



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on May 13, 2013

Census Bureau Surprises in 2012 Presidential Election Final Report

The Census Bureau's [final report](#) on the 2012 presidential election which was just published last week contained enough surprising information to draw delight from liberals and dire warnings from conservatives. Although the total voter participation rate declined only slightly between 2008 and 2012, from 63.6 percent to 61.8 percent, the voting rate by blacks exceeded the voting rate by whites for the first time since the bureau started reporting presidential election results in 1996. Another surprising note: The actual number of white voters declined for the first time, from 100 million to 98 million.



The *Washington Post* [said](#) the report “produced another demographic milestone” in how changing voting patterns among whites, blacks, Asians, and Hispanics are impacting presidential elections and what the implications are for future elections between the Democratic and Republican parties. The combination of higher turnouts among Hispanics and blacks and reduced turnout by whites was sufficient to reelect the president in 2012.

In 2012 white voters represented 73.7 percent of the total vote while blacks and Hispanics represented almost 22 percent. In 1996 white voters represented 82.5 percent of the total vote while blacks and Hispanics combined represented just over 15 percent. Even though just 39 percent of whites [voted for the incumbent in 2012](#), 71 percent of Hispanic voters and 93 percent of black voters did, more than enough to give President Obama a decisive victory over his Republican rival, Mitt Romney. The participation rate by blacks surprised Brookings Institution demographer William Frey, who said: “They persevered. This [was] an important time for them. They were very much responsible for reelecting Barack Obama.”

Conservative commentator Patrick Buchanan, a candidate for the Republican Party's nomination for president in 1992 and 1996, [noted with distress](#) the decrease in the number of whites who voted in 2012:

America's white majority, which accounts for nine in 10 of all Republican votes in presidential elections, is not only shrinking as a share of the electorate, but it is declining in numbers, as well...

This is the crisis of the Grand Old Party.

Buchanan thinks the crisis is likely to continue, especially if anything like the current immigration bill being considered in Washington passes. That bill would create a “pathway to citizenship” for between 11 and 12 million illegal immigrants, most of whom are likely to vote Democratic. With the white vote shrinking both in numbers and in voter participation, Buchanan is not optimistic about the future for the Republican Party.



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Looking closely at the Census Bureau's report, however, reveals some cause for optimism. Between the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections, the voting cohort between ages 18 to 24 increased by eight full percentage points but in 2012 that same cohort expressed its dissatisfaction with either candidate by staying away from the polls in large numbers, declining by nearly seven percent — a change in just one election cycle of nearly 15 percentage points. And even in its reveling over the report, the *Post* also noted that without a black Democrat running for office in 2016, there is serious question about whether those black voter participation rates can be sustained.

If there is any kind of conservative pushback against the Obama administration's blatantly extremist policies in the midterm elections in 2014 and if the Republicans can mount a significant challenge to the Democratic nominee in 2016, that election just might surprise both the writers at the *Washington Post* and Buchanan.

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