



## Primary concerns

The Asian-American and Latino communities have historically been underrepresented voices in California politics, despite each community's significant population statewide. New data from the **California Civic Engagement Project**, part of the USC Price School of Public Policy, predicts that Latino and Asian-American voters will represent just less than 30% of eligible voters and turnout in the March 3 primary, based on increased voter turnout in 2008 and 2016. Meanwhile, voter turnout among youth of all ethnicities is expected to continue its downward trend. **Mindy Romero**, the project's founder and director, outlines its latest research.

### This report shows rising numbers of Latino and Asian-American voters. What can that be attributed to?

One is just the population growth that we continue to see for the Latino and Asian-American communities in California, and then there is how that impacts the size of their voting bloc ... So we said if turnout for Latinos and Asian Americans stays the same in the 2020 primary as it was in the 2016 primary ... given the population growth that we've seen, it would mean that they've increased their share of voters, their overall number of voters and their overall share of voters to the highest share we've seen, and the highest number that we've seen for a primary.

### At the same time, your data shows declining youth vote.

Again, demographics. So we're an aging society, we all know that, and the flip side of that is we have fewer young people ... [It's] an overall decline and that is all documented by the California Department of Finance. Because of reduced birth rates, lower fertility rates and then on the flip side for older folks, people living longer themselves and fertility rates that peaked and produced a larger cohort of older folks. ... You have a declining youth population, you have increasing aging population of voters, and that just means it's more of a challenge for everyone that does work to mobilize the youth vote, that wants young people to be heard, to be part of politics. ... Campaigns by design are often looking for the likely voter model, running



Mindy Romero, founder and director of the California Civic Engagement Project, elaborates on the state's changing voter demographics.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MINDY ROMERO

the numbers, it's going to be even more of a challenge to focus on young people potentially given that the younger population is declining and the older population is growing.

### What would a smart campaign be doing with this information?

A campaign that doesn't take the Latino and Asian-American vote seriously is going to be potentially sacrificing a huge proportion of the voting bloc in the primary. ... [If] you combine them together, we're projecting about 30% of actual voters—not potential voters, actual voters. The other thing to think about in the presidential primary is that the delegates, of course, are proportional in our state. So there are congressional districts across the state where Latinos and Asian Americans make up a very large, much larger proportion of voters and potential voters, and if campaigns aren't aggressively, sincerely outreaching to them, then they're missing huge possibilities when it comes to delegates.

With youth, the declining numbers do not mean that campaigns shouldn't be reaching out to young people ... There's lots of research that shows that if you do deep contact with young voters, and you connect with them on the issues they care about, and you ask them to vote—actually ask them to vote—then they're much more likely to actually turn out. So it might mean there's some additional work that might need to be done with young voters, but there really can be a payoff there, so campaigns should not write them off. □

See the California Civic Engagement Project's 2020 primary election fact sheets at [ccep.usc.edu/fact-sheets](http://ccep.usc.edu/fact-sheets).

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