

WHITE PAPER #1



CA45th

10/15/17

No Party Preference (NPP) Voters in the 45th Congressional District of California: A Summary of Demographic, Issue and Political Behavioral Information

WHAT WE FOUND

An analysis of demographic and issue profiles of No Party Preference (NPP) voters suggests the possibility of a Republican loss of the CA-45th congressional seat in the 2018 midterm election. The younger and foreign born profile of NPP voters, along with Democratic issue overlap, makes this electorate open to a strong Democratic challenger to current incumbent Representative Mimi Walters (R).

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Unless younger NPP voters are persuaded to turn out and voter at higher rates than was the case in the 2014 midterm election, the higher rate of NPP voter registration in the district since 2007 will not adversely affect the overall advantage in voter registration and voter turnout of Republican voters.

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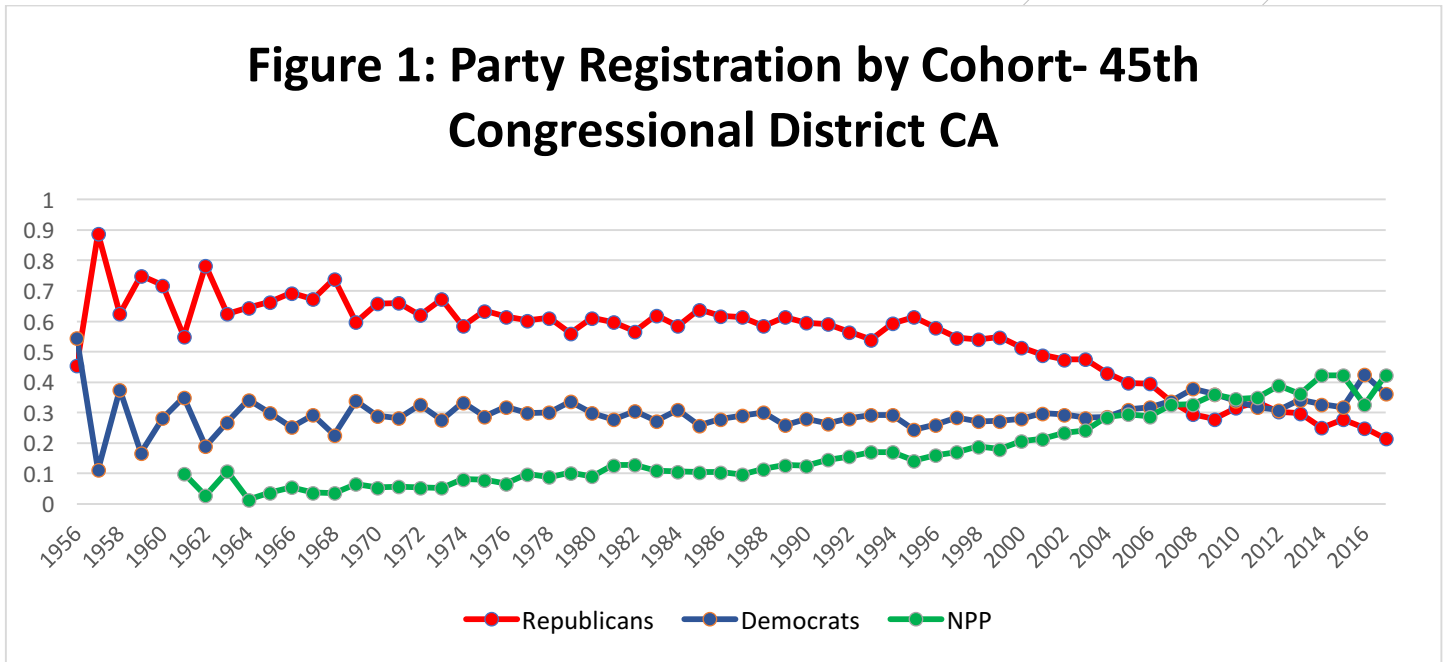
CALIFORNIA 45TH

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INTRODUCTION

No Party Preference (NPP) voter registration has shown a steady increase in the 45th Congressional District. As of March 2017, NPP voters made up 25.8% of the registered voters in the district, with Republican voters comprising 39.6% and Democratic voters comprising 30.6% of registered voters.¹ This might come as a surprise to those holding assumptions of Republican voter registration dominance in the district. Though a history of elected Republican Congressional Representatives suggests a comfortable congressional seat, analysis of registration cohorts² in fact demonstrates that since 2007, there has been a steady increase in the percentage of NPP registered voters. In fact, NPP registration has occurred at an even higher rate than registration for the Democratic Party, as Figure 1 shows. Voter registration data also demonstrates that Republican party registration has been in decline since 2000.

