

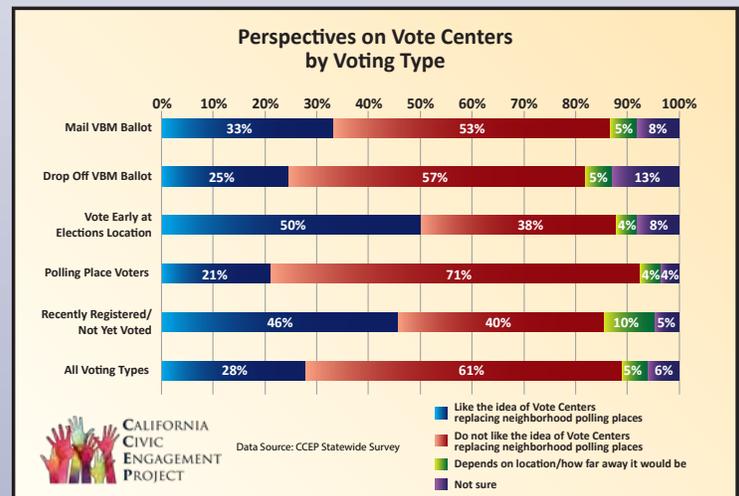
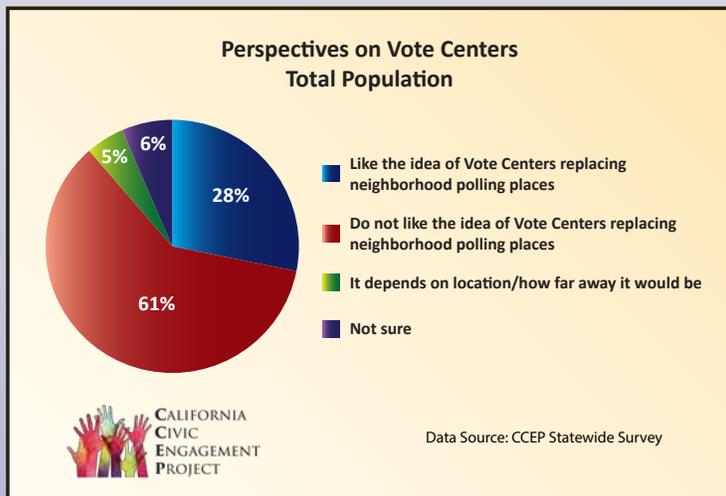
## California Voter Experience Statewide Survey: Voter Perspectives on Vote Centers - Fact Sheet

The California Civic Engagement Project (CCEP) conducted a multi-method research project entitled *The California Voter Experience Study*. The findings of this study provide a comprehensive examination of how and why California voters choose to cast their ballots (either by Vote-By-Mail or polling place), and how they perceive the introduction of a new Vote Center Model in California. This fact sheet presents our findings from the CCEP’s statewide survey of 1,100 California voters, including an oversample of Latinos. Surveys were conducted in both English and Spanish. The sample error for the total survey sample is +/-2.9%.<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion of our findings, see the CCEP policy brief of the same name.

