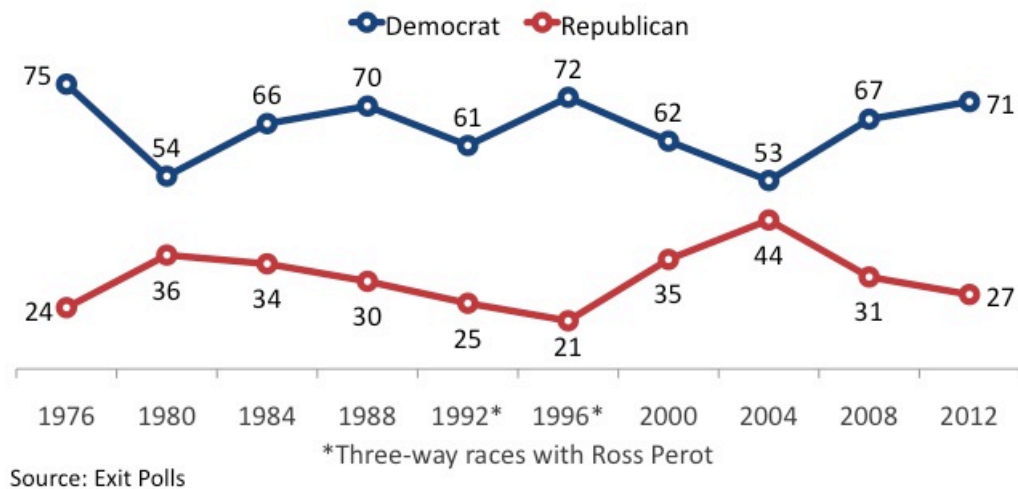




TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Whit Ayres and Jennifer Sevilla Korn
DATE: December 12, 2012
RE: The Hispanic Challenge and Opportunity for Republicans

Resurgent Republic and the Hispanic Leadership Network jointly surveyed Hispanics who voted in the 2012 Presidential election in four critical states: Florida, Colorado, Nevada, and New Mexico. The results make clear the size of the hole Republicans have dug among Hispanic voters over the past eight years. At a time of growing Hispanic influence in the electorate, Mitt Romney received the lowest percentage of the Hispanic vote of any Republican presidential nominee in a two-candidate election since Watergate.



Some argue that Hispanics have been voting Democratic for years, that there is little Republicans can do to change the trend, and that trying to do so will split the Republican base. That position is belied by the facts, most recently in 2004 when President George W. Bush achieved 44 percent of the Hispanic vote, the highest in history for a Republican presidential candidate, while simultaneously generating the second largest turnout of the Republican base voters in the history of exit polling.

It is also the route to political irrelevance in national elections. Mitt Romney won a landslide among white voters, defeating Barack Obama by 59 to 39 percent. In the process he won every large segment of white voters, often by double-digit margins: white men, white women, white Catholics, white Protestants, white old people, white young people.

Yet that was not enough to craft a national majority. Republicans have run out of persuadable white voters. For the fifth time in the past six presidential elections, Republicans lost the popular vote. Trying to win a national election by gaining a larger and larger share of a smaller and smaller portion of the electorate is a losing political proposition.

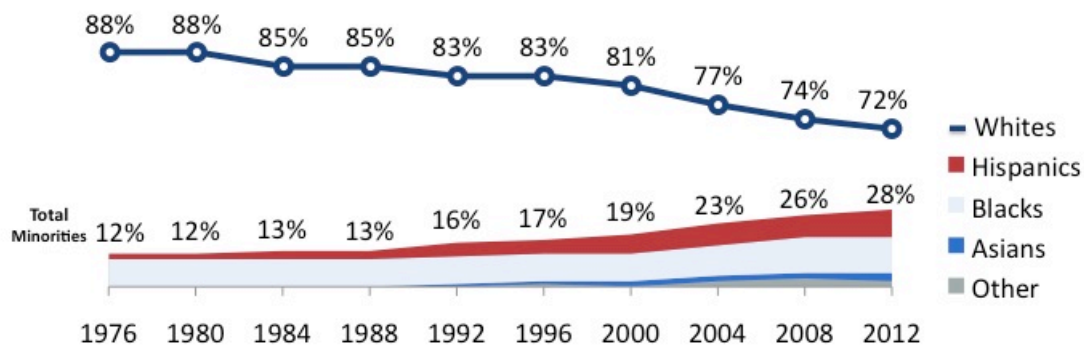
To be competitive nationally in the future, Republicans must do better among non-white Americans, especially Hispanics and Asians. If Republicans achieve 40 percent or more of Hispanics nationally, they can elect conservative Republicans to national office. Settling for a quarter or less of the Hispanic vote nationally will relegate Republicans to a regional party with few national prospects.

