



California's Ballot Tracking Service: Who Is Using It and How Does It Impact Voter Confidence and Behavior?

About the Center for Inclusive Democracy (CID)

The Center for Inclusive Democracy's mission is to improve the social and economic quality of life in U.S. communities by producing non-partisan academic research that informs policy and on-the-ground organizing efforts through education and outreach for a more engaged, transparent, and representative democracy. CID conducts pioneering research that explores voting behavior, civic engagement, as well as electoral and economic issues at the intersection of social justice and democracy.

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HAAS JR. fund

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Executive Summary

Statewide ballot tracking was introduced to California voters in the 2020 election cycle after the Secretary of State's office contracted with the BallotTrax organization, a division of i3logix, Inc. based in Denver, Colorado, to create a tracking tool. Available in all 58 counties, the BallotTrax tool sends updates via email, text, or voice message informing registrants when their vote-by-mail ballot has been mailed to them, when it has been received by their county elections office, and the status of their ballot as it is processed. Since the 2020 general election, vote-by-mail ballots have been sent to every registered voter in the state and the majority of voters cast their ballots using vote-by-mail (VBM) ballots, returning them through a variety of methods: secure drop box, staffed drop-off location, and via the United States Postal Service (U.S.P.S.)

Examining who is signed up for BallotTrax to track their vote-by-mail ballot, what their voting behaviors are, and how they differ from those who do not use the ballot tracking tool can improve our understanding of how BallotTrax may be influencing Californians' interactions with the electoral process. This report examines BallotTrax use in California in the 2022 primary and general elections to better understand who is using the tool, how their behaviors differ from those who don't, and what their preferences are when signed up for BallotTrax.

Key Findings

Millions of Californians opted to use BallotTrax in 2022. Nearly one-third (30.2%) of primary voters and one-quarter (26.7%) of general voters were signed up to receive vote-by-mail ballot status updates from BallotTrax, representing over three million Californians in each election. Use rates were more similar among registered voters, with 18.0% of registered voters using BallotTrax in the primary election and 17.7% using it in the general election. Since implementation in 2020, BallotTrax participation in California has remained relatively stable with around five million accounts. As of the day of the 2024 primary election, 4,776,411 Californians were signed up to track their ballot.

BallotTrax use rates were the highest among registered Democrats, mid-aged voters, Black voters, and white, non-Latino voters. Democratic voters signed up for BallotTrax at notably higher rates than Republican and no party preference voters. Nearly 32% of Democratic voters used the tracking tool in the 2022 general, while 21.1% of Republican voters and 23.8% of no party preference voters did the same. Just under 27% of Black voters used the tool, compared to 22.9% of Asian-American and 21.1% of Latino voters in the general election. BallotTrax use among age groups peaked among voters aged 35 to 54, while younger voters signed up to track their ballot at the lowest rate.

Concerns about ballots being received was the top reason survey respondents signed up for BallotTrax. Over 46% of eligible voters (adult citizens) surveyed said they signed up for the tracking tool for reassurance that their ballot was received by election authorities. Concerns about ballots being counted were also top reasons to sign up for the tool, with one-third of respondents saying they wanted reassurance their ballot was counted by election authorities and over one-quarter saying they wanted reassurance that their ballot would be received and counted before the Election Day deadline.

Registered voter turnout among BallotTrax users was notably higher than among those not signed up for the tracking tool. While nearly 56% of BallotTrax users turned out to vote in the primary election, only half as many (28.2%) non-BallotTrax users voted. Similarly, in the general election, over two-thirds of BallotTrax users cast a ballot, while just 44.7% of non-BallotTrax users did so. When broken out by racial and ethnic group, age, and party affiliation, registered voter turnout was consistently higher among BallotTrax users. Among racial/ethnic and partisan groups, the turnout difference between ballottrax and non-ballottrax registrants was larger for Blacks and smaller for Republicans.

BallotTrax users voted using vote-by-mail ballots at higher rates than non-BallotTrax users. The overwhelming majority of all voters voted using mail ballots in the 2022 election cycle, although BallotTrax users voted with them at even higher rates. Nearly 93% of BallotTrax users voted with a vote-by-mail ballot in the general election, compared to 86.1% of non-BallotTrax users. In both elections, returning vote-by-mail ballots to drop boxes was the most common voting method for BallotTrax users, while returning a ballot through the U.S. Postal Service was the most common among non-BallotTrax users.

BallotTrax users had lower vote-by-mail rejection rates than non-BallotTrax users. In the 2022 election cycle, the vote-by-mail rejection rate was at least fifty percent higher among non-BallotTrax users than among those who signed up for the tracking tool. Of all vote-by-mail ballots cast by BallotTrax users in the 2022 primary election, 1.0% were ultimately rejected compared to 1.6% of vote-by-mail ballots cast by non-BallotTrax users. In the general election, rejection rates were lower for both BallotTrax users (0.8%) and non-BallotTrax users (1.4%), but followed the same pattern.

The majority of curable vote-by-mail ballots cast by BallotTrax users were corrected and counted. Among BallotTrax users, over 61% of vote-by-mail ballots that were originally rejected were cured and counted, while less than 1% of voters with curable ballots attempted and failed to correct their ballots. While many ballots were corrected, a large portion (over 37%) of voters made no attempt to correct their curable ballots and they were not counted. Another 0.4% of BallotTrax users with curable vote-by-mail ballots opted to vote in person instead. Looking at specific groups, Asian-American BallotTrax users cured their rejected vote-by-mail ballots at higher rates than other registrants of color, while Latino BallotTrax users had the lowest ballot cure rate. In addition, BallotTrax users aged 65 and over had a vote-by-mail cure rate around sixty percent higher than those aged 18 to 24. These trends were consistent across both 2022 elections. Due to data limitations, this report was unable to examine cure rates among non-BallotTrax users.

Email and text notifications were by far the top message delivery preferences in the 2022 primary and general elections, with only a small portion of BallotTrax users opting to receive voice updates. Email-only notifications were more common among Asian Americans, no party preference registrants, and registrants over the age of 65, with text-only more common among young registrants aged 18 to 24, Latinos, and registered Republicans.

Summary

Nearly one-third of primary voters and one-quarter of general voters used BallotTrax to track their vote-by-mail ballot in the 2022 election cycle. Democrats, mid-aged voters, Black voters, and white, non-Latino voters used the tool at the highest rates. In both 2022 elections, registered voter turnout rates were notably higher among BallotTrax users compared to registrants not signed up for the ballot tracking service. One of BallotTrax's features is notifying vote-by-mail voters when their ballot is rejected yet curable. The majority of BallotTrax voters with curable ballots corrected the issue and their vote was counted, with Asian-American voters and voters over age 65 correcting their rejected ballots at higher rates than Latinos and young voters aged 18 to 24.

A large proportion of California's eligible voters remain unaware of the availability of BallotTrax, with awareness lowest for Asian Americans, Latinos and older voters, the groups with the lowest BallotTrax use. Greater voter outreach and education around BallotTrax and its options could potentially narrow these gaps bringing the service to a more representative set of users in the state.

Introduction

In the 2020 election cycle, all California county elections offices began automatically sending vote-by-mail ballots to all registered voters. With higher anticipated uptake of voting by mail as well as declining trust in elections among some segments of the population, the state saw an opportunity to offer voters additional transparency on the status of their ballots. The California Secretary of State contracted BallotTrax, a division of i3logix, Inc. based in Denver, Colorado to provide a mail ballot locator and notification system.¹ Available in all 58 counties, the BallotTrax tool sends updates via email, text, or voice message informing registrants when their vote-by-mail ballot has been mailed to them, when it has been received by their county elections office, and the status of their ballot as it is processed.²

Two years after the launch of BallotTrax in California, the 2022 midterm election cycle continued to see large shares of voters using vote-by-mail ballots. Approximately 4.8 million registered voters were signed up for BallotTrax in the 2022 election cycle. The number of BallotTrax accounts has remained relatively stable since implementation in 2020, with over 4.7 million registered voters signed up for the tool as of the day of the 2024 primary election. This report examines BallotTrax use in California in the 2022 primary and general elections to better understand who is using the tool, how their behaviors differ from those who don't, and what their preferences are.

Study Goals

Examining who is signed up for BallotTrax to track their vote-by-mail ballot, what their voting behaviors are, and how they differ from those who do not use the ballot tracking tool can improve our understanding of how BallotTrax may be influencing Californians' interactions with the electoral process. The Center for Inclusive Democracy conducted a statewide study examining BallotTrax use and potential differences in voting behavior between BallotTrax users and non-BallotTrax users in the 2022 election cycle. Additionally, the Center for Inclusive Democracy conducted a statewide representative survey examining the opinions of eligible voters (adult citizens) in California to gauge their knowledge and views of BallotTrax. Our analysis seeks to answer the following questions broken out by racial and ethnic groups, age, and party affiliations in California:

1. What share of registered voters and actual voters signed up for BallotTrax in the 2022 election cycle?
2. Why do Californians choose to or choose not to sign up for BallotTrax?
3. How does registered voter turnout differ between BallotTrax users and non-BallotTrax users?
4. How do voting methods differ between BallotTrax users and non-BallotTrax users?
5. How do vote-by-mail rejection rates differ between BallotTrax users and non-BallotTrax users and what were the rejection reasons?
6. How do BallotTrax users respond to curable issues with their vote-by-mail ballots?
7. What were BallotTrax users' message delivery and language preferences?

Study Methodology

The voter files used in this analysis were provided by the California Secretary of State. Voter files provided the individual registrant's date of birth (used to identify age), party affiliation, voting activity, registration date, original registration date, registration method, and total number of registered voters. Once received, the data was anonymized to maintain confidentiality. Self-reported gender, race, and ethnicity data were not present for the majority of voters in these files so we imputed this information (see "Data Limitations: Identifying Race and Ethnicity" below).³ Registered voters in California have the option to self-report their gender, race, and ethnicity on the voter registration application, but only a small percentage of registrants have typically done so. Eligible voter population data (adult citizens) were provided by the California Department of Finance.

BallotTrax data was provided by BallotTrax and the California Secretary of State. The data files provided vote-by-mail ballot status history and final status, language preference, and message delivery preference. The BallotTrax files were merged with the voter file using unique registrant ID numbers. A small number of BallotTrax users were lost in the merging process for this report. In the 2022 primary election file, 30,499 (0.8%) BallotTrax users did not have corresponding registrant ID numbers in the voter file. In the 2022 general election, 46,043 (1.3%) BallotTrax users did not have corresponding registrant ID numbers in the voter file. Voter file records are live files that capture active voters at the time of data generation and the voter file used in this analysis was generated a few months after the election, which may explain the lost cases. Some voters may have moved out of state at the time of the file generation or some voters may have become inactive by the time the voter file was generated.

BallotTrax users can be broken out into two categories: 1). Those who opt in to receive notifications via email, text, and/or voice calls; and 2). Those who do not receive notifications and instead log into BallotTrax to view their ballot status. The BallotTrax data used in this report only includes BallotTrax users who were actively signed up to receive notifications via text, email, or voice calls. Registered voters who have a BallotTrax account but do not receive notifications were not included in the data used in this study. In the 2022 primary election, a total of 4,897,439 registered voters had a BallotTrax account and 3,937,750 opted to receive ballot updates. In the 2022 general election, a total of 4,845,758 registered voters had a BallotTrax account and 3,579,989 opted to receive ballot updates.

Survey Methodology

We surveyed a large sample of eligible voters in California – 11,409 respondents – in order to include outsized numbers of members of the state's largest racial and ethnic groups (self-reported by respondents). Surveys were conducted online in both English and Spanish. The margin of error for the total survey sample is +/-3.1%.

We fielded the survey from July 1, 2023 to Aug 2, 2023, recording the views of a diverse sample in which 43.1% of respondents are white (non-Latino), 33.2% are Latino, 15.1% are Asian-American, and 8.6% are African-American (these numbers total 100.5% because some Latinos are members of multiple racial groups). Each of these figures are within 0.2 to 3.3 percentage points of the estimates for the state's citizen voting age population reported by the United States Census Bureau. To further ensure that our findings reflect this population, we created survey weights based on the demographic characteristics of this population and report all results using those weights. We included an oversample of eligible voters with disabilities. We note that the actual behavior of voters at the time of the election could differ from their survey responses (see online appendix for survey instrument).

Data Limitations: Identifying Race and Ethnicity

Current methods in election science used to identify the race and ethnicity of voters are less reliable for some demographic groups, including Indigenous/Native and Asian-American subgroup populations. We identified registrants' race and ethnicity in county voter files with the R package Who Are You (WRU), which computes the probability of each racial category for registrants using surname, neighborhood demographics (geocoding with census tract data), and other characteristics, such as gender, party, and age. For this report, analysis of the voter file by race and ethnicity is limited to Latino, Asian-American, and Black registrants because the imputation for other racial and ethnic groups can have a high degree of inaccuracy. However, some error in measurement for all races and ethnicities, particularly for Black registrants,

is present and caution is appropriate when interpreting small effects. For this reason, we do not report the racial and ethnic composition of BallotTrax users and keep all groups separate so as to not skew results.

The analysis in this report primarily focuses on BallotTrax participation and voting behaviors across racial and ethnic groups, age groups, and party affiliations. Due to data limitations, we are unable to examine BallotTrax use rates and behaviors specific to Californians who are limited English proficient or Californians with disabilities.

What is BallotTrax?

BallotTrax is a tool that tracks the status of every vote-by-mail ballot and sends a series of notifications to voters informing them where their ballot is in the election process, starting from when the ballot is printed and ending with whether it was accepted or rejected. BallotTrax tracks the vote-by-mail ballot through United States Postal Service barcodes and voter registration data and does not have access to the contents of the ballots. Every registered California voter has the option to sign up for the tool; registered voters are not automatically enrolled.⁴

BallotTrax was introduced to all 58 California counties in the 2018 election cycle with counties voluntarily adopting the service and making it available to their voters. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in legislation requiring vote-by-mail ballots to be automatically sent to all registered voters and every California county to adopt the BallotTrax service. While sign-up for the tracking tool was high compared to other states, there was noted confusion from some voters.⁵ Confusion involved a disconnect between expected ballot progress and actual ballot progress, as well as message language. Some counties, for example, mailed ballots were dropped into the postal stream a few days after automatic voter notifications were sent were notified that their ballot was on the way, prompting concern of lost ballots. BallotTrax message language, written and controlled by the Secretary of State's office, was also perceived as vague or incorrect by some voters, such as referring to polling places in counties that are vote-by-mail only.



California's vote-by-mail ballot tracking tool powered by BallotTrax is known as Where's My Ballot?, which provides a way for voters to track and receive notifications on the status of their ballot throughout the entire process. See the California Secretary of State's website to review the sign up process.⁶

BallotTrax users can be broken out into two categories: 1). Those who opt in to receive notifications via email, text, and/or voice calls; and 2). Those who do not receive notifications and instead log into BallotTrax to view their ballot status. Combining those two categories, BallotTrax sign ups in California has remained relatively stable since the 2020 election cycle. In the 2020 general election, 5,027,564 (22.8%) registered voters had a BallotTrax account. BallotTrax participation slightly declined to 4,897,439 (22.3%) registered voters in the 2022 primary election and to 4,845,758 (22.1%) registered voters in the 2022 general election. On the day of the 2024 primary election, 4,776,411 registered voters in California were signed up to track their ballot.

BallotTrax is customizable for message delivery preferences, when those notifications can be sent, and the language in which the messages are sent. For message delivery options, BallotTrax users can choose one or a combination of voice, email, or text messages. In California, BallotTrax notifications are available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Tagalog, Thai, and Vietnamese.

At the time of this report's release, nine states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii, Nevada, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and Utah) and the District of Columbia have contracts with BallotTrax. In an additional twelve states (Oregon, Alaska, Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, New Jersey, Maryland, Tennessee, Texas, and Florida), BallotTrax is available in some counties.⁷

Vote-by-Mail Legislation

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the California legislature passed bills directing changes to how the 2020 general election was administered in order to ensure a safe and accessible election. Among various bills, Assembly Bill 860 made significant changes to vote-by-mail (VBM) access by requiring that county elections offices mail all registered voters a VBM ballot in the 2020 general election.⁸ In fall 2021, Governor Gavin Newsom signed Assembly Bill 37, which expanded vote-by-mail access by making the requirement for county elections offices to send all active voters a vote-by-mail ballot permanent.⁹

County Variation in BallotTrax Promotion

There are two primary locations where county election offices inform registered voters about their ability to sign-up for the state's BallotTrax service: county election office websites and county Voter Information Guides (VIG). For the 2022 election cycle, the placement of sign-up information on election office websites (page location and number of clicks), as well as the text used to describe BallotTrax on sites varied widely across California counties. A majority of counties did not use the Secretary of State's "Where's My Ballot" logo or name when discussing BallotTrax on their websites, while others used some combination of the two.

Placement and language used also varied across county VIGs. In the same cycle, twenty California counties did not mention the availability of BallotTrax in their VIGs.

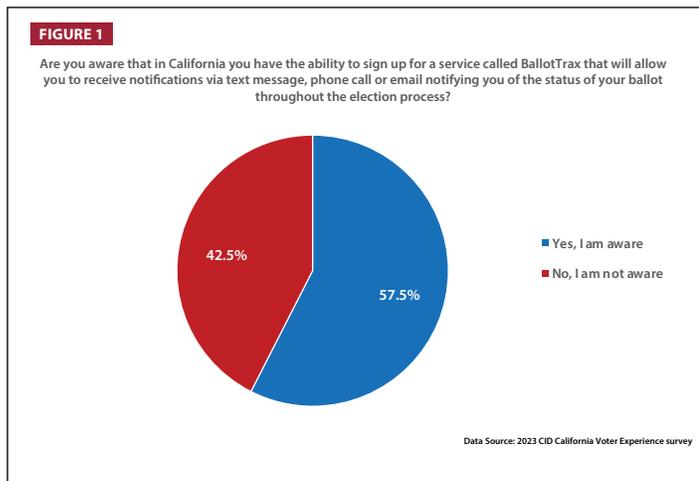
CID was unable to identify a relationship (in any direction) between how counties informed their registered voters about BallotTrax's availability and counties' BallotTrax use rates.

Californians' Awareness and Views of BallotTrax

Californians' Awareness and Views of BallotTrax

To better understand Californians' knowledge of BallotTrax and their views of the service, CID surveyed eligible voters (adult citizens) through its annual California Voter Experience Survey. Specifically, we examined who knew about the option to track their ballot as well as the reasons they did or did not sign up for the tool. **The majority of Californians eligible to vote surveyed did know about BallotTrax, and over 60% of respondents who were aware of the tool were signed up to track their ballot.** There were a variety of reasons respondents opted to receive ballot notifications, which varied across race, ethnicity, age group, and party affiliation. **Concerns about ballots being received by the elections office was the top reason respondents signed up for BallotTrax.** In contrast, many respondents who did not sign up for notifications had high trust in the ballot return process.

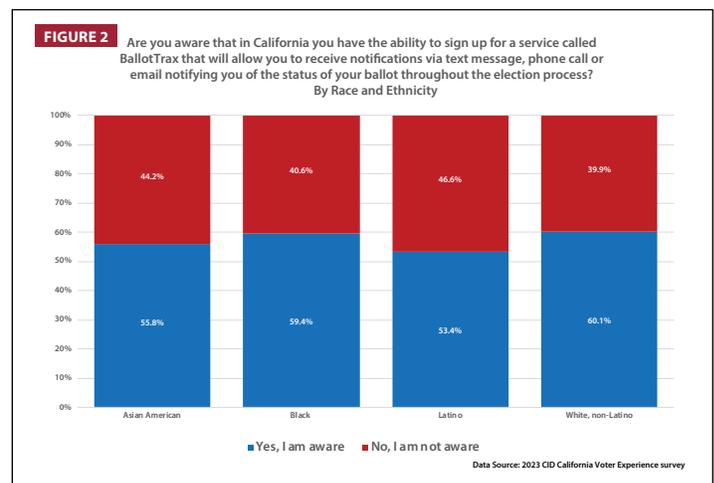
Survey Question 1: Are you aware that in California you have the ability to sign up for a service called BallotTrax that will allow you to receive notifications via text message, phone call or email notifying you of the status of your ballot throughout the election process (e.g., mailed, received, opened)?

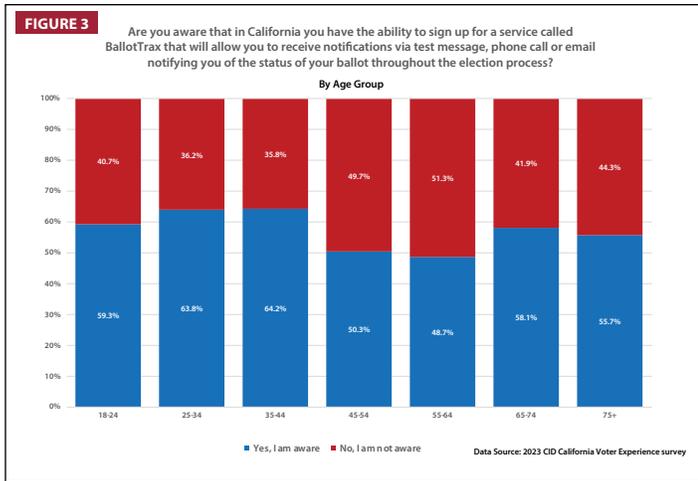


The majority of eligible voters surveyed were aware of BallotTrax. Over 57% of respondents said they were aware that they had the ability to sign up for a ballot tracking service in order to receive ballot updates, while 42.5% said they were not aware of the option (Figure 1).

Awareness of BallotTrax varied by race and ethnicity.

