

THE NEW AMERICAN ELECTORATE

THE GROWING POLITICAL POWER
OF IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

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ABOUT SPECIAL REPORTS ON IMMIGRATION

The Immigration Policy Center's Special Reports are our most in-depth publication, providing detailed analyses of special topics in U.S. immigration policy.

ABOUT THE IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER

The Immigration Policy Center, established in 2003, is the policy arm of the American Immigration Council. IPC's mission is to shape a national conversation on immigration and immigrant integration. Through its research and analysis, IPC provides policymakers, the media, and the general public with accurate information about the role of immigrants and immigration policy on U.S. society. IPC reports and materials are widely disseminated and relied upon by press and policymakers. IPC staff regularly serves as experts to leaders on Capitol Hill, opinion-makers, and the media. IPC is a non-partisan organization that neither supports nor opposes any political party or candidate for office. Visit our website at www.immigrationpolicy.org and our blog at www.immigrationimpact.com.

This report is an updated version of a previous report, which was prepared for the Immigration Policy Center by Rob Paral and Associates in October 2008. Rob Paral and Associates provided the data for this update, which was prepared by Walter Ewing and Seth Hoy of the Immigration Policy Center.

Executive Summary

At a time when federal, state, and local elections are often decided by small voting margins—with candidates frequently locked in ferocious competition for the ballots of those “voting blocs” that might turn the electoral tide in their favor—one large and growing bloc of voters has been consistently overlooked and politically underestimated: New Americans. This group of voters and potential voters includes not only immigrants who have become U.S. citizens (Naturalized Americans), but also the U.S.-born children of immigrants who were raised during the current era of large-scale immigration from Latin America and Asia which began in 1965 (the Post-1965 Children of Immigrants). These immigrants and their children have a powerful and highly personal connection to the modern immigrant experience that most other Americans do not. It’s one thing to hear family stories about a grandfather or great-grandfather coming to the United States during the much-romanticized “Ellis Island” era of immigration from Europe that ended decades ago. It’s quite another to belong to a family that is experiencing first-hand the political and economic realities of immigration today. The ranks of registered voters who are New Americans, or Latino or Asian, have been growing rapidly this decade and are likely to play an increasingly pivotal role in elections at all levels in the years to come, particularly in battleground states like Florida, Colorado, Nevada, and New Mexico. As public opinion polls reveal, anti-immigrant political rhetoric is likely to motivate many New Americans to cast ballots, but is unlikely to win many votes for candidates perceived as anti-immigrant.

New Americans, Latinos, and Asians Are Large and Growing Shares of the U.S. Electorate

➤ **New Americans Were 10.2 Percent (15 million) of All Registered Voters in 2008**

- 9.3 million were Naturalized Americans, accounting for 6.4 percent of registered voters.
- 5.7 million were Post-1965 Children of Immigrants, accounting for 3.9 percent of registered voters.¹

➤ **Latinos and Asians Accounted for 10.7 Percent (15.6 million) of All Registered Voters in 2008**

- 11.6 million Latinos comprised 7.9 percent of registered voters.
- 4 million Asians accounted for 2.8 percent of registered voters.

➤ **Between the Presidential Elections of 1996 and 2008, the Number of New Americans Registered to Vote Jumped 101.5 percent**

- The number of Naturalized Americans registered to vote grew from 5.2 million to 9.3 million—an increase of 79.9 percent.
- The number of Post-1965 Children of Immigrants registered to vote increased from 2.3 million to 5.7 million—an increase of 151.1 percent.

➤ **The Number of Latinos and Asians Registered to Vote Increased 79.4 Percent from 1996 to 2008**

- The number of Latinos registered to vote grew from 6.6 million to 11.6 million—an increase of 76.6 percent.
- The number of Asians registered to vote increased from 2.1 million to 4 million—an increase of 87.9 percent.

¹ Due to rounding, some totals do not sum exactly.

New Americans, Latinos, and Asians are Pivotal Voting Blocs in Many States

➤ **The number of New American Registered Voters Exceeded 2008 Presidential Victory Margins in 12 States:**

- This was the case in **Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia**. In similarly close Presidential, Congressional, state house, or local elections today, the votes of New Americans could be decisive.
- In **North Carolina**, New Americans accounted for 177,291 of the state's registered voters, while the margin of victory in the Presidential race was only 14,177 votes.
- In **Virginia**, New Americans comprised 367,745 of all registered voters, while the margin of victory in the Presidential race was 234,527 votes.

➤ **The Number of Latino and Asian Registered Voters Exceeded 2008 Presidential Victory Margins in 15 States:**

- This was the case in **Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia**. In similarly close Presidential, Congressional, state house, or local elections today, the votes of Latinos and Asians could be decisive.
- In **Arizona**, Latinos and Asians accounted for 449,774 of the state's registered voters, while the margin of victory in the Presidential race was 195,404 votes.
- In **Missouri**, Latinos and Asians comprised 42,629 of all registered voters, while the margin of victory in the Presidential race was only 3,903 votes.

New Americans, Latinos, and Asians Look to Immigration When Voting

➤ **The Votes of Latinos Are Influenced by Candidates' Stances on Immigration:**

- A poll conducted by LatinoMetrics in May and June of 2010 found that "since the end of 2009, immigration has catapulted to the top issue of personal concern among 1 in 4 Latinos—tied with jobs & the economy." The poll also found that 8 in 10 Latinos regard immigration reform as being "of extreme importance."
- Similarly, a poll conducted in June 2010 by Dr. Ricardo Ramirez for the NALEO Educational Fund found that 27 percent of Latino voters cited "immigration" when asked "what general issues would be most important to you in deciding whom to vote for?" Immigration ranked as one of the top three issues for one-third of Latino voters.

Introduction

The votes of New Americans (both naturalized citizens and the children born to immigrants in the United States since 1965), as well as the votes of Latinos and Asians, are increasingly important to the outcomes of elections at the federal, state, and local levels in the United States. Yet the ongoing racial and ethnic diversification of the American electorate receives relatively little attention from pundits and analysts discussing the electoral outlook for future elections. However, as naturalized citizens and their families grow into sizable portions of the electorate, political candidates who fail to recognize the growing importance of New American, Latino, and Asian voters increasingly undermine their own campaigns.

The U.S.-born children of immigrants in particular are increasingly important in the voting booth. These children occupy a unique position in U.S. society in that they have watched one or both of their parents navigate a new society and culture. As a result, they are personally connected to the struggles of immigrants and to the ways in which U.S. society reacts to and treats immigrants. There were 5.7 million of these Post-1965 Children of Immigrants registered to vote in 2008.

Immigrants who have become U.S. citizens (Naturalized Americans) and the U.S.-born children of immigrants are closely connected to, and many are a part of, the Latino and Asian communities in the United States. Latinos and Asians include not only immigrants and their children, but also families that have lived here for many generations. In general, Latinos and Asians have a close connection to the immigrant experience because they are immigrants themselves, or their parents were immigrants, or they live in neighborhoods where friends and extended-family members are immigrants.

Apart from sheer growth in their numbers, two key factors are transforming New American, Asian, and Latino voters into a potent electoral force which is changing the nature of elections and political campaigns nationwide. First, immigrant communities can now be found throughout the United States. No longer concentrated in just a few states like California, Florida, New York, and Texas, immigrants are becoming a sizable portion of the population in states like Nevada, Washington, and North Carolina. Second, contemporary elections are often won by very thin voting margins. In 2008, for example, John McCain carried Missouri by just 3,903 votes, while Barack Obama won North Carolina by only 14,177 votes.

The combination of wide geographic dispersion and increasingly close elections means that New American, Latino, and Asian voters can play a crucial role in elections taking place in “battleground” states where neither the Democratic Party nor the Republican Party has a decisive edge. As one example, Barack Obama’s margin of victory was 236,450 votes in Florida, while New Americans accounted for 1.7 million of all registered voters in the state.

This report describes the contours of the New American, Latino, and Asian electorate in the United States as of the November 2008 federal elections. Using the most recent data available, the report provides both a nationwide and state-by-state accounting of registered voters and actual voters who are New Americans, Latinos, or Asians. Particular attention is paid to key battleground states and those states where immigrants are a large portion of the population.

