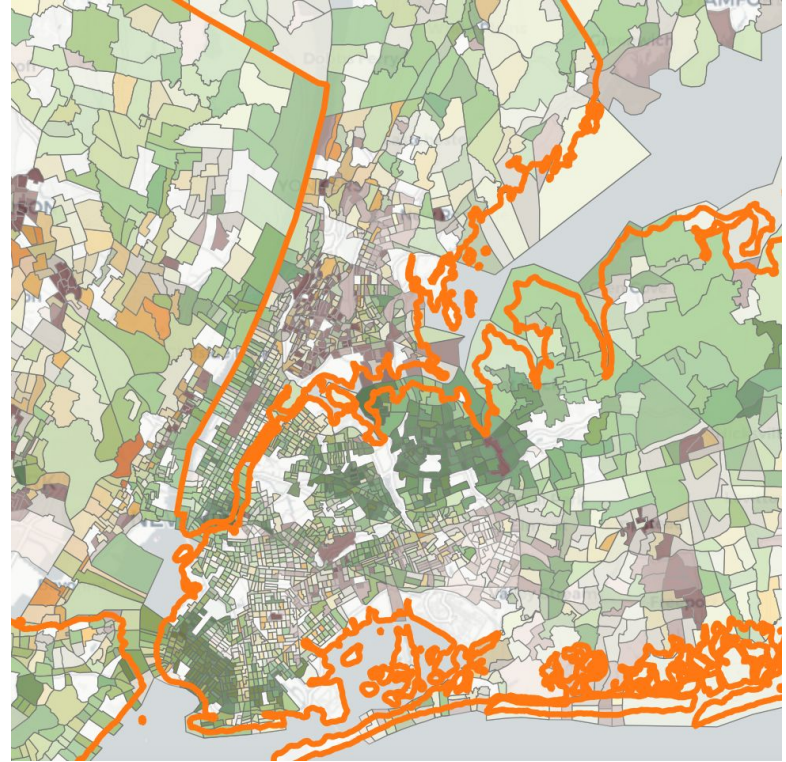# The Vital Voters Project

Finding and Connecting to the Voters Campaigns Often Ignore

A record number of Americans voted in 2020. Among people who had voted in prior presidential elections, Joe Biden and Donald Trump were essentially tied. But among people who were voting for their first time, Biden did much better:

–Among people whose first federal vote was in 2018, Biden won by 16.7 points.
–And among people whose first presidential vote was in 2020, Biden won by 9.8 points.

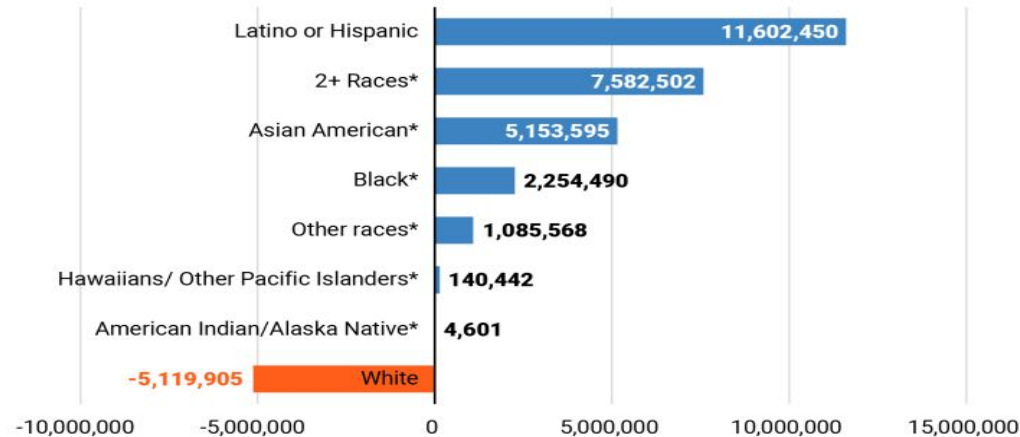These new and less regular voters are what we call Vital Voters.

Many Vital Voters are often missed or ignored by campaigns and voter registration drives because they aren't in the "mainstream" of American society. They are often newly naturalized citizens or people for whom English is not the primary language spoken at home.

We may say we want to reach them, but our tools for voter outreach generally don't.

Until now.

Based on the 2020 census, the United States population is changing dramatically. The white population is rapidly shrinking while non-white groups are growing.