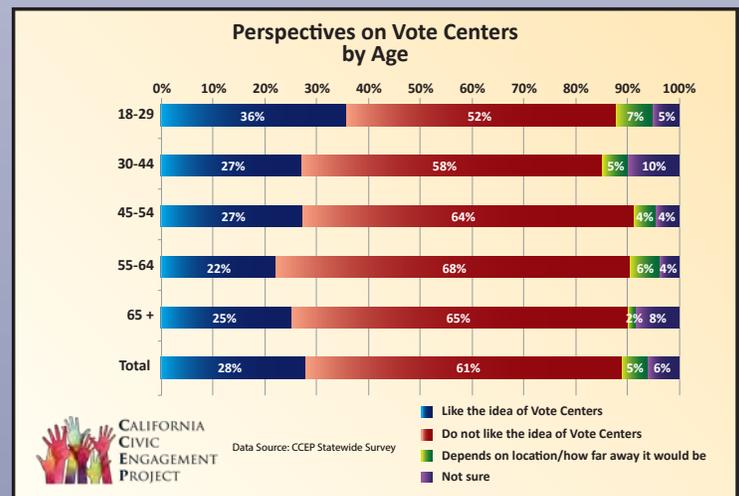
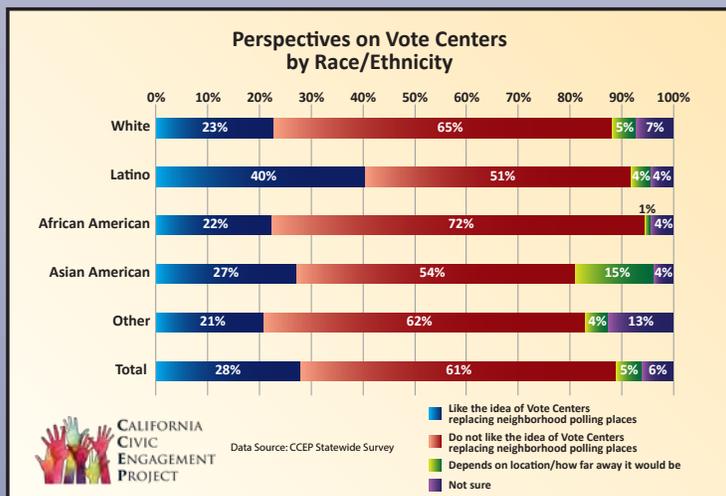
### How do different groups of voters react to the possible use of a Vote Center Model in California?

In 2016, Governor Jerry Brown signed Senate Bill 450 into law, which allows counties to choose to adopt a new voting system. Known as the Voter’s Choice Act, this new model enables counties to mail every registered voter a Vote-By-Mail ballot which the voter can either mail in, or return at a ballot drop box or a newly established Vote Center.

At Vote Centers, which replace traditional neighborhood polling places, voters can cast their ballots in person, drop off their voted VBM ballots, access same-day voter registration, receive replacement ballots, and access additional services. While Vote Centers will be far less numerous than polling places, unlike polling places, they will be open for up to ten days prior to Election Day and available for all voters to utilize county-wide. Of California’s 58 counties, 14 counties are eligible to opt in to this new voting model for the 2018 election, while the remaining counties are eligible to adopt the model in 2020. In 2020, Los Angeles County will be permitted to opt in to the model, but will not be required to mail all registered voters VBM ballots until 2024.<sup>2</sup> As a part of our research on the voting behavior of California voters, we asked respondents for their perspectives on the implementation of Vote Centers in California.



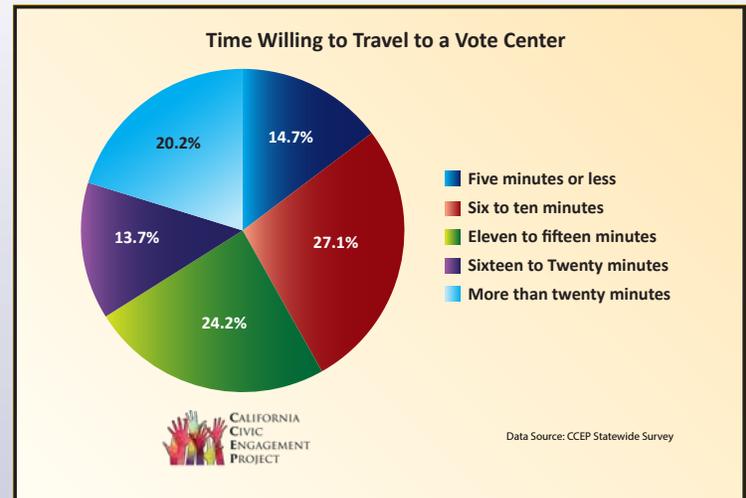
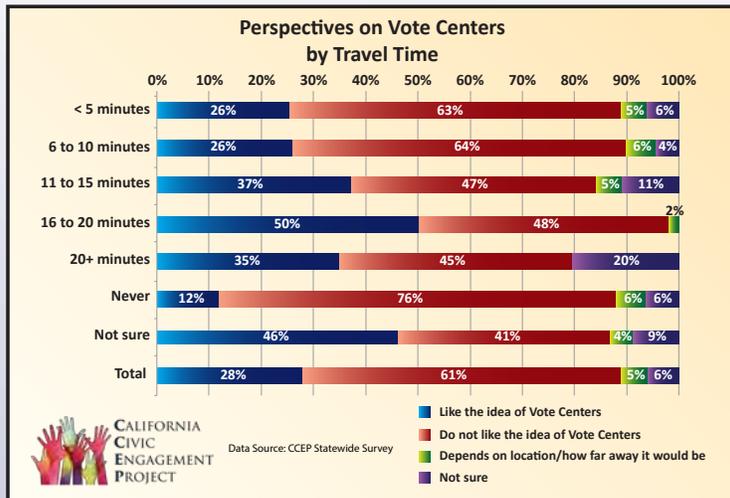
A majority of Californians (61%) do not like the idea of Vote Centers replacing neighborhood polling places. However, significantly more polling place voters do not like the idea of Vote Centers than do VBM voters—71% versus 53%, respectively. We also found that a majority of voters, regardless of income group, and a majority of voters with disabilities (64%) did not like the idea of Vote Centers.



