

Examining How Immigration Waves Have Altered Cuban-American Politics

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Abstract

Using recent survey data, we find that common media portrayal of the Cuban-American population as homogeneously pro-Republican and anti-Castro is inaccurate. The data show clear differences between several cross-cutting groups, including those that live in Florida and those that do not. We also find differences based upon whether the respondents came to the United States before or after the 1980 Mariel boatlift.

Review of Cuban-American Politics

- ❖ Cuban-Americans register and vote at higher rates than other Latino-Americans and Anglo-Americans.
- ❖ Cuban-Americans are significantly more likely to vote Republican than other Latino-Americans and Anglo-Americans.
- ❖ Cuban-Americans make up about 6% of the Latino-American electorate.
- ❖ Income is more highly correlated with Cuban-American party affiliation than it is for other Latino-Americans.

Immigration Waves

- ❖ The pre-Mariel wave of Cuban-Americans came to the USA in the 1960s and 1970s following the overthrow of Batista by Castro in 1959.
- ❖ These immigrants of the 1960s and 1970s are considered to largely be political immigrants, motivated by their dislike of Castro in particular and Communism in general.



- ❖ The second wave of Cuban-Americans came to the USA in the 1980s following the Mariel boatlift, negotiated between Castro and President Carter.
- ❖ These Mariel and post-Mariel immigrants of the 1980s and 1990s are considered to be largely economic immigrants, motivated by their desire to find economic success and stability in the United States and therefore less concerned with U.S. policy towards Castro.
- ❖ Immigrants of the 2000s, following the collapse of the USSR, are also largely economic immigrants.

Concentration in Miami

- ❖ About 45% of all Cuban-Americans live in or near Miami.
- ❖ Because of this concentration, Miami Cuban-Americans are often the subjects of surveys of Cuban-American politics.
- ❖ The proximity to Cuba, the Miami media market and the presence of various Cuban-American NGOs keeps the focus of the Miami Cuban-American community on Cuban politics.
- ❖ The Republican Party, notably the Reagan administration, has reached out to this community.
- ❖ The immigrants of the 2000s largely immigrated to the USA via Mexico, so are not concentrated in Miami.

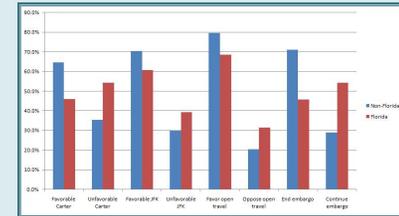


Methodology and Hypotheses

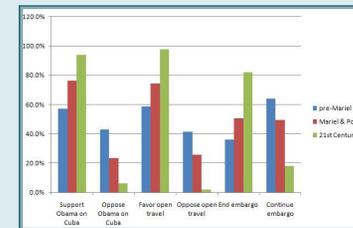
- ❖ We used the "National Poll Of Cuban & Cuban Americans On Changes To Cuba Policy" from the Florida-based public opinion research firm Bendixen & Amandi.
- ❖ Unlike previous efforts at surveying Cuban-Americans, this survey specifically targeted the sample to include a representative sample of Cuban-Americans outside of the Miami-Dade region.
- ❖ **Hypothesis 1:** We expect find significant differences on views about US policy towards Cuba between Cuban-Americans living in the Florida and Cuban-Americans outside of Florida.
- ❖ **Hypothesis 2:** We expect to find significant differences on views about US policy towards Cuba between the pre- and post-Mariel boatlift Cuban-Americans.
- ❖ **Hypothesis 3:** As a null corollary to hypotheses 2 & 3, we also expect to find NO significant differences between Cuban-Americans born in Cuba and those born in the United States.
- ❖ We focused on the survey questions:
 - ❖ What is your opinion of President Barack Obama/Jimmy Carter/John Kennedy?
 - ❖ Do you favor or oppose all American citizens being able to travel to Cuba?
 - ❖ What is your opinion about the U. S. embargo against Cuba?
 - ❖ Do you favor or oppose President Obama's newly announced [relaxed] policy towards Cuba?

Hypothesis 1: Residency

- ❖ We found significant differences on opinion of President Carter ($P < 0.041$) and President Kennedy ($P < 0.047$) depending on where the respondent lived.
- ❖ We also found significant differences on the travel ban ($P < 0.034$) and the embargo ($P < 0.001$) depending on where the respondent lived.
- ❖ The non-Florida Cuban-Americans were more likely to have positive opinions of the Democratic Presidents, and more likely to favor loosening restrictions on US policy to Cuba.
- ❖ Significant support was found for Hypothesis 1.



Hypothesis 2: Immigration Wave



- ❖ We found significant differences on opinion of President Obama's new policy towards Cuba ($P < 0.001$) depending on when the respondent immigrated.
- ❖ We also found significant differences on the travel ban ($P < 0.001$) and the embargo ($P < 0.001$) depending on when the respondent immigrated.
- ❖ The Mariel and post-Mariel Cuban-Americans were more likely to have positive opinions of President Obama's new policy, and more likely to favor loosening restrictions on US policy to Cuba. The Cuban-Americans who immigrated in the 21st Century were even more favorable towards loosening restrictions.
- ❖ Significant support was found for Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3: Place of Birth

- ❖ Over the same questions used in Hypothesis 2, we were unable to find significant differences between Cuban-Americans born in the USA and Cuban-Americans born in Cuba.
- ❖ The null hypothesis was supported.

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