

2013

Latino Community Report

For the 130th General Assembly

Ohio Hispanic Voters: Eligibility, Participation, and Preferences



Ohio

Latino Affairs
Commission

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The best efforts were made to gather and provide accurate and current information. Data presented from previous years indicates the most up to date research available. OCHLA will provide any additional information or data upon request as it becomes available.

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Introduction

In 2006, a number of rallies emerged around the United States to demonstrate the political strength of the Hispanic population in the country. Jorge Contreras, a well-known Hispanic activist, stated “the sleeping Latino giant is finally awake”¹. While it’s an open question whether or not U.S. Hispanics have fully “awoken” politically, there is no question about the magnitude of Hispanic population growth nationwide. According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2012 November Current Population Survey – the most recent estimate available - there are over 53 million Hispanics in the country, comprising 17% of the total U.S. population². Ohio’s Hispanic community is estimated at more than 355,000 people, comprising approximately three percent of the state’s total population. **The Hispanic population growth accounted for over half of the nation’s growth in the past decade, and three quarters of Ohio’s growth over the same period,** and this trend is projected to continue in the coming years.

This Latino Community Report will provide insight into the characteristics of Hispanic voters in Ohio and nationwide. The report will demonstrate voter preferences and the Hispanic share of the electorate nationwide and in Ohio, utilizing recent exit polls during the 2004 and 2012 elections. This Latino Community Report uses data from the 2004 election as a comparison point to the 2012 election for a couple of reasons: first, 2008 is a somewhat unique electoral year. The voter turnout and enthusiasm for Barack Obama in 2008 among ethnic minorities makes it somewhat unreliable in analyzing voting trends. Second, both the 2004 and 2012 elections for president featured an embattled incumbent versus a challenger. The more variables that are controlled and consistent, the more illustrative the data will be.

Additionally, this report will demonstrate key issues facing Ohio Hispanics that drove their voting patterns, and compare those issues with those cited by Ohioans at large. Finally, the report will endeavor to explain the causes for the growth of the Hispanic vote in Ohio and nationally, shifting party preferences in ballots cast for President, and differences regarding which issues are critical between Hispanic voters and their peers. The Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs endeavors to be a valuable resource to members of the General Assembly in understanding and serving their Hispanic constituents. **Our office welcomes calls and emails for further information, research, clarifications and to help with outreach.**

