



CIRCLE

The Center for Information & Research on
Civic Learning & Engagement

Electoral Engagement Among Latino Youth

By Mark Hugo Lopez, Research Director¹
March 2003

There are many ways to measure electoral engagement. In this fact sheet, information on three main measures, voter turnout, voter registration, and political engagement is presented with specific emphasis on Latino Youth between ages 18 and 30.

Population Estimates

In 2000, there were an estimated 4.2 million young Latino citizens² between the ages of 18 and 30, and another 10.4 million Latino citizens between the ages of 0 and 17. Approximately 51.7 percent of young Latino citizens were female. This compares to an estimated 30.5 million young non-Hispanic white citizens ages 18-30 and 6.4 million young African American citizens 18-30 year olds.³

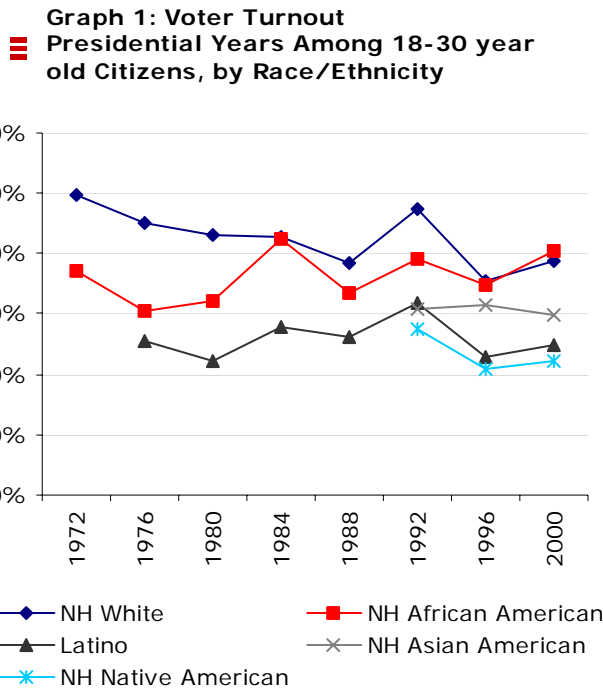
**Table 1 – Latino Citizen Youth Population Estimates,
In thousands**

	<i>Ages 18-30</i>	<i>Ages 18-19</i>	<i>Ages 20-21</i>	<i>Ages 22-24</i>	<i>Ages 25-30</i>	<i>Ages 0-17</i>
1974	1,780	361	326	404	690	***
1976	2,005	397	339	453	816	***
1978	1,862	309	346	431	776	***
1980	2,216	383	360	532	942	***
1982	2,279	427	364	554	934	***
1984	2,506	439	367	582	1,118	***
1986	2,983	454	482	644	1,403	***
1988	2,941	471	439	668	1,363	***
1990	2,822	428	443	600	1,350	***
1992	2,808	417	457	621	1,313	***
1994	3,525	655	551	762	1,557	8,641
1996	3,785	654	663	857	1,611	9,350
1998	4,113	840	656	952	1,665	9,912
2000	4,229	839	723	954	1,713	10,358

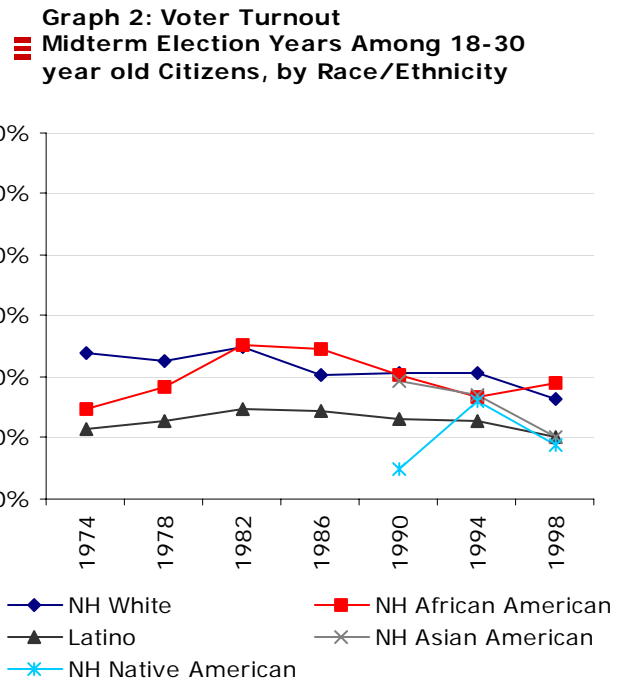
Source: Current Population Survey, November Supplements, 1974-2000.

Voter Turnout

As reported in our fact sheet “Youth Voter Turnout has Declined by Any Measure,” voter turnout, using the CIRCLE method,⁴ for young people ages 18-30 has declined steadily since 1972 with spikes in voter turnout among all young people in 1992, and a large spike in 1984 for African American youth. In all years however, voter turnout among young Latinos trails significantly behind young African Americans and young non-Hispanic whites. Graphs 1 and 2 show the trend in youth voter turnout among citizens ages 18-30.



Source: Current Population Survey, November Supplements, 1972-2000.



Source: Current Population Survey, November Supplements, 1972-2000.

All Latinos are not the same, and there are likely to be differences in voter turnout (or any other measure of civic engagement) across Latino ethnic groups. For voter turnout in 2000, young Latinos of Cuban origin are significantly more likely to turnout than their young Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Central American counterparts.

Table 2 – Voter Turnout Among Citizens by Ethnicity, 2000

	18-30	31 and older
Mexican	32.7%	53.6%
Puerto Rican	31.7%	58.0%
Cuban	50.1%	72.6%
Central American	39.2%	64.6%
Non-Hispanic African American	50.4%	71.5%
Non-Hispanic White	48.7%	73.8%

Note: All results are for citizens only. All results are based on Author’s tabulation from the Current Population Survey, November Supplement 2000.

Voter Turnout in Select States and Metropolitan Areas in 2000

Voter turnout in 2000 among young Latinos varied between a low of 28.6 percent in Arizona to a high of 47.4 percent in Illinois. However, across all states, young Latinos were less likely to vote than their non-Hispanic white and African American counterparts. Furthermore, Latino adults in 2000 were less likely to vote than their non-Hispanic white and African American counterparts.

