LATINO VOTERS & THE POLLS

HOW ACCURATE ARE ELECTION SURVEYS AND EXIT POLLS?

Gabriel R. Sanchez, Ph.D.
Principal, Latino Decisions
Polling Latinos 101

- It is well known that the Latino population is growing, and becoming a larger share of the overall U.S. population

- Polling data on Latinos varies widely and wildly

- Conclusion is that many polls make two key mistakes:
  - Have too few Latinos in their sample – large margin of error
  - Have the wrong Latinos in their sample – not representative

- In 1970 this might have been no big deal, but Latino population is truly national today
PRE-ELECTION SURVEYS
Lessons from 2010

- Nevada
  - 16 pre-election surveys had Angle +3 on average
  - Angle lost by -5 when the actual ballots were counted

- Colorado
  - Same story, polls have Bennet down, yet he won

- Other states that weren't “upsets”
  - In many states with large Latino populations, polls underestimated the Democratic advantage, as per post-election analysis by Nate Silver at 538
Spotlight on Nevada 2010

- Nevada
  - 16 pre-election surveys had Angle +3 on average
  - These statewide pre-election polls generally had between 50 – 100 Latinos in their sample (MoE 10% – 14%)
  - The Latino vote estimate for Harry Reid was between 55% to 70% in statewide polls in 2010
  - Latino Decisions pre and election eve polls estimate Reid at 90% of the Latino vote
    - corroborated by regression analysis of official precinct level vote choice
  - Had the pre-elections accurately estimated a 90-10 split they would have had Reid leading Angle by 3-5 points
Same problems emerge in 2012

- Late October Monmouth Poll +3.5 Romney
- Latino vote only +6 Obama at 48-42

### 1. Actual Data as Reported by Monmouth University Poll

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Obama</th>
<th>Romney</th>
<th>Share</th>
<th>O x share</th>
<th>R x share</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>72</td>
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<td>41.0</td>
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<td>82</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>48.5</td>
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Same problems emerge in 2012

- Substituting the average* of Latino-specific October 2012 pre-election polls of Obama +48

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### 2. Substituting Latino data with 8-poll average of Latinos

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<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>46.1</td>
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*Average of Latino Decisions, Pew Hispanic, NBC-Telemundo & Univision polls October 2012 polls
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Polling Latinos 101: Pre-election polls

- Many pre-election surveys make 3 specific mistakes:

  1) Sample sizes are way too small

  2) Samples not drawn to be representative of all Latinos

  3) Limited, or zero interviews in Spanish
Spanish must be available at first-contact!

- Without, Spanish-speakers under-represented;
- Low numbers of Spanish interviews yields a biased sample:
  - Too assimilated, too native-born, higher income and higher education;
- If the Spanish is under 30% nationally, the firm is very likely using “call-backs” and the sample is biased
Poor sample construction

- Beyond the lack of Spanish interviews, most polls do not attempt to draw a representative or accurate Latino sample.
- You must start with a proper Latino sample frame design.
  - Is it representative by age, nativity, education, language, acculturation?
  - When the sample is done, do pollsters check the demographics of their Latino completes and compare them to the Census American Community Survey? NO!
  - If a survey ONLY interviewed recent immigrants we would dismiss it as laughable. At the same time if they interviewed ZERO immigrants, we would dismiss it.
  - The point is, we should be demanding to know the internal demographics and reliability of the Latino sample that pollsters are collecting.
Polling Latinos 101: Exit Polls

- 4 questions to ask of the exit polls

1) Which precincts were selected, and how?

2) What share of Latino interviews are in Spanish?

3) What are the Latino demographics?

4) What percent are election day voters vs. early voters?
Exit polls systematically misrepresent minority vote

- Education level among minority voters in 2010 exit polls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Census</th>
<th>Exit Poll</th>
<th>Diff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>+20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>+29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>+12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>+12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>+12.1</td>
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Exit polls are not representative of Latino vote

- Exit poll sample design is not intended to get a statewide representative sample of subgroups of voters.
- In 2014 the Edison exit polls selected ZERO precincts in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas.
- Exit polls said 44% of Latinos voted for Abbott.
Important Texas Polling Issues

- **Exits: 44% for Abbott**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Latino</th>
<th>Abbott</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starr</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maverick</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zavala</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Hogg</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duval</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bad samples = Wrong data

- Statistical analysis by David Damore earlier this year shows clear evidence that Latino respondents who appear in so-called “mainstream” polls are statistically more likely to be Republicans
  - The Correlates of Latino Political Behavior, 06/20/2016
    - http://www.latinodecisions.com/blog/2016/06/20/the-correlates-of-latino-political-behavior/

- Put another way, those missing in these polls are the most likely to be Democrats: immigrants, Spanish-dominant, lower socioeconomic status, and younger Latinos
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10/17/16