

# Survey Methodology and the Latina/o Vote

## Why a Bilingual, Bicultural, Latino-Centered Approach Matters

Matt A. Barreto, Tyler Reny, and Bryan Wilcox-Archuleta

In March 2013, after the GOP lost what it expected to be a much closer presidential race, party chair Reince Priebus led the Republican National Committee (RNC) in conducting an autopsy of the 2012 election that they titled the “Growth and Opportunity Project.” The resulting 100-page report prioritized outreach to Latino, African American, and Asian American voters. With regard to Hispanic voters, the guide suggested more welcoming rhetoric: “If Hispanic Americans perceive that a GOP nominee or candidate does not want them in the United States (i.e. self-deportation), they will not pay attention to our [policies] . . . We must embrace and champion comprehensive immigration reform” (RNC 2013, 8).

It came as a shock, then, when Priebus and the RNC backed candidate Donald Trump, the real estate mogul whose career began with being sued for housing discrimination against African Americans (Mahler and Eder 2016); who suggested that the Central Park Five be executed for their crimes even after they were cleared of wrongdoing (Burns 2016); who led the birtherism charges against Barack Obama throughout his presidency (Barbaro 2016); and who kick-started his own presidential campaign in 2015 by calling Mexicans murderers and rapists (Ye Hee Lee 2015). Trump broke with the decades-long GOP strategy of implicit racial appeals, opting instead for explicitly hostile and xenophobic statements about minority groups throughout his campaign. As a result, he became the first modern Republican candidate to win the party’s nomination based on racial prejudice (Tesler 2016).

Given Trump's racially insensitive rhetoric, particularly toward Latinos and immigrants, it was widely expected that Latino voter backlash would be enormous and crippling for the GOP candidate in the general election. Polling and reporting throughout the campaign season suggested that Hispanic voter enthusiasm was at sky-high levels and that registration was spiking (Bernal 2016; Gross 2016; O'Keefe 2016). According to pre-election polling by Latino Decisions, a firm specializing in Latino political opinion research, Democrat Hillary Clinton was situated to win a record high 79 percent of the Hispanic vote and Trump a record low 18 percent (Gross 2016). A sizable body of academic research in Chicano studies and political science similarly suggested that such blatant racial appeals would be detrimental to Trump's chances, particularly in Latino-heavy swing states.

Yet on November 8, 2016, as polling place lines dwindled and Edison Research, exclusive provider of exit poll data to a consortium of media outlets known as the National Election Pool, began tallying and releasing results, a new narrative emerged.<sup>1</sup> Trump, according to the Edison Exit Poll, actually did *better* with Latino voters than Republican candidate Mitt Romney had done in 2012 (CNN 2016). The findings sparked a public debate between pollsters, pitting those who specialize in measuring Latino political attitudes and who estimated that Clinton's margin of victory among Latinos would exceed that of Obama's, against Edison, whose exit polling found the opposite. Complicating the picture is the fact that Edison does not immediately release its sampling methodology to the public; the release of such information can take years after an election.

---

MATT A. BARRETO is professor of political science and Chicana/o studies at UCLA and co-founder of the research and polling firm Latino Decisions, which is widely acknowledged as the leading Latino political opinion research group in the United States. He is author of *Ethnic Cues: The Role of Shared Ethnicity in Latino Political Behavior* (University of Michigan Press, 2010) and co-author of *Change They Can't Believe In: The Tea Party and Reactionary Politics in America* (Princeton University Press, 2013) and *Latino America: How America's Most Dynamic Population Is Poised to Transform the Politics of the Nation* (PublicAffairs, 2014). TYLER RENY is a graduate student in political science at the University of California, Los Angeles. He studies the impact of demographic change on political attitudes and behaviors in the United States. He has recently had articles accepted for publication at *Social Sciences Quarterly*, *Politics Research Quarterly*, and *Comparative Political Studies*. He may be reached at [ttreny@gmail.com](mailto:ttreny@gmail.com).

BRYAN WILCOX-ARCHULETA is a graduate student in political science and statistics at the University of California, Los Angeles, where he studies the role of identity in politics among minority populations in the United States. He has work forthcoming in *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics*. He can be reached at [bwa@ucla.edu](mailto:bwa@ucla.edu).

In this article, we first briefly summarize the academic literature on Latino political behavior and explain why understanding the attitudes of subgroups requires that pollsters be culturally sensitive to the populations they study. We then present a novel analysis of real vote data suggesting that Clinton did, as expected, surpass Obama's margin of victory among Latino voters. Analyzing 29,045,522 votes from 39,118 electoral precincts across ten states, we show that Latino Decisions polling was far closer to the actual vote returns than the Edison Exit Poll. We conclude by looking to the future of the Latino electorate and polling in US elections.

