Easy as Clicking 'Yes': How Automatic Voter Registration is Powering Up Youth Votes

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This working paper examines the relationship between state-level implementation of Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) policies and the voting turnout of young voters (aged 18-24) in United States elections, primarily analyzing data for elections between 2010 and 2022. As of 2023, 24 states and Washington, D.C. adopted AVR policies, though not all have implemented fully. Beyond the binary decision whether to enact AVR, this paper further examines if different types of AVR impact voter turnout within the same age group. The results show that the general presence of AVR increases young voter turnout by 3.2%; Front-end opt-out AVR policies increase young voter turnout by 2.8% and back-end opt-out AVR policies increase young voter turnout by 3.9%. These results show statistically significant increases in young voter turnout when either type of AVR is present, and suggests that expanding AVR in all states, particularly with back-end opt-out AVR mechanisms, could encourage further young voter participation and enfranchisement.

I. Introduction

This paper seeks to expand on current research that interrogates the impact of AVR on voter turnout, specifically by analyzing AVR's impact on young voters in the U.S.. The analysis classifies young voters as U.S. citizens between the ages of 18 and 24. As much electoral research shows, young voters in the U.S. tend to have lower voter turnout rates as compared to other age groups. Existing research indicates that AVR may help increase democratic participation and encourage higher turnout rates across the voting-eligible population. Given the persistent low turnout among young voters, there is increasing interest in understanding if AVR policies can meaningfully boost voter participation among 18 to 24 year olds.

As of 2023, 24 states and Washington, D.C. in the U.S. have enacted AVR policies. These each represent different political ecosystems and demographic patterns. Understanding the patterns in voter turnout in these 24 states and DC with AVR implementation will shed light on (i) the impact of AVR policies regardless of other political factors, and (ii) the circumstances that heighten the impact of AVR policies on democratic participation. Because AVR is typically initiated through local Department of Motor Vehicles (DMVs), departments of social services, and other government touch points, understanding if these unique registration methods capture young voters and subsequently result in higher voter turnout for that age group is critical to the current implementation strategies.

While AVR directly addresses voter registration barriers rather than voter turnout barriers, many studies infer that reducing the registration barrier will in turn help increase turnout. This research

uses voter turnout data as a way to analyze a continuum of democratic engagement facilitated by AVR polities.

II.   Background

A Brief History of Voting Rights and Youth Participation

The evolution of voting rights in the United States reflects an ongoing struggle to promote equitable access to the electoral process. Key legislative milestones, such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA), sought to remove barriers and expand suffrage to marginalized communities.[1] However, persistent challenges in voter registration systems have stifled the effectiveness of these efforts.

A significant advancement in voting rights came from the passage of The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) in 1993, known as the "motor voter" law. The motor voter law aimed to streamline voter registration by integrating it with driver's license applications at DMV offices. This approach sought to address the administrative burdens and logistical hurdles that often deterred eligible individuals from registering to vote. Initial studies showed a modest increase in voter turnout following the NVRA's enactment, but integrating the voter registration process with the DMV infrastructure as outlined in the motor voter provision remained a challenge for many states even decades later.[2] Consequently, states began exploring alternative solutions, leading to the emergence of AVR policies.

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[1] Berman, D. (2015, July 20). The Voting Rights Act of 1965: Background and Overview. Congressional Research Service.
[2] Fordham, R. (2022, March). Automatic Voter Registration Report. Data for Progress. ("Fordham (2022)");
Mann, C. B., Gronke, P., & Adona, N. (2020). Framing Automatic Voter Registration: Partisanship and Public Understanding of Automatic Voter Registration: Part of Special Symposium on Election Sciences. American Politics Research, 48(6), 693-699 ("Mann (2020)").

Motives and Intentions of AVR

AVR seeks to achieve three main objectives: enhance voter participation, decrease administrative burdens, and improve the accuracy of voter rolls.[3] Its primary aim is to boost voter turnout by automating the registration process, thereby making it more accessible and convenient for eligible individuals. AVR also addresses demographic disparities in voter registration by reducing administrative barriers, thereby promoting equity and inclusivity in the electoral system. Lastly, AVR promotes accurate and current voter registration rolls by integrating registration with government services, reducing errors and the potential for voter disenfranchisement due to outdated information.[4]

Various factors including partisan interests, advocacy efforts by voting rights groups, and public perception of electoral integrity have shaped and influenced the passage of AVR legislation in the states. Proponents of AVR argue for its potential to improve electoral participation and modernize voter registration systems, framing it as a fundamental step toward a more inclusive democracy.[5] Conversely, opponents may view AVR through a partisan lens, considering its potential impact on electoral outcomes.[6] With both sides at play, voting rights groups also share a crucial role in mobilizing support for AVR, framing it as a means to expand access to the electoral process and address systemic barriers to voter registration.[7]

AVR Implementation Types

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[3] Fordham (2022); McGhee, Eric and Hill, Charlotte and Romero, Mindy, The Registration and Turnout Effects of Automatic Voter Registration (September 29, 2021) ("McGhee et al. (2021)").
[4] Fordham (2022); McGhee et al. (2021).
[5] Fordham (2022); McGhee et al. (2021).
[6] Mann (2020).
[7] Root, D., & Kennedy, C. (2018, July 11). Increasing Voter Participation in America. Center for American Progress. ("Root & Kennedy(2021)").

