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November 4, 2025, Statewide Special Election Voter's Choice Act Report Summary

The Voter's Choice Act (VCA) was passed by the Legislature in 2016 (Senate Bill 450, Chapter 832, Statutes of 2016) to enhance voting accessibility in California by introducing a vote center model, versus the traditional polling place model, and providing extended in-person early voting of up to 10 days before the election.

This summary presents an overview of voting behavior and ballot usage data that will be included in the final Secretary of State's Voter's Choice Act November 4, 2025, Statewide Special Election Report to the Legislature (California Elections Code section 4005).

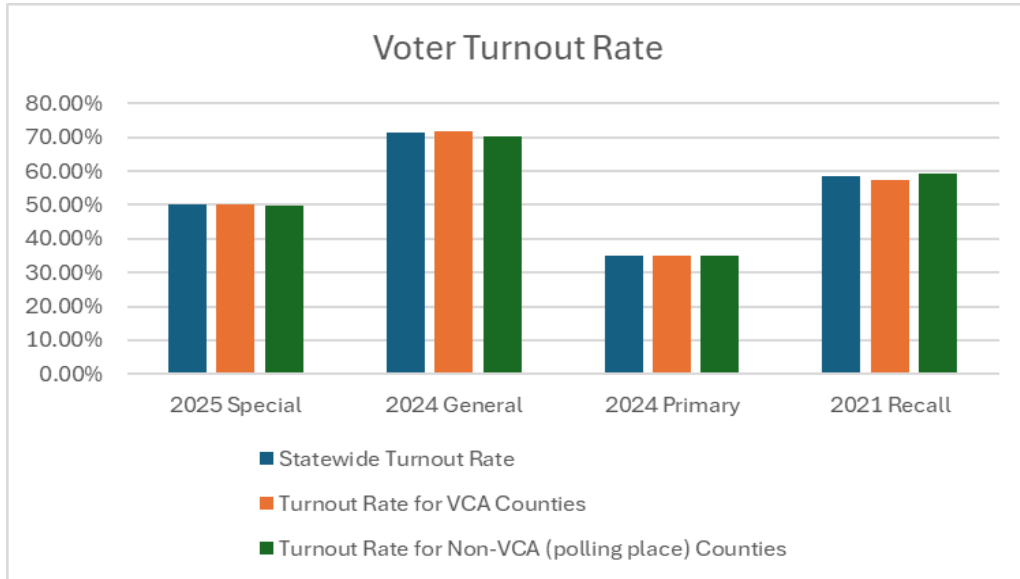
Drawing from data from the Secretary of State's statewide voter registration database, VoteCal, the report details turnout rates, registration statistics, voting methods, and ballot rejection patterns across a range of demographic and linguistic groups. This summary provides a comparison of the November 4, 2025, Special Election data to the September 14, 2021, Gubernatorial Recall Election data as well as information for comparison to the last two statewide elections in 2024.

The number of counties using the VCA model has almost doubled since the last statewide special election in 2021. In the November 4, 2025, Statewide Special Election, a total of 29 counties used the VCA model compared to 15 counties in the September 14, 2021, Gubernatorial Recall Election. These 29 counties include more than 18 million registered voters—which is approximately 78% of the state's electorate.

Voter Turnout

The voter turnout in the 2025 Statewide Special Election was slightly higher in VCA counties at 50.24% compared to the 49.79% turnout in polling place counties. The same was true in the 2024 General Election where turnout in VCA counties was 71.70%, while it was 70.39% in polling place counties. Overall, participation rates have been fairly close between VCA counties versus polling place counties. However, since the 2024 General Election, the participation rates in VCA counties has been slightly higher than in polling places, while they were slightly lower in VCA counties in previous elections. We are hoping that this is a new trend as voters become more familiar with the vote-center model.

