STATISTICS ON LATINOS
BY LATINO POLICY FORUM

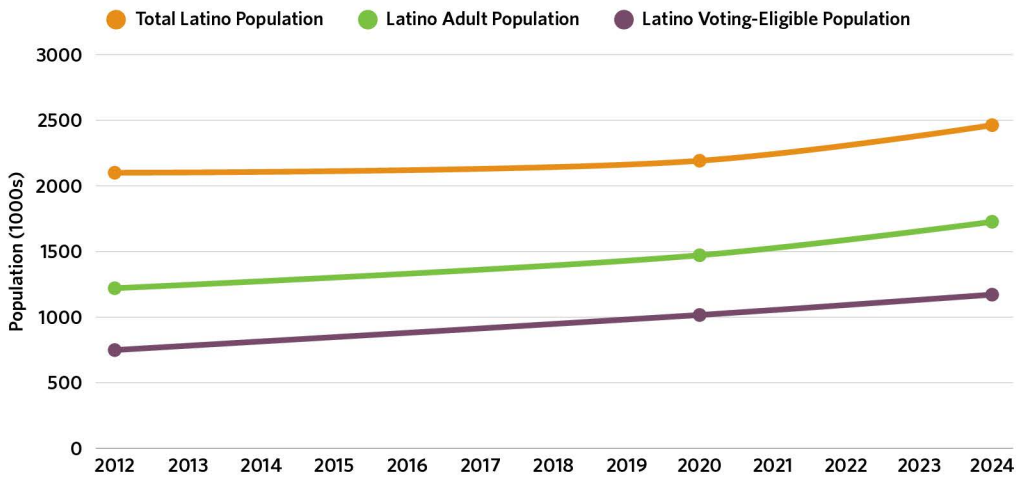
THE LATINO ELECTORATE IN ILLINOIS:
Growth, Geography, and Turning Potential into Power

The Latino electorate in Illinois has grown 56% since 2012. However, only slightly more than half of eligible Latinos are registered to vote, and fewer yet turn out to the polls, which leaves much of the community's political power untapped. This brief examines how the Latino electorate has grown, where Latino voters live, and how they participate, along with what it will take to turn that potential into power.

There are approximately 8.8 million eligible voters in Illinois.[1] Approximately 1.2 million, or 13.3%, of those eligible to vote in Illinois are Latino. The state is home to approximately 1.73 million Latinos over 18, about 68% of whom are citizens.

Since 2012, Illinois's total Latino population has increased by about 17%, and as many in this group become citizens and as U.S.-born Latinos age into the electorate, the voting-eligible population has increased even faster—up by 56% since 2012.

Figure 1. The Latino Population in Illinois has Grown Steadily Over the Past Decade



2012, 2020, 2025 Total Latino Population (ACS), Total Adult Population (CPS), Total Adult Citizen Population (CPS). Source: U.S. Census.

[1] By eligible voters, we mean the citizen voting-age population, the best widely available measure of the eligible voter population. This number includes some persons who are ineligible to vote despite being citizen adults, notably those who are incarcerated. The U.S. Census makes these estimates using two separate survey projects, the American Community Survey (ACS) and the Current Population Study (CPS). The estimates generated by these studies differ slightly. Because the CPS asks questions about voter turnout that we use here, we use CPS estimates in this report unless otherwise indicated for specific analyses. The most recent year for which these figures are available from the U.S. Census are 2024 for the CPS (https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-590.html) 2024 5-year estimates from the ACS: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/about/voting-rights/cvap.html

Latinos also continue to grow as a share of the overall Illinois voting-eligible population. Since 2012, the non-Hispanic White voting-eligible population of Illinois has gradually declined, and the Black population has remained relatively steady. The Latino and Asian-American populations have grown substantially, making up all the population growth in the state. Latinos have grown from 8.7% of the eligible electorate to 13.3% since 2012. This means that with each election cycle, Latinos have increasing opportunities to influence the political and policy direction of the state.