There are two main types of AVR policies: front-end opt-out and back-end opt-out. In a front-end opt-out system, individuals are informed that the information they provide during government transactions will be used to automatically register them to vote unless they explicitly decline.[8] This approach provides individuals with the opportunity to opt out of voter registration in-real-time. Conversely, a back-end opt-out system notifies individuals by mail after the agency transaction that they will be registered to vote unless they return the mailer indicating their desire not to be registered. Currently, the majority of states that have adopted AVR use front-end opt-out systems, with only a few employing back-end opt-out approaches.[9]

Another important distinction in AVR design is between forced-choice and default registration systems. In forced-choice systems, potential registrants are required to answer voter registration questions–such as whether they are currently registered and if they want to register–in order to proceed with the agency transaction process. In contrast, default registration systems make voter registration the default choice, and individuals must take additional steps to decline registration if they do not wish to be added to the voter rolls.[10] For example, in the form provided by the agency, there is a boxed option to opt-out of voter registration. If this option is not selected—indicated by leaving the corresponding box unchecked—the individual will automatically be registered to vote.[11] All current back-end opt-out systems are combined with default registration. Among states employing front-end AVR, the majority utilize the default option, while only a few have implemented forced-choice registration.[12]

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[8] Fordham (2022).
[9] Fordham (2022).
[10] Fordham (2022).
[11] McGhee et al. (2021).
[12] McGhee et al. (2021).

AVR Implementation in the US

As of 2023, 24 states and Washington, D.C. have adopted AVR policies, though not all have

implemented fully. These 24 states span a range of political climates and approaches to

electorate-expanding reforms.[13] Specifically, these 24 states include both liberal-leaning and

conservative-leaning states, each with its unique history of voter turnout and sociopolitical

ecosystems. **Figure 1** below displays the implementation timeline of AVR policies across all

U.S. states.

Figure 1. Automatic Voter Registration Implementation Timeline

Government agencies, particularly the DMV, serve as primary touchpoints for voter registration

within AVR systems. As mentioned, states vary in their registration methods, with some opting

for default registration, while others implement forced-choice registration. The expected impact

of AVR on registration rates depends on the specific implementation method adopted by each

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[13] National Conference of State Legislatures. (2024, February). Automatic Voter Registration. ("NCSL (2024)").

state, with back-end opt-out and default registration systems generally expected to lead to higher registration rates compared to front-end opt-out and forced-choice systems.[14]

Effects of AVR in the Literature

AVR has shown promising results in increasing voter registration and turnout, and existing studies find this is the case particularly with back-end opt-out default systems. Specifically, literature suggests back-end opt-out default AVR systems register more eligible voters and have a larger impact on turnout as compared to front-end opt-out systems.[15] More so, literature indicates that switching from front-end opt-out to back-end opt-out AVR systems may further enhance turnout effects, particularly among traditionally underrepresented demographic groups. For example, voters registered through Oregon's back-end opt-out AVR system tended to be younger, more rural, lower-income, and more ethnically diverse than the general electorate.[16] This finding suggests that combining back-end opt-out AVR with a multiple-agency model may further improve outcomes, as members of underrepresented groups may interact more frequently with various government agencies. These findings also underscore the importance of AVR design in shaping its impact on voter participation, particularly among young voters and other traditionally underrepresented groups. Further research is needed to fully understand the implications of AVR and designs to identify strategies for optimizing voter turnout and engagement for young and underrepresented groups. This analysis will concentrate on the observed effects of AVR systems on young voter turnout.

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[14] McGhee et al. (2021).
[15] McGhee et al. (2021).
[16] Griffin et al., "Who Votes With Automatic Voter Registration? Impact Analysis of Oregon's First-in-the-Nation Program." Center for American Progress.

