

**THE STATE OF THE CALIFORNIA  
AFRICAN AMERICAN ELECTORATE  
VOTING BEHAVIOR AND POLICY PREFERENCES**

**THE STATE OF BLACK CALIFORNIA: TEN YEARS LATER  
AN INFORMATIONAL BRIEFING**



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FEBRUARY 28, 2018



THE CLEAR PATH | **Public Opinion Research**

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# **I. INTRODUCTION**

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# INTRODUCTION

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- African Americans have long been recognized as having the highest rate of political participation and civic engagement in the country, especially when controlling for socio-economic status.
- Fighting for, securing, and exercising the franchise has played a critical role in African Americans' struggle to actualize the promise of freedom and equality in the United States.
- High rates of engagement and participation are a function of the long struggle for social, economic and political incorporation—embodied in the struggle for civil rights.
- Collective memory, defined as a shared sense of history, is an important driver of high rates of voter turnout and civic engagement.
- There is still a shared sense of civic duty among African Americans that is motivated by the sacrifices made to secure voting rights.

# INTRODUCTION

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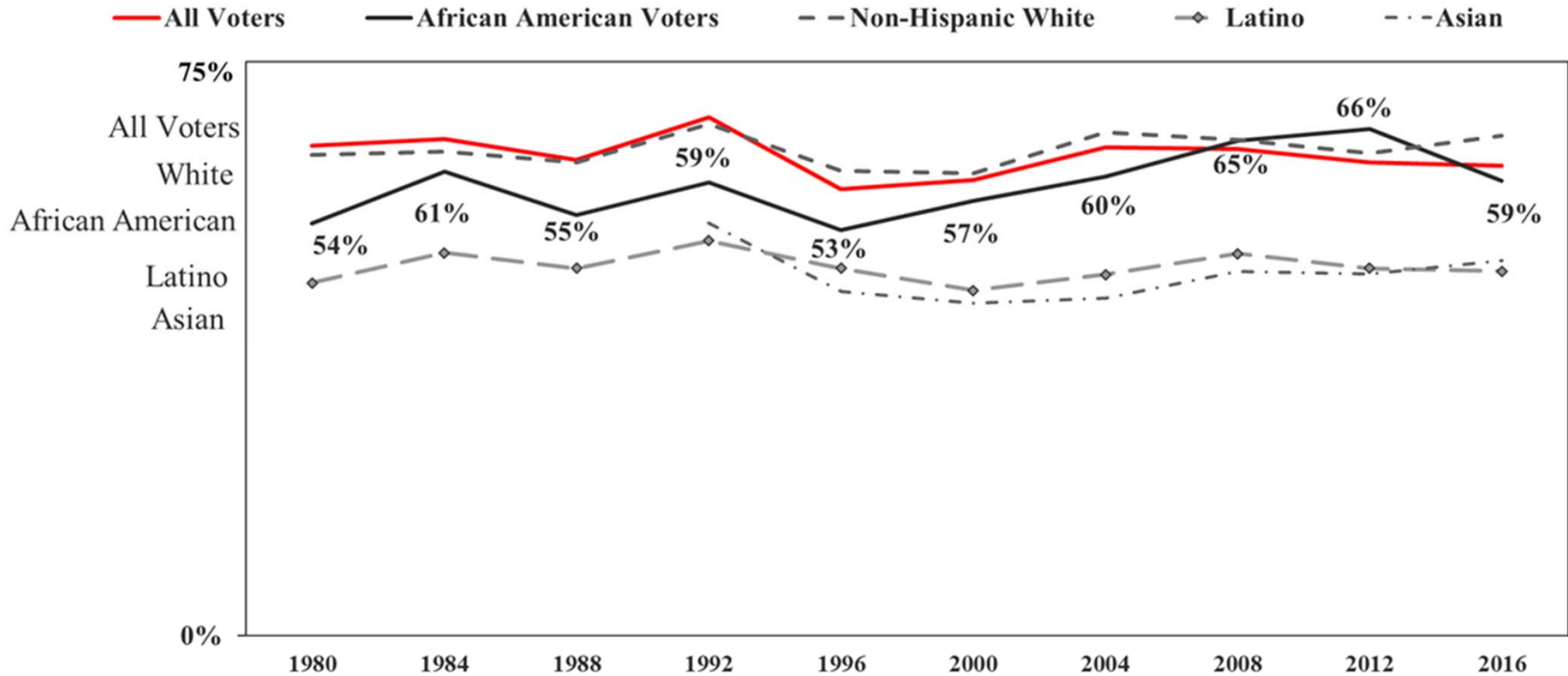
- The significance of the African American vote is often overlooked or understated by a variety of political stakeholders, including political candidates and the press.
- The Black population in California is more geographically dispersed than it was 20 years ago, which can make identifying and contacting Black voters more challenging.
- The Black population is also becoming more diverse for a variety of reasons, including immigration, shifting perceptions of Black identity, and generational turnover.
- Afro-Latinos, Afro-Caribbean, and African immigrants are an increasing percentage of the population.

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**II. ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION:  
CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN  
VOTERS**

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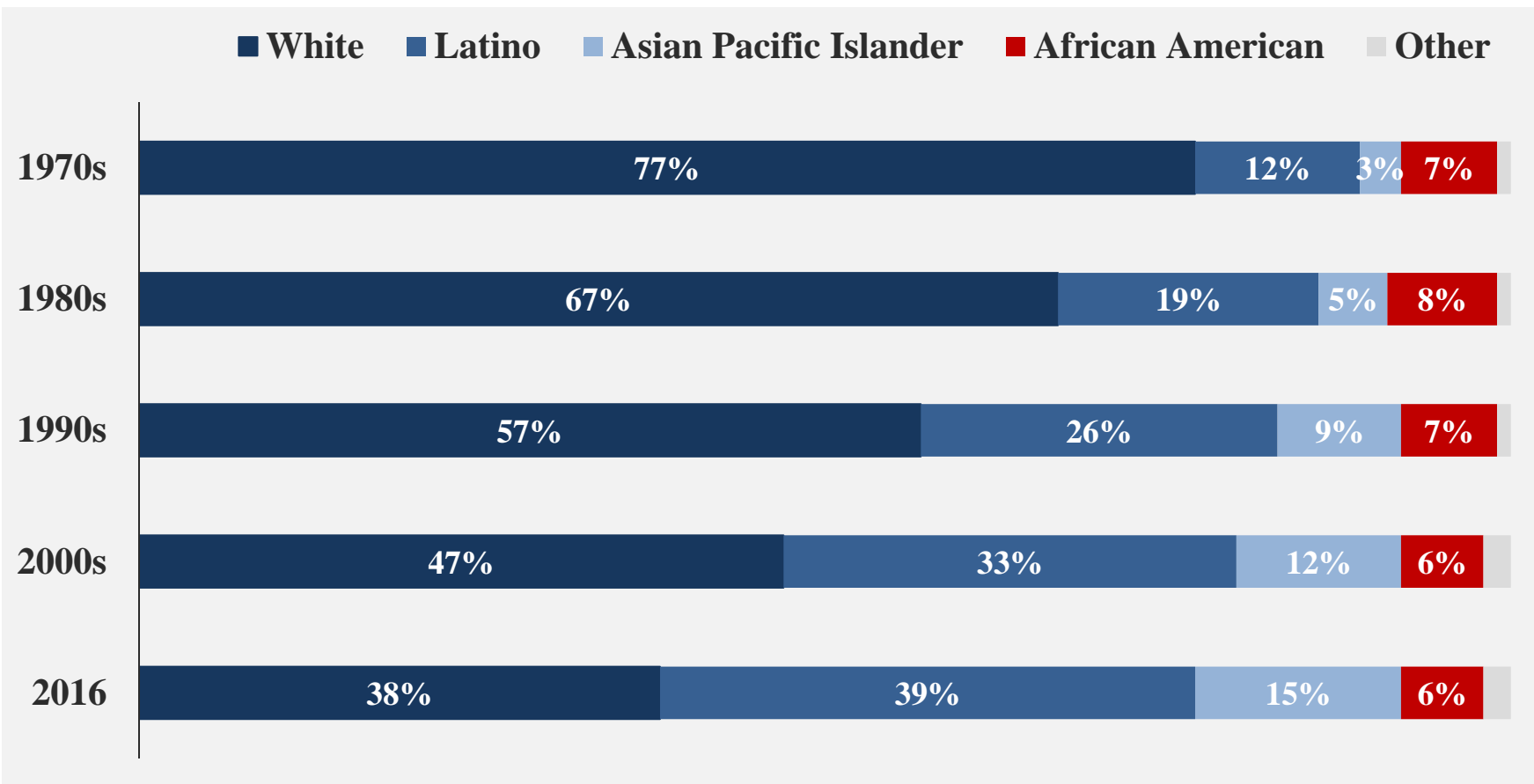
# NATIONAL TRENDS IN VOTER TURNOUT BY ETHNO-RACIAL SUBGROUP <sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Source: 2016 American Community Survey, Voting and Registration by Race, Hispanic Origin, Sex, and Age Groups.

