

# *The Emerging American Voter: An Examination of the Increase in the Black Vote in November 1998*

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*Washington, D.C.*

*June 2000*

*Population Division Working Paper No. 44*



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*Helping You Make Informed Decisions*

# *Disclaimer*

- This poster was originally presented at the Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America (PAA), Los Angeles, CA, March 2000.
- This paper reports the general results of research and analysis undertaken by Census Staff. It has undergone a more limited review than official Census Bureau publications. This report is released to inform interested parties of research and to encourage discussion.
- The views expressed in this paper are solely attributable to the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the United States Census Bureau.

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# Abstract

In the 1998 congressional election, only 45.3 percent of the voting-age citizen population reported voting. This percentage was the lowest turnout recorded since 1942. While voting rates decreased amongst the overall population, the percentage of Blacks who voted in the 1998 election increased. Between 1994 and 1998, the Black citizen vote rose from 38.8 percent to 41.9 percent, a 3.1 percentage point increase. This is the first congressional election that the Black turnout increased while the White turnout decreased. Why did this occur? Was this a one-time phenomenon or an emerging trend to be expected again in the 2000 election?

Certain demographic and socioeconomic characteristics are relatively strong indicators of voting behavior. Indeed, Whites and Blacks have similar patterns of voting participation by age, educational attainment, family income, and tenure. That is, regardless of race, older people vote more than younger people; more educated people vote more than less educated people; people from higher income families vote more than people from lower family incomes; and people who own their own homes vote more than people who rent. As a whole, the White and Black populations have distinctly different distributions among these characteristics, although there is some evidence these gaps may be narrowing. Other research suggests that the net of demographic and socioeconomic variables, such as education, Blacks are at least as likely, if not more likely, to vote as Whites.

Using data from the Voting and Registration Supplement of the November 1994 and 1998 Current Population Survey (CPS), this paper will examine the increase in the Black vote in a period when overall voter participation is at an all time low. We will examine whether these differences result from demographic composition or some other factor. First, we will estimate logistic regressions to examine by race group which demographic variables or type of election are related to whether a person will 1) register to vote and 2) vote. Second, we will investigate which, if any other of these characteristics, may have changed during the four year period from the last Congressional election.

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Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, February 8, 1999 and Day, Jennifer and Avalaura Gaither. 2000. "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 1998." Current Population Reports, US Census Bureau.

Data in this paper for the Black and White populations do not include Hispanics.

Bass, Loretta and Lynne Casper. 1998. "Are There Differences in Registration and Voting Behavior Between Naturalized and Native-born Americans?" Population Division Working Paper No 28, US Census Bureau and Wolfinger, Raymond. 1994. "Improving Voter Participation in What to Do: Recommendations for Improving the Electoral Process." By Paul E. Frank and William G. Mayer. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

# *Introduction*

- **1998 was the first congressional election in which the Black voter turnout increased while the White voter turnout decreased (Table A).**
- Does change in demographic characteristics account for the change in voting?
- Does change in the type of election (i.e., congressional representative, senator, or governor) account for the change in voting?
- Does change in some combination of demographic characteristics or type of election account for the change in voting?

# *Table A. Reported Rates of Voting by Race: November 1966 to 1998*

Characteristics	Congressional elections of --								
	1966	1970	1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994	1998
<b>United States</b>									
Total, voting age	112,800	120,701	141,299	151,646	165,483	173,890	182,118	190,267	198,228
Percent voted	55.4	54.6	44.7	45.9	48.5	46.0	45.0	45.0	41.9
<b>Citizen Population</b>									
Non-Hispanic White	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	50.8	47.4
Non-Hispanic Black	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	38.8	41.9
<b>Total Population</b>									
White	57.0	56.0	46.3	47.3	49.9	47.0	46.7	47.3	43.3
Black	41.7	43.5	33.8	37.2	43.0	43.2	39.2	37.1	39.6
(Numbers in thousands)									
NA Not available									
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, CPS.									

# *Key Statistics*

- In the 1998 congressional election, 45.3% of the voting-age citizens reported voting, down from 48.3% in 1994.
- However, between 1994 and 1998, the Black citizen vote rose from 38.8 % to 41.9 %, a statistically significant increase of 3.1 percentage points.

# *Data Sources*

- The information on voting in this report is from the November supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS), which asked respondents whether they registered and whether they voted.
- The CPS is a monthly survey of approximately 50,000 households conducted since 1942. The voting supplement has been conducted since 1964.
- Type of election by state data are from the Congressional Quarterly, “America Votes.”

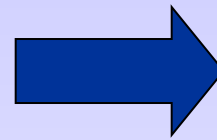


# Questions

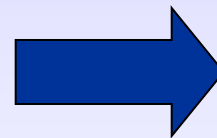
Does change in a single demographic indicator account for the increase in Black voting?

Does change in the type of election account for the increase in Black voting?

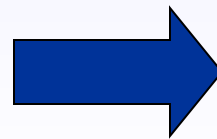
Does change in some combination of demographic indicators or election type account for the increase in Black voting?



