

Missouri Votes

Civic Engagement in the “Show Me” State
2002–2006

By Benjamin Spears



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Executive Summary

Missouri Votes: Civic Engagement in the “Show Me” State provides a concise review of the population and voter participation trends of various demographic groups in the November 2006 election. The report is based largely on the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (CPS). Key findings include:

- Between 2002 and 2006, Missouri’s non-White population, which represented only 17 percent of the state’s total, added nearly as many new residents, in raw numbers, as were added to the White population.
- Non-White Missourians in 2006 were less likely than Whites to have both registered and voted, showing underrepresentation in that demographic and overrepresentation in the White cohort.
- Missourians earning less than \$25,000 were 20 percent less likely to be registered to vote than Missourians earning more than \$75,000. Lower-income Missourians were therefore less represented heading into the polls in 2006.
- From 2002 to 2006, Missouri’s 18- to 29-year-old population grew by 163,000 people — 4 times the statewide average — and gained approximately 125,000 new voters.
- Younger Missourians were approximately 25 percent more likely to have voted in the 2006 election compared to 2002. Still, voting-eligible 18- to 29-year-olds were half as likely to have voted in 2006 as Missourians 65 and over.

Introduction

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

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 sources of data for this report, which provides a review of the frequency tables generated from responses to the November 2006 CPS.

This report is organized by the three major cross-sections of the electorate: race or ethnicity, income and age. First, we describe the size and demographic composition of Missouri's overall population and voting-eligible population. We then show characteristics of the registered population and conclude by describing some of the disparities in the composition of the voting populations.

The data show that those Missourians who are White, those who are older and those who are more affluent are overrepresented in rates of voter registration and participation than their non-White, younger and lower-income counterparts.

Summary Table: Percent of Missouri Population Eligible to Vote, Voting and Not Voting, by Demographic Characteristics, 2006

Demographic Category	Voting- Eligible	Registered	Voters	Non-Voters
RACE				
White	84%	86%	87%	82%
Non-White	16%	14%	13%	18%
Black	11%	10%	9%	11%
HOUSEHOLD INCOME				
Less than \$25,000	23%	20%	15%	33%
\$25,000–\$74,999	53%	54%	57%	38%
More than \$75,000	24%	36%	39%	29%
AGE GROUP				
Under 30	23%	18%	14%	30%
30 to 64	59%	61%	65%	51%
65 and Over	18%	21%	22%	19%

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

Electorate by Race or Ethnicity

The U.S. population grew from 288 million to 299 million between 2002 and 2006. During that period, Missouri's population grew from 5.7 million to 5.8 million.

Missouri's population grew by 3 percent between 2002 and 2006, slightly slower than the national growth rate of 4 percent.

Missouri was less racially and ethnically diverse than the U.S. as a whole. Eighty-three percent of Missourians were White in 2006, whereas 66 percent of the overall American population was White.

Between 2002 and 2006, Missouri's non-White population grew by close to four times the growth rate of the state's White population. Latinos composed approximately 20 percent of the state's overall population growth. From this, one would expect greater non-White representation in Missouri's electorate in 2006, which we will examine later.

Table 1 shows Missouri's and the U.S. population change between 2002 and 2006.

Table 1: United States and Missouri Populations by Race and Ethnicity, 2002 and 2006

	2002		2006		Percent Population Change
	Total	Percent Total	Total	Percent Total	
Missouri	5,680		5,843		3%
White	4,739	83%	4,826	83%	2%
Non-White	941	17%	1,017	17%	8%
Black	644	11%	666	11%	3%
Latino	134	2%	164	3%	22%
Asian	69	1%	82	1%	19%
United States	288,126		299,398		
White	196,824	68%	198,745	66%	1%
Non-White	91,302	32%	100,653	34%	10%
Black	35,203	12%	36,690	12%	4%
Latino	38,598	13%	44,321	15%	15%
Asian	11,321	4%	12,882	4%	14%

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 addition to the rapid rate of Missouri's non-White population growth, non-White citizenship has increased. Of Missouri's non-White population, 57 percent were voting eligible in 2002; 66 percent were voting eligible in 2006.

