

# Spanish Language Voter Survey

Group Project for Baldwin-Wallace College Fall  
2011 POL 240: Introduction to Political Analysis  
course:

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## **SUMMARY**

In September 2010, The United States Department of Justice ordered Cuyahoga County Board of Elections to provide updated reports regarding voter turnout among Hispanic voters. The following research project stemmed from the court order.

In June 2011 the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections Spanish Language Advisory Group asked Baldwin-Wallace College Professor Javier Morales-Ortiz (a member of the Advisory Group) if it would be possible to have one of the B-W classes survey Hispanic residents to gather information about voting awareness and behavior. Dr. Morales-Ortiz asked Dr. Tom Sutton if the POL 240: Introduction to Political Analysis class could conduct such a study. Dr. Sutton agreed, and the study was assigned as one of two class group projects, with eleven students choosing to participate in conducting the study. The objective of this research project was to determine the factors affecting voter turnout rates among Hispanic residents eligible to vote in Cuyahoga County.

In order to determine the areas within the county that have high Hispanic populations, we used the 2010 Census data. The Census website contained a tool that allowed us to further narrow down the populations by race and ethnicity. Within Cuyahoga County, fifty-two tracts had populations consisting of 10 percent or more Hispanic people. These tracts were primarily located on the west side of the county. The Census website also contained a tool to narrow down blocks within the Census tracts. This tool was helpful in allowing us to randomize the sample. From the tracts, we chose nineteen blocks in which we found high populations of Hispanic residents. In order to further expand the variation of Hispanic populations, we chose to reach out to local organizations that regularly service such populations. These locations include: Dave's Mercado (Ridge Rd., Cleveland), Esperanza community outreach center (W. 25<sup>th</sup>, Cleveland), and a W. 48<sup>th</sup> block group meeting for the month of October.

The surveys utilized for this project were based on a template provided by the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections. The survey was revised three times before finalization. Questions concerning the demographics of those surveyed were added on the basis of what was deemed necessary for collecting significant data. For further outreach, both English and Spanish versions were available for the respondents.

Surveyors collected data eleven times between October 19, 2011 and November 18, 2011. To utilize the hours before dusk, as well as the optimal times residents would be at home, the times ranged from 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM. Over the course of four weeks, 143 surveys were collected by eleven Baldwin-Wallace students. The survey collection effort is summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1**

**Date of Completed Survey**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	10/19/11	2	1.4	1.4
	10/20/11	13	9.1	10.5
	10/22/11	8	5.6	16.1
	10/23/11	15	10.5	26.6
	10/27/11	20	14.0	40.6
	11/01/11	10	7.0	47.6
	11/02/11	10	7.0	54.5
	11/04/11	10	7.0	61.5
	11/09/11	21	14.7	76.2
	11/17/11	26	18.2	94.4
	11/18/11	8	5.6	100.0
	Total	143	100.0	

**SURVEY OBSTACLES:**

While surveying throughout the Westside of Cuyahoga County, we encountered several obstacles. Many of the residences in the areas surveyed were not welcoming to strangers. Homes were gated, both in the front and back yards, “no trespassing” signs were extremely common, and large guard dogs were present at most homes. These measures of security posed great obstacles for data collection. While surveying, we noticed many of the “no trespassing” signs were on the homes of Hispanic individuals. Reluctance was also common among those that did answer the door to us.

**SURVEY SUCCESS:**

Although obstacles were faced, some elements of the study benefitted the data collection. By having the survey in both English and Spanish, the language barrier was not a hindrance. Having a Spanish speaking person accompany the group during a portion of the surveying helped as well. The weather was mostly favorable, allowing for residents to be outside of their homes, which made them easier to encounter. Also, explaining that the project was for educational purposes as well as for voting purposes, made the respondents more willing to complete a survey. By adding community locations to our samples, more respondents were willing to cooperate for surveys.

