

PewResearchCenter

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Obama 71%; Romney 27%

## Latino Voters in the 2012 Election

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## About the Pew Hispanic Center

The Pew Hispanic Center is a nonpartisan research organization that seeks to improve public understanding of the diverse Hispanic population in the United States and to chronicle Latinos' growing impact on the nation. It does not take positions on policy issues. The Center is part of the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" based in Washington, D.C., and it is funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, a Philadelphia-based public charity. All of the Center's reports are available at [www.pewhispanic.org](http://www.pewhispanic.org).

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## **About this Report**

Exit poll results for this report were obtained from [CNN's Election 2012](#) website and are based on National Election Pool national and state exit poll surveys of voters as reported on November 6, 2012. In addition to an analysis of the national Latino vote, 12 states were examined. These states are Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin.

## **Acknowledgements**

The authors thank Eileen Patten for excellent research assistance. Seth Motel checked numbers in the report.

## **A Note on Terminology**

The terms “Latino” and “Hispanic” are used interchangeably in this report.

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## 1. Overview

Latinos voted for President Barack Obama over Republican Mitt Romney by 71% to 27%, according to an analysis of exit polls by the Pew Hispanic Center, a Project of the Pew Research Center.<sup>1</sup>

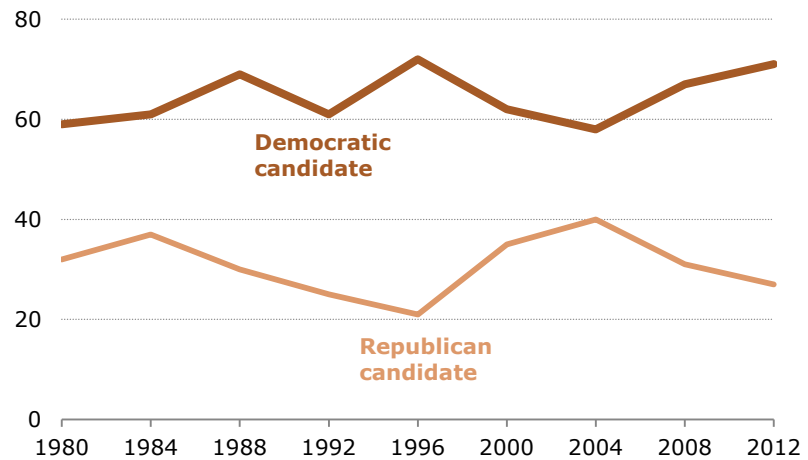
Obama's national vote share among Hispanic voters is the highest seen by a Democratic candidate since 1996, when President Bill Clinton won 72% of the Hispanic vote.

The Center's analysis finds that Latinos made up 10% of the electorate, as indicated by the national exit poll, up from 9% in 2008 and 8% in 2004.<sup>2</sup> The analysis also shows that as a group, non-white voters made up 28% of the nation's electorate, up

Figure 1

### The Hispanic Vote in Presidential Elections, 1980-2012

(% of Hispanics who voted for the ...)



(winner is bolded)

Year	Democratic candidate	Republican candidate	Democratic advantage
1980	Jimmy Carter, 56%	<b>Ronald Reagan, 35%</b>	+21
1984	Walter Mondale, 61%	<b>Ronald Reagan, 37%</b>	+24
1988	Michael Dukakis, 69%	<b>George H.W. Bush, 30%</b>	+39
1992	<b>Bill Clinton, 61%</b>	George H.W. Bush, 25%	+36
1996	<b>Bill Clinton, 72%</b>	Bob Dole, 21%	+51
2000	Al Gore, 62%	<b>George W. Bush, 35%</b>	+27
2004	John Kerry, 58%	<b>George W. Bush, 40%</b>	+18
2008	<b>Barack Obama, 67%</b>	John McCain, 31%	+36
2012	<b>Barack Obama, 71%</b>	Mitt Romney, 27%	+44

Notes: Independent and other third party candidates not shown. In 1992, the independent candidate Ross Perot received 14% of the Hispanic vote. "Democratic advantage" calculated after rounding.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center analysis of national exit poll data, 1980-2012

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<sup>1</sup> The analysis in this report is limited to 12 states. These states are Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin. Voter survey results from the National Election Pool national exit poll and state exit polls were obtained from [CNN's Election 2012](http://www.cnn.com/Election2012) website.

