

## The Hispanic Vote in the 2008 Election

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## Overview

Hispanics voted for Democrats Barack Obama and Joe Biden over Republicans John McCain and Sarah Palin by a margin of more than two-to-one in the 2008 presidential election, 67% versus 31%, according to an analysis by the Pew Hispanic Center of exit polls from Edison Media Research as published by CNN.<sup>1</sup> The Center's analysis also finds that 9% of the electorate was Latino, as indicated by the national exit poll. This is higher, by one percentage point, than the share in the 2004 national exit poll.<sup>2</sup>

Nationally, all Latino demographic sub-groups voted for Obama by heavy margins. According to the national exit poll, 64% of Hispanic males and 68% of Hispanic females supported Obama. Latino youth, just as all youth nationwide, supported Obama over McCain by a lopsided margin – 76% versus 19%.

Obama carried the Latino vote by sizeable margins in all states with large Latino populations. His biggest breakthrough came in Florida, where he won 57% of the Latino vote in a state where Latinos have historically supported Republican presidential candidates (President Bush carried 56% of the Latino vote in Florida in 2004). Obama's margins were much larger in other states with big Latino populations. He carried 78% of the Latino vote in New Jersey, 76% in Nevada, and 74% in California.

In an election year when voter participation rose across the board, Latinos increased their share of the national vote to 9% from 8% in 2004 according to the national exit poll. In several states, however, Latinos represented a larger share of voters this year than in 2004. The largest increases in the share of voters who are Hispanic occurred in the states of New Mexico (9 percentage points higher), Colorado (5 points higher) and Nevada (5 points higher), all three battleground states in this year's election.

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<sup>1</sup> The analysis in this report is limited to nine states with sufficiently large Hispanic samples in state exit polls. These states are Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico and Texas. Voter survey results from the National Exit Poll and State Exit Polls were obtained from [CNN's Election 2008](#) website on Friday, November 7, 2008.

<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 either aggregated State Exit Polls or from the Census Bureau's November voting supplement of the Current Population Survey. In 2004, according to the National Exit Poll, 8.4% of voters were of Hispanic origin. However, according to the aggregated State Exit Polls, 7.5% were Hispanic, according to the 2004 November CPS, 6% of voters were Hispanic. Estimates of the Hispanic share of the electorate for 2008 from the aggregated State Exit Polls and the 2008 November CPS will not be available until 2009. 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.

Nationwide, the Latino vote was significantly more Democratic this year than in 2004, when President Bush captured an estimated 40% of the Hispanic vote, a modern high for a Republican presidential candidate.<sup>3</sup>

But even though McCain's Latino vote fell well below that of President's Bush's in 2004, it was still much higher than the 21% share of the Hispanic vote that Sen. Robert Dole received as the GOP presidential nominee in 1996. McCain's Latino vote this year was similar to the 30% share of the Latino vote that GOP congressional candidates received in 2006.

Meantime, Obama's 67% share of the Latino vote in the 2008 general election represented a major reversal of fortunes for him since the Democratic primaries, when he lost the Latino vote to Sen. Hillary Clinton by a margin of nearly two-to-one ([Minushkin and Lopez, 2008](#)). No other major demographic voting group in the country swung so heavily to Obama as Latinos did between the primaries and the general election this year. According to the 2008 National Survey of Latinos, conducted in June and July of this year, 75% of Latino registered voters who said they supported Clinton in the primaries switched their support to Obama ([Lopez and Minushkin, 2008](#)).

This report contains an analysis of exit poll results for the Latino vote in 9 states and for the U.S.

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<sup>3</sup> There is continuing uncertainty over whether President Bush received 40% of the Hispanic vote in 2004, as indicated by exit polls in the 50 states and the District of Columbia conducted on Election Day, or 44%, as indicated by the nationwide National Election Pool exit poll. Reasons for the differing estimates are spelled out in "[Hispanics and the 2004 Election: Population, Electorate and Voters](#)," by Roberto Suro, Richard Fry and Jeffrey Passel (2005).

## About this Report

Exit poll results for this report were obtained from [CNN's Election 2008](#) website and are based on the Edison Media Research's National Election Pool national and state exit poll surveys of voters as reported on November 7, 2008. In addition to an analysis of the national Latino vote, nine states were examined. These states are Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico and Texas.

