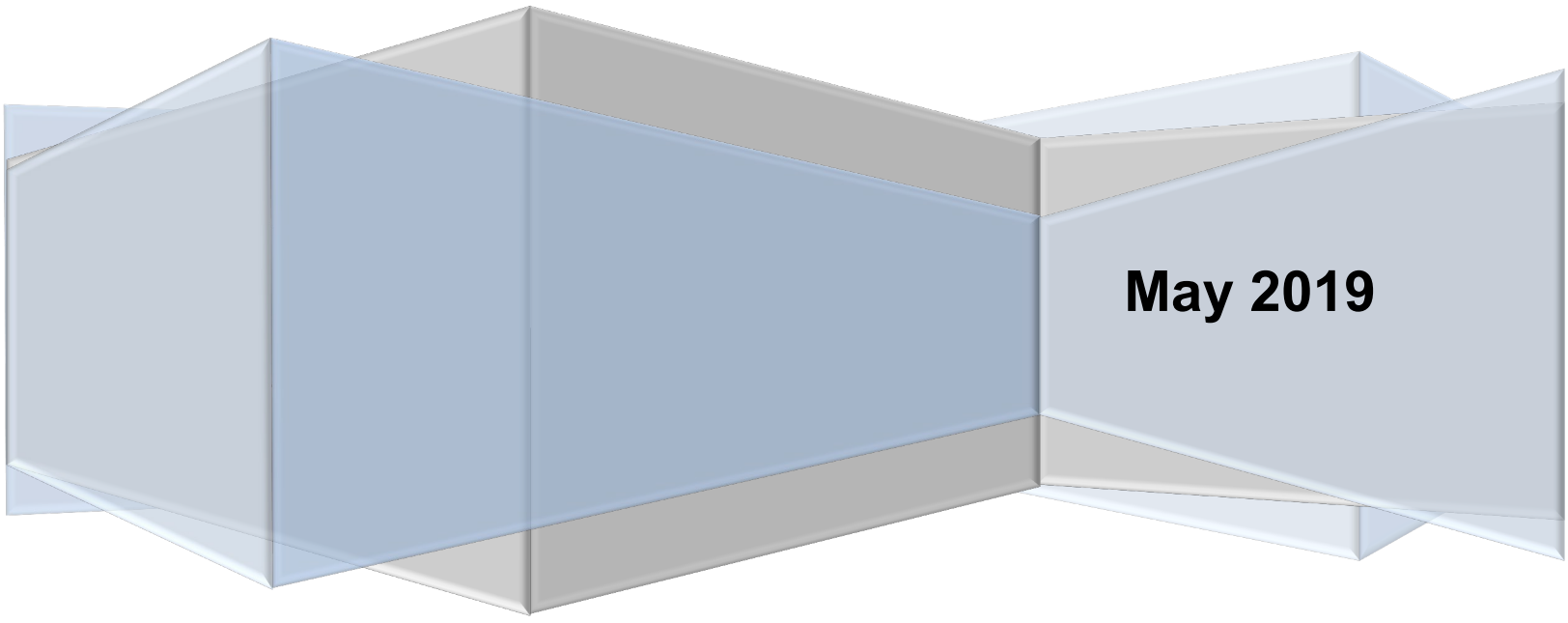
California Secretary of State

# Bilingual Poll Worker Recruitment Report

## November 6, 2018, General Election



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## INTRODUCTION AND METHODS

California leads the nation in the number of residents that speak a language other than English. According to estimates in the 2018 American Community Survey, over 16 million Californians are able to speak a language other than English. California's multilingual population is 78% greater than the next nearest state (Texas) and is nearly equal to the total multilingual populations of 41 other states combined.[1] This diversity of language represents a unique challenge for California's elections officials tasked with providing voting services and materials to registered voters in the state.

The California Legislature has long recognized the need to provide election services in languages other than English.[2] Both federal and state laws govern the determination of languages that are required to be supported in each county and the level of service to be provided for each language.[3] In particular, California Elections Code stipulates the circumstances that require county elections officials to "make reasonable efforts to recruit election officials who are fluent" in the languages specified by the law. In 2017 the California State Legislature passed the California Voting for All Act. This legislation updated the language service requirements for county elections officials and established a new reporting process directing the California Secretary of State to collect data related to the recruitment of bilingual poll workers from county officials.