Glossary of Terms

Naturalized Americans: Immigrants who have obtained U.S. citizenship and are eligible to vote.

Post-1965 Children of Immigrants: Persons born in the United States *since* 1965 who have at least one immigrant parent.

New Americans: Naturalized Citizens and Post-1965 Children of Immigrants combined.

Other Americans: Persons born in the United States to native-born parents, and those persons born *before* 1965 who have at least one immigrant parent.

Battleground States: States with closely divided electorates as of 2008: Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.²

Key States: States with large immigrant populations: California, Illinois, New York, and Texas.

Time Frame of the Analysis: Our analysis of the changing role of immigrants and other communities begins with the 1996 elections because they were the first for which data became available on voting and registration of naturalized citizens.

Source of Data

Unless otherwise noted, the information in this report is derived from the Voting and Registration Supplement to the Current Population Survey. The survey is conducted in November after the biennial federal elections.

² Defined as states in which the margin of victory for either Barack Obama or John McCain was less than 15 percent of all votes cast.

New American, Latino, and Asian Voters at the National Level

The electoral power of New American voters is significant

- There were 15 million New American registered voters in 2008.

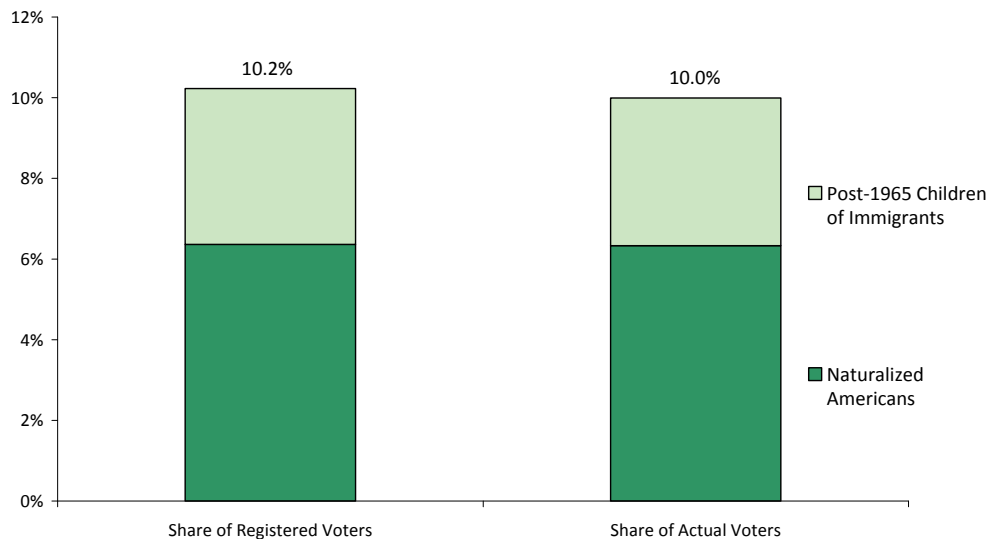
New Americans were 10.2 percent of all registered voters

There were 15.0 million New Americans registered to vote in 2008, totaling 10.2 percent of all registered voters (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

- 9.3 million were Naturalized Americans.
- 5.7 million were Post-1965 Children of Immigrants.

Registered Voters	14,965,865
Actual Voters	13,104,886

Figure 1: "New American" Share of Registered Voters & Actual Voters, 2008



New Americans were 10.0 percent of actual voters

13.1 million New Americans voted in 2008, representing 10.0 percent of all those who voted (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

- 8.3 million were Naturalized Americans.
- 4.8 million were Post-1965 Children of Immigrants.

The electoral power of Latino and Asian voters is significant

- There were 15.6 million Latino and Asian registered voters in 2008.

Latinos and Asians were 10.7 percent of all registered voters

Together, Latinos and Asians constituted 15.6 million, or 10.7 percent, of all registered voters in 2008 (see Table 2 and Figure 2).³

- 11.6 million Latinos accounted for 7.9 percent of all registered voters.
- 4.0 million Asians accounted for 2.8 percent of all registered voters.

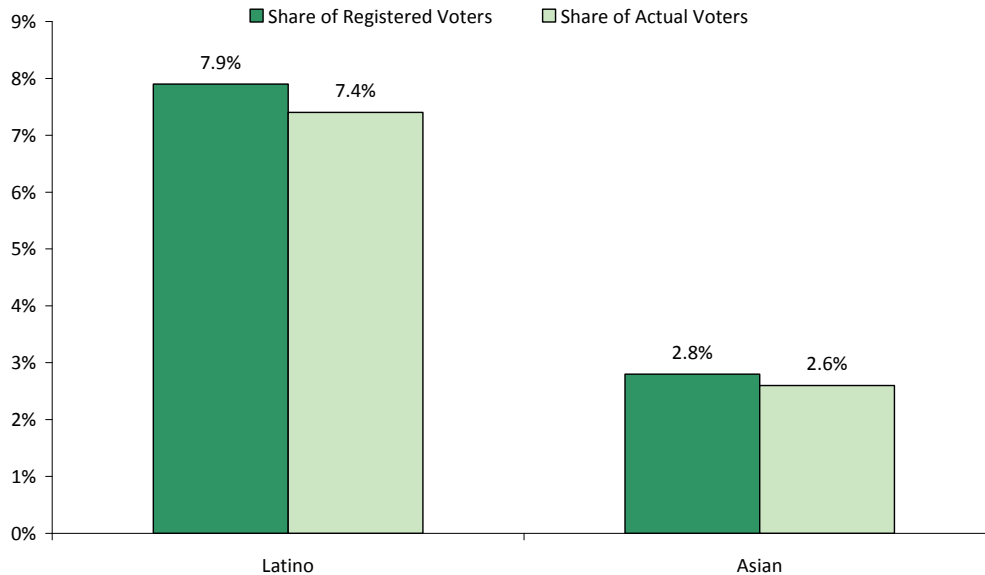
Table 2: Latino & Asian Registered Voters & Actual Voters, 2008		
	Latinos	Asians
Registered Voters	11,607,769	4,033,783
Actual Voters	9,745,458	3,468,184

Latinos and Asians were 10.1 percent of actual voters

Together, Latinos and Asians accounted for 13.2 million, or 10.1 percent, of all persons who cast a ballot in 2008 (see Table 2 and Figure 2).

- 9.7 million Latinos comprised 7.4 percent of all voters.
- 3.5 million Asians comprised 2.6 percent of all voters.

Figure 2: Latino & Asian Share of Registered Voters & Actual Voters, 2008



³ Latinos may be of any race. However, in this report, individuals are counted as belonging to the racial categories “white,” “black,” “Asian,” or “other” only if they did *not* also define themselves as “Latino.”

The electoral power of New Americans, Latinos, and Asians is growing fast

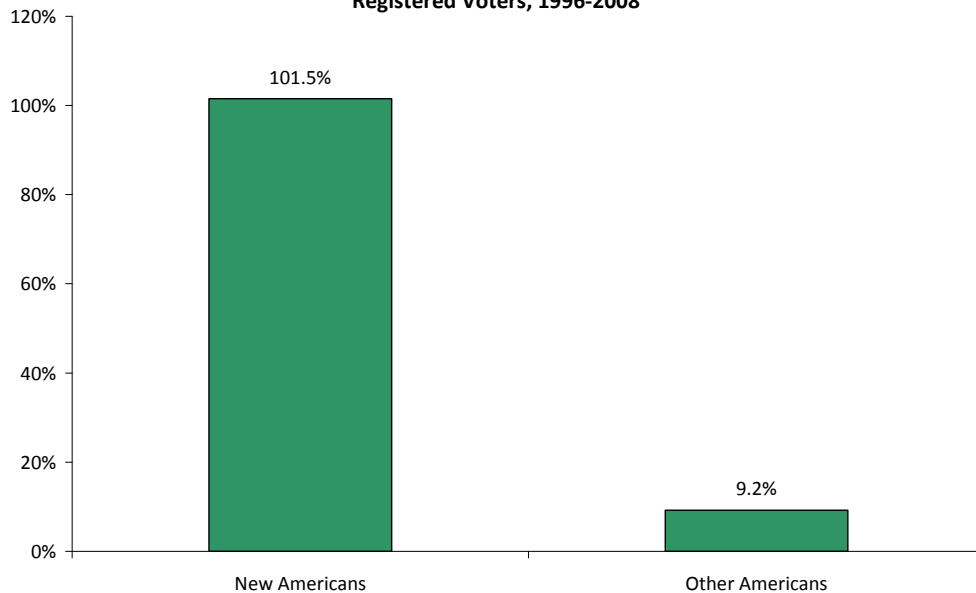
The number of New American registered voters increased by 7.5 million between 1996 and 2008

The number of New American registered voters rose by 7.5 million between 1996 and 2008—an increase of 101.5 percent (see Table 3 and Figure 3).

