

Getting out the *Early* Vote: Lessons for Progressives

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Summary

This report comprises a summary of research on early voting, in so far as these bear on the question of how early voting may help or hinder progressive targeting efforts. The review is selective; a more complete summary of the literature on early voting and its impact on campaigns, turnout, and voting behavior are available at <http://earlyvoting.net> and in Gronke 2004.

While much of the research conducted thus far is limited to a small number of states, consistent patterns have emerged that should raise concerns for progressive efforts. We conclude below that early voting has the potential to hurt progressives targeting. The primary goal for progressives should be to influence changes in statewide registration and election reforms so as to make early voting reports easily and cheaply available to all candidates. The demographic and attitudinal profiles of early voters do not favor progressives, but there are no major indications of partisan or other attitudinal differences among early voting that will harm the progressive cause.

Specifically, the research shows:

1. Early voting is rapidly increasing nationwide. There were nearly 25 million early votes cast in 2004, and there is a strong likelihood that this number will increase by between 50 and 100% by 2008. Neither political party can ignore the early vote.
2. Early voting may increase the costs of voter mobilization as campaigns have to engage in two or more weeks of GOTV efforts. However, to the degree to which early voting turnout information is cheaply and readily available, early voting may actually increase the efficiency of mobilization efforts.
3. Early voters differ demographically from precinct level voters in ways that do not benefit progressives. They tend to be older and better educated. They face longer commutes. There are some indication that African Americans avoid early voting.
4. Early voters tend to be more trusting of government, more partisan, and more energized about the campaign. As early voting increases, it is possible that the most partisan voters will disengage from the campaign as it reaches its final stages. This may hinder progressive candidates, who rely relatively more on labor intensive GOTV campaigns than do their opponents.

What is Early Voting?

The terms “early voting” and “non-precinct voting” cover three separate yet related reforms to traditional Election Day voting. First, twenty-eight states explicitly allow *in person early voting*, where a voter can cast a ballot at community centers, fire stations, libraries, and other governmental offices, all well before election day (North Dakota and New Mexico, for example, allow ballots to be cast in person as early as 40 days before election day). Second, many states have dramatically *liberalized absentee balloting*. Twenty states allow no-excuse absentee voting, and two (Washington and California) allow voters to place themselves on a “permanent” absentee ballot list. Absentee ballots can obviously be cast as soon as they arrive in the mail, with required postmark dates varying by state.¹ Finally, one state, Oregon, has implemented a well-publicized experiment with *vote by mail* (VBM). VBM was legalized in 1981 and was adopted statewide in 1995. For VBM, the only limit on early voting is the date that the ballot is delivered to the voter (generally not more than 20 days before the election).²

How Many Early Votes Are Cast?

- **Result:** 20% or more of ballots are cast early, with significant variation nationwide
- **The Progressive lesson: no one can ignore the early vote**

Over the past 20 years, alternatives to traditional Election Day voting have been introduced with increasing frequency all over the United States. What were once “provisions to allow the elderly, infirm, and those out of the state to vote...before election day” (Stein, 1998) have become privileges that are being significantly expanded. These alternatives include various forms of early voting, and “(e)lection day in the United States is rapidly turning into an anachronism ... waiting in line to cast our ballots will become the quaint notion of a bygone era” (Gronke 2004). Early voting and extended “election periods” are here to stay.

The voter response to such reforms is unambiguous--the cumulative effect of the availability of early voting resulted in more than 25 million ballots being cast early or absentee (according to the Election Assistance Commission’s election day survey). This figure is consistent with survey data generated by the National Annenberg Election Study, which estimated more than 20% of voters cast early ballots in 2004 (the AP estimates that 115.7 million voters cast ballots in 2004, resulting in an NAES estimate of 23.3 million early voters). This figure is up 6% in just four years, according to the NAES (NAES 2005).

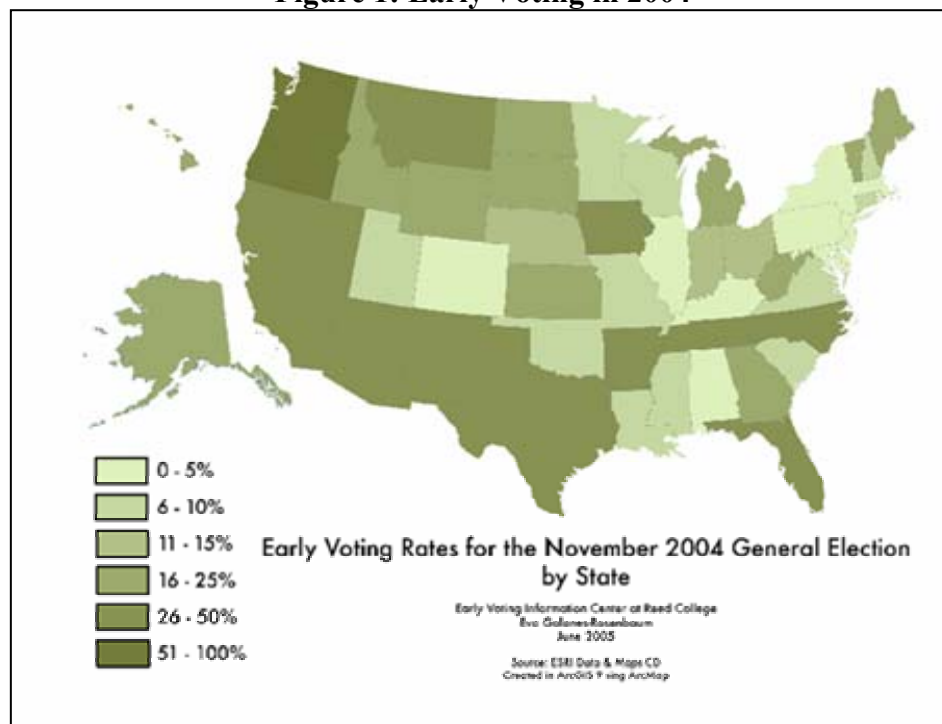
¹ In Iowa in 2004, ballots were mailed out on September 8th, and the first ballots were returned September 23. There is a surprising amount of variation in when the ballot must *arrive* (see the table at www.electionline.org). Most require the ballot to arrive by poll closing on election day, but many only require an election day postmark, while the District of Columbia and Alaska allow absentee ballots to arrive 10 days after the date of election.