Figure 1: Party Registration by Cohort- 45th Congressional District CA



source: Orange County Registrar of Voters, March 23, 2017

Currently, neither party holds an outright majority of registered voters, though the Republican party does hold an advantage. ***Without a majority of registered voters in the district, both the Republican Party and the Democratic Party will need to attract and mobilize NPP voters to be successful in the 2018 Congressional election cycle.*** This White Paper is intended to provide information about the demographic profile, public opinion profile and political behavioral profile of NPP voters in the 45th Congressional district of California in advance of the 2018 election cycle. Our information is based upon analysis of the voter information file, as obtained from the Orange County Registrar of Voters, and public opinion research conducted by California45th, a non-partisan organization in the district.

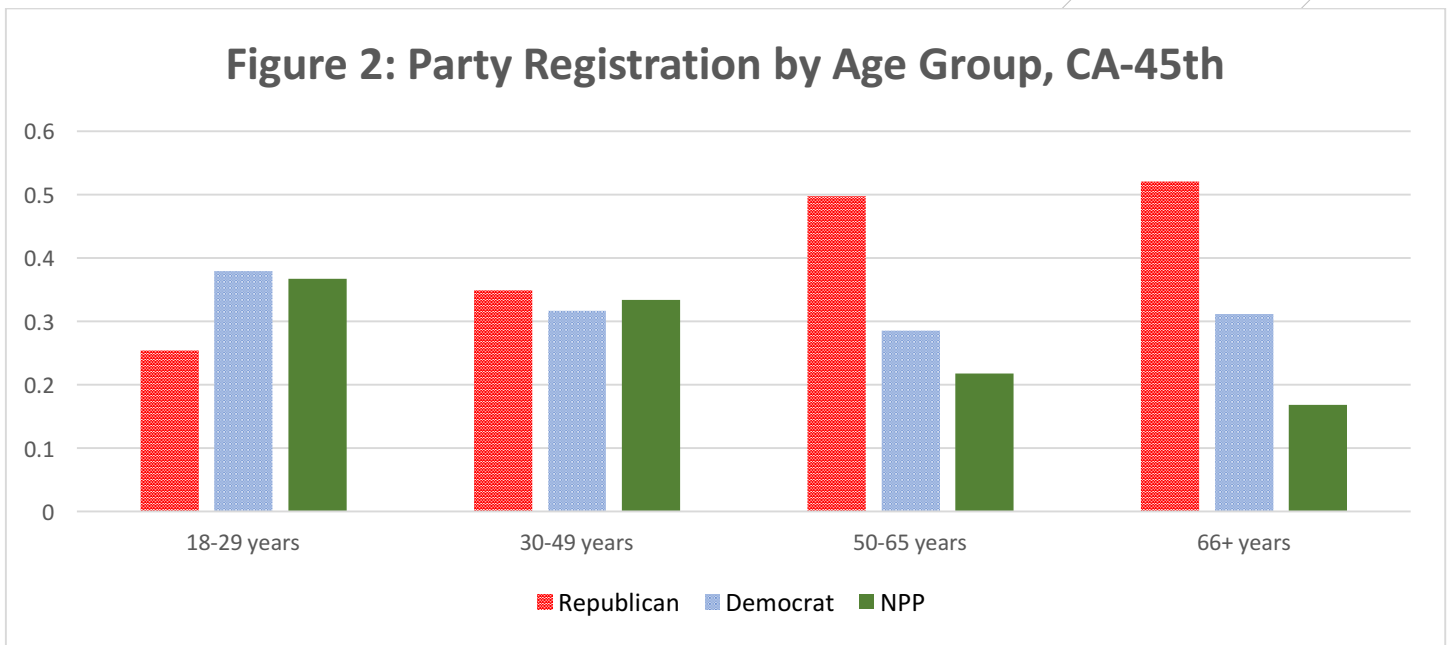
¹ Source: Voter registration data obtained from the Orange County Registrar of Voters, March 23, 2017.

