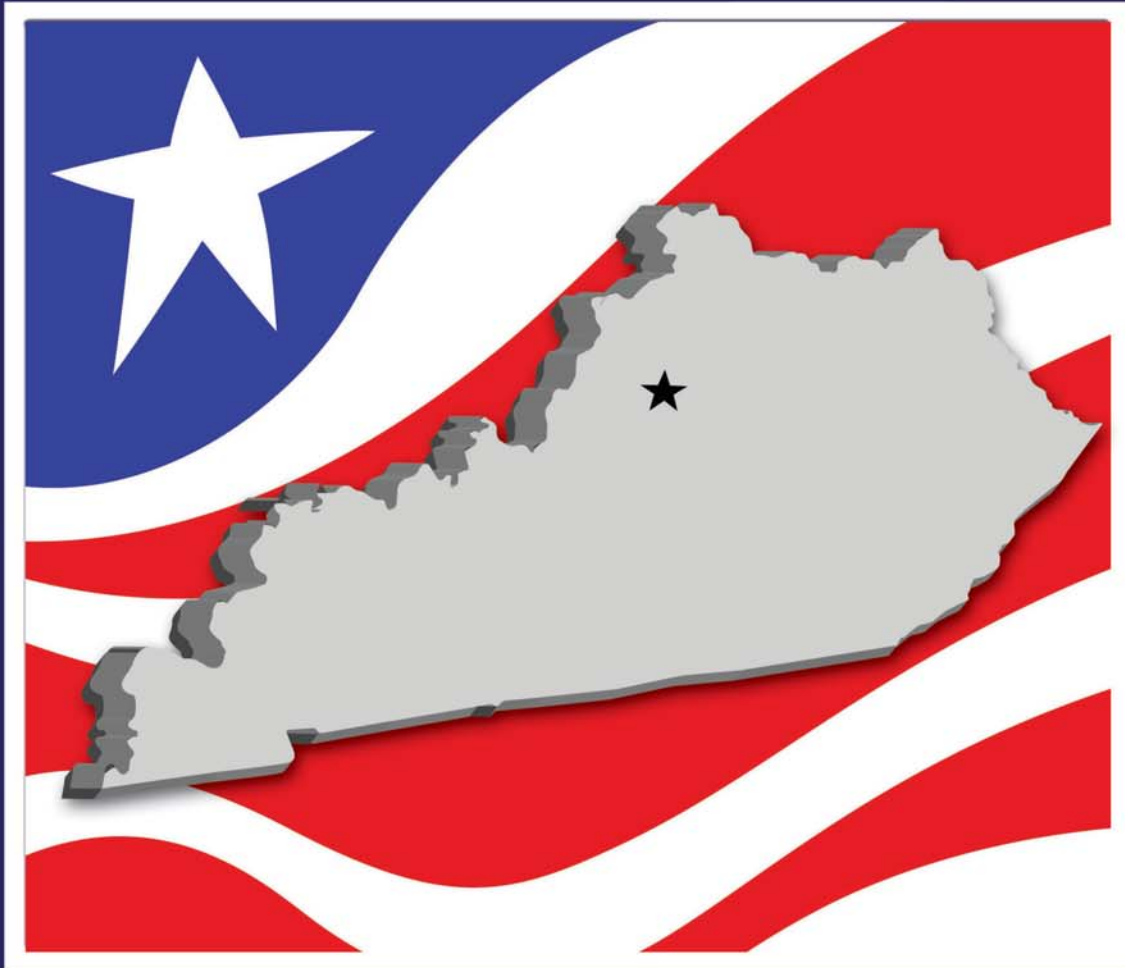


Who Votes In The Bluegrass State?

The Composition of Kentucky's Electorate, 2002-2006



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report uses Census Bureau Current Population Survey data to present information on Kentucky's population, voter registration and voting over time and compared to the United States. We pay special attention to the racial, ethnic, age and income demographics within Kentucky.