Table 3 – Voter Turnout Among Citizens in Select States, 2000⁵

	<i>Latino, 18-30</i>	<i>Non- Hispanic African American, 18-30</i>	<i>Non- Hispanic White, 18-30</i>	<i>All Young People 18-30</i>	<i>Latinos 31 and older</i>	<i>All Adults 31 and older</i>
Arizona	28.6%	***	38.6%	32.8%	50.6%	65.0%
California	37.6%	57.6%	53.5%	48.7%	61.7%	72.3%
Florida	37.8%	50.7%	48.4%	47.1%	62.4%	70.9%
Illinois	47.4%	71.2%	49.6%	53.1%	64.6%	74.6%
New Mexico	31.1%	***	46.5%	36.5%	55.8%	65.4%
New York	39.7%	50.9%	51.2%	48.8%	61.1%	72.7%
Texas	31.1%	51.9%	44.4%	41.2%	52.0%	67.4%
National	34.9%	50.4%	48.7%	47.2%	57.5%	72.0%

Note: All results are for citizens only. There were too few African American respondents from Arizona and New Mexico to provide reliable estimates of voter turnout. For youth voter turnout state by state, see "Voter Turnout in the States, 1998 and 2000." All results are based on Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey, November Supplement 2000.

In select metropolitan areas, young Latino voter turnout trailed that of non-Hispanic whites and African Americans in 2000.

Table 4 – Voter Turnout Among Citizens in Select Metropolitan Areas, 2000

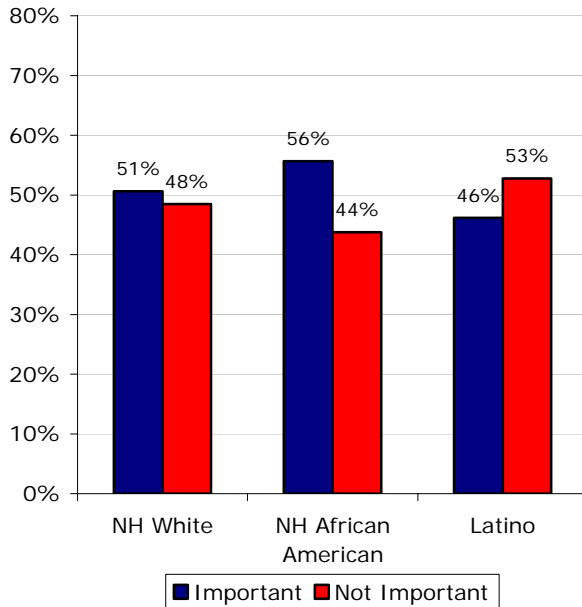
	<i>Latino, 18-30</i>	<i>Non- Hispanic African American, 18-30</i>	<i>Non- Hispanic White, 18-30</i>	<i>All Young People 18-30</i>	<i>Latinos 31 and older</i>	<i>All Adults 31 and older</i>
Chicago	50.5%	76.4%	57.2%	60.1%	64.3%	76.1%
Dallas/Ft Worth	20.1%	47.1%	40.5%	38.5%	53.4%	65.9%
Houston	31.1%	50.0%	51.6%	46.7%	43.6%	69.4%
Los Angeles	40.1%	53.5%	56.0%	51.1%	65.9%	73.6%
Miami	43.0%	66.2%	54.5%	52.0%	64.7%	71.8%
New York	40.6%	50.2%	53.9%	50.4%	64.5%	74.4%
National	34.9%	50.4%	48.7%	47.2%	57.5%	72.0%

Note: All results are for citizens only. All results are based on Author's tabulation from the Current Population Survey, November Supplement 2000.

Views on Voting

In a survey of 1,500 young people among 15-25 year olds, young Latinos are least likely to view voting as an important activity.

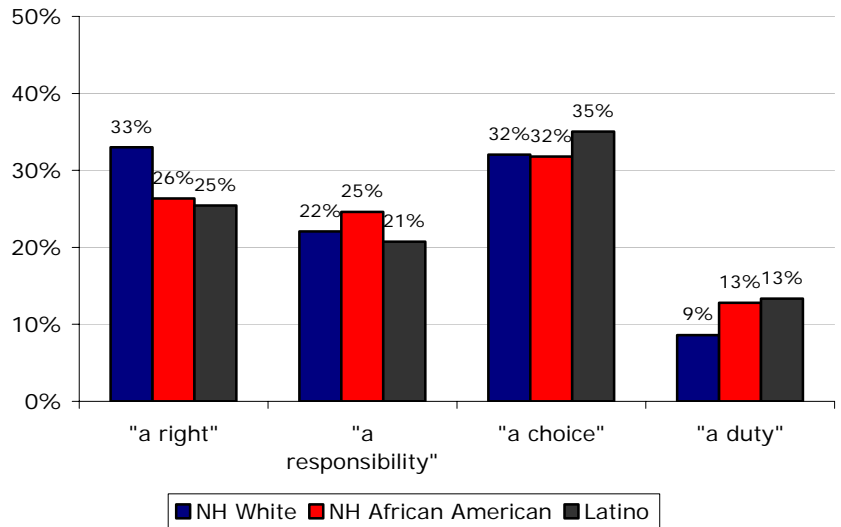
Graph 3: African American Youth Ages 15-25 are Most Likely to View Voting as Important



Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government National Youth Survey, Jan 2002

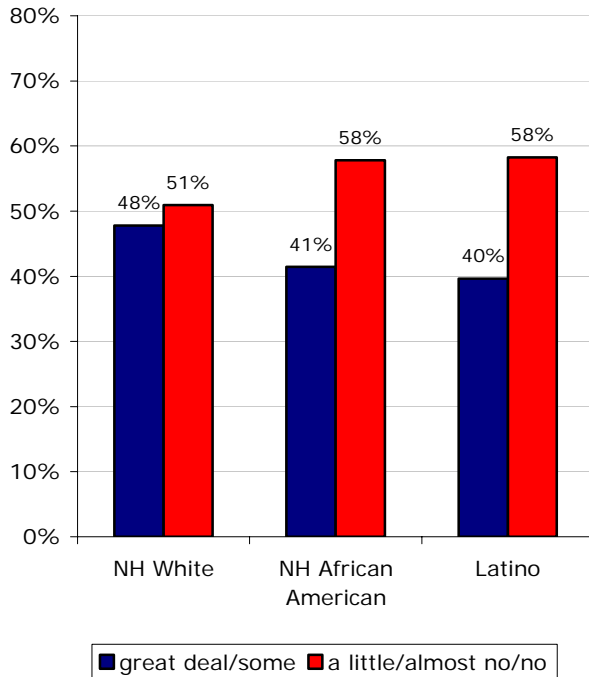
Among young people, approximately 30 percent view voting as "a right," with a similar view of voting evident across young whites, young African Americans, and young Latinos, though young Latinos are less likely than their non-Hispanic African American and non-Hispanic white youth to view voting as "a right" and more likely to view voting as "a choice."

