



DATA *for* SOCIAL GOOD

Addressing the needs of a diverse electorate.

Let's Talk Politics: How We Can Transform Our Democracy



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League of Women Voters

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What's the Problem?

Overall disengagement

Elections are determined by who sits out more than who is engaged.

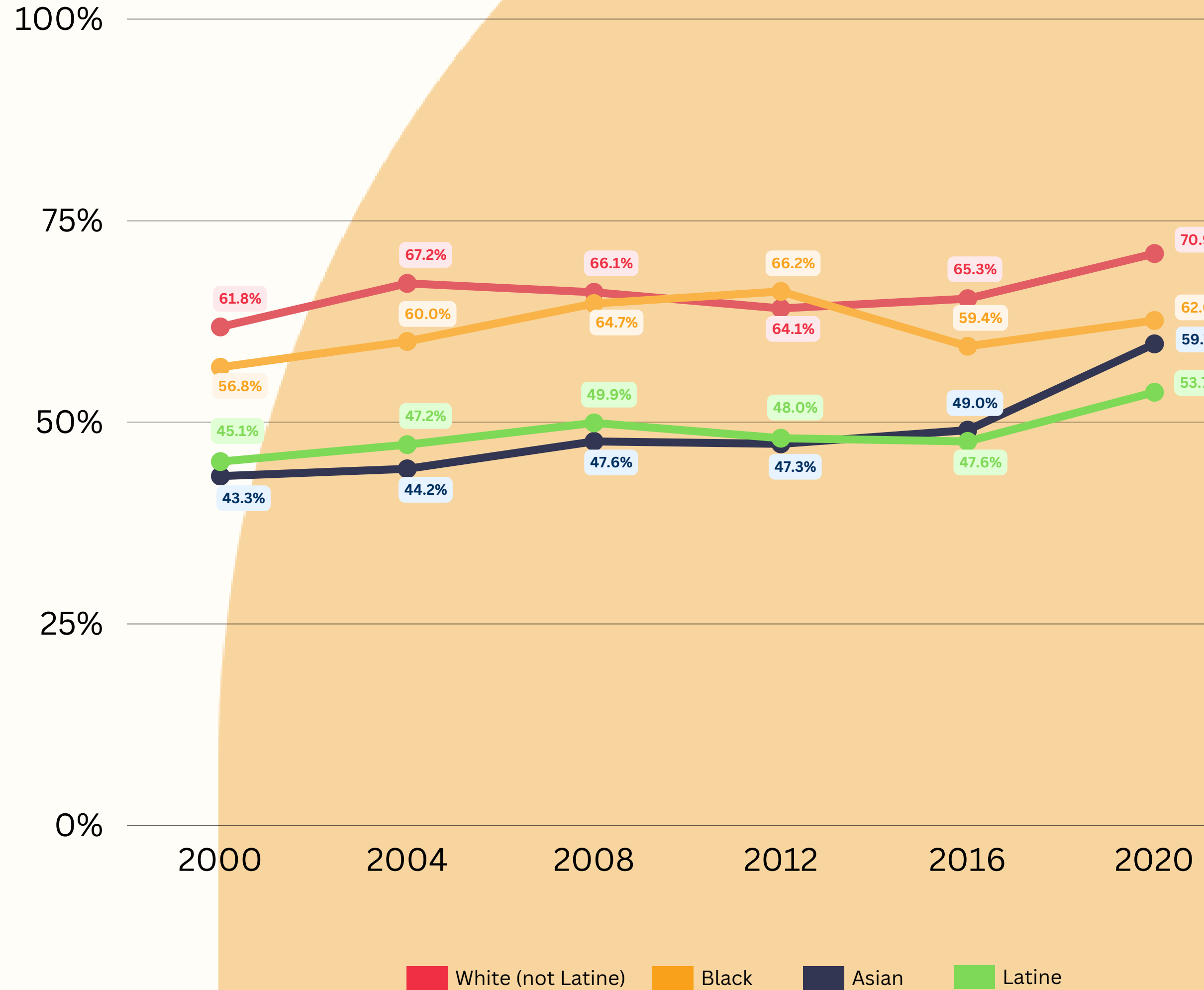


2022: Record Midterm Turnout (highest in 20 years)

- 48% of eligible voters did not vote
- 30% of eligible voters did not register
- Most new registrants are no party preference (NPP)
- Significant racial differences in registration and turnout
- Youth of color least likely to vote

