



The Effects of Voting Materials in Spanish on the Participation of Latino Voters in Ventura County

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine if voting materials in Spanish affects the participation of Latino voters in Ventura County, California. Though there is a fair amount of research on voting materials in Spanish and how they affected the participation of Latino voters, most studies were broad and no studies had ever been conducted on the Ventura County. For this study, it was necessary to determine the usefulness of voting materials in Spanish as well as which groups benefited from voting materials the most. To accomplish this, surveys and interviews were administered to Latinos in Ventura County. The data from the surveys and interviews reflected the benefits of voting materials in Spanish as they make voting easier for many Spanish speaking Latinos. This study concluded that voting materials in Spanish do affect the participation of Latino voters in Ventura County by making voting more convenient and easier for Latinos in Ventura County.

Methods

The administration at Thousand Oaks, Westlake and Newbury Park High School sent an email blast out with the survey to all parents of Latino students. The survey had every single question translated into Spanish as well as a cover letter sent out to the potential participants of the survey in English and Spanish which explained what the survey was for and the kind of questions it would contain to ensure effective participation from English speakers and Spanish speakers alike. The survey asked simple identifying questions regarding the surveyor's name, age and if they lived in Ventura County. The survey contained questions to access the language abilities of the participant as well as if they are registered to vote, their voting experience in terms of difficulty, the language their ballot is in, if they use voting materials in Spanish and if voting materials are helpful or useless to them. The survey results were used to identify three individuals who benefited from the voting materials provided to them by the Ventura County at varying levels for interviews. As well as another interview with Crystal a records technician at the Ventura County Clerk's Office Election Division, before conducting this interview all of the interview questions were reviewed by the Election Division.

Discussion

As the survey revealed that voting materials in Spanish can potentially increase the participation of Latino voters as many responded that these materials made voting easier/possible for them. The results of the interview also revealed that this could be due to voting materials in Spanish making voting easier and more convenient. The survey also showed that the majority of respondents described voting as, "easy". The majority of respondents also described voting materials in Spanish as useful to them, voting is probably easier for them because they are able to use these voting materials to vote and when making decisions about voting. Contrastingly, only a small percentage of respondents (22%) said that they use a ballot in Spanish when voting, but still described voting materials in Spanish as useful to them when voting this suggests that they use voting materials in Spanish that are not ballots. My interview with Crystal the Records Technician for the Ventura County Clerk's Office gave me insight on how the Ventura County provides a wide variety of voting materials in Spanish to Spanish speakers, and all three people I interviewed took advantage of voting materials in Spanish specifically, the voter county information guide as all three interviewees used this to make decisions.