Key findings from the report include:

- Kentucky's population increased at a lower rate than the overall U.S. population between 2002 and 2006 — 3 percent compared with 4 percent.
- Kentucky is much less racially and ethnically diverse than the U.S. as a whole — 88 percent of Kentuckians are White compared to 66 percent of the U.S. population.
- Kentucky's population appears to be growing younger — the state's "65 and over" age group declined by 80,000 in population between 2002 and 2006, while the "under 30" cohort swelled by approximately 120,000 people.
- Kentucky's White population has a high percentage of its population eligible to vote relative to Blacks and non-Whites (75 percent for the White population and 57 percent for the non-White population).
- Blacks gained ground in registration as a percent of their eligible voting population (47 percent in 1998 to 68 percent in 2006).
- Once registered, Kentucky's Blacks vote at a rate equal to Whites (68 percent of both groups in 2006).
- More than four out of five citizens aged 65 and over were registered in 2006 compared to fewer than 3 out of five citizens under 30.
- Just 33 percent of voting-eligible persons earning less than \$25,000 in 2006 voted; 80 percent of persons earning more than \$75,000 voted.

INTRODUCTION

This report examines Kentucky's population and electoral participation trends between 2002 and 2006, and compares them to the United States as a whole. The report's major focal points include rates of eligibility, registration and turnout by race or ethnicity, age and income.

The largest survey of voting behavior is the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS and Population Estimates Program are the primary data sources for this report, which provides a review of the frequency tables generated from responses to the November 2006 CPS. Some cross-tabulations are provided to show how those responses interact with race, income and age.

This report is organized in three major sections: population, registration and voting. In the first section, we describe the size and demographic composition of Kentucky's overall population and voting-eligible population (VEP). Next, we examine the racial (and ethnic), age and income characteristics of the state's registered population. Then, we present information on the subset of the Kentucky population that voted. We conclude by describing some of the disparities in the rate at which certain populations register and vote.

As we show, Kentuckians who are White, those who are older and those who are more affluent are more likely to register to vote and turn out at the polls. Blacks have significantly increased the rate at which they are registered but still lag behind Whites. Latinos and Asians represent a growing portion of the state population, but their population is still too small to make reliable estimates regarding their rates of registration and voting.

Summary Table: Percent of Kentucky Population Eligible to Vote, Voting, and Not Voting, 2006

<i>Demographic Category</i>	<i>Voters Eligible</i>	<i>Voters</i>	<i>Non-Voters</i>
Race			
White	92%	93%	86%
Non-White	8%	7%	14%
Black	6%	6%	8%
Household Income*			
Less than \$25,000	23%	16%	31%
\$25,000 - \$74,999	38%	38%	37%
More than \$75,000	18%	27%	10%
Age Group			
Under 30	20%	11%	28%
30 to 64	63%	70%	56%
65 and Over	17%	20%	14%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2006

*Of the VEP 21% did not report income

POPULATION

The population of Kentucky was approximately 4.2 million in 2006. This represents 1.4 percent of the country's population.

Table 1 shows that Kentucky's population increased 3 percent between 2002 and 2006, from 4,089,000 to 4,206,000, while the U.S. as a whole grew by 4 percent during the same period.

Table 1: Kentucky Population Compared to U.S., 2002 and 2006			
	2002	2006	Percent Change
Kentucky	4,089	4,206	3%
United States	288,126	299,398	4%

Numbers in thousands
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Estimates of the Population by Selected Groups for the United States and States, 2002 and 2006

In 2002, Whites constituted a majority of Kentucky's population (89 percent) followed by Blacks (7 percent), Latinos (2 percent) and Asians (1 percent). That racial and ethnic makeup remained largely unchanged through 2006, when Whites made up a slightly smaller percent (88) of the population. Table 2 presents the state's population by race/ethnicity in 2002 and 2006 and the change.

