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CENTER FOR
INCLUSIVE
DEMOCRACY

Examining San Mateo County's
Adoption of the California Voter's Choice Act:
2020 General Election



OFFICE OF MARK CHURCH
**CHIEF ELECTIONS OFFICER &
ASSESSOR-COUNTY CLERK-RECORDER**
COUNTY OF SAN MATEO

This research was commissioned by the San Mateo County Elections Office and was independently conducted by the Center for Inclusive Democracy.

About the Center for Inclusive Democracy (CID)

Celebrating its 10-year anniversary this year, the Center for Inclusive Democracy (CID), formerly known as the California Civic Engagement Project, is part of the USC Sol Price School of Public Policy and is based in Sacramento. CID conducts a range of national and multi-state research initiatives exploring voting behavior, civic engagement, electoral and economic research, the intersection of social justice and democracy, and more. Its non-partisan research informs and empowers a wide range of policy and organizing efforts aimed at eliminating disparities in social and economic wellbeing. To learn more about CID's research, visit: cid.usc.edu.

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Executive Summary

The 2020 election cycle was the second election cycle in San Mateo County held under the California Voter's Choice Act (VCA). Under the VCA, counties replace traditional polling places with vote centers offering a range of voter including in-person voting, accessible voting options, language assistance, vote-by-mail ballot drop-off, and conditional voter registration. Additionally, vote-by-mail ballots are automatically sent to all registered voters in counties that adopted the VCA. As of the 2020 general election, fifteen California counties had adopted the VCA. This report provides an analysis of the impact of the VCA on San Mateo County voters in the 2020 general election.

Key Findings from San Mateo County's VCA Implementation in the 2020 General Election

The majority of voters used vote-by-mail ballots and many relied on vote center services

- The overwhelming majority (91.3%) of San Mateo County voters used a VBM ballot.
- The most common VBM return methods were through the mail (39.7%) and at ballot drop box locations (39.2%).
- San Mateo County vote centers were utilized for services including voting in person, dropping off their VBM ballots, receiving language assistance, replacing damaged or lost ballots, and, if not registered, conditionally registering to vote and casting a ballot.
- Less than one percent of voters used conditional voter registration to cast a ballot.

Vote center use varied by group

- Youth (aged 18-24) and Latino voters used vote centers at higher rates than senior voters, Asian-American voters, and the general population.
- Voters who voted in-person in the last election they participated in used vote centers at much higher rates than the general population in the 2020 general election.

Vote Center Use (in-person voting and VBM drop off) in the 2020 San Mateo County General Election

	Voted at a Vote Center	Total Votes in Election	% of Total Votes
Youth Voters (18 to 24)	6,765	29,985	22.6%
Senior Voters (65+)	17,074	98,346	17.4%
Asian American Voters	16,045	87,039	18.4%
Latino Voters	13,674	56,682	24.1%
Previous In-Person Voters	16,589	47,350	35.0%
All Voters	79,692	379,988	21.0%

Source: San Mateo County Voter File and Political Data Inc.

Voter turnout varied by demographic group

- Just under 86% of registered voters and 75.5% of eligible voters (adult citizens) in San Mateo County voted in the 2020 general election.
- Asian-American voters and the general population saw an increase in eligible voter turnout rates (compared to 2016 turnout); Latino voters also experienced growth in eligible voter turnout, although the growth was not as large as seen among Asian Americans and the general population.
- Asian-American and Latino voters continued to be underrepresented in the San Mateo County voting electorate, with Latino voters having the largest gap between their share of the eligible voter population and their share of votes cast.
- Asian-American, Latino, youth, previous in-person voters, and new voters had lower registered voter turnout rates than the general population. Latino voters (56.9%) had notably lower eligible voter turnout than the general population (75.5%), while the Asian-American eligible voter turnout (67.0%) was closer to that of all voters.
- Young voters (aged 18 to 24) had lower eligible and registered voter turnout rates than older voters (aged 65 and over).
- Registered Democrats had higher registered voter turnout rates than registered Republicans.
- U.S.-born voters had higher registered voter turnout rates than foreign-born voters.

VBM ballot rejection rates varied by demographic group

- Latino, Asian-American, youth, and new voters had higher VBM ballot rejection rates than the general population.
- Young voters aged 18 to 24 had a VBM rejection rate five times that of older voters aged 65 and over.

- Registered Democrats and registered Republicans had the same VBM rejection rate.
- Foreign-born and U.S.-born voters had the same rejection rate.

Signature issues were the top reason for rejected VBM ballots

- In the 2020 general election, 0.3% of all VBM ballots cast were rejected.
- The majority of rejected VBM ballots were rejected for signature issues, with 65.8% having non-matching signatures and 9.2% were missing signatures. Another 20.7% were rejected for being received late.

Conclusion

In the 2020 general election, which took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, San Mateo County voters overwhelmingly voted with VBM ballots. Vote centers continued to play a crucial role in the election process, with 21.0% of all voters utilizing vote center services. There were variations in voting methods used by voters, turnout rates, and VBM ballot rejection rates across demographic groups. Asian-American voters, previous in-person voters, and new voters voted by mail at higher rates than the general population, while Latino voters voted in person at higher rates than the general population. Latino, Asian-American, and young voters had lower turnout rates than the general population, while also having higher VBM ballot rejection rates than the general population. The majority of rejected VBM ballots were rejected for signature issues, with 20.7% of rejected ballots being received late. The relatively low percentage of late rejected ballots may be in part due to the expanded VBM return window due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Introduction

The 2020 election cycle was the second election cycle in San Mateo County held under the California Voter's Choice Act (VCA). Counties choosing to adopt the VCA are required to mail vote-by-mail (VBM) ballots to all registered voters. Additionally, counties adopting the VCA replace polling places with vote centers, which are distributed throughout the county and available to all voters up to ten days prior to Election Day. Vote centers offer a range of voter services including in-person voting, accessible voting options, VBM ballot drop-off, and conditional voter registration (CVR). In the 2020 election cycle, fifteen California counties, consisting of approximately half the state's registered voter population, opted to adopt the VCA voting model.

This report provides quantitative analysis of the impact of the VCA on San Mateo County voters. We address three main research questions for the following voter categories: race, ethnicity, age, gender, foreign-born status, historical polling place voters, new voters, and political party affiliation.

1. What method of voting did San Mateo County voters use to cast their ballots in the 2020 general election?
2. What were the 2020 voter turnout rates in the San Mateo County general election, and how did they vary by demographic group?
3. What were the vote-by-mail ballot rejection rates in the 2020 San Mateo County general election, and what were the reasons for ballot rejections?

About the Study

Study Methodology

The above research questions were also examined for the [2018 election cycle in CID's report, Examining San Mateo County's Adoption of the California Voter's Choice Act: 2018 Election Cycle](#). San Mateo County voter registration files were the primary data source used in this report's analysis of the 2020 general election. These files were provided by two sources: San Mateo County and Political Data, Inc. (PDI). San Mateo County provided extracts of its voter registration file from the 2020 general election. This file included the registrant's date of birth (used to identify age), party affiliation, voting activity, registration date, type of ballot cast (in person, mail, or provisional), VBM ballot rejection status, and reasons for ballot rejection. Gender, race, and ethnicity are not present for the majority of voters in the county voter registration file. Registered voters in California have the option to self-report their gender, race, and ethnicity on the voter registration application, but this has historically been done by only a small percent of registrants. PDI provided additional demographic identifiers, including gender, foreign-born status, and vote history.¹ During the merging process, non-matching files were omitted to maintain a comparable dataset. The resulting merged dataset varies slightly from the official San Mateo County election results.

Citizen voting-age population (CVAP) data at the state and county level was provided by the California Department of Finance. CVAP estimates for the general population and racial and ethnic groups are derived from the 2020 Decennial Census population counts, the most up to date data source available. CVAP for age groups, however, are still based on the 2010 Decennial Census population counts since needed data from the Census Bureau has not been released as of the publication of this report. In order to examine the geographic variation of eligible voter turnout in San Mateo County, we calculated eligible voter turnout at the census tract level. We used American Community 5-year Estimates (2016-2020) for the citizen voting-age population (CVAP) and assigned voters to census tracts using the geographic coordinates of their home precinct.

Race and Ethnicity Identification

The commonly applied research method to identify a voter's race and ethnicity from state and county voter records uses a combination of the registrant's names (surname commonly associated with race and ethnicity) and neighborhood characteristics (geocoding with census tract data). CID identified registrant's race and ethnicity in the county voter files using the R package Who Are You (WRU), which uses the Bayes' Rule to compute the posterior probability of each racial category for registrants using surname, geolocation, and other characteristics, such as gender, party, and age.² The package implements methods described in Imai and Khanna (2016) "Improving Ecological Inference by Predicting Individual Ethnicity from Voter Registration Methods."³ After the probabilities for each racial and ethnic group were computed for all registrants, the probabilities were summed to aggregate to the county level.

In addition to identifying registrants' race and ethnicity, CID identified registrants' gender by using the R package `gender`, which infers gender categories from first names and birth year using historical name datasets. The gender predictions were then used to refine race and ethnicity probabilities using the WRU package.

Matching a registrant's first name to their gender is known to be very accurate, although limited as non-binary and other genders cannot currently be identified in a voter file. The accuracy of surname matching and geocoding to identify a voter's race and ethnicity varies by group and population size. For this report, analysis of the voter file by race and ethnicity is limited to Latinos and Asian Americans as the method of using surname matching and geocoding for these groups has a high degree of accuracy (although to a somewhat lesser degree for Asian-American communities). Black and white voters cannot be reliably identified based on their last name. For white and Black voters, geocoding can help produce some level of accuracy at the census tract level, especially for Black voters who are more likely than other groups to live in segregated neighborhoods.

Geocoding, however, is not reliable for Black voters at the county level due to this group's smaller proportion of California's population (5.4%) compared to some other states. This is especially true in many California counties where nearly every census tract has a small Black population and geocoding can erroneously assign Black voters to other racial and ethnic groups. Due to the difficulty in reliably identifying Black and white voters at the county level through geocoding, we do not provide a discussion of the data for these groups in the body of the report. We do, however, make their data available in the appendix of this report for informational purposes. Geocoding for identifying other populations, such as Asian-American subgroups and indigenous populations, is also not reliable at the county level in California.

Registrants' residence location data is necessary to complete the analysis in WRU. For this report, CID used longitude and latitude data provided by PDI to identify census tracts for geocoding. Around 1.3% (5,530) of registrants did not have accompanying location data for analysis and could not have their race and ethnicities identified. These registrants were omitted from any analysis of racial and ethnic groups but were included in all other analyses throughout this report.

San Mateo County Demographics

Multiple factors can influence voter turnout and voting behaviors, including community demographics. In the following sections, CID details San Mateo County's demographic profile in order to give better context of the 2020 election cycle. The profile includes race, ethnicity, education attainment, median income, limited English proficiency population, and the population with disabilities.

Race and Ethnicity

	San Mateo County	California
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.1%	0.4%
Asian American	29.8%	15.1%
Black	1.9%	5.4%
Latino	25.0%	39.4%
White, non-Latino	36.1%	34.7%
Other Pacific Islander	1.2%	0.3%
Other Race Alone	0.8%	0.6%
Two or More Races	5.1%	4.1%

Data Source: 2020 Decennial Census

As seen in Table 1, San Mateo County has a higher Asian-American population and a lower Latino population compared to the state as a whole. Nearly 30% of San Mateo County residents are Asian American, almost twice the share of California residents who are Asian American (15.1%). A quarter of San Mateo residents are Latino, compared to 39.4% of California residents. Over 36% of San Mateo residents are white, non-Latino, 1.4 percentage points higher than residents in California (34.7%). Less than 2% of residents of San Mateo County are Black, while 5.4% of California residents are Black.

	San Mateo County	California
Asian Indian	11.0%	13.9%
Bangladeshi	0.1%	0.2%
Bhutanese	0.0%	0.0%
Burmese	0.9%	0.3%
Cambodian	0.1%	1.6%
Chinese, except Taiwanese	39.6%	25.9%
Filipino	32.0%	22.0%
Hmong	0.2%	1.7%
Indonesian	0.2%	0.5%
Japanese	4.0%	4.5%
Korean	3.2%	8.1%
Laotian	0.0%	1.0%
Malaysian	0.1%	0.1%
Mongolian	0.1%	0.1%
Nepalese	0.3%	0.2%
Okinawan	0.0%	0.0%
Pakistani	0.5%	1.1%
Sri Lankan	0.1%	0.2%
Taiwanese	1.0%	1.5%
Thai	0.4%	0.9%
Vietnamese	2.1%	11.6%
Other Asian, specified	0.0%	0.4%
Other Asian, not specified	0.3%	0.5%
Two or more Asian	3.6%	3.7%

Data Source: American Community Survey 5-year 2016 to 2020

Among Asian-American subgroups, the majority of Asian-American residents in San Mateo County are either Chinese or Filipino (Table 2). Nearly 40% of Asian Americans living in San Mateo County are Chinese and 32.0% are Filipino, higher shares than Asian Americans in California as a whole (25.9% and 22.0%, respectively). The shares of Asian Americans living in San Mateo County who are Korean or Vietnamese are lower than their share living in California. In San Mateo County, 3.2% of Asian Americans are Korean compared to 8.1% in California and 2.1% are Vietnamese compared to 11.6% in California. Additionally, 4.0% of Asian Americans in San Mateo County are Japanese, similar to the share of Asian Americans in California (4.5%).

Education Attainment

**Table 3: Education Attainment
18 Years and Older
San Mateo County**

	San Mateo County	California
Less than high school graduate	9.5%	15.4%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	16.0%	21.7%
Some college or associate's degree	25.0%	31.1%
Bachelor's degree or higher	49.5%	31.9%

Data Source: American Community Survey 5-year 2016 to 2020

As seen in Table 3, San Mateo County is a highly educated county. Nearly 50.0% of residents 18 years and older in San Mateo County have a bachelor's degree or higher, 17.6 percentage points more than the state rate. A quarter of adult residents in San Mateo County have some college or an associate's degree, lower than the statewide rate (31.1%). Another 16.0% of adults in San Mateo County are high school graduates (or equivalent), compared to 21.7% in California. Lastly, 9.5% of residents aged 18 and over in San Mateo County have less than a high school diploma, nearly six percentage points lower than the statewide rate (15.4%).

Household Income

**Table 4: Median Income
Households by Race and Ethnicity of Householder
San Mateo County**

	San Mateo County	California
All Households	\$128,091	\$78,672
American Indian and Alaska Native	\$96,458	\$60,182
Asian American	\$144,177	\$101,380
Black	\$80,529	\$54,976
Latino	\$81,839	\$62,330
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	\$96,731	\$81,682
White, non-Latino	\$145,836	\$90,496
Other Race	\$76,759	\$59,287
Two or More Races	\$108,256	\$76,733

Data Source: American Community Survey 5-year 2016 to 2020

In 2020, the median household income in San Mateo County was \$128,091, notably higher than the median household income of \$78,672 throughout California (Table 4). In San Mateo County, white, non-Latino householders had the highest median income (\$145,836) among all race and ethnicities. Asian-American households had the second highest median income, with \$144,177. Black households (\$80,529), Latino households (\$81,839), and other race households (\$76,759) had the lowest median incomes in the county.

**Table 5: Income Brackets
Households
San Mateo County**

	San Mateo County	California
Less than \$10,000	2.6%	4.7%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	2.1%	3.9%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	4.0%	6.9%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	4.0%	7.1%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	6.0%	10.0%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	10.4%	15.3%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	10.4%	12.3%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	17.3%	17.1%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	13.1%	9.4%
\$200,000 or more	30.1%	13.3%

Data Source: American Community Survey 5-year 2016 to 2020

Shown in Table 5, a large portion of San Mateo County households (30.1%) had an annual income above \$200,000 in 2020, more than double the portion of California households in the same bracket. Slightly over 13% of households in San Mateo County earned between \$150,000 and \$199,999, compared to 9.4% of all California households. The share of San Mateo County households earning between \$100,000 and \$149,999 in 2020 was similar to all California households (17.3% and 17.1%, respectively). San Mateo County consistently had lower shares of the population in income brackets below \$100,000 than California as a whole. For example, the share of San Mateo County households earning between \$25,000 and \$34,999 (below the poverty line) was 4.0%, compared to 7.1% of all households in California.

Limited English Proficiency

**Table 6: Population with Limited English Proficiency
San Mateo County**

	San Mateo County			California		
	LEP Population	Total Population	Percent LEP	LEP Population	Total Population	Percent LEP
Population 5 years old and over	121,629	722,535	16.8%	6,432,102	36,936,941	17.4%
Citizens 18 years old and over	63,448	505,583	12.5%	2,995,597	25,774,911	11.6%

Data Source: American Community Survey 5-year 2016 to 2020

San Mateo County has slightly lower rates of limited English proficiency (LEP), meaning a person speaks English less than “very well,” when compared to California as a whole. In San Mateo County 16.8% of the population aged 5 and over are LEP compared to 17.4% of California residents. Among citizens aged 18 and over, 12.5% speak English less than “very well,” compared to 11.6% of citizens aged 18 and over throughout California.

**Table 7: Language Spoken at Home by Limited English Proficiency for Population 5 Years and Over
San Mateo County**

	San Mateo County		California	
	Residents	Percent of LEP Population	Residents	Percent of LEP Population
LEP Spanish Speaking Population	52,182	42.9%	4,083,013	63.5%
LEP Asian and Pacific Island Language Speaking Population	55,700	45.8%	1,720,073	26.7%
LEP Other Indo-European Languages Speaking Population	11,815	9.7%	499,656	7.8%
LEP Other Language Speaking Population	1,932	1.6%	129,360	2.0%
All Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Population	121,629	-	6,432,102	-

Data Source: American Community Survey 5-year 2016 to 2020

As seen in Table 7, a larger proportion of San Mateo County’s LEP population speaks Asian and Pacific Island languages at home and a smaller proportion speaks Spanish at home compared to California as a whole. In San Mateo County, 45.8% of the LEP population speaks Asian and Pacific Island languages at home, compared to 26.7% of California’s LEP population. Nearly 43% of San Mateo County’s LEP population speaks Spanish, while 63.5% of California’s LEP population speaks Spanish at home. A little under 10% of San Mateo’s LEP population speaks Indo-European languages at home, almost two percentage points more than California’s LEP population (7.8%). See Appendix for individual language breakdown.

Population with Disabilities

**Table 8: Population with Disability
San Mateo County**

	San Mateo County		California	
	Population	Percent of Total Population	Population	Percent of Total Population
Population with One or More Disabilities	62,417	8.2%	4,146,951	10.7%
Hearing Difficulty	19,065	2.5%	1,147,500	3.0%
Vision Difficulty	10,500	1.4%	778,145	2.0%
Cognitive Difficulty	22,911	3.0%	1,585,969	4.1%
Ambulatory Difficulty	30,648	4.0%	2,118,765	5.5%
Self-Care Difficulty	14,141	1.9%	964,579	2.5%
Independent Living Difficulty	26,339	3.5%	1,654,210	4.3%
Total Civilian	11,815	9.7%	499,656	7.8%
Non-Institutionalized Population	761,683	-	38,838,726	-

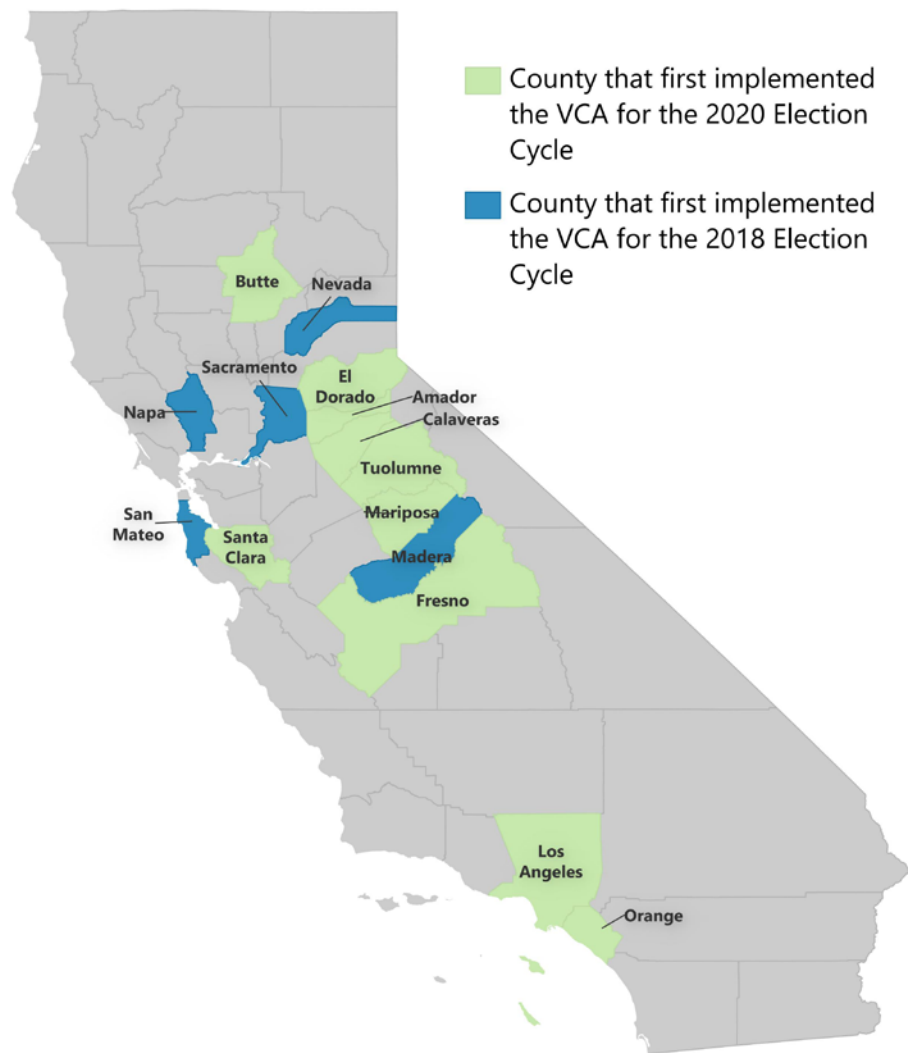
Data Source: American Community Survey 5-year 2016 to 2020

In San Mateo County, 8.2% of the population has one or more disabilities, which is 2.5 percentage points lower than the share of California's population (10.7%). Ambulatory difficulty is the most common disability in both San Mateo County (4.0%) and California (5.5%). Additionally, 3.5% of San Mateo County's population has independent living difficulty, 3.0% has cognitive difficulty, 2.5% has hearing difficulty, 1.9% has self-care difficulty, and 1.4% has vision difficulty.

Note: Some residents have more than one disability and are included in multiple individual disability counts.

The Voter's Choice Act

FIGURE 1



In 2016, Governor Jerry Brown signed Senate Bill 450, which allows California counties to choose to adopt a voting model known as the Voter's Choice Act (VCA).⁴ Under the VCA, counties replace traditional polling places with vote centers and automatically send vote-by-mail ballots to all registered voters. Vote centers offer a variety of services including in-person voting, accessible voting options, language assistance, VBM ballot drop-off, and conditional voter registration. Vote centers are distributed throughout the county and are available to all voters for up to ten days before and on Election Day. Additionally, voters in VCA counties can cast a ballot at any vote center within their county.

Through the multiple VBM ballot return options, the VCA provides opportunities to expand VBM while preserving in-person voting. In addition to returning VBM ballots through the mail and at vote centers, the VCA requires that secure ballot drop boxes be made available to voters, giving them additional opportunities to return their ballots.

Along with San Mateo County which first adopted the VCA in 2018, a total of 15 of California's 58 counties had adopted the VCA model in the 2020 general election (Figure 1). Other VCA counties include Amador, Butte, Calaveras, El Dorado, Fresno, Los Angeles, Madera, Mariposa, Napa, Nevada, Orange, Sacramento, Santa Clara, and Tuolumne. The 15 VCA counties contain approximately half of California's registered voters.

2020 General Election Context

The 2020 general election was noteworthy for a number of contextual elements, including the election being held during the COVID-19 pandemic. Public health measures, such as stay at home orders and social distancing recommendations, presented unique challenges for election officials. Prior to the 2020 general election, the California State Legislature passed multiple bills to ensure a safe and accessible election.

Conducting a Safe and Accessible Election

The COVID-19 pandemic presented multiple challenges for election officials to ensure a safe and accessible general election. Assembly Bill 860 and Senate Bill 423 were signed into law to help the state navigate the impact of the pandemic on the election.⁵ Both bills directed changes in how the election was administered in all California counties, including VCA counties.

To ensure accessibility in the election, Assembly Bill 860 expanded the window of acceptance for a VBM ballot by two weeks. Mailed VBM ballots were accepted if postmarked on or before Election Day and received by the county election office no later than 17 days after the Election Day. Additionally, non-VCA counties were required to mail each registered voter a VBM ballot before Election Day.

To ensure a safe election, both Assembly Bill 860 and Senate Bill 423 allowed counties to reduce the number of days voting locations were open. Under Assembly Bill 860, VCA counties were only required to open vote centers beginning three days before the Election Day (instead of 10 days as required by the VCA) but were still required to provide the number of drop boxes (1 for every 15,000 registered voters) and voting locations (one for every 10,000 registered voters) as specified by the VCA. Under Senate Bill 423, VCA counties were allowed to reduce the length of time their 11-day vote centers were open to only 4 days (starting 3 days prior to Election Day). Due to changing elections laws and other public health mandates due to COVID-19, officials had additional challenges conducting elections this election cycle.

General Election Coronavirus Funding

Due to the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 general election required additional funding to ensure a safe and accessible election.⁶ Assembly Bill 89 and Assembly Bill 100 appropriated state and county funding for the 2020 general election consistent with California's requirements to reduce the spread of COVID-19. San Mateo County received an additional \$990,688 for general COVID-19 funding and \$242,375 for outreach and communication detailing the election process changes. This funding was in addition to funds allocated under state and local budget authority as part of the normal conduct of elections. A portion of the funding was used for multiple costs of conducting a safe election during the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

1. Increased costs related to all aspects of voting by mail;
2. Equipment needs for processing increased VBM ballots;
3. Meeting the in-person voting requirements;
4. Permanent and temporary staffing;
5. Additional security at polling places and election facilities;
6. Specialized training for staff and election workers;
7. Cleaning and disinfection of polling places and election facilities; and
8. Personal protective equipment.

About the San Mateo County 2020 Election Cycle

The 2020 general election was the second election cycle conducted by San Mateo County using the VCA voting model. CID released a report ([found here](#)) examining voter turnout, methods, and other trends for the 2018 San Mateo election cycle (the first two elections in which San Mateo County utilized the VCA voting model).

Following the requirements of the VCA, San Mateo County provided 45 vote centers located throughout the county in the 2020 general election, with at least one vote center in each municipality (Figure 2). Three vote centers were open 30 days prior to Election Day (going beyond the requirements of Assembly Bill 860 and Senate Bill 423) and 42 vote centers were open four days prior to Election Day. Additionally, San Mateo County had three pop-up vote centers and one roving vote center. One pop-up vote center was open one day before Election Day and all three pop-up vote centers were open on Election Day.

During the early voting period of the general election, vote centers were open from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm and from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm on Election Day. Thirty-nine ballot drop box locations (the term used by the county for internally and externally placed drop boxes) were also distributed throughout the county (Figure 3). Eight ballot drop box locations had drop boxes placed in both inside and outside locations. Figures 2 and 3 show the locations of vote centers and ballot drop box locations in San Mateo County for the 2020 general election. Figure 4 identifies the geographic and low-income distribution of the population in the county for the 2020 election cycle.

Outreach activities expanded for the general election, with targeted advertisements on eight radio stations, 11 television stations, and in 19 local newspapers. For the general election, San Mateo County voters were digitally targeted through seven websites (YouTube, Facebook, KTVU, KCBS, Univision, and MercuryNews.com), 100,000 emails, and 1,000,000-plus mobile phone advertisements.

San Mateo County Voter Education and Outreach Advisory Committee

At the request of community members, the San Mateo County Chief Elections Office established the Voter Education and Outreach Advisory Committee (VEOAC) in the 2018 election cycle. The VEOAC is co-chaired by Thrive, The Alliance of Nonprofits for San Mateo County and San Francisco Peninsula People Power and consists of twenty to thirty members. The mission of the San Mateo County VEOAC is to advise and assist the Chief Elections Officer on the matters relating to voter education and outreach and to enhance outreach opportunities and compliance with all federal, state, and local laws. The San Mateo County Elections office provided community-based organizations \$100,000 for community voter outreach and education during the 2020 general election.