Theory of Turnout Among Young Voters

Historically, young voter turnout has consistently trailed behind that of older age groups, both in the US and globally. In the highly contested 2016 presidential election cycle, the voter turnout gap between 18-24 year olds and those aged 25 and older exceeded 20 percentage points. This turnout disparity was slightly larger than the gap observed in 1972, the first presidential election in which 18-year-olds were eligible to vote.[17]

Over the span of the 2018 to 2022 election cycles, young voter participation rates experienced notable fluctuations, reflecting evolving trends in political engagement among this demographic. In the 2018 midterm elections, young voter turnout reached 28%, setting a historic record and signaling a remarkable increase from previous cycles (13% of young voters voted in 2014).[18] However, by the 2022 election cycle, national young voter turnout dropped to 23% , declining from the previous midterm but still demonstrating a notable improvement from earlier years.[19] Despite these fluctuations, young voters consistently lag behind older cohorts. Efforts to address barriers to young voter turnout – information costs, structural barriers, lack of outreach, and generational differences– have led to significant increases in turnout, particularly in landmark elections like the 2020 presidential race.[20]

Barriers to Voting for Young Voters

[17] McDonald, J. A., & Hanmer, M. J. (2018, August 29). "Understanding and Confronting Barriers to Youth Voting in America" Center for Democracy and Civic Engagement at University of Maryland.
[18] Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). (2019). 28% of Young People Voted in 2018. Tufts Tisch College.
[19] Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. (2024). The Youth Vote in 2022. Tufts Tisch College. ("CIRCLE (2024)").
[20] Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). (2020). Half of Youth Voted in 2020, an 11-Point Increase from 2016. Tufts Tisch College; Root & Kennedy (2021).

One major voting barrier for young people is the higher costs they incur in accessing information about political engagement and understanding the voting process. Wolfinger and Rosenstone highlight that a lack of resources and information can impede political participation among young people.[21] Young voters often struggle with the specifics of how and where to register and vote, frequently missing critical deadlines or requirements. Compared to older generations of Americans, today's young voters encounter distinct informational challenges when it comes to voting: they are less acquainted with the voting process and researching candidates; they find it harder to schedule time for voting and balance it with other life commitments, finding non-digital aspects of voting particularly inconvenient; they encounter more transportation difficulties due to less stable lifestyles than older age cohorts and have to weigh the decision between voting and working; and, are also less likely to possess the necessary documentation for voter registration.[22] In particular, the information gap creates a substantial disadvantage and is a key predictor of lower voting turnout among young voters. In fact, individuals who reported a lack of sufficient registration and voting information were 57 percentage points less likely to vote in the 2018 elections.[23]

Understanding the voting process is dependent on the state and region in which a voter resides. Varying registration deadlines and electoral rules across states can deter voters, especially those who frequently change residences. For example, in 2022, young voter turnout reached as high as 37% in Michigan and as low as 13% in Tennessee.[24] The regional disparity underscores the

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[21] Holbein, J. B., & Hillygus, D. S. (2016, April). Making Young Voters: The Impact of Preregistration on Youth Turnout. American Journal of Political Science, 60(2), 364-382. Midwest Political Science Association; Wolfinger, R. E., & Rosenstone, S. J. (2006). Who Votes? Yale University Press.

[22] Hill, C. (2020, August 8). Young People Face Higher Voting Costs and Are Less Informed About State Voting Laws. Berkeley Institute for Young Americans, UC Berkeley.("Hill (2020)").

[23] Hill (2020).

[24] CIRCLE (2024).

difficulties decentralized electoral rules pose for young voters who have less stable work and living situations.

Another factor contributing to low young voter turnout is the absence of targeted mobilization efforts. As voter turnout declines among 18 to 24 year olds, political campaigns increasingly overlook this demographic. In 2022, the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) reported that nearly half of the young people surveyed (46%) received no contact from any organization, candidate, or party. Of these 46%, 21% cited a lack of sufficient knowledge as their reason for not voting, while only 40% felt qualified to participate in politics.[25] The minimal outreach not only restricts access to crucial information but also undermines young voters' confidence in their voting abilities.

Research increasingly focuses on the generational differences between eligible voters as a determinant of voter turnout. In particular, Zukin et al. discuss how young people today are more engaged in community activities rather than participating at the voting booth or interacting directly with politicians, illustrating a shift from traditional political involvement to civic engagement.[26] This shift may stem from various factors, including early socialization at home, but the prevailing view suggests it is largely due to young people's changing perceptions of government. Younger voters perceive greater inefficacy and mistrust with the government, compared to senior citizens, and therefore opt to participate in civic engagement.[27] According to CIRCLE reports of the 2022 election, a third of young people (32%) have signed a petition or

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[25] CIRCLE (2024).
[26] Zukin, C., Keeter, S., Andolina, M., Jenkins, K., & Delli Carpini, M. X. (2006). A New Engagement?: Political Participation, Civic Life, and the Changing American Citizen. Oxford University Press.
[27] Gentry, B. (2018). Why Youth Vote: Identity, Inspirational Leaders and Independence (1st ed. 2018). Springer International Publishing. ("Gentry (2018)").

