

Racial disparities persist in who has a say in California politics, study shows

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When it comes to political power in California, a study of political participation shows whites at the top, even though they no longer are the state's largest racial/ethnic group. Credit: Advancement Project California

A report released recently by Advancement Project California and co-

authored by a UC Berkeley professor finds that whites have the most power and influence in terms of who has a say in California politics, while Latinos and Asian Americans have the least, despite comprising the majority of the state's population.

Researchers looked at various forms of 2016 political participation, such as contacting [public officials](#), signing petitions and more. Their work included disaggregated data for Asian Americans and specifically for Pacific Islanders, as well as for millennials, along with an analysis of their political participation.

The [report](#), "[Unequal Voices Part II: Who Speaks for California?](#)" was prepared by UC Berkeley's Lisa García Bedolla, a Chancellor's Professor of education and of political science who is a principal and co-founder of the American Majority Project Research Institute, and Karthick Ramakrishnan, a professor and associate dean of UC Riverside's School of Public Policy.

Key findings include:

- Whites had the highest rate of participation in most categories, including contacting public officials, contributing to campaigns and petition signing.
- Whites are twice as likely as Latinos and Asian Americans to contact public officials. Whites are more than five times as likely as Cambodian and Hmong Americans to do so.
- Latinos and Asian Americans combined are a majority of California's resident population and a near-majority of the adult population, but they account for only a quarter or a third of the participating [population](#) in many political activities.
- Among Asian American communities, Indian Americans tend to participate at higher rates, while Hmong and Korean Americans tend to participate at lower rates.

- Language barriers and a lack of confidence in ability to understand the political process play a significant role in the low participation rates of Latinos and Asian Americans.

The report is the second in a two-part series by Advancement Project California. In addition to its findings, the report notes bright spots in the political participation picture and suggests structural changes to increase diversity in the state's [political participation](#).



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Provided by University of California - Berkeley

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