

# Latinos, Group Identity, and Equal Opportunity on the 2020 California Ballot

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## Abstract

**Objective:** Racial minority groups are often assumed to support equal opportunity policies, with most research focused on biracial contexts between Whites and Blacks. With a unique opportunity to study richer contexts from California's 2020 elections, we test whether Latino voters supported ballot measures associated with equal opportunity.

**Methods:** Using data on vote choice for Propositions 15 (raising commercial property taxes) and 16 (repealing prohibition of affirmative action) from a post-election survey of California registrants, we use logistic regression to test whether Latino support for equal opportunity policies is higher than that of Whites.

**Results:** For both propositions, while Latino support was higher than White support, it was not statistically different when controlled for partisanship.

**Conclusion:** There is little evidence to suggest that California Latinos support equal opportunity policies more strongly than White voters. This lukewarm support may explain the fates of both propositions in the election.

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# 1 Introduction

While the connections between group positions on policy issues, linked fate, and voting behavior have been studied extensively for Blacks and Whites, similar evidence for Latinos has been mixed. For one, Latinos are generally not thought to be attached as close to their group label as other groups (Bishin et al., 2012; Escaleras et al., 2019; Gutierrez et al., 2019). There has, however, been some research suggesting that the increasing attention to the Latino electorate and the grouping of ethnic groups generally considered to be “Latino” by outsiders has built a larger and more cohesive group that could produce a “Latino vote” (Barreto and Segura, 2014; Escaleras et al., 2019).

Furthermore, an explanation for the political behavior of Latinos as a group has not been firmly established (de la Garza, 2004). Often the conventional wisdom is that Latinos will eventually come to have political opinions and behaviors similar to Blacks, in that they will become a group that steadily gravitates towards the Democratic Party (de la Garza, 2004; Bishin et al., 2012; Ocampo et al., 2021). Essentially, due to their shared experiences as a racial and immigrant group, Latinos are expected to vote for the Democratic Party and for policies that improve their economic and social standing and alleviate discrimination (Bishin et al., 2012; Ocampo et al., 2021).

In this paper, we make a more nuanced argument: due to the steady shifts in demographics in California that have led to a more diverse population, and the long history of Latinos in the state, California Latino voters are now likely to support policies that benefit their ethnic group. To test this hypothesis, we use survey data from the 2020 general election in California. Specifically, we use self-reported votes on two ballot propositions to measure Latino support for policies considered as parts of a solution for discrimination against minorities. The first, Proposition 15, was a commercial tax initiative that was meant to make levying taxes from non-residential properties easier, with much of the potential revenue planned on supporting public education (Myers, 2020). The second, Proposition 16, was an attempt to repeal Section 209 of the California Constitution, which prohibited affirmative action policies for state-funded entities (California Secretary of State, 2020b). Both Propositions 15 (48.0% yes versus 52.0% no) and 16 (42.8% yes versus 57.2% no) were defeated in the general election, an election in which Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden received 63.5% of the California statewide vote (California Secretary of State, 2020c).

Studying the voting behavior of California Latinos on these two ballot measures provides a unique opportunity to test the thesis of racial/ethnic group cohesion in the context of matters of public policy. This is not a situation where the voting decision focuses on candidates, who may have ambiguous or uncertain positions on issues and policies that might be of importance to California Latinos. Nor is it a situation where, as researchers, we are analyzing survey responses regarding the opinions of Latinos about public policy. Instead, voters in California were asked to cast deciding votes on these two policy matters in this election, and by studying voting behavior

for ballot measures, we can examine how California Latinos (and voters from other racial/ethnic groups) decided to vote on these policy changes.

Our study does not support the general hypothesis that Latino voters in California are now more supportive of policies that may benefit Latinos as a group. We find that while Latino voters were more likely to support Propositions 15 and 16 than were White voters in our binary regression models, the differences are neither statistically significant nor substantially large. Although both propositions deal with equal opportunity, Latinos did not provide a strong majority for either of the measures (Arellano, 2020; Rivera, 2020).

## 2 Latinos and Equal Opportunity Policies

### 2.1 Group Voting and Race/Ethnicity

Since Blumer (1958) shifted the focus of the racial prejudice discussion to group-level collective understanding, racial groups are often regarded as having “group positions.” These positions are not only tied to how a given racial group views itself and other groups, but also to the social, economic, or political (dis)advantages of the hierarchical position it occupies. Such group positions and group identities can impact group-level preferences on issues such as affirmative action and welfare, if these are perceived as being a benefit or an external threat to the group’s position (Blumer, 1958; Rosenstein, 2008).

Although race and ethnicity are studied as a hierarchical order under such a framework in American politics, Latinos are usually studied separately by their country of origin instead of as a group with unified position or identities (de la Garza, 2004; Beltrán, 2010; Ocampo et al., 2021). This may be due to the lack of attachment that Latinos feel towards their group. The broad ethnic category of “Hispanic” was created by the U.S. government in the 1970s. Many individuals of Latin American origin do not identify with that label, and many have been found to have stronger identification with their countries of origin (Gutierrez et al., 2019). While pundits have continually referred to Latinos as a monolith, political scientists have been much more divided (Beltrán, 2010). It is recognized that the way the term was created implies that the members of those communities may not identify with it. Yet scholars have also noted that over time, members of those sub-groups may have given the term meaning by using it to refer to themselves (Jones-Correa and Leal, 1996). By 2006, the Latino National Political Survey also found that a large majority of Latinos identified with the pan-ethnic term (Barreto and Segura, 2014). The importance of not studying an entire ethnicity as a monolith has been seen through the contrasting results in elections and party affiliations, most notably the comparison between Florida Latinos and Latinos elsewhere (Yang and de la Garza, 2017; Escaleras et al., 2019).

