Methodology
and Data Documentation

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Introduction

The 2020 USC Dornsife Daybreak poll represents an ongoing experimental approach to tracking changes in Americans' opinions during a presidential campaign. The poll uses non-traditional *probabilistic polling* methods which are an alternative to traditional polling's categorical vote questions and likely voter screens. In 2020, we also include three other models for predicting outcomes, and a generic congressional vote.

The 2020 Daybreak Poll is one of many projects associated with the ongoing Understanding America Study (UAS) at the University of Southern California's (USC) Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research (CESR), and was conducted in partnership with USC's Center for the Political Future with media partner the Los Angeles Times. Some of the questions in the survey were developed in collaboration with researchers from USC's Sol Price School of Public Policy, the Santa Fe Institute, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The Daybreak Poll election panel is based in the UAS, a probability-based internet poll established in 2014. At the time of the 2020 election, the UAS consisted of close to 9000 adult residents of the United States who were recruited from household addresses randomly selected from zip codes across the country. Detailed information about UAS sampling, recruitment, attrition and retention and weighting, as well as access to UAS publicly available datasets, is available on the UAS data pages. Also available are data, documentation and other information about the 2016 presidential and 2018 midterm elections.

The Daybreak Poll's methods were developed based on findings from three prior implementations of probabilistic polling: a pilot study in 2008 (Delavande & Manski, 2010), a full tracking poll in 2012, when members of our team, then at RAND, conducted the successful 2012 RAND Continuous Presidential Election Poll (Gutsche, Kapteyn, Meijer, & Weerman, 2014; Kapteyn, Meijer, & Weerman, 2012), and the 2016 Daybreak poll conducted at USC.

The aims of the poll are to track change in voting preference in an election panel over time; Investigate associations of candidate preference and intent to vote with voter characteristics and attributes; to continue to investigate the ability of the probabilistic polling method to accurately estimate popular vote outcome in the election; and to contribute to the field of election research by continuing evaluation of alternative methods of tracking public opinion during an election. The Daybreak Polls' tracking charts, data files, and methodology documentation are posted on the website election.usc.edu.

This document summarizes the Poll's various data files, methodological reports and other programs and documentation, and will be updated over time. It provides overviews and links to more detailed information including full text questionnaires, toplines and crosstab documents, details about the poll's weighting and estimation schemes, and a guide to the various primary and general election data collections. These election data and methodology documents, including this document, are available at https://uasdata.usc.edu/page/UAS+2020+Presidential+Election. Daybreak Poll-related news stories, op-eds, blog posts, and reports are listed at that site, as well as at the Center for the Political Future website.

CESR Daybreak Poll Team

Jill E Darling is the Survey Director for CESR's Understanding America Study and of the Dornsife 2020 Daybreak Poll

Arie Kapteyn is a Professor of Economics and the Executive Director of CESR

Tania Gutsche is the Managing Director of CESR and Study Manager of the Understanding America Study

Erik Meijer is a Senior Economist at CESR, and handles the sampling and weighting for the Daybreak poll

Bas Weerman is CESR's IT Director and creator of the Daybreak poll's updating tracking survey graphics

Bart Orriens is the Managing IT Director at CESR and oversees dissemination of the Daybreak's poll data sets and documentation

Michael Moldoff is a Senior Programmer at CESR, and provides data and documentation quality assurance.

For questions about this survey, please contact the UAS team at uas-l@usc.edu

Survey Design

Sample and Recruitment

The Daybreak poll's election panel members are UAS panel members who are U.S. citizens and members of recruitment waves that have a known probability of selection. The election panel was recruited via a UAS survey (UAS 307) that asked about 2016 vote history, registration, party affiliation, and included the invitation to participate in the bi-weekly election panel.

Each study member who was invited was randomized to respond on a pre-assigned day, distributed so that a full sample participates over a 14-day period. Respondents have until their next assigned wave day (or 13 days after their assigned date) to complete the survey. Data for a full wave is thus nearly complete after the first 14 days, but not entirely final until the end of the full 28-day wave.

Participants in the election tracking poll answer a short survey twice a month. USC researchers use these data to calculate four types of estimators of the presidential vote: probability-based personal voting, expectations about voting of participants' social circles, expectations about voting by people in their state, and a categorical vote estimation among likely voters. In the tracking poll, eligible voters also estimate their chances of voting in the election for president and for Congress, as well as their probability of voting for a Democrat or a Republican in their House and Senate races.

