

The HECTORDELEON PERSPECTIVE

Placing context to the American Latino Experience, from culture to politics

HOUSTON VOTER PROFILE:

What Does The Houston Electorate Look Like Today?

What effect might it have on the 2015 mayoral election?

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WHAT DOES THE HOUSTON ELECTORATE LOOK LIKE?

What effect might it have on the 2015 mayoral election?

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the race and ethnicity of the City of Houston's (COH) electorate is paramount in predicting a mayoral candidate's chances of winning an election outright or making it into a runoff. However, knowing the demographic make-up of the city's voter roll is a challenge since Texans are not required to provide race or ethnicity on the official voter registration record.

Thus the question arises: how can the racial and ethnic make-up of the city's voter roll be determined?

To approximate the racial and ethnic composition of the electorate in the 4th largest city in the U.S., this analysis uses redistricting data from the U.S. Census 2000, 2010 the 2010 Census, and the 2010 and 2011 American Community Survey,¹ as well as 2013 Census population estimates in addition to Spanish and Asian voter surname queries on the Houston voter roll and Houston city council district voter data.

In the public domain, the influence population has on reapportionment at every level of government is often confused with the voting strength a racial or ethnic population may have on an election. The *voter registration* approximation sheds light on *what is* and on *what could be* as it relates to the impact major voting groups may have on an election.

About the Data

This statistical profile of the population, voting age population, citizen voting age population and registered voters for Blacks, Asians, Hispanics and Whites in the City of Houston is based on the author's tabulations of the Census Bureau's 2000, 2010 and 2013 Census population estimates and American Community Survey (ACS). Voter registration approximations are based on surnamed registered voter queries employing the DIANE S. LAUDERDALE and BERT KESTENBAUM Spanish and Asian surnamed list and a Gallup Tracking Survey conducted prior to the 2013 election.²

¹ U.S. Census 2000 and 2010 Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File for Harris County titled "HISPANIC OR LATINO, AND NOT HISPANIC OR LATINO BY RACE FOR THE POPULATION 18 YEARS AND OVER," the 2010 Census, and 2010 and 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates for "SEX BY AGE AND CITIZENSHIP STATUS.

² This profile is a product of Hector de Leon. Any inaccuracy in the statistics presented in the report is an error of the author. Questions pertaining to the report should be sent to the author.

Black Population, Voting Age Population, Citizen Voting Age Population and Voters

As of 2010, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Surveys, Blacks comprised 31 percent of the citizen voting age population (CVAP) in Houston. It is likely that the total number of Black registered voters on the voter roll is almost equal to the Black CVAP. Currently, the single-member Black opportunity Council Districts B, D and K constitute 30 percent of the city's registered voters.

Accounting for Spanish and Asian surnames on the voter roll and White VAP and voter registration rates, at least 22 percent of that 30 percent are Black. And, with one-third (120,452) of the Black voting age population (VAP) residing outside Districts B, D and K, the probability is high that the Black registered voter total is commensurate to the CVAP.

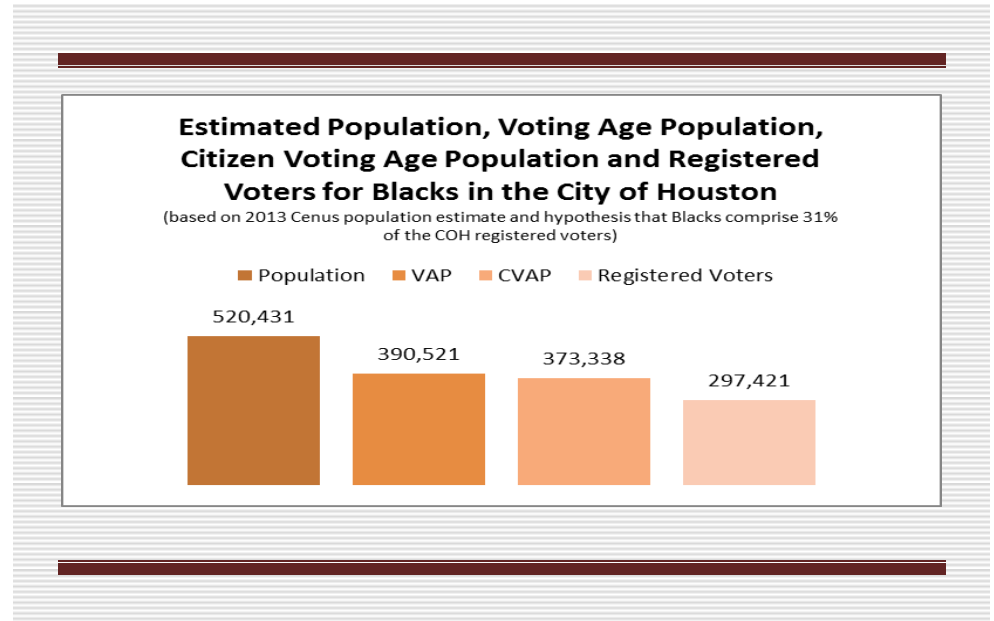
How strong is the Black vote?

