



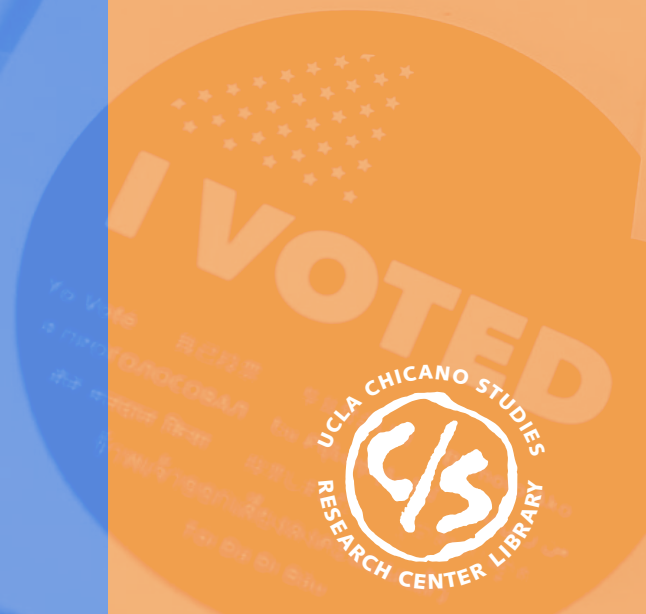
CALIFORNIA'S YOUNG LATINX VOTERS

AND THE 2022 MIDTERM ELECTION

**VERONICA TERRIQUEZ
AND
STEVEN CARMONA MORA**

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During the 2022 midterm election, Alianza's Youth Organizing Council and adult allies went door-to-door to speak to voters in Coachella and surrounding unincorporated communities in Riverside County. In-person conversations can play an important role in motivating young voters to submit their ballot



Midterm elections have significant consequences for the country, individual states, and local communities even though they do not garner as much public attention as presidential elections. Young voters can play a decisive role in midterm election outcomes, and their participation in the electoral process has increased in recent election cycles. There is still a long way to go, however, before age-equitable representation at the ballot box is achieved, especially for young Latinx voters.

This brief focuses on the turnout of Latinx young adult voters, specifically



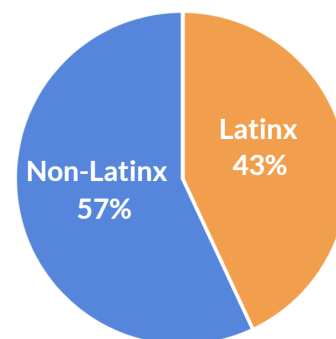
In Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, Future Leaders of America's high-school-aged youth leaders participated in phone banking and canvassing to remind first-time and other young voters to submit their ballots by mail or to show up at the polls. Youth leaders are trained to guide first-time voters on options for properly submitting their ballots.

those aged eighteen to thirty-four, in California's 2022 midterm election. Latinx voters compose the largest ethno-racial group in this age bracket, and their participation at the ballot box has important implications for the healthy functioning of local and state governments in California. In this report we look at county-level voting patterns of Latinx young adults.

LATINX TURNOUT STATEWIDE

In the 2022 midterm election, Latinxs who were registered to vote made up a sizable segment of California's electorate and were the plurality among those who were eighteen to thirty-four years of age. Latinxs accounted for 43 percent of all California's registered voters in this age group (fig. 1). (Whites were the second largest group, composing 39 percent.) Moreover, among all registered Latinx voters, young adults accounted for 39 percent

FIGURE 1. REGISTERED CALIFORNIA VOTERS AGES EIGHTEEN TO THIRTY-FOUR, NOVEMBER 2022, BY RACE/ETHNICITY



(fig. 2). In comparison, non-Latinx young adults made up only 23 percent of registered voters in this age group.

