



# CAN NONPROFITS INCREASE VOTING

# AMONG THEIR CLIENTS, CONSTITUENTS, AND STAFF?

***AN EVALUATION OF THE TRACK THE VOTE PROGRAM***

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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 **Nonprofit VOTE**  
[www.nonprofitvote.org](http://www.nonprofitvote.org)

*Prepared with the assistance of CIRCLE, the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University's Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service.*

# Executive Summary

The Track the Vote program sought to answer questions about the effectiveness of nonprofit service providers in promoting voter participation within their regular services and programs, as well as their potential for increasing voter turnout among nonprofit clients and constituents. To do so, the program tracked 33,741 individuals who registered to vote or signed a pledge to vote at 94 nonprofits. The nonprofits included a diverse set of community health centers, family service agencies, multi-service organizations, and community development groups across seven states.

Using demographic and voting history data, we were able to determine who the nonprofits reached and at what rate contacted voters turned out to vote in the 2012 general election, as compared to all registered voters in the seven states involved. The results showed the impact of personal voter outreach by nonprofit service providers in raising turnout rates among those least expected to vote and in closing gaps in voter participation across all demographics.

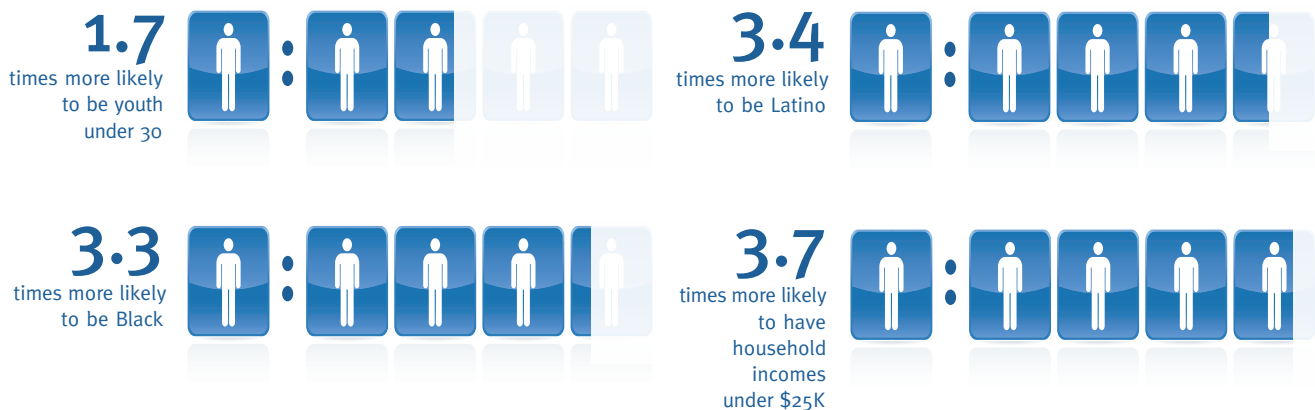
To complement the voter turnout information, we conducted standardized interviews with 27 of the participating nonprofits to learn more about the capacity issues they faced and the tactics they used to engage voters. Fifteen of those interviews were turned into case studies, contained in Part II of this report.

## Findings

### Who Nonprofits Reached

- The clients and constituents engaged by nonprofits were markedly more diverse, lower income, and younger than all registered voters in the seven states, made up of populations with a history of lower voter turnout in past elections.

#### NONPROFIT VOTERS WERE –



#### – THAN ALL OTHER VOTERS.

Figure 1

## Comparing Voter Turnout Rates

- **Voters contacted by nonprofits voted at a higher rate than the average turnout for all registered voters.** Voter turnout among the clients and constituents that nonprofits registered or collected pledges from (“nonprofit voters”) was 74%, six points above the 68% turnout rate for all registered voters. In fact, nonprofit voters outperformed their counterparts across all demographic groups studied.

