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PRIMARY ELECTION PROFILE

CALIFORNIA



ELECTION DAY:
TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 2024

PROJECTED LATINO VOTE FOR NOVEMBER 2024: 4,816,467

ELECTORAL COLLEGE VOTES: 54

TOTAL POPULATION (2022):

39,029,342

LATINO POPULATION (2022):

15,732,184



Since 1992, California has been a Democratic stronghold in presidential contests, with the Democratic candidates' margins of victory ranging from 10 percent to 30 percent. President George H.W. Bush was the last Republican to win the state in 1988.

The Latino vote played a [key role](#) in California's partisan shift toward electing Democratic Presidential and statewide candidates. The [significant impact](#) of the Latino electorate on California's partisan realignment resulted in part from the harsh tone of the anti-immigrant rhetoric in the public dialogue around measures like Proposition 187 in the mid-1990s, which sought to deny certain benefits to undocumented immigrants and required public employees to act as quasi immigration officers, with many California Latinos holding Republicans responsible for these measures. Ultimately, federal courts found Proposition 187 to be unconstitutional.

Similarly, the public dialogue around immigration legislation and issues in 2006 and 2007 helped [mobilize](#) Latinos in California and nationwide to protest, become U.S. citizens, and cast ballots. The comments and policies of former President Donald Trump (R) also helped spur record Latino turnout in [2018](#) for the midterm congressional elections, shortly after President Trump took office. In 2018, the California Latino vote reached 3.3 million, nearly double the 1.7 million turnout of Election 2014. The turnout rate of Latino voting-age citizens in California increased from 25 percent to 43 percent during the same period. According to Latino Decisions' 2018 [Election Eve poll](#), 74 percent of California Latinos disapproved of the job President Trump had been doing as president, and 82 percent believed that his statements and policies would cause a major setback to the progress made by Latinos. Ninety-three percent of California Latinos indicated that rhetoric attacking immigrants and the need for comprehensive immigration reform was an important reason to vote in the election.

However, there has been a shift in the issues California Latinos have viewed as important in midterm and congressional elections since 2018. In Election 2020, Latinos turned out in [record numbers](#) for a presidential election, with 4.5 million casting ballots, a 35.7 percent increase from 2016. According to the NALEO Educational Fund Election 2020 Weekly Tracking [Poll](#), more than half (51 percent) of Latinos identified responding to the COVID-19 pandemic as one of the most important issues they wanted the next president to address. Lowering health care costs (28 percent) and addressing racism and discrimination (26 percent) also ranked as more important issues for the state's Latinos than immigration reform (21 percent).

In Election 2022, the NALEO Educational Fund Election 2022 Weekly Tracking [Poll](#) revealed that nearly half (48 percent) of California Latinos named the rising cost of living as one of the most important issues in the election, with issues such as women's reproductive and abortion rights (26 percent) and improving wages and job opportunities (26 percent) ranking higher than protecting immigrant rights (16 percent). Given the history of the Latino vote in California, it is unclear how issues like inflation and global instability or the public policy debate around immigration and border issues will play in mobilizing the California Latino electorate.

Another factor that may affect California Latino turnout in Election 2024 is the extent to which there are robust efforts to reach and mobilize Latino voters. [Polling](#) of Latino registered voters in Election 2020 suggests that California Latinos were more likely to be contacted by parties, campaigns, or other organizations than [in Election 2016](#). While California has not been considered a [battleground state](#) in presidential elections for several decades, there may be greater Election 2024 investment in outreach to Latino voters, given the importance of the state's competitive congressional elections in the fight for a majority in the U.S. House of Representatives.

CONGRESSIONAL RACES

U.S. Senate

After the passing of U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D), Governor Gavin Newsom (D) appointed former labor leader and EMILYs List President Laphonza Butler (D) to fill her seat. Senator Butler announced she would not run for election in 2024, and a crowded group of contenders has entered the primary contest. Under California’s “top two” primary system, candidates for congressional seats, state legislative offices, and state constitutional offices are listed on the ballot with a political party preference or no party preference (NPP). However, only the two candidates receiving the most votes in the primary — regardless of party preference — move on to the general election. Thus, candidates from the same political party may face each other in the general election.