Despite their prominence across the state, Latinx young adults voted

at a much lower rate than the rest of the young adult population did (fig. 3). When compared to all registered young adults in California, only 22 percent of Latinx young adults cast ballots,

FIGURE 2. AGE OF REGISTERED CALIFORNIA VOTERS, NOVEMBER 2022, BY RACE/ETHNICITY

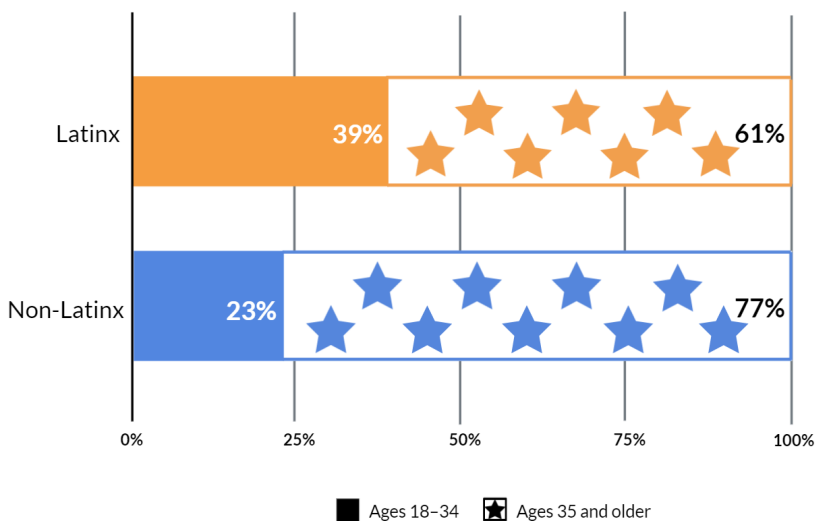
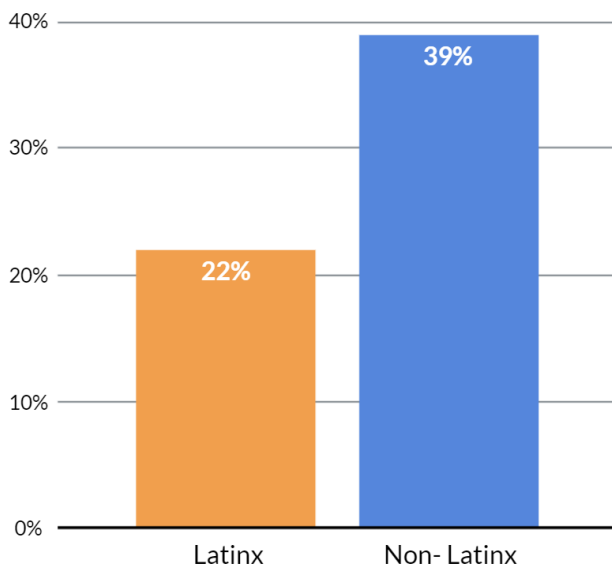


FIGURE 3. TURNOUT RATE FOR CALIFORNIA VOTERS AGES EIGHTEEN TO THIRTY-FOUR DURING THE 2022 MIDTERM ELECTION, BY RACE/ETHNICITY



whereas 39 percent of their non-Latinx peers voted—a whopping 17 percent difference that signals the need to invest in developing the young Latinx vote. Such a comparatively low turnout can negatively affect the accountability of elected officials to the interests and needs of a significant proportion of California’s population.

DISPARITIES ACROSS CALIFORNIA’S COUNTIES

While Latinx young adults composed the plurality of registered voters across the state, it is important to note that they were a majority in certain counties. For example, Latinx young adults dominated in Imperial County, making up 90 percent of all young registered voters, and they were a clear majority in the Central Valley counties of Fresno, Kern, Tulare, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, and Kings. In the Central Coast, the highest concentration of Latinx young adult voters were found in Monterey, where they made up over two-thirds of registered young adults. They were also the majority in the populous counties of Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and Riverside. Table 1 provides information about young Latinx voters for each of California’s fifty-eight counties.

