictions some administrative leeway in determining, for example, the number of signatures required for ballot access or the number of precincts, ballots, or voting machines necessary to service voters at an election. Persons may be removed from a voter registry for failure to respond to a sec. $8(\mathrm{~d})(2)$ confirmation mailing if the registrant has failed to vote or appeared to vote in any election between the date of the confirmation notice and the day after the second subsequent general election for a federal office has occurred.

## Applicability and Coverage

Question 1 of the Election Day Survey asked states to provide the number of active and inactive voters in each local election jurisdiction. But the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) did not specifically ask the states to provide the total number of registered voters at the time of the November 2004 general election. Nor did the EAC ask for the number of persons who registered to
vote on Election Day in the six states with EDR: Idaho, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. ${ }^{1}$

Election Data Services had previously collected the reported numbers of registered voters from the states for their respective jurisdictions at the November election. A comparison of the EAC survey data and Election Data Services' data showed the different ways in which states report voter registration numbers. In some states, voter registration is just the number of active voters, while in others, voter registration is a combination of active and inactive voters. In four states, the determination of whether to report active and inactive voters in voter registration totals is at the discretion of individual local jurisdictions. The different ways in which states report voter registration numbers are as follows:

Voter Registration Reports Include Active Voters Only (26)

| Alabama | Georgia | Mississippi | South Carolina |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Alaska | Illinois | Michigan | South Dakota |
| Arizona | Indiana | Nevada | Utah |
| California | Kentucky | New Hampshire* | Vermont |
| Connecticut | Maine | Oregon | Washington |
| Dist. of Columbia | Maryland | Pennsylvania |  |
| Florida | Minnesota | Rhode Island* |  |

Voter Registration Reports Include Active and Inactive Voters (20)

| Arkansas | Kansas | Nebraska |
| :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Colorado | Louisiana | New Mexico |
| Delaware | Massachusetts | New York |
| Hawaii | Missouri | North Carolina |
| Idaho* | Montana | Oklahoma |

Reporting Active and Inactive Voters Varies by Local Jurisdiction (4)
Iowa New Jersey Ohio Wisconsin*

Unknown (4)
American Samoa Guam Puerto Rico U.S. Virgin Islands
*Voter registration reports also include voters who registered on Election Day.
North Dakota does not have voter registration.
Because of the differences among state voter registration reports and the fact that not every state provided uniform data on active voters, we added a special column to Table 2 called "Reported Total Registration." All calculations in this study based on total voter registration use Reported Total Registration. For states that report only active voters, Reported Total Registration represents solely active voters. For states that report both active and inactive voters, Reported Total Registration is a combination of active and inactive voters. In four states-Iowa, New Jersey, Ohio, and Wisconsinwhere local election jurisdictions decide whether to report active and inactive voters, Reported Total Registration is a combination of active and inactive voters, depending on local practice.

There are also two special cases: North Dakota and Wisconsin. North Dakota has no voter registration requirement and responded "Not Applicable" to survey question 1. In North Dakota, anyone of voting age is allowed to vote on Election Day. As a result, in Table 2, Reported Total

[^0]Registration for North Dakota is the estimated November 2004 voting age population (VAP). Wisconsin's voter registration requirement applies only to municipalities with populations larger than 5,000. Only 337 of the state's 1,900 local election jurisdictions reported voter registration numbers on the survey. Wisconsin is building a statewide voter registration database, and some jurisdictions smaller than 5,000 provided voter registration numbers on the survey. For all other Wisconsin jurisdictions, Reported Total Registration in Table 2 is estimated November 2004 VAP.

## Historical Context

For most eligible citizens in the United States, the first step to participate in the electoral process is to register to vote, except in North Dakota, which has no voter registration, and in the six states with EDR. For residents of all other states, the last day to register to vote prior to an election depends on state law. Table 2a provides a list of state voter registration deadlines for the November 2004 general election. Some states have different deadlines for registration by mail or in person. Some of the states with EDR have deadlines for preregistration by mail.

Prior to the adoption of the NVRA in 1993, individuals had to seek out voter registration applications on their own. After NVRA, voter registration applications were more readily available at public offices, most notably motor vehicles offices. The size of voter registries increased as voter registration became easier. But voter registration rolls contain a certain amount of "deadwood"-that is, duplicate names, erroneous or obsolete address information, and names of deceased and ineligible people still listed as active, or inactive, voters. Updating registration rolls for persons who change their places of residence is a continual challenge to registrars across the country.

