

Latino Arizonans' Perspectives



Lisa Urias
CEO
Urias Communications

Arizona is home to more than one million Latinos. When considering the issues that are important to our state, it is imperative to examine the opinions and perceptions of this fast-growing Latino community and how they compare to those of Arizona residents, in general.

What we see within this research is that engagement is often influenced by experience. The median age of Arizona Latinos is 30, younger than any other ethnic group, but clearly an important time of maturation. Remember 30? It's a time when you're moving ahead in your career, marrying, buying a home, and having children. We become more aware of the world around us and gain a better understanding of the impact policy issues have on our lives.

And in Arizona, this Latino generation has grown up bearing witness to and experiencing the significant impacts political leaders like Sheriff Arpaio and Russell Pearce, and policies like SB 1070, the Dream Act, and DACA have had on our communities.

Latinos value what immigrants bring to our communities. More often than not, it's their parents, grandparents, and neighbors who do the hard work that contributes steadily to the American economic engine.

It's not surprising, then, that Arizona Latinos have very different perceptions of immigration issues than non-Hispanic whites. In particular, Latinos are less supportive of deportation and see that as punitive to people they know or to whom they have personal connections. Latinos are more in favor of making it easier for immigrants to come to Arizona. Latinos are also less

likely, by a margin of 16 percentage points, to say they feel "less safe" because of undocumented immigrants. Let's face it: most Latinos live surrounded by people in their communities who may or may not be legally documented (in many cases, we've never even asked).

But Latino engagement in the issues that affect Arizona extends well beyond immigration. Among all Arizonans, younger people, defined as those under 35, have a keener interest in issues like childcare, jobs, and education. It's not surprising, then, that Arizona's Latino community shares these same concerns. This study shows that Latinos feel more strongly about policy issues than the rest of the population, notably when it comes to childcare, mental health, domestic violence, and substance abuse.

As an increasing number of Latinos make their way through colleges and universities and experience the upward mobility that America provides, many Latinos remain left behind.

While the educational achievement gap for Latinos is narrowing, only 26% of Latinos in Arizona hold at least an associate degree and the income inequity between Latinos and non-Hispanic white populations remains.

Many adult Latinos experienced elementary schools riddled with overcrowded classrooms and far fewer resources. Today, quality childcare is often cost-prohibitive for Latino families. So, the Latino interest in policy, and how it impacts their communities, is growing, sincere, and critical.

In a recent report by Labels and Lists (L2), the largest non-partisan voter data provider, voter turnout among this population has nearly doubled from 33.2% to 50.4%, and the growth was greatest among voters ages 18-34. The impact and influence of this fastest-growing population in Arizona – with that critical median age of 30 – will increase over the next few decades, economically, socially, and at the ballot box. That's why, as we move forward on crafting policy that will shape the future of Arizona and our country, it is more important than ever to include everyone in the conversation.