The [frontrunners](#) in the U.S. Senate race include Democratic U.S. Reps. Barbara Lee, Katie Porter, and Adam Schiff, as well as Republican former Dodger Steve Garvey. With Latinos accounting for nearly one-third (29 percent) of California’s registered voters, they are poised to help determine the outcome of both the primary and general elections.

U.S. House of Representatives

Twelve of California’s 14 incumbent Latino U.S. Representatives are running for reelection (U.S. Reps. Tony Cardenas (D-29) and Grace Flores Napolitano (D-31) are retiring at the end of their terms). Of these incumbents, 10 are likely to emerge victorious in the primary and general election: Democrats Pete Aguilar, Salud Carbajal, Lou Correa, Nanette Diaz Barragan, Robert Garcia, Jimmy Gomez, Raul Ruiz, Linda Sanchez, Norma Torres, and Juan Vargas. In the 27th Congressional District, U.S. Rep. Mike Garcia (R) will likely face a competitive general election challenge from Democrat George Whitesides, an aerospace entrepreneur and former NASA Chief of Staff, who has been able to invest a considerable amount of his own money in his campaign. In the 49th Congressional District, the victor in a crowded primary field of Republicans could mount a viable general election campaign to unseat U.S. Rep. Mike Levin (D). The Republican contenders include automotive technology executive Sheryl Adams, small business owner Matt Gunderson, veterans’ advocate Kate Monroe, and Entravision Communications executive Margarita Wilkinson.

Several Latinos are battling for the seats being vacated by retiring U.S. Reps. Cardenas and Napolitano. In the 29th Congressional District, community organizer Angelica Dueñas (D) is likely to face State Assemblymember Luz Rivas (D) in the general election (in this strongly Democratic district, family youth advocate Benito Benny Bernal (R) will face a challenging race to reach the

general election). The most competitive candidates in the 31st Congressional District include three Latino Democrats — California State Senators Bob Archuleta and Susan Rubio and former U.S. Rep. Gil Cisneros.

In another open seat race, two Latinos face an uphill battle within a crowded field of competitors for the seat being vacated by U.S. Rep. Schiff, who is running for U.S. Senate. In the 30th Congressional District, legislative advisor Francesco Arreaga (D) and technology entrepreneur Josh Bocanegra (NPP) will have difficulties winning a primary where [frontrunners](#) include former California State Assemblymember and Los Angeles City Attorney Mike Feuer, as well as State Assemblymember Laura Friedman, Los Angeles Unified School District Board Member Nick Melvoin, and State Senator Anthony Portantino.

Latinos are also mounting viable campaigns to unseat incumbents in contests both parties have targeted as critical for the congressional balance of power. In the 22nd Congressional District, either former State Assemblymember Rudy Salas (D) or State Senator Melissa Hurtado (D) will likely face U.S. Rep. David Valadao (R) in the general election. In the 45th Congressional District, Garden Grove City Councilmember Kim Nguyen-Penalzoza (D) is a competitive contender for the opportunity to challenge U.S. Rep. Michelle Steel (R) in the general election, where Nguyen-Penalzoza would face a difficult race.

Some Latino primary candidates will face much tougher battles in their efforts to reach the general election and unseat incumbents, including Chabot-Las Positas Community College Trustee Luis Reynoso (R), who is challenging U.S. Rep. Eric Swalwell (D) in the 14th Congressional District; small business owner Peter Hernandez (R), who is challenging U.S. Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D) in the 18th Congressional District; and Tustin Unified School District Board Member Allyson Muñiz Damikolas (D), who is challenging U.S. Rep. Young Kim (R) in the 40th Congressional District.

CALIFORNIA LATINO VOTER PROJECTION FOR ELECTION 2024

NALEO Educational Fund projects that at least **4.8 million Latinos will cast ballots in the 2024 presidential California election in November**. Our projection is based on trends in voter turnout in the past six presidential elections. Between 2016 and 2020, there was an increase of 35.7 percent in turnout, the highest percentage increase since 2008. As described in more detail in NALEO Educational Fund's [2024 Latino Vote Projections](#), several factors may have contributed to this increase, including the COVID-19 pandemic, concerns about health care costs, and the nation's racial reckoning and protests following the murder of George Floyd. Considering the trends in the past six presidential elections, we project the California Latino vote in November 2024 to increase 6.1 percent from 2020 turnout and represent a 44.0 percent increase from 2016.