The 2000 census revealed that 46.7 percent of the U.S. population had moved in the previous five years. The people most likely to become deadwood on the voter registration rolls are those who moved just outside the county in which they formerly resided, which was 21.3 percent of the population. Yearly current population reports from the Census Bureau have constantly shown that about 17 percent of this nation's population moves every year. The Current Population Survey (CPS) is a monthly survey of labor statistics conducted by the Census Bureau. In November of an election year, the CPS survey includes a limited number of voting questions.

Table 2b shows trends in voter registration nationally. After 1994, voter registration as a percentage of the citizen voting age population increased about seven percentage points from 71.6 percent to 78.7 percent. This corresponds to the time that states began implementing NVRA, which linked voter registration changes with driver’s license agencies. Since 1996, voter registration has held steady at a little more than 82 percent of the citizen voting age population (CVAP), but now complete data on 2004 shows it increased to 86.1 percent. Due to holes in the data collection, the EAC survey shows just 81.2 percent of the citizen voting age population was registered in 2004.

While registration as a percentage of CVAP has increased, the percentage of persons identifying themselves as a citizen of voting age and registered to vote in the Census Bureau's CPS has remained relatively constant, at 67.4 percent. Moreover, the difference between the percentage of CVAP on the CPS reported as registered and the aggregate national statistics shows that for the most recent elections, over 10 percent fewer people report being registered than the state-provided statistics indicate. What makes this difference all the more significant is that election surveys consistently find more people report voting than aggregate statistics indicate, a phenomenon
sometimes attributed to "social desirability"-the desire by survey respondents to provide the socially correct answer. If people misreport that they vote when they do not, it would be expected that they would misreport registering when they have not. The most plausible explanations for the discrepancy are both deadwood, and misreporting by voters.

## Table 2a. State Voter Registration Deadlines for 2004 General Election

| 31 days before the election Nevada (mail) |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 30 days before the election |  |  |
| Alaska Louisiana | Pennsylvania | Washington (mail) |
| Arkansas Michigan | Rhode Island | Wyoming (mail) |
| Dist. of Columbia Mississippi | South Carolina |  |
| Georgia Montana | Tennessee |  |
| Hawaii Ohio | Texas |  |
| 29 days before the election |  |  |
| Arizona Florida | Kentucky | Virginia |
| Colorado Indiana | New Jersey |  |
| 28 days before the election |  |  |
| Illinois New Mexico |  |  |
| 27 days before the election Missouri |  |  |
| 25 days before the election |  |  |
| Idaho (mail) New York | North Carolina | Oklahoma* |
| 24 days before the election Idaho (in person) |  |  |
| 21 days before the election |  |  |
| Maryland Minnesota (mail) | Nevada (in-person) | Oregon (new registrants) |
| 20 days before the election |  |  |
| Delaware Massachusetts | Utah (mail) | West Virginia |
| 18 days before the election Nebraska |  |  |
| 15 days before the election |  |  |
| California Kansas | Washington (in per |  |
| Iowa (mail) South Dakota |  |  |

## 14 days before the election

## Connecticut

13 days before the election
Wisconsin (mail)
10 days before the election
Alabama Iowa (in person) New Hampshire (mail) Vermont

8 days before the election
Utah (in person) Vermont

No deadline
Maine
Election Day Registration

| Idaho | Minnesota | Wisconsin |
| :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Maine | New Hampshire | Wyoming |

*Registration applications may be submitted anytime, but registration cards may not be issued during the 24 days prior to an election.

