



2016 PRIMARY ELECTION PROFILE

# FLORIDA



**ELECTION DAY:**  
**TUESDAY, MARCH 15, 2016**

**ELECTORAL COLLEGE VOTES: 29**

**TOTAL POPULATION (2014):**

**19,893,297**

**HISPANIC POPULATION (2014):**

**4,788,870**



In the last four presidential elections, Florida has been a key battleground state with extremely competitive contests that have had a significant impact on the outcome of the presidential race. The Hispanic vote has played a pivotal role in each of these elections. In November 2000 and 2004, Hispanic support for President George W. Bush (R) helped him carry the state and garner the Electoral College votes needed for his victories. During the 2008 contest, the Hispanic vote was particularly critical in helping President Barack Obama (D) win Florida and reverse the Republican trend of the previous two presidential races. According to CNN exit poll data, in the 2008 election, White voters favored Senator John McCain (R-AZ) over Obama by 56%-42%. In contrast, Hispanic voters supported Obama over McCain by 57%-42%.

In Election 2012, the Florida vote was extraordinarily close, and President Obama's margin of victory over Governor Mitt Romney (R) was less than 1%. As was the case in 2008, CNN exit poll data indicate that the Hispanic vote was crucial for Obama's victory. According to these data, White voters favored Governor Romney 61%-37%, while Hispanic voters supported Obama over Romney by 60%-39%.

Florida's Hispanics account for 12% of the state's registered Republican voters, and they are poised to have a significant impact on the outcome of the Republican primary. In the 2008 Presidential primary, McCain received more than half of the Hispanic Republican vote, which helped him gain a critical victory over Romney. While the Republican National Committee (RNC) eventually stripped Florida of half its delegates for moving up its election so early in the primary season, McCain's Florida victory helped sustain the momentum of his candidacy and stall Romney's campaign.

Trends in the migration of Puerto Ricans to Florida from Puerto Rico and other U.S. states are also shaping Florida's Hispanic electorate. According to an analysis of 2014 Census data conducted by Pew Research Center, the number of Puerto Ricans in Florida reached 1.0 million in 2014, an increase of 110% since 2000. The analysis also notes that the Puerto Rican population of the state is approaching the size of the Cuban American population (1.4 million in 2014). When assessing the impact of the Hispanic electorate on Florida's primary and general election, the growth of the Hispanic community and its increasing diversity are trends that bear watching.

In the March 2016 Florida primary, some political observers believe that Florida native son U.S. Senator Marco Rubio (R) must win the state to remain a viable Presidential candidate. Florida's Hispanic voters will play a key role in determining the outcome of the Presidential primary contest in March and Congressional and state primary races in August.

## CONGRESSIONAL RACES

As of this writing, the Hispanic candidates pursuing the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate seat being vacated by Marco Rubio include Lt. Governor Carlos Lopez-Cantera and Pastor Ernesto Rivera. With Florida's reputation as a "swing" state, political observers believe the general election U.S. Senate contest will be one of the most competitive in the nation.

In the U.S. House of Representatives, Florida's three Hispanic Republican incumbents are seeking re-election, and none face serious opposition in their primaries: Carlos Curbelo, Mario Diaz-Balart, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. In the 26th Congressional District, Curbelo is likely to face a strong challenge in the general election from the Democratic nominee. Hispanic contenders for the Democratic nomination include business owner Annette Taddeo and former U.S. Rep. Joe Garcia, whom Curbelo defeated in 2014.

Contenders in Florida's competitive U.S. Senate race involve several incumbent U.S. Representatives, whose candidacies in turn are creating vacancies and open seat contests. In the 6th Congressional district, State Rep. David Santiago (R) is among the candidates

for the seat being vacated by U.S. Rep. Ron DeSantis (R). In the 9th Congressional District, Hispanics are running on both sides of the aisle for the seat being vacated by U.S. Rep. Alan Grayson (D). Former Florida State Rep. Ricardo Rangel (D) and State Senator Darren Soto (D) are seeking the Democratic nomination, and Kissimmee City Commissioner Wanda Rentas (R) is seeking the Republican nomination. In the 18th Congressional District, Martin County School Boardmember Rebecca Negron (R) will face a tough contest in her bid for the Republican nomination for the seat being vacated by U.S. Rep. Patrick Murphy (D).