- Registered voters who were Naturalized Americans increased by 4.1 million—an increase of 79.9 percent.
- Registered voters who were Post-1965 Children of Immigrants increased by 3.4 million—an increase of 151.1 percent.

Table 3: "New American" & "Other American" Registered Voters, 1996 & 2008				
	1996	2008	Number Change	Percent Change
New Americans	7,428,861	14,965,865	7,537,004	101.5%
Naturalized Americans	5,176,164	9,310,113	4,133,949	79.9%
Post-1965 Children of Immigrants	2,252,697	5,655,752	3,403,055	151.1%
Other Americans	120,232,587	131,345,142	11,112,555	9.2%
All Americans	127,661,448	146,311,007	18,649,559	14.6%

Figure 3: Percent Change in Number of "New American" & "Other American" Registered Voters, 1996-2008



During the twelve years between the Presidential elections of 1996 and 2008, the New American share of registered voters increased by 4.4 percentage points. Conversely, the share of registered voters comprised of the rest of the population declined by 4.4 percentage points (see Figure 4).

- In 1996, New Americans were 5.8 percent of those registered to vote.
- By 2008, New Americans were 10.2 percent of registered voters (see Figure 5).

Figure 4: Percentage Point Change in "New American" & "Other American" Share of Registered Voters, 1996-2008

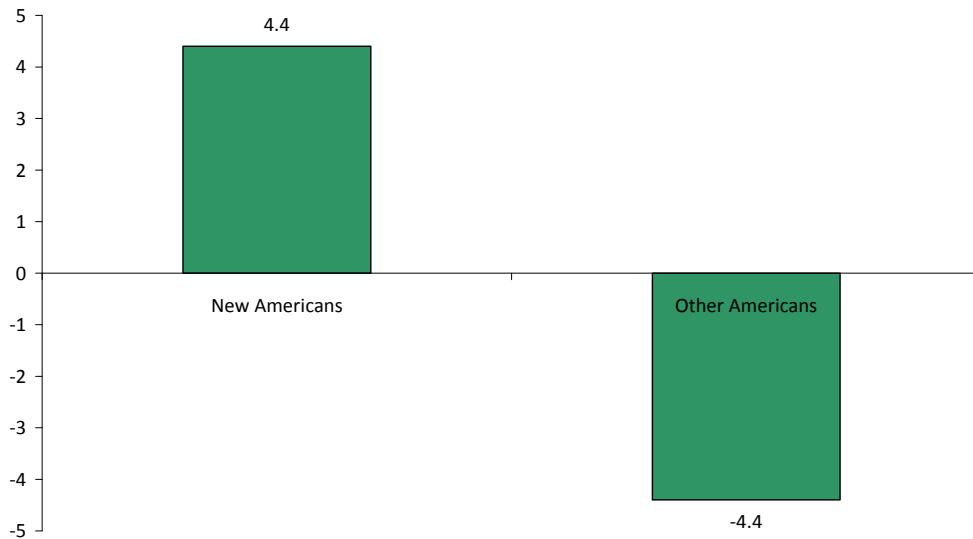
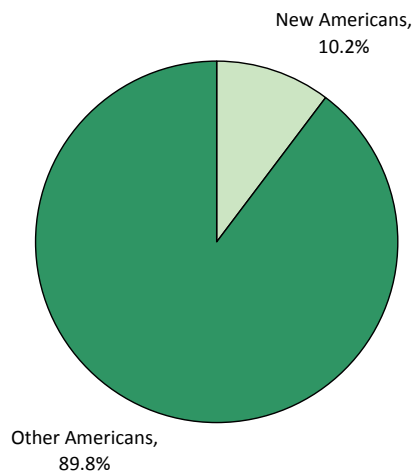


Figure 5: "New American" Share of Registered Voters, 2008



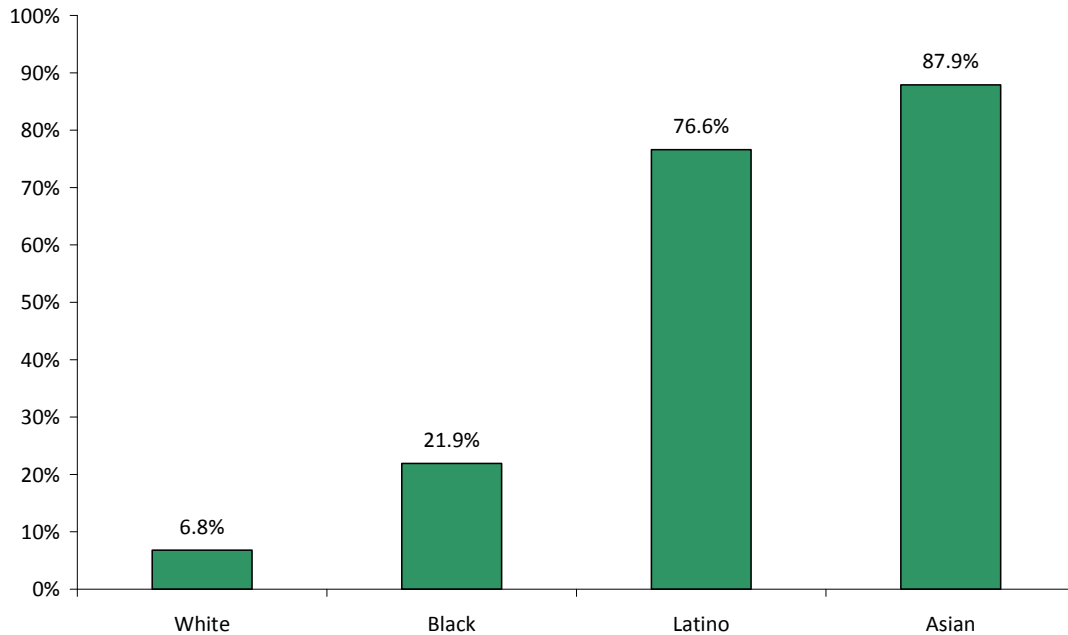
The number of Latino and Asian registered voters grew by 6.9 million between 1996 and 2008

The number of Latino and Asian registered voters increased by 6.9 million between 1996 and 2008 (see Table 4 and Figure 6).

- Latino registered voters increased by 5.0 million (an increase of 76.6 percent).
- Asian registered voters increased by 1.9 million (an increase of 87.9 percent).

Table 4: Registered Voters by Race/Ethnicity, 1996 & 2008				
	1996	2008	Number Change	Percent Change
White	104,100,691	111,214,527	7,113,836	6.8%
Black	13,990,648	17,059,000	3,068,352	21.9%
Latino	6,572,830	11,607,769	5,034,939	76.6%
Asian	2,146,468	4,033,783	1,887,315	87.9%
Other	850,811	2,395,929	1,545,118	181.6%
Total	127,661,448	146,311,008	18,649,560	14.6%

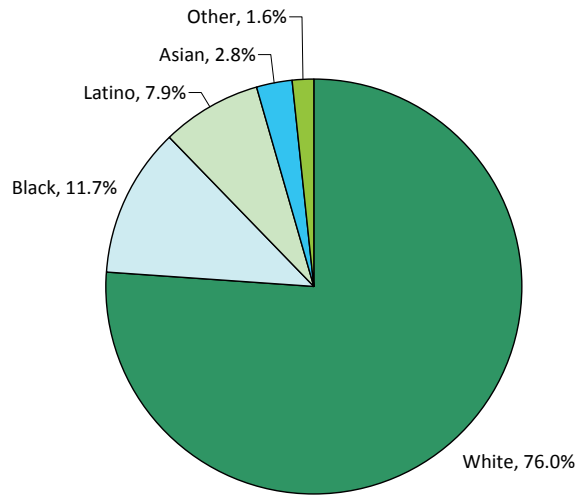
Figure 6: Percent Change in Number of Registered Voters by Race/Ethnicity, 1996-2008



Latinos and Asians combined accounted for 10.7 percent of all registered voters in 2008 (see Figure 7).