Once a month, we add additional questions to the survey as a separate poll. The three polls (UAS 308 from August 25th to September 7th, UAS 313 from September 22nd to October 5th, and UAS 315 from October 20th to November 2nd) measure behavior, beliefs, and attitudes.

State deadlines for registration and early voting are also factored into the design; automatically triggering questions about registration status and whether the participant has already voted. Unregistered voters who pass their states' deadline are given a zero likelihood of voting, and those who voted already are asked who they voted for, and what method they used to vote: in person, by mail, etc.

Tracking Survey Questions and Estimates

Probability of Personal Presidential Vote

- What is the percent chance that you will vote in the presidential election? (0-100%)

- If you do vote in the election, what is the percent chance you will vote for Joe Biden (Democrat), Donald Trump (Republican), Someone else? (Answers add to 100%)

- Of all of the people who live in your state and are likely to vote, what percentage do you think will vote for, Joe Biden (Democrat), Donald Trump (Republican), Someone else? (Answers add to 100%)

For every respondent we multiply the probability that they will vote for a certain candidate by the self-reported probability that the respondent will vote in the election. For each of the candidates these numbers are added up and divided by the sum of all voting probabilities

Probability of Congressional Vote by Party

-What is the percent chance that you will vote in November in the races for U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate? (0-100%)

-If you do vote in the election for U.S. House of Representatives/U.S. Senate, what is the percent chance you will vote for the Republican candidate, the Democratic candidate, or someone else? (answers add to 100%)

For every respondent we multiply the probability that they will vote for a certain candidate by the self-reported probability that the respondent will vote in the election. For each of the candidates these numbers are added up and divided by the sum of all voting probabilities.

Social Circle Expectations

- What percentage of your social contacts that live in your state are likely to vote in the 2020 U.S. presidential election___% ?

- Out of all your social contacts who live in your state and are likely to vote in the 2020 U.S. presidential election, what percentage do you think will vote for: Joe Biden (Democrat), Donald Trump (Republican), Someone else? (Answers add to 100%)

Social circle estimates are created by taking the ratio of the percentage of social contacts expected to vote for different candidates, conditional on social contacts' likelihood of voting. Estimates are post-stratified by the adult population of each state.

Winner Expectations

- Of all people who live in your state and are likely to vote, what percentage do you think will vote for: Joe Biden (Democrat), Donald Trump (Republican), Someone else? (Answers add to 100%)

Winner expectation estimates are calculated as the mean of winner expectations for each candidate, post-stratified by the adult population of each state.

Categorical (traditional vote question)

If the election were being held today, would you vote for: Joe Biden (Democrat), Donald Trump (Republican), Jo Jorgensen (Libertarian), Howie Hawkins (Green), Undecided, Would not vote in the election. Undecided are asked: As of now, do you lean more toward voting for Joe Biden (Democrat), Donald Trump (Republican), Someone else, Do not lean toward any candidate.

Categorical estimates are based on weighted proportions of the sample who vote for each candidate, or vote and lean for each candidate, after removing those who would not vote in the election. We create these estimates among voters who say they have a greater than 50% likelihood of voting in the election, and choose a candidate, or are undecided.

After early voting, if respondent indicates they have already voted

In the election for president, did you vote for? Joe Biden (Democrat), Donald Trump (Republican), Joe Jorgensen (Libertarian party candidate), Howie Hawkins (Green party candidate), Someone else I prefer not to say

Which of the following comes closest to the way in which you voted in the 2020 presidential election? in person, dropping off a mail ballot or absentee ballot at a voting location; in person, at a voting location during the early voting period; in person, at a voting location on election day; by mail, using a mail ballot or an absentee ballot; Some other way (please write in)

Weights

The method for creating sample weights for the tracking survey follows a customized version of the general procedure for UAS surveys described in CESR's online methodology documentation.

Sample weights are constructed in two steps.

First, we calculate a base weight that corrects for unequal probabilities of recruitment of different households into the UAS. Second, we generate post-stratification weights, which align sample distributions of key demographics, namely gender, race/ethnicity, age, education, geographic location, urbanicity, and voting in the 2016 election, with their population counterparts.