Houston elections bear out the strength of the Black vote. In every election that has taken place since 1979, a Black candidate has been elected to one of the five citywide council positions. During this period, non-mayoral Black candidates have won 30 citywide contests, including the City Controller position in 2009, 2011 and 2013.

In addition, Black registered voters within the city have propelled several Black mayoral candidates into a runoff election: Sylvester Turner in 1991, Lee Brown in 1997 and 2001, and Gene Locke in 2009. Of those, only Brown's mayoral candidacy fared well, leading a Democratic coalition against a Republican candidate in runoff elections on two different occasions.

Notwithstanding those successes, Houston election results suggest that strong Black mayoral candidates have struggled to garner support from non-Black voters in elections when a strong White Democrat is on the ballot. In 2003, in an open mayoral contest that included former State Chair of the Democratic Party Bill White, and former Houston Councilmember at-large and current Harris County Treasurer Orlando Sanchez, Sylvester Turner received 29 percent of the vote. It was not enough to make it into a runoff election. Six years later, in another open Mayoral contest, Gene Locke received 26 percent making it into a runoff election against the eventual winner Annise Parker. Most recently, in 2013, Ben Hall received 28 percent of the vote but failed to force Parker into a runoff.

On average, based on the total votes legitimate Black mayoral candidates have received, a Black candidate can expect to get about 28 percent of the vote in a general election. Although Blacks only account for 24 percent of Houston's population, the Black voter base is significant; alone, it is sometimes enough to pull a Black candidate into a runoff, but not enough to win a mayoral contest.



Asian Population, Voting Age Population, Citizen Voting Age Population and Voters

The size of Houston's Asian population is often overestimated because Asian candidates have experienced noticeable although limited electoral success. In 1999, Gordon Quan, an American of Chinese ancestry, was elected to one of the five at large city council positions where he served until 2005. An Asian candidate has been elected in Houston Council District F since 2003.

Surname data suggests that the Asian electoral success may not be due to voting strength. According to the Census, Asians constitute only 5 percent of Houston's citizen voting age population (65,331). And a query of Vietnamese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Japanese and South Asians surnames on the voter roll places the Asian citywide registered voters count at 4 percent.

There are two City of Houston council districts where the Asian registered voter population hits double digits. In District F, Asians account for about 16 percent of the registered voters; and, in District J, Asians constitute 10.3 percent of the registered voters.

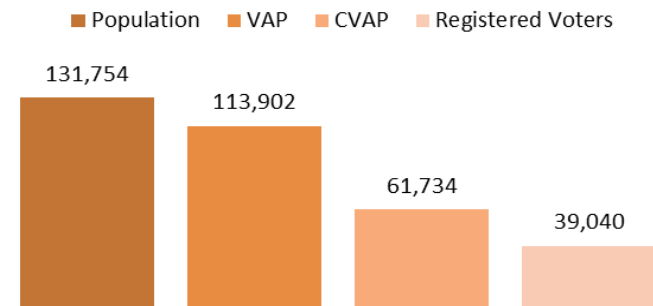
Still, voter participation data for the 2012 presidential election show Asian surname voter turnout rates to be 20 points lower than the aggregate turnout rate for Blacks and White voters.

Visibility and the Asian business community's strong involvement in the political process may explain the electoral progress Asians have experienced in what may be the most racially and ethnically diverse district in the city.

Presently, Asians constitute six percent of Houston's population.

