

## Does the Latino Vote Matter?

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### Abstract

**The Latino people have been part of United States history for more than 400 years. Today, Latinos make up around 17.6% of the population in the U.S., and is increasing every year. Meanwhile, the average educational level and income of Hispanics are relatively low because much of this population consists of immigrants who come to the U.S. to start a new life. The problem of whether or not the Latino vote matters is related to the demographic of the Latino population, political situations in the United States, and the further influence of Latino Vote in American politics. Moreover, there are very high Latino populations in swing states, which make the Latino vote matter, in some ways, more highly than the vote of other populations. Any candidate who can secure the Latino vote could have the potential to make changes in traditional political views in the U.S. Thus, Latino votes are especially significant in a presidential election.**

### Keywords

**Latino Vote, Latino population, American politics.**

### 1. Introduction

The Latino people have been part of United States history for more than 400 years. In fact, these people have lived in and cultivated the land of the U.S. longer than any other population except for Native Americans. Today, Latinos make up around 17.6% of the population in the U.S., and is increasing every year. Meanwhile, the average educational level and income of Hispanics are relatively low because much of this population consists of immigrants who come to the U.S. to start a new life. The problem of whether or not the Latino vote matters is related to the demographic of the Latino population, political situations in the United States, and the further influence of Latino Vote in American politics. Moreover, there are very high Latino populations in swing states, which make the Latino vote matter, in some ways, more highly than the vote of other populations. Any candidate who can secure the Latino vote could have the potential to make changes in traditional political views in the U.S. Thus, Latino votes are especially significant in a presidential election.

### 2. Latino Population and demographic situations

The Latino population and demographic will show the situations of Latinos within the U.S., and data concerning this population will provide a way to analyze whether the Latino voters can make a significant impact on a candidate's political campaign.

### 3. Latino population grows fast:

#### 3.1 The number of Hispanics in the U.S. population is rising.

The Latino population has the share of 17.6% of the total population of United States. From the prediction of the U.S. Census Bureau (2014), the population of Hispanics will increase to 28.6% by 2060. Therefore, the Hispanic population will become one major force to determine the results of elections (Figure 1).

**Hispanics are a Rising Share of the U.S. Population**

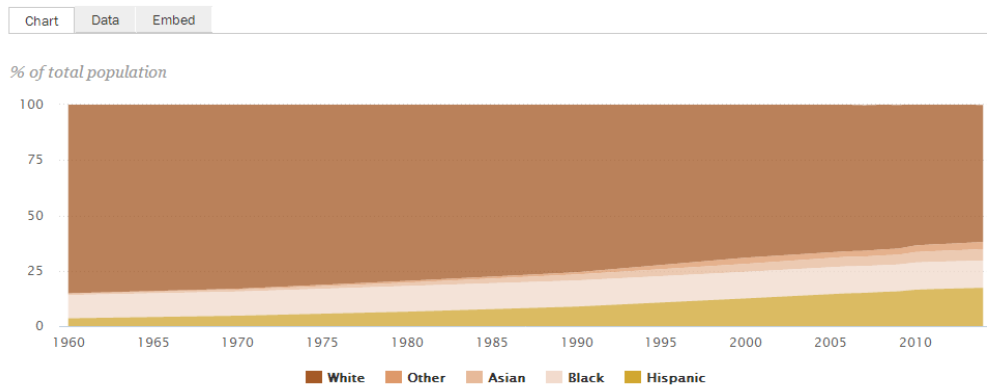


Figure 1: For 1960 and 1970, see Passel and Cohn’s 2008 population projections. For 1980-2000, Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. decennial census data (5% IPUMS) for 2006-2014, Pew Research Center analysis of American Community Survey (1% IPUMS)

**3.2 The Foreign born Hispanic population and the U.S. born Hispanic population have changed over years.**

**The Hispanic Population, by Nativity**

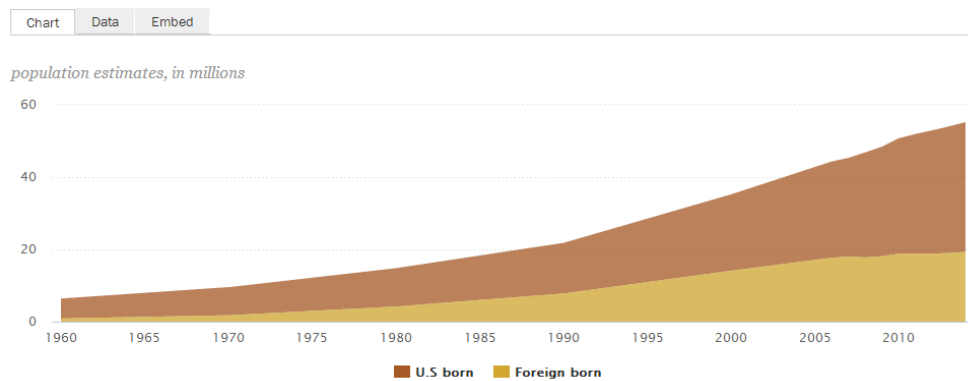


Figure 2: For 1960 and 1970, see Passel and Cohn’s 2008 population projections. For 1980-2000, Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Decennial Census data (5% IPUMS), for 2006-2014, Pew Research Center analysis of American Community Survey (1% IPUMS)

The number of foreign-born Latino people has grown dramatically since around 1990 (Figure 2). In fact, the population of foreign born Latinos has increased by 20 times since 1960 (Figure 3).

