

Highlights:

- Youth eligible turnout was only 3.7% in the June 2014 primary election.
- No Party Preference (NPP) registrants turned out at lower rates than registered voters from major parties.
- 28% of all new registrants since the June 2010 primary have been youth.
- For the first time, youth are below 20% Republican registration.
- At 35%, NPP is now the second most common registration affiliation for youth.
- 28.6% of all new registrants chose to register via the online system.
- The youth share of California's vote is projected to decrease steadily over the next 20 years.

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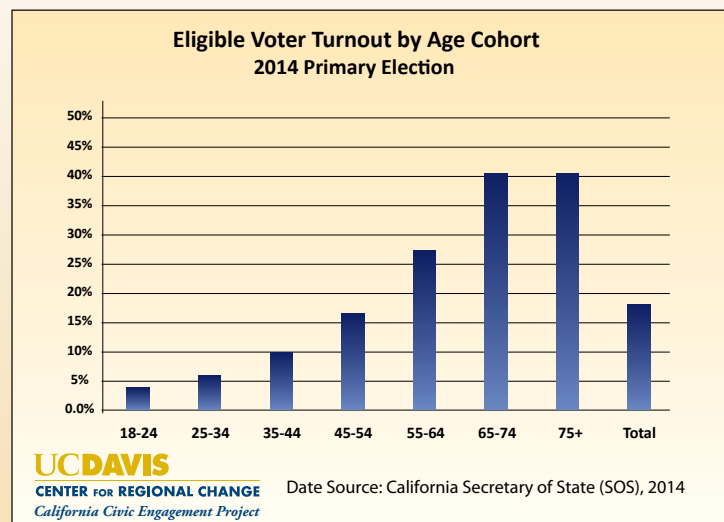
California's 2014 Youth Voter Turnout: Decline and Future Opportunities

Only 18% of California's eligible voters (citizens over age 18) turned out to vote in the June 2014 primary election; the lowest eligible turnout of any statewide election in California history. Given the gap between eligible youth turnout (age 18-24) and the rest of the electorate is typically larger in primary elections, we examine how low youth turnout was in the June primary. We also project what the future impact of the youth vote might be in California going forward, given both its changing party affiliations and population size.

Utilizing California Secretary of State voter records, we examined the following research questions:¹

1. How did the 2014 youth vote differ from the rest of the electorate?
2. What impact did youth have on political party representation in California?
3. What are some of the challenges and opportunities for increasing youth representation in California?

1: How did the 2014 youth vote differ from the rest of the electorate?



Among all eligible voters in California, turnout was 18.1%. Less than one-fifth of the state's eligible voters cast a ballot.

There are dramatic disparities in the eligible turnout of California's June primary vote by group. Youth experienced the lowest rates of voter participation of any age. Voter turnout of eligible youth was 3.7%. Despite a 6.4% increase from the 2010 primary in the

number of youth registrants, only 129,000 of the 3.5 million eligible youth (age 18-24 citizens) in California voted.²

Younger Californians are driving the state's lower turnout numbers. Older voters experienced turnout far above the 18% state eligible turnout rate. Twenty-seven percent of eligible 55 to 64 year-olds turned out to vote and 40.8% of those eligible over age 65 voted.