FIGURE 2

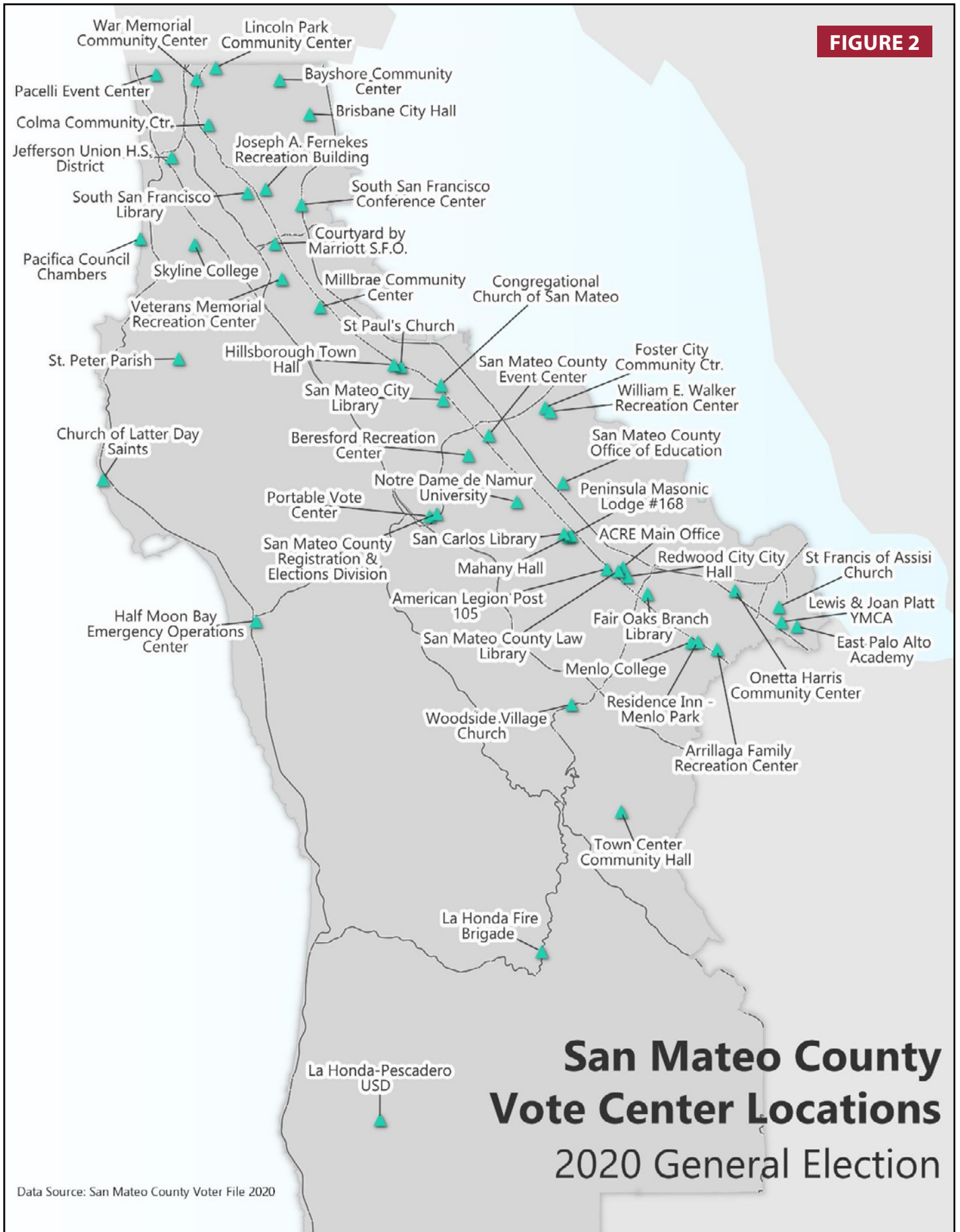
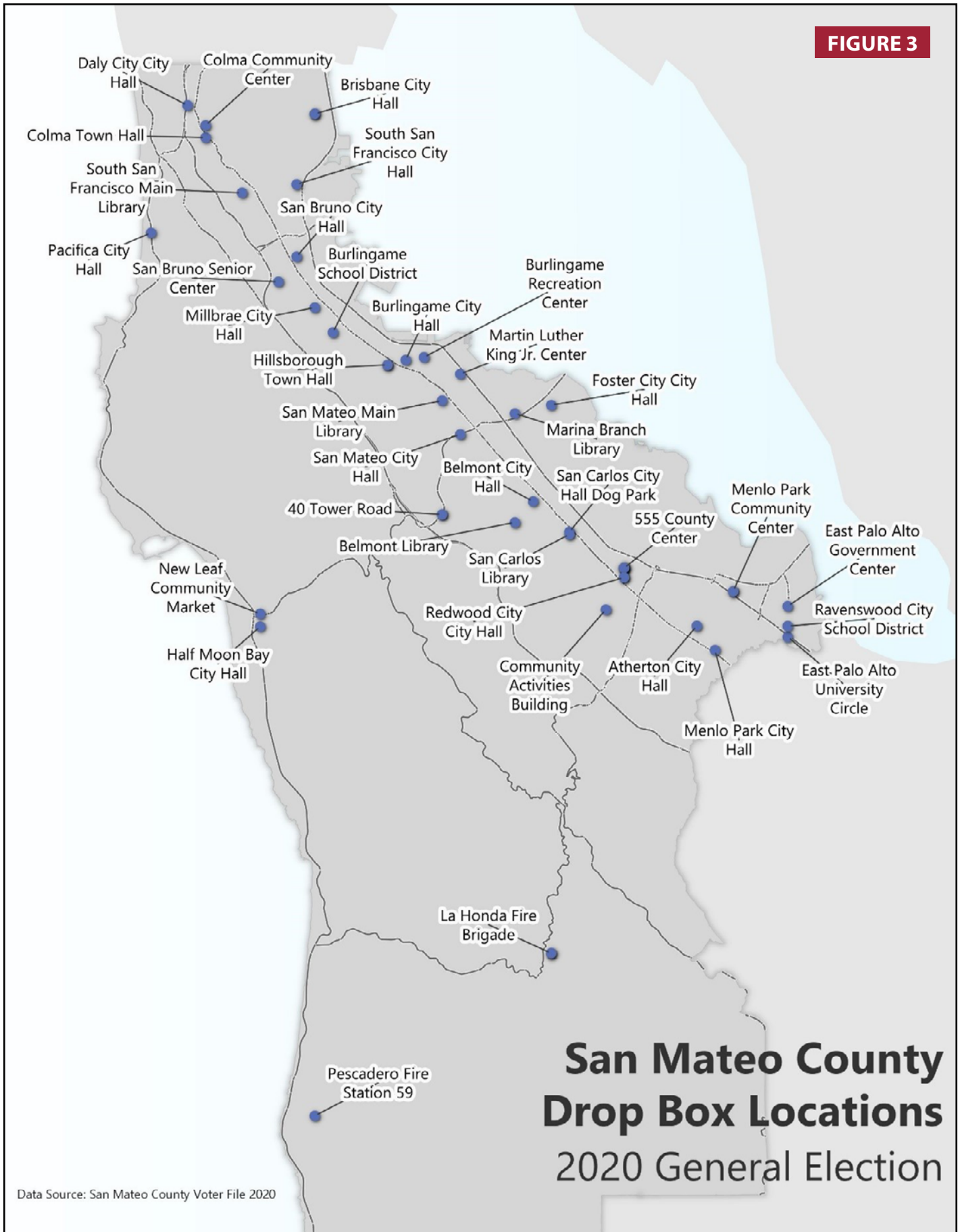


FIGURE 3



San Mateo County Drop Box Locations 2020 General Election

Data Source: San Mateo County Voter File 2020

FIGURE 4

San Mateo County Income and Population Density

2020 Election Cycle

Voting Sites

- ▲ Vote Center
- Drop Box

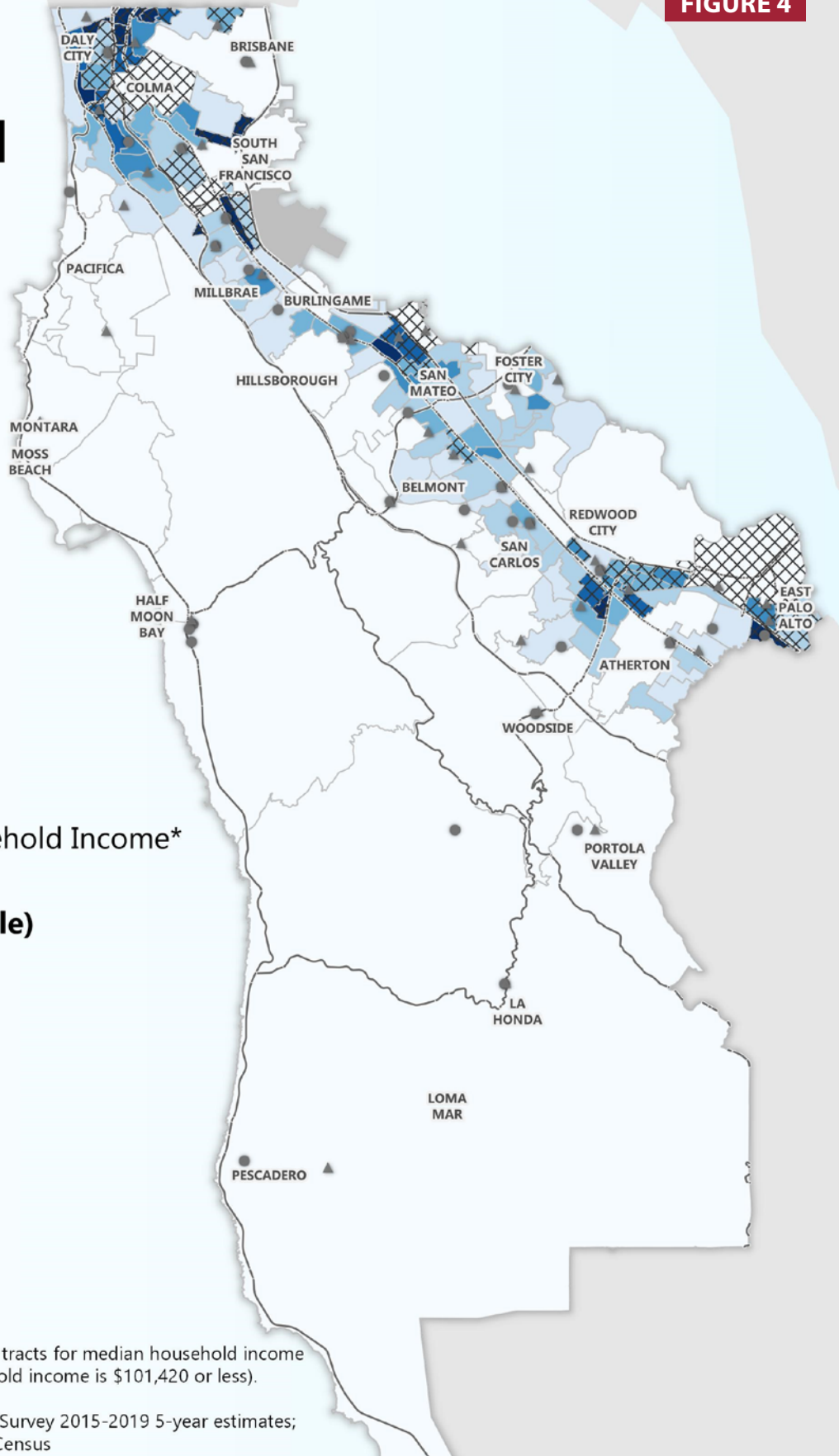
▨ Low Median Household Income*

Population Density (people per square mile)

- 21 - 3,200
- 3,201 - 6,200
- 6,201 - 9,200
- 9,201 - 12,000
- 12,001 - 15,000
- 15,001 - 18,000
- 18,000 - 32,850
- No Data

*The lowest quartile (25%) of census tracts for median household income (census tracts where median household income is \$101,420 or less).

Data Sources: American Community Survey 2015-2019 5-year estimates; U.S. Census Bureau 2010 Decennial Census



What method of voting did San Mateo County voters use to cast their ballots in the 2020 General Election?

Section Highlights

- In the 2020 general election, the majority (91.3%) of San Mateo voters used VBM ballots. The two most common VBM return methods were by mail and by drop box.
- The majority of voters voted early, with most opting to return their VBM ballots early to drop boxes and through the mail.
- Latino, previous in-person voters, and new voters voted in person at higher rates than the general population. Asian-American voters voted by mail at higher rates than the general population.
- Foreign-born voters returned their VBM ballots through the mail at higher rates than U.S.-born voters, while U.S.-born voters returned their ballots at drop boxes and vote center locations at higher rates than foreign-born voters.
- Young voters (aged 18 to 24) voted in person at higher rates than older voters (aged 65 and over).
- Registered Republicans voted in person at more than twice the rate of registered Democratic voters.
- Around 0.9% of voters in San Mateo County used conditional voter registration.

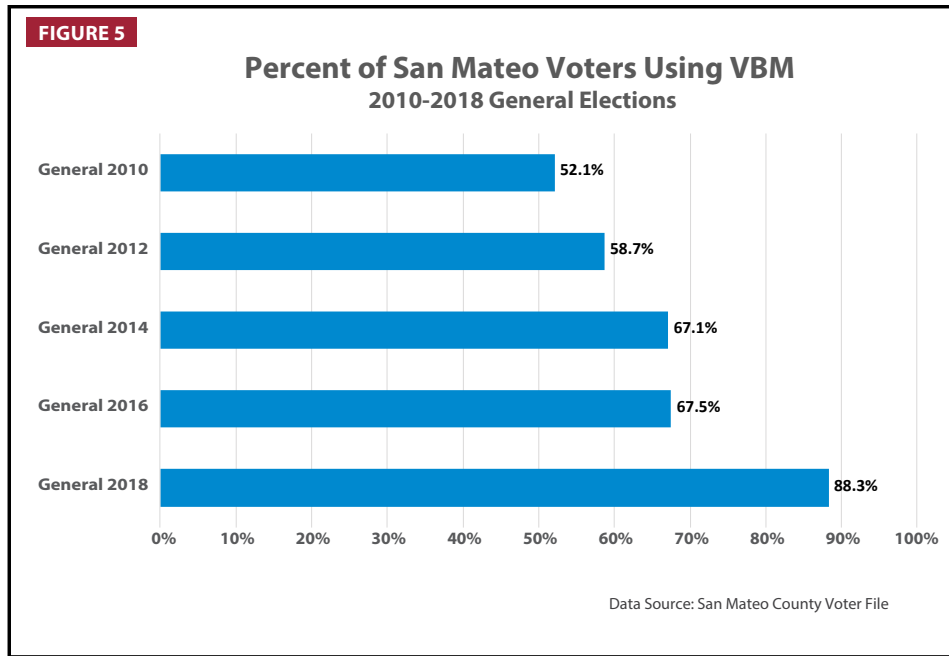
Table 9: Definition of Voting Methods Used in the 2020 General Election

Vote Method	Description
Mail	A Vote-by-Mail ballot that was returned using the mail.
Drop Box Location	A Vote-by-Mail ballot that was returned by dropping the ballot off at a drop box location (internally and externally placed).
Vote Center	A ballot that was cast in person at a vote center.
Vote Center Ballot Drop Off	A Vote-by-Mail ballot that was returned by dropping the ballot off at a vote center.

In the 2020 general election, San Mateo voters had four main ways they could cast their ballots: by returning their VBM ballot through the mail, dropping off their VBM ballot at a vote center, dropping off their VBM ballot at a ballot drop box location, or voting in person at a vote center (Table 9). Additionally, the VCA requires counties to offer the option of Remote Accessible Vote-by-Mail (RAVBM).⁷ The RAVBM option allows voters with disabilities to request a ballot to be sent electronically that they can download, read, and mark on their computer using their own accessible technology. Voters using RAVBM are able to print and mail their ballot. During the 2020 general election, all voters in California were allowed to use RAVBM due to the safety concerns regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

Three vote centers were used by voters during the 30 days leading up to the 2020 general election and 42 were open four days before Election Day offering voters a range of services including dropping off their VBM ballots, replacing spoiled ballots (ballots needing to be replaced because the voter made a mistake and wants a replacement) or lost ballots and/or envelopes, and receiving language assistance. If voters needed to register to vote or update their voter registration, they were able to conditionally register to vote and cast a ballot at any vote center in San Mateo County.

Even before adopting the VCA, San Mateo County voters were using VBM ballots at rates above the state's average. As Figure 5 shows, VBM ballot use in San Mateo general elections increased in every election between 2010 and 2018. After San Mateo County adopted the VCA for the 2018 election cycle, VBM use rates jumped more than 30% from the previous general election.



In the 2020 general election, the vast majority (91.3%) of voters in San Mateo County used a VBM ballot, with voting through the mail being the most used method. Figure 6 and Tables 10 and 11 show that of the 379,988 ballots cast and counted, 39.7% (150,928 ballots) were returned by mail. Another 39.2% (148,995 ballots) of VBM ballots were returned via drop box and 12.3% (46,757 ballots) were returned at a vote center location. A little under 9% (32,935 ballots) of voters voted in person at a vote center. Of the 346,680 VBM ballots counted in the general election, 89.1% (309,052 ballots) were received before Election Day (Table 11). Of all votes cast and counted, 0.9% (3,440) were cast with conditional voter registration.

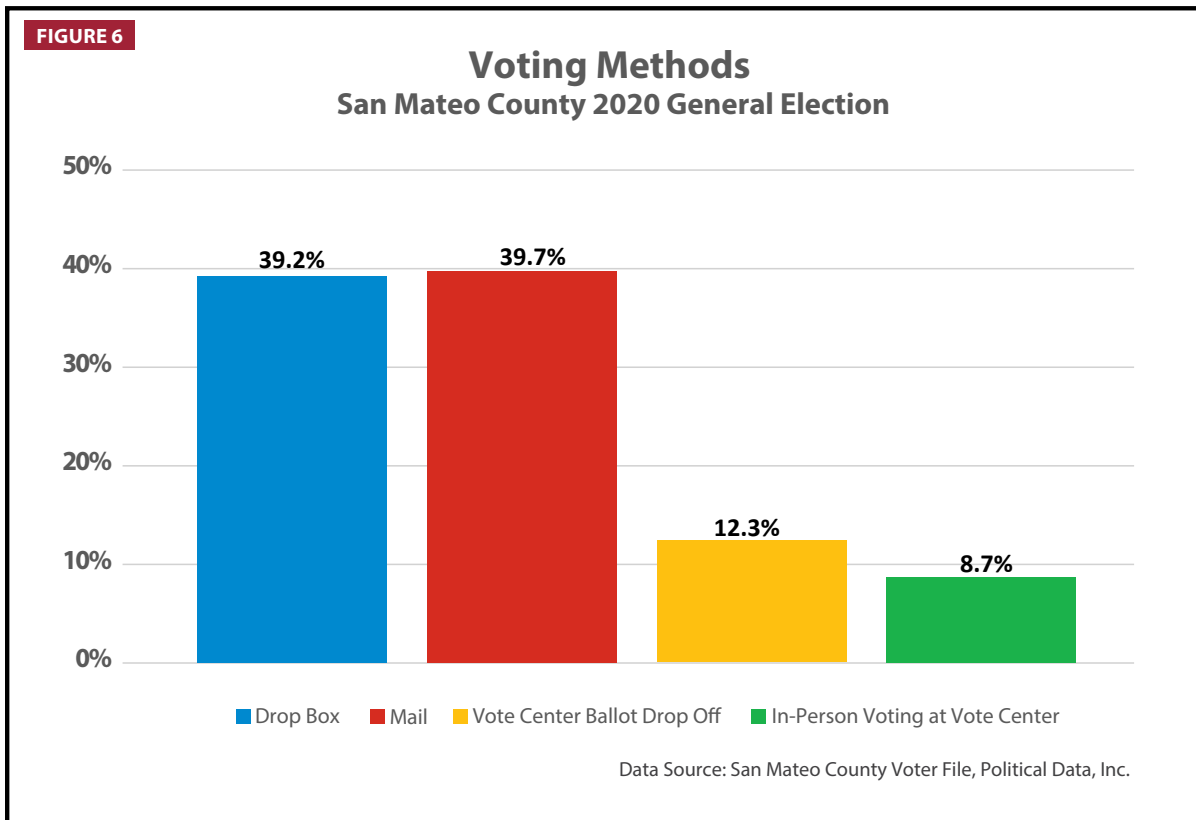


Table 10: San Mateo County 2020 General Election Overview

Eligible Voters	Registered Voters	In-Person Ballots	VBM Ballots	No Data Ballots	Total Ballots
503,379	442,206	32,935	346,680	373	379,988

Data Source: San Mateo Voter File and Political Data Inc.

Table 11: San Mateo County 2020 General Election VBM Ballots Counted

	Returned to Drop Box	Received in Mail	Returned to Vote Center	Total VBM Ballots Cast
Before Election Day	132,611	143,613	32,828	309,052
Election Day + 17 Days After	16,384	7,231	13,929	37,544
No Received Date	NA	84	NA	84
Total VBM Ballots	148,995	150,928	46,757	346,680

Source: San Mateo County Voter File and Political Data Inc.

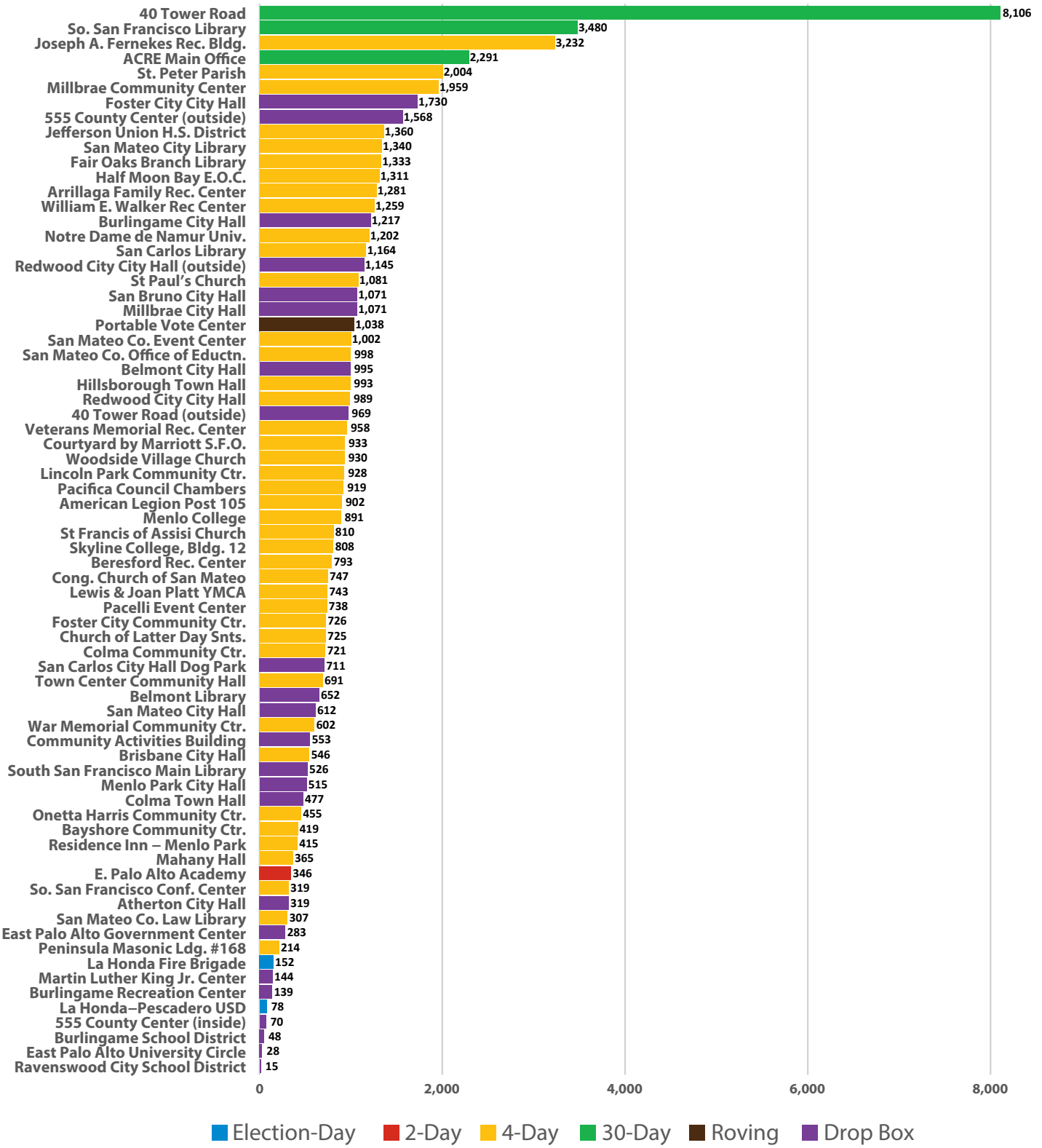
Vote Center and Ballot Drop-Off Use by Day and Location

The majority of voters in San Mateo County voted early in the 2020 general election, with many opting to return their VBM ballots early to drop boxes and through the mail. Figure 7 illustrates that mailed and drop box ballots were received in large numbers during the weeks prior to Election Day. Specifically, our data show that 89.0% (132,611) of all VBM ballots returned to drop boxes and 95.2% (143,613) VBM ballots returned through the mail were received before Election Day (Table 11). The remaining 10.9% (16,384) of ballots returned to drop boxes and 4.8% (7,231) of ballots sent through the mail were received on or up to 17 days after Election Day.⁸ A little over 70% (32,828) of all VBM ballots dropped off at vote center locations were received before Election Day, while the remaining 29.8% (13,929) were dropped off on Election Day. The majority of San Mateo in-person voters also voted early. Of the in-person votes with return dates, just under 86% (17,606) of voters cast their ballot before Election Day. Just over 14% of voters who cast a ballot in person voted on Election Day.

Note: 37.7% (12,426) of ballots cast in person at vote centers did not have return dates and are not included in Figure 7.

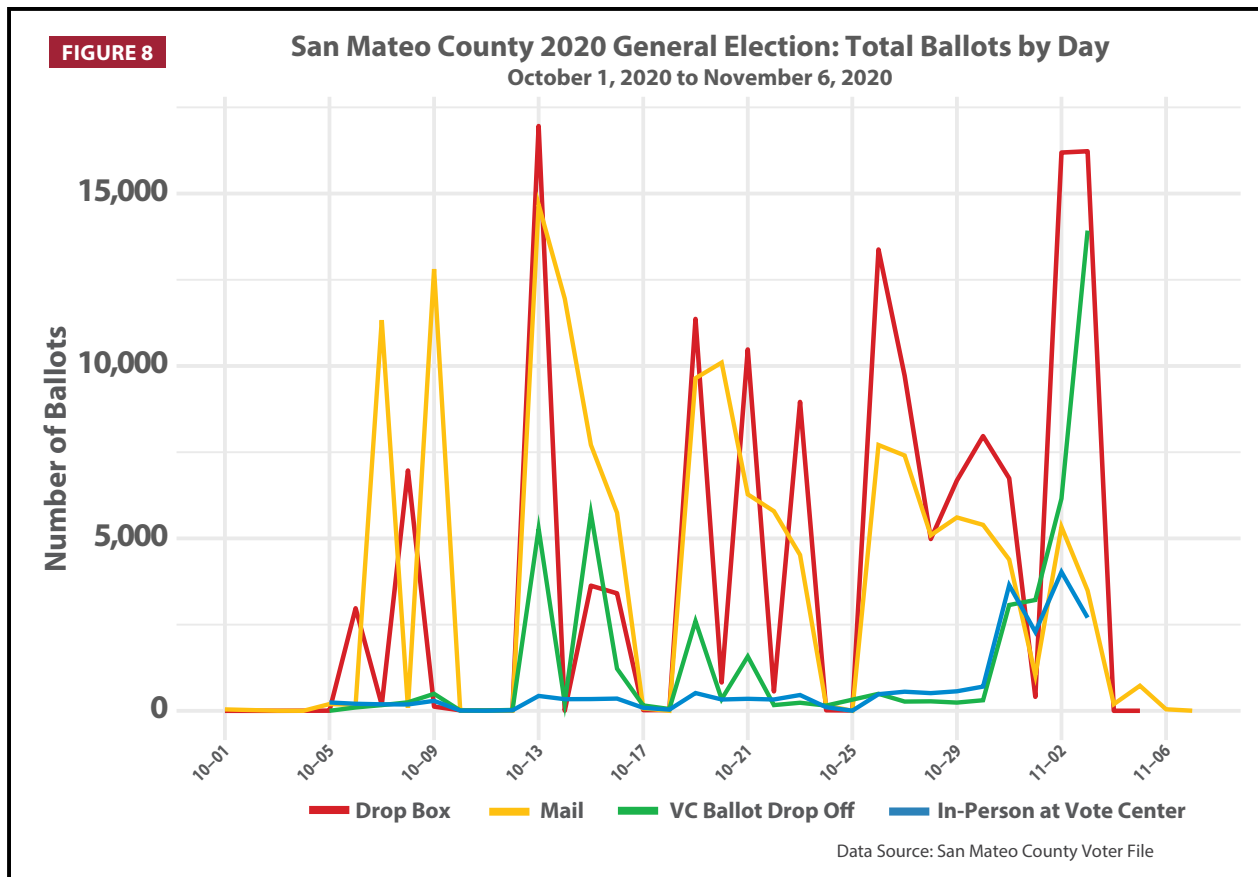
FIGURE 7

San Mateo County 2020 General Election: Ballots by Location*



*Only includes in-person voters or voters who dropped off a VBM ballot at a vote center. Drop box voters excluded.

Data Source: San Mateo County Voter Files and Political Data, Inc.



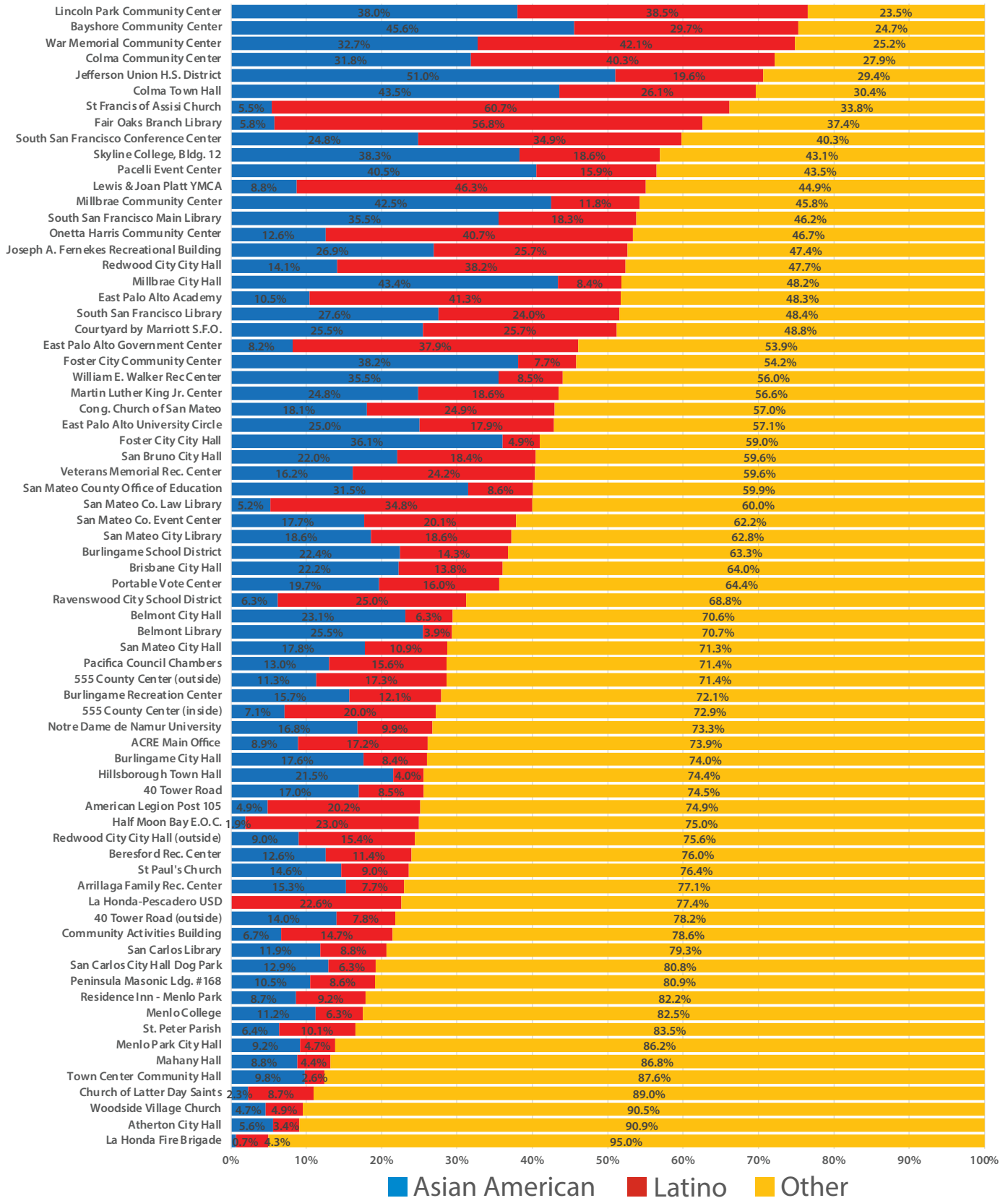
There was a wide variation of activity between voting locations in San Mateo County. Figure 8 displays the number of counted ballots received at vote centers or drop boxes. For this analysis, location data was only available for ballots cast by voters classified as either voting in person or by vote center drop off. Of the 46,757 voters who returned their VBM ballots to a vote center location (vote center drop off), 14,793 had a voting location identified as drop boxes. Corresponding location data for voters classified as voting via drop box was not available.

