



The New American Electorate:

The Growing Political Power of
Immigrants and Their Children

Produced by Rob Paral & Associates

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The Immigration Policy Center

The Immigration Policy Center (IPC), established in 2003, is the policy arm of the American Immigration Law Foundation. IPC's mission is to shape a rational national conversation on immigration and immigrant integration. Through its research and analysis, IPC provides policymakers, the media, and the general public with accurate information about the role of immigrants and immigration policy on U.S. society. IPC reports and materials are widely disseminated and relied upon by press and policy makers. IPC staff regularly serves as experts to leaders on Capitol Hill, opinion-makers and the media. IPC is a non-partisan organization that neither supports nor opposes any political party or candidate for office.

Rob Paral and Associates

Rob Paral and Associates (RPA) is a consulting firm that helps not-for-profit and philanthropic institutions understand the populations they serve and the impact of their programs. RPA provides information on demographic, social, and economic characteristics of communities.

Some examples of our recent work include the following:

- Helping a health policy organization determine the need for health insurance in legislative districts in Illinois.
- Estimating the numbers of legal immigrants in U.S. metro areas for a national philanthropic organization.
- Providing a legal aid corporation with information to understand the shifting needs of its clients.
- Evaluating the impact of charitable giving and support for community foundations in the Midwest.
- Developing policies and procedures needed by a state agency to communicate with limited-English clients.

Direct outcomes of our work have recently been cited in *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Economist*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and a large number of other major news media outlets. More information is available at www.robparal.com.

Executive Summary

At a time when federal, state, and local elections are often decided by small voting margins—with candidates frequently locked in ferocious competition for the ballots of those “voting blocs” that might turn the electoral tide in their favor—one large and growing bloc of voters has been consistently overlooked and politically underestimated: New Americans. This group of voters and potential voters includes not only immigrants who have become U.S. citizens (Naturalized Americans), but also the U.S.-born children of immigrants who were raised during the current era of large-scale immigration from Latin America and Asia which began in 1965 (the Post-1965 Children of Immigrants). These immigrants and their children have a powerful and highly personal connection to the modern immigrant experience that most other Americans do not. It’s one thing to hear family stories about a grandfather or great-grandfather coming to the United States during the much-romanticized “Ellis Island” era of immigration from Europe that ended decades ago. It’s quite another to belong to a family that is experiencing first-hand the political and economic realities of immigration today. The ranks of registered voters who are New Americans, or Latino or Asian, have been growing rapidly this decade and are likely to play an increasingly pivotal role in elections at all levels in the years to come, particularly in battleground states like Florida, Colorado, Nevada, and New Mexico. As recent public opinion polls reveal, anti-immigrant political rhetoric is likely to motivate many New Americans to cast ballots in November, but is unlikely to win many votes for candidates perceived as anti-immigrant.

New Americans, Latinos, and Asians Are Large and Growing Shares of the U.S. Electorate

- **New Americans Were 8.6 Percent of All Registered Voters in 2006**
 - 7.6 million were Naturalized Americans, accounting for 5.6 percent of registered voters.
 - 4.1 million were Post-1965 Children of Immigrants, accounting for 3.0 percent of registered voters.
- **Latinos and Asians Accounted for 9.3 Percent of All Registered Voters in 2006**
 - 9.3 million Latinos comprised 6.8 percent of registered voters.
 - 3.3 million Asians accounted for 2.5 percent of registered voters.
- **Between the Two Presidential Elections of 1996 and 2004, the Number of New Americans Registered to Vote Jumped Nearly 60 percent**
 - The number of Naturalized Americans registered to vote grew from 5.2 million to 8.0 million—an increase of 55.1 percent.
 - The number of Post-1965 Children of Immigrants registered to vote increased from 2.3 million to 3.8 million—an increase of 70.7 percent.
- **The Number of Latinos and Asians Registered to Vote Increased Nearly 46 Percent from 1996 to 2004**
 - The number of Latinos registered to vote grew from 6.6 million to 9.3 million—an increase of 41.6 percent.
 - The number of Asians registered to vote increased from 2.1 million to 3.4 million—an increase of 58.6 percent.
- **2008 Expected to Be a Banner Year for New American Voters**
 - **Record-Breaking Naturalization Rates.** According to data from the [Office of Immigration Statistics](#) and [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services](#), there are roughly 3 million more naturalized citizens eligible to vote now than there were during the last Presidential election in 2004.
 - **Turbo-Charged Registration Efforts.** The 2006 immigrant mobilizations spurred this year’s ambitious voter-registration and get-out-the-vote campaigns, including the [We Are America Alliance](#) and [“Ya es Hora, Ve y Vota”](#) (“It’s time, go vote”), and many more have made it a goal to register millions of New American voters before the 2008 elections and encourage all registered voters to vote on Election Day.

- **Record Turnouts Expected.** Latino turnout may hit record highs in 2008, surmounting the 7.6 million Latino voters who turned out in 2004. A recent [NALEO Educational Fund](#) poll of registered Latino voters in key battleground states—Colorado, Florida, New Mexico, and Nevada—found that nearly 90 percent of Latino registered voters in those states are almost certain they will vote in November.

New Americans, Latinos, and Asians are Pivotal Voting Blocs in Many States

➤ **New Americans' Share of Registered Voters *Exceeded* 2004 Presidential Victory Margins in 16 States:**

- This was the case in **Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin**. In similarly close Presidential, Congressional, state house, or local elections today, the votes of New Americans could be decisive.
- In **New Mexico**, New Americans accounted for 7.0 percent of the state's registered voters, while the margin of victory in the Presidential race amounted to only 0.6 percent of registered voters.
- In **Florida**, New Americans comprised 14.5 percent of registered voters, while the margin of victory in the Presidential race amounted to 4.6 percent of registered voters.

➤ **Latino and Asian Share of Registered Voters *Exceeded* 2004 Presidential Victory Margins in 15 States:**

- This was the case in **Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wisconsin**. In similarly close Presidential, Congressional, state house, or local elections today, the votes of Latinos and Asians could be decisive.
- In **Colorado**, Latinos and Asians accounted for 10.9 percent of the state's registered voters, while the margin of victory in the Presidential race amounted to 4.3 percent of registered voters.
- In **Nevada**, Latinos and Asians comprised 12.3 percent of registered voters, while the margin of victory in the Presidential race amounted to only 2.2 percent of registered voters.

New Americans, Latinos, and Asians Look to Immigration When Voting

➤ **Latinos Influenced by Immigration in 2006:**

- A poll conducted by the [National Council of La Raza](#) just before the 2006 elections found that 47 percent of "Latino registered and likely voters" in 23 states said that events surrounding immigration over the previous year influenced their vote, while 51 percent said immigration was an important issue in their vote.

➤ **Candidates' Stance on Immigration Likely to Impact Voting Decisions in 2008:**

- According to a poll conducted in June and July by the [Pew Hispanic Center](#), 75 percent of Latino registered voters view the immigration issue as "extremely important" or "very important."

Introduction

New Americans (including both naturalized citizens and the children born to immigrants in the United States since 1965), Latinos, and Asians are increasingly important to the outcome of elections at the federal, state, and local level in the United States. Yet immigration and the ongoing racial and ethnic diversification of the American electorate have received relatively little attention from pundits and analysts discussing the 2008 vote and the electoral outlook for future elections. However, as naturalized citizens and their families grow into sizable portions of the electorate, political candidates who fail to recognize the growing importance of New American, Latino, and Asian voters increasingly undermine their own campaigns.

The U.S.-born children of immigrants in particular are increasingly important in the voting booth. These children occupy a unique position in U.S. society in that they have watched one or both of their parents navigate a new society and culture. As a result, they are personally connected to the struggles of immigrants and to the ways in which U.S. society reacts to and treats immigrants. There were nearly four million of these Post-1965 Children of Immigrants registered to vote in 2006.

Immigrants who have become U.S. citizens (Naturalized Americans) and the U.S.-born children of immigrants are closely connected to, and many are a part of, the Latino and Asian communities in the United States. Latinos and Asians include not only immigrants and their children, but also families that have lived here for many generations. In general, Latinos and Asians have a close connection to the immigrant experience because they are immigrants themselves, or their parents were immigrants, or they live in neighborhoods where friends and extended-family members are immigrants.

Apart from sheer growth in their numbers, two key factors are transforming New American, Asian, and Latino voters into a potent electoral force which is changing the nature of elections and political campaigns nationwide. First, immigrant communities can now be found throughout the United States. No longer concentrated in just a few states like California, Florida, New York, and Texas, immigrants are becoming a sizable portion of the population in states like Nevada, Washington, and North Carolina. Second, contemporary elections are often won by very thin voting margins. In 2004, for example, President Bush carried Ohio by just 119,000 votes, or 2 percent of all registered voters, while Senator John Kerry won Michigan by a margin equaling 3 percent of registered voters.

