



CALIFORNIA CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

Research for a Stronger, More Inclusive Democracy

As California Goes, So Goes the Nation? U.S. Demographic Change and the Latino Vote

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Summary

The impact of the growing Latino population on the U.S. landscape has been substantial. Latinos drove the nation's changing demographic profile over the past 30 years and are now the nation's largest racial or ethnic group, growing from 14.6 million people to over 55 million and comprising over 17% of the U.S. population by 2014. With population growth, there has also been a substantial increase in the Latino share of the U.S. electorate. From the 1980 to 2012 presidential general elections, the Latino share of the nation's voters grew steadily, from 2.6% to 8.4%, while non-Latino Whites saw their share of the U.S. vote decline 16 percentage points, from 90.1% to 73.7%.

Despite the perception of some political pundits and the general media that Latino turnout has experienced strong gains over the past few decades, the data shows a somewhat different story. Latino turnout increased by less than two percentage points from the 1980 till 2012 presidential elections. The highest year of eligible voter turnout for Latinos was in the 1992 general election (51.6%). With the exception of the 1980, 1992 and 2004 general elections, the Latino-White voter turnout gap has remained constant at 16%.

The growth in the Latino population in California has significantly changed the state's demographic landscape. Latinos have driven the state's overall population growth, while at the same time, the non-Latino white population has decreased. For the first time in modern California history, Latinos have reached a plurality of the state's total population. As with U.S. Latinos, California Latinos are younger than the state's non-Latino whites and nearly all Latinos under age 18 are native-born citizens. As the sizable block of Latino youth transition to adulthood, they will bring significant increases in California's Latino proportion of the eligible voter population.

Increases in the Latino population also have contributed to a steady increase in the Latino share of California's total votes cast. Consistent with California's population changes, the most dramatic shifts in the composition of the state's vote have also occurred since 2000. Between the 2000 and 2012 general elections, the white proportion of California's vote declined 13.5 percentage points from nearly 70.2% to 56.7% by 2012, while the Latino share of the vote increased 10 percentage points. Without Latinos, Democrats and Republicans would have been nearly equal in their percentage of voters.

But disparities in electoral participation continue to exist for people of color in California, and the U.S. as a whole. Latinos continue to be underrepresented among voters compared to their share of those eligible to vote and the overall population. In contrast, non-Latino Whites remain overrepresented in the electorate. This is because Latinos have consistently had lower registration and voter turnout rates than non-Latino Whites. At the same time, disparities in turnout by income, age and education are greater for Latinos in California than they are in the U.S..

In 2016, Latinos will likely see a record number of voters participate in the general election due to population increases. Latinos, thus, will be a key force in the selection of the president, but will also shape electoral outcomes at the state and local level. However, considering that the majority of Latinos do not reside in swing states, it will be a comparably smaller number of Latino voters who will help choose the next President. Swing states with the largest proportions of Latino voters (Colorado, Florida and Nevada) will see the greatest Latino direct electoral influence in the presidential race.

Highlights:

- 17% of the U.S. Latino population resides in presidential election swing states.
- Latinos are projected to be 24% of the U.S. population by 2040.
- California is a safe Democratic state in presidential elections because of the Latino Democratic vote.
- Latinos make up 9% of the total eligible voter population in swing states.
- Latinos are projected to be 45% of the CA population by 2040.
- California voter turnout is lower than U.S. turnout due to participation disparities among its large non-white population.
- Nearly all U.S. Latino youth are citizens.
- Latinos are projected to be 24.2% of CA's 2016 vote.

Introduction

The 2012 general election generated considerable discussion about the current and future demographic make up of the U.S. electorate. Much of this attention focused on how growing numbers of U.S. Latinos might generate a larger share of Latino voters, and what their influence might be on the political process.¹ Overall, Latinos currently skew strongly Democratic in their political party affiliation. How they vote, how often they vote, and how that vote will grow in the coming years has significant implications for both national and local politics, potentially remaking the nation’s “red-blue map,” and giving Latinos a greater voice in the political decision-making process.

Fueled primarily by U.S. births, the Latino population is projected to increase 110% between 2015 and 2060 (from 56.7 million to 119 million). By 2060, Latinos are projected to be 28% of the total U.S. population. By 2044 The U.S. is projected to be majority-minority (the population will be composed of less than 50% non-Latino Whites) (U.S. Census 2014 Population Projections).²

Currently, the proportion of Latinos in the U.S. population is the same as their proportion of California’s population 30 years ago. Much can be learned about the potential for Latino impact on the U.S. electorate by looking at the electoral experiences of the growing Latino population in California.

In California, the impact of high Latino population growth has been

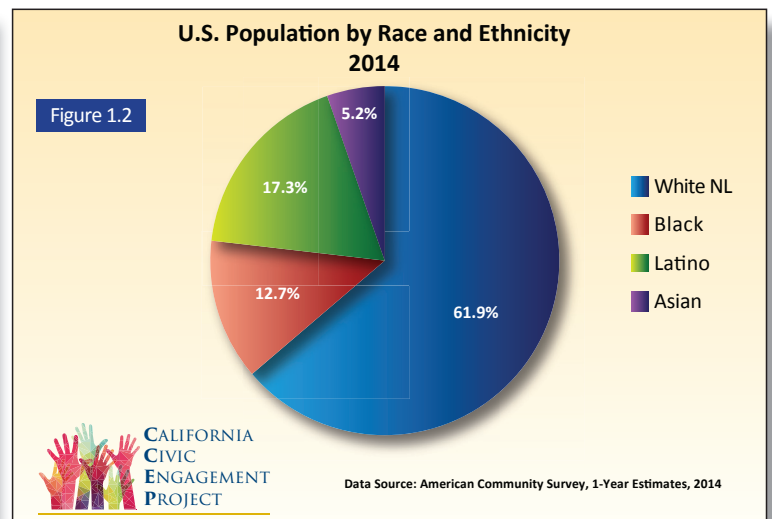
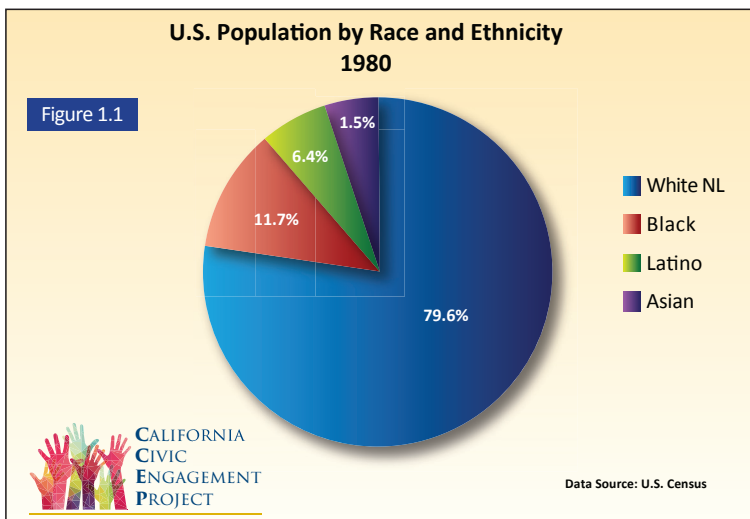
felt on the electorate in increasingly influential ways since 1980. From 1980 to 2014, California’s Latino population increased by 10.4 million, or nearly seventy percent of the state’s total population growth of 15.1 million. Latinos now make-up 39% (nearly 15 million) of the California’s total population of 38.8 million and are a majority in many communities across the state (American Community Survey, U.S. Census). A growing Latino population means more eligible Latino voters. Today, Latinos are the fastest-growing block of voters in California.

This report provides a detailed overview of the U.S. and California’s changing population composition, while also documenting the historic and current racial and ethnic disparities in voter turnout present within our electoral system. Utilizing available historical population data (U.S. Census, American Community Survey) and voter data (Current Population Survey) from 1980 to 2014, we examine the following research questions:³

- 1) What has been the impact of Latino population growth on the political landscape in California and the U.S.?
- 2) How do California Latino voters differ from Latino voters in the U.S.?
- 3) What role does California play in U.S. elections?
- 4) What impact will Latinos play in the 2016 U.S. Election and beyond?

1. Latinos are Driving U.S. Population Change

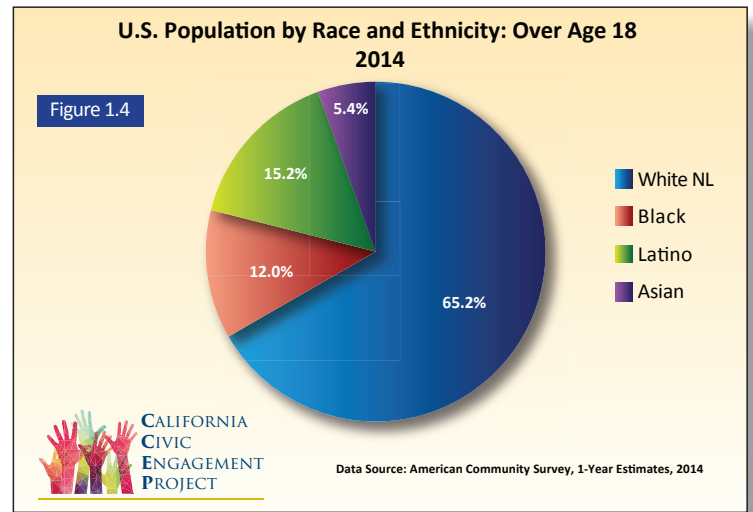
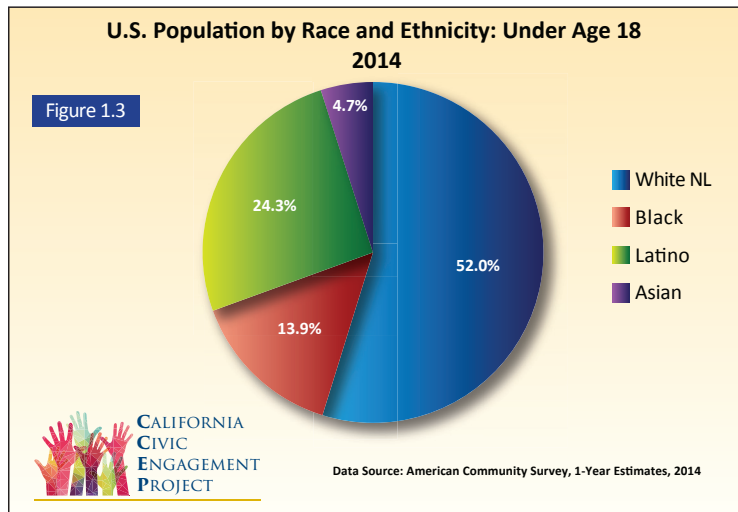
Before we can begin to assess what Latino population growth might mean for the U.S. electorate, we need to more fully understand the impact of population change on the pool of eligible and actual voters. Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2 show that between 1980 and 2014, Latinos were the largest driver of the nation’s changing demographic profile. Over this 34-year period, Latinos comprised 44% of the nation’s total population growth, growing from 14.6 million people to over 55 million and increasing the Latino share of the population to over 17% (out of a total U.S. population of 319 million). Latinos are now the largest minority (racial or ethnic) group in the U.S. In comparison, the Asian-American population grew by 377% in the U.S., (an increase of 13 million), but at 5.2%, they make up a much smaller proportion of the population than Latinos in 2014. Meanwhile, the black population of the U.S. grew by 13.9 million. In 2014, Blacks were 12.7% of the total population, up by one percentage point since 1980. Over the same period, the white non-Latino share of the population declined to 61.9%, from 79.6% in 1980 (data for populations other than non-Latino Whites, Blacks, Latinos and Asian-Americans not shown in figures).



Between 1980 and 2000, the Latino immigrant population increased from 4.2 million to 14.1 million and was a main component of Latino population growth, overall. However, in recent years, immigration to the U.S. from Mexico has slowed considerably and numerically speaking is nearly equivalent to migration from the U.S. to Mexico. Since 2000, the primary source of Latino population growth has been native births (Pew Research Center, 2015).⁴

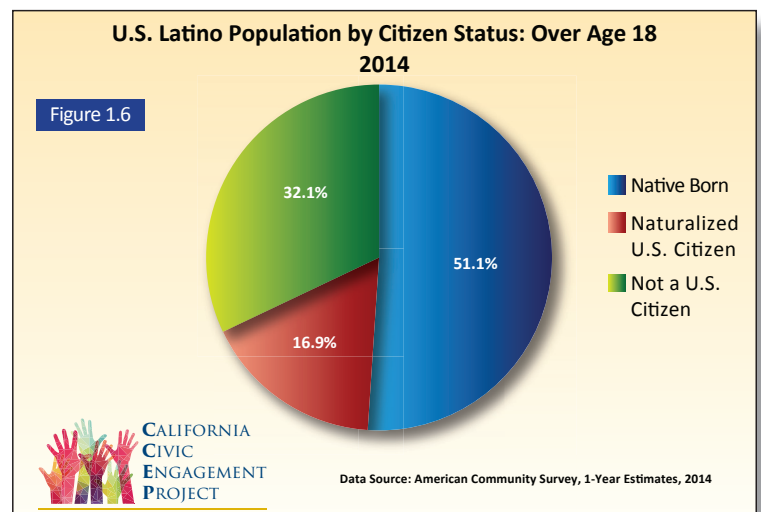
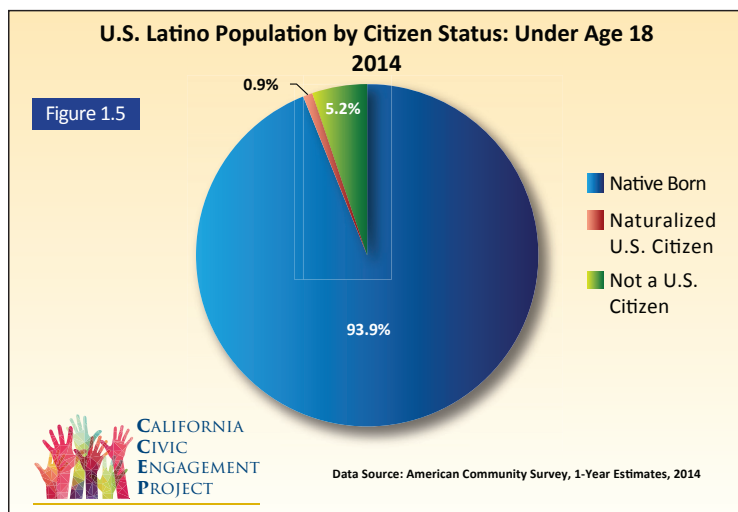
a. Nearly One Quarter of U.S. Children are Latino

Latinos are younger as a population than white non-Latinos. Figure 1.3 and Figure 1.4 show that when the U.S. population in 2014 is broken down by age, Latinos comprise a much greater proportion (24.3%) of those under age 18, compared with a smaller proportion (15.2%) of adults. Thirty-four percent of the total Latino population is under age 18, a much higher percentage than non-Latino Whites, Blacks and Asian-Americans.



b. Nearly all Latino Youth are Citizens

In 2014, 23.3% of Latinos in the U.S. were non-citizens. Nearly all of these non-citizens were adults. Figure 1.5 and Figure 1.6 show that 51.1% of the adult Latino population was native-born and 32.1% were non-citizens. In contrast, nearly 94% of the U.S. Latino population under age 18 was native-born and only 5.2% were non-citizens. This increase in the number of U.S.-born Latinos (and the decline in Latino immigration) is reshaping the makeup of adult Latino population (Pew Research Center, 2014).⁵ About 800,000 Latinos now turn 18 each year. As Latino youth age into adulthood, they will greatly increase the Latino proportion of the citizen voting-age population.

