

**To:** Equis Partners  
**From:** Equis Research Team  
**Re:** Practical Recommendations for Spanish Program  
**Date:** **September 7, 2022**

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## INTRO

With two months left until the end of the election, many Spanish-speakers remain uncommitted, at a rate higher than other Latinos. Campaigns still have a chance to compete for their vote. The purpose of this memo is to support our partners both in making the case for increased funding for Spanish-language programs and in improving outreach to these under-engaged voters. This memo summarizes where Spanish-dominant Latinos stand today, why they are a critical segment of the vote, and which best practices — in targeting, messaging and content creation — can be easily applied during the last weeks of the 2022 midterms.

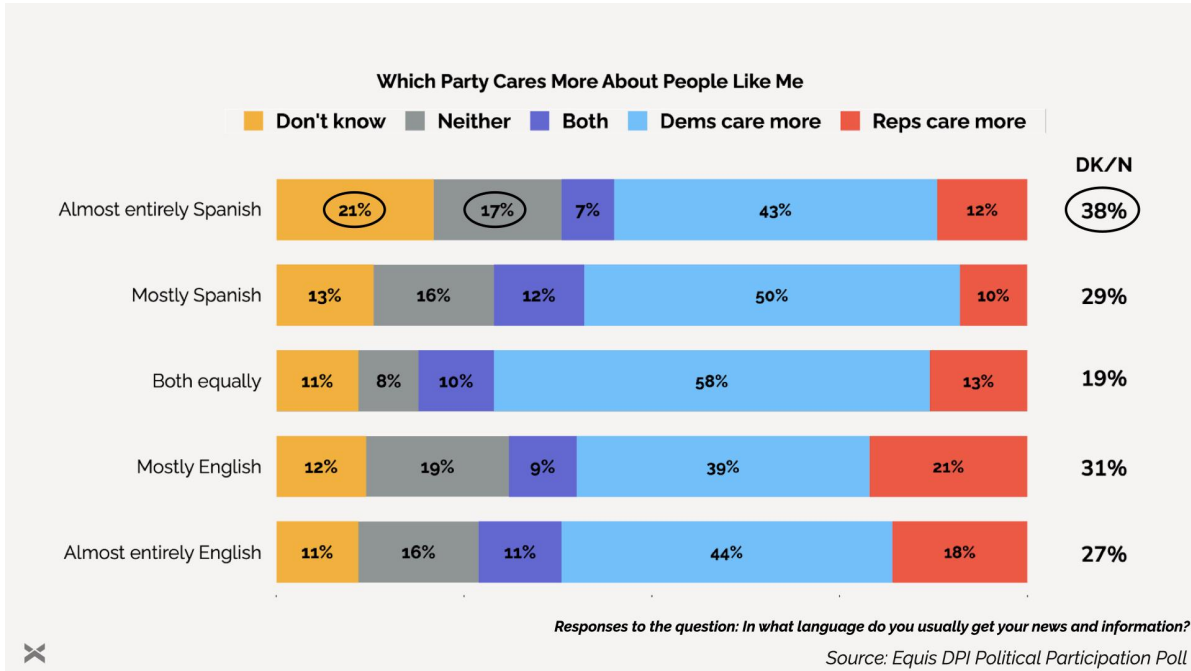
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## THE OPPORTUNITY

It is estimated that there are 60 million Spanish-speakers in the United States, including both monolingual and bilingual speakers. According to Pew, 16% of registered Latino voters in the United States are Spanish-dominant, meaning that they primarily communicate in Spanish. A much larger percentage (39%) are bilingual. Together, **a majority of Latino voters speak some Spanish**. Even with such large numbers of Spanish-speakers in the U.S., our research has shown key trends that highlight that they remain under-engaged in the political process. We have an opportunity to address this issue by changing how we approach Spanish-speaking audiences through Spanish-language communication.

### **Trend #1: Care**

**A notable segment of the Latino electorate cannot say which party cares more about them, especially the Spanish-dominant.** In recent digital testing we have conducted, participants who stated they consumed news “Mostly in Spanish” or “Almost Entirely in Spanish” expressed feeling they do not know which political party cares more about people like them. Some also expressed that neither party cared about people like them.



