

# STUDENT VOTER GUIDE

## 2020

*WHO WHAT WHY*



**D**espite constituting a significant voting cohort and having the potential to shape elections, youth have historically turned up to vote at lower levels than older adults.

Barriers to the youth vote include proof of residency and identification requirements, missing class or work to wait in line, and finding transportation to off-campus polls. Given the prominent role that colleges and universities play in the lives of new voters across the country, it is crucial to analyze

what they are doing to encourage democratic citizenship.

### **How This Guide Helps**

Sourced through primary research, WhoWhatWhy's Student Voter Guide highlights these efforts. Key data points include the number of polling places on campus,

student voting rates, and the number of polling stations within five miles of campus. It should be noted that these statistics are reflective of the 2016 general election and do not address any changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the spirit of friendly civic competition, the 76

schools included in this analysis can see how they rank in terms of formal democratic participation and prioritize ways to facilitate and improve campus engagement.

### **Project Goals**

WhoWhatWhy intends that the Student Voter Guide advise prospective students on university voter policies, inform and encourage current students to vote, and recognize universities that facilitate accessible and student-friendly on-campus voting. This guide will also serve as a primary source for journalists seeking to cover university civic engagement ahead of the 2020 general election and all that follow.

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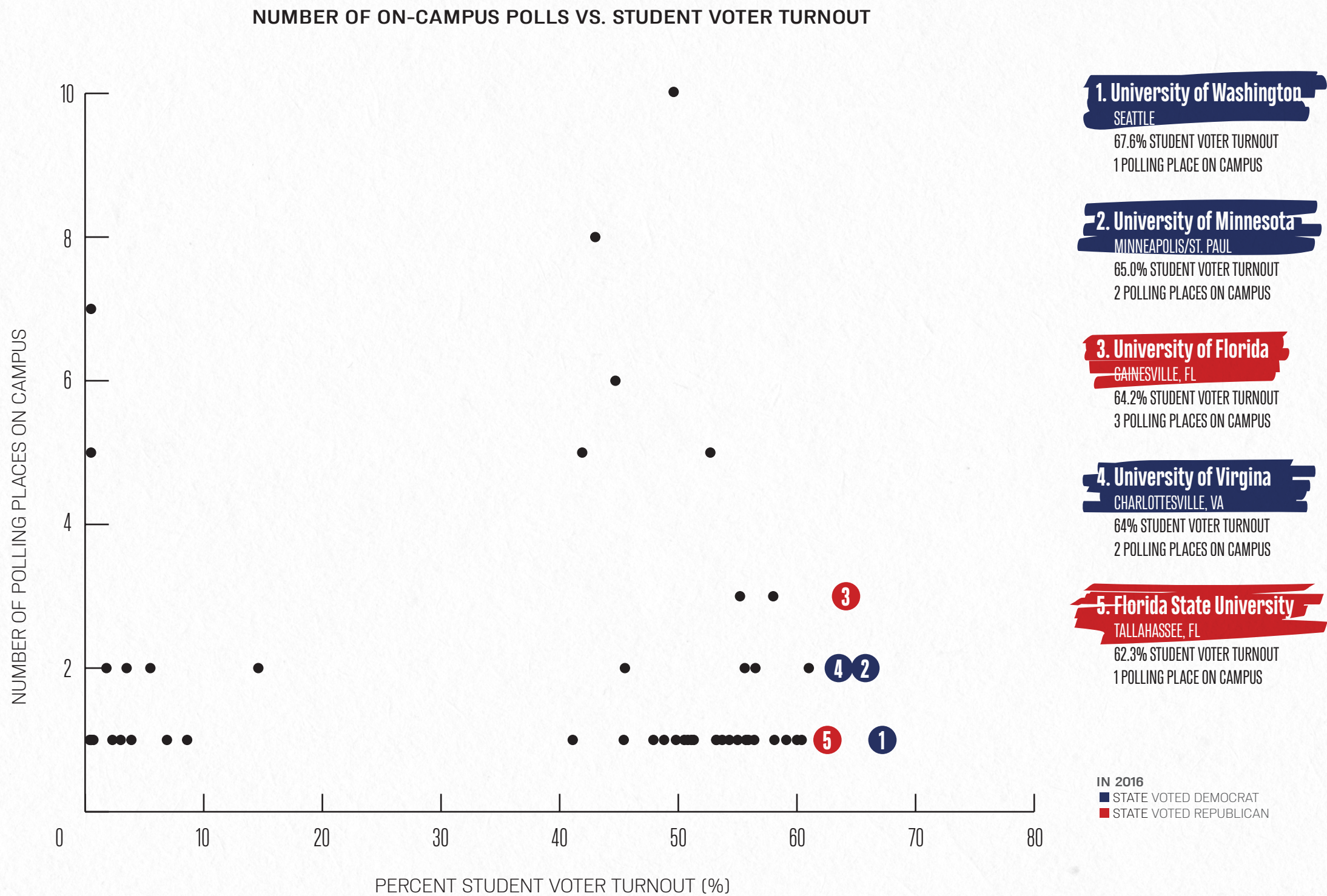
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Cover image: The graduate image is based on a photo courtesy of Charles Deloye via Unsplash. The "I Voted" sticker graphic is courtesy of Visuals via Unsplash