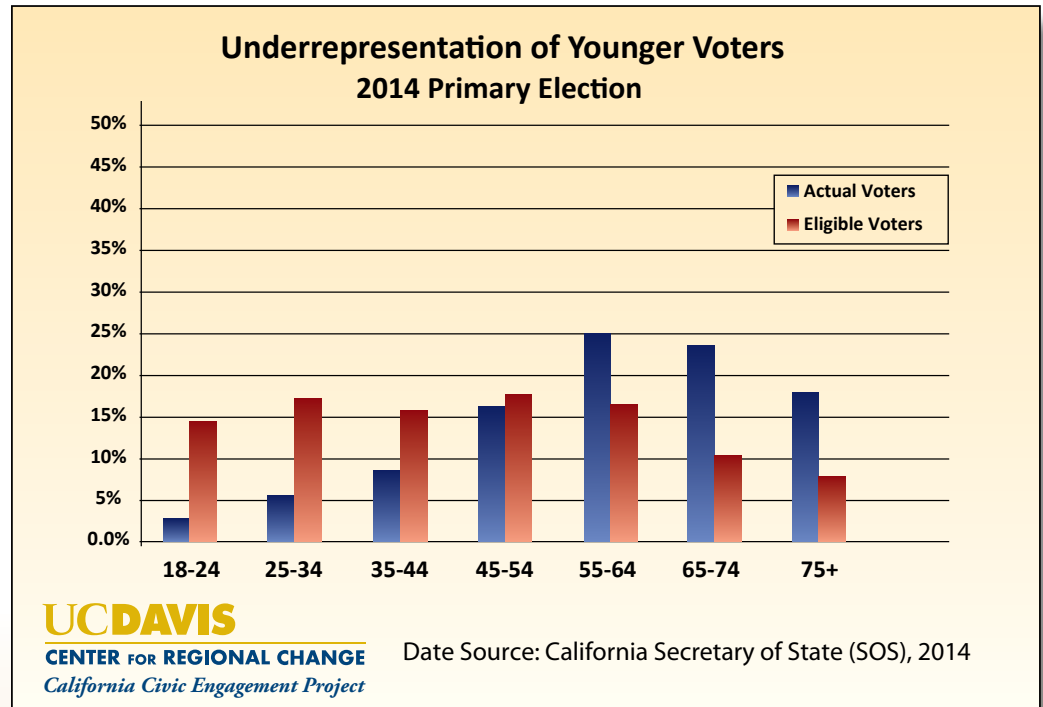
County Variation

Across California's counties there was variation in the level of eligible youth turnout. Turnout of youth ranged twenty percentage points at the county level - from a low of 2.4% (Riverside) to a high of 25% (Alpine). All but three counties had a youth turnout rate below 10% and only ten counties produced eligible turnout rates below the state average. The three counties with the lowest youth turnout rates, Riverside, San Bernardino and Los Angeles (2.4%, 2.5% and 2.7% eligible turnout, respectively), also have the largest youth voter populations.

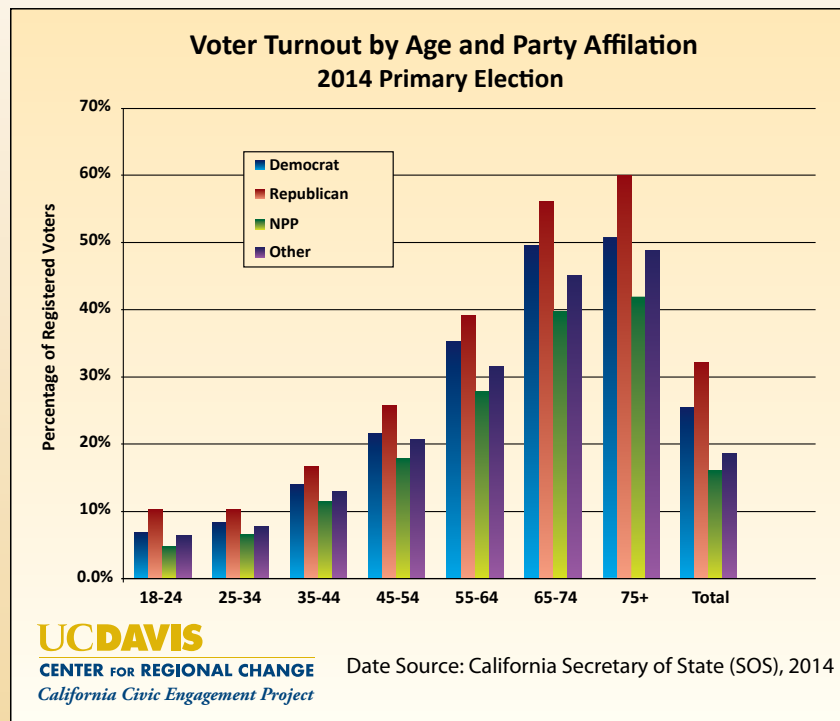
Youth Underrepresented Among Voters

An extremely low voter turnout rate for youth translated into youth being only 3% of all actual voters in the June 2014 primary. Youth were underrepresented among those who voted compared to their 14.5% share of the eligible electorate (citizens age 18 and older). Essentially, youth had very little voice in decisions made in the June primary.

