

# Predicting 17-Year-Old Turnout in California if the Voting Age Were Lowered

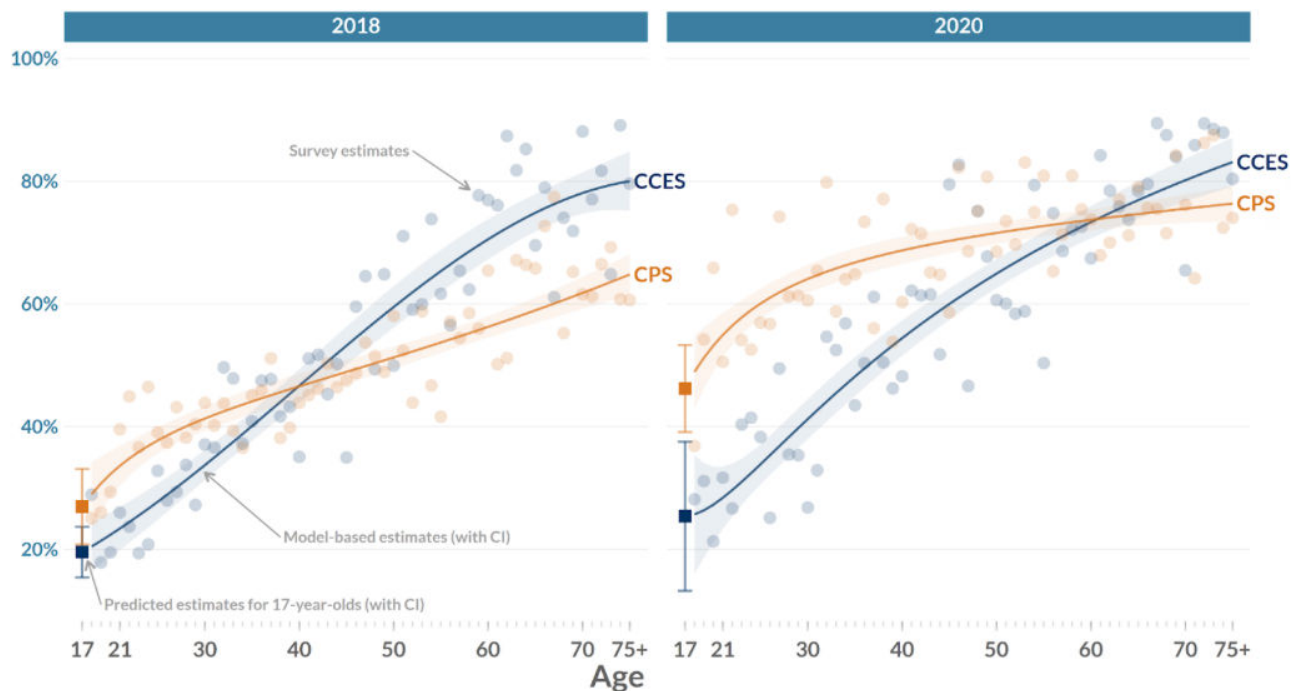
May 23, 2023 | James Hawkins

Read the [full policy brief](#), which reviews the research evidence for lowering the voting age, California’s historical context, and predicted turnout rates for 17-year-olds.

Using data from the Cooperative Election Study (CCES) and the Current Population Survey (CPS), we estimate how many 17-year-olds would have voted in 2018 and 2020 if they were eligible to vote.

## At what rate do Californians vote?

### Voter turnout rates in 2018 and 2020 (among citizens)



Source: Authors' analysis of the Cooperative Election Study (CCES) and the Current Population Survey (CPS) via IPUMS-CPS.

Sample: California citizens 18+. Ages top-coded at 75 years old.

Notes: The CPS results are based on bias-corrected weights (for non-response and over-reporting) from the US Elections Project. The model-based estimates are calculated based on the predicted values from fitting a weighted fractional polynomial regression model based on the survey-provided person weights. The predicted values for 17-year-olds are based on out-of-sample prediction from the corresponding fractional polynomial model. Error bars report 95% confidence intervals (CIs).



We find that:

- **2018 Midterms** – If the voting age were lowered to 17, our point estimates show that between 20-27 percent of all 17-year-olds in California would have participated in the 2018 midterm election;
- **2020 General Election** – Between 26-46 percent of all 17-year-olds would have participated in the 2020 general election (with additional uncertainty within the estimated 95% confidence intervals).

Our predictions show that 17-year-olds would have the lowest turnout rate of any age group, but our estimates do not account for exogenous factors such as the popularity of an election, whether high-quality civics education is offered to 17-year-olds, the novelty of the voting age change and its effect on turnout, or other factors.