



There are some significant trends in the current election which may well make for a very interesting, and very different, election night:

High Turnout

Poll Proliferation

Early Voting

The turnout in this election is likely to be the highest in modern times, and possibly the highest in American history. Bill McInturff, John McCain's pollster, in a somewhat [self-serving analysis](#), is predicting well over 62% turnout. It is already "Conventional Wisdom" that black turnout may reach 95% in many states. Whenever an uncontrolled variable, like gross turnout, veers wildly out of standard deviation the polling models used by most pollsters will start to fall apart.

This separation between the polls and reality is complicated in this race due to many factors, some of which the major polling organizations have already prepared for, such as the proliferation of cellphone only lifestyles by younger voters (Pew already is polling cellphones) and some which they cannot adjust for, such as historical shifts in numbers voting.

Another exacerbating influence this year is the proliferation of polls and polling analysis websites. A [good story](#) in the New York Times today reports on this, and with millions of hits daily spread between four or five sites, you know that there are a lot of people getting daily or even hourly updates on the current state of the race. With as many as 30 polls a day, spread between national and state, and a surfeit of analytical sites, many people are, get ready for this, *deciding the news for themselves*, rather than relying upon a select reportariat to feed it to them. Thus more uncertainty.

Lastly, early voting is happening in more states than ever before, and in many states this will lead to more uncertainty on election night than ever before. "Why," you might ask, "if people are voting early then we will know the outcome earlier, right?" Well, not so fast. While some states have exercised vote-by-mail or other early voting options for many years, like Oregon, and have built their systems around it, other states, like Wisconsin, do not actually have a dedicated early voting system and simply leverage their existing absentee ballot systems. This can lead to extended waits on election night as these absentee ballots are sorted and counted and apportioned to their appropriate precincts. This is a wildcard on

many election nights, but with early voting accounting for as much as 40% of the tally in some states, expect it to be much worse this time.

Much has been made this year of the “[Bradley Effect](#),” a much discredited theory which states that polls are skewed in favor of African-American candidates because people being polled may lie about their preference. While numerous studies have shown this to be an untruth, there is significant reportage and first person accounts telling us that the real “Bradley Effect” — the under polling of Mayor Tom Bradley’s gubernatorial opponent — George Deukmejian was due to the failure of Bradley’s pollsters to take account of the high absentee voting that year.

So, what does this mean for you?

Well, for starters, pay no attention to the polls. There is not a single polling organization which has a model which can account for all of this.

Secondly, vote! Nothing can ally your own concerns about the state of the race like voting for yourself.

Next, get everyone you know to vote. They deserve the same degree of surety as you do.

Besides, if you know them the chances are pretty good that they will vote like you.

Lastly, don’t expect an early epiphany on election night. While we very well may know the next President of the United States a week from me writing these words, it may just as well take a day or more to sort out all of those early ballots.

If you, like me, want to see Barack Obama in the Whitehouse come January 20th, please follow those steps. Please vote, make those around you vote, and then be patient. This is truly history in the making.