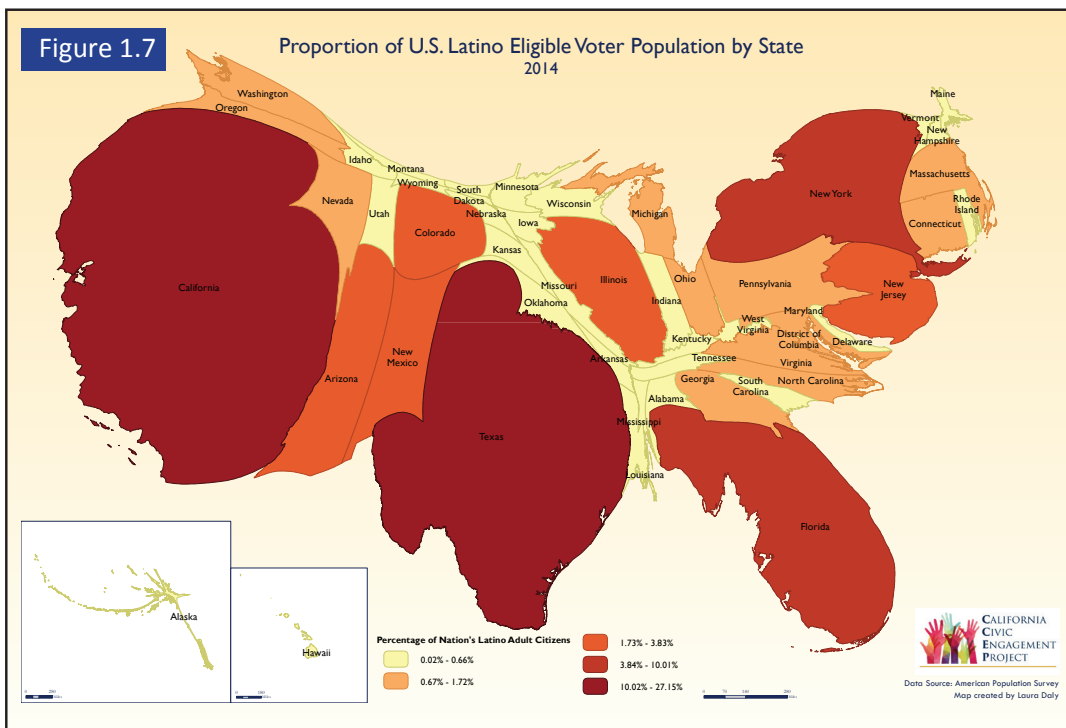


U.S. Undocumented Population

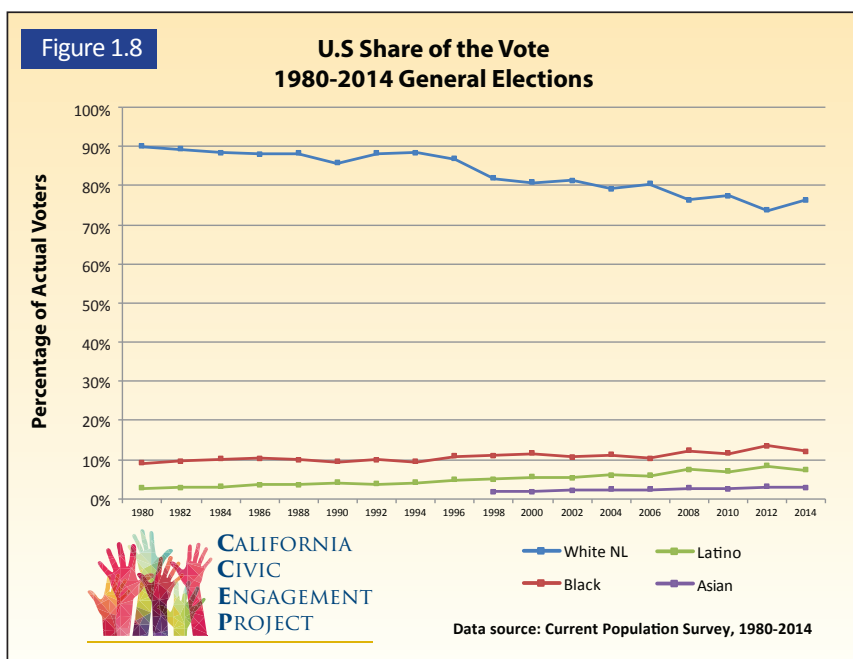
According to the U.S. Census, unauthorized immigrants are included in its estimates of the total foreign-born population and it is not possible to present separate estimates of unauthorized immigrants. Thus not all U.S. residents are accounted for in census population data. However, unauthorized immigrants have many reasons for not answering the U.S. Census correctly and can be difficult to contact.⁶

c. Latino Geography

The geography of the Latino population in the U.S. varies dramatically across the nation. More than half of the nation’s Latinos reside in just three states: California, Texas and Florida. Another 20% reside in Arizona, New Mexico, New York and New Jersey. In 2014, California alone had 27% of the nation’s total Latino population and 27% of its Latino eligible voter population. Over 70% of the nation’s Latino population is contained within only 100 counties, with Los Angeles County alone containing 9% (5 million) of the Latino population in the U.S. (Pew Research Center, 2013).⁷



Nationally, Mexicans are the largest group of Latino origin, making up 64.6% of all Latinos in the nation. Geographic settlement patterns for Latinos differ by country of origin. For example, Latinos of Mexican origin are the largest group in the Los Angeles-Long Beach metropolitan area, comprising 78% of the area’s Latinos. Latinos of Mexican origin are also the most numerous group in many metropolitan areas in the Southwestern states, including California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. However, along the East Coast, the composition of Latino groups differs greatly. The largest Latino groups in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area are Puerto Rican and Dominican. In Miami-Hialeah, Florida, Cubans are the largest Latino group, while in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, Salvadorans have been the most numerous (Pew Research Center, 2013).⁸



d. Decline of the U.S. White Vote: Presidential Elections

Over the past 30 plus years, we have seen a substantial increase in the Latino share of the U.S. electorate. From the 1980 to 2012 presidential elections, the Latino share of the nation’s total pool of actual voters grew steadily from 2.6% to 8.4%, while the black share of the vote increased from 9% to 13.4%, and the Asian-American share rose from 1.7% (in 1996) to 2.9%. Over the same period, the non-Latino white share of voters declined 16 percentage points, from 90.1% to 73.7% by 2012 (Figure 1.8).

These increases in the Latino share of the U.S. vote have occurred due to the growth of the Latino eligible voter population. As the population of eligible Latino voters has increased, the number of actual Latino voters has also increased (see Section 1h for a discussion of Latino eligible turnout rates during this same period).⁹

Note: Some of this decrease in the white vote is due to the changing data collection methods overtime by the CPS. From 1980 through 1996, data reported by the CPS for the white population included Asian-Americans, as well as Latinos. Latino data alone was also reported. Many types of Asian-American data were not available from the CPS until 1998. Consequently, the white percent of the vote is somewhat inflated for the election years of 1980 through 1996. Current Population Survey (CPS) data is the most utilized estimate of voter turnout in the U.S., aside from state voter records (these do not provide demographic identification), but CPS data can be problematic because of the overreporting (and sometimes underreporting by some groups) inherent in survey data involving self-reported rates of turnout, and also due to the Survey's methodology in treating non-responses. These issues often produce higher state turnout rates than what are reported by state voter records and are not comparable to turnout findings utilizing state voter records. When comparing voter turnout across states and by demographic group, CPS voter data has the most consistent data collection methods and is the most reliable source available for historical analyses. See notes for more discussion.⁹

e. Underrepresentation in the U.S. Electorate: Presidential Elections

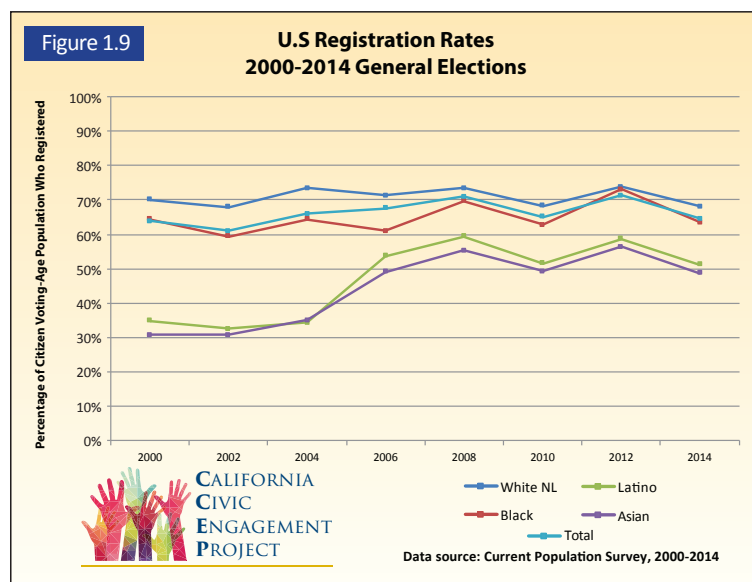
Disparities in electoral representation remain a constant for Latinos as well as Asian-Americans. Both groups are underrepresented in the voting electorate based on their share of the U.S. population, and given their percentage of the nation's eligible voter population.

At 8.4%, the 2012 Latino share of the U.S. vote remained below Latinos' 11% share of the nation's 2012 eligible voter population (defined here as adult citizens) and below their 17% share of the nation's total population that year. Meanwhile, Asian-Americans faced a similar situation: in 2012, they made up 2.9% of the U.S. vote, but 3.8% of the nation's eligible voter population, and 5% of the U.S. total population. By contrast, non-Latino Whites were overrepresented in the 2012 electorate, with 73.7% of the U.S. vote, but 70.8% of the nation's eligible voter population, and 62% of the U.S. total population. Finally, with 13.4% of the vote, African-Americans were also numerically overrepresented among U.S. voters compared with their 12.6% of the eligible voter population and 12.7% of the U.S. population.

f. The 2014 Midterm Election

Much of the research on voter turnout focuses on presidential elections. This focus reflects the media and general public's strong interest in this part of the U.S. electoral experience. However, it is important to note that the greatest disparities in eligible voter turnout take place in midterm elections. Not only are general turnout rates lower in midterm elections, but the gap between the voting rates of non-Whites and Whites is wider than the gap in presidential elections. Over the past 30 years, non-Whites and youth have been even more underrepresented in midterm elections than in presidential elections. What is more, the underrepresentation of Latinos during midterm elections has become numerically greater since the 2000 general election.

In the midterm election of 2014, the nation hit a record low turnout of eligible voters. Only 41.9% of all those eligible to vote did so, down from 45.5% in 2010. Latino, Whites and Asian-Americans also all saw record lows for their turnout. Latino eligible turnout was only 27%, Asian-American turnout was 27.1% and non-Latino Whites saw an eligible turnout of 45.8%. In contrast, Blacks did not see a record low turnout, although their turnout rate of 39.7% was within a point of their lowest rate (see appendix for detailed data tables). Despite record low turnout rates, Latinos also saw a record for the number of Latino voters (6.8 million).



g. The Changing Electorate

Latinos and Asian-Americans are underrepresented in their share of the U.S. vote because they both register and turn out to vote at rates much lower than those of non-Latino White voters.

An analysis of U.S. voter turnout by race and ethnicity utilizing the registered voter population can be problematic due to disparities in registration rates. U.S. Latinos, Asian-Americans and Blacks all have lower registration rates than non-Latino Whites. Still, Blacks have higher registration rates than Latinos and Asian-Americans. To obtain a clearer understanding of participation disparities by population group, it is preferable to utilize eligible voter turnout (the percentage of adult citizens who voted) as a measure of voter turnout.

From 2000-2014, non-Latino White registration rates did not fall below the upper 60-percent range, whereas the rates of non-Whites have fluctuated at much lower levels. Latino and Asian-American registration rates did not reach 60% in any election during the 2000-2014 period. The high point in registration rates for Blacks and Latinos was 2008. For non-Latino Whites and Asian-Americans, the high point was in 2012. From 2000 to 2004, the gap between the registration rates of Latinos and Asians and that of non-Latino Whites was in the mid to upper 30-percent range, though beginning in 2006, registration gaps shrunk to the mid to upper teens (see Figure 1.9).

h. U.S. Eligible Voter Turnout: Presidential Elections

Figure 1.10 shows that from the 1980 to 2012 presidential elections, general eligible turnout declined by just over 2 percentage points (from 64% to 61.8%). The general election of 1992 was the high-water mark for voter turnout of the total eligible population, at 67.7%. Interestingly, in the next presidential election (1996), the nation experienced the lowest eligible turnout (58.4%). Since 1992, the highest total eligible turnout rate was in 2008 at 63.6%.

i. Narrowing the White-Black Voting Gap

In 2012, non-Latino White voters experienced eligible voter turnout rates higher than those of Latino and Asian-American voters in the U.S. At the same time, the gap between the eligible voter turnout rates of non-Latino Whites compared to those of Blacks and Latinos has narrowed. This narrowing has been most dramatic in the case of black voters. Eligible voter turnout of Blacks increased from 53.9% in 1980 to 66.2% in 2012, with a steady upward trend beginning in 1996. This increase led to the elimination of the white-black gap in eligible turnout in 2012. For the first time in U.S. electoral history, eligible Blacks reported turning out to vote at a higher rate than Whites did, outpacing them by 2 percentage points in that year's general election.