² A registration cohort refers to voters registered each year.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Analyses of voter registration with respect to nativity³ and age cohort⁴ have provided some explanation for the increased trend in NPP voter registration. Demographic changes in the 45th Congressional district have led to an increase in the percentage of foreign born voters. As of March 2017, the percentage of foreign born voters in the district was approximately 25%.⁵ When broken down by party registration, the voter data indicated that 36.5% of foreign born voters were NPP registered compared to 23.6% of non-foreign born voters.⁶ Looking at NPP voter registration overall, **34.6% of all NPP registered voters in the district were foreign born.**

With respect to age, younger voter cohorts are more likely to register as NPP, as Figure 2⁷ shows.



source: CA45th Research Report #2

Specifically, 16.8% of those 66 years and older are registered as NPP, 21.8% of those aged 50-65 years are registered as NPP, 33.4% of those aged 30-49 years are registered as NPP, and 36.7% of those aged 18-29 years old are registered as NPP. Looking at NPP voter registration overall, **62.2% of all NPP registered voters in the district are under 50 years of age.**

From this demographic analysis of NPP voter data we see that a strong majority of NPP voters are under the age of 50 and almost a third of NPP voters are foreign born.

³ "CA45th Research Report #1: Citizen at Birth vs. Naturalized Citizens and Voter Registration: Implications for Elections in the 45th Congressional District" (May 8, 2017). https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58a121de5016e17623852960/t/5919b75529687fd2ca10d5c6/1494857558082/Citizen_at_Birth_vs_Naturalized_Citizens_and_Voter_Registration.pdf (accessed 10/5/17)

⁴ "CA45th Research Report #2: Party Registration Trends in the 45th Congressional District" (May 26, 2017). https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58a121de5016e17623852960/t/5928f90edb29d6710cadcfcb/1495857423004/CA45_Party_Registration_Trends_and_Cohorts.pdf (accessed 10/5/17)

⁵ See CA45th Research Report #1, p.7

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ See CA45th Research Report #2, p.3

NPP ISSUES

California45th has conducted two public opinion polls which measured registered voters' issue priorities and issue positions.⁸ Both surveys asked random samples of registered voters what they thought were the most important issues facing the country. The survey questions were open ended, meaning that respondents could provide their own responses. The responses were then coded into issue categories.⁹ In the first survey, administered in late April/early May 2017, the most important issue for NPP voters was economic issues (19.6%). In the July 2017 survey, the most important issue for NPP voters was again economic issues (18.1%). A similar percentage of Republican voters indicated economic issues were most important for both the April/May survey (18.4%), and in the July survey (20.8%). With respect to the largest overall issue concern group, ***NPP voters' issue concerns were more reflective of Republican voters' concerns.*** The April/May 2017 survey additionally asked voters to choose from a specific list of issues which they thought was most important.¹⁰ ***In this case, NPP voters choose healthcare (36.5%) as the most important issue facing the nation,*** which was even higher than the percentage of Democratic voters (36.1%) choosing healthcare. At the time of this first public opinion poll, the effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act was in full swing¹¹ and very much in the news.

The July 2017 survey focused on specific issue positions in the areas of: healthcare, immigration, the environment, and government oversight of financial industries. When asked about healthcare, and which healthcare plan they preferred,¹² ***46.6% of NPP voters chose the Affordable Care Act,*** which was much lower than the preference of Democratic voters (79.8%), and much higher than the preference of Republican voters (14.2%) for the Affordable Care Act. When asked to indicate whether they prioritized protecting the environment or economic growth, ***75.3% of NPP voters indicated they would prioritize protecting the environment, which was more similar to the priority of registered Democrats (91.8%),*** than registered Republicans (33.6%). In the area of immigration, ***NPP voters preferred that undocumented immigrants should be allowed to stay and eventually apply for citizenship (57.5%)*** compared to the view of requiring undocumented immigrants to leave the United States, which 49.1% of Republican voters preferred. Finally, with respect to oversight of the financial industry, ***a majority of NPP voters (58.9%) indicated that there should be more government oversight of financial companies,*** which was similar to the percentage of Democratic voters (66.3%) who also felt there should be more government oversight of financial companies. Only 16.8% of Republican voters felt there should be more government oversight of financial companies.

In terms of issue positions, NPP voters reflect Republicans in their general prioritization of economic issues, but with respect to specific positions, reflect Democratic priorities of the environment and financial industry oversight. NPP positions with respect to immigration and healthcare are closer to Democratic positions than Republican positions.

⁸ "CA45th Public Opinion Poll #1" (May 2017) https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58a121de5016e17623852960/t/592746a85016e14f4ff75263/1495746217447/CA45_Public_Opinion_Poll_%231.pdf (accessed 10/5/17); "CA45th Public Opinion Poll #3 (July 2017) https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58a121de5016e17623852960/t/59a330976f4ca3e5e08897c2/1503867038093/CA45_Public_Opinion_Poll_%233.pdf (accessed 10/5/17).