These four surveys demonstrate the potential for conservative candidates in four very different Hispanic electorates, and the short and long-term steps that can improve Republicans' standing in the Hispanic community. The project surveyed 400 registered Hispanic voters in each of the states who voted in the 2012 presidential election. Each respondent was interviewed by a bilingual interviewer and was offered the option to complete the survey in English or Spanish. Since these are surveys of Hispanic American citizens who vote in elections, Hispanics in these surveys are older, have reached a higher level of education, more likely to speak English, and more likely to be born in America than those in surveys of all Hispanic residents.

We will mine these surveys for insights for some time, with results posted at resurgentrepublic.com and hispanicleadershipnetwork.org. But following are some key highlights.

Increasing Hispanic Voters from Exit Polls

In 2012 white voters made up 72 percent of the national electorate and non-white voters constituted 28 percent, the highest in history. In 2012 Hispanics constituted 10 percent of the national electorate, up from 9 percent in 2008. That is a sign of things to come. Every month in America 50,000 Hispanics turn 18 years old and are eligible to vote, a trend that will continue for the next 20 years: <http://www.hispanicvoters2012.com>.



Source: Exit Polls

In some critical swing states the percentage of Hispanics is higher. In three of these four swing states the Hispanic percentage grew between 2008 and 2012, from 14 to 17 percent in Florida, from 13 to 14 percent in Colorado, and from 15 to 18 percent in Nevada. Only in New Mexico was the Hispanic percentage down, from 41 to 37 percent, perhaps because New Mexico was essentially conceded to Obama by both campaigns early on.

The State of the Republican Brand

Recent years have not been kind to the Republican brand among Hispanic voters in these four states. In addition to Barack Obama decisively defeating Mitt Romney last month, the Republican Party's image suffers when compared to the Democratic Party's image, both in general and on a variety of specific issues.

One encouraging fact for Republicans is that conservative Hispanics elected in 2010 – Senator Marco Rubio in Florida, Governor Susana Martinez in New Mexico, and Governor Brian Sandoval in Nevada – are far more popular in their states than the Republican Party overall. But in Colorado, where former Republican congressman and outspoken anti-immigrant activist Tom Tancredo was the de facto Republican nominee for governor last cycle, the situation for Republicans among Hispanics is dire.

1. Majorities of Hispanic voters say that, regardless of how they typically vote, the Republican Party does not respect the values and concerns of the Hispanic community. Combined with the overwhelming view that the Democratic Party, rather than the Republican Party, better understands the needs and concerns of Hispanic voters, the results of this question should be sobering for Republican candidates at every level. Hispanic voters say the Republican Party does not respect the values and concerns of the Hispanic community by 51 to 44 percent in Florida, 54 to 40 percent in New Mexico, 59 to 35 percent in Nevada, and 63 to 30 percent in Colorado.

The Democratic Party fares much better, with Hispanic voters saying the party *does* respect the values and concerns of Hispanic voters by 67 to 28 percent in Florida, 72 to 23 percent in New Mexico and Nevada, and 76 to 20 percent in Colorado. These results are a stark illustration of the challenge the Republican Party faces among Hispanic voters, and show the importance of quality outreach efforts and a respectful tone, along with attractive policy ideas, when trying to win votes in the Hispanic community.

2. The Republican Party has net unfavorable ratings among Hispanic voters in each of these states. The Republican Party as a whole is unpopular among these voters – its favorable to unfavorable rating in Florida approaches a split, but is still a negative 44 to 47 percent, compared to 35 to 53 percent in New Mexico, 33 to 58 percent in Nevada, and 30 to 61 percent in Colorado. In Colorado, 43 percent of Hispanic voters have a “very unfavorable” view of the party.