Table 2: Kentucky Population by Ethnicity and Race, 2002 and 2006						
	2002		2006		2002-2006	
	Total	Percent Total	Total	Percent Total	Percent Change In Population	Change in Proportion of Total
White	3,641	89%	3,716	88%	2%	-1%
Non-White*	416	10%	449	11%	8%	1%
Black	302	7%	312	7%	3%	0%
Latino	69	2%	86	2%	25%	0%
Asian	35	1%	41	1%	17%	0%
Total	4,092		4,206		3%	

Numbers in thousands
Source: US Census Bureau, Estimates of the Population by Selected Groups for the United States and States, 2002 and 2006
**Combined due to small sample size for individual races and ethnicities*

The U.S. was considerably more racially and ethnically diverse than Kentucky in 2006. Whites made up 88 percent of Kentucky's population but only 66 percent of the U.S. population. The greatest difference in diversity between the U.S. and Kentucky is the Latino population, which constituted 15 percent of the national population but only 2 percent of Kentucky's population. Table 3 presents each racial and ethnic group's share of Kentucky's population in 2006 compared to the U.S. as a whole.

Table 3: Kentucky Racial and Ethnic Diversity Compared to U.S., 2006		
	Kentucky	U.S.
White	88%	66%
Black	7%	12%
Latino	2%	15%
Asian	1%	4%
Other	2%	3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Estimates of the Population by Selected Groups for the United States and States, 2006

Approximately 3 million Kentuckians, or 73 percent of the state's population, were eligible to vote in 2002. The majority of eligible Kentuckians, almost two-thirds, fell within the age ranges of 30 to 64. Less than 20 percent of the voting-eligible population (VEP) was 65 years of age or older, and only 18 percent was under 30 years of age in 2002.

The voting-eligible population grew younger between 2002 and 2006. During those four years, the number of voting-eligible Kentuckians age 65 and older declined by approximately 80,000, or 14 percent. In the same period, the number of voting-

eligible Kentuckians who were under 30 years of age grew by 120,000, or 23 percent. Table 4 shows how the composition of the voting-eligible population by age has shifted between 2002 and 2006.

Table 4: Kentucky Voting Eligible Population by Age, 2002-2006					
	2002		2006		Percent Change in VEP, 2002-2006
	VEP	Percent of total	VEP	Percent of total	
Under 30	529	18%	650	21%	23%
30 to 64	1,881	63%	1,907	62%	1%
65 and Over	574	19%	495	16%	-14%
Total	2,984		3,052		2%

Numbers in thousands

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2002 and 2006

Table 5 presents information on how Kentucky's voting-eligible population was distributed by income in 2002 and 2006.

Table 5: Kentucky Voting Eligible Population by Income, 2006		
	VEP	Percent of Total VEP
Less than \$25,000	714	29%
\$25,000 – 39,999	500	21%
\$40,000-59,999	432	18%
\$60,000-99,999	519	21%
\$100,000 and over	259	11%
Total Reporting Income	2,424	-
Total	3,052	-

Numbers in thousands

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2006

The U.S. and Kentucky show differing trends in their populations' eligibility to register to vote and vote. In both 2002 and 2006, Kentucky had a higher proportion of its citizens eligible to vote than the U.S. as a whole. That difference, however, narrowed. The proportion of Kentuckians eligible to vote declined from 75 percent in 2002 to 73 percent in 2006, while the voting-eligible population of the U.S. increased by 1 percent, from 67 percent to 68 percent. Table 6 presents information on the proportion of Kentucky citizens who are eligible to vote in 2002 and in 2006 compared to the U.S.