Figure 2. Change in US population for race and ethnic groups, 2010-2020

Group	Change
Latino or Hispanic	11,602,450
2+ Races*	7,582,502
Asian American*	5,153,595
Black*	2,254,490
Other races*	1,085,568
Hawaiians/ Other Pacific Islanders*	140,442
American Indian/Alaska Native*	4,601
White	-5,119,905

* non-Latino or Hispanic members of racial group

Source: William H. Frey analysis of 2010 and 2020 U.S. decennial censuses.

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The number of immigrant voters is growing exponentially

Between 2000 and 2020, the size of the immigrant electorate nearly doubled to 23.2 million.

On average, 860,000 naturalized citizens are sworn in each year. Even in the middle of a pandemic, 625,000 became citizens in 2020.

Countries of Birth

Among the top five countries of birth for people naturalizing in FY 2020, Mexico was the lead country, with 13.3% of all naturalizations, followed by India (7.7%), the Philippines (5.3%), Cuba (5%), and the People's Republic of China (3.7%). The top five countries of birth comprised 35% of the naturalized citizens in FY 2020.

Country	Percentage
Mexico	13.3%
India	7.7%
Philippines	5.3%
Cuba	5.0%
China	3.7%
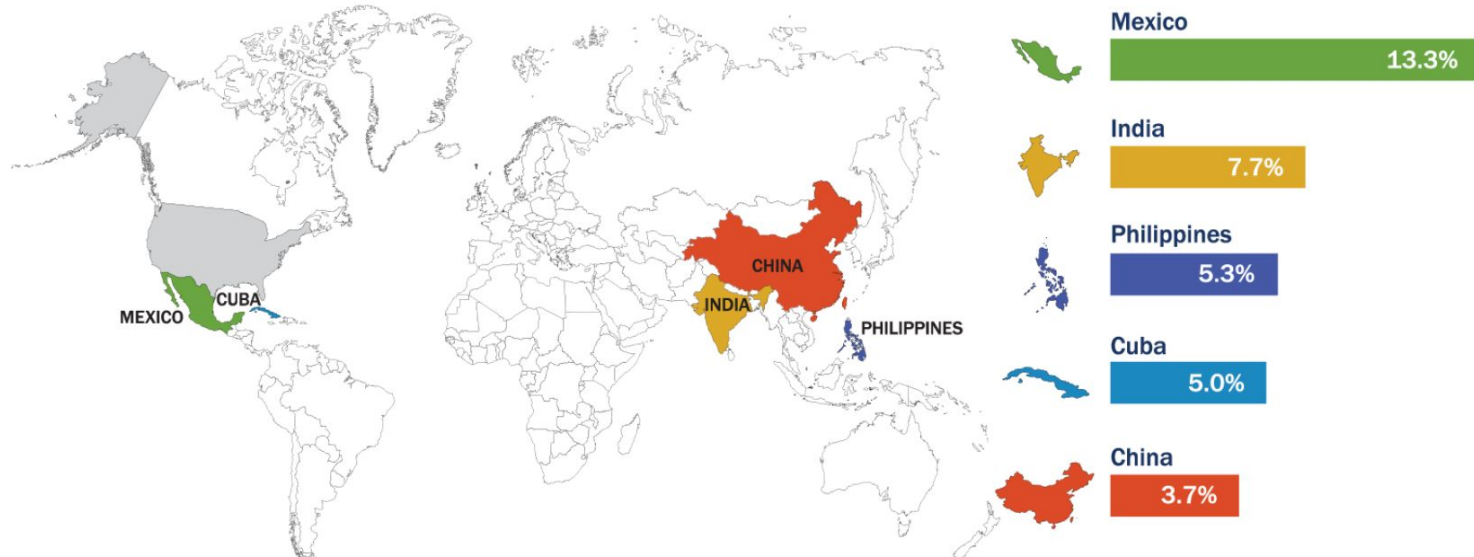
Source: USCIS

