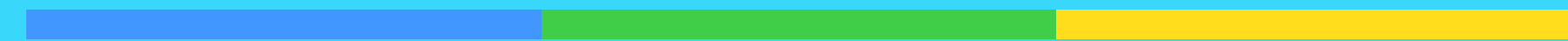


2022 Post-Mortem

Latino Voters &  
The Case of the Missing Red Wave



*June 2023*



## The 2022 question

From the results of the 2020 presidential election flowed a flood of analysis, theories & thought pieces on Latino voters... including from us at Equis. (See, for starters, our 2020 post-mortem parts one and two.)

The big question underneath: was the Trump-era shift in Latino vote choice the start of a reconfiguration in how Hispanic voters (and other non-white voters) perceived the political parties? Or was it a temporary fluctuation, within the norm?

The 2022 midterms represented the **first meaningful check point**.

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# Data used in this report

This report relies heavily on:

- **Equis Post-Mortem Battleground Poll:** Survey of registered Hispanic voters in 12 battleground states (fielded December 10-22, 2022 via live dial and text-to-web, n = 2,000 in AZ, CO, FL, GA, MI, NC, NM, NV, OH, PA, TX, WI, with 82% of respondents fully matched to the voter file);
- **2021-2022 Equis State Series:** 37 multi-modal polls, plus focus groups, in 10 states (conducted in partnership with GBAO, EMC Research, Normington Petts, Searchlight, TargetSmart, and Castillo & Associates, 22,000 total interviews). Respondents in some states matched to the voter file after the election for validated vote history. Some data from 2019-2020 time series was also used.

Other data that informed the analysis:

- **Precinct-level data** compiled by Equis;
- **Equis/Democracy Corps** survey of 1,800 registered Hispanic voters in 11 states (August 19-24, 2021) & Democracy Corps national web poll of registered voters (October 20-26, 2021);
- **Competitive spending data** for ads run in Spanish across TV, radio and digital, used with permission from Solidarity Strategies and Priorities USA;
- Other public data from **Catalist**, **Midterm Voter Poll**, **Pew Research** and **ANES**.



# 1. Executive Summary

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# Executive Summary

This reports reflects a high-level analysis of Latino voter trends in the 2022 election. Many narratives — some more substantiated than others — contributed to a sense of uncertainty around Latino voting in the lead-up to the midterms. But what factors ended up shaping the final results, and what do they portend for 2024?



# Executive Summary

- I. **Latinos in Limbo:** Would the level of Latino support reached by Trump in 2020 (about 4-in-10 Latinos nationally) persist, reverse, or increase? While neither a reverse nor a decline seemed likely, conditions were unstable, between historical precedent for first midterms, relentless crisis, and a history-making summer 2022 (Dobbs, January 6th hearings, etc.) There were questions about how those circumstances might land with Latinos. Public polling of Latino voters was all over the map.

At the end of the day, there turned out to be basic stability in support levels among Latinos in highly-contested races, despite another steep decline for Democrats among Hispanics in Florida. In short: the GOP held gains they had made since 2016/2018 but weren't able to build on them.



# Executive Summary

- II. **A Formula for Stability:** We point to three factors that had been reasons to anticipate possible GOP gains but ultimately became components of stability in the battleground:
1. *Issue Environment:* The fundamentals, including rising costs & Biden job approval, looked dire for Dems. But inflation voters stayed home, Dobbs & democracy voters didn't.
  2. *Candidates & Campaigns:* While the GOP increased outreach to Latino voters (or made indications they would), Democrats out-campaigned them in key races.
  3. *Party Brands:* In spite of talk of realignment, the traditional perception of the political parties among Latinos — the identity force-field — held firm, even among the swingiest voters.



# Executive Summary

- III. **A Recipe for Collapse:** These factors are cast in relief in Florida: similar elements, combined differently, enabled a steep decline in Democratic support among Hispanics. Florida Republicans out-campaigned Democrats. The fundamentals caught up with Dems And many Hispanic voters in FL adopted a different story about the parties.



# Executive Summary

IV. **What it Means for 2024:** Those who *didn't* vote in 2022 are the biggest wildcard this next cycle. Swing Latinos still seem to default to Dems but are open to individual Republicans, with greater support possible when there is a major shift in the issue environment, imbalanced campaigning, or a weakening of identity bonds. We start 2024 where we started 2022: with uncertainty and dynamism. Much can change.

## 2. Latinos in Limbo

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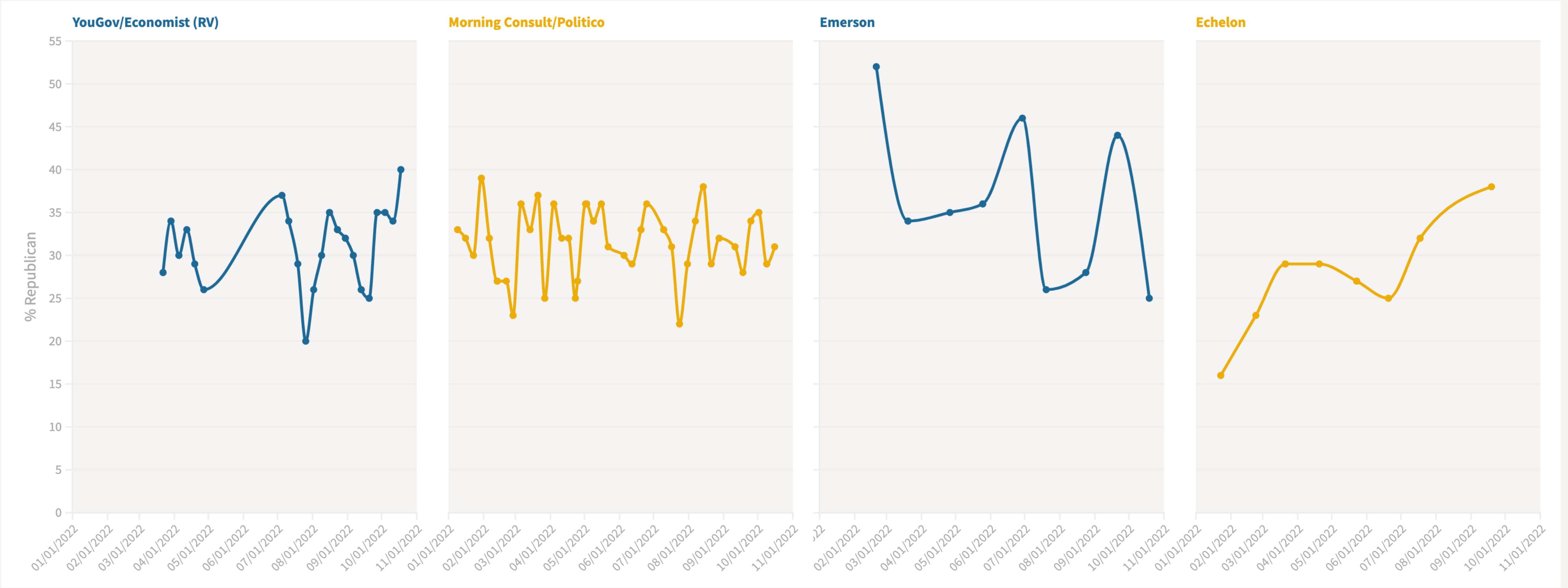
# Why there was uncertainty about the Latino vote

1. **A gravity-defying shift in 2020** that suggested a weakened link between Hispanic identity and support for Dems—but it was unclear whether it would last;
2. **2020 never really ended** + relentless crisis became the “new normal”: rising prices, long shadow of COVID, mass shootings, Ukraine, January 6th & the MAGA movement;
3. Fundamentals suggested a swing against the incumbent party, based on **historical precedent**;
4. Signs that Republicans might be making **a more concerted effort to court Latinos** (outreach in the VA gov win, Flores special in TX + Latina recruitment in other CDs, RNC community centers, etc.);
5. **Dobbs decision** & debates over its impact on Latino voters (+ same with other sources of Democratic optimism — e.g. summer legislative action);
6. Mixed signals in **polling** of Latino voters.



# Mixed signals in public polling of Latino voters in the 2022 cycle

## GOP Support in Generic Congressional Ballot - Registered Latino Voters

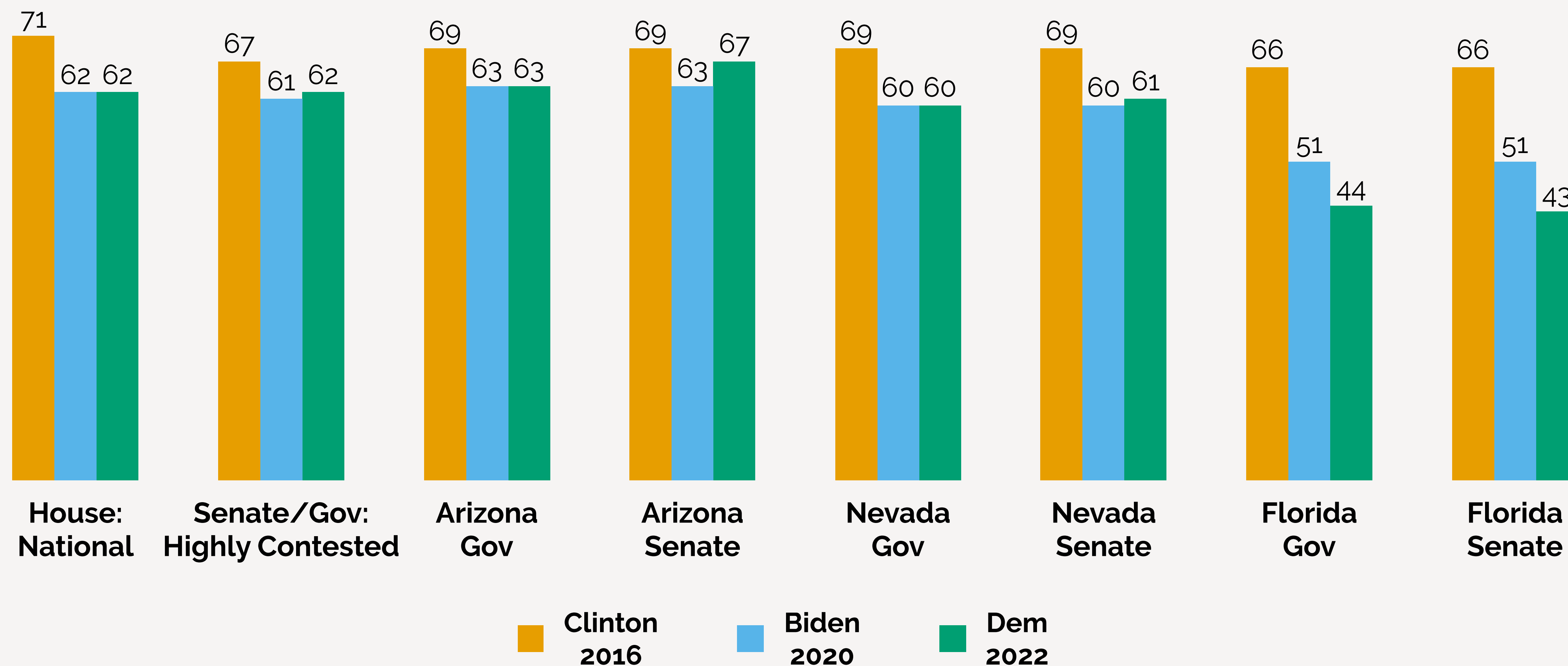




So how did Latinos vote in 2022? Much like they did in 2020

1. A further steep decline for Democrats among Hispanics in **Florida**, where Republicans won the Latino vote for the first time in 15 years;
2. Basic **stability in support levels among Latinos everywhere else** (i.e. no major GOP/Dem increases over 2020 performance, beyond a spike for Dems in AZ);
3. Still, increased levels of GOP support **relative to 2016 or 2018**.

## Outside of Florida, Latino Democratic Support in 2022 Similar to 2020



# 3. A Formula for Stability

## The Elements of Stability in the Battleground States

### ISSUE ENVIRONMENT

Why didn't fundamentals translate into GOP gains? Economic troubles vs. new dynamics (Dobbs, MAGA-related democracy concerns)

+

### CANDIDATES & CAMPAIGNS

GOP signaled an increase in outreach to Latino voters. Were they out-campaigned in key races?

+

### PARTY BRANDS

Has there been a shift in how Latinos perceive the political parties? Or have party attachments held firm among swing Latino voters?

## The Elements of Stability in the Battleground States

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Has there been a shift in how Latinos perceive the political parties? Or have party attachments held firm among swing Latino voters?





1. Why didn't inflation or presidential approval doom Democrats among Latinos?
2. Did the Dobbs effect take hold among Latinos?
3. Did these factors play differently among Florida Hispanics?



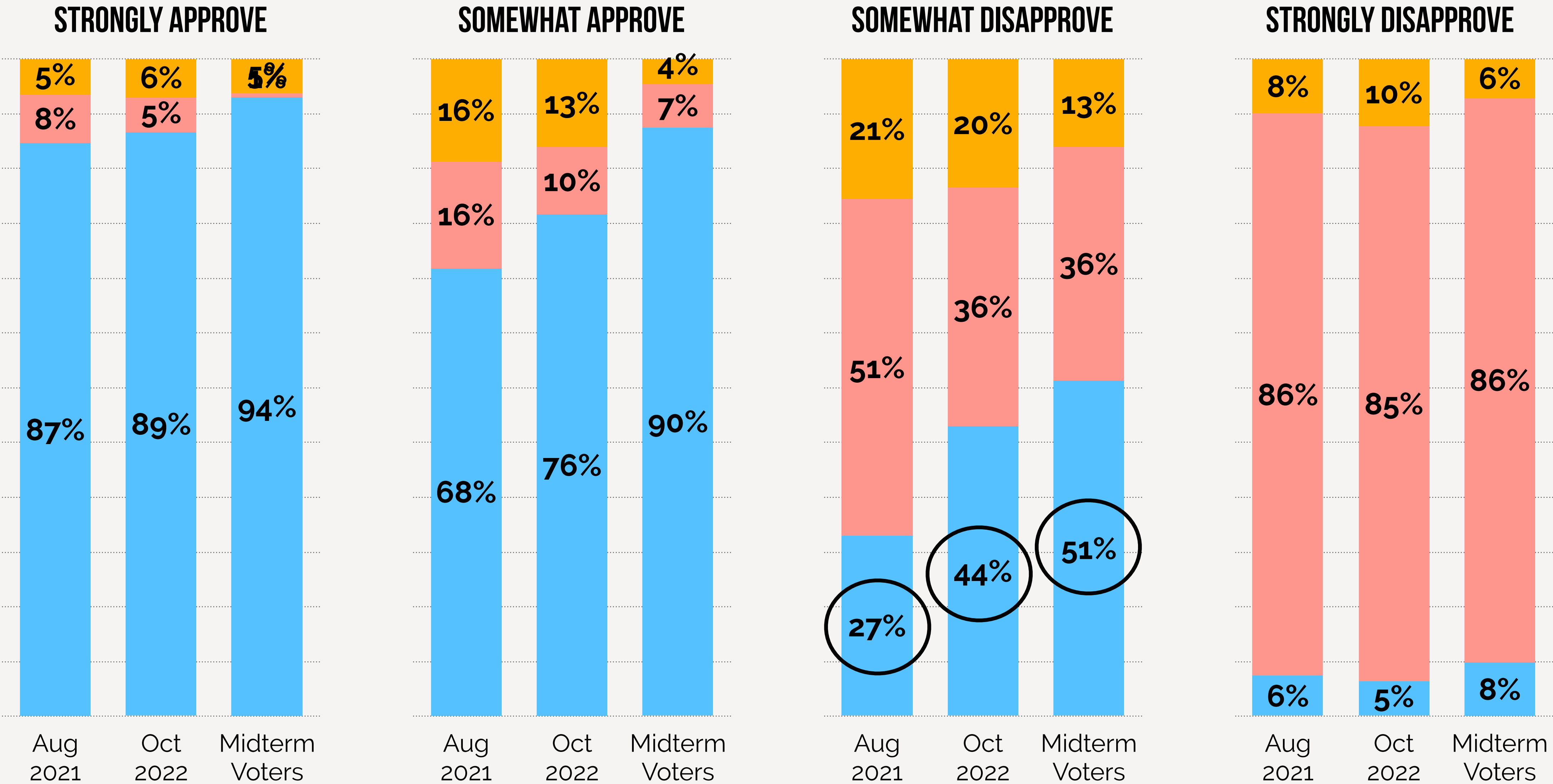
Biden approval wasn't destiny among Latino voters.

