



*Research for a Stronger, More Inclusive Democracy*

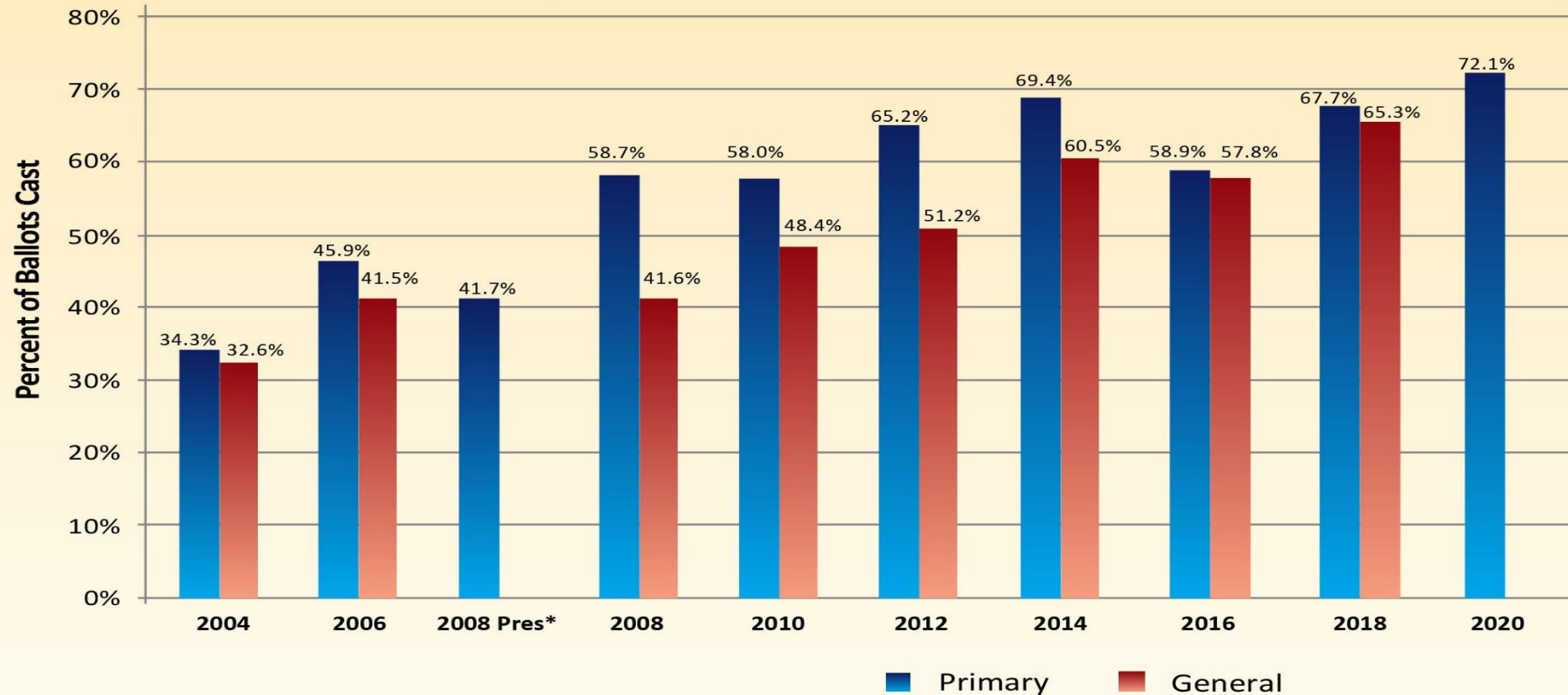
# Vote-by-Mail Use in California

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