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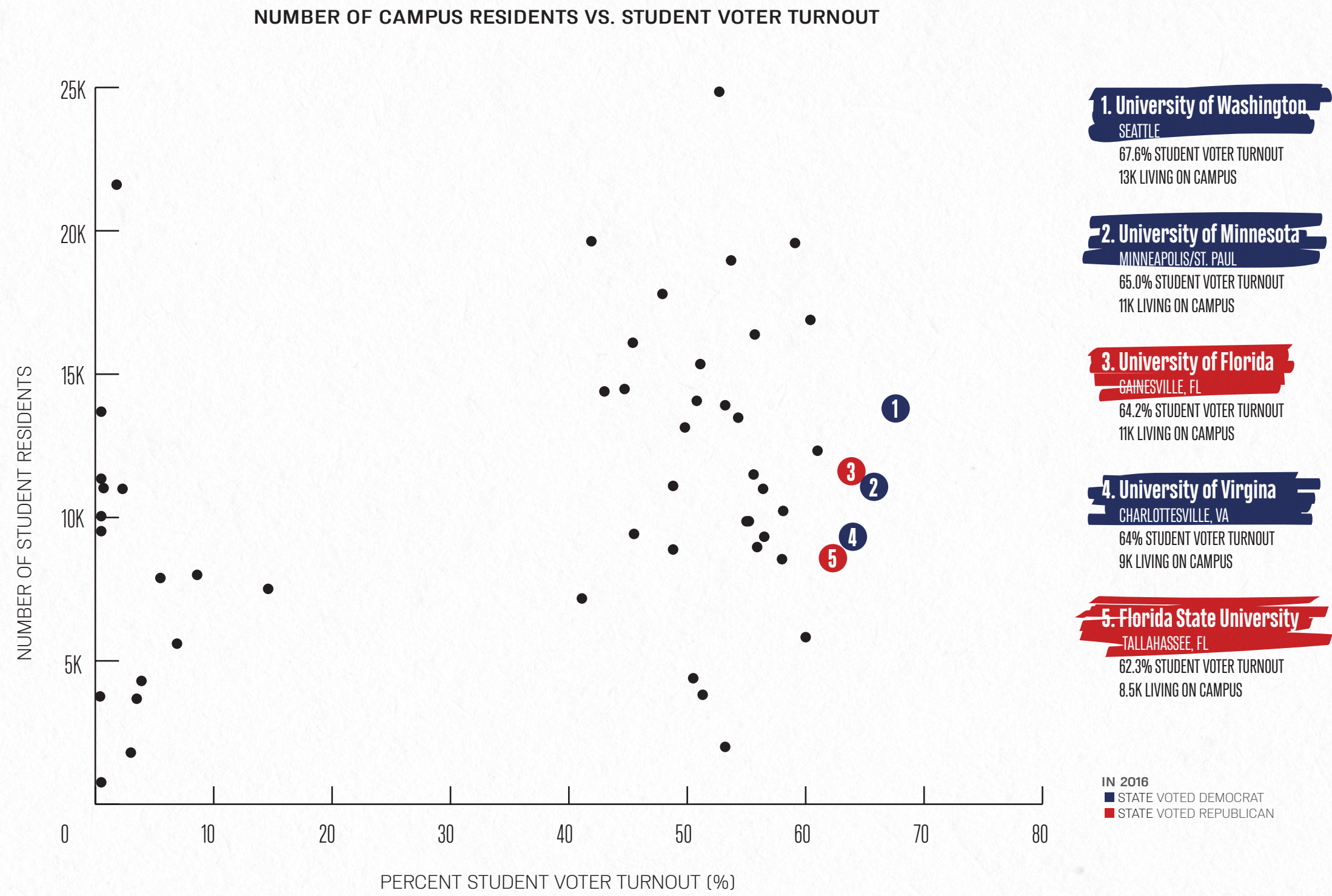
**On-campus polls help remove barriers to student voting**, such as finding transportation to off-campus polling locations.