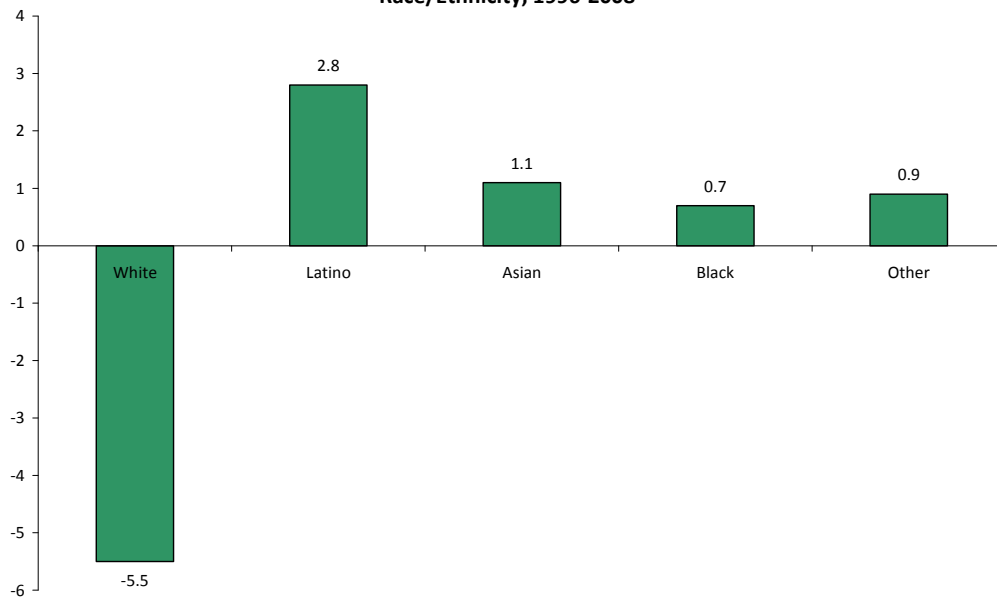
- Latinos were 7.9 percent of registered voters.
- Asians were 2.8 percent of registered voters.

Figure 7: Share of Registered Voters by Race/Ethnicity, 2008



Between 1996 and 2008, the Latino share of registered voters increased by 2.8 percentage points and the Asian share by 1.1 percentage points. In contrast, the non-Latino white share declined by 5.5 percentage points (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Percentage Point Change in Share of Registered Voters by Race/Ethnicity, 1996-2008



New American, Latino, and Asian Voters in Battleground States

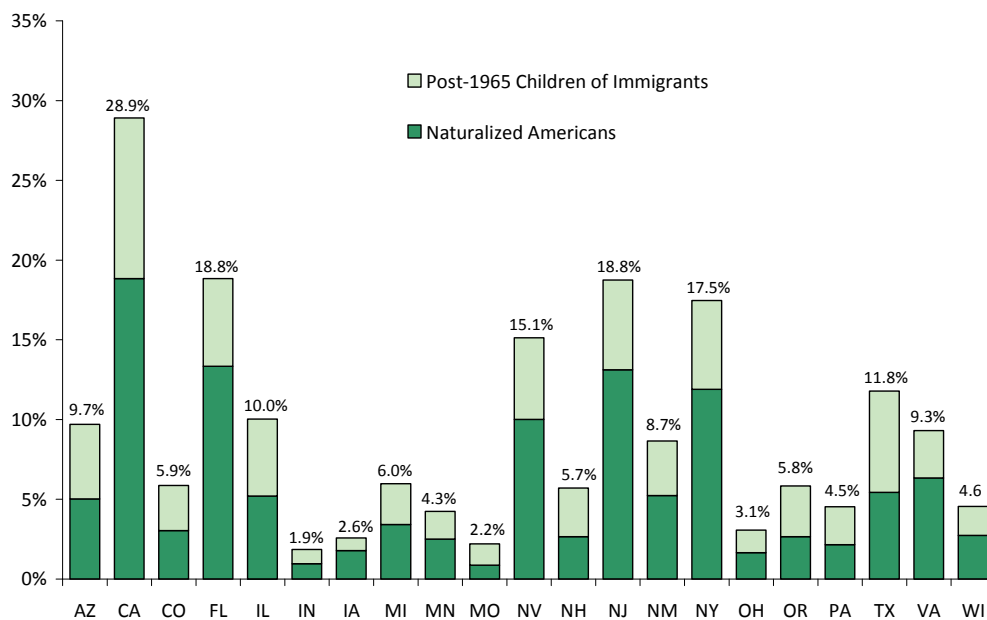
New Americans, Latinos, and Asians are pivotal voting blocs in some battleground states

The New American share of registered voters is well above the national average in some battleground states

In certain states—including battlegrounds of the 2008 election—the New American share of registered voters is well above the 2008 national average of 10.2 percent. In these states, New Americans exercise critical electoral power as a mainstream voting group and not as marginal players whose votes are crucial only in close elections. In order to get elected in these states, a candidate must obtain significant support from New Americans.

New American voters have the greatest electoral power in California, where they accounted for 28.9 percent of all registered voters in 2008. However, New Americans comprise a significant share of registered voters in other electorally important states as well: Arizona (9.7 percent of registered voters in 2008), Florida (18.8 percent), Illinois (10.0 percent), Nevada (15.1 percent), New Jersey (18.8 percent), New York (17.5 percent), and Texas (11.8 percent) (see Figure 9 and Appendix 1).

Figure 9: "New American" Share of Registered Voters in Select States, 2008

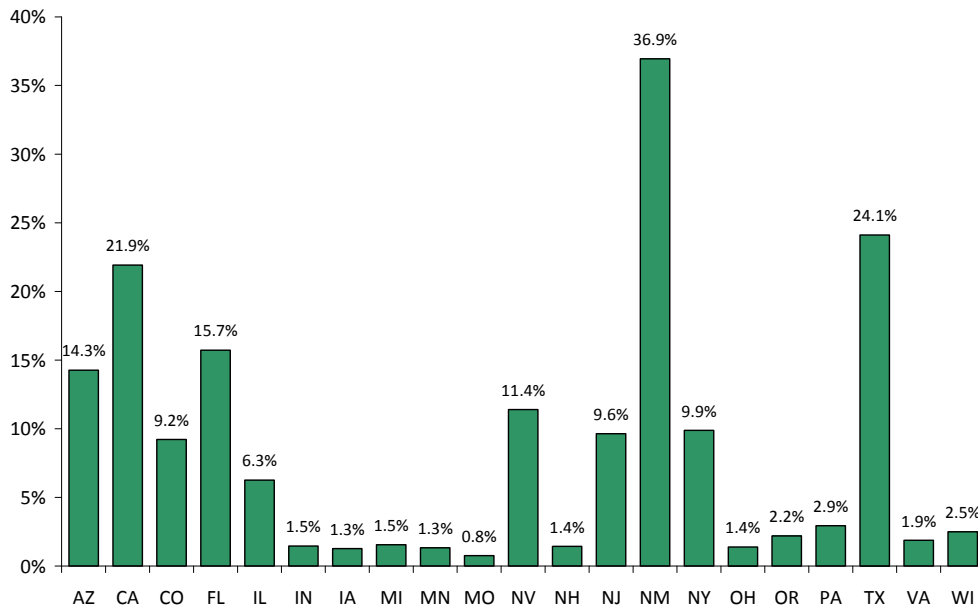


The New American share of registered voters was lower than the national average in battleground states such as Colorado, Michigan, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Oregon, and Virginia. But, in a close election, New American voters can be pivotal even in these states.