In the 14th Congressional District, Evelio Gonzalez (R) will face an uphill battle as he pursues the Republican nomination and the opportunity to unseat incumbent U.S. Rep. Kathy Castor (D) in the general election.

# FLORIDA'S HISPANIC POPULATION: 2014

	POPULATION	SHARE OF TOTAL POPULATION
All Hispanics	4,788,870	24%
Hispanic Adults	3,597,204	23%
Hispanic Voting-Age Citizens	2,566,940	18%

# FLORIDA'S HISPANIC ELECTORATE\*

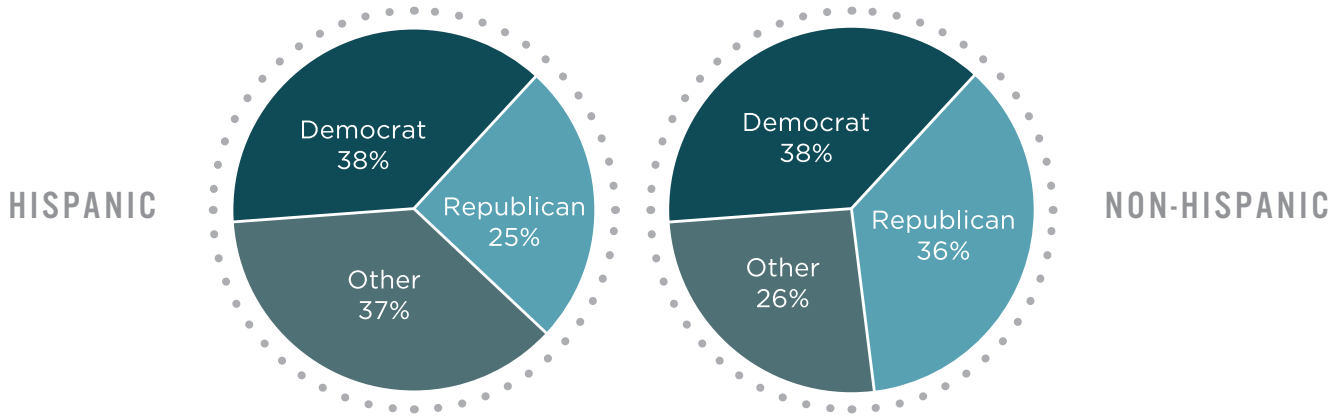
Nearly one of every six  
Florida registered voters  
(16%) is Hispanic.

Total Registered Voters	13,085,913
Hispanic Registered Voters	2,051,671
Hispanic Share of Registered Voters	16%