<sup>2</sup> Utilizing the National Exit Poll to estimate the share of the electorate that is Hispanic generally produces an estimate that is higher than that observed in the Census Bureau's November voting supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS). In 2008, according to the National Exit Poll, 9% of voters were of Hispanic origin ([Lopez, 2008](#)). However, according to the 2008 November CPS, 7.4% of voters were Hispanic ([Lopez and Taylor, 2009](#)). Estimates of the Hispanic share of the electorate for 2012 from the 2012 November CPS will not be available until 2013. For more details on the issues associated with using these data sources to estimate the share of the electorate that is Hispanic, see "[Hispanics and the 2004 Election: Population, Electorate and Voters](#)" by Roberto Suro, Richard Fry and Jeffrey Passel.

from 26% in 2008.<sup>3</sup>

## Battleground States

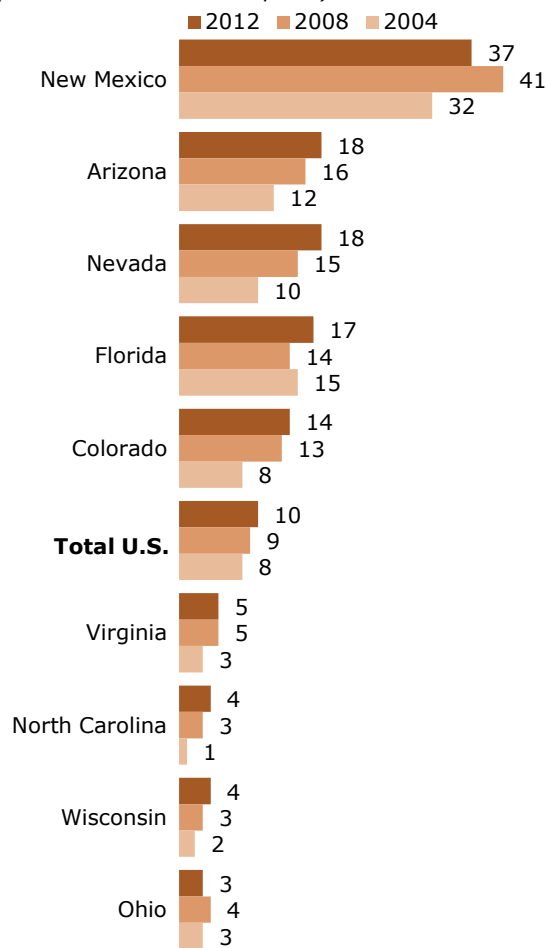
Hispanics made up a growing share of voters in three of the key battleground states in yesterday's election—Florida, Nevada and Colorado.

Obama carried Florida's Hispanic vote 60% to 39%, an improvement over his 57% to 42% showing in 2008. Also, Hispanics made up 17% of the Florida electorate this year, up from 14% in 2008.

The state's growing non-Cuban population—especially growth in the Puerto Rican population in central Florida—contributed to the President's improved showing among Hispanic voters. This year, according to the Florida exit poll, 34% of Hispanic voters were Cuban while 57% were non-Cuban. Among Cuban voters, the vote was split—49% supported Obama while 47% supported Romney. Among the state's non-Cuban voters, Obama won 66% versus 34% for Romney.

