

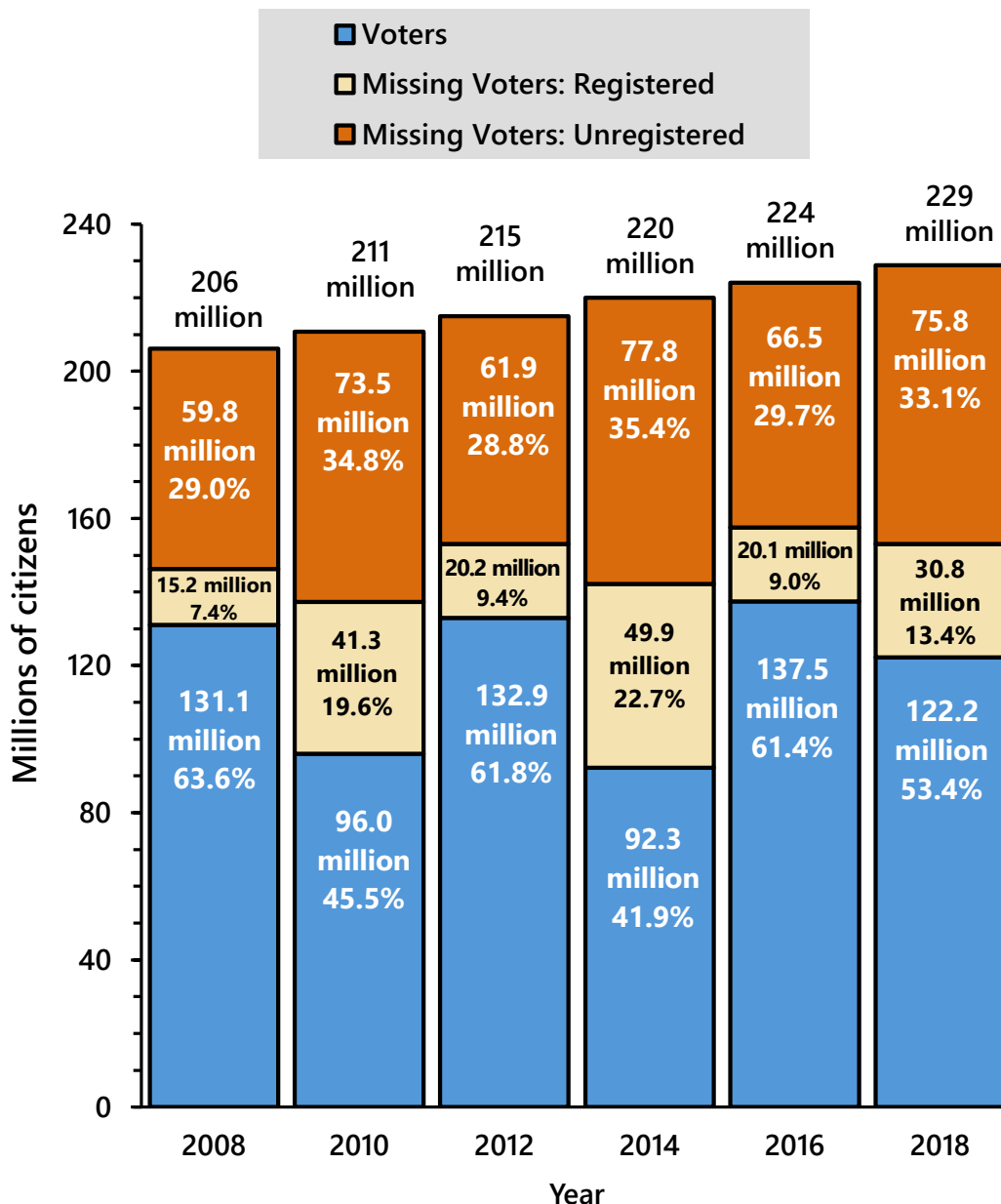


# MISSING VOTERS PROJECT

## United States 2018

Figure 1  
 Voters and Missing Voters  
 United States, 2008-2018

Universe: Citizens 18+ years old





## Who Are America's Missing Voters?

Missing voters are citizens who do not vote in elections. In this report, we describe the social and economic characteristics of missing voters, and we provide insight into *why* missing voters don't vote.

## What Is the Missing Voters Project?

The mission of the Missing Voters Project is to educate community activists, public officials, journalists, educators, and the public about missing voters. We do this by producing educational materials and sharing them widely to support nonpartisan voting participation efforts. We chose the design motif of an FBI Missing Persons poster to elicit feelings of unease and alarm about the millions of citizens who do not vote.

## How to Interpret the Data Charts

The voting charts (Figures 1, 2, 4, 6, 8) include both the *number of voters* and *missing voters* (in millions), as well as the *percent of all citizens* who either voted, were registered but didn't vote, or were not registered and couldn't vote. The reasons charts (Figures 3, 5, 7, 9) include only missing voters, and show the *percent of missing voters* who reported specific reasons for not voting.