Director



# History of VBM Use in California

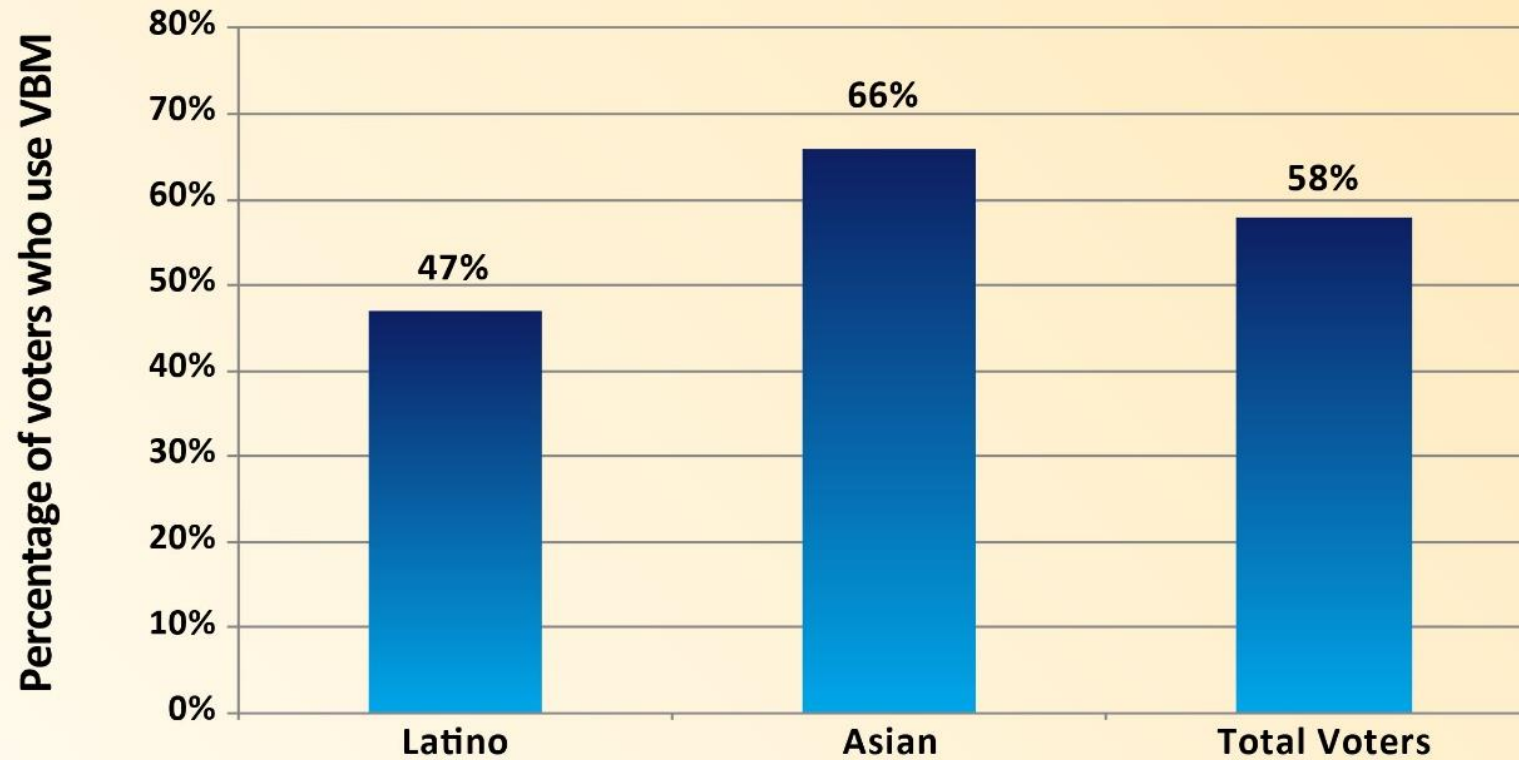
## Vote-by-Mail Ballot Use California Elections: 2004 to 2020