The amount of activity at each vote center varied considerably, with some locations receiving a tremendous number of ballots, such as 40 Tower Road receiving 8,106 ballots, while La Honda-Pescadero USD received as few as 78 ballots. The amount of activity of each drop box also varied considerably. The Foster City City Hall drop box, for example, received 1,730 ballots, while Ravenswood City School District drop box received 15 ballots.

Note: The information presented in our vote location analysis is limited due to missing location data, which should be considered when reviewing this section. Of the 79,692 ballots cast at a vote center (either dropped off or in-person), 9,457 did not have vote center location data. All voters who used conditional voter registration (3,440) were missing vote center location. The remaining missing records were in-person votes (469 ballots) and vote center drop off votes (5,548 ballots). Additionally, data was not available for the number of ballots cast at 23 of 39 of the drop boxes in San Mateo County.

FIGURE 9

San Mateo County 2020 General Election: Vote Center Ballots Share by Race and Ethnicity



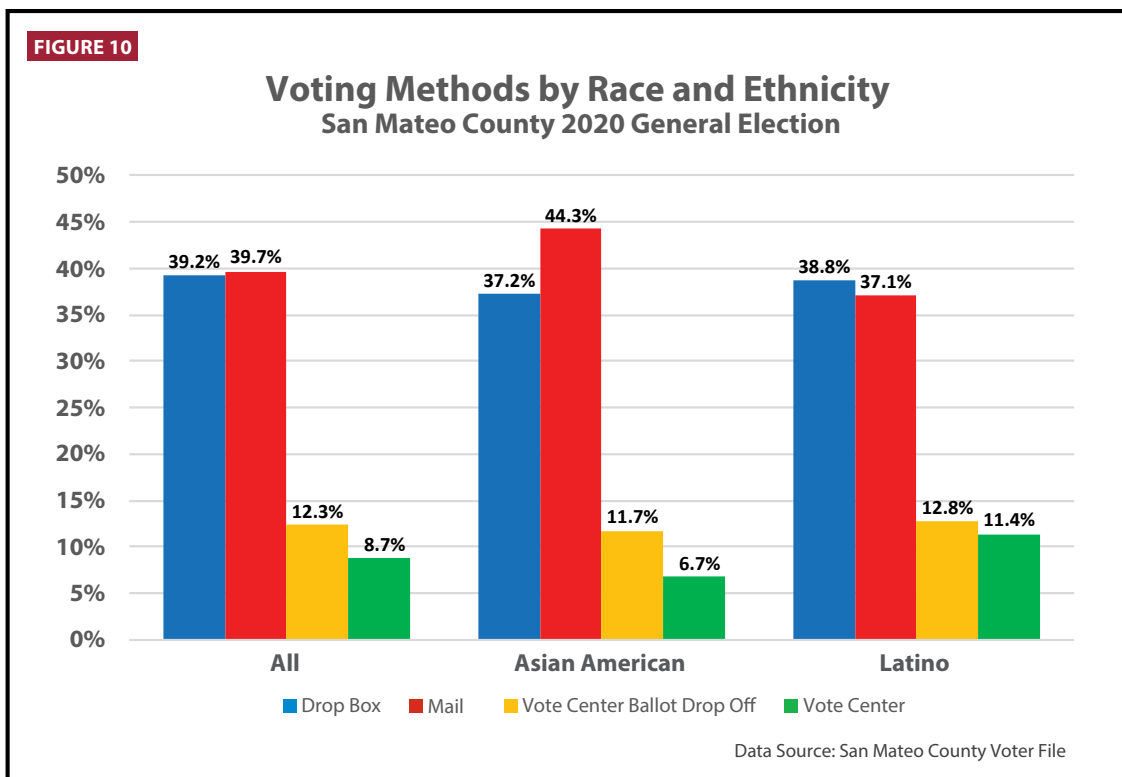
*Only includes voters who voted in person or by vote location drop off. Voters classified as drop box voters are not included

Data Source: San Mateo County Voter Files and Political Data, Inc.

There was significant variation in the race and ethnicity of voters using each vote location in the general election. Figure 9 shows that Lincoln Park Community Center, for example, had a fairly even distribution of voters in the racial and ethnic groups, with 38.0% of voters being Asian-American, 38.5% being Latino, and the remaining 23.5% neither Latino nor Asian-American. On the other hand, of the voters using the La Honda Fire Brigade vote center, 4.3% were Latino, 0.7% were Asian-American, and 95.0% were neither Latino nor Asian-American. At 21 voting locations, the majority share of voting activity came from Latino or Asian-American voters. La Honda - Pescadero USD was the only vote center to not receive ballots from Asian-American voters.

Again, we note that our vote location analysis is limited due to missing data in voter records. Roughly 12% of voters who used vote centers were missing vote location data. Additionally, data for 23 drop boxes and all voters classified as returning their ballots via drop box was not available. This should be considered when reviewing this section.

Method of Voting by Race and Ethnicity

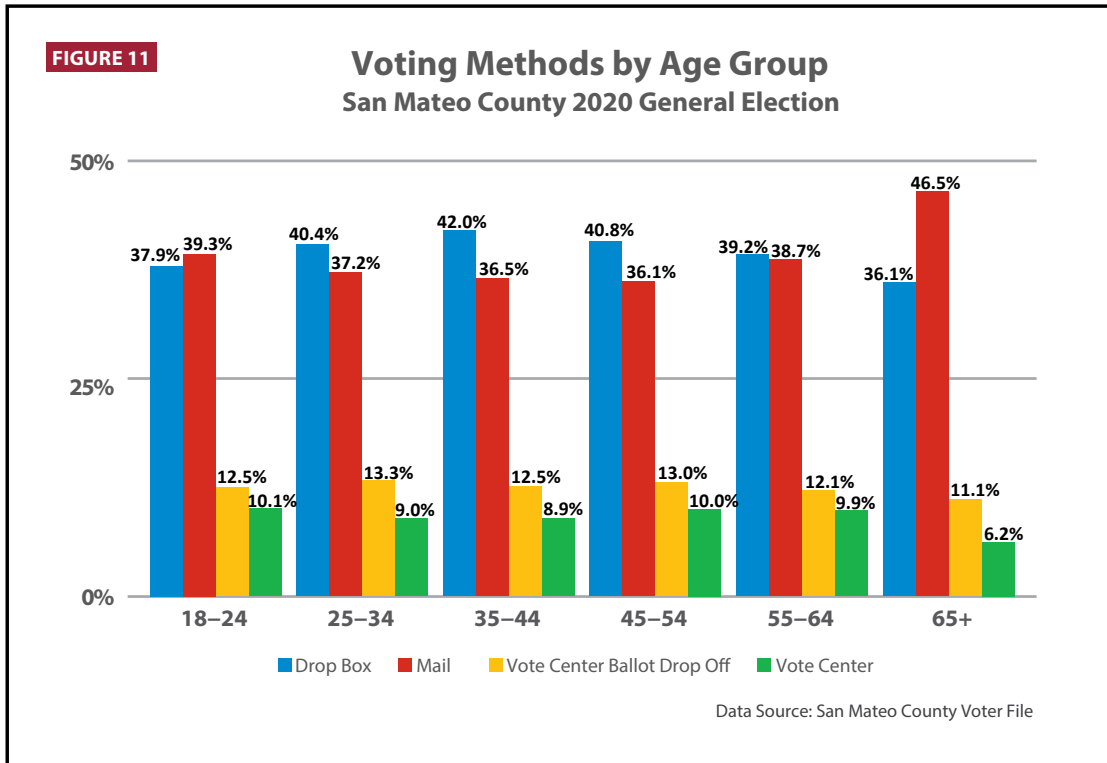


The majority of voters in each race and ethnic group used VBM ballots in the 2020 general election. There are differences, however, in the method of voting used by racial and ethnic groups in San Mateo County. Asian-American voters voted by mail at higher rates than Latino and all voters. Just over 44% of Asian-American voters returned their VBM ballot through the mail, compared to 37.1% of Latino voters and 39.7% of the general population (Figure 10).

Conversely, Latino voters voted in person at higher rates than Asian-American voters and the general population. Around 11.4% of Latino voters voted in person at a vote center, compared to 6.7% of Asian-American voters and 8.7% of all voters. Latino voters also dropped off their VBM ballots at a vote center and via drop boxes at higher rates than Asian-American voters. Nearly 39% of Latino voters used drop boxes, compared to 37.2% of Asian-American voters. Under 12% of Asian-American voters dropped off their VBM ballot at a vote center, while 12.8% of Latino voters did the same.

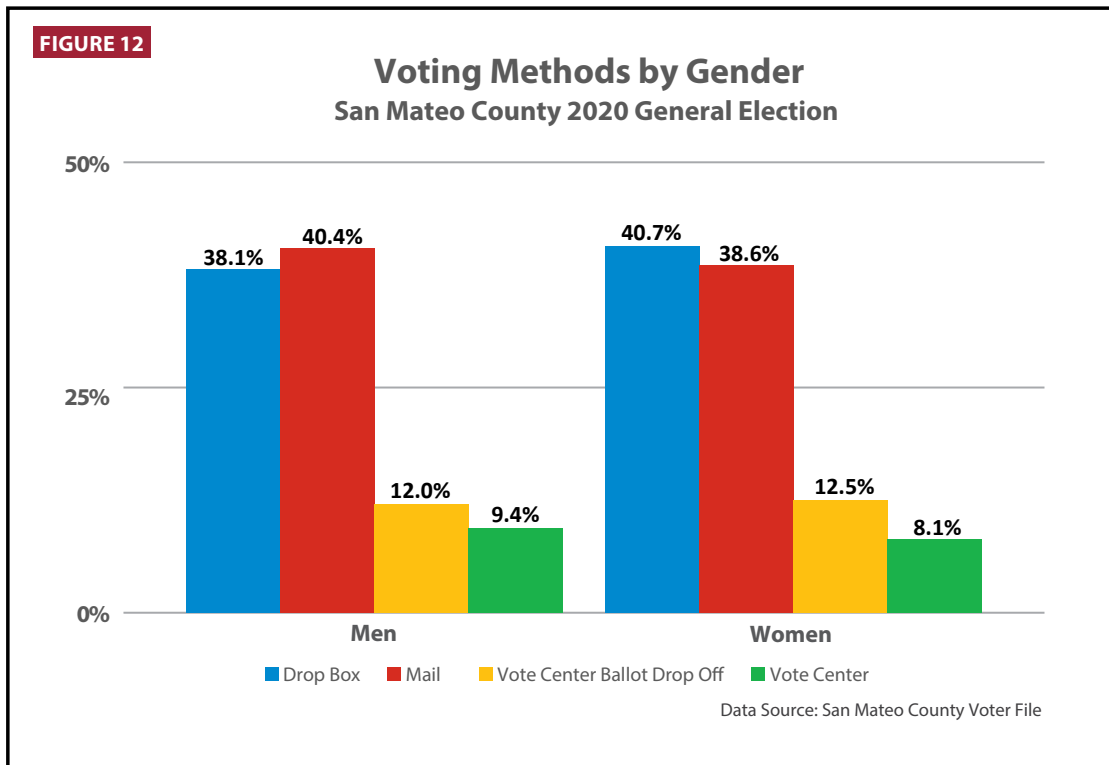
Note: Due to missing location data used for the geocoding portion of identifying the race and ethnicities of registrants, 1.3% (5,530) of registrants' race and ethnicities could not be identified and were omitted from all race and ethnicity analyses. See the appendix for available data for Black and white, non-Latino voters. Also see page 6 of this report for a discussion of data limitations and methods used to identify the race and ethnicity of voters.

Method of Voting by Age



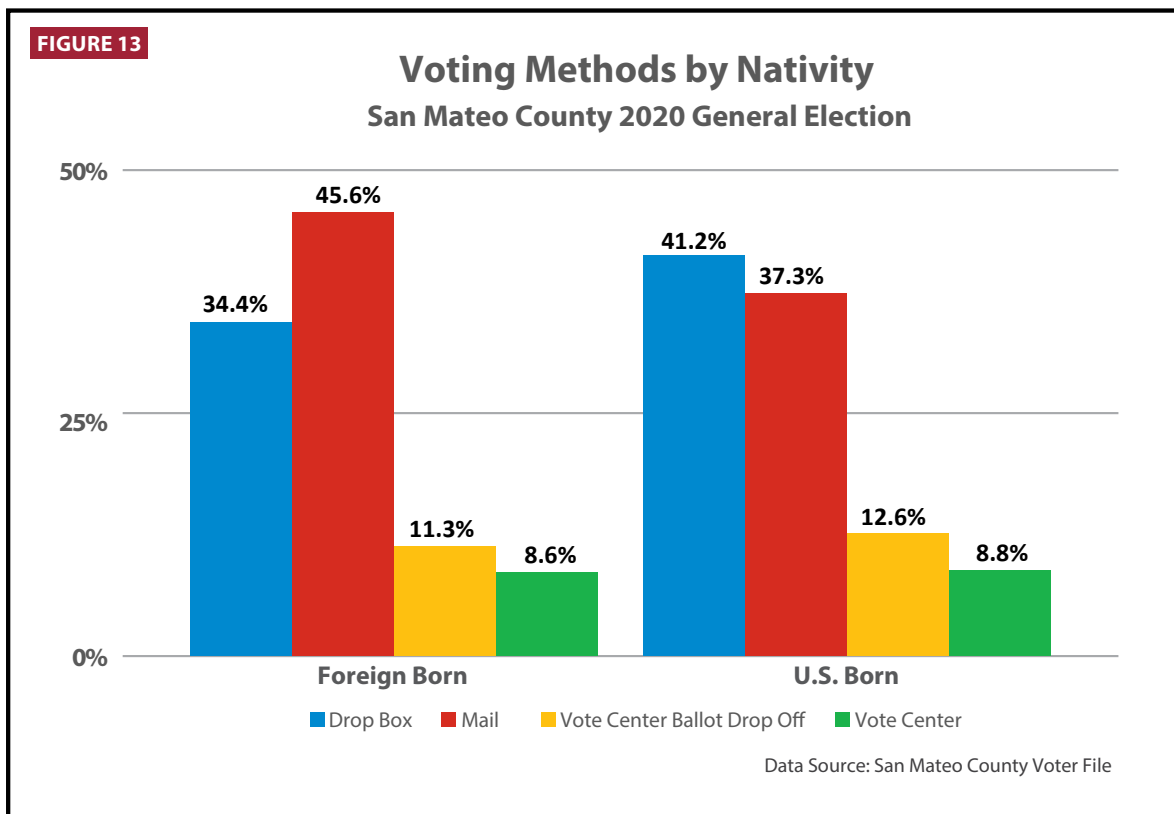
In the 2020 general election, older voters voted by mail at higher rates than younger voters, while younger voters voted in person, via drop box, and vote center drop off at higher rates than older voters. Among the six age groups, voters aged 65 and over and voters aged 18-24 had the highest mail voting rates at 46.5% and 39.3%, respectively (Figure 11). Voters aged 45 to 54 had the lowest mail use rates of 36.1%. Young voters aged 18 to 24 had the highest rates of in-person votes at 10.1%, while voters aged 65 and over had the lowest rate of voting in person at 6.2%. Drop box and vote center location drop off voting varied between the age groups. Drop box use ranged from 36.1% (65 and older) to 42.0% (age 35 to 44). Vote center ballot drop off ranged from 11.1% (age 65 and older) to 13.3% (age 25 to 34).

Method of Voting by Gender



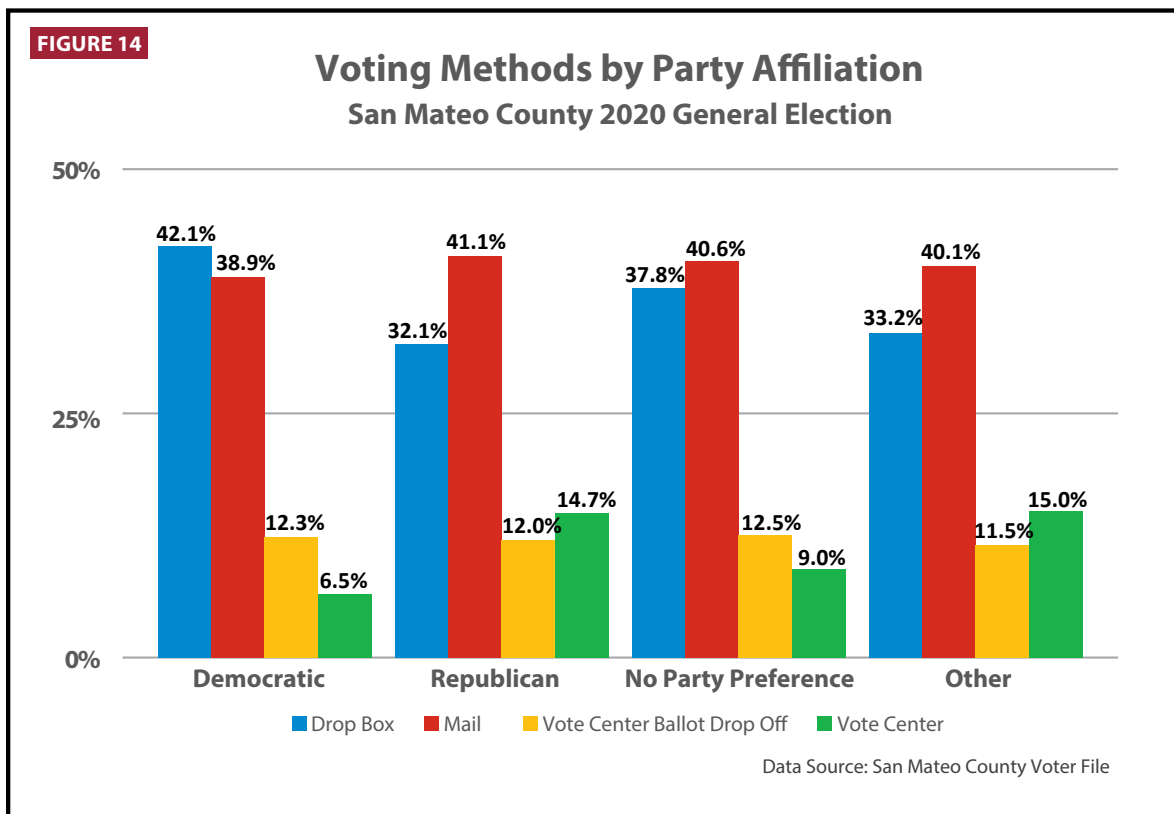
Overall, voting methods were similar between men and women.⁹ Men returned their VBM ballots through the mail at slightly higher rates than women, while women returned their VBM ballots at a drop box at slightly higher rates than men. A little over 40% of men sent their VBM ballots through the mail, compared to 38.6% of women (Figure 12). Around 40.7% of women returned their VBM ballots via drop box, while 38.1% of men did the same. Men and women returned their ballot at a vote center location at similar rates – 12.0% of men and 12.5% of women. A slightly higher percentage of men (9.4%) voted in person compared to women (8.1%).

Method of Voting by Nativity



Foreign-born voters returned their VBM ballots through the mail at higher rates than U.S.-born voters, while U.S.-born voters returned their ballots at drop boxes and vote center locations at higher rates than foreign-born voters.¹⁰ Over 45% of foreign-born voters in San Mateo County voted by mail, compared to 37.3% of U.S.-born voters (Figure 13). Just over 41% of U.S.-born voters dropped off their VBM ballot at a drop box, while 34.4% of foreign-born voters did the same. Slightly over 11% of foreign-born voters and 12.6% of U.S.-born voters used the vote center drop off option. Foreign-born and U.S.-born voters voted in person at similar rates (8.6% and 8.8%, respectively).

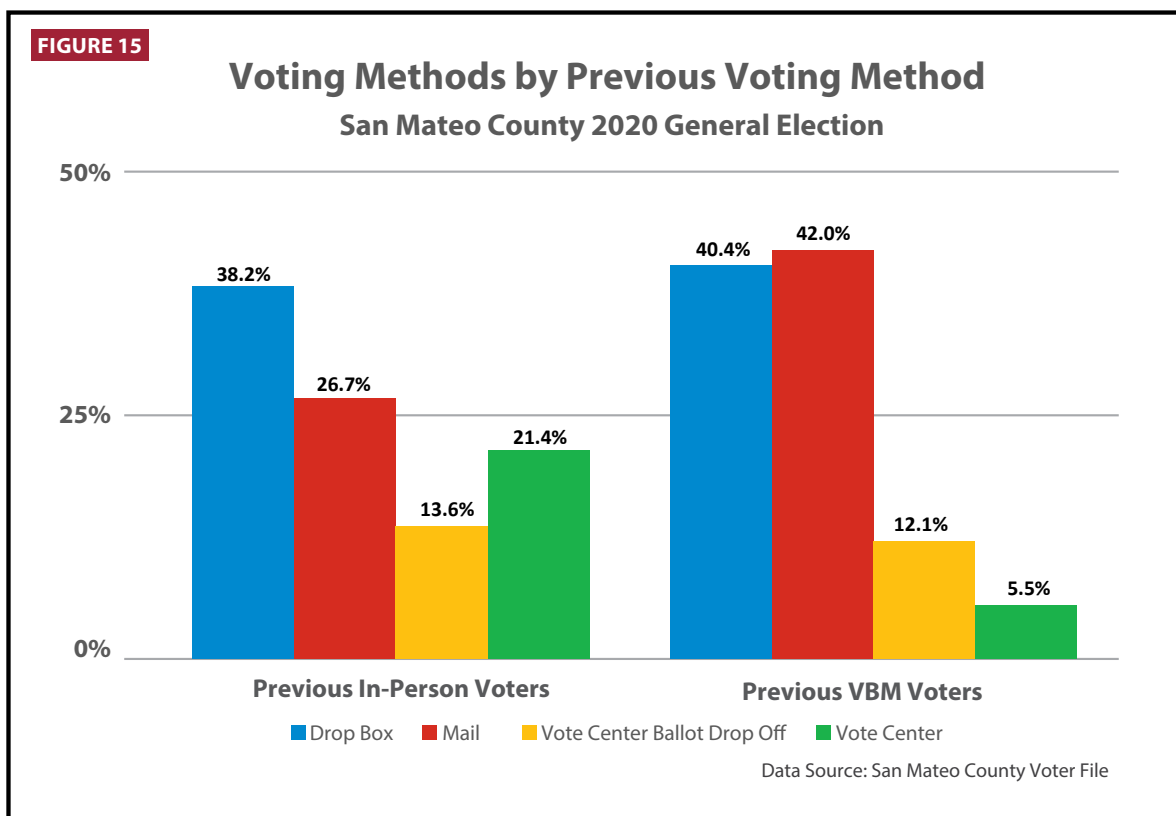
Method of Voting by Party Affiliation



Republican voters voted by mail at higher rates than both Democratic and No Party Preference voters. Just over 41% of Republicans returned their VBM ballots through the mail, while 38.9% of Democrats and 40.6% of No Party Preference voters voted by mail (Figure 14). Registered Republican voters voted in person at more than twice the rate of registered Democratic voters. A little under 15% of Republican voters voted in person, compared to 6.5% of Democratic and 9.0% of No Party Preference voters.

Conversely, registered Democratic voters voted via drop box at much higher rates than Republican voters. Just over 42% of Democratic voters returned their VBM ballot at a drop box, compared to 32.1% of Republicans and 37.8% of No Party Preference voters. All party affiliation groups had similar vote center drop off rates, with 12.3% of Democratic voters, 12.0% of Republican voters, and 12.5% of No Party Preference voters using the option.

Method of Voting for Previous In-Person Voters

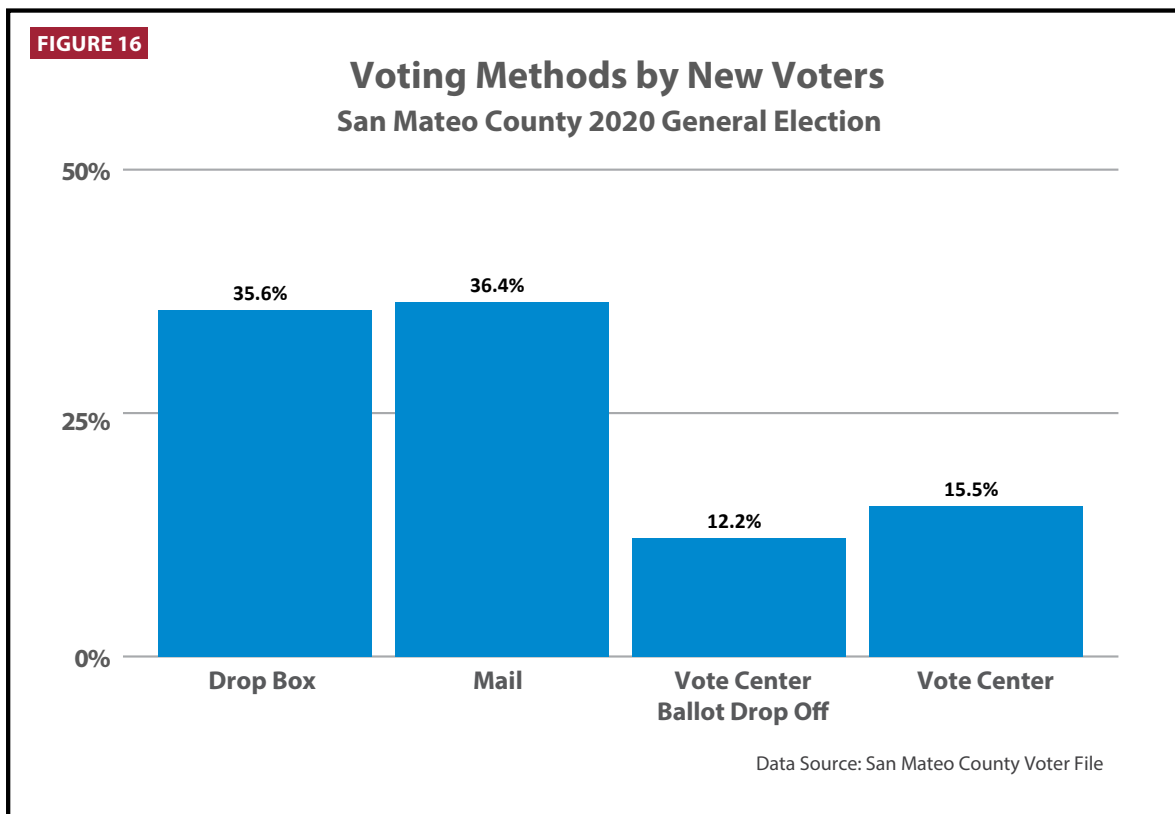


A previous in-person voter is defined as a registrant who voted in person at a vote center or polling place in the last election in which they voted. Similarly, a previous VBM voter is defined as a registrant who voted with a VBM ballot in the last election in which they voted. We applied these terms to voters whose most recent voting experience was in any election from 2010 to the 2020 primary election. Previous voters whose last election was earlier than 2010 were excluded from this analysis.

Previous VBM voters voted by mail at much higher rates than previous in-person voters. Around 42% of previous VBM voters voted by mail, while only 26.7% of previous in-person voters did the same (Figure 15). Previous VBM voters also voted via drop box at higher rates than previous in-person voters. Over 40% of previous VBM voters dropped off their VBM ballot at a drop box, compared to 38.2% of previous in-person voters.

Previous in-person voters voted in person at almost four times the rate of previous VBM voters. Over 21% of previous polling place voters voted in person, compared to 5.5% of previous VBM voters. Additionally, previous in-person voters (13.6%) dropped off their VBM ballots at a vote center location at higher rates than previous VBM voters (12.1%).

