



WE ARE   
CALIFORNIA

@LatinoCommFdn

# UNLEASHING LATINO VOTING POWER:

STRATEGIES TO BOOST VOTER  
PARTICIPATION AMONG LATINO YOUTH

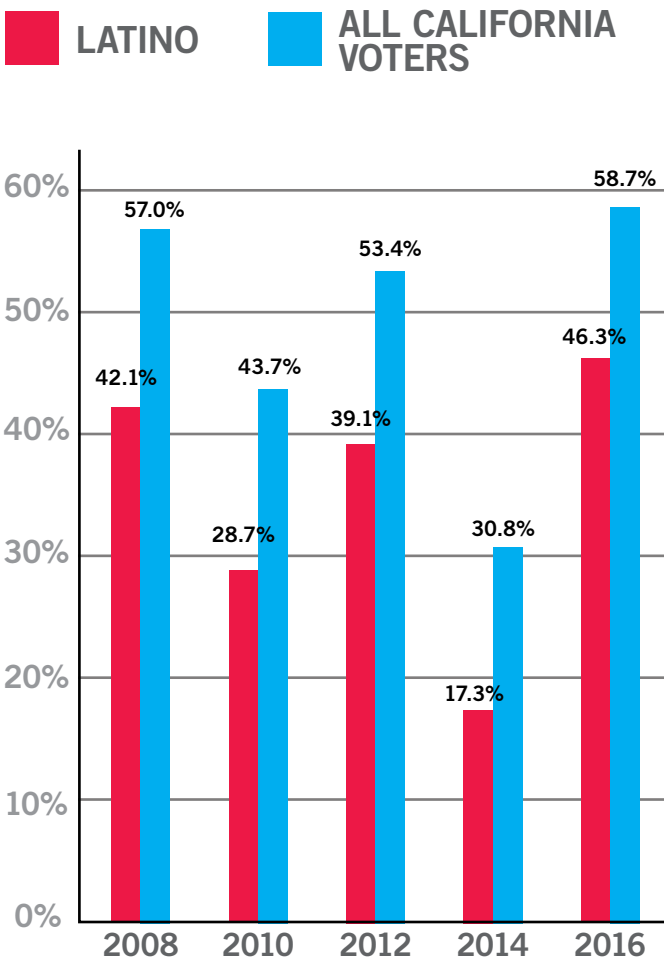
**LATINO  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION**  
|||||

California is home to the largest Latino population in the United States. In fact, by 2045, Latinos are projected to become 45% of the state's population<sup>(1)</sup>. Latinos will define the state's economic and cultural landscape for decades to come.

## The time is now for Latinos to leverage this power.

We must begin with exercising our right to vote. Latinos make up 28% of all eligible voters in California. Yet, we have less than 50% of Latinos turning out the vote consistently for the past five elections. Latinos, historically, have lagged all non-Latinos by 20%.

### ELIGIBLE VOTER TURNOUT 2008-2016 ELECTIONS



Source: UC Davis, California Civic Engagement Project

**“If we do everything right, 2022 will be the year that Latinos can say to themselves that we have achieved the goal of being counted in the political arena.”**

**– Ben Monterroso, Mi Familia Vota**



## The biggest opportunity in turning this around lies with our young people

California's Latino population is young. The median age is 28 and there are 5 million Latinos in the state who are under 20.

In the 2016 Presidential Election, approximately 30% of eligible young Latino voters (18-24) turned out to vote compared to 58.7% of all eligible California voters<sup>(2)</sup>. If we begin our voter efforts with the millions of young Latino voters in our state, surely this number will change.

Latinos currently represent 39% of all Californians, yet only hold 13% of seats in the State Senate and 30% of seats in State Assembly. In the past 50 years, California has had only two Latino Lieutenant Governors.

Less than 10% of county supervisors in the state and less than 20% of city council members are Latino.<sup>(3)</sup>

We will edge closer to true representation when we use our vote as our voice. Our presence will be felt in the electorate and our public policies will better resemble the needs of our community.

## Addressing the Voting Participation Rates of Latino Youth

The Latino Community Foundation consulted the experts – elected officials, nonprofit leaders, philanthropists, and three working groups of young Latinos across the state (Central Valley, Los Angeles, San Francisco Bay Area) – to understand the root causes of these trends and to strategize how we can mobilize young Latinos to the ballot box. **Here is what we found.**

