

Arizona's Emerging Latino Vote

*By Bill Hart
and E.C. Hedberg, Ph.D.*



August 2012

Arizona's Emerging Latino Vote

Predicting the future can be risky business, but demographics tell us there is one irrefutable element in Arizona's future – the disproportionate growth in young Latino citizens. Latinos constitute Arizona's most rapidly growing ethnicity and could represent more than 50 percent of Arizona's population by mid-century. The ramifications will be profound, with major impacts to be felt in the healthcare industries, at all levels of education, the workforce population and in state budgeting – just to cite a few. But perhaps the most important and far-reaching shift will be a change in statewide voting patterns and elections.

Presently, Arizona politics and government are dominated by a Republican majority that is supported and elected, primarily, by Arizona's aging white population. Research shows Latinos are unlikely to vote Republican and much more likely to support Democratic and Independent candidates. As a result, as their numbers grow much larger in proportion to other ethnic groups, Latinos' impact on electing officials more to their political favor also will grow. That means that, over time, Arizona is likely to see more and more Democratic and Independent candidates elected to office, as well as perhaps more moderate Republicans.

The demographics are undeniable: Unless there is an unforeseeable sea change in Latino voting patterns, Arizona is destined to become a much less Republican-dominated state, perhaps even changing from red to blue in the coming decades. The change will be slow – the full impact won't be felt for another 20 or 30 years – but incremental and noticeable, as our state's political face is changed irrevocably by Arizona's emerging Latino vote.

The 2012 Vote

In the short term at least, there are factors that have historically worked against higher Latino registration and turnout in Arizona, and they can reasonably be expected to again be in play this year:

- Latinos today make up about 30 percent of Arizona's population. However, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanics constitute only 25 percent of the state's voter-age population. Further, about one-third of Arizona Latino adults are not citizens and thus ineligible to vote.
- Latinos' age profile also works against their likelihood to vote – for now, at least – because younger Americans of any ethnicity tend to register and vote less frequently than older ones. The state's Latino population is substantially younger than that of non-Hispanic Whites. The median age for Arizona Latinos is 25; for non-Hispanic Whites, it is 44.
- A third factor: Lower-income Americans tend to register and vote less often than middle- and upper-income citizens. About 26 percent of Arizona Latinos live below the poverty line, according to the Census Bureau, compared to about 15 percent of all state residents as a whole.

- In addition, many Latinos work in jobs that grant them little flexibility in leaving work to vote. Among all registered voters of all ethnicities who did not vote in 2010, the single most common reason cited in a national Census Bureau survey was “too busy, conflicting work or school schedule.”
- There remains a gap in registration between Latinos and non-Hispanic Whites. About 69 percent of eligible Arizona Latinos were registered in 2010, compared to about 83 percent of non-Hispanic Whites.

Despite such obstacles, some political observers — and many activists — believe that 2012 will see a significant turnout among Hispanics in Arizona. For example, the National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO) predicts that Arizona Latino turnout this year will reach 359,000, an increase of 23% over the 2008 presidential election, and will constitute 12% of the total turnout.

These arguments for the sudden increase:

- Many Arizona Latinos have been energized by Senate Bill 1070 and related anti-immigrant measures and rhetoric of the past several years. June’s U.S. Supreme Court ruling on SB1070, this view holds, will not blunt those concerns because it upheld the requirement that police officers inquire about individuals’ immigration status under certain circumstances.
- The growing impact of the Latino vote has been demonstrated in the recent electoral victories of President Obama, Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton, and Phoenix Councilmember Daniel Valenzuela.
- Latino registration rates, while still below that of non-Hispanic Whites, have been increasing. In addition, a coalition of 12 Latino organizations in Arizona has been pursuing what it claims is an unprecedented voter registration drive this year, primarily in Maricopa, Pima, Pinal, Yuma and Santa Cruz counties.
- The reluctance or inability of Latinos (and others) to vote during the workday may diminish as more sign on to receive their ballots in the mail — a major objective of current registration drives for greater Latino participation.
- The Obama campaign and national Democrats argue that Arizona is in play in the presidential race, and promise to mount a strong effort to win the state; drawing out the largest possible Hispanic vote is a component of that strategy.
- Arizona Democrats believe they have a strong Latino candidate for the U.S. senate seat being vacated by the retiring Jon Kyl, a Republican. If so, the candidacy of Richard Carmona, a former U.S. Surgeon General, may bolster registration and voting by Latinos.