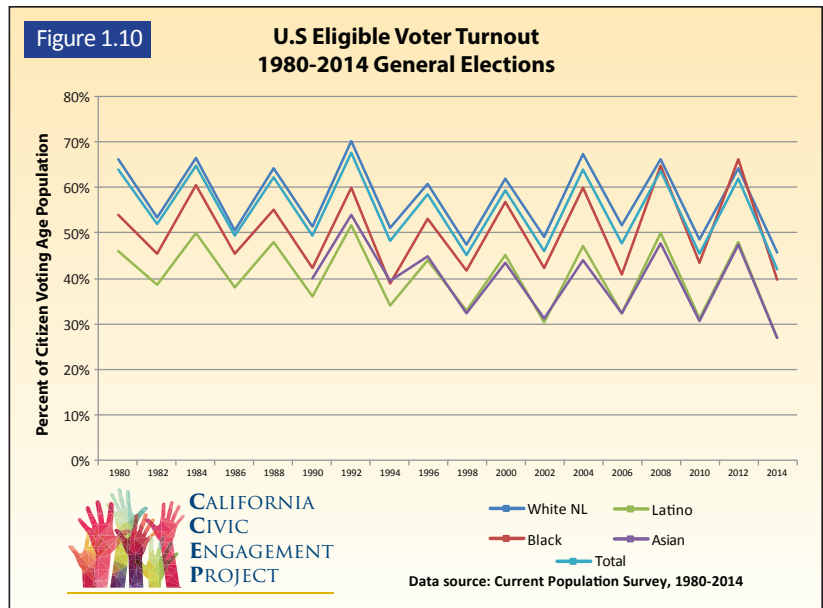
j. The Persistent Latino-White Voting Gap

Latino turnout only increased by 1.9 percentage points from 1980 till 2012. The highest year of eligible voter turnout for Latinos was the 1992 general election (51.6%). Since then, Latino turnout has been on the rise again, but has yet to reach the 1992 level.

While Latinos have voted at higher eligible turnout rates than Asian-Americans have (based on comparable election years beginning in 2000), they have consistently voted at much lower turnout rates than non-Latino whites have. With the exception of the 1980, 1992 and 2004 general elections, the Latino-White voter turnout gap has remained the same at 16%. Counter to the perceptions of many political pundits and media, Latinos have not experienced large increases in their turnout rates during this period.

k. The Asian-American-White Voting Gap

The Current Population Survey did not collect voting data for Asian-Americans prior to 1990. From this general election on, Asian-Americans, like Latinos, have consistently voted at a much lower rate than have non-Latino whites. From 1992 till 2000, Asian-American turnout decreased by 10 percentage points, but has been rising over the last decade. From 2000 onward, the gap between Asian-American and non-Latino White voting rates, generally, has been larger than the gap between Latino and non-Latino Whites voting rates.



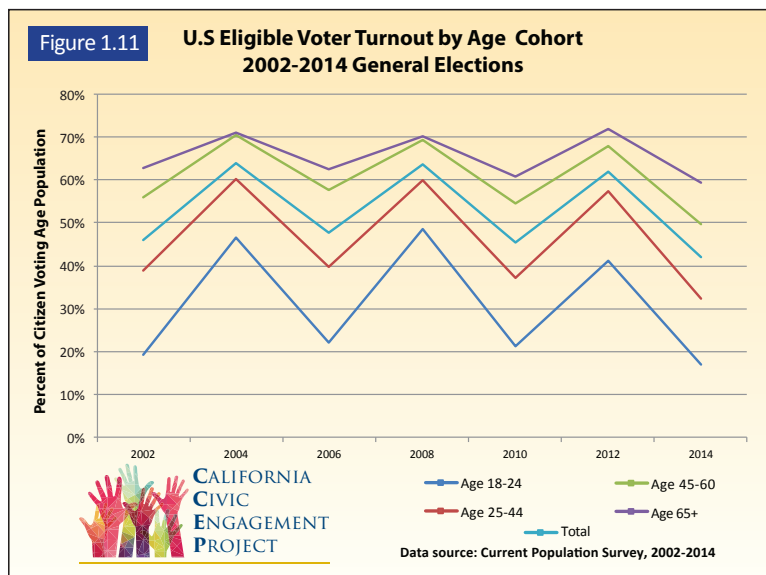
I. Voting Disparity: The 2008 Turnout Myth

The election of 2008, which pitted Barack Obama against John McCain, is commonly seen as an exceptional year for eligible voter turnout in a general election. However, eligible turnout for the total population was actually slightly higher in 2004 (63.8% vs. 63.6%).

The general election of 1992 (a highly competitive presidential election between candidates Bill Clinton, George Bush and Ross Perot) actually achieved the highest eligible general turnout (and highest white turnout) in the past 30 years. After 1992, general eligible turnout rates declined to pre-1980 rates, and remained low throughout the general elections of the 1990's and 2000's. Even 2008's eligible turnout rate was slightly lower than turnout in 1980.

The general election of 2008 is notable for the high turnout of eligible non-Whites. Blacks, Latinos and Asian-Americans all increased their turnout rates in 2008 as compared to 2004. However, Latinos and Asian-Americans actually experienced their highest eligible turnout rates in 1992. In contrast, 2012 saw the highest eligible turnout for Blacks, while Latino and Asian-American voting rates were lower in 2012 than in 2008.

m. Older Voters Dominate the Electorate: Presidential Elections



The age gap in U.S. voter turnout constitutes one of the largest group disparities in voter participation. Figure 1.11 shows that eligible 18-24 year-olds have consistently had the lowest voter turnout levels of any age cohort over the last decade. Only 46.7% of eligible 18-24 year-olds voted in the U.S. in the 2004 general election, and this number decreased to 41.2% in 2012. The gap in turnout between 18-24 year-olds and those over age 65 (the age group with the highest turnout rates) also increased from 24.3% in 2004 to 30.8% in 2012. Youth eligible turnout in 2012 was at a decade-low for general presidential elections.

From Figure 1.11, we can see that the size of the U.S. age gap in voting is larger during midterm elections compared with presidential elections. Fewer youth turn out during midterm elections. In 2014, only 17.1% of eligible youth age 18-24 turned out to vote. Youth eligible turnout was 42.3 percentage points lower than the rate for those age 65 and

older in this election.

n. Age Turnout by Race and Ethnicity

When looking at the youth vote in the U.S. by race and ethnicity, we see some considerable variations in turnout. In 2012, eligible Latino and Asian-American youth voted at lower rates (7.8 and 11.1 percentage points lower, respectively) than did their non-Latino White counterparts' rate of 42%. However, this is not the story for black youth. Beginning in 2008, eligible black 18-24 year-olds turned out at much higher levels than did white youth. In 2012, 48.7% of eligible Blacks age 18-to-24 year-old turned out to vote, a full 6.7 percentage points higher than the rate for white youth (although this was a decline from 2008's high point of 55.4%).

For Latino youth, there is some positive movement. Even though they still experience lower turnout compared with non-Latino white youth, their rates have seen a small overall increase since 2004, going up 1.2 percentage points by 2012 (although they experienced a decrease from 2008). In contrast, Asian-American youth experienced an overall decline of three percentage points from 2004 to 2012 (and a nearly 10 percentage-point decline from 2008).

The U.S. voter age gap looks very different when we break it down by race and ethnicity. In 2012, Whites had a larger difference in turnout (31.4 percentage points) between their eligible youth and those age 65 and older. Asian-Americans had the smallest difference in turnout between their youngest and oldest age cohorts (22.8 percentage points), while Latinos and Blacks were nearly the same with a 26 percentage-point gap.

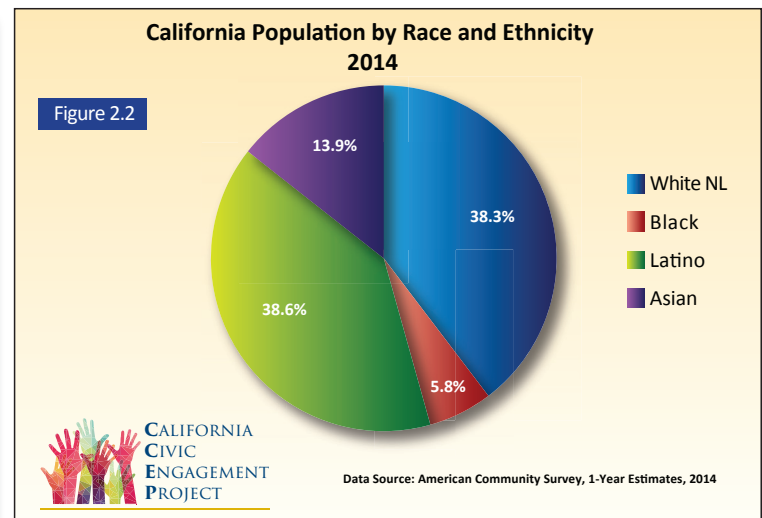
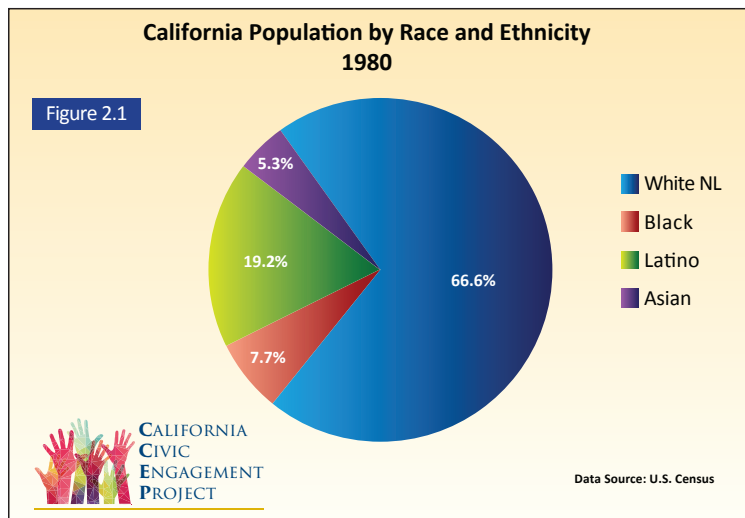
One age pattern was found that runs counter to what we might expect from most voter turnout literature. In 2008, eligible Blacks, Latinos and Asians aged 45-64 actually voted at higher turnout rates than their 65-and-over counterparts.

2. Dramatic Growth of the California Latino Vote

Understanding the potential political changes ahead for California requires assessing the past and on-going electoral impact of population change in the state. How have the changes in the California Latino population since 1980 affected the level of Latino electoral participation? To what extent has the growth in the Latino vote impacted the composition of the state's overall electorate?

a. Latinos are a Plurality of California's Population

There were significant changes in California's demographic landscape from 1980 to 2014, as illustrated by Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2. The Latino and Asian-American populations drove the state's growth, increasing by 230% (10.4 million) and 331% (4.1 million) respectively, while the non-Latino White population decreased by 5.8% (900,000). The total Black population increased by half a million but declined as a proportion of the state's population as a result of the faster growth among Latino and Asian Americans populations. Much of the decrease in the non-Latino White population occurred after the year 2000.



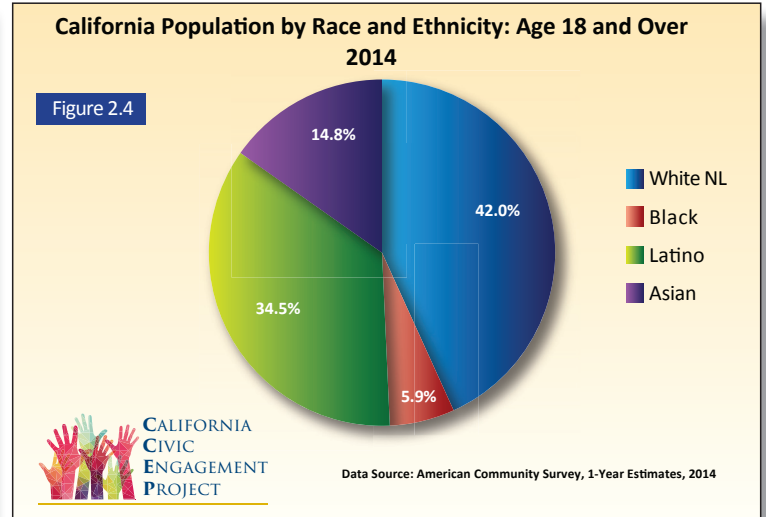
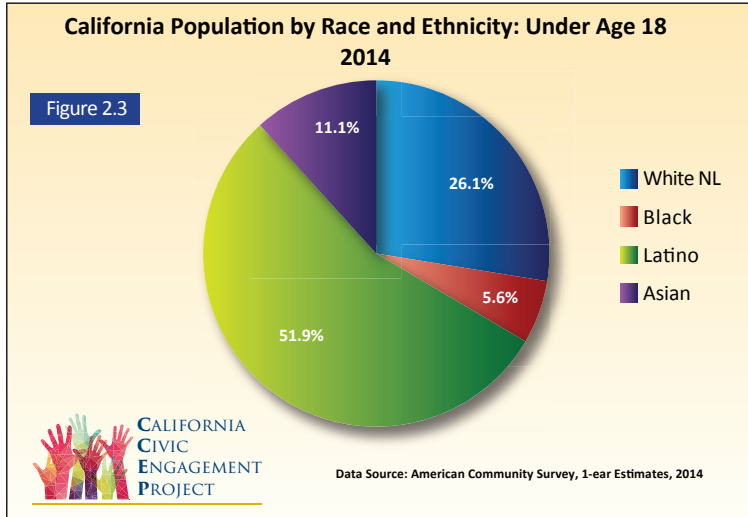
From 2000 until 2014, the Latino and Asian-American populations in California increased by 32% (3.5 million) and 34% (1.2 million), respectively, while the non-Latino white population decreased by 5.5% (900,000). The Black population remained steady (adding 20,000), but once again declined as a proportion of the state's population as a result of the faster growth among Latino and Asian-American populations.

Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2 show the change in the make up of California's population since 1980. In 2014, Latinos made up over 38% of the population, Asian-Americans made up 13.9% and Blacks were 5.8%. For the first time, Latinos made up a plurality of California's population, and are more numerous than non-Latino whites.

Latinos and Asian-Americans have driven California's population growth since 1980. Together, these two groups now make up a majority of the state's population.