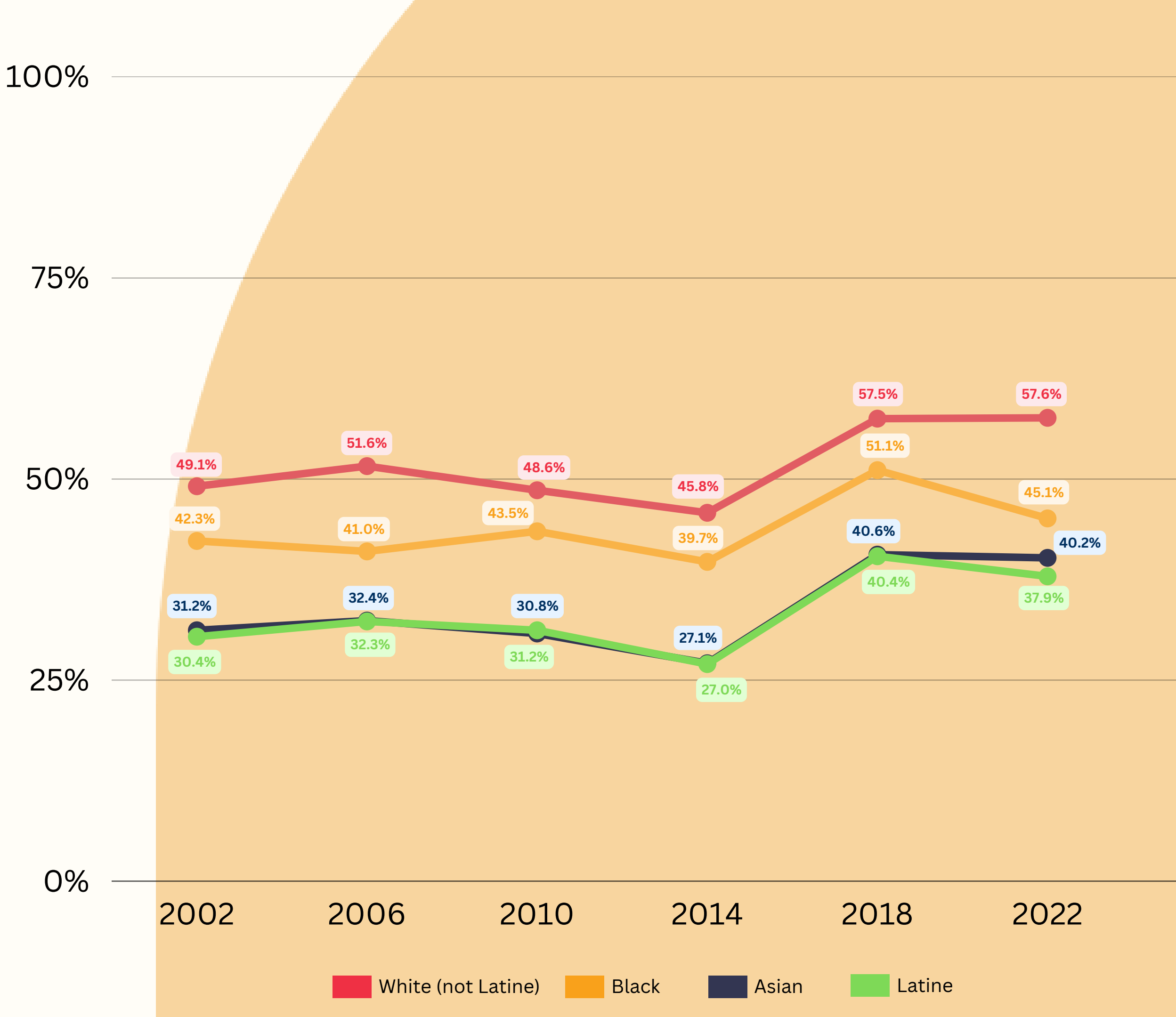
Presidential Turnout, 2000-2020

Turnout among Eligible Voters in the United States



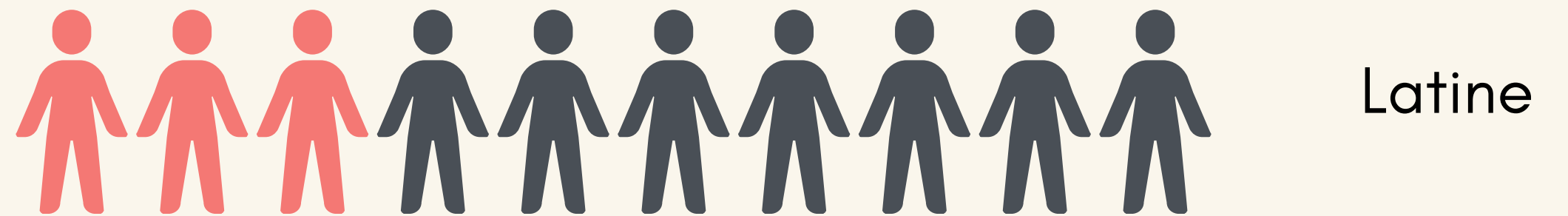
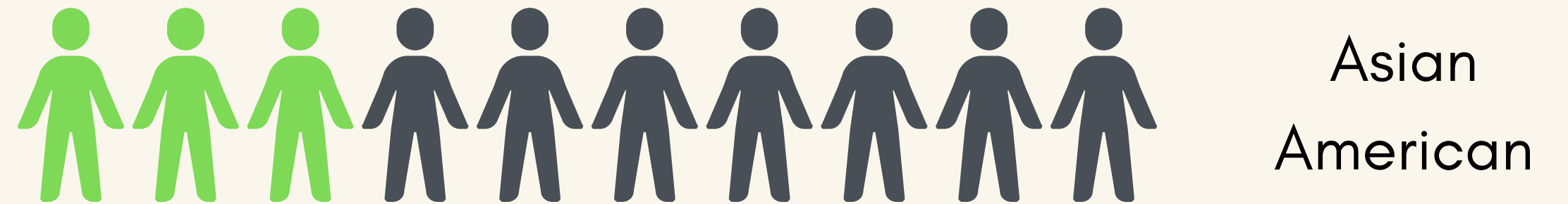
