

MINORITY MYTH VS. REALITY

At least this time around, white voters will elect the president.

You can't blame political operatives for hyping the role of minorities in November's presidential contest. They need only look to the 2000 election, where the outcomes in two ethnically diverse states, Florida and New Mexico, were determined by 537 and 366 votes, respectively. Clearly, every vote counts. So the push to reach out to growing minority populations makes sense. Also, the census reveals that minorities account for more than one-third of our national population, and that whites make up less than half the populations in four states—California, Texas, New Mexico and Hawaii—as other states head in that direction.

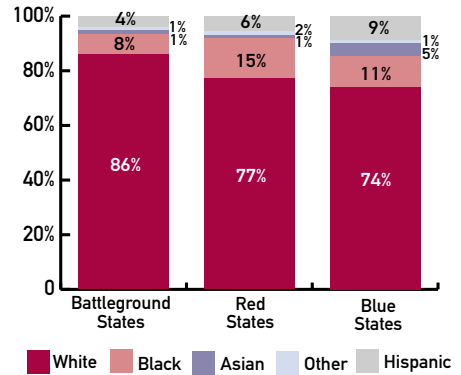
The quest for minority votes was obvious at the Republican Party Convention, which highlighted the president's Latino nephew, George P. Bush, Maryland's African American Lt. Gov. Michael S. Steele and Asian American Labor Secretary Elaine Chao. California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, too, extolled opportunities for immigrants under Republican Party principles. While the previous election showed the GOP behind Democrats among minority voters (by 9-to-1 among blacks, 2-to-1 among Hispanics, and 6-to-4 among Asian Americans), they are hoping to make inroads. Hispanic commenta-

tor Jorge Ramos stated in *The Latino Wave* that Bush will win if he gets more than 3 in 10 Latino votes in November.

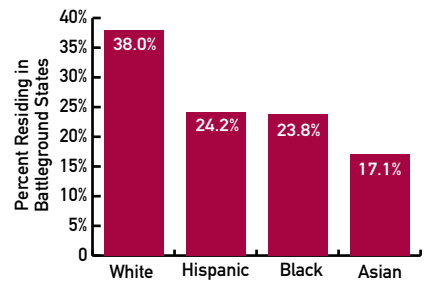
Democrats also count on Hispanics to win growing Western battleground states, like Arizona and Nevada (See "Battling Battlegrounds," *American Demographics*, September 2004) and have given New Mexico's Hispanic governor, Bill Richardson, a starring role in the national campaign; not to mention the Party's efforts to energize black voters with the likes of Jesse Jackson and former President Clinton.

Despite the hoopla over minority votes, demographic facts would indicate that this emphasis is overstated. One such fact is that minorities, Hispanics particularly, have a voter "translation problem." That is, their representation in the overall population grossly outweighs their representation in the voting population. A large share of the Latino community is under age 18, and among adults, they are less likely to be citizens, to register to vote and to vote. Nationally, of every 100 Hispanics, only 40 are voting-age citizens, 23 are likely to register, and just 18 will show up at the polls. These national statistics even overstate voting states with low citizenship rates like Nevada, Georgia or North Carolina, but understates voting propensity in higher citizenship states like New Mexico.

White Voters Dominate Battleground States

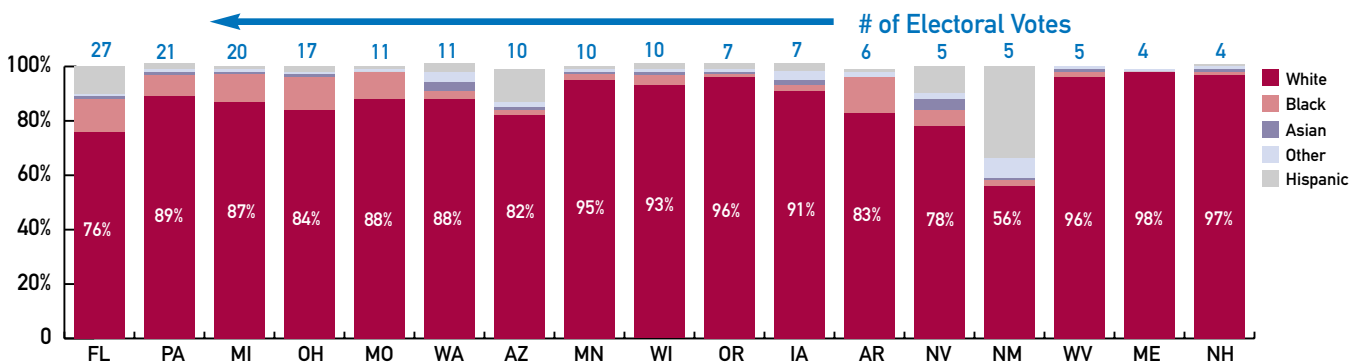


Fewer Minority Voters Reside in Battleground States



Source: William H. Frey analysis of US Census 2003 Current Population Survey and other sources

Racial Composition of Battleground States



Source: William H. Frey analysis of U.S. Census 2003 Current Population Survey and other sources

While fewer than one-fifth of all Hispanics vote, the African American population-to-voter ratio is significantly higher. Of 100 blacks in the total population, 37 wind up voting. Almost twice as many African Americans as Hispanics will cast ballots nationally, despite there being more Hispanics in the overall population.

