

However, there is a considerably larger source of inequality inherent in the current system—namely the power of a voter to decide the presidency under the state-by-state winner-take-all method of awarding electoral votes.

In the first six presidential elections of the 2000s, the presidency was decided by an average of 287,969 popular votes distributed over an average of just three decisive states, as shown in table 1.33.

As shown in the table, there is a 210-to-1 inequality in the power of a vote to decide the national outcome under the current state-by-state winner-take-all method of awarding electoral votes.

## **1.5. VOTER PARTICIPATION IS LOWER IN SPECTATOR STATES THAN IN BATTLEGROUND STATES.**

Many voters have come to understand that they are politically irrelevant in the general-election for President.

Voter turnout was considerably higher in the closely divided battleground states than in the rest of the country. Specifically, it was:

- 11% higher in 2020
- 11% higher in 2016
- 16% higher in 2012
- 9% higher in 2008.

Details follow for each election.

### **1.5.1. 2020 election**

In 2020, voter turnout in the 12 closely divided battleground states was 11% higher than in the 39 spectator states.

Voter turnout was 67.94% nationally in 2020. This percentage was computed from the following statistics:

- The civilian voting-age population (CVAP), as computed by the U.S. Census Bureau, was 235,418,734.
- A total of 159,934,200 people turned out to vote in the 2020 presidential election.<sup>253</sup>

As previously mentioned, virtually all (96%) of the 2020 general-election campaign events (204 of the 212 events) occurred in 12 closely divided battleground states (section 1.2.1). Each of the battleground states received between four and 47 campaign events. The other 38 states and the District of Columbia were almost totally ignored.

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<sup>253</sup>The total number of votes cast for President in 2020 was 158,224,999. That is, 98.9% of the people who turned out to vote in 2020 voted for President (and 1.1% abstained in the presidential race).

Table 1.42 shows voter turnout in 2020 in the 12 battleground states.

- Column 4 of the table shows the state’s civilian voting-age population (CVAP) as reported by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission.<sup>254</sup>
- Column 5 shows the number of people who voted in the state.
- Column 1 shows each state’s voter turnout percentage—that is, column 5 divided by column 4.
- Column 2 shows the number of presidential general-election campaign events for each state. .

Turnout in the 12 battleground states in 2020 was 54,173,497 people out of a total civilian voting-age population of 76,309,782—that is, turnout was 70.99%.

**Table 1.42 Voter turnout in the 12 battleground states in 2020**

Turnout percent	2020 events	State	CVAP	Voter turnout
71%	47	Pennsylvania	9,810,201	6,973,951
72%	31	Florida	15,507,315	11,137,676
72%	25	North Carolina	7,729,644	5,543,405
74%	21	Michigan	7,562,464	5,579,317
75%	18	Wisconsin	4,412,888	3,308,331
67%	13	Ohio	8,879,469	5,974,121
67%	13	Arizona	5,137,474	3,420,481
67%	11	Nevada	2,111,932	1,407,761
79%	9	Minnesota	4,157,556	3,290,013
66%	7	Georgia	7,581,837	5,023,812
72%	5	Iowa	2,348,787	1,700,130
76%	4	New Hampshire	1,070,215	814,499
<b>70.99%</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>76,309,782</b>	<b>54,173,497</b>

Table 1.43 shows the voter turnout in the 38 spectator states and the District of Columbia. The table is sorted based on the number of general-election campaign events in column 2 (and secondarily by the turnout percentage in column 1). Thirty-four of these 39 spectator jurisdictions were totally ignored. Five of these 39 places together received only eight of the nation’s 212 general-election campaign events.

As can be seen from the table, turnout in the 38 spectator states and the District of Columbia in 2020 was 105,760,703 people out of a total civilian voting-age population of 159,108,952—that is, turnout was 66.47%.

We now compare turnout in the battlegrounds with the rest of the country.

The ratio of 70.99% (the turnout in the 12 battleground states) to 66.47% (the turnout in the 38 spectator states and the District of Columbia) is 1.11-to-1.

That is, 11% more people turned out to vote in the 12 battleground states than in the 38 spectator states and the District of Columbia in 2020.

Battleground status is not, of course, the sole factor in determining voter turnout.

<sup>254</sup>U.S. Election Assistance Commission. 2021. *The Election Administration and Voting Survey: 2020 Comprehensive Report*. Pages 27–28. [https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_library/files/2020\\_EAVS\\_Report\\_Final\\_508c.pdf](https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/document_library/files/2020_EAVS_Report_Final_508c.pdf). Also see <https://www.eac.gov/research-and-data/datasets-codebooks-and-surveys>