# ETHNO-RACIAL PROFILES: CALIFORNIA RESIDENTS

## 1970-2016 <sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Source: California Department of Finance, 1970-2000; American Community Survey, 2016.



# CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN VOTERS

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- African Americans make up 12 percent of the American electorate. <sup>1</sup>
- African Americans make up approximately 6% of California's likely voters. <sup>2</sup>
- Although an estimated 4% of California's registered voters are African American, Africans vote at a higher rate than other subgroups. <sup>3</sup>
- 52% of California African American voters live in Los Angeles County. <sup>3</sup>

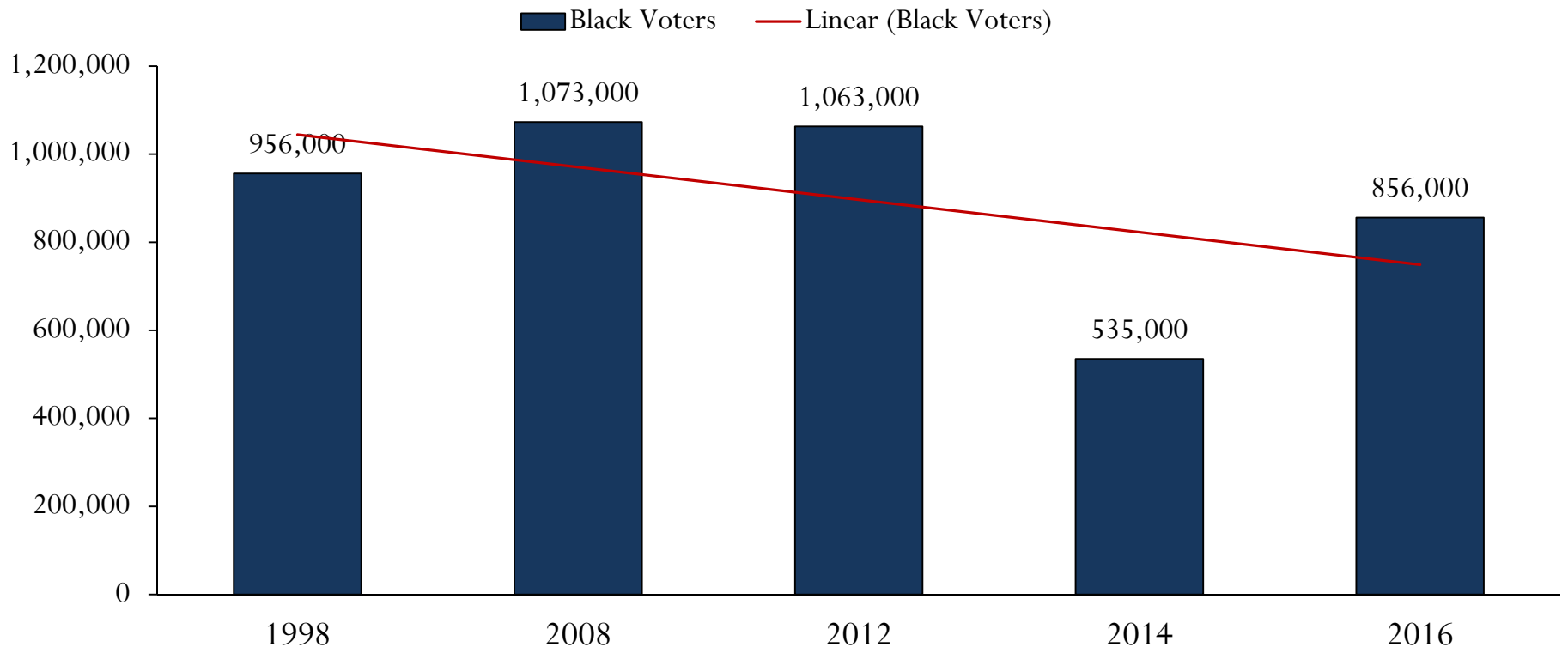
<sup>1</sup> Krogstad, Jens Manuel. 2016. "2016 Electorate Will Be the Most Diverse in U.S. History." Pew Research. <http://pewrsr.ch/208FXvE>

<sup>2</sup> Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Political Data, 2018.