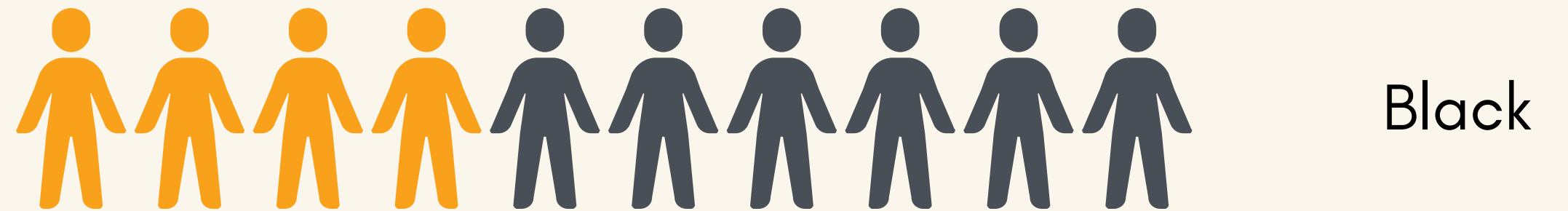
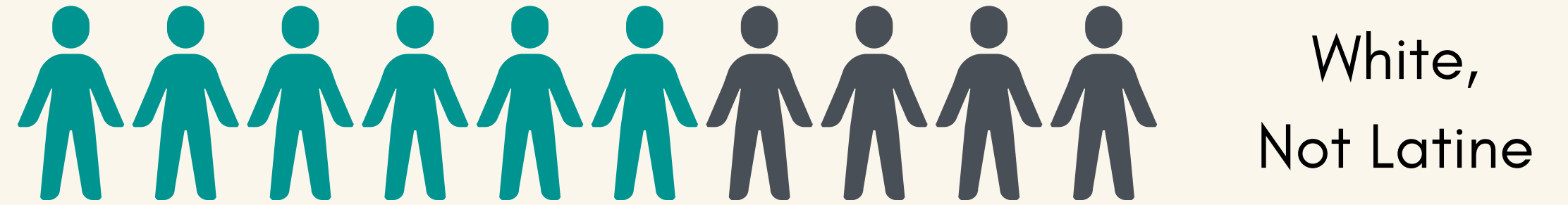
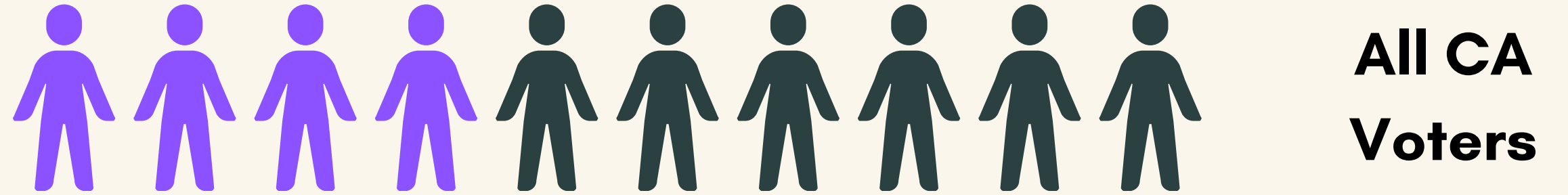
Midterm Turnout, 2002-2022

Turnout among Eligible Voters in the United States



Who is Left Out?

