



Report

October 2024

The Rapidly Growing Texas Latino Electorate

Rogelio Sáenz, Ph.D., and Selene M. Gomez, Doctoral Candidate

KEY FINDINGS

- Latinos made up 1 million of the 1,650,000 new citizens of the voting age population (CVAP) that Texas added between 2017 and 2022. Whites added 55,000 citizens of voting age.
 - Latino CVAP growth was widespread throughout the state, while White CVAP growth was largely limited to suburban areas.
 - Nearly 70 percent of the 1 million new Latino citizens of voting age are in the 12 most populous counties.
 - Latino CVAP growth also occurred in the West Texas, Permian Basin, and Panhandle regions.
 - Texas is now a majority-minority state with more non-White than White citizens of voting age.
-

Demographers for decades had been projecting that one day the Latino population would outnumber the White population in Texas. This took place last year in 2023. [The latest U.S. Census Bureau population estimates](#) also point to the disproportionate growth of Latinos in the state. Texas added nearly 1.4 million people between April 1, 2020, and July 1, 2023, with Latinos accounting for just over half (51.1%) of the state's population growth.

The Texas demographic shift has been driven primarily by the combination of an aging White population and a youthful Latino population. The median age of Whites (42.7) is more than 12 years older than that of Latinos (30.4). In the White population, adults 65 and older outnumber youth less than 18 years of age. In contrast, in the Latino population, there are 3.6 youth less than 18 per one adult 65 and older, compared to 0.9 among Whites.

These demographic trends have implications for the future of Texas across all institutions, from the economy to the workforce, the healthcare system, the religious system, and the political system.

Given the upcoming presidential election with significant races in Texas, most prominently the U.S. Senate race in early November and the [most recent voter roll purge of over 1.1 million Texas voters](#), it is timely to gain an understanding of the shift in the citizens of voting age population (CVAP) among Latinos and Whites.

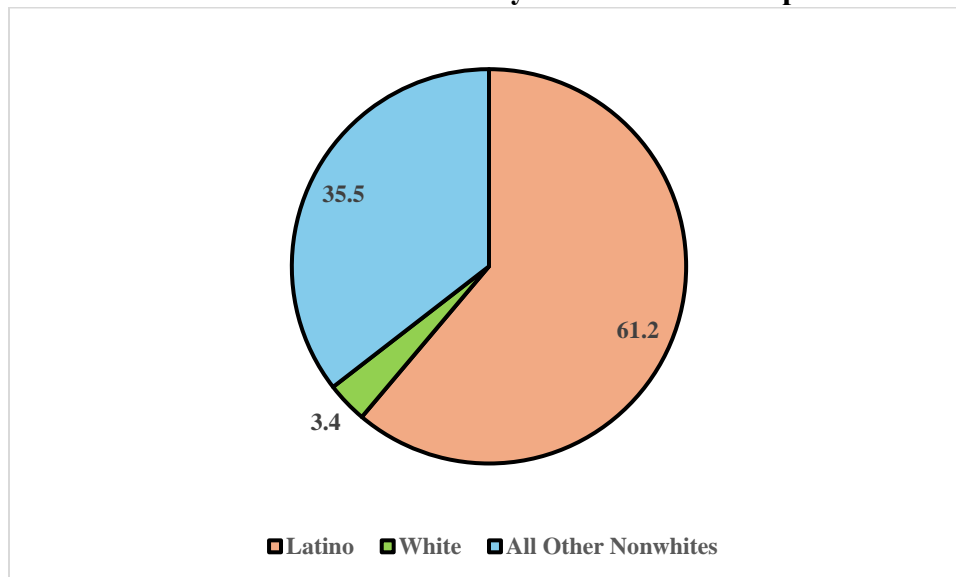
To do this, we use data from the 2017 and 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates to assess the level of change in the Latino and White citizens of voting age population (CVAP) over the last five years in the state and across the 254 counties. The CVAP is defined as persons 18 years of age and older who are U.S. citizens (born in the U.S. or who have become naturalized citizens). This is the population that forms the potential electorate in Texas.