The exact locations surveyed, with total frequencies of response rates are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2****Location of Captured Survey**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	115th St	2	1.4	1.4
	116th St	2	1.4	2.8
	44th St	10	7.0	9.8
	48th St	3	2.1	11.9
	50th St	4	2.8	14.7
	52nd St	3	2.1	16.8
	54th St	5	3.5	20.3
	95th St	2	1.4	21.7
	97th St	8	5.6	27.3
	Archwood	10	7.0	34.3
	Bridge Ct	3	2.1	36.4
	Colgate	2	1.4	37.8
	Dave's Market	34	23.8	61.5
	Esperanza	21	14.7	76.2
	Hague	3	2.1	78.3
	Lillian Ct	2	1.4	79.7
	W 48th Block Meeting	2	1.4	81.1
	W 48th St	5	3.5	84.6
	W 52nd St	11	7.7	92.3
	W 56th St	2	1.4	93.7
	W 64th St	5	3.5	97.2
	W 65th St	4	2.8	100.0
	Total	143	100.0	

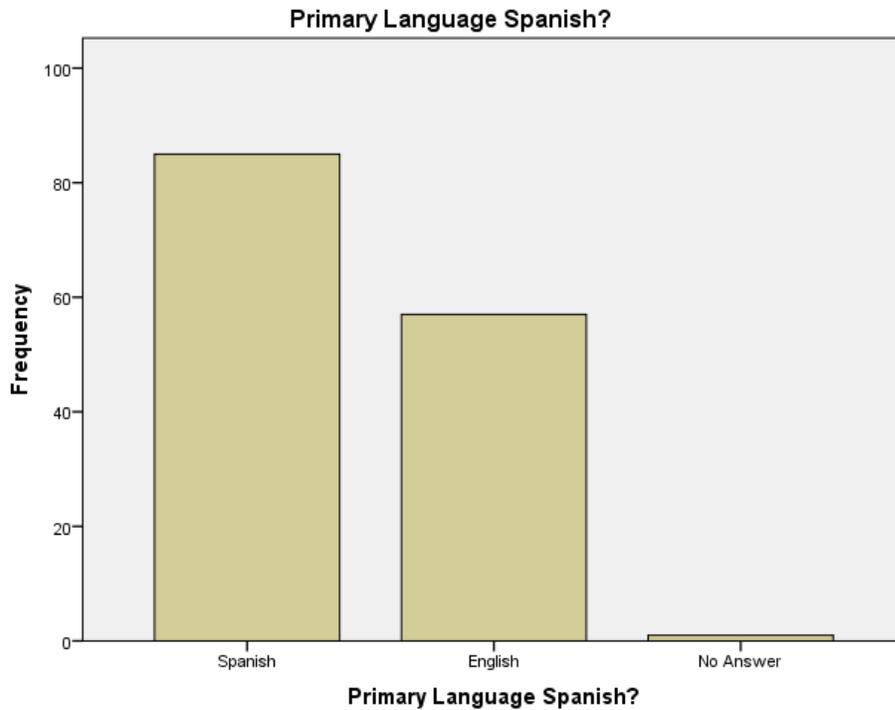
Of the 143 surveys collected, the majority of respondents overwhelmingly identified as Hispanic. Because the block areas also include large quantities of Caucasian, African-American, and other ethnicities, data was initially collected from non-Hispanics as well. After the initial collection of surveys from non-Hispanics, data collection was limited to those who identified as Hispanic. The results for respondents' ethnicity are displayed in Table 3.

**Table 3**

		Was the respondent Hispanic?		
		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	125	87.4	87.4
	No	18	12.6	100.0
Total		143	100.0	

To determine whether the primary language of the respondent is a significant factor in determining voter turnout rates for Hispanic populations, we added the question of the respondent's primary language. The results in Figure 1 show that a majority of the respondents' primary language is Spanish; however, there are also a large number of primarily English speaking respondents as well.