## How to Understand the Reasons for Not Voting Data

All reasons were self-reported by missing voters (see further details below under Methods). We combined responses into the following categories:

- ◆ **Apathy** (*"not interested in the election or politics"*), **aversion** (*"don't like the candidates or issues"*), or **futility** (*"my vote doesn't matter"*).
- ◆ **Systemic or logistical barriers** (*"did not know where or how to register;" "registration or absentee ballot problems;" "did not meet residency requirements;" "inconvenient polling place, hours, or lines;" "out of town;" "not eligible to vote;" "difficulty with English;" "transportation problems;" or "bad weather conditions"*).
- ◆ **Deadlines or timing** (*"missed registration deadline;" "forgot to vote;" "too busy;" or "conflicting schedule"*).
- ◆ **Illness or disability** affected either the missing voter or a family member who required care.

## Methods and Data

Data in this report are from a special supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS), administered by the Census Bureau each November (from 2008 to 2018) immediately following the election. Statistically-weighted estimates for 2018 were derived from a national sample of 88,749 adult citizens. Citizens include civilian, non-military, non-institutionalized adults residing in the United States. All responses were either self-reported, or reported by a proxy who was an adult member of the respondent's household. The reasons for not voting results were compiled from two questions: one asked of people who were not registered to vote, and one asked of people who were registered but did not vote. For persons who were missing responses to the reasons questions, we imputed answers based on the sample distribution of responses.

Full technical details, variable definitions, links to the CPS data, and other valuable resources for the Missing Voters Project are available at <https://www.wiise-usa.org/mvp>. We accessed some CPS data via IPUMS-CPS at the University of Minnesota, <https://www.ipums.org>.

## Limitations

There are important voting justice issues that could not be addressed by the data analyzed in this report. These include voter suppression, purging of voter registration rolls, partisan gerrymandering, and other tactics that stop people from voting. See Resources on page 8 for links to voting rights organizations.

## How to Cite This Report

**Missing Voters Project: United States 2018.** Olney, MD: Women's Institute for Independent Social Enquiry, 2020. <https://www.wiise-usa.org/mvp/mvp-2018-reports>

## About The Women's Institute for Independent Social Enquiry (WiISE)

WiISE is a nonpartisan, progressive think tank whose mission is to foster a just society through independent social science, humanities, arts, and public policy research. We believe that rigorous evidence-based research, when effectively translated for a broad spectrum of audiences, can be a catalyst for transformational social change. We champion the ideas of women by cultivating and supporting women scholars, leaders, and artists.

## Connect With Us!

We welcome your feedback and comments on the Missing Voters Project, as well as on other timely issues relevant to our mission. Please reach out to us online at <https://www.wiise-usa.org/connect>.



### Voting Trends 2008-2018 (see page 1)

- ◆ The number of voting age citizens in the United States increased from 206 million in 2008 to 229 million in 2018.
- ◆ The percent of citizens voting averaged slightly more than 60% in presidential election years and less than 50% in mid-term election years. The exception was the mid-term election in 2018, when 53.4% of citizens voted.
- ◆ There were 107 million missing voters in 2018, and the majority were not registered to vote.

### Voting by Labor Force Status in 2018 (see page 4)

- ◆ Managers and professionals were the largest labor force segment (n=64.5 million).
- ◆ Voting rates were lowest among discouraged workers (35.4%), adults unable to work (37.1%), and blue collar and service workers (40.5%).
- ◆ Blue collar and service workers were the largest group of missing voters (n=23.2 million, 43.1% women).
- ◆ Apathy, aversion, or futility were the top reasons for not voting in most groups, ranging from 31.8% of discouraged workers to 37.6% of blue collar and service workers.
- ◆ Illness or disability (of self or family member) were common reasons for not voting among adults unable to work (34.6%) and retirees (23.9%).

### Voting by Age in 2018 (see page 5)

- ◆ The largest group of citizens by age were 45 to 64 years old (n=77.1 million). Young people 18 to 24 years old were the smallest segment (27.0 million).
- ◆ Voting participation was lowest among young voters (32.4%) and highest among elder voters (66.1%).
- ◆ The largest number of missing voters were 25 to 44 years old (n=40.1 million).
- ◆ Apathy, aversion, or futility were the top reasons for not voting for all age groups, ranging from 31.9% to 35.3%.
- ◆ Deadlines or timing were important reasons for missing voters 18 to 24 years old (25.3%) and 25 to 44 years old (26.3%), but not for elder missing voters (8.2%).