In the same election, voters age 55 and older were overrepresented compared to their proportion of eligible voters. Sixty-five to seventy-four year-olds experienced the widest gap; they were 23.5% of all voters in the June primary but only 10.4% of all eligible voters.



2: What impact did youth have on political party representation in California?



In the 2014 primary election, registered voter turnout of the general population was also a record state low at 25%. Only 6.9% of registered youth voted in the June primary – 18 percentage points lower than the registered voter turnout of the general electorate.

There was a wider gap in political party turnout than seen in the 2012 general electorate. Turnout of registered Republicans was 32.3% and Democratic turnout was 24.7%. No Party Preference (NPP) registrants turned out at lower rates than major party affiliates. Turnout of those registered as NPP was only 16.2% - a gap of 16 percentage points between Republican and NPP turnout.³

Youth turnout rates by party affiliation were far lower than the party turnout of the general electorate. Youth Democratic turnout was 7.1%, Republican, 10.3% and youth NPP registrant's turnout was 4.8%. Youth turnout of all other parties combined was 6.4%.

This lower turnout for youth NPP registrants is striking considering the high percentages of youth (34.7%) who were registered as NPP in the June 2014 primary.

Republican turnout was highest in every age group. This is in contrast to the 2012 general election where younger voters (ages 18-24 and 25-34) had higher Democratic Party turnout compared to Republicans of the same ages.

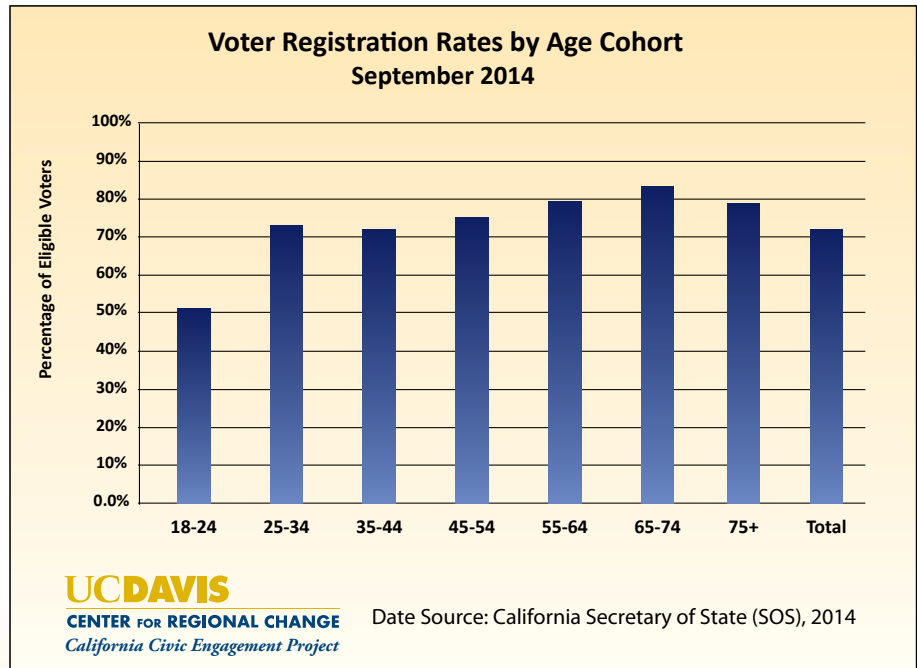
Note: For a complete discussion of youth registration and voter turnout in the 2012 General Election, see CCEP Policy Brief Issue Five, California's 2012 Youth Voter Turnout: Disparate Growth and Remaining Challenges.⁴

November 2014 Registration: Greater than 1 in 4 are Youth

As of the California Secretary of State's 60 day close of registration, only 51% of all eligible youth (citizens age 18-24) are registered to vote for the upcoming November general election. Every other age group has a registration rate of over 70%.

Currently, there are 17.4 million registrants in California, 1.8 million (10.2%) are youth. Like with actual voters, youth are underrepresented among registrants compared to their 14.5% of the state's eligible voter population.

Despite the low registration rate for youth, they comprise a significant proportion of the new registrants. In looking at registration of only those registered to vote since the 2012 general election, 25% have been youth.