Beyond 2012

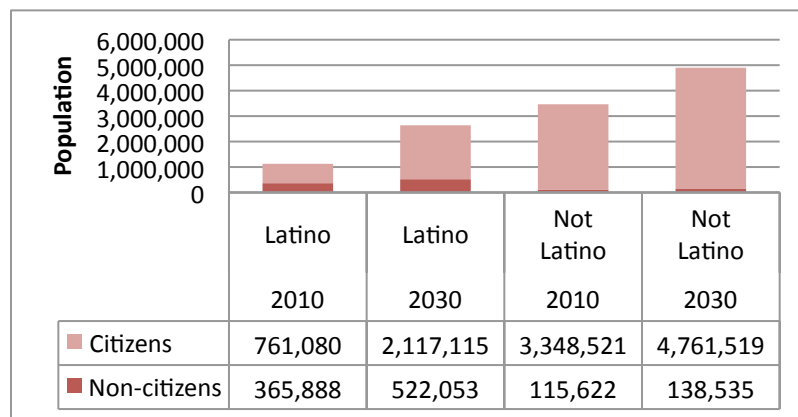
Regardless of this November's results, the impact of the Hispanic vote in Arizona seems certain to grow. Trying to divine the future is always risky, and the following analysis makes no claim to precision. Instead, it is offered to illustrate what are arguably the most important political factors influencing Arizona's next few decades:

- Arizona's Latino population is growing much faster than that of non-Hispanic Whites, and is expected to continue to do so.
- Virtually all of Arizona's large population of Latino children and adolescents are U.S. citizens; they will grow up and many will vote. If past behavior is any guide, most will register as either Independents or Democrats.

Voter Population

In 2010, Arizona was home to about 4.6 million persons over the age of 19.¹ About 25 percent of them were Latino. By 2030, a population projection² shows this percent rising to 35 percent of the state's adult population. Equally important, nearly 99 percent of Arizona Latinos ages 4 and under were citizens in 2010, along with similarly high percentages of older Latino children and adolescents. This means that even if no more Arizona Latinos become citizens, and there is no further net immigration, 99 percent of Latinos aged 20 to 24 (who were 4 and under in 2010) will be voting-age citizens in 2030 (*See Figure 1*). This would constitute a 178 percent increase in the number of Latino citizens aged 20 and older from 2010 to 2030. In contrast, the number of adult non-Latino Arizona citizens is expected to increase by only 42 percent during this period.

**Figure 1: Arizona Population and Citizenship in 2010 and 2030
Ages 20 and Older**

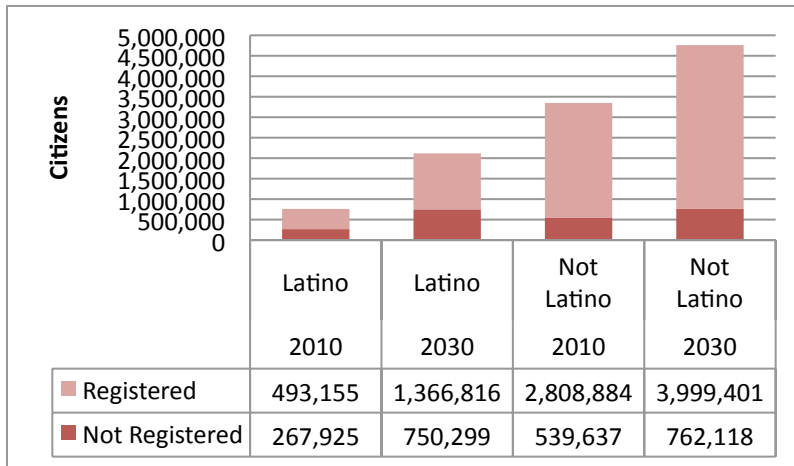


Sources: American Community Survey and GeoLytics Projections

Registration

Figure 2 shows³ the registration rates for younger and older individuals by ethnicity. As noted earlier, Latinos have lower registrations rates for both age groups.