### Awaking the Sleeping Giant

Despite the size of the Latino population in the United States, geographic clustering, national origin diversity, immigration and citizenship status, and low levels of participation have long kept Latinos out of the national political spotlight (de la Garza and DeSipio 1996; DeSipio 1996; Pachon and DeSipio 1994). Yet by the early 2000s, media began to speculate on the potential political impact of the then 35 million Latinos residing within the United States, a population *Time* magazine and others dubbed the "sleeping giant" (Tumulty 2001). The growing Latino population in swing states like Virginia, Nevada, and Colorado, together with the now explicit and active courting of Latino votes by presidential candidates, has ensured steady coverage of Latino voters throughout every recent presidential campaign cycle (Barreto et al. 2008; Collingwood, Barreto, and Garcia-Rios 2014; Fraga and Leal 2004; Garcia and Sanchez 2008).

The sheer diversity of the Latino population in the United States has prevented the emergence of a cohesive pan-ethnic voting bloc comparable to the African American vote (Barreto and Segura 2015; Sánchez and Pita 2006). However, Latino voters have long been supportive of the Democratic Party (Alvarez and García Bedolla 2003; Bowler, Nicholson, and Segura 2006; Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura 2001; Segura 2012; Tolbert and Hero 2001; Uhlaner and Garcia 2005). With the exception of 2004, when George W. Bush was able to garner about 40 percent support from Latino voters, Democratic presidential candidates have received roughly 65 to 70 percent of the Latino two-party vote in each election cycle (Barreto and Segura 2015).

There are multiple reasons for this strong Democratic support. First, surveys have revealed that, despite common tropes of Latinos as "natural conservatives," Latinos generally favor a large and active federal

government and are in many ways natural Democrats (Barreto and Segura 2015). Second, there is evidence that a Latino pan-ethnic group identity may be emerging to influence both attitudes and behaviors (Sanchez 2006b; Sanchez and Masuoka 2010). For African Americans, their sense of “linked fate,” a product of specific social and historical circumstances, contributes to more homogenous policy preferences and voting behaviors (Dawson 1994). In 1989, investigators of the Latino National Political Survey (LNPS) found little evidence of a similar pan-ethnic identity among Latinos in the United States (de la Garza 1992). Recent survey research, however, finds increasing identification with pan-ethnic terms (Fraga et al. 2010). While there are still questions about the durability of this incipient Latino political consciousness (Beltrán 2010), scholars have found that at specific times and under certain circumstances, pan-ethnic identity can be activated and can shape political beliefs and spur mobilization (Sanchez 2006a, 2006b). Finally, as Latinos are socialized into the US political system, Democratic candidates are simply more likely than Republican candidates to reach out to and mobilize Latino voters (Collingwood, Barreto, and Garcia-Rios 2014; Nuño 2007). This consistent outreach by one party can inculcate a sense of belonging that can shape subsequent partisan attachments (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002).

As social psychology would predict, a number of studies have found that certain forms of threat can mobilize Latinos into a cohesive voting coalition by increasing the influence of ethnic identity on political evaluations and behaviors (Michelson and Pallares 2001; Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura 2001). Indeed, Efrén Pérez (2014) finds that “high-identifying Latinos” exposed to xenophobic rhetoric become more ethnocentric and more likely to support policies that support in-group pride. Matt Barreto and Gary Segura (2015) find that messages stressing discrimination, harassment, and racial profiling toward Latinos are among the most highly motivating (Schildkraut 2005).

Numerous real-world examples show how vitriolic anti-immigrant and anti-Latino rhetoric can mobilize Latino voters and push them toward the Democratic Party. California’s experience is a case in point. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, California’s immigrant population expanded as the non-Hispanic white population shrank. For decades, California anti-immigrant groups had been pushing elites to debate immigration, and by the late 1980s their efforts began to bear fruit. As grassroots conservative movements whipped up anti-immigrant hysteria, activists gathered signatures for a punitive anti-immigrant ballot measure (HoSang 2010, 164).

In 1994 these efforts culminated in the passage of Proposition 187, which imposed restrictions on public education, housing, and public services for undocumented Californians through changes to the state's Penal Code, Welfare and Institutions Code, Health and Safety Code, Education Code, and Government Codes. The measure's unofficial title, the "Save Our State" initiative, helped it garner wide support from the public. Postelection polling confirmed that anti-immigrant campaigning was particularly successful in mobilizing white voters. Fully 63 percent of white voters, 62 percent of independent voters, and 55 percent of moderates ultimately supported the measure (HoSang 2010).