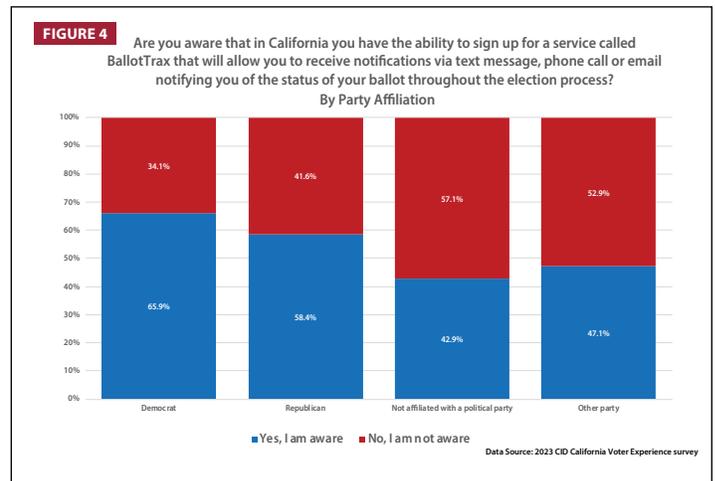
While over half of survey respondents of all racial and ethnic groups said they were aware of the ballot tracking tool, smaller shares of Asian-American (55.8%) and Latino (53.4%) respondents knew about BallotTrax compared to Black (59.4%) and white, non-Latino (60.1%) respondents (Figure 2).



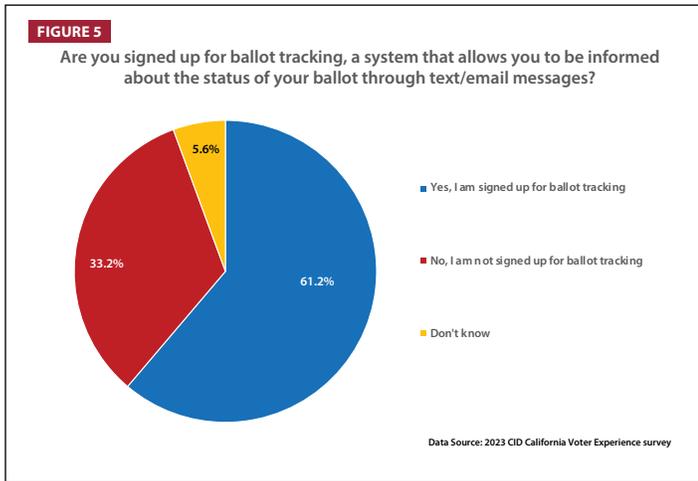


Awareness of BallotTrax peaked among respondents aged 25 to 44, while older respondents had lower awareness levels. Nearly two-thirds of respondents aged 25 to 44 said they were aware of the ability to sign up for BallotTrax and nearly 60% of young respondents aged 18 to 24 said they knew about the tool (Figure 3). Awareness declined among respondents aged 45 to 54 (50.3%) and 55 to 64 (48.7%) and then increased among those aged 65 to 74 (58.1%) and 75 and older (55.7%).

Democrats had the highest awareness of BallotTrax among all party affiliations. Nearly two-thirds of Democrats surveyed said they were aware of the ballot tracking tool, more than seven percentage points higher than Republican respondents (58.4%, Figure 4). Respondents with no party affiliation (42.9%) had by far the lowest awareness of BallotTrax.



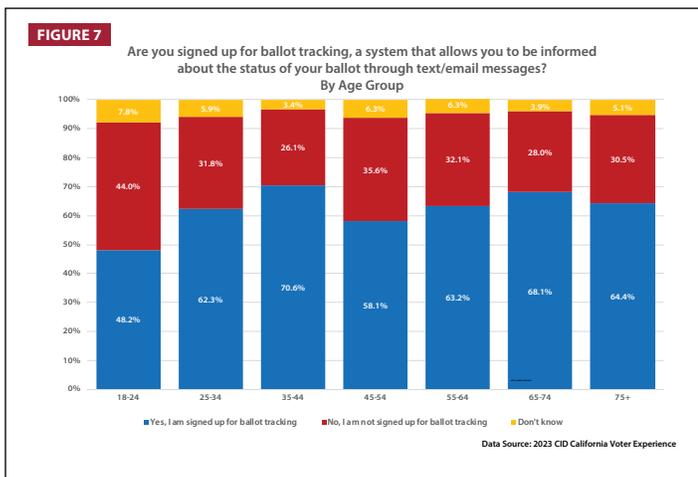
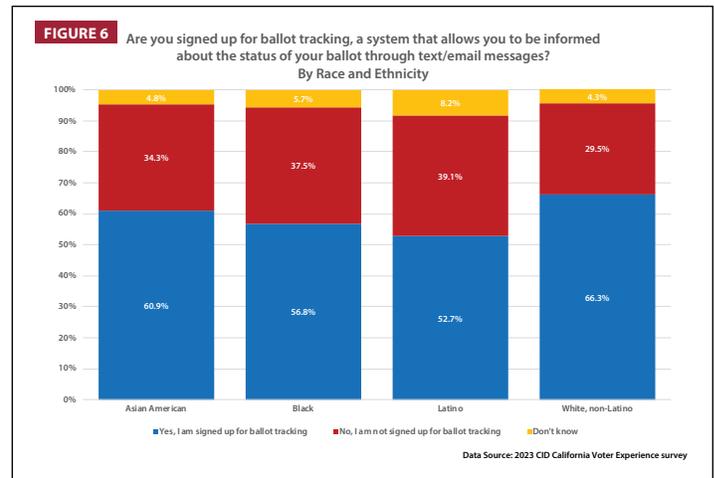
Survey Question 2: Are you signed up for ballot tracking, a system that allows you to be informed about the status of your ballot through text/email messages?



The majority of respondents who were aware of BallotTrax said they were signed up for the tool. Over 61% of respondents who knew about BallotTrax said they had signed up to receive notifications about their ballot (Figure 5). Among all respondents, regardless of knowledge of BallotTrax, 34.4% of eligible voters and 40.8% of registered voters said they were signed up for the tracking tool (not shown).

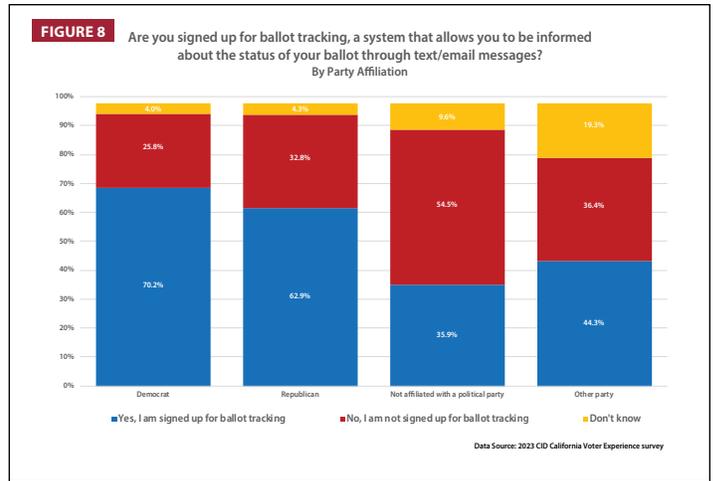
As the analysis in the following sections of this report will show, these use rates are notably larger than what is shown in the voter records. This disparity emphasizes the difference between what resources eligible voters think they participate in and the resources in which they actually participate.

White, non-Latino respondents reported BallotTrax use rates notably higher than that of Black and Latino respondents. Among respondents who were aware of BallotTrax, over two-thirds of white, non-Latinos said they had signed up for the tool (Figure 6). Despite having the second highest awareness of BallotTrax, Black respondents had the second lowest reported sign-up rate (56.8%), while Asian-American respondents had the second lowest awareness and the second highest reported sign-up rate (60.9%). Latino respondents had lowest reported sign-up rate (52.7%) as well as the smallest share who were aware of the tool.

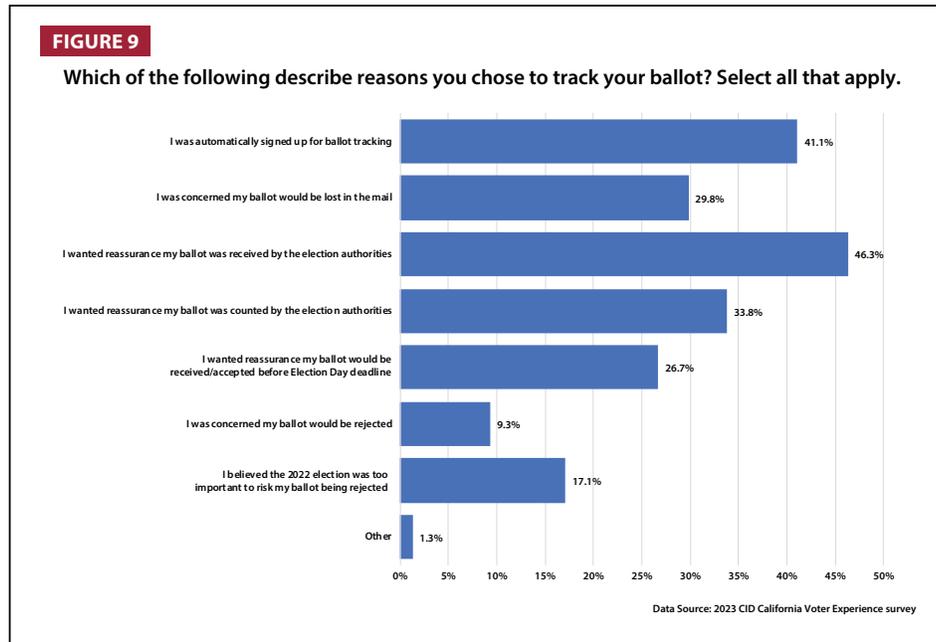


Young respondents aged 18 to 24 reported the lowest BallotTrax sign up rate. Under half of respondents aged 18 to 24 who were aware of BallotTrax also reported that they were signed up for the tool, nearly ten percentage points lower than respondents aged 45 to 54, the age group with the second lowest reported sign-up rate (Figure 7). Reported BallotTrax use was highest among respondents between 35 and 44 years old, who also had the highest awareness of the tracking tool (seen in Figures 14 and 15). Older respondents over the age of 55 had high reported BallotTrax participation rates, ranging from 63.2% to 68.1%, despite having lower awareness of the tool.

Democratic respondents had the highest reported BallotTrax use across all party affiliations. Among respondents aware of the tool, only one-quarter of Democrats said they were not signed up for BallotTrax and over 70% said they opted to receive ballot notifications (Figure 8). Reported BallotTrax use among Republicans who were aware of the tracking tool (62.9%) was also notably higher than those with no party affiliation (35.9%).



Survey Question 3a: Which of the following describe reasons you chose to track your ballot?



Concerns about ballots being received was the top reason respondents signed up for BallotTrax. Over 46% of respondents said they signed up for the tracking tool for reassurance that their ballot was received by election authorities (Figure 9). Concerns about ballots being counted were also top reasons to sign up for the tool, with one-third of respondents saying they wanted reassurance their ballot was counted by election authorities and over one-quarter saying they wanted reassurance that their ballot would be received and counted before the Election Day deadline. Some respondents were concerned about their ballot being rejected (9.3%), while some believed that the 2022 general election was too important to risk their ballot being rejected (17.1%).

Over forty percent of respondents said they were automatically signed up for BallotTrax despite there being no automatic sign-up option. To become a BallotTrax user, registered voters must sign up for the tool themselves using the “where’s my ballot” website and no voters are automatically signed up to receive ballot notifications. Despite this, a large portion of respondents stated they were automatically signed up for the tracking tool, indicating some Californians may believe they are already able to track their ballot when they do not have an account.

Table 1 - Which of the following describe reasons you chose to track your ballot? Select all that apply. By Race and Ethnicity

	Asian American	Black	Latino	White, non-Latino
I was automatically signed up for ballot tracking	36.4%	47.1%	38.5%	41.9%
I was concerned my ballot would be lost in the mail	35.8%	38.3%	30.5%	27.7%
I wanted reassurance my ballot was received by the election authorities	37.7%	33.9%	39.4%	51.3%
I wanted reassurance my ballot was counted by the election authorities	30.2%	23.3%	24.3%	39.0%
I wanted reassurance my ballot would be received/accepted before Election Day deadline	25.3%	25.6%	21.3%	28.8%
I was concerned my ballot would be rejected	11.1%	8.4%	8.2%	9.8%
I believed the 2022 election was too important to risk my ballot being rejected	12.3%	11.9%	13.3%	19.5%
Other	0.6%	0.4%	0.6%	1.6%

Data Source: 2023 CID California Voter Experience survey

Reasons for signing up for BallotTrax varied across racial and ethnic groups. Over half of white, non-Latino respondents signed up for BallotTrax for reassurance that their ballot was received by election officials, notably higher than Asian-American (37.7%), Black (33.9%), and Latino (39.4%) respondents (Table 1). Instead, Asian-American (35.8%), Black (38.3%), and Latino (30.5%) respondents were more concerned that their ballot would be lost in the mail than white, non-Latino respondents (27.7%). Additionally, Black (23.3%) and Latino (24.3%) BallotTrax users had lower rates of concern about their ballots being counted by election officials than Asian Americans (30.2%) and white, non-Latinos (39.0%).

Table 2 - Which of the following describe reasons you chose to track your ballot? Select all that apply. By Age Group

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
I was automatically signed up for ballot tracking	45.1%	51.2%	52.2%	40.0%	20.8%	20.8%	23.2%
I was concerned my ballot would be lost in the mail	30.6%	34.7%	33.5%	24.8%	25.9%	24.2%	16.1%
I wanted reassurance my ballot was received by the election authorities	33.2%	37.6%	41.2%	48.5%	61.4%	66.8%	70.5%
I wanted reassurance my ballot was counted by the election authorities	21.5%	24.1%	33.7%	36.9%	44.7%	49.8%	58.9%
I wanted reassurance my ballot would be received/accepted before Election Day deadline	19.5%	24.2%	27.8%	23.9%	32.8%	32.5%	42.9%
I was concerned my ballot would be rejected	10.4%	11.1%	12.2%	8.2%	5.5%	4.2%	8.0%
I believed the 2022 election was too important to risk my ballot being rejected	10.6%	11.1%	19.8%	18.0%	21.8%	22.8%	29.5%
Other	0.5%	1.1%	0.9%	0.6%	2.0%	2.8%	1.8%

Data Source: 2023 CID California Voter Experience survey

Respondents under the age of 45 had higher concerns about their ballot being rejected, while older respondents were concerned about their ballot not being received. At least 60% of respondents over the age of 55 were concerned about their ballot being received by election officials, compared to under 40% of those aged 18 to 34 (Table 2). Similarly, the share of respondents in each age group who signed up for BallotTrax for reassurance that their ballot was counted by election officials increased with age, with only 21.5% of those aged 18 to 24 selecting that concern and nearly 59% of those aged 75 and older stating that as a reason to sign up for the tool. Instead, younger respondents signed up for the tool over concerns their ballot would be rejected at higher rates than older respondents, with those aged 18 to 24 (10.4%), 25 to 34 (11.1%), and 35 to 44 (12.2%) stating that concern. In contrast, only 5.5% of respondents aged 55 to 64 and 4.2% of respondents aged 65 to 74 stated concerns about their ballot being rejected as a reason to sign up for ballot notifications.

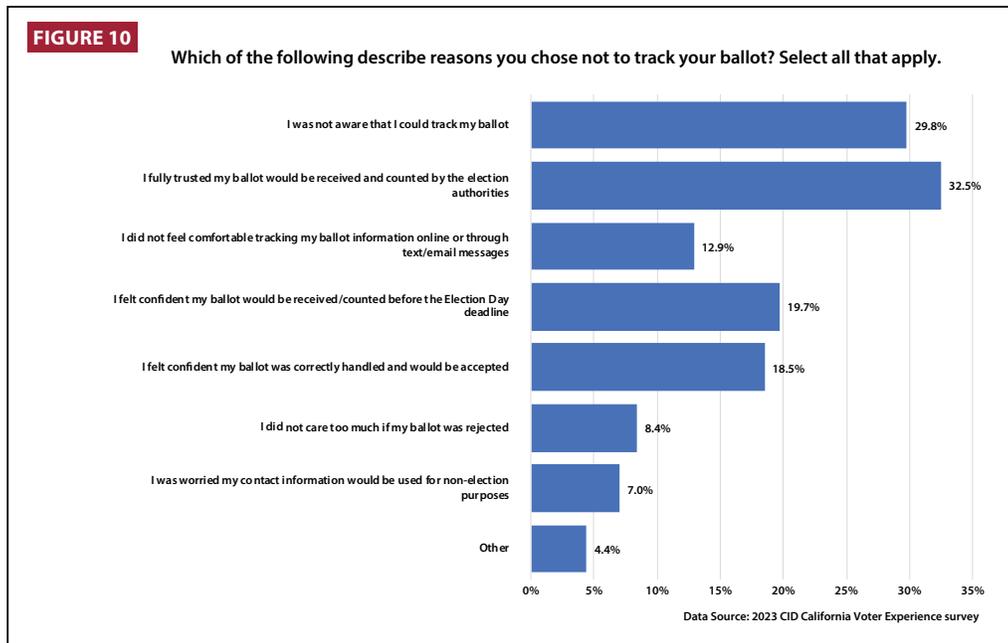
Table 3 - Which of the following describe reasons you chose to track your ballot? Select all that apply. By Party Affiliation

	Democrat	Republican	Not affiliated with a political party	Other party
I was automatically signed up for ballot tracking	41.9%	43.3%	34.0%	36.8%
I was concerned my ballot would be lost in the mail	30.5%	31.5%	21.1%	23.7%
I wanted reassurance my ballot was received by the election authorities	48.6%	41.5%	44.6%	44.7%
I wanted reassurance my ballot was counted by the election authorities	34.7%	32.6%	33.0%	42.1%
I wanted reassurance my ballot would be received/accepted before Election Day deadline	28.3%	24.4%	24.1%	26.3%
I was concerned my ballot would be rejected	9.3%	11.7%	6.1%	2.6%
I believed the 2022 election was too important to risk my ballot being rejected	18.1%	16.6%	12.9%	21.1%
Other	1.0%	1.4%	1.7%	2.6%

Data Source: 2023 CID California Voter Experience survey

Democrats signed up for BallotTrax for reassurance their ballot was received and counted at higher rates than Republicans, while Republicans had higher concerns about their ballots being rejected. Nearly half of Democratic respondents said they signed up for BallotTrax for reassurance their ballot was received by election officials, a little over 7 percentage points more than Republicans (Table 3). Another 34.7% of Democrats said they wanted reassurance their ballot was counted by election officials and 28.3% wanted reassurance it was received and counted before election day, slightly higher shares than Republican respondents (32.6% and 24.4%, respectively). Instead, nearly 12% of Republicans said they signed up for ballot notifications over concerns their ballot would be rejected, slightly higher than Democrats (9.3%).

Survey Question 3b: Which of the following describe reasons you chose not to track your ballot?



The most common reason respondents said they did not sign up for BallotTrax was trust in the process. Nearly one-third of respondents who had not signed up for BallotTrax stated they fully trusted their ballot would be received and counted by election authorities, with another 19.7% saying they were confident their ballot would be received and counted before the Election Day deadline and 18.5% saying they were confident their ballot would be correctly handled and would be accepted (Figure 10). Almost 30% of respondents said they did not sign up because they were unaware that they could track their ballot, while 8.4% said they did not care too much if their ballot was rejected. A small but notable share of respondents stated security as a reason for not signing up for the tool, with 12.9% saying they did not feel comfortable tracking their ballot online or through text/email messages and 7.0% saying they were worried their contact information would be used for non-election purposes.

**Table 4 - Which of the following describe reasons you chose not to track your ballot? Select all that apply.
By Race and Ethnicity**

	Asian American	Black	Latino	White, non-Latino
I was not aware that I could track my ballot	32.1%	39.1%	35.1%	25.7%
I fully trusted my ballot would be received and counted by the election authorities	28.4%	28.3%	29.2%	36.1%
I did not feel comfortable tracking my ballot information online or through text/email messages	23.5%	13.0%	12.9%	11.6%
I felt confident my ballot would be received/counted before the Election Day deadline	18.5%	18.1%	16.9%	20.9%
I felt confident my ballot was correctly handled and would be accepted	13.6%	10.1%	14.2%	22.1%
I did not care too much if my ballot was rejected	11.1%	8.0%	10.2%	7.2%
I was worried my contact information would be used for non-election purposes	11.1%	7.2%	7.5%	5.9%
Other	1.2%	2.9%	3.5%	5.4%

Data Source: 2023 CID California Voter Experience survey

Asian-American respondents did not sign up for BallotTrax over security concerns at the highest rates, while larger shares of Black and Latino respondents were not aware of the option. Over 23% of Asian Americans surveyed stated they were not comfortable tracking their ballot online or through text/email messages, notably higher than Black (13.0%), Latino (12.9%), and white, non-Latino (11.6%) respondents (Table 4). Similarly, over 11% of Asian-American respondents said they were worried their contact information would be used for non-election purposes, nearly twice the rate of white, non-Latinos (5.9%) and around four percentage points higher than Black (7.2%) and Latino (7.5%) respondents. In contrast, Black (39.1%) and Latino (35.1%) stated they were unaware of the tracking tool at higher rates than Asian-American (32.1%) and white, non-Latino (25.7%) respondents.

**Table 5 - Which of the following describe reasons you chose not to track your ballot? Select all that apply.
By Age Group**

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
I was not aware that I could track my ballot	44.9%	33.9%	27.0%	24.4%	21.2%	7.8%	13.7%
I fully trusted my ballot would be received and counted by the election authorities	24.6%	27.1%	31.5%	31.0%	42.3%	52.2%	60.8%
I did not feel comfortable tracking my ballot information online or through text/email messages	15.0%	16.6%	12.6%	14.2%	7.3%	8.7%	3.9%
I felt confident my ballot would be received/counted before the Election Day deadline	12.0%	15.9%	24.8%	19.3%	21.2%	33.0%	31.4%
I felt confident my ballot was correctly handled and would be accepted	13.8%	16.6%	18.5%	13.7%	24.1%	33.0%	31.4%
I did not care too much if my ballot was rejected	12.0%	12.2%	7.7%	7.6%	0.0%	1.7%	2.0%
I was worried my contact information would be used for non-election purposes	6.0%	7.1%	7.2%	8.1%	4.4%	9.6%	5.9%
Other	2.4%	4.1%	5.0%	7.1%	4.4%	6.1%	5.9%

Data Source: 2023 CID California Voter Experience survey

Young respondents aged 18 to 24 were the least aware of the tracking tool across all age groups. Nearly 45% of respondents between 18 and 24 said they did not sign up for BallotTrax because they were unaware they could track their ballot, eleven percentage points higher than those aged 25 to 34, the age group who selected the reason at the second highest frequency (Table 5). Trust in the process increased with age, with almost one-quarter of respondents aged 18 to 24 saying they didn't sign up because they fully trusted their ballot would be received and county by election authorities and over half of respondents over the age of 65 saying the same.