**Sources of Hispanic Population Growth, by Decade**

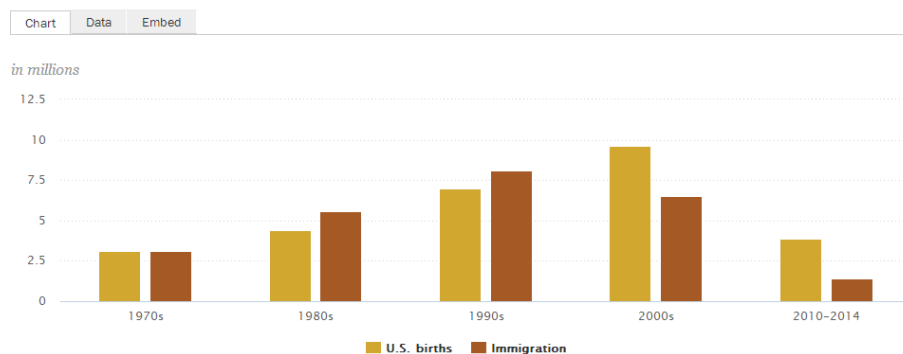


Figure 3: Based on Pew Research Center tabulations of 2014 American Community Survey (1% IPUMS) for 2010-2014, and of the 2010 American Community Survey (1% IPUMS) for 2000s. Data for 1970s, 1980s and 1990s drawn from Pew Research Center historical projections (Passel and Cohn, 2008)

Moreover, the number of U.S.-born Latino people is the primary source of the Hispanic population growth since 2000. The population of Hispanic people is going to be more and more native, which means the number of Latino people registered as voters will be much more than before.

**3.3 The median age of a Latino person is the youngest than in many other races (Figure 4).**

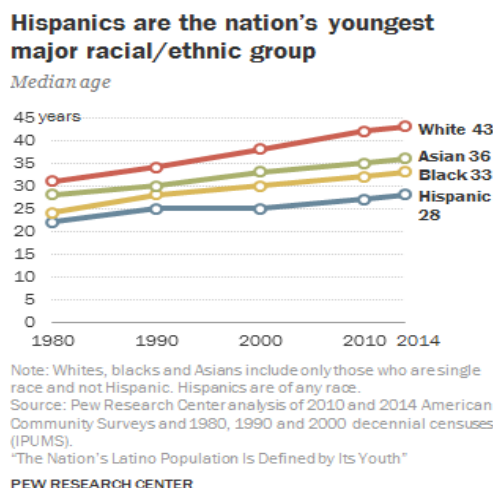


Figure 4: the median age of different ethnic group in the United States

The median age of the Hispanic population is merely 28. According to the Pew Research Center, 44% of Hispanic eligible voters are Millennial Latinos. Nearly half (47%) of native-born Hispanics are younger than 18, which is an extremely high percentage comparing to U.S. born blacks (27%) and U.S. born whites (20%). Thus, we can make a relatively easy prediction that in the next 20-30 years the Latinos are highly likely to be a very major factor in the economic and political environments in the U.S. Thus, the overall population of Latino people in the U.S. has already made the population become a major ethical group in the elections in terms of influence and participation. From the trends and predictions from the aforementioned sources.

**4. The religion of Latino matters:**

In Hispanic culture, the number of Hispanics affiliated with a religion is relatively high. Catholic is the most dominant religion in Latino cultures, and almost 82% of Hispanic population claim they are religious.(Figure 5) This is important because political ideas are often related to religions in the U.S. For example, the views about same-sex marriage, abortion and gender roles are both key factors in many religions as well as in most political campaigns and foundational beliefs.

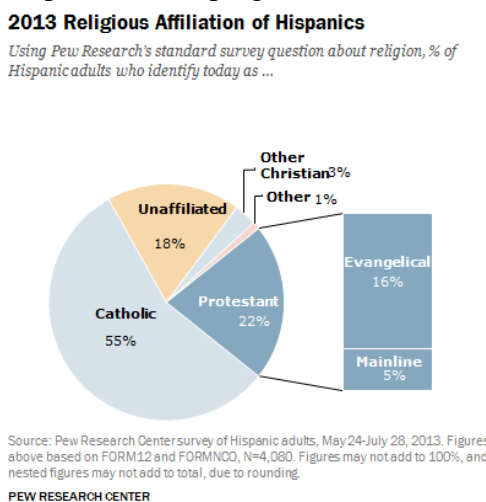


Figure 5: Religious Affiliation of Hispanics 2013, Pew Research Center.

According to Pew Research Center (2013), a majority population of about 55% in all 35.4 million Hispanics is Catholic, and there are about 22% Protestants in the U.S. Latinos population, including evangelical (16%) and mainline (5%). Although the percentage of Catholic Latinos has dropped dramatically in recent years (from 67% to 55% in 4 years), Catholicism remains the dominant religion in Hispanic populations.