### THE OPPORTUNITY:

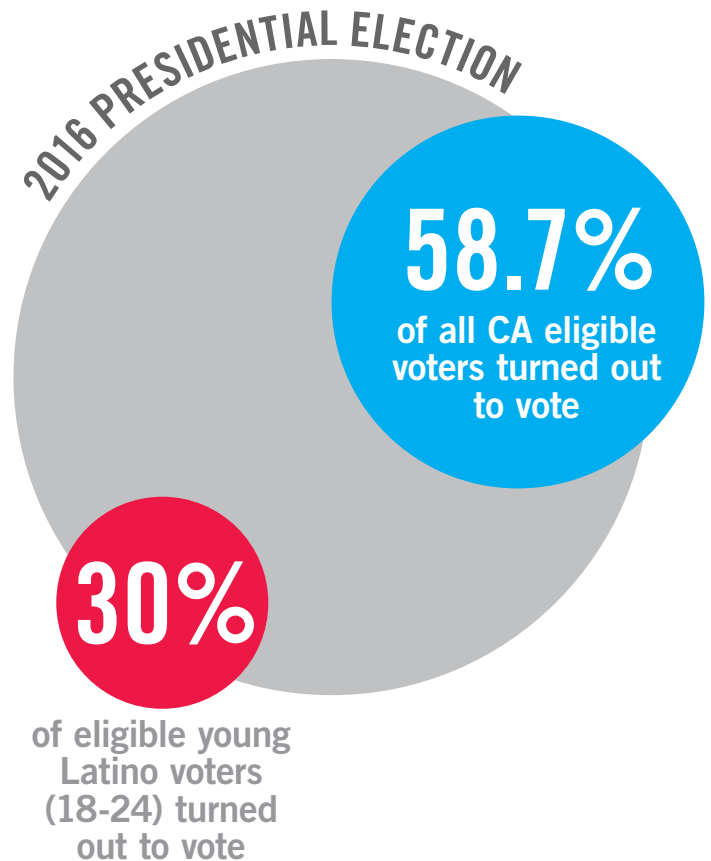
**28**

**Median Age of California's Latino Population**

**5M**

**Latinos in California are under 20 years old**

### THE REALITY:





## NEED FOR VOTER EDUCATION:

Young Latinos need greater education on voting and elections. Common questions include but are not limited to: **How do I register to vote? Does my vote matter?** Every moment is an opportunity to educate the next generation of Latino voters. Doing so will help these young people understand their power in changing their communities.



## LATINO YOUTH ARE MOVING DIGITAL:

Latino youth are increasingly communicating with one another digitally. We need better use of technology so that Latino youth can talk politics, organize around issues, and obtain news on elections.



## ENGAGEMENT IS CRITICAL TO TURNOUT:

Close to 2/3 of Latinos in California reported that candidates and political parties did not engage them in the past presidential election.<sup>(4)</sup> Latino youth are our community's greatest asset. Their commitment to racial justice, economic opportunity, and protecting our planet is what is driving policies across all levels of our government. Engaging our Latino youth on the issues they face establishes their trust in government and encourages their participation in elections.



## NEED FOR PHILANTHROPIC INVESTMENT:

Less than 10% of philanthropic dollars in the state have gone towards Latino civic engagement since 2011<sup>(5)</sup>. Latino-led nonprofits in California are the ones closest to the ground working with Latino youth. Their voter engagement efforts should be supported by the philanthropic community on a timely, robust manner.



## VOTING IS A LEARNED HABIT:

Voting is a habit that begins first at home. We need greater exposure opportunities for Latino youth and their families to civic engagement. Connecting Latino youth to the electoral process at an early age builds interest in voting.

**“We overthink voting because we don’t know the process. That scares us and we don’t go out to vote.”**

**– Los Angeles Youth Working Group Participant**

Mobilizing young Latinos to the ballot box will require multiple approaches and commitments from across sectors. A few key strategies to consider are offered below.

## EXPOSE LATINO YOUTH TO VOTING EARLY AND OFTEN:

### High School Voter Education Weeks

54% of California's public school students are Latino. Elected officials, nonprofits, and school districts must promote civic engagement, voter registration, and voter education in schools during California's High School Voter Education Weeks. See also Power of Democracy, a group working to increase civics education in California.

### Promote Student Poll Worker Service

Students can earn money and extra credit for school, while helping to administer elections and gaining exposure to the political process. San Francisco and Orange County student poll worker programs are models to consider.

## PROVIDE PRACTICAL, TARGETED VOTER EDUCATION:

### Incorporate technology and mass media

Latino youth are heavy text users and consumers of digital media. Using these tools can educate voters when elections occur, locate polling places, and explain why elections matter.

For example, in 2016, over 30k Californians (17-25 years old) registered to vote via a Facebook reminder before the election.<sup>(6)</sup>

## INCREASE VOTER REGISTRATION:

### Automatic voter registration – one way to register Latinos at scale

Specific policies include New Motor Voter Law and pre-registration of 16 and 17-year olds.