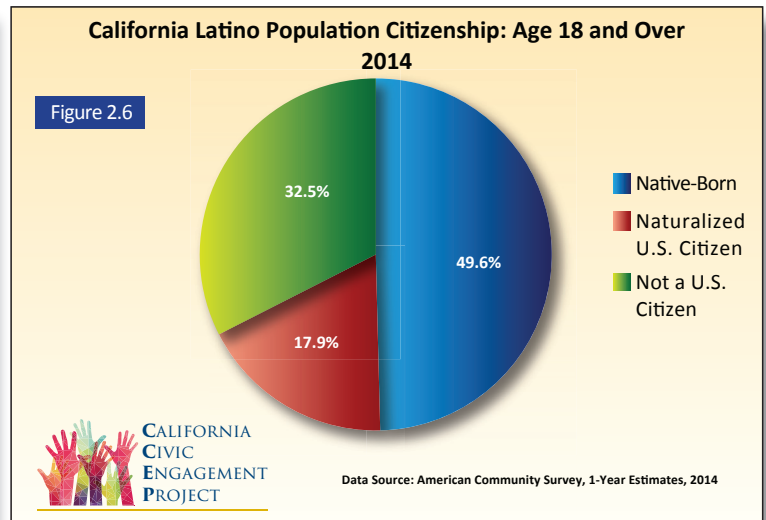
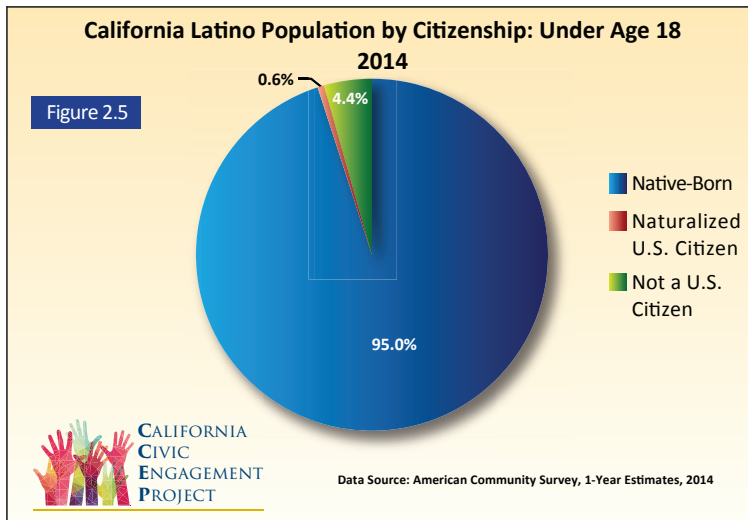
b. Latinos are a Majority of Californians Under Age 18

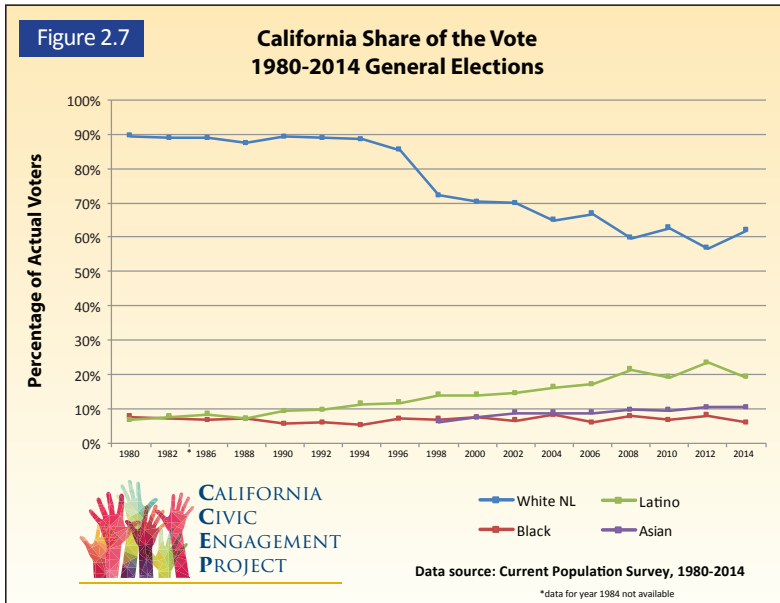
California Latinos are younger than the state’s non-Latino Whites, echoing the national trend. Figures 2.3 and 2.4 show that when California’s 2014 total population numbers are broken down by age, Latinos comprise a majority (51.9%) of the state’s under age-18 population, compared with 34.5% of its adults. Nearly 32% of California’s Latino population were under age 18, with 68% age 18 and over. These under age-18 proportions are much higher than what we find in the 2014 non-Latino white, black and Asian-American populations.



c. Nearly all California Latinos Under Age 18 are Citizens

In 2014, 24% percent of all California Latinos were non-citizens, nearly the same proportion as among U.S. Latinos. Nearly all of these non-citizens were age 18 and over. Similar to U.S. Latinos, 49.6% of the adult California Latino population were native-born, while 32.5% of the adult population were non-citizens (Figure 2.6). In contrast, 95% of the California Latino population under age 18 were native-born, and only 4.4% of those under age were not citizens (Figure 2.5). As California Latino youth transition to adulthood, every year will bring significant increases in California’s Latino proportion of the citizen voting-age population.





d. California's Dramatically Declining White Vote

Increases in the Latino population since 1980 contributed to a steady increase in the Latino share of California's total votes cast in presidential elections. Figure 2.7 shows that between the 1980 and the 2012 Presidential General Election, the Latino share of the state's vote increased from 6.6% to 23.5%, the Asian-American share of the state's vote increased by 4 percentage points, while the white proportion of California's vote declined from nearly 90% to 56.7%.

The most dramatic shifts in the composition of the state's vote have also occurred since 2000. Between the 2000 and 2012 general elections, the non-Latino White proportion of California's vote declined 13.5 percentage points, while the Latino vote increased 10 percentage points. The decrease in the non-Latino white share of the state's vote can be largely

attributed to increases in the Latino and Asian-American vote, with Latinos responsible for the bulk of those increases. The California black vote remained essentially steady during this period.

The shifts in the state's electorate since 2000 has also brought a reduction in the gap between the non-Latino white share of the vote and the Latino, Asian-American and black share. For Latinos, the gap in their vote share with non-Latino Whites has narrowed by 23 percentage points, meaning that Latinos have gained in their share of California electoral politics over the past decade (see appendix for detailed data).

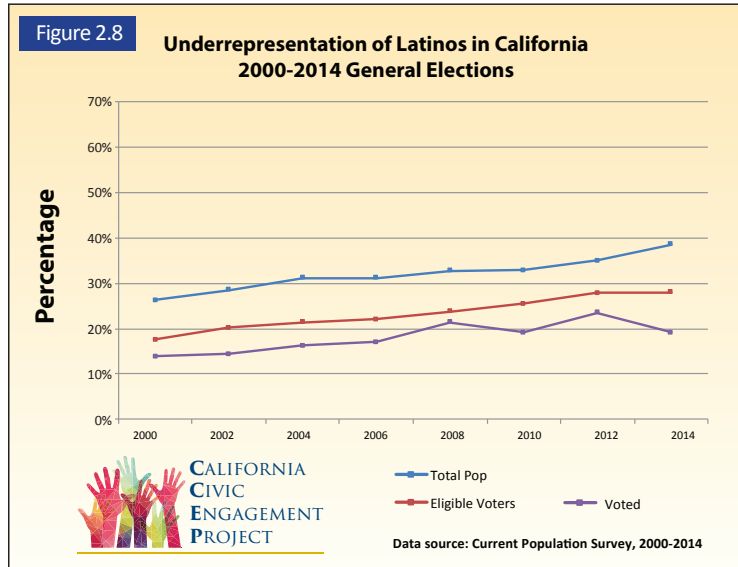
e. 2014 Midterm Disparities

Eligible turnout rates are consistently lower in midterm elections. However, disparities in turnout by race, ethnicity and age are greater - meaning the turnout gap between historically underrepresented groups and whites and older voters is wider in midterm elections than in presidential elections. California experienced even greater disparities in eligible turnout rates in the 2014 midterm election than the U.S. as a whole. This occurred, in part, because the year 2014 saw a record-low turnout (both registered and eligible turnout) for a general statewide election in California. This continued the decline in voter turnout for midterm general elections in the state since 1982 (see CCEP Policy Brief #9).

The result of the record low turnout in 2014 was a higher share of the vote for non-Latino Whites, at 62%, over their share in the 2012 election. The Latino share of the state's vote in 2014 declined to 19.1%, the black share to 6%, and the Asian-American share remained steady at 10.4% in the same election.

In 2014, California experienced a record low turnout for a statewide general election. Extremely low turnout meant greater disparities in participation by race and ethnicity.

f. Underrepresentation in California's Electorate



Disparities in electoral participation continue to exist for non-Whites across California communities. The Latino and Asian-American share of the state's vote is not representative compared to these groups' share of the state's overall population, nor is it representative compared to their share of the state's eligible voter population.

Figure 2.8 shows that at 23.5%, the 2012 Latino share of California's total vote remained below Latinos' 26.4% share of the state's 2012 eligible voter population, and far below the 38% Latino share of the state's total population that year. With 10.3% of the vote, Asian-Americans were also below their 12.8% of the state's 2012 eligible voter population, and below their 13% share of the total population. In contrast, Blacks held a larger share of the state's vote, 7.9%, in comparison to their 7% share of the eligible voter population, as well as their 7% total population. The non-Latino white share of the state's vote was 56.7% in

2012. Their share of the eligible voter population was 50.4% and their share of the state's total population was 40%. Together, these four groups (non-Latino Whites, Latinos, Asian-Americans and blacks make up 97% of the eligible voter population, and 97.5% of the voting electorate in the state.

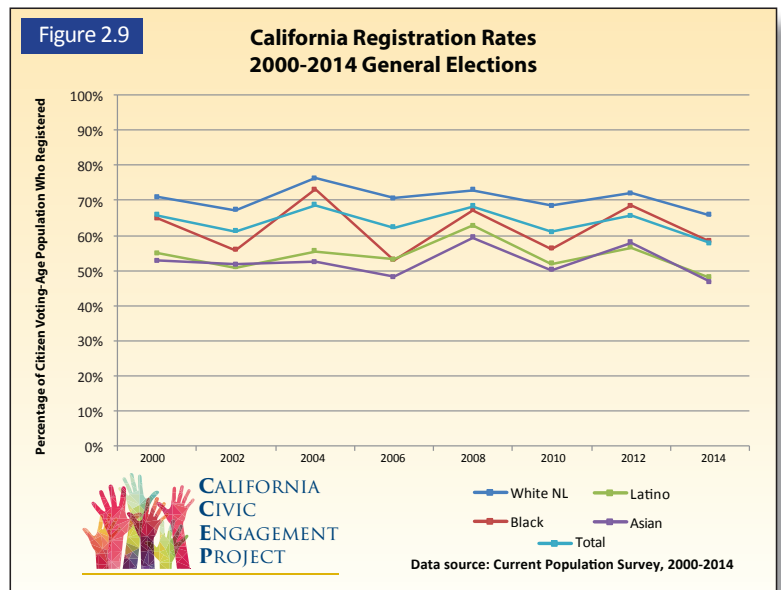
g. Latino Underrepresentation: 2014 Midterm Election

Over the last decade and a half, until 2014, there has been a steady increase in the Latino share of the state's vote. However, in November 2014, despite increases in the Latino population and Latino registration, the Latino percentage of the California vote declined to 19.1%, the first decline (across comparable midterm and presidential elections) since 2006 (Figure 2.8). In 2014, Latinos thus became more underrepresented in our electoral process – meaning their share of the vote was even less representative when compared to the Latino share of the state's overall population (nearly 39%) and the Latino share of the state's eligible citizen voting population (28%).

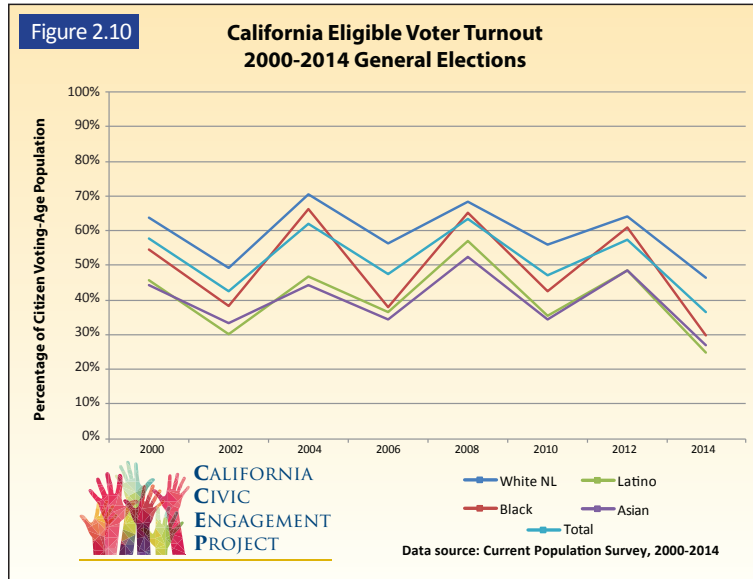
h. California Registration Rates

Latinos and Asian-Americans are underrepresented in their share of California's vote because they register and turn out to vote at rates much lower than the non-Latino white electorate. California Latinos, Asian-Americans and Blacks all have lower registration rates than non-Latino Whites. However California Blacks have higher registration rates than Latinos and Asian-Americans (Figure 2.9).

From 2000-2014, non-Latino white registration rates remained in the upper 60 to mid-70 percent range, whereas the rates for non-Whites fluctuated at much lower ranges. Only in one California general election (2008) did Latino registration rates exceed 60%. Asian-American rates have never reached this high mark in the state. Furthermore, not all racial and ethnic groups have experienced the same high points in registration in the same elections. Since 2000, the highest registration rates for Latinos and Asian-Americans were in the 2008 general election. In contrast, the peak in registration rates for both Blacks and non-Latino Whites was in 2004.



i. Disparities in California Eligible Voter Turnout: Presidential Elections



From 2000 to 2012, the number of Californians voting in elections increased by 17%. While the number of non-Latino white voters declined, the number of black, Asian-American and Latino voters all increased at rates that outpaced the growth of these groups' eligible voter population. Latinos nearly doubled their number of actual voters (by 1.5 million), Asian voters increased their votes by two-thirds (.5 million) and blacks experienced a 23% increase (.2 million). In contrast, non-Latino white voters decreased by 4 million during the same 2000-2012 period.

Eligible turnout rates (as well as registered voter turnout, see appendix) have fluctuated since the 2000 general election, but dramatic disparities in voter turnout rates by race and ethnicity remained historically consistent in California through 2012.

