Estimating Voter Turnout in the Current Population Survey

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Analysts of election data have long lamented the difference between so-called "official" counts of votes cast in an election and results from household surveys, which also purport to measure voter turnout. Typical of the difference is the 91.6 million votes reported by the Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives for the 1988 Presidential election versus 102.2 million reported voters in the November 1988 Current Population Survey (CPS).

This paper analyzes the problem of overestimating voter turnout in household surveys at the national and State level using estimates of turnout reported by respondents in the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS). The data base used as the standard of comparison for CPS estimates is the official count of votes for President as reported to Congress by the Clerk of the House. Overestimation of voting is computed as the percent difference between the CPS estimate of the number of voters and the official count of votes cast in an election (table A).

The paper first compares overestimation in the Presidential elections of 1980, 1984, and 1988 for the United States, regions and States. Then, the paper discusses changes in the geographical distribution of overestimation in these three Presidential election years. Because there is no single candidate for which all citizens are eligible to vote in non-Presidential election years, and the fact that some states do not report total votes cast, comparable information on turnout among different States is unavailable in non-Presidential election years. Conseqently no analysis is attempted for those years.

After discussing geographical differences in overestimating voting and the changes noted in the overestimates over time, a multivariate analysis is used to examine the relationship between selected socioeconomic characteristics of States and their rates of net overestimation. These macro-level relationships will be examined in light of other researchers' findings from various voter validation studies that use the individual as the unit of analysis. A concluding section will discuss the implications of our findings on overestimation for recent trends in voting patterns as previously analyzed in Census Bureau reports.

Problems in Self-Reported Voting

Always substantial, discrepancies between survey estimates and official counts in recent years have increased to the extent that the 1988 CPS estimate of turnout was 11 percent higher than the official count of votes (table A). In the first CPS surveys in the 1960's, overestimates of voting were about 8 or 9 percent. Despite discrepancies as large as recorded in 1988, surveys remain an important analytical tool in election studies because they identify the characteristics of people who vote or do not vote.

That discrepancies arise in estimating voter turnout is almost inevitable given the difference in the units of tabulation. The "official count" tabulated by each State's board of elections shows the number of votes counted for specific offices. Because in any election voters typically vote for more than one office, the total number of voters in each State is approximated by the office receiving the highest number of votes. In Presidential election years, it is always the office of President. These official turnout figures for the office of President may be less than the actual number of persons going to the polls because ballots may have been mismarked or they may not have included a vote for a candidate for President (altogether about 1.3 percent in 1988).[1]

Household surveys, on the other hand, estimate the number of people who voted and registered to vote from direct interviews with household respondents. In Census Bureau surveys, reports of voting behavior are sometimes made by other adult members of the household ("proxy" respondents) as well as by designated respondents. If some persons misreport their voting or that of other household members, studies show that surveys will produce higher estimates of turnout than the count of votes indicates. It has long been assumed that substantial misreporting by household respondents accounts for most of the differences between survey estimates and official vote figures. In this paper, we will discuss a number of other factors as well as respondent misreports that contribute to the discrepan-

Table A.
Comparison of CPS Voting Estimates and Official Counts in Presidential Election Years: November 1964 to 1988

(Numbers in thousands)

Year	Official vote for President		CPS estimate		Difference	
	Number	Turnout rate	Number	Turnout rate	Number	Turnout rate
1988	91,587	50.1	102,224	57.4	10,637	11.6
1984	92,655	53.1	101.878	59.9	9,223	10.0
1980	86,497	52.6	93,066	59.2	6,569	7.6
1976	81,603	53.6	86,698	59.2	5,095	6.2
1972	77,625	55.1	85,766	63.0	8,141	10.5
1968	73,212	60.9	78,964	67.8	5,752	7.9
1964	70,645	61.9	76,671	69.3	6,026	8.5

Source: Current Population Reports, Series P-20 No. 440, 405, 370, 322, 253, 192, and 143, and Series P-25, No. 1059.

[1]Nonvoter Study '88–89 of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, Washington, DC.

cy between CPS estimates of turnout and official counts.

