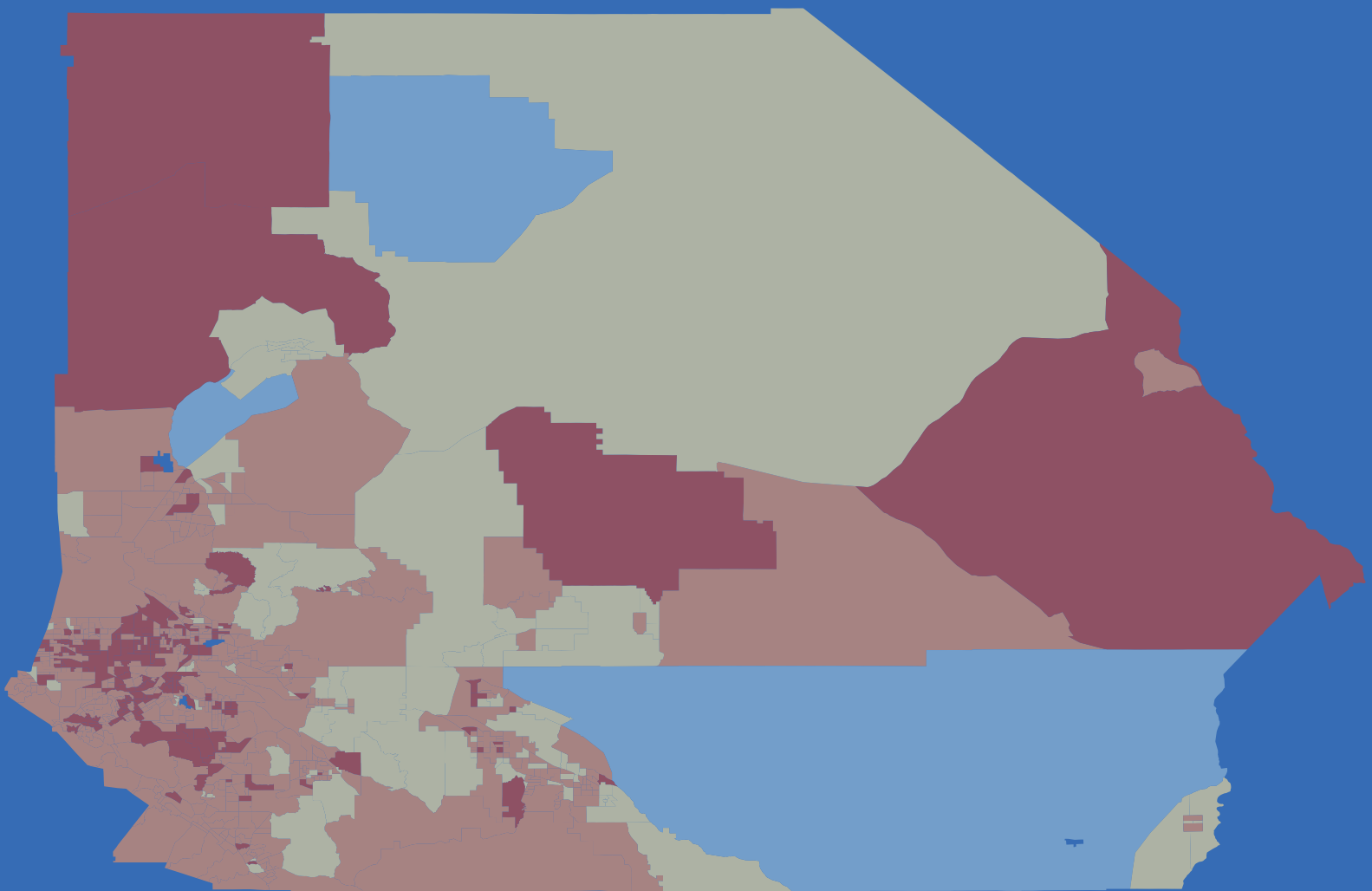

State of Civic Engagement in the Inland Empire

DECEMBER 2019



PART FOUR IN A SERIES



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A community's strength depends on its level of civic engagement, which includes voting, volunteerism, and other forms of civic and political participation. This is particularly true in the Inland Empire, a rapidly growing region of 4.6 million residents that is poised to add another 2 million in the next 40 years. It is also a racially diverse region where Latinos are a majority of the resident population, yet lag significantly behind in their level of civic engagement. This report provides a mix of historical, quantitative, and qualitative data with respect to civic engagement in the region.

Our examination of civic engagement in the Inland Empire shows a region on the rise. There have been tremendous gains in voter registration and voter turnout since 2012, particularly among youth, women, and communities of color. Many of these gains might be attributed to campaign-related factors, such as the competitive presidential primaries in 2016 and the "blue wave" election in 2018.

At the same time, the Inland Empire has also benefited from state policies that have made it easier for residents to register to vote and participate in elections, including local elections. The region has also benefited from years of consistent investments in integrated voter engagement, with several community organizations working in a coordinated manner to mobilize and empower residents who had previously been disengaged or shut out of the decision-making process.

Recent investments in Census outreach are adding to the civic sophistication of the region, providing community organizations with an even greater ability to understand, advocate for, and mobilize their communities. As we discuss in this report, Census outreach is part of a continuum of civic engagement well underway, including public engagement in redistricting, voter registration, voter turnout, participation beyond voting, and running for public office.

While there are promising indicators of progress on these various dimensions, the region still faces enormous disparities in participation and representation, and still lags behind the rest of Southern California and the state.

Capitalizing on gains from Census outreach and state policy reforms will require the region to make further investments and local policy reforms. As the Inland Empire continues to grow rapidly, it is increasingly important that its diverse populations are meaningfully empowered and engaged in the important decisions facing the region.

HISTORY OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The Inland Empire is home to diverse groups of Native American people and tribes including the Alliklik, Chumash, Cahuilla, Gabrielino, Kitanemuk, Serrano, Luiseño, Chemehuevi, Kumeyaay, and Mojave. These groups lived across the region’s deserts, valleys, and mountains dating back over 10,000 years (Patterson 2016).

First nations in the region were largely autonomous and self-sufficient communities, with diverse social and cultural norms. Community engagement was conducted at the local level, often through face-to-face interactions (Patterson 2016). Many tribes in the region were led by hereditary headmen. These leaders consulted and listened to the needs and complaints of their kin and neighbors, striving to be peacemakers (Clastres 1987; Gailey 1987). While there were no formal voting procedures, a group of elders could replace leaders deemed unfit to govern. These cultural norms tended to increase the likelihood a leader would be generous and considerate of the interests of the entire community (Patterson 2016).

As Spaniards started to settle in the region in the 1700s, Native villages and tribes began to form alliances to establish security and resistance against settlers. These alliances came with their own struggles. As power shifted between tribes, tensions began to emerge among certain communities (Patterson 2016).

Civic Engagement from Spanish Colony to Statehood

Clashes between the Spanish and Native tribes became more frequent during the colonial era. The Spanish imposed their cultural and societal norms on Native Americans, and began religious conversion efforts under the Mission system (Yenne 2004). For the early Spanish settlers, civic engagement was inherently linked with Christianity and evangelism.

In 1812, Spain passed a constitution that granted citizenship and voting rights to Spanish men, Native men, and some Black residents. It is important to note that this constitution still completely excluded women and other minority groups. The Spanish Constitution was repealed two years later, and Spain returned to a monarchy in 1814.

In 1821, the Mexican War of Independence gave Mexico [including present-day Riverside and San Bernardino counties] independence from Spain. This transition of power led to a period of unrest in the region (Patterson

KEY FACTS

ELIGIBLE VOTERS, INLAND EMPIRE

2.83 MILLION

REGISTRATION RATE (OCTOBER 2019)

74%

2018 TURNOUT, AMONG ELIGIBLE VOTERS

43%

Source: California Secretary of State

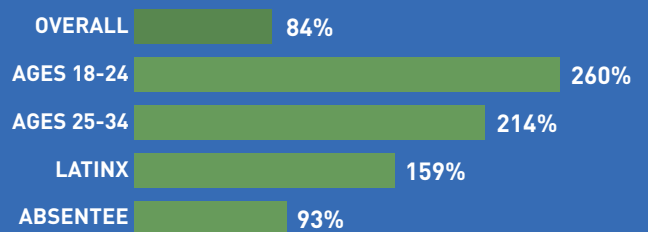
RACIAL GAPS IN PARTICIPATION

(SHARE OF)	RESIDENTS	ADULT CITIZENS	REGISTERED
LATINX	52%	40%	38%
WHITE	32%	42%	44%
BLACK	7%	10%	9%
ASIAN	7%	6%	6%
NATIVE AM	0.4%	1%	0.6%
OTHER	3%	1%	2%

	VOTERS	ATTEND MEETINGS	CONTACT OFFICIALS
LATINX	37%	52%	13%
WHITE	49%	33%	62%
BLACK	8%	10%	19%
ASIAN	5%	4%	4%
NATIVE AM	N/A	N/A	2.6%
OTHER	1%	2%	3%

Source: Current Population Survey Supplements 2017, 2018

VOTING INCREASES AMONG SELECT GROUPS, 2014 TO 2018



Source: Political Data Incorporated

2016). The Mexican government imposed laws without much consideration for local conditions, causing friction between the government and residents (Robinson 1979).

Civic engagement from the period of Mexican rule was also characterized by factionalism. One faction was still loyal to Spain and wanted to maintain the power of the Church and its missions (Patterson 2016). A second group supported the Mexican rebellion and the newly formed independent state (Patterson 2016). Finally, a third group petitioned for more local autonomy (Patterson 2016). This factionalism grew worse during the Mexican-American War (1846–48), which ended with Mexico formally ceding California and other territories to the United States.

The discovery of gold in 1849 hastened the establishment of California statehood in 1850. It also upended social relations in the state, as White settlers arrived in large numbers, outnumbering the Mexican American population and soon passing laws limiting the rights of Chinese immigrants and all other nonwhite populations in the state (Colbern and Ramakrishnan, 2020). And even though the Progressive Era helped secure female suffrage at the local level during the early 1900s and statewide in 1911, many policies restricting civic participation among communities of color still remained in place.

At the same time, associational life continued to grow. Churches formed strong foundations for civic engagement in Black communities, while hometown associations helped Mexican immigrant communities thrive in Southern California (CA Department of Parks and Recreation 1988). The establishment of national organizations—like the NAACP in 1909, the League of Women Voters in 1920, and the Association on American Indian Affairs in 1922—helped to further grow civic engagement across a diverse set of communities in the region. Wartime mobilization and the return of U.S. veterans also served as catalysts for the creation and strengthening of civic participation (Skocpol, 2004).

