



IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER

...providing factual information about immigration and immigrants in America

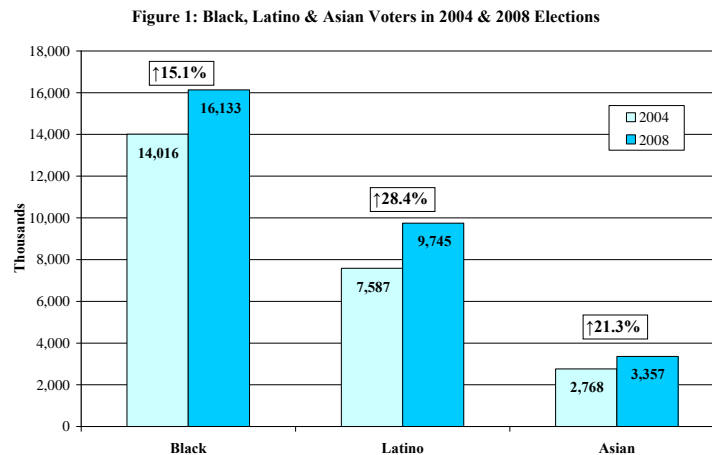
August 13, 2009

LATINO AND ASIAN CLOUT IN THE VOTING BOOTH: Census Data Underscores Growing Power of Minority Voters

Voting data from the 2008 election, released in late July by the [U.S. Census Bureau](#),¹ illustrates the growing electoral power of minority voters. A comparison of Current Population Survey data on voters in the 2004² and 2008³ elections reveals the extent to which the ranks of Latino, Asian, and black voters have increased in only four years.⁴ This data should serve as a demographic wake-up call to politicians that they cannot ignore the concerns of minority voters without paying a price at the polls. In the case of Latinos and Asians—the majority of whom are immigrants or children of immigrants—one of these concerns is immigration reform. Political candidates should pay particular attention to the rapid rise of Latino and Asian voters in electorally pivotal states such as Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Nevada, New Mexico, and North Carolina.

The numbers of Latino, Asian, and black voters increased dramatically between 2004 and 2008 {Figure 1}.

- The number of Latino voters increased by 28.4%, or 2.2 million—from 7.6 million in 2004 to 9.8 million in 2008.
- The number of Asian voters increased by 21.3%, or 589,000—from 2.8 million in 2004 to 3.4 million in 2008.
- The number of black voters increased by 15.1%, or 2.1 million—from 14 million in 2004 to 16.1 million in 2008.
- In contrast, the number of non-Latino white voters increased by 0.5%, or 475,000—from 99.6 million in 2004 to 100 million in 2008.



Source: 2004 & 2008 Current Population Surveys.

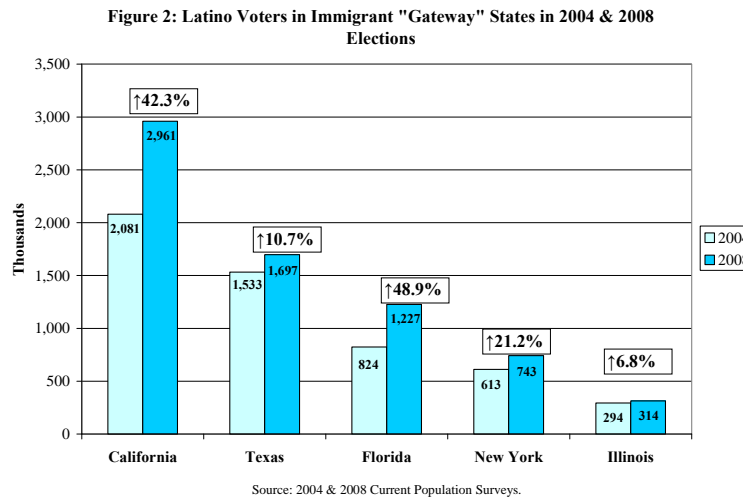
THE IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER

1331 G STREET, NW • WASHINGTON, DC 20005 • TEL: (202) 507-7500 • FAX: (202) 742-5619

www.immigrationpolicy.org

The number of Latino voters increased significantly in the traditional immigrant “gateway” states of California, Texas, Florida, New York, and Illinois between 2004 and 2008 {Figure 2}.