**4.1 Same-Sex Marriage is a sensitive topic in both religion and politics (Figure 6).**

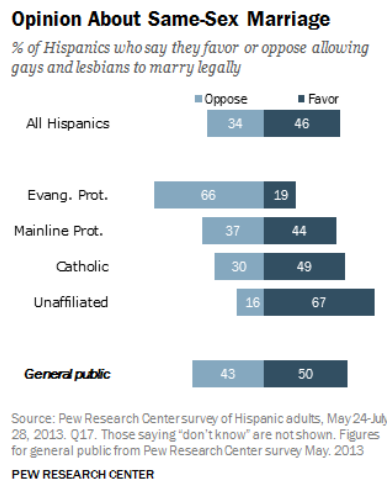


Figure 6: Opinion About Same-Sex Marriage in Hispanic population

The overall public in the U.S. has become more inclined to agree with same-sex marriage in recent years, including many members of the Latino populations. In fact, according to the Pew Research Center (2013), the percentage of Latinos favoring same-sex marriage has risen from 30% to 46% in 2006-2013. However, there are a number of evangelical Protestant Hispanic people who continue to oppose same-sex marriage in general (about 66% oppose same-sex marriage). The majority of Hispanics Catholics are in favor of same-sex marriage (49% favor, 30% opposed). Compared to the general public in the U.S., Hispanic populations favor same-sex marriage more than many other populations. The same-sex marriage is always an issue discussing in the U.S. political campaigns. For example, Hillary Clinton, the candidate of presidential election for Democratic Party, has been asked her whether she agrees the same-sex marriage or not in many different occasions (July 2004 on the Senate floor, May 2007 in a questionnaire for the Human Right Campaign, and etc).

**4.2 Abortion is another sensitive issue in religion and politics (Figure 7).**

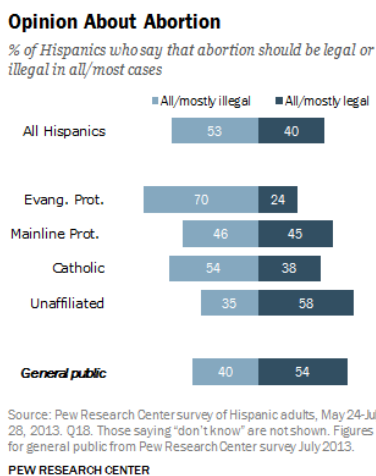


Figure 7: Opinion about Abortion in Hispanics

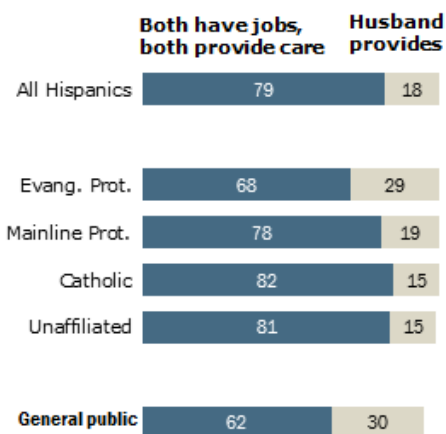
Unlike with same-sex marriage, Latinos have tended to be more conservative than the general public with regards to abortion. The majority of unaffiliated Hispanic people think abortion should be legal (58% to 35%). Hispanic evangelical Protestants mostly believe that abortion should be illegal (74%),

and many Hispanic Catholics would prefer to see abortion illegal as well (54%). Thus, the two largest religious groups in Hispanic populations can be considered as mostly opposed to abortion. Meanwhile, the general public in the U.S. is inclined to support abortion, as 54% of the general public thinks abortion should be legal, while only 40% desire abortion to be illegal. According to Susan Milligan from the U.S. News, “For decades since Roe v Wade, the Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, was decided 43 years ago, the political fight has had one side touting the right of women to control their own bodies and the other side the right of a developing fetus to its very survival.” The discussion of abortion has been a major issue in U.S. political campaigns for a long time.

**4.3 The view of gender roles in the marriage of Hispanics is not divided in different perspectives even in different religions (Figure 8).**

**Gender Roles and Marriage**

*% of Hispanics who say a more satisfying marriage is one where the husband provides for the family and wife takes care of the house and children OR both have jobs and both take care of the house and children*



Source: Pew Research Center survey of Hispanic adults, May 24-July 28, 2013. Q257e. Those saying “don’t know” are not shown. Figures for general public from Pew Research Center survey Oct. 1-21, 2010.

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Figure 8: Gender roles and Marriage, the percentage of Hispanics who say a more satisfying marriage is one where the husband provides for the family and the wife takes care of the house and children, or when both parties have jobs and both take care of the house and children.

The Latinos of all major religious groups do not agree to the traditional views of gender roles in marriage. 79% of all Hispanics believe the arrangement of a marriage needs to include both parties holding jobs and helping to take care of the house and children. Only 18% of Hispanics think the traditional arrangement where the husbands provide money and the wives take care of the house and children are proper gender roles in marriage. Latino evangelical Protestants are the groups who mostly prefer traditional marriage arrangements in Hispanic population; however, there are still 68% of evangelical Protestants who do not agree to the traditional marriage arrangements. Comparing to the general public in the U.S. (30% prefer traditional marriage arrangement and 62% do not), the Latinos are more likely to agree that a woman can play very important roles in political fields as well as in the home.

**5. Latino votes will change Political provisions for the Republican Party in 2016**

**5.1 The fundamental political ideas in the Republican Party are not popular within the Latinos (Figure 9).**

The Latino voters are highly likely to vote for the Democratic Party, even if the Democratic Party cannot meet the benefits for the U.S. overall. Recent research in from the Pew Research Center (2016)

shows that in all of Hispanic registered voters, Hillary Clinton has a 66% to 24% support advantage over Donald Trump. Four years ago, Barack Obama had a 69% to 21% advantage over Mitt Romney and became the president of United States of America; 8 years ago, the same situation happened in the presidential election: Obama had a 66% to 23% advantage over John McCain. What is more, the number of eligible voters in Hispanics has grown from 19.5 million to 27.3 million in 8 years. Again, because Latino people comprise a high percentage of U.S. Citizens, and because they tend to be more progressive in their views, the likelihood that they will support the democratic candidate increases the likelihood that these candidates will be successful over their Republican counterparts.

