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The 2018 Mid-Term Election: Estimated Voter Participation Rates by Race and Age in Arizona, Florida, Georgia and Texas

Laird W. Bergad

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The 2018 Mid-Term Election: Estimated Voter Participation Rates by Race and Age in Arizona, Florida, Georgia and Texas

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The Center established and helps administer an interdisciplinary specialization in Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies in the Masters of Arts in Liberal Studies program.

The Latino Data Project was developed with the goal of making information available on the dynamically growing Latino population of the United States and especially New York City through the analysis of extant data available from a variety of sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Institute for Health, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and state and local-level data sources.

All Latino Data Project reports are available at <http://clacls.gc.cuny.edu>

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Executive Summary

The razor thin margins separating the Democratic and Republican candidates for senator and governor in Florida; in the Georgia governor's race; in the senatorial election in Arizona; and the strong showing by Beto O'Rourke in the senatorial race in Texas, mask the extraordinary problems faced by the Democratic Party as it turns to the presidential election scheduled for November 2020.¹

In each of these state elections Democratic-leaning demographic constituencies – African Americans, Latinos, and young voters between 18 and 29 years of age – voted at significantly lower rates than the principal Republican constituencies, older non-Hispanic white men and women. If Democratic demographic constituencies would have voted at even slightly higher rates, elections in these four states each Democratic candidate would have won by comfortable margins.

Journalists and political commentators have noted over and over again that the problem Democrats will face in the 2020 presidential election is how they can nominate a candidate who will attract the white working-class vote and/or 'peel off' some of the Republican support in predominantly white rural areas of key swing states. This theory for victory may be somewhat accurate given the profile of extant voters.

However, this is entirely misguided from a purely statistical point of view. Quite simply there are millions of voters among young people, African Americans, and Latinos (Democratic-leaning demographic groups) who don't vote. Even a slight increase of voter participation rates among these Democratic constituencies would make the difficult task of attracting non-Hispanic conservative whites in swing states of little importance. There are many more votes to be gained among these groups if the Democratic Party can develop effective voter registration and mobilization campaigns, compared with votes to be gained by trying to tailor their candidate in 2020 or the Party's message to attract core Republican voters whose support for the current President remains strong and apparently unwavering. These four elections demonstrate the simple mathematics of this very clearly.

Thus, the challenge facing the Democratic Party is not to attract the right-wing, racist, anti-immigrant and xenophobic supporters of the current President and his Republican Party enablers. It is to find strategies to register Democratic demographic constituents and get them to the polls in November 2020.

This study highlights these problems by examining the turnout rates by race/ethnicity and age in Arizona, Florida, Georgia and Texas. In each state voting rates by older non-Hispanic whites dwarfed those of younger people, Latinos, and African Americans and this is what accounted for close elections.

¹ As of the writing of this study (November 15, 2018) a recount is underway in Florida where the Republican senatorial candidate Rick Scott currently leads the Democratic candidate Bill Nelson by 12,14 votes out of 8,183,578 ballots which were cast; and where Ron DeSantis the Republican gubernatorial candidate leads the Democrat Andre Gillum by 32,633 votes out of 8,218,531 votes.

In Georgia, Stacy Abrams the Democratic candidate for governor trails the Republican Brian Kemp by 58,150 votes out of 3,931,443 total votes cast.

In Arizona, the Democrat Krysten Sinema had been declared the winner over the Republican candidate for Senate Martha McSally by 38,197 votes out of 2,208,567 total ballots currently counted.

In Texas, the Democratic candidate for senator Beto O'Rourke lost to Republican Ted Cruz by 219,427 votes out of 8,334,221 total votes.

See <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/11/06/us/elections/results-senate-elections.html>

(See methodological note at the end of this study which explains how voter participation rates were calculated in each state).

Arizona

The Arizona senate race has been declared in favor of Kyrsten Sinema, the Democratic candidate who defeated Martha McSally the Republican candidate by 38,197 votes out of a total 2,208,567 ballots cast.² A major factor in this victory was the Latino vote which accounted for approximately 18% of all votes cast in the election. According to a CNN exit poll sample of 1,091 respondents 69% of Latinos voted for Sinema. The non-Hispanic white vote made up 76% of all votes and 55% supported the Republican candidate. A significant portion, 45%, of non-Hispanic whites voted for Sinema, substantially higher than the 40% who voted for Clinton in 2016 and the 54% who voted Republican in that presidential election. Another way to frame this is that non-Hispanic white support for Republicans has remained strong and not diminished. There is no reason to anticipate that this will change in Arizona in 2020. In Arizona African-American and Asian voters made up a small 2% and 1% of those who voted in the senatorial race.³

This small margin of victory by Sinema was in many ways because of the Latino vote which offers opportunity for the Democratic Party in future elections. Raising Latino voter participation beyond the 35% rate in Arizona could yield very productive results in 2020. By way of comparison, in the largest race/ethnic group in the state, 53.5% of all eligible non-Hispanic white voters cast ballots in the senate race. (See table 1).

The Democratic Party should take notice as it sets its sights on the presidential election of 2020. A major objective in Arizona should be to find strategies to register Latino voters, an extremely large potential source of electoral support which could help make Arizona a 'blue' state in 2020.

² See the New York Times November 13, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/12/us/kyrsten-sinema-arizona-senator.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage>

³ See <https://www.cnn.com/election/2018/exit-polls/arizona/senate>

Table 1
Arizona: The Electorate and Voting by Race/Ethnicity in the 2018 Mid-Term Election

Race/Ethnicity	Electorate	% of Total Electorate	Number of Voters	% of Total Voters	Voter Participation Rate
Non-Hispanic White	3,136,722	64.1%	1,678,511	76.0%	53.5%
Non-Hispanic Black	205,379	4.2%	44,171	2.0%	21.5%
Asian	120,634	2.5%	22,086	1.0%	18.3%
Latinos	1,126,818	23.0%	397,542	18.0%	35.3%
Other	302,930	6.2%	66,257	3.0%	21.9%
Total	4,892,483	100.0%	2,208,567	100.0%	45.1%

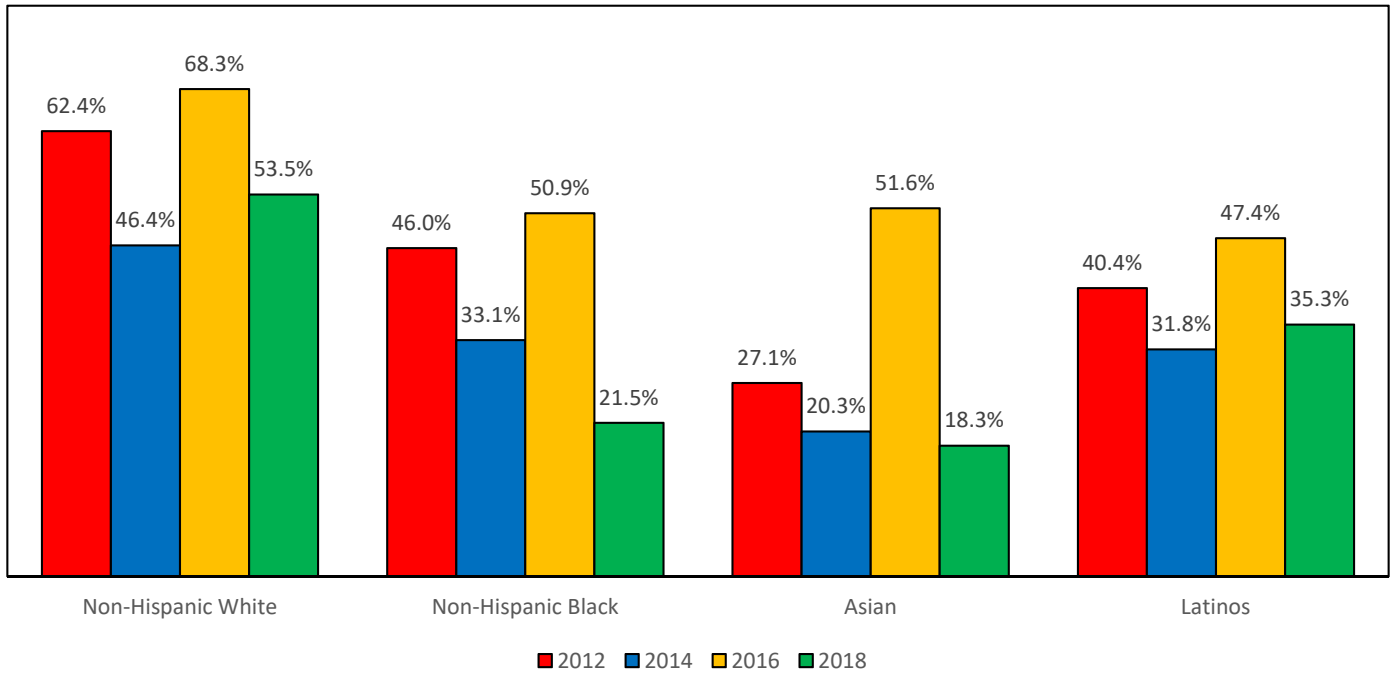
Note: The voter participation rate is the percentage of eligible voters who cast ballots.