However, the attachment to group labels may be cultivated given shared experiences. The different groups have many similarities, generally. The groups share a common language, similar

racial and colonial histories, a media culture, and a religion (Barreto and Segura, 2014; Masuoka, 2006). Additionally, many in the Latino community have commonly faced discrimination as they are treated as a single group by outsiders. This discrimination has been observed even for newly arrived immigrants and Latinos across generations, as an external threat to the overall group that could increase solidarity amongst them, as they report similar experiences (Giles and Evans, 1985; Gutierrez et al., 2019). Research has argued that shared experiences like these might heighten group cohesion on issues of importance to Latinos (Sanchez, 2006). This Latino group consciousness might lead to increased political participation for Latinos (Stokes, 2003).

The sense as a group may further grow depending on historical and demographic context. In California, the Latino population is mostly made up of those of Mexican descent or origin. More importantly, California's Latinos actually *outnumber* non-Latino Whites in the state (Panzar, 2015; Barreto and Segura, 2014). This change in demographics was not a sudden one—it was a gradual shift that happened over the last century, propelled by a major influx in the Latino population after the 1970s through migration (Bedolla and Hosam, 2021; Panzar, 2015). The Latino population in California is, therefore, characterized by people of Latin American descent that go back generations to those that lived in California before the annexation or to those who migrated in earlier periods, and who were then socialized in the U.S., and more recent immigrants (Bedolla and Hosam, 2021). It has previously been found that individuals that have a longer generational history within the U.S. are more likely to identify as Latinos (Jones-Correa and Leal, 1996). A longer history within the U.S. also provides social and political experiences that can result in higher political participation (Lien, 1994). Essentially, given the large population of Mexican-Americans and their known partisan leanings, Latinos in California may be far more cohesive than Latinos on a national level.

The idea of a greater Latino group cohesion in California has certain implications. According to Bishin et al. (2012), it could push feelings associated with in-group and out-group dynamics, including struggles over collective resources with other groups. Similarly, linked fate, or when individuals tie the availability of their opportunities or future to their group's, has been used to explain a group's cohesiveness on political stances and success in mobilization efforts (Dawson, 1995; Bishin et al., 2012; Gay et al., 2016; Masuoka, 2006; Escaleras et al., 2019). This has particularly been shown to be the case for Black political unity in a two-race context, but for Latinos, the evidence of linked fate playing a role in voting behavior has been less clear (Dawson, 1995; Bishin et al., 2012; Escaleras et al., 2019). In general, studies on vote choice and attitudes on equal opportunity policies are generally situated within a two-race context, with Whites being highlighted as the group that has more variation in their preferences (Bobo and Hutchings, 1996). Though, the focus on Latinos as a voting bloc has recently been increasing among scholars and pundits. While the Latino minority group may comprise many sub-groups, the sub-groups are all treated by outsiders as a single group. Given this, identification as Latino may have increased for individuals within the sub-groups. Escaleras et al. (2019) found that about half of their Latino

respondents in the surveys done in 2014 and 2016 agreed with the idea of linked fate.

With the growing inclusion of other groups into the study of race, it has been noted that the generally accepted ideas on equal opportunity have to be amended as each group interacts with Whites and other minority groups differently (Kim, 2015). Equal opportunity policies, such as affirmative action, are often considered to be solutions or inroads for leveling the playing field for women and minorities. These programs often aim at increasing access for minorities and increasing diversity overall. Some of the policies on these issues are seen as explicitly racial, in the case of affirmative action, or implicitly racial, in the case of welfare policies (Wetts and Willer, 2018; Parker et al., 1997). Moreover, the group's perceptions of these programs are important as they can show how attached the members of the group are to their group identity or label (Kim, 2015). Research has also shown that the perception of the programs often varies by racial and ethnic groups (Parker et al., 1997).

Latinos have not been widely studied in a race framework on equal opportunity policies as Latinos are not seen as fitting neatly into a single group. Usually, their voting behavior is explained by individual-level ideology or immigrant experiences, especially in the case of Cuban-Americans, due to the different immigration policies that applied to them (Bishin et al., 2012; Escaleras et al., 2019). Yang and de la Garza studied the "Americanization" of Latinos and how it could explain their attitudes. Importantly, the work showed evidence on almost unanimous support for policies such as equal funding for schools and economic safety net policies (Yang and de la Garza, 2017). Adding the complexity of expanding research to include multiple races and ethnic groups could show that each of those groups may have different perceptions and opinions on other policies put forth to address different forms of discrimination (Kim, 2015). Furthermore, the gradual demographic change seen in California could provide more insight beyond previous explanations and could build upon Yang and de La Garza's work. Studying the attitudes of Latinos on equal opportunity policies could shed some light on how they fit into contemporary American politics and if their support or opposition to these policies are tied to the two main parties. Overall, it can add new insight into the study of race and ethnic identity.