In Colorado, Obama carried the Latino vote by a wide margin—75% to 23%. The president's performance among Latino voters in Colorado was better than in 2008, when Obama won the Latino vote 61% to 38%. Hispanics made up

Figure 2  
**Hispanic Share of Voters in Presidential Elections, 2004-2012**  
(% of voters who are Hispanic)



Source: Pew Hispanic Center analysis of 2012, 2008 and 2004 National Election Pool national exit poll and state exit poll results

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<sup>3</sup> While Latino voters were a larger share of the electorate in 2012 than in 2008, the number of Latinos who cast a vote in yesterday's election will not be known until sometime in the spring of 2013, when data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey becomes available. In this year's election, according to Pew Hispanic Center estimates, 23.7 million Latinos were eligible to vote, up from 19.5 million in 2008 (Lopez, Motel and Patten, 2012). Latinos also represent a growing share of all eligible voters and growing shares of eligible voters in many states. Nationally, 11.0% of all eligible voters in the U.S. are Hispanic, up from 9.5% in 2008.

14% of Colorado voters this year, up from 13% in 2008.

In Nevada, Obama won the Hispanic vote 70% to 25%. However, the president's Hispanic vote was down from the 76% share he won in 2008. Among voters in Nevada, the Hispanic share was 18%, up from 15% in 2008.

In other states, the President also carried large shares of the Hispanic vote. Among other battlegrounds, Obama won 68% of the Hispanic vote in North Carolina, 65% in Wisconsin, 64% in Virginia and 53% in Ohio.

### **Top Issues for Hispanic Voters in 2012**

For Hispanic voters, according to the national exit poll, 60% identified the economy as the most important issue (of four listed) facing the country today, virtually the same as the share (59%) of the general electorate that identified the economy as the nation's most important issue. On the other three issues asked about, for Hispanic voters, the economy was followed by health care (18%), the federal budget deficit (11%) and foreign policy (6%).

Throughout this election cycle, the issue of immigration has been an important issue for Hispanics. In the national exit poll, voters were asked about what should happen to unauthorized immigrants working in the U.S. According to the national exit poll, 77% of Hispanic voters said these immigrants should be offered a chance to apply for legal status while 18% said these immigrants should be deported. Among all voters, fewer than two-thirds (65%) said these immigrants should be offered a chance to apply for legal status while 28% say they should be deported.

## Demographics of the Latino Vote

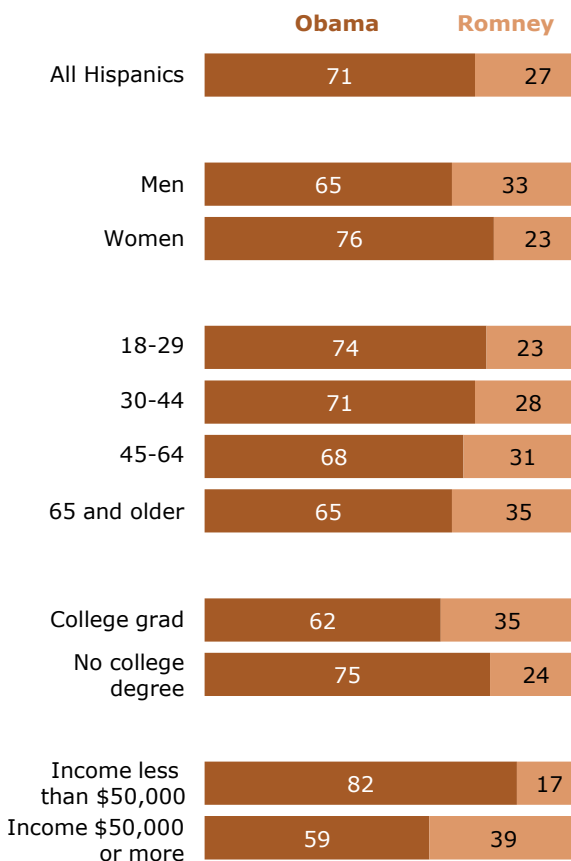
Among Latino voters, support for Obama was strong among all major demographic sub-groups. Yet some differences were evident. According to the national exit poll, Hispanic women supported Obama more than Hispanic males—76% versus 65%.

Latino youth, just as all youth nationwide, supported Obama over Romney, but did so by a wider margin—74% versus 23% for Latino youth compared with 60% versus 37% among all youth. Obama won other Latino age groups by nearly as large a margin.

