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# The Changing Demographics of Florida's Latino Electorate: Latino Party Affiliation and Voter Registration Rates in the State, Central Florida, and South Florida

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*Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies*

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## The Changing Demographics of Florida's Latino Electorate

### Latino Party Affiliation and Voter Registration Rates in the State, Central Florida, and South Florida

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**Methodological Note:** The data found in this report on the total Latino population and the total Latino electorate of Florida are slightly different than the data reported for the state whose gateway is the Pew Research Center Hispanic Trends, 2014 State Election Facts web page found at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/fact-sheets/2014-state-election-fact-sheets/> and on its “Mapping the Latino Electorate by State” web page at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/mapping-the-latino-electorate-by-state/>

This is because PEW researchers used the Census Bureau's-provided variable HISPAND found in the American Community Survey 2014 data set released by the University of Minnesota's, Minnesota Population Center IPUMS project to quantify Latinos nationally and in each state. (See footnote 3).

That variable includes Europeans such as Spaniards, Canary Islanders, or other individuals born in a Spanish province and counts them as Hispanics. The variable also excludes Brazilians who CLACLS insists should be enumerated as Latinos

CLACLS eliminated all Europeans from the HISPAND variable and then created a variable called LATINOS in its 2014 ACS data set using the birthplace of the individual and/or the parents' birthplace data if a person did not have a known nationality. Thus, a person whose nationality was unknown but who was born in Mexico is classified as Mexican and included as a Latino. Likewise a person whose nationality is unknown but whose mother was born in Mexico is 'turned into' a Mexican rather than 'Other Hispanic.' A Brazilian nationality variable was created using birthplace and parents' birthplace data and added to the new 'Latino' variable created by CLACLS.

**Acknowledgements:** This report was made possible by the meticulous research conducted by Justine Calcagno, Ph.D. and Director of Quantitative Research at CLACLS.

## Executive Summary

There is no question that Florida and its 29 electoral votes will be critical for the victory of either party in the November 2016 presidential election and that Latinos will play a decisive role in determining the outcome in the state. The political importance of the state's Latinos has increased significantly after 1990 because of extraordinary demographic transformations and high voter participation rates.

- The Latino population of Florida soared between 1990 and 2014 according to the most recent census data for 2014 and currently comprises 25% of the state's population and 19% of its electorate.
- Latinos in Florida had higher registration and voting rates than national averages among Latinos.
- In 2012 72% of Florida's Latino electorate, potential voters who were citizens 18 years of age and older, were registered to vote compared with a national average of about 59%.
- CLACLS projects that about 75% of Florida's Latino electorate will be registered to vote in the 2016 presidential election based on past rates of increase.
- CLACLS projects that about 64% of all eligible Latino voters will cast ballots in November 2016. The national average among Latinos has been about 48% in every presidential election since 1992.
- CLACLS projects that Latinos in Florida will account for 20% of all votes cast in Florida in November 2016 making them a decisive force in the outcome of the election in the state.
- Some explanations that account for such high registration rates among Florida Latinos are that the majority of the electorate are women and that in general the Latino electorate is both older and better educated than the Latino electorate nationally. These factors are linked to higher registration rates among Latino voters.
- The national composition of the Latino electorate in Florida has shifted dramatically because of the immigration of many national-origin groups to the state after 1990.
- The Cuban vote was once the defining factor in the state and in 1990 Cubans comprised 48% of the Latino electorate. However, this had fallen to 30% by 2014 although Cubans are still the largest of the Latino nationalities in the electorate.
- The Puerto Rican population of the state has increased dramatically between 1990 and 2014, but contrary to 'popular' misconceptions Puerto Ricans are about the same percentage of the overall electorate in 2014 (28%) as they were in 1990 (26%).
- Cubans and Puerto Ricans accounted for 57% of Florida's Latino electorate in 2014.



- The principal reason for the relative decline of Cubans as a percentage of Florida's total Latino electorate between 1990 and 2014, and the stagnation of Puerto Ricans in percentage terms, was the arrival of large numbers of South and Central Americans to the state who have become naturalized or whose children were born in the U.S., are thus citizens, and have reached 18 years of age and are eligible to vote.
- Mexicans, Colombians, Dominicans, Nicaraguans, and Peruvians are the most numerous, although each nationality accounted for relatively small percentages of the overall electorate compared with Cubans and Puerto Ricans as of 2014.
- Exit polls indicated that 60% of the state's Latinos voted for President Obama's reelection in 2012. A titanic shift took place among Florida's Cuban voters. In 2000 25% voted Democratic according to presidential preference polls. In 2012 this had nearly doubled to 48% as a younger generation of Cubans born in the U.S. have moved into the Florida electorate with very different political perspectives and inclinations than older Cubans.
- Among all other Latino nationalities presidential preference polls indicated overwhelming support for President Obama in 2012 ranging from 66% of Mexicans to 92% of Brazilians. Some 83% of the large Puerto Rican population expressed preference for President Obama in the 2012 election.
- Voter registration data are available for Latinos from 2006 on and suggest the progressive decline of Latino identification as Republicans. In 2014 27% of all Latinos were registered as Republicans down from 37% in 2006; 38% registered as Democrats an increase from 33% in 2006; and 33% had no party affiliation, up from 28% in 2006.
- South Florida counties, Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach, accounted for 57.4% of all registered Latino voters in the state in 2014 while Central Florida counties, Pinellas, Polk, Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Hillsborough, and Brevard accounted for another 26.4% of registered voters. Thus, nearly 84% of all registered Latino voters in the state lived in South and Central Florida in 2014.
- In Central Florida Latinos comprised 14% of the total electorate; 45% of registered Latino voters were Democrats, 36% with no party affiliation, and only 17% as Republicans in 2014.
- Puerto Ricans were 52% of the Central Florida electorate in 2014 followed by Cubans at 12% and Mexicans at 10%.
- In South Florida Latinos were 31% of the total electorate in 2014 and 34% of all registered Latino voters were Democrats, 33% Republicans, and 32% without party affiliation in 2014.
- Cubans were 43% of the South Florida electorate down from 63% in 1990. Puerto Ricans were the second largest group at 13% followed by Colombians at 10%.

## The Growth of the Latino Population and Electorate in Florida, 1990 - 2014

Since the contested 2000 presidential election in Florida, won by George W. Bush by 537 votes out of nearly 6 million votes cast in the state, and which propelled him into his fateful presidency, Florida has been central to the outcome of U.S. presidential elections. President Bush won Florida by a significant margin when reelected in 2004; Barack Obama's was victorious in Florida by nearly 3% of the popular vote in his election to the presidency in 2008; and he won Florida by less than 1% of the popular vote in 2012. Approximately 60% of Latinos in the state voted for President Obama's reelection in 2012 up from an estimated 57% in 2008. President Bush had previously won about 56% of the Latino vote in Florida in 2004, which was a rise from about 49% in 2000.

There will be no state which will be contested in the November 2016 presidential election where Latinos will play a more critical role than Florida. The state's Latino population has soared since 1990 when it stood at nearly 1.6 million residents and 12.2% of Florida's total population, to over 5 million people in 2014 and 25% of all Floridians.<sup>1</sup> (See figure 1).

Over the same period of time the Latino electorate in the state, citizens 18 years of age and older and eligible to vote, has increased from about 650,000 and 7.1% of Florida's total electorate in 1990 to over 2,600,000 and nearly 19% of all eligible Florida voters in 2014. (See figure 2). The Florida Latino electorate comprises over 10% of the total Latino electorate in the United States. Only California and Texas have more Latino voters.

In 2014 about 71% of all Latinos 18 years of age and older were citizens of the United States. Of these total citizens who comprised the Latino electorate in 2014, 57% were citizens by birth and 43% were naturalized. (See table 1).

Latinos, of course, are not a homogenous race/ethnic group and it is misleading to use the term as an overarching generalization to describe a sector of the Florida or U.S. population. Latinos are comprised of various nationalities, of people who are of immigrant origin and born in the United States, and each group has different demographic characteristics such as age and sex structures or educational attainment levels. Each nationality and its various subgroups have different political views and perspectives which determine the way they may vote in any election, as well as various participation

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<sup>1</sup> All demographic data used in this report were derived from the 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2014 raw data files made available by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) for each decennial census year or the American Community Survey of 2014. See Steven Ruggles, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, and Matthew Sobek. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 6.0 [Machine-readable database]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2015.

The data found in this report on the total Latino population and the total Latino electorate in Florida are slightly different than the data which has been systematically posted on these census years by the Pew Research Center, Hispanic Trends found at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/>. This is because Pew researchers have used the Census Bureau's-provided variable HISPAND found in all IPUMS census files released by the University of Minnesota's, Minnesota Population Center.

That variable includes Europeans such as Spaniards, Canary Islanders, or other individuals born in a Spanish province and counts them as Hispanics. The variable also excludes Brazilians who CLACLS insists should be enumerated as Latinos

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rates in national, state, or local elections. The Florida Latino electorate is diverse and has changed significantly since 1990, especially in its composition by nationality.

Figure 1  
The Latino Population of Florida, 1990 - 2014

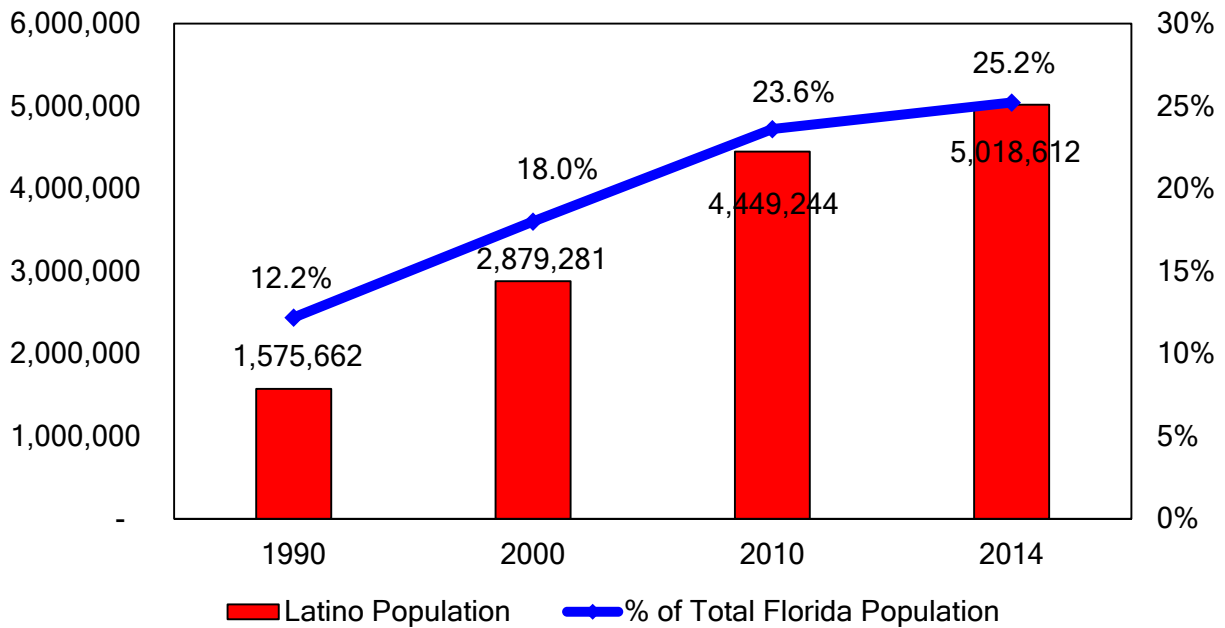


Figure 2  
The Latino Electorate of Florida, 1990 - 2014

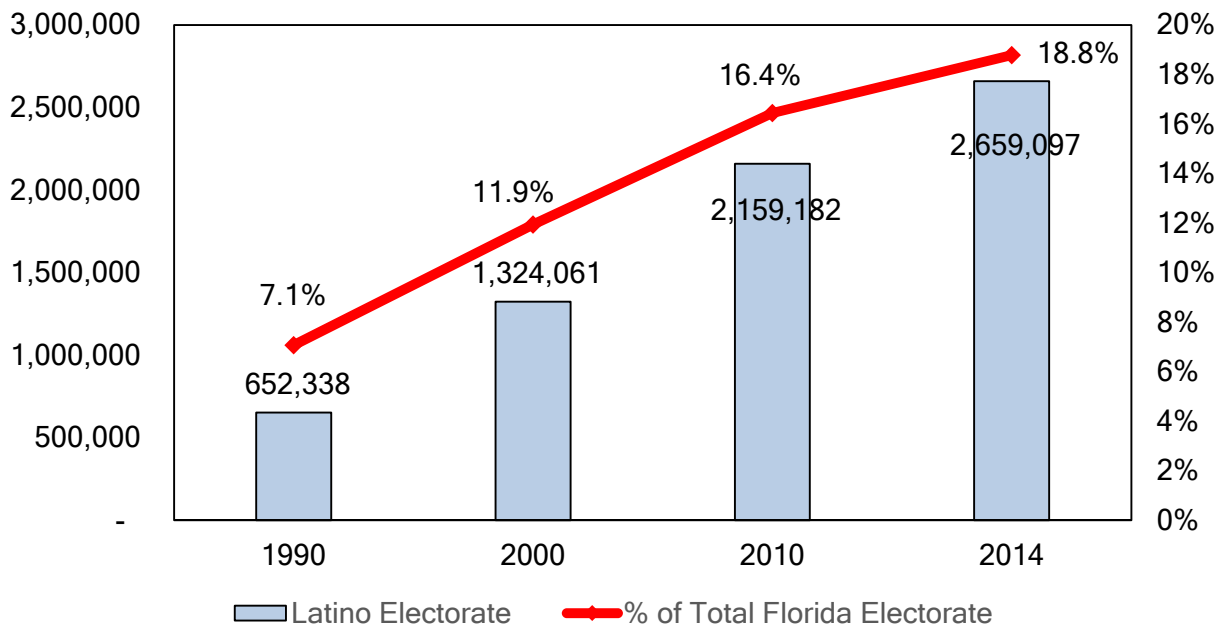


Table 1  
Selected Characteristics of Florida Latino Population  
18 Years of Age and Older by Citizenship  
and Electorate Status, 2014

