

TOP ISSUES FOR LATINO VOTERS IN SWING STATES FOR THE 2020 ELECTION

Nevada

Florida

Arizona

Texas

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Latino voters are critical to electoral outcomes in four battleground states: Arizona, Florida, Nevada, and Texas. The economy, healthcare, the coronavirus outbreak, and racial and ethnic inequality are the most important issues for Latino registered voters going into the 2020 election.¹

In this report, we provide evidence that shows why these 4 issues are at the top of Latinos' concerns in 2020 in the 4 states where Latino voters are most likely to influence the results of the election.

Our main findings are:

- The majority of Latino workers earn less than \$15 an hour in Arizona (53.9%), Florida (52.9%), and Texas (54.8%). In Nevada, almost half (49.9%) earn less than \$15 an hour.
- Latinos receive lower pay than white workers for doing similar work. The hourly wage difference between white and Latino workers in the same job with the same education is 2% in Arizona, 4.8% in Florida, 1.6% in Nevada, and 5.3% in Texas.
- Most of the wage gap between Latinos and white workers reflects group educational differences, underlining the importance of investing in education for Latino communities. However, remaining wage gaps, even after accounting for educational differences, suggest that employment discrimination remains a problem.
- Latinos are more likely to be uninsured than any other demographic group in these four states. The proportion of Latinos without health insurance is 19% in Arizona, 21% in Florida, 21% in Nevada, and 29% in Texas.
- Latinos are overexposed to the coronavirus and have disproportionate rates of infection. In Arizona, Latinos make up 32% of the population and 45% of COVID-19 cases. In Florida, Latinos make up 26% of the population and 38% of COVID-19 cases. In Nevada, Latinos represent 29% of the population and 45% of COVID-19 cases, and in Texas, they represent 40% of the population and 45% of COVID-19 cases.

To address these key issues for Latino voters the following policies should be enacted:

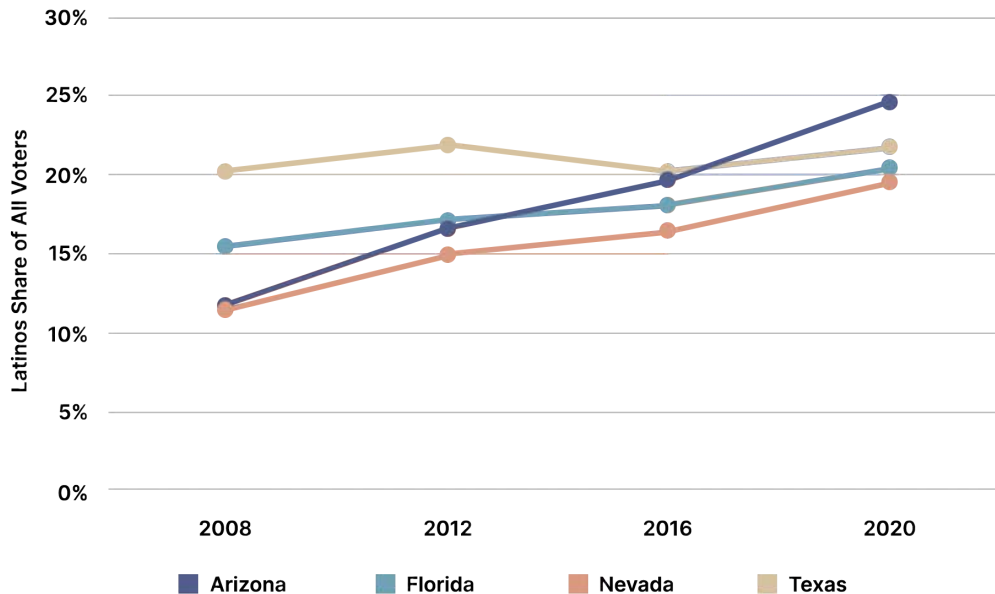
1. Increase the federal minimum wage to at least \$15 an hour with annual increases larger than increases in the consumer price index, and eliminate exclusions of minimum wage regulations for domestic, farm, and tipped workers.
2. Increase Latino representation, retention, and graduation in institutions of higher education through affirmative action in admissions, robust financial aid, and integrated social welfare programs to support housing, food security, health care, and other service needs. Through access to higher education, Latinos will have access to better paying jobs.
3. Establish universal health coverage and access for all regardless of immigration or employment status.
4. Expand and enforce workplace health and safety regulations for all essential workers at risk of being exposed to the coronavirus.

