

EVOLUTION OF THE LATINO VOTE BY REGION AND IN KEY STATES

Introduction

Latino* voters are the fastest-growing segment of the United States electorate and will play a critical role in determining the outcome of the 2012 general election.† Between 2000 and 2010, the Latino population boomed, growing by 43% nationally and increasing in every state, thus contributing to a growing Latino electorate. During that decade, the Hispanic citizen voting age population (CVAP)—those who are over age 18 and eligible to vote—increased by 62% compared to only 9% in the non-Hispanic population (see Figure 1). In addition, Latinos exhibited the highest registration and voting growth rate of any other racial or ethnic group and made up 7.4% of the total electorate in the 2008 general election (see Table 1). Hispanics clearly demonstrated their growing political influence that year by helping President Barack Obama win the key battleground states of Colorado, Florida, Nevada, and New Mexico—all states that President George W. Bush won in 2004 with more than 40% of the Hispanic vote. The 2008 election also showed that the Latino vote is an increasingly influential factor in states that do not have large Latino populations, such as North Carolina and Indiana, where Hispanic voters turned out in greater numbers than the margin of victory in many state, local, and national races.

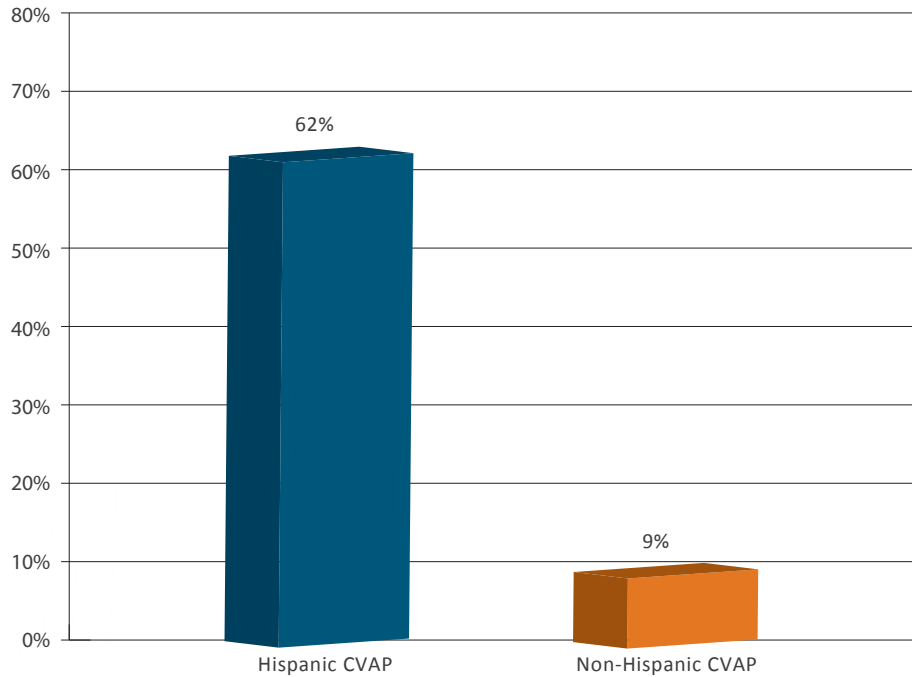
While we've witnessed a spike in the number of eligible Hispanic voters, growing registration and voter turnout, and their expanding political influence, Latinos proportionally turn out to vote at rates that are lower relative to other racial and ethnic groups. In 2008, only 50% of all eligible Latinos voted: of 19.5 million Latinos eligible to vote, only 11.6 million registered and 9.7 million voted (see Figure 2). Clearly, the Hispanic population will only meet its full electoral potential if these gaps diminish and if greater numbers of registered voters are mobilized to vote.

This fact sheet illustrates the trends described and provides an analysis of the Latino electorate by region and key states.

* The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race.

† This fact sheet was authored by Sara Benitez, Research Analyst at the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), with substantive input from Patricia Foxen, Deputy Director of Research; Clarissa Martínez De Castro, Director of Civic Engagement and Immigration; and Camila Gallardo, Senior Communications Manager. NCLR is the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States.