Graph 4: How do you describe voting Among 18-25 year olds, by Race/Ethnicity



Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government National Youth Survey, Jan 2002

Graph 5: A Majority of Youth Ages 15-25 Feel They Can Make Little Difference in Solving the Problems of Their Communities



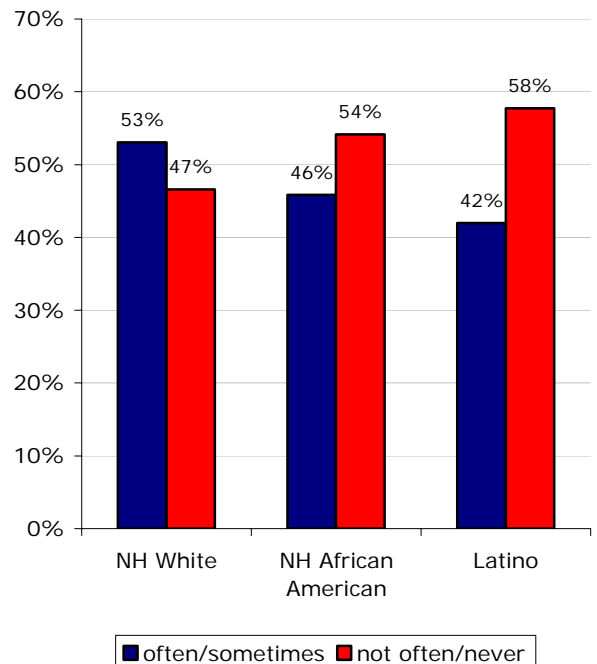
Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government Youth Survey, Jan 2002.

As Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, and Jenkins have shown in their report “The Civic and Political Health of the Nation: A Generational Portrait,” whether or not parents discuss politics with their children can be an important factor in determining the civic engagement of young people later in life.

Among young people, young Latinos are least likely to have discussed politics with their parents.

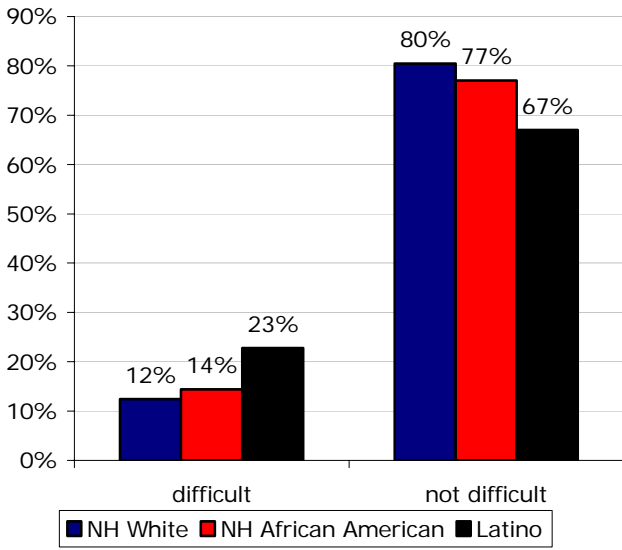
Young people feel they can make little difference in solving the problems of their community, with young African Americans and Young Latinos feeling less efficacious than their young non-Hispanic white counterparts.

Graph 6: Talked About Politics with Parents, Young People Ages 15-25



Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government National Youth Survey, Jan 2002.

Graph 7: How Difficult is it for people like you to actually vote? Among 18-25 year olds, by Race/Ethnicity



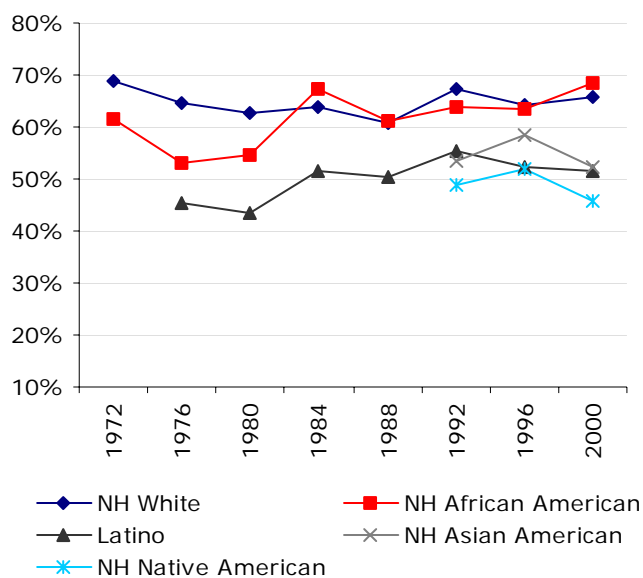
Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government National Youth Survey, Jan 2002

When it comes to casting a vote, most youth say it is not necessarily difficult. However, young Latinos are least likely to say it is not difficult to vote.

Registering to Vote

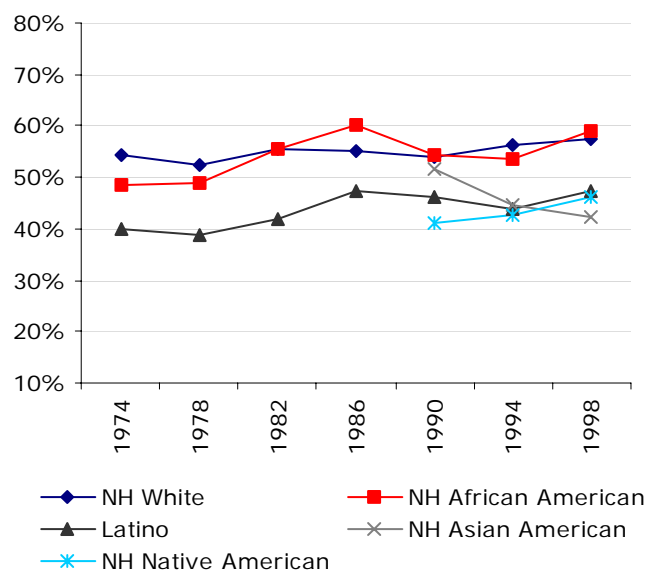
Voter registration rates among young people have remained relatively flat over the past 30 years, though since 1984 voter registration rates among young African Americans are statistically indistinguishable from those of whites. Young Latinos continue to lag behind their young African American and white counterparts in voter registration rates.⁶

Graph 8: Voter Registration Presidential Years Among 18-30 year old Citizens, by Race/Ethnicity



Source: Current Population Survey, November Supplements, 1972-2000.

Graph 9: Voter Registration Midterm Election Years Among 18-30 year old Citizens, by Race/Ethnicity



Source: Current Population Survey, November Supplements, 1972-2000.

Across ethnicities, young Cuban Americans are more likely to be registered to vote than their Latino counterparts in 2000.

Table 5 – Registration Rates Among Citizens by Ethnicity, 2000

	18-30	31 and older
Mexican	50.8%	69.1%
Puerto Rican	47.0%	70.1%
Cuban	70.6%	81.1%
Central American	48.9%	73.2%
Non-Hispanic African American	68.3%	82.2%
Non-Hispanic White	65.7%	83.5%

Note: All results are for citizens only. All results are based on Author's tabulation from the Current Population Survey, November Supplement 2000.