### Voting by Race and Hispanic Ethnicity in 2018 (see page 6)

- ◆ The majority (67.7%) of voting age citizens were non-Hispanic whites (n=155.0 million).
- ◆ Whites were most likely to vote (57.5%), followed by Blacks (50.6%), American Indians and Alaska Natives (45.0%), Asians and Pacific Islanders (41.8%). Hispanic citizens had the lowest rate of voting (40.4%).
- ◆ Apathy, aversion, or futility as reasons for not voting were highest among American Indian and Alaska Native (36.4%) and White (35.2%) missing voters, and lowest among Black missing voters (28.3%).
- ◆ Systemic or logistical barriers were important reasons for Asian and Pacific Islander missing voters (26.8%) and Hispanic missing voters (24.9%), and less important for White missing voters (15.8%).
- ◆ Deadlines or timing were a barrier to voting for over one-fifth (>20%) of Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians and Pacific Islanders.

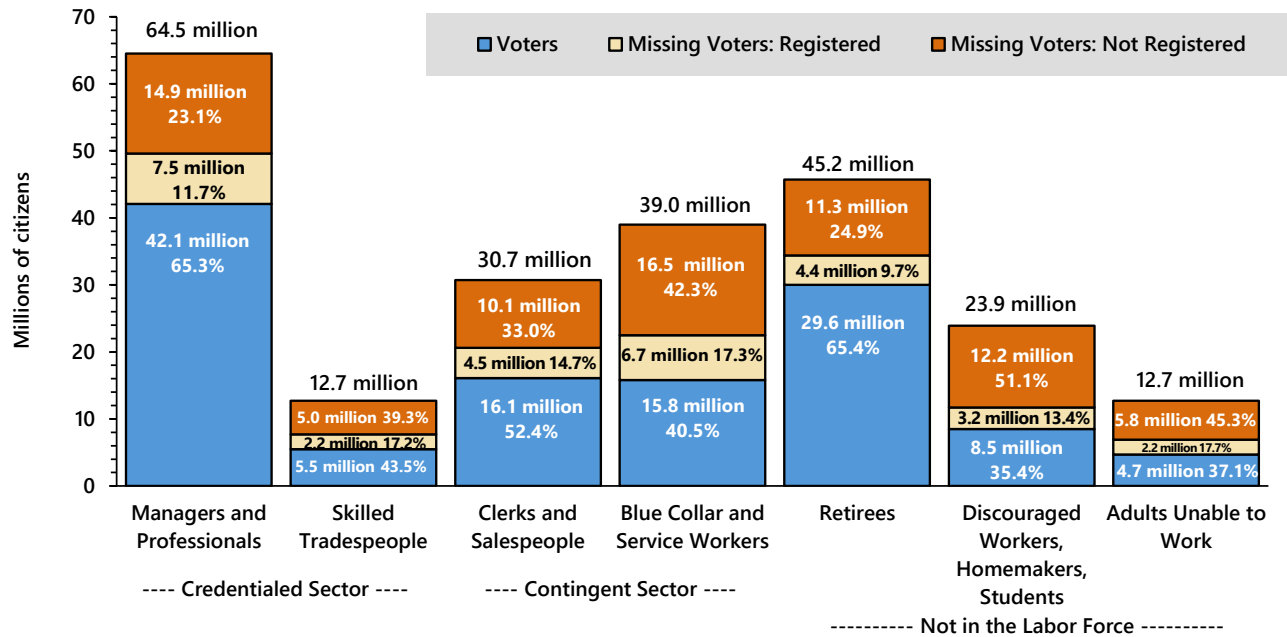
### Voting by Education in 2018 (see page 7)

- ◆ College graduates were the largest segment of voting age citizens (n=77.3 million), followed by those with some college education (n=66.6 million).
- ◆ Voting participation was higher among adults with more education, ranging from 27.2% of those with no high school diploma to 68.7% of those with a college degree.
- ◆ High school graduates (with no college) were the largest number of missing voters (38.2 million).
- ◆ Apathy, aversion, or futility were the top reasons for not voting reported by high school graduates (38.2%) and those with some college (31.0%).
- ◆ Deadlines or timing were the top reasons for not voting reported by college graduates (27.8%).