Texas is Now a Majority-Minority CVAP State

Overall, between 2017 and 2022, Texas added nearly 1,650,000 new citizens of voting age. Of these new potential voters, Latinos accounted for 1 million, other non-White persons (including American Indians and Alaska Natives, Asians, Blacks, Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders, Multiracial persons, and Some Other Race) added 585,000, and Whites tacked on just over 55,000 citizens of voting age over the last five years. Thus, of the 1,650,000 new potential voters, Latinos accounted for more than three out of five (61.2%), other non-Whites for more than one-third (35.5%), and Whites for one out of 30 (3.4%) (Figure 1).

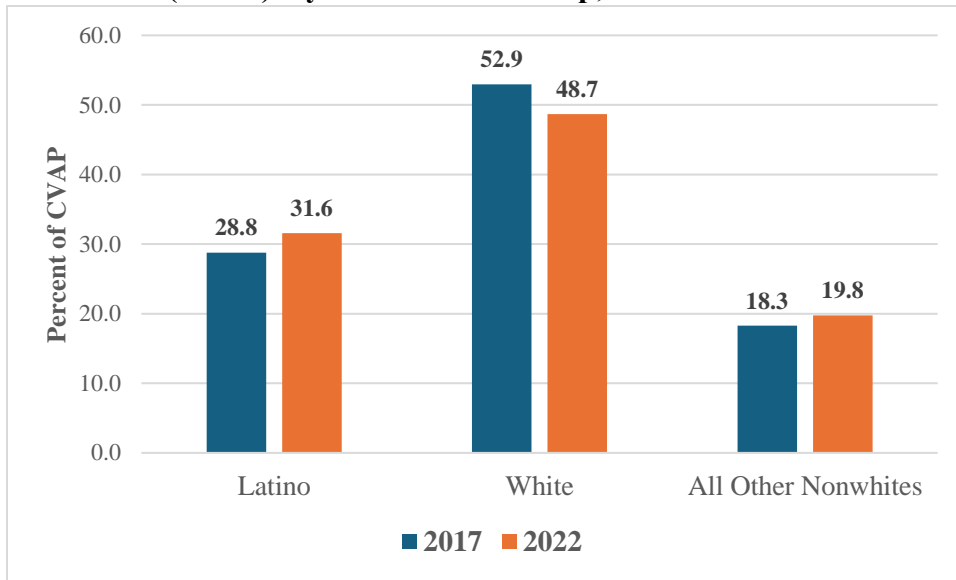
Furthermore, between 2017 and 2022, the percentage share of the Texas total CVAP that is Latino rose from 28.8 percent to 31.6 percent and among all other non-Whites from 18.3 percent to 19.8 percent, but fell for Whites from 52.9 percent to 48.7 percent (Figure 2). As such, in 2022, Texas became a majority-minority state relative to its potential eligible voters.

Figure 1. Percentage Distribution of All New Texas Citizens of Voting Age Population (CVAP) Between 2017 and 2022 by Race/Ethnic Groups



Source: 2017 and 2022 ACS Five-Year Estimates (data.census.gov)

Figure 2. Percentage Share of Texas Citizens of Voting Age Population (CVAP) by Race/Ethnic Group, 2017 and 2022