Table 6: Kentucky Voting Eligible Population Compared to US, 2002 and 2006								
	2002			2006			Change in VEP	Change in VEP as Percent of Population
	Population	VEP	Percent VEP of Population	Population	VEP	Percent VEP of Population		
Kentucky	3,978	2,984	75%	4,206	3,052	73%	2%	-2%
United States	287,985	192,656	67%	294,853	201,000	68%	4%	1%

Numbers in thousands

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2006

REGISTRATION

Voting is a two-step process: One must first register and only then can one cast a ballot. At each point, some proportion of the eligible population drops off. This effect is not uniform across populations.

Approximately 2.2 million Kentuckians reported that they were registered voters in 2006. Whites in Kentucky had a higher registration rate among the voting-eligible population than other racial and ethnic groups. Table 7 shows that almost 75 percent of eligible Whites were registered to vote compared to 68 percent of Blacks and 67 percent of non-Whites in 2006.

Table 7: Kentucky Registered Voters by Race and Ethnicity, 2006			
	Registered	Registered as Percent of VEP	Registered as Percent of Pop
White	2,074 7	4%	56%
Non-White	145 6	7%	33%
Black	126 6	8%	40%
Total	2,219 7	3%	53%

Numbers in thousands

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2006

Kentucky's racial and ethnic minorities have lagged behind Whites in registration rates for at least the last 10 years. Significant progress has been made toward closing the gap. In 1998, the registration rate was 47 percent among voting-eligible Blacks and 67 percent for Whites. In 2006, Blacks had achieved a 68 percent registration rate but still lagged behind Whites, whose registration rate had increased by 6 percentage points to 74 percent. Table 8 presents the 10-year upward trend in registration rates for Whites and Blacks in Kentucky. Notably, both groups were able to consolidate in off-years (2002 and 2006) some of the significant registration gains that occurred in the presidential election years (2000 and 2004).

Table 8: Kentuckians Registered as a Percent of Voting Eligible Population by Race, 1998-2006						
	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	Percent Change
White	67%	72%	69%	75%	74%	10%
Black	47%	61%	54%	80%	68%	43%
Total	66%	72%	68%	75%	73%	11%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November Supplements

Table 9 compares the 2006 registration rates of the voting-eligible population by race for the U.S. and Kentucky.

Table 9: Total Registration Composition by Race and Ethnicity Kentucky and US, 2006		
	Kentucky	US
White	93%	79%
Non-White	7%	21%
Black	6%	11%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2006

In Kentucky, consistent with the U.S. as a whole, people on the lower end of the income scale were less likely to be registered than their higher-income counterparts. While 64 percent of voting-eligible individuals in the bottom income quintile were registered to vote in 2006, 95 percent of voting-eligible individuals in the top income quintile were registered. Table 10 presents the total number of individuals who were registered to vote and registration rates for income groups in 2006.

Table 10: Kentucky Registration Rate by Income, 2006

	Registered	Registered as Percent of VEP
Less than \$25,000	460	64%
\$25,000 – 39,999	347	69%
\$40,000-59,999	369	85%
\$60,000-99,999	427	82%
\$100,000 and over	247	95%
Reporting Total	1,850	76%
Total	2,240	

Numbers in thousands

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2006

Consistent with decades of research, rates of registration in Kentucky rise with age. More than three out of four persons age 65 and older were registered to vote in 2002. Closer to two out of four persons ages 18–29 were registered to vote.

From 2002 to 2006, 100,000 more Kentuckians under 30 were registered to vote. The under-30 age group's registration rate rose by five percentage points during those four years. However, the 65-and-over voting-eligible population displayed a 2006 registration rate six points higher than their 2002 rate, which widened the gap between youth and senior registration rates, despite the gains in under-30 registrants.