Misreporting by respondents. Since the Bureau began the voting supplement to the CPS in 1964, a number of efforts have been made to identify and reduce misreporting.[2] In the first survey in 1964, a subsample of households was reinterviewed by the supervisory field staff. While the reinterview showed overall consistency in reporting on voting, this may have been in part because the reinterviewer usually talked with the same household respondent as originally interviewed the previous week, who may have repeated any earlier misreports. In 1972, a test was conducted of the hypothesis that by asking the presumably less sensitive question on registration first, any tendency to overreport on voting might be lessened. Results for those who reported on voting indicated that reversing the question order did not reduce the proportion of persons who reported that they had voted.[3]

Use of proxy respondents. Another perennial concern with respondent reports of voting in the CPS is the fear that proxy respondents might report that an absent household member had voted when in fact the person had not. In the voting supplement to the November 1974 CPS, for approximately one-eighth of the sample households, interviewers were instructed to obtain the voting supplement information directly from each individual. The differences in turnout between groups reporting for themselves (47 percent) or by someone else (48 percent) were not significant. Thus, this test yielded no evidence that proxy reporting accounted for any part of the overestimate of voting.[4]

[2]For a comprehensive discussion of the overreporting problem, including a comparison of the 1964 Bureau of the Census survey and that of the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan, see Aage R. Claussen (1968–69).

[3]Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 253 (1973).

[4]Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 293 (1976).

In the November 1984 survey, respondents in two outgoing rotation groups whose voting and registration had been previously reported by another house-

Table B.
Overrestimating Voting in the CPS in Presidential Elections, 1980 to 1988, for Regions and Divisions
(Numbers in thousands)

Region and division	Clerk of House	Current Population Survey	Percent difference
1988			
United States	91,587	102,224	11.6
Northeast	19,851	21,744	9.5
New England	5,729	6,160	7.5
Middle Atlantic	14,122	15,584	10.4
Midwest	24,663	27,259	10.5
East North Central	16,983	18,856	11.0
West North Central	7,680	8,403	9.4
South	28,557	33,094	15.9
South Atlantic	14,234	16,704	17.4
East South Central	5,269	5,960	13.1
West South Central	9,054	10,430	15.2
West	18,515	20,126	8.7
Mountain	5,007	5,593	11.7
Pacific	13,508	14,533	7.6
1984			
United States	92,655	101,878	10.0
Northeast	20,483	21,994	7.4
New England	5,613	5,861	4.4
Middle Atlantic	14,870	16,133	8.5
Midwest	25,457	27,679	8.7
East North Central	17,629	19,201	8.9
West North Central	7,828	8,478	8.3
South	28,834	32,696	13.4
South Atlantic	14,125	15,699	11.1
East South Central	5,464	6,473	18.5
West South Central	9,245	8,478	8.3
West	17,883	19,508	9.1
Mountain	4,732	5,295	11.9
Pacific	13,151	14,213	8.1
1980			
United States	86,497	93,066	7.6
Northeast	19,206	20,756	8.1
New England	5,466	5,935	8.6
Middle Atlantic	13,740	14,821	7.9
Midwest	25,178	27,328	8.5
East North Central	17,459	18,931	8.4
West North Central	7,719	8,397	8.8
South	25,809	28,102	8.9
South Atlantic	12,582	13,706	8.9
East South Central	5,148	5,776	12.2
West South Central	8,079	8,620	6.7
West	16,308	16,879	3.5
Mountain	4,340	4,594	5.9
Pacific	11,968	12,285	2.6

Source: Table 1 of this paper.

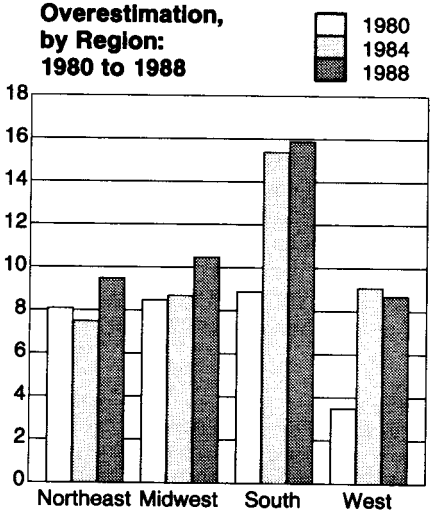
hold member were followed up by the interviewer and asked the voting and registration questions directly.[5] Results of this test showed that among persons for whom reinterviews were obtained, 99 percent who had been reported by another household member as having voted also reported for themselves that they voted; further, 99 percent of the followup interviews that initially reported that the respondent did not vote confirmed the report. Thus, the 1984 proxy verification test confirmed the 1974 finding that misreports by proxy respondents do not account for the discrepancy between CPS estimates of turnout and official counts of the number of votes.[6]