Population benchmarks are derived from the Basic Monthly Current Population Survey (CPS), the American Community Survey (ACS), the Election Project, and the Federal Election Commission. The provided sample weights bring the sample in line with the adult population of U.S. citizens along these dimensions, if the entire sample is used. For some results, the weighting contains a third step where weights are scaled such that State populations are matched.

Weighting Variable Definitions

- gender : (0) male, (1) female

- race/ethnicity: (1) white only, (2) Black only, (3) other/mixed, (4) Hispanic, (5) Native American.

Hispanic overrides categories 1-3, so those are all non-Hispanic. Native American includes American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and this overrides categories 1-4, so those are all non-Native American.

- age: based on year of birth only; (1) 18-39, (2) 40-64, (3) 65+

- education: (1) high school or less; (2) Some college/Associate degree; (3) Bachelor's degree or more

- urbanicity: (0) rural; (1) mixed; (2) urban. This is determined at the level of the zip code tabulation area (zcta) where the respondent lives. From the Census Bureau, we obtain fraction of the population of the zcta that lives in an urban area. If this fraction is 0, the zcta is rural, if it is 1, the zcta is urban, and otherwise, it is mixed. The ACS then gives us the population in each of the three categories. These are then scaledscaled so they match the total CPS population. (They're otherwise close but not identical.)

- geographic location: (1) states that voted Republican in 2016; (2) battleground states in 2016; (3) states that voted Democrat in 2016, excluding California; (4) San Francisco Bay Area; (5) Los Angeles County; (6) Rest of Southern California; (7) Rest of Northern California. (1)-(3) are determined from whether the Trump-Clinton difference in the two-party split in the presidential election was > 2 percentage points.

- vote in 2016: number of Trump, Clinton, and other candidate votes from the FEC official results. Voting Age population, percent noncitizens, overseas eligible voters from the Election project. We compute a limited "Voting Eligible Population" from these that differs

from the Election Project's one in that we leave in the current and former felons who are ineligible to vote. From the FEC and Election Project numbers, we compute the fractions of nonvoters and Trump, Clinton, other candidate voters. From the CPS, we compute the fractions of the adult U.S. citizen population that are 18-21 and 22 and over. The computed 2016 split is applied to the 22+ population and the 18-21 population is then added to the set of 2016 nonvoters.

Sources of data for benchmarking

CPS: Stacked January-June 2020 monthly basic CPS, from the IPUMS CPS https://cps.ipums.org/cps/

ACS: 2014-2018 5-year average zcta-level file, table B05003, to get total population 18 years and over and subtract "18 years and over" " Foreign born" & "Not a U.S. citizen". https://data.census.gov/cedsci/advanced

FEC: https://www.fec.gov/introduction-campaign-finance/election-and-voting-information/federal-elections-2016/ https://www.fec.gov/documents/1889/federalelections2016.pdf https://www.fec.gov/documents/1890/federalelections2016.xlsx

Election Project: http://www.electproject.org/2016g

Documentation and Data Dissemination

Interactive graphic results

The survey design allows us to provide daily updates to graphs on our tracking survey website https://election.usc.edu These are refreshed just after 3am PT every day of the week. On the site, viewers can choose to view aggregated results from each of the models. The graphs may be run for overall results, or among categories of party registration or

Graphics and aggregate data files

The aggregated data used to create the graphics is available from the tracking graph website in csv format, along with the charts themselves, in several graphic formats. Please contact us for more information if you are interested in using these data or embedding them in other sites.

Documentation

Survey questionnaires, toplines, press releases, graphics, this document are available from our 2020 Election Data page.

Public Use Data files

Microdata files are publicly available to registered UAS data users for download each day from our 2020 Election Data page. There are two types of data files, and a suite of useful programs for creating weights:

- **Tracking Poll Daily basic file**. Updated daily. De-identified and pre-weighted to match the tracking graphics at election.usc.edu. Available for download by all registered UAS data users
- **Tracking Poll Longitudinal File**. Linkable to other UAS data and includes additional demographic and descriptive variables. Requires sensitive data use agreement and institutional counter-signature.
- Weighting programs. We also provide a package of Stata programs that can be adapted to create weights for the longitudinal file.