Table 2b. Voter Registration Statistics, 1964-2004

| Year | Voting Age Population (VAP) | Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) | Registered Voters | Percent Registered of VAP | Percent Registered of CVAP | Percent Registered of CVAP (CPS) |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| $2004{ }^{1}$ | 221,279,989 | 204,440,432 | 177,265,030 | 79.5 | 86.1 | -- |
| $2002{ }^{1}$ | 216,207,290 | 198,902,000 | 162,993,315 | 73.3 | 82.3 | 66.5 |
| $2000{ }^{1}$ | 202,609,000 | 194,477,000 | 163,931,394 | 80.9 | 82.7 | 69.5 |
| $1998{ }^{1}$ | 200,929,000 | 190,007,000 | 156,036,945 | 77.7 | 82.1 | 67.1 |
| $1996{ }^{2}$ | 192,198,000 | 185,849,000 | 146,370,909 | 76.2 | 78.7 | 65.9 |
| $1994{ }^{2}$ | 189,406,000 | 181,909,000 | 130,292,822 | 68.8 | 71.6 | 67.1 |
| $1992{ }^{2}$ | 185,392,000 | 178,694,000 | 133,821,178 | 72.2 | 74.9 | 68.2 |
| $1990{ }^{2}$ | 181,734,000 | -- | 121,105,630 | 66.6 | -- | -- |
| $1988{ }^{2}$ | 178,701,000 | -- | 126,379,628 | 70.7 | -- | -- |
| $1986{ }^{2}$ | 174,555,000 | -- | 118,399,984 | 67.8 | -- | -- |
| $1984{ }^{2}$ | 170,485,000 | -- | 124,150,614 | 72.8 | -- | -- |
| $1982^{2}$ | 166,017,000 | -- | 110,671,225 | 66.7 | -- | -- |
| $1980^{2}$ | 160,755,000 | -- | 113,043,734 | 70.3 | -- | -- |
| $1978{ }^{2}$ | 154,655,000 | -- | 103,291,265 | 66.8 | -- | -- |
| $1976{ }^{2}$ | 148,704,000 | -- | 105,037,980 | 70.6 | -- | -- |
| $1974{ }^{3}$ | 140,892,000 | -- | 96,199,020 | 68.3 | -- | -- |
| $1972{ }^{4}$ | 132,243,000 | -- | 97,328,541 | 73.6 | -- | -- |
| $1970^{5}$ | 115,520,000 | -- | 82,496,747 | 71.4 | -- | -- |
| $1968{ }^{6}$ | 111,433,000 | -- | 81,884,802 | 73.5 | -- | -- |
| $1966{ }^{7}$ | 104,661,000 | -- | 76,288,283 | 72.9 | -- | -- |
| $1964{ }^{8}$ | 98,569,000 | -- | 73,715,818 | 74.8 | -- | -- |

${ }^{1}$ Includes all 50 states and the District of Columbia. ${ }^{2}$ Includes 48 states and the District of Columbia (excludes North Dakota and Wisconsin). ${ }^{3}$ Includes 47 states and the District of Columbia (excludes Iowa, North Dakota, and Wisconsin). ${ }^{4}$ Includes 46 states and the District of Columbia (excludes Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, and Wisconsin).
${ }^{5}$ Includes 45 states and the District of Columbia (excludes Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, North Dakota, and Wisconsin).
${ }^{6}$ Includes 44 states and the District of Columbia (excludes Alaska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, North Dakota, and Wisconsin). ${ }^{7}$ Includes 41 states (excludes Alaska, Iowa, Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and the District of Columbia). ${ }^{8}$ Includes 40 states (excludes Alabama, Alaska, Iowa, Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and the District of Columbia).

Other notes: Registered voter totals from 1998-2004 include the entire voting age population for North Dakota, which does not have voter registration, and Wisconsin, where only larger jurisdictions have voter registration. Voter registration statistics for 2004 are from the Election Day Survey. Voter registration data for 2002 and earlier is from Election Data Services Inc. Citizen voting age population (CVAP) was calculated by Dr. Michael McDonald. Voter registration rates from Current Population Survey (CPS) reports are from the U.S. Census Bureau.

## Survey Results

Table 2 presents data on active and inactive voters from question 1 on the Election Day Survey. In the table, numbers of active and inactive voters are calculated as percentages of the reported total number of registered voters as well as the VAP and theCVAP. The table also provides EDR statistics for four of the six states that allow voters to register on Election Day. The column headings in Table 2 are as follows:

## Column Headings for Table 2. Voter Registration

| Col.- | Heading | Description |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 1 | Code | State census code |
| 2 | Name | Respondent to Election Day Survey |
| 3 | Jurisdiction | Number of local election jurisdictions from survey question 22 |
| 4 | Reported Total Registration | Number of active and inactive registered voters from survey questions 1a and 1b, supplemental data on Election Day registration in six states, and VAP data for North Dakota and jurisdictions in Wisconsin that do not have voter registration |
| 5 | Cases | Number of jurisdictions that responded to question 1, that provided Election Day registration data, or for which VAP data was substituted for voter registration data |
| 6 | Active Registration | Number of active registered voters from survey question 1a |
| 7 | Cases | Number of jurisdictions that responded to question 1a, that provided Election Day registration data, or for which VAP data was substituted |
| 8 | Percent Active Registration | Number of active registered voters (col. 6) divided by the total number of registered voters (col. 4) |
| 9 | Inactive Registration | Number of inactive registered voters from survey question 1b |
| 10 | Cases | Number of jurisdictions that responded to question 1b |
| 11 | Percent Inactive Registration | Number of inactive registered voters (col. 9) divided by the total number of registered voters (col. 4) |
| 12 | Percent Increase If Inactive Reg. Included | Number of inactive registered voters (col. 9) divided by the number of active registered voters (col. 6) |
| 13 | Election Day Registration | Number of persons who registered to vote on Election Day (six states) |
| 14 | Cases | Number of jurisdictions that provided supplemental data on Election Day registration |
| 15 | Percent Election Day Registration | Number of persons who registered on Election Day (col. 13) divided by the total number of registered voters (col. 4) |

