GHPAC
GHANA DIASPORA
PUBLIC AFFAIRS COLLECTIVE

BUILDING GHANAIAN POWER

STATE OF GHANAIAN AMERICA / CIVIC DATA SERIES · WHITE PAPER

The Invisible Vote

Ghanaian Americans and the 2026 Midterm Elections

ELECTION DAY EDITION | NOVEMBER 3, 2026

An independent demographic analysis of Ghanaian American voting eligibility, geographic concentration and the limits of conventional electoral data, with recommendations for building a credible evidence base for representation.

111,918
Estimated voting-eligible Ghanaian American adults[1]

217,120
Published Ghanaian-ancestry population[2]

46%
Share of the eligible electorate in New York, Maryland, Virginia and New Jersey[1]

[1] GHPAC analysis of ACS 2020–2024 five-year PUMS; national eligible-voter estimate ±5,036 at 90% confidence. [2] U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2020–2024 five-year Table B04006, ancestry alone or in combination. These estimates are not voter-registration or turnout totals.

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FOREWORD

From visibility to representation

Ghanaian Americans are part of the American electorate, workforce and civic landscape, yet we are rarely visible as a distinct community in the data used to understand political participation. Too often, our experiences are absorbed into broad categories that tell policymakers little about who we are or where we live.

On Election Day 2026, the Ghana Diaspora Public Affairs Collective is releasing a new baseline: an estimated 111,918 Ghanaian Americans meet the basic U.S. citizenship and age criteria for voting. The analysis also shows that the population captured by federal ancestry measures depends on whether someone reports Ghanaian identity first, second, or not at all.

The question is not whether Ghanaian Americans vote as a bloc; this research cannot answer that. The question is how we build an accurate evidence base for participation, representation and policy engagement across the generations. As GHPAC moves from visibility to power, credible research is one of the institutions we must build.

This white paper is one phase of the broader State of Ghanaian America initiative. Our forthcoming community research will examine priorities and lived experiences that federal data do not measure. We intend to use both to inform nonpartisan civic education, institutional collaboration and a long-term effort to improve representation in federal statistics, including the 2030 Census.

Adjoa Kyerematen
President & CEO, Ghana Diaspora Public Affairs Collective

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A baseline for a community the data rarely sees

> *Ghanaian Americans are a measurable part of the U.S. electorate, concentrated in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast, but nearly invisible in the data used to describe voters.*

This white paper establishes the first public, margin-of-error-backed estimate of the Ghanaian American population eligible to vote, describes where that population lives, and places it alongside the 2026 midterm landscape. Just as important, it sets out what these estimates cannot tell us, and what it will take to close that gap.

111,918
Estimated U.S.-citizen Ghanaian Americans age 18+ (±5,036)

217,120
Published Ghanaian-ancestry population, ACS 2020–2024

18,286
Reported Ghanaian only as a second ancestry

46%
Of eligible adults live in NY, MD, VA and NJ

Key findings

- **111,918 estimated Ghanaian American U.S. citizens aged 18+** (±5,036 at 90% confidence), based on pooled 2020–2024 ACS data. This is an estimate of eligibility, not a headcount for November 3, 2026.
- **217,120 people reported Ghanaian ancestry** alone or in combination in the Census Bureau's published five-year table. GHPAC's microdata estimate of the comparable population is 212,821 (±9,652), within the published figure's confidence interval.
- **18,286 people reported Ghanaian only as their second ancestry.** Analyses that count only the first-listed ancestry miss them entirely. They are included in every figure in this paper, not added on top.
- **About 46% of the estimated eligible electorate lives in New York, Maryland, Virginia and New Jersey.** New York alone has an estimated 20,186 eligible adults, nearly one in five nationally.
- **The states with the most Ghanaian American eligible adults are not the states with the closest Senate races.** Ohio and Texas, both rated Toss Up for U.S. Senate, hold an estimated 5,779 and 6,887 eligible adults respectively.
- **Concentration, competitiveness and participation are three separate questions.** Federal data can answer only the first. The analysis does not identify voter registration, actual turnout, party preference, vote choice or congressional-district populations.

