



Join The NiLP Network

NiLP
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
LATINO POLICY

The NiLP Network
on Latino Issues

Latino Policy iReport

NiLP Survey of
NY Latino Opinion Leaders, Part 1 of 2

**National Institute
for Latino Policy
(NiLP)**

25 West 18th Street
New York, NY 10011
800-590-2516
info@latinopolicy.org
www.latinopolicy.org

Board of Directors

- José R. Sánchez
Chair
- Edgar DeJesus
Secretary
- Israel Colon
Treasurer
- Maria Rivera
Development Chair
- Hector Figueroa
- Tanya K. Hernandez
- Angelo Falcón
President

To make a donation,
Mail check or money
order to the above
address to the order of
"National Institute for
Latino Policy"

Follow us on
[Twitter](#) and
[Angelo's Facebook
Page](#)

Is Political Corruption Worse in the Latino Community? Perceptions of Latino Political Ethics in New York

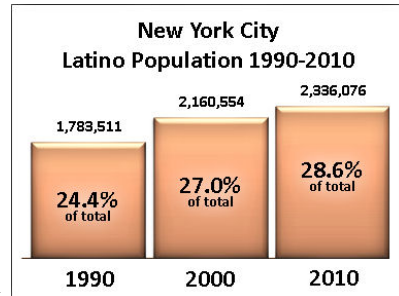
By Angelo Falcón (May 13, 2013)

With the recent arrests of elected officials in New York and the revelation that a number of them have been wearing wires as part of corruption investigations, the question most asked in political circles these day is, "Who is next?"

The number of Latino political figures who have been found guilty of political wrong doing in recent times include quite a number: State Senators Pedro Espada, Hiram Monserrate (for corruption as a NYC Councilmember) and Efrain Gonzalez, and NYC Councilmember Miguel Martinez. Therefore, for Latinos, the role of former State Assemblyman Nelson Castro as an undercover agent for the authorities and the identification of State Senator Jose Peralta as the possible subject of investigation (which he has denied) has raised urgent questions about the extent of political corruption within and implications for the Latino community. Is it more extensive than in other communities? As these investigations proceed, what role will Latino elected officials be playing? What impact will these developments have on the nature of Latino politics? What solutions to this problem do Latinos support?

To promote a discussion of these issues within the Latino community, the National Institute for Latino Policy (NiLP) conducted a web survey of Latino opinion leaders in New York State. Based on the membership of the influential NiLP Network on Latino Issues, this survey included Latino leaders and activists in a wide range of areas, including government, business and the nonprofit sectors. This is a stratum of the Latino community that plays an important role in its agenda setting and political direction. The lack of reliable opinion polling and coverage about the Latino population makes this type of elite survey a useful supplement to understand Latino public opinion, especially of political issues.

As close to a third of New York City's population, the Latino population's views on the issue of political corruption are important to understand as legislative and other efforts to address this problem are discussed and promoted. Unlike other major racial-ethnic groups in the city, leadership in



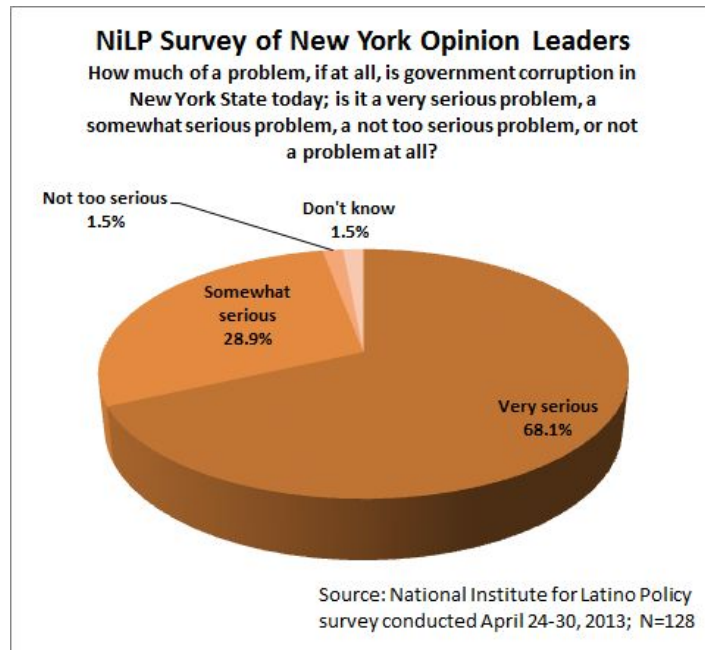
the Latino community is less diverse and more dependent on public sector politicians. As a result, the type of political corruption currently under scrutiny can be seen as having a disproportionate impact on the well-being of the Latino community compared to other groups.

