



**New York City Mayoral Election Study:
General Election Telephone Exit Poll
A Pace University Study
In Cooperation With
THE NEW YORK OBSERVER, WCBS 2 NEWS, AND WNYC RADIO**

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I. INTRODUCTION

In cooperation with *The New York Observer*, WCBS 2 News, and WNYC Radio, The Pace Poll has fielded what we believe to be the *only* statistically-valid exit poll of voters in the 2005 New York City general election.

Municipal elections constitute important milestones in civic life, and, when examined in their historical context, they say much about the city's political dynamics.

Our hope is that these survey results will help journalists, editorialists, academics, and urbanists to better understand and explain the causes, consequences, and significance of New York City's 2005 mayoral election.

II. ANALYSIS

¡Viva El Status Quo!

Not surprisingly, given the election results, voters overwhelmingly approve of the status quo: an astonishing 70% think the city is headed in the right direction while only 15% think it's off on the wrong track. Indeed, 85% of Bloomberg voters approve of the status quo, but so too do 47% of Ferrer voters. One couldn't expect much better right-direction numbers in a poll fielded among members of Optimists International. Latina women

(49%), Latinos generally (54%) and Black women (56%) are the least likely to be optimistic.

More than three in four (77%) voters hold either a strongly favorable (45%) or somewhat favorable (32%) opinion of the Mayor while only 20% hold either a strongly unfavorable (9%) or somewhat unfavorable (11%) opinion of him. In The Bronx, just under two-thirds (63%) hold a favorable impression of the Mayor. Similarly, the Mayor enjoys a favorable reputation among Blacks (76%) and Latinos (51%).

Likewise, voters overwhelmingly approve of Mayor Bloomberg's job performance: 76% approve either somewhat (32%) or strongly (44%) while only 20% disapprove either somewhat (10%) or strongly (10%). Even 72% of Blacks, 64% of Bronx residents, 56% of Latinos, and 46% of Ferrer voters approve of the Mayor's job performance.

In their assessments of the changes in the quality of New York City's public schools, voters are inclined to believe the schools have improved: 36% say the schools are better, 14% say they are worse, and 24% say they are about the same. Blacks (45%) are the most likely ethnicity to think the schools have improved during Bloomberg's first term.

In terms of their personal financial situations, however, opinions are more mixed. A majority (57%) feel they are no better off than they were four years ago while 24% think they are better today and 16% think they are worse today. Ironically, The Bronx was the only borough Ferrer carried, but its residents are the most likely to think they are better off after 4 years of Bloomberg (27% of Bronx Residents think their personal financial situations have improved in the last 4 years). Likewise, Latinos (28%) are the most likely ethnicity to think their personal finances have improved.

Voters are worried about another terrorist attack: 60% are either very (18%) or somewhat (42%) worried about another attack compared to 38% who are either not that worried (23%) or not worried at all (15%) about another attack.

If you can't win, play for second place

Apparently, Fernando Ferrer's "lose with dignity" strategy paid dividends: he was spared the 30+ point defeat that several polls had predicted; he appears to have carried The Bronx (59% to 39%)¹, Blacks (53% to 46%), and Latinos (63% to 34%). A majority of the electorate (52%) has a favorable impression of Ferrer while only 35% have an unfavorable impression of him.

Not surprisingly, ethnicity trumped religion. Ferrer failed to translate his appeal among Latinos, most of whom are Catholic, to white Catholics, whom he lost 24% (Ferrer) to 72% (Bloomberg).

¹ This one result is according to unofficial results reported in this morning's *New York Times*.

Bloomberg scores impressive win

Nevertheless, Bloomberg's victory was dramatic at many levels. For example, he carried every income level, winning The Poor² (54% to 46%), The Middle Class³ (56% to 41%), The Upper Middle Class⁴ (55% to 40%), and The Prosperous⁵ (63% to 35%) and achieving a statistical tie among The Working Class⁶ (50% to 49%). Statistically speaking, he tied among union households (49% to 48%), among tenants living in rent controlled or rent stabilized apartments (48% to 50%), and Democrats (48% to 50%). In addition, Bloomberg won decisively among Republicans (93% to 4%) and Other Voters⁷ (79% to 19%). Although not a WASP, Bloomberg carried white Protestants in a decisive fashion (73% to 27%).