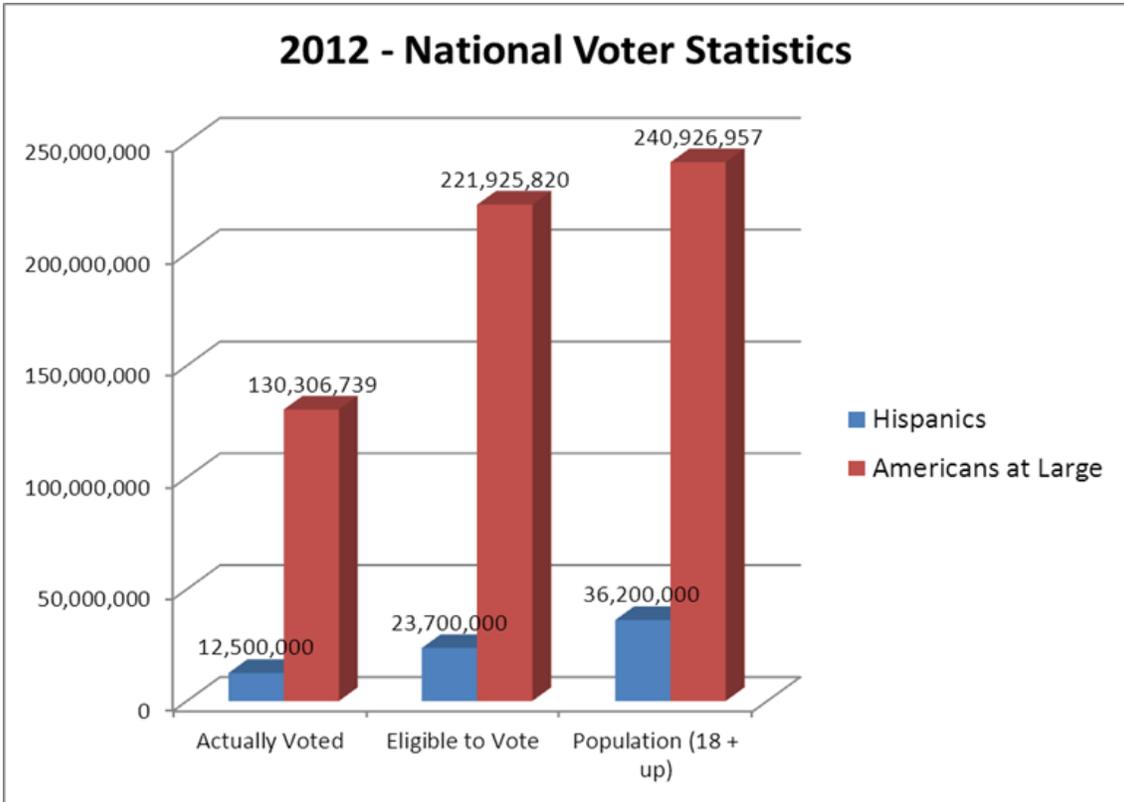
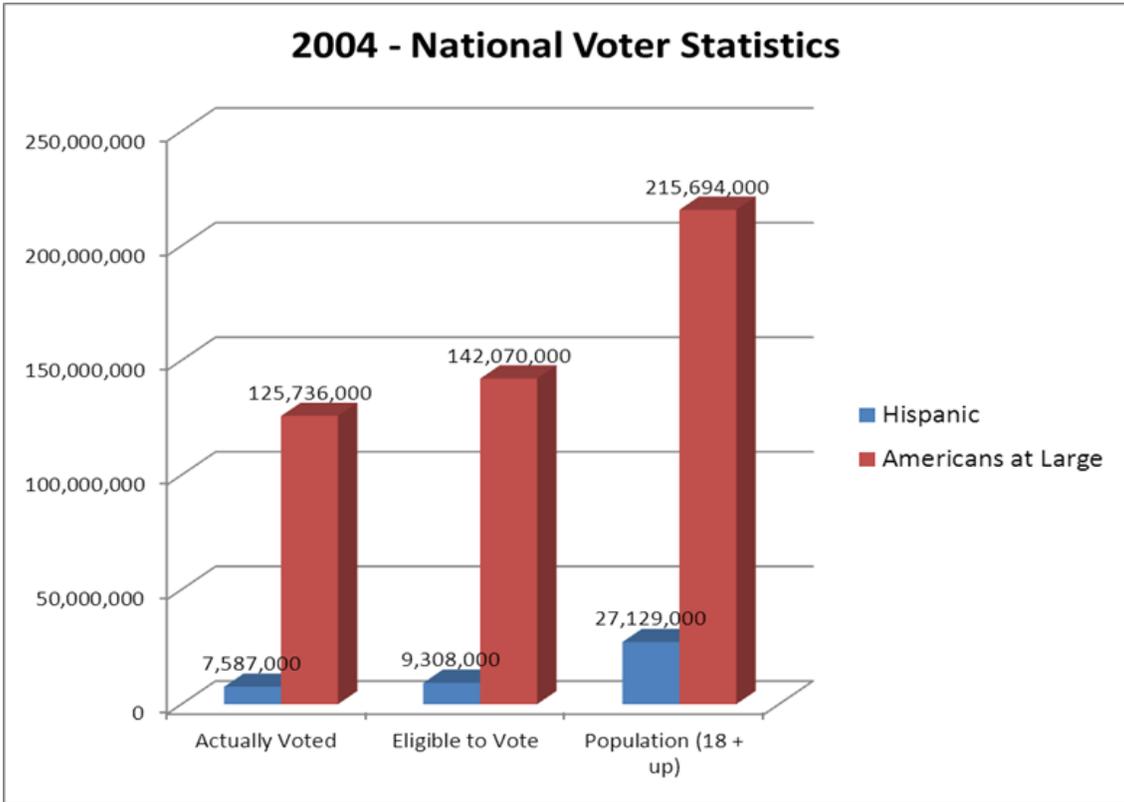
1. Contreras, Jorge. National Day of Action Rally. Washington, DC. April 10, 2006.
2. U.S. Census Bureau. November 2012 Current Population Survey. 2012.