Democrats likely won **Latinos who “somewhat” disapproved of the president** (as well as those who approved of him).

# Dems overcame bad fundamentals, won Latinos who softly disapproved of Biden

Congressional Ballot by Biden Job Approval Among Latino Voters  
August 2021 vs. October 2022 vs. Post-Mortem (Validated Voters)

- Undecided/Other
- Congressional Rep
- Congressional Dem



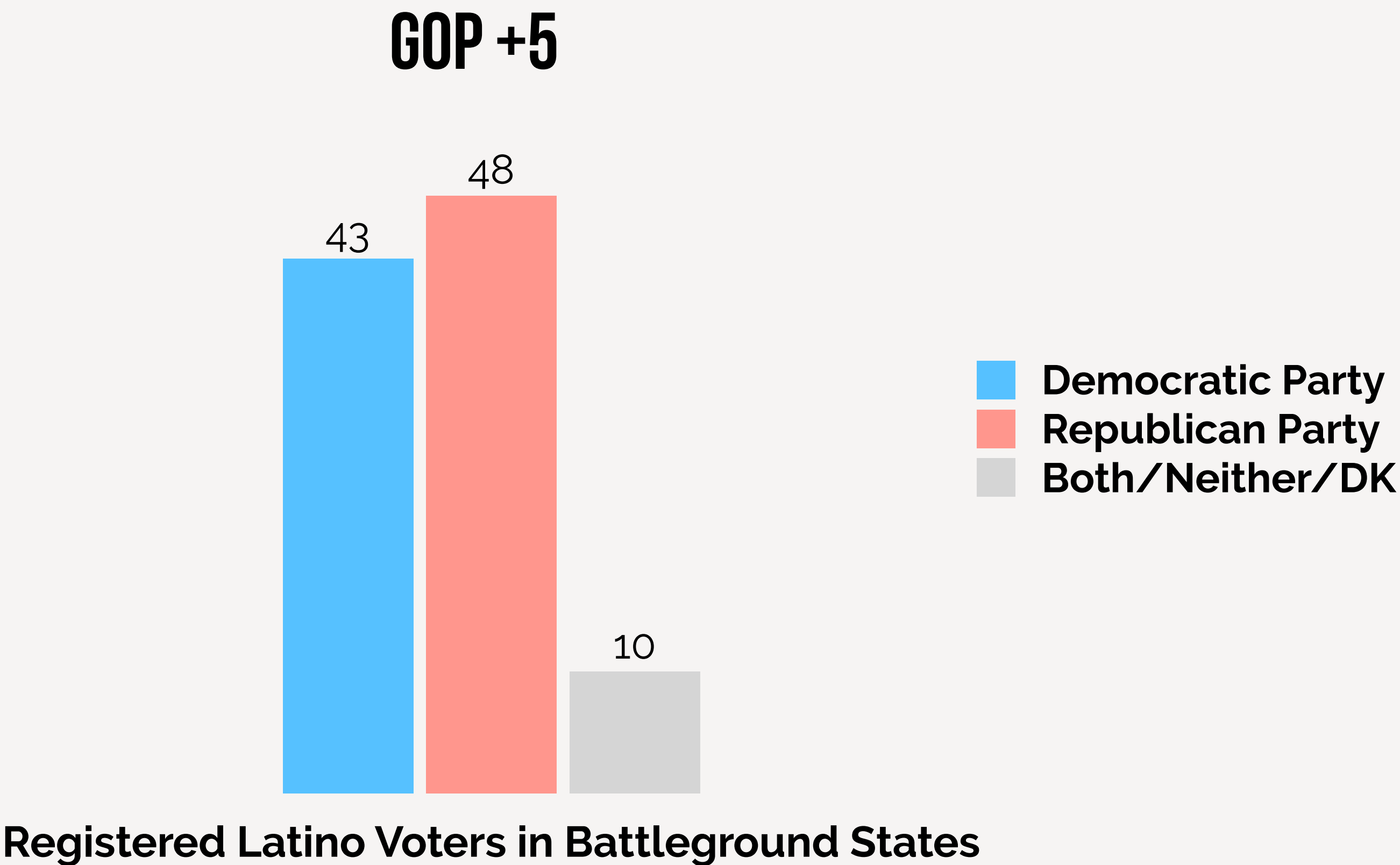
Source: Equis/Democracy Corps (Aug 2021), Equis State Series (Oct 2022), Equis Post-Mortem Battleground Poll (Dec 2022)



Similarly, while the GOP was **trusted more to deal with rising costs** by registered Latinos in battleground states, they **didn't fully capitalize**.

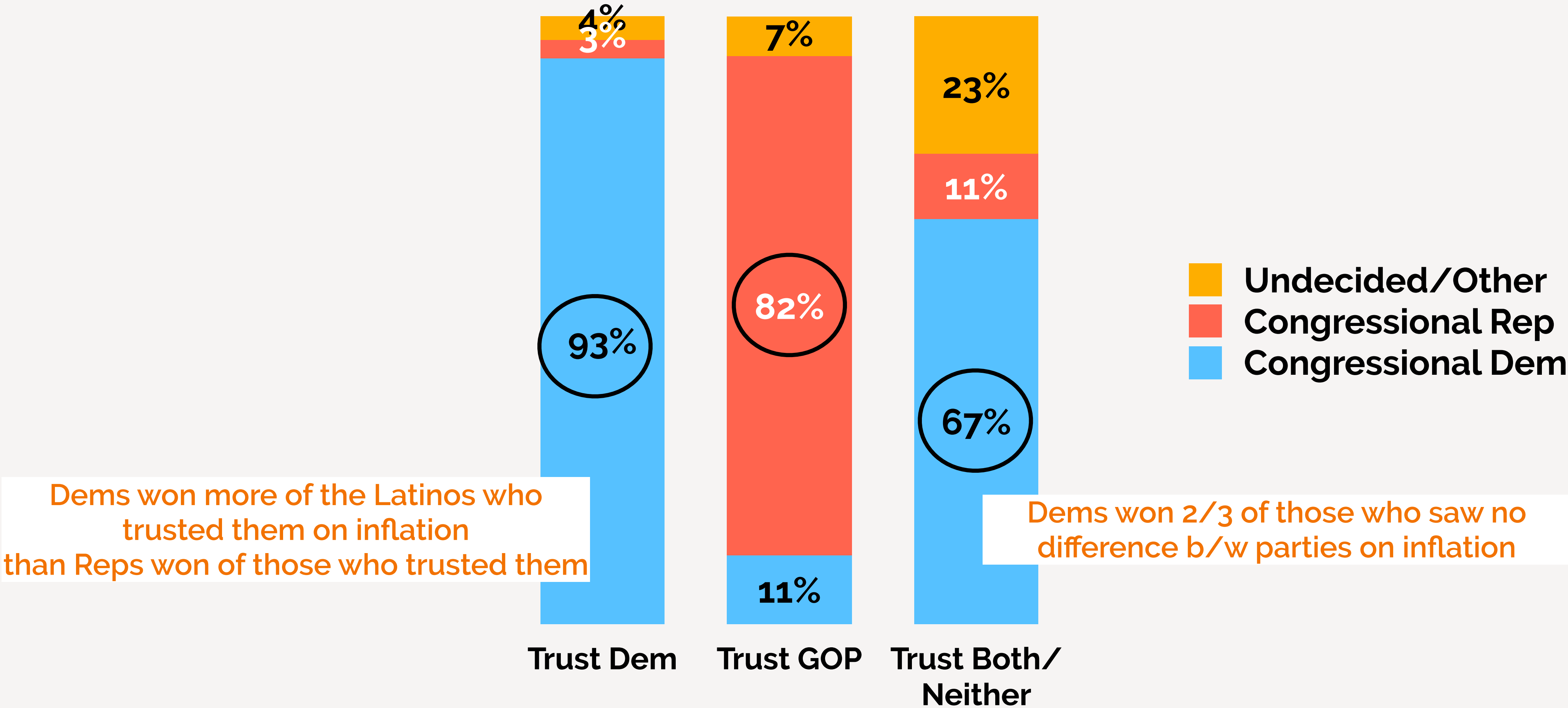
GOP had an edge among Latinos on tackling rising costs...but didn't capitalize

"Which party did you trust more to deal with inflation & rising cost of living?"



GOP had an edge among Latinos on tackling rising costs...but didn't capitalize

Congressional Ballot By Trust to Deal with Inflation/Cost of Living  
Among Latino voters in battleground states





**Economic and cost of living concerns** did boost Republicans among Latinos, but were (a) **undercut by low turnout** and (b) **offset in great part by a Dobbs effect**.



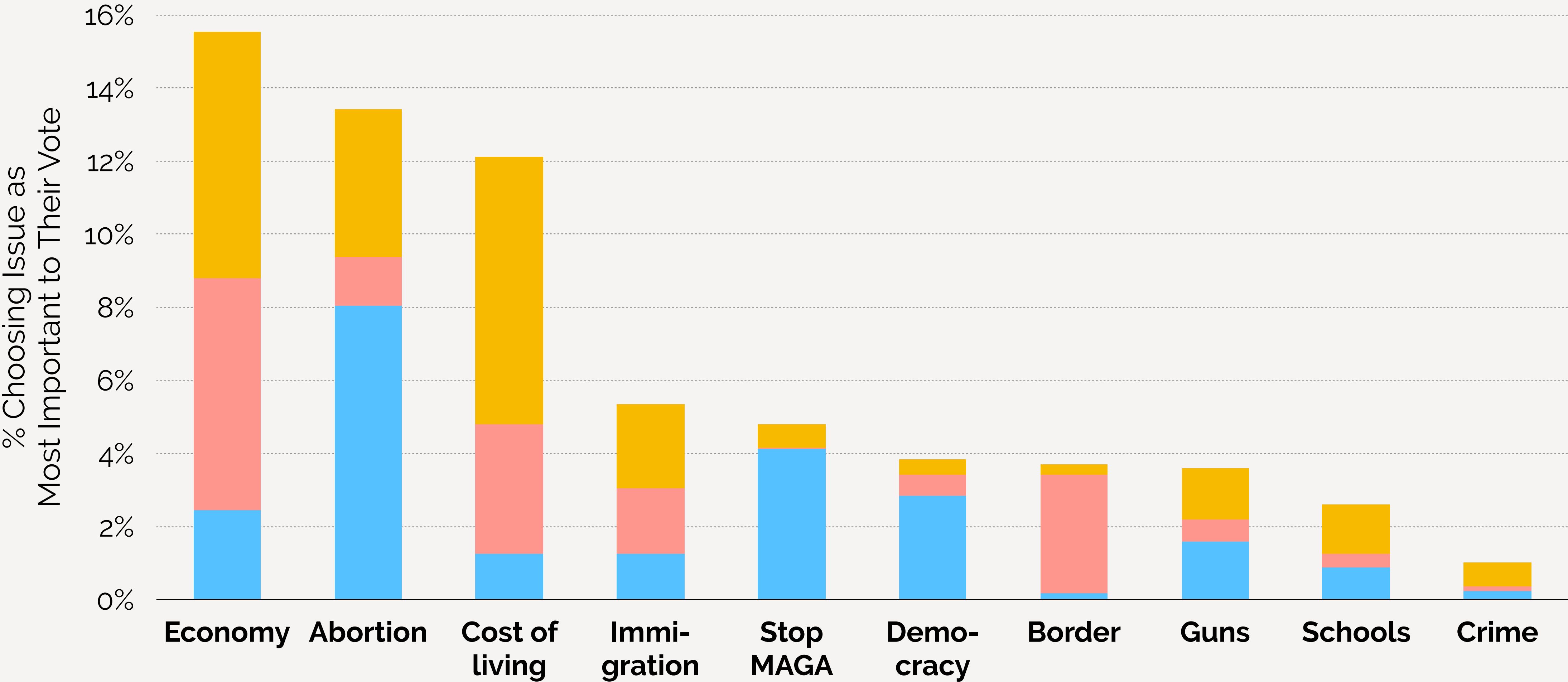


Voters who chose **cost of living/economy** as their top issue voted overwhelmingly for Republicans... but **voted at lower than expected rates**.

Latinos who chose **abortion** as their top issue, while a smaller group, voted in dominant fashion for Democrats... and **turned out beyond predicted rates**.