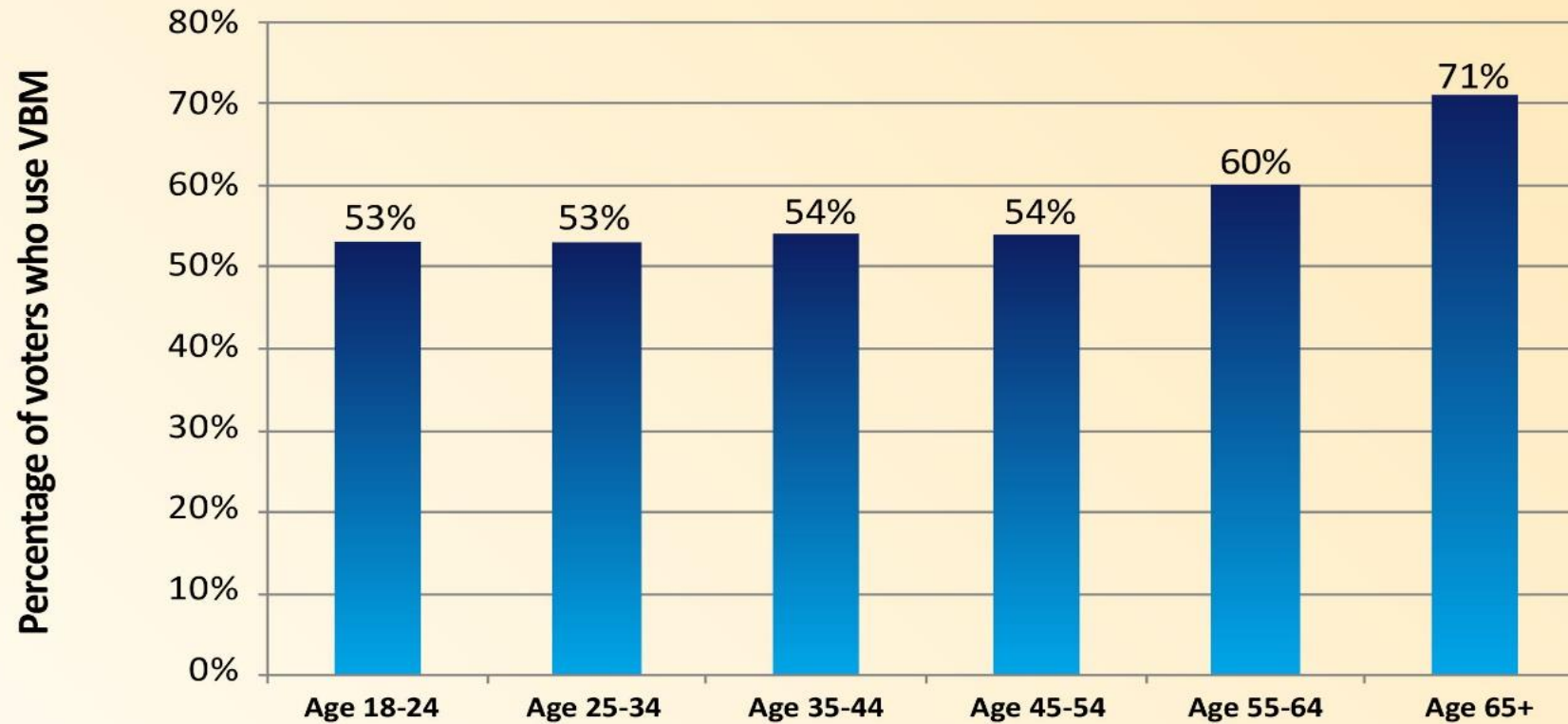
Data source: California Secretary of State

\*California held a special presidential primary in February 2008. It also held its standard primary in June of that same year for all other statewide elected positions and ballot initiatives.

## Percent Vote-By-Mail among Latinos and Asian Americans 2016 California General Election



## Percent Vote-By-Mail by Age Group 2016 California General Election



# Why do California voters choose Vote-By-Mail instead of voting in person?

# VBM Voters

- 72% - more convenient than going to a neighborhood polling place on Election Day
- 67% - preferred to fill out their ballots in a place where they could look things up on the internet
- 60% - did not want to wait in line at the neighborhood polling place
- 52% - preferred to fill out their ballots where they could discuss their choices with family or friends

# Polling Place Voters

- 96.9% - polling place was convenient to get to
- 90% - going to the polling place on Election Day was an important part of their voting experience
- 64.4% - wanted to get the sticker that says they voted – I voted!