INTRODUCTION

Latino voters will be crucial in deciding the outcome of the 2020 election. Latinos are expected to make up at least 20% of all voters in Arizona, Florida, Nevada, and Texas, states where opinion polls show a very close race between Donald Trump and Joe Biden.² These four states account for 84 votes in the Electoral College.

More than ever before, Latinos have the power to decisively swing the 2020 presidential election in favor of one presidential ticket because of the growth of this electorate in 4 key battleground states.³ As seen in **Figure 1**, the number and proportion of Latino voters in these 4 states have risen considerably over the last 4 election cycles. In Arizona, the proportion of voters who are Latino more than double between 2008 (11.7%) and 2020 (24.7%). The share of Latino voters in Florida and Nevada has also increased rapidly in the past 4 election cycles.

Figure 1. Share of voters who are Latino in Arizona, Florida, Nevada, and Texas, 2008-2020



Source: Michael Herndon et al., *The Power of the New Majority: A 10 State Analysis of Voters of Color in the 2020 Election*, (Los Angeles: UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative, February 2020), [available online](#).

Notes: 2020 numbers are projections based on national and state survey data, exit poll data, and official vote histories.

The economy, healthcare, the coronavirus outbreak, and racial and ethnic inequality are the four most important issues among registered Latino voters going into the 2020 presidential election. Latinos care about a variety of key issues, seven of which poll higher than immigration.⁴

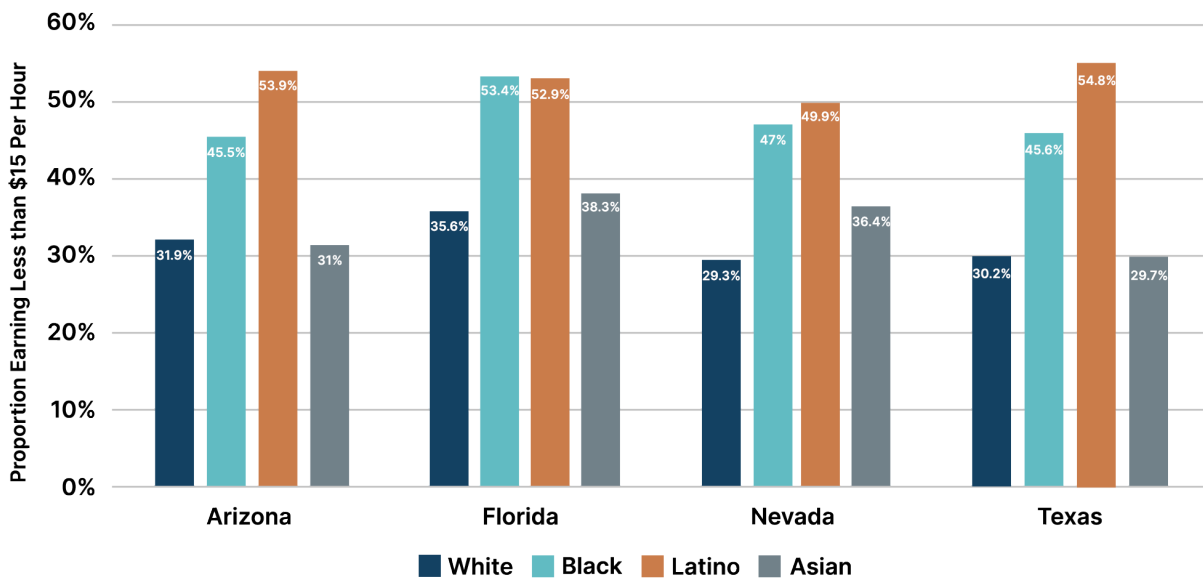
In this report, we provide statistical indicators that show why these 4 issues are at the top of Latinos' concerns in 2020 in the 4 states where Latinos are most likely to influence the results of the election. First, we provide the proportion of workers earning less than \$15 an hour for white, Black, Latino, and Asian workers. Second, we analyze how hourly wage gaps between white and Latino workers exist even when we compare workers with similar educational background and in similar jobs. Third, we compare the proportion of white, Black, Latino and Asian people under 65 years old without health insurance, and last, we compare the proportion of COVID-19 cases for each racial or ethnic group with their proportion of the overall population.

