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Inside the 2012 Latino Electorate

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About this Report

This report summarizes the participation of Latino voters in the 2012 presidential election. Its appendix contains tables and figures about the electorate in 2012, with a focus on Latinos. The data for this report are derived from the November Voting and Registration Supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS is a monthly survey of about 55,000 households conducted by the Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. It is representative of the non-institutionalized population of the U.S. It does not include data on the voting behavior of enlisted military personnel and those who are institutionalized. The November Voting and Registration Supplement is one of the richest sources of information available about the characteristics of voters. It is conducted after Election Day and relies on survey respondent self-reports of voting and voter registration.

Acknowledgements

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A Note on Terminology

The terms “Latino” and “Hispanic” are used interchangeably in this report.

The terms “whites” and “blacks” are used to refer to the non-Hispanic components of their populations.

“Native born” or “U.S. born” refers to persons born in the United States and those born in other countries to parents at least one of whom was a U.S. citizen.

“Foreign born” refers to persons born outside of the United States to parents neither of whom was a U.S. citizen. Foreign born also refers to those born in Puerto Rico. Although individuals born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens by birth, they are included among the foreign born because they are born into a Spanish-dominant culture and because on many points their attitudes, views and beliefs are much closer to Hispanics born abroad than to Hispanics born in the 50 states or the District of Columbia.

Inside the 2012 Latino Electorate

A record 11.2 million Latinos voted in the 2012 presidential election, but Latinos' voter turnout rate continues to lag other groups significantly, according to an analysis of new Census Bureau data by the Pew Research Center.

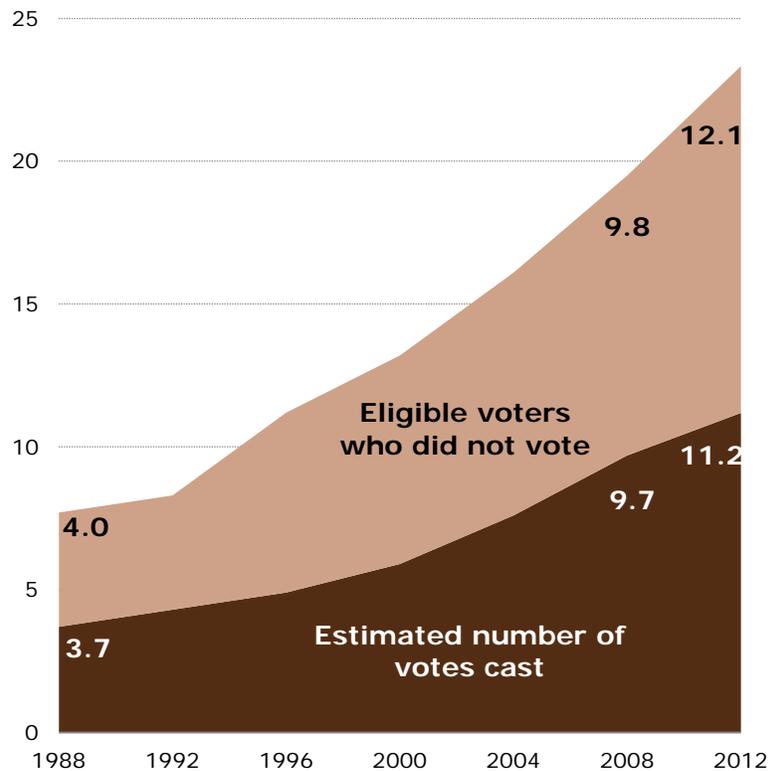
Overall, 48% of Hispanic eligible voters turned out to vote in 2012, down from 49.9% in 2008. By comparison, the 2012 voter turnout rate among blacks was 66.6% and among whites was 64.1%, both significantly higher than the turnout rate among Hispanics.

Rapid growth of the nation's Latino

population has fueled quick growth in the number of Latinos eligible to vote (U.S. citizen adults). Between 2008 and 2012, the number of Latino eligible voters grew from 19.5 million to 23.3 million—an increase of 19%. By contrast, the number of Latino voters increased by 15% over 2008. With the number of Latino voters growing more slowly than the number of Latino eligible voters, the Latino voter turnout rate declined between 2008 and 2012—despite a record turnout.

The Pew Research analysis also finds that the Hispanic voter turnout rate declined for nearly all major Hispanic demographic subgroups with the exception of three. The voter turnout rate

Figure 1
Latino Participation in Presidential Elections, 1988-2012
(in millions)



Note: The estimated number of votes cast is based on individual voting self-reports.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations from the Current Population Survey, November Supplements.