Because different population groups may exhibit different levels of estimation and reporting errors, and until ways are found to eliminate the effects of these errors on survey estimates of voter turnout, estimates of change for any group will be unreliable. Therefore, this report turns to examination of variation in the regional distribution of overestimation and attempts to evaluate the effects of survey population coverage and controls on CPS voter turnout estimates. Then, using regression techniques, socioeconomic characteristics of States which are consistently associated with high overestimates of voting are identified and analyzed.

The Geography of Overestimation

Population coverage. Inaccuracies in the coverage of the population by the survey may affect a survey estimate of voters. If the CPS sample is less successful in enumerating groups with traditionally low turnouts, (e.g., transients and illegal aliens), then, although the sample is weighted to correctly represent overall age, sex, and race distributions, the survey respondents may overrepresent population groups more likely to vote.[7] Further, the CPS results are adjusted to independent population estimates based on the decennial census and to the extent that the census is subject to undercounts in selected groups or geographic areas, this source of error will be reflected in estimates from the CPS.

Figure
Percent Voter Overestimation, by Region: 1980 to 1988



Regional distribution of overestimation. In the Presidential elections of 1988 and 1984 the South led all other regions in overestimation error in the CPS, 15.9 percent in 1988, 13.4 percent in 1984; in 1980 the South's 8.9 percent overestimate exceeded only that in the West, the lowest of any region in 1980 (table B). Overestimation of voting in the Northeast has ranged from about 7 to 10 percent and in the Midwest, between 9 and 11 percent. Between 1980 and 1988, the highest percentage point increases in overestimating occurred in the South and the West, while less change has been noted in the Northeast and Midwest (table B).

Table C.
Change in Voting-Age Population, by Region: 1980 to 1988
(Numbers in thousands)

Region	Voting-age population		Percent increase, 1980-88
	1988	1980	
Northeast	37,874	35,500	+ 6.7
Midwest	43,309	41,542	4.3
South	60,725	50,561	20.1
West	36,190	29,483	22.7

Source: Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 440, tables C and A-2.

Since 1980, population shifts have led to an increasing proportion of the voting age population living in the South and the West, compared with the remainder of the U.S. Between 1980 and 1988. The voting age population in the South increased by 20 percent and in the West by 23 percent; low growth was noted for the Northeast (7 percent) and the Midwest (4 percent) census regions (table C). This population growth since 1980 has led to an increase in the proportion of all U.S. voters living in the South (from 29.8 percent in 1980 to 31.2 percent in 1988) and in the West (from 18.9 to 20.2 percent), while the Midwest has lost voters (from 29.1 to 26.9 percent); about 22 percent of voters have lived in the Northeast at each Presidential election since 1980 (table B, Clerk of the House figures).

Shifts in the regional distribution of overestimates of voting corresponded to these population changes and levels of regional overestimating (table D). The South, which accounted for 34.9 percent of the 6.6 million overestimate in voting in the CPS in 1980, increased its share to 42.7 percent in 1988. Between 1980 and 1988, the share of voter overestimates attributable to the West doubled from 8.7 of the total in 1980 to 17.6 percent in 1984, then dropped to 15.1 percent for the 1988 election.

The proportion of total overestimation dropped between 1980 and 1988 both in the Midwest (from 32.7 to 24.4 percent) and in the Northeast (from 23.6 to 17.8 percent).

[5]The Current Population Survey is divided into eight representative components or "rotation groups." Each month two rotation groups move out of the survey and are replaced by two new incoming groups.

[6]Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 405 (1986).

[7]See U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 440, for an evaluation of the quality of CPS data on voting and registration.

