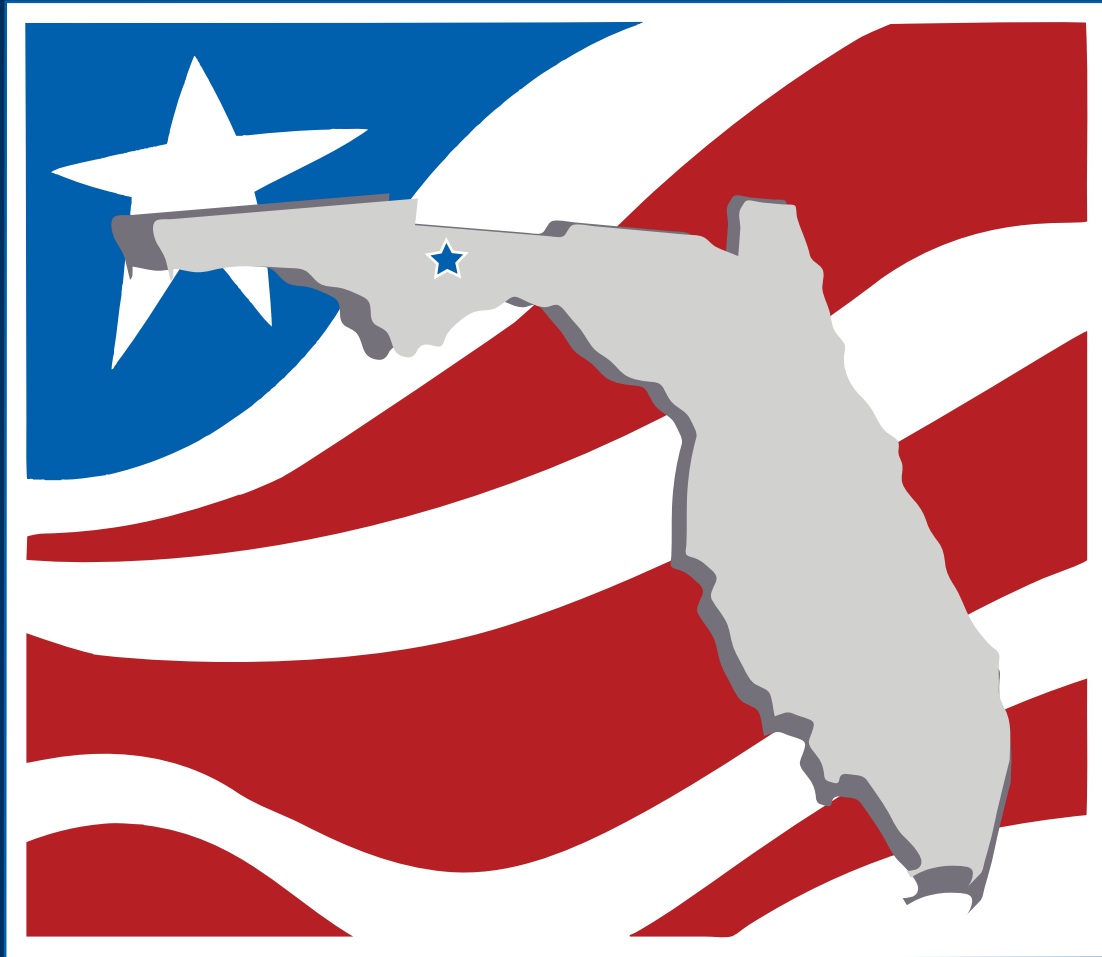


Florida Votes: Civic Engagement in the Sunshine State, 2002-2006



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Executive Summary

This report uses Census Bureau Current Population Survey (CPS) data to present information on Florida's population, voter registration and voting participation over time and to compare it to data relative to the United States. We pay special attention to the racial, ethnic, age and income demographics within Florida.