# TRENDING: CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN VOTER TURNOUT

*Number of People Who Voted in Each General Election <sup>1</sup>*

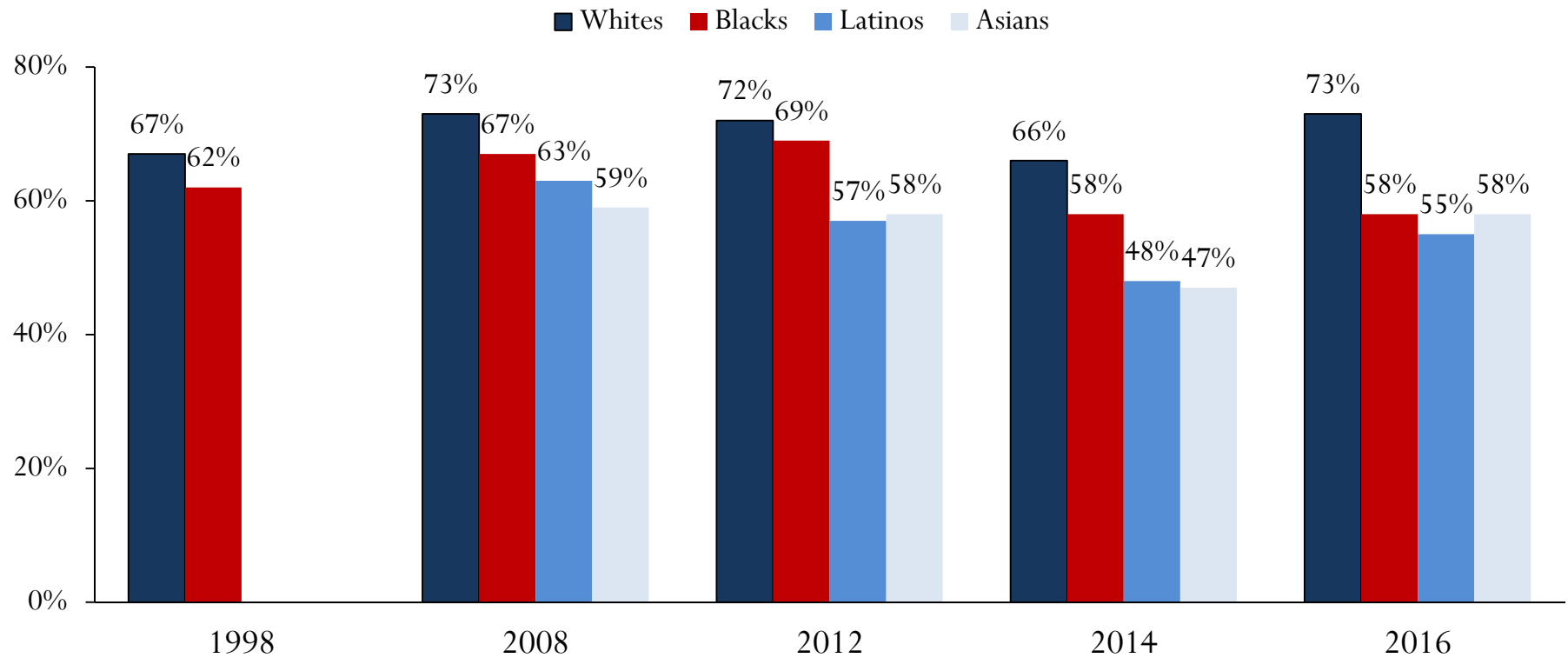


Percent of All Voters	1998	2008	2012	2014	2016
	7.7%	7.8%	7.9%	6.3%	5.9%

<sup>1</sup> Source: American Community Survey, 1998-2016.

# TRENDING: PERCENTAGE OF CITIZEN VOTING AGE POPULATION REGISTERED TO VOTE

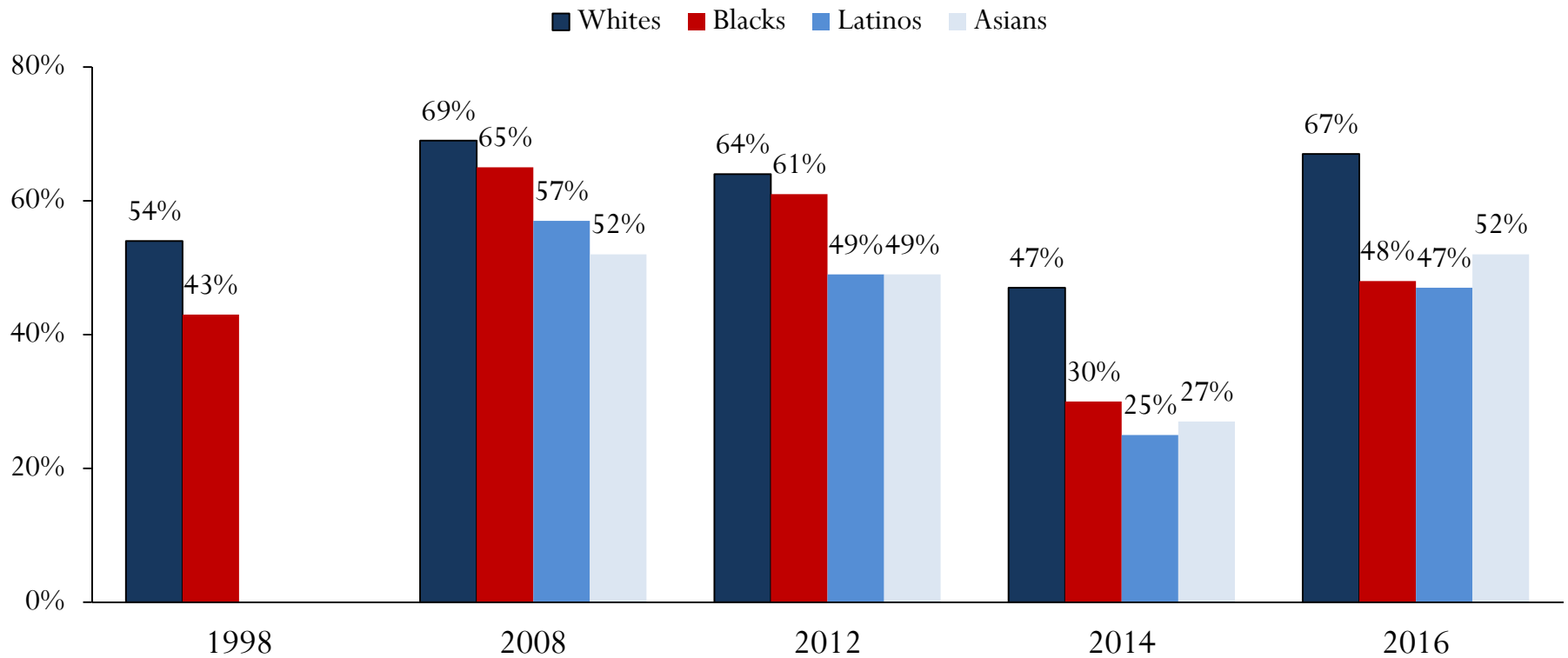
*Percentage Registered to Vote in Each Election Year <sup>1</sup>*



<sup>1</sup> Source: American Community Survey, 1998-2016.

# TRENDING: PERCENTAGE OF CITIZEN VOTING AGE POPULATION THAT VOTED

Percentage of the Population that Voted in Each Election Year <sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Source: American Community Survey, 1998-2016.

# CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN VOTERS

## DEMOGRAPHICS: GENDER

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- Survey data suggests that, among Black voters, women are registered at higher rates than men. <sup>1</sup>

<b>Gender</b>	<b>% of Black Voters</b>	<b>% of All Voters</b>
Female	58%	52%
Male	42%	48%

<sup>1</sup> Source: 2016 California African American Policy Priorities Survey (CAAPPS).

# CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN VOTERS

## DEMOGRAPHICS: AGE

- The age distribution of Black voters is comparable to the distribution of all voters statewide. <sup>1</sup>

Age Bracket	% of Black Voters	% of All Voters
18-24	5%	8%
25-34	19%	18%
35-44	18%	16%
45-54	18%	16%
55-64	19%	18%
65+	21%	24%

<sup>1</sup> Source: Political Data, 2018.

# CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN VOTERS

## DEMOGRAPHICS: PARTISANSHIP

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- Nearly 7 in 10 Black voters are registered as Democrats.<sup>1</sup>

<b>Party Affiliation</b>	<b>% of Black Voters</b>	<b>% of All Voters</b>
Democrats	69%	45%
Republicans	8%	25%
Independents	23%	30%

<sup>1</sup> Source: Political Data, 2018.

# CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN VOTERS

## DEMOGRAPHICS: GEOGRAPHY

- Black voters are concentrated in Los Angeles County. <sup>1</sup>

County	% of Black Voters	% of All Voters
Los Angeles County	52%	27%
Alameda/Contra Costa/Solano	26%	8%
San Bernardino/Riverside	8%	10%
Sacramento	5%	4%
San Diego	5%	9%
Fresno/Kern/San Joaquin	4%	6%

<sup>1</sup> Source: Statewide Information System, 2018.



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**III. THE 2016 CALIFORNIA AFRICAN  
AMERICAN POLICY PRIORITIES  
SURVEY (CAAPPS)**

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# CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION

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- Polling among African Americans reveals high degrees of consensus on key issues, but the diversity of opinion within the population is often discounted and underexplored.
- Detailed examinations of Black public opinion reveal ideological diversity, as well as notable differences in opinion across age, socio-economic status, gender, and religiosity.
- However, surveys focusing on African American voters' policy preferences are rare.
- Surveys of the general population do not often include sufficient interviews to provide reliable data on African American public opinion.

# THE 2016 CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN POLICY PRIORITIES SURVEY

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- The 2016 California African American Policy Priorities Survey (CAAPPS) is one of the only publicly available Statewide surveys of the policy preferences of California's Black voters.
- CAAPPS was sponsored and funded by the African American Voter Representation, Education, and Participation Project (AAVREP).
- 800 telephone interviews were conducted throughout California with likely Black voters.
- Interviews conducted May 5-17, 2016. Voters were reached on landlines (63%) and cellular phones (37%).
- The margin of sampling error is  $\pm 3.5\%$ .
- Survey results were supplemented with statewide focus groups in Los Angeles, Riverside, San Diego, Oakland, and Sacramento, conducted in July 2016.

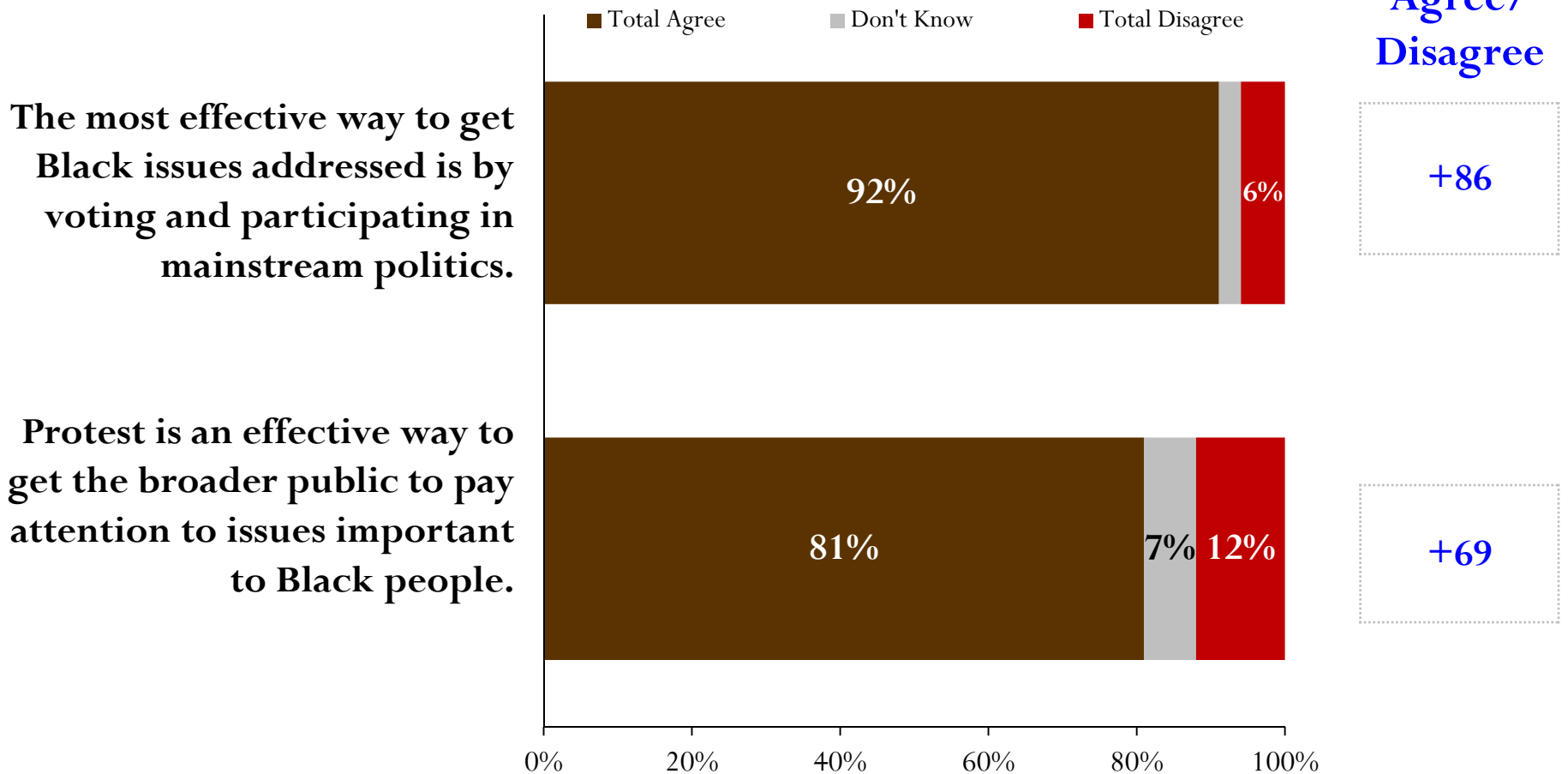
# KEY FINDINGS OF THE CAAPP SURVEY

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- Keeping Trump from getting elected was a key mobilizer in the 2016 November election.
  - ❑ 48% of voters said they were extremely motivated to turnout to elect Hillary Clinton as President.
  - ❑ 66% were extremely motivated to turnout to vote to keep Donald Trump from getting elected.
- There was, however, a substantial enthusiasm gap between millennials and other generational cohorts.
  - ❑ 33% of millennials said they were extremely motivated to elect Hillary Clinton as President, compared to 52% of older voters.
  - ❑ 60% of millennials were extremely motivated to turnout to keep Donald Trump from getting elected, compared to 67% of older voters.
- All voters across age-cohorts had a strong desire to vote *for* social change – not just against Trump.