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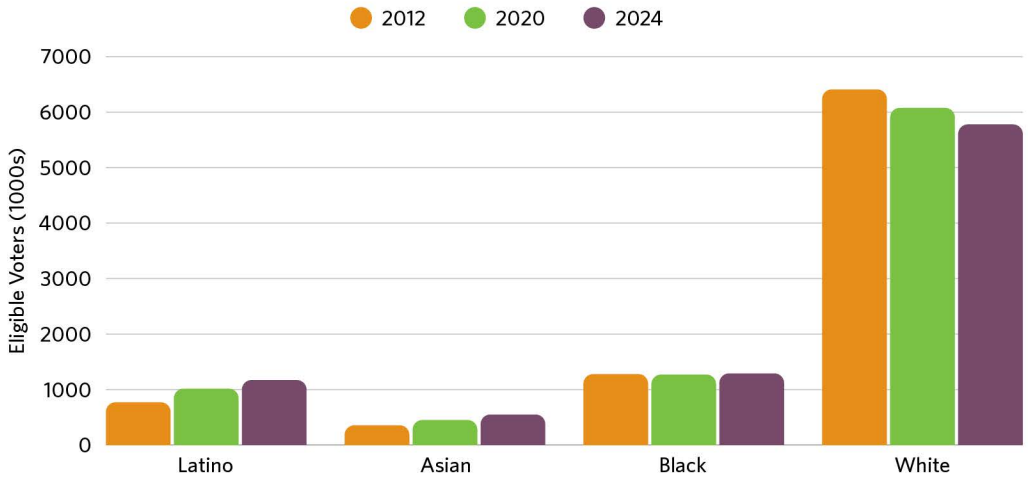
Figure 2: Total Number of Eligible Voters by Race/Ethnicity, Illinois in 2012, 2020, and 2024



Source: U.S. Census

This trend is likely to continue because of the age structure of these racial and ethnic groups within Illinois. On average, Latinos are much younger than other Illinoisans, as we can see in the following figure, which shows the age distribution of the citizen population for each racial/ethnic group in Illinois.

Figure 3: Age Distribution of the Citizen Population for Each Racial/Ethnic Group in Illinois, 2024

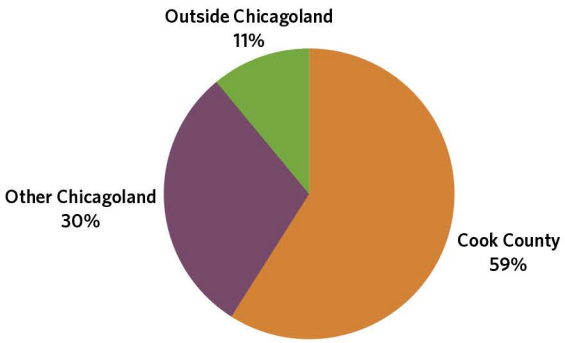
Source: U.S. Census (IPUMS 2024)

Figure 3 shows the age distribution among citizens across racial/ethnic groups, with younger ages at the left and older ages at the right. About 1 in 3 Latino citizens is still under 18—not yet eligible to vote, but many age in year after year. While a large majority (63%) of Latino citizens are under 35, this is not true for the other groups. Most dramatically, only 38% of White citizen-residents of Illinois are under 35, while 37% are over 55. If these trends persist, Latinos will increase as a share of the eligible electorate each year.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

As with the overall population, most Latinos in Illinois live in the Chicagoland area. Of the overall population statewide electorate of 1.2 million eligible Latino voters, approximately 720,000 (59% of the statewide total) live in Cook County. About 420,000 (35% of the statewide total) live in the City of Chicago alone. An additional 360,000 (30% of the statewide total) live in the other counties of the Chicago metro area.[2] About 135,000 (11% of the statewide total) live elsewhere in Illinois.

Figure 4: Share of Voting-Eligible Latinos in Different Regions of Illinois



Source: U.S. Census via Redistricting Data Hub

Even within Chicagoland, Latino voters are also concentrated within particular communities and neighborhoods. The following figures show Census Places (commonly referred to as cities, villages, or towns) of at least 25,000 residents, in which at least 13% of the voting-eligible population is Latino according to the U.S. Census (that is, places where the local Latino population is proportionally larger than it is the statewide).