Key findings include:

- A substantial majority (56 percent) of Floridians did not participate in the 2006 election. That figure was greater for traditionally underrepresented groups, such as young and low-income persons, and communities of color.
- Between 2002 and 2006, Florida's Latino population added approximately 634,000, but the Latino voting-eligible population grew by only 134,000 (21 percent of population growth).
- For at least the last ten years, voting-eligible Whites have been consistently more likely to be registered to vote than their non-White counterparts.
- Among age groups, Florida's voting-eligible population under 30 years of age was least likely to be registered to vote. The gap between registration rates of young adults and older Floridians widened between 2002 and 2006.
- Among all income groups, low-income voting-eligible Floridians were least likely to vote. Of the voting-eligible population earning less than \$25,000, 38 percent turned out to vote. That figure was 60 percent for voting-eligible persons earning \$100,000 or more.
- The number of Blacks voting in 2006 was 10 percent greater than in 2002.

Introduction

This report examines Florida's population and electoral participation in 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 sources of data 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 Florida's overall population and voting-eligible population. 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 Florida population that voted. We conclude by describing some of the disparities in the rates at which certain populations register and vote.

As we show, Floridians 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. Young people and people of color, especially Latinos, experienced declines in electoral participation, despite significant population growth.

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

Demographic Category	Voter Eligible	Voters	Non-Voters
RACE			
White	70%	77%	68%
Non-White	30%	23%	32%
Black	13%	12%	13%
Latino	13%	9%	16%
HOUSEHOLD INCOME			
Less than \$25,000	21%	16%	20%
\$25,000 - \$74,999	49%	48%	54%
More than \$100,000	30%	36%	26%
AGE GROUP			
Under 30	18%	8%	23%
30 to 64	60%	62%	60%
65 and Over	22%	30%	17%

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

Population

The population of Florida was approximately 18 million in 2006. This represents 6 percent of our country's population.

Florida's population grew by 8 percent between 2002 and 2006. The U.S. as a whole grew by 4 percent during the same period. Approximately 13 percent of the 11.3 million new residents of the U.S. between 2002 and 2006 were new residents of Florida.

Table 1 shows Florida's 2002–2006 population growth, from 16,682,000 to 18,090,000, as well as the country's growth, from 288,126,000 to 299,398,000.

Table 1. Florida and U.S. Population Change, 2002 – 2006

	2002	2006	Change	Percentage Change
Florida	16,682	18,090	1,408	8%
United States	288,126	299,398	11,272	4%

Numbers in the thousands

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

Florida was slightly more racially and ethnically diverse than the U.S. in 2006. Whites made up 61 percent of Florida's population and 66 percent of the U.S. population. Blacks represented a slightly higher percentage of Florida's population than the U.S. population. Florida has a greater percentage of its population that is Latino than the U.S. overall.

Table 2 presents racial and ethnic groups' shares of Florida's population in 2006 compared to the U.S. as a whole.

Table 2: Florida and U.S. Racial/Ethnic Diversity, 2006

	Florida	United States
White	61%	66%
Non-White	39%	34%
Black	15%	12%
Latino	20%	15%
Asian	2%	5%
Other	1%	3%

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

In 2002, 10.7 million Whites constituted the majority racial group in Florida's population (64 percent of the state population). Latinos were the largest minority, with 3 million people (18 percent), followed by 2.5 million Blacks (15 percent) and 300,000 Asians (2 percent).

Most of Florida's population growth between 2002 and 2006 occurred in non-White groups. Florida's non-White population grew by approximately 1 million during that time. Latinos represented 20 percent of the population in 2006, up from 18 percent in 2002.

Table 3 presents Florida's population by race and ethnicity in 2002 and 2006 and the change between those years.

Table 3: Florida Population by Race and Ethnicity, 2002 and 2006

	2002		2006		2002 – 2006	
	Total	Percent Total	Total	Percent Total	Numeric Population Change	Percent Population Change
White	10,701	64%	11,093	61%	392	4%
Non-White	5,981	36%	6,997	39%	1,016	17%
Black	2,451	15%	2,717	15%	266	11%
Latino	3,012	18%	3,646	20%	634	21%
Asian	306	2%	384	2%	78	26%
Total	16,682		18,090		1,408	8%

Numbers in thousands

Source: US Census Bureau, Estimates of the Population by Selected Groups for the United States and States, 2002 and 2006

The U.S. voting-eligible population was 193 million in 2002 and 201 million in 2006 (a 4 percent growth rate). Florida's voting-eligible population grew by 10 percent from 11 million in 2002 to 12 million in 2006.

