



THE AGE GAP IN CALIFORNIA POLITICS

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- **Older adults are much more likely to be registered and to vote than younger adults.**
Voter registration rates in California increase sharply with age, ranging from 58 percent for adults under age 25 to 92 percent for adults age 65 and older. Turnout also varies by age: Only one in four (24%) in the youngest age group are likely voters, compared with three in four (76%) in the oldest age group. This skews likely voters heavily toward older Californians: Adults age 55 and older make up 28 percent of the state's adult population, but they constitute 39 percent of those most likely to cast ballots in elections. Conversely, residents under age 35 represent 33 percent of the state's adult population but only 18 percent of likely voters. Middle-aged Californians (ages 35 to 54) are about equally represented in the population (40%) and among likely voters (43%).
- **Younger adults tend to be independents; older adults are more conservative.**
Younger Californians are much less likely than others to align themselves with one of the two major political parties. Nearly four in 10 registered voters who are 18 to 24 years old are registered as independents or are aligned with a "third party," compared with only 14 percent of those who are 65 and older. Overall, Republican Party registration increases with age. Democrats outnumber Republicans by 17 points among those under age 25 (39% to 22%), while there are about equal proportions among registered voters age 65 and older (44% to 42%). Political liberalism also decreases with age: Liberals outnumber conservatives by a 6-point margin in the youngest age group (37% to 31%), but conservatives outnumber liberals by a 19-point margin in the oldest age group (43% to 24%).
- **Older adults are more politically attentive and have less trust in state government.**
There are notable differences across age groups when it comes to interest in politics. Nearly half of adult Californians under age 25 (47%) have little or no interest in politics; only about one in six (17%) express a great deal of interest. By contrast, one in four of those age 65 and older (24%) say they have little or no interest in politics, while one in three (32%) are highly interested. Trust in the California state government declines with age.
- **The racial/ethnic complexion of younger adults reflects the changing face of California.**
A look at the racial and ethnic profile of the state across age groups provides a snapshot of the rapidly changing social landscape. Latinos outnumber whites in the youngest age category (49% to 34%); older Californians are overwhelmingly white (80% of those age 65 and older). This demographic trend points to the possibility of a dramatic shift in the racial and ethnic composition of the voting population, if today's younger age groups become more politically active in the future.
- **Young, middle-aged, and older Californians differ along many demographic dimensions.**
Majorities of Californians in the age groups of 18 to 24 (65%) and 65 and older (54%) have annual household incomes under \$40,000, compared with fewer than three in 10 of those ages 45 to 54. Homeownership in California sharply increases with age: Most residents in the youngest age group rent their homes (73%), whereas most in the oldest age group are homeowners (81%). Middle-aged Californians have somewhat more formal education than older Californians: 45 percent of those ages 35 to 44 have a college degree, compared with 38 percent of those age 65 and older.

Demographic/Political Profile of California Adults by Age Group

		18 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 +
All Adults		13%	19%	21%	19%	13%	15%
Registered to vote	Yes	58	65	74	83	89	92
	No	42	35	26	17	11	8
Likely to vote	Yes	24	33	50	66	73	76
	No	76	67	50	34	27	24
Party registration	Democrat	39	38	39	42	45	44
	Republican	22	27	32	33	34	42
	Independent/other	39	35	29	25	21	14
Ideology	Very liberal	12	11	9	10	11	8
	Somewhat liberal	25	24	21	21	20	16
	Moderate	32	33	34	34	33	33
	Somewhat conservative	22	24	25	25	24	27
	Very conservative	9	8	11	10	12	16
Interest in politics	Great deal	17	20	23	28	30	32
	Fair amount	36	37	41	44	46	44
	Only a little/none	47	43	36	28	24	24
Trust in state government	Just about always	6	9	7	5	3	4
	Most of the time	32	24	25	24	20	21
	Only some of the time	59	62	62	65	69	70
	None of the time, not at all (<i>volunteered</i>)	3	5	6	6	8	5
Race/ethnicity	White	34	39	50	64	72	80
	Latino	49	45	34	22	14	9
	Black	6	5	6	6	6	5
	Asian	9	8	7	6	4	4
	Other	3	3	3	3	3	2
Education	No college	54	39	33	27	24	34
	Some college	32	23	22	27	29	28
	College graduate	14	38	45	46	47	38
Income	Under \$40,000	65	47	34	29	33	54
	\$40,000 to \$79,999	23	32	32	35	35	32
	\$80,000 or more	12	21	34	36	32	14
Own/rent	Own	27	39	62	72	78	81
	Rent	73	61	38	28	22	19
Nativity	U.S.-born	68	61	65	76	83	86
	Immigrant	32	39	35	24	17	14

Sources: (1) Combined results of eleven PPIC Statewide Surveys conducted between May 2005 and May 2006, including interviews with 23,516 adult residents. (2) California Department of Finance, *Race/Ethnic Population with Age and Sex Detail, 2000-2050*, May 2004.