As you can see, there are dozens of such communities. In some places, they make up an even more substantial share. Notably, in Cicero and Berwyn, Latinos make up a majority of the eligible electorate, and in Chicago about 1 in 4 potential voters is Latino.

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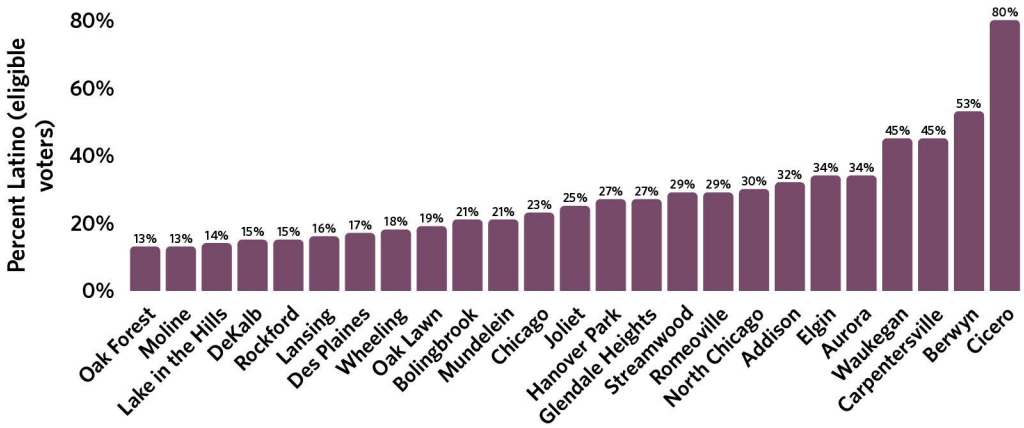
Figure 5: Percent Latino Among Eligible Voters in Select Cities/Towns in Illinois

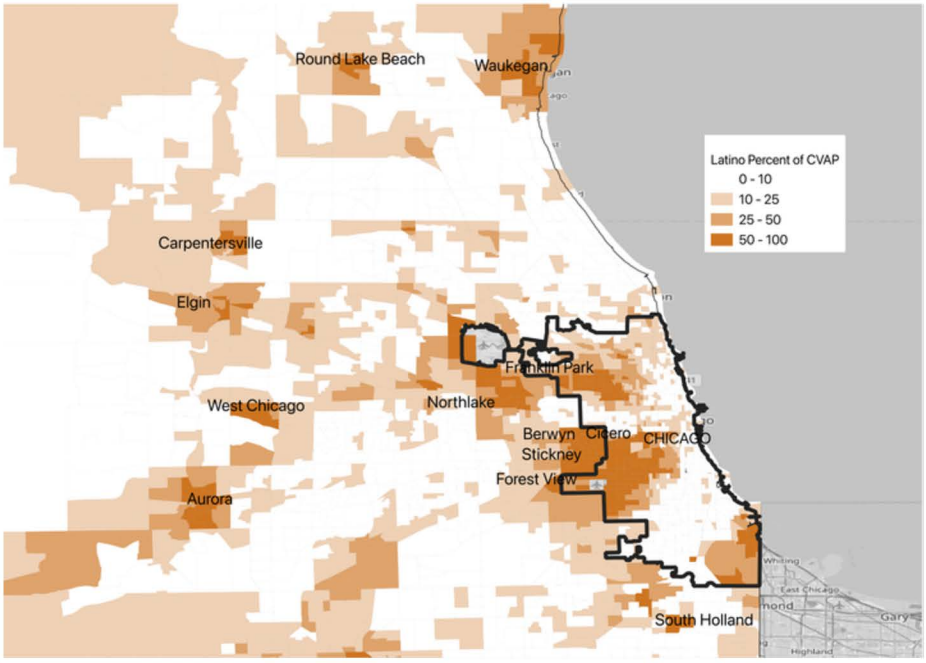


Source: US. Census via Redistricting Data Hub

[2] The Chicago Metropolitan Area is comprised of Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties

Even within those counties and cities, eligible Latino voters are not always distributed evenly; they tend to be concentrated in particular neighborhoods. The following map shades Census Tracts in the Chicago metropolitan area by the percent of the eligible voting population that is Latino. While in many areas (those shaded white) less than one in ten eligible voters is Latino, in large sections of Chicago on the Northwest and Southwest sides, residents are predominantly Latino. The same is true in some first-ring western suburbs (Cicero and Berwyn, as well as areas near O'Hare). There are similar areas in small cities at the edge of the metropolitan area, including Waukegan, Elgin, West Chicago, and Aurora.