Table 1.43 Voter turnout in the 39 spectator states in 2020

Turnout percent	2020 events	State	CVAP	Voter turnout
61%	3	Texas	18,875,542	11,449,044
76%	2	Maine	1,078,770	822,534
72%	1	Virginia	6,226,623	4,487,338
70%	1	Nebraska	1,388,950	966,786
62%	1	Indiana	4,978,356	3,103,284
78%		Colorado	4,244,210	3,320,607
76%		Washington	5,409,035	4,116,055
76%		Oregon	3,162,204	2,396,123
74%		Vermont	498,705	368,075
74%		Montana	831,760	612,141
73%		New Jersey	6,170,130	4,494,659
72%		Massachusetts	5,057,192	3,658,005
72%		Utah	2,134,249	1,542,529
71%		Connecticut	2,619,474	1,863,479
71%		Delaware	725,178	514,656
71%		Maryland	4,316,921	3,059,603
69%		Missouri	4,650,318	3,201,458
68%		Idaho	1,282,630	878,527
68%		California	26,032,160	17,720,746
68%		Alaska	533,151	361,400
68%		Illinois	9,088,036	6,140,545
66%		Kansas	2,103,748	1,379,623
65%		South Dakota	653,394	427,406
65%		Rhode Island	800,798	519,412
65%		South Carolina	3,892,341	2,523,856
65%		D.C.	536,768	346,491
64%		North Dakota	567,545	364,499
64%		Wyoming	434,852	278,503
64%		Kentucky	3,367,502	2,149,444
63%		New York	13,810,830	8,701,749
63%		Louisiana	3,463,372	2,169,354
62%		Alabama	3,731,336	2,329,047
61%		New Mexico	1,522,171	928,230
60%		Tennessee	5,129,580	3,074,692
59%		Mississippi	2,246,323	1,334,155
57%		Hawaii	1,014,035	580,098
56%		West Virginia	1,420,289	801,667
54%		Oklahoma	2,875,059	1,564,886
54%		Arkansas	2,235,415	1,209,997
<b>66.47%</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>159,108,952</b>	<b>105,760,703</b>

Table 1.44 shows each state’s voter turnout for the 2020 election. The 12 battleground states are highlighted in bold. The table is sorted according to the state’s voter turnout (column 1). Minnesota is at the top (with 79% turnout), and Arkansas is at the bottom (with 54% turnout).

A glance at table 1.44 shows that none of the 12 battleground states (highlighted in bold) is among the 20 low-turnout states at the bottom of the table. Two-thirds of the battleground states had above-average turnout—that is, turnout above 67.94%.

However, the table also indicates that a state’s voter turnout is influenced by factors other than the state’s battleground status.

For example, voter turnout was usually higher in the states where every voter received a ballot by mail in 2020.<sup>255</sup> Turnout in five of the eight “vote by mail” states (Colorado, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, and Washington) was higher than the national average.<sup>256</sup>

A state’s demographics (particularly education and income) play an important role in voter turnout. A glance at the bottom portion of the table shows numerous low-turnout states with below-average levels of education and income.

Although difficult to quantify, the ease of voting also impacts turnout.

Another intangible factor is that some states historically have had a culture of greater civic participation. For example, Minnesota appears near the top of the list in all four of the presidential elections between 2008 and 2020—even though it received almost no attention from presidential campaigns in three of those four elections (namely, 2008, 2012, and 2016, as shown in tables later in this section).

Nonetheless, presidential campaigning in a state exerts a major impact on voter turnout, and turnout in the 12 battleground states was 11% higher in 2020 than in the 38 spectator states and the District of Columbia.

### 1.5.2. 2016 election

In 2016, voter turnout in the 12 closely divided battleground states was 11% higher than in the 38 spectator states and the District of Columbia. This is the same percentage difference as 2020.

Voter turnout in 2016 was 62.2% nationally.

Specifically, 138,467,690 people turned out to vote, out of a civilian voting-age population of 222,469,187.<sup>257</sup>

In 2016, virtually all (94%) of the general-election campaign events (375 of the 399 events) occurred in the 12 states that were closely divided that year. Each of these 12 battleground states received a considerable number of events (i.e., between 10 and 71). In

<sup>255</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures. 2022. *Vote-by-Mail States*. <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/vopp-table-18-states-with-all-mail-elections.aspx>

<sup>256</sup> “Vote by mail” alone does not guarantee above-average turnout. In 2020, three of the vote-by-mail states (Hawaii, Nevada, and California) did not have above-average turnout. These three states did, however, experience significant increases in their turnout, compared to 2016, when they did not use vote by mail. Specifically, Hawaii’s low turnout increased from 44% in 2016 without “vote by mail” to 57% with it; Nevada’s turnout increased from 61% to 67%; and California’s turnout increased from 60% to 68%.

<sup>257</sup> U.S. Election Assistance Commission. 2017. *The Election Administration and Voting Survey: 2016 Comprehensive Report*. Pages 20–21. [https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/eac\\_assets/1/6/2016\\_EAVS\\_Comprehensive\\_Report.pdf](https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/eac_assets/1/6/2016_EAVS_Comprehensive_Report.pdf)

