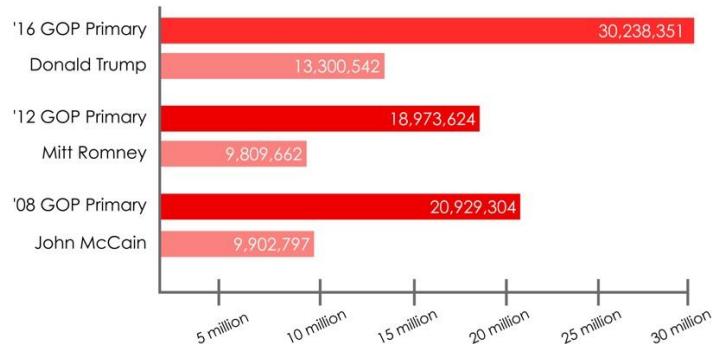


**TO:** Interested Parties  
**FR:** Lincoln Park Strategies  
**RE:** The Small Accomplishment of a Big Turnout  
**DATE:** June 21, 2016

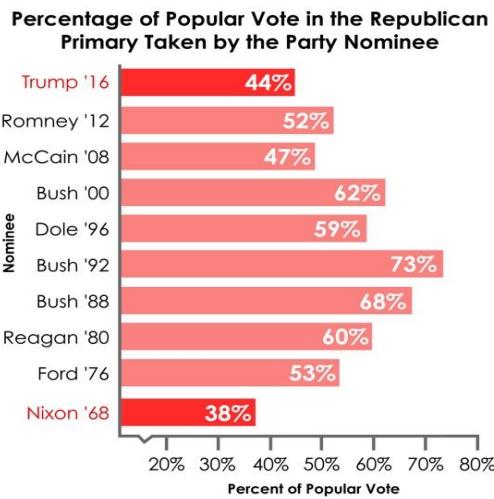
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The bravado of Donald Trump has proven to be a powerful tool in the presumptive nominee's war chest, instantaneously acquiring the spotlight from early party favorites, such as Jeb Bush and Scott Walker, during his bid announcement, and dominating the media's election coverage ever since. While many of the boisterous billionaire's claims are met with skepticism, Mr. Trump's assertion that he has vastly expanded the Republican electorate comes, in theory, with the mathematical foundation to support such a claim. Indeed, primary turnout for Republicans has soared, and Donald Trump walked away with the highest vote count for a Republican Primary in American history. Mr. Trump's popular vote, alone, could embody a modest-sized primary—constituting over 70% of the 2012 primary electorate. Such figures should afford, at the very least, a glimmer of encouragement to the leaders of a party that has failed to win the popular vote five of the last six election cycles.

### Popular Votes in the Republican Primaries



However, before anyone at RNC headquarters starts popping the champagne corks, Trump actually fared worse, percentage wise, than all of the recent GOP nominees. In fact, Mr. Trump's campaign presents the lowest ratio of primary support for a nominee in the Republican Party since Richard Nixon in 1968.



The growth in the pure number of voters is certainly nothing to sneeze at, and if Republicans come anywhere close to duplicating the 61% growth in voter participation exhibited during this primary cycle come November, Donald Trump will handily defeat Hillary Clinton. Yet, as many pundits and political analysts [have already pointed out](#), there is no discernible correlation between higher primary turnouts and winning the general election. Further, this year's crowded arena of Republican presidential hopefuls may be a more realistic driver of voter participation than Mr. Trump's bombastic depiction of his policy platform simply due to the sheer manpower exhausted by so many political machines operating in a concentrated area (Iowa, New Hampshire, etc.) at once. All this is to say, the stir caused by Donald Trump may not be the only reason for high turnout.

Even if we give Mr. Trump full credit as the cause of the increase in civic participation, an analysis of the data available to us suggests that the voters Donald Trump has pulled into the process are not the ones he needs to win in the general election.

Our analysis, utilizing voter mapping capabilities provided by [L2 Political](#), has instead found that Mr. Trump's "biggest thing happening in politics" might be much ado about nothing. Of the millions of additional Republican voters casting their ballots in this year's primaries, only 7% did not participate in either the 2012 or 2008 presidential general elections. The vast majority of Republican voters, including Trump's "silent majority," would have likely participated in the general election, regardless of his candidacy.

