



NEWS RELEASE

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For further information, contact:
Jennifer Morales 202/347-5270 or jmorales@kff.org
Dianne Saenz 202/292-3304 or dianne@pewhispanic.org
Molly Voris 650/854-9400 or mvoris@kff.org

LATINO VOTERS MOST LIKELY TO IDENTIFY AS DEMOCRATS, BUT PARTY LOYALTY IS SHALLOW, AND POLITICAL VIEWS DEFY EASY CATEGORIZATION

Immigrants Transforming and Expanding the Hispanic Electorate

Washington, DC – The Hispanic electorate is emerging as a distinct presence on the political landscape, demonstrating broad but shallow party loyalty and a mixture of ideological beliefs and policy positions that defies easy categorization, according to a new national survey of Latinos who are registered to vote. At the same time, immigration is resulting in an infusion of new voters, and U.S.- and foreign-born Latinos take somewhat different views on a variety of issues.

These are among the broad findings of the *National Survey of Latinos: The Latino Electorate*, released today by the Pew Hispanic Center and the Kaiser Family Foundation. The report is an excerpt from the *National Survey of Latinos*, a nationally representative telephone survey of 4,213 adults -- including 2,929 Hispanic adults -- that will be released in full in December 2002.

Latino Voters' Identification with the Democratic Party Comes with a Notable Ambivalence

Among registered Latinos, about half identify as Democrats (49%), with one-fifth saying they are Republicans (20%) and another fifth identifying as Independents (19%). Among registered voters, Latinos are twice as likely as whites to self-identify as Democrats (49% and 24%, respectively), but less likely than African Americans (64%).

“Despite strong Democratic leanings, Latinos show significant partisan ambivalence,” said Roberto Suro, Director of the Pew Hispanic Center. “At a time of very sharp partisan divisions, they’re not ideologically committed to either of the major parties.”

Although the Democratic Party holds a distinct advantage among registered Latinos, there is some ambivalence in this party loyalty, especially when President Bush is a factor. Among registered Latinos, 45% say that the Democratic Party is more concerned with Latinos than the Republican Party (10%), but four in ten (40%) feel there is no difference between the major political parties. When it comes to dealing with the economy, nearly twice as many registered Latinos say they have more confidence in Democrats (53%) than Republicans (27%). However, when faced with a choice between Democrats in Congress and President Bush, the Democratic advantage disappears: 42% say they have more confidence in President Bush and 43% point to Democrats in Congress.

Latinos' Support for Larger Government Contrasts with More Conservative Social Views

Over half (55%) of the Hispanic electorate would prefer to pay higher taxes to support a larger government that provides more services (38% oppose). Meanwhile, majorities of registered whites (61%) and African Americans (52%) would prefer to pay lower taxes and have a smaller government.

Latinos' support for larger government contrasts with their more conservative views on a number of social issues, including abortion. More than half of Latino voters think that abortion should be illegal in most (31%) or all (24%) cases, while 42% disagree, believing that abortion should be legal in most (30%) or all (12%) cases. This is a view shared by African Americans, but most whites (53%) say it should be legal in most or all cases. Registered, foreign-born Latinos tend to hold more conservative views than those born in the U.S. For example, 46% of foreign-born Latinos say having a child without being married is unacceptable, compared to 33% of native-born Hispanics.

“As immigration transforms the Latino electorate, candidates and politicians will increasingly be asked to respond to a population of voters whose political views challenge conventional wisdom,” said Mollyann Brodie, Ph.D., Vice President and Director of Public Opinion and Media Research for the Kaiser Family Foundation.

The distinctiveness of the Hispanic electorate is perhaps best illustrated by comparing Latinos' views with those of whites with the same party affiliation. For example, about half (52%) of Hispanic Republicans say they would rather pay higher taxes to support a larger government, compared to only 17% of white Republicans. Similarly, 34% of Hispanic Democrats believe divorce is unacceptable, compared to 13% of white Democrats.