Table D.
Regional Distribution of Overestimation in the Current Population Survey: 1980 to 1988

(Numbers in thousands)

Region	1988	1984	1980
United States	10,637	9,223	6,569
Northeast	1,893	1,511	1,550
Midwest	2,596	2,222	2,150
South	4,537	3,862	2,293
West	1,611	1,625	571
Percent Distribution			
United States	100.0	100.0	100.0
Northeast	17.8	16.4	23.6
Midwest	24.4	24.1	32.7
South	42.7	41.9	34.9
West	15.1	17.6	8.7

Source: Derived from table B of this report. Numbers represent the difference between CPS and Clerk of the House voter turnout.

Effects of population controls. Part of the sizeable increases in overestimation that occurred in the South and West between 1980 and 1988 may have resulted from the introduction of population controls based on the 1980 census. These new controls resulted in an increase in the estimated voting-age population nationwide of almost 3 percent. As table E shows, 1980 census based estimates of the voting age population (VAP) in the South and West for November 1980 are clearly higher than the projections which used 1970 census based controls. These differences in controls affect the CPS estimates of voters because the November 1980 CPS used 1970 census based controls, while the November 1984 and 1988 CPS supplements used 1980 census based controls.

The change in census based controls resulted in a disproportional increase in the CPS estimate of the voting-age population in the South and West after 1980. This increase in the voting-age population for these regions for 1984 and later years translated, in turn, into a sharp increase in the CPS estimate of total voters for 1984 and 1988, compared with official vote counts.

Column 3 of table F shows the approximate percent increase between 1980 and 1988 in CPS estimates of regional turnout after adjusting the 1980 CPS voting age population to correspond with 1980 census based estimates.[8] Clearly, the adjusted percentage increases are closer to observed changes in the official count, supporting the contention that a substantial part of the observed increase in CPS overestimation of turnout in the South and West between 1980 and 1988 occurred as a result of the changeover from 1970 census to 1980 census based population estimates.

State distribution of overestimation. Among States, variation in the level of overestimating turnout reached as high as 30 percent in each of the election years 1988, 1984, and 1980. Only Alaska showed consistent net underestimating in CPS (table 1)[9]. In addition, a high level of consistency in the ordering of States from high to low levels of overestimation was found; that is, States with high overestimation rates in one election generally had high rates in other years.

Since voting in the CPS is tabulated by the person's residence at the survey date and not according to the State in

[8]For example, November 1980 population estimates for the South based on 1980 census controls are 5 percent higher than those based on 1970 census controls as indicated in the text tables. If the November 1980 CPS had used the 1980 census-based controls, there would have been about 5 percent more more Southern voters (29.5 million) estimated by this survey (versus 28.1 million as reported in table B). This would have resulted in a 12.1 percent increase in CPS voter turnout between 1980 and 1988 for the South instead of the 17.8 percent calculated from table B.

[9]Because Alaska has had a small, rapidly growing population, estimates and projections have consistently understated its voting age population, one result of which is an apparent underreporting of voting in the CP's. See the article by Jeffrey Passel in this issue, which discusses the effects of different population estimates on measures of voter turnout.

Table E.
Change in Voting-Age Population: 1970 vs. 1980 Census Controls

(Numbers in thousands)

Region	Projections of November 1980 voting-age population (1970 census controls)	Estimates of November 1980 voting-age population (1980 census controls)	Percent difference
United States	160,491	164,595	2.6
Northeast	36,061	36,287	0.6
Midwest	42,066	42,194	0.3
South	51,945	54,556	5.0
West	30,418	31,558	3.7

Source: Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 879, for 1970 census-based projections and Series p25, No. 1019, for post-1980 census-based estimates.

Table F.
Percent Change in Number of Voters: 1980 to 1988

Region	Clerk of the House	CPS estimates	
		Unadjusted	Adjusted
United States	5.9	9.8	7.1
Northeast	3.4	4.8	4.1
Midwest	-2.0	-0.3	-0.6
South	10.6	17.8	12.2
West	13.5	19.2	15.0

Table G.
Regression Equations for Analyzing the Percentage Point Difference in Overestimation of Voting in the CPS
(Standard errors shown in parenthesis)

