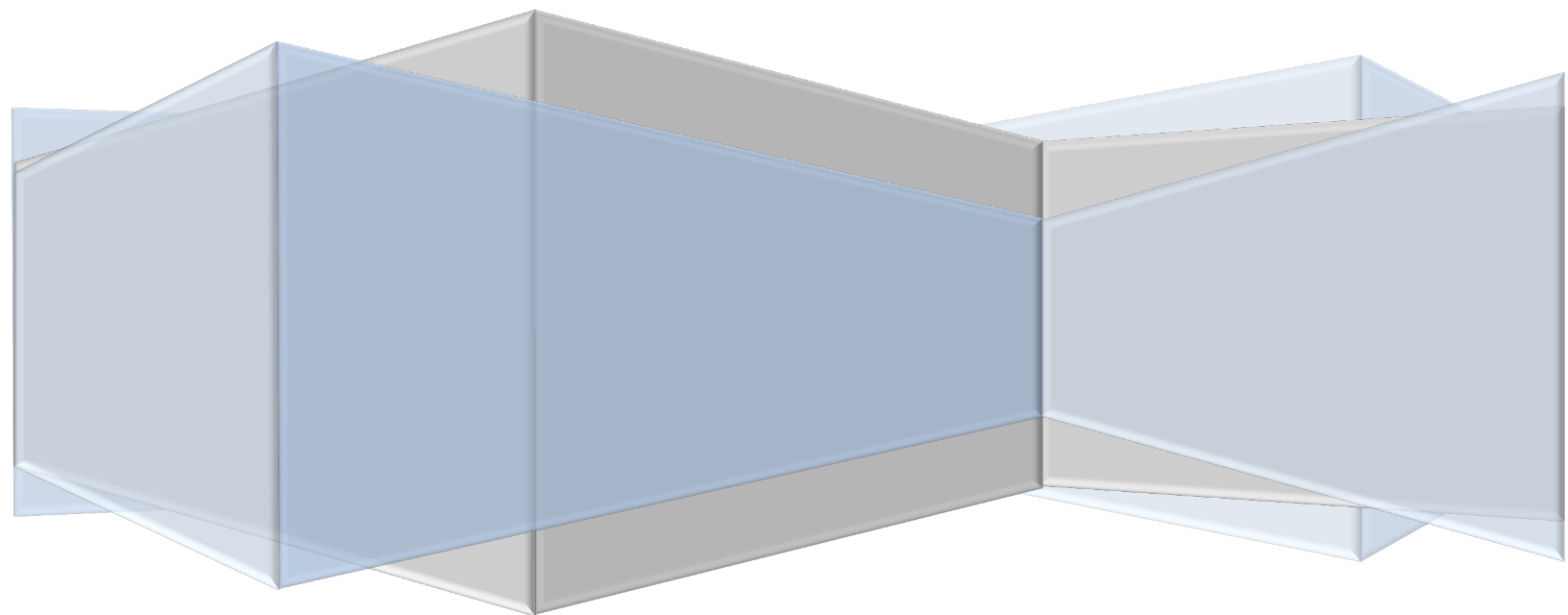


California Secretary of State

Bilingual Poll Worker Recruitment Report

November 8, 2022, General Election



Introduction and Methods

California is the most populous state in the United States and one of the most diverse.^[1] It is a melting pot of people from different backgrounds and cultures, and it creates a unique population that is rich in language diversity. More than any other state, 43.9% of California's population speaks a language other than English at home, which is more than double the percentage of the United States as a whole. When considering California's large population, 43.9% equates to almost 16.3 million California residents that speak a language other than English at home.^[2] There has always been a large Spanish speaking population throughout the State, and it is continuing to grow. Over 10.5 million California residents speak Spanish at home, which is 28.3% of the population. With the growing language diversity and percentage of the population who speak a language other than English on the rise, California elections officials are faced with a unique challenge of recruiting bilingual poll workers every election.

California follows both federal and state law to determine the languages each county must support and the different requirements for each of these supported languages. New federal language determinations are made every 5 years based on census information as required by Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The act requires counties, where more than 10,000 of their voting-age population are members of a single language minority, to provide all their election materials that are available in English in that language as well.^[3] California Elections Code section 14201 mandates even further language support in counties for precincts that have 3% or more of the voting-age population with a single language minority.^[4]

In addition to providing election materials, counties are also required to make reasonable efforts in recruiting bilingual poll workers for their mandated languages every election.^[5] For the California Secretary of State to assess the level of language support across the state, the "2022 November Bilingual Poll Worker Recruitment Survey" was provided to each county elections office. The questions in the survey captured the number of bilingual poll workers for each of the counties' mandated languages who signed up to work at a voting location, and the number of those recruited who served on Election Day for the November 8, 2022, General Election. Counties were also asked to provide the number of bilingual legal permanent residents and bilingual student volunteers, if applicable. Furthermore, counties had the opportunity to provide details about any other language access services they provided at voting locations.