Voter Registration Rates in Select States and Metropolitan Areas in 2000

Voter registration rates among young Latinos varied between a low of 35.9 percent in Arizona to a high of 61.8 percent in Illinois in 2000. However, no matter what state one considers, young Latinos were less likely to be registered to vote than their non-Hispanic white and African American counterparts in 2000.

Table 6 – Voter Registration Among Citizens in Select States, 2000

	<i>Latino, 18-30</i>	<i>Non- Hispanic African American, 18-30</i>	<i>Non- Hispanic White, 18-30</i>	<i>All Young People 18-30</i>	<i>Latinos 31 and older</i>	<i>All Adults 31 and older</i>
Arizona	35.9%	***	49.9%	42.6%	62.5%	72.9%
California	49.9%	69.9%	69.4%	62.6%	71.8%	80.6%
Florida	54.4%	68.7%	62.8%	62.8%	71.4%	81.3%
Illinois	61.8%	85.8%	69.1%	70.7%	75.1%	85.7%
New Mexico	48.8%	***	59.6%	50.2%	67.2%	74.3%
New York	52.3%	65.7%	70.9%	66.8%	72.6%	82.1%
Texas	58.5%	72.7%	71.0%	67.0%	72.5%	82.1%
National	51.6%	68.3%	65.8%	64.2%	70.9%	82.1%

Note: All results are for citizens only. There were too few African American respondents from Arizona and New Mexico to provide reliable estimates of voter registration. All results are based on Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey, November Supplement 2000.

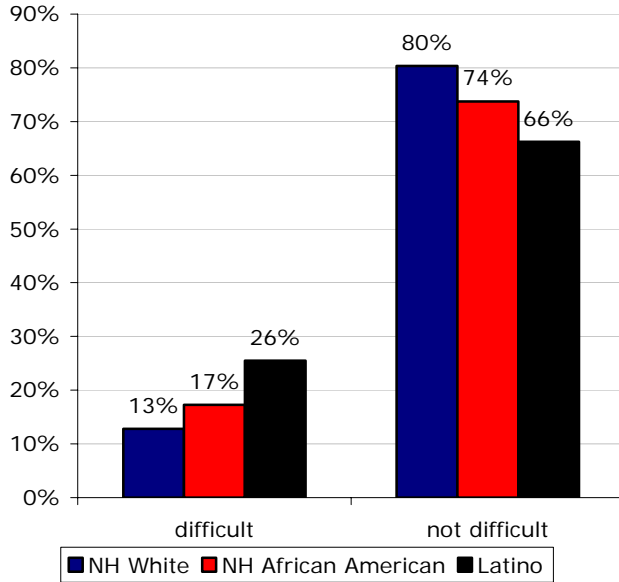
In select metropolitan areas, young Latino voter registration rates trailed those of non-Hispanic whites and African Americans in 2000.

Table 7 – Voter Registration Among Citizens in Select Metropolitan Areas, 2000

	<i>Latino, 18-30</i>	<i>Non- Hispanic African American, 18-30</i>	<i>Non- Hispanic White, 18-30</i>	<i>All Young People 18-30</i>	<i>Latinos 31 and older</i>	<i>All Adults 31 and older</i>
Chicago	65.3%	85.6%	74.8%	74.7%	75.1%	85.0%
Dallas/Ft Worth	58.2%	72.9%	65.1%	64.4%	67.7%	80.1%
Houston	60.3%	67.9%	77.3%	70.9%	64.0%	79.8%
Los Angeles	50.9%	67.1%	72.0%	64.7%	74.9%	81.4%
Miami	56.5%	87.2%	75.0%	70.3%	73.8%	82.6%
New York	52.2%	64.6%	70.7%	66.1%	76.1%	83.5%
National	51.6%	68.3%	65.8%	64.2%	70.9%	82.1%

Note: All results are for citizens only. All results are based on Author's tabulation from the Current Population Survey, November Supplement 2000.

Graph 10: How Difficult is it for People Like You to Register to Vote? Among 18-25 year olds, by Race/Ethnicity

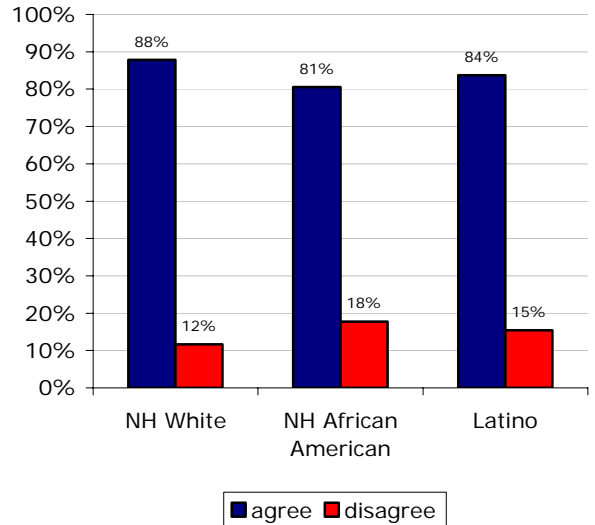


Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government National Youth Survey, Jan 2002

Young Latinos are most likely to find it difficult to register to vote, though a sizeable majority of all youth claim it is not difficult to register to vote.

Strong majorities of young people feel their vote will count, though young African Americans are least likely to feel their vote makes a difference.

Graph 11: My Vote Counts, Youth Ages 18-25

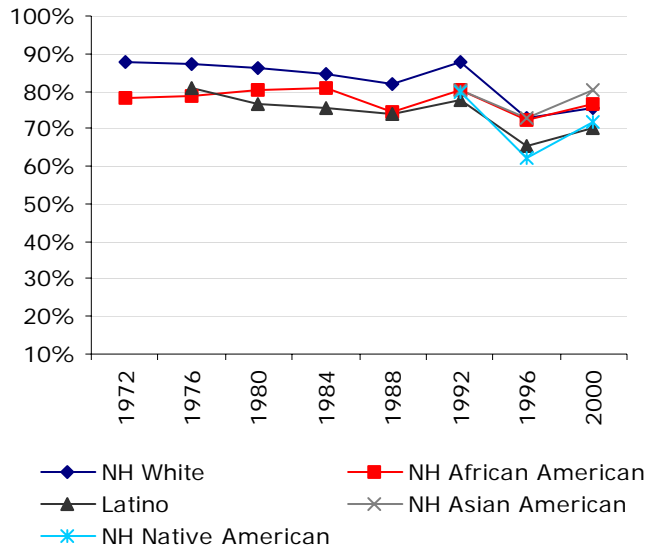


Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government National Youth Survey, Jan 2002.