Population 18 +	Population	% of Total
Citizens and Electorate	2,659,097	71.1%
Not Citizens	1,081,868	28.9%
<b>Total Population 18 +</b>	<b>3,740,965</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Electorate	Population	% of Total
Citizen by Birth	1,511,498	56.8%
Naturalized Citizen	1,147,599	43.2%
<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>2,659,097</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Latino National Subgroups Comprising the Florida Population and Electorate. 1990 - 2014

There are two overarching myths about the Florida electorate. The first is that Cubans are the key to winning the state in presidential elections. The second is that Puerto Ricans have grown as a political force in the state because of a significant increase in migration from Puerto Rico to Florida linked to the ongoing economic and political crisis on the island.

In fact, in 1990 Cubans made up 44.0% of all Latinos in the state of Florida and accounted for 47.3% of the Latino electorate, a powerful political force to be sure. The Cuban population of the state increased in real terms, doubling between 1990 and 2014 from about 700,000 to nearly 1.4 million. However in percentage terms Cubans declined relative to other Latino nationalities who arrived in the state in increasing numbers. By 2014 Cubans had fallen to 28% of all Latinos residing in Florida.

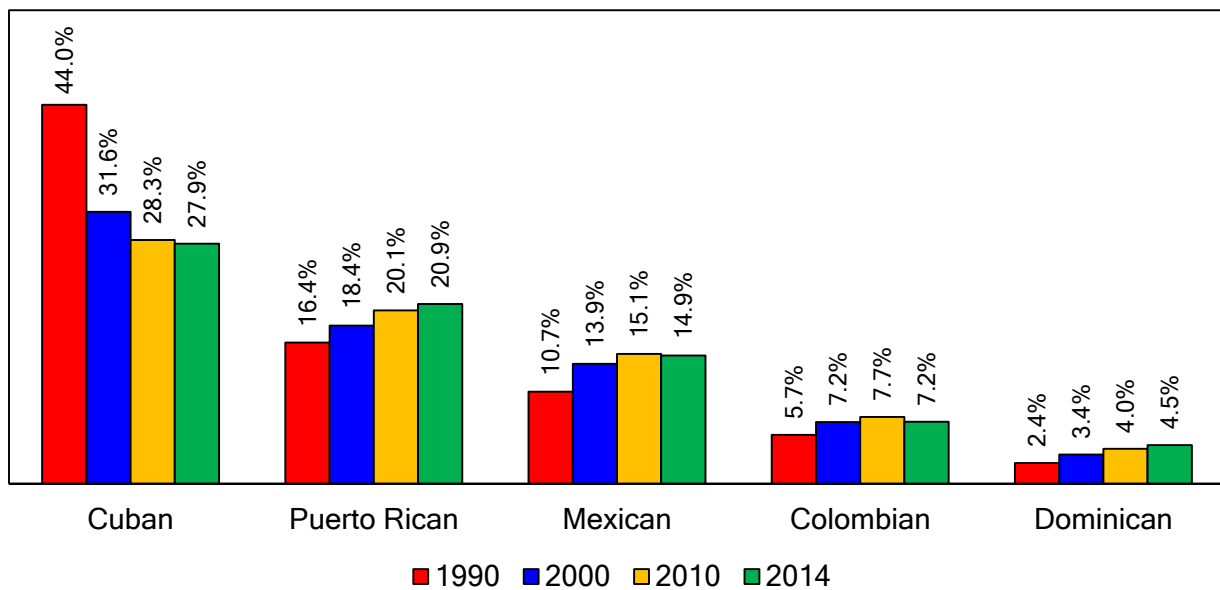
The Puerto Rican population of Florida more than quadrupled between 1990 and 2014 from nearly 260,000 residents to over one million and they increased their share of Florida's Latinos from about 16% to 21% of the state's total Latino population.

However, when we examine the electorate of both nationalities, Puerto Ricans did not change significantly in percentage terms between 1990 when they were 26% of all eligible Latino voters in the state, to 2014 when they had risen slightly to 28% of Florida's Latino electorate. Over the same period, Florida's Cuban electorate, despite increasing in absolute terms, fell from 47% to 30% of all Latino eligible voters in the state between 1990 and 2014. Unless there has been a massive outmigration from Puerto Rico to Florida between 2014 and 2016, which may be occurring, it is not likely that Puerto

Ricans will increase their share of Florida's voters in November 2016, although without question they will be an important political force shaping the outcome.<sup>2</sup>

Another 'real' story in Florida is the arrival of an eclectic mix of Latinos of all nationalities between 1990 and 2014 of whom Mexicans, Colombians, and Dominicans were the most numerous, followed by Nicaraguans, Venezuelans, Peruvians, Hondurans, Guatemalans, and Brazilians. These Latino national subgroups not only became a significant part of the state's overall Latino population, but accounted for increasing portions of Florida's Latino electorate as well. (See figures 3 and 4 and tables 2 and 3).

Figure 3  
The Latino Population of Florida by Largest Nationalities, 1990 - 2014  
(in percentages of total Latino population)



<sup>2</sup> See Asma Khalid "As Florida's Puerto Rican Population Booms, Political Parties Move In" National Public Radio, December 6, 2015 at <http://www.npr.org/2015/12/06/458501962/as-floridas-puerto-rican-population-booms-political-parties-move-in>

Figure 4  
 The Latino Electorate of Florida by Largest Nationalities, 1990 - 2014  
 (in percentages of total Latino electorate)

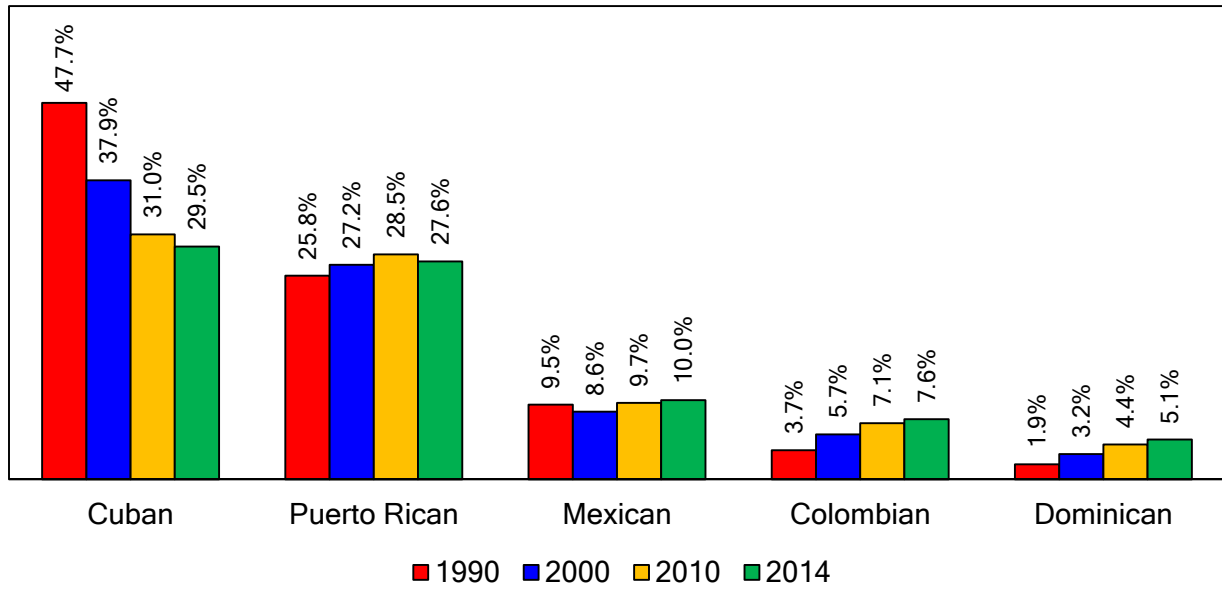


Table 2  
Total Latino Population of Florida by Nationality, 1990 - 2014

	Population				Percentage of Total			
	1990	2000	2010	2014	1990	2000	2010	2014
Cuban	693,695	909,463	1,259,722	1,398,964	44.0%	31.6%	28.3%	27.9%
Puerto Rican	258,116	528,500	895,625	1,047,687	16.4%	18.4%	20.1%	20.9%
Mexican	168,274	400,536	669,994	746,655	10.7%	13.9%	15.1%	14.9%
Colombian	89,104	205,905	344,663	360,112	5.7%	7.2%	7.7%	7.2%
Dominican	37,605	97,202	180,104	224,156	2.4%	3.4%	4.0%	4.5%
Nicaraguan	83,092	128,503	153,761	175,917	5.3%	4.5%	3.5%	3.5%
Venezuelan	20,355	59,996	131,825	164,851	1.3%	2.1%	3.0%	3.3%
Peruvian	29,075	70,866	117,171	139,662	1.8%	2.5%	2.6%	2.8%
Honduran	28,598	66,574	140,340	137,671	1.8%	2.3%	3.2%	2.7%
Guatemalan	13,417	39,441	92,966	108,773	0.9%	1.4%	2.1%	2.2%
Brazilian	11,545	53,569	90,414	93,824	0.7%	1.9%	2.0%	1.9%
Ecuadorian	17,915	42,653	74,320	81,581	1.1%	1.5%	1.7%	1.6%
Argentinean	17,752	36,051	64,873	77,562	1.1%	1.3%	1.5%	1.5%
Salvadoran	12,895	31,931	59,870	72,053	0.8%	1.1%	1.3%	1.4%
Other Hispanic	47,634	122,670	50,332	54,897	3.0%	4.3%	1.1%	1.1%
Panamanian	18,021	27,759	34,093	39,624	1.1%	1.0%	0.8%	0.8%
Costa Rican	8,992	19,472	25,124	30,702	0.6%	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%
Chilean	11,641	21,483	30,403	26,760	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.5%
Uruguayan	3,261	6,927	17,610	16,979	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	0.3%
Bolivian	3,885	6,276	11,140	12,650	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%
Paraguayan	486	1,443	3,767	4,300	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
South American	271	1,053	1,032	2,563	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Central American	33	1,008	95	669	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	1,575,662	2,879,281	4,449,244	5,018,612	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 3  
Total Latino Electorate of Florida by Nationality, 1990 - 2014

	Electorate				Percentage of Total			
	1990	2000	2010	2014	1990	2000	2010	2014
Cuban	308,312	495,408	670,405	784,868	47.3%	37.4%	31.0%	29.5%
Puerto Rican	170,413	363,104	616,025	734,600	26.1%	27.4%	28.5%	27.6%
Mexican	63,066	117,825	209,259	267,226	9.7%	8.9%	9.7%	10.0%
Colombian	24,056	74,544	153,591	203,043	3.7%	5.6%	7.1%	7.6%
Dominican	11,688	40,923	95,545	134,363	1.8%	3.1%	4.4%	5.1%
Nicaraguan	5,457	25,627	65,963	91,409	0.8%	1.9%	3.1%	3.4%
Peruvian	6,534	22,931	48,670	73,920	1.0%	1.7%	2.3%	2.8%
Venezuelan	4,093	13,974	36,088	61,707	0.6%	1.1%	1.7%	2.3%
Ecuadorian	5,343	17,588	40,564	46,463	0.8%	1.3%	1.9%	1.7%
Honduran	5,733	16,739	42,647	41,985	0.9%	1.3%	2.0%	1.6%
Brazilian	3,525	11,094	27,807	37,864	0.5%	0.8%	1.3%	1.4%
Argentinean	5,322	14,094	25,387	31,007	0.8%	1.1%	1.2%	1.2%
Other Hispanic	18,145	55,630	27,033	29,069	2.8%	4.2%	1.3%	1.1%
Guatemalan	2,305	8,667	16,794	25,767	0.4%	0.7%	0.8%	1.0%
Panamanian	8,086	15,838	23,188	25,110	1.2%	1.2%	1.1%	0.9%
Salvadoran	2,219	7,522	20,906	24,815	0.3%	0.6%	1.0%	0.9%
Costa Rican	2,548	7,793	12,230	18,192	0.4%	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%
Chilean	3,247	7,956	14,947	13,455	0.5%	0.6%	0.7%	0.5%
Uruguayan	994	3,183	4,871	5,983	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Bolivian	1,034	2,427	5,324	5,519	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
South American	97	445	228	1,583	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Paraguayan	121	457	1,615	928	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%
Central American	-	292	95	221	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>652,338</b>	<b>1,324,061</b>	<b>2,159,182</b>	<b>2,659,097</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Registration and Voting Rates among Latinos in Florida, 1996 - 2016

The key to understanding Latino voter participation in state elections across the United States is registration rates. At the national level there has been almost no change in both the percentage of all Latinos who have registered to vote in presidential elections between 1992 and 2012 (about 58%) and in the portion of the Latino electorate who has cast their ballots (48%). Both of these rates are well below those of non-Hispanic whites and blacks of whom about 73% of eligible voting populations were registered in the presidential election of 2012. About two-thirds of eligible voters of both race/ethnic groups voted in that election.