Since the June 2010 primary, 28% of all new registrants have been youth.

Party Registration: Youth Driving State's Decline in Major Party Registration

There is significant variation in current registration by party affiliation across age groups. Twenty-three percent of all registered Californians are not affiliated with a political party, while 43% are registered as Democratic and 28% registered as Republican.

Youth party registration is strikingly different. Youth are currently 37.3% Democratic, the only age cohort below 40% Democratic. For the first time statewide, youth are below 20% in Republican registration – at 19.6%. There is an 18 percentage point gap between youth Democratic Party and youth Republican Party registration.

Youth registered voters are also identifying less with each of the state's two major parties, registering as No Party Preference (NPP) in even larger proportions than the general electorate. At 35%, NPP is now the second most common registration affiliation for youth. This number is up for youth from 29% just two years ago. Youth also register as "other" party registrants at rate nearly two-thirds higher than the general registered population.

The growth in NPP registration is significant because voter turnout of youth and all age groups is lower for those registered without a party affiliation. If youth continue to increase their NPP registration, impacts could be seen on the overall turnout rate for youth in California.

NPP is the Largest Percentage of Youth Registration in Many Counties

Despite fewer registrants statewide, Republicans maintain their county by county edge over Democrats, holding the highest proportion of general registered voters (all ages) in 31 of the state's 58 counties. In contrast, across counties, registered youth differ substantially in party identification versus the general registered population. In 19 counties, the highest percentage of youth registrants is in a party identification that is different from that county's general registered population. NPP is the largest registration designation for youth in 28 (including Orange and San Diego) of the state's counties. This NPP registration edge is up from 15 counties during the November 2012 General Election. Twelve counties have youth populations whose largest percentage of registrants is Republican.

Youth Using Online Voter Registration

A key tool in youth voter registration is the development of the online voter registration system in California. Since its implementation on September 19th, 2012, 970,000 people have registered to vote through this method. Currently, 5.4% of California's registered voter population are online registrants. However, this population is dominated by those registrants who registered before an online method was an option.⁵

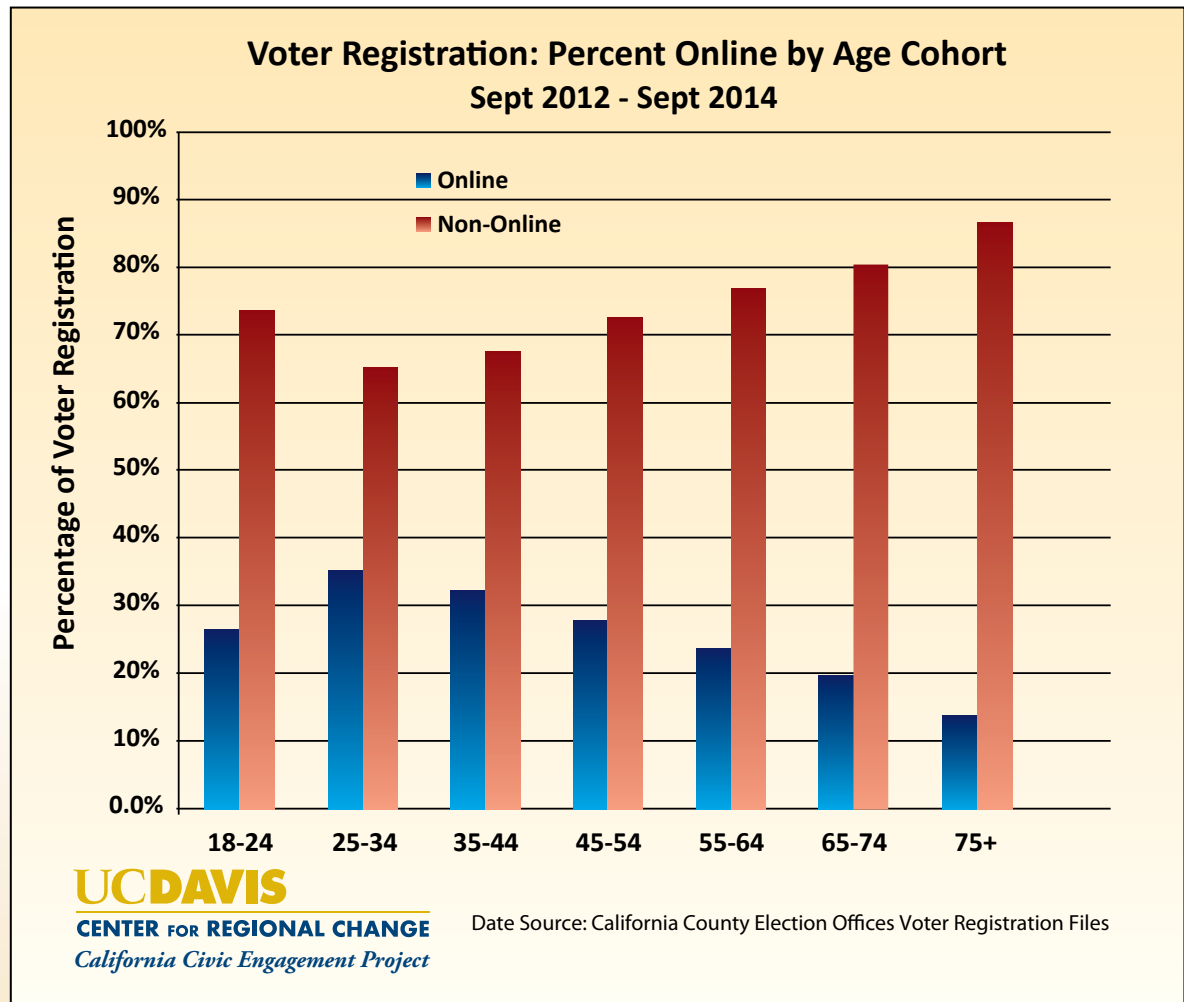
Looking at only those registrants who registered or re-registered after online registration was made available, 28.6% chose to register via the online system. Use of online voter registration varies across counties from a high of 40% (San Mateo) to a low of 3.1% (Modoc County).