Summary of recommendations

- **Federal statistical agencies:** preserve detailed origin and ancestry write-in responses, and publish Ghanaian as a coded, tabulated category in the ACS and the 2030 Census.
- **Researchers and funders:** invest in community-designed surveys; avoid surname-based ancestry inference; always report eligibility, registration and turnout separately.

- **Media, campaigns and civic partners:** describe these figures as eligibility estimates with margins of error, never as voting blocs or predicted ballots.
- **Community members and institutions:** report Ghanaian identity on federal surveys and take part in community-led research.

01 | CONTEXT

The visibility problem

> *A community that cannot be counted is easy to overlook, in outreach, in policy and in representation.*

Most civic and political data describe Americans through broad categories. Ghanaian Americans appear inside "Black or African American," inside "foreign-born" or "African-born," or inside generic immigrant groupings, but rarely as themselves. Those categories are useful for many purposes, but they tell policymakers, election administrators and community institutions very little about a specific diaspora with its own languages, institutions, settlement patterns and priorities.

The challenge is not simply that Ghanaian Americans are a smaller population. It is that each of the main data sources captures a different slice of the community, and none of them was designed to measure civic participation by national heritage.

Three instruments, three different answers

Source	What it captures	What it misses
ACS ancestry question	Self-reported ancestry or ethnic origin; up to two responses are coded	People of Ghanaian heritage who write a different response, or none; second responses are often dropped in simpler analyses
Decennial Census race write-in	Detailed write-in responses within race categories (172,558 Ghanaian in 2020)	A different question and year; not combinable with ACS ancestry counts
Voter files	Registration and vote history (whether, not how, someone voted)	No ancestry or national-origin field at all

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau ACS Table B04006; 2020 Census detailed race write-in tabulations.

Why common workarounds fall short

Because voter files contain no ancestry field, analysts sometimes infer national origin from surnames. For Ghanaian Americans this approach is particularly unreliable. Many Ghanaian names overlap with English, Christian, Muslim or other West African names, while others are shared across neighboring countries. A surname model would systematically exclude Ghanaian Americans with non-distinctive surnames, and could misattribute others. The result would look precise while being biased in ways that are hard to detect.

Country-of-birth data have a different problem: they capture immigrants but not the U.S.-born children and grandchildren who make up a growing share of the community, and who are, by definition, citizens.

Why ancestry is the right starting point

The ACS ancestry question is self-reported, covers both immigrants and U.S.-born generations, and is paired with citizenship and age in the same record. That makes it the only large federal source from which a Ghanaian American **eligibility** estimate can be produced with known margins of error. It is a starting point, not the full picture.

02 | FINDINGS

The national picture

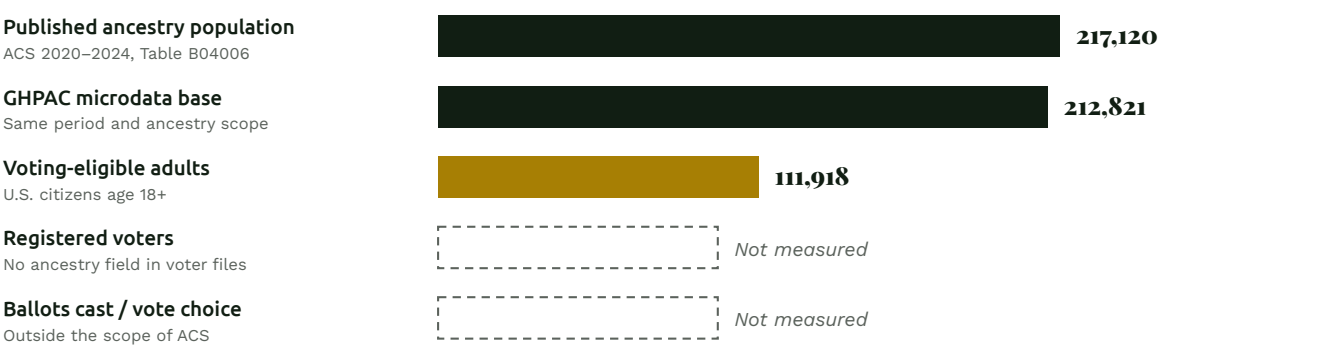
The Census Bureau's 2020–2024 ACS five-year Table B04006 reports 217,120 people with Ghanaian ancestry alone or in combination. An independent GHPAC computation using the 2020–2024 five-year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) estimates 212,821 ±9,652, within the published total's 90% confidence interval. The published Census figure is used for the headline ancestry population; GHPAC's record-level analysis supports the eligibility and geographic estimates.