The combination of wide geographic dispersion and increasingly close elections means that New American, Latino, and Asian voters can play a crucial role in elections taking place in “battleground” states where neither the Democratic Party nor the Republican Party has a decisive edge. As one example, the Bush-Kerry margin of victory represented 4.6 percent of registered voters in Florida, while New Americans were 14.5 percent of all registered voters.

This report describes the contours of the New American, Latino, and Asian electorate in the United States as the nation approaches the November 2008 federal elections. Using the most recent data available, the report provides both a nationwide and state-by-state accounting of registered voters and actual voters who are New Americans, Latinos, or Asians. Particular attention is paid to key battleground states and those states where immigrants are a large portion of the population.

Glossary of Terms

Naturalized Americans: Immigrants who have obtained U.S. citizenship and are eligible to vote.

Post-1965 Children of Immigrants: Persons born in the United States *since* 1965 who have at least one immigrant parent.

New Americans: Naturalized Citizens and Post-1965 Children of Immigrants combined.

Other Americans: Persons born in the United States to native-born parents, and those persons born *before* 1965 who have at least one immigrant parent.

Battleground States: States with closely divided electorates as of 2008: Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Key States: States with large immigrant populations: California, Illinois, New York, and Texas.

Time Frame of the Analysis: Our analysis of the changing role of immigrants and other communities begins with the 1996 elections because they were the first for which data became available on voting and registration of naturalized citizens.

Source of Data

Unless otherwise noted, the information in this report is derived from the Voting and Registration Supplement to the Current Population Survey. The survey is conducted in November after the biennial federal elections.

New American, Latino, and Asian voters at the national level

The electoral power of New American voters is significant

There were nearly 12 million New American registered voters in 2006

Defining “New Americans”

“New Americans” are naturalized immigrants and those children of immigrants who were born in the United States in 1965 or later. We call the first group “Naturalized Americans” and the second group “Post-1965 Children of Immigrants.”

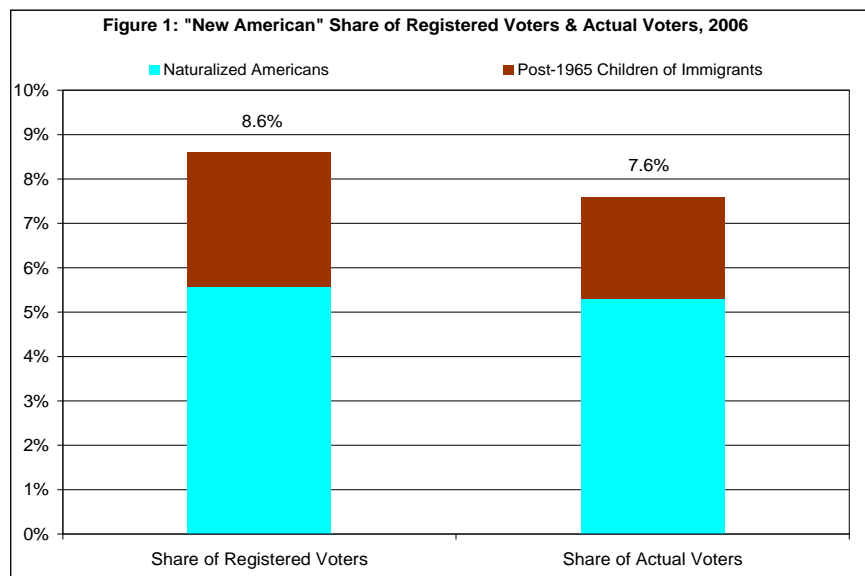
New Americans were 8.6 percent of all registered voters

There were 11.7 million New Americans registered to vote in 2006, totaling 8.6 percent of all registered voters (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

- 7.6 million were Naturalized Americans.
- 4.1 million were Post-1965 Children of Immigrants.

Table 1: “New American” Registered Voters & Actual Voters, 2006

Registered Voters	11,692,840
Actual Voters	7,297,890



New Americans were 7.6 percent of actual voters

7.3 million New Americans voted in 2006, representing 7.6 percent of all those who voted (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

- 5.1 million were Naturalized Americans.
- 2.2 million were Post-1965 Children of Immigrants.

The electoral power of Latino and Asian voters is significant

There were nearly 13 million Latino and Asian registered voters in 2006

Latinos and Asians were 9.3 percent of all registered voters

Together, Latinos and Asians constituted 12.6 million, or 9.3 percent, of all registered voters in 2006 (see Table 2 and Figure 2).¹

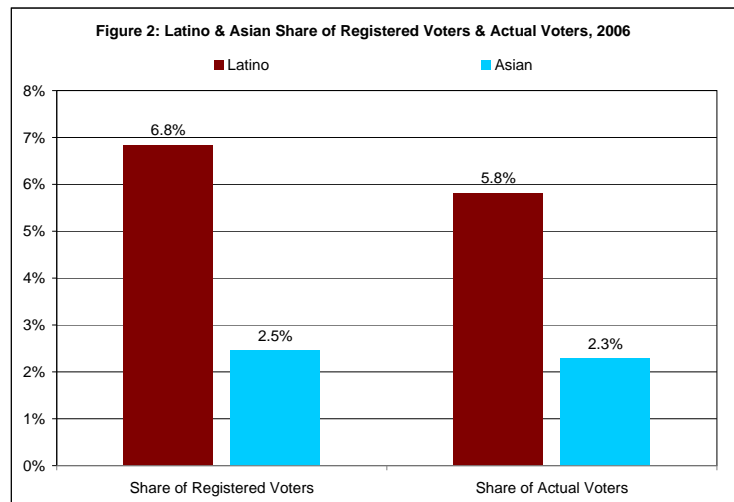
- 9.3 million Latinos accounted for 6.8 percent of all registered voters.
- 3.3 million Asians accounted for 2.5 percent of all registered voters.

Table 2: Latino & Asian Registered Voters & Actual Voters, 2006		
	Latinos	Asians
Registered Voters	9,303,544	3,333,653
Actual Voters	5,595,381	2,196,863

Latinos and Asians were 8.1 percent of actual voters

Together, Latinos and Asians accounted for 7.8 million, or 8.1 percent, of all persons who cast a ballot in 2006 (see Table 2 and Figure 2).

- 5.6 million Latinos comprised 5.8 percent of all voters.
- 2.2 million Asians comprised 2.3 percent of all voters.



¹ Latinos may be of any race. However, in this report, individuals are counted as belonging to the racial categories “white,” “black,” “Asian,” or “other” only if they did *not* also define themselves as “Latino.”

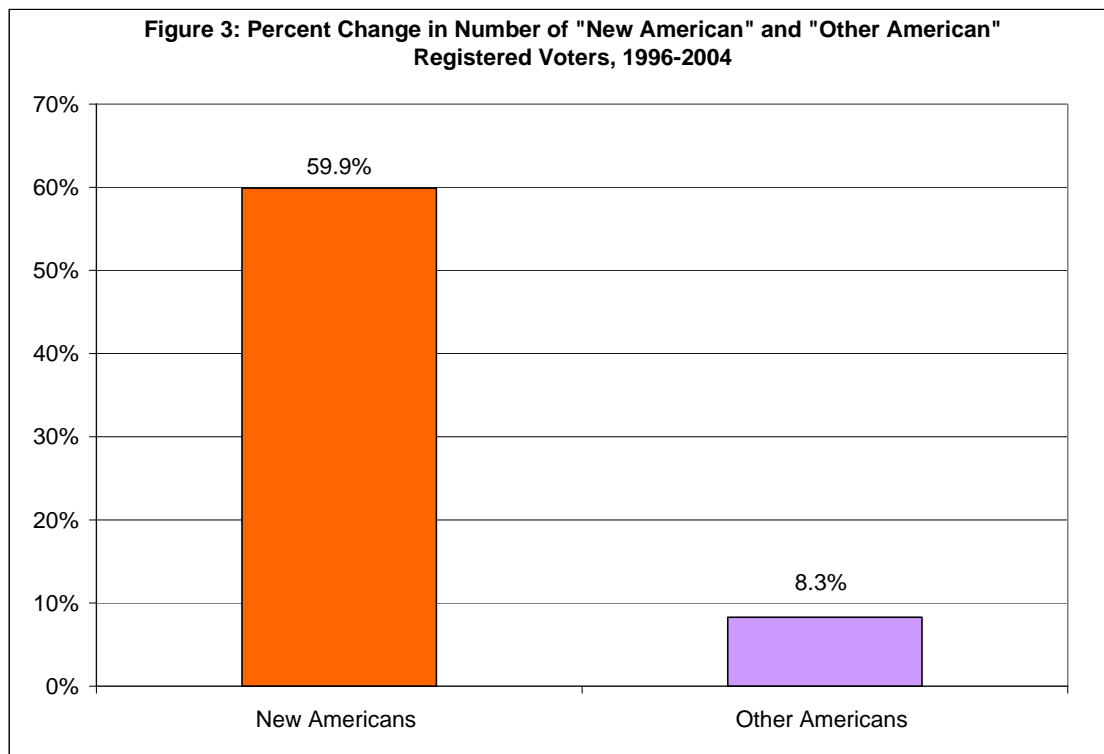
The electoral power of New Americans, Latinos, and Asians is growing fast

The number of New American registered voters increased by 4.4 million between 1996 and 2004²

The number of New American registered voters rose by 4.4 million between 1996 and 2004—an increase of 59.9 percent (see Table 3 and Figure 3).