FINDINGS

THE ECONOMY: LATINOS RECEIVE LOW WAGES FOR THEIR HARD WORK

The majority of Latino workers in Arizona, Florida, and Texas and half of those in Nevada make under \$15 per hour, less than a living wage. As seen in **Figure 2**, Latinos are the racial or ethnic group with the largest share of workers earning less than \$15 an hour in all four states: Arizona (53.9%), Florida (52.9%), Nevada (49.9%), and Texas (54.8%). In Florida, the majority of Black voters also make less than \$15 an hour (53.4%).

Figure 2. Proportion of workers earning less than \$15 an hour by race or ethnicity



Source: Estimations by the Center for Employment Equity based on the American Community Survey 2017 5 year sample. Detailed data for all 50 states is [available online](#).

Notes: Latinos may be of any race; all other racial groups are non-Hispanic.

Nationally, 42% of all U.S. jobs pay \$15 an hour or less. The incidence of low wage work varies tremendously across states, from a low of 20% in Washington, D.C. to a high of 47% in Arkansas. In all states Latino workers are more likely to be in these low wage jobs than white workers, and in most states than Black workers.⁵

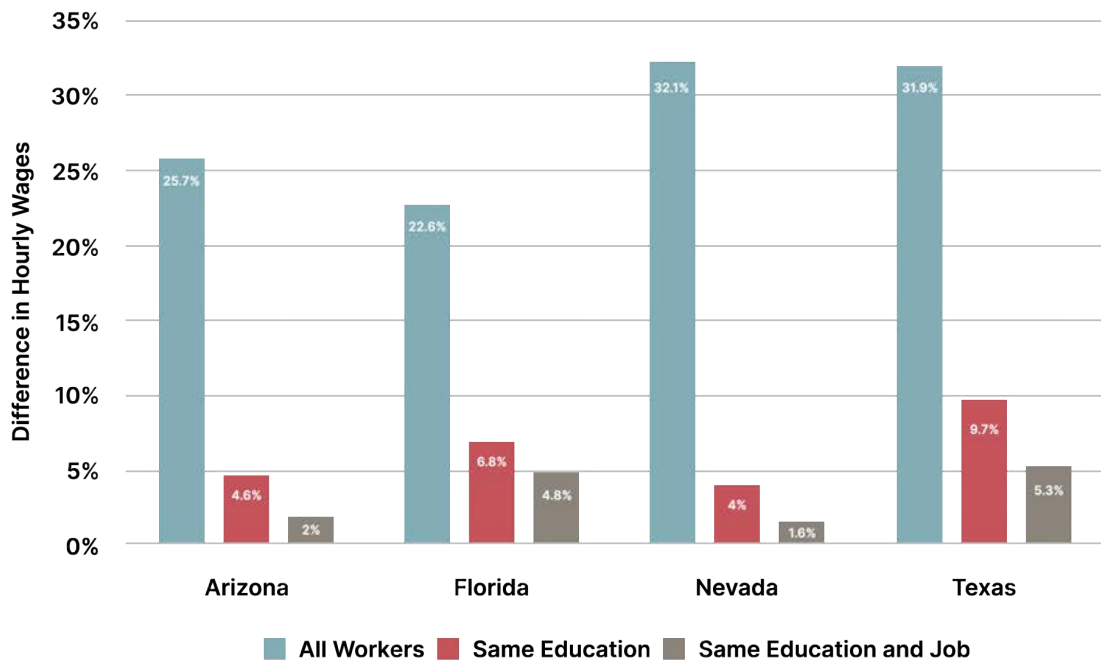
RACIAL INEQUALITY: LATINOS RECEIVE LOWER HOURLY WAGES THAN WHITE WORKERS, EVEN WHEN THEY HAVE THE SAME LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND WORK IN THE SAME JOB