# BLACK VOTERS FIND VALUE IN VOTING AS WELL AS PROTEST

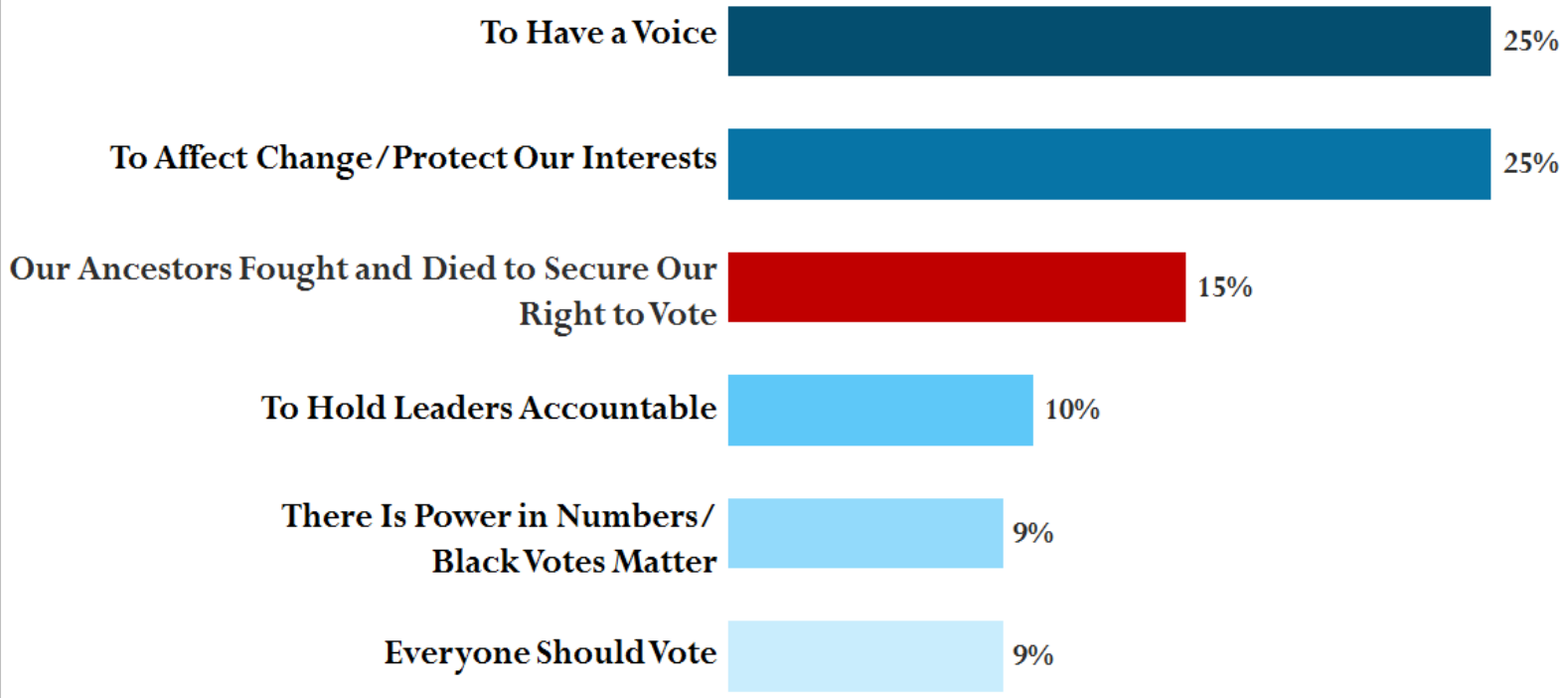
**Question:** Now I would like to read a list of different statements. After you hear each one, please tell me if you generally agree or disagree with that statement. <sup>1</sup>:



<sup>1</sup> Source: 2016 CAAPPS. Split sampled. Percentages 5% or below not labeled.

# AFRICAN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPORTANCE OF VOTING <sup>1</sup>

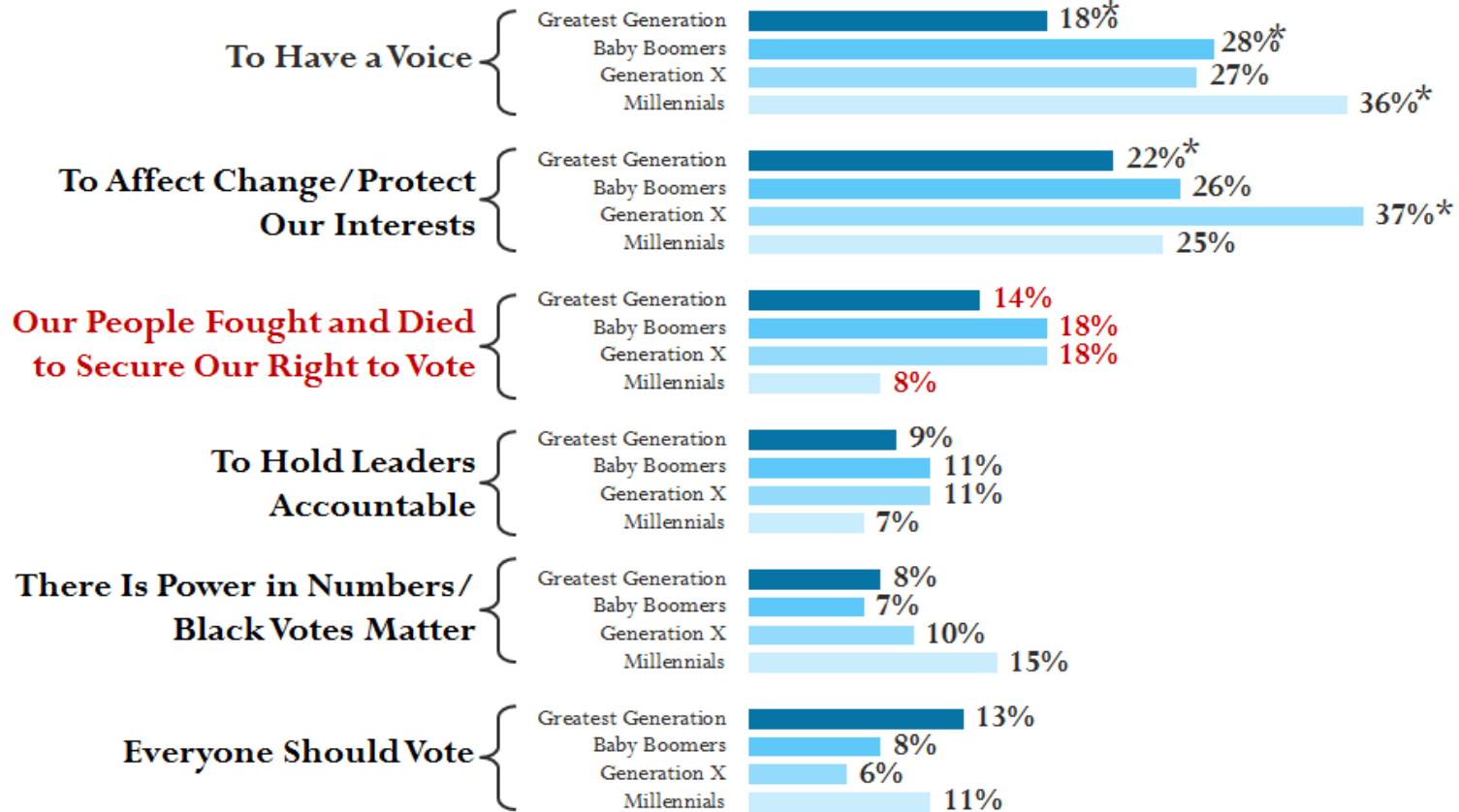
Survey Question: Can you share with me the most important reason why you believe it is [important for black people to vote in every election]? *(Open-End; Verbatim Responses Coded; Multiple Responses Allowed; Only Top Responses Shown)*



<sup>1</sup> Source: 2016 CAAPPS.