## **2.2 California: Propositions 15 and 16**

The first ballot proposition included in this study is Proposition 15, which proposed an adjustment in commercial property taxes throughout California. The proposition would have effectively rolled back parts of Proposition 13, which was passed in 1978. Proposition 13 originally changed the way property taxes were levied by assessing property values at purchase prices and capping taxes at 1% of that value (Myers, 2020). Proposition 13 is regarded as a "tax-cutting" policy, because it required all initiatives to increase municipal taxes as it made it difficult to increase taxes. Proposition 13 was later joined by Propositions 62 and 218, both of which also made it difficult to increase other types of taxes (Martin et al., 2019).

Proposition 15 was noteworthy because Proposition 13 was regarded as a "third rail" within

California politics (Mehta and Finnegan, 2014). The “Yes to Proposition 15” campaign primarily highlighted how the roll-back of certain parts of Proposition 13 would increase funding for schools and local communities. They framed the proposition as a way to lower class sizes and provide aid to underfunded school districts, and they stressed that the new revenue would go to communities of color to address racial inequities (California Secretary of State, 2020a). The advocacy battle was intense for this ballot measure: there were 56 million dollars in reported contributions to support the measure and 61 million in opposition.<sup>1</sup>

Proposition 16, on the other hand, attempted to change Section 209 of the California Constitution. Section 209 (also known as Proposition 209) was passed in 1996, and it prohibited the consideration of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin for public employment, public education, and public contracting. The section includes exceptions, mostly restricted to when an office or contract requires a person of the same sex or when federal funding requires consideration of the sort (California Secretary of State, 2020b).

Affirmative action policies are explicitly about racial equity, and there have been successes and real impacts seen with these policies and the efforts made to prohibit them. For example, between 1989 and 1995, the number of minority students enrolled in engineering programs in California had been steadily growing. Yet after the implementation of Section 209, the number of minority students enrolled decreased, especially Black students (Witherspoon et al., 1999). In Texas, a similar outcome was seen after the Hopwood lawsuit eliminated affirmative action policies for the admissions process in public universities (Witherspoon et al., 1999).

In sharp contrast to Proposition 15, the level of campaign contributions to support or oppose Proposition 16 was much lower. Reported contributions in support totaled 20 million, while contributions in opposition were only about a million dollars.<sup>2</sup> The total contributed to either side was only 21 million dollars as opposed to the 117 million dollars spent on Proposition 15, and the vast majority of the cash was spent in support of the passage of Proposition 16.

While conventional wisdom may lead someone to argue that any person from a minority ethnic group would support initiatives like Prop. 15 and 16, support may hinge on context. This context could include changes in the population and the makeup of communities where Latinos live. Essentially, as demographics change within the state of California, support for these initiatives could change. More recently, this form of context has been highlighted as important for affirmative action through a high-profile court case brought forth by the Students for Fair Admissions group. They argued that Asian American students were discriminated against through affirmative action policies. The case led many to assume that minority groups may not support affirmative action at the expected levels (Yam, 2020). Furthermore, the overall change in de-

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<sup>1</sup>Data from the California Secretary of State, available at <https://www.sos.ca.gov/campaign-lobbying/cal-access-resources/measure-contributions/2020-ballot-measure-contribution-totals/proposition-15-increases-funding-public-schools-community-colleges-and-local-government-services-changing-tax-assessment-commerc>.

<sup>2</sup>Data provided by the California Secretary of State, <https://bit.ly/3xPCvhh>.

mographics seen in California has resulted in wide-reaching shifts in circumstances, even with Section 209 in place. An example of this can be seen in students admitted to public universities in California. In 1999, about 38% of those admitted were Asian students (Witherspoon et al., 1999). By 2020, at 36%, Latinos made up the largest racial-ethnic group admitted to the University of California’s entering freshman class (Watanabe, 2020). An initial precinct-level analysis of voter support across 9 counties in California for both Proposition 15 and 16 showed that it varied based on race and geographic differences (Lee, Jessica, Nathan Chan, and Natalie Masuoka, 2021).

Given the identity of Latinos within the state of California and previous studies done on equal opportunity policies, the hypotheses we test in this paper are:

- *Hypothesis 1*: Latinos will largely support Proposition 15 more than Whites.
- *Hypothesis 2*: Latinos will largely support Proposition 16 more than Whites.

### 3 Data and Methodology

We use a post-election survey of California registered voters, conducted in English from November 4 to November 10, 2020. The survey was implemented online, using respondents from YouGov’s opt-in panel and from another external provider.<sup>3</sup> In this survey, 2,532 California registered voters were given the opportunity to provide their opinions about a wide range of issues, including whether they voted for or against Proposition 15 and 16. The sample was weighted on gender, age, race, education, and geographic region within the state; the margin of error for the survey, adjusted for weighting, is  $\pm 2.3\%$ .

Most of the variables included in the models we specify below do not have missing values. 3.6% of the responses for the question on Proposition 15 were missing, while 3.9% of the responses for the question on Proposition 16 were missing. Using only those who have fully answered both questions, 2,225 participants are used in the analysis.

Table 1 shows the breakdown of the votes for both Proposition 15 and 16 by each of the variables included in the study. Variables capturing demographic attributes such as gender, age, and race were included. Although we use age as a continuous variable, for comparability, categorical variables by generation are displayed. We also provide a breakdown by partisanship, which is expected to be correlated with vote choice for both propositions. In the model, we also include income, and political variables such as confidence in election integrity and perception of whether the state’s response to the pandemic was effective, as these hyper-partisan wedge issues of 2020 could have implications for who supported each ballot measure.