**Trend #2: Motivation**

**Spanish-dominant voters express less motivation than their English-dominant counterparts when it comes to motivation to vote.** Across different surveys and digital testing, Spanish-dominant participants are less motivated to vote in upcoming elections.

**Spanish-speaking participants tend to express less motivation when it comes to voting**

% "Very Motivated" to vote in the November Elections

	English	Spanish	Difference
Arizona**	52	51	-1
Florida	76	63	-13
Texas	68	<b>36</b>	-32
North Carolina	71	<b>47</b>	-24
Pennsylvania	66	<b>44</b>	-22
Georgia*	65	<b>49</b>	-16

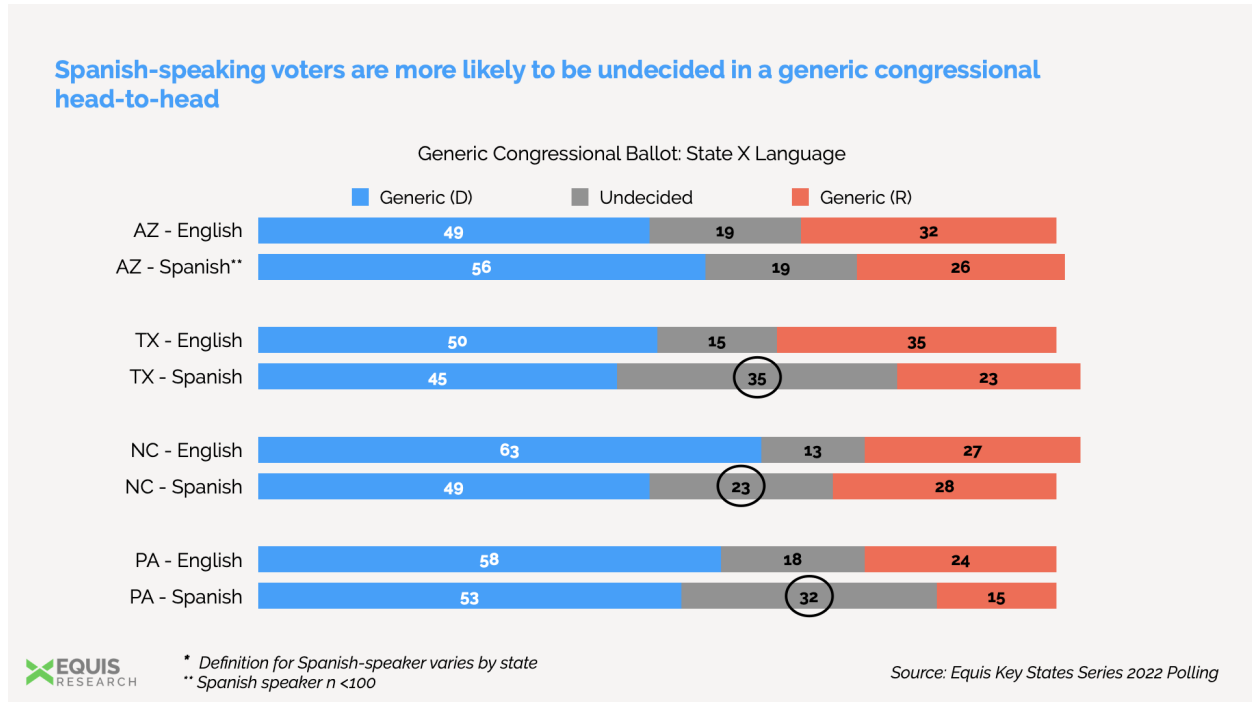


\* Definition for Spanish-speaker varies by state  
\*\* Spanish speaker n <100

Source: Equis Key States Series 2022 Polling

### **Trend #3: Candidate Support**

**More often than English-speakers, Spanish-dominant voters express feeling undecided about which candidate(s) they support.** This is most clear in our state-specific work where voters are asked questions about specific candidates, like those running to be their next U.S. Senator or their state's next governor.