# Some Group Differences: Focus Groups

## VBM

- Latinos noted that work hours can make voting at the polls inconvenient
- Latinos' preference to consult with family when making their voting decisions

## Polls

- Latinos more likely than members of other groups to cite the social aspect of voting as a reason for voting in person
- Young voters, including those who use VBM, preferred going to the polls for their first voting experience

# Polling Place Voters

## Voters With Disabilities

- Strong desire to be seen representing the disability community
- Highly value the right to cast a private ballot at a polling place

## Also...

- Language assistance
- Accessible voting machine
- VBM assistance

# African-American Voters

Most commonly shared reasons for voting in person were:

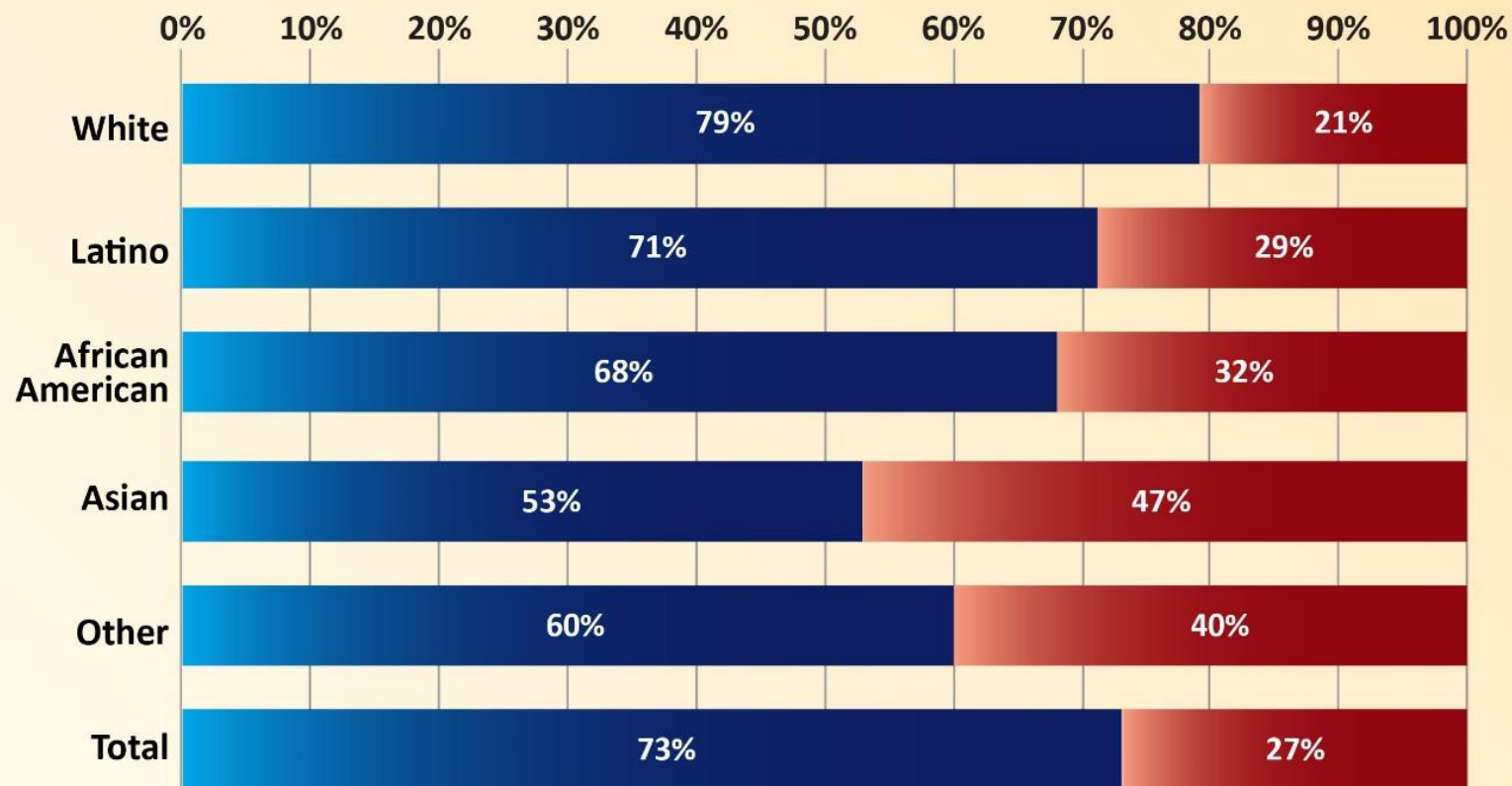
- Lack of confidence/trust that their vote would be counted if their ballot were to be sent through the mail
- A desire to be seen representing the African-American community when voting
- Following a family/community tradition of voting in person
- A desire to enjoy the social aspects of voting in person
- A desire to set a positive example for their children by taking them to vote, and for others by displaying their “I Voted” sticker

