

Native-Born Citizens and Naturalized Citizens – Differences in Voting Behavior within the United States

Key Words:

1. Nativity Status: defined by whether an individual is a native born citizen or a naturalized citizen
2. Native Born Citizens: individuals who were born in the United States
3. Naturalized Citizens: individuals who were born outside of the United States, but later obtained United States citizenship
4. Residential Mobility: changes in residence

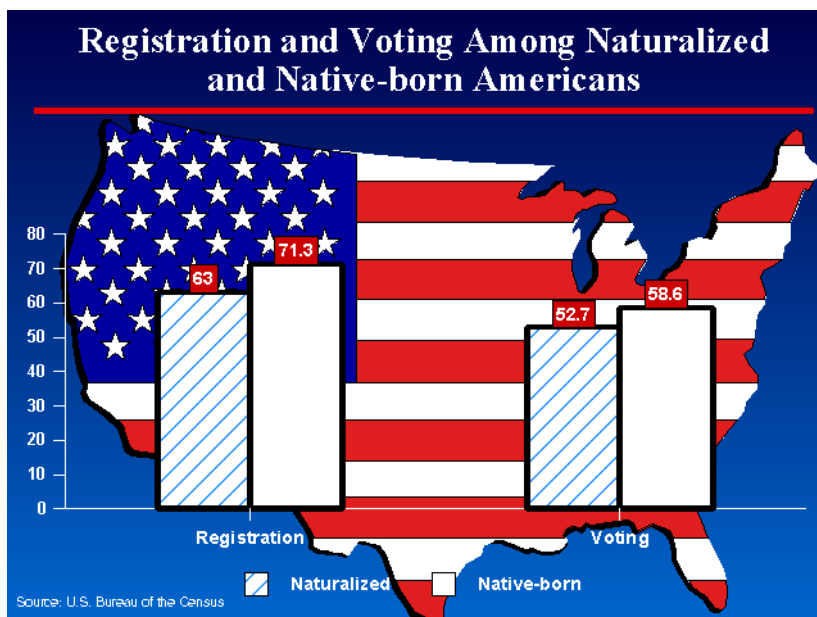
Description:

Native born citizens have different voting behavior than do naturalized citizens. Although both groups have the right to vote, native born citizens are more likely to vote than naturalized citizens. These differences are attributed to education, residential mobility, and length of time in the United States among other factors.

Key Points:

1. Which socioeconomic factors most determine whether a native born citizen will 1) register and 2) vote?
2. Are native born citizens more likely to vote than naturalized citizens?
3. How much is voting behavior of naturalized citizens attributed to native country?
4. How much is voting behavior of naturalized citizens attributed to length of time living in the US?

Images:



Source: US Bureau of the Census

Table 1. Party Identification among Naturalized and Non-Naturalized Immigrants, and Latinos, 2006 and 2008.

Party Identification	2006			2008		
	Immigrant Citizen	Immigrant Non-Citizen	Latino*	Immigrant Citizen	Immigrant Non-Citizen	Latino*
Democratic	51.3 %	60.5 %	54.0 %	55.0 %	70.6 %	57.4 %
Republican	35.8 %	22.5 %	34.3 %	30.9 %	15.9 %	27.2 %
Independent	12.9 %	17.0 %	11.6 %	14.1 %	13.5 %	15.4 %
N	1,754	382	4,454	1,640	775	2,991

Source: You Gov/Polimetrix, Cooperative Congressional Election Study, 2006, 2008, weighted cell percentages. Party categories include leaners as partisans, consistent with previous research on party identification (Petrocik 2009).
* Includes both naturalized and native-born Latinos.

Source: Center for Immigration Status

Briefing:

It is not surprising that citizens (both native born citizens and naturalized citizens) of a higher social economic status are more likely to register and vote. This statement is true regardless of which factor we use to measure social economic status: education, income, occupation, etc.

However, one key factor that causes some disturbances in voting behavior is an individual's residential mobility. Individuals must update their registration information every time they change residency. 16% of Americans move every year, leaving this block of individuals less likely to register or update their registration. Furthermore, "those who have been at their residence for one to four years are 30% more likely to register to vote than those who have been at their residency for less than one year" (Bass 9). As an individual lives in their residency for even longer, the likelihood of the registering to vote doubles. Individuals within this category oftentimes include, but are not limited to, homeowners and married couples.

Staying on the topic of registration, for naturalized citizens, their native country plays a significant factor in their voting behavior. For example, naturalized citizens who were born in communist countries during the 1980s were more likely to participate in American politics than those who were born in democratic countries. This may be because naturalized citizens who were born in communist countries in which they may not have had the right to vote nor had the opportunity to choose between more than one political party may value American politics more. That drives them to participate more so than their democratic counterparts. In contrast, naturalized citizens whose native countries tend to be, in general, more politically active, will

more likely register and vote because the idea of civic responsibility would be more ingrained within them.

Furthermore, naturalized citizens who still felt tied to their native country were less likely to register and vote. That strong tie a naturalized citizen holds is more pertinent within males than females. Males entering the United States tend to use their old networks to succeed, and thus makes it harder to move on. This is particularly true within the Hispanic population. Oftentimes, naturalized Hispanic men try to hold on to the status and social structure they once had in their native country. On the other hand, naturalized Hispanic women are more likely to adjust to the American political life and learn more about the institution possibly because as women, they didn't have such a high status in their native country to begin with so there's not much they can hold on to.

In addition to an individual's native country, the length of time for which a naturalized citizen has lived in the United States also plays a significant role in their voting behavior. Another way of looking at an individual's length of time living in the United States is asking how well they have assimilated to the United States political culture. One factor of assimilation is language. Oftentimes, it takes more than a couple of years to solidify the use of a language. Once naturalized citizens have a firm grasp of the English language, then it becomes even easier to participate in American politics, thus making it more likely to register and vote. In addition to language, the more time that naturalized citizens spend in the United States, the more educated they become on issues and the more involved they become within their own community.

Although it is most information points to the fact that native born citizens are more likely to vote than naturalized citizens, this is not the case within the Hispanic group. Within the Hispanic group, naturalized Hispanics are more likely to vote than native-born Hispanics. This difference isn't attributed to their native country, but rather to the differences in education and income. Oftentimes naturalized Hispanics are more educated, and, thus, are of higher income than native-born Hispanics.

Works Cited:

US Census Bureau. 1 April 2013

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McCormick, Richard. "Ethno-Cultural Interpretations of Nineteenth-Century American Voting Behavior." Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 89, No. 2 (Jun 1974) p. 351 – 377. JSTOR. 10 April 2013 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2149264>

Useful Resources:

US Citizenship and Immigration Services: <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>

Registering to Vote: <http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Voting/Register.shtml>

US Census Bureau: <http://www.census.gov/>