Table 1.44 Voter turnout in 2020

Turnout percent	2020 events	State	CVAP	Voter turnout
<b>79%</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Minnesota</b>	<b>4,157,556</b>	<b>3,290,013</b>
78%		Colorado	4,244,210	3,320,607
76%	2	Maine	1,078,770	822,534
<b>76%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>New Hampshire</b>	<b>1,070,215</b>	<b>814,499</b>
76%		Washington	5,409,035	4,116,055
76%		Oregon	3,162,204	2,396,123
<b>75%</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>4,412,888</b>	<b>3,308,331</b>
74%		Vermont	498,705	368,075
74%	21	Michigan	7,562,464	5,579,317
74%		Montana	831,760	612,141
73%		New Jersey	6,170,130	4,494,659
72%	5	Iowa	2,348,787	1,700,130
72%		Massachusetts	5,057,192	3,658,005
72%		Utah	2,134,249	1,542,529
72%	1	Virginia	6,226,623	4,487,338
<b>72%</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>Florida</b>	<b>15,507,315</b>	<b>11,137,676</b>
<b>72%</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>North Carolina</b>	<b>7,729,644</b>	<b>5,543,405</b>
71%		Connecticut	2,619,474	1,863,479
71%	47	Pennsylvania	9,810,201	6,973,951
71%		Delaware	725,178	514,656
71%		Maryland	4,316,921	3,059,603
70%	1	Nebraska	1,388,950	966,786
69%		Missouri	4,650,318	3,201,458
68%		Idaho	1,282,630	878,527
68%		California	26,032,160	17,720,746
68%		Alaska	533,151	361,400
68%		Illinois	9,088,036	6,140,545
<b>67%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>Ohio</b>	<b>8,879,469</b>	<b>5,974,121</b>
<b>67%</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>Nevada</b>	<b>2,111,932</b>	<b>1,407,761</b>
<b>67%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>Arizona</b>	<b>5,137,474</b>	<b>3,420,481</b>
<b>66%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Georgia</b>	<b>7,581,837</b>	<b>5,023,812</b>
66%		Kansas	2,103,748	1,379,623
65%		South Dakota	653,394	427,406
65%		Rhode Island	800,798	519,412
65%		South Carolina	3,892,341	2,523,856
65%		D.C.	536,768	346,491
64%		North Dakota	567,545	364,499
64%		Wyoming	434,852	278,503
64%		Kentucky	3,367,502	2,149,444
63%		New York	13,810,830	8,701,749
63%		Louisiana	3,463,372	2,169,354
62%		Alabama	3,731,336	2,329,047
62%	1	Indiana	4,978,356	3,103,284
61%		New Mexico	1,522,171	928,230
61%	3	Texas	18,875,542	11,449,044
60%		Tennessee	5,129,580	3,074,692
59%		Mississippi	2,246,323	1,334,155
57%		Hawaii	1,014,035	580,098
56%		West Virginia	1,420,289	801,667
54%		Oklahoma	2,875,059	1,564,886
54%		Arkansas	2,235,415	1,209,997
<b>67.94%</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>235,418,734</b>	<b>159,934,200</b>

**Table 1.45 Voter turnout in the 12 battleground states in 2016**

Turnout percent	2016 events	State	CVAP	Voter Turnout
69%	71	Florida	13,933,052	9,613,669
66%	55	North Carolina	7,107,998	4,690,195
64%	54	Pennsylvania	9,710,416	6,223,150
64%	48	Ohio	8,709,050	5,607,641
67%	23	Virginia	5,953,612	3,996,302
66%	22	Michigan	7,380,136	4,874,619
74%	21	New Hampshire	1,020,130	757,669
69%	21	Iowa	2,285,126	1,581,371
77%	19	Colorado	3,750,953	2,884,199
61%	17	Nevada	1,863,799	1,128,492
70%	14	Wisconsin	4,294,321	2,993,000
60%	10	Arizona	4,526,594	2,722,660
<b>66.7%</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>70,535,187</b>	<b>47,072,967</b>

contrast, the states that received the remaining 24 events (a mere 6% of the total of 375 events) received no more than three events each.<sup>258</sup>

Table 1.45 shows voter turnout in the 12 battleground states in 2016. It is sorted according to the state's number of general-election campaign events (shown in column 2).

As can be seen from the table, 47,072,967 people voted, out of a total civilian voting-age population (CVAP) of 70,535,187. That is, the turnout in 2016 in the 12 battleground states was 66.7%.

Table 1.46 shows voter turnout in 2016 in the 38 spectator states and the District of Columbia. It is sorted based on the number of general-election campaign events in column 2 (and secondarily by the turnout percentage in column 1).

The table shows that 91,394,723 people voted, out of a total civilian voting-age population of 151,934,000. That is, the turnout in the 38 spectator states and the District of Columbia in 2016 was 60.2%.

The ratio of 66.7% (the turnout in the 12 battleground states) to 60.2% (the turnout in the 38 spectator states and the District of Columbia) is 1.11-to-1.

Thus, turnout in 2016 in the 12 battleground states was 11% higher than in the 38 spectator states and the District of Columbia.

Table 1.47 shows each state's voter turnout for the 2016 election. The 12 battleground states are highlighted in bold. The table is sorted according to the state's voter turnout (column 1).

<sup>258</sup>The battleground states vary slightly from election to election. Of the dozen battleground states that together accounted for almost all of the entire general-election campaign in 2016, all but two appeared on the list for 2020. Specifically, Colorado and Virginia (which had been closely divided in 2016, 2012, and 2008) were both safely Democratic in 2020—and therefore virtually ignored in 2020. Meanwhile, two other states (Minnesota and Georgia) joined the list of the dozen battleground states that together accounted for almost the entire campaign in 2020. In 2016, Minnesota and Georgia received only three and two events (out of a national total of 399), respectively.