Latinos receive lower pay than white workers for doing similar work. As seen in Figure 3, Latino workers earn significantly less than their white counterparts. The total hourly wage gap between white and Latino workers is 25.7% in Arizona, 22.6% in Florida, 32.1% in Nevada, and 31.9% in Texas (see blue bars in **Figure 3**). This total gap serves as an indicator of income inequality between white and Latino workers even if it does not account for differences in the average educational level of white workers and Latino workers.

When we compare white and Latino workers who have similar educational attainment, we observe smaller but still significant wage gaps. The hourly wage gap between white and Latino workers with similar educational attainment is 4.6% in Arizona, 6.8% in Florida, 4% in Nevada, and 9.7% in Texas (see red bars in **Figure 3**).

The wage gap between white workers and Latino workers remains even among workers with the same educational attainment and in the same job. The hourly wage difference between white and Latino workers in the same job with the same education is 2% in Arizona, 4.8% in Florida, 1.6% in Nevada, and 5.3% in Texas (see brown bars in **Figure 3**).

Figure 3. Hourly wage gaps between white and Latino workers



Source: Center for Employment Equity Analysis of American Community Survey 2017 5-year sample. A detailed data visualization for all states across the United States is [available here](#).

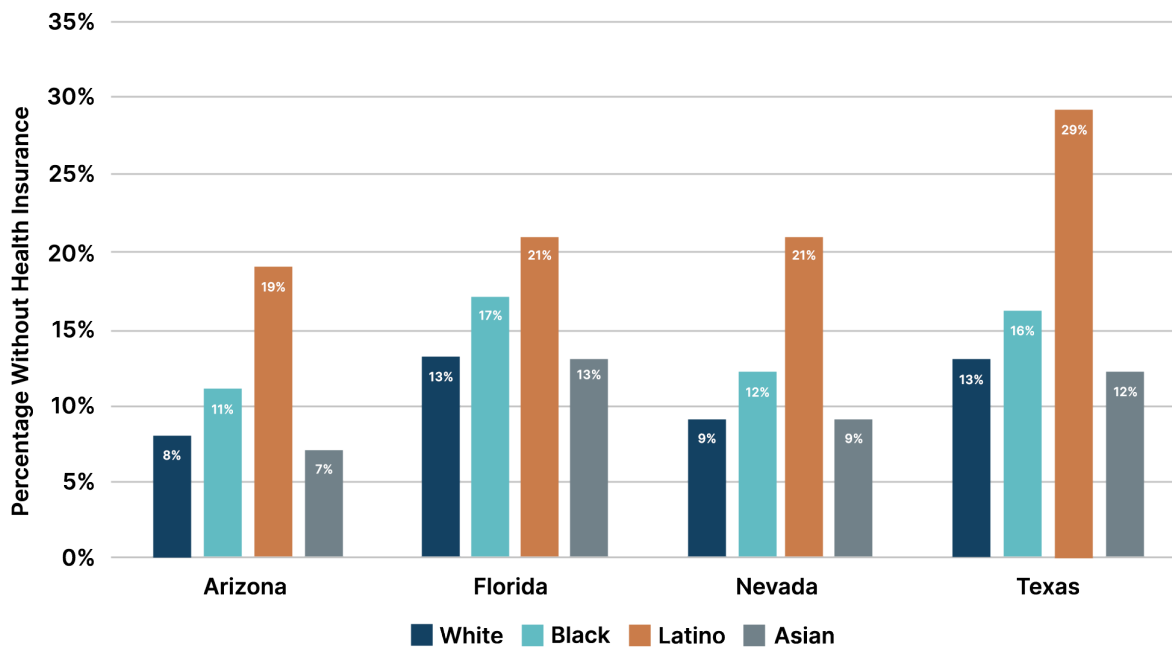
Notes: We provide hourly wage gaps between white and Latino workers using three measures. First, we provide the difference in average hourly wages between all white workers and all Latino workers without taking into account differences in educational attainment or in occupation (see blue bar). Then, we show the same wage gap once we account for the differences in average educational attainment between both groups (see red bar). Last, we account for differences in occupations between white and Latino workers (see brown bar).