## Column Headings for Table 2 (cont.)

| Col.- | Heading | Description |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 16 | Percent Total Registration of VAP | Number of registered voters (col. 4) divided by the estimated voting age population (col. 4 of Table 1) |
| 17 | Cases > 100\% | Number of jurisdictions where the reported number of registered voters (col. 4) is greater than the estimated voting age population (col. 4 of Table 1) |
| 18 | Percent Active Registration of VAP | Number of active registered voters (col. 6) divided by the estimated voting age population (col. 4 of Table 1) |
| 19 | Cases > 100\% | Number of jurisdictions where the reported number of active registered voters (col. 6) is greater than the estimated voting age population (col. 4 of Table 1) |
| 20 | Percent Total Registration of CVAP | Number of registered voters (col. 4) divided by the estimated citizen voting age population (col. 6 of Table 1) |
| 21 | Cases > 100\% | Number of jurisdictions where the reported number of registered voters (col. 4) is greater than the estimated citizen voting age population (col. 6 of Table 1) |
| 22 | Percent Active Registration of CVAP | Number of active registered voters (col. 6) divided by the estimated citizen voting age population (col. 6 of Table 1) |
| 23 | Cases > 100\% | Number of jurisdictions where the reported number of active registered voters (col. 6) is greater than the estimated citizen voting age population (col. 6 of Table 1) |

Note: VAP = Voting Age Population, CVAP = Citizen Voting Age Population.

## Analysis of Survey Results

The following is our analysis of the data in Table 2 for each of the 18 cross-tabulation factors described earlier in this report. A description of each factor follows a general summary and a statelevel summary of the survey data.

1) Regions
2) Changed Voting Equipment Since 2000
3) Urban to Rural
4) Size of Jurisdiction
5) Statewide Voter Registration Database
6) Race and Ethnicity
7) Election Day Registration
8) Median Income
9) Provisional Ballot Acceptance
10) High School Education
11) No Excuse Absentee Balloting
12) Early Voting
13) Battleground States
14) Presidential Margin of Victory
15) Red versus Blue Jurisdictions

This analysis is based only on data that was reported to the EAC on the Election Day Survey. Many state responses to a survey question or part of a question did not cover all local election jurisdictions. In Table 2 as well as other tables in this report, a jurisdiction was excluded from a statistical calculation if its response was missing for one or more of the data items (i.e., columns) used in the calculation. A column labeled "Cases" next to each statistical calculation shows the number of jurisdictions covered by that calculation.

## Summary

The registration data for November 2004 shows that nearly 177.3 million persons were reported registered, an increase of nearly 15 million from the 2002 election and 14 million from the last presidential election in 2000. For 2004, voter registration constituted 79.5 percent of the VAP and 86.1 percent of the CVAP of the United States excluding territories, according to responses to the EAC survey. If only active voters are considered the registration base, then voter registration constituted 74.9 percent of the VAP and 81.2 percent of the CVAP.

The level of inactive voters was highest in the largest jurisdictions of this nation, along with those in the West. Jurisdictions that are predominantly Hispanic and those covered by section 203 of the Voting Rights Act (language minority requirements) also have some of the highest levels of inactive voters. This may be due to decades of failure to provide voting materials in minority languages, particularly mailings to clear up registration issues that go unanswered because the potential voter does not understand the written English language. These voters would, therefore, be more likely to be moved to the inactive registration lists.

Registration rates are highest in small town and rural jurisdictions, along with those that have higher education levels. For 2004, battleground states clearly had higher registration rates than nonbattleground states. The lowest registration rates can be found in predominantly Hispanic communities, but that is also a function of lower citizenship rates.

## States

For the states that incorporate both active and inactive voters into their registration counts, the share of their rolls that is inactive varies widely. Colorado reported the largest share of inactive voters (22.5 percent). However, in 12 of the remaining 19 states, the inactive voters amount to less than 10

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percent of the overall file. On average, inactive registrations constitute about 12 percent of a state's voter file. The lowest is in Delaware, where inactives are reportedly only 4.8 percent of the overall voter file.

In the 26 states that report active voters only on voter registration rolls, and report inactive separately, we found a significantly larger number of inactive voters. The large number of inactive voters balloons the size of state voter files. On the survey, California reported another 5.6 million registered voters as inactive, which would have increased the size of the state's registration rolls by 34.8 percent. The District of Columbia voter rolls would be 44.1 percent larger if inactive voters were considered.