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of naturalized Hispanic immigrants who arrived in the 1990s increased from 41.2% in 2008 to 47.2% in 2012. Among Hispanics ages 65 and older, the voter turnout rate increased from 56% in 2008 to 59.9% in 2012, mirroring a similar increase among all eligible voters ages 65 and older. And among Hispanic origin groups, the voter turnout rate of Puerto Ricans increased from 49.7% in 2008 to 52.8% in 2012.

The analysis also finds that voter turnout rates differed widely among Latino demographic subgroups. In 2012, the highest voter turnout rates were among those with a college degree (70.8%) and among Cuban-origin Latinos (67.2%). Meanwhile, the lowest were among those ages 18 to 29 (36.9%) and those with less than a high school diploma (35.5%).

Latinos were also a larger share of the nation's electorate in 2012, making up a record 8.4% of all voters, up from 7.4% in 2008. However, while 11.2 million Latinos voted in 2012, an even greater number—12.1 million—chose not to vote even though they were eligible to do so. Overall, among the nation's 82.1 million nonvoters in 2012, 15% were Latinos.

Much of the growth in the number of Latino eligible voters was driven by Latino youth. Among the 3.8 million Latinos who became eligible to vote between 2008 and 2012, 3.7 million were U.S.-born young Hispanics who entered adulthood.

Annually, about 800,000 U.S.-born young Hispanics come of age, making them newly eligible to vote ([Taylor, Gonzalez-Barrera, Passel and Lopez, 2012](#)).

The number of Hispanics who say they were registered to vote in 2012 reached 13.7 million, up 18% over 2008. That was also a record. However, the voter turnout rate among Hispanic registered voters was lower in 2012 than in 2008—81.7% versus 84%.

Terminology

Voting Age Population: Persons ages 18 and older.

Voting Eligible Population: Persons ages 18 and older who are U.S. citizens.

Registered Voter Population: Persons who say they were registered to vote in the 2012 election.

Voter Population or Voter

Turnout: Persons who say they voted in the November 2012 election.

Voter Turnout Rate: Share of the voting eligible population who say they voted.

Table 1

Changes in the Composition of Latino Eligible Voters, 2012 and 2008

(in thousands)

	2012	2008	Change	Change (%)
Voting Eligible				
All	23,329	19,537	3,792	19.4
Naturalized citizen	5,706	5,077	629	12.4
U.S. born	17,623	14,461	3,163	21.9
Ages 18 to 22	3,676	2,565	1,111	43.3

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations from the Current Population Survey, November Supplements data.

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Overall, Hispanics made up 17.2% of the nation's population in 2012, 10.8% of eligible voters, but just 8.4% of all voters. Much of this difference is driven by the relative youth of the nation's Hispanic population and the high number of non-citizen adults among its population ([Taylor, Gonzalez-Barrera, Passel and Lopez, 2012](#)). Just 43.9% of Hispanics are eligible to vote while more than half (51.7%) of Asians, 69.1% of blacks and 78.6% of whites are eligible to vote.

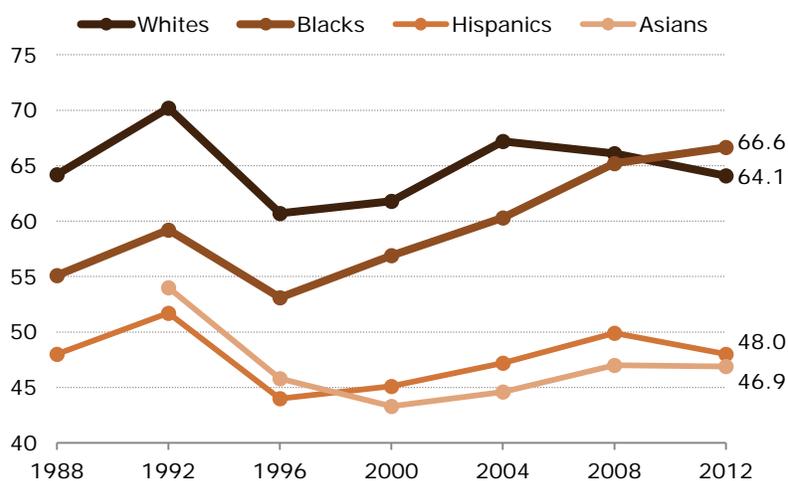
In 2012, Latinos supported Barack Obama over Mitt Romney by a margin of 71% to 27% ([Lopez and Taylor, 2012](#)) and were an important part of the coalition that re-elected the president. As the electorate diversifies—with Latinos accounting for much of that change—the importance of the Latino vote will likely grow ([Taylor, 2013](#)).