Figure 1.
U.S. Hispanic and Non-Hispanic CVAP Growth Rate, 2000–2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, “Data Retrieval: Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2000 and 2010,” *Current Population Survey*, Table Creator, <http://www.census.gov/cps/data/cpstablecreator.html> (accessed January 2012).

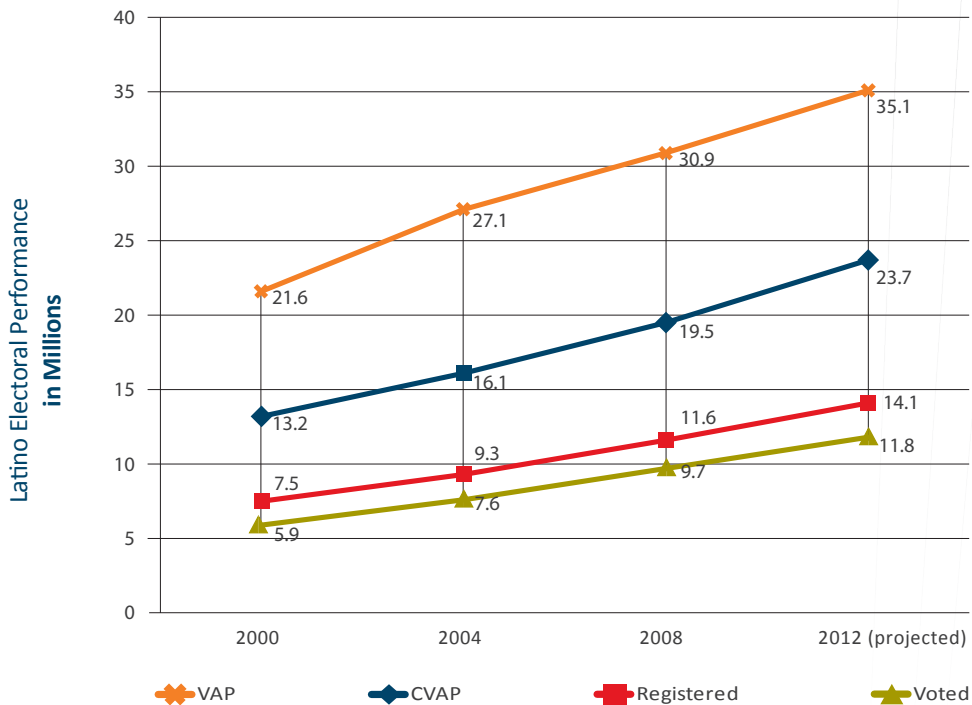
TABLE 1.
Latino Voter Turnout and Party Preference in Presidential Elections, 2000–2008

Year	Total Latino Voter Turnout	Latino Share of Electorate	Latino Presidential Preference		Margin of Victory and Winning Party
2008	9,745,000	7.4%	67% D	31% R	7; D
2004*	7,587,000	6.0%	53% D	40% R*	2.5; R
2000	5,934,000	5.4%	62% D	35% R	1; R

* In 2004, initial exit poll results showed that 44% of Latinos voted for President Bush. These results were widely regarded as inaccurate, and on December 3, 2004, NBC issued a statement lowering Bush’s share of the Hispanic vote to 40%. NCLR detailed the discrepancy in the 2004 exit poll results in the memo, *How Did Latinos Really Vote in 2004?*

Source: Data for Latino share of votes cast are from U.S. Census Bureau, “Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2000, 2004, and 2008,” *Current Population Survey*, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/voting.html> (accessed January 2012); Latino party support data are from *The New York Times* National Exit Polls, <http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/president/national-exit-polls.html> (accessed February 2012); and margin of victory data are from Dave Leip, “Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections,” <http://uselectionatlas.org> (accessed February 2012).