Yet non-Whites continued to trail Missouri's statewide voting-eligible rate. The overall statewide voting-eligible rate was 73 percent in 2006. This was a slight increase from 2002, when the rate was 71 percent.

Table 2 shows Missouri's 2002 and 2006 rates of voting eligibility by race.

Table 2: Missouri Voting-Eligible Population by Race and Ethnicity, 2002 to 2006

	2002		2006	
	Voting-Eligible Population	VEP as % of Population	Voting-Eligible Population	VEP as % of Population
White	3,518	74%	3,608	75%
Non-White	540	57%	668	66%
Black	452	70%	449	67%
Total	4,058	71%	4,276	73%

Numbers in thousands

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

A greater percentage of Missourians were registered to vote in 2006 than in any mid-term election in the previous decade.

However, registration rates are not uniform across demographic groups. In 2006, Blacks were underrepresented among registered voters. Although they were more likely than Whites to be registered in 2002 and 2004, Blacks were less likely to be registered than Whites in 2006.

Table 3 shows the racial disparity in Missouri's registration as a percent of its voting-eligible population.

Table 3: Missouri Registration as a Percent of Voting-Eligible Population by Race, 1998 to 2006

	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006
White	76%	76%	74%	81%	75%
Black	71%	78%	75%	88%	70%
Total	74%	76%	73%	81%	74%

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

Voter participation rates across racial groups were skewed in 2002, with greater percentages of the White registered voters going to the polls. In 2006 the rates were more closely aligned across the racial groups. However, the disparities in voter registration rates in 2006 and registration rates and turnout in 2002 meant that White voters made up a disproportionate portion of the state's voters both those years. In the end, Black Missourians were less likely to have voted in 2002 and 2006 than their White counterparts.

Table 4 shows Missouri's voter turnout by race in 2002 and 2006.

Table 4: Missouri Voter Turnout by Race, 2006

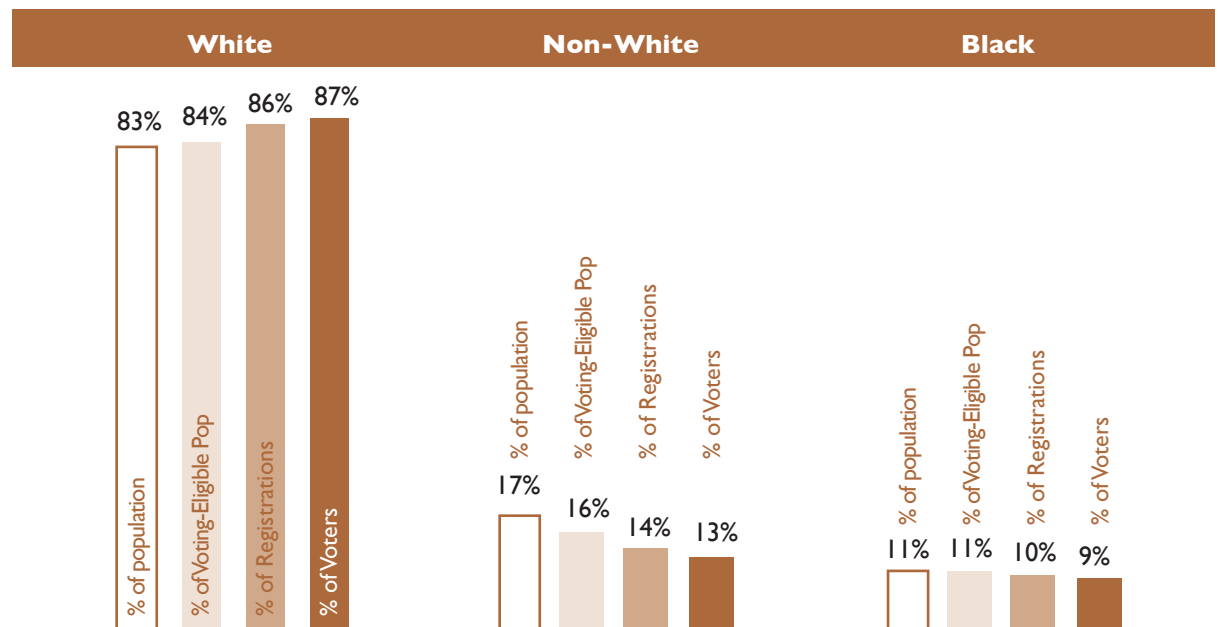
	2002	2006
White	52%	58%
Non-White	42%	55%
Black	46%	58%
Total	50%	57%

