

# California's Latino and Asian-American Vote: 2020 Primary Election



Until 2016, California's voter turnout had been on the decline in prior primary elections. In the state's June Primary that year, the state saw an increase in turnout rates for Latinos, Asian Americans, and the general electorate.<sup>1</sup> This CCEP fact sheet provides a look forward to what we can potentially expect for the participation of Latinos and Asian Americans in California's March 2020 Primary Election.

## California Presidential Primary Turnout

- Total eligible turnout (the percentage of adult citizens who voted) in California's 2016 Primary was 33.5%, up over 11 percentage points from the 2012 Presidential Primary.
- Latino eligible voter turnout was 23.3% in the 2016 Primary, up from 10.1% in 2012.
- At 19.1%, Asian-American eligible voter turnout in the 2016 Primary increased 7.4 percentage points from the 2012 Primary.
- Even with these increases, voter turnout of eligible Latinos and Asian Americans continued to remain much lower than turnout of the total population eligible to vote.

FIGURE 1

California Eligible Voter Turnout  
2010-2018 Primary Elections

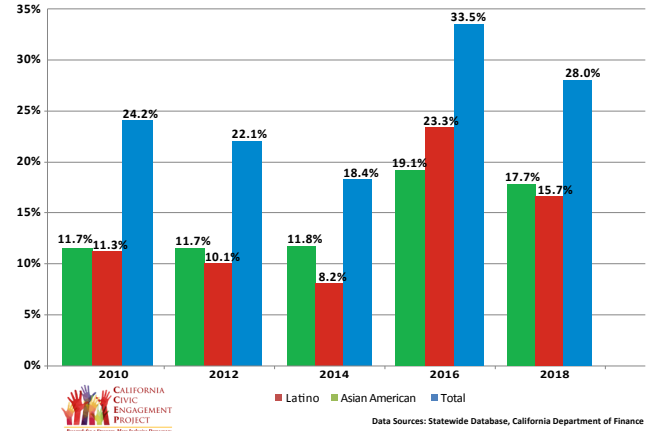
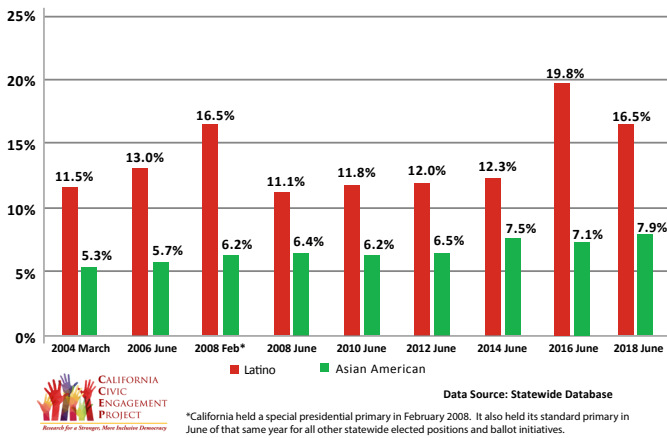


FIGURE 2

Percent of the Total California Vote  
2004-2018 Primary Elections



- The Latino share of California's total vote in the 2016 Primary was 19.8%, significantly more than any other primary in the past decade and a half.
- The Latino share of 2016 Primary voters (19.8%) was slightly larger than the Latino share of voters in the 2012 General Election (19.4%).
- The Asian-American share of California's total vote in the 2016 Primary (7.1%) increased from the 2012 Primary (6.4%).
- Despite their higher turnout rates in the 2016 Primary, both Latinos and Asian Americans continued to be underrepresented in California's electorate. Latinos made up 28.5% and Asian Americans 12.5% of the eligible voter population in 2016.

