

Projecting the Number of Eligible Voters with Disabilities in the November 2016 Elections

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The number of eligible voters with disabilities is growing with the aging of the population and advances in medical technology. This brief report summarizes projections of how many people with disabilities will be eligible to vote in the November 2016 elections, based on analysis of data from the Census Bureau's 2010-2014 American Community Survey combined with Census Bureau population projections. The methodology is described at the end of the report.

The key findings, as shown in Table 1 and pictured in Figure 1, are:

- A projected 35.4 million people with disabilities will be eligible to vote in the November 2016 elections, representing close to one-sixth of the total electorate.
- The number of eligible voters with disabilities has increased 10.8% since 2008, compared to an increase of 8.5% among eligible voters without disabilities.
- There will be 62.7 million eligible voters who either have a disability or have a household member with a disability, more than one-fourth of the total electorate.

Table 2 provides a breakdown by major type of disability. These figures show that

- Mobility impairment will be the most common disability in November 2016. A projected 20.2 million eligible voters will have mobility impairments, 12.2 million will have cognitive impairments, 10.6 million will have hearing impairments, and 6.3 million will have visual impairments. (Note that these groups overlap since a person may have more than one type of disability.)

Breakdowns by age, sex, and race/ethnicity in Tables 3 and 4 show that:

- Despite senior citizens having a higher likelihood of disability, there will be more eligible voters with disabilities under age 65 (19.3 million) than there are age 65 or older (16.0 million).
- There will be slightly more women (18.5 million) than men (16.8 million) among eligible voters with disabilities.
- The eligible voters with disabilities will include 25.2 million non-Hispanic whites, 5.1 million blacks, and 2.6 million Hispanics/Latinos.
- The total number of eligible voters with disabilities (35.4 million) exceeds the total number of eligible voters who are black (28.7 million) or Hispanic/Latino (29.5 million).
- Mobility impairments are the most common type of disability in each group except for the youngest (age 18-34), among whom cognitive impairments are the most common type of disability.

Breakdowns by college education, marital status, and personal income in Table 5 show that:

- There will be 5.9 million eligible voters with disabilities with college degrees, representing 8.8% of all eligible voters with college degrees.

- While about half of all eligible voters are married with a spouse present, less than half of eligible voters with disabilities are married with a spouse present (14.9 million). Eligible voters with disabilities are more likely to be separated, divorced, widowed, or never married (20.5 million total).
- People with disabilities are disproportionately likely to be low-income. The rate of disability is 21.8% among all individuals with less than \$25,000 in personal income, and is only 6.2% among all individuals with more than \$100,000 in personal income.

Finally, breakdowns by region and state in Tables 6 and 7 show that:

- The South has the highest number (14.3 million) of eligible voters with disabilities, as well as the highest rate of disability among all eligible voters (16.8%), while the Northeast has the lowest number (5.9 million) and percent with disabilities (14.7%).
- Consistent with the above regional pattern, the states with the highest rate of disability among all eligible voters are West Virginia (24.1%), Kentucky (21.2%), Arkansas (21.1%), and Mississippi (21.0%).

These figures show that people with disabilities constitute a sizeable share of the electorate, so their votes could influence election outcomes. A key question of course is how many of them will actually vote. Despite the barriers often faced by people with disabilities in exercising the right to vote,¹ estimates from another government data source show that a

¹ Among those who voted in a polling place in 2012, 30% of voters with disabilities reported some type of difficulty in voting, compared to 8% of voters without disabilities (Lisa Schur, Meera Adya, and Douglas Kruse, Disability, Voter Turnout, and Voting Difficulties in the 2012 Elections, report to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, June 2013, at <http://smlr.rutgers.edu/research-centers/disability-and-voter-turnout>). See the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report at <http://gao.gov/products/GAO-13-538SP>, and the White Paper prepared by Schur for the 2013 Presidential Commission on Election Administration at https://www.supportthevoter.gov/files/2013/08/Disability-and-Voting-White-Paper-for-Presidential-Commission-Schur.docx_.pdf.

majority of people with disabilities reported voting in 2012, and their reported voter turnout was only 5.7 percentage points lower than among citizens without disabilities.² How many will actually vote depends on the dynamics of the 2016 campaign, get-out-the-vote efforts, and extent of voting barriers facing people with disabilities. Regarding political preferences, the limited prior evidence indicates that people with disabilities are similar to those without disabilities in patterns of party identification and placement on a conservative-liberal scale, but are more likely to favor a greater government role in health care and creating employment opportunities.³

