



Black Voters in 2016: Enthusiasm

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Introduction

Eligible black voters participated in the 2012 general election at a higher rate than the members of any other racial or ethnic group. Some experts have wondered whether African American voters will turn out at a historically high level again in 2016—without President Barack Obama on the ballot.

Partnering with the Nielsen Company, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies commissioned a poll and analyzed data collected from 1,500 registered voters to address that question.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Despite polarizing views and record low approval numbers for each candidate, most voters said they intended to vote, regardless of their race or ethnicity.
- At all levels of education and income, in every region of the country, an overwhelming majority of black men and women said they saw the 2016 race as a high-stakes election.
- More black women than black men said they believed the 2016 presidential election's outcome would be very important compared with past elections.
- Among voters planning to cast their ballots for the Democratic Party's presidential nominee, African Americans were more likely than whites or Latinos to describe their choice as a vote for Hillary Clinton, rather than as a vote against Donald Trump.

- Among black voters who intended to support the Democratic nominee, a majority of older voters described their choice as a vote for Clinton. Younger black voters were more likely to describe their choice as a vote against Trump.

National polls usually include too few non-white respondents to deliver detailed data on the opinions of African Americans. The Joint Center sought to help fill that gap by commissioning a survey with a deliberate oversample of African Americans and Latinos.¹ This approach made it possible to study the differences between the opinions of black, white, and Latino voters, and to identify trends among different African American demographic groups.

¹ The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies has a significant track record of polling within the African American community. Our primary focus within this series is on African American voter behavior. For comparative purposes, we also polled white and Latino voters. However, resources were limited for more in-depth Latino polling, as well as Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, and Native American polling due to constraints with in-language resources and market penetration. For more detailed information on Latino and Asian American voter behavior, please consult the work being done by Latino Decisions, Asian American Decisions, or our partners at AAPI Data.

Results

Do you plan to vote in the November 2016 presidential election this year?

The vast majority of voters, regardless of race or ethnicity, said they intended to vote. Nearly 90 percent of whites said they intended to vote, as did 83 percent of Latinos and 86 percent of blacks.

Intention to vote: Voters by race and ethnicity

	Plan to Vote	Not Sure	Don't Plan to Vote
Whites	89%	8%	3%
Latinos	83%	14%	3%
Blacks	86%	12%	2%

Older black voters were the most likely to say they planned to vote of any African American age group. Comparatively, millennials across racial and ethnic groups were the most likely to say they didn't plan to vote of any age group.²

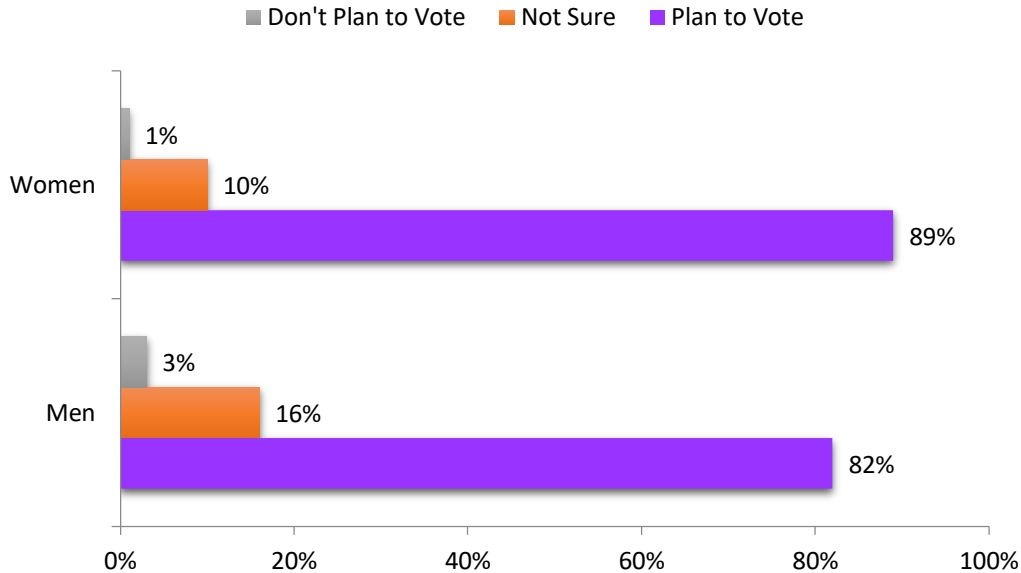
Intention to vote: Black voters by age

Black Voters by Age	Plan to Vote	Not Sure	Don't Plan to Vote
18-29	76%	19%	6%
30-39	84%	14%	2%
40-54	90%	9%	1%
55-64	89%	11%	0%
65+	97%	3%	0%

Black women were more likely to say they intended to vote than black men. Nearly 90 percent of black women said they intended to turn out and vote, compared to 82 percent of black men.