**Bivariate  
Analysis**



**Analysis controlling  
for type of election  
by state**



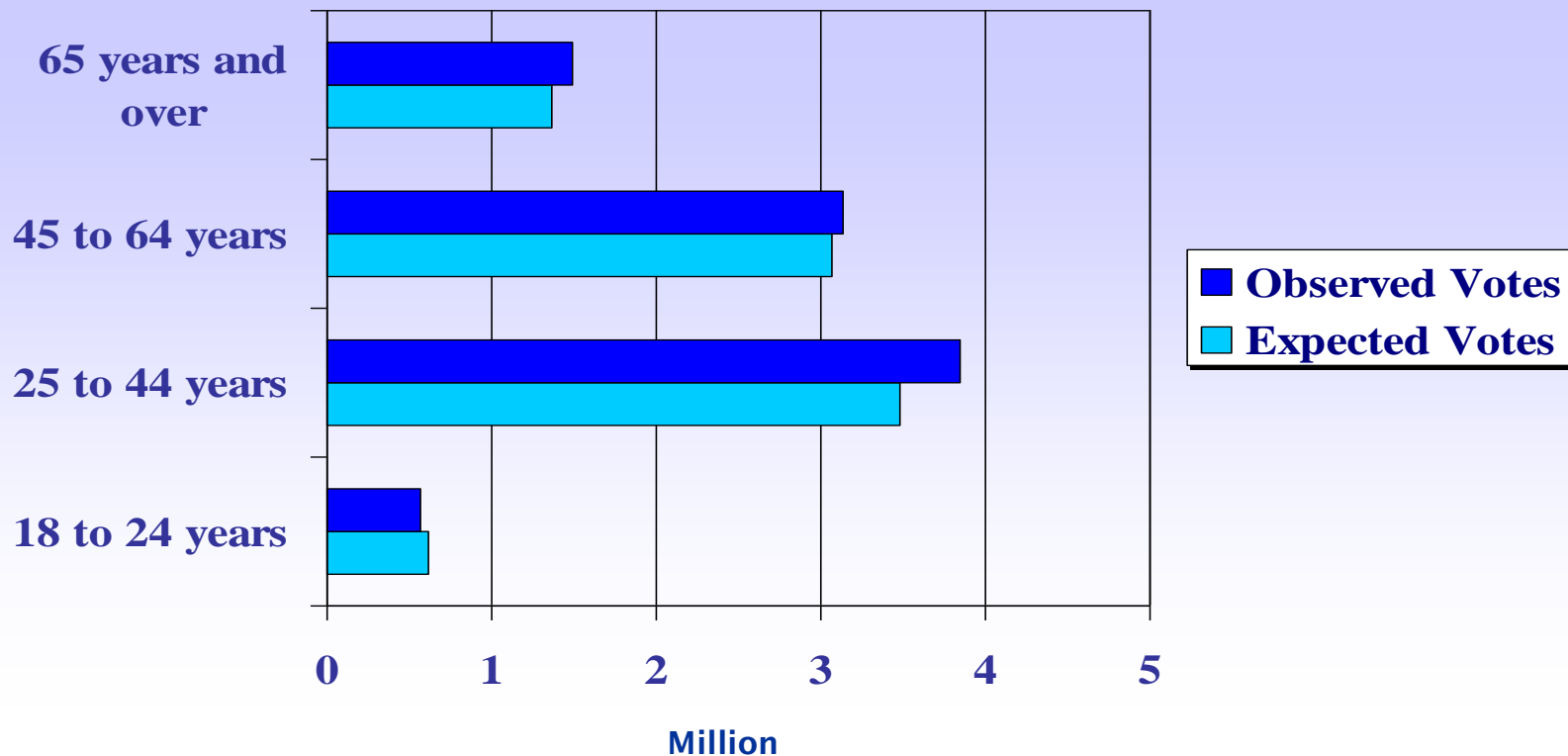
**Multivariate  
Logistic Regression**

# Methods

# *Bivariate Analysis*

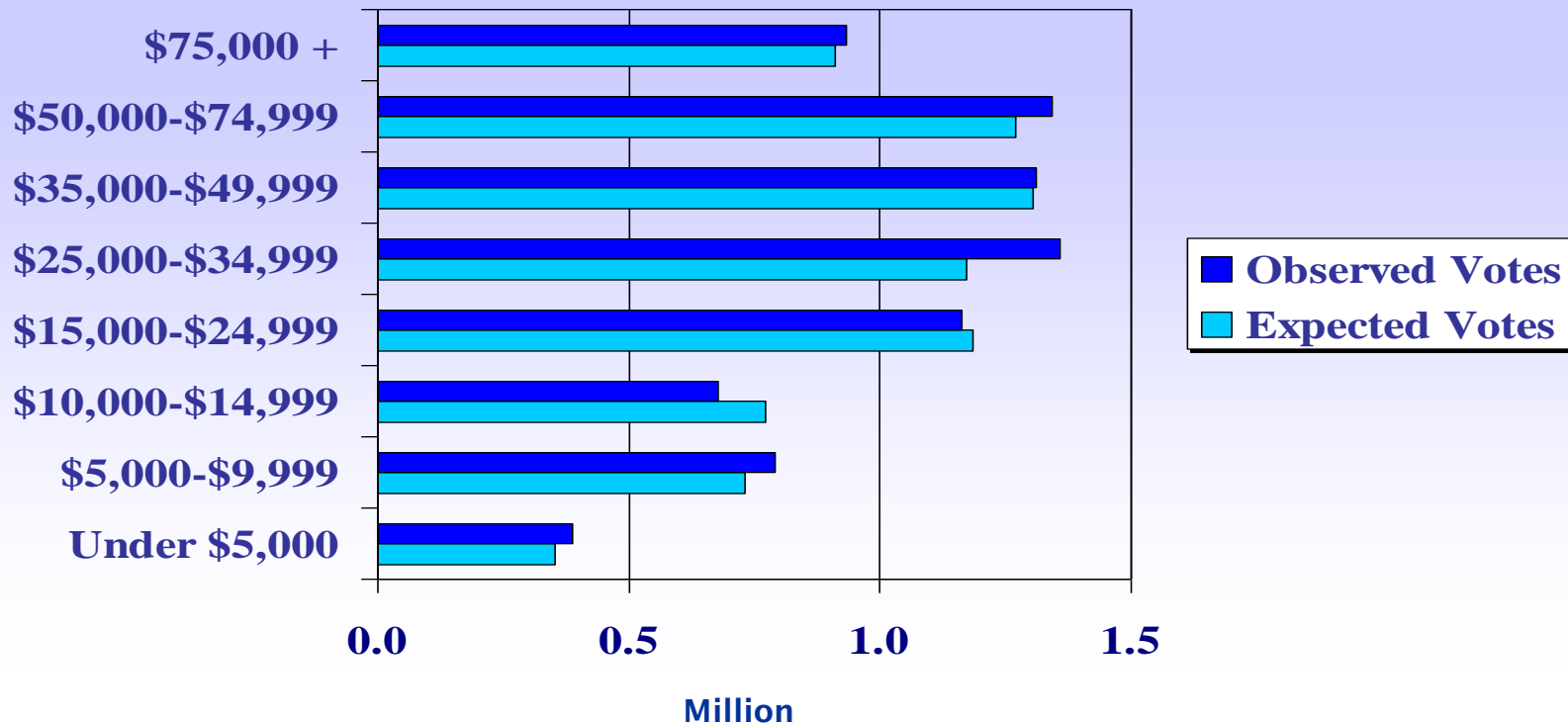
- Purpose: To predict the number of expected voters in 1998, accounting for demographic shift, but discounting a fundamental change in voting behavior.
- **Method**
- Step 1: Identify indicators predictive of voting behavior (e.g., Income, Education, Age).
- Step 2: Perform cross tabs of the Black population by each indicator and voting.