Figure 2.10 shows that turnout of California's eligible voters (defined as adult citizens) was only 57.5% in the 2012 election (a decrease from 63.4% in 2008), meaning that over 40% of the state's eligible voters did not vote. In 2012, the Latino and Asian-American eligible voter turnout were essentially the same, at only 48.5% and 48.6%, respectively. In contrast, non-Latino white eligible turnout was 64.3%, marking an almost 16 percentage-point disparity in electoral participation when compared to the turnout of Latinos and Asian-Americans. Blacks also experienced a lower eligible voter turnout than non-Latino Whites, although the gap was much smaller.

j. Proposition 187's Effect

The mid-1990s saw a historic moment in California politics. Between 1994 and 2004, Latinos and Asian-Americans drove voter registration growth in California significantly and, for the first time. The state added 1.8 million newly registered voters, of which 66% were Latino. These gains in voter registration outpaced population gains for Latinos. The Latino population grew 30.9% but Latino voter registration grew 68.7% (Barreto, Ramírez, Fraga and Guerra 2009).¹⁰ In 2014, Latino registered voters were 54.6% Democratic, 17.3% Republican and 23.8% No Party Preference (NPP).

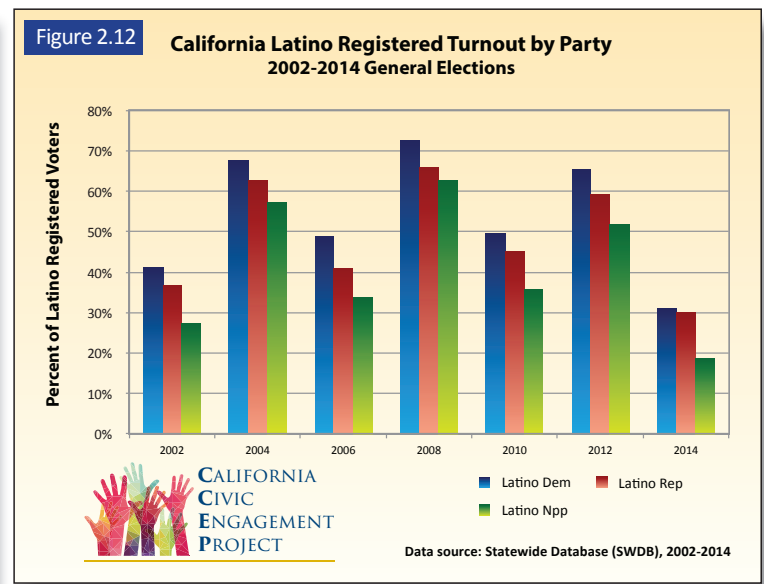
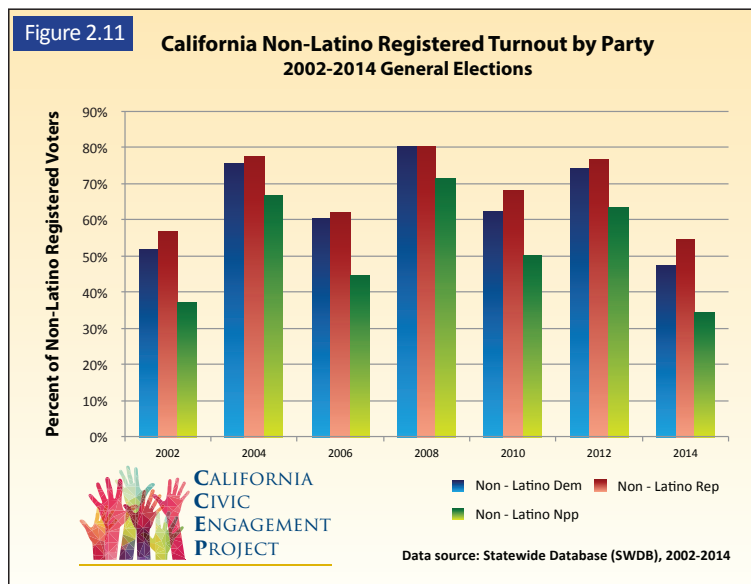
Political analysts have generally explained the growing numbers of Latino registered voters as a response to the state's development of a heightened anti-Latino political climate (as evidence by Propositions 187, 209 and 227) during the same period. Essentially, the emergence of high numbers of registered California Latinos has been identified as a collective, defensive reaction to what was widely perceived as a political attack against their social and economic status (Arteaga, Fligel and Rodriguez 1998). However, while the election of 1994 did bring a large spike in registered voter turnout of Latinos (eligible turnout data is not available for this time period), there has not been a lasting increase in registered voter turnout of the Latino population at a statewide level since the mid-1990s. While the Latino share of California's voters has increased steadily since 1994, this increase cannot be attributed to increases in Latino voter turnout. Population growth is the key factor in the increased electoral voice of California Latinos (see appendix for historical registered voter turnout data). What has had a deep and lasting impact on the California electorate is the strong Democratic party affiliation that developed among Latinos given the anti-Latino political climate, which was seen as having been promoted by many elected members in the state's Republican party (including Republican Governor Pete Wilson).¹¹

The effects of California's anti-Latino political climate in the 1990's are still being felt today in the Latino swing to solidly Democratic registration. California is a safe Democratic state in Presidential Elections because of the Latino Democratic vote

k. The Latino Impact on Political Party Representation in California: Presidential Elections

In California, those registered as Republicans have long turned out to vote at higher rates than Democrats and those registered as No Party Preference have (NPP signifies those registered as no party preference, or who decline to state their party preference).¹² This pattern was repeated in the presidential general election of 2012. In this election, Republican turnout was 74.3%, Democratic turnout was 71.7%, and NPP turnout was much lower, at 60.7% (state voter records do not identify which candidate and/or party for which an individual voter actually voted. Although not common for most of the California electorate, voters do sometimes vote differently than their party affiliation. Voter records do not identify the candidate/party for which NPP voters chose to vote).¹³

In Figure 2.11 and Figure 2.12, we can see that when party turnout for Latinos is separated out from that of non-Latinos (all non-Latinos combined), very different turnout patterns emerge. For every presidential election from 2004-2012 (2000 election party data was not available for this analysis), the turnout of non-Latinos who registered Republican has outpaced the turnout of non-Latinos who registered Democratic (although by only a very slim margin in 2008). In contrast, Latinos registered as Democrats turned out at higher rates than Latino Republicans.



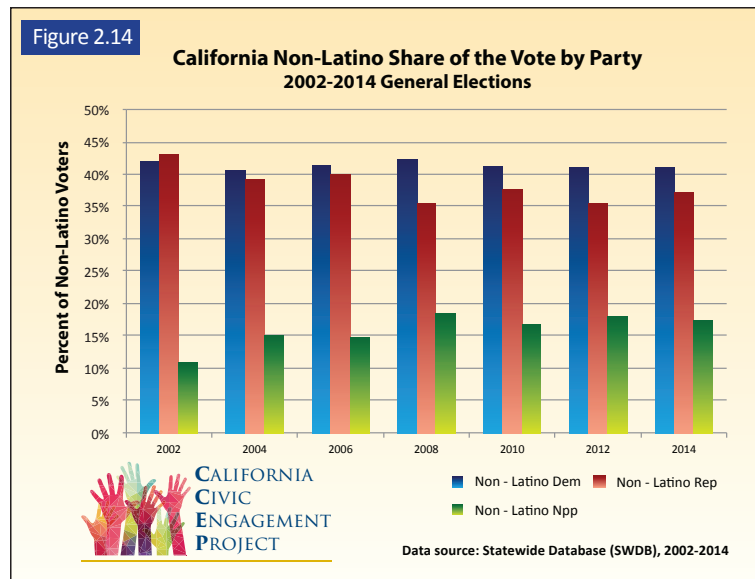
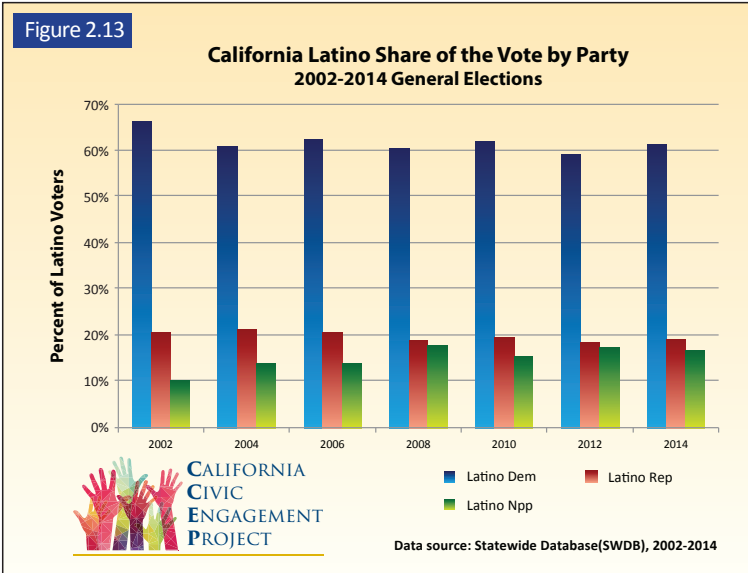
l. Wider Party Gap in Midterm Elections

The California party gap in registered voter turnout is greater in midterm elections than it is in presidential ones, and has increased from 2002 to 2014. This disparity is illustrated when looking at the change from the 2012 to the 2014 general elections. From 2012 to 2014, general voter turnout declined across all major party and NPP registered voters. As a whole, Republican turnout declined less (23.4 percentage points) than Democratic turnout did (29.1 percentage points), while NPP registrations declined 30 percentage points. This means that in 2014, the turnout gap between the Democratic and Republican parties increased to 8 percentage points from 2012. However, this was not the case for both Latinos and non-Latinos. The Latino turnout gap between parties actually decreased in 2014, to less than a percentage point (.7). This was due to the sizable decline in Latino Democratic turnout in 2014 from 2012, which was greater than the decline in Latino Republican turnout.

m. Decline in Latino Democratic Voters

Despite lower overall registered voter turnout levels, voters registered as Democratic have a much larger influence on California's electorate due to the fact that they are more numerous in the state. While the Democratic share of the state's total vote has declined only slightly (1.2 percentage points) since 2002 to 44.2% in 2014, the Republican share of the state's vote has significantly declined, from 40% in 2002, to 34.3% in 2014. In 2014, there was a 10 percentage-point gap between the parties. It is the NPP voters who have been increasing their share of the general vote throughout the decade, from 10.6% in 2002, to 17.1% in 2014. In the 2012, Presidential Election, the Democratic-Republican party gap was 13 percentage points.

From Figure 2.13, we can see that over the last decade in California, substantially more Latino voters were registered Democratic over Republican and NPP. In contrast to general voters and non-Latino voters, the Democratic dominance for Latinos has actually declined by five percentage points during this period, from 66.4% in 2002 to 61.3% in 2014. Similarly, the Latino Republican share of the state’s vote has also declined during the decade, from 20.5% in 2002 to 18.9% in 2014. This was a 42.4 percentage point gap in the party share of the Latino vote in 2014. While Latinos have decreased their proportion of actual voters who are registered with the two major parties, they have steadily increased the proportion of their voters registered as NPP. In 2014, NPP voters made-up 16.3% of all Latino voters, up from just 10.1% in 2002.



n. Party Share of the Vote: Without Latino Voters

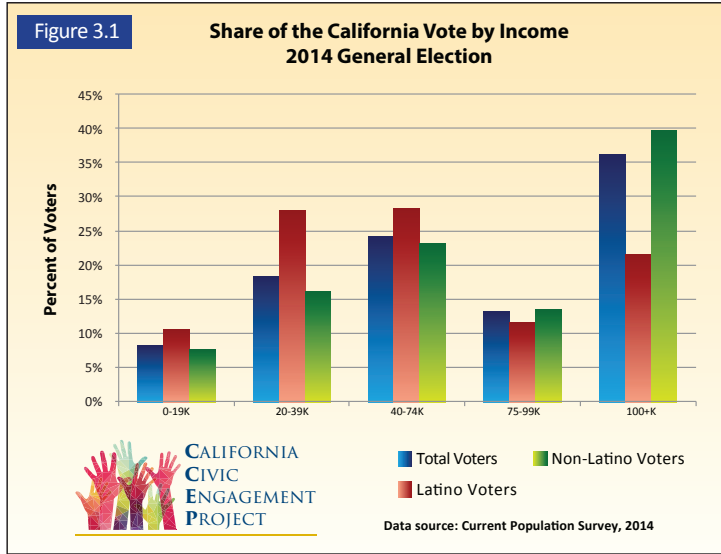
What would the political party share of the California vote have looked like without Latino voters? Without Latinos in the electorate, the voter gap between Democrats and Republicans in 2014 would have been only four percentage points; with Latinos included it was 10 percentage points. For most of the last decade, there would have only been a small difference in the major party share of the state’s vote if Latino voters were not included (Figure 2.14). Indeed, Republican voters would have actually comprised a slightly higher proportion of non-Latino voters in 2002. Looking back over the decade’s voting trends, the growth of Latino voters and their strong Democratic registration has been a main reason why California has become a blue (Democratic-dominated) state.

California Latinos have decreased their proportion of actual voters who are registered with the two major parties, while they have steadily increased the proportion of their voters registered as NPP. In 2014, NPP voters made-up 16.3% of all Latino voters, up from just 10.1% in 2002.

3. How California Latino voters differ from Latino voters in the U.S.?

The voting electorate in the U.S. and California is not representative of the nation’s residents, nor of those eligible to vote. Both sets of voters, across race and ethnicity, are older, more educated and of higher income than non-voters. However, when the population of voters is broken down by race and ethnicity, Latinos are the only large racial or ethnic group (among Whites, Blacks, Latino and Asian-Americans) whose voters experience both numerical underrepresentation in the electorate, and who experience significantly lower income and educational attainment than do non-Latino voters.

a. Latino Voters Have Lower Incomes than Non-Latino Voters



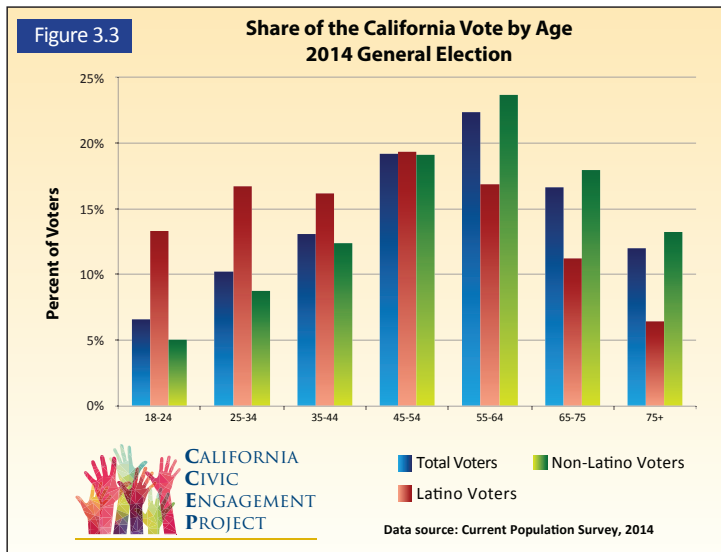
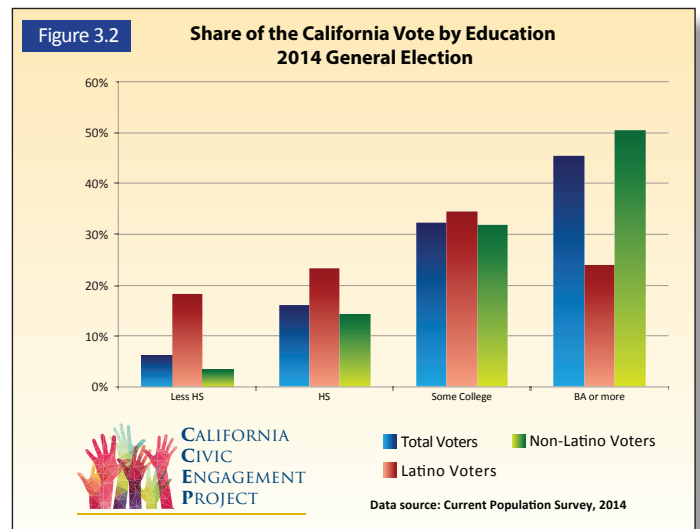
Over half (53.1%) of California’s non-Latino voters in 2014 had a household income of at least \$75,000 dollars a year or greater and only 23.7% had a household income of under \$40,000 (Figure 3.1). Nearly 40% had a household income of \$100,000 or greater. In contrast, California Latino voters skew much lower in income than non-Latinos. Nearly 39% of Latino voters fell into the household income category of less than \$40,000 a year and only 33% were in households with an income of over \$75,000 a year.