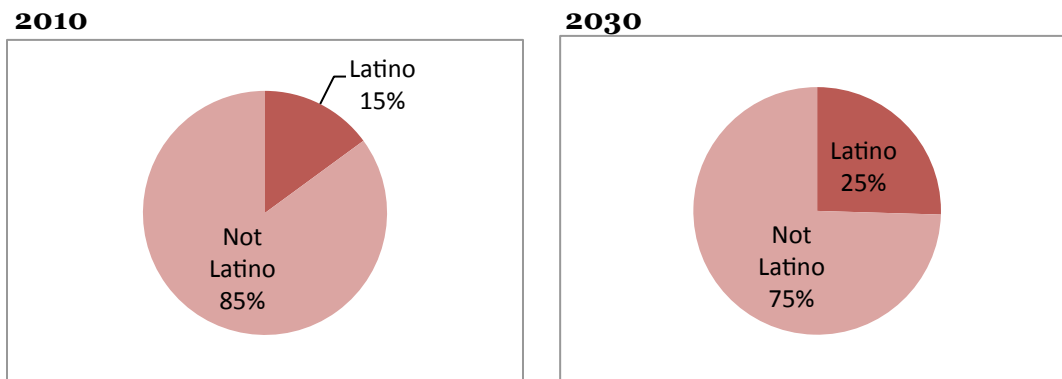
**Figure 2: Arizona Registration of Citizens in 2010 and 2030
Ages 20 and older**



Sources: American Community Survey, 2010 Current Population Survey, and GeoLytics Projections.

If registration rates remain more or less at current levels for each age and race group, growth in the Latino voting-age share of the population should increase the Latino share of all Arizona voters from 15 percent in 2010 to 25 percent in 2030 (See Figure 3).

Figure 3: Ethnicity of Registered Voters Ages 20 and older



Source: 2010 American Community Survey, 2010 Current Population Survey, GeoLytics projections

Party Preference

Reliable public data regarding the party identification of Arizona Latinos are scarce. Neither the U.S. Census Bureau nor the Arizona Secretary of State collects this information. However, polls — including exit polls — have regularly shown a preference among Arizona Hispanics for the Democratic Party.

For example, an analysis of 2010 exit polls by the Pew Hispanic Center concluded that 71 percent of Arizona Latino voters supported Democrat Terry Goddard for governor, while 28 percent supported Republican Jan Brewer.

In the 2010 Senate vote, the Pew analysis found, 57 percent of Latino voters supported Democrat senatorial candidate Rodney Glassman and 40 percent went for Republican incumbent John McCain.⁴

A June 2012 poll by the national polling firm Latino Decisions found President Obama favored by Arizona Latinos 74 percent to 18 percent over the presumptive Republican presidential candidate, Mitt Romney.⁵

The June Latino Decisions poll also found 9 percent of Latino respondents identifying themselves as Republican, 53 percent calling themselves Democratic, and 27 percent calling themselves Independent — plus 10 percent naming another party or “don’t know.”⁶

These numbers track well with this analysis’ estimate of older Latino voters, though not so well for younger voters.⁷

Analysis: How did we get our numbers?

In the present analysis, party preference for older and younger Latinos is taken from two sources:

First, to represent attitudes before SB1070 and other controversial political events, we use the Arizona respondents to Fraga’s 2006 National Latino Survey.

Second, to represent the most recent trends in Latino party preference, we employ 2012 numbers from the Latino Decisions poll.

Survey data from a 2011 Bruce Merrill/Morrison Institute poll were used to assess party preference for Arizona Non-Latinos, which are used in both scenarios.