# 2022 Congressional Vote Among Latino Voters, By Top Issue

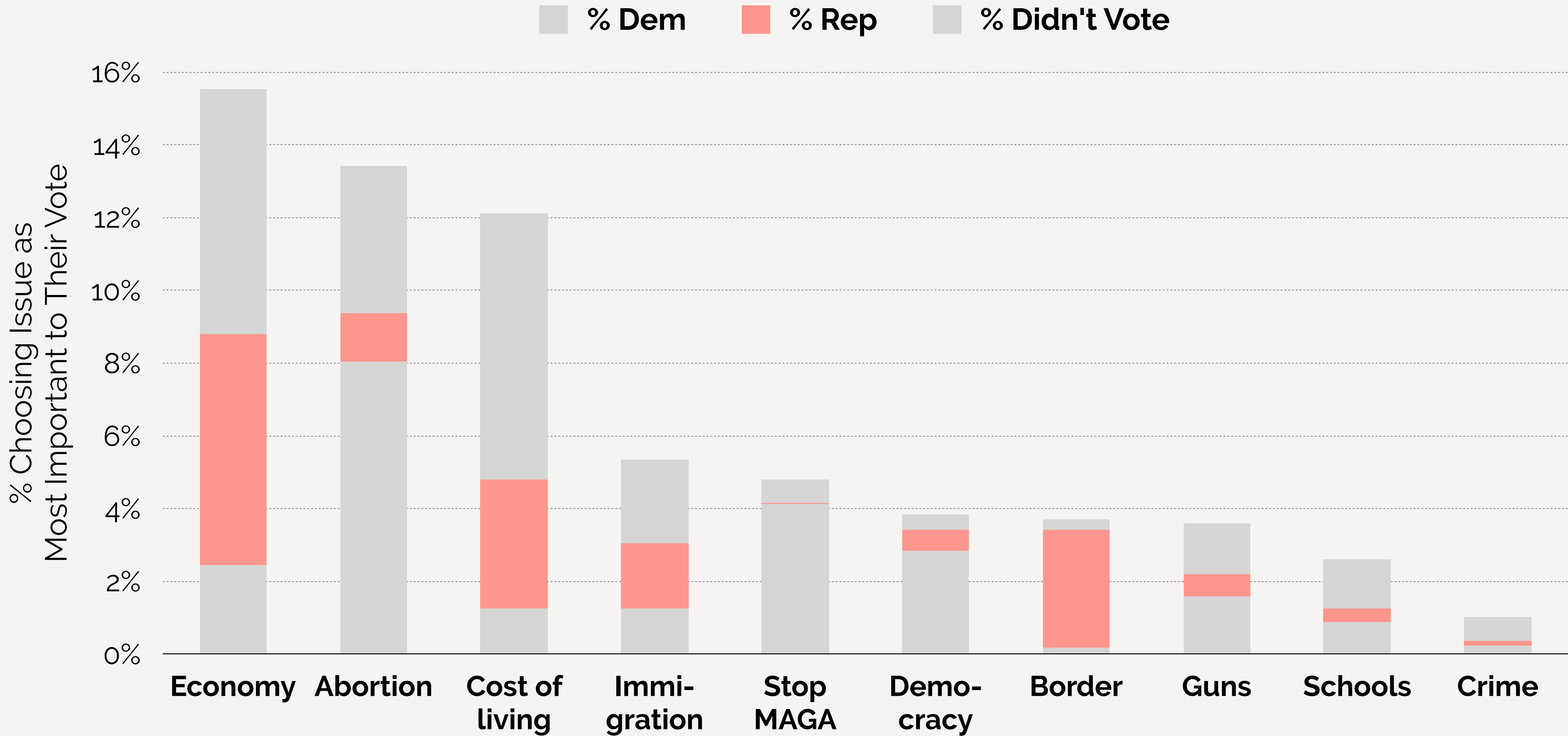
% Dem    % Rep    % Didn't Vote



Source: Equis Post-Mortem Battleground Poll (Dec 2022) | voter-file-matched respondents in battleground

**GOP Latino coalition composed of voters who prioritized economy & immigration, esp. the border**

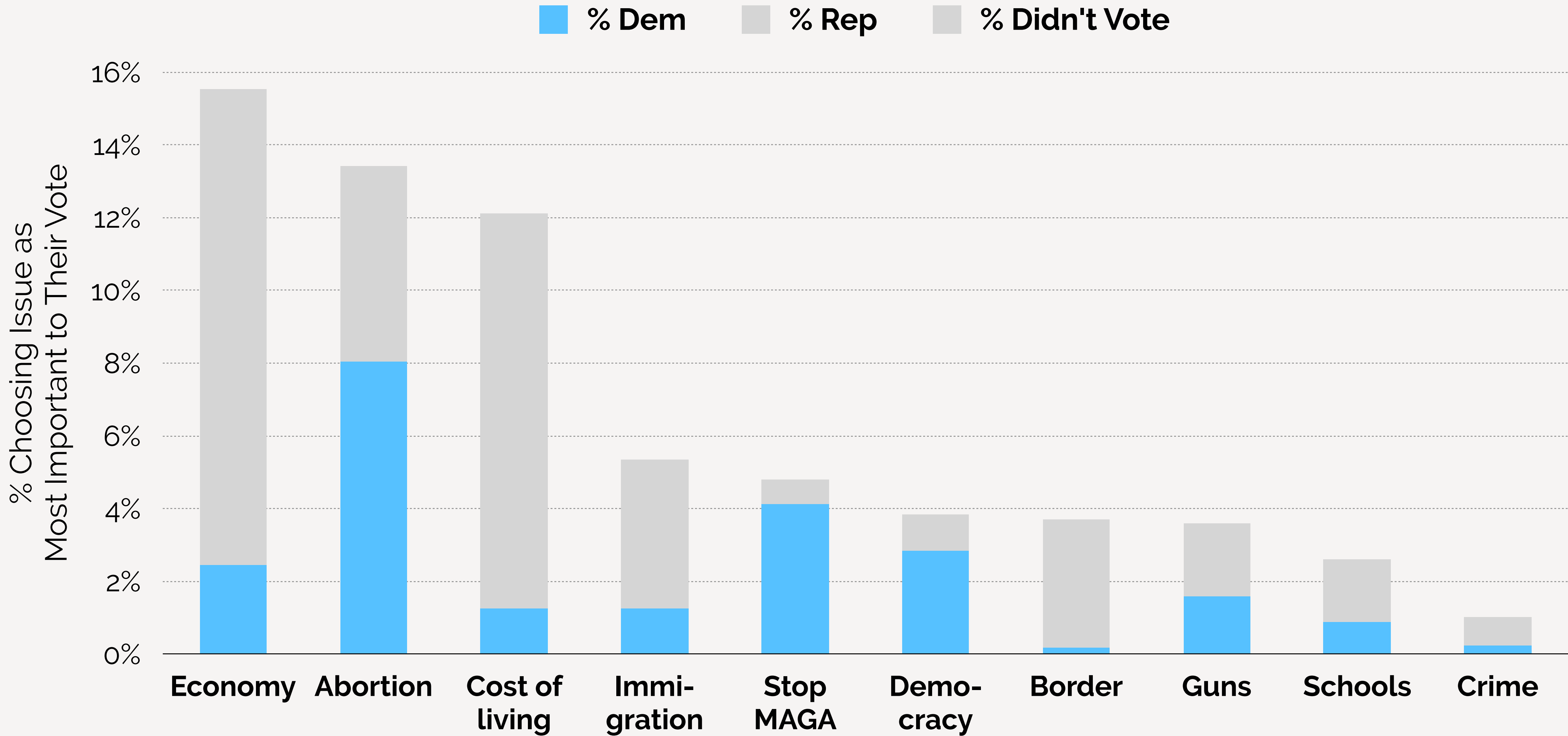
**2022 Congressional Vote Among Latino Voters, By Top Issue**



Source: Equis Post-Mortem Battleground Poll (Dec 2022) | voter-file-matched respondents in battleground

Dem Latino coalition in midterm a collection of diverse interests, anchored by abortion voters

2022 Congressional Vote Among Latino Voters, By Top Issue

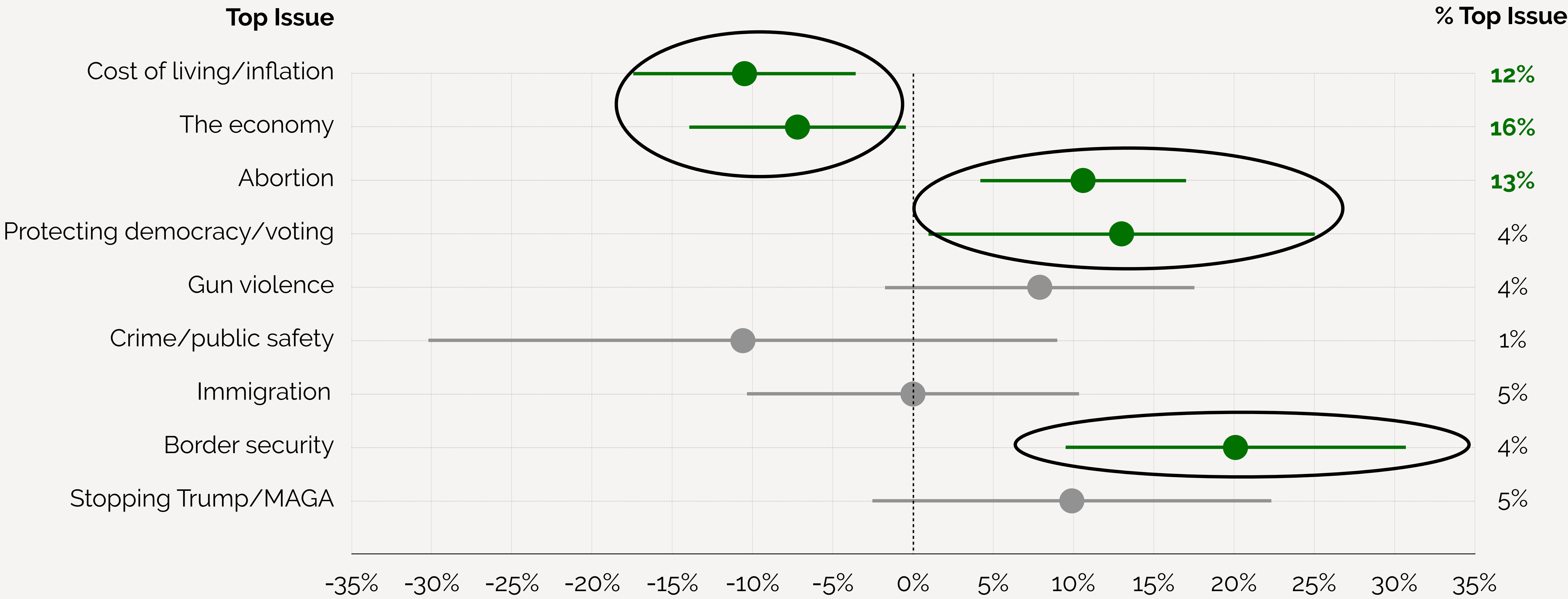


Source: Equis Post-Mortem Battleground Poll (Dec 2022) | voter-file-matched respondents in battleground

# Turnout lower than expected for inflation/economy voters, higher than expected for abortion voters

Democracy and border also animating but overall more marginal

Marginal Effects on the Probability of Voting in 2022



From a logistic regression model of validated 2022 turnout w/controls for vote propensity score, party ID, ideology and demographics (gender, age, education, nativity, language, religion, national origin, state of residence). Source: Equis Post-Mortem Battleground Poll

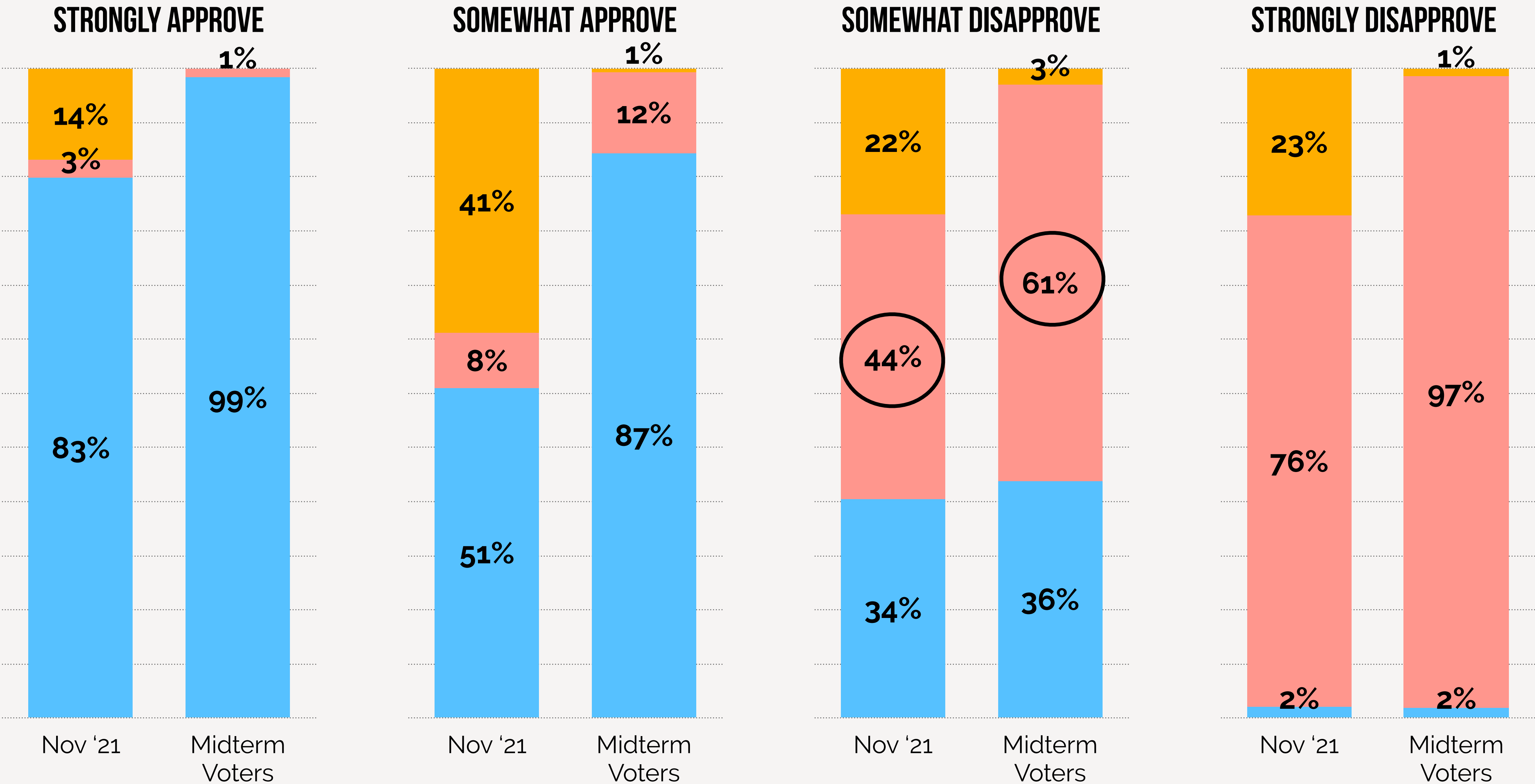


Florida again offers a counterpoint: Republicans capitalized on **Biden disapproval**. They were far more trusted on **inflation**. And **abortion** wasn't as salient in Florida as it had been in other states. As such, we didn't witness the **turnout effect** seen elsewhere.

**FLORIDA: unlike battleground, GOP dominated among Latino disapprovers**

- Undecided/Other
- Congressional Rep
- Congressional Dem

**FLORIDA: Congressional Ballot by Biden Job Approval**  
November 2021 vs. Sep/Oct 2022 (Validated Hispanic Voters)



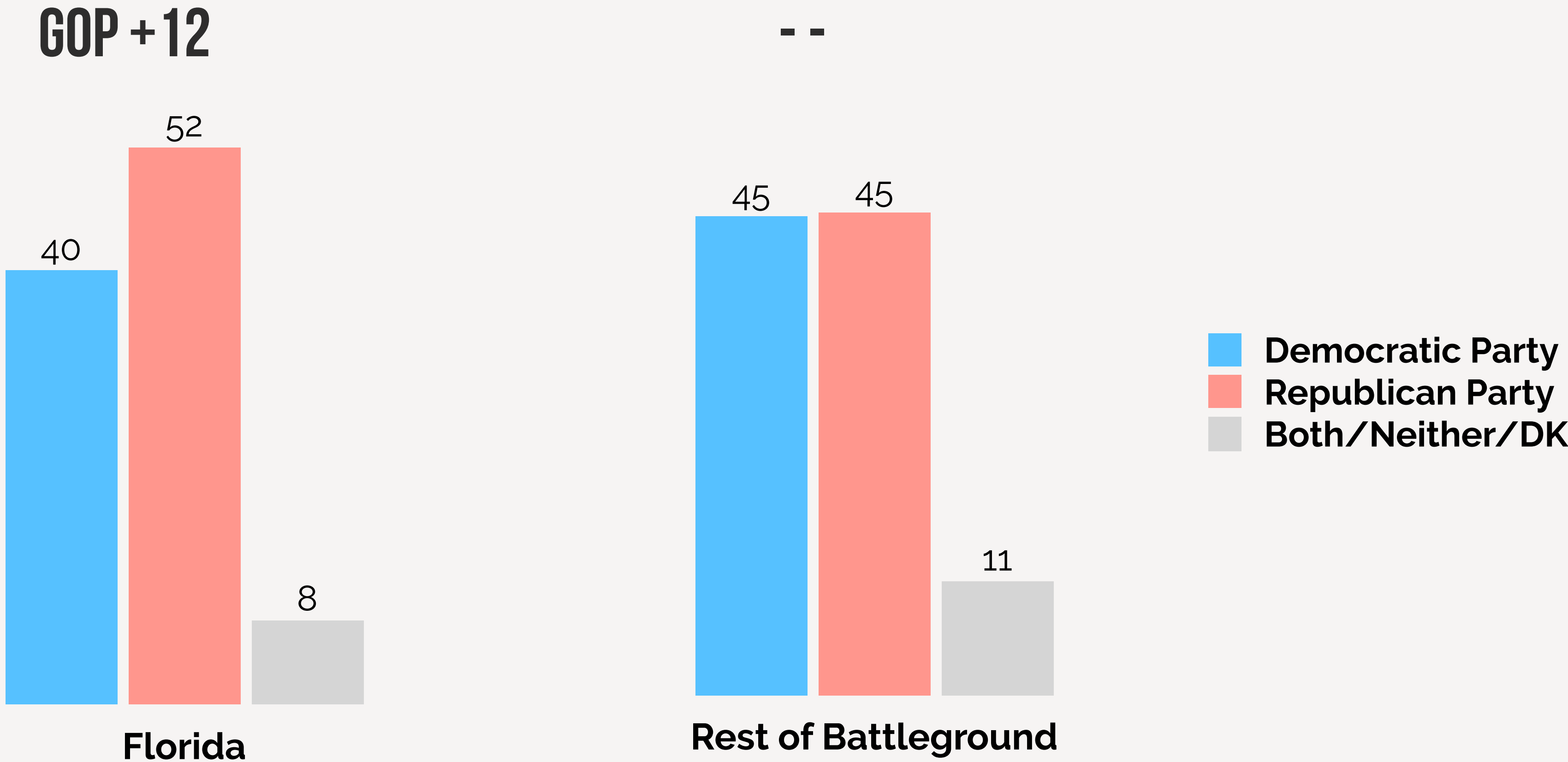
Source: Equis State Series surveys in Florida (Nov/Dec 2021 & Sept/Oct 2022, w/ EMC), matched to 2022 vote records & reweighted to electorate.