During the 2016 general election cycle, most schools with a 47-67 percent student voter turnout rate had one on-campus polling location. While some schools with two or more on-campus locations saw a higher turnout, overall results demonstrate that having more polling stations does not guarantee a higher voter turnout. That said, increasing the number of campus polling stations can have other benefits, such as reducing wait times and the number of students who miss class to vote.



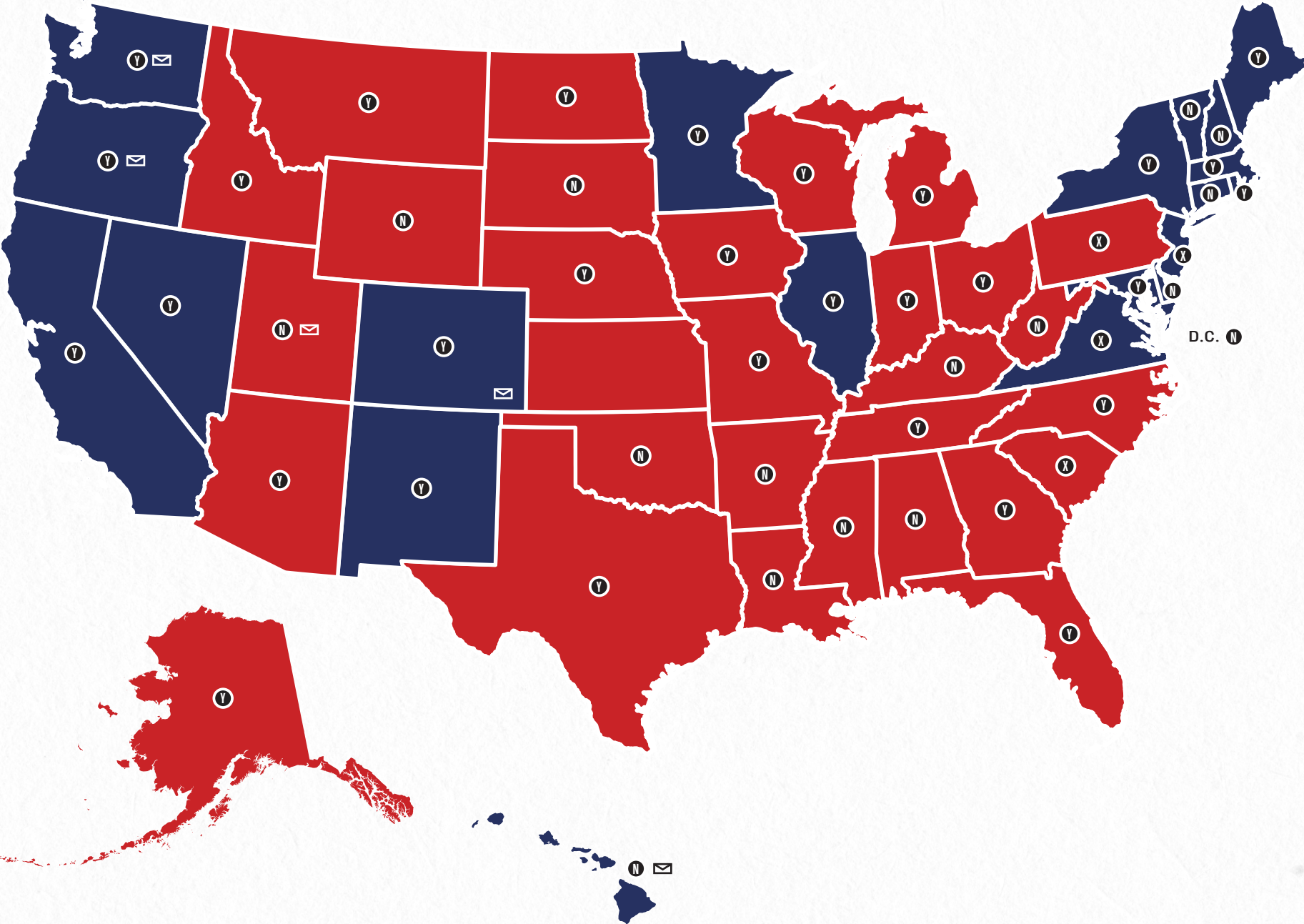
**Students living on-campus often have an easier time voting** since their proof of residency is issued by the university, and on-campus polling locations are determined, in part, by their proximity to dorms and residential dwellings.

