

THE UNIVERSITY COLLABORATIVE NEW AMERICANS EXIT POLL PROJECT

Preliminary Results from the 2008 New York City Voter Exit Poll

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2008 New Americans Exit Poll: Preliminary Findings

This summary reflects a partial analysis of the 2008 New Americans Exit Poll data, based on 94 percent of surveys collected on Election Day as New Yorkers exited the polls. Because the official turnout statistics are not yet available, we cannot yet properly weight the data or report a margin of error for the survey. The findings, therefore, should be interpreted with care.

New York City Foreign Born Voters, 2008 (estimated percentages)

Length of Time in the U.S.	Foreign Born
5 to 10 Years	8.0
11 to 15 Years	15.3
16 to 20 Years	22.3
More Than 20 Years	53.3
When Naturalized	
2006 - 2008	17.6
2000 - 2005	24.8
1995 - 1999	17.3
1990 - 1994	12.0
1980 - 1989	14.3
1970 - 1979	7.7
Before 1970	6.3

Findings 2008

1) Immigrants continue to swell the ranks of first time voters in New York City and remain a driving force in the growth of the city's electorate. Nearly half (41.1 percent) of all those voting for the first time in this presidential election were foreign born. For the past three presidential elections, three in ten of all foreign born voters were first time voters compared to lower rates among the native born (one in ten in 2000; two in ten in 2004, and one in ten in 2008).

2) Our newest citizens make up the largest cohort of foreign-born voters. Nearly 18% of foreign-born voters became citizens during the last two years, and an additional 25% of foreign-born voters naturalized between 2000 and 2005; those who naturalized between 2000 and 2005 make up the largest cohort of all foreign-born voters.

3) Turnout in New York City increased by about 3 percent over 2004. This increase was driven by higher turn-out rates in Black and Latino-majority election districts, and offset by a slight decrease in white majority election districts. Among Latino-majority election districts turnout increased by 5.4 percent (17,717); African American-majority districts increased by 13%. Asian American districts, however, showed a decrease in turnout of 6.6 percent over 2004 levels (note: these figures are the machine totals and do not include absentee and paper ballot counts).

FINDINGS (continued)

4) In the face of national anti-immigrant sentiment, New York City voters retain a positive attitude toward immigration: more favor increasing the number of immigrants legally permitted to come to the U.S. to live (34.2 percent) than decreasing it (25.1), with foreign born voters only slightly more positive in their in their views (38.6 percent) than the native born (33.2).

5) In near identical numbers, immigrant and native born voters share the same concerns in this election - they report that their choice for president was motivated primarily by the issue of jobs and the economy, followed by the financial crisis and health care. Immigration itself was the top issue for only a tiny fraction of voters among either group (.4 percent of native born voters expressed immigration as their top concern compared to 4.4 percent of the foreign born).

6) Similarly, both groups name jobs and the economy, education, and health care as the top concerns for state government. Equal proportions of people among the foreign and native born want state government to focus on education as much as job creation and financial management.

7) With respect to city politics and policy, both groups oppose extending the city's term limits law in equal proportions (55.5 percent of native born and 55.2 percent of immigrants). When asked whether the mayor and city council should cut services or raise taxes to address the impending budget, only 15.2 percent of the foreign born and 20.9 percent of the native born favor cutting city services. Immigrants are slightly more likely to favor government at all levels doing more to solve problems (87.3 percent) than are the native born (82.6 percent).

8) Political parties and campaigns do a poor job of contacting immigrant voters. While immigrant and native-born voters are contacted at similar rates by unions (estimated 12%)—only about 9% of foreign born voters report being contacted by political parties and only about 11% by political campaigns, which is roughly half the rate that native-born voters report being contacted (about 18% and 20% respectively).

9) Governor Paterson needs to make inroads to gain the approval of foreign-born voters. Foreign-born voters approve Governor Paterson's performance at a lower rate than native-born voters (40% approval rating by foreign-born vs. 50% by native-born).

