

Equity in Voter Turnout after Pandemic Election Policy Changes

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PPIC

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Pandemic policy: more mail and less in-person voting

- Reduce risk of exposure
- Reduce number of in-person locations
- Reduce pressure on in-person locations

Did the changes affect voting equity?

- Key reform goal: ending the “exclusive electorate” by closing the “turnout gap”
- Evidence: All vote-by-mail raises total turnout
 - In-person consolidation is more mixed
- Question: Does it improve the turnout gap?
 - Voters of color
 - Young people

Equity in three different contexts

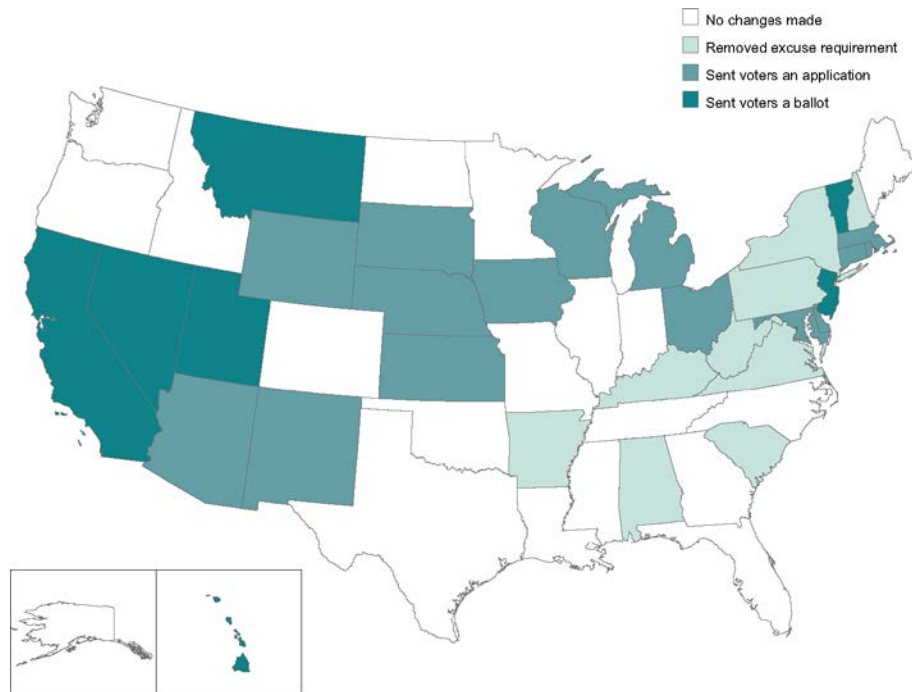
- 2020 general election: universal vote-by-mail
- 2020 LA primary: universal vote-by-mail
- 2020 general election: in-person consolidation

- The pandemic and voting-by-mail
- Results: universal vote-by-mail and equity
- Results: in-person voting options and equity
- Conclusions and recommendations

States relaxed access to mail ballots

- 9 states removed restrictions on signing up
- 15 states mailed every voter an *application*
- 7 states and DC mailed every voter a *ballot*
 - California was one of these states

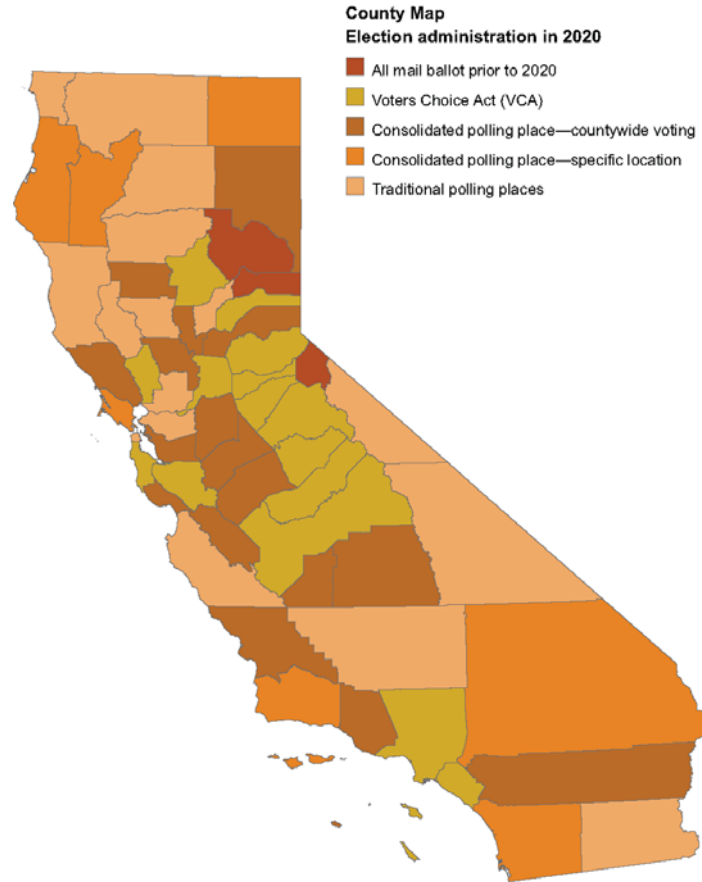
Many states changed access to mail ballots for 2020