Method of Voting by New Voters



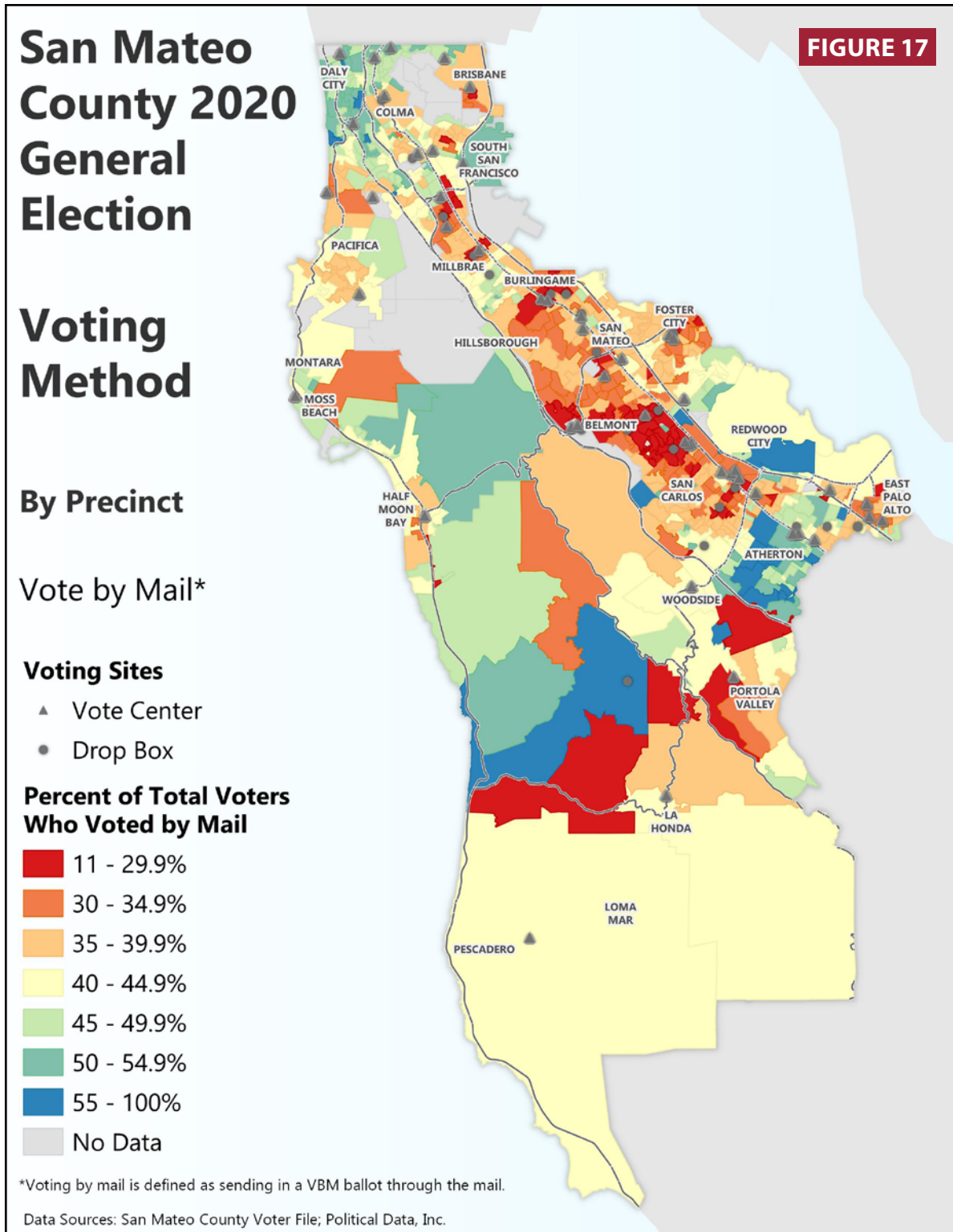
In our analysis, we also seek to understand how newly registered voters (those who never cast a ballot in California by any voting method) are using the voting options under the VCA. New voters are defined as those who registered to vote for the first time after the 2020 primary election and who voted in the 2020 general election. In the 2020 general election, there were 34,616 newly registered voters in San Mateo County, 28,736 of whom voted. It is important to note that some voters identified as new voters may have voted in previous elections in states other than California.

While the majority (84.2%) of new voters voted with VBM ballots, new voters voted in person at close to twice the rate of the general population. In the 2020 general election, 15.5% of new voters voted in person, compared to 8.7% of all voters (Figure 16). Another 35.6% of new voters voted by drop box and 36.4% voted by mail. New voters dropped off their VBM ballots at a vote center location at similar rates to the general population, with 12.2% of new voters and 12.3% of all voters using the option.

Mail Use Rates by Voting Precinct

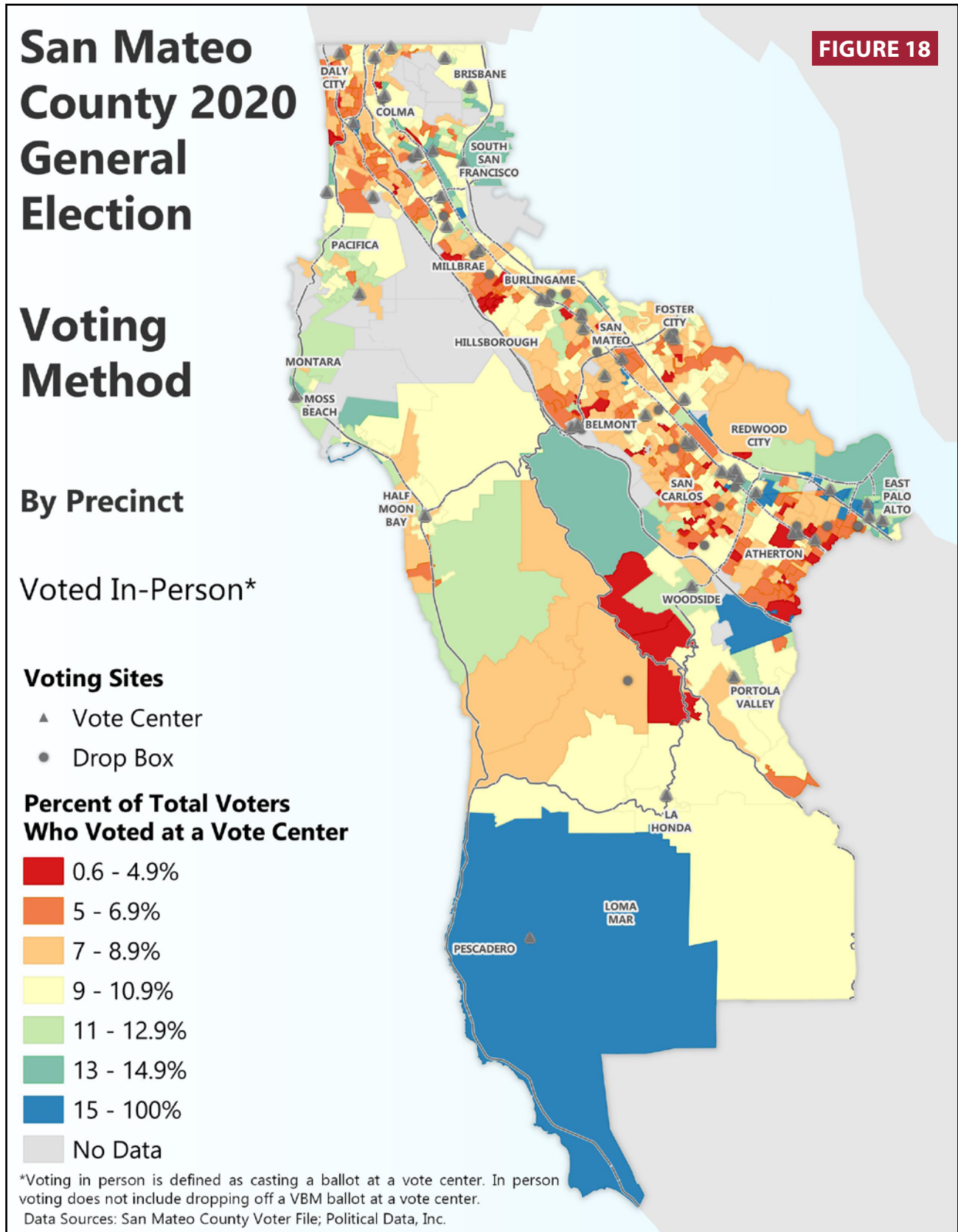
During the 2020 general election, there was substantial variation in voters returning their ballots through the mail across cities in San Mateo County. For example, Daly City and Atherton had over half of their voters return their ballots through the mail (50.3% and 57.2%, respectively), while San Carlos and Belmont – the cities with the lowest mail use rate – had less than a third of their voters return their ballots through the mail (29.6% and 29.7%, respectively).

When examining the mail rate of VBM ballots by precinct of voter, there is variation across the county (Figure 17). There are precincts with low mail use rates in East Palo Alto, Belmont, and Burlingame, while there are precincts with particularly high mail use rates in Redwood City, Atherton, and Daly City.



In-Person Vote Center Use Rates by Voting Precinct

In the 2020 general election, in-person voting was low compared to other voting methods in San Mateo County (Figure 18). Precincts with relatively high in-person voting were clustered around South San Francisco, East Palo Alto, and Pescadero. Precincts with relatively low in-person voting were clustered around Atherton, Daly City, Millbrae, and Burlingame.



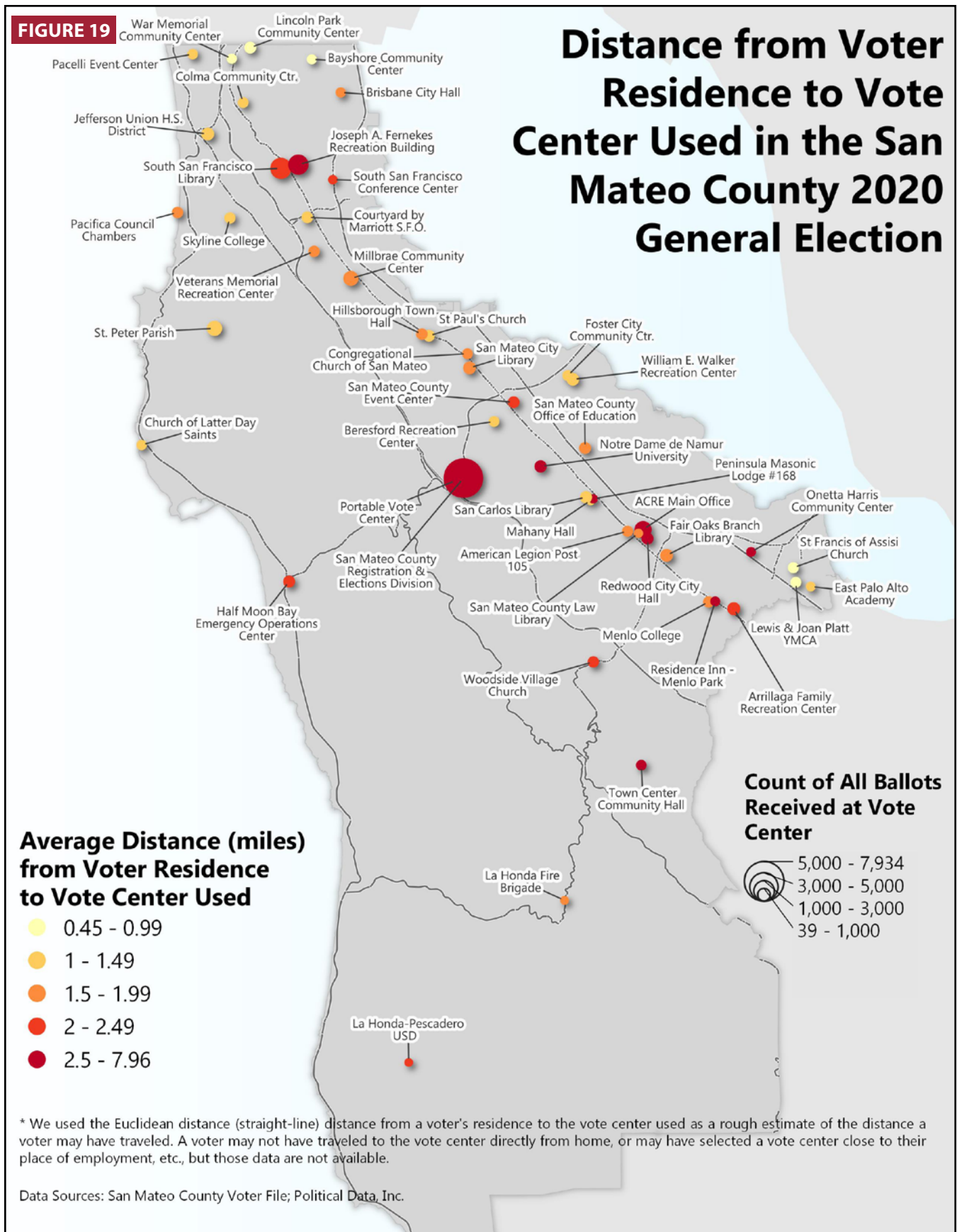
Conditional Voter Registration (CVR)

Of all votes cast and counted in the 2020 general election, 0.9% (3,440 ballots) were cast with conditional voter registration. CVR was disproportionately used by Latinos, Asian Americans, youth (aged 18 to 24), new voters, and previous in-person voter (see appendix for a breakdown of CVR use by demographic group).

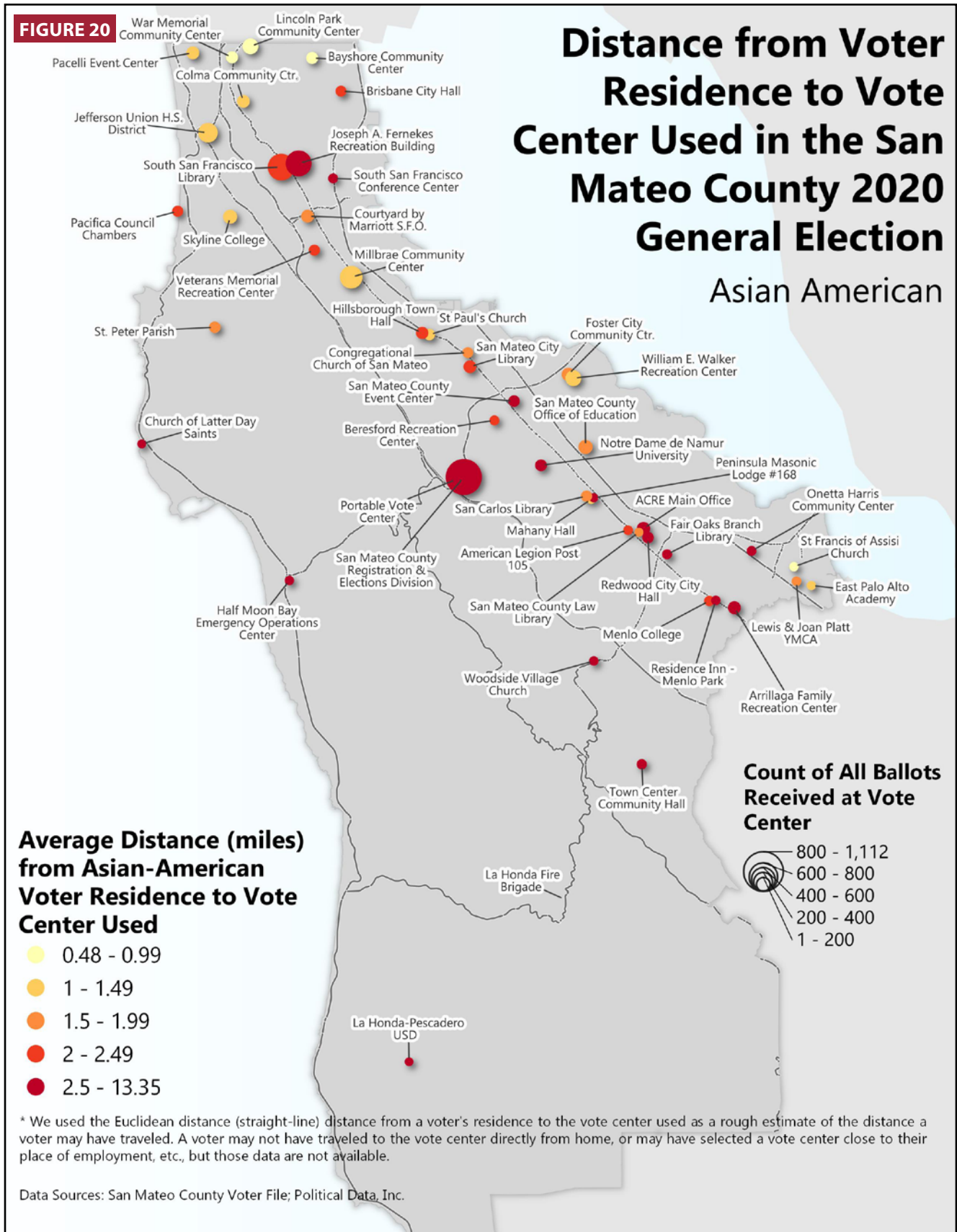
Voter Distance to Vote Center

A key aspect of the VCA is ensuring vote centers and drop box locations are geographically accessible to voters. Because the VCA allows voters to use any vote center in their county, voters may have traveled to the vote center they used directly from home, or they may have selected a vote center close to their place of employment, shopping, or other point of interest. Data identifying voters' travel patterns, however, are unavailable in the county voter registration file. For this reason, we limited our analysis to the distance San Mateo County voters traveled to a vote center from their residence in the 2020 general election. We calculated the Euclidean (straight-line) distance from the voter's residence to the voting location they used to cast their ballot.¹¹ This analysis included voters who used the vote center to vote in person or to drop off their VBM ballot at the vote center.

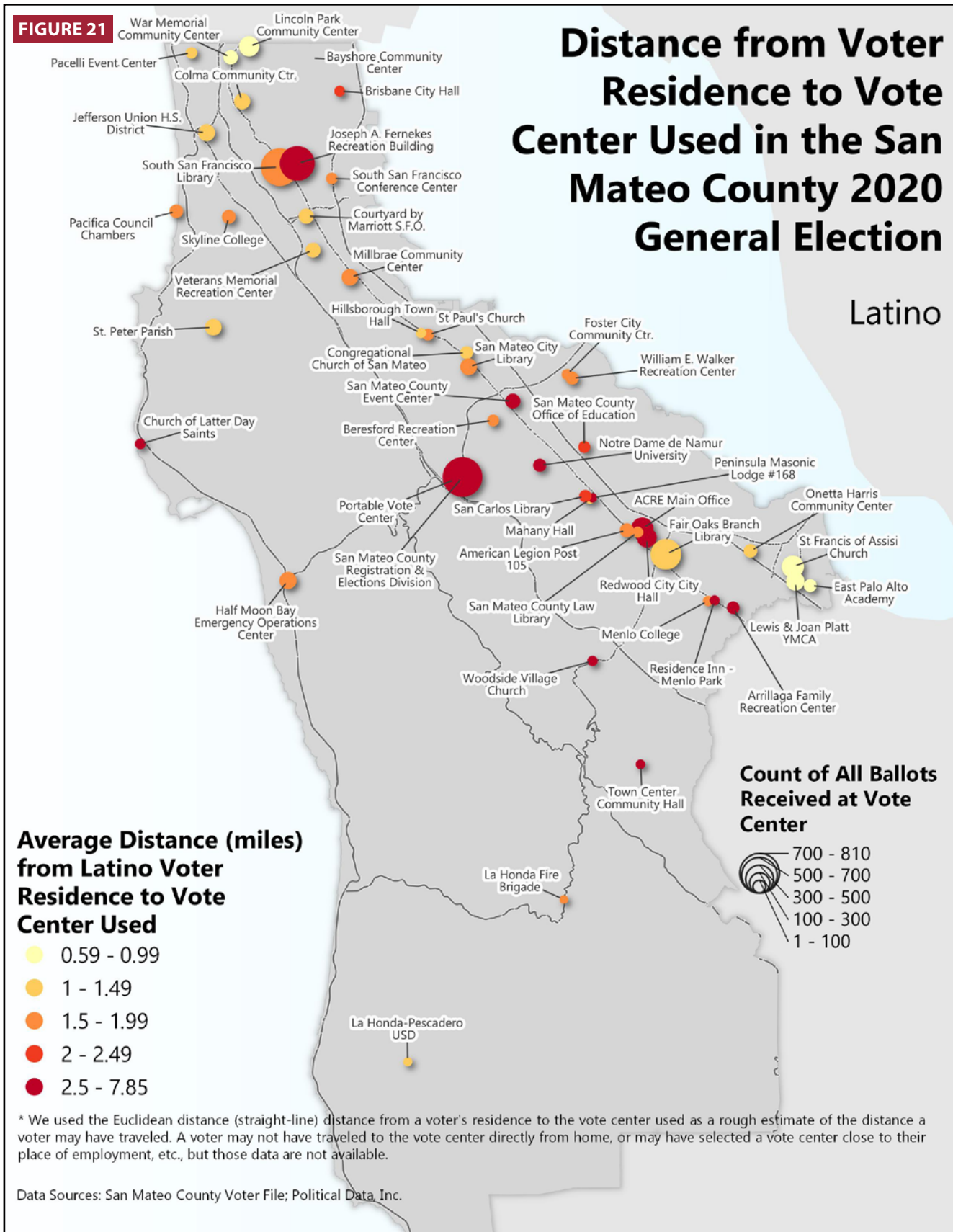
Note: Vote center location data was limited due to missing location data for some voters. Of the 79,692 ballots cast at a vote center (either dropped off or in-person), 9,457 did not have vote center location data. All voters who used conditional voter registration (3,440) were missing vote center location. The remaining missing records were in-person votes (469 ballots) and vote center drop off votes (5,548 ballots). Additionally, race and ethnicity identifiers used in the distance to vote center analysis were provided by PDI and were not predicted through the WRU package.



The average distance from a voter's residence to the vote center that they used (for in-person voting or dropping off a VBM ballot) was 2.1 miles. Figure 19 shows that the average travel distance varied for each individual vote center. The average distance from a voter's residence to the vote center they used ranged from 0.45 miles to 7.96 miles with distinctions among Asian-American (Figure 20) and Latino (Figure 21) voters.



Asian-American voters, on average, had further distances between their residence and the vote center they used than the general population. The average distance from Asian-American voters' residence to the vote center they used was 3.0 miles (Figure 20). Asian-American voters also had a wider range of distances between their residence and the vote center they used than the general population. The average distance from Asian-American voters' residence to the vote center they used ranged from 0.48 miles to 13.35 miles.



On average, Latino voters travel distance was shorter and did not vary as much as Asian American voters. For Latino voters, the average distance from a voter's residence to the vote center they used was 2.2 miles, slightly further than the general population. Figure 21 shows the average distance from Latino voters' residence to the vote center they used ranged from 0.59 miles to 7.85 miles.

What were 2020 voter turnout rates in San Mateo County, and how did they vary by demographic group?

Section Highlights

- Just under 86% of registered voters in San Mateo County cast a ballot in the 2020 general election.
- Asian-American voters, Latino voters, and the general population experienced growth in eligible voter turnout rates between the 2016 and 2020 general elections, although Latino voters experienced the slowest growth among all groups examined.
- Asian-American and Latino voters were underrepresented in the San Mateo County voting electorate, with Latino voters having the largest gap between their share of votes cast and their share of the eligible voter population.
- Asian-American, Latino, youth, previous in-person, and new voters had lower registered voter turnout rates than the general population.
- Asian-American and Latino voters had lower eligible voter turnout rates than the general population.
- Young voters (aged 18 to 24) had lower eligible voter turnout rates than older voters (aged 65 and over).
- Registered Democrats had higher registered voter turnout rates than registered Republicans.
- U.S.-born voters had higher registered voter turnout rates than foreign-born voters.

Making a causal connection between any election reform and voter turnout calls for caution. First, turnout is a difficult outcome to model because it is potentially influenced by a variety of factors, including the competitiveness of the individual races, characteristics of the candidates, as well as the greater electoral context. Additionally, turnout can be influenced by other factors specific to a county or other jurisdiction's electorate such as demographic and political composition as well as historical turnout trends, making it difficult to assess the specific impact of an individual election reform.

Voter turnout in the 2020 general election was historically high in California and nationally.¹² Utilizing voter files provided by Political Data, Inc (PDI), CID examined the change in registered voter turnout and eligible voter turnout between the 2016 and 2020 general elections. The state saw an eligible voter turnout (turnout of adult citizens) higher than in 2016 and the highest eligible turnout in any of the state's general elections since 1962 (Table 12).¹³ San Mateo County was no exception and experienced an increase in voter turnout over the previous general presidential election. Table 12 shows eligible voter turnout in the 2020 general election increased by 11.3 percentage points from the 2016 general election and registered voter turnout increased by 4.4 percentage points in San Mateo County.

**Table 12: Eligible and Registered Voter Turnout
2016 and 2020 General Elections**

	2016		2020	
	Eligible Voter Turnout	Registered Voter Turnout	Eligible Voter Turnout	Registered Voter Turnout
San Mateo County	63.9%	80.6%	75.2%	85.0%
VCA Counties	56.8%	70.8%	68.9%	77.4%
Non-VCA Counties	56.8%	76.5%	67.3%	80.6%
California	56.8%	73.6%	68.1%	79.0%

Data Source: Political Data Inc, California Department of Finance

Note: For Tables 12-14, 2020 general turnout numbers may differ slightly from other sections due to small differences between the PDI voter file used in this section and the voter file provided by San Mateo County used in the remaining sections of this report.

2016-2020 General Election Voter Turnout: Race and Ethnicity

To examine the change in voter turnout of racial and ethnic groups in the 2020 general election, CID used 2016 and 2020 voter files provided by Political Data Inc (PDI). CID used the same method described in the methodology section to identify Asian Americans and Latinos in the PDI voter files.

**Table 13: Eligible Voter Turnout by Race and Ethnicity
2016 and 2020 General Elections**

	2016			2020			Percentage Point Change		
	All Voters	Asian American	Latino	All Voters	Asian American	Latino	All Voters	Asian American	Latino
San Mateo County	63.9%	49.1%	49.1%	75.2%	67.1%	56.9%	+11.3	+18.0	+7.8
VCA Counties	56.8%	41.5%	44.8%	68.9%	59.1%	52.4%	+12.1	+17.6	+7.6
Non-VCA Counties	56.8%	39.7%	41.3%	67.3%	54.2%	51.3%	+10.5	+14.5	+10.0
California	56.8%	40.8%	43.2%	68.1%	57.1%	53.4%	+11.3	+16.3	+10.2

Data Source: Political Data Inc, California Department of Finance

As seen in Table 13, both Asian-American and Latino voters saw growth in their eligible voter turnout rates between the 2016 and 2020 general elections. In California, Asian-American eligible voter turnout increased by 16.3 percentage points, notably higher than the growth seen among all voters (11.3 percentage points). Latino eligible voter turnout growth was lower at 10.2 percentage points.

San Mateo County also saw growth in eligible voter turnout for both Asian-American and Latino voters. Asian-American voters in San Mateo County saw a larger eligible voter turnout growth than the general population – 18.0 percentage points versus 11.3 percentage points. Again, Latino eligible voter turnout growth was lower than Asian-Americans and all voters. Latino eligible voter turnout increased 7.8 percentage points in the 2020 general election from the 2016 general election, less than half of the growth seen by Asian-American voters.

**Table 14: Registered Voter Turnout by Race and Ethnicity
2016 and 2020 General Elections**

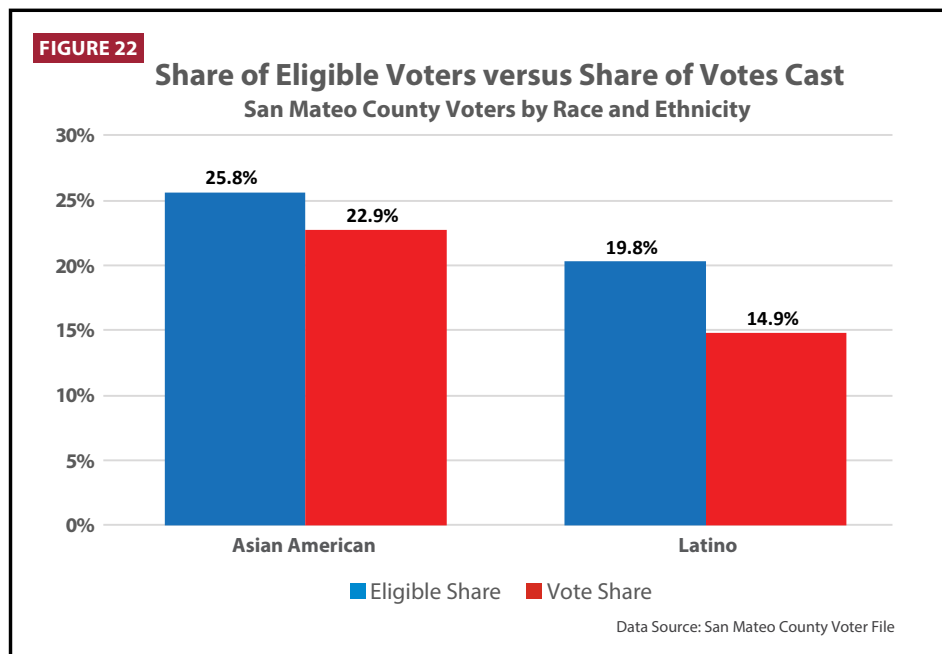
	2016			2020			Percentage Point Change		
	All Voters	Asian American	Latino	All Voters	Asian American	Latino	All Voters	Asian American	Latino
San Mateo County	80.6%	75.5%	74.6%	85.0%	83.1%	79.0%	+4.4	+7.6	+4.4
VCA Counties	70.8%	67.4%	64.8%	77.4%	77.9%	70.2%	+6.6	+10.5	+5.4
Non-VCA Counties	76.5%	72.2%	67.7%	80.6%	80.9%	71.1%	+4.1	+8.7	+3.4
California	73.6%	69.1%	66.1%	79.0%	79.0%	70.6%	+5.4	+9.9	+4.5

Data Source: Political Data Inc, California Department of Finance

In California, Asian-American voters experienced a higher rate of registered voter turnout than the general population while Latino voters experienced a rate lower than all voters. The increase in registered voter turnout from 2016 to 2020 general elections was 9.9 percentage points for Asian-American voters, 4.5 percentage points for Latino voters, and 5.4 percentage points for all voters (Table 14). In San Mateo County, however, Latino voters had the same growth in registered voter turnout as the general population (4.4). Asian-Americans continued to have larger growth than both Latino and all voters, with an 7.6 percentage point increase.

Voter Representation of Latinos and Asian Americans

In San Mateo County, both Latino and Asian-American voters were underrepresented in the voting electorate compared to their share of the eligible voting population. Figure 22 shows that 22.9% of voters who cast a ballot in the 2020 general election were Asian-American, while 25.8% of eligible voters were Asian-American. Additionally, only 14.9% of voters who cast a ballot were Latino, while they represent 19.8% of the eligible voter population. Latinos had the largest gap between their share of votes and share of the eligible voting population with a gap of 4.9 percentage points. Asian-American voters had a 2.9 percentage point gap between their share of the votes and their share of the eligible voting population.



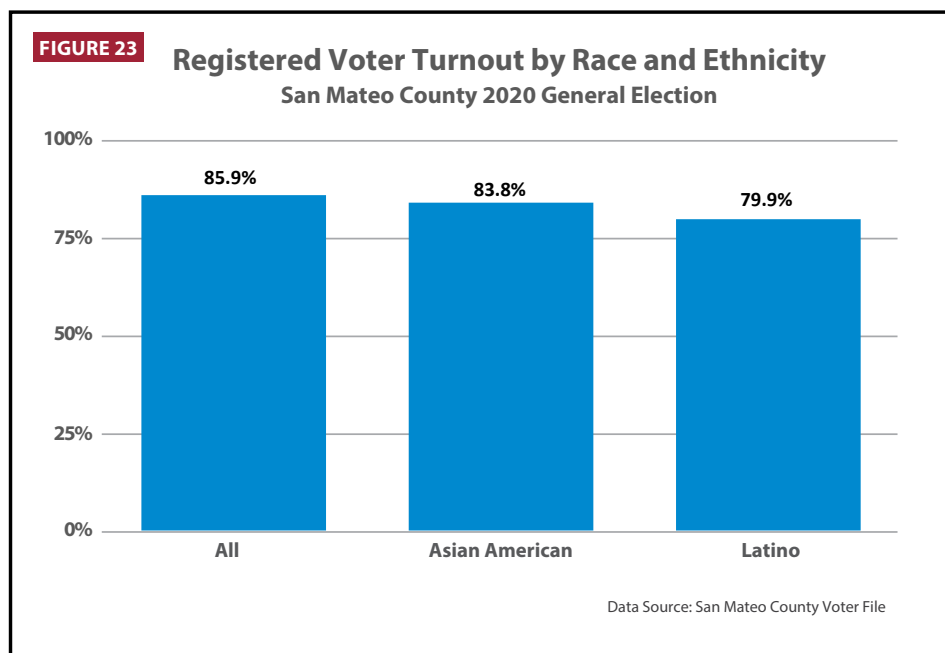
Note: Due to missing location data used for the geocoding portion of identifying the race and ethnicities of registrants, 1.3% (5,530) of registrants' race and ethnicities could not be identified and were omitted from all race and ethnicity analyses. See the appendix for available data for Black and white, non-Latino voters. Also see page 6 of this report for a discussion of data limitations and further details about identifying the race and ethnicity of voters.