The Latino and Asian share of registered voters is well above the national average in some battleground states

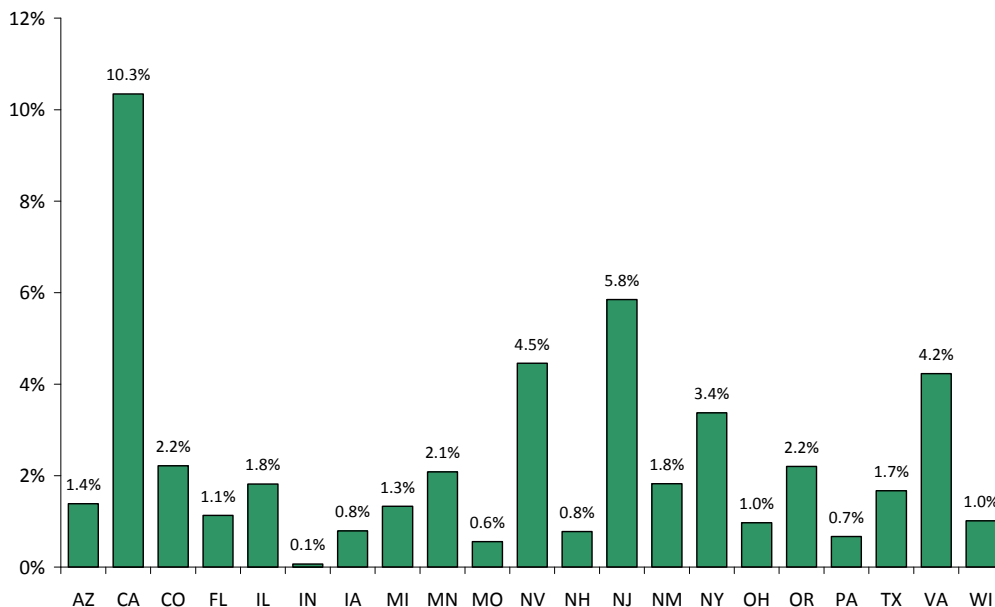
States with relatively high shares of New American registered voters often have Latino and Asian shares of registered voters that are significantly above the 2008 national average of 10.7 percent: Florida (16.8 percent of registered voters in 2008), New Jersey (15.4 percent), New York (13.3 percent), Arizona (15.7 percent), Nevada (15.9 percent), and California (32.2 percent) (see Figure 10, Figure 11, and Appendix 2).

Figure 10: Latino Share of Registered Voters in Select States, 2008



However, there are other states where, despite a comparatively low New American share of registered voters, the Latino and Asian share is relatively high: Colorado (11.4 percent of registered voters in 2008), New Mexico (38.7 percent), and Texas (25.8 percent) (see Figure 10, Figure 11, and Appendix 2).

Figure 11: Asian Share of Registered Voters in Select States, 2008



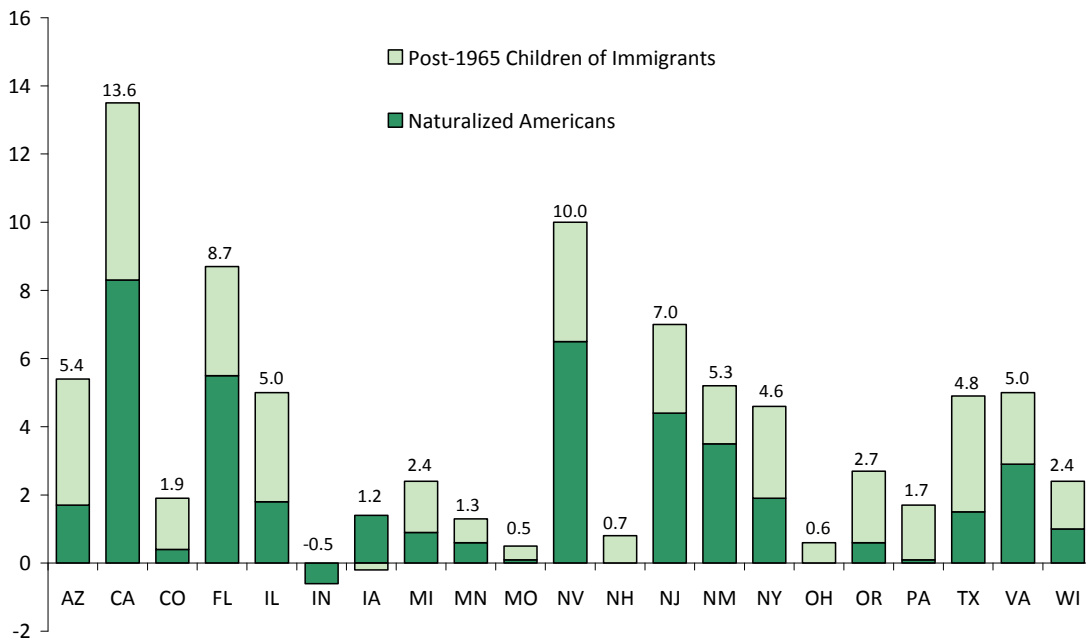
The Latino and Asian share of registered voters is lower than the national average in other battleground states such as Michigan, Pennsylvania, Oregon, and Virginia. But their numbers are sufficient to swing a close election in these states.

The electoral power of New Americans, Latinos, and Asians is growing fast in battleground states

The share of New American registered voters is increasing in nearly every battleground state

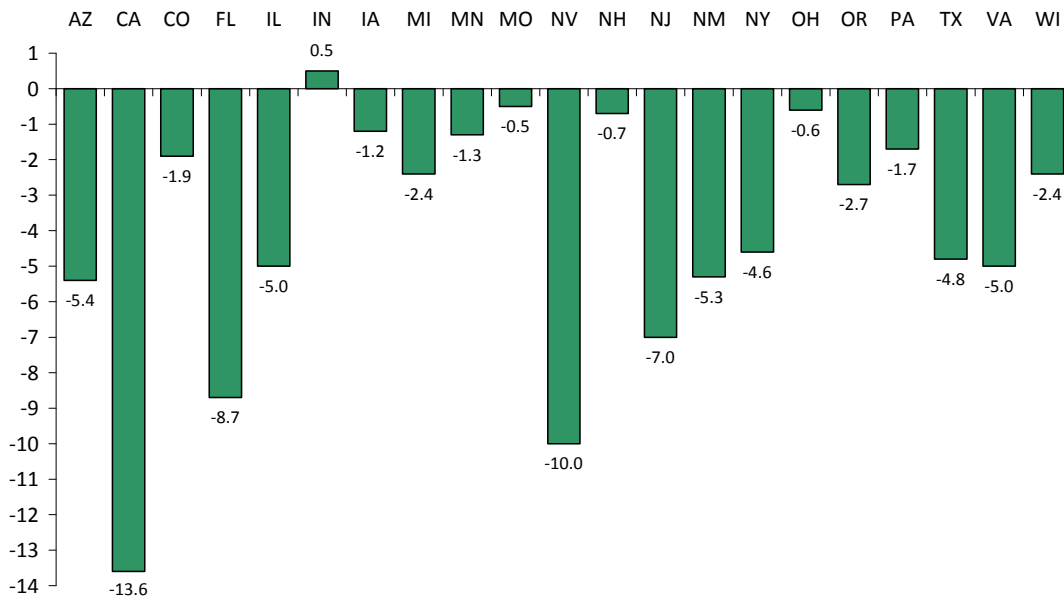
The New American share of registered voters increased in nearly every battleground and other key state during the twelve years between the Presidential elections of 1996 and 2008 (see Figures 12 and 13).

Figure 12: Percentage Point Change in New American Share of Registered Voters in Select States, 1996-2008



- In some states, the New American share of registered voters grew at rates well above the national average of 4.4 percentage points: California (13.6 percentage points), Florida (8.7 percentage points), Nevada (10.0 percentage points), and New Jersey (7.0 percentage points).
- In other states, the increase was not as great, but was still above the national average: Illinois (5.0 percentage points), New Mexico (5.3 percentage points), Texas (4.8 percentage points), and Virginia (5.0 percentage points).