² The survey found that 6 percent of black and white voters age 18-29 and 4 percent of Latino voters age 18-29 indicate that they do not plan to vote.

Intention to vote: Black voters by gender



Educational attainment was correlated with the intention to vote. Eighty percent of black voters with a high school diploma or less said they planned to vote, compared with at least 94 percent of black voters with a bachelor's degree or higher.

Intention to vote: Black voters by education

Black Voters by Education Level	Plan to Vote	Not Sure	Don't Plan to Vote
High School or Less	80%	18%	1%
Some College	87%	10%	3%
College Graduate	94%	5%	1%
Post Graduate	96%	4%	1%

Income and the intention to vote did not appear to have a clear correlation for black voters, although voters earning more than \$50,000 and less than \$100,000 a year were slightly more likely to say that they planned to vote than other groups.

Intention to vote: Black voters by income

Black Voters by Household Income	Plan to Vote	Not Sure	Don't Plan to Vote
Less than \$35,000	82%	16%	2%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	85%	11%	4%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	90%	8%	1%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	92%	8%	0%
More than \$100,000	85%	15%	0%

Midwestern and Northeastern African American voters were more likely to say that they planned to vote than black voters in the South and West. However, regional differences were relatively small.

Intention to vote: Black voters by region

Black Voters by Region	Plan to Vote	Not Sure	Don't Plan to Vote
Midwest	90%	9%	1%
Northeast	89%	11%	0%
South	84%	13%	3%
West	83%	16%	1%

How important is the outcome of the 2016 presidential election relative to previous presidential elections?

The clear majority of voters, regardless of their race or ethnicity, expressed a belief that the 2016 presidential race is consequential relative to previous elections.

Election's importance: Black voters by race and ethnicity

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not at all Important
Whites	83%	13%	3%	1%
Latinos	85%	11%	1%	2%
Blacks	84%	12%	1%	5%

Nearly all black voters over the age of 65 said that this election is very important relative to previous races. In contrast, only 80 percent of voters age 18 to 29 said that they felt the same way.³

Election's importance: Black voters by age

Black Voters by Age	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not at all Important
18-29	80%	14%	3%	3%
30-39	86%	12%	1%	1%
40-54	81%	15%	2%	2%
55-64	85%	9%	1%	5%
65+	98%	2%	0%	0%

Black women were somewhat more likely than black men to see this election as very important. Eighty-seven percent of black women said they believed that it was very important, compared to 80 percent of black men.

³Hillary Clinton may not be as popular as Barack Obama among black voters. In fact, 67 percent of all black voters described President Obama as someone they like very much, while Clinton garnered this response from only 29 percent of all black voters.

Conversely, 16 percent of black men said they thought this election was somewhat important, compared with 9 percent of black women.

It is important to note that the large gender gap among African American voters in this poll reflects the fact that fewer black men are registered to vote than black women. High incarceration rates and felon disenfranchisement, which remove more otherwise eligible African American men from the pool of registered voters, are two major causes of this disparity.

Election’s importance: Black voters by gender

Black Voters by Gender	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not at all Important
Men	80%	16%	1%	3%
Women	87%	9%	2%	2%

Educational attainment was correlated with a belief that this election’s outcome will be very important. Black voters with a high school diploma or less were the least likely to think that the election outcome would be very important, while the most-educated African American voters were more likely to say that the election outcome would be very important.

Election’s importance: Black voters by education

Black Voters by Education Level	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not at all Important
High School or Less	81%	15%	2%	3%
Some College	85%	11%	1%	2%
College Graduate	87%	9%	2%	2%
Post Graduate	91%	7%	1%	1%

Income and the intention to vote did not appear to have a clear correlation for black voters, although voters earning more than \$75,000 a year were slightly more likely to say that they planned to vote than other groups.

Election's importance: Black voters by income

Black Voters by Household Income	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not at all Important
Less than \$35,000	79%	17%	2%	2%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	84%	13%	2%	2%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	86%	9%	2%	3%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	90%	10%	1%	0%
More than \$100,000	90%	5%	1%	5%

In terms of regional differences, Midwestern and Northeastern black voters appeared to be more likely to say that the election outcome would be very important than black voters in the South and West.