TURNOUT AND FIRST TIME VOTERS

Voter Turn Out				
Racial Composition of Election District	2004	2008	Net Change	Percentage
White Majority	1030314	1002440	-31084	-3.0%
Black Majority	486548	549587	62752	13.0%
Hispanic Majority	353073	372254	18938	5.4%
Asian Majority	33823	31604	-2219	-6.6%
Total	2281450	2346909	65459	2.9%

Proportion of First Time Voters Among all New York City Voters (estimated percentages)

	Native Born	Foreign Born	Total
2000 Presidential	10.8	34.4	19.6
2002 State and Federal	4.2	14.6	8.1
2004 Presidential	17.2	29.8	21.8
2005 Municipal	2.5	7.1	4.3
2008 State and Federal	2.8	8.4	4.5
2008 Presidential	13.7	28.9	17.9

New York City First Time Voters, 2008 (estimated percentages)

Nativity	
Native Born	50.5
Foreign Born	41.1
Race	
White	22.2
Black	20.6
Latino	36.0
Asian	14.8
Other	6.5

Length of Time in the U.S. By When Naturalized New York City Foreign Born Voters, 2008 (estimated percentages)

	5-10 Years	11-15 Years	More Than 15 Years
2006-2008	69.7	28.8	9.3
2000-2005	22.4	50.0	20.4
1995-1999	5.3	14.4	19.5
1990-1994	0	5.5	14.9
1980-1989	0	0	18.0
1970-1979	0	0	9.8
Before 1979	0	0	8.2

First Time Voter, Age by Race
New York City Voters, 2008
 (estimated percentages)

	White	Black	Latino	Asian	Other
First Time Voter	22.2	20.6	36.0	14.8	6.5
Age					
18 to 29 Years	55.6	59.2	60.4	39.0	64.6
30 to 45 Years	26.9	21.8	23.4	32.4	31.2
46 to 65 Years	21.2	23.0	30.1	23.9	1.8
Over 65 Years	2.5	.7	3.7	2.9	0

PARTY AND CANDIDATE PREFERENCES

Vote Choice and Party Registration
New York City Voters, 2008
 (estimated percentages)

	Native Born	Foreign Born	Total
President			
Barack Obama (D)	83.7	82.3	83.3
John McCain (R)	13.8	15.8	14.3
New York State Senate			
Democratic Candidate	79.5	79.2	79.3
Republican Candidate	13.1	14.1	13.3
Party Registration			
Democratic Party	72.1	70.3	71.8
Republican Party	10.4	10.3	10.3
Other Party	4.2	2.7	3.8
No Party Registration	12.5	16.0	13.4

Vote Choice by Race and Nativity
New York City Voters, 2008
 (estimated percentages)

	White		Black		Latino		Asian		Other	
	Native	FB	Native	FB	Native	FB	Native	FB	Native	FB
Obama	75.3	68.9	95.4	92.6	91.2	88.5	89.8	74.6	90.6	91.6
McCain	22.5	29.2	2.0	2.7	8.8	9.2	6.8	24.4	3.1	8.4

Vote Choice by Age and Nativity
New York City Voters, 2008
 (estimated percentages)

	18-29 years		30-45 years		46-65 years		Over 65 years	
	Native	FB	Native	FB	Native	FB	Native	FB
Obama	88.7	91.7	85.8	84.3	77.6	81.8	69.4	69.7
McCain	8.5	5.4	11.5	13.2	20.3	16.5	27.8	30.3

**Proportion of Voters Reporting Voter Contacts
In the Month Before the 2008 Election
New York City Voters, 2008**
(estimated percentages)

Contacted by:	Native Born	Foreign Born	Total
Union	11.8	11.7	11.9
Family, Friend, Neighbor	24.1	17.5	22.2
Political Party	17.5	8.7	14.6
Political Campaign	20.0	10.8	16.9
Immigrant Organization	.8	2.1	1.2
Automated Call	14.8	8.9	12.9
Contacted by Any Means			