The income distribution of California Latino voters is somewhat similar to that of U.S. Latino voters. However, income disparities between non-Latino and Latinos appear greater in California than the U.S. A greater proportion of non-Latino voters in California are in higher-income categories than U.S. non-Latino voters, and fewer California non-Latino voters are in lower-income categories than non-Latino voters in the U.S (see appendix for detailed data tables).

b. Latino Voters are Less Educated than Non-Latino Voters

In California, half (50.6%) of all non-Latino voters have attained a bachelor’s degree or higher compared to only 23.9% of Latino voters. Just over 17% of non-Latino voters have achieved only a high school degree or less education, whereas 41.5% of Latino voters have achieved this same level of education (Figure 3.2).

California voters, as a whole, are more educated than U.S. voters. This is the case for Latinos and non-Latinos. More California Latino voters (three percentage points) hold a bachelor’s degree or higher than do U.S. Latino voters. For California non-Latinos, it’s a much greater margin. Fifty-one percent hold a bachelor’s degree or higher compared with 42.1% of non-Latino voters in the U.S. (levels of education and family income among Latinos are expected to increase and these two demographic factors are primary influencers on voter turnout).



c. Latino Voters are Younger than Non-Latino Voters

Thirty-one percent of California’s non-Latino voters are age 65 and older, while only 17.6% of Latino voters are of this age group. In contrast, 30% of the state’s Latino voters are under age 35, whereas as only 13.8% of non-Latino voters are this young.

More California Latino voters are younger than age 35 compared to U.S. Latino voters. California non-Latino voters skew a little older than non-Latinos in the U.S.? More of these voters are under age 35 than U.S non-Latinos (by two percentage points) and fewer are age 65 and older.

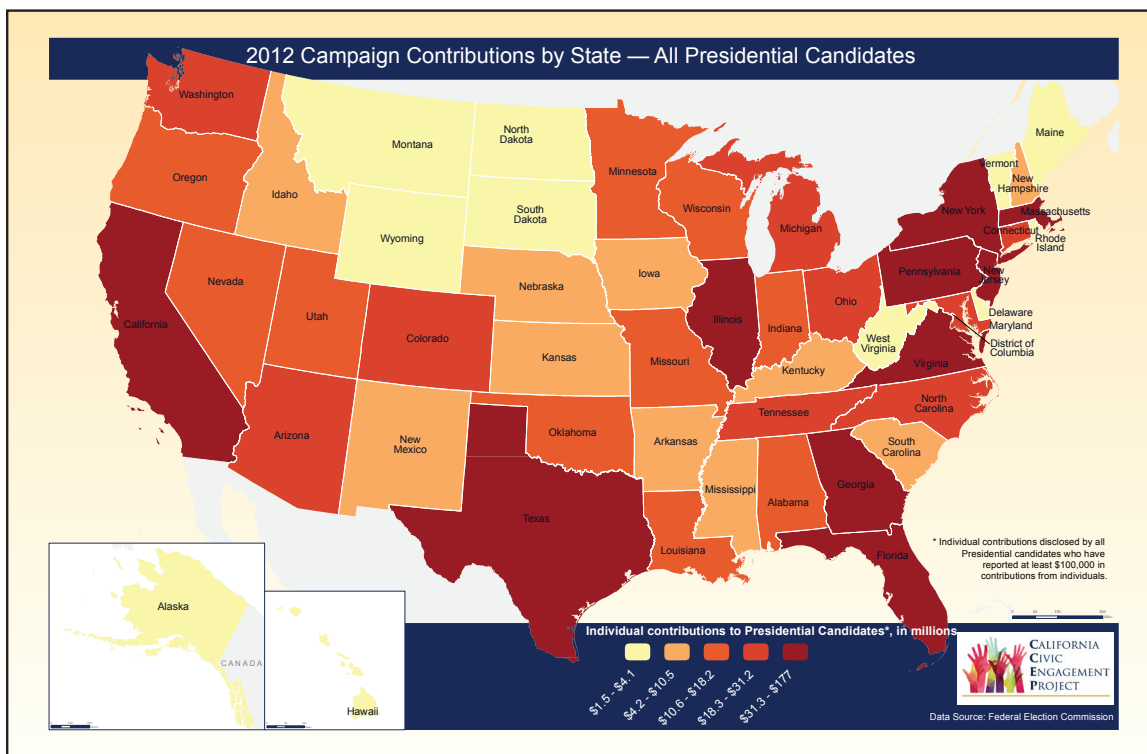
4. What role does California play in U.S. Elections?

As a large segment of the U.S. population and of U.S. voters, Latinos have a significant impact on the U.S. electoral landscape. Three of the most critical areas of influence are: presidential elections, political organizing and Congress.

Presidential Elections

The U.S. Electoral College System is the institution underlying our nation's presidential elections. Over the past several decades, states where the presidential general election is competitive have shifted considerably. Currently, the following nine states are considered swing states for the 2016 election (where support for the major political parties is equally split): Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, and Wisconsin.¹⁴ Since 1992, California has voted for the Democratic presidential candidate in every general election and the Democratic Party has a strong registration advantage over Republicans in the state. California thus currently plays less of a direct electoral role in the competitive race for president (i.e. candidates don't campaign in the state and don't attempt to mobilize its voters) as do its Latino voters.

Political Contributions and Advocacy Capacity



However, California does remain an important baseline in strategies utilized to win the Presidency for both Democrats and Republicans. The Democratic strategy to win the White House is grounded in winning the state's 55 electoral votes. The Democratic Party knows it can solidly count on California's votes and Republicans know they are not competitive for those votes and need to make them up with victories in other states.

It is important to note that California is a safe Democratic state because

of the Latino Democratic vote. It is Latinos, and their strong Democratic affiliation, who make California a solid win for Democrats. California represents what happens when Latinos as swing voters become permanent Democratic supporters. In a sense, California is the first state where Latinos were the swing voters (prior to the mid-1990's Latinos were near evenly divided in their party affiliation). Latinos swung the state from being solidly Republican to being safely and consistently Democratic today.

California also plays an influential role in electing the President of the United States by being a key driver of the influence of Latino voters in other states. California is home to many of the most politically influential Latino advocacy organizations in the U.S.. As Latino issues are discussed or action is mobilized nationally, California-based Latino organizations often play a major role. California, with its rich Latino history and its large Latino population, has built a strong capacity to achieve political victories that are relevant on a national scale, and aids other states to achieve such victories by sharing knowledge and resources.

California is also a key source for campaign contributions and high-profile popular endorsements for president. During general presidential elections, candidates travel to California to meet with donors in Silicon Valley or Hollywood and to enlist famous names to promote their campaigns. Many of these are Latino celebrities (e.g. Rosario Dawson, Eva Longoria and Wilmer Valderrama) who travel throughout the U.S. supporting candidates, as well as non-partisan get-out-the-vote efforts.

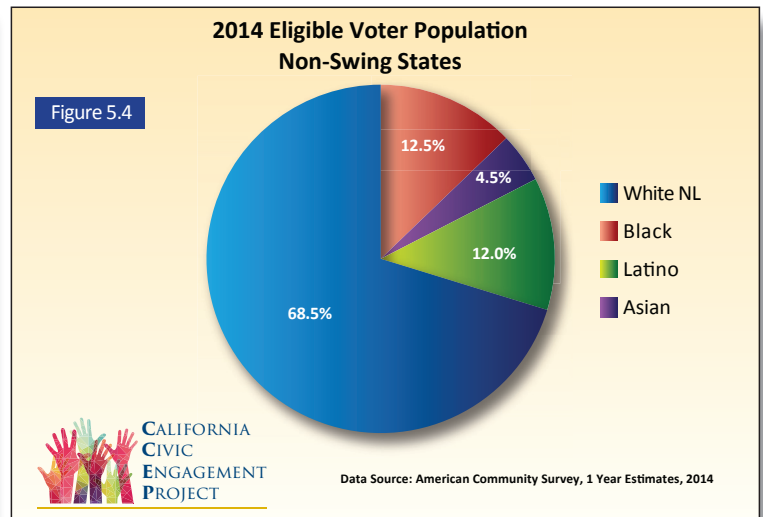
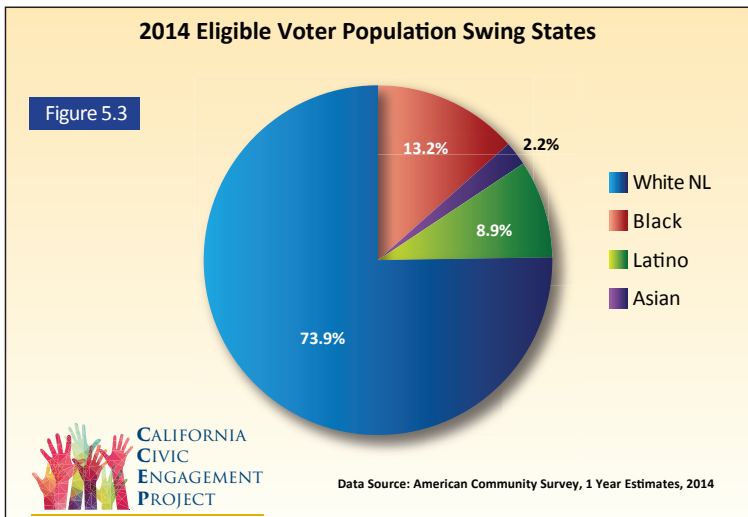
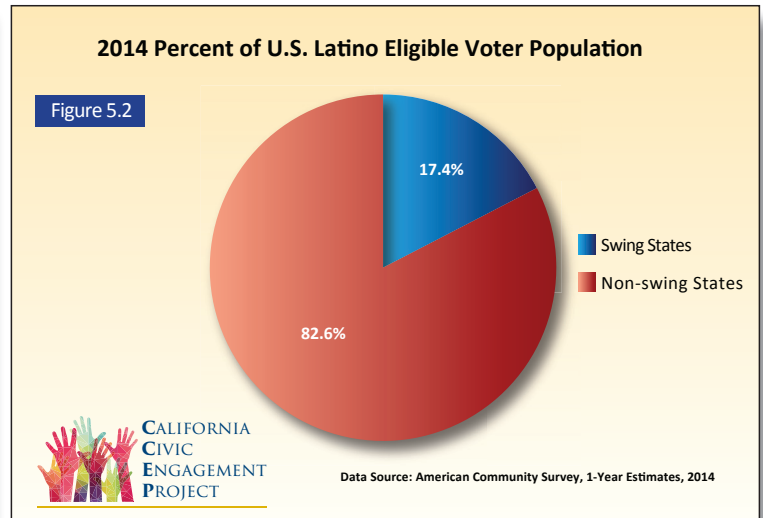
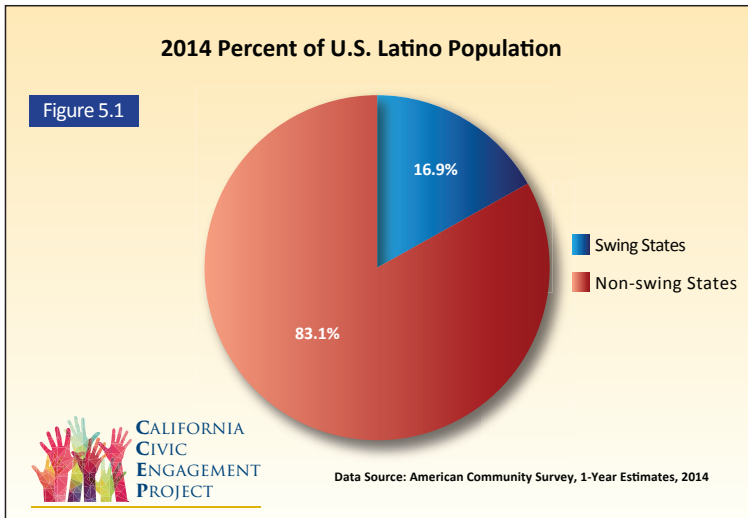
The Battle for Congressional Control

In the 2014 elections, Latino Decisions, a political opinion research firm, identified 105 House seats (44 Republican and 61 Democratic) in which Latino voters did or could influence the outcome of the election.¹⁵ The political impact of California's growing proportions of Latinos and Asian-Americans will be felt in the state's contribution to the battle for party control of Congress. In California, many of the state's competitive electoral districts are currently in regions where the Latino population is large and fast-growing i.e., San Joaquin Valley), including four of the state's six hotly contested congressional districts – the 21st, 7th, 26th and 36th (see CCEP Policy Brief 10).

