

STATE OF REPRE SENTA TION ²⁰₂₀

NEW AMERICANS IN
STATE LEGISLATURES



NEW
AMERICAN
LEADERS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The importance of who holds the power in state capitals has never been more pronounced than in 2020, in the midst of the current COVID-19 pandemic and the calls for urgent action to address police brutality. The recent deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Tony McDade, Nina Pop and Breonna Taylor have sparked national mobilization to hold police accountable and address the disproportionate number of deaths of Black Americans at the hands of law enforcement. Civil uprisings have spread across cities, and calls for systemic change have become a national rallying cry.

This popular call for change and recognition that Black lives matter are occurring at the same time that immigrants and people of color, who are frontline workers in the healthcare industry and food supply chain, have been disproportionately affected by job loss, illness and death. COVID-19 has deepened the existing economic and healthcare divide and further emphasized that political choices at the state level play a pivotal role in protecting residents.

State-level policymakers play a vital role in addressing criminal justice reform, creating police reform legislation and controlling budgets that influence the way cities and county-level law enforcement are funded. More broadly, they help ensure that the voices of all constituents are heard, and the needs of all communities are met equitably.

State of Representation 2020 presents new findings on the current composition of state legislatures in the United States. The data identifies which states have the largest disparities in representation as well as specific groups of New Americans who are particularly underrepresented in state legislatures. This is the first survey, to our knowledge, that sought to identify Black state legislators with immigrant origins from the Caribbean, Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, and non-white New American state legislators from the Middle East and North Africa.

KEY FINDINGS

46/50

New American legislators are underrepresented in 46 of the 50 states.

We measured legislative parity by comparing the state's naturalized citizen voting age population to the percentage of New American legislators in office. By focusing only on first-generation immigrants, the number of New American voters in the state is underestimated, offering a conservative measure as a baseline.

The most concerning states are Connecticut and New Jersey.

- > Naturalized citizens make up 17.8 percent of New Jersey's voting age population, but only 3 percent of the state legislature are New Americans.
- > 10 percent of Connecticut's voting age population are naturalized citizens, but only 1 percent of their state legislature is composed of New Americans.

3.5%

Of the 7,383 legislative seats in U.S. state legislatures, New Americans hold only 258, or 3.5 percent of seats.

- > 1.5 percent of state legislators in the U.S. are first-generation Americans.
- > 2 percent of state legislators in the U.S. are second-generation Americans.

25.7%

First- and second-generation Americans make up 25.7 percent of the American population.¹

- > 13.7 percent of the American population (44.8 million individuals) are first-generation Americans.
- > 12 percent of the American population (40 million individuals) are second-generation Americans.

0

The following nine states—Arkansas, Idaho, Iowa, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, South Carolina and South Dakota—have no New American state legislators.

9.2%

First-generation immigrants who are naturalized citizens comprise 9.2 percent of the national citizen voting age population, meaning Americans age 18 and over.²

¹ Pew Research Center, 2019.

² This statistic is drawn from the U.S. Census IPUMS data; further information can be found within the appendix. Citizen voting age population (CVAP) refers to individuals within the American population who are eligible to vote. The CVAP is utilized as a metric to assess whether there is equality of representation for minorities, particularly when it comes to legislative redistricting.

KEY FINDINGS

36%

New Americans who are Asian Pacific Islanders (API) have a notable gender imbalance.

- > Of the 84 API New Americans in state office, only 30, or 36 percent, of API New American legislators are women.

6.2%

Individuals who have origins in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are not accounted for in national state legislature analyses.

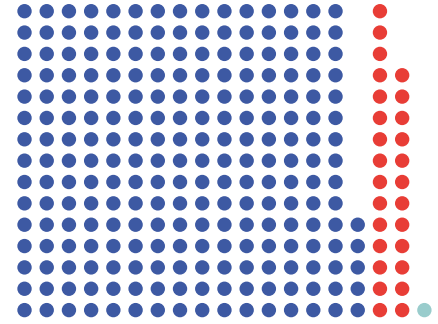
This report offers one of the first inclusions of MENA populations in studies on state legislators.

- > Of the 258 New Americans, 16 state legislators (6.2 percent) are MENA.

0.5%

Black New Americans are underrepresented and account for 0.5 percent of all U.S. state legislators.

- > Of the 258 New Americans, 39, or 15.11%, are Black.
- > Black Americans from the Caribbean make up 25 of the 258 New American state legislators.
- > New Americans from Sub-Saharan Africa are drastically underrepresented. Only eight New Americans from Sub-Saharan Africa are state legislators.



The overwhelming majority of New American legislators are affiliated with the Democratic party.

One is an Independent, 27 are Republican and 230 state legislators are Democrats.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings from this report indicate that funders and democracy building groups must continue to invest in states that vote Democratic in federal elections but poorly reflect the diversity of their states' residents in state legislatures (e.g., Massachusetts). In addition, targeted investment is needed to address the gender gap in representation among API legislators and the inadequate representation of Black and MENA immigrants nationally.

INTRODUCTION

One of the healthiest tests of the democratic process is whether the voices and involvement of all Americans are equitably represented in the legislative process. Despite historic gains in the 2018 elections, in which prominent women of color were elected to Congress, our country's leaders are overwhelmingly white and male. This persists across all levels of office in the United States and calls for attention and investment by those committed to building an inclusive democracy in which every American is represented.

The position of state legislator is rarely associated with glamour and fame. Voters might be more familiar with their governor or Congress member, but they often do not recognize the names or faces of their state representatives. In fact, these decision-makers play critical roles in setting policy that affects voters' everyday lives, perhaps more so than Congress. By allocating resources, holding localities accountable and setting legal norms, state decision-makers are vital in building safe and inclusive communities.