- Step 3: Multiply the number of people within each demographic category in 1998 (e.g., Ages 18-24, 25-34, 45-54, etc.) by the voting rate of people in that category in 1994, to get an 'expected' number of voters. The 'expected' figure is the number of people in 1998 who would have voted given a 1998 population distribution, but 1994 voting rates for people in the measured demographic categories.

# *Number of Black Votes by Age in 1998*



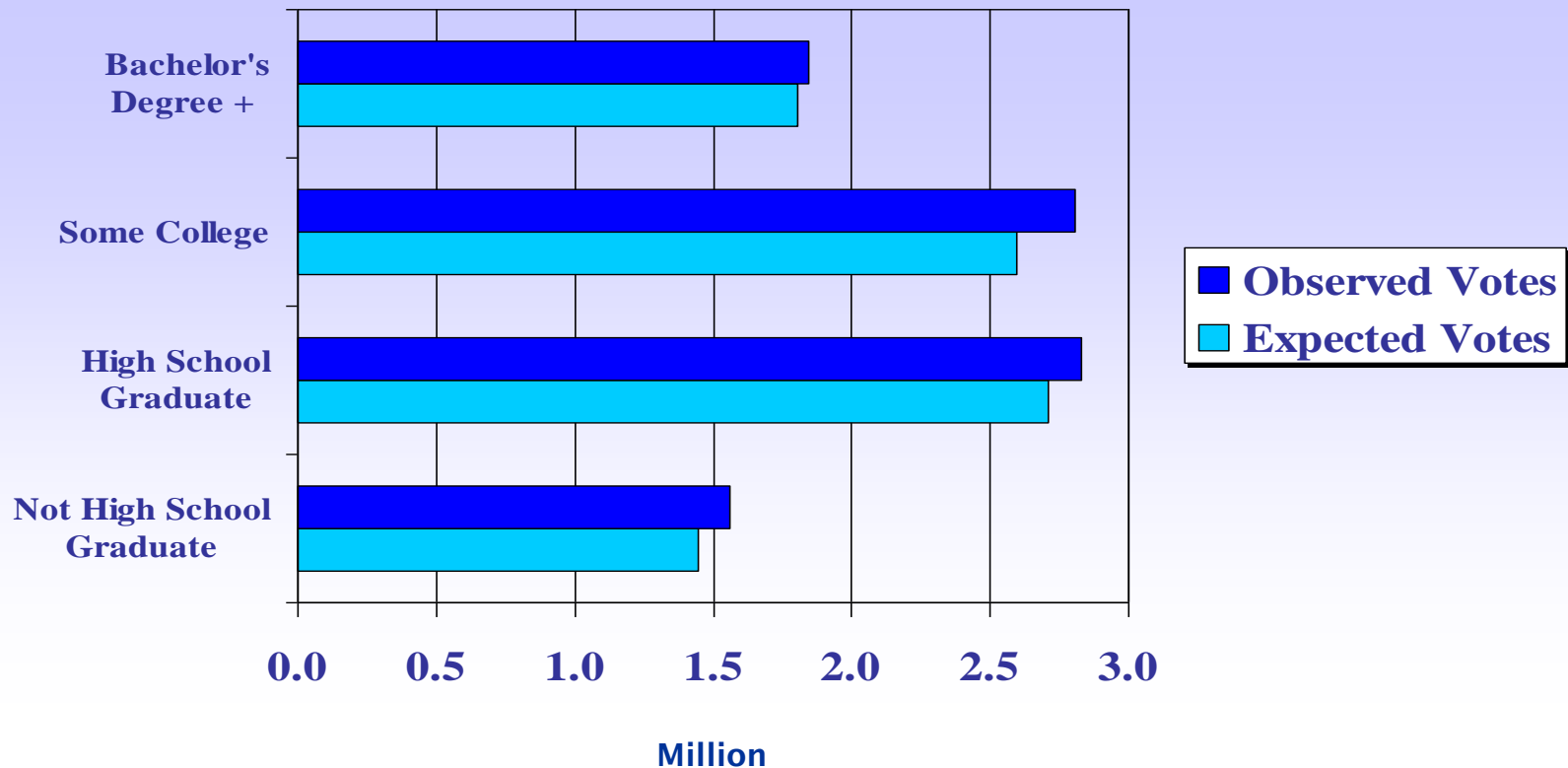
- The observed vote is higher than the expected vote for Blacks ages 25 years and older.
- It is especially higher for those ages 25 to 44 years old.