joined a boycott, while one in seven has participated in a march or demonstration. Additionally, 28% of young voters expressed a willingness to protest or would take the opportunity to do so if it arose.[28] Yet, only 23% of eligible young voters casted a ballot in the 2022 midterm election.[29] Further, less than one third of young people reported trust in either of the two major political parties, their state government, Congress, or the President. Specifically, the Republican Party and Congress have the highest levels of distrust among youth, with 49% and 41% expressing skepticism, respectively.[30] These perceptions of government significantly shape young people's definitions of good citizenship. Unlike older generations, who may view military service, tax compliance, and voting as quintessential to good citizenship, younger generations are more inclined towards civic engagement, such as public discussions on social issues and community service.[31] This shift reflects a broader generational divide in political engagement and may result in underrepresentation at the polls, as younger individuals choose forms of participation that don't necessarily include voting.[32]

Predicted Effects of AVR on Young Voter Turnout

AVR is designed to simplify the voter registration process, which could in turn boost voter turnout. However, research suggests only moderate improvement in young voter turnout. Charlotte Hill's analysis discusses that "[w]hile cost-reducing reforms can shrink the turnout gap between young and old Americans, they are often only modestly effective at boosting youth turnout."[33] It's important to note that her findings primarily highlight that higher voting costs

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[28] Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). (2023). Youth Are Interested in Political Action but Lack Support and Opportunities. Tufts Tisch College. ("CIRCLE (2023)").
[29] CIRCLE (2024).
[30] CIRCLE (2023).
[31] Gentry (2018).
[32] Dalton, Russell. (2009). The Good Citizen: How a Younger Generation Is Reshaping American Politics. Rev. ed. Washington D.C.: CQ Press.
[33] Hill (2020).

disproportionately affect young people, leading to lower registration and turnout rates. This indicates that while AVR may ease registration barriers, it may not drastically alter voting patterns among young people without supplementary efforts.[34] Therefore, the expectation is that, while AVR will ease registration barriers and provide moderate improvement in young voter turnout, significant increases in young voter turnout will likely require targeted educational initiatives and outreach programs to inform and engage young voters more effectively in the electoral process. Nevertheless, further research is needed to evaluate and shed light on the effectiveness of policies like AVR in enhancing young voter political engagement and strengthening democratic representation.

This study contributes to the broader literature, using a quasi-experimental design that tracks changes in turnout among young voters across multiple election cycles, thereby providing a dynamic and detailed picture of the effects of AVR.

III.   Data

The main source of data on voter turnout come from the Census Current Population Survey (CPS) and CPS Voter Supplement. The CPS is a monthly survey of approximately 60,000 households sponsored jointly by the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), and the Voter Supplement is completed as part of the November CPS every two years.[35] The supplement asks whether the respondent voted in the most recent election, whether they were registered, and what voting method they used, among other questions. This study's main analysis specifically relied on CPS data from 2010-2022. This data set covers all Presidential and

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[34] Hill (2020).
[35] U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). Current Population Survey. Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps.html.

Congressional election years and includes responses from all 50 states as well as Washington, D.C.. The CPS data also includes key variables such as age, race, sex, and education level of respondents. The analysis focused on the age variable and created six age groupings: 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65+. Grouping by age group allowed the assessment to isolate the specific effect of AVR policies on young voters aged 18-24.

The CPS data set offers the following response options for voter turnout: "Did Not Vote", "Voted", "Refused", "Don't Know", "No Response", and "Not in Universe." The analysis offered in this paper classified CPS respondents who selected "Voted" as such. In order to provide a conservative assessment of voter turnout, and the impact of AVR on voter turnout, the analysis classified all other responses ("Did Not Vote", "Refused", "Don't Know", and "No Response") as "Did Not Vote." CPS respondents with values of "Not in Universe" were classified as "N/A" and excluded from the analysis.[36]

The data on states' AVR policies comes from the National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL). NCSL provides information on the year that each state implemented an AVR policy and which type of opt-out method it employed.[37] As of 2022, the latest election for which this analysis assesses voter turnout data, 21 states (including Washington, D.C.) had implemented AVR.[38] Of those 21 states, six states – Alaska, Colorado, Delaware, Oregon, Nevada, and Massachusetts – use back-end opt-out AVR and the remaining 16 states and Washington, D.C.

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[36] Specifically, a sensitivity check on the categorization of "Did Not Vote" and "N/A" (i) more narrowly defined "Did Not Vote" as respondents who explicitly indicated so in the CPS, and (ii) more broadly defined "N/A" respondents as those who selected any of the following in the CPS: "Refused", "Don't Know", "No Response", and "Not in Universe." The observed effect size of AVR on young voters moderately increased from 0.032 (3.2 percent) to 0.049 (4.9 percent).
[37] NCSL (2024).
[38] NCSL (2024).

employ front-end opt-out AVR.[39] The NCSL data allowed for the inclusion of three binary variables along with the CPS data set analysis: one that indicated whether AVR had been implemented by each state in the year in question, one to indicate implementation of front-end opt-out AVR, and one to indicate implementation of back-end opt-out AVR.