Hispanic Voter Participation Nationwide

The number of eligible Hispanic-American voters has increased drastically while percentages of those eligible who actually vote remain far below the national average. Still, their share of the electorate is growing. As the charts on the next page will show, a record 23.7 million Hispanics were eligible to vote in the 2012 presidential election, compared to 16.1 million Hispanics just eight years prior³. In 2004, approximately 27.9% of eligible Hispanics voted in the presidential election, compared to 58.3% of eligible voters in the population at large. By the 2012 election, however, approximately 35.5% of eligible Hispanics voted in the presidential election of 2012, compared to the 54.1% of all eligible voters. In other words, **voter turnout for Hispanic Americans has grown seven percent since 2004, while the voter turnout for the general population has declined by approximately four percent.**

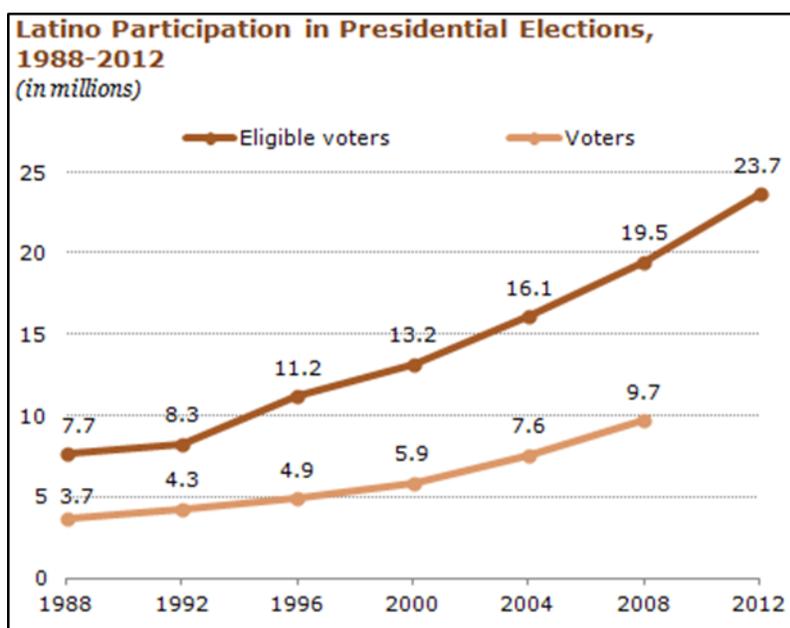


3. Taylor, Gonzalez-Barrera, Passel, and Lopez. "An Awakened Giant: The Hispanic Electorate is Likely to Double by 2030". Pew Research Hispanic Center. 2012.



Source(s): U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2004
 Pew Research Hispanic Center, Latino Voters in the 2012 Election, November 2012

While the gap between the Hispanic voter turnout and turnout for the population at large is significant, data trends indicate that the Hispanic voter turnout will continue to increase in future elections. Voter turnout for the American population as a whole varies by election, yet the Hispanic voter turnout seems to have increased consistently during the past several presidential elections. While the national Hispanic population is 17% of the total U.S. population, they comprised just 10% of all voters in the 2012 election⁴. However, recent data suggests that the Hispanic electorate will rise quickly due to generational replacement - as Hispanics are the youngest ethnic group in the U.S.⁵ - and potential naturalization measures. In fact, **data collected by the Pew Research Center suggests that the national Hispanic electorate is likely to double by 2030⁶**. This can be attributed to a rapidly increasing population as well as a growing interest in and comfort with the American political system.



Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the Current Population Survey. "An Awakened Giant". Pew Research Center. 2012.

National exit polls showed that the Hispanic population represented 10% of the electorate in 2012, compared to 9% in 2008, and 8% in 2004⁷. Although it is impossible to precisely predict the size and power of the Hispanic electorate in the future, trends in data and in demographics indicate that Hispanic voters are growing in number and influence nationwide, and the national electorate as a whole is becoming increasingly diverse.

4. Taylor, Gonzalez-Barrera, Passel, and Lopez. "An Awakened Giant: The Hispanic Electorate is Likely to Double by 2030". *Pew Research Hispanic Center*. 2012.

5. Id.

6. Id.

7. Lopez, Mark, and Taylor, Paul. "Latino Voters in the 2012 Election". *Pew Research Center*. 2012. Gallup Exit Poll. CNN. 2004, 2008.

Ohio Hispanic Voters at a Glance

Ohio's Hispanic voter profiles differ both from Ohio voters as a whole and Hispanic voters nationally. Of the 355,000 Hispanics living in Ohio, the most recent data shows that 166,000 are eligible to vote, which is the 19th largest Hispanic eligible voter population nationally⁸. Ohio's Hispanic population comprises approximately three percent of the state's total population, and that percentage ranks just 42nd nationwide. Ohio Hispanics, however, are much more civic-minded than Hispanics in other states. **Ohio ranks 13th among all states in the share of the Hispanic population that is eligible to vote, although Ohio's Hispanic population only ranks 23rd in the nation**⁹. It is possible that the state's Hispanic voters are more engaged due to the recognition that Ohio serves as a key swing state in presidential elections. That is, an emphasis on political campaigning and get-out-the-vote efforts from various campaigns in the state may account for this variance in share of the electorate. Ohio also has very significant communities of Puerto Ricans – U.S. citizens that are eligible to vote – relative to the Hispanic populations in other states. Here is a short summary profile of Ohio Hispanic voters: ¹⁰

- *Over 32% of eligible Hispanic voters in Ohio are ages 18-29, compared to 20% of all eligible voters in Ohio. In other words, Hispanic voters in Ohio are younger when compared to the state's average.*
- *44% of Hispanic eligible voters in Ohio are of Mexican origin, while another 33% are of Puerto Rican origin. Nationwide, 59% of eligible voters are of Mexican origin and only 14% are Puerto Rican.*
- *Nearly 23% of all Hispanic eligible voters in Ohio have not completed high school, compared to only 12% of all Ohio eligible voters who have not.*
- *Over 54% of Hispanic eligible voters in Ohio are homeowners, just below the nationwide share of 58%.*