# *Number of Black Votes by Income in 1998*



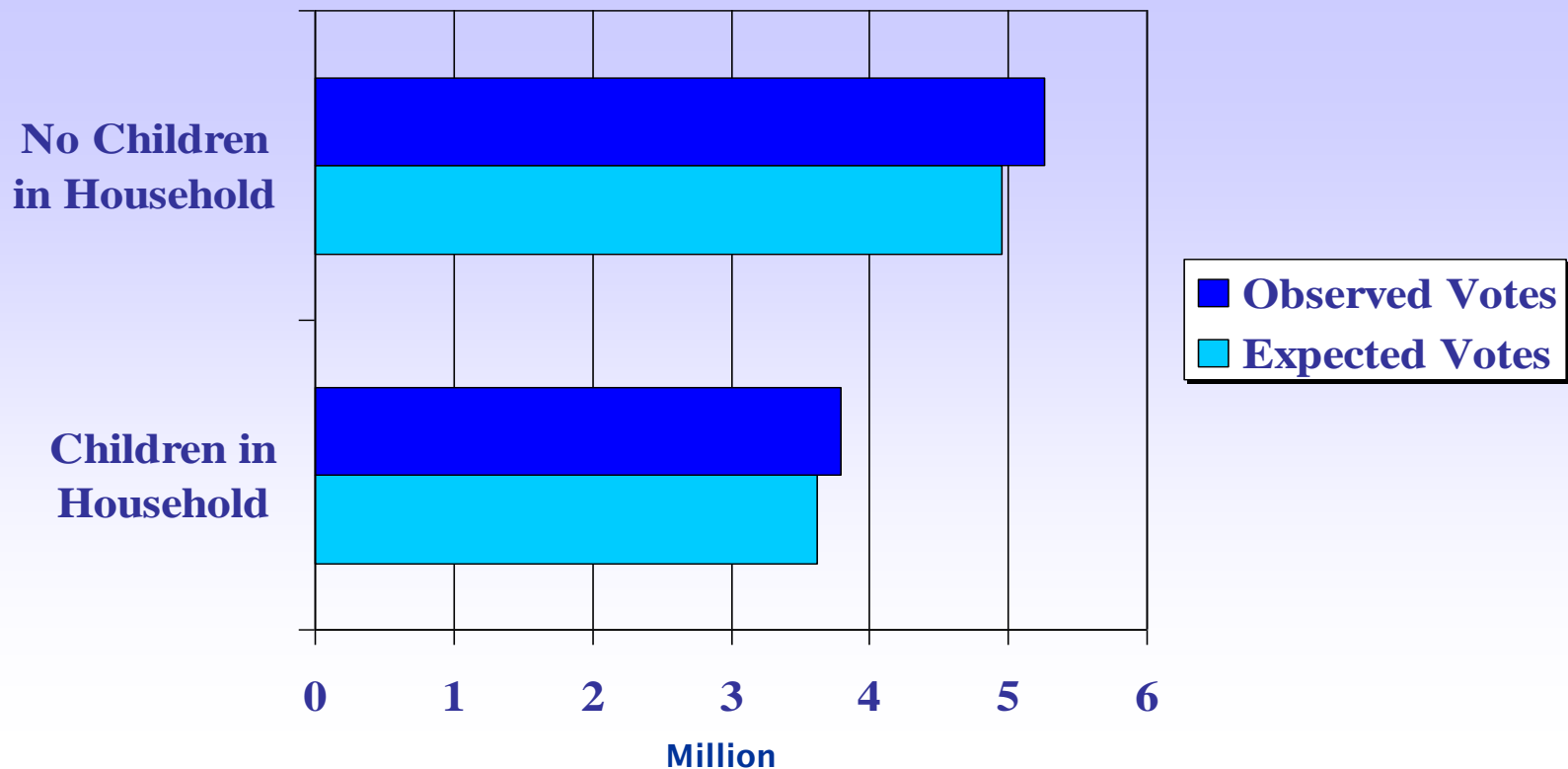
- The observed vote is higher than the expected vote for those in the middle and higher income levels, especially the \$25,000 to \$34,999 income range.

