New American Voters in Michigan

Building the Electoral Power of Naturalized Voters

Election Day in Detroit, 2020. Photo courtesy Michigan United.

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Photo courtesy Michigan United, 2022.

Executive Summary EMBARGO

The high stakes of the 2022 U.S. midterm elections showcase the urgency of engaging all eligible voters to ensure a fully participatory, representative democracy. In Michigan, a bloc of New American Voters — recently naturalized citizens that have earned the right to vote — has the potential to play an outsized role in the outcomes of critical federal and state races. This voting bloc is multiracial, multigenerational, geographically diverse, and majority female. New American Voters hold distinct ideologies, experiences, and viewpoints, and will be motivated by a variety of issues this November.

With a competitive gubernatorial election (rated "toss up" by the Cook Political Report), Michigan will be one of the most critical states during the November 2022 midterm elections and New American Voters can sway the outcome. Michigan ranks 9th according to the New American Voters Impact Model, which was created by the National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA) and the U.S. Immigration Policy Center (USIPC) at the University of California, San Diego to showcase the potential of this critical voting bloc to influence the outcome of midterm elections in 50 states. This report offers data that illustrates how New American Voters can have an outsized impact.

- Michigan is home to 66,177 newly naturalized citizens, representing nearly half of the 154,188-vote margin of victory in the 2020 presidential election in the state.
- Nearly 20 percent of Michigan's newly naturalized citizens are from Iraq. Approximately 61 percent are under the age of 45 years old and more than around 53 percent are women.
- The Detroit-Warren-Dearborn metropolitan area has the highest concentration of naturalized citizens, with nearly 290,000, followed by the Grand Rapids metropolitan area with nearly 34,000, and then the Ann Arbor metropolitan area with approximately 32,000.

Michigan's cohort is part of an estimated 5.19 million newly naturalized citizens across the U.S., according to New American Voters 2022: Harnessing the Power of Naturalized Citizens, a report released by NPNA, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), APIAVote, and USPIC. The power of this potential voting bloc is determined by individuals' ability to both register and vote this November.

This electoral season presents many challenges, including the need for organizations to adapt their voter engagement work to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, language access issues , and ongoing efforts to tighten and restrict access to voting, particularly targeting voters of color. One form of voter suppression that has emerged in recent years is the increasing backlog and processing delays of citizenship applications.

According to the latest data from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), there are over 700,000 pending citizenship applications nationwide, with 14,553 applications backlogged in USCIS' offices in Michigan and an average processing time of 11 months.[1] This means that immigrants who are eligible for citizenship and who would have otherwise naturalized and have had time to register to vote in this year's elections may not be able to do so given the naturalization application backlog.

Michigan-based organizations, including Asian & Pacific Islander Vote (APIAVote) Michigan, and Michigan United, are partnering with NPNA's New American Voters Campaign, a non-partisan nationwide effort to address naturalization barriers and encourage newly naturalized citizens to register and vote.

1 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, "Number of Form n-400 Application for Naturalization by Category of Naturalization, Case Status and USCIS Field Office Location." October 1, 2021 - December 31,2021. https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/reports/N400_performancedata_fy2022_qtr1.pdf

Methodology EMBARGO

This report is based on USCIS data on naturalizations that occurred from Fiscal Year 2016 through FY 2020 and naturalization applications that the agency approved in FY 2021.[2] Estimates for naturalizations during FY 2021 are based on previous spikes in naturalizations between FY 2019 and FY 2020, right before the presidential election.

"Newly naturalized citizens" are defined as those who have naturalized since FY 2016. "New American Voters" are defined as those who have naturalized since FY 2016 and can subsequently register to vote.

