



Center for Latin American, Caribbean & Latino Studies

Latinos and the 2008 Presidential Elections: a Visual Data Base

Laura Limonic
Research Associate
Center for Latin American,
Caribbean & Latino Studies

Center for Latin American,
Caribbean & Latino Studies

Graduate Center
City University of New York
365 Fifth Avenue
Room 5419
New York, New York 10016

212-817-8438

clacsl@gc.cuny.edu

<http://web.gc.cuny.edu/lastudies>



The Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies is a research institute that works for the advancement of the study of Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinos in the United States in the doctoral programs at the CUNY Graduate Center. One of its major priorities is to provide funding and research opportunities to Latino students at the Ph.D. level.

The Center established and helps administer an interdisciplinary specialization in Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies in the Masters of Arts in Liberal Studies program.

The Latino Data Project was developed with the goal of making information available on the dynamically growing Latino population of the United States and especially New York City through the analysis of extant data available from a variety of sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Institute for Health, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and state and local-level data sources.

All Latino Data Project reports are available at <http://web.gc.cuny.edu/lastudies/>

For additional information you may contact the Center at 212-817-8438 or by e-mail at clacls@gc.cuny.edu.

Staff:

Laird W. Bergad, Professor, Ph.D. Program in History, Executive Director

Carolina Barrera-Tobón, Administrative Director

Michelle Morazán, Development Coordinator

Victoria Stone, Special Projects and Mapping Coordinator

Debora Upegui-Hernández, Special Events Coordinator

Melissa Swinea, Editorial Assistant

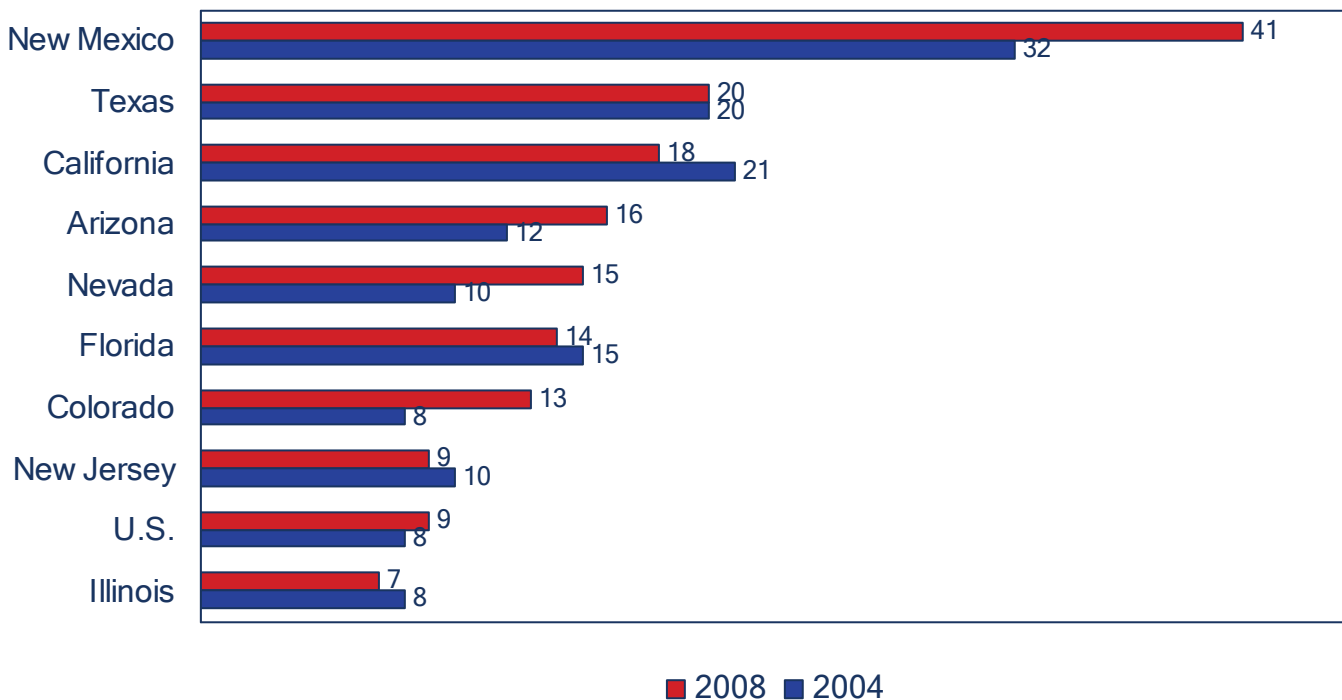
Laura Limonic, Research Assistant

Copyright @ 2008
Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies
Room 5419
Graduate Center
City University of New York
365 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10016