In addition to political affiliations, the current Democrat candidate Hilary Clinton holds the majority of the vote among millennials (18-35 years old). Clinton leads 71% over 19% among millennials comparing to a 65% to 26% divide among elderly populations (Pew research center). Because the Latino populations tend to be made up of younger populations, the support these populations show for the Democrats is more likely to occur.

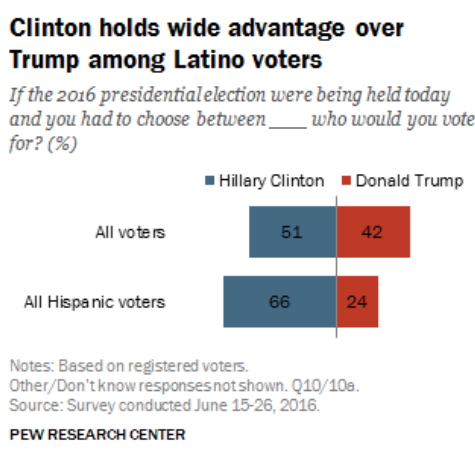


Figure 9: Clinton holds wide advantage over Trump among Latino voters.

## 5.2 There will be a dilemma for Republican Party

Since the Republican Party has much less support from the growing Hispanic population, politicians are more likely to try to find a way to meet the political ideas of the Latinos. However, this may in turn jeopardize some fundamental political ideas of the Republican Party. For example, when “pressed on abortion ban, Donald Trump sees a penalty for women,” (New York Times, 2016). Trump has also been quoted as saying that there has to be “some form of punishment” for a woman who has an abortion.” After this quote was released to the media, the team of Trump’s campaign made a statement which was somehow an explanation of how to interpret Trump’s idea regarding abortion. (New York Times, 2016) In that statement, Trump’s campaign team claimed that the woman is a victim in an abortion case, so a woman should not be punished. However, the doctors who perform abortions will be held legally responsible. In this way, Trump’s team attempted to cater both to those who believe abortion should be illegal, and those who should not.

Moreover, the Republican Party has always disagreed to same-sex marriage. Donald Trump, on the other hand, did not claim he was against same-sex marriage. He has, however, stated that he is against the Supreme Court’s decision to legalize same-sex marriage at a federal level. Nevertheless, the majority of U.S. citizens, and especially Hispanic populations, are in favor of same-sex marriage, as well as for increasing the minimum wage. If Donald Trump or the Republican Party are against such matters strongly they will not be able to win either the presidential or congress elections.

Another example is Florida, as Florida is one of the most important states in presidential elections. Presidential elections in the U.S. are won not by popular vote, but by winning the Electoral College. Rather than one big national election, presidential elections are really 51 little elections held simultaneously in each state (and the District of Columbia). If there were no state-to-state variation

at all, and the state vote margins remained fixed relative to one another, you'd need to know only the winner of the tipping point state to know who won the election (Figure 10).

### Tipping Point States in 2016

Florida, Pennsylvania and Ohio are the three states most likely to provide the deciding vote in the 2016 presidential election.

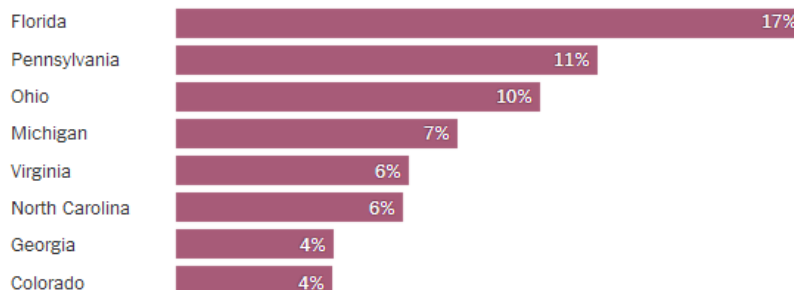


Figure 10: tipping point states in 2016

In the long run, it is not a good thing for the Republican Party to lose Florida because of the Latino vote. The dilemma is going to be like this: “If you try to appeal to Hispanics, you could turn off working-class whites. If you try to appeal to working-class whites, you might turn off Hispanics.”(The New York Times 2016)

In the latest research from the New York Times (2016), Clinton has a 58% winning percentage against a 42% winning percentage of Trump. (Figure 11)

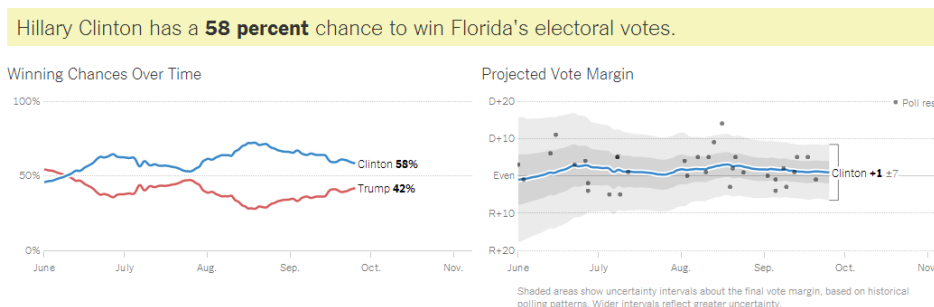


Figure 11: The first figure is the winning chance and the second figure is the statistical vote projection in Florida. Both show the winning of Clinton in Florida.