Immigrant Voters Are Critical to Winning in Battleground States

In Georgia, AAPI turnout increased by 62,000 in 2020 from 2016. Biden won by fewer than 12,000 votes.
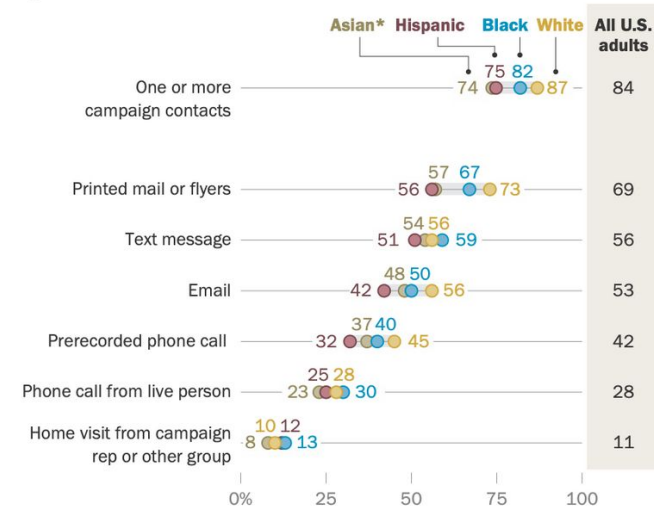
Source: TargetSmart

16% of eligible voters in Florida are naturalized citizens. 10% in Texas. 8% percent in Arizona.

Source: Pew Research Center

AAPI and Latino voters received less campaign contact than White and Black voters in battleground states in 2020

Majority of eligible voters overall said they received a campaign contact before 2020 election, with lower shares of Hispanics and Asians saying so

% of U.S. citizen adults who said they were contacted in the following ways by a candidate's campaign or a group supporting a candidate in the month before the November 2020 election

	Asian*	Hispanic	Black	White	All U.S. adults
One or more campaign contacts	74	75	82	87	84
Printed mail or flyers	56	57	67	73	69
Text message	51	54	59	56	56
Email	42	48	50	56	53
Prerecorded phone call	32	37	40	45	42
Phone call from live person	23	25	30	28	28
Home visit from campaign rep or other group	8	10	13	12	11

*Asian adults interviewed in English only.
Note: Based on U.S. citizen adults. White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Contacts include those from any candidate or group supporting a candidate.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 12-17, 2020.

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Take a look at the Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Arabic populations. Consider the potential in Texas. Remember that Beto O'Rourke lost to Ted Cruz in 2018 by 214,921 votes.

State	Total Population	Chinese	Low Eng Prof	Vietnamese	Low Eng Prof	Korean	Low Eng Prof	Arabic	Low Eng Prof
Arizona	6,946,685	34,917	17,440	23,792	13,695	9,983	4,777	25,342	9,736
Colorado	5,531,141	24,813	12,234	19,998	10,987	14,299	7,025	11,666	4,077
Florida	20,598,139	74,711	40,564	61,725	34,894	20,365	10,177	58,147	18,832
Georgia	10,297,484	49,100	25,311	45,853	28,138	47,552	25,302	18,798	6,303
Iowa	3,132,499	12,313	7,325	8,549	5,594	2,859	1,352	7,986	3,489
Michigan	9,957,488	50,366	25,309	14,373	8,117	15,463	7,434	138,749	58,453
Minnesota	5,527,358	23,981	11,427	23,106	13,270	5,333	2,221	13,635	4,845
Nevada	2,922,849	29,334	16,817	9,546	4,451	10,927	5,521	4,977	1,388
North Carolina	10,155,624	36,635	16,323	23,205	13,641	15,342	7,295	23,405	8,571
Ohio	11,641,879	46,268	22,851	13,277	7,157	10,772	5,120	44,747	15,644
Pennsylvania	12,956,593	88,410	48,055	36,618	22,561	28,390	13,980	35,767	13,499
Texas	**27.885.195**	**170.446**	**82.010**	**219.569**	**124.500**	**58.077**	**28.742**	**86.165**	**30.812**

Source: American Community Survey

Contrary to popular opinion, Asian Americans favor the Democratic Party

Table 2. Party Favorability Among Asian American Registered Voters, 2018

	Republican Party			Democratic Party		
	Unfavo-rable	No opinion/ never heard	Favo-rable	Unfavo–rable	No opinion/ never heard	Favo–rable
ASIAN AM	**52%**	**14%**	**34%**	**28%**	**14%**	**58%**
Asian Indian	54%	10%	36%	20%	8%	70%
Chinese	58%	24%	20%	28%	20%	52%
Filipino	44%	8%	48%	36%	12%	50%
Japanese	68%	20%%	14%	26%	18%	56%
Korean	56%	10%	32%	26%	10%	62%
Vietnamese	38%	14%	48%	24%	16%	60%

AAPI voter turnout increased by 10 points in 2020. Latino voters by 6 points.