Figure 2.
Latino Voting-Age Population and Electorate, 2000–2012



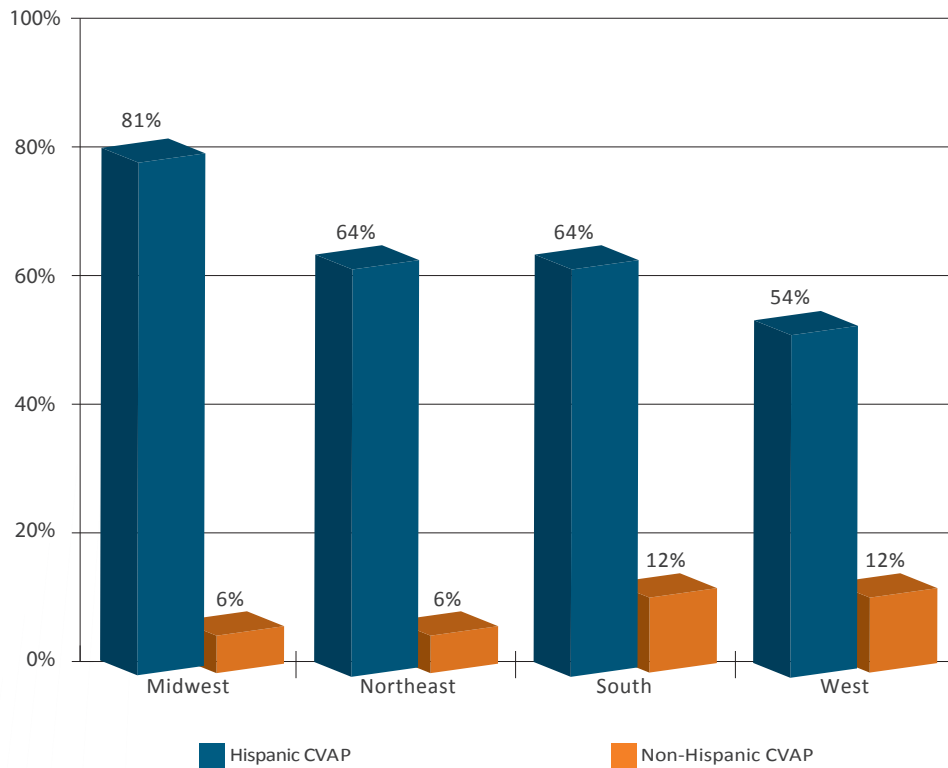
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, “Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2000, 2002, 2008,” *Current Population Survey*, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/voting.html> (accessed February 2012), Table 4a. The 2012 projections are derived from an NCLR calculation using the Latino Voting Age Population (VAP) growth rate between 2000 and 2008 multiplied by the 2008 CVAP to arrive at the 2012 Latino CVAP. This number was then multiplied by the 2008 Latino voter registration and turnout rates.

The Hispanic Electorate by Region

In each region,* the size and growth of the Hispanic electorate could have an important impact on the outcome of the 2012 election in key states. Several states where the Hispanic electorate is expected to be more competitive and influential in the election are situated in regions where there has been significant demographic change over the past decade (see Figure 3). The latest U.S. Census results showed that by 2010, Latinos in the West composed 30% of the total population.† Although smaller in numbers, the Latino population in the South and Midwest showed a very rapid growth rate. Hispanic voters are expected to be more influential in several battleground states, particularly those where they make up a large share of the total electorate (see Tables 2.A and 2.B).

* This fact sheet uses the U.S. Census Bureau’s definition for geographic regions. There are four Census regions: Midwest, Northeast, South, and West. The Midwest includes IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, and WI; Northeast includes CT, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, and VT; the South includes AL, AR, DE, DC, GA, KY, FL, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, and WV; and the West includes AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NM, NV, OR, UT, WA, and WY.

† All regional-level data are from NCLR calculations using U.S. Census Bureau, “Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2000 and 2010” *Current Population Survey*, <http://dataferrett.census.gov> (accessed January 2012); and U.S. Census Bureau, “Reported Voting and Registration, by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Age, for the United States, Regions, and Divisions: November 2000 and November 2008,” <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2008/tables.html> (accessed February 2012), Table 3.