This report utilizes United Nations regional classifications to specify newly naturalized citizens' region of origin.[3] These classifications are Americas, Asia, Europe, Africa, and Oceania. All of the tables referenced throughout this report are based on USCIS data from 2016-2020. Additionally, data onnaturalization gaps is based on the 2020 1-Year ACS.[4]

The New American Voters Impact Model (Figure 1) ranks states' relative "political importance" based on six factors: (1) newly naturalized citizens from 2016 to 2020 as a multiple of the state's 2016presidential vote margin; (2) the average presidential election margin in 2012, 2016, and 2020; (3) group density; (4) the presence of a competitive U.S. Senate race; (5) the presence of a competitive gubernatorial race; and (6) the presence of a competitive race for control of state legislative chambers. All of these factors are multiplied by each other in order to arrive at a raw score. That raw score is standardized on a 1 to 99 scale. The 15 highest-scoring states are termed "politically important states" throughout this report. A more in-depth explanation of the model factors can be found in NPNA's companion national report.[5]

2 See "Naturalizations," U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, accessed May 9, 2022, https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/naturalizations. "Immigration and Citizenship Data," U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, accessed May 9, 2022, https://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-and-studies/ immigration-and-citizenship-data

3 See "Countries or Areas," United Nations Statistics Division, accessed May 9, 2022, https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/#geo-regions

4 See "American Community Survey," United States Census Bureau, accessed May 9, 2022, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/

5 National Partnership for New Americans, Service Employees International Union, U.S. Immigration Policy Center at the University of California San Diego, and APIA Vote, "New American Voters 2022: Harnessing the Power of Naturalized Citizens," July 2022, https://newamericanvoters.org/assets/2022/07/NPNA_2022-New-American-Voters-Report.pdf

WHY MICHIGAN IS SO IMPORTANT

There are more than 390,000 naturalized citizens in Michigan, representing nearly four percent of the state population and nearly five percent of all registered voters. As Figure 2 shows, approximately one-fifth of all naturalized citizens in Michigan have naturalized since the 2016 presidential election.

Figure 1: Politically Important States, according to the New American Voters Impact Model, 2022
This map shows how states score in the NPNA New American Voters Impact Model