Election's importance: Black voters by region

Black Voters by Census Region	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not at all Important
Midwest	90%	5%	0%	4%
Northeast	89%	10%	1%	0%
South	83%	13%	2%	2%
West	75%	20%	3%	3%

Would you say that your choice to support the Democratic Party's presidential nominee will be more a vote *for* Hillary Clinton or more a vote *against* Donald Trump?

The polarizing reputations of both major party nominees have raised questions about the strength of support for each of the candidates. In particular, there is much speculation that voters are voting against an opponent rather than for his/her chosen candidate. To test this question, pollsters asked voters how they viewed their vote. Overall, most voters said that they would be voting *against* a candidate rather than voting *for* a candidate. Among white Trump voters, 56 percent said that they planned to vote against his opponent, compared with 44 percent who say that they would be voting for him. Among white Clinton voters, 60 percent said that they planned to vote against her opponent, compared with 40 percent who say they would be voting for her.

There were too few black and Latino Trump voters to do any meaningful analysis about their views on this matter, so only the numbers for Clinton supporters of color are presented here. Sixty percent of Latino Clinton supporters said that they were voting against Trump (with 40 percent saying they were voting for the Democratic presidential nominee). Black Clinton supporters were nearly evenly split, with 51 percent saying they were voting against Trump and 49 percent saying they were voting for the Democratic presidential nominee.

For Clinton or against Trump: All voters by race and ethnicity

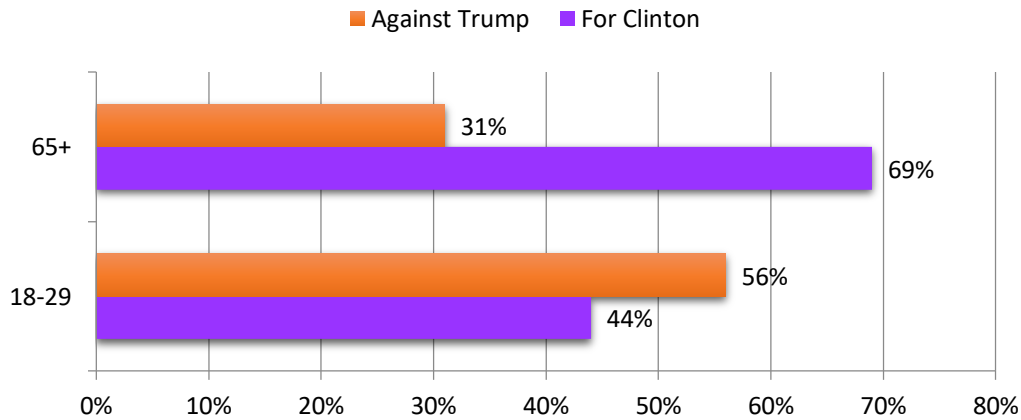
	Voting For Candidate	Voting Against Opponent
<u>Clinton Supporters:</u>		
Whites	40%	60%
Latinos	40%	60%
Blacks	49%	51%
<u>Trump Supporters:</u>		
Whites	44%	56%

The oldest black voters polled were the most likely to say they were voting for Clinton, rather than against Trump. In contrast, a clear majority of black voters age 29 or younger said they planned to cast a vote against Trump rather than for Clinton.

For Clinton or against Trump: Black voters planning to support the Democratic Party's presidential nominee by age

Black Clinton Supporters	For Clinton	Against Trump
18-29	44%	56%
30-39	36%	64%
40-54	55%	45%
55-64	58%	42%
65+	69%	31%

Is Your Vote for the Democratic Presidential Nominee for Clinton or against Trump? Oldest vs Youngest Black voters



Black men and women displayed different levels of support for Clinton. Fifty-five percent of black male Clinton supporters said their vote would be cast for Clinton, compared to 45 percent who said that their vote would be cast against Donald Trump. Those figures are reversed for black women: 53 percent said they would vote against Trump and 47 percent said that they would be voting for Clinton.

For Clinton or against Trump: Black voters planning to support the Democratic Party’s presidential nominee by gender

Black Clinton Supporters by Gender	For Clinton	Against Trump
Men	55%	45%
Women	47%	53%

Polling did not detect a significant correlation between educational attainment, income, or region of residence and whether black supporters of the Democratic Party’s presidential nominee said they intended to vote for

Clinton or against Trump. In general, when black voters were asked whether they were voting for Clinton or against Trump by supporting the Democratic nominee, they were nearly evenly split.