The Latino voter participation rate of 35.3% in 2018 was slightly higher than the 31.8% of eligible Latino voters who voted in the 2014 midterm elections, but significantly lower than the 47.4% who turned out in November 2016. Still an improvement in midterm voting rates suggests a positive development among Latino voters as 2020 approaches. Additionally, the non-Hispanic white voter turnout of 53.5% was significantly higher than the 46.4% turnout rate in the 2014 midterms but lower than the 68.3% non-Hispanic white turnout rate in 2016.

These higher rates among the two major race/ethnic voting groups compared with the 2014 mid-term elections are testimony to a greater level of voter motivation resulting from the polarizing and divisive politics of the current Presidential regime.⁴ (See figure 1 for voter participation rates between 2012 and 2018 in Arizona).

⁴ All participation rates for 2012, 2014, and 2016 were derived from the U.S. Census Bureau's Voting and Registration Tables web site at <https://www.census.gov/topics/public-sector/voting/data/tables.2016.html>

Figure 1
 Voter Participation Rates by Race/Ethnicity in Arizona
 Elections 2012 - 2018



If the Arizona voting population is analyzed by age for all races it is graphically clear that younger voters, who tend to support Democratic candidates, voted at significantly lower rates than older voters as indicated in table 2. A scandalous 14.1% of all eligible Arizona voters between 18 and 24 years of age voted, and only 20% of the 25 to 29 years-old electorate voted. Although the CNN sample sizes for voters in these age groups was too small in Arizona, at the national level in all races 68% of 18-24 year olds and 66% of 25-29 year olds voted Democratic.⁵

This compares with a 54.9% voting rate among 50-64 year olds and 55.8% among those 65 years of age and older. Figure 2 indicates voting rates among the youngest and oldest voters in Arizona between 2012 and 2018.

Again, Democratic organizers looking ahead to 2020 ought to develop effective strategies for mobilizing young people if they want to end this dreadful period in American politics and the reign of the current president.

⁵ See <https://www.cnn.com/election/2018/exit-polls/national-results>

Table 2
Arizona: The Electorate and Voting by Age in the 2018 Mid-Term Election

Age Group	Electorate	% of Total Electorate	Number of Voters	% of Total Voters	Voter Participation Rate
18-24	626,605	12.8%	88,343	4.0%	14.1%
25-29	442,392	9.0%	88,343	4.0%	20.0%
30-39	768,622	15.7%	375,456	17.0%	48.8%
40-49	739,962	15.1%	353,371	16.0%	47.8%
50-64	1,166,451	23.8%	640,484	29.0%	54.9%
65 +	1,148,451	23.5%	640,484	29.0%	55.8%
Total	4,892,483	100.0%	2,208,567	100.0%	45.1%

Another way to frame these data is to examine the race/ethnic and age structure of the electorate compared with the actual voting population. In Arizona non-Hispanic whites comprised 64% of potential voters but because of higher participation rates than Latinos they were 76% of all voters. Latinos were 23% of possible voters in the state but accounted for 18% of votes actually cast because of lower participation rates.

Even more alarming for Democrats is the fact that voters between 18 and 29 years of age comprised nearly 22% of the electorate in Arizona but only 8% of cast ballots. Older voters, those 50 years of age and older were 47% of all potential voters and 58% of all actual voters. (See table 3).

As long as elections are decided by an older predominantly non-Hispanic white population Democratic candidates will have great difficulty winning elections at any level, state or national, even though Sinema won in Arizona.

Figure 2
 Voter Participation Rates by Youngest and Oldest Voters, Arizona 2012 - 2018

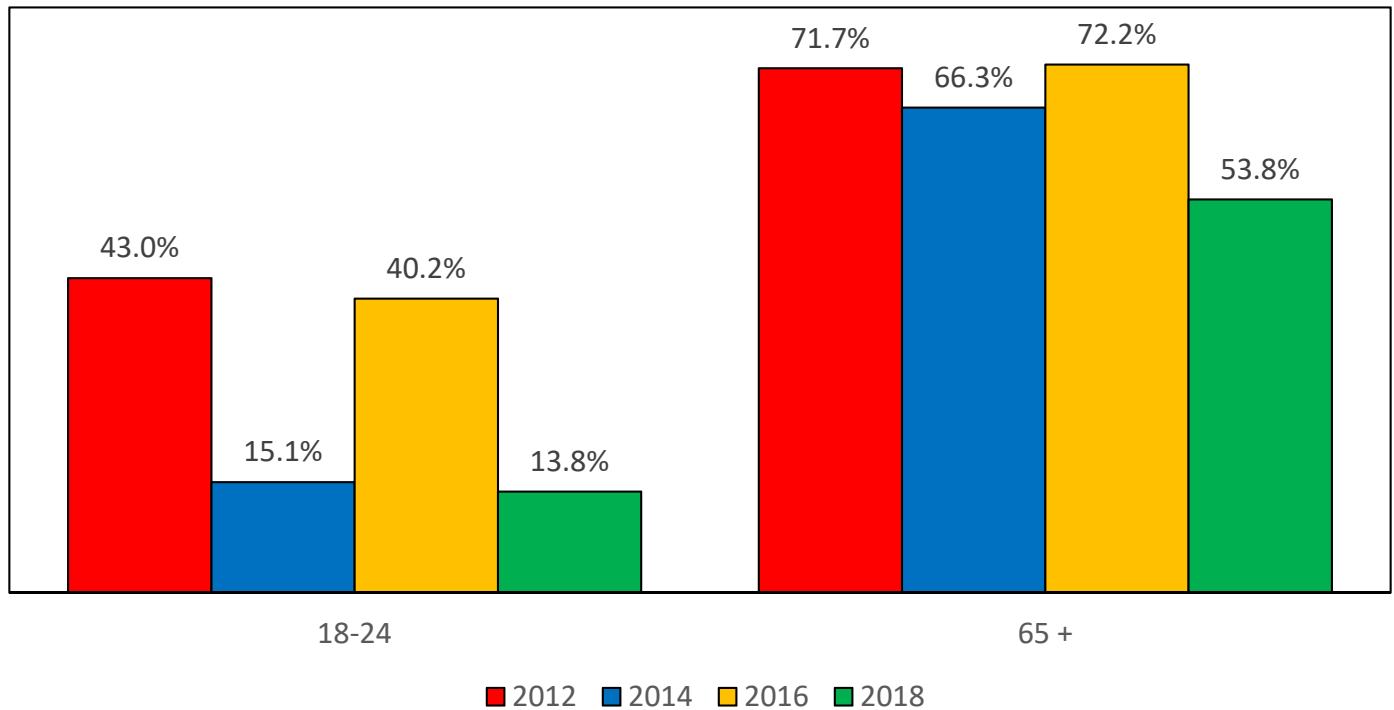


Table 3
 Arizona: Percentage of Potential Voters and Percentage of Actual Votes Cast by Race/Ethnicity and Age, 2018 Mid-Term Election