Federal measure	Estimate	Interpretation
ACS 2020–2024 five-year, Ghanaian ancestry alone or in combination	217,120 ±8,734	Published Census B04006
GHPAC calculation, same period and ancestry scope	212,821 ±9,652	PUMS estimate used as analytical base
ACS 2025 one-year, Ghanaian ancestry	252,700 ±25,040	Different period and precision; not used to derive eligibility
2020 Census detailed Ghanaian race write-in	172,558	Different question and year; not directly comparable

Margins of error shown at 90% confidence.

From population to participation: what is measured, and what is not

Bar lengths scaled to the published ancestry population. Registration and turnout cannot be measured for Ghanaian Americans with existing data.



Within the pooled analysis, roughly half (about 53%) of the Ghanaian-ancestry population meets the citizenship and age criteria for voting. The remainder includes children and adults who are not U.S. citizens. Many of them are part of the community's civic life, through families, congregations and associations, without being part of the electorate.

Within the 2020–2024 five-year comparisons presented in Benjamin Osei's research, Ghanaian ranks third among named African-country ancestries, after Nigerian and Ethiopian. This refers to ancestry reporting, not all African-born residents or all people with African heritage.

Why the second ancestry matters

Of 6,965 unweighted PUMS records reporting Ghanaian in either ancestry field, 590 listed Ghanaian only as a second ancestry. Weighted, they represent an estimated **18,286 people**, about one in twelve of the analytical base. An analysis that counts only first-listed ancestry would miss them entirely, which is why a single-response approach is too narrow. Others with Ghanaian heritage may not record Ghanaian ancestry in either field; the size, citizenship and age composition of that uncaptured population are unknown.