Methodology

These projections account for trends in age, sex, and race/ethnicity by using Census Bureau population projections broken down by these characteristics, combined with disability information from the American Community Survey.⁴ Four race/ethnicity groups were created (white non-Hispanic, Black, Hispanic, and other), and the full set of permutations with sex and single years of age (18-85, with 85+ combined into one category) created population projections for 544 demographic groups. The 2010-2014 American Community Survey, which has a total of more than 12 million observations for individuals age 18 or older, was then used to calculate the percent of non-citizens, institutionalized people, and people with disabilities among non-institutionalized citizens, in each of these demographic groups. The Census projections for each group were adjusted for the estimated number of non-citizens and institutionalized people in order to estimate projected number of eligible voters in the total population. Within each group,

² See Table 6 at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2012/tables.html>. The rate of reported voter turnout in the cited survey cannot be simply applied to the figures presented here from the American Community Survey, due to differences in survey method and context as noted in the methodology section.

³ Lisa Schur and Meera Adya, "Sideline or Mainstreamed? Political Participation and Attitudes of People with Disabilities in the United States," *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 94, No. 3, 2013, pp. 811-839.

⁴ <https://www.census.gov/population/projections/data/national/2014.html>

the disability rate was multiplied by the projected number of eligible voters to derive projections for eligible voters with and without disabilities in 2016 and 2017. Since the Census Bureau provides projections for July 1 of each year, we estimated the November 2016 population by adding one third of the difference between the 2016 and 2017 projections (representing 4 months) to the 2016 projection. The Census Bureau does not do population projections by state, so the state and regional numbers in Tables 6 and 7 are based on our projections of eligible voters with and without disabilities separately in each state using 2010-2014 data in the American Community Survey, adjusted to sum to the national projections.

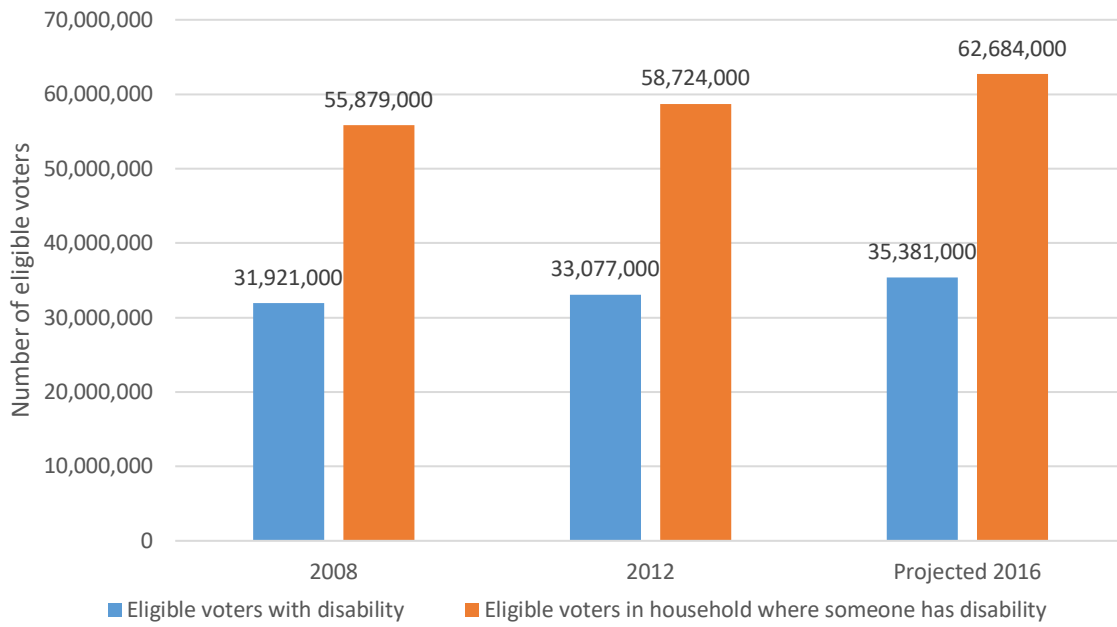
Estimates of disability vary by survey, depending on the questions used to identify disability, the defined population, and the survey method and context. Using more extensive questions, the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) yielded a 2010 total estimate of 56.7 million people with disabilities, of which 51.5 million were age 15 or older but an unknown number were eligible to vote.⁵ The Current Population Survey (CPS) uses the same questions as the American Community Survey but has a different survey method and context, and yielded a 2012 estimate of 27.5 million citizens with disabilities age 18 or older.⁶ The 2010-2014 American Community Survey, which yields a disability prevalence between the SIPP and CPS numbers, was chosen for this report because it has more recent data than SIPP and a far larger sample than either the SIPP or CPS for generating reliable numbers to apply to Census population projections as described above.⁷