## A Note on Terminology

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

The terms “whites,” “blacks” and “others” are used to refer to the non-Hispanic components of their population.

## About the Author

**Mark Hugo Lopez** is the Associate Director of the Pew Hispanic Center. Prior to joining the Center, Lopez was research director of the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement as well as a research assistant professor at the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland. His areas of expertise include labor economics, civic engagement, voting behavior and the economics of education. He received his Ph.D. in economics from Princeton University.

## Recommended Citation

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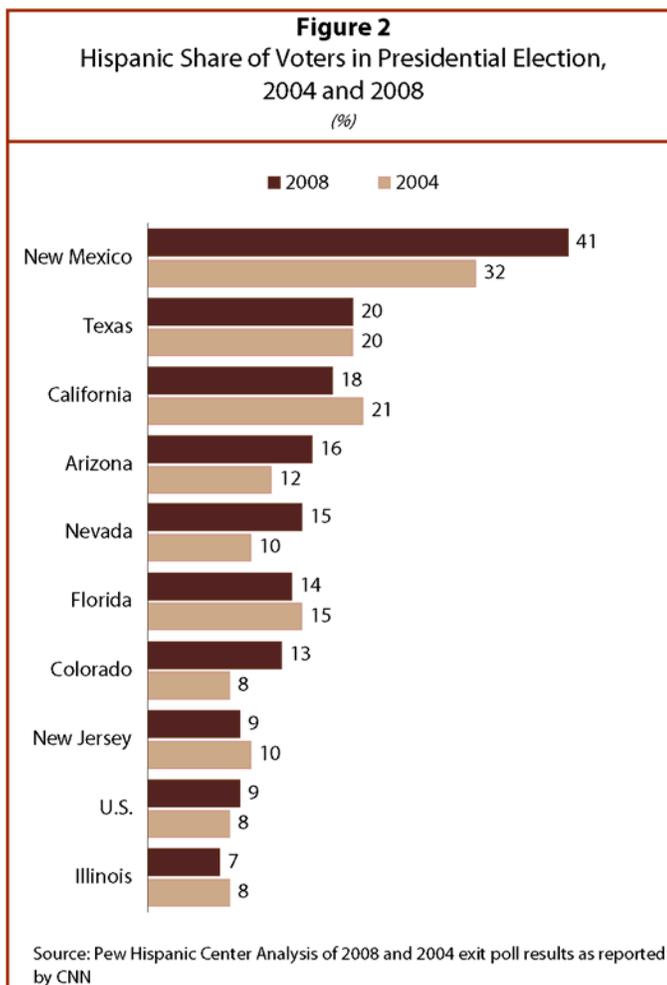
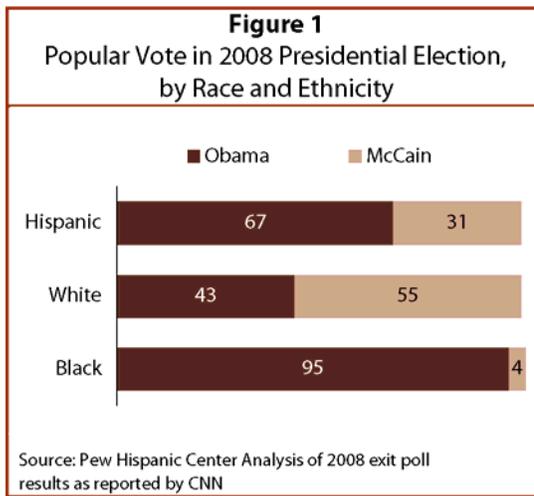
## Acknowledgments