To register visit the UAS registration page.

Daybreak Poll Data Files and Documentation

This section provides detailed information about the data files available on the 2020 Daybreak Poll Data page. All election-related data files and documentation, including this document, and data from post-election surveys are available online at https://uasdata.uas.edu/https://uasdata.usc.edu. Also available is the suite of programs for weighting the longitudinal file.

The Daybreak Poll generates a cumulative longitudinal microdata file and Daily 7-day and 14-day sample files. The *Longitudinal* file includes the cumulative microdata from all participants over the course of the poll. Each *Daily* file represents the daily estimate of the vote – one point on the tracking chart, based on the prior seven or fourteen days. Details are provided in the sections below.

Daybreak Poll Cumulative Microdata: the Longitudinal file

The file is provided in a zipped Stata format. Variable summaries for this file are provided in Appendix II: Variable definitions for the 2020 Daybreak Longitudinal File. We have provided a suite of weighting programs that may be adapted for use with the Longitudinal File, as a separate downloadable zip file. We urge data users to use these programs to construct weights that will account for both sample design (we have a California and a Los Angeles oversample) as well as sample variation away from known distributions for voting age populations.

Filenames and number of observations

Filenames	2020 Daybreak Tracking Poll Longitudinal file
File location	https://uasdata.usc.edu/page/UAS+2020+Presidential+Election
Access level	Sensitive. Requires sensitive data use supplemental agreement with institutional affiliation and counter-signature
Unique observations	TBD

Unique identifiers for each observation

uasid	individual UAS identification number. Can link election data to other UAS data
ts	time stamp of the observation

Panel variables

invite	Date invited to participate
pollwave/pollweek	Wave invited to participate, and week the poll was completed
polldate	Date the poll was completed
polldayno	Sequential day number survey was completed (see Appendix I)

weight

[TBD]	Second stage post-stratification weights are calculated by the user according to the type of analysis desired (e.g. final cohort weights, weekly or daily weights) – see weighting package

weighting programs

To use the provided weighting programs, unzip the weights file into the same directory where you have stored your downloaded longitudinal file. Then modify the template to run your desired weights. The zip file of weighting programs available with the microdata file.

wgt_template2.do	This is a template Stata script that provides an example for how the weighting programs are used. You will modify this file to create your own weights for the longitudinal file. Typically you will create weights by wave, but you can also create weekly or daily weights. Note that the smaller the sample, the higher the error, so daily weights, for example, will create less stable estimates than wave-based weights. This file calls the other programs provided here. We recommend that you leave the other files as they are and make any needed changes only in this program.
mkweights4.ado	This program implements the weighting routine
overwgt4.ado	This program is called by mkweights4.ado to implement the over() option to weight by wave or week, etc.
trimmed_weight.ado	implements the weight trimming algorithm
cps_marg_2020.ster	This file contains the population distributions derived from the CPS and other sources to be used in post-stratification. For a list of the variables and their derivation sources, please consult the election data documentation document.

Daybreak Poll Daily File

The Daily file provides a weighted 7-day sample and a weighted 14 day sample, updated daily and name-tagged with the day's date. The file is fully de-identified: uasid is replaced with a study-specific code that allows linking of Daily files over time. The file is provided in Stata 13 format and accessible to registered UAS data users.

Filenames and number of observations

Filename	Day2020MMDD.dta
File location	https://uasdata.usc.edu/page/UAS+2020+Presidential+Election .
Access level	Basic – requires UAS account and signed data use agreement

Identifiers

random_id	individual identifier – replaces uasid, may be used to link Daily files together

Weight variables

w2020MMDD	Weight for the day's 7-day or 14 day sample – tagged with the day's date YYYYMMDD format

About the Understanding America Study Internet Panel

The Understanding America Study (UAS) is an ongoing national research panel that started in 2014. We recruit study members in waves using household addresses obtained from Marketing Systems Group frames which cover all zip codes in the United States. To ensure full coverage of the U.S. population, we provide internet-connected tablets to households that were not already online. Our panel includes U.S. residents who have cell phones, landlines, or no phone at all. It also includes a small number of respondents recruited from a listed sample, though these participants are not included in weighted samples. Study members are compensated for their participation.