	% of Electorate	% of Votes Cast
Non-Hispanic White	64.1%	76.0%
Non-Hispanic Black	4.2%	2.0%
Asian	2.5%	1.0%
Latinos	23.0%	18.0%
Other	6.2%	3.00%
18-24	12.8%	4.0%
25-29	9.0%	4.0%
30-39	15.7%	17.0%
40-49	15.1%	16.0%
50-64	23.8%	29.0%
65 +	23.5%	29.0%

Florida

The razor thin margins in both the senatorial and gubernatorial races in Florida are highlighted by the fact that as of the writing of this study a contentious recount is under way for Senator. In the race for governor Andrew Gillum trailed the Republican candidate by 33,669 votes out of 8,218,531 total votes and conceded the election to Ron DeSantis on November 17. In the senatorial race Democrat Bill Nelson is 12,514 votes behind Rick Scott out of 8,183,578 votes cast.

Had Democratic constituents, mainly African Americans and younger voters voted at slightly higher rates, Democrats would have swept both of these elections handily. The same holds true for Latino voters, although exit polls indicated a greater support for Republicans in both races than was the case among African Americans and younger voters. In the senatorial race 54% of Latinos voted Democratic compared with 62% who voted for Clinton in 2016.

This decline in Democratic support among Florida Latinos should be a cause of concern to the Democratic Party, although it is probable that this level of backing for Republicans in the state was because younger, Democratic-leaning Latinos, voted at very low rates.

Support for Democrats among African Americans was strong as 90% voted for Bill Nelson; 62% of voters between 18 and 24 years of age voted Democratic; and 71% of voters between 25 and 29 years of age voted for Nelson. However, these Democratic constituencies had significantly lower voter turnout rates than among older non-Hispanic whites.

The 'story' behind the close mid-term elections in Florida is typical of what occurs throughout the United States. Non-Hispanic whites voted at a 58.6% rate on November 6, 2018 in Florida. Even an African-American candidate for governor could not get African American eligible voters to move beyond a 49.3% voting rate, which was, however, higher than the 44% which turned out in the 2014 mid-terms. Latinos voted at 41.1%, significantly greater than the 36% who voted in 2014. Yet, even a small increase among Florida Hispanic or African-American voters would have meant Democratic victories and no recount, despite marginal support for Nelson and Gillum among Latinos according to exit polls. The extraordinarily higher participation rate among non-Hispanic whites is what made the Florida 2018 mid-terms close and will in all likelihood lead to a Republican victory in both races.

Over 76% of voters 65 years of age and older voted and they were 37% of total votes. About 67% of 50-64 year olds voted, another 31% of those who cast ballots. Thus, 62% of all votes in the Florida mid-terms were cast by those 50 years old and older, who voted at a high rate. Younger voters? Only 25.6% of 18-24 year olds voted and 33% of 25-29 year olds.

As long as the Democratic Party cannot mobilize its supporters to register and to go to the polls there are going to be close elections in Florida and the state may decide the presidency in 2020. Older non-Hispanic white voters who lean Republican dominate the voting public even though they emphatically do not reflect the political sentiments of the total state electorate or potential voters. (See tables 4 and 5).

Trump campaigned heavily in Florida and his impact on non-Hispanic white voter turnout should be worrisome to Democrats. In the 2014 mid-term elections 47.5% of this voting demographic turned out to vote.

This increased dramatically to 58.6% in the recent election demonstrating the sway that the current president has over white, conservative, racist, xenophobic, older voters. (See figure 3).

Table 4
Florida: The Electorate and Voting by Race/Ethnicity in the 2018 Mid-Term Election

Race/Ethnicity	Electorate	% of Total Electorate	Number of Voters	% of Total Voters	Voter Participation Rate
Non-Hispanic White	9,262,450	61.6%	5,424,230	66.0%	58.6%
Non-Hispanic Black	2,168,962	14.4%	1,068,409	13.0%	49.3%
Asian	336,635	2.2%	164,371	2.0%	48.8%
Latinos	2,997,805	20.0%	1,232,780	15.0%	41.1%
Other	260,472	1.7%	328,741	4.0%	**
Total	15,026,324	100.0%	8,218,531	100.0%	54.7%

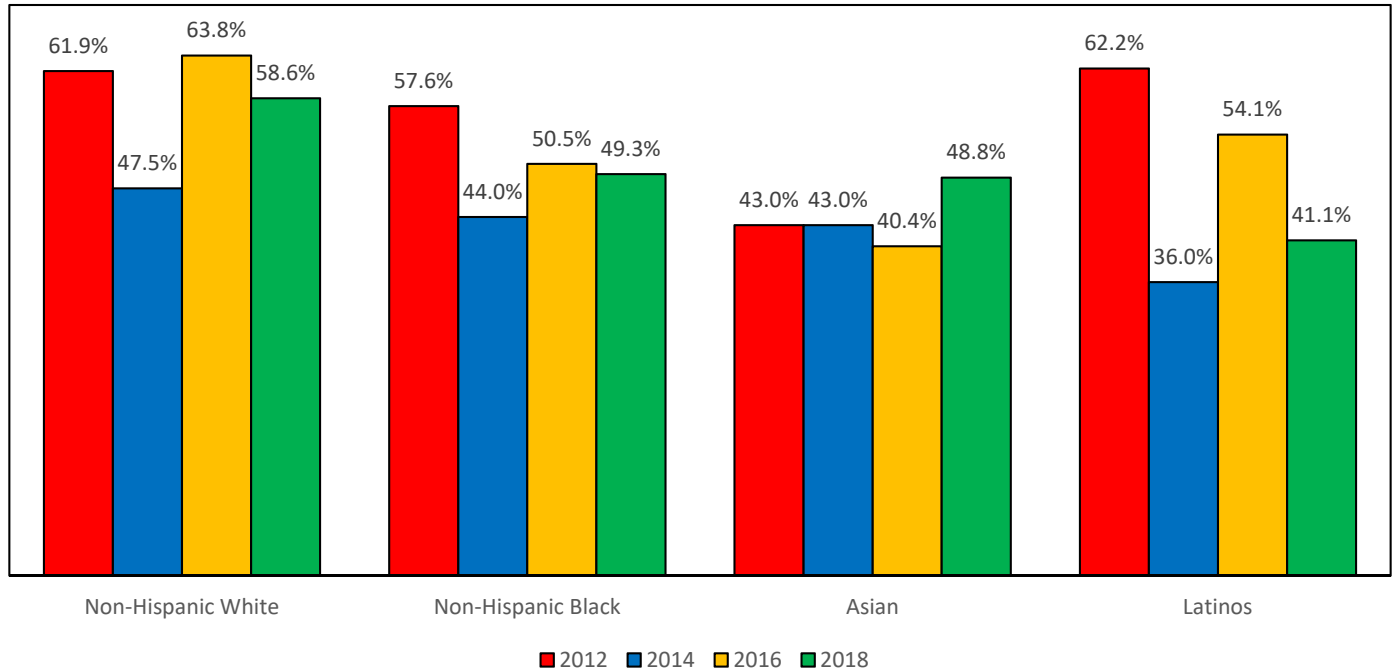
Note: The voter participation rate is the percentage of eligible voters who cast ballots.