2020 Detailed Turnout Analysis: Introduction

In the following sections, we provide detailed examination of San Mateo County's 2020 general election voter turnout. In our turnout analysis, votes include all ballots that were cast and counted and does not include rejected ballots in the totals. Comparable data is not available to identify eligible turnout by gender, nativity, party affiliation, length of voting, and voting method. Therefore, we limit our analysis to registered voter turnout for these voter categories.

As mentioned earlier in this report, the dataset used for this section's analysis is the result of merging San Mateo County and Political Data, Inc. voter files and unmatched records were omitted to maintain a consistent and comparable data set. The analysis presented in this section varies slightly from San Mateo County's official results and the Statewide Database analysis.

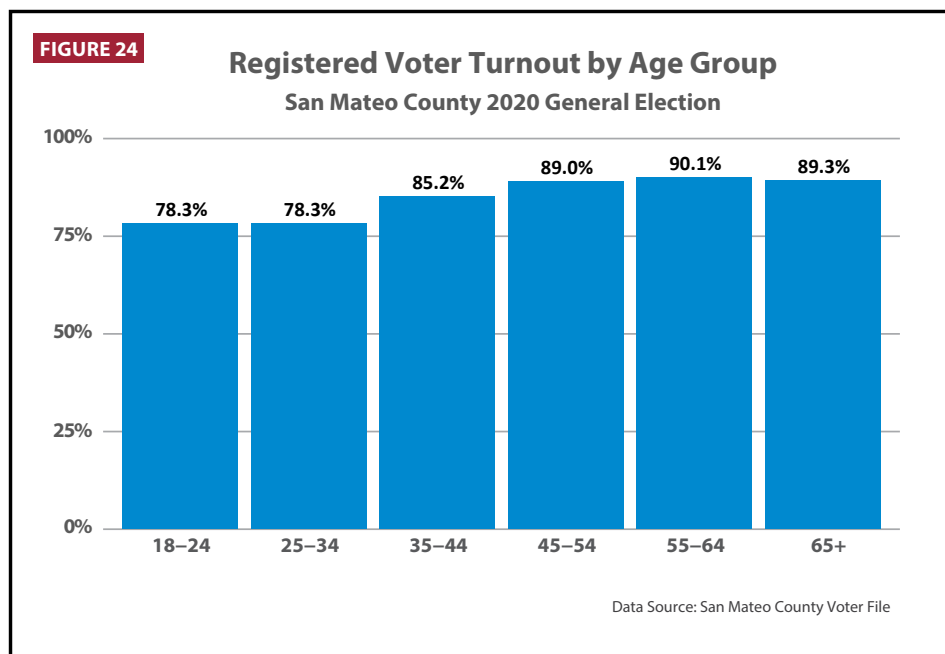
Registered Voter Turnout by Race and Ethnicity



In the 2020 general election, registered voter turnout rates varied across race and ethnic groups. Latino voters in San Mateo County had lower registered voter turnout rates than Asian-Americans, while both had lower registered voter turnout than the general population. Just under 80% of registered Latino voters and 83.8% of registered Asian-American voters cast a vote, compared to 85.9% of all voters (Figure 23).

Note: Due to missing location data used for the geocoding portion of identifying the race and ethnicities of registrants, 1.3% (5,530) of registrants' race and ethnicities could not be identified and were omitted from all race and ethnicity analyses. See the appendix for available data for Black and white, non-Latino voters. Also see page 6 of this report for a discussion of data limitations and further details about identifying the race and ethnicity of voters.

Registered Voter Turnout by Age



In general, younger voters had lower registered voter turnout rates than older voters. Around 78.3% of registered voters aged 18 to 34 cast a ballot that was counted, while 89.3% of registered voters aged 65 and over did so (Figure 24). Voters aged 55 to 64 had the highest registered voter turnout at 90.1%, with 65 and older voters having the second highest registered voter turnout.

Registered Voter Turnout by Gender

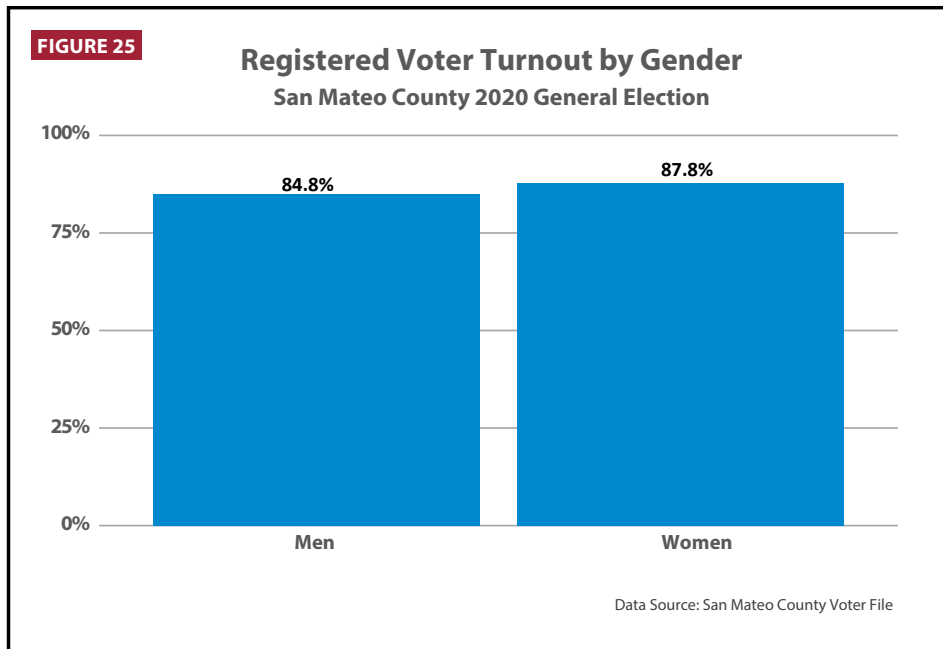
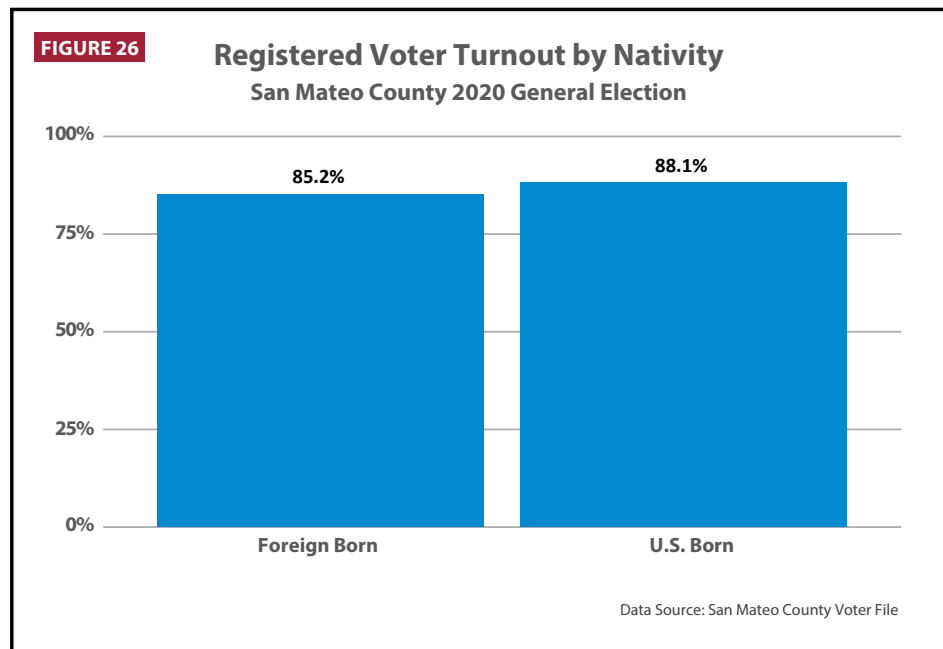


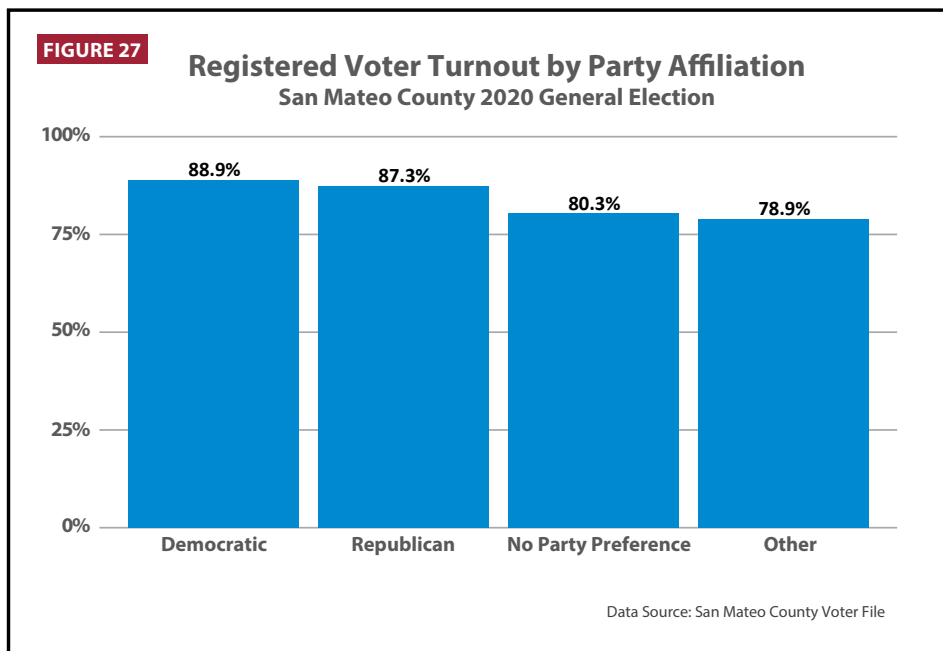
Figure 25 shows that women had a higher registered voter turnout rate than men.¹⁵ A little under 88% of women registered to vote cast a ballot that was counted, while 84.8% of men registered to vote cast a ballot.

Registered Voter Turnout by Nativity



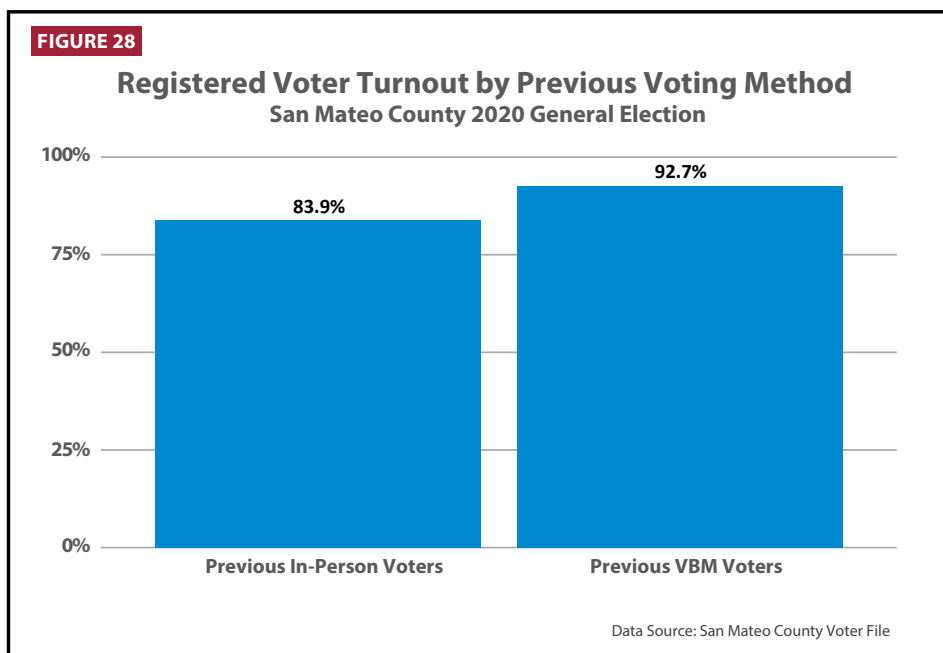
In the 2020 general election, registered voter turnout for U.S.-born voters was 2.9 percentage points higher than the registered voter turnout for foreign-born voters.¹⁶ Just over 88% of U.S.-born voters registered to vote cast a ballot that was counted, compared to 85.2% of foreign-born voters registered to vote (Figure 26).

Registered Voter Turnout by Party Affiliation



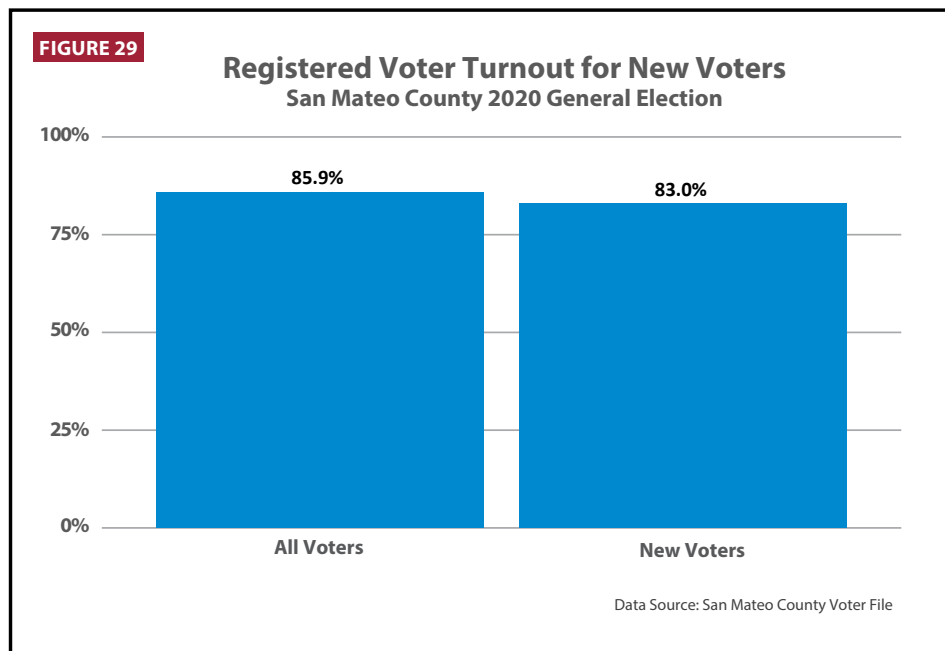
Registered Democratic voters had the highest registered voter turnout rate of all party affiliations. Just under 89% of registered Democrats, 87.3% of registered Republicans, and 80.3% of No Party Preference voters cast a ballot (Figure 27).

Registered Voter Turnout by Previous Voting Method



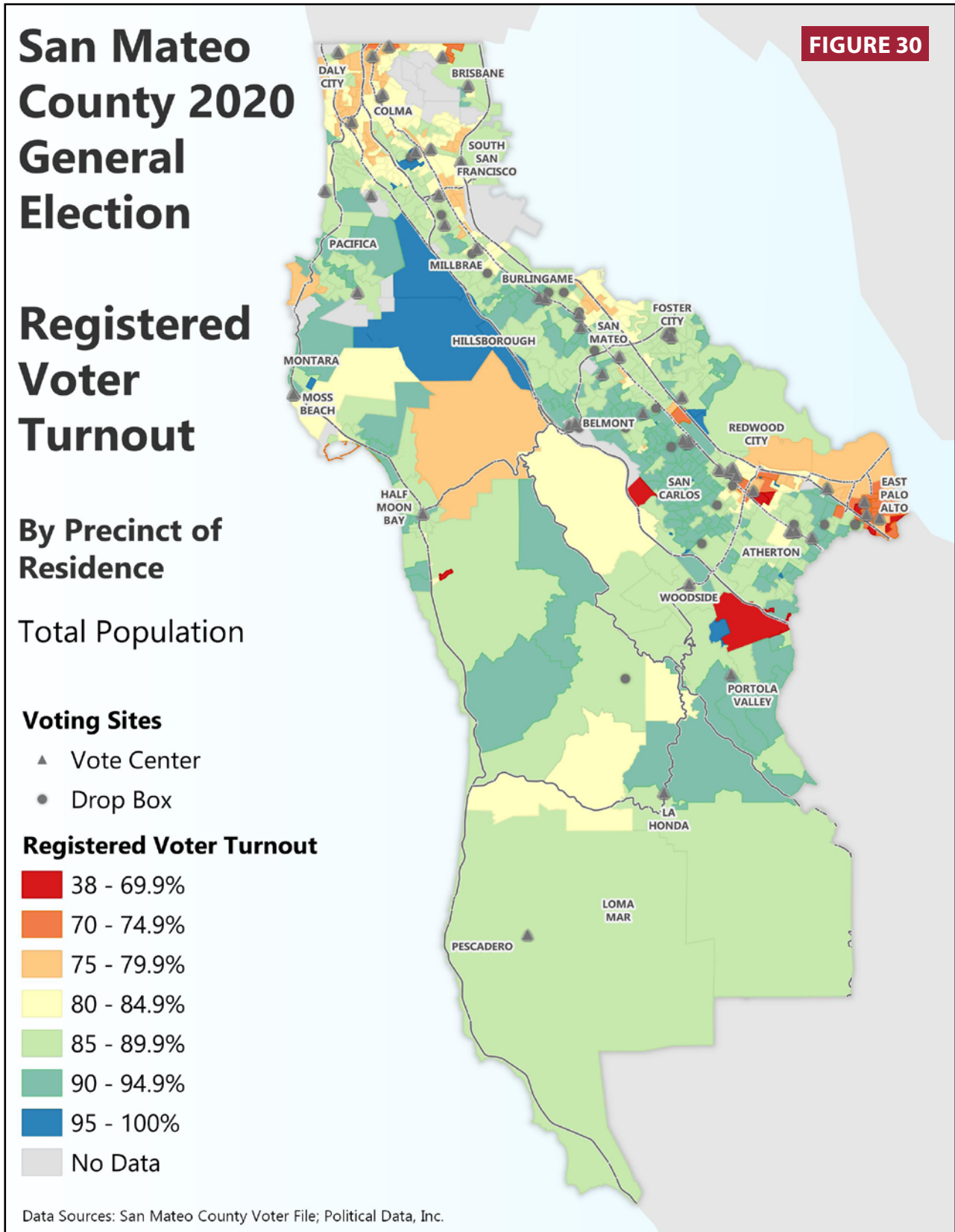
Previous VBM voters had a much higher registered voter turnout rate than previous in-person voters. Just under 84% of registrants who voted at an in-person location in their last election voted in the 2020 general election, while 92.7% of registrants who voted by VBM ballot in their last election experience voted – a turnout gap of almost 9 percentage points (Figure 28).

Registered Voter Turnout by New Voters



New voters had a lower registered voter turnout rate than the general population. Around 83% of new registrants cast a ballot that were counted, producing a turnout gap between the general registrant population (85.9%) and the new registrant population of 2.9 percentage points (Figure 29).

Registered Voter Turnout by Precinct of Residence



In the 2020 general election, there was a wide variation of registered voter turnout across San Mateo County. While the San Mateo County registered voter turnout rate was 85.9%, registered voter turnout by registrants’ precinct of residence ranged from 38.9% to nearly 100%. Figure 30 shows precincts with high registered voter turnout clustered around Burlingame, Belmont, Pacifica, Millbrae, San Carlos, Atherton, and Half Moon Bay. We see precincts with lower registered voter turnout clustered around Daly City, East Palo Alto, and Colma.

San Mateo County 2020 General Election

FIGURE 31

Registered Voter Turnout

By Precinct of Residence

Asian American

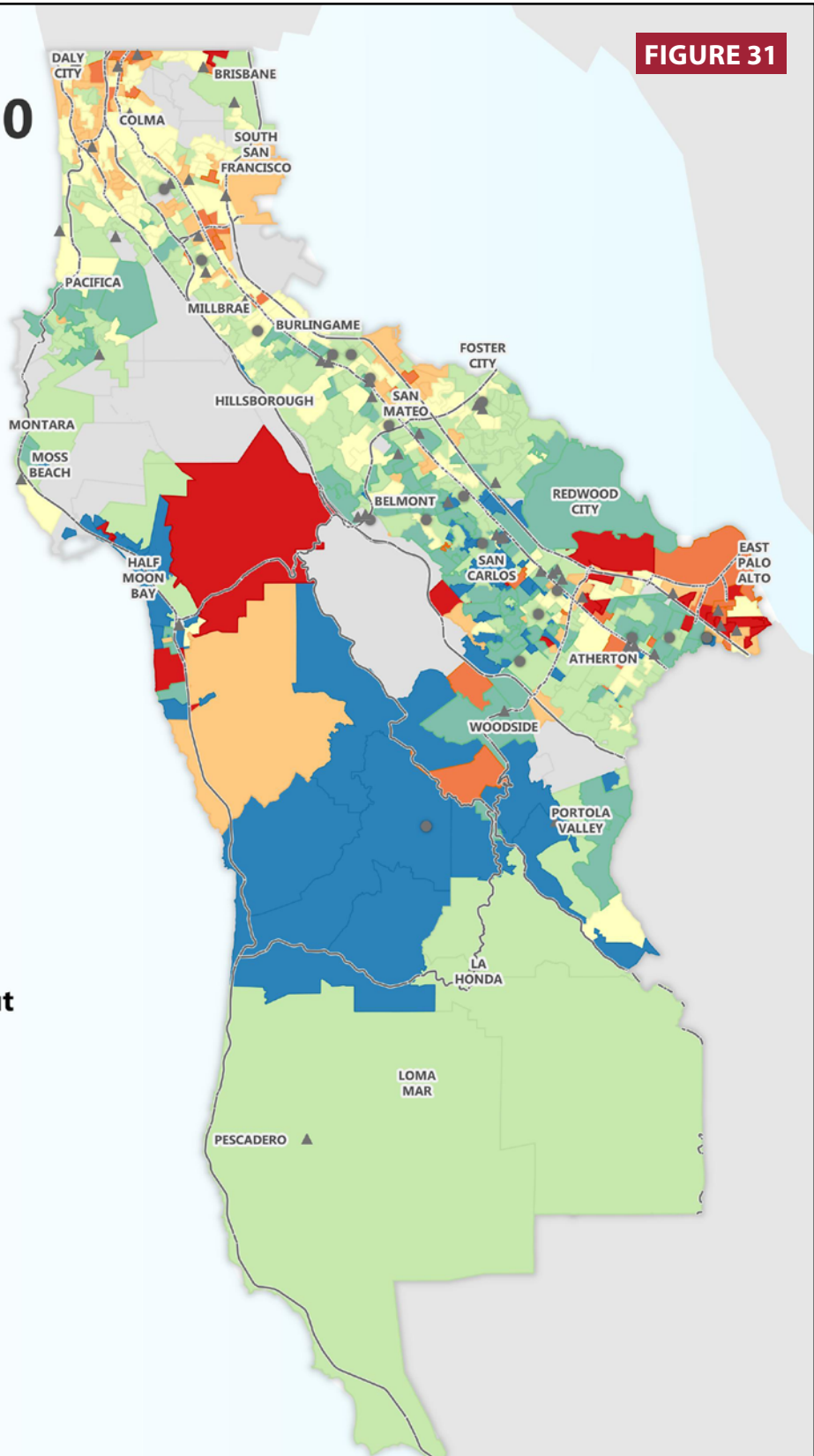
Vote Center

- ▲ Vote Center
- Drop Box

Eligible Voter Turnout

- 0 - 69.9%
- 70 - 74.9%
- 75 - 79.9%
- 80 - 84.9%
- 85 - 89.9%
- 90 - 94.9%
- 95 - 100%
- No Data

Data Sources: San Mateo Voter Files



Countywide, 83.8% of Asian Americans registered to vote voted. Figure 31 shows there was great variation across precincts in San Mateo County. Precincts with higher registered voter turnout rates for Asian Americans clustered around Half Moon Bay, Redwood City, San Carlos, Woodside, Portola Valley, and Pacifica. Precincts with lower registered voter turnout for Asian Americans clustered around Daly City, Colma, South San Francisco, and East Palo Alto.

San Mateo County 2020 General Election

FIGURE 32

Registered Voter Turnout

By Precinct of Residence

Latino

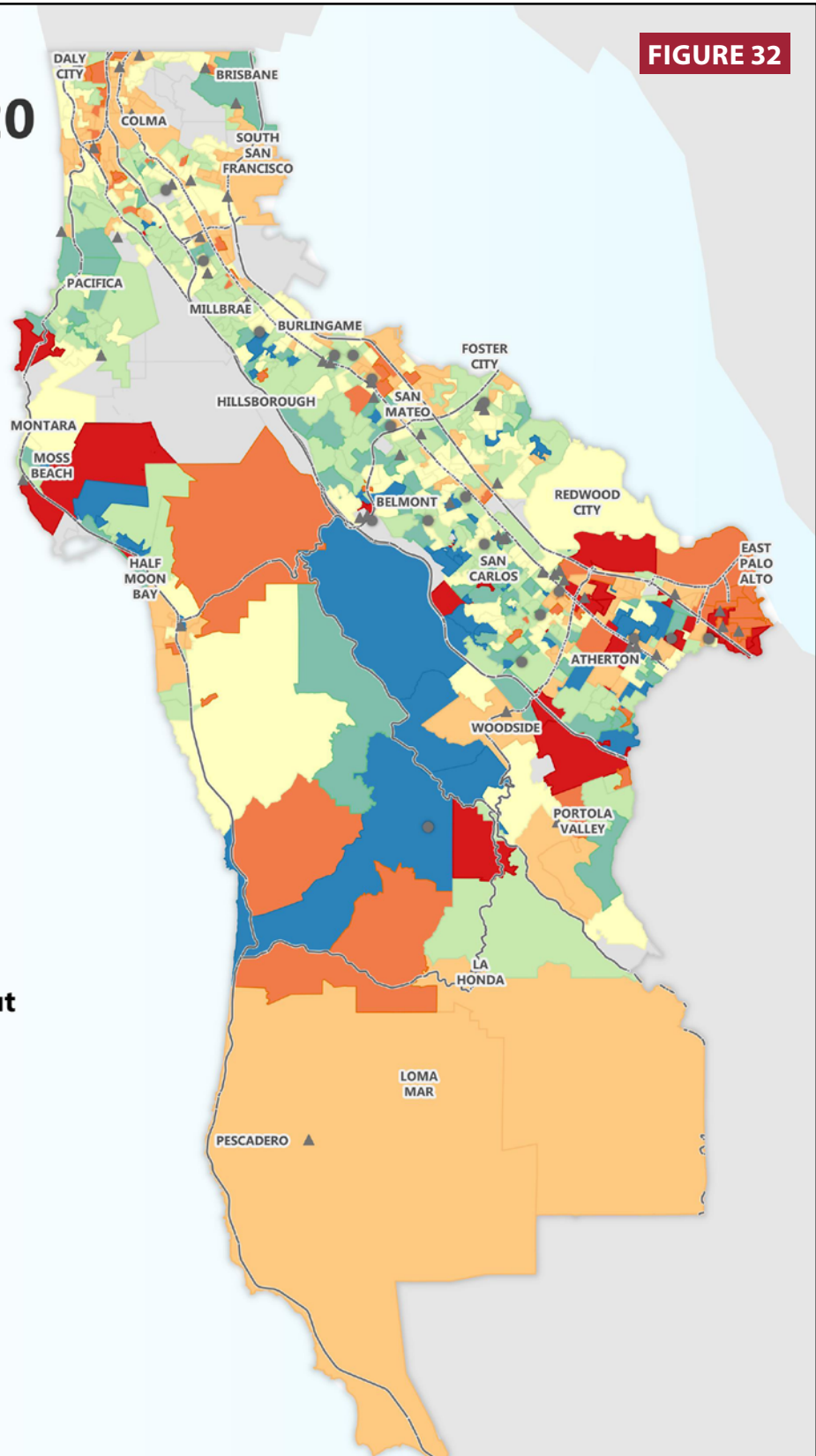
Vote Center

- ▲ Vote Center
- Drop Box

Eligible Voter Turnout

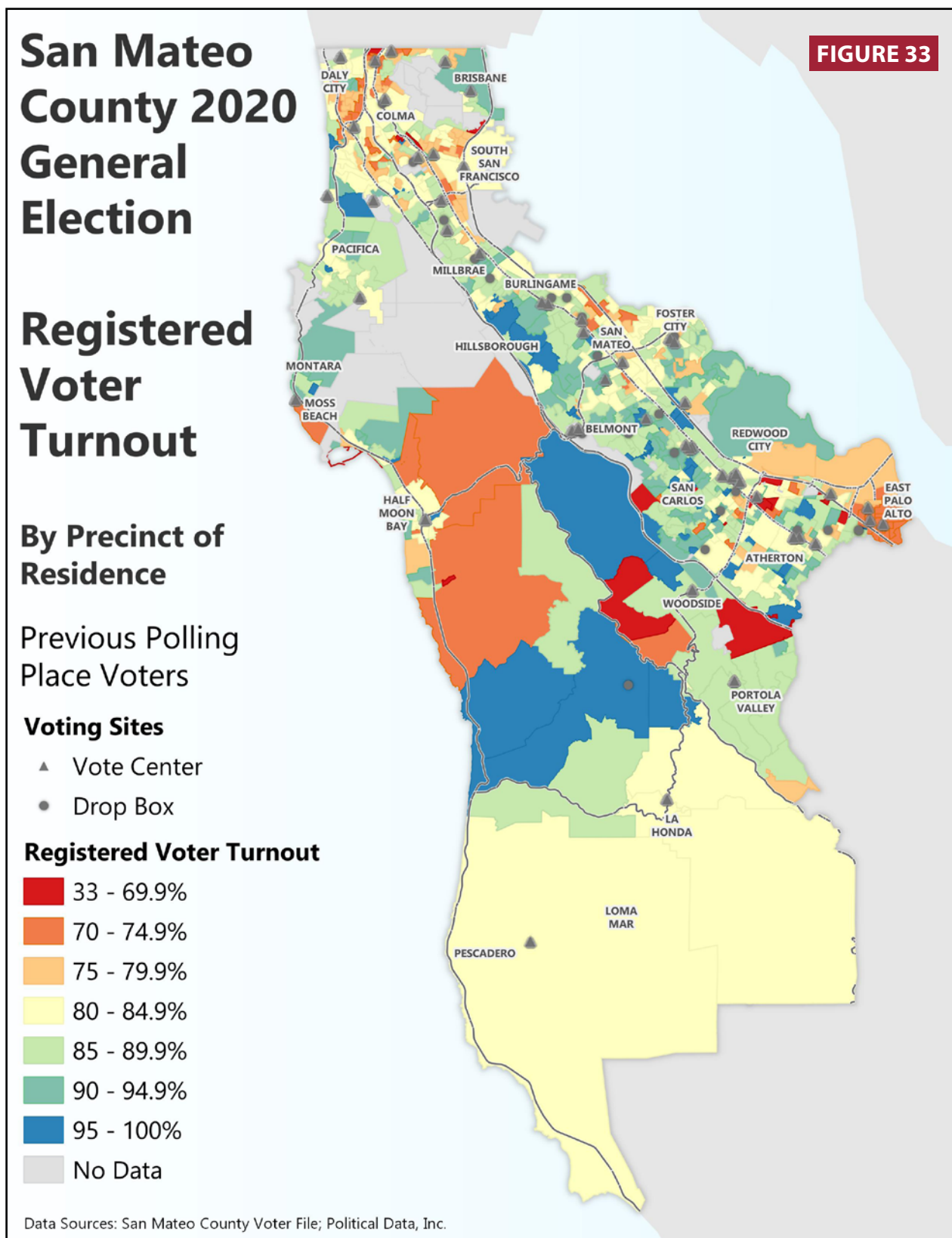
- 0 - 69.9%
- 70 - 74.9%
- 75 - 79.9%
- 80 - 84.9%
- 85 - 89.9%
- 90 - 94.9%
- 95 - 100%
- No Data