The U.S. electorate reached several milestones last year. According to the Census Bureau, 2012 was the first time that the black voter turnout rate¹ exceeded that of whites ([File, 2013](#)), though there is some skepticism about when or if the black voter turnout rate surpassed the white voter turnout rate ([Taylor and Lopez, 2013](#)). In addition, the number of white voters declined for the second presidential election in a row, leading to a decline in the white voter turnout rate. One other finding from 2012 is the decline in the youth voter turnout rate.

According to an analysis by the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement, the voter turnout rate among those ages 18 to 29 declined from 51% in 2008 to 45% in 2012 ([CIRCLE, 2013](#)).

Figure 2
Voter Turnout Rates in Presidential Elections, 1988-2012

(% of eligible voters)



Note: White, black and Asian populations include only non-Hispanics who reported a single race. Native Americans and mixed-race groups not shown. The estimated number of votes cast is based on individual voting self-reports.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations from the Current Population Survey, November Supplements

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¹ In the Census Bureau report ([File, 2013](#)), voter turnout rates for blacks and Asians are based on eligible voter populations that include Hispanics. Hispanics can be of any race.

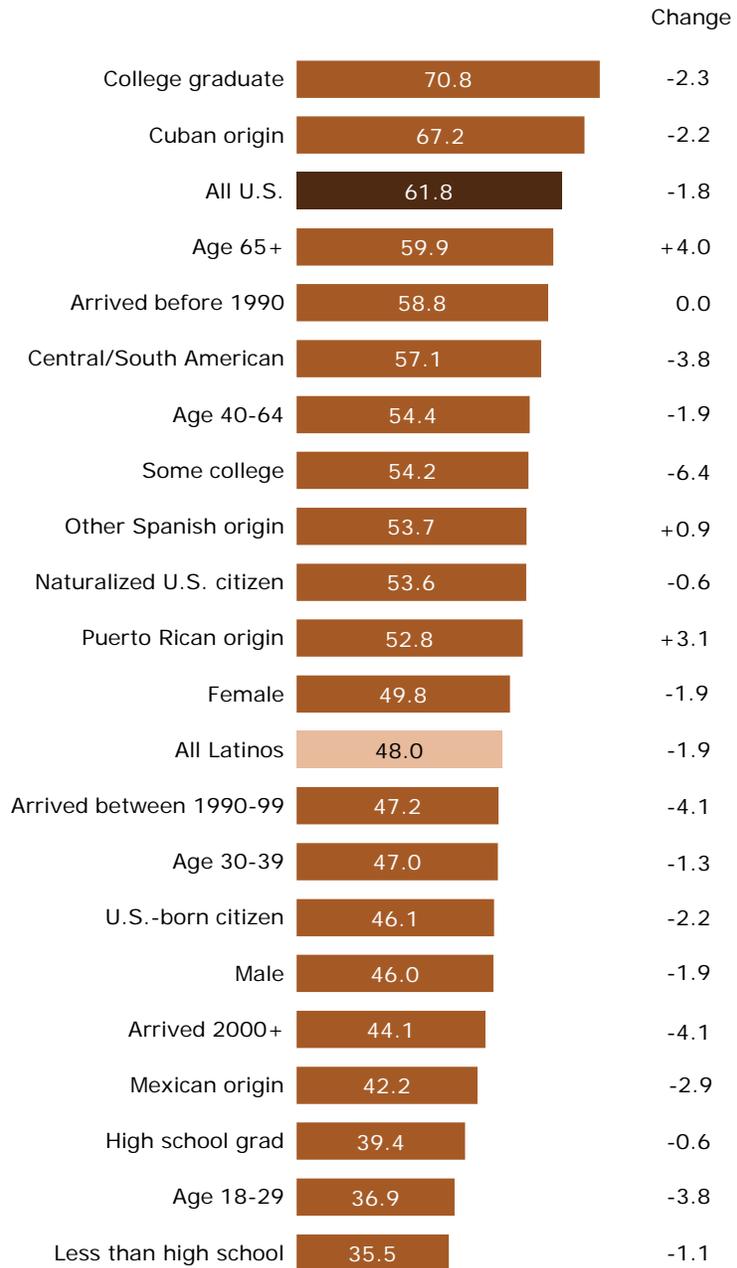
Dissecting the Latino Electorate

The Latino community is diverse and that diversity is reflected in different levels of electoral participation. While voter participation for Latinos overall declined between 2008 and 2012, that wasn't true for all sub-groups of Latinos.