This report provides a summary analysis of the responses provided by each county elections office and published on the Secretary of State website.

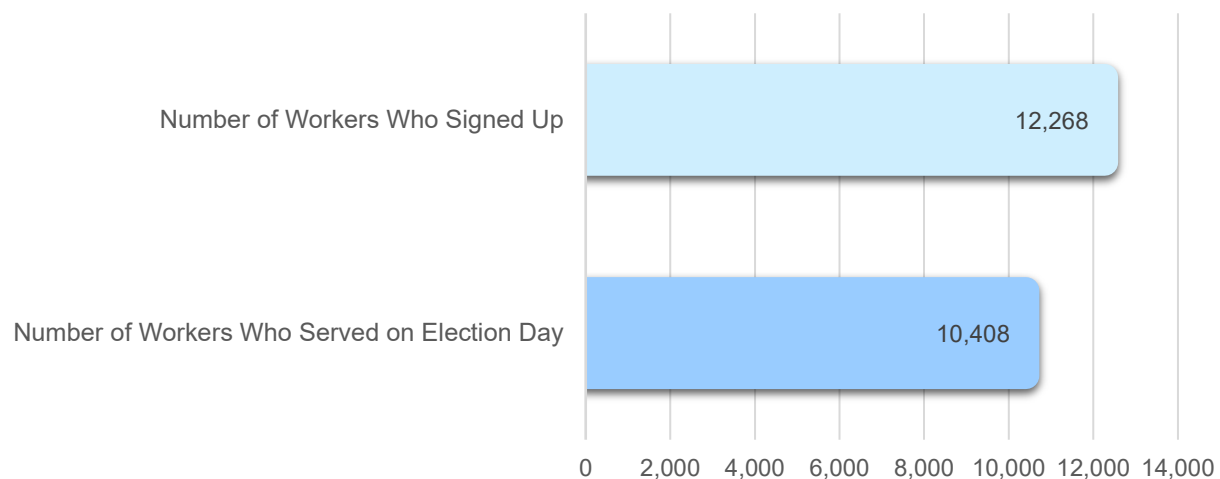
Bilingual Poll Worker Recruitment Survey Results and Analysis

Each of California's 58 counties were required to provide the Secretary of State responses to the Bilingual Poll Worker Recruitment Survey detailing their efforts to recruit bilingual poll workers for the November 8, 2022, General Election. According to the responses provided by the county election officials, 54 counties attempted to recruit bilingual poll workers. The remaining four counties--Alpine, Plumas, Sierra, and Trinity, are either all vote-by-mail counties or have no federal or state mandated languages.

Bilingual Poll Workers Who Signed Up and Served on Election Day

A total of 12,268 people signed up to be bilingual poll workers, and 10,408 bilingual poll workers served on Election Day throughout the State. This means that 84.8% of those who signed up did end up serving at a voting location on Election Day. When comparing the data from previous surveys, the total number of people signing up has decreased, but the percentage of those who signed up and served on Election Day has increased 10.7%—from 74.1% in 2020 to 84.8% in 2022.^[6] The lower percentage of poll workers that signed up and served in 2020 may have been due to COVID mandates or concerns of safety, and the percentage of poll workers serving in 2022 may have increased as COVID mandates were lifted.