This NiLP Survey of NY Latino Opinion Leaders was conducted on April 24 -30, 2013 of 128 Latino opinion leaders in New York State. Along with general questions about the problem of political corruption, this survey asked about the respondents' perceptions of each of the major Latino elected officials in New York in Congress, the Borough Presidency, State Senate, State Assembly and NYC Council. These individual ethical assessments are based completely on the respondents' perceptions and not on any other information provided. No implications are implied about the nature of an individual politician's behavior, except to acknowledge the importance of public perceptions in politics.

In addition, a series of questions were asked about support in the Latino community for the candidates for NYC Mayor and who they thought were the most influential Latino elected officials in the state. This will be the subject of a follow-up report being released on Wednesday, May 15th.

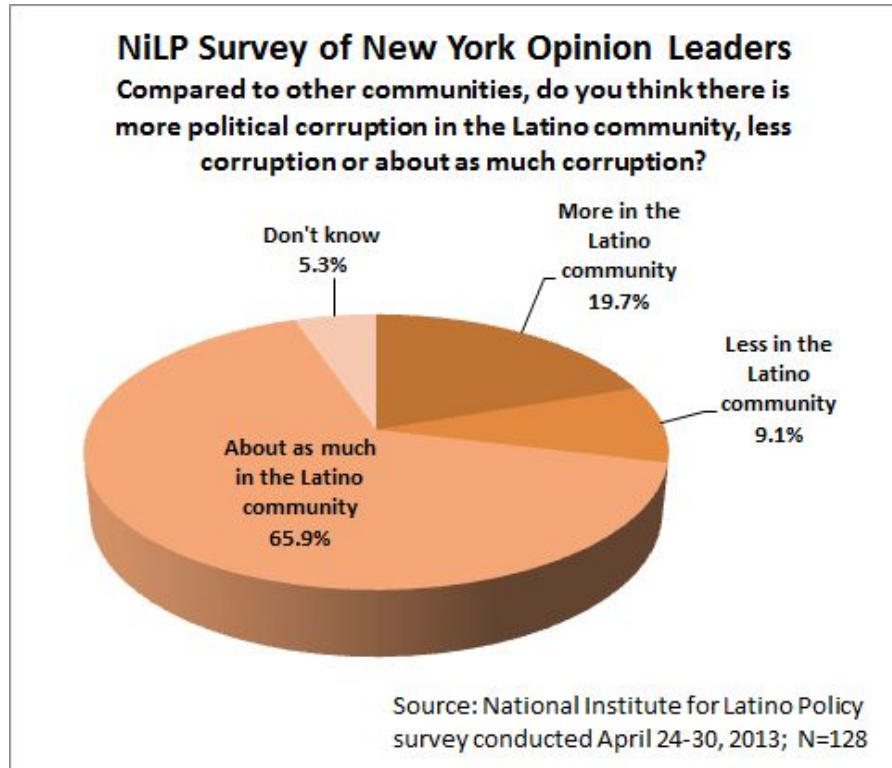
The Problem of Political Corruption in the Latino Community

Latino opinion leaders overwhelmingly identify government corruption as a serious problem in New York State. Over two thirds (68 percent) feel it is a very serious problem, and another 29 percent as being somewhat serious. This is higher than the level of seriousness of the problem identified by general New York State voters in an [April 17th Quinnipiac University poll](#), in which 48 percent thought it was very serious and 39 percent somewhat serious.

