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Two Perspectives on Demographic Changes in the States Ahead of the 2020 Presidential Election

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Prologue

The States of Change: Demographics and Democracy project is a collaboration of the Bipartisan Policy Center, the Brookings Institution, the Center for American Progress, and the Democracy Fund. The project began in 2014 and has been generously funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Democracy Fund. In year one, States of Change examined the changing demography of the nation and projected the racial and ethnic composition of every state to 2060. The detailed findings, available in the initial report, were discussed at the project's February 2015 conference. In year two, the project's leaders commissioned six papers on the policy implications of the demographic changes, two each from different political perspectives on the significance of the changes for the family, for the economy and workforce, and for the social contract. A second report, released with the papers in February 2016, projected possible presidential election outcomes from 2016 to 2032 using data from the project's first report. In year three, the project commissioned two papers from political strategists on demographic change and its impact on political campaigns. A third report, released at the project's February 2017 conference, considered the impact of demographic change on representation in the political system. Last year, in conjunction with the release of a report on presidential elections after the pattern-breaking results of the 2016 election, the project commissioned two papers looking at future demographic coalitions and their impact on electoral outcomes. This year, the project releases a report on how demographic shifts are transforming the Republican and Democratic parties with new simulations charting the ever-changing electoral landscape for Republicans and Democrats that foreshadow what could happen in the 2020 primaries and general election. The authors of this year's papers focus on how these demographic shifts may materialize in the states and their impact on statewide and national electoral results.

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Party Coalitions and Demographic Change: How Latinos Change Politics in California and Texas

By Matt A. Barreto and Angela Gutierrez

The demographics of the United States have changed dramatically in the last 50 years. What was once a majority white country is on the verge of becoming a majority-minority country. These demographic changes have already occurred in a number of states. California has been a majority-minority state since the 2000 census, and in 2014, Latinos surpassed whites to become the largest racial group in the state.¹ Changes to the demographic makeup of the United States are bound to have an important impact not only in the workplace and society but in the makeup of the nation's political representation. Already demographic changes have led to growing pains and political backlash among different segments of the population. This paper presents an argument about how demographic change and reactionary politics influence political outcomes.

The political history of the state of California is a microcosm of what Americans can expect to happen on a much larger level in the years to come. Today, there is little doubt as to how California will vote in presidential and senatorial elections. Since 1992, Democratic presidential candidates have carried the state with increasingly wide vote margins.² But this was not always the case. Between 1952 and 1988, the United States held 11 presidential elections, but the only time the Democratic presidential candidate received California's electoral votes was in 1964, when Lyndon Johnson ran for president.³ California was once an important state for the Republican Party: The John Birch Society was founded in Orange County, and women in the state led a strong grassroots effort to get Barry Goldwater on the ballot.⁴ Additionally, California was home to two Republican presidents—Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. So how did California go from a Republican state to a solidly Democratic state? Demographic change coupled with reactionary politics are key to the story of California—and will be key for many other states in the future.

Historically, research on new immigrant groups has suggested that Latinos and Asians are less likely to engage in politics.⁵ In part, this was due to being new to the country, lacking political socialization at home, and having lower levels of socioeconomic status and education. In addition, Latinos and Asians were once far less likely to be on the receiving end of campaigns' political outreach or mobilization efforts.⁶ These factors restrained Latinos' and Asians' electoral participation. But if and when these groups did start to participate, scholars did not expect them to shift dramatically in favor of one party over another.⁷ Though black voters have long stood with the Democratic Party, their history in the United States is very different from that of other minority groups.⁸ Some wondered whether these newer groups would socialize into the political process and hold similar allegiances.⁹ But for the most part, scholars agreed that the Democratic Party's stances on social and fiscal issues had the potential to divide Latino voters. The narrative of the socially conservative but fiscally liberal voter pervades the academic literature on Latino partisanship.^{10,11}

California's demographic transition provides insight into how national party coalitions may change as Asian and Latino voters increasingly enter the electorate. Table 1 shows the registration patterns in the state of California by political party for the presidential election years between 1992 and 2016, when California was undergoing dramatic demographic changes. The number of registered Democrats in the state has stayed fairly consistent, while the number of registered Republicans has seen a steady decline. Why? The number of voters with no partisan preference is on the rise. Voting trends indicate that this is not simply due to a large pool of independents. Instead, this non-partisan trend is increasingly shifting the electorate in favor of the Democrats. While the Democratic Party is not increasing in size in California, the decline of Republican identifiers is certainly working in its favor. So, are Latinos actually Republicans and just don't know it? No. It's more that Latinos don't know if they are Democrats,

but they certainly know that they are *not* Republicans. One factor in the decline of Republican Party registration in California was the reactionary policies placed on the ballot and supported by the Republican Party and other political elites at a time when the Latino population in the state was expanding.¹²

Table 1. Partisan Registration for the State of California, 1992-2016

Year	Republicans	Democrats	Other	No Preference
1992	39%	47%	4%	10%
1996	37%	47%	5%	11%
2000	35%	46%	5%	14%
2004	35%	44%	4%	18%
2008	31%	44%	4%	20%
2012	29%	44%	6%	21%
2016	26%	45%	5%	25%

Source: California Secretary of State.¹³

Republicans felt that a response to the changing demographics would be beneficial to increasing voter turnout among Republicans in the state. However, instead of embracing Asians and Latinos, a potentially new pool of Republican voters, they decided to go after undocumented immigrants in the state, which only further alienated the growing minority population. This came to a head in 1994, when legislators placed Proposition 187 on the ballot.¹⁴ Prop 187 sought to prohibit non-U.S. citizens from benefiting from public services such as health care and public-school education. The measure additionally required doctors, nurses, and teachers to report anyone who they suspected was in the country illegally.^{15,16} At the time, then-Governor Pete Wilson was one of the strongest supporters of the proposition. He was looking to be re-elected in the 1994 election and chose to make Prop 187 a key focus of his campaign. In November 1994, Wilson was re-elected with 55 percent of the vote, and Prop 187 passed with 59 percent of the vote.¹⁷ Despite this short-term win, Wilson and Prop 187 would change the state forever, ushering in a new wave of Latino Democratic voters who Republicans were never able to successfully engage.

The proposition was the first of many voted on during the 1990s that were viewed as a reactionary response to the changing face of California.¹⁸ Shortly after, Californians voted on Proposition 209, which eliminated affirmative action in the state in 1996, and Proposition 227, which created an English-only school day and removed bilingual education from public schools in 1998.¹⁹ The Republican Party in California supported the propositions—and voters took notice. Latino voters were not the only ones turned off by the anti-immigrant rhetoric. Research conducted after these propositions found that there was a shift in partisan identification among both Latinos and younger white voters in the state.²⁰ It is possible that Republicans did not expect backlash from Latino voters given that the propositions targeted undocumented people who are not eligible to vote. However, many Latinos live in mixed-status households or have undocumented family and friends—all of which led to a lot of angry Latino voters.²¹ In addition,



Republicans may not have anticipated that younger white Californian voters were progressive on the issue of immigration, as they grew up in a more diverse, immigrant-connected state. After the passage of these propositions, Latino voters in the state reported being more aware of political events, and voter turnout was higher among immigrants who naturalized in the 1990s compared with those who naturalized previously, suggesting that more Latinos registered as a response to the anti-immigrant sentiment in the state.^{22,23} When reactionary policies come to the forefront, the electorate will not be complacent. Instead, there will be a steady transition toward the party that is most inclusive. California's transition toward the Democratic Party, for example, has only intensified in recent years. After Donald Trump's 2016 campaign, which he suffused with reactionary anti-immigrant rhetoric, California doubled down on its blue-state, liberal identity. Focusing on the Orange County area, Democrats were able to flip seven congressional districts, reducing Republicans to seven out of 53 congressional seats in the state.²⁴

DEMOGRAPHIC AND POLITICAL CHANGE: A 10-YEAR TRANSITION

Reactionary politics are primarily brought on due to demographic changes and a feeling that traditional groups are under threat.²⁵ California's experience with these policies occurred just as the state's Latino and Asian populations were starting to rapidly increase. A similar story is currently happening right now in Arizona and Texas. However, though Latinos and Asians are facing backlash politics in these states, shifts in partisan coalitions won't occur overnight. We predict a much slower process—but a steady one nonetheless. For California, the shift from a red state to a solidly blue state took roughly 10 years. In 1990, California's population was 58 percent white, 7 percent black, 25 percent Latino, and 10 percent Asian. By 2000, whites were down to 50 percent of the state population, while Latinos grew to 31 percent and Asians to 13 percent (and blacks ticked slightly downward to 6 percent). During the 1990s and early 2000s in California, not only were the state's racial demographics changing, but there was rapid political integration, especially for Latino and Asian Americans.

For states with similar populations, where soon the majority-white population will no longer be the majority, it is probable that, like California, it will take these states about 10 years before changes in party coalitions will take hold of political outcomes. Whether political change is rapid or slow depends on the degree of the threats minority populations face and the strength of the activism they conduct. However, some states can undergo demographic changes and become majority minority without reactionary politics, reducing the likelihood that they will experience dramatic changes to their voting coalitions. Different states take different approaches to changing demographics. For instance, as governor, George W. Bush took a more inclusive approach to Latinos and immigrants in the state of Texas, which is likely why the increase in the Latino population did not significantly shake up voting coalitions there, even as California experienced a dramatic shift. While the Latino population had been growing in Texas, there was no political urgency or threats to minority populations to accelerate Latino participation in the Democratic Party, and the Texas Democratic Party itself did very little to recruit new Latino voters in the 1990s and 2000s. However, if Texas legislators do take up reactionary policies that are perceived as political threats, or if there is a shift in political elites' rhetoric that targets or even attacks minorities, Texans can expect to see a more rapid and dramatic partisan shift in party coalitions as large minority populations voice their concerns.

THE 10-YEAR TRANSITION IN ACTION

The changes to partisan coalitions currently underway in Arizona, and the increased diversity to the Democratic coalition in the state, first started to take shape when Arizona Senate Bill (S.B.) 1070 passed in the state legislature in 2010. At that time, whites made up 58 percent of Arizona's population, similar to California's white population in 1990, and Latinos made up 30 percent of Arizona's population. By 2017, the American Community Survey reported that non-Hispanic whites had dropped five points to 53 percent of the population, while the Latino population continued to grow. Currently, the white population in the state is also significantly older than the minority population, and it is projected that by 2024, minorities will make up the majority of the state population.^{26,27} Given these demographic shifts, the makeup of the partisan coalitions, especially the Democratic coalition, will undergo substantial transformations.

The new law, S.B. 1070, proposed by Republican legislators, only amplified the backlash politics in Arizona. Known as the “papers please” law, it allowed local and state police to ask individuals for proof of citizenship if they suspected he or she were undocumented. S.B. 1070 was widely publicized nationally due to its controversial nature.²⁸ The law allowed police to use racial profiling when conducting stops, and many felt this unfairly targeted the state’s Latino population. Nationally, public-opinion polling found general support for S.B. 1070 among whites, but the bill was strongly opposed by a majority of Latinos across all generations.²⁹ In Arizona, response to the state law was strong: A number of groups held demonstrations to signal public disapproval. Ultimately, the U.S. Justice Department challenged S.B. 1070 in the courts, and the U.S. Supreme Court determined that many of the law’s provisions were unconstitutional.³⁰ The media attention garnered by S.B. 1070 highlighted minority groups’ unequal treatment in the state, which spurred shifts in partisan trends. Similar to California, Arizonan Latinos especially opposed the reactionary politics of the “papers please” law; what’s more, younger white voters also voiced a more progressive view on immigration politics. In essence, Arizona was having its Pete Wilson–Prop. 187 moment. Only playing the part of anti-immigrant politician Pete Wilson was none other than Arizona’s Sheriff Joe Arpaio.