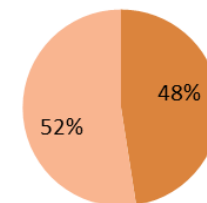
Estimated Population, Voting Age Population, Citizen Voting Age Population and Registered Voters for Asians in the City of Houston

(based on 2013 Census Population estimates, surname query & 2013 Gallup Survey)



Asian Citizen Voting Age Population Inside the City of Houston vs Outside the COH

City of Houston CVAP Harris County CVAP, excluding Houston



Hispanic Population, Voting Age Population, Citizen Voting Age Population and Voters

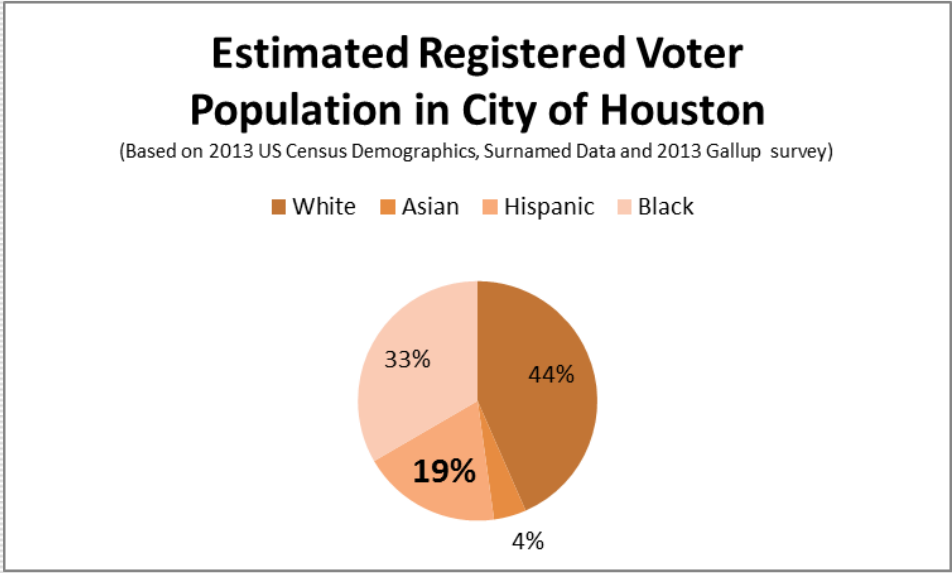
According to Census estimates, Hispanics comprise 44 percent of Houston’s population, making them the largest racial or ethnic group in the city. However, Census data also shows Hispanics only constitute 26 percent of Houston’s citizen voting age population.

After every decennial Census, the focus is always on noticeable population increases. As a result, speculation about the increasing size of the Hispanic population generates confused expectations about the Hispanic vote and its immediate impact on the political landscape. The fact is, out of an estimated one million Hispanics in the city only about 650,000 are 18 years of age or older. Of those, a little less than half (49.4%) are citizens.

In part, the disproportion between the Hispanic population and the Hispanic CVAP is the reason why Hispanics only account for about 19 percent of the registered voters in the City of Houston.

The value of understanding Population vs CVAP

Knowing the difference between the Hispanic population and the citizen voting age population is crucial to understanding the Hispanic electorate. It tempers expectations related to civic engagement efforts dedicated to growing the Hispanic vote. It provides clarity about where Hispanics are and where they need to be as it relates voter registration. More importantly, it shows why the Hispanic voting strength is not commensurate to the size of its population.



Self-Reported Voter Registration by Racial and Ethnic Subgroup

	% Registered
All Americans	78
Non-Hispanic whites	85
Non-Hispanic blacks	81
Asians	60
Hispanics	51

Gallup Daily tracking, July 1-Sept. 26, 2013

GALLUP

The Myth of the Sleeping Giant

Surname queries performed on the city's voter roll show that the number of Spanish surnamed registered voters in the City of Houston could be as high as 21 percent (198,436) and as low as 17 percent (167,743). The higher total results from a query using a US Census Spanish surname list of over 12,000 names. The lower total results from a query using the Census list of "the 639 Most Frequently Occurring Heavily Hispanic Surnames."

Although both Spanish surname registered voter estimates (17-21%) are respectable in relation to the Hispanic CVAP (26%), the numbers do not support the "Sleeping Giant" hypothesis perpetuated by pundits whose pronouncements about the Hispanic vote are based on raw population and not on citizen voting age population.

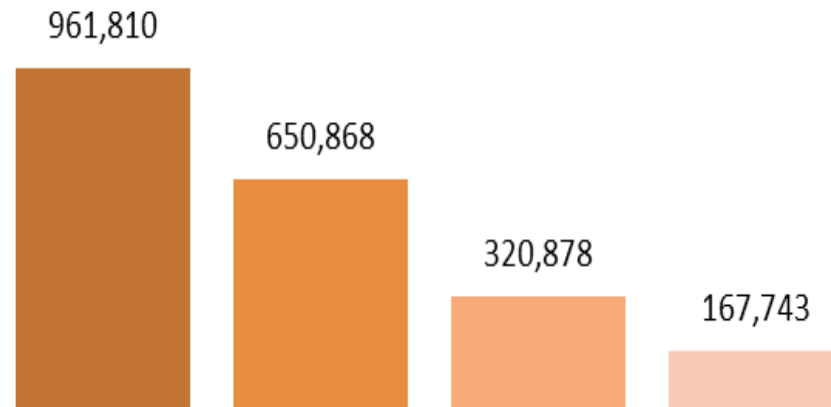
"Giant" is a term which means greater than not less than. Hence, "giant" is a term that is not applicable to the Hispanic vote at this point. Eligibility factors like age and citizenship status make the "giant" label improbable in the near future.