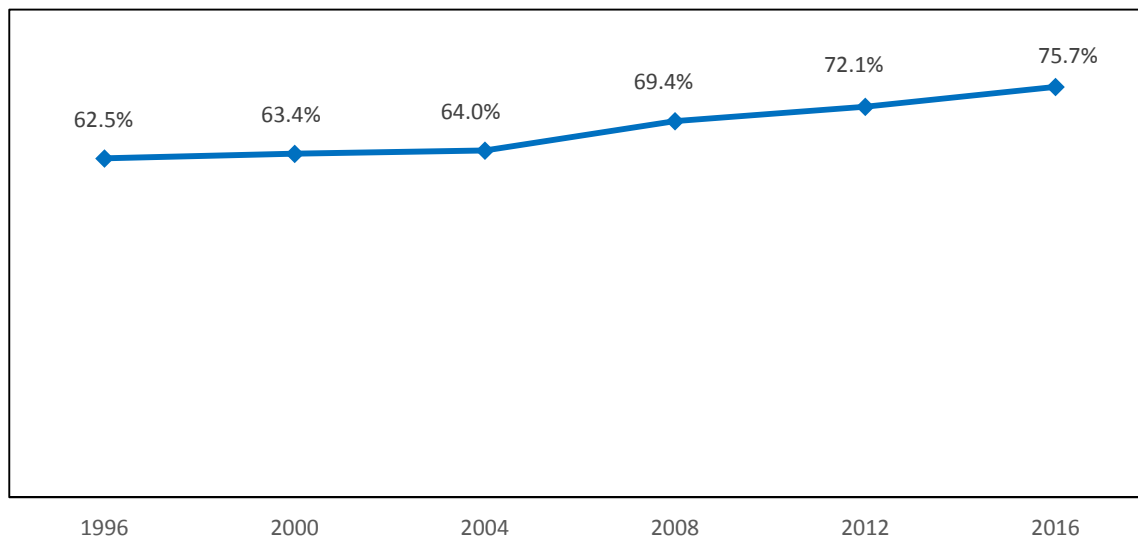
In Florida, however, voter registration and participation rates are among the highest in the nation among Latinos and both have increased steadily. In 1996 63% of eligible Latinos registered to vote in the state and 49% of the Latino electorate voted. These percentages rose steadily and in 2012 72% of the Latino



electorate was registered to vote and 62% of all eligible Latino voters actually voted. In 1992 Latinos accounted for 9% of all votes cast in Florida. This increased to 17% in 2012.

Based on yearly rates of increase between 1996 and 2012 CLACLS projects that nearly 76% of Latinos in the state will be registered to vote in 2016; 64% of all eligible Latinos will go to the polls; and that 20% of the total popular vote in Florida will be comprised of Latinos.<sup>3</sup> (See figure 5 through 7).

Figure 5  
Voter Registration Rates among Latinos as a Percentage of Total Florida  
Latino Electorate, 1996 - 2016



<sup>3</sup> The 2016 estimate was derived by CLACLS using the yearly percentage rate of increase in voters between 2004 and 2012 and then calculating this same rate of growth between 2008 and 2012 and projecting both to 2016. Then the overall percentage increases to 2016 were divided by two. For example the Florida projections yielded a voter population of 21.4% of all voters in 2016 using the 2004-2012 rate of growth. Using the 2008-2012 yearly rate of growth the projected percentage of all Latino voters was 19.3%. These two numbers were added and divided by two, or averaged, to derive the 20.4% projection of Latinos as a percentage of all Florida voters in 2016. There is an unknown margin of error in these calculations and as in all hypothetical statistical calculations for the future these may not be precise but they do serve as fairly reliable statistical indicators because they use past trends. Data on voter turnout for Latinos was derived from the U.S. Census Bureau, Voting and Registration, found at:

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/index.html>

These data originated in the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) data from the November Voter Supplements for each year. These are estimates based on sample data and a description of these data and their comparisons to officially released Federal government data is found at

[http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/other/State%20User%20Note\\_Final.pdf](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/other/State%20User%20Note_Final.pdf)

In the above report the Census Bureau observes "The estimates are also frequently accompanied by large margins of error, due to the small sample sizes involved. Data users are encouraged to interpret these results with caution. Despite these issues, the Census Bureau's November supplement to the CPS remains the most comprehensive data source available for examining trends in the social and demographic composition of the electorate in federal elections." Thus, the data presented in this report must be used with caution. They serve as indicators and may not be precise because of unknown margins of error.

Figure 6  
Percentage of Florida Latino Electorate Voting, 1996 - 2016

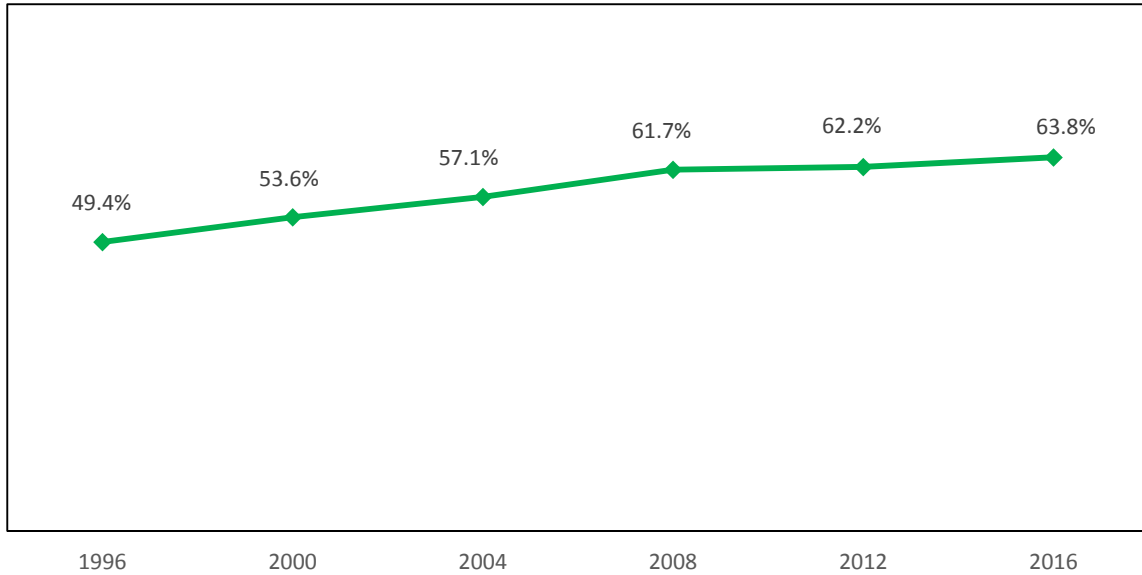
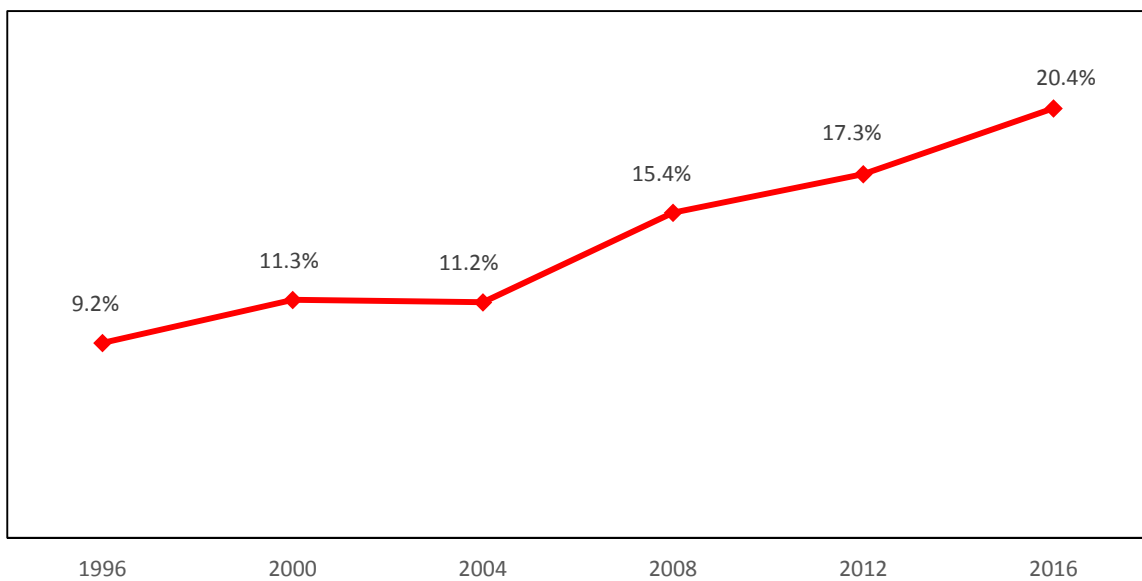


Figure 7  
Latinos as a Percentage of Total Voting Population in Florida, 1996 - 2016



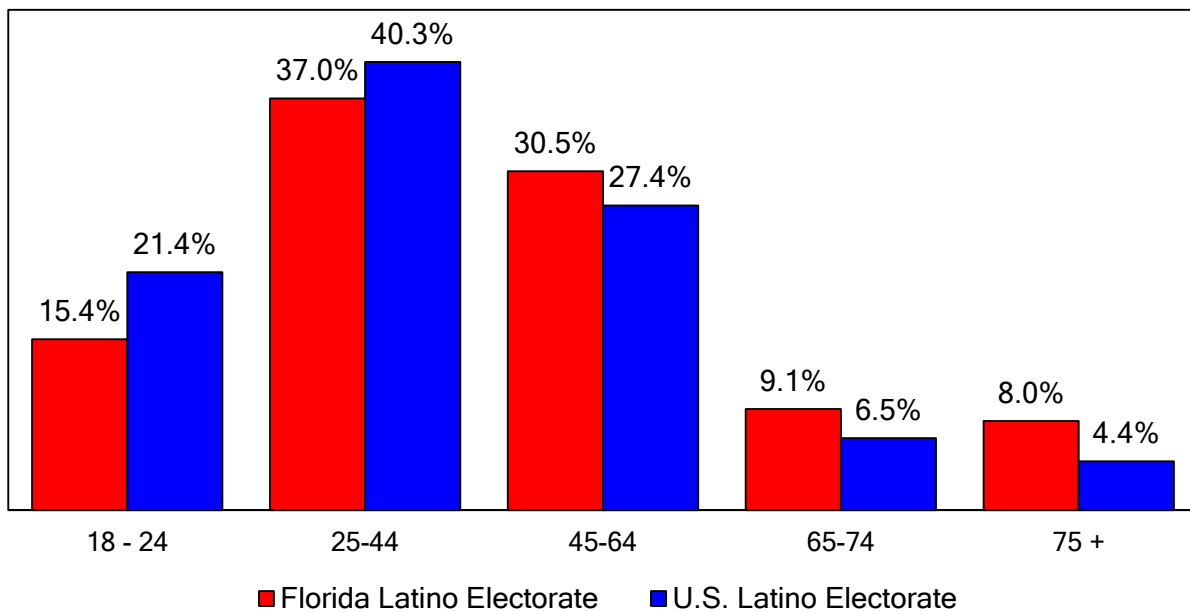
## Why do Latinos in Florida Register and Vote at Higher Rates than the National Average?

### The Age Factor

One of the major reasons why Florida's Latinos registered and voted at higher rates than national Latino averages was because they fell into older age categories than found across the United States. This is an important factor because older Latinos in general registered and voted at higher rates than younger Latinos. Additionally, even younger Latinos registered and voted at higher rates in Florida than across the nation in the 2012 presidential election.