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

In conclusion, non-White Missourians were underrepresented relative to their share of the population. The share of the voting population for non-Whites in Missouri equals approximately 75 percent of their share of the overall population. Blacks, similarly, make up 11 percent of the overall population but only 9 percent of registered voters. That 9 percent is only 78 percent of the amount they make up in Missouri's statewide population.

Figure 1 shows the extent to which Whites are overrepresented as voters, while non-Whites are underrepresented as voters.

Figure 1: Missouri Racial/Ethnic Composition of Voting-Eligible Population, Registered Voters and Voters, 2006



Electorate by Income

Consistent with the U.S. as a whole¹, the likelihood of being registered to vote in Missouri rises with income. In 2006, lower-income Missourians were underrepresented in registration relative to their higher-income counterparts.

Table 5 shows Missouri income groups' registration as a percentage of the voting-eligible population.

Table 5: Missouri Registration by Income, 2006

	VEP	Registered	Registered as % of VEP
< \$25,000	765	509	66%
\$25,000–39,999	639	470	74%
\$40,000–74,999	1,143	925	81%
\$75,000 & over	796	645	81%
Reporting Total	3,343	2,549	76%

Numbers in thousands

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

In addition to registration, participation at the ballot box was inconsistent across Missouri's income groups. Of the voting-eligible population earning less than \$25,000, only 37 percent voted in 2006. In contrast, that same year 65 percent of voting-eligible Missourians earning more than \$75,000 voted.

Table 6 shows Missouri's 2006 voter turnout as a percentage of the registered and voting-eligible populations.

Table 6: Missouri Voter Turnout by Income, 2006

	Voted as % of Registered	Voted as % of VEP
< \$25,000	56%	37%
\$25,000–39,999	73%	53%
\$40,000–74,999	79%	64%
\$75,000 & over	80%	65%
Reporting Total	73%	56%

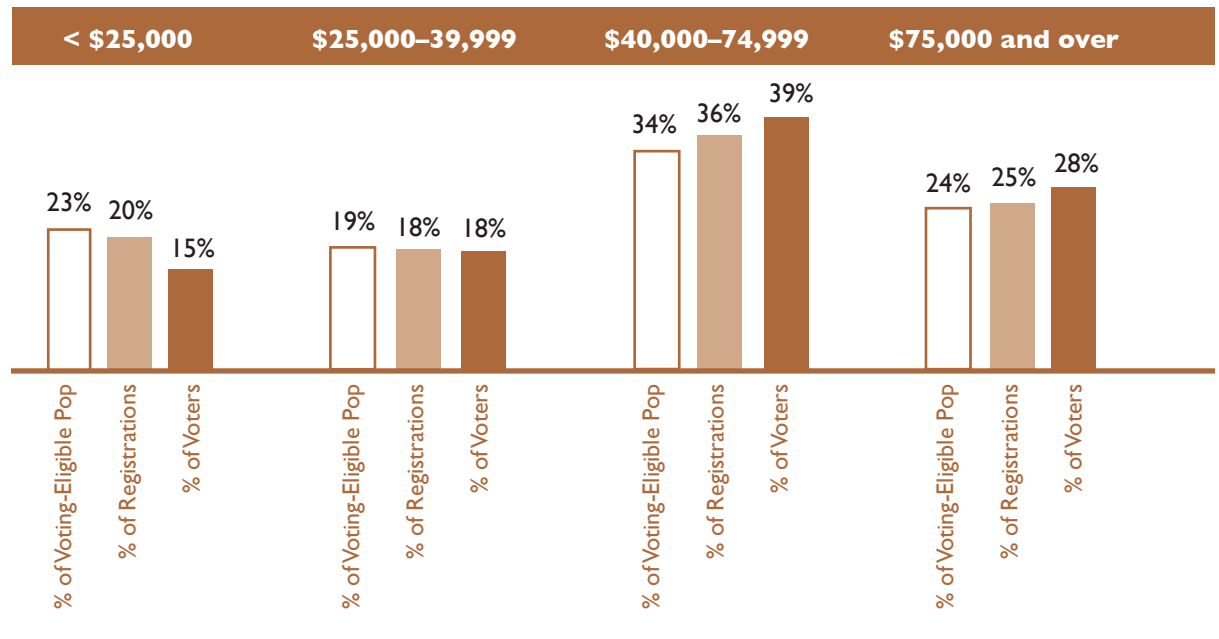
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2006