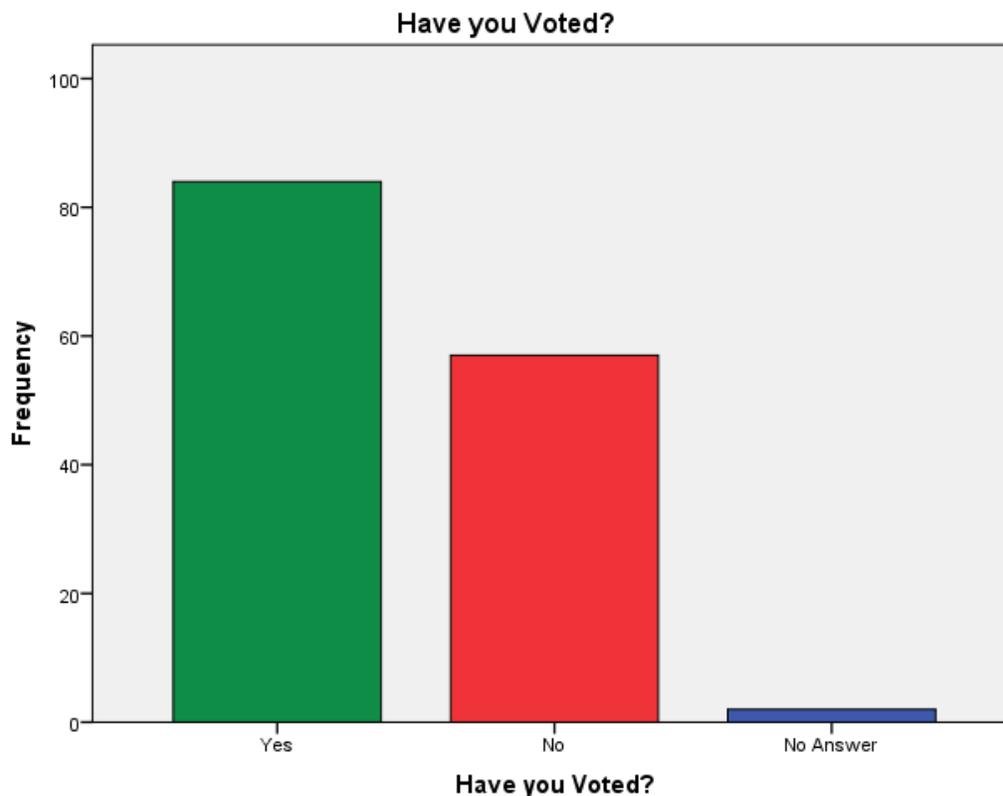
**Figure 1**



## DATA RESULTS

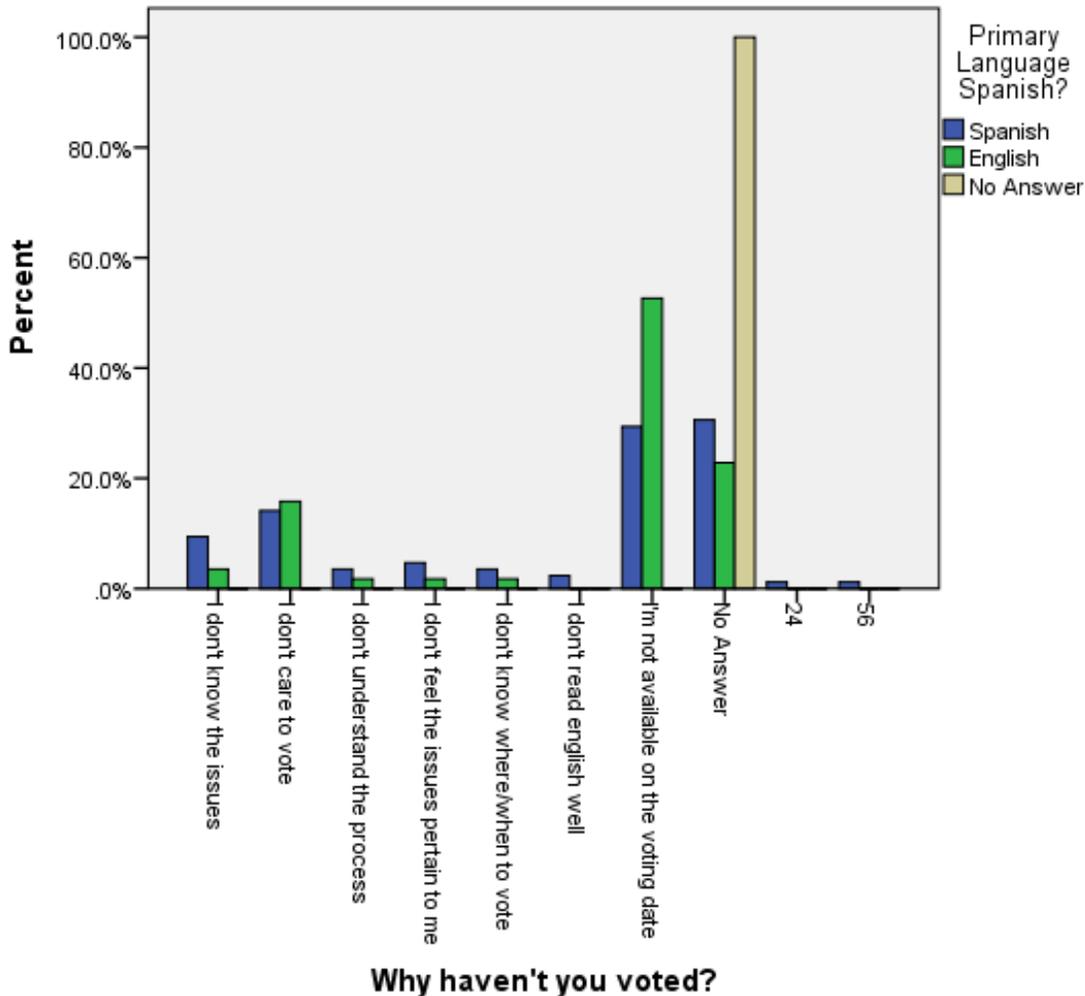
Because the major purpose of this survey is to examine voter turnout rates among Hispanic populations, the most pertinent question asked is if the respondent has previously voted. Figure 2 shows whether or not the respondent has voted. Although a high number of respondents have voted in the past, there is still a high number who have not voted. The basis of this project is to gauge the reasons why there are such high levels of low voter turnout among Hispanic individuals in Cuyahoga County.

**Figure 2**



If the respondent identified as not having previously voted, the question of “why not?” was asked. The results in Figure 3 list various reasons for not voting, ranging from “I don’t know the issues” to “I’m not available on voting day”. The overwhelming majority of respondents listed that they were not available on voting days. The second most common answer was no answer at all. Further research would need to be conducted in order to assess the lack of responses to the question.

**Figure 3**



\*24 and 56 refer to respondents answering multiple reasons for not voting. 24: “I don’t care to vote and “I don’t feel the issues pertain to me”. 56: “I don’t know where/when to vote” and “I don’t read English well”

Attributing the low Hispanic voter turnout in Cuyahoga County solely to language barriers has not been demonstrated by our research. Whether or not language barriers are a significant factor to low voter turnout in Cuyahoga County is a common misconception. As the results in Table 4 show, 100 percent of respondents who identified as primarily Spanish speaking also identify themselves as Hispanic. 68.4 percent of primarily English speaking respondents also identify themselves as Hispanic. The data shows that although there are a significant amount of Spanish speaking, Hispanic individuals, there are also high numbers of Hispanic people who predominantly speak English. A language barrier may be a contributing factor, but there are

other factors as well. This can be shown by the large percentage of Hispanic individuals who identify English as their primary language.