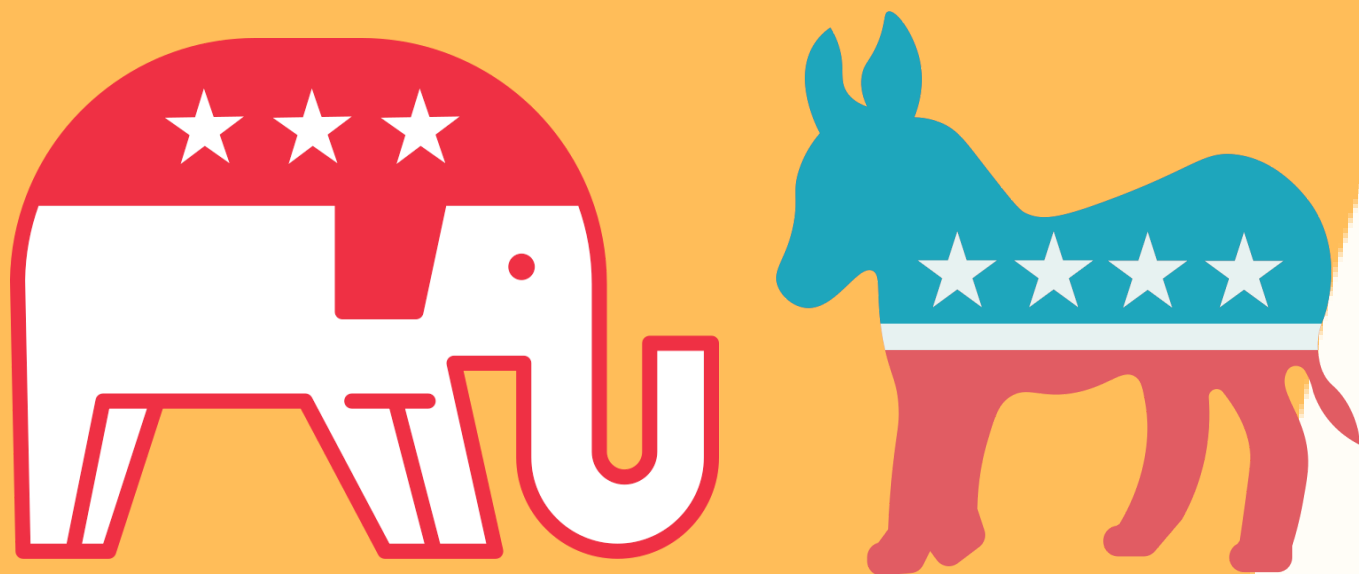
2022 voter turnout
among eligible voters
in California,
by Race
(nonvoters in gray)



Why is this the Case?

Lack of Mobilization

Typical campaign approaches only exacerbate this problem



Common campaign practices

- "Win number" = 50.1%; denominator doesn't matter
- Likely voter strategy
- Focus on TV and digital
- One-size-fits all approach
- Little outreach to non-party registrants

Guiding Principles

- 1 Not all voters are the same, even if they share life experiences and group membership
- 2 Race matters insofar as it can lead to a set of shared experiences/social position.
- 3 Voters don't come to an election blank. Messages are interpreted through past experiences.
- 4 Education and developing counter narratives are key to building power



The Landscape



When elections are framed around the things voters of color care about, they vote.

- POC voters are focused on the economy and education
- Racism/social justice very important to younger POC
- Making voting easier worked for many; need to consider what that means now
- POC generally frustrated with politicians and politics, so lead with issues

Voters Need Onboarding

Many voters don't know what Congress or their state legislature does. Campaigns need to teach them how those institutions/elected officials affect what they care most about.



Voters Need Help Voting

Providing voters with information about the voting process itself is important, especially for younger voters of color. Don't assume people know how to vote and aren't intimidated by it.





Anger Does Not Mobilize People Who Already Feel They Don't Have Power/People in Power Don't Listen to Them

Messages that focus on bad actors, people taking your power away (e.g., voter suppression), and other negative frames are not the way to mobilize voters of color.

