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## METROPOLITAN DESK

### THE 2001 ELECTIONS: THE VOTERS; City's Hispanics Shift, Moving Toward G.O.P.

By MIRTA OJITO (NYT) 745 words

In an election year in which the city's mayoral candidates reached out to Hispanic New Yorkers as never before, voter surveys showed that Hispanic voters have responded in kind.

They, too, behaved in ways never before seen: 47 percent of the Latinos who went to the polls on Tuesday voted for Michael R. Bloomberg, the Republican candidate, who narrowly won the election against Mark Green, a Democrat.

That percentage, 47, is four points higher than the one Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani received from Latino voters in 1997, records show. Still, Mr. Green got 49 percent of the Latino vote Tuesday night, leaving him in a statistical tie with Mr. Bloomberg.

The evenly split Latino vote is a radical change in New York City, where the Latino vote has long been assumed to go to a Democrat.

"The fact that Bloomberg got more Latinos than Giuliani is amazing," said Angelo Falcón, senior policy executive with the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund and a close follower of city politics. "It should shake the Democratic party to its foundation.

"For too long, the Democrats have taken the Latino vote for granted," Mr. Falcón added. "They have insulted us. They have ignored us, and still we voted for them. No more."

In fact, the Latino vote for Democrats has been slipping gradually since 1989, the year statistics from exit polls began to be recorded. In 1989, Mayor David N. Dinkins got 64 percent of the Latino vote, and 60 percent four years later. In 1997, Ruth W. Messinger got 57 percent.

Mr. Falcón attributes the even lower percentage for Mr. Green to the rage many Latino voters felt toward him for running what they have described as a racially charged and harsh campaign against Fernando Ferrer, the Bronx borough president and the preferred candidate among Latino New Yorkers. With Mr. Ferrer out of the race, many Latinos voted against Mr. Green or stayed home.

Eighteen percent of the voters identified themselves as Hispanics in exit polls Tuesday night; by comparison, 24 percent of the voters in the primary runoff, in which Mr. Ferrer was battling Mr. Green, described themselves as Latinos.

Raúl Amador, a 61-year-old accountant who lives in Woodhaven, Queens, did not vote Tuesday, he said. But if he had, he would have voted for Mr. Bloomberg.

"If it wasn't going to be Ferrer, then, frankly, it didn't matter that much who among these two Americans won," he said. "Ferrer was one of us. The other two are about the same."

Except, he added, that Mr. Bloomberg is a billionaire and that makes Mr. Amador more inclined to trust him, he said.

"You figure someone with so much money would want to give to us, not take from us," said Mr. Amador, who is from Nicaragua and recalls the way in which presidents and mayors in that country have enriched themselves while in power.

But Maria Rivera, who was born in Puerto Rico but has lived in the South Bronx for two decades, did not think about Mr. Bloomberg's money or even in Mr. Ferrer's loss when she made her decision to vote for Mr. Green.

As a lifelong Democrat and the mother of two children, one of whom has a learning disability, she voted for Mr. Green because she liked the ideas he proposed to improve public education, she said.

"I thought about going for Bloomberg, but briefly," Ms. Rivera, 36, said. "Now, all we can hope for is that he will do everything he has promised to do."

Raúl Rodríguez, too, voted for Mr. Green. Mr. Rodríguez, a 43-year-old carpenter from East Harlem, said he had always voted for a Democrat and could not imagine voting for a Republican, no matter how disappointed he was at Mr. Ferrer's loss.

"Bloomberg has no political experience," he said during his lunch break yesterday at a Kentucky Fried Chicken. "What can we expect from someone with no experience in government? It will all be a surprise, like a box a chocolates."