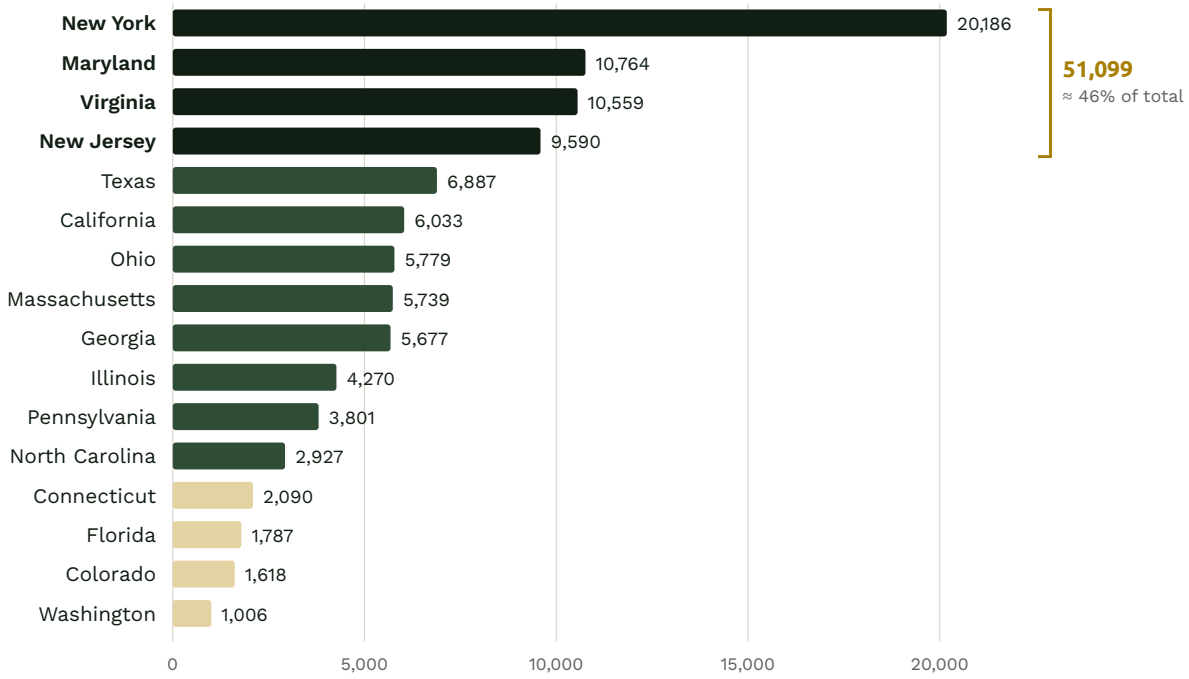
03 | FINDINGS

Where the estimated electorate lives

Geography is the most immediate civic-planning contribution of this analysis. A concentration of eligible adults in a state creates a reason to study civic infrastructure there. It is not a basis for claiming that a community determines the outcome of a particular contest.

Estimated voting-eligible Ghanaian American adults by state

The 16 states meeting reporting thresholds. Dark green: four leading states. Light gold: use with caution.



18%
of the national eligible estimate lives in New York (20,186)

82%
lives in the 12 publishable states combined (92,212)

34 + DC
states suppressed for small samples or low reliability

The pattern is regional. Four Mid-Atlantic and Northeast states (New York, Maryland, Virginia and New Jersey) together hold an estimated 51,099 eligible adults. A second tier spanning Texas, California, Ohio, Massachusetts and Georgia each holds between roughly 5,700 and 6,900. Washington, D.C. sits at the heart of the largest corridor but falls below the sample threshold for a reliable estimate on its own.

State	Est. eligible	Status	State	Est. eligible	Status
New York	20,186	Publishable	Georgia	5,677	Publishable
Maryland	10,764	Publishable	Illinois	4,270	Publishable
Virginia	10,559	Publishable	Pennsylvania	3,801	Publishable
New Jersey	9,590	Publishable	North Carolina	2,927	Publishable
Texas	6,887	Publishable	Connecticut	2,090	Use with caution
California	6,033	Publishable	Florida	1,787	Use with caution
Ohio	5,779	Publishable	Colorado	1,618	Use with caution
Massachusetts	5,739	Publishable	Washington	1,006	Use with caution

Source: GHPAC expanded ACS 2020–2024 five-year PUMS analysis. State-level margins of error vary. The 12 publishable states meet Benjamin Osei's reliability thresholds; four are flagged for caution. Thirty-four other states and Washington, D.C. are suppressed. The four leading states together account for 51,099 of the national point estimate, approximately 46%.

04 | ANALYSIS

The 2026 battleground intersection

As of November 2, 2026, the Cook Political Report classified U.S. Senate contests in Ohio and Texas as Toss Up. GHPAC estimates 5,779 eligible Ghanaian American adults in Ohio and 6,887 in Texas. These statewide populations are not voting blocs, registration counts or predicted ballots. Their presence makes the states important locations for further nonpartisan research about civic participation and community institutions.

The Cook Political Report also identifies competitive U.S. House contests in several states with measurable Ghanaian American eligible populations. The examples below establish a geographic overlap at state level only. ACS state estimates cannot be apportioned to those districts without additional geographically suitable data.