These policies and political rhetoric did not go unnoticed by the state's Latino population. By 1996, California Latinos were naturalizing, registering to vote, and turning out in record numbers. Adrian Pantoja, Ricardo Ramirez, and Gary Segura (2001) found that after the Proposition 187 fight, newly naturalized Latinos in California turned out at higher rates than Latinos in other states that lacked such an intensely nativist political climate. Latinos were also voting increasingly for the Democratic Party. Shaun Bowler, Stephen P. Nicholson, and Gary Segura (2006) find that Proposition 187 (together with the equally racial Propositions 207 and 229) nearly doubled the probability that California Latinos would vote Democratic (see also Barreto and Woods 2005). The Latino share of the state electorate increased from 7 percent in 1990 to 14 percent in 2000 with the addition of more than 1 million Latino voters to the rolls, according to the California Field Poll.<sup>2</sup> By 1998, Democrats had won back the California statehouse, state assembly, and state senate. By 2002, Democrats held every statewide office.

This backlash—sometimes called the "Pete Wilson Effect," after the California governor who championed the punitive anti-immigrant propositions—is not limited to California. In Nevada, Sharron Angle's racially charged and vitriolic anti-immigrant appeals destroyed any chance she had of unseating the incumbent senator and majority leader Harry Reid during her 2010 bid for the US Senate. Latino voters in Nevada turned out almost unanimously for Reid (Barreto 2010). In Virginia's 2013 gubernatorial race, Ken Cuccinelli's record of hostile anti-immigrant rhetoric and actions mobilized Latino and Asian support for his opponent, Terry McAuliffe, providing McAuliffe just enough votes to beat back Cuccinelli's otherwise promising bid for governor (Segura 2013). It is clear that anti-immigrant political appeals contribute to ethnic solidarity and organized political activity among Latino voters (Martinez 2008; Pérez 2014).

Based in part on these experiences in California, Nevada, and Virginia, academics and practitioners expected that Latinos would turn out *en masse* against Donald Trump. Pre-election polls suggested a blowout for Clinton among Latino voters, including polls by Latino Decisions, Univision/*Washington Post*, NBC/Telemundo, NALEO/Telemundo, and Florida International University/New Latino Voice. Indeed, Latino registration skyrocketed and early voting in Latino-heavy counties ran at all-time highs (Gamboa 2016). It was therefore astonishing when Edison Exit Poll results suggested that Latinos did not just support Trump, but gave him more support than they had given Romney four years earlier. The postelection political narrative shifted from one of predicting Latino backlash against Trump to blaming Latinos for his victory (Brammer 2016).

How could all the pre-election polling have been so wrong? Or was it? Using real election returns at the electoral precinct level together with demographic data from Catalist, a campaign data vendor, we estimate how Latinos really voted in the 2016 election. We find strong evidence that the Edison Exit Poll overestimated Latino support for Trump by 15 percentage points and that pre-election pollsters were far more accurate in their assessment. Indeed, Trump received the smallest share of the Latino vote of any presidential candidate in recent political history.

Before we present the findings of our analysis, we examine why the Edison Exit Poll so badly overestimated support for Trump among Latino voters.

## Different Approaches to Polling Latinos Yield Different Results

There are a number of reasons to distrust Edison Research's exit poll estimates for Latinos. First, the polling firm does not select enough high-density Latino precincts in its sampling. Second, it does not conduct enough Spanish-language interviews. As a result, the findings do not accurately represent Latinos in the United States, instead skewing toward higher socioeconomic status and more conservative voters. Here we outline each shortcoming and then show how culturally competent methods can overcome these limitations.

### EDISON EXIT POLL METHODOLOGY: SAMPLING AND LANGUAGE ISSUES

The Edison Exit Poll was never designed to capture sub-populations, like Latinos or African Americans. Instead, it was designed to offer one national estimate and to help news organizations predict outcomes. Because it does

not oversample with sub-populations in mind, it falls short on a number of fronts. Using demographic information from past Edison Exit Polls, we show that the methodology employed is insufficient to capture the complexities of the Latino population.

First, Edison does not select many high-density Latino (or African American) precincts. Despite very high levels of segregation in the United States, the Exit Poll actually has very few precincts with large numbers of minority voters. The reason, of course, is that minority-heavy precincts are not close in outcome and thus are less helpful to pollsters in predicting the shifting preferences of the electorate. For example, Edison recently admitted that its Exit Poll had only eleven total precincts with sizable Latino populations. In 2014 they admitted they had selected zero precincts in the Texas Rio Grande Valley, where 25 percent of all Texas Latinos reside (Nuño 2014).

Second, the Exit Poll is primarily conducted in English, not Spanish. According to US Census Bureau data, about 30 percent of Latino voters are foreign-born. Most of those voters are more comfortable being interviewed in Spanish. In past cycles, only 6 or 7 percent of Exit Poll interviews with Latinos are in Spanish,<sup>3</sup> while the population numbers suggest that it should be closer to 30 percent. Spanish-dominant Latinos are far more heavily Democratic than those who are English-dominant, which suggests that Edison estimates of Latino voting for the Republican candidate could be heavily biased upward.