Because 15% of registered voters are Latino, and the data from the above graphs show the projected vote margin, if there are 10% more Latino voters supporting Donald Trump, he will most likely win the state of Florida by 0.5%. Comparing to the 66% to 24% advantage Clinton currently has over Trump, the Latino vote could be the difference between a Trump candidacy and a Clinton one.

Two years ago, positions including Arellano’s were created by the Republican National Committee to reach the large Latino communities in some key states. More and more Latinos have considered themselves to have no party preference comparing to those who dominantly prefer the traditional viewpoints of the Democratic Party. Donald Trump this summer hired the “Latinas for Trump” founder as director for his campaign as Latino outreach. Thus, the Republican Party has started to figure out a way to get close to the large Latino population, which comes at the cost of compromising some of the most fundamental premises of the Republican Party.

## 6. The low vote rate of Latinos

Although Latino voters have already been a major factor in political elections because of their large populations, there still are many eligible Hispanic voters that do not turnout to cast their votes. If the percentage of actual voters have increased magnificently, much more Hispanic voices can be heard in the U.S. Comparing the example of African American in last 4 decades, the voices of African American have been heard from top to the bottom and as an ethical group they have earned the equality

regarding political matters and other aspects as well. In this case, to find out a way to help Hispanic eligible voters to vote will benefit the whole Latinos.

**6.1 The number of Latino eligible voters versus the number of voters (Figure 12, Figure 13).**

**Number of Latino Eligible Voters Is Increasing Faster Than the Number of Latino Voters in Presidential Election Years**

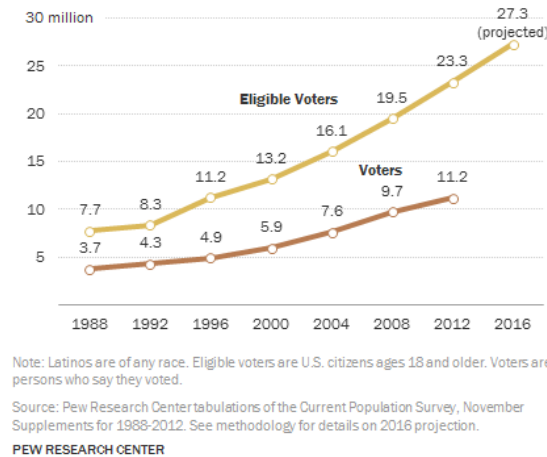


Figure 12: The number of Latino eligible voters is increasing faster than the number of Latino voters in presidential years.

**Falling Share of Hispanic Eligible Voters Is from Texas**  
*% of Hispanic eligible voters who live in ...*

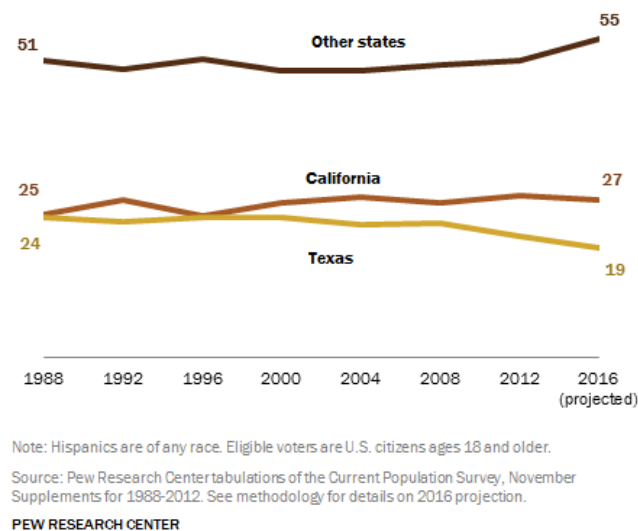


Figure 13: the percentage of eligible voters living in Texas and California as compared to the rest of the U.S

As shown, the number of eligible voters has increased in recent years. The projected number of eligible voters is 27.3 million and the rapid growth is in large part due to U.S. born Hispanics entering the eligible voting age. However, the number of Hispanic non-voters has increased almost as dramatically as the number of eligible voters. In 2008, the number of Hispanic non-voters was 9.8 million and the number evolved to 12.1 million in 2012. The percentage of nonvoters increased as well; in 2008, there were 50.1% non-voters, and there were 52% non-voters in 2012. Thus, for the Latino vote to truly matter at its fullest potential, the number of eligible voters of this population needs to exercise their rights and actually vote.

The falling percentage of voters is mainly seen in Texas. Texas holds one of the largest Hispanic population states in the U.S., but the projected number of eligible voters has declined from 24% in



2000 to 19% in 2016. However, the actual number of Hispanics has grown by 49% from year 2000 to year 2015. This change indicates that there are a large group of Hispanic adults who belong to non-citizen immigrant populations. In fact, non-citizens have a 28% share in all Hispanic adults in Texas. Thus, people do not need to worry about the number of eligible Latino voters being in decline. On the contrary, the actual number of Hispanic eligible voters is increasing dramatically.

### 6.2 The potential reasons that keep Latino people away from polls

In recent years of presidential elections, the media often tries to talk about the importance of the Latino vote and some media even referred to “the sleeping giant” to describe the Latino vote. However, it never turned out to be the real giant in presidential elections. Still, many believe that the sleeping giant could awaken this year. Many Latino eligible voters indicated that they are going to vote in this year’s election because of both economy and immigration issues.

On the other hand, there are several factors that still may keep Latinos away from voting such as the language barrier, cynicism and unfamiliarity with voting. In addition, candidates have not spent enough time and efforts on this segment of population. Moreover, states have implemented new policies restricting voting and creating barriers for registration and for voting. Latinos who have a high school education or lower make up a portion of more than 60% nation-wide, and almost a quarter live in poverty. As a matter of fact, people who are young, poor and not highly educated will tend to be non-voters.

