

# Evaluation of Voter Registration and Contact Programs

**Prepared for and jointly written in cooperation with:**  
The State Public Interest Research Groups (State PIRGs)

November 14, 2006

**Table of Contents**

**Summary.....3**

**1. Introduction.....6**

**2. Registration and Turnout Summary Statistics .....8**

**3. Effects of Frequency of Contact ..... 15**

**4. Effects of Mode of Contact ..... 20**

**5. Effects of Date Last Contacted ..... 25**

**6. Propensity Score Analysis ..... 34**

**7. Conclusions..... 40**

## Summary

In the 2004 U.S. Presidential election, voter participation reached the highest level in nearly half a century. A record 122 million citizens cast ballots for President in 2004. The rise in participation was largely fueled by extraordinary youth voter turnout, which surged by 11 percentage points over 2000, nearly three times the rate of increase for the general population (4 percentage points). The increase in youth participation was driven, at least in part, by registration and Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) efforts.

This report is designed to analyze the 2004 voter registration and voter contact efforts of the State PIRGs' New Voters Project (PIRG NVP) in six states: Colorado, Iowa, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, and Wisconsin. The PIRG New Voters Project is a program of the State Public Interest Research Groups (State PIRGs), a network of nonpartisan, state-based public interest organizations active in 35 states. The State PIRGs have a long history of youth civic engagement, with a network of college chapters across the country, and have been active in youth voter mobilization programs since 1984.

In 2004, with the support of the Pew Charitable Trusts and in partnership with the George Washington Graduate School of Political Management, the State PIRGs took youth voter mobilization model to a larger scale than ever before and launched the PIRG New Voters Project, an unprecedented effort to boost youth participation in the political process.

The strategy of the PIRG New Voters Project is to register and turn out young voters and, in the process, call the attention of political campaigns to the importance of youth participation in the political system. To encourage the political world to take youth more seriously as an electoral force, the State PIRGs' New Voters Project works to demonstrate the value and specific methodology of effective youth voter turnout efforts.

To this end, the State PIRGs ran an intensive, nonpartisan voter registration and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) campaign in six states during the 2004 presidential election (the project ultimately worked in 23 states, but only the six states that used the full model statewide are analyzed here). The State PIRGs' New Voters Project targeted 18-24 year olds, both in and out of college, and used a myriad of techniques to both register and persuade 18 to 24 year old voters to vote on Election Day.

This report analyzes the 2004 voter registration and voter contact efforts of the PIRG New Voters Project in the six states listed above. For these states, Polimetrix was provided 1,386,090 database records that had been matched up against state voter registration lists. These database records included PIRG NVP new registrants, voters that PIRG NVP contacted, and other young people who were simply on the statewide voter file at the time but who were not contacted. Where possible, 2004 general election turnout had been appended.

Our analysis examined how various factors impacted turnout. These factors included:

- Being registered by PIRG NVP
- Being contacted by PIRG NVP
- Being contacted by PIRG NVP multiple times
- Mode of contact
- Timing between contact and Election Day

This report also used a special kind of methodology called *propensity score matching* to analyze the efforts within the state of Iowa. We applied propensity scores (estimates of how likely a person is to be or contacted by PIRG NVP, based upon demographics and other characteristics), to the PIRG NVP file, and then matched individuals who were registered or contacted with similar individuals who were not contacted. This allows us to estimate (with a much greater degree of clarity than usual methods) the effect of the PIRG NVP registration efforts on turnout.

Our report demonstrated the findings below. While we hope this executive summary will be helpful, we also hope that readers will take the time to peruse the rest of the report and will review the important caveats that accompany each of these conclusions.

- Examining all states, individuals both registered and contacted by PIRG NVP turned out at a rate of 86.3%. People who were registered but not contacted turned out at a rate of 77.0%, while those contacted but not registered turned out at a rate of 76.9%. These are all sharp increases from the baseline “not registered and not contacted” group, which turned out at a 59.5% rate.
- Through propensity score modeling in the state of Iowa, PIRG NVP registration and contact appeared to have had a demonstrable and substantial effect on voter participation rates. People who were registered to vote by PIRG NVP were 5.9 percentage points more likely to vote than a demographically similar control group not registered by PIRG NVP, among people who registered less than six months before the election. People who were contacted by PIRG NVP were 13.2 percentage points more likely to vote than a demographically similar control group not contacted by PIRG NVP.<sup>1</sup>
- Over 300,000 voters identified in the voter files were contacted by PIRG NVP at least once, with over 128,000 of them receiving two or more contacts. A clear and powerful relationship was found between more contacts and turnout: contacting voters three or more times pushed the turnout rates into the 80s, contrasted with rates in the mid 70s for voters contacted only one or two times.
- Contacting voters in the few days leading up to the election had a clear and positive effect when compared to earlier contacts. Contacts in the 3 days leading up to election day have the largest relationship on turnout, with contacts in the 2-3 day window maxing out at an 85.3% turnout rate. Contacts starting at 9 days out and before suffer by as much as ten percentage points.

---

<sup>1</sup> The numbers from the propensity score analysis are derived by comparing the top “quintile” of PIRG NVP registrants – so it is not strictly a representation of *all* of the PIRG NVP registrants. The quintile breakdown method is explained in a later section.

Over 211,000 voters received a contact from PIRG NVP fewer than nine days out from the 2004 general election, and over 132,000 of these were three days or fewer out.

## 1. Introduction

The ultimate goal of voter registration and contact programs is to increase political participation. In this report, we will examine turnout rates according to whether an individual was *registered* by the PIRG New Voters Project, as well as whether the voter was otherwise *contacted* by the program during the GOTV phase. By definition, there can be overlap between these two categories; an individual can have been registered by the program and subsequently contacted with a reminder to vote.

At the outset, we should distinguish between *applications*, *registrations*, and *turnout*. These are conceptually distinct categories with different determinants. For the purposes of this report, an *application* is defined as an individual's completion of a voter registration form, with the data captured in the database.

A *registration* is defined as an instance where the voter rolls have information for a voter, and that information matches a corresponding application in the database.

Simplest of all, a voter who is classified as one who *turns out* is an individual who votes in the election and whose record on the voter file reflects this fact.

Each of these processes – application, registration and turnout – are of intrinsic interest and will be analyzed individually to reach an overall understanding of the operation and effectiveness of registration efforts of the PIRG New Voters Project.

This report addresses a number of critical questions in evaluating the effectiveness of the voter registration and contact programs. They include:

- How many people were registered?
- Of those that were registered, how many voted?
- To what extent did the frequency of contact affect individuals' likelihood to vote?
- To what extent did the mode of contact affect individuals' likelihood to vote?
- To what extent did the date of last contact affect individuals' likelihood to vote?

There are, of course, many other questions that one might ask, but the questions listed above are the most basic ones for this kind of evaluation.

In this report, we evaluate the effectiveness of the PIRG New Voters Project programs in six states during 2004. These states are: Colorado, Iowa, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, and Wisconsin.

This report is divided into seven total sections. Section two, which is next, provides overall registration and turnout summary statistics. The third section explores the effects that arise from contacting individuals more frequently. Section four discusses how the mode of contact affects turnout. The fifth section presents turnout results by the date of last contact by the PIRG New Voters Project. Section six analyzes turnout

using a different kind of methodology, propensity score matching, for the state of Iowa. Finally, section seven provides some basic conclusions.

