

An Awakened Giant: The Hispanic Electorate Is Likely to Double by 2030

The record number of Latinos who cast ballots for president this year are the leading edge of an ascendant ethnic voting bloc that is likely to double in size within a generation, according to a Pew Hispanic Center [analysis](#) of U.S. Census Bureau data, Election Day exit polls and a new nationwide survey of Hispanics.

The nation's 53 million Hispanics comprise 17% of the total U.S. population, but just 10% of all voters this year, according to the national exit poll. But Hispanics' share of the electorate will rise quickly for several reasons.

The most important is that Hispanics are by far the nation's youngest ethnic group. Their median age is 27 years—and just 18 years among native-born Hispanics—compared with 42 years for that of white non-Hispanics. In the coming decades their share of the age-eligible electorate will rise markedly through generational replacement alone.

According to Pew Hispanic Center projections, Hispanics will account for 40% of the growth in the eligible electorate in the U.S. between now and 2030, at which time 40 million Hispanics will be eligible to vote, up from 23.7 million now.

Moreover, if Hispanics' relatively low voter participation and naturalization rates were to increase to the levels of other groups, the number of votes that Hispanics actually cast in future elections would easily double within two decades.

If the national exit poll's estimate proves correct that 10% of all voters this year were Hispanic, it would mean that as many as 12.5 million Hispanics cast ballots. But perhaps a more illuminating way to analyze the distinctive characteristics of the Hispanic electorate—current and future—is to parse the more than 40 million Hispanics in the United States who did not vote or were not eligible to vote in 2012. They are:

- **Adults who were eligible to vote but chose not to (11.2 million):** The estimated 44% to 53% turnout rate of eligible Hispanic voters in 2012 is in the same range as the 50% who turned out in 2008. But it still likely lags well below the turnout rate of whites and blacks this year.
- **Adult legal permanent residents (5.4 million):** The naturalization rate among legal immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean trails that of other legal immigrants by a sizable margin - 49% versus 72% according to a Pew Hispanic analysis of the 2011 March Current Population Survey (CPS). A new Pew Hispanic survey finds that a major reason Hispanic immigrants naturalize is to gain civil and legal rights, including the right to vote. The survey also finds that more than nine-in-ten (93%) Hispanic immigrants who have not naturalized yet say they would if they could. Of those who haven't, many cite administrative costs and barriers, a lack of English proficiency and a lack of initiative. The flexing of electoral muscle by Hispanic voters this year conceivably could encourage more legal immigrants to become naturalized citizens.
- **Adult unauthorized immigrants (7.1 million):** This group would only become eligible to vote if Congress were to pass a law creating a pathway to citizenship for them. Judging by the immediate post-election comments of leading Democratic and Republican lawmakers, the long-dormant prospects for passage of such legislation appear to have been revived by Latinos' strong showing at the polls.
- **Too young to vote (17.6 million):** The vast majority (93%) of Latino youths are U.S.-born citizens and thus will automatically become eligible to vote once they turn 18. Today, some 800,000 young Latinos turn 18 each year, but by 2030, this number could grow to 1 million per year, adding a potential electorate of more than 16 million new Latino voters to the rolls by 2030.

Generational replacement alone will push the age- and citizen-eligible Latino electorate to about 40 million within two decades. If the turnout rate of this electorate over time converges with that of whites and blacks in recent elections (66% and 65% respectively in 2008), that will mean twice as many Latino voters could be casting ballots in 2032 as did in 2012.

The report, "[An Awakened Giant: The Hispanic Electorate Is Likely to Double by 2030](#)," authored by Paul Taylor, director, Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, research associate, Jeffrey S. Passel, senior demographer, and Mark Hugo Lopez, associate director, is available at the Pew Hispanic Center's website, www.pewhispanic.org.

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