Breaking the analysis down by age, 26.5% of youth who registered to vote after the online system was made available chose to register via this method.

A higher percentage of age cohorts, 25 to 34, 35 to 44 and 55 to 64 year-olds, who registered chose to do so online than youth.

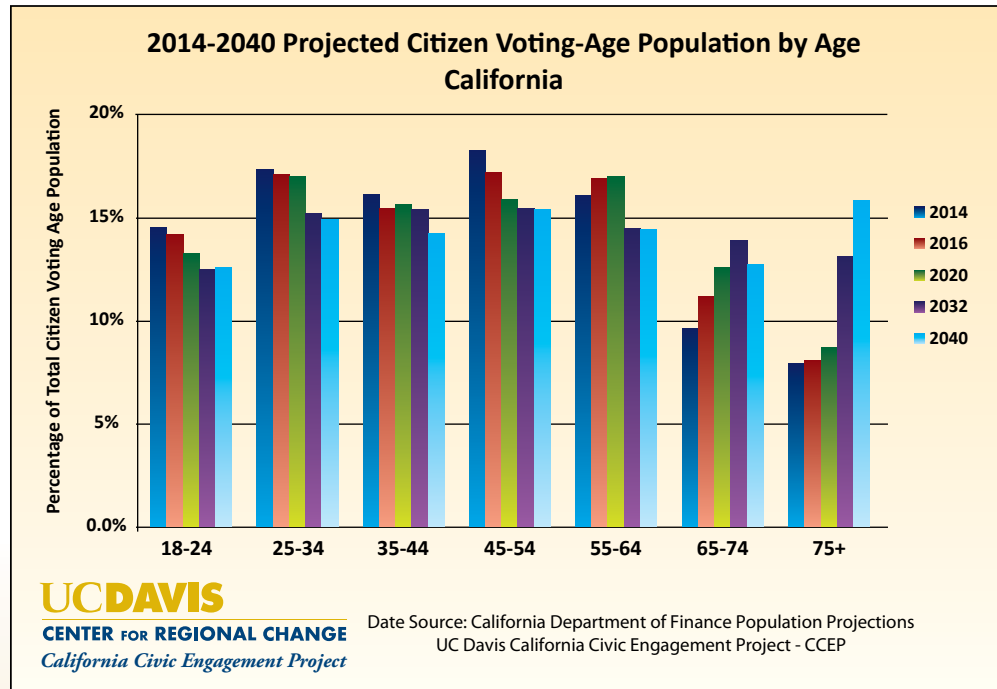
As in the November 2012 general election, younger online registrants turned out to vote in high numbers in the 2010 primary. Both youth and 25-34 years-olds who registered online turned out to vote at two percentage points higher than registrants of these age groups who utilized other registration methods.⁶ Given that 24% of online registrants are youth, online registration may provide a pathway to increasing youth turnout.