Survey date	Intercept	South	Percent Black	Per capita income	Percent voting	Percent high school graduate	Adjusted R-square
1988	**32.390	-3.096	**.408	**-.606	-.160	-.089	.479
	(11.321)	(2.239)	(.107)	(.248)	(.121)	(.129)	
1984	**44.364	-3.307	**.373	**-1.980	**-.331	.096	.515
	(12.475)	(2.419)	(.133)	(.411)	(.125)	(.152)	
1980	**30.972	**-4.658	**.330	-.964	-.074	-.169	.328
	(11.518)	(2.269)	(.122)	(.621)	(.105)	(.157)	

**Significant at the .05 level.
South = A dummy variable with a value of 1 for States in the South and 0 for all other States.
Per capita income = Mean per capita personal income for State in thousands of dollars.
Percent voting = Votes for President as percent of resident voting-age population.
Percent Black from CPS for each year.
Percent high school graduate = Percent of State population 25 years and over who completed 4 years of high school or more (1980 census estimates).

which his or her vote is cast, some regional- and State-level variation in overestimation may be due to a difference between actual and voting residence. For example, if a State has a large population whose voting residence may be elsewhere, i.e., Washington, DC, overestimates may occur in the survey since the person is tallied as voting in the area where he or she resides at the time of the survey and not where the voting actually occurs. While this may explain some regional variation, it cannot address the problem of overestimation at the national level.

Socioeconomic Correlates of Overestimation

Not all error in estimating turnout in CPS is the result of population controls or survey coverage. Studies that match survey responses with voting records clearly indicate that a significant part of the discrepancy between survey estimates and offical counts is the result of respondent misreporting (Traugott and Katosh, 1979). Thus, while assessing regional changes in overestimation is important in identifying geographic areas where overestimation is high, it provides only indirect information on the characteristics of persons who misreport their electoral behavior and next to nothing about their reasons for doing so. Information on misreporters would be best obtained by matching actual voting records with a sample of CPS respondents, a project which would involve many technical problems in addition to being very costly. However, other methods can indirectly shed light on this topic. In this paper, we have correlated overestimates of voting in the CPS with selected socioeconomic summary measures for States. The results suggest a socioeconomic component to the overestimates, but because states rather than persons were used in the regression equations, the transferability of the results from observed statistical relationships to actual behavioral analysis cannot be conclusive.

Variables and data sources. Two socioeconomic variables which previous studies have shown to be related to misreporting of voting and for which State estimates exist for each of the Presidential elections between 1980 and 1988 are race and income.[10] Table G shows the regression for State differences in overestimation. The regressions include observations for all 50 States. Because of the unusual population base of the District of Columbia where voting out of State may be quite common among Congressional staff and military personnel living in the city, Washington, DC, was not included in the regressions.

[10]See for example, Hill and Hurley (1984) and Traugott and Katosh (1979).

The dependent variable in the regression was the percent difference between the CPS estimate of turnout for States and turnout as recorded by the Clerk of the House. The independent variables include the percent Black and per capita personal income for each State, a dummy variable for whether the State is located in the South, the States' official turnout rate, included to control for the potential level of overreporting in each State, and the percent of States' population 25 years and over with 12 or more years of school completed.

Data on the percentage Black for each State was estimated from the CPS supplements for the election years of 1980, 1984, and 1988. Voter rates for each state are derived from the Clerk of the House vote tallies and 1980 census-based population estimates and projections for each election year. Per capita income figures are derived from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis's *Survey of Current Business*, while the percentage of States' population who had at least a high school education are from the 1980 census. Unfortunately, reliable State level educational indicators are only available during census years, so this indicator for 1980 was used for all three election regressions in this paper.

Overall results. The adjusted R-square values in table G measure the

portion of the variation in States' overestimate of turnout in each Presidential election year explained by the regression. In 1988 and 1984, the R-square values were about .50, indicating that the variables in the regression accounted for about half of the variation in net overestimation for those states for those election years. In 1980, the regression accounted for only about one-third of the variation in overestimation.

South-non-South differences. While table B shows that overestimation was higher in the South than in the remainder of the United States in 1984 and 1988, the regression equations (table G) indicate that after standardizing for important socioeconomic variables such as percent Black and income, the overestimate of turnout was no greater in Southern States than in the remainder of the nation in 1984 and 1988 and that it was actually greater outside the South in 1980.