**Table 6 - Which of the following describe reasons you chose not to track your ballot? Select all that apply.
By Party Affiliation**

	Democrat	Republican	Not affiliated with a political party	Other party
I was not aware that I could track my ballot	27.6%	29.9%	33.1%	39.3%
I fully trusted my ballot would be received and counted by the election authorities	39.5%	31.1%	24.4%	17.9%
I did not feel comfortable tracking my ballot information online or through text/email messages	12.8%	12.3%	14.1%	14.3%
I felt confident my ballot would be received/counted before the Election Day deadline	22.9%	19.2%	13.8%	25.0%
I felt confident my ballot was correctly handled and would be accepted	22.5%	15.9%	14.4%	21.4%
I did not care too much if my ballot was rejected	6.1%	6.0%	13.3%	10.7%
I was worried my contact information would be used for non-election purposes	6.6%	6.3%	7.7%	7.1%
Other	3.5%	5.1%	5.6%	3.6%

Data Source: 2023 CID California Voter Experience survey

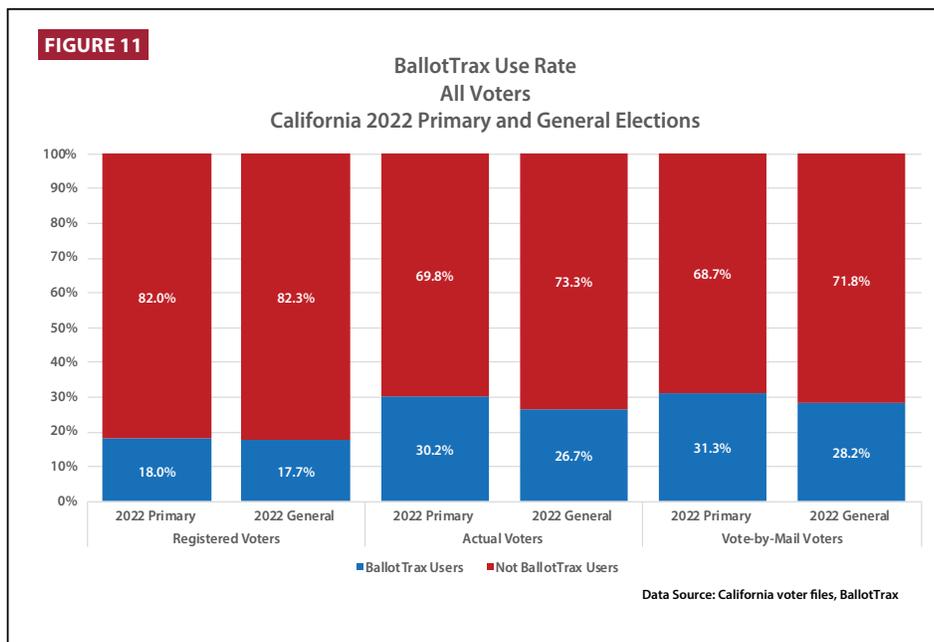
Democrats stated trust in the process as a reason they did not sign up for BallotTrax at higher rates than Republicans. Nearly 40% of Democratic respondents said they did not sign up for the tracking tool because they fully trust their ballot would be received and counted by the election authorities, while 31.1% of Republicans said the same (Table 6). Similarly, 22.5% of Democrats said they felt confident that their ballot would be correctly handled and accepted, while just under 16% of Republicans said the same. Similar shares of Democratic and Republican respondents selected the remaining reasons to not sign up for BallotTrax.

BallotTrax Use in the 2022 Primary and General Elections

Actual BallotTrax Use in California

Nearly one-third of 2022 primary voters and one-quarter of 2022 general voters received vote-by-mail ballot notifications from BallotTrax, with use rates being the highest among registered Democrats, midaged voters, Black voters, and white, non-Latino voters. The following analysis reveals that BallotTrax use rates, or the share of voters who were signed up for the ballot tracking system at the time of the election, decreased between the 2022 primary and general elections. BallotTrax accounts are ongoing, meaning once a voter creates an account to track their ballot, they continue to be signed up for the tool in future elections until they opt out. Voters “signed up” for BallotTrax include all voters who had an active account at the time of the election, regardless of when they created the account. Despite the reduction in BallotTrax participation, overall user demographics in both elections were consistent: the tracking tool was less commonly used by registered Republicans, younger voters aged 18 to 24, and Latino voters.

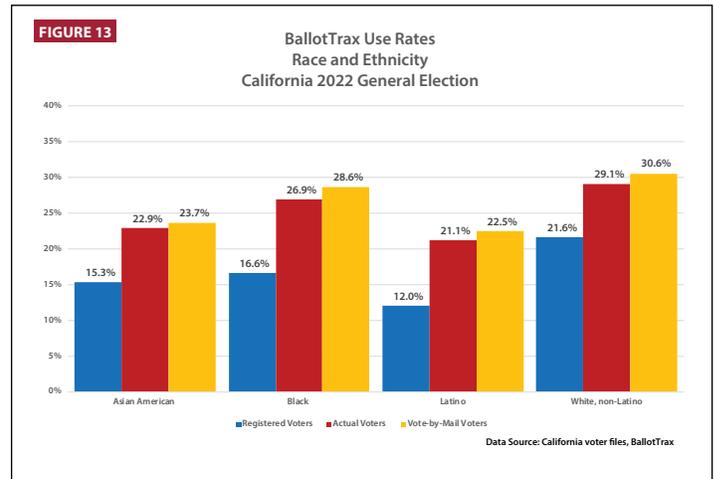
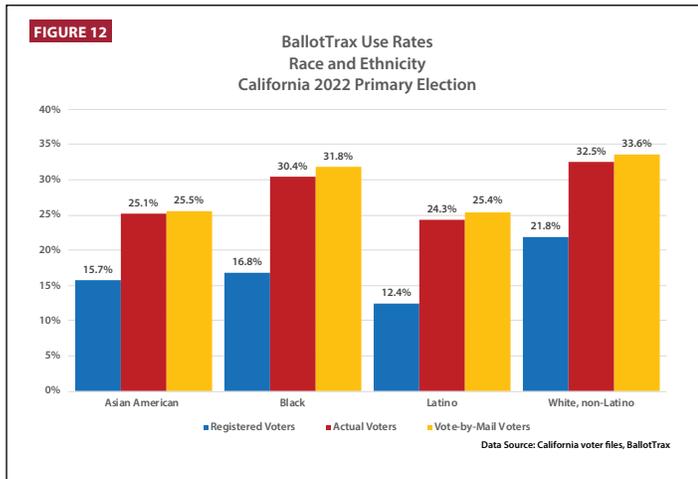
BallotTrax Use - All Registrants



A larger share of voters used BallotTrax to track their ballots in the 2022 primary election than in the 2022 general election. Around 18.0% of registered voters were signed up for BallotTrax in the 2022 primary election, which slightly decreased to 17.7% in the 2022 general election (Figure 11). Among actual voters who cast a ballot, nearly one-third used BallotTrax to track their ballot in the primary, nearly four percentage points more than in the 2022 general election (26.7%). BallotTrax use was higher among Vote-by-Mail voters, with 31.3% using the tool in the primary election and over 28% using the tool in the general election.

Note: For BallotTrax use rates by county, see online appendix.

BallotTrax Use - Race and Ethnicity

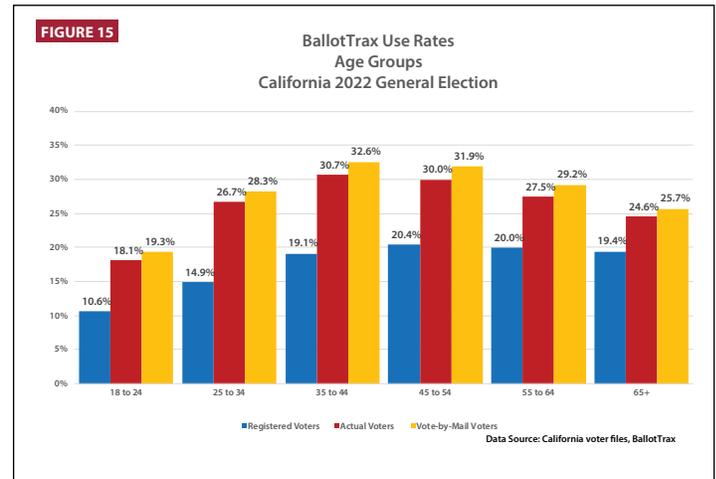
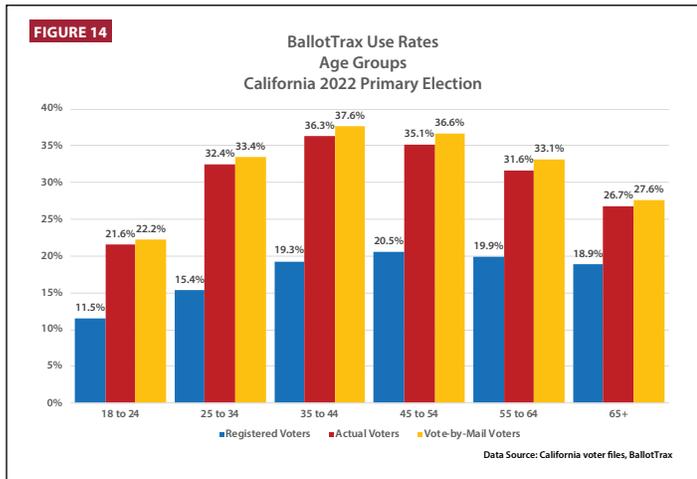


Registrants of color had lower BallotTrax use rates than white, non-Latino registrants. In both the 2022 primary and general elections, Latino and Asian-American registered voters, those who actually voted, and those who voted specifically using a vote-by-mail voters had BallotTrax use rates at least two percentage points lower than white, non-Latinos (Figures 12 and 13). Latino registrants and voters consistently had the lowest BallotTrax use rates, particularly among registered voters. For example, just over 12% of Latino registered voters were BallotTrax users in the primary, compared to 15.7% of Asian-American registered voters and 16.8% of Black registered voters. While Black registered voters had notably lower BallotTrax use rates than white, non-Latinos in both elections, Black voters and Black vote-by-mail voters had similar use rates to their white, non-Latino counterparts. Nearly 32% of Black vote-by-mail voters in the primary election were signed up for BallotTrax, less than two percentage points away from the white, non-Latino use rate, while around one-quarter of both Asian-American and Latino vote-by-mail voters were signed up for the tracking tool.

BallotTrax use rates decreased in the 2022 general election compared to the primary election across all racial and ethnic groups. Between the primary and general elections, Asian-American vote-by-mail voters saw the smallest decline (1.8 percentage points) compared to Black (3.2 percentage points), Latino (2.9 percentage points), and white, non-Latino (3.0 percentage points) vote-by-mail voters. Among registered voters, however, Asian Americans and Latinos saw the largest decline in BallotTrax use (both 0.4 percentage points), while use among Black and white, non-Latino registered voters declined by 0.2 percentage points.

Note: For BallotTrax use rates by race/ethnicity and county, see online appendix.

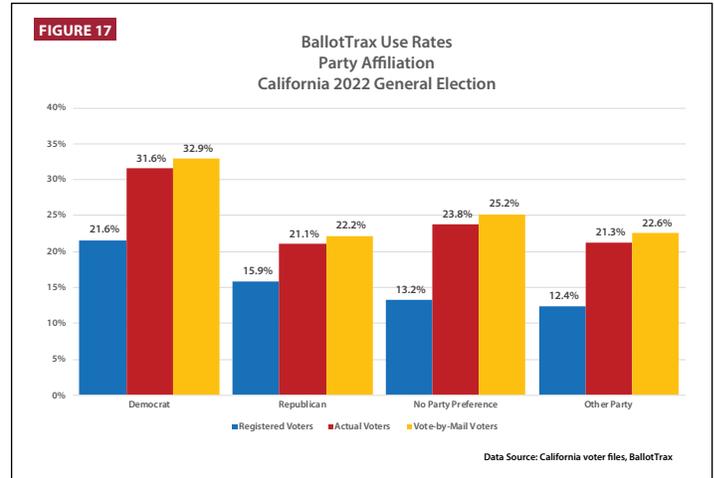
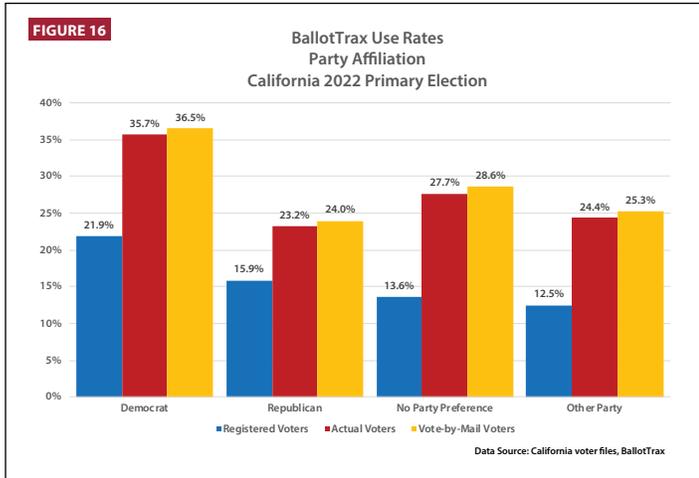
BallotTrax Use - Age Groups



BallotTrax use in both elections increased with age, peaking among mid-aged registrants and voters. Young registrants and voters aged 18 to 24 had the lowest BallotTrax use rates in both the primary and general elections, with use rates increasing with each age group and then slightly declining after age 54 (Figures 14 and 15). In the general election, for example, 19.3% of vote-by-mail voters aged 18 to 24 signed up for the ballot tracking tool, while over 32% of vote-by-mail voters aged 35 to 44 did so. Older vote-by-mail voters aged 65 and older had the second lowest use rate behind youth vote-by-mail voters, although those aged 65 and older used the tracking tool at notably higher rates than their young counterparts. In the 2022 primary election, over 27% of vote-by-mail voters aged 65 and older were signed up for BallotTrax, more than five percentage points higher than vote-by-mail voters aged 18 to 24 (22.2%).

Note: For BallotTrax use rates by age groups and county, see online appendix.

BallotTrax Use - Party Affiliation



BallotTrax was notably more common among registered Democrats than any other party affiliation. Across both elections, registered Democrats consistently had BallotTrax use rates 5 to twelve percentage points higher than those of registered Republicans, who used BallotTrax at the lowest rates (Figures 16 and 17). Democrats who voted with vote-by-mail ballots had particularly high BallotTrax use rates compared to other party affiliations. In the 2022 general election, for example, nearly one-third of Democratic vote-by-mail voters were signed up for the tool, compared to one-quarter or less of Republican, no party preference, and other party vote-by-mail voters.

Note: For BallotTrax use rates by party affiliation and county, see online appendix.

BallotTrax Use in California Counties

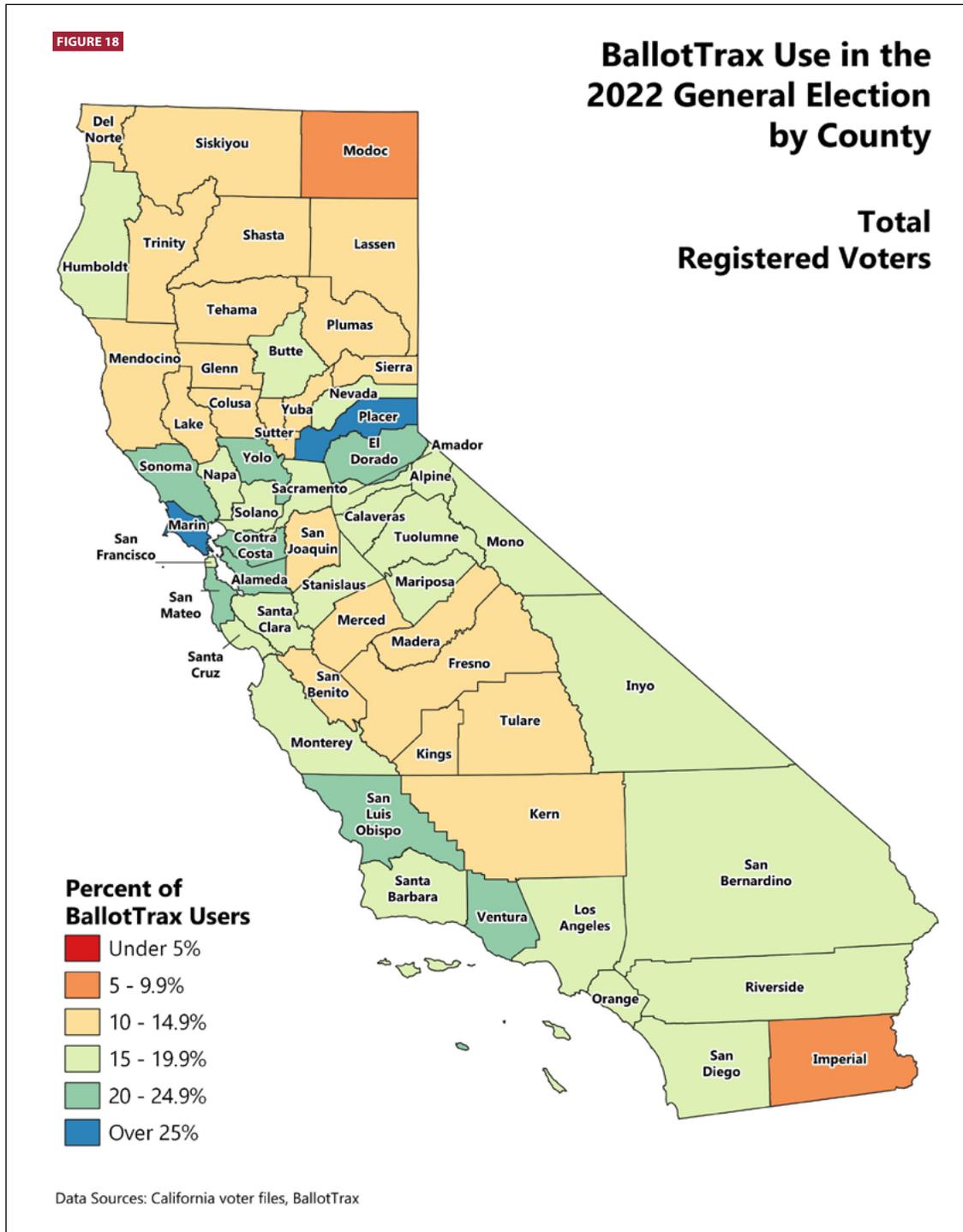
BallotTrax use varied widely across California counties, with some having use rates under 10% and others having over one-quarter of registered voters signed up for the tool. **BallotTrax use was highest in counties on the coast and across the Sacramento region, while the lowest use was in the southern Central Valley and Northern California.** BallotTrax use rates also varied by race, ethnicity, age, and party affiliation across counties. Latino and Asian-American registered voters had low use rates in many counties compared to the general population, while registered Democrats had higher use rates in many counties compared to registered Republicans.

The following section details BallotTrax use rates across counties in the 2022 general election. For use rates across counties in the 2022 primary election, see the online appendix.

BallotTrax Use – All Registered Voters

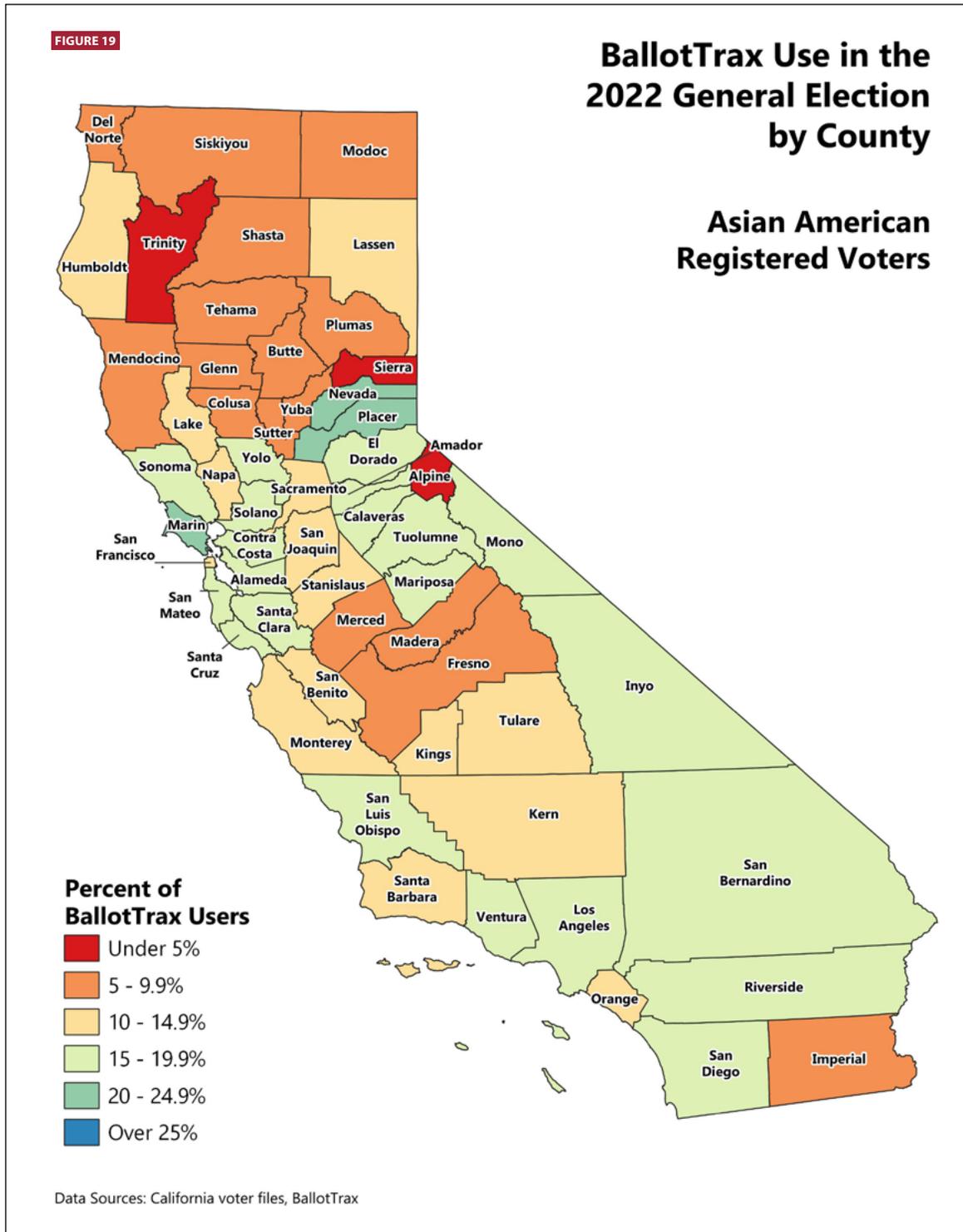
BallotTrax use among registered voters varied widely across California counties, with the highest percentage of registered voters using the tool concentrated in the Bay Area and the greater Sacramento region. BallotTrax use was highest in Marin County (27.3%), Placer County (25.6%), and Sonoma County (23.5%, Figure 18).