However, the difference between the estimated Spanish surnamed registered voters and the Hispanic citizen voting age population show that Hispanics have the greatest potential for growth. Voter registration statistics suggest that less than half (48 percent) of the Hispanic population that is eligible to vote is not registered. Nonetheless, if all race and ethnic groups in Houston achieved full voter registration from one day to the next, Hispanics would be the third largest voting group in the city and not - the portended "Sleeping Giant."

Estimated Population, Voting Age Population, Citizen Voting Age Population and Registered Voters for Hispanics in the City of Houston

(based on 2013 Census population estimates) and surname voter queries)

■ Population ■ VAP ■ CVAP ■ Registered Voters



White Population, Voting Age Population, Citizen Voting Age Population and Voters

Whites constitute 26 percent of Houston's population. Yet, Whites, conservatively, make up 38 percent of the citizen voting age population, about 44 percent of Houston's registered voters and beyond 50 percent of the voters in a city election.

Theoretically, White voters alone acting in consort could provide a mayoral candidate all the votes needed to win an election. But in Houston proper (within the city limits) that is very unlikely. The 2012 and 2014 November election results show that partisan voting may be influenced by the race and ethnicity of the voters within a political district. The ideological voting loyalties which are manifested in even-numbered year partisan elections are likely to be evident in odd-numbered year elections. This means that even in the non-partisan Houston election a significant number voters, including Whites, will choose candidates based on the perceived party affiliation of each candidate.

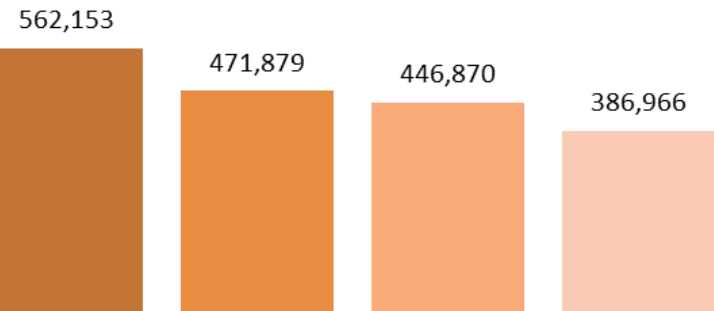
In Houston proper, voters favor Democratic Party candidates in 8 of the 11 council districts. And, the straight party vote favors Democratic candidates by a 16 point margin, 58 to 42 percent.

In short, partisan voting among Houston's White voters results in the creations of at least two White minority voting groups out of a White voting majority.

Estimated Population, Voting Age Population, Citizen Voting Age Population and Registered Voters for Whites in the City of Houston

(based on 2013 Census Population estimates)

Population VAP CVAP Registered Voters



White Vote in 2012 Presidential Election in Harris County

Precincts	Vote for REPUBLICAN Presidential Ticket	Vote for DEMOCRATIC Presidential Ticket	Votes for other Parties
90-100% White VAP	81.63%	17.37%	1.00%
80-89 % White VAP	76.27%	22.27%	1.27%
70-79% White VAP	69.14%	29.24%	1.63%
60-69% White VAP	65.97%	32.39%	1.64%
50-59% White VAP	62.11%	36.43%	1.46%

Population does not equal voting power: Is CVAP a Lagging indicator?

Hispanics, Blacks and Asians combined constitute 74 percent of Houston's population. However, as best as it can be determined, due to the voter eligibility rates, lower voter registration rates and other factors, these groups comprise 56 percent of the city's registered voter population.