# *Number of Black Votes by Educational Attainment in 1998*



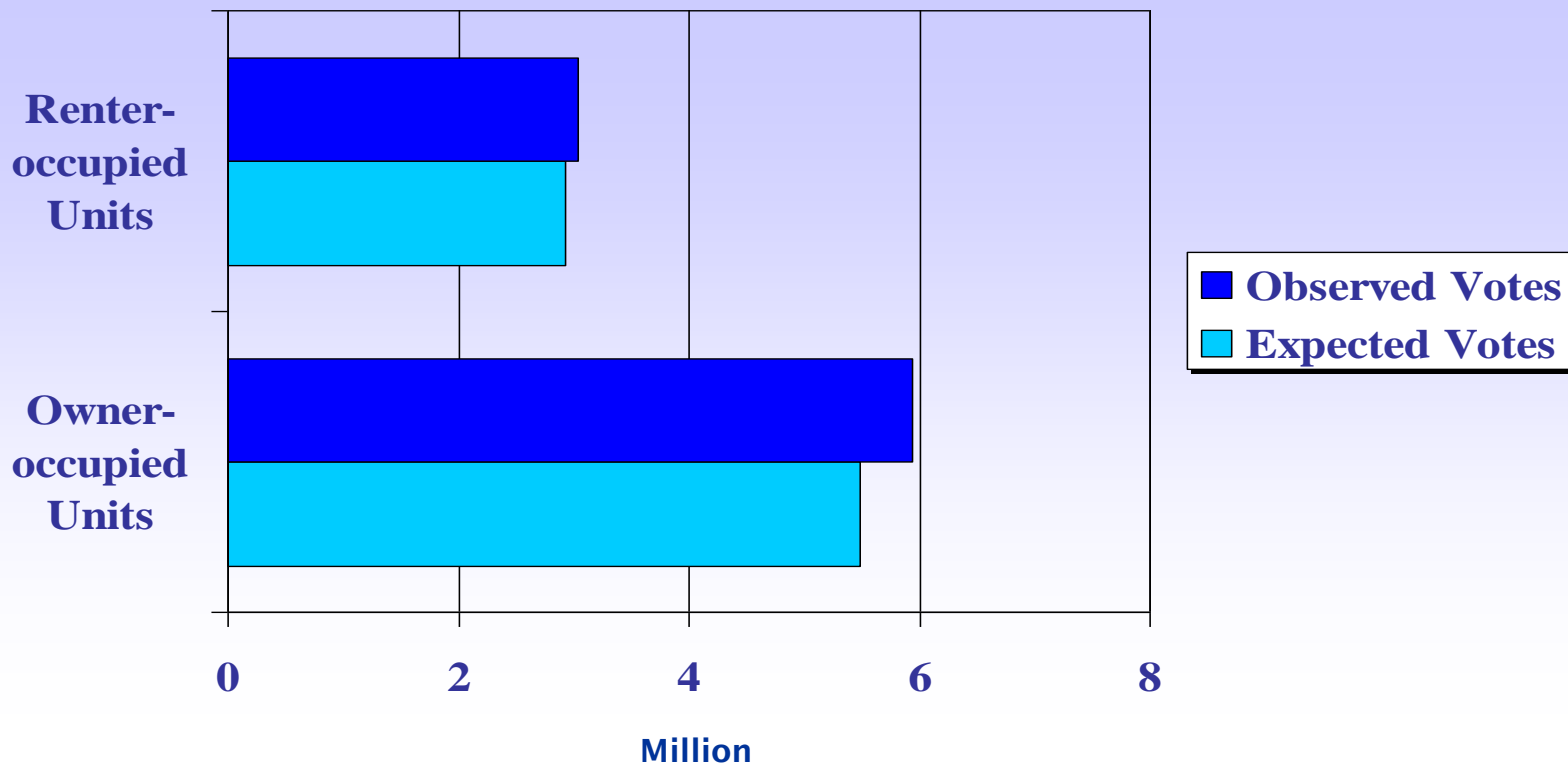
- The observed vote is higher than the expected vote for Blacks with less than a bachelor's degree.

