Did Low Voter Turnout in Minority Neighborhoods Drive Trump's Victory in Ohio? What the Cuyahoga County Results Indicate

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- Donald Trump won Ohio's 18 Electoral College votes by a margin of more than 446,000 ballots (2,841,005 for Trump versus 2,394,164 for Clinton). Some observers have suggested that low voter turn-out among African-American and Hispanic/Latino residents in urbanized counties played an important role in Trump's Ohio victory.

- Cuyahoga County is an excellent place to explore this issue. In Cuyahoga County Clinton received 383,974 votes (65 percent) versus Trump's 179,894 votes (31 percent). Specific data about how individual voters voted are confidential but totals by precinct are available.[1] Voting data can be compared to census data about where people live to estimate voter registration rates, voter turn-out, and voting preferences among different groups.

- Map 1 shows the percent of registered voters who voted in the election by precinct and the geographic distribution of African American and Hispanic/Latino residents of voting age (18 and older) in Cuyahoga County. Each red dot represents 100 voting age African-American residents and each green dot represents 100 voting age Hispanic/Latino residents (2010 Census).

- Map 1 indicates that African-Americans and Hispanics/Latinos largely live in neighborhoods where voter turn-out was lower than average. Using residential location data, I estimate that about 84 or 85 percent of African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos are registered to vote (the same proportion as non-African-Americans).[2]

- In Cuyahoga County approximately 56.4 percent of all persons age 18 and older voted,[3] slightly less than the estimated national turn-out rate of 58.1 percent.[4] Based on residential location, I estimate that voter turn-out in Cuyahoga County was about 50.6 percent among African Americans, and about 35.6 percent among Hispanics/Latinos.

- Map 2 shows the percent of votes for Clinton by precinct and the geographic distribution of African American and Hispanic/Latino voting age residents. Based on these data, I estimate that about 87 percent of African-American voters and 67 percent of Hispanic/Latino voters voted for Clinton in Cuyahoga County. If voter turn-out among these two groups matched the higher county average, Clinton would likely have received another 24,400 votes.

- Cuyahoga County accounts for 26.1 percent of Ohio's African American voting population and 17.6 percent of the state's voting age Hispanic/Latino population (2015 ACS). Conflating the Cuyahoga County estimates for turn-out and voting preference statewide (arguably a "best case" scenario for Clinton) higher voter turnout among African-Americans and Hispanics/Latinos could have generated approximately 99,000 more votes for Clinton throughout Ohio. Since Trump won by 446,841 votes, I conclude that lower voter turn-out among minority voters in Ohio's urbanized counties was not a major factor in Donald Trump's electoral victory in the state.

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[1] See http://boe.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/RaceResultsAll.aspx
[2] The proportions of voting age residents by race and ethnicity (2010 census) are used to allocate voter registration by race and ethnicity in each precinct and summed to estimate overall registration rates by race and ethnicity in the County. This method assumes that racial and ethnic voter registration rates within each precinct are equal.
[3] This is based on 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates of population by age.
[4] See data at http://electproject.org.

**Map 1: Percent of Registered Voters Voting in 2016 Presidential Election
and
African American and Hispanic/Latino Persons 18 and Older**

Cuyahoga County, Ohio

Percent of registered voters who voted

11.3% - 49.9%
50.0% - 67.6%
67.6% - 74.9%
74.9% - 87.3%

By precinct

Persons 18 and Older

1 Dot = 100
African American
Hispanic/Latino

Randomly located
within census block

Sources:
Cuyahoga County
Board of Elections

2010 Census

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**Map 2: Percent Voting for Clinton in 2016 Presidential Election
and
African American and Hispanic/Latino Persons 18 and Older**

Cuyahoga County, Ohio

Percent for Clinton

30.3% - 49.9%
49.9% - 66.6%
66.6% - 84.9%
84.9% - 98.9%

By precinct

Persons 18 and Older

1 Dot = 100
African American
Hispanic/Latino

Randomly located
within census block

Sources:
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Board of Elections

2010 Census

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