

Issue Brief: Euro-Americans vs. Latinos in U.S. Politics

Key Words

Latinos, European-Americans, swing-vote, electorate, voting patterns, U.S. census

Description

The following issue brief will focus on the differences in voting patterns among Latinos and European-Americans – whites, as they are indicated on the 2000 U.S. census form – and the issues that are hallmark of the Latino population as opposed to the European-American population. In addition, the demographics of both ethno-racial populations will be discussed.

Key Points

- European-Americans have more potential to influence politics than Latinos because of their higher numbers
- Latinos, though, have increasingly become more powerful as an electorate
- Latinos tend to vote Democrat, and were part of the swing vote that helped put Obama into power last November
- Although the former point is true, however, different nationalities within the ethnoracial group will demonstrate different voting patterns and label their political values differently. For example, Cubans are heavily Republican. Therefore, making generalizations is not always helpful.
- Latinos and European-Americans both valued the economy as the most important issue
- However, had only European-Americans voted in this election, Obama would have lost; hence, minorities played a huge role. Evidence indicates that Latinos played a larger role than was expected.

Images

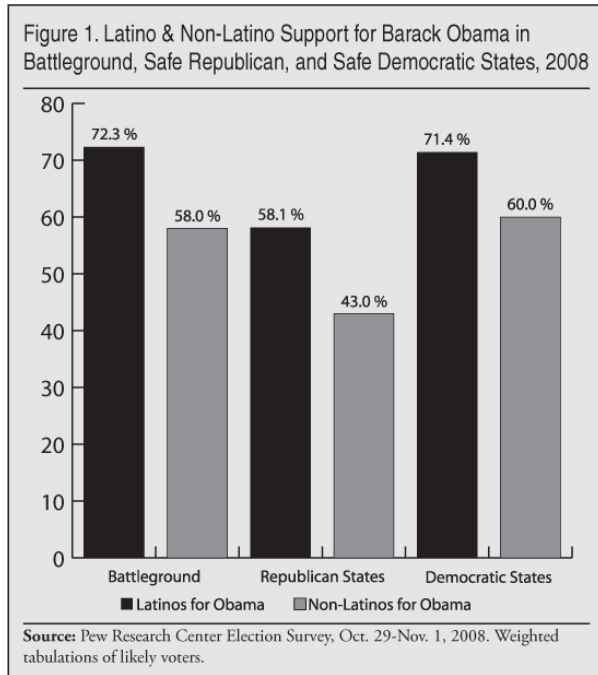
Table 2. Latino and White Non-Latino Voting in Competitive and Less Competitive U.S. House, Senate, and Gubernatorial Elections in 2006

U.S. Senate				
Location	Latino		Non-Latino White	
	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.
Competitive States	64 %	36 %	46 %	53 %
Non-Competitive States	62 %	36 %	51 %	46 %
National	62 %	36 %	50 %	47 %
(N=17,895)				
Governor				
Location	Latino		Non-Latino White	
	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.
Competitive States	64 %	36 %	48 %	49 %
Non-Competitive States	56 %	37 %	45 %	48 %
National	57 %	37 %	46 %	48 %
(N=19,398)				
U.S. House				
Location	Latino		Non-Latino White	
	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.
Competitive States	61 %	36 %	48 %	48 %
Non-Competitive States	62 %	33 %	47 %	52 %
National	62 %	33 %	47 %	48 %
(N=23,082)				

Source: Cooperative Congressional Election Study, 2006
 Tabulations do not include voting for minor party candidates.