First- and second-generation immigrants who are American citizens make up an important part of the American population and voting bloc. This report is a portrait of their representation in state

legislatures. Identifying which states are moving toward equitable representation, and which states are falling behind, is fundamental to providing solutions to closing this gap. This report presents the findings of new data that New American Leaders collected, identifying which of the 7,383 state legislators in the U.S. are first- or second-generation immigrants.³

In this report, we refer to first-generation New Americans as those who were born outside of the United States, and second-generation as those born to immigrant parents in the U.S. We also explore the representation of rapidly growing and emerging immigrant groups not previously documented in surveys of representation, specifically Black immigrants and those who are from the

Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Among Black immigrants, we include New Americans who identify racially as Black, including individuals from the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and Europe.

In evaluating representation of New Americans, we look not just at the overall population of first- and second-generation immigrants, but also at the naturalized citizen voting age population. The report aims to identify trends in representation generally, and among specific subgroups of New Americans by gender, race and ethnicity. We conclude with recommendations for investment in closing the representation gap to ensure a more representative and reflective democracy.

³ Full methodology can be found in the appendix.

NATIONAL PORTRAIT OF NEW AMERICAN STATE LEGISLATORS

There are 7,383 state legislators across the United States.

This number includes legislators in both the lower and upper houses of each state legislature. As *Table 1* highlights, the overwhelming majority of legislators are white (81.96 percent) and male (71.1 percent).

Additional disparities become evident when we focus on first- and second-generation Americans holding legislative seats. Of the 7,383 state legislative positions, New Americans hold only 258 seats. This accounts for 3.5 percent of all seats. Two percent of state legislators are second-generation Americans, and 1.5 percent are first-generation Americans. *Table 1* provides a portrait of all U.S. state legislators.

STATE LEGISLATORS IN THE UNITED STATES, 2020

TABLE 1 | DEMOGRAPHICS OF STATE LEGISLATORS

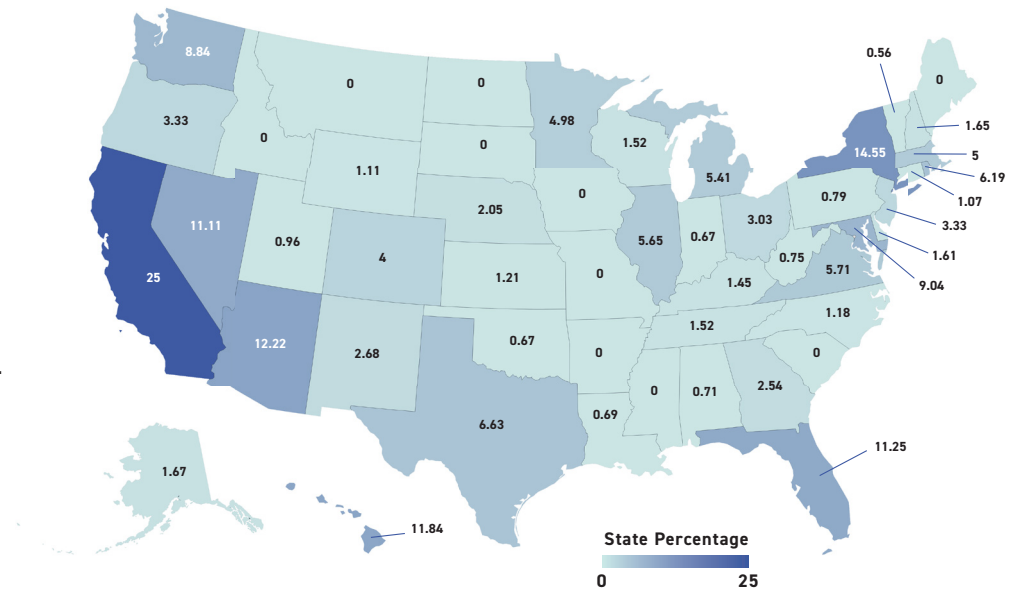
GROUP NAME	NUMBER	% OF ALL STATE LEGISLATORS
First-Generation	111	1.50
Second-Generation	147	2.00
Total of New Americans	258	3.5
Black	733	9.93
Asian Pacific Islander	149	2.02
Latinx	310	4.2
White	6051	81.96
Indigenous	49	0.66
Multiracial	37	0.5
Other Race	49	0.66
Total	7383	100
Women	2132	28.9
Men	5251	71.1
Total	7383	100

STATE-LEVEL ANALYSIS OF NEW AMERICAN LEGISLATORS

Disaggregating the data by state reveals the variation in representation and progress we see between states.

Figure 1 presents a portrait of the entire country and the percentage of New American state legislators in each state.

FIGURE 1 | PERCENTAGE OF NEW AMERICAN STATE LEGISLATORS IN THE U.S.



ABSENCE OF REPRESENTATION

While New Americans reside in every state in the U.S., our research finds that nine states have zero representation of New Americans in their state legislatures.

These nine states, highlighted in *Table 2*, account for 1,327 legislative seats, or 18 percent of the nation's state legislators. While immigrants and New Americans may account for a smaller portion of the population in these states, as *Table 3* highlights, they still have a presence in these states. In particular, immigrants and New Americans represent 5 percent or higher of the state population in Iowa, South Carolina, Arkansas and Idaho.

Data for percentages of immigrants in each state are drawn from the U.S. Census American Community Survey. These numbers offer a conservative measure of New Americans in the states, as they only account for the percentage of foreign-born individuals and not for the state's second-generation residents.