Wage gaps are produced by multiple processes, including group differences in human capital investments like education, segregation at the firm and job level in hiring, and sometimes discrimination in pay for people in the same jobs.⁶ Improving labor force incorporation for Latinos requires policies that increase wages for workers across all jobs, improve educational opportunity so Latinos can take advantage of higher paying jobs, and eradicate discrimination in hiring and pay. Our research shows that it is the first two – the quality of jobs and access to education— which are most decisive in these four swing states.

HEALTHCARE: LATINOS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE UNINSURED THAN OTHER DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

Latinos are more likely to be uninsured than any other demographic group in these four states. As seen in **Figure 4**, the proportion of Latinos under 65 without health insurance is 19% in Arizona, 21% in Florida, 21% in Nevada, and 29% in Texas. Compared to whites, the proportion of Latinos that are uninsured is 2.4 times higher in Arizona, 1.6 times higher in Florida, 2.3 times higher in Nevada, and 2.2 times higher in Texas.

Figure 4. Proportion of people under 65 years old without health insurance by race or ethnicity



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation estimates based on the 2008-2018 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates, [available online](#).

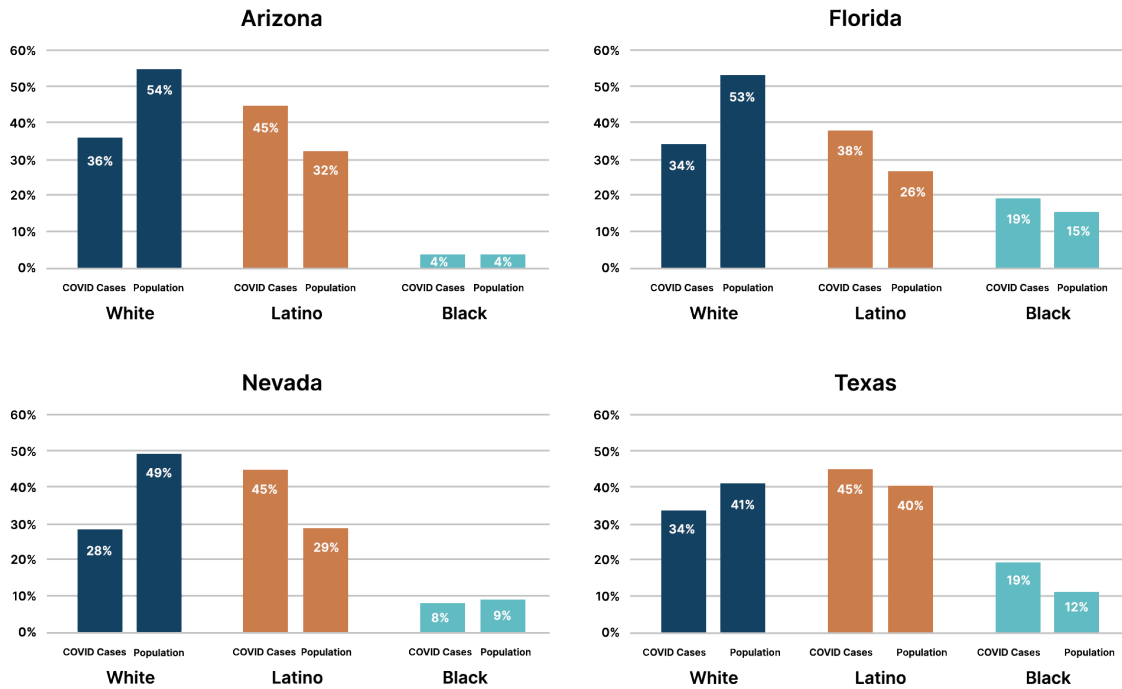
Notes: Latinos may be of any race; all other racial groups are non-Hispanic.