Messages that focus on collective power, influence, and "people like me" winning are much more effective.

Digital Outreach



Remains Largely Symbolic

Most campaigns appeal to racial group connections but don't speak to why that connection matters

- Linked fate found to be key to Latinx support for Democrats (despite Trump approval)
- Feelings of racial solidarity must be rooted in a person/community's substantive needs
- Appeals must be relevant to current realities, rooted in actual context
- Symbolism without a connection to action and impact not likely to be effective

Research indicates that messages that resonate with disengaged voters have these elements



Be rooted in lived experience



Speak to shared values



Name the harm in values terms



Make people feel like agents in their own lives



Describe a solution, not just critique current actions

People are Frustrated

Research shows the importance of being relational, not transactional

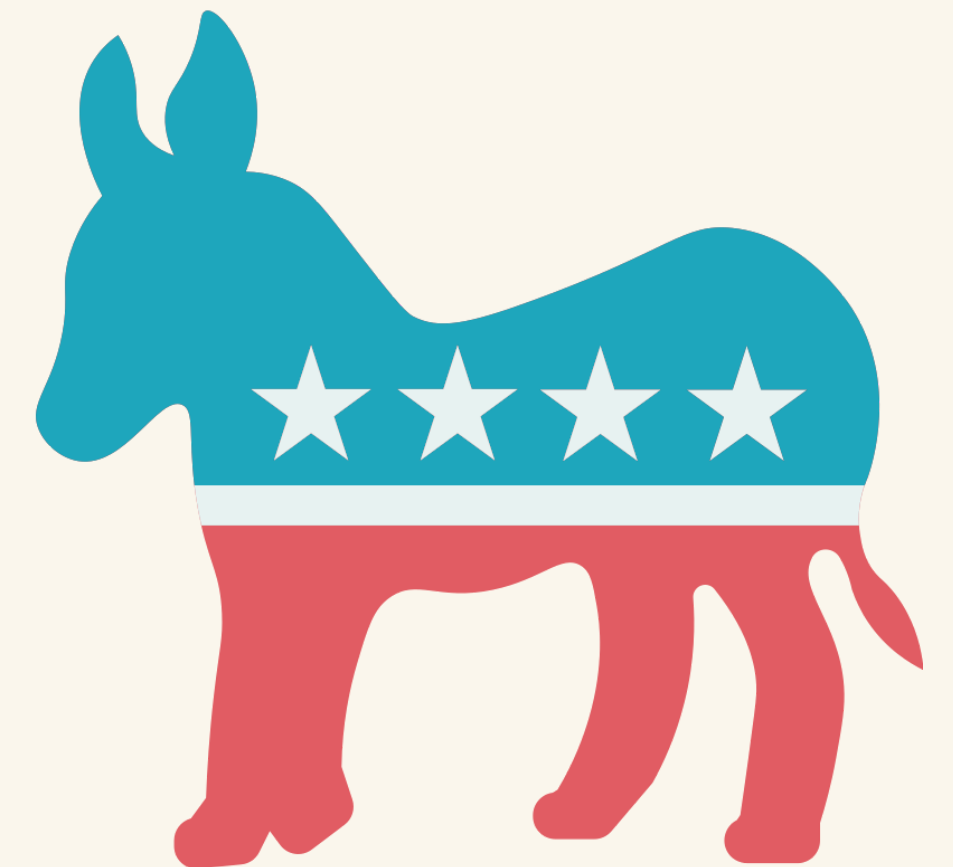
Outreach should:

- Include active listening
- Reinforce the value of voting (this may not be obvious for voters)
- Make impact concrete and easily understood
- Don't encourage cynicism
- Build trust



Political Take Homes

- Non-voters often don't think either party cares about their needs.
 - Not clear who are the "good guys" and who are the "bad guys"
 - Respondents seemed disgusted with the political system generally
- Want things to be fixed and see real change in the day-to-day
 - Who does it does not matter
 - Leaves the door open for charismatic/populist leaders
- Joe Biden is not popular
 - At best they are neutral, at worst he's seen as fake/scripted



Final Conclusions

- Many voters of color feel powerless and ignored
- Pandemic has eroded people's sense of security and community
- Voters of color generally unaware of who does what
- They're not hopeful about politicians' understanding of them or their ability to make their lives better
- Messages that reinforce cynicism or distrust will only make these voters more disaffected
- Need to talk about politics in ways that engage and uplift, fostering hope, trust, and feelings of agency