Throughout the United States 62% of Latinos in the electorate as of 2014 were between the ages of 18 and 24 and 25 and 44. In Florida 52% fell into these age categories. (See figure 8).

Figure 8  
Florida and United States Latino Electorates by Age Category, 2014



The rates of voter registration, percentages of registered voters who actually voted in every age category, and the percentage of the total Latino electorate who voted in Florida in the 2012 presidential election were significantly higher than national Latino averages and there is no reason to suspect that these rates will not remain very high for the November 2016 election. (See figures 9 - 11).

Figure 9  
Percent of the Latino Electorate in Florida and United States Registered for the 2012 Presidential Election by Age Category

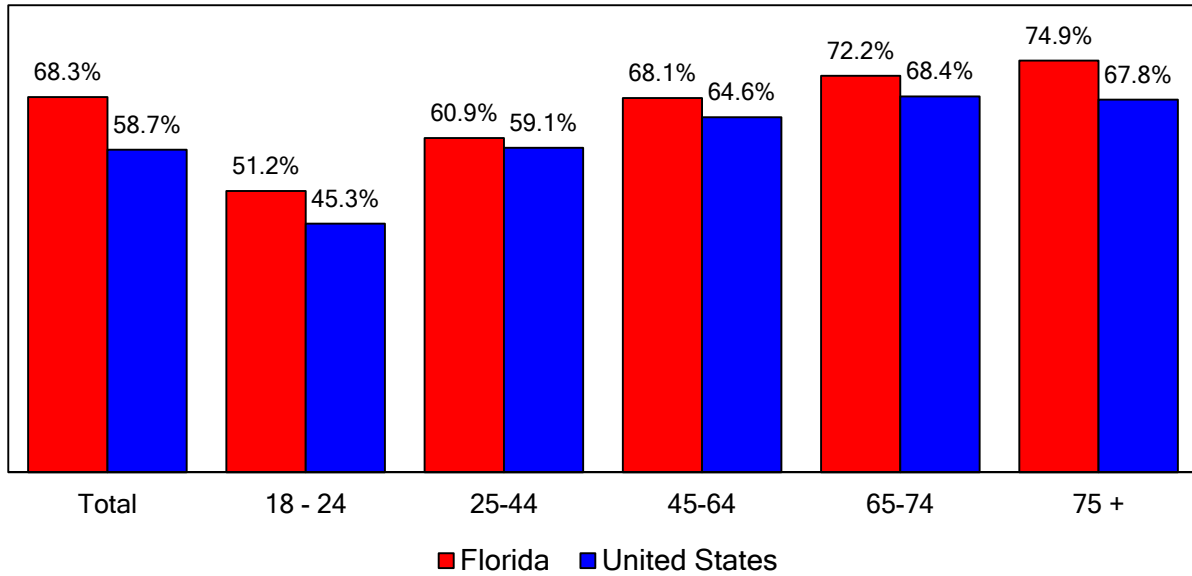


Figure 10  
Percent of the Latino Electorate Registered to Vote in Florida and United States which Voted in the 2012 Presidential Election by Age Category

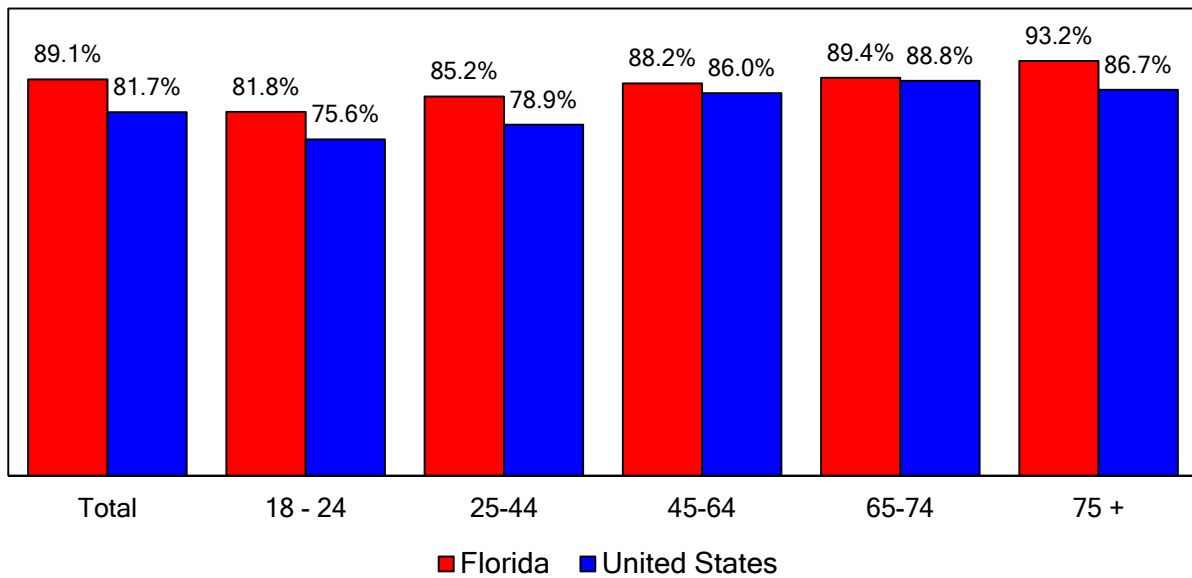
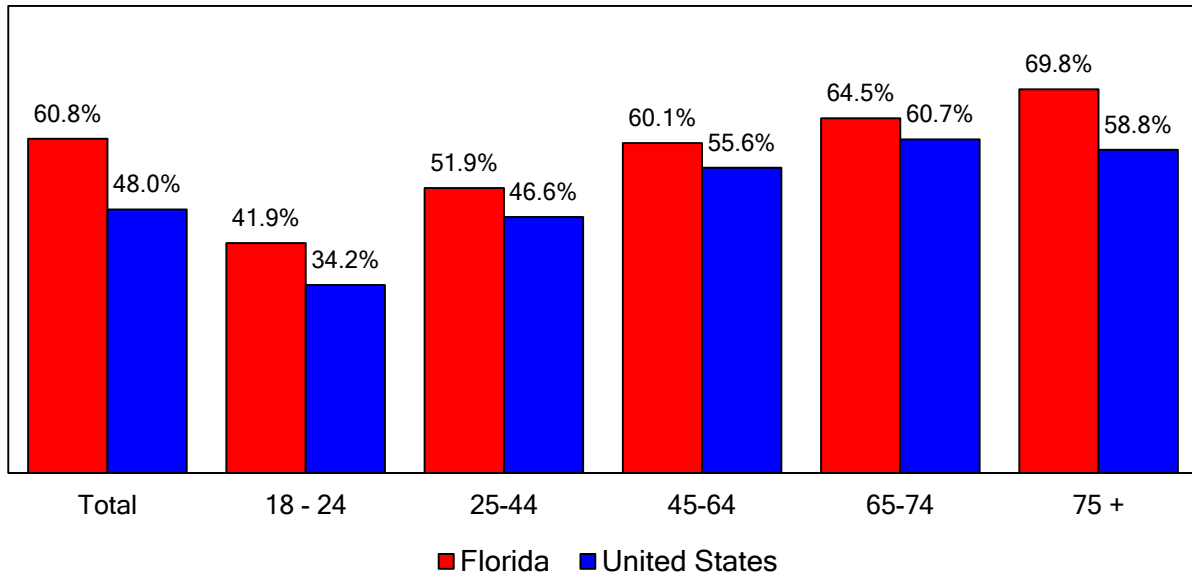
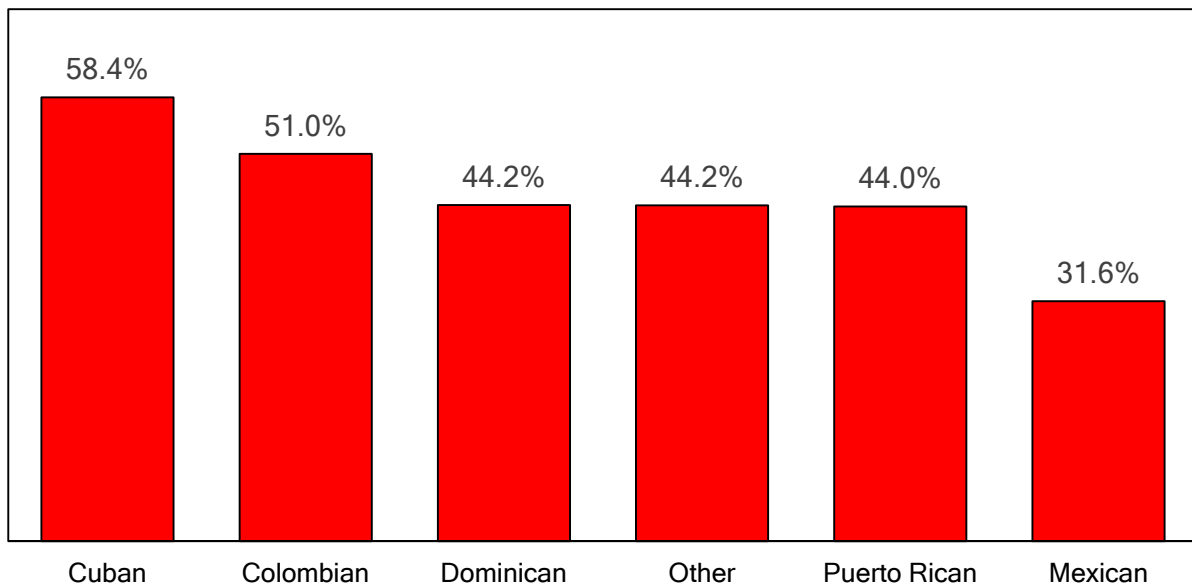


Figure 11  
Percent of the Latino Electorate in Florida and United States which Voted in the 2012 Presidential Election by Age Category



Among the major nationalities comprising the Florida Latino electorate Cubans had the oldest age profile and were thus more likely to register to vote, followed by Colombians, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans. (See figure 12 which considers these nationalities by their electorates 45 years of age and older as a percentage of total electorates for each Latino national subgroup).

Figure 12  
Percent of the Electorate in Florida 45 Years of Age and Older by Latino Nationality, 2014



## The Sex Factor

Women comprised 53% of the Florida Latino electorate in 2014. In older age categories their percentages of overall potential voters was even greater. This is of importance because older Latinas registered and voted at higher rates than younger Latinos and Latinas nationally and specifically in Florida in the presidential election of 2012. (See table 4).<sup>4</sup> It is likely that because women in the Latino Florida electorate in each of the 25 and over age categories were greater than the number of men, this partially explains higher registration and voting rates among all Latinos in the state in 2012. This will probably be the case in November 2016 as well.

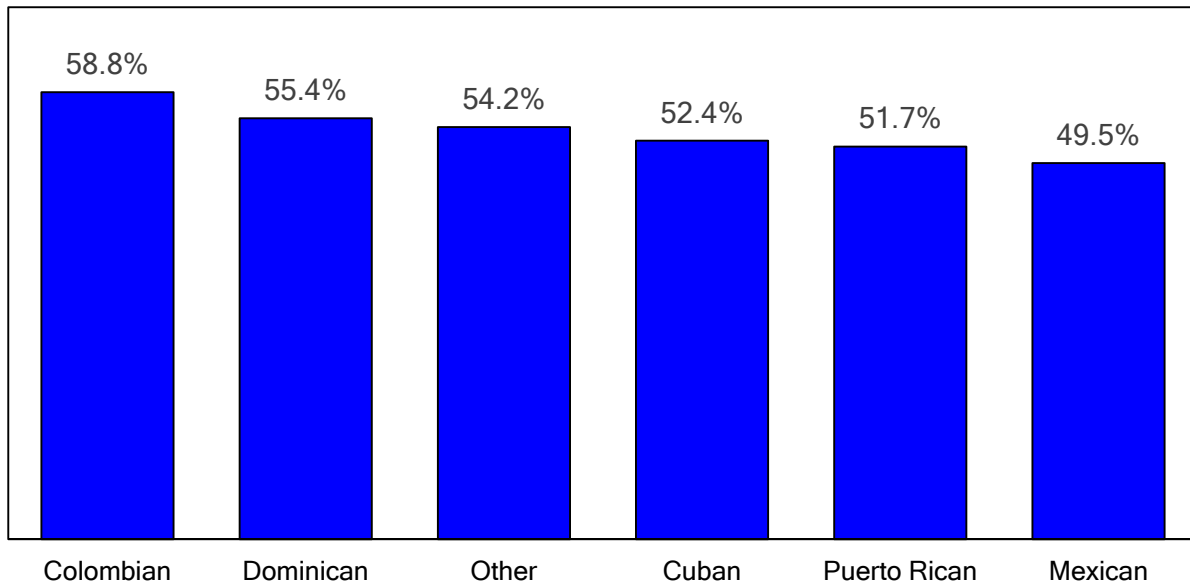
Table 4  
Percentage of Florida Electorate Registered and Voted in 2012  
and Percentage of Latino Electorate Female by Age Category, 2014

	% Latino Electorate Registered in Florida 2012	% of Latino Electorate Voted in Florida 2012	Females as % of Age Category in Latino Electorate in Florida 2014
18 to 24	51.2%	41.9%	49.5%
25 to 34	60.9%	51.9%	50.5%
35 to 44	68.1%	60.1%	52.1%
45 to 64	72.2%	64.5%	53.7%
65+	74.9%	69.8%	58.3%
Total	68.3%	60.8%	52.9%

If we examine the electorate of the major Latino nationalities in Florida every one, with the exception of Mexicans, had more women than men according to 2014 census data. Colombians led the way with nearly 59% of total eligible voters who were female followed by Dominicans at 55%, Cubans and Puerto Ricans at 52% and Mexicans at about half. (See figure 13).