Civic Engagement in the 1960s

During the 1960s, mobilization for racial and gender equality was increasing in Southern California (Sorey, 2010). Marches, rallies, and demonstrations shed growing light on racial and gender discrimination. Additionally, environmental issues began gaining attention in the Inland Empire as housing construction displaced agricultural land and open spaces. In many cases, women in the region led the charge in organizing local civic involvement in environmental issues.¹

One prominent example of local civic engagement during this period was the racial integration of Riverside Unified School District. Schools in the area were de facto segregated because of school boundary laws that compounded the disadvantages of residential segregation (Hendrick 1968). The Lowell School, a predominantly minority school in Riverside, was burned by an arsonist in 1965 just weeks after the Watts riots in Los Angeles (Littleworth 2014). Community leaders, including many minority youth, intensified their advocacy, circulating petitions and organizing boycotts calling for the true desegregation of Riverside schools. The school district soon relented, agreeing to a plan for racial integration in Riverside public schools (Littleworth 2014).

Contemporary Organizations and Policies

The last two decades have seen a growth of various civic engagement efforts and organizations. For example, the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCA EJ) was founded in 1993, building on over 15 years of community advocacy and litigation over community exposure to toxic chemicals from the Stringfellow Acid Pits in unincorporated Riverside County. Similarly, the Perris area saw the formation of TODEC Legal Center, which focused on large-scale naturalization campaigns, and empowering Latinx communities through get out the vote campaigns and other civic engagement efforts. Similar grassroots organizations emerged in other parts of the region and, in 2012, many of them organized under the collective umbrella of Inland Empowerment. Greater investments by statewide philanthropic organizations soon followed, increasing the capacity and sophistication of civic engagement initiatives in the region. We feature leaders from Inland Empowerment and several other civic engagement organizations in the Community Profiles section of this report, including in our online supplement.

In addition to locally generated efforts to increase voter engagement, the region has also benefited from statewide policies that make it easier for individuals and communities to become civically engaged. These reforms have targeted voter registration—including online voter registration, same-day voter registration, automated voter registration through the DMV—as well as policies encouraging voter turnout, including the California Voting Rights Act, expanded availability of provisional voter ballots, and moves towards on-cycle municipal elections.

California's contemporary advances in progressive electoral policies extend earlier progressive policies on transparency and open government. For example, the 1953 Brown Act guaranteed the right for public

attendance and participation in local policy making institutions like city and county agencies, boards, and councils. By prohibiting secret and informal meetings by policy makers, the Brown Act safeguards the role of ordinary citizens in their self-governance. More recently, the 2001 California Voting Rights Act (CVRA) expanded protections afforded by the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 to minority voters. Specifically, the CVRA allows minority voters to sue local governments that implement at-large elections—an approach that is known to dilute the voting strength of minority voters, and thereby reduce their ability to elect a candidate of preference—without also having to prove that their voting bloc is geographically concentrated.

Apart from these historical policies, two more recent policies exemplify California's commitment to expanding the electorate and encouraging political participation: the 2015 New Motor Voter Act (AB 1641) and the 2016 Voter's Choice Act (SB 450). AB 1641 simplified the voter registration process by linking information collected by the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to voter databases managed by the California Secretary of State. Prior to AB 1641, DMV customers had the option to register as voters, but for over 20 years the gap between eligible voters and registered voters actually grew worse.² AB 1641 sought to reverse that trend by making "opting out" the default action rather than "opting in" to voter registration when they applied for a new driver's license or a new state ID, or renewed or changed their address on an existing driver's license or ID.

One of the most crucial consequences of the New Motor Voter Act is not simply increasing the number of registered voters, but also shifting the demographic composition of the electorate to more closely match that of the adult citizen population. For example, research by the Public Policy Institute of California in 2016 showed that automated voter registration would most likely increase the share of younger, Latino, Asian, immigrant, lower-income, less-educated, and more mobile groups in the California electorate.³

Political voices from the Inland Empire are especially likely to be amplified by the improved voter registration rates secured through the New Motor Voter Act. San Bernardino and Riverside counties are home to concentrations of younger, Latino, Asian, immigrant, and lower-income residents. In the same PPIC analysis from 2016, Riverside County was estimated to log an increase in registration between 15%-18% following implementation, and San Bernardino County by as much as 21%.

PROFILE

ITALIA

Organization: Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCA EJ)

Position: Political Director

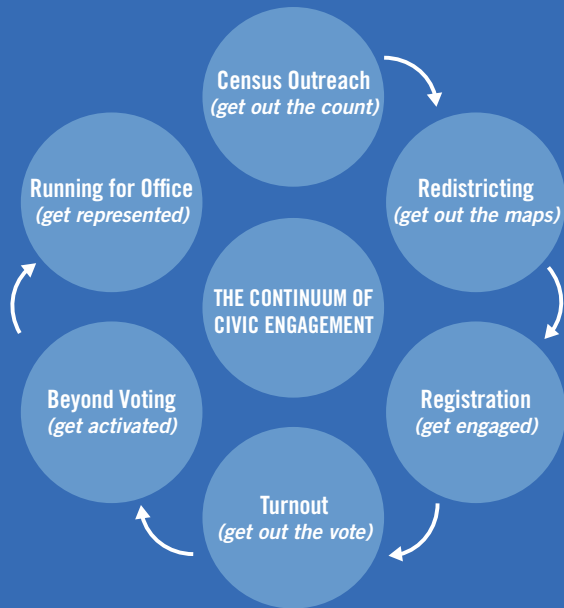
The Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCA EJ) aims to elevate the voices and concerns of residents related to environmental justice and quality of life. The organization got its start in 1993, building on over 15 years of community advocacy and litigation over community exposure to toxic chemicals from a Superfund site in unincorporated Riverside County. Today, CCA EJ looks to address environmental justice through three main components: the natural environment, the social environment, and the political and economic environment.

Italia first got involved with CCA EJ three years ago when she was hired to develop a campaign focused on civic engagement. Today, in her role as Political Director, Italia focuses on sustaining a robust and year-round civic engagement program that includes forming strategic partnerships with government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and key stakeholders. Through the Civic Engagement program, Italia and CCA EJ empower people so they can have a stronger voice in different levels of government and help their communities lead a better life. In addition to empowering the community and serving as a liaison for different groups, Italia also puts together voter registration trainings, professional and leadership development for community members, and civic engagement education.

Italia notes that there are different local groups are influential based on the issue. When it comes to environmental issues and social justice, Italia believes that CCA EJ is one of the prominent groups in the Inland Empire but she believes that other groups could join with CCA EJ to have a stronger influence in social and environmental justice issues.

CCA EJ leaders and community members often voice their opinions during Board of Supervisor meetings for issues that adversely affect neighborhoods and families. The organization is also heavily involved in 2020 Census outreach efforts, building on its strong reputation among marginalized populations in the region to encourage them to participate in the decennial Census effort.

Staff capacity remains a significant constraint, and Italia is hopeful that additional philanthropic investments in the region can help grow and sustain the work of civic engagement organizations like CCA EJ.



CENSUS AND THE CONTINUUM OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Outreach efforts on the 2020 Census offer an important opportunity for us to re-conceptualize civic engagement, not simply as a discrete set of activities but as part of a continuum of engagement that operates at the level of individual as well as community.

Census Outreach: Being accurately counted in the Census is critical for civic engagement and community empowerment, as places with significant undercounts risk losing representation through Congressional apportionment and redistricting for various levels of government. In addition, activities associated with Census outreach such as message development, mapping and canvassing households, and reaching hard-to-count populations, enable organizations to build their strategic capacity for ongoing civic engagement.

Redistricting: Organizations who are involved in “getting out the count” can also fruitfully engage in “getting out the maps” and strengthen community engagement in redistricting. Inland Empowerment, the primary “backbone organization” supporting nonprofit Census outreach efforts in the region (see p. 7) is taking a lead role in supporting individuals and communities to be more engaged in the redistricting process through 2021. Community engagement will be especially vital for the region given its rapid growth and racial diversification. In 2010, only 8% of initial applications for redistricting commissioner and 7% of completed applications came from the Inland Empire, even though the region accounted for 11% of California’s adult citizen population.⁴ In 2019, 10% of initial applications and 8% of completed applications came from the Inland Empire, while the region accounted for 11.6% of the state’s adult citizen population.

Voter Registration: In addition to nonprofit organizations, political parties and interest groups also engage in voter registration drives. As noted in p. 5, California has passed a series of reforms making it easier for adult citizens to register to vote. These reforms make the work of **voter turnout** more important in the future, as “get out the vote” efforts increasingly need to target those who were registered through an automated process rather than an affirmative one.

Beyond Voting: Ultimately, policy is influenced and shaped not only by who votes, but also by who continues to engage between elections. Thus, for example, groups who are heavily involved in attending public meetings and contacting public officials are more likely to have their needs addressed than those who refrain from such activities. Finally, it is important for communities to not only influence policy agendas, but also to actively shape them by running for office and winning.

For the 2020 Census, efforts in the Inland Empire are well underway to reach hard-to-count populations in the region. The State of California is investing about \$2.7 million in outreach through the two county governments to support government outreach, and another \$2.6 through The Community Foundation to support nonprofit outreach. In addition, statewide and local philanthropy has raised \$1.5 million to support Census outreach efforts. UCR’s Center for Social Innovation is providing data analysis, dissemination, and other support to both efforts; Inland Empowerment is supporting the nonprofit Census effort through field planning, implementation, and monitoring; and the National Association of Latino Elected and appointed Officials (NALEO) is providing nonprofits and government agencies with educational materials and training.

According to the CSIUCR 2019 Capacity Survey, areas like the Morongo Basin in San Bernardino County need more resources to help reach hard-to-count populations. In addition, hard-to-count groups like the disabled and homeless need more attention. In terms of languages, the survey found that while there is significant support for Spanish, both written and spoken, it is limited for other languages like Vietnamese, Korean, and Arabic. These survey results, as well as other research from Census 2020 efforts in the region can be found at <https://socialinnovation.ucr.edu/2020Census>.

In sum, the 2020 Census outreach effort in the Inland Empire is important, not only to ensure an accurate count to ensure fair representation and investment in the region, but also to strengthen the policy sophistication of community organizations that are working in partnership with government agencies, businesses, and institutions of higher learning.

As our analysis of voter registration since 2012 bears out (p. 9), registration increases have indeed been disproportionately higher in the Inland Empire than in the rest of Southern California and statewide, and the gains have been particularly strong among young adults and Latinos.