IV.   Analysis

Preliminary data analysis suggests AVR may have a larger impact on young voter turnout compared with other age groups. **Figure 2** shows the average voter turnout from 2010 to 2022, comparing age group turnout when AVR was not implemented (indicated through value 0 and in red) and when AVR was implemented (indicated through value 1 and in blue). Across all age groups, the difference in pre-AVR voter turnout compared to post-AVR voter turnout is largest for the youngest voter subgroup.

Figure 2. Voter Turnout by Age Group and AVR Implementation (2010-2022)

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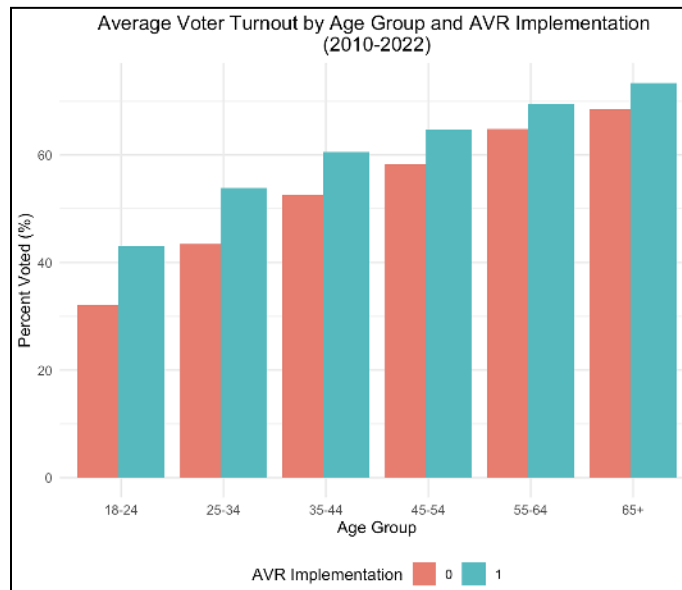
[39] "Movement Advancement Project. (2022). Policy Spotlight: Automatic Voter Registration Best Practices in the States."

Additional analyses confirm the relationship between AVR and young voter turnout through two difference-in-differences (DID) models: Model A estimates the impact of AVR policies on young voter turnout, and Model B estimates the specific effects of front-end opt-out and back-end opt-out policies on young voter turnout.

Model A: AVR and Voter Turnout

Model A consists of three regressions that assess: (i) the impact of AVR policies on voter turnout of all age groups (no disaggregation), (ii) the impact of AVR policies and being a young voter on voter turnout, and (iii) the impact of AVR policies, being a young voter, and the combination of AVR policies and being a young voter on voter turnout. The first regression calculates average voter turnout by state and year. The second regression creates age group categories and calculates average voter turnout by state, year, and age group. The third regression adds an interaction term between the young voter age group and AVR.

A difference-in-difference model is appropriate because state fixed effects account for the varying voter turnout trends within each state. Controlling for state fixed effects can minimize the counter argument that states with AVR policies already tend to have higher voter turnout rates. Year fixed effects in our models also control for national-level factors that might affect voter turnout across all states in a given year, such as the national political environment, economic conditions, or federal policy changes, as well as specific years like 2012 and 2020, which had particularly high turnout.

Below are the three regressions for Model A:

     i. $Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_{1ij} (AVR) + \gamma_i + \delta_j + \varepsilon_{ij}$

ii. $Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_{1ij} \ (AVR) + \beta_{2ij} \ (\text{Young Voter}) + \gamma_i + \delta_j + \varepsilon_{ij}$

iii. $Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_{1ij} \ (AVR) + \beta_{2ij} \ (\text{Young Voter}) + \beta_{3ij} \ (AVR*\text{Young Voter}) + \gamma_i + \delta_j + \varepsilon_{ij}$

In each of the regressions:

- Y represents the predicted average voter turnout by state and year.

- β_1 is the beta coefficient representing the average effect on voter turnout associated with implementing an AVR policy.

- β_2 is the beta coefficient representing the average effect on voter turnout associated with being in the 18-24 age group.

- β_3 is the interaction coefficient representing the additional effect on voter turnout when both AVR policy implementation and being in the 18-24 age group coincide. This coefficient captures the differential impact of AVR policy on voter turnout within the 18-24 age group.

- γ_i represents state fixed effects (i denotes the state).

- δ_j represents year fixed effects (j denotes the year).

- ε_{ij} represents the error term for each model.