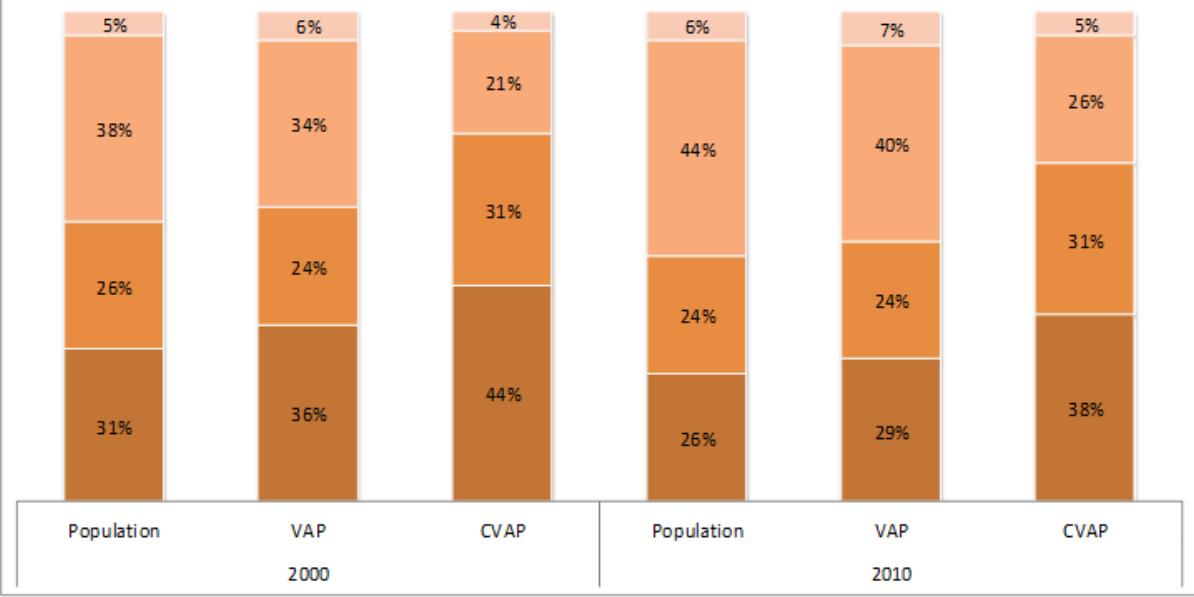
Ten years ago Hispanics, Asians and Blacks comprised 56 percent of the citizen voting age population in the city of Houston. In other words, the 2000 CVAP totals were equal to the current estimated voter registration totals. The data suggest that the CVAP may be a lagging indicator. In order to predict how Houston's voter roll will look in 2020, one could simply look at the 2010 Census CVAP estimates.