Voter Turnout Among the Registered

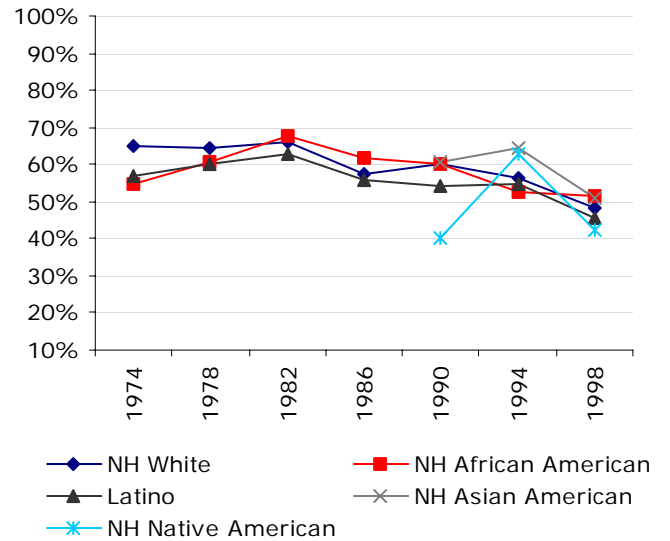
An alternative measure of voter turnout is turnout among those who are already registered to vote. Among registered voters, youth voter turnout has also declined, though at a slower rate than overall voter turnout. Furthermore, there is little distinction in voter turnout among registered young voters across race and ethnicity.

Graph 12: Voter Turnout Among the Registered, Presidential Years Among 18-30 year old Citizens, by Race/Ethnicity



Source: Current Population Survey, November Supplements, 1972-2000.

Graph 13: Voter Turnout Among the Registered, Midterm Election Years Among 18-30 year old Citizens, by Race/Ethnicity



Source: Current Population Survey, November Supplements, 1972-2000.

In 2000, young Latinos of Cuban origin were more likely to be registered to vote than their Latino counterparts.

Table 8 – Voter Turnout Among Registered Citizens by Ethnicity, 2000

	18-30	31 and older
Mexican	66.8%	79.2%
Puerto Rican	71.1%	83.1%
Cuban	69.6%	91.0%
Central American	80.9%	89.3%
Non-Hispanic African American	76.6%	88.0%
Non-Hispanic White	75.8%	89.2%

Note: All results are for citizens only. All results are based on Author's tabulation from the Current Population Survey, November Supplement 2000.

***Voter Turnout Among Registered Citizens in
Select States and Metropolitan Areas in 2000***

In 2000, voter turnout among registered young Latinos varied from a low of 67.2 percent in New Mexico to a high of 80.3 percent in Arizona.

Table 9 – Voter Turnout Among Registered Citizens in Select States, 2000

	<i>Latino, 18-30</i>	<i>Non- Hispanic African American, 18-30</i>	<i>Non- Hispanic White, 18-30</i>	<i>All Young People 18-30</i>	<i>Latinos 31 and older</i>	<i>All Adults 31 and older</i>
Arizona	80.3%	***	77.8%	78.0%	81.6%	89.8%
California	77.7%	86.8%	79.2%	80.2%	86.3%	90.4%
Florida	70.8%	74.7%	78.1%	76.0%	87.9%	87.8%
Illinois	77.5%	84.7%	74.3%	77.3%	86.0%	88.0%
New Mexico	67.2%	***	79.0%	74.7%	84.2%	88.9%
New York	80.0%	83.5%	75.7%	77.0%	85.6%	90.1%
Texas	55.8%	73.2%	63.3%	63.0%	74.0%	84.0%
<i>National</i>	<i>70.0%</i>	<i>76.6%</i>	<i>75.8%</i>	<i>75.5%</i>	<i>82.4%</i>	<i>88.6%</i>

Note: All results are for citizens only. There were too few African American respondents from Arizona and New Mexico to provide reliable estimates of voter turnout. All results are based on Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey, November Supplement 2000.

In select metropolitan areas, voter turnout among registered young Latinos trailed voter turnout rates among registered non-Hispanic whites and African Americans in 2000.

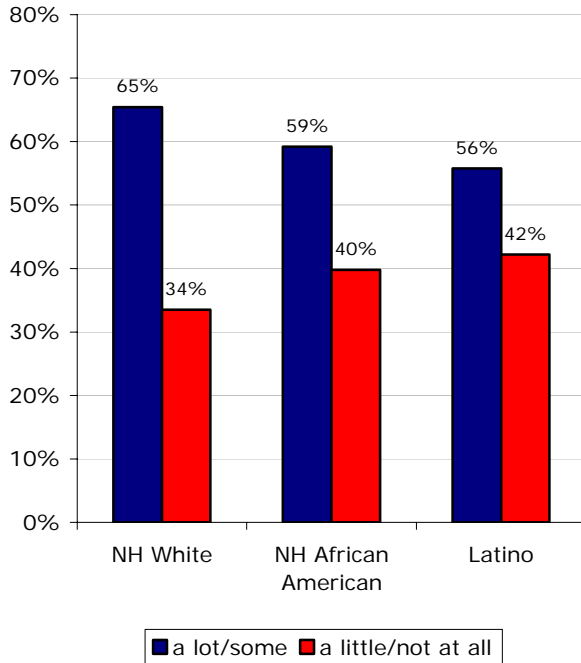
**Table 10 – Voter Turnout Among Registered Citizens
in Select Metropolitan Areas, 2000**

	<i>Latino, 18-30</i>	<i>Non- Hispanic African American, 18-30</i>	<i>Non- Hispanic White, 18-30</i>	<i>All Young People 18-30</i>	<i>Latinos 31 and older</i>	<i>All Adults 31 and older</i>
Chicago	78.0%	90.0%	77.9%	81.7%	85.6%	90.2%
Dallas/Ft Worth	34.6%	67.6%	63.3%	61.1%	73.7%	85.3%
Houston	57.8%	75.4%	67.3%	67.2%	70.1%	88.4%
Los Angeles	79.8%	85.4%	80.0%	81.2%	88.9%	91.1%
Miami	74.6%	75.9%	73.7%	73.9%	88.6%	87.4%
New York	81.6%	82.5%	79.0%	79.5%	86.6%	90.6%
<i>National</i>	<i>70.0%</i>	<i>76.6%</i>	<i>75.8%</i>	<i>75.5%</i>	<i>82.4%</i>	<i>88.6%</i>

Note: All results are for citizens only. All results are based on Author's tabulation from the Current Population Survey, November Supplement 2000.