² The current status of early voting rules and regulations can be found at <http://www.electionline.org/Default.aspx?tabid=474>.

The rapid growth in early voting is apparent to anyone who has been monitoring absentee balloting or in-person early voting rates. The increase just in the past four years is illustrated in the two maps below (Figures 1 and 2), the first of which was produced for the 2004 election by the Early Voting Information Center (EVIC), and the second by the CalTech/MIT Voting Technology Project (CalTech/MIT 2001).

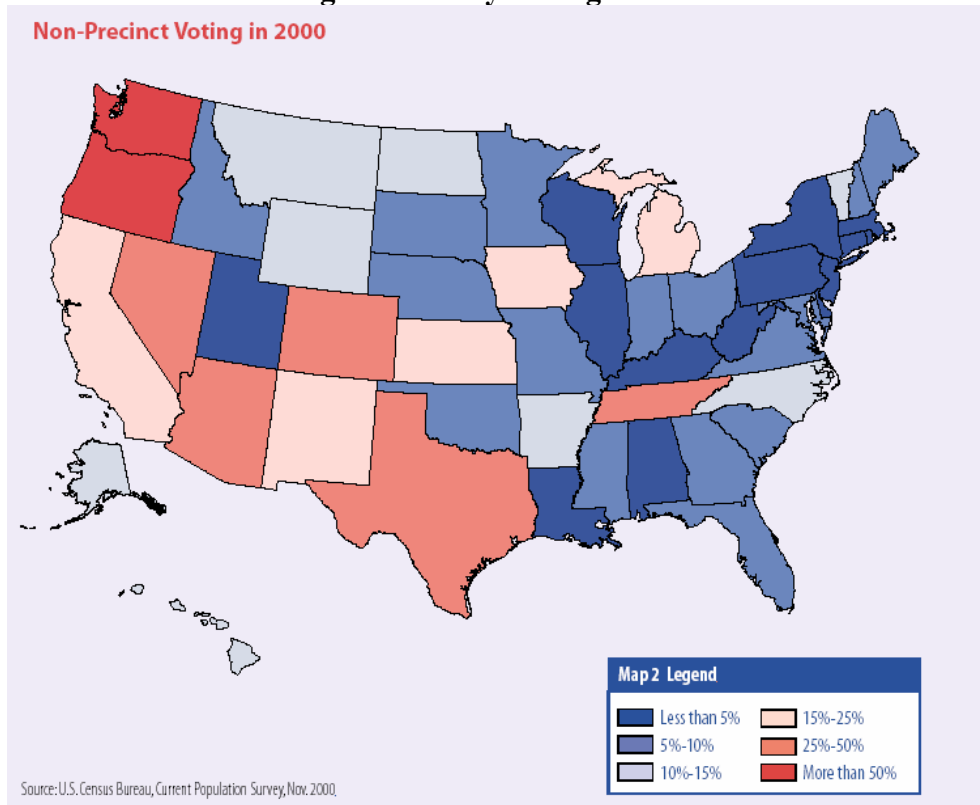
And what the maps also make clear is that what was once a phenomenon limited to West Coast states which experiment with electoral reforms is spreading across the country. Since the widespread controversies after the 2000 election, efforts to reform state and county elections systems have been ramped up considerably. Legislators often turned to these alternatives as a way to ease accessibility (including disabled access), reduce long lines, and raise turnout.³ A wide array of non-partisan reform organizations have called for a dramatic increase in all types of early voting. The two primary national organizations that deal with election administration, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), both issued reports after the 2000 elections, and again after the passage of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) that urge states to consider reforms that would allow early voting (NCSL 2001; NASS 2003; 2001; Bradbury 2001). Major advocacy groups such as Common Cause and the AARP have also come out publicly in favor of relaxed absentee balloting and in-person early voting.

Figure 1: Early Voting in 2004



³ A running tally of proposed changes to state and local election laws pertaining to early voting and other newspaper accounts of early voting are reported at <http://earlyvote.blogspot.com>.

Figure 2: Early Voting in 2000



What seems to be clear is that voters choose early voting over precinct level voting. What is less clear, however, is whether the time of voting decision continues to move backwards. We have examined this hypothesis most extensively in Oregon. One illustrative graphic is presented in Figure 3a, which seems to show that, statewide, Oregon voters are casting their ballots earlier over time. A more detailed analysis of voting patterns in Multnomah County, however, shows a quite different pattern. In Figure 3b, we plot early voting rates over a variety of federal, state, and special elections. Here we see no consistent pattern of increasingly early voting over time. We are pursuing statewide analyses of additional elections to reconcile these results.

What we suspect is happening is that the both the level, and rate, of early voting is heavily influenced by partisan mobilization efforts and by the intensity of the campaign. When there is a focused effort to get out the *early* vote, voters respond—we found this in Miami-Dade in 2004 (Gronke et al. 2005) and Stein and colleagues found this in Texas (Stein et al. 2005, 2003). At the national level, these distinctions may not have much of an impact, but in many state and local contests, it can be critical to determine how responsive early voting is to high profile ballot measures, competitive gubernatorial contests, and the like.