State | eligible est.	Election context (Cook, Nov. 2)	Interpretation / limit
Ohio | 5,779	U.S. Senate: Toss Up; OH-07: Toss Up; OH-09: Lean D	Statewide eligible population; not district-specific
Texas | 6,887	U.S. Senate: Toss Up; TX-15 and TX-35: Toss Up	Statewide eligible population; district location unknown
New York | 20,186	NY-17: Toss Up; NY-03, NY-04 and NY-19: Likely D	Largest estimated state electorate; no district distribution
Virginia | 10,559	VA-01: Toss Up; VA-02: Lean D	Statewide overlap only
New Jersey | 9,590	NJ-07: Lean D	No measured NJ-07 Ghanaian electorate
Pennsylvania | 3,801	PA-01: Toss Up; PA-07, PA-08, PA-10: Lean D	Statewide overlap only
North Carolina | 2,927	NC-01: Toss Up; U.S. Senate: Likely D	No inference about race-level influence
Georgia | 5,677	U.S. Senate: Likely D	Not rated Toss Up in Cook's Nov. 2 ratings

Election classifications are attributed to Cook Political Report ratings dated November 2, 2026. "Lean D," "Likely D" and "Toss Up" are the publisher's descriptive ratings, not GHPAC assessments or predictions. Ratings can change and are not measurements of Ghanaian American voter behavior.

Concentration is not competitiveness

The contrast is important. The four states with the largest estimated Ghanaian American eligible populations, New York, Maryland, Virginia and New Jersey, are not the states containing the closest-rated U.S. Senate races. Maryland, for instance, is a major population center in this analysis but does not appear in the battleground examples above. This paper therefore treats demographic concentration, electoral competitiveness and actual political participation as three separate questions.

CONCENTRATION

Where do eligible Ghanaian Americans live?

Answered, at state level, by this paper's ACS estimates.

COMPETITIVENESS

Where are races close?

Described by independent ratings such as Cook; changes over a cycle.

PARTICIPATION

Who registers, votes, and how?

Not measurable for Ghanaian Americans with any existing dataset.

Treating these questions separately protects the credibility of the community's data. Claims that a population "decides" a race require evidence on all three; at present, only the first can be documented.

05 | CONTEXT

Issues and community context

National polling helps explain the setting in which this data is being released; it does not reveal Ghanaian American policy preferences. In Pew Research Center polling of registered voters conducted September 28–October 4, 2026, 84% described the economy as very important to their congressional vote; 73% named the future of democracy, 68% healthcare and 59% immigration. These findings describe registered U.S. voters generally, not Ghanaian Americans specifically.

Share of all U.S. registered voters calling each issue "very important" to their 2026 vote

Source: Pew Research Center, survey conducted Sept. 28–Oct. 4, 2026. Selected issues shown.



A community profile from federal data

GHPAC's analysis of the same ACS microdata provides socioeconomic context for the Ghanaian-ancestry population:

51.9%
Bachelor's degree or higher, adults 25+

82.5%
In the labor force, ages 16–64

77.4%
Employed, ages 16–64

91.0%
With health insurance

These figures describe a highly educated, heavily employed community. They provide context, but they do not establish how Ghanaian Americans rank election issues. It would be a mistake to assume, for example, that a high rate of insurance coverage means healthcare is a lower priority, or that labor-force participation predicts views on economic policy.

The question federal data cannot answer

What policies matter most to Ghanaian Americans? Which institutions shape participation? What barriers prevent civic visibility from becoming durable representation? The next phase of State of Ghanaian America research is designed to ask these community-specific questions directly.

06 | INTERPRETATION

What the data can—and cannot—say

> *Credibility is a civic asset. Stating limits clearly is what allows these numbers to be used with confidence.*

This analysis can

- Estimate the number of Ghanaian Americans who are U.S. citizens aged 18+
- Show which states hold reliable concentrations of that population
- Quantify how ancestry-reporting choices change the count
- Provide margins of error for each estimate

This analysis cannot

- Measure registration, turnout, party affiliation or vote choice
- Place statewide populations inside congressional districts
- Count people of Ghanaian heritage who did not report it
- Show that any community decides an election outcome

1. Eligibility is not participation

This paper estimates eligibility, defined here by U.S. citizenship and age 18 or older in the ACS 2020–2024 pooled sample. It does not measure registration, turnout, party affiliation, voting choices or candidate support. Voter files do not identify Ghanaian ancestry as a distinct field, while surname-based estimates would risk systematically excluding Ghanaian Americans with non-distinctive or overlapping surnames.