- Registered voters who were Naturalized Americans increased by 2.9 million—an increase of 55.1 percent.
- Registered voters who were Post-1965 Children of Immigrants increased by 1.6 million—an increase of 70.7 percent.

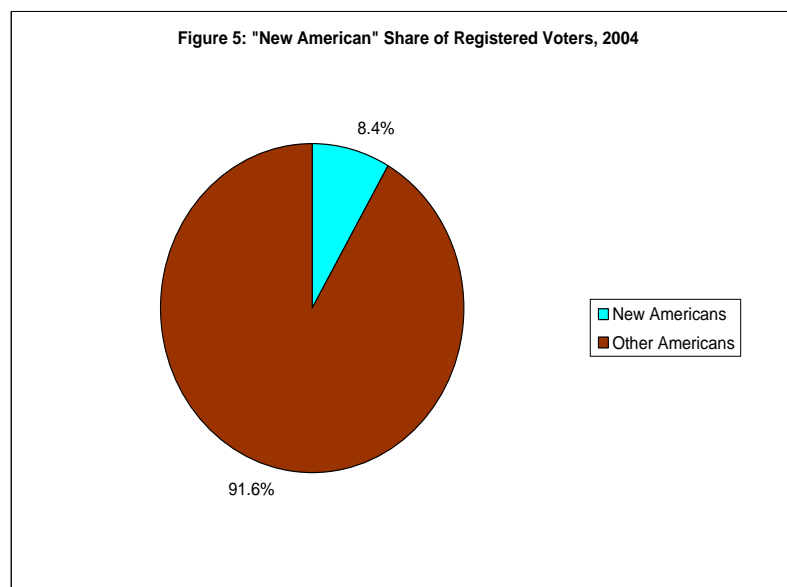
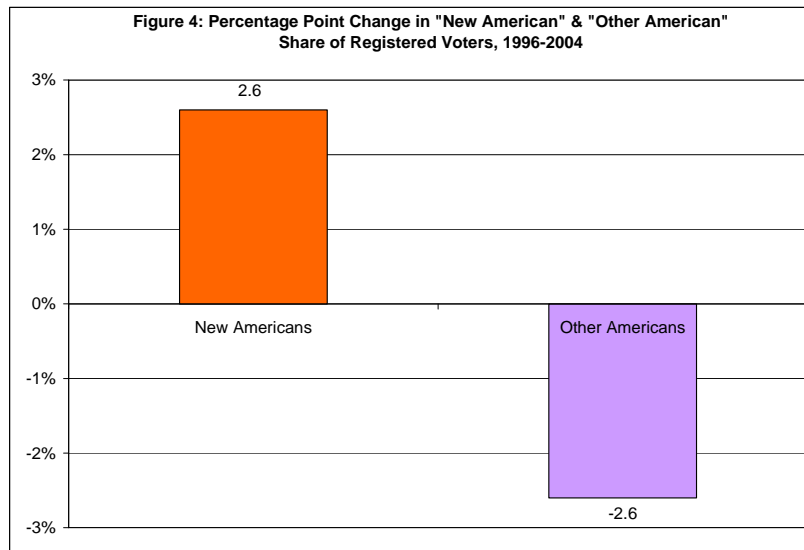
Table 3: "New American" & "Other American" Registered Voters, 1996 & 2004				
	1996	2004	Number Change	Percent Change
New Americans	7,428,861	11,875,622	4,446,761	59.9%
Naturalized Americans	5,176,164	8,030,322	2,854,158	55.1%
Post-1965 Children of Immigrants	2,252,697	3,845,300	1,592,603	70.7%
Other Americans	120,232,587	130,193,938	9,961,351	8.3%
All Americans	127,661,448	142,069,560	14,408,112	11.3%



² The previous pages used 2006 data, as they are the most recent available; in this section we compare change between 1996 and 2004 as these are both Presidential election years.

During the eight years between the Presidential elections of 1996 and 2004, the New American share of registered voters increased by 2.6 percentage points. Conversely, the share of registered voters comprised of the rest of the population declined by 2.6 percentage points (see Figure 4).

- In 1996, New Americans were 5.8 percent of those registered to vote.
- By 2004, New Americans were 8.4 percent of registered voters (see Figure 5).

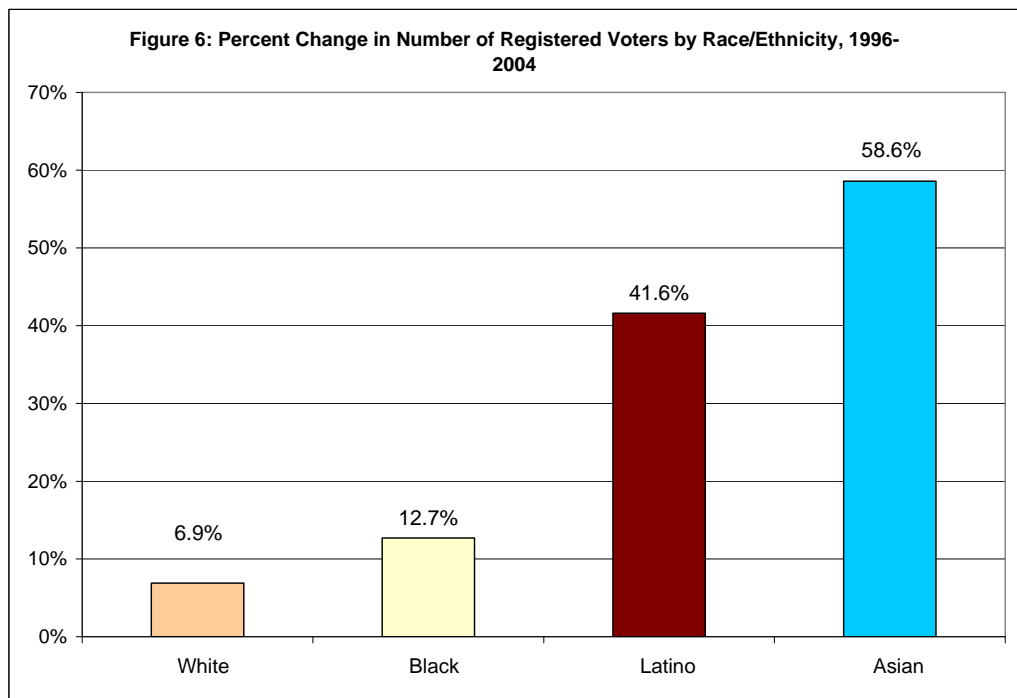


The number of Latino and Asian registered voters grew by 4.0 million between 1996 and 2004

The number of Latino and Asian registered voters increased by 4.0 million between 1996 and 2004 (see Table 4 and Figure 6).

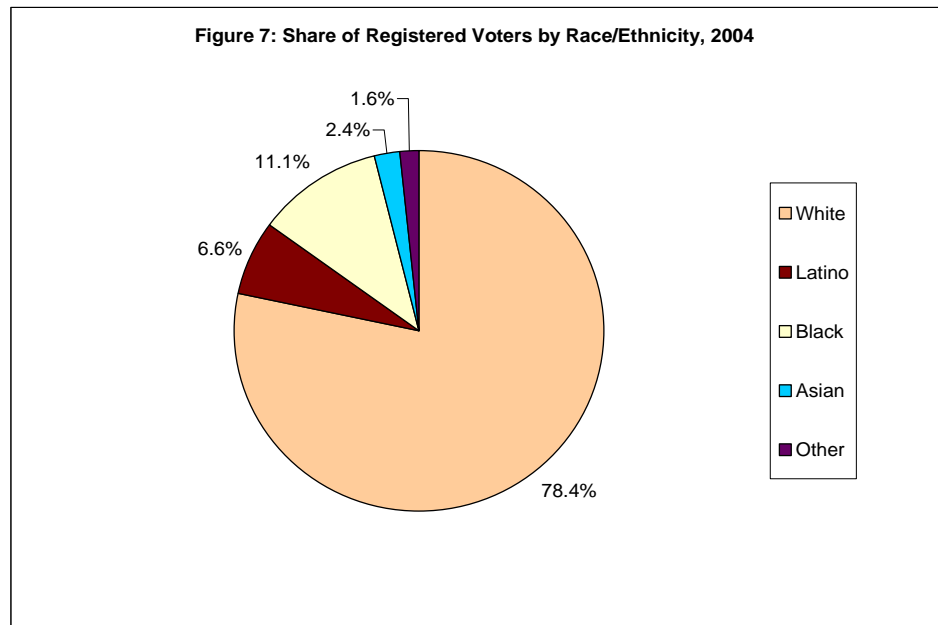
- Latino registered voters increased by 2.7 million (an increase of 41.6 percent).
- Asian registered voters increased by 1.3 million (an increase of 58.6 percent).

