The 1995 FIU Cuba Poll: Views on Policy Options Toward Cuba Held by Cuban-American Residents of Dade County, Florida and Union City, New Jersey

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The 1995 FIU Cuba Poll

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Held by Cuban-American Residents
of Dade County, Florida
and Union City, New Jersey

April 11, 1995

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Dr. Hugh Gladwin
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Principal Investigators

Florida International University
The State University of Florida at Miami
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The 1995 Cuba Poll, conducted by the Institute of Public Opinion Research (IPOR) of Florida International University and the Cuban Research Institute, measured the level of support within the Cuban-American community in Dade County, Florida and Union City, New Jersey, for policies directed toward Cuba. Funding from the ARCA Foundation permitted the investigators to expand the range of the poll. This poll, conducted between February 7 to March 14, consisted of 1504 random interviews with Cuban Americans in the two areas with the largest concentration of Cuban-Americans. One thousand and two interviews were completed in Dade County and five hundred and two in Union City. The increased size of the poll also permits a complete analysis of various demographic categories within Dade County as well as allowing for a thorough comparison of the two communities.

The first Cuba Poll was conducted four years ago, in March of 1991. Subsequent polls were conducted in October of 1991 and in June of 1993. As in the three previous polls, the researchers this time found a diversity of opinions on what policies would facilitate political changes on the island. The consistency of some of the responses, as well as the shift in others, present us with the most complete picture to date of the Cuban-American political attitudes towards Cuba. While most of the responses were consistent with the previous survey, the most recent poll uncovered interesting shifts in some significant attitudes toward foreign policy options as well as highlighted some important opinions regarding current U.S. policy towards Cuba and Cuban refugees. In general terms, the findings can be summarized as follows.

♦ There appears to be an increasing frustration about the lack of political change occurring on the island and the growing acceptance that desired changes are not likely to occur anytime soon.

♦ At the same time, a sizable minority of respondents continue to signal that they would support a dialogue with the Cuban government. In the context of the other responses, this consistent desire can be interpreted as signifying that among some within the Cuban-American community in the United States such a dialogue is seen as important in bringing about a rapid change to the island as well as bringing about the end of the Castro era in Cuba.

♦ In general, the Cuban-American residents of Union City are more likely to support negotiated solutions to the Cuban problem than the Dade County residents. Union City residents were significantly more supportive of the strategies emphasizing negotiation to bring about change expressed.
Respondents who left Cuba after 1970 are more likely to support negotiated solutions than those arriving during the 1960s. In fact, the more recent the departure from Cuba, the more likely that the respondent will support negotiated solutions.

Similarly, there seems to be a considerable generational division on the questions raised by the survey. Younger respondents are more likely to support negotiated solutions without combining them with pressure strategies.

Both populations expressed strong support for the continuation or tightening of the embargo and increasing international economic pressure.

Within each population there is a large percentage which supports pressure strategies in combination with negotiated strategies. For example, 71% of Dade County and 67% of U.City respondents who support a dialogue also support tightening the embargo.

Echoing the results of the other surveys, the Cuban-American community is willing to lend support to human rights groups working inside Cuba.

A sizable majority (68%) of Cuban Americans are willing to enter into negotiations with the Cuban government to facilitate free elections on the island. This position forms part of the political agenda of some moderate exile organizations.

Only 7.4% of the respondents belong to organizations directly involved in Cuban issues and of these only 4.2% consider themselves active members.

There continues to be support for initiating military action by exile groups or a U.S. invasion of the island.

There is also a desire to travel to the island but strong support of the recently initiated travel ban. A majority in both regions support the recently imposed policy of banning travel to Cuba (Dade: 66% U. City: 53%).

Similarly, a majority in both regions support the recently imposed policy forbidding the sending of money to relatives in Cuba (Dade: 59% U. City: 52%).

A large majority in both regions reports that a local candidate's position on Cuba is important in determining their vote (Dade: 70% U. City: 79%).