Table 1.46 Voter turnout in the 39 spectator states in 2016

Turnout percent	2016 events	State	CVAP	Voter Turnout
74%	3	Maine	1,048,274	771,892
59%	3	Georgia	6,978,660	4,147,161
55%	3	New Mexico	1,457,632	804,073
75%	2	Minnesota	3,950,807	2,973,744
66%	2	Missouri	4,525,035	2,973,855
65%	2	Nebraska	1,333,860	869,815
59%	2	Indiana	4,801,113	2,831,540
68%	1	Washington	4,937,212	3,363,452
65%	1	Connecticut	2,574,178	1,675,955
62%	1	Illinois	8,979,999	5,562,009
60%	1	California	24,280,349	14,610,494
60%	1	Utah	1,868,008	1,114,567
55%	1	Mississippi	2,210,424	1,209,357
52%	1	Texas	16,864,962	8,701,152
72%		Oregon	2,867,670	2,051,452
70%		Massachusetts	4,850,598	3,378,801
67%		Maryland	4,182,241	2,807,326
66%		Montana	781,250	516,901
66%		Delaware	681,606	448,217
66%		Vermont	493,124	323,623
65%		New Jersey	6,053,893	3,957,303
64%		D.C.	485,116	311,841
64%		North Dakota	546,486	349,945
63%		Idaho	1,130,550	710,495
62%		Alaska	523,747	323,288
60%		Rhode Island	776,565	469,547
60%		Louisiana	3,410,634	2,049,802
60%		South Dakota	621,461	372,988
60%		Wyoming	430,026	256,553
60%		South Carolina	3,566,508	2,124,952
60%		Kansas	2,053,919	1,223,491
59%		Kentucky	3,297,108	1,949,254
59%		Alabama	3,620,994	2,137,452
58%		New York	13,531,404	7,793,078
53%		Oklahoma	2,768,561	1,465,505
53%		Tennessee	4,828,366	2,545,271
50%		West Virginia	1,455,848	732,362
48%		Arkansas	2,164,083	1,048,513
44%		Hawaii	1,001,729	437,697
<b>60.2%</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>151,934,000</b>	<b>91,394,723</b>

A glance at the table shows that the 12 battleground states (in bold) tend to appear near the top part of the table. All but two (Arizona and Nevada) had turnout above the national average of 62.2%.

Table 1.47 Voter turnout in 2016

Turnout percent	2016 events	State	CVAP	Voter Turnout
<b>77%</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>Colorado</b>	<b>3,750,953</b>	<b>2,884,199</b>
75%	2	Minnesota	3,950,807	2,973,744
<b>74%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>New Hampshire</b>	<b>1,020,130</b>	<b>757,669</b>
74%	3	Maine	1,048,274	771,892
72%		Oregon	2,867,670	2,051,452
<b>70%</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>4,294,321</b>	<b>2,993,000</b>
70%		Massachusetts	4,850,598	3,378,801
<b>69%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>Iowa</b>	<b>2,285,126</b>	<b>1,581,371</b>
<b>69%</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>Florida</b>	<b>13,933,052</b>	<b>9,613,669</b>
68%	1	Washington	4,937,212	3,363,452
67%		Maryland	4,182,241	2,807,326
<b>67%</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>Virginia</b>	<b>5,953,612</b>	<b>3,996,302</b>
66%		Montana	781,250	516,901
<b>66%</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>Michigan</b>	<b>7,380,136</b>	<b>4,874,619</b>
<b>66%</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>North Carolina</b>	<b>7,107,998</b>	<b>4,690,195</b>
66%		Delaware	681,606	448,217
66%	2	Missouri	4,525,035	2,973,855
66%		Vermont	493,124	323,623
65%		New Jersey	6,053,893	3,957,303
65%	2	Nebraska	1,333,860	869,815
65%	1	Connecticut	2,574,178	1,675,955
<b>64%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>Ohio</b>	<b>8,709,050</b>	<b>5,607,641</b>
64%		D.C.	485,116	311,841
<b>64%</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>Pennsylvania</b>	<b>9,710,416</b>	<b>6,223,150</b>
64%		North Dakota	546,486	349,945
63%		Idaho	1,130,550	710,495
62%	1	Illinois	8,979,999	5,562,009
62%		Alaska	523,747	323,288
<b>61%</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>Nevada</b>	<b>1,863,799</b>	<b>1,128,492</b>
60%		Rhode Island	776,565	469,547
60%	1	California	24,280,349	14,610,494
<b>60%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Arizona</b>	<b>4,526,594</b>	<b>2,722,660</b>
60%		Louisiana	3,410,634	2,049,802
60%		South Dakota	621,461	372,988
60%	1	Utah	1,868,008	1,114,567
60%		Wyoming	430,026	256,553
60%		South Carolina	3,566,508	2,124,952
60%		Kansas	2,053,919	1,223,491
59%	3	Georgia	6,978,660	4,147,161
59%		Kentucky	3,297,108	1,949,254
59%		Alabama	3,620,994	2,137,452
59%	2	Indiana	4,801,113	2,831,540
58%		New York	13,531,404	7,793,078
55%	3	New Mexico	1,457,632	804,073
55%	1	Mississippi	2,210,424	1,209,357
53%		Oklahoma	2,768,561	1,465,505
53%		Tennessee	4,828,366	2,545,271
52%	1	Texas	16,864,962	8,701,152
50%		West Virginia	1,455,848	732,362
48%		Arkansas	2,164,083	1,048,513
44%		Hawaii	1,001,729	437,697
<b>62.2%</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>222,469,187</b>	<b>138,467,690</b>



**Table 1.48 Voter turnout in the 12 battleground states in 2012**

Turnout percent	2012 events	State	ECVAP	Voter Turnout
65%	73	Ohio	8,678,945	5,632,423
63%	40	Florida	13,534,127	8,557,692
66%	36	Virginia	5,883,341	3,896,846
70%	27	Iowa	2,280,022	1,589,951
71%	23	Colorado	3,654,799	2,594,628
72%	18	Wisconsin	4,271,926	3,078,135
71%	13	New Hampshire	1,014,537	718,700
56%	13	Nevada	1,804,094	1,017,772
60%	5	Pennsylvania	9,700,796	5,783,621
65%	3	North Carolina	7,013,407	4,539,729
75%	1	Minnesota	3,920,519	2,950,780
65%	1	Michigan	7,347,850	4,780,701
<b>65.3%</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>12 states</b>	<b>69,104,363</b>	<b>45,140,978</b>

### 1.5.3. 2012 election

In 2012, voter turnout in the 12 battleground states was 16% higher than in the 38 spectator states and the District of Columbia.