# *Number of Black Votes by Related Children in Household in 1998*



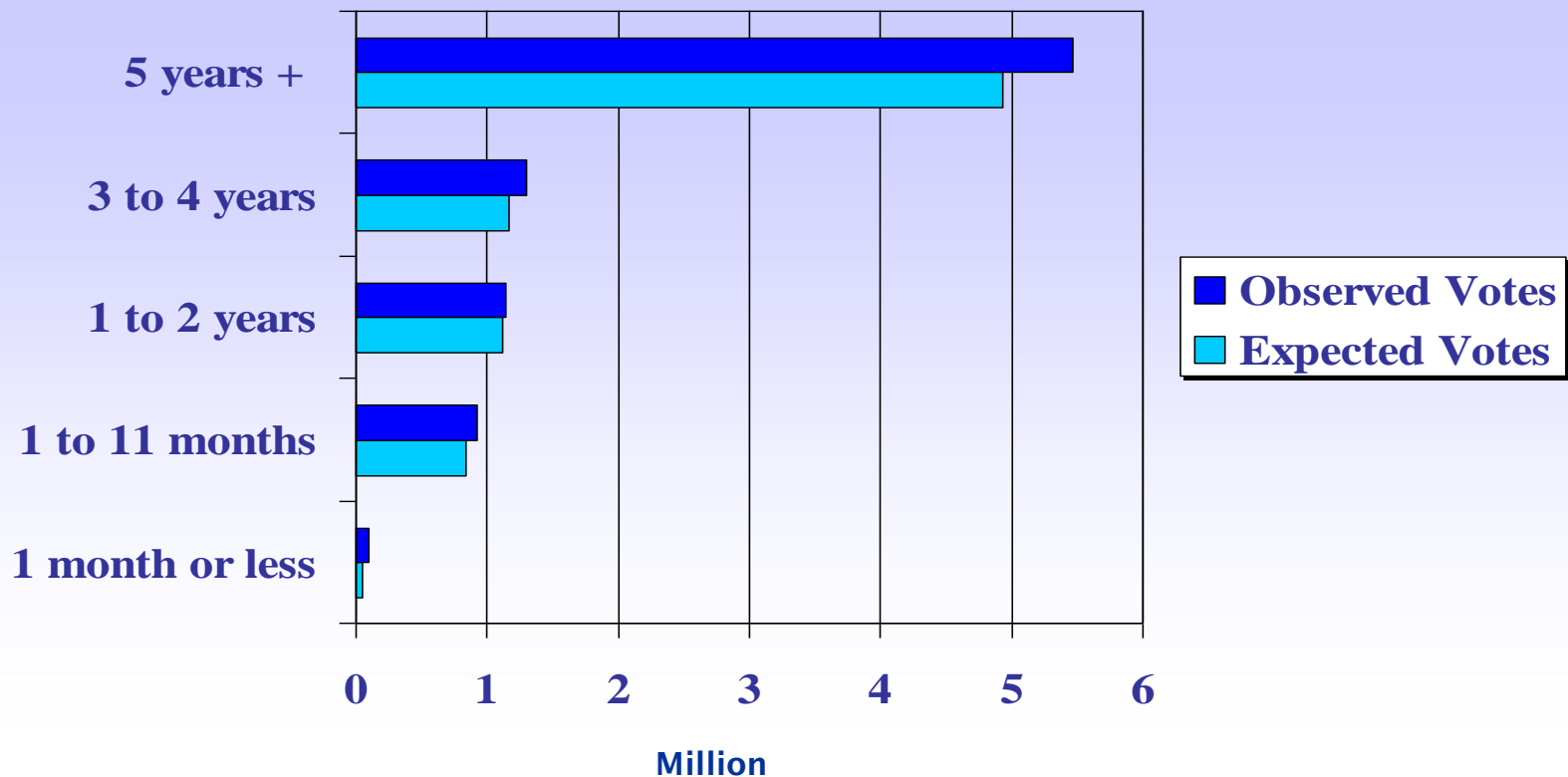
- The observed vote is higher than the expected vote for both Blacks who have children in the household and Blacks who have no children in the household.

# *Number of Black Votes by Tenure in 1998*



- The observed vote is higher than the expected vote for Blacks who own homes.

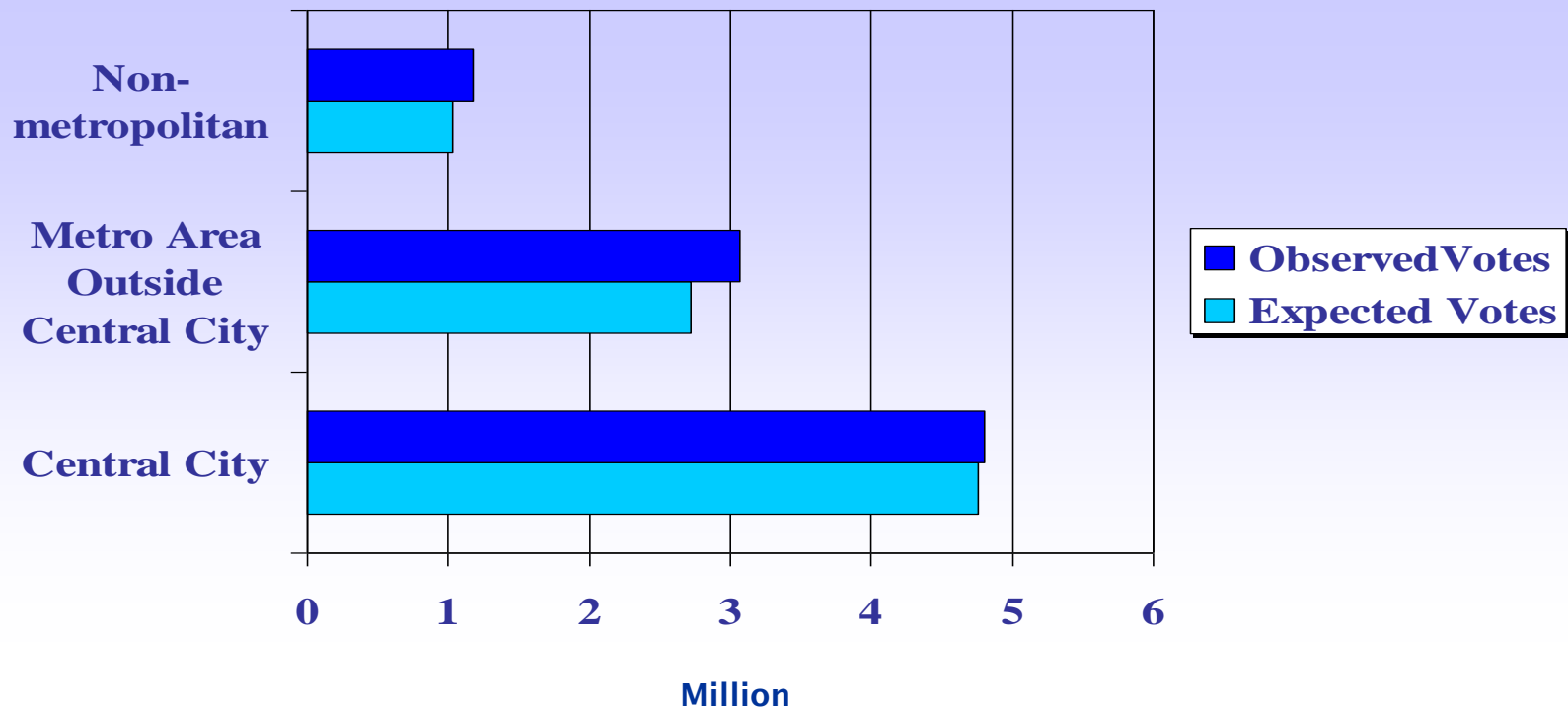
# *Number of Black Votes by Duration of Residence in 1998*