As shown, turnout rates among Latinx young adults who were registered voters were comparatively low in the state’s Latinx-majority counties. In the Central Valley counties of Kern and Tulare and the Inland Southern

California counties of San Bernardino, Riverside, and Imperial, where registered Latinx young adults outnumbered their non-Latinx peers, less than 20 percent cast a vote. Compared to urbanized coastal counties, Inland counties tend to lack the civic infrastructure that can support young voter turnout. Our observations over the years also suggest that high schools in places like the Central Valley and the Inland Empire do not promote preregistration to the same degree as their coastal counterparts do. Indeed, student researchers have documented instances where school administrators have blocked nonpartisan voter registration, although this practice is sanctioned and encouraged by California law: Assembly Bill 1817 designates high school voter education weeks, and Senate Bill 113 lowers the preregistration age to sixteen in California.

We must, however, acknowledge that in 2022, turnout among Latinx young adults was comparatively low even in urbanized coastal areas such as Los Angeles County, which had a turnout rate of only 21 percent. Given that 33 percent of all Latinx young adult voters in California reside in Los Angeles County, this low turnout depressed their turnout rate statewide. Moreover, these percentages are a step backward from 2018, when turnout rates in Los Angeles County were bolstered by the work of a well-coordinated network of youth organizing groups in low-income communities, which increased turnout

TABLE 1. PARTICIPATION OF LATINX YOUNG ADULTS IN THE 2022 MIDTERM ELECTION, BY CALIFORNIA COUNTY

County	Number registered to vote	As share of all registered young adults countywide	Turnout rate
Los Angeles	867,302	52%	21%
San Bernardino	216,400	59%	18%
Riverside	214,196	56%	19%
San Diego	194,636	37%	22%
Orange	181,054	36%	24%
Fresno	86,507	56%	20%
Kern	83,537	60%	19%
Santa Clara	73,568	27%	26%
Ventura	61,623	46%	23%
Alameda	55,673	23%	27%
Sacramento	54,563	23%	28%
San Joaquin	52,479	45%	20%
Tulare	50,032	70%	19%
Contra Costa	46,440	28%	25%
Stanislaus	45,312	54%	21%
Monterey	41,994	68%	20%
Santa Barbara	32,546	47%	22%
Merced	28,998	67%	21%
San Mateo	26,121	26%	28%
Imperial	24,437	90%	19%
Sonoma	20,969	31%	26%
Solano	18,892	30%	23%
San Francisco	17,315	12%	40%
Santa Cruz	14,743	35%	28%
Madera	14,124	64%	21%
Kings	11,960	61%	20%
Yolo	11,571	33%	28%
San Luis Obispo	8,799	22%	25%
Placer	7,631	13%	31%
Napa	7,358	38%	27%
San Benito	6,984	64%	26%
Butte	6,044	19%	26%
Sutter	4,558	32%	22%
Marin	3,949	13%	28%
Yuba	3,447	30%	18%
Mendocino	2,688	27%	19%
El Dorado	2,612	11%	30%
Humboldt	2,539	13%	27%
Shasta	2,269	10%	24%
Tehama	2,179	26%	15%
Colusa	1,982	66%	22%
Glenn	1,690	46%	21%
Lake	1,660	24%	17%
Nevada	1,010	8%	25%

TABLE 1 CONT.

County	Number registered to vote	As share of all registered young adults countywide	Turnout rate
Calaveras	694	13%	30%
Tuolumne	544	9%	32%
Del Norte	523	18%	19%
Inyo	492	24%	28%
Siskiyou	469	10%	22%
Amador	443	11%	34%
Mono	412	25%	19%
Lassen	333	11%	27%
Mariposa	230	12%	21%
Plumas	169	7%	20%
Modoc	100	12%	23%
Trinity	39	4%	26%
Sierra	19	7%	32%
Alpine	8	6%	38%

Notes: “Young adults” are voters ages eighteen to thirty-four. “Turnout rate” is the share of registered Latinx young adults within each county who cast a ballot during the 2022 midterm election.