# AFRICAN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES VARY SOMEWHAT BY AGE <sup>1</sup>

How important do you believe it is for black people to vote in every election? [Extremely, Very, Somewhat, Not Too, Not at All Important]? Can you share with me why...



\*  $p < .01$

<sup>1</sup> Source: 2016 CAAPPS.

# FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS UNDERScored THE IMPORTANCE OF THE VOTE

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**LOS ANGELES FEMALE MILLENNIAL VOTER:** Voting in my household is very important. I was in the sixth grade in 2008 when Obama was elected, so my mother took me down there to the polls to go vote with her. That experience was really eye opening for me, because I know how important it is to vote, because you want your voice to be heard. **If you don't vote and then you complain about what happens, it's like, "Well, did you do your part?"**

**SAN DIEGO MALE GENERATION X VOTER:** My father used to make me and my little brother watch KPBS, like "Keep Your Eyes On The Prize" as kids and showing the struggles and strife that black people had to go through in order just to be considered a human being in this country....showing Emmett Till, the story of Emmett Till and all that type of stuff, that always just resonated in my mind. **My people died in order for me to vote and have this type of responsibility.** I always feel like, not that I'm just obligated, but I'm representing them, too, in a way.

**SACRAMENTO FEMALE BABY BOOMER VOTER:** ...So many people gave their lives to vote. I don't ever want to forget that. **I don't ever want to ever do anything to dishonor the people that made the ultimate sacrifice,** that is to give your life...

<sup>1</sup> Source: 2016 CAAPPS.



# THE 2016 NATIONAL PUBLIC DISCOURSE: BLACK LIVES MATTER AND ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION <sup>1</sup>

*“Before, we fought to have our right to vote, but now, we need to fight to have our right to vote mean something...”*

Black Americans have a chance right now collectively to say to the  
Democrats:

‘Hey, if you don’t give us criminal justice reform, we’ll give the country to Donald Trump.’ That’ll send the Democrats into a frenzy.

Black lives will matter then, I guarantee you.”

–Hawk Newsome, #Iaintvotingtillblacklivesmatter

<sup>1</sup> Source: “Despite Black Lives Matter, Young Black Americans Aren’t Voting in Higher Numbers. *Washington Post*, May 14, 2016.

# THE 2016 NATIONAL PUBLIC DISCOURSE: BLACK LIVES MATTER AND ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION <sup>1</sup>

**“Voting is definitely one way  
[of advancing the interests of African Americans],  
and *I wouldn’t insult my ancestors* by telling people they shouldn’t vote,  
but there are other ways of re-imagining and restructuring the world,  
and that lies in organizing our communities.”**

—Ashley Williams, Black Lives Matter Activist

<sup>1</sup> Source: “Despite Black Lives Matter, Young Black Americans Aren’t Voting in Higher Numbers.” *Washington Post*, May 14, 2016.

# THE 2016 NATIONAL PUBLIC DISCOURSE: BLACK LIVES MATTER AND ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION <sup>1</sup>

**“You have to have a strategy...not just hashtags...**

**passion is vital, but you’ve got to have a strategy.**

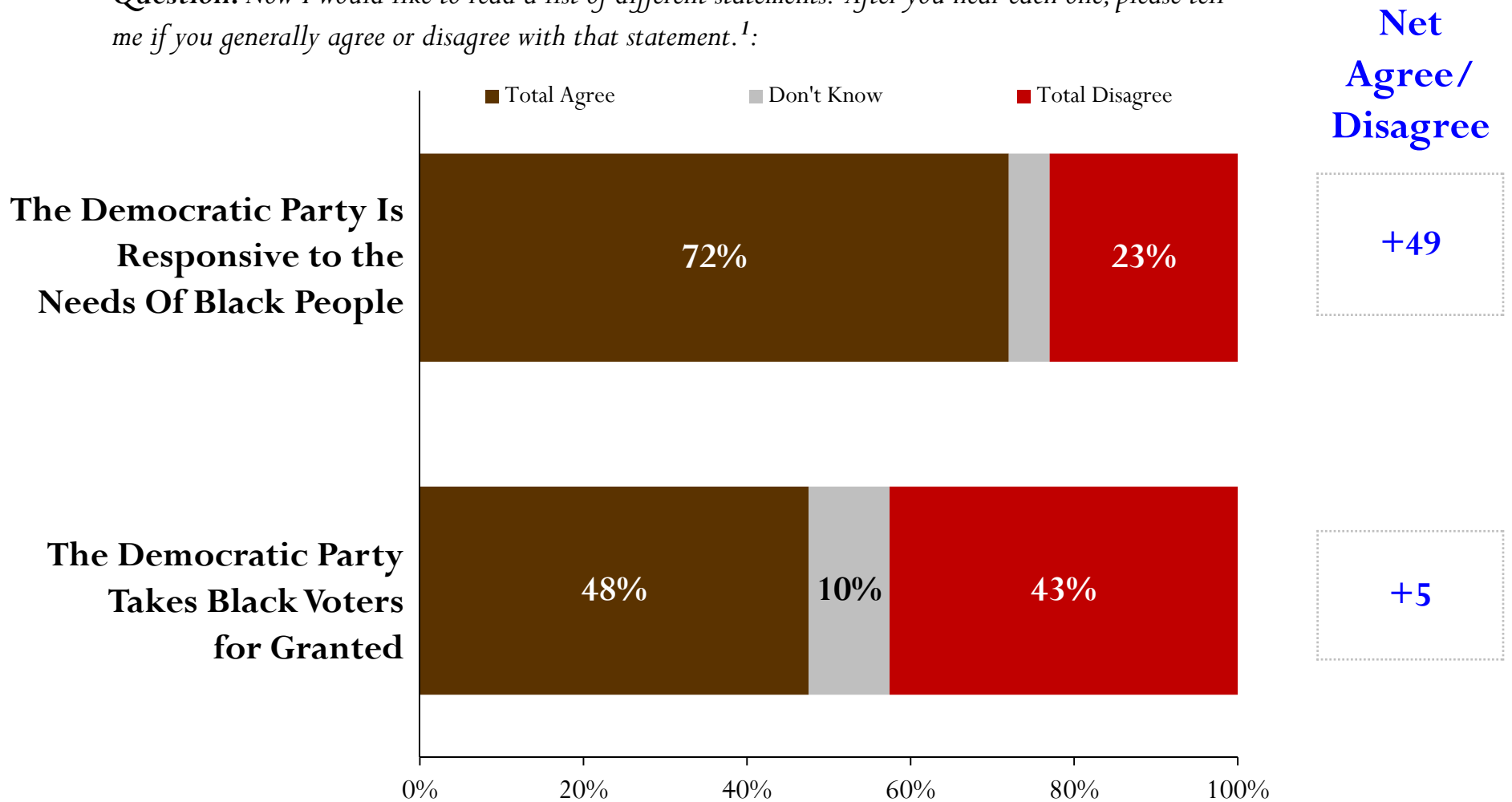
**And, your plan better include voting, not just some of the time,  
but all the time.”**

–President Barack Obama, Howard University Commencement Address

<sup>1</sup> Source: “Despite Black Lives Matter, Young Black Americans Aren’t Voting in Higher Numbers. *Washington Post*, May 14, 2016.