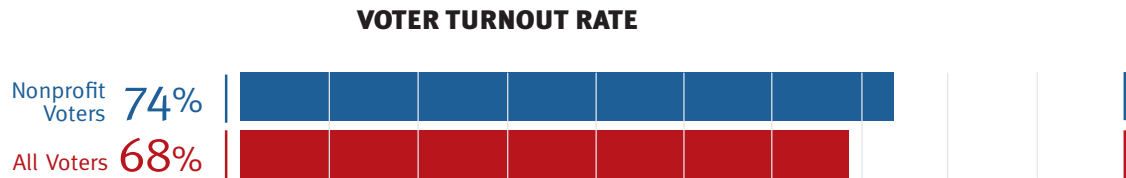


Figure 2

- **Nonprofits were particularly effective at increasing voter turnout among groups that are traditionally underrepresented in the electoral process.** Voter turnout of nonprofit voters compared to all registered voters was:
  - 18 points higher for Latino voters (72% vs. 54%),
  - 15 points higher for voters under the age of 30 (68% vs. 53%), and
  - 15 points higher for voters with household incomes under \$25,000 (68% vs. 53%).
- **Disparities in voter turnout by age, income, race, and ethnicity narrowed or disappeared among voters engaged by the nonprofits** compared to the large turnout gaps evident among registered voters in Census data<sup>1</sup> and the data in this report.
- **The intervention by nonprofits had its biggest impact on turnout among least-likely voters – those that campaigns typically disregard** based on low “voter propensity scores” assigned before the election to predict their likelihood to vote. The nonprofit voters with the lowest voting propensity scores were three times more likely to vote than their low-propensity counterparts among all registered voters.

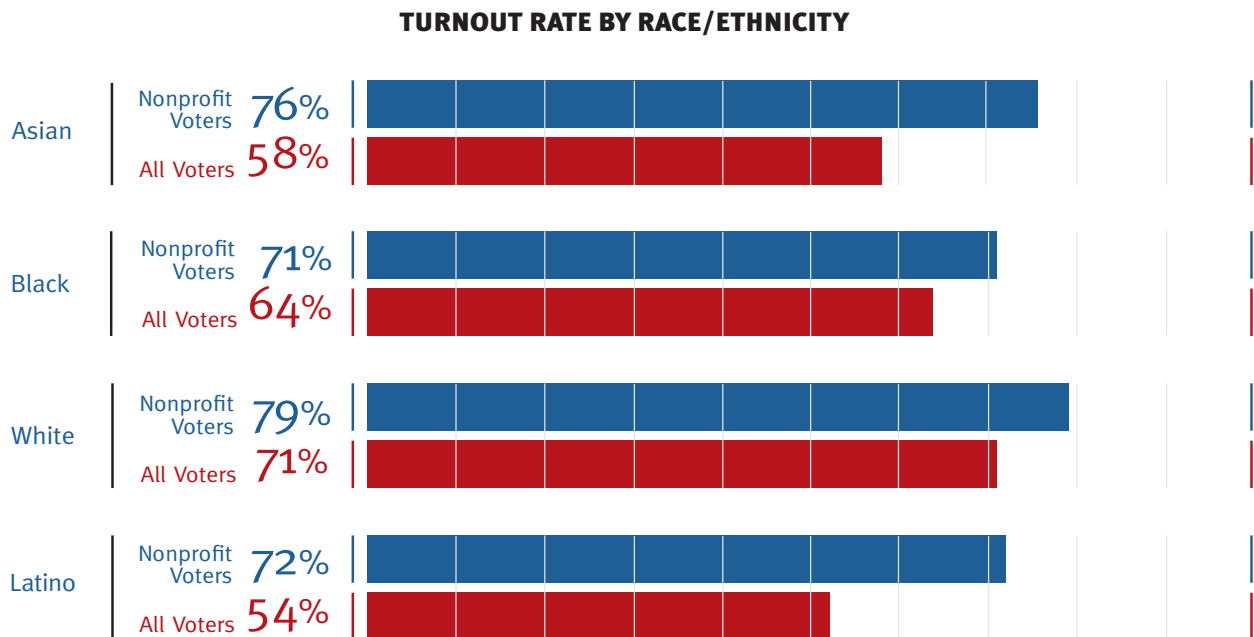


Figure 3

<sup>1</sup> Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2012, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2012.

## Motivation, Capacity Challenges, and Success Factors

- The top reasons nonprofits cited for conducting voter engagement were to advance their organization’s mission and empower their clients.
- Nonprofits faced their biggest challenge in staffing their voter registration and pledge activities, in part due to insufficient planning. The most successful agencies were able to assign voter engagement activities to staff who had compatible workloads and schedules, such as outreach and marketing teams or those signing clients up for benefits.
- The most identifiable success factors were motivated staff and volunteers and strong support from a state or national partner in the form of training, check-ins, and materials.
- Nonprofits used a range of agency-based strategies to engage voters, finding venues where they had the time and opportunity to talk their clients and constituents about the election and voter registration during services, in classes and meetings, and at agency-related events.



Figure 4: Photos from Track the Vote program participants, clockwise from top left – Harbor Health (photo © Kelly Creedon), Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, Neighborhood Service Organization, and Clinica Family Health Services.

## Acknowledgements

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Founded in 2005, Nonprofit VOTE partners with America's nonprofits to help the people they serve participate and vote. We are the leading source of nonpartisan resources to help nonprofits integrate voter engagement into their ongoing activities and services.

To view or download a copy of the full report, visit [www.nonprofitvote.org](http://www.nonprofitvote.org).