** The percentage voter participation rate for 'other' is a statistical anomaly based on projected data and is not included here. These data are from the gubernatorial race.

Table 5
Florida: The Electorate and Voting by Age in the 2018 Mid-Term Election

Age Group	Electorate	% of Total Electorate	Number of Voters	% of Total Voters	Voter Participation Rate
18-24	1,603,241	10.7%	410,927	5.0%	25.6%
25-29	1,232,007	8.2%	410,927	5.0%	33.4%
30-39	2,210,960	14.7%	821,853	10.0%	37.2%
40-49	2,185,293	14.5%	986,224	12.0%	45.1%
50-64	3,804,502	25.3%	2,547,745	31.0%	67.0%
65 +	3,990,321	26.6%	3,040,856	37.0%	76.2%
Total	15,026,324	100.0%	8,218,531	100.0%	54.7%

Figure 3
 Voter Participation Rates by Race/Ethnicity in Florida
 Elections 2012 - 2018



Non-Hispanic black voters also increased from 2014 (44% voting rate) to a voting rate of 49.5% in 2018. But this was considerably below the 57.6% rate in the 2012 presidential election when Barack Obama was a candidate. The Democratic Party has its work cut out for it to increase voting rates within Florida African-American communities if it wants to win the pivotal state in 2020.

Latinos had the lowest voter turnout rate at 41% but this was an increase from the 36% voting rate in the 2014 mid-term election, as indicated previously, and that certainly is positive news. However, the 44% support for Republicans in Florida, despite the daily racist and anti-immigrant attacks on their communities by the current President ought to be a major cause for concern within the Democratic Party. It is likely that older, more conservative Latinos, were the major component of Latino voting. This presents a huge challenge for Democratic organizers if they want to win the state in two years. There is a pressing need to register and turnout younger Latino voters.

These data on voting patterns by race/ethnicity and age are presented in another way in table 6. Non-Hispanic white voters comprised 62% of the electorate and 66% of all votes cast. Latinos comprised 20% of all eligible voters in the state but 15% of those who voted.

The greatest disparity was in the age of voters. This was an ‘old people’s’ election but only because younger voters of all races largely sat out. It was noted previously that 68% of all votes cast were by people 50 years of age and older, who comprised 52% of all eligible voters. Voters under 30 years of age were only 10% of all voters even though they made up 19% of the electorate. Again, this is a challenge facing Democrats if they

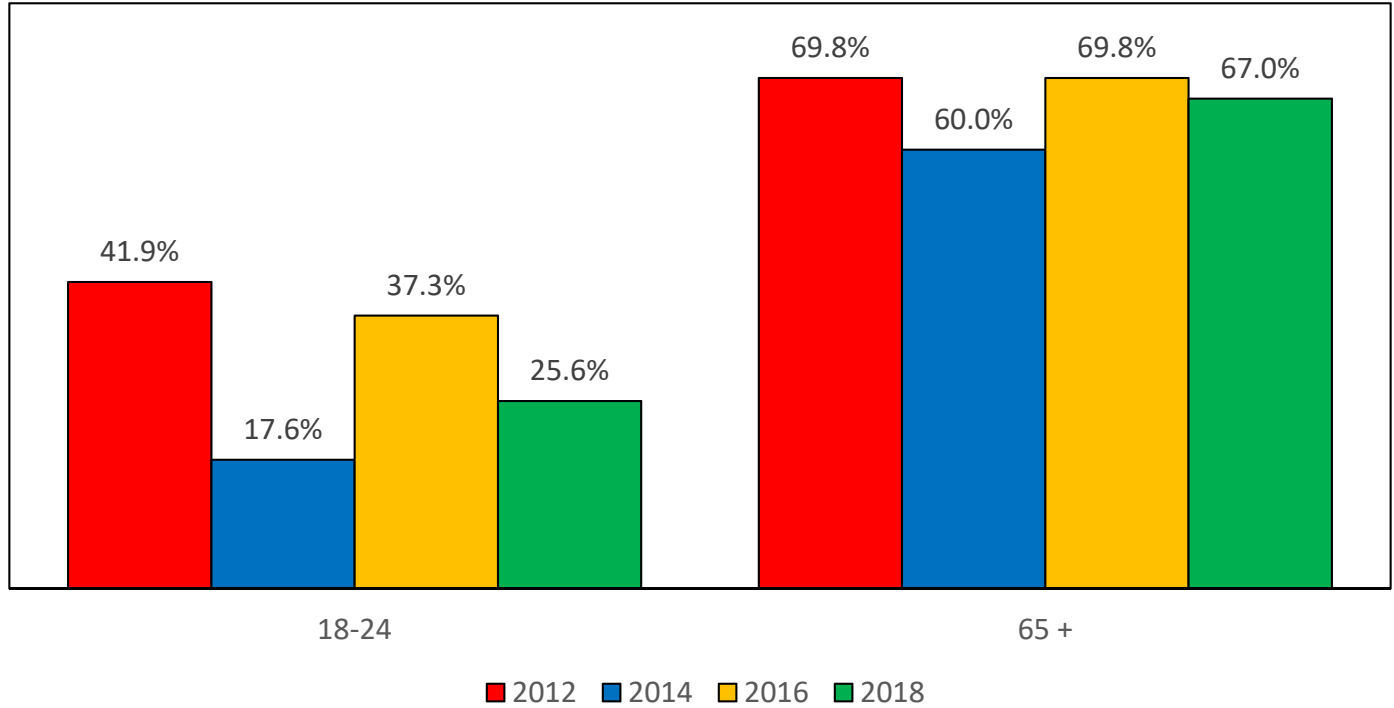
want to carry Florida in 2020 and increase their probability of retaking the White House: get young people of all races to register and vote!

Figure 4 indicates changes in participation rates among younger and older voters in Florida between 2012 and 2018. The enthusiasm of older voters should be noted. And even though 18-24 year olds increased their voting rate to 25.6% in 2018 compared with 17.6% in the 2014 mid-term elections, this was still an appalling turnout in an election which so much at stake.

Table 6
 Florida: Percentage of Potential Voters and Percentage of Actual Votes Cast by Race/Ethnicity and Age, 2018 Mid-Term Election

	% of Electorate	% of Votes Cast
Non-Hispanic White	61.6%	66.0%
Non-Hispanic Black	14.4%	13.0%
Asian	2.2%	2.0%
Latinos	20.0%	15.0%
Other	1.7%	4.0%
18-24	10.7%	5.0%
25-29	8.2%	5.0%
30-39	14.7%	10.0%
40-49	14.5%	12.0%
50-64	25.3%	31.0%
65 +	26.6%	37.0%

Figure 4
 Voter Participation Rates by Youngest and Oldest Voters, Florida 2012 - 2018



Georgia

Like Florida, the Georgia race for governor was very close. Stacy Abrams, the Democratic and African-American candidate was trailing the Republican Brian Kemp by about 51,150 votes out of 3,931,443 total ballots counted on November 15 and conceded the governorship on November 16.⁶ Kemp, who was Secretary of State before his abrupt resignation after the election, is well-known for his voter suppression efforts in African-American communities. A federal judge ordered the review of provisional ballots on Monday November 12, mostly cast in African-American regions of the state, but the end result was a victory for the Republican candidate.⁷

⁶ See <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/16/us/elections/georgia-governor-race-kemp-abrams.html>

⁷ See <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/11/13/us/elections/2018-midterm-elections-uncalled-races.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage>

Although the state has a small Latino population whose votes could be critical in a tight election (4.8% of the Georgia electorate), the major voting populations from a race/ethnic perspective are non-Hispanic whites, 58.6% of the electorate, and African Americans who are 32% of all eligible voters in Georgia.

