

New technologies 'no magic bullet' to get voters of color to polls, study says

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Old-fashioned, door-to-door canvassing and phone bank calling seem to work better with voters of color than new technologies, a study shows.

Voters of color are mobilized more by old-fashioned, door-to-door canvassing and phone bank calling than by new technologies, according to a new UC Berkeley study.

The findings by a research team headed by Lisa García Bedolla, an expert on minority voting issues and a professor in the Graduate School of Education and political science department, could be powerful in future elections.

"Personal contact, either on the phone or at the door, remains the most effective way to turn out [voters](#) of color in California," says a report on the study, which tested different strategies in getting people historically less inclined to vote to turn out to cast their ballots – perhaps for the first time.

Records show that in California's November 2014 election, votes were cast by just 24.9 percent of eligible Latino voters, 26.8 percent of eligible Asian voters, and 29.9 percent of eligible African American voters, compared to just under 47 percent of eligible white voters.

The report, "Testing New Technologies in Mobilizing Voters of Color: An Analysis from the November 2014 Elections," reflects work with 10 community organizations across California who tested the impacts of such digital tools as texting, Facebook ads and telephone "town halls."

Technology, they found, is no magic bullet.

Texting, it turns out, has an inconsistent impact with voters of color, and social media failed to increase turnout by Latinos or youth overall.

The research report, funded by the James Irvine Foundation, stressed the importance of culturally competent and contextually appropriate outreach in terms of what tools and strategies are applied and how. New technologies can be layered with more personal approaches tailored to different audiences, the researchers found, and must be constantly tested and updated.

García Bedolla and coauthors Marisa Abrajano of UC San Diego and Jane Junn of the University of Southern California concluded that finding the most effective strategies for moving voters of color to the polls "is essential for California's electorate to reflect its population."

More information: The report is available online:
[gse.berkeley.edu/sites/default ... ingVotersofColor.pdf](https://gse.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/2015-10/ingVotersofColor.pdf)

Provided by University of California - Berkeley

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