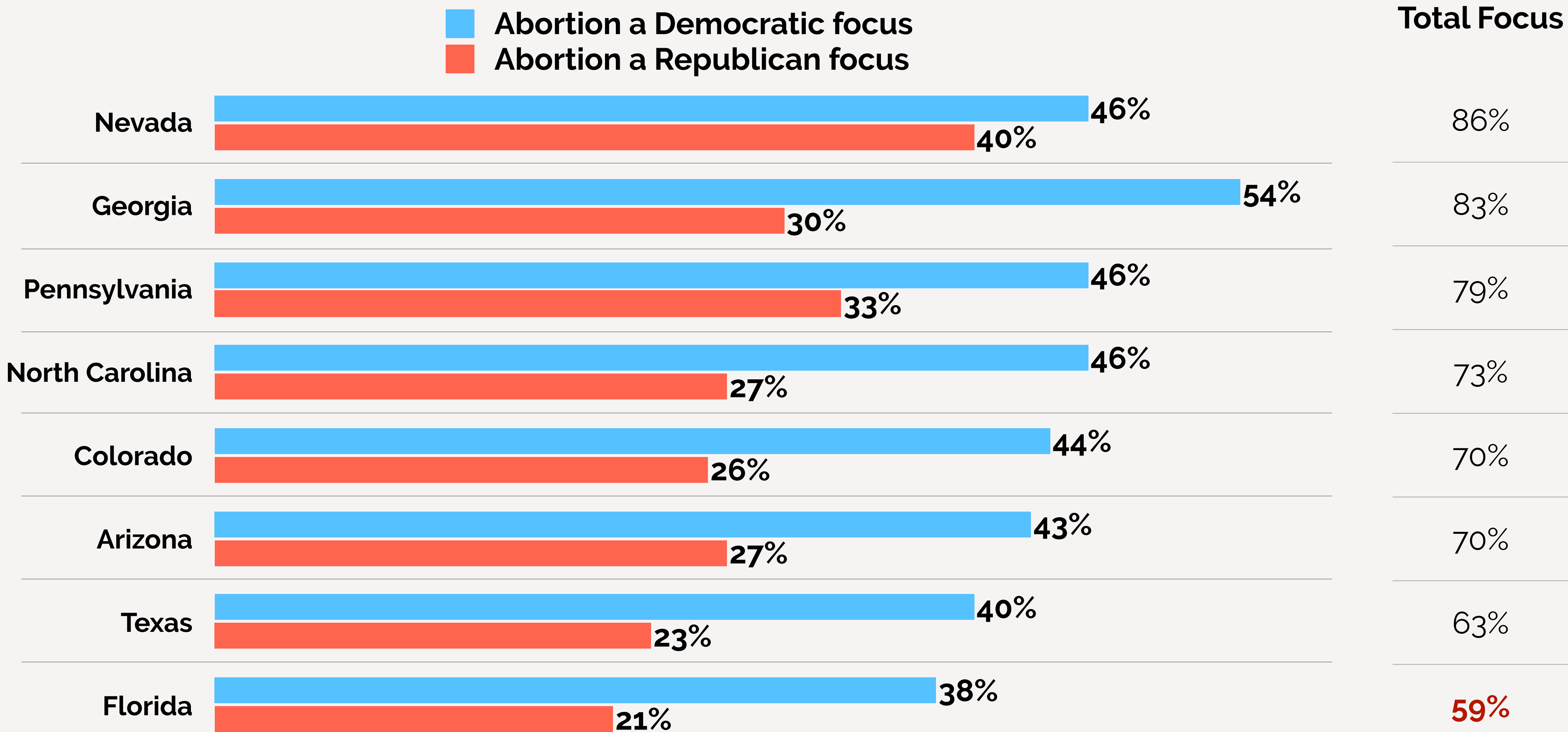
# Outright majority of Florida Hispanics trusted GOP more to handle rising prices

Latinos in battleground were evenly divided

"Which party did you trust more to deal with inflation & rising cost of living?"



# Florida Latinos the least likely to report that campaigns were focusing on abortion



Question: Based on what you saw and heard about the election, what two issues do you think Democrats/Republicans focused on most during their campaigns this year?





## Issue Environment - In Short

The fundamentals, including rising costs & Biden job approval, looked dire for Democrats. **But in the battleground states, inflation voters stayed home, Dobbs & democracy voters didn't.**



## The Elements of Stability in the Battleground States

### ISSUE ENVIRONMENT

Why didn't fundamentals translate into GOP gains? Economic troubles vs. new dynamics (Dobbs, MAGA-related democracy concerns)

+

### CANDIDATES & CAMPAIGNS

GOP signaled an increase in outreach to Latino voters. Were they out-campaigned by Democrats in key races?

+

### PARTY BRANDS

Has there been a shift in how Latinos perceive the political parties? Or have party attachments held firm among swing Latino voters?



Republicans were said to be **courting the Latino vote** in 2022 in a way they hadn't before, spurred by their gains in 2020.

What was the quality of these efforts? And how did it stack up against the outreach from Democratic candidates and campaigns?



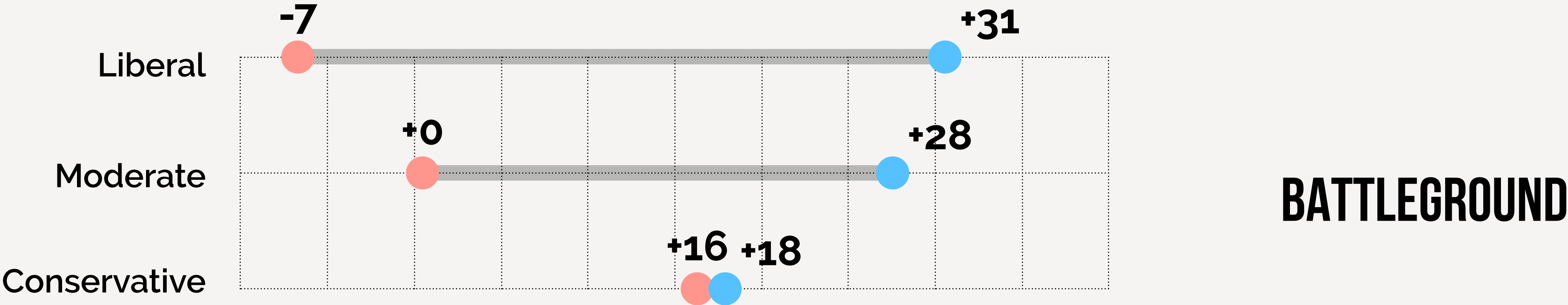
The first test: did Latino voters *perceive* a greater effort to court them by the GOP? Regardless of what Republicans tried, **did voters see it?**

In the highly-contested states, only conservative Latinos perceived an increase in effort from Republicans, while Latinos of all ideologies (including the conservatives) reported an increase from *Democrats*.

**Latinos in battleground states largely perceived greater effort from *Democrats***  
Even conservatives who reported push from GOP said they saw the same from Dems

**“Did [Democrats/Republicans] make more or less of an effort to win your vote compared to previous years?”**

**Net Effort Compared to Previous Years (More Effort - Less Effort)**  
Among Registered Latino Voters in Battleground States, By Ideology







**Spending in Spanish** is a useful proxy for gauging to what extent campaigns prioritize Hispanic targets (though it by no means represents the full picture of paid media).

Which brings us to our next test: **how did communication in Spanish land with its intended audience?**

We can use Nevada as an example, since it was heavily contested by both sides & represented a major litmus test for Latino GOP support.

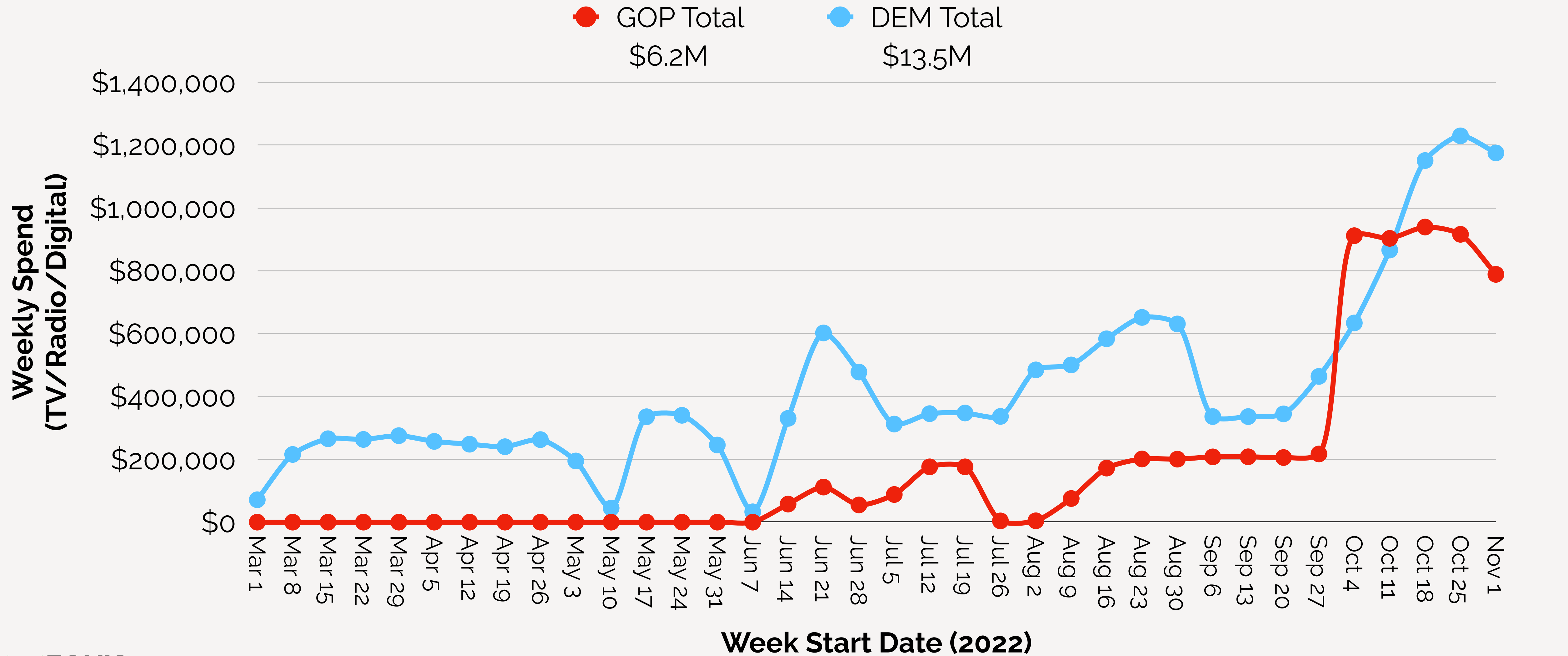


Republicans did **spend heavily in Spanish in NV**, and it helped boost Laxalt's profile among target voters.

But Democratic spending, which **came in even heavier**, seemed to preserve Cortez Masto's standing, and her communications appeared to harm his image more than his messaging hurt her.

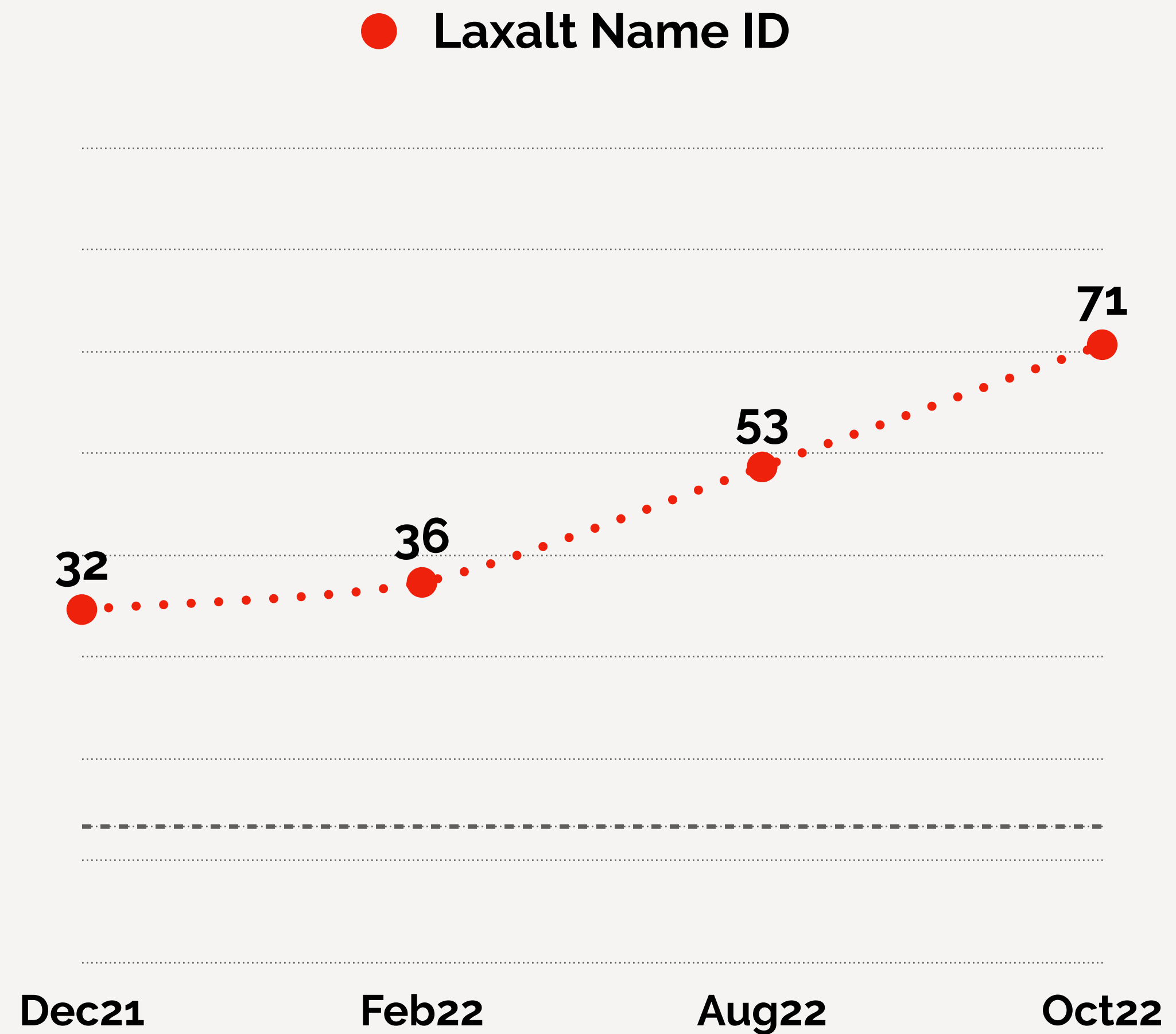
In Nevada Senate race, GOP was outspent 2:1 in Spanish overall, in spite of late spike