Schools with a greater number of students living on campus see higher voter turnout rates during presidential elections. **Given that 73 percent of schools analyzed had at least one on-campus polling station** during the 2016 general election, this finding suggests that a large percentage of college students across the country rely on on-campus voting options.



ON-CAMPUS POLLS VS. 2016 STATE POLITICAL OUTCOMES

IN 2016 ■ VOTED DEMOCRAT ■ VOTED REPUBLICAN  
SCHOOLS HAD POLLS ON CAMPUS ● YES ● NO ● MIXED  
HOLD ELECTIONS ENTIRELY BY MAIL ✉



Since decisions to allocate on-campus polling places reside with state governments, it is necessary to analyze whether partisanship influences student-friendly voting options.

While 48 percent of schools with on-campus polls voted Democrat in the 2016 election, 60 percent of schools without on-campus polls voted Republican. Beyond reflecting President Trump's victory in the electoral college, the fact that Republicans lead the study in schools both with and without on-campus polls is largely attributable to the data set.

56 schools had polls on campus

20 did not

40 schools are located in states that voted Republican in the 2016 presidential election

36 schools are located in states that voted Democrat in the 2016 presidential election

Ranking criteria

Schools are ranked according to formal civic engagement. In contrast to informal political participation, including protest, activism, and service-oriented work, formal participation involves voting, political party membership, and working on a campaign. Both forms of participation are essential for democracy to thrive. However, for fair measurement and concrete comparison, schools were ranked based on the following:

- Percentage of student turnout in the 2016 election
- Percentage of early student turnout in the 2016 election
- Number of on-campus polling places
- Voter registration drives
- Voter registration rate
- Student ID accepted as voter ID
- ID requirements (Photo vs. no photo)

**1** Figures may not sum due to rounding  
**2** “Polling Places” include ballot drop boxes and voter service centers  
**3** From/on campus  
✉ State votes entirely by mail