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A large majority in both regions feels that all points of view on how to deal with Castro should be heard (Dade: 61% U. City: 70%).

A minority in both regions feels that the Republican election gains will make the end of Fidel Castro’s rule happen sooner (Dade: 34% U. City: 33%).

A minority in both regions believes that the Republicans will make it easier for Cubans to immigrate to the U.S. (Dade County: 29% U. City: 30%).

Approximately one third in both regions considers the U.S. decision to send rafters to Guantanamo to be the correct decision to be made at the time (Dade: 36% U. City: 32%).

A large majority believes that now the Guantanamo and Panama camp residents should be allowed to come to the U.S. (Dade: 83% U. City: 83%).
FINDINGS

ANTICIPATION OF POLITICAL CHANGES IN CUBA

The survey results indicate that Cuban-Americans have become less certain about when major political changes will occur in Cuba. While in 1991 approximately 54% of respondents expected changes to occur within one year and an overwhelming 88% anticipated changes in five years or less, only 41% of the current respondents expect major changes within the next five years.

- Only 14 percent expect major political changes to occur in Cuba within one year while an additional 27 percent anticipate that major changes are more than one year but less than five years away.

** Dade County: 15% within one year and 26% between one and five years.
** Union City: 13% within one year and 27% between one and five years.

- In a marked increase of pessimism, 20% of the sample believes that desired changes will never occur in Cuba.

** Dade County: 18%
** Union City: 22%

The older respondents are more likely to consider political changes in Cuba imminent (within one year). Yet, younger respondents are more optimistic that change will occur within the next nine years. Similarly, significantly more respondents who oppose a dialogue believe that changes will occur within one year but more of those favoring a dialogue believe that changes will occur within two to five years.

POLICIES SUPPORTED TO PROMOTE POLITICAL CHANGE IN CUBA

The Cuban-American community supports a variety of policies to promote political changes on the island. Within the general patterns there are some variances associated with particular groups. The cross tabulations included in this report divide responses according to seven variables: gender, age, year respondent left Cuba, education, income level, position on a dialogue with the Cuban government and political party affiliation. Please refer to these tabulations for complete details on the differences between respondents belonging to each group. Here, we will highlight the general responses of the populations based on their level of support for specific policies. If we look at the rank order of support from the all of the respondents that voiced an opinion, the following order emerges.
92 percent favor supporting human rights groups working inside Cuba.

** Dade County: 92%
** Union City: 93%

There is an extremely high level of support for this policy across categories in all groups. Within each group, all response categories fall within five percentage points of each other except in the questions measuring departure from Cuba and position on the dialogue issue. The most recent arrivals (since 1980) exhibit stronger support for this position.

84 percent favor increasing international economic pressure on Cuba.

** Dade County: 86%
** Union City: 80%

All groupings exhibited high support for this policy option, with the strongest support coming from those arriving in the decade of the 60s and well educated, affluent (over $50,000) respondents who also oppose a dialogue (91% of all respondents who oppose a dialogue favor this policy).

83 percent favor negotiations with the Cuban government to allow Cuban family members to join relatives living here.

** Dade County: 80%
** Union City: 89%

The respondents belonging to the younger age categories, the most recent arrivals and those supporting a dialogue were more likely to support this position.

82 percent favor the tightening of the trade embargo.

** Dade County: 84%
** Union City: 77%

Respondents older than twenty five, respondents who left Cuba in the 1960s and 1970s and those opposing the dialogue are most likely to support a tightening of the embargo.

82 percent favor negotiations to improve the human rights conditions on the island.

** Dade County: 80%
** Union City: 86%
All respondent categories exhibited high support for this policy option. The younger, more recently arrived respondents, as well as the better educated, more affluent agree on this alternative. (92% of all respondents favoring a dialogue also favor this policy.)