California took a varied approach to the pandemic...

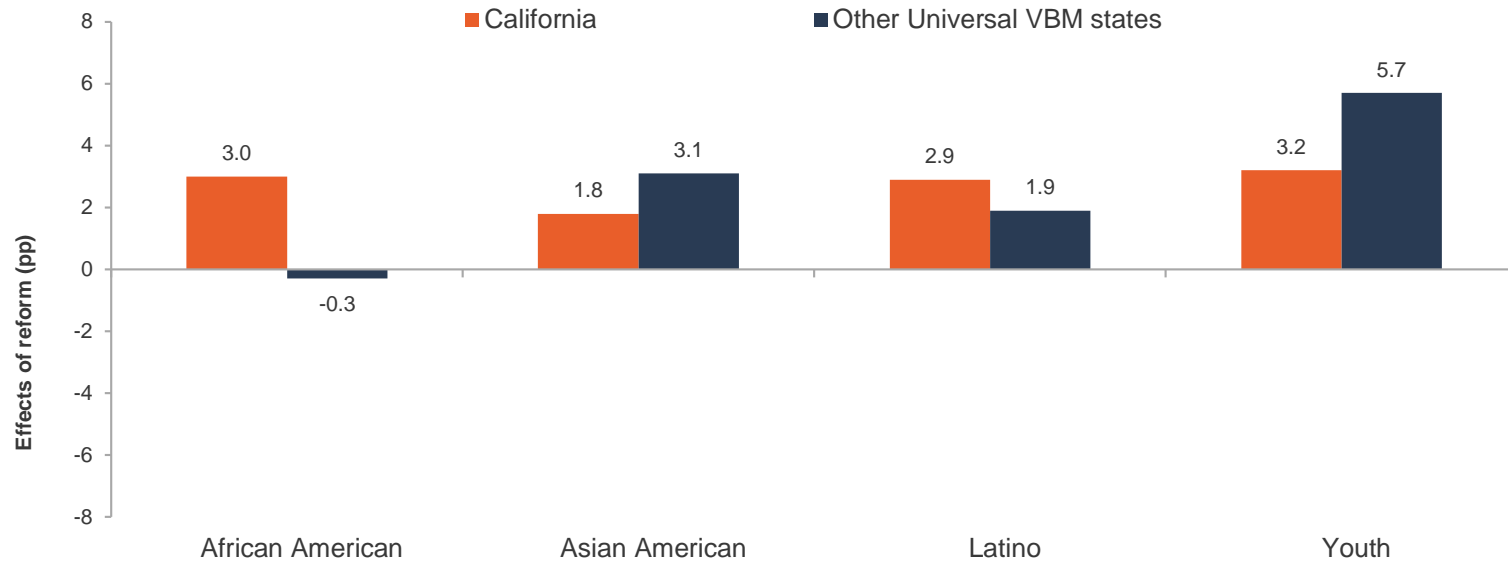
- Mailed ballots to all active voters in all counties
 - Will continue under AB 37
- One of five approaches to in-person voting
 - Traditional polling place system (16)
 - Consolidated polling places accessible to neighborhood (7)
 - Consolidated polling places accessible to anyone in county (17)
 - Voter's Choice Act (15)
 - All vote-by-mail with no polling places (3)