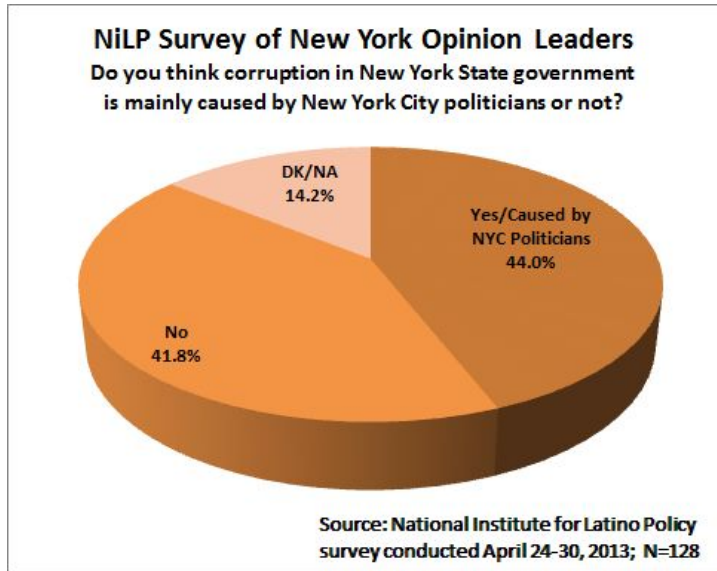


Asked if they thought political corruption was a more serious problem in the Latino community than in other communities, about two-thirds (66 percent)

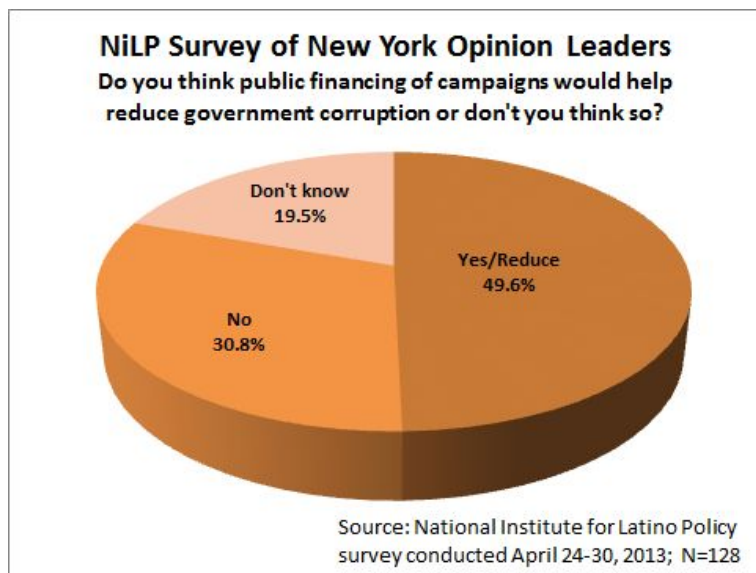
felt that it is about the same. Only 20 percent felt it was a bigger problem in the Latino community and 9 percent thought it was less of a problem in their community. This is important because so many of the individuals presented with criminal charges and identified as being under investigation have so far been people of color that some are [seeing this problem of political corruption being primarily that of the Black and, by extension, Latino political classes.](#)



On the other hand, with the majority of elected officials arrested or caught in criminal investigations being from New York City, there is a question about whether the problem of political corruption in the state is fueled mostly from the city. The Latino opinion leaders were divided on this question: 44 percent thought it was caused by NYC politicians, 42 percent that is isn't, and 14 percent stated that they didn't know.



One much-discussed solution to the problem of government corruption is the adoption of the public financing of state elections. Asked if this would reduce the problem, about half (50 percent) thought that it would. About a third (31 percent) felt that public financing of elections wouldn't make a difference and 20 percent stated that they didn't know. There are other measures being proposed as well, but it is interesting that as the most discussed, public financing does not achieve consensus, at least among Latino opinion leaders, as a solution to the problem. This indicates the need for further public discussion about approaches to addressing the problem of government corruption.