♦ 74 percent favor U.S. support of an armed internal rebellion to overthrow the Cuban government. (Q4)

** Dade County: 74%
** Union City: 73%

The young males are more likely to favor support of an armed internal rebellion as well as those having left Cuba during the decade of the 1960s.

♦ 73 percent favor maintaining the current policy of no diplomatic relations and no trade with Cuba.

** Dade County: 77%
** Union City: 66%

The older age groups and those opposing a dialogue are most likely to support this position.

♦ 73 percent favor military action by the exile community against the Cuban government.

** Dade County: 73%
** Union City: 72%

The respondents most supportive of this position are those not having graduated from high school, and those opposing a dialogue.

♦ 68 percent favor starting negotiations with the Cuban government to facilitate peaceful democratic change by means of free-elections or plebiscite.

** Dade County: 63%
** Union City: 79%

The younger age groups, those having left Cuba after 1970, the higher income and educational categories and those in favor of a dialogue are the respondents most likely to support this initiative.
• 68 percent favor the starting of negotiations with the Cuban government to allow regular phone communications with the island.

** Dade County: 65%
** Union City: 74%

The younger respondents, along with those having left Cuba after 1970 and particularly since 1980 are the most likely to support such an initiative.

• 65 percent favor negotiations to exclude medicines from the trade embargo.

** Dade County: 62%
** Union City: 71%

The youngest respondents (18-24), those who left Cuba during the 1980s or 1990s, women, lower income individuals and those who support a dialogue are most likely to support this position.

• 57 percent favor a United States invasion of Cuba.

** Dade County: 59%
** Union City: 54%

Respondents in the higher income levels, along with those that left Cuba before between 1950 and 1970, ages 25-44 and over 65 are the most likely supporters of this position.

• 46 percent favor the establishment of a national dialogue between Cuban exiles, Cuban dissidents, and representatives of the Cuban Government.

** Dade County: 40%
** Union City: 57%

Women, respondents in the younger age brackets, those leaving Cuba after 1970, high school and college graduates and the higher income categories (especially the over $30,000 group) are the strongest supporters of a dialogue.

• 43 percent favor negotiations to allow unrestricted travel by Cuban-Americans to the island to visit relatives.

** Dade County: 37%
** Union City: 56%

The younger respondents, those having left Cuba after 1970 and those favoring a dialogue are the most likely supporters of this policy initiative.
34 percent favor negotiations to exclude food from the trade embargo.

** Dade County: 28%
** Union City: 45%

The youngest respondents (18-24), those who left Cuba in the 1980s, those with a higher income and those who support a dialogue are most likely to support this position.

24 percent favor negotiations to allow unrestricted trade with Cuba.

** Dade County: 18%
** Union City: 34%

Women, arrivals since 1970, lower educational categories, and those supporting a dialogue are most likely to approve of this option. (94% of the respondents opposing a dialogue also oppose this option.)

CHANGES IN PERSONAL PLANS IF CUBA’S GOVERNMENT CHANGES TO A DESIRED DEMOCRACY

Another set of questions were designed to measure the potential movement of Cubans between Miami and the island when certain changes are perceived to have taken place in Cuban.

92 percent would be likely to return to visit the island if the country’s government changed to more democratic form of government.

** Dade County: 93%
** Union City: 92%

46 percent of respondents would be likely to travel to Cuba if all travel restrictions were lifted.

** Dade County: 40%
** Union City: 57%

39 percent felt that relatives on the island would come to the United States to live if Cuba had a democratic government.

** Dade County: 38%
** Union City: 42%
Domestic Spill Over Effect

One section of the questionnaire is designed to measure some of the impact that the Cuba issue might have on domestic electoral concerns. One of the most significant results of the domestic spill over effect of the Cuban-American communities' concern with Cuba is their high registration in the Republican Party. As mentioned above, 37 percent of the respondents are registered Republicans and 11 percent are registered Democrats with the Republicans being most numerous in Dade County (40% to 31%) and twice as many Democrats being registered in Union City (16% to 8%). Analysts have signaled this political alignment, not typical of the Hispanic population in the United States, to be a result of the Cuban concern for foreign policy issues. Cubans became involved in politics initially to influence Washington's position towards Cuba. Achieving local power is a result of this initial commitment.