Voter Turnout Rates among Latino Eligible Voters

Latinos who have a college degree and those who trace their family origins to Cuba had the highest voter turnout rates among Latino demographic sub-groups in 2012. Seven-in-ten (70.8%) Latinos with a college degree and 67.2% of Latinos of Cuban origin turned out to vote last year—both substantially higher than the 48% turnout rate among all Latinos. By contrast, some of the lowest voter turnout rates among Latino demographic subgroups were among those with less than a high school diploma (35.5%), young Latinos ages

Figure 3
Turnout Rates Among Latino Eligible Voters, 2012 (%)



Source: Pew Research Center tabulations from the Current Population Survey, 2012 November Supplement data.

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18 to 29 (36.9%) and those who graduated from high school (39.4%).

Voter turnout rates for just about all major sub-groups of Latinos were lower in 2012 than in 2008 with a few notable exceptions. For naturalized Latinos who arrived to the U.S. between 1990 and 1999, their voter turnout rate in 2012 increased 6 percentage points over 2008. For Latinos ages 65 and older, their voter turnout rate in 2012 was up 4 percentage points over 2008. For Latinos of Puerto Rican origin, their voter turnout rate in 2012 was up 3.1 percentage points over 2008.

Among Latinos by country of origin group, Cubans were followed by Hispanics of Central or South American origin (57.1%), other Spanish origin (53.7%) and Puerto Rican origin (52.8%). Hispanics of Mexican origin had the lowest turnout rate—42.2%.

Hispanic females voted at a higher rate than Hispanic males—49.8% versus 46.0%. And Hispanics who are naturalized citizens voted at a higher rate than Hispanics who are U.S.-born citizens—53.6% versus 46.1%. Finally among Hispanic immigrants, 58.8% of those who arrived before 1990 voted, while voter turnout rates were lower among those who arrived between 1990 and 1999 and those who arrived after 2000—47.2% and 44.1% respectively.

Demographic Profile of Latino Voters and Latino Nonvoters

Hispanic non-voters in 2012 differed in many ways compared with Hispanics who voted.

Overall, Hispanic nonvoters were more likely to be male, young (ages 18 to 29), never married, have a high school education or less, to be of Mexican origin, have annual family incomes of less than \$50,000 a year and not be in the labor force compared with Hispanic voters. However, two large differences are evident between Latino nonvoters and Latino voters.

The first is the relative youth of Latino nonvoters. Among them, 40% were under the age of 30. By contrast, among all Latino voters, only 25% were ages 18 to 29.

The second is the Hispanic origin of nonvoters. Among Hispanic nonvoters, two-thirds (66%) were of Mexican origin in 2012. Among Hispanic voters, half (52%) were of Mexican origin. Hispanic nonvoters were also less likely than

Table 2
Demographic Composition of Latino Voters and Nonvoters, 2012

(%)

	Hispanic Voters	Hispanic Nonvoters	All Nonvoters
Total			
<i>(in thousands)</i>	11,188	12,141	82,133
Gender			
Male	47	51	50
Female	53	49	50
Age			
18-29	25	40	31
30-39	19	20	17
40-64	42	32	38
65+	14	9	14
Marital Status			
Married	51	41	43
Widowed/Divorced/ Separated	18	18	21
Never Married	31	42	36
Citizenship Status			
U.S.-born citizen	73	78	90
Naturalized U.S. citizen	27	22	10
Educational Attainment			
Less than high school	16	27	16
High school grad	27	38	38
Some college	35	27	28
College or more	23	9	18
Hispanic Origin			
Mexican	52	66	10
Puerto Rican	14	12	2
Cuban	7	3	0
Central/South American	19	13	2
Other Spanish	7	6	1
Annual Family Income			
Less than 20k	19	26	23
20k to 49k	34	40	35
50k to 99k	32	24	28
100k or more	15	10	15
Employment Status			
In Labor Force	71	65	62
Employed	64	58	57
Unemployed	6	7	6
Not in labor force	29	35	38

Note: Family income not adjusted for inflation.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations from the Current Population Survey, November Supplements

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Hispanic voters to be Cuban (3% versus 7%), Central or South American (13% versus 19%) or Puerto Rican (12% versus 14%).