Among Hispanic college graduates, 62% voted for Obama while 35% supported Romney. By contrast, 75% of Hispanics without a college degree voted for Obama while 24% voted for Romney.

Another gap was evident among Latino voters when viewed by income. Among Latino voters whose total family income is below \$50,000, 82% voted for Obama while 17% voted for Romney. Among Latino voters with family incomes of \$50,000 or more, 59% voted for Obama while 39% voted for Romney.

**Figure 3**  
**Latino Popular Vote in the 2012 Presidential Election**  
(% who voted for ... )



Note: Share of the vote that went to third-party candidates not shown.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center analysis of 2012 exit poll results as reported by CNN

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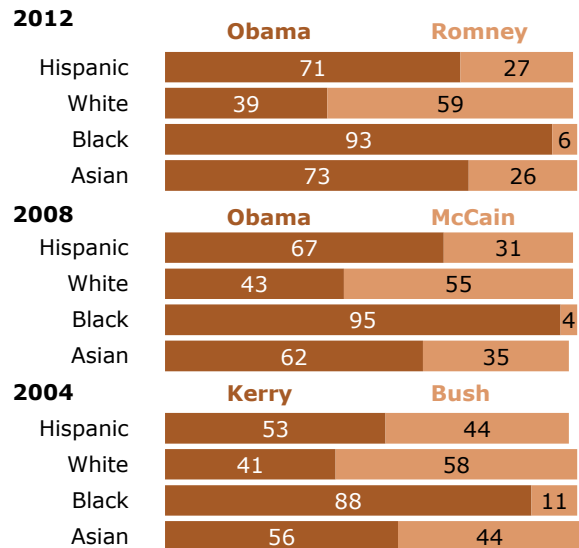


## Appendix A: National and Selected State Results

Figure A1

### Popular Vote in the 2004-2012 Presidential Elections, by Race and Ethnicity

(% who voted for ... )

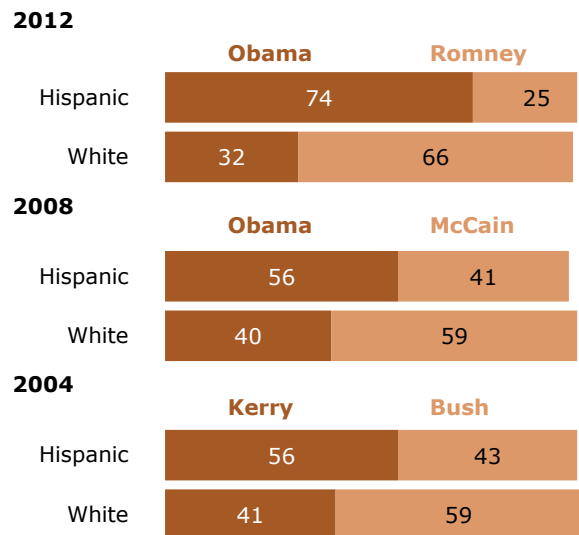


Note: Share of the vote that went to third-party candidates not shown.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center analysis of 2012, 2008 and 2004 National Election Pool national exit poll results

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**Figure A2**  
**Presidential Preference in Arizona, by Race and Ethnicity, 2004-2012**  
 (% who voted for ... )



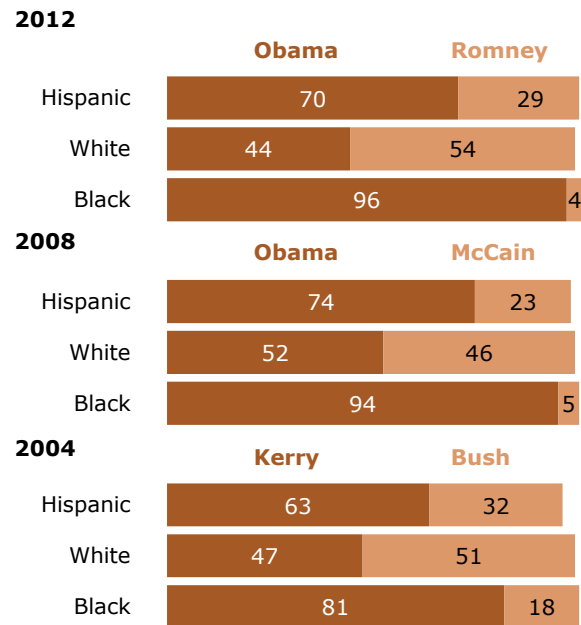
Note: Share of the vote that went to third-party candidates is not shown.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center analysis of 2012, 2008 and 2004 National Election Pool Arizona exit poll results