Trust in Government

Graph 14: Trust in Government Youth Ages 15-25

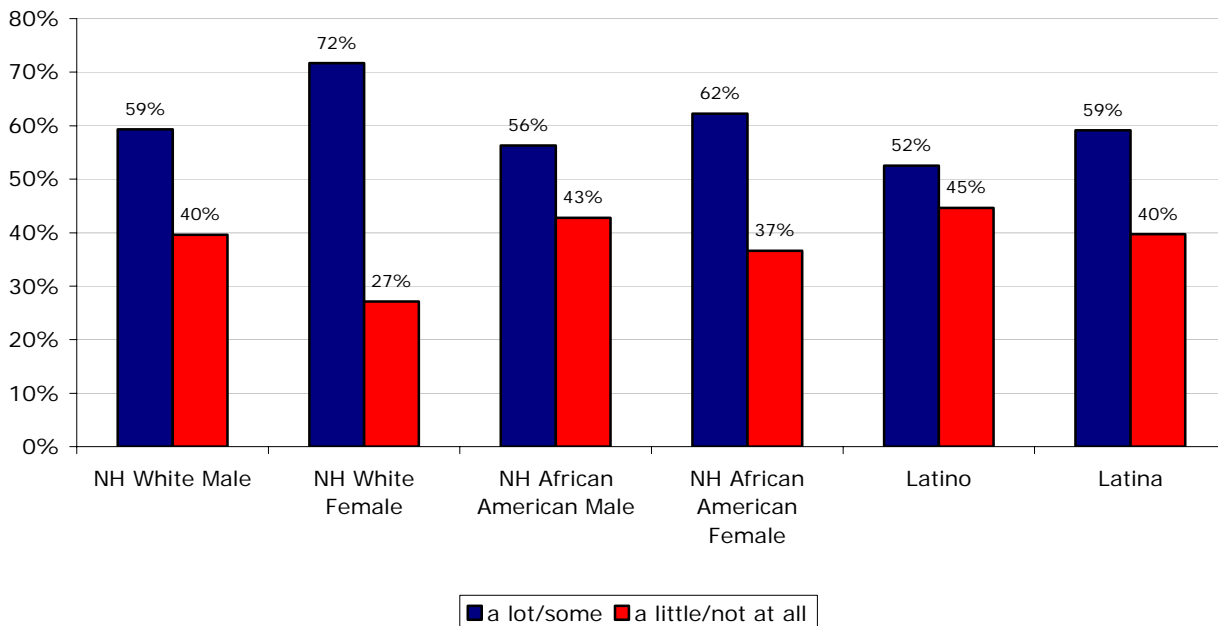


African American and Latino youth express less trust in government than their white counterparts.

Trust in government is highest among young women

Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government National Youth Survey, Jan 2002.

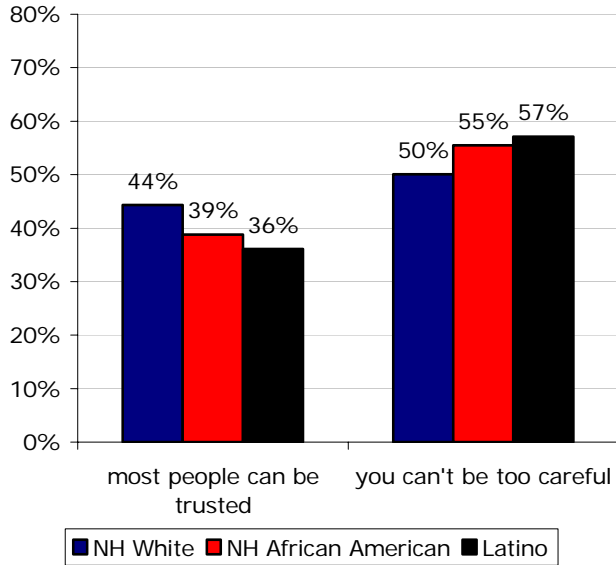
Graph 15: Trust in Government, by Gender, Youth Ages 15-25



Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government National Youth Survey, Jan 2002.

Trust in Others

Graph 16: Can you trust others, Among 18-25 year olds, by Race/Ethnicity

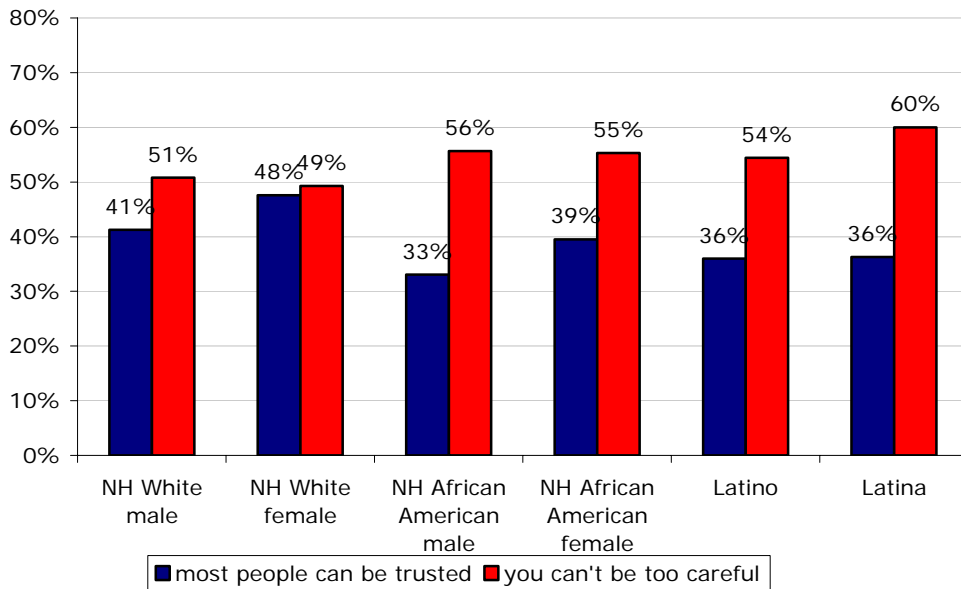


Young Latinos are more likely to say that “you can’t be too careful” when it comes to trusting others.

Across gender, young Latinas are more likely than either Latinos or non-Hispanic whites or African Americans to say that when it comes to trusting other people, “you can’t be too careful.”

Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government National Youth Survey, Jan 2002

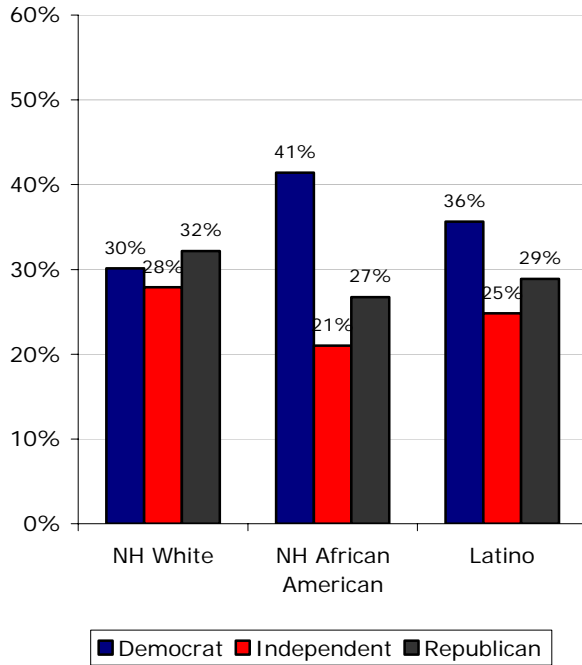
Graph 17: Can You Trust Others, Among 18-25 Year Olds, by Race/Ethnicity & Gender



Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government National Youth Survey, Jan 2002

Political Party Identification

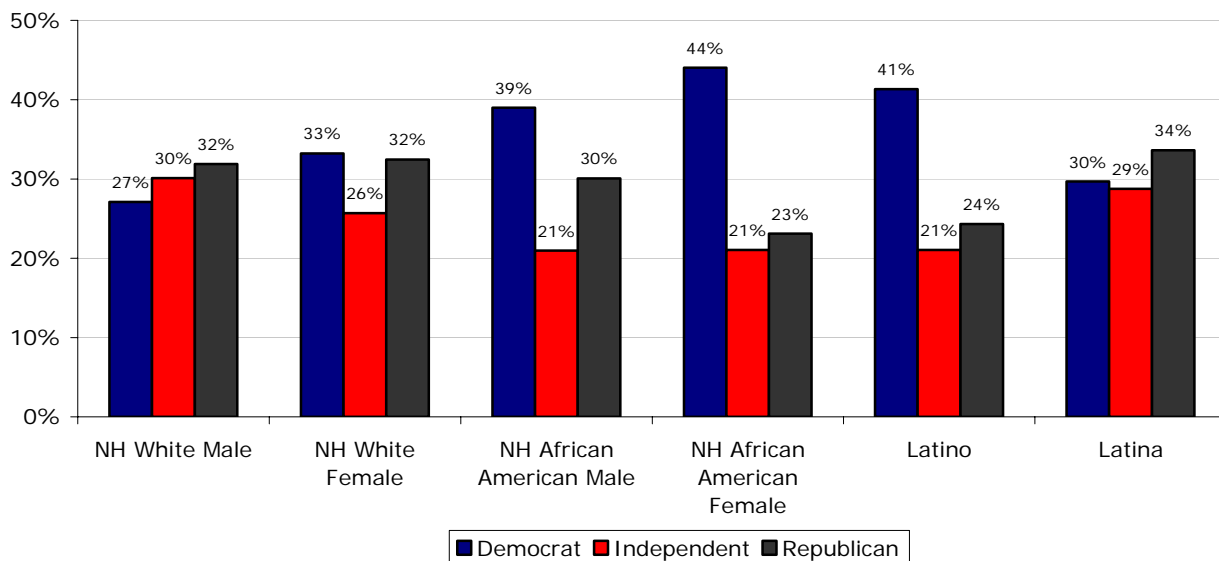
Graph 18: Political Party Identification, Youth Ages 18-25



Young African Americans are most likely to identify themselves as Democrats. This is particularly true for young female African Americans. Among Latinos, young Hispanic males are more likely to identify as Democrats than their female counterparts, who are evenly split across political parties.

Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government National Youth Survey, Jan 2002.

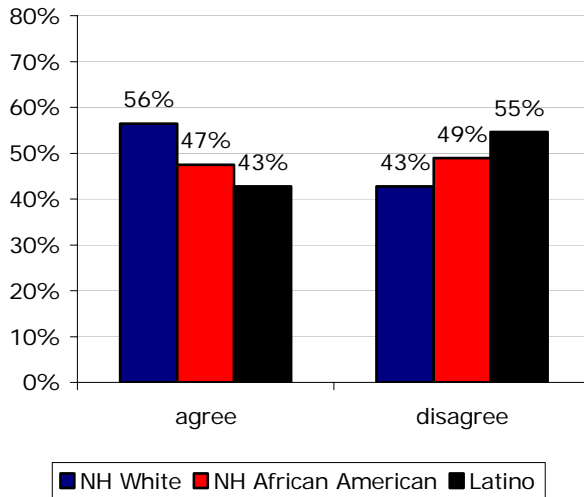
Graph 19: Political Party Identification, By Gender, Youth Ages 18-25



Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government National Youth Survey, Jan 2002.

Views of Government, Politics and Elections

Graph 20: Government Addresses the Needs of Young People, Among 18-25 Year Olds, by Race/Ethnicity

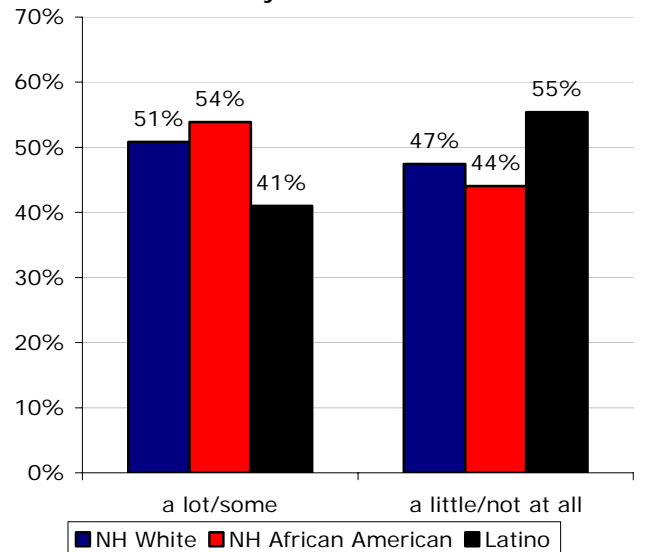


Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government National Youth Survey, Jan 2002

Young Latinos are more likely to disagree with the statement “Government Addresses the Needs of Young People” than their white or African American counterparts.

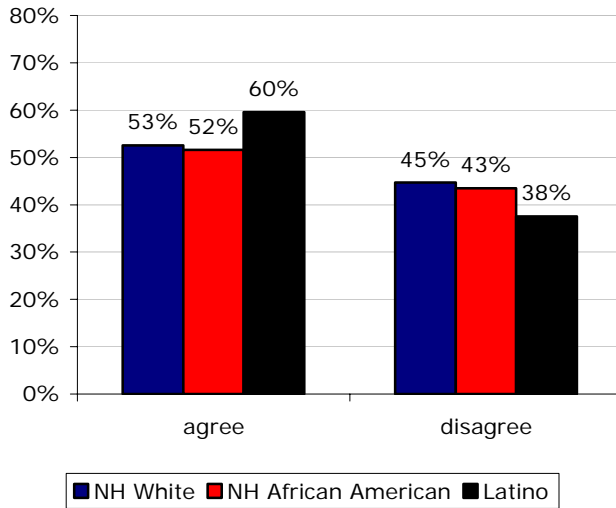
Young Latinos are also more likely to say that political leaders pay “little” to no attention to the needs of young people.