## Travel Time

Vote Centers will be less numerous than traditional polling places. This means that many voters may find themselves further away from a place to cast a ballot in person. We asked Californians about the travel time they are currently experiencing when casting a ballot and how they felt about Vote Centers.

- 80% of voters of all voting types typically travel 10 minutes or less to their polling place.
- 74% of polling place voters and 59% of voters who drop off their VBM ballot travel five minutes or less to their polling place.
- The majority of voters who travel 10 minutes or less to their polling place did not like the idea of Vote Centers



## CCEP Recommendations

Our research has found that while some California voters are receptive to the adoption of Vote Centers in their counties, a majority do not like the idea of this new electoral change. A majority of California voters also expressed an unwillingness to travel more than 15 minutes to use a Vote Center. A majority of voters who use VBM and a majority of voters who vote at polling places also share a lack of receptiveness to vote centers. This feeling is present across all race/ethnicity, age, and income groups of California voters.

It should also be noted that voters whose counties adopt the new model might react differently when they actually interact with Vote Centers, and experience some of the many of the benefits they will offer. However, initial perceptions of Vote Centers could have an impact on the willingness of voters to use the new model once available. These perceptions will need to be addressed and alleviated by election officials and local elected leaders should the Vote Center Model be adopted in a county. CCEP research suggests that targeted and sustained education efforts will be critical to helping California voters know about, have confidence in, and successfully utilize the new election model. This is essential to ensuring that voters experience the new model positively, minimizing the risk that voters could be discouraged from casting their ballots. For a full discussion of the CCEP's Vote Center recommendations, see this fact sheet's companion policy brief, *California Voter Experience Statewide Survey: Voter Perspectives on Vote Centers*.

## Notes

1. For a more detailed discussion on survey methodology, see this fact sheet's companion policy brief, *California Voter Experience Statewide Survey: Voter Perspectives on Vote Centers*. See the CCEP website for more information on the methodology of California Voter Experience Study. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57b8c7ce15d5dbf599fb46ab/t/59ae50828419c2d149a57209/1504596099823/CCEP+CVE+Methodology+%281%29.pdf>
2. For more information on California Senate Bill 450, see [http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201520160SB450](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160SB450)

### About the California Civic Engagement Project (CCEP)

The California Civic Engagement Project was established at the UC Davis Center for Regional Change in 2011. The CCEP conducts research to inform policy and on the ground efforts for a more engaged and representative democracy, improving the social and economic quality of life in communities. The CCEP engages in pioneering research to identify disparities in civic participation across place and population. Its research informs and empowers a wide range of policy and organizing efforts in California aimed at reducing 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 advisory committee, or review the extensive coverage of the CCEP's work in the nation and California media, visit our website at <http://ccep.ucdavis.edu>



For more information about the California Civic Engagement Project, contact CCEP Director, Mindy Romero, Ph.D., at [msromero@ucdavis.edu](mailto:msromero@ucdavis.edu). Visit our website at <http://ccep.ucdavis.edu>