Notably, about 48.7% of the Latinos voted for Proposition 15 and 44.9% for Proposition 16.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Of the 2,532 CA registered voters, 1,891 were selected from YouGov’s online panel, and 641 from Dynata’s online panel.

<sup>4</sup>The survey included a number of variables that allowed respondents to identify with different racial groups, all of which included the option of Hispanic. A separate question asked the respondents whether they were Hispanic

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Prop. 15</b>	<b>Prop. 16</b>
<b>Age</b>		
— Gen Z (18-24)	58.2	48.5
— Millennial (25-40)	54.5	46.6
— Gen X (41-56)	41.4	40.3
— Boomer (57-75)	39.6	35.7
— Silent (75+)	31.9	32.2
<b>Gender</b>		
— Female	43.7	38.6
— Male	46.6	42.4
<b>Race</b>		
— White	41.8	36.1
— Black	56.2	65.5
— Latino	48.7	44.9
— Asian	48.5	39.5
— Other	44.1	39.2
<b>Party</b>		
— Dem	64.0	59.8
— Rep	14.2	12.7
— Independent	39.5	31.5
— Other	51.7	49.1
— Not sure	37.0	25.2

Table 1: Proportion of “Yes” Response, Weighted

Support levels by Latinos for both propositions were higher than that by Whites, 41.8% of whom supported Proposition 15 and 36.1% of whom supported Proposition 16.

<b>Party</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Latino</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Other</b>
Dem	40.9	69.8	49.6	43.6	38.4
Rep	28.9	6.9	18.2	19.2	19.1
Other	30.2	23.3	32.2	37.2	42.5

Table 2: Party ID and Race, Weighted Proportions

Table 2 shows the variation in partisanship by race. In all categories, those who identified as Democrats outnumbered the rest, as was seen in Table 1, although the proportion identifying as neither of the two parties was also significant. Those identifying as Black were most closely aligned with the Democratic Party, followed by Hispanics/Latinos, Asians, and Whites. Latinos identified mostly as Democrats, with 49.6% of them identifying as such, or as “other.” Only 18.2% of Latinos identified as Republicans.

or Latino. Those who identified Hispanic identification on race almost always identified as Latino, although a few more people identified as Latino while not as Hispanic. Due to multicollinearity, only a five-category race variable as shown in the results tables was used. While the survey used the term ‘Hispanic,’ we consistently use Latino.



In order to determine the association between racial and ethnic identifications and support for each ballot measure while controlling for other factors, we use binary logistic regression. We have two dependent variables, the support of Proposition 15 and Proposition 16, and each is a binary variable with “yes” or “no” outcomes. Respondents who said “I don’t know” or who did not answer the questions about the support for or opposition to each ballot measure were treated as missing data. The main independent variable is race and ethnicity, which is a self-identified factor variable for White, Black, Latino, Asian, and others.

The models will be nested, with more variables included throughout the three iterations for comparison. The first model only uses race and demographic variables, such as: age, gender, education, region, and income. The second model includes all of the previous demographic variables and partisanship. The final model expands to include more political variables: perceptions of election integrity and perceptions of the state’s COVID-19 response. In all models, the regressions are weighted using the provided survey weights.

## 4 Results

Table 3 is an abbreviated version of the regression results for all three models, where coefficients for geographic and demographic variables, included in all models, are omitted for brevity (full tables in the Appendix). Similarly, Table 4 is an abbreviated version of the regression results of the weighted models for Prop. 16. The baseline category for each variable is White for race, Democrat for party, “very confident” for election integrity, and “more effective than others” for the state’s COVID responses.

Tables 3 and 4 show that Latinos supported both Proposition 15 and 16 more than Whites, but not at a significant level once other factors were accounted for. In all of the models for Prop. 15, the log odds of supporting the proposition were higher for Latinos compared to Whites. The log odds of Latinos supporting Prop. 15 more than Whites was highest in the first model, which was the simple model that did not include any political variables. The higher support for Prop. 15, however, was not statistically significant. Furthermore, in comparison to the difference in support between Blacks and Whites, the log odds of Latino support compared to Whites was much lower. The general relationship between Latinos and their votes on Prop. 15 does align with the first hypothesis, but the hypothesis was ultimately rejected as Latinos did not support the proposition much more strongly than Whites.

For Prop. 16, the log odds of Latinos supporting it were all higher compared to Whites, as well. Yet, the difference between Latinos and Whites in the first column was the greatest out of all of the models once again. The estimate was statistically significant at the 0.05 level but did not include any political variables. Once those were all included, the log odds of Latinos supporting Prop. 16 decreased and lost statistical significance. As with Prop. 15, the hypothesis that pertains to Prop. 16 was rejected. While Latinos were more likely to support Prop. 16, they did not do so

Table 3: Proposition 15 (Commerical Property Tax) Models

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Support Proposition 15		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Race: Black	0.736** (0.258)	0.230 (0.295)	0.301 (0.301)
Race: Hispanic/Latino	0.267 (0.148)	0.046 (0.164)	0.042 (0.176)
Race: Asian	-0.074 (0.165)	-0.178 (0.183)	-0.139 (0.180)
Race: Other	-0.013 (0.215)	-0.083 (0.235)	0.070 (0.259)
Party: Rep		-2.525*** (0.169)	-1.773*** (0.185)
Party: Other		-1.210*** (0.132)	-0.818*** (0.143)
Election Integrity: Somewhat confident			-0.453** (0.152)
Election Integrity: Not too confident			-1.466*** (0.276)
Electoral Integrity: Not at all confident			-1.493*** (0.291)
Electoral Integrity: Don't know			0.220 (0.459)
COVID Response: Less effective than others			-0.720*** (0.171)
COVID Response: About as effective			-0.517*** (0.152)
Constant	No	No	No
Gender	Yes	Yes	Yes
Age	Yes	Yes	Yes
Education	Yes	Yes	Yes
Income	Yes	Yes	Yes
CA Region	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,225	2,225	2,202

