

To: Marce Gutierrez-Graudiņš, Founder and Executive Director, Azul
From: Gary Segura, Co-founder and CEO, BSP Research
Date: Wednesday, July 27, 2022
Re: 2022 Azul U.S. Latinos and the Ocean Public Survey

Methodological Overview

On behalf of Azul, an environmental justice organization working with grassroots communities to protect coasts and the ocean, Barreto Segura Partners (BSP) Research conducted a survey of n=1,900 registered Latino voters across the United States to understand their views and perspectives on the climate crisis and protecting the environment, specifically the ocean. Data was collected by web (75%) and telephone (25%). The survey was available in English or Spanish (according to preference), ran from May 26 to June 7, 2022, and held a margin of error of +/- 2.3%.

Special care was taken in sourcing U.S. Latino respondents, with respondents oversampled in California (300), Texas (300), and Florida (225), as well as the New England (250), New York-New Jersey-Connecticut (225), and Chicago metro (225) regions. U.S. Latino respondents traced their national origins to many countries, including Mexico, across Central America, South America and the Caribbean. National estimates use post-stratification weighting to assure that oversamples do not distort national estimates.

Key Takeaways

U.S. Latinos are overwhelmingly supportive of Azul’s ocean justice and climate policy goals, including limiting offshore drilling and ensuring public lands and waters are accessible to all.

Access to the beaches and outdoors is strongly valued, with 81% of respondents saying the government should maintain beaches and parks – open to *all*, and 87% saying that Congress should create new national parks, national monuments, national wildlife refuges and tribal protected areas to protect historic sites or areas for outdoor recreation. Respondents favored strong policies they thought the government could implement to protect the ocean; 78% said they would support actions to ban offshore drilling for oil and natural gas and replacing them with renewable fuels like solar and wind. People also recognize that there are groups who are helping the environment, with 79% of respondents agreeing environmental groups are doing “good work”.

The poll also found a consensus that communities cannot be healthy if the environment is not healthy. A surprising 89% of Latinos in the U.S. believe in protecting the environment as a means of protecting their communities.

Ultimately, people believe protecting the environment is crucial not only for themselves and their communities, but also for their children. Again, 86% of Latinos believe the government has a responsibility to preserve the ocean and public lands for the enjoyment of future generations. Unlike most political issues, there was no significant gap in policy preferences between individuals who identified as men and women, or identified in another way, further indicative of widespread support for policies to combat climate change.

The Ocean Crisis is Real and Requires Ocean Policy, Action.

The U.S. Latino public's understanding of environmental science is evident in the two-thirds (67%) of Latinos who disagreed with the statement that polluted oceans can clean themselves. Less than one-in-three people agree that we do not need to worry about the health of the ocean because we will develop new technologies to clean them. Furthermore, only 30% of people agree that the *ocean is so large, it is unlikely that humans will cause lasting damage to them* – meaning 70 percent of respondents believe humans are causing lasting damage to our ocean. This first-of-its-kind poll displays that Latinos understand that human actions are to blame for damage to the ocean, with 86% of people agreeing that plastic pollution poses a health risk, and 86% of people also affirming that plastic pollution will only get worse unless the U.S. government intervenes to curb and prevent it. And they demonstrate a desire for ocean-climate action.

U.S. Latinos are supportive of policies to protect the ocean – even when these policies impact them financially.

Overall, Latinos appear willing to pay the costs for protecting the ocean and our environment, and in turn the health of their communities. When surveyed, 92% of respondents supported doing more to prevent plastic pollution with 80% of respondents supporting the ban of single-use plastics, even if it means having less convenient options. This pattern of protecting the environment, regardless of the costs, held for many other policy proposals as well: 66% of respondents supported a ban on offshore drilling, even if it meant paying more for gas, and 85% of respondents agreed the government should implement the strongest possible protections for ocean areas that are important for conservation purposes, even if it is costly. Likewise, 74% of respondents supported stricter regulation of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities, even if it meant paying more for fewer fish. Most surprisingly, 80% of Latinos supported increasing the share of both protected lands and waters in the United States to 30% of each. Of the people who supported this policy, 84% said they would still support it if it cost the U.S. government more to do, and 66% said they would still support it even if it increased the cost of natural resource products they purchased.