CALIFORNIA

| PROJECTED LATINO VOTE 2024 | LATINO VOTE 2020 | % CHANGE BETWEEN 2020 AND 2024 | LATINO VOTE 2016 | % CHANGE BETWEEN 2016 AND 2024 |
|----------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 4,816,467 | 4,539,000 | 6.11% | 3,345,000 | 43.99% |

In addition, the Latino share of all California voters in 2024 is expected to be 28.4 percent, which mirrors the Latino share in 2020 and is a 22.4 percent increase from 2016.

Our Election 2024 projection is a floor, and the actual Latino vote could exceed the projection based on the political and policy environments leading into the November election. Furthermore, one of the factors contributing to Latino turnout in Election 2020 was candidate and party investment in Latino voter mobilization. This kind of investment will continue to be crucial for the California Latino vote in Election 2024 to match or exceed the vote of 2020. More information about California Latino turnout can be found in the Voter Turnout section below and NALEO Educational Fund’s analysis of national and state projected turnout in Election 2024.

CALIFORNIA LATINO POPULATION 2022

| | POPULATION | SHARE OF TOTAL POPULATION |
|----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|
| All Latinos | 15,732,184 | 40.3% |
| Latino Adults | 11,319,602 | 37.1% |
| Latino Voting-Age Citizens | 8,503,173 | 32.6% |

CALIFORNIA LATINO ELECTORATE

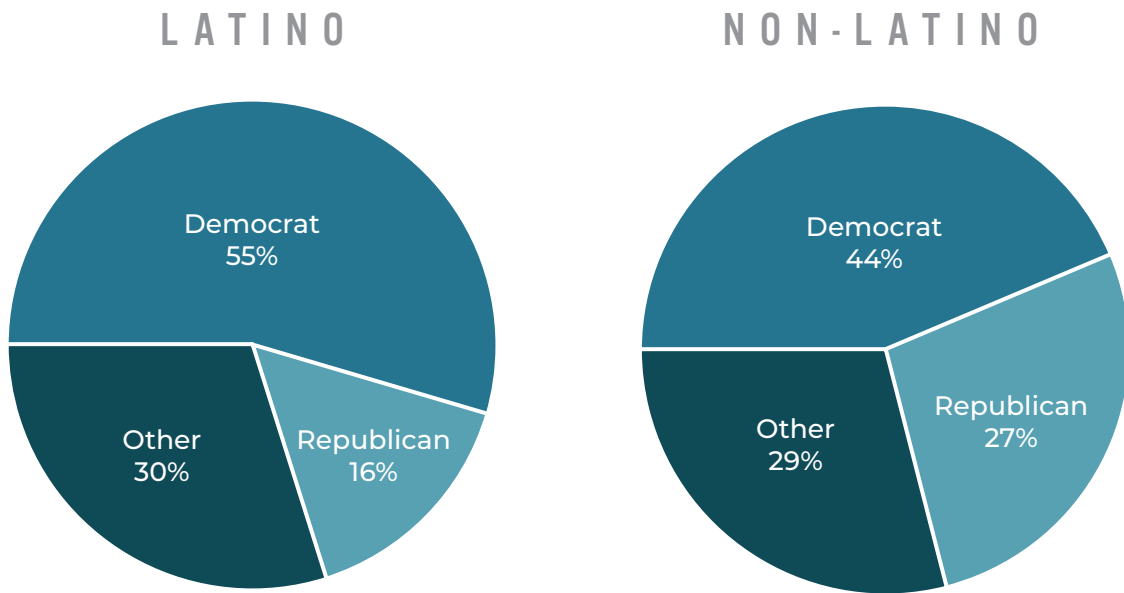
(as of August 2023, from VAN voter file)

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Total Registered Voters | 21,660,888 |
| Latino Registered Voters | 6,333,247 |
| Latino Share of Registered Voters | 29.24% |

Nearly one of every three (29 percent) California registered voters is Latino.