TABLE 2 | STATES WITH NO NEW AMERICANS IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE

STATE	STATE LEGISLATURE SEATS	% OF FIRST-GENERATION IMMIGRANTS IN STATE
Arkansas	135	5
Idaho	105	6
Iowa	150	5.2
Mississippi	174	2.3
Missouri	197	4.01
Montana	150	2.2
North Dakota	141	3.9
South Carolina	170	5
South Dakota	105	3.5

PARITY OF REPRESENTATION

NEW AMERICAN VOTERS AND CITIZEN VOTING AGE POPULATION

First-generation immigrants comprise 9.2 percent of the national citizen voting age population.⁴ The CVAP offers a metric of how many New Americans are voting age citizens.⁵ Of the 7,383 legislative seats in U.S. state legislatures, New Americans hold only 258, or 3.5 percent of the seats.

The gap between who Americans are and who our leaders are is pronounced when comparing the percentage of New American legislators with the naturalized CVAP. This is a conservative baseline metric, because the CVAP information highlights first-generation American voters and does not include second-generation Americans.

Given that a full 26 percent of the American population are first- and second-generation Americans,⁶ the underrepresentation of New Americans in state legislatures is even more

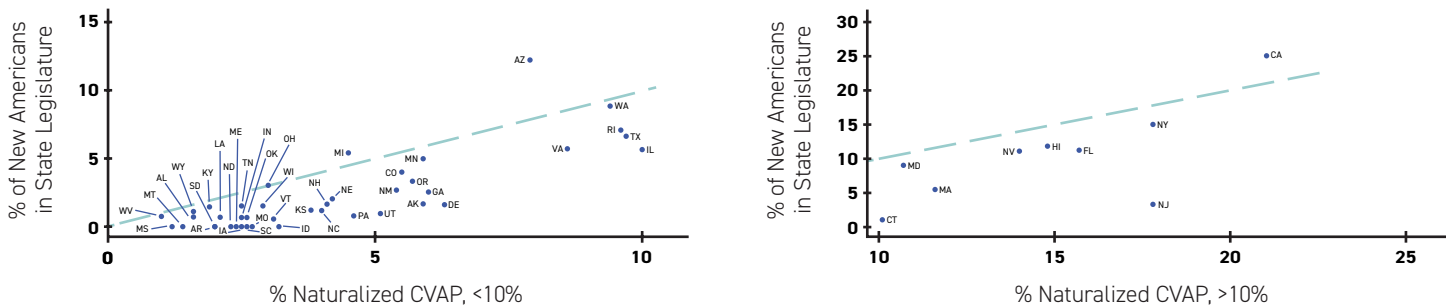
pronounced when we take into account the percentage of second-generation immigrants in each state who are eligible to vote.

Table 3 highlights the difference between Percent New American State Legislators and Percent Naturalized CVAP to highlight in Column 3 whether states meet parity of representation. The states are listed in rank order, from the largest disparity to the lowest. The table shows that even with the conservative baseline estimate of New Americans, 46 states do not meet parity.

Figure 2 graphically illustrates this data as well.

The states with the largest representation gap are Connecticut and New Jersey. Naturalized citizens make up 17.8 percent of New Jersey's voting age population, but only 3 percent of the state legislature is composed of New Americans. Similarly, 10 percent of Connecticut's voting age population are naturalized citizens, but only 1 percent of their state legislature is composed of New Americans.

FIGURE 2 | REPRESENTATIONAL PARITY IN STATE LEGISLATURES



Note: Percent New American state legislators (y-axis) plotted against percent naturalized CVAP in the state. Any state falling below the line is failing to meet parity.

⁴ This statistic is drawn from the U.S. Census IPUMS data; further information can be found within the appendix.

⁵ The appendix includes the full methodological steps utilized to calculate the CVAP.

⁶ Pew Research Center, 2019.

TABLE 3 | PARITY OF REPRESENTATION BY CITIZEN VOTING AGE POPULATION

STATE	% OF NEW AMERICANS IN STATE LEGISLATURE	% NATURALIZED CVAP	DIFFERENCE
New Jersey	3.33	17.8	-14.47
Connecticut	1.07	10.1	-9.03
Massachusetts	5	11.6	-6.6
Delaware	1.61	6.3	-4.69
Florida	11.25	15.7	-4.45
Illinois	5.65	10	-4.35
Alaska	1.67	5.9	-4.23
Utah	0.96	5.1	-4.14
Pennsylvania	0.79	4.6	-3.81
Georgia	2.54	6	-3.46
Idaho	0	3.2	-3.2
Texas	6.63	9.7	-3.07
Hawaii	11.84	14.8	-2.96
Nevada	11.11	14	-2.89
Virginia	5.71	8.6	-2.89
North Carolina	1.18	4	-2.82
New York	14.55	17.8	-3.25
New Mexico	2.68	5.4	-2.72
Missouri	0	2.7	-2.7
South Carolina	0	2.6	-2.6
Kansas	1.21	3.8	-2.59
Vermont	0.56	3.1	-2.54
Rhode Island	6.19	9.6	-3.41
Iowa	0	2.5	-2.5
New Hampshire	1.65	4.1	-2.45
Oregon	3.33	5.7	-2.37
North Dakota	0	2.3	-2.3
Nebraska	2.04	4.2	-2.16
Arkansas	0	2	-2
South Dakota	0	2	-2
Oklahoma	0.67	2.6	-1.94
Indiana	0.67	2.5	-1.83
Maryland	9.04	10.7	-1.66
Colorado	4	5.5	-1.5
Louisiana	0.69	2.1	-1.41
Montana	0	1.4	-1.4