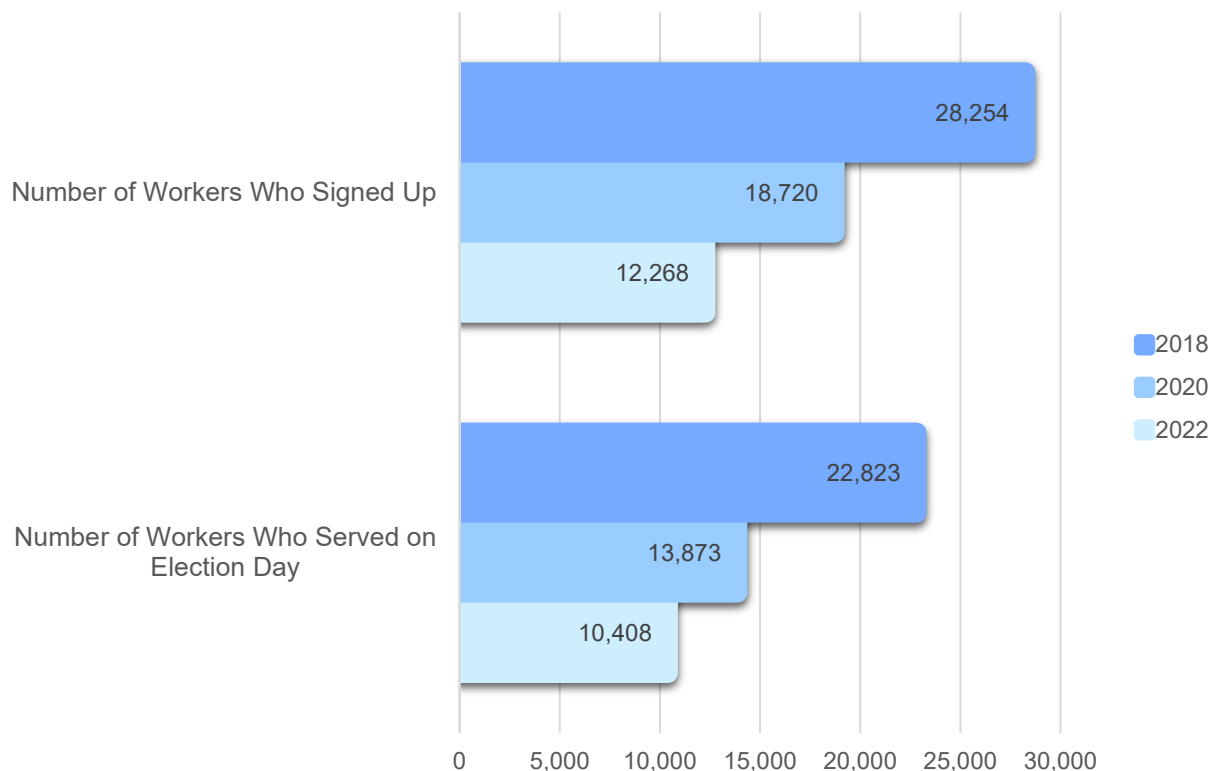
Bilingual Poll Workers Who Signed Up and Who Served on Election Day



A possible reason for the drop in poll workers signing up for the November 2022 Election when compared to the November 2020 Election could be that it mirrors voter turnout in Gubernatorial Elections versus Presidential Elections. The November 2022 Election was a Gubernatorial Election and the state saw a 50.80% voter turnout. In contrast, the November 2020 Election was a Presidential Election and the state saw more voters

participating with an 80.67% voter turnout.^[7] For at least the past 20 years, California voters have been more active in Presidential General Elections than they are in Gubernatorial General Elections. The number of people signing up to work as poll workers may be higher during an election such as a Presidential Election that typically has a higher voter turnout. Another explanation for the drop in poll workers could be attributed to more voters relying on voting-by-mail versus voting in person at polling places or voting locations. There has been a steady upward trend of voters voting-by-mail, with the following percentages of voters in the last four general elections choosing to cast their ballots by mail: 57.79% for November 2016, 65.31% for November 2018, 86.72% for November 2020, and 87.52% for November 2022.^[8]

Election Comparisons of Poll Workers Who Signed Up and Served on Election Day



80.8% of those who signed up served on Election Day in 2018, 74.1% in 2020, and 84.8% in 2022