ISSUES

**Issues and Voting
New York City Voters, 2008**
(estimated percentages)

	Native Born	Foreign Born	Total
Single Most Important Issue in Deciding Vote for President			
Jobs/Economy	31.0	27.0	30.1
Financial Crisis	15.3	20.3	16.9
War in Iraq	14.9	14.9	14.5
Health Care	8.1	6.0	8.0
Education	6.6	8.7	7.2

**Role of Government
New York City Voters, 2008**
(estimated percentages)

	Native Born	Foreign Born	Total
Agree:			
Government should do more to solve problems	82.6	87.3	84.0
Government is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals	17.4	12.7	16.0

**Attitude Toward Levels of Legal Immigration to the U.S.
New York City Voters, 2008**
(estimated percentages)

	Native Born	Foreign Born	Total
Number of Immigrants Permitted to Come to the U.S. to Live Should Be:			
Increased a lot	16.9	21.1	17.9
Increased a little	16.3	17.5	16.3
Decreased a lot	15.1	6.4	12.8
Decreased a little	13.0	10.4	12.3
Same as now	21.1	21.6	21.4
Don't Know	17.6	23.1	19.3

City and State Politics
New York City Voters, 2008
 (estimated percentages)

	Native Born	Foreign Born	Total
Do you approve or disapprove of the job Gov. Paterson is doing?			
Approve	50.5	40.0	48.0
Disapprove	11.9	12.3	12.3
Most important issues for state legislature			
Jobs/Economy	67.9	64.2	67.3
Education	66.5	65.0	65.9
Health Care	47.9	48.7	48.2
Should the Mayor and city council cut services or raise taxes to address the city' fiscal crisis			
Cut services	19.2	21.3	19.5
Raise taxes	20.8	15.2	19.3

Racial Composition of Candidate's Support, New York City Voters, 2008
 (estimated percentages)

	Obama	McCain	Total
Race			
White	37.7	69.3	41.8
Black	22.3	2.8	19.7
Latino	25.0	13.2	23.5
Asian	9.3	12.7	9.8
Other	5.8	2.0	5.2

Race Questions by Racial Group, New York City Voters, 2008
 (estimated percentages)

	White	Black	Latino	Asian	Other
Candidate of Same Racial Background Understands My Issues Better	13.9	50.7	43.1	38.2	29.2
Race Relations in NYC Gotten Better Over Past 4 Years	53.2	14.3	19.6	8.7	4.2

Background:

The University Collaborative/New Americans Exit Poll (NAEP) project began in 2000. Since then, we interviewed over 17,000 New York City voters, including nearly 6,000 foreign born citizen voters leaving their polling places on Election Day in 2000, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2008. The result is a unique database of information on the political preferences, attitudes and behavior of New Yorkers participating in recent national, state and municipal elections. To facilitate the full participation of immigrant voters, surveys are made available in English, Chinese, Spanish, Russian, and Korean translations, and are administered by a trained, multi-lingual survey staff recruited from the city's ethnic and immigrant neighborhoods.

The funding for the 2008 exit poll was provided by Barnard College, Columbia University, the City University of New York, the New York Latino Research and Resources Network at the University of Albany/State University of New York, New York Community Trust, Solidago Foundation and the Four Freedoms Fund.

The project enjoys a fruitful collaboration with the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) which provides support through staff time dedicated to project recruitment and implementation, and field work supervision on Election Day.

Methodology

The sampling strategy was originally developed by Prof. Mollenkopf. It involves linking census boundaries with the city's electoral geography and importing demographic data into election district boundaries; grouping the city's 6,291 election districts into 1,360 polling sites, and stratifying them by the proportion foreign born. The demographic data used for sampling for the first four NAEP surveys (2000, 2002, 2004, 2005) was drawn from the 1990 U.S. Census and adjusted with data from the 2000 U.S. Census. In 2006 we replaced the sampling frame with a new sample using only 2000 census data. Next, we randomly sampled polling sites within three strata. The lowest stratum is set at 18 percent foreign born or less, the election district average for the percentage foreign born in the population. Foreign born voters, therefore, are slightly over-sampled in the NAEP. We do this in order to build up large enough representative samples of the city's major immigrant groups appropriate for finer statistical analysis.