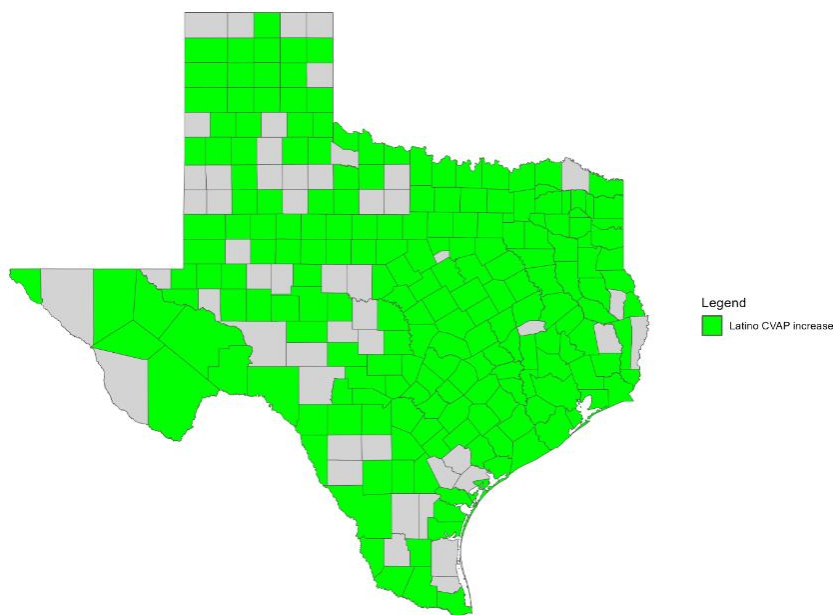


Source: 2017 and 2022 ACS Five-Year Estimates (data.census.gov)

Widespread Growth of Latino CVAP Across Texas Counties

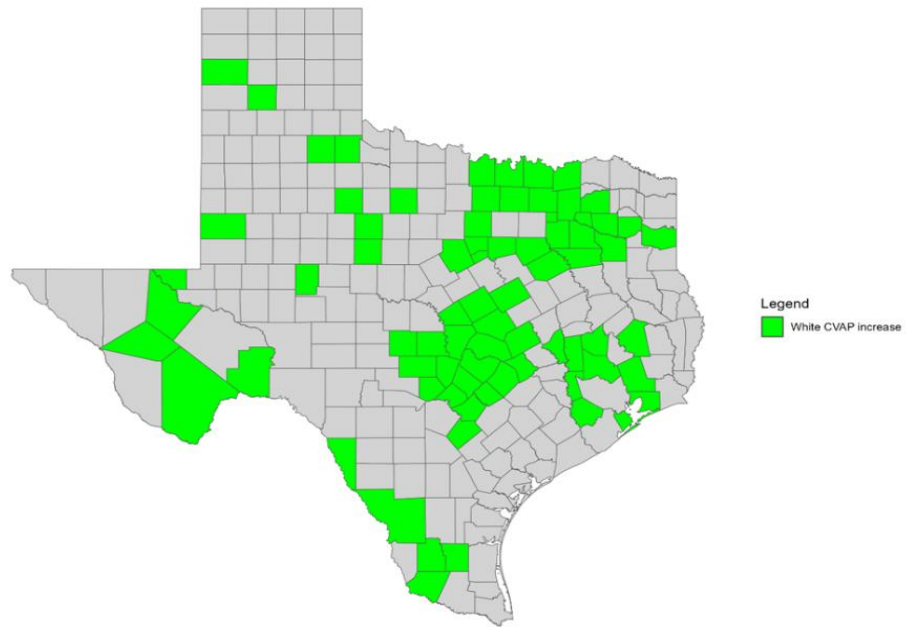
The number of Latino citizens of voting age increased in 202 of the 254 Texas counties, with four-fifths of counties experiencing gains (Figure 3). The Latino CVAP growth occurred across all regions of the state. On the other hand, White CVAP growth occurred in significantly fewer counties—75 of the 254 (Figure 4). The increase in the White CVAP occurred predominantly in the suburban areas of the Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Houston metropolitan areas.

Figure 3. Texas Counties With Increases in Latino Citizens of Voting Age Population (CVAP), 2017-2022



Source: 2017 and 2022 ACS Five-Year Estimates (data.census.gov)