Another significant state election reform is the Voter's Choice Act (VCA), which offers counties the choice of adopting a new voting model that includes sending Vote-By-Mail (VBM) ballots to all registered voters, replacing neighborhood polling places with a smaller number of Vote Centers available to all voters up to ten days before Election Day. Vote Centers, in turn, offer drop box voting, in-person voting, and conditional voter registration. Fourteen of California's 58 counties were eligible to adopt the model for the 2018 election cycle, and five counties did so—Madera, Napa, Nevada, Sacramento and San Mateo. Research from the 2018 experience indicates that voter turnout increased even more in counties adopting VCA reforms than comparable counties not adopting those reforms (McGhee et al. 2019). About half of the state's population will be covered by the Voter's Choice Act in 2020, including Orange County and Los Angeles County (CCEP and CSIUCR 2019). The Inland Empire counties of Riverside and San Bernardino have yet to adopt these reforms.

PATTERNS AND TRENDS IN PARTICIPATION

VOTER REGISTRATION

When examining political participation through voting, it is essential to first explore voter registration. Voter registration, or enrollment, is the requirement that a person otherwise eligible to vote register before they are permitted to vote. In California, this enrollment may be automated through the DMV or may require a separate in-person, mail, or online application. Additionally, residents can conditionally register in person on Election Day. Finally, California is one of 14 states and the District of Columbia to allow pre-registration for 16 and 17 year olds.⁵

The Inland Empire has typically lagged behind the rest of California when it comes to voter registration. According to registration data from the California Secretary of State, only 69% of adult citizens in the Inland Empire were registered to vote in 2012, compared to 81% in the rest of Southern California, 78% in the Bay Area, and 77% statewide.⁶

Thanks to the various statewide reforms and regional investments noted in this report, the Inland Empire has seen a disproportionate jump in voter registration. Since 2012, the region has seen a 17% proportional increase in its voter registration, with increases similar across Riverside and San Bernardino counties (p. 9). Comparable increases

PROFILE

MICHAEL

Organization: Inland Empowerment

Position: Executive Director

Inland Empowerment is a collective table which seeks to increase voter engagement in the region, and particularly among communities of color, through coordinated outreach. The group has 8 partner organizations and a table staff of three.

Inland Empowerment coordinates joint outreach of the table, develops technological solutions, provides training and engages partners through capacity building projects to increase the efficacy of voter outreach. They also assist with grants for local civic engagement organizations.

Michael has been involved with Inland Empowerment since its creation in 2012, when he was in charge of data management. In his current capacity as Executive Director, Michael is in charge of facilitating and implementing engagement strategy for partner organizations.

Michael notes that it is necessary to engage under-represented and long-ignored communities, getting them more involved as voters, vocal stakeholders, and leaders. Inland Empowerment and its partner organizations believe that building the political power of disadvantaged communities is essential to revitalize the region.

Michael notes that a shift in power dynamics in the Inland Empire is critical to advance progressive policy priorities and leaders, including women, people of color, low-income, immigrant, LGBTQ+, and religious minority leaders.

Inland Empowerment is also heavily involved in Census 2020 efforts, leveraging its expertise in nonpartisan voter contact to serve as an organizational backbone to Census outreach by nonprofit partners. The organization is partnering with several civic organizations in the Inland Empire, including the Community Foundation and the Center for Social Innovation, to ensure the highest possible level of census participation in the region.

Michael notes that Inland Empowerment's biggest challenge in the coming years is ensuring adequate funding, as some statewide funders have shifted their priorities in recent years. This adversely affects the capacity of Inland Empowerment and its various partners to sustain the important work of integrated voter engagement in the region.

during that time were 10% in the rest of Southern California and 11% statewide. Part of this difference, however, could be due to variations in population increase across regions. Even when examining registration rates as a proportion of adult citizens, however, we find a greater proportional increase in voter registration in the Inland Empire than in the rest of Southern California or statewide.

Despite this progress, the region continues to lag in its voter registration. The California Secretary of State noted in its release of October 2019 voter registration that the state had crossed an important threshold of 80% voter registration among adult citizens. The same data show 74% voter registration in the Inland Empire and 86% voter registration in the rest of Southern California. As the vast literature on voting participation has shown, much of this remaining gap can be attributed to differences in socioeconomic status, urban density, nonprofit resources, campaign outreach, and the intensity of local news coverage. Thus, even with statewide policy reforms making it easier than ever to register to vote, the Inland Empire could still benefit from significantly more investments in civic engagement.

REGISTRATION GAINS AMONG KEY GROUPS

Voter registration gains in the Inland Empire have been particularly strong among youth and communities of color. Data from Political Data Incorporated (PDI) shows that voter registration from 2012 to 2018 jumped by 15% among 18 to 24 year-olds in the Inland Empire, compared to a 10% registration increase overall in the region during the same period. The registration increase was even greater among 25 to 34 year-olds (p. 9). Importantly, these gains were not simply due to population growth in these age groups. Indeed, the number of 18 to 24 year-olds actually decreased by 5% during this same period.

Latinos also saw disproportionately high gains in voter registration during this time period. Data from PDI shows that Latinx registration grew by 36% between 2012 and 2018, far exceeding the Inland Empire's overall gain of 10% during the same period.⁷ PDI does not have reliable data on African American registered voters in the Inland Empire, and its data on Asian Americans shows a 50% increase in voter registration from 2012 to 2018. Finally, PDI data shows that voter registration among women in the Inland Empire has been higher than voter registration among men since 2012. And in 2018, women in the Inland Empire accounted for 53% of registered voters in 2018, significantly higher than their share of adult citizens that same year (50.7%).

Another notable change has been the significant increase in permanent absentee registration in the Inland Empire, from about 846,000 in 2012 to over 1.3 million in 2018 (p. 9). A permanent absentee voter can vote by mail from any location and does not have to vote at their regularly assigned polling place. Any registered voter in California can apply to be a permanent absentee voter. In the Inland Empire, the percentage of permanent absentee voters increased by 58% from 2012 to 2018, compared to a 50% increase statewide during the same time period.

DIFFERENCES BY PARTY

There has also been a notable change in voter registration by party since 2012. The Republican share of registered voters in the Inland Empire has declined from 39% in 2012 to 30% in 2019 according to data from the California Secretary of State (p. 9). This has mirrored Republican declines statewide as well, where registration has fallen from 29.4% in 2012 to 23.6% in 2019. Notably, however, there are still more registered Republican voters in the Inland Empire than those who indicate No Party Preference (NPP). By contrast, NPP registered voters in 2019 outnumbered Republicans statewide, 26.7% to 23.6%. The share of Democratic voters in the Inland Empire has stayed relatively constant during this time period and, as of October 2019, Democrats had a greater share of voter registration in San Bernardino County (39.6%) than in Riverside County (37.8%).

VOTER TURNOUT

While registration is an important first step, voter turnout is essential to ensuring adequate representation of community needs and interests. As noted by California's Institute for Local Government—a nonprofit that works closely with the League of California Cities, the California State Association of Counties, and the California Special Districts Association—voting as a form of citizens engagement has numerous benefits for citizens and local governments alike. These benefits include: (1) better identification of the public's values and recommendations, (2) encouraging a more informed public, (3) facilitating more community buy-in and support, (4) building trust and transparency between the public and government, and (5) encouraging higher rates of community participation and leadership (Ramakrishnan 2005).

According to data from the California Secretary of State, voting in the Inland Empire has been steadily increasing since 2000, for midterm and presidential elections alike

Data Snapshot

VOTER REGISTRATION BY REGION

	INLAND EMPIRE	RIVERSIDE COUNTY	SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY	REST OF SO CAL	CALIFORNIA
2012	1,794,986	943,405	851,581	6,868,386	18,245,970
2014	1,743,259 (-3%)	891,575 (-5%)	851,684 (0%)	6,755,195 (-2%)	17,803,823 (-2%)
2016	1,907,149 (6%)	1,019,130 (8%)	888,019 (4%)	7,232,069 (5%)	19,411,771 (6%)
2018	1,973,273 (10%)	1,035,957 (10%)	937,316 (10%)	7,288,943 (6%)	19,696,371 (8%)
2019	2,102,205 (17%)	1,099,432 (17%)	1,002,773 (18%)	7,540,569 (10%)	20,328,636 (11%)

Data from 2012 to 2018 based on November registration; 2019 data as of Oct 1; proportional increases from 2012 noted in parentheses

Source: California Secretary of State

VOTER REGISTRATION GAINS IN THE INLAND EMPIRE AMONG KEY POPULATION GROUPS

	AGES 18-24	AGES 25-34	LATINX	PERMANENT ABSENTEE
2012	183,851	277,075	476,454	845,668
2014	188,522 (3%)	299,153 (8%)	525,576 (10%)	878,214 (4%)
2016	195,407 (6%)	282,800 (2%)	534,624 (12%)	1,198,721 (42%)
2018	210,522 (15%)	338,340 (22%)	649,703 (36%)	1,336,931 (58%)

Proportional increases from 2012 noted in parentheses

Source: Political Data Incorporated

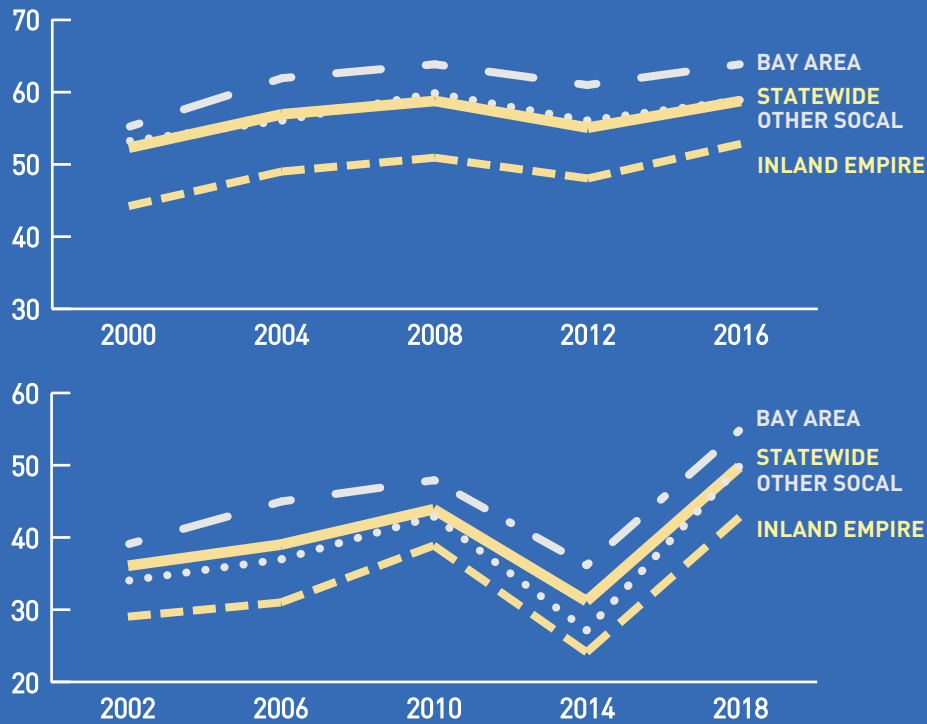
PARTY SHARE OF VOTER REGISTRATION IN THE INLAND EMPIRE