Figure 3: Oregon 2000 vs 2004 Turnout

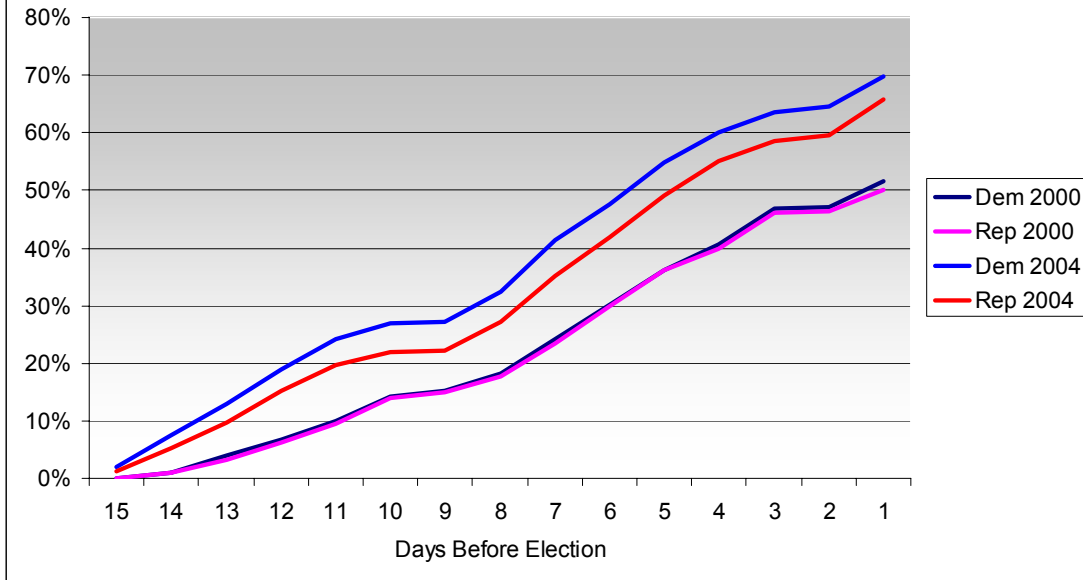
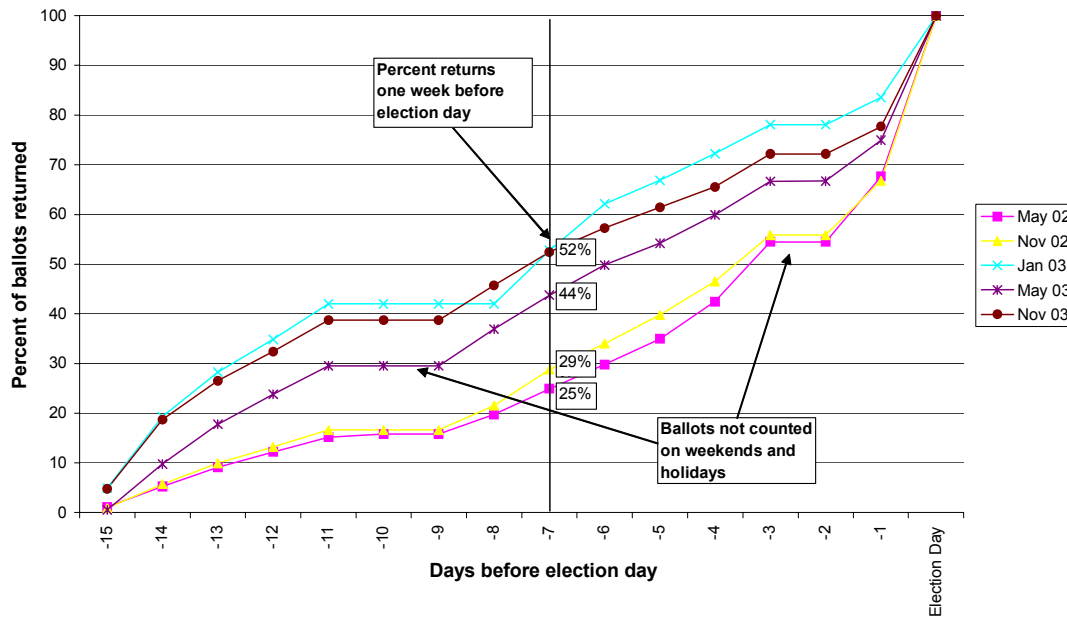


Figure 3: Recent Early Voting Trends, Multnomah County, OR



Why Early Voting?

- **Result:**
 - Early voting is justified for reasons of convenience and popularity
 - Advocates claim early voting increases turnout, although the evidence is slim
 - Early voting allows political parties to target their mobilization efforts
- **The Progressive lesson: it is unwise to stand in the way of early voting; instead, progressives must adjust their campaigns to accommodate it.**

We have argued thus far that early voting is such a popular reform among both election officials and with voters that it is only likely to increase in frequency. While there are some indications that early voting holds some political disadvantages for progressives, these are not compelling reasons to oppose its extension. Many progressive groups already support it. Still, it may be helpful to review briefly the rationales most often provided for adopting early voting.

The first reason given is that early voting is **more convenient** than traditional day of election voting. Because the early voting period is usually more than one week long, in-person EV, absentee, and VBM systems all provide busy people or people with special needs a more leisurely and controlled way to cast a ballot at their leisure. The accessibility of the ballot box, especially with regard to distance from one's home or place of work, can have a significant impact on whether citizens participate in elections. Those who work for an hourly wage, have long commutes, or have heavy time restraints on a November Tuesday can use early voting to participate when they have more time – like on the weekend.⁴ People with physical disabilities may have access issues and can use absentee or mail-ballots to alleviate these problems, or vote early in-person (when time and crowd-pressure is lower and better access may be available at libraries or elections offices). Those who are non-English speakers, or who cannot read well, can receive additional help when crowds are smaller and poll-workers aren't as strained.

Second and relatedly, early voting is preferred by some elections officials and voting rights advocates because they believe it **increases turnout**. Theoretically, because early voting reduces much of the cost associated with the act of voting (transportation, time, and other inconveniences), it should increase turnout. Findings about this have been controversial: there is no clear evidence that early voting *always* increases turnout, and at least one recent study (Smith and Comer 2005) suggests that it may *depress* turnout. There is certainly no agreement on *how much* it might increase participation. Regardless of the empirical results, the impact on turnout is almost always cited in newspaper editorials, published speeches, and legislative debates over early voting.

⁴ For example, the AFL-CIO, at its more recent convention, considered a proposal to extend Oregon's vote by mail election system into other states. One of the primary reasons given was that by-mail voting was more convenient for shift workers. See Oregon AFL-CIO, "Resolution 34: Support and Expand Oregon's Vote-by-mail Elections in Other States." Resolution proposed at the 2005 convention of the AFL-CIO (available at <http://aflcio.org/aboutus/thisistheaficio/convention/2005/resolutions.cfm>).

Third, some argue that early voting **improves the quality of democratic decision making**. According to these advocates, early voting allows voters the time and leisure to reflect upon their voting options.⁵ Unfortunately, there is no logical reason that voting *earlier* than election day provides *more* time to evaluate the options on the ballot, nor is there any empirical evidence sustaining the claim of more informed decision making.