Figure 13: Percentage Point Change in "Other American" Share of Registered Voters in Select States, 1996-2008



The share of Latino and Asian registered voters is increasing in nearly every battleground state

The Latino and Asian share of registered voters also increased in nearly every battleground state between 1996 and 2008 (see Figure 14 and Figure 15):

- Some states experienced increases in the Latino and Asian share of registered voters well above the national average of 3.9 percentage points: California (12.8 percentage points), Florida (7.0 percentage points), Nevada (9.0 percentage points), and New Jersey (6.4 percentage points).
- In other states, the increase was not as great, but was still above the national average: Illinois (4.5 percentage points), New Mexico (5.0 percentage points), and Texas (4.8 percentage points).

Figure 14: Percentage Point Change in Latino Share of Registered Voters in Select States, 1996-2008

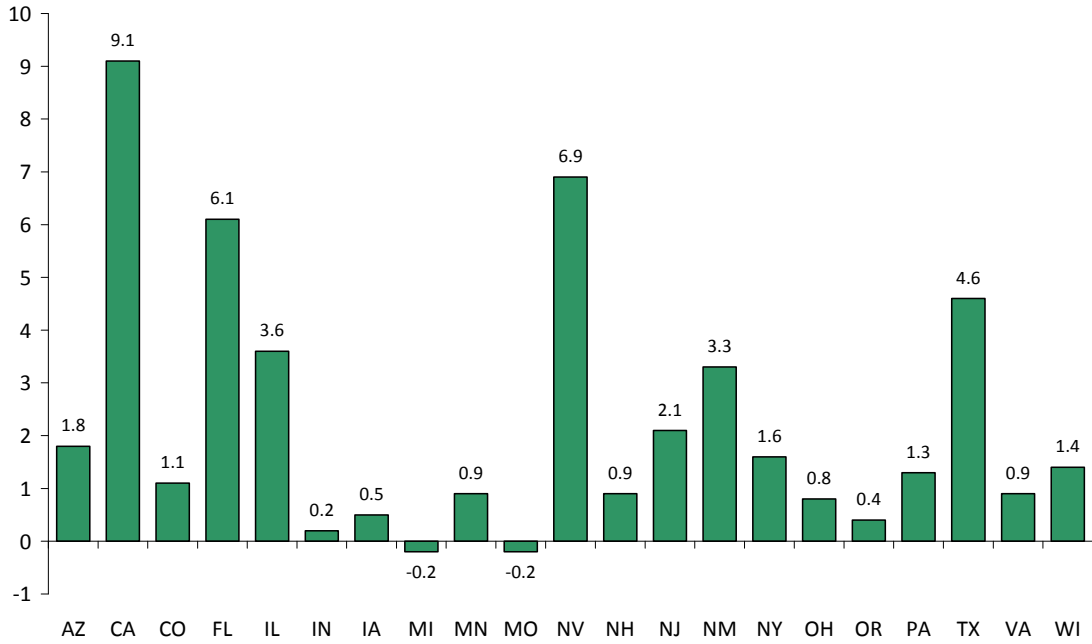
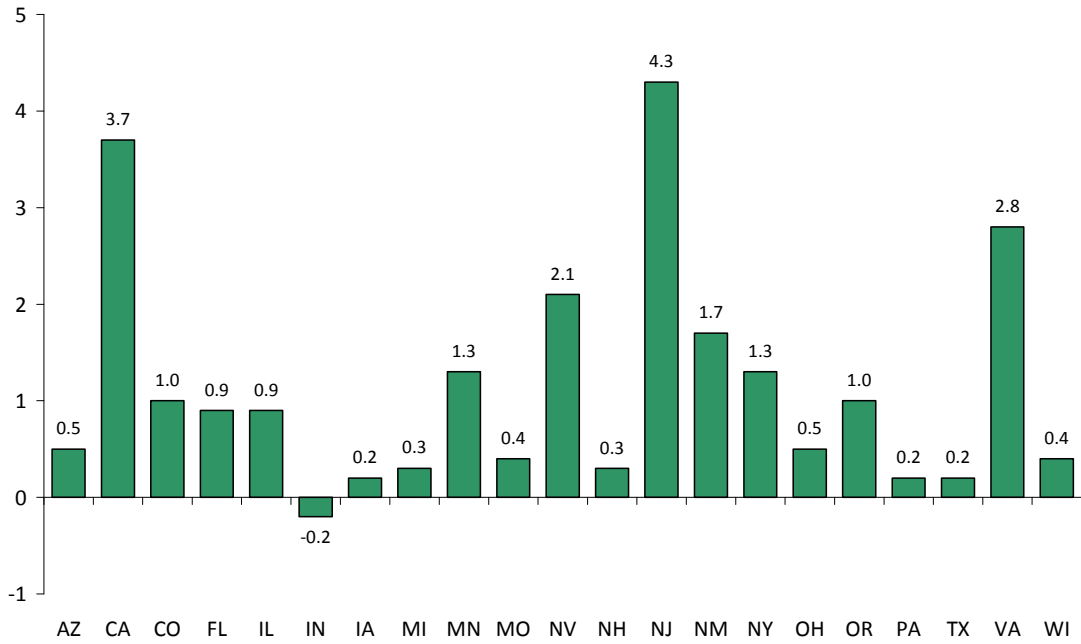


Figure 15: Percentage Point Change in Asian Share of Registered Voters in Select States, 1996-2008



New Americans, Latinos, and Asians are pivotal voting blocs in battleground states even where their numbers are small

The electoral power of New Americans is greater than their numbers suggest

The electoral power of New Americans is not limited to those states where they are the most numerous. In an era when Presidential, Congressional, and state elections are often decided by thin voting margins, even a relatively small number of New Americans can have enormous electoral influence.

In Missouri, for example, there were only 71,174 New American registered voters in 2008, but that number was significantly larger than the 3,903 votes by which John McCain won the state. In Missouri and other states where the number of New American registered voters was greater than the margin of victory in 2008, the votes of New Americans could conceivably be decisive in similarly close elections today (see Table 5).⁴

	Number of "New American" Registered Voters	Number of Votes by Which Obama or McCain Won State
Florida	1,652,969	236,450 (O)
California	4,302,850	3,262,692 (O)
Texas	1,193,683	950,695 (M)
North Carolina	177,291	14,177 (O)
New Jersey	754,362	602,215 (O)
Georgia	338,972	204,607 (M)
Virginia	367,745	234,527 (O)
Arizona	278,774	195,404 (M)
Missouri	71,174	3,903 (M)
Nevada	173,554	120,909 (O)
Indiana	57,649	28,391 (O)
Montana	13,770	11,096 (M)

⁴ Popular vote counts for the 2008 presidential election come from the U.S. Electoral College, "[2008 Presidential Election: Popular Vote Totals.](#)"

The electoral power of Latinos and Asians is greater than their numbers suggest

As with New Americans, the electoral power of Latino and Asian voters is not limited to those states where they exercise critical electoral strength by sheer force of numbers. In battleground states in particular, the votes of Latinos and Asians can be pivotal in close elections. In Indiana, for instance, there were only 47,348 Latino and Asian registered voters in 2008, but that was significantly greater than the 28,391 votes by which Barack Obama won the state (see Table 6).

	Number of Latino & Asian Registered Voters	Number of Votes by Which Obama or McCain Won State
Texas	2,609,559	950,695 (M)
California	4,802,658	3,262,692 (O)
Florida	1,479,122	236,450 (O)
Arizona	449,774	195,404 (M)
New Mexico	363,176	125,590 (O)
North Carolina	136,425	14,177 (O)
Hawaii	280,265	205,305 (O)
Colorado	278,713	214,987 (O)
Nevada	181,846	120,909 (O)
Missouri	42,629	3,903 (M)
New Jersey	622,843	602,215 (O)
Indiana	47,348	28,391 (O)
Virginia	241,505	234,527 (O)
Georgia	209,362	204,607 (M)
Montana	12,117	11,096 (M)

The Importance of Immigration as an Election Issue

Immigration appears to be a key issue driving the rise in naturalization rates and voter registration among New Americans, Latinos, and Asians. Following the passage of a harsh immigration-enforcement bill by the House of Representatives in 2006, millions of immigrants and their supporters engaged in unprecedented mobilizations around the country. Many demonstrators held signs reading “Today We March, Tomorrow We Vote.” Since then, the government has stepped up its immigration-enforcement activities. This has been met by an upsurge in civic-participation activity, including large increases in naturalization and voter mobilization.