For more information about the UAS panel, including weighting details; panel sampling procedures; recruitment protocols; survey and recruitment response rates; panel attrition rates; panel management protocols; and microdata files (including nonresponse and paradata), please visit the Understanding America Study panel website at https://UASdata.usc.eduhttps:/uasdata.usc.edu.

About the Center for Economic and Social Research

The Center for Economic and Social Research (CESR), part of the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, conducts basic and applied research in economics, psychology, demography, education, and sociology. The center's name signifies the breadth of the research, which encompasses numerous disciplines, topics and methodologies. The Center's multi-disciplinary philosophy fosters a productive and innovative research environment focused on understanding and informing important societal issues. It is led by economist and online panel expert Arie Kapteyn, founding director of the CentERpanel in the Netherlands, the oldest existing probability Internet panel in the world, as well as the RAND American Life Panel before he moved on to create CESR.

About the Center for the Political Future

The mission of the USC Dornsife Center for the Political Future is to advance civil dialogue that transcends partisan divisions and explores solutions to our most pressing national and global issues. The Center is led by two of the nation's most experienced and respected political experts, Robert Shrum and Michael Murphy.

Shrum is the Carmen H. and Louis Warschaw Chair in Practical Politics at USC. He has a storied career as an author and campaign adviser to Democratic candidates. His numerous clients included Edward Kennedy, Joe Biden, John Glenn, and Barbara Mikulski in their Senate campaigns, and John Kerry and Al Gore in their presidential races.

Murphy is one of the Republican Party's most successful political consultants. Murphy has led more than 20 statewide campaigns to victory, including gubernatorial races for Jeb Bush, Mitt Romney, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Christine Todd Whitman, John Engler, and Tommy Thompson as well as dozens of Senatorial, United States House, and other races.

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Appendix I: Correspondence of Daybreak polldayno and calendar dates

polldayno	Date	Events	polldayno	Date	Events	polldayno	Date	Events
1	Aug 11	Kamala Harris VP	32	Sep 11		63	Oct 12	
2	Aug 12		33	Sep 12		64	Oct 13	
3	Aug 13		34	Sep 13		65	Oct 14	
4	Aug 14		35	Sep 14		66	Oct 15	Biden/Trump Debate #2
5	Aug 15		36	Sep 15		67	Oct 16	
6	Aug 16		37	Sep 16		68	Oct 17	
7	Aug 17	DNC	38	Sep 17		69	Oct 18	
8	Aug 18	DNC	39	Sep 18	Supreme Court Vacancy	70	Oct 19	
9	Aug 19	DNC	40	Sep 19		71	Oct 20	
10	Aug 20	DNC	41	Sep 20		72	Oct 21	
11	Aug 21		42	Sep 21		73	Oct 22	Biden/Trump Debate # 3
12	Aug 22		43	Sep 22		74	Oct 23	
13	Aug 23		44	Sep 23		75	Oct 24	
14	Aug 24	RNC	45	Sep 24		76	Oct 25	
15	Aug 25	RNC	46	Sep 25		77	Oct 26	
16	Aug 26	RNC	47	Sep 26		78	Oct 27	
17	Aug 27	RNC	48	Sep 27		79	Oct 28	
18	Aug 28		49	Sep 28		80	Oct 29	
19	Aug 29		50	Sep 29	Biden/Trump debate #1	81	Oct 30	
20	Aug 30		51	Sep 30		82	Oct 31	
21	Aug 31		52	Oct 1		83	Nov 1	
22	Sep 1		53	Oct 2		84	Nov 2	
23	Sep 2		54	Oct 3			Nov 3	Election Day
24	Sep 3		55	Oct 4				
25	Sep 4		56	Oct 5				
26	Sep 5		57	Oct 6				
27	Sep 6		58	Oct 7	VP Harris/Pence Debate			
28	Sep 7		59	Oct 8				
29	Sep 8		60	Oct 9				
30	Sep 9		61	Oct 10				
31	Sep 10		62	Oct 11				

Wave #	Start date	14 days	End date	Polls
1	August 11	August 24	September 7	
2	August 25	September 7	September 21	August Poll (UAS 308)
3	September 8	September 21	October 5	
4	September 22	October 5	October 19	September Poll (UAS 313)
5	October 6	October 19	November 2	
6	October 20	November 2	November 2	October Poll (UAS 315)
7	November 4	Nov 17		Post-election wave