Table 4: Registered Voters by Race/Ethnicity, 1996 & 2004				
	1996	2004	Number Change	Percent Change
White	104,100,691	111,318,498	7,217,807	6.9%
Black	13,990,648	15,772,832	1,782,184	12.7%
Latino	6,572,830	9,307,915	2,735,085	41.6%
Asian	2,146,468	3,403,773	1,257,305	58.6%
Other	850,811	2,266,543	1,415,732	166.4%
Total	127,661,448	142,069,561	14,408,113	11.3%

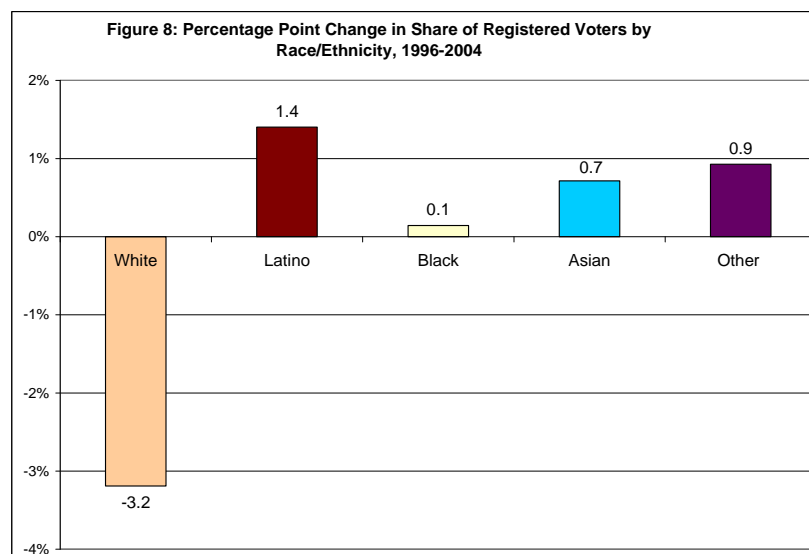


Latinos and Asians combined accounted for 9.0 percent of all registered voters in 2004 (see Figure 7).

- Latinos were 6.6 percent of registered voters.
- Asians were 2.4 percent of registered voters.



Between 1996 and 2004, the Latino share of registered voters increased by 1.4 percentage points and the Asian share by 0.7 percentage points. In contrast, the non-Latino white share declined by 3.2 percentage points (see Figure 8).



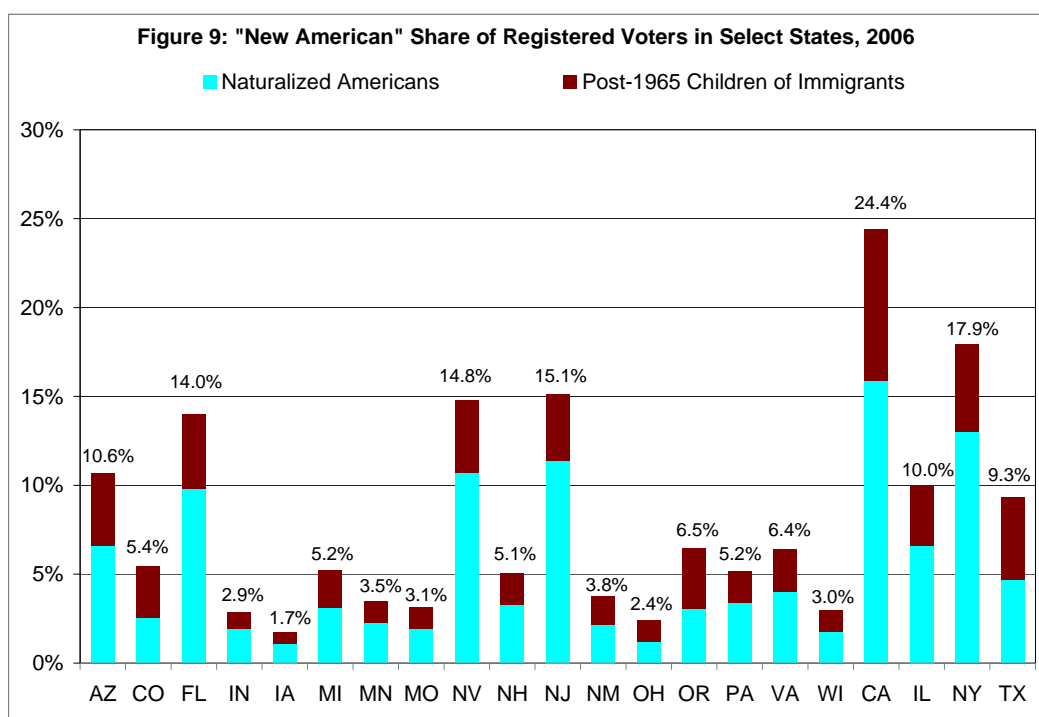
New American, Latino, and Asian voters in battleground states

New Americans, Latinos, and Asians are pivotal voting blocs in some battleground states

The New American share of registered voters is well above the national average in some battleground states

In certain states—including battlegrounds of the 2008 election—the New American share of registered voters is well above the 2006 national average of 8.6 percent. In these states, New Americans exercise critical electoral power as a mainstream voting group and not as marginal players whose votes are crucial only in close elections. In order to get elected in these states, a candidate must obtain significant support from New Americans.

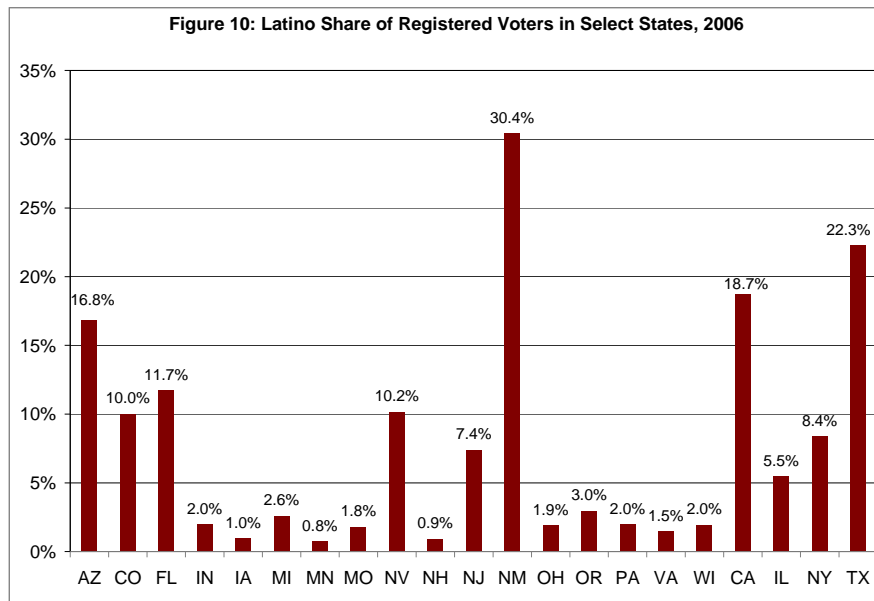
New American voters have the greatest electoral power in California, where they accounted for 24.4 percent of all registered voters in 2006. However, New Americans comprise a significant share of registered voters in other electorally important states as well: Arizona (10.6 percent of registered voters in 2006), Florida (14.0 percent), Illinois (10.0 percent), Nevada (14.8 percent), New Jersey (15.1 percent), New York (17.9 percent), and Texas (9.3 percent) (see Figure 9 and Appendix 1).