Voter turnout in 2012 was 59.1% nationally. Specifically, 129,664,614 people turned out to vote, out of an estimated civilian voting-age population of 219,493,648.<sup>259</sup>

In 2012, 100% of the 253 general-election campaign events occurred in the 12 closely divided battleground states.<sup>260</sup>

Table 1.48 shows voter turnout in the 12 battleground states in 2012. The table is sorted according to the state's number of general-election campaign events (shown in column 2).

The table shows that 45,140,978 people voted, out of an estimated civilian voting-age population (ECVAP) of 69,104,363. That is, turnout was 65.3% in the 12 battleground states in 2012.

Table 1.49 shows voter turnout in the 38 spectator states and the District of Columbia in 2012. The table shows that 84,523,636 people voted, out of a total civilian voting-age population of 150,389,285. That is, the turnout was 56.2%. This table is sorted according to the turnout percentage (column 1).

All of the general-election campaign events were concentrated in the 12 battleground states in 2012, so none of these 39 jurisdictions received any campaign events (column 2).

The ratio of 65.3% (the turnout in the 12 battleground states) to 56.2% (the turnout in the 38 spectator states and the District of Columbia) is 1.16.

Thus, turnout in the 12 battleground states was 16% higher than in the 38 spectator states and the District of Columbia in 2012.

<sup>259</sup> U.S. Election Assistance Commission. 2013. The Election Administration and Voting Survey: 2012 Comprehensive Report. Pages 20–21. [https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/Research/EAC\\_2012VoterSurvey.pdf](https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/Research/EAC_2012VoterSurvey.pdf)

<sup>260</sup> The battleground states vary slightly from election to election. Of the dozen battleground states that together accounted for the entire general-election campaign in 2012, all but Minnesota appeared on the list for 2016 (when Arizona appeared on the list).

Table 1.49 Voter turnout in the 39 spectator states in 2012

Turnout percent	2012 events	State	ECVAP	Voter Turnout
69%		Maine	1,046,057	724,759
67%		Massachusetts	4,784,241	3,184,196
66%		Maryland	4,153,057	2,734,189
66%		Washington	4,879,174	3,206,490
64%		Oregon	2,822,652	1,820,507
63%		Montana	774,966	491,966
63%		Missouri	4,505,205	2,840,776
62%		D.C.	473,487	294,254
62%		Delaware	672,175	417,631
62%		Vermont	491,789	304,509
61%		Nebraska	1,329,041	815,568
61%		New Jersey	6,012,270	3,677,463
61%		North Dakota	536,097	326,239
61%		Connecticut	2,565,067	1,560,640
60%		Illinois	8,916,661	5,339,488
60%		Idaho	1,114,631	666,290
60%		South Dakota	619,251	368,816
59%		Louisiana	3,396,443	2,014,511
59%		Rhode Island	768,684	451,593
58%		Alaska	519,629	302,465
58%		Wyoming	430,996	250,701
58%		Alabama	3,595,400	2,083,309
57%		Georgia	6,867,525	3,910,557
57%		South Carolina	3,506,606	1,981,516
56%		Utah	1,829,834	1,023,036
56%		Indiana	4,780,336	2,663,373
56%		California	23,546,880	13,096,097
55%		Kentucky	3,283,865	1,815,896
54%		Kansas	2,053,815	1,115,281
53%		New York	13,408,596	7,128,852
53%		Arizona	4,376,217	2,323,579
52%		Tennessee	4,790,345	2,480,182
50%		Arkansas	2,159,446	1,080,809
49%		Oklahoma	2,757,440	1,343,380
48%		Texas	16,518,813	7,993,851
47%		West Virginia	1,460,372	685,099
47%		New Mexico	1,448,740	679,080
44%		Hawaii	993,045	436,774
40%		Mississippi	2,200,437	889,914
<b>56.2%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>150,389,285</b>	<b>84,523,636</b>