In 2012, Hispanic nonvoters also differed from other nonvoters. While 40% of Hispanic nonvoters were between ages 18 to 29, 31% of all nonvoters were in the same age group. And while 27% of Hispanic nonvoters did not have a high school diploma, just 16% of all nonvoters did not have a high school diploma. Overall, some 82 million U.S. eligible voters did not vote in 2012.

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Appendix

Appendix Table 1
Voting Age and Voting Eligible Population, 2012 and 2008
(thousands)

	2012	2008	Change	Change (%)
All				
Voting age	235,248	225,499	9,749	4.3
Voting eligible	215,081	206,072	9,009	4.4
White				
Voting age	155,615	154,472	1,143	0.7
Voting eligible	152,862	151,321	1,541	1.0
Black				
Voting age	27,037	25,682	1,355	5.3
Voting eligible	25,753	24,322	1,431	5.9
Hispanic				
Voting age	35,204	30,852	4,352	14.1
Voting eligible	23,329	19,537	3,792	19.4
Asian				
Voting age	12,138	10,274	1,863	18.1
Voting eligible	8,032	6,912	1,120	16.2

Notes: Voting age population refers to U.S. residents at least 18 years of age. Voting eligible population refers to U.S. citizens at least 18 years of age. White, black and Asian populations include only non-Hispanics who reported a single race. Native Americans and mixed-race groups not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations from the Current Population Survey, November Supplements

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Appendix Table 2
Number Registered and Number of Voters, 2012 and 2008
(thousands)

	2012	2008	Change	Change (%)
All				
Registered	153,157	146,311	6,846	4.7
Voted	132,948	131,144	1,804	1.4
White				
Registered	112,706	111,215	1,491	1.3
Voted	98,041	100,042	-2,001	-2.0
Black				
Registered	18,852	17,059	1,793	10.5
Voted	17,163	15,857	1,306	8.2
Hispanic				
Registered	13,697	11,608	2,090	18.0
Voted	11,188	9,745	1,443	14.8
Asians				
Registered	4,504	3,790	714	18.8
Voted	3,770	3,250	520	16.0

Notes: White, black and Asian populations include only non-Hispanics who reported a single race. Native Americans and mixed-race groups not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations from the Current Population Survey, November Supplements

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Appendix Table 3
Demographic Composition of Latino Voters, 2012 and 2008

(thousands)

	2012	2008
Total Latino Voters		
	11,188	9,745
Gender		
Male	5,227	4,610
Female	5,961	5,135
Age Group		
18-29	2,818	2,393
30-39	2,114	2,002
40-64	4,597	4,062
65+	1,538	1,201
Marital Status		
Married	5,727	5,448
Widowed/Divorced/ Separated	2,018	1,616
Never Married	3,443	2,681
Citizenship Status		
U.S.-born citizen	8,130	6,995
Naturalized U.S. citizen	3,058	2,751
Educational Attainment		
Less than high school	1,781	1,740
High school grad	2,966	2,544
Some college	3,886	3,375
College or more	2,555	2,086
Hispanic Origin		
Mexican	5,868	5,194
Puerto Rican	1,610	1,399
Cuban	771	713
Central/South American	2,125	1,724
Other Spanish	814	716
Annual Family Income		
Less than 20k	2,104	1,268
20k to 49k	3,805	2,911
50k to 99k	3,559	2,799
100k or more	1,720	1,497
Employment Status		
In Labor Force	7,896	7,098
Employed	7,211	6,634
Unemployed	685	464
Not in labor force	3,292	2,647
Duration of Residence		
Before 1990	1,988	2,137
1990 to 1999	689	464
2000 or later	346	149

Note: Family income not adjusted for inflation.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations from the Current Population Survey, November Supplements

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Appendix Table 4
Latino Voter Turnout Rate, by Demographic Groups, 2012 and 2008

(% among eligible voters)