Model B: Front-End Opt-Out AVR vs. Back-End Opt-Out AVR and Voter Turnout

Model B follows the same structure as Model A, but splits the original AVR variable into front-end opt-out and back-end opt-out dummies to assess whether AVR implementation types have different impacts on voter turnout. Below are the three regressions for Model B:

i. $Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_{1ij} \ (\text{AVR Front-end}) + \beta_{2ij} \ (\text{AVR Back-end}) + \gamma_i + \delta_j + \varepsilon_{ij}$

ii. $Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_{1ij} \ (\text{AVR Front-end}) + + \beta_{2ij} \ (\text{AVR Back-end}) + \beta_{3ij} \ (\text{Young Voter}) + \gamma i + \delta_j + \varepsilon_{ij}$

iii. $Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_{1ij}$ (AVR Front-end)+ + β_{2ij} (AVR Back-end) + β_{3ij} (Young Voter) + β_{4ij}

(AVR Front-end*Young Voter) + β_{5ij} (AVR Back-end*Young Voter) + $\gamma_i + \delta_j + \varepsilon_{ij}$

In the Model B regressions:

- β_1 is the beta coefficient representing the average effect on voter turnout associated with implementing a front-end type AVR policy.

- β_2 is the beta coefficient representing the average effect on voter turnout associated with implementing a back-end type AVR policy.

- β_3 is the beta coefficient representing the average effect on voter turnout associated with being in the 18-24 age group.

- β_4 is the interaction coefficient representing the additional effect on voter turnout when both front-end type AVR policy implementation and being in the 18-24 age group coincide.

- β_5 is the interaction coefficient representing the additional effect on voter turnout when both back-end type AVR policy implementation and being in the 18-24 age group coincide.

V. Results

Figure 3 below shows the results of Model A that analyzes AVR's impact on voter turnout.

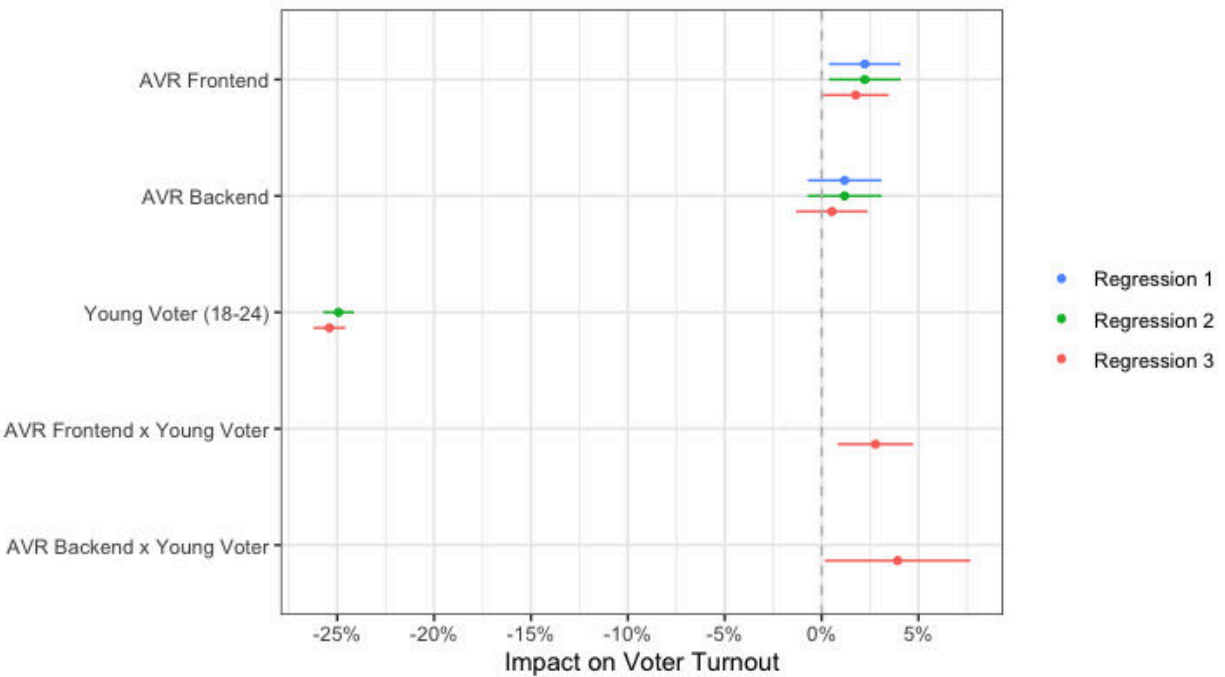**Figure 3. Model A: Average Treatment Effect of AVR on Voter Turnout**
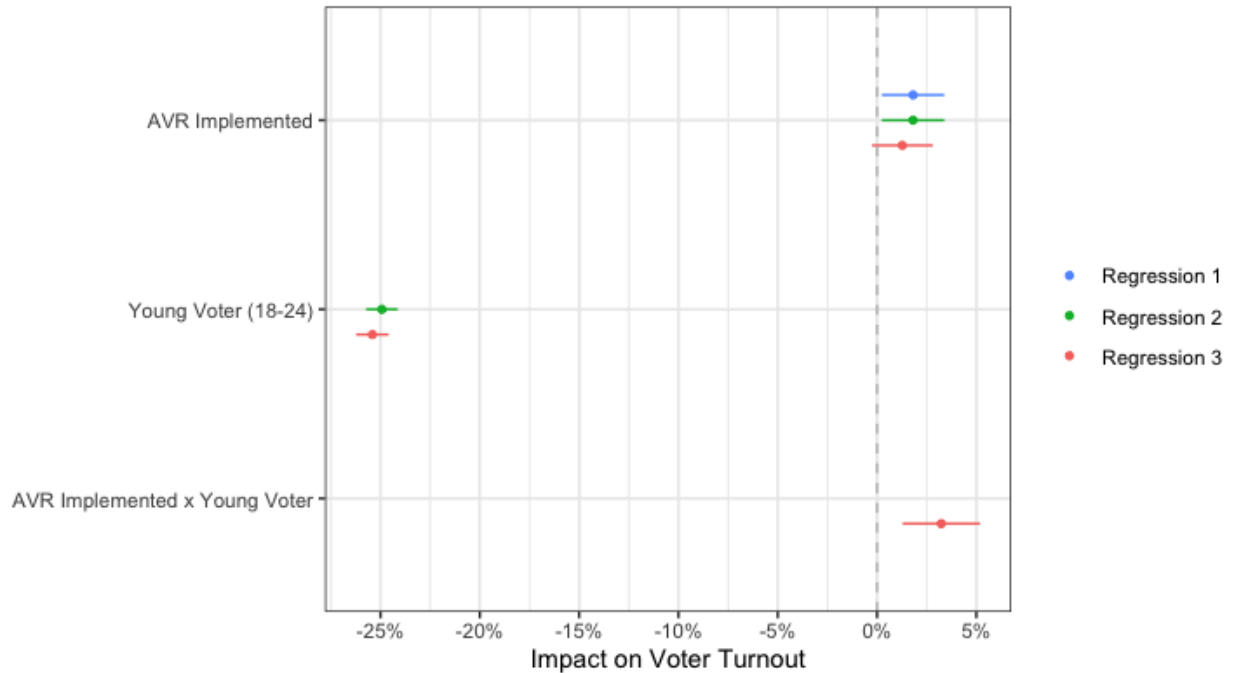
The average treatment effect of AVR implementation alone in regression 1 on voter turnout is 1.8% (p<.05). Once the 18-24 age range is added in regression 2, there is a similar coefficient on AVR and a coefficient of negative 24.9% (p<.01) on being a young voter. This result is consistent with literature showing that young voter-eligible individuals have a much lower voter turnout rate as compared to the general voting-age population.