# Trust in Postal Delivery

Of voters who do not typically use the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) to mail a VBM ballot...

- 27% said they did not trust the USPS to get their ballot delivered safely, or in time to be counted
- 29% of Latinos, 32% of African Americans and 47% of Asian Americans surveyed did not trust the USPS
- 36% of those age 18-29 expressed a lack of trust
- 29% of age 65 + expressed lack of trust

## Trust in U.S. Postal Service to Deliver Ballot Safely/on Time

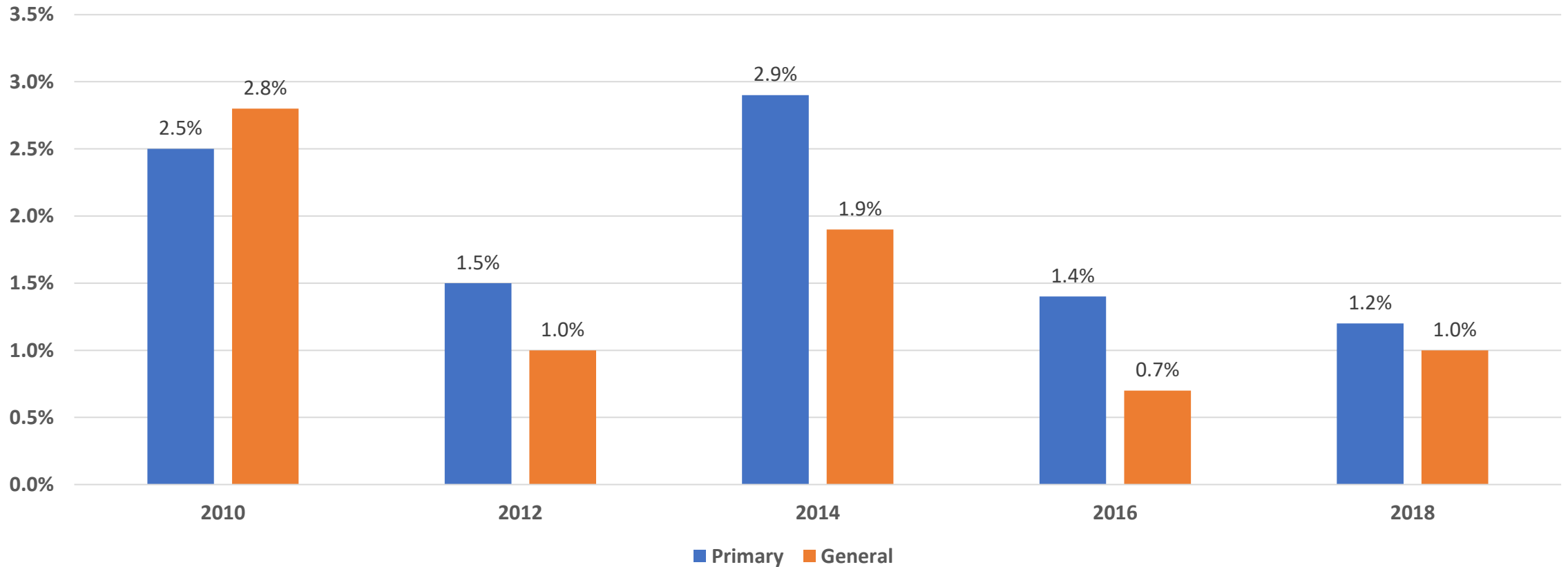


# VBM Rejection Rates in California

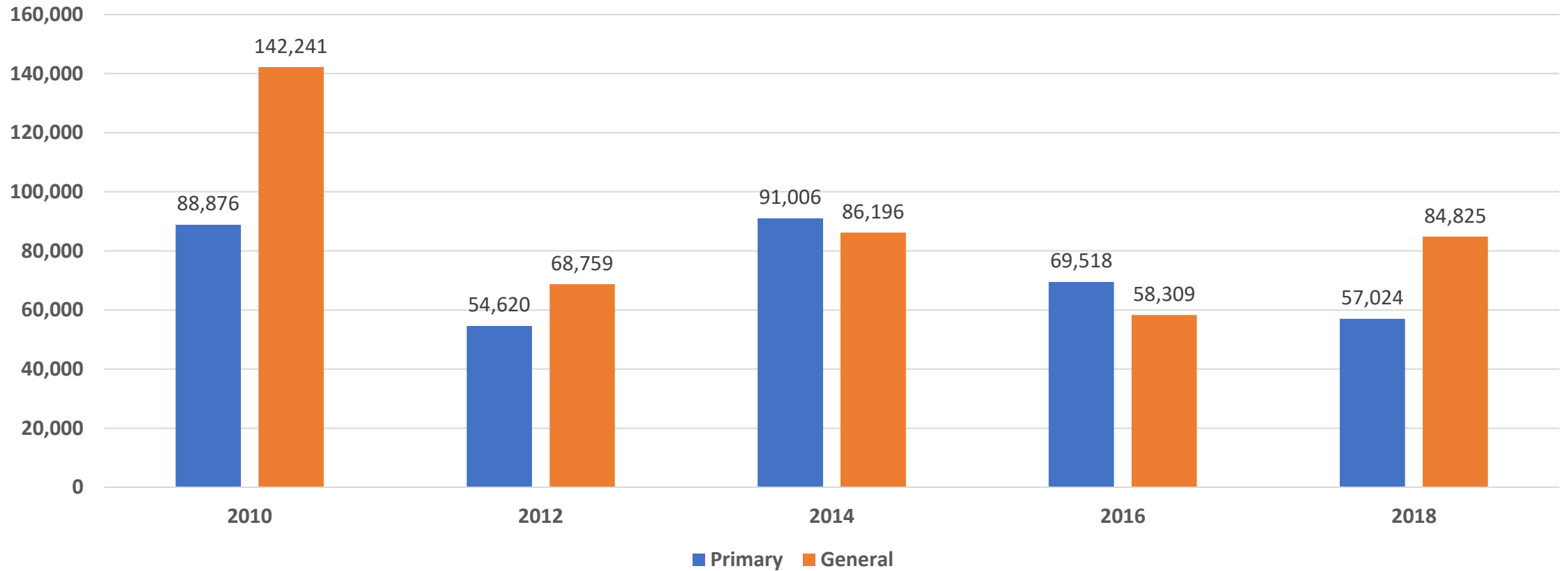
# VBM Rejection Rates

- 2010-2018 – CA rejection rates have fluctuated
- 2018 – 1% of all VBM ballots were rejected = nearly 85,000

## Percent of VBM Ballots - Rejected 2010 to 2018 Elections



## Number of Rejected VBM Ballots 2010 to 2018 Elections



# VBM Rejection Rates

- Disparities in VBM rejection rates by:
  - Race/ethnicity
  - Age
  - Military status
  - Language preference
  - Vote method
  - Nativity
  - Geography
- Top three rejection reasons: Late, signature doesn't match, and no signature
- Also - differences in reasons for rejection by voter group and county