The polls discern some other dimensions of the spill-over effect on Cuban-American political culture.

- Seventy three percent say that in local political elections, a candidate's position on Cuba is important in determining their vote.
** Dade County: 70%
** Union City: 79%

- Sixty four percent feel that all points of view on how to deal with Castro should be heard.
** Dade County: 61%
** Union City: 70%

- Thirty four percent of the respondents felt that the Republican election gains will make the end of Fidel Castro's rule happen sooner. Forty nine percent say that Republicans will make no difference in this outcome.
** Dade County: 34% sooner
** Union City: 33%

- Thirty percent believe that the Republicans will make it easier for Cubans to immigrate to the U.S. while thirty three percent believe they will make it harder.
** Dade County: 29% easier
** Union City: 30%
Current Policies

♦ Thirty four percent consider the U.S. decision to send rafters to Guantanamo was the correct decision to be made at the time.

** Dade County: 36%
** Union City: 32%

♦ Eighty three percent feel that now the Guantanamo and Panama camp residents should be allowed to come to the U.S.

** Dade County: 83%
** Union City: 83%

♦ Sixty two percent favor the recently imposed travel restrictions to the island.

** Dade County: 66%
** Union City: 53%

♦ Fifty six percent favor the recently imposed restrictions on sending money to relatives on the island.

** Dade County: 59%
** Union City: 52%

♦ Forty percent feel that resuming normal relations with Cuba will be good for Florida’s economy.

** Dade County: 46%
** Union City: 29%

♦ Seventy five percent feel that the U.S. invasion of Haiti was a good thing.

** Dade County: 77%
** Union City: 70%

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

As can be expected from such a large sample, the demographic characteristics of the sample accurately represent the characteristics of the Cuban-American population in Dade County and Union City.

♦ 49.2 percent of the sample is male.

** Dade County: 49%
** Union City: 50%
88 percent of respondents were born in Cuba and the remainder are children of at least one Cuban parent.

** Dade County: 87.7%
** Union City: 88.3%

Median age of sample is 45 years old. (All respondents were over 18 years of age.)

** Dade County: 46
** Union City: 43

47 percent of respondents have a family income under $30,000.

** Dade County: 45.7%
** Union City: 50.8%

51 percent of the respondents are high school graduates.

** Dade County: 48%
** Union City: 56%

37 percent are registered Republicans and 11 percent are registered Democrats but 43 percent are not registered to vote.

** Dade County: 40% Republicans; 8% Democrats; 45% not registered.
** Union City: 31% Republicans; 16% Democrats; 41% not registered.

87.5 percent of the sample was white with 1.6 percent reporting to be Black and 5 percent reporting to be Mulatto.

** Dade County: 90.8% white; .8% Black; 3.7% Mulato
** Union City: 81% white; 3.2% Black; 8.7% Mulato

16 percent of the Cuban born sample left the island before 1959, 38% arrived between 1959 and 1969, 13% arrived in the decade of the 1970s, 25% arrived between 1980 and 1989 with a majority of these (14%) arriving in 1980 and 8% have arrived since 1990.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DADE</th>
<th>UNION CITY</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 1959</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959-1969</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-1979</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980-1989</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990-1995</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION

In this poll, for the first time we can measure the similarities and differences between the New Jersey and the Dade County Cuban-American communities. It is axiomatic that the New Jersey community is more liberal, as measured by party affiliation, and less dogmatic than the Southern Florida community. This "common knowledge" has been espoused for years. Yet, New Jersey served as the spawning ground of the Torricelli Bill and Representative Bob Menendez is indistinguishable from Diaz-Balart or Ros-Lehtinen on positions towards Cuba. This poll allows us to tease out some of these contradictions and put both communities in context.