Arpaio, who had served as Maricopa County’s sheriff for 24 years, poured fuel on the fire of anti-immigrant sentiment among whites and ramped up fear among Latinos. A staunch conservative, Arpaio is infamous for his position on immigration.³¹ He boasted of his disregard for the court order to cease profiling and detaining suspected undocumented immigrants and of his refusal to turn them over to federal immigration lawyers. In 2017, the courts found him guilty of ignoring the court order, but President Trump pardoned Arpaio before he served any time.³² Arpaio tried to leverage his notoriety to run for re-election, but due to the changing demographics in the county, he lost his re-election bid in 2016.³³

Maricopa County is not the only county in Arizona that is experiencing demographic and partisan change. Table 2 displays the party registration rates for the state from 2008 to 2018. The table indicates that the share of registered Democrats and Republicans overall has decreased over time while the number of “other” voters has increased. Interestingly, while Republican Party identifiers are decreasing, the percentage of Democratic identifiers is creeping back up from its low of 29 percent in 2014. The increasing number of “other” voters in the state is also worth noting. Are these voters more likely to help or hurt the Republican Party in Arizona? The 2018 midterm elections seem to indicate that these other voters are similar to the voters in California who claim to not have a partisan preference: They are helping the Democrats.

Table 2. Partisan Registration for the State of California, 1992-2016

Year	Republicans	Democrats	Other
2008	37%	34%	29%
2010	36%	32%	32%
2012	36%	31%	33%
2014	35%	29%	36%
2016	34%	30%	36%
2018	35%	31%	34%

Source: Arizona Secretary of State.³⁴



Arizona's elections are already reflecting shifts in the state's voting coalitions. When Arizona Senator Jeff Flake decided to retire, he created an open seat in 2018 that many viewed as a possible pickup for the Democratic Party, which has been making inroads in the state over the years. Democrat U.S. Representative Kyrsten Sinema ran for Flake's against Republican U.S. Representative Martha McSally.³⁵ Democrats had not held a Senate seat in the state since 1995, but days after the election, Sinema emerged victorious—receiving 49.96 percent of the vote and besting her opponent by 55,900 votes.³⁶ In addition to Sinema's win in the Senate, Arizonans also elected a number of Democratic state legislators. The Democrats flipped four seats, increasing their share of the House state legislature to 29, while Republicans held on to the remaining 31.³⁷ These Democratic wins are also attributable to changes in the composition of Arizona's suburbs, where younger white and Latino voters are settling.³⁸

In light of the 2018 midterm elections, we expect that Arizona will continue to shift in the Democrats' favor. In 2020, non-college-educated whites may increase their support for the Republican Party, but even as these voters shift toward the Republican coalition, we anticipate that college-educated whites will continue to shift the state in a Democratic direction, and this will be more strongly felt as the Latino voting age population continues to increase. In Arizona, the percentage of Latino voters increased 3 percent from 2014 to 2018, while the percentage of white voters decreased 4 percent. For this reason, it is critical to focus on the emerging Latino voter population.

Figure 1. Arizona's Party Coalitions: Latinos and Asians/Other Swing Demographics

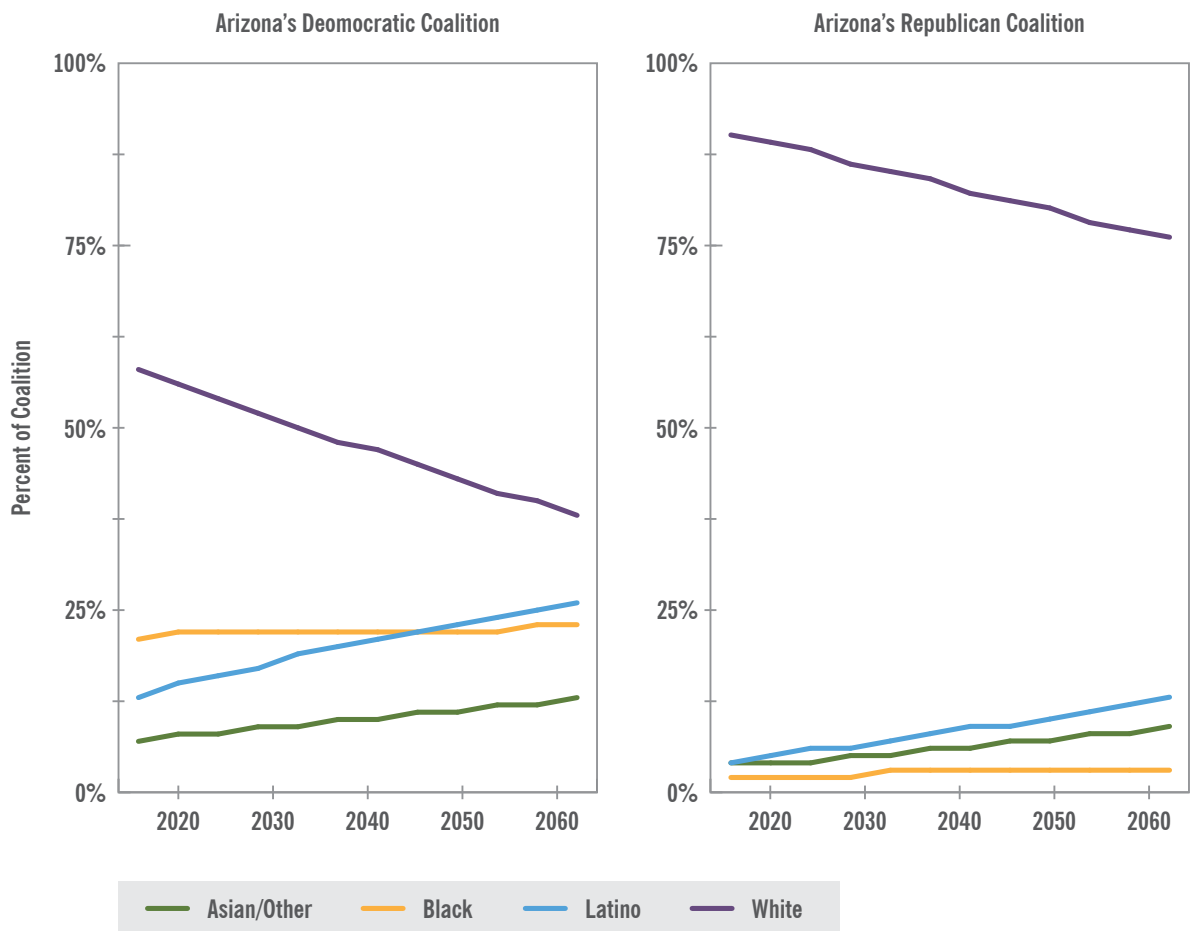


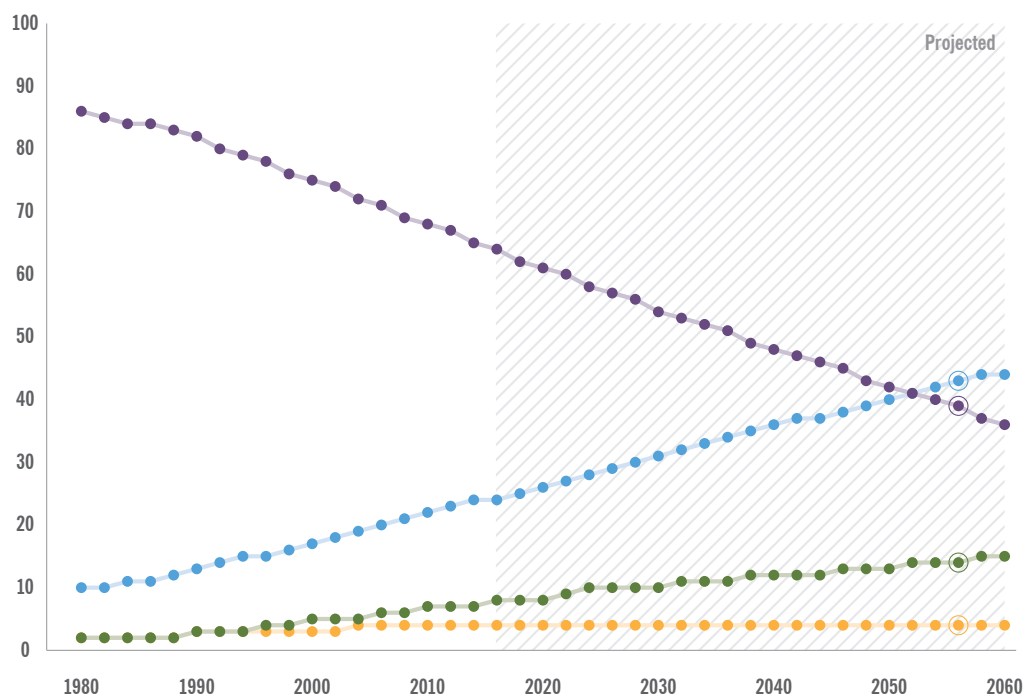
Figure 1 above displays what the composition of Arizona's parties will look like in the future if Hispanics, Asians, and other minorities swing 7.5 points in favor of the Democratic Party relative to the 2016 election vote. In the second panel, the figure shows that support for the Republican Party comes primarily from white voters, a trend that continues well into the next 40 years. For the Democratic Party, the first panel indicates that by 2020, whites will make up only 50 percent of Democratic voters. These shifts in voting, may lead the parties to employ different strategies in order to secure an electoral advantage. For the Democratic Party in particular, it will be important to advance policy positions that appeal broadly to all of the demographics that make up their coalition.

The States of Change project created a number of different electoral scenarios to forecast the results of future presidential elections, including the scenario above, in which Latinos and other non-black minorities increase their support for the Democratic Party in the 2020 election and beyond by 7.5 points relative to the 2016 election. If this were to occur, then not only would Democrats carry the popular vote nationally in 2020 by six points, but they would win the electoral college and flip Arizona. However, for such an outcome to happen, the Democratic Party in Arizona would need to engage in strong minority outreach.

This scenario is probable given the results of the 2018 midterm election. Not only will Latinos likely increase their support for the Democratic candidate, as time progresses, the Latino vote will be of greater importance to the Democratic Party. What is particularly interesting about Arizona is that whites currently make up a large majority of voters who are ages 65 and older, while the Latino population is composed of younger individuals. With a rapidly expanding Latino population and a significantly older white population, not only will Latinos become an important group to winning the state, but younger voters will have a greater say, too. According to exit polls in Arizona, voters ages 18 to 44 voted Democrat in the Senate race by a 21-point margin (59-38), driven by young Latinos and younger white voters who are increasingly less Republican than their parents.

So how likely is it that Latinos in Arizona will support the Democratic candidate in 2020? The Latino Decisions 2018 Election Eve poll leading up to the midterms indicated that Latinos in Arizona are as disapproving of Trump as Latinos in California; 74 percent of Latinos in that poll disapproved of the job the president was doing. If 2018 is any indication of what Americans can expect in the 2020 election, Latinos will continue to make Arizona a competitive state, as they make up a larger and larger share of the electorate.

Figure 2. Eligible Voters by Race in Arizona



Another possible shift in Arizona, however, would be if non-college-educated whites shifted five points toward the Republican Party and five points away from the Democratic Party relative to the 2016 election. If that were to occur, with no other changes in voting patterns, then States of Change projects a two-point increase in the share of white non-college-educated voters who make up the Republican Party. If such a scenario were to occur, 56 percent of the Republican Party in Arizona would be composed of non-college-educated whites. So, the Republican Party could make direct appeals to non-college-educated whites, particularly by making hard-line arguments on immigration, and win the state of Arizona in 2020.³⁹ But pandering to this portion of the electorate with reactionary politics surrounding immigration may not be a particularly fruitful long-term plan. According to States of Change data, Latinos will make up roughly 30 percent of the voting-age population in 2020, and the Latino population will continue to grow in size, surpassing the white voting-age population in fewer than 30 years. While hard-line appeals may attract some white voters to the Republican Party, they won't help the party expand its coalition among minority groups.⁴⁰

In the 2018 States of Change *America's Electoral Future* report, researchers conducted several trade-off scenarios to estimate 2020 and 2036 electoral outcomes when multiple demographic segments of voters shift.⁴¹ Based on the 10-year transition model and what happened in Arizona during the midterm elections, the most likely scenario involves white non-college-educated voters shifting toward the Republican Party, while college-educated whites and minorities shift toward the Democratic Party.⁴² Even with the loss of non-college-educated whites, the States of Change scenario counts Arizona as a win for the Democratic Party in the 2020 election. The reduction of college-educated white voters in the Republican Party might reduce the rate at which the Democratic Party diversifies, but it would not alter the types of Democratic appeals that would mobilize a diverse base. This suggests that if the Republican Party is serious about keeping Arizona a red state, then the GOP needs to make strong efforts to attract minority voters—particularly Latinos. But if increasing the share of Latino voters who make up their voting coalition in Arizona means toning down the anti-immigrant rhetoric, Republicans may also lose the most effective way to mobilize their primarily white base.