<http://mexicoinstitute.wordpress.com/2009/07/14/some-latinos-angry-at-obama-and-congress-threatening-to-boycott-census/>



http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_rNGHGDmZH2k/SCNjGg2aR9I/AAAAAAAAABAg/o_sDzl53Xbw/s400/obama.jpg

Issue Brief

Since the 1990s, Latinos have been evolving into a highly influential electorate, although as the last U.S. Census in 2000 shows, European-Americans far outstrip Latinos in numbers for potential political participation. Labeled here as whites, European-Americans add up to approximately 211 million in number – 75.1% of the overall population. Latinos emerge as the second largest ethno-racial group, amounting to around 35 million – 12.5% of the overall population (“Race and Hispanic or Latino: 2000”). Although the Pew Hispanic Center’s tabulation may come four years later in 2004, it still provides useful information regarding the number of eligible voters for both ethno-racial groups – 39% of Latinos – here labeled as Hispanics – are eligible to vote, compared to the 76% of European-Americans (Taylor). Therefore, we can calculate that around 13,650,000 Latinos and 160,360,000 European-Americans are eligible to vote.

Despite the fact that European-American eligible voters are almost twelve times the size of Latino eligible voters, as aforesaid, the Latino electorate doubtlessly left its mark this past election out of all other minority groups, not surprisingly since they have exponentially enlarged the most, increasing in 2007 by 1.4 million (Witt). This past November, President Barack Obama won no less than the strikingly large 67% of the Latino vote; what’s more, only 32% of Latinos supported John McCain, as opposed to the slightly higher 39% that the last Republican candidate, George W. Bush, won in 2004 (“Analysis of Latino Vote in 2008”). The Pew Hispanic Center, therefore, correctly pinpointed Latinos as an effective element of the swing vote to bring a White House victory to the Democrats (Lopez).

As the first image in the brief shows, Latinos tend to vote Democrat in consistently higher numbers than white non-Latinos at all levels of government. However, analyzing pan-ethnically is not necessarily a good strategy, considering the political differences between Latinos of different national origins – for example, Cuban Americans tend to be highly conservative (DeSipio 48). Even Puerto Rican and Mexican-American Democrats are labeled as “Proto-Republicans” by Republicans because of their focus on family values and their support for a strong military (42). Moreover, Latinos as a whole are conservative on issues such as abortion, the death penalty, and foreign policies, in addition to being more likely to label themselves as “conservative” rather than “liberal” (50).

However, the terms “conservative” and “liberal” are not akin to “Democratic” and “Republican.” In addition, Latinos are more willing to pay higher taxes on issues such as education, welfare, and health care, to name a few (51). The focus on such issues could perhaps be explained by the high levels of poverty within the Latino community that could compel it to vote for candidates whose more liberal stances on the aforementioned issues could improve the state of this ethno-racial electorate.

U.S. News pondered the concept that Latinos shifted more to the Democratic side because of the Republican Party’s stance on immigration control (Ewers). However, the Center for Immigration Studies has shown through a survey that this is nothing more than a myth, and that immigration wasn’t the main focus this election. This election, the main concern of both Latino and European-American voter populations was the economy – specifically jobs, an issue that Obama was deemed to be more knowledgeable in (Gimpel).

Most prominently last year, Latinos played an important role in both the Democratic primaries and the general presidential election – first, they formed a bulk of Hillary Rodham Clinton’s support (Wallsten). After she retired from the race, Barack Obama had a short tug-of-war with John McCain to pull Clinton’s dislocated voters over to the Democratic side, which eventually resulted in a Latino electorate going blue in 2008 (O’Donnell). African-Americans similarly played a huge role in the election, 95% voting for Barack Obama. However, African-Americans, historically speaking, have sided with the Democratic Party. Their siding with Obama was expected, which is what made the Latino group the swing electorate of 2008 (“National Exit Polls”).

Despite this fact, it comes as a surprise that, as the New York Times estimated, if only European-Americans had voted in this election, Obama would have lost (Harwood). Therefore, the impetus of minority electorates – most specifically Latinos – was indeed more prominent than ever before. Ergo, Latinos this year demonstrated the power of a single vote, multiplied by the efforts of an ethno-racial group, could influence one of the most historical elections in American history.

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Minority Data Research Center

<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/MDRC/about.html>