Table 4 shows the voting-eligible population of Florida and the U.S. in 2002 and 2006.

Table 4: Florida and U.S. Voting Eligible Population Change, 2002 and 2006

	2002		2006		2002 – 2006	
	VEP	Percent VEP of Population	VEP	Percent VEP of Population	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Florida	11,043	66%	12,098	67%	1,055	10%
United States	192,656	67%	201,000	68%	8,344	4%

Numbers in thousands

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

Florida's non-White voting-eligible population groups grew faster than the White voting-eligible population between 2002 and 2006. Almost half the 1 million additional voting-eligible population in the state were non-White.

The Black voting-eligible population grew by 17 percent between 2002 and 2006 — faster than every other racial and ethnic group.

The Latino voting-eligible population growth between 2002 and 2006, 134,000, failed to keep pace with the overall Latino population growth of 634,000. Of the added Floridian Latino population during that time, only 21 percent were voting eligible.

Table 5 shows Florida's voting-eligible population by race and ethnicity in 2002 and 2006, as well as the change between those two election years.

Table 5: Florida Voting Eligible Population by Race and Ethnicity, 2002 – 2006

			Numeric Change	Percent Change
White	7,958	8,526	568	7%
Non-White	3,085	3,572	487	16%
Black	1,379	1,612	233	17%
Latino	1,493	1,627	134	9%
Total	11,043	12,098	1,055	10%

Numbers in thousands

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

Among the Floridian voting-eligible population that reported income in 2006, 1.9 million (21 percent) earned less than \$25,000. The \$60,000–99,999 earning group was the largest income segment (23 percent) of the overall voting-eligible population, with 2 million people.

Table 6 presents information on how Florida's voting-eligible population was distributed by income in 2006.

Table 6: Florida Voting Eligible Population by Income, 2006

	VEP	Percent of Total VEP
Less than \$25,000	1,884	21%
\$25,000 – 39,999	1,747	19%
\$40,000 – 59,999	1,699	19%
\$60,000 – 99,999	2,058	23%
\$100,000 & over	1,756	19%
Total Reporting Income	9,143	–
United States	12,098	–

Numbers in thousands

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

Florida's adult population has grown younger over the past few years. The under-30 and 30-to-64 age groups each grew at greater rate (11 percent) than that of the 65-and-over age group (5 percent).

Though more than 20 percent of Florida's voting-eligible population was over 65 in 2006, only about 10 percent of the 1 million added voting-eligible population between 2002 and 2006 was over the age of 65.

Table 7 shows how the composition of the voting-eligible population by age shifted between 2002 and 2006.

Table 7: Florida Voting Eligible Population by Age, 2002 – 2006

			Numeric Change	Percent Change
Under 30	1,950	2,172	222	11%
30 to 64	6,567	7,270	703	11%
65 & over	2,526	2,656	130	5%
Total	11,043	12,098	1,055	10%

Numbers in thousands

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

Voter 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.

Whites made up 74 percent of Florida's 8 million registered voters, a much greater proportion than the 61 percent Whites represent of Florida's population. Blacks and Latinos represent 12 percent of the registered population each, less than the 15 and 20 percent they represent in the overall population, respectively, from 2002.

Table 8 shows the racial composition of Florida's registered voters.

Table 8: Florida Registration by Race, 2006

	Registered	Percent of Total
White	5,822	74%
Non-White	2,033	26%
Black	948	12%
Latino	913	12%
Total	7,8655	—

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

Overall, 65 percent of Floridians were registered, a drop since election year 1998. Whites in Florida consistently had a higher registration rate among the voting-eligible population than non-White racial and ethnic groups. Across the five federal elections between 1998 and 2006, the gap between registration rates for Whites and non-Whites as a percent of voting-eligible population has increased. Blacks were registered at lower rates than Whites in 2006 than they were in 1998.