RANK			TOTAL ENROLLMENT <sup>1</sup> (UNDERGRAD   GRADUATE)	NUMBER OF STUDENT RESIDENTS	HOW MANY POLLING PLACES <sup>2</sup> ON CAMPUS	STUDENT VOTER TURNOUT	EARLY VOTING ON CAMPUS?	# POLLING PLACES WITHIN 5 MI <sup>3</sup>	CAN STUDENT ID BE USED TO VOTE?	VOTER REG. DRIVES*	TOTAL GRADE OF ALL FACTORS	2016 STATE ELECTION RESULT
1	University of Washington	Seattle, WA ✉	47K (32K   15K)	13,734	1	67.6% (24,220)	No	11	Yes	Yes	A+	Democrat
2	University of Minnesota	Minneapolis, MN	51K (35K   16K)	11,207	2	65.3% (25,640)	No	2	No ID needed	Yes	A+	Democrat
3	University of Florida	Gainesville, FL	52K (35K   17K)	11,487	3	64.2% (31,116)	Yes	3	Yes	Yes	A+	Republican
4	University of Virginia	Charlottesville, VA	25K (17K   8K)	9,362	2	63.9% (13,981)	No	12	Yes	Yes	A+	Democrat
5	Florida State University	Tallahassee, FL	41K (32K   9K)	8,611	1	62.3% (23,979)	Yes	50	Yes	Yes	A+	Republican
6	University of Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh, PA	29K (19K   9K)	12,329	2	61.0% (17,444)	No	25	No ID needed	Yes	A+	Republican
7	University of Maryland	College Park, MD	41K (31K   10K)	16,892	1	60.4% (20,873)	No	48	No ID needed	Yes	A+	Democrat
8	University of Nebraska (Lincoln)	Lincoln, NE	25K (21K   5K)	5,826	1	60.0% (12,474)	N/A	18	No ID needed	Yes	A+	Republican
9	Ohio State University	Columbus, OH	61K (47K   14K)	19,574	1	59.1% (34,233)	No	15	No	Yes	A	Republican
10	Clemson University	Clemson, SC	25K (20K   5K)	10,229	1	58.1% (12,595)	No	11	No	Yes	A	Republican
11	University of Iowa	Iowa City, IA	32K (24K   8K)	8,547	3	58.0% (14,440)	Yes	26	No	Yes	A	Republican
12	University of Texas	Austin, TX	52K (41K   11K)	9,329	2	56.5% (22,640)	No	37	No	Yes	A	Republican
13	University of California, Los Angeles	LA, CA	46K (32K   14K)	11,000	1	56.4% (14,372)	No	109	No ID needed	Yes	A	Democrat
14	Miami University	Oxford, OH	20K (17K   3K)	8,969	1	55.9% (11,376)	No	5	No	Yes	A	Republican
15	Pennsylvania State University	University Park, PA	47K (40K   6K)	16,383	1	55.7% (43,605)	No	27	No ID needed	Yes	A	Republican
16	Virginia Tech	Blacksburg, VA	35K (28K   7K)	11,500	2	55.6% (19,376)	No	10	Yes	Yes	A	Democrat
17	University of California, Santa Barbara	Santa Barbara, CA	26K (23K   3K)	9,870	3	55.2% (12,053)	No	21	No ID needed	Yes	A	Democrat
18	University of Colorado	Boulder, CO ✉	37K (30K   6K)	9,867	1	55% (20,101)	No	5	Yes	Yes	A	Democrat
19	North Carolina State University	Raleigh, NC	35K (25K   10K)	13,482	1	54.3% (15,643)	Yes	40	No ID needed	No	A-	Republican
20	University of Alaska, Anchorage	Anchorage, AK	13K (12K   1K)	764	1	54.2% (7,131)	Yes	66	No ID needed	Yes	A-	Republican
21	University of Massachusetts	Amherst, MA	101K (24K   77K)	18,967	1	53.7% (14,631)	Yes	8	No ID needed	Yes	A-	Democrat
22	The University of New Mexico	Albuquerque, NM	21K (15K   5K)	2,000	1	53.2% (15,254)	Yes	18	No ID needed	Yes	A-	Democrat
23	Stony Brook University	Stony Brook, NY	26K (18K   9K)	13,915	1	53.2% (11,099)	No	30	No ID needed	Yes	A-	Democrat
24	University of California, Irvine	Irvine, CA	36K (30K   6K)	13,692	7	53% (19,096)	Yes	70	No ID needed	Yes	A-	Democrat
25	University of California, Santa Cruz	Santa Cruz, CA	20K (18K   2K)	10,047	5	53% (10,441)	No	24	No ID needed	Yes	A-	Democrat
26	University of California, Berkeley	Berkeley, CA	43K (31K   12K)	11,353	1	53% (22,525)	No	73	No ID needed	Yes	A-	Democrat


Grading criteria

The grade reflects a range, based on the school’s rank. Schools are grouped based on similar characteristics, such as percent voter turnout, percent of students registered to vote, and voter ID laws.