Figure 3.**U.S. Hispanic and Non-Hispanic CVAP Growth Rate by Region, 2000–2010**

Source: NCLR calculation using U.S. Census Bureau, "Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2000 and 2010" *Current Population Survey*, <http://dataferrett.census.gov/> (accessed January 2012).

Hispanics in the Midwest

Between 2000 and 2010, the Latino population and CVAP in the Midwest grew more than in any other region. While smaller in size and share of the total electorate, the Latino vote could be essential to the outcome of several competitive states in the Midwest, including Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin. In 2008, Latinos in Indiana voted at a greater number than the margin of victory, demonstrating that while Latinos make up a small share of the electorate they can be critical in a state where the winner is decided by a slim margin.

The Size and Growth of the Latino Electorate in the Midwest

- From 2000 to 2010, the Hispanic population in the Midwest increased by 49%, growing from 3.1 million to 4.6 million.
- During the same period, the Latino CVAP increased by 81%, growing from 870,161 to 1.6 million. Latinos accounted for 22% of the Midwest's total CVAP growth, adding 702,164 new voters throughout the region.
- In contrast, the non-Hispanic population grew by 2% and the non-Hispanic CVAP increased by 6%—from 43.8 million to 46.3 million—adding 2.5 million new voters to the region.
- Hispanics account for 7% of the region's total population and 3.3% of all eligible voters.
- In 2008, 703,000 or 47% of eligible Latinos voted, accounting for 2.2% of the total electorate. Based on the same turnout rate, at least 738,992 Latinos in the Midwest can be expected to vote in 2012.

Hispanics in the Northeast

Without the growth that the Hispanic population experienced during in the previous decade, the total population in the Northeast would have declined. Some states in the Northeast lost congressional seats, yet the growth in the Latino population prevented even greater losses. Hispanic voters make up 6.1% of the electorate in Pennsylvania, the only northeastern state considered competitive for the 2012 presidential election.

The Size and Growth of the Hispanic Electorate in the Northeast

- Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population in the Northeast increased by 33%, growing from 5.3 million to 6.9 million.
- During the same period, the Latino eligible voter population increased by 64%, growing from 1.9 million to 3.1 million. Latinos accounted for 39% of the region's total CVAP growth, adding 1.2 million new voters throughout the Northeast.
- In contrast, the non-Hispanic population decreased by 0.03% while the non-Hispanic CVAP increased by 6%—from 33.5 million to 35.4 million—accounting for 1.9 million new voters in the region.
- Latinos make up 13% of the total population and 8% of all eligible voters in the Northeast.
- In 2008, 1.4 million or 52% of eligible Latinos voted, making up 6% of the total electorate. Based on the same turnout rate, at least 1.6 million Hispanics can be expected to vote in the Northeast in 2012.

Hispanics in the South

The Hispanic electorate will continue to be influential in states with historically high Hispanic populations and in states where the Hispanic population is relatively newer and growing rapidly. As in past elections, the Latino electorate will play an important role in the perennial battleground state of Florida. In addition, North Carolina will exhibit the growing impact of the Hispanic vote. In 2008, Latinos in North Carolina voted in numbers greater than the margin of victory, which could point to an increasingly influential electorate in that state.

The Size and Growth of the Hispanic Electorate in the South

- Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population in the South increased by 57%, growing from 11.6 million to 18.2 million.
- During the same period, the Hispanic eligible voter population increased by 55%, growing from five million to 7.8 million. Latinos accounted for 26% of the region's total CVAP growth, adding 2.8 million new voters to the South.
- By comparison, the non-Hispanic population grew by 9% and the non-Hispanic CVAP by 12%—from 62.1 million to 69.9 million—accounting for 7.7 million new voters in the region.
- Latinos make up 16% of the region's total population and 8.5% of all eligible voters.
- In 2008, 3.4 million or 46% of eligible Latinos voted, making up 7% of the total electorate. Based on the same turnout rate, at least 3.6 million Latinos can be expected to vote throughout the South in 2012.

