



KEY FINDINGS

Representational Bias in the 2012 Electorate

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This document highlights key findings from *Representational Bias in the 2012 Electorate*, a comprehensive new report from Project Vote on how the American electorate has become more or less representative of the citizen population over the past four presidential elections. Using the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, *Representational Bias in the 2012 Electorate* illustrates how electoral participation varies for different segments of the adult citizen population, and identifies where there is still work to be done to achieve a truly representative democracy.

Continuing Disparities in the American Electorate

Continuing traditional patterns, inequality in representation remained the norm in the composition of the American electorate in 2012:

- Voting patterns for Whites and Blacks were relatively consistent with their numbers in the general population in 2012. However, the growing Latino population remains underrepresented: Latinos make up 10.9 percent of the population, but only 8.4 percent of the electorate.
- Young citizens were underrepresented in the electorate: Americans under 30 made up 21.2 percent of the adult citizen population in 2012, but only 15.5 percent of the voting population.
- Registration and voting rates are disproportionately higher among higher-income people. Of adult citizens earning less than \$25,000, only 49.4 percent reported voting in the 2012 election, compared to 73.6 percent of those earning over \$100,000 dollars.
- Education is also positively associated with voting and registration. Over 77 percent of Americans with a bachelor's degree or higher reported voting in 2012, compared to only 38 percent of adult citizens without a high-school diploma.
- Gender and marital status are positively associated with higher registration and turnout figures. Women are typically more likely to participate in elections than men, and being married increases the likelihood that an individual will register and vote.
- Residential stability matters for turnout: 67.5 percent of voters had lived at the same address for 5 years or more.

States Ranked by Voter Registration and Voting Rates

- The District of Columbia, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Massachusetts were among the states with the highest rates of voter registration in 2012.
- Arkansas, Arizona, Nevada, Wyoming, Utah, and Hawaii had the lowest rates of registration.
- The District of Columbia, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Massachusetts had the highest voter turnout rates in 2012.
- Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Hawaii, and West Virginia had the lowest turnout rates.
- Some perennial battleground states, like Florida and Ohio, rank below the national average in voter registration rates.

Other Findings

- In 2012, for the first time in recent history, Black Americans voted at higher rates than White Americans. Black turnout rates have trended upwards over the last four presidential election cycles, increasing 10 points since the 2000 election.
- Black voters over the age of 30 saw gains in turnout rates since 2008, and overall had the highest turnout rates of any groups, followed closely by White voters over 30.
- While turnout for young voters was low in 2012, young Black voters broke this pattern, voting at much higher rates than young voters from all other ethnic groups.
- White turnout rates in 2012 were the lowest they've been since 2000. Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander turnout rates fell off slightly in 2012 from 2008, but were still higher than in 2000 and 2004.

Additional Voters If Parity Had Been Achieved

If disparities in participation had been eliminated in 2012, tens of millions more Americans would have voted:

- If non-White Americans had participated at the same rates as White Americans, 5 million more non-Whites would have voted.
- If people under 30 had participated at the same rate as those over 30, an additional 9.7 million young people would have voted.
- If people making less than \$25,000 a year had participated at the same rate as those making \$100,000 or more, 11.5 million additional votes would have been cast.
- If people with a high-school education or less had turned out at the same rate as those who had attended college, 19.1 million more votes would have been cast.
- If unmarried Americans turned out at the same rate as married people, 6.4 million more votes would have been cast.
- If persons with disabilities had turned out at the same rate as people with no reported disabilities, 1.5 million more votes would have been cast.

America is founded on the principle of a representative government. Disparities in the American electorate weaken our democracy and skew the national agenda by excluding from major public policy decisions the voices of the least powerful and most vulnerable citizens.

In order for public policy to successfully reflect the needs and interests of all Americans, it is necessary to address the limitations to full representation discussed in *Representational Bias in the 2012 Electorate*. To accomplish a truly representative democracy, it is crucial that we work to increase participation among underrepresented groups, and advance policies that facilitate, not hinder, the ability of all Americans to register and vote.

For more detailed information, including comprehensive charts and tables, please download the full report, *Representational Bias in the 2012 Electorate*, at www.projectvote.org.



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For More Information, read

REPRESENTATIONAL BIAS IN THE 2012 ELECTORATE

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