## 2. Registration and Turnout Summary Statistics

This report analyzes the efforts of the PIRG New Voters Project in terms of voter registration and contact in six states during 2004. The six states analyzed in our report are the following:

Colorado	Nevada
Iowa	Oregon
New Mexico	Wisconsin

The total quantity of database records received for analysis in our report is 1,881,759. These records come from a variety of different sources. Some of these records are individuals that the PIRG New Voters Project registered. Others are voters that PIRG NVP contacted during the course of the election cycle. There are still other records that, while not registered or contacted, nevertheless appear in the PIRG NVP database. Some of these may include, for example, young people that PIRG NVP attempted to contact but was unable to do so.

Turning first to the question of registration, the PIRG New Voters Project database included records for 251,449 people who submitted applications to register to vote. It should be noted that this number does not constitute the entirety of PIRG New Voters Project registration efforts: some records never reached the database, some were coded in ways that could not be identified for the purpose of this analysis, and some were in geographic locations not within the scope of this analysis.<sup>2</sup>

An outside vendor was contracted by the State PIRGs to match the entire database against the statewide (or, in some cases, countywide) voter lists in the states above. In New Mexico and Nevada, the PIRG New Voters Project database was matched only to the voter files of the states' most populous counties: Bernalillo County, New Mexico and Clark County, Nevada. While these counties contain the bulk of their states' populations, the project may have registered or contacted voters in other counties that were not included in the file match.

The turnout analyses provided in the rest of this section and throughout the rest of the report employ the results of the voter file matches in the six states. It is critical to note that the tables and the data used in them reflect the turnout rates *only* for those individuals who matched to the statewide voter files. Thus, for example, an individual whom PIRG NVP attempted to register but who could not be successfully matched to the voter rolls would not be factored into the results.

It is surprisingly difficult to determine with precision how many *actual* registrations were produced by a set of applications, as well as how many of the nominal registrants voted in the subsequent election. Not all of the applications collected in a database end up on the county or state's list of registered voters. Some applications are invalid

---

<sup>2</sup> There is also a quantity of records contained in the PIRG database that are not included in this total. They are records that appear in the master data of "registrations" that do not join back to the state-specific data and thus cannot be analyzed. This is a relatively small quantity, but it does help illustrate why the numbers in this section may differ slightly from other internal PIRG numbers.



and may be rejected (because the applicant is already registered, a non-citizen, or a felon, because the application is incomplete, because the application was submitted too late or not at all, and any number of other possible reasons).

Among the 251,449 individuals whose applications to vote were recorded in the PIRG New Voters Project database, 152,487 (or 60.6% percent) of those applications were able to be matched to the voter registration rolls by the outside vendor contracted by the PIRGs. Table 2.1 breaks out these results by state.

**Table 2.1: Number of Applications Matched in Voter Lists**

State	Total Database Input Records	Matched to Voter List	Match Percentage
Colorado	55,087	43,979	79.8 %
Iowa	45,565	17,580	38.6 % <sup>3</sup>
New Mexico	5,818	4,073	70.0 %
Nevada	16,220	9,391	57.9 %
Oregon	34,453	26,350	76.5 %
Wisconsin	94,306	51,114	54.2 %
<i>Total</i>	251,449	152,487	60.6 %

As the data show, the match percentages range from a low of just under 40% for Iowa to a high of nearly 80% in Colorado. This means that on average, three out of five applications had a corresponding record that could be found on the statewide voter list.

This should not be interpreted, however, to mean that *only* 60% of the applicants made it onto the voter rolls. There are a great many reasons why records from the PIRG NVP database might fail to match to a record on the statewide voter lists, even though the registration at the time was successful. Matching any two lists from separate data entry against one another is an inherently difficult task. Data entry errors are quite prevalent in general – ranging from simple things such as typos to more complex problems such as transposition of data across fields. These problems are exacerbated in particular either when a form is difficult to read or when data entry staff is not sufficiently trained or conscientious. In addition, the fact that the programs occurred during the 2004 cycle whereas the voter files used in matching were from 2006 can lead to substantial artificial failures to match as well. Voters who subsequently move or are purged can be quite difficult to match. In addition, in two of the six states studied here, voter file matching was performed only in the most populous county of the state – applicants who lived within these states, but outside of those counties were not matched to the file and do not appear as registrants in this analysis.

<sup>3</sup> Readers will note that the match rate in Iowa is relatively low when compared to that of the other states. Polimetrix has not received any information which sheds light on this oddity. It is worthwhile to note that PoliMatch, our own matching software that is employed as part of the “propensity score analysis” later in this report, did yield a substantially higher match rate for registrants in Iowa than that which is shown in this table.

Including the numbers above, a total of 1,386,090 records in the six states were successfully matched to statewide voter files by the vendor hired by the PIRGs. Overall, the names and addresses matched include voter lists that PIRG NVP obtained during the campaign season, as well as names collected by scanning and entering information from voter registration forms. In other words, there are individuals that PIRG NVP contacted, registered, or both, and there are individuals that PIRG NVP did not touch during the 2004 election cycle. Table 2.2 breaks the results out according to these various possibilities for all states.

**Table 2.2: Turnout by Registration and Contact, All Voter Lists**

<b>Registration Type</b>	<b>Contact Type</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
Registered by PIRG NVP	Contacted by PIRG NVP	45,473	39,482	86.3%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	106,744	82,155	77.0%
	Combined	152,487	121,637	79.8%
Not Registered by PIRG NVP	Contacted by PIRG NVP	258,299	198,609	76.9%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	975,304	580,081	59.5%
	Combined	1,233,603	778,690	63.1%
Combined	Contacted by PIRG NVP	304,042	238,091	78.3%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	1,082,048	662,236	61.2%
	Combined	1,386,090	900,327	65.0%

Tables 2.3 through 2.8 break out the results for Colorado, Iowa, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, and Wisconsin, respectively.

**Table 2.3: Turnout by Registration and Contact, Colorado**

<b>Registration Type</b>	<b>Contact Type</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
Registered by PIRG NVP	Contacted by PIRG NVP	12,014	10,082	83.9%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	31,965	23,036	72.1%
	Combined	43,979	33,118	75.3%
Not Registered by PIRG NVP	Contacted by PIRG NVP	69,097	51,239	74.2%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	313,234	176,942	56.5%
	Combined	382,331	228,181	59.7%
Combined	Contacted by PIRG NVP	81,111	61,321	75.6%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	345,199	199,978	57.9%
	Combined	426,310	261,299	61.3%

**Table 2.4: Turnout by Registration and Contact, Iowa**

<b>Registration Type</b>	<b>Contact Type</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
Registered by PIRG NVP	Contacted by PIRG NVP	8,272	7,004	84.7%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	9,308	6,878	73.9%
	Combined	17,580	13,882	79.0%
Not Registered by PIRG NVP	Contacted by PIRG NVP	40,174	28,810	71.7%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	145,661	69,236	47.5%
	Combined	185,835	98,046	52.8%
Combined	Contacted by PIRG NVP	48,446	35,814	73.9%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	154,969	76,114	49.1%
	Combined	203,415	111,928	55.0%

**Table 2.5: Turnout by Registration and Contact, New Mexico**

<b>Registration Type</b>	<b>Contact Type</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
Registered by PIRG NVP	Contacted by PIRG NVP	1,356	1,095	80.8%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	2,717	1,941	71.4%
	Combined	4,073	3,036	74.5%
Not Registered by PIRG NVP	Contacted by PIRG NVP	24,287	17,968	74.0%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	78,626	46,958	59.7%
	Combined	102,913	64,926	63.1%
Combined	Contacted by PIRG NVP	25,643	19,063	74.3%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	81,343	48,899	60.1%
	Combined	106,986	67,962	63.5%