New Americans, Latinos, and Asians, regardless of their immigration status, all feel the impact of the current environment—some because they or close family members are immigrants, others because they may “look like” immigrants in the eyes of government authorities and the broader public. Anti-immigrant policies affect not just immigrants, but the Latino and Asian communities in general.

All evidence points to the fact that New Americans, Latinos, and Asians have taken the “Tomorrow We Vote” mandate seriously. The 2008 elections were marked by a significant increase in new voter

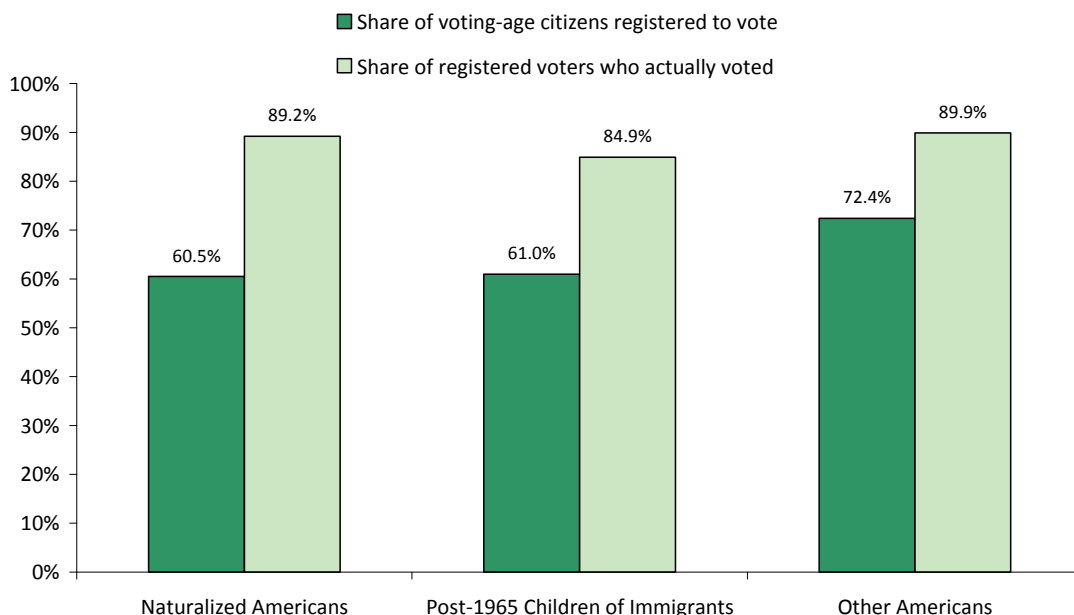
registrations and high levels of voter turnout by these voting blocs, driven in part by the stances that candidates took on immigration. Moreover, a poll conducted by LatinoMetrics in May and June of 2010 found that “since the end of 2009, immigration has catapulted to the top issue of personal concern among 1 in 4 Latinos—tied with jobs & the economy.” The poll also found that 8 in 10 Latinos regard immigration reform as being “of extreme importance.”⁵ Similarly, a poll conducted in June 2010 by Dr. Ricardo Ramirez for the NALEO Educational Fund found that 27 percent of Latino voters cited “immigration” when asked “what general issues would be most important to you in deciding whom to vote for?” Immigration ranked as one of the top three issues for one-third of Latino voters.⁶

The political power of New Americans, Latinos, and Asians will continue to grow

The political power of New American voters will continue to increase in coming years as more and more children of immigrants come of voting age, more long-term legal immigrants become naturalized citizens, and increasing numbers of New Americans register to vote.

The key to the electoral power of New Americans is voter registration. In past elections, New Americans have had slightly lower registration rates than the rest of the U.S. population. However, once New Americans register to vote, they turn out to cast ballots at approximately the same rate as everyone else (see Figure 16). If more New Americans register to vote, it is likely that they will turn out in high numbers, thereby increasing their share of the electorate.

Figure 16: Voter Registration & Turnout Rates of Naturalized Americans, Post-1965 Children of Immigrants & Other Americans 2008

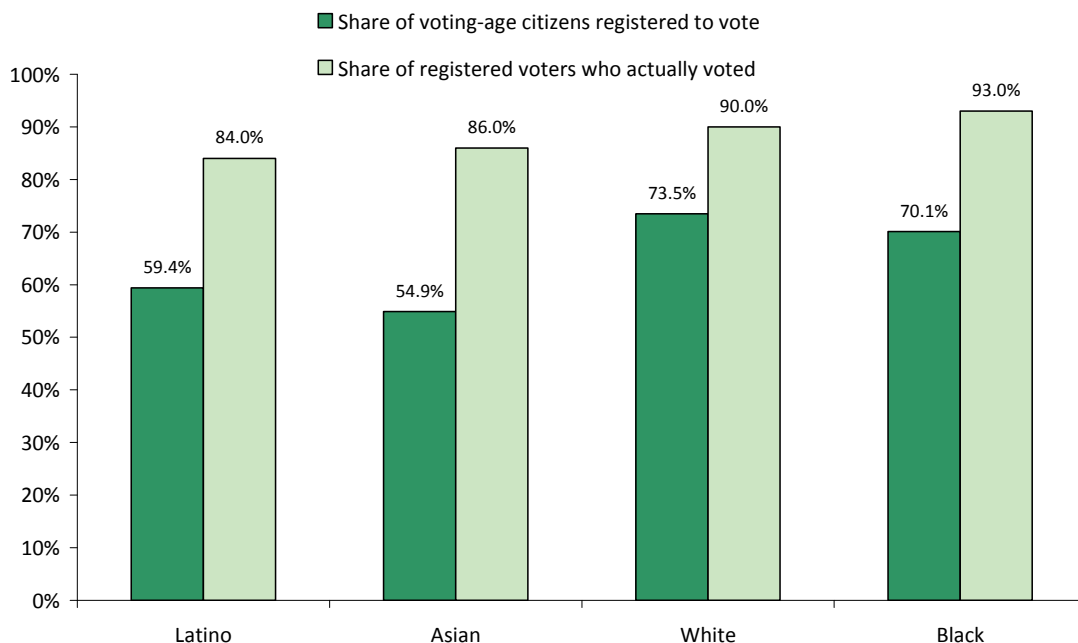


⁵ LatinoMetrics, [U.S. Latinos’ Perceptions & Actions Around Immigration Debate: Law Enforcement, Lifestyle and Voting Impact](#), July 14, 2010.

⁶ NALEO Educational Fund, [The 2010 Latino Vote](#), July 20, 2010.

The same is true for Latino and Asian voters, whose registration numbers were significantly lower than white and black voters in 2004. However, registered Asians and Latinos did turn out to vote at the same rate as other groups (see Figure 17). Turnout by Latino voters jumped from 4.9 million in 1996 to 9.7 million in 2008, while turnout by Asian voters increased from 1.7 million to 3.5 million during this period.

Figure 17: Voter Registration & Turnout Rates by Race/Ethnicity, 2008



The number of New Americans eligible to vote has grown significantly since the 1996 Presidential election as record numbers of legal immigrants have applied for naturalization. According to data from the Office of Immigration Statistics, 9.8 million immigrants became naturalized citizens from Fiscal Year (FY) 1996 through FY 2009.⁷

There are other indications that the potential electoral power of New Americans, Latinos, and Asians will continue to grow. The U.S. Census Bureau has predicted that the Latino share of the U.S. population will double from 15 percent as of 2008 to 30 percent by 2050. The Asian share of the population is expected to rise from 5.1 percent to 9.2 percent during this time.⁸

Conclusion

Registered voters who are New Americans (Naturalized Americans and the Post-1965 Children of Immigrants), or who belong to the Latino or Asian communities, are a significant portion of the American electorate. These groups are growing rapidly not only in states that have traditionally received immigrants, but also in states that have only recently begun to have more diverse populations. As a result, registered voters who are immigrants themselves or otherwise connected personally to the immigrant experience have significant electoral power at federal, state, and local levels. New Americans, Latinos, and Asians are casting ballots in record numbers. These voters will remember what candidates have said—or not said—about the value of immigrants and immigration.