Data Sources: San Mateo Voter Files



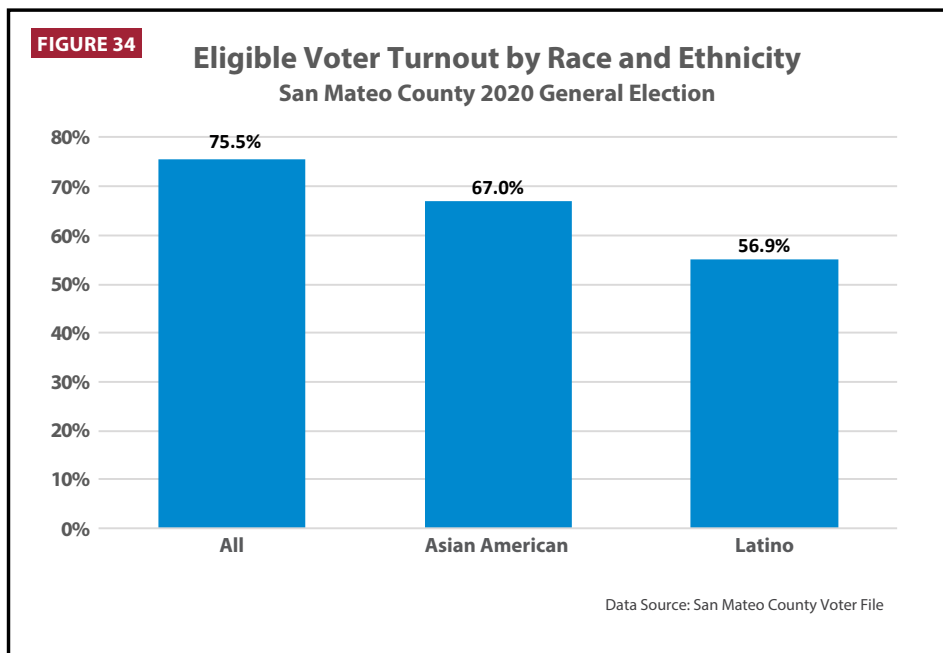
Nearly 80% of Latinos registered to vote in San Mateo County cast a ballot in the 2020 general election. Figure 32 shows that registered voter turnout rates for Latino voters ranged widely between precincts. Precincts with higher registered voter turnout rates of Latinos clustered around Pacifica, San Carlos, Hillsborough, Belmont, and Millbrae. Precincts with lower registered voter turnout rates for Latinos clustered around Daly City, Colma, South San Francisco, Atherton, Woodside, and East Palo Alto.

Registered Voter Turnout by Previous Voting Method



Just under 84% of voters who voted in person in the last election they participated in voted in the 2020 general election in San Mateo County (Figure 33). Across precincts in San Mateo County, registered voter turnout rates for previous in-person voters ranged from 33.3% to 100%. Precincts with higher registered voter turnout rates clustered around Millbrae, Burlingame, Hillsborough, and San Carlos. Precincts with lower registered voter turnout rates clustered around Daly City, South San Francisco, and East Palo Alto.

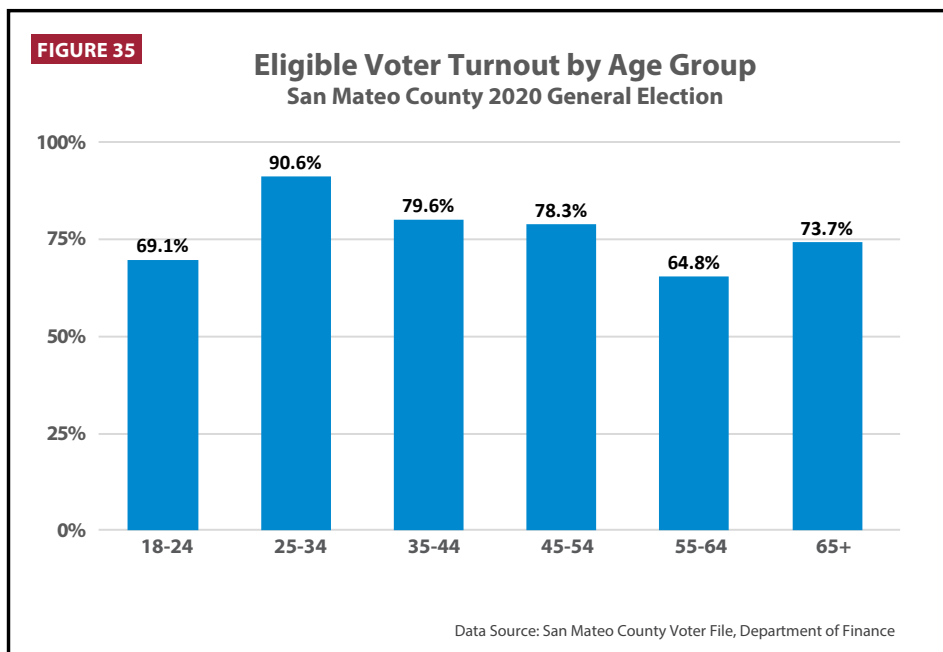
Eligible Voter Turnout by Race and Ethnicity



Disparities in voter participation are larger when looking at eligible voter turnout rates (turnout of adult citizens) compared to registered voter turnout (see online appendix for 2020 registration rates). Over 75% of all eligible voters in San Mateo County voted in the 2020 general election (Figure 34). In contrast, 67.0% of eligible Asian-American voters and 56.9% of eligible Latino voters voted.¹⁷

Note: Due to missing location data used for the geocoding portion of identifying the race and ethnicities of registrants, 1.3% (5,530) of registrants' race and ethnicities could not be identified and were omitted from all race and ethnicity analyses. See the appendix for available data for Black and white, non-Latino voters. Also see page 6 of this report for a discussion of data limitations and further details about identifying the race and ethnicity of voters.

Eligible Voter Turnout by Age



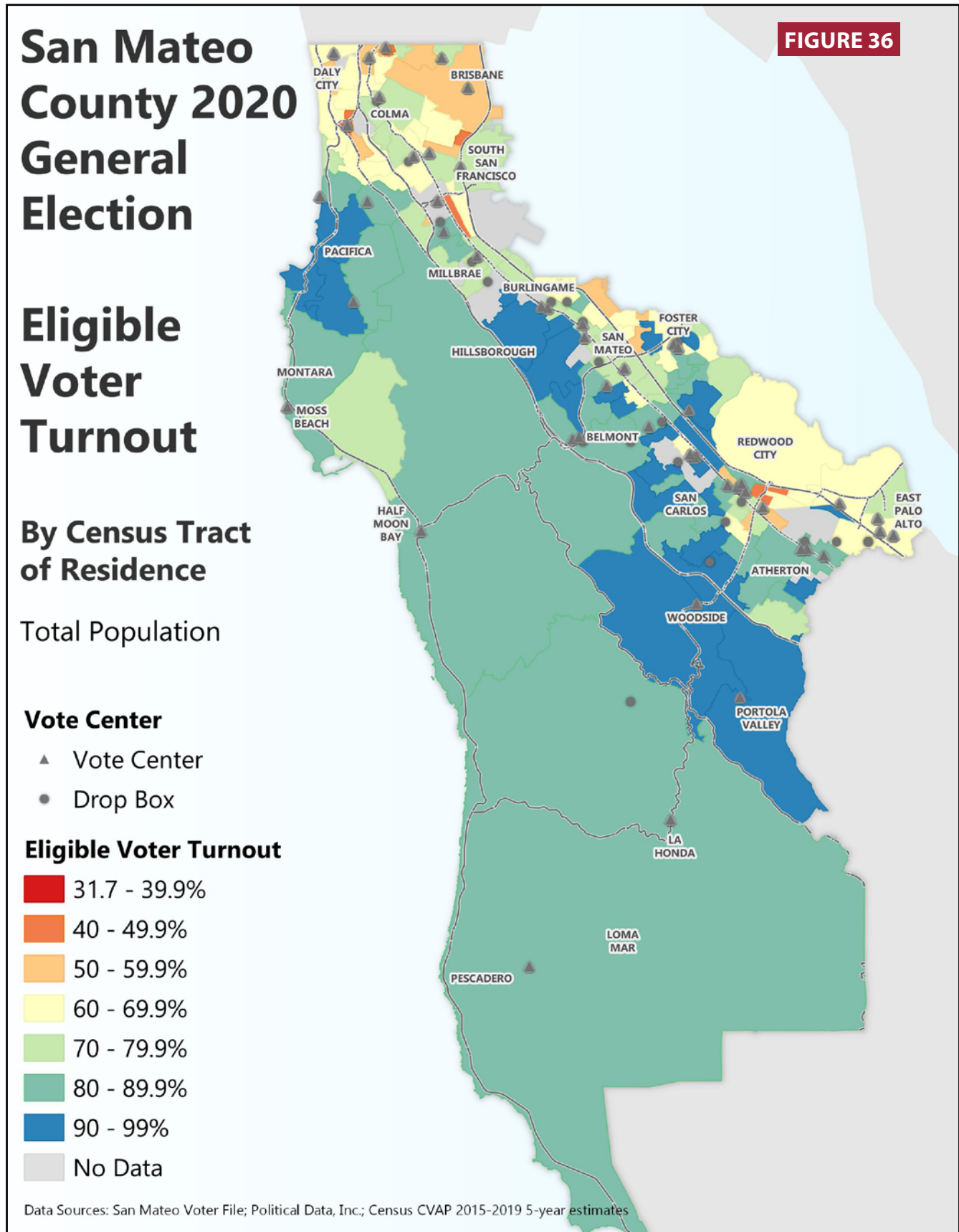
Eligible voter turnout varied by age group. Nearly 74% of eligible voters aged 65 and over voted, compared to 69.1% of voters aged 18 to 24 (Figure 35). Voters aged 25 to 34 had the highest eligible voter turnout at 90.6%, with voters aged 35 to 44 having the second highest eligible voter turnout rate at 79.6%.

Note: The citizen voting-age population (CVAP) estimates used in eligible voter turnout analysis for age groups are derived from the 2010 Decennial Census. Necessary data from the Census Bureau needed to update CVAP estimates based on the 2020 Decennial Census was not yet released at the time of this report's publication.

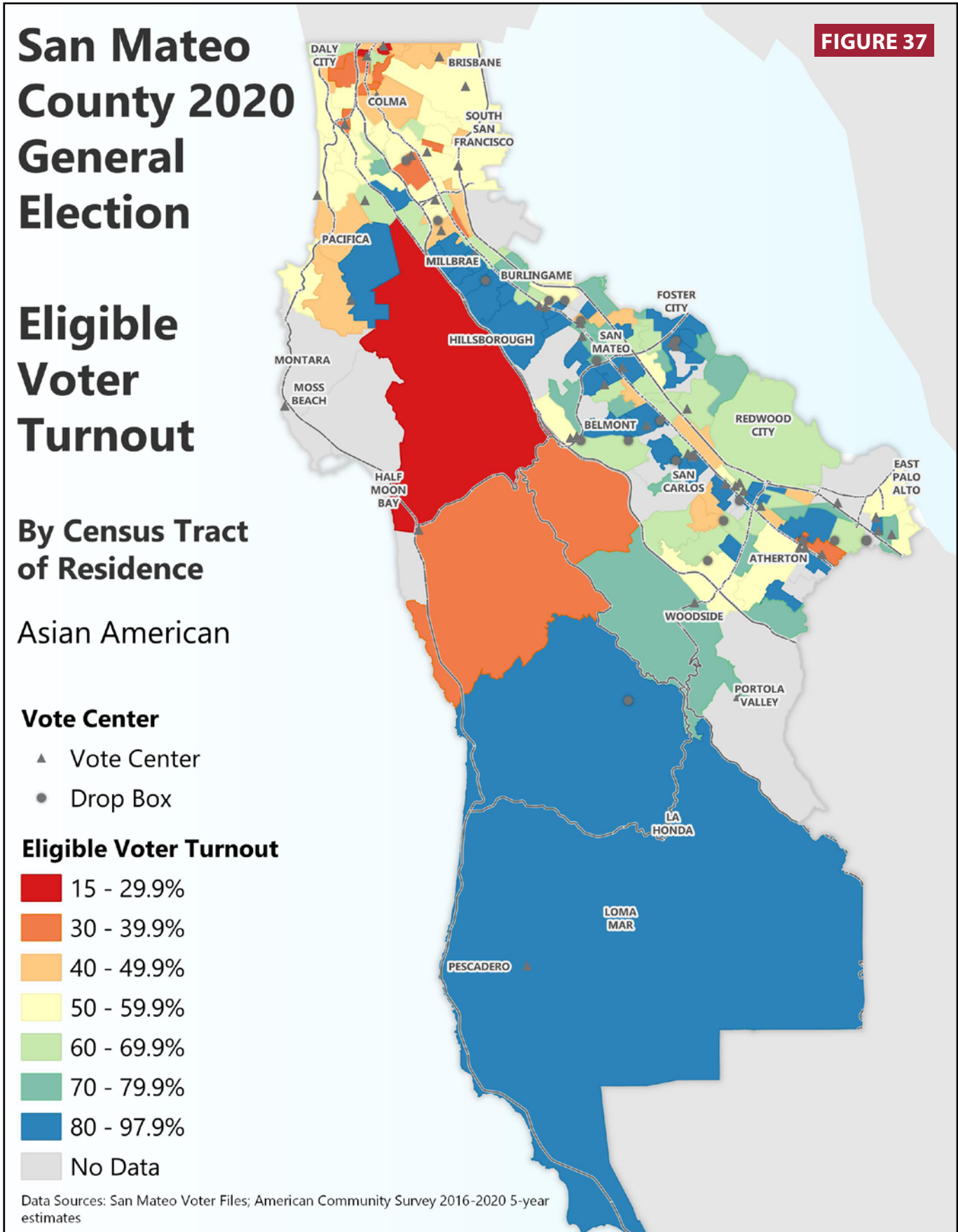
Eligible Voter Turnout by Census Tract of Residence

In order to examine the geographic variation of eligible voter turnout in San Mateo County, we calculated eligible voter turnout at the census tract level. We used American Community 5-year Estimates (2016-2020) for the citizen voting-age population (CVAP) and assigned voters to census tracts using the geographic coordinates of their home precinct.

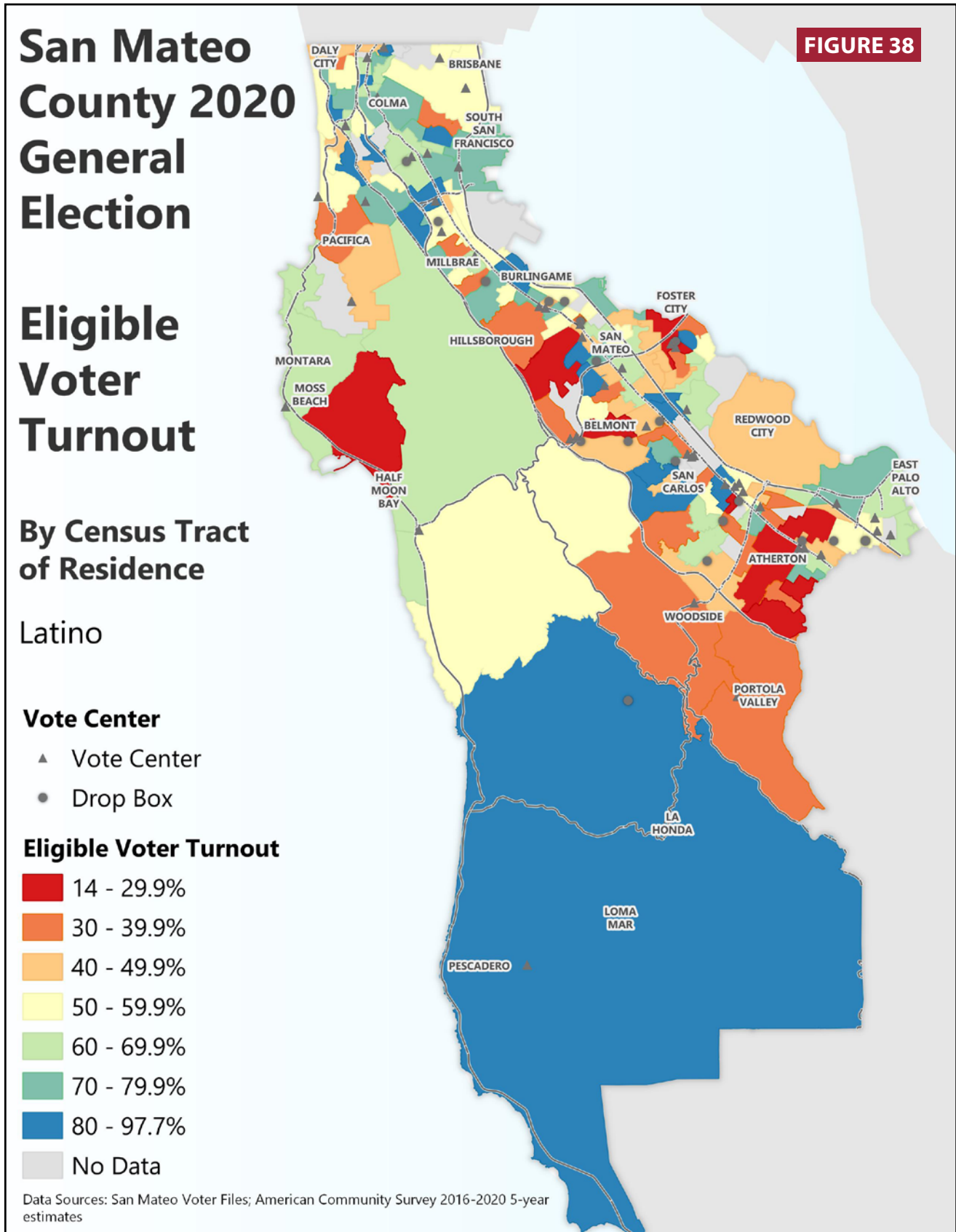
In the 2020 general election, higher eligible voter turnout for the total population occurred in areas around Pacifica, Burlingame, Woodside, and Portola Valley. Lower eligible turnout rates occurred in areas around South San Francisco, Daly City, Redwood City, Brisbane, East Palo Alto, Half Moon Bay, and Colma (Figure 36).



In San Mateo County, there was higher eligible voter turnout for Asian-American voters in the southern part of the county and lower turnout in the northern part of the peninsula. Figure 37 shows that less than 50% of eligible Asian-American voters in Colma voted in the 2020 general election, while 90.0% to 97.9% of voted in Pescadero and La Honda.



Eligible voter turnout for Latinos in the 2020 general election was higher in census tracts around South San Francisco, Colma, East Palo Alto, La Honda, and Pescadero (Figure 38). Census tracts with lower eligible voter turnout were found around Atherton, Brisbane, Woodside, Pacifica, and San Mateo. Pacifica, Half Moon Bay, Hillsborough, Belmont, Atherton, Woodside, Foster City, and Portola Valley.



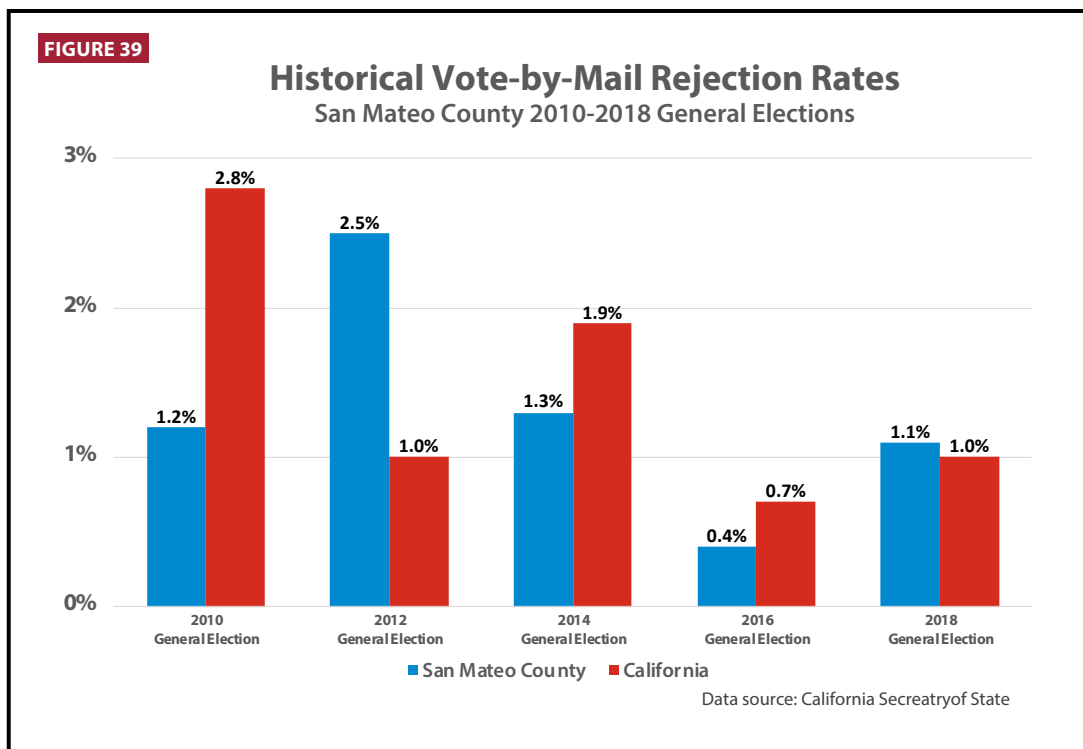
What were the Vote-by-Mail rejection rates in the 2020 San Mateo County general election, and what were the reasons for these ballot rejections?

Section Highlights

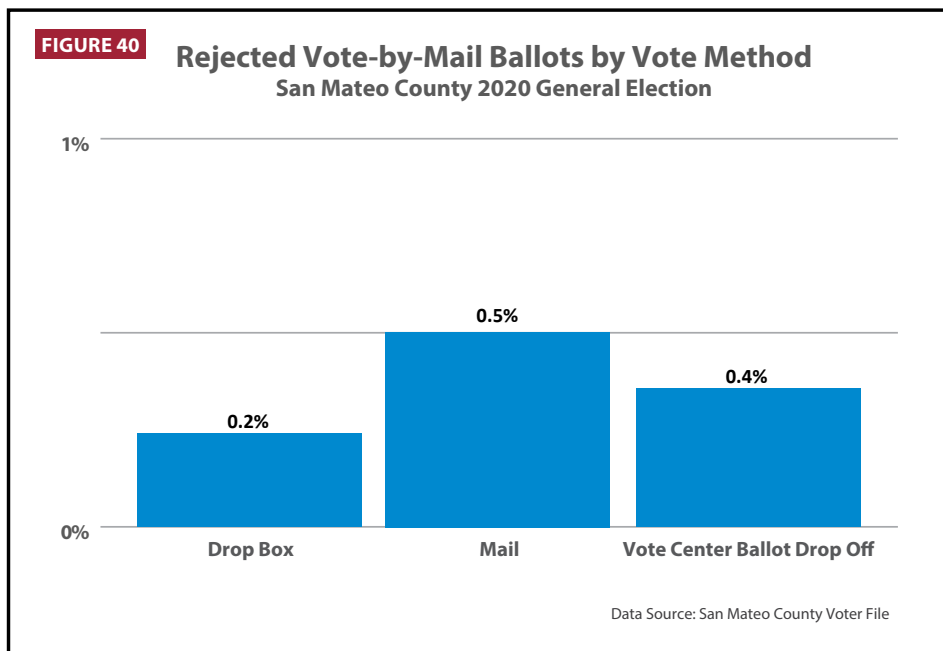
- In the San Mateo 2020 general election, 0.3% of all VBM ballots cast (includes ballots that were counted or rejected) were rejected.
- The majority of rejected VBM ballots were rejected for signatures issues, with 65.8% having non-matching signatures and 9.2% missing signatures. Another 20.7% were rejected for being received late.
- Latino, Asian-American, youth, and new voters had higher VBM rejection rates than the general population.
- Young voters aged 18 to 24 had a VBM rejection rate five times that of older voters aged 65 and over.
- Registered Democrats and registered Republicans had the same VBM rejection rate.
- Foreign-born and U.S.-born voters had the same rejection rate.

In the following sections, we examine the VBM ballot rejection rates in San Mateo County for the 2020 general election. The VBM ballot rejection rate is the percent of all VBM ballots cast (both accepted and rejected) that were rejected and uncounted. This includes all VBM ballots that were returned through the mail, dropped off at a ballot drop box location, or dropped off at a vote center.

Historically, San Mateo County has often had lower VBM ballot rejection rates than the statewide rate, as seen in Figure 39.¹⁸ In the 2020 general election, San Mateo County continued to have a lower VBM rejection rate than California as a whole. Our analysis found that of the 381,303 VBM ballots cast, 1,315 (0.3%) were rejected in the San Mateo County 2020 general election. In California, around 0.5% of VBM ballots cast in the 2020 general election were rejected.

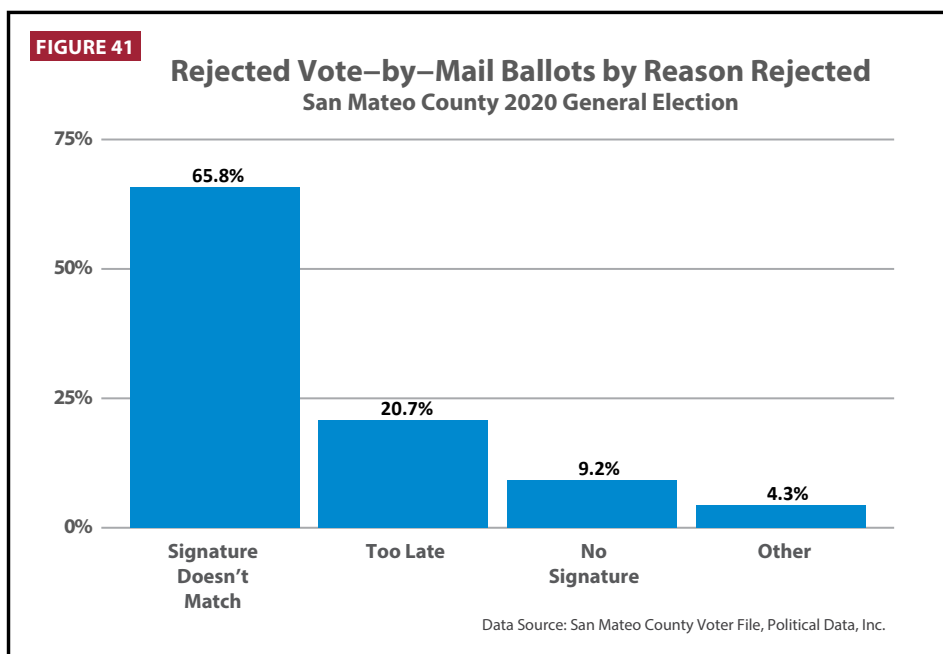


VBM Ballot Rejection Rate by Vote Method



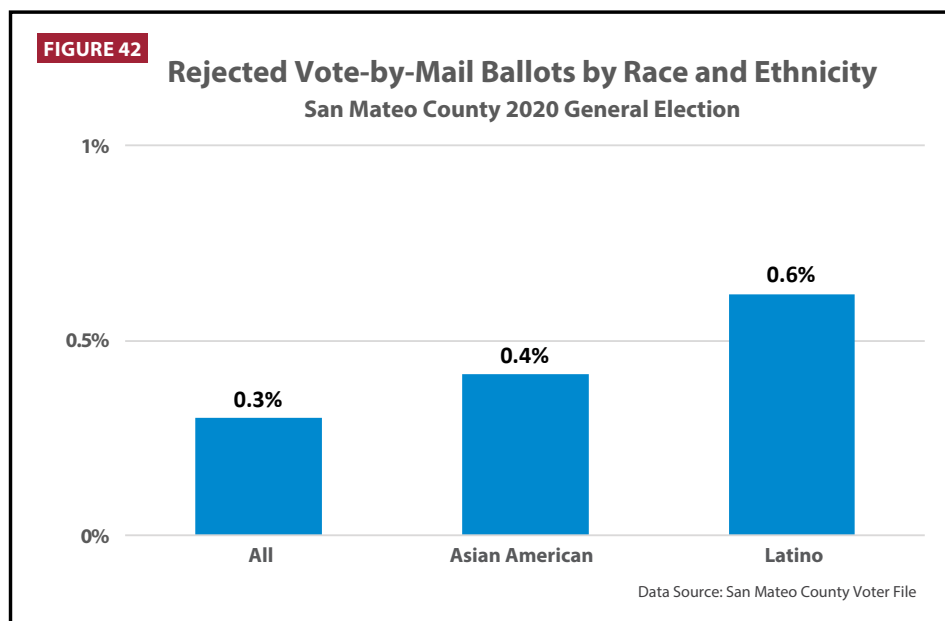
Looking at the various methods of returning VBM ballots, there is a difference in rejection rates among the return methods. VBM ballots returned to drop boxes had lower rejection rates than those sent through the mail or dropped off at a vote center location. Of all VBM ballots returned to a drop box, 0.2% were rejected, while 0.5% of ballots sent through the mail and 0.4% of ballots dropped off at a vote center location were rejected (Figure 40).