Besides the publicly stated reasons for early voting, our research has shown that there are two other, often unstated reasons, given for adopting early voting. First, we suspect that many election officials prefer early voting because it is **easier and cheaper to administer**, and results in a more accurate count (CalTech/MIT 2001). Recent changes in election law may only increase the desire to move to early voting. Consider the case of Washington State, which recently passed a law requiring a paper trail for all ballots. Rather than shoulder the expense of replacing all of their newly acquired electronic voting machines, a number of Washington counties have chosen the much cheaper route of all by-mail voting (since 80% or more of their citizens vote absentee already).

Another unstated reason for supporting early voting comes from political parties and GOTV activists. Our interviews show that the prolonged “period of voting” created by early voting systems enables campaigns to **more specifically target supporters**. Instead of bombarding supporters with reminders for a week or more, campaigns can focus their attention on supporters who have not already cast a ballot by five days before Election Day, three days before, the day before, etc. In addition, campaigns can hold rallies and other events centered on early voting. The 2004 election saw some campaigns busing people to early voting sites after rallies and giving people who had already voted special admission to music events. Heavily-partisan voters can cast a ballot early and move on with work or family. Although this is an important advantage to early voting, there is little scholarship on the changes that early voting brings with regard to campaigns, and legislators generally do not seem to take campaigning advantages or disadvantages into account when adopting early voting.

How will early voting change campaigning?

- **Result:**
 - Assuming current electoral laws and procedures remain unchanged, early voting increases campaign costs.
 - Early voting complicates the timing of campaign events and advertisements.
 - These effects can be ameliorated if turnout data are easily accessible.
- **The Progressive Lesson: Advocate for easy and cheap availability of early voter turnout data, ideally at the state level.**

At a recent conference on vote-by-mail, Congressman David Wu (OR-2) was asked to reflect on his experiences as a candidate, first under traditional polling place elections,

⁵ See, for example, Susan Davis, “Voting by Mail Could Improve American Democracy,” *Roll Call*, June 22, 2005; “Voting by Mail,” Oregon Secretary of State’s Office, <http://www.arcweb.state.or.us>; Resolution 34 at the 2005 AFL-CIO Convention, cited previously;

then under VBM. Wu, no great advocate of VBM, compared it to “Groundhog Day, the movie. You never know where you are on any day until Election Day” (“Vote by Mail Conference”).⁶ Another political consultant describes Oregon as not “... hav(ing) an Election Day anymore. We have an election fortnight. You have to peak sooner and sustain longer.” (Pat McCormick, quoted in Cole 2002) While not based on a complete national survey, additional discussions and presentations from elected officials, campaign consultants, and journalists both at this conference and during confirmed Wu’s point: VBM increases the costs of campaigning, primarily because get out the vote (GOTV) efforts and campaign communications have to be spread over a longer period of time.⁷

Newspaper accounts of campaigns of in-person early voting and liberalized absentee systems make similar arguments (Nagourney 2002, Wayne 2000). Local campaigners in Texas must attend to “early voters.” In Washington State, no candidate can afford to ignore the 80% of the electorate who currently mail in their ballot. National parties, statewide campaigns, and even local candidates are devoting increasing resources to “Get Out The *Early Vote*” (GOTEV).

This evidence is consistent across each type of reform: early voting increases candidate uncertainty and raises candidate costs. The worst case scenario for campaigns, at least according to the participants the VBM conference, is what already exists in many states and localities: a “mixed” system where large portions of the electorate choose to cast an absentee or early vote and the rest vote on election day.⁸

Early voting systems, by providing a “moving target” for Election Day, also make it more difficult to time campaign events. How can you tell when to release an ad without knowing what proportion of the electorate has already turned out (and presumably tuned out)? Behavioral evidence supports this point. A recent study of new voting technologies suggests that “individualized” voting methods allow voters to resist campaign ads. They substituted more “unmediated” sources such as personal experience and interpersonal communication (Iyengar 2001).

An anecdotal account illustrates the effect. In the 2003 California recall election, a late-breaking story accused Arnold Schwarzenegger of groping women.⁹ Regardless of the credibility of these charges, there is no doubt that a large portion of the three million voters who cast absentee ballots voted prior to the story, and a complete understanding of the electorate’s choice must take these “early voting” decisions into account.

There are, however, ways to take advantage of early voting. In some states, early voting results can be obtained on a “real time” basis as the campaign proceeds. ACT (American

⁶ In the 1993 film *Groundhog Day*, the main character, played by Bill Murray, is stuck in time, endlessly repeating the same day, “groundhog day.”

⁷ The transcript of the VBM conference is available at <http://www.american.edu/spa/ccps/video.html>.

⁸ The EVIC is in the process of conducting a survey of party officials in the 50 states which should provide a more comprehensive summary of the level and costs associated of early voting mobilization efforts.

⁹ The story broke in the *Los Angeles Times* on Thursday, October 3rd, four days before the election.

Coming Together) efforts in Oregon in 2004 are illustrative. ACT's mobilization effort had three prongs:

1. Identify likely Democratic voters (and when registering new voters, try to determine if they are likely Democratic voters)
2. Contact these voters soon after the election materials are released
3. Continue to contact these voters until the ballot is returned, reminding voters that the sooner they vote, the sooner the phone calls will stop.¹⁰

What this effort required was that ACT have a) the personnel in place to contact county elections officials multiple times per week, b) the financial resources to pay for a voter history file, and c) the computer expertise to merge these data with their own targeting files. Ultimately, what ACT chose to do was to focus their efforts on those counties and precincts with the deepest "vote mines" for progressive candidates (in this case, John Kerry).

What this effort also required was an election administration regime that made voter turnout information readily and easily accessible. Oregon has determined that ballot return information was a public record, and has made this information available (county by county) to anyone willing to pay for it (and promise not to use it for commercial purposes). Not all states follow this policy. Still, even in Oregon, such an effort is costly. A voter file in Multnomah County alone costs approximately \$500 for each purchase. To the degree that this same situation obtains in other states, extensive early voting will benefit the better funded political party—generally, the Republican party.

There is a way out of this dilemma: make turnout data easily accessible for relatively low cost and in a consistent data format. There is some movement in this direction. The Election Assistance Commission (EAC) is currently in the middle of drafting a set of voluntary guidelines for statewide registration systems. In addition, the EAC will soon be soliciting research proposals for data dissemination standards. Other efforts are underway to establish standardized distribution formats for election data. Alvarez and Hall argue for standards that will allow for "seamless communication (that) will allow election officials to share data" (Alvarez and Hall 2005). Progressive efforts should be focused on making sure that these standards are adopted nationwide.