Percentage of citizens over 18 that voted in the presidential elections from 2008-2020, broken down by race or ethnicity

ASIAN	HISPANIC	WHITE	BLACK
+25.5% vs. 2008	+8% vs. 2008	+7.6% vs. 2008	-3.1% vs. 2008

ASIAN: 2008: 47%, 2012: 47%, 2016: 49%, 2020: 59%

HISPANIC: 2008: 50%, 2012: 48%, 2016: 48%, 2020: 54%

WHITE: 2008: 66%, 2012: 64%, 2016: 65%, 2020: 71%

BLACK: 2008: 65%, 2012: 67%, 2016: 60%, 2020: 63%
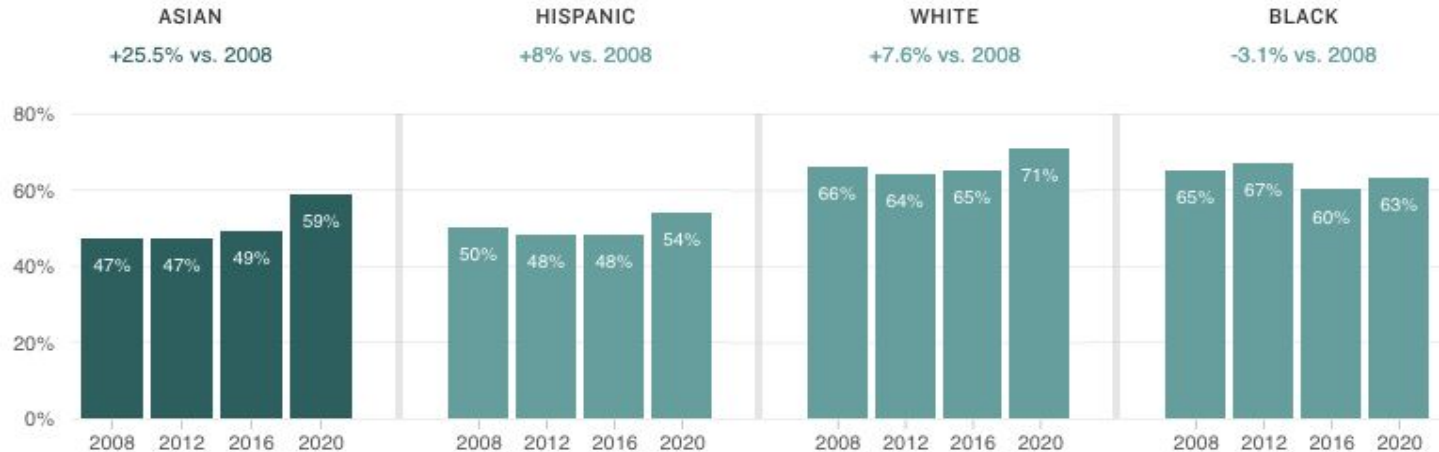
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Credit: Ruth Talbot/NPR

The tools campaigns use to target voters are blind to these opportunities. At best, they use Spanish-sounding surnames as a way to "find" Latinos, with no regard to country of origin.