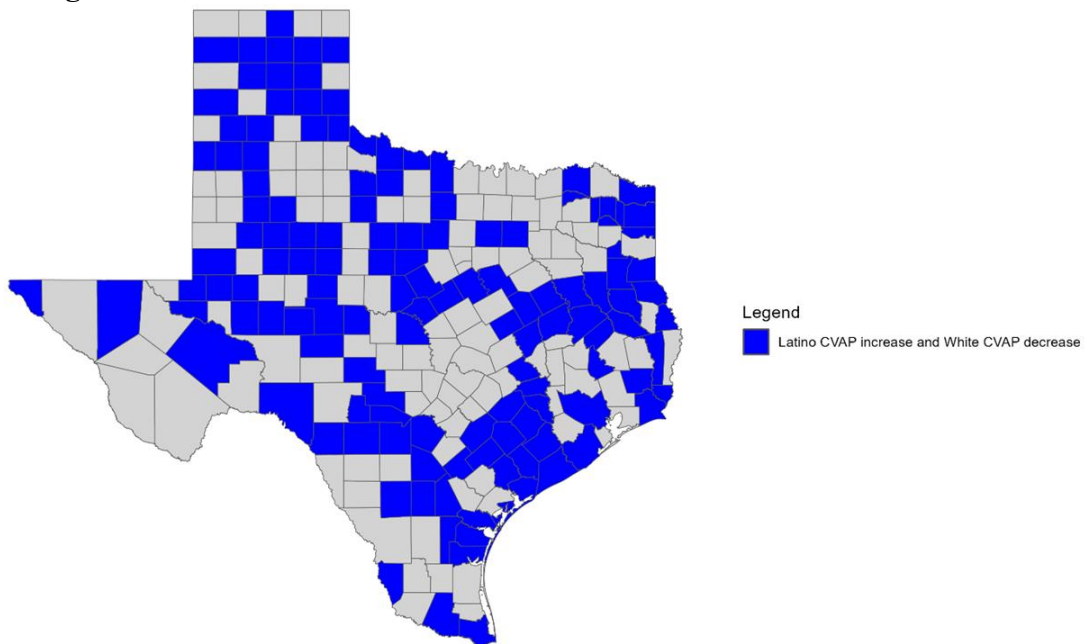
Figure 4. Texas Counties With Increases in White Citizens of Voting Age Population, 2017-2022



Source: 2017 and 2022 ACS Five-Year Estimates (data.census.gov)

Particularly noteworthy is that over half of Texas counties (134 out of 254) had gains in the Latino CVAP and losses in the White CVAP between 2017 and 2022 (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Texas Counties With Latino CVAP Gains and White CVAP Losses



Source: 2017 and 2022 ACS Five-Year Estimates (data.census.gov)

The Dominance of 12 Largest Counties in Latino CVAP Gains

The twelve most populous counties in Texas experienced gains of over 20,000 Latino citizens of voting age between 2017 and 2022 (Table 1). The largest six counties saw declines in the respective White numbers: Harris (Latinos, +174,838; Whites, -56,522), Bexar (+90,631; -6,225), Dallas (+77,270; -43,597), Tarrant (+73,722; -16,568), El Paso (+57,862; -5,026), and Hidalgo (+46,002; -4,002). Across these six counties, Latinos added more than half a million (520,325) citizens of voting age adults, while Whites had 132,000 fewer. In the remaining six counties with the largest Latino CVAP gains, Whites also experienced gains.

Overall, the 12 counties combined added more than 698,000 Latino citizens of voting age between 2017 and 2022, accounting for 69.3 percent of the 1 million Latino CVAP added throughout the state.