TEXAS

Texas is another interesting state where we expect rapid shifts in partisan coalitions. Similar to California, Latinos make up a large share of the state's population. As of 2018, the U.S. Census⁴³ estimates that non-Hispanic whites make up 42 percent of Texas's population, while Latinos make up 39 percent. Blacks make up the next largest group, totaling 12 percent of the state population, with Asians making up 5 percent of the population. But while Texas has a large minority population, historically those populations have not been as politically active as California's minority populations. In 2014, for example, only 46 percent of the Latino voting-age population in Texas were registered to vote, and of those registered, only 48 percent turned out to vote in the midterm elections. Overall, that means just 22 percent of Latino adults in Texas cast a ballot in the 2014 midterms.⁴⁴ While the 2014 midterms had low turnout nationally, the same pattern persisted in the 2012 presidential election. According to the U.S. Census Current Population Survey from November 2012, just 39 percent of Latino eligible voters in Texas cast a ballot; in California, 49 percent did. This 10-point gap in participation rates is striking. If Texas Latinos were engaged, mobilized, and integrated into politics at the same rate as they are in California, then Texas Latinos would have a major impact on state politics almost immediately—making Texas a battleground state.

Given that Latinos tend to vote Democratic, and that the demographics should favor the Democratic Party, why is it that Texas has not had a Democrat win the state's presidential votes since 1976? Like California, the minority portion of the state started growing in the 1990s. But while California was dealing with state-level reactionary politics, Texas was not.⁴⁵ While California was passing a strict anti-immigrant initiative, championed by an anti-immigrant governor in 1994, Texas gubernatorial candidate George W. Bush made the inclusion of Latinos and immigrants a centerpiece of his campaign, calling for a more inclusive and diverse Republican Party. By 2001, Republican Governor Rick Perry had signed the Texas DREAM Act into law. Thus, Texas did not confront anywhere near the scale of reactionary politics during the 1990s and early 2000s that California did. As a result, we argue that advocates have not mobilized Latino voters in the state the same way they mobilized California voters, which contributes to Texas's lower turnout levels and to the stasis in the size and makeup of the state's party coalitions. While there are not enough reactionary

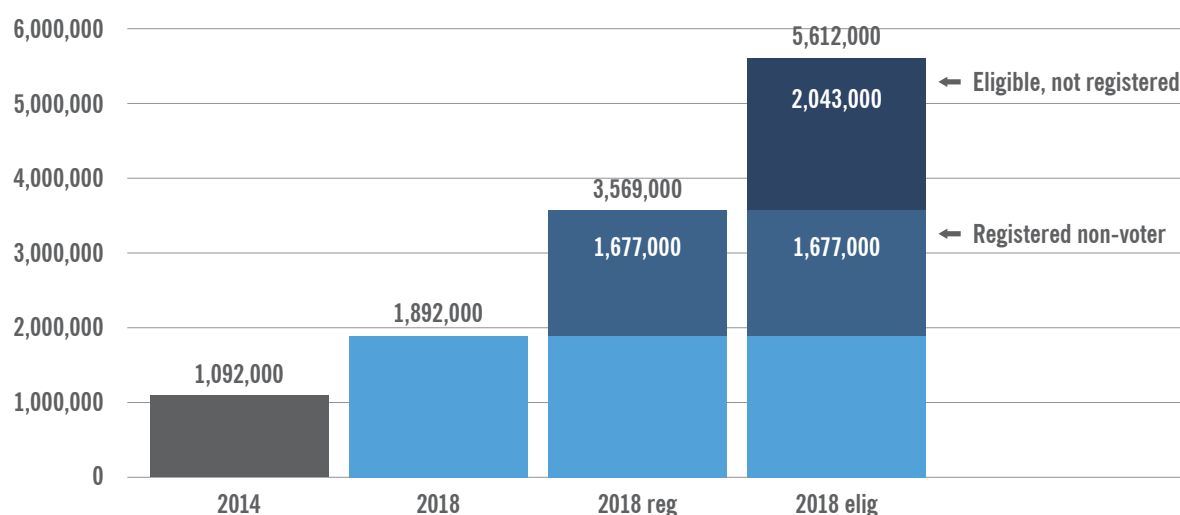
politics in Texas to threaten and thus mobilize Latino voters, Latinos in the state have also not received sufficient political outreach.⁴⁶ Politicians generally do not target low-propensity voters due to the simple fact that they are less likely to turn out. This leads to a cycle of under-mobilization in which many minorities and immigrant groups are left out of outreach efforts.⁴⁷ With little outreach, incentive, or motivation, Texas's Latino voters are complacent, going along with the status quo.

But that may be changing. There are indications that Latinos in Texas are reducing the gap in terms of numbers of registered voters and voter turnout. The increase may be due in part to reactionary politics at the national level. Then-candidate Trump angered many Latinos when, in his 2016 campaign, he characterized Mexicans as criminals and rapists; and his electoral college win was subsequently met with political demonstrations. In the days and months following Trump's election, thousands took to the streets in protest. But for Texans, the 2016 presidential election was not the only issue they were concerned about.

At the state level, Texas's 10-year transition began with the passage of Senate Bill 4 (SB4), which the Texas state legislature introduced in November 2016. The bill allows officials to question the immigration status of those detained or arrested by local law enforcement. What's more, local government department heads and elected officials can be punished if they do not comply with requests from agents to turn over immigrants.⁴⁸ SB4 was met with public outcry and numerous protests throughout the state.⁴⁹ Latino organizations immediately challenged the legality of SB4 in the courts. While the lower courts objected to the law and issued an injunction, last year the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth circuit unanimously decided that the law could go in effect.⁵⁰

With a Latino electorate now angered by reactionary politics, what does this mean for the future of Texas's party coalitions? Given that Texas is already heavily Latino, we expect the coalitions will shift sooner than might otherwise be expected. Mobilized eligible voters make up a sizable portion of the state population and have the potential to bring on rapid electoral changes at the state level. Figure 3, which compares the 2014 midterm turnout with 2018, shows that there was an increase of 800,000 Latino voters in the 2018 election. There are also an additional roughly 1.7 million registered non-voting Latinos, and 2 million eligible but not yet registered Latinos living in the state. If parties and political organizations invest efforts into mobilizing the Latino community, they could be a tremendous force in the 2020 election. It is also important to consider that the Latino population in Texas is young. Another 400,000 will be eligible to vote by the 2020 election. Basic voter outreach and youth-minded voter-registration drives could bring these new voters into the electorate. These numbers alone indicate the potential for a much more rapid shift in partisan control in the state.

Figure 3. The Latino Vote in Texas, 2014-2018



Source: Latino Decisions.⁵¹



Signs of a shift are also present in Republican candidates' diminishing vote margins. The Texas Senate race in 2018 is one indication of weakening Republican support in the state. This is mainly attributable to the Latino electorate's growth rate. While Democrat Beto O'Rourke did not manage to win a Texas Senate seat, the difference between him and Ted Cruz, the Republican candidate, was only 214,921 votes—a difference of 2.6 percent. Looking back at previous Senate elections, Table 1 displays the vote share for the Democratic and Republican parties for the last four Senate elections. Prior to the 2018 election, the smallest difference in vote share occurred in 2008, when the gap between Republican John Cornyn and Democrat Rick Noriega was 11.98 points. Democrats have gained substantial ground in a relatively short time. In part, this has to do with the shifting electorate. In terms of composition change, from 2014 to 2018, the number of Latinos in the Texas electorate increased by 3 percent, while the percent of white voters in the state decreased by 5 percent. Additionally, while 67 percent of white voters in Texas supported the Republican candidate, most of the gains made by Democrats in Texas are attributable to the increase in voter turnout among Latinos. According to Latino Decisions' Election Eve Poll 2018, 74 percent of Latinos voted for the Democratic candidate in the 2018 election.

Table 3. Vote Share for the Texas Senate, 2008-2018

Candidate	Vote Share	Year	Party
Cruz	50.89	2018	R
O'Rourke	48.33	2018	D
Cornyn	61.56	2014	R
Alameel	34.36	2014	D
Cruz	56.46	2012	R
Sadler	40.62	2012	D
Cornyn	54.82	2008	R
Noriega	42.84	2008	D

Source: Texas Secretary of State.⁵²

Given these trends, if campaigns continue to engage in Latino voter outreach in Texas, it is very likely that Texas will become a battleground state in the near future.

Figure 4. Texas Coalitions: Latinos and Asians/Other Swing Demographics

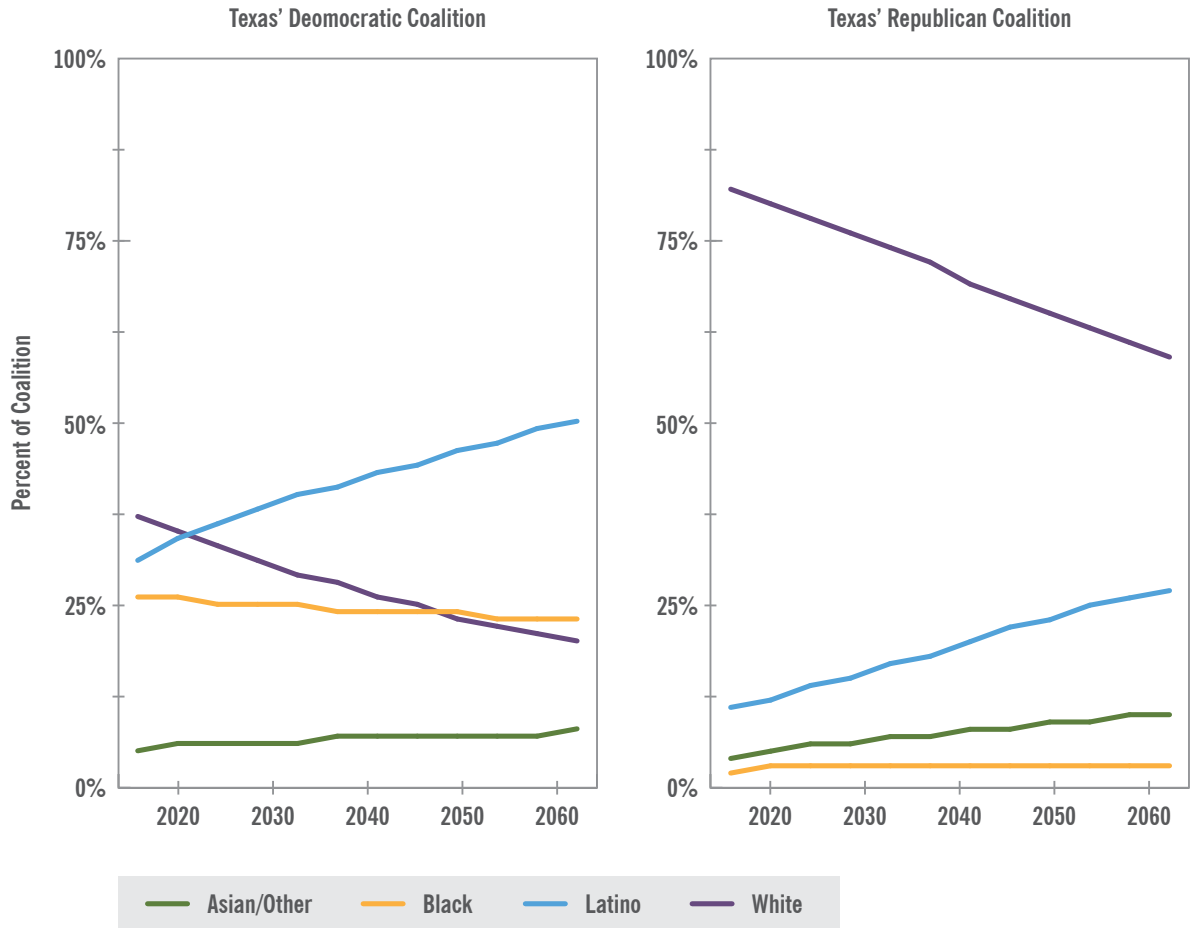


Figure 4 displays what the composition of the parties would look like in the future if Latinos, Asians, and other non-black minorities shifted 7.5 points toward the Democratic Party and 7.5 points away from the Republican Party relative to 2016.⁵³ In the Democratic coalition in the first panel, whites currently make up a plurality of the party, but by the 2020 election, Latinos will make up 34 percent of the Democratic Party, just 1 percent away from the white share. Texas also has a substantial black population, which comprises 25 percent of the Democratic coalition. With this diverse coalition, mobilization efforts will be key to unlocking Democratic potential among all segments of the population. If a swing among Latinos, Asians, and other non-black minorities toward the Democrats is the only shift that occurs, it will not be enough to secure the popular vote in the state in 2020, but Texas would likely flip Democratic by the 2028 election.⁵⁴ Due to the fact that Texas already has a large Latino population, this scenario is consistent with our theory of the 10-year cycle in action.