Climate change is real — the public understands the environment is in crisis and cannot heal itself.

Despite issues of climate change generally appearing to be a partisan issue, 60% of U.S. Latinos disagree with the statement that *climate change is not an emergency, but rather a natural*

process of change, and 86% of respondents cited that climate change poses a health and safety risk to all people. Regardless of party, U.S. Latinos understand the scientific implications of not protecting the environment.

Although levels of support vary slightly from state to state, overall, there is overwhelming consensus that the environment and our ocean is in a critical state.

There is consensus that climate change is an issue (96% of respondents cited environmental issues like pollution and global warming were personally important to them), but the rate at which they felt it was of importance was influenced by their geographical location. A substantial 84% of respondents in the generally progressive area of New England rated environmental issues as “very important” compared to only 64% of Texans citing they are “very important”. Interestingly, a more conservative Florida was more progressive than both California and the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region, with nearly 70% of respondents stating environmental issues are “very important” to them (compared to 63% and 68% respectively). Of course, warming and its impacts are likely to be felt more severely in Florida than anywhere in the US.

Further, 92% of respondents agreed that the environment was either in crisis or facing challenges. Nearly 63% of Latino residents from the New England area noted that the environment was in serious crisis, compared to only 50% of Latino Texans saying the same. Like the findings in the first question, Florida’s Latino residents were the second-most progressive behind New England residents, with 60% saying the environment was in serious crisis.

The data shows that Florida Latinos hold stronger environmental views than other traditionally progressive states and regions suggest that political ideology is not the only indicator on individual concerns of climate change, but the threat climate change poses to where people live, plays a significant role in shaping opinions as well.

U.S. Latino Spanish-speaking households were generally more progressive on ocean-climate issues than U.S. Latino English-speaking households

One significant difference that was observed in this poll are the disparities between English and Spanish speaking households. When surveyed, 72% of respondents from Spanish-speaking households cited environmental issues as being very important to them compared to only 51% of respondents from English-speaking households. This pattern of Spanish-speaking households being more concerned than English-speaking households held for nearly every specific environmental issue, including air pollution (73% vs 59%), water pollution (76% vs 62%), land conservation (64% vs 49%), protecting endangered species (68% vs 53%), and lead/other chemicals in drinking water (76% vs 63%). This contradicts the notion that Spanish-speaking (and, by extension, foreign-born) households are more conservative on social issues than English-speaking households. Spanish-speaking households are often more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, may have experienced its effects in countries of origin, and their

strong sense of community leads them to want to unite in solving ocean justice and environmental issues.

Summary

Policies protecting the ocean, reducing pollution, and combating climate change are issues U.S. Latinos care about and are reflected in overwhelming support. Although the strength of opinion varied slightly depending on the state/region respondents were from – with Texas being most conservative and New England most liberal, and Florida as a surprisingly progressive outlier – U.S. Latinos overwhelmingly believe that climate change is real, and understand the science which indicates the climate crisis and ocean pollution are people-made phenomena. However, these regional differences reveal that the threat ocean and environmental degradation poses to peoples’ respective regions plays a significant role in their opinions on climate change and ocean protection.

Because Latinos overwhelmingly accept threats to the ocean and climate change as real, environmental policies often traditionally portrayed as “radical” surprisingly received high levels of support, including banning offshore oil drilling, banning and phasing out single-use plastics, and combating overfishing. Importantly, these policies still received high levels of support even when people considered that they could impact their wallets.

Peoples’ main motivations for supporting protecting the ocean and other aspects of the environment are to ensure they live in a healthy community, and to protect natural spaces for future generations (namely, their children) to enjoy. As such, future messaging on environmental and ocean justice policies should potentially cater to these motivations. Further Latino respondents favorably view the work of environmental groups. However, people surveyed think it is ultimately the government’s responsibility to care for our ocean and its resources, protect the environment, and secure natural spaces for the enjoyment of all people.