

Polling Memo and Summary for California Release
2015 Environmental Attitudes Survey

Submitted to

Earthjustice and GreenLatinos



Latino Decisions
Everything Latino Politics

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Latino Decisions in partnership with Earthjustice and GreenLatinos conducted a national survey of Latino registered voters and their attitudes toward the environment. The survey, fielded between June 24 and July 8, is based on a national sample of 1,200 Latino registered voters who were interviewed by landline, cell and on-line in English and Spanish. As part of that effort, California, Colorado and Florida were oversampled, with 300 interviews completed in each of those states. The state samples carry a nominal margin of error of +/- 5.7 percentage points.

Here we examine results from California. The national results challenge this assumption by finding that Latinos care deeply about the environment and specifically about its impact on their families. We found that Latinos are as engaged, if not more so, in issues of climate and environment, that they have strong personal interests in seeing the environment improved, and that these issues matter in their political calculi. Here, we take an in-depth look at the California results. California is home to over 14 million Latinos and has the largest concentration of Hispanics in the nation. Given their sizable population and political influence, Latino environmental attitudes carry significant political weight.

When highlighting important claims in your external communications, we believe the poll best illustrates five central claims:

1. Environmental issues are seen as important policy priorities as other policy issues commonly associated with Latinos such as promoting jobs, immigration reform and increasing the minimum wage. Among the different environmental issues polled, concerns over water conservation efforts are paramount among Latinos in California. In a battery of thirteen separate questions related to environmental and non-environmental policies issues, “increase the conservation of water” was the highest ranked issue with 91% of Latinos saying it was very to extremely important. Strengthening the Clear Water Act “to protect our waterways and clean drinking water” came in third with 87% saying it was very to extremely important. No doubt daily reports of California’s drought is brining water issues to the forefront of Latino voters.

2. Another policy issue that ranked high in the minds of Latino voters was reducing “smog and air pollution.” Nearly nine in ten (87%) Latinos considered this issue to be very to extremely important. Concerns over smog and air pollution, like water conservation is ranked higher among Latinos in California than Latinos outside of the state. In a separate question respondents were asked, “How serious of a health threat is air pollution in your city to you and your immediate family?” 77% said it was a somewhat to a very serious threat. California’s ongoing drought, urbanization, and extensive freeway system make these top priorities for Latinos in the Golden State.
3. Eight out of ten (81%) Latinos in California are worried (somewhat to very) about climate change and they, more than other Americans, see climate change as a consequence of human activity. Over two-thirds (68%) accept anthropogenic explanations of global warming. Comparing our results to other national surveys of the broader population, the differences are around 16 percentage points.
4. Latino concerns are transnational. Over two-thirds (69%) of Latinos are aware of environmental degradation and climate impact in their countries of origin and consider this when developing their views. However, the health effects of contaminated water and air pollution to their families in California is a major worry for Latinos: 80% say contaminated water is a serious health threat to their families and 77% say air pollution is a serious health threat. In short, Latino environmental attitudes are driven by global and local worries. The unifying theme is family. Specifically, the impacts a contaminated environment has on family residing in Latin America and in California.
5. Latinos in California, by a larger margin than Latinos nationally and in other states, do not accept the jobs/environment trade-off. Specially, a substantial majority of Latinos believe green energy and environmental reform is either good for economic opportunity and job growth (64%) or has no effect (12%). Only 20% accepted the jobs/environment tradeoff. (Nationally, only 59% thought environmental reform was good for the economy.)
6. Latinos want to reward candidates and office-holders who address environmental problems. Respondents reported feeling more favorably (by 77%) about officials who act on behalf of the environment. This finding is politically significant since Latinos in California are a sizable electorate and they are a key reason the state is solidly Democratic.

7. Outreach to Californians by environmental organizations is modest and consistent with national numbers. Nationwide, 76% had never been contacted by a green organization, 74% had never taken any action like signing a petition or attending a meeting or rally, and 87% had never been an actual member of a green organization. By comparison, in California, 78%, 74%, and 86% respectively, meaning no significant variation between the national experience and California experience.
8. Nevertheless, Californians are significantly more likely to call themselves “environmentalists.” While only 18% of our national sample said they called themselves by that term, 27% of California’s Latino registered voters did. Overall concern about the environment seems consistent with national numbers, but embrace of the identity is clearly stronger in California. This suggests significant growth opportunity for green membership organizations among California Latino voters.