# Voting by Labor Force Status

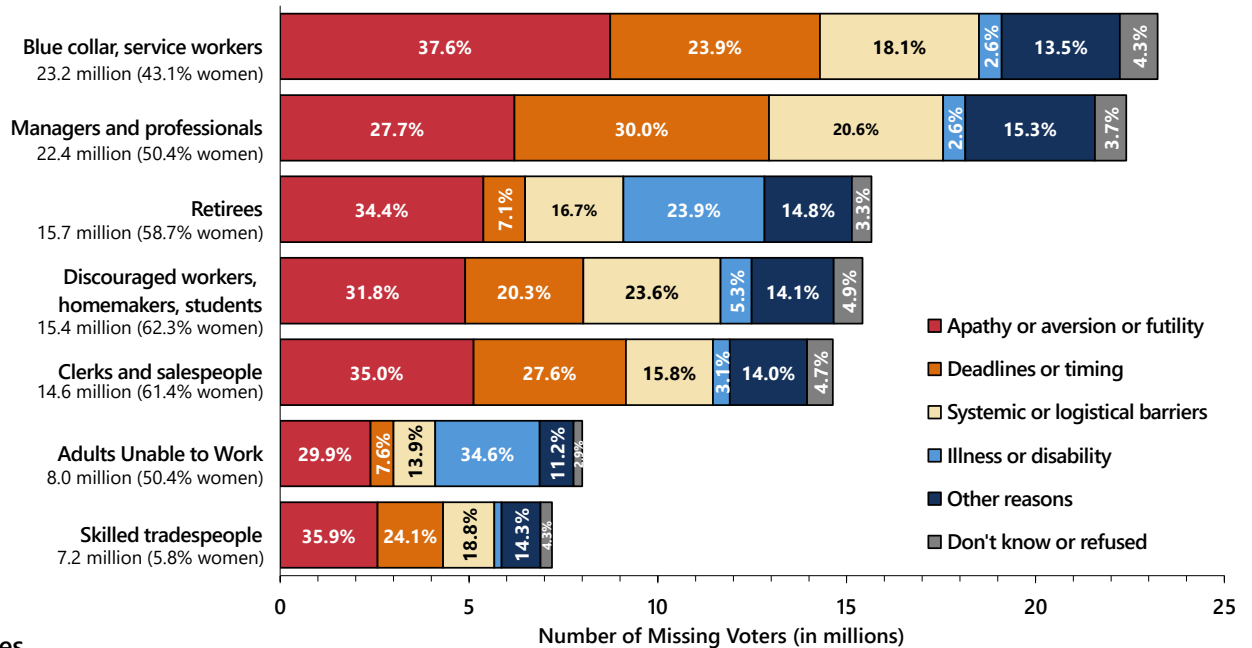
**Figure 2**  
**Voters and Missing Voters, by Labor Force Status**  
**United States, 2018**

Universe: Citizens 18+ years old (Total = 229 million)



**Figure 3**  
**Reasons for Not Voting, by Labor Force Status**  
**United States, 2018**

Universe: Missing voters 18+ years old (Total = 107 million)



**Notes**

Please note that some numbers may appear not to add up correctly due to rounding. Unemployed workers were categorized based on their most recent occupation. *Discouraged workers* were not actively seeking a job and were considered to be “not in the labor force.” Voting data are from the Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey (November 2018). Statistically-weighted estimates were derived from a national sample of 88,749 adult citizens. Citizens include civilian, non-military, non-institutionalized persons residing in the United States. Reasons for not voting were compiled from two separate questions, and responses imputed for persons with missing data. See page 2 for help with interpreting the charts. Full technical details are available at <https://www.wiise-usa.org/mvp>.



Figure 4  
Voters and Missing Voters, by Age  
United States, 2018

Universe: Citizens 18+ years old (Total = 229 million)

