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## Lower Voter Turnout Is Seen in States That Require ID

By [CHRISTOPHER DREW](#)

States that imposed identification requirements on voters reduced turnout at the polls in the 2004 presidential election by about 3 percent, and by two to three times as much for minorities, new research suggests.

The study, prepared by scholars at Rutgers and [Ohio State Universities](#) for the federal Election Assistance Commission, supports concerns among voting-rights advocates that blacks and Hispanics could be disproportionately affected by ID requirements. But federal officials say more research is needed to draw firmer conclusions about the effects on future elections.

Tim Vercellotti, a professor at the Eagleton Institute of Politics at [Rutgers University](#) who helped conduct the study, said that in the states where voters were required to sign their names or present identifying documents like utility bills, blacks were 5.7 percent less likely to vote than in states where voters simply had to say their names.

Dr. Vercellotti said Hispanics appeared to be 10 percent less likely to vote under those requirements, while the combined rate for people of all races was 2.7 percent.

“Do people not even go to vote because they don’t want to hassle with the requirements, or is this occurring at the polling place, when they’re told they can’t vote without further ID?” Dr. Vercellotti asked. “If we can answer this question, then policymakers can develop procedures and voter awareness campaigns to mitigate it.”

The results of the study were presented to the election commission earlier this month and were reported Tuesday by USA Today. The analysis was based on data provided to the [Census Bureau](#) by 53,000 people.

Donetta L. Davidson, the commission’s chairwoman, said that more states had tightened identification requirements since 2004, and that the panel was considering what additional research should be done. She said it would be helpful to see if the patterns held for more than one election cycle.

Federal law requires only first-time voters to verify their identities. But about half the states require documentation from all voters.

Requirements for photo identification have been hotly debated, and Dr. Vercellotti said their potential impact needed to be studied closely.

Only two states, Indiana and Florida, now require all voters to show photo ID, and voters without it are allowed to cast only provisional ballots. Indiana officials have said voter turnout increased by 2 percent last November, compared with the 2002 midterm election, despite the enactment of a photo ID law in 2005.

Three states — Hawaii, Louisiana and South Dakota — require voters without photo ID to sign affidavits to cast regular ballots. Photo ID laws in Missouri and Georgia have been struck down in court, and several states are considering similar measures.