Table 1.50 Voter turnout in 2012

Turnout percent	2012 events	State	ECVAP	Voter Turnout
<b>75%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Minnesota</b>	<b>3,920,519</b>	<b>2,950,780</b>
<b>72%</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>4,271,926</b>	<b>3,078,135</b>
<b>71%</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>Colorado</b>	<b>3,654,799</b>	<b>2,594,628</b>
<b>71%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>New Hampshire</b>	<b>1,014,537</b>	<b>718,700</b>
<b>70%</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>Iowa</b>	<b>2,280,022</b>	<b>1,589,951</b>
69%		Maine	1,046,057	724,759
67%		Massachusetts	4,784,241	3,184,196
<b>66%</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>Virginia</b>	<b>5,883,341</b>	<b>3,896,846</b>
66%		Maryland	4,153,057	2,734,189
66%		Washington	4,879,174	3,206,490
<b>65%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Michigan</b>	<b>7,347,850</b>	<b>4,780,701</b>
<b>65%</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>Ohio</b>	<b>8,678,945</b>	<b>5,632,423</b>
<b>65%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>North Carolina</b>	<b>7,013,407</b>	<b>4,539,729</b>
64%		Oregon	2,822,652	1,820,507
63%		Montana	774,966	491,966
<b>63%</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>Florida</b>	<b>13,534,127</b>	<b>8,557,692</b>
63%		Missouri	4,505,205	2,840,776
62%		D.C.	473,487	294,254
62%		Delaware	672,175	417,631
62%		Vermont	491,789	304,509
61%		Nebraska	1,329,041	815,568
61%		New Jersey	6,012,270	3,677,463
61%		North Dakota	536,097	326,239
61%		Connecticut	2,565,067	1,560,640
60%		Illinois	8,916,661	5,339,488
60%		Idaho	1,114,631	666,290
<b>60%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Pennsylvania</b>	<b>9,700,796</b>	<b>5,783,621</b>
60%		South Dakota	619,251	368,816
59%		Louisiana	3,396,443	2,014,511
59%		Rhode Island	768,684	451,593
58%		Alaska	519,629	302,465
58%		Wyoming	430,996	250,701
58%		Alabama	3,595,400	2,083,309
57%		Georgia	6,867,525	3,910,557
57%		South Carolina	3,506,606	1,981,516
<b>56%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>Nevada</b>	<b>1,804,094</b>	<b>1,017,772</b>
56%		Utah	1,829,834	1,023,036
56%		Indiana	4,780,336	2,663,373
56%		California	23,546,880	13,096,097
55%		Kentucky	3,283,865	1,815,896
54%		Kansas	2,053,815	1,115,281
53%		New York	13,408,596	7,128,852
53%		Arizona	4,376,217	2,323,579
52%		Tennessee	4,790,345	2,480,182
50%		Arkansas	2,159,446	1,080,809
49%		Oklahoma	2,757,440	1,343,380
48%		Texas	16,518,813	7,993,851
47%		West Virginia	1,460,372	685,099
47%		New Mexico	1,448,740	679,080
44%		Hawaii	993,045	436,774
40%		Mississippi	2,200,437	889,914
<b>59.1%</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>219,493,648</b>	<b>129,664,614</b>

Table 1.50 shows each state's turnout data for the 2012 election.<sup>261</sup> The table is sorted according to the state's voter turnout (column 1).

A glance at the table shows that almost all of the battleground states (in bold) were in the top of the table.

#### 1.5.4. 2008 election

In this section, we will see that turnout in 2008 in the 14 battleground states was 9% higher than in the 36 spectator states and the District of Columbia.

In 2008, 131,924,177 people turned out to vote, out of an estimated civilian voting-age population (ECVAP) of 210,476,000. That is, voter turnout was 62.7% nationally.

Virtually all (98%) of the general-election campaign events (293 of the 300 events) occurred in 14 closely divided battleground states. Each of these 14 battleground states received between seven and 62 events. There was a dramatic difference between the number of events in these 14 battleground states, compared to the number of events in the remaining states. The jurisdictions that received the remaining seven events (a mere 2% of the national total of 300 events) received only one or two events each. No other states received any events.<sup>262</sup>

Table 1.51 shows the voter turnout in the 14 battleground states in 2008. The table is sorted according to the number of general-election campaign events in column 2 (and, secondarily, according to turnout percentage shown in column 1).

The table shows that 48,462,271 people voted, out of a total estimated civilian voting-age population (ECVAP) of 72,985,000. That is, turnout was 66.4% in the 14 battleground states in 2008.

**Table 1.51 Voter turnout in the 14 battleground states in 2008**

Turnout percent	2008 events	State	CVAP	Voter Turnout
66%	62	Ohio	8,569,000	5,671,438
67%	46	Florida	12,643,000	8,514,809
65%	40	Pennsylvania	9,400,000	6,071,357
68%	23	Virginia	5,546,000	3,750,065
68%	21	Missouri	4,391,000	2,992,023
71%	20	Colorado	3,434,000	2,426,253
66%	15	North Carolina	6,586,000	4,338,197
73%	12	New Hampshire	988,000	719,403
58%	12	Nevada	1,665,000	970,019
69%	10	Michigan	7,334,000	5,039,080
60%	9	Indiana	4,643,000	2,805,986
72%	8	Wisconsin	4,190,000	2,996,869
45%	8	New Mexico	1,370,000	620,289
69%	7	Iowa	2,226,000	1,546,483
<b>66.4%</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>72,985,000</b>	<b>48,462,271</b>

<sup>261</sup> U.S. Election Assistance Commission. *The 2012 Election Administration and Voting Survey*. September 2013. Page 29–30. [https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/eac\\_assets/1/6/2012ElectionAdministrationandVoterSurvey.pdf](https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/eac_assets/1/6/2012ElectionAdministrationandVoterSurvey.pdf)

<sup>262</sup> The number of battleground states has been shrinking for decades. FairVote. 2005. *The Shrinking Battleground: The 2008 Presidential Election and Beyond*. Takoma Park, MD: The Center for Voting and Democracy. <http://archive.fairvote.org/?page=1555>

Table 1.52 shows voter turnout in the 36 spectator states and the District of Columbia in 2008. As can be seen, only the five jurisdictions at the top of this table received any campaign events, and the other 32 jurisdictions received no events at all.