Table 1 shows younger Latinos identifying as mostly Independents (59 percent) in 2006, while about half of older Latinos tended to be Democrats. The plurality of non-Latinos was Republican.

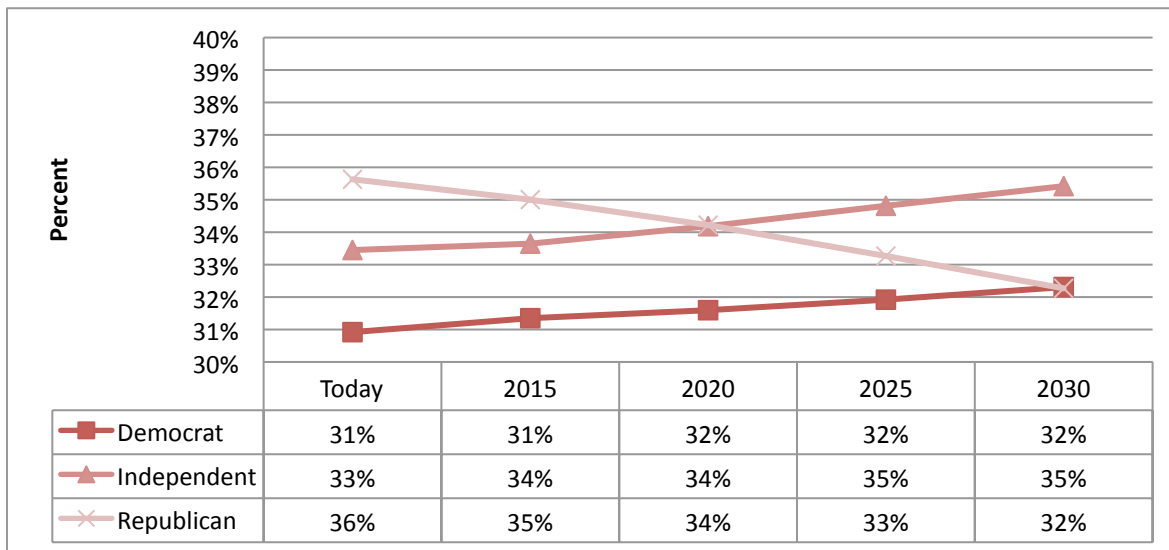
These two data sets allow us to estimate two plausible scenarios: a scenario where Latino preferences return to what they were before the latest political events, and a scenario where Latino preferences remain where they are today.

Scenario 1: Fewer Latino Democrats

Currently, this analysis estimates⁸ that of 3.3 million registered voters, 31 percent are Democratic, 33 percent Independent and 36 percent Republican. As a comparison, the current data from the Arizona Secretary of State show that of 3.2 million registered voters, 30 percent are Democratic, 34 percent are Independent, and 36 percent Republican. These numbers differ somewhat from the 2010 party registration numbers available from the Arizona Secretary of State’s office because of sampling error.⁹

Based on the available data, the long-term trend seems clear: As 2030 approaches, and more of the large cohort of Latino children and adolescents reach voting age, the share of registered Arizona voters who identify as Republican declines — mostly due to an increasing Independent share — until it roughly equals the Democratic share at 32 percent (*See Figure 4*).

Figure 4: Percent of Party Identification for Registered Population Arizona Ages 20 and Older by Year (Scenario 1 – 2006 Preferences)