Note: \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001

Table 4: Proposition 16 (Affirmative Action) Models

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Support Proposition 16		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Race: Black	1.389*** (0.247)	0.988*** (0.274)	1.126*** (0.286)
Race: Hispanic/Latino	0.310* (0.147)	0.115 (0.166)	0.081 (0.174)
Race: Asian	-0.054 (0.168)	-0.151 (0.174)	-0.087 (0.182)
Race: Other	-0.106 (0.227)	-0.183 (0.238)	0.078 (0.269)
Party: Rep		-2.397*** (0.175)	-1.618*** (0.192)
Party: Other		-1.195*** (0.126)	-0.817*** (0.136)
Election Integrity: Somewhat confident			-0.399** (0.149)
Election Integrity: Not too confident			-1.418*** (0.271)
Electoral Integrity: Not at all confident			-1.949*** (0.374)
Electoral Integrity: Don't know			-0.203 (0.383)
COVID Response: Less effective than others			-0.807*** (0.171)
COVID Response: About as effective			-0.725*** (0.153)
Constant	No	No	No
Gender	Yes	Yes	Yes
Age	Yes	Yes	Yes
Education	Yes	Yes	Yes
Income	Yes	Yes	Yes
CA Region	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,225	2,225	2,202

Note: \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001

in a way that was statistically significant when compared to Whites.

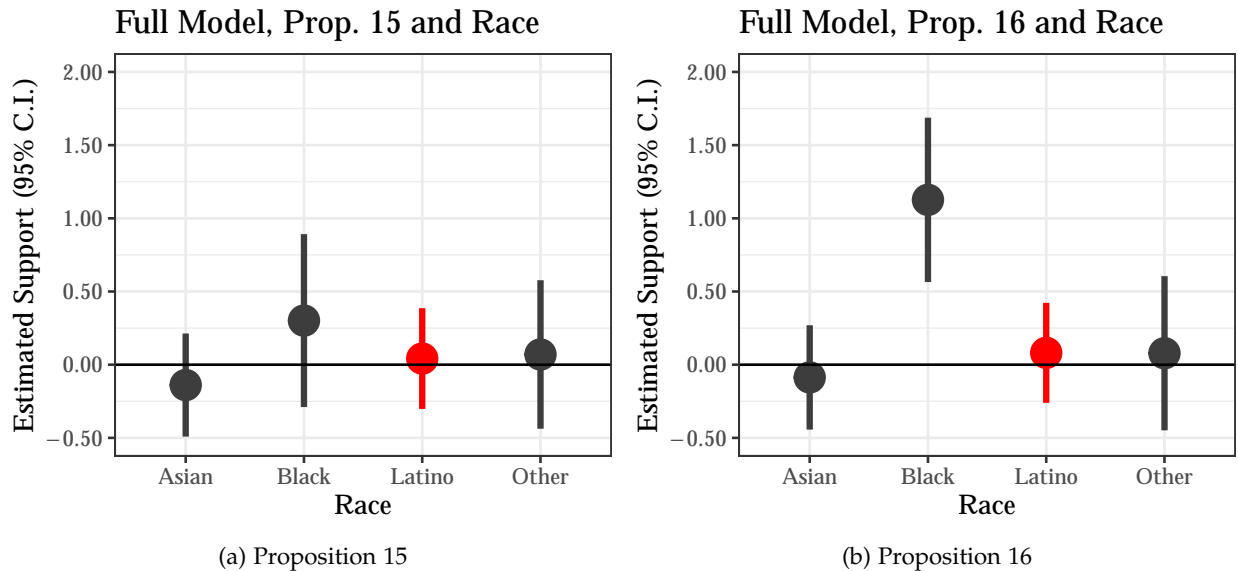


Figure 1: Race Coefficients for Prop. 15 and 16 in the Full Model

Both Figure 1a and Figure 1b show the race and ethnic identity coefficients from the Proposition 15 and 16 models. Respondents who identified as Latinos supported the propositions at higher levels compared to those who identified as non-Latino Whites, but the figures show just how small that increase in support is. Importantly, the support from respondents who identified with other racial groups is higher than the support by Latinos compared to Whites, except for those who were Asian. In the figures, it can be seen that the racial group with the highest support for either proposition compared to Whites came from Black respondents. It is worth noting, however, that support from Black respondents compared to White respondents on Proposition 15 was lower and was closer to that of other racial groups.

While Latinos were not found to support either of the propositions more strongly than Whites, the models did indicate that other factors were important in the explanations for the differing support for Proposition 15 and 16. These factors were mostly political, with the exception of one racial category for Proposition 16.

Partisanship was found to be an important factor that is associated with the support for both Prop. 15 and Prop. 16. For partisanship in Prop. 15 models, the log odds of supporting Prop. 15 were lower for all partisans and non-partisans compared to Democrats. There was a clear gap between Republicans and Democrats. The log odds of supporting Prop. 15 for Republicans compared to Democrats decreased the most in the second model and was followed by the decrease in the third model. The estimates for partisanship were statistically significant in both of the models that included them. For partisanship in the Prop. 16 models, the biggest decrease in the log odds of support was for those that identified as Republicans compared to

Democrats in the second model. However, the log odds of supporting Prop. 16 decreased for all partisans and non-partisans compared to Democrats and were all statistically significant.