\* as of February 2016

# PARTY AFFILIATION

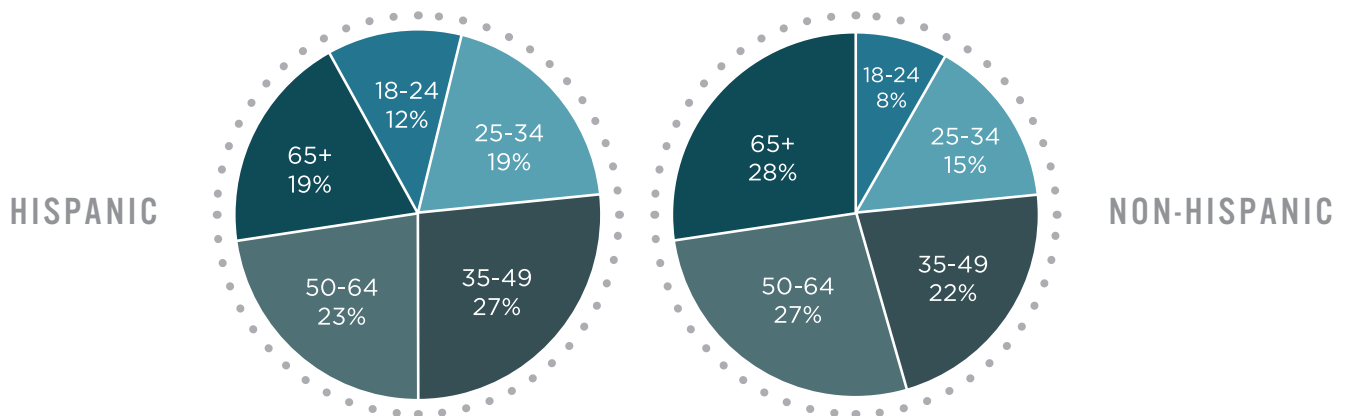
Florida's Hispanics are politically diverse, with significant numbers affiliated with each of the two major political parties. Nearly four of ten Hispanics are Democrats (38%), 25% are Republican, and 37% are not affiliated with either major political party. Non-Hispanics are more likely to be affiliated with the Republican Party than Hispanics (36% compared to 25%). In contrast, Hispanics are more likely to be unaffiliated with either major political party than non-Hispanics (37% compared to 26%).



Hispanics will play a key role in Florida's March presidential primary. Hispanics are 15% of the state's registered Democrats and 12% of the registered Republicans. Hispanics also comprise 21% of voters who are not affiliated with either of the major parties, and both parties are likely to target them in the general election.