Latinos Emphasize Education, and Voice Strong Support for Open Immigration Policies

When asked to name the two most important issues in determining their vote for a candidate, 58% of registered Latinos said education, 39% said the economy and 23% said health care and Medicare. Registered Latinos are substantially more likely to choose education than registered whites (40%) and African Americans (46%). Education is particularly important to foreign-born Latino voters, with 68% citing education as a top issue, compared to 50% of native-born Latinos.

Registered Latinos voice strong support for various immigration proposals. The vast majority (85%) favors a proposal that would give undocumented, Latin American immigrants working in the U.S. a chance to obtain legal status (12% oppose). Fewer, but still a sizeable majority (68%), favor a guest worker proposal that would allow Latino immigrants to enter the country legally to work for a limited time and then return to their home countries (30% oppose). Most non-Hispanics also support these proposals, but by significantly smaller margins.

Almost half (48%) of registered Latinos think there are too many immigrants in the United States today. However, about three-fourths (76%) think the United States should allow more Latin Americans to come and work in this country legally (36%) or allow the same number as it does now (40%). A clear majority (62%) of registered Hispanics believes undocumented immigrants help the economy by providing low cost labor (31% disagree). By contrast, about two-thirds of whites (67%) and African Americans (67%) feel illegal immigrants hurt the economy by driving wages down. A sizeable number -- nearly four in ten (39%) -- native-born, registered Latinos also take a negative view of the impact of undocumented immigration.

Immigration is Transforming and Expanding the Hispanic Electorate

Among Latinos who are U.S. citizens and registered to vote, a considerable majority (72%) were either born outside the United States (41%) or have parents who were born outside the U.S. (31%).

Looking to the future, the Hispanic electorate has considerable potential for growth, but its political impact is uncertain. More than six in ten Latinos who plan to become U.S. citizens are not aligned with either Democrats or Republicans: 35% report that they are Independents; 10% say something else, and 18% say they do not know their party affiliation.

These and other findings from the full report on the Latino electorate will be presented at an October 3, 2002 press briefing, along with two studies of recent Latino voting patterns conducted by the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute.

Methodology

The Pew Hispanic Center/Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation *National Survey of Latinos: The Latino Electorate* is an excerpt from the *National Survey of Latinos*, which will be released in full in December 2002. The survey was conducted by telephone between April 4 and June 11, 2002 among a nationally representative sample of 4,213 adults, 18 years and older, who were selected at random. Representatives of the Pew Hispanic Center and the Kaiser Family Foundation worked together to develop the survey questionnaire and analyze the results. International Communications Research of Media, PA conducted the fieldwork in either English or Spanish, based on the respondent's preference.

Of those who were interviewed, 2,929 identified themselves as being of Hispanic or Latin origin or descent. Throughout the report they will be referred to interchangeably as either "Latinos" or "Hispanics." Interviews were also conducted with 1,008 non-Hispanic whites and 171 non-Hispanic African Americans. The results are weighted to represent the actual distribution of adults throughout the United States.

This report is primarily based upon responses from those who said that they were registered to vote at their current address — 1,329 Latinos, 838 non-Hispanic whites, and 136 non-Hispanic African Americans. Of the Latinos who said they were registered to vote, 655 were born in the United States not including Puerto Rico ("native-born") and 674 were born outside of the United States or on the island of Puerto Rico ("foreign-born"). It should be noted that registration status is self-reported and a common finding in public opinion polling is that registration status is often over-reported when compared to actual registration records. The margin of sampling error is +/- 3.6 percentage points for Latinos who are registered to vote, +/- 3.7 percentage points for registered whites, and +/- 11.3 percentage points for registered African Americans. Note that sampling error may be larger for other subgroups and that sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error in this or any other public opinion poll.

A webcast of the press briefing will be available at www.kaisernetwork.org and a transcript will be available at www.pewhispanic.org and www.kff.org.

Copies of the toplines, fact sheet and a summary and chartpack of key findings are available online at www.kff.org or www.pewhispanic.org, or by calling the Foundation's publications request line at 1-800-656-4533 and requesting publication #3266 (toplines), #3267 (fact sheet), or #3265 (summary and chartpack).

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