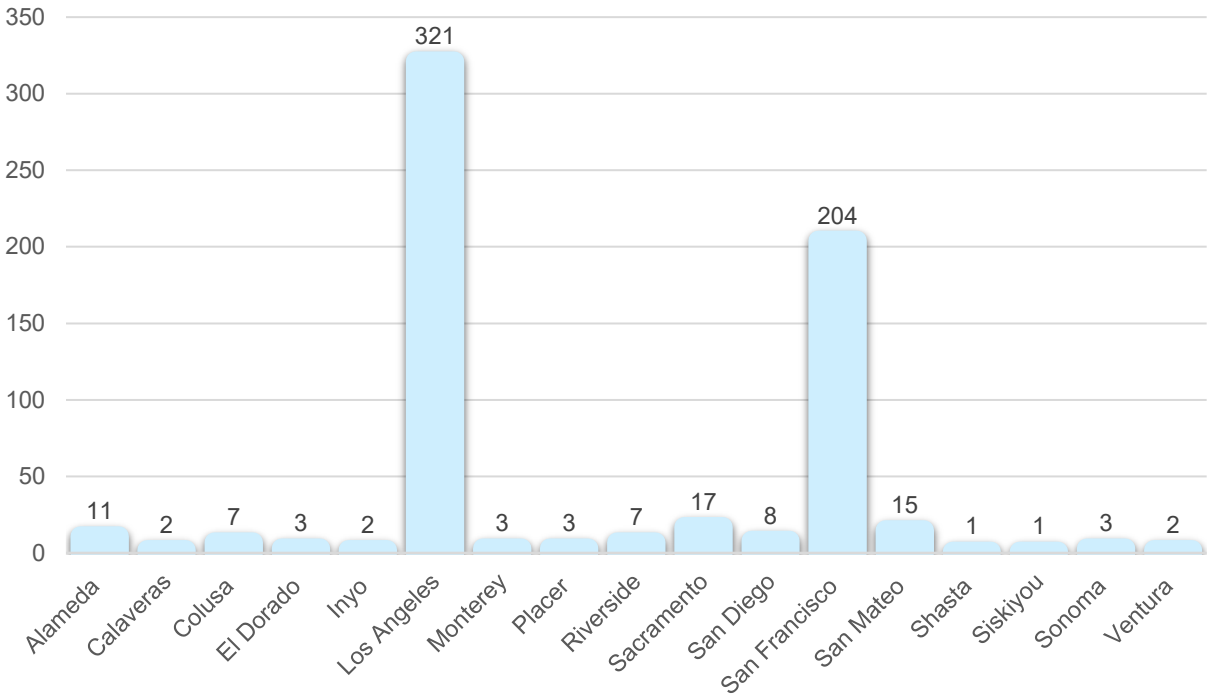
Lastly, more counties are moving towards the Voter's Choice Act (VCA) model of voting, where there are vote centers instead of polling places. Vote centers offer more services to voters, are open for multiple days instead of just Election Day, and they allow a voter from anywhere in the county to cast their vote at any location in the county instead of their previously assigned polling place. Since there are fewer vote center locations compared to the previous polling places, less staff are required to staff the locations which may have

contributed to the number of poll workers signing up and/or serving. Additionally, poll workers may be less likely to volunteer over 11 days that vote centers are open versus one day on Election Day under the polling place model, so counties often tap into county resources to staff the vote center locations.

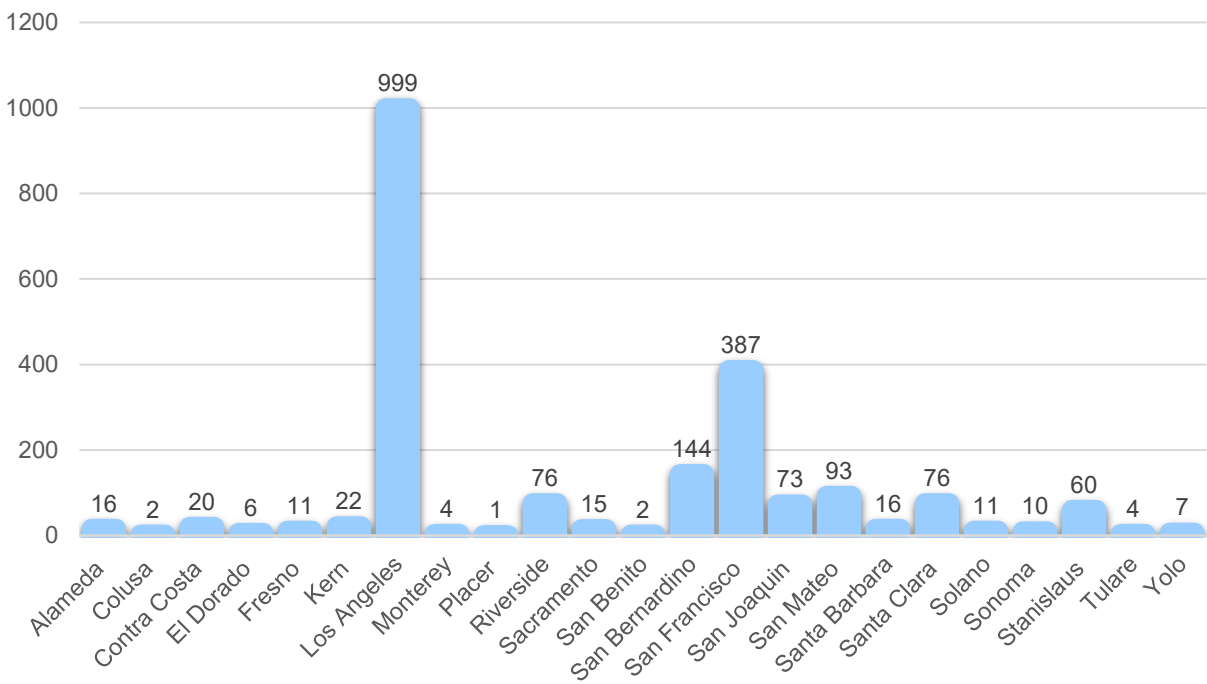
Bilingual Legal Permanent Residents and Students