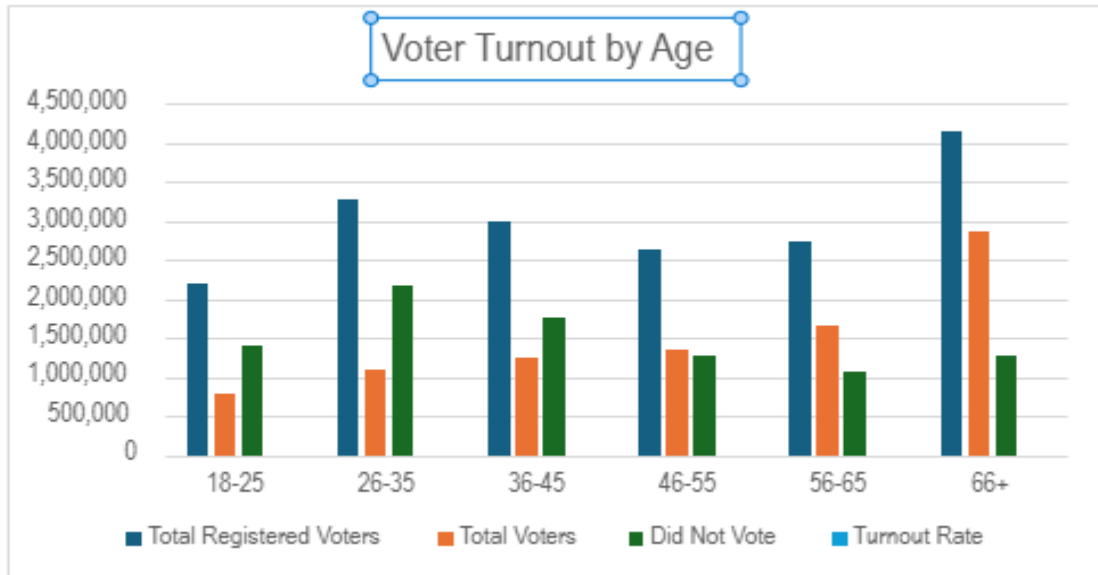
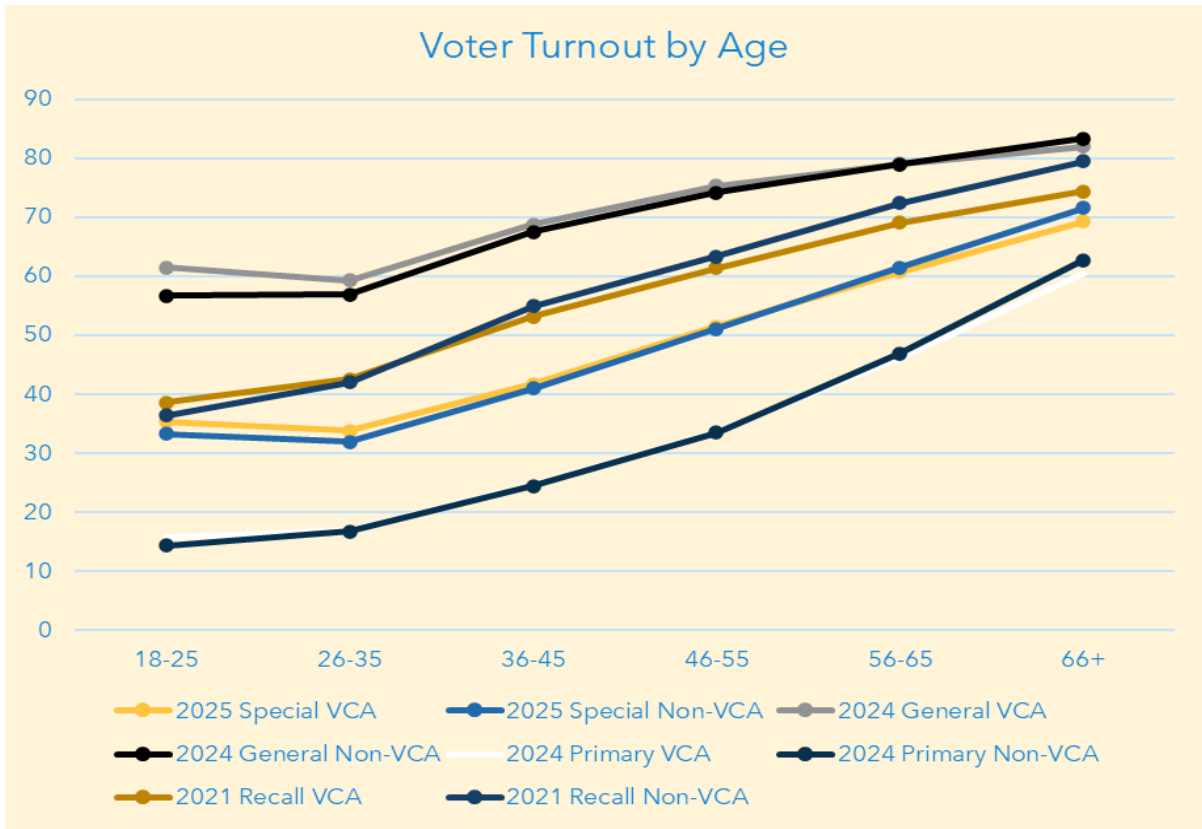
When compared with a similar election, the standalone 2021 Gubernatorial Recall Election, the 2025 Statewide Special Election had an 8% lower turnout overall, which may be because of the interest in the recall election compared to the redistricting election. However, the turnout rate was only 7% lower in VCA counties versus almost 10% lower for polling place counties when compared to the 2021 election.