Still, many Latinos care about politics and many of them understand the importance for them to be engaged. But some obstacles such as cynicism, unfamiliarity with voting and language barriers will keep Latinos away from the polls. Alma Marquez, founder and president of a communications and public affairs firm that focuses on education-related issues and political and civic engagement, has said that “many of the community members feel as though they’re not really viewed as Americans and if they do not view them as American, they will not vote.” (Voiceofoc, election 2016) There are many cases of Latinos choosing not to vote only because of the unfamiliarity with the system, the language, the candidates, and more. They feel it is embarrassing to show up and ask around how to vote. Moreover, according to the U.S. Census (2013), about 33% of Latinos speak limited English (Figure 14).

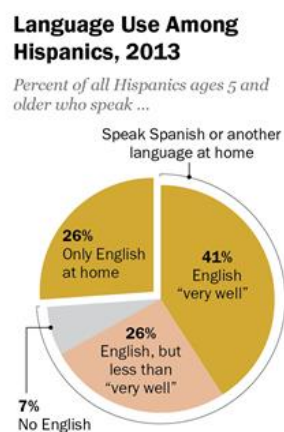


Figure 14: The English-speaking portion of the Hispanic population in the U.S

For example, Salem, Massachusetts, inside the Point neighborhood, which is less than half a square mile of Salem, nearly 65 percent of residents are Hispanic, yet 20% of households do not speak English. The residents are mostly immigrants from the Dominican Republic. People said the language barrier has become one big problem for voters. Latino voters said during 2012 and 2014 that election workers prevented them from voting by being unable to communicate well with these potential voters. Police took bilingual sample ballots away from the voters. Some voters said they were asked for ID while other white voters were not. (Voting wars news 21) In this case, language is a real barrier for Hispanic voters to actually vote.

Latino communities, on the other hand, have attempted to reach potential voters. Univision, the leading broadcasting network that operates in Spanish, made a statement in February saying that its goal is to help register 3 million Hispanic voters before November’s election. Univision is the fifth largest network in the United States. Univision provides news in Spanish and entertainment shows to the Latinos, and with help from Univision some organizations can give many Latinos a better understanding of voting. Moreover, a website named Your America was created this year. This website will help people to sign up for text message updates about the election, and over 100,000 Latinos attended the organization’s program. More and more Hispanic populations are finding out ways of participating in the presidential campaign to various degrees in the U.S.

### 7. The Electoral College and total votes

The Electoral College is a process that will determine the result of the presidential election. Eligible voters in the U.S. do not vote for the president or the vice president directly. They elect representatives known as electors, who will pledge to vote for certain candidates in turn. 50 states and the District of Columbia have apportioned 538 electors, and the number of electors in each state is the same as the congress seats. All 538 electors are combined with 435 Representatives, 100 Senators and three electors from the District of Columbia. Since the 1880s, all states except for Maine and Nebraska have a “winner-take-all” basis. The candidate winning over 270 electoral votes will create an absolute majority, and will become the president and vice president depending on how the party is operating (Figure 15).

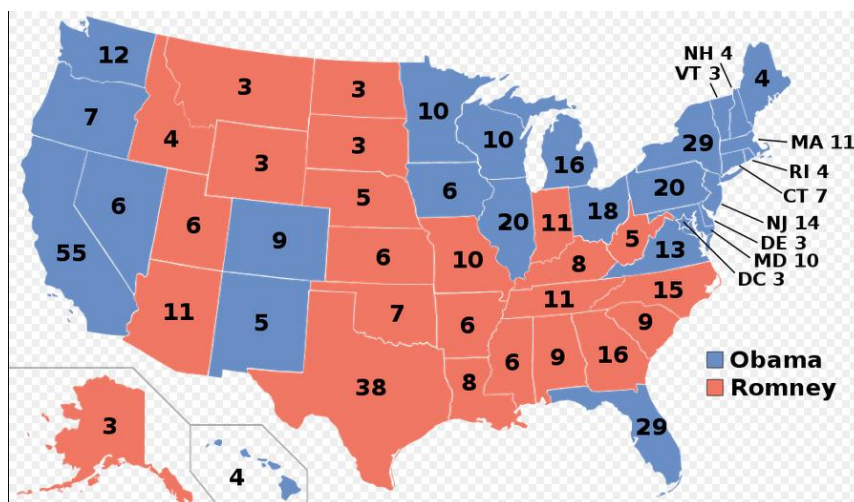


Figure 15: Electoral College map showing the results of the 2012 U.S. presidential election.

President Barack Obama (D-IL) won the popular vote in 26 states and the District of Columbia (denoted in blue) to capture 332 electoral votes. Former Governor Mitt Romney (R-MA) won the popular vote in 24 states (denoted in red) to capture 206 electoral votes.

The number of electoral votes is based on the Census and this number will be effective for the 2012, 2016 and 2020 presidential elections.

There are some criticisms about Electoral College. For example, total votes are not determinative in an electoral system (Figure 16).