- The observed vote is higher than the expected vote for Blacks who have lived in the same residence for longer periods of time.

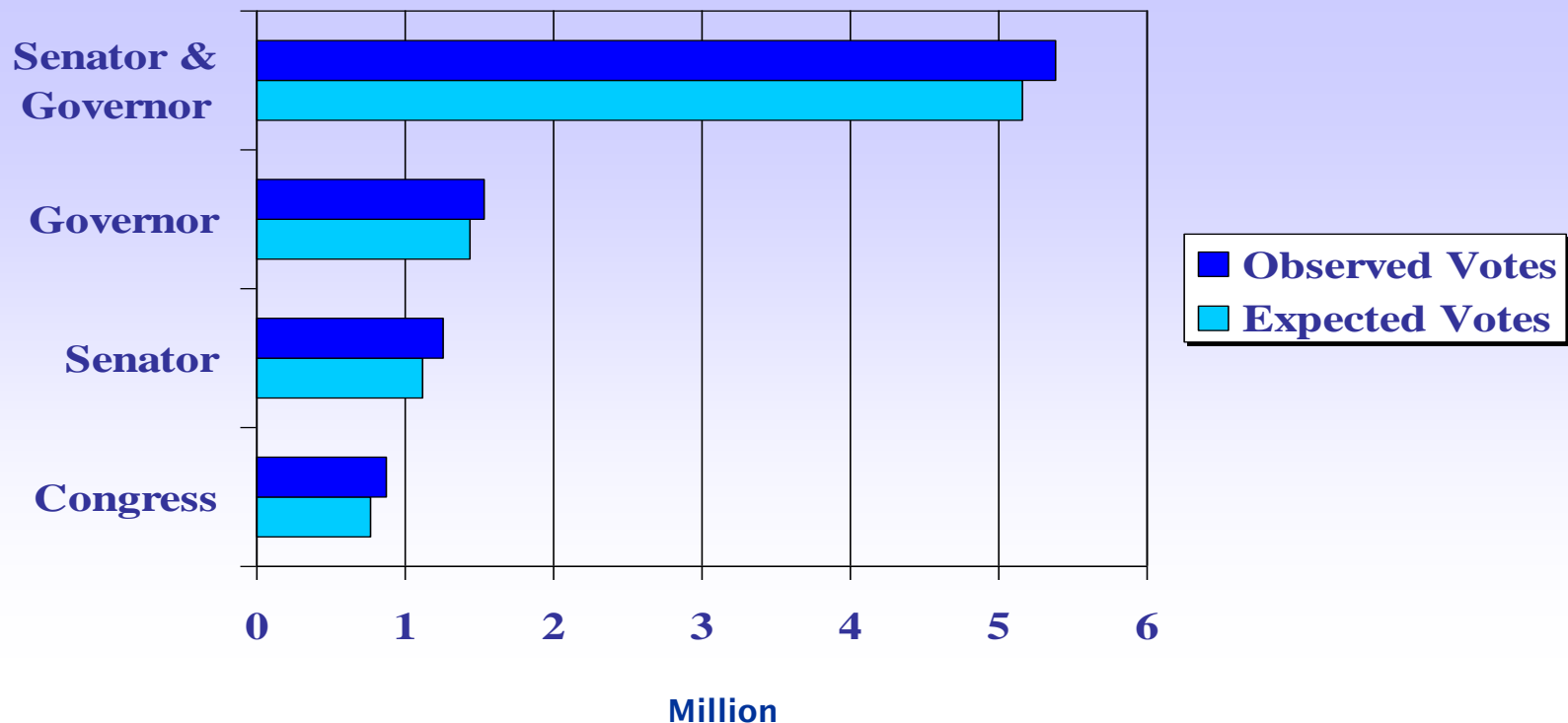


# *Number of Black Votes by Type of Residence in 1998*



- The observed vote is higher than the expected vote for Blacks who live in metropolitan areas outside of the central cities.