Election	Statewide Turnout Rate	Turnout Rate for VCA Counties	Turnout rate for non-VCA (polling place) counties
2025 Special	50.14%	50.24%	49.79%
2024 General	71.41%	71.70%	70.39
2024 Primary	34.97%	34.92%	35.15%
2021 Recall	58.43%	57.40%	59.44%

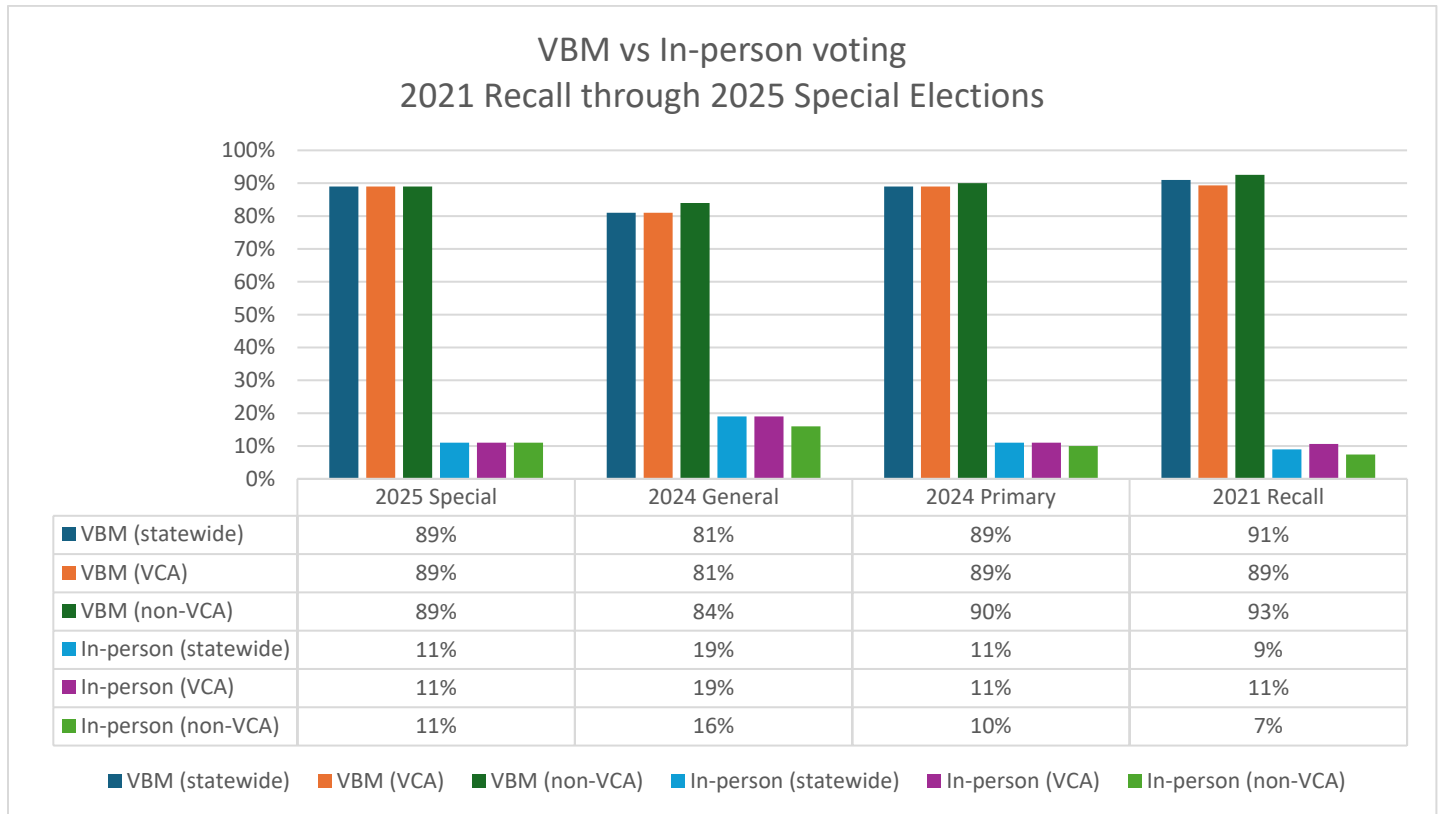
Voter Turnout Percentage by Age

Historically, voter turnout percentages tend to increase as age increases. However, beginning in the 2024 General Election that changed for the 18-25 and 26-35 age groups. In both the 2024 General Election and the 2025 Statewide Special Election, the 18-25 age group outperformed the 26-35 age group by approximately 1.5%-2%, while participation in the other age groups increased with age. The number of voters aged 18 to 45 who did not participate in the 2025 Statewide Special Election was higher than the number of voters who did vote. However, it is the reverse for voters 46 and older, where all ages between 46 and 66+ voted in higher numbers than those who did not.



Voter Participation: Vote-by-mail (VBM) vs In-person Voting

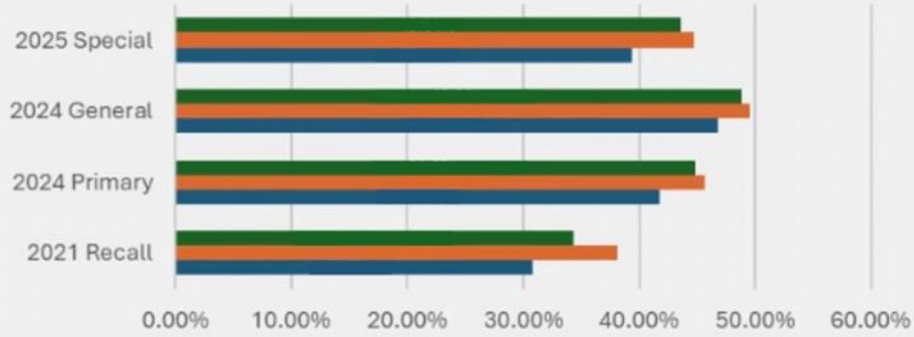
Voting by mail (which includes ballots that were mailed and those that were dropped in a drop box or at a voting location) was the preferred method for voters during the 2025 Statewide Special Election. In both VCA and polling place counties, 89% of voters mailed or dropped off a ballot compared to 11% of voters who voted in person, which is similar to prior elections. There was a small decrease in VBM voters and an increase in in-person voting in the 2024 General Election which may be due to the increase in voters that typically aren't likely to participate in other elections and are unfamiliar with the process; therefore, requiring services provided at in-person locations, including the ability to register and vote the same day.



Voter Participation: VBM Ballot Return Methods