⁹ Importantly, the issue grouping "other", reflecting concerns that could not be easily classified, was the largest issue group in both surveys.

¹⁰ Choices were: the economy, healthcare, national security, immigration, civil rights, foreign policy, other and no opinion.

¹¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2017/04/20/conservative-republicans-reportedly-pleased-with-changes-to-health-care-proposal.html> (accessed 10/5/17)

¹² Choices were: The Affordable Care Act, the Republican Plan to Replace it, something else, or neither.

POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

With respect to the political behavior of NPP voters, the most relevant to this White Paper is voter turnout. In no election since the passage of California’s Open Primary “Top-Two” election law in 2010¹³ has NPP turnout equaled or exceeded Republican or Democratic turnout. As shown in Table 1, over the six elections since 2010, the disparity in turnout percentage ranged from 4.8% to 18.5% in general elections to 18.1% to 21.2% in primary elections when comparing Republican and NPP turnout- averages of 9.9% and 20.0% respectively. In the 2016 primary, the disparity between Democratic and NPP turnout was 23.8%, exceeding all other disparities despite this being an election where the Democratic candidate for U.S. Congress received more votes than any Democratic candidate in history in the 45th Congressional District.

Table 1: Turnout by Party registration 2012-2016 - 45th Congressional District CA

<u>2016 General Election:</u>	<u>332636 voted out of 371269 expected voters (89.5 %)</u>
Republicans:	138674 voted out of 150883 expected voters (91.9 %)
Democrats:	103773 voted out of 114730 expected voters (90.4 %)
No Party:	77378 voted out of 90506 expected voters (85.4 %)
All others:	2811 voted out of 15150 expected voters (84.5 %)
<u>2016 Primary Election:</u>	<u>179593 voted out of 267543 expected voters (67.1 %)</u>
Republicans:	80945 voted out of 115685 expected voters (69.9 %)
Democrats:	64419 voted out of 85115 expected voters (75.6 %)
No Party:	29608 voted out of 57099 expected voters (51.8 %)
All others:	4621 voted out of 9644 expected voters (47.9 %)
<u>2014 General Election:</u>	<u>159497 voted out of 230705 expected voters (69.1 %)</u>
Republicans:	83387 voted out of 109835 expected voters (75.9 %)
Democrats:	44397 voted out of 65665 expected voters (67.6 %)
No Party:	27123 voted out of 47205 expected voters (57.4 %)
All others:	4590 voted out of 8000 expected voters (57.3 %)
<u>2014 Primary Election:</u>	<u>84500 voted out of 187971 expected voters (44.9 %)</u>
Republicans:	46874 voted out of 90344 expected voters (51.8 %)
Democrats:	23702 voted out of 53103 expected voters (44.6 %)
No Party:	11828 voted out of 37950 expected voters (31.1 %)
All others:	2096 voted out of 6574 expected voters (31.8 %)
<u>2012 General Election:</u>	<u>267310 voted out of 282660 expected voters (94.5 %)</u>
Republicans:	126491 voted out of 131391 expected voters (96.2 %)
Democrats:	77318 voted out of 81879 expected voters (94.4 %)
No Party:	54239 voted out of 59302 expected voters (91.4 %)
All others:	9262 voted out of 10088 expected voters (91.8 %)
<u>2012 Primary Election:</u>	<u>97784 voted out of 168725 expected voters (57.9 %)</u>
Republicans:	55782 voted out of 86524 expected voters (64.4 %)
Democrats:	26322 voted out of 46281 expected voters (56.8 %)
No Party:	13223 voted out of 30606 expected voters (43.2 %)
All others:	2457 voted out of 5314 expected voters (46.2 %)

source: Orange County Registrar of Voters, March 23, 2017
 Not all voters registered as of each election are represented in the data

Taking into consideration the significant increase in the number of NPP registered voters and the decline in Republican registration during that time interval, it is reasonable to assume that the low turnout rate of NPP voters has served to minimize the number of votes cast against Republican candidates by NPP voters based on NPP voter differences with Republican positions on policy issues. The two public opinion polls conducted by California45th cited herein indicate that NPP voters are likely to favor Democratic candidates in future elections where issues focus on health care, immigration, and financial industry regulation, suggesting strongly that a higher percentage of NPPs must vote in those elections in order to prevent the Republican voter

¹³ <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/california-politics/2010/06/do-not-publish--propositon-14-passes.html> (accessed 10/5/17)

registration advantage from deciding the outcome of those elections based solely on issues where voters are neutral or favor Republican positions.