Figure 6: Percent of Voting-Eligible Population That is Latino
Darker shades indicate higher percentage



Source: U.S. Census via Redistricting Data Hub.

LATINO VOTING REGISTRATION AND ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION

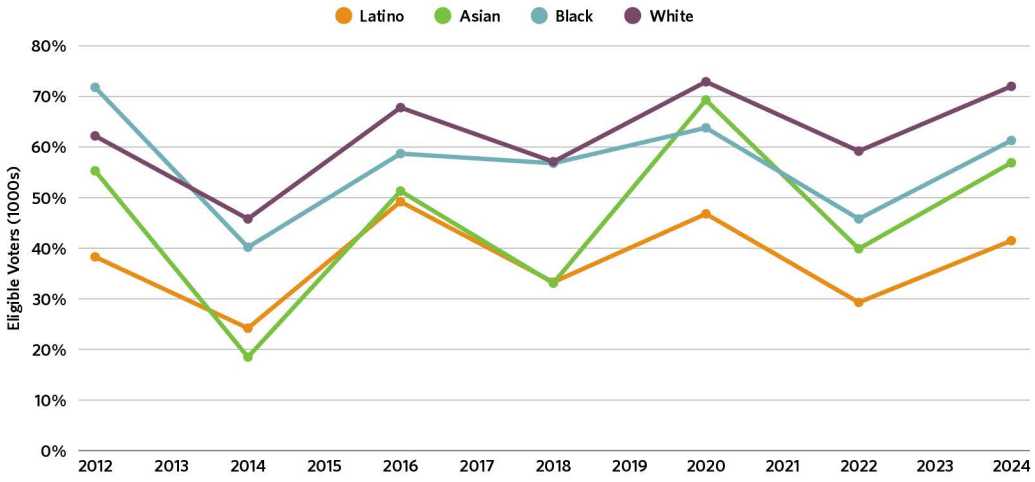
Of course, potential voters does not translate to actual voters. When it comes to election time, registration and participation rates among Latinos have not increased in proportion to their growth in the eligible electorate: voting-eligible Latinos are much less likely than members of other racial and ethnic groups to register or vote in Illinois. While 81.5% of eligible non-Hispanic White Illinoisans were registered to vote in 2024, only 54.5% of eligible Latinos were registered, a gap of greater than 25 percentage points. Voting-eligible Black and Asian-American Illinoisans were registered at rates of 65.5% and 77.7%, respectively, meaning that Latinos were much less likely to be registered than other groups. [3]

[3] Estimates of registration rates among Latinos vary across high-quality available sources. Unless otherwise indicated we use data from the U.S. Census's Current Population Survey. Estimates from the Redistricting Data Hub using data from L2, a private company that processes and analyzes voter file, suggest that registration rates among Latinos are higher, closer to 87 percent statewide (though still lower than other groups). We use these estimates for the local analyses and maps, so they appear somewhat different from the statewide estimates from the CPS. In both sources, participation among eligible voters is lower among Latinos than in other major racial/ethnic groups.

While 81.5% of eligible non-Hispanic White Illinoisans were registered to vote in 2024, only 54.5% of eligible Latinos were registered, a gap of greater than 25 percentage points.

This "registration gap" grew even larger when it came to voting. While voting rates vary over time in all groups, especially changing between midterm and presidential election years, Latinos have been far less likely than other groups to participate in elections. For example, about 71% of non-Hispanic White eligible voters in Illinois turned out in 2024, only 41% of eligible Latinos did. In the last midterm elections, in 2022, the turnout rate among eligible Latinos was 29%, less than one in three.