	REPUBLICAN	DEMOCRAT	NO PARTY PREFERENCE	OTHER PARTY
2012	39%	38%	19%	5%
2014	37%	37%	21%	5%
2016	34%	39%	22%	5%
2018	31%	38%	25%	5%
2019	30%	39%	25%	6%

Data from 2012 to 2018 based on November registration; 2019 data as of Oct 1

Source: California Secretary of State

VOTER TURNOUT IN PRESIDENTIAL AND MIDTERM ELECTIONS



Source: California Secretary of State

VOTING GAINS IN THE INLAND EMPIRE AMONG KEY POPULATION GROUPS

	OVERALL	AGES 18-24	AGES 25-34	LATINX	ABSENTEE
2012 (PRES)	1,245,115	116,272	161,634	318,377	651,897
2016 (PRES)	1,433,089 (15%)	135,536 (16%)	207,692 (28%)	439,952 (38%)	883,761 (35%)
2014 (MIDTERM)	645,286	25,764	46,625	132,057	409,013
2018 (MIDTERM)	1,188,111 (84%)	92,938 (260%)	146,573 (214%)	342,804 (159%)	793,312 (93%)

Proportional increases from 2012 and 2014 noted in parentheses

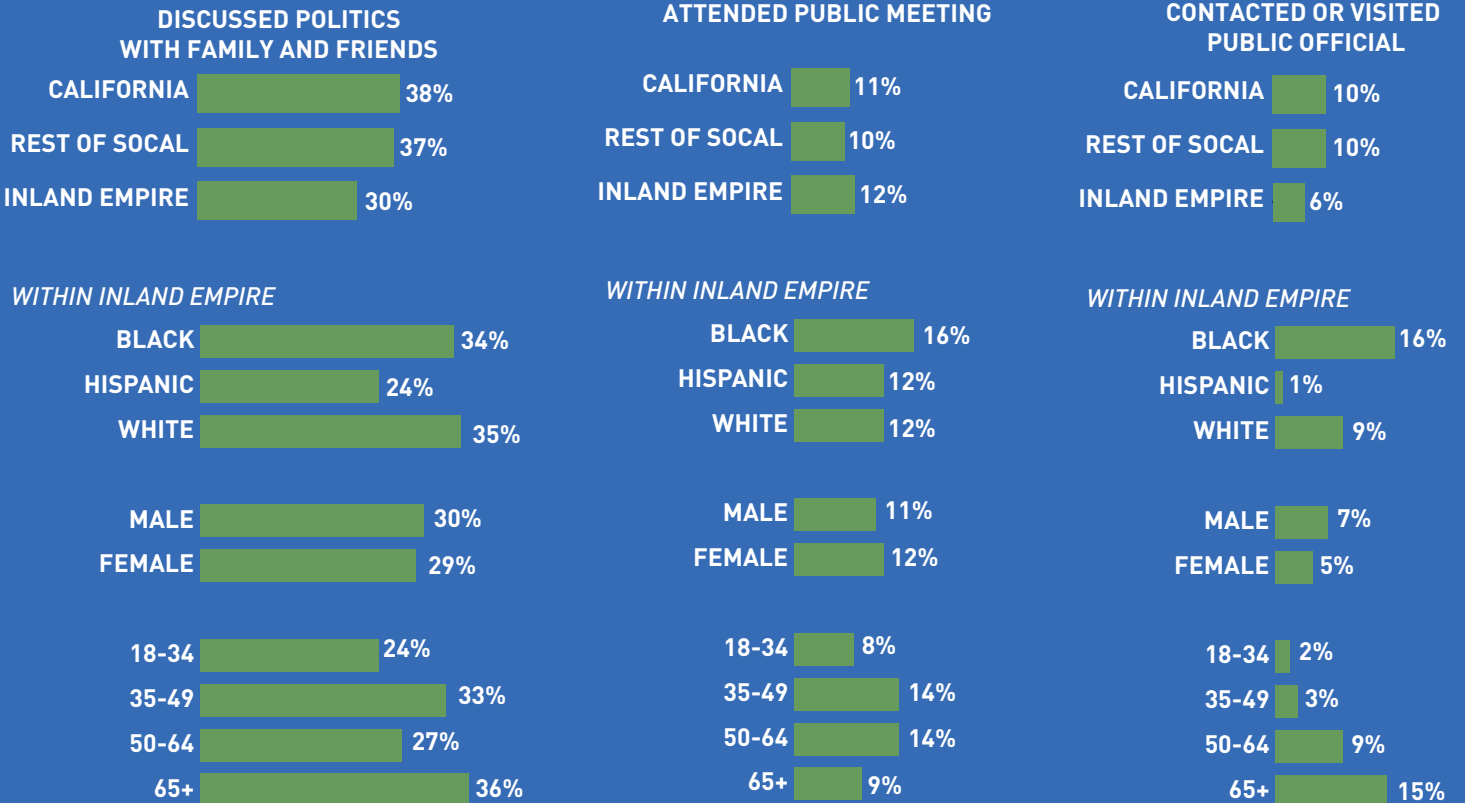
Source: Political Data Incorporated

PARTY SHARE OF VOTER TURNOUT IN THE INLAND EMPIRE

	REPUBLICAN	DEMOCRAT	NO PARTY PREF/OTHER
2012	40%	39%	21%
2014	44%	37%	19%
2016	36%	40%	23%
2018	36%	39%	25%

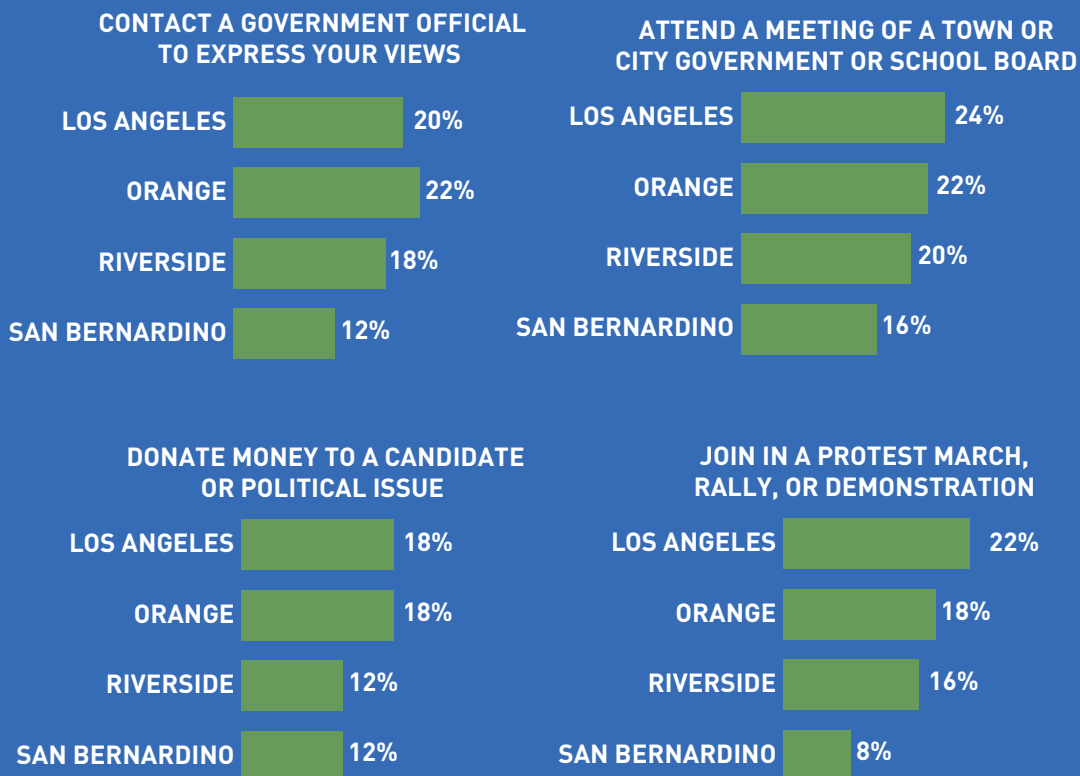
Source: Political Data Incorporated

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BEYOND VOTING



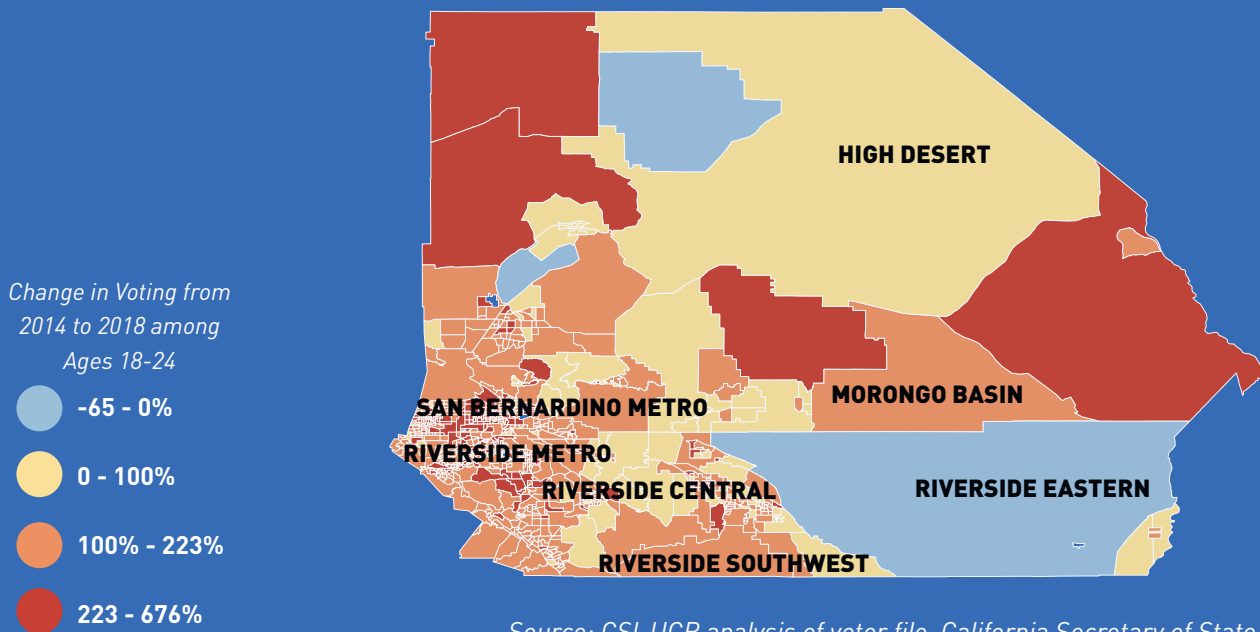
Source: 2017 CPS Volunteer and Civic Life Supplement

