

2004 and 2006 New Mexico Canvass Data Shows Undervote Rates Plummet in Minority Precincts When Paper Ballots are Used

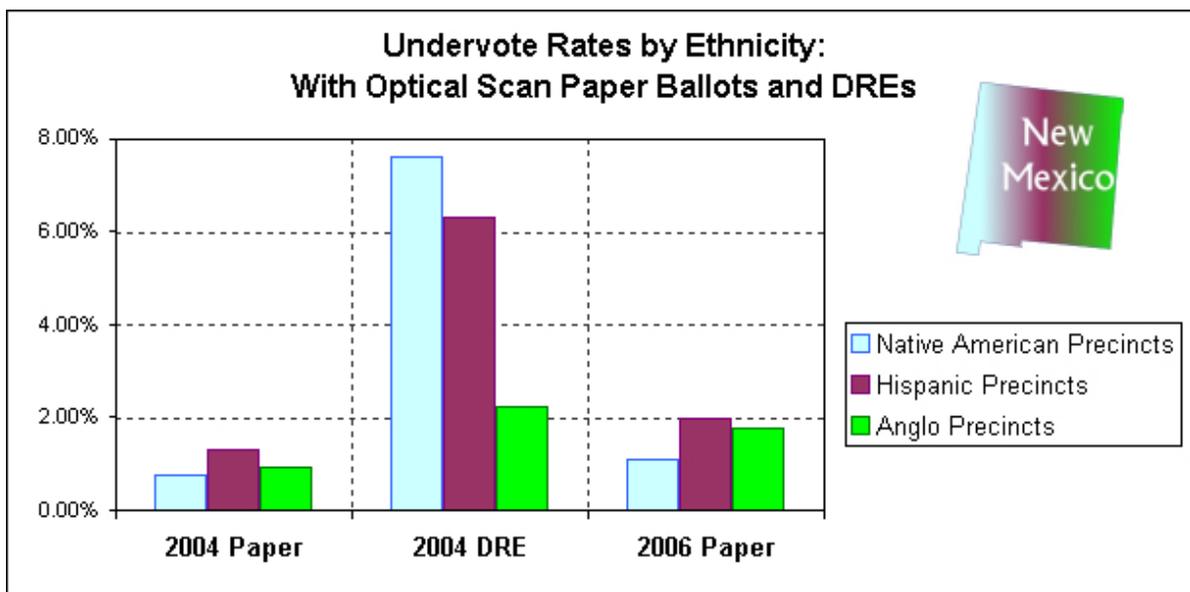
Findings

Undervotes represent ballots on which no vote was registered for a specific contest. For example, undervotes in the presidential race occur when ballots register no vote for president.

Surveys show, and experts agree, that a 0.5% undervote rate is normal in the presidential contest. This means that one (1) out of every 200 people who casts a ballot in a presidential election chooses not to vote for president. Undervote rates higher than 0.5% in the major contest on a ballot, especially in presidential elections, suggest that votes may not have been counted, either through a mistake of the voter or a mistake in tabulation.

Analysis of New Mexico precinct vote data for the November 2004 and November 2006 elections shows that for the major contest on the ballot – president in 2004 and governor in 2006:

- ◆ Paper ballots tabulated by optical scan systems have similar undervote rates for all ethnicities.
- ◆ Electronic ballots cast on Direct Record Electronic (DRE) voting machines in Anglo precincts have a similar undervote rate to the rate for paper ballots.
- ◆ Electronic ballots cast on DREs in Native American and Hispanic precincts have significantly higher undervote rates.



Method

November 2004 precinct vote data was obtained directly from the New Mexico Secretary of State. November 2006 precinct vote data was obtained from the Secretary of State's web site.

Equipment used in 2004 in each precinct was determined by using data from the Secretary of State's web site and confirmation calls to the clerks of each county. In 2006, all precincts used optical scan tabulators for all ballots cast.

2000 census data was obtained from the New Mexico legislature. Data sets were selected for the precincts in which 75% or more of the population was of a specific ethnicity.

The chart on the previous page shows the statewide undervote rates in both the 2004 and 2006 general elections for paper ballots and ballots cast on DREs in precincts with at least:

- ◆ 75% Hispanic population
- ◆ 75% Native American population
- ◆ 75% Anglo population

In 2004, 246,290 ballots were cast in precincts having a predominant (at least 75%) ethnicity, 98,004 on paper, 148,286 on DREs. In 2006, 180,783 ballots were cast in those same precincts. Undervote rates were as follows:

Ethnicity	2004 Paper Ballots	2004 DRE Ballots	2006 Paper Ballots
Native American	0.74%	7.61%	1.11%
Hispanic	1.29%	6.33%	1.99%
Anglo	0.92%	2.22%	1.76%

For detailed data, see: www.votersunite.org/info/2006NMSelectedData.xls.

Acknowledgments

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