While the 2010 Affordable Care Act reduced the US uninsured population by nearly half, twenty-eight million Americans, 10.4% of the population were uninsured in 2018.⁷ In each of these key swing states the Latino population is uninsured at twice the national rate or more. They are also more likely to be uninsured than other groups. Extending the Affordable Care Act to the entire population, probably with an extension of Medicaid coverage and lower reliance on low wage employers to provide health care insurance, is a key issue for the Latino community.

COVID-19: LATINOS HAVE BEEN DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTED BY THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

Latinos have been disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus outbreak. As seen in **Figure 5**, compared to their proportion of the population, Latinos are more likely to get infected by COVID-19. In Arizona, Latinos make up 32% of the population and 45% of COVID-19 cases. In Florida, Latinos make up 26% of the population and 38% of COVID-19 cases. In Nevada, Latinos represent 29% of the population and 45% of COVID-19 cases, and in Texas, they represent 40% of the population and 45% of COVID cases.

Figure 5. Comparison between the proportion of COVID-19 cases and the proportion of a State’s population represented by Whites, Latinos, and Blacks



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of The COVID Tracking Project, COVID Racial Data Tracker. Proportion of State’s population by Race/Ethnicity is based on the Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of 2018 American Community Survey, [available online](#).

Notes: Data on COVID-19 cases was up to September 27, 2020. Latinos may be of any race; all other racial groups are non-Hispanic.

Latinos have higher rates of COVID-19 infection than other racial groups because they are overexposed to the virus at work.⁸ The overrepresentation of Latinos in essential jobs where maintaining social distance or working from home is difficult i.e. nursing home attendants, cashiers, shelf stockers, truck drivers exposes Latino workers to the virus.⁹ There are two implications to this pattern. The first is that Latino workers, far from being competitive threats to others, are essential to the normal working of the economy, a fact underlined by their high rates of employment among essential workers during the pandemic. The second, is that the health of the economy and the well-being of essential workers are intimately connected. At least in these swing states, candidates who ignore the quality of jobs and health care for Latino workers risk losing elections.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Latinos and other workers need a new, New Deal and they need it now.¹⁰ Candidates for national and local offices in Arizona, Florida, Nevada, and Texas who want Latino votes should be campaigning on the availability of living wages, educational opportunities, expanded health coverage, and insuring the economic and health well-being of essential workers.

We recommend all candidates and elected officials to prioritize the following policies:

1. Increase minimum wage to at least \$15 an hour nationally, automatically rising with future inflation, and eliminate exclusions of minimum wage regulations for domestic, farm and tipped workers.
2. Increase Latino representation, retention, and graduation in institutions of higher education through affirmative action in admissions, robust financial aid, and integrated social welfare programs to support housing, food security, health care, and other service needs. Through access to higher education Latinos will have access to better paying jobs.
3. Reform healthcare towards a universal single-payer system.
4. Expand and enforce workplace health and safety regulations for all workers fueling our economy.