LIKELIHOOD OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS



Source: CSIUCR/SCNG Fall 2019 Survey

GAINS IN YOUTH VOTING, 2014 TO 2018



RACIAL REPRESENTATION IN THE I.E., STATE LEGISLATIVE AND CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATES

	WHITE CANDIDATES	LATINX CANDIDATES	ASIAN CANDIDATES	BLACK CANDIDATES	NATIVE AMERICAN CANDIDATES
2010	35 (70%, 1.10)	9 (18%, 0.70)	0 (0%, 0)	4 (8%, 1.28)	0 (0%, 0)
2014	33 (63.4%, 1.07)	12 (23%, 0.80)	5 (9.6%, 2.08)	2 (3.8%, 0.61)	0 (0%, 0)
2018	27 (52.9%, 0.92)	14 (27.4%, 0.89)	4 (7.8%, 1.59)	2 (3.9%, 0.62)	1 (1.9%, 2.82)

Representation Parity Index in parentheses

Source: CSI-UCR Analysis of Data from California Secretary of State - Statement of Vote

RACIAL REPRESENTATION IN THE I.E., STATE LEGISLATIVE AND CONGRESSIONAL WINNERS

	WHITE CANDIDATES	LATINX CANDIDATES	ASIAN CANDIDATES	BLACK CANDIDATES	NATIVE AMERICAN CANDIDATES
2010	17 (68%, 1.07)	6 (24%, 0.94)	0 (0%, 0)	1 (4%, 0.64)	0 (0%, 0)
2014	14 (53.8%, 0.90)	7 (26.9%, 0.93)	3 (11.5%, 2.45)	2 (7.6%, 1.23)	0 (0%, 0)
2018	12 (46%, 0.80)	9 (34.6%, 1.13)	3 (11.5%, 2.34)	1 (3.8%, 0.61)	1 (3.8%, 5.55)

Representation Parity Index in parentheses

Source: CSI-UCR Analysis of Data California Secretary of State - Statement of Vote

FOR MORE DATA AND INFORMATION, VISIT [SOCIALINNOVATION.UCR.EDU/RESEARCH](https://socialinnovation.ucr.edu/research)

(p. 10). In 2000, for example, 44% of adult citizens in the Inland Empire voted in the general election, while 53% did so in 2016. Even more dramatically, only 29% of adult citizens in the Inland Empire voted in the 2002 gubernatorial/midterm election, while 43% did so in the 2018 election. One notable exception to the overall upward trend in voting was the 2014 election, which had historically very low levels of voter turnout (24% among adult citizens). There are several reasons why 2014 saw such low levels of voter turnout, ranging from an uncompetitive governor's race in California featuring a relatively popular incumbent to relatively low levels of voter enthusiasm among Democratic voters nationwide in the 2014 midterm elections.

By contrast, 2018 saw the highest turnout rates in any midterm election since 1914 and broke records nationwide.⁸ There are many possible reasons for this dramatic increase in voter interest, ranging from President Trump's ability to mobilize both those for and against him, as well as increases in nonpartisan voter outreach plus a record crop of candidates of color, female candidates, and those who identify as LGBTQ+ and as members of religious minorities.⁹ Southern California also saw greater national attention than ever before, especially as Republican incumbents in Congress faced stiff challenges from Democrats in parts of Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, and Riverside Counties. It remains to be seen whether this high level of interest will carry over into 2022, although it is likely that the intensity of voter opinion in the presidential election, as well as continued voter engagement by nonpartisan groups, will produce very high levels of voter turnout in the foreseeable future.

While voter turnout in the Inland Empire has increased significantly over the past two decades, it still lags behind other regions in the state (p. 10). For example, 53% of adult citizens in the Inland Empire voted in the most recent presidential election, compared to 59% of those living in the rest of Southern California, 64% of those living in the Bay Area, and 59% statewide. Similarly, while 43% of adult citizens in the Inland Empire voted in the most recent midterm election, 50% did so in the rest of Southern California, compared to 55% in the Bay Area, and 50% statewide. As we discuss at the end of this report, several policy changes and investments in civic engagement could help bridge these persistent gaps in participation between the Inland Empire and the rest of the state.

VOTING GAINS AMONG KEY GROUPS

Just as in the case of voter registration, turnout gains in the Inland Empire have been particularly strong among youth and communities of color. Data from Political Data Incorporated (PDI) shows that voting in presidential elections increased by 15% in the region between 2012 and

PROFILE

CELENE

Organization: Inland Empire Labor Council
Position: Political Director

The Inland Empire Labor Council (IELC) aims to improve the lives of working families in Riverside and San Bernardino county through organizing, policy, and advocacy. It engaged in issue advocacy and electoral work as well as providing assistance to labor unions on campaigns and partnerships in the region. The IELC is made up of over 93 different unions that represent workers in Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

Celene first got involved with unions as a UC Riverside student, when she was introduced to the region's labor movement. Before joining the Inland Empire Labor Council, Celene worked for different labor unions and organizations, and these experiences have helped her guide the mission and vision of the IELC.

In her role as political director, Celene seeks to build relationships with other local advocacy groups across a range of issues. She mentions that they try to understand the areas where they can agree and work together in order to better serve the community, Celene notes that "if we are talking about transforming our region for what's better and best for our communities environmental wise, job wise, and their quality of life, then we really have to work together."

The IELC is heavily involved in voter education and voter engagement in the region. It holds local meetings on issues that could impact the region and where they are able to gather feedback or concerns before advocating for a given policy. Through its political committee, the organization also solicits input from member unions in a systematic manner, asking candidates about their positions on key regional priorities.

Celene sees the movement against worker unions and organizing as one of the biggest challenges faced by the Labor Council and its member unions. She notes that union membership has decreased over the years, making it even more difficult for the labor movement to advocate against harmful policies and practices.

Celene also notes that it is vital for the region's elected officials to represent the interest of workers. Without adequate representation, she fears, elected officials will not effectively advocate for better jobs and quality of life in the region, and people will eventually move out of the Inland Empire to places that will provide both.

PROFILE

LUZ

Organization: Training Occupational Development Educating Communities (TODEC)

Position: Community Programs Director

Training Occupational Development Educating Communities (TODEC) is a grassroots, immigrant-centered, immigrant-powered, base-building organization working to build power in the immigrant community to become socially, economically, educationally, and civically self sufficient.

Luz has been involved in TODEC since its founding in 1984 and formal incorporation in 1996. Her parents founded TODEC, and the organization continues the tradition of inter-generational empowerment through its youth civic engagement program, *Monarcas Luchadoras-Jovenes Comprometidos*.

Luz notes that TODEC has played a significant role to advance the lives of the immigrant community, but the founders realized that they need to go beyond advocacy “to create systems change, we needed to build on our political power.” To have a greater impact, TODEC has helped more than 130,000 individuals become U.S. citizens. Luz notes that they help individuals become not only citizens, but also engaged citizens.

Luz and TODEC are also involved in 2020 Census outreach, building on their prior engagement in 2010 and 2000. Their involvement in 2010 also extend to mobilizing the community around redistricting and pushing for meaningful changes to the maps generated by the citizens redistricting commission. Luz notes that TODEC “worked with other organizations to organize the maps and the redistricting because we knew our votes were being watered down.”

For many years, TODEC continued its grassroots engagement without funding from foundations or government; relying exclusively on the voluntary work of its leaders and members. Luz notes that one of the challenges that TODEC will face in the coming years is raising enough funds to meet increased demand, and to have the flexibility of unrestricted funding to be able to respond and adapt to the changing needs of its communities.

2016. The increase in voting among 18 to 24 year-olds was similar at 16% (p. 10), while the voting gain among 25 to 34 year-olds was higher, at 28%. The 2016 election also saw a significant increase in Latinx voting, as their numbers increased by 38% from 2012.

These gains in voting paled, however, in comparison to the gains between the 2014 and 2018 midterm elections. As noted earlier, the 2014 election had very low levels of voter interest in California while the 2018 election had historically high levels of voter interest for a midterm election. Data from PDI shows that voting in the Inland Empire increased, on average, by 84% between 2014 and 2018.

While these gains are, by themselves, impressive, the increases were even more dramatic among young voters and Latinx voters. Voting among 18 to 24 year-olds increased by more than 250% during this period, increasing from about 25,000 in 2014 to nearly 93,000 in 2018. Similarly, voting among 25 to 34 year-olds doubled from about 47,000 voters in 2014 to nearly 147,000 voters in 2018. As noted earlier, these gains were not simply due to population growth among these age groups. The number of 18 to 24 year-olds in the Inland Empire decreased by 4% from 2014 to 2018, while the number of 25 to 34 year-olds increased by about 8%.

Latinos also saw disproportionately high voting gains between 2014 and 2018. Data from PDI shows that Latinx voting grew by nearly 160% between 2014 and 2018, far exceeding the Inland Empire’s overall voting gain of 84% during the same period. PDI does not have reliable data on African American voters in the Inland Empire, and its data on Asian Americans shows a 121% increase in voter turnout from 2014 to 2018. Meanwhile, self-reported data from the Current Population Survey shows that turnout among African Americans increased by about 25% between 2014 and 2018.

Data from PDI also shows that voter turnout among women in the Inland Empire has generally been slightly higher than turnout among men. There are some exceptions, however, as men had slightly higher turnout rates in the 2014 general election, as well as in the 2014 and 2018 primary elections.

Finally, the Inland Empire has also seen a significant increase in absentee voting since 2012. In both the presidential and midterm election cycles, the growth of absentee voting has outpaced the growth of overall voting in the region (see table 2, p. 10). In the most recent midterm election, two-thirds of all votes in the Inland Empire were submitted by absentee ballot, suggesting that reforms like the Voters Choice Act may be more viable in the future for the region than in the past.