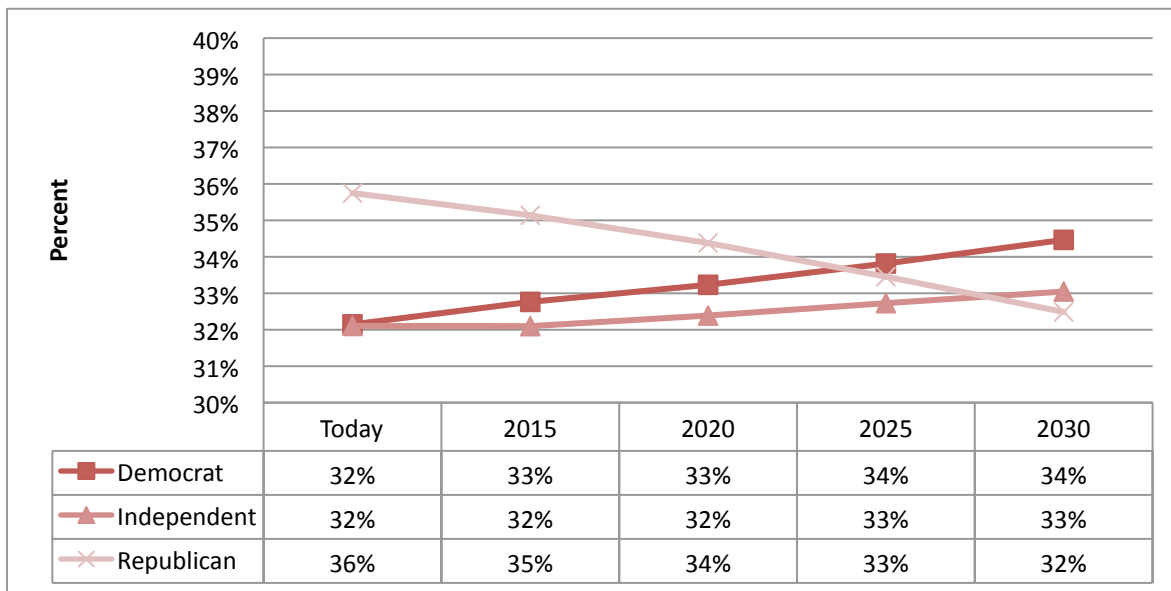


Sources: 2010 American Community Survey, 2010 Current Population Survey, 2006 Latino National Survey, 2011 Merrill/Morrison Institute Poll, Geolytics projections

Scenario 2: More Latino Democrats

Perhaps in reaction to recent anti-immigrant actions and rhetoric, especially by Republicans, more Arizona Latinos expressed Democratic identification in 2012 than in 2006. Using these preferences, we see a somewhat different story by 2030 when Democrats exceed Republicans, 34 percent to 32 percent, respectively (See Figure 5).

Figure 5: Percent of Party Identification for Registered Population Arizona Ages 20 and Older by Year (Scenario 2 – 2012 Preferences)



Sources: 2010 American Community Survey, 2010 Current Population Survey, 2012 Latino Decisions Survey, 2011 Merrill/Morrison Institute Poll, Geolytics projections

Table 1: Party Preference Projections of Registered Voters / Arizona

Sources: 2010 American Community Survey, 2010 Current Population Survey, 2006 Latino National Survey, 2011 Merrill/Morrison Institute Poll, GeoLytics projections)

Scenario 1: 2006 Latino Preferences

	Democrat		Independent		Republican		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Current Estimations								
All Ethnicities								
All Ages	1,020,982	30.9%	1,104,536	33.5%	1,176,521	35.6%	3,302,039	100.0%
20-39	315,293	28.7%	463,278	42.2%	318,772	29.0%	1,097,343	100.0%
40 and older	705,689	32.0%	641,258	29.1%	857,749	38.9%	2,204,696	100.0%
Non-Latinos								
All Ages	806,266	28.7%	866,147	30.8%	1,136,472	40.5%	2,808,884	100.0%
20-39	231,327	27.1%	318,074	37.3%	303,616	35.6%	853,017	100.0%
40 and older	574,939	29.4%	548,073	28.0%	832,856	42.6%	1,955,867	100.0%
Latinos								
All Ages	214,716	43.5%	238,389	48.3%	40,049	8.1%	493,155	100.0%
20-39	83,966	34.4%	145,204	59.4%	15,156	6.2%	244,326	100.0%
40 and older	130,750	52.5%	93,185	37.4%	24,894	10.0%	248,829	100.0%
2030 Estimations								
All Ethnicities								
All Ages	1,733,806	32.3%	1,900,722	35.4%	1,731,689	32.3%	5,366,217	100.0%
20-39	563,965	30.0%	865,180	46.0%	453,540	24.1%	1,882,684	100.0%
40 and older	1,169,842	33.6%	1,035,542	29.7%	1,278,149	36.7%	3,483,533	100.0%
Non-Latinos								
All Ages	1,149,558	28.7%	1,226,884	30.7%	1,622,958	40.6%	3,999,400	100.0%
20-39	310,728	27.1%	427,251	37.3%	407,831	35.6%	1,145,810	100.0%
40 and older	838,830	29.4%	799,632	28.0%	1,215,128	42.6%	2,853,590	100.0%
Latinos								
All Ages	584,248	42.7%	673,838	49.3%	108,731	8.0%	1,366,816	100.0%
20-39	253,237	34.4%	437,928	59.4%	45,709	6.2%	736,874	100.0%
40 and older	331,011	52.5%	235,909	37.4%	63,022	10.0%	629,943	100.0%