Alaska reported registration numbers that were more than our calculated VAP and CVAP. The state did not provide information on inactive voters. Alaska's Department of Labor generates its own population estimates, and the department estimated VAP for July 1, 2004, of 461,887. As a result, the state itself reports more registered voters than their own estimated voting age population. North Dakota also hits the 100 percent mark, because the state has no voter registration and the state's voting age population is considered as registered to vote for this study. Noncitizens in North Dakota constitute about 6,000 people, and since straight VAP was used for registration, the percentage of CVAP jumps over 100 percent.

When noncitizens are excluded from the base population, four states-Alaska, North Dakota, Iowa, and Maine-have more registered voters than CVAP. Iowa includes inactive voters in its registration counts. That totals Iowa's registered voters at over 100 percent of CVAP. However, if only active voters are considered, Iowa's registration is 94.0 percent of CVAP.

Maine, on the other hand, counts only active voters as its registration base. Despite this, the number of active voters exceeds the CVAP estimate on a statewide basis, as well as in 289 of the state's 517 townships. Again, the problem of small jurisdictions is apparent in the VAP and CVAP estimates. Even Maine’s planning office reports estimated VAP of just 1,010,187 for July 1, 2004. If that VAP number were aged to November, it would still be less than the registration total of 1,025,777.

Table 2c presents the ranking of states by registration rates calculated against both VAP and CVAP for the state's reported registration and the state's active registration. Each state's rank changes with each of four different methods of calculating registration rates. Yet in most cases the shift is not dramatic. States near the bottom under one method tend to be near the bottom in all methods. States near the top stay near the top no matter which method is used to calculate registration rates.

For the six states with EDR, we made a special effort to collect data on how many people registered on Election Day. Unfortunately, the state of Maine did not keep a separate count of these individuals in 2004, but upon the completion of a statewide voter registration system, Maine will be able to report such numbers in 2006. Not all the jurisdictions responded to our request for EDR data.

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Table 2c. State Rankings for Registration Calculations