In California, an important effect of backlash politics on the electorate was the swing in white college-educated voters toward the Democratic Party. It is likely that in Texas there will also be a slight shift in college-educated voters to the Democratic Party. Of course, these shifts in the electorate could also result in a shift of white non-college-educated voters toward the Republican coalition.⁵⁵ One States of Change scenario has white non-college-educated voters moving toward the Republican Party, with white college graduates and Latinos, Asians, and other minorities moving toward the Democratic Party.⁵⁶ This realignment would not change Texas's presidential election outcome until the 2028 election, but the Republican margin of victory in the 2020 and 2024 elections will be very narrow.



DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE WITHOUT REACTIONARY POLITICS

There are two other states in which Latinos make up a large share of the state population, but neither has faced the same sort of reactionary politics seen in Arizona and Texas. While the coalitions in Florida are shifting, they are doing so at a slower rate. Florida has been a bellwether state in presidential elections for the last 20 years, and it is likely that Florida will continue to be an important state in presidential elections while the party coalitions continue to evolve. Nevada on the other hand has seen major shifts in voting coalitions, but though it was an important battleground state in the past, we suspect the Silver State has solidified itself as a Democratic state for presidential races.

Florida's demographics are unlike those of California, Arizona, or Texas. What is interesting about Florida's population is that a large share of the state's Latino population is Cuban. Overall, whites make up 54 percent of the state population, while Latinos make up 26 percent and blacks make up 16 percent; but historically, the Cuban population is more likely to identify as Republican than any other Latin American ethnic group.⁵⁷ However, there is some indication that Cubans might be becoming more liberal and supportive of Democrats.⁵⁸ In 2018, 59 percent of Latinos in Florida disapproved of the job Trump was doing as president, and only 13 percent of Latinos in Florida believed that Trump has had a positive impact on Latinos. In 2018, Florida's race for governor was hotly contested. Republican Ron DeSantis very narrowly edged out Andrew Gillum by 32,463 votes.⁵⁹ So, who was turning out in Florida during the 2018 election? Analysis by Latino Decisions indicates that Democratic Latinos voted at significantly higher rates relative to 2014, while Democratic support among white voters shrank in Florida.

As in Arizona, white voters predominately comprise Florida's Republican coalition. If Latinos, Asians, and other minorities swing 7.5 points toward the Democratic Party relative to the 2016 election, whites would comprise 83 percent of the Republican coalition and 49 percent of the Democratic coalition.⁶⁰ Latinos would make up about 24 percent of the Democratic coalition, while blacks would make up an additional 23 percent. The lack of diversity in the Republican coalition in a state that has not faced any reactionary politics should be a caution sign for the Republican Party.

In 2008, Nevada was a contested battleground state. President Barack Obama and the Democratic National Committee invested \$20 million in Latino outreach in Colorado, Florida, Nevada, and New Mexico, and the investment paid off.^{61,62} In 2008, Latinos comprised 24 percent of Nevada's population and 15 percent of the eligible voters.⁶³ With the support of Latino voters in the state, Obama was able to secure 55.1 percent of the vote in the 2008 general election. Since 2008, Democrats have successfully carried the state in presidential elections. But despite these Democratic victories, it is important to be cognizant of the shrinking margins of victory. While President Obama's margin of victory was 12.4 percent in 2008, this shrunk to 6.7 percent in 2012, and in the 2016 election, Hillary Clinton won the state by a much smaller 2.4 percent.⁶⁴ While it is more likely than not that Nevada will stay in the Democratic column, to ensure continued success, it is imperative that the Democratic Party and its candidates make sure that Nevada does not backslide in the next presidential election.

There are a few States of Change scenarios that forecast a Republican win in 2020. One such case would be if non-black minorities swing toward the GOP in 2020 while other voting patterns remain the same. We think this scenario is unlikely given that Trump is the presumptive nominee for the Republican Party.⁶⁵ Another scenario that nets Nevada for the GOP would be if non-black minorities shifted toward the Republican Party while white non-college-educated voters shifted toward the Democratic Party; again, barring some unforeseeable event, this is not likely given that Trump will be running for re-election in 2020.

A more plausible scenario and more of a concern for Democrats would be if white non-college-educated voters shifted toward the Republican Party without any shift in the rest of the electorate. This would produce a Republican victory in Nevada in 2020, which is why it is the Democratic Party cannot take Nevada for granted. To hold onto Nevada, Democrats must continue outreach efforts, especially among college-educated white voters and minorities.

Using 2016 turnout and support levels as a baseline, the Democratic coalition in Nevada relies primarily on white non-college-educated voters, who comprise 34 percent of the Democratic coalition.⁶⁶ While the share of non-college-educated white voters will decline to about 20 percent by 2044, maintaining their support will be integral to keeping Nevada a blue state. At the same time, the Democratic Party needs to maintain the support of Nevada's Latino voters, a majority of whom are not college-educated and whose influence will continue to grow. Rather than pitting one segment of the population against another, campaigning on economic issues that will benefit all working-class voters may be a way to maintain the Democratic coalition in the state.

GROWTH AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IN PARTY COALITIONS

While we have laid out our expectations for four heavily Latino states, there are a number of states that will see future growth among Latinos and minorities in general. In the short term, these emerging populations may not impact the outcome of the 2020 election, but they will reshape the political landscape in the future. How positively or negatively the parties and political elites respond to these demographic changes will be crucial to the balance of power in both national and state politics. We will focus on Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia.

Pennsylvania is a battleground state for presidential politics due to its very close elections. While Democrats managed to win the popular vote in the state from 1992 to 2014, Republicans claimed victory in the 2016 presidential election.⁶⁷ According to States of Change data, whites make up 77 percent of Pennsylvania's population, while blacks make up the next largest group with 11 percent.⁶⁸ Currently, Latinos make up 7 percent of Pennsylvania's population. Latinos comprise 6 percent of the state's eligible voters. According to projections, Latinos will not make up more than 10 percent of the population until 2030; still, due to the close elections in Pennsylvania, Latinos could make or break the hopes of presidential candidates.⁶⁹ If Latinos, Asians, and other non-black minorities swing 7.5 points toward the Democratic Party and 7.5 points away from the Republican Party, 30 percent of the Democratic coalition will come from minority voters in the next election. By 2040, this will increase to 40 percent.⁷⁰

North Carolina is another state to watch. Currently, whites make up 64 percent of the state population, while blacks make up 21 percent, Latinos 9 percent, and Asians 3 percent.⁷¹ While this state is fairly diverse, the percentage of Latino and Asian voters combined is just 12 percent. The bulk of the Democratic coalition is composed of black and white voters. Black voters currently make up about 40 percent of the Democratic coalition, and this is expected to increase, while the share of white voters will modestly decline.⁷² Using 2016 turnout and support levels as a baseline, white Democratic voters in North Carolina are primarily college-educated, comprising 30 percent of the Democratic coalition.⁷³ If non-college-educated white voters shifted toward the Republican Party by five points, little would change in terms of who comprises the Democratic coalition. Voter turnout, especially among North Carolina's black and college-educated white population, will be important for Democratic success.

While Democrats have won the popular vote in Virginia for the last three presidential elections, the Republican Party continues to be competitive in the state. Currently, 65 percent of eligible voters in the state are white, while 20 percent are black. But the Asian and Latino populations have been steadily increasing. If non-college-educated whites shifted toward the Republican Party, in 2020 whites would just barely make up the majority of the Democratic coalition (51 percent). But after 2020, the Democratic coalition would mainly consist of minorities. This means that ensuring turnout among all demographics will be key to Democratic success in the future.

In 2018, Georgia's Democratic voters came primarily from minorities in the state. Assuming similar turnout patterns as 2016, States of Change estimates that whites will comprise just 32 percent of the Democratic coalition in 2020.⁷⁴ And if white non-college-educated voters shift toward the Republican Party in Georgia and nothing else changes, we would expect the Republicans to win Georgia in 2020 and continue to do so in the future. However, States of Change projections indicate that if non-black minorities, or white college-educated voters, or, especially, both swing toward the Democratic Party, Georgia could flip toward the Democratic Party in the 2020s.



KEEPING THE 2018 POLITICAL MOMENTUM

This paper started with a story about reactionary politics at the state level. We argue that with demographic change comes the possibility of reactionary politics. Even under such circumstances, we do not expect to see the political landscape change overnight. There is a process to how reactionary politics play out, and we expect that the political transition that occurs from Republican to Democrat will not fully settle for 10 years. This was the case in the state of California during the 1990s, and we expect a similar scenario to happen in Arizona and Texas. While we have also highlighted a number of states that have minority population sizes to transition, and another set of increasingly diverse states where we expect to see changes in party coalitions and outcomes in the near future, we have not yet addressed the issue of reactionary politics at the national level.

The 2016 presidential election was an example of reactionary politics revved up to its most extreme level. Trump's remarks about "rapists," "drugs," and "criminals" coming in through the Southern border was the start of the anti-immigrant, anti-Latino deluge that has persisted for the last three years.⁷⁵ Trump's rhetoric in 2016 mobilized Latinos, but Trump still managed to secure a victory in the electoral college.⁷⁶ When Trump lost the popular vote by more than 3 million votes but won the election, millions of Americans took to the streets in protest. On January 21, 2017, the day after Trump's inauguration, 4.2 million people across the country participated in the Women's March.⁷⁷

The 2018 midterm election was the first national general election since Trump's 2016 victory—and Americans wanted their voices heard. Fully 53 percent of the citizen voting-age population voted in 2018. Voter turnout increased among young voters, minorities, and college-educated voters.⁷⁸ In 2018, these trends benefited Democratic candidates, allowing them to regain control of the U.S. House of Representatives.⁷⁹ With voter outreach efforts by Democratic candidates and the Democratic Party, we anticipate that the Democratic Party's voting coalitions will continue to expand and increase in diversity for years to come.

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Adapting to Win: How Republicans Compete in a Changing America

By Patrick Ruffini

As the United States changes demographically, it is not just the makeup of the electorate as a whole that will change; it is also that of each political party. The 2019 States of Change report examines this aspect of demographic change ahead of the 2020 primary season. In a race for the White House that is heavily mediated by primary electorates, demographics often help to decide who will emerge as each major party's nominee.

The 2016 election was the triumph of demographics within the parties. White voters without a college degree have always made up a dominant share—at least 60 percent—of the Republican Party's voters. Their activation as a bloc for Donald Trump—in tandem with his strength among older primary voters—was instrumental to his nomination and election. Support from nonwhites—who make up 40 percent of the Democratic Party's voters, and especially African Americans, who make up 22 percent—was decisive in Hillary Clinton's primary victory over Bernie Sanders.

Two major demographic forces are reshaping the makeup of both major political parties and the competitive battleground in elections to come. The first of these forces is the sudden polarization of white voters along educational lines, which burst into the open in the 2016 election and carried over into the 2018 midterms. The second force is the continued growth of nonwhites as a share of the electorate, growing from a mere 12 percent in 1980 to 27 percent in 2016 and to a projected 36 percent in 2036. Neither party will be untouched by these shifts.

