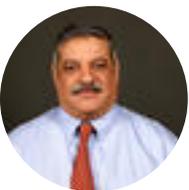


Poll: Florida Hispanic voters favor Hillary Clinton over Donald Trump

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Hillary Clinton has a strong lead over Donald Trump among Florida Hispanics, an advantage that could make the difference in winning or losing the close contest for the state's 29 electoral votes.

Polls conducted by Florida Atlantic University's Business and Economics Polling Initiative released Thursday also found Clinton leading among Hispanic voters in four other battleground states: Colorado, Nevada, North Carolina and Ohio.

Florida is the biggest battleground prize in the **presidential election** and Clinton has support of 53 percent of Hispanic voters in the Sunshine State. Trump has 34 percent. **Libertarian Gary Johnson** was the choice of 3 percent — less than in any of the other states — and Green Party candidate **Jill Stein** had less than 1 percent.

Clinton needs the support of Hispanics, who account for more than 15 percent of Florida's registered voters, to win the state. The RealClearPolitics average of Florida polls has Clinton and Trump tied at 45 percent.

"Hispanics are one of the fastest-growing populations in the United States. **Republicans** cannot continue to underperform with them and maintain a realistic ability to win some of these battleground states," Kevin Wagner, an FAU political scientist said in a written poll analysis. "The electoral map becomes increasingly difficult for Republicans if they cannot narrow these large margins."

Clinton's 19-percentage point advantage among Florida Hispanics is significant, but the poll's findings weren't unalloyed good news.

- Her advantage is less than her leads over Trump in the other four states surveyed.

- Her Florida lead lags **Barack Obama**'s performance among Hispanic voters in the last two presidential elections. In 2008, he received 57 percent of the Hispanic vote in Florida and in 2012 he won 60 percent of the Hispanic vote. Obama narrowly won the state in both elections.

- Her lead comes from voters younger than age 55. The candidates are much closer among voters 55 and older. The youngest voters are the most difficult to motivate to turn out to actually cast ballots.

"Clinton is doing well among young Hispanic voters, now she has to motivate them to go out and vote," Monica Escaleras, director of the FAU polling initiative said in a statement.

Clinton hasn't won over Julian Pardo, 31, of Davie, who voted for Bernie Sanders in the March 15 Florida Democratic presidential primary.

He's sure he won't vote for Trump, who he said "does not have the personality to be president. I think the way he talks and the way he expresses ideas shows he doesn't want to benefit the people."

Pardo said his choice is between Clinton and not voting, and doesn't know what he'll do. "I'm undecided on Clinton."

Here's a breakdown the results by age group:

- Voters age 18 to 34, Clinton has 62 percent to Trump's 21 percent.

- Voters age 35 to 54, Clinton leads with 63 percent to 23 percent for Trump.

- Voters age 55 to 74, Trump has slight advantage, 49 percent to 43 percent for Clinton.

- Voters age 75 and older, Clinton has a small advantage, 45 percent to 38 percent.

Roberto Barrantes, 64, and Judith Castillo, 68, are in the closely divided, likely to vote category.

Barrantes, a Democrat who lives West of Boca Raton, said he trusts Clinton, especially on his top issues of the economy and health care, and plans to vote for her. "I think Donald Trump would be a disaster for the country," he said.

Castillo, a Pembroke Pines Republican, detests Clinton, who she regards as a liar, and admires Trump for his background in business instead of politics.

"I can't even find a word to describe her," she said. "Is Donald Trump perfect? No. Does Donald Trump say things I don't agree with? Yes. But would I want him in the White House at this point? You better believe I would."

Castillo believes polls are understating support for her candidate. "There are many people out there who are silent voters who don't want to say they're for Trump," she said. "He's going to win big."

Hispanic voters in Florida have a more favorable view of Clinton and a less favorable view of Trump than recent polls show of the overall population in Florida.

FAU found Clinton is viewed positively by 49 percent of Florida Hispanics and unfavorably by 42 percent for a net positive of 7 percentage points. A New York Times Upshot/Siena College Research Institute poll released Monday found Clinton was viewed favorably by 40 percent of likely Florida voters and unfavorably by 53 percent, for a net negative of 13 points.

Trump is viewed positively by 33 percent of Florida Hispanics and negatively by 58 percent for a net negative of 25 points. The Times/Siena College poll of likely Florida voters found 39 percent had a favorable view of Trump and 55 percent unfavorable, for a net negative of 16 points.

Still, Florida is a relative bright spot for Trump. He's viewed far more positively by Hispanics in the Sunshine State than the other four states. In Colorado, where 80 percent of Hispanics have an unfavorable impression of Trump, he has a net negative favorability of 64 percentage points. In Colorado, 73 percent of Hispanics in Colorado are of Mexican heritage; Trump has alienated many Mexican-Americans with his negative descriptions of immigrants from the nation and his pledge to build a wall on the southern U.S. border.

Florida Hispanics were once seen as overwhelmingly Republican because of longstanding support from Cuban-American voters in South Florida.

As recently as 2004, Florida was a much better state for Republican presidential candidates seeking Hispanic support than it is today. Republican George W. Bush won his re-election that year with the support of 56 percent of the state's Hispanic voters. His brother, Jeb Bush, was then the state's governor, and both Bushes courted Hispanic voters and enjoyed political support in the community.

Florida in the 21st century has become home to many Democratic-leaning Hispanic voters, especially people who have moved to the central part of the state from Puerto Rico. And younger voters with Cuban ancestry don't share their parents' and grandparents' allegiance to the Republican Party.

The state's Hispanic voters see Clinton as the better candidate on a range of issues: the economy (59 percent), immigration (60 percent), terrorism and national security (58 percent), education (65 percent), and treatment of minorities (67 percent). Hispanics in the other four states also said Clinton was better than Trump on all the issues.

On health care, 67 percent said Clinton would be better than Trump. But a majority, 54 percent, of Florida Hispanics want to see Obamacare repealed; 46 percent want to keep it.

Pollsters also asked about another highly controversial issue: gun control. An overwhelming majority of 68 percent want laws concerning the sale of guns to be made more strict, 24 percent want them to remain the same and 9 percent said gun sale laws should be less strict.

FAU polled 400 registered voters in each state in English and Spanish from Sept. 15-19 using both automated telephone calls and online surveys. Each state survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 5 percentage points. The sample size for subgroups, such as voters of different ages, is much smaller, which makes the margin of error higher.

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