VOTING DISPARITIES PERSIST IN THE REGION

Despite gains in voting among various groups, there still remain significant gaps in participation by race, age, disability status, and socioeconomic status.

Disparities by Race or Ethnicity

When analyzing self-reported turnout in terms of race or ethnicity, data from the Current Population Survey indicates that Whites have the highest turnout rates in the Inland Empire, and particularly so during midterm elections. For example, 56% of White adult citizens reported voting in the 2018 general election, compared to 45% of Latinos, 42% of Asian Americans, and 39% of African Americans. In the 2016 presidential election, Black voter turnout and White turnout were comparable (at 62% and 61%, respectively), but turnout among Latinos and Asian Americans was significantly lower (at 49% and 47%, respectively).

Disparities by Age

Like with voter registration, voter turnout tends to correlate with age. Older residents tend to have higher rates of voting than those in younger age groups. Older citizens are more likely to vote for many reasons which include: (1) protecting Social Security and Medicare benefits, (2) having less mobility and moving means they do not have to re-register to vote often, (3) more time if they are not working full-time, and (4) social norms and the identification of being a “voter.”¹⁰ Data from the Current Population Survey shows that in the 2018 general election, only 34% of 18 to 24 year-olds reported voting while 62% of those 65 years and older reported doing so. The results were similar for the 2016 presidential election, at 44% and 71%, respectively.

Disparities by Disability Status

Millions of Americans with disabilities have difficulty exercising their right to vote due to barriers and accessibility issues including (1) transportation to and from the polling place, (2) an inaccessible polling site, (3) the working condition of the accessibility polling machinery poll workers not knowing how to work it, and (4) poll workers that are not properly trained to help voters with disabilities (Schur et al. 2002). A large body of scholarly work has noted this continued disenfranchisement among people living with cognitive and physical disabilities (Matsubayashi 2014; Schur 2002; Agran 2016; Shur 2013; Schriener 1997).

Over the last few decades, the U.S. government has enacted several pieces of legislation aimed to make voting more accessible to individuals with disabilities. Despite these efforts, the participation gap between people with and without disabilities has not decreased over the last three decades (Matsubayashi 2014). What is true nationally

PROFILE

VONYA

Organization: Starting Over, Inc.

Position: Co-Founder & Executive Director

Vonya Quarles is Co-Founder and Executive Director for Starting Over Inc, an organization that aims to provide transitional housing and reentry services for individuals, while also addressing disparities and inequity in the region. In terms of civic engagement, the organization implements the “All of Us or None” program, which helps people impacted by the criminal justice system develop their communities and get involved in civic life.

Vonya first got involved with the organization in 2002 with the idea of providing sober housing to people. She had gone through the criminal justice system and experienced homelessness, and “wanted to see if we could help other people like ourselves.” This desire to help other individuals impacted by the system eventually led to the founding of Starting Over in 2009. In 2013, the California State Bar granted Vonya her license to practice law after clearing the Moral Character requirement.

According to Vonya, civic engagement takes up close to sixty percent of the work of Starting Over. Vonya notes “...we provide voter registration, voter education, community engagement forums to help educate people about particular policies or ballot initiatives.” Vonya believes that this work helps community members become more educated on issues that affect them or that they were not aware it could affect them. She also notes the importance of partnerships with other organizations, even though they may not always be on the same side of a particular issue.

Vonya is very proud of Starting Over’s volunteers, the vast majority of whom are drawn to the organization’s civic engagement work. For example, Starting Over takes a group of close sixty volunteers to Sacramento every year to an event called “Quest for Democracy Day,” where formerly incarcerated volunteers learn how to make an impact in the policy making process, particularly on issues affecting the communities where they live.

PROFILE

SHEHERYAR

Organization: Warehouse Workers Resource Center (WWRC)

Position: Executive Director

Warehouse Workers Resource Center (WWRC) is a nonprofit organization that aims to improve the lives of warehouse workers and their families in Southern California through education, advocacy and action. WWRC assists warehouse workers with information including workplace rights, wage theft, worker compensations, rights as immigrant workers, and referrals to legal services.

In addition to some of the services provided by WWRC, Sheheryar notes the organization is involved in direct worker organizing. WWRC also supports workers that seek to improve workplace conditions through policy advocacy.

Before joining WWRC, Sheheryar worked in community organizing around the Bay Area. He eventually moved on to do research on labor organizing and supported different groups in campaigns that focused on workplace organizing.

Sheheryar notes that through the civic engagement side of WWRC, the organization trains canvassers to not only be knowledgeable about voter engagement but also about the mission and work of the organization. He says that “civic engagement is a core part of our work, we do direct policy advocacy in Sacramento and we’ve been able to push four or five bills in the last eight years”. WWRC has been instrumental in advocating for the first-ever state bill regulating indoor work temperatures. WWRC is also involved in efforts to push for better community and worker benefits, including actions currently underway at San Bernardino airport, where a developer is reportedly building a logistics facility for Amazon.

Sheheryar finds that large corporations are the biggest challenge for the WWRC. Bigger corporations will undoubtedly have vast amounts of power which makes the work of WWRC more difficult to carry out. A second challenge that WWRC faces are federal regulations from the Department of Labor that can undermine the work that worker’s rights organizations provide in California.

is also true in the Inland Empire. Thus, for example, the Current Population Survey reveals that only 30% of disabled individuals in the Inland Empire reported voting in the 2018 general election, compared to 48% among those without a disability. Similarly, only 39% of disabled individuals in the Inland Empire reported voting in the 2016 presidential election, compared to 56% of those without a disability. These gaps were similar in the Inland Empire as they were statewide in California.

Disparities by Income and Homeownership

One of the most enduring findings in political behavior is the fact that voting tends to correlate with homeownership and income. Part of this difference is due to resources they can use to get politically informed and active, and they are also more likely to be contacted and mobilized by political campaigns. In addition, homeowners tend to pay more attention to local politics and policies when compared to renters, and they also benefit from greater outreach by local elected officials.

Data from the Current Population Survey reveal that homeowners in the Inland Empire were significantly more likely to vote than renters, and this finding held true in presidential as well as midterm elections. For instance, 59% of homeowners voted in the 2016 presidential election, compared to 46% of renters. This gap is even greater in midterm elections. In the 2014 election, for example, homeowners in the Inland Empire were more than twice as likely to vote (35%) than renters (17%). Even in the historic 2018 election that saw relatively high levels of turnout, 52% of homeowners in the Inland Empire reported voting, compared to only 38% of renters. These voting gaps between homeowners and renters are not unique to the Inland Empire, but they are slightly higher than the gaps statewide.

In addition to participation disparities by homeownership, income is also a significant factor shaping voter turnout. In the 2018 election, only 36% of voters with family incomes below \$25,000 reported voting, compared to 52% among those with incomes between \$75,000 and \$100,000 and 55% for those with incomes \$100,000 and above. Thus, policies and investments targeting voter education and voter outreach among renters and low-income voters could help boost overall voter turnout in the region and reduce participation disparities by socioeconomic status.

GAPS IN PRIMARY ELECTIONS

Disparities in voting by race and age get even more stark when analyzing primary election data. For example,

PDI data for the Inland Empire reveals that in the 2018 primary election, about 60% of registered voters 65 and over voted, compared to only 12% of 18 to 24 years olds. Racial gaps were severe too, as 22% of registered Latinos voted in the 2018 primary, compared to 39% of Whites. These gaps were smaller in the 2016 primaries although then, too, senior citizens were more than twice as likely to turn out as registered voters below age 34, and White registered voters were 1.3 times as likely to participate than Latinos.

These disparities in primary turnout can have serious consequences in California’s top-two primary system. A top-two system is a type of election where all candidates are listed on the same primary ballot. The top two vote-getters, regardless of their party affiliations, advance to the general election. When only certain groups consistently vote in a top-two system, those groups have greater control over which candidates appear on the general election ballot. More pointedly, if youth in the Inland Empire do not participate in primary elections, older voters will narrow those choices for them.

VOTING IN LOCAL ELECTIONS

In addition to voting in presidential and gubernatorial elections, it is also important to pay attention to turnout in local elections. According to data from the Current Population Survey (2017), 39% of Inland Empire residents indicated that they had voted in local elections in the prior 12 months, compared to 49% of residents in the rest of Southern California and 51% of residents statewide.

Racial disparities in voting are even stronger in local elections than in gubernatorial elections. In 2017, for example, 51% of Whites indicated that they had voted in a local election in the prior 12 months, while the same was true for only 26% of the region’s Latinx eligible voters. By contrast, the White-Latinx voting gap during the 2018 gubernatorial election was much smaller, at 56% and 45%, respectively.

OTHER BARRIERS TO VOTING

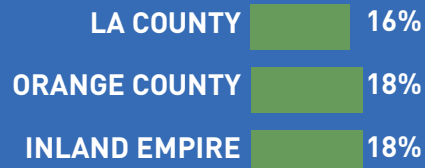
While there are no longer poll taxes and other formal barriers such as literacy tests and racial bans on citizenship, many Americans still find it difficult to exercise their right to vote. A number of structural and social barriers can still disenfranchise voters and impede their efforts to get to the polls (Schneider, 1996).

Voter ID Requirements

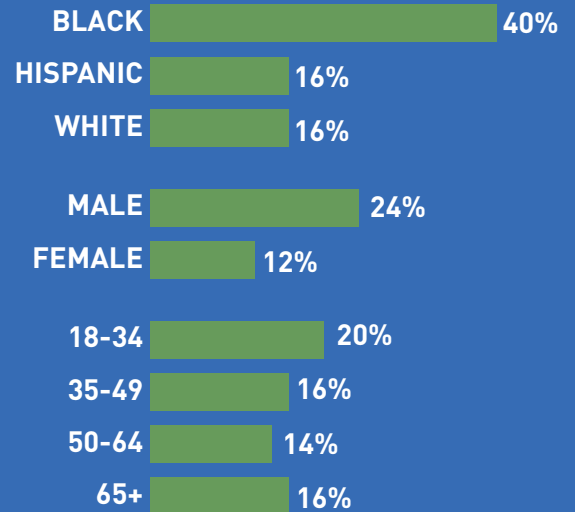
In recent years, state legislatures across the United States have implemented voter identification laws. These laws require voters to present some form of identification

POLITICAL AMBITION & REPRESENTATION

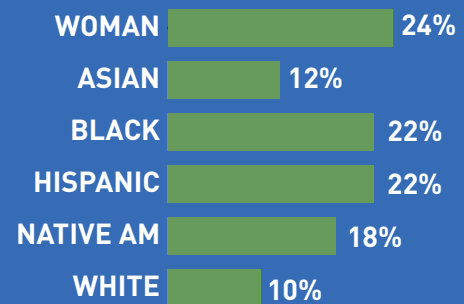
CONSIDERED RUNNING FOR OFFICE



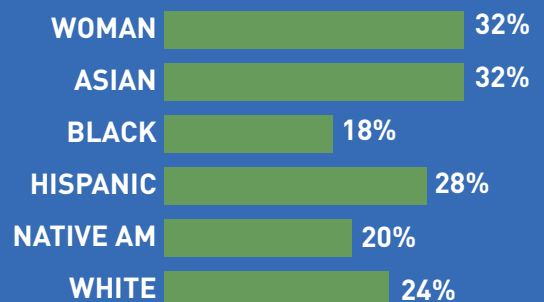
WITHIN INLAND EMPIRE



VERY/EXTREMELY IMPORTANT FOR A LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIAL TO BE



VERY/EXTREMELY IMPORTANT FOR A MEMBER OF CONGRESS TO BE



Source: CSI-UCR/SCNG Fall 2019 Survey

at the polls. In some cases, the required identification must include a photo. These laws can essentially determine who can and who cannot vote. Additionally, several recent studies have noted that these stricter ID laws disproportionately burden minorities (Hajnal, Kuk, Lajevardi 2018; Barreto, Nuno, Sanchez 2019).