⁷ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, *2009 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*, [Table 20](#).

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, [“An Older and More Diverse Nation by Midcentury,”](#) August 14, 2008.

Appendix 1: Registered Voters by Nativity, 2008

State	Total	New Americans	Other Americans
Alabama	2,437,969	0.8%	99.2%
Alaska	345,268	6.9%	93.1%
Arizona	2,873,824	9.7%	90.3%
Arkansas	1,317,351	0.5%	99.5%
California	14,885,162	28.9%	71.1%
Colorado	2,436,693	5.9%	94.1%
Connecticut	1,761,162	11.3%	88.7%
Delaware	447,204	5.8%	94.2%
District of Columbia	323,718	10.5%	89.5%
Florida	8,774,000	18.8%	81.2%
Georgia	4,623,889	7.3%	92.7%
Hawaii	522,370	14.4%	85.6%
Idaho	722,537	4.2%	95.8%
Illinois	6,151,435	10.0%	90.0%
Indiana	3,104,646	1.9%	98.1%
Iowa	1,630,335	2.6%	97.4%
Kansas	1,342,512	3.7%	96.3%
Kentucky	2,258,588	1.8%	98.2%
Louisiana	2,392,790	1.7%	98.3%
Maine	801,356	3.6%	96.4%
Maryland	2,827,544	10.4%	89.6%
Massachusetts	3,293,167	12.2%	87.8%
Michigan	5,530,676	6.0%	94.0%
Minnesota	2,931,026	4.3%	95.7%
Mississippi	1,588,808	0.6%	99.4%
Missouri	3,224,038	2.2%	97.8%
Montana	516,193	2.7%	97.3%
Nebraska	938,674	3.2%	96.8%
Nevada	1,147,468	15.1%	84.9%
New Hampshire	755,866	5.7%	94.3%
New Jersey	4,022,171	18.8%	81.2%
New Mexico	936,714	8.7%	91.3%
New York	8,457,556	17.5%	82.5%
North Carolina	4,901,682	3.6%	96.4%
North Dakota	398,551	1.1%	98.9%
Ohio	6,108,496	3.1%	96.9%
Oklahoma	1,797,990	3.3%	96.7%
Oregon	1,960,596	5.8%	94.2%
Pennsylvania	6,450,734	4.5%	95.5%
Rhode Island	567,750	13.0%	87.0%

State	Total	New Americans	Other Americans
South Carolina	2,384,614	2.3%	97.7%
South Dakota	441,668	1.3%	98.7%
Tennessee	2,920,981	3.0%	97.0%
Texas	10,123,250	11.8%	88.2%
Utah	1,055,897	5.4%	94.6%
Vermont	345,246	4.3%	95.7%
Virginia	3,950,370	9.3%	90.7%
Washington	3,298,584	9.4%	90.6%
West Virginia	917,018	0.7%	99.3%
Wisconsin	3,095,219	4.6%	95.4%
Wyoming	269,650	1.8%	98.2%

Appendix 2: Registered Voters by Race/Ethnicity, 2008

State	Total	(Non-Latino) White	Latino	(Non-Latino) Asian	(Non-Latino) Black	Other
Alabama	2,437,969	73.5%	0.2%	0.0%	25.1%	1.3%
Alaska	345,268	78.4%	2.5%	3.5%	2.7%	12.8%
Arizona	2,873,824	74.8%	14.3%	1.4%	4.2%	5.3%
Arkansas	1,317,351	84.8%	0.6%	0.0%	12.2%	2.5%
California	14,885,162	59.0%	21.9%	10.3%	7.2%	1.6%
Colorado	2,436,693	84.1%	9.2%	2.2%	3.2%	1.3%
Connecticut	1,761,162	84.7%	5.9%	1.8%	7.0%	0.6%
Delaware	447,204	77.8%	2.1%	0.9%	18.4%	0.9%
District of Columbia	323,718	40.1%	3.5%	1.7%	53.0%	1.7%
Florida	8,774,000	70.8%	15.7%	1.1%	11.8%	0.6%
Georgia	4,623,889	64.5%	3.2%	1.3%	30.1%	0.8%
Hawaii	522,370	27.0%	3.2%	50.5%	0.4%	18.9%
Idaho	722,537	91.7%	5.1%	1.1%	0.8%	1.3%
Illinois	6,151,435	77.7%	6.3%	1.8%	13.4%	0.8%
Indiana	3,104,646	90.6%	1.5%	0.1%	7.3%	0.6%
Iowa	1,630,335	94.0%	1.3%	0.8%	2.6%	1.4%
Kansas	1,342,512	87.5%	3.2%	1.4%	5.0%	3.0%
Kentucky	2,258,588	91.4%	0.6%	0.4%	5.9%	1.8%
Louisiana	2,392,790	67.4%	1.6%	0.2%	29.6%	1.2%
Maine	801,356	96.1%	1.1%	0.2%	0.7%	2.0%
Maryland	2,827,544	63.4%	3.3%	3.1%	29.1%	1.1%
Massachusetts	3,293,167	88.9%	3.1%	2.7%	4.3%	1.0%
Michigan	5,530,676	82.4%	1.5%	1.3%	13.3%	1.4%
Minnesota	2,931,026	92.4%	1.3%	2.1%	2.8%	1.4%
Mississippi	1,588,808	61.7%	0.6%	0.0%	37.0%	0.7%
Missouri	3,224,038	86.2%	0.8%	0.6%	10.9%	1.6%
Montana	516,193	92.9%	1.6%	0.7%	0.4%	4.4%
Nebraska	938,674	92.1%	3.0%	0.8%	2.7%	1.4%
Nevada	1,147,468	72.3%	11.4%	4.5%	9.8%	2.0%
New Hampshire	755,866	96.2%	1.4%	0.8%	0.6%	1.0%
New Jersey	4,022,171	71.2%	9.6%	5.8%	12.4%	1.0%
New Mexico	936,714	53.0%	36.9%	1.8%	1.8%	6.5%
New York	8,457,556	73.4%	9.9%	3.4%	12.5%	0.8%
North Carolina	4,901,682	75.8%	1.7%	1.1%	19.5%	2.0%
North Dakota	398,551	89.8%	0.8%	0.5%	0.5%	8.4%
Ohio	6,108,496	85.2%	1.4%	1.0%	11.1%	1.3%
Oklahoma	1,797,990	77.7%	2.6%	0.7%	7.9%	11.1%
Oregon	1,960,596	89.7%	2.2%	2.2%	1.9%	4.0%
Pennsylvania	6,450,734	87.1%	2.9%	0.7%	8.3%	1.0%
Rhode Island	567,750	89.2%	4.0%	1.3%	5.0%	0.5%

State	Total	(Non-Latino) White	Latino	(Non-Latino) Asian	(Non-Latino) Black	Other
South Carolina	2,384,614	71.0%	0.9%	0.4%	27.3%	0.5%
South Dakota	441,668	94.8%	0.8%	0.5%	0.5%	3.4%
Tennessee	2,920,981	82.2%	1.3%	0.8%	14.6%	1.1%
Texas	10,123,250	59.7%	24.1%	1.7%	13.3%	1.2%
Utah	1,055,897	94.0%	2.3%	1.7%	1.2%	0.9%
Vermont	345,246	96.4%	0.6%	0.3%	0.9%	1.8%
Virginia	3,950,370	74.6%	1.9%	4.2%	18.2%	1.1%
Washington	3,298,584	84.5%	4.8%	5.4%	1.6%	3.7%
West Virginia	917,018	96.5%	0.6%	0.1%	2.3%	0.6%
Wisconsin	3,095,219	90.7%	2.5%	1.0%	4.7%	1.1%
Wyoming	269,650	93.6%	3.1%	0.0%	0.5%	2.7%