Graph 21: How Much do Political Leaders Pay Attention to the Needs of Young People, Among 18-25 Year Olds, by Race/Ethnicity



Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government National Youth Survey, Jan 2002

Graph 22: Politics and Elections Address the Needs of Young People, Among 18-25 Year Olds, by Race/Ethnicity

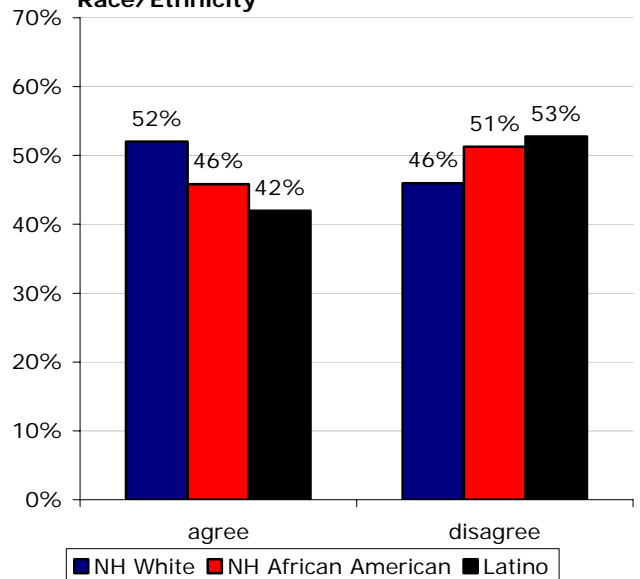


Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government National Youth Survey, Jan 2002

In contrast however, young Latinos are more likely to say that "Politics and Elections address the needs of young people" than their young white or African American counterparts.

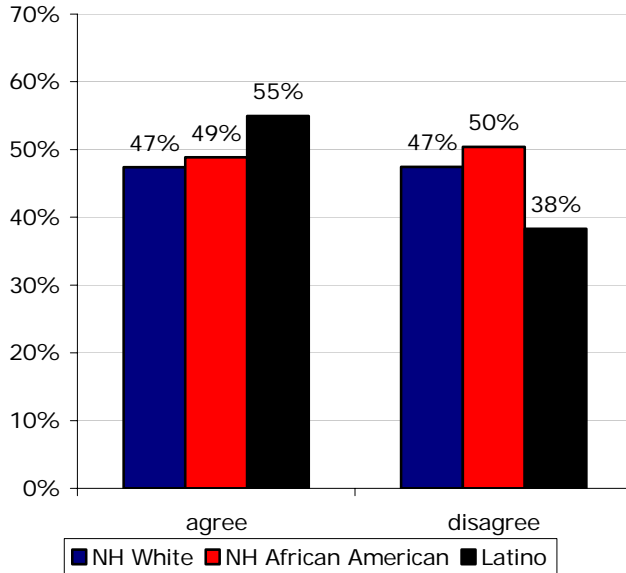
With regards to politics and candidates, young Latinos have a generally more negative opinion of political candidates than their white or African American counterparts. Specifically, young Latinos are more likely to say that they disagree with the statement "Candidates take young people seriously" than their young non-Hispanic counterparts.

Graph 23: "Candidates Take Young People Seriously," Among 18-25 Year Olds, by Race/Ethnicity



Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government National Youth Survey, Jan 2002

Graph 24: "Candidates Never Come to My Community," Among 18-25 Year Olds, by Race/Ethnicity

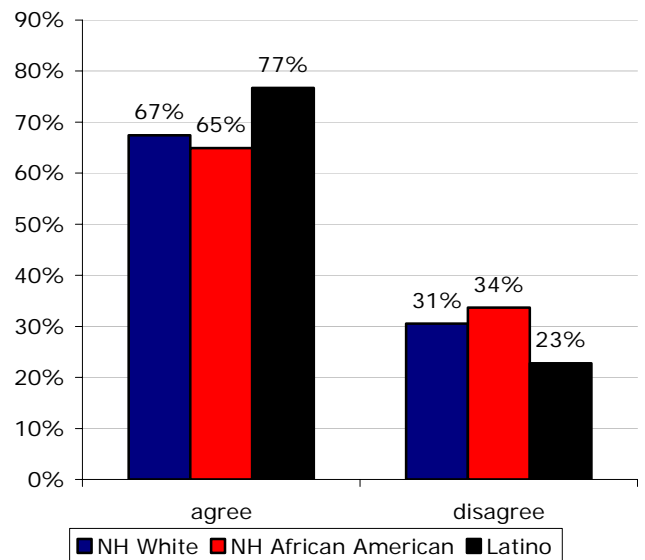


Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government National Youth Survey, Jan 2002

Furthermore, young Latinos are more likely to say that "Candidates never come to my community" than their non-Hispanic counterparts.

Finally, young Latinos are most likely to agree with the statement that "Candidates would rather talk to wealthier/older voters" than young non-Hispanic whites and African Americans.

Graph 25: "Candidates Would Rather Talk to Wealthier/Older Voters," Among 18-25 Year Olds, by Race/Ethnicity



Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government National Youth Survey, Jan 2002

Notes

¹ I thank Michael Olander for excellent research assistance. I also thank Emily Kirby for helpful comments on previous drafts of this fact sheet. All errors in fact or interpretation are my own.

² There are approximately 3.3 million young Latinos between the ages of 18 and 30 who are not citizens of the U.S. When taken together with the number of Latino citizens, the total estimated population in 2000 of young Latinos between the ages 18 and 30 is 7.5 million.

³ These figures are estimates of the number of non-institutionalized young people in the U.S. Estimates are based on the 2000 November supplement of the Current Population Survey.

⁴ Data for Voter Turnout rates and Registration rates are taken from the 1972 to 2000 November Supplements of the Current Population Survey. Each survey is completed within two weeks of the November elections, and interviews over 50,000 non-institutionalized individuals. Calculation of the voter turnout rate by the CIRCLE method excludes survey participants who did not answer the voting question or the registration question. Inclusion of "no answers" would result in a lower turnout rate than that reported here. For this fact sheet, voter turnout and voter registration rates are calculated for U.S. citizens only. For example, Voter Turnout among citizens is given as:

$$Voter_Turnout_{citizens_no_miss} = \frac{(\#_of_self_reported_voters)}{(\#_of_U.S.Citizens_over_age_18_who_answered_the_voting_question)}.$$

⁵ States were selected based on the sample size of Latino citizens. If the sample size was below 50, results were not reported.

⁶ Similar to the measure for voter turnout, the measure of voter registration has been adjusted to reflect registration rates among U.S. citizens only, and non-responses to the question of voter registration.