Third, past Edison Exit Polls demonstrate a substantial skew toward minorities with higher income and education than the average for those populations. When compared to the Current Population Survey's November supplements (official estimates of who voted, compiled by the Census Bureau), the Exit Poll has between 11 percent and 12 percent more college graduates and 5 percent more respondents with above-median incomes (CNN 2016). That held true in 2016 as well. In the current Exit Poll results, 44 percent of nonwhite respondents have college degrees (CNN 2016). The actual proportion of college graduates among all nonwhites in the voting electorate is around 30 percent. As for income by race, though this has been reported in all previous year Exit Polls, we cannot find that breakout on any network presentations of the 2016 Exit Poll. Historically, Exit Poll respondents have had significantly higher income than the average among nonwhite voters as indicated by the Current Population Survey.

Edison has acknowledged these shortcomings. In 2005, the pollsters wrote that the Exit Poll "is not designed to yield very reliable estimates of the characteristics of small, geographically clustered demographic groups.

These groups have much larger design effects and thus larger sampling errors. . . . If we want to improve the National Exit Poll estimate for Hispanic vote (or Asian vote, Jewish vote or Mormon vote etc.) we would either need to drastically increase the number of precincts in the National Sample or oversample the number of Hispanic precincts” (Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International 2005, 62). Despite their self-critique, it appears that they have made few adjustments to their methodologies and continue to misrepresent minority subgroup voting. Polling firms like Latino Decisions rely on more culturally competent methods, yielding a far more accurate picture of the Latino electorate on Election Day.

#### **LATINO DECISIONS METHODOLOGY: CULTURALLY COMPETENT METHODS**

The Latino Decisions 2016 Election Eve Poll surveyed 5,599 extremely high-propensity Latino voters in the nights immediately prior to the election. It found that 79 percent of Latino voters supported Secretary Clinton, 18 percent supported Donald Trump, and 3 percent chose some other candidate. Latino Decisions takes a culturally competent and rigorous social science approach to polling US Latinos, taking care to ensure a representative sample of this population.

First, respondents were randomly selected from the voter rolls to match a statewide representative sample of Latinos. The sample was pre-screened, based on vote history in previous presidential elections and date of registration, to include a mix of new registrants and first-time voters. All respondents confirmed their Hispanic identity at the start of each survey, and non-Hispanic respondents were screened out. Respondents were asked if they had already voted early, and if not, if they were 100 percent certain they would vote on November 8. Any respondent who was not certain was excluded from the poll. In past cycles, thanks to this careful methodology, over 90 percent of respondents were validated subsequently as having voted in the election, and the distributions on variables of interest did not vary between the total and those validated.

Representativeness was further ensured by offering a fully bilingual option to respondents. Interviews were conducted either online or by telephone with live callers, all of whom were bilingual, and both phone and web interviews were completed in the language preferred by the respondent.

The resulting national sample for the 2016 Election Eve Poll carries an overall margin of error of 1.8 percent. This margin is adjusted to account for the design effect resulting from twelve unique sample strata of varying



size, mode differences, and post-stratification weighting used to derive the national estimate. Florida has 804 completed interviews and carries a margin of error of 3.5 percent. The other individual states sampled—Arizona (417), California (414), Colorado (404), Illinois (406), Nevada (404), New York (405), North Carolina (410), Ohio (403), Texas (409), Virginia (407), and Wisconsin (411)—have a margin of error of 4.9 percent. The remaining 405 respondents are from other states and the District of Columbia.

## Cultural Competence Is a Must

Exit polls derive estimates from a small, nonrepresentative sample of a handful of precincts, significantly biasing subgroup estimates. By contrast, culturally competent methods, like those employed by Latino Decisions, are necessary to estimate accurate Latino vote outcomes. In particular, Latino Decisions randomly samples a sufficiently large number of Latino registered voters in each state, conducts bilingual surveys, and weights the final results to match the census for correct geographic dispersion, age, education, nativity, and gender of Latino voters. For all these reasons, Latino Decisions results differ significantly from those of the Edison Exit Poll and, from a social science perspective, are more accurate and reliable.

Despite the methodological rigor employed by Latino Decisions, its results, like those of Edison, are derived from a single cross-sectional survey that necessarily has a margin of error. To validate these findings, we merge real voting data, collected at the precinct level in ten states with large Latino populations, with precinct demographic estimates. This dataset represents the official votes cast, tallied, and verified by counties around the country in 2016, not survey estimates. We can then use a statistical technique called ecological inference (EI), which allows us to infer individual-level behavior from aggregate data, to estimate how Latinos voted in the 2016 election (King 1997).

## PRECINCT ANALYSIS

The Edison Exit Poll estimates that 28 percent of Latino voters nationwide cast their votes for Trump, one percentage point higher than the estimated 27 percent that cast their votes for Romney in 2012. When broken out by state, as we show in the first column of table 1, the numbers are similarly higher than would be expected. In Colorado, North Carolina, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, and Florida, the Exit Poll estimated that Trump won more than 30 percent of the Latino vote.