¹"Representational Bias in the 2006 Electorate" provides a review of voter participation in the 2006 elections based on the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS). http://projectvote.org/fileadmin/ProjectVote/Publications/Representational_bias_report_2006.pdf

Despite representing 23 percent of Missouri's voting-eligible population, Missourians earning less than \$25,000 constituted closer to 15 percent of voters in 2006.

Figure 2 shows that Missourians earning greater than \$75,000 were overrepresented in the registered and voting populations relative to their share of the voting-eligible population.

Figure 2: Missouri Income Composition of Voter-Eligible Population and Electorate, 2006



Electorate by Age

Missouri’s entire voting-eligible population grew by 218,000 people from 2002 to 2006, a 5 percent growth rate. Over the same period, the under-30 age grouping within the voting-eligible population experienced a growth rate four times greater than the overall voting-eligible population’s. This is a clear indication that Missouri’s electorate is trending younger.

In Missouri, the under-30 voting-eligible population group’s growth equaled 75 percent of the state’s overall growth. Table 7 shows Missouri’s voting-eligible population by age in 2002 and 2006.

Table 7: Missouri Voting-Eligible Population by Age, 2002 to 2006

	2002	2006	Change	Percent Change
Under 30	816	979	163	20%
30 to 64	2,528	2,520	-8	0%
65 and Over	714	777	63	9%
Total	4,058	4,276	218	5%

Numbers in thousands

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

Similar to the observation about the voting-eligible population by age growth, not all of Missouri’s age groups were registered at the same rate in 2002 and 2006. However, between those years, registration across most of Missouri’s age groups improved.

Missouri’s under-30 voting-eligible population was registered at a greater rate in the 2006 election than in the 2002 election. Still, younger Missourians’ registration rates were much lower than the registration rates of their older counterparts.

Table 8 shows registration rates of Missouri’s age groups as a percentage of the voting-eligible population in 2002 and 2006.

Table 8: Missouri Registration as a Percent of Voting Eligible Population by Age, 2002 to 2006

	2002	2006
Under 30	55%	59%
30 to 64	77%	77%
65 and Over	81%	85%

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

Twenty-six percent of Missouri's voting-eligible population under 30 voted in 2002. That figure was almost three times greater — 70 percent — for Missourians 65 and over, displaying extreme underrepresentation at the ballot box for young people in the “Show Me” State.

Despite improving their turnout rate from 2002, only 55 percent of registered Missourians under 30 voted in 2006. Seventy-six percent of registered Missourians over 65 voted in 2006. Table 9 shows voter turnout of Missouri's age groups in 2002 and 2006 as percentages of the registered and voting-eligible populations.