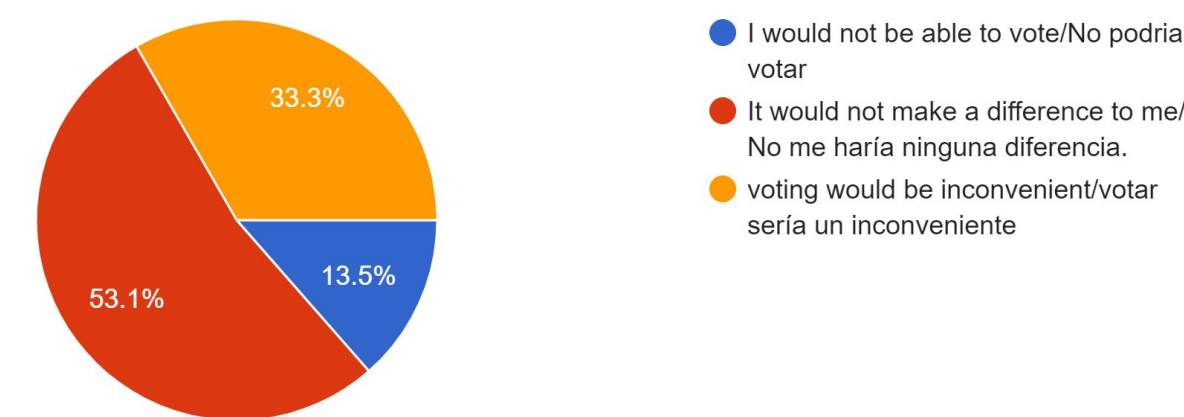
Introduction

Ventura County is a county in Southern California with a total population of 854,223 people with a large Latino population that makes up 42.9% of the population. The estimated number of Latinos in the Ventura County is 366,461 and according to the U.S Census Bureau, about 240,036 of these Latinos are native Spanish speakers. Ventura County does provide voting materials in Spanish due to its high Latino population. The voting materials available in Spanish for Spanish speaking voters in the Ventura County include county voter information guides, ballots, all legal publications, website, voting instructions, voter outreach materials, voter forms, ballot drop off location lists and press releases. Clearly, a lot of voting materials are available to voters in order to help them vote in elections and make informed opinions about the candidates and propositions on the ballot. This project will asses if voting materials in Spanish are effective in helping Spanish speakers vote and be informed about elections. It will also evaluate how the use of voting materials in Spanish affects Latino voters participation in Ventura County.

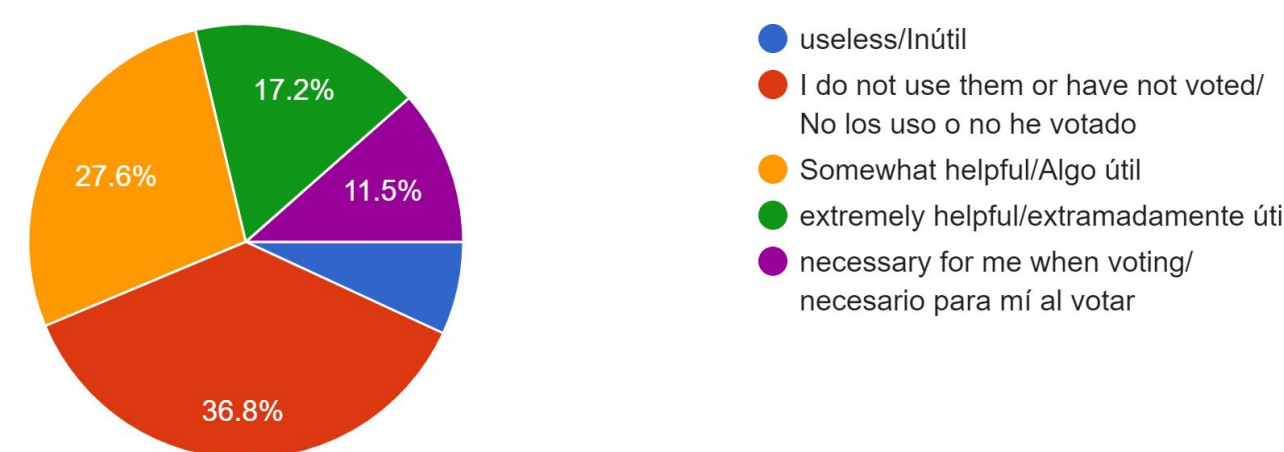
Question: How do voting materials in Spanish affect the participation of Latino voters in Ventura County?

Results

If the Ventura County did not have voting materials in Spanish....Si el Condado de Ventura no tuviera materiales para votar en español ...
96 responses



If you use voting materials in Spanish would you say they are....
87 responses



Conclusions

Overall, this study evaluated how voting materials in Spanish did somewhat affect the participation of Latino voters in Ventura County as voting materials in Spanish made voting for many survey participants easier and more convenient. Although this study was relatively small it did illustrate the benefits of voting materials in Spanish, they allow Spanish speakers in the Ventura County a better understanding of voting as well as what they are voting for. Voting materials in Spanish allow Spanish speakers who speak English at different levels be able to more effectively cast their votes in their best interests, as the interview results revealed that people who speak English proficiently still have difficulties with using voting materials in English. Further research is necessary in jurisdictions that do not provide voting materials for Spanish speakers in order to measure how voting materials in Spanish affects the participation of Latino voters and how comfortable they feel when voting without the assistance of voting materials in Spanish. Ultimately this study determined that the Ventura County needs voting materials in Spanish because of the benefits they offer Spanish speaking Latino voters.

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