**Table 1. Comparing Latino Support for Trump in Ten States across Edison Exit Poll, Latino Decisions Election Eve Poll, and Precinct Vote Returns**

State	Trump support: Edison Exit Poll estimate (%)	Trump support: Latino Decisions estimate (%)	Trump vote returns: precinct ecological estimate (%)	Difference precinct–Edison Exit Poll (percentage points)
Colorado	30	16	8	–22
North Carolina	40	15	20	–20
Nevada	29	16	10	–19
Arizona	31	12	15	–16
Texas	34	16	18	–16
New Mexico	33	—	19	–14
California	24	16	11	–13
New York	23	10	10	–13
Florida	35	31	31	–4
Illinois	—	10	6	—
AVERAGE	31	15.78	14.8	–15.22

*Note:* Cells display estimated percentage of Trump support among Latino voters by state and method of estimation. Final column shows difference between ecological inference precinct analysis and the Edison Exit Poll. The Edison Exit Poll did not sample enough Latinos in Illinois to estimate Latino support for Trump, despite the sizable Latino population in the state. Similarly, Latino Decisions did not sample New Mexico Latinos.

Edison estimates for Latino support were also in sharp contrast to the leading polling conducted right up until the election. The Latino Decisions 2016 Election Eve Poll, conducted in the days before November 8, sampled 5,600 Latino likely voters in eleven states. The results from this poll showed that 18 percent of Latinos nationwide supported Trump. State-level results from the Latino Decisions poll, shown in the second column of table 1, are much closer to what we would expect based on the theories outlined above. Averaged across states we see that the Edison Exit Poll estimated Trump support among Latinos as being over 15 percentage points higher than Latino Decisions polling. Who was right?

To answer this question we turn to real election data. For each state, we collected 2016 precinct-level election data from each county’s board of elections website. We then merged this data, by state, with precinct-level demographic estimates from Catalist, a firm that compiles data, including race, on 240 million voting-age individuals in the United States. These

precinct-level estimates of the Latino registered voter population, together with precinct-level electoral returns, allow us to statistically estimate how Latinos voted in each state. In total, we have 29,045,522 voters in over 39,000 precincts in ten states. This represents approximately 92 percent of the Latino voting population in the United States. We are confident that our results are not driven by more liberal states such as California or by specific regions of the country.

We start with a simple scatter plot that plots the share of the vote for each candidate against the proportion of Latino registered voters in the precinct (fig. 1). We then use locally weighted regression curves (LOESS)

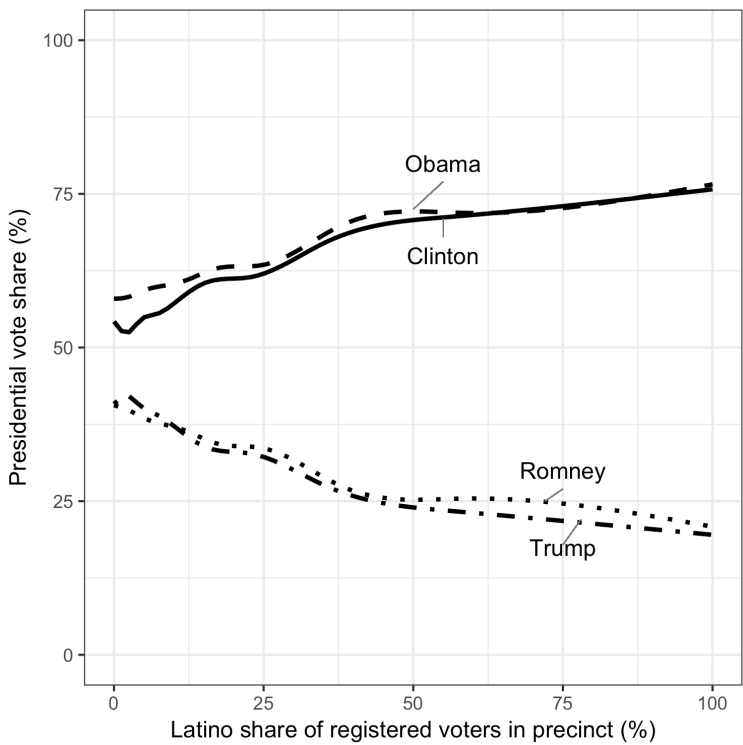


Figure 1. Estimated Presidential Vote among Latinos in 2012 and 2016, Based on Official Vote Returns from 39,118 Precincts

Source: Authors' calculations based on 39,118 precinct-level election results.