In response, the California Secretary of State conducted a survey of county elections officials regarding their recruitment of bilingual poll workers for the November 6, 2018, General Election. This report provides information and analysis of the data collected in the survey, including charts and graphs of the results. In addition to this summary of survey results, the answers to the survey provided by each county elections office will be published allowing for additional analysis.

The questions in the survey were designed to capture information regarding the number of bilingual poll workers recruited by county elections officials for the November 6, 2018, General Election. In consultation with members of the Secretary of State's Language Accessibility Advisory Committee (LAAC), the survey also included questions about the different types of programs used to recruit bilingual poll workers. These programs included the recruitment of student poll workers and legal permanent residents. In addition, some counties reported using other means of specifically recruiting bilingual poll workers, such as the use of a pool of available county employees from other departments. Finally, some LAAC members noted that some counties are using technology solutions to serve significantly more languages than they were previously capable of accommodating.

## BILINGUAL POLL WORKER RECRUITMENT SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In response to the survey, all counties that are required to do so reported attempting to recruit bilingual poll workers. These 54 counties provided support for 30 different languages through their bilingual poll worker program. Counties that did not attempt to recruit bilingual poll workers did not have a language mandate or were all vote-by-mail.[4] The most widely served language in the state was Spanish. 54 of California's 58 counties reported working to recruit poll workers that were able to assist voters in Spanish. The next most widely served languages were Filipino (30 counties serving either Tagalog and/or Ilocano), Chinese (19 counties), and Vietnamese and Korean (16 counties for each).

The 54 counties that worked to recruit bilingual poll workers responded in the survey that they had commitments from a reported 28,254 bilingual poll workers. Additionally, the Secretary of State requested information regarding how many of those poll workers actually reported to serve at the polls on Election Day. Approximately 22,823 poll workers reported for their service on Election Day which resulted in nearly 81% of recruits completing their service across all languages.

Counties were also asked to provide information regarding some of the different methods they used to recruit bilingual poll workers. California Elections Code allows county elections officials to recruit students and non-voters to serve as poll workers in order to recruit additional bilingual poll workers.[5] Counties reported that 984 legal permanent residents were recruited to provide bilingual support at polling places across the state. County officials also reported that 5,531 student poll workers were recruited to act as bilingual poll workers. Additionally, at least 11,486 poll workers were recruited through other county efforts or programs. Some of these programs include recruitment of county workers from other departments, targeting college campuses, and paying extra help workers to serve as bilingual support.

Finally, under advisement from some members of the state LAAC, the survey included the opportunity for counties to provide some details regarding any technological solutions that were deployed to provide language support. At least 18 county officials reported using telephonic translations technology to provide additional language support. Most of these technological solutions involve 3-party telephone calls, though some of the cutting-edge translations technologies take advantage of applications like Facetime to allow video enabled translations calls.