# CALIFORNIA'S BLACK VOTERS FEEL THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY IS RESPONSIVE—YET MANY FEEL TAKEN FOR GRANTED

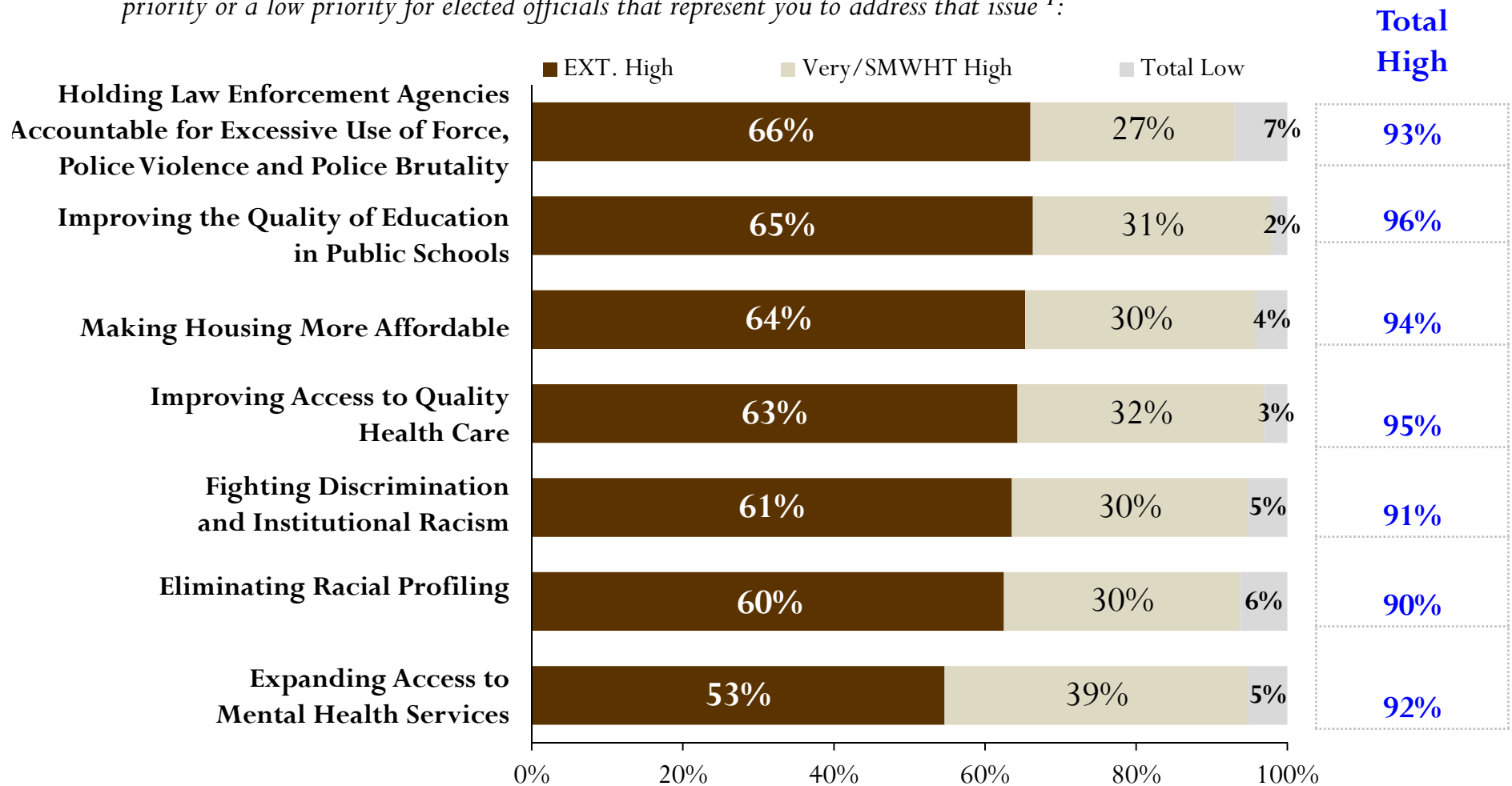
*Question: Now I would like to read a list of different statements. After you hear each one, please tell me if you generally agree or disagree with that statement.<sup>1</sup>:*



<sup>1</sup> Source: 2016 CAAPPS. Split sampled. Percentages 5% or below not labeled.

# CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC EDUCATION ARE AMONG THE HIGHEST POLICY PRIORITIES

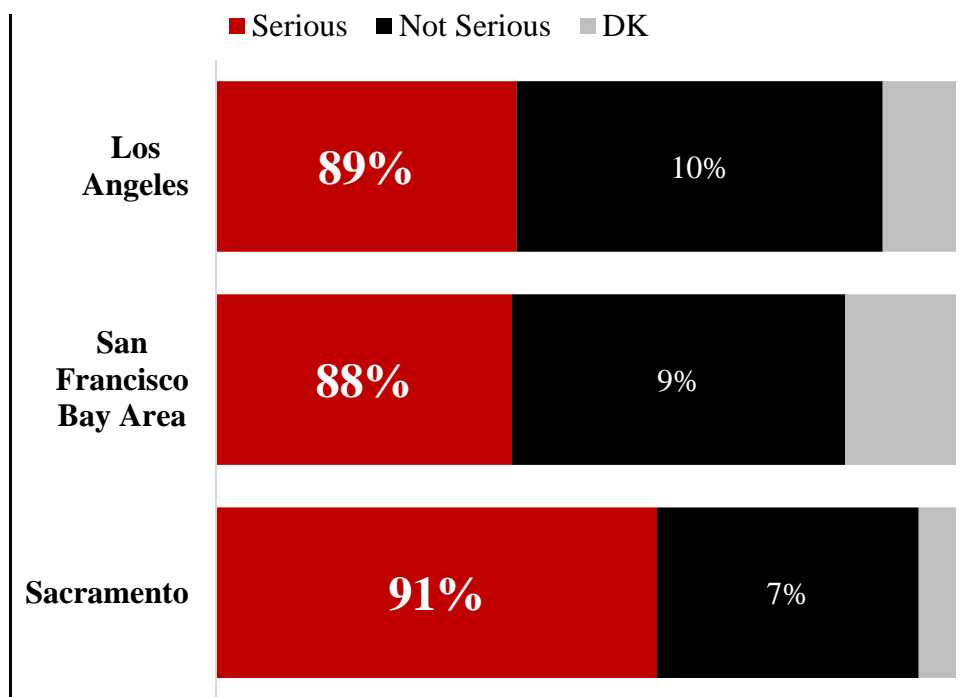
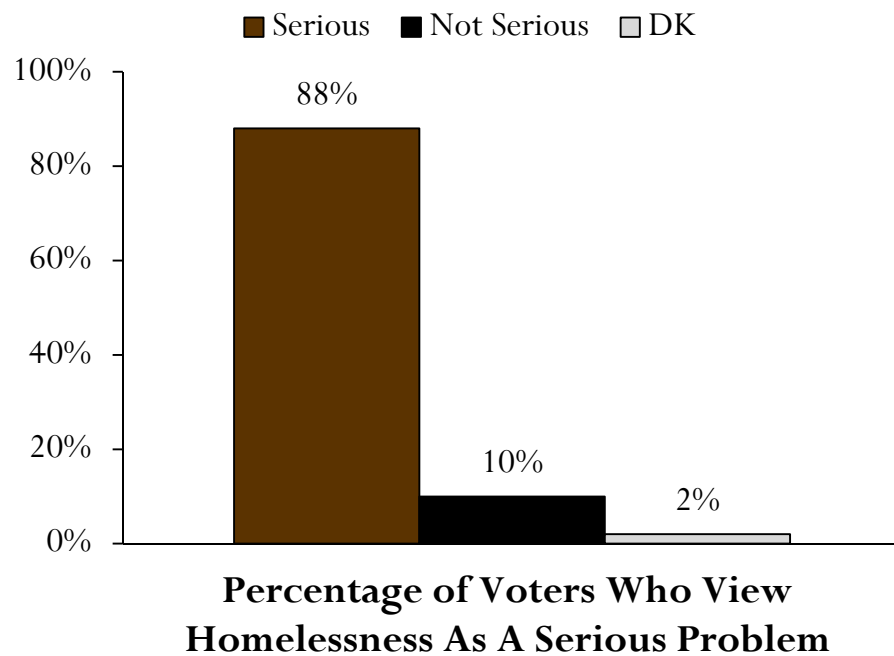
*Q: Next, I'd like to read you a list of issues. After you hear each one, please tell me whether you consider it to be a high priority or a low priority for elected officials that represent you to address that issue <sup>1</sup>:*