2. Identity reporting shapes the count

The estimate includes respondents who report Ghanaian as a first or second ancestry; people of Ghanaian heritage who did not provide that response are not included. As a matter of demographic interpretation, the ancestry-based population is an incomplete measure of the broader community. Even so, the statistical point estimate should not be presented as a mathematically proven minimum, and should not be used to extrapolate an uncounted population.

3. State geography is not district geography

PUMS permits these state-level estimates at varying reliability, but it does not support claims that the statewide populations are located within individual competitive congressional districts. State comparison is context, not evidence of causal influence or electoral decisiveness.

4. A pooled estimate is not a point-in-time count

The five-year ACS pools responses collected from 2020 through 2024. It describes the average over that period, not the population on Election Day 2026. Naturalizations, young people turning 18 and migration since then are not reflected.

How to cite these figures responsibly

Accurate	Inaccurate
“An estimated 111,918 Ghanaian Americans are eligible to vote (±5,036).”	“111,918 Ghanaian Americans will vote on Election Day.”
“Ohio has an estimated 5,779 eligible Ghanaian American adults, and a Senate race rated Toss Up.”	“Ghanaian Americans will decide Ohio’s Senate race.”
“About 46% of the estimated eligible population lives in four states.”	“Ghanaian Americans vote as a bloc in the Mid-Atlantic.”

07 | POLICY

Recommendations

The gap this paper documents is not unique to Ghanaian Americans; it affects many diaspora communities whose national heritage disappears inside broad categories. Closing it requires action from the institutions that produce, interpret and use civic data. GHPAC offers the following nonpartisan recommendations.

For federal statistical agencies and Congress

Preserve and publish detailed origin data

Maintain detailed write-in responses for ancestry and origin in the American Community Survey and the 2030 Census, code Ghanaian as a distinct response, and publish it in standard tables at national and state levels.

Count every reported ancestry

Ensure that second-listed ancestry responses continue to be coded and are included in published “alone or in combination” tables, so communities with multiple heritages are not undercounted.

Support small-population reliability

Expand access to pooled multi-year and sub-state estimates, with clear margins of error, so smaller communities can be measured responsibly below the state level.

For researchers, universities and funders

Invest in community-designed research

Fund independently designed surveys of diaspora communities that publish their methodology and limits, and pair them with federal estimates rather than replacing them.

Avoid surname-based ancestry inference

Do not assign Ghanaian ancestry from surnames in voter files; the method systematically excludes people with non-distinctive names and introduces hidden bias.

Report the three questions separately

Distinguish eligibility, registration and turnout in every publication, and never present ancestry estimates as vote totals.

For media, campaigns and civic partners

Describe the data accurately

Present these figures as eligibility estimates with margins of error, attribute race ratings to their publishers, and avoid “voting bloc” or “deciding vote” framing that the evidence does not support.

Engage through community institutions

Nonpartisan voter-education efforts should work with the churches, mosques, professional networks, student associations and hometown organizations through which Ghanaian Americans organize.

For Ghanaian Americans and community institutions

Be counted as who you are

When completing the ACS or the 2030 Census, report Ghanaian identity in the ancestry, origin or write-in fields. Every response strengthens the community's statistical visibility.

Take part in community-led research

Participate in the State of Ghanaian America survey and encourage family, congregations and associations to do the same.

