



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

POLICY RESEARCH CENTER

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Research Policy Update

Native Vote Report: 2021 Virginia Gubernatorial Election

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Native Vote initiative is a nonpartisan effort to promote American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) voter engagement throughout Indian Country. The purpose of this report is to provide information on the status of the upcoming Virginia Gubernatorial election race where turnout of the Native Vote has the potential to impact the outcome of the race.



2021 Virginia Gubernatorial Race – AI/AN Voting Age Population

The upcoming Virginia Gubernatorial election will be held on Tuesday, November 2, 2021. The current governor, Ralph Northam, is ineligible to run for office. The election is between Democratic former governor Terry McAuliffe and Republican nominee Glenn Youngkin. Early voting began in the state on September 17, 2021, and current polling shows the race to be extremely close between the two candidates.

Close races have the potential to be impacted by the number of voting age AI/ANs who vote, especially if they are a significant percentage of the total population in the state. **Table 1** shows the overall population for the state, the AI/AN voting age population number, and the percentage of the AI/AN voting age population.

Table 1: AI/AN Voting Age Statewide Population Percentage for Virginia

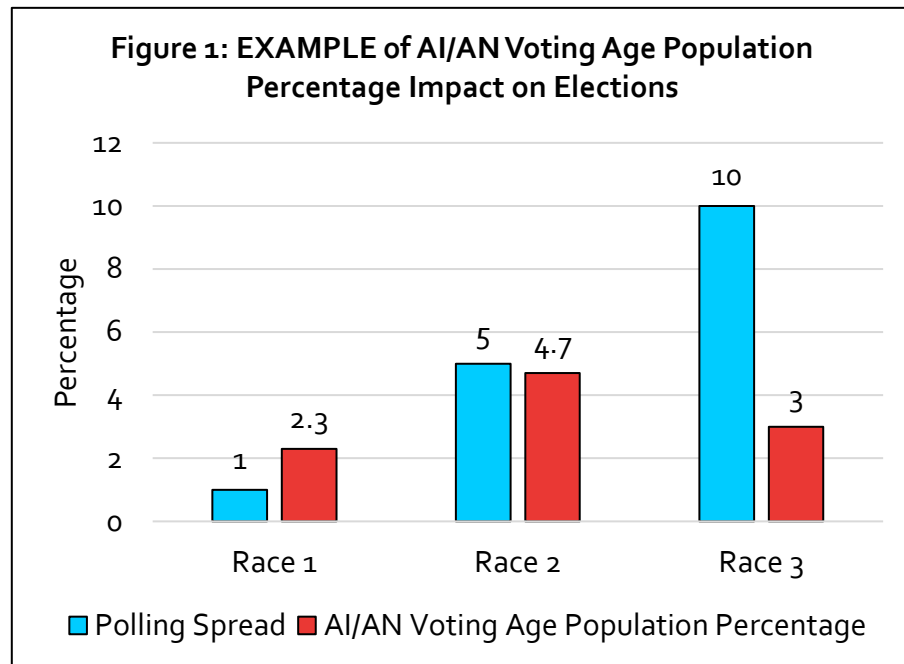
State	2020 Total Voting Age Population	2020 AI/AN Alone and in Combination Voting Age Population	2020 AI/AN Alone and in Combination Voting Age Population Percentage of State Total
Virginia	6,745,054	131,743	2.0%

Source: Steven Manson, Jonathan Schroeder, David Van Riper, Tracy Kugler, and Steven Ruggles. IPUMS National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 16.0 [U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2020 Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File, Table PL3]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS. 2021. <http://doi.org/10.18128/Do50.V16.0>

The AI/AN voting age population has the potential to impact competitive races where the margin of victory is estimated to be close to the AI/AN voting age population percentage. In the state of Virginia, the AI/AN voting age population according to the 2020 Census is around 2 percent of the state's total population.

Figure 1 illustrates an example of how graphs are used in this report to illustrate the way in which the AI/AN voting age population percentage can impact close elections. The estimated polling difference or margin between candidates is represented as a percent in the blue bars, and the AI/AN voting age population percentage of the total state population is represented in the red bars in the graph.

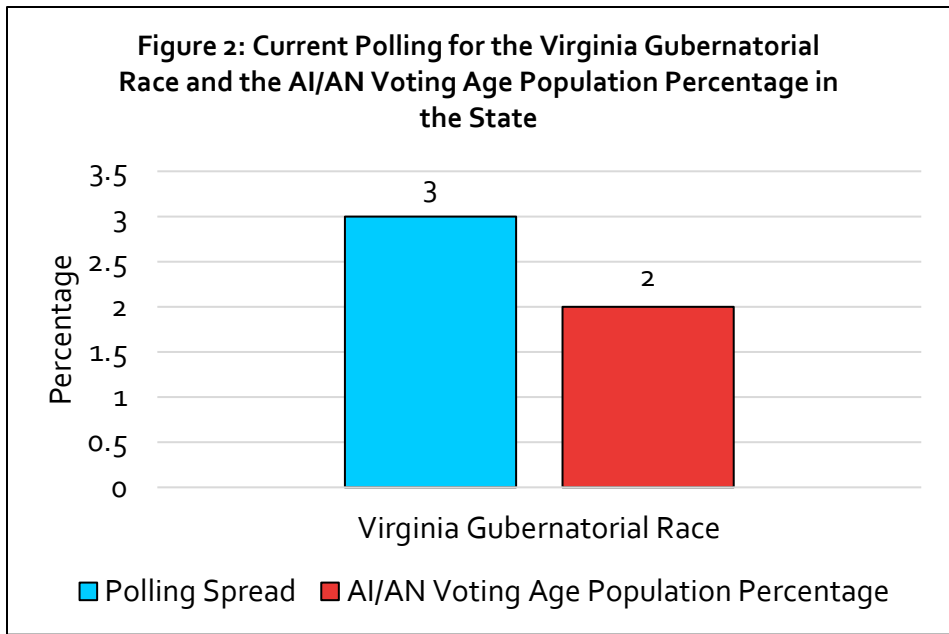
In *Race 1*, the AI/AN percentage in the example state (red) is larger than the polling difference between candidates (blue). In *Race 1*, AI/AN voters can clearly impact the outcome of the race if there is good AI/AN voter turnout.