RANK			TOTAL ENROLLMENT <sup>1</sup> (UNDERGRAD   GRADUATE)	NUMBER OF STUDENT RESIDENTS	HOW MANY POLLING PLACES <sup>2</sup> ON CAMPUS	STUDENT VOTER TURNOUT	EARLY VOTING ON CAMPUS?	# POLLING PLACES WITHIN 5 MI <sup>3</sup>	CAN STUDENT ID BE USED TO VOTE?	VOTER REG. DRIVES*	TOTAL GRADE OF ALL FACTORS	2016 STATE ELECTION RESULT
28	University of Illinois	Champaign, IL	50K (34K   16K)	24,851	5	52.7% (18,634)	Yes	57	No ID needed	No	A-	Democrat
28	University of Kansas	Lawrence, KA	28K (19K   6K 9K)	3,817	1	51.3% (12,536)	Yes	43	Yes	Yes	A-	Republican
29	University of North Carolina	Chapel Hill, NC	30K (19K   11K)	15,351	1	51.1% (14,241)	Yes	26	No ID needed	Yes	A-	Republican
30	Georgia Tech	Atlanta, GA	33K (16K   17K)	14,070	1	50.8% (16,623)	No	59	Yes	Yes	A-	Republican
31	University of Maine	Orono, ME	12K (9K   2K)	4,393	1	50.5% (5,149)	No	4	No ID needed	Yes	A-	Democrat
32	University of Georgia	Athens, GA	39K (30K   9K)	13,141	1	49.8% (16,596)	Yes	18	Yes	Yes	B+	Republican
33	University of California, Davis	Davis, CA	38K (31K   7K)	9,524	1	49% (18,645)	No	33	No ID needed	Yes	B+	Democrat
34	University of Wisconsin	Madison, WI	44K (33K   12K)	11,102	10	48.8% (16,806)	Yes	42	No	Yes	B+	Republican
35	Binghamton University	Binghamton, NY	18K (14K   4K)	8,884	1	48.8% (6,887)	No	3	No ID needed	Yes	B+	Democrat
36	Purdue University	West Lafayette, IN	43K (33K   11K)	17,798	1	47.9% (15,093)	No	7	No ID needed	Yes	B	Republican
37	University of Tennessee	Knoxville , TN	29K (23K   6K)	9,427	2	45.5% (12,009)	Yes	19	No	Yes	B	Republican
38	Indiana University	Bloomington, IN	44K (33K   10K)	16,096	1	45.4% (17,183)	No	20	Yes	Yes	B	Democrat
39	University of Michigan	Ann Arbor, MI	47K (30K   16K)	14,481	6	44.7% (16,740)	No	34	No ID needed	Yes	B	Republican
40	University of California, San Diego	La Jolla, CA	38K (30K   8K)	14,397	8	43% (11,776)	No	15	No ID needed	Yes	B	Democrat
41	Michigan State University	East Lansing, MI	50K (39K   11K)	19,636	5	41.9% (16,388)	No	20	Yes	Yes	B	Republican
42	University of California, Riverside	Riverside, CA	24K (21K   3K)	7,176	1	41.1% (8,059)	No	22	No ID needed	Yes	B	Democrat
43	University of California, Merced	Merced, CA	9K (8K   1K)	3,759	1	41% (3,503)	Yes	5	No ID needed	Yes	B	Democrat
44	University of Missouri	Columbia, MO	30K (23K   6K)	7,511	2	14.6% (4,402)	No	28	Yes	Yes	B-	Republican
45	University of Arizona	Tucson, AZ	46K (36K   10K)	8,000	1	8.6% (3,964)	Yes	49	No	Yes	B-	Republican
46	University of Rhode Island	Kingston, RI	17K (14K   3K)	5,600	1	6.9% (1,206)	No	6	Yes	Yes	B-	Democrat
47	University of South Florida	Tampa, FL	44K (32K   12K)	7,890	2	5.5% (2,429)	Yes	43	Yes	Yes	B-	Republican
48	Montana State University	Bozeman, MT	17K (15K   2K)	4,300	1	3.9% (653)	No	5	Yes	Yes	C+	Republican
49	Boise State University	Boise, ID	26K (23K   3K)	3,679	2	3.5% (921)	No	42	Yes	Yes	C+	Republican
50	University of Nevada, Las Vegas	Las Vegas, NV	30K (25K   4K)	1,800	1	3% (915)	Yes	16	No ID needed	Yes	C+	Democrat
51	Texas A&M University	College Station, TX	68K (54K   15K)	11,000	1	2.3% (1,603)	Yes	13	No	Yes	C+	Republican
52	Rutgers University	Piscataway, NJ	50K (36K   14K)	21,609	2	1.8% (892)	No	19	No ID needed	Yes	C+	Democrat