As of 2019, 35 states enforced voter identification requirements.¹¹ According to the California Secretary of State, “in most cases, California voters are not required to show identification at their polling place.” First time voters may be asked to present an ID, but it is generally not required to vote in California. Still, even in a state like California, misinformation and purposeful deception about ID requirements could affect voter turnout rates for certain communities. Some voters may think an ID is required to cast their vote, and may stay home because they lack an official state ID. Additionally, low-income voters may not be able to afford the fees associated with getting a license or official state ID.

Language Access

Another notable barrier to voting is language access. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 prohibits state and local governments from imposing any voting law discriminates against racial or language minorities. In addition, Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act mandates that jurisdictions (such as cities, counties, and states) need to provide language assistance where language minorities number at least 10,000 residents or comprise more than 5% of adult citizens.¹² California’s mandate goes even further, mandating language assistance for groups that meet a 3% threshold in a county or precinct (Egelko 2019).

Despite these rules, some groups may still face difficulty when exercising their right to vote. Language access is a particular concern in Asian immigrant communities, who often find language assistance lacking at polling locations, even in counties mandated to provide them (Magpantay 2004). Recently, the civil rights group Asian Law Caucus successfully sued California to make sure that Asian language assistance is provided in all counties where populations meet the 3% threshold for assistance (Egelko 2019).

Discouragement & Lack of Information

Discouragement in the political process and a lack of information can also be significant barriers to participation. Voters may be distrustful of politicians and the entire political process, and may decide not to participate at all. According to the CSI-UCR/SCNG Fall 2019 Survey, respondents were asked whether they agree

or disagree with the statement “Public officials don’t care much what people like me think.” 42% of Inland Empire residents said they “somewhat agree” and 28% “strongly agreed.” Additionally, respondents were asked whether or not they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “People like me don’t have any say about what the government does.” The survey found that 36% of Inland Empire residents “somewhat agreed” and 24% “strongly agreed” with this statement. These results shine a light on the relational disconnect between political representatives and the public’s engagement in the political process.

Another significant barrier to voting is having insufficient information. According to the CSI-UCR/SCNG Fall 2019 Survey, 44% of Inland Empire residents “somewhat agreed” and 12% “strongly agreed” with the statement that “sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what’s going on.” One of the principal ways that citizens can get better informed about politics and policy is through local news media. We discuss the alarming reduction in local news coverage in our section on policy options to boost civic engagement.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT BEYOND VOTING

In addition to voting, there are several other important ways to engage in policy and decision-making. Indeed, when it comes to policy influence, activities like contacting officials and attending public hearings can be much more consequential than voting.

According to the Current Population Survey (p. 11), the proportion attending public meetings such as school board meetings and planning commission meetings is generally the same in the Inland Empire (12%) as statewide (11%). Older residents have higher rates of attending public meetings than those below age 35. These findings are echoed in the CSI-UCR/SCNG Fall 2019 survey, where roughly 20% of the population of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties report attending a meeting of a town or city government or school board. However, when asked whether they are likely to attend a public meeting in the next 12 months, residents in San Bernardino County were less likely than those in Los Angeles County to indicate that they would participate (p. 11).

Another influential civic engagement activity is contacting public officials. According to the Current Population Survey (p. 11), the Inland Empire has a lower rate of contacting public officials (6%) when compared to the rest of Southern California (10%) or statewide (10%).

Within the region, racial disparities in contact are quite stark. While 16% of Black residents and 9% of White residents reported contacting public officials, only 1% of Latinos said the same. This disparity is particularly troubling considering that Latinos are a majority of the region's residents. Finally, age disparities are also quite severe, with 15% of seniors age 65 and older contacting public officials, but only 2% of 18-34 year-olds doing so.

This age dynamic flips when looking at engagement in protest marches, rallies, or demonstrations. According to data from the CSI-UCR/SCNG Fall 2019 Survey, 17% of residents ages 18 to 34 reported participating in protests and rallies in the past 12 months, compared to only 4% of those 35 or older. Overall, 10% of residents in the Inland Empire reported participating in protests and rallies, and racial gaps in participation were negligible.

VOLUNTEERISM

Aside from political participation, a large part of civic engagement involves volunteerism. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, 25% of residents in the Inland Empire volunteered in 2018, ranking them 43rd among metropolitan areas in the United States.¹³ This ranking has improved in recent years from 47th place in 2015.

Economic benefits for the region are often a byproduct of this volunteerism. For example, the Corporation for National and Community Service estimates that volunteerism in the Inland Empire was worth about \$1.7 billion dollars in 2018. Additionally, 39.9% of residents donated \$25 or more to charity, further enhancing community and nonprofit development. It is important to note that donations have been decreasing in recent years, following a national decline after 2008. This slowdown of donations appears to be a symptom of economic tightening in the region, placing further pressure on the region's nonprofits and charities. According to the CSI-UCR/SCNG Fall 2019 Survey, 46% of Riverside County and 40% of San Bernardino County residents said they have donated to a charitable cause aside from a religious organization. In Orange County, a region that has more economic resources and larger nonprofits, the rate of charitable giving is significantly higher at 58%.

Data from the 2017 CPS Volunteer and Civic Life Supplement show that in the Inland Empire, 45% of volunteers were involved in education and youth organizations. When analyzed further, these data shows that Latinos, women, and those with 4 year college degrees or higher are more likely to volunteer in these organizations. In addition, younger age groups are more involved. For

PROFILE

TOM

Organization: Inland Congregations United for Change
Position: Executive Director

Inland Congregations United for Change (ICUC) is an organization that develops grassroots leadership in congregations across the Inland Empire. Tom notes that one of the organization's goals is to teach community organizing to new organizations and congregations. ICUC provides about 25 different trainings that revolve around the issues organizations face in their respective communities. The goal of ICUC is to train organizations to better understand the issues and assets available to themselves and their communities.

Before joining ICUC, Tom spent almost 15 years in Latin American countries where he was actively involved in organizing. He also spent time working with the farm workers movement in the Midwest as an organizer. He eventually settled in San Bernardino where he was hired as a community organizer by ICUC.

At ICUC, individuals are not referred to as volunteers but as "leaders." ICUC also has a youth organizer program that partners with 18 schools. Given the number of leaders active in the congregations, ICUC has greater reach than many other organizations in the region. At the same time, Tom notes that ICUC also partners with other organizations on strategic issues, in order to have an even greater reach.

When asked about civic activities carried out by ICUC, Tom states "Civic activities? That is 100 percent of what we do." Tom notes that over the last few weeks, ICUC leaders have done census related work, attended a city council meeting over in Coachella, and had a walk with community members and city leaders in San Bernardino.

Tom sees growth as a challenge for ICUC. The organization does not have the necessary staff to cover all areas where they would like to have an active congregation. ICUC must find ways to raise funds or change and adapt their current funding model so they can engage more congregations. In addition to these challenges, Tom believes that ICUC must find ways to adapt and align its organizing efforts with the state and national organizing movements.

example, of the age group 35-49, 60% said they had volunteered with education and youth organizations.

According to the same data, religious engagement is the second largest volunteer activity in the Inland Empire. Among those who volunteer in the region, 37% report doing so with a religious organization. This percentage is slightly higher in the Inland Empire than in the rest of Southern California (33%) and statewide (31%). The region is also on par with others with respect to volunteers who participate in “sports and hobby” organizations, including sports leagues. By contrast, volunteers in the Inland Empire are much less likely to be involved in political activities (9%) than those who volunteer elsewhere in Southern California (23%) or statewide (22%).

Finally, the 2017 Current Population Survey data also point to disparities in volunteerism by race, age, and educational attainment. Participation among Latinos (16%) was significantly below the regional average (26%), as was involvement among 18 to 34 year-olds (18%), and those with only a high school degree (14%). At the same time, the data also show a few bright spots. Latinos who volunteer in the Inland Empire are much more likely than Whites to do so for religious organizations (47% versus 28%, respectively), and are about as likely to volunteer in education and youth organizations (53% and 45%, respectively). As prior studies have indicated, greater recruitment by mainstream community organizations could go a long way in strengthening and diversifying civic engagement in the region (Ramakrishnan et al. 2007).

REPRESENTATION

The “Continuum of Civic Engagement” (p. 6) maps out the interrelations and interactions across different aspects of engagement. Running for office is the last step of the process and ultimately affects the state of representation in the region. Our analysis of data from the California Secretary of State Statement of Vote (SOS-SOV), show that the share of White state legislative and Congressional candidates in the Inland Empire has decreased significantly since 2010 (p. 12).¹⁴ For example, in 2010 White candidates made up 70% of total candidates and were over-represented when accounting for the size of their adult citizen population; we calculate the Representation Parity Index (or RPI) of Whites as 1.10 in 2010.

For context, any RPI score over 1.00 means that group is over-represented when compared to its share of adult citizens, and any score under 1.00 means that group is

under-represented. In 2018, Whites made up 52.9% of candidates for the state legislature and Congress and had a RPI of 0.92, a significant decrease since 2010 and slightly below parity. By contrast, Latinx candidates in the Inland Empire tend to be under-represented, but have made significant gains in recent years. For example, in 2010 Latinx candidates made up just 18% of total candidates in the I.E., resulting in a parity score of 0.70. By 2018, the percentage of Latino candidates had risen to 27.4% with a parity score of 0.89.