Note: The lines correspond to local weighted regression curves (loess) and show a weighted average of support for Clinton and Trump in 2016 compared to Obama and Romney in 2012. Each precinct is weighted by the total number of votes cast. The 39,118 precincts are in Colorado, North Carolina, Nevada, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, California, New York, Florida, and Illinois.

to highlight the trend in the data for each of the major party candidates in 2012 and 2016. What is immediately clear is that as the proportion of Latinos in the precinct increases, overall support for the Democratic candidates increases. Comparing the two lower lines, it is clear that Romney does better than Trump on average in the precincts that are more heavily Latino. It is only in the precincts where very few Latinos live that Trump outperforms Romney. If Trump did in fact do better than Romney among Latinos overall, as the Exit Poll suggests, it is unclear where those votes would have come from.

Next, we use a statistical method called ecological inference (EI), developed by Harvard political scientist Gary King (1997). This method uses aggregate data to infer behavior at the individual level. While there are issues inherent in estimating individual-level behavior from aggregate data (see King, Rosen, and Tanner 2004 for a discussion), EI has been the gold standard in academic applications and has been used extensively in voting rights court cases (Grofman and Merrill 2004; King 1997). EI is beneficial because it provides exact statistical estimates as opposed to a general pattern, as we showed in figure 1.

Column 3 of table 1 contains the EI estimates from our analysis, and column 4 displays the difference between our precinct analysis and the Edison Exit Poll. We show that Edison consistently overestimated support for Trump by very large margins. In Colorado, the Exit Poll estimated Latino support for Trump 22 percentage points higher than our results; in North Carolina the excess was 20 points, and in Nevada 19 points. Averaged across the ten states, our estimate of 14.8 percent Trump support among Latinos is much closer to the averaged Latino Decisions estimate of 15.78 than to the averaged Edison Exit Poll estimate of 31 percent.

In table 2, we aggregate all the state-level data together into a single dataset and run a final ecological inference. We report results for Trump and Clinton together with estimates of uncertainty. Using the real election returns data, we find that an estimated 79.2 percent of Latinos voted for Hillary Clinton and 15.8 percent of Latinos voted for Donald Trump. These estimates are almost identical to the predictions of the Latino Decisions Election Eve Poll.

## Conclusion

In this article we highlight the importance of taking a culturally competent approach to collecting accurate data among Latinos. Scholars and

**Table 2. Precinct Vote Return Analysis for Ten States Pooled**

Candidate	Estimated support (%)	Standard error of estimate (%)
Clinton	79.2	14.6
Trump	15.8	11.7

*Note:* Cells display the average estimated percentage of Latinos who voted for Clinton and Trump in the 2016 presidential election based on our ecological inference estimates. Our dataset consists of all pooled precincts in Colorado, North Carolina, Nevada, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, California, New York, Florida, and Illinois. The second column shows the standard error, a measure that indicates the level of uncertainty in our estimate.

practitioners need to put more care into devising a research design and approach that is Latino-centered before starting a data collection effort. What differences exist within the Latino community, and how can our research design take this into account? Are we offering surveys in Spanish? Are we targeting all Latino households with equal frequency? Are we wording questions in a way that is culturally sensitive? Are our sample sizes large enough to allow for generalizable inferences? These questions and more need to be asked when assessing the accuracy of our research approaches within the Latino community.

In the immediate aftermath of the 2016 presidential election, many political pundits and even some scholars suggested that Latino voters had supported Trump by larger than expected margins (Cadava 2016; Enten 2016). The historian Geraldo Cadava (2016) released an analysis of selected counties in New Mexico and Texas in an attempt to show that Trump did better than expected among Latinos, notably among rural Latinos, who, he argued, were similar to rural white voters. Similarly, Alejandra Matos of the *Washington Post* and Harry Enten of FiveThirty-Eight.com both released articles suggesting that Trump did better than Romney among Latino voters (Enten 2016; Matos 2016). These reports coupled with the Edison Exit Poll subgroup results were surprising on many levels. Not only did they come to vastly different conclusions than bilingual and bicultural survey research of Latinos during the election, they were at odds with a wide body of scholarship on Latino political behavior. One possible reason the mainstream survey results were unexpected could simply be because they were inaccurate.

To assess this possibility, we gathered vote and demographic data from over 39,000 individual voting precincts across ten states and used reliable statistical modeling to infer how Latinos voted. Our findings suggest that Trump not only did worse than Romney with Latino voters but also received the lowest Latino vote share of any candidate in recent presidential

election history. Our real election data estimates were nearly identical to the estimates from multiple pre-election polls that took a Latino-centered approach, such as those from Latino Decisions, Univision, NBC/Tel-emundo, and NALEO. These findings highlight the urgent need for all polling firms to adopt culturally competent methods in future elections.

## Notes

1. Members of the National Election Pool include ABC, CBS, CNN, Fox, NBC, and the Associated Press.
2. Based on California Field Polls from various years. California Field Poll data are distributed by UC DATA, University of California, Berkeley, [http://ucdata.berkeley.edu/data\\_record.php?recid=3](http://ucdata.berkeley.edu/data_record.php?recid=3).
3. Based on national election day exit polls from various years, available on the Roper Center website, <https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/polls/us-elections/exit-polls/>.

