

THE NEW AMERICANS EXIT POLL PROJECT
Preliminary Results from the 2006 New York City Voter Exit Poll

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2006 New Americans Exit Poll: Preliminary Findings

This summary reflects only a partial analysis of the 2006 New Americans Exit Poll data for 2006, based on about 80 percent of surveys collected on Election Day as New Yorkers exited the polls. Because the data analysis is not complete, we cannot yet properly weight the data or report a margin of error for the survey. The findings, therefore, should be interpreted with care.

Party Preferences

- Immigrants, like other New Yorkers, voted heavily for Democratic candidates in this election. However, immigrant voters in our survey were slightly less likely to say that they voted for Democratic gubernatorial candidate, Eliot Spitzer, than the native-born (74 percent, compared to 80 percent for the native-born); and they were slightly more likely to say they were registered in the Republican party (14 percent, compared to 11 percent for the native-born).
- On the question of which of the major political parties had done a better job in handling immigration issues over the previous year, by wide margins immigrants, like the native-born, believe the Democratic party has done a better job on this issue (57 percent of immigrants favor the Democrats, compared to about half of the native-born), but immigrant voters are not as unfavorably disposed toward the Republican party as the native-born. About 15 percent of immigrant voters think the Republicans have done a better job than the Democrats, compared to just 10 percent of the native-born who think this way. Immigrants are more likely to have an opinion on this issue, which explains why they are both more likely to favor the Democrats and also more likely to favor the Republicans than the native-born, even if they favor the Democrats more.

The Immigration Rallies

- About two-thirds of voters in our poll said that they followed the news about the immigration rallies that took place in the spring. About a quarter of those also said they or a family member participated in those rallies; overall, roughly 10 percent of all voters in our poll said they or a family member participated in the spring rallies.
- Among those voters who said they or a family member participated in the spring immigration rallies, two-thirds were born in the U.S. or Puerto Rico. About half said they were Latino, and a quarter said they were white. New York City voters who participated in the rallies, therefore, appear to be a diverse group including many native-born and non-Latino citizens.
- One in five of those who said they or a family member participated in the immigration rallies said they voted for President Bush in 2004, compared to about one in four among those who did not participate in the rallies.
- About 10 percent of foreign-born participants and those with family members who participated in the immigration rallies said that they had never voted before, whereas nearly all of the native-born participants said that they had voted in the past.
- Immigrant voters who voted for George W. Bush in 2004 were more likely to vote for the Democratic candidate for U.S. House than were the native-born (14 percent of immigrant voters split votes this way, compared to 11 percent of the native-born). It is interesting to note that among those who supported President Bush, about a quarter now say that over the last year, the Democratic party handled immigration issues better than the Republican party, with immigrants more likely than the

native-born to think this way (29 percent of foreign-born Bush voters favor the Democratic party on the immigration issue today, compared to 19 percent of the native-born).

First-Time Voters

- Nearly one-third of the New York City electorate is foreign-born. The initial findings from the 2006 NAEP about the size of the immigrant electorate in the city are consistent with our findings from exit polls conducted 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2005.
- In addition, and consistent with past findings, immigrant voters are much more likely to have cast a ballot for the first time in the 2006 mid-term elections than their native-born counterparts. Nearly eight percent of the immigrant voters in our survey report they are first-time voters, compared to two percent of the native-born.
- Overall, about four percent of the voters in our survey were first-time voters, a proportion similar to what we found in 2005 (4.3 percent), but lower than what we found in 2002, when eight percent of voters said they were voting for the first time.
- Nevertheless, while we may be experiencing a slowing or stabilization in the growth of New York City's electorate stemming from the mobilization of new voters, immigrant voters are still the driving force behind the addition of new voters. As we found in past exit polls, about two-thirds of all first-time voters in this election said they were foreign-born.
- If immigrants are roughly one-third of the electorate and two-thirds of all first-time voters, they are twice as likely as the native-born to be new voters. Extrapolating from the rates of first-time voting found among all immigrant voters in past New Americans Exit Polls, we estimate that more than 360,000 first-time immigrant voters have cast ballots in the last three election cycles (2002, 2004, and 2005).

The New Americans Exit Poll project began in 2000 and is a collaboration between Professor Lorraine C. Minnite of Barnard College, Professor John H. Mollenkopf of the City University of New York Graduate Center, and the New York Immigration Coalition. We are joined this year by Professor Robert Y. Shapiro of Columbia University. Since 2000, we have interviewed more than 10,000 New York City voters, including nearly 4,000 foreign-born naturalized citizens, and compiled a unique source of information on the political preferences, attitudes, and behavior of New Yorkers participating in recent national, state, and municipal elections. Surveys are made available to voters in English, Chinese, Spanish, Russian, and this year, Korean translations and administered by a trained, multi-lingual survey staff recruited from the city's ethnic and immigrant neighborhoods.