As mentioned, for Blacks, the log odds of supporting Prop. 15 was higher compared to Whites. However, the biggest difference was seen in the first model. This was also the only model where the estimate for Blacks support was statistically significant. For Prop. 16, the log odds of Blacks supporting Prop. 16 was higher compared to Whites. The predictor for Blacks was statistically significant in all of the three models for Prop. 16.

Overall, these models showed that Latinos in California support policies like Prop. 15 and 16 more than non-Latino Whites, but the differences are not extremely large. This is shown through the lack of statistical significance in the logistic regression models. The most important variables that seem to be associated with Latino vote choice for these propositions seem to be partisanship, electoral integrity, and the perception of California’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, the results are consistent for subgroups by party and by age groups, as displayed in Figures 2 and 3. Although for those identifying as Black, the results may differ by subgroups (as in Figure 2b), for Latinos, the support levels for both propositions are not significant in all subgroups. In particular, this shows that the results are not simply an artifact of Latinos leaning more towards the Democratic Party. Even within explicitly Republican or third-party/nonpartisan electorate, in both proposition the Latino support is not meaningfully different compared to support levels of the White electorate<sup>5</sup>

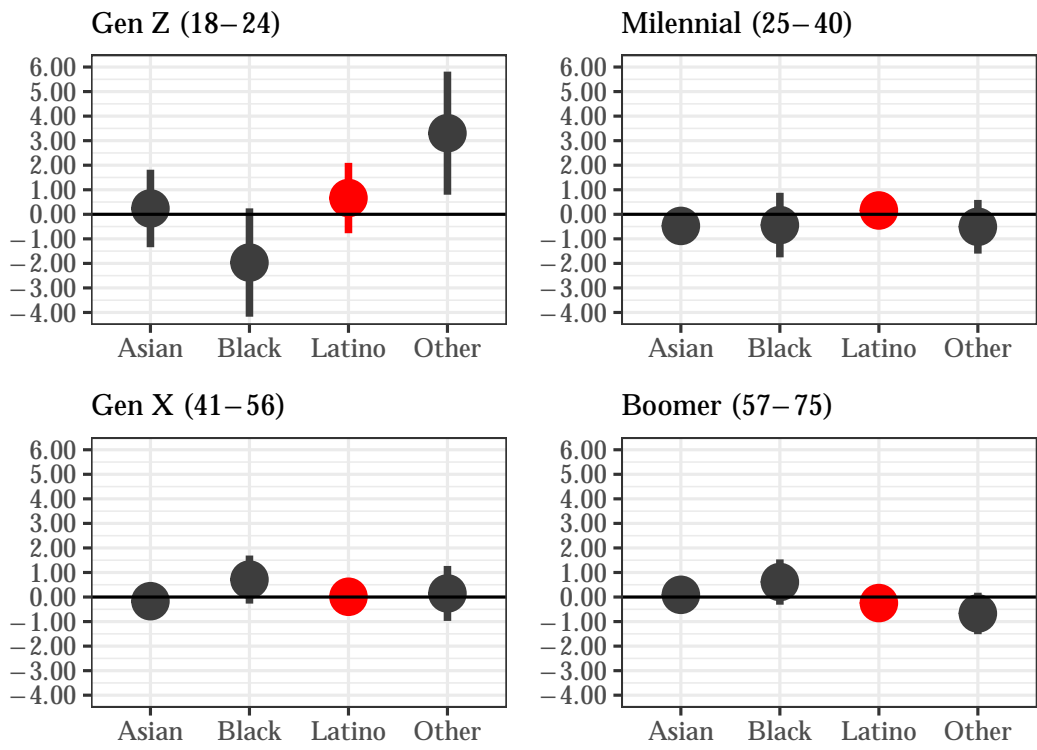
Finally, to show the substantive effects, first-differences calculations were run using the coefficients from hypotheticals that were simulated from a thousand samples. These hypotheticals set the respondent as either Latino or not, and then compared the impact of identifying with the ethnic group had on the respondents’ support of Prop. 15 and 16. The results are included in Table 5.

	Median	2.5%	97.5%	s.e.
<b>Proposition 15</b>				
— Non-Latino	0.88	0.73	0.96	0.06
— Latino	0.89	0.73	0.96	0.06
— Difference	0.00	-0.03	0.05	0.02
<b>Proposition 16</b>				
— Non-Latino	0.89	0.75	0.96	0.05
— Latino	0.90	0.77	0.96	0.05
— Difference	0.01	-0.03	0.05	0.02