It is well-established that older voters, especially so-called 'baby boomers' and seniors, have higher turnout rates than their younger cohorts¹⁴. As shown in Figure 2, 62.2% of NPP registrants are under the age of 50. Table 2 shows turnout rates of NPP voters in differing age groups over the six elections from 2012-2016. Turnout rates for the 50-and-below age groups of NPP voters are consistently lower than voter turnout rates for the 51-70-aged 'baby boomer' group, with the exception of the 2016 general election where the 35-50 age group bested the 51-70 age group by 0.5%. In that same time interval, the percentage of NPP voters over the age of 50 expected to vote in past elections has declined from 57.0% to 39.1%. In comparison, Table 3 shows that Republicans, with similar low turnout rates for younger voters, have had an average of 72.2% of expected voters over the age of 50 (until the 2016 primary and general elections, when those percentages declined to 68.8% and 64.1%, respectively).

Of special note is voter turnout data from the 2014 midterm elections. Midterm elections have lower levels of voter turnout compared to Presidential elections,¹⁵ given a perceived lack of excitement or salience on the part of the electorate.¹⁶ Data from Table 3 demonstrates that this is certainly the case in 2014. Turnout in both the primary (51.8%) and general election (75.9%) was much lower for Republicans, compared to turnout in 2012 (69.9% and 91.9%) and 2016 (64.4% and 96.2%). For NPP voters, the difference is stunning: only 31.1% of all NPP voters voted in the primary election of 2014 and 57.4% voted in the general election of 2014. Keeping in mind that a majority of NPP voters are under age 50, we see that only 14.6% of NPP voters aged 18-34 and 20.4% of NPP voters aged 35-50 voted in the primary election of 2014, and 35.4% of NPP voters aged 18-34 and 50.4% of NPP voters aged 35-50 voted in the general election of 2014.

NPP voter turnout varies based on age and type of election. In general, younger voters turn out to vote at lower rates compared to older cohorts, which is supported by the data in our tables. Research indicates that midterm elections have lower turnout rates, with strong partisans being those who do turn out to vote. Our evidence substantiates this as well, as seen in a comparison between NPP and Republican turnout data.

SUMMARY: An analysis of demographic and issue profiles of No Party Preference (NPP) voters, suggests the possibility of a Republican loss of the CA-45th Congressional seat in the 2018 midterm election. The younger and foreign born profile of NPP voters, along with issue overlap when compared to Democratic voters, makes this electorate open to the right Democratic challenger to current incumbent, Representative Mimi Walters (R). However, unless younger NPP voters are persuaded to turn out and vote at higher rates than was the case in the 2014 midterm election, the increased rate of NPP voter registration in the district since 2007 will not adversely affect the overall advantage in voter registration and voter turnout of Republican voters.

¹⁴ see Putnam, R.D. (1995) Tuning in, tuning out: The strange disappearance of social capital in America. *PS: Political Science and Politics*. Vol. 28 (December): 664.

¹⁵ See Conway, Mary Margaret. 2000. *Political Participation in the United States*. Washington D.C.: CQ Press.

¹⁶ See Theiss-Morse, Elizabeth and Michael Wagner. 2011 *Political Behavior in Midterm Elections*. Washington D.C.: CQ Press.