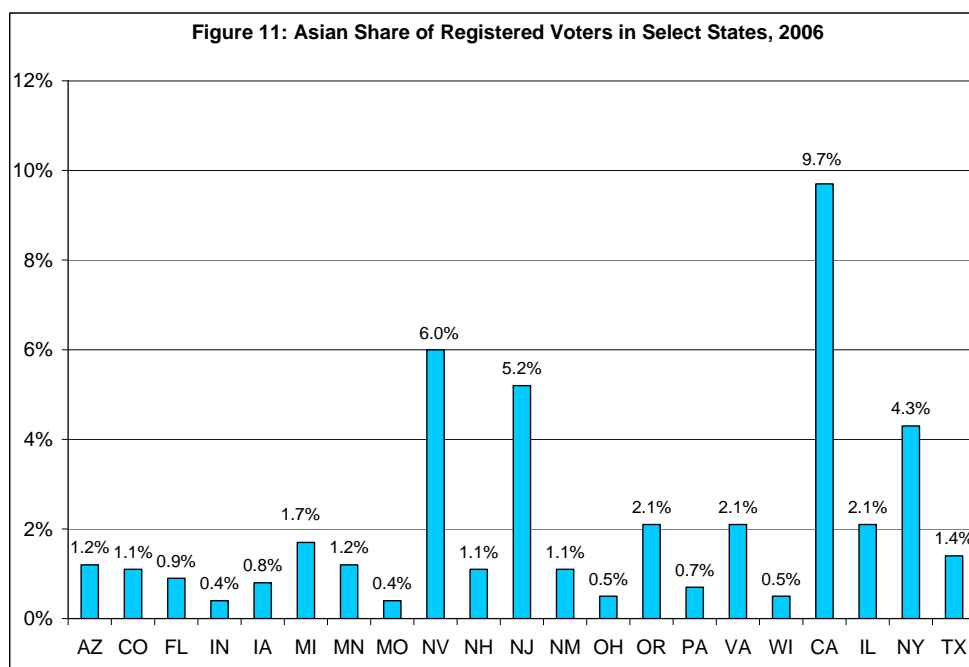
The New American share of registered voters was lower than the national average in other battleground states such as Colorado, Michigan, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Oregon, and Virginia. But, in a close election, New American voters can be pivotal even in these states. This will be discussed in detail later.

The Latino and Asian share of registered voters is well above the national average in some battleground states

States with relatively high shares of New American registered voters often have Latino and Asian shares of registered voters that are significantly above the 2006 national average of 9.3 percent: Florida (12.6 percent of registered voters in 2006), New Jersey (12.6 percent), New York (12.7 percent), Arizona (18.0 percent), Nevada (16.2 percent), and California (28.4 percent) (see Figure 10, Figure 11, and Appendix 2).



However, there are other states where, despite a comparatively low New American share of registered voters, the Latino and Asian share is relatively high: Colorado (11.1 percent of registered voters in 2006), New Mexico (31.5 percent), and Texas (23.7 percent) (see Figure 10, Figure 11, and Appendix 2).

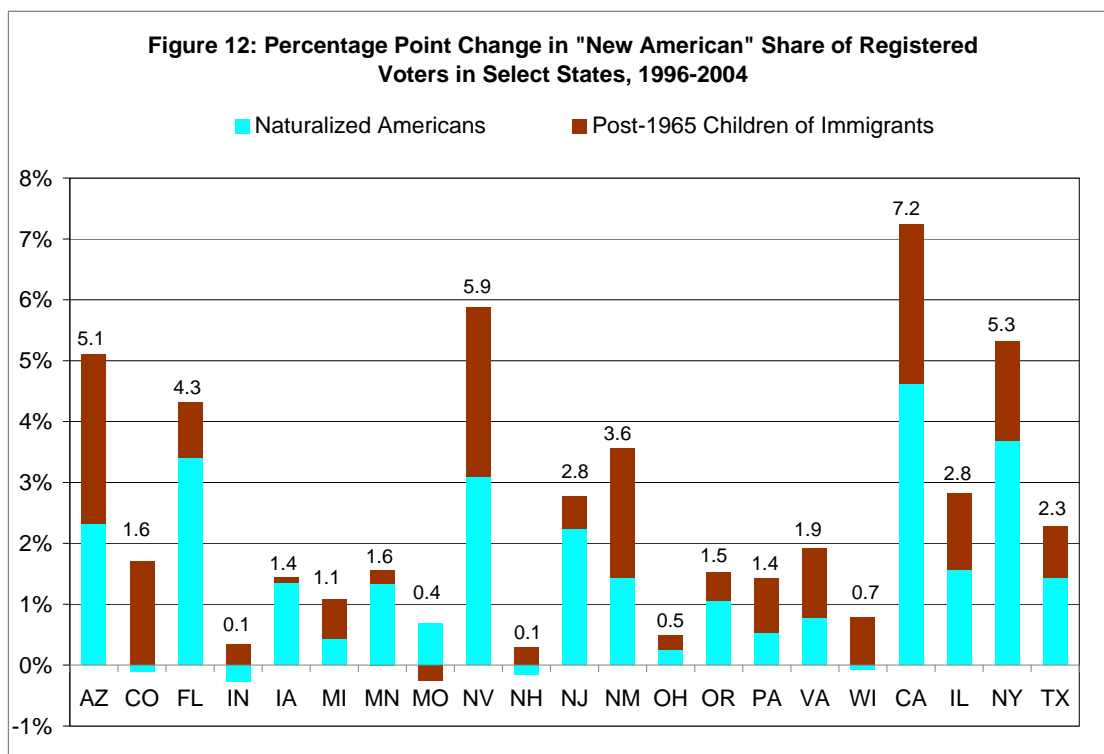


The Latino and Asian share of registered voters is lower than the national average in other battleground states such as Michigan, Pennsylvania, Oregon, and Virginia. But their numbers are sufficient to swing a close election in these states. This will be discussed in detail later.

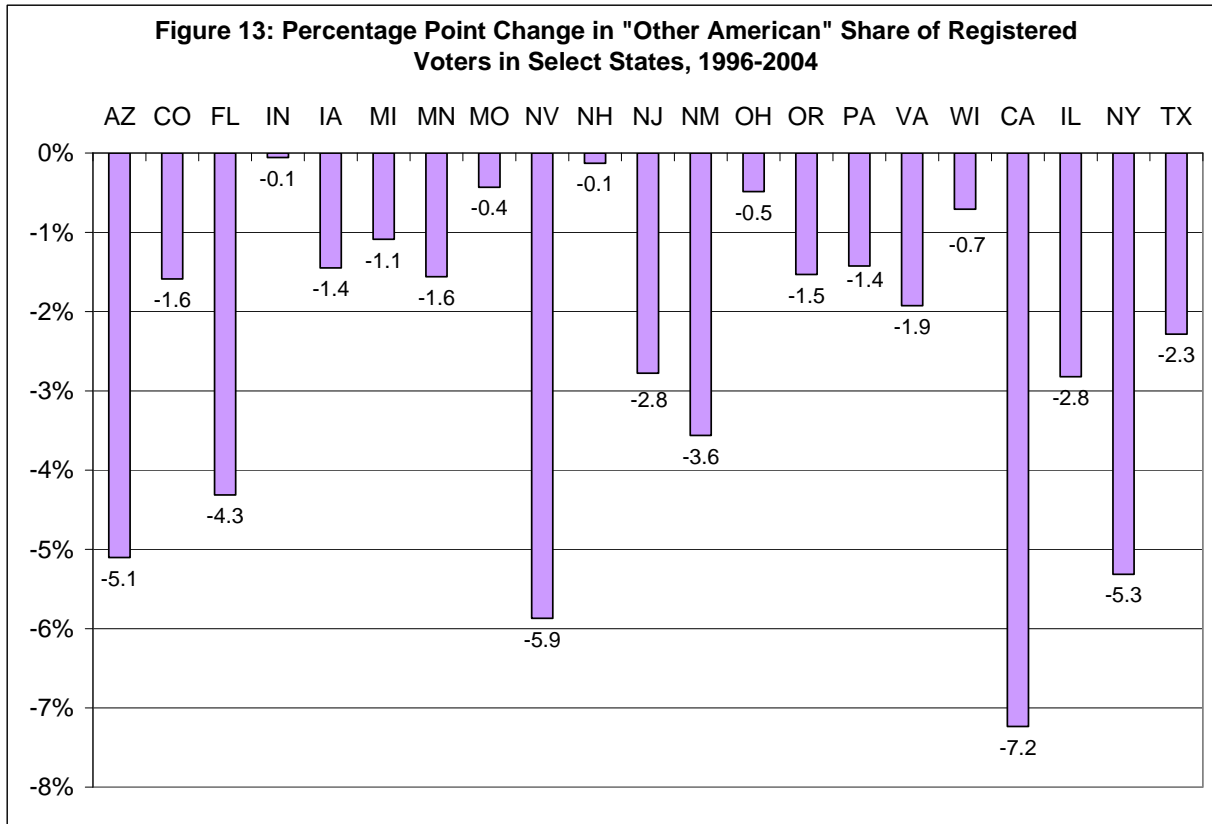
The electoral power of New Americans, Latinos, and Asians is growing fast in battleground states

The share of New American registered voters is increasing in every battleground state

The New American share of registered voters increased in every battleground and other key state during the eight years between the Presidential elections of 1996 and 2004 (see Figure 12 and Figure 13).