Twenty-four of California’s 58 counties had a BallotTrax use rate below 15% of registered voters in the 2022 general election. Counties with the lowest shares of registered voters signed up to receive ballot notifications were concentrated in Northern California, with Imperial (7.7%), Modoc (9.2%), and Colusa (10.4%) counties having the lowest use rates across the state.



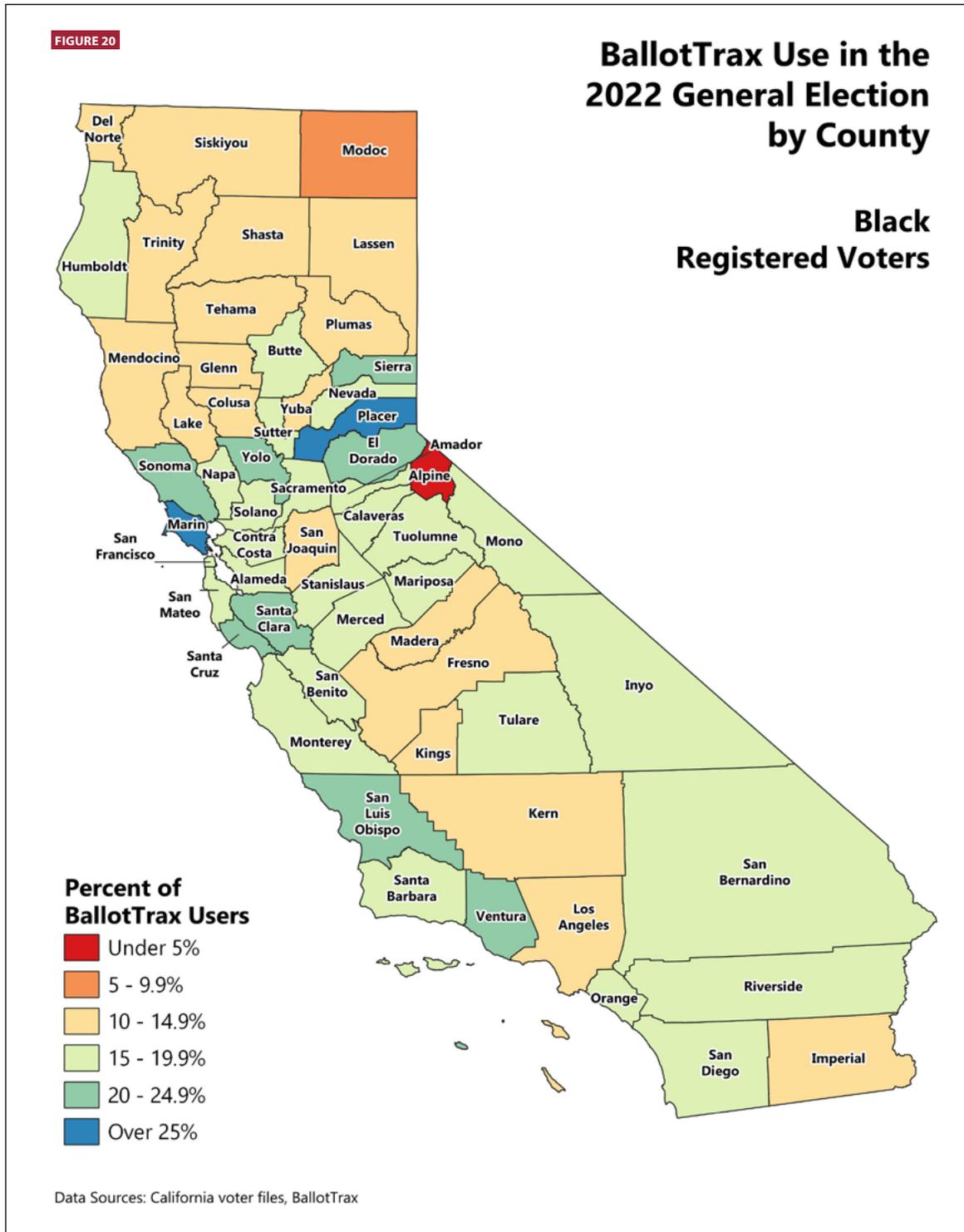
BallotTrax Use – Asian-American Registered Voters

Nearly one-third of California’s counties had Asian-American BallotTrax use rates below ten percent of registered voters. Nineteen of California’s 58 counties had less than 10% of Asian-American registered voters signed up for the ballot tracking tool in the 2022 general election (Figure 19). Counties with low Asian-American BallotTrax use rates were concentrated in Northern California and the Central Valley. BallotTrax use among Asian Americans was highest in Placer and Marin counties, the only counties with Asian-American BallotTrax use rates over 20%.



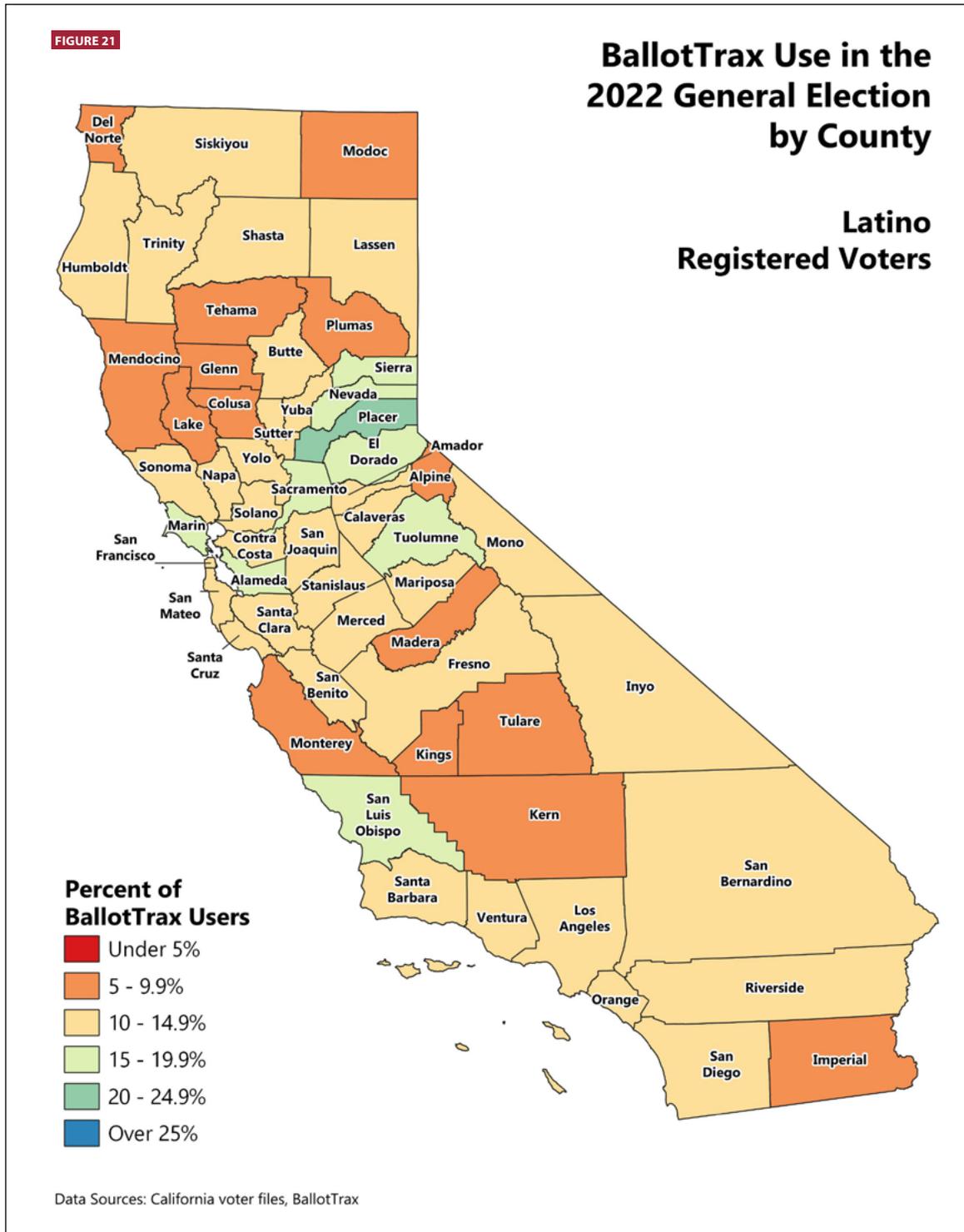
BallotTrax Use – Black Registered Voters

BallotTrax use among Black registered voters was highest on the coast and the Sacramento region and lowest in Northern Central Valley and Eastern Sierras. Twenty-one counties had Black BallotTrax use rate below 15%, most of which are concentrated in the northern part of the state (Figure 20). The counties with the highest Black BallotTrax use rate were Marin (26.2%), Placer (26.0%), and Yolo (23.1%) counties.



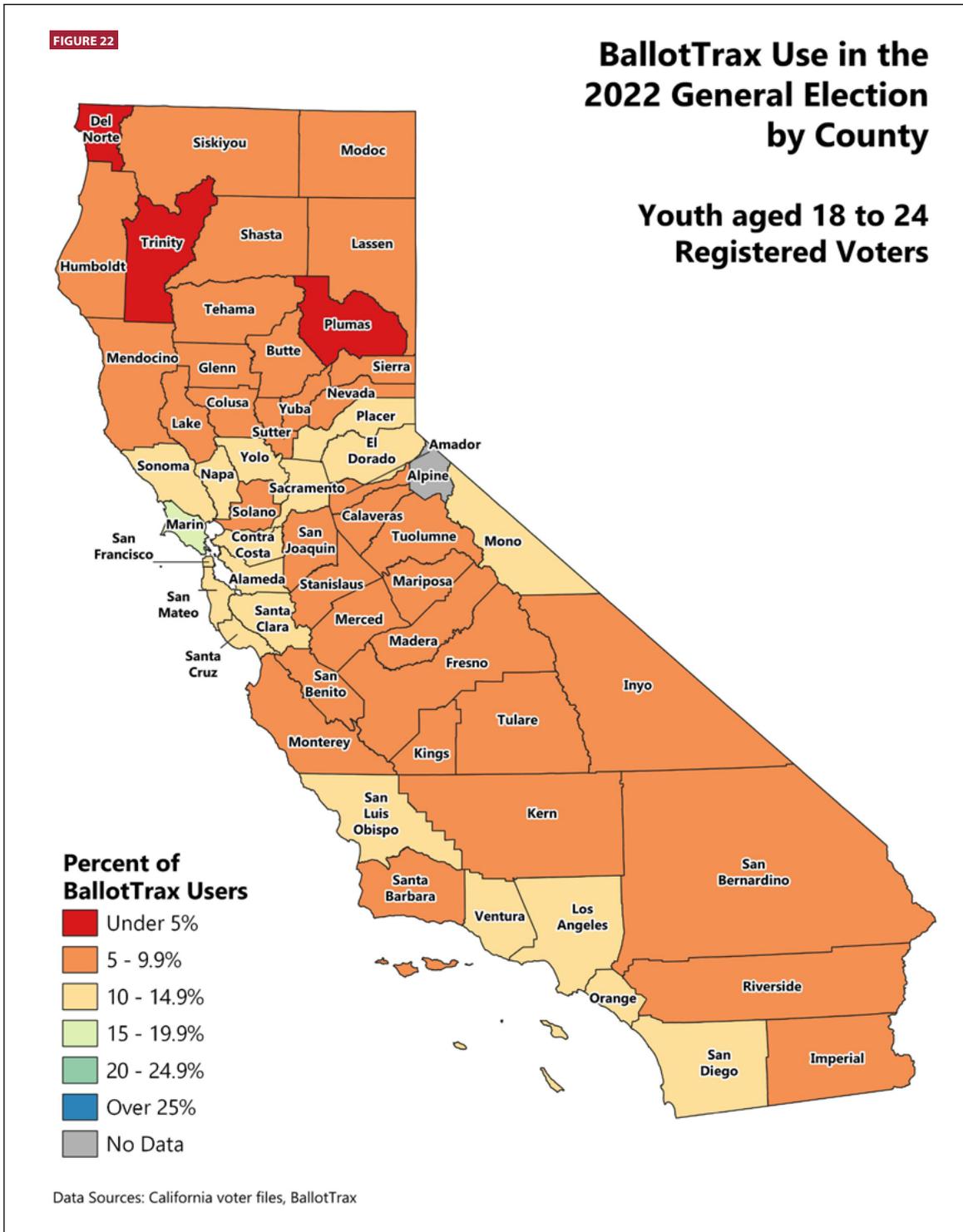
BallotTrax Use – Latino Registered Voters

The overwhelming majority of counties had a Latino BallotTrax use rate below 15% in the 2022 general election. Only eight of California’s 58 counties had over 15% of Latino registered voters signed up for the ballot tracking tool, which were located in the Eastern Sierras, Sacramento region, and the Bay Area (Figure 21). BallotTrax use among Latino registered voter was notably low in Northern California and the Southern Central Valley, where many counties had BallotTrax use lower than 10% of registered voters.



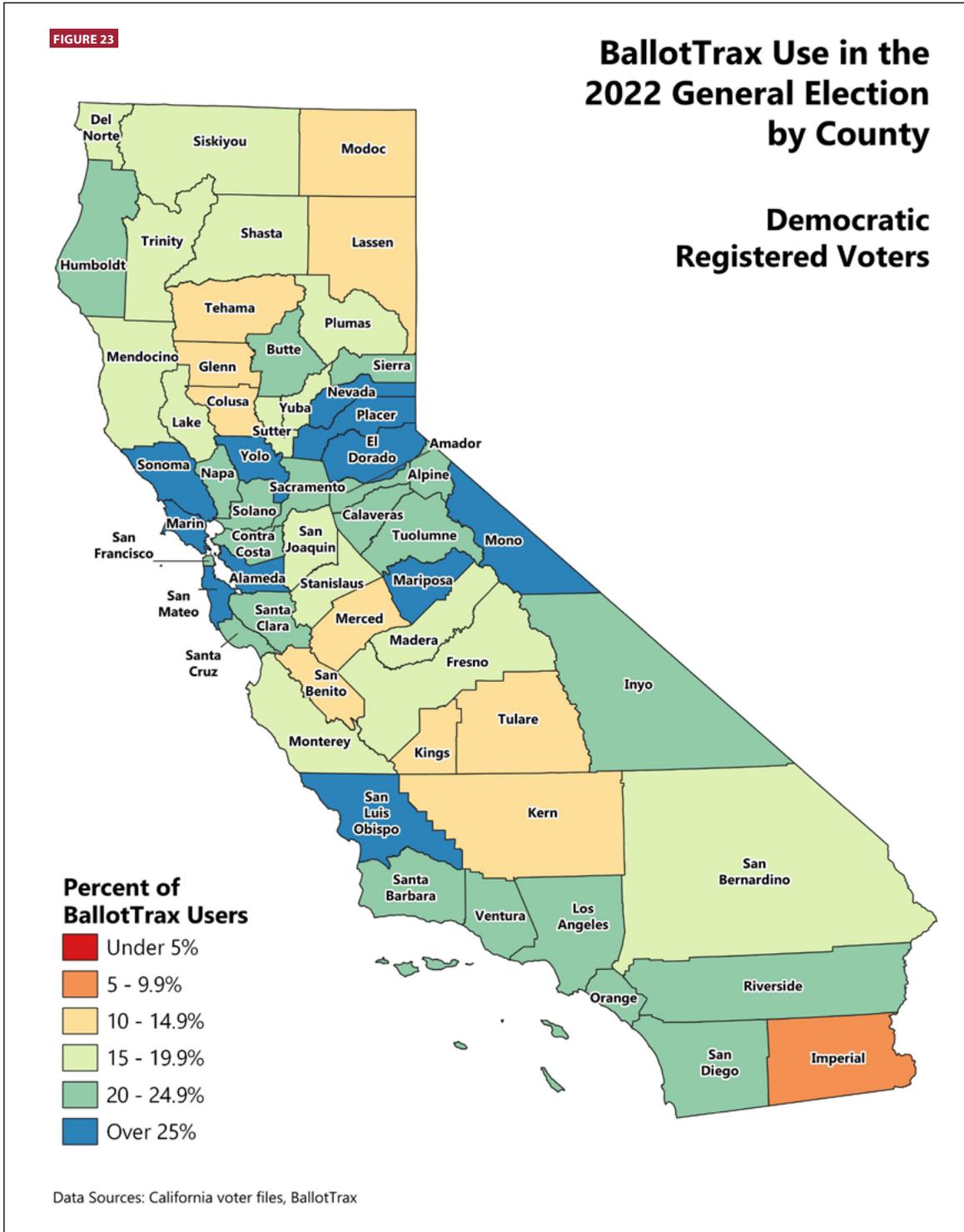
BallotTrax Use – Youth (Aged 18 to 24) Registered Voters

There were not any counties in California that had a youth BallotTrax use rate over 15% in the 2022 general election. BallotTrax use among registered voters aged 18 to 24 was highest in counties in the Bay Area and Sacramento region, with Marin (14.9%) having the highest use rate among youth (Figure 22). The majority (39) of California 58 counties had a youth BallotTrax use rate below 10%, with the lowest use rates being in Northern California.



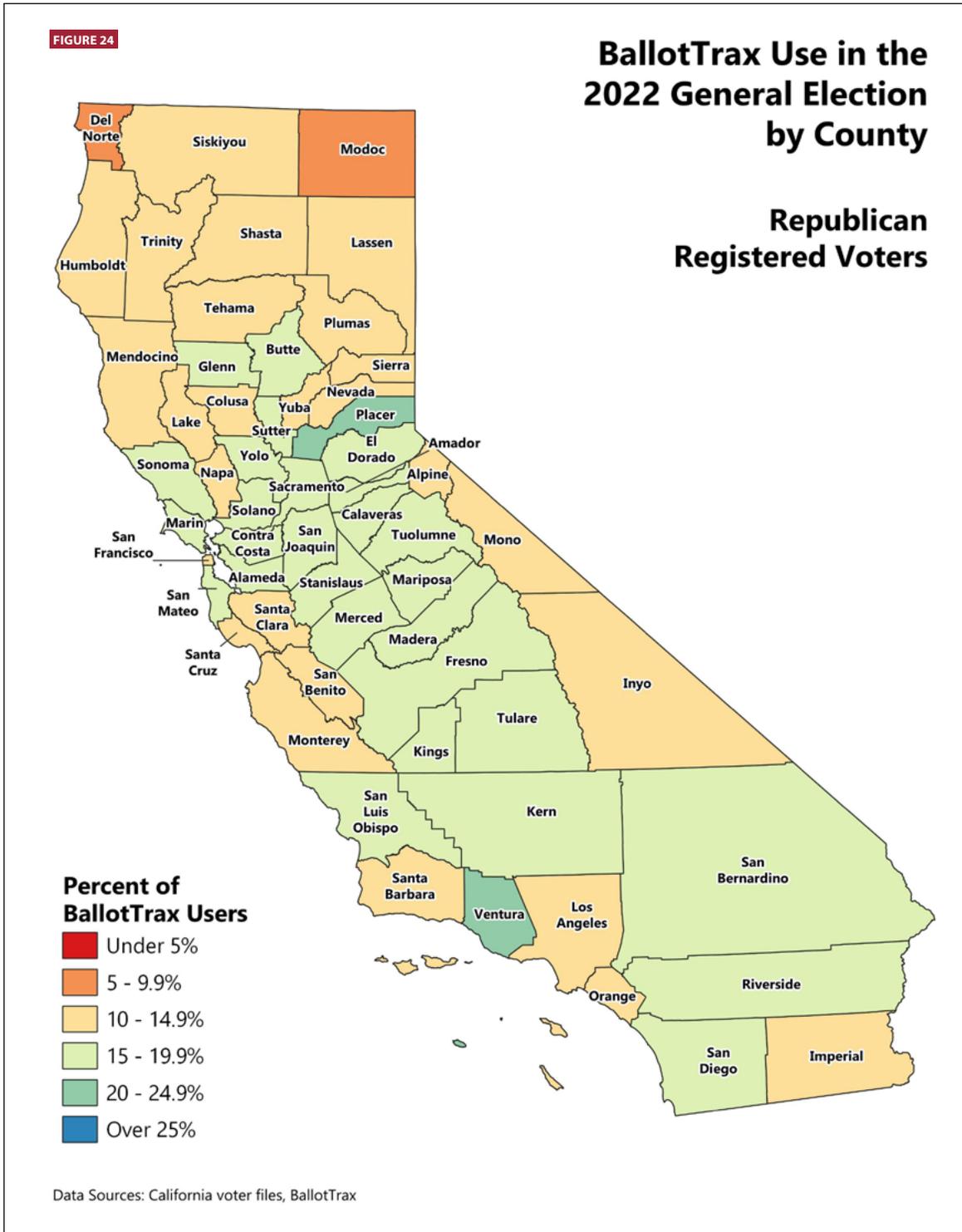
BallotTrax Use – Democratic Registered Voters

Eleven counties had a Democratic BallotTrax use rate above 25%, while another nineteen counties had a use rate above 20% in the 2022 general election. Counties with the highest share of registered Democrats signed up for the ballot tracking tool were concentrated in the Bay Area and Sacramento region (Figure 23). The counties with the lowest use rate among Democrats were concentrated in the Central Valley.