Hispanic Voters in Presidential Elections: 2004 and 2012

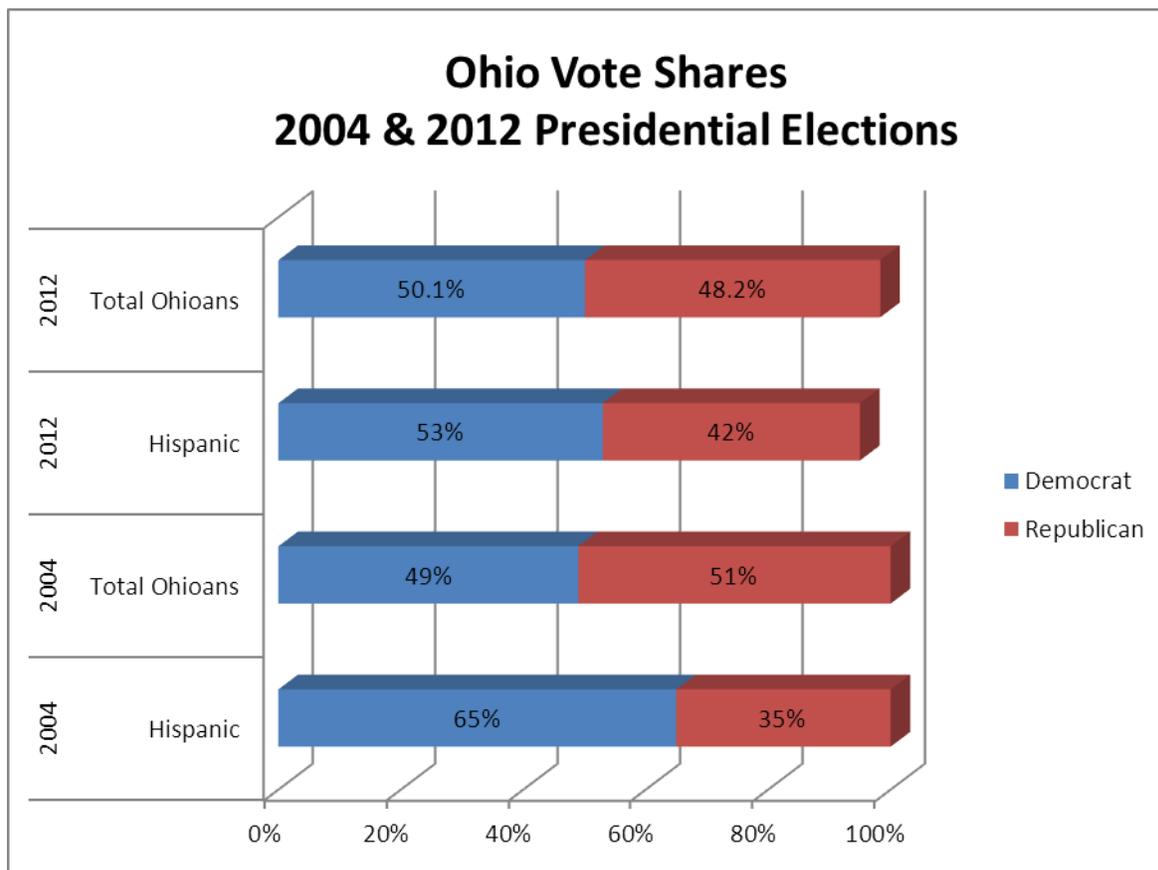
Ohio Hispanic voters have the potential to be a key factor in electoral outcomes, as data from the 2004 and 2012 elections show. Before we discuss those figures, however, there is a large discrepancy in data for which this report must account. Nationally there is no dispute – Hispanic voters broke for President Obama by a record 71% in 2012¹¹.

8. Motel, Seth, and Patten, Eileen. "Latinos in the 2012 Election: Ohio". *Pew Research Hispanic Center*. 2012.

9. *Id.*

10. Van Lohuizen, Jan R. "Hispanic Voting in 2012". Voter and Consumer Research Group. 20 December 2012.

Data from the Pew Hispanic Center indicates that in 2012, Ohio Hispanic voters were split 53% for Obama and 42% for Romney, which was the republican candidate's highest vote share among Hispanics in any state¹². Another political opinion research group, however – Latino Decisions – found that Latino voters supported President Obama over Governor Romney by a margin of 82% to 17% - a rate much higher than the already-record national difference¹³. This Latino Community Report bases its data and analysis on the numbers from Pew for a couple of reasons. First, Pew Hispanic Center is a nationally-renowned and academically esteemed research institution regarding Hispanics. That's not to suggest that Latino Decisions is less competent, rather, it is less universally known and respected. Second, the Pew data is based on exit polls, while the Latino Decisions data is based on election-eve polling by calling voters. While we're no experts on best polling practices, exit poll data seems as though it would be more accurate than projections based on voter intentions.



Source(s): CNN, Ohio Exit Polls, 2004 and 2012. Pew Research Hispanic Center, Latino Voters in the 2012 Election, November 2012.

11. Motel, Seth, and Patten, Eileen. "Latinos in the 2012 Election". *Pew Research Hispanic Center*. 2012.
 12. *Id.*
 13. *Latino Decisions*, a political opinion research group, showed that Latino voters supported Obama over Romney by 82% to 17%. These numbers are based on the estimate that Latinos comprised 1.5% of the Ohio electorate, whereas other data estimates vary.