Table 2: Party Preference Projections of Registered Voters / Arizona

Sources: 2010 American Community Survey, 2010 Current Population Survey, 2012 Latino Decisions Survey, 2011 Merrill Poll, GeoLytics projections)

Scenario 2: 2012 Latino Preferences

	Democrat		Independent		Republican		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Current Estimations								
All Ethnicities								
All Ages	1,061,510	32.1%	1,060,112	32.1%	1,180,417	35.7%	3,302,039	100.0%
20-39	342,251	31.2%	432,663	39.4%	322,429	29.4%	1,097,343	100.0%
40 and older	719,260	32.6%	627,449	28.5%	857,987	38.9%	2,204,696	100.0%
Non-Latinos								
All Ages	806,266	28.7%	866,147	30.8%	1,136,472	40.5%	2,808,884	100.0%
20-39	231,327	27.1%	318,074	37.3%	303,616	35.6%	853,017	100.0%
40 and older	574,939	29.4%	548,073	28.0%	832,856	42.6%	1,955,867	100.0%
Latinos								
All Ages	255,245	51.8%	193,965	39.3%	43,945	8.9%	493,155	100.0%
20-39	110,924	45.4%	114,589	46.9%	18,813	7.7%	244,326	100.0%
40 and older	144,321	58.0%	79,376	31.9%	25,132	10.1%	248,829	100.0%
2030 Estimations								
All Ethnicities								
All Ages	1,849,466	34.5%	1,773,429	33.0%	1,743,322	32.5%	5,366,217	100.0%
20-39	645,269	34.3%	772,845	41.1%	464,570	24.7%	1,882,684	100.0%
40 and older	1,204,197	34.6%	1,000,584	28.7%	1,278,752	36.7%	3,483,533	100.0%
Non-Latinos								
All Ages	1,149,558	28.7%	1,226,884	30.7%	1,622,958	40.6%	3,999,400	100.0%
20-39	310,728	27.1%	427,251	37.3%	407,831	35.6%	1,145,810	100.0%
40 and older	838,830	29.4%	799,632	28.0%	1,215,128	42.6%	2,853,590	100.0%
Latinos								
All Ages	699,907	51.2%	546,546	40.0%	120,363	8.8%	1,366,816	100.0%
20-39	334,541	45.4%	345,594	46.9%	56,739	7.7%	736,874	100.0%
40 and older	365,367	58.0%	200,952	31.9%	63,624	10.1%	629,943	100.0%

Red to Blue?

Does this mean that Arizona will be a blue state by 2030?

Not necessarily, because although Latinos have a voting preference that substantially leans Democratic, data projections show the greatest expected gain in party registration will be on behalf of Independents, not Democrats.

Also, preference and registration could change over the next two decades, altering the results. For example, if the 2012 ballot proposition changing Arizona's primary election system into a "top two" system is successful, there could well be a significant rise in the share of all Arizonans registering as Independents, decreasing both the Democratic and Republican shares.

Still, it is important to note that while Latinos (like all ethnicities) are comprised of members from all political persuasions, they are unlikely as a group to support a Republican agenda.