PARTY AFFILIATION

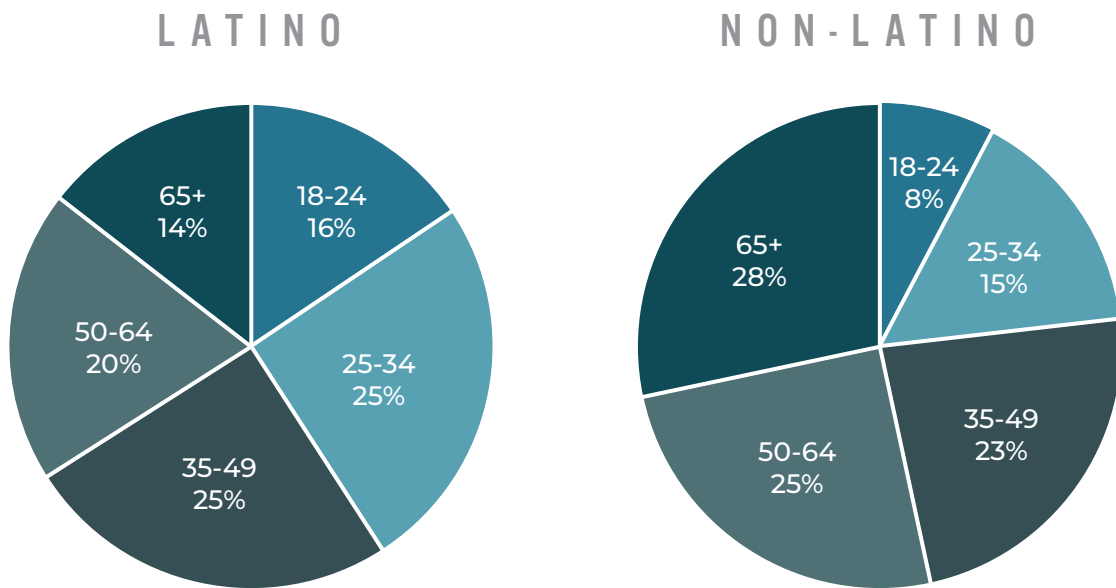
Latinos are more likely to be Democrats than non-Latinos, with 55 percent of Latinos affiliating with the Democratic Party, compared to 44 percent of non-Latinos. Latinos are less likely to be Republicans than the non-Latino electorate. The share of Latinos and non-Latinos who do not affiliate with either major political party are similar. One of every six Latino registered voters (16 percent) is Republican, compared to 27 percent of non-Latinos. Nearly one of every three Latino registered voters (30 percent) is not affiliated with either major party, compared to 29 percent of non-Latinos.



Totals may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

AGE

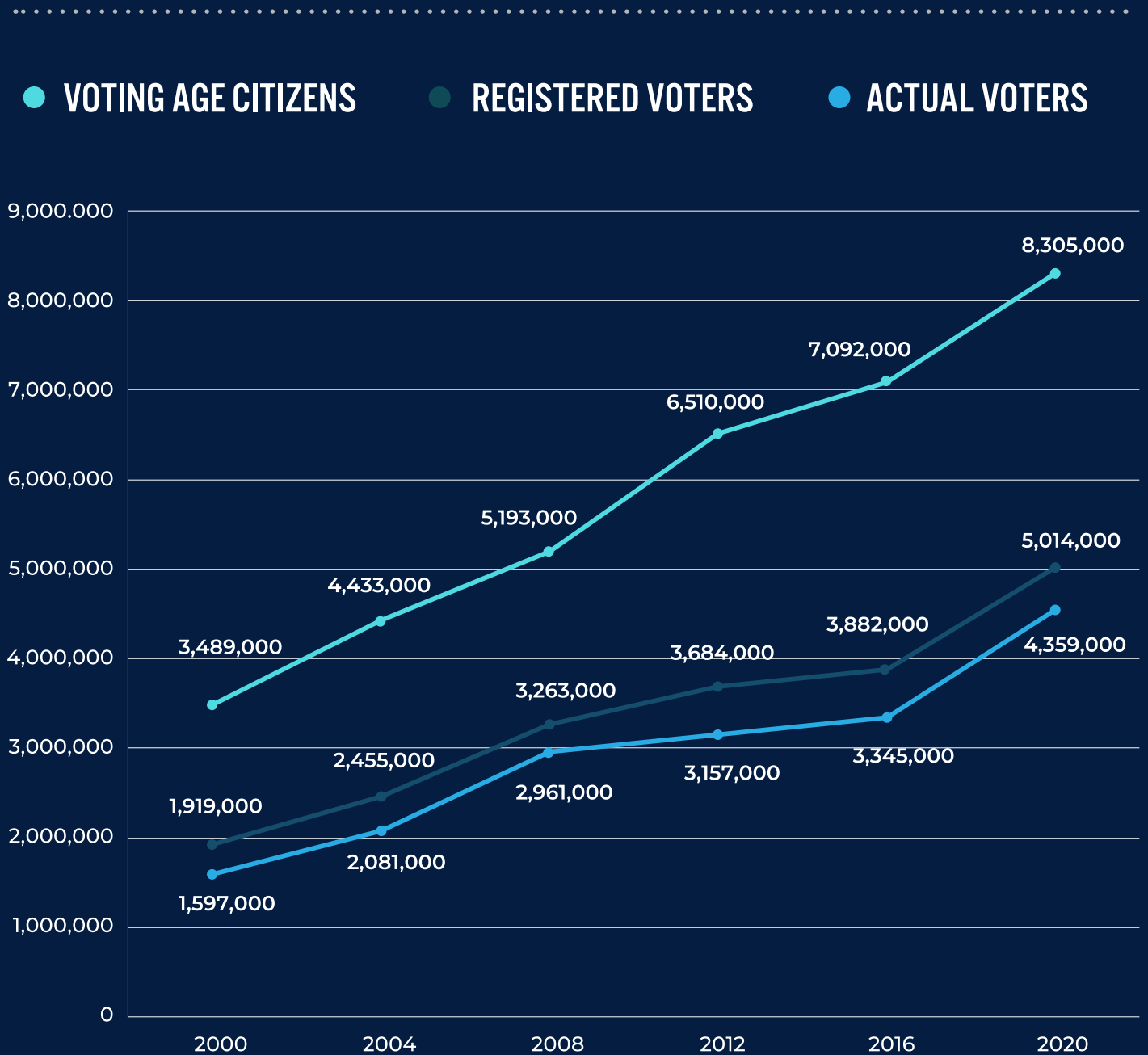
California Latino registered voters tend to be younger than non-Latinos, with 18–24-year-olds comprising 16 percent of registered Latinos, compared to 8 percent of non-Latinos. Similarly, 25 percent of Latino registered voters are 25–34-year-olds, compared to 15 percent of non-Latinos. In contrast, 53 percent of non-Latino registered voters are 50 and older, compared to 34 percent of Latinos.