**Table 4**

**Was the respondent Hispanic? \* Primary Language Spanish? Crosstabulation**

			Primary Language Spanish?			Total
			Spanish	English	No Answer	
Was the respondent Hispanic?	Yes	Count	85	39	1	125
		% within Primary Language Spanish?	100.0%	68.4%	100.0%	87.4%
	No	Count	0	18	0	18
		% within Primary Language Spanish?	.0%	31.6%	.0%	12.6%
Total		Count	85	57	1	143
		% within Primary Language Spanish?	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

To determine whether the availability of bi-lingual voting materials would have an effect on turnout among Hispanic voters, we inquired about knowledge of bi-lingual voting materials and if it increased the likelihood of the individual to vote. The results in Table 5 show that Spanish speaking voters are more aware of bi-lingual voting materials than English speaking individuals. When asked, 66.7 percent of Hispanic individuals were aware of bi-lingual voting materials in contrast to 32.7 percent of English speaking individuals.

**Table 5****Primary Language Spanish? \* Are you aware of bi-lingual voting materials? Crosstabulation**

			Are you aware of bi-lingual voting materials?			Total
			Yes	No	No Answer	
Primary Language Spanish?	Spanish	Count % within Are you aware of bi-lingual voting materials?	65 66.3%	19 51.4%	1 12.5%	85 59.4%
	English	Count % within Are you aware of bi-lingual voting materials?	32 32.7%	18 48.6%	7 87.5%	57 39.9%
	No Answer	Count % within Are you aware of bi-lingual voting materials?	1 1.0%	0 .0%	0 .0%	1 .7%
Total	Count % within Are you aware of bi-lingual voting materials?	98 100.0%	37 100.0%	8 100.0%	143 100.0%	

Overall, Table 6 reveals that as Spanish speaking individuals become more aware of the availability of bi-lingual voting materials, the likelihood of voter turnout increases. Statistical evidence shows that a respondent would be 56.1 percent more likely to vote when they are aware of bi-lingual voting materials. However, 59.5 percent of respondents are not aware of bi-lingual materials, and would not be more likely to vote if these materials were available.

**Table 6**

**More likely to vote due to bi-lingual materials? \* Are you aware of bi-lingual voting materials?**

**Crosstabulation**

			Are you aware of bi-lingual voting materials?			Total
			Yes	No	No Answer	
More likely to vote due to bi-lingual materials?	Yes	Count % within Are you aware of bi-lingual voting materials?	55 56.1%	10 27.0%	0 .0%	65 45.5%
	No	Count % within Are you aware of bi-lingual voting materials?	27 27.6%	22 59.5%	2 25.0%	51 35.7%
	No Answer	Count % within Are you aware of bi-lingual voting materials?	16 16.3%	5 13.5%	6 75.0%	27 18.9%
Total	Count % within Are you aware of bi-lingual voting materials?	98 100.0%	37 100.0%	8 100.0%	143 100.0%	

Involvement in community organizations is a key element of voter turnout. Most involvement reflects an individual's activity within the community, leading to more awareness of current affairs and a strong desire to be active and help in the community. A direct correlation is found between voting and community involvement. Table 7 shows the importance of community activism in regards to voter participation. Although community involvement played a positive role in voter turnout, a lack of community involvement did not hinder voter turnout.

**Table 7****Community/Group/Org Involvement? \* Have you Voted? Crosstabulation**

		Have you Voted?			Total
		Yes	No	No Answer	
Community/Group/Org Involvement?	Church	24	14	0	38
	Block Group/Community Group	3	1	1	5
	Neighborhood Watch	2	2	1	5
	Other Community Involvement	11	3	0	14
	No Comm Involvement	35	35	0	70
	No Answer	2	2	0	4
	2 or more organizations	7	0	0	7
Total	84	57	2	143	

In regards to the population of the survey sample, involvement in church played more of an important role in voter turnout, than did the respondents' community involvement. Hispanic respondents were predominantly more involved in church or reported having no community involvement. Therefore, we cannot determine that community involvement alone played a role in Hispanic voter turnout, as is reflected in Table 8.