Who Votes Early?

- **Result**
 - Early voters are older, with some indications that they are whiter and better educated but are not higher income
 - There are mixed results with respect to the partisanship of early voters
 - Early voters are more trusting of government

¹⁰ Source: Interview with Jeannie Berg, Oregon coordinator, Americans Coming Together. See also images of early voting posters and door hangers, including the comment about no more contacts after the vote, at <http://earlyvoting.net>.

- **Progressive Lesson: Most indications are that early voters are more likely to vote Republican. To the degree that getting out the early vote advantages campaigns, it could hurt progressive efforts.**

We start with two general observations about early voting among the population. First, we assume that those voters are more inconvenienced by voting on election day will be more likely to vote early. This is relatively uncontroversial. Second, we believe that voters who have made up their minds will be more likely to vote early. This is a more nuanced prediction, because there are a number of categories of voters who may decide early. First, there are committed partisans who won't be swayed by campaign rhetoric. Second, there are voters who are so highly informed that they already have firmly set convictions (not necessarily partisan), and the campaign provides them little new information. Finally we think that the least informed and the most disinterested voters may also vote early. Why? Similar to the most informed voters, the least informed voters are not swayed by the campaign, but for precisely the opposite reason—they don't pay attention to the campaign, and if they vote at all, there is no reason not to simply get it out of the way.¹¹

In contrast to the impact on campaigning, where our results are more speculative and preliminary, there are consistent patterns of early voting among the population. In this section, I draw on data from four different sources to illustrate these effects:

1. The 2000 National Annenberg Election Survey (NAES) (national data, comparing those respondents who said they voted early to those who said they voted on election day)
2. The 2004 National Exit Poll (NEP) (for this comparison, we used the 13 state phone polls compared to the comparable 13 exit polls)
3. A 2004 early voting and exit poll conducted in Dade County, Florida (early voting polls and day of election polls were conducted at polling places)
4. A series of analyses conducted on voterfiles from the State of Oregon

It is important to note that these results are preliminary because they are based on bivariate differences. Because the ability to vote early is not randomly distributed nationwide (except for the NEP comparisons, which are limited to the 13 states where they NEP conducted early voter phone polls), these results need to be replicated in multivariate analysis.

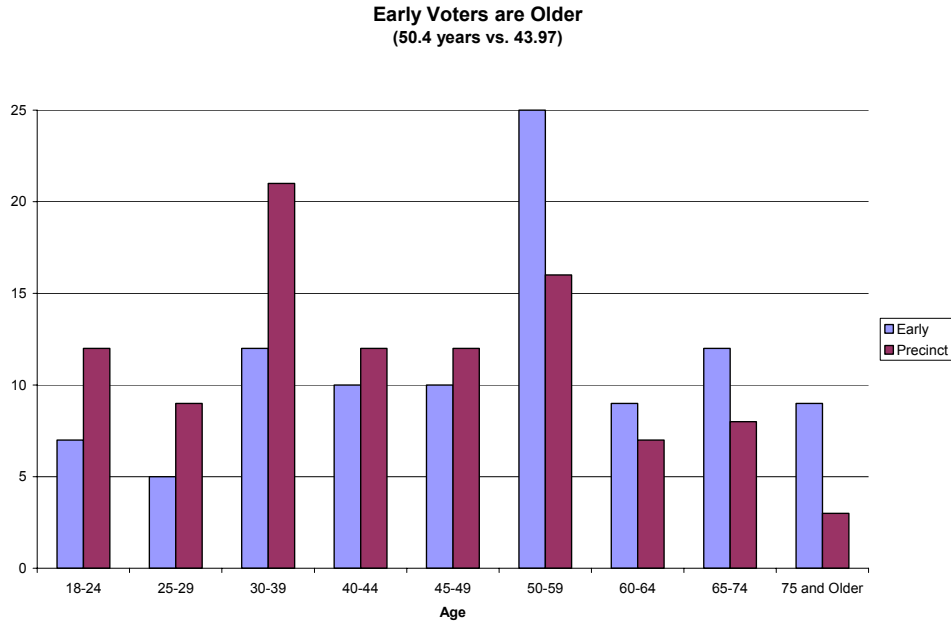
Demographic Differences

The first and most consistent result is that early voters are older. We do not know whether this is because they find voting on election day inconvenient and appreciate the ability to cast their ballots earlier, whether they have more stable partisan and political preferences and are thus less effected by the campaign (and thus would be more likely to cast their ballot earlier). Nonetheless, as shown below, the proportion of early voters in every category over 50 exceeds the proportion of precinct voters, while the reverse is true

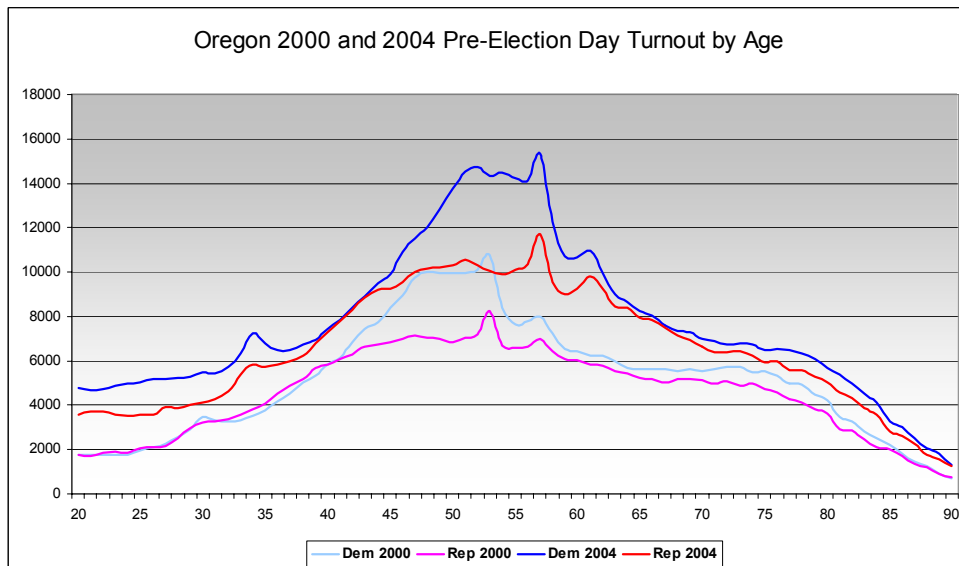
¹¹ More extensive treatments of these hypotheses are provided in Gronke et al. 2005 and Gronke 2004.

among younger categories. As already mentioned, these results are consistent across all datasets that we have examined. The average early voting in the 2000 NAES was 51.8 years old, compared to 47.1 years old for the average election day voter. In Miami-Dade County in 2004, early voters were six years older (42.7) than election day voters (36.5).