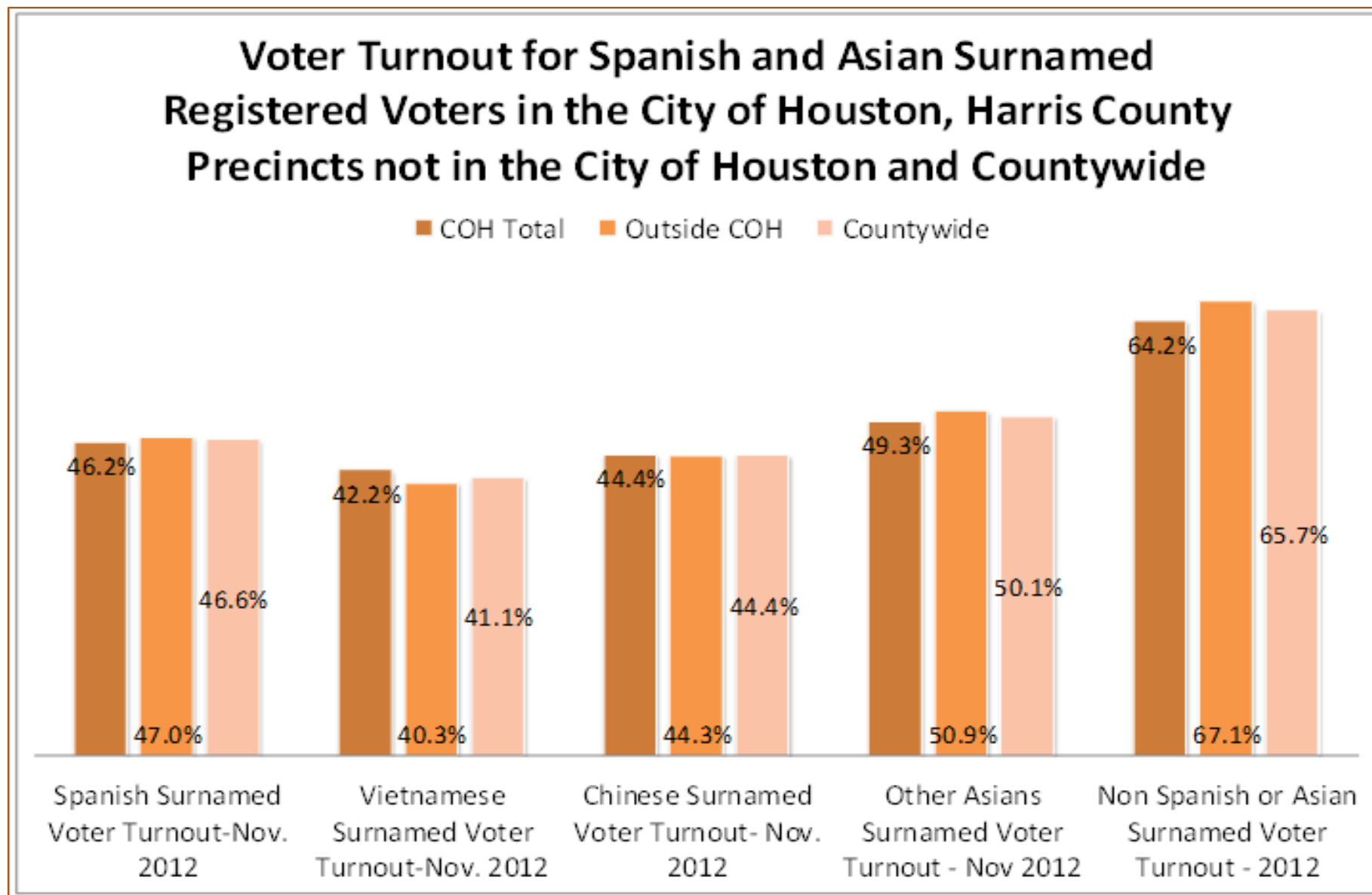
Conclusion

Population plays an integral role in reapportionment at every level of government. Yet, Census population percentages do not determine the number of registered voters a race or ethnic group has on the voter roll in a political jurisdiction. To approximate the voting strength of a major voting group, citizen voting age population and surname data may be the best available indicators. And in Houston, those variables suggest that a mayoral candidate, whether White, Black, Hispanic or Asian, cannot depend on a single racial or ethnic voting group to provide the votes needed to win a well-contested election. Only a solid coalition of voters will garner political victory in Houston.

City of Houston: Population, Voting Age Population and
Citizenship Voting Age Population