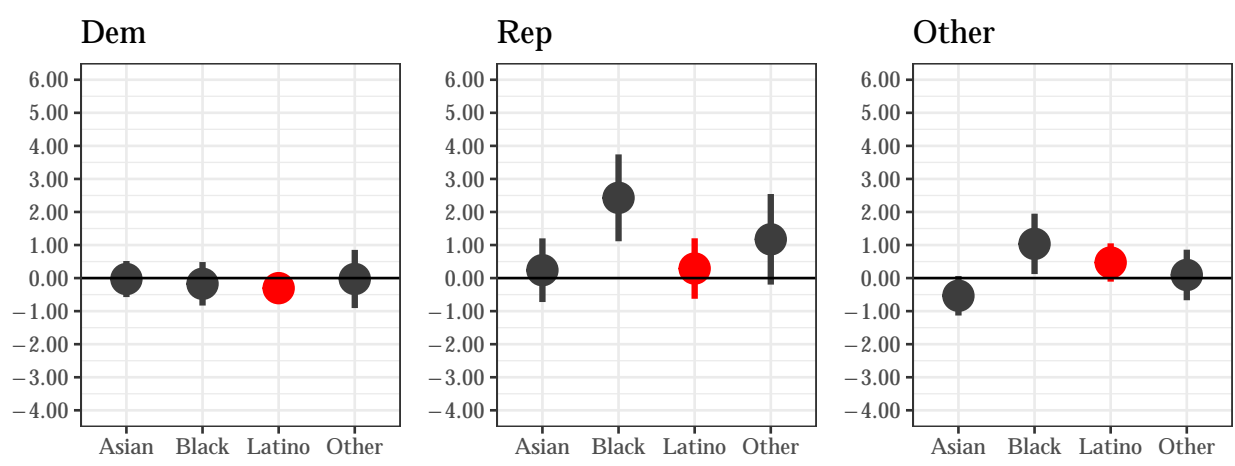
Table 5: First Differences in the Expected Probabilities for Latinos and Non-Latinos

From the first differences calculations, identifying as Latino has a very slight correlation with

<sup>5</sup>The regression results by partisan subgroups is available in Appendix F.