Figure 4: Age and Early Voting (2004 NEP)

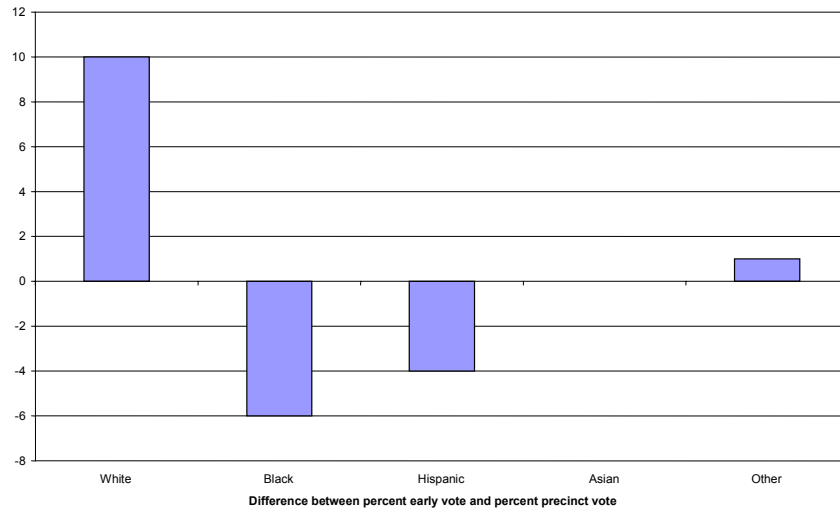


As already noted, the underlying patterns can shift across elections. In Oregon, from 2000 to 2004, there was a pronounced shift among middle aged Democrats toward early voting, with Republicans trailing somewhat behind. Whether this pattern is reflective of other battleground states is not clear—few states have as high quality voterfile data available as does the State of Oregon, and almost none report the actual date that the ballot was cast.

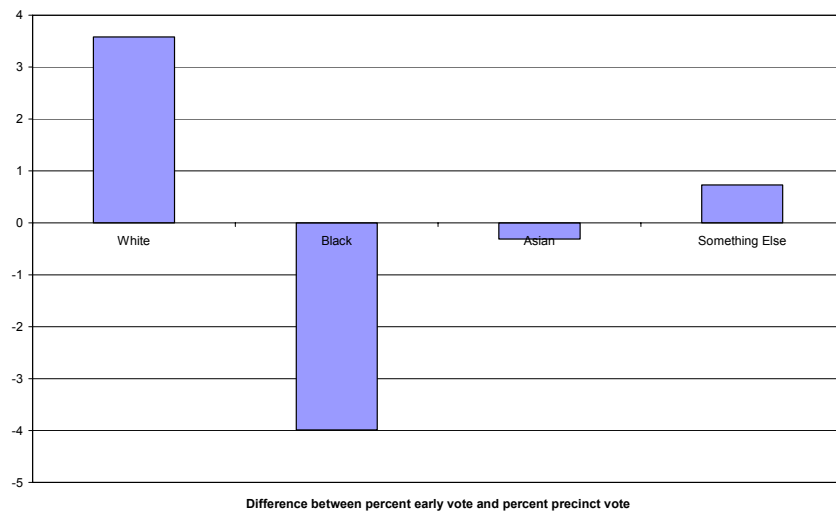


Second, we found that African American voters are less likely to be early voters. Again, we are not certain why this result obtains. Is this because African American voters are distrustful of the political system, and place more faith in the polling place? Or is this a product of extensive absentee ballot efforts on the part of Republicans without similar efforts on the part of Democrats?

Figure 5: African American Voters are less like to vote early
Precinct voters are more likely to be minority (2004 NEP)



Precinct voters are more likely to be minority (2000 NAES).

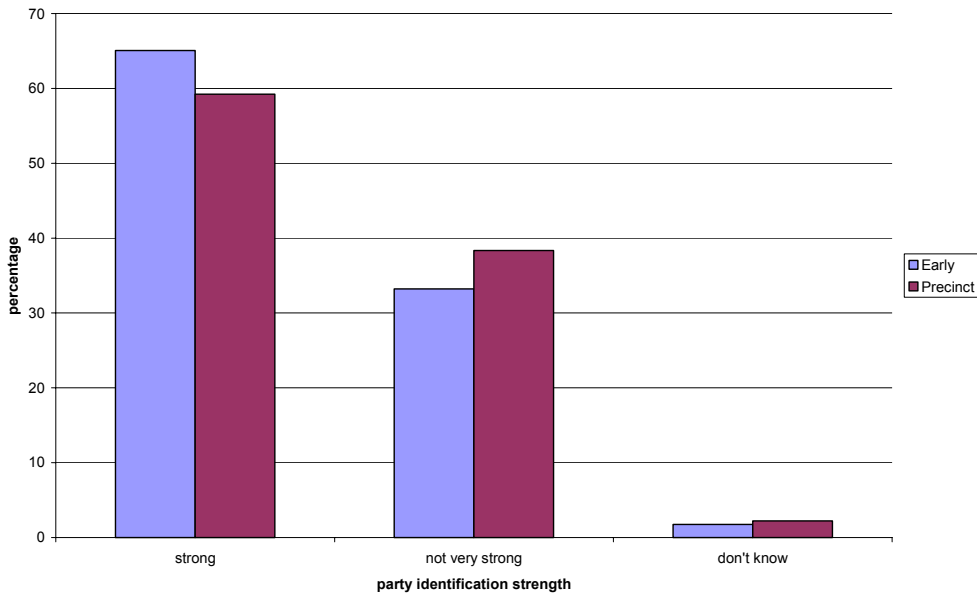


We also found, consistently, that early voters tend to be better educated (a statistically significant difference in both the 2000 NAES, the 2004 NEP, and the 2004 Miami-Date poll), more urban and suburban versus rural (2000 NAES only). We did not find any discernible differences between early voters and precinct voters based on the frequency of church attendance, distribution of income, or gender.