**Table 2.6: Turnout by Registration and Contact, Nevada**

<b>Registration Type</b>	<b>Contact Type</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
Registered by PIRG NVP	Contacted by PIRG NVP	2,330	1,983	85.1%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	7,061	4,881	69.1%
	Combined	9,391	6,864	73.1%
Not Registered by PIRG NVP	Contacted by PIRG NVP	28,590	22,404	78.4%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	61,592	32,123	52.2%
	Combined	90,182	54,527	60.5%
Combined	Contacted by PIRG NVP	30,920	24,387	78.9%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	68,653	37,004	53.9%
	Combined	99,573	61,391	61.7%

**Table 2.7: Turnout by Registration and Contact, Oregon**

<b>Registration Type</b>	<b>Contact Type</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
Registered by PIRG NVP	Contacted by PIRG NVP	6,294	5,421	86.1%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	20,056	14,978	74.7%
	Combined	26,350	20,399	77.4%
Not Registered by PIRG NVP	Contacted by PIRG NVP	51,359	43,587	84.9%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	201,009	138,449	68.9%
	Combined	252,368	182,036	72.1%
Combined	Contacted by PIRG NVP	57,653	49,008	85.0%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	221,065	153,427	69.4%
	Combined	278,718	202,435	72.6%

**Table 2.8: Turnout by Registration and Contact, Wisconsin**

<b>Registration Type</b>	<b>Contact Type</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
Registered by PIRG NVP	Contacted by PIRG NVP	15,477	13,897	89.8%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	35,637	30,441	85.4%
	Combined	51,114	44,338	86.7%
Not Registered by PIRG NVP	Contacted by PIRG NVP	44,792	34,601	77.2%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	175,182	116,373	66.4%
	Combined	219,974	150,974	68.6%
Combined	Contacted by PIRG NVP	60,269	48,498	80.5%
	Not Contacted by PIRG NVP	210,819	146,814	69.6%
	Combined	271,088	195,312	72.0%

These results are overall quite positive, especially when compared to the “not registered, not contacted” baseline groups.

In general, these results demonstrate that those individuals both registered and contacted turned out at a rate of 86.3%, while those who were neither registered nor contacted had a rate of 59.5%. It appeared that registration and contact together had more success than either PIRG NVP registration alone (77.0%) or contact without registration (76.9%). However, there are also some important things to keep in mind when reviewing the results.

First and foremost, there is an inherent positive bias contained within these results. When the PIRG New Voters Project contacted an individual in 2004, the very fact that the contact occurred meant that the individual was “there” and existed.<sup>4</sup> Particularly as the November general election approached, this made it more and more likely that an individual would remain present and at the address listed. Contrast this with the other individuals who were not contacted and not attempted to be registered by the PIRGs. Some of these individuals may have been on the voter rolls for some time. Others simply might have moved prior to the election. And still some others may have died, although that number should be rather small given the demographic being analyzed here. Any voter list contains a certain fraction of “deadwood,” and it is important to bear in mind that the fraction of deadwood is likely to be lower among a successfully contacted group than against a neutral, untouched group of voters. To elucidate that point, Table 2.9 presents the results of the impact of registration length on turnout for all states.

**Table 2.9: Effect of Length of Registration on Turnout, All Voter Lists**

<b>Length of Registration</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
Blank or Invalid	297,463	204,556	68.8%
0 to 90 Days	213,096	165,596	77.7%
91 to 120 Days	136,273	97,550	71.6%
121 to 180 Days	63,629	42,852	67.3%
181 to 365 Days	119,840	79,346	66.2%
366 or More Days	555,789	310,427	55.9%

These caveats should not, however, obscure the generally favorable results that the tables above demonstrate.

<sup>4</sup> The propensity score analysis in a later section, as well as another section dealing with timing of registration, will put this issue into a little bit more context. By comparing NVP-registered individuals with non-NVP registrants, both of whom registered in the weeks leading up to the election, the phantom voters problem is addressed to some extent.

### 3. Effects of Frequency of Contact

While the preceding section provided insights into the effects of contacting voters prior to the election, this section is designed to measure the effect of multiple contacts. In theory, one would expect that voters who were contacted multiple times would be more likely to turn out than those who were contacted only once or not at all.

Table 3.1 presents the results for all states by the number of contacts. If an individual received 7 or more contacts according to the database, their number of contacts was collapsed into a "7 or more" category. It is important to bear in mind for analytical purposes that these data are restricted only to those database records that matched the state voter files. As such, there is some positive bias inherent in the numbers (as individuals who did not match inherently do not have vote history associated with their records).

**Table 3.1: Effect of Multiple Contacts on Turnout, All Voter Lists**

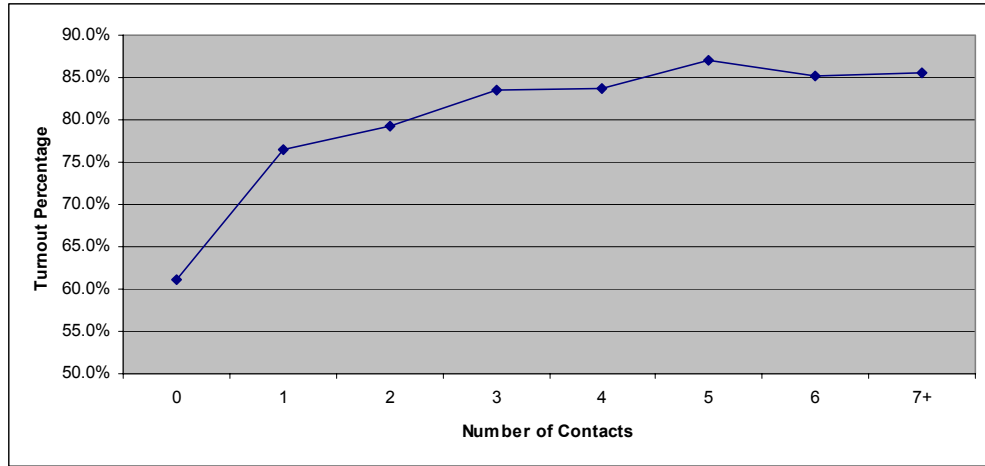
<b>Times Contacted</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
0	1,082,048	662,236	61.2%
1	175,349	133,975	76.4%
2	82,344	65,207	79.2%
3	23,126	19,298	83.4%
4	15,424	12,903	83.7%
5	2,851	2,483	87.1%
6	2,996	2,554	85.2%
7 or more	1,952	1,671	85.6%
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,386,090</i>	<i>900,327</i>	<i>65.0%</i>

In addition, while it is generally the case that two or more contacts occurred on different dates, this is not necessarily the case. Further, some records do not contain date of contact information, which makes determining the timing difference between contacts impossible. The issue of timing of contact will be explored in a subsequent section.

It is useful to note that within the database, 304,042 individuals received at least one contact. Of these, 175,349 received exactly one contact, meaning the remainder of 128,693 all received two or more. The PIRG NVP programs clearly were geared toward repeated contacts of individuals, and the tabular results above suggest some success from this approach. The turnout rate for individuals receiving a single contact was 76.4%, and repeated contacts generally strengthened that number into the eighties.