	2012	2008
Total Latino		
	48.0	49.9
Gender		
Male	46.0	47.9
Female	49.8	51.8
Age-Group		
18-29	36.9	40.8
30-39	47.0	48.3
40-64	54.4	56.3
65+	59.9	56.0
Marital Status		
Married	53.7	54.8
Widowed/Divorced/ Separated	48.2	46.9
Never Married	40.6	43.5
Citizenship Status		
U.S.-born citizen	46.1	48.4
Naturalized U.S. citizen	53.6	54.2
Educational Attainment		
Less than high school	35.5	36.7
High school grad	39.4	40.0
Some college	54.2	60.6
College graduate	70.8	73.0
Hispanic Origin		
Mexican	42.2	45.1
Puerto Rican	52.8	49.7
Cuban	67.2	69.4
Central/South American	57.1	60.9
Other Spanish	53.7	52.8
Annual Family Income		
Less than 20k	40.3	39.9
20k to 49k	43.9	47.0
50k to 99k	54.7	60.6
100k or more	58.5	73.5
Employment Status		
In Labor Force	49.8	52.0
Employed	50.6	52.7
Unemployed	43.4	43.6
Not in labor force	44.0	45.0
Duration of Residence		
Before 1990	58.8	58.7
1990 to 1999	47.2	41.2
2000 or later	44.1	48.1

Note: Family income not adjusted for inflation.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations from the Current Population Survey, November Supplements

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Appendix Table 5
Demographic Composition of Voters, by Race and Ethnicity, 2012
(thousands)

	All	Hispanic	White	Black	Asian
Total	132,948	11,188	98,041	17,163	3,770
Gender					
Male	61,551	5,227	46,288	7,084	1,719
Female	71,397	5,961	51,754	10,078	2,051
Age					
18-29	20,539	2,818	12,987	3,459	622
30-39	19,458	2,114	13,242	2,875	650
40-64	60,786	4,597	45,398	7,889	1,751
65+	29,641	1,538	24,385	2,669	688
Marital Status					
Married	78,860	5,727	63,012	6,243	2,498
Widowed/Divorced/ Separated	24,829	2,018	17,851	4,013	439
Never Married	29,260	3,443	17,179	6,907	833
Citizenship Status					
U.S.-born citizen	123,654	8,130	95,622	16,033	1,250
Naturalized U.S. citizen	9,294	3,058	2,419	1,130	2,520
Educational Attainment					
Less than high school	8,297	1,781	4,114	1,931	245
High school grad	34,402	2,966	24,804	5,398	522
Some college	41,601	3,886	30,037	5,817	824
College or more	48,648	2,555	39,086	4,017	2,179
Annual Family Income					
Less than 20k	17,067	2,104	9,624	4,331	398
20k to 49k	37,948	3,805	26,526	5,996	741
50k to 99k	44,715	3,559	34,690	4,480	1,193
100k or more	33,217	1,720	27,200	2,355	1,439
Employment Status					
In Labor Force	88,674	7,896	64,765	11,394	2,740
Employed	83,563	7,211	61,950	10,118	2,572
Unemployed	5,111	685	2,815	1,276	167
Not in labor force	44,275	3,292	33,276	5,769	1,030

Notes: White, black and Asian populations include only non-Hispanics who reported a single race. Native Americans and mixed-race groups not shown. Family income not adjusted for inflation.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations from the Current Population Survey, November Supplements

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Appendix Table 6
Demographic Composition of Eligible Voters, by Race and Ethnicity, 2012

(thousands)

	All	Hispanic	White	Black	Asian
Total	215,081	23,329	152,862	25,753	8,032
Gender					
Male	103,022	11,369	73,989	11,489	3,767
Female	112,059	11,960	78,873	14,264	4,265
Age					
18-29	45,603	7,634	28,188	6,447	1,720
30-39	33,543	4,496	22,075	4,437	1,462
40-64	91,379	8,446	66,694	10,944	3,466
65+	41,169	2,566	33,224	3,562	1,290
Marital Status					
Married	114,367	10,661	87,998	8,683	4,856
Widowed/Divorced/ Separated	42,200	4,186	30,408	5,673	1,004
Never Married	58,513	8,482	34,455	11,397	2,172
Citizenship Status					
U.S.-born citizen	197,756	17,623	148,498	23,923	2,900
Naturalized U.S. citizen	17,325	5,706	4,364	1,830	5,132
Educational Attainment					
Less than high school	21,842	5,012	11,736	3,707	696
High school grad	65,380	7,534	45,891	8,858	1,540
Some college	64,790	7,173	45,731	8,157	1,957
College or more	63,069	3,610	49,505	5,032	3,840
Annual Family Income					
Less than 20k	35,743	5,223	20,790	7,522	964
20k to 49k	66,585	8,660	45,401	8,975	1,895
50k to 99k	67,614	6,507	50,955	6,187	2,598
100k or more	45,140	2,939	35,716	3,069	2,575
Employment Status					
In Labor Force	139,876	15,839	98,986	16,242	5,490
Employed	130,033	14,263	93,435	14,220	5,175
Unemployed	9,843	1,576	5,551	2,022	315
Not in labor force	75,205	7,490	53,876	9,511	2,543