NV-SEN: Spanish Spend for TV/Radio/Digital by Campaigns & Allies



# Laxalt grew name ID among the target audience for Spanish spend

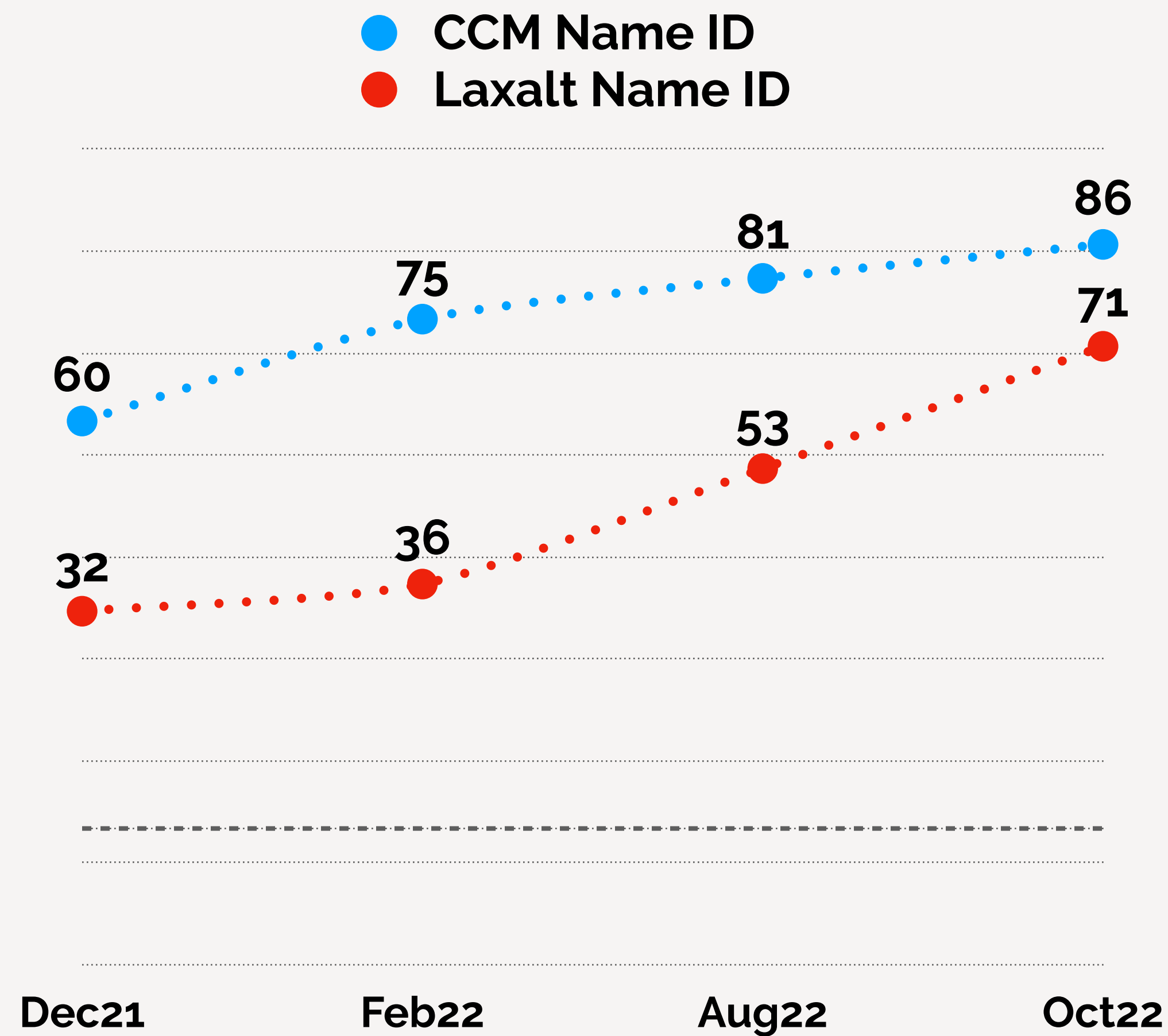
Name ID Among Univision/Telemundo Watchers



Source: Equis State Series surveys in Nevada (w/ Normington Petts) | registered voters

# Laxalt grew name ID among the target audience for Spanish spend, but CCM did too

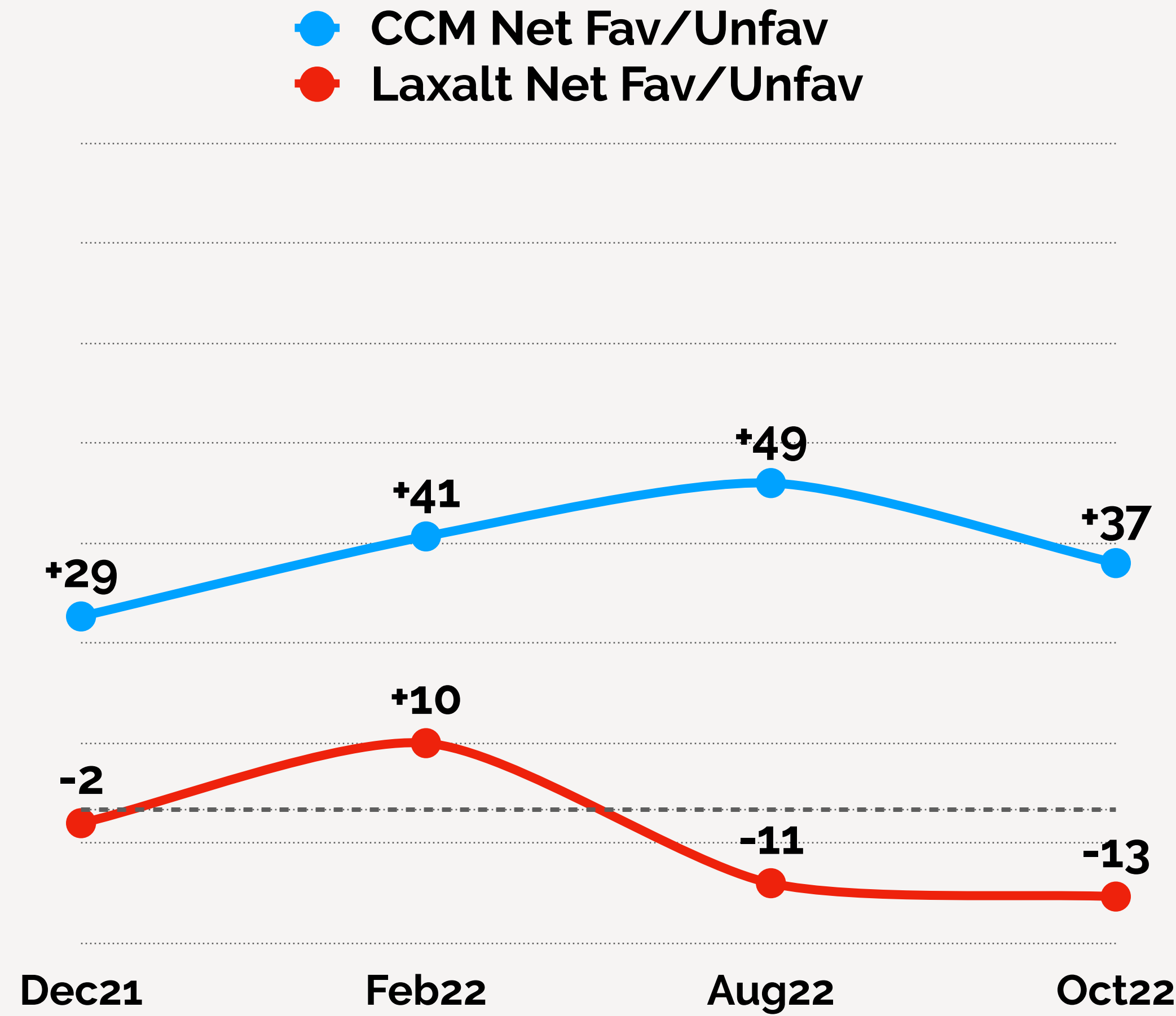
Name ID Among **Univision/Telemundo Watchers**



Source: Equis State Series surveys in Nevada (w/ Normington Petts) | registered voters

# CCM took some hits but successfully differentiated herself among Spanish viewers

Favorability Among Univision/Telemundo Watchers



Source: Equis State Series surveys in Nevada (w/ Normington Petts) | registered voters







GOP spent heavily in Spanish to **attack Cortez Masto on crime** (the top issue of 4-6% of Latinos who gets news in Spanish)



In Spanish, Dems **spent on contrast** (mix of negative/positive), with heavy buy behind ads on **prescription drugs & gas prices** (cost of living was top issue for 25% of audience, economy for another 33%)





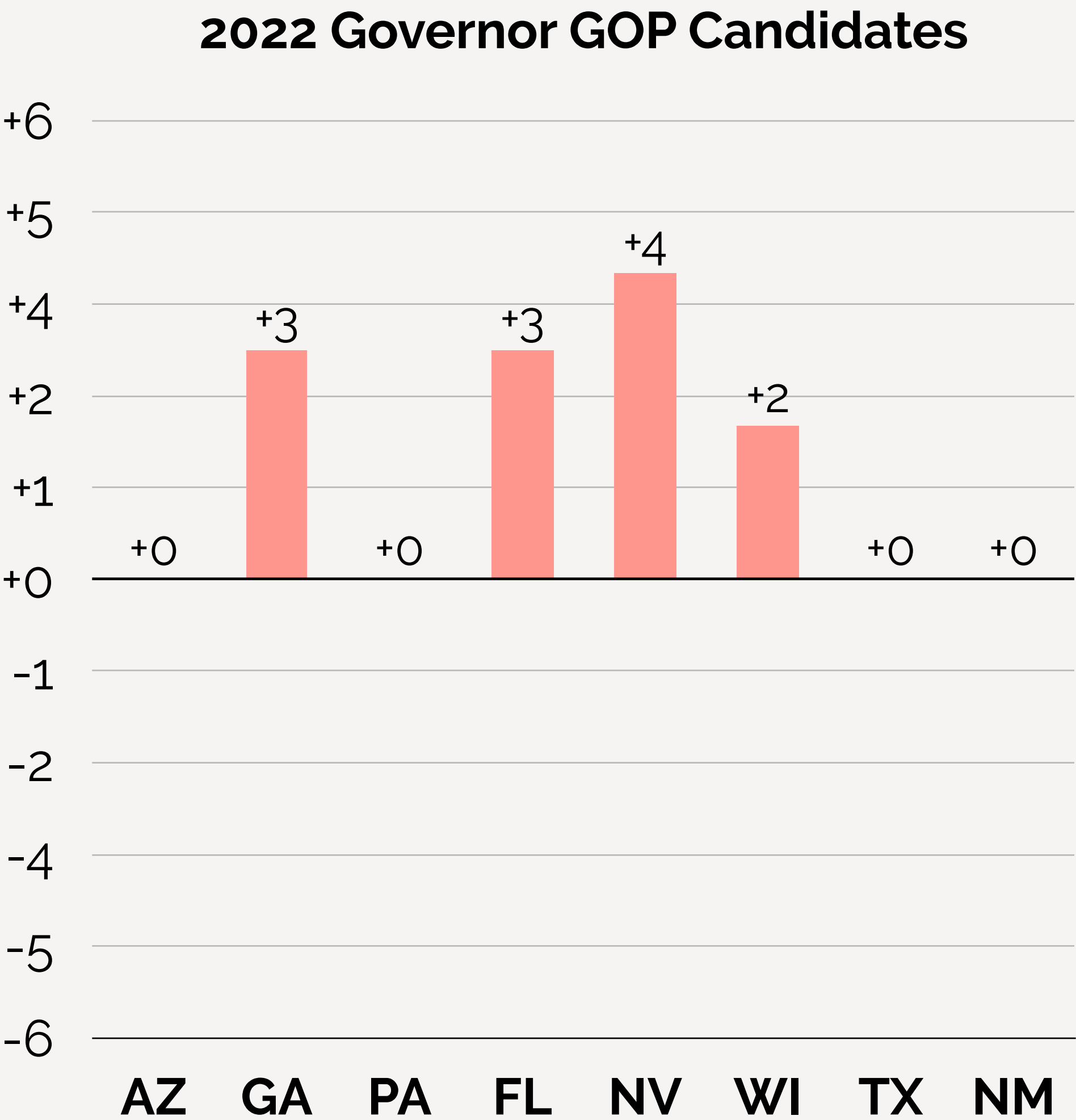
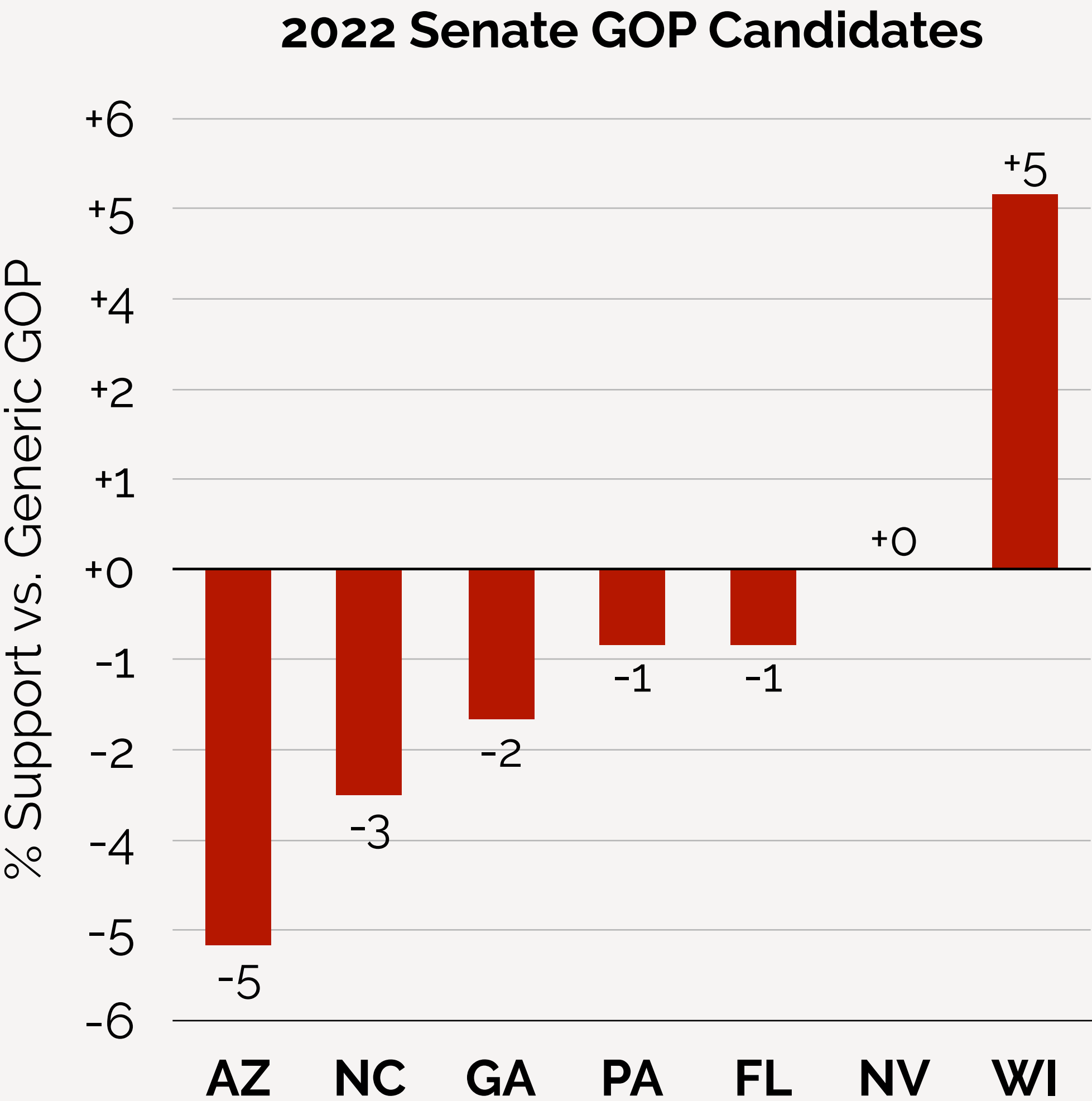
A test of campaign effectiveness: is the candidate able to distinguish themselves from their party brand?