Perceptions of the Political Ethics of Latino Elected Officials

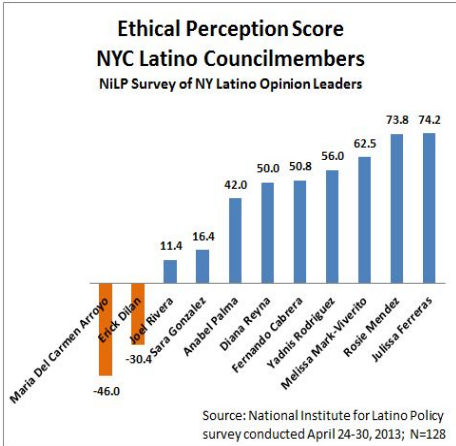
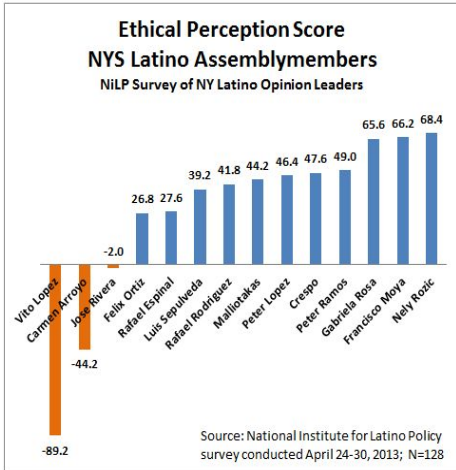
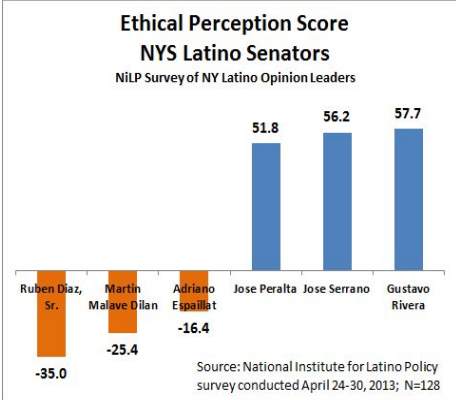
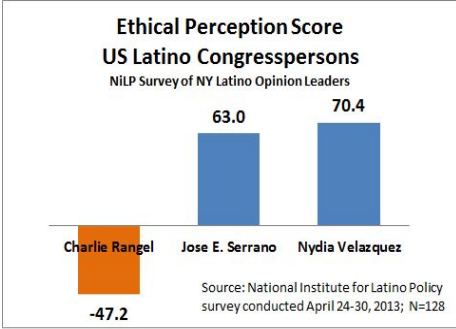
The survey respondents were asked to rate each Latino elected official on their assessment of their political ethics: were they definitely or probably ethical, or

definitely or probably corrupt. If they knew very little about a particular politician, they were asked to leave that person's listing blank or mark "don't know."

By subtracting the rating for those thought to be corrupt from those thought to be ethical, we derived an "Ethical Perception Score." The higher this score, the more ethical a politician was thought to be; the lower the score, the more corrupt.

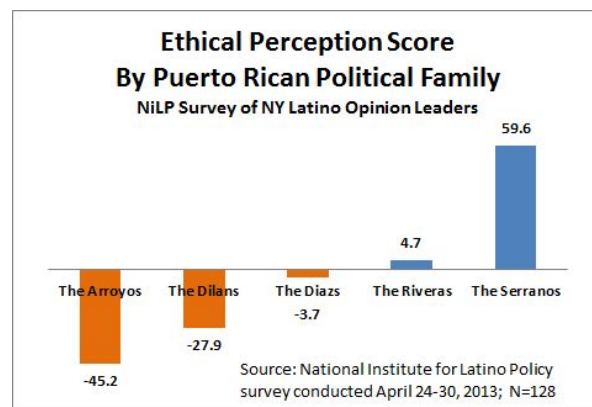
In order to provide some contrast, two high profile non-Latino elected officials were included in the questions, but excluded from the analysis that was limited to Latinos only. Congressman Charlie Rangel, who identifies primarily as African-American (despite having a Puerto Rican father) and State Assemblyman Vito Lopez, who is Italian-American, were listed in the questions but not included in the analysis presented below.

The Ethical Perception Scores based on the ratings by the Latino opinion leaders for the individual Latino elected officials according to type of elected office were as follows:



A unique characteristic of Latino politics in New York City is the large number of elected officials who are related family members, a phenomenon that is the subject of a 2012 NiLP iReport, "[A Boricua Game of Thrones?](#)" Specifically in the Bronx, Puerto Rican elected officials were related in four political families that include fully 60 percent of Puerto Rican electeds in that borough: the Arroyos (Carmen and Maria del Carmen), the Diazs (Ruben, Sr and Ruben, Jr.), the Riveras (José and Joel, and recently, Naomi), and the Serranos (Jose, Sr. and Jose, Jr.). In addition, in Brooklyn, there are the Dilans (Martin Malave and Erick).

There is much speculation that the presence of such family relationships among the political class can be generally reflective of the potential for political corruption. The perceptions of the Latino opinion leaders in this survey support this suspicion. Of the five Puerto Rican political families, four received ethically negative or very low scores.