Maine	1	2.4	-1.4
Wisconsin	1.52	2.9	-1.38
Mississippi	0	1.2	-1.2
Tennessee	1.52	2.5	-0.99
Minnesota	4.98	5.9	-0.93
Alabama	0.71	1.6	-0.89
Washington	8.84	9.4	-0.56
Wyoming	1.11	1.6	-0.49
Kentucky	1.45	1.9	-0.45
West Virginia	0.75	1	-0.25
Ohio	3.03	3	0.03
Michigan	5.41	4.5	0.91
Arizona	12.22	7.9	4.32
California	26.6	21	5.6

A CLOSER LOOK AT THREE STATES

ARIZONA | CALIFORNIA | NEW YORK

Arizona and California have state legislatures with numbers that meet parity, by the citizen voting age population estimate of naturalized citizens within each state. However, a closer look at the breakdown of New Americans within these state legislatures indicates that these states still have disparities that require further attention. New York's legislature is diverse but does not meet parity and needs intervention in specific areas.

ARIZONA

Although Arizona's overall New American numbers look positive in comparison to other states, disparities remain.

Arizona has a significant Asian Pacific Islander (API) population, with 155,381 eligible API voters, or 3 percent of the voting population.⁷ Yet, Arizona only has one API state legislator. Arizona would need at least three API New Americans in the state legislature to reach relative parity. Similarly, Black immigrants are a growing part of Arizona's state population, yet there is a complete absence of Black New Americans within the Arizona state legislature.

CALIFORNIA

California has more immigrants in the state than any other American state, with at least 25 percent (11 million residents) of the state population being foreign born.⁸

In particular, California has one of the most sizable Asian Pacific Islander populations, with 11 percent of immigrants being API.⁹ However, API New Americans account for only 9 percent of California's state legislators. Even without accounting for the number of second-generation API residents in California, we see an underrepresentation of API legislators. The gender disparity among California API legislators is also very glaring. Of the 11 API state legislators, only one is a woman. Forty percent of California's population are Latinx, but only 15 percent of New Americans legislators are Latinx, falling far below an ideal measure of representation for Latinx communities in the state.¹⁰

As the following section further details, Black immigrants are one of the most overlooked New American populations. This remains the case even in a state as diverse as California. Six percent of California's population is Black, and Black immigrants represent a sizable and growing portion of that population, yet there is only one Black New American in the state legislature.¹¹

⁷ APIA Vote, 2018.

⁸ Johnson and Sanchez, 2018.

⁹ APIA Vote, 2018.

¹⁰ Migration Policy Institute, 2020.

¹¹ Black Alliance for Just Immigration, 2018.

NEW YORK

Fifteen percent of New York state legislators are New Americans, and their CVAP is 17.8 percent, leaving a 3.25 percent gap. New York still has work to do, as a state legislature, to achieve parity.

The state's legislature has a sizable number of New Americans, and therefore merits a closer look. Like California, New York's legislature has a large gender disparity among API women holding state legislative seats. With at least 1 million eligible API voters in the state, the number of API New American state

legislators is not near parity, especially with regard to API women. Only one API New American woman serves in the state legislature. Black New Americans make up 7 percent of the legislature, but given that Black immigrants include populations from the Caribbean, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, there are disparities in representation within this subgroup. There are 15 Black New Americans in the New York state legislature. Twelve are from the Caribbean, one is from Latin America and only one of the state's legislators is from Sub-Saharan Africa. While there is a growing representation of Black immigrants in New York, given the substantive population of both Black Caribbeans and Black Africans, representational challenges still remain.

TABLE 4 | RACIAL AND ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF CALIFORNIA, NEW YORK AND ARIZONA

RACIAL GROUP	RACIAL GROUP TOTAL	WOMEN	MEN
CALIFORNIA			
Latinx	19	14	5
Black	1	0	1
API	11	1	10
MENA	1	0	1
Total	32/120		
NEW YORK			
Black: Caribbean	12		
Black: Sub-Saharan Africa	1		
Black: Latin America	1		
Other	1		
Total Black	15	8	7
Latinx	7	6	1
API	4	1	3
MENA	3	2	1
Other	2	2	0
Total (New Americans/State Legislators)	31/213		
ARIZONA			
Latinx	8	3	5
Black	0	0	0
API	1	0	1
Multiracial	2	2	0
Total	11/90		

WHO ARE THE NEW AMERICAN STATE LEGISLATORS?

Focusing on the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the 258 New American state legislators provides important information on which communities are most involved and represented.

Nationally, we find that there is near parity of New American women and men serving in state legislatures. However, some gender disparities exist when the distribution of women and men is examined by racial and ethnic background.

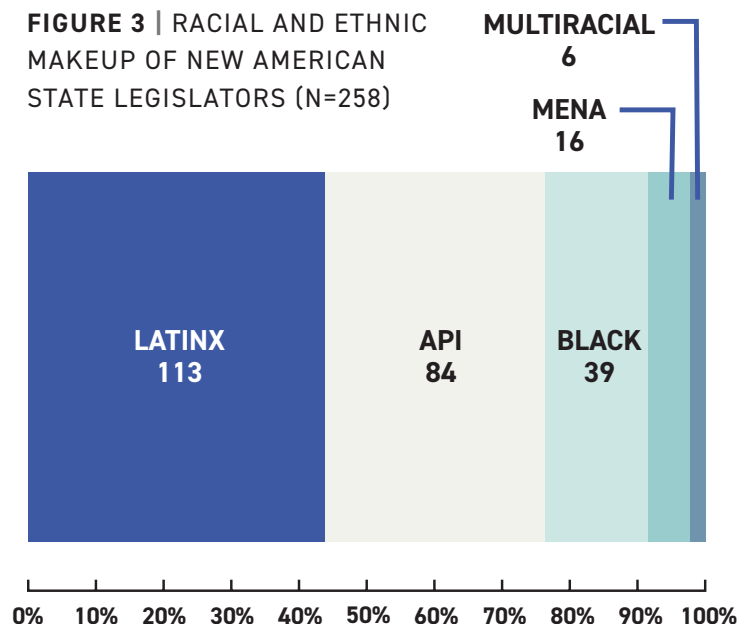
Of the 258 New Americans currently in office, Latinx state legislators comprise the largest body of New American state legislators (43.8%), followed by Asian Pacific Islanders (32.59%) and Black Americans (15.11%). Black New Americans include a small number of Black immigrants from East Africa, West Africa, the Caribbean and South America.