08 | NEXT STEPS

From visibility to power: GHPAC's research agenda

GHPAC views these estimates as a baseline for an American constituency whose institutions, participation and policy experiences deserve sustained study. The aim is to understand representation rather than assume political agreement. The research supports four practical areas of nonpartisan work:

Civic data and education

Make the distinction between eligibility, registration and turnout clear; build reliable public information resources without inferring preferences.

Community infrastructure

Document the churches, professional networks, student associations, hometown organizations and civic institutions through which Ghanaian Americans organize.

Community-led evidence

Combine federal estimates with an independently designed survey of priorities, identity, public policy concerns and experiences; publish methodology and limits.

Census representation and data stewardship

Plan for accurate Ghanaian identification in the 2030 Census according to the final federal questionnaire, while establishing privacy, access and retention safeguards.

This election analysis stands apart from GHPAC's forthcoming State of Ghanaian America survey findings. The first establishes a demographic baseline; later research is intended to examine experiences and priorities that the ACS cannot measure. Together, they are the foundation for an evidence base that matches the community's presence in American life.

APPENDIX

Methodology, glossary and sources

Methodology

Original population, eligibility, state and socioeconomic analysis: Benjamin Osei, GHPAC Pre-Midterm Snapshot — Executive Summary (revised October 30, 2026). The analysis uses the ACS 2020–2024 five-year Public Use Microdata Sample obtained via IPUMS USA: 6,965 deduplicated unweighted person records reporting Ghanaian in either ancestry response.

Eligibility is defined as U.S. citizenship and age 18 or older. Reported margins of error use ACS replicate weights and 90% confidence intervals. State estimates were suppressed where unweighted samples were under 50 or coefficients of variation exceeded 30%; coefficients of variation of 15%–30% were flagged for caution.

Calculations were performed by GHPAC's research team and have not been independently replicated. GHPAC's institutional interpretation, recommendations and foreword are editorial additions, separate from Benjamin Osei's original calculations. This publication does not endorse candidates or political parties.

Glossary

Ancestry (alone or in combination)

People who report Ghanaian as their only ancestry or as one of up to two coded ancestry responses on the ACS.

Voting-eligible adult

A U.S. citizen aged 18 or older. Eligibility does not mean a person is registered or voted.

PUMS

Public Use Microdata Sample: anonymized individual ACS records that allow custom tabulations, such as eligibility by ancestry.

Margin of error (90%)

The range within which the true value is expected to fall in 90% of samples.

Coefficient of variation (CV)

The standard error as a share of the estimate; higher values mean less reliable estimates.

Sources

Federal benchmarks. U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2020–2024 five-year Table B04006 (Ghanaian ancestry alone or in combination); ACS 2025 one-year Table B04006, displayed for context only. The 2020 Census detailed race write-in is a different instrument and is not combined with ACS ancestry counts.

Microdata. IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, ACS 2020–2024 five-year PUMS.

Election context. The Cook Political Report, Senate Race Ratings and House Race Ratings, November 2, 2026. https://www.cookpolitical.com/ratings/senate-race-ratings ; https://www.cookpolitical.com/ratings/house-race-ratings. The examples are reporting context only.

National issues context. Pew Research Center, "Economy Ranks as Top Issue in Midterms for All Voters – But Partisans Differ Over the Importance of Other Issues," October 8, 2026; survey of U.S. adults conducted September 28–October 4, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2026/10/08/economy-ranks-as-top-issue-in-midterms-for-all-voters-but-partisans-differ-over-the-importance-of-other-issues/

ABOUT GHPAC

From visibility to power.

The Ghana Diaspora Public Affairs Collective (GHPAC) is a Washington, D.C.-based, nonpartisan 501(c)(4) organization advancing the civic, economic and cultural standing of Ghanaian Americans through policy advocacy, civic engagement, business development and cultural programming.

The State of Ghanaian America initiative is GHPAC's long-term effort to document the history, demographics and community impact of Ghanaian Americans, and to build the research institutions our community needs to be accurately seen and represented.

Institutions, researchers and community organizations interested in partnering on the State of Ghanaian America initiative are invited to contact GHPAC.

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