Clearly there is near unanimity regarding certain issues, such as opposition to the Castro regime and support of human rights groups on the island. Yet, evidence suggests that on the issue of specific policy options toward Cuba, respondents may express a diversity of positions. Many respondents express support for positions regarded as hard line as well as those associated with a softer or more conciliatory stance. For example, sixty eight percent support starting negotiations with the Cuban government to facilitate peaceful, democratic change by means of elections or plebiscite, while fifty seven percent favor military action by the exile community against the Cuban government. Obviously, some respondents favor both of these strategies. While these positions might seem contradictory, they reflect an openness to supporting a wide range of strategies that might bring about changes in Cuba.

By looking at breakdown by region of the responses above, some obvious differences emerge between the Dade and Union City respondents. At first blush, the Union City respondents seem to support negotiated solutions more strongly.

In fact, by running a simple chi-square statistical test, one can verify these impressions. Of the fifteen questions dealing with policy options towards Cuba, there is a statistically significant difference between the Union City and Dade County respondents in ten questions (at the .01 level of significance.) This indicates that the resulting difference is 95% certain not to be based on chance. Any relationship at the .01 level is considered to be strongly significant. On these eleven issues, one can be fairly secure in assuming that there exists real differences of opinion between the two populations.

The Carrot and the Stick

What does this indicate about the differences or similarities between the two communities? In both communities there is a large minority that combines soft and hard lines in what appears to be a strategy of change. This group appears, in fact, to be saying "the only way to deal with the Cuban government is by applying all the pressure possible, while leaving a door open for negotiations." Both communities exhibit this carrot and stick approach to dealing with the Cuban government. A sizeable portion of each community
supports some pressure strategies as well as some negotiated solutions. This tendency, however, is stronger in the New Jersey community. Cuban-Americans in Union City are more likely to support negotiated solutions, even when combining these with pressure strategies.

Even when supporting violent solutions which both communities do with statistically equal zeal, the New Jersey respondents are more likely to also support some sort of negotiation strategy, leading to the assumption that the threat of violence is seen as the strongest stick possible to combine with the carrot of negotiations.

The two regions are most similar in their support of human rights groups. There is overwhelming support in both areas for human rights issues and activists on the island.

Dade Over Time: The Less Things Change...

As Table 1 shows, the Cuban-American community in Dade County taken as a whole, has maintained a surprisingly steady position when considering policy options toward Cuba. What changes do occur can be explained by the anticipation of change, which was palpably high in 1991, and the ensuing frustration when the expectations did not materialize. In the polls taken in 1991, there was a measurable sense of change in the air and the airwaves of Miami. The events transforming the socialist block were seen as harbingers of what would soon occur in Cuba. In this climate of inevitable victory, the hard lines became less dramatic and more conciliatory. Talk of "one people" and of "one struggle" to rebuild a destroyed economy were common, even among the most recalcitrant anti-Castro foes. That, indeed, was the point: one could look beyond Castro for the first time in thirty years. His days were numbered and the count down had begun.

In this climate, the community became almost forgiving. In our second survey of 1991, we measured relatively high responses for most negotiation questions. Even the dreaded D word registered a near majority support (49.7%) since engaging in a dialogue with a dying regime seemed more acceptable. In addition, the steady flow of travelers from Miami to Havana reported the sufferings of a people, most of whom were relatives of someone in Miami.

While any close observer of the social, political and economic climate of the island can detect marked changes, to most of the Cuban American population, these changes are cosmetic and far short of those expected. The 1993 Poll measured the frustration of a community now more eager than ever to apply whatever sanctions are necessary to topple the Castro government. Thus, negotiated solutions declined in support while the harder lines were emphasized.