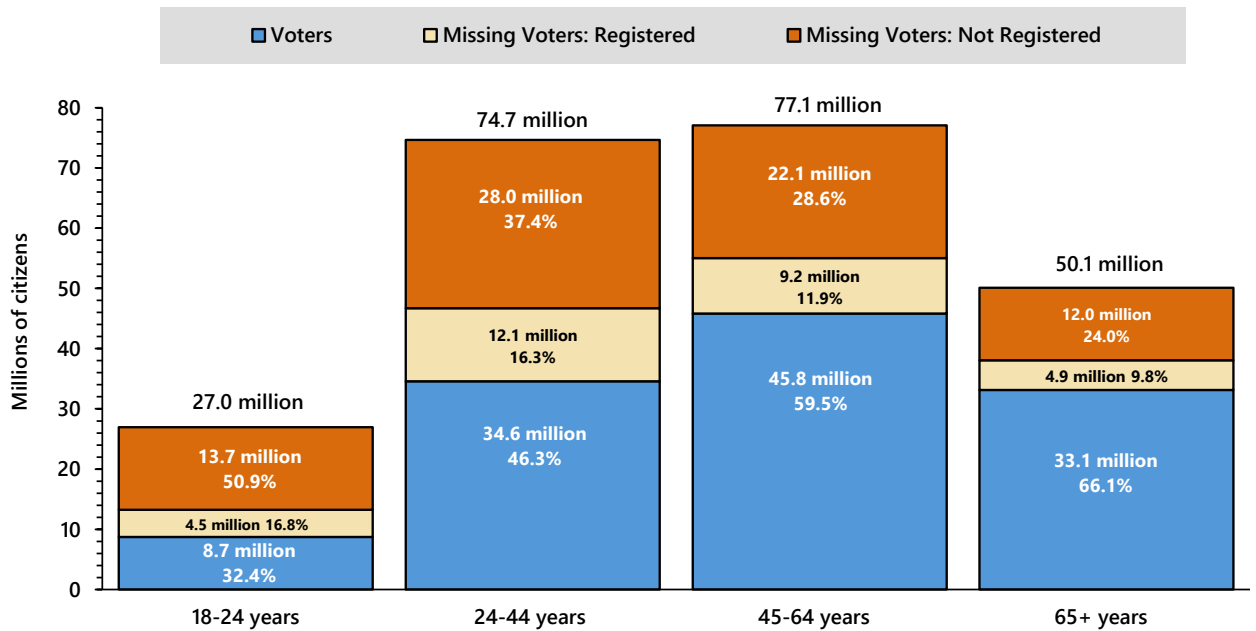
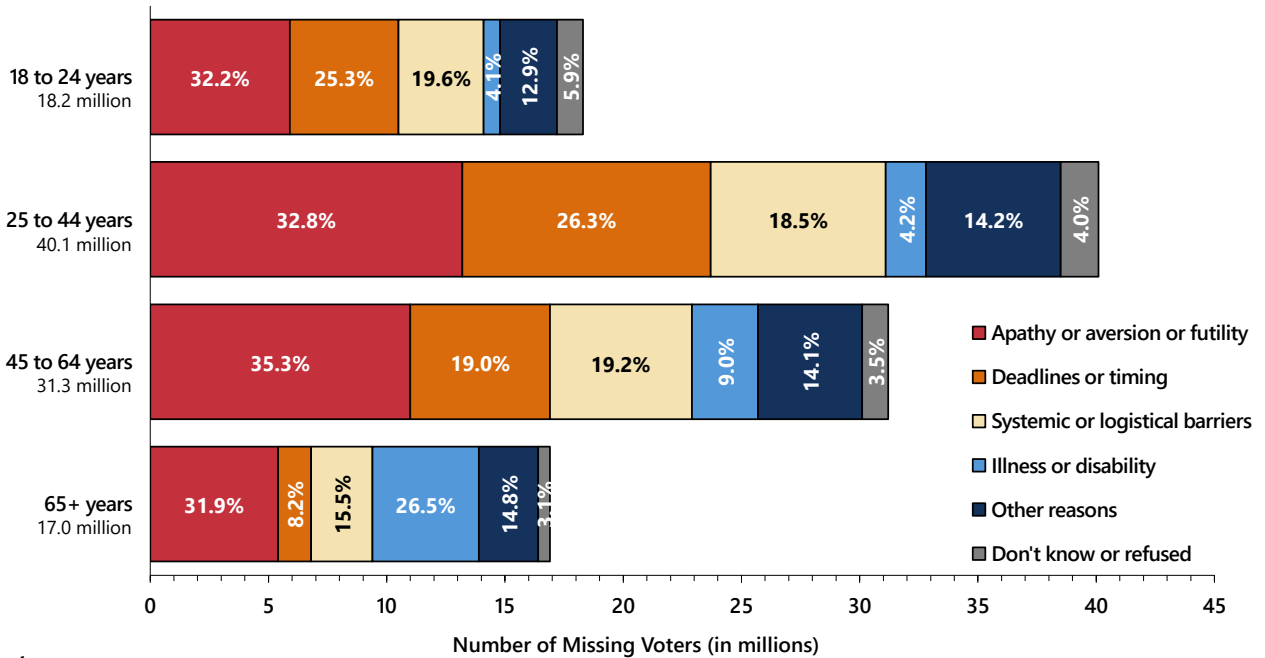


Figure 5  
Reasons for Not Voting, by Age  
United States, 2018

Universe: Missing voters 18+ years old (Total = 107 million)



