

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 26, 2005**

Contact: Bahram Rajae, American Political Science Association  
[brajaee@apsanet.org](mailto:brajaee@apsanet.org), (202) 483-2512

## EXIT POLLS' CLAIM OF RECORD-HIGH LATINO SUPPORT FOR BUSH FOUND "SUSPECT" BY POLITICAL SCIENTISTS

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Latino voters likely did not support President Bush's re-election in the record numbers two national exit polls reported after the November election. So claims a research team comprised of political scientists David Leal (University of Texas-Austin), Matt Barreto (University of California-Irvine), Jongho Lee (Tomás Rivera Policy Institute), and Rodolfo de la Garza (Columbia University). The findings appear in an article entitled "The Latino Vote in the 2004 Election" published in the January issue of *PS: Political Science and Politics*, a journal of the American Political Science Association.

Two of the three major exit polls conducted in 2004 showed Bush receiving record levels of 44% (Edison/Mitofsky poll) and 45% (*Los Angeles Times* poll) of the Latino vote. A third poll, conducted by the Willie C. Velazquez Research Institute, found 31.4% support for Bush and 67.7% for Kerry—a pattern more consistent with historical data and pre-election polling right up to the election. Yet, despite this notable discrepancy "the 44% figure was accepted by many and often repeated."

The researchers compared results of the Edison/Mitofsky and *Times* exit polls to a wide range of data—including historical trends, party identification, data from pre-election surveys, and the results of official vote totals from Texas. The results of this comparison underscore the likelihood of errors in the exit polls.

In none of 10 pre-election surveys conducted between June 2003 and October 2004 and analyzed by the team did support for President Bush reach 40% among Latinos. In 9 of those surveys, the president received less than 35% of the anticipated Latino vote. Moreover, the researchers found that "with regard to education, income, age, and immigrant status, every subsection of the Latino electorate stated a vote preference lower than 35% for President Bush." While the data does show that President Bush received strong support among Cuban-Americans and non-Catholic Christian Latinos (6% and 18% of the overall Latino electorate), the combined numbers of these two subgroups is simply too small to push overall Latino support to a level of 44%.

Similarly, the national exit poll results suggested that Bush won among Latinos in Texas by 59–41%; instead, preliminary official vote totals indicate that Kerry did much better among Texan Latinos, winning comfortably in the heavily Latino counties near the Mexico border. The upshot is that the president would have to have won 80% or more of the urban Latino vote in Texas to offset this advantage—a development rendered unlikely by preliminary vote totals from heavily Latino districts in Dallas, where Kerry is estimated to have won 71% of the overall Latino vote.

The "data provide little evidence that President Bush received the 44% level of support from Latinos estimated by the 2004 exit polls," the research team summarizes, and "it seems more logical to conclude that the exit polls mistakenly depicted the Latino vote than to accept that Latino preferences could have changed so substantially in such a short period."

The American Political Science Association (est. 1903) is the leading professional organization for the study of political science and has over 15,000 members in 80 countries. To read this article in *PS: Political Science & Politics*, visit [www.apsanet.org/ps/](http://www.apsanet.org/ps/). For more news and information about political science research visit the APSA's media website, [www.politicalsciencenews.org](http://www.politicalsciencenews.org).

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