The frustration is evident in this poll as well. Respondents no longer anticipate changes but they continue to exhibit flexibility of approaches to encourage change.
METHODOLOGY

From February 7 to March 14, 1504 Cuban-Americans in Dade County, Florida and Union City, New Jersey were asked a battery of questions about their support of policies toward Cuba. While the survey was slightly restructured to allow for a more complete measurement of the sources of information that respondents relied upon to receive news about Cuba, the questions asked were the same as those asked in the initial survey. The ten minute questionnaire was a result of careful planning and design to insure that all attitudes about the diverse policies towards Cuba existing in the Cuban-American community could be expressed and recorded.

A random sample was generated from telephone exchanges in Dade County and Union City using standard random-digit-dialing procedures which ensure that each residential phone has an equal chance of being chosen for the sample. In Union City, the 1990 census tracts with the highest Cuban population were targeted. In addition, the sample was stratified according to Hispanic residence patterns in both regions. Bilingual (Spanish/English) interviewers conducted the interviews from IPOR'S 16-station telephone lab at the North Miami Campus of Florida International University. The margin of error for the full sample of 1504 is +/-2.5% at the 95% confidence level (Dade sample: +/- 3%; Union City sample: +/-4.4%

This means, for example, that for the result that forty six percent of the 1504 respondents favor the establishing of a national dialogue, the chances are 95 out of 100 that the opinion of the entire Cuban-American population in the two areas will fall between 43.4 and 48.6 percent in favor of this position.

HOW TO READ THE TABLES IN THIS REPORT

The answers to the questions appear in frequency and cross-tabulation tables, which have counts and column percentages. The frequency tables, which appear first, show the number of times each response to a question was given. For questions where it is possible to collapse the responses into broader categories, two sets of frequency tables are included. Please note that the tables for the collapsed responses eliminate certain types of responses from the percentage calculations, so care should be taken in the review and citing of data.

Some respondents spontaneously answered that they could not support a particular policy as long as Fidel and/or Raul Castro were in power in Cuba. This response appears separately in the full response-set tables, but is included in the "oppose" answers in the collapsed response tables.

There are also two sets--full response and collapsed-response--of cross-tabulation tables. The cross-tabulation tables break down the responses by demographic groups including age, income, gender, political party, and by position on dialogue with Cuba.

Caution is advised in the use of percentages for subgroups found in the cross-tabulation tables. The margin of error changes with the size of the group on which a percentage is based. Thanks to
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<td>Supporting human rights groups inside Cuba</td>
<td>90.3%</td>
<td>91.0%</td>
<td>90.4%</td>
<td>92.0%</td>
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<td>87.5%</td>
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<td>83.9%</td>
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<td>77.5%</td>
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<td>73.6%</td>
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<td>83.6%</td>
<td>77.5%</td>
<td>81.9%</td>
<td>79.9%</td>
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<td>73.1%</td>
<td>72.8%</td>
<td>73.0%</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
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<td>80.4%</td>
<td>79.9%</td>
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<td>75.9%</td>
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<td>A U.S. invasion of Cuba</td>
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<td>Allowing Cuban-Americans unrestricted rights to travel to Cuba</td>
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<td>43.1%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
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<td>23.4%</td>
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<td>61.7%</td>
<td>70.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allowing unrestricted trade with Cuba</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes
The 1991 and 1993 polls were conducted only in Dade County with a sample of 600 respondents. The margin of error of these surveys is plus or minus 4%. The margin of error for the 1995 Dade sample of 1002 is plus or minus 3%. This means that to be 95% statistically certain that a real shift has occurred in the attitudes of Cuban-Americans in Dade, there should be a separation of 7% between any specific response in the Dade surveys conducted in 1991-1993 and 1995.

In the collapsed frequency tables for all surveys, the percentage of respondents who favor a position is calculated by collapsing the "strongly favor" and "mostly favor" categories into "favor." This is the response that is presented here. The oppose category is calculated by collapsing the "mostly oppose" and "strongly oppose" categories into "oppose." "Don't know" and "No answer" responses are considered missing values in the collapsed frequency tables.