...across counties



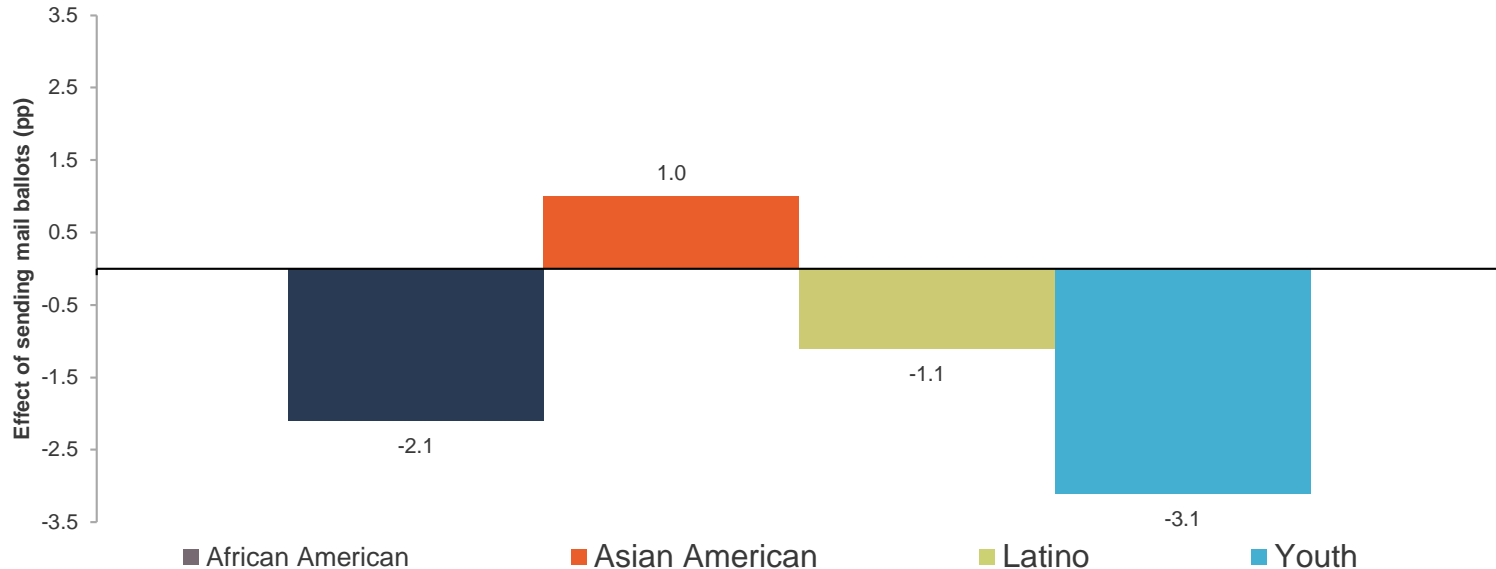
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Universal VBM was good for youth, mostly good for people of color



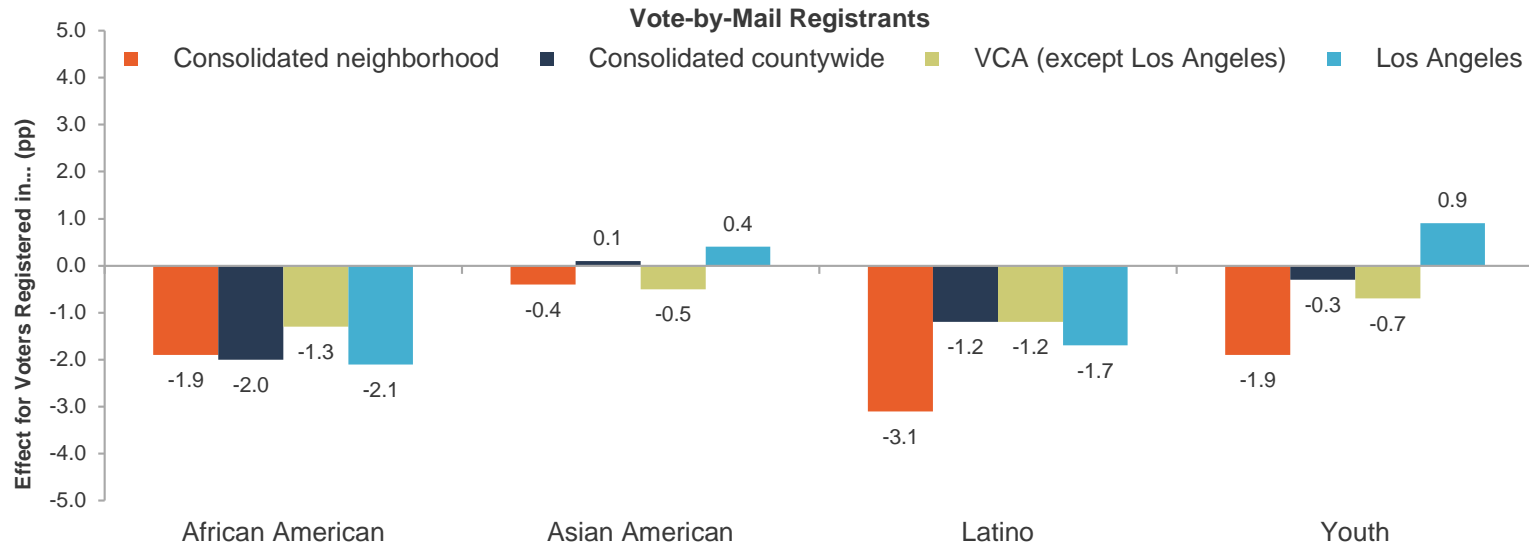
Mail ballots in LA 2020 primary usually hurt turnout gap

