



# CENTER FOR DEMOCRACY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

## **Who Lacks ID in Texas Today?: An Exploration of Voter ID Access, Barriers, and Knowledge**

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Texas was the second state in the country to adopt a voter identification law (in 1966) and second to make ID a requirement for voting (in 1997), following only South Carolina.<sup>1</sup> The current voter ID law in Texas requires a photo ID for in person voting, but allows it to be expired for up to four years prior to voting, or for any length of time for those age 70 or older. Texas allows the following photo IDs for in-person voting: a Texas driver's license; Texas Election Identification Certificate (EIC); Texas Personal Identification Card (state ID card); Texas Handgun License; military ID; US Certificate of Citizenship; or a US passport or passport card.<sup>2</sup> Those who cannot produce one of these documents at the polling place can use the Reasonable Impediment Declaration (RID) process, which allows for a variety of secondary documents that list the voter's name and address to be used, such as a current utility bill or paycheck. To use the reasonable impediment process a voter must declare that they have experienced one of a list of accepted reasonable impediments to obtaining one of the required photo IDs. Falsifying the RID makes one subject to prosecution.

VoteRiders and the Center for Democracy and Civic Engagement (CDCE) at the University of Maryland contracted with SSRS, a highly regarded survey firm, to obtain a representative sample of the Texas adult US citizen population to examine the extent to which adult citizens in Texas have the ID needed in order to vote, as well as their understanding of Texas's voter ID law.<sup>3</sup> To the best of our knowledge, this is the first survey of voting eligible Texans with questions specific to the exact provisions of the Texas voter ID law. This research builds on national survey research conducted earlier this year with additional partners including the Brennan Center for Justice and Public Wise.

The sample of 1,210 respondents was drawn from SSRS's probability panel with a supplement from the Verasight probability panel. Included in the sample are oversamples of 18-24-year-olds, Black respondents, and individuals with income of less than \$30,000 per year. The survey was fielded July 18, 2024 through August 11, 2024. All of the results below are weighted. The survey instrument was developed by CDCE with consultation from VoteRiders. The survey was available in English or Spanish, with Spanish translation provided by SSRS in consultation with Selene M. Gomez of VoteRiders. All data analysis was conducted by CDCE. To obtain population estimates we apply the survey results to the U.S. Census Current Population Survey's estimates of the citizen voting-age population in Texas.<sup>4</sup> A summary of the main results follows. The topline results are available at this [link](#).

**About 252,000 adult citizens in Texas (or 1% of the adult voting age citizen population), do not have any of the documents they need to vote a regular ballot without completing a**

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<sup>1</sup> See Table 2 in [Biggers, Daniel R., and Michael J. Hanmer. 2017. "Understanding the adoption of voter identification laws in the American states." \*American Politics Research\* 45\(4\): 560-588.](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.votetexas.gov/mobile/id-faqs.htm> last visited 9/26/24.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this report when we refer to Texans we are referring to voting age US citizens who are residents of the state of Texas.

<sup>4</sup> We use the latest estimates from 2022, Table 4a at: <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-586.html>

**reasonable impediment declaration.** Black Texans are four times more likely to lack the primary documents needed to vote (4%) compared to Hispanic and White Texans (both 1%). **18-29 year old Texans are five times more likely to lack any of the primary documents needed to vote than their older peers, with 5% not having any of the documents needed to vote** compared to 1% of those age 30 or older. Similarly, 4% of people making under \$30,000 annually and 3% of those earning between \$30,000 and \$50,000 do not have any of the accepted forms of voter ID compared to less than 1% of those earning more than \$50,000 per year.

**Ninety-two percent of Texans have a Texas driver's license with a qualifying expiration date that they can use to vote, but there are clear disparities by race, age, and income.** While 94% of White Texans possess a Texas driver's license that they can use to vote, 86% of Black Texans, and 89% of Hispanic Texans have the same. Nearly 2 in 10 18-29-year-olds cannot use a license to vote in Texas (19% compared to 5% of those aged 30 and up). One quarter of Texans who earn less than \$30,000 do not have a license that they can use to vote (25%). Differences by income are particularly stark, as this is more than double the percentage of Texans earning \$30,000 to \$50,000 (11%), and more than 5 times the rate for those earning \$50,000 to \$100,000 (4%). Among Texans earning over \$100,000, 1% do not have a driver's license that they can use to vote in Texas.

**For Texans without a driver's license with a qualifying expiration date and their current name and address, 43% have a Texas state ID they could use to vote.** Among Black Texans without a qualifying driver's license with their current name and address, 28% can use a Texas state ID (called a Personal Identification Card in Texas) to vote, compared to 54% of Hispanic Texans, and 41% of White Texans.