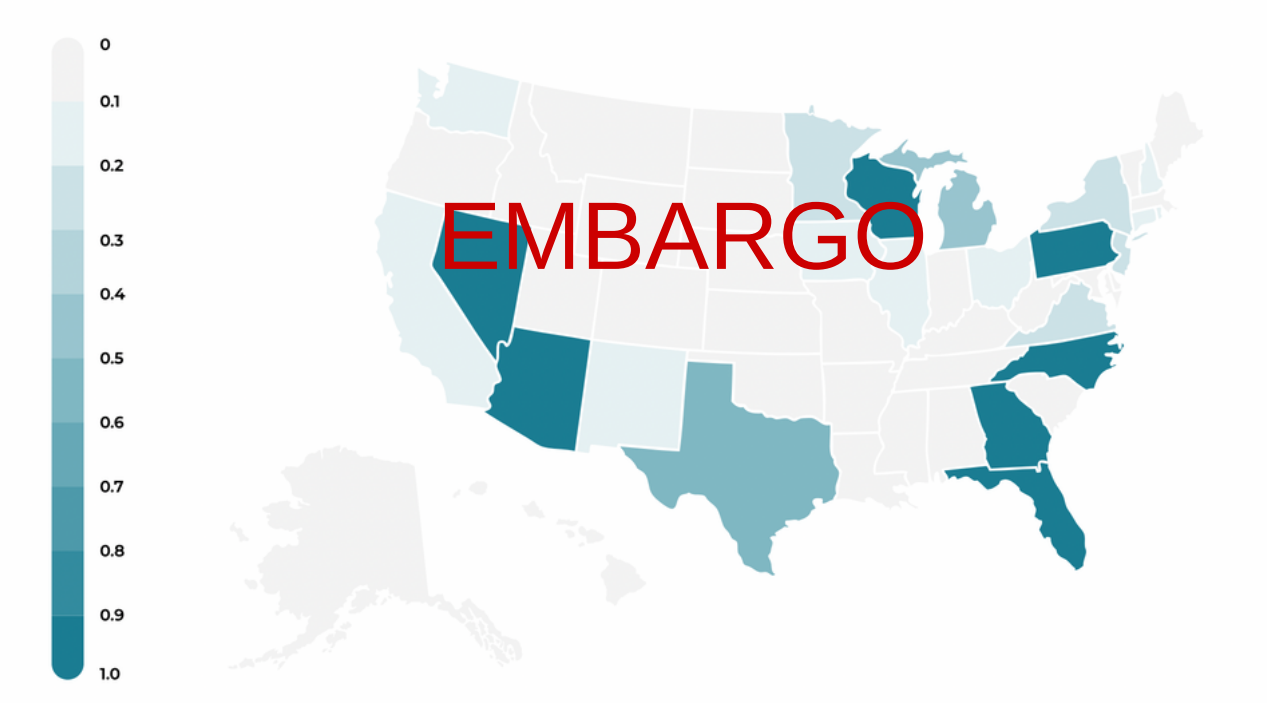

Figure 2: Michigan State Population Figures 2022

TOTAL POPULATION	REGISTERED VOTERS	ALL NATURALIZED CITIZENS	NEWLY NATURALIZED CITIZENS 2016-2020
10,005,488	8,116,535[6]	386,131	66,177

From 2016 through 2020, Michigan added an estimated 66,177 newly naturalized citizens, which is almost half the 154,188-vote margin of victory during the 2020 presidential election in the state. Michigan's cohort is part of an estimated 5.19 million newly naturalized citizens across the U.S.[7]

6 Michigan Voter Information Center, Department of State. "Voter Registration Statistics," accessed September 1, 2022, https://mvic.sos.state.mi.us/VoterCount/Index

7 National Partnership for New Americans, Service Employees International Union, U.S. Immigration Policy Center at the University of California San Diego, and APIA Vote, "New American Voters 2022: Harnessing the Power of Naturalized Citizens," July 2022, https://newamericanvoters.org/assets/2022/07/NPNA_2022-New-American-Voters-Report.pdf

WHO ARE MICHIGAN'S NEW AMERICAN VOTERS?

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Of the total number of persons who naturalized in Michigan from 2016 to 2020, approximately 63 percent are from Asia, which includes Asian and Pacific Islander countries,[8] approximately 15 percent are from the Americas, which includes Latin America and the Caribbean, approximately 15 percent are from Europe, and approximately 7 percent are from the African continent. (See Figure 3.)

FIGURE 3: MICHIGAN NATURALIZED CITIZENS BY REGION OF ORIGIN 2016-2020

REGION	NUMBER OF NEWLY NATURALIZED CITIZENS	PERCENTAGE OF NEWLY NATURALIZED CITIZE
Americas	41,676	63%
Asia	9,859	15%
Europe	9,700	15%
Africa	4,544	7%
Oceania	175	0.3%
Other/Unknown	223	0.3%
Total 2016-2020	66,177	

63%

Newly Naturalized Citizens from the Americas & Carribean

15%

Newly Naturalized Citizens from Asian and Pacific Islander Countires

8 The UN region classifications used in this report define the Middle East as part of "Western Asia." See the methodology section for details.

Figure 4 shows the top 20 countries of origin for persons who naturalized in Michigan from 2016 to 2020. Newly naturalized citizens from Iraq lead the way, followed by India, then Mexico.

FIGURE 4: MICHIGAN NEWLY NATURALIZED CITIZENS BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, 2016-2020

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RANK	COUNTRY	TOTAL
1	Iraq	12,958
2	India	5,992
3	Mexico	4,186
4	Bangladesh	2,904
5	Lebanon	2,678
6	Yemen	2,482
7	China, People's Republic	2,279
8	Canada	1,998
9	Philippines	1,867
10	Albania	1,721
11	Vietnam	1,382
12	Pakistan	1,302
13	Burma	1,200
14	United Kingdom	1,160
15	Korea, South	1,015
16	Romania	880
17	Ukraine	800
18	Syria	759
19	Nigeria	663
20	Jordan	662

26%

Newly naturalized U.S. citizens 35-45 years old

25%

Newly naturalized U.S. citizens 25-34 years old

19%

Newly naturalized U.S. citizens 45-55 years old

12%

Newly naturalized U.S. citizens 55-65 years old

10%

Newly naturalized U.S. citizens 18-24 years old

Approximately 61 percent of persons who naturalized in Michigan from 2016 to 2020 were below the age of 45 and more than 53 percent were women. The full breakdown by age and gender is shown in the table below.

