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# Absentee Voting & Expanding Electoral Participation

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- This research seeks to identify the power liberalization of voting has on expanding the electorate to include demographics commonly underrepresented in the democratic process.
- Initially absentee voting was established during WWI as a means to allow soldiers displaced by war to participate in voting.
- While many states now allow for anybody to vote via an absentee ballot Currently in the United States 22 states require an excuse for voters to be eligible for an absentee ballot.
- The state of California provides its residents the option to permanently vote absentee. While the state of Oregon has switched to absentee only elections.

Table 1. Procedural Permissiveness by State

	By mail		
	Allows permanent	No excuse	Requires excuse
Alabama			
Alaska			
Arizona			
Arkansas			
California			
Colorado			
Connecticut			
Delaware			
Florida			
Georgia			
Hawaii			
Idaho			
Illinois			
Indiana			
Iowa			
Kansas			
Kentucky			
Louisiana			
Maine			
Maryland			
Massachusetts			
Michigan			
Minnesota			
Mississippi			
Missouri			
Montana			
Nebraska			
Nevada			
New Hampshire			
New Jersey			
New Mexico			
New York			
North Carolina			
North Dakota			
Ohio			
Oklahoma			
Oregon			
Pennsylvania			
Rhode Island			
South Carolina			
South Dakota			
Tennessee			
Texas			
Utah			
Vermont			
Virginia			
Washington			
West Virginia			
Wisconsin			
Wyoming			
Total	4	28	2

# Absentee Voting & Expanding Electoral Participation

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Graph 1

Table 4. Demographic and Vote Comparison of Absentee and Election Day Voters

	Absentee	Election Day	Difference
White	70.7%	73.6%	-2.9
Latino	10.3%	11.8%	-1.5
Black	4.4%	5.4%	-1.0
Asian	3.7%	5.8%	-2.1
Female	56.0%	50.9%	5.1
Under 40 years old	15.6%	29.9%	-14.3*
41-59 years old	42.6%	44.2%	-1.6
Over 60 years old	41.8%	25.9%	15.9*
College degree	77.7%	59.3%	18.4*
Under \$60,000	55.1%	38.0%	17.1*
Over \$100,000	19.7%	29.9%	-10.2*
Recall—Yes	56.0%	55.5%	0.5
Recall—No	44.0%	44.5%	-0.5
Schwarzenegger	46.6%	49.0%	-2.4
Bustamante	33.2%	32.0%	1.2
McClintock	13.5%	13.0%	0.5
Camejo	3.6%	3.0%	0.6
Other	3.1%	3.0%	0.1
Prop. 54—Yes	30.8%	36.1%	-5.3
Prop. 54—No	69.2%	63.9%	5.3
N	300	5,205	

SOURCE.—For absentee voters, CAVS (Loyola Marymount University 2003); for Election Day voters, *Los Angeles Times* exit poll (Los Angeles Times 2003).  
\*  $\chi^2$  significant at  $p < .05$ .