Figure 3.1 puts the above results into a graphical context. In general, the pattern is an increasing turnout rate up to approximately 5 contacts, after which the graph flattens.

**Figure 3.1: Effect of Multiple Contacts on Turnout, All Voter Lists**



To repeat the caveat from the previous section, some (though not all) of the sharp turnout jump when moving from zero contacts to one is artificial. By definition, if a voter received a contact by PIRG NVP, that was also confirmation that the voter physically was residing at that address or phone number. By contrast, there is a certain amount of deadwood present in the zero contact percentage, and these people could inherently not turn out to vote.

Tables 3.2 through 3.7 break out the above results by state.



**Table 3.2: Effect of Multiple Contacts on Turnout, Colorado**

<b>Times Contacted</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
0	345,199	199,978	57.9%
1	43,480	32,093	73.8%
2	23,158	17,469	75.4%
3	7,283	5,908	81.1%
4	4,641	3,715	80.0%
5	894	759	84.9%
6	981	815	83.1%
7 or more	674	562	83.4%
<i>Total</i>	<i>426,310</i>	<i>261,299</i>	<i>61.3%</i>

**Table 3.3: Effect of Multiple Contacts on Turnout, Iowa**

<b>Times Contacted</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
0	154,969	76,114	49.1%
1	30,076	21,294	70.8%
2	12,183	9,383	77.0%
3	3,575	2,994	83.7%
4	1,749	1,434	82.0%
5	386	342	88.6%
6	310	239	77.1%
7 or more	167	128	76.6%
<i>Total</i>	<i>203,415</i>	<i>111,928</i>	<i>55.0%</i>

**Table 3.4: Effect of Multiple Contacts on Turnout, New Mexico**

<b>Times Contacted</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
0	81,343	48,899	60.1%
1	14,153	10,145	71.7%
2	6,956	5,277	75.9%
3	2,349	1,878	79.9%
4	1,355	1,069	78.9%
5	358	304	84.9%
6	297	254	85.5%
7 or more	175	136	77.7%
<i>Total</i>	<i>106,986</i>	<i>67,962</i>	<i>63.5%</i>

**Table 3.5: Effect of Multiple Contacts on Turnout, Nevada**

<b>Times Contacted</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
0	68,653	37,004	53.9%
1	17,725	13,600	76.7%
2	7,856	6,201	78.9%
3	2,544	2,138	84.0%
4	1,652	1,446	87.5%
5	482	421	87.3%
6	385	330	85.7%
7 or more	276	251	90.9%
<i>Total</i>	<i>99,573</i>	<i>61,391</i>	<i>61.7%</i>

**Table 3.6: Effect of Multiple Contacts on Turnout, Oregon**

<b>Times Contacted</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
0	221,065	153,427	69.4%
1	37,855	31,968	84.4%
2	13,428	11,374	84.7%
3	3,338	2,980	89.3%
4	2,234	1,968	88.1%
5	302	275	91.1%
6	285	253	88.8%
7 or more	211	190	90.0%
<i>Total</i>	<i>278,718</i>	<i>202,435</i>	<i>72.6%</i>

**Table 3.7: Effect of Multiple Contacts on Turnout, Wisconsin**

<b>Times Contacted</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
0	210,819	146,814	69.6%
1	32,060	24,875	77.6%
2	18,763	15,503	82.6%
3	4,037	3,400	84.2%
4	3,793	3,271	86.2%
5	429	382	89.0%
6	738	663	89.8%
7 or more	449	404	90.9%
<i>Total</i>	<i>271,088</i>	<i>195,312</i>	<i>72.0%</i>

## 4. Effects of Mode of Contact

This section provides results by mode of contact. In theory, contacting voters through certain mechanisms may have a more lasting or effective impression than others. Tables 4.1 through 4.7 provide the turnout results for all states combined as well as each state individually by mode of contact.

The PIRG New Voters Project used multiple avenues to reach out to prospective voters in the days and weeks prior to the 2004 election. Those tactics inherently targeted different categories of young voters, with different expectations of success. They included:

- **Campus Phone** – Student volunteers (unpaid) contacted 18-24 year olds by phone. The vast majority were contacts with students from their own schools, but some were non-students from the same geographic area. This category includes contacts made in the weeks before Election Day, but excludes contacts made on Election Day itself.
- **Campus Non-Phone** – Student volunteers engaged in a number of in-person GOTV activities including: dormitory canvassing, classroom presentations, and conversations with students walking around campus grounds. The majority were contacted at tables on campus and those contacted were asked to pledge to vote, their names were collected (as a requirement of being counted as “contacts”) and they were offered the opportunity to look up information on their polling places. This category captures contacts made before Election Day.
- **Canvass** – Includes door-to-door canvassing by paid canvassers in residential neighborhoods. The precincts canvassed were selected based on high concentrations of 18-24 year olds, primarily non-students. This category does not include any on-campus canvassing, but does include very limited canvassing in off-campus neighborhoods directly adjacent to college campuses. This category captures contacts made before Election Day.
- **Election Day: Campus and Canvass** – Includes all contacts made on Election Day through campus phone, campus non-phone, and canvass contacts. The vast majority of contacts were made by phone banks where callers were a mix of student volunteers and canvassers, with a majority being students.
- **Paid Phone Bank** – Starting three weeks before Election Day, callers with the state PIRGs’ paid phone bank called lists of 18 to 24 year old voters. The phone bank focused on calling previously uncontacted individuals, and then, starting three days before Election Day, switched to calling only those already contacted at least once. Contacts are broken down into three subcategories:
  - Three weeks before Election Day and prior: These were first-time contacts made prior to three weeks before Election Day. (As the PIRGs recruited new callers for PIRG NVP, new callers started with GOTV calls before the true GOTV operation had begun.)
  - Three weeks before to weekend before Election Day: These were first-time contacts made in the last three weeks before the election, up until the weekend before Election Day.
  - Re-Contacts: These were re-contacts of previously contacted individuals from the weekend before Election Day through Election Day itself.

- **Precinct** – Contacts made by non-college student volunteer “precinct captains” to 18-24 year old voters in their own precincts and, to some extent, neighboring precincts. These contacts were made prior to Election Day and on Election Day itself. Subcategories include:
  - Precinct Non-Phone – Includes canvassing by precinct captains and PIRG NVP staff organizers working with them.
  - Precinct Phone – Includes phone banking by PIRG NVP staff organizers and their precinct captains.
- **Field** – Contacts made by volunteer phone-bankers recruited from lists of voters registered by the PIRG New Voters Project to make calls during the final week before Election Day. This includes contacts made before and on Election Day.

Other categories included in Table 4.1 refer to the following:

- **Blank** – Indicates records listed as contacted for which no information was provided on the mode of contact.
- **PIRG NVP Already Voted** – Includes contacts who told PIRG NVP they had already voted (either through absentee ballot or early voting).
- **Yale Do Not Contact** – These are voters the project deliberately did not attempt to contact as part of a separate experiment with Yale University.