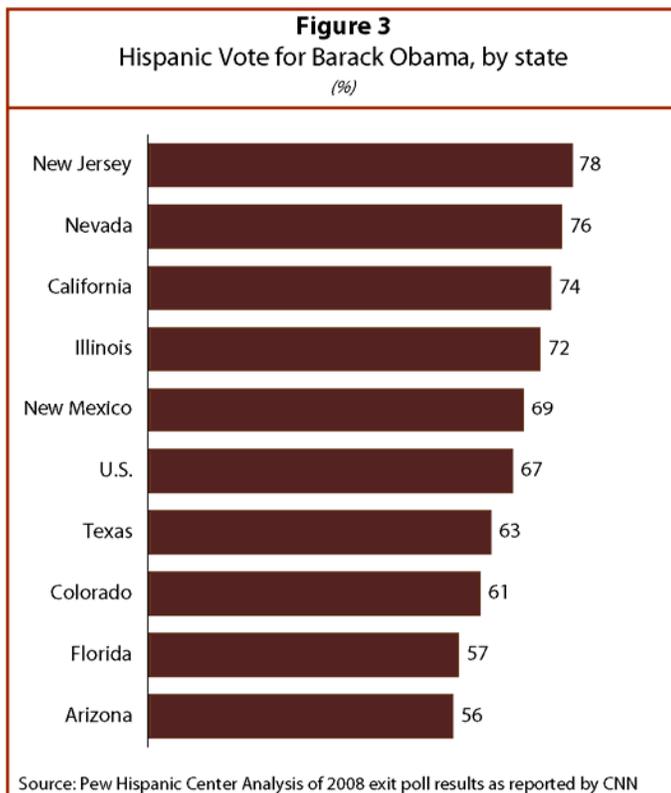
I thank Richard Fry, Scott Keeter, and Paul Taylor for technical guidance in pulling together this report. Paul Taylor and Richard Fry provided timely input and editorial guidance in the drafting of the report. Daniel Dockterman and Ana González-Barrera helped in the production and fact checking of all figures in the report.

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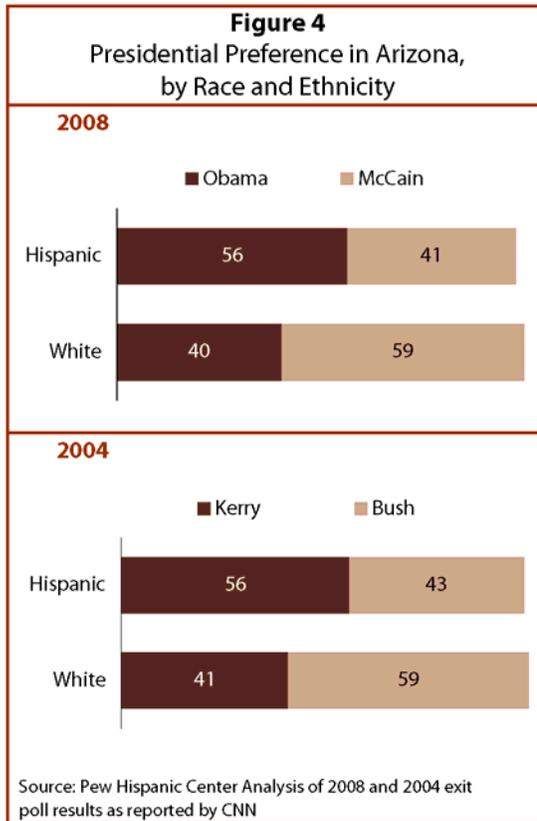
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## National Results