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**Figure A3**  
**Presidential Preference in California,**  
**By Race and Ethnicity, 2004-2012**

(% who voted for ... )

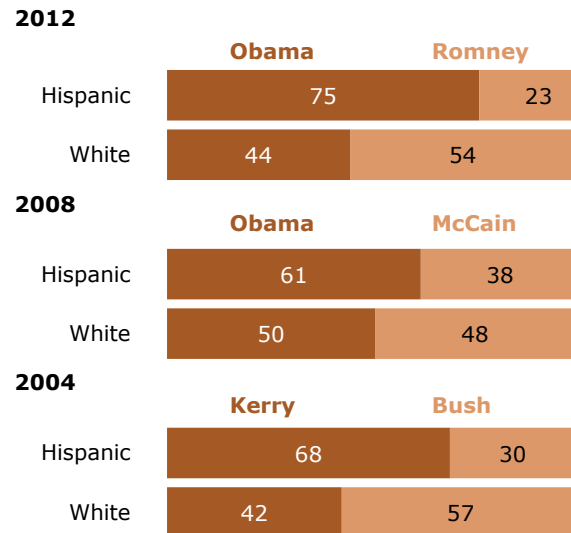


Note: Share of the vote that went to third-party candidates is not shown.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center analysis of 2012, 2008 and 2004 National Election Pool California exit poll results

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**Figure A4**  
**Presidential Preference in Colorado,**  
**By Race and Ethnicity, 2004-2012**  
 (% who voted for ... )



Note: Share of the vote that went to third-party candidates is not shown.

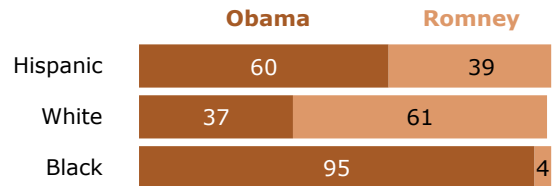
Source: Pew Hispanic Center analysis of 2012, 2008 and 2004 National Election Pool Colorado exit poll results

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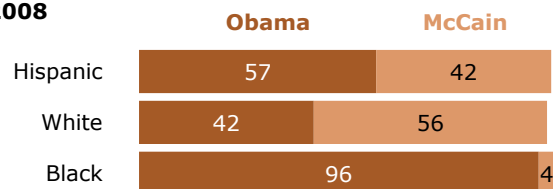
**Figure A5**  
**Presidential Preference in Florida, by**  
**Race and Ethnicity, 2004-2012**

(% who voted for ... )