Table 8b shows that 68 percent of eligible Whites were registered to vote compared to 59 percent of Blacks and 56 percent of Latinos in 2006.

Table 8b: Florida Registration as a Percent of Voting Eligible Population by Race, 1998 to 2006

	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006
White	67%	71%	67%	73%	68%
Black	61%	66%	60%	65%	59%
Latino	59%	63%	60%	64%	56%
Total	66%	70%	66%	72%	65%

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

Consistent with the U.S. as a whole, Floridians on the lower end of the income scale were less likely to be registered in 2006 than their higher-income counterparts. While three out of five Floridians earning less than \$25,000 were registered to vote, closer to four out of five Floridians earning \$100,000 and over were registered.

Table 9 presents the total number of individuals who were registered to vote and registration rates across income groups in 2006.

Table 9: Florida Registration by Income, 2006

	Registered	Registered as Percent of VEP
Less than \$25,000	1,132	60%
\$25,000 – 39,999	1,196	69%
\$40,000 – 59,999	1,255	74%
\$60,000 – 99,999	1,549	75%
\$100,000 & over	1,378	79%
Reporting Total	6,510	71%

Numbers in thousands

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

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

Between 2002 and 2006, the 65-and-over voting-eligible population maintained a consistent registration rate. The registration rate of Floridians under 30 fell by three percentage points, which widened the gap between younger and older registration rates.

Table 10 shows Florida's registered voters by age in 2002 and 2006.

Table 10: Florida Registration by Age, 2002 – 2006

	Registered	Percent VEP Registered	Registered	Percent VEP Registered	Change in Registration	
					Numeric Change	Percent Change
Under 30	937	48%		45%	39	4%
30 to 64	4,381	67%	4,820	66%	439	10%
65 & over	1,971	78%	2,059	78%	88	5%
United States	7,290	66%	7,855	65%	565	8%

Numbers in thousands

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

Voter Turnout

In 2002, 5.33 million Floridians voted; that number was slightly higher in 2006, reaching 5.34 million. With population growth as large as it was between those years, however, voter participation as a percent of the eligible population was lower in 2006 than in 2002. (Forty-four percent of Floridians voted versus 48 percent).

Whites and Blacks in Florida had higher numbers of persons voting in 2006 than 2002. Large increases in non-voting populations (eligible adults not reporting voting), however, led to a decrease in the turnout rate of all of Florida’s racial and ethnic groups between the 2002 and 2006 elections.

Table 11: Florida Voter Turnout by Race, 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
White	4,073	74%	51%	4,102	71%	48%	1%
Non-White	1,261	70%	41%	1,238	61%	35%	-2%
Black	575	70%	42%	634	67%	39%	10%
Latino	609	69%	41%	506	55%	31%	-17%
Total	5,334	73%	48%	5,343	68%	44%	0%

Numbers in thousands

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

Table 12 compares Florida voting rates by race to analogous U.S. statistics.

Table 12: Florida and U.S. Voter Turnout, 2006

	U.S. Percent Eligible Voting	Florida Percent Eligible Voting
White	51%	48%
Black	41%	39%
Latino	32%	31%
Total	48%	44%

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

Low-income Floridians were much less likely to vote than their middle- and upper-income counterparts. Of the voting-eligible population earning less than \$25,000, 38 percent turned out to vote. The turnout figure was 60 percent for Floridians earning \$100,000 or greater.

Table 13 shows the voter turnout by income group for 2006.

Table 13: Florida Voter Turnout by Income, 2006

	Voted	Percent Voting of Registered	Percent Voting of VEP
Less than \$25,000	709	63%	38%
\$25,000 – 39,999	782	65%	45%
\$40,000 – 59,999	843	67%	50%
\$60,000 – 99,999	1,036	67%	50%
\$100,000 & over	1,049	76%	60%
Total Reporting	4,420	68%	48%
Total	5,343	68%	44%

Numbers in thousands

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

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

Table 14 shows Florida's voter turnout by age in 2002 and 2006.