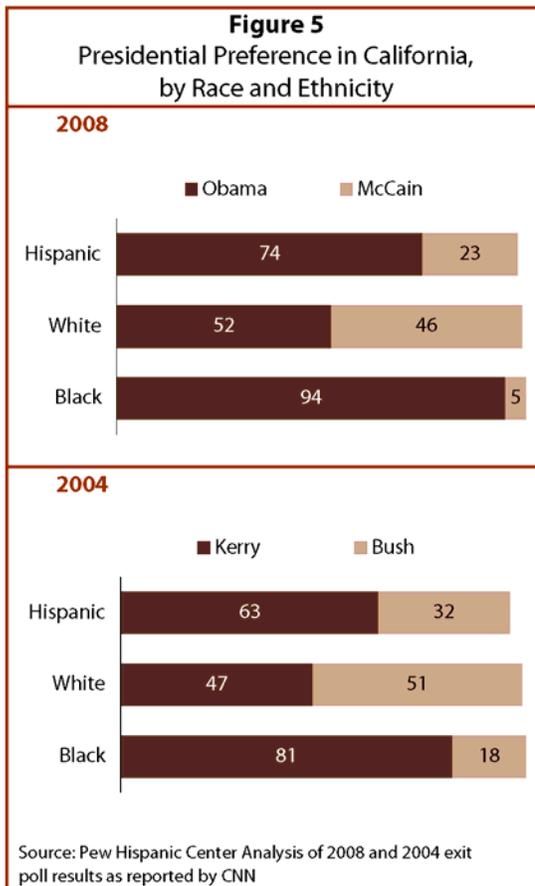




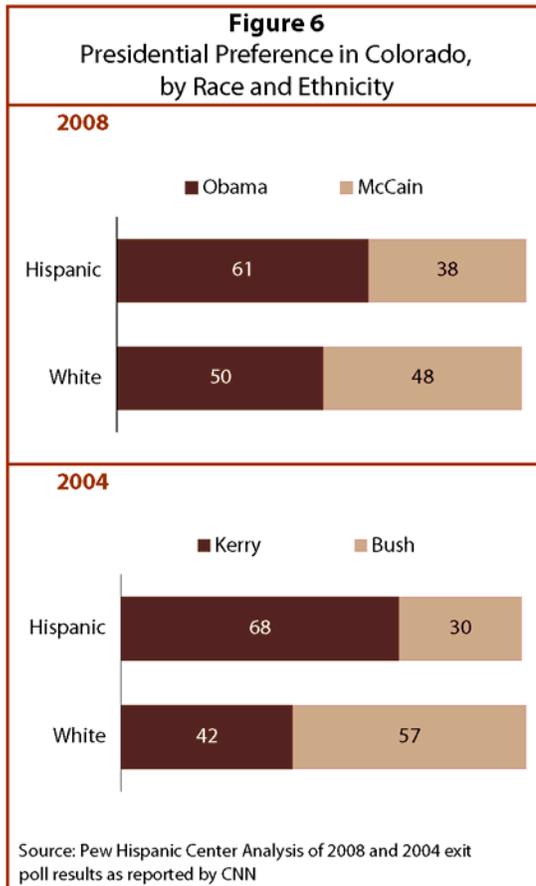
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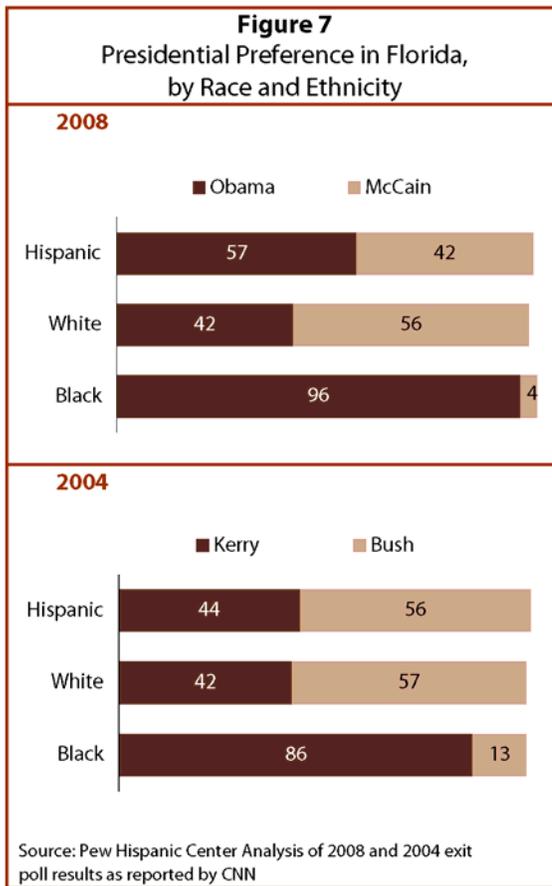
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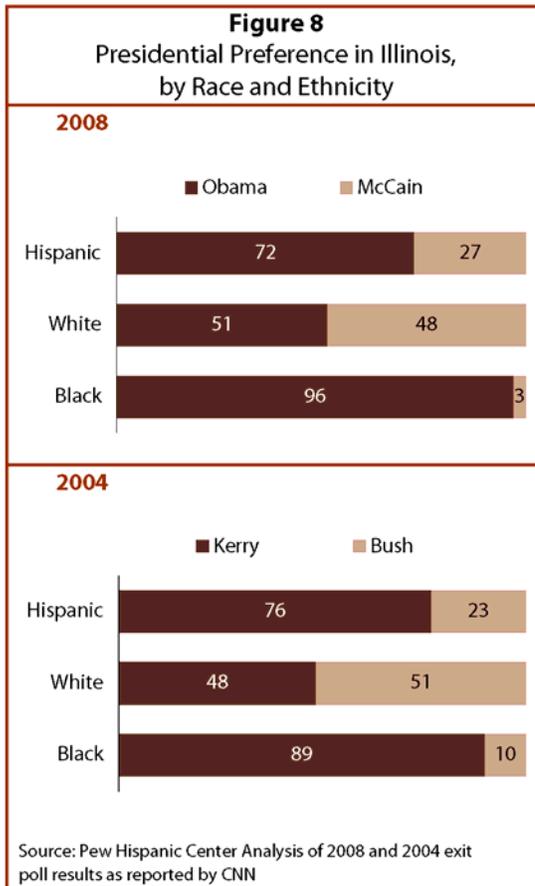
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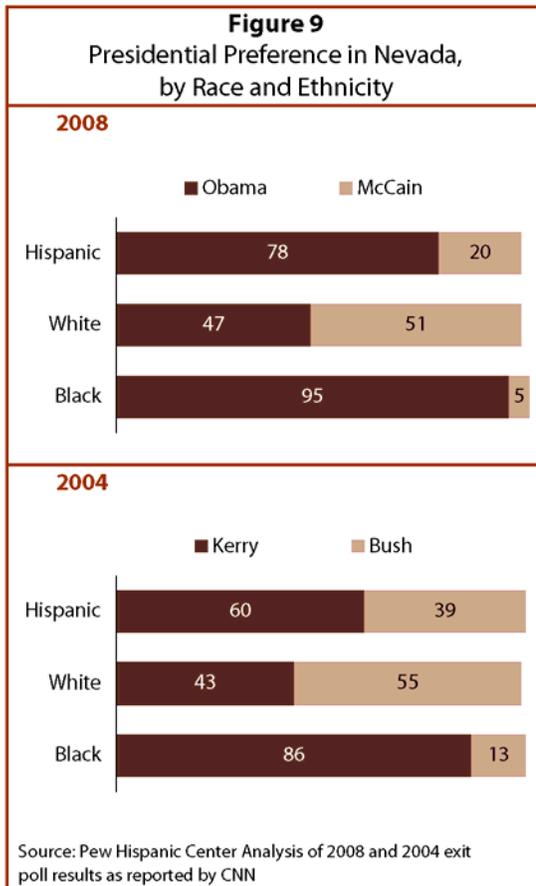