**Table 8****Community/Group/Org Involvement? \* Was the respondent Hispanic? Crosstabulation**

		Was the respondent Hispanic?		Total
		Yes	No	
Community/Group/Org Involvement?	<b>Church</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>38</b>
	Block Group/Community Group	5	0	5
	Neighborhood Watch	5	0	5
	Other Community Involvement	11	3	14
	<b>No Comm Involvement</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>70</b>
	No Answer	3	1	4
	2 or more organizations	6	1	7
Total	125	18	143	

Education level has been proven to be a demographic that plays a significant role in overall voter turnout. Table 9 shows the variance in education levels throughout the survey sample. When analyzing voter turnout in regards to education level (Table 9.1), the majority of those reporting higher levels of education voted whereas those who reported having between some high school and some college more often did not. The population we dealt with responded more frequently with an education level of “some high school” (28%) or “high school diploma or equivalent” (28.7%). It is possible that lack of higher education in the sample played a role in low voter turnout. Referring to Table 9.1, those with lower education levels that have voted range from 30%-50%, whereas those with higher education levels that have voted range from 73%-93%.

**Table 9**

		Education Level?		
		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Some High School	40	28.0	28.0
	High School diploma or equivalent	41	28.7	56.6
	Some College	30	21.0	77.6
	2 Year College degree	14	9.8	87.4
	4 Year College Degree	9	6.3	93.7
	Master’s Degree and above	2	1.4	95.1
	No Answer	7	4.9	100.0
	Total	143	100.0	

**Table 9.1****Education Level? \* Have you Voted? Crosstabulation**

		Have you Voted?			Total
		Yes	No	No Answer	
Some High School	Count	12	27	1	40
	% within Have you Voted?	14.3%	47.4%	50.0%	28.0%
High School diploma or equivalent	Count	23	17	1	41
	% within Have you Voted?	27.4%	29.8%	50.0%	28.7%
Some College	Count	22	8	0	30
	% within Have you Voted?	26.2%	14.0%	.0%	21.0%
2 Year College degree	Count	13	1	0	14
	% within Have you Voted?	15.5%	1.8%	.0%	9.8%
4 Year College Degree	Count	7	2	0	9
	% within Have you Voted?	8.3%	3.5%	.0%	6.3%
Master's Degree and above	Count	2	0	0	2
	% within Have you Voted?	2.4%	.0%	.0%	1.4%
No Answer	Count	5	2	0	7
	% within Have you Voted?	6.0%	3.5%	.0%	4.9%
Total	Count	84	57	2	143
	% within Have you Voted?	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In regards to the survey population, the variance in income levels did not play a substantial role for determining voter turnout. At each income level, the difference between those who voted and those who did not vote was not noteworthy enough to be considered a factor of voter turnout. The only level that has some potential significance is the \$22,000-\$34,999 group in which the ratio between voters and non-voters is the greatest. Table 10 shows these results.

**Table 10****Income Level? \* Have you Voted? Crosstabulation**

			Have you Voted?			Total
			Yes	No	No Answer	
Income Level?	State/Federal Assistance Program	Count	5	8	0	13
		% within Income Level?	38.5%	61.5%	.0%	100.0%
21,999 and under		Count	32	22	1	55
		% within Income Level?	58.2%	40.0%	1.8%	100.0%
22,000 - 34,999		Count	15	9	1	25
		% within Income Level?	60.0%	36.0%	4.0%	100.0%
35,000 - 47,999		Count	8	6	0	14
		% within Income Level?	57.1%	42.9%	.0%	100.0%
48,000 - 59,999		Count	8	6	0	14
		% within Income Level?	57.1%	42.9%	.0%	100.0%
No Answer		Count	16	6	0	22
		% within Income Level?	72.7%	27.3%	.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	84	57	2	143
		% within Income Level?	58.7%	39.9%	1.4%	100.0%

In a household breakdown of respondents, survey results showed that individuals living in households having persons under the age of 18 were less likely to vote than those living in homes that did not. Respondents were twice more likely to vote if no one in the household was under 18 than homes with even one person under 18, and four times more likely than those living in households with three or more people under 18 (Table 11). This may be due in part to a decrease in free time for those living in households with a large amount of individuals under the age of 18.