Table 14: Florida Voter Turnout by Age, 2002 and 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
Under 30	454	48%	23%	401	41%	19%	-12%
30 to 64	3,223	74%	49%	3,321	69%	46%	3%
65 & over	1,657	84%	66%	1,621	79%	61%	-2%
Total	5,334	73%	48%	5,343	68%	44%	0%

Numbers in thousands

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

Conclusion

This report presents election trends in Florida 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.

Florida is a predominantly White state, with Whites representing a slightly lower percentage of the state population than the nation overall. In the time period studied, the non-White population grew at a much greater rate than that of Whites. Latinos make up a larger percentage of Florida's population than of the nation overall; Florida's Latino population continues to grow faster than the state's general population.

The data indicate increased voter eligibility across all demographic groups examined. Still, in keeping with decades of research across the U.S., registration rates were higher among older and more affluent Floridians. Younger, poorer Floridians, and Floridians of color, were underrepresented in registration and voting in 2006.

Figure 1 shows the underrepresentation of Floridians earning less than \$25,000 in the registered voter and voting populations as compared to their incidence in the voting-eligible population.

Figure 1: Florida Income Composition of Voter Eligible Population and Electorate, 2006

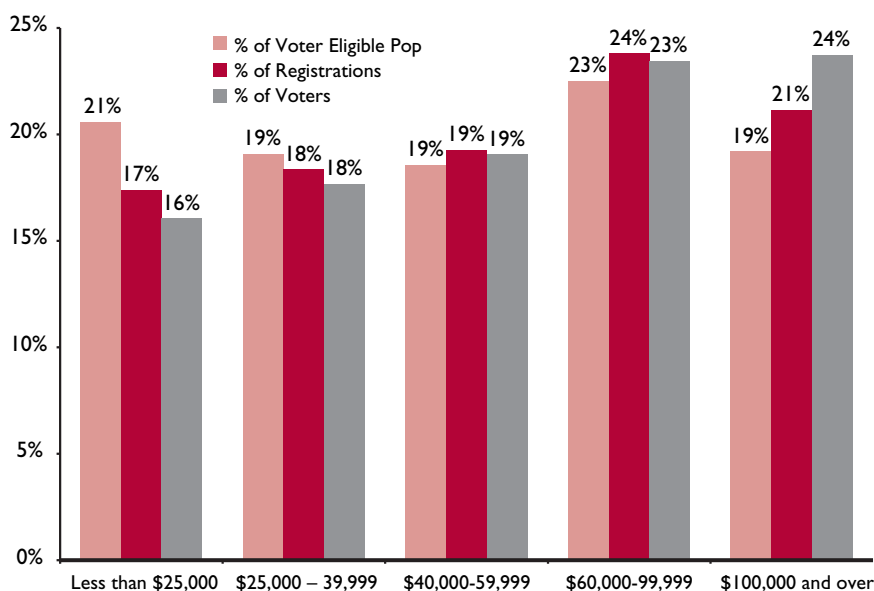
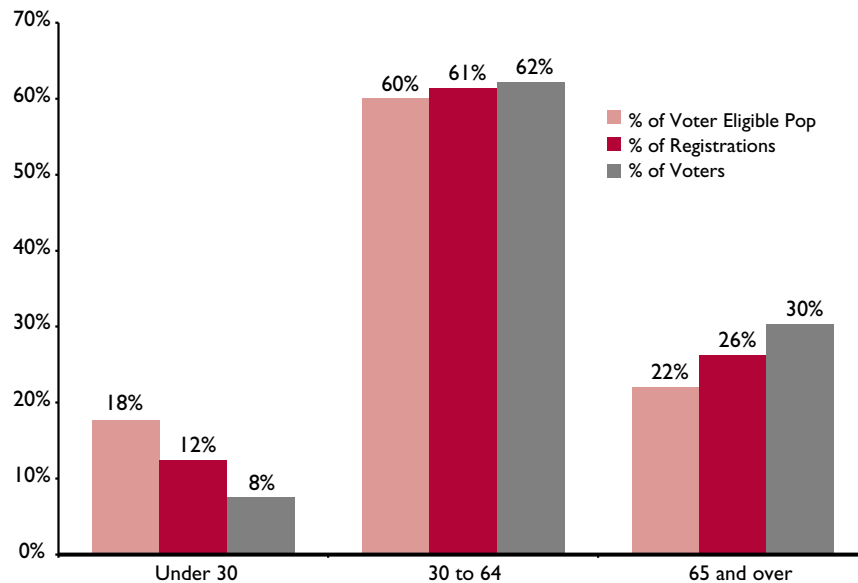