Similar gains in representation parity can be found when examining election winners. In the Inland Empire in 2010, 68% of the candidates who won were White and 24% were Latinx. In 2018 this disparity began to shrink with Whites accounting for 46% of winning candidates and Latinos accounting for 35%. These changes in a relatively short period of time may signal a future where representation in the I.E. is becoming more equitable for Latinos.

One way to gauge the future of representation in the region is to examine variations in political ambition across groups. We asked respondents in the CSI-UCR/SCNG Fall 2019 Survey if they had ever considered running for elected office (p. 17). Nearly one in five Inland Empire residents (18%) indicated that they had considered it, comparable to those living in Los Angeles and Orange County. Within the Inland Empire, however, there were significant differences across groups, with men twice as likely as women, and Blacks more than twice as likely as Latinos and Whites, to have considered running for office. Interestingly, 18 to 34 year-olds were slightly more likely than those in older age groups to have considered running for office.

Finally, the same survey also gauged the extent of potential voter support for more diverse candidates (p. 17). Support for greater racial and gender diversity was higher at the Congressional level than for local offices, and residents gave lower priority for Asian American candidates to win office at the local level when compared to Black and Hispanic candidates.

PERSPECTIVES OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

In addition to the community profiles in this report, we also conducted interviews with elected officials across the region. These officials were asked their opinions on the current state of participation in the region. All elected officials were aware of various community organizations doing work related to: economic development, housing and homelessness, social justice advocacy, health, youth, and civic involvement among others. By

contrast, these public officials were less likely to be able to name organizations promoting civic engagement among the elderly, pointing to possible gaps in resources and mobilization among these groups.

Officials we interviewed tended to see civic participation as higher among Latino and African Americans than among Asian Americans, but believed that the latter would begin participating more in the future given their population growth and longer settlement in the region.

For the most part, elected officials believe that many individuals in the Inland Empire are constrained by their work schedule and commutes which prevent them from being actively involved. They also see higher rates of participation among more established residents in the Inland Empire when compared to newer residents, as many of the latter may lack the information and knowledge about organizations that align with their interests. However, a number of elected officials believe that the burden of getting informed and engaged should not fall on the new residents alone, but should rather be a process whereby local officials and community organizations increase their outreach to newer residents.

POLICY OPTIONS

While civic engagement in the Inland Empire is on a strong upward trajectory, racial disparities still abound, and participation in the region still lags behind the rest of the state. Here, we outline several options for the region to consider, ranging from the actions of government agencies (such as with adoption of the Voter's Choice Act and a modernized version of the Brown Act) to the investment decisions of statewide and regional philanthropy (such as investing in local news capacity and sustaining investments in integrated civic engagement).

Voters Choice Act: One of the underlying motives of the VCA is to expand and encourage greater voter participation. In fact, according to an independent study, in the five counties where officials implemented the Vote Center and Vote-By-Mail model, turnout in the 2018 election increased by about 3 percent over the turnout in 2014, this in comparison to the counties that continued using the classic neighborhood polling places and did not provide expansions to early in-person voting. Part of that increase in turnout can be credited to three features of the VCA model that increase the flexibility that county officials can provide to voters.

One obvious advantage of the VCA for voters is the expansion of early in-person voting. By promoting access to the ballot a full ten days in advance of the

PROFILE

NAJAYRA

Organization: Inland Empire Immigrant Youth Collective

Position: Youth Engagement Coordinator

Najayra is the Youth Engagement Coordinator at the Inland Empire Immigrant Youth Collective (IEIYC), a nonprofit organization that aims to achieve equal access to higher education and justice for the immigrant community in the Inland Empire. The IEIYC seeks to create safe spaces for all undocumented individuals regardless of their sexual orientation, status, or any other aspect that intersects with being undocumented.

As the Youth Engagement Coordinator, Najayra's responsibilities include engaging the youth, coordinating with partners to bring in youth and educate them on issues they face, and host numerous workshops.

Najayra is in charge of developing different workshops where they inform the community about issues affecting undocumented individuals. The IEIYC also has "Know your Rights" or "Teatro Campesino Forum" where youth help other individuals understand their rights as undocumented individuals. Najayra is very proud of their Undocumented Mentorship Academy (UMA). UMA aims to give undocumented youth the opportunity to learn about civic activism and legislative issues.

IEIYC members and staff often engage with community to alert them about local and federal issues that may affect them. Currently, the organization is involved with Census education and outreach efforts in immigrant communities. In addition, the IEIYC is also involved in civic engagement through phone banking campaigns and voter canvassing activities.

Najayra states that the biggest challenge the IEIYC faces is the lack of staff and their ability to carry out their mission. She notes that "we don't have the capacity to hire someone, so our goal is to continue to build on IEIYC and the staff, and also the capacity of items and campaigns we can come on to." Najayra mentions that with an adequate number of staff the capacity of IEIYC could be extended and they could tackle more issues that the community faces.

traditional Tuesday election day, officials can accommodate a broader set of voters' schedules. A related crucial source of flexibility for voters is the policy to mail Vote-By-Mail ballots to every registered voter. Under the VCA voters can mail in their ballot or drop it off at a Vote Center. Importantly, those who wish to continue the traditional approach, or for those who require assistance or an accessible voting option, Vote Centers also house the classic vote machines that collect in-person ballots. Finally, Vote Centers are available for all voters to utilize county-wide, removing the restrictions in place under the traditional neighborhood polling precinct system.

Perhaps less obvious is how the VCA institutes flexibility for a more inclusive level of participation. Specifically, the VCA requires counties to follow crucial processes in order for their adoption of innovative VCA procedures to be approved by the state. As part of the application process, county officials are required to hold public meetings as they develop an Election Administration Plan (EAP), and form advisory committees to address specific concerns for voters in need of language assistance and accessibility needs for voters with disabilities. A county must submit their full EAP for review to the state four months in advance of the inaugural implementing election in that county. The mechanism for compliance insures that local stakeholders and advocacy organizations are afforded ample time and opportunity to shape the implementation of Vote Centers to suit the needs of all community members who are eligible to vote.

Other statewide reforms: Other initiatives, like online voter registration and youth pre-registration have saved California money by moving away from processes that include paper and paper processing costs. However, if a substantial number of people take advantage of the same-day voter registration option, that may burden local voting bureaucrats and complicate election-day work, without necessarily boosting the total number of participants by very much. And, while the youth pre-registration program has logged a promising number of 16 and 17 year olds in California, it remains to be seen whether earlier registrants participate more than those who sign up at adulthood.

Additionally, the goal of SB 415, better known as the California Voter Participation Rights Act (CVPR) is to drastically increase voter turnout in off-cycle low turnout elections. The CVPR requires cities, counties, and school districts that hold their regular elections on an off-cycle date, and that have low turnout (defined as 25% below average) to move those elections to align with statewide elections. By coinciding with higher turnout

statewide elections, the CVPR aims to increase turnout for local elections. Although the CVPR does not address all the issues that affect voter turnout, it appears to be a step in the right direction towards better representation.

Of course, there is room for improvement in California to further the cause of promoting broader electoral participation. For instance, efforts have been stymied to institute a public funding or matching funds program that would level the playing field in terms of how much influence voters can apply with money, including the 2010 Proposition 15 that was rejected by voters. In addition, the top-2 system, touted as a reform that would nudge candidates to appeal to a broader swath of the electorate, it turns out, may disenfranchise low-income, young, and Latino voters because they are less likely to turnout for primary elections. The top-2 system allows voters to cast a ballot in support of any candidate appearing on the primary ballot, and the two candidates who secure the most votes, regardless of whether they are from the same political party or not, will face off in the general election. By shifting the key electoral decision to the primary, voters who do participate in the primary can effectively exercise greater voice in the ultimate outcome. Thus, several policies and initiatives leave room for California to grow towards a more inclusive system of electoral politics.

Building on Census foundations: The Inland Empire has benefited from significant public and philanthropic investments in Census outreach, which were unprecedented in scale for the region. These investments have built the policy sophistication and civic engagement capacity of community organizations serving a wide variety of populations across the entire two-county region. While Census outreach is a foundation block, investments in civic engagement cannot stop there. As our "continuum of civic engagement" shows, statewide and regional philanthropy can continue to strengthen community engagement in redistricting, voter engagement, leadership development, and community advocacy.

Innovations in local data collection: While there is widespread recognition that contacting public officials and attending public meetings are important forms of civic participation that are often even more influential than voting, it is rare to find local data on the demographics of who participates in meetings of the city council, planning commission, or school board. Pilot efforts to innovate and improve on the Brown Act, to systematically track and evaluate resident engagement in local decision-making would help jurisdictions

monitor and strengthen civic engagement in their communities.

Investing in local news coverage: Recent research has shown that declines in newsroom staffing has reduced coverage of local news, which is in turn associated with reductions in local political competition and reduced voter turnout (Rubado and Jennings 2019). Philanthropic investments in efforts like Report for America, Cal Matters, and local journalism labs involving industry, community foundations, high schools and colleges can go a long way in improving resident knowledge of local decisions and improving resident engagement in local decision-making.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Inlandia Institute via <http://inlandiainstitute.org/guides/making-waves-womens-environmental-movement/>
- 2 See McGhee, Eric and Mindy Romero. "What to Expect from California's New Motor Voter Law" A report by the Public Policy Institute of California. July 2016. Available online at: <https://www.ppic.org/publication/what-to-expect-from-californias-new-motor-voter-law/>
- 3 Public Policy Institute of California via <https://www.ppic.org/publication/what-to-expect-from-californias-new-motor-voter-law/>
- 4 Calculations based on data available from California State Auditor's Office and U.S. Census Bureau Citizen Voting Age Population Special Tabulations.
- 5 Information from the National Conference of State Legislatures via <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/preregistration-for-young-voters.aspx>
- 6 Legislative districts were redrawn for 2012, making it a good baseline year for comparative data through 2020.
- 7 "Latinx" is used as a singular phrase in this report, while "Latinos" is plural
- 8 Record information via <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/11/19/18103110/2018-midterm-elections-turnout>
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 Recommendations from <https://money.usnews.com/money/retirement/articles/2012/03/19/why-older-citizens-are-more-likely-to-vote>
- 11 Ballotpedia via https://ballotpedia.org/Voter_identification_laws_by_state
- 12 Language Minority Citizens: Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act via <https://www.justice.gov/crt/language-minority-citizens>
- 13 Rankings via <https://www.nationalservice.gov/serve/via/cities>
- 14 Race determined through racial imputation surname analysis, cross checked by hand coding by two independent coders

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