**Table 4.1: Effect of Mode of Contact on Turnout, All Voter Lists**

Mode of Contact	Count	Turnout	Turnout Percentage
Campus Non-Phone	50,188	41,433	82.6%
Campus Phone	13,600	11,540	84.9%
Canvass	76,779	56,749	73.9%
Election Day	16,703	13,793	82.6%
Field	3,660	2,920	79.8%
Precinct Non-Phone	1,258	884	70.3%
Precinct Phone	6,153	4,811	78.2%
Paid Phone Bank <sup>5</sup>	130,983	98,925	75.5%
Three Weeks Before Election Day and Prior	35,405	26,358	74.4%
Three Weeks Before to Weekend Before Election Day	99,677	75,649	75.9%
Re-Contacts	27,197	22,563	83.0%
<i>Yale Do Not Contact</i>	9,706	6,392	65.9%
<i>PIRG NVP Already Voted</i>	53,409	50,294	94.2%
<i>Blank</i>	5,498	4,012	73.0%

In general, campus activities led the charts, with campus phone strongest at 84.9%. Election Day activities also surpassed the 80% threshold. Within the paid phone bank program, pre-election day re-contacts had the highest rate with 83%.

It is important to note that the PIRG NVP programs were intended to address different audiences. Some included high concentrations of college students, others mixed student and non-student populations, and still others focused almost exclusively on non-students. In addition, various types of contacts were made at different times in the pre-election period. As discussed in Section 5, timing of contact is critical in assessing the impact of those contacts on voter turnout. To the extent that different types of people would inherently turn out at different rates, interpreting the results above to mean that certain types of contacts are inherently more *effective* should be done with great caution.

<sup>5</sup> The numbers in this table and in other tables in this section count people rather than contacts. As such, the counts for "Paid Phone Bank" will not simply be the sum of adding the three different types of paid phone bank contacts together.

**Table 4.2: Effect of Mode of Contact on Turnout, Colorado**

<b>Mode of Contact</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
Campus Non-Phone	10,761	8,940	83.1%
Campus Phone	2,586	2,176	84.1%
Canvass	27,985	20,280	72.5%
Election Day: Campus and Canvass	9,736	7,532	77.4%
Field	434	335	77.2%
Precinct Non-Phone	2	1	50.0%
Precinct Phone	50	24	48.0%
Paid Phone Bank	35,772	26,337	73.6%
Three Weeks Before Election Day and Prior	10,184	7,375	72.4%
Three Weeks Before to Weekend Before Election Day	27,363	20,262	74.0%
Re-Contacts	8,920	7,133	80.0%
<i>Yale Do Not Contact</i>	1,712	1,073	62.7%
<i>PIRG NVP Already Voted</i>	9,797	9,011	92.0%
<i>Blank</i>	390	348	89.2%

**Table 4.3: Effect of Mode of Contact on Turnout, Iowa**

<b>Mode of Contact</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
Campus Non-Phone	8,299	6,851	82.6%
Campus Phone	339	268	79.1%
Canvass	6,442	4,799	74.5%
Election Day: Campus and Canvass	306	277	90.5%
Field	750	611	81.5%
Precinct Non-Phone			
Precinct Phone			
Paid Phone Bank	27,934	19,754	70.7%
Three Weeks Before Election Day and Prior	7,147	5,038	70.5%
Three Weeks Before to Weekend Before Election Day	21,408	15,199	71.0%
Re-Contacts	5,479	4,430	80.9%
<i>Yale Do Not Contact</i>	1,316	826	62.8%
<i>PIRG NVP Already Voted</i>	9,875	8,075	81.8%
<i>Blank</i>	133	119	89.5%



**Table 4.4: Effect of Mode of Contact on Turnout, New Mexico**

<b>Mode of Contact</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
Campus Non-Phone	5,512	4,477	81.2%
Campus Phone	2,008	1,685	83.9%
Canvass	10,325	7,080	68.6%
Election Day	3,103	2,655	85.6%
Field	1,505	1,189	79.0%
Precinct Non-Phone	991	682	68.8%
Precinct Phone	2,605	2,089	80.2%
Paid Phone Bank	4,700	3,627	77.2%
Three Weeks Before Election Day and Prior	937	738	78.8%
Three Weeks Before to Weekend Before Election Day	3,805	2,940	77.3%
Re-Contacts	1,344	1,097	81.6%
<i>Yale Do Not Contact</i>	1,693	1,026	60.6%
<i>PIRG NVP Already Voted</i>	529	524	99.1%
<i>Blank</i>	42	31	73.8%

**Table 4.5: Effect of Mode of Contact on Turnout, Nevada**

<b>Mode of Contact</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
Campus Non-Phone	3,152	2,242	71.1%
Campus Phone	1,875	1,431	76.3%
Canvass	6,430	4,534	70.5%
Election Day	145	104	71.7%
Field	713	571	80.1%
Precinct Non-Phone	265	201	75.8%
Precinct Phone	3,498	2,698	77.1%
Paid Phone Bank	9,621	6,914	71.9%
Three Weeks Before Election Day and Prior	5,278	3,719	70.5%
Three Weeks Before to Weekend Before Election Day	5,669	4,195	74.0%
Re-Contacts	1,393	1,117	80.2%
<i>Yale Do Not Contact</i>	1,555	950	61.1%
<i>PIRG NVP Already Voted</i>	13,876	13,762	99.2%
<i>Blank</i>	866	493	56.9%

**Table 4.6: Effect of Mode of Contact on Turnout, Oregon**

<b>Mode of Contact</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
Campus Non-Phone	7,159	5,921	82.7%
Campus Phone	3,421	2,997	87.6%
Canvass	9,845	7,816	79.4%
Election Day	103	82	79.6%
Field	243	200	82.3%
Precinct Non-Phone			
Precinct Phone			
Paid Phone Bank	19,859	16,114	81.1%
Three Weeks Before Election Day and Prior	7,336	5,966	81.3%
Three Weeks Before to Weekend Before Election Day	13,478	10,963	81.3%
Re-Contacts	2,331	1,999	85.8%
<i>Yale Do Not Contact</i>	1,890	1,485	78.6%
<i>PIRG NVP Already Voted</i>	19,183	18,782	97.9%
<i>Blank</i>	3,833	2,803	73.1%

**Table 4.7: Effect of Mode of Contact on Turnout, Wisconsin**

<b>Mode of Contact</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
Campus Non-Phone	15,305	13,002	85.0%
Campus Phone	3,371	2,983	88.5%
Canvass	15,752	12,240	77.7%
Election Day	3,310	3,143	95.0%
Field	15	14	93.3%
Precinct Non-Phone			
Precinct Phone			
Paid Phone Bank	33,097	26,179	79.1%
Three Weeks Before Election Day and Prior	4,523	3,522	77.9%
Three Weeks Before to Weekend Before Election Day	27,954	22,090	79.0%
Re-Contacts	7,730	6,787	87.8%
<i>Yale Do Not Contact</i>	1,540	1,032	67.0%
<i>PIRG NVP Already Voted</i>	149	140	94.0%
<i>Blank</i>	234	218	93.2%

## 5. Effects of Date Last Contacted

In addition to the generic questions regarding the efficacy of voter registration and contact, it is also important to evaluate the influence of timing of contact. Just as registration programs wonder whether they will create more “real” voters by registering people closer to Election Day or earlier, so also can there be real and measurable turnout effects derived from when voters are contacted.

One school of thought holds that voter contact should occur early and be repeated over and over during the course of a cycle. Another school of thought posits that contacting voters just prior to the election provides the most bang for the buck. This section does not try to weigh these alternatives against one another, but it does provide data on the relationship between turnout and the number of days between the “final” contact and election day. Table 5.1 provides the results for all states. In this table and in others in this section, “Invalid” means that no contact ever had a valid date associated with it (e.g., lack of year, stray characters), while “Blank” means that no date existed with any contact ever for that person.