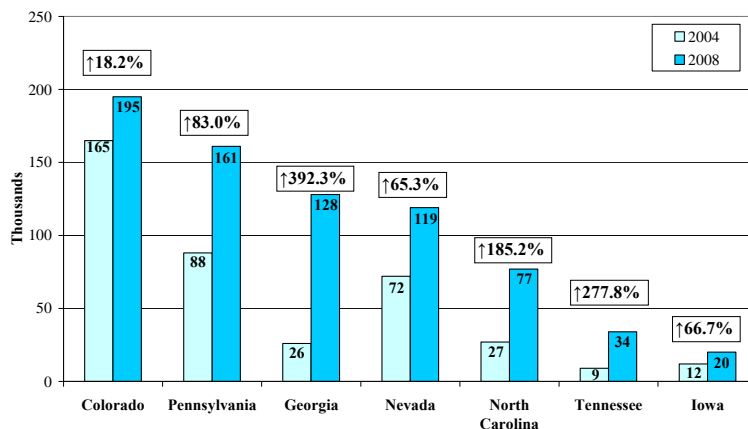
- Among the five traditional immigrant “gateway” states (which are home to more than two-thirds of all Latinos in the United States⁵), the largest increase in Latino voters in percentage terms occurred in Florida, where the number of Latino voters grew by 48.9%, or 403,000—from 824,000 in 2004 to 1.2 million in 2008.
- Among the “gateway” states, the largest increase in Latino voters in terms of raw numbers occurred in California, where the ranks of Latino voters increased by 880,000, or 42.3%—from 2.1 million in 2004 to 3 million in 2008.



The number of Latino voters increased significantly in other electorally key states such as Colorado, Pennsylvania, Georgia, Nevada, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Iowa between 2004 and 2008 {Figure 3}.

- The largest increases in Latino voters anywhere in the country in percentage terms occurred not in the immigrant “gateway” states, but in three southern states. The number of Latino voters increased by:
 - 392.3% in Georgia (from 26,000 to 128,000).
 - 277.8% in Tennessee (from 9,000 to 34,000).
 - 185.2% in North Carolina (from 27,000 to 77,000).
- The largest increases in Latino voters beyond the gateway states in terms of raw numbers occurred in some of the more electorally important swing states. The number of Latino voters increased by:
 - 73,000 (or 83%) in Pennsylvania.
 - 47,000 (or 65.3%) in Nevada.
 - 30,000 (or 18.2%) in Colorado.
 - 8,000 (or 66.7%) in Iowa.

Figure 3: Latino Voters in Other Key States in 2004 & 2008 Elections

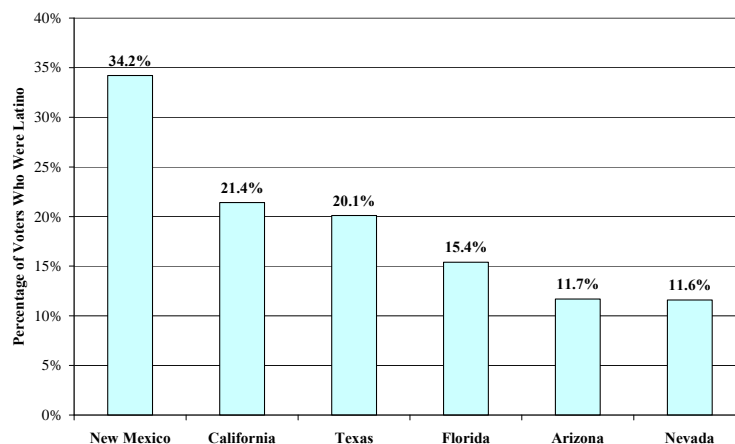


Source: 2004 & 2008 Current Population Surveys.

Latinos were a major share of the total electorate in New Mexico, California, Texas, Florida, Arizona, and Nevada in 2008 {Figure 4}.

- More than one-in-three voters in New Mexico are Latino.
- One-in-five voters in California and Texas are Latino.
- Latinos accounted for one-in-seven voters in Florida, and one-in-nine in Arizona and Nevada.

Figure 4: States with Highest Latino Shares of Voters in the 2008 Election

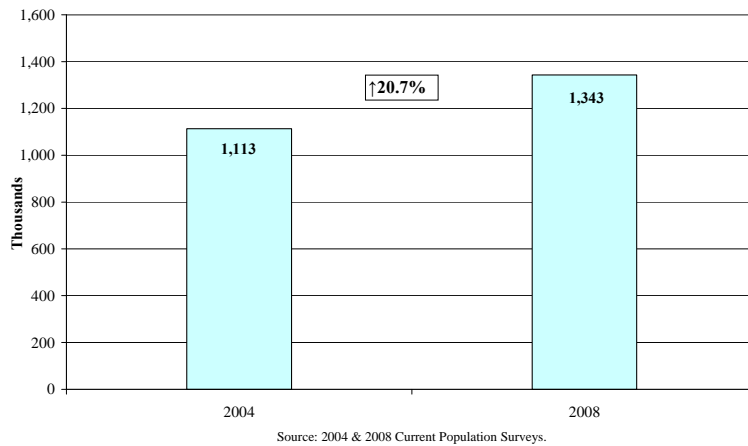


Source: 2008 Current Population Survey.

The number of Asian voters increased significantly in several electorally key states such as California, Virginia, Georgia, Ohio, Arizona, and Colorado between 2004 and 2008.

- In California, which is home to more than one-third of all Asians in the United States,⁶ the number of Asian voters increased by 20.7%, or 230,000—from 1.1 million in 2004 to 1.3 million in 2008 {Figure 5}.