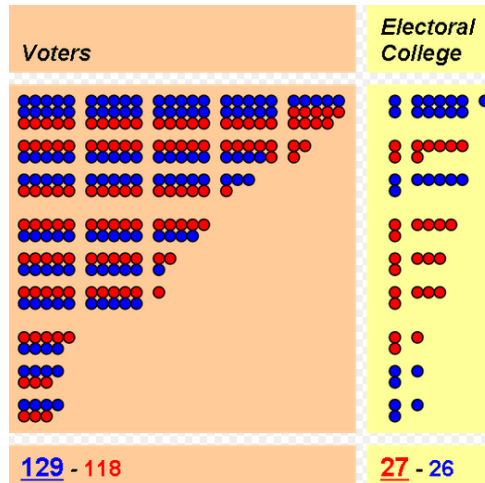


Figure 16: Graphic showing how the popular vote winner can lose the electoral vote, created by Szu, 2007.

For example, this illustration shows how the Electoral College fails to reflect the actual popular votes. The Electoral College system violates the political principle of one-person one-vote. According to George C. Edwards (2011)“The United States is the only country that elects a politically powerful president via an electoral college and the only one in which a candidate can become president without having obtained the highest number of votes in the sole or final round of popular voting.”This means that the president of the U.S. can have received a minority of votes. In fact, this situation has happened 3 times in U.S. history: 1876, 1888 and 2000.

Moreover, because of the winner-takes-all system in presidential elections, candidates mostly need to spend time and money on swing states, because they matter the most in presidential elections (Figure 17).

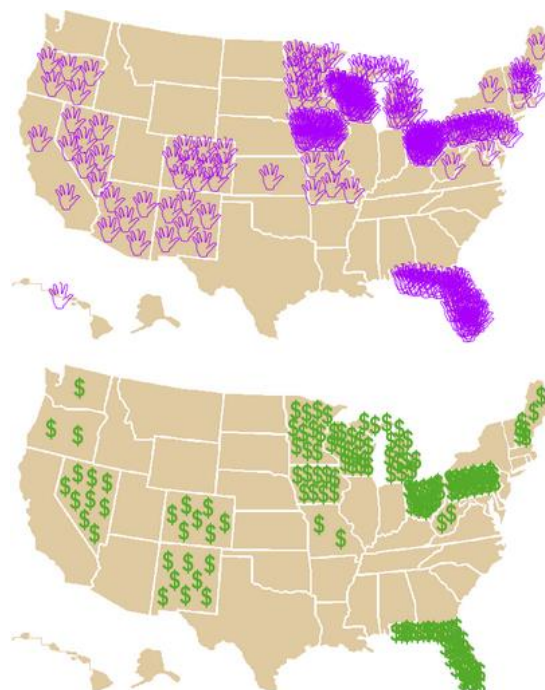


Figure 17: These maps show the amount of attention the Bush and Kerry campaigns (considered together) gave to each state during the final five weeks of the 2004 election: At the top, each waving hand represents a visit from a presidential or vice-presidential candidate during the final five weeks of the election. (Candidates' visits to their own home states are not counted.) At the bottom, each dollar sign represents one million dollars spent on TV advertising by the campaigns during the same time period. Data from Fair Vote's report, "Who Picks the President?"

In presidential campaigns the focus on certain swing states is outrageous when compared to the amount of attention spent on other states. However, this is not exactly the principle of democracy. Voters from other states do not get the same focus and attentions from presidential candidates.

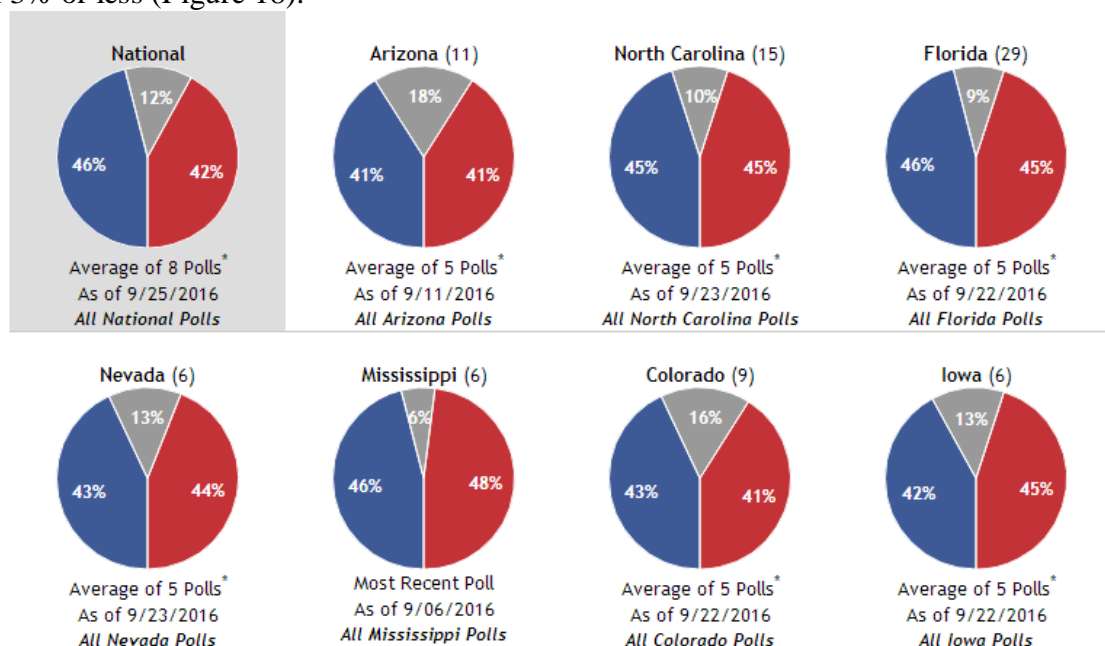
Furthermore, the less attention from candidates in non-swing states will cause fewer voters to execute their rights as citizens. This is also a reason why the percentage of Hispanic non-voters increased in recent years: They are simply not being given the same level of attention as other populations. To be more specific, California and Texas have the most Latino populations in the U.S. However, both states are not even close to being swing states. California is a traditional democratic state and the percentage of people who vote for the Democratic Party is much more than the Republican Party. On the contrary, Texas is a traditional Republican Party state and most voters in Texas will support the Republican Party. In this case, those large amounts of Hispanic voters are likely to feel like they have no reason to participate in the presidential elections, simply because they do not feel they will have enough influence to change the way other voters in these states typically vote. If they were taught otherwise, they could discover that because of their large population, and the specific demographics of their populations, they actually do have the power to affect which party can win in both of these states and in other states as well.

