



Latino Policy & Politics Initiative

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LATINOS ARE SEVERELY UNDERREPRESENTED IN LOS ANGELES TIMES OPINION PAGES

UCLA study says lack of inclusion leaves Latinos voiceless on crucial issues affecting their communities.

Over a 17-month span that included a presidential election in which the Latino vote was critical and a burgeoning COVID-19 crisis that devastated the Latino community, just 4% of op-eds published by the Los Angeles Times featured Latino authors, according to a [new report](#) from the [UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative](#).

Opinion pages play a significant role in shaping public opinion and policy outcomes, and the UCLA analysis sought to determine whether Los Angeles' flagship newspaper — situated in a county where Latinos make up almost 50% of the population — was giving adequate representation to its plurality community.

The report, which focused on the period from January 2020 to May 2021, also found that Latinos accounted for only 11% of the Los Angeles Times editorial board, another obstacle to ensuring that their voices are represented.

“As national debates around democracy, the economy, the response to COVID-19, immigration and environmental justice take place, papers like the Los Angeles Times have a responsibility to ensure that Latinos are given a proportional and fair opportunity to shape the conversation,” said Sonja Diaz, founding director of UCLA initiative and one of the report’s authors. “Our study shows that there is an urgent need for the Los Angeles Times to make its editorial pages more inclusive and representative of the community it covers.”

To evaluate the representation of Latino voices, researchers examined 564 op-eds from 120 randomly selected dates in 2020 and 60 dates through May 2021 — a standard sampling practice. They found that only 4.3% of those pieces were written or co-written by Latinos. Demographic data on the authors was obtained by searching publicly available biographical information, contacting them directly or analyzing their surnames against a database of common last names by ethnicity.

Latino op-ed authors, the researchers found, were far more likely than non-Latinos to focus on issues that impact the Latino community. Almost 46 percent of the opinion pieces written or co-written by Latinos were either predominantly or partially focused on Latinos and their communities, compared with only 3% of op-eds that did not include a Latino author.

Overall, 95% of Times op-eds published during the 17-month period made no explicit mention of Latinos or Latino communities.

The additional lack of Latino representation on the editorial board is not unique to the Los Angeles Times, the researchers stressed, but of the five papers whose boards they analyzed, the Times had the highest rate of underrepresentation relative to its county's Latino population.

To increase Latino representation at the Los Angeles Times, the report authors recommend that Times leaders focus on hiring more Latino columnists and editorial board members and that they make a concerted effort to place more Latino voices and issues in the paper's opinion pages.

The UCLA study follows a [U.S. Government Accountability Office report](#), released in September, that found that while Latinos make up an average of 18% of the workforce in other sectors of the economy — comparable to Latinos' percentage of the U.S. population — they remain underrepresented in national media, where they comprise 12% of the workforce.

The researchers noted that while the widely employed methodologies of random date selection and the use of surnames to identify a small portion of Latino op-ed writers may have resulted in a slight undercount or overcount of Latino authors, the underrepresentation of Latinos in the sample analyzed is so considerable that it would be statistically improbable for the main findings to change.

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ABOUT THE UCLA LATINO POLICY AND POLITICS INITIATIVE

The UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative addresses the most critical domestic policy challenges facing Latinos and other communities of color through research, advocacy, mobilization, and leadership development to expand genuine opportunity for all Americans.