<sup>4</sup> The age categories used to examine Florida Latino voters by sex are different than those found in figures 8 through 12 because these are the categories used by the census bureau to measure age structure by state. See Table 4c <https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2012/tables.html>

Figure 13  
Percent of the Electorate in Florida which was Female by Latino Nationality,  
2014



### The Educational Attainment Factor

There are no specific data on voter participation rates in Florida by educational attainment although there are national-level data which conclusively indicate that in the 2012 presidential election voter registration and participation rates were significantly higher among the electorate with higher levels of educational attainment. (See figure 14).<sup>5</sup>

Data on educational attainment are only collected for the population 25 years of age and older so younger potential voters are not included in the available statistics. However, data for 2014 suggest that the Florida Latino electorate had higher educational attainment levels than was the case at the national level and that this was one of the factors which may help explain higher registration and voter participation rates in the state.

In 2014 18.6% of all Latinos eligible to vote 25 years of age and older in the United States had achieved a B.A. degree or higher. In Florida 24.7% of the Latino electorate in this same age group had graduated from a college or university or had achieved a higher degree.

If those achieving an Associate's Degree and/or a B.A or higher degree are aggregated, 35.5% of the Florida Latino electorate 25 years of age or older fell into these categories compared with 26.5% among Latinos across the U.S. Although the electorate under 25 years of age are not included in these data, they strongly suggest that Latinos eligible to vote were more educated in Florida compared with national

<sup>5</sup> Figure 12 is based on data found in Table 5, in the U.S. Census Bureau's Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2012 - Detailed Tables, at <https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2012/tables.html>

averages and that this may account for the state's higher registration and voter rates among the Latino electorate. (See figure 15).

Figure 14  
Percent of the Eligible Electorate in the United States which Voted in the 2012 Presidential Election by Educational Attainment Level

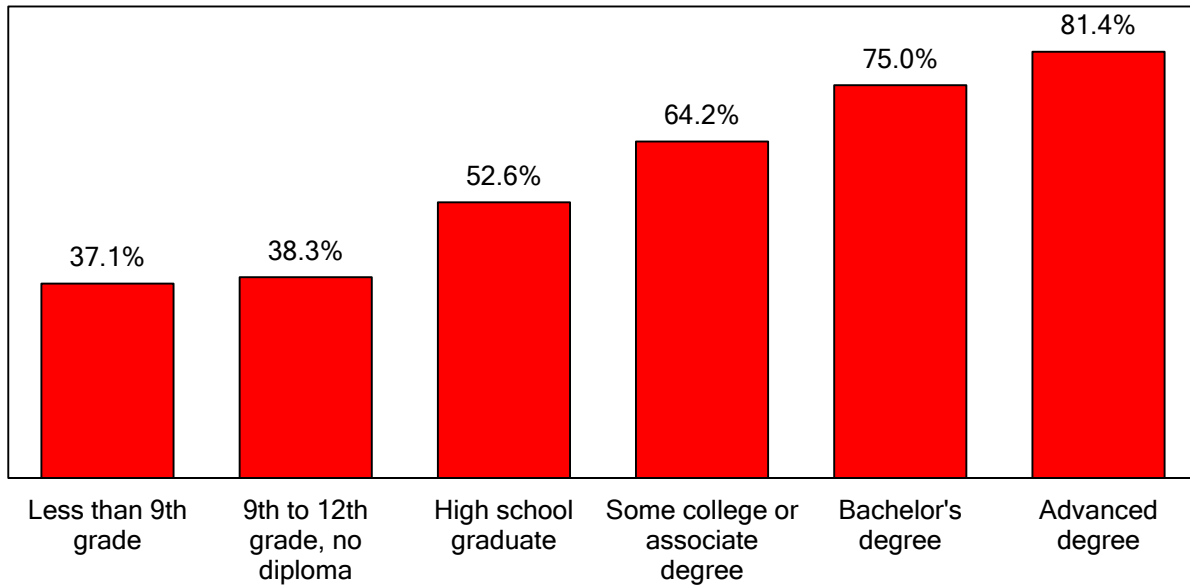
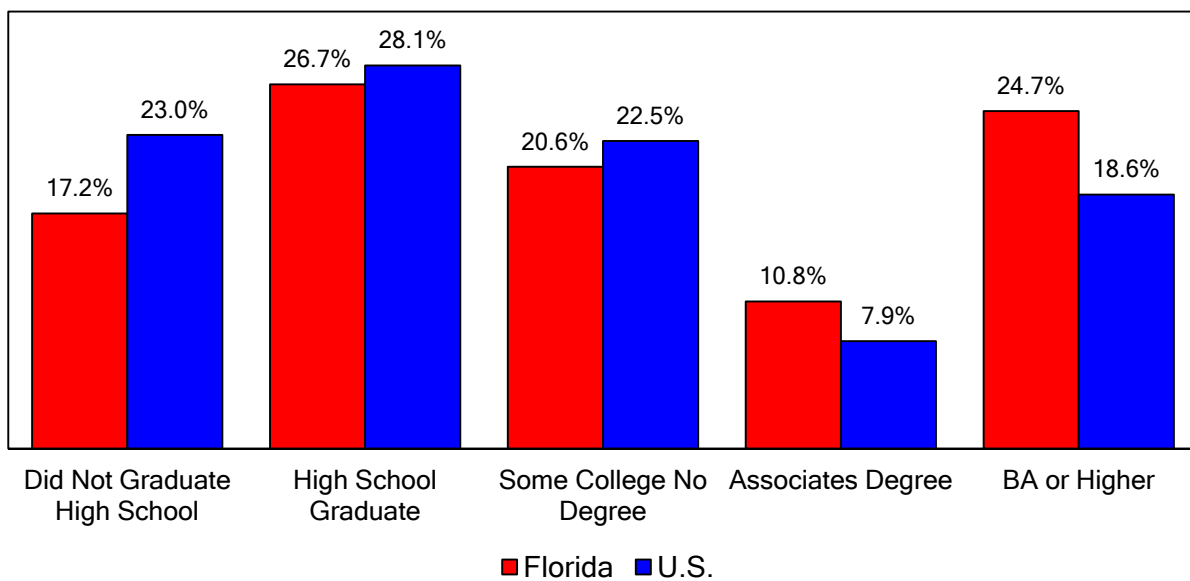


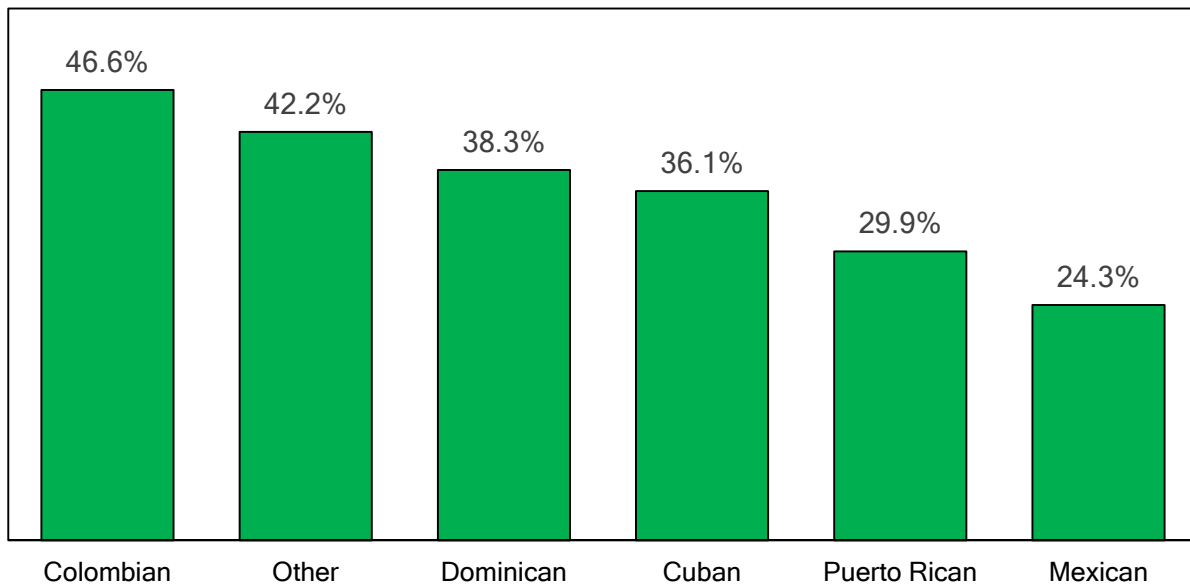
Figure 15  
Educational Attainment Level of Latino Electorate in Florida and United States, 2014 (Population 25 Years of Age and Older)





When higher education attainment levels are examined among Florida's Latino electorate by nationality, nearly 47% of Colombians had achieved an Associate's degree or higher, 38% of Dominicans, 36% of Cubans, 30% of Puerto Ricans, and 24% of Mexicans. In all probability national groups with greater percentages of their electorates having achieved a college degree at the Associates level of above, had higher registration and participation rates. (See figure 16).

Figure 16  
Percent of the Electorate in Florida which had Achieved an Associates Degree or Higher by Latino Nationality, 2014



### Voting Patterns by Florida's Latino Nationalities in Past Presidential Elections

There are no systematic data on the participation rates by Latino nationality nor of the national composition of those who actually cast their ballots in past presidential elections in Florida. There are, however, exit polling data based on relatively small samples, which indicate that the traditional Republican-leaning Cuban-American vote moved decisively in the direction of Democrats and President Obama in the 2012 presidential election. The Miami Herald's post-election poll had President Obama garnering 48% of the Cuban vote to 52% voting for Mitt Romney.<sup>6</sup> Pew Hispanic indicates that Cubans in Florida voted 49% for Obama in 2012 to 47% for Romney, a titanic shift from the 78% of the Cuban-American vote won by President Bush in 2004.<sup>7</sup>

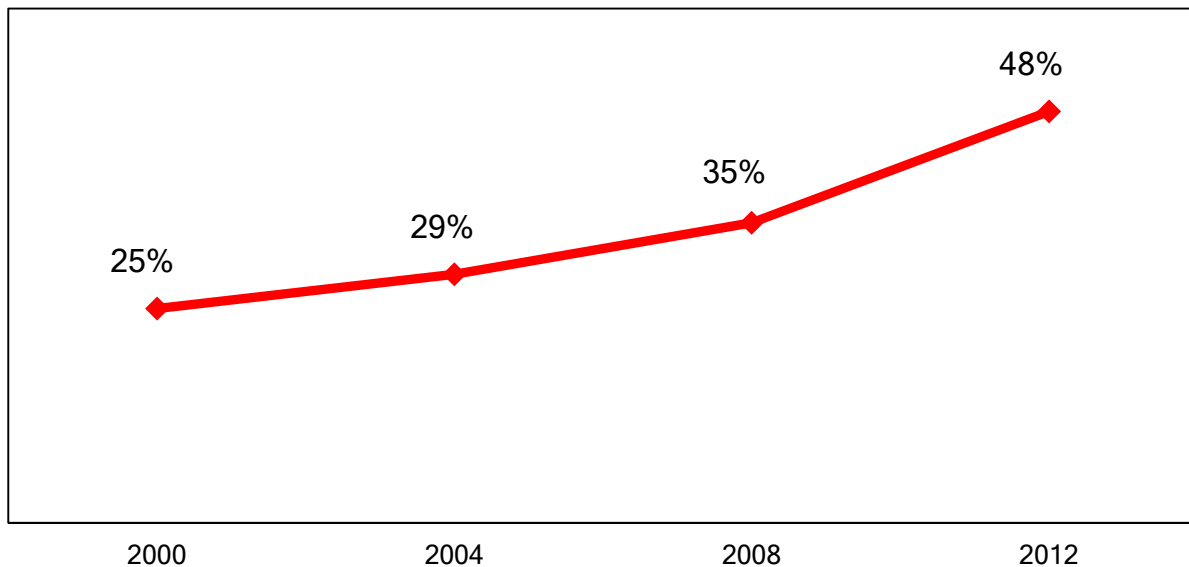
<sup>6</sup> See the Miami Herald, November 8, 2012 "Poll: Obama got big share of Cuban American vote, won among other Hispanics in Florida" at <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/politics-government/article1944391.html>

<sup>7</sup> See Jens Manuel Kronstad, "After decades of GOP support, Cubans shifting toward the Democratic Party" Pew Hispanic Research Center, June 24, 2014 at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/06/24/after-decades-of-gop-support-cubans-shifting-toward-the-democratic-party/>

In 2012 60% of Florida Cubans born in the U.S. voted for President Obama although they made up only 20% of Cuban voters. Data from the 2014 American Community Survey indicate that 33% of the Cuban electorate was born in the United States, although registration and voting rates for 2016 may not be predicted. By way of contrast 55% of Cubans born in Cuba voted Republican in the 2012 presidential election.

