



New Poll Shows Dead Heat Between Chicago Mayoral Candidates

For release: March 28, 2023

Poll shows likely voters slightly favor Vallas, but turnout hard to predict

- One-third of Latinos think Vallas may be Latino
- 43% of voters say they have not been contacted by campaigns
- Key issues include crime, police reform, cost of living

CHICAGO – With one week remaining until Chicago’s mayoral runoff election on April 4, Northwestern University’s [Center for the Study of Diversity and Democracy \(CSDD\)](#) and a coalition of Black and Latino nonprofits released the results of a second nonpartisan poll showing candidates Brandon Johnson and Paul Vallas in a neck-and-neck race to the finish line.

Overall, the choice among voters is evenly split between Vallas and Johnson, with each candidate earning 44% of the overall vote, with 12% undecided.

When broken down by race/ethnicity, Black registered voters favor Johnson by a wide margin. Fifty-five percent have decided to vote for or lean toward Johnson, versus 28% favoring Vallas. Among Latino registered voters, 46% favor Vallas, while 35% prefer Johnson. Registered white voters are the most split between candidates with 51% voting for or leaning toward Vallas and 42% for Johnson. One interesting finding is that one-third of Latinos think Vallas also may be Latino.

With so many voters still undecided, candidates have a great opportunity to improve their chances of victory by reaching out to their constituents, say the coalition members. When asked if a campaign or local organization has asked them to vote, 43% of potential voters citywide say they have not been contacted. Among Latinos, 47% say they have not been contacted, and 46% of Black registered voters say they have not been contacted. Whites reported higher contact rates at 62%, versus 38% who have not

been contacted. This suggests both candidates still have time to influence the election with increased outreach, especially to minority voters.

BSP Research conducted the poll. Northwestern and the coalition of Black and Latino nonprofits — including [Hispanic Federation](#), [Illinois Black Advocacy Initiative](#), [Latino Policy Forum](#) and [Latino Victory Project](#) — developed and funded the poll to better understand the issues mobilizing Black and Latino Chicago voters.

“The wild card on April 4th is the Latino vote,” said Jaime Domínguez, associate professor of instruction in Northwestern’s department of political science and CSDD research affiliate. “And neither candidate appears to have a lock on this electorate. Yet, turnout will be critical given the Latino share of undecideds. Even if one-third of Latino voters think that Vallas is a coethnic, the Latino vote is still a very diverse and multi-dimensional collective, so targeted outreach efforts will be critical in the coming days.”

“The fact that 47% of Latino voters and 46% of Black voters reported not being contacted to mobilize their vote sheds a powerful light on the need to encourage minority voters to show up at the ballot box. With only one week left, everyone — especially campaigns, government and philanthropic partners — has a responsibility to engage with communities on the ground and use culturally and linguistically relevant messaging to empower our communities to participate in our democracy,” said Frankie Miranda president and CEO Hispanic Federation.

“This latest poll once again demonstrates that voters of color are a coveted and influential demographic that have the power to decide elections, but they must be persuaded about why voting matters in their lives and why they need to show up to the polls. It’s clear that whoever wins the mayoral race must hit the ground running to address and provide real solutions to the pressing issues impacting Chicagoans. Latino Victory Project is proud to partner again with the Center for the Study of Diversity and Democracy at Northwestern University and our fellow Black and Latino organizations working to ensure that our communities remain informed and engaged in local elections,” said Nathalie Rayes, president and CEO of Latino Victory Project.

“I found it surprising that so many — one-third of Latinos — thought that Vallas might be Latino, along with one-third saying that they prefer a candidate who truly understands the Latino community,” said Sylvia Puente, president and CEO of Latino Policy Forum. “Given this, it will be important for the next mayor to demonstrate outreach, commitment and investment in the Latino community. I was also pleased to see that those polled reaffirmed their commitment, over 80%, to ‘create a humane and orderly way to allow immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers to live and contribute to Chicago,’ and that over 70% responded that Blacks and Latinos in Chicago would be better off if they

‘worked closely in partnership.’”

Poll finds crime a key issue

The poll found that reducing crime is far and away the most important issue, with 50% of registered voters saying it is an important issue. Likewise, across race/ethnicity, 49% of Latino, 53% of Black and 50% of white voters cited crime as the most important issue. There were substantial differences across age, with 80% of registered voters over 65 years of age saying reducing crime is an important issue and 31% of 18- to 29-year-old voters saying it is an important issue.

Despite the concern over crime, 30% of Black voters said police reform was the second most important issue. Among Latinos and whites, 35% of Latinos and 31% of whites said the rising cost of living was the second most important issue.

The poll also found:

- **Older voters break heavily for Vallas:** Vallas enjoys a +31-point advantage among voters over 65 years old, with 60% saying they will vote for him, and just 22% saying they will vote for Johnson. Twenty-two percent of these voters say they are still undecided. Vallas’ support among registered voters from the ages of 18 to 29 is 29%.
- **Lower-income voters less decided:** Lower-income earners report higher levels of indecision in the race, with 29% saying they have not made a decision yet. Among high-income earners, Johnson leads Vallas 46% to 42% and has fewer undecided voters, with 12% of those reporting incomes over \$80,000 saying they have not decided yet.
- **Lightfoot and Garcia Voters:** Voters who said they supported Lightfoot and Garcia in the primary were asked which candidate they are supporting in the runoff election. Among Lightfoot voters, 41% say they will support Johnson and 22% will support Vallas, with 37% still undecided. Among Garcia voters, 38% indicate they will vote for Vallas and 34% for Johnson. Among Garcia voters, 27% indicate they are still undecided.
- **Candidate Qualifications:** The survey asked Vallas and Johnson supporters why they chose their candidate. Among Vallas voters, the top factors in their decision to support him were reducing crime (75%); addressing economic issues (68%); and job experience (66%). Among Johnson voters, the top factors in their decision to support him were reducing crime (67%); doing a better job for poor and working-class people (68%); and addressing economic issues (64%).

- **Preferred characteristics:** The survey also asked about important characteristics in supporting a candidate for mayor. For voters overall, the top two characteristics were being progressive and fighting for progressive issues (37%) and experience as an elected official (36%). Another strong preference among Latinos is that “the candidate truly understands their community (35%).”

Lastly, the poll shows high levels of perceived commonality by Black and Latino voters. When asked how much they think Latino and Black voters have in common, 75% of Latino registered voters said they had a great deal or a fair amount in common. Among Black registered voters, 73% said they have a great deal or a fair amount in common.

“Black voters have long understood the impact that municipal elections, particularly mayoral races, have on our communities,” said Patrice James, executive director of the Illinois Black Advocacy Initiative. “Unsurprisingly, the poll showed that a candidate's experience as an elected official and their history of working with Black communities were important considerations for Black voters. The next mayor of Chicago must work with the city's Black communities to ensure the concerns illustrated by the survey results are addressed through a root-cause, community-first approach, because we are a savvy electorate that will hold them accountable.”

BSP collected 1,500 interviews with Chicagoans of all backgrounds, with a nominal margin of error of +/- 2.8%. The poll fielded from March 15-23, with a sample size of 1,500 voters, reached by cell phone, email invite or online voter panels. Interviews were conducted online in English and Spanish at the discretion of the respondent. More information on the survey methodology is available [here](#).

Download a PDF of the key takeaways [here](#).

Download a PDF of the topline results by race [here](#).