Counties may also recruit legal permanent residents and/or bilingual students to serve as bilingual poll workers at voting locations. A total of 610 legal permanent residents and 2,055 bilingual students were recruited to serve across the state during the November 2022 Election. This represented a significant drop from both the November 2020 Election and November 2018 Election. During the November 2020 Election, 878 legal permanent residents and 2,742 bilingual students were recruited to serve at voting locations; and during the November 2018 Election, 984 legal permanent residents and 5,531 bilingual students were recruited.^[6] One possible reason for this downward trend could be linked to more counties moving towards the Voter's Choice Act (VCA) model of voting; some counties have shifted their poll worker recruitment away from volunteers or temporary/stipend workers and are recruiting more temporary county workers to assist at vote centers. Information on how legal permanent residents and bilingual students are recruited to serve as bilingual poll workers is not captured from the survey; however, if this downward trend continues, the SOS will encourage counties to look at ways to expand how they advertise to recruit legal permanent residents and students to serve as poll workers. Especially for counties who struggle to recruit bilingual poll workers, exploring recruitment options for more bilingual legal permanent residents and students could help counties find more people willing to volunteer and provide language assistance during each election cycle.

Legal Permanent Residents

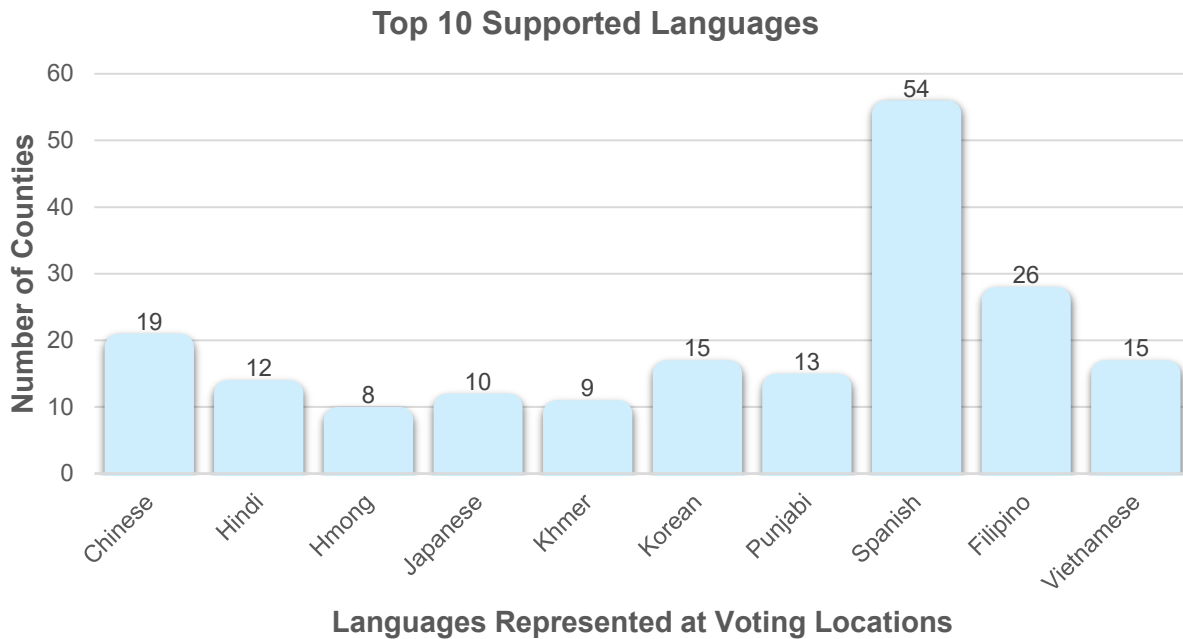


Bilingual Students



Supported Languages

A total of 36 languages were supported across all 54 counties that were required to recruit bilingual poll workers. Four counties are either all vote-by-mail counties with no in-person voting outside of the county office or had no federal or state mandated language requirements. Spanish was the most widely supported language with all 54 of these counties providing Spanish language assistance at their polling places or voting locations. After Spanish, the next most widely served languages were Asian languages, accounting for all the remaining languages in the top 10 supported languages across the state. Most notably, Filipino (including Tagalog and Ilocano) was supported in 26 counties, Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese) in 19 counties, and Korean and Vietnamese in 15 counties each. These are the same top five languages for which language assistance was provided in for both the November 2018 and November 2020 General Elections.^[6]



There were also 8 counties that provided assistance in non-mandated languages: El Dorado, Humboldt, Los Angeles, Madera, Nevada, San Diego, Shasta, and Yolo. The following languages were supported across these 8 counties: American Sign Language, Dutch, French, German, Hebrew, Polish, Somali, and Turkish. It helps illustrate how important it can be to broadly reach out to many different language communities for assistance and to recruit volunteers who speak a variety of languages; this allows more language voters to be represented and participate in the election and voting process. These 8 counties provided the possibility for additional support in non-mandated

languages to voters that speak these languages, who may not have had assistance in their language otherwise.

Third-Party Telephonic Translation Services

Currently, the Secretary of State provides a third-party telephonic translation service that is available for all counties to use when needed during state as well as local elections. This service allows county elections officials and their staff to provide translation services over the phone in many different languages. During the November 2022 Election, 15 counties specifically responded that they used this service and/or trained their staff on how to assist voters with this service. Another 17 counties reported using other telephonic translation services, separate from the one provided by the Secretary of State. In total, at least 32 counties reported using third-party telephonic translation services during the election.