**Table 5.1: Effect of Days Since Last Contact on Turnout, All Voter Lists**

<b>Days Since Last Contact</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
<i>Invalid</i>	13,650	11,216	82.2%
<i>Blank</i>	4,842	3,586	74.1%
0 Days	42,846	34,966	81.6%
1 Day	30,332	24,589	81.1%
2 to 3 Days	58,859	50,210	85.3%
4 to 8 Days	79,880	62,811	78.6%
9 to 15 Days	31,984	22,059	69.0%
16 to 30 Days	32,333	22,187	68.6%
31 to 60 Days	8,997	6,267	69.7%
61 to 90 Days			
91+ Days	319	200	62.7%

Of the nearly 300,000 contacted individuals, 132,037 voters received a contact three days or less out from the election. 211,917 voters received a contact fewer than nine days out from the election. This suggests a Get-Out-The-Vote effort that was both large and comprehensive in scope.

The turnout effects are both sharp and surprising. Contacts in the 3 days leading up to election day have the largest effect on turnout, with the 2-3 day window maxing out at an 85.3% turnout rate. Contacts starting at 9 days out and before suffer by as much as ten percentage points. This seems to suggest that even if an organization plans to conduct a layered contact program over time, it should not skip a final round of contacts right before the election.

An important qualification that should be borne in mind here has to do with early voting. An increasing number of states have enacted provisions for early vote, which allow registered voters to cast ballots in certain locations on certain days and times during the weeks leading up to the election. Among the six states here, Colorado, Iowa, Nevada, New Mexico, and Oregon all have early vote provisions. (In the case of Oregon, votes are cast by mail.) To some extent this is reflected in the “already voted” category in Section 4. In any event, this situation obfuscates some of the relationship between contact date and turnout.

Tables 5.2 through 5.7 provide the state-by-state breakouts. In the context of early voting, the relationships are quite interesting. In Wisconsin, for example, where there is no early voting, the efficacy of contacts on turnout is highest on Election Day and steadily slopes back from there. The same characterization can be made of New Mexico. In the other four states, though, the highest rates of turnout can be found either from people contacted the day before Election Day (e.g., Colorado and Iowa), or two to three days before Election Day (e.g., Nevada and Oregon). While more research would be needed to establish a definitive causal link, this suggests that field activists might plan their GOTV efforts differently in early vote states versus non-early vote states with respect to timing of contact.

**Table 5.2: Effect of Days Since Last Contact on Turnout, Colorado**

<b>Days Since Last Contact</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
<i>Invalid</i>	3,336	2,911	87.3%
<i>Blank</i>	517	461	89.2%
0 Days	15,381	12,012	78.1%
1 Day	10,679	8,623	80.7%
2 to 3 Days	14,591	11,470	78.6%
4 to 8 Days	16,009	12,112	75.7%
9 to 15 Days	8,567	5,673	66.2%
16 to 30 Days	10,085	6,688	66.3%
31 to 60 Days	1,908	1,347	70.6%
61 to 90 Days			
91+ Days	38	24	63.2%

**Table 5.3: Effect of Days Since Last Contact on Turnout, Iowa**

<b>Days Since Last Contact</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
<i>Invalid</i>	1,373	1,172	85.4%
<i>Blank</i>	161	120	74.5%
0 Days	4,495	3,562	79.2%
1 Day	5,030	4,133	82.2%
2 to 3 Days	4,618	3,475	75.2%
4 to 8 Days	19,353	14,659	75.7%
9 to 15 Days	6,018	3,927	65.3%
16 to 30 Days	5,838	3,764	64.5%
31 to 60 Days	1,521	970	63.8%
61 to 90 Days			
91+ Days	39	32	82.1%

**Table 5.4: Effect of Days Since Last Contact on Turnout, New Mexico**

<b>Days Since Last Contact</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
<i>Invalid</i>	3,060	2,453	80.2%
<i>Blank</i>	163	118	72.4%
0 Days	4,599	3,822	83.1%
1 Day	2,881	2,115	73.4%
2 to 3 Days	5,062	3,591	70.9%
4 to 8 Days	5,717	4,050	70.8%
9 to 15 Days	2,538	1,803	71.0%
16 to 30 Days	1,072	752	70.1%
31 to 60 Days	358	254	70.9%
61 to 90 Days			
91+ Days	193	105	54.4%

**Table 5.5: Effect of Days Since Last Contact on Turnout, Nevada**

<b>Days Since Last Contact</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
<i>Invalid</i>	2,753	2,146	78.0%
<i>Blank</i>	127	67	52.8%
0 Days	2,481	1,635	65.9%
1 Day	2,220	1,656	74.6%
2 to 3 Days	7,399	6,706	90.6%
4 to 8 Days	10,697	9,315	87.1%
9 to 15 Days	2,096	1,157	55.2%
16 to 30 Days	2,058	1,116	54.2%
31 to 60 Days	1,040	550	52.9%
61 to 90 Days			
91+ Days	49	39	79.6%

**Table 5.6: Effect of Days Since Last Contact on Turnout, Oregon**

<b>Days Since Last Contact</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
<i>Invalid</i>	1,610	1,201	74.6%
<i>Blank</i>	3,486	2,495	71.6%
0 Days	3,577	2,972	83.1%
1 Day	4,164	3,472	83.4%
2 to 3 Days	20,626	19,563	94.8%
4 to 8 Days	11,789	9,741	82.6%
9 to 15 Days	4,584	3,516	76.7%
16 to 30 Days	6,105	4,710	77.1%
31 to 60 Days	1,712	1,338	78.2%
61 to 90 Days			
91+ Days			



**Table 5.7: Effect of Days Since Last Contact on Turnout, Wisconsin**

<b>Days Since Last Contact</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Turnout Percentage</b>
<i>Invalid</i>	<i>1,518</i>	<i>1,333</i>	<i>87.8%</i>
<i>Blank</i>	<i>388</i>	<i>325</i>	<i>83.8%</i>
0 Days	12,313	10,963	89.0%
1 Day	5,358	4,590	85.7%
2 to 3 Days	6,563	5,405	82.4%
4 to 8 Days	16,315	12,934	79.3%
9 to 15 Days	8,181	5,983	73.1%
16 to 30 Days	7,175	5,157	71.9%
31 to 60 Days	2,458	1,808	73.6%
61 to 90 Days			
91+ Days			

## 6. Propensity Score Analysis

Up to this point, our examination of turnout has been solely based on comparing people on the PIRG NVP voter files who were registered and contacted to those on the PIRG NVP voter files who were not. While there are many meaningful conclusions that can be drawn from such an analysis, there is also an important stumbling block that obscures our understanding of the effect of registration and contact. Many voter registration and contact programs are targeted at people who, under normal circumstances, would on average be less likely to vote. Therefore, it is important to compare similar voters who would otherwise have about the same probability of being registered or contacted by the PIRG New Voters Project. One way to achieve this is through propensity score matching. While we cannot create a perfect experiment that compares two equivalent groups of people that differ only by whether or not they were registered or contacted, we can estimate how likely a given individual is to be registered by a group. Then we can compare the turnout rates of those who were likely to be registered (or contacted) but were *not* registered (or contacted) with those who were.

The method works through two stages. The first stage involves the construction of the propensity scores themselves, through models, while the second stage involves matching "similar" people on the basis of those scores.