You can't ask Votebuilder to find voters by country of origin or language spoken in the home.
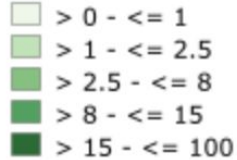
By combining 2020 US Census data with 2020 election data, the Vital Voters Project makes it possible for campaigns to see where such voters are geographically concentrated, either by census tract or precinct.
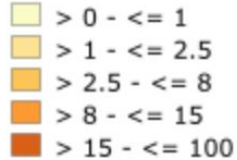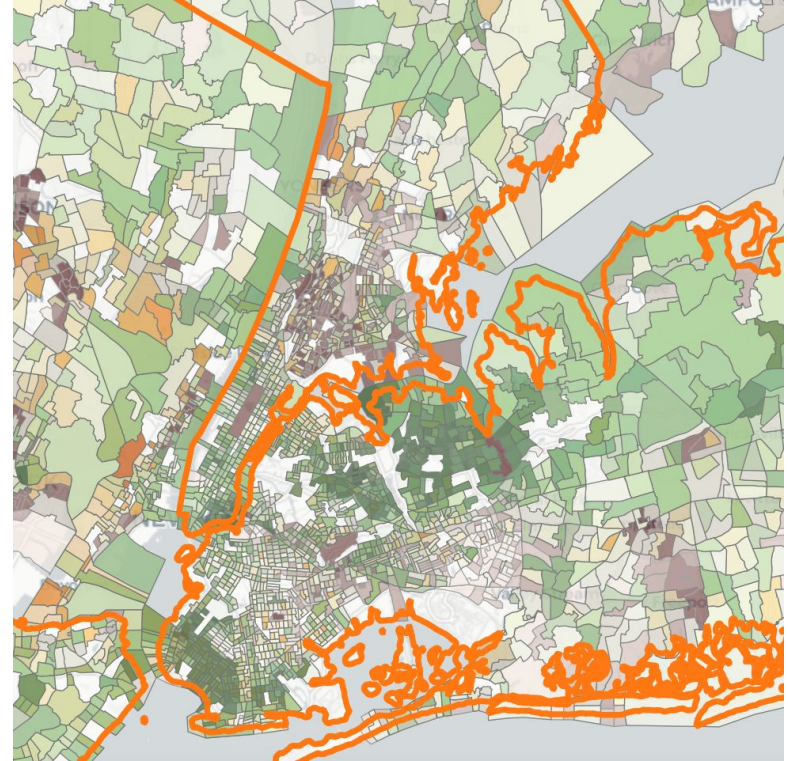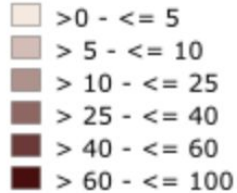
Legend

NY State Boundary

☐ States

Tracts Percentage Chinese

☐ > 0 - <= 1
☐ > 1 - <= 2.5
☐ > 2.5 - <= 8
☐ > 8 - <= 15
☐ > 15 - <= 100

Tracts Percentage Arabic

☐ > 0 - <= 1
☐ > 1 - <= 2.5
☐ > 2.5 - <= 8
☐ > 8 - <= 15
☐ > 15 - <= 100

Tracts Percentage Spanish

☐ >0 - <= 5
☐ > 5 - <= 10
☐ > 10 - <= 25
☐ > 25 - <= 40
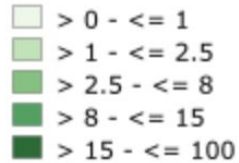☐ > 40 - <= 60
☐ > 60 - <= 100

Armed with this information, campaigns can better target these voters with language- and culturally-appropriate materials and volunteers.
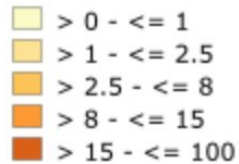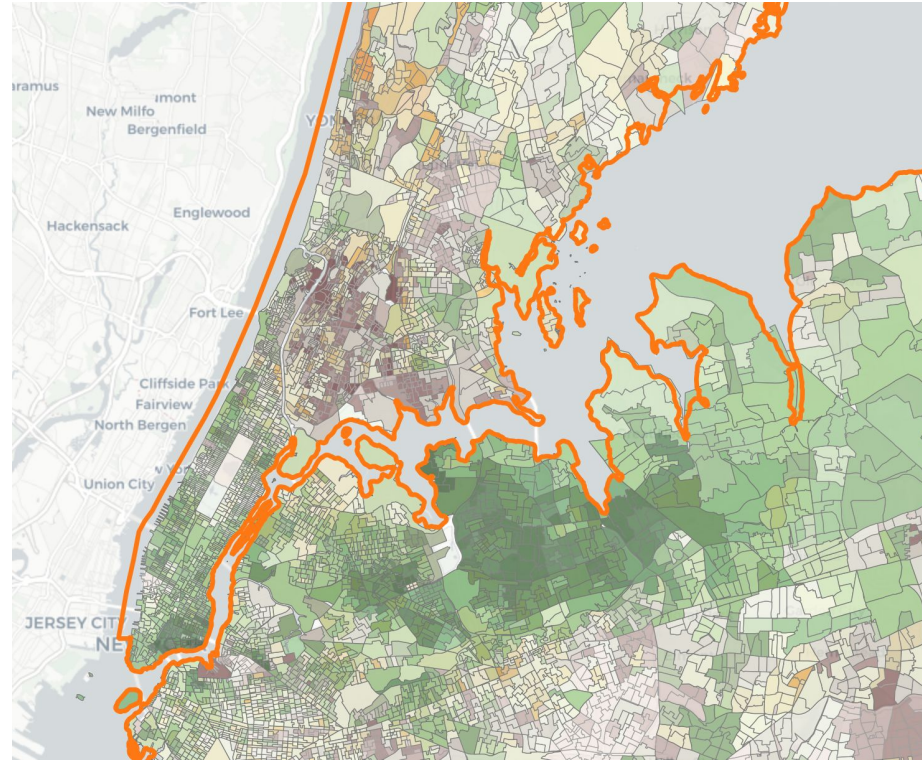
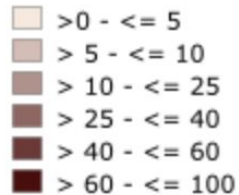Legend

