MINNESOTA STATE PLANNING AGENCY
Office of State Demographer

POPULATION NOTES
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CHARACTERISTICS OF MINNESOTA VOTERS IN THE 1984 ELECTION

In the 1984 fall election, Minnesota had the highest percentage of participation among its eligible voters of any state in the nation. In that election, nearly 79 percent of Minnesotans age 18 and older voted, compared with nearly 60 percent nationally. Minnesota's voting rate exceeded the national rate by almost 32 percent. The percent voting in Minnesota was significantly higher in all age groups except those 65 and older, the age group which nationally has the highest percent voting.

In many respects, actual voters in Minnesota reflect the characteristics of all persons in the state who are eligible to vote. Major exceptions are that voters tend to be slightly older, better educated, and have higher incomes than all persons of voting age.

The groups with the highest rates of voting include persons age 50 to 59 with four or more years of college, earning incomes of $30,000 or more. Government workers and persons in executive, professional, technical, and protective services occupations are also more likely to vote. The groups with the lowest rates of voter participation include persons age 20 to 24 who rent, earn less than $10,000 annually, and have less than a high school diploma.

The information presented in this Note is taken from the 1984 November Current Population Survey, conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The total sample for Minnesota is 1,744 persons of voting age. Due to the relatively small size of the sample, the reader is cautioned that sampling errors can be large, especially for relatively small groups. Estimated sampling errors are included with the tables and the technical note at the end of this Note describes the use of these sampling errors. The voting rates are based on a question in the survey relating to whether or not the respondent voted. The total number of voters derived from this question exceeds the number of votes cast in the election. Evidently, some persons report that they vote when in fact they did not vote.

TABLE 1. PERCENT VOTING IN MINNESOTA AND THE U.S.: 1984

Age	% Voting in Minnesota	% Voting in the U.S.	Sampling Error (±)
18-19	79.8%	35.1%	6.2%
20-24	58.7	42.8	4.9
25-29	67.6	50.8	4.6
30-34	80.5	58.6	3.7
35-64	87.1	67.2	1.8
65 and over	77.5	71.8	3.9
Total	78.8	59.9	1.4

Minnesotans Are More Likely To Vote

Minnesota has historically had a high percent of persons voting. The 1984 election is no exception, with Minnesota again ranking first among all states, with 78.8 percent voting compared with 59.9 percent nationally (Table 1).

The differences in percent voting exist among all age groups except for persons age 65 and older. The largest differences occurred among the 18 and 19 year olds and 30 to 34 year olds. For example, for persons age 30 to 34, 80.5 percent voted in Minnesota compared with 58.6 percent nationally.

Middle Aged Are Most Likely To Vote

Persons in their middle years, from 35 to 64, are most likely to vote, with more than 84 percent participating in elections (Table 2). Young adults aged 20 to 24 have the lowest percents, with less than 59 percent voting. The proportion voting generally rises with age until age 65 and older, where a slight decline in percent voting is observed. Interestingly, new voters, age 18 and 19, vote at a much higher rate than persons in their twenties, with almost 80 percent voting, though the sampling error in this young age group is relatively large. The highest voting percent is among the 50 to 59 year age group, with 88.8 percent voting.

As a result of the higher voting rates among the middle and older ages, the average age of voters is higher than that of non-voters. The median age (the age at which half are older and half are younger) among voters is 40 years, while among non-voters it is 30 years. Persons age 40 and older represent 47 percent of the voting age population but 50 percent of voters.

TABLE 2. VOTING BEHAVIOR BY AGE: MINNESOTA, 1984

Age	Percent Voting	Sampling Error (±)	% of All Voters	% of All Non-Voters
18-19	79.8%	6.15%	5.0%	4.7%
20-24	58.7	4.90	8.8	23.0
25-29	67.6	4.56	10.5	18.8
30-34	80.5	3.70	13.6	12.4
35-39	87.5	3.48	11.7	6.3
40-49	86.6	2.93	17.3	9.9
50-59	88.8	3.10	13.6	6.3
60-64	84.2	5.22	6.1	4.4
65 and over	77.5	3.87	13.4	14.2

Persons with Higher Incomes Are More Likely To Vote

The percent of persons voting also increases with income. As a result, low income persons tend to be underrepresented in the electorate while middle and upper income persons tend to be overrepresented. Fewer than 63 percent of persons with incomes less than $10,000 voted (Table 3). By contrast, more than 90 percent of persons with incomes of $30,000 or more voted.