212-817-8438
clacls@gc.cuny.edu
<http://web.gc.cuny.edu/lastudies>

Latinos played a significant role in the 2008 presidential election and this was especially the case in ‘swing states.’ According to national exit polls Latinos increased their share of the national vote from the 2004 election from 8% to 9% of all voters.¹ Although this increase was marginal, there were important differences in states with large Latino populations. In California, the Latino share of the state vote actually declined from 21% in 2004 to 18% in 2008. Florida, New Jersey and Illinois also experienced slight declines in the percentage of voters who were Latinos. However, in New Mexico, Colorado and Nevada, three of the major battleground states, Latinos increased their share of all voters between 2004 and 2008: from 32% to 41% in New Mexico; 8% to 13% in Colorado; and 10% to 15% in Nevada. (See Figure 1). This may have played a crucial role in the Obama victory in these states.

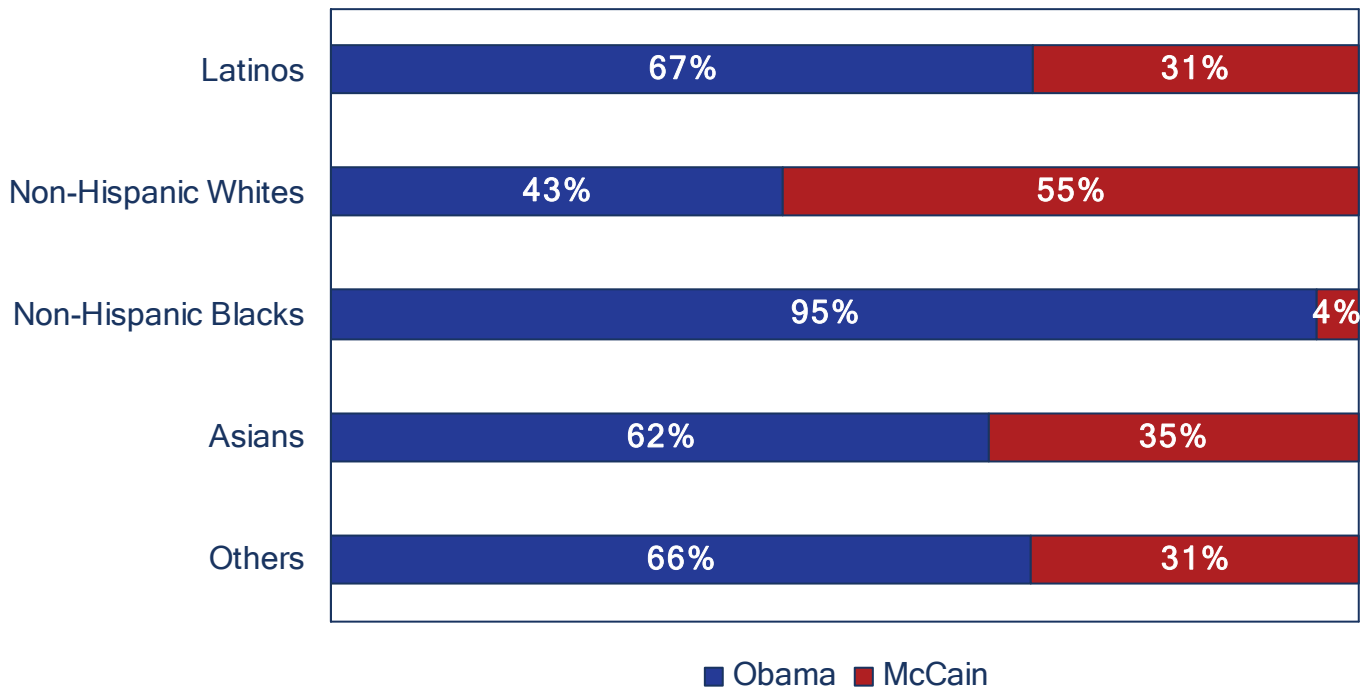
Figure 1
 Latino Share of Voters in Presidential Elections 2004 and 2008
 (in percentages)



Nationwide, Latinos voted overwhelmingly for Barack Obama over John McCain. Obama received 67% of the Latino vote, compared to 31% for McCain. Obama also received the majority of votes from other minority groups: 95% among African-Americans and 62% among Asians. Non-Hispanic Whites was the only group that voted for McCain over Obama (55% to 43%). (See Figure 2).

¹ All data in this report were derived from the exit polls from Edison Media Research as published by CNN: <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/> and Pew Hispanic Center’s analysis of the exit polls from Edison Media Research as published by CNN: <http://pewhispanic.org/reports/report.php?ReportID=98>.