BallotTrax Use – Republican Registered Voters

There were not any counties in California that had a Republican BallotTrax use rate above 25% in the 2022 general election. In twenty-eight counties, less than 15% of registered Republicans were signed up to receive ballot notifications (Figure 24). Placer County (24.5%) and Ventura County (20.4%) were the only counties to have Republican use rates above 20%, with the next highest Republican BallotTrax use rate being in Solano County (19.8%).



Registered Voter Turnout Rates in the 2022 Primary and General Elections

Registered Voter Turnout by BallotTrax Use

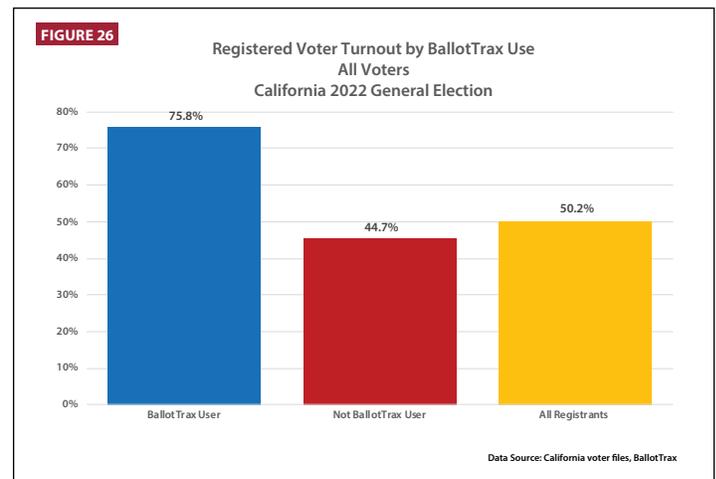
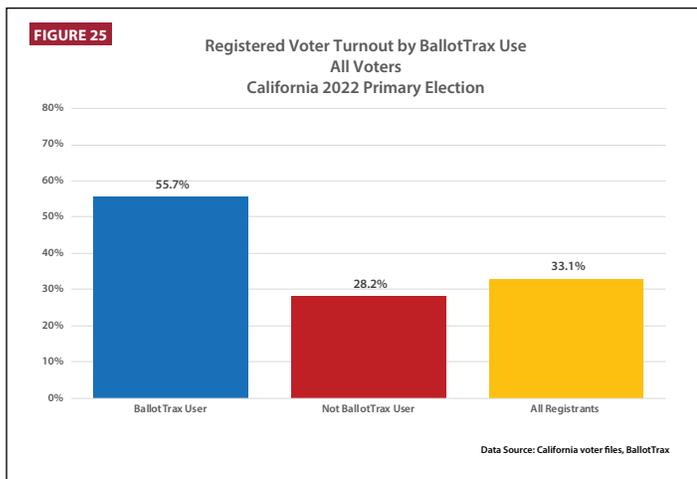
Registered voter turnout rates among BallotTrax users of all racial and ethnic groups, ages, and party affiliations were notably higher than among their counterparts not using the ballot tracking tool in both the 2022 primary and general elections. By examining registered voter turnout differences between BallotTrax use and non-use, the following section can provide insight into how BallotTrax may correlate with voter participation, particularly among groups historically underrepresented in California’s voting electorate.

Many factors influence registered voter turnout, such as election type (presidential vs. midterm), competitiveness of an election, political climate, and candidate quality. Our analysis examines only the descriptive relationship between BallotTrax use and registered voter turnout and does not demonstrate causality. In other words, while signing up for BallotTrax possibly encourages people to vote, there is also the possibility of high propensity voters being more likely to sign up for the ballot tracking tool. We present voter turnout of only the registered voter population in order to examine turnout differences between voters who were and were not signed up for BallotTrax. For a look at registered voter turnout prior to BallotTrax implementation, see page 38.

As with California’s registered voter population, the demographic make-up of California’s voters (those actually casting a ballot) is not representative of the state’s population who are eligible to vote (adult citizens). Historically and currently, voters of color and young voters have notably lower voter turnout rates than California’s general population, resulting in these groups being underrepresented among those casting ballots. For example, Asian Americans were 10.6 % of California’s actual voters in the 2020 general election but were 14.6% of all the state’s eligible-to-vote residents. For more information on these voter representation gaps, see [CID’s Voter’s Choice Act research report](#).

Note: For a more complete equity-focused discussion of voter turnout across groups, CID encourages the examination of turnout of the larger eligible voter population (adult citizens). Examining only registered voter turnout rates can obscure the significant historical and current inequities in voter registration across racial/ethnic and age groups. See CID’s [website](#) for research on this measure of turnout.

Registered Voter Turnout - All Registrants

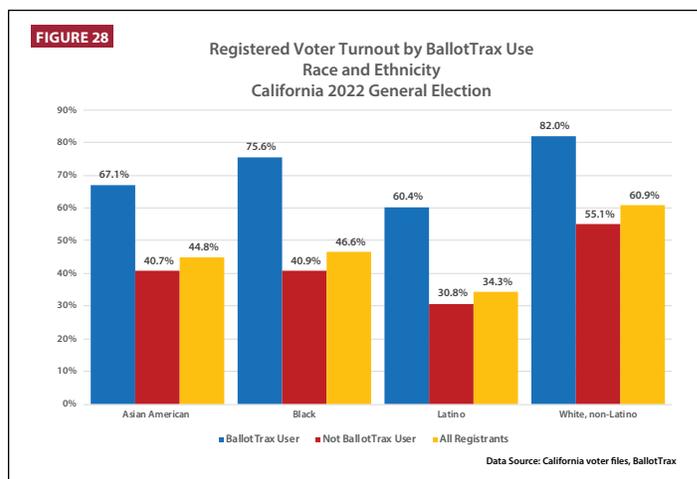
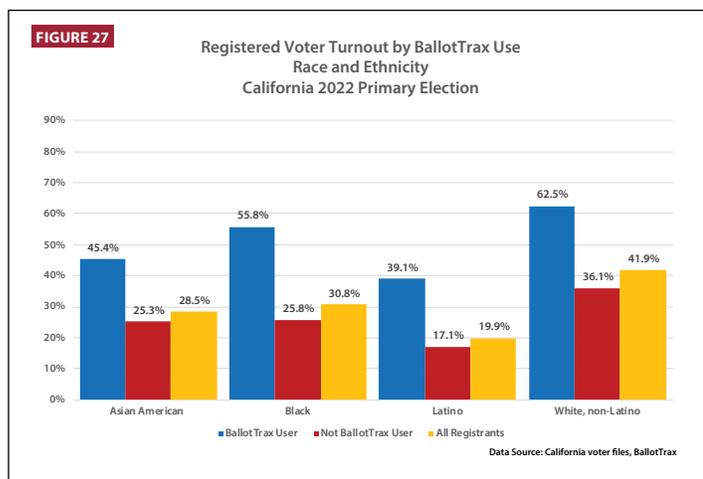


BallotTrax users had notably higher registered voter turnout rates than non-BallotTrax users in both elections. The registered voter turnout rate among BallotTrax users was particularly higher in the primary election, with over 55% of registered voters signed up for the tool casting a ballot, nearly twice the rate of their counterparts (28.2%) who did not use BallotTrax (Figures 25 and 26). BallotTrax users in the 2022 general election had a registered voter turnout (75.8%) more than thirty percentage points higher than non-BallotTrax users (44.7%).

While primary elections historically have lower turnout than general elections, BallotTrax users saw a larger increase in turnout between elections than non-BallotTrax users. Registered voter turnout among BallotTrax users increased by 20 percentage points between the primary and general elections. In comparison, the registered voter turnout among non-BallotTrax users increased by 16.5 percentage points between elections.

Note: For registered voter turnout by county, see the online appendix.

Registered Voter Turnout - Race and Ethnicity



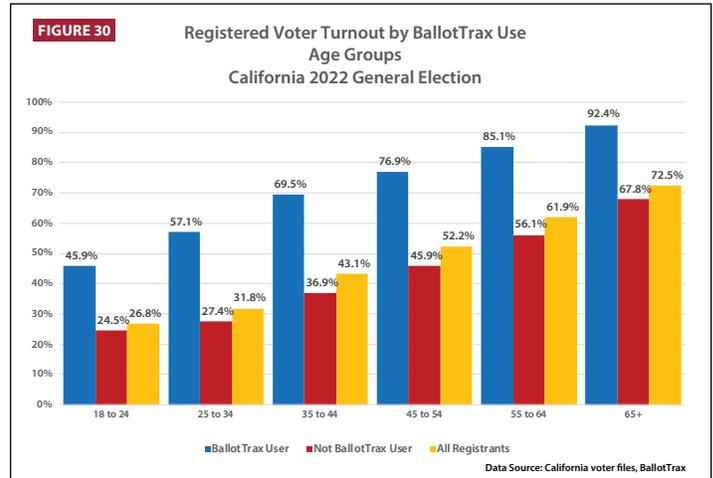
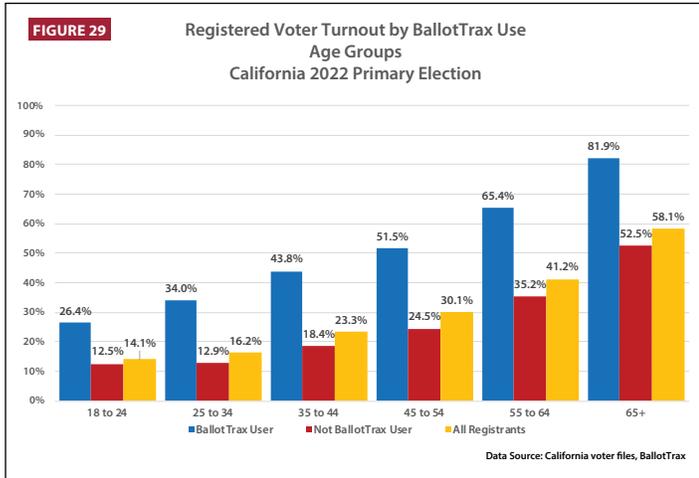
Turnout gaps between registrants of color and white, non-Latino registrants were less pronounced among BallotTrax users than among non-BallotTrax users in the general election, but more pronounced in the primary election.

Historically, registrants of color have had lower turnout rates than white, non-Latino registrants and the general population. While these turnout gaps continued in the 2022 general election, they were less pronounced among Black and Latino BallotTrax users (Figure 28). In the general election, there was a 6.4 percentage point turnout gap between Black BallotTrax users (75.6%) and white, non-Latino BallotTrax users (82.0%) but a 14.2 percentage point turnout gap between Black voters (40.9%) and white, non-Latino voters (55.1%) not signed up for the ballot tracking tool. The Latino turnout gap was also less pronounced among BallotTrax users (21.6 percentage points) compared to non-BallotTrax users (24.3 percentage points), although the difference was much smaller than among Black voters. Asian-American voters, however, had a slightly wider turnout gap between BallotTrax users (14.9 percentage points) and non-BallotTrax users (14.4 percentage points).

In contrast, turnout gaps between Latino, Asian-American, and white, non-Latino registrants were larger among BallotTrax users than non-BallotTrax users in the primary election (Figure 27). Asian-American BallotTrax users, for example, had a registered voter turnout 17.1 percentage points below white, non-Latino BallotTrax users, compared to a 10.8 percentage point difference among non-BallotTrax users. Black BallotTrax users were the only registrants of color that had a narrower turnout gap (6.8 percentage points) from white, non-Latino BallotTrax users compared to the turnout gap between Black and white, non-Latino voters who did not use the tracking tool.

Note: For registered voter turnout by race/ethnicity and county, see the online appendix.

Registered Voter Turnout - Age Groups

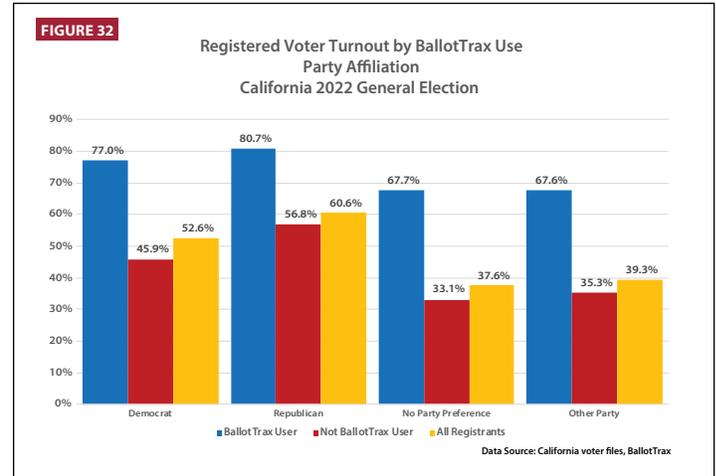
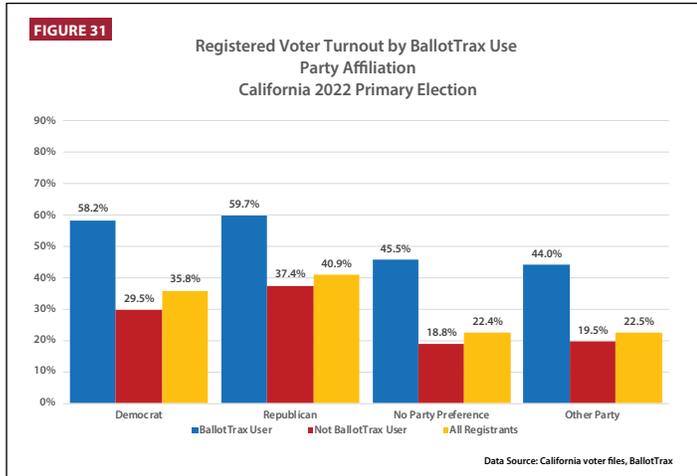


Turnout gaps between younger registrants (aged 18 to 24) and older registrants (aged 65 and older) were larger among BallotTrax users than non-BallotTrax users, particularly in the primary election. Turnout rates have historically been correlated with age, with older registrants often having notably higher turnout rates than their younger counterparts. These turnout rates continued in the 2022 primary and general elections, although they were wider among BallotTrax users (Figures 29 and 30). In the 2022 primary election, just over 26% of BallotTrax users aged 18 to 24 cast a ballot, 55.5 percentage points lower than their counterparts aged 65 and older (81.9%), while there was a 40.0 percentage point difference among youth and senior non-BallotTrax users (12.5% and 52.5%, respectively). The trend was also seen in the general election, although to a lesser degree (46.5 percentage point gap among BallotTrax users and 43.3 percentage point gap among non-BallotTrax users).

Turnout gaps between close age groups are also more pronounced among BallotTrax users in the primary election. For example, around one-third of BallotTrax users aged 25 to 34 cast a ballot, 9.8 percentage points lower than those aged 35 to 44 (43.8%). Among non-BallotTrax users, however, the turnout gap between these age groups was 5.5 percentage points. Similar trends are seen in all age groups except between those aged 55 to 64 and 65 and older where non-BallotTrax users had the larger turnout gap.

Note: For registered voter turnout by age group and county, see the online appendix.

Registered Voter Turnout - Party Affiliation



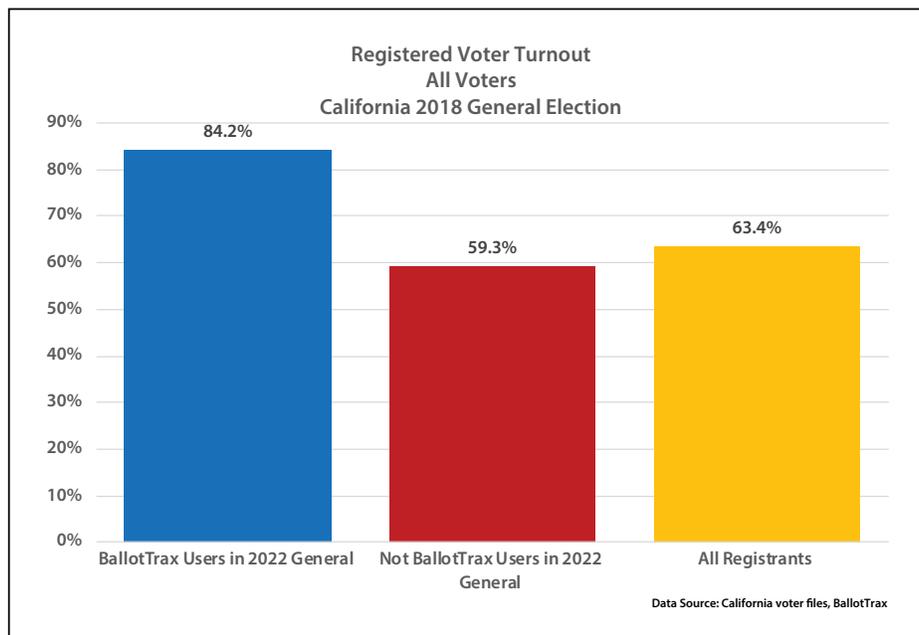
While Republicans overall had a higher registered voter turnout rate than Democrats in both elections, the turnout differences were smaller among BallotTrax users. Registered voter turnout rates between Republicans and Democrats signed up for BallotTrax differed by 3.7 percentage points in the general election, while there was a 10.9 percentage point difference between turnout rates among Democratic and Republican voters who were not signed up for the tool (Figure 32). Turnout rates between the party affiliations were even closer in the primary election among BallotTrax users, with 58.2 of Democratic BallotTrax users and 59.7% of Republican BallotTrax users casting a ballot (1.5 percentage points difference, Figure 31). In contrast, there was a nearly eight percentage point difference between Republican and Democratic turnout among non-BallotTrax users.

Note: For registered voter turnout by party affiliation and county, see the online appendix.

Registered Voter Turnout Prior to BallotTrax Implementation

Looking closer at voting behaviors among 2022 BallotTrax users in elections prior to BallotTrax implementation may shed light on the impact of the ballot tracking tool on turnout. The following analysis examines registered voter turnout among 2022 BallotTrax users in the 2018 general election (before BallotTrax implementation) and compares their turnout rates to those who were not signed up for the tool in the 2022 general election.

To complete this analysis, CID examined registered voter turnout in the 2018 general election among voters who were active in 2018 and were signed up for BallotTrax in the 2022 general election. Of the nearly 3.9 million BallotTrax users in the 2022 general election, just over three million of them were registered to vote in the 2018 general election.



Future BallotTrax users voted at higher rates in the 2018 general election compared to those who would not sign up for the tool in the next midterm election, although the turnout gap was smaller than in the 2022 general election. Just over 84% of future BallotTrax users cast a ballot in the 2018 general election, nearly 25 percentage points higher than those who were not signed up for the tool in 2022 (59.3%). In comparison, there was a 31-percentage point difference in registered voter turnout between BallotTrax users (75.8%) and non-BallotTrax users (44.7%) in the 2022 general election (See Figure 26 on page 34). While total registered voter turnout was higher in 2018 (63.4%) than in 2022 (50.2%), future BallotTrax users had notably higher turnout prior to signing up for the tool in 2018 compared to those who would not sign up for the tool, implying many BallotTrax users may already be high propensity voters. The larger turnout difference in 2022, however, hints at a turnout bump by BallotTrax, especially considering the lower overall turnout in 2022 compared to 2018.

These trends are seen across all racial, ethnic, age, and party groups examined. Nearly 85% of future Black BallotTrax users, for example, voted in the 2018 general election compared to 53% of those who would not sign up for the tool in the future. Registered voter turnout was more than fifty percent higher among future BallotTrax users aged 18 to 24 (66.8%) compared to future non-BallotTrax users (44.2%) the same age. Future Democratic and Republican BallotTrax users also had notably higher turnout in 2018 than their counterparts who would not sign up for the tool in the 2022 general election. For more information on registered voter turnout in the 2018 general election by BallotTrax use, race, ethnicity, age, and party affiliation, see Appendix B.

Voting Methods in the 2022 Primary and General Elections

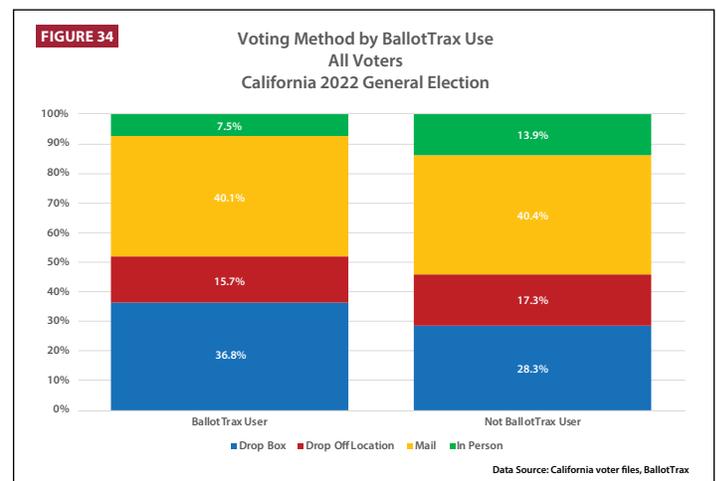
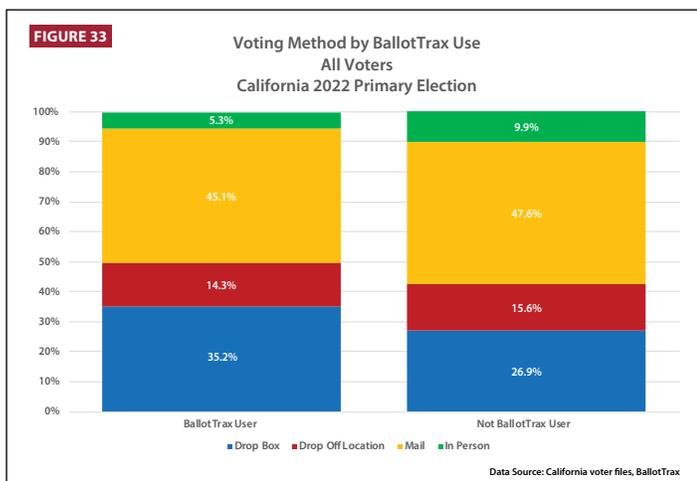
Voting Methods by BallotTrax Use

Since the 2020 general election, the year BallotTrax was available in all counties and the election in which all registered voters automatically received a vote-by-mail ballot for the first time, the majority of voters have voted with vote-by-mail ballots. In the 2022 general election, only 12.2% of voters cast their ballot in person. Instead, 40.3% of voters returned their vote-by-mail ballot through the mail, 30.6% returned them to a drop box, and 16.9% dropped off their vote-by-mail ballots at a voting location. See CID's 2022 methods report for more information.