Abramson and Claggett, (1984) using person-level data, found that in 3 of the 4 Social Research Council-Center for Political Studies (SRC-CPS) surveys of 1964, 1976, 1978, and 1980, ". . . southern blacks were more likely to overreport voting than were blacks outside the South" (p. 721). On the other hand, results reported by Anderson, Silver, and Abramson (1988) indicate that both White and Black nonvoters in the South were less likely to overreport voting than their counterparts outside the South (p. 61).

Race and income. Higher overestimating in each of the elections was significantly associated with States which recorded relatively higher proportions of the electorate being Black. Higher levels of overestimating were also related to low levels of per capita income both in 1988 and 1984; in 1980, although the association was negative, it failed to pass the 10-percent level of significance. A similar association between race and overreporting has been observed by Traugott and Katosh (1979), Katosh and Traugott (1981), Sigelman (1982), Abramson and Claggett (1984) and Hill and Hurley (1984). Other studies (Silver, Anderson, Abramson, 1986), however, have found that the characteristics associated with the likelihood of voting are also those associated with a high probability of misreporting, e.g., being White, having high income or education.

Actual turnout. The official voter turnout was included in the equations to control for interstate differences in the population at risk of misreporting.[11] In theory, the higher the official voter turnout, the lower the potential for overestimation since the population at risk of misreporting will be reduced. For each year, overestimation appeared to be less likely in States where official turnout was relatively high, as expected, but only in 1984 was the overestimate significantly higher in States with low voter turnout.

Education. Educational attainment, measured by the percentage of each State's population 25 years old and over reported in the 1980 census as having completed at least 4 years of high school had no significant relationship with the overestimation of voting in any of the elections. Traugott and Katosh (1974) found a similarly low association between educational level of respondents and misreporting of voting in the voter validation studies from the 1976 and 1978 elections. This is in marked contrast with Silver, Anderson, and Abramson (1986), who found overreporting positively related to education, noting that ". . . college graduates were the most likely to overreport voting, and those who had not finished high school were the least likely to overreport voting" (p. 615).

A number of other studies (Hill and Hurley (1984); Anderson and Silver (1986); Sigelman (1982); and Abramson and Claggett (1989)) also found an association between education and overreporting of voting. The authors suggest that more highly educated people are likely to overreport since they feel they are expected to vote—so instead of admitting that they did not vote, they claim that they did in order to live up to the expectations placed on them in an interview situation. The general consistency of the relationship between education and overreporting in these studies suggests that lack of a relationship between overestimation of voting and education background in this CPS study may have resulted from the crudeness of the measure used in the analysis (percent high school graduate by State in 1980) and use of the same measure for 1984 and 1988 as for 1980.

[11]For a discussion of the population at risk of overreporting on voting and the effects of the marginal distribution of actual voters and nonvoters on the propensity to misreport voting, see Anderson and Silverman (1986).

Conclusion

This paper analyzed the regional and socioeconomic differences in overestimation of turnout in the Presidential elections of 1980, 1984, and 1988 in the CPS. Overestimation of voting in the CPS, compared with official turnout figures, stood at 12 percent in 1988, up from 8 percent since the 1980 election. By and large, States have been consistent in their overestimation patterns; that is, states that have high overestimation in one election tend to have high overoverestimation in other election years, although the level of overestimating has increased in recent years. Further, as the share of the voting age population and voters living in the South and West increased over the past decade, the overestimate has tended to increase in these areas faster than in other regions of the country.

Some of this increase since 1980, especially in the South and West, was the result of switching from 1970 to 1980 census-based population controls in the CPS after the 1980 survey was taken. Survey estimates of voters in 1980 (based on 1970 census controls), although still higher than official counts, were lower than they would have been if 1980 census-based controls had been incorporated into the survey design.

Although the simple aggregate figures have consistently indicated that states in the South generally have the highest

rates of overestimation in CPS voting supplements, when the effects of race and State income levels are held constant, net overestimation tends to be no higher for southern States than for those outside the South. In fact, in 1980 with income and race held constant, the overestimate was significantly less in the South than in other regions.

The intuitive suspicion that States with low actual turnout, and thus more potential to overestimate voting, would have higher rates of actual overestimation was confirmed only for 1984 (table G).

Although education is one of the most significant variables affecting turnout, no evidence was found in this study linking our measure of educational attainment (percent high school graduate as reported in the 1980 census) with overestimation of turnout in the CPS.