# **VBM Rejection Rates in VCA Counties**

## **CVF/CCEP Rejected Ballots Study Preliminary Findings**

# VBM Rejection Rates

This study is examining November 2018 rejected vote-by-mail ballots in three counties:

- Sacramento (0.8 % rejected)
- Santa Clara (0.7 % rejected)
- San Mateo (1.0 % rejected)

# VBM Rejection Rates

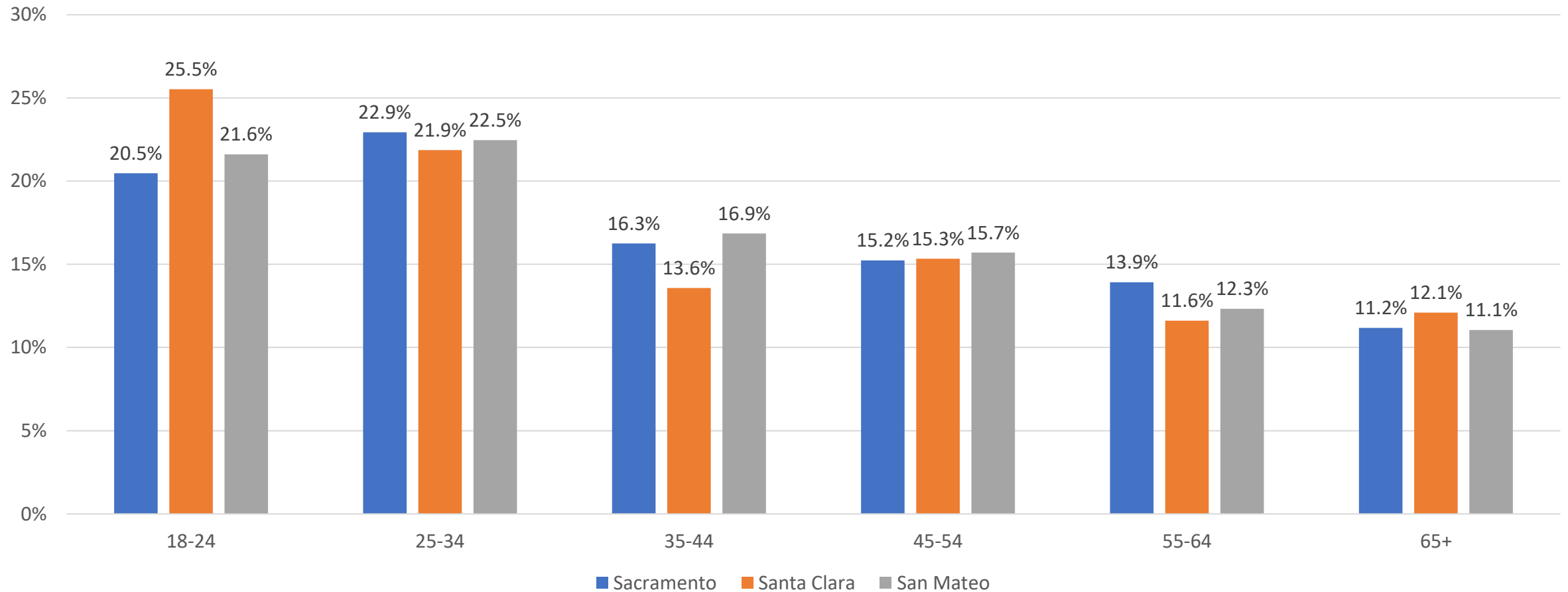
Youth (age 18-24) area overrepresented among rejected VBM ballots