DYNAMIC DEMOGRAPHICS AND AMERICA'S TWO-PARTY EQUILIBRIUM

Often analysts view these demographic shifts as sobering news for Republicans, and if one takes a static view of things—assuming that partisan voting patterns within groups will continue roughly as they are today—the road ahead for the GOP is indeed daunting. The growth of a very Democratic-leaning nonwhite bloc paired with the decline of a very Republican-leaning white electorate without a college degree is a challenge that Republicans must look squarely in the face. If any version of a straight-line projection bears out, Republicans will cease to become a party that can win a national majority and will face either forced reinvention or extinction.

And yet, the American electorate has never been a static body. Parties have always adapted to new and evolving demographic circumstances. The cyclical nature of politics, with a changing cast of characters triggering rapid shifts in voter loyalties from election to election, can often obscure and overwhelm even the slow grinding of demography. Demographic change itself is also a dynamic force: Growing political mobilization in one group can trigger an offsetting reaction in other groups.

The significant demographic changes that Americans have already experienced over the last generation have not impaired the Republican Party's ability to win elections, which since 1992 has enjoyed more time at the helm of the presidency and Congress than the Democratic Party. The battle for control of the White House has settled into an eight-year pattern of alternating party control, and midterm elections result in backlash verdicts against the party in the White House, cementing a seat at the table for both parties. In fact, these dynamics—not demographics—seem to more clearly explain the result of recent elections.

Added to this political balancing act are the very obvious and dramatic effects that individual leaders can have on demographic support levels—effects that can obliterate the most carefully constructed scenarios. John F. Kennedy, a Catholic, won his co-religionists by a nearly four-to-one margin even though Catholics were roughly equally divided before then. The realignment of the



white and black South in the 1960s saw the “solid South” evolve from a Democratic bastion to a Republican heartland. George W. Bush was distinctly more appealing to Latino voters than previous Republican nominees, and Barack Obama drove historic levels of black support and turnout in 2008 and 2012. Donald Trump defied the odds with white working-class voters and breached the Democrats’ electoral firewall. From JFK to Trump, parties and candidates have always evolved to win.

Even if the precise magnitude of future political shifts is unknown, the general direction of demographic change is knowable, as are the impacts within each major party. At the same time, this analysis would be overly narrow if it focused only on the internal makeup of the Republican and Democratic parties. Trends within the overall electorate and within states have always influenced strategic choices about which demographic groups to target. This paper will concentrate on those electorate-wide trends and on how they should shape Republican thinking about the demographic coalitions of the future.

In doing so, this paper will not ignore the very real challenges the Republican Party faces if trends continue on the current trajectory. Using evidence collected by the States of Change research team—a project that estimates the demographic composition of each party and the electorate as a whole by race, education, and age—this paper will examine future scenarios to understand how demographic and dynamic changes may continue to unfold on their present path or how they may veer off in a new direction.

There are two competing theories of the case. One is that demographic changes will reach a critical mass in coming elections, giving Democrats a decisive advantage. This paper will advance a different view. Through enormous waves of social change, a competitive two-party system has been the norm in the United States, and parties have always adapted to changing circumstances. Republicans to date have not needed to significantly retool their demographic coalition to win 270 electoral votes, but should it become necessary for them to do so, the party will likely make a determined effort in that direction. In its own way, Trump’s pivot to working-class voters fits this evolutionary pattern, serving as a corrective to a Republican Party whose appeal had been based on a purely pro-business economic message that was dangerously narrow: They hadn’t cracked 300 electoral votes in 28 years. This pragmatic search for new messages and new coalitions always pushes U.S. politics toward a stable equilibrium. Within this constant push and pull, demographic voting patterns change—sometimes overnight. With these demographic changes, the parties too can begin to look different than they did in the past.

DEMOGRAPHICS IN AN AGE OF POLARIZATION

Parties aren’t passive bystanders in the process of demographic change. They observe impending shifts and intentionally build electoral strategies around those shifts, appealing to different races, generations, genders, or educational groups. With these potential gains come potential losses. A group may sense that a candidate is spending more time talking to a rival group and may shift its loyalties as a result. In the process, the parties work to engineer positive-sum demographic trades—gaining more votes than they lose—and to eschew zero-sum or losing trades.

As the first woman to head a major-party ticket, Hillary Clinton tried to activate voters behind the idea of electing the first woman president. An analysis of voter file data after the fact showed this worked in driving turnout—among *Democratic* women. Turnout among Republican men also rose compared with 2016, canceling out any benefit of a gender-based appeal. Gender for Democrats in 2016 ended up being a zero-sum demographic trade.

Contrast this with positive-sum demographic trades in recent electoral history:

- Even as he apparently lost white voters with a college degree, Donald Trump’s focus on working-class white voters was positive-sum in two crucial respects. First, there were more of them in the electorate (at 44 percent) than white voters with degrees (29 percent).¹ Second, they were disproportionately concentrated in Midwestern swing states that had eluded Republicans in previous elections.² Building a message around these voters at the expense of more educated voters was positive-sum.

- The surge of black support and turnout for Barack Obama was positive-sum. Black turnout rivaled white turnout in 2008 and exceeded it in 2012. Obama also won more of the black vote on a percentage basis, exceeding already astronomical levels of Democratic support. With the exception of some parts of Appalachia and the South, Obama did not do worse among white voters than Democrats had in 2004, and in fact, white voters as a whole swung his way. This helped him in swing states where blacks are a higher percentage of the population than they are nationally, including North Carolina, Florida, and Michigan. But a reversion to pre-Obama support and turnout levels proved deeply problematic to Clinton in 2016.
- Generational support was positive-sum for Obama in 2008, with a 25-point marginal swing among voters ages 18 to 29 from 2004 to 2008,³ but has been zero-sum since 2012, as the movement of voters over 65 into the Republican camp has essentially canceled out the Democratic lean among younger voters.

The ebbs and flows of demographics have important tactical impacts on how parties campaign. Extreme polarization in the electorate, especially among whites by education, has made voters easier to target, mobilize, and cultivate into long-term supporters. More than any other demographic trend, educational polarization sorts the electorate based on where they live—making cities and suburbs much more Democratic and rural areas much more Republican. Geographic bloc voting has created safe seats, and even safe states, more common over time, which has prized a more cautious strategy of appealing to the base over sweeping persuasive appeals to those in the middle.

Worldview also drives today's polarization. Unlike temporary candidate-driven alliances based on ethnic or religious affinities, partisan sorting on education reinforces longer-term social divisions. The parties are more and more perfectly sorted ideologically, with rural, religious, and non-degree-holding voters espousing culturally conservative values aligning with the Republicans and more urban, secular, and educated voters aligning with the Democrats. This may make the partisan divide as currently constituted stickier than in the past.

The segregation of non-college-educated and college-educated voters is instantly visible on any map of the 2016 results. Worldview-driven shifts led Democrats to break all previous records in the close-in suburbs, where the most educated voters live, while rural and working-class areas filled with “ancestral Democrats” broke for Trump by margins analysts scarcely thought possible. *The Cook Political Report's* David Wasserman charted the rise of “landslide counties” in the aftermath of the 2016 election.⁴ That year, 61 percent of Americans lived in a county in which the successful candidate won by more than 20 points, a new record, while the population of “extreme landslide” counties—those with victory margins of 50 points or more—doubled from 10 percent to 21 percent of the country between 2012 and 2016. (In 1992, just 4 percent of Americans lived in such counties.)

Some have dubbed this social, educational, and political divide the “Big Sort”—and at a tactical level, it is a boon to both the Republican and Democratic parties. The Big Sort makes it easier to understand who one's voters are and mobilize them, even if one does not have access to sophisticated individual-level targeting databases. All a candidate who is running for office has to do is look at a map of past election results to understand where their voters are.

Yale University's Eitan Hersh has shown experimentally how such information helps parties mobilize voters while reinforcing existing electoral divisions.⁵ In states with rich individual-level data on voter files, such as party registration and race, turnout among individuals known to be high-value targets (that is, registered Republicans, or African Americans) is higher. In places without such data, high voter turnout is based on whether voters live in a precinct where one party consistently does well, which is the highest-quality data point the parties can use. Geography thus becomes destiny.

This shift has been especially profound for Republicans, whose voters are increasingly as thoroughly sorted as the Democrats once were in big cities, before they broke through to the close-in suburbs. Counties that used to go Republican with 55 percent of the vote may now break for them with 70 percent. The white working class's shift into the GOP has made the party's job of targeting much easier. Paradoxically, it has also made this group a more critical part of the Republican coalition even as their numbers have shrunk.



The “white working class”—white voters without a college degree—used to be so prevalent within the electorate that pollsters never defined them as a group. They were 69 percent of all voters in 1980, and their voting patterns didn’t differ from their white degree-holding brethren. As they shrunk to a total of 44 percent of all voters in 2016, their voting patterns became much more distinct—they voted for Trump by a 39 percent margin⁶ even as he lost the popular vote by 2 percent. Trump’s ability to activate a distinct group identity among white working-class voters mirrors the Democrats’ mobilization of African American, Latino, and young voters. For the first time, the electorate is divided into these three distinct demographic parts: (1) a white working-class Republican demographic base; (2) a nonwhite Democratic demographic base; and (3) a white college-educated swing bloc—and the white working class is still the largest of the three.

Concentrated minorities with distinct voting patterns are easier for parties to narrow-cast to and mobilize. The decline of the white working class to 35 percent of the electorate need not be a problem for Republicans so long as they maintain support levels and even expand to levels similar to those of nonwhites as a whole for Democrats. At a minimum, one should not summarily dismiss the possibility that the electorate could become even more polarized along these lines than it is today.

THE ELECTORATE BY RACE

Certainly, Republicans can continue to rely on outsized majorities with working-class whites (at least in the electoral college); but this does not mean they can or should dismiss the electoral growth of nonwhites, especially Latinos and Asians. The U.S. Census Bureau’s survey of voting and registration in the 2018 midterm elections stunned many observers by finding that Latinos made up a greater share of 2018 voters than they did in the 2016 presidential election,⁷ a surprise given their historically lower minority turnout in midterm elections. Applied to a higher turnout 2020 election, this suggests a Latino vote that may exceed even bullish projections.

Table 1. Composition of the Electorate by Race, 2016-2036 (assuming 2016 turnout and support levels)

Group	Overall		Republican Coalition		Democratic Coalition	
	2016	2036	2016	2036	2016	2036
White	73.4	64.4	87.7	80.5	59.3	50.1
African American	11.9	13.1	2.2	2.5	21.9	22.8
Latino	9.1	14.4	5.7	10.0	12.3	18.3
Asian/Other	5.6	8.1	4.4	6.9	6.5	8.8

Looking over the long term, nonwhites are set to rise from 26.6 percent of the electorate in 2016 to 35.6 percent in 2036, assuming current patterns of support and turnout. Within the Democratic Party, nonwhites are set to go from 40 percent in 2016 to 50 percent in 2036—a number that could rise as high as 54 percent if turnout among minority groups equals that seen among white voters. Nonwhites will remain a smaller—but still growing—share of the GOP, going from 12 percent in 2016 to 19 percent under the same steady state projection—and possibly 22 percent if they manage to grow their share of the vote among Latinos and Asian/“Other” group voters by 7.5 percent.

LATINOS AND THE GOP

The vast majority of nonwhite growth in the electorate has come from Latinos, Asians, and “Other” racial groups. Within the Republican Party, Latinos, who are 6 percent of GOP voters today, would rise to 10 percent by 2036—and up to 12 percent under the most optimistic States of Change scenario for the party. Asians and others would go from 4 percent in 2016 to 7 percent in 2036, and as high as 8 percent.

The Latino vote choice has been stable since 2008, with Republican candidate performance ranging from 27 percent to 31 percent in the intervening elections. Trump’s focus on immigration did not worsen the party’s standing with Latino voters in 2016. But the GOP’s overall performance with Latinos remains poor and is near its historical low. To build winning presidential coalitions without appreciably higher white support, Republicans will need to grow their share of the vote among Latinos by 10 points or more.

The most compelling evidence comes from George W. Bush’s breakthrough performance with Latino voters—36 percent in 2000 and 44 percent in 2004,⁸ according to exit polls. Republicans will need something resembling the 2004 high water mark, when four in 10 Latino voters built a popular vote majority without more white voter support.