**Table 11****Have you Voted? \* People under18 in Household? Crosstabulation**

			People under18 in Household?					Total
			0	1	2	3 or more	No Answer	
Have you Voted?	Yes	Count	36	15	14	9	10	84
		% within People under18 in Household?	65.5%	55.6%	51.9%	42.9%	76.9%	58.7%
	No	Count	18	12	13	11	3	57
		% within People under18 in Household?	32.7%	44.4%	48.1%	52.4%	23.1%	39.9%
	No Answer	Count	1	0	0	1	0	2
		% within People under18 in Household?	1.8%	.0%	.0%	4.8%	.0%	1.4%
Total	Count	55	27	27	21	13	143	
	% within People under18 in Household?	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

## CONCLUSION

The findings lead to a few conclusions about low voter turnout among Hispanic individuals in Cuyahoga County. As the data shows, language does not seem to be a barrier in voting patterns. Most Hispanic respondents were aware of bi-lingual formatting, and because voting locations include bi-lingual ballots, language does not constitute a substantial hindrance. Although 56.1 percent of respondents are more likely to vote because they are aware of bi-lingual voting materials, an even higher percent of 59.5 percent of respondents are not aware of bi-lingual voting materials and the knowledge of these materials would not increase the likelihood of voter turnout. As research continued, we discovered that the language barrier between Hispanic voters and voting materials was not a main factor of low voter turnout. More tests were conducted in order to find the accurate reasoning for low voter turnout among Hispanics.

As the data in Figure 3 shows, the majority of respondents identified that they either did not have the time to vote, or they did not answer the question. The results offer the conclusion of low political efficacy. Most respondents do not take the time to vote (due to other barriers that this survey did not measure) and/or do not care to vote. This leads to a further assumption that basic demographics play a significant role.

Education level has a clear effect on voter turnout. The lower the education level, the lower voter turnout is. For example, an overwhelming amount of respondents who identify themselves as completing some high school or having a high school diploma/equivalent make up 77.2 percent of respondents who have not voted. This analysis is supported by the data from the National Election Survey from 2008. Nationally, 8.6 percent of respondents with 0-11 years of education voted compared to 64.2 percent of respondents with 13 or more years of education. These findings are shown in Table 12.

**Table 12**

**RECODE of educ\_r (Highest grade of school or year of college R completed) \* Did R vote?**

**Crosstabulation**

			Did R vote?		Total
			No	Yes	
RECODE of educ_r (Highest grade of school or year of college R completed)	0-11 yrs	Count	138	140	278
		% within Did R vote?	29.2%	8.6%	13.2%
	12 yrs	Count	178	445	623
		% within Did R vote?	37.7%	27.2%	29.6%
	13-more yrs	Count	156	1050	1206
		% within Did R vote?	33.1%	64.2%	57.2%
Total		Count	472	1635	2107
		% within Did R vote?	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Data from NES 2008 survey

According to Table 10, income level does not have a substantial effect on voter turnout. In general, the percentages of voter turnout only vary slightly when compared with income level.

There are many opportunities for future research regarding voter turnout and Hispanic populations in Cuyahoga County. Research could be conducted on a broader sample relating income and voter turnout (not necessarily focusing on Hispanic individuals) and compared to the results of this study. From there, it could be determined if income is the main causal factor of the low turnout of Hispanic voters in Cuyahoga County. If this is the case, the Board of Elections should be reaching out to all low-income individuals, regardless of ethnicity or primary language. Another opportunity for future research could investigate further why certain individuals do not care to vote and the reasons they are unavailable on voting day. Such research could lead the Board of Elections to placing their focus on emphasizing absentee ballots or extending hours of voting booths. Future Baldwin-Wallace College students could draw from this primary study to further investigate the variables.

