

Fact Sheet: Estimating the Effect of the REVUP Campaign on Disability Turnout

Lisa Schur and Douglas Kruse^[1]

The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) launched campaigns in many states in 2016 to increase voter registration and turnout among people with disabilities. This effort is known as REVUP for “Register, Educate, Vote, Use your Power” (<https://www.aapd.com/advocacy/voting/>).

This fact sheet provides figures on voter turnout among people with and without disabilities, comparing changes between REVUP and non-REVUP states over the 2014 and 2018 midterm elections.^[2] This is based on an analysis of microdata from the Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey Voting and Registration Supplement conducted following the midterm elections in November 2014 and 2018. These supplements contain samples of 96,267 eligible voters in 2014 and 88,749 in 2018. The overall results for this survey are reported by the Census Bureau at <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-583.html>. Here we use the same data to examine the relative turnout of citizens with disabilities in REVUP and non-REVUP states from 2014 to 2018.^[3] We focus on these years since they provide a comparison of midterm elections (which typically have lower turnout in general) before and after the introduction of the REVUP campaigns in 2016.

Our analysis uses a “difference-in-differences” approach, examining the interaction of differences in voter turnout along three dimensions: 1) between 2014 and 2018, 2) between people with and without disabilities, and 3) between REVUP and non-REVUP states.

The following table shows the turnout of people with and without disabilities in 2014 and 2018, broken out by REVUP and non-REVUP states.

	Non-REVUP states			REVUP states			Difference in increase between REVUP and non-REVUP states
	2014	2018	Increase	2014	2018	Increase	
No disability	45.1%	55.2%	10.1%	41.6%	53.8%	12.3%	2.2%
Disability	43.9%	49.6%	5.7%	40.3%	49.2%	9.0%	3.3%
Extra increase in disability turnout in REVUP states, minus the increase for voters without disabilities							1.1%

As can be seen above, the increase in turnout between 2014 and 2018 among people with disabilities was 9.0% in REVUP states compared to 5.7% in non-REVUP states, for a difference of 3.3 percentage points. Among people without disabilities, the increase in turnout was 12.3% in REVUP states compared to 10.1% in non-REVUP states, for a difference of 2.2 percentage points. As a result, turnout went up 1.1 percentage points more in REVUP states for people with disabilities, relative to the increased turnout in REVUP states for people without

disabilities. Based on the Census Bureau data, this would indicate that turnout was increased by 257,000 voters with disabilities in the REVUP states in 2018.

That said, we must be careful in interpreting the results. Based on the large sample and strong differences, we are very certain that voter turnout jumped up in 2018 for people both with and without disabilities, in both REVUP and non-REVUP states, at more than a 99% level of confidence. The 3.3 and 2.2 point differences between REVUP and non-REVUP states for people with and without disabilities (respectively) indicate higher turnout in general in REVUP states but are not quite strong enough to reach a 90% level of confidence. We observe a slightly higher increase in voter turnout for people with disabilities in REVUP states, relative to the increase for people without disabilities in REVUP states, but we cannot be statistically confident that it was in fact higher. While these Census samples are larger than for typical surveys, the estimated 1.1 point gap linked to REVUP is not large enough to rule out sampling error as an explanation (i.e., the difference is not “statistically significant”).^[4] Nonetheless our best point estimate from this sample is that the relationship is positive, indicating that voter turnout increased between 2014 and 2018 by an additional 1.1 percentage points among people with disabilities in REVUP states, relative to the increased turnout of people without disabilities in those states. If this best estimate is accurate, there were an additional 257,000 voters with disabilities in the REVUP states in 2018.

^[1] Professors at the School of Management and Labor Relations and Co-directors of the Program for Disability Research, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, Lschur@smlr.rutgers.edu and Dkruse@smlr.rutgers.edu.

^[2] According to AAPD there were active REVUP campaigns in Washington D.C. and 32 states: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

^[3] Disability is defined using 6 questions on the Census survey, broadly identifying hearing impairments, visual impairments, cognitive impairments, mobility impairments, difficulties with household activities, and difficulties going outside the home alone. All figures use Census weights to better reflect the population.

^[4] These comparisons of statistical significance are based on linear probability models with robust standard errors clustered at the state level. Very similar results were obtained using probit regressions. The p-values were 0.179 for the 2.2 point difference, 0.104 for the 3.3 point difference, and 0.571 for the 1.1 point difference.