The Democratic Party, by comparison, has favorable to unfavorable ratings of two-to-one or better in each state – 60 to 30 percent in Florida, 66 to 26 percent in New Mexico, 69 to 24 percent in Nevada, and 72 to 23 percent in Colorado. President Obama outperforms even these numbers, with favorable to unfavorable ratings of 64 to 34 percent in Florida, 72 to 26 percent in each of New Mexico and Nevada, and 78 to 20 percent in Colorado.

3. But Republican statewide elected officials are far more popular than the Republican Party in general, and Mitt Romney specifically. In Florida, Senator Marco Rubio has a 49 to 37 percent favorable-unfavorable rating, compared to Romney’s 44 to 51 percent. In New Mexico, Governor Susana Martinez has a 53 to 35 percent favorable-unfavorable rating, compared to Romney’s 34 to 58 percent. And in Nevada, Governor Brian Sandoval has a 47 to 27 percent favorable-unfavorable rating, compared to Romney’s 32 to 62 percent. As seen with the Republican Party overall, Mitt Romney’s worst favorable-unfavorable rating is in Colorado, at 26 to 69 percent (including 51 percent very unfavorable).

4. The Democratic Party has a decisive advantage over the Republican Party on a variety of phrases related to policy and governing philosophy. Hispanics in each of these states prefer Democrats to Republicans on the issues, usually by wide margins. Democrats lead not only in traditionally Democratic areas like education, women’s rights, and social issues, but also on traditionally Republican issues like deficit reduction, the economy, and helping small businesses. Democrats also hold wide advantages on supporting legal immigration, and caring about the middle class, while Republicans have a wide lead on caring primarily about helping the rich. Margins for Democrats tend to be narrowest in Florida and widest in Colorado, with New Mexico and Nevada in between.

Disturbingly, majorities of voters in each state say that “Is anti-immigrant” better describes the Republican Party, while the Democratic Party has big leads on “Understands the needs and concerns of Hispanic voters,” and “Makes an effort to win Hispanic voters.” But one area of potential concern for Democrats is seen on “Views the Hispanic community as a group, rather than as individuals,” where they lead Republicans in every state by double-digit margins. This suggests a sense among some Hispanic voters that the Democratic Party takes them and their vote for granted, thus offering Republicans an opportunity to make inroads among these voters with a results-oriented agenda that does not pander.

	<i>FL</i>		<i>CO</i>		<i>NM</i>		<i>NV</i>	
	<i>Dem</i>	<i>Rep</i>	<i>Dem</i>	<i>Rep</i>	<i>Dem</i>	<i>Rep</i>	<i>Dem</i>	<i>Rep</i>
Right plans to improve education	56	24	69	18	56	24	65	23
Works to protect women’s rights	63	18	72	14	68	19	72	16
Shares values on social issues	65	23	68	21	60	24	70	15
Ideas that will reduce deficit	42	39	55	30	52	33	48	38
Ideas that will improve economy	48	37	63	24	53	32	59	29
Ideas that will help small business	50	38	63	27	56	34	56	35
Supports legal immigration	58	24	71	19	65	18	69	18
Cares about helping middle class	61	28	72	19	69	21	71	20
Cares about helping rich people	19	63	21	66	19	67	23	65
Anti-immigrant	20	54	29	53	23	55	25	56
Understands needs/concerns of Hispanics	62	19	74	12	69	14	73	12
Makes effort to win Hispanics	68	16	77	12	77	11	79	11
Views Hispanics as group	50	33	50	35	51	32	54	33

5. Only in Florida was the Romney campaign close to par with the Obama campaign in its Hispanic voter contact effort. Given that voters say that the Democratic Party, rather than the Republican Party, makes an effort to win Hispanic voters, it is not surprising to see a decided Democratic outreach advantage in the recent presidential campaign.

In Florida, 32 percent of voters say the Obama campaign personally contacted them five times or more, 32 percent say one to four times, and 32 percent say it never contacted them. By comparison, 30 percent say the Romney campaign personally contacted them five times or more, 28 percent say one to four times, and 39 percent say it never contacted them. Romney outreach focused predominantly on Cubans, 36 percent of whom were contacted five or more times, 22 percent one to four times, and 37 percent never contacted.

In Nevada, which saw the biggest gap, 50 percent of voters say the Obama campaign personally contacted them five times or more, 28 percent say one to four times, and 19 percent say it never contacted them. By comparison, 33 percent say the Romney campaign personally contacted them five times or more, 26 percent say one to four times, and 37 percent say it never contacted them.