### Stage 1: Propensity Score Model Construction

During the first modeling stage, three separate sets of propensity score models were run to analyze the PIRG New Voters Project data in the state of Iowa: one for registrants only, one for contacted voters only, and one for voters who were both registered and contacted. Estimation of propensity scores is accomplished using a statistical technique called logistic regression. For each voter, the logistic regression procedure estimates a registered voter's probability of being registered (or contacted) as a function of his/her demographic characteristics and past vote history. Note that the models were run only on voters 26 years old or younger.

The following variables were used as predictors of being registered or contacted in the propensity score models:

- Age of the voter
- Gender of the voter
- Party affiliation
- Length of voter registration
- Turnout in the 2000 and 2002 general elections and in the 2004 primary election
- Eligibility to vote in the 2000 and 2002 general elections and in the 2004 primary election
- Voter status
- Racial composition of census block in which the voter lives
- Precinct-level turnout in the 2004 general election

- Median income of voter's census tract
- Average educational attainment in the voter's census tract

The first four variables are individual demographic or political variables on the voter file. The next two variables contain individual turnout information from the vote history files. Since the amount of potential vote history varies by the length of time the voter has been registered, we include both eligibility and turnout in prior elections. This specification distinguishes between voters who were not eligible to have voted in a prior election and voters who were eligible to vote in a prior election but did not. The last set of variables measure characteristics of the voter's neighborhood (defined by either their Census block or tract). These variables are included both to capture contextual effects and to control for demographic variables (such as income and education) that are missing at the individual level from the voter file.

## **Stage 2: Propensity Score Matching**

For simplicity, although we built three sets of propensity score models, let us use the registration propensity score model as an example. After building the registration propensity scores, registrants were then divided into quintiles based on how likely the individuals were to be registered by PIRG NVP. The top quintile represents individuals whose characteristics made them very likely to be registered, and the bottom quintile represents those whose characteristics made them very unlikely to be registered. Each quintile of registrants was then matched with a control group – comprised of individuals from the Polimetrix 2005 Iowa voter file – that was not registered by the PIRG NVP programs. Any difference in turnout between a quintile of registrants and its control group likely can be attributed to the effect of being contacted by the program. It should be noted that while the quintiles of registrants for each group have equal numbers of people, the quintiles of the control groups do not. Also, we are not able to control for the fact that some members of the control group may have been registered by another voter registration program outside of this study.

Table 6.1 presents the overall results of the propensity score matching for the state of Iowa.

**Table 6.1: Turnout by Propensity Quintiles, Iowa**

		<b>Bottom quintile</b>	<b>2nd quintile</b>	<b>3rd quintile</b>	<b>4th quintile</b>	<b>Top quintile</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Contacted</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	59.8% (10405)	71.4% (10404)	77.8% (10404)	82.7% (10404)	87.5% (10404)	75.8% (52021)
	<b>Controls</b>	39.0% (60813)	51.3% (40227)	56.2% (25258)	62.2% (17020)	66.5% (10318)	55.1% (153636)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	20.8%	20.1%	21.6%	20.5%	20.9%	20.8%
<b>Registered</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	70.0% (3243)	75.0% (3243)	74.3% (3243)	81.4% (3243)	86.6% (3242)	77.5% (16214)
	<b>Controls</b>	45.5% (119435)	59.9% (19326)	64.7% (9061)	70.5% (4347)	80.6% (1467)	64.2% (153636)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	24.5%	15.0%	9.5%	10.9%	6.0%	13.2%
<b>Both</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	73.7% (1491)	84.0% (1491)	85.8% (1491)	89.9% (1491)	90.6% (1490)	84.8% (7454)
	<b>Controls</b>	46.6% (124556)	59.7% (17746)	61.2% (7154)	69.9% (3267)	81.9% (913)	63.9% (153636)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	27.1%	24.3%	24.6%	20.0%	8.7%	20.9%

In interpreting the results above, it is important to focus on the results in the top quintiles. The top quintiles compare the kinds of people that the PIRG New Voters Project was likely to register or contact to similar people that the program did not contact. These kinds of individuals fundamentally share many sets of traits in common, and it is whether or not they were contacted by the program that fundamentally sets them apart. The bottom quintile is actually rather uninformative as it contains individuals who bucked the trends, so to speak, and is fundamentally made up of “noisier” data.

Thus, in examining the contact model for example, the top quintile of PIRG NVP contacts had a turnout rate of 87.5%, while the control group had a turnout rate of 66.5% - a difference of 21 percentage points. This indicates a substantial benefit to the PIRG NVP contact programs. Similarly, in examining the registration programs, a difference of six percentage points can be found. This implies that, subject to the limitations of the methodology and technique, the effect of registration by PIRG NVP (versus registration by another means) was a six percentage point boost in turnout.

There are a couple important caveats that should be borne in mind. First, even propensity score analysis is subject to one of the key limitations highlighted earlier in this report – specifically, the fact that by definition a PIRG NVP contact was known to exist at that address, whereas a generic voter file contact may have long since disappeared. Therefore, these numbers also share some amount of positive bias as well. To address this problem to some extent, we also broke out the propensity score results by registration length. The theory behind this was that more recent registrants, both by PIRG NVP and on the voter file, are inherently less likely to be “deadwood.”

Second, while the number of controls used in the propensity score models is extensive, it cannot be exhaustive. There may be other unobserved and unknown variables that affected whether or not an individual was likely to be registered by the PIRG NVP program. These factors can distort the effects that are measured.

Tables 6.2, 6.3, and 6.4 present the results of the contact, registration, and combined contacts and registration models, respectively.

**Table 6.2: Turnout by Propensity Quintiles – Contacts by Registration Length**

		Bottom quintile	2nd quintile	3rd quintile	4th quintile	Top quintile
<b>0-6 months</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	71.1% (982)	75.7% (1505)	82.0% (2222)	83.9% (3469)	87.7% (4782)
	<b>Controls</b>	72.7% (6605)	72.1% (7031)	71.0% (5452)	72.5% (5457)	74.5% (4438)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	-1.6%	3.6%	11.0%	11.3%	13.2%
<b>6 mo - 1 yr</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	69.7% (901)	73.3% (1195)	76.7% (1293)	81.5% (1546)	84.4% (1654)
	<b>Controls</b>	51.7% (3799)	56.6% (4370)	58.1% (3327)	62.9% (2561)	65.8% (1654)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	18.0%	16.7%	18.6%	18.6%	18.6%
<b>1-2 years</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	65.4% (1622)	72.9% (1721)	76.4% (1865)	82.0% (1801)	86.0% (1101)
	<b>Controls</b>	44.4% (7906)	49.4% (6316)	54.2% (4535)	56.4% (2867)	54.4% (1066)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	21.0%	23.6%	22.2%	25.5%	31.6%
<b>2-4 years</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	57.4% (2913)	68.2% (3007)	73.9% (2779)	80.2% (2131)	89.3% (1760)
	<b>Controls</b>	34.6% (17152)	43.8% (11488)	47.8% (6923)	53.6% (3488)	58.7% (1839)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	22.8%	24.4%	26.1%	26.6%	30.6%
<b>4-6 years</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	55.1% (2837)	70.2% (2276)	80.0% (1827)	85.5% (1206)	89.3% (951)
	<b>Controls</b>	30.7% (18193)	43.7% (8556)	51.6% (4117)	55.4% (2206)	59.5% (1142)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	24.4%	26.5%	28.5%	30.0%	29.8%
<b>6-9 years</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	52.3% (1150)	72.6% (700)	82.1% (418)	86.1% (251)	91.7% (156)
	<b>Controls</b>	27.2% (7158)	49.1% (2466)	54.8% (904)	69.4% (441)	73.7% (179)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	25.1%	23.5%	27.3%	16.7%	17.9%