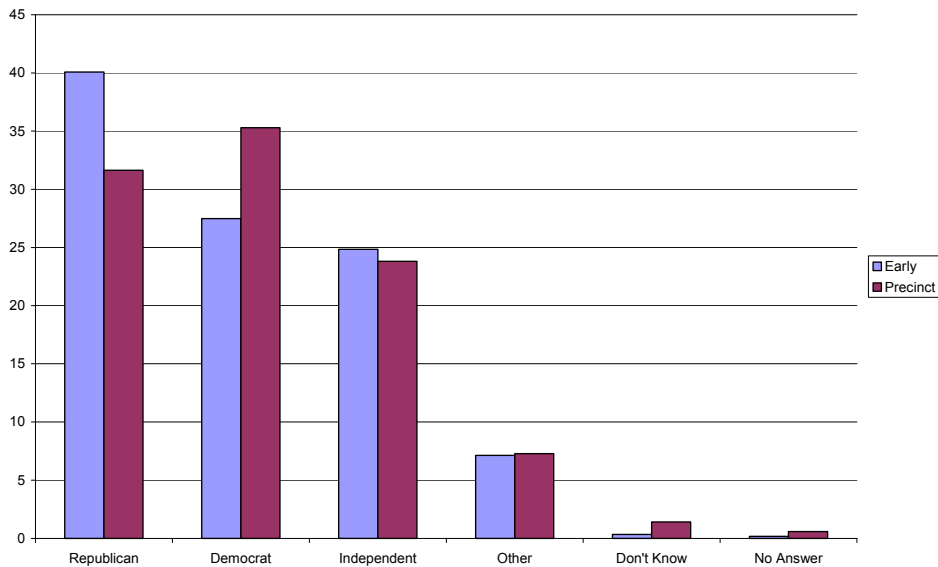
Partisan and other attitudinal differences

Possibly the result that intrigued us most was the consistent finding in the NAES, the Miami-Dade poll, and in analyses of the Oregon voterfiles that partisan identifiers are more likely to vote early. Yet, these results were not replicated in the 2004 NEP data. Our multivariate analysis of early voting in Oregon, conducted for a series of elections, consistently showed that voters who were willing to declare their partisan affiliation on the registration record were more likely to vote early (Gronke 2004) (see also Stein's analysis in Texas, Stein 1998). As shown below, the NAES data also show that strong partisans and Republican identifiers are more likely to report voting early.

NAES 2000: Early voters are slightly more partisan.

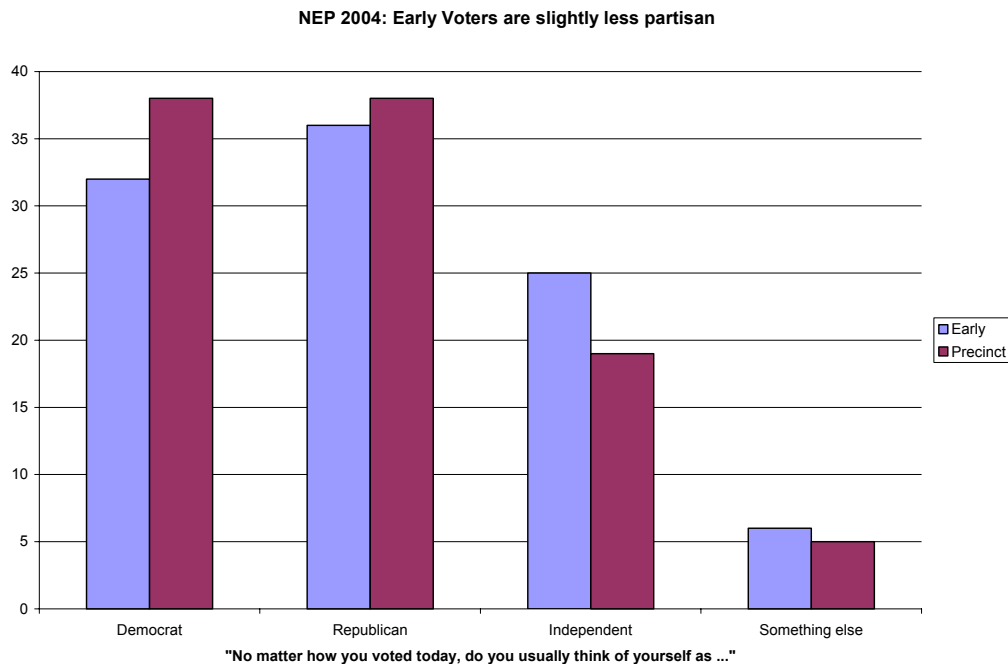


NAES 2000: Republicans and Independents Voted Early



This leaves us puzzled by the 2004 NEP data, which show that partisans were slightly *less* likely to report voting early. Given the consistency of previous work, we tend to discount the NEP results.

We should add that the NEP and the NAES examined early voting in very different ways. The NAES was a rolling cross section. Respondents who were sampled prior to election day could volunteer that they had already voted (in which case they were counted as early voters), or if they were sampled after the election, could report that they had voted early. The NEP conducted a special telephone survey in 12 states in order to gauge the attitudes of absentee and early voters.