Notes

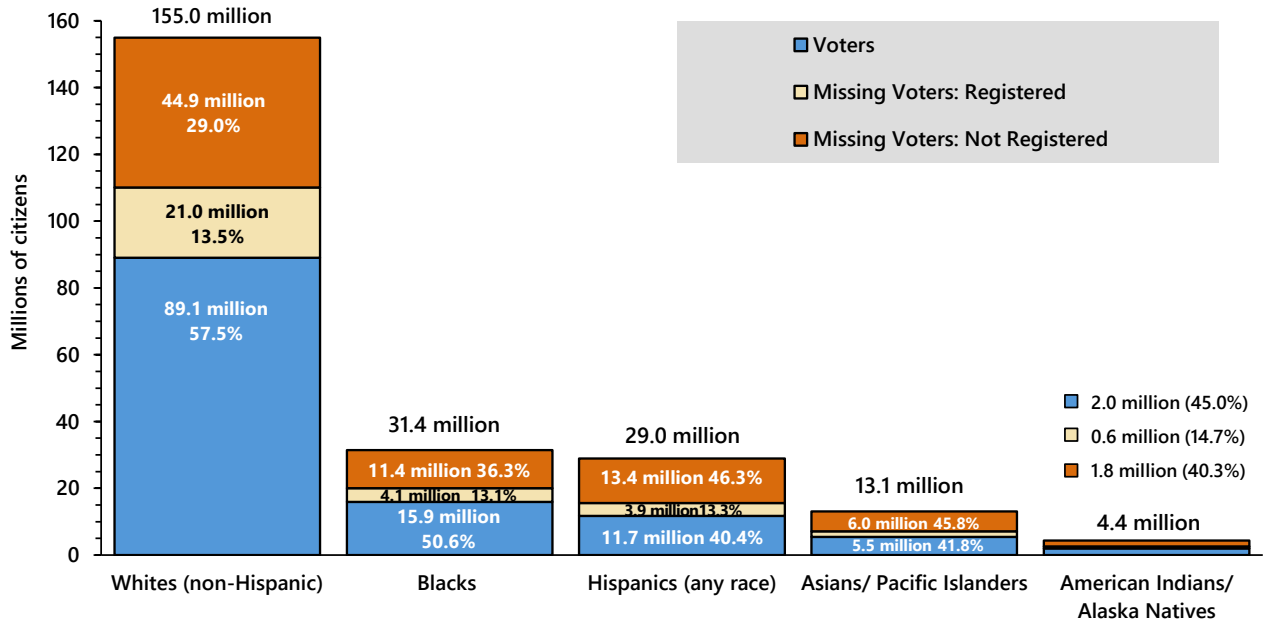
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# Voting by Race and Hispanic Ethnicity

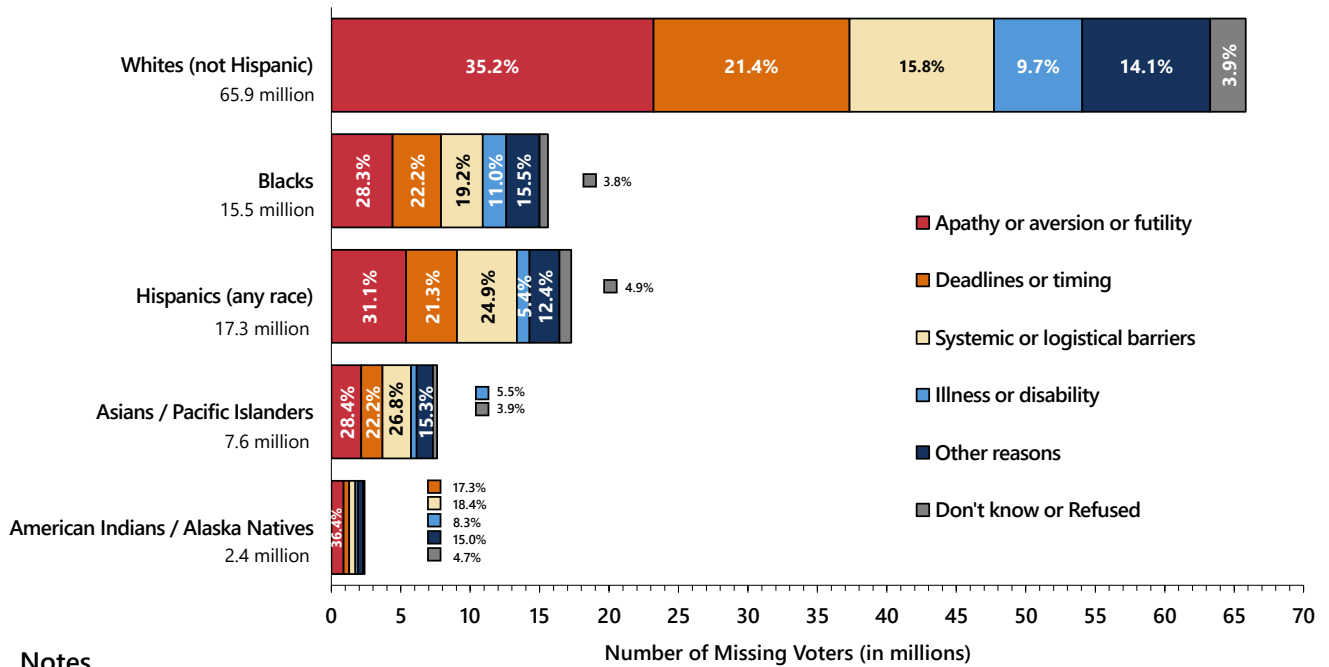
**Figure 6**  
**Voters and Missing Voters, by Race and Hispanic Ethnicity**  
**United States, 2018**

Universe: Citizens 18+ years old (Total = 229 million)