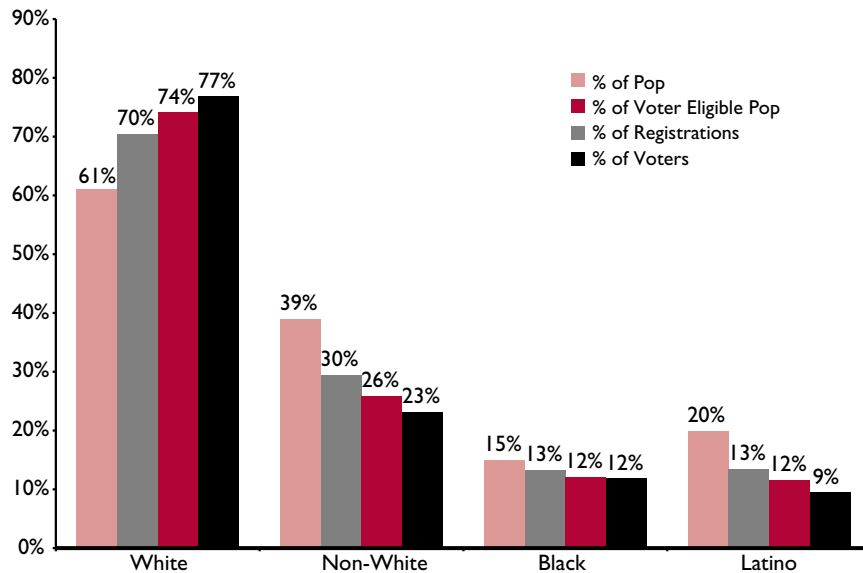
Figure 2 compares the composition of Florida's voting-eligible population by age in 2006.

Figure 2: Florida Age Composition Voter Eligible Population, Registered Voters, and Voters, 2006



Latinos are severely underrepresented in the voting-eligible population (13 percent), registered voters (12 percent) and actual voters (9 percent). Figure 3 shows that Florida's Whites are overrepresented in the voting-eligible population, registered voters and voters, while non-Whites are underrepresented compared to their proportion of the populations.

Figure 3: Florida Racial/ Ethnic Composition of Voter Eligible Population, Registered Voters, and Voters, 2006



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 recent immigrants. Continued failure to do so risks further disenfranchising historically locked-out groups in our democracy.

Appendices: Cross-Tabs

Appendix Table 1: Florida Portions of VEP, Registered Voters, and Voted Populations by Race, 2006

	VEP	Registered	Voted
White	71%	74%	77%
Non-White	30%	26%	23%
Black	13%	12%	12%
Latino	14%	12%	10%

Appendix Table 2: Florida portions of VEP, Registered Voters, and Voted Populations by Age, 2006

	VEP	Registered	Voted
Under 30	18%	12%	8%
30 to 64	60%	61%	62%
65 & over	23%	26%	30%

Appendix Table 3: Florida portions of VEP, Registered Voters, and Voted Populations by Income, 2006

	VEP	Registered	Voted
Less than \$25,000	21%	17%	16%
\$25,000 – 39,999	19%	18%	18%
\$40,000 – 59,999	19%	19%	19%
\$60,000 – 99,999	23%	24%	23%
\$100,000 & over	19%	21%	24%

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.



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