



Goal 7: Community and Cultural Engagement

Desired Community Condition: Residents are active participants in civic and public affairs.



Indicator: **Voting Age Participation (VAP)**

Progress Rating: Local Trend: STABLE National Comparison: BETTER

Indicator Description

State election data for Bernalillo County and Albuquerque municipal election data are reviewed over the period 1988 to 2003. This indicator is the percentage of the population (City of Albuquerque or Bernalillo County) age 18 or older who voted in national, state, and certain local elections. This is the standard methodology used by researchers in the electoral studies field to determine participation rate, and is known as Voting Age Participation (VAP). The VAP figure has its flaws in that it includes individuals who, while age eligible, are not eligible to vote for other reasons, e.g., non-citizens and those convicted of felonies. Nonetheless, the VAP renders a more reliable participation denominator than voter registration figures, making it more useful for analyzing trends.

Another measure, “voter turnout,” is commonly employed by election administrators and reported by the media. Voter turnout is the actual vote compared to the number of registered voters and is always higher than the indicator used here. Voter turnout is not used here, because in the 1990s a major change in federal law affected how local election administrators maintain voter registration lists, making it difficult to compare historical voting trends.

Why is this indicator important?

Voting is the most fundamental indicator of public participation in civic affairs. By voting, citizens make their voice heard on major policy issues, choose elected officials, and hold them accountable.

Data Sources

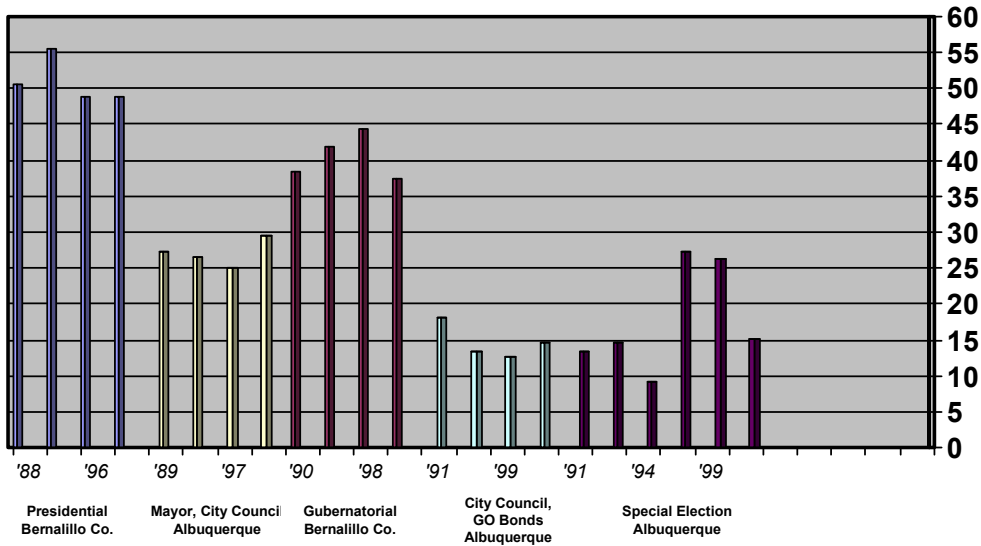
N.M. Office of the Secretary of State, Bureau of Elections; U.S. Census Bureau; Committee for the Study of the American Electorate; City of Albuquerque City Clerk

What can we tell from the data?

- More people vote in national elections than in state or local elections.
- The 2000 presidential election turnout (County) is almost the same as 1996, but lower than 1992 and 1988.
- The 2002 gubernatorial election turnout (County) was significantly lower than 1998 and 1994.
- The 2001 City Mayoral election was notably higher than the three previous mayoral elections.
- The 2003 City Council and GO bond turnout was higher than the two previous elections of this type.
- The last City special election (2001) reflected slightly higher turnouts than 1991 and 1992, significantly higher than 1994, but significantly lower than 1997 and 1999 (see * in data table). The latter elections were both mail in ballot elections, while the others were traditional, precinct based elections.

- Bernalillo County VAP turnout has been higher than the VAP turnout for the states of New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona for the last three state/national election cycles (1998, 2000, 2002) and higher than the US and Utah VAP rates for 1998 and 2002. Only Colorado exceeded the County rate two of these three elections.

VOTER AGE PARTICIPATION TURNOUT ALBUQUERQUE/BERNALILLO COUNTY



VOTER PARTICIPATION RATE					
Bernalillo County or City of Albuquerque Turnout divided by Voting Age Population (VAP)					
Election	Presidential	Gubernatorial	Mayor, Council	Council, GO Bonds	Special
Jurisdiction	County	County	City	City	City
YEAR					
1988	50.60%				
1989			27.40%		
1990		38.50%			
1991				18.10%	13.50%
1992	55.40%				14.80%
1993			26.60%		
1994		41.90%			9.20%
1995				13.50%	
1996	48.70%				
1997			25.00%		27.3%*
1998		44.20%			
1999				12.70%	26.4%*
2000	48.80%				
2001			29.61%		15.03%
2002		37.42%			
2003				14.69%	

VAP Turnout Rate	1998		2000		2002	
	US Senate	Presidential	US Senate	Presidential	US Senate	Presidential
Bernalillo County	44.2%	48.8%	48.8%	48.8%	37.4%	37.4%
United States Total	35.2%	50.1%	35.2%	50.1%	36.4%	36.4%
New Mexico	37.9%	46.3%	37.9%	46.3%	36.1%	36.1%
Texas	24.7%	44.0%	24.7%	44.0%	28.7%	28.7%
Colorado	40.9%	56.2%	40.9%	56.2%	41.8%	41.8%
Utah	32.3%	52.2%	32.3%	52.2%	35.1%	35.1%
Arizona	26.7%	41.9%	26.7%	41.9%	31.0%	31.0%