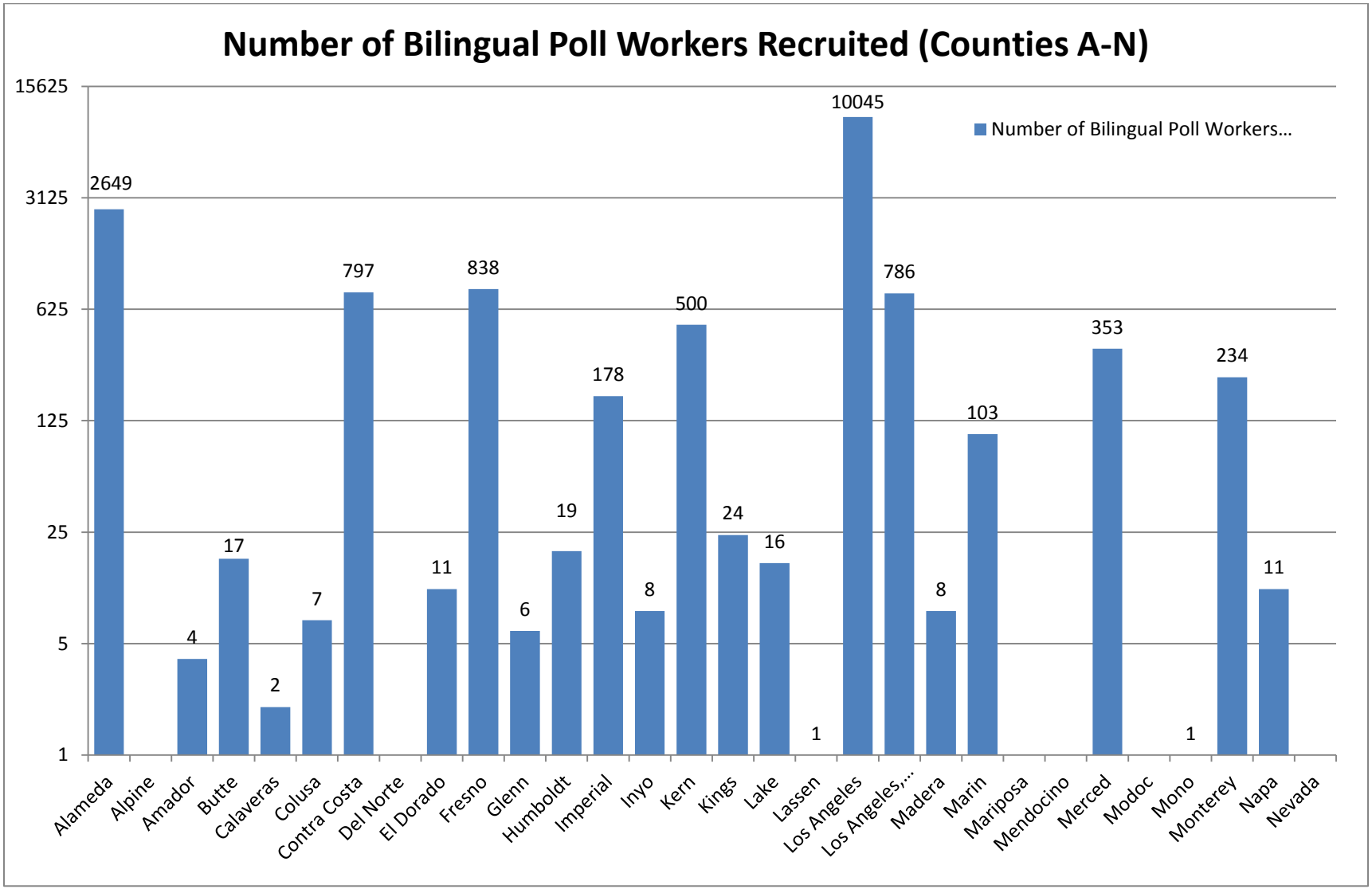
## SURVEY DATA SPREADSHEET

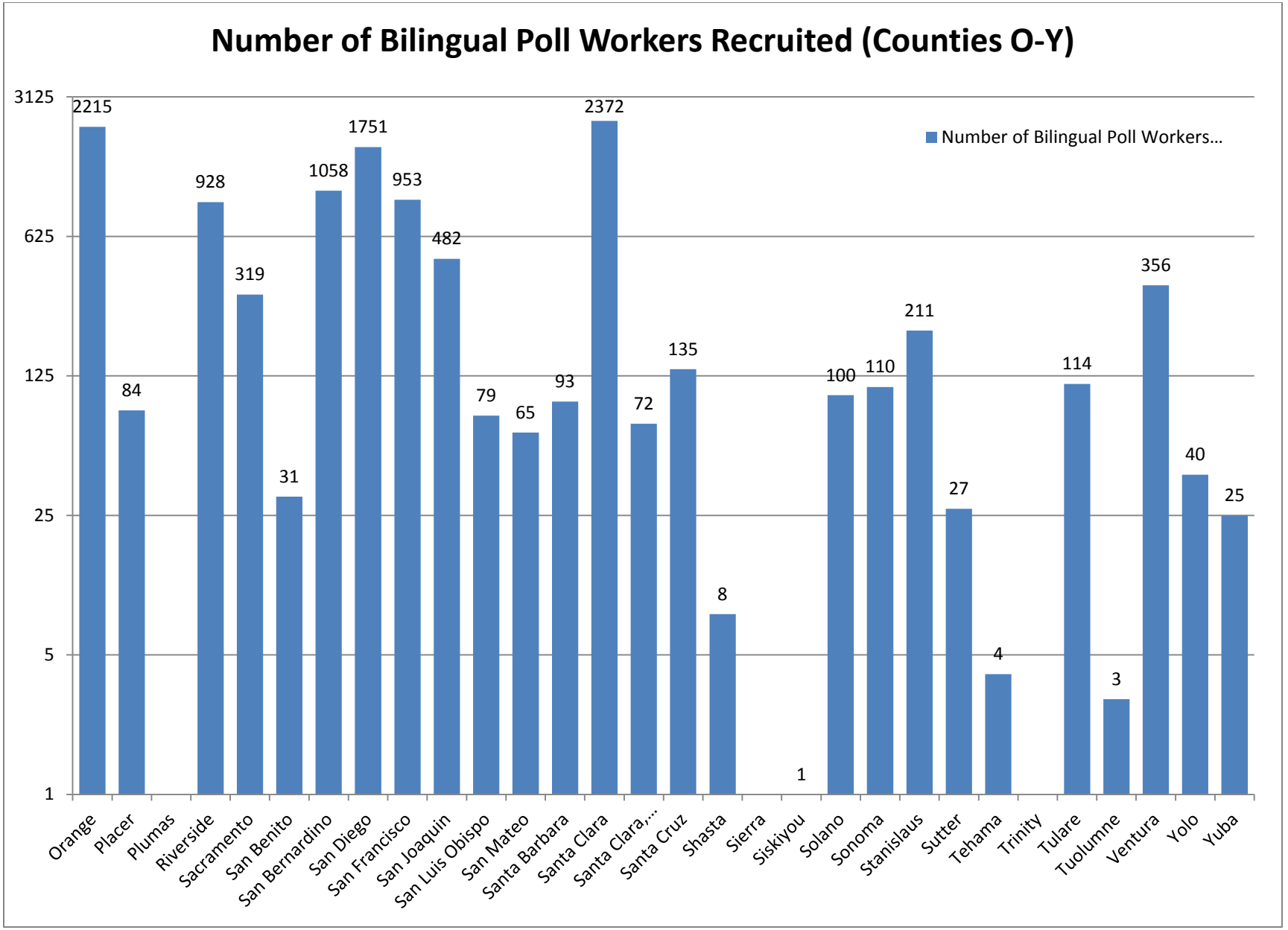
This report provides a summary analysis of answers provided by county elections officials in response to a survey conducted by the Secretary of State. In addition to releasing this report, the Secretary of State is releasing the survey responses provided by county elections officials displayed by county. The survey may contain some fields that are blank. This is intentional as the survey was built to provide enough space to accommodate up to 10 languages per survey. This was adequate for all but Los Angeles and Santa Clara Counties. Their answers were divided into languages they are mandated to serve and those they are not mandated to serve.

## FOOTNOTES

1. https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_17_5YR_B16001&prodType=table
2. California Elections Code section 12303 (as amended by Stats. 1996, Ch. 725, Sec. 19)
3. Federal Voting Rights Act (VRA) Section 203 and California Elections Code section 14201
4. Trinity County is not covered by a mandate for language service. Alpine, Plumas, and Sierra Counties are all vote-by-mail elections and have no polling places.
5. California Elections Code section 12302 (as amended by Stats. 2015, Ch. 150, Sec. 1)

## CHARTS AND VISUAL ANALYSIS




Number of Bilingual Poll Workers Recruited (Counties O-Y)
Number of Bilingual Poll Workers…
3125
625
125
25
5
1
2215
84
928
319
31
1058
1751
953
482
79
65
93
2372
72
135
8
1
100
110
211
27
4
114
3
356
40
25
Orange
Placer
Plumas
Riverside
Sacramento
San Benito
San Bernardino
San Diego
San Francisco
San Joaquin
San Luis Obispo
San Mateo
Santa Barbara
Santa Clara
Santa Clara,...
Santa Cruz
Shasta
Sierra
Siskiyou
Solano
Sonoma
Stanislaus
Sutter
Tehama
Trinity
Tulare
Tuolumne
Ventura
Yolo
Yuba