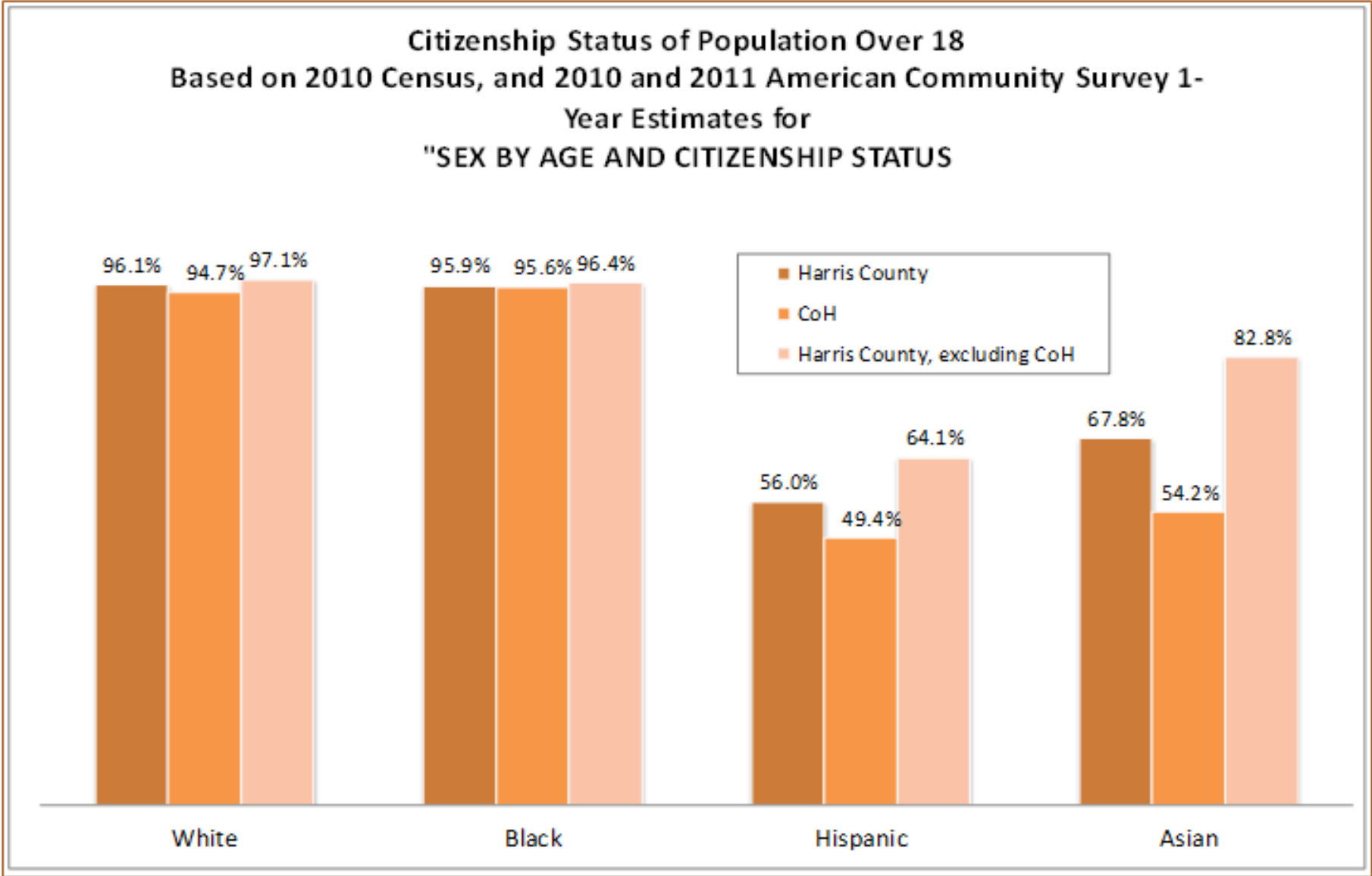
■ White ■ Black ■ Hispanic ■ Asian





APPENDIX B

City of Houston Registered Voters (Feb 2015 Harris County Voter Roll)				
CITY of HOUSTON COUNCIL DISTRICT	CoH COUNCIL DISTRICT Reg. Voters	% Asian Surnamed Registered Voters	% Spanish Surnamed Registered Voters	NON-Asian/Spanish Surnamed Registered Voters
61A	72,396	5.0%	25.2%	69.8%
61B	94,909	0.8%	14.8%	84.4%
61C	129,800	3.9%	11.8%	84.3%
61D	111,095	3.1%	12.2%	84.7%
61E	107,963	4.0%	17.6%	78.4%
61F	67,677	16.0%	19.6%	64.4%
61G	115,340	4.9%	7.2%	88.0%
61H	72,150	1.2%	52.7%	46.2%
61I	63,464	2.9%	55.5%	41.5%
61J	45,651	10.6%	23.4%	65.9%
61K	78,979	4.2%	16.3%	79.4%
TOTAL	959,424	4.6%	20.7%	74.7%



2014 November Election: Aggregate Vote in CoH Council Districts (CD) for Partisan Candidates

CoH CD	Vote for 'R' Candidates	Vote for 'D' Candidates	Vote for Libertarian Candidates	Vote for Green Candidates	Hisp. VAP	White VAP	Black VAP	Asian VAP	Other VAP
A	56.3%	41.0%	0.8%	1.9%	51.4%	29.3%	12.8%	5.3%	1.2%
B	7.2%	90.6%	0.3%	1.9%	36.1%	5.8%	56.4%	0.8%	0.9%
C	47.4%	48.7%	1.0%	3.0%	21.7%	63.4%	6.5%	6.7%	1.7%
D	14.0%	83.4%	0.4%	2.2%	22.6%	14.6%	55.3%	6.2%	1.3%
E	70.6%	27.2%	0.8%	1.4%	30.0%	55.5%	6.7%	6.4%	1.5%
F	42.3%	54.7%	0.8%	2.2%	38.1%	18.2%	23.9%	18.0%	1.9%
G	69.2%	28.6%	0.8%	1.5%	15.5%	63.2%	9.6%	9.8%	1.9%
H	28.9%	67.6%	0.7%	2.8%	66.2%	16.4%	15.9%	0.8%	0.7%
I	29.6%	67.2%	0.6%	2.6%	73.6%	10.5%	12.7%	2.3%	0.9%
J	41.3%	55.5%	0.8%	2.4%	59.3%	13.2%	18.0%	8.3%	1.2%
K	27.6%	69.4%	0.5%	2.4%	32.4%	17.7%	41.7%	6.9%	1.2%

ABOUT hdl PERSPECTIVE

THE HECTOR DE LEON (hdl) PERSPECTIVE is a private publication that serves as a repository for essays, data analyses and didactic verses that place context to the American Latino experience, from culture to politics.

Essays and stories in hdl PERSPECTIVE are based on personal and professional experience. They serve as sober examples of the daily challenges American Latinos experience.