## Works Cited

- Alvarez, R. Michael, and Lisa García Bedolla. 2003. "The Foundations of Latino Voter Partisanship: Evidence from the 2000 Election." *Journal of Politics* 65, no. 1: 31–49.
- Barbaro, Michael. 2016. "Donald Trump Clung to 'Birther' Lie for Years, and Still Isn't Apologetic." *New York Times*, September 17.
- Barreto, Matt. 2010. "Proving the Exit Polls Wrong: Harry Reid Did Win Over 90% of the Latino Vote." Latino Decisions blog, November 15. <http://www.latinodecisions.com/blog/2010/11/15/proving-the-exit-poll-s-wrong-harry-reid-did-win-over-90-of-the-latino-vote/>.
- Barreto, Matt A., Luis R. Fraga, Sylvia Manzano, Valerie Martinez-Ebers, and Gary M. Segura. 2008. "Should They Dance with the One Who Brung 'Em? Latinos and the 2008 Presidential Election." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 41, no. 4: 753–60.
- Barreto, Matt, and Gary Segura. 2015. *Latino America: How America's Most Dynamic Population Is Poised to Transform the Politics of the Nation*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Barreto, Matt, and Nathan Woods. 2005. "Metropolitan Latino Political Behavior: Turnout and Candidate Preference in Los Angeles." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 27, no. 2: 71–91.

- Bernal, Rafael. 2016. "Hispanic Voter Registration Spikes." *The Hill*, April 27.
- Beltrán, Cristina. 2010. *The Trouble with Unity: Latino Politics and the Creation of Identity*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bowler, Shaun, Stephen P. Nicholson, and Gary Segura. 2006. "Earthquakes and Aftershocks: Race, Direct Democracy, and Partisan Change." *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 1: 146–59.
- Brammer, John Paul. 2016. "'The Latino Vote' Didn't Overwhelm Trump, Because We're Not All the Same." *Guardian*, November 9.
- Burns, Sarah. 2016. "Why Trump Doubled Down on the Central Park Five." *New York Times*, October 17.
- Cadava, Geraldo L. 2016. "Rural Hispanic Votes—Like White Rural Voters—Shifted toward Trump. Here's Why." *Washington Post*, November 17.
- Collingwood, Loren, Matt A. Barreto, and Sergio I. Garcia-Rios. 2014. "Revisiting Latino Voting: Cross-Racial Mobilization in the 2012 Election." *Political Research Quarterly* 67, no. 4: 632–45.
- CNN. 2016. "Election 2016: Exit Polls." CNN Politics, November 23.
- Dawson, Michael C. 1994. *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- de la Garza, Rodolfo O. 1992. *Latino National Political Survey: Summary of Findings*. Chicago: Inter-University Program for Latino Research. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED354281.pdf>.
- de la Garza, Rodolfo, and Louis DeSipio, eds. 1996. *Ethnic Ironies: Latino Politics in the 1992 Elections*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- DeSipio, Louis. 1996. "After Proposition 187, the Deluge: Reforming Naturalization Administration While Making Good Citizens." *Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy* 9: 7–24.
- Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International. 2005. *Evaluation of Edison/Mitofsky Election System 2004*. Prepared for the National Election Pool. Available on ABC News website, <https://abcnews.go.com/images/Politics/EvaluationofEdisonMitofskyElectionSystem.pdf>.
- Enten, Harry. 2016. "Trump Probably Did Better with Latino Voters Than Romney Did." *FiveThirtyEight.com*, November 18.
- Fraga, Luis R., and David L. Leal. 2004. "Playing the 'Latino Card': Race, Ethnicity, and National Party Politics." *Du Bois Review* 1, no. 2: 297–317.
- Fraga, Luis R., John A. Garcia, Rodney E. Hero, Michael Jones-Correa, Valerie Martinez-Ebers, and Gary M. Segura. 2010. *Latinos in the New Millennium: An Almanac of Opinion, Behavior, and Policy Preferences*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Gamboa, Suzanne. 2016. "Trump Targeted Mexicans, Now Latino Vote Surge May Wall Him Out." *NBC News*, November 8.
- Garcia, F. Chris, and Gabriel R. Sanchez. 2008. *Hispanics and the U.S. Political System: Moving into the Mainstream*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Green, Donald, Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Schickler. 2002. *Partisan Hearts and Minds: Political Parties and the Social Identities of Voters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