The Rising Latino Share of the CVAP in 33 Counties

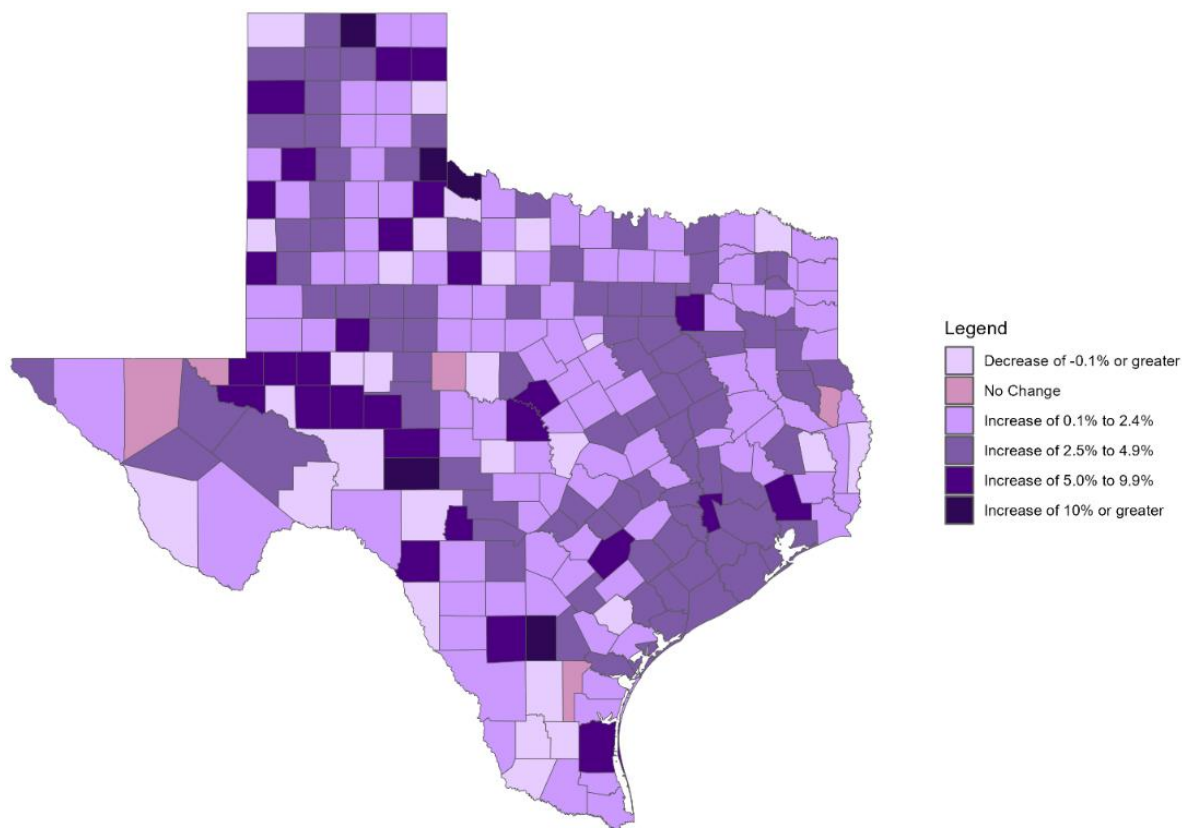
Although Latino increases in the of number citizens of voting age were widespread across the state, the growth was most noticeable in 33 counties which increased their percentage share of the county CVAP by 5 or more percentage points. These counties are shown in the three darkest hues of purple in Figure 6. Overall, for the most part, these are relatively small counties located in rural areas. The average population size of the 33 counties was 24,122 in 2022, with half having populations below 5,000.

Table 1. Twelve Counties with the Most Latino Citizens of Voting Age Population (CVAP) Added Between 2017 and 2022

County	Latino CVAP Increase	White CVAP Change
Harris	174,838	-56,522
Bexar	90,631	-6,225
Dallas	77,270	-43,597
Tarrant	73,722	-16,568
El Paso	57,862	-5,026
Hidalgo	46,002	-4,002
Travis	45,474	33,695
Fort Bend	31,902	4,534
Denton	28,215	36,107
Montgomery	24,619	25,208
Williamson	24,512	32,242
Collin	23,324	31,136

Source: 2017 and 2022 ACS Five-Year Estimates (data.census.gov)

Figure 6. Level of Percentage Point Change of County CVAP Latino, 2017-2022



Source: 2017 and 2022 ACS Five-Year Estimates (data.census.gov)

While the 33 counties are located in varying parts of the state, 20 (three-fifths of the 33) are located in West Texas, the Permian Basin, and the Panhandle regions. The remainder are located in South Texas (Middle Rio Grande in the southwest portion, Coastal Bend in the Corpus Christi area, and Golden Crescent in the Victoria vicinity), Upper Gulf Coast (Houston metro area), North Texas (Wichita Falls and the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area), and Central Texas (for a list of regions and subareas of the state, see [Map of the Regions of Texas \(texascounties.net\)](http://texascounties.net)).