Implications of the Study

Results of this study, if borne out by rigorous matching of respondent reports and voting records, would tend to compromise recent observations in CPS reports which note the general narrowing of the observed gap in turnout rates among race groups since the 1970's. However, because the association studied here uses States as the level of analysis, no such conclusions can be firmly established. Other studies, however, do report that racial differences in turnout persist or even increase among respondents who have had their voting records validated. Katosh and Traugott (1981) in their matching study of the 1976 and 1978 elections note that they ". . . do not find any major changes in the fundamental nature of the basic relationships that have been observed . . ." even if only the responses of the validated voters are studied.

Given the consistent findings on overestimation and overreporting by race found both in previous person-level studies and in the aggregate analysis undertaken in this report, it may well be that the apparent narrowing of the voting gap between Whites and Blacks has been exaggerated in recent CPS reports. In other words, differences in voter turnout between the White and Black populations, and between economically rich and poor Americans, could be greater than measured in the CPS. Similarly, Abramson and Claggett (1984, 1986) found that racial differences in turnout remained strong over time among validated voters (p. 416). Hill and Hurley (1984) found that the turnout gap between Whites and Blacks actually increased more over time among validated voters.

In the past, many analysts have assumed a reluctance to admit dereliction in civic duty as the likely reason people say they voted when they did not. The association noted in this study of high overestimation in States with either a high proportion of their population Black or with a low per capita income, characteristics associated with lower socioeconomic status and lower levels of social participation, suggests that a reluctance to admit being outside the mainstream of American culture may be as strong a motivator to misreport as the desire to exhibit civic responsibility.

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Table 1.
Comparison of CPS Voting Estimates and Official Counts of Votes Cast, by State: November 1988, 1984, and 1980