Notes: White, black and Asian populations include only non-Hispanics who reported a single race. Native Americans and mixed-race groups not shown. Family income not adjusted for inflation.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations from the Current Population Survey, November Supplements

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Appendix Table 7
Voting Turnout Rates, by Race and Ethnicity, 2012
 (% among eligible voters)

	All	Hispanic	White	Black	Asian
Total	61.8	48.0	64.1	66.6	46.9
Gender					
Male	59.7	46.0	62.6	61.7	45.6
Female	63.7	49.8	65.6	70.7	48.1
Age					
18-29	45.0	36.9	46.1	53.7	36.2
30-39	58.0	47.0	60.0	64.8	44.5
40-64	66.5	54.4	68.1	72.1	50.5
65+	72.0	59.9	73.4	74.9	53.3
Marital Status					
Married	69.0	53.7	71.6	71.9	51.5
Widowed/Divorced/ Separated	58.8	48.2	58.7	70.7	43.7
Never Married	50.0	40.6	49.9	60.6	38.3
Citizenship Status					
U.S.-born citizen	62.5	46.1	64.4	67.0	43.1
Naturalized U.S. citizen	53.6	53.6	55.4	61.8	49.1
Educational Attainment					
Less than high school	38.0	35.5	35.1	52.1	35.3
High school grad	52.6	39.4	54.0	60.9	33.9
Some college	64.2	54.2	65.7	71.3	42.1
College or more	77.1	70.8	79.0	79.8	56.8
Annual Family Income					
Less than 20k	47.8	40.3	46.3	57.6	41.2
20k to 49k	57.0	43.9	58.4	66.8	39.1
50k to 99k	66.1	54.7	68.1	72.4	45.9
100k or more	73.6	58.5	76.2	76.7	55.9
Employment Status					
In Labor Force	63.4	49.8	65.4	70.2	49.9
Employed	64.3	50.6	66.3	71.2	49.7
Unemployed	51.9	43.4	50.7	63.1	53.1
Not in labor force	58.9	44.0	61.8	60.7	40.5

Notes: White, black and Asian populations include only non-Hispanics who reported a single race. Native Americans and mixed-race groups not shown. Family income not adjusted for inflation.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations from the Current Population Survey, November Supplements

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Appendix Table 8
Change in Voter Turnout Rates

(% among eligible voters)

	2012	2008	Change (%points)
All	61.8	63.6	-1.8
White	64.1	66.1	-2.0
Black	66.6	65.2	1.4
Hispanic	48.0	49.9	-1.9
Asian	46.9	47.0	-0.1

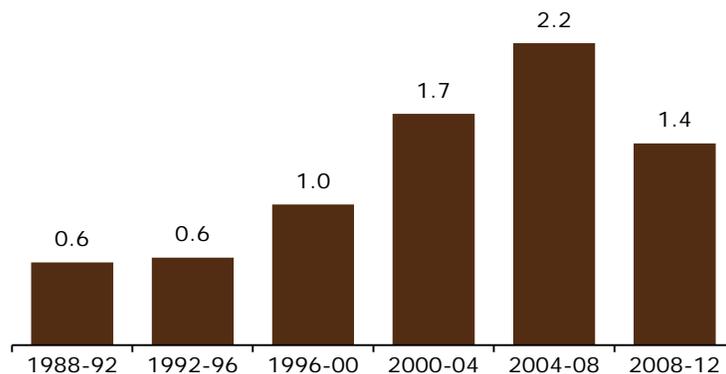
Note: White, black and Asian populations include only non-Hispanics who reported a single race. Native Americans and mixed-race groups not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations from the Current Population Survey, November Supplements

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Appendix Figure 1
Change in Number of Votes Cast by Hispanics, 1988-2012

(millions)



Note: White, black and Asian populations include only non-Hispanics who reported a single race. Native Americans and mixed-race groups not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations from the Current Population Survey, November Supplements.

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