Totals may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

LATINO VOTER TURNOUT

Between 2000 and 2020, the Latino vote nearly tripled, growing from 1.6 million to 4.5 million, an increase of 184 percent. The Latino voting-age citizen population grew steadily during the same period, reaching 8.3 million in 2020.



LATINOS IN CALIFORNIA ELECTED OFFICES 1996–2021

In 2021, 1,833 Latinos served in elected office in California, with 97 percent serving at the local level, including the county, municipal, and school board levels — as well as at the judicial or law enforcement levels.

| CALIFORNIA | 1996 | 2001 | 2007 | 2013 | 2021 |
|----------------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| U.S. Senators | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| U.S. Representatives | 4 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 14 |
| State Executives | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| State Legislators | 14 | 26 | 28 | 26 | 30* |
| Local Officials | 675 | 734 | 1128 | 1330 | 1786 |
| TOTAL | 693 | 767 | 1163 | 1365 | 1833 |

**as of this writing, there are 40 Latinos serving in the California state legislature.*

SOURCES

NALEO Educational Fund, National Directory of Latino Elected Officials, 2016–2021.

This report uses data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2022 American Community Survey (ACS), 1-year estimates. The ACS is conducted every year and is an ongoing survey of a sample of the population, which produces estimates of various population characteristics.

Unless indicated otherwise, the source of the voting and registration data in the profile is from the *Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (CPS) and its Voting and Registration in the Elections of November: 2000–2020* report. The CPS data used in this profile and the survey from which they are derived are subject to certain limitations. First, actual voter turnout and registration may be overestimated by the CPS because individuals may tend to over-report electoral participation. Additionally, the CPS is a national survey, and estimates for smaller sub-groups within the national population may be based on relatively small sample sizes. Consequently, the margin of error associated with estimates of voting and registration for these sub-groups is greater than the margin associated with the national population or larger population sub-groups.

NGP Voter Activation Network (VAN) voter file data, August 2023: VAN data are subject to some limitations regarding collecting, entering, maintaining, and analyzing voter file records. All estimates are of Registered Active Voters.

For more information about NALEO Educational Fund’s publications on the Latino population or Election 2024, please contact Dorian Caal at dcaal@naleo.org or (213) 765-9450.