<sup>1</sup> Source: 2016 CAAPPS. Ranked by extremely high.

# HOMELESSNESS IS IDENTIFIED AS A SERIOUS PROBLEM BY BLACK VOTERS STATEWIDE

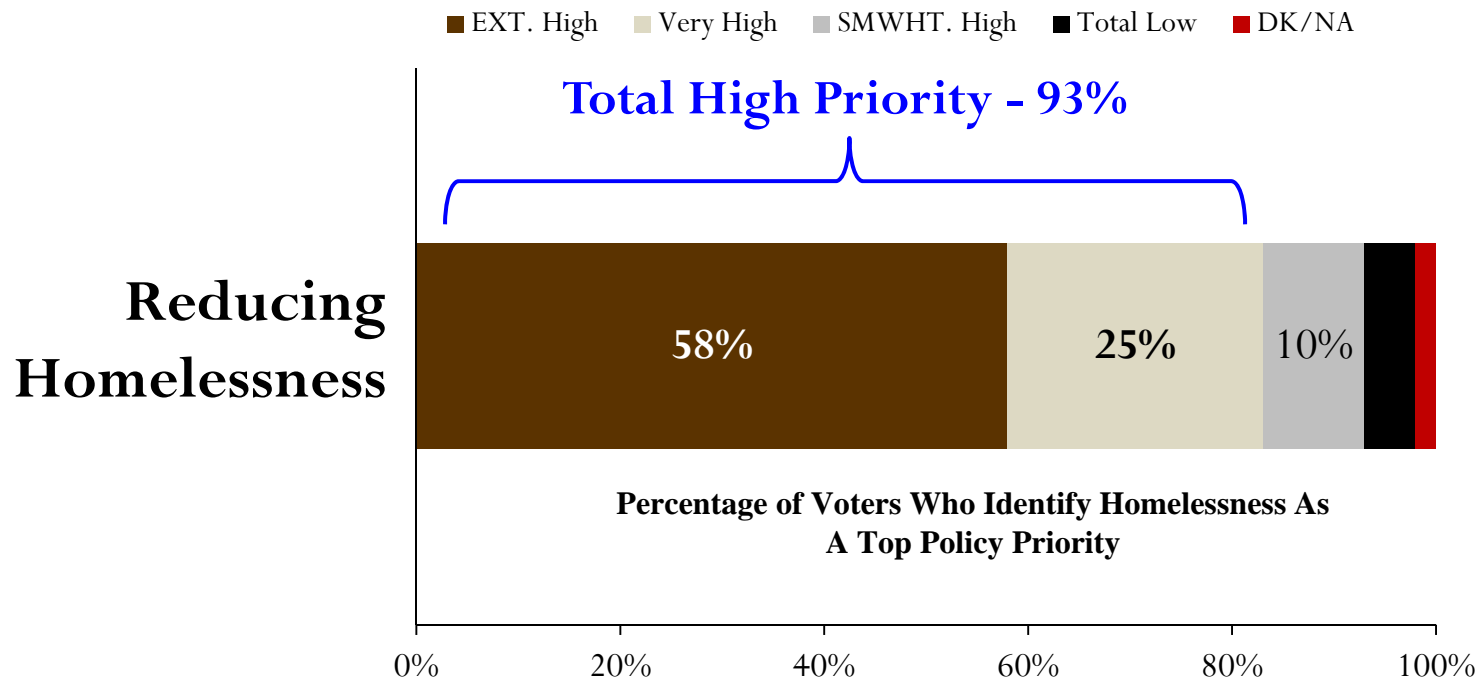
*Q: Now, I would like to ask you a follow-up question about one of the issues I just mentioned to you. Thinking about the region of California in which you live, how serious of a problem is homelessness? Would you say it is a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not that serious of a problem, or not a serious problem at all? <sup>1</sup>*



<sup>1</sup> Source: 2016 CAAPPS.

# HOMELESSNESS IS ALSO A TOP POLICY PRIORITY

*Q: Next, I'd like to read you a list of issues. After you hear each one, please tell me whether you consider it to be a high priority or a low priority for elected officials that represent you to address that issue...Reducing homelessness:<sup>1</sup>*



<sup>1</sup> Source: 2016 CAAPPS. Split sampled. Percentages 5% or below not labeled.

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**IV. LOOKING TOWARD THE  
NOVEMBER 2018 GENERAL ELECTION**

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# LOOKING TOWARD THE NOVEMBER 2018 GENERAL ELECTION

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- Large scale mobilization efforts against President Donald Trump have likely narrowed the generational gap in enthusiasm around electoral participation that existed in 2016.
- It remains unclear, however, whether political engagement in protests will translate into high rates of voter participation in a non-presidential election year.
- The extent to which California Gubernatorial candidates highlight African American policy priorities may play a critical role.
- African American public opinion remains understudied in statewide research on public attitudes.
- Political parties, news outlets, and policy think tanks must be urged to take a closer look at African American attitudes and opinions in order to be responsive to the priorities of this important constituency.

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

**Shakari Byerly**

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Shakari@evitarus.com

www.evitarus.com



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