The surveyors would like to acknowledge and thank the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections, Spanish Language Advisory Group, and Dr. Morales-Ortiz for giving us the opportunity to conduct such a study and present our findings.

## Appendix

Los resultados de esta encuesta serán compartidos con la Comisión Electoral de Elecciones del condado de Cuyahoga

Español

1) ¿Acaso tu lengua materna es el español? Si \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

2) ¿Está usted activo/a en alguna organización cívica y/o comunitaria? ¿Qué tipo de organización? organizaciones/grupos?

- a) En la Iglesia
- b) En algún club social o grupo comunitario
- c) Un grupo de seguridad comunitaria
- d) Otra actividad de comunidad
- e) No estoy activo/a en la comunidad

3) ¿Ha usted votado anteriormente? Si \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ (Si, brinca a la pregunta 4)

4) ¿Por que usted no ha votado anteriormente?

- a) No sé, por las cuestiones de políticas
- b) No me importa o interesa votar
- c) No entiendo el proceso
- d) No siento que los problemas me pertenecen
- e) No sé cuando y donde puedo votar
- f) No leo el ingles
- g) No estoy disponible en la fecha de votar (Si escoge esta pregunta, por favor responde a la pregunta (a)

a. ¿Esta usted consciente de que existe la opción de el voto en ausencia? Si \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

5) ¿Esta usted consciente que las formas para ejercer su derecho al voto están en la forma bilingüe? Si \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

6) Como su lengua materna es el español, ¿acaso va usted a votar utilizando la forma bilingüe? Si \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

7) ¿Cuál es su nivel de educación?

- a) Alguna escuela superior
- b) Tengo un diploma de secundaria o equivalente
- c) Tengo algunos años de estudios universitarios
- d) Tengo un título universitario de dos años
- e) Tengo un título universitario de 4 años
- f) Tengo una Maestría y/o un titulo de posgrado

Solamente una persona por casa debe responder las siguientes preguntas. Por favor, deje en blanco en las encuestas adicionales.

8) ¿Cuántas personas son mayores de 18 años en su hogar?

- a) 1
- b) 2
- c) 3
- d) 4+

9) ¿Cuántas personas son menores de 18 años en su hogar?

- a) 0
- b) 1
- c) 2
- d) 3+

10) ¿Cuál es su ingreso familiar?

- a. se basan principalmente en la programas de beneficencia social y/o otros programa de gobierno
- b. \$21,999 y bajo
- c. \$22,000 - \$34,999
- d. \$35,000 - \$47,999
- e. \$48,000 - \$59,999

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Information from this survey will be shared with the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections

English

1) Is Spanish your primary language? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

2) Are you involved in any community organizations or groups?

- a) Church
- b) Block group/club-club
- c) Neighborhood watch
- d) Other community involvement
- e) No community involvement

3) Have you previously voted? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ (If yes, skip question 4)

4) Why haven't you previously voted?

- a) I don't know the issues
- b) I don't care to vote
- c) I don't understand the process
- d) I don't feel the issues pertain to me

- e) I don't know when/where to vote
- f) I don't read English well
- g) I'm not available on the voting date (if you choose this, please answer question a)
- a. Are you aware of early and/or absentee voting? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

5) Are you aware the voting materials are now in bi-lingual form? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

6) If Spanish is your primary language, now that voting materials are in bi-lingual form, are you more likely to go vote? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

7) What is your education level?

- a) Some High school
- b) High School diploma/ or equivalent
- c) Some college
- d) 2 year college degree
- e) 4 year college degree
- f) Master's degree and above

Only one person per household should answer the following questions. Please leave blank on additional surveys.

5) How many people are over the age of 18 in your household?

- a) 1
- b) 2
- c) 3
- d) 4+

6) How many people are under the age of 18 in your household?

- a) 0
- b) 1
- c) 2
- d) 3+

8) What is your household income?

- a) \$21,999 and under
- b) \$22,000 - \$34,999
- c) \$35,000 - \$47,999
- d) \$48,000 - \$59,999

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