5. What impact will Latinos Have in future U.S. elections?

a. Latinos in Swing States

Figures 5.1 and 5.2 break down the distribution of the U.S. Latino population. The Latino population has been growing in "swing states". Nearly 17% of U.S. Latinos and just over the same percentage of Latino eligible voters reside in swing states. Latinos make up 8.9% of the total population of swing states combined and 12% of their eligible voter population (Figures 5.3 and 5.4). Although turnout disparities still exist for Latinos, they had higher 2014 eligible turnout rates in swing states, overall, than they did in non-swing states, at 34% and 25.6%, respectively. Figures 5.5 and 5.6 show that Latinos make up 6.4% of 2014 swing-state voters and 7.6% of non-swing voters (see appendix for individual state data). These numbers are large enough to influence the outcome of swing-state elections and, therefore, the selection of the president. However, it is clear that Latinos in swing states such as Ohio (400,000) and Florida (4.8 million) have a greater electoral influence on the outcome of the U.S. presidential election (as their votes could be a deciding factor in who wins those states) than do Latinos in California (nearly 15 million), which, alone, holds 27% of the total U.S. Latino population.



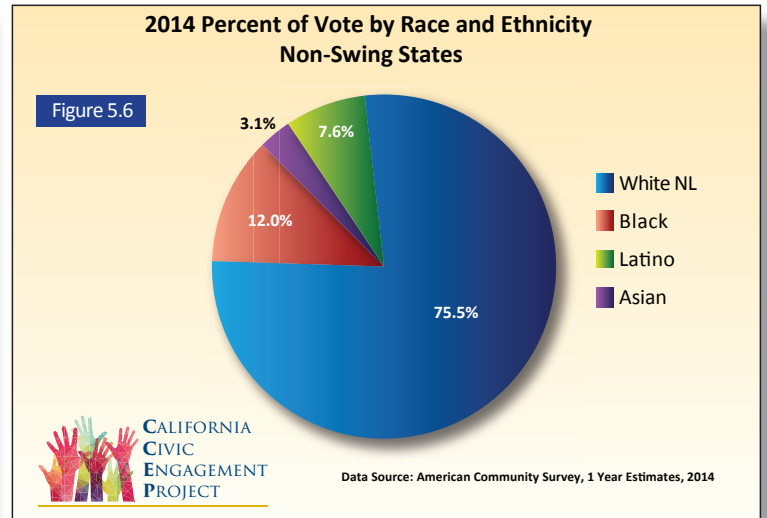
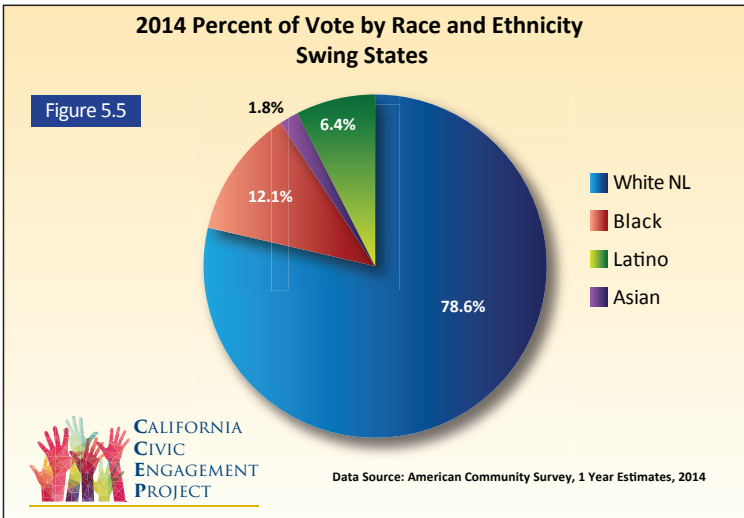
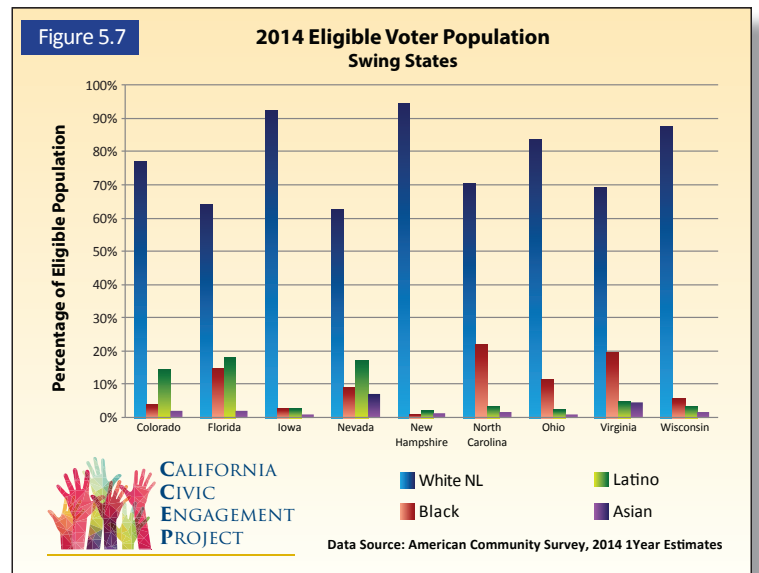
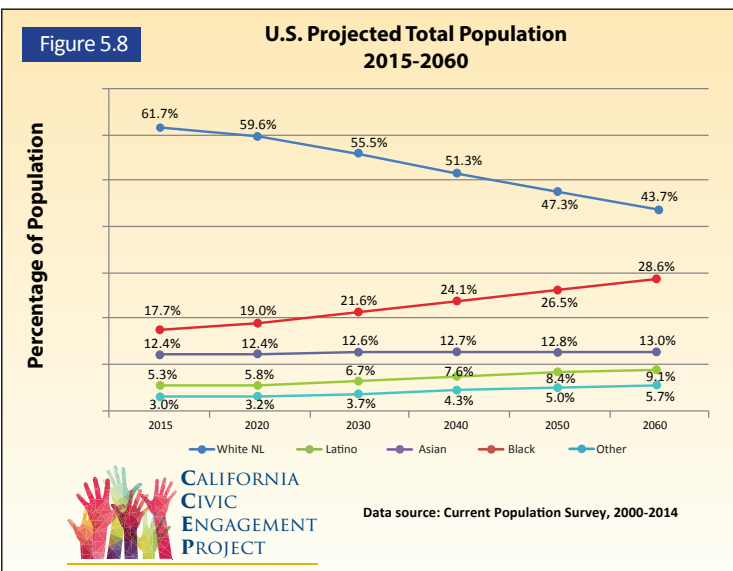


Figure 5.7 provides eligible voter population data for individual swing states. When swing states are examined individually, it is clear that most have a small Latino proportion of their eligible voter populations (less than 5%). Only three states, Colorado, Florida and Nevada have large Latino eligible voter populations (14.5%, 18.1% and 17.1%, respectively). As the Latino population continues to grow in these states, in particular, it will increase the influence Latinos have in the presidential race. Latinos will likely play a deciding role in the choice for president.

Latinos make up 6.4% of 2014 swing state voters. Their numbers are large enough to influence the outcome of swing state elections and, therefore, the selection of President.



b. U.S. Latino Population Projected to Continue Growth

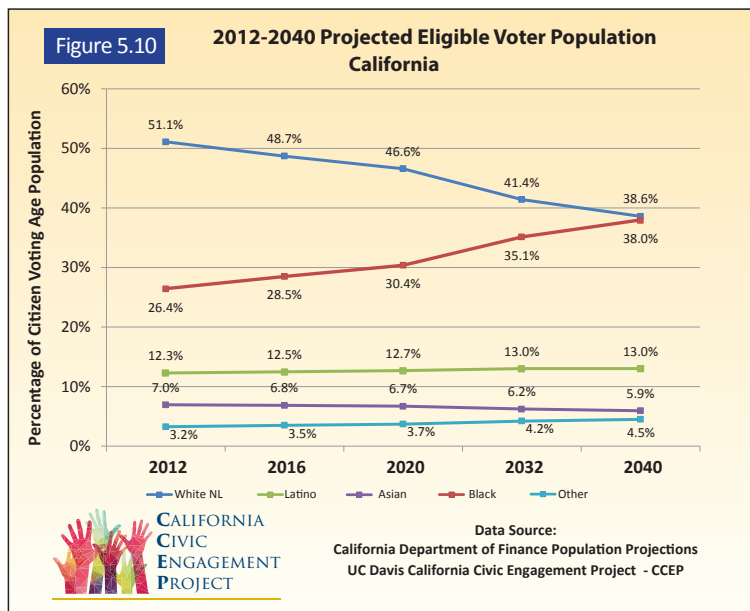
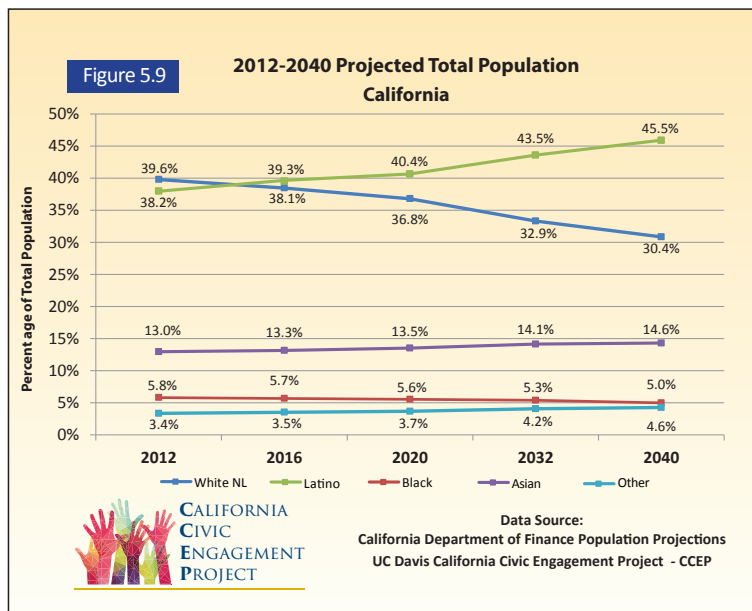


Steady growth in the U.S. Latino and Asian-American populations will almost certainly impact the nation’s political landscape, including the 2016 elections.

From 2015 to 2040, U.S. total population growth is projected at 29.7 %, while the Latino and Asian-American populations are projected to grow 110% and 122%, respectively. The black population will increase 40% and non-Latino Whites are projected to decrease 8.2%. Latinos will drive the nation’s population shifts, comprising 65.3% of the nations total growth through 2040.

Figure 5.8 shows that by 2040, Latinos are projected to reach 28.6% of the U.S. total population (Latino youth make up the largest segment of this growth), while Asian-Americans will reach 9.4%. Blacks are projected to reach 14.3% and non-Latino Whites will comprise 43.7% of the nation’s total population (U.S. Census 2014 National Population Projections).¹⁶

c. California Latino Population Projected to Continue Growth



In California, Latinos are also projected to steadily continue their large population gains. From 2015 to 2040, the state’s total population growth is projected at 21.4%, while the Latino and Asian-American populations are projected to grow 41.5% and 33.8%, respectively. The black population will increase 5.4% and non-Latino Whites will decrease 4.2%. Latinos will drive the state’s population shifts due to their much larger population in absolute numbers. Latinos will comprise 76% of the state’s total growth over the next two and a half decades. Figure 5.9 shows that by 2040, Latinos are projected to comprise 45.5% of the state’s total population. The non-Latino white population will decline to 30.4%.¹⁷

Population change will also bring a significant increase in the proportion of Latinos and Asian-Americans eligible to vote in California (adult citizens). By 2040, California’s eligible voter population will increase 31% (7.5 million). The Latino eligible voter population will increase 77% (5.3 million) to comprise 38% of the state’s total eligible voter population and Asian-American eligible voters are projected to increase 37% (1.1 million) to make-up 13% of all eligible voters in the state. The black eligible voter population will increase by 12.4% (0.2 million) to 5.9% of the total eligible population. Figure 5.10 shows that by 2040, for the first time, non-Latino Whites (only increasing 2.5% or .3 million in absolute numbers over this period) and Latinos will reach roughly parity in their proportions of California’s eligible voters, as non-Latino whites decline to just over 38%.

In 2015, the non-Latino white eligible voter population was estimated to decline to 49% of California’s eligible voters. Thus, for the first time in statewide general election, California as a majority-minority of eligible voters in 2016. As the composition of California’s electorate shifts, it is likely that its political landscape will change as well. A larger political voice for historically underrepresented groups matters. Those who vote in the current electorate often do not represent the views of those who don’t vote, particularly on issues related to economic policy.¹⁹ Current voters tend to be more conservative on issues of resource distribution than non-voters. As the makeup of California’s voting electorate changes over time, the interests and needs of its new members will likely push the state’s political structure to adjust its issue priorities. However, if the state’s electoral system fails to mobilize the large number of future Latino and Asian-American eligible voters into voting then these groups could become even more underrepresented - meaning their percentage of the state’s vote might not keep pace with their increasing percent of eligible voters.

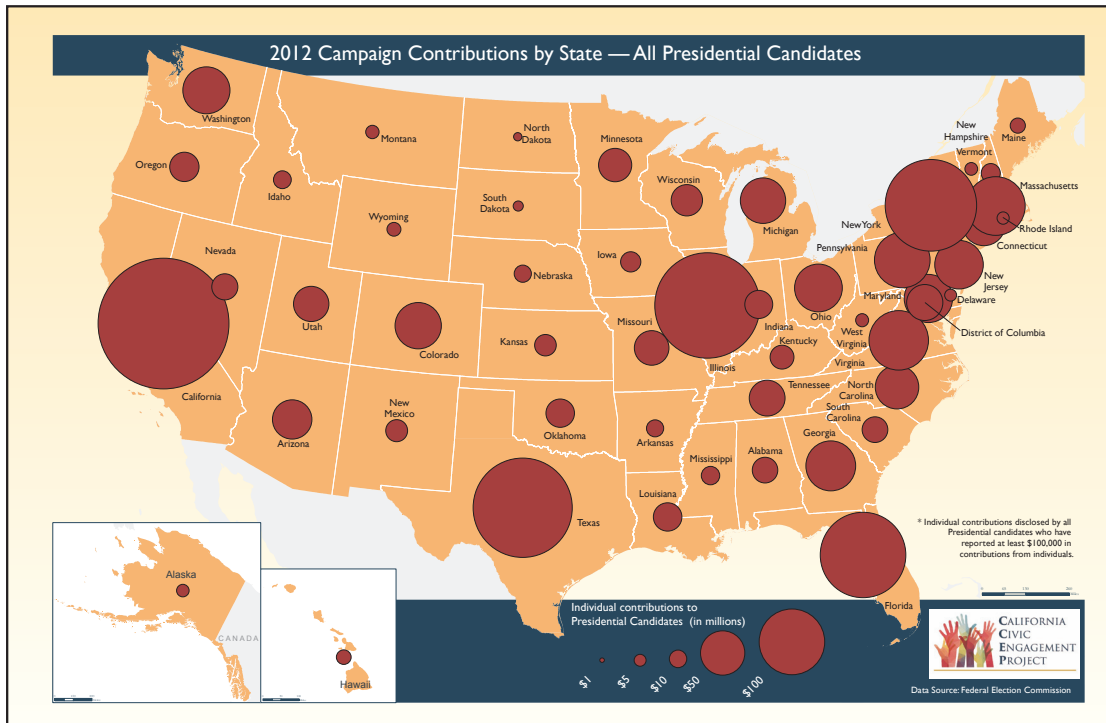
d. Projecting the California Latino Vote

In California, Latinos are also projected to steadily continue their large voter gains. From 2015 to 2040, holding the state’s total current turnout rates constant, significant changes in the state’s vote will be driven by projected shifts in the eligible non-Latino white and Latino voter populations. If Latinos maintain their 2012 California eligible turnout rate (48.5%) through the 2040 general election, their percent of the state’s vote would rise considerably - to 33.2% in 2040. In contrast, assuming non-Latino Whites maintain their 2012 turnout rates, their share of California’s vote is projected to decrease to 44.7%, over the same period.