## Projecting the Racial and Ethnic Composition of the Eligible Voter Population in California

FIGURE 3

2020-2040 Projected Total Population  
California

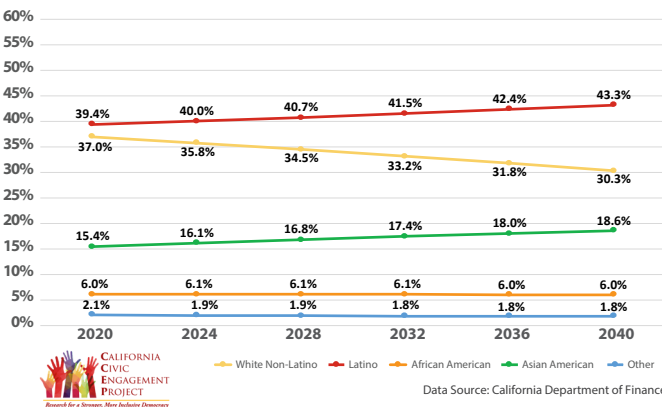
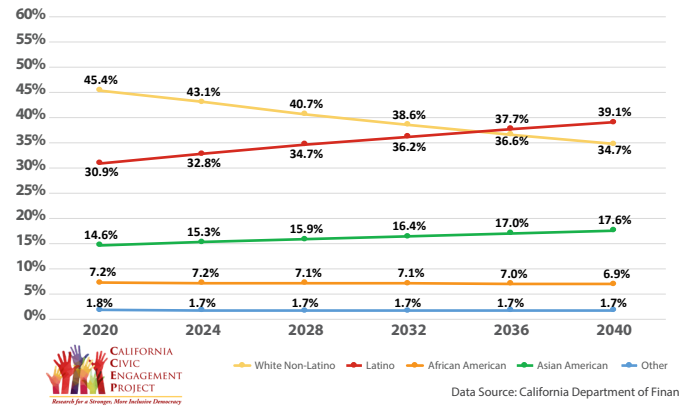


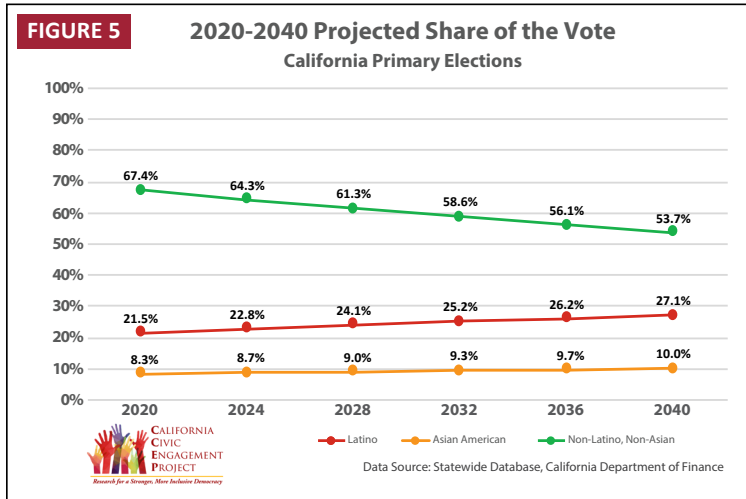
FIGURE 4

2020-2040 Projected Citizen Voting-Age Population  
California



- Both Latinos and Asian Americans will make up an overwhelming degree of the population growth seen in the state over the next twenty years.<sup>2</sup>
- By 2040, Latinos are projected to grow to 43.3% of the state’s total population, Asian Americans are projected at 18.6%, while the non-Latino white population will decline to just over 30%.
- California’s citizen voting-age population (CVAP), those who are eligible to vote, is also changing dramatically.
- Latinos are projected to be 30.9% of the state’s CVAP in 2020, increasing to 39.1% by 2040.
- The Asian-American proportion of CVAP will increase to 17.6% in 2040, and non-Latino whites will decrease their proportion to 34.7%. The Black proportion of California’s CVAP will decrease slightly to 6.9%.

### Projecting More Latino and Asian American Voters



- California Latinos are also projected to steadily continue their large voter gains over the next twenty years.
- If we hold constant Latinos’ 2016 Primary eligible turnout rate (19.1%) through the 2040 Primary Election, their percent of the state’s primary vote would rise considerably - to 21.5% (1,860,525) in 2020 and 27.1% (2,756,325) by 2040.
- Assuming their 2016 Primary eligible turnout rate (17.1%) remains constant through 2040’s Primary election, Asian Americans are projected to increase their share of the state’s Primary vote to 8.3% (721,535) in 2020 and to 10% (1,015,372) by 2040.
- In contrast, assuming those voters who are non-Latino and non-Asian American maintain their combined 2016 turnout rates, their share of California’s vote is projected to decrease to 53.7% by 2040.
- If Latinos and Asian Americans increased their 2020 Primary eligible turnout rates by 5 percentage points over their 2016 Primary turnout, their percent of the 2020 Primary vote would be 22.7% (2,260,421) and 9.2% (910,805), respectively.