Table 11: Kentucky Registration Rate by Age, 2002-2006

	2002		2006		Change in Total Number of Registered	Change in Percent of VEP Registered
	Registered	Percent VEP Registered	Registered	Percent VEP Registered		
Under 30	284	54%	385	59%	36%	6%
30 to 64	1,286	68%	1,441	76%	12%	7%
65 and Over	447	78%	414	84%	-7%	6%
Total	2,017	68%	2,240	73%	11%	6%

Numbers in thousands

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2002 and 2006

VOTING

In 2002, 1.4 million Kentuckians, or 46 percent of the population eligible to vote, reported casting a ballot. Eligible Whites had a significantly higher turnout rate (47 percent) than eligible Blacks (35 percent). By 2006, this disparity had almost disappeared. Fifty percent of eligible Whites voted, while 46 percent of Blacks voted. Table 12 shows the estimated number of individuals who voted and the turnout rate by race for 2002 and 2006.

Table 12: Kentucky Voter Turnout by Race 2002-2006

	2002			2006			2002-2006		
	Voted	Percent Voting of Registered	Percent Voting of VEP	Voted	Percent Voting of Registered	Percent Voting of VEP	Percent Change in Number of Voters	Change in Voted as Percent of Registered	Change in Voted as Percent of VEP
White	1,280	68%	47%	1,402	68%	50%	10%	0%	0%
Non-White	88	67%	36%	106	66%	45%	20%	-1%	-1%
Black	76	65%	35%	86	68%	46%	13%	3%	3%
Total	1,444	68%	46%	1,508	68%	49%	10%	4%	4%

Numbers in thousands

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November Supplements

Kentucky slightly outperformed the U.S. as a whole with respect to the percentage of the eligible population that reported voting in 2006 — 49 percent to 48 percent. Interestingly, Whites in Kentucky have a lower turnout rate than they did in the U.S. as a whole (50 percent versus 52 percent), while Blacks in Kentucky had a higher turnout rate (46 percent versus 42 percent). Table 13 compares Kentucky registration and voting rates to the U.S.

Table 13: Voter Turnout in Kentucky and the US, 2006

	US Percent Eligible Voting	Kentucky Percent Eligible Voting
White	52 %	50 %
Black	42 %	46 %
Total	48 %	49 %

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2006

Low-income Kentuckians were much less likely to vote than their middle- and upper-income counterparts. Table 14 shows the turnout by income group for 2006.

Table 14: Kentucky Voter Turnout by Income, 2006

	Voted	Percent Voting of Registered	Percent Voting of VEP
Less than \$25,000	238	52%	33%
\$25,000 – 39,999	198	57%	40%
\$40,000-59,999	257	70%	59%
\$60,000-99,999	319	75%	61%
\$100,000 and over	206	83%	80%
Total Reporting	1,218	66%	50%
Total	1,508		

Numbers in thousands

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2006

Older Americans have higher rates of voting than younger Americans. Recent Kentucky elections display the same pattern.

Table 15 shows the estimated turnout by age in Kentucky in 2002 and 2006.

Table 15: Kentucky Voter Turnout by Age, 2002 and 2006

	2002			2006			2002-2006		
	Voted	Percent Voting of Registered	Percent Voting of VEP	Voted	Percent Voting of Registered	Percent Voting of VEP	Change in Number of Voters	Change in Voted as Percent of Registered	Change in Voted as Percent of VEP
Under 30	158	56%	30%	181	47%	28%	15%	-9%	-2%
30 to 64	883	69%	47%	1,029	71%	54%	17%	3%	7%
65 and Over	326	73%	57%	298	72%	60%	-9%	-1%	3%
Total	1,367	68%	46%	1,508	67%	49%	10%	0%	4%