In Colorado, 47 percent of voters say the Obama campaign personally contacted them five times or more, 30 percent say one to four times, and 20 percent say it never contacted them. By comparison, 31 percent say the Romney campaign personally contacted them five times or more, 29 percent say one to four times, and 39 percent say it never contacted them.

In New Mexico, where contact by both campaigns was lowest, likely due to the fact that it was the least competitive of the four states, 25 percent of voters say the Obama campaign personally contacted them five times or more, 35 percent say one to four times, and 35 percent say it never contacted them. By comparison, 19 percent say the Romney campaign personally contacted them five times or more, 25 percent say one to four times, and 52 percent say it never contacted them.

Hispanic Views on the Economy, Immigration, and Education

1. As seen nationally, Hispanic voters in these states say the economy was the most important issue in deciding their vote for President. At least 71 percent of the Hispanic voters in each of these four states said the economy and jobs was extremely important in deciding their vote (71 percent in Colorado, New Mexico, and Nevada, and 78 percent in Florida). As seen in the following table, education, health care, and federal deficits and debt also drew majorities in each state saying the issue was *extremely important* in deciding their vote:

	<i>FL</i>	<i>CO</i>	<i>NM</i>	<i>NV</i>
Economy and jobs	78%	71%	71%	71%
Education	70%	66%	64%	67%
Health care	66%	63%	63%	65%
Federal deficits and debt	59%	52%	52%	56%
Taxes	54%	47%	48%	50%
Immigration	40%	42%	37%	47%

Immigration placed last among these tested issues, but that does not mean it was unimportant. In each state majorities rated immigration as either a five (extremely important) or four on this scale. But the issue was less salient this year with voters facing a challenging economy.

2. Of nine tested policies regarding immigration, Hispanic voters support eight by overwhelming margins, including guest worker programs, border security, and legal status provisions. They oppose only “taking aggressive steps to seek out and deport as many undocumented immigrants as possible.” Testing a range of policy options regarding immigration finds support of three-quarters or more for eight of the nine options, with the notable exception of taking aggressive steps to seek out and deport undocumented immigrants. The following table ranks various policies by their support among Hispanic voters in each state:

	<i>FL</i>	<i>CO</i>	<i>NM</i>	<i>NV</i>
Temporary work visa	90%	93%	89%	90%
Earn legal status/serve in military	91%	90%	83%	86%
Earn legal status/graduate from college	89%	87%	84%	88%
Increasing border security	86%	81%	85%	79%
Earn legal status/pay fine, have job, learn English	83%	83%	81%	84%
Guest worker program for seasonal jobs with annual return	87%	81%	80%	79%
In-state tuition for children of undocumented immigrants	76%	78%	70%	77%
Children of undocumented immigrants apply for legal status for their parents	74%	76%	69%	74%
Aggressive steps to seek and deport undocumented immigrants	43%	39%	44%	38%

There is ample opportunity for conservatives to support approaches that garner Hispanic support. Increased border security, for example, draws the support of four-fifths of Hispanic voters in these states, while components of the DREAM Act or Achieve proposals secure even higher levels of support.

3. Significant minorities of Hispanic voters in all four states say they know an undocumented immigrant. Forty-four percent of Hispanic voters in Colorado say they personally know someone who is an undocumented immigrant, compared to 43 percent each in Nevada and New Mexico, and 34 percent in Florida. The implications of this finding are significant. Conservatives tend to discuss immigration reform strictly in rule-of-law terms, and Hispanics support increased border security. For many Hispanic voters however, immigration policy is not an abstract discussion, but one that directly affects people they know.

4. The tone Republicans use to discuss immigration has an impact on Hispanics who are not directly affected by the issue. Some Republicans argue that harsh rhetoric and policies regarding illegal immigrants will not affect Hispanics who are American citizens. But this survey suggests otherwise. All Puerto Ricans are citizens of the United States. Yet Mitt Romney lost Puerto Rican voters in Florida by 64 to 36 percent, one of the main reasons why Obama won the state. Many Hispanic Americans take attacks on undocumented Hispanics as an attack on the entire Hispanic community.

5. Hispanic voters in all four states support school choice and merit pay for teachers. In all four states, Hispanic voters say that private school choice “helps disabled and low-income students find the school that is right for them” rather than “hurts the education of all students” by double-digit margins (60 to 33 percent in both Nevada and New Mexico, 57 to 34 percent in Colorado, and 58 to 38 percent in Florida). As we’ve seen in previous qualitative research, education reforms that empower parents resonate with persuadable Hispanic voters.