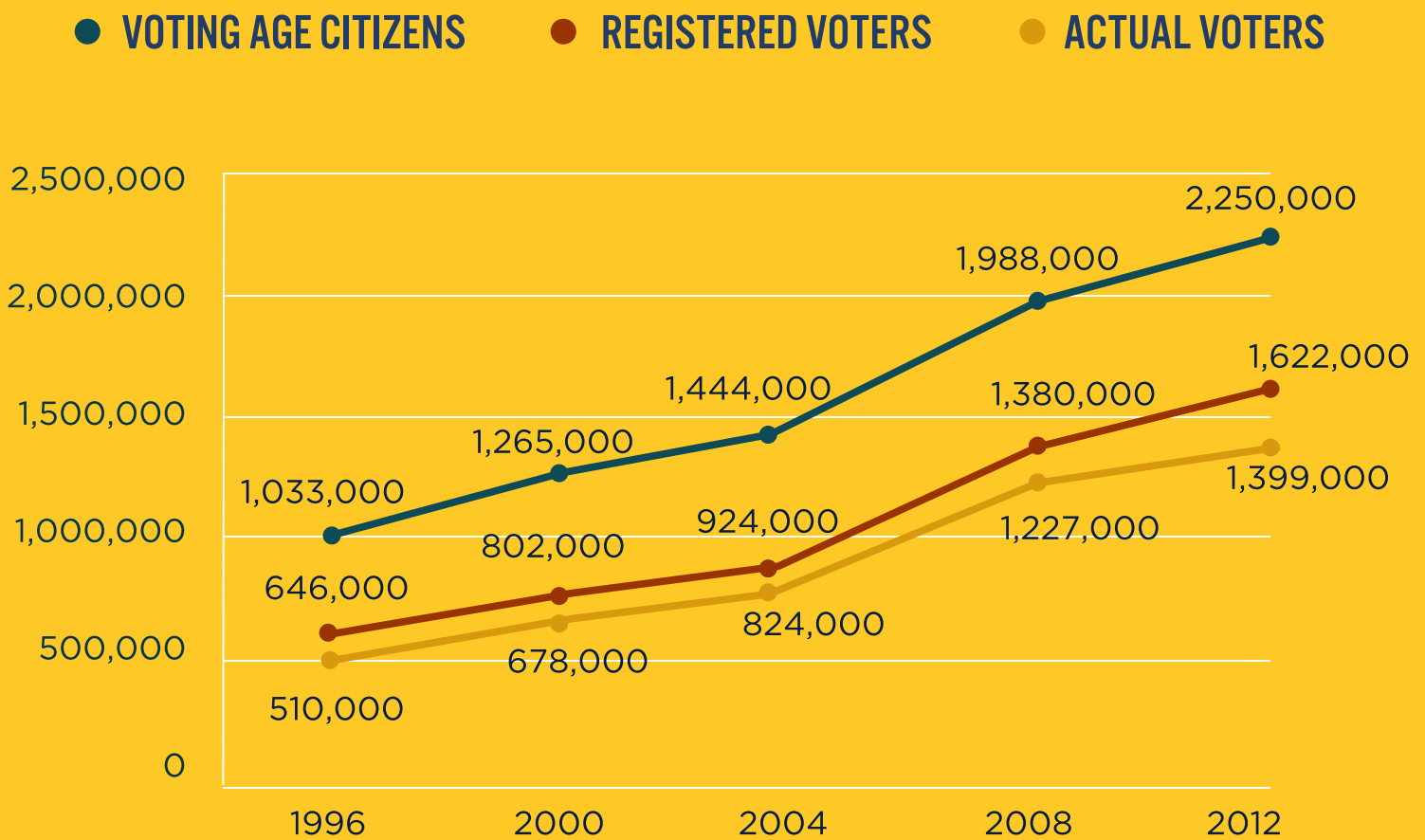
# AGE

Florida's Hispanic registered voters tend to be somewhat younger than non-Hispanics with 18-24 year olds comprising 12% of registered Hispanics, compared to 8% of non-Hispanics. Similarly, 19% of Hispanic registered voters are 25-34 year olds, compared to 15% of non-Hispanics. In contrast, over half (55%) of non-Hispanic registered voters are 50 and older, compared to 42% of Hispanics.



# VOTER TURNOUT

Hispanic voter turnout in Florida Presidential elections nearly tripled from 1996 to 2012, growing from 510,000 to nearly 1.4 million, an increase of 174%.



# HISPANICS IN FLORIDA ELECTED OFFICE

In 2015, 179 Hispanics served in elected office in Florida, with 85% serving at the local level, including county, municipal, school board, judicial and law enforcement, and special district officials.

## HISPANICS IN FLORIDA ELECTED OFFICE: 1996 – 2015

	1996	2001	2005	2011	2015
U.S. Senators	0	0	1	1	1
U.S. Representatives	2	2	3	3	3
State Officials	0	0	0	0	1
State Legislators	12	15	17	14	21
Local Officials	58	73	110	137	153
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>179</b>



For more information about the NALEO Educational Fund's Election 2016 publications, please contact Rosalind Gold at [rgold@naleo.org](mailto:rgold@naleo.org) or (213) 747-7606, ext. 4420.

# SOURCES

NALEO Educational Fund, *2015 National Directory of Latino Elected Officials*.

This report uses data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2014 American Community Survey (ACS), 1-year estimates. The ACS is conducted every year and is an on-going survey of a sample of the population which produces estimates of various population characteristics.

U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), *Voting and Registration in the Elections of November: 1996-2012*. The CPS data used in this report and the survey from which they are derived are subject to certain limitations. First, actual voter turnout and registration may be overestimated by the CPS, because individuals may tend to over-report electoral participation. Additionally, the CPS is a national survey, and estimates derived for smaller sub-groups within the national population may be based on relatively small sample sizes. Consequently, the margin of error associated with estimates of voting and registration for these sub-groups is greater than the margin associated with the national population or larger population sub-groups.

NGP Voter Activation Network (VAN) voter file data, February 2016. VAN data are subject to certain limitations relating to the collection, entry, maintenance and analysis of voter file records.

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