Five counties saw the percentage share of Latinos climb 10 or more percentage points from 2017 to 2022: Sutton (located in West Texas; population of 3,345; 53.5% of CVAP Latino in 2017 to 66.8% in 2022); Childress (Panhandle; 6,781; 18.9% to 30.5%); Hardeman (North Texas, 3,541; 11.5% to 22.7%); McMullen (South Texas, Coastal Bend; 670; 39.4% to 50.1%), and Hansford (Panhandle; 5,270; 25.2% to 35.1%).

We now highlight the six most populous counties among the set of 33 counties and the significant gains they experienced in the rise of Latinos in their percentage share of the total CVAP from 2017 to 2022 (Table 2). All six counties experienced substantial gains in the share of the total CVAP that is Latino from 2017 to 2022, ranging from 5 (Liberty County) to 6.6 (Kaufman County) percentage points. The six counties include a county that became majority-Latino (Ector), two with approximately 40 percent of the CVAP being Latino (Midland and Howard), and three with about 20 percent of the CVAP being Latino (Waller, Kaufman, and Liberty).

Table 2. Rising Latino Percentage Share of County CVAP in the Six Most Populous of the 33 Counties With Largest Latino Gains

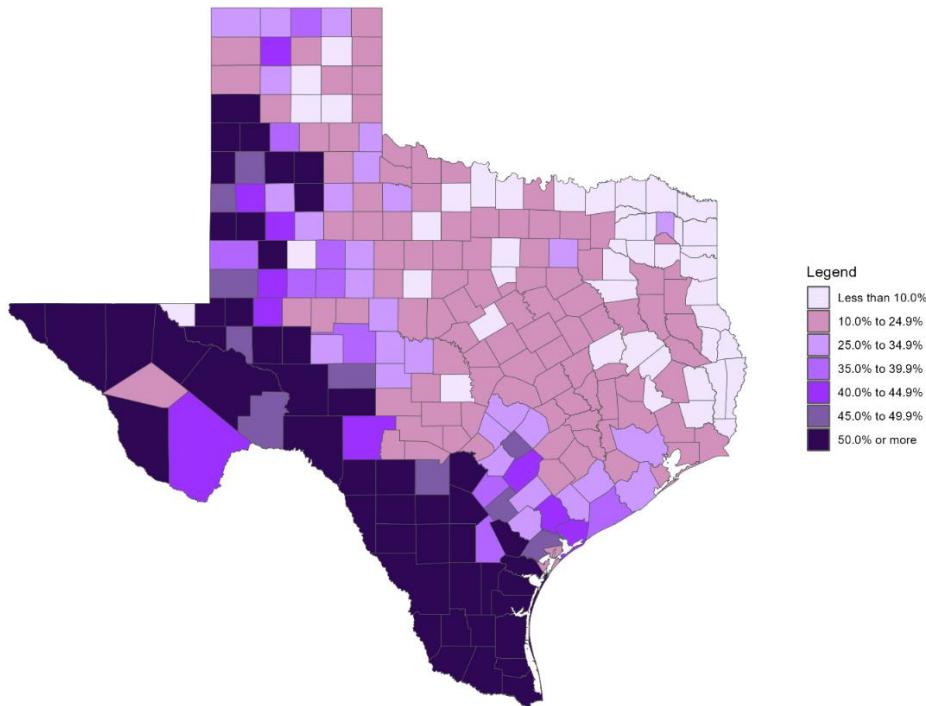
County	Region	2022 County Population	Pct. CVAP Latino	
			2017	2022
Midland County	Permian Basin	169,393	34.1	40.1
Ector County	Permian Basin	162,300	49.6	55.5
Kaufman County	Dallas-Fort Worth Metro	149,773	11.4	17.9
Liberty County	Houston Metro	93,523	12.4	17.5
Waller County	Houston Metro	57,463	14.1	20.7
Howard County	Permian Basin	34,488	31.4	36.9