Latinos are less likely to be registered to vote, and less likely to vote, than their white, non-Latino counterparts today. But if they change that behavior and begin to register and vote in larger numbers – as many observers say is already beginning to happen – Latinos can be a major influence on state politics and in state government in the near future.

Data and demographics tell us a change in the political face of Arizona is on the horizon with the emerging Latino voter. It's not a matter of if, but when.

•

The Authors

Bill Hart is a senior policy analyst at Morrison Institute for Public Policy.

William.Hart@asu.edu

Dr. E.C. Hedberg is a faculty associate in the ASU College of Public Programs.

EHedberg@asu.edu

Morrison Institute Latino Public Policy Center is part of Morrison Institute for Public Policy, an independent and nonpartisan center of research, analysis and public outreach established in 1982. Morrison Institute is part of the Arizona State University College of Public Programs in the ASU School of Public Affairs and is located in downtown Phoenix.

MorrisonInstitute.asu.edu

Notes

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010, obtained from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series. The data begin with age 20 because our population projections are provided in five-year increments that begin with ages 15-19.

² These projections were calculated for Morrison Institute by GeoLytics, a social research and marketing firm.

³

Current Registration Rates Arizona		
Race	Age	Rate
Latino	20 to 39	66%
Latino	40 and older	72%
Not Latino	20 to 39	77%
Not Latino	40 and older	86%

U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Current Population Survey, Voting and Registration Supplement. While the margins of error are high for both Latinos (± 8 points) and non-Latinos (± 5 points), these are the best publicly available data. These data also show higher registration rates than what is expected from published census results. Using the same micro data as the census, we discovered that the census includes "missing" responses as "not registered." After statistical adjustment, we found that the registration rates were much higher than what is published.

⁴ Mark Hugo Lopez, "The Latino Vote in the 2010 Elections," Pew Hispanic Center, Washington, D.C. (November 3, 2010). <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2010/11/03/ii-results/>

⁵ Latino Decisions, <http://www.latinodecisions.com/blog/2012/06/22/new-poll-obama-leads-romney-among-latinos-in-key-2012-battleground-states/>

⁶ Data provided by Matt Barreto from Latino Decisions/America's Voice Education Fund 2012 Battleground Poll

⁷ A July 2 national USA Today/Gallup poll found a majority of U.S. Hispanics identifying as Independents (51%) rather than as Democrats (32%) or Republicans (11%). Asked about their political leanings, most Hispanics affiliate with the Democratic rather than the Republican Party. Both sets of numbers shift more decisively in the Democrats' favor among the roughly half of U.S. Hispanics who are registered.

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/155453/half-hispanics-identify-political-independents.aspx>

⁸ Calculation of the number of registered voters for each party for each age and ethnicity group is based upon the GeoLytics population projections. The total population is multiplied by the rates of citizenship, registration, and party preference to produce the number of voters. The number of voters for each party across the different age and ethnicity groups is then added to calculate grand totals. While rates of citizenship follow cohorts through time, our rates of party preference and registration do not (since they tend to change over the life course).

⁹ See the tables at <http://www.azsos.gov/election/voterreg/2010-10-22.pdf>. These show that 32% of registered voters were Democratic 31% were Independent and 36% were Republican in the 2010 general election.

Data Sources

Fraga, Luis R., John A. Garcia, Rodney Hero, Michael Jones-Correa, Valerie Martinez-Ebers, and Gary M. Segura. Latino National Survey (LNS), 2006. ICPSR20862-v5. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2012-06-06. doi:10.3886/ICPSR20862.v5

Latino Decisions/America's Voice Education Fund 2012 Battleground Poll, June 2012

Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek. *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0* [Machine-readable database]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010.

United States Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census, United States Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and United States Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census. Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division. Current Population Survey, November 2010: Voting and Registration Supplement [Computer file]. ICPSR31082-v1. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2011-07-14. doi:10.3886/ICPSR31082.v1

2011 Merrill/Morrison Institute Statewide Issues Poll