

US Elections 2012: the Latino factor

According to U.S. government statistics, there are more than 50 million people of Hispanic origin living in the United States. That makes them the country's largest minority group. That means Hispanics are a powerful force in American politics.

MARK LOPEZ, HISPANIC PEW CENTER: Latinos have played a growing and important role in the nation's presidential elections over the last few election cycles. There are now more than 21 million Hispanics who are eligible to vote. And Latinos reside in some key states.

ROMO (voice-over): In the 2008 election, in Colorado, Latinos represented 13 percent of all voters, 14 percent in Nevada, 15 percent in Florida, and a whopping 38 percent in New Mexico, all considered swing states. In 2008, 9.5 million Latino voters went to the polls out of 12 million registered. The leader of an organization that tracks Latino voting trends says he's expecting a dramatic increase next year. In 2004, former President George W. Bush won more than 40 percent of the Latino vote. Four years later, 67 percent of Hispanic voters went for Barack Obama. Experts say anybody getting that kind of support from Latinos next year, whether Democrat or Republican, has a good chance of winning the presidency.

ANDRADE: The Latino vote can prove decisive. And we have demonstrated the ability to swing critical states, again, like we did in 2008.

ROMO (voice-over): And that's exactly why Democrat and Republicans are going after the country's largest minority group - Rafael Romo, CNN.

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