Source: 2017 and 2022 ACS Five-Year Estimates (data.census.gov)

The Geographical Split of Latino CVAP Prominence

Despite the overwhelming growth of the Latino CVAP across much of Texas, Latinos comprised the largest percentage share of the total CVAP in counties in the south and the immediate southeast of the state and further north, generally west of San Angelo (Figure 6). Still, counties where Latinos account for 40 percent or more of the CVAP are clustered in southern and western Texas and largely to the west of the Lubbock vicinity in the West Texas, Permian Basin, and Panhandle regions.

Figure 6. Level of Percentage Share of Total Citizens of Voting Age Population (CVAP) Being Latino in Texas Counties



Source: 2017 and 2022 ACS Five-Year Estimates (data.census.gov)

In 2022, 47 counties had CVAPs with more than 50 percent being Latino. In 18 counties, Latinos accounted for over three-fourth of the total CVAP: Starr (94.9%), Kenedy (94.7%), Maverick (94.0%), Webb (93.7%), Zavala (93.3%), Jim Hogg (91.9%), Zapata (91.7%), Brooks (89.6%), Hidalgo (88.7%), Duval (87.4%), Cameron (86.1%), Dimmit (85.9%), Willacy (85.5%), La Salle (82.7%), El Paso (79.8%), Culberson (79.1%), Jim Wells (78.0%), Val Verde (77.0%), and Frio (75.6%).

The number of Latino-majority CVAP counties rose from 31 in 2017 to 47 in 2022. Fourteen counties became Latino-majority CVAP counties between 2017 and 2022. Aside from McMullen County, which has a population of 670 and is located in the southern part of Texas, these counties are in the Panhandle, Permian Basin, and West Texas regions.

Conclusions

In a relatively brief period spanning five years, the Texas citizens of voting age population (CVAP) changed significantly. Texas has become a majority-minority CVAP state, with non-Whites now outnumbering Whites among the potential voters in the upcoming election in early November and beyond. Latinos are driving this shift, accounting for 1 million of Texas' 1,650,000 new citizens of voting age added between 2017 and 2022, three of every five new persons that could potentially vote.

Moreover, Latino growth in the CVAP occurred throughout the state. In contrast, that for Whites occurred in much fewer counties, relegated primarily to suburban areas circling the Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Houston metropolitan areas. Latinos now represent the majority of the CVAP of 47 counties, including 14 largely located in the Panhandle, Permian Basin, and West Texas region, joining the ranks in 2022. These major shifts are due to an aging White population and a youthful Latino population.

While the CVAP represents the most widely available data to gauge the potential voters for the upcoming election, it represents only the possibility rather than the reality of casting a ballot. Indeed, Texans who are currently serving time in prison and those who are on probation are not eligible to vote. In addition, people who are part of the CVAP must register to vote and actually vote. If not, their numbers do not materialize beyond "potential voters." Latinos have comparatively low levels of voter registration and actual voting. This can partially be attributed to the [strict voting laws Texas has been increasingly passing every legislative session extending back to 2011](#), such as SB1, which is currently in litigation.

Finally, the demographic trends observed in our analysis above have been in motion for some time. They will intensify in the coming elections as the White population becomes increasingly much older than Latinos and other groups of color. In 2022, there were 3.5 million Latino youth less than 18 years of age who are U.S. citizens, with more than 193,000 turning age 18 every year. By comparison, 123,000 White youth who are U.S. citizens will turn 18 annually.

Given these demographic trends, it is no surprise why Texas Republicans keep enacting policies to make it difficult for Texans to vote and allege and [search for voter fraud](#) when there is [no evidence that it exists](#).

Rogelio Sáenz is a Professor in the Department of Sociology and Demography at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Selene M. Gomez is a Ph.D. candidate in Applied Demography at the University of Texas at San Antonio.