Figure 2
 Popular Vote in 2008 Presidential Election,
 by Race/Ethnicity
 (in percentages)



This was significantly greater than in 2004 when George Bush received 40% of the Latino vote. Obama received the largest shares of the Latino vote in all states with substantial Latino populations. In California, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, Florida and Texas, the Latino population voted overwhelmingly for Obama. His victory in Florida was particularly salient, as the Latino population in Florida has traditionally supported Republican candidates. In 2004 Bush received 56% of the Latino vote in Florida, while in 2008 Obama received 57% of the Latino vote. The following graphs show the presidential preferences 2004 and 2008 within states with large Latino populations. (See figures 3 through 11).

It is also important to take note of the fact that younger Latinos voted for Obama at sharply higher rates than older Latinos. According to CNN exit polls (<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/results/polls/#USP00p1>) among Latinos between 18 and 29 years of age 76% voted for Obama while this declined to 63% in the 30-44 year old age category; 58% among 45 to 64 year olds; and perhaps a surprising 68% among Latinos 65 years of age and older. Additionally, there was a slight difference by sex. Some 68% of Latinas voted for Obama while 64% of Latino males voted for the Democratic candidate. (See figure 12).

Figure 3
 Presidential Preference in Arizona, by Race and Ethnicity

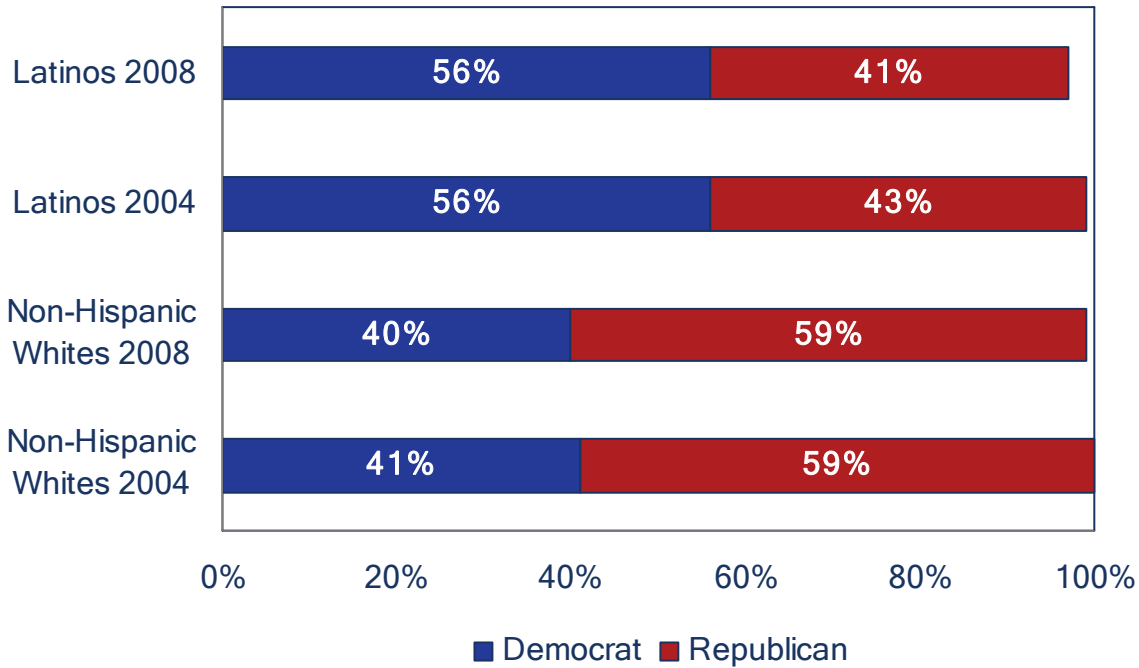


Figure 4
 Presidential Preference in California, by Race and Ethnicity

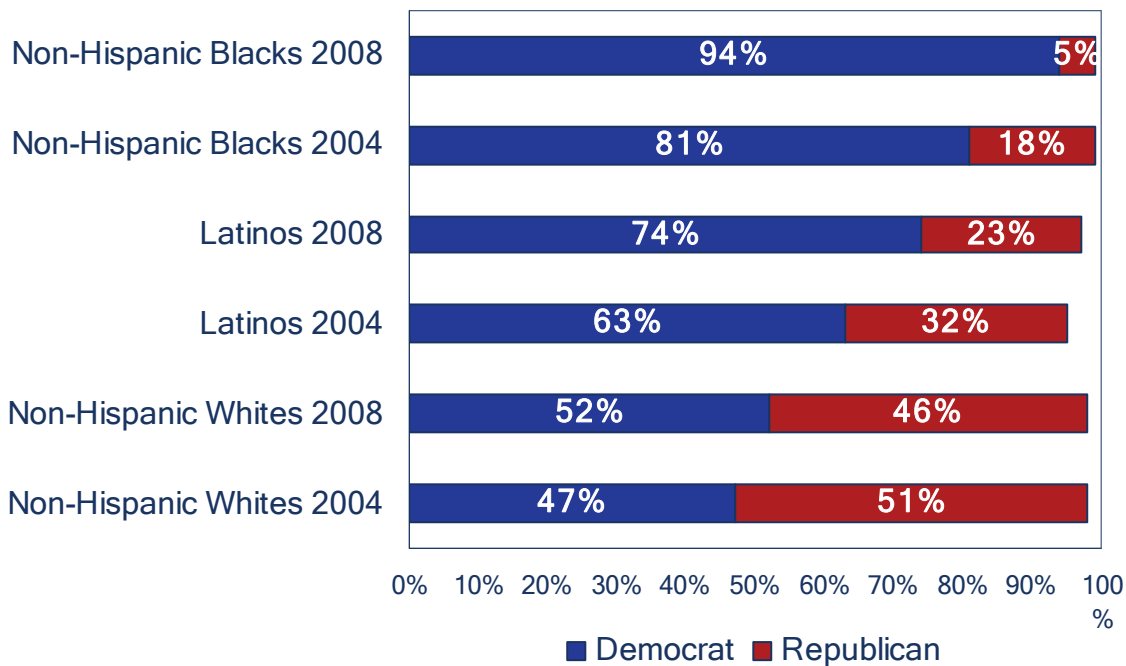


Figure 5
 Presidential Preference in Colorado, by Race and Ethnicity

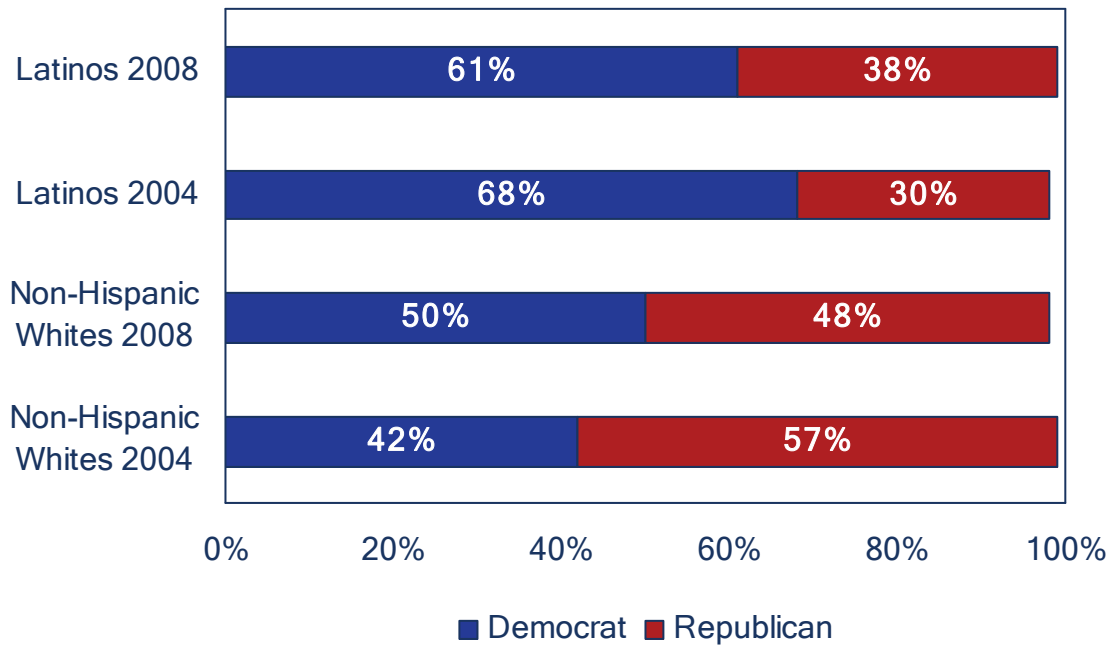