**Did individual Republicans perform better than a generic GOP candidate might among Latino voters?** Short answer: yes in the governor's races, but not in the senate contests.

Meanwhile, Democrats needed to outperform a party baseline to succeed in this election, and they seemed to do just that, with a few exceptions.

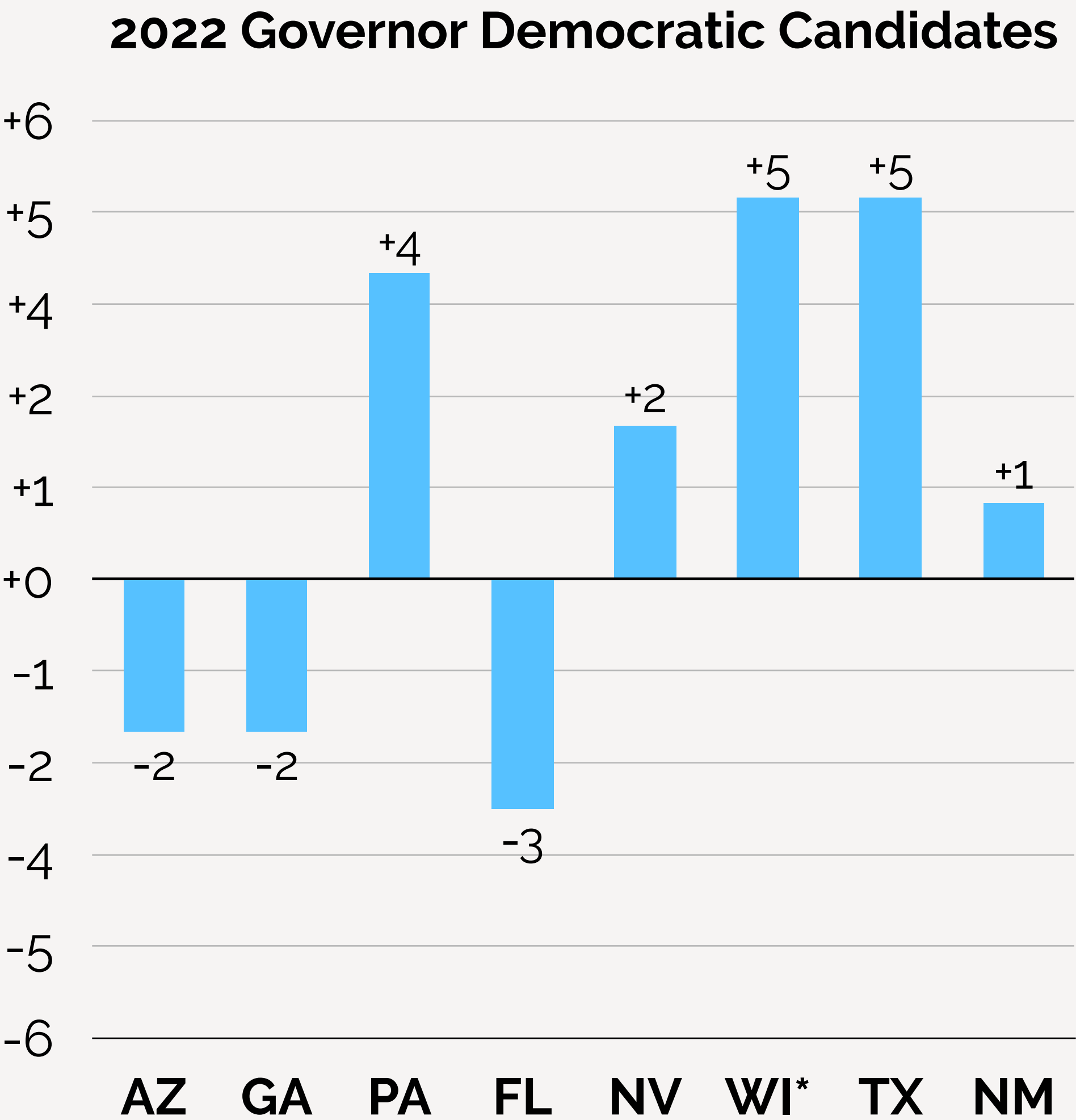
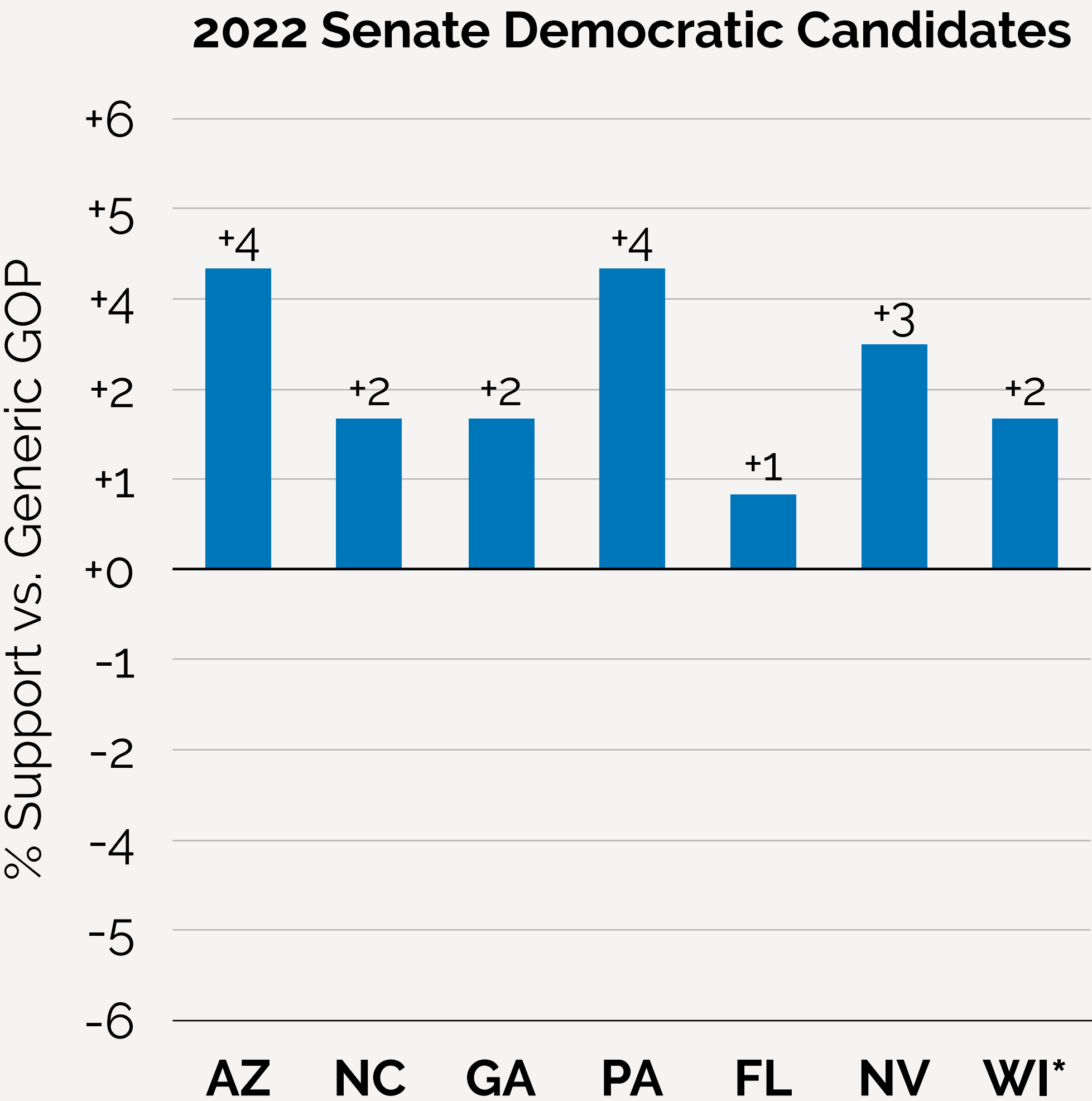


Only one *Senate* Rep stood out, though GOP Govs beat their party baseline in several states



# Meanwhile, most Senate Dems, and several Dem Govs, outperformed a generic Democrat

The exceptions: gubernatorial candidates in Florida, Georgia, Arizona

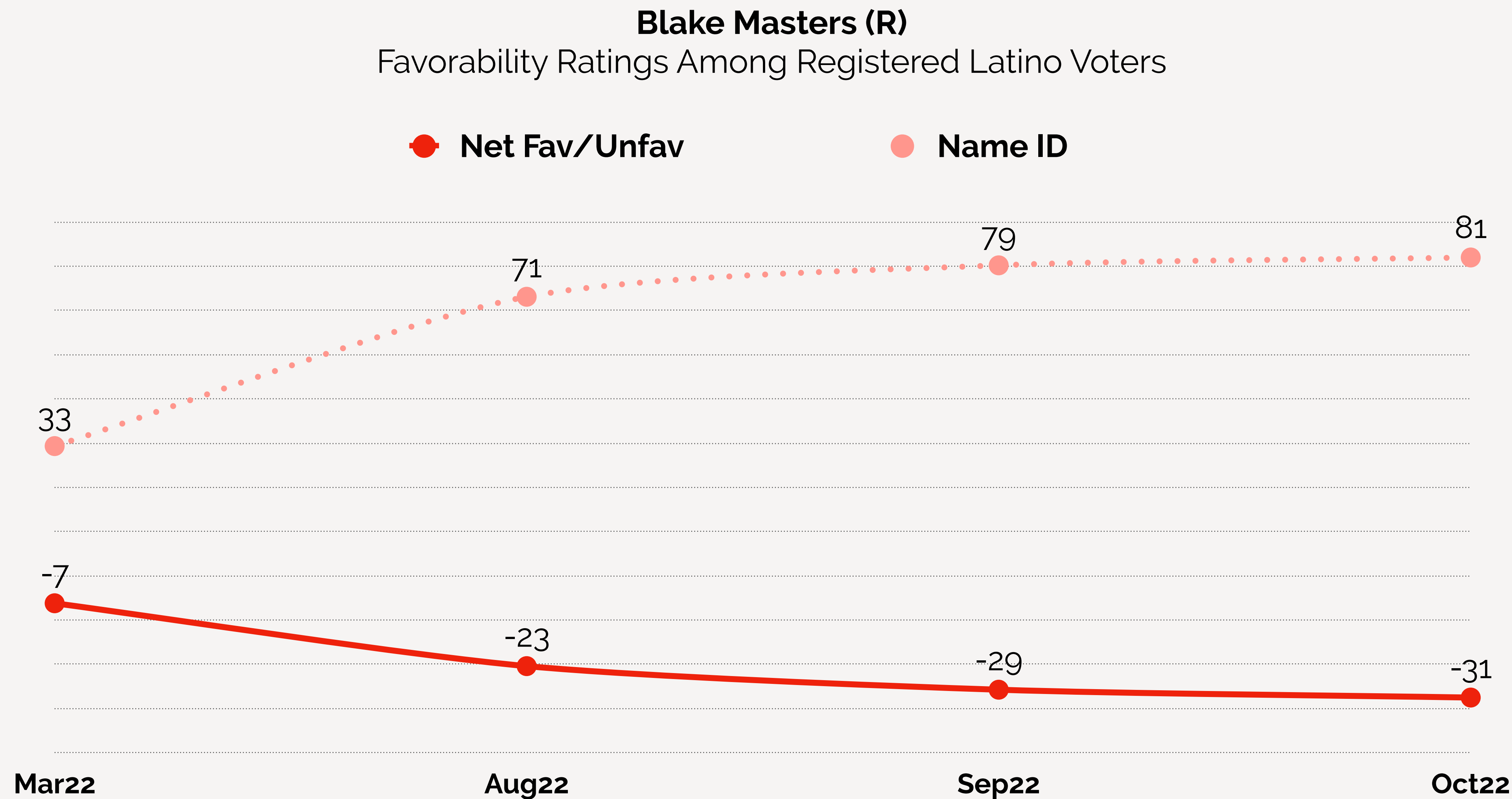




Lastly: regardless of where they started, did candidates improve over the cycle? Did they withstand negative attacks from the other side? Did **Latino voters like what they were selling?**

A case study from Arizona, the other hotly contested litmus test for Latino GOP support: Blake Masters **grew more unpopular as his campaign went on**, becoming the least popular GOP candidate we tested pre-election among Latinos. Meanwhile, Mark Kelly appeared to weather all storms.