TABLE I: Vote by Key Demographic Groups

Demographic Group	Bloomberg	Ferrer
Total	59%	39%
Male	59%	37%
Female	58%	40%
Democrats*	48%	50%*
Republicans	93%	4%
Other Party Affiliations	79%	19%
Whites	67%	30%
Blacks*	46%	53%*
Latinos*	34%	63%*
White men	67%	31%
White women	68%	30%
Black men*	47%	51%*
Black women*	46%	55%*
Latino men*	39%	57%*
Latina women*	30%	68%*
Union households	49%	48%
Catholics	57%	40%
Protestants	58%	40%
Jews	72%	26%
White Protestants	73%	27%
White Catholics	72%	24%
Latino Catholics	29%	70%

*Demographic groups that Ferrer carried.

In addition, this was a vote for Bloomberg, not a vote against Ferrer: 85% of Bloomberg voters say their vote was a vote for him while only 10% said it was a vote against Ferrer;

² Those who earn less than \$20,000 a year.

³ Those who earn between \$30,000 and \$49,000 a year.

⁴ Those who earn between \$50,000 and \$74,000 a year.

⁵ Those who earn more than \$75,000 a year.

⁶ Those who earn between \$20,000 and \$29,000 a year.

⁷ Defined as voters who are neither Democrats nor Republicans.

conversely, 55% of Ferrer voters say they were voting for him while only 38% say they were voting against Bloomberg.

Bloomberg won on schools and the economy

Among all voters, schools (25%), the economy (18%), and housing (12%) are the issues most likely to have decided their vote. Bloomberg voters say the economy (23%) and schools (21%) are the issues most likely to have influenced their votes while Ferrer supporters tended to base their votes on schools (32%), housing (19%), and the economy (12%). In other words, Bloomberg and Ferrer supporters generally agreed on the key issues – if not the precise ranking among those key issues – with the exception of housing, which was relatively unlikely to have moved Bloomberg supporters (only 6% of his supporters say “housing” determined their vote).

Bloomberg relied on strength; Ferrer relied on Party

In terms of the personal characteristics most likely to have pushed voters into one camp or the other, Bloomberg’s supporters are most likely to say he is a strong leader (34%) or honest and trustworthy (16%) while Ferrer’s supporters are most likely to say he cares about people like them (24%) or that he’s a member of the same political party (22%).

III. METHODOLOGY

This survey’s results are based on 1105 interviews conducted via telephone on November 8, 2005, among registered voters in New York City who voted in the day’s municipal general elections. (The margin of error on a sample that size is +/- 2.9%.) Potential respondents were randomly selected from a list of registered voters in New York City; potential respondents were then screened to ensure that they had voted in this election. Preliminary results were weighted to reflect the actual vote; consequently, results may shift slightly as the final vote tallies are adjusted. In addition, results may shift slightly after additional weighting to correct for other errors.

Although this methodology subjects the poll to several potential errors, *The Washington Post*’s Richard Morin⁸ observed that persistent problems with traditional exit polls have shown that face-to-face canvasses are not immune to the problems endemic to all polls; thus, we infer that the methodological shortcomings of our telephone exit poll are different, but no worse than those of conventional exit polls.

To illustrate Mr. Morin’s points about traditional exit polls, consider his review of recent history. Exit polls in 2004 were rife with problems; most of which were small, none of which were insignificant, and all of which created an imaginary Kerry boomlet. In 1992 and less so in 1996, exit polls overstated Bill Clinton’s advantage. And in 1998, exit

⁸ The following three paragraphs paraphrase Mr. Morin’s arguments, presented in Morin, Richard, “Surveying the Damage: Exit Polls Can’t Predict Winners, so Don’t Expect Them To,” *The Washington Post*, November 21, 2004, p. B1.

polls found the race a dead heat, even though Dukakis lost in a landslide. Results in individual states had anomalies as well; for example, in 2004, exit polls forecasted a close finish in Virginia, but Bush crushed Kerry by 9 points.

As Mr. Morin correctly points out, the dirty little secret known to all pollsters is that the errors in exit polls' horse race predictions don't affect the accuracy of subgroup analyses, since one key feature of exit polls is that the results are weighted to reflect the actual vote. And because we weighted our results to the actual vote, we can say that we know the percentage of Latinos or Catholics who voted for each candidate, even if we may have mis-estimated the percentage of Latinos or Catholics in the overall electorate.