Figure 5: Michigan Newly Naturalized Citizens By Age and Gender* 2016-2020

AGE	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	%
18-24 YEARS	3,230	3,163	6,393	10%
25-34 YEARS	8,910	7,592	16,502	25%
35-45 YEARS	9,162	7,942	17,104	26%
45-55 YEARS	6,375	6,022	12,397	19%
55-65 YEARS	4,298	3,544	7,842	12%
65 YEARS AND OLDER	3,296	2,643	5,939	9%
TOTAL	35,271 (53.3% of total)	30,906 (46.7% of total)	66,177	

*USCIS does not collect data on transgender or non-binary individuals.

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WHERE ARE MICHIGAN'S NEW AMERICAN VOTERS?

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Table 6 shows the total number of naturalized citizens in metropolitan areas in Michigan. The Detroit-Warren-Dearborn metropolitan area has nearly 290,000 naturalized citizens, followed by the Grand Rapids metropolitan area with nearly 34,000 naturalized citizens, and then the Ann Arbor metropolitan area with approximately 32,000 naturalized citizens.[9]

Figure 6: Michigan Naturalized U.S. Citizens By Metro Area and Region of Origin, 2022

Metropolitan Area	Total	Africa	Americas	Asia	Europe	Oceania
Detroit-Warren-Dearborn, MI	287,623	12,329	30,011	181,041	63,647	595
Grand Rapids-Wyoming, MI	33726	2,832	10,598	12,598	7,245	152
Ann Arbor, MI	31,851	3,224	2,808	18,676	7,143	N/A
Lansing-East Lansing, MI	9,816	1,954	637	5,264	1,961	N/A
Kalamazoo-Portage, MI	7,780	67	2,611	2,956	2,146	N/A
Niles-Benton Harbor, MI	4,496	265	674	1,718	1,836	N/A
Saginaw, MI	2,642	171	477	970	1,024	N/A
Jackson, MI	1,898	N/A	1,353	427	118	N/A
Monroe, MI	1,731	N/A	129	994	608	N/A
Muskegon, MI	1,626	120	337	1,033	136	N/A

Note: This table includes figures of **all** naturalized citizens in named regions, not just newly naturalized.

9 Estimates obtained from the 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Public Use Microdata (PUM).

Votes Counted Voices Carried campaign event at the University of Michigan. Photo courtesy APIAVote Michigan, September 2016.

ENGAGING MICHGAN'S NEW AMERICAN VOTERS

The 2022 New American Voters campaign is a non-partisan nationwide effort coordinated by NPNA to encourage newly naturalized citizens to register and vote. Newly naturalized citizens in Michigan interested in becoming citizens or new voters can connect with the following NPNA member and partner organizations below for more information.

Michigan Partners

Asian Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote) Michigan is a nonpartisan nonprofit committed to justice and equity for the Asian American community through grassroots mobilization, civic engagement, leadership development, and coalition building. Learn more at www.apiavotemi.org.

Michigan United organizes to build the power our communities need to win the justice they deserve. We're working for an equitable and sustainable world that reflects our values of economic and racial justice. Learn more at www.miunited.org.

National Partners

The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) unites 2 million diverse members in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico. SEIU members working in the healthcare industry, in the public sector and in property services believe in the power of joining together on the job to win higher wages and benefits and to create better communities while fighting for a more just society and an economy that works for all of us, not just corporations and the wealthy. Learn more at www.seiu.org

The U.S. Immigration Policy Center (USIPC) at UC San Diego was the lead author of this report in partnership with NPNA and SEIU. USIPC conducts and supports rigorous social science research to advance understanding of the foundations and consequences of U.S. immigration policy. Immigration has played an integral role in American history and is sure to feature prominently in America's future. But what should the immigration policies of our nation of immigrants be? The USIPC brings together leading academics, policy analysts, immigrant rights leaders, and policymakers across all levels of government to conceptualize, debate, and design a new U.S. immigration policy agenda that meets the demands of the 21st century. Learn more at www.usipc.ucsd.edu

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