| Ranking | Name | Percent <br> Totay <br> Registratien <br> of VAP | Name | Percent Active Registration of VAP | Name | Percent Total Registr of citizen VAP | Name | Percent Active Registr of Citizen VAP |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 1 | Alaska | 100.5 | Alaska | 100.5 | Alaska | 103.8 | Alaska | 103.8 |
| 2 | North Dakota | 100.0 | Maine | 98.8 | Wisconsin | 102.2 | Maine | 100.3 |
| 3 | Wisconsin | 99.8 | Michigan | 94.1 | North Dakota | 101.2 | Michigan | 97.2 |
| 4 | Maine | 98.8 | Indiana | 92.7 | Iowa | 100.6 | District of Colum | 94.8 |
| 5 | Iowa | 98.3 | Iowa | 91.9 | Maine | 100.3 | Indiana | 94.8 |
| 6 | Missouri | 96.5 | Vermont | 91.1 | Missouri | 98.4 | Iowa | 94.0 |
| 7 | New Hampshire | 95.0 | Kentucky | 88.5 | New Hampshire | 97.5 | Vermont | 92.9 |
| 8 | Michigan | 94.1 | Nebraska | 88.1 | Michigan | 97.2 | Nebraska | 91.2 |
| 9 | Indiana | 92.7 | South Dakota | 87.2 | Colorado | 95.9 | Rhode Island | 90.1 |
| 10 | Ohio | 91.8 | Pennsylvania | 87.0 | District of Colum | 94.8 | Kentucky | 89.8 |
| 11 | Vermont | 91.1 | New Hampshire, | 85.5 | Indiana | 94.8 | Pennsylvania | 89.0 |
| 12 | Colorado | 89.7 | District of Colum | 85.1 | Ohio | 93.3 | South Dakota | 88.2 |
| 13 | Idaho | 89.3 | Wisconsin | 84.9 | Vermont | 92.9 | Delaware | 87.9 |
| 14 | Montana | 89.2 | Delaware | 84.6 | Idaho | 92.8 | New Hampshire | 87.8 |
| 15 | Kentucky | 88.5 | Rhode Island | 83.9 | New York | 91.6 | Wisconsin | 87.6 |
| 16 | Nebraska | 88.1 | Missouri | 83.8 | Delaware | 91.4 | Illinois | 85.5 |
| 17 | Delaware | 88.1 | Mississippi | 83.0 | Nebraska | 91.2 | Missouri | 85.4 |
| 18 | Louisiana | 87.3 | West Virginia | 81.7 | Texas | 90.7 | Florida | 85.3 |
| 19 | South Dakota | 87.2 | Louisiana | 80.2 | North Carolina | 90.2 | Mississippi | 83.8 |
| 20 | Pennsylvania | 87.0 | Ohio | 79.7 | Rhode Island | 90.1 | Utah | 82.6 |
| 21 | North Carolina | 86.2 | Illinois | 78.0 | Montana | 90.0 | Oregon | 82.5 |
| 22 | District of Colum | 85.1 | Idaho | 77.8 | Kentucky | 89.8 | New York | 82.3 |
| 23 | Rhode Island | 83.9 | Utah | 77.7 | Massachusetts | 89.5 | West Virginia | 82.2 |
| 24 | Mississippi | 83.0 | North Carolina | 77.7 | Pennsylvania | 89.0 | Louisiana | 81.5 |
| 25 | Tennessee | 83.0 | Oregon | 77.4 | Louisiana | 88.7 | North Carolina | 81.3 |
| 26 | Kansas | 82.7 | Kansas | 77.2 | South Dakota | 88.2 | Ohio | 81.1 |
| 27 | Massachusetts | 82.7 | Minnesota | 76.9 | Kansas | 85.9 | Idaho | 80.9 |
| 28 | Arkansas | 82.1 | Florida | 76.6 | Illinois | 85.5 | Massachusetts | 80.6 |
| 29 | West Virginia | 81.7 | Alabama | 75.8 | New Mexico | 85.4 | Kansas | 80.2 |
| 30 | Texas | 80.5 | Massachusetts | 74.4 | New Jersey | 85.4 | Minnesota | 79.7 |
| 31 | Oklahoma | 80.5 | Tennessee | 74.2 | Florida | 85.3 | Washington | 79.5 |
| 32 | New York | 80.0 | Washington | 74.1 | Tennessee | 84.7 | New Jersey | 79.1 |
| 33 | Virginia | 79.3 | Maryland | 73.9 | Arkansas | 84.0 | Maryland | 78.8 |
| 34 | New Mexico | 79.1 | Virginia | 73.4 | Virginia | 83.8 | New Mexico | 78.5 |
| 35 | Illinois | 78.0 | South Carolina | 73.0 | Mississippi | 83.8 | Virginia | 77.6 |
| 36 | Utah | 77.7 | Montana | 72.7 | Oklahoma | 82.8 | Alabama | 76.9 |
| 37 | Oregon | 77.4 | New Mexico | 72.7 | Utah | 82.6 | California | 76.8 |
| 38 | Minnesota | 76.9 | Arkansas | 72.3 | Oregon | 82.5 | Texas | 76.2 |
| 39 | Florida | 76.6 | New York | 71.9 | West Virginia | 82.2 | Tennessee | 75.8 |
| 40 | New Jersey | 76.2 | New Jersey | 70.6 | Minnesota | 79.7 | South Carolina | 74.6 |
| 41 | Alabama | 75.8 | Colorado | 69.6 | Washington | 79.5 | Colorado | 74.4 |
| 42 | Washington | 74.1 | Oklahoma | 69.1 | Maryland | 78.8 | Arkansas | 73.9 |
| 43 | Maryland | 73.9 | Connecticut | 68.2 | Alabama | 76.9 | Montana | 73.3 |
| 44 | South Carolina | 73.0 | Texas | 67.6 | California | 76.8 | Connecticut | 72.9 |
| 45 | Wyoming | 70.9 | Georgia | 65.0 | South Carolina | 74.6 | Oklahoma | 71.1 |
| 46 | Connecticut | 68.2 | Arizona | 63.0 | Connecticut | 72.9 | Arizona | 70.1 |
| 47 | Hawaii | 66.0 | California | 62.5 | Wyoming | 72.0 | Nevada | 69.9 |
| 48 | Georgia | 65.0 | Nevada | 61.8 | Hawaii | 71.9 | Georgia | 69.0 |
| 49 | Arizona | 63.0 | Wyoming | 60.2 | Arizona | 70.1 | Hawaii | 64.4 |
| 50 | California | 62.5 | Hawaii | 59.2 | Nevada | 69.9 | Wyoming | 61.1 |
| 51 | Nevada | 61.8 | North Dakota |  | Georgia | 69.0 | North Dakota |  |
| 52 | American Samoa |  | American Samoa |  | American Samoa |  | American Samoa |  |
| 53 | Guam |  | Guam |  | Guam |  | Guam |  |
| 54 | Puerto Rico |  | Puerto Rico |  | Puerto Rico |  | Puerto Rico |  |
| 55 | Virgin Islands |  | Virgin Islands |  | Virgin Islands |  | Virgin Islands |  |
|  | Total | 79.5 | Total | 74.9 | Total | 86.1 | Total | 81.2 |
|  | Maximum | 100.5 | Maximum | 100.5 | Maximum | 103.8 | Maximum | 103.8 |
|  | Average | 82.7 | Average | 77.9 | Average | 86.9 | Average | 82.0 |
|  | Minimum | 61.8 | Minimum | 59.2 | Minimum | 69.0 | Minimum | 61.1 |