Source: Available TargetSmart voter data (2022).

for the state overall (Terriquez and Carmona Mora 2020).

Latinx young adult voters generally had above-average turnout rates in the San Francisco Bay Area and adjacent counties, where they compose a minority of voters. San Francisco County, a comparatively affluent area, had by far the highest turnout rate among Latinx youth ages eighteen to thirty-four. Though these young adults made up only 12 percent of the county’s electorate, an impressive 40 percent turned out to vote. Turnout was also high in Santa Cruz County, home to UC Santa Cruz, a Hispanic-Serving Institution, which likely contributed to the higher Latinx turnout rate. Voting rates among Latinx young adults in other Bay Area counties were also comparatively high: we found that turnout was 27 percent in Alameda County, 28 percent

in San Mateo County, and 26 percent in Santa Clara County.

These divergent county patterns can be attributed to various factors. These include regional differences in the proportion of Latinx young adults raised in immigrant nonvoting households, the availability of civic infrastructure geared toward Latinx youth, access to other-raced voting peers, and the extent to which educational institutions facilitate voter outreach efforts in high schools and community colleges.

ACTIVATING YOUNG VOTERS

It is important to recognize that turnout among Latinx young adults has improved over the last several years. Nevertheless, more can be done to increase the active electorate and address the turnout gap among Latinx

youth. Research shows that Latinx young adults can become invested in elections once they understand the power of their vote, including at the local level and during midterm cycles (Terriquez and Carmona Mora 2020; Terriquez, Villegas, and Villalobos 2020). Voter outreach and education must occur on a regular basis, especially since many of these young residents have parents who are unable to vote because they are noncitizens. High schools, community colleges, and community-based organizations are key outreach sites for Latinx youth who are least likely to be exposed to voting processes. The following recommendations for Latinx and other communities with low turnout rates are based on six years of research and observations.

- Train high school and community college students to properly register young voters. Peer-to-peer education about voting rights can interrupt disinformation and apathy.
- Educate young people on the impact that local, state, and federal governments have on their lives and local communities. Linking local debates and concerns to electoral processes enables young people to see the relevance of voting to their community's well-being and interests.
- Host youth-led educational and arts events at high schools that generate excitement about voting among unlikely voters.
- Conduct nonpartisan, peer-to-peer phone banking and canvassing to

answer questions about specific ballot submission processes and to encourage turnout. Peer-to-peer conversations can spur young voters to exercise their rights.

- Coordinate with schools and local civic groups to ensure wide-reaching voter education efforts. As noted in our LA Youth Vote report (Terriquez and Carmona Mora 2020), by working together, nonprofit organizations, county voter registrars, the secretary of state, school district leaders, and individual school leaders can develop a nonpartisan voter outreach plan that reaches young adults across wide geographies. Such coordination requires designated staffing across multiple agencies and developing a shared curriculum to ensure the quality and reach of nonpartisan voter outreach efforts.

CONCLUSION

Latinxs compose the plurality of California's young adult electorate and the majority in some counties. State and local government agencies can be more responsive and accountable to their constituents by providing reliable information to young adults about the voting process and how their involvement can contribute to a vibrant democracy. California's civic institutions—including high schools, community colleges, and community-based organizations—can lead outreach efforts targeting Latinx and other undermobilized young populations.

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AUTHORS

Veronica Terriquez is the director of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center and is a professor in the UCLA Departments of Chicana/o and Central American Studies and Urban Planning. **Steven Carmona Mora** is a master's student in the UCLA Department of Urban Planning.



The "Juntos por El Valle!" bus tour traveled across the Central Valley counties of Kern, Tulare, and Kings to educate Latinx communities on the importance of voting during the 2022 midterm election. Organized by LOUD for Tomorrow, the tour offered arts and culture events designed to engage multigenerational groups of Latinx voters. These included weekend pop-ups that provided information on voter registration and language access and GenteFest '22, a free music festival that featured Latinx artists and encouraged civic engagement.