

A SNAPSHOT OF LATINO VOTERS IN NORTH CAROLINA

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Introduction

Latinos make up nearly 9% of North Carolina's 9.7 million people, ranking the state 11th nationally and 3rd in the Southeast (after Florida and Georgia) for the total number of Latino residents. From 2000 to 2012, the Hispanic population in North Carolina more than doubled to more than 830,000. Although Latinos currently make up only about 2% of the North Carolina electorate, their number and share will continue to grow as U.S.-born children become of age, legal permanent residents naturalize, and in-country migration of Latinos from other states increases.

Profile of Latino Voters in NC

The reality of the Hispanic population in North Carolina belies the stereotypical image of single men from Mexico, migrating from one job to another, without documents. A true profile reveals that:

- 38% are under 18
- 39% are from a country other than Mexico
- 47% are women
- 58% are US citizens
- 89% of those under 18 are US citizens.

How Many Registered and Unregistered Hispanic Voters Are There?

Using data and survey information from the US Census Bureau, as well as election records, we estimate that there are **115,000 registered Hispanic voters** in North Carolina: 91,600 who self-identified as Latinos when they registered to vote and 23,400 others who did not. This number represents a 35% increase in registered Latino voters since 2008 (see figure 1).

The Census Bureau's American Community Survey puts the number of Hispanic citizens of voting age in 2010 at 193,500. Projecting forward to 2012, we estimate the

number of voting-age Latino citizens is now about 215,000. Considering that 115,000 are already registered, we estimate that **about 100,000 eligible Latino voters** remain unregistered.

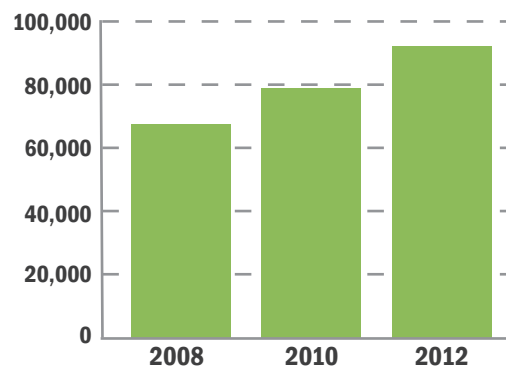


FIGURE 1: SELF-IDENTIFIED
LATINO VOTERS FROM 2008 -2012

Voters By Age

In general, the Latino population is young, suggesting that its electoral power is just beginning to be felt. The median age of all Hispanics in North Carolina is 24, and voters aged 18-40 make up 62% of registered Latino voters (see figure 2), while they only comprise 34% and 43% of white and Black voters, respectively.

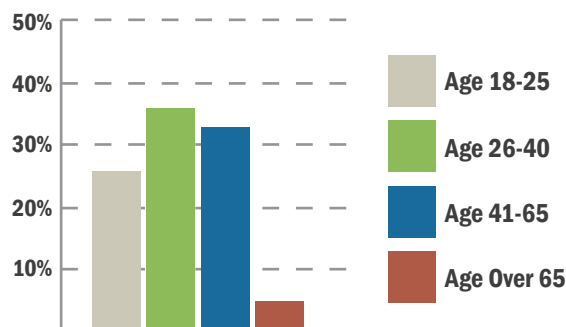


FIGURE 2: REGISTERED LATINO VOTERS BY AGE GROUP

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Voters By Location

Hispanic residents are not evenly distributed across North Carolina. Most (52%) of Latinos live in 10 counties in the urbanized Piedmont (Mecklenburg, Wake, Forsyth, Durham, Guilford, Cumberland, Johnston, Union, Onslow, and Cabarrus), but they make up a larger share of the people in several more rural counties (Duplin, Lee, Sampson, Greene, Montgomery, Chatham, and Hoke). 61% of self-identified, registered Latino voters are in ten counties (Mecklenburg, Wake, Cumberland, Guilford, Forsyth, Durham, Onslow, Union, Cabarrus, and Orange).

Voters By Party

Although most (44%) Hispanic voters in North Carolina are registered Democrats, Unaffiliated voters also make up a sizeable portion (37%) (see figure 3), which suggests that neither party should take the growing Latino vote for granted. The lack of party loyalty also presents an added challenge for voter turnout.

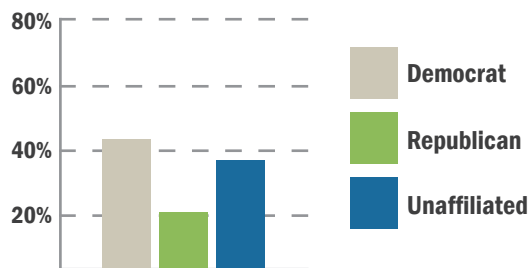


FIGURE 3: REGISTERED LATINO VOTERS BY PARTY

Voter Turnout

Although Latino presence has increased at the polls nationally, Hispanics continue to register and vote at lower rates compared to other groups. In the 2008 general election, 70% of all registered voters cast a ballot, moving North Carolina up to 20th place among the 50 states for voter turnout. While 60% of registered Latinos in North Carolina voted that fall, 72% of Blacks (a modern record) and 69% of whites turned out (see figure 4).

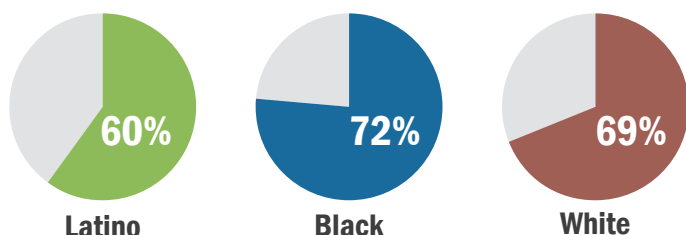


FIGURE 4: VOTER TURNOUT BY RACE/ETHNICITY

Voter Protection

A good registration and mobilization campaign is not enough to ensure Latino voter empowerment. Monitoring election mischief and addressing voter concerns about intimidation or misinformation – often referred to as “Election Protection” – is an important part of any voter engagement program. Low-income voters and people of color are historically the preferred targets of voter suppression tactics. Educating Hispanics about their voting rights and the national Election Protection numbers are critical steps in protecting the Latino vote.

Election Hotlines:
866-OUR-VOTE
and
888-VE-Y-VOTA

CONCLUSION

Judging by the numbers, Latino political power in North Carolina is poised to increase. But realizing this opportunity will require targeted efforts to register all eligible voters and increase turnout. Helping the growing Hispanic population become a political force will require a year-round program of education, engagement, and leadership training that extends well beyond this year.

The organizations producing this report can be resources for materials, voter registration assistance and other strategic help:

- **Democracy North Carolina**
(888) OUR-VOTE | www.democracy-nc.org
- **Latin American Coalition**
(704) 531-3848 | www.latinamericancoalition.org
- **El Pueblo**
(919) 835-1525 | www.elpueblo.org
- **NC Latino Coalition**
(919) 423-6332 | www.latinocoalitionnc.org

View the full report at:

<http://bit.ly/latino-voters-nc>