Table 5 also illustrates a growing and undercounted body of New Americans—those of MENA origin—who comprise 6.13 percent of New American legislators. MENA legislators have previously been an invisible part of research reports, in part because they are categorized as white by the Census, which masks the diverse subgroup of constituents they represent.

TABLE 5 | NEW AMERICAN STATE LEGISLATORS

GROUP	NUMBER	% OF TOTAL NEW AMERICAN LEGISLATORS
Women	127	49.22
Men	131	50.78
Total	258	
Black	39	15.11
Asian Pacific Islander	84	32.56
Latinx	113	43.8
Middle Eastern	16	6.2
Multiracial	6	2.33
Total	258	

FIGURE 3 | RACIAL AND ETHNIC MAKEUP OF NEW AMERICAN STATE LEGISLATORS (N=258)

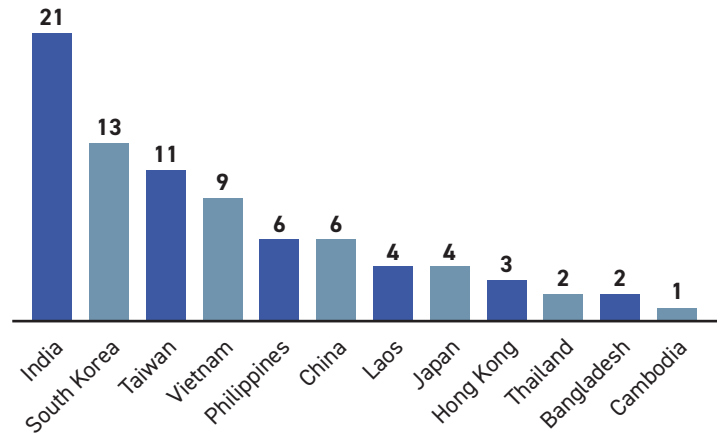


ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER AMERICANS

Asian Pacific Islander Americans account for one of the largest groups of New Americans in the electorate.

There are an estimated 22.4 million Americans that identify as API. Seventy-four percent of API Americans are first-generation immigrants.¹² Among state legislators nationally, 84 API legislators of the 7,383 are New Americans. As *Figure 4* highlights, there are 21 people originating from India, 13 from South Korea and 11 from Taiwan. New Americans trace their ancestry to a diverse range of other countries, represented in smaller numbers on the table.

FIGURE 4 | API NEW AMERICAN STATE LEGISLATORS



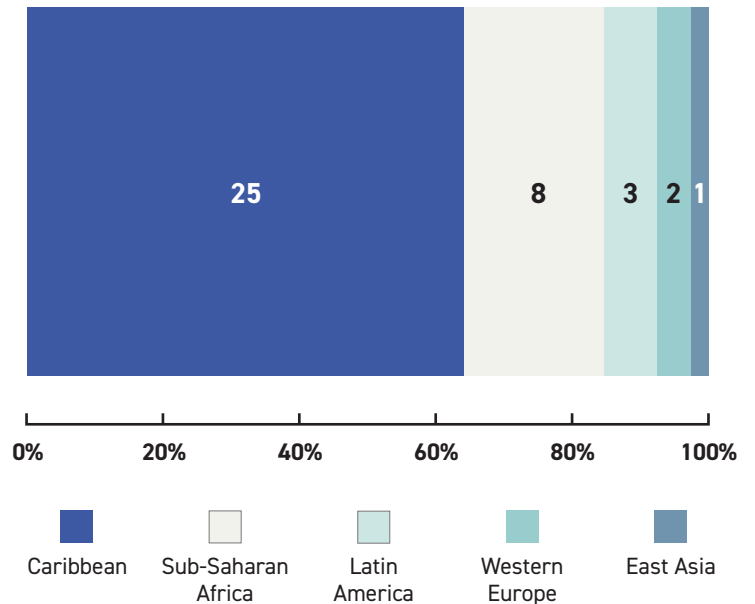
BLACK NEW AMERICANS

Black New Americans account for a growing portion of the American population, with an estimated 4.2 million Black immigrants currently residing in the U.S.¹³ Roughly 9 percent of the nation's Black residents are first-generation Black immigrants.¹⁴

Black Americans account for a diverse community of immigrants, with origins primarily in the Caribbean, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. Parsing out which Black immigrants are represented highlights the disparities of representation among communities. Only 15 state legislatures have any Black New Americans in their state legislature, and only three states (New York, Maryland and Florida) have three or more legislators who are Black New Americans.

The overwhelming majority of Black New American legislators are of Caribbean origin. Of the 39 Black New Americans in office, 25 are Caribbean American. Only eight originate from various parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. Three trace their origins to Central and South America, and the remaining two are originally from Western Europe.