Figure 6
 Presidential Preference in Florida, by Race and Ethnicity

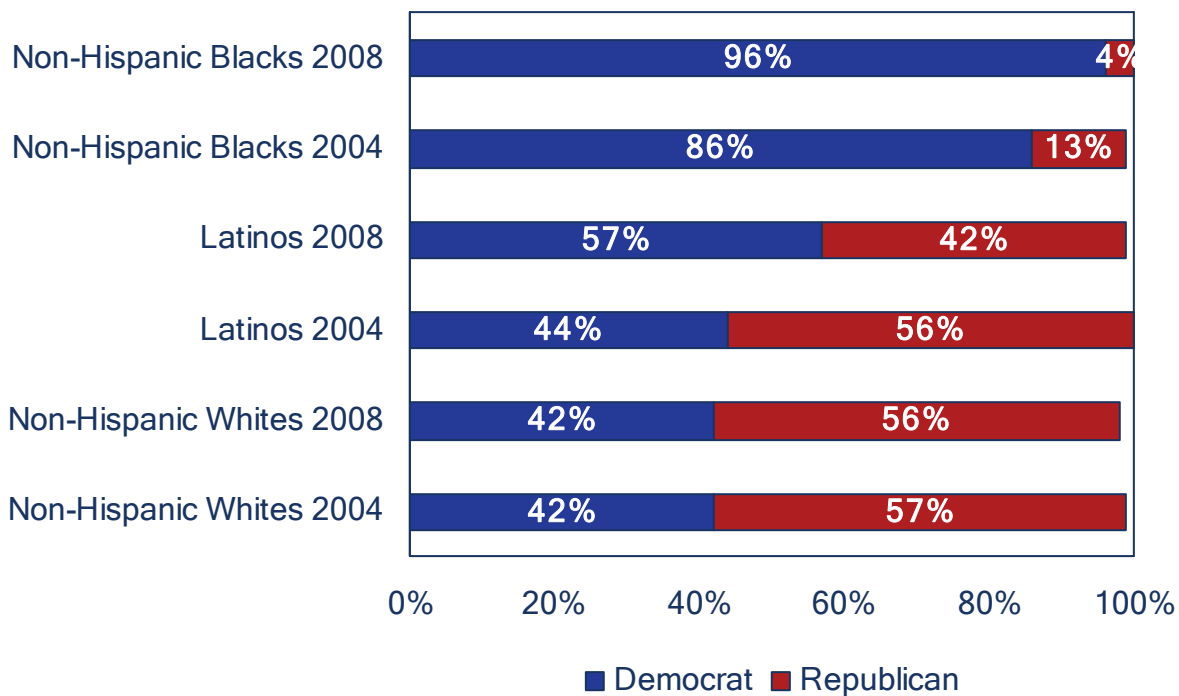


Figure 7
 Presidential Preference in Illinois, by Race and Ethnicity

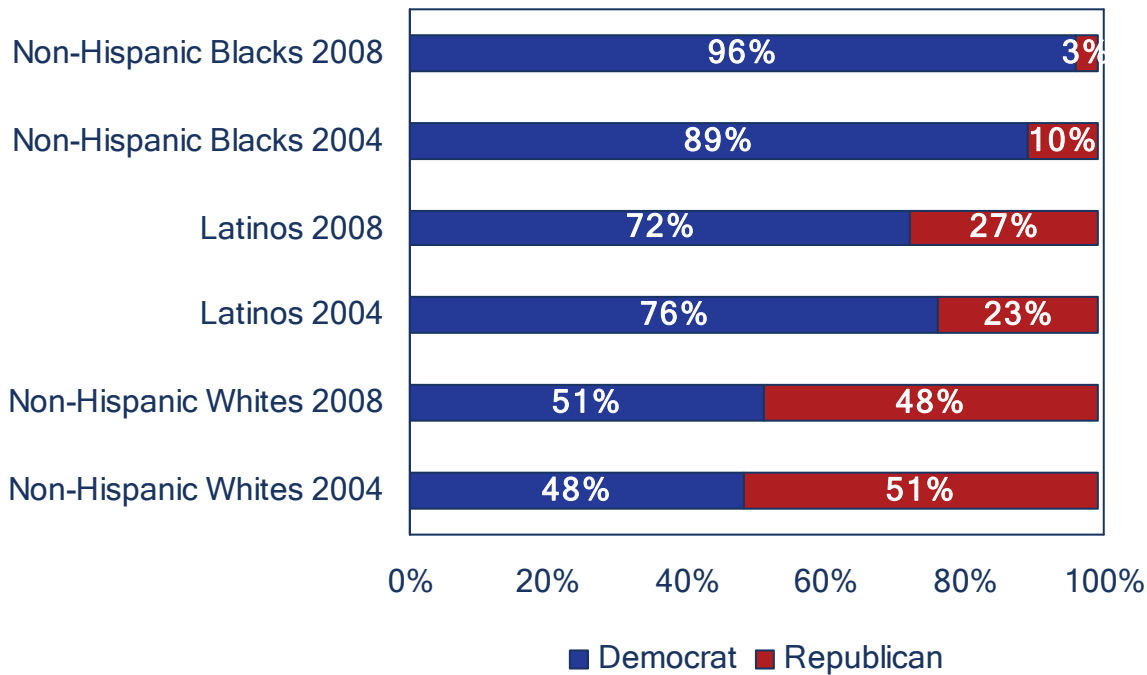


Figure 8
 Presidential Preference in Nevada, by Race and Ethnicity

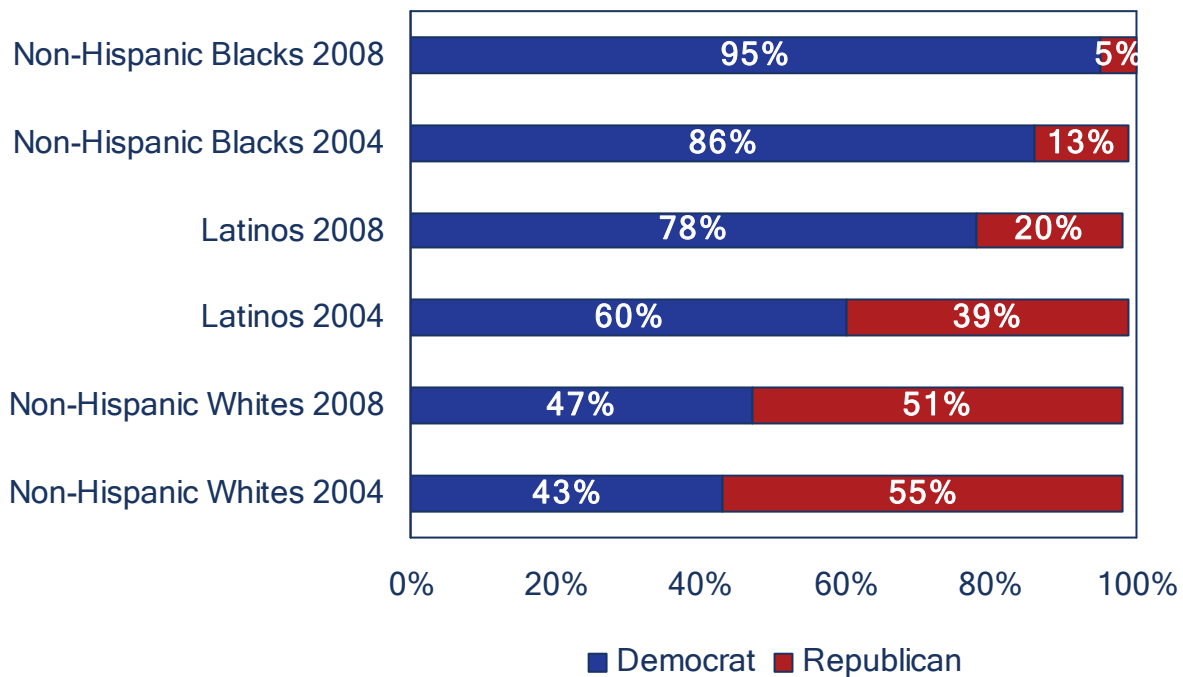


Figure 9
 Presidential Preference in New Jersey, by Race and Ethnicity

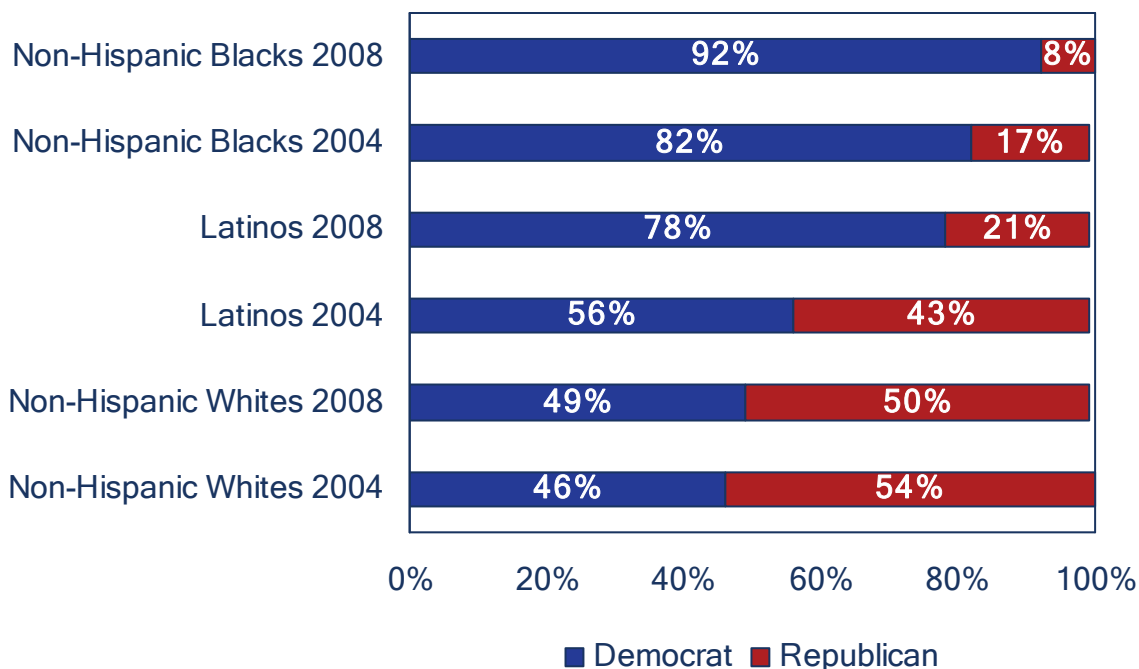


Figure 10
 Presidential Preference in New Mexico, by Race and Ethnicity

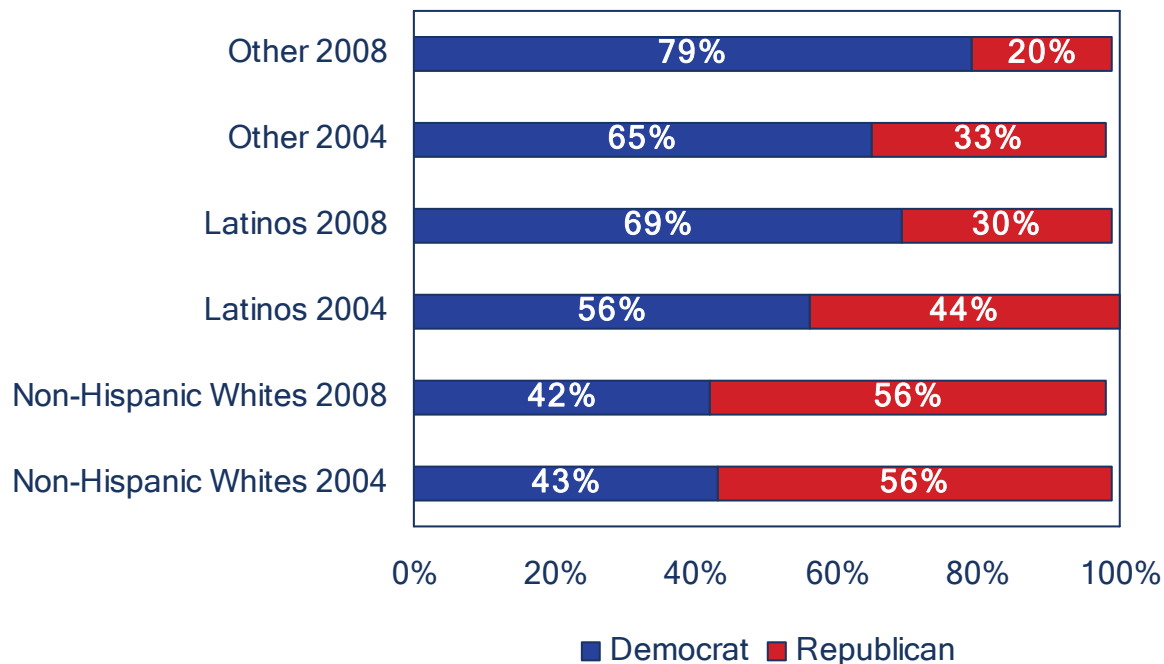