## Regions

Strongly influenced by California, the West is the region with the largest share of inactive voters reported on voter registration rolls, making up 26.1 percent of the region's voter file. The West also has the lowest registration rate in the nation, reporting only 68.5 percent of the VAP and 79.1 percent of the CVAP. On the other hand, the Midwest reported the highest registration rate in the nation, 89.4 percent for VAP and 92.8 for CVAP.

## Urban to Rural

Small town and rural areas reported the lowest rates of inactive voters in voter files. Rural communities also have the highest registration rates in the nation based on voting age population (84.2 percent). However, when noncitizens are taken out of the mix, urban jurisdictions have the highest registration rates for citizens ( 88.8 percent).

## Size of Jurisdiction

There is a near linear relationship between the size of the jurisdiction and the reported level of inactive voters in the voter file. Clearly, the largest jurisdictions in this nation have the largest share of inactive registered voters on their rolls. At 21.6 percent, the jurisdictions that have more than 1 million persons of voting age have more than twice as many inactive voters as the smallest jurisdictions in the nation, at 8.8 percent.
The rate of registration, on the other hand, tends to be highest in the smaller jurisdictions, while the largest jurisdictions tend to have the lowest registration rates, no matter what method is used to calculate the rates. For example, nearly all ( 99.6 percent) persons of voting age are registered in jurisdictions with less than 1,000 population, but only 70.0 percent are registered in communities with more than 1 million persons. This order is retained when calculated as a percentage of CVAP. However, as noted earlier in this report, the smallest jurisdictions have the largest number of counties and towns that show more registered voters than the estimated VAP and CVAP.

## Race and Ethnicity

Predominantly Hispanic communities have high levels of inactive voters on their rolls. Collectively, nearly 23.7 percent of their rolls are inactive. This compares with just 16.4 percent in predominantly African American jurisdictions and 14.9 in predominantly White communities. The predominately Native American jurisdictions in the country had the lowest levels of inactive voters, just 12.0 percent of their rolls.
Predominantly Hispanic jurisdictions also have the lowest voter registration rates in the country (61.5 percent), especially when registration rates are calculated based on VAP. Rates are higher, and on par with other jurisdictions, for Hispanic areas (81.4 percent) when non-citizens are removed from the calculations. Native American jurisdictions have the highest registration rates ( 86.0 percent of VAP, and 87.8 percent for CVAP).

## Median Income

Jurisdictions with a median income of $\$ 40,000$ to $\$ 45,000$ have the highest share of inactive voters, 19.9 percent. On the other hand, jurisdictions with the lowest median income have the lowest share of inactive voters, 9.7 percent. The lowest median income communities also have the highest registration rates. This is likely because of the rural nature of low-income jurisdictions. But the

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authors caution against reaching too many conclusions based on this aggregate dataset. Precinct level data would allow more concrete conclusions on this subject.

## High School Education

Jurisdictions in the second lowest category of percentage of those with a high school education reported the highest rates of inactive voters on their rolls, 18.5 percent. The lowest rate was reported by the lowest education jurisdictions, at 9.6 percent. Excepting this, the share of inactive voters tended to decrease as education increased. The higher the levels of high school education, generally the higher the reported rates of registration. The lowest education jurisdictions defied the trend slightly. This is true for both VAP and CVAP.

## Section 203 Language Minority Requirements

Jurisdictions covered by the language minority requirements of section 203 of the Voting Rights Act appear to have nearly twice the numbers of inactive voters on their rolls (21.5 percent), compared with jurisdictions that are not covered (12.1 percent).

Covered jurisdictions also have a significantly lower voter registration rate among the voting age population, 70.6 percent compared with 83.8 percent for jurisdictions not covered by section 203. The difference, however, lessens when citizenship is taken into account, 82.8 percent for covered jurisdictions versus 87.5 percent for noncovered areas.

## Section 5 Preclearance of Voting Procedures

Section 5-covered jurisdictions have a slightly lower share of inactive voters, 15.1 versus 15.5 percent. Section 5 jurisdictions reported lower registration rates than other jurisdictions, 68.3 versus 77.2 percent for VAP and 75.6 versus 83.0 percent for CVAP.