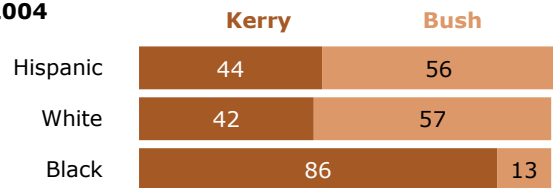
**2012**



**2008**



**2004**



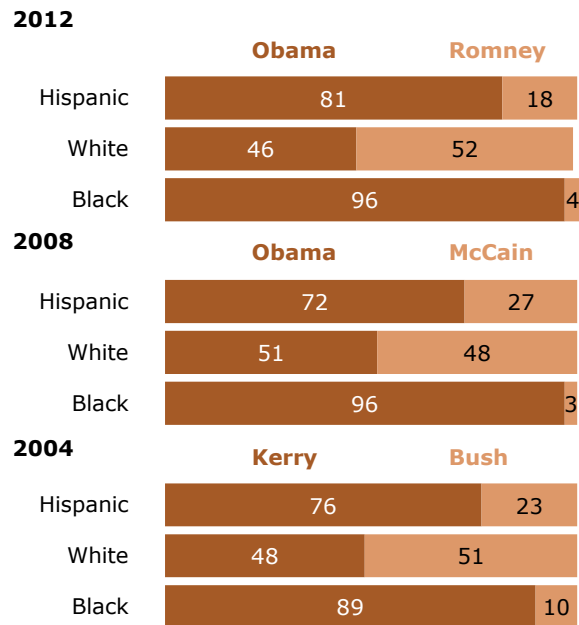
Note: Share of the vote that went to third-party candidates is not shown.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center analysis of 2012, 2008 and 2004 National Election Pool Florida exit poll results

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**Figure A6**  
**Presidential Preference in Illinois, by**  
**Race and Ethnicity, 2004-2012**

(% who voted for ... )



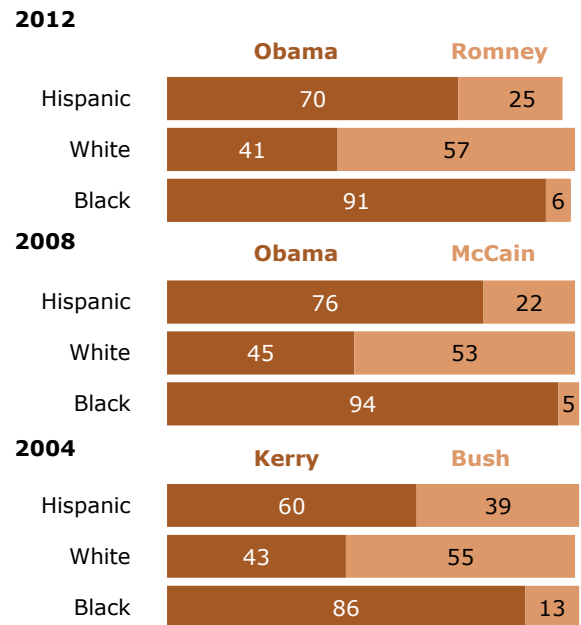
Note: Share of the vote that went to third-party candidates is not shown.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center analysis of 2012, 2008 and 2004 National Election Pool Illinois exit poll results

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**Figure A7**  
**Presidential Preference in Nevada, by Race and Ethnicity, 2004-2012**

(% who voted for ... )



Note: Share of the vote that went to third-party candidates is not shown.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center analysis of 2012, 2008 and 2004 National Election Pool Nevada exit poll results

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**Figure A8**  
**Presidential Preference in New Mexico, by Race and Ethnicity, 2004-2012**

(% who voted for ... )

**2012**

	<b>Obama</b>	<b>Romney</b>
Hispanic	64	29
White	40	56

**2008**

	<b>Obama</b>	<b>McCain</b>
Hispanic	69	30
White	42	56

**2004**

	<b>Kerry</b>	<b>Bush</b>
Hispanic	56	44
White	43	56

Note: Share of the vote that went to third-party candidates is not shown.

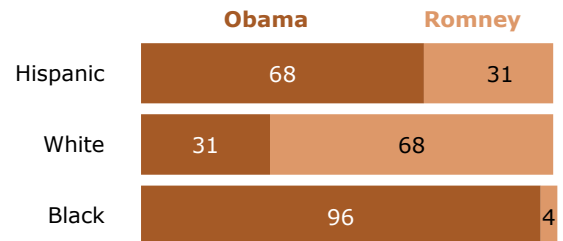
Source: Pew Hispanic Center analysis of 2012, 2008 and 2004 National Election Pool New Mexico exit poll results