### **REASONS TO INVEST**

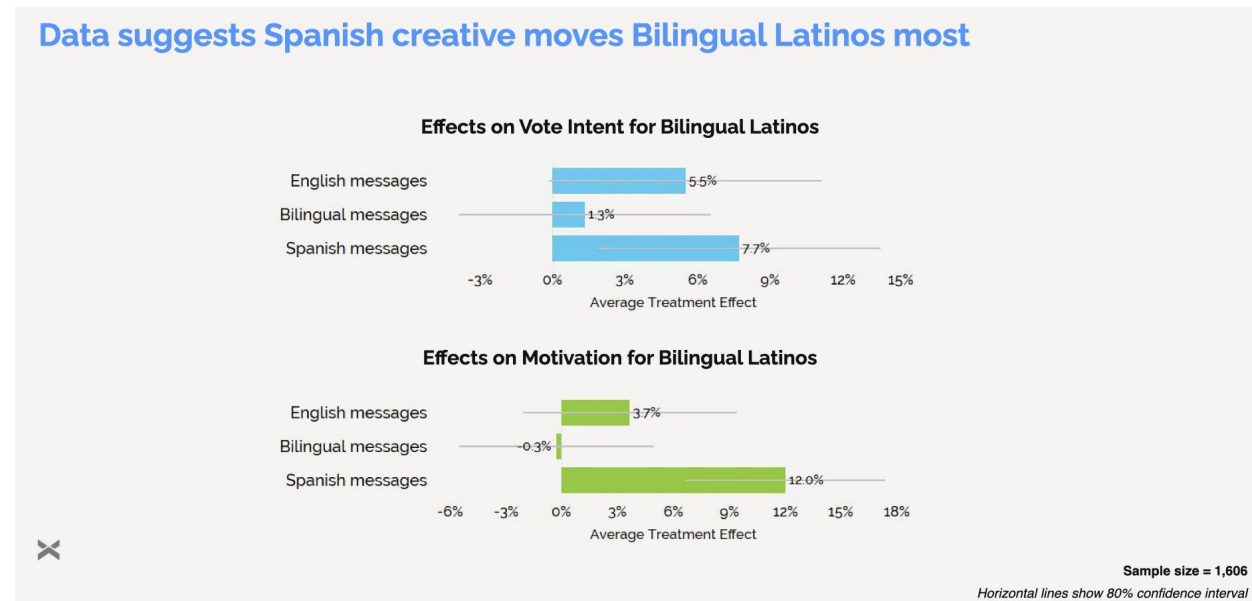
The trends highlighted above show there are undecided and under-engaged voters who can be persuaded and mobilized by investing in culturally competent Spanish-language communication. Candidates and campaigns should seize this opportunity for the following reasons:

#### **Reason #1: You need it.**

It's that simple. If someone does not understand English, and you are seeking to be understood, then you need to meet people where they are. Create content in Spanish. Sharing information about your candidate, issue, or election in a language that people understand and are comfortable with continues to be important.

## **Reason #2: It shows you value Spanish-speakers.**

Investing in more resources to develop Spanish content and target it with fewer restrictions can signal to individuals that a candidate/campaign and/or organization cares about people like them. Recent digital testing we conducted revealed that Spanish creative moves bilingual Latinos most.



## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Targeting**

- **Use Spanish-language predictive models for call lists** with the understanding that they are designed to make it easier to find voters who would *prefer* to be contacted in Spanish. Do not use Spanish models with the intention to make a list of **ALL** Spanish speakers in your universe; they aren't built for that.
- **Be less restrictive with your online targeting.** Conventional wisdom is to limit Spanish communications exclusively to Spanish-dominant or monolingual audiences. Our testing challenges this wisdom when it comes to digital: we found that Spanish-language communication can be especially impactful with both Spanish-dominant and bilingual audiences. And bilinguals are a sizable portion of the Latino electorate!
- **Be prepared at the doors.** It is wise to make literature and scripts available in Spanish so your canvassers can easily share information. Not sure if you'll run into

Spanish-speakers at the doors? It is usually enough to know the turf you are cutting is immigrant-heavy.

