Tracking Trends Among Likely Voters as Absentee Voting Gets Underway

Much of the work of election campaigning goes on beneath the radar, where campaigns fight furiously to identify and register potential supporters and ensure their participation. Identifying likely voters, as such, is a moving target – but with absentee voting beginning soon, an initial look reveals some intriguing patterns.

As reported previously, Kamala Harris leads Donald Trump by a slight 4 percentage points, 50-46 percent, among all adults and registered voters alike, and by 6 points, 52-46 percent, among likely voters in the latest ABC News/Ipsos poll. While those numbers are virtually identical, closer assessment shows movement to Harris in some groups when comparing all adults with likely voters – notably, those younger than 40, younger women in particular and Black people.

This analysis, produced for ABC by Langer Research Associates, finds that support for Harris goes from 54 percent of all adults younger than 40 to 64 percent of those identified as likely voters. Trump's support, meanwhile, drops from 42 percent of adults in this age group to 33 percent of those likely to vote.

That shift is driven largely by women: Harris' support increases from 60 percent of all women younger than 40 to 73 percent of those in this age group who are likely to vote. Trump sees a corresponding drop in support, from 35 percent among all women younger than 40 to 24 percent of those likely to vote.

Harris has 82 percent support among all Black people, rising to 93 percent among those who are likely voters. Trump, for his part, goes from 15 percent support among all Black people to 7 percent among those who are likely to vote. Harris also gains among liberals.

	Harris		Trump	
Candidate Preference Among All Adults vs. Likely Voters *ABC News/Ipsos poll*				
	All adults	**Likely voters**	**All adults**	**Likely voters**
All 18-39	54%	64%	42%	33%
Women 18-39	60	73	35	24
Men 18-39	49	57*		
Black people	82	93	15	7
Liberals	89	95	8	4
*Significant differences shown. * = slight difference.*				

Countervailing movement in Trump's direction doesn't reach the level of statistical significance in any group. He has, for example, 52 percent support among all 50- to 64-year-olds (his best age group) and 56 percent among likely voters in this group. He goes from 85 to 88 percent among conservatives and from 52 to 54 percent among people who don't have a four-year college degree.

But it's not all about who receives more support in likely voter groups; it's also about the size of those groups. Harris, for example, leads Trump by 23 points, 60-37 percent, among likely voters with four-year degrees – and, as such, benefits from the fact that this group makes up 45 percent of likely voters, vs. 35 percent of the general population.

Trump pushes back with his 10-point likely voter advantage among white people: they account for 61 percent of all adults but 71 percent of likely voters. He's also aided by a lower prevalence of adults younger than 40; they make up 36 percent of all adults vs. 25 percent of those identified as likely to vote.

All told, it's the combination of group sizes and preferences among groups that add up to keep the race a close one. Likely voters are defined here, in part, by people saying they are certain to vote. Motivating them actually to do so is what both campaigns are all about – starting now.