Persons with incomes of $30,000 or more represented almost 40 percent of all voters, but less than 35 percent of voting age population and only 15 percent of non-voters. Persons with

TABLE 3. VOTING BEHAVIOR BY INCOME: MINNESOTA, 1984

Income	Percent Voting	Sampling Error (±)	% of All Voters	% of All Non-Voters
Less than $10,000	62.6%	3.80%	16.0%	35.2%
$10,000 to $19,999	72.0	3.29	21.1	30.2
$20,000 to $29,999	81.5	2.88	23.3	19.5
$30,000 to $49,999	90.9	2.16	25.4	9.3
$50,000 or more	90.0	2.99	14.2	5.8

incomes less than $20,000 represented just over 37 percent of voters, but more than 65 percent of non-voters. While persons with incomes over $20,000 represent a majority of voters, persons with incomes under $20,000 represent a majority of non-voters.

College Educated Are Most Likely To Vote

As with income and age, the percent of Minnesotans voting also increases with education (Table 4). Persons with less than eight years of education are least likely to vote while persons with more than four years of college are most likely to vote. Approximately two-thirds of persons with less than a high school diploma voted in 1984. This group represents 16 percent of all voters, but 31 percent of non-voters.

The largest single education group includes persons with a high school diploma. These persons make up 45 percent of voters and just over 50 percent of non-voters. More than three-fourths of these persons voted in 1984, closely approximating the 78.8 percent overall voting percent for the state.

By contrast, persons with four or more years of college made up just over 20 percent of voters but only 7.2 percent of non-voters. More than 90 percent of persons with four or more years of college voted in 1984.

TABLE 4. VOTING BEHAVIOR BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT: MINNESOTA, 1984

Education	Percent Voting	Sampling Error (±)	% of All Voters	% of All Non-Voters
8th grade or less	66.5%	4.44%	8.1%	14.9%
1-3 yrs. high school	64.5	4.46	7.9	16.1
High school	76.9	2.05	45.0	50.2
1-3 yrs. college	85.8	2.44	18.6	11.4
4 yrs. college	90.0	2.56	13.1	5.4
4+ yrs college	93.9	2.77	7.4	1.8

Voting Percentage Differs by Occupation

The occupations with the highest voting percentages include executives, professional and technical, and protective services (Table 5). Persons employed in protective services (which includes police, fire and other related occupations) demonstrate a very high voting percent of 97.8 percent, though they represent only 1.2 percent of all voters. Executive, professional and technical and protective services employees combine to make up almost 23 percent of all voters, but only nine percent of non-voters.

By contrast, persons involved in production work (precision production plus operators, fabricators, and laborers) combine for only 22.3 percent of all voters, but more than 35 percent of non-voters. Approximately 70 percent of persons in these occupation classes vote.

TABLE 5. VOTING BEHAVIOR BY OCCUPATIONAL CLASS: MINNESOTA, 1984

Occupation	Percent Voting	Sampling Error (±)	% of All Voters	% of All Non-Voters
Executive	89.7%	3.62%	9.4%	4.0%
Professional and technical	91.1	2.84	13.5	4.9
Sales	77.8	5.24	7.2	7.7
Administrative support	83.9	3.84	11.4	8.1
Protective services	97.8	5.04	1.2	0.1
Other services	76.1	4.47	10.2	12.0
Precision products	71.8	5.75	9.1	13.3
Operators, fabricators & laborers	69.2	4.06	13.2	21.9
No stated occupation	76.7	2.86	24.8	28.0

TABLE 6. VOTING BEHAVIOR BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS: MINNESOTA, 1984