- Grofman, Bernard, and Samuel Merrill. 2004. "Ecological Regression and Ecological Inference." In King, Rosen, and Tanner 2004, 123–43.
- Gross, Justin. 2016. "Latino Electorate On Track for Historic Turnout in 2016." Latino Decisions blog, November 3. <http://www.latinodecisions.com/blog/2016/11/03/latino-electorate-on-track-for-historic-turnout-in-2016/>.
- HoSang, Daniel. 2010. *Racial Propositions: Ballot Initiatives and the Making of Postwar California*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- King, Gary. 1997. *A Solution to the Ecological Inference Problem: Reconstructing Individual Behavior from Aggregate Data*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- King, Gary, Ori Rosen, and Martin A. Tanner. 2004. *Ecological Inference: New Methodological Strategies*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Latino Decisions. 2016. "2016 Election Eve Poll." <http://www.latinodecisions.com/2016-election-eve-poll/>.
- Mahler, Jonathan and Steve Eder. 2016. "'No Vacancies' for Blacks: How Donald Trump Got His Start, and Was First Accused of Bias." *New York Times*, November 28.
- Martinez, Lisa. 2008. "The Individual and Contextual Determinants of Protest Among Latinos." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 13, no. 2: 189–204.
- Matos, Alejandra. 2016. "On the El Paso Border, Trump's Appeal with Latinos Defies Expectations." *Washington Post*, December 9.
- Michelson, Melissa R., and Amalia Pallares. 2001. "The Politicization of Chicago Mexican Americans: Naturalization, the Vote, and Perceptions of Discrimination." *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 26, no. 2: 63–85.
- Nuño, Stephen A. 2007. "Latino Mobilization and Vote Choice in the 2000 Presidential Election." *American Politics Research* 35, no. 2: 273–93.
- Nuño, Stephen A. 2014. "Did the GOP Make Inroads with the Latino Vote?" *Washington Post*, November 19.
- O'Keefe, Ed. 2016. "Latino Voter Group Reports Registering More than 100,000 New Voters." *Washington Post*, October 4.
- Pachon, Harry, and Louis DeSipio. 1994. *New Americans by Choice: Political Perspectives of Latino Immigrants*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Pantoja, Adrian D., Ricardo Ramirez, and Gary M. Segura. 2001. "Citizens by Choice, Voters by Necessity: Patterns in Political Mobilization by Naturalized Latinos." *Political Research Quarterly* 54, no. 4: 729–50.
- Pérez, Efrén O. 2014. "Xenophobic Rhetoric and Its Political Effects on Immigrants and Their Co-Ethnics." *American Journal of Political Science* 59, no. 3: 549–64.
- RNC (Republican National Committee). 2013. *Growth & Opportunity Project*. [http://goproject.gop.com/rnc\\_growth\\_opportunity\\_book\\_2013.pdf](http://goproject.gop.com/rnc_growth_opportunity_book_2013.pdf).
- Sánchez, Rosaura, and Beatrice Pita. 2006. "Theses on the Latino Bloc: A Critical Perspective." *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 31, no. 2: 25–53.
- Sanchez, Gabriel R. 2006a. "The Role of Group Consciousness in Latino Public Opinion." *Political Research Quarterly* 59, no. 3: 435–46.
- . 2006b. "The Role of Group Consciousness in Political Participation among Latinos in the United States." *American Politics Research* 34, no. 4: 427–51.



- Sanchez, Gabriel R., and Natalie Masuoka. 2010. "Brown Utility Heuristic? The Presence and Contributing Factors of Latino Linked Fate." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 32, no. 4: 519–31.
- Schildkraut, Deborah J. 2005. *Press One for English: Language Policy, Public Opinion, and American Identity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Segura, Gary. 2012. "Latino Public Opinion and Realigning the American Electorate." *Daedalus* 141, no. 4: 98–113.
- . 2013. "New Race Politics and the Virginia Election." Latino Decisions blog, November 6. <http://www.latinodecisions.com/blog/2013/11/06/new-race-politics-and-the-virginia-election/>.
- Shepard, Steven. 2016. "Latino Voting Surge Rattles Trump Campaign." *Politico*, November 6.
- Tesler, Michael. 2016. "Trump Is the First Modern Republican to Win the Nomination Based on Racial Prejudice." *Washington Post*, August 1.
- Tolbert, Caroline, and Robert Hero. 2001. "Dealing with Diversity: Racial/Ethnic Context and Social Change." *Political Research Quarterly* 43, no. 3: 571–604.
- Tumulty, Karen. 2001. "La Nueva Frontera: Courting a Sleeping Giant." *Time*, June 11.
- Uhlaner, Carole J., and F. Chris Garcia. 2005. "Learning Which Party Fits: Experience, Ethnic Identity, and the Demographic Foundations of Latino Party Identification." In *Diversity in Democracy: Minority Representation in the United States*, edited by Gary Segura and Shaun Bowler, 72–101. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
- Ye Hee Lee, Michelle. 2015. "Donald Trump's False Comments Connecting Mexican Immigrants and Crime." *Washington Post*, July 8.