Sacramento – 20.5% versus 6.7%

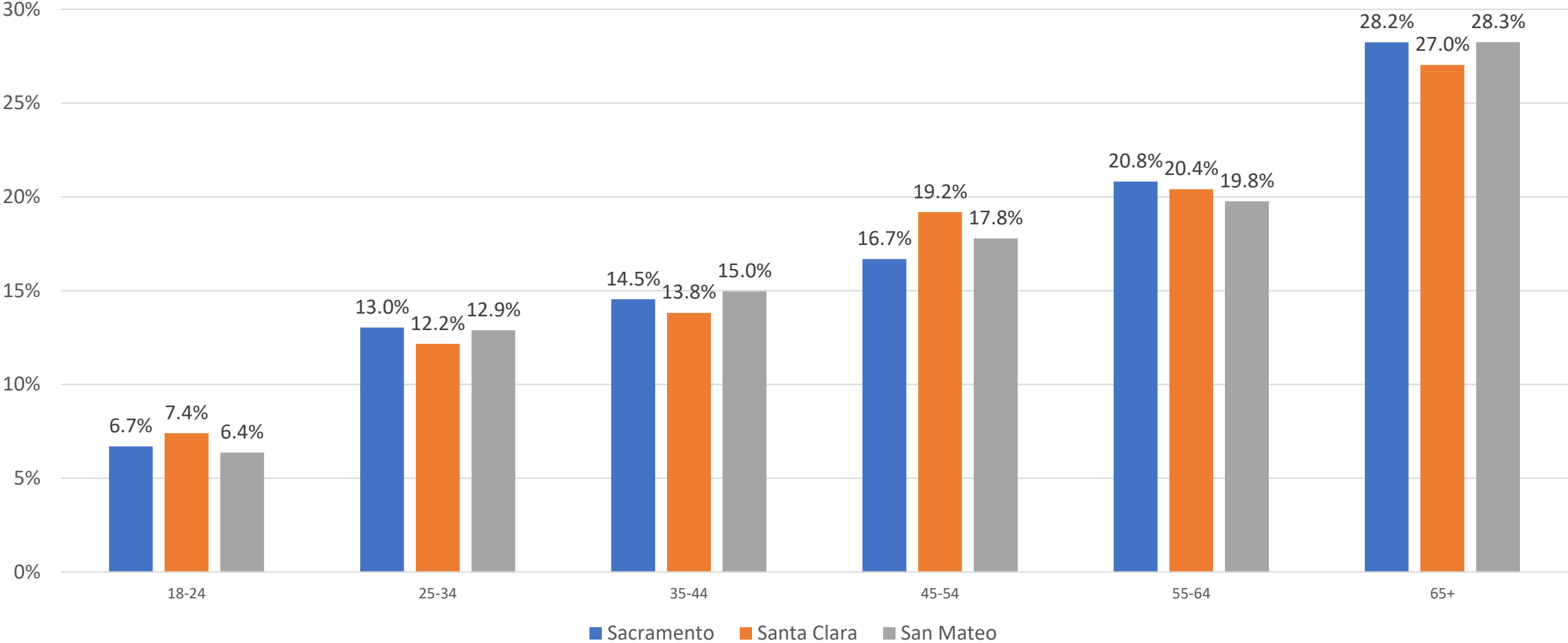
Santa Clara - 25.5% versus 7.4%

San Mateo 21.6% versus 6.4%

## Percent of Rejected Ballots by Age Group 2018 General Election



# Percent of VBM Ballots by Age Group 2018 General Election



# CVF/CCEP Rejected VBM Ballot Study

Sacramento's late ballots in three elections:

- Most ballots rejected due to lateness in recent elections are **postmarked** after Election Day and could not have been accepted even with a longer grace period for arrival.
- Significant percentage of ballots are not postmarked or have unreadable postmarks.
- Increasing awareness about USPS pickup practices and dating one's signature on the ballot envelope could help reduce ballot rejection due to late postmarks and missing or unreadable postmarks

# Conclusion

- 2020 Primary - 72% VBM - Will be higher in the General Election
- Historic patterns of disparate VBM use
- Important reasons why people vote choose to vote in person
- Greater numbers of rejected ballots in 2020
- Disparities in VBM rejections rates
- New research on how voters will vote this November – May 21 presentation

# Thank you!

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*View my Tedx Talk on the Power of the Youth Vote!*