For Clinton or against Trump: Black voters planning to support the Democratic Party’s presidential nominee by education

Black Clinton Supporters by Education Level	For Clinton	Against Trump
High School or Less	54%	46%
Some College	46%	54%
College Graduate	50%	50%
Post Graduate	51%	49%

For Clinton or against Trump: Black voters planning to support the Democratic Party’s presidential nominee by income

Black Clinton Supporters by Household Income	For Clinton	Against Trump
Less than \$35,000	54%	46%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	47%	53%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	46%	54%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	54%	46%
More than \$100,000	50%	50%

Finally, regional breakdowns did not reveal meaningful variations in how black Clinton supporters conceive their vote in this election. In the Midwest, South, and West, a slight majority of black Clinton supporters said that they would be voting for her as opposed to voting against Donald Trump. In contrast, 54 percent of voters in the Northeast said that their vote for Clinton would be a vote against Trump.

**For Clinton or against Trump:
Black voters planning to support the
Democratic Party's presidential nominee by
region**

Black Clinton Supporters by Region	For Clinton	Against Trump
Midwest	51%	49%
Northeast	46%	54%
South	51%	49%
West	52%	48%

Methodology

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies commissioned and analyzed the results of this survey conducted in partnership with the Nielsen Company Data. This survey results from a nationally representative sample of 1,500 registered voters, with an intentional oversample of African Americans and Latinos (600 whites, 600 African Americans, and 300 Latinos). Though the report focuses upon sentiments and views expressed by African American voters, efforts were made to poll Latino and white voters for comparison. The Joint Center acknowledges the absence of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Native American data. Unfortunately, limited in-language resources prevented the Joint Center and Nielsen from polling these voters.

Using [survey questions](#) developed by the Joint Center, the Nielsen Company Data collected this data through the Nielsen Scarborough panel between September 1 and September 15, 2016. The Nielsen Scarborough panel consists of 200,000+ U.S. adults drawn from a random probability selection process that includes random-digit-dialing (RDD) and address-based sample methods. The panel offers statistically reliable projections to the total U.S. adult population and is designed to ensure the representativeness of Hispanic and African American populations.

Respondents were asked to self-report race, and whether they were Latino or of Hispanic origin (which the Joint Center uses interchangeably in this report to be more inclusive of those who identify as being of South or Latin American descent).⁴ For results that compare racial and ethnic groups, we examine non-Hispanic whites and non-Hispanic blacks against Latinos overall. For breakdowns of black voters we include only non-Hispanic blacks.

The margin of error for individual racial and ethnic groups is +/- 5 percentage points. In comparing differences within racial and ethnic subgroups, the margin of error grows larger. The Joint Center reminds readers to interpret group differences with caution. It is also important to note that margins of error are calculated on individual proportions and not on the difference. The margin of error also shrinks significantly as a number approaches zero, allowing us to be more confident in some results than others.

⁴ Respondents answered in English or Spanish at their discretion.

This survey was conducted prior to the presidential debates. While the Joint Center does not assume the overall support levels are identical to the current state of the race, the survey's results were generally similar to other national polling, with non-Hispanic white voters more likely to support Trump, and Hispanic and African American voters more likely to support Clinton.

This survey is not a snapshot of the horserace between two candidates prior to the national election. Instead, with a significant oversample of African Americans, the survey provides insight into differences of opinion within the African American community due to demographic factors, such as age, gender, income, educational attainment, and [geographic region](#).

Among black voters, the weighted sample reflects the following demographics:

Black Voters by Age	Percent of Sample
18-29	25%
30-39	22%
40-54	30%
55-64	15%
65+	8%

Black Voters by Gender	Percent of Sample
Men	40%
Women	60%

Black Voters by Education	Percent of Sample
High School or Less	43%
Some College	34%
College Graduate	14%
Post Graduate	9%

Black Voters by Income	Percent of Sample
Less than \$35,000	32%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	23%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	17%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	13%
More than \$100,000	14%

Black Voters by Region	Percent of Sample
Midwest ⁵	17%
Northeast	18%
South	55%
West	10%

⁵ This report uses the Census regional breakdown: Northeast (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT, NJ, NY, PA), Midwest (IN, IL, MI, OH, WI, IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD), South (DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV, AL, KY, MS, TN, AR, LA, OK, TX), and West (AZ, CO, ID, NM, MT, UT, NV, WY, AK, CA, HI, OR, WA). See U.S. Census Bureau Regional map here: http://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/maps-data/maps/reference/us_regdiv.pdf.

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The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies is a non-partisan, non-profit public policy organization that supports elected officials and policy experts who serve communities of color across the country.

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