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53	University at Buffalo	Buffalo, NY	32K (22K   10K)	11,026	1	0.7% (231)	No	13	No ID needed	Yes	C+	Democrat
54	University of North Dakota	Grand Forks, ND	14K (11K   3K)	3,748	1	0	No	9	No	No	C+	Republican
55	Colorado School of Mines	Golden, CO 	6K (5K   1K)	1,880	1	0	No	2	Yes	Yes	C+	Democrat
56	University of Oregon	Eugene, OR 	23K (19K   4K)	4,981	1	0	No	6	No ID needed	No	C+	Democrat
57	College of William and Mary	Williamsburg, VA	9K (6K   2K)	6,260	No Polls on Campus	0	No	2	Yes	Yes	C	Democrat
58	University of South Carolina	Columbia, SC	35K (27K   8K)	9,394	No Polls on Campus	0	No	47	No	Yes	C	Republican
59	University of Delaware	Newark, DE	23K (19K   4K)	9,545	No Polls on Campus	0	No	0	Yes	Yes	C	Democrat
60	The George Washington University	Washington, DC	26K (11K   16K)	15,804	No Polls on Campus	0	No	80	No ID needed	Yes	C	Democrat
61	The University of Oklahoma	Norman, OK	26K (20K   5K)	8,372	No Polls on Campus	0	No	29	Yes	Yes	C	Republican
62	University of Mississippi	Oxford, MS	20K (17K   3K)	5,068	No Polls on Campus	0	No	5	Yes	Yes	C	Republican
63	Temple University	Philadelphia, PA	40K (29K   10K)	7,955	No Polls on Campus	0	No	497	No ID needed	Yes	C-	Republican
63	University of Vermont	Burlington, VT	13K (11K   2K)	5,800	No Polls on Campus	0	No	12	No ID needed	Yes	C-	Democrat
64	University of Connecticut	Storrs, CT	27K (19K   8K)	17,817	No Polls on Campus	0	No	1	Yes	Yes	C-	Democrat
64	Utah Valley University	Orem, UT 	42K (41K   1K)	No on-campus housing	No Polls on Campus	0	No	7	Yes	Yes	C-	Republican
64	West Virginia University	Morgantown, WV	27K (21K   6K)	5,426	No Polls on Campus	0	No	16	No ID needed	Yes	C-	Republican
65	Auburn University	Auburn, AL	30K (25K   6K)	5,783	No Polls on Campus	0	No	4	Yes	Yes	C-	Republican
65	University of Kentucky	Lexington, KY	29K (22K   7K)	9,046	No Polls on Campus	0	No	116	Yes	Yes	C-	Republican
65	Louisiana State University	Baton Rouge, LA	32K (26K   6K)	8,490	No Polls on Campus	0	No	33	Yes	Yes	C-	Republican
66	University of Hawai'i at Mānoa	Honolulu, HI 	17K (13K   5K)	2,884	No Polls on Campus	0	No	2	No	Yes	C-	Democrat
67	University of Wyoming	Laramie, WY	12K (10K   2K)	3,062	No Polls on Campus	0	No	7	No ID needed	No	D+	Republican
68	New Jersey Institute of Technology	Newark, NJ	11K (9K   3K)	2,741	No Polls on Campus	0	No	183	No ID needed	No	D+	Democrat
69	University of Arkansas	Fayetteville, AR	26K (21K   4K)	12,548	No Polls on Campus	0	No	17	Yes	No	D	Republican
69	South Dakota State University	Brookings, SD	12K (10K   1K)	3,500	No Polls on Campus	0	No	3	Yes	Yes	D	Republican
70	University of New Hampshire	Durham, NH	15K (13K   2K)	5,306	No Polls on Campus	0	No	5	Yes	No	D	Democrat

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WhoWhatWhy  
embodies a form  
of investigative  
reporting that is  
rigorous, relentless,  
and scientific — we  
call it forensic journalism.

Election integrity is at the heart  
of our democracy. Without it,  
our country won’t run the way  
the founders intended—the  
way we deserve it to. In our EI  
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determine how we got here: from  
gerrymandered districts to voter  
registration purges to voter ID  
laws and everything in between.  
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vote from start to finish and  
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