

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## NATIONAL TURNOUT

Voter turnout exceeded 2012 at a level consistent with the last three presidential elections.

- 60.2% of the nation's 231 million eligible voters cast ballots, according to ballots counted and certified by state election boards, compared to 58.6% turnout in 2012.
- Four in ten eligible voters didn't vote. Among the most common reasons voters cite for not voting are a lack of competition and meaningful choices on the ballot or problems with their voter registration or getting to the polls.

## STATE TURNOUT RANKINGS

The two factors that consistently correlate with higher voter participation are the ability to fix a registration issue when you vote and living in a battleground state.

### Same Day Voter Registration

- **The six highest-ranking states offered same day voter registration (SDR)**, which allows voters to register or fix a registration problem when they vote (In order – Minnesota, Maine, New Hampshire, Colorado, Wisconsin and Iowa).
- **Voter turnout in states with SDR was seven points higher** than states without the option, consistent with every election since the policy was first introduced in the 1970s.
- **The significant turnout advantage of SDR states has persisted** even as four new states (Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois and Maryland) implemented the policy since the 2012 election.

### Automatic Voter Registration (AVR)

- **Oregon, the first state to implement AVR, saw the highest turnout increase of any state** over 2012 – 4.1 percentage points. AVR pro-actively registers citizens at DMV transactions.

### Battleground States

- **Five of the six highest-turnout states, and 12 of the top 20**, were battleground states.
- Voter turnout in contested battleground states has been **five to eight percentage points higher** than in non-battleground states in each of the last five presidential elections.
- **The campaigns dedicated 95% of their ad spending and 99% of campaign visits** to the 14 battleground states – well over half going to just four states – FL, NC, OH and PA.
- **The voices of 65% of the electorate – 147 million voters** – were left on the sidelines from determining the presidency – living in the 36 non-battlegrounds states whose electoral votes were pre-ordained. That, in fact, is largely what happened.
- **Latino (75%) and Asian American voters (81%) lived disproportionately outside swing states** and, as a result, experienced 10-16 percentage points less contact than their swing state counterparts and a reduced voice in the election of the president.

### Lowest Ranking States

- **Hawaii, West Virginia, Texas, Tennessee, and Arkansas were at the bottom five** for the third consecutive presidential election. None were battleground states. All five cut off the ability to register or update a registration three to four weeks before Election Day.
- **National turnout was reduced by 1.5 percentage points**, due to low turnout in three of the four most populous states – California, New York and Texas.

## RECORD LOW COMPETITION IN U.S. HOUSE RACES

The lack of competition in Congressional races compounds the lack of competition in non-battleground states in the presidential race.

- **Competition in House elections reached its lowest level** since [Cook Political Report](#) began rating competition in 1984. Cook rated 37 of the 435 U.S. House races as competitive on the eve of the 2016 election.
- In the end, even fewer House seats – 33 – ended up being competitive with a margin of victory between the top two candidates of 10% or less. **73% of House races were won by landslide margins of victory – over 20%.**