APPENDIX I: METHODOLOGY

Data to estimate the proportion of workers earning less than \$15 per hour come from the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) of the 2013-2017 5-year American Community Survey (ACS). PUMS data contains individual responses from the American Community Survey and the 5-year dataset has a large enough sample to produce reliable estimates for geographic areas of any size. The data dictionary produced by the Census Bureau with detailed descriptions of each variable in the data can be found [here](#). Hourly wages were calculated by dividing the total wages or salary income earned in the past 12 months by the number of weeks worked during past 12 months obtained through a recode of the variable and then divided by the number of hours people worked in a usual week in that year.

Wage gaps were estimated using regression methods. The overall wage gap is the state average difference in hourly wages between the focal group and a comparison group (e.g. white workers relative to Latino workers). To estimate wage gaps, we used 2013-2017 ACS PUMS 5-year estimates, limiting the dataset to civilians engaged in paid labor at the time of the survey and only to those between the ages of 16 and 65. Wages were calculated by dividing annual income in 2017 dollars by the number of hours the respondent worked in the past 12 months. For all calculations, the natural logarithm of wages was used to control for skewness in the wage distribution. To obtain state specific wage gaps, we performed 51 regressions, one for each State plus the District of Columbia. By estimating separate state regressions for each industry, we allow each state to have state specific coefficients.

The rates of the population 0 to 64 who is uninsured come from estimates by the Kaiser Family Foundation based on the 2018 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates.

COVID-19 cases come from the Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of The COVID Tracking Project, COVID Racial Data Tracker. The proportion of State's population by race or ethnicity is based on the Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of 2018 American Community Survey (ACS)

APPENDIX II: DETAILED DATA TABLES

Table A1. Proportion of vote by racial/ethnic groups, 2008-2020

		2008	2012	2016	2020
ARIZONA	White, non-Hispanic	78.17%	72.01%	70.89%	66.94%
	Latina/o	11.65%	16.58%	19.61%	24.62%
	Black	4.25%	4.39%	4.98%	5.26%
	Asian	2.08%	2.20%	2.02%	1.06%
	Native American	3.84%	4.81%	2.49%	2.15%
FLORIDA	White, non-Hispanic	70.87%	66.98%	67.39%	65.18%
	Latina/o	15.43%	17.26%	18.09%	20.41%
	Black	12.90%	14.02%	12.56%	12.80%
	Asian	1.11%	2.11%	1.98%	2.55%
NEVADA	White, non-Hispanic	72.6%	67.2%	65.4%	61.9%
	Latina/o	11.6%	15.0%	16.4%	19.6%
	Black	10.7%	10.2%	10.7%	10.6%
	Asian	3.4%	7.0%	6.5%	8.3%
TEXAS	White, non-Hispanic	62.96%	58.86%	61.34%	59.73%
	Latina/o	20.12%	21.87%	20.13%	21.67%
	Black	14.85%	15.97%	14.72%	15.00%
	Asian	1.58%	2.55%	3.70%	4.55%

Source: Michael Herndon et al., *The Power of the New Majority: A 10 State Analysis of Voters of Color in the 2020 Election*, (Los Angeles: UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative, February 2020), [available online](#).

Table A2. Proportion of workers making less than \$15 an hour

	All Races	White	Black	Latina/o	Asian
ARIZONA	39.8%	31.9%	45.5%	53.9%	31.0%
FLORIDA	43.3%	35.6%	53.4%	52.9%	38.3%
NEVADA	37.4%	29.3%	47.0%	49.9%	36.4%
TEXAS	41.2%	30.2%	45.6%	54.8%	29.7%

Source: Estimations by the Center for Employment Equity based on the American Community Survey 2017 5-year sample. Detailed data for all 50 states is [available online](#).

Table A3. Wage gaps between white and Latino workers

	No Controls	Controlling for Education	Controlling for Job Segregation
ARIZONA	-25.7%	-4.6%	-2.0%
FLORIDA	-22.6%	-6.8%	-4.8%
NEVADA	-32.1%	-4.0%	-1.6%
TEXAS	-31.9%	-9.7%	-5.3%

Source: Center for Employment Equity Analysis of American Community Survey 2017 5 year sample. A detailed data visualization for all states across the United States is [available here](#).