Figure 7: Percent of Voting-Eligible Population Casting Votes, 2012-2024



Source: U.S. Census.

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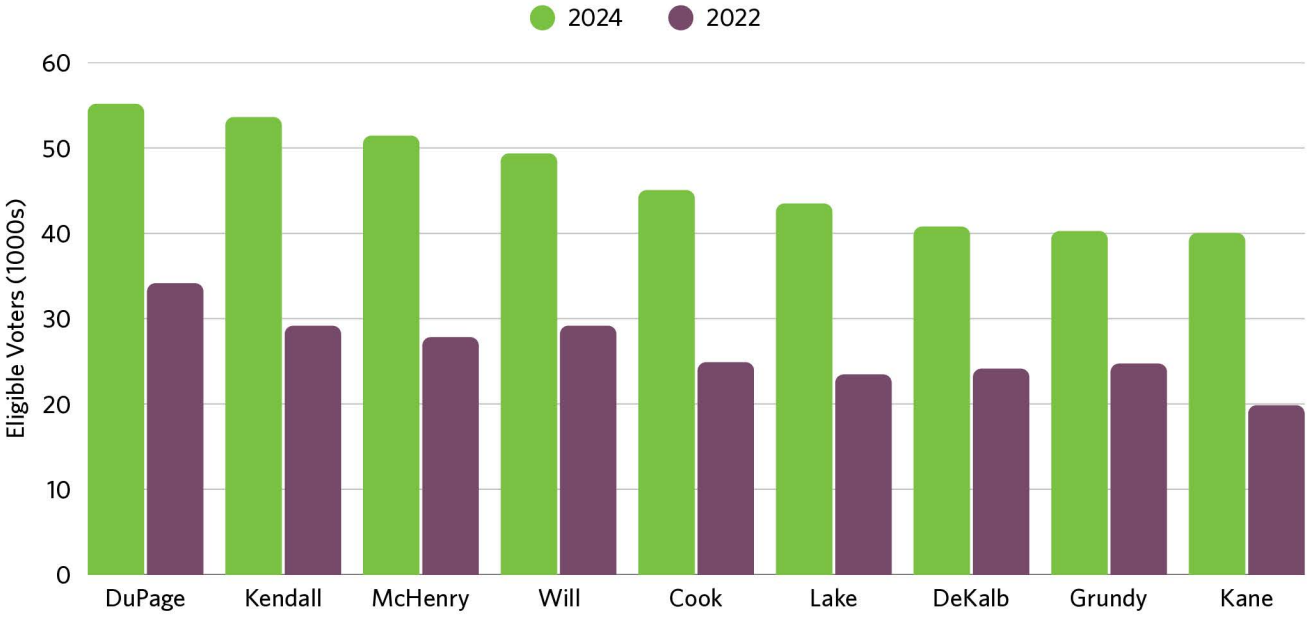
This turnout gap is present in the Chicago metro-area counties where most Illinois Latinos live. The next figure shows the percent of eligible Latinos who participated in the most recent presidential (2024) and midterm (2022) elections. Presidential-year turnout was below 50% in most of these counties (including Cook), and below 30% in the midterm year. As in the previous analysis of statewide voter turnout, these numbers were substantially below other racial/ethnic groups in these areas.