In regression 3, the coefficient on AVR alone decreases from a 1.8% to 1.3%, and the average treatment effect of AVR across all age groups is not statistically significant (p>0.05). The interaction of AVR and young voters is an additional positive 3.2% increase in turnout (p<0.01), demonstrating that AVR is associated with a statistically significant increase in voter turnout among voters aged 18-24 years old. See Appendix A for full Model A results.

Figure 4 below shows the results of Model B that analyzes the specific impact of front-end and back-end type AVR policies on voter turnout.

Figure 4. Model B: Average Treatment Effects of Front End and Back End AVR on Voter Turnout

In Model B, regression 1 shows that the average treatment effect of front-end opt-out AVR implementation is a 2.2% increase in voter turnout, compared to an 1.2% increase in voter turnout effect with back-end opt-out AVR implementation. The increase associated with the front-end opt-out AVR is statistically significant ($p<.05$). Once the 18-24 age range is added in regression 2, the coefficient remains consistent on both front-end opt-out and back-end opt-out AVR as well as the expected 2.49% decrease for young voters previously observed in Model A. In regression 3, the increase in voter turnout from implementing front-end opt-out AVR alone decreases from 2.2% to 1.8%. However, when front-end opt-out AVR interacts with younger voters, it yields an additional increase of 2.8% ($p<0.01$). The effect of back-end opt-out AVR alone shows a more pronounced decrease, from 1.2% to .08%. Yet, when back-end opt-out AVR

is combined with young voter interaction, it results in a 3.9% increase in turnout (p<0.01). The results indicate that between the two AVR types, back-end opt-out has the greater impact on increasing voter turnout among young voters aged 18-24. Additionally, since the statistically significant increase in voter turnout for back-end opt-out AVR occurs only in interaction with young voters, and given the large confidence interval, it suggests that the impact of this type of AVR might vary significantly based on the age of the voter. See Appendix A for further details on Model B results.