**Fifty-six percent of Texans have a US passport or US passport card that they can use to vote.** This includes 58% of Black Texans, 56% of Hispanic Texans, and 55% of White Texans. Democrats are somewhat more likely to be able to use a passport than Republicans (60% and 54%, respectively).

**The rates at which other primary documents can be used to vote is relatively low.** Among adult Texans, 13% have a Texas Handgun License, 10% have a military ID, 10% have an Election Identification Certificate (EIC), and 2% have a US Certificate of Citizenship.

**Not having an ID with one's current name and/or address has the potential to cause difficulties at polling places.** While an address match between the voter registration address and the address on the voter ID is not a requirement of Texas's voter ID law, voters who lack this type of up to date document may incorrectly believe they cannot use their ID, or could experience confusion and intimidation at the polls in their interaction with pollworkers, who may not be aware of the intricacies of the state's voter ID law. While 92% of Texans have a driver's license with a qualifying expiration date, 10% of Texans have a driver's license with a different address. The likelihood of having an updated license and thus the likelihood of encountering potential difficulties at the polls vary across key demographic groups. 8% of White Texans have

a license that does not have their current address, compared to 15% of Black Texans and 11% of Hispanic Texans. Texans who are 18-29-years-old (16%) are more likely than their older counterparts (9%) to have a Texas license that has an outdated address.

When combining a driver's license and state ID, the survey indicates that 13% of Texans might have a potential difficulty at the polls based on their current ID. This includes those that have neither a Texas driver's license nor a Texas state ID card that can be used for voting (2%), have a Texas state ID card that has a different name and/or address (1%), have a Texas license and Texas state ID card but both have a different name and/or address (2%), or have a Texas license with a different name and/or address (8%).

### **Expiration Dates and Out-of-State ID**

**By allowing the accepted types of photo ID to be expired for up to four years prior to voting, or for any length of time for those voters who are 70 or older, Texas provides more ID options to hundreds of thousands of voters. Yet a much larger number of voters need to find other options to comply with the ID law.** The above analyses take into account the way in which the Texas voter ID law deals with documents that have expired. With the exception of the US Certificate of Citizenship, which does not have an expiration date, all other accepted documents can be expired for up to 4 years for those younger than 70-years-old. For Texans who are 70 or older, there is no limit on how long the document can be expired. The survey allows us to assess how the provision of the Texas voter ID law relating to age and expiration date influences how many adult Texans can use particular documents to vote.

More than 106,000 Texans have an expired license that they can still use to vote this November because of Texas's allowance for expired licenses. However, **we estimate that even more Texans—about 126,000—have a Texas driver's license that they cannot use to vote this year because they are under 70 and their license expired before 10/20/20** (i.e., four years prior to the start of early voting).

Unlike many other states with voter ID laws, Texas does not allow voters to use out-of-state ID to vote, even though the purpose of the voter ID law is to verify a voter's identity and not residency. We estimate that more than 291,000 Texans possess a driver's license from another state that they cannot use for voting purposes in Texas. Nearly 144,000 Texans have a state ID card from another state that they cannot use for voting in Texas.

**Over 1.5 million Texans possess military IDs that they cannot use to vote this fall because their ID expired before October 20, 2020 and they are under 70-years-old.** This is more than double the nearly 682,000 Texans who have an accepted military ID that expired within four years of the voting period (about 227,000) or have an even older ID but are 70 or older (454,000). Another 1.5 million Texans have US passports or passport cards that they cannot use to vote because they expired before October 20, 2020 and they are under the age of 70. Additionally, while over 175,000 Texas have an expired handgun license that can be used

for voting, nearly 187,000 cannot because they are under 70 and their handgun license expired before 10/21/20.

## **Documentary Proof of Citizenship**

**About 1.3 million Texans who are US citizens and of voting age (7%) would have difficulty showing documentation proving their citizenship (documentary proof of citizenship, or DPOC).** Documents proving US citizenship include US birth certificates, US passports or passport cards, US naturalization certificates, and US certificates of citizenship. **One percent of adult Texans who are US citizens and of voting age do not have any DPOC at all, and 6% cannot easily access their DPOC.<sup>5</sup>**

For White Texans, 1% do not have any DPOC, and 4% cannot easily access their DPOC. Nearly all Black and Hispanic Texans have DPOC, but 5% of Black Texans and 8% of Hispanic Texans cannot easily access it.

**Showing DPOC is harder for Republicans than Democrats.** One percent of Republicans do not have DPOC, and 7% cannot easily access their DPOC. Nearly all Texas Democrats have DPOC but 4% of Democrats cannot easily access their DPOC.