FIGURE 5 | AREA OF ORIGIN FOR BLACK NEW AMERICANS (N=258)¹⁵



¹² Pew Research Center, 2017.

¹³ Pew Research Center, 2018.

¹⁴ Pew Research Center, 2018.

¹⁵ Robert Jackson, state legislator from the state of New York, is a Black state legislator, with one parent from China. The country of origin representation of China among Black New Americans within the table accounts for his family heritage specifically.

TABLE 6 | STATES WITH BLACK NEW AMERICANS IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE

STATES WITH BLACK NEW AMERICAN LEGISLATORS	BLACK NEW AMERICAN LEGISLATORS/TOTAL STATE LEGISLATORS	% OF NEW AMERICANS THAT ARE BLACK IN STATE LEGISLATURE OVERALL
New York	15/213	7
Maryland	6/188	3.19
Florida	3/160	1
Minnesota	2/201	1
New Hampshire	2/424	0.47
Rhode Island	2/113	1.77
Alabama	1/140	0.7
California	1/120	0.83
Georgia	1/236	0.42
Louisiana	1/144	0.69
Massachusetts	1/200	0.5
Nevada	1/63	1.59
Ohio	1/132	0.76
Washington	1/147	0.68
Wisconsin	1/132	0.76

Caribbean New Americans

There are an estimated 2 million Black Caribbean immigrants in the U.S., who account for nearly half of all Black immigrants to the United States. Twenty-five of the 39 Black New Americans in state legislatures are Caribbean immigrants. Twelve of the 25 Black Caribbean legislators are part of New York’s state legislature; five serve in Maryland and three in Florida.

New Americans from Sub-Saharan Africa

In general, we see a significant underrepresentation of Black immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa. Half of Black immigrants in the U.S. migrated from various parts of the African continent, but they are minimally represented in state legislatures. Even in the state of New York, which has the highest percentage of Black New American legislators, only one Black legislator is an African immigrant.

The absence of Black New Americans within the Texas state legislature is particularly evident. From 2010 to 2018, the population of Black New Americans in Texas has risen by nearly 81 percent (161, 500 to 292,100), and Texas currently has the largest population of African immigrants (221,700) in the United States.¹⁶ In addition to Texas, other states with significant populations of New Americans from Sub-Saharan Africa include California, Georgia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York and Virginia, all of which have limited or no representation of Black immigrants.¹⁷

¹⁶ New American Economy Research Fund, 2020.

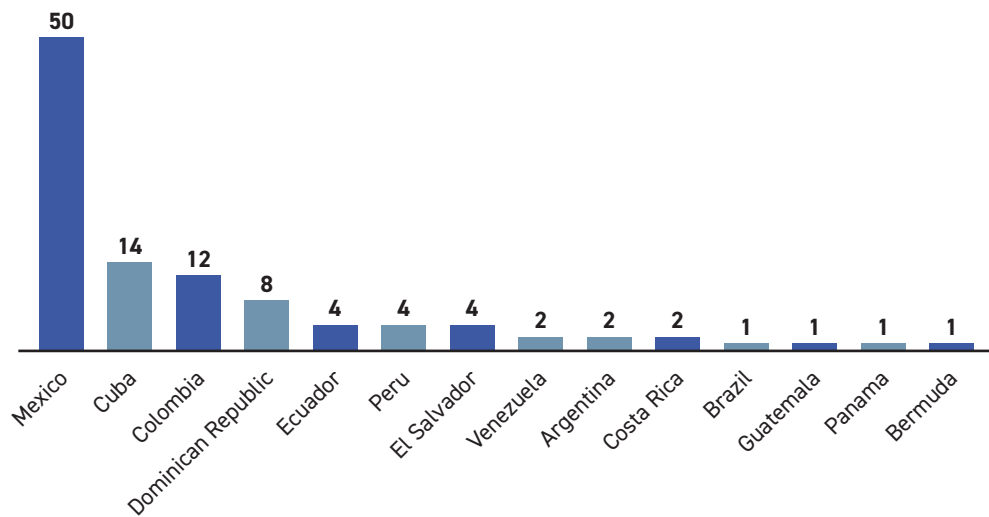
¹⁷ Migration Policy Institute, 2018.

LATINX

The Latinx community includes individuals from Central America, South America and the Caribbean. In the U.S., 58.84 million people identify as Hispanic or Latinx. Thirty-three percent of the population are foreign born (19.4 million). Of the 7,383 legislators, 310 are Latinx. Of those 310, 113 Latinx are New Americans.

As *Table 7* shows, 44.24 percent of (50) Latinx legislators are of Mexican descent. People of Mexican descent make up 61 percent of the total Latinx population. Cubans make up 3.9 percent of the total Latinx population and 12.39 percent of Latinx legislators. Colombians make up 10.6 percent of the Latinx New Americans in state legislative office. The remaining 37 Latinx New American legislators have fewer than 10 legislators from a specific country of descent. They represent a variety of different countries of origin, as *Figure 6* highlights.

FIGURE 6 | LATINX LEGISLATORS



MIDDLE EAST/NORTH AFRICAN (MENA) NEW AMERICANS

Individuals from the MENA countries include Arab Americans and other communities from the Middle East and North Africa. MENA populations are largest within the states of California, Michigan and New York.¹⁸

New Americans who identify as MENA represent the smallest subgroup of New Americans within this data. Only 12 states had any legislators with a MENA background. Even the state of Michigan, which is home to the city of Dearborn with one of the highest per capita populations of Arab Americans, has only two MENA state legislators.