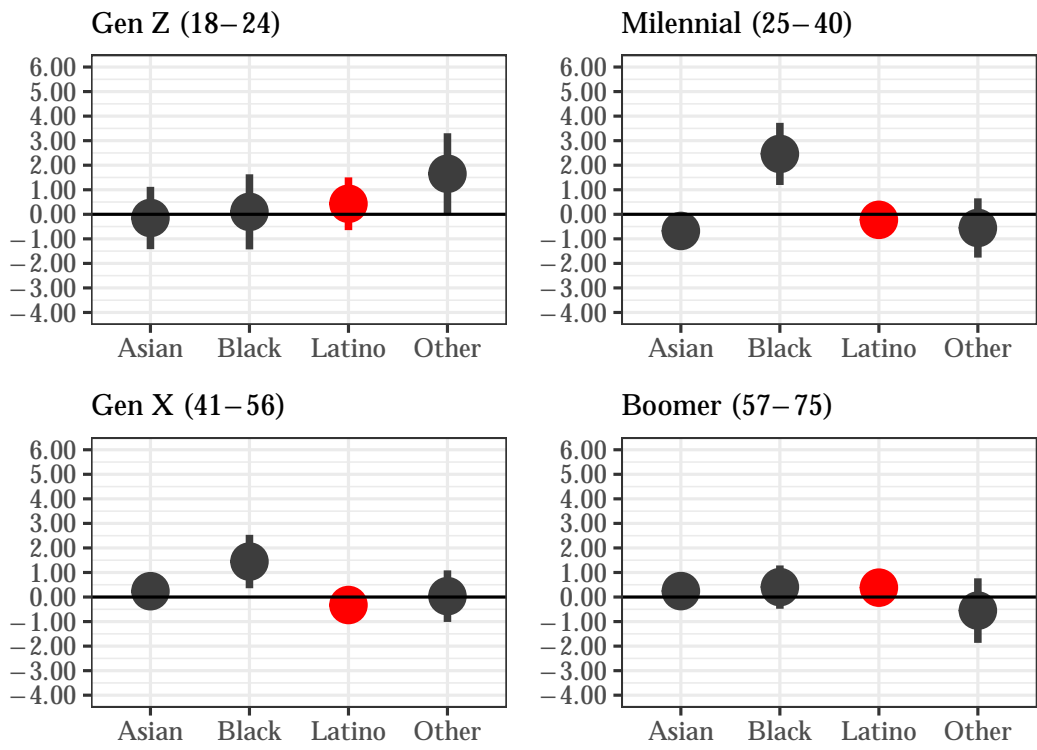


(a) By Age Group

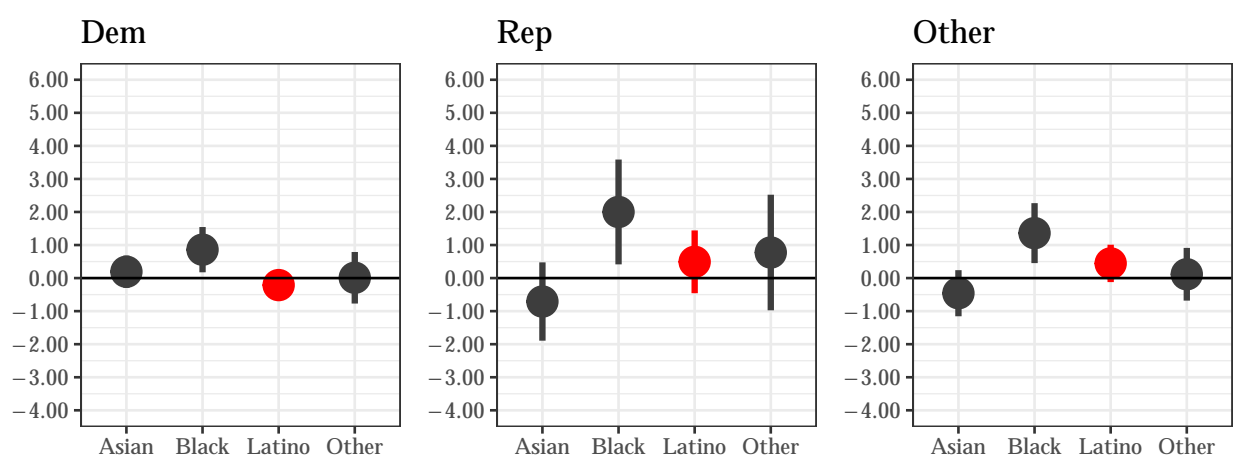


(b) By Party

Figure 2: Race Coefficients for Prop. 15 in the Full Model by Subgroups



(a) By Age Group



(b) By Party

Figure 3: Race Coefficients for Prop. 16 in the Full Model by Subgroups

support for Prop. 15 and 16. For Prop. 16, the hypothetical case where the voter is Latino did see an increase of 0.01. The 95% confidence interval, however, indicates that the difference is not statistically significant.

## 5 Conclusion

Little evidence was found to support the hypotheses that Latinos would be highly likely to vote for equal opportunity policies on their ballots in November 2020. Our results indicate that the null hypotheses—that Latinos oppose these sorts of policies—cannot be rejected. The models showed positive increases in support among Latinos when compared to Whites, very few of the Latino predictors were statistically significant, in stark contrast to the increases in support for Proposition 16 by the Black electorate. This suggests that some Latinos are voting as expected, but not enough of them are doing so to produce strong evidence to show that their group has taken a strong position on equal opportunity issues.

A limitation that may have affected the findings is that the results may have captured a close alignment of Latinos in California and the Democratic Party. Including both of the predictors in the model may have dampened the results seen. Another limitation is potential confounders related to the impact of COVID-19, which were not included in these models. If economic factors had such a large impact on the Latino vote in 2020, then questions on recent unemployment and related issues need to be included in future studies. The survey did include questions on income, whether the respondent owned or rented their home, and how long they had lived there, but those questions only hint at the possible economic impact that the pandemic had on Latinos. Data from the Pew Research Center, for example, has shown that Latinos, especially Latinas, were impacted dramatically by the economic downturn ([Krogstad and Lopez, 2020](#)).

Another possible explanation for the lack of significant results could be that there was a shift in partisanship among Latinos in California in the 2020 election. Over the last decade, the Republican Party has frequently argued that Latinos are a key demographic group where they can make inroads. Republicans have continually argued that Latinos share a common “work ethic, conservatism, and entrepreneurial spirit” ([de la Garza and Cortina, 2007](#)). Others pointed to high religiosity and steady growth of Protestant Latinos for explanations in Latino support for Donald Trump and the Republican Party in the 2016 election ([Corral, Alvaro J and Leal, David L, 2020](#)). However, the causality may run in the other direction—perhaps it is because Latinos are not highly sympathetic toward equal opportunity policies that they are leaning more towards the Republican Party.

Early analysis of the precinct-level data and vote choice among Latinos have shown that certain segments of the Latino population in certain states did vote for Trump in 2020. Many claim that Latino subgroups did move cohesively and consistently towards the Republican Party in states like Arizona and Florida ([Druke, 2021](#)). More research on Latino vote choice is needed, as an



early explanation for this movement towards the right is that 2020 was a particular election that did not hold immigration as a key issue for Latinos. Immigration is usually thought of as a signal for whether a politician or party is “pro-Latino” or “anti-Latino,” even for Latino sub-groups that are not very affected by immigration policy (Druke, 2021). A recent study found that a little more than half of the Latino voters thought that the economy was the most important issue in 2020 (Ocampo et al., 2021).

The conclusions of this study are, of course, tempered by the generalizations drawn from ballot measures in California. What do our results imply for how Latino and Hispanics across the United States might vote in the 2022 and 2024 federal elections? Of course, our data are from the 2020 elections in California, and we have focused here on two ballot measures, not on candidate support. As California is a blue state with a Latino voter population that may differ demographically and politically from Latinos and Hispanics in other parts of the county, we do need to be cautious about overgeneralization.

However, we believe that our results shed light on group identity and support for equal opportunity among Latinos and may be indicative of problems facing the Democratic party in upcoming federal elections. Our results imply that Democratic strategists may not necessarily rely upon Latinos and Hispanics in one of the most progressive states in the country to support progressive causes overwhelmingly. Instead, Latino and Hispanic voters might need much more carefully formulated campaign messages and outreach in order to be persuaded to support highly progressive causes and candidates.

For future research, additional aspects of the Latino experience should be considered. As a largely immigrant group, it would be useful to capture generational differences by immigration in policy attitudes and voting behavior. Some research has been done on generational differences and their effect on group identity, and a step toward the consequences seen in political outcomes is needed (Sanchez and Masuoka, 2010). A possible way to capture another aspect of the different sub-groups under the Latino label would be to include a measure on respondents’ primary language,<sup>6</sup> whether they were born abroad, and the percentage of their lives in the U.S. (Barreto, 2005).

Overall, the study did not support our hypotheses. More research on this topic needs to be conducted in order to gain a better understanding of how Latino sub-groups view each other and outsiders, as well as the effect of their theorized growing unity on individual voting behavior and policy preferences.

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<sup>6</sup>Note, however, that this survey was conducted in English, potentially excluding those without a level of English fluency.

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