



The Rising Political Clout of People of Color

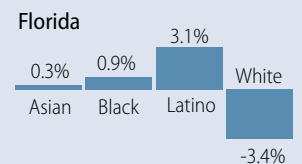
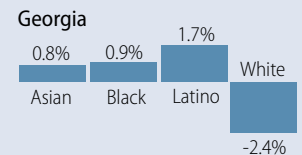
By Progress 2050

August 2015

People of color are becoming a growing force among the electorate as the number of eligible voters who are people of color continues to increase. Their potential to have a profound impact on the American political system is clear. In particular, women of color are driving this trend with their tendency to vote at higher rates than their non-Hispanic white counterparts.

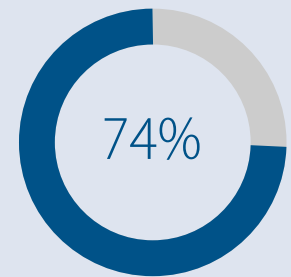
- **The percentage of the eligible electorate who are people of color has steadily increased.** In 1996, African Americans made up 11.9 percent of the electorate, while Hispanics made up 6.1 percent and Asian Americans constituted 2.1 percent.¹ By 2014, blacks constituted 12.5 percent of the electorate, Hispanics constituted 11.4 percent, and Asian Americans represented 4.2 percent.²
- **In many of the battleground states, people of color will become a larger percentage of the voting-eligible population and will have increased influence in the upcoming presidential election.** In Florida, Latinos will increase their share of the voting-eligible population from 17.1 percent in 2012 to 20.2 percent by 2016;³ African Americans will increase their share of the voting-eligible population from 14.6 percent in 2012 to 15.5 percent by 2016;⁴ and Asian Americans will increase their share from 1.9 percent in 2012 to 2.2 percent by 2016. The non-Hispanic white share of the voting-eligible population will decrease from 65.3 percent in 2012 to 61.7 percent by 2016.⁵ In Georgia, the Hispanic share of the voting-eligible population will increase from 3.9 percent in 2012 to 5.6 percent by 2016;⁶ the African American share of the voting-eligible population will increase from 31.1 percent to 32 percent during the same time span;⁷ and the Asian American share of the voting-eligible population is expected to increase from 2.2 percent in 2012 to 3 percent by 2016.⁸ The non-Hispanic white share of the voting-eligible population is expected to fall from 61.7 percent in 2012 to 59.3 percent in 2016.⁹

People of color will have increased influence in battleground states in 2016



- **Asian Americans' share of the electorate is growing.** From 2000 to 2012, the number of Asian American voters grew from approximately 2 million to 3.9 million voters.¹⁰ The Asian American share of the voting-eligible population increased from 1.8 percent in 2000 to close to 4 percent of the voting-eligible population in 2014.¹¹ By 2044, it is expected that Asian Americans will comprise 10 percent of the voting-eligible population.¹²
- **During the 2012 presidential election, African Americans voted at a higher rate than non-Hispanic white voters.** Blacks voted at a rate of 66.2 percent,¹³ compared with non-Hispanic whites, who voted at a rate of 64.1 percent. This was the first time that the African American voting rate exceeded that of non-Hispanic whites since the Bureau of the Census began to record voting rates in 1964.¹⁴ In fact, the 2012 black vote represented a larger share of the electorate than the African American share of eligible voters.
- **Women of color are growing to be an even more important segment of the electorate.** Since 2000, women of color have contributed 74 percent¹⁵ of the growth in eligible women voters. The voting-eligible population of white women has increased by approximately 6 percent since 1990, compared with a 55 percent¹⁶ increase in voting-eligible women of color over the same time period.
- **A large portion of the population of people of color is below age 18, and a vast majority are U.S. citizens.** As of 2013, 26.2 percent of blacks,¹⁷ 32.8 percent of Latinos,¹⁸ and 21 percent of Asians were below age 18.¹⁹ 19.4 percent of whites were below age 18.²⁰ With such significant populations below age 18, particularly in the Latino community, these demographic groups are poised to see an increase in their share of eligible voters as those below age 18 reach voting age. Furthermore, according to the Pew Hispanic Center, close to 800,000 Latinos²¹ turn 18 each year; by 2030, this number could grow to 1 million per year.²² According to the Census Bureau's 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 94.5 percent²³ of Latinos under age 18 were either born in the United States or are naturalized citizens. That same survey found that 86.7 percent²⁴ of Asians under age 18 were born in the United States or are naturalized citizens. As Asian and Latino youth age, they will add to the growing share of eligible voters in their respective communities.
- **There are as many eligible Latino voters today as there were actual voters in the 2012 presidential election.** In 2012, about 12 million Latinos voted. That same year, however, there were 11.2 million Latino adults who were eligible to vote but did not.²⁵

Women of color make up the vast majority of newly eligible women voters



Endnotes

- 2 Thom File, *Who Votes? Congressional Elections and the American Electorate: 1978–2014* (Suitland, MD: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015), available at <http://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/demo/p20-577.pdf>.
- 3 Patrick Oakford, “The Changing Face of America’s Electorate” (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2015), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/report/2015/01/06/101605/the-changing-face-of-americas-electorate/>.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 File, *The Diversifying Electorate—Voting Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin in 2012 (and Other Recent Elections)*.
- 11 File, *Who Votes? Congressional Elections and the American Electorate: 1978–2014*.
- 12 Karthick Ramakrishnan and Farah Z. Ahmad, “State of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders: Civic Participation and Democracy” (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2014), available at <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/AAP-Participation.pdf>.
- 13 File, *The Diversifying Electorate—Voting Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin in 2012 (and Other Recent Elections)*.
- 14 Bureau of the Census, “About Voting and Registration,” available at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/about/index.html> (last accessed March 2015).
- 15 Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Survey* (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2000); Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Survey* (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2014).
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Author’s calculations are based on data from Bureau of the Census, *2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates* (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2013), table B01001B.
- 18 Ibid., table B01001I.
- 19 Ibid., table B01001D.
- 20 Ibid., table B01001A.
- 21 Paul Taylor and others, “An Awakened Giant: The Hispanic Electorate Is Likely to Double by 2030” (Washington: Pew Hispanic Center, 2012), available at http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2012/11/hispanic_vote_likely_to_double_by_2030_11-14-12.pdf.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Author’s calculations are based on data from Bureau of the Census, *2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates*, table B05003I.
- 24 Ibid., table B05003D.
- 25 Taylor and others, “An Awakened Giant.”