### Establish cross-sector partnerships

Nonprofits and philanthropy must work together to pool resources to register more young Latino voters.

The Latino Community Foundation's "Yo Voy a Votar, Y Tu?" Campaign, in partnership with three Latino-led nonprofits, registered 6,500 Latino youth at concerts during the 2016 Presidential election.

## RESTRUCTURE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FUNDING:

### Fund community organizing

It's the issues that motivate people to the ballot box. Latino-led nonprofits working around criminal justice and the environment, for example, will need general operating funding to inspire voting as a tool for social change among community members.

### Diversify philanthropic staff and boards

Many organizations are overlooked for civic engagement funding because of the lack of diversity in philanthropic boards and staff. Hiring people from diverse backgrounds can help advocate for new organizations to acquire funding for their civic engagement work.

In the next five years, Latino youth in California will have the opportunity to assert their civic power by voting in a midterm election, a presidential election, and even participate in the 2020 U.S. Census.

As leaders in politics, nonprofits, and philanthropy, we must all work together to engage our next generation of Latino voters and build a state that is inclusive of all our interests.

Until then, the push to make California a more representative democracy continues.

**“Political orientation should not just happen within the four walls of an institution. It should also happen in neighborhood parks, where people are connected.”**

**– Sammy Nuñez,  
Fathers & Families of San Joaquin**

Find out more about Latino Community Foundation  
[www.latinocf.org](http://www.latinocf.org) | Social media [@LatinoCommFdn](https://twitter.com/LatinoCommFdn)

(1) Mindy Romero, “As California Goes, So Goes the Nation? U.S. Demographic Change and the Latino Vote,” University of California, Davis, California Civic Engagement Project, January 2016, p. 2, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57b8c7ce15d5dbf599fb46ab/t/57ffe74029687f7dc1b7a91a/1476388678377/ucdaviscepjan2016report.pdf>

(2) Ibid.

(3) The Leadership California Institute, “The Status of Latinos in California: An Analysis of the Growing Latino Population, Voting Trends and Elected Representation, <http://leadershipcaliforniainstitute.org/sites/all/files/Status%20of%20Latinos%20Report%20Preview.pdf>

(4) Latino Decisions, “Latino Decisions 2016 Election Eve Poll,” <http://www.latinovote2016.com/app/#all-ca-all>

(5) Foundation Center: Foundation Funding for U.S. Democracy, <http://democracy.foundationcenter.org/>

(6) Niraj Chokshi, “Facebook Helped Drive a Voter Registration Surge, Election Officials Say,” New York Times, October 12, 2016, [https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/13/us/politics/facebook-helped-drive-a-voter-registration-surge-election-officials-say.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/13/us/politics/facebook-helped-drive-a-voter-registration-surge-election-officials-say.html?_r=0)

**Thank you to all the people and organizations below who made this report possible.**

## **Elected Officials**

Supervisor Luis Alejo, Monterey County, CA  
Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard, Los Angeles, CA  
State Assemblyman Dr. Joaquin Arambula, Fresno, CA  
State Assemblywoman Anna Caballero, Salinas, CA  
School Board Member Nancy Chaires Espinoza, Elk Grove, CA  
Mayor Robert Garcia, Long Beach, CA  
Mayor Robert Gonzales, San Fernando, CA  
School Board Member Shanthi Gonzales, Oakland, CA  
State Senator Ben Hueso, San Diego, CA  
Councilwoman Esmeralda Soria, Fresno, CA

## **Nonprofit Leaders**

Susana De Anda, Community Water Center  
Davin Cardenas, North Bay Organizing Project  
Camila Chavez, Dolores Huerta Foundation  
Antonio Diaz, PODER  
Crissy Gallardo & Staff, Faith in the Valley  
Maricela Gutierrez, Services, Immigrant Rights & Education Network (SIREN)  
Ben Monterosso, Mi Familia Vota  
Sammy Nunez, Fathers & Families of San Joaquin  
Sandra Perez, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO)  
Benjamin Torres & Staff, CD Tech  
Karla Zombro, California Calls

## **Philanthropic Leaders**

Orson Aguilar, The Greenlining Institute  
Arnoldo Avalos, The Avalos Foundation  
Ludovic Blain, Color of Democracy Fund  
Maria Blanco, University of California  
Sonia Gonzales, California Bar Foundation  
Luis Sanchez, YVote

## **Other**

Alma Flores, City of Santa Ana, CA  
Jill Fox, San Francisco Elections Division  
Ben Hamatake, Orange County Registrar of Voters  
Mindy Romero, California Civic Engagement Research Project, UC Davis  
James Schwab, California Secretary of State's Office  
UC Berkeley Goldman School of Public Policy  
Kurston Cook  
Hemly Ordoñez  
Leila Pedersen