It is inevitable that a greater percentage of Florida Cubans will be comprised of the U.S. born in the 2016 and future presidential elections. Trends in voting patterns indicate that they have supported Democratic candidates more strongly in each presidential election after 2000 and this will mean that in all likelihood the Democratic candidate in 2016 may earn a greater share of Cuban support in Florida than the 48% or 49% won by President Obama in 2012. (See figure 17).

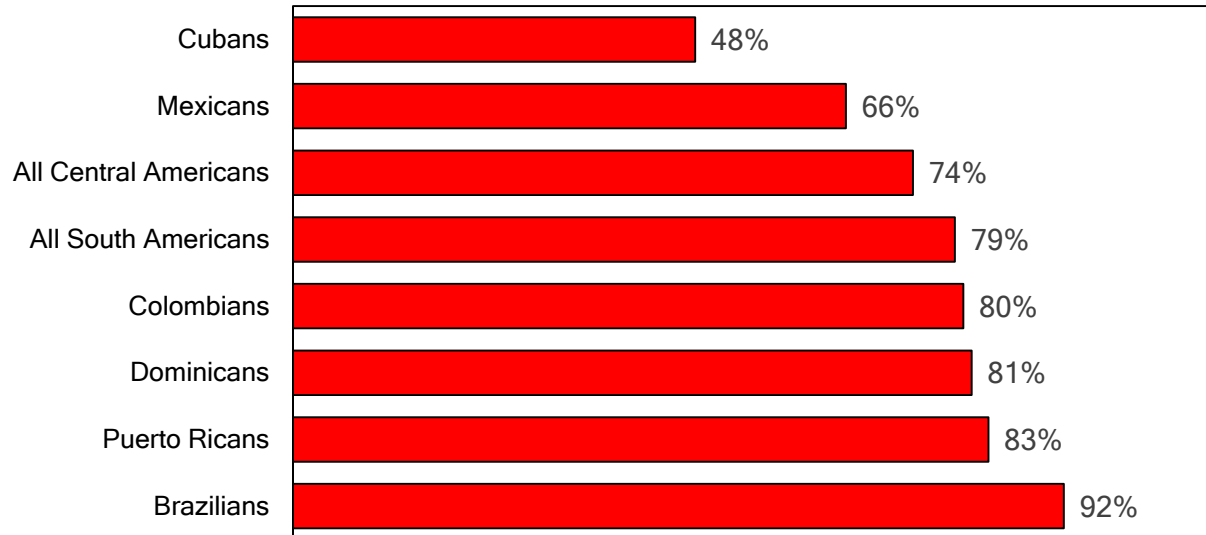
Figure 17  
Preference for Democratic Candidate among Florida Cubans in Presidential Elections, 2000 - 2012 (According to Exit Poll Data)



Source: Benedixen and Amandi International "Exit Poll of Hispanic Voters in Florida" November 8, 2012, p. 14 available at: <http://bendixenandamandi.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/ElectionResults-ExitPoll.pdf>

In 2012 83% of Puerto Ricans in Florida, the second largest Latino national voting group, voted for President Obama according to exit polling data from Benedixen and Amandi. Among the three other largest groups, 66% of Mexicans, 80% of Colombians, and 81% of Dominicans voted for President Obama in 2012. Aggregating Latino national groups together 79% of all South Americans and 74% of Central Americans voted Democratic in November 2012. (See figure 18).

Figure 18  
Preference for President Barack Obama in 2012 Presidential Election  
among Florida's Latino Voters by Nationality (According to Exit Poll Data)



Source: Bendixen and Amadi International "Exit Poll of Hispanic Voters in Florida" November 8, 2012, pp. 14 - 24 available at: <http://bendixenandamadi.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/ElectionResults-ExitPoll.pdf>

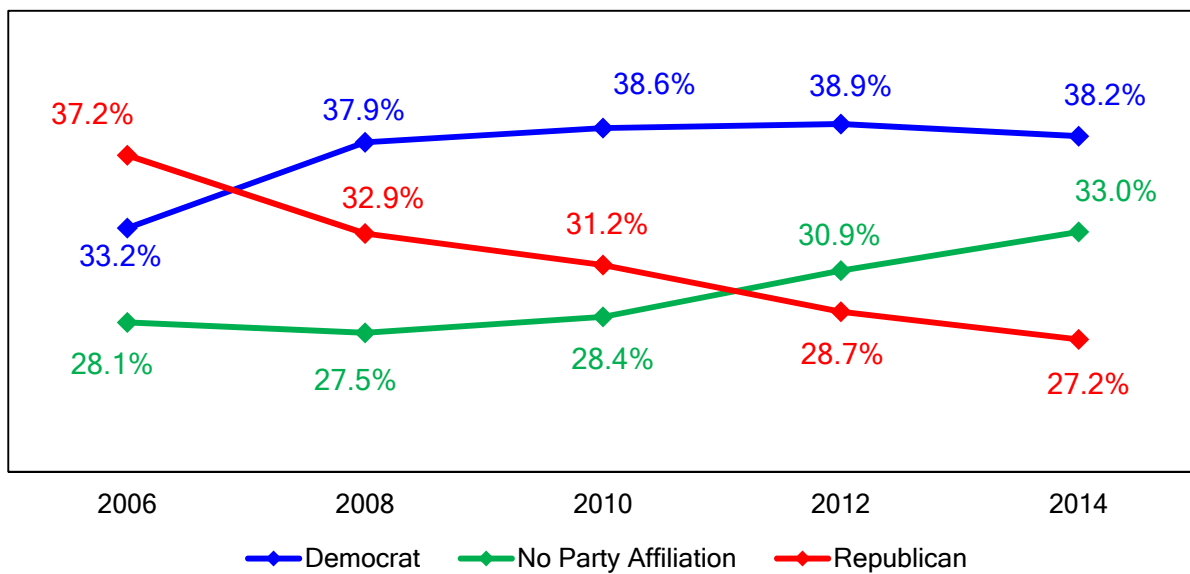
It is impossible to predict future registration and voting rates for any national Latino subgroup for the 2016 elections. However, it is known that the Latino electorate is larger than it was in 2012 and CLACLS has projected that Latino voters will make up about 20% of the total in November 2016 up from 17% in 2012. Cubans were the only Latino national group which narrowly supported Mitt Romney in 2012 according to exit polls. However, 72% of the Florida electorate was not Cuban according to 2014 census data. If the overwhelming past support for President Obama among non-Cuban Latino voters of all nationalities holds in 2016, the Republican candidate will have a very difficult time carrying the state. There is little doubt that the Latino vote will determine the outcome of the November 2016 election in Florida.

**Voter Registration and Party Affiliation among Florida's Latinos 2006 - 2014<sup>8</sup>**

Not only did Florida's Latinos heavily favor President Obama's reelection to the Presidency in 2012, but there has been a decisive shift in the party affiliation of the state's registered Latino voters since 2006 when the Florida State Board of Elections began to systematically collect data on the party affiliation of registered Latino voters.

In 2006 37% of all Latinos registered as Republicans to vote in the mid-term elections of that year. This fell steadily for each subsequent election and in 2014 27% of all Latino voters registered as Republicans. Over the same period Latinos registering as Democrats rose from 33% to 38% and Latinos with no party affiliation, or independents, increased from 28% to 33% of the officially registered Latino electorate of the state. (See figure 19).

Figure 19  
Latinos Registered to Vote in Florida by Party Affiliation  
2006 - 2014



In 2014 Latinos comprised 11% of all registered Republicans in the state; 14% of all registered Democrats; and 21% of all Floridians registering as independents or with no party affiliation. (See table 5). There is no way to predict how independent Latinos will vote in the 2016 election. However, given the level of Democratic support in the 2012 election, and the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the major Republican-party candidates for the nomination as of this report's release in March 2016, there is little reason to expect that there will be a major swing among Latino voters toward the Republican presidential candidate in November 2016.

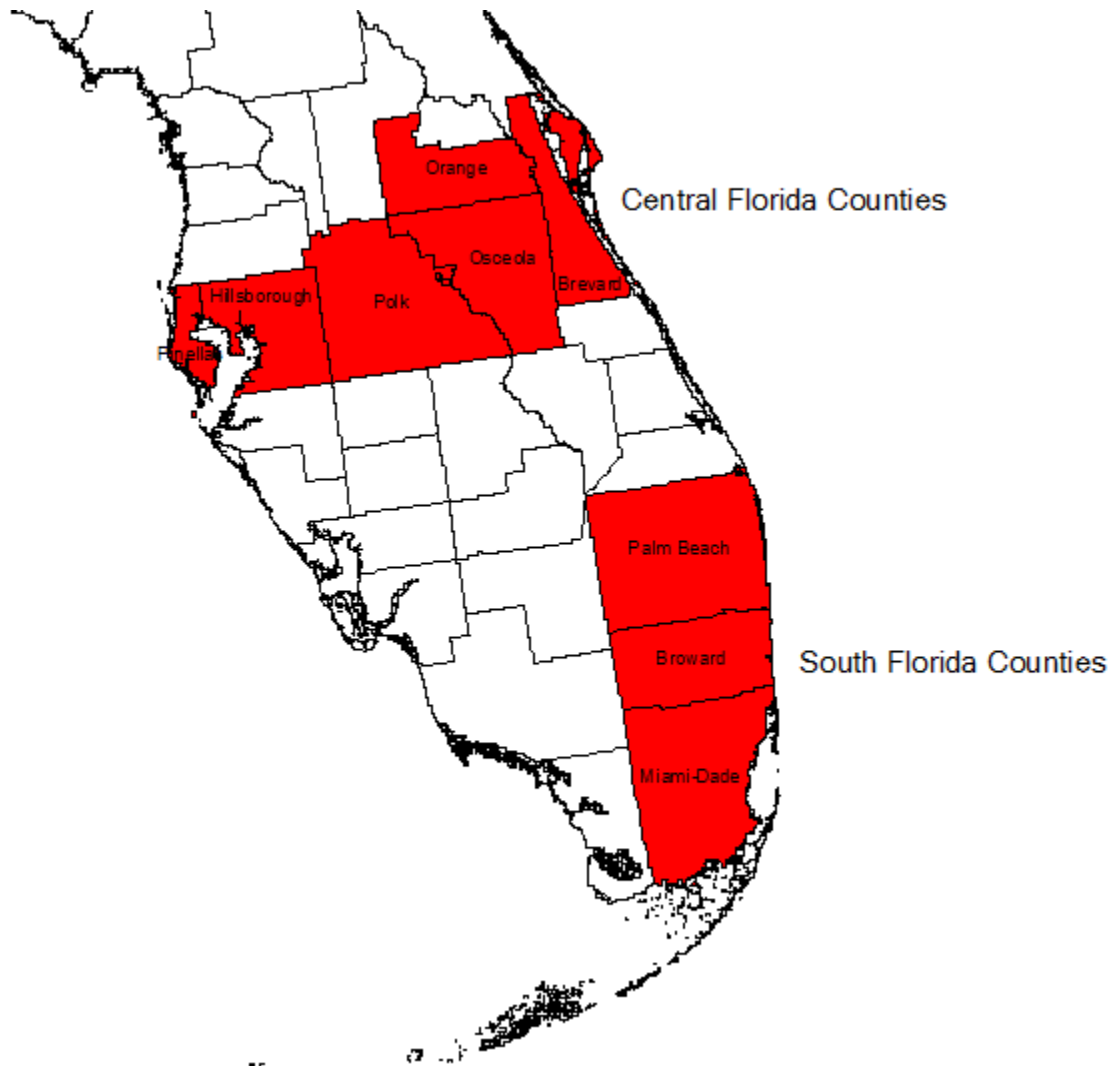
<sup>8</sup> The Florida Department of State, Division of Elections did not collect data on Latinos until 2006 although they did gather data on 'Blacks' and 'Whites.' All data in this section are derived from their web site at: <http://dos.myflorida.com/elections/data-statistics/voter-registration-statistics/>

Table 5  
 Latinos as Percentages of Total Registered Voters  
 of Major Political Parties or No Affiliation in Florida  
 2014

Republican	11.3%
Democrat	14.3%
No Party Affiliation	20.6%
Other	8.0%

Central and South Florida Counties

Map 1  
 Central and South Florida Counties



Voter registration data for 2014 indicate that 83.8% of all registered Latino voters in the state of Florida were found in the central and south Florida counties depicted in Map 1. Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties had 57.4% of all Florida's registered Latinos in 2014, and 26.4% were found in Pinellas, Polk, Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Brevard, and Hillsborough counties.