Category	Percent Voting	Sampling Error(±)	% of All Voters	% of All Non-Voters
Employed	80.5%	1.64%	69.8%	63.2%
Self employed	81.3	4.40	9.5	8.1
Private sector	77.5	2.05	47.6	51.5
Government	93.0	2.65	12.7	3.6
Unemployed	66.0	8.58	3.0	5.7
Not in labor force	76.7	2.74	27.1	30.5
Homemaker	80.4	3.56	14.8	13.4
In school	73.1	8.78	2.8	3.8
Other	72.5	4.75	9.5	13.3

Employed Are More Likely To Vote

More than two-thirds (69.8 %) of all voters were employed at the time of the election (Table 6). Private sector employees made up the largest single group, with more than 47 percent of all voters. However, their voting rate was less than that of the self-employed and government workers. The rate among government workers (federal, state and local) was especially high at 93 percent, including nearly 13 percent of all voters.

While eight of every ten employed persons voted, only two of every three unemployed persons voted. The unemployed made up three percent of all voters and nearly six percent of all non-voters.

Among persons not in the labor force, homemakers had the highest participation rate (80.4%) and the largest block of voters (14.8% of all voters). Persons not in the labor force for reasons other than homemaking and school (including those retired, disabled, and others) had a lower voting rate of 72.5 percent. Less than ten percent of all voters were in this category.

Persons in Families Are More Likely To Vote

Persons living in families constituted more than 84 percent of all voters (Table 7). Because this group's population share is so large, it also includes more than 75 percent of non-voters. More than eight of every ten persons of voting age living in families voted. There is little difference in the voter participation rate between persons with no children at home and those with at least one child at home. However, persons with at least one child age five or younger appear less likely to vote.

Persons not living in a family (living alone, living with non-relatives, or in group quarters such as college dorms or nursing homes) have a lower voting rate of 70.2 percent. These individuals make up nearly 16 percent of all voters and nearly 25 percent of non-voters.

TABLE 7. VOTING BEHAVIOR BY FAMILY STATUS: MINNESOTA, 1984

Status	Percent Voting	Sampling Error(±)	% of All Voters	% of All Non-Voters
In family setting	80.7%	1.48%	84.4%	75.3%
No children	81.2	2.20	38.0	32.7
Child present	80.2	2.02	46.4	42.6
Child 0-5	73.8	3.50	17.2	22.8
Child 6-13	81.6	2.73	24.3	20.4
*Not in a family	70.2	3.73	15.6	24.7

*Includes living alone, living with non-relatives or in group quarters.

Renters Are Less Likely To Vote

Renters are less likely to vote than home owners. Only 64 percent of renters voted, compared with 83 percent of home owners (Table 8). While renters make up only a little more than 18 percent of all voters, they constitute nearly 38 percent of non-voters.

TABLE 8. HOME OWNERS' AND RENTERS' VOTING BEHAVIOR: MINNESOTA, 1984

Tenure	Percent Voting	Sampling Error (±)	% of All Voters	% of All Non-Voter
Home owner	83.0%	1.71%	81.9%	62.5
Renter	64.3	4.09	18.2	37.5

Technical Note

The results presented in this Population Note were obtained from the November, 1984 Current Population Survey taken by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The Minnesota sample is comprised of 1,744 persons of voting age.

Since this is a sample, it is subject to sampling error. Estimates of the sampling errors are provided with the tables. Sampling error is a measure of the variations that occurred by chance because a sample rather than the entire population was surveyed. The sampling error shown in the tables indicates the likely range of voting rates within which the actual voting rate falls. For example, the estimated voting rate for persons age 50 to 59 is 88.8 percent. The sampling error of three percent implies that the actual voting rate is likely to be plus or minus three percent, of the estimated rate of 88.8 percent or between 85.8 percent and 91.8 percent.

According to the survey reported on here, 2,245,370 Minnesotans reported voting in the fall 1984 election while the official count of voters totaled 2,114,842. The survey, therefore, claims 130,528 voters more than the official total, or 6.2 percent more than the official total. One reason for this difference is that the survey includes persons who claimed to vote but actually did not. Another reason is that the survey estimate of total voters is based on an independent estimate of the voting age population of the state which itself includes an estimating error.

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