VBM Ballot Rejection Rate by Reason Rejected



The vast majority (75%) of rejected VBM ballots were rejected for signature issues (Figure 41). Of the 1,315 rejected VBM ballots in San Mateo County, 865 (65.8%) were rejected for non-matching signatures and 121 (9.2%) were rejected for missing signatures. Another 272 (20.7%) VBM ballots were rejected for being received late. The remaining 57 (4.3%) VBM ballots were rejected for other reasons.

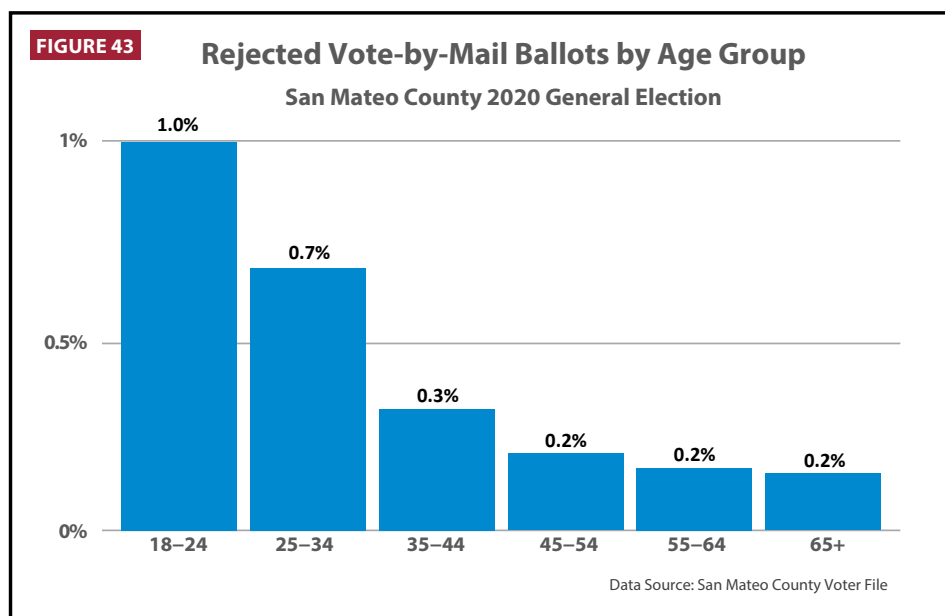
VBM Ballot Rejection Rate by Race and Ethnicity



VBM rejection rates varied slightly across racial and ethnic groups. Both Latino and Asian-American voters had higher VBM rejection rates than the general population. While 0.3% of all VBM ballots were rejected, 0.6% (313 rejected VBM ballots) of VBM ballots cast by Latino voters and 0.4% (336 rejected VBM ballots) of VBM ballots cast by Asian-American voters were rejected (Figure 42).

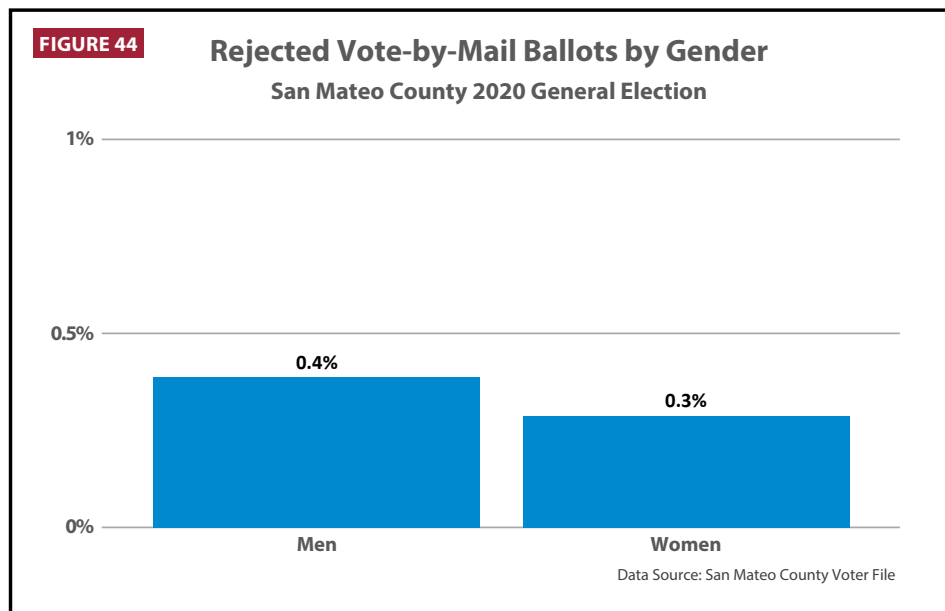
Note: Due to missing location data used for the geocoding portion of identifying the race and ethnicities of registrants, 1.3% (5,530) of registrants' race and ethnicities could not be identified and were omitted from all race and ethnicity analyses. See the appendix for available data for Black and white, non-Latino voters. Also see page 6 of this report for a discussion of data limitations and further details about identifying the race and ethnicity of voters.

VBM Ballot Rejection Rate by Age



Young voters had higher VBM rejection rates than older voters. In the general election, 1.0% (315 rejected VBM ballots) of VBM ballots cast by young voters aged 18 to 24 were rejected, while only 0.2% (401 rejected VBM ballots) of VBM ballots cast by older voters aged 45 and over were rejected (Figure 43). Youth voters had the highest VBM rejection rate of all age groups.

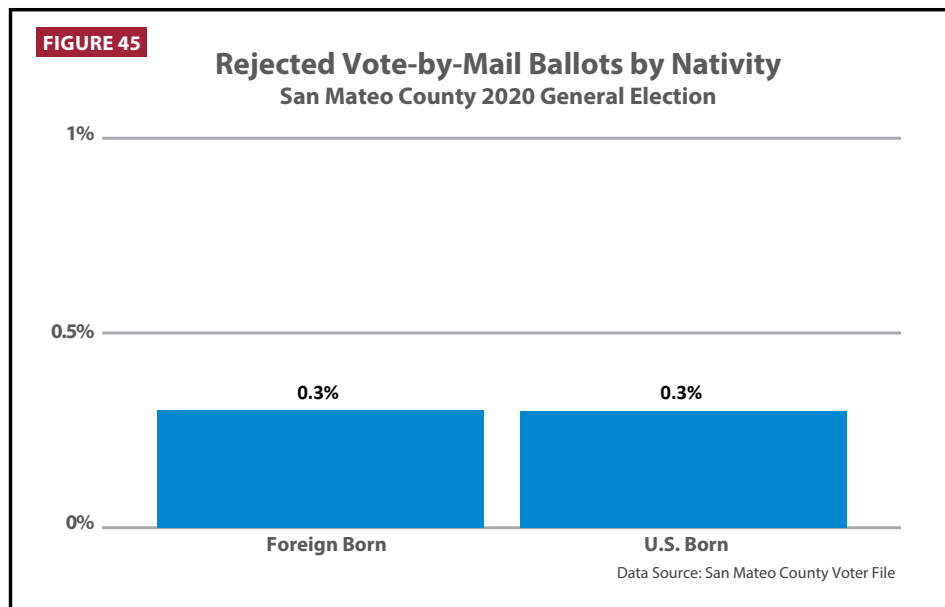
VBM Ballot Rejection Rate by Gender



Men had slightly higher VBM rejection rates than women.¹⁹ In San Mateo County, 0.4% (665 rejected VBM ballots) of VBM ballots cast by men were rejected, compared to 0.3% (538 rejected VBM ballots) of VBM ballots cast by women (Figure 44).

Note: There was no gender identified for 112 voters who had rejected VBM ballots.

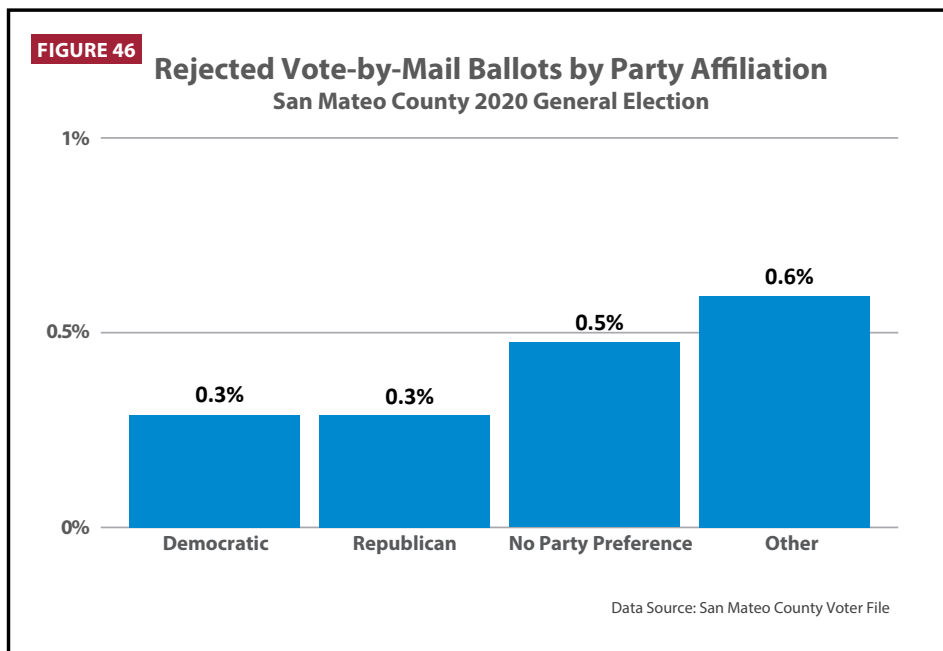
VBM Ballot Rejection Rate by Nativity



Foreign-born voters had the same VBM rejection rate as U.S.-born voters, with 0.3% of VBM ballots cast being rejected (248 rejected VBM ballots from foreign-born voters and 759 rejected VBM ballots from U.S.-born voters) (Figure 45).²⁰

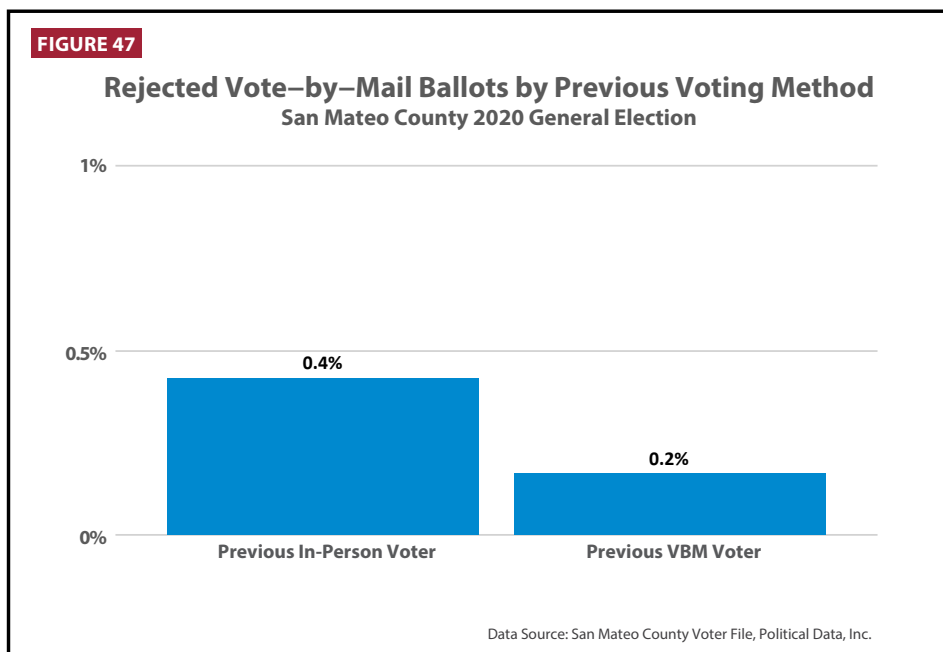
Note: Nativity could not be identified for 308 voters who had rejected VBM ballots.

VBM Ballot Rejection Rate by Party Affiliation



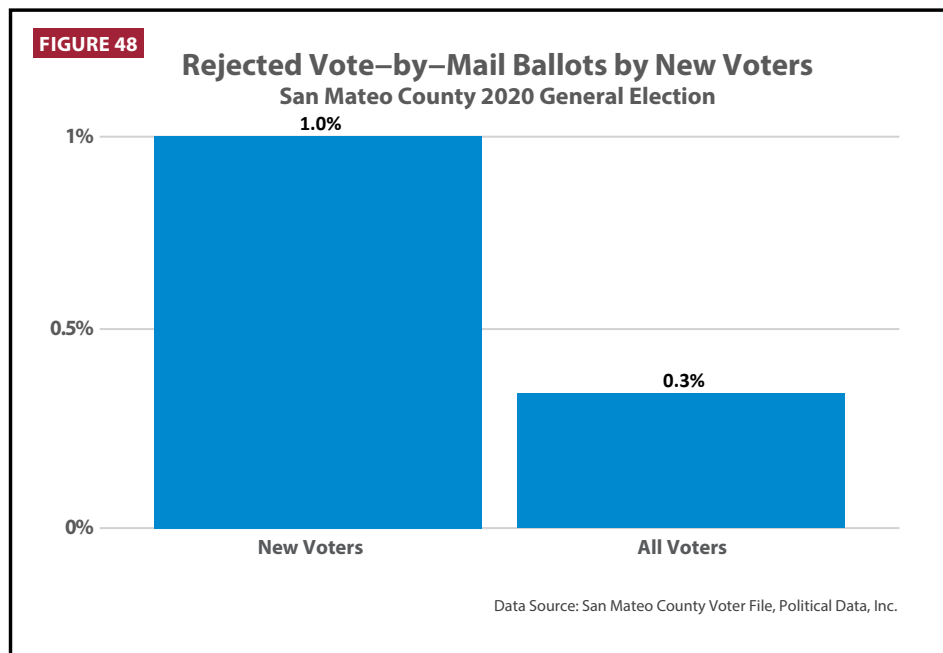
Registered Democrats and registered Republicans had the same VBM rejection rate in the general election, while No Party Preference voters had a higher VBM rejection rate than the two party affiliations. Both Democrats and Republicans had a VBM rejection rate of 0.3% (622 rejected VBM ballots from Democrats and 150 rejected VBM ballots from Republicans). While 0.5% (445 rejected VBM ballots) of VBM ballots cast by No Party Preference voters were rejected (Figure 46).

VBM Ballot Rejection Rate by Previous Voting Method



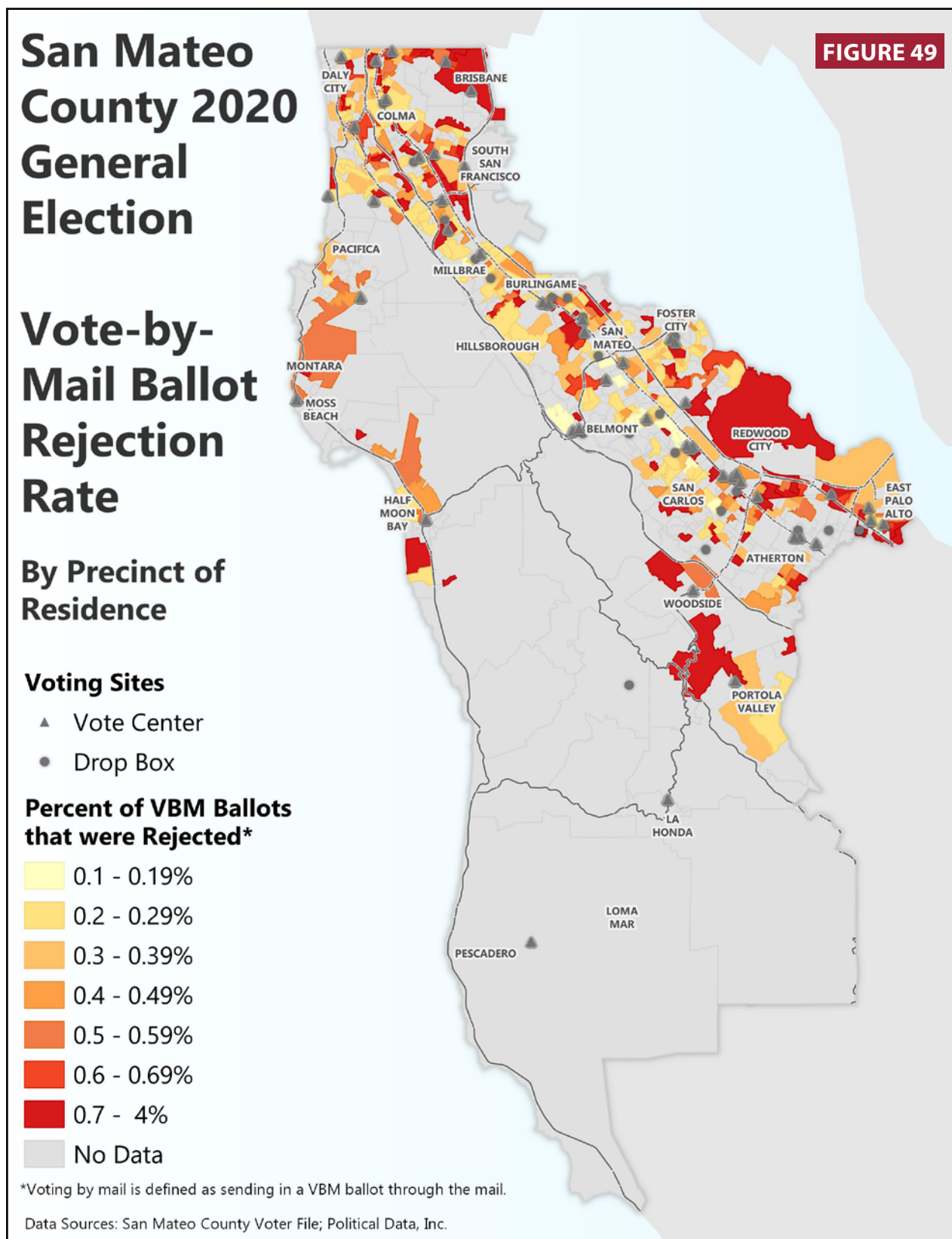
VBM rejection rates varied between previous voting methods. Previous in-person voters had twice the VBM rejection rate of previous VBM voters. Around 0.4% (201 rejected VBM ballots) of VBM ballots cast by voters who voted in person in their last election were rejected, compared to 0.2% (456 rejected VBM ballots) of VBM ballots cast by voters who voted with a VBM ballot in their last election (Figure 47).

VBM Ballot Rejection Rate by New Voters



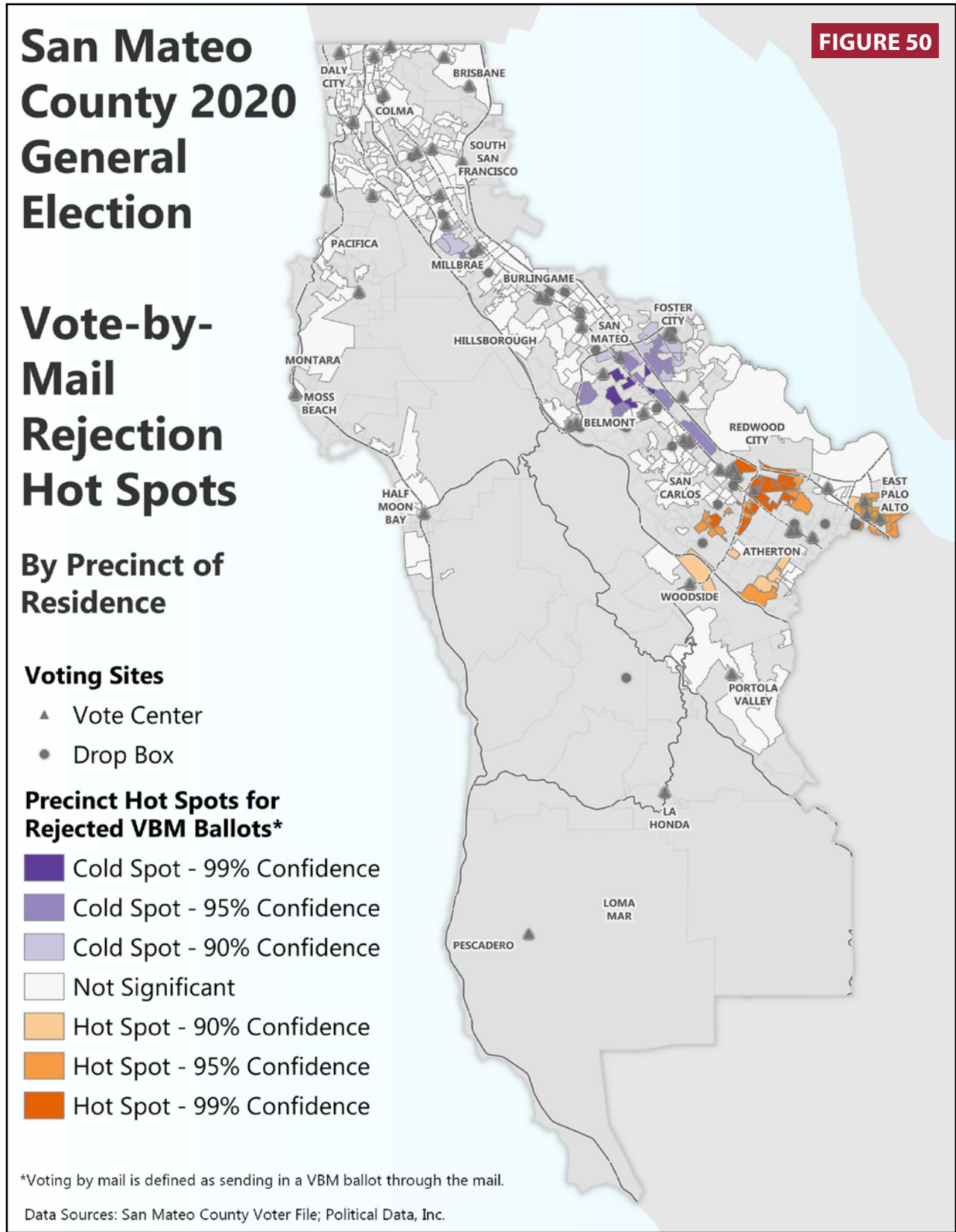
New voters had significantly higher rates of VBM rejection than the general population. Of all VBM ballots cast by new voters, 1.0% (282 rejected VBM ballots) were rejected, more than three times the rate (0.3%) of the general population (Figure 48).

VBM Ballot Rejection Rate by Precinct of Residence



Around 0.3% of all VBM ballots cast in the San Mateo County 2020 general election were rejected. Figure 49 shows there was a wide range of VBM rejection rates among the precincts. VBM rejection rates by voters' precinct of residence ranged from 0.1% to 4.0%. Precincts with rejection rates higher than the county rate (0.3%) clustered around Brisbane, Redwood City, Woodside, and East Palo Alto.

VBM Ballot Rejection Rate Hot Spots



In a hot spot analysis of the VBM rejection rates in the 2020 general election in San Mateo County, we see statistically significant clusters of high VBM rejection rates in East Palo Alto, Redwood City, Woodside, and Atherton (Figure 50). We see statistically significant clusters of low VBM rejection rates in San Mateo, Foster City, Belmont, and San Carlos.

Conclusion

In the 2020 general election, San Mateo County voters overwhelmingly (91.3%) voted using VBM ballots. The most used voting methods were returning VBM ballots through the mail (39.7%) and at a drop box (39.2%). A little under 9% of all voters voted in-person at a vote center, while 12.3% dropped off their VBM ballots at a vote center.

The majority of voters in San Mateo County voted early in the 2020 general election. Around 95% of ballots sent through the mail, 89% of all ballots returned to drop boxes, and over 70% of ballots returned to vote center locations were received before Election Day. Voters who voted in person at vote centers also voted early, with 86% of in-person votes cast before Election Day.

The ways in which San Mateo County voters cast their ballot varied by demographic group. Latino voters, young voters (aged 18 to 24), previous in-person voters, and new voters voted in-person at higher rates than the general population. Registered Republicans voted in person at more than twice the rate of registered Democrats, while registered Democrats used drop boxes at higher rates than registered Republicans. Asian-American voters and foreign-born voters sent their VBM ballots through the mail at higher rates than the general population.

Around 0.9% of all voters in San Mateo County used conditional voter registration. Latinos, Asian Americans, young voters, new voters, and previous in-person voters had higher CVR use rates than the general population.

Over 75% of eligible voters and 85.9% of registered voters in San Mateo County cast a ballot in the 2020 general election. Turnout rates were, however, lower among some demographic groups. Latinos, Asian Americans, and young voters had lower eligible and registered voter turnout rates than the general population. New voters and previous in-person voters had lower registered voter turnout rates than all voters. Registered Democratic voters had the highest registered voter turnout rate of all party affiliations.

Vote-by-Mail rejection rates were relatively low (0.3%) in San Mateo County. Some demographic groups, however, had higher rejection rates. Latino, Asian-American, and new voters had higher rejection rates than the general population. Young voters (aged 18 to 24) had five times the rejection rate of older voters (aged 65 and over). Previous in-person voters had twice the rejection rate of previous VBM voters.

Notes

1. Political Data, Inc. provided the San Mateo County voter registration file extracts from December 2020 with the following additional voter attributes identified: race and ethnicity, age, gender and nativity. These data are the actual registration records and not representative samples. Because of this, the level of confidence in the data is not susceptible to estimates as are survey or exit poll results. Latinos and Asians are distinguished in the registration data from the general population primarily by using Spanish and Asian surname lists which identify registrants with commonly occurring Spanish and Asian surnames. The Passel-Word Spanish surname list, published by the U.S. Census Bureau, was utilized to identify Latinos. For Asians, the U.S. Census Bureau's surname lists for six major Asian-American ethnic groups were utilized: Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Asian Indian, and Vietnamese. In addition, ballot language designation and birthplace also inform the identification race and ethnicity. Surname matching for research purposes is not reliable for white, non-Hispanic, and African-American populations, and thus, registration data is not examined by this study for these groups. White, non-Latinos and African Americans are 48.2% and 3.2% of the San Mateo County eligible (adult citizen) voter population, respectively. Note: Some additional Latinos and Asians may be registered to vote and not flagged by the surname databases.
2. For more information on the R package Who Are You? (WRU), see: <https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/wru/wru.pdf>
3. See Imai and Khanna (2016) "Improving Ecological Inference by Predicting Individual Ethnicity from Voter Registration Methods." : <https://imai.fas.harvard.edu/research/files/race.pdf>
4. For more information on the California Voter's Choice Act, see: http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160SB450
5. For information on Assembly Bill 860 and Senate Bill 423, see: <https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/>
6. For information on Assembly Bill 89 and Assembly Bill 100, see: <https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/>
7. The Voter's Choice Act requires counties to offer the option of Remote Accessible Vote-by-Mail (RAVBM). Voters with disabilities are sent a ballot electronically that they can download. They then can read and mark the ballot on their computer using their own accessible technology. They then print and mail in the ballot. For more information see California Senate Bill 450: http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160SB450
8. Assembly Bill 860 extended the window to receive VBM ballots in the 2020 general election from 3 days after Election Day to 17 days after Election Day in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB860
9. Gender is identified by Political Data, Inc. in the voter registration file by using gender name lists provided by the U.S. Census.
10. Nativity is identified by Political Data, Inc. in the voter registration file by a registrant's report of birthplace in their voter registration application.
11. For more information on this methodology, see ESRI Resources: http://resources.esri.com/help/9.3/arcgisengine/java/gp_toolref/spatial_statistics_tools/how_hot_spot_analysis_colon_getis_ord_gi_star_spatial_statistics_works.htm
12. See the California Secretary of State's Voter Participation Statistics by County: <https://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/sov/2020-general/sov/03-voter-participation-stats-by-county.pdf>
13. See the California Secretary of State's Historical Voter Registration and Participation in Statewide General Elections: <https://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/sov/2020-general/sov/04-historical-voter-reg-participation.pdf>
14. Voter data by demographic breakdown were acquired from the Statewide Database. These data are actual voter records and not representative samples. Due to differences in data collection methods, caution should be utilized when directly comparing California Secretary of State voter data publications with Statewide Database data. Latinos and Asians are distinguished in the statewide database voter data from the general population by the use of Spanish and Asian surname lists which identify registrants with commonly occurring Spanish and Asian surnames. Surname matching is not reliable for white, non-Hispanic, and African-American populations, and thus, voter data is not available for these groups. For more information on methodology and limitations, please see: <http://swdb.berkeley.edu/d10/Creating%20CA%20Official%20Redistricting%20Database.pdf>
15. Gender is identified by Political Data, Inc. in the voter registration file by using gender name lists provided by the U.S. Census.
16. Nativity is identified by Political Data, Inc. in the voter registration file by a registrant's report of birthplace in their voter registration application.
17. We define eligible voters as those who are adult citizens (whether registered to vote or not). These data were provided by the California Department of Finance.
18. See: California Secretary of State. "Historical Vote-By-Mail (Absentee) Ballot." <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/historical-absentee/>.
19. Gender is identified by Political Data, Inc. in the voter registration file by using gender name lists provided by the U.S. Census.
20. Nativity is identified by Political Data, Inc. in the voter registration file by a registrant's report of birthplace in their voter registration application.