Despite different racial structures than those prevailing in Arizona and Florida, it is the turnout rate among race/ethnic and age groups that determined the outcome of this election. And as in Arizona and Florida, Democratic-leaning constituencies turned out in Georgia at lower rates than Republican favoring demographic groups. Non-Hispanic whites, the major source of Republican support turned out at a 54.6% rate, while 50% of African-American voters went to the polls despite the Abrams candidacy. Still, this rate was higher than the 43% who voted in 2014. CNN exit polls indicated that 74% of non-Hispanic whites voted for Kemp. Among African-American voters 93% voted for Abrams. Quite simply had African-American voters turned out at even a slightly higher rate than half of all eligible voters, the election would have been decided in Abram’s favor.

Latinos had the highest voter participation rate in the state at 56.1% of its electorate, an impressive show of political power and much higher than in 2014 when it was nearly 30%. However, they accounted for only 5% of the total votes cast, voting 62% in favor of Abrams according to exit polls. In close elections Georgia Latino voters certainly have the potential to be the most critical swing vote in the state. (See table 7).

Table 7
Georgia: The Electorate and Voting by Race/Ethnicity in the 2018 Mid-Term Election

Race/Ethnicity	Electorate	% of Total Electorate	Number of Voters	% of Total Voters	Voter Participation Rate
Non-Hispanic White	4,319,193	58.6%	2,358,866	60.0%	54.6%
Non-Hispanic Black	2,360,252	32.0%	1,179,433	30.0%	50.0%
Asian	195,713	2.7%	78,629	2.0%	40.2%
Latinos	350,216	4.8%	196,572	5.0%	56.1%
Other	140,260	1.9%	117,943	3.0%	84.1%
Total	7,365,634	100.0%	3,931,443	100.0%	53.4%

Note: The voter participation rate is the percentage of eligible voters who cast ballots.

The participation rates by age of the voting population, irrespective of race, were perhaps even more critical in Georgia than in Arizona and Florida. About 61% of 18-24 year olds supported Abrams according to CNN exit polls; but only 36.9% of eligible voters in this age group voted. Some 71% of 25-29 year olds voted for Abrams; but only 29.5% of them voted.

At the other extreme 59% of voters 65 years of age and older supported Kemp; 65.9% of them voted. About 58% of 50-64 year olds voted for Kemp; 60.4% voted.

Once again, if younger voters cannot be registered by the Democratic Party, and turned out to vote, in Georgia as elsewhere future elections will be decided by predominantly older voters who emphatically do not reflect the political leanings of the total electorate. To write that elections are all about turnout is trite, but accurate. (See table 8 for these data).

Table 8
Georgia: The Electorate and Voting by Age in the 2018 Mid-Term Election

Age Group	Electorate	% of Total Electorate	Number of Voters	% of Total Voters	Voter Participation Rate
18-24	958,978	13.0%	353,830	9.0%	36.9%
25-29	667,206	9.1%	196,572	5.0%	29.5%
30-39	1,223,199	16.6%	589,716	15.0%	48.2%
40-49	1,255,792	17.0%	746,974	19.0%	59.5%
50-64	1,887,916	25.6%	1,140,118	29.0%	60.4%
65 +	1,372,543	18.6%	904,232	23.0%	65.9%
Total	7,365,634	100.0%	3,931,443	100.0%	53.4%

As to be expected voter participation rates among all race/ethnic groups were lower than in the presidential elections of 2012 and 2016, but as was the case in Arizona and Florida in the 2018 mid-term voter participation rates were higher than in the 2014 mid-term elections. The polarizing and mobilizing impact of the current divisive President clearly impacted Georgia voters. Non-Hispanic whites voted at a 44.8% rate in 2014; 54.6% rate in 2018. Republicans were probably driven by a racist antipathy toward an African-American candidate, and this racism was stirred up by both Kemp, a clone of the current President and his divisive political postures.⁸

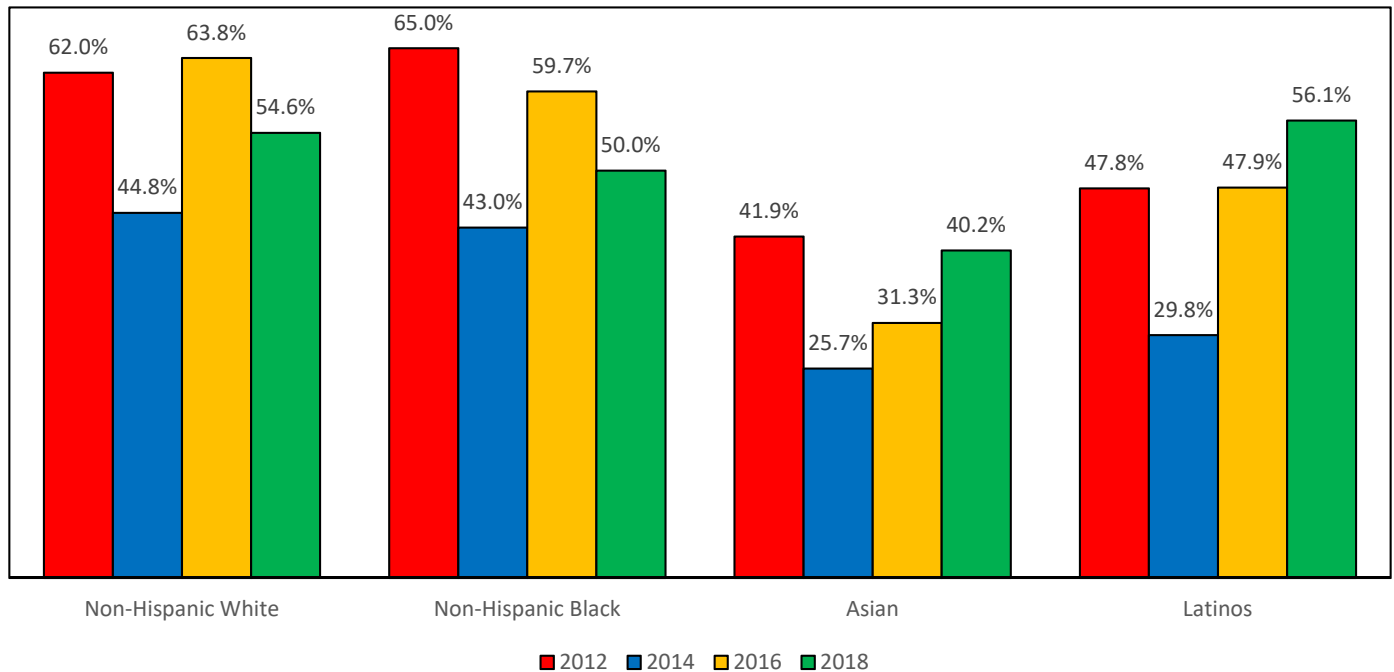
African-Americans increased their participation rate from 43% in 2014 to 50% in 2018; and Latinos experienced the most impressive increase from the near 30% of the 2014 midterms to 56.1% in 2018. Despite being a relatively small share of the Georgia electorate the Latino vote could be of great significance in 2020. (See figure 6).