### Content Creation

- **Understand who your audience is.** The best content will be produced when you have a clear idea of who you are trying to reach. This can help with figuring out if you have the correct messenger, if you need to hire a translator from a specific nationality, or if using an anglicism will likely slide among voters whose everyday vocabulary embraces it.
- **Be intentional with your Spanish content.** It is obvious when content in Spanish is rushed or incorrectly translated. Poorly translated content can give people the impression that they are just being pandered to. On the other hand, good Spanish can be a positive for candidates/campaigns, even if the audience receiving it understands English. It shows commitment and investment to those who are often left out of the political process due to language barriers.
- **Work with the right people.** Translation is a job; don't assume that bilingual staff on your team will be able to translate from English to Spanish or produce Spanish-first content. If you don't know where to start your approach to Spanish-language communications or are hoping to evaluate where your organization currently stands, check out our [Spanish-Language Recommendations + Glossary guide](#) for some basics.

### Messaging

- **Lean in on the idea that Latinos are the engine of the economy.** Across our work, we hear from voters that the economy remains a top issue. They do not want government handouts — *no piden nada regalado*. They want an opportunity to work hard and provide for their families. In a recent partnership with Somos, we tested four messages related to the economy — the message below performed best among participants:
  - *Si nuestros jefes y líderes quieren que el país y la economía salgan adelante, tienen que asegurarse que nosotros, los trabajadores, podamos hacer lo mismo. **Nosotros somos la fuente de la riqueza de nuestro país, y si a mi me va bien, al país le va bien.** Pero en este momento, aunque trabajo tan duro como siempre, no puedo pagar por nuestros gastos médicos ni vivienda, y por lo tanto no puedo contribuir a la reactivación de la economía. **El bienestar de nuestro país depende de todos nosotros.** Por eso necesitamos más líderes que nos tengan como prioridad y respeten nuestros aportes a la economía.*
- **Tie in gratitude.** Across our focus groups, we have heard many Spanish-dominant participants, particularly those who are immigrants or are children of immigrants, express gratitude for being in this country. They are grateful for being given

opportunities to buy a home, work good jobs, and provide for their families — things that they feel are unattainable in their home countries.

- "Me siento **agradecida**. Yo sé la lucha que ellos [mis padres] vivieron allá [Cuba]. Todas las puertas que yo quiera están abiertas." - Diana 39 y/o Cuban Independent from Florida
  - "Me siento **agradecida**. Después de todo lo que ha pasado [COVID, perdió su casa] seguimos luchando." - Soitzha, 53 y/o Mexican lean Democrat from Arizona
  - "**Me siento agradecido**. Se me han abierto oportunidades de trabajo y más beneficios para mi y mi familia." - Pablo, 39 y/o Argentinian Democrat from Wisconsin
- **Highlight examples of how Democrats care AND deliver.** Spanish-dominant participants in our research often express liking Democrats' policies but feeling like they are often empty promises. They want to see results. One effective way to show that Democrats care and deliver is through authentic storytelling.
    - "En el 2014 empecé mi negocio de camión de arepas en Washington, DC. Tres años después, abrí mi primer restaurante. Cuando pegó el COVID, fue difícil mantener a mi familia. Cuando **el presidente Biden y los demócratas en el Congreso hicieron que el proceso de PPP fuera más accesible para los propietarios de pequeños negocios como yo**, salvó mi negocio y me ayudó a mantener a mi familia. Necesitamos más líderes en Washington que comprendan lo que hemos estado viviendo y **que tomen medidas para mejorar nuestras vidas.**"

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## CONCLUSION

The bottom line is Spanish-dominant audiences urgently need to be engaged, not only during GOTV and not only during presidential elections: always. Latino voters are the last wildcard — and to capitalize on the power of Latino voters it is key to reach and engage the Spanish-dominant.

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