The table shows that 83,461,906 people voted, out of a total estimated civilian voting-age population of 137,491,000. That is, turnout in the 36 spectator states and the District of Columbia in 2008 was 60.7%.

**Table 1.52 Voter turnout in the 37 spectator states in 2008**

Turnout percent	2008 events	State	ECVAP	Voter Turnout
77%	2	Minnesota	3,799,000	2,920,214
73%	2	Maine	1,025,000	744,456
57%	1	Tennessee	4,591,000	2,618,238
52%	1	D.C.	433,000	226,871
52%	1	West Virginia	1,418,000	736,622
69%		Vermont	482,000	333,839
68%		Oregon	2,711,000	1,845,251
68%		Alaska	485,000	328,957
67%		Maryland	3,957,000	2,661,905
67%		Montana	740,000	497,599
67%		Massachusetts	4,621,000	3,102,995
67%		New Jersey	5,851,000	3,910,220
67%		Washington	4,609,000	3,071,587
66%		Connecticut	2,480,000	1,644,845
66%		Delaware	632,000	415,696
65%		North Dakota	490,000	318,425
65%		South Dakota	598,000	387,355
64%		Wyoming	397,000	256,035
64%		Arkansas	2,083,000	1,341,795
64%		Nebraska	1,278,000	811,780
63%		Illinois	8,830,000	5,577,509
63%		Kansas	2,005,000	1,263,202
63%		Rhode Island	757,000	475,428
63%		Idaho	1,063,000	667,506
62%		California	22,224,000	13,798,557
61%		Louisiana	3,237,000	1,980,814
61%		Alabama	3,462,000	2,105,622
60%		Georgia	6,614,000	3,975,986
58%		New York	13,206,000	7,722,019
58%		South Carolina	3,303,000	1,930,359
58%		Kentucky	3,198,000	1,861,577
56%		Oklahoma	2,630,000	1,474,694
55%		Arizona	4,205,000	2,320,851
55%		Utah	1,759,000	960,299
53%		Texas	15,254,000	8,059,731
50%		Hawaii	919,000	456,009
31%		Mississippi	2,145,000	657,058
<b>60.7%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>137,491,000</b>	<b>83,461,906</b>

The ratio of 66.4% (the turnout in the 14 battleground states) to 60.7% (the turnout in the 36 spectator states and the District of Columbia) was 1.09.

That is, turnout in the 14 battleground states was 9% higher than in the 36 spectator states and the District of Columbia in 2008.

Table 1.53 shows each state's turnout data for the 2008 election.<sup>263</sup>

A glance at the table shows that the 14 battleground states (in bold) are concentrated at the top of the table. All but three of the 14 battleground states in 2008 had above-average turnout (that is, above 62.7%).

### 1.5.5. 1824 election

It is no mystery as to why voter turnout is higher in battleground states, compared to the rest of the country. The reason is the same today as it was in 1824.

The 1824 election was the first election in which presidential electors were chosen by the people in more than half of the states. Three-quarters of the 24 states conducted popular elections, while state legislatures appointed the electors in the remaining six.

Discussing voter turnout in 1824, historian Donald Ratcliffe wrote:

“The overall level of turnout in the election was low.... **The reason was that in most states, the outcome in the [presidential election] was already fairly clear, and voting did not seem a priority. Only half a dozen states experienced a real popular contest:** in the Old Northwest (Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois), in New Jersey and Maryland, and in North Carolina. In these states, turnout in the presidential election rose to over **40 percent**, compared with less than **24 percent** in the ten other states<sup>264</sup> that held a popular election.”<sup>265</sup> [Emphasis added]

The ratio of 40% to 24% is 1.67. That is, turnout in the six contested states was 67% higher than in the 10 spectator states in 1824.

<sup>263</sup> U.S. Election Assistance Commission. 2008. *The 2008 Election Administration and Voting Survey*. November 2009. Pages 28–29. [https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/eac\\_assets/1/28/2008%20Election%20Administration%20and%20Voting%20Survey%20EAVS%20Report.pdf](https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/eac_assets/1/28/2008%20Election%20Administration%20and%20Voting%20Survey%20EAVS%20Report.pdf)

<sup>264</sup> Note that there was no popular vote for President in 1824 in six states (Delaware, Georgia, Louisiana, New York, South Carolina, and Vermont). Instead, the legislatures appointed the state's presidential electors. In fact, 1824 was the last election in which a substantial number of state legislatures appointed presidential electors. By 1828, only two state legislatures appointed their state's presidential electors (Delaware and South Carolina).

<sup>265</sup> Ratcliffe, Donald. 2015. *The One-Party Presidential Contest: Adams, Jackson, and 1824's Five-Horse Race*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas. Page 21.