Voting patterns by race/ethnicity in the Georgia gubernatorial election were somewhat different than in Arizona and Florida. Actual voting among the major groups paralleled each race/ethnicity's portion of the electorate despite lower turnout rates by African Americans. Non-Hispanic whites made up 58.6% of the state's electorate and 60% of voters according to exit polls. African Americans were 32% of Georgia's electorate and

⁸ On the campaign trail for Kemp, Trump repeatedly said the Abrams was 'not qualified for the job.' See <https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/05/politics/donald-trump-race-gillum-abrams-obama/index.html>

30% of total voters. This differential, slightly more non-Hispanic white voters than their share of potential voters, and slightly less African-American voters than their portion of the electorate, is what made this election so close. Latinos, at 5% of all votes cast were 4.8% of the electorate. Although a small voting population relative to African Americans and non-Hispanic whites, Latinos could be a major factor as a ‘swing vote’ in the state in future elections, as has been noted above.

Figure 5
 Voter Participation Rates by Race/Ethnicity in Georgia
 Elections 2012 - 2018



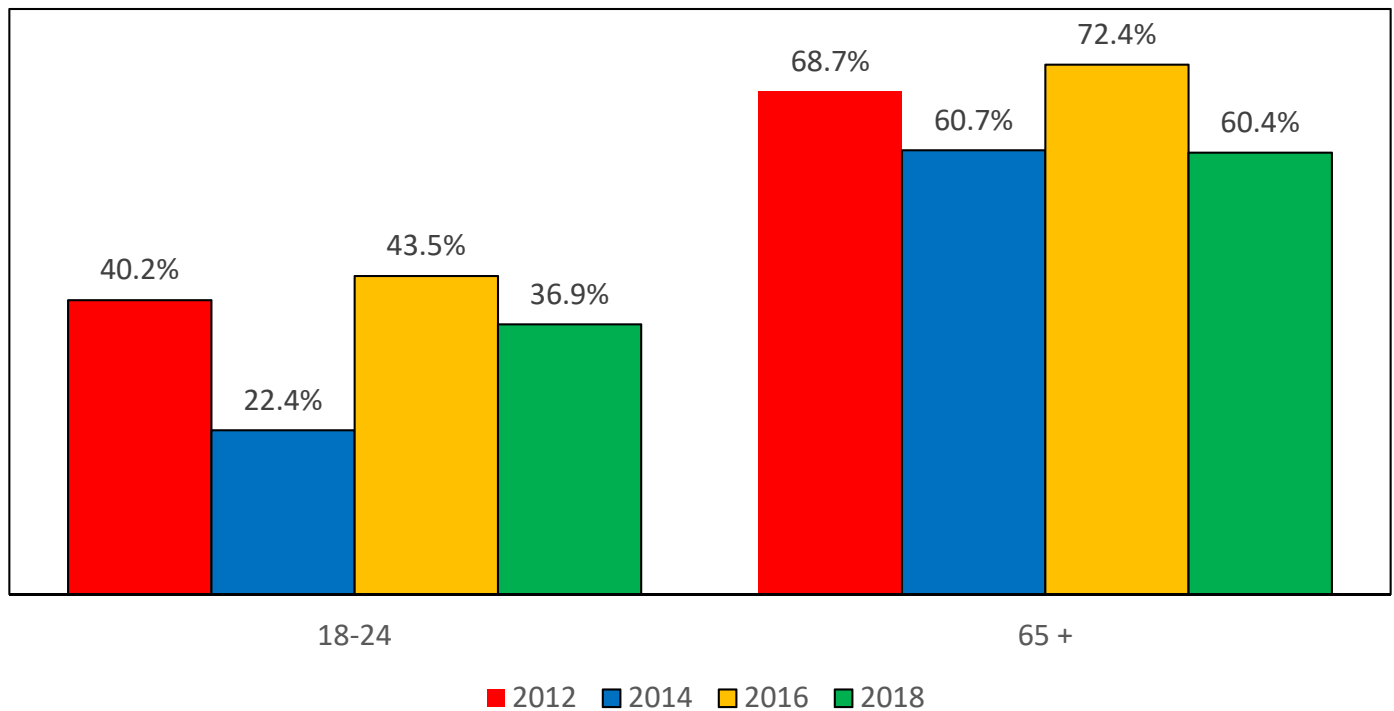
The major disparities in Georgia were among age groups for all races and this presents an ongoing challenge to the Democratic Party in Georgia and elsewhere. Voters in Georgia between 18 and 29 years of age comprised 22% of the electorate but only 14% of all votes cast. Voters 50 years of age and older, who support Republican candidates more strongly than younger voters, comprised 44.3% of the Georgia electorate but 52% of actual votes.

Herein lies the explanation in Georgia and elsewhere of why it is that Democrats lose elections: they can't get their constituents, especially younger voters, to register and vote at rates commensurate with their share of the electorate. As long as older voters decide elections, Democrats will face the same kinds of dilemmas confronted in Georgia, Arizona, Florida and elsewhere. (See table 9 and figure 6 for these data).

Table 9
 Georgia: Percentage of Potential Voters and Percentage of Actual Votes Cast by Race/Ethnicity and Age, 2018 Mid-Term Election

	% of Electorate	% of Votes Cast
Non-Hispanic White	58.6%	60.0%
Non-Hispanic Black	32.0%	30.0%
Asian	2.7%	2.0%
Latinos	4.8%	5.0%
Other	1.9%	3.0%
18-24	13.0%	9.0%
25-29	9.1%	5.0%
30-39	16.6%	15.0%
40-49	17.0%	19.0%
50-64	25.6%	29.0%
65 +	18.6%	23.0%

Figure 6
 Voter Participation Rates by Youngest and Oldest Voters, Georgia 2012 - 2018



Texas

Beto O’Rourke’s valiant bid to become senator in conservative Texas failed. Ted Cruz was able to win the senatorial race by 219,427 votes out of a total of 8,334,221 total ballots cast. As was the case in Arizona, Florida, and Georgia, Democratic leaning constituencies voted at substantially lower rates than the non-Hispanic white and older voters who supported Cruz.

From a racial/ethnic perspective the Texas electorate is very different from the other states considered in this study. First and foremost, Latinos comprise 29.5% of eligible voters in the state; African-Americans, 13.1%; and non-Hispanic whites 51.5% of the total electorate.

Latinos supported O’Rourke by 64% to 35% for Cruz. Their voter participation rate of 40.4% was significantly lower than the 49.9% participation rate of non-Hispanic whites who supported Cruz by 66% to 34% for O’Rourke, according to CNN exit polls. Still, however, Latinos in Texas voted at the same 40% rate as in the 2016 presidential election and extraordinarily higher than the 22.4% rate in the 2014 mid-terms. This is a positive sign for the Democratic Party for it may foreshadow an even higher rate in 2020 which could be critical in turning the conservative state Democratic. African Americans supported O’Rourke by 89% to 11% for Cruz, but 42.2% of eligible African-American voters went to the polls. (See table 10).

Table 10
Texas: The Electorate and Voting by Race/Ethnicity in the 2018 Mid-Term Election

Race/Ethnicity	Electorate	% of Total Electorate	Number of Voters	% of Total Voters	Voter Participation Rate
Non-Hispanic White	9,360,607	51.5%	4,667,164	56.0%	49.9%
Non-Hispanic Black	2,378,163	13.1%	1,000,107	12.0%	42.1%
Asian	686,209	3.8%	250,027	3.0%	36.4%
Latinos	5,369,889	29.5%	2,166,897	26.0%	40.4%
Other	384,023	2.1%	250,027	3.0%	65.1%
Total	18,178,891	100.0%	8,334,221	100.0%	45.8%

Note: The voter participation rate is the percentage of eligible voters who cast ballots.