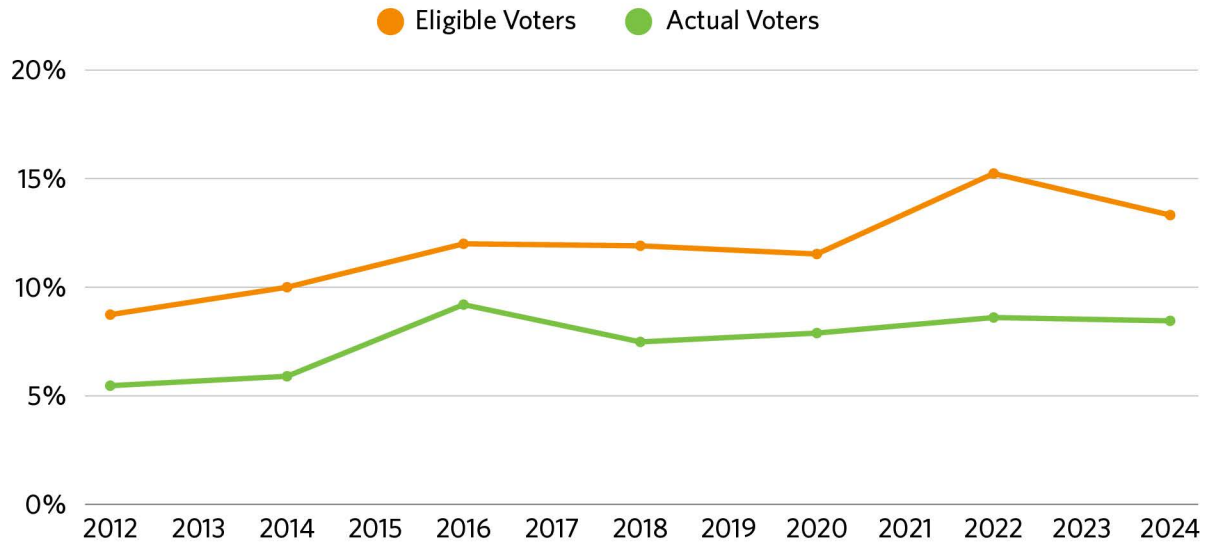
Figure 8: Percentage of Latino Voters who Voted in 2024 and 2022



Source: U.S. Census and L2 via Redistricting Data Hub

This gap in registration and voting means that despite their growing numbers in Illinois, Latinos have not increased as a share of the actual electorate that has been casting votes on Election Day. In 2024, while the eligible electorate was 13.3% Latino, the population of voters was only 8.5% Latino, meaning that Latinos were underrepresented in the electorate.

Figure 9: Latinos make up 13.3% of eligible voters, but only 8% of the actual electorate



Latino Share of Eligible Electorate and Actual Voters, 2012-2024. Source: U.S. Census

There are many factors that contribute to this relatively low level of voter participation among Illinois Latinos. First, Latinos are disproportionately young, and people under the age of 30 are much less likely to vote than their elders in every racial/ethnic group. Another major factor predicting turnout is whether or not eligible voters are contacted by candidates or other voter-mobilization groups active around election time. Both Democrats and Republicans and almost all political candidates are eager to capture the Latino vote, but according to Latino voters in Illinois, they often do not hear from candidates and many fail to win their support. According to NBC/Telemundo, in the Chicago media market, in 2024, $13.8 million was spent on English language linear television and $200,000 in Spanish language linear television. Finally, many voters, regardless of background, feel like their vote does not make a difference and thus do not turn out to the polls, so when Latino voters are not included in outreach, it may reinforce that perception.

Have you made your plan to vote yet?

¡Vota Ya! is Illinois' Latino Voting Hub. Find everything you need to exercise your right to vote including information on how to register, your rights, and more.

ilvotaya.com

At least some of these factors can be mitigated by increased and effective voter outreach. Help with registration, information about the confidentiality and security of voting procedures in Illinois, information about candidates and issue positions, and more can help reduce the cost and make clear the benefits of voting. This is why, with the midterms and mayoral election fast approaching, it is incumbent that civic groups, candidates, and parties engage in microtargeted and effective get-out-the-vote efforts. A key step to making these efforts effective is partnership with existing Latino advocacy organizations to better mobilize Latinos and prioritize the issues that matter most to this group, such as access to early education, preventative health care, affordable housing, and measures to reduce crime. These broad-based issues affect every community in Illinois, and have extra resonance among Latinos. Latino advocacy groups can help competently inform eligible voters about the key issues at stake in the race, and why it is important to have elected officials that represent community views on important public policy issues.

ABOUT SOL

SOL is a series of periodic policy briefs that combine data with insightful analysis from the Latino Policy Forum. The series provides a unique snapshot of the growth, influence and challenges of the local Latino community, for use by community leaders, urban planners, elected officials, journalists, and anyone interested in building a shared future for all of Illinois.

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