Of the 16 MENA New Americans in state legislatures, eight are of Iranian descent, three are of Palestinian descent and two are of Lebanese descent. There are only two legislators of North African descent (from Algeria and Morocco).

18 Migration Policy Institute, 2018.

NEW AMERICAN WOMEN

In comparison to the national portrait of all 7,383 state legislators in the U.S., the national portrait of New American legislators has better gender distribution.

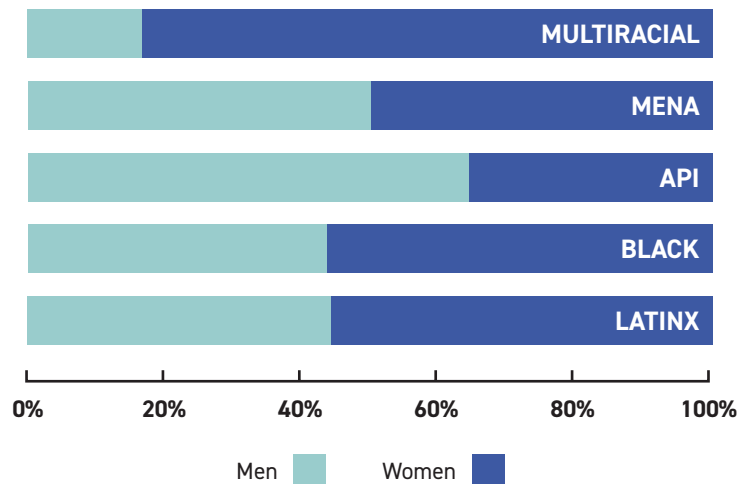
Among white legislators, 61 percent are male, and only 22 percent are female.¹⁹ In comparison, we see a relatively equal number of New American women and men serving in office nationally. Black New Americans have a marginally higher number of women in elected office compared to men, and there is near gender parity for Latinx and MENA New Americans.

The most striking disparity is among API state legislators. Of the 84 legislators who identify as Asian Pacific Islander and New American, only 29 are women. That accounts for only one-third of API New American state legislators. Even in California and New York, states with higher API populations, there is only one female API New American state legislator in each state.

TABLE 7 | GENDER AND RACIAL BACKGROUND

NEW AMERICANS RACIAL GROUP	NEW AMERICANS RACIAL GROUP TOTAL	MEN	WOMEN
Latinx	113	50	63
Black	39	17	22
API	84	54	30
MENA	16	8	8
Multiracial	6	1	5

FIGURE 7 | GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF NEW AMERICAN LEGISLATORS



PARTISANSHIP AND NEW AMERICANS

The overwhelming majority of New American legislators are affiliated with the Democratic party: 230 of 258.

One legislator identifies as an independent, and the remaining 27 as Republican. Most of the Republicans are spread out evenly across the U.S., with the exception of Florida, which has eight New Americans who identify as Republican. California has three, New Hampshire and Ohio have two, and the remainder have either zero or one Republicans.

¹⁹ Reflective Democracy, 2019.

MOVING FORWARD

Nearly 250 years into the United States' project of building a democracy, we are far from having an inclusive democracy that represents all Americans.

If current political crises are any indication, state politics are integral to the health and well-being of all Americans. Given that state leaders determine how budgets are allocated and are at the frontlines of criminal justice reform, education, healthcare and labor policy, the lack of representational parity signals long-term challenges in achieving equitable policy for native people, Black Americans and New American communities.

The overall gap in representation is wide, even with the conservative estimate that the citizen voting age population estimate offers (since it accounts just for first-generation Americans). In addition to the troubling overall gap in representation, the report points to areas of geographic need, disparities in partisan efforts to build representation and underrepresentation by key subgroups including API women and Black and MENA immigrants. Reflecting on some of the key findings from the report, this analysis reiterates key challenges and offers recommendations to address gaps.

While we expect the 2020 elections will lead to incremental increases in representational parity, we have a long way to go before America's leaders truly reflect its people.

— RECOMMENDATION 1 —

We recommend developing a bench of qualified and knowledgeable immigrants to run for office. This type of investment is not simply diversity for diversity's sake. Having New Americans on the ballot can help mobilize new voters from immigrant and refugee communities, helping to expand the electorate as well as increase representation from these communities. When these representatives create policy that is more inclusive and rooted in solidarity with other marginalized groups, community members feel heard and seen and are likely to keep participating. Thus, a pipeline of candidates from immigrant communities can have an ongoing and generative impact on our democracy.

While the overall gap between America's residents and America's state legislators is striking, the underrepresentation of Black and MENA immigrants and the gender gap between API legislators is especially noteworthy.

— RECOMMENDATION 2 —

Targeted investment in recruiting and supporting API women and Black and MENA immigrants to run and win is crucial to bridging this gap. Pipeline programs must specifically address the experiences and assets that these populations bring to the campaign trail and into office and tackle the systemic and social barriers that limit their ability to run, win and lead. In addition, existing elected officials from these groups can mentor and sponsor others like them along the political journey.

Even states that technically reach parity have disparities of representation. Our conservative estimate of comparing parity of representation to first-generation American's citizen voting age population may show higher levels of parity than currently exist, since we do not take into consideration the CVAP population of second-generation Americans. This is exemplified by the state analysis of California, Arizona and New York. A more in-depth examination of these states shows that, beyond the CVAP estimate, disparities of representation exist, for example in the minimal representation of New Americans who are Sub-Saharan African.

RECOMMENDATION 3

State political leaders should not take for granted that their aggregate levels of representation are enough, but instead should address gaps among specific subgroups who are underrepresented. In many cases, this requires attention to systemic and societal barriers as well as to increased investment in leadership development.