As was the case in Arizona, Florida and Georgia, Democratic-leaning younger voters also had dreadfully lower participation rates than older voters who tended to support Cruz. CNN exit polls indicated that 69% of voter ages 18-24 favored O’Rourke. But only 26.5% of eligible voters in this age category voted. These same polls estimated that 73% of all 25-29 year olds voted Democratic. However, only 33.1% of this sector of the electorate turned out to vote.

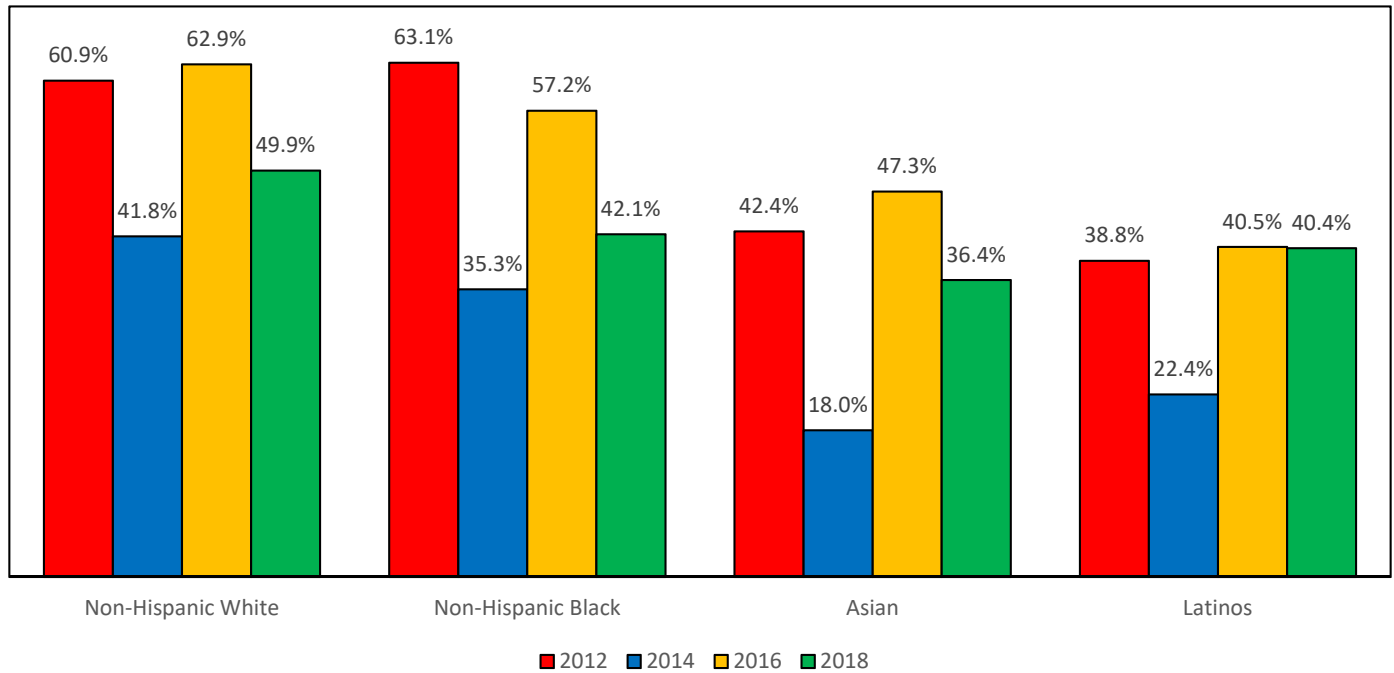
At the other extreme, 57% of 50-64 year olds supported Cruz and 49.5% voted. In the 65 years of age and older age bracket 58% voted for the Republican candidate and 69.4% voted. (See table 11). It is difficult for Democratic candidates to win elections when such a huge portion of younger voters do not participate.

Table 11
Texas: The Electorate and Voting by Age in the 2018 Mid-Term Election

Age Group	Electorate	% of Total Electorate	Number of Voters	% of Total Voters	Voter Participation Rate
18-24	2,518,785	13.9%	666,738	8.0%	26.5%
25-29	1,764,895	9.7%	583,395	7.0%	33.1%
30-39	3,265,373	18.0%	1,250,133	15.0%	38.3%
40-49	3,013,398	16.6%	1,416,818	17.0%	47.0%
50-64	4,374,818	24.1%	2,166,897	26.0%	49.5%
65 +	3,241,622	17.8%	2,250,240	27.0%	69.4%
Total	18,178,891	100.0%	8,334,221	100.0%	45.8%

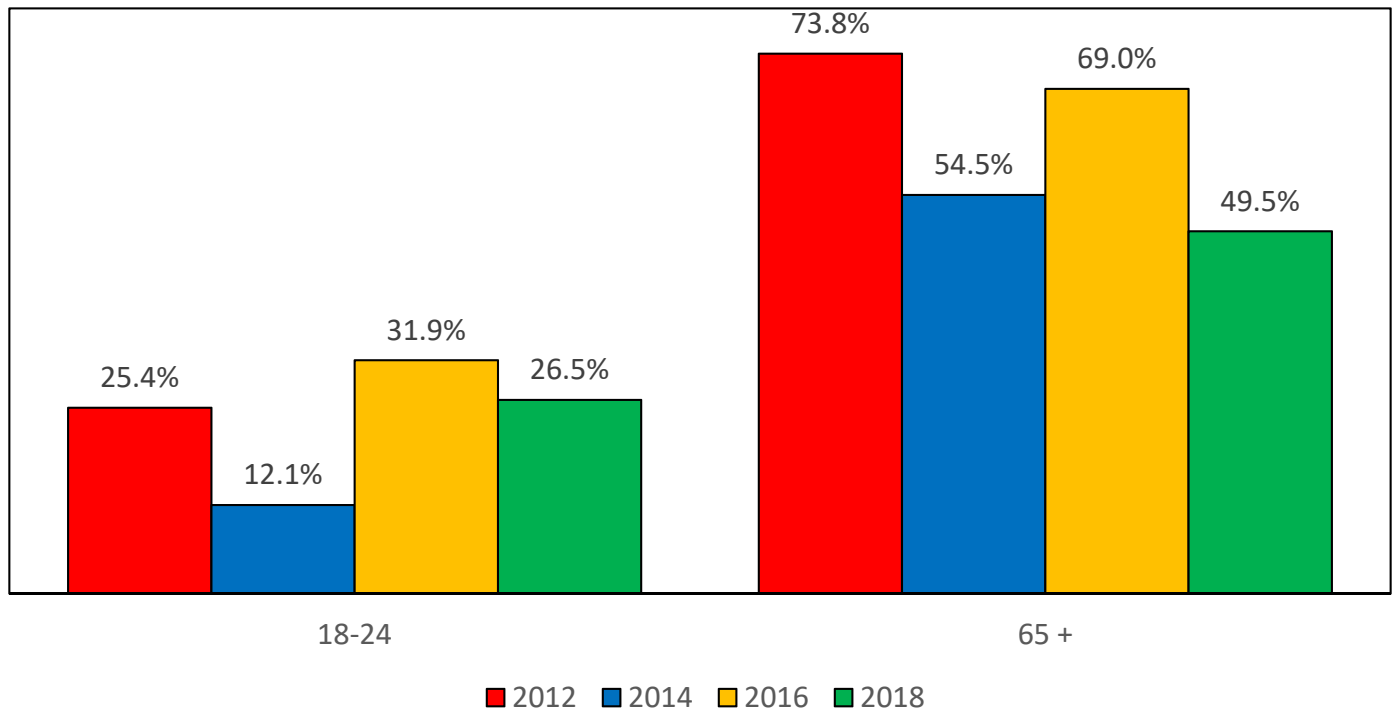
However, not all the news was grim with respect to Democratic leaning constituencies. Among Texas Latinos there was a major increase in voting rates from the dismal 22.4% in the 2014 mid-terms to the 40.4% of November 2018 which was about the same as in the 2016 presidential election. (This was indicated previously). Among African Americans there was also an increase from 2014 when the voting rate was 35.3% to the 42.1% rate of 2018. However, African Americans did not vote at nearly the 57% rate which prevailed in 2016 while Latinos voted at similar rates which is good news for Democrats moving forward toward 2020. The challenge will be to raise these rates higher in order to increase the probability that Texas can be turned 'blue' in the next presidential election. (See figure 7).