What lessons can Republicans today learn from Bush’s Latino surge? While Bush vocally split from other Republicans on immigration reform, his success with Latino voters hinged on his cultural appeal: He was the Spanish-speaking border-state governor who had built a close relationship with the Latino community in Texas. One Republican who ran after Bush, John McCain, shared Bush’s perspective on immigration reform, but McCain was only able to capture 31 percent of the Latino vote in 2008. Future Republican success with Latino voters will rely more on intangibles—a Bush-like ease and connection—than on a perfect policy alignment.

The Latino Future

This issue is an urgent one for the Republican Party, as groups composed of recent immigrants continue to grow as a share of the electorate. Latinos are set to grow to 14 percent of voters in presidential elections by 2036, eclipsing African Americans as the largest racial or ethnic minority in the electorate.

Republicans may be able to improve their standing with nonwhite voters by appealing to them in a more concerted way as candidates. As they do so, they may try to build on top of natural trends that may make the Latino vote more competitive as it becomes more established in the United States. The case for this is rooted in the historical experience of past waves of immigrants.

Throughout U.S. history, immigrant groups like the Irish, Italians, Germans, and Eastern Europeans began with a very distinct social and political identity. Immigrants at first stuck very close to one another and organized themselves politically based on nationality in the face of discrimination from a dominant “white” culture, which at the time was defined to exclude new European immigrants. Through generations of integration and intermarriage, these divisions eventually became less meaningful, and these groups came to vote more like the “old stock” population.



A version of this may be happening with newer immigrants to the United States. According to a 2017 study by the Pew Research Center, those with Hispanic or Latino ancestry are less likely to identify as Hispanic or Latino the further they get from their immigrant roots.⁹ While just 8 percent of second-generation Americans with some Hispanic ancestry did not consider themselves Hispanic, this rose sharply to 23 percent for those in the third generation and 50 percent for those in the fourth generation. High rates of intermarriage are driving this trend. Among those with Hispanic ancestry, 18 percent of those born abroad, 29 percent of those in the second generation, and 65 percent of those in the third generation and above reported some non-Hispanic ancestry. The U.S. Latino population is currently heavily composed of first-generation immigrants and their children, but falling migration since the Great Recession and intermarriage will change this over time.

Those Latinos with deeper roots in the United States are likely to be more promising Republican targets than recent immigrants. A Pew Research Center survey of Latinos in 2016 found higher rates of Republican identification among the U.S.-born (26 percent) than among the foreign-born (18 percent); and higher rates of Republican identification among those who predominantly spoke English (30 percent) than among those who predominantly spoke Spanish (11 percent).¹⁰ An analysis of voter file data in states with partisan voter registration shows a stark difference in partisanship between Latinos who live in precincts with many other Latinos and those who live in precincts with fewer Latinos (when excluding the historically Republican Cuban-American community in Miami, Florida). Democrats hold a 44 percent-to-26 percent advantage in voter registration among voters tagged as Hispanic on the voter file in precincts that are less than 10 percent Hispanic, compared with a 66 percent-to-10 percent advantage in majority Hispanic precincts.¹¹ Survey data from multiple sources also demonstrate that Hispanic partisanship is tied to income—higher-income respondents were more likely to identify with the GOP, another data point showing the link between establishment in the United States and shifting partisanship.

Of course, these may merely be descriptive statistics and not predictive of future trends, especially if the relative mix of recent immigrants and more established Latinos changes only modestly over time. After all, similar trends among other immigrant groups played out over generations, longer than the time horizon of the States of Change projections. Positive as such developments would be for the Republicans, they are not a substitute for improved outreach by the party's candidates. Republican support rates among predominantly English-speaking, U.S.-born Latinos have been too low to sustain the kind of improvements the party will need with the Latino vote as a whole moving forward. The growth of a highly established Latino community in the United States is an important trend, but for Republicans, it's one that will play a supporting role to a more focused strategy of persuading Latino voters.

Implications for 2020

One factor limiting the impact of the strong growth of the Latino electorate on the overall presidential election results is that they are under-represented in battleground states. The Latino vote is strongest in border states like California and Texas, which have not been competitive at the presidential level, and in Florida, which features a very different country-of-origin mix that makes the Latino population as a whole there more Republican.

Hispanics are nonetheless a significant share of the electorate in some key 2020 swing states, including Arizona, Nevada, and Florida. Arizona—which was just six points off the national popular vote margin in 2020—will test whether growing Hispanic political strength will push a formerly red state into the toss-up column, as happened in Nevada. Politically, Maricopa County, which comprises the Phoenix metropolitan area, dominates Arizona. Consistent with overall national trends in urban areas, Maricopa County swung eight points against Trump in 2016, with a greater anti-Trump swing in white areas. And overall, Arizona features two groups favorable to Democrats—Hispanics and college-educated urban whites—that may make the state more competitive in 2020.

As discussed, Florida's Latino vote is unique. It is heavily composed of Cuban-Americans (who have traditionally leaned Republican but have been less favorable to Trump) and Puerto Rican voters concentrated in the Orlando area. Yet the state as a whole has leaned Republican due to the continued strength of white seniors and the absence of a dominant major metropolitan

area with a large base of college-educated professionals. In the Democratic wave year of 2018, Republicans captured the two top offices, and Trump captured the state in 2016 even with a historically low Hispanic vote share that lagged far behind other Republicans on the ballot.

What about Texas? The state combines features that ought to be favorable to Democrats: a large Hispanic population combined with large, educated metro areas that swung strongly against Trump in 2016. Yet the state's overall partisan lean—10 points to the right of the country as a whole in 2016 and in the 2018 congressional vote—makes it a stretch for Democrats in 2020.

AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE GOP

While the Hispanic vote is changing rapidly in both size and nature, the African American vote has remained stable both as a share of the electorate and in its partisan loyalties. As an overall share of the electorate, States of Change projects African Americans will rise slightly, from 11.9 percent to 13.1 percent, from 2016 to 2036, assuming current levels of support and turnout. At the end of this time period, they would be just 2.5 percent of the Republican coalition, and 22.8 percent of the Democratic coalition.

Despite the stability of the African American vote, it's important to remember that black voters are movable and will shift from their political baseline, even if that baseline happens to be very Democratic.

With the nomination and election of Barack Obama, Democrats improved on their very strong levels of black support—African American support for the Republican nominee in exit polls dropped to half to just 4 percent in 2008, while the rate of black voter turnout in 2012 eclipsed that of whites, a historic first.¹² However, this surge was temporary. Black turnout subsequently dropped by about 10 percent, and measures of partisan support returned to pre-2008 levels. The withdrawal of this crucial ingredient to Obama's electoral success either completely or nearly made the difference in 2016 in North Carolina, Florida, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin, states with a combined 90 electoral votes.

The African American Future

While African Americans have a larger footprint than Hispanics in the battle for the electoral college, their prospects for a future change in partisan voting patterns seem more limited absent an external stimulus to dramatically shift the partisan balance among black voters.

One trend of note is generational: Among men, there appears to be a reverse age gap, with significantly higher Republican support levels among men ages 18 to 44. Data from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES),¹³ which includes 2018 interviews with 28,348 Americans, show rates of Republican Party identification among this group at 17 percent, compared with 7 percent among African American women. The highest rates of Democratic loyalty by age are among the oldest voters, ages 65 and over, the reverse of that found among whites. *The New York Times'* *Upshot* polls of swing congressional districts last fall (with a combined dataset totaling 37,287 live interviews) also found evidence of a reverse age gap among black men, with 20 percent of black men ages 18 to 44 supporting Republican congressional candidates, compared with just 10 percent of black men over 45.¹⁴

Signs of Democrats losing their grip on the African American vote are tentative and limited to younger males. Older African American voters demonstrate the highest rates of Democratic support, and black women are consistent in their levels of Democratic support across age cohorts. And this latter fact is significant, because women cast a disproportionate share of votes among African Americans—63 percent according to voter file data in Southern states with race as a variable on the national voter file.¹⁵



Implications for 2020

Whether the African American vote in 2020 is decisive or not will hinge in large part on whether the Democrats nominate an African American candidate, and if they do, whether such a candidate can remake the electorate to the extent Obama did. If they control these two variables, the Democratic coalition instantly rests on a much firmer foundation than it did in 2016.

Evidence from the 2018 midterms suggests that African American general election nominees in statewide elections succeed in raising black turnout, though maybe not to Obama levels. In an election where voter enthusiasm was off the charts with Democratic-leaning white voters with a college degree, black voters had the strongest turnout compared with the 2016 election among Democratic voters in both Georgia and Florida. The Democratic over-performance among blacks was stronger in Georgia, where black voters are also more numerous, than in Florida, where Andrew Gillum underperformed in final polling averages.

Whereas Hispanics are heavily represented in large states that are predominantly not competitive, African Americans remain crucial to Democratic success in large battleground states throughout the country, including the industrial, ex-“Blue Wall” states like Pennsylvania and Michigan, and crucial to any success the party may have in the South, including Florida, North Carolina, and looking into the future, Georgia, if the current trend among educated whites in the Atlanta metro area continues. The combination of a loyal minority vote and the presence of large numbers of white voters with degrees has proved a successful Democratic formula in states like California and in former Republican strongholds like Virginia. And with the ability to convert eight net Democratic votes for every 10 voters they turn out, African Americans will continue to be a crucial turnout target for Democrats regardless of any erosion on the margins.

THE PARTY COALITIONS IN THE FUTURE

The sheer force of demographic change is extremely likely to see more nonwhites flowing into both party coalitions in the future. For Democrats, the baseline is higher, with nonwhites potentially making up a majority of Democrats in the next 20 years. Even Republicans are likely to see significant changes, with nonwhites rising from 12 percent to 19 percent of their coalition under the States of Change baseline scenario.

The makeup of the party coalitions shapes the choices put forward to voters in the general election. This creates feedback loops that in turn may reshape partisan loyalties. How might more diverse party coalitions change politics in the future?

One consequence is that nonwhites could serve as a counterweight to growing ideological polarization among whites. Driven by an exodus of working-class and Southern whites, Democrats as a whole have grown more liberal in recent decades, with self-identified liberals now outnumbering moderates and conservatives in the party. CCES data shows that nonwhites may be an exception to this liberal trend. Nonwhite Democrats identify as 45 percent moderate or conservative, to 46 percent liberal, compared with whites who identify as 59 percent liberal to 36 percent moderate or conservative. Nonwhite Democrats have not tended to support left-wing candidates in primaries, as in 2016 when they overwhelmingly supported Clinton over Sanders. The main exception to this pattern seems to be 2008, when an African American candidate, Obama, became the candidate of the Democratic left.

Even if the party doesn't improve its anemic performance among nonwhite voters, the country's changing demography will likely make the Republican Party more diverse. Besides the imperative to appeal to nonwhites in a general election, a near-doubling of the Republican Party's nonwhite voter base could subtly shift the dynamics of a Republican electorate where today nearly nine in 10 voters are white. A rise in the share of nonwhite Republicans to one in five or one in four will not inexorably lead to the nomination of more nonwhite candidates in a party opposed to race-based quotas. Nor do Republican nonwhites hold dramatically different or more liberal views on issues like immigration enforcement or racial identity. But as shown, policy is often less decisive in shifting a community's support than a sense of rapport and connection with the candidate. The increasing need to campaign to nonwhite voters in a primary can only have a healthy effect on the Republican efforts to appeal to them in a general election.

THE ELECTORATE BY EDUCATION

The American electorate is set to become more educated over time, driven by a large shift in electorate-wide education rates among whites and the aging-out of the current 65+ cohort who disproportionately do not have college degrees.

When discussing the educational divide, what most people mean primarily is the white educational divide. Polarization by education has been exclusively a white phenomenon; among nonwhites, non-degree-holders have largely voted like degree-holders. Thus, it makes the most sense to primarily consider education in the context of race, specifically as a driver of white voter behavior.

Table 2. Composition of the Electorate by Race and Education, 2016-2036 (assuming 2016 turnout and support levels)

Group	Overall		Republican Coalition		Democratic Coalition	
	2016	2036	2016	2036	2016	2036
White College	29.5	29.0	27.8	29.0	30.6	28.3
White Non-College	43.8	35.3	59.9	51.2	27.8	21.8
Nonwhite College	7.7	11.2	3.7	6.2	11.6	15.7
Nonwhite Non-College	18.8	24.4	8.6	13.3	29.1	34.2

Viewing the electorate from the standpoint of group composition, the continued attrition of the white non-college share immediately stands out. A group that was 44 percent of the electorate that elected Trump is set to decline to 35 percent by 2036, while nonwhite voters, with and without degrees, are set to offset the non-college white decline point-per-point. Overall and within both party coalitions, States of Change projects white voters with a college degree will change little in their voting strength.