The disparities in traditionally “blue” states, like Connecticut, Massachusetts and New Jersey, indicate that even blue states that are known for being relatively more diverse are failing to represent populations that are the backbone of the Democratic party.

RECOMMENDATION 4

States must be viewed not just from the lens of how they vote in presidential cycles but also from the lens of representing diverse communities. This entails taking into consideration internal dynamics in each state and how state-based political entities may or may not welcome political newcomers as candidates. Political donors and institutional philanthropy should look beyond the overly simplified red versus blue lens when investing in civic engagement broadly and in developing a pipeline specifically.

The Republican party has significant catching up to do to become a party that reflects the diversity of the American electorate.

RECOMMENDATION 5

A more inclusive immigrant agenda may help Republicans gain a competitive advantage in building a party that New Americans feel is representative of their policy priorities. While we focus here simply on the race and ethnicity of legislators, we know that identity alone is not enough. In recruiting leaders from immigrant communities, the Republican party must ensure these candidates and elected officials advocate for inclusive policies that welcome New Americans.

In the short term, gains can be achieved by investing in immigrant leaders. But underlying the representation gap are key systemic challenges and societal barriers that limit the ability of New Americans to run for office, win and govern. In the medium term, further research can explore how these factors influence the way our democracy looks and works. In the long term, we anticipate that exponential increases in representation can only occur when systemic challenges are decreased and eventually eliminated. Only then will our state legislatures operate with our shared struggles and collective interests in mind.

APPENDIX

METHODS

The data was built utilizing information from Reflective Democracy's roster of the 50 state legislatures and Rutgers' Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP). The primary focus was taking the state legislators that were categorized as non-white and identifying who among those legislators may be first- or second-generation American. The state legislator information was verified, and the legislator's electoral results from the 2019 election cycle were also included and confirmed. The first-round verification on the data base came from existing data that Rutgers' CAWP provided on female state legislatures. In order to find out whether legislators were first- or second-generation Americans, the second-round examined at campaign websites and published material to verify whether they are New American.

We define New American as a first- or second-generation immigrant. First-generation refers to those who migrated themselves and second-generation to those who were born in the U.S. and have one or more immigrant parents. For individuals whom we could not identify, the third-round verification involved contacting state legislators' offices.

The research team both called and emailed state legislators. In the final round, local community organizers were also contacted to verify information. It is important to note that a small subset of state legislators were unverifiable. What we know is the state legislators in our data set are publicly discussing being New American. There is the possibility of an underestimation, given the ambiguity of some state legislators who have not disclosed their status as New Americans. Finally, our primary focus was on the 1,335 non-white state legislators. We would like to note that it is plausible there may be white New American legislators, the primary focus of this report were state legislators from the historically marginalized communities that the report focuses upon.

CVAP ESTIMATES

Data on the naturalized citizen voting age population come from the U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) five-year estimates. The naturalized citizen voting age population estimates include only first-generation immigrants. It is thus important to note that this analysis likely underestimates the effect that New Americans may have on the changing American electorate, since it does not include second-generation immigrants.

TABLE A | OVERALL NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF NEW AMERICAN LEGISLATORS IN THE UNITED STATES

STATES	TOTAL NEW AMERICANS	TOTAL STATE LEGISLATORS	STATE %
Arkansas	0	135	0
Idaho	0	105	0
Iowa	0	150	0
Maine	0	174	0
Mississippi	0	174	0
Missouri	0	197	0
Montana	0	150	0
North Dakota	0	141	0
South Carolina	0	170	0
South Dakota	0	105	0
Vermont	1	180	0.56
Indiana	1	150	0.67
Oklahoma	1	149	0.67
Louisiana	1	144	0.69
Alabama	1	140	0.71
West Virginia	1	134	0.75
Pennsylvania	2	253	0.79
Utah	1	104	0.96
Connecticut	2	187	1.07
Wyoming	1	90	1.11
North Carolina	2	170	1.18
Kansas	2	165	1.21
Kentucky	2	138	1.45
Tennessee	2	132	1.52
Wisconsin	2	132	1.52
Delaware	1	62	1.61
New Hampshire	7	424	1.65
Alaska	1	60	1.67
Nebraska	1	49	2.04
Georgia	6	236	2.54
New Mexico	3	112	2.68
Ohio	4	132	3.03
New Jersey	4	120	3.33
Oregon	3	90	3.33
Colorado	4	100	4.00

Minnesota	10	201	4.98
Michigan	8	148	5.41
Massachusetts	10	200	5.00
Illinois	10	177	5.65
Virginia	8	140	5.71
Texas	12	181	6.63
Rhode Island	7	113	6.19
Washington	13	147	8.84
Maryland	17	188	9.04
Nevada	7	63	11.11
Florida	18	160	11.25
Hawaii	9	76	11.84
Arizona	11	90	12.22
New York	31	213	14.55
California	30	120	25.00

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Dr. Tom Wong, Director of the US Immigration Policy Center at the University of California, San Diego, provided the analysis to create the citizen voting age population estimates.

State legislature representation data from Reflective Democracy and Rutgers University's Center for American Women and Politics provided an important baseline on which to build our analysis of New Americans.

New American Leaders is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization. We envision an inclusive democracy in which every American is represented. Our mission is to empower New Americans to run, win and lead. We do this through trainings, coaching and convenings that build community and advocate for policy reform and systems change. Headquartered in New York, we operate in multiple states across the country.

Our affiliated 501(c)(4) organization, the New American Leaders Action Fund, is building a democracy that represents and includes all people by engaging new voters, supporting New Americans as they run for office and expanding civic engagement.



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