Figure 7
 Voter Participation Rates by Race/Ethnicity in Texas
 Elections 2012 - 2018



Even among 18-24 year olds there was an increase from the dreadful 12.1% voting rate in 2014 to the low 26.5% of the 2018 mid-terms. Optimism should be tempered here. Even though younger voters increased the participation rate, it was still comparatively low and should be a focal point of Democratic strategists as they move toward 2020. (See figure 8).

Figure 8
 Voter Participation Rates by Youngest and Oldest Voters, Texas 2012 - 2018



When the percentage of all votes cast by race/ethnicity is compared with the percentage of the electorate made up by each major group the advantage of non-Hispanic whites is clear. They represented 51.5% of the Texas electorate and 56% of actual voters. This alone explains the Cruz victory because of the strong support from this demographic which is the Republican base.

African Americans comprised 13.1% of the electorate and 12% of voters. Latinos, 29.5% of the Texas electorate, they were 26% of all voters. Had there been a closer parity between the composition of the electorate and the composition of voters by race/ethnicity it is likely O'Rourke would have won. Nevertheless, the differentials cited here were fairly small and may herald better news in 2020.

The greatest discrepancy, however, was with respect to voting by age group for all races and this is the dominant factor accounting for the Cruz victory in Texas as well as the close races in Georgia and Florida. Democrat-leaning voters between 18 and 29 years of age were 23.6% of the Texas electorate but because of low participation rates were only 15% of all voters. Voters 50 years of age and older cast 53% of all ballots in the 2018 race for Senate even though they were 42% of the electorate. (See table 12).

It is clear from these data that the Democratic Party has its work cut out for it if it wants to turn Texas 'blue' in 2020. Above all it has to find a strategy for registering younger voters of all races and getting them to the polls.

Table 12
 Texas: Percentage of Potential Voters and
 Percentage of Actual Votes Cast by Race/
 Ethnicity and Age, 2018 Mid-Term Election

	% of Electorate	% of Votes Cast
Non-Hispanic White	51.5%	56.0%
Non-Hispanic Black	13.1%	12.0%
Asian	3.8%	3.0%
Latinos	29.5%	26.0%
Other	2.1%	3.0%
18-24	13.9%	8.0%
25-29	9.7%	7.0%
30-39	18.0%	15.0%
40-49	16.6%	17.0%
50-64	24.1%	26.0%
65 +	17.8%	27.0%

Conclusion

This study underlines the inescapable fact that comparatively lower voter participation rates among younger voters, African-Americans, and Latinos are the keys for understanding why it is that a President with a huge disapproval rating among the general public is able to influence, and even sway, elections in favor of Republican candidates in states with diversified populations. There is little debate about the fact that the 2018 mid-term election was all about Trump and his divisive, racist, anti-immigrant, misogynistic, hate-filled contempt for democratic institutions, and generally destructive politics.

There is a fairly large swath, of U.S. society that finds comfort in and supports the President irrespective of serial lying and vicious attacks on the most basic elements of U.S. democracy. And they turn out to vote. They are older and whiter than the general public and emphatically do not represent political thinking among most ‘Americans.’ They do, however vote at relatively high rates and that is what determined the elections in the four states considered in this study.

Democratic constituencies by race/ethnicity, as has been repeated over and again, vote at considerably lower rates. Especially striking are the low voting rates among younger voters who overwhelmingly vote

Democratic irrespective of race when they go to the polls.⁹ Elections in all four states were dominated by voters 50 years of age and older who voted largely Republican; as well as by non-Hispanic whites who voted at rates which were much higher than their overall share of the electorate or even populations, in each state.

The challenge for the Democratic Party as it faces the critical 2020 election is clear. Can the party find innovative ways to register and mobilize the demographic constituencies which support Democratic candidates in nearly every key swing state that will determine the outcome of the next presidential election?

The answer to this question will revolve around whether there can be some very introspective thinking among the Democratic leadership with respect to past registration and turnout strategies, many of which have not been successful. There is the need for some creative thinking about how to develop new approaches to mobilize Democratic supporters in each demographic. Relying on strategies of the past will probably not work in the extremely polarized political environment which has overwhelmed political life in the U.S., even before the 2016 election.

If this is not done the nation may very well face four more years of the destructive madness which has descended over the U.S. because of the rise to power of a dangerous President who is supported by older non-Hispanic whites, a demographic which responds to the divisive politics of hatred and turns out at the polls.

⁹ CNN has notes: “1. Republicans have an age problem: In the national House exit poll, Republicans got crushed among young people -- taking just 32% as compared to 67% for Democrats among those aged 18 to 29. But it's more than just the youngest segment of the electorate where Republicans are struggling. Among voters aged 18-44 -- at 42 years old myself, I'd say that includes people who are no spring chickens -- Democrats took 61%, while Republicans got just 36%. See <https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/13/politics/2018-exit-polls/index.html>

Methodological Note

The electorate in each state by race was calculated using the American Community Survey 2017 data released by IPUMS-USA (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series at the University of Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota) in November 2018. This is available at <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/cite.shtml>. The electorate is defined as citizens 18 years of age and older and thus eligible to vote.

(Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas, and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 8.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V8.0>).

The number of estimated voters who actually cast ballots by race was calculated in the following way:

- 1) The number of total voters who cast ballots in the senatorial races of Arizona, Florida, and Texas, and in the gubernatorial race of Georgia was calculated using the data on total votes cast found on the New York Times Election 2018 web site at:
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/11/06/us/elections/results-senate-elections.html> and <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/11/06/us/elections/results-governor-elections.html>.
- 2) These data on actual votes cast were cross-checked for accuracy with the data presented by CNN Election Results web site at <https://www.cnn.com/election/2018/results/>
- 3) The percentage of all votes cast by race and age was then determined using the CNN Exit Polls web site at <https://www.cnn.com/election/2018/exit-polls/> which was based on a national sample of 18,778 respondents. For example, for Florida it was estimated that 66% of all votes in the senate race were cast by non-Hispanic Whites; 13% by 'Blacks'; 15% by Latinos; 2% by Asians; and 4% by other race. It was also calculated that 5% of all ballots were cast by 18-24 year olds; 5% by 25-29 year olds; 10% by 30 – 39 year olds; 12% by 40 – 49 year olds; 31% by 50-64 year olds; and 37% by those 65 years of age and older.
- 4) To estimate the number of votes actually cast by race and age the percentage estimate of each category in the CNN exit poll sample for each state indicated above was multiplied by the actual number of ballots cast.
- 5) To estimate the voter participation rate, the number of estimated votes cast by race and age was divided by the number of the electorate derived from the IPUMS ACS 2017 sample.
- 6) There is an unknown margin of error in these calculations. However, irrespective of this margin of error which is impossible to determine the **relative** participation rates by sex and age are in all likelihood quite accurate. In other words, the Florida data indicate that 58% of non-Hispanic whites eligible to vote in the state cast ballots compared with 50% of non-Hispanic blacks. While these data for each race may not be precise because they are based on samples, the differential participation rates are in all likelihood close to accurate.