Hispanics in the West

Latino voters in the West will play a critical role in the outcome of the 2012 general election. Compared to other regions, the Latino electorate is larger and makes up a larger share of the total regional electorate, particularly in several states that are considered highly competitive for the presidential election: New Mexico, Colorado, and Nevada.

Size and Growth of the Hispanic Electorate in the West

- Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population in the West increased by 34%, growing from 15.3 million to 20.6 million.
- During the same period, the number of Latinos eligible to vote increased by 64%, growing from 5.3 million to 8.7 million. The Latino population accounted for 45% of the region's total CVAP growth, adding 3.4 million new voters.
- In contrast, the non-Hispanic population increased by 7% and the non-Hispanic CVAP grew by 12%—from 33.7 million to 37.8 million—adding 4.1 million new voters to the region.
- Hispanics now make up 29% of the region's total population and 19% of all eligible voters.
- In 2008, 53% of eligible Latino voters in the West turned out to vote for a total of 4.1 million voters, or 14% of the total electorate. If the turnout rate stays the same, at least 4.6 million Latinos in the region can be expected to vote in 2012.

TABLE 2.**The Latino Electorate in Key* States in 2008, and Projected Turnout for 2012 (Numbers in Thousands)**

	ACTUAL						PROJECTED			
	Total Latino CVAP Growth Rate, 2004–2008	% of Latino CVAP Registered, 2008	Total Latino Vote, 2008	Latino Presidential Preference, 2008	Presidential Election Results and Margin of Victory Percentage Points, 2008	Difference in Number of Votes, McCain–Obama, 2008	Total Latino CVAP, 2012	Total Latino Registering, 2012	Total Latino Vote, 2012	
A. COMPETITIVE STATES WITH LARGE LATINO ELECTORATES										
Colorado [†]	105%	59%	195	61% D	38% R	Obama + 8.7	215	400	237	205
Florida [†]	138%	69%	1,277	57% D	42% R	Obama + 2.5	236	2,737	1,900	1,689
Nevada [†]	151%	57%	119	76% D	22% R	Obama + 2.5	121	344	198	180
New Mexico	111%	64%	289	69% D	30% R	Obama + 2.5	126	598	384	321
B. COMPETITIVE STATES										
Indiana	86%	44%	36	77% D	23% R	Obama + 0.9	28	88	39	31
Michigan	103%	58%	70	64% D	33% R	Obama + 16.5	824	150	87	71
North Carolina	108%	70%	77	N/A	N/A	Obama + 0.4	14	128	90	83
Ohio	109%	60%	74	N/A	N/A	Obama + 4.0	202	155	83	81
Pennsylvania [†]	178%	59%	161	72% D	28% R	Obama + 10.4	601	568	337	287
Virginia	98%	26%	74	65% D	34% R	Obama + 6.3	234	126	33	29
Wisconsin	151%	51%	66	N/A	N/A	Obama + 13.9	415	227	117	100
National	114%	59%	9745	67% D	31% R	Obama + 7	8,538	23,725	14,097	11,834
<p>* Key states were selected by referencing several analyses of competitive states in 2012, specifically, Matt A. Barreto, “Where Latino Votes Will Matter in 2012,” http://latinodecisions.wordpress.com (accessed January 2012); David Paul Kuhn, “The Critical 2012 Swing States,”; and CNN, “CNN Electoral Map,” http://www.cnn.com/election/2012/electoral-map.html (all accessed January 2012).</p> <p>[†] States where NCLR will operate voter registration and mobilization activities.</p> <p>States in bold switched from Republican in 2004 to Democrat in 2008.</p>										

Sources: NCLR calculation using U.S. Census Bureau, “Reported Voting and Registration of the Total Voting-Age Population, by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for States: November 2000 and November 2008,” <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/index.html> (accessed February 2012), Tables 4a and 4b; Latino party support, where available, from CNN, “Election Center,” <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/results/polls.main> (accessed January 2012); 2008 vote numbers from Antonio Gonzalez and Steven Ochoa, “The Latino Vote in 2008: Trends and Characteristics” (San Antonio, TX: William C. Velasquez Institute, November 2008), <http://www.wcvi.org> (accessed March 2012).