## Type of Voting Equipment

Jurisdictions that use lever machines and hand-counted paper ballots reported the lowest numbers of inactive voters, 9.5 and 10.4 percent, respectively. Jurisdictions using paper ballots also have the highest registration rates in the nation, 93.2 percent of VAP or 95.0 percent of CVAP. This is likely because these jurisdictions tend to be rural and in the Midwest. Jurisdictions that used multiple systems or optical scans reported the highest rates of inactive voters, 18.5 and 17.4 percent, respectively. These jurisdictions were largely in-line with the registration rates of other jurisdictions. Jurisdictions that used electronic machines reported the lowest registration rates, 75.9 percent of VAP and 82.7 percent of CVAP.

## Changed Voting Equipment since 2000

Jurisdictions that changed voting equipment since 2000 reported a higher percentage of inactive voters on their files, 18.9 versus 13.8 . However, jurisdictions that changed voting systems reported lower registration rates than other jurisdictions, 74.1 versus 82.0 for VAP and 83.5 versus 87.2 for CVAP.

## Statewide Voter Registration Database

Jurisdictions in states with a statewide voter registration database in place for the 2004 election reported a lower percentage of inactive voters than the rest of the nation, 11.0 versus 16.5 percent.

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Jurisdictions in states with a statewide voter registration database reported slightly lower registration rates than other jurisdictions, 78.9 versus 79.7 percent for VAP; 82.7 versus 87.0 percent for CVAP.

## Election Day Registration

Jurisdictions that allow EDR reported lower numbers of inactive voters on their rolls than other jurisdictions, 10.5 versus 15.5 percent. In addition, EDR jurisdictions have higher registration rates than other jurisdictions, 89.7 versus 78.9 for VAP and 92.2 versus 85.7 for CVAP.

## Provisional Ballot Acceptance

Jurisdictions in states that allowed provisional ballots to be counted if they were cast in any precinct in the home jurisdiction reported nearly twice the numbers of inactive voters compared with jurisdictions where voters could vote in their home precincts only, 20.9 versus 11.9 percent. The "overall jurisdiction" communities also reported lower registration rates than the "in-precinct only" areas, 74.0 versus 83.0 percent for VAP and 81.8 versus 88.8 percent for CVAP.

## No Excuse Absentee Balloting

Jurisdictions that allow the more liberal practice of accepting no excuse absentee ballots reported a higher share of inactive voters, 18.6 percent versus 13.3 percent. However, no excuse absentee balloting jurisdictions reported lower rates of registration, 75.8 versus 81.9 percent of VAP and 84.2 versus 87.2 percent of CVAP.

## Early Voting

Jurisdictions in states that allowed some form of early voting had a higher share of inactive voters, 18.2 percent versus 12.7 percent. However, these same jurisdictions tended to have lower registration rates than those in states that do not have early voting provisions, 74.5 versus 83.5 percent of VAP and 83.1 versus 88.3 percent of CVAP.

## Battleground States

Jurisdictions in 2004 battleground states tended to have fewer inactive voters on the rolls than those in nonbattleground states, 13.8 percent versus 16.0 percent. However, the impact of the 2004 campaign can be seen in battleground states' higher registration rates than nonbattleground states, 84.4 versus 76.9 percent for VAP and 88.8 versus 84.6 percent for CVAP.

## Presidential Margin of Victory

There is no clear pattern of percentage of inactive voters by a jurisdiction's presidential margin of victory, ranging between 12.6 and 16.0 percent. There do not appear to be significant differences in the level of inactive voters or registration rates whether jurisdictions had close or large margins of victory in the 2004 presidential election, ranging between 78.3 and 86.0 percent of VAP and 84.2 and 89.3 percent of CVAP.

## Red versus Blue Jurisdictions

Jurisdictions strongly carried by Kerry in the presidential election of 2004 reported the highest share of inactive registration, 20.0 percent, though there was no clear pattern among the remaining jurisdictions, which ranged between 12.0 and 15.3 percent. Registration rates in jurisdictions carried by Bush were similar to those jurisdictions carried by Kerry, ranging from 79.4 to 86.6 percent for

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Bush jurisdictions and 77.7 to 82.4 percent for Kerry jurisdictions, among VAP, and 83.1 to 90.3 percent for Bush jurisdictions and 86.8 to 88.8 percent for Kerry jurisdictions, among CVAP.

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Registration



Registration


Registration



[^0]:    ${ }^{1}$ Rhode Island is not considered an Election Day Registration (EDR) state but allows persons to register on Election Day to vote for president only.