When averaging the Ethical Perception Scores along a number of other dimensions, some interesting patterns emerge. We looked at the effects of gender, geography and type of office.

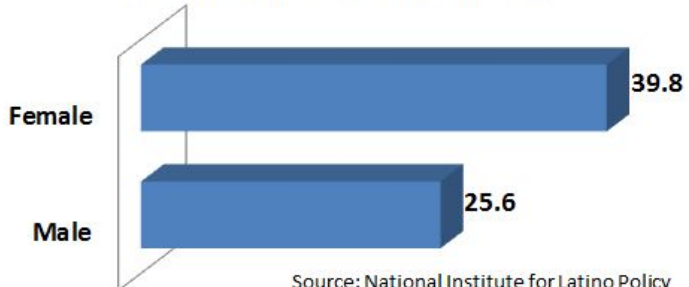
Latino opinion leaders found that women Latina elected officials were generally seen as much more ethical than the men. The women had an average score of 40, compared to only 26 for the men.

The Bronx (21) and Brooklyn (19) had the lowest Ethical Perception Scores, compared to Manhattan (47) and Queens (65).

Members of Congress had the highest average ethical score (67), compared to State Assembly members (37), NYC Councilmembers (33), the Bronx Borough President (27) and State Senators (15). The State Senate is singled out as the political body with Latino elected officials who are perceived as being most corrupt.

Ethical Perception Score Female vs Male Latino Elected Officials

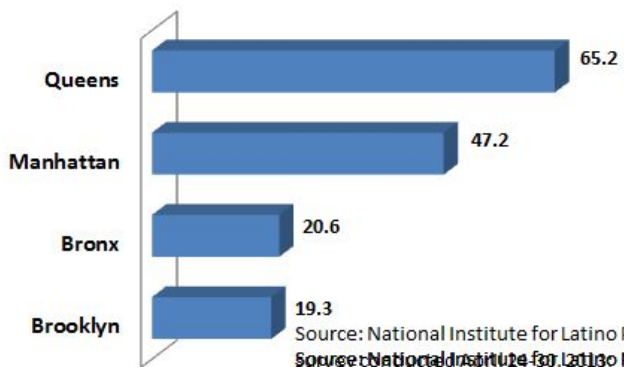
NIILP NYC Survey of Latino Opinion Leaders



Source: National Institute for Latino Policy survey conducted April 24-30, 2013; N=128

Ethical Perception Score Latino Elected Officials by County/Borough

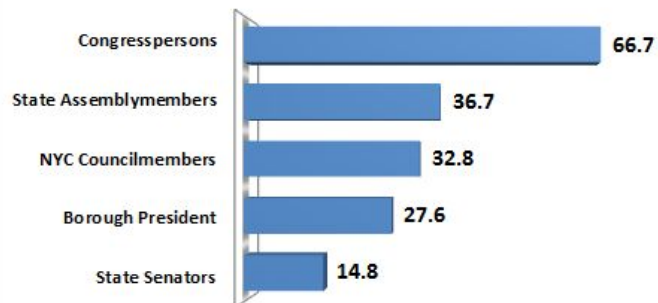
NIILP NYC Survey of Latino Opinion Leaders



Source: National Institute for Latino Policy survey conducted April 24-30, 2013; N=128

Ethical Perception Score By Type of Latino Elected Office

NIILP Survey of NY Latino Opinion Leaders



Source: National Institute for Latino Policy survey conducted April 24-30, 2013; N=128

Conclusion

This survey presented the perceptions of key Latino opinion leaders on the problem of political corruption in New York in general and within the Latino community. It found that this is a matter of great concern in this community, but that it is not seen as being any worse among Latinos than in other communities.

There was a wide range of perceptions of the ethics of Latino elected officials that give indications of who Latino opinion leaders suspect might be next to be investigated. At the same time, these indicate that they view the majority of Latino elected officials to be ethical, singling out this community's two Members of Congress and female elected officials in this regard. This survey also cast suspicion on the presence of political families in Latino politics as a possible indicator of potential political corruption.

Given the size of the Latino population in New York, this community should be playing a major role in discussions on addressing the problem of political corruption. This survey hopefully contributes to a greater understanding of Latino opinion on this issue.

Angelo Falcón is President of the National Institute for Latino Policy (NiLP). He can be contacted at afalcon@latinopolicy.org.