Do UC Davis students plan to vote in the 2008 presidential election?

By

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Survey Background and Methods

In fall quarter 2007, a representative from the Roosevelt Institution, “the nation’s first student think tank,” asked Student Affairs Research & Information (SARI) to conduct a QuickSurvey to assist in their research related to student democratic participation.

From November 27 to December 3, 2007, SARI administered a QuickSurvey to all students via the MyUCDavis portal (http://my.ucdavis.edu). A total of 7,583 students responded to the QuickSurvey, or about 25% of all undergraduate and graduate students combined.

Students were to indicate whether or not they planned to vote in the upcoming presidential election. Response options included, *yes*, *no*, and *unsure*.

Below is a screenshot of the QuickSurvey face question as it appeared on the portal:
Each of these response options led to a branch question. Here are the screenshots of the branches as they appeared on the portal:

**Yes branch**

![Yes branch screenshot]

**No branch**

![No branch screenshot]

**Unsure branch**

![Unsure branch screenshot]
Results

Seventy percent (70%) of students reported that they planned to vote in the upcoming presidential election. This is followed by 16% of students who reported that they do not plan to vote and 14% who were unsure whether they plan to vote.

Figure 1: "Do you plan on voting in the upcoming presidential election?"
Respondents who answered *yes* were prompted to answer the follow-up question, “Do you believe that your vote counts?” Of the 5,283 respondents who answered *yes* to the face question, 4,738 replied to the branch and 57% of these reported that they believe their vote does count. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of respondents reported that it depended on the election and 16% reported that they do not believe their vote counts but they plan to vote anyway.

**Figure 2: "Do you believe that your vote counts?"**

![Bar chart showing responses to the question: 57% said yes, 27% answered sometimes depending on the election, and 16% said no but plan to vote anyways.](chart.png)
Respondents who answered no were prompted to answer a follow-up question about the reasons they do not plan to vote. Of the 1,240 respondents who answered no to the face question, 1,019 replied to the branch and 40% of these reported that they are not eligible to vote, 25% reported that they are not registered to vote, and 18% reported that they were indifferent to the outcome of this election. Multiple responses were allowed, so the frequencies do not sum to 100%.

Figure 3: Explain why you do not plan to vote
Respondents who answered *unsure* were prompted to answer a follow-up question about why they might not vote. Of the 1,060 respondents who answered *unsure* to the face question, 807 replied to the branch. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of these reported that they might not vote because they are not registered to vote and 15% reported they are indifferent to the outcome of this election. Multiple responses were allowed, so the frequencies do not sum to 100%.

**Figure 4: Explain why you might not vote**

![Bar chart showing reasons for not voting](chart.png)

- 39% I am not registered to vote
- 12% I don't know if I will be able to submit an absentee ballot
- 9% I dislike the candidates
- 10% I dislike the campaign process
- 7% I dislike the electoral college
- 15% I am indifferent to the outcome of this election
- Other
Undergraduate students were significantly more likely than graduate students to report that they were unsure if they will participate in the upcoming presidential election (16% vs. 4%).

Figure 5: "Do you plan to vote in the upcoming presidential election?" by Class Level

[Bar chart showing percentage of Undergraduate and Graduate students planning to vote, with 69% of Undergraduates and 73% of Graduates planning to vote, 16% of Undergraduates unsure, 22% of Graduates unsure, and 4% of Undergraduates unsure.]
Among undergraduates, the likelihood of voting increased as class level increased, with 74% of seniors planning to vote, compared to 65% of freshmen.

Figure 6: "Do you plan to vote in the upcoming presidential election?" by Undergraduate Class Level
Asian/Asian-American students were least likely to report that they plan to vote in the upcoming presidential election (49%). They were also the most likely to be unsure if they will vote (24%). American Indian/Alaskan Native and White students were significantly more likely to report that they plan to vote in the presidential election than students of other ethnicities (88% and 84%, respectively).

Figure 7: "Do you plan to vote in the upcoming presidential election?" by Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>% of Yes</th>
<th>% of No</th>
<th>% of Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American/Black</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Asian-American</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Among Asian students, Filipino/Filipino-American and Japanese/Japanese-American students were most likely to report that they plan to vote in the upcoming presidential election (62% and 61%, respectively) and Chinese/Chinese-American and Korean/Korean-American students were least likely (43% and 41%). Please note that the Other Asian category includes Pacific Islanders and Southeast Asians because of their small sample sizes.

Figure 8: "Do you plan to vote in the upcoming presidential election?" by Asian Ethnicity

Females were more likely than males to report that they plan to vote (71% vs. 67%). Although the difference was statistically significant, it is not considered to have practical significance.