Figures 5 and 6. State Comparisons
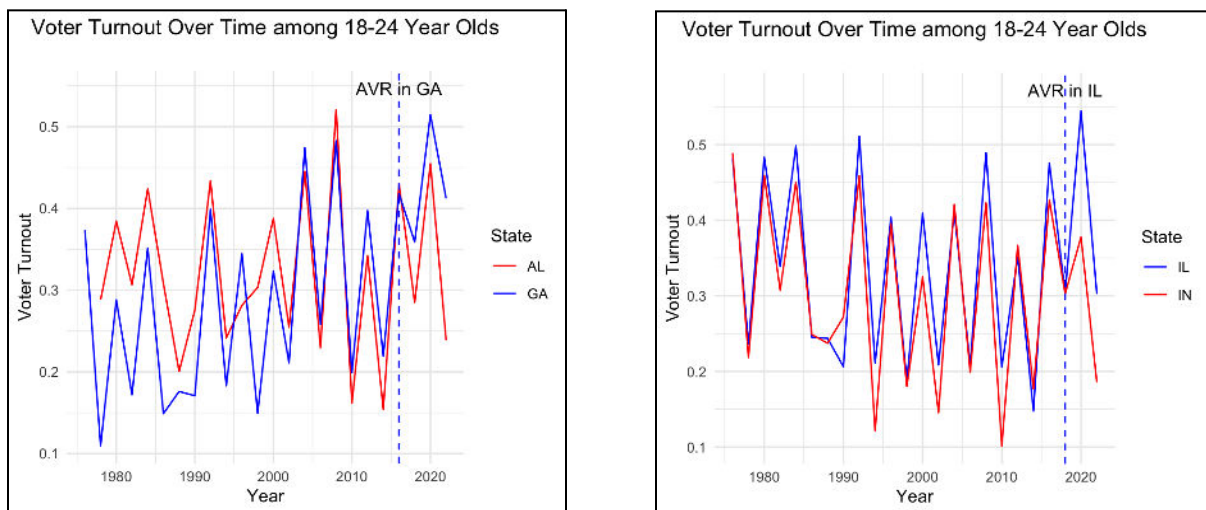
The above graphs (**Figure 5** and **Figure 6**) each demonstrate raw voter trends between neighboring states in two regions (Southeast and Midwest). In each graph, one of the states, in blue, has implemented AVR (Georgia and Illinois), with the implementation date identified by the dotted line, and one of the states, in red, (Alabama and Indiana) has not. Further statistical analysis is needed to interrogate if there is a causal effect of AVR policies on these voter turnout trends.

VI.   Next Steps

This paper assesses the impacts of AVR on young voter turnout, revealing that there is a significant positive impact of AVR on young voter turnout. However, there are various ways to specify both the independent and dependent variables into potentially more illustrative identifiers which would allow for deeper understanding of the gaps in current AVR implementation.

Expanding the demographics included in this assessment is a clear next step. While this analysis focuses on young voter turnout, there is opportunity to investigate AVR's effects on other underrepresented groups, such as low-income individuals, rural residents, and voters of color. This would expand understanding of who currently most benefits from AVR policies and who is still not being effectively targeted. Given the results from the breakout analysis of the impact of front-end opt-out and back-end opt-out AVR policies for young voters, further analysis of how each AVR type impacts specific demographic groups would be valuable.

Methodologically, this model could also employ a rolling cross section analysis. This type of analysis could provide a more longitudinal analysis and incorporate many of the above variations in both AVR and demographic differences. Other studies have shown that while AVR raises voter registration and turnout rates, the effects of AVR on voter turnout gradually increase the longer AVR is implemented. Therefore, longitudinal studies that continue to track voter turnout changes could be instrumental in understanding the true impact.[40]

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[40] McGhee et al. (2021).

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Appendix A

Table 1: Model A Regression Results

	Table 1:		
	Dependent variable:		
	Average Voter Turnout		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
AVR Implemented	0.018*	0.018*	0.013
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
18-24		−0.249***	−0.254***
		(0.004)	(0.004)
AVR Implemented x 18-24			0.032***
			(0.010)
Constant	0.474***	0.516***	0.516***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Observations	2,142	2,142	2,142
R^2	0.326	0.643	0.643
Adjusted R^2	0.307	0.633	0.633
Note:	$^*p<0.05$; $^{**}p<0.01$; $^{***}p<0.001$		

Table 2: Model B Regression Results

Table 2:

	Dependent variable:		
	Average Voter Turnout		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
AVR Front End	0.022*	0.022*	0.018*
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.008)
AVR Backend	0.012	0.012	0.005
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
18-24		-0.249^{***}	-0.254^{***}
		(0.004)	(0.004)
AVR Frontend x 18-24			0.028**
			(0.010)
AVR Backend x 18-24			0.039*
			(0.019)
Constant	0.477***	0.518***	0.519***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Observations	2,142	2,142	2,142
R^2	0.326	0.643	0.643
Adjusted R^2	0.307	0.633	0.633

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001