Note: See the CCEP's website for detailed registration, voter turnout, and online registration data by California county." All charts presented in this brief are available for individual download at the CCEP's website.



Since its implementation, 28.6% of all new registrants chose to register via the online system

3: What are some of the challenges and opportunities to increasing youth representation in California?



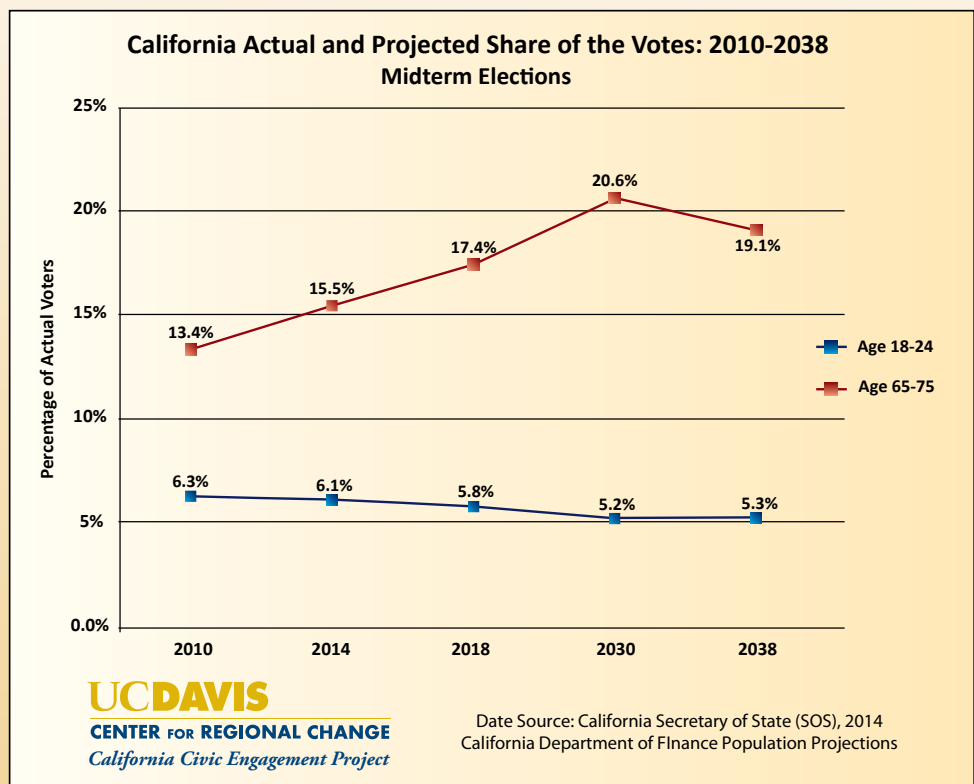
Expected changes in California's youth population will represent a challenge to increasing the voice of California's youth overtime. The youth proportion of the state's citizen voting age population is projected to decline steadily over the next 20 years. This decline will occur for the youth of every major race and ethnic group in California. Not until after 2032 is the youth proportion of the general citizen voting age population projected to slightly increase. California's eligible voter population will be steadily aging.⁷

Decline in the youth share of the eligible voting population in California will bring changes in the future composition of the state's youth vote.

How will youth population decline impact the future composition of the youth vote?