NY State Boundary

☐ States

Precincts Percentage Chinese

☐ > 0 - <= 1
☐ > 1 - <= 2.5
☐ > 2.5 - <= 8
☐ > 8 - <= 15
☐ > 15 - <= 100

Precincts Percentage Arabic

☐ > 0 - <= 1
☐ > 1 - <= 2.5
☐ > 2.5 - <= 8
☐ > 8 - <= 15
☐ > 15 - <= 100

Precincts Percentage Spanish

☐ >0 - <= 5
☐ > 5 - <= 10
☐ > 10 - <= 25
☐ > 25 - <= 40
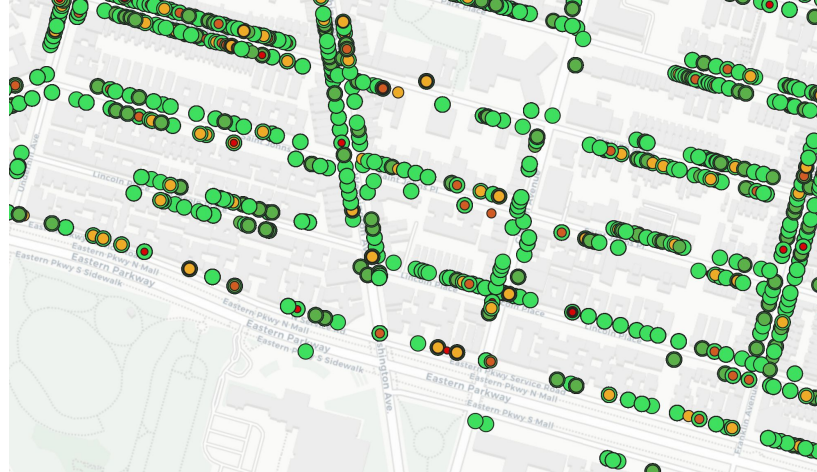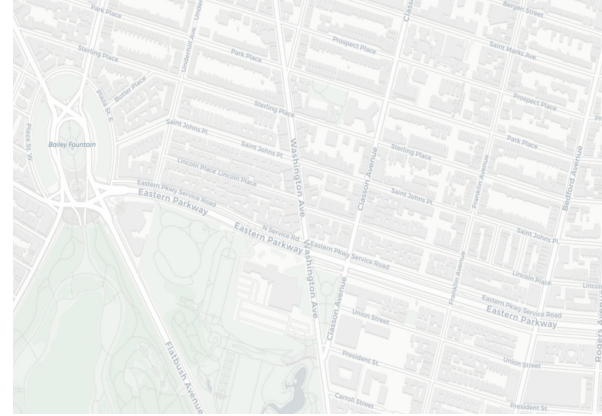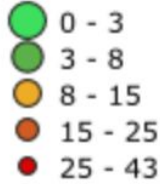☐ > 40 - <= 60
☐ > 60 - <= 100

We are working on going further, to integrate data about individual voters based on where they live and how often they vote. We are also planning to include breakdowns by age, to better find younger voters.

Legend

NY State Boundary

☐ States

Voters - vote count

● 0 - 3
● 3 - 8
● 8 - 15
● 15 - 25
● 25 - 43

Eventually, a campaign or voter registration group could use this data to zero in on where irregular and newly registered voters are concentrated, as well as where voter engagement levels are lower or higher.

Next steps:

- We're looking for partners who want to use these maps in their campaigns
- We're looking for funding to continue building and refining these tools

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