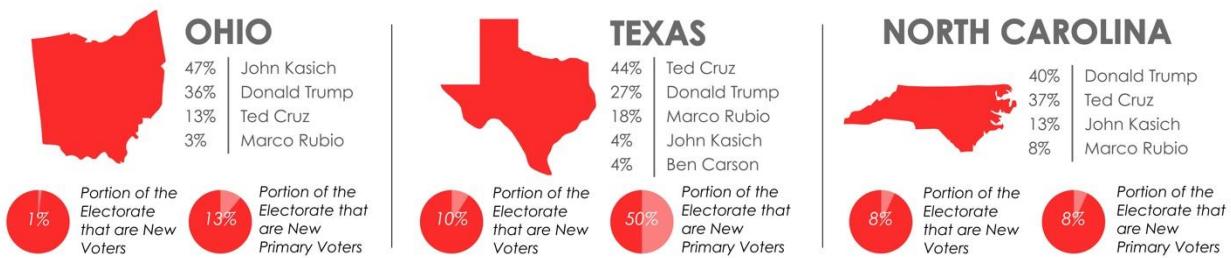
While not a huge number, this figure still illustrates an expanding Republican base following significant losses in 2008 and 2012. Furthermore, if the 7% growth were to carry through to November on the Republican side, it would clearly help cut the deficit we saw in the popular vote in 2012. Be that as it may, 2012 is not 2016 and the popular vote is not how we elect our president.

When we look at the numbers in some of the states where data is available to us, we see a less promising number for the GOP. In Ohio, for example, Republican primary participation grew by 14% from 2012 to 2016, and yet, only 1% of this year's participants are not normal general election voters (they did not participate in the 2012 or 2008 general elections). Further, Trump lost Ohio to a primary challenger and one of his biggest critics, Governor John Kasich. The Ohio Governor vocalized staying in the race specifically to impede Mr. Trump's delegate prospects even as Mr. Kasich held no mathematical chance at the nomination. While it is impossible to know the motivations of each individual voter, it is not too much of a stretch to say that a good number of additional voters flocking to the polls in the Buckeye State likely sought to keep the nomination from Trump.

If we look further south, Texas Sen. Ted Cruz pulled off an impressive victory in his home state over the presumptive nominee. In this case, the Grand Ole Party's largest safe state for the general election precisely doubled Republican turnout in the primary from four years ago. But once again the vast majority of these voters are not new voters. In fact, only one-in-ten Texans had not participated in the last two general elections.

While the data available cannot differentiate to whom these new voters cast their ballots for, it is hard to believe that the tenth of the electorate categorized as new voters went to Donald Trump while Senator Cruz maintained a victory margin that can only be called a landslide.

To be fair there was one state we found where Donald Trump's claims hold up (at least at first glance): North Carolina. In the Tar Heel State, Trump won and the state experienced an 8% increase in primary participation while also having 8% of their electorate constitute new voters. However, when adjusting for the natural cycle of voters passing and a new generation registering to vote, the 8% electorate growth shrivels down to an insignificant 1.2% increase. The other 6.8% of new voters were not registered to vote until after the 2012 general election—[within the projected realm of new millennial voters outlined in the Census Bureau's most recent polling report](#). Could some of these voters have been motivated to register by Trump? Absolutely, however it is tough to argue that all of them were. Additionally, adjusting for newly registered voters in other states yields a similarly inconsequential portion of the electorate having been brought into the process. Real counts in Ohio and Texas dropped to 0.6% and 2.8%, respectively, and the aggregate Republican Primary electorate falls from 7% to 1.7%.





While the numbers and facts are unlikely to stop Trump from claiming his effect on turnout, the fact is that a 1.7% electorate growth, with most swing states falling below this national average, will do little to advance the presumptive nominee this election cycle. So while Mr. Trump's effect on voters may still be *the biggest thing happening in politics* right now, the data doesn't quite measure up to his rhetoric.