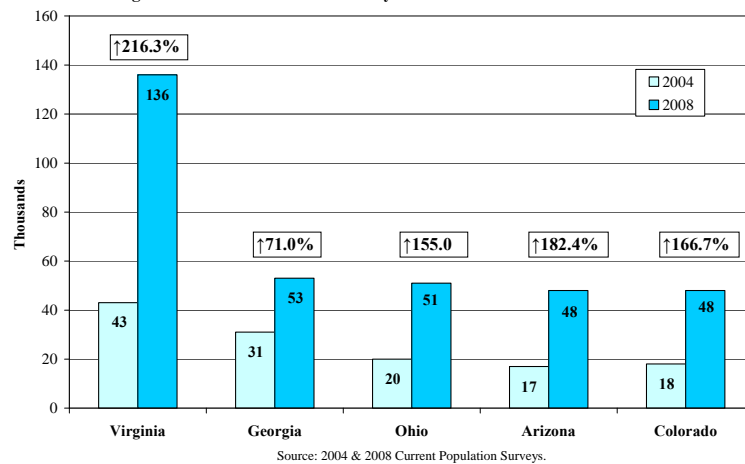
Figure 5: Asian Voters in California in 2004 & 2008 Elections



➤ The number of Asian voters increased by {Figure 6}:

- 216.3% in Virginia (from 43,000 to 136,000).
- 182.4% in Arizona (from 17,000 to 48,000).
- 166.7% in Colorado (from 18,000 to 48,000).
- 155.0% in Ohio (from 20,000 to 51,000).

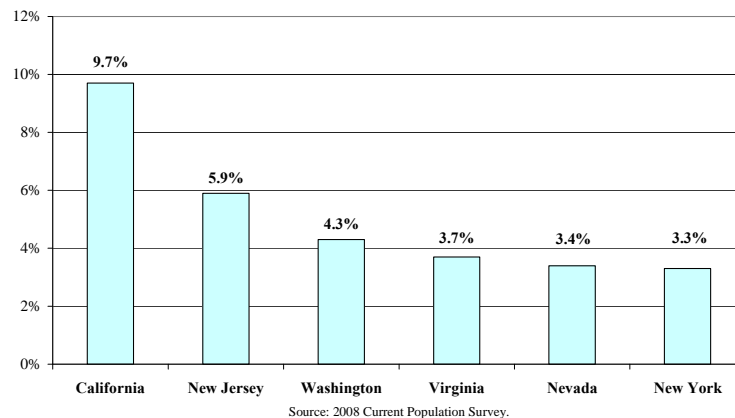
Figure 6: Asian Voters in Other Key States in 2004 & 2008 Elections.



Asians were a significant share of the total electorate in Hawaii, California, and New Jersey in 2008.

- 43.5% of all voters in Hawaii were Asian in 2008.
- Asians accounted for one-in-ten voters in California, and nearly 6% of voters in New Jersey {Figure 7}.

Figure 7: States with the Highest Asian Shares of Voters in the 2008 Elections
(Excluding Hawaii)



Roughly one out of every ten voters was Latino or Asian in the 2008 election. In other words, one-in-ten voters likely has a personal connection of some sort to the immigration debate that has begun to percolate in Congress. When these voters go to the polls again for the 2010 midterm elections, they will no doubt be aware of which candidates have tried to make good on President Obama’s promise of comprehensive immigration reform—and which candidates have not. It is worth noting that in six of the [nine states](#) that went from “red” to “blue” in the 2008 election (Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Nevada, New Mexico, and North Carolina),⁷ the number of Latino and Asian voters significantly exceeded Barack Obama’s [margin of victory](#)⁸ over John McCain.

For more information contact:
Walter Ewing
wewing@aifl.org
202-507-7507

Endnotes

¹ U.S. Census Bureau News, “[Voter Turnout Increases by 5 Million in 2008 Presidential Election, U.S. Census Bureau Reports: Data Show Significant Increases Among Hispanic, Black and Young Voters](#),” July 20, 2009.

² U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2004, “[Table 4a. Reported Voting and Registration of the Total Voting-Age Population, by Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin, for States: November 2004](#).”

³ U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2008, “[Table 4b. Reported Voting and Registration of the Voting-Age Population, by Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin, for States: November 2008](#).”

⁴ “Hispanic” (or “Latino,” in this report) is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as an ethnic category, whereas “white,” “black,” and “Asian” are defined as racial categories. Individuals who identify themselves as Hispanic may also identify themselves as white, black, or Asian. The Census Bureau data released in July provides separate figures for all “whites” and for “non-Hispanic whites” in particular, but does not do the same for blacks and Asians. As a result, there is some overlap between the figures for Hispanics (Latinos) and for blacks and Asians. However, this overlap is relatively small.

⁵ [2007 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates](#).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ *New York Times* website, [Election Results 2008](#), December 9, 2008.

⁸ U.S. Electoral College, [2008 Presidential Election: Popular Vote Totals](#).