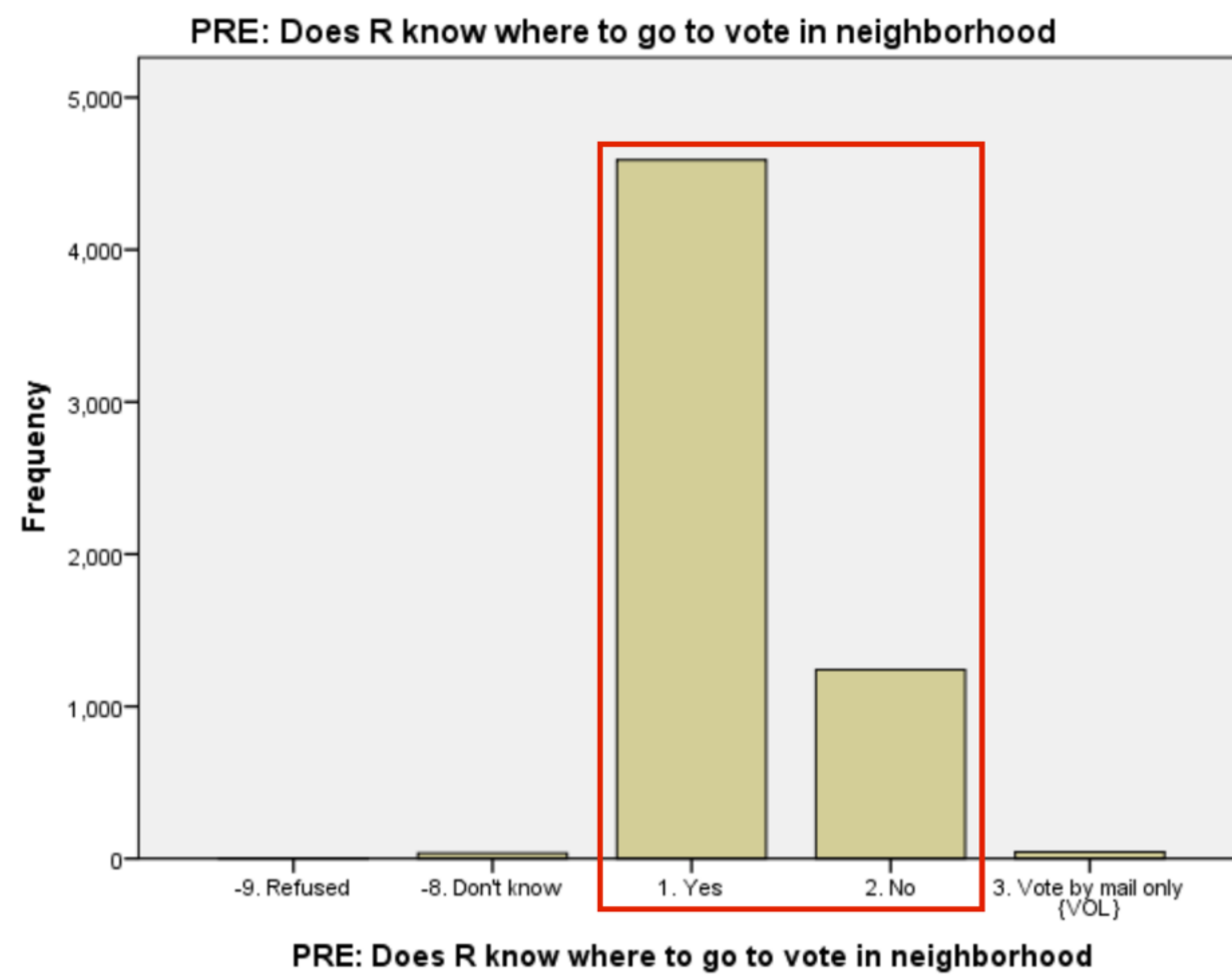
## Hypotheses:

**H 1:** Minority demographics are less likely to vote, therefore decreasing the cost of voting can aid in expanding electoral participation

**H 2:** The Liberalizing of Absentee voting will minimize the cost associated with voting, thus alleviating the necessity of knowing the location of a polling place

**H 3:** Life responsibilities, such as the burden of child raising, will inhibit an individuals likelihood to vote at a polling place

Graph 2



Graph 3

PRE: Did R vote for President \* PRE: How many children in HH age 10 or younger Crosstabulation

Count		PRE: How many children in HH age 10 or younger				Total
		-9. Refused	0. No children age 10 or younger	1. One child age 10 or younger	2. Two or more children age 10 or younger	
PRE: Did R vote for President	-1	15	4226	973	295	5509
	1. Yes, voted for President	1	325	52	17	395
	2. No, didn't vote for President	0	7	3	0	10
Total		16	4558	1028	312	5914

## Findings

### H 1: Participation by Demographic

- It has been identified that minority groups have lower electoral participation rates in comparison to their counterpart white voters. Graph 1 provides a brief visualization of participation rates in accordance to demographic in the state of California. Not only does this graph reveal the lower rates in which minority citizens vote absentee, but also the drastically low rate that they vote in general. It is important to keep in mind states very in the regulations they place on absentee ballot accessibility.

### H 2: Precinct Accessibility

- Graph 3 provides a visualization of how a lack of accessibility to voting inhibits participation. For this example, the simple knowledge of where to go to vote is examined. In this chart it can be seen that over a thousand individuals did not vote, merely on the fact that they did not know where to go. Voting can be thought of as being comparable to a cost benefit calculation. Thus, the decision to vote absentee or any method of voting are effected by the effort required (cost) to vote at a polling place. Therefore, the liberalization of absentee voting could stimulate participation through minimizing costs associated with voting, by eliminating the necessity of voting at a precinct.

### H 3: Familial Responsibility

- Graph 2 provides insight on one of the most drastic variables that defies demographic categorization. It can be identified that the burden of raising a child inhibits an individuals availability to vote at a precinct. A drastic decline can be seen in comparing the voting results of individuals with children in their household comparison to individuals without children. Given that the Government estimates that currently there are 74.3 million children in the United States, 24.7 million of which are under the age of 11, poses quite a challenge in the execution of a direct democracy. Thus, creating an opportunity for liberalized absentee voting to provide assistance. The extension of time an absentee ballot gives the voter provides an increased opportunity for a caregiver to exercise their electoral voice.

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