Among the two largest Latino nationalities in the state 79% of the total Cuban population lived in South Florida and another 12% in Central Florida in 2014, or 90% of all Florida Cubans were found in both regions. Over 80% of the total Cuban electorate was living South Florida and another 11% in Central Florida in 2014.

Puerto Ricans were not quite as concentrated. Nearly half of the Puerto Rican population of the state lived in Central Florida in 2014 and another quarter was found in South Florida counties. About the same portion of the Puerto Rican electorate was found in each region. (See table 6).

Table 6  
 Percentage of Total Cuban and Puerto Rican Florida Populations  
 and Electorate Living in South and Central Florida, 2014

Percentage of Total Populations			
	South Florida	Central Florida	Total South and Central Florida
Cuban	78.5%	11.6%	90.2%
Puerto Rican	25.0%	49.1%	74.1%

Percentage of Total Electorates			
	South Florida	Central Florida	Total South and Central Florida
Cuban	80.2%	10.8%	91.0%
Puerto Rican	25.9%	49.0%	74.8%

## Central Florida

In Central Florida Latinos comprised 14% of total registered voters in 2014 and 45% of them were registered as Democrats, 36% with no party affiliation, and 17.2% as Republicans. (See tables 7 and 8).

Registered Voters in Central Florida by Race/Ethnicity  
as of 2014 General Election

Non-Hispanic Whites	2,175,314	66.2%
Latinos	458,088	13.9%
Non-Hispanic Blacks	417,769	12.7%
Unknown	81,361	2.5%
Asians	75,619	2.3%
Other	44,230	1.3%
Multi-Racial	20,939	0.6%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	10,573	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,284,116</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Florida Department of State, Division of Elections, 2014 General Election, County Voter Registration by Party by Race, Generated October 18, 2014.

Note: Central Florida Counties include Pinellas, Polk, Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Brevard, and Hillsborough.

Table 8  
Party Affiliation of Latinos Registered to Vote as of  
2014 General Election, Total Central Florida

Democrat	207,956	45.4%
No Party Affiliation	164,438	35.9%
Republican	78,754	17.2%
Other	6,940	1.5%
Total	458,088	100.0%

Source: Florida Department of State, Division of Elections  
2014 General Election, County Voter Registration by Part  
by Race, Generated October 18, 2014.

Note: Central Florida Counties include Pinellas, Polk,  
Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Brevard, and Hillsborough.

Central Florida has been transformed between 1990 and 2014 by the large scale migration of Latinos from varied regions. The most numerous have been Puerto Ricans, followed by Mexicans, Cubans, Dominicans, and Colombians. Yet, while the Puerto Rican population has increased fivefold between 1990 and 2014, their percentage of all Latinos in Central Florida has remained exactly the same: 41% in 1990 and 2014. It is the Cuban population, which although expanding in real terms, has fallen as a percentage of all Latinos in Central Florida from 21% in 1990 to 13% in 2014. (See figures 20 and 21).

Figure 20  
Latino Population of Central Florida, 1990 - 2014  
Largest Nationalities

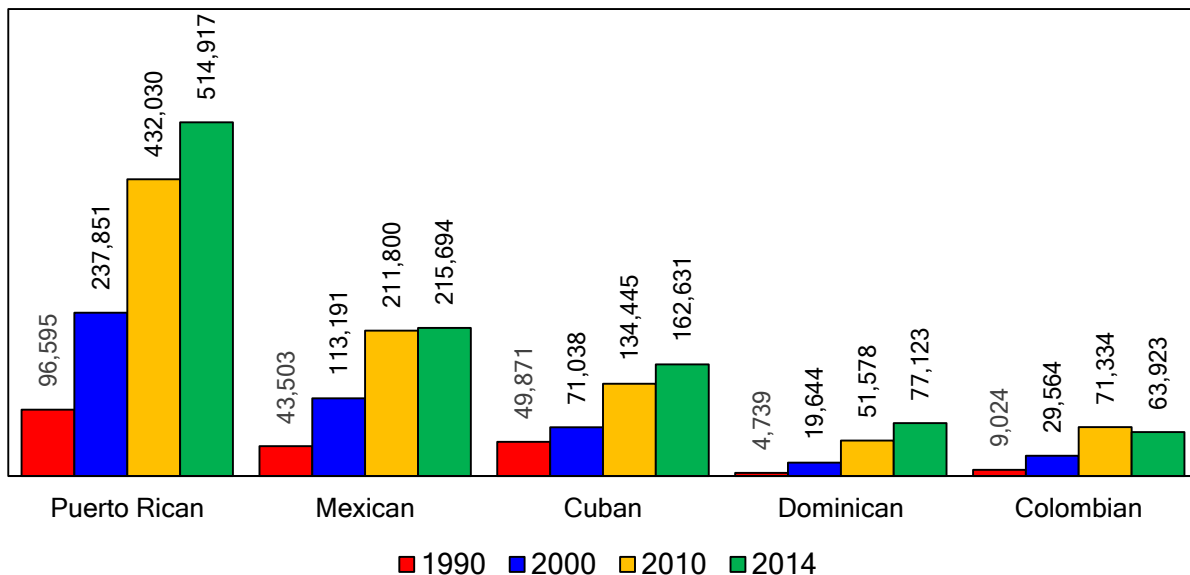
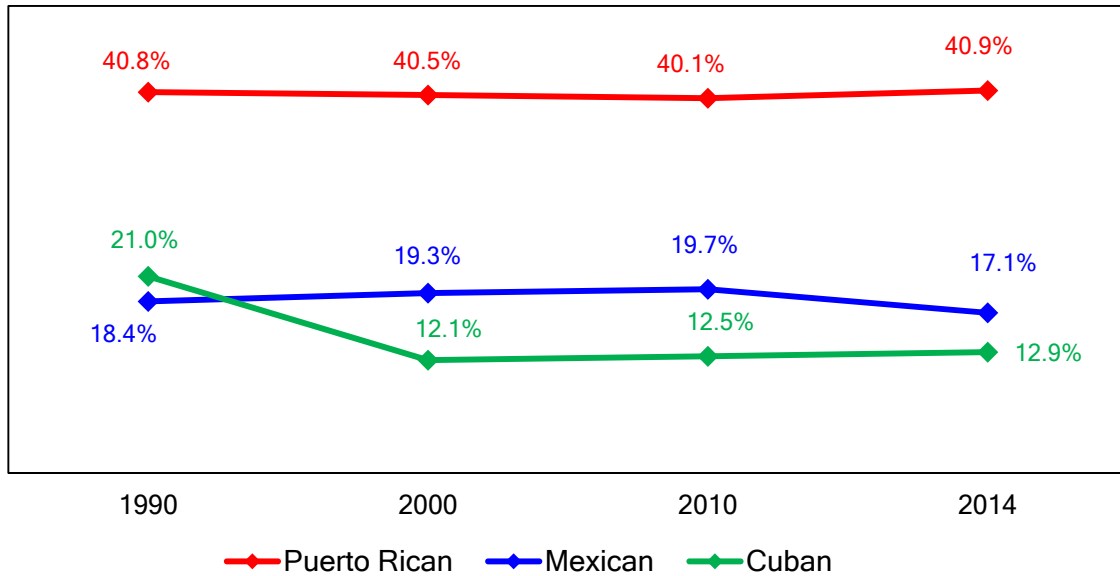




Figure 21  
 Latino Population of Central Florida, 1990 - 2014  
 Largest Nationalities (in percentage of all Latinos)



However, because Puerto Ricans are all U.S. citizens, their share of the electorate has been much larger than their portion of the overall Latino population. Yet, there has been no significant rise from 1990 when Puerto Ricans were 51% of all eligible Latino voters in Central Florida and 52% in 2014. The 'real' story in Central Florida is the decline of the Cuban electorate from 20% to 12% of eligible Latino voters between 1990 and 2014. (See figures 22 and 23). Still, however, in November 2016 the turnout rate and voter preference of Puerto Ricans in Central Florida may be of extraordinary importance to the result of the state's election in a tight race.

Figure 22  
 Latino Electorate of Central Florida, 1990 - 2014  
 Largest Nationalities

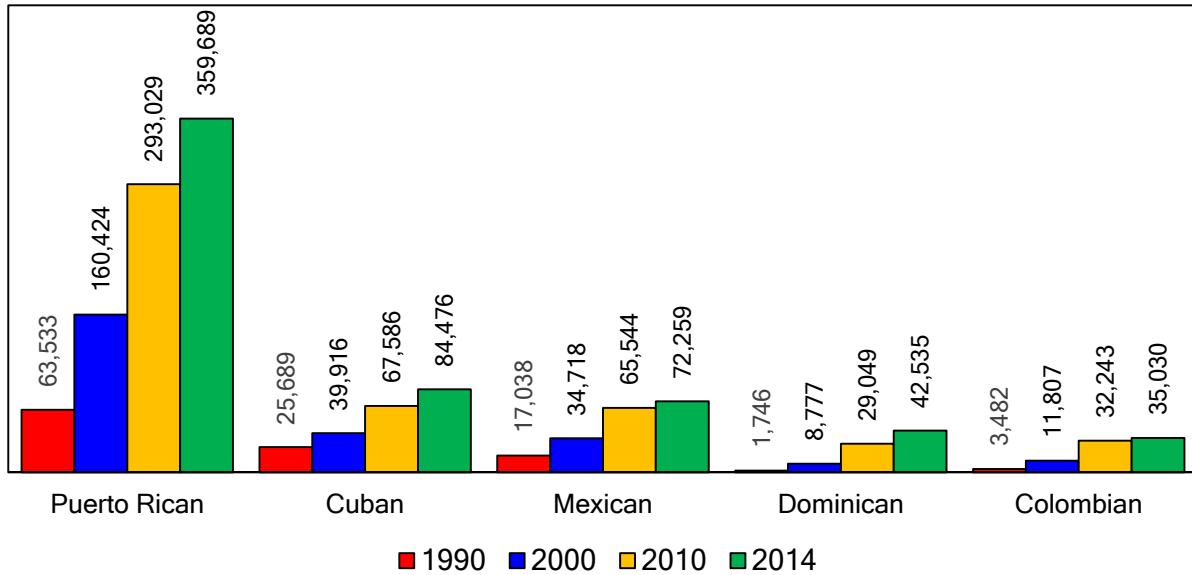
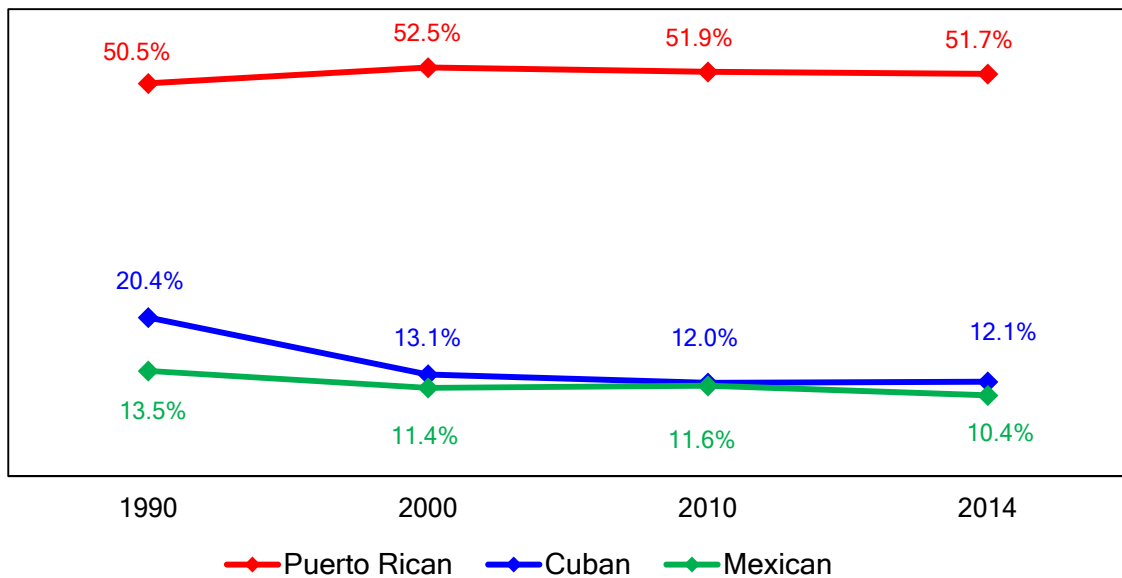


Figure 23  
 Latino Electorate of Central Florida, 1990 - 2014  
 Largest Nationalities (in percentage of all Latinos)



## South Florida

In South Florida Latinos comprised 31% of total registered voters in 2014 and 34% were registered as Democrats, significantly lower than in Central Florida. This, in all likelihood was reflective of a large, and older, Cuban population which comprised 43% of the South Florida Latino electorate and their traditional Republican-leaning sentiments. Nearly 33% of all South Florida Latinos were registered as Republicans in 2014, significantly higher than the 17% in Central Florida, and 32% of all Latinos were registered with no party affiliation. (See tables 9 and 10). Still, as was the case in Central Florida most registered voters were Democrats or independents with no party affiliation.