# As Masters name ID grew through 2022, so did unfavorable views of him

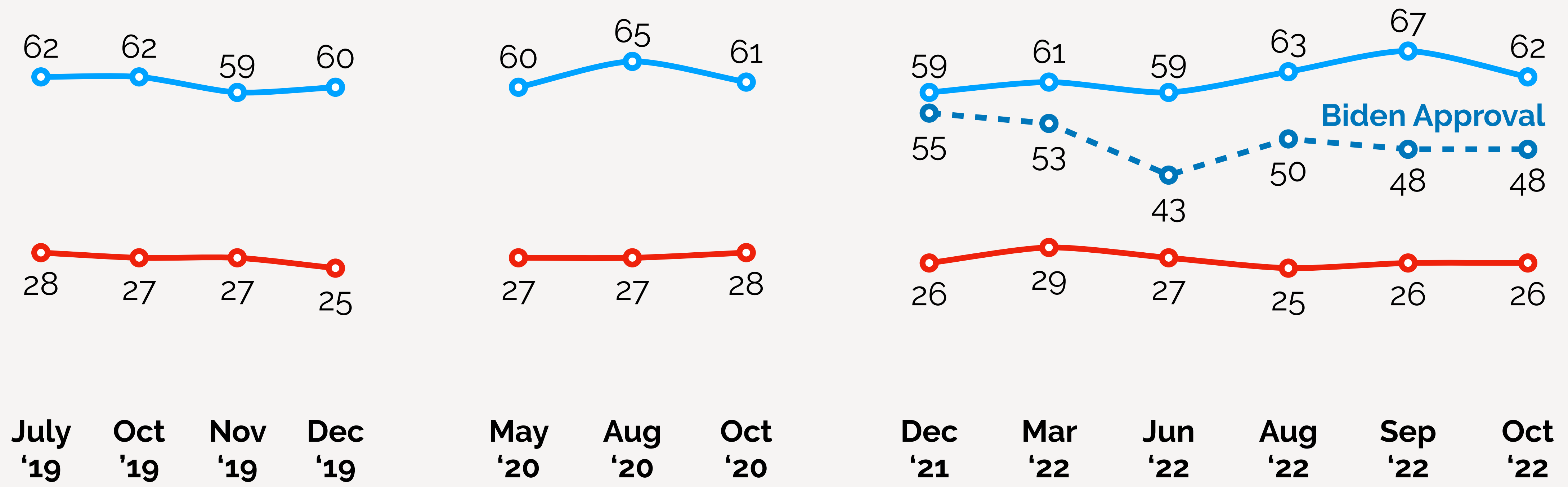


Source: Equis State Series surveys in Arizona (w/ GBAO) | all registered voters

Meanwhile, Sen. Kelly appeared uncannily resilient to trends

Mark Kelly vs. The World

Head-to-Head vs. McSally/Masters/GOP Among Registered Latinos





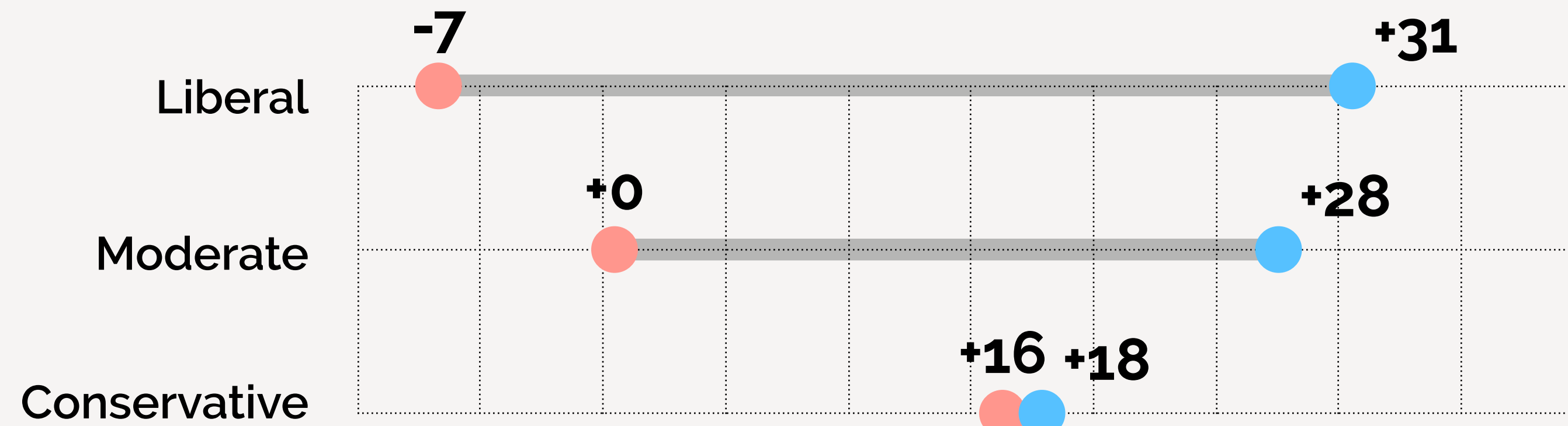
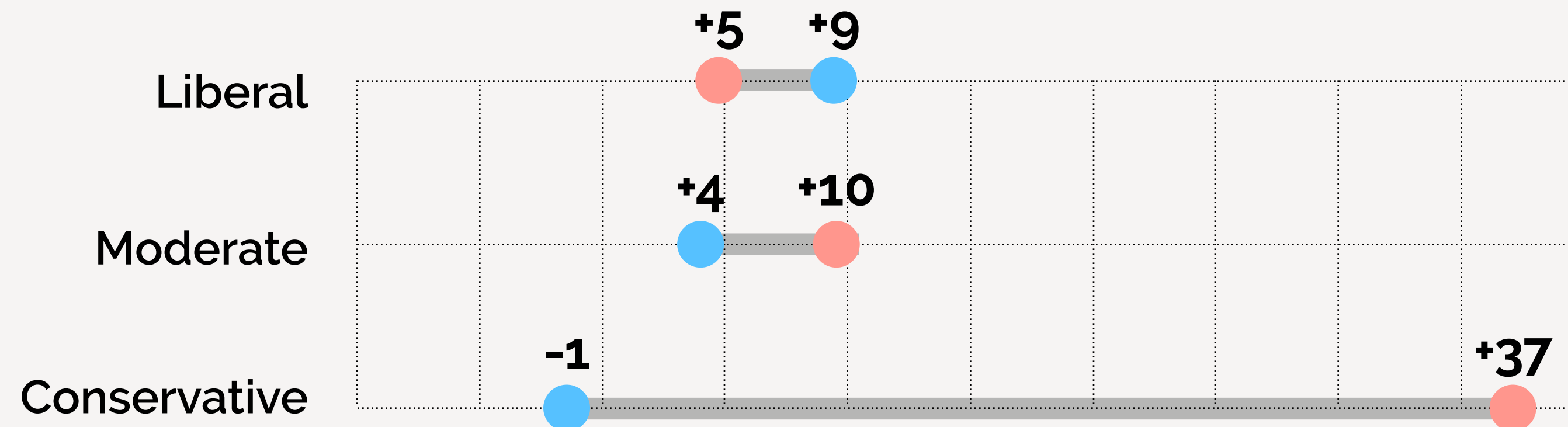
## The contrapositive is Florida.

The impact of campaign effects was perhaps most notable in a place where Dems did not contest at the same level as the GOP: Florida.

# “Did [Democrats/Republicans] make more or less of an effort to win your vote compared to previous years?”

Net Effort Compared to Previous Years (More Effort - Less Effort)

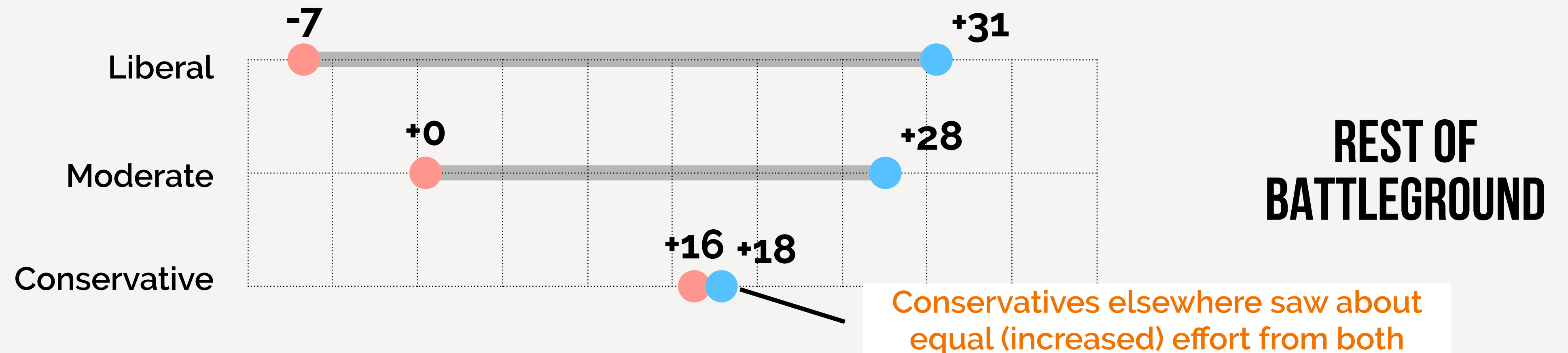
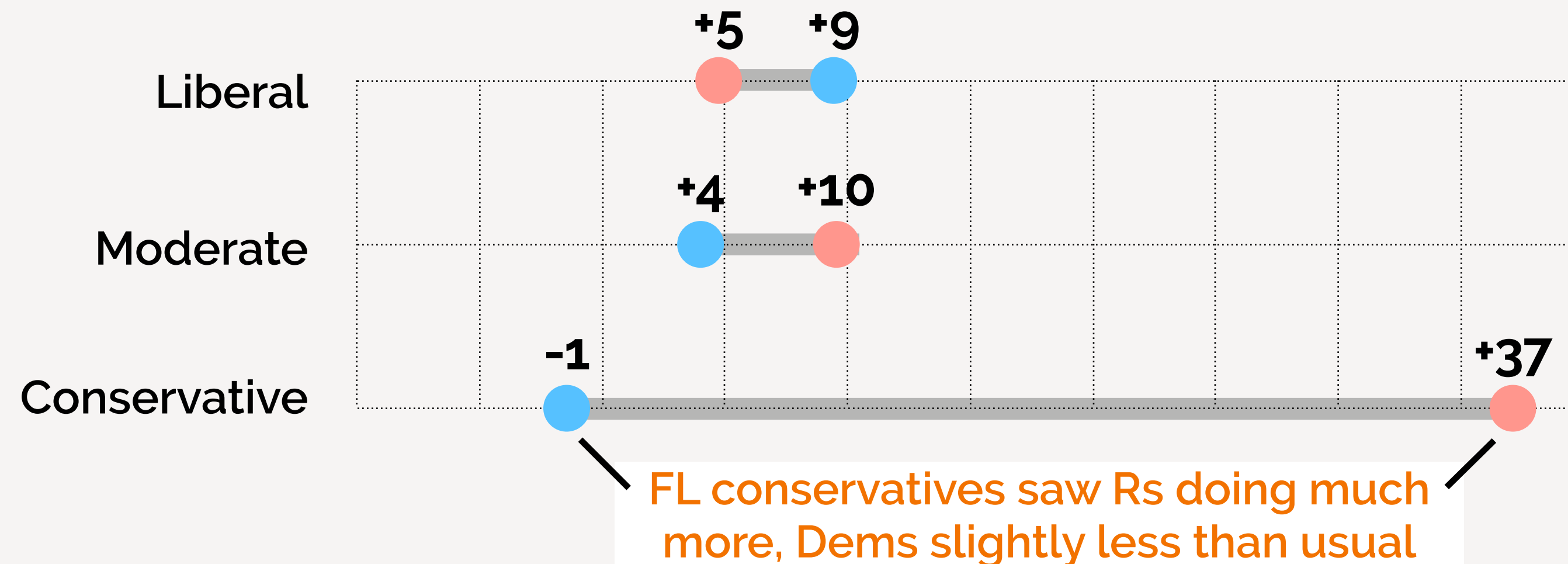
● Democrats ● Republicans



# “Did [Democrats/Republicans] make more or less of an effort to win your vote compared to previous years?”

Net Effort Compared to Previous Years (More Effort - Less Effort)

● Democrats ● Republicans



Source: Equis Post-Mortem Battleground Poll (Dec 2022) | all registered voters

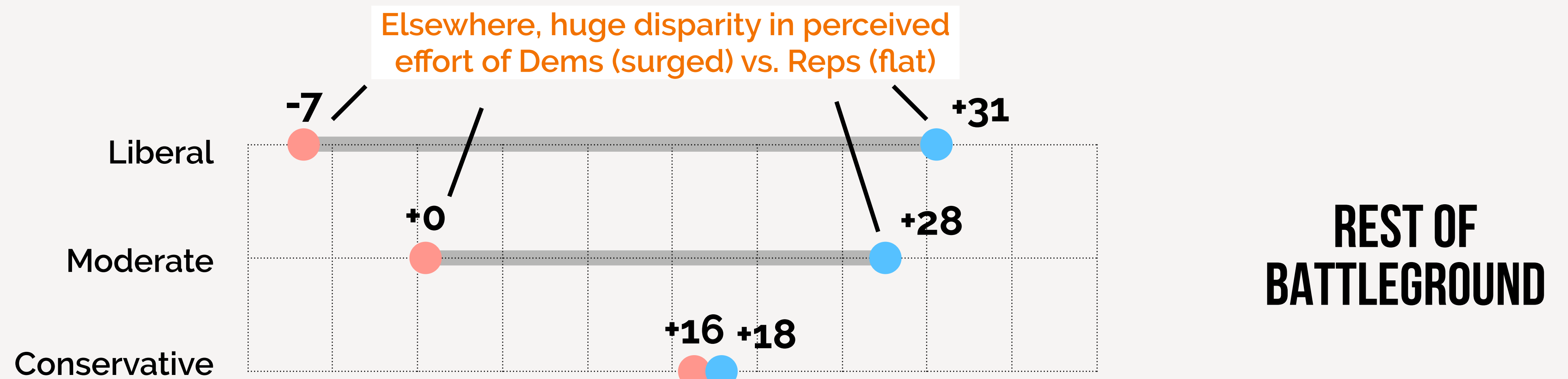
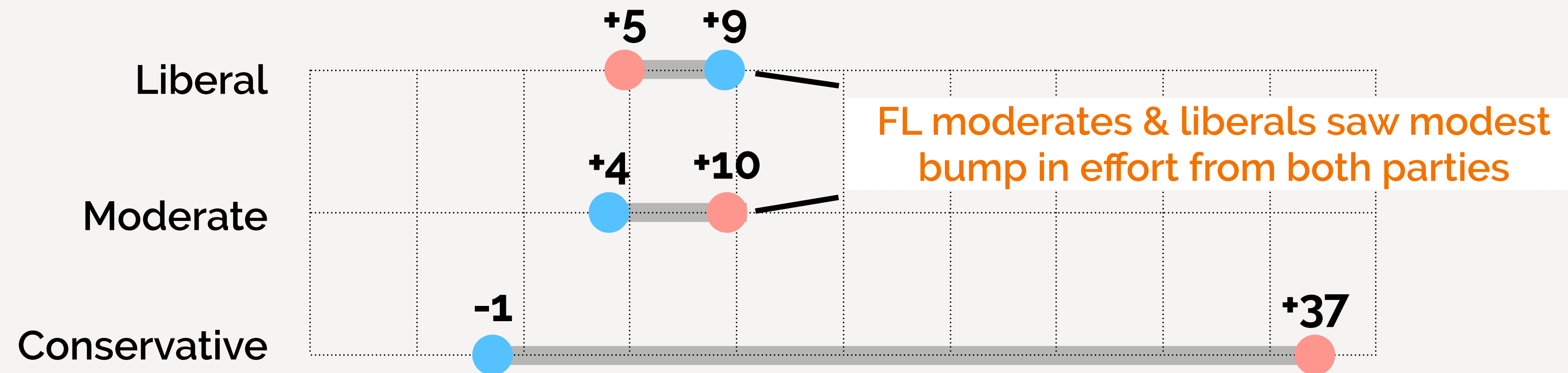