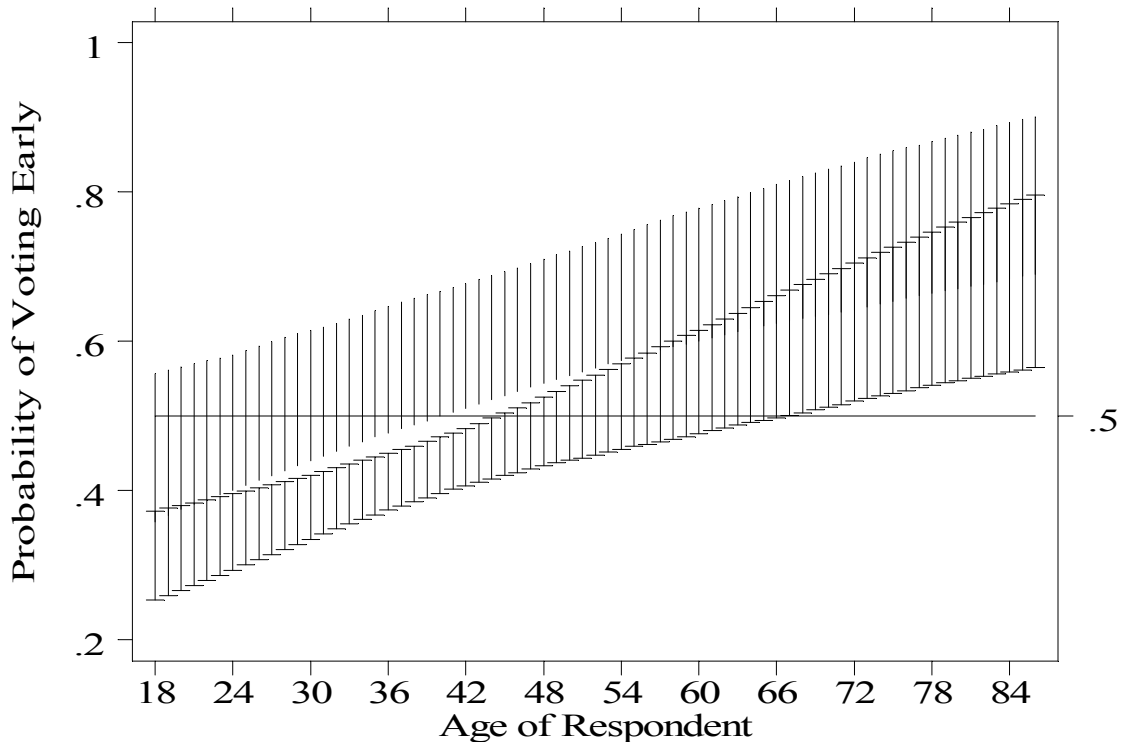
With regards to partisanship, it is important to highlight recent results reported by Stein et al. (2005) and Gronke et al. (2005), studying early voting in Florida in 2004. Gronke and colleagues found that Cuban Americans in Miami-Dade County were more likely to vote early than other ethnic groups. We conclude that this is a result of heavy mobilization efforts surrounding the Martinez senatorial campaign. Stein and colleagues find a similar result statewide in Texas. They write that: “the greatest substantive impact of increased early voting opportunities clearly results from partisan mobilization efforts...” (2005, pg 3). Furthermore, they show that, at least in Texas, only Democratic efforts to mobilize early voters actually increases turnout among their supporters—Republican supporters already turnout, independent of party efforts.

On most other attitudinal measures, we found little difference between early voters and day of election voters. In 2004, early voters were no more or less likely to approve of Bush’s performance in office, felt no different about the war in Iraq, and differed little in their evaluations of the economy or the state of the country.

We would like to highlight one final result from the Miami-Dade survey that calls for further research. In this study, first time voters, voters who were concerned that their ballots might not be counted properly, and voters who expressed lower levels of trust in government were significantly less likely to voter early. While admittedly based on a survey of just one county, it is a county located in a state that received tremendous scrutiny of its election system after 2000.

The impact of voting irregularities, as occurred in Florida in 2000, may be significant. We compare the relative impact of age and trust in the integrity of your ballot on early voting. In Figure 5, we plot the predicted probability of voting early across age and among those who did (above the dashed line) and did not (below the dashed line) thought their vote would be counted. Thinking that your vote would count is worth about 30 years, in that you are virtually certain to vote early if you think your vote will count once you are over about age 40. If you do not think your vote will count, then you will not reach the same predicted level of early voting until about age 68. Put another way, an election irregularity like Florida experienced in 2000 might be expected to take well over a generation before its impact on turnout behavior finally recedes.

Figure 5: Comparing Trust in the Ballot and Age on Early Voting



Turning Out and Tuning Out?

These results lead to a potential worry for all party activists, but one that could have a greater impact on progressives. Suppose it is the case that partisans *do* vote early at

increasingly high rates. Suppose that the most civically engaged and trusting citizens cast their ballots as soon as possible. How might this impact the ability of campaigns to recruit volunteers and engage in mobilization efforts?

One could imagine that a large portion of our citizenry will tune out the campaign once they have cast their ballot. This hearkens back to warnings against early voting because it erodes the civic and community act of the election (Hansen 2001). For parties like the Democrats that rely more heavily on human resources rather than capital resources, this is a threatening prospect. Even with Stein et al.'s encouraging results about relative turnout, Democrats must figure out a way to sustain interest and excitement in the campaign even while large numbers of their supporters have already finished voting.

Conclusions

Early voting is clearly in flux. More than 30 states now allow some sort of no-excuse early voting, with more being added each month. It is highly likely that, by 2008, the vast majority of the nation will have the opportunity to vote early. If past trends hold, between a quarter and forty percent of all ballots will be cast early, with many states exceeding 75%.

At present, there seems to be few attitudinal differences between early voters and day of election voters. It would be a mistake to dismiss the early voting phenomenon. First, early voting clearly alters the dynamics of campaigning, increasing the uncertainty that is inherent in any election campaign. Candidates in most states and localities have no idea how many ballots have actually been cast. They may be wasting scarce campaign resources on voters who have already turned out and tuned out.

Strategically, then, candidates must target resources at getting out the early vote in order to reduce this uncertainty. To the degree that a candidate can be confident that the early voters have actually cast their ballot, candidates are able to focus on those that remain undecided or who have otherwise not yet voted.

As a result, we argue that early voting, as it currently exists, benefits well-funded campaigns, because of the cost involved in sustaining a mobilization effort over a multi-week period. Progressives would do well to lobby state and local election officials, and election reform advocates, to make sure that, should states adopt relaxed early voting regulations, that they also make turnout data easily and cheaply accessible and distribute in a common format. This is an effort that levels the playing field for *all* candidates, not just progressives.

Finally, the demographic profile of early voters favors Republicans. Early voters tend to be older, better educated, and are less likely to be African American. As shown by Stein et al. (2005, 2003) and Gronke et al. (2005), the most important feature of early voters is that they have been mobilized. Partisan advantages emerge to the degree that one party

mobilizes harder than the other. As long as progressives can sustain extended get out the early vote efforts, they should be able to remain competitive for the early vote.

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