**Figure 7**  
**Reasons for Not Voting, by Race and Hispanic Ethnicity**  
**United States, 2018**

Universe: Missing voters 18+ years old (Total = 107 million)



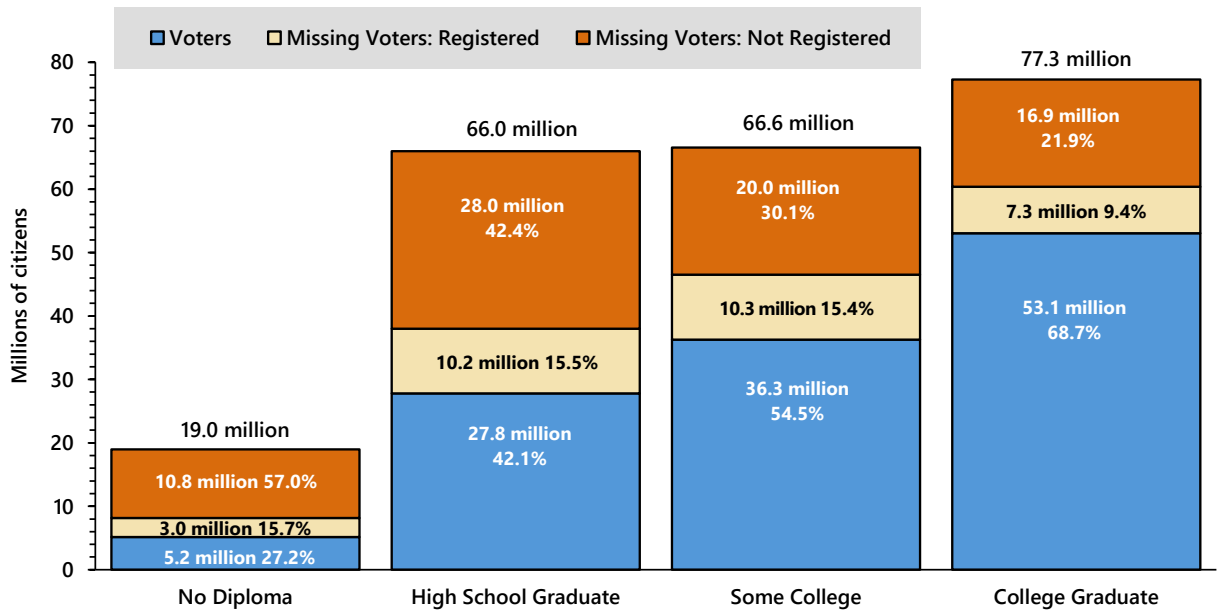
**Notes**

Please note that some numbers may appear not to add up correctly due to rounding. Race and ethnicity were self-reported. All groups except *Whites* may include multiracial individuals. Voting data are from the Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey (November 2018). Statistically-weighted estimates were derived from a national sample of 88,749 adult citizens. Citizens include civilian, non-military, non-institutionalized persons residing in the United States. Reasons for not voting were compiled from two separate questions, and responses imputed for persons with missing data. See page 2 for help with interpreting the charts. Full technical details are available at <https://www.wiise-usa.org/mvp>.



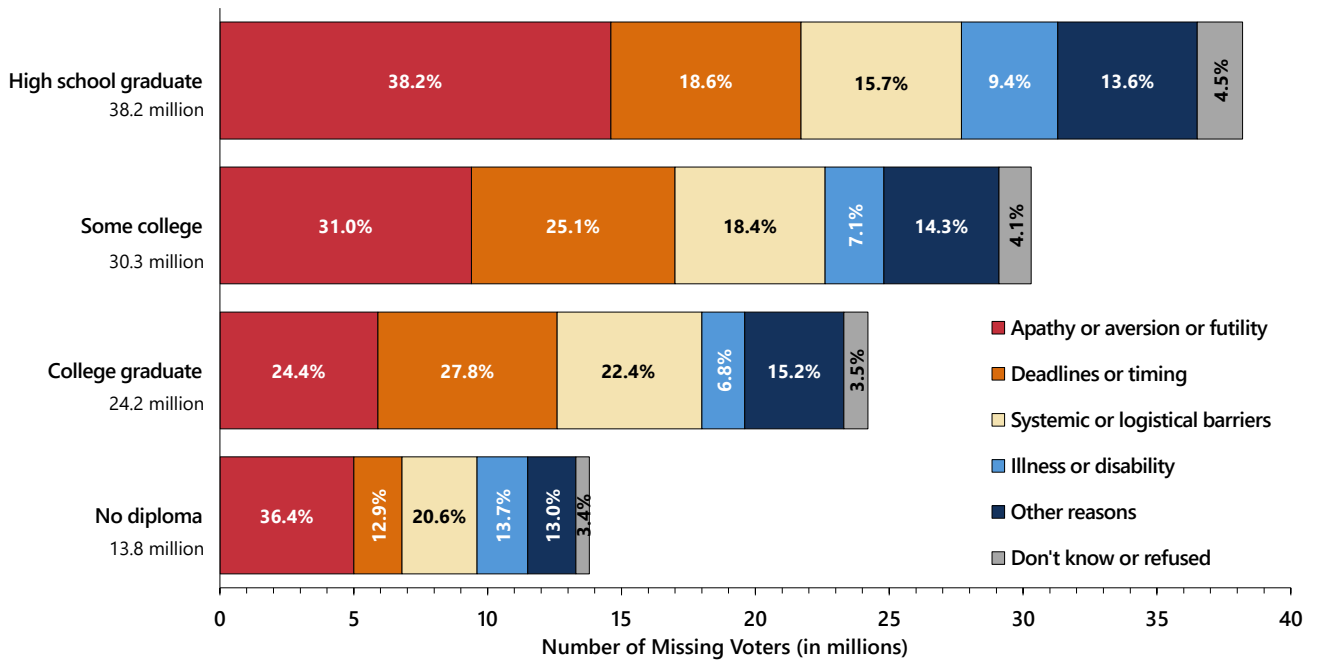
**Figure 8**  
**Voters and Missing Voters, by Education**  
**United States, 2018**