Table 1.53 Voter turnout in 2008

Turnout percent	2008 events	State	ECVAP	Voter Turnout
77%	2	Minnesota	3,799,000	2,920,214
<b>73%</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>New Hampshire</b>	<b>988,000</b>	<b>719,403</b>
73%	2	Maine	1,025,000	744,456
<b>72%</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>4,190,000</b>	<b>2,996,869</b>
<b>71%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Colorado</b>	<b>3,434,000</b>	<b>2,426,253</b>
<b>69%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Iowa</b>	<b>2,226,000</b>	<b>1,546,483</b>
69%		Vermont	482,000	333,839
69%	10	Michigan	7,334,000	5,039,080
68%	21	Missouri	4,391,000	2,992,023
68%		Oregon	2,711,000	1,845,251
68%		Alaska	485,000	328,957
68%	23	Virginia	5,546,000	3,750,065
67%	46	Florida	12,643,000	8,514,809
67%		Maryland	3,957,000	2,661,905
67%		Montana	740,000	497,599
67%		Massachusetts	4,621,000	3,102,995
67%		New Jersey	5,851,000	3,910,220
67%		Washington	4,609,000	3,071,587
66%		Connecticut	2,480,000	1,644,845
<b>66%</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>Ohio</b>	<b>8,569,000</b>	<b>5,671,438</b>
<b>66%</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>North Carolina</b>	<b>6,586,000</b>	<b>4,338,197</b>
66%		Delaware	632,000	415,696
65%		North Dakota	490,000	318,425
65%		South Dakota	598,000	387,355
65%	40	Pennsylvania	9,400,000	6,071,357
64%		Wyoming	397,000	256,035
64%		Arkansas	2,083,000	1,341,795
64%		Nebraska	1,278,000	811,780
63%		Illinois	8,830,000	5,577,509
63%		Kansas	2,005,000	1,263,202
63%		Rhode Island	757,000	475,428
63%		Idaho	1,063,000	667,506
62%		California	22,224,000	13,798,557
61%		Louisiana	3,237,000	1,980,814
61%		Alabama	3,462,000	2,105,622
60%	9	Indiana	4,643,000	2,805,986
60%		Georgia	6,614,000	3,975,986
58%		New York	13,206,000	7,722,019
58%		South Carolina	3,303,000	1,930,359
58%	12	Nevada	1,665,000	970,019
58%		Kentucky	3,198,000	1,861,577
57%	1	Tennessee	4,591,000	2,618,238
56%		Oklahoma	2,630,000	1,474,694
55%		Arizona	4,205,000	2,320,851
55%		Utah	1,759,000	960,299
53%		Texas	15,254,000	8,059,731
52%	1	D.C.	433,000	226,871
52%	1	West Virginia	1,418,000	736,622
50%		Hawaii	919,000	456,009
<b>45%</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>New Mexico</b>	<b>1,370,000</b>	<b>620,289</b>
31%		Mississippi	2,145,000	657,058
<b>62.7%</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>210,476,000</b>	<b>131,924,177</b>

### 1.5.6. Additional studies of voter turnout

Numerous other studies have noted the correlation between a state's battleground status and voter turnout.

A 2005 Brookings Institution report pointed out:

“The electoral college can depress voter participation in much of the nation. Overall, the percentage of voters who participated in last fall's election was almost 5 percent higher than the turnout in 2000. Yet, most of the increase was limited to the battleground states. **Because the electoral college has effectively narrowed elections like the last one to a quadrennial contest for the votes of a relatively small number of states, people elsewhere are likely to feel that their votes don't matter.**”<sup>266</sup> [Emphasis added]

In 2012, *USA Today* reported the following about that year's election:

“Swing-state voters are a bit more enthusiastic about voting this year than those living elsewhere, perhaps reflecting the attention they're given in TV ads and candidate visits. Nearly half of those in battleground states are extremely or very enthusiastic about voting for president this year.”<sup>267</sup>

Other analysts of voter turnout employ slightly different definitions of the battleground states from ours, or use statistics other than the Civilian Voting Age Population (CVAP) data compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>268</sup>

For example, the late Curtis Gans discussed the turnout in the 2012 election during a televised panel on November 9, 2012, at the Bipartisan Policy Center:

“Because of the Electoral College, we limit the number of states where we have campaigns. In the ... **10 battleground states, the turnout was 62.8%, In the rest, turnout was 54.8%.**”<sup>269</sup> [Emphasis added]

The ratio of 62.8% to 54.8% is 1.15. Thus, using Gans' list of 10 battleground states, the turnout was 15% higher than in the rest of the country. Note that this is almost the same as the 16% difference in turnout that we computed using our list of 12 battleground states.

The Nonprofit Vote organization studied turnout for the six presidential elections between 2000 and 2020 and concluded:

“Battleground states consistently show turnout advantages.”<sup>270</sup>

<sup>266</sup> Nivola, Pietro S. 2005. *Thinking About Political Polarization*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution. Policy Brief 139. January 2005.

<sup>267</sup> Page, Susan. 2012. Swing states poll: Amid barrage of ads, Obama has edge. *USA Today*. July 8, 2012.

<sup>268</sup> For example, the studies by the U.S. Elections Project overseen by Professor Michael P. McDonald of the University of Florida use the “voter-eligible population” (VEP) on their extensive web site at <https://www.electproject.org/election-data/voter-turnout-data>

<sup>269</sup> Bipartisan Policy Center Post-Election Analysis. C-SPAN. November 9, 2012. Timestamp 36.50. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?309358-1/bipartisan-policy-center-post-election-analysis>

<sup>270</sup> Nonprofit Vote. 2020. *America Goes to the Polls 2020: Policy and Voter Turnout in the 2020 Election*. Page 24. <https://www.nonprofitvote.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/america-goes-polls-2020-7.pdf>