Nonetheless, a group's size may not dictate its influence. African Americans are a modest 12 percent of the overall electorate but remain a powerful part of the Democratic coalition because of the efficiency with which Democratic candidates can be translate their votes into support. The same became true for Republicans and white voters without a degree in 2016. Non-college whites were once much more numerous within the electorate writ large, and they were relatively evenly divided between the parties, few thought to build an electoral strategy to cultivate a shared group partisan identity—until Donald Trump. Now that non-college whites have established their potency as a group to be mobilized, future Republican candidates will seek to tap into it, even if they do not have the same natural appeal to them as Trump.

Even looking to 2036, we can see the electorate breaking down into three roughly equally sized groups—nonwhites at 36 percent (the Democrats' demographic base), whites without a degree at 35 percent (the Republicans' demographic base), and whites with a college degree at 29 percent (a demographic swing vote). Within the Republican coalition, non-college whites will remain a majority through 2036, when they'd still make up 51 percent of Republicans. As such, party strategists are likely to continue to see their votes as quite influential if they continue behaving anything like the core Republican base group they are now.



The Future of the White Educational Divide

Where does the white educational divide go from here? The 2016 election represented a fast-forwarding of trends that have been in the making since Bill Clinton faded from the scene as an avatar of conservative, working-class Democrats in the 1990s. It's a fair long-term bet that the white educational divide will continue to remain a significant force in U.S. politics, despite, possibly, some lingering uncertainty about whether first post-Trump election will revert to the pre-2024 mean.

The white educational divide could continue to deepen, or it could recede. About the only certainty is that it will remain a force in some form over the next few elections. This is not a terribly helpful prediction, since even a small marginal shift in either direction would be enough to change the result in 2020. Though it is not possible to know with certainty what those shifts will be, there are some likely future scenarios and reasons for why they may come into being.

Scenario #1: The White Educational Divide Deepens

Recent elections show that extreme polarization by educational attainment among whites is no longer just a Trump phenomenon. The 2018 midterms and post-Trump special elections have mirrored the 2016 divide. Elections to the U.S. House in 2018 correlated more with each district's vote in the 2016 presidential election than the in the 2016 House elections held on the same day. This may be an artifact of the Trump era, or it could be part of a more durable partisan realignment by education.

The case for a further intensification of the educational divide rests on the idea that as working-class whites become more conscious of their diminishing numbers, their tendency to "vote like a minority group" will only intensify, with more bloc voting for conservative populist candidates. This argument is typically made about whites as a whole, with survey data suggesting apprehension about the idea of racial and ethnic minorities becoming a majority of the U.S. population,¹⁶ but working-class white voters are those most likely to share this view.

Scenario #2: College Graduates Become the Working Class

As a group, white degree-holders are projected to remain stable as a share of the overall electorate, but increase as a *share of whites*. That's not surprising, as overall rates of educational attainment continue to increase.

Yet, as tomorrow's educated workers become more qualified for the jobs of the future, so far overall economic outcomes have not increased commensurate to a more educated workforce. Economic prosperity has become more stratified and sorted according to education, but the median income has not risen in tandem with rising rates of education. The results are apparent in record levels of college debt, with the cost of a college degree increasing rapidly and the economic benefits not keeping pace.

What implications could this have for U.S. politics? An economically frustrated class of college graduates seems like a breeding ground for populism, but whether it's one of the right or the left is an open question. On the one hand, going to college and getting a degree is increasingly common, such that those culturally in the "white working class" are increasingly pursuing higher education and shifting the politics of this group rightward. On the other hand, the choice to pursue a college degree may function as a kind of sorting hat for liberal cultural values, which when combined with diminished economic prospects may furnish a future base for a Sanders-style socialism.

Scenario #3: The White Educational Divide Recedes After Trump

There is also a distinct possibility that in 2024 the electorate will revert to the pre-Trump coalitions, especially if a future Republican nominee is unable to recreate his or her appeal to working-class whites while also not being less polarizing to educated whites. All of the trends mentioned above will continue playing themselves out in the decades to come, but without Trump as a lightning rod, there could be a temporary return to the more "normal" patterns evident before Trump.

Implications for 2020 and Beyond

In a single election, Donald Trump was able to achieve nearly all the gains possible from appealing primarily to whites without a college degree. Of the states he failed to capture, only Minnesota (10 electoral votes), Nevada (six electoral votes), New Hampshire (four electoral votes), and Maine (four electoral votes) are battleground states with an average or above average share of whites without a degree.

With a buffer of 36 electoral votes, Trump's task in 2020 will be primarily defensive, guarding against any erosion in his white working-class base in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania, as well as in Maine's second congressional district.

Further polarization of whites by education could lead to a further shakeup of the electoral map, with Upper Midwest states solidifying for Republicans over time, while faster-growing Sun Belt states like Texas, Georgia, and Arizona drift toward swing-state status. For the moment, however, Texas and Georgia (the two largest prizes available to Democrats based on such a strategy) remain around 10 points to the right of the nation as a whole, making them uncertain 2020 targets.

The Democrats' Electoral College Challenge in a White America Polarized By Education

The key pre-election "tell" that Trump would overperform in the electoral college relative to his popular vote standing was that the swing states were much more demographically favorable to him, specifically in their high numbers of whites without a college degree.

An analysis of states considered to be likely "tipping points" by the various States of Change models over the next five presidential elections suggests that a similar dynamic could continue, albeit in a more muted form. In this analysis, a "tipping-point state" is defined as one that is likely to be within five points of the overall national popular vote margin and thus one that will be heavily targeted regardless of the competitive dynamics prevalent in any given year. In 2036, the tipping-point states would much more closely resemble safe and leaning Republican states than they do safe and leaning Democratic states. The tipping-point Hispanic vote percentage will be 12 percent (versus 10 percent for Republican states and 19 percent for Democratic states). The tipping-point percentage of whites without a college degree will be 38 percent (compared with 41 percent for Republican states and 28 percent for Democratic states). Such an analysis cannot predict which way future swing states will go in 2036, but it does suggest that demographic change favoring Democrats will continue disproportionately concentrate in safely blue states in a way that may presage a continued split between the electoral college and the popular vote.



Figure 1. Projected 2036 Demographics in Red, Blue, and Tipping-Point States (assuming 2016 turnout and support levels)

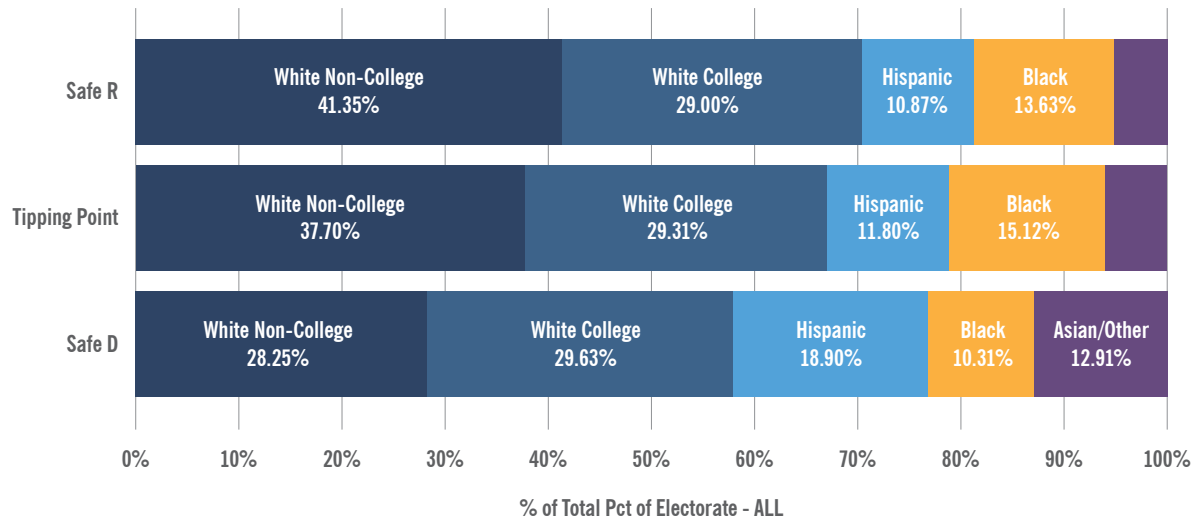
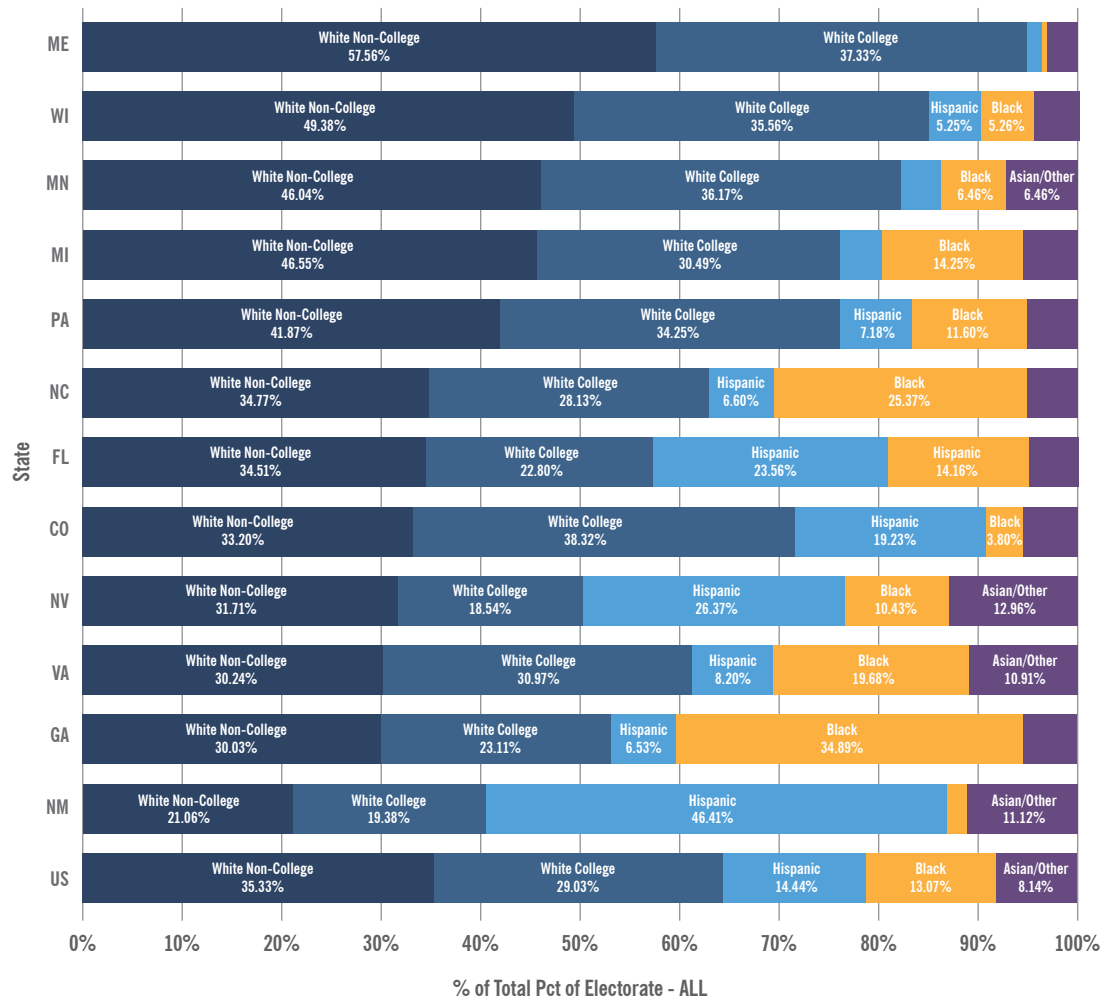


Figure 2. Projected 2036 Demographics in Tipping-Point States (assuming 2016 turnout and support levels)



THE ELECTORATE BY AGE

The American electorate is aging. By 2036, the remaining Baby Boomers will vacate the 45-to-64 age group, and voters ages 65 and over will rise from 24 percent today to 32 percent of American voters. If Republicans maintain their current high support within this group, the trend will be magnified within their ranks, with voters 65 and over set to make up 38 percent of Republican voters in 2036, up from 30 percent today.