Table 2: No Party Preference Voting History - 45th Congressional District CA

2012 primary election						
Age group	expected to vote	voted	didn't vote	percent of group who voted	percent of All expected party voters	percent of All party votes
18-34	4513	1233	3280	27.3	14.7	09.3
35-50	8643	2593	6050	30.0	28.2	19.6
51-70	12334	5980	6354	48.4	40.3	45.2
70+	5115	3417	1698	66.8	16.7	25.8
All ages	30605	13223	17382	43.2	----	----
2012 general election						
Age group	expected to vote	voted	didn't vote	percent of group who voted	percent of All expected party voters	percent of All party votes
18-34	11552	9663	1889	83.6	19.4	17.8
35-50	18659	17040	1619	91.3	31.4	31.4
51-70	22026	20785	1241	94.3	37.1	38.3
70+	7064	6751	313	95.5	11.9	12.4
All ages	59301	54239	5062	91.4	----	----
2014 primary election						
Age group	expected to vote	voted	didn't vote	percent of group who voted	percent of All expected party voters	percent of All party votes
18-34	7312	1069	6243	14.6	19.2	09.0
35-50	11114	2275	8839	20.4	29.2	19.2
51-70	13880	5323	8557	38.3	36.5	45.0
70+	5643	3161	2482	56.0	14.8	26.7
All ages	37949	11828	26121	31.1	----	----
2014 general election						
Age group	expected to vote	voted	didn't vote	percent of group who voted	percent of All expected party voters	percent of All party votes
18-34	9140	3243	5897	35.4	19.3	11.9
35-50	14054	7090	6964	50.4	29.7	26.1
51-70	17495	11782	5713	67.3	37.0	43.4
70+	6515	5008	1507	76.8	13.8	18.4
All ages	47204	27123	20081	57.4	----	----
2016 primary election						
Age group	expected to vote	voted	didn't vote	percent of group who voted	percent of All expected party voters	percent of All party votes
18-34	14899	6540	8359	43.8	26.0	22.0
35-50	16728	7606	9122	45.4	29.3	25.6
51-70	18651	10952	7699	58.7	32.6	36.9
70+	6808	4509	2299	66.2	11.9	15.2
All ages	57086	29607	27479	51.8	----	----
2016 general election						
Age group	expected to vote	voted	didn't vote	percent of group who voted	percent of All expected party voters	percent of All party votes
18-34	26955	20983	5972	77.8	29.7	27.1
35-50	28116	24609	3507	87.5	31.0	31.8
51-70	26995	24243	2752	89.8	29.8	31.3
70+	8438	7543	895	89.3	09.3	09.7
All ages	90504	77378	13126	85.4	----	----

source: Orange County Registrar of Voters, March 23, 2017
Not all voters registered as of each election are represented in the data

Table 3: Republican Voting History - 45th Congressional District CA

2012 primary election						
Age group	expected to vote	voted	didn't vote	percent of group who voted	percent of All expected party voters	percent of All party votes
18-34	5655	2559	3096	45.2	06.5	04.5
35-50	15338	6680	8658	43.5	17.7	11.9
51-70	40885	26238	14647	64.1	47.2	47.0
70+	24645	20305	4340	82.3	28.4	36.4
All ages	86523	55782	30741	64.4	----	----

2012 general election						
Age group	expected to vote	voted	didn't vote	percent of group who voted	percent of All expected party voters	percent of All party votes
18-34	12347	11170	1177	90.4	09.3	08.8
35-50	27992	26485	1507	94.6	21.3	20.9
51-70	62234	60592	1642	97.3	47.3	47.9
70+	28817	28244	573	98.0	21.9	22.3
All ages	131390	126491	4899	96.2	----	----

2014 primary election						
Age group	expected to vote	voted	didn't vote	percent of group who voted	percent of All expected party voters	percent of All party votes
18-34	7869	2055	5814	26.1	08.7	04.3
35-50	16918	5219	11699	30.8	18.7	11.1
51-70	40878	21574	19304	52.7	45.2	46.0
70+	24678	18026	6652	73.0	27.3	38.4
All ages	90343	46874	43469	51.8	----	----

2014 general election						
Age group	expected to vote	voted	didn't vote	percent of group who voted	percent of All expected party voters	percent of All party votes
18-34	9753	4880	4873	50.0	08.8	05.8
35-50	21384	13482	7902	63.0	19.4	16.1
51-70	51322	41043	10279	79.9	46.7	49.2
70+	27375	23982	3393	87.6	24.9	28.7
All ages	109834	83387	26447	75.9	----	----

2016 primary election						
Age group	expected to vote	voted	didn't vote	percent of group who voted	percent of All expected party voters	percent of All party votes
18-34	13380	6548	6832	48.9	11.5	08.0
35-50	22600	12497	10103	55.2	19.5	15.4
51-70	51918	38647	13271	74.4	44.8	47.7
70+	27760	23251	4509	83.7	24.0	28.7
All ages	115658	80943	34715	69.9	----	----

2016 general election						
Age group	expected to vote	voted	didn't vote	percent of group who voted	percent of All expected party voters	percent of All party votes
18-34	21179	17523	3656	82.7	14.0	12.6
35-50	32929	29857	3072	90.6	21.8	21.5
51-70	66419	62857	3562	94.6	44.0	45.3
70+	30353	28437	1916	93.6	20.1	20.5
All ages	150880	138674	12206	91.9	----	----

source: Orange County Registrar of Voters, March 23, 2017
 Not all voters registered as of each election are represented in the data