Table 9: Missouri Voter Turnout by Age, 2002 and 2006

	2002		2006	
	Voted as % of Registered	Voted as % of VEP	Voted as % of Registered	Voted as % of VEP
Under 30	46%	26%	55%	32%
30 to 64	73%	57%	77%	59%
65 and Over	86%	70%	76%	64%

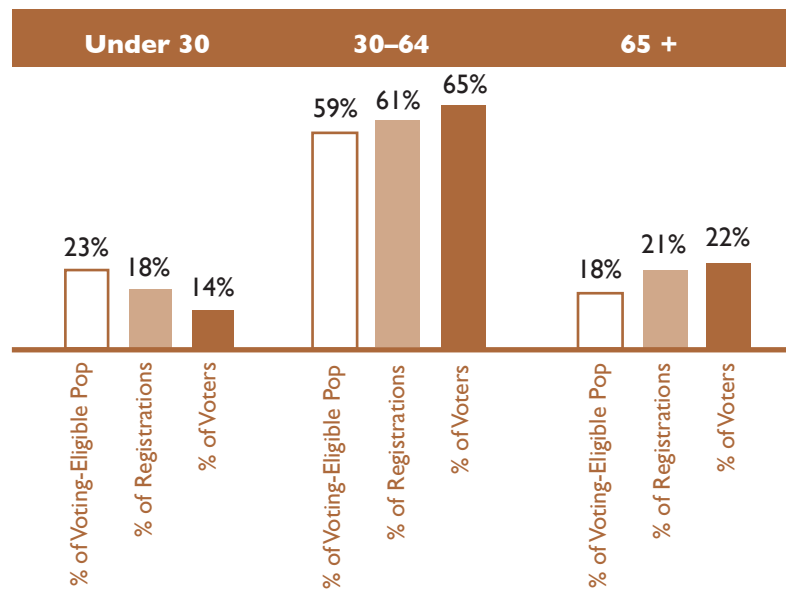
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2002 and 2006

Adults aged 30 to 64 represented 59 percent of Missouri's voting-eligible population, 61 percent of the state's registered voters and 65 percent of those who voted in 2006.

As with non-Whites, the registered under-30 population makes up less of the registered population than it does of the voting-eligible population. The registered population represents roughly 75 percent of that age group's voting-eligible population. The under-30 population makes up 23 percent of Missouri's voting-eligible population but only 18 percent of all registered voters in the state. Further, it makes up only 14 percent of those who actually voted, thereby compounding the underrepresentation of young Missourians.

Older Missourians, on the other hand, are overrepresented in the electorate. Though Missourians over 65 comprise 18 percent of Missouri's voting-eligible population, their share of the voting cohort equals 22 percent of all voters. Figure 3 shows the composition of Missouri's electorate by age in 2006.

Figure 3: Missouri Age Composition Voter-Eligible Population, Registered Voters and Voters, 2006



Conclusion

This report presents participation data on Missouri and the United States between 2002 and 2006, with a focus on disparities by race/ethnicity, income and age. Each of those categories was compared through the lenses of eligibility, registration and voting.

As the report shows, Whites represented a higher percentage of that state's population than that of the overall nation. The non-White population grew at a relatively high rate between 2002 and 2006 but continues to lag behind in registration and voting rates.

Consistent with decades of data from the U.S. as a whole, registration and voting rates were lower among younger and less affluent Missourians. In addition, Missourians of color were underrepresented in the 2006 electorate.

Public agencies, community organizations and the general public should take note of the disparities in participation to further engage young people, low-income people and new citizens. Continued failure to do so risks further lock-out of historically disenfranchised groups from our democratic process.

About Project Vote

ProjectVote is a national nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that promotes voting in low-income and minority communities. With offices in Washington, DC, and Little Rock, AR, ProjectVote's staff are experts in the fields of voting rights, election law, and large-scale voter contact programs.

About the Author

Ben Spears has been a research assistant with ProjectVote 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 ProjectVote, Ben served as researcher and project assistant at multiple international humanitarian organizations in Atlanta, Georgia, including CARE USA.



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