In the 2025 Statewide Special Election, voters in VCA counties preferred to return their ballots at a drop-off location versus by mail fairly equally 44.71% to 44.02%, a difference of less than one percent. However, in polling place counties, voters preferred to return their ballots by mail rather than at a drop-off location by 10%.

VBM Ballot Returned at Ballot Drop-off Locations



	2021 Recall	2024 Primary	2024 General	2025 Special
■ Statewide	34.34%	44.83%	48.90%	43.54%
■ VCA Counties	38.16%	45.70%	49.48%	44.71%
■ Non-VCA (Polling Place Counties)	30.75%	41.76%	46.80%	39.35%

■ Statewide ■ VCA Counties ■ Non-VCA (Polling Place Counties)

Election	Ballots returned by mail			Ballots returned at ballot drop-off locations		
	State	VCA	Non-VCA	State	VCA	Non-VCA
2025 Special	45.32%	44.02%	49.94%	43.54%	44.71%	39.35%
2024 General	32.44%	31.10%	37.25%	48.90%	49.48%	46.80%
2024 Primary	43.09%	42.74%	48.01%	44.83%	45.70%	41.76%
2021 Recall	56.56%	51.07%	61.72%	34.34%	38.16%	30.75%

Ballot Rejection Reasons and Rates

Statewide the top three reasons for ballot rejection were 1) **ballot not received on time**, 2) **non-matching signature**, and 3) **no voter signature**. VCA counties had the same top reasons, except non-matching signature was the number one reason, followed by ballot not received on time and no voter signature.

The ballot rejection rate in VCA counties was slightly lower than in polling place counties—1.52% compared to 1.78%. However the overall rejection rates increased since the 2024 General Election and were most similar to the 2024 Primary Election. This may be due voters being less inclined to cure their ballot in a single-issue election or a primary versus a presidential election, where voters turn out in higher numbers and are more invested in the outcome. In all four elections, the rejection rate was consistently lower in VCA counties as compared to polling place counties. This could possibly be attributed to the additional voter education and outreach required in VCA counties.