- In some states, the New American share of registered voters grew at rates well above the national average of 2.6 percentage points: Arizona (5.1 percentage points), Nevada (5.9 percentage points), California (7.2 percentage points), and New York (5.3 percentage points).
- In other states, the increase was not as great, but was still above the national average: Florida (4.3 percentage points), New Jersey (2.8 percentage points), New Mexico (3.6 percentage points), and Illinois (2.8 percentage points).



The share of Latino and Asian registered voters is increasing in almost every battleground state

The Latino and Asian share of registered voters also increased in nearly every battleground state between 1996 and 2004 (see Figure 14 and Figure 15):

- Some states experienced increases in the Latino and Asian share of registered voters well above the national average of 2.1 percentage points: California (7.7 percentage points) and Nevada (5.5 percentage points).
- In other states, the increase was not as great, but was still above the national average: Florida (2.6 percentage points), Minnesota (2.7 percentage points), Illinois (3.3 percentage points), and Texas (3.4 percentage points).

Figure 14: Percentage Point Change in Latino Share of Registered Voters in Select States, 1996-2004

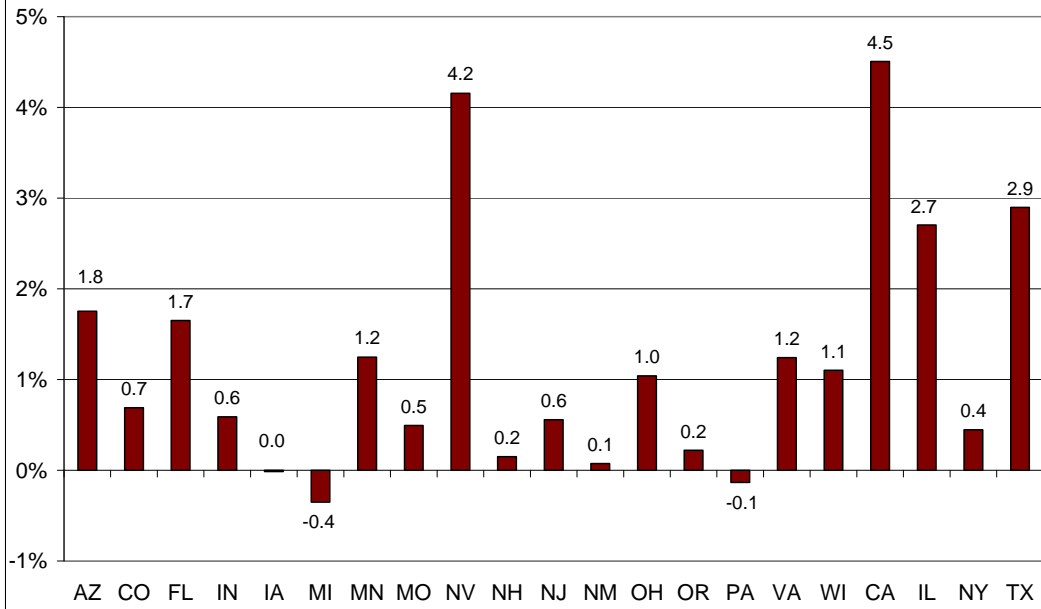
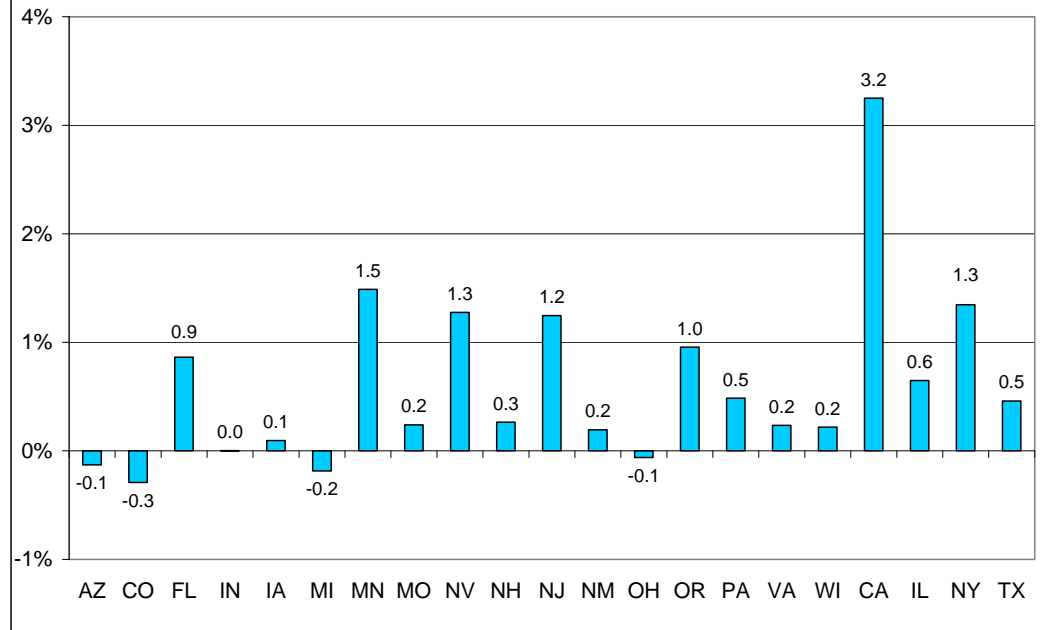


Figure 15: Percentage Point Change in Asian Share of Registered Voters in Select States, 1996-2004



New Americans, Latinos, and Asians are pivotal voting blocs in battleground states even where their numbers are small

The electoral power of New Americans is greater than their numbers suggest

The electoral power of New Americans is not limited to those states where they are the most numerous. In an era when Presidential, Congressional, and state elections are often decided by thin voting margins, even a relatively small number of New Americans can have enormous electoral influence.

In Wisconsin, for example, the New American share of registered voters was 2.9 percent in 2004, while the margin of victory in the 2004 Presidential race was only 0.4 percent. In Wisconsin and other states where the New American share of registered voters was close to or greater than the margin of victory in 2004, the votes of New Americans could conceivably be decisive in similarly close elections today (*see Table 5*).

Table 5: Electoral Strength of “New Americans” in Battleground/Key States, 2004					
State		Total “New Americans”	“New Americans” as % of Registered Voters	Bush/Kerry Differential	Bush/Kerry Differential as % of Registered Voters
Battleground States	Low “New American” Share of Registered Voters With Potentially Critical Electoral Strength				
	CO	127,249	5.5%	99,523 (B)	4.3%
	IN	74,075	2.4%	510,427 (B)	16.8%
	IA	47,424	2.8%	10,059 (B)	0.6%
	MI	250,731	4.7%	165,437 (K)	3.1%
	MN	138,267	4.5%	98,319 (K)	3.2%
	MO	70,677	2.1%	196,542 (B)	5.9%
	NH	36,606	5.1%	9,274 (K)	1.3%
	NM	65,189	7.0%	5,988 (B)	0.6%
	OH	176,902	2.9%	118,601 (B)	2.0%
	OR	96,221	4.7%	76,332 (K)	3.7%
	PA	274,856	4.2%	144,248 (K)	2.2%
	VA	214,298	6.2%	262,217 (B)	7.6%
	WI	93,560	2.9%	11,384 (K)	0.4%
	High “New American” Share of Registered Voters With Potentially Critical Electoral Strength				
	AZ	233,217	9.4%	210,770 (B)	8.5%
	FL	1,189,527	14.5%	380,978 (B)	4.6%
	NV	106,047	11.0%	21,500 (B)	2.2%
	NJ	593,295	14.5%	241,427 (K)	5.9%
Key States	High “New American” Share of Registered Voters				
	CA	3,202,810	22.6%	1,235,659 (K)	8.7%
	IL	508,037	7.9%	545,604 (K)	8.5%
	NY	1,564,535	18.1%	1,351,713 (K)	15.7%
	TX	894,436	9.2%	1,694,213 (B)	17.5%

In assessing the potential impact of New American votes, the margins of victory in the 2004 Bush-Kerry Presidential race might not seem applicable in 2008. Judging from the 2004 margins, for instance, it seems that New Americans in Indiana have little potential impact given that President Bush carried that state by a wide margin. However, current polls indicate that the 2008 contest in Indiana is quite close. Rasmussen™ polling reported a difference in support for McCain vs. Obama of only 2 percent in late September 2008. Relatively small numbers of New Americans may constitute a critical electoral group even in states that were not in play in 2004.