Hispanic voters say tying teacher pay to student achievement is “*fair, because teachers who help their students more should be rewarded and the program gives extra incentives to teachers in low-performing schools*” rather than “*unfair, because teachers don’t have control over the quality of their students and whether they have a good learning environment at home,*” including a 54 to 38 percent margin in Nevada, a 52 to 40 percent margin in New Mexico, a 50 to 42 percent margin in Florida, and a 48 to 42 percent margin in Colorado. Given the relative importance of education to Hispanic voters noted above, these issues offer a good opportunity for conservatives to highlight their proposals.

The Republican Potential Among Hispanic Voters

Republicans should not expect to win a majority of the Hispanic vote nationally any time in the foreseeable future. But they can reasonably win more than 40 percent of Hispanic voters in many states. Winning at least 40 percent of the Hispanic vote can make the difference between winning and losing these four states, all of which Obama carried. In a close election, winning battleground states with large and growing Hispanic populations makes the difference between winning and losing the Presidency.

1. Republicans should set as a short-term goal winning Hispanics who consider themselves to be conservative, a level they did not reach in the 2012 presidential election in any of the four states. In Florida, 44 percent of Hispanics say they are very or somewhat conservative; Romney won 39 percent of Florida Hispanics. Only 26 percent of Florida Hispanics consider themselves to be Republicans. In Colorado 38

percent of Hispanics are conservative; Romney won 23 percent. Only 16 percent of Colorado Hispanics say they are Republicans. In New Mexico 47 percent are conservative; Romney won 29 percent, and 22 percent say they are Republicans. And in Nevada 40 percent are conservative; Romney won 25 percent, and only 15 percent are Republicans. (Hispanic votes for Republican candidates for U.S. House of Representatives closely matched the Romney percentage.)

2. At a minimum, Republicans should gain the percentage of Hispanic voters who say “government is doing too many things better left to individuals and businesses.”

A majority of Hispanic voters in each of the four states says “government should do more to solve problems and help meet the needs of people.” (We adopted the exit poll wording on this question; other research we have conducted shows that adding “with higher taxes” to the larger government option and “with lower taxes” to the small government option significantly affects the results in favor of smaller government.) But a significant minority of Hispanic voters in each state believes government is doing too many things better left to individuals and businesses, voters who should be open to a Republican message of limited government: 40 percent in Florida, 30 percent in Colorado, 34 percent in New Mexico, and 35 percent in Nevada.

3. An even larger proportion of Hispanics in each state believes the best way to create jobs is to limit government spending, lower taxes, and reduce excessive regulation. Respondents were asked to choose between two statements:

The best way to improve the economy and increase job opportunities for Hispanics is to limit government spending, lower taxes, and reduce excessive regulations that hurt small businesses.

The best way to improve the economy and increase job opportunities for Hispanics is to increase government investment in job training, education, and infrastructure.

While a majority of Hispanics in each state believes in increasing government investment, a significant minority believes in lower government spending, lower taxes, and fewer regulations: 42 percent in Florida, 38 percent in Colorado, 39 percent in New Mexico, and 40 percent in Nevada. All of those are higher percentages than Romney received in 2012, significantly higher in Colorado, New Mexico, and Nevada.

4. Majorities of Hispanic voters in all four states believe small businesses face taxes that are too high and too many regulations. Voters agree with the statement “small businesses are struggling from taxes that are too high and regulations that are too burdensome,” including 51 percent in Florida, 60 percent in Colorado, 61 percent in Nevada, and 62 percent in New Mexico. By advocating for tax and regulation reforms, Republicans close the gap on which party is better trusted on this issue.

5. A more ambitious but still achievable goal for Hispanics among Republicans is the percentage who believe government policies should promote economic opportunity instead of a liberal definition of “fairness.” Respondents were asked to choose between two statements:

Government policies should promote opportunity by fostering job growth, encouraging entrepreneurs, and allowing hardworking people to keep more of what they earn.

Government policies should promote fairness by narrowing the gap between rich and poor, making the rich pay a higher share and reducing income inequality.