Sending ballots always increased turnout, but increased it *more* for seniors and non-Hispanic whites

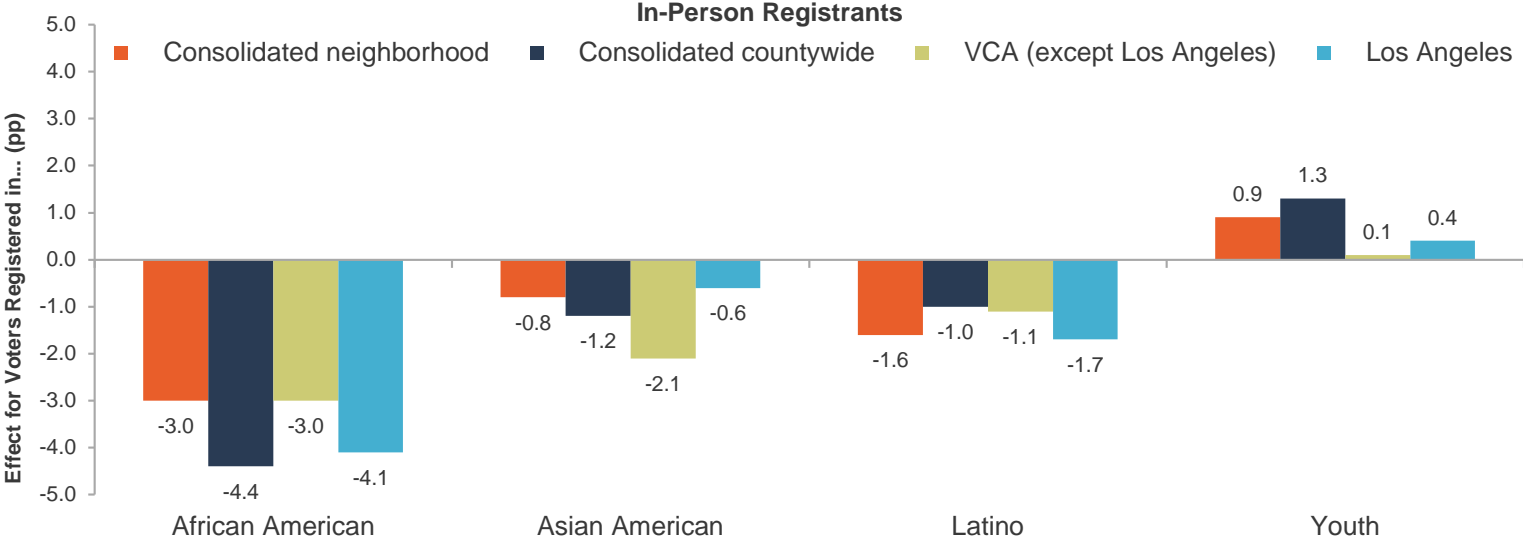


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Changing in-person options often worsened turnout gap for VBM registrants...



...and in-person registrants



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Conclusions/recommendations

- Universal VBM: modest improvement in fall elections
 - Primary elections more complicated
- Consolidating in-person: some worsened equity
 - Includes Voter's Choice Act consolidation
- Recommendations
 - More outreach to underrepresented groups in primaries
 - More outreach to underrepresented groups about in-person voting
 - Possible rethinking of in-person consolidation

Notes on the use of these slides

These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

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Thank you for your interest in this work.