Appendix

Language Spoken at Home by Limited English Proficiency for Population 5 years and Over* San Mateo County

Language	San Mateo County		California	
	LEP Population by Language	Percent of Total LEP Population	LEP Population by Language	Percent of Total LEP Population
Amharic, Somali, or other Afro-Asiatic languages	52	0.0%	29,452	0.5%
Arabic	1,920	1.6%	68,876	1.1%
Armenian	92	0.1%	85,752	1.3%
Bengali	237	0.2%	10,367	0.2%
Chinese (incl. Mandarin, Cantonese)	28,699	23.7%	670,510	10.6%
French (incl. Cajun)	590	0.5%	14,099	0.2%
German	265	0.2%	9,205	0.1%
Greek	847	0.7%	5,138	0.1%
Gujarati	284	0.2%	11,351	0.2%
Haitian	0	0.0%	2,295	0.0%
Hebrew	125	0.1%	4,576	0.1%
Hindi	1,967	1.6%	38,701	0.6%
Hmong	0	0.0%	25,961	0.4%
Ilocano, Samoan, Hawaiian, or other Austronesian languages	720	0.6%	37,356	0.6%
Italian	411	0.3%	8,372	0.1%
Japanese	2,866	2.4%	54,509	0.9%
Khmer	618	0.5%	30,780	0.5%
Korean	1,496	1.2%	195,113	3.1%
Malayalam, Kannada, or other Dravidian languages	0	0.0%	3,535	0.1%
Navajo	0	0.0%	180	0.0%
Nepali, Marathi, or other Indic languages	1,538	1.3%	12,129	0.2%
Persian (incl. Farsi, Dari)	447	0.4%	85,064	1.3%
Polish	0	0.0%	6,485	0.1%
Portuguese	2,390	2.0%	25,542	0.4%
Punjabi	155	0.1%	60,470	1.0%
Russian	2,733	2.3%	64,170	1.0%
Serbo-Croatian	75	0.1%	3,325	0.1%
Spanish	52,722	43.6%	4,038,453	63.6%
Swahili or other languages of Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa	0	0.0%	6,171	0.1%
Tagalog (incl. Filipino)	14,326	11.8%	249,455	3.9%
Tamil	143	0.1%	8,116	0.1%
Telugu	367	0.3%	10,655	0.2%
Thai, Lao, or other Tai-Kadai languages	294	0.2%	40,384	0.6%
Ukrainian or other Slavic languages	121	0.1%	13,645	0.2%
Urdu	293	0.2%	13,897	0.2%
Vietnamese	1,361	1.1%	336,865	5.3%
Yiddish, Pennsylvania Dutch or other West Germanic languages	0	0.0%	3,209	0.1%
Yoruba, Twi, Igbo, or other languages of Western Africa	0	0.0%	4,484	0.1%
Other and unspecified languages	132	0.1%	14,403	0.2%
Other Indo-European languages	122	0.1%	17,897	0.3%
Other languages of Asia	2,540	2.1%	27,726	0.4%
Other Native languages of North America	0	0.0%	1,231	0.0%
Total LEP Population	120,948	-	6,349,904	-

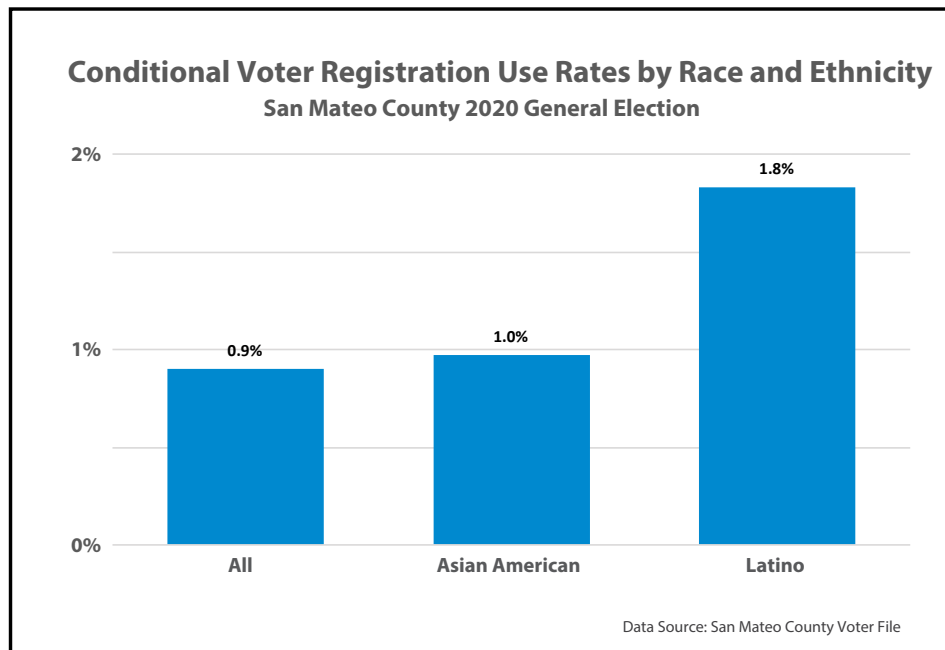
Data Source: American Community Survey 1-year 2015 to 2019

*Some languages listed have a large margin of error. This should be considered when reviewing this table, especially for language groups with small populations.

Conditional Voter Registration (CVR)

Of all votes cast and counted in the 2020 general election, 0.9% (3,440) were cast with conditional voter registration (CVR). CVR was disproportionately used by Latinos, Asian Americans, youth (aged 18 to 24), new voters, and previous in-person voters.

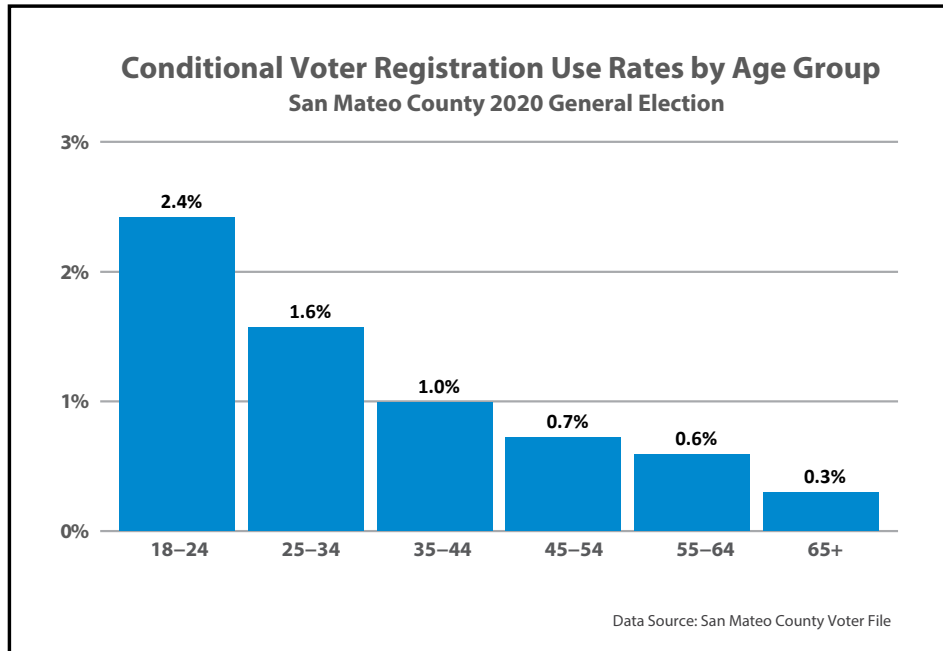
Conditional Voter Registration (CVR) by Race and Ethnicity



In the 2020 general election, Latino voters in San Mateo County used CVR at higher rates than both Asian-American and all voters. Around 1.8% of Latino voters used conditional voter registration, while Asian-American voters used CVR at a slightly higher rate than the general population at 1.0% and 0.9%, respectively. Of all voters who used CVR, Latino voters comprised just over 29%, while Asian-American voters comprised of 19.6% of voters.

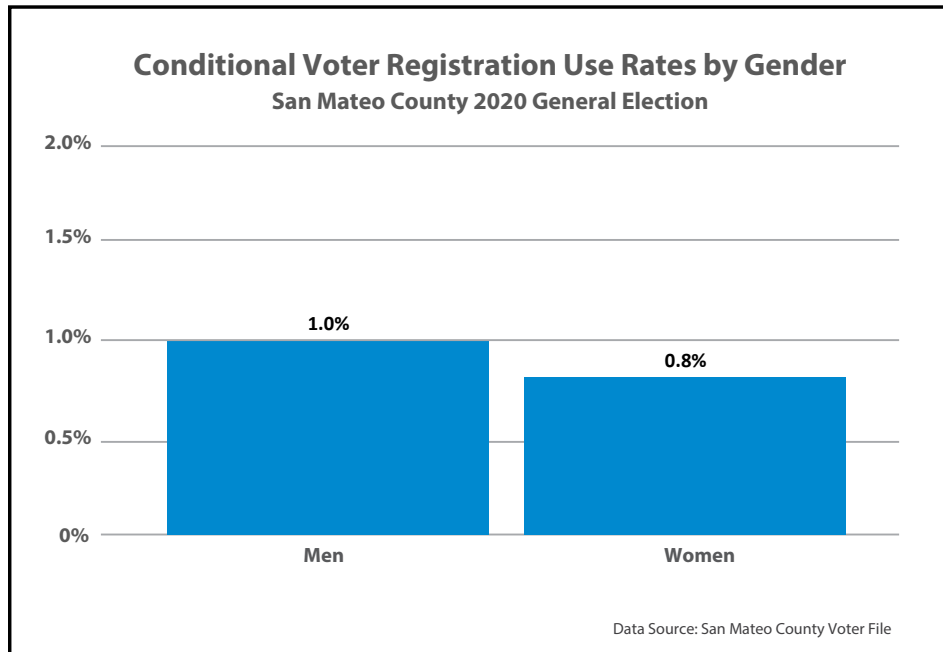
Note: Due to missing location data used for the geocoding portion of identifying the race and ethnicities of registrants, 1.3% (5,530) of registrants' race and ethnicities could not be identified and were omitted from all race and ethnicity analyses. See page 6 of this report for a discussion of data limitations and further details about identifying the race and ethnicity of voters.

Conditional Voter Registration (CVR) by Age Group



Young voters used conditional voter registration at higher rates than older voters. Around 2.4% of voters aged 18 to 24 used CVR, compared to 0.3% of voters aged 65 and over. Youth voters comprised of 21.3% of voters who used conditional voter registration, while older voters aged 65 and over comprised 8.6% of voters who used the option.

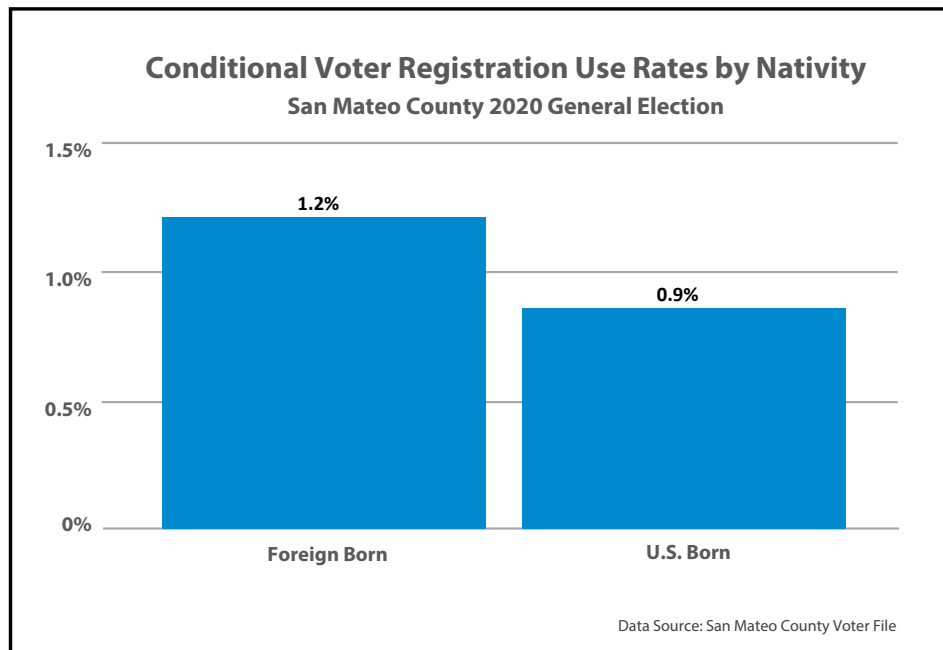
Conditional Voter Registration (CVR) by Gender



Men used conditional voter registration at higher rates than women.⁸ Around 1.0% of men and 0.8% of women in San Mateo County used CVR. Just over 51% of voters who used CVR were men, while 45.2% of voters who used CVR were women.

Note: The remaining 3.6% of voters who used CVR did not have their gender identified.

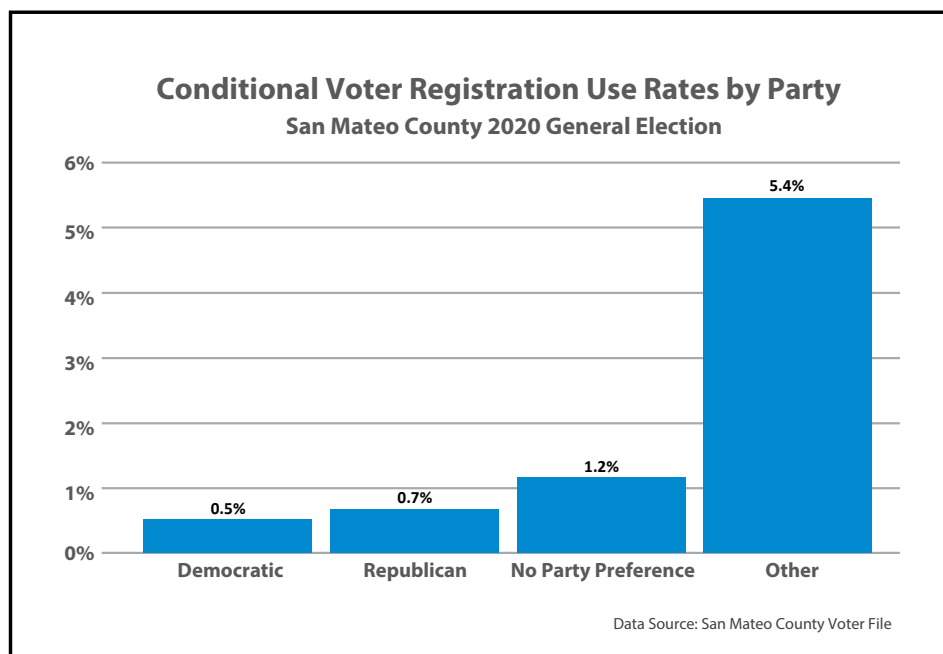
Conditional Voter Registration (CVR) by Nativity



Foreign-born voters used CVR at higher rates than U.S.-born voters.⁹ Around 1.2% of foreign-born voters used CVR, compared to 0.9% of U.S.-born voters who cast a vote. Foreign-born voters comprised 31.6% of voters who used CVR, while U.S.-born voters comprised of 63.9% of voters who used CVR.

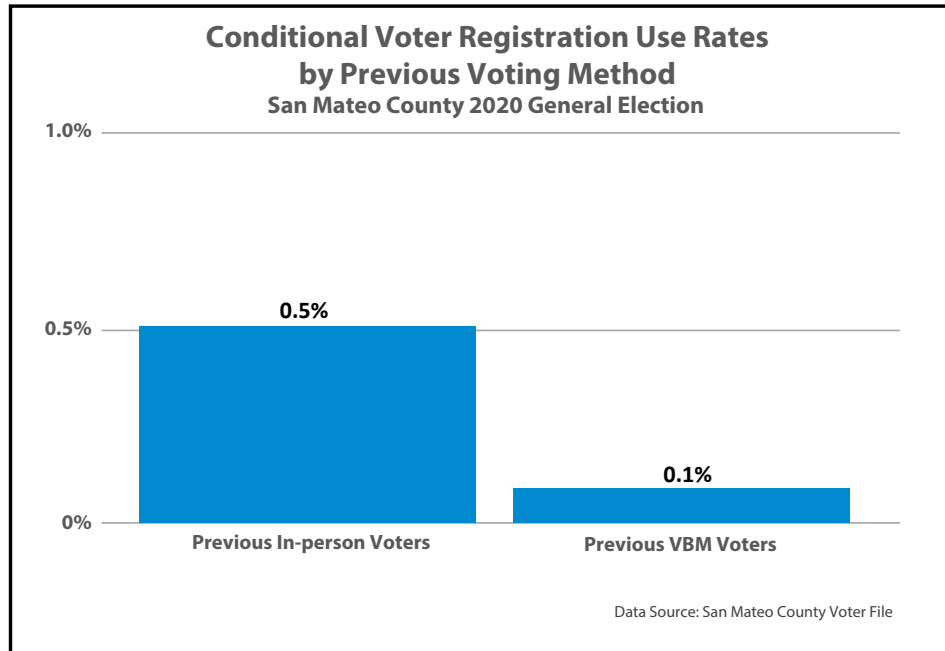
Note: The remaining 4.5% of CVR voters did not have their nativity identified.

Conditional Voter Registration (CVR) by Party Affiliation



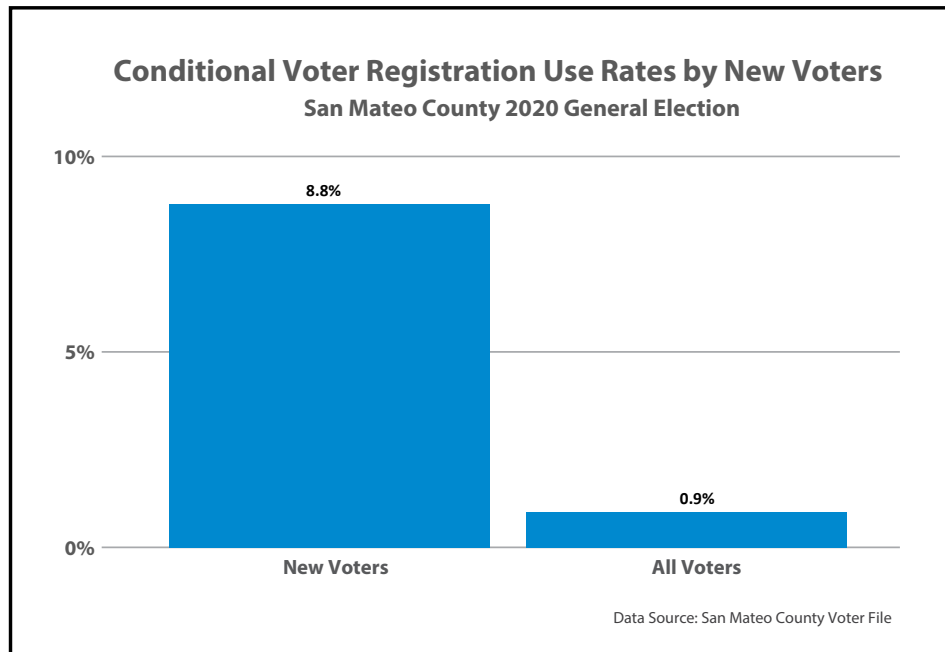
Registered Republican voters used conditional voter registration at higher rates than Democratic voters, while No Party Preference voters used CVR at higher rates than both party affiliations. Of all registered Republicans who cast a vote, 0.7% used CVR compared to 0.5% of Democrats and 1.2% of No Party Preference Voters. Of all voters who used CVR, 31.8% were registered Democrats, 10.9% were registered Republicans, 31.3% were No Party Preference, and 26.0% were registered as other parties.

Conditional Voter Registration (CVR) by Previous Method



Previous in-person voters used conditional voter registration at higher rates than previous VBM voters. Around 0.5% of previous in-person voters who cast a vote used CVR, compared to 0.1% of previous VBM voters.

Conditional Voter Registration (CVR) by New Voters



New voters used conditional voter registration at much higher rates than the general population, with 8.8% of new voters who cast a vote using the option. New voters also represented a significant proportion of voters who used CVR. Over 73% of voters who used CVR were new voters.

Vote Methods Black and White Voters San Mateo County 2020 General Election

Method	Black Voters			White Voters		
	Method Count	Total Votes	Percent Method	Method Count	Total Votes	Percent Method
Drop Box	5,846	15,371	38.0%	85,230	211,031	40.4%
Mail	6,120	15,371	39.8%	81,345	211,031	38.5%
VC Ballot Drop Off	2,011	15,371	13.1%	26,035	211,031	12.3%
Vote Center	1,376	15,371	9.0%	18,258	211,031	8.7%

Data Source: San Mateo County Voter File

Note: These data identifying white and Black voters in the California voter file are not reliable for research purposes. Exercise strong caution when reviewing this data table

Vote-by-Mail Rejected Rates Black and White Voters San Mateo County 2020 General Election

Black Voters			White Voters		
Rejected VBM Ballots	Total VBM Ballots Cast	Percent VBM Rejected	Rejected VBM Ballots	Total VBM Ballots Cast	Percent VBM Rejected
49	13,977	0.4%	578	192,610	0.3%

Data Source: San Mateo County Voter File

Note: These data identifying white and Black voters in the California voter file are not reliable for research purposes. Exercise strong caution when reviewing this data table

Conditional Voter Registration Black and White Voters San Mateo County 2020 General Election

Black Voters			White Voters		
CVR Ballots Counted	Total Votes	Percent CVR	CVR Ballots Counted	Total Votes	Percent CVR
164	15,371	1.1%	1,264	211,031	0.6%

Data Source: San Mateo County Voter File

Note: These data identifying white and Black voters in the California voter file are not reliable for research purposes. Exercise strong caution when reviewing this data table

Registered Voter Turnout Black and White Voters San Mateo County 2020 General Election

Black Voters			White Voters		
Votes Counted	Total Registered	Registered Voter Turnout	Votes Counted	Total Registered	Registered Voter Turnout
15,371	18,348	83.8%	211,031	237,355	88.9%

Data Source: San Mateo County Voter File

Note: These data identifying white and Black voters in the California voter file are not reliable for research purposes. Exercise strong caution when reviewing this data table

San Mateo County 2020 General Election

Eligible Voter Turnout

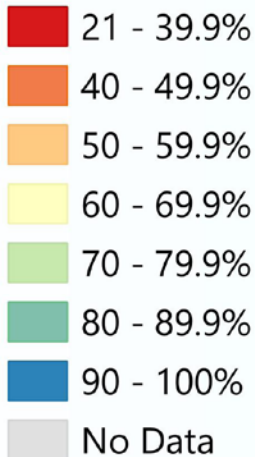
By Census Tract of Residence

Black

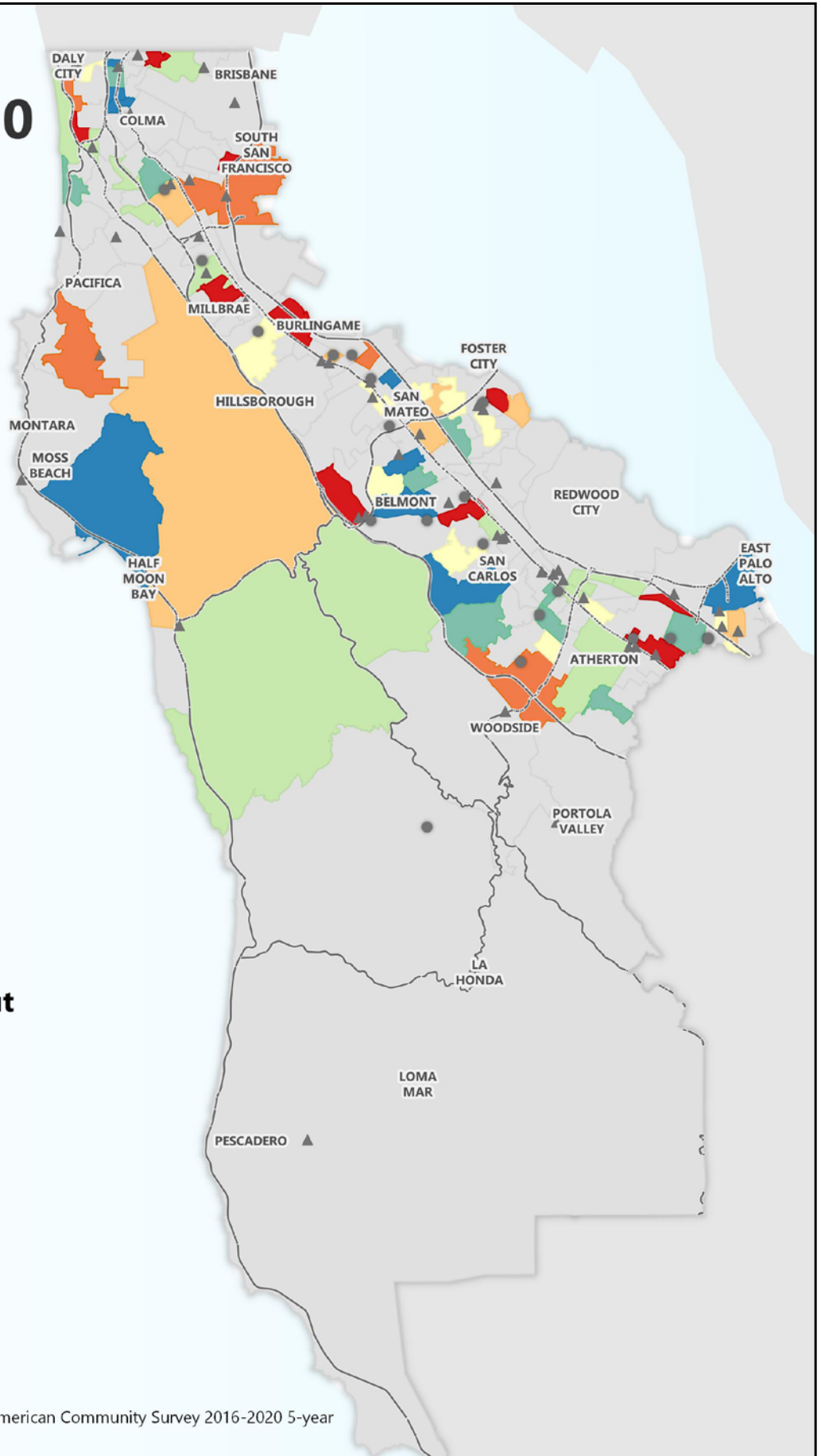
Vote Center

- ▲ Vote Center
- Drop Box

Eligible Voter Turnout



Data Sources: San Mateo Voter Files; American Community Survey 2016-2020 5-year estimates



San Mateo County 2020 General Election

Registered Voter Turnout

By Precinct of Residence

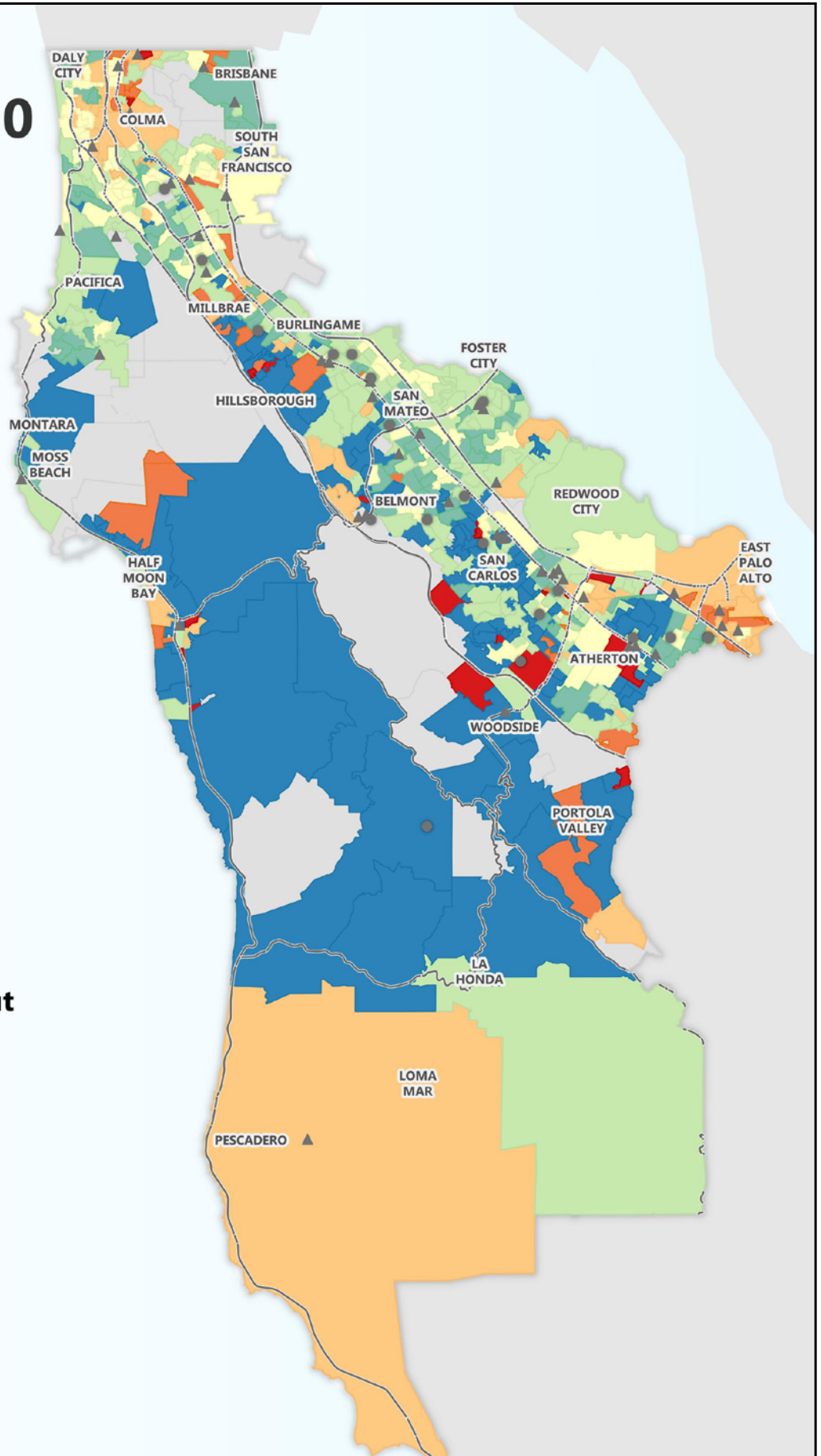
Black

Vote Center

- ▲ Vote Center
- Drop Box

Eligible Voter Turnout

- 0 - 69.9%
- 70 - 74.9%
- 75 - 79.9%
- 80 - 84.9%
- 85 - 89.9%
- 90 - 94.9%
- 95 - 100%
- No Data



Data Sources: San Mateo Voter Files

Distance from Voter Residence to Vote Center Used in the San Mateo County 2020 General Election

Black






Average Distance (miles) from Latino Voter Residence to Vote Center Used

- 0.24 - 1.49
- 1.5 - 2.49
- 2.5 - 3.49
- 3.5 - 4.49
- 4.5 - 13.18

* We used the Euclidean distance (straight-line) distance from a voter's residence to the vote center used as a rough estimate of the distance a voter may have traveled. A voter may not have traveled to the vote center directly from home, or may have selected a vote center close to their place of employment, etc., but those data are not available.

Data Sources: San Mateo County Voter File; Political Data, Inc.

Count of All Ballots Received at Vote Center

-  120 - 131
-  100 - 120
-  60 - 100
-  20 - 60
-  1 - 20