The percentage of Hispanics choosing opportunity over fairness is 53 percent in Florida, 42 percent in Colorado, 48 percent in New Mexico, and 48 percent in Nevada. Achieving those percentages for a Republican candidate would dramatically enhance Republican chances of carrying each state in a presidential election.

6. When asked a version of a generic ballot for president in 2016, the percentage of Hispanics who say they will likely vote for a Republican plus those who may vote for a Republican if they like the candidate and his policies surpasses 40 percent in all four states. The Republican candidate’s strongest potential among Hispanics lies in Florida and New Mexico, followed by Nevada and Colorado. In Florida, 23 percent say they are “likely to vote for a Republican,” and 29 percent say they “will consider both parties, and may vote for the Republican if I like the candidate and his policies,” for a total of 52 percent. In New Mexico comparable figures are 21 percent likely and 32 percent consider, or 53 percent total. Nevada Hispanics say 17 percent likely and 28 percent consider, for a total of 45 percent. Colorado Hispanics offer the least potential for the Republican at 16 percent likely and 25 percent consider, or 41 percent total.

7. As the following table demonstrates, Republicans have significant room to grow among Hispanic voters in each of the four states surveyed here.

	<i>FL</i>	<i>CO</i>	<i>NM</i>	<i>NV</i>
Consider themselves to be Republicans	26%	16%	22%	15%
Voted for Romney in 2012	39%	23%	29%	25%
Consider themselves to be conservative	44%	38%	47%	40%
Government is doing too many things	40%	30%	34%	35%
Limit spending, lower taxes, reduce regulations	42%	38%	39%	40%
Government should promote "opportunity", not "fairness"	53%	42%	48%	48%
Likely/consider voting Republican in 2016	52%	41%	53%	45%

Conclusion

Republicans face some major challenges among Hispanic Americans, problems that will not be resolved just by passing immigration reform legislation. Years of harsh rhetoric and punitive policies will not be undone overnight. Fixing a broken immigration system is necessary but not sufficient to make Republicans competitive in the Hispanic community.

But resolving those problems is imperative if Republicans hope to remain a competitive force in national politics. Numbers do not lie, and growing Hispanic influence in American life will only continue to grow. The party offers an impressive cadre of Hispanic Republican leaders, and an array of possible immigration reforms and other popular policy initiatives regarding education and small businesses that are consistent with conservative principles. New candidates, new policies, and a new tone are all imperative.

President George W. Bush and his campaign demonstrated the way forward in 2004, when an aggressive outreach effort and popular policies in the Hispanic community yielded 44 percent of the Hispanic vote. As this memo demonstrates, reaching a comparable level once again in the Hispanic community is imminently achievable.

Ronald Reagan demonstrated the right tone. His farewell address in 1989 included the following passage:

“I’ve spoken of the shining city all my political life, but I don’t know if I ever quite communicated what I saw when I said it. But in my mind it was a tall, proud city built on rocks stronger than oceans, windswept, God-blessed and teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace; a city with free ports that hummed with commerce and creativity. And if there had to be city walls, the walls had doors and the doors were open to anyone with the will and heart to get here.”

Conservatives have a ways to go to make significant gains in the Hispanic community. But there is an opportunity and the way forward is clear.

Methodology

These surveys of 400 Hispanic voters in each of four states – Florida, Colorado, New Mexico, and Nevada – were conducted November 28-December 7, 2012. Respondents were selected randomly from a listed sample of Hispanic registered voters. All respondents confirmed that they voted in the 2012 presidential election and are of Hispanic or Latino descent.

All calls were conducted by live bilingual interviewers, and the interview began in the language spoken by the respondent. Early in each interview – either as the first question asked within the landline sample and as the first question after confirming the safe use of a cell phone in the cell phone sample – each respondent had the choice to take the survey in English or Spanish. Quotas were set for county, age, and gender based on voter

registration, and the sample was minimally weighted to match the exit poll support for President Obama and Governor Romney.

The margin of error for responses with an even split – 50 percent for one response and 50 percent for another response – is plus or minus 4.90 percentage points for each of the four full samples. The margin of error declines as the split in the respondents becomes less even. For example, the margin of error is plus or minus 4.24 percentage points when the 400 respondents split 75 percent for one response and 25 percent for another.

The margin of error is higher for subgroups of the sample. For example, when respondents split evenly on a question the margin of error increases from 4.90 percent to 6.93 percent for subsamples of 200, and to 9.80 percent for subsamples of 100.