Numbers in thousands

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2002 and 2006

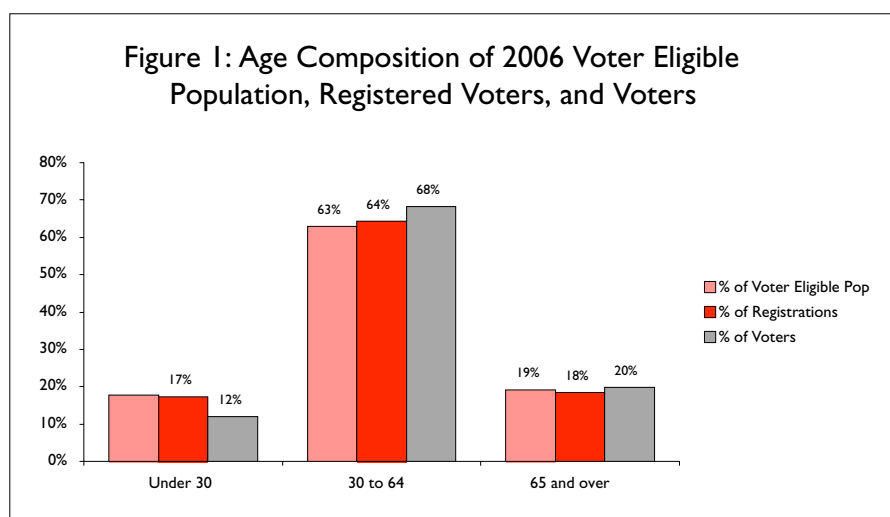
CONCLUSION

This report presents election trends in Kentucky and the United States between 2002 and 2006, with a focus on rates of eligibility, registration and turnout. Each of those categories was compared by race, age and income.

Kentucky is a predominantly White state, with Whites representing a higher percentage of the state population than the nation overall. However, in the time period studied, the population of Blacks and Latinos has increased. Also of note is that Kentucky's population is trending younger.

The data indicate increased registration among Kentucky's voting-eligible population, even among underrepresented groups, such as Blacks and Latinos. In keeping with decades of research across the U.S., registration rates in Kentucky rise with age and income level. Younger, poorer Kentuckians were less likely to be registered.

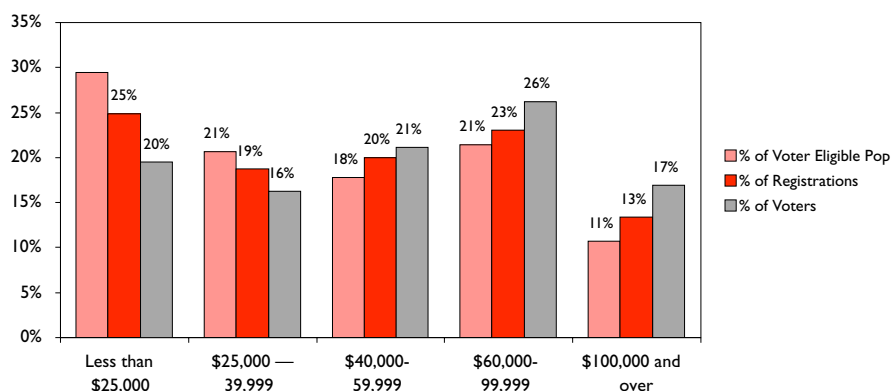
Figure 1 shows the underrepresentation of Kentuckians under 30 in the registered voter and voting populations as compared to their presence in the voting-eligible population.



Lower-income and younger persons, already less likely to be registered, were less likely to cast ballots than their higher-income and older counterparts in Kentucky.

Figure 2 shows the underrepresentation of Kentuckians earning less than \$25,000 in the registered voter and voting populations as compared to their presence in the voting-eligible population.

Figure 2: Income Composition of Voter Eligible Population and Electorate



Also of note, voter turnout in Kentucky was slightly greater than the national average — by 1 percentage point in 2006.

As Kentucky's population continues to grow younger and immigration continues, an increasing percentage of the population will be made up of groups with low participation rates in the electorate. This reduction in participation will likely skew the electorate further toward White, older, wealthier groups. Work must be done to engage young people, low-income people and recent immigrants to counteract these trends or Kentucky risks further disenfranchising historically locked-out groups.