We engaged in a qualified exercise calculating the projected change in the composition of California's youth voters through the midterm election of 2038. For ease of discussion, we project the vote for youth utilizing two different sets of eligible turnout rates constant through this period: the 2010 midterm eligible turnout rate for youth and the 2010 midterm eligible turnout rate for 65 to 74 year-olds (the age group with the highest eligible turnout).⁸

Assuming youth maintain constant their 2010 eligible turnout rate (18.5%) through the 2038 midterm election, we project a steady decrease in the youth share of California's vote, from 6.3% in 2010 to 5.3% in 2038. In contrast, 65 to 74 year-olds are projected to increase their share of the state's vote, from 13.4% in 2010 to 19.1% in 2038, when holding their 2010 turnout rate (65.4%) constant. Until about 2030, these two age groups are quite literally moving in the opposite direction with regard to vote share. From 2010 until just after 2020, youth are projected to continue to hold a larger share of the eligible voter population (although declining in absolute numbers). Youth are projected to continue to be underrepresented in the state's vote share due to their much lower eligible voter turnout rates versus older age groups.



Assuming for this exercise that youth voted at the same rates as older citizens, we would see a very different picture. We project the youth share of the state's vote would be considerably higher and hold a larger share of California's actual voters than the 65-74 year-old age group (utilizing their 2010 turnout rate). Based on their higher CVAP proportions, youth voters would outnumber older voters. We project that only after the 2020 general election, would youth become a smaller share of California's actual vote as they become a smaller share of its eligible voter population (versus the 65-74 age group).

Opportunities for Increasing Youth Voter Turnout

These findings show that while increasing youth voter registration rates is a needed first step, it does not alone automatically translate into increased representation for youth at the polls.

The structure of California's current electoral system continues to be a challenge to navigate for our state's youth. Important action areas are education and outreach for youth. Outreach to increase youth participation needs to account for the disparities in voter turnout within the youth population and include targeted efforts to reach youth, particularly youth of color and low income.⁹

High schools can be key partners in educating youth about the civic process and transitioning them youth into active participants in our electoral system.¹⁰ When high school youth learn why voting is relevant to their lives, as well as how to actually register and vote, they are more likely to cast a ballot when they turn eighteen. Connecting with youth at the high school level also means reaching a wide demographic representation of youth.

Voter registration outreach programs for high school students were established by California Elections Code §2131 and the Help America Vote Act of 2002. However, resources dedicated to registration outreach can vary greatly by county, including limited youth outreach by county election offices.

Two recently passed legislative bills provide avenues through which communities and advocates can work with schools to increase youth voter participation:

Assembly Bill 700 (2013) requires the Instructional Quality Commission to ensure that voter education information is included in the American Government and Civics curriculum in all California high schools. This bill was developed to increase civic participation and education among our youth.¹¹

Assembly Bill 1817 (2014) encourages voter participation among high school students, allowing students to register or pre-register qualified classmates on high school campuses to vote in upcoming elections. This bill amends current Education Code §49040 which established "High School Voter Education Weeks" during the last two weeks in April and September of a school year.

A declining youth proportion of the population in California will challenge efforts to raise the voice of youth in the state's political process. As California's population ages, policies and programming focused on youth could be affected. Given their declining proportions, in order for youth to increase their group voice in the state's decision making process going forward, they will need to turn out at rates higher than the rest of the electorate (this has never occurred in a statewide election). Now more than ever, California's youth need to be educated and mobilized to enter the state's electoral process.

Note: Projections of the California youth vote for general elections through 2040 are available in CCEP Policy Brief: Issue Seven - Is Demography Political Destiny: Population Change and California's Future Electorate.

Upcoming Brief:
2014 general election: analysis and implications for the political landscape