Table 9  
Registered Voters in South Florida by Race/Ethnicity  
as of 2014 General Election

Non-Hispanic Whites	1,391,769	43.2%
Latinos	996,773	31.0%
Non-Hispanic Blacks	596,590	18.5%
Unknown	103,272	3.2%
Asians	54,363	1.7%
Other	52,728	1.6%
Multi-Racial	16,602	0.5%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	7,652	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,219,749</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Florida Department of State, Division of Elections, 2014 General Election, County Voter Registration by Party by Race, Generated October 18, 2014.

Note: South Florida counties include Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach.

Table 10  
Party Affiliation of Latinos Registered to Vote as of  
2014 General Election, Total South Florida

Democrat	336,584	33.8%
Republican	324,387	32.5%
No Party Affiliation	320,197	32.1%
Other	15,605	1.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>996,773</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Florida Department of State, Division of Elections, 2014 General Election, County Voter Registration by Party by Race, Generated October 18, 2014.

Note: South Florida counties include Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach.

Cubans were still the largest Latino population sector at 41% of South Florida's total Latino population in 2014. But this had fallen from a majority of 55% in 1990. There was no other particular Latino national sub-group which approached the size of the Cuban population in the three counties comprising South Florida, but still non-Cubans were the majority of the overall population in 2014. (See figures 24 and 25).

Figure 24  
Latino Population of South Florida, 1990 - 2014  
Largest Nationalities

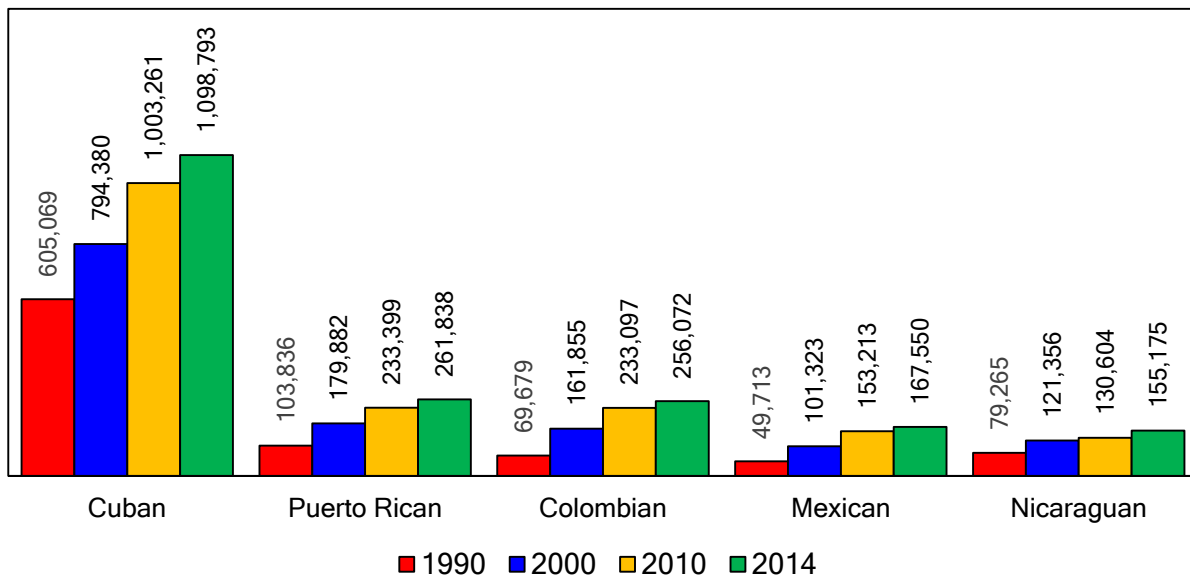
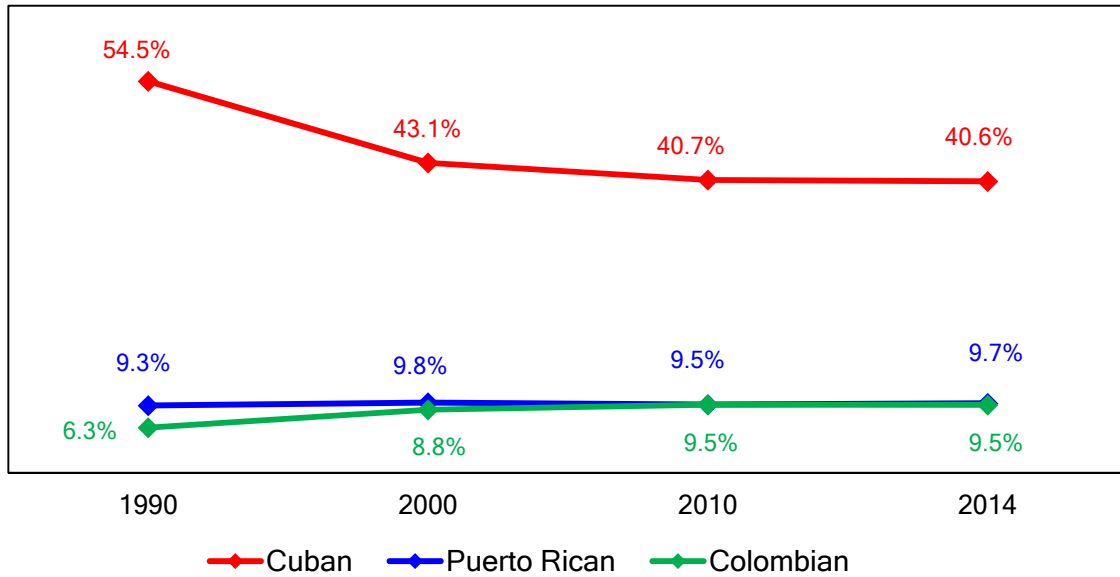


Figure 25  
 Latino Population of South Florida, 1990 - 2014  
 Largest Nationalities (in percentage of all Latinos)



Cubans are still a plurality of the South Florida Latino electorate at 43% in 2014, but this is significantly lower than the 63% of the Latino electorate which was Cuban in 1990. Puerto Ricans have also declined from 17% to 13% of the South Florida Latino electorate between 1990 and 2014 reflecting the growth of Colombians and other Latino nationalities which are eligible to vote. (See figures 26 and 27).

Figure 26  
 Latino Electorate of South Florida, 1990 - 2014  
 Largest Nationalities

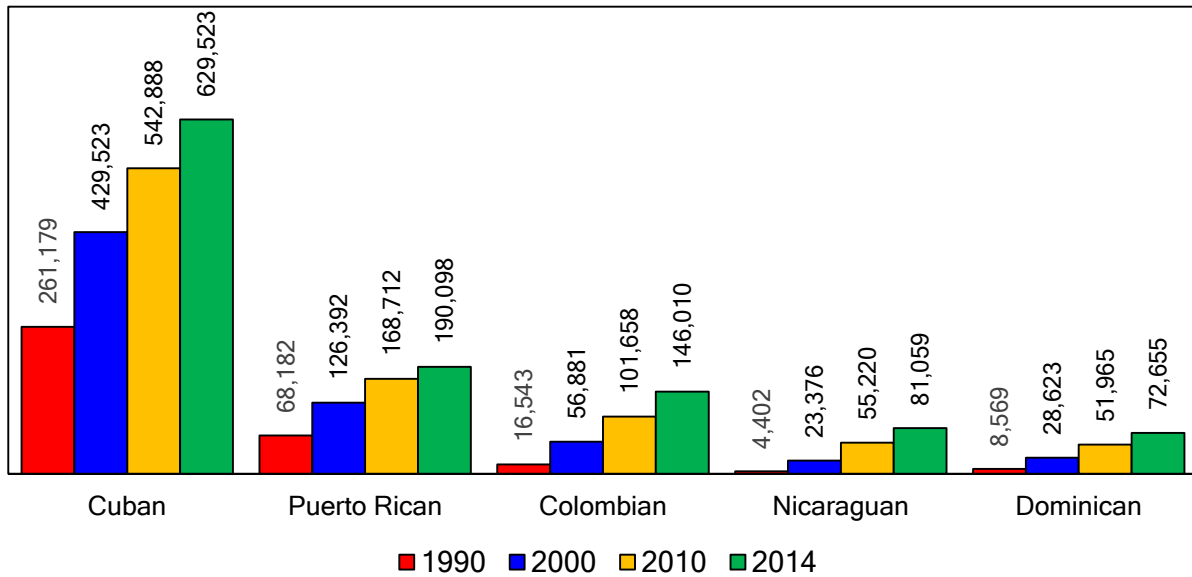
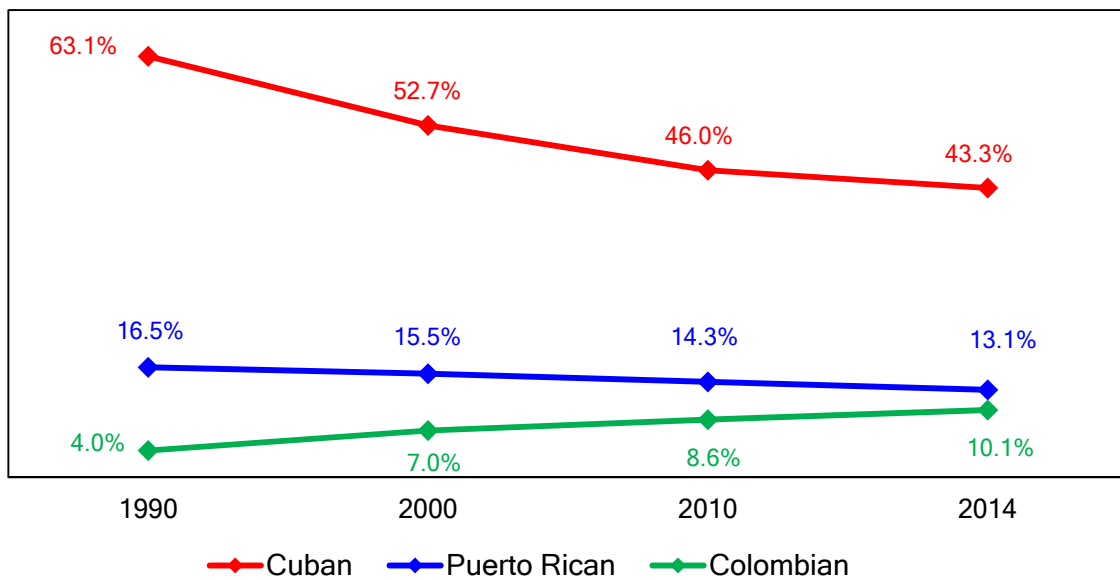


Figure 27  
 Latino Electorate of South Florida, 1990 - 2014  
 Largest Nationalities (in percentage of all Latinos)



## Conclusion

The demographic transformations occurring in Florida between 1990 and 2014 have resulted in a dramatic shift in the political persuasions of the state's Latino electorate. The state was once defined by the 'Cuban vote' in presidential elections but this is no longer the case. The Cuban population has increased in real terms but because of the arrival of Puerto Ricans, Central Americans, and South Americans of various nationalities, the Cuban population has declined as a percentage of the overall population, electorate, and voters. For the November 2016 election over 70% of the Florida electorate will be non-Cuban.

Within the Cuban voting population there has been a clear generational change as well as an accompanying shift in political persuasions among younger, U.S.-born Cubans. Cubans once voted solidly Republican but this was no longer the case in the presidential election of 2012 when, according to preference polls, 48% of Cubans leaned toward President Obama's reelection. This was up from 25% of all voters who favored Al Gore in the contested 2000 presidential race. All other Latino national groups in the state, according to exit polls, heavily supported President Obama in 2012.

An examination of voter registration rolls reveals a clear shift away from the Republican Party since 2006. A significantly larger percentage of Florida's Latinos register as Democrats or with no party affiliation. The conventional wisdom is that no Republican candidate in the 2016 presidential election can win the White House without a victory in Florida. There is no way, of course, to predict how different race/ethnic groups in the state will vote in November 2016, nor what voter turnout rates will be.

However, with respect to Latinos several factors are very clear. First, they will play a critical role in determining the outcome in Florida as they will account for about 20% of all votes cast. Second, it is highly likely that they will support the Democratic candidate by a larger margin than the 60% rate of 2012. Third, it will be extraordinarily difficult for a Republican candidate to carry Florida because of the shift in the demographic structure, voter registration patterns, and presidential preferences among the state's Latinos.

In a close presidential election Florida's Latino voters could determine who wins the White House in November 2016.