### California’s Competitive Congressional Districts

| CD # | 2016 Primary Latino Eligible Turnout | 2016 Primary Asian-American Eligible Turnout | Latino % of 2016 CVAP | Asian-American % of 2016 CVAP | Latino % of 2016 Primary Voters | Asian-American % of 2016 Primary Voters | Latino CVAP Who Did Not Vote in 2016 Primary | Asian American CVAP Who Did Not Vote in 2016 Primary | Incumbent    |
|------|--------------------------------------|--|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|--|--|--------------|
| 10   | 20.4%                                | 11.2%  | 31.6%                 | 6.5%                          | 22.0%                           | 2.9%                                    | 116,119                                      | 26,610   | Harder (D)   |
| 21   | 15.7%                                | 14.0%  | 60.0%                 | 3.6%                          | 46.0%                           | 2.5%                                    | 175,831                                      | 10,826   | Cox (D)      |
| 25   | 19.5%                                | 16.1%  | 30.0%                 | 7.8%                          | 18.9%                           | 4.9%                                    | 113,852                                      | 30,704   | Vacant (D)   |
| 39   | 25.1%                                | 15.4%  | 27.9%                 | 28.8%                         | 22.3%                           | 19.9%                                   | 100,833                                      | 117,425  | Cisneros (D) |
| 45   | 23.7%                                | 16.3%  | 14.9%                 | 20.5%                         | 9.9%                            | 12.3%                                   | 58,310                                       | 88,202   | Porter (D)   |
| 48   | 21.9%                                | 22.7%  | 14.7%                 | 17.7%                         | 9.0%                            | 13.2%                                   | 59,662                                       | 71,305   | Rouda (D)    |

Letters in parentheses denote party affiliation of the incumbent. D=Democratic and R=Republican.

Data Source: Statewide Database, American Community Survey

- In the 2016 Primary, Latinos made up at least 9% of the voters in each of the state’s six congressional districts (CDs) expected to be competitive in 2020 (CA-10, CA 21, CA-25, CA-39, CA-45, and CA-48). Latinos made up 46% of all voters in the 21st CD and nearly a quarter in the 10th and 39th CDs. Asian Americans comprised over 10% of voters in the 39th, 45th and 48th CDs.
- While Latinos and Asian Americans play a critical role in each of these highly competitive CDs, their turnout rates are low. In five out of six of these CDs, Latino eligible turnout in 2016’s Primary ranked in the bottom half of all Californias CDs. CD 21 saw the second to lowest Latino eligible turnout of all 53 of the state’s CDs.
- Table A shows the number of eligible Latino and Asian-American voters who did not vote in each CD in 2016’s Primary. Mobilizing these potential voters would mean that residents would have a much greater voice in their district’s choice of elected representatives.
- Given the substantial size of the Latino CVAP throughout the state’s CDs, mobilizing more Latinos could help transform a number of non-competitive districts into competitive ones in the 2020 elections.

### About the California Civic Engagement Project (CCEP)

The California Civic Engagement Project (CCEP) is part of the USC Sol Price School of Public Policy in Sacramento. The CCEP conducts research to inform policy and on-the-ground efforts for a more engaged and representative democracy, improving the social and economic quality of life in communities. The CCEP is engaging in pioneering research to identify disparities in civic participation across place and population. Its research informs and empowers a wide range of policy and organizing efforts aimed at reducing disparities in state and regional patterns of well-being and opportunity. To learn about the CCEP, visit our website at <https://ccep.usc.edu>

1. Voter data for Blacks and non-Latino whites is not available from the Statewide Database. 2. Straight line CVAP projections developed by the California Department of Finance for the CCEP. These projections are based on assumptions that straight line birth rates, death rates, and immigration rates follow current trends under current laws. If immigration rates change beyond what is currently expected, these assumptions may over or understate population growth. Future adjustments to these projections will be made.

Data sources: Statewide Database, California Department of Finance.

For more information about this research study, contact Mindy Romero, CCEP Director, at [msromero@usc.edu](mailto:msromero@usc.edu).