# “Did [Democrats/Republicans] make more or less of an effort to win your vote compared to previous years?”

Net Effort Compared to Previous Years (More Effort - Less Effort)

● Democrats ● Republicans

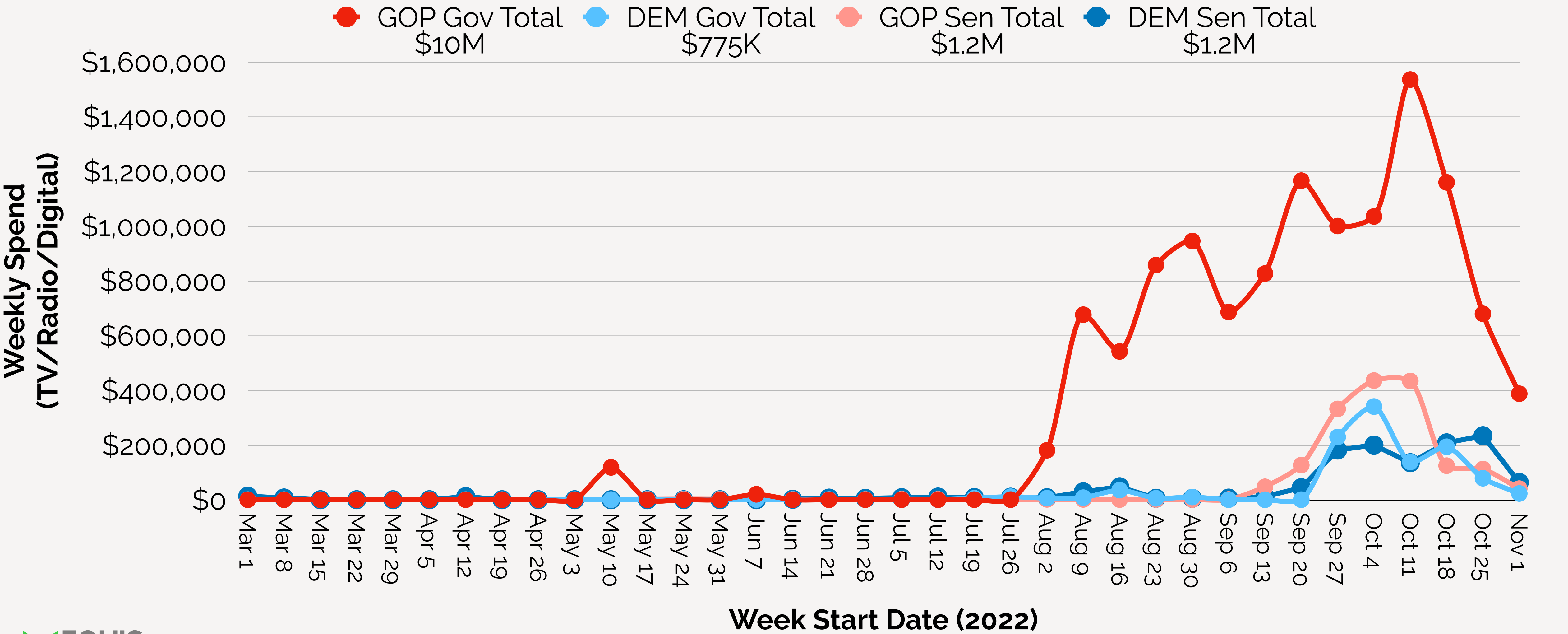




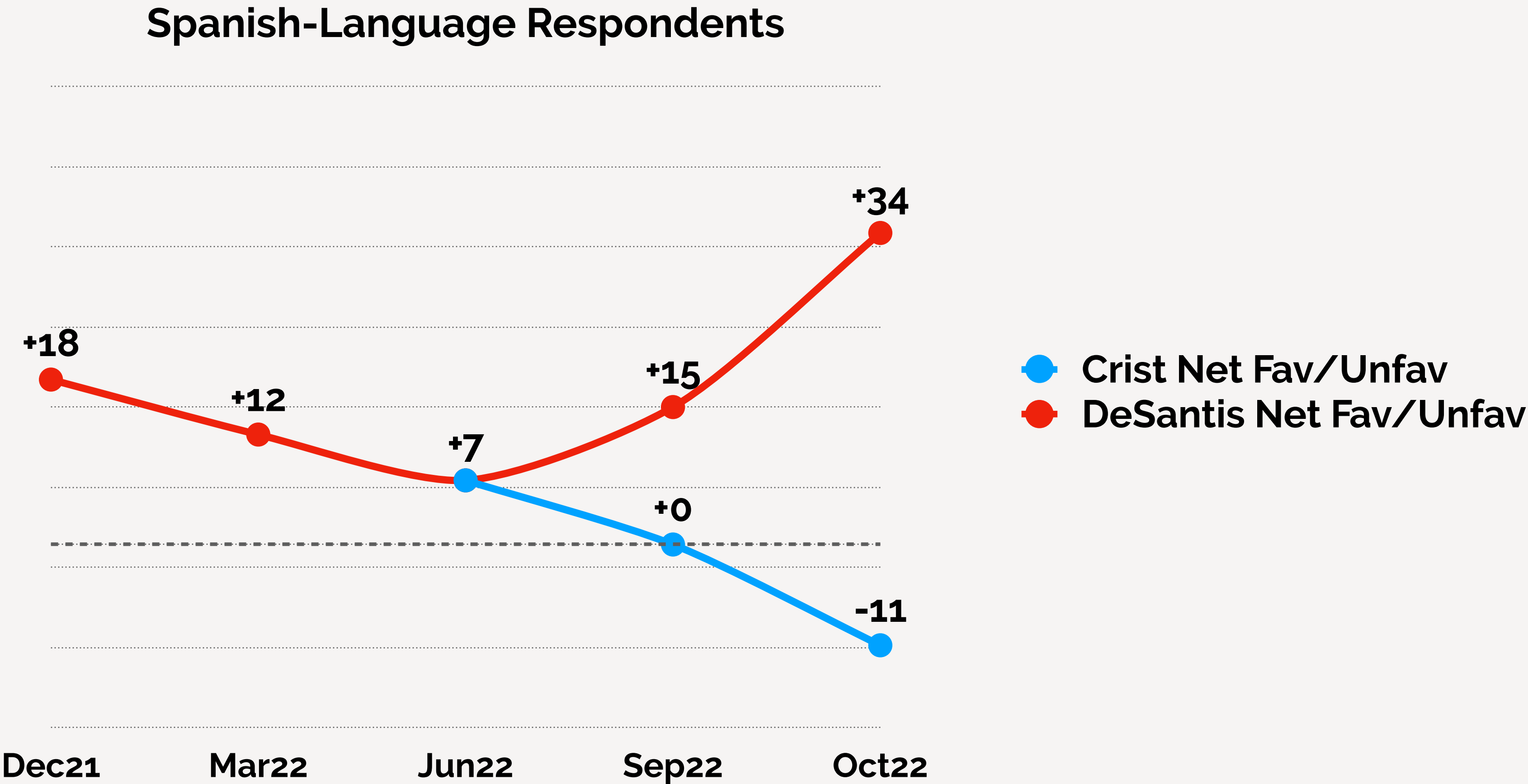
We can again use Spanish-language spending to gauge how voters reacted to heavy investment. In Florida, the DeSantis side enjoyed **an asymmetric advantage in Spanish ad spending**, and it seemed to bear fruit with the target audience.

In Florida, heavy spending in Spanish on DeSantis side, nominal Spanish spend by everyone else

FLORIDA: Spanish Spend for TV/Radio/Digital by Campaigns & Allies



Name ID & Favorability Among **Spanish-Dominant Respondents**



Source: Equis State Series surveys in Florida (w/ EMC) | registered voters





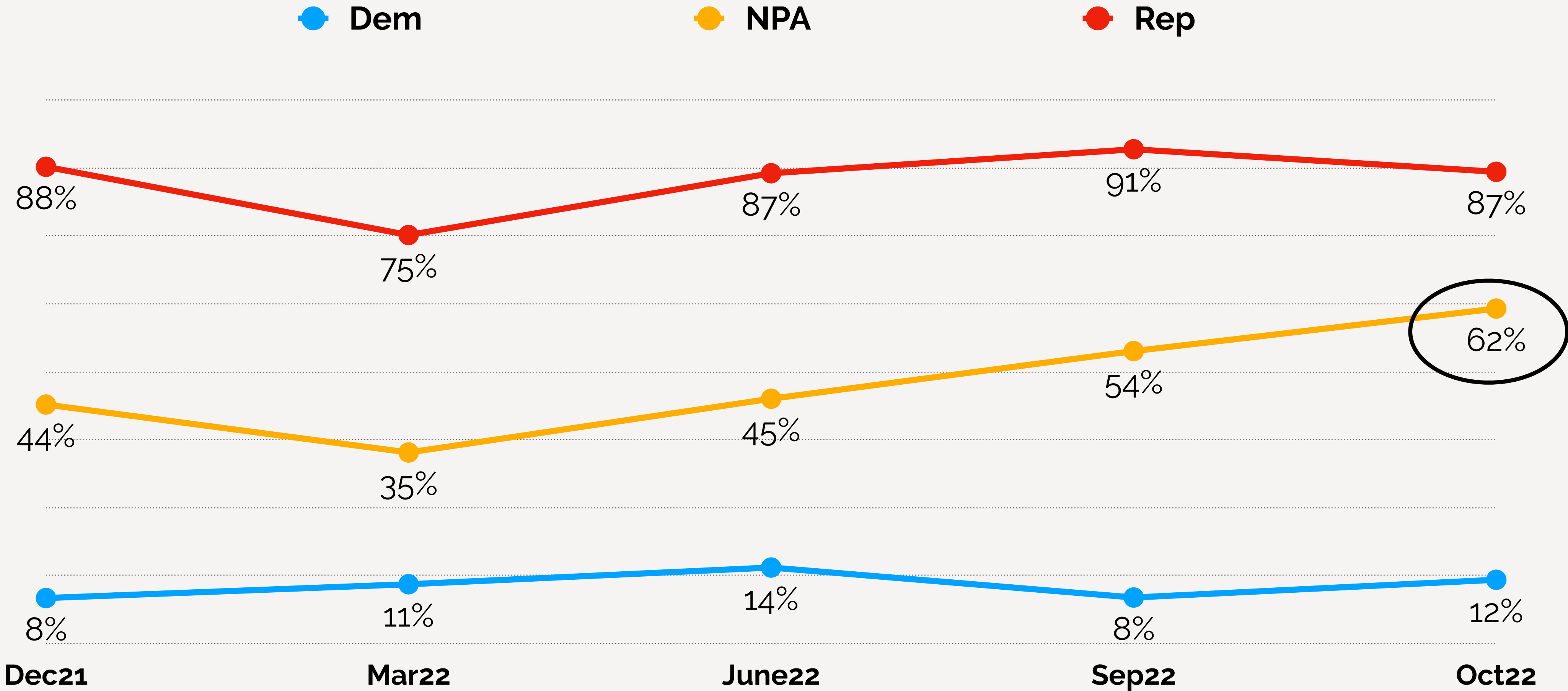
This is a chicken-and-egg situation. National Democratic money didn't go to Florida precisely because the Republican incumbents were deemed too strong and the price tag too steep.

Regardless, we can use the example to see what happens late in a contest when the disparity in campaign effort and candidate favorability favors one party: **less-partisan Hispanics in Florida — independents, low-propensity voters — broke toward the front-runners.**

Less-frequent voters are the core of the Hispanic swing.

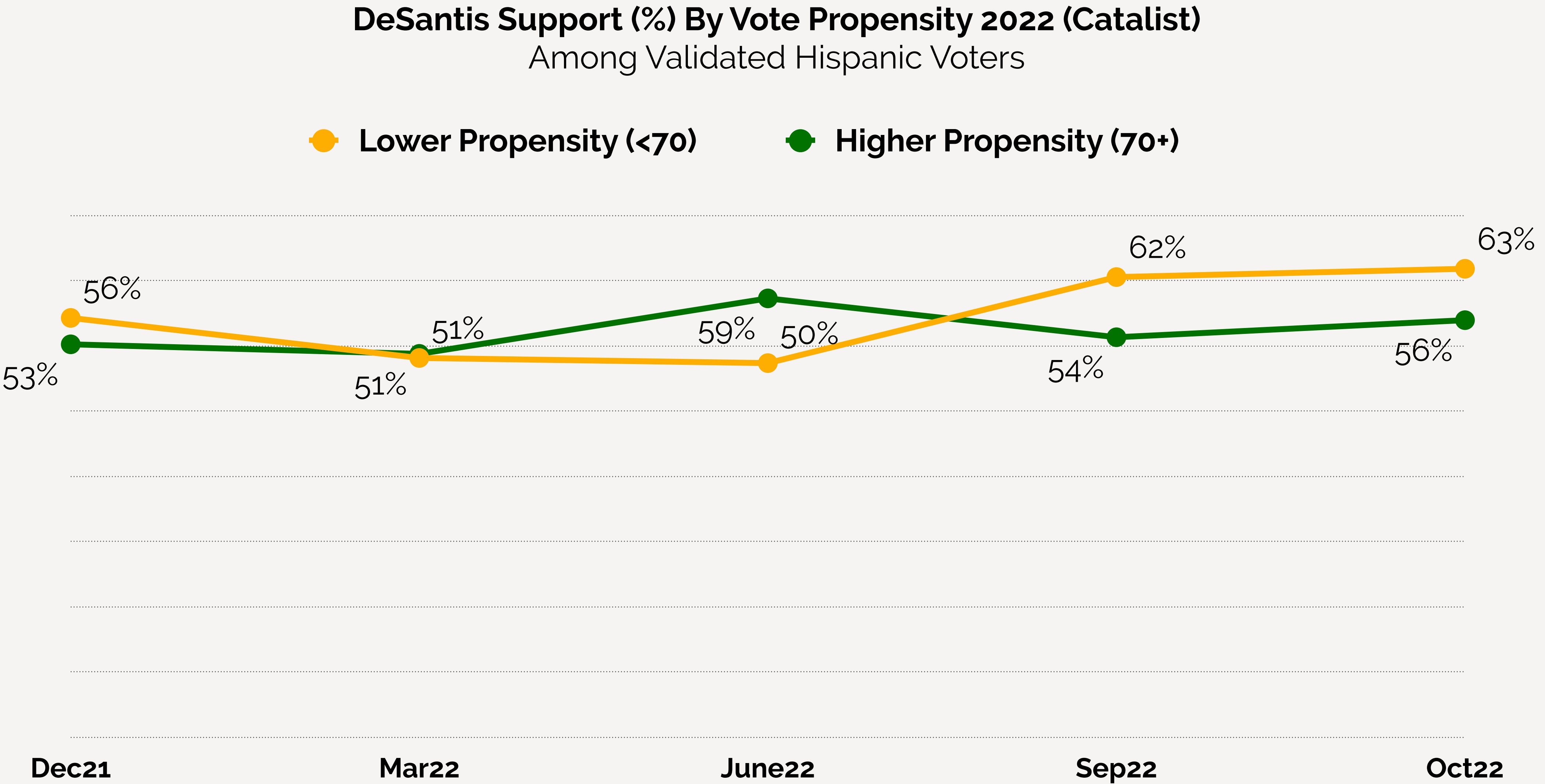
# Hispanic Independents in Florida broke late for Rubio (and DeSantis)

Rubio Support (%) Among Validated Hispanic Voters - By Party Registration & Survey Wave



Source: Equis State Series surveys in Florida (w/ EMC), matched to 2022 vote records & reweighted to electorate