⁵ <http://www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/p70-131.pdf>

⁶ Table 6 at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2012/tables.html>

⁷ Further details on methodology are available on request.

Figure 1: Disability in the Electorate, 2008-2016



Based on analysis of American Community Survey combined with Census Bureau demographic projections

Table 1: Disability and the Electorate, 2008-2012 and Projected 2016

Figures represent number of people eligible to vote.

	2008	2012	Projected 2016	Percent increase 2008-2016
Disability status of eligible voters				
Have disability	31,921,000	33,077,000	35,381,000	10.84%
No disability	174,893,000	183,162,000	189,766,000	8.50%
Percent with disability	15.43%	15.30%	15.71%	
Disability in households of eligible voters				
Any household member has disability	55,879,000	58,724,000	62,684,000	12.18%
No household member has disability	150,934,000	157,515,000	162,463,000	7.64%
Percent in disability household	27.02%	27.16%	27.84%	

Based on analysis of American Community Survey combined with Census projections from <https://www.census.gov/population/projections/data/national/2014.html>.

Table 2: Disability in the Electorate by Type of Disability, 2008-2012 and Projected 2016

Figures represent number of people eligible to vote.

	2008	2012	Projected 2016	Percent increase 2008-2016
Any disability	31,921,000	33,077,000	35,381,000	10.84%
Mobility impairment	18,129,000	18,866,000	20,153,000	11.16%
Difficulty going outside alone	12,394,000	12,939,000	13,600,000	9.73%
Cognitive impairment	10,960,000	11,605,000	12,230,000	11.59%
Hearing impairment	9,599,000	9,718,000	10,563,000	10.04%
Difficulty with self-care	6,458,000	6,850,000	7,420,000	14.90%
Visual impairment	5,930,000	5,739,000	6,289,000	6.05%

Based on analysis of American Community Survey combined with Census projections from <https://www.census.gov/population/projections/data/national/2014.html>.

Table 3: Demographic Breakdown of Projected Electorate by Disability Status, 2016

Figures represent number of people eligible to vote.

	Have disability	No disability	Total	Percent with disability
Age 18-64	19,350,000	160,786,000	180,136,000	10.74%
Age 65+	16,030,000	28,980,000	45,010,000	35.61%
Age 18-34	4,247,000	64,712,000	68,959,000	6.16%
Age 35-49	4,984,000	48,647,000	53,631,000	9.29%
Age 50-64	10,119,000	47,427,000	57,546,000	17.58%
Age 65-74	6,832,000	19,864,000	26,696,000	25.59%
Age 75+	9,198,000	9,116,000	18,314,000	50.22%
Female	18,540,000	97,560,000	116,100,000	15.97%
Male	16,840,000	92,206,000	109,046,000	15.44%
White non-Hispanic	25,160,000	129,593,000	154,753,000	16.26%
Black	5,124,000	23,540,000	28,664,000	17.88%
Hispanic/Latino	3,622,000	25,884,000	29,506,000	12.28%
Other race/ethnicity	1,475,000	10,749,000	12,224,000	12.07%

Based on analysis of American Community Survey combined with Census projections from <https://www.census.gov/population/projections/data/national/2014.html>.