While BallotTrax is used to track vote-by-mail ballots, voters who sign up for the tool do not exclusively vote by mail; a small portion opt to vote in person instead. **The share of BallotTrax users that did opt to vote in person, however, was only about half that of those who were not signed up for the tracking tool.** BallotTrax users of all racial and ethnic groups, ages, and party affiliations voted in person at lower rates than those who were not BallotTrax users, although some groups, such as registered Republicans, had less of a difference in voting methods than others.

Note: The voter files used in this analysis included a detailed method field with various voting methods, including conditional voter registration ballots and provisional ballots. For the purpose of this analysis, conditional voter registration ballots and provisional ballots were combined into in-person voting. For a complete breakdown of voting methods, see the online appendix.

Voting Methods - All Registrants

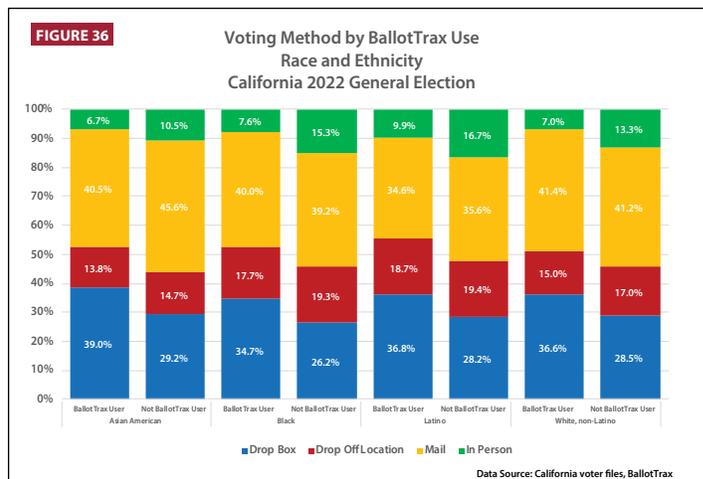
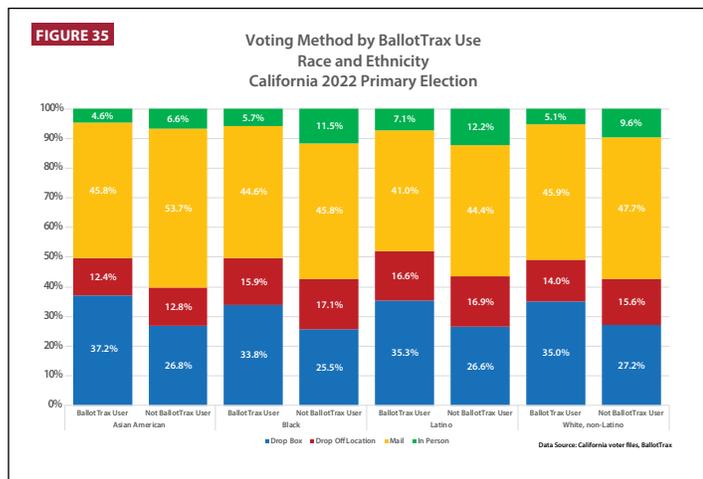


BallotTrax users returned their vote-by-mail ballots to a drop box at higher rates than non-BallotTrax users. Vote-by-mail ballots can be returned via drop box, drop off location, or mail. The vast majority of all voters voted with vote-by-mail ballots in the 2022 election cycle, although BallotTrax users voted with them at even higher rates than non-BallotTrax users (Figures 33 and 34).¹⁰ Nearly 95% of BallotTrax users voted with a vote-by-mail ballot in the primary election, compared to 90.1% of non-BallotTrax users. The remaining voters—just over 5% of BallotTrax users and approximately 10% of non-BallotTrax users—voted in person. In the general election, more BallotTrax users voted in person (7.5%), although it was still nearly half the rate of non-BallotTrax users (13.9%).

In both elections, BallotTrax users returned their vote-by-mail ballots via mail and at drop off locations at similar rates as non-BallotTrax users. In contrast, over one-third of BallotTrax users returned their vote-by-mail ballot to a drop box in both elections, around eight percentage points more than non-BallotTrax users.

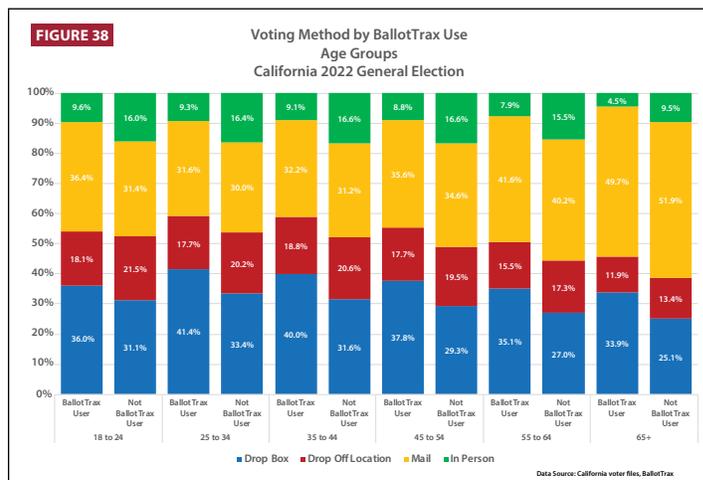
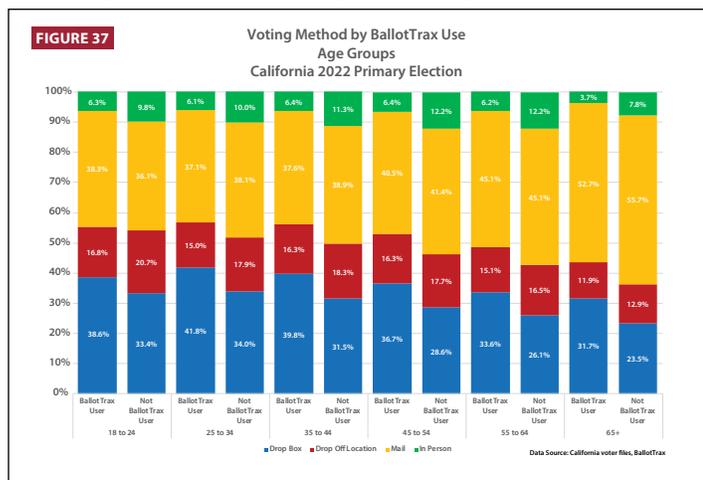
Note: For voting methods by county, see the online appendix.

Voting Methods - Race and Ethnicity



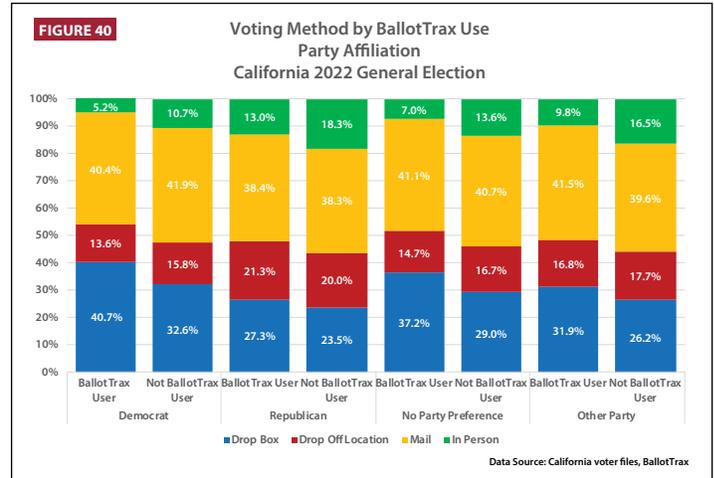
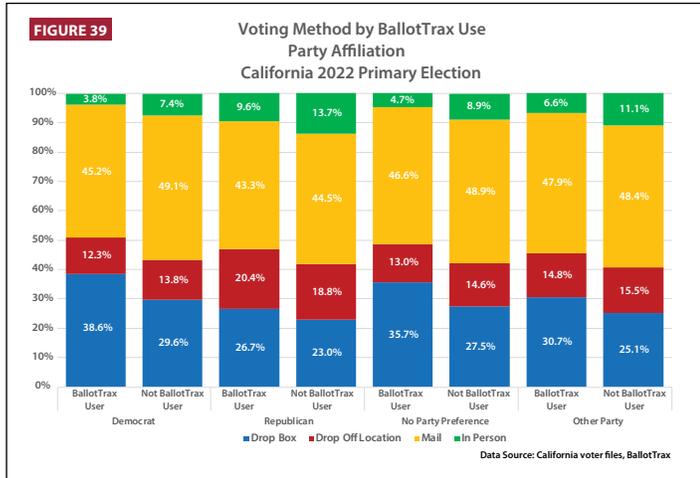
Asian Americans had more variation in voting methods between BallotTrax users and non-BallotTrax users compared to other racial and ethnic groups. While BallotTrax users of all racial and ethnic groups voted with vote-by-mail ballots at higher rates than their non-BallotTrax user counterparts, Asian Americans had the largest differences in return methods in both elections (Figures 35 and 36). In the general election, for example, Asian-American BallotTrax users voted via the mail (40.5%) at lower rates than Asian-American non-BallotTrax users (45.6%), while Black, Latino, and white, non-Latino BallotTrax users voted via the mail at similar rates to their counterparts who were not signed up for the tracking tool. Asian-American BallotTrax users also voted in person (6.7%) at a rate closer to their non-BallotTrax counterparts (10.5%) than Black (7.6% versus 15.3%, respectively), Latino (9.9% versus 16.7%, respectively) and white, non-Latino (7.0% versus 13.3%, respectively) BallotTrax and non-BallotTrax users.

Voting Methods - Age Groups



Young BallotTrax users had higher rates of mail voting compared to young non-BallotTrax users, while all other age groups had higher rates of drop box voting among BallotTrax users. In the general election, over 36% of young BallotTrax users aged 18 to 24 voted via the mail, five percentage points higher than non-BallotTrax users in the same age groups (Figures 37 and 38). In contrast, BallotTrax users over the age of 24 had similar mail voting rates as non-BallotTrax users. Instead, BallotTrax users aged over 24 had larger rates of drop box voting compared to non-BallotTrax users than those aged 18 to 24. 40.0% of BallotTrax users aged 35 to 44, for example, voted via drop box in the general election, 8.4 percentage points higher than non-BallotTrax users (31.6%) in the same age groups. While youth BallotTrax users (36.0%) also had higher drop box voting rates than non-BallotTrax users (31.1%), the difference (4.9 percentage points) was smaller than all other age groups.

Voting Methods - Party Affiliation



Voting methods between Democrats and Republicans varied more among BallotTrax users than non-BallotTrax users. Among BallotTrax users, registered Republicans voted in person at a rate two and half times higher than registered Democratic BallotTrax users (Figures 39 and 40). In comparison, Republicans who were not signed up for the tracking tool voted in person at less than twice the rate of their Democratic counterparts in both elections. Additionally, Democratic BallotTrax users had notably low in-person voting rates compared to Democratic non-BallotTrax users, about half the rate in both the primary election (3.8% and 7.4%, respectively) and the general election (5.2% and 10.7%, respectively). Registered Democrats returned their vote-by-mail ballots to drop boxes at higher rates than registered Republicans, although the difference was larger among BallotTrax users. In the primary election, for example, nearly 39% of Democratic BallotTrax users used drop boxes to vote, compared to 26.7% of Republican BallotTrax users. In comparison, just under 30% of Democratic non-BallotTrax users returned their ballot to a drop box, while 23.0% of Republican non-BallotTrax users did so.

Vote-by-Mail Rejection in the 2022 Primary and General Elections

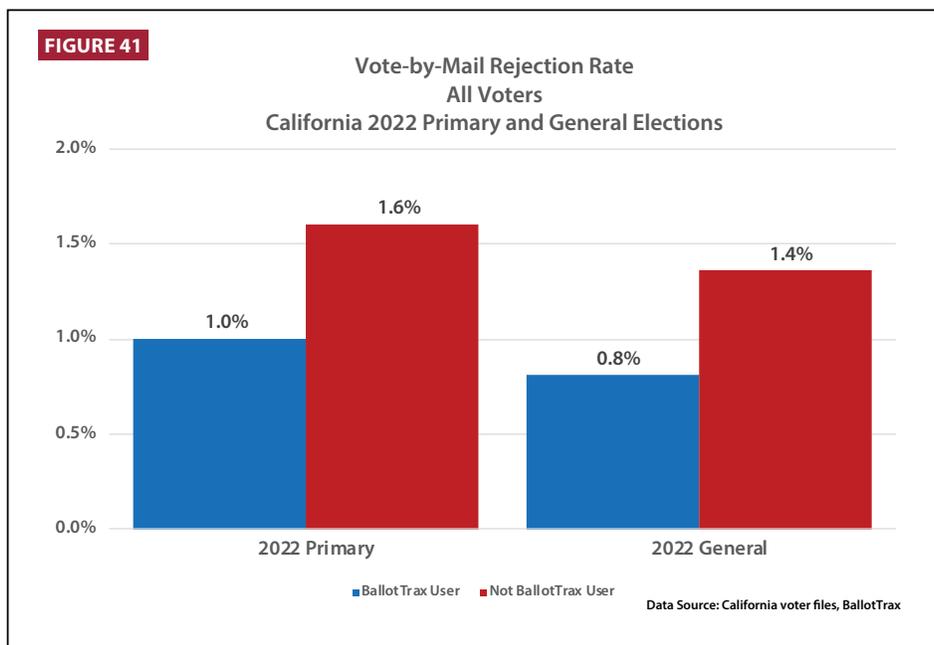
Vote-by-Mail Rejection by BallotTrax Use

Along with tracking the vote-by-mail ballots' progress through the mail system, BallotTrax also notifies its users if there is an issue with their ballot such as a signature discrepancy. When notified that their vote-by-mail ballot is rejected yet curable, voters have the opportunity to correct these issues in order for their vote to be counted. **The majority of BallotTrax users with rejected yet curable vote-by-mail ballots corrected the issue and their vote was counted in the 2022 primary and general elections. Ballot cure rates, however, varied across racial and ethnic groups, ages, and party affiliations, with Latino voters and young voters aged 18 to 24 correcting their ballots at the lowest rates.**

Although a large number of rejected yet curable ballots were corrected, a small portion of vote-by-mail ballots cast by BallotTrax users were ultimately rejected. **In both elections, BallotTrax users had lower vote-by-mail rejection rates than those who did not sign up for the tool.** While historically underrepresented voting groups, such as Asian Americans, Latinos, and voters between 18 and 24, who were BallotTrax users had lower rejection rates than their non-BallotTrax counterparts, they still had the highest vote-by-mail rejection rates compared to the general population and white, non-Latino voters. Latino and young BallotTrax users had the lowest ballot cure rates and the largest vote-by-mail rejection rates.

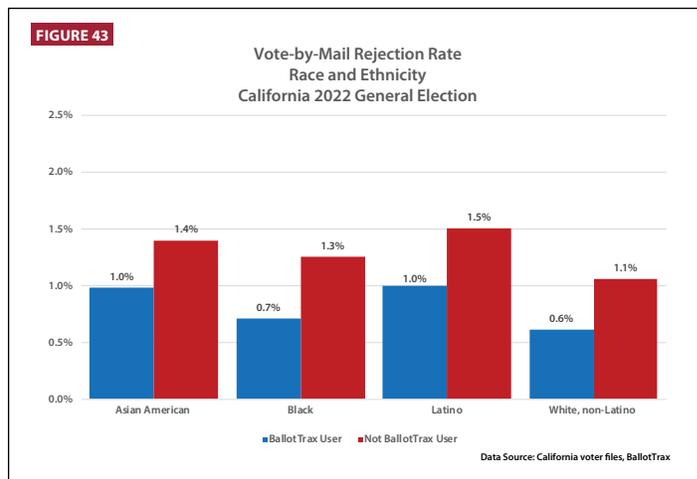
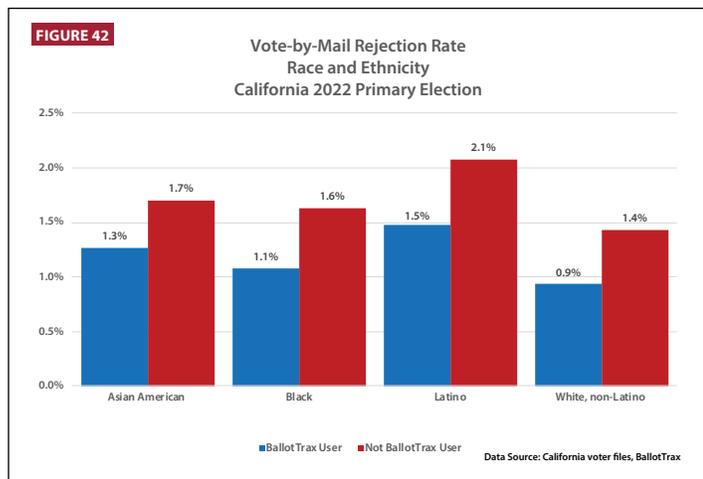
Note: All voters, regardless of BallotTrax use, are notified when they have a rejected, yet curable vote-by-mail ballot. Cure rates for all voters in California are unavailable and the section detailing cured ballots is limited to BallotTrax users.

Vote-by-Mail Rejection Rates – All Registrants



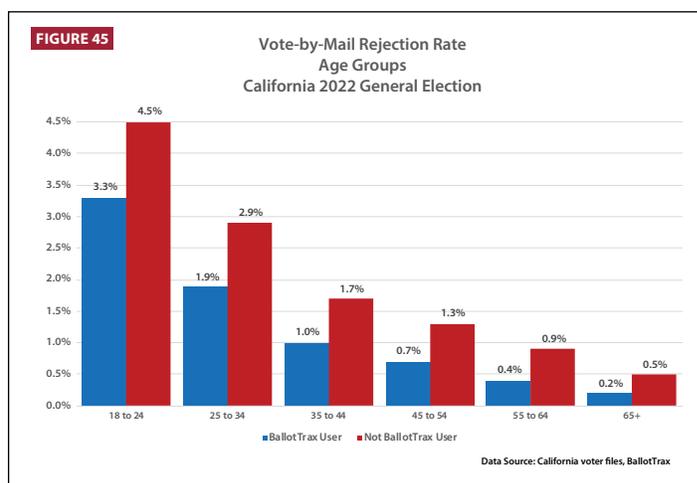
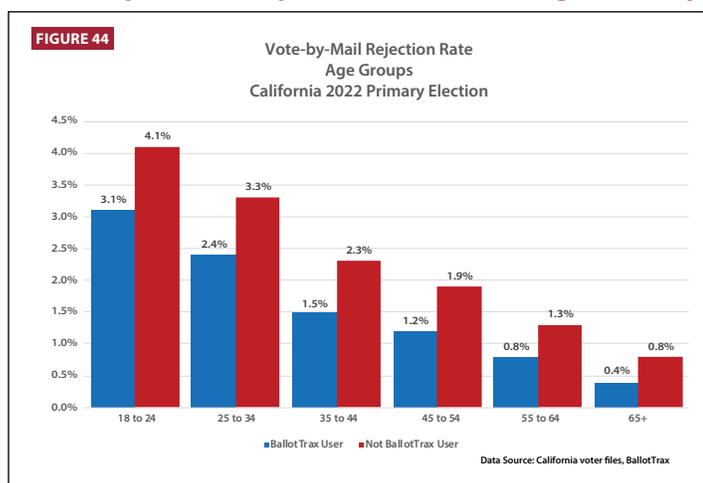
In the 2022 primary and general elections, the vote-by-mail rejection rate was at least fifty percent higher among non-BallotTrax users than among BallotTrax users. Of all vote-by-mail ballots cast by BallotTrax users in the 2022 primary election, 1.0% were ultimately rejected (Figure 41). In comparison, 1.6% of vote-by-mail ballots cast by non-BallotTrax users were not counted. Similar trends are seen in the 2022 general election, although rejection rates were lower for both groups compared to the primary election. Of the roughly 2.7 million vote-by-mail ballots cast by BallotTrax users in the 2022 general election, 0.8% of them were rejected for various reasons, which was just over half of the rejection rate seen among non-BallotTrax users (1.4%).

Vote-by-Mail Rejection Rates - Race and Ethnicity



BallotTrax users of color had similar vote-by-mail rejection gaps from white, non-Latino BallotTrax users as their counterparts not using the tracking tool. Voters of color have historically had higher vote-by-mail rejection rates than white, non-Latino voters. This trend continued regardless of BallotTrax use in both the primary and general election (Figures 42 and 43). In the general election, Asian-American BallotTrax users had a slightly larger gap (0.4 percentage points) in their rejection rates compared to white, non-Latino voters than their counterparts who were signed up to receive notification (0.3 percentage points), while Black BallotTrax users (0.1 percentage points) had a slightly narrower gap than Black non-BallotTrax users (0.2 percentage points). Latinos had the same vote-by-mail rejection rate gap (0.4 percentage points) from the white, non-Latino rate regardless of BallotTrax use. Similar trends are seen in the primary election, with Asian-American BallotTrax users having a slightly larger gap (0.4 percentage points) than Asian-American non-BallotTrax users (0.3 percentage points), Black BallotTrax users and Black non-BallotTrax users having the same gap (0.2 percentage points), and Latino BallotTrax users having a slightly narrower gap (0.6 percentage points) than their counterparts not using the tool (0.7 percentage points).