The figures from Pew show an Ohio Hispanic electorate that is much more “in-play” than the Hispanic electorate nationwide. While President Obama won a record 71% of the national Hispanic vote in 2012, he won just 53% of the *Ohio* Hispanic vote. More, this appears to be part of a trend toward republican presidential candidates among Ohio Hispanics. **Exit poll data shows that Ohio Hispanics drifted toward the republican candidate between the 2004 and 2012 elections.** President Obama garnered 53% of the Ohio Hispanic vote in 2012, but in 2004 Senator Kerry commanded 65% of the Ohio Hispanic vote¹⁴. Many analysts argue that it is in regard to changing views on immigration reform policies by both political parties¹⁵. While the narrative from pundits nationwide has been that republicans have alienated Hispanic voters because of their harsh stance on immigration issues, that appears to be at least partially a myth in Ohio.

It is too simplistic to assume, however that this issue alone is responsible for changing voting preferences either nationally or in Ohio. Much like the American electorate at-large, the Hispanic electorate is also comprised of numerous voting blocs, based on a number of characteristics such as religion, income, age, home-ownership and education. Ohio Hispanics are a particularly dynamic demographic electorate, and is likely changing in Ohio according to these characteristics. Understanding how Hispanic voters perceive the importance of electoral issues is also paramount to contextualizing their role in Ohio elections.

Key Issues for Ohio’s Hispanic Voters

The notion that immigration is the sole or dominant issue driving Latino voting preferences also appears to be a myth, at least in Ohio. **Like their fellow Ohioans, Hispanic voters in Ohio saw jobs and the economy as the most important issue in the 2012 presidential election, with 46% of respondents citing that issue as the most critical behind their vote¹⁶.** This is not surprising, as the economy was also the most important for issue for Ohio voters at large, at approximately 59%. The graphs on the following page illustrate the top five issues for Hispanics and Ohioans at large during the 2012 election. While both groups list the economy and health care as key issues, **Hispanics prioritized education and immigration while Ohioans at large were more concerned with the deficit and foreign policy.**

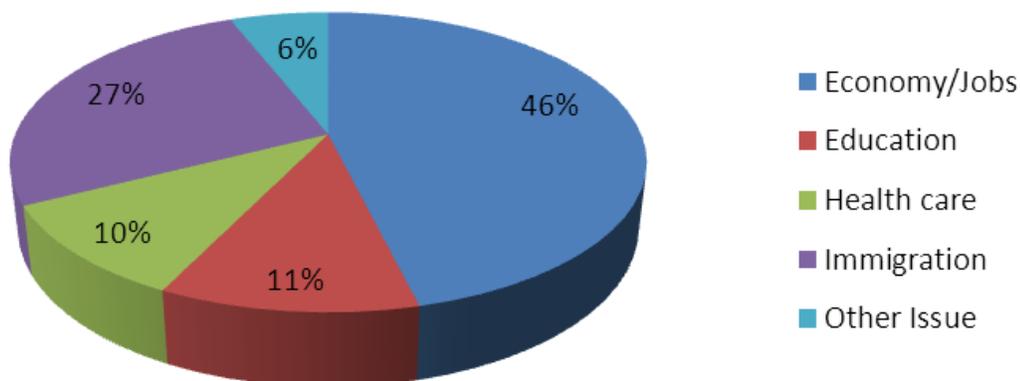
14. CNN Exit Polls: Ohio, 2004.

15. Barreto, Matt. “New Poll: Immigration Policy Stance Directly Tied to Winning the Latino Vote”. *Latino Decisions*. 2013.

16. *ImpreMedia/Latino Decisions*, 2012 Latino Election Eve Poll.