Table A4. Percent uninsured by racial/ethnic group

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian/Alaska Native	Total
ARIZONA	8.0%	11.0%	19.0%	7.0%	25.0%	13.0%
FLORIDA	13.0%	17.0%	21.0%	13.0%	27.0%	16.0%
NEVADA	9.0%	12.0%	21.0%	9.0%	24.0%	13.0%
TEXAS	13.0%	16.0%	29.0%	12.0%	15.0%	20.0%

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation estimates based on the 2008-2018 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates, [available online](#).

Table A5. Comparison between the proportion of COVID-19 cases and the proportion of a State's population represented by Whites, Latinos, and Blacks

	White		Black		Latino	
	COVID-19 Cases	Population	COVID-19 Cases	Population	COVID-19 Cases	Population
ARIZONA	36%	54%	4%	4%	45%	32%
FLORIDA	34%	53%	19%	15%	38%	26%
NEVADA	28%	49%	8%	9%	45%	29%
TEXAS	34%	41%	19%	12%	45%	40%

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of The COVID Tracking Project, COVID Racial Data Tracker. Proportion of State's population by Race/Ethnicity is based on the Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of 2018 American Community Survey, [available online](#).

ENDNOTES

¹ Jens Manuel Krogstad and Mark Hugo Lopez, “Hispanic Voters Say Economy, Health Care, and COVID-19 Are Top Issues in 2020 Presidential Election,” Pew Research Center, September 11, 2020, [available online](#).

² 2020 numbers are projections based on national and state survey data, exit poll data, and official vote histories. For detailed methodology see Michael Herndon et al., *The Power of the New Majority: A 10 State Analysis of Voters of Color in the 2020 Election*, (Los Angeles: UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative, February 2020), [available online](#).

³ At 9:30 am on October 9, reputable poll aggregator FiveThirtyEight.com had the following polling averages for the 2020 presidential election: Biden leads in Arizona by 3.7 points (48.5% vs 44.8%); Biden leads in Florida by 4.4 points (48.9% vs 44.6%); Biden leads in Nevada by 6.9 points (49.3% vs 42.5%); Trump leads in Texas by 1.6 points (48.4% vs 46.7%).

⁴ Jens Manuel Krogstad and Mark Hugo Lopez, “Hispanic Voters Say Economy, Health Care, and COVID-19 Are Top Issues in 2020 Presidential Election,” Pew Research Center, September 11, 2020, [available online](#).

⁵ Donald Tomaskovic-Devey, Rodrigo Dominguez-Villegas & Eric Hoyt, *The COVID-19 Recession: An Opportunity to Reform our Low Wage Economy?*, (Amherst, MA: Center for Employment Equity, May 2020), [available online](#).

⁶ Petersen, Trond, and Ishak Saporta. “The opportunity structure for discrimination.” *American Journal of Sociology* 109, no. 4 (2004): 852-901.

⁷ Jennifer Tolbert, Kendal Orgera, Natalie Singer, and Anthony Damico, *Key Facts about the Uninsured Population*. Kaiser Family Foundation, December 2019, [available here](#).

⁸ Although focusing on the high infection rates of black workers, an earlier report by the Center for Employment Equity also demonstrates that Latino infection rates rise when they are more likely to be employed in essential customer facing jobs: Caroline Pryor and Donald Tomaskovic-Devey, *How Covid Exposed Healthcare Deficits for Black Workers*, Center for Employment Equity, August 2020, [available online](#).

⁹ David Hayes-Bautista and Paul Hsu, “Uninsured Working Latinos and COVID19: Essential Business at Risk”, *UCLA Center for the Study of Latino Health and Culture*, April 2020, [available online](#).

¹⁰ Clare Hammonds, Jasmine Kerrissey & Donald Tomaskovic-Devey, *Stressed, Unsafe, and Insecure: Essential Workers Need A New, New Deal*. Center for Employment Equity June 2020, [available online](#).



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