Appendix II: Variable definitions for the 2020 Daybreak Longitudinal File

Probabilistic	**voting questions**
prob_vote	Chance you will vote
trump_vote	Conditional probability of voting for Trump
biden_vote	Conditional probability of voting for Biden
other_vote	Conditional probability of voting for other
prob_trump	Unconditional probability of voting for Trump
prob_biden	Unconditional probability of voting for Biden
prob_other	Unconditional probability of voting for other candidate
Expectations	**about popular vote in and U.S.**
trump_state	Expected % Trump in state in state
biden_state	Expected % Biden in state in state
other_state	Expected % other in state in state
trump_pct	Expected % Trump in U.S. in U.S.
biden_pct	Expected % Biden in U.S. in U.S.
other_pct	Expected % other in U.S. in U.S.
Social	**contacts questions**
vote_soc	Social contacts % vote
trump_soc	Social contacts % Trump conditional on voting
biden_soc	Social contacts % Biden conditional on voting
other_soc	Social contacts % other conditional on voting
pct_trump_soc	Unconditioned pct Soc voting for \ Trump
pct_biden_soc	Unconditioned pct Soc voting for \ Biden
pct_other_so	Unconditioned pct Soc voting for \someone else
Probabilistic	**voting questions for House and House and Senate**
prob_house	Chance you will vote in the House race
h_rep_vote	Conditional probability of voting for the Republican in the House race
h_dem_vote	Conditional probability of voting for the Democrat in the House race
h_oth_vote	Conditional probability of voting for someone else in the House race
prob_h_rep	Unconditional probability of voting for the Republican in the House race
prob_h_dem	Unconditional probability of voting for the Democrat in the House race
prob_h_oth	Unconditional probability of voting for someone else in the House race
s_rep_vote	Conditional probability of voting for the Republican in the Senate race
s_dem_vote	Conditional probability of voting for the Democrat in the Senate race
s_oth_vote	Conditional probability of voting for someone else in the Senate race
prob_s_rep	Unconditional probability of voting for the Republican in the Senate race
prob_s_dem	Unconditional probability of voting for the Democrat in the Senate race
prob_s_oth	Unconditional probability of voting for someone else in the Senate race
Traditional	**voting questions**
today_vote	Presidential categorical without lean
today_lean	Presidential categorical lean only
Today_comb	Presidential categorical with lean
Participation	**variables that describe when the survey was taken**
uasid	UAS study ID
ts	Poll time stamp
invite	Date invited for poll
daygrp	Assigned day group
pollwave	Wave invited for poll (08/11-08/24=1)
pollstart	Date and time poll survey started
pollend	Date and time poll survey completed
polldate	Date poll survey completed

polldayno	Sequential day number poll completed (08/11=1)
pollweek	Week poll completed (08/11-08/17=1)

Weighting Vars	**Recoded variables used in weighting and graphics**
pr_daygrp	Assigned day group
pr_basewgt	Base weight
pr_female	Female
pr_age_cat3	Age (3 categories)
pr_race5	Race-ethnicity (5 categories)
pr_edu3	Education (3 categories)
pr_urban3	Urbanicity (3 categories)
pr_stateside	State of residence - FIPS coding
Pr_region7	National regions (7 categories)
pr_vote2016	Vote in 2016
likely_voter	Likely voter for categorical (probability of voting > 50% and plan to vote)
registered_voter	Registered to vote or living in North Dakota

Other	**Variables in tracking survey after early voting or registration deadline passed**
partyreg	Party registration (asked in each wave of tracking poll from 9/10 on
early_vote	Voted already?
pres_vote	Who did you vote for (Asked only if voted)
ev_method	Vote method (Asked only if voted)
ev_diff	Vote difficulty (Asked only if voted)
ev_conf	Confidence accurate counting (Asked only if voted)

	Variables asked in Intake Survey (UAS 306)
party_aff	Party affiliation (affiliated and lean toward affiliation)

	Variables that combine information from the intake survey and the tracking poll
partyreg_comb	Party registration (preload + poll)
regis_comb	Voter registration (preload + poll)