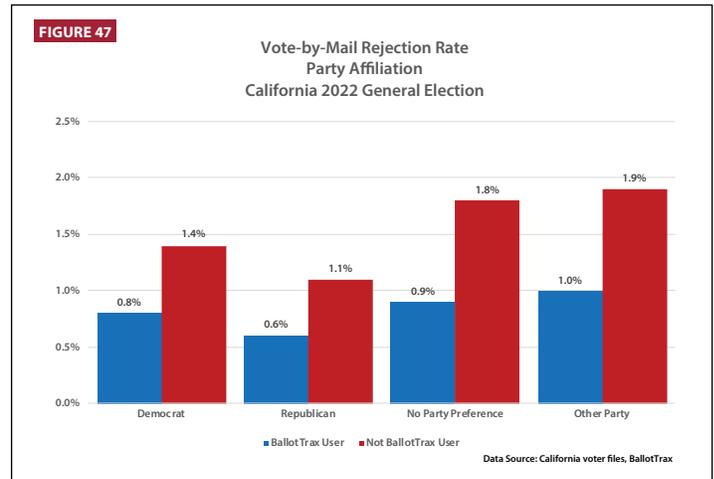
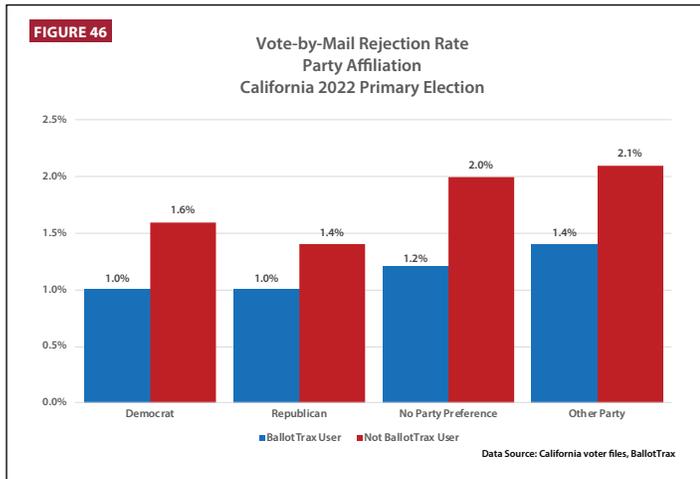
Vote-by-Mail Rejection Rates - Age Groups



BallotTrax users aged 18 to 24 had a smaller difference in vote-by-mail rejection rates from BallotTrax users aged 65 and older compared to non-BallotTrax users. Vote-by-mail rejection rates are often correlated with age, resulting in younger voters having much higher rejection rates than older voters. While this trend is true for both BallotTrax and non-BallotTrax users, the difference between youth and senior rejection rates are narrower among BallotTrax users in both elections (Figures 44 and 45). In the general election, for example, 3.3% of vote-by-mail ballots cast by BallotTrax users aged 18 to 24 were rejected, 3.1 percentage points higher than those aged 65 and older (0.2%). In contrast, 4.5% of vote-by-mail ballots cast by non-BallotTrax users aged 18 to 24 were rejected, 4.0 percentage points higher than their older

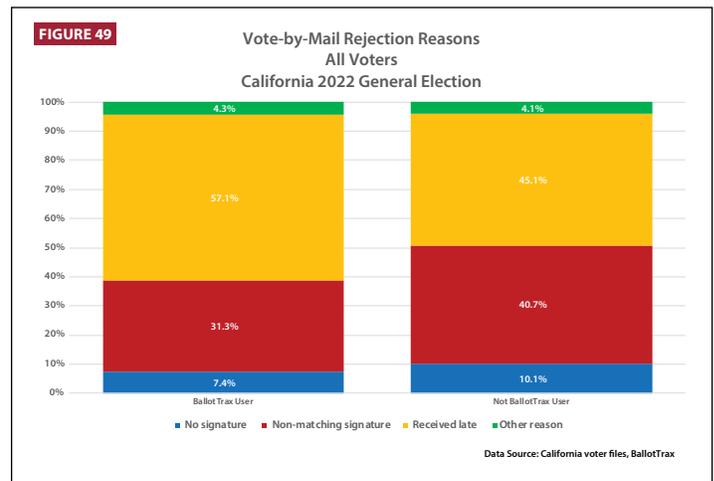
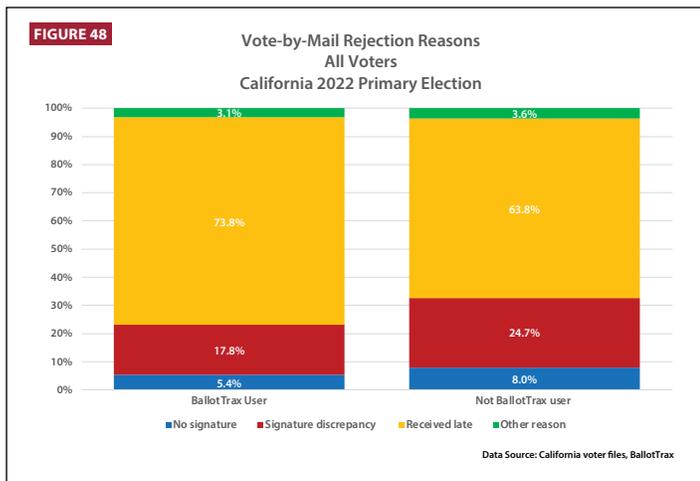
counterparts (0.5%).

Vote-by-Mail Rejection Rates - Party Affiliation



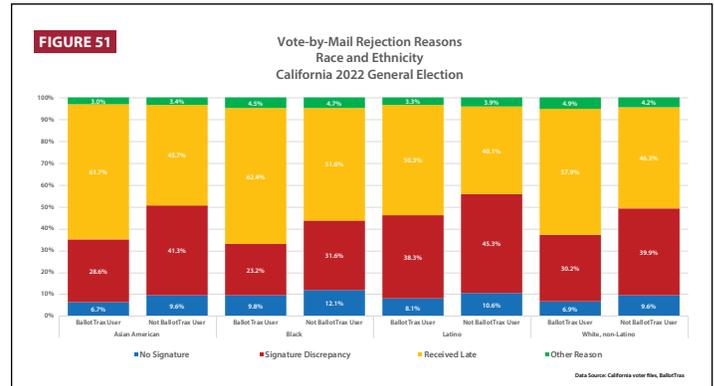
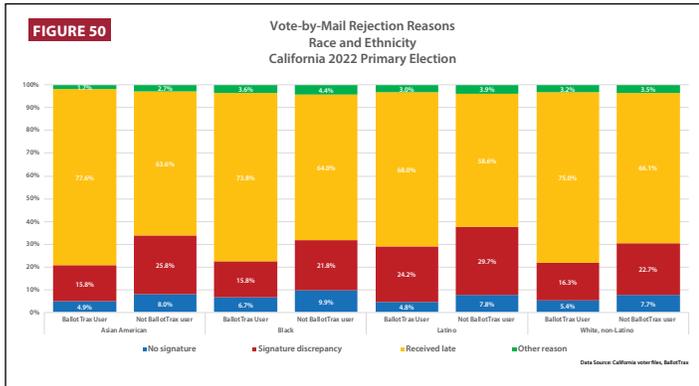
Vote-by-mail rejection rates were similar between Democratic and Republican BallotTrax users, while Democratic non-BallotTrax users had higher rejection rates than their Republican counterparts. Registered Republican and Democratic BallotTrax users had the same vote-by-mail rejection rates (1.0%) in the primary election, while Democrats (1.6%) had a slightly higher rejection rates than Republicans (1.4%) who didn’t use BallotTrax (Figure 46). Similarly, Democratic BallotTrax users had a vote-by-mail rejection rate (0.8%) just 0.2 percentage points higher than their Republican counterparts (0.6%) in the general election, while Democrats (1.4%) not using the tool had a vote-by-mail rejection rate 0.3 percentage points higher than Republicans (1.1%) not using the tool (Figure 47).

Vote-by-Mail Rejection Reasons – All Voters



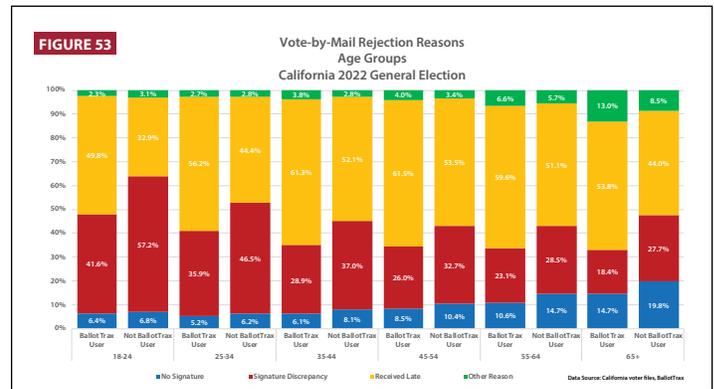
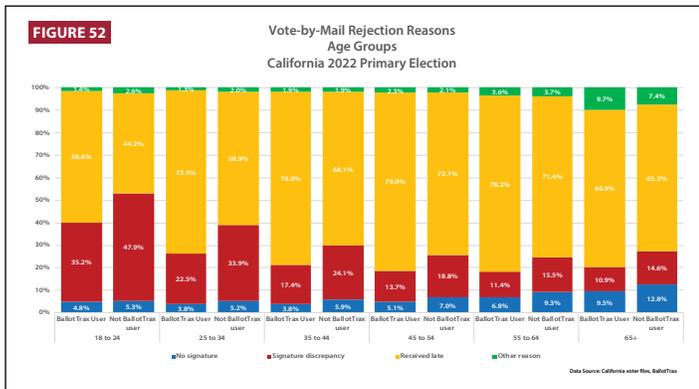
Rejected ballots cast by BallotTrax users had lower rates of signature issues than those cast by non-BallotTrax users. In both elections, the rates of BallotTrax users with late vote-by-mail ballots was at least ten percentage points higher than non-BallotTrax users (Figures 48 and 49). BallotTrax users had lower rates of missing signatures and non-matching signatures than their counterparts not using the tool. In the primary election, for example, only 17.8% of rejected vote-by-mail ballots cast by BallotTrax users had non-matching signatures, while nearly one-quarter of rejected ballots cast by non-BallotTrax users had non-matching signatures.

Vote-by-Mail Rejection Reasons – Race and Ethnicity



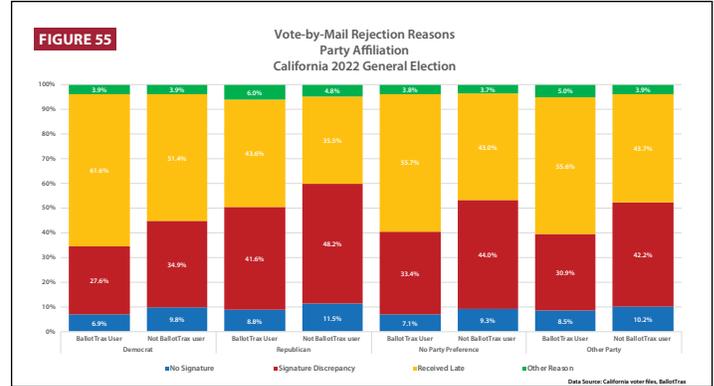
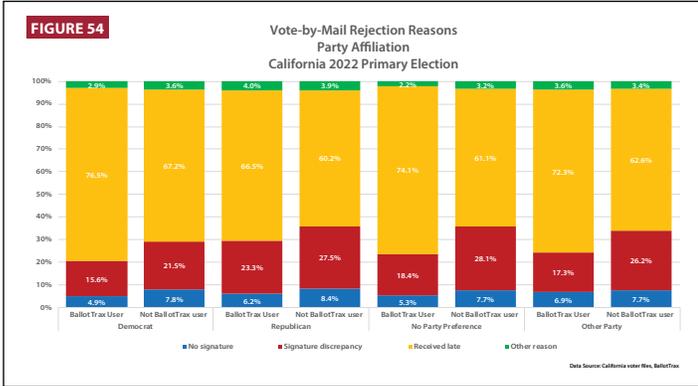
Late vote-by-mail ballots were more common among BallotTrax users of all racial and ethnic groups than among non-BallotTrax users. In both elections, Asian-American, Black, and Latino BallotTrax users had late ballot rates at least nine percentage points higher than Asian-American, Black, and Latino voters who were not using the tool (Figures 50 and 51). Asian Americans had the largest difference in late ballots between BallotTrax and non-BallotTrax users, while Latinos had the smallest. For example, in the general election, 61.7% of rejected ballots cast by Asian-American BallotTrax users were received late, compared to 45.7% of rejected ballots cast by Asian Americans not using BallotTrax (16.0 percentage points difference). Just over 50% of rejected ballots cast by Latino BallotTrax users in the general election were received late, 10.2 percentage points higher than the share of rejected ballots cast by Latino non-BallotTrax users (40.1%).

Vote-by-Mail Rejection Reasons – Age Groups



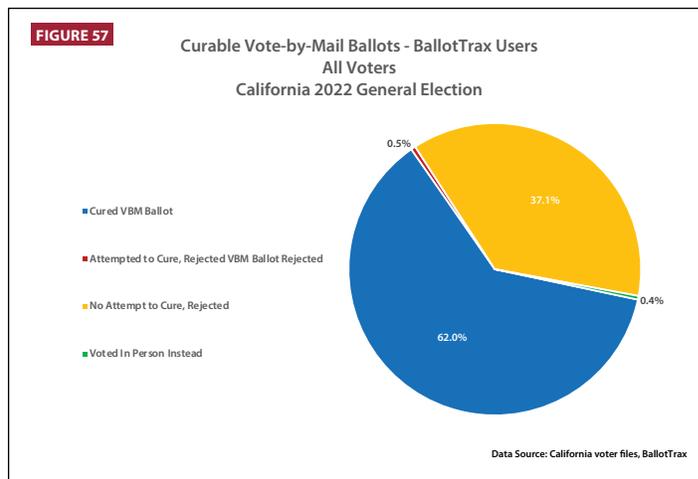
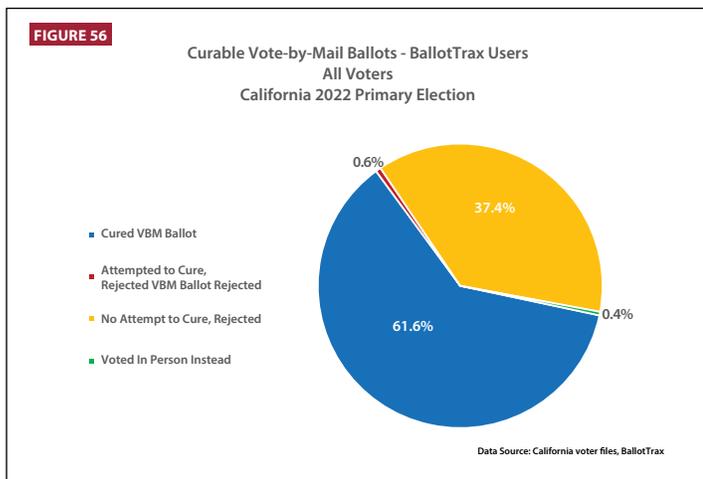
While BallotTrax users of all ages had lower rates of signature issues than non-BallotTrax users, young voters had the largest difference. Young voters aged 18 to 24 had the highest rates of signature issues of all age groups, but young BallotTrax users had notably lower signature issues than their counterparts not signed up for BallotTrax compared to other age groups (Figure 52 and 53). In the general election, there was a 15.6 percentage point difference in mismatched signature rates between young BallotTrax users (41.6%) and non-BallotTrax users (57.2%). In comparison, mid-aged voters had the smallest difference in signature issues between BallotTrax and non-BallotTrax users. For example, 13.7% of BallotTrax users aged 45 to 54 with rejected ballots in the primary election had non-matching signatures, only 5.1 percentage points lower than their non-BallotTrax counterparts (18.8%).

Vote-by-Mail Rejection Reasons – Party Affiliation



Republican BallotTrax and non-BallotTrax users had smaller differences in vote-by-mail rejection reasons than Democrats. In both elections, Democratic and Republican BallotTrax users had higher rates of late vote-by-mail ballots than non-BallotTrax users, although the difference was smaller among Republicans, especially in the primary election (Figures 54 and 55). Over three-quarters of rejected ballots cast by Democratic BallotTrax users in the primary election were received late, compared to 67.2% of Democratic non-BallotTrax users (9.3 percentage point difference), while there was a 6.3 percentage point gap in late ballot rates between Republican BallotTrax users (66.5%) and Republican non-BallotTrax users (60.2%).

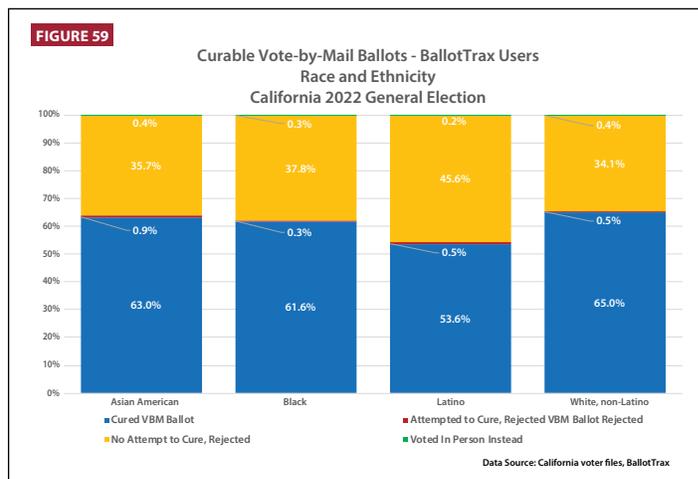
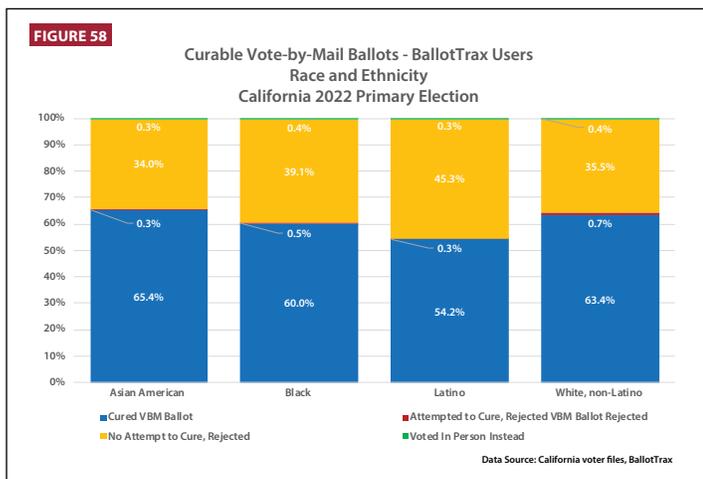
Curable Rejected Ballots - All Registrants



The majority of curable vote-by-mail ballots cast by BallotTrax users were corrected and counted in the 2022 primary election. Over 61% of vote-by-mail ballots that were originally rejected were cured and counted in both the primary and general elections, while a very small portion (0.6% in the primary and 0.5% in the general) of voters with curable ballots attempted and failed to correct their ballots (Figures 56 and 57). While many ballots were corrected, a large portion, around 37% in both elections, of voters with rejected yet curable ballots made no attempt to correct them and they were not counted. Another 0.4% of BallotTrax users with curable vote-by-mail ballots opted to vote in person instead of correcting their vote-by-mail ballot.

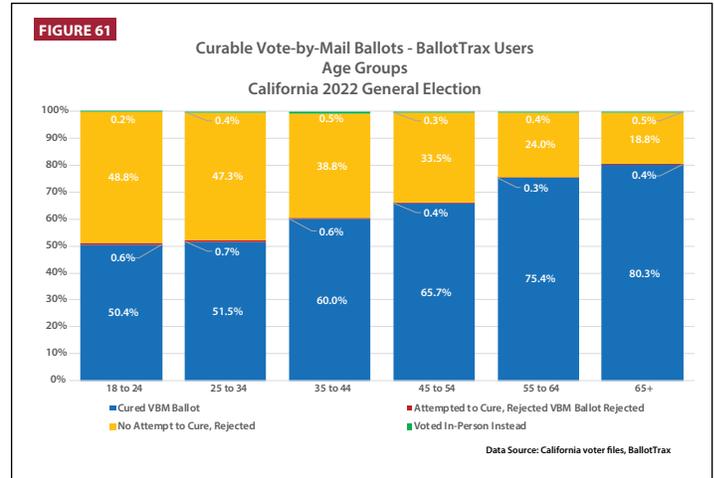
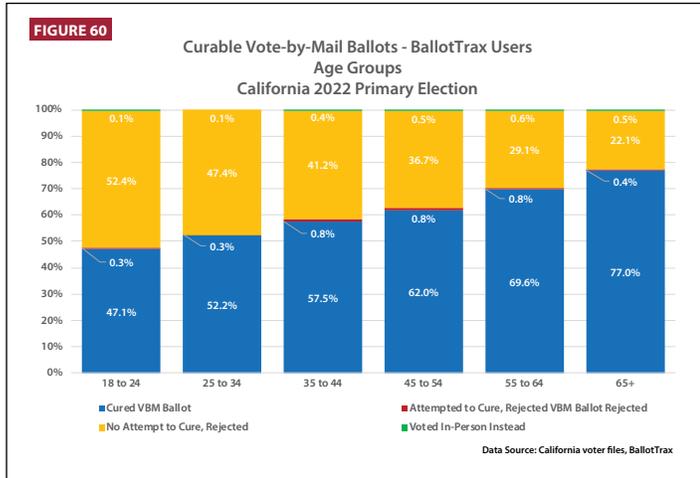
Note: Due to data limitations, this report was unable to examine cure rates among non-BallotTrax users.