Universe: Citizens 18+ years old (Total = 229 million)



**Figure 9**  
**Reasons for Not Voting, by Education**  
**United States, 2018**

Universe: Missing voters 18+ years old (Total = 107 million)



**Notes**

Please note that some numbers may appear not to add up correctly due to rounding. *Some college* includes people with Associate's degrees. Voting data are from the Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey (November 2018). Statistically-weighted estimates were derived from a national sample of 88,749 adult citizens. Citizens include civilian, non-military, non-institutionalized persons residing in the United States. Please note that some numbers may appear not to add up correctly due to rounding. Reasons for not voting were compiled from two separate questions, and responses imputed for persons with missing data. See page 2 for help with interpreting the charts. Full technical details are available at <https://www.wiise-usa.org/mvp>.





The resources listed below can aid efforts to motivate citizen involvement, expand voter registration, combat voter suppression, eliminate barriers to voting, and monitor local elections. The webpage links in the listings below were active as of January 2020. Visit <https://www.wiise-usa.org/mvp-resources> for current links.

### **FREE Resources for Local Organizations**

#### ***National Voter Registration Day***

<https://nationalvoterregistrationday.org/>

Find extensive FREE resources to help your local organization hold voter registration drives. Register as a partner and receive FREE posters and stickers.

#### ***Vote411.org***

<http://www.vote411.org/>

VOTE411.org is a FREE "one-stop-shop" for election-related information. It provides state-specific nonpartisan information to the public, including a polling place locator.

#### ***Voter Identification Requirements for Every State***

<https://www.voteriders.org/get-voter-id/voter-id-info-cards/>

Vote Riders will print and mail FREE state info wallet cards to any non-profit organization in any state. These cards summarize the forms of voter ID required to vote for each state.

### **Voting Rights Organizations**

#### ***Advancement Project***

<https://advancementproject.org/issues/voting-rights/>

Advancement Project is a next generation, multi-racial civil rights organization. Advancement Project works to address barriers to the ballot for voters of color and expand access to the vote before Election Day.

#### ***Common Cause***

<https://www.commoncause.org>

Common Cause is a nonpartisan grassroots organization with chapters in 35 states, which works to promote government transparency, equal voting opportunities, and fair representation.

#### ***Demos***

<https://www.demos.org/our-issues/democratic-reform/voting-rights-and-voter-access>

Demos ("the people") is a public policy organization working to reduce political and economic inequality and to guarantee the freedom to vote through research, advocacy, litigation, and strategic communications.

#### ***Fair Fight***

<https://fairfight.com/>

Fair Fight brings awareness to the public on election reform, advocates for election reform at all levels, and engages in targeted voter registration and other voter outreach programs and communications.

#### ***League of Women Voters (LWV)***

<https://www.lwv.org>

The LWV works to increase understanding of public policy issues, influences public policy through education and advocacy, and works to ensure equal participation in voting.

#### ***Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)***

<https://www.splcenter.org/our-issues/voting-rights>

The SPLC is dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry and to seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of our society, using litigation, education, and other forms of advocacy for equal opportunity.

#### ***UNIDOS US***

<https://www.unidosus.org/issues/voting/>

UNIDOS US (formerly National Council of La Raza) and its network of nearly 300 affiliates serve the Hispanic community through research, policy analysis, state and national advocacy, and community programs.

#### ***Voter Participation Center***

<https://www.voterparticipation.org/>

The Voter Participation Center's mission is to increase civic engagement among the Rising American Electorate: unmarried women, people of color, and millennials.