# *Number of Black Votes by Type of Election in 1998*



- The observed vote is higher than the expected vote in all states, regardless of the type of officials being elected.

# *Multivariate Logistic Regression*

- **Purpose:** To detect a fundamental change in voting behavior controlling for the combined effect of all demographic shifts.

- **Model 1:** Probability of voting among all citizens.

(Applied to all ages 18+ years in 1994, all ages 18+ years in 1998.)

Probability of Voting = Constant + Race + Sex + Education + Age + Election type + Income  
+ Rent/own + Length of residence + Marital status + Metropolitan status

- **Model 2:** Probability of voting among Black citizens.

(Applied to 18+ years Black non-Hispanic in 1994, 18+ years Black non-Hispanic in 1998.)

Probability of Voting = Constant + Sex + Education + Age + Election type + Income + Rent/own  
+ Length of residence + Marital status + Metropolitan status

- **Model 3:** Probability of voting among all citizens in 1994 and 1998.

(Applied to all ages 18+ years in a combined data set of 1994 and 1998 data.)

Probability of Voting = Constant + Year + Race + Sex + Education + Age + Election type + Income  
+ Rent/own + Length of residence + Marital status + Metropolitan status

- **Model 4:** Probability of voting among Black citizens in 1994 and 1998.

(Applied to 18+ years Black non-Hispanics in a combined data set of 1994 and 1998 data.)

Probability of Voting = Constant + Year + Sex + Education + Age + Election type + Income  
+ Rent/own + Length of residence + Marital status + Metropolitan status

# *Model 1: Probability of Voting Among All Citizens*

## **\*Key Results: Voting by Race and Election Type**

			N	Parameter	Standard	Pr >	Standardized	Odds
Year	Variable	DF	(raw count)	Estimate	Error	Chi- Square	Estimate	Ratio
1994	Black	1	95357	0.1577	0.018	0.0001	0.038046	1.171
1998	Black	1	84076	0.4088	0.0178	0.0001	0.107326	1.505
1994	Senator	1	95357	-0.0995	0.0165	0.0001	-0.024719	0.905
1998	Senator	1	84067	-0.039	0.0161	0.0154	-0.010692	0.962

\* See handout for complete model results.

**Controlling for socioeconomic factors, Blacks were significantly more likely to vote than non-Blacks in both the 1994 and 1998 elections.**

**In both 1994 and 1998, people in states holding elections for senators and congressmen were significantly less likely to vote than those in states electing Governors as well.**

## *Model 2: Probability of Voting Among Black Citizens*

### **\*Key Result: Voting by Election Type**

			N	Parameter	Standard	Pr >	Standardized	Odds
Year	Variable	DF	(raw count)	Estimate	Error	Chi- Square	Estimate	Ratio
1994	Senator	1	9516	-0.2553	0.0490	0.0001	-0.069525	0.775
1998	Senator	1	7993	-0.0181	0.0452	0.6894	-0.005773	0.982

\* See handout for complete model results.

In 1994, Blacks in states holding elections for senators and representatives were significantly less likely to vote than those in states electing governors as well. However, in 1998, there was no statistically significant difference in voting probability between Blacks living in states electing senators and representatives and Blacks living in other states.

## *Model 3: Probability of Voting Among All Citizens in 1994 and 1998*

**\*Key Results: Voting in 1998 compared to 1994, and voting among Blacks compared to non-Blacks.**

Years	Variable	DF	N (raw count)	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	Pr > Chi- Square	Standardized Estimate	Odds Ratio
1994 & 1998	Dummy98	1	179433	-0.1921	0.00783	0.0001	-0.075064	0.825
1994 & 1998	Black	1	179433	0.2843	0.0126	0.0001	0.071493	1.329

\* See handout for complete model results.

When shifts in socioeconomic factors are controlled for, citizens were significantly less likely to vote in 1998 than they were in 1994.

All other things being equal, Blacks were significantly more likely to vote than non-Blacks during both elections.

## *Model 4: Probability of Voting Among Black Citizens in 1994 and 1998*

### **\*Key Result: Voting in 1998 compared to 1994**

Years	Variable	DF	N (raw count)	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	Pr > Chi- Square	Standardized Estimate	Odds Ratio
1994 & 1998	Dummy98	1	17509	0.0701	0.0226	0.0019	0.03004	1.073

\* See handout for complete model results.

**Black citizens were significantly more likely to vote in 1998 than they were in 1994, controlling for a shift in socioeconomic factors.**

# *Conclusions*

- The observed votes for Blacks in 1998 exceeded expected votes for every demographic characteristic--no variable by itself shifted enough to explain the increase in Black voter turnout.
- The observed vote for Blacks is higher than the expected vote in all types of elections, regardless of the type of officials being elected.
- Controlling for several demographic characteristics, Blacks appeared more likely to vote than non-Blacks in BOTH elections (much more likely in 1998.)
- Therefore, the increase in Black voter turnout from 1994 to 1998 can not be explained by changes in basic demographic characteristics or the type of election.



# *Contact Information*

For further information contact:  
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