**Table 6.3: Turnout by Propensity Quintiles – Registrants by Registration Length**

		<b>Bottom quintile</b>	<b>2nd quintile</b>	<b>3rd quintile</b>	<b>4th quintile</b>	<b>Top quintile</b>
<b>0-6 months</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	60.9% (453)	68.4% (1971)	71.1% (2636)	81.3% (2885)	86.7% (3232)
	<b>Controls</b>	74.2% (5700)	71.5% (10585)	70.7% (7350)	72.8% (3887)	80.8% (1461)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	-13.3%	-3.1%	0.3%	8.6%	5.9%
<b>6 mo - 1 yr</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	68.7% (233)	76.8% (379)	85.2% (216)	82.1% (319)	N/A (10)
	<b>Controls</b>	57.5% (10631)	57.6% (4107)	58.6% (633)	66.5% (334)	N/A (6)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	11.2%	19.2%	26.6%	15.7%	N/A
<b>1-2 years</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	70.6% (585)	87.0% (231)	91.1% (179)	N/A (13)	N/A (0)
	<b>Controls</b>	50.2% (20965)	45.6% (1326)	40.1% (377)	N/A (22)	N/A (0)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	20.4%	41.4%	51.0%	N/A	N/A
<b>2-4 years</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	69.7% (1061)	90.9% (449)	89.1% (184)	N/A (23)	N/A (0)
	<b>Controls</b>	42.8% (38485)	35.7% (1754)	21.4% (552)	N/A (99)	N/A (0)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	26.9%	55.2%	67.8%	N/A	N/A
<b>4-6 years</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	75.1% (704)	85.5% (159)	N/A (20)	N/A (0)	N/A (0)
	<b>Controls</b>	39.8% (32968)	19.6% (1140)	16.2% (105)	N/A (1)	N/A (0)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	35.4%	66.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>6-9 years</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	73.4% (207)	N/A (54)	N/A (8)	N/A (3)	N/A (0)
	<b>Controls</b>	36.4% (10686)	46.6% (414)	N/A (44)	N/A (4)	N/A (0)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	37.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Looking at Table 6.3, readers may initially be confused by why some individuals in the PIRG NVP groups had registration dates one year or more before the 2004 election date. Some voters listed as registered by PIRG NVP may, in fact, have already been present on the rolls. There are times when a re-registration is useful; an example of this is when a voter changes his or her name or address, or even information such as party registration. Re-registering these voters serves an intrinsic purpose and has value. Some other re-registrations are useless: a voter may complete an application with information that is purely identical to that which is already contained on the registrar’s rolls. This report is not intended to address the issue of re-registrations, but understanding it may help contextualize the results in these tables.

**Table 6.4: Turnout by Propensity Quintiles – Combined Contacts and Registrants by Registration Length**

		<b>Bottom quintile</b>	<b>2nd quintile</b>	<b>3rd quintile</b>	<b>4th quintile</b>	<b>Top quintile</b>
<b>0-6 months</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	72.1% (298)	77.8% (832)	83.8% (1041)	89.9% (1226)	90.6% (1484)
	<b>Controls</b>	72.8% (10834)	70.7% (9702)	70.9% (5043)	77.9% (2507)	82.3% (897)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	-0.6%	7.1%	12.8%	12.0%	8.3%
<b>6 mo - 1 yr</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	70.9% (110)	89.7% (155)	89.8% (127)	89.1% (175)	100.0% (6)
	<b>Controls</b>	57.1% (11678)	58.6% (3074)	60.6% (604)	67.0% (339)	62.5% (16)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	13.8%	31.1%	29.2%	22.2%	37.5%
<b>1-2 years</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	74.3% (241)	89.1% (128)	93.7% (126)	N/A (24)	N/A (0)
	<b>Controls</b>	50.1% (20763)	46.2% (1392)	43.5% (430)	41.0% (105)	N/A (0)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	24.1%	42.9%	50.2%	N/A	N/A
<b>2-4 years</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	70.0% (447)	94.8% (250)	88.8% (169)	N/A (57)	N/A (0)
	<b>Controls</b>	42.7% (37853)	38.9% (2061)	28.6% (689)	19.2% (287)	N/A (0)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	27.3%	55.9%	60.2%	N/A	N/A
<b>4-6 years</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	80.1% (311)	92.3% (104)	N/A (23)	N/A (6)	N/A (0)
	<b>Controls</b>	39.7% (32696)	26.6% (1150)	13.8% (349)	N/A (19)	N/A (0)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	40.3%	65.7%	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>6-9 years</b>	<b>PIRG NVP</b>	N/A (84)	N/A (22)	N/A (5)	N/A (3)	N/A (0)
	<b>Controls</b>	36.3% (10732)	N/A (367)	N/A (39)	N/A (10)	N/A (0)
	<b><i>Difference</i></b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

## 7. Conclusions

Retrospective analysis of a voter registration and contact program is useful for understanding both what happened and what is possible. Done properly, it can help funders and groups alike understand the strengths and weaknesses of their programs, including size and scope, targeting, resource allocation, and other strategic decisions. The real value of such an analysis rests, however, with being able to apply some of its findings toward potential future programs.

Applying the conclusions of this report to voters in 2006 should be done with caution. For example, while the NVP applicants who made it onto the voter rolls had a turnout rate approaching 80% in 2004, one might reasonably expect the turnout rate among new registrants to decline this year given the lack of a presidential election. Similarly, different demographic groups often vote at different rates during midterm election years than during presidential election years. This is not to say that the turnout findings are not at all applicable to the 2006 election; however, they should be complemented with voter file data and other research that is specific to the midterm election cycle.

The following bullet points reiterate our key findings, subject to the caveats explained in our report.

- Through propensity score modeling in the state of Iowa, PIRG NVP registration and contact appeared to have had a demonstrable and substantial effect on voter participation rates. People who were registered to vote by PIRG NVP were 5.9 percentage points more likely to vote than a demographically similar control group not registered by PIRG NVP, among people who registered less than six months before the election. People who were contacted by PIRG NVP were 13.2 percentage points more likely to vote than a demographically similar control group not contacted by PIRG NVP.
- Examining all states, individuals both registered and contacted by PIRG NVP turned out at a rate of 86.3%. People who were registered but not contacted turned out at a rate of 77.0%, while those contacted but not registered turned out at a rate of 76.9%. These are all sharp increases from the baseline “not registered and not contacted” group, which turned out at a 59.5% rate.
- Over 300,000 voters were contacted by PIRG NVP at least once, with over 128,000 of them receiving two or more contacts. A clear and powerful relationship was found between more contacts and turnout: contacting voters three or more times pushed the turnout rates into the 80s, contrasted with rates in the mid 70s for voters contacted only one or two times.
- Contacting voters in the few days leading up to the election had a clear and positive effect when compared to earlier contacts. Contacts in the 3 days leading up to election day have the clearest relationship with high turnout, with contacts in the 2-3 day window maxing out at an 85.3% turnout rate. Contacts starting at 9 days out and before suffer by as much as ten percentage points. Over 211,000 voters received a contact from PIRG NVP fewer than nine



days out from the 2004 general election, and over 132,000 of these were three days or fewer out.