Curable Rejected Ballots - Race and Ethnicity



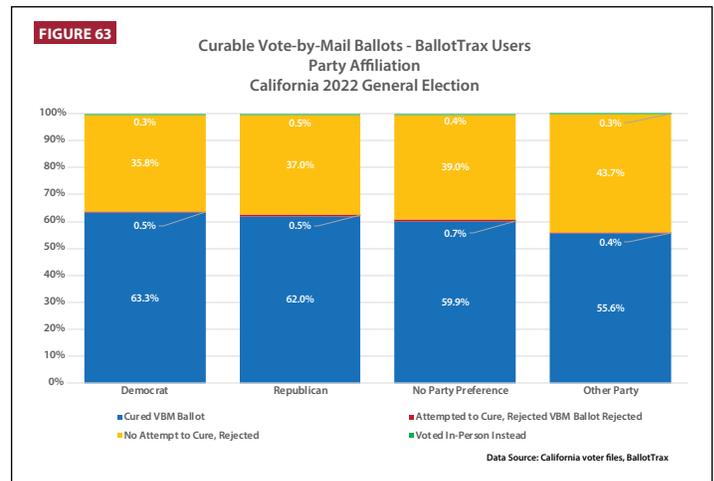
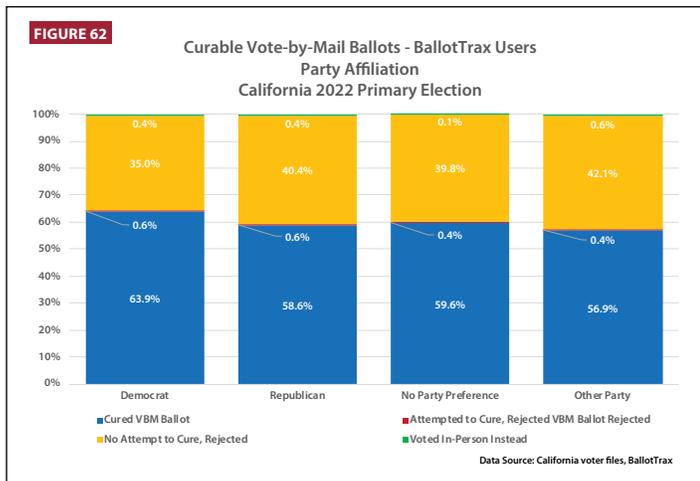
Asian-American BallotTrax users cured their rejected ballots at higher rates than other BallotTrax users of color, while Latino BallotTrax users had by far the lowest cure rate. Nearly two-thirds of curable rejected ballots cast by Asian-American BallotTrax users were corrected and counted in both elections, compared to around 60% of those cast by Black BallotTrax users and a little over half of Latino BallotTrax users (Figures 58 and 59). Over 45% of Latino BallotTrax users with curable, rejected ballots made no attempt to correct them in both elections, over ten percentage points higher than Asian-American and white, non-Latino BallotTrax users.

Curable Rejected Ballots Use - Age Groups



BallotTrax users aged 65 and over had a vote-by-mail cure rate sixty percent higher than those aged 18 to 24. Younger BallotTrax users had notably lower vote-by-mail cure rates than those in older age groups in both elections (Figures 60 and 61). Around half of BallotTrax users aged 18 to 24 cured their rejected ballot, compared to over three-quarters of BallotTrax users aged 65 and older. Additionally, cure rates increased with age in every age group, with each age group having a higher cure rate than the last.

Curable Rejected Ballots Use - Party Affiliation



Republican BallotTrax users cured their rejected vote-by-mail ballots at lower rates than Democratic BallotTrax users. While the majority of curable, rejected ballots were corrected across party affiliations, Democratic BallotTrax users cured their rejected ballots at slightly higher rates than Republicans in both elections (Figures 62 and 63). In the primary election, for example, just under 59% of rejected vote-by-mail ballots cast by Republican BallotTrax users were cured, over five percentage points lower than Democratic BallotTrax users (63.9%). Democratic BallotTrax users also cured their rejected ballots (63.3%) at higher rates than Republican BallotTrax users (62.0%) in the general election, although the difference was narrower.

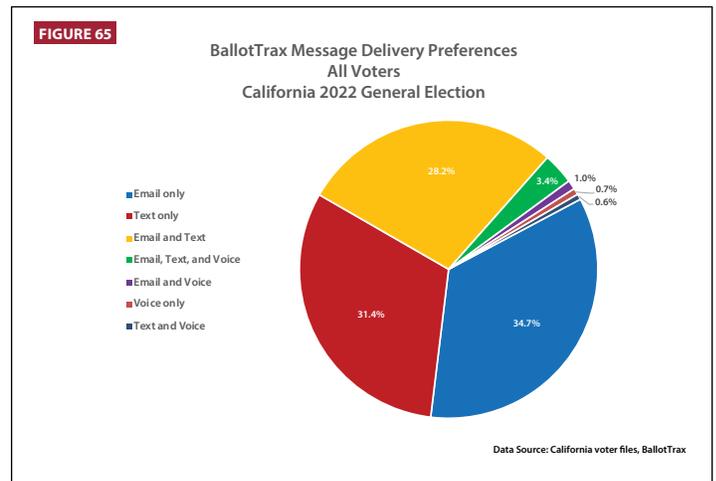
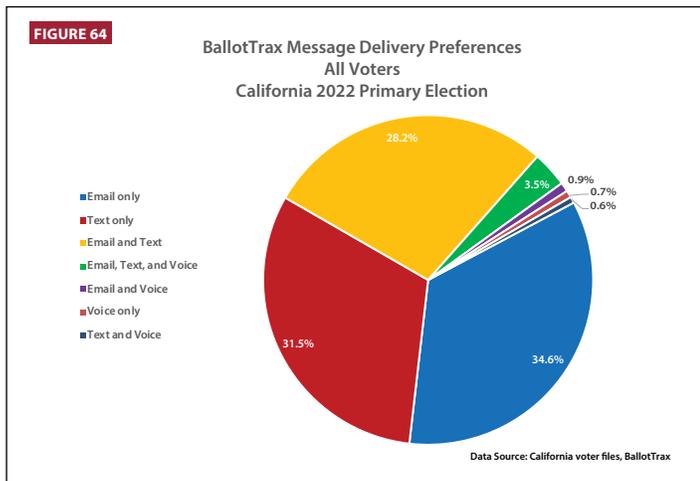
BallotTrax User Preferences in the 2022 Primary and General Elections

BallotTrax User Preferences

BallotTrax users can customize their experience by selecting how notifications are delivered and in what language. **Email and text notifications were the top message delivery preferences in the 2022 primary and general elections, with only a small portion of BallotTrax users opting to receive voice updates.** Email-only notifications were more common among Asian Americans, no party preference registrants, and registrants over the age of 65, while text-only notifications were more common among young registrants aged 18 to 24, Latinos, and registered Republicans.

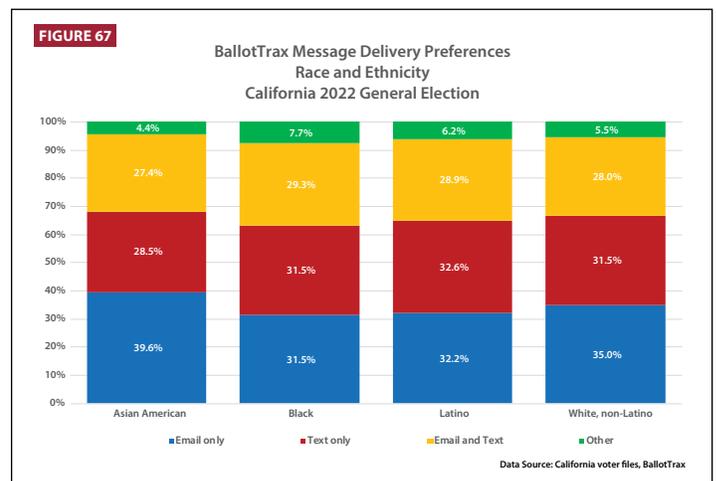
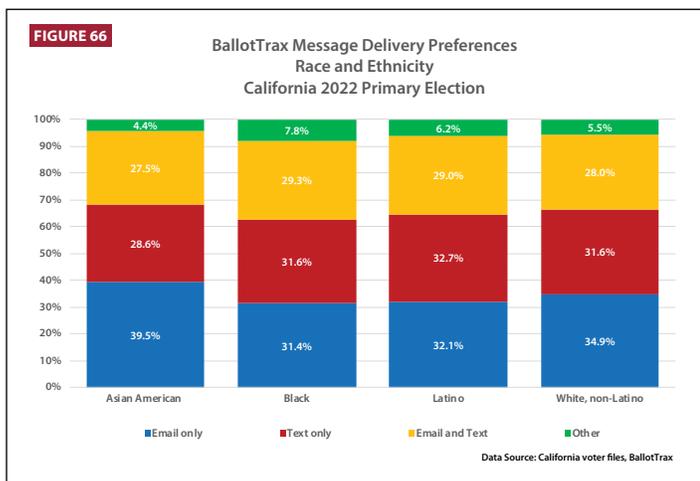
English was by far the most commonly selected language among BallotTrax users, with less than 0.5% selecting to receive ballot updates in other languages. While the majority of registered voters, regardless of their BallotTrax use, also selected English as their preferred language, a higher share selected to receive voting materials in non-English languages than BallotTrax users.

BallotTrax Message Delivery Preferences – All Registrants



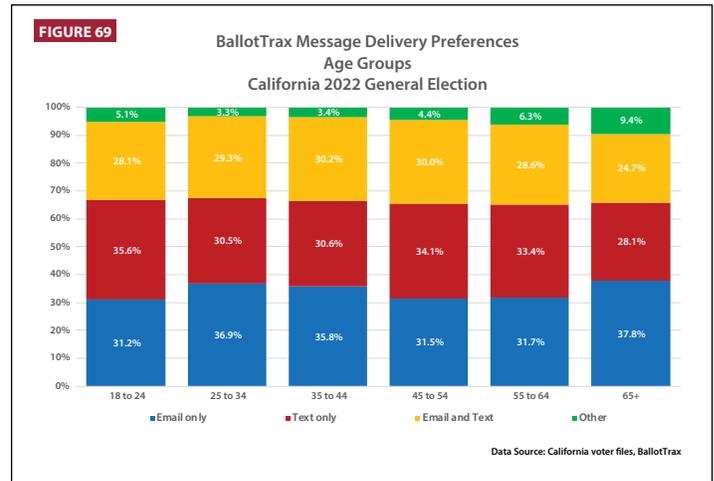
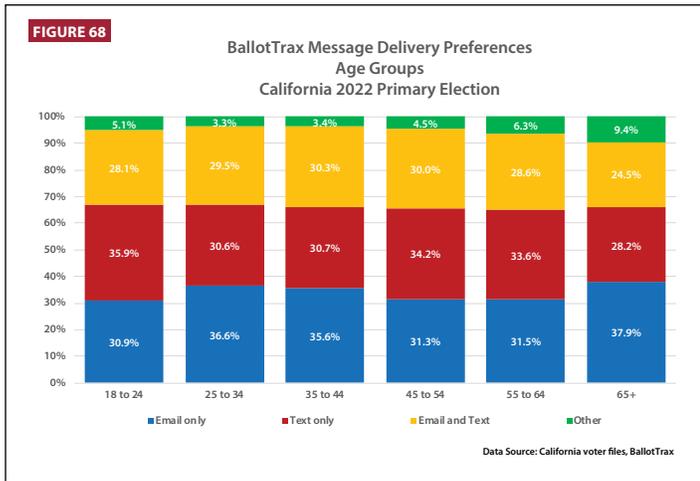
In both the 2022 primary and general elections, the majority of BallotTrax users preferred either email or text notifications about their ballot status. Over one-third of BallotTrax users selected email only as their message delivery preference, followed closely by around 31% choosing the text only option (Figures 64 and 65). Notably small shares of BallotTrax users requested to receive ballot updates through voice calls.

BallotTrax Message Delivery Preferences – Race and Ethnicity



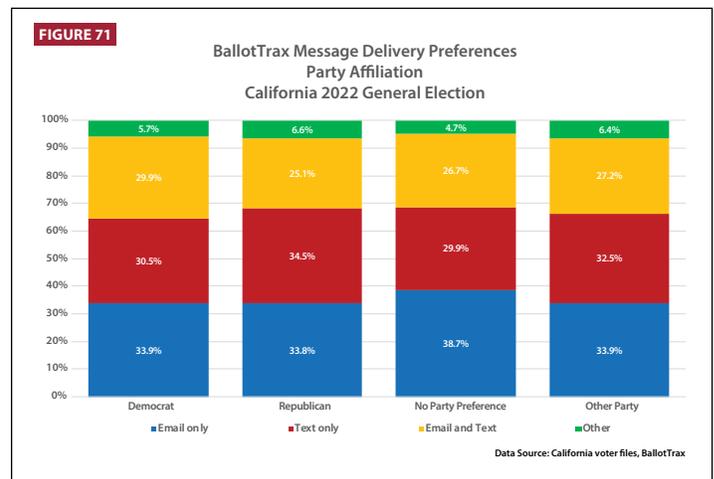
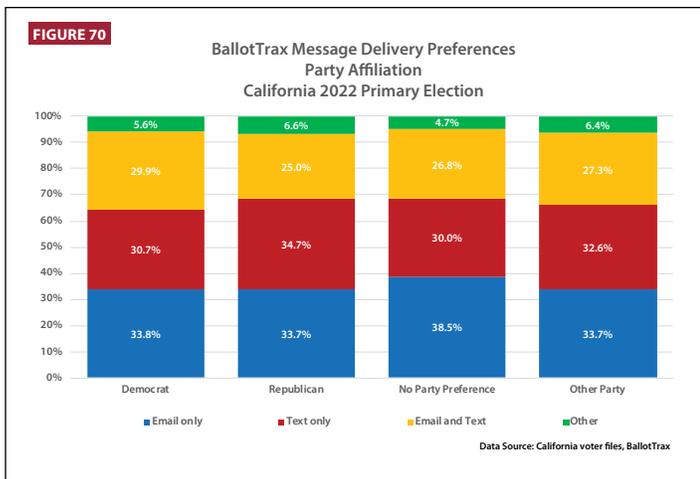
Asian-American BallotTrax users selected Email only as their message delivery system at higher rates than other racial and ethnic groups in the 2022 primary and general elections. Nearly 40% of Asian-American preferred to receive ballot updates through email only, compared to about one-third of Latino, Black, and white, non-Latino BallotTrax users (Figure 66 and 67). Asian Americans also selected text messages as their message delivery preference at lower rates, while they selected email and text messages at similar rates to other racial and ethnic groups. White, non-Latino BallotTrax users preferred email notifications at higher rates than Black and Latino BallotTrax users.

BallotTrax Message Delivery Preferences – Age Groups



BallotTrax message preferences fluctuated across age groups. Nearly 36% of BallotTrax users aged 18 to 24 selected texts only to receive ballot status notifications in both elections, more than seven percentage points higher than those aged 65 and over (around 28%, Figures 68 and 69). Instead, BallotTrax users aged 65 and older opted to receive ballot updates via email only at the highest rate (around 38%). Text only was most common among BallotTrax users aged 18 to 24 and 45 to 64, while email only was the most common among BallotTrax users aged 25 to 44 and 65 and older.

BallotTrax Message Delivery Preferences – Party Affiliation



Republican BallotTrax users preferred to receive ballot updates through text messages only at higher rates than Democrats, while Democrats elected to receive both email and text notifications at higher rates than Republicans. Almost 35% of registered Republican BallotTrax users preferred to receive ballot updates through text only, a larger share than those who selected email only or both email and text messages (Figures 70 and 71). In contrast, registered Democratic BallotTrax users selected email as their message delivery preference (around 34%) and nearly 30% opted to receive both email and text message notifications.

BallotTrax Language Preferences – All Registrants

Table 7 - Language Preferences 2020 Primary Election			Table 8 - Language Preferences 2020 General Election		
	BallotTrax Language Preference	Voter Registration Language Preference		BallotTrax Language Preference	Voter Registration Language Preference
Chinese	0.1%	0.7%	Chinese	0.1%	0.7%
English	99.5%	95.3%	English	99.5%	95.2%
Hindi	0.0%	0.0%	Hindi	0.0%	0.0%
Japanese	0.0%	0.0%	Japanese	0.0%	0.0%
Khmer	0.0%	0.0%	Khmer	0.0%	0.0%
Korean	0.0%	0.3%	Korean	0.0%	0.3%
Spanish	0.3%	3.0%	Spanish	0.3%	3.1%
Tagalog	0.0%	0.1%	Tagalog	0.0%	0.1%
Thai	0.0%	0.0%	Thai	0.0%	0.0%
Vietnamese	0.0%	0.5%	Vietnamese	0.0%	0.5%

Data Source: California voter files, BallotTrax

Data Source: California voter files, BallotTrax

A higher share of BallotTrax users selected English as their preferred language than among registered voters. The vast majority of registered voters selected English as their preferred language, although the share was even higher among BallotTrax users (Tables 7 and 8). Over 99% of BallotTrax users opted to receive ballot updates in English, compared to around 95% of registered voters opting to receive voting materials in English. While around 3% of registered voters selected Spanish as their preferred language, only 0.3% of BallotTrax users did so. Similarly, only 0.1% of BallotTrax users selected Chinese, while 0.7% of registered voters selected Chinese as their preferred language. While small shares of registered voters asked to receive voting materials in Korean (0.3%) or Vietnamese (0.5%), virtually no BallotTrax users requested to receive notifications in those languages.

Summary

Since its introduction in 2020, millions of California voters have used BallotTrax to track their vote-by-mail ballots through the voting process. Available in all 58 counties, BallotTrax is a ballot tracking tool that sends updates via email, text, or voice messages informing registrants when their vote-by-mail ballot has been mailed to them, when it has been received by their county elections office, and the status of their ballot as it is processed.

In a statewide representative survey of eligible voters, the majority (57.5%) of respondents were aware of their ability to track their ballot with BallotTrax. Of respondents who were aware of the option, around 60% said they were signed up for the tool, a notably higher use rate than is shown in CID's analysis of official voter records. Many respondents indicated they signed up to receive ballot notifications for reassurance that their ballot was received (46.3%) and counted (33.8%) by election authorities, while nearly 30% were concerned their ballot would be lost in the mail. Over 41% of respondents said they were automatically signed up for the tool, even though registered voters must sign up for BallotTrax themselves and none are automatically signed up. Respondents who were aware of BallotTrax but did not sign up for ballot notifications identified trust in the process as a common reason for not using BallotTrax with nearly one-third stating they fully trusted that their ballot would be received and counted by election authorities. A small but notable share of respondents stated security as a reason for not signing up for the tool, with 12.9% saying they did not feel comfortable tracking their ballot online or through text/email messages and 7.0% saying they were worried their contact information would be used for non-election purposes.

According to CID's voter file analysis, nearly one-third of those casting a ballot in the 2022 primary election received BallotTrax notifications, while one-quarter of voters in the 2022 general election utilized the tool. Some groups used BallotTrax at higher rates than others. BallotTrax use was higher among registered Democrats, mid-aged voters, and Black voters compared to registered Republicans, young voters aged 18 to 24, and Latino voters.

In the 2022 election cycle, Californians registered to vote who were signed up for BallotTrax voted in higher numbers than their counterparts not using the tool. Registered voter turnout among BallotTrax users was about two-thirds higher than the registered voter turnout among non-BallotTrax users in the 2022 general election and twice as large in the 2022 primary election. When breaking out turnout by racial and ethnic groups, ages, and party affiliations, BallotTrax users consistently had notably higher turnout rates than non-BallotTrax users. Nearly 46% of young BallotTrax users aged 18 to 24, for example, voted in the 2022 general election, twenty percentage points higher than non-BallotTrax users in the same age group.

In addition to having higher turnout, registered voter turnout gaps among some historically underrepresented groups were narrower among BallotTrax users than the general population. For example, there was a 21.6 percentage point turnout gap between Latino BallotTrax users and white, non-Latino BallotTrax users in the 2022 general election. In comparison, there was a 24.3 percentage point turnout gap between all Latino voters and all white, non-Latino voters.

While BallotTrax is used to track vote-by-mail ballots, voters who have signed up for the tool do not exclusively vote by mail and a small portion opt to vote in person instead. BallotTrax users did, however, cast vote-by-mail ballots at higher rates than non-BallotTrax voters. For example, nearly 95% of BallotTrax voters cast vote-by-mail ballots in the 2022 primary election, compared to 90.1% of non-BallotTrax voters. While vote-by-mail ballots were very common among all voters, some BallotTrax users voted in-person at higher rates than others. Over 7% of Latino BallotTrax users voted in person in the primary election compared to 4.6% of Asian-American BallotTrax users and 5.7% of Black BallotTrax users.

Along with tracking the vote-by-mail ballots' progress through the mail system, BallotTrax also notifies its users if there is an issue with their ballot such as a signature discrepancy and if the issue is curable. A majority (over 61%) of BallotTrax users with rejected yet curable ballots corrected the issue and their vote was counted. Ballot cure rates, however, varied across racial and ethnic groups, ages, and party affiliations, with Latino voters and young voters aged 18 to 24 correcting their ballots at the lowest rates.

Despite the large number of rejected yet curable ballots that were corrected, a small portion of vote-by-mail ballots cast by BallotTrax users were ultimately rejected. Historically underrepresented groups, such as Asian Americans, Latinos, and voters aged 18 to 24, had the highest vote-by-mail rejection rates.

BallotTrax has enabled millions of California voters to track their vote-by-mail ballot throughout the entire voting process. In the 2022 election cycle, BallotTrax users voted in higher numbers than the general population, cured rejected ballots, and voted by mail ballots at higher rates than non-BallotTrax users. At the same time, a large proportion of California's eligible voters remain unaware of the availability of BallotTrax, with awareness lowest for Asian Americans, Latinos and older voters, along with use rates for these groups. Greater voter outreach and education around BallotTrax and its options could potentially narrow these gaps bringing the service to a more representative set of users in the state.

Notes

1. For more information on BallotTrax in California, see: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ballot-status/wheres-my-ballot>
2. For more information, see: <https://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/pdfs/ballotrax-troubleshooting.pdf>
3. Because the California Election Code does not require registered voters to identify their race or ethnicity, the California voter file provides an incomplete flag for this information. While self-reported ethnicity data is generally reliable as an identifier, low self-reporting rates result in an incomplete VoteCal dataset. Further, the voting behavior and demographic characteristics of California registrants who answered this question are different than the ones who don't (self-selection bias), resulting in an unrepresentative sample of the total electorate.
4. For more information, see: <https://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/pdfs/ballotrax-troubleshooting.pdf>
5. For more information, see: <https://calmatters.org/politics/2020/12/ballotrax-confused-some-voters/>
6. For more information on BallotTrax in California, see: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ballot-status/wheres-my-ballot>
7. See: <https://wheresmyballot.com/>
8. For more information on AB 860, see: https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB860
9. For more information on AB 37, see: <https://legiscan.com/CA/text/AB37/id/2434626>
10. For more information on voting methods in past elections, see: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/statistics/voter-participation-stats-county>