

Study Shows People with Disabilities Less Likely to Vote

People with disabilities are about 20 percentage points less likely than those without disabilities to vote, and 10 points less likely to be registered to vote, say researchers who conducted a national random-household telephone survey of 1,240 Americans of voting age after the November, 1998 elections.

The lower voter turnout "is not explained by their perceptions of the political system or their perceived ability to participate," say researchers [Kay Schriener](#) of the University of Arkansas and [Douglas Kruse](#) of Rutgers University, who conducted the survey.

People with disabilities are more likely than those without disabilities to have encountered, or expect, difficulties in voting at a polling place. Of those voting in the past ten years, 8% of people with disabilities encountered such problems compared to less than 2% of people without disabilities. Among those not voting within the past ten years, 27% of people with disabilities would expect such problems compared to 4% of people without disabilities.

If people with disabilities voted at the same rate as those without disabilities, there would have been 4.6 million additional voters in 1998, raising the overall turnout rate by 2.5 percentage points. Political parties were less likely to contact people with disabilities in the 1998 campaigns, the survey found.

The survey used the same questions used by the 2000 Census to identify disabled respondents. The sample was stratified so that interviews were conducted with 700 people with disabilities and 540 people without disabilities.

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EXPERTS:

Kay Schriener and Douglas Kruse have conducted a number of studies about voting access and persons with disabilities.

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The Trace R&D Center was formed in 1971 to address the communication needs of people who are nonspeaking and have severe disabilities. Its director is Gregg Vanderheiden.

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