The electoral power of Latinos and Asians is greater than their numbers suggest

As with New Americans, the electoral power of Latino and Asian voters is not limited to those states where they exercise critical electoral strength by sheer force of numbers. In battleground states in particular, the votes of Latinos and Asians can be pivotal in close elections.

Although Latino and Asian electoral power is usually greatest in states where New Americans are also a prominent voting bloc, this is not always the case. In New Mexico, for example, the New American share of registered voters was 7.0 percent in 2004, but the combined Latino and Asian share was 34.0 percent (*see Table 6*). This means that Latinos and Asians can play a major electoral role in states where New Americans cannot.

Table 6: Electoral Strength of Latinos & Asians in Battleground/Key States, 2004					
	State	Total Latinos & Asians	Latino and Asian % of Registered Voters	Bush/Kerry Differential	Bush/Kerry Differential as % of Registered Voters
Battleground States	Low Latino/Asian Share of Registered Voters With Potentially Critical Electoral Strength				
	IN	65,484	2.2%	510,427 (B)	16.8%
	IA	24,658	1.5%	10,059 (B)	0.6%
	MI	116,442	2.2%	165,437 (K)	3.1%
	MN	123,260	4.0%	98,319 (K)	3.2%
	MO	63,107	1.9%	196,542 (B)	5.9%
	NH	10,228	1.4%	9,274 (K)	1.3%
	OH	124,803	2.1%	118,601 (B)	2.0%
	OR	85,224	4.2%	76,332 (K)	3.7%
	PA	155,608	2.4%	144,248 (K)	2.2%
	VA	136,115	4.0%	262,217 (B)	7.6%
	WI	98,244	3.0%	11,384 (K)	0.4%
	High Latino/Asian Share of Registered Voters With Potentially Critical Electoral Strength				
	AZ	373,828	15.0%	210,770 (B)	8.5%
	CO	225,321	9.8%	99,523 (B)	4.3%
	FL	1,014,916	12.3%	380,978 (B)	4.6%
	NV	118,459	12.3%	21,500 (B)	2.2%
	NJ	446,251	10.9%	241,427 (K)	5.9%
	NM	318,716	34.0%	5,988 (B)	0.6%
Key States	High Latino/Asian Share of Registered Voters				
	CA	3,854,011	27.2%	1,235,659 (K)	8.7%
	IL	441,317	6.9%	545,604 (K)	8.5%
	NY	1,045,238	12.1%	1,351,713 (K)	15.7%
	TX	2,358,822	24.4%	1,694,213 (B)	17.5%

The importance of immigration as an election issue

Immigration appears to be a key issue driving the rise in naturalization rates and voter registration among New Americans, Latinos, and Asians. Following the passage of a harsh immigration-enforcement bill by the House of Representatives in 2006, millions of immigrants and their supporters engaged in unprecedented mobilizations around the country. Many demonstrators held signs reading “Today We March, Tomorrow We Vote.” Since then, the government has stepped up its immigration-enforcement activities. This has been met by an upsurge in civic-participation activity, including large increases in naturalization and voter mobilization.

New Americans, Latinos, and Asians, regardless of their immigration status, all feel the impact of the current environment—some because they or close family members are immigrants, others because they may “look like” immigrants in the eyes of government authorities and the broader public. Anti-immigrant policies affect not just immigrants, but the Latino and Asian communities in general.

All evidence points to the fact that New Americans, Latinos, and Asians have taken the “Tomorrow We Vote” mandate seriously. The 2008 elections are likely to be marked by a significant increase in new voter registrations and high levels of voter turnout by these voting blocs, driven in part by the stances that candidates take on immigration.

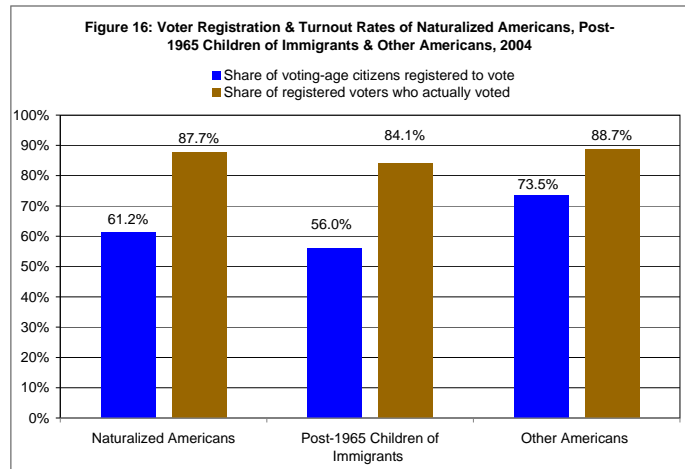
The 2006 immigrant mobilizations spurred this year’s ambitious voter-registration and get-out-the-vote campaigns, including the [We Are America Alliance](#) and [“Ya es Hora, Ve y Vota”](#) (“It’s time, go vote”), and many more have made it a goal to register millions of New American voters before the 2008 elections and encourage all registered voters to vote on Election Day.

Latino turnout may hit record highs in 2008, surmounting the 7.6 million Latino voters who turned out in 2004. A recent [NALEO Educational Fund](#) poll of registered Latino voters in key battleground states—Colorado, Florida, New Mexico, and Nevada—found that nearly 90 percent of Latino registered voters in those states are almost certain they will vote in November. This year, immigration is still on the minds of Latinos. According to a poll conducted in June and July 2008 by the [Pew Hispanic Center](#), 75 percent of Latino registered voters view the immigration issue as “extremely important” or “very important.”

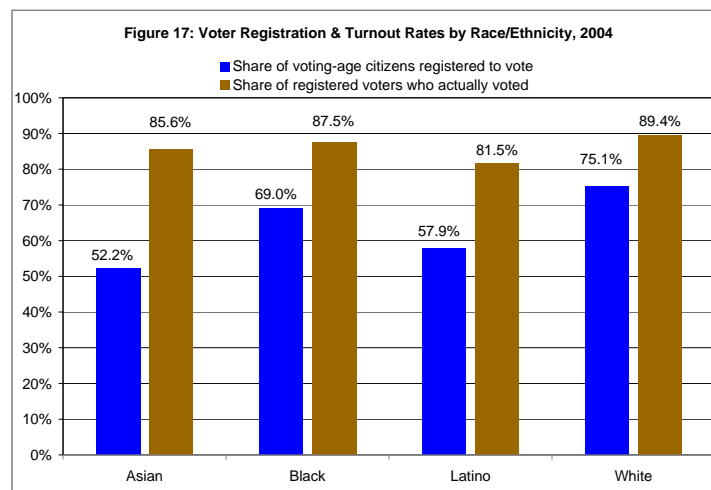
The political power of New Americans, Latinos, and Asians will continue to grow

The political power of New American voters will continue to increase in coming years as more and more children of immigrants come of voting age, more long-term legal immigrants become naturalized citizens, and increasing numbers of New Americans register to vote.

The key to the electoral power of New Americans is voter registration. In past elections, New Americans have had slightly lower registration rates than the rest of the U.S. population. However, once New Americans register to vote, they turn out to cast ballots at approximately the same rate as everyone else (*see Figure 16*). If more New Americans register to vote, it is likely that they will turn out in high numbers, thereby increasing their share of the electorate.



The same is true for Latino and Asian voters, whose registration numbers were significantly lower than white and black voters in 2004. However, registered Asians and Latinos did turn out to vote at the same rate as other groups (see Figure 17). Turnout by Latino voters jumped from 5.9 million in 2000 to a record-breaking 7.6 million in 2004, while turnout by Asian voters increased from 2.0 million to 2.8 million. This trend is expected to continue into the 2008 elections.



We know that the number of New Americans eligible to vote has grown significantly since the 2004 Presidential election as record numbers of legal immigrants have applied for naturalization. According to data from the [Office of Immigration Statistics](#) and [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services](#), there are roughly 3 million more naturalized citizens eligible to vote now than there were during the last Presidential election in 2004. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 alone, 1.4 million long-term immigrants applied for U.S. citizenship.

There is evidence that voter-registration numbers will hit record high levels by the time of the 2008 election, and many voter-registration efforts have focused on New Americans, Latinos, and Asians. For example, in July 2008, nine national Latino organizations launched a [voter-registration drive](#) with the goal of registering two million new voters in time for the November 2008 elections.