Table 4: Demographic Breakdown of Projected Electorate by Type of Disability, 2016

	All eligible voters	Have disability	Mobility impairment	Difficulty going outside alone	Cognitive impairment	Hearing impairment	Difficulty with self-care	Visual impairment
Number of eligible voters								
Age 18-64	180,136,000	19,350,000	9,867,000	6,834,000	8,198,000	3,908,000	3,513,000	3,358,000
Age 65+	45,010,000	16,030,000	10,286,000	6,766,000	4,032,000	6,655,000	3,727,000	2,931,000
Age 18-34	68,959,000	4,247,000	1,072,000	1,583,000	2,626,000	623,000	616,000	735,000
Age 35-49	53,631,000	4,984,000	2,425,000	1,845,000	2,294,000	902,000	916,000	881,000
Age 50-64	57,546,000	10,119,000	6,370,000	3,405,000	3,277,000	2,383,000	1,981,000	1,743,000
Age 65-74	26,696,000	6,832,000	4,249,000	2,103,000	1,441,000	2,483,000	1,214,000	1,103,000
Age 75+	18,314,000	9,198,000	6,037,000	4,663,000	2,591,000	4,172,000	2,513,000	1,828,000
Female	116,100,000	18,540,000	8,343,000	5,526,000	5,895,000	6,260,000	3,067,000	2,841,000
Male	109,047,000	16,840,000	11,810,000	8,074,000	6,335,000	4,303,000	4,174,000	3,448,000
White non-Hispanic	154,753,000	25,160,000	14,159,000	9,420,000	8,184,000	8,479,000	4,948,000	4,112,000
Black	28,665,000	5,124,000	3,237,000	2,143,000	1,977,000	813,000	1,184,000	1,084,000
Hispanic	29,505,000	3,622,000	1,966,000	1,419,000	1,471,000	871,000	798,000	808,000
Other race/ethnicity	12,224,000	1,475,000	791,000	618,000	599,000	400,000	310,000	285,000
Percent of all eligible voters								
Age 18-64	100.0%	10.7%	5.5%	3.8%	4.6%	2.2%	2.0%	1.9%
Age 65+	100.0%	35.6%	22.9%	15.0%	9.0%	14.8%	8.3%	6.5%
Age 18-34	100.0%	6.2%	1.6%	2.3%	3.8%	0.9%	0.9%	1.1%
Age 35-49	100.0%	9.3%	4.5%	3.4%	4.3%	1.7%	1.7%	1.6%
Age 50-64	100.0%	17.6%	11.1%	5.9%	5.7%	4.1%	3.4%	3.0%
Age 65-74	100.0%	25.6%	15.9%	7.9%	5.4%	9.3%	4.5%	4.1%
Age 75+	100.0%	50.2%	33.0%	25.5%	14.1%	22.8%	13.7%	10.0%
Female	100.0%	16.0%	7.2%	4.8%	5.1%	5.4%	2.6%	2.4%
Male	100.0%	15.4%	10.8%	7.4%	5.8%	3.9%	3.8%	3.2%
White non-Hispanic	100.0%	16.3%	9.1%	6.1%	5.3%	5.5%	3.2%	2.7%
Black	100.0%	17.9%	11.3%	7.5%	6.9%	2.8%	4.1%	3.8%
Hispanic	100.0%	12.3%	6.7%	4.8%	5.0%	3.0%	2.7%	2.7%
Other race/ethnicity	100.0%	12.1%	6.5%	5.1%	4.9%	3.3%	2.5%	2.3%

Based on analysis of American Community Survey combined with Census projections from <https://www.census.gov/population/projections/data/national/2014.html>.

Table 5: Additional Demographic Breakdowns of Projected Electorate by Type of Disability, 2016

	All eligible voters (1)	Have disability (2)	Mobility impairment (3)	Difficulty going outside alone (4)	Cognitive impairment (5)	Hearing impairment (6)	Difficulty with self-care (7)	Visual impairment (8)
Number of eligible voters								
College degree	66,582,000	5,876,000	3,007,000	1,840,000	1,479,000	2,139,000	1,048,000	952,000
No college degree	158,564,000	29,505,000	17,087,000	11,715,000	10,717,000	8,421,000	6,177,000	5,329,000
Married, spouse present	111,433,000	14,849,000	8,326,000	4,674,000	3,718,000	5,413,000	2,639,000	2,400,000
All other marital status	113,713,000	20,532,000	11,769,000	8,882,000	8,477,000	5,147,000	4,587,000	3,881,000
Personal income								
<\$25,000	111,754,000	24,403,000	14,552,000	10,687,000	9,735,000	6,041,000	5,573,000	4,504,000
\$25,000-49,999	56,208,000	6,747,000	3,625,000	1,961,000	1,661,000	2,600,000	1,106,000	1,136,000
\$50,000-99,999	40,849,000	3,214,000	1,489,000	703,000	636,000	1,420,000	420,000	494,000
\$100,000+	16,336,000	1,017,000	429,000	204,000	164,000	499,000	126,000	147,000
Percent of all eligible voters								
College degree	100.0%	8.8%	4.5%	2.8%	2.2%	3.2%	1.6%	1.4%
No college degree	100.0%	18.6%	10.8%	7.4%	6.8%	5.3%	3.9%	3.4%
Married, spouse present	100.0%	13.3%	7.5%	4.2%	3.3%	4.9%	2.4%	2.2%
All other marital status	100.0%	18.1%	10.3%	7.8%	7.5%	4.5%	4.0%	3.4%
Personal income								
<\$25,000	100.0%	21.8%	13.0%	9.6%	8.7%	5.4%	5.0%	4.0%
\$25,000-49,999	100.0%	12.0%	6.4%	3.5%	3.0%	4.6%	2.0%	2.0%
\$50,000-99,999	100.0%	7.9%	3.6%	1.7%	1.6%	3.5%	1.0%	1.2%
\$100,000+	100.0%	6.2%	2.6%	1.2%	1.0%	3.1%	0.8%	0.9%