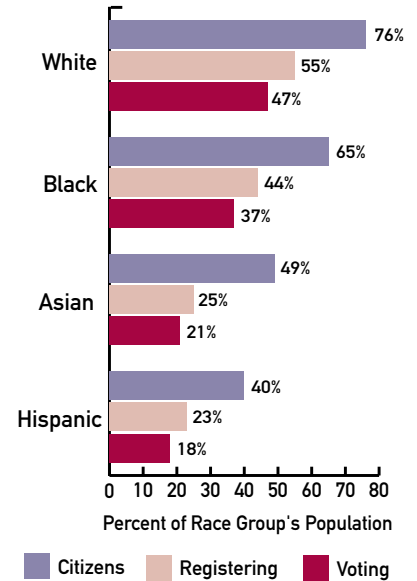
The “translation” of population to voters is highest for whites. Almost half of all whites in the total population (47 of 100) will vote. Indeed, 4 in 5 voters are white compared with 2 in 3 in the population overall. In the nation’s battleground states, whites will account for a whopping 86 percent of those who cast ballots.

Minorities are clustered in states that, historically, are less likely to be up for grabs. Fully 64 percent of Hispanic voters reside either in the safe “Red” Republican state of Texas, or the safe “Blue” Democratic states of California, New York, New Jersey and Illinois—all states that contain historical urban gateways for Latin American immigrants and their descendants. Eighty-three percent of Asian voters reside in immigrant gateway Red or Blue states

(55 percent reside in California, New York and Hawaii). African Americans’ historically strong presence in the South diminished during the “Great Migration” northward up to the 1990s. But recent reverse migration among African Americans back to the South introduces more Democratic-leaning black voters to Red stronghold states, although not enough to tip the balance to Blue. At the same time, many blacks are leaving Midwest battleground states, so their migration may ironically have a bigger political impact on the states they’re exiting.

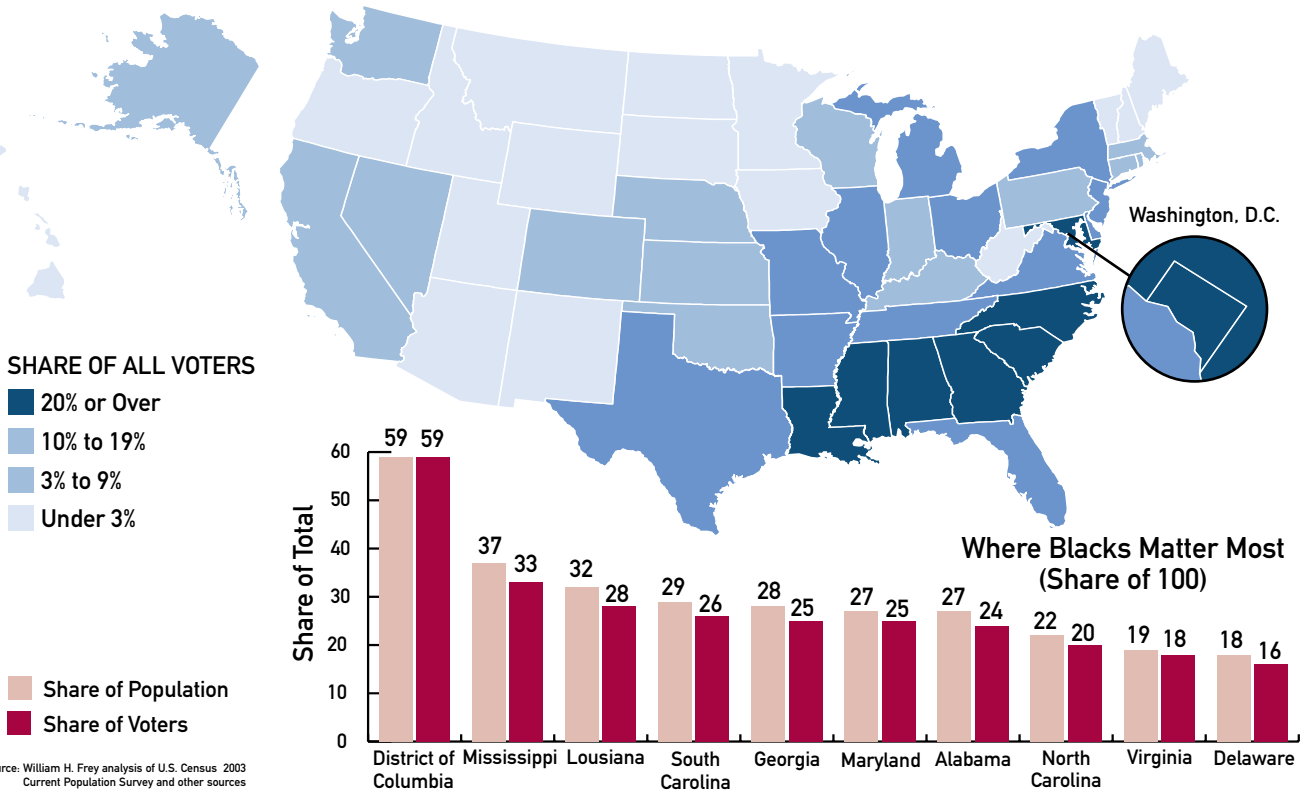
Meanwhile, almost 2 in 5 whites reside in battleground states. While they do not dominate all battlegrounds, they are the vast majority in states with large electoral votes like Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan and Missouri, not to mention a swath of smaller battleground states. While it is possible that minorities could affect the outcome in cliffhanger states like Florida and New Mexico, sheer demographic weight suggests that this year’s presidential election will be determined on mostly white battlegrounds.