NOTES

- ¹ Voter records were acquired from the California Secretary of State's Office (SOS). Detailed voter registration records (60 day close of registration, September 5th, 2014) were acquired from the California Secretary of State's Office (SOS) and aggregated to the county and state level. These data are the actual registration records and not representative samples. Data on online voter registration was not available from Trinity County.
- ² The California SOS calculates eligible turnout utilizing citizen population data from the Census and California Department of Finance, as well as felony population rates from the California Department of Corrections. The California SOS does not publish eligible population counts by age. In order to calculate the percent voted of the youth eligible population we utilized 18-24 Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) data from the California Department of Finance. Due to the differences in how the eligible population is calculated for the general and youth populations, some caution should be utilized when directly comparing eligible turnout for these groups.
- ³ No Party Preference (NPP) includes all registrants identified in California Secretary of State's registration records as decline to state or no party preference. Other Party include all registrants identified in California Secretary of State's registration records as any of the following party affiliations: American Independent Party, American Elect Party, Green Party, Libertarian Party, Peace and Freedom Party and Other.
- ⁴ CCEP Policy Brief Issue Five, California's 2012 Youth Voter Turnout: Disparate Growth and Remaining Challenges. See: <http://regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/ourwork/publications/ccep/ucdavis-ccep-brief-5-youth-voter-turnout>
- ⁵ California Senate Bill 397, effective Jan. 1, authorized creation of an online registration system which was implemented on September 19, 2012. The system allows the entire registration process to occur electronically and be verified against CA Department of Motor Vehicle records. As of the 60 day close of registration for the November general election, there are 941,686 registrants still registered as online. Some registrants who initially registered online may have re-registered utilized a non-online method or been designated as an inactive voter.
- ⁶ CCEP Policy Brief: Issue Four- Online Voter Registration: Impact on California's 2012 Election Turnout, by Age and Party Affiliation. See: <http://regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/ourwork/publications/ccep/ucdavis-ccep-brief-4-online-voter-turnout-impact>
- ⁷ Analysis based on California Department of Finance P-3: State and County Total Population Projections by Race/Ethnicity and Detailed Age, 2010-2060. CVAP analysis based on straight line citizen voting age populations (CVAP) projections developed by the California Department of Finance for the California Civic Engagement Project. If immigration rates change beyond what is currently expected, these assumptions may over or understate population growth. If there are any significant changes in immigration, birth, or death rates, projections will need to be adjusted accordingly. For more information on the CVAP projections, see the CCEP website: <http://regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/projects/california-civic-engagement-project-ccep>. For more information on the base population projections please consult: http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/projections/P-1/documents/Projections_Methodology_2013.pdf. See the California Civic Engagement Project's Policy Brief # 7: Is Demography Political Destiny? Population Change and California's Future Electorate http://regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/ourwork/projects/copy2_of_UCDavisCCEPPolicyBriefIssue7.pdf
- ⁸ CCEP youth voter projections utilized straight line CVAP projections developed by the California Department of Finance for the California Civic Engagement Project (CCEP). Baseline eligible voter turnout rates were generated by CCEP analysis of California county voter registration data.
- ⁹ Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement: Voter Registration Among Young People in 2008, November. See: <http://www.civicyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/2012-Exit-Poll-by-Ed-Attainment-Final.pdf>
- ¹⁰ Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement: High School Civic Education Linked to Voting Participation and Political Knowledge, No Effect on Partisanship or Candidate Selection. See: <http://www.civicyouth.org/high-school-civic-education-linked-to-voting-participation-and-political-knowledge-no-effect-on-partisanship-or-candidate-selection/>
- ¹¹ For more information on Assembly Bill 700, see: http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB700. For more information on Assembly Bill 1817, see: http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB18171

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About the California Civic Engagement Project (CCEP):

In 2011, the UC Davis Center for Regional Change established the California Civic Engagement Project (CCEP) to inform the public dialogue on representative governance in California. The CCEP is working to improve the quality and quantity of publicly available civic engagement data by collecting and curating data from a broad range of sources for public access and use. The CCEP is engaging in pioneering research to identify disparities in civic participation across place and population. It is well positioned to inform and empower a wide range of policy and organizing efforts in California to reduce disparities in state and regional patterns of well-being and opportunity. Key audiences include public officials, advocacy groups, political researchers and communities themselves. To learn about the CCEP's national and state advisory committee, or review the extensive coverage of the CCEP's work in California's media, visit our website at:
<http://regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/ccep>

About the Center for Regional Change

Launched in 2007, the CRC is a catalyst for innovative, collaborative, and action-oriented research. It brings together faculty and students from different disciplines, and builds bridges between university, policy, advocacy, business, philanthropy and other sectors. The CRC's goal is to support the building of healthy, equitable, prosperous, and sustainable regions in California and beyond. Learn more! Visit the CRC website at
<http://regionalchange.ucdavis.edu>

For more information about this research study and the California Civic Engagement Project, contact Mindy Romero, CCEP Director, at 530-665-3010 or msromero@ucdavis.edu.

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