Based on analysis of American Community Survey combined with Census projections from <https://www.census.gov/population/projections/data/national/2014.html>.

Table 6: Eligible Voters by Disability Status and Region

	Have disability (1)	No disability (2)	Total (3)	Percent with disability (4)
Number of eligible voters				
Northeast	5,880,000	34,060,000	39,940,000	14.7%
Midwest	7,542,000	40,322,000	47,864,000	15.8%
South	14,276,000	71,372,000	85,648,000	16.7%
West	7,682,000	44,013,000	51,695,000	14.9%

Table 7: Eligible Voters by Disability Status and State

	Disability	No disability	Percent with disability		Disability	No disability	Percent with disability
Alabama	663,000	2,812,000	19.1%	Missouri	761,000	3,572,000	17.6%
Alaska	65,000	441,000	12.8%	Montana	131,000	635,000	17.1%
Arizona	813,000	4,085,000	16.6%	Nebraska	165,000	1,132,000	12.7%
Arkansas	435,000	1,627,000	21.1%	Nevada	369,000	1,634,000	18.4%
California	3,490,000	22,524,000	13.4%	New Hampshire	142,000	823,000	14.7%
Colorado	525,000	3,389,000	13.4%	New Jersey	841,000	5,267,000	13.8%
Connecticut	342,000	2,241,000	13.2%	New Mexico	301,000	1,213,000	19.9%
Delaware	95,000	617,000	13.3%	New York	1,923,000	11,635,000	14.2%
D.C.	73,000	475,000	13.3%	North Carolina	1,236,000	6,026,000	17.0%
Florida	2,467,000	12,623,000	16.3%	North Dakota	70,000	467,000	13.0%
Georgia	1,136,000	5,924,000	16.1%	Ohio	1,392,000	6,853,000	16.9%
Hawaii	130,000	825,000	13.6%	Oklahoma	523,000	2,169,000	19.4%
Idaho	175,000	931,000	15.8%	Oregon	548,000	2,317,000	19.1%
Illinois	1,263,000	7,717,000	14.1%	Pennsylvania	1,558,000	8,040,000	16.2%
Indiana	812,000	3,771,000	17.7%	Rhode Island	126,000	657,000	16.1%
Iowa	323,000	1,894,000	14.6%	South Carolina	645,000	2,980,000	17.8%
Kansas	299,000	1,649,000	15.3%	South Dakota	94,000	504,000	15.7%
Kentucky	673,000	2,499,000	21.2%	Tennessee	919,000	3,828,000	19.4%
Louisiana	562,000	2,784,000	16.8%	Texas	2,644,000	15,244,000	14.8%
Maine	177,000	782,000	18.5%	Utah	257,000	1,584,000	14.0%
Maryland	575,000	3,784,000	13.2%	Vermont	84,000	380,000	18.1%
Massachusetts	687,000	4,235,000	14.0%	Virginia	849,000	5,242,000	13.9%
Michigan	1,234,000	5,848,000	17.4%	Washington	814,000	4,073,000	16.7%
Minnesota	512,000	3,347,000	13.3%	West Virginia	332,000	1,047,000	24.1%
Mississippi	448,000	1,690,000	21.0%	Wisconsin	618,000	3,568,000	14.8%
				Wyoming	64,000	361,000	15.1%