There are other indications that the potential electoral power of New Americans, Latinos, and Asians will continue to grow. The [U.S. Census Bureau](#) has predicted that the Latino share of the U.S. population will double from 15 percent to 30 percent by 2050. The Asian share of the population is expected to rise from 5.1 percent to 9.2 percent during this time.

Conclusion

It is widely recognized that the United States is diversifying as immigrant, Latino, and Asian communities grow in size and move to new parts of the country. What has garnered less public attention is the political participation of these groups, especially their impact on elections. Registered voters who are New Americans (Naturalized Americans and the Post-1965 Children of Immigrants), or who belong to the Latino or Asian communities, are a significant portion of the American electorate. These groups are growing rapidly not only in states that have traditionally received immigrants, but also in states that have only recently begun to have more diverse populations. As a result, registered voters who are immigrants themselves or otherwise connected personally to the immigrant experience have significant electoral power at federal, state, and local levels.

Despite these trends, this year's Presidential and Congressional candidates have been largely silent about immigration in their campaigns. Both of the major candidates for President, for instance, have supported comprehensive immigration reform during their careers, but have chosen to leave the topic out of their daily messaging. However, immigration can't be ignored forever. New Americans, Latinos, and Asians are casting ballots in record numbers. These voters will remember what candidates have said—or not said—about the value of immigrants and immigration.

Appendix 1: Registered Voters by Nativity, 2006

State	Total	New Americans	Other Americans
Alabama	2,480,437	1.6%	98.4%
Alaska	332,635	5.4%	94.6%
Arizona	2,378,380	10.6%	89.4%
Arkansas	1,316,096	1.4%	98.6%
California	13,239,286	24.4%	75.6%
Colorado	2,275,308	5.4%	94.6%
Connecticut	1,649,588	10.6%	89.4%
Delaware	407,994	7.4%	92.6%
District of Columbia	275,308	9.7%	90.3%
Florida	7,855,255	14.0%	86.0%
Georgia	3,949,692	3.7%	96.3%
Hawaii	492,349	15.3%	84.7%
Idaho	660,013	4.7%	95.3%
Illinois	5,778,509	10.0%	90.0%
Indiana	2,945,685	2.9%	97.1%
Iowa	1,663,192	1.7%	98.3%
Kansas	1,274,245	1.8%	98.2%
Kentucky	2,239,864	1.0%	99.0%
Louisiana	2,179,275	1.7%	98.3%
Maine	810,889	1.8%	98.2%
Maryland	2,720,082	6.5%	93.5%
Massachusetts	3,180,437	12.7%	87.3%
Michigan	5,256,215	5.2%	94.8%
Minnesota	2,862,032	3.5%	96.5%
Mississippi	1,436,811	0.3%	99.7%
Missouri	3,170,026	3.1%	96.9%
Montana	512,109	2.3%	97.7%
Nebraska	852,075	2.7%	97.3%
Nevada	904,665	14.8%	85.2%
New Hampshire	686,869	5.1%	94.9%
New Jersey	3,487,188	15.1%	84.9%
New Mexico	950,567	3.8%	96.2%
New York	8,142,871	17.9%	82.1%
North Carolina	4,159,625	1.9%	98.1%
North Dakota	396,868	1.9%	98.1%
Ohio	5,919,213	2.4%	97.6%
Oklahoma	1,775,954	2.6%	97.4%
Oregon	1,924,338	6.5%	93.5%
Pennsylvania	5,990,863	5.2%	94.8%

State	Total	New Americans	Other Americans
Rhode Island	536,482	11.6%	88.4%
South Carolina	1,985,533	1.3%	98.7%
South Dakota	445,308	1.3%	98.7%
Tennessee	2,827,969	1.3%	98.7%
Texas	9,675,712	9.3%	90.7%
Utah	931,583	4.1%	95.9%
Vermont	344,603	4.3%	95.7%
Virginia	3,402,200	6.4%	93.6%
Washington	3,090,071	7.5%	92.5%
West Virginia	873,259	0.5%	99.5%
Wisconsin	2,947,938	3.0%	97.0%
Wyoming	253,225	1.5%	98.5%

Appendix 2: Registered Voters by Race/Ethnicity, 2006

State	Total	(Non-Latino) White	Latino	(Non-Latino) Asian	(Non-Latino) Black	Other
Alabama	2,480,436	73.0%	0.5%	0.1%	24.3%	2.1%
Alaska	332,635	78.0%	2.0%	2.9%	2.2%	15.0%
Arizona	2,378,380	75.2%	16.8%	1.2%	3.2%	3.6%
Arkansas	1,316,096	83.6%	1.1%	0.2%	13.0%	2.1%
California	13,239,287	63.9%	18.7%	9.7%	6.1%	1.6%
Colorado	2,275,308	86.0%	10.0%	1.1%	2.1%	0.8%
Connecticut	1,649,588	85.4%	5.4%	1.6%	7.0%	0.6%
Delaware	407,993	77.5%	1.8%	2.1%	17.8%	0.7%
District of Columbia	275,307	40.0%	2.4%	2.6%	53.6%	1.4%
Florida	7,855,255	74.1%	11.7%	0.9%	12.1%	1.1%
Georgia	3,949,691	69.5%	1.5%	0.8%	27.3%	0.9%
Hawaii	492,349	24.7%	5.1%	52.8%	1.3%	16.1%
Idaho	660,012	95.4%	2.4%	1.1%	0.0%	1.2%
Illinois	5,778,509	78.0%	5.5%	2.1%	13.9%	0.4%
Indiana	2,945,685	90.2%	2.0%	0.4%	7.1%	0.3%
Iowa	1,663,192	96.5%	1.0%	0.8%	1.2%	0.5%
Kansas	1,274,246	91.4%	2.5%	0.1%	4.3%	1.7%
Kentucky	2,239,864	92.6%	0.6%	0.2%	5.6%	0.9%
Louisiana	2,179,273	70.3%	1.5%	0.5%	27.2%	0.6%
Maine	810,888	97.9%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	1.7%
Maryland	2,720,080	67.5%	3.1%	1.4%	27.2%	0.8%
Massachusetts	3,180,437	90.5%	2.7%	2.6%	3.3%	0.9%
Michigan	5,256,215	81.4%	2.6%	1.7%	12.7%	1.6%
Minnesota	2,862,032	94.7%	0.8%	1.2%	2.5%	0.9%
Mississippi	1,436,812	63.2%	0.0%	0.0%	36.1%	0.7%
Missouri	3,170,025	85.8%	1.8%	0.4%	9.9%	2.1%
Montana	512,109	93.6%	0.6%	0.4%	0.1%	5.4%
Nebraska	852,074	93.7%	2.3%	0.3%	2.5%	1.3%
Nevada	904,664	75.3%	10.2%	6.0%	6.8%	1.7%
New Hampshire	686,869	96.3%	0.9%	1.1%	0.4%	1.2%
New Jersey	3,487,189	76.7%	7.4%	5.2%	10.1%	0.6%
New Mexico	950,567	57.8%	30.4%	1.1%	1.8%	8.9%
New York	8,142,872	74.1%	8.4%	4.3%	12.4%	0.8%
North Carolina	4,159,625	78.3%	0.8%	0.5%	18.9%	1.6%
North Dakota	396,868	90.6%	0.8%	0.4%	0.2%	8.0%
Ohio	5,919,213	86.5%	1.9%	0.5%	9.8%	1.3%
Oklahoma	1,775,954	82.2%	2.1%	0.1%	5.7%	9.9%
Oregon	1,924,337	91.4%	3.0%	2.1%	0.8%	2.7%
Pennsylvania	5,990,863	90.1%	2.0%	0.7%	6.8%	0.5%

State	Total	(Non-Latino) White	Latino	(Non-Latino) Asian	(Non-Latino) Black	Other
Rhode Island	536,482	89.4%	4.6%	1.3%	3.2%	1.6%
South Carolina	1,985,533	68.6%	0.5%	0.1%	29.1%	1.7%
South Dakota	445,309	94.3%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	4.5%
Tennessee	2,827,970	84.9%	0.4%	0.3%	13.2%	1.2%
Texas	9,675,713	63.6%	22.3%	1.4%	11.7%	0.9%
Utah	931,584	94.0%	3.8%	0.8%	0.2%	1.2%
Vermont	344,603	96.3%	0.6%	0.4%	0.7%	2.1%
Virginia	3,402,201	80.0%	1.5%	2.1%	15.6%	0.8%
Washington	3,090,070	86.2%	3.1%	4.9%	1.3%	4.4%
West Virginia	873,259	96.4%	0.2%	0.2%	2.1%	1.1%
Wisconsin	2,947,938	91.8%	2.0%	0.5%	4.1%	1.6%
Wyoming	253,225	92.5%	5.1%	0.3%	0.7%	1.4%