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New Report Finds California's Latino, Asian-American and Youth Voters Remained Underrepresented Among November 2020 Voters, Based on These Groups' Share of State's Population

Despite state's historically high voter turnout, Center for Inclusive Democracy at USC study finds participation gap still persists for historically underrepresented voters

Los Angeles, March 9, 2021 – The 2020 General Election was historic in many ways, including voter turnout. According to the California Secretary of State, California saw the highest eligible turnout rate (the percentage of adult citizens who voted) in 2020 for a general election since 1952. But a new study from the Center for Inclusive Democracy at USC has found that despite also seeing higher turnout in 2020, Latinos, Asian Americans and youth did not make headway in closing the gap between their turnout rates and the turnout of California overall.

“We were excited to see record voter turnout across the country this past election, as it represented a huge opportunity to bring in more voters who are typically underrepresented in the electorate,” said Mindy Romero, director of the Center for Inclusive Democracy. “Yet in California, these underrepresented groups did not gain ground in terms of actual voter participation rates versus the rest of the voting population, which was both surprising and disappointing.”

Latino eligible turnout was 53.0% in 2020 compared with 46.4% in 2016. Asian-American eligible turnout was 47.7% in 2020, while it was 38.5% in 2016.

The difference between the eligible voter turnout rates for Latinos and the total population increased to 14.4 percentage points in 2020 compared to a 10.9 percentage point gap in 2016.

The difference between the eligible voter turnout rates for Asian Americans and the total population increased to 19.7 percentage points in 2020 compared to an 18.8 percentage point gap in 2016.

Despite the turnout gap in the 2020 election, the Latino and Asian-American share of California voters casting ballots was the highest seen in any California statewide election.

For Latinos, their share of the state's voters in the 2020 general election increased from 22.8% to 24.3%, a positive uptick but a number still far below their share of the state's eligible voter population of 30.9%, or a representation gap of over 6 percentage points. This was also the case for Asian-American voters, whose share of the vote went from 8.3% to 10.4%, an increase of just over 2 percentage points, but again far below their share of the state's eligible voter population of 14.6%.

The Center for Inclusive Democracy’s report on the youth (age 18-24) vote during the 2020 general election found similar results.

In the 2020 general election, the youth (age 18-24) eligible turnout was 47.4%, a rate substantially higher than in the previous general election. The 2016 general election saw a 36.6% youth eligible turnout rate. The difference in the eligible turnout rate between youth and the total population (67.4%) stayed about the same in 2020 compared to 2016 – approximately 20 percentage points.

The youth share of California’s 2020 general election voters increased to 10.2%, up from 8.9%, which was the highest youth share of California voters for a statewide general election since 2002. Yet, at 10.2%, youth still remained underrepresented at the polls, given their share of the state’s eligible voter population at 14.5%, a representation gap of more than 4 percentage points.

“This most recent study by our Center is telling—we all need to do more to close these voting gaps to have true representation at the ballot box by all population groups,” added Romero.

One significant challenge for Latinos and Asian Americans turning out to vote is their continuing low registration rates compared to the total population. In 2020, the overall registration rate for the general election in California was 84.5%. In contrast, registration rates for Latinos came in at just 73.0%, 11.5 percentage points lower than the general population, but still higher than in the 2016 general election. For Asian Americans, the gap was even more significant in 2020, with registration rates at just 59.5%, a difference of 25 percentage points when compared to the state’s overall registration rate.

The youth registration rate (percentage of citizens 18-24 years who are registered) reached 66.4% in the 2020 general election – the lowest registration rate of any other age group.

The complete “*Latino and Asian-American Vote: November 2020 General Election*” and “*California’s Youth Vote: November 2020 General Election*” fact sheets can be found [here](#).

About the Center for Inclusive Democracy (CID)

Celebrating its 10-year anniversary this year, the [Center for Inclusive Democracy](#) (CID), formerly known as the California Civic Engagement Project, is part of the USC Sol Price School of Public Policy and is based in Sacramento. CID conducts a range of national and multi-state research initiatives exploring voting behavior, civic engagement, electoral and economic research, the intersection of social justice and democracy, and more. Its non-partisan research informs and empowers a wide range of policy and organizing efforts aimed at eliminating disparities in social and economic well-being. Now a cornerstone project nested within CID’s larger umbrella, the California Civic Engagement Project continues to produce groundbreaking resources and research for California.

About the USC Price School of Public Policy

CID is housed within the [USC Sol Price School of Public Policy](#) and based in the Price School Sacramento Center. Since 1929, the Price School has defined excellence and innovation in public affairs education and research. Ranked third nationwide among “America’s Best Graduate Schools” for public affairs, according to the *U.S. News & World Report*, the USC Price School faculty, scholars and students help shape the world around us. Graduates of the Price School fulfill and extend the School’s mission to improve the quality of life for people and their communities at home and abroad. The Price Sacramento Center was established in 1971 to ensure that key research finds its needed audience of policy makers and stakeholders in the state capital.

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