Below are California-specific take-aways for the press, elected officials, and the public:

- The recommendations outlined in the analysis of the national survey apply to Latinos in California with some important differences.
- In a battery of thirteen separate questions related to environmental and non-environmental policies issues; there is a slight reordering in the rankings of issue priorities. For Latinos in California, water conservation and smog/air pollution reduction were ranked higher than other policy issues. These issues are also listed among the top five in the national survey, however, the reordering of the ranking suggests that these policies are particularly salient for Californians. This makes sense given the on-going drought and the long-standing concerns over air quality in the state.
- Latinos in California, by a larger margin than Latinos in other states, do not accept the jobs/environment trade-off. This may be a consequence of California’s lead in adopting environmental protections, the large and growing segment of green jobs in the state, or simply better messaging from California government at all levels.
- Finally, Latinos constitute nearly 20 percent of California’s electorate although they are nearly 40 percent of the state’s total population. This indicates that the Latino electorate is sizable and will continue to expand for some time. Therefore Latino environmental attitudes carry significant weight in Sacramento. The fact that

Latinos are willing to embrace the identity, and act on those attitudes, is important and should not be lost on policymakers and elected officials. Latinos in the Golden State are environmental voters.

Gary M. Segura, Co-Founder and Principal

Dr. Gary Segura is a co-founder and Principal at Latino Decisions. He is also Professor of Political Science at Stanford University, and Co-Principal Investigator of the American National Election Studies (ANES). He received his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois. Over the last 18 years, Segura has directed polling research that has completed over 100,000 interviews with Americans of all backgrounds on matters of social and political importance.

He has briefed members of both the U.S. House and Senate as well as senior White House officials and appeared on National Public Radio, the News Hour, Frontline, the CBS Evening News, MSNBC, and numerous other outlets. On the day after the 2010, 2012, and 2014 elections Segura led national press briefings to explain and unpack the Latino vote and his analysis was quoted in virtually every story about Latino voters in the days and weeks after each national election.

His research has been published in the most prestigious disciplinary outlets including the *American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, and the *Journal of Politics*. Segura's most recent book publications include: *"The Future is Ours:" Minority Politics, Political Behavior and the Multiracial Era of American Politics*, (Congressional Quarterly Press), *Latinos in the New Millennium: An Almanac of Opinion, Behavior, and Policy Preferences* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), and *Latino America: How America's Most Dynamic Population is Poised to Transform the Politics of the Nation* (Public Affairs).

Segura has testified as an expert on political power and discrimination in both voting rights cases and LGBT civil rights cases, and has filed amicus curiae briefs on subjects as diverse as marriage equality and affirmative action. He has served as an expert witness in the two landmark LGBT rights cases of 2013, *Windsor v. United States* and *Hollingsworth v Perry*. In 2010, he was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

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Dr. Adrian D. Pantoja, is Senior Analyst for Latino Decisions and Professor of Political Studies and Chicano Studies at Pitzer College, a member of the Claremont Colleges. He received his B.A. from the University of San Francisco and Ph.D. in Political Science from the Claremont Graduate University.

At Latino decisions, Pantoja has directed all major research on Latino environmental attitudes and has provided critical insights into how and why Latinos view issues such as carbon pollution, conservation and climate change.

His academic research is published in over three-dozen journals and edited volumes. He has delivered over one hundred presentations at academic conferences and public forums. Presentations for Latino Decisions have been given at the Netroots Nation Conference, the Civil Justice Association of California meeting, the State of Arizona's Latino Vote Symposium, and the Center for American Progress. As a consultant he has carried out research for organizations such as the Center for American Progress, the National Association of Latino Elected Officials, the Natural Resources Defense Council and others.

He has authored over a dozen political blogs and co-authored the following policy reports, *Building An All-In Nation*, *A View from the American Public*, *Anti-Immigrant Politics and Lessons for the GOP from California*, and *A Closer Look at Legal Permanent Residents' (LPRs): Motivations and Barriers to Naturalization*. Dr. Pantoja frequently provides expert political commentaries for various newspapers, newsmagazines, television, and radio programs.

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