Recommendations

Third-party telephonic translation services are helpful when counties are unable to recruit bilingual workers in specific languages and allows poll workers to still assist language voters when a bilingual poll worker is not present or available. It also allows counties to provide language assistance in additional languages outside of their statutory requirements as the telephonic translation services are not limited to only the required languages. With access to a cell phone or tablet, poll workers can connect with a translator in a wide variety of languages in which voters may need assistance. The goal is for all counties to utilize this technology as often as necessary because it is a simple and effective solution to providing language assistance to voters when used. In addition to training staff on how to use the service, the Secretary of State recommends that every county advertise that this service is available to all voters who need language assistance and how they can request this option at a polling place or voting location.

The Secretary of State has received feedback from the community to request additional information that captures data on bilingual election staff that work specifically at vote centers, which are open 11 days including Election Day and allow voters from anywhere in the county to vote rather than an assigned polling place. Additional suggestions included requesting information on how bilingual poll workers or bilingual election staff are recruited. Including this information for future surveys may assist the Secretary of State make more informed recommendations on how county elections officials recruit bilingual workers.

As California's population continues to grow, language accessibility will continue to be an important topic to ensure that all California voters are enfranchised and able to receive information in the language that they best understand. The Secretary of State and county elections officials should ensure that the information to recruit bilingual poll workers across the state is easily accessible and effectively advertised. The Secretary of State strongly recommends using various mediums of advertisement that are available to the county, such as radio, television, newspapers, internet website and social media posts, outreach to local language communities, outreach to other county departments, and working with the local Language Accessibility Advisory Committee. Counties are encouraged to promote that legal permanent residents and students are eligible to become poll workers. Additionally, it is beneficial for counties to maintain working relationships with current or previous bilingual poll workers. Communicating that their continued participation and language assistance at polling places is an important part of the election process may help maintain working relationships for them want to help during future elections.

Resources

1. [Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the United States: 2010 Census and 2020 Census](#), United States Census Bureau
2. [Language Spoken at Home](#), United States Census Bureau
3. [Voting Rights Act of 1965, Section 203](#) and [Section 203 Determinations](#)
4. [California Elections Code, Section 14201](#) and [Section 14201 Determinations](#)
5. [California Elections Code, Section 12303](#)
6. Bilingual Poll Worker Recruitment Report: [November 6, 2018, General Election](#) and [November 3, 2020, General Election](#)
7. Voter Participation Statistics: [November 3, 2020, General Election](#) and [November 8, 2022, General Election](#)
8. [California Statewide Election Results](#)