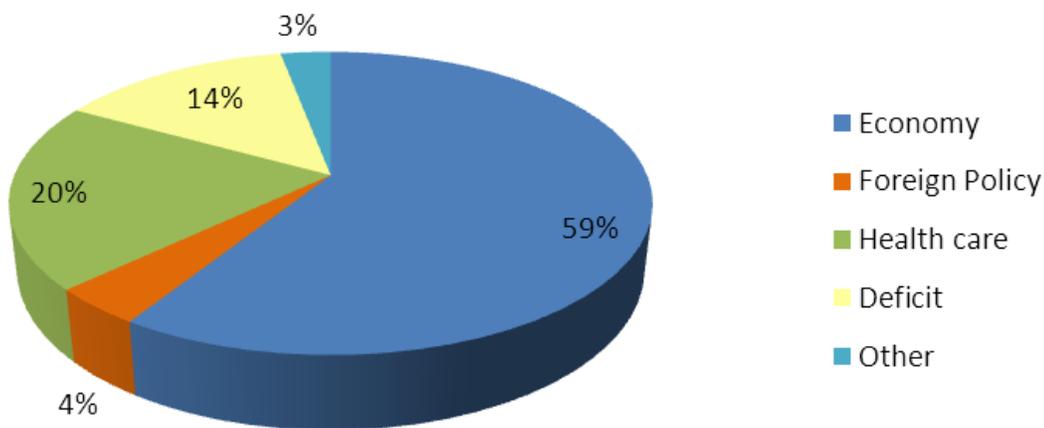
17. CNN Exit Polls 2012: Ohio.

Most Important Issues - Hispanics in Ohio - 2012 Election



Source: ImpreMedia/Latino Decisions, 2012 Latino Election Eve Poll.

Most Important Issues - Ohioans at Large - 2012 Election



Source: CNN, 2012 Ohio Election Exit Poll.

Conclusions

This Latino Community Report has endeavored to comparatively illustrate characteristics and preferences of Hispanic voters nationally and in Ohio in an effort to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the political priorities and civic engagement of this growing population. The report has also looked back at Hispanic voter preferences in 2004 to demonstrate changing trends in participation, influence and preferences. Data such as this is generally difficult to collect and analyze comparatively with Ohioan and American voters at large. We hope that this report was able to offer insight into what has become, and will continue to be, an important electoral demographic both in Ohio and the United States. Key takeaways can be summarized as follows:

- 1. The Hispanic vote nationally and in Ohio is expanding in: eligibility, registration and participation – both in raw numbers and as a percentage of the electorate. The community is becoming more and more involved in the democratic process at all levels.*
- 2. Ohio Hispanic voters appear to be much more “in-play” in presidential elections than their peers in other states. While the state’s Hispanics broke for Obama and Kerry from 2004 to 2012, they did so at lower margins, and indeed those margins have shrunk, not expanded.*
- 3. Ohio’s small Hispanic population is very politically active compared to the communities in other states, and they therefore exercise proportionally-greater influence on Ohio elections.*
- 4. Ohio Hispanic voters tend to prioritize domestic and social justice issues – particularly education and immigration - more than the bulk of Ohio’s electorate. Still, immigration is not quite the dominant electoral factor for Ohio Hispanics as it’s often portrayed.*

What does this mean for Ohio's future?

There are several inferences for Ohio's leaders to be drawn from this data. First, the Hispanic electorate will likely continue growing significantly in Ohio and throughout the mid-west and United States in general¹⁸. Like any population growth, this will affect public policy in Ohio, and must be considered when parties and office-holders create future strategies, platforms and outreach. Secondly, the Hispanic electorate is not stagnant in its preferences, and will likely continue to change - both affecting and being affected by the policy environment in which they reside. It is important to note that, as an electorate, this voter demographic is significant already and growing rapidly. More, it is still largely in play and has the potential to increasingly shape Ohio's electoral profile at both state and national levels. For more information, please contact the Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs using the contact information on page 1.

18. Gouveia, Lourdes, and Saenz, Rogelio. "Global Forces and Latino Population Growth in the Midwest: A Regional and Subregional Analysis". *Great Plains Research*. Paper 515: 2000.