In *Race 2*, the AI/AN voting age population percentage is close to the polling difference between candidates. AI/AN voters in elections like this example can potentially impact the outcome, particularly if the race tightens between the two candidates.

In *Race 3*, the AI/AN voting age population percentage is smaller than the polling difference between candidates. In this example, AI/AN voters may not have a big impact on the outcome but should still be encouraged to vote since election polls sometimes have wide margins of error.

Data on competitive elections may change over time. In this report, polling data is monitored through the use of current polling as compiled by *FiveThirtyEight*, a news media source and national polling clearinghouse. This report also uses data from the U.S. Census Bureau on the number and percentage of AI/AN voters in election districts. For the statewide election, the data on AI/AN voting age population is drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2020 P.L. 94-171 Redistricting Data File.



As of September 21, 2021, Democratic former governor Terry McAuliffe leads by three percentage points over Republican nominee Glenn Youngkin. This is close to the AI/AN voting age population percentage for the state (2 percent). Previous polling in Virginia has at times, found results reporting even closer margins and even a zero margin in recent

Source: Steven Manson, Jonathan Schroeder, David Van Riper, Tracy Kugler, and Steven Ruggles. IPUMS National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 16.0 [U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2020 Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File, Table PL3]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS. 2021. <http://doi.org/10.18128/Do50.V16.0>; FiveThirtyEight, Accessed on September 21, 2021.

weeks between the candidates. Figure 2 illustrates how the population of AI/ANs who vote in the state can potentially impact the outcome of this very tight election.

Virginia Tribal Nations and AI/AN Voting Districts

In addition to the AI/AN voting age population percentage statewide, Virginia has seven federally recognized tribes: **Chickahominy Indian Tribe; Chickahominy Indians Eastern Division; Monacan Indian Nation; Nansemond Indian Nation; Pamunkey Indian Tribe; Rappahannock Tribe; and Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe.** There are also an additional four with state recognition: **Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Indian Tribe; Mattaponi; Nottoway Indian Tribe; and Patawomeck Indian Tribe.** The Mattaponi and Pamunkey reservations, the only two reservations located in the state, are both located in King William County. This county has an AI/AN voting age population of 3 percent. One North Carolina state-recognized tribe is also partially located in Virginia: **Sappony**, located in Halifax County, Virginia. Halifax County has an AI/AN voting age population percentage of 1.2 percent.

Virginia has two majority minority AI/AN voting districts with over 50% AI/AN voting age population percentages in the state. The districts constitute 0.1% of the total voting districts in the state. The first, **Precinct D-3 Part 2** is located in Montgomery County, and the second, **Sheltons Mill Part 2**, is located in Louisa County. Montgomery County has an AI/AN voting age population of 1.5 percent, while Louisa County has an AI/AN voting age population of 2.4 percent.

Table 2 shows the voting districts, the total population, the AI/AN voting age population, and the AI/AN voting age population percentage for the districts. While relatively small districts, their contribution is still important in Virginia’s upcoming close election for the governor’s seat.

Table 2: Virginia Voting Districts with Majority Minority AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentages

County	Voting District	2020 Total Voting Age Population	2020 AI/AN Alone and in Combination Voting Age Population	2020 AI/AN Alone and in Combination Voting Age Population Percentage of District Total
Montgomery	Precinct D-3 Part 2	3	3	100.0%
Louisa	Sheltons Mill Part 2	6	4	66.7%

Source: Steven Manson, Jonathan Schroeder, David Van Riper, Tracy Kugler, and Steven Ruggles. IPUMS National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 16.0 [U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2020 Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File, Table PL3]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS. 2021. <http://doi.org/10.18128/Do50.V16.0>

In close elections, AI/AN voters have the ability to impact the outcome of elections in close races. The new 2020 Census data illustrate the potential impact of Virginia AI/AN voters and Tribal Nations in the upcoming Gubernatorial election. The voting age population data illustrate the important role that Tribal Nations and Virginia AI/ANs can play to get out the Native Vote for the upcoming election, as well as all elections coming up in 2021 and 2022.

Given the increase in the AI/AN population in the 2020 Census, getting out the Native Vote in all elections, including the important upcoming 2022 elections, has the potential to make a big difference in close elections. To view the percentage of AI/ANs in each state, view our recent report *A First Look at the 2020 Census – American Indian and Alaska Native Redistricting Data*: bit.ly/3AG5sOd.

To view past Native Vote data reports, visit the NCAI Policy Research Center [Publications Page](#) and scroll down to 2020 Native Vote Reports.

For more information, email research@ncai.org or visit NCAI’s Native Vote website at: <http://www.nativevote.org/>.

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