APPENDICES

Appendix Table 1: Participation by gender and race, 2006

Numbers in thousands		Population	VEP	%VEP of Pop	Registered	%VEP of Reg.	Voted	Percent VEP Voting
Male	White	1,843	1,339	73%	978	73%	695	52%
	Black	150	91	61%	52	57%	35	67%
	Non-White	218	128	59%	72	56%	48	67%
	Total	1,993	1,467	74%	1,050	72%	743	71%
Female	White	1,919	1,466	76%	1,097	75%	707	64%
	Black	160	95	59%	74	78%	51	69%
	Non-White	228	119	52%	93	78%	58	62%
	Total	2,147	1,585	74%	1,190	75%	765	64%
Male and Female	White	3,762	2,805	75%	2,075	74%	1,402	68%
	Black	310	186	60%	126	68%	86	68%
	Non-White	432	247	57%	165	67%	106	64%
	Total	4,072	3,052	75%	2,240	73%	1,508	67%
Total		4,072	3,052	75%	2,240	73%	1,508	67%

Appendix Table 2: Participation by Gender and Age, 2006

Numbers in thousands		Population	VEP	Registered	Percent VEP Registered	Voted	Percent VEP Voting
Male	Under 30	865	326	175	54%	101	31%
	30 to 64	972	916	685	75%	497	54%
	65 and Over	221	225	189	84%	145	64%
	Total	2,059	1,467	1,050	72%	743	51%
Female	Under 30	830	324	210	65%	81	25%
	30 to 64	1,003	991	755	76%	532	54%
	65 and Over	314	270	225	83%	153	57%
	Total	2,147	1,585	1,190	75%	765	48%
Total		4,206	3,052	2,240	73%	1,508	49%

Appendix Table 3: Kentucky and US Portions of VEP, Registered Voters, and Voted Populations by Race, 2006

	Kentucky			US		
	VEP	Registered	Voted	VEP	Registered	Voted
White	92%	93%	93%	74%	78%	80%
Non-White	8%	7%	7%	26%	22%	20%
Black	6%	6%	6%	12%	11%	10%

Appendix Table 4: Kentucky portions of VEP, Registered Voters, and Voted Populations by Age, 2006

	VEP	Registered	Voted
Under 30	18%	17%	12%
30 to 64	63%	64%	68%
65 and over	19%	18%	20%

Appendix Table 5: Kentucky portions of VEP, Registered Voters, and Voted Populations by Income, 2006

	VEP	Registered	Voted
Less than \$25,000	29%	25%	20%
\$25,000 – 39,999	21%	19%	16%
\$40,000-59,999	18%	20%	21%
\$60,000-99,999	21%	23%	26%
\$100,000 and over	11%	13%	17%

Appendix Table 6: Kentucky Population, VEP, Registration by Race

Numbers in thousands	2002				2006			
	Pop	VEP	Registered	Voted	Pop	VEP	Registered	Voted
White	3,703	2,729	1,882	1,280	3,716	2,805	2,075	1,402
Black	306	216	116	76	312	186	126	86
Latino	69				86			
Asian	35				41			
Non-White	416	247	132	88	439	186	126	97
Total	4,093	2,984	2,017	1,356	4,206	3,052	2,240	1,488

Appendix Table 7: Kentucky Registration Rate (of VEP) by Race and Ethnicity, compared to US, 2006

	Kentucky	US
White	74%	71%
Black	68%	61%
Total	73%	68%

About Project Vote

Since its founding in 1982, Project Vote has been a leading provider of strategic and management services to the voter engagement and civic participation community.

About the Author

Ben Spears has been a research assistant with Project Vote since September 2006. He graduated in 2005 from the George Washington University in Washington, DC, where he was active on hunger and homelessness issues. While in the nation's capital, Ben interned with Congressman John Lewis (GA-5) and participated in dialogues with other student leaders as part of the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness. Before joining Project Vote, Ben served as researcher and project assistant at multiple international humanitarian organizations in Atlanta, Georgia, including CARE USA.