### 8. Conclusion

The population of Latinos is increasing fast, and the number of eligible voters grows dramatically every year. As the number of voters increases, the Latino vote matters in the presidential elections more significantly. Some of the swing states such as Florida have a very large group of Hispanic citizens. Because of the nature of the Electoral College system in the U.S., the votes of Hispanics in those states matter significantly. Moreover, the Republican Party has to adapt their political views more or less to meet the needs of Latinos in order to gain the vote of this large population. Thus, the conclusion can be made that the Latino votes matter in America, both in determining which party will win the election but also in changing the fundamental political ideologies of the parties.

#### 8.1 Personal thinking with regards to the result of 2016 presidential election

According to the data from 270towin (2016), there are 8 states in the U.S. that have the differential within 3% or less (Figure 18).



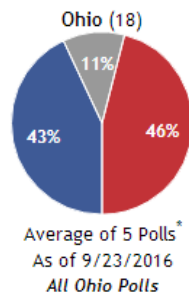


Figure 18: The states with competitiveness (the differential is 3% or less) in presidential election 2016.

If we consider the states with a differential between 2, parties over 3% are settled. The conclusion will be that Clinton has 250 electoral votes and Trump holds 179 electoral votes (Figure 19, Figure 20).

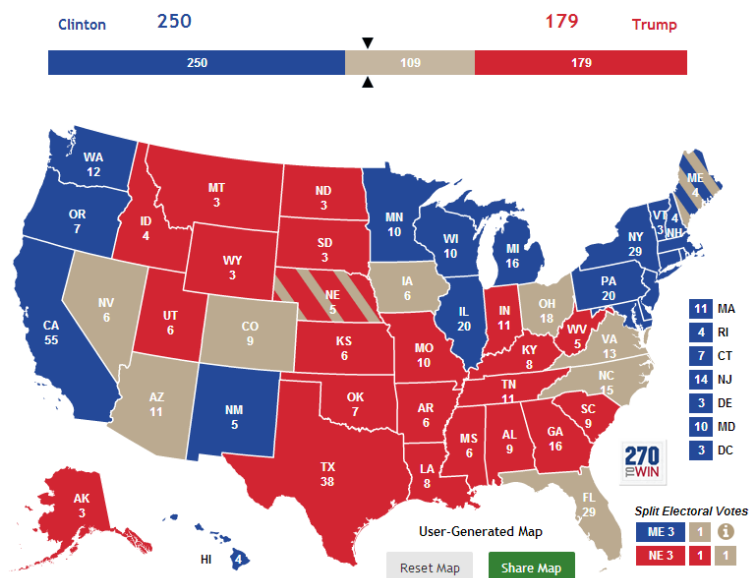


Figure 19: This is an electoral map I made the uncertain states are within 3% differential

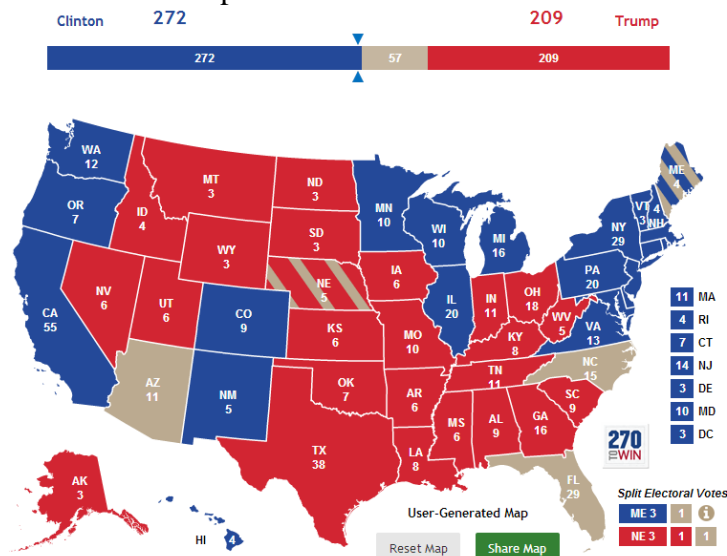


Figure 20: This is the result not including states with differential within 1%

According to the prediction map I made, Clinton has a higher possibility of winning the presidential election in 2016. As a matter of fact, Trump has to win in Arizona, North Carolina, Nevada and Florida in order to win the election and it is a very difficult task.

Counter points of this paper:

In this paper the Latinos have been considered as a very important factor in politics. However, there are some reasons that support the contrary conclusion. Large amounts of Hispanic populations are living in California and Texas, and both states are in favor to Democratic or Republican respectively for a long history and have traditions of supporting either party. In this case, the Latino votes will not change the vote of either California or Texas. Another point against the importance of the Latino vote is the fact that many Latinos living in the states support the Democratic Party already. When they vote for the Democratic Party, it will not change anything, because this trend has already been the case for many years.

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