Assuming their 2012 eligible turnout rate (48.6%) remains through 2040's general election, Asian Americans are projected to increase their share of the state's vote slightly. Even though California Blacks have a much higher 2012 eligible voter turnout rate than Latinos and Asian-Americans, they are projected to experience a decrease in their share of the share of vote largely due to increases in the sheer number of Latino and Asian-Americans voters in California.

6. Addressing Turnout Disparities

a. Latinos in the U.S. political landscape



The electoral influence of Latinos on the 2016 presidential race must be understood in the context of population growth and geography. Due to continuing population increases, Latinos will likely see a record number of voters participate in the 2016 election, and, thus, will be a key force in the selection of not only the president but also in many down-ballot races. Latinos typically have a greater influence in state and local races when they occur in a presidential cycle due to the higher turnout rates Latinos experience in presidential elections. However, the direct electoral influence on the presidential race that Latinos

have will largely be reserved for competitive swing states. Considering that the majority of Latinos do not reside in swing states, it will be a comparably smaller number of Latino voters who will help choose the next President. Swing states with the largest proportions of Latino voters (Colorado, Florida and Nevada) will see the greatest Latino influence in the presidential race. Due to the deciding influence of swing states, Latinos in non-swing states will not be mobilized or pursued by Presidential candidates in the 2016 general election (along with other non-swing state voters) and will likely experience lower turnout than Latinos in swing states (as has historically been the case). Essentially, non-swing state Latinos will be denied a direct voice in the 2016 Presidential race.

At the same time, it is important to remember that having a record number of Latino voters does not mean that electoral disparities are eliminated. Due to low turnout rates, Latinos will most certainly remain underrepresented in 2016. Thus, Latinos will not have as large a voice in presidential and other races as their population numbers would generate if their participation were commensurate with their percentage of the vote.

b. Why is Turnout So Low?

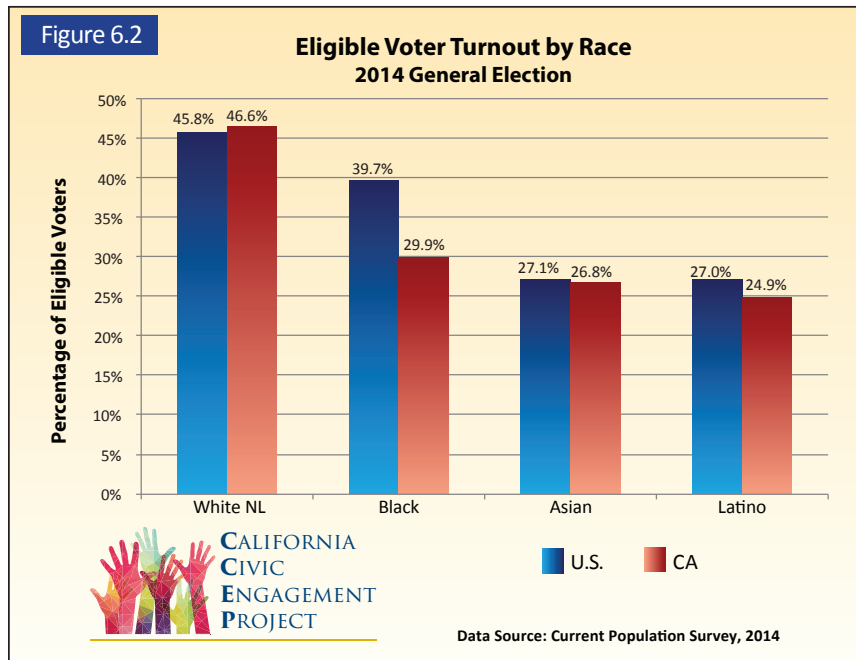
In 2014, according to the Current Population Survey, non-voters attributed their lack of participation to two main factors: 1) they were too busy (due to conflicting work/school schedules), and 2) not interested (and felt their vote wouldn't make a difference). But race and ethnicity made a difference in the kind of answer they provided. Nearly 30% of Latinos said they were too busy to vote, and 35% of Asian-Americans gave the same answer, whereas only 26% of non-Latino Whites said they were too busy. Fifteen percent of Latinos said they did not vote because they were not interested, compared with just over 13% of Asian-American and just over 16% of non-Latino Whites.²⁰

However, these reasons don't tell the whole story behind low turnout in the U.S. Voting needs to be made easier and more accessible and potential voters need to be motivated to vote. These elements are not unrelated. If voters understand the electoral

system, are not restricted by registration requirements and deadlines, have clear and accurate information to make their decisions, and are engaged by candidates in meaningful ways, then they will be less likely to feel "too busy or not interested" in voting, or feel that their vote won't make a difference. Latinos and Asian-Americans are disproportionately impacted by institutional barriers to voting (such as registration requirements and the lack of voting materials in needed languages). Both groups often receive insufficient information, outreach and mobilization during elections. Research has shown that when Latinos and Asian-Americans are given greater access and outreach they are more likely to vote (see CCEP Policy Brief 10 for more discussion on reasons for not voting).²¹

c. California's Greater Disparities

Disparities in eligible voter turnout mean the U.S. and California have a voting electorate that is not represented of their residents. Their population of voters is skewed older, higher-income, and lower-educated and has a disproportionate number of non-Latino Whites compared with their eligible voter populations. California has greater disparities in electoral participation than the U.S. as a whole.



In the 2014 general election, California's total eligible turnout ranked in the bottom 20% of all U.S. states. Prior to the mid-1990s, California's eligible turnout rates were consistently higher than those of the U.S. as a whole (see CCEP Policy Brief # 9). In 2014, non-Latino White eligible turnout was higher in California than that of the U.S., while eligible turnout of California Blacks and Latinos was much lower than in their U.S. counterparts (Asian-American turnout was essentially the same for both the U.S. and California). Given the large number of voters of color in the state, the fact that voters of color turned out in low numbers meant that California had an overall lower turnout rate than did the U.S. as a whole.

d. Moving the Turnout Needle

California now has a minority-majority eligible voter population. In order to increase the state's total turnout rate, the data make it clear that election reforms (pursued by both policy makers and advocacy groups) must include efforts aimed at increasing the turnout of voters of color. Given these voters' demographic clout, it will not be possible to move the needle on California's turnout unless minority turnout rates -- especially Latino turnout rates -- improve dramatically. New strategies must take into account the differing barriers to voting that Latinos and Asian-Americans experience in California and elsewhere. Strategies also need to account for the particularly wide range of economic, cultural and political experiences within Asian-American communities. Disparities in turnout weaken the health of the state's democracy for everyone, as well as California's voice on the national landscape.

Notes

- ¹ The term Latino is utilized interchangeably for Hispanic in this report. The term Black is utilized in this brief to include individuals who have reported their race as Black or African-American based on available U.S. Census classifications.
- ² CCEP analysis of U.S. Census 2014 Population Projections. See: <https://www.census.gov/population/projections/data/national/2014.html>
- ³ CCEP analysis of Current Population Survey, November Supplement on Voting and Registration:1980-2014, U.S. Census Population Data, and American Community Survey, 1 year estimates.
- ⁴ See: Pew Research Center, More Mexicans Leaving Than Coming to the U.S: <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/11/19/more-mexicans-leaving-than-coming-to-the-u-s/>.
- ⁵ See Pre Research Center, Hispanic Nativity Shift, U.S. births drive population growth as immigration stalls: <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2014/04/29/hispanic-nativity-shift/>.
- ⁶ Undocumented immigrants may not respond to census surveys and are more likely to have informal or temporary living arrangements that make it difficult for census takers to locate them. Often undocumented immigrants fear census takers will report their status to law enforcement agencies.
- ⁷ See: Pew Research Center, Mapping the Latino Population, By State, County and City: <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/08/29/mapping-the-latino-population-by-state-county-and-city/>.
- ⁸ See: Pew Research Center, Diverse Origins: The Nation's 14 Largest Hispanic-Origin Groups: <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/06/19/diverse-origins-the-nations-14-largest-hispanic-origin-groups/>.
- ⁹ For more information on CPS methodology, see: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/technical-documentation/complete.html>. For more information on CPS overreport bias, see: <http://www.electproject.org/home/voter-turnout/cps-methodology>. For an analysis of CPS data corrected for overreport bias, see the United States elections project: <http://www.electproject.org/home/voter-turnout/cps-methodology/>.
- ¹⁰ Matt Barrett, Ricardo Ramirez, Luis Fraga and Fernando Guerra. 2009. See: http://mattbarreto.com/papers/ca04_chapter.pdf.
- ¹¹ California Proposition 187 (also known as the Save Our State SOS initiative) was a 1994 ballot initiative to establish a state-run citizenship screening system and prohibit undocumented immigrants from using health care, public education, and other social services in the State of California (Wikipedia 2014). Proposition 209 was on the November 5, 1996 general election ballot in California as an initiated constitutional amendment, where it was approved. Proposition 209 amended the California Constitution to prohibit public institutions from discriminating on the basis of race, sex, or ethnicity (Ballotpedia 2014).
- ¹² No Party Preference (NPP) includes all registrants identified in the California Secretary of State's registration records as 'decline to state' or 'no party preference'. We do not present data for 'other party' registrants in this brief.
- ¹³ Registration data was acquired from the Statewide Database and aggregated to the county and state level. These data are the actual registration records and not representative samples. Because of this, the level of confidence in the data is not susceptible to estimates as are survey or exit poll results. Latinos and Asian-Americans are distinguished in the registration data from the general population by the use of Spanish and Asian surname lists which identify registrants with commonly occurring Spanish and Asian surnames. The Passel-Word Spanish surname list, published by the US Census Bureau, was utilized to identify Latinos. For Asian-Americans, the US Census Bureau's surname lists for six major Asian-American ethnic groups were utilized: Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Asian Indian, and Vietnamese. Surname matching for Latinos is a commonly utilized methodology. However, confidence levels for Asian can be lower as it has generally been found to be more difficult to achieve accurate identification of Asian surnames. Surname matching is not reliable for white, non-Hispanic, and African-American populations, and thus registration data is not available for these groups. Note: Some additional Latinos and Asian-Americans may be registered to vote and not flagged by surname databases. For more information on methodology and limitations, please see: <http://swdb.berkeley.edu/d10/Creating%20CA%20Official%20Redistricting%20Database.pdf>.
- ¹⁴ Swing states are defined as states that are expected to have competitive presidential races in which either party has a good chance of winning. This report identifies the following nine swing states based on CCEP analysis of the past three presidential election cycles and current state political climate: Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, and Wisconsin.
- ¹⁵ See: Latino Decisions, How Latino Voters May Decide Control of the U.S. House of Representatives: <http://www.latinodecisions.com/blog/2013/07/09/how-latino-voters-may-decide-control-of-the-u-s-house-of-representatives>
- ¹⁶ See: Pew Research Center, With Fewer New Arrivals, Census Lowers Hispanic Population Projections: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/12/16/with-fewer-new-arrivals-census-lowers-hispanic-population-projections-2/> U.S. Census 2014 National Population Projections. The Population Projections Program produces projections of the U.S. resident population by age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, and nativity. The Census Bureau releases new national projections periodically. See http://www.census.gov/population/projections/data/national/2014.html?eml=gd&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery.
- ¹⁷ Analysis based on California Department of Finance P-3: State and County Total Population Projections by Race/Ethnicity and Detailed Age, 2010-2060. CVAP analysis is based on straight-line citizen voting age population (CVAP) projections developed by the California Department of Finance for the California Civic Engagement Project. If immigration rates change beyond what is currently expected, these assumptions may over or understate population growth. If there are any significant changes in immigration, birth, or death rates, projections will need to be adjusted accordingly. For more information on the base population projections, please consult: http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/projections/P-1/documents/Projections_Methodology_2013.pdf. CVAP analysis is based on straight line citizen voting-age populations (CVAP) projections developed by the California Department of Finance for the California Civic Engagement Project. If immigration rates change beyond what is currently expected, these assumptions may over or understate population growth. If there are any significant changes in immigration, birth, or death rates, projections will need to be adjusted accordingly.
- ¹⁸ CCEP voter projections utilized straight-line CVAP projections developed by the California Department of Finance for the California Civic Engagement Project (CCEP). Baseline eligible voter turnout rates were generated by CCEP analysis of Statewide Database voter registration data.
- ¹⁹ See: Leighley and Nagler. 2013. Who Votes Now? Demographics, Issues, Inequality, and Turnout in the United States
- ²⁰ Current Population Survey: November Supplement, 2014
- ²¹ See: "Language Access and Initiative Outcomes: Did the Voting Rights Act Influence Support for Bilingual Education?" by Daniel Hopkins, <http://polmeth.wustl.edu/media/Paper/cadraft5.pdf>. See: Mobilizing Inclusion: Transforming the Electorate through Get-Out-the-Vote Campaigns, by Lisa Garcia Bedolla and Melissa R. Michelson. See: Behind the Numbers: Post Election Survey of Asian American and Pacific Islander Voters in 2012: <http://www.naasurvey.com/resources/Presentations/2012-aapipes-national.pdf>

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Research for a Stronger, More Inclusive Democracy

About the California Civic Engagement Project (CCEP):

The California Civic Engagement Project (CCEP) was established at the UC Davis Center for Regional Change to inform the public dialogue on representative governance in California. The CCEP is engaging in pioneering research to identify disparities in civic participation across place and population. It is well positioned to inform and empower a wide range of policy and organizing efforts in California to reduce disparities in state and regional patterns of well-being and opportunity. Key audiences include public officials, advocacy groups, political researchers and communities themselves. To learn about the CCEP's national advisory committee, or review the extensive coverage of the CCEP's work in the national and California media, visit our website at <http://regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/ccep>.

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