**Younger Texans are three times more likely to have trouble accessing their DPOC than older Texans.** One percent of 18-29 year olds have no DPOC at all, but 12% would have trouble accessing their DPOC. While 1% of Texans 30 years old and older do not have DPOC, 4% would have trouble accessing their DPOC.

**Higher-income Texans are more likely to not have DPOC than lower-income Texans.** For Texans making more than \$100,000 annually, 2% do not have DPOC, and an additional 2% cannot easily access their DPOC. For Texans making under \$30,000 annually, nearly all have DPOC but 5% cannot easily access their DPOC.

## **Knowledge of Voter ID Law Provisions**

**99% of Texas residents do not fully know the voter ID law in their state.** Our survey asked if Texans knew if they had to: (1) show ID to vote; (2) if the ID must be a photo ID; (3) if Texas accepts expired IDs; and (4) up to how many years the ID can be expired. **Over 5 million Texans (27%), do not know any of the key provisions of their state's voter ID law.** A quarter only know that they must show ID to vote, and no other details about the voter ID law. Less than half (45%) know that they must show an ID to vote and it must be a photo ID. Few Texans know the nuances of the law: 1% know that they have to show ID and that expired IDs are accepted; another 1% know that provision plus the number of years the ID could be expired; and 1% know that ID is required, that it has to be a photo ID, and that Texas allows IDs to be expired.

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<sup>5</sup> "Easily accessible" means that the items used for DPOC were "in a place you could quickly find it if you had to show it tomorrow."

**Black Texans are more knowledgeable about the features of Texas's voter ID law than Hispanic and White Texans.** Over half of Black Texans (53%) know they need to show a photo ID; 27% know about showing an ID at all; and 17% of Black Texans know none of these provisions of the law. Over a third of Hispanic Texans do not know any of these provisions (34%), 23% know about showing an ID, and 40% know they need to show a photo ID. About one quarter of White Texans do not know any of these provisions (24%), 27% know they need to show an ID, and 47% know they need to show a photo ID.

**Over half of independents (52%) and nearly a quarter of Republicans (24%) do not know any of these laws.** Another 24% of Republicans and 17% of independents know the in-person ID law only. 17% of Democrats do not know any of these laws, and 30% know the in-person ID law only. Nearly half of Democrats and Republicans (49%) know they need to show ID and that it must be a photo ID, compared to 30% of independents.

Texans who do not have one of the primary forms of photo ID can use a secondary form of identification that contains their name and address and complete a Reasonable Impediment Declaration (RID) to vote in person. **90% of Texans have never heard of the RID process.** While 6% have heard of the RID and 13% know they can show supplementary ID, only 4% know both of these provisions of the law. White Texans are more likely to not know anything about the RID process (79%) than Black Texans (73%) or Hispanic Texans (76%). Three percent of Black and Hispanic Texans know both provisions, compared to 5% of White Texans. Four percent of Democrats, 3% of Republicans, and 6% of independents know both of these provisions. Republicans are more likely to not know about either provision (79%) than Democrats (75%) and independents (77%).

## **Voter Confidence**

**Overall, Texans are confident they have the ID they need to vote in Texas (92%).** Six percent of Texans are not confident, and 2% incorrectly stated "I do not need ID to vote in Texas." Confidence is high among Black Texans (93%) and White Texans (95%), but is lower among Hispanic Texans (89%). Three quarters (75%) of independents are confident, compared to 96% of both Democrats and Republicans. Texans ages 18-29 are much less confident than Texans 30 years and older, at 81% and 95%, respectively.

**Texans are less confident they can provide information from their IDs to vote by mail;** 86% are confident, 12% are not confident, and 2% stated that they do not need ID to vote in Texas. Confidence is higher among Black Texans (92%) than White Texans (89%) and Hispanic Texans (82%). Republicans are more confident at 91% than Democrats (87%) and independents (73%). While 88% of those 30 and older are confident, 79% of 18-29-year-olds are confident.

## **Barriers to Driver's Licenses**

**A quarter of Texans without driver's licenses cite financial difficulties as the reason why.**

The specific financial difficulties are the "cost of getting a license" (8%), "cost of buying a car" (11%), and "cost of car insurance" (6%). Texans also cite procedural barriers, such as "I don't have transportation to the ID issuing office" (4%), "the process is too complicated" (3%), "not sure how to get a license" (2%), and "I don't have the documents needed" (1%). Some Texans are not eligible to receive a driver's license; 6% say "I can't drive for medical reasons or disability" and 3% say "I'm legally prohibited from getting a license." Fourteen percent say they "Don't like driving/Don't drive," and 12% say "driving makes me anxious/afraid."