Consistent with an overall aging of the electorate, the youngest voters, ages 18 to 29, are set to decline from 16 percent of the electorate in 2016 to 14 percent in 2036.

Table 3. Composition of the Electorate by Age, 2016-2036 (assuming 2016 turnout and support levels)

Age Group	Overall		Republican Coalition		Democratic Coalition	
	2016	2036	2016	2036	2016	2036
18-29	15.9	14.0	10.9	9.4	19.4	17.0
30-44	22.5	22.5	18.7	18.6	25.2	25.0
45-64	37.3	31.7	40.8	33.9	34.7	33.9
65+	24.3	31.8	29.6	38.1	20.7	27.8

Projecting future political behavior based on age means making an assumption that was unnecessary when it came to race and education: that tomorrow's seniors—or tomorrow's young voters—will share the political views of those in that group today. Most people will be in the same racial or educational group in 2036, but almost everyone will be in a different age group.

In recent elections, voter polarization has occurred fairly straightforwardly on age, with older people voting more Republican and younger people voting more Democratic. All of the States of Change scenarios assume that a pattern like this will continue to hold into the future.

This has not always been the case. Prior to 2000, older voters *generally* leaned more Republican, but this was not a hard-and-fast rule. In the 1980s, both the youngest and oldest voters leaned to the left of the country as a whole while middle-aged voters leaned right. In 2000, older and younger voters supported George W. Bush and Al Gore at similar rates.

The first hints of today's generational polarization came in 2004, a wartime election in which younger voters began their current shift to the left. In 2008, voters ages 18 to 29 turned in a historic landslide for Obama, supporting him by a margin of 66 percent to 32 percent. This Democratic advantage lessened in subsequent elections but remained a healthy 20 percent in 2016. While Democratic dominance of future waves of young voters is not preordained, a lean to the left of the country as a whole is expected given that younger voters are significantly more nonwhite than other age groups.



The Future Politics of Older Voters

Generational politics in 2008 truly were positive-sum for Obama and the Democrats. While older voters were starting their shift right, the Obama landslide with younger voters did more to pull the electorate as a whole to the left than older voters pulled it right. This was not true in 2012 and 2016. In both of those years, older voters pulled the country just as far to the right as younger voters pulled it to the left, when considering the relative lean of both voter groups and their size in the electorate. In this sense, generational politics have been zero-sum: Older voters cancel out younger voters. In some places, the shift has been positive-sum for Republicans: The oldest state, Florida, was the ultimate tipping point in 2000, but it has leaned a few points to the right of the nation as a whole in subsequent elections.

The aging of the electorate has the potential to pull this math slightly in a Republican direction—if the party can replicate current generational trends (to be fair, a bigger “if” than many other aspects of demographic analysis). The oldest voters (65-plus) currently outnumber the youngest (18-29) in presidential elections by about three to two. This ratio is set to increase to 2.3 to one by 2036.

Regardless of the partisan implications, this does seem to augur a future politics that is even more solicitous of older audiences than today. Potential policy implications include proposed changes to entitlement programs becoming even more unpalatable than they already are and cultural issues of greater concern to older voters continuing to hold sway within the Republican Party.

The Future Politics of Younger Voters

Young voters, which the exit polls have traditionally defined as those under 30, supported Clinton over Trump by 20 points in 2016. This margin widened to 30 points for Democratic House candidates in the Associated Press/Fox News Votecast survey¹⁷ and to 35 points in the traditional exit poll. This may be a renewed swing to the left among the youngest voters in the Trump era, or it could be a function of voter turnout. As less frequent voters, young voters are uniquely susceptible to large swings based on differences in partisan enthusiasm and turnout, and so the true partisan equilibrium of younger voters probably lies somewhere between 2016 and 2018.

While there is some empirical evidence for the idea that voters grow more conservative as they age—many of today’s Baby Boomers for Trump were among the most highly Democratic voters when the voting age was lowered to 18 in 1972—today’s partisan gap among Millennials is historically high enough to spark concerns that Republicans may forever lose a generation of voters.

There must be more rigor to discussions about shifting young voter preferences as they age. Republicans blithely dismiss the problem with comments like, “We’ll get them when they start paying taxes.” Democrats jubilantly assume that current off-the-charts support levels among younger voters will be written in stone. Neither is likely to be right.

Today’s age gap can be understood as a racial gap and a marriage gap. Take the racial gap first: Today’s 18- to 29-year-old electorate is 37 percent nonwhite—incidentally, that’s a bit higher than where analysts assume the overall electorate will be in 2036. And it’s easy to look at a 20- or 25-point advantage as case closed for Democratic dominance into the future.

But young voters today are significantly more liberal than older voters within each racial group—except for the previously discussed case of young African American men. Contrary to the story many Republicans tell themselves—this is not a function of economic standing and growing aversion to taxes, but a function of marriage and child-rearing.

Multivariate regression analyses of surveys my firm has conducted with younger voters finds that, among whites, marriage and having a child under the age of 18 in the home is what separates Republicans from Democrats; income is hardly significant, and age is not significant at all. Re-weighting younger populations to fit marital and family breakdowns seen at age 40 yields an eight-point net shift to Republicans in party identification, and likely more if considering it strictly on a two-party basis with no independents.

Performing a similar exercise with the CCES data finds an eight- to 14-point shift to Republicans among white voters, although 14 points is probably too optimistic given the notably conservative skew of those who married young. Assume party support levels of married 30- to 44-year-olds, and the shift to the right is eight points.

Generational attitudes are neither fixed in time nor are they completely unmoored from early, formative political experiences. There appears to be some combination of a shift right with age combined with the robust social-science finding that an initial imprint of political events in one's teens and early 20s can be dispositive.¹⁸

Of course, there are some caveats to such an analysis. To the extent young people have been postponing marriage and family formation, this could slow any movement to the right the Republicans might be expecting among young voters. Projecting the views of the current population forward is an inexact science, but one that may nonetheless help the parties understand the mechanisms through which young voters might adjust their views as they move through life.

Implications for 2020

States do not vary from each other based on age as much as they do on race and education. When they do, the previous analysis of state differences by race and education largely capture age differences. Older states tend to be those with lots of white voters without a college degree, and younger states tend to be those with more degree-holders.

Two exceptions are the retiree havens of Florida and Arizona. The Republican advantage among older voters has been strong enough to counteract or hold at bay the growth of more challenging demographics for Republicans, specifically Hispanic voters. In Florida, the continued strength of white retirees (many from the Midwest) in the electorate has fully neutralized any potential Democratic trend, while Arizona, dominated by a relatively educated Phoenix metro area and a haven for California exiles, has seen a more Democratic trend—though Arizona was still around six points to the right of the nation as a whole in 2016.

CONCLUSION: THE GOP IN 2036

Persuasion continues to be a powerful force in U.S. politics. Candidates put forward unique messages, and voters in different groups respond in distinctive ways. There remains a collective urge to reward or punish parties based on perceived performance in office that can produce the sort of electorate-wide swings that Americans saw in 2018. This paper has argued that these forces are more influential in the long run than changes in the demographic makeup of the electorate. Enticing people to support you is a better way to win elections than waiting out the demographic tides.

For Republicans, there is no question that such persuasion will need to involve a dramatic improvement in the party's support among nonwhite voters—especially among new immigrant populations. Such a change may happen slowly, or it might happen overnight—as when George W. Bush won four in 10 Latinos or when Donald Trump ran up historic margins among whites without a college degree.

Yes, the GOP could continue to hope for growth in its share of the white vote—and this appears to have ticked up in recent years, to a recent historical high of 61 percent of the two-party vote in 2016. But even an increase to 65 percent of the two-party vote by 2036, an extremely bullish scenario, would not eliminate the need for some improvement among racial and ethnic minorities.



What would the Republican Party need to do by 2036 if it did not improve among white voters, or if it improved only modestly? The table below lays out this scenario and others. Their share of the vote would need to substantially improve among all nonwhite groups, from 8 percent to 15 percent among African Americans, from 30 percent to 42 percent among Hispanics, and from 33 percent to 45 percent among Asian and other racial groups. Yes, they could still improve somewhat among whites—as a rule of thumb, each one-point shift in the white vote reduces the need for a two-point shift in the nonwhite vote, but the need for a substantial realignment among nonwhites is inescapable.

Table 4. Republican 50%+1 Scenarios in 2036, by Target Share of Two-Party Vote by Race

Group	Current	GOP Victory Scenarios in 2036				
		Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4	Scenario 5
White	61%	61%	62%	63%	64%	65%
African American	8%	15%	13%	11%	10%	8%
Hispanic	30%	42%	40%	38%	36%	34%
Asian/Other	33%	45%	43%	41%	39%	37%

Of course, 16 years is a long time in politics. In 2000, 16 years before the last presidential election, seniors were voting as Democratic as the youngest voters, Republicans held a 12 percent lead among whites compared with 20 percent today, and the nation was one election removed from a white electorate with no education gap.

A shifting racial mix is also not the only way the electorate is changing. The electorate is aging, while it's also becoming more educated. The parties will need to pay attention to trends along each of these dimensions without becoming fixated on one to the exclusion of all others. In some cases, these trends may counteract each other. A more nonwhite electorate could favor Democrats, but an older, more integrated nonwhite electorate may be more conservative than the nonwhite electorate of today.

In 2016, Trump made a big bet that working-class populism was the future of the Republican Party. In so doing, he exposed a disconnect with past party leaders, who espoused free-market orthodoxy even though 60 percent or more of their voters were working-class whites who held more moderate views on economics. The bet paid off in a string of electoral victories in Midwestern battlegrounds that had eluded Republicans even in past victories.

But Trump's bet, which hinged heavily on immigration enforcement, limits potential future avenues for growth among nonwhite voters. These voters share one big thing in common with Trump's base: They are predominantly in the working class. In 2036, three of every five voters—and nearly seven in 10 nonwhites, will not have college degrees. A colorblind populism—modeled perhaps on the immigrant-friendly politics of Canadian conservative leaders like Ontario's Doug Ford and Alberta's Jason Kenney—could start to bridge the divide between traditional conservatives and working-class nonwhites, many of whom hold conservative views on social issues. Canada's conservatives realized they didn't have a choice, in a country where one in five

people were born abroad, a number rising to one in two in cities like Toronto, adapting their message accordingly was a must. In last year's provincial elections in Ontario, a plurality of immigrant voters supported the new conservative government. U.S. conservatives could do more to position themselves on the side of immigrants, for instance by more explicitly casting their immigration policy as one of fairness to legal immigrants.

An electoral strategy premised heavily on whites without a college degree provided important benefits to Trump in 2016, and the Republican Party's failure to capture large shares of nonwhite voters has not prevented the party from winning the presidency, keeping control of the Senate, and holding a majority of governorships. The electoral college and the GOP's structural advantage in Congress—an advantage based on the concentration of the Democratic vote in lopsided states and urban congressional districts—have postponed the party's day of reckoning. They cannot postpone that day forever.

Before that day ever comes, Republicans must prioritize extending their recent inroads with working-class white voters to working-class nonwhites. Recent trends within the Democratic Party may provide an opportunity. Democratic gains among white degree-holders and Democratic victories in wealthy suburban congressional districts last fall partially counterbalanced Republican gains among whites without a college degree. Large electoral prizes in the prosperous Sun Belt are likely to keep Democrats focused on that target.

As Democrats in 2016 pivoted from economic populism to an appeal to educated voters culturally offended by Trump, they surrendered large swaths of the working-class Midwest and potentially created an opening among nonwhites who are economically to the left but not uniformly left of center on social and cultural issues. In the future, Republicans could seize this opening with an economic and cultural populism that more vigorously celebrates legal immigration and campaigns more actively in communities of color. Such an approach is in keeping with all the ways the United States is changing: It is a country that is growing more diverse, but one in which cultural conservatism remains strong as it grows older; and it is a country that is growing more educated, but one in which working-class voters of all races remain firmly at the electoral center of gravity.



Endnotes

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