Minorities Vote Less (PERCENT OF RACIAL GROUP THAT REGISTERS/VOTES)



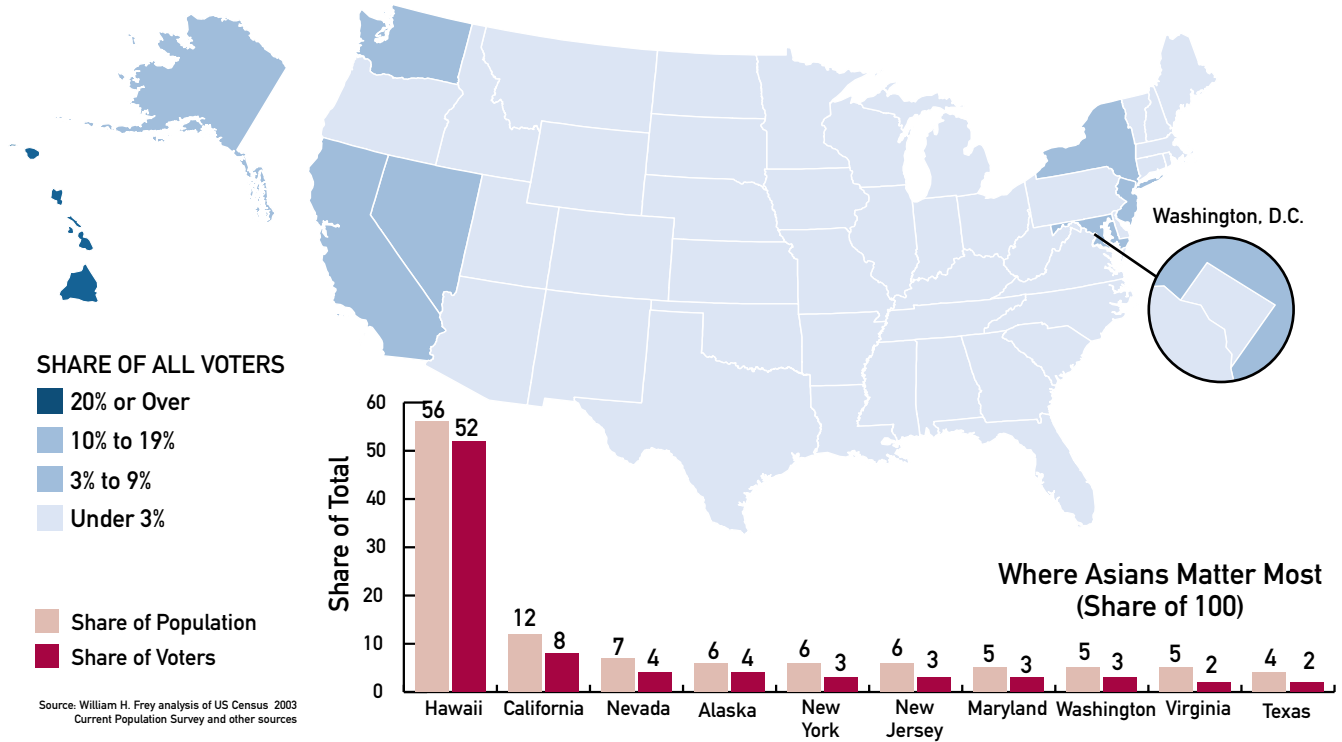
Source: William H. Frey analysis of U.S. Census 2003 Current Population Survey and other sources

BLACK Share of Voters by State



Source: William H. Frey analysis of U.S. Census 2003 Current Population Survey and other sources

Asian Share of Voters by State



HISPANIC Share of Voters by State