All the data used to create the charts and tables in Perspective is based on public information. The information posted here is not based on exit polls. It reflects the results produced when U.S. Census Bureau demographics information, voter registration statistics, and election results are combined. The percentages provided regarding how a group voted is not based on a response to a question, but real and concrete behavior manifested via ballots cast for a candidate or party in a specific cluster of voting precincts.

Perspective endeavors to present inspired substantive constructive work that are concise, coherent and cogent with the goal of provoking thought, from the general citizenry to makers of public policy.

The thoughts and reports offered in Perspective are the sole products of Hector de Leon and contributing authors.

Perspective is based in Houston, Texas.

Author's Background

Héctor de Leon has spent his professional life carrying out educational initiatives with the objective of enhancing voter participation and an understanding of the electoral process via private and public organizations.

Since May 2004, Hector has worked for Harris County. He was appointed Director of Communications and Voter Outreach of the office of the Harris County Clerk in 2007. In this capacity, he helps provide the citizens of the third largest county in the nation the information needed to access the voting process, with a special focus on limited English proficient voters covered by the language provision of the 1975 Voting Rights Act and voters of African American ancestry.

Prior to joining the Harris County Clerk's Office, Hector worked for the NALEO Educational Fund from March 1993 to April 2004. He began as the volunteer recruitment coordinator and ascended to Regional Director in 1994 after Leonel Castillo, former City of Houston Controller and Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service under President Jimmy Carter, vacated the position. While with the NALEO Ed. Fund, Hector partnered with community-based groups creating an ad hoc network that worked to conduct citizenship classes, administer the U.S citizenship exam and provide assistance with the completion of naturalization application process to thousands of legal residents via the NALEO U.S. Citizenship Workshop model. The groups included The Metropolitan Organization (TMO), The Ft. Bend-Interfaith Council, Houston Community College Southeast, Centro Hispano Educativo, The Harris County Department of Education and several parishes within the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, as well as local elected and non-elected leaders.

In 1994, understanding that citizenship and voting go hand-in-hand, Héctor incorporated an annual voter education and voter mobilization campaign to NALEO's programmatic activities during election cycles with the help of the local affiliates of the two major Spanish-language television networks. The campaign consisted of educational Public Service Announcements which focused on increasing awareness among Latinos about the voter registration deadline, Voting by Mail, Early Voting and Election Day. The PSAs were supplemented with voter registration activities and an effort to teach Latinos how to use the voting equipment. The effort concluded with an Election Day voter information hotline and election analysis for Spanish language television news.

By 2004, the NALEO Educational Fund's national civic education activities mirrored the Houston NALEO office voter education and mobilization efforts. At the time Hector joined NALEO, the organization was known as "the nation's foremost advocate of increased access to U.S. citizenship information and assistance." By the time he left, his contributions had helped the NALEO Ed. Fund evolve into "the nation's leading nonprofit organization that facilitates the full participation of Latinos in the American political process, from citizenship to public service."

Hector began his civic engagement journey as a participant in the political action committee (PAC) Latinos Unidos from 1990 to 1994. Latinos Unidos was created by a group of Houston Latino leaders, including former Houston City Councilmember Ben T. Reyes, with the goal of increasing the participation of Latinos in the American political process. The PAC was chaired by Leonel J. Castillo.

As one of the main volunteers of Latinos Unidos, Héctor was responsible for helping organize a weekly Saturday morning meeting, finding a guest speaker and coordinating a voter registration block walk. He also organized monthly voter registration efforts at U.S. Naturalization ceremonies distributing voter registration applications to thousands of new citizens every third Friday of the month; an activity he continued until 2004. In addition, he helped coordinate voter mobilization activities and voter advocacy efforts.

Hector became director of the Latinos Unidos PAC laboring in the corner of Houston Councilmember Reyes' district office in the heart of the Magnolia Park neighborhood which is near the Houston Ship Channel. Under Hector's guidance, the group established an independent office and began offering U.S citizenship classes in an underserved Latino community in North Houston. Hector served as the Government and History instructor for legal residents seeking to naturalize.

The Latinos Unidos meetings continued throughout the 1990s, but the PAC's regular grass-roots activities ceased after Hector went to work for the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund Texas office based in Houston.

Hector's work ethic and leadership helped established the NALEO Educational Fund as the preeminent non-profit civic education organization in Southeast Texas.

Hector was born in Monterrey and raised [in the ejido of Albercones] in the municipality of Doctor Arroyo, in the state of Nuevo Leon, where his mother was a rural teacher for over 20 years. He is a naturalized American citizen of Mexican origin whose paternal ancestors are native to the Americas.