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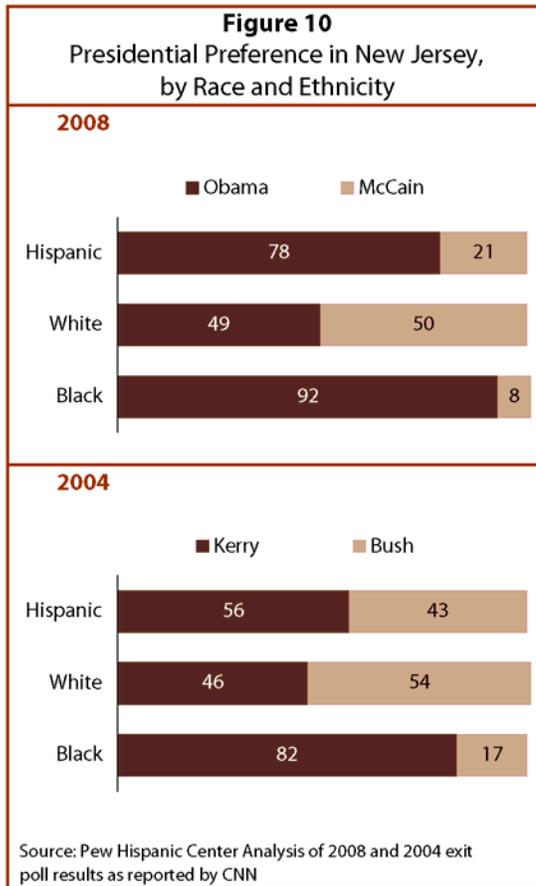
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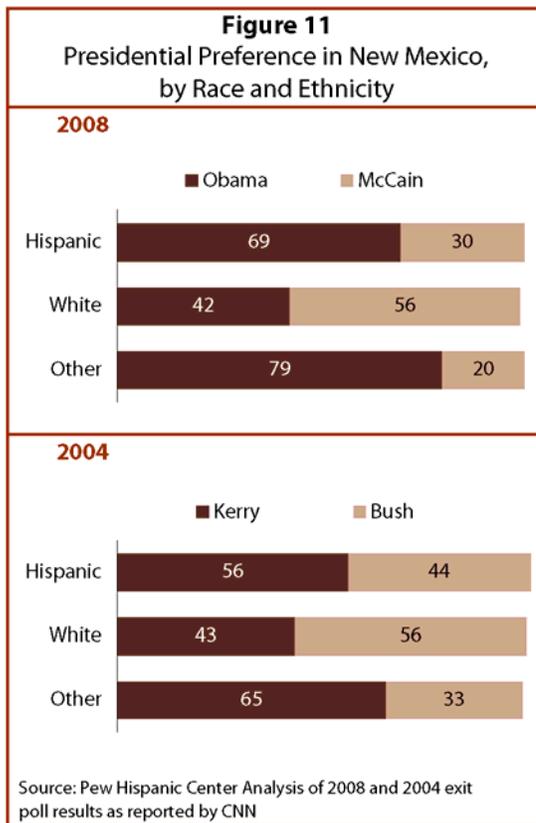
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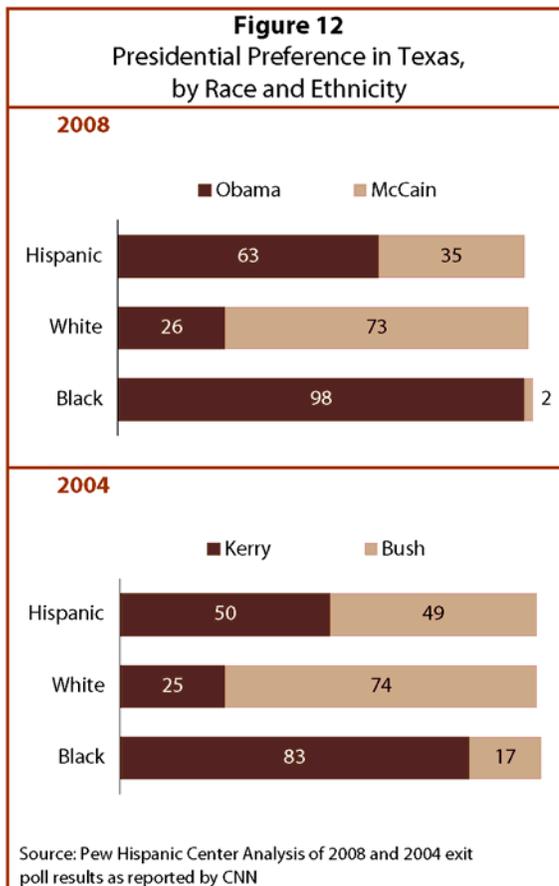
# Results for New Jersey



## Results for New Mexico



## Results for Texas



## References

Lopez, Mark Hugo and Susan Minushkin. [\*2008 National Survey of Latinos: Hispanic Voter Attitudes\*](#). Pew Hispanic Center, July 2008.

Minushkin, Susan and Mark Hugo Lopez. [\*The Hispanic Vote in the 2008 Democratic Presidential Primaries\*](#). Pew Hispanic Center, June 2008.

Suro, Roberto, Richard Fry and Jeffrey Passel. [\*Hispanics and the 2004 Election: Population, Electorate and Voters\*](#). Pew Hispanic Center, July 2005.