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Figure A9

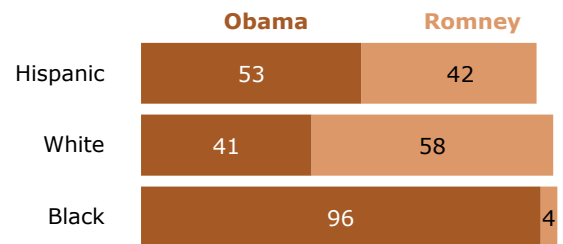
**Presidential Preference in North Carolina, by Race and Ethnicity, 2012***(% who voted for ... )*

Note: Share of the vote that went to third party candidates is not shown.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center analysis of 2012 National Election Pool North Carolina exit poll results

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Figure A10

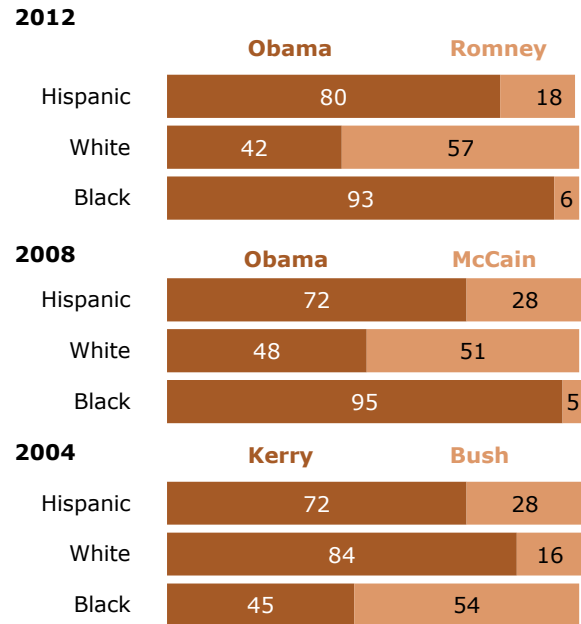
**Presidential Preference in Ohio, by Race and Ethnicity, 2012***(% who voted for ... )*

Note: Share of the vote that went to third-party candidates is not shown.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center analysis of 2012 National Election Pool Ohio exit poll results

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Figure A11  
**Presidential Preference in Pennsylvania, by Race and Ethnicity, 2004-2012**  
 (% who voted for ... )

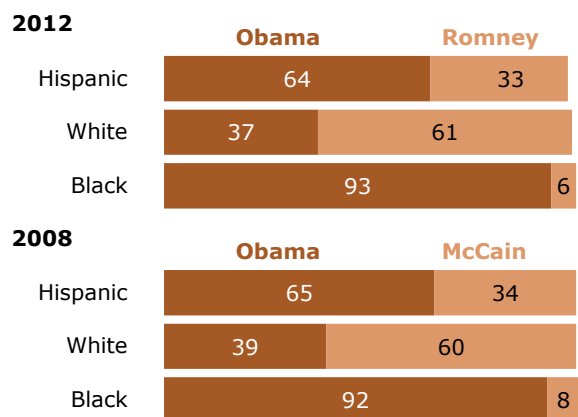


Note: Share of the vote that went to third-party candidates is not shown.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center analysis of 2012, 2008 and 2004 National Election Pool Pennsylvania exit poll results

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**Figure A12**  
**Presidential Preference in Virginia, by Race and Ethnicity, 2008 and 2012**  
 (% who voted for ... )

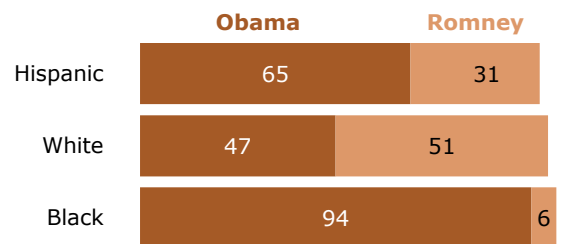


Note: Share of the vote that went to third-party candidates is not shown.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center analysis of 2012 and 2008 National Election Pool Virginia exit poll results

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**Figure A13**  
**Presidential Preference in Wisconsin, By Race and Ethnicity, 2012**  
 (% who voted for ... )



Note: Share of the vote that went to third-party candidates is not shown.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center analysis of 2012 National Election Pool Wisconsin exit poll results

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