Figure 11
 Presidential Preference in Texas, by Race and Ethnicity

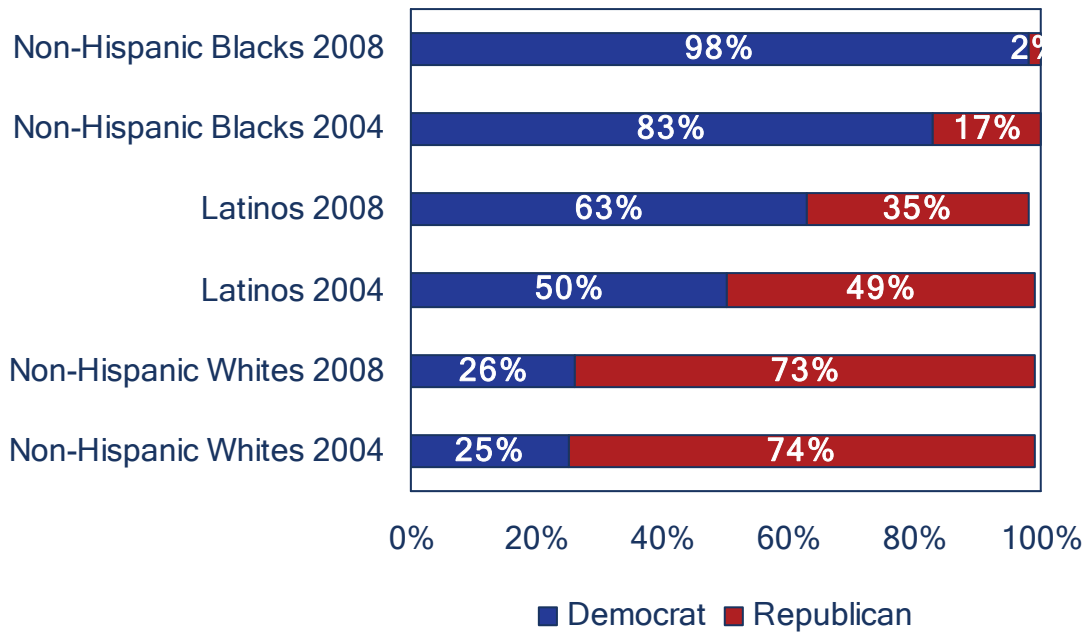
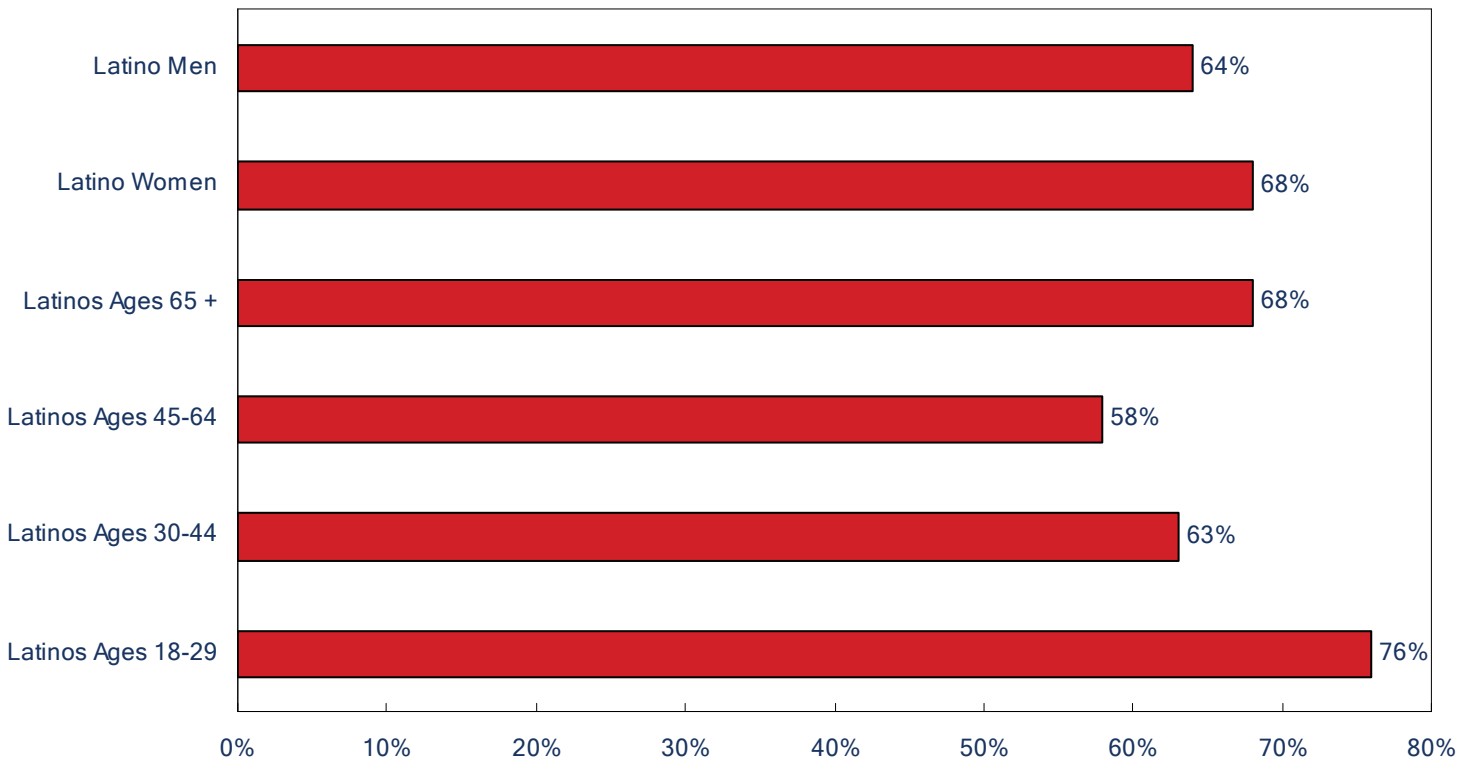


Figure 12
 Latino Vote for Barack Obama in 2008 Presidential Election by Sex and Age Category
 (in percentages)



These results hold a great deal of promise for Democratic candidates in the future as the absolute number and overall percentage of Latinos within the total U.S. electorate will only increase, since Latinos are the fastest growing racial/ethnic group in the U.S. More Latinos will be born as citizens and more foreign-born Latinos will acquire citizenship and be eligible to vote in future elections. The overwhelming support for Obama among younger Latinos offers an important insight into possible future voting patterns and a renewed enthusiasm for Democratic candidates. The rising percentage of Latinos voting for Bush in the presidential elections of 2000 and 2004 may have been only a temporary shift to the Republican Party. Whether Obama's candidacy and his charismatic ability to attract support among Latinos in presidential elections is a harbinger of future Latino voting patterns will be known only in 2012.