State	Clerk of the House[1]			Current Population Survey			Percent difference					
	1988	1984	1980	1988	1984	1980	1988	Standard error	1984	Standard error	1980	Standard error
United States	91,587	92,655	86,497	102,224	101,878	93,066	11.6	0.5	10.0	0.4	7.6	0.3
Alabama	1,378	1,442	1,342	1,668	1,697	1,485	21.0	4.1	17.7	4.8	10.7	4.6
Alaska	200	208	158	190	191	143	−5.0	3.2	−8.2	3.6	−9.5	6.6
Arizona	1,172	1,026	874	1,358	1,178	937	15.9	3.8	14.8	5.3	7.2	5.5
Arkansas	828	884	838	960	992	888	15.9	3.9	12.2	5.1	6.0	5.3
California	9,887	9,505	8,583	10,569	10,346	8,854	6.9	1.9	8.8	1.9	3.2	1.7
Colorado	1,372	1,295	1,184	1,563	1,381	1,257	13.9	3.2	6.6	4.5	6.2	4.4
Connecticut	1,443	1,467	1,406	1,571	1,522	1,539	8.9	3.3	3.7	4.5	9.5	4.4
Delaware	250	255	236	284	261	251	13.6	3.6	2.4	5.1	6.4	8.1
District of Columbia	193	211	174	242	253	227	25.4	4.8	19.9	6.3	30.5	11.4
Florida	4,302	4,180	3,687	5,151	4,439	3,732	19.7	1.8	6.2	3.0	1.2	2.6
Georgia	1,810	1,776	1,597	2,255	2,153	1,894	24.6	4.3	21.2	4.8	18.6	4.4
Hawaii	354	336	303	409	378	337	15.5	4.0	12.5	5.6	11.2	7.8
Idaho	409	411	437	428	449	439	4.6	3.1	9.2	4.8	0.5	5.7
Illinois	4,559	4,819	4,750	5,081	5,518	5,270	11.4	1.8	14.5	2.8	10.9	2.4
Indiana	2,169	2,233	2,242	2,454	2,431	2,355	13.1	3.5	8.9	3.9	5.0	3.5
Iowa	1,226	1,320	1,318	1,291	1,422	1,410	5.3	3.1	7.7	4.5	7.0	4.5
Kansas	993	1,022	980	1,075	1,096	1,087	8.3	3.2	7.2	5.0	10.9	5.0
Kentucky	1,323	1,369	1,296	1,331	1,549	1,402	0.6	3.9	13.1	5.3	8.2	4.7
Louisiana	1,628	1,707	1,549	1,969	2,024	1,735	20.9	3.6	18.6	4.4	12.0	4.3
Maine	555	553	523	585	566	527	5.4	2.7	2.4	4.4	0.8	5.8
Maryland	1,714	1,676	1,540	1,844	1,899	1,759	7.6	3.8	13.3	4.5	14.2	3.7
Massachusetts	2,633	2,559	2,524	2,825	2,664	2,777	7.3	1.6	4.1	3.2	10.0	2.7
Michigan	3,669	3,802	3,910	3,984	3,986	4,163	8.6	1.8	4.8	3.0	6.5	2.4
Minnesota	2,097	2,084	2,052	2,176	2,245	2,140	3.8	2.6	7.7	4.1	4.3	3.4
Mississippi	932	941	892	1,124	1,240	1,100	20.6	3.6	31.8	5.2	23.3	5.5
Missouri	2,093	2,123	2,100	2,450	2,345	2,375	17.1	3.3	10.5	4.1	13.1	3.7
Montana	366	384	364	392	410	374	7.1	2.8	6.8	4.5	2.7	6.1
Nebraska	661	652	640	722	706	703	9.2	3.0	8.3	5.0	9.8	6.0
Nevada	343	283	244	363	312	254	5.8	4.4	10.2	6.1	4.1	7.7
New Hampshire	451	389	384	468	426	437	3.8	3.3	9.5	5.4	13.8	7.1
New Jersey	3,100	3,218	2,976	3,470	3,387	3,173	11.9	1.7	5.3	3.2	6.6	3.0
New Mexico	521	514	456	573	601	501	10.0	3.5	16.9	5.2	9.9	6.3
New York	6,486	6,807	6,202	7,189	7,549	6,931	10.8	1.9	10.9	2.2	11.8	2.1
North Carolina	2,134	2,175	1,856	2,497	2,475	2,040	17.0	2.1	13.8	4.3	9.9	4.0
North Dakota	297	309	301	334	334	329	12.5	2.7	8.1	4.6	9.3	6.6
Ohio	4,394	4,563	4,284	4,882	4,813	4,631	11.1	1.7	5.5	2.7	8.1	2.5
Oklahoma	1,171	1,256	1,150	1,257	1,416	1,234	7.3	3.8	12.7	4.7	7.3	4.9
Oregon	1,202	1,227	1,182	1,290	1,289	1,223	7.3	3.3	5.1	4.7	3.5	4.8
Pennsylvania	4,536	4,845	4,562	4,925	5,197	4,717	8.6	1.9	7.3	2.7	3.4	2.4
Rhode Island	405	410	416	451	448	438	11.4	3.6	9.3	5.2	5.3	6.9
South Carolina	986	969	888	1,195	1,120	1,021	21.2	4.2	15.6	5.6	15.0	5.7
South Dakota	313	318	328	355	330	353	13.4	2.4	3.8	4.5	7.6	6.4
Tennessee	1,636	1,712	1,618	1,837	1,987	1,789	12.3	4.0	16.1	4.8	10.6	4.2
Texas	5,427	5,398	4,542	6,244	6,092	4,763	15.1	2.0	12.9	2.7	4.9	2.4
Utah	647	630	604	721	730	641	11.4	3.0	15.9	4.8	6.1	5.2
Vermont	243	235	213	260	235	217	7.0	3.2	0.0	4.8	1.9	7.7
Virginia	2,192	2,147	1,866	2,516	2,271	2,006	14.8	3.2	5.8	4.7	7.5	4.0
Washington	1,865	1,875	1,742	2,075	2,009	1,728	11.3	3.2	7.1	4.6	−0.8	3.9
West Virginia	653	736	738	720	828	776	10.3	4.3	12.5	4.9	5.1	5.6
Wisconsin	2,192	2,212	2,273	2,455	2,453	2,512	12.0	2.7	10.9	4.5	10.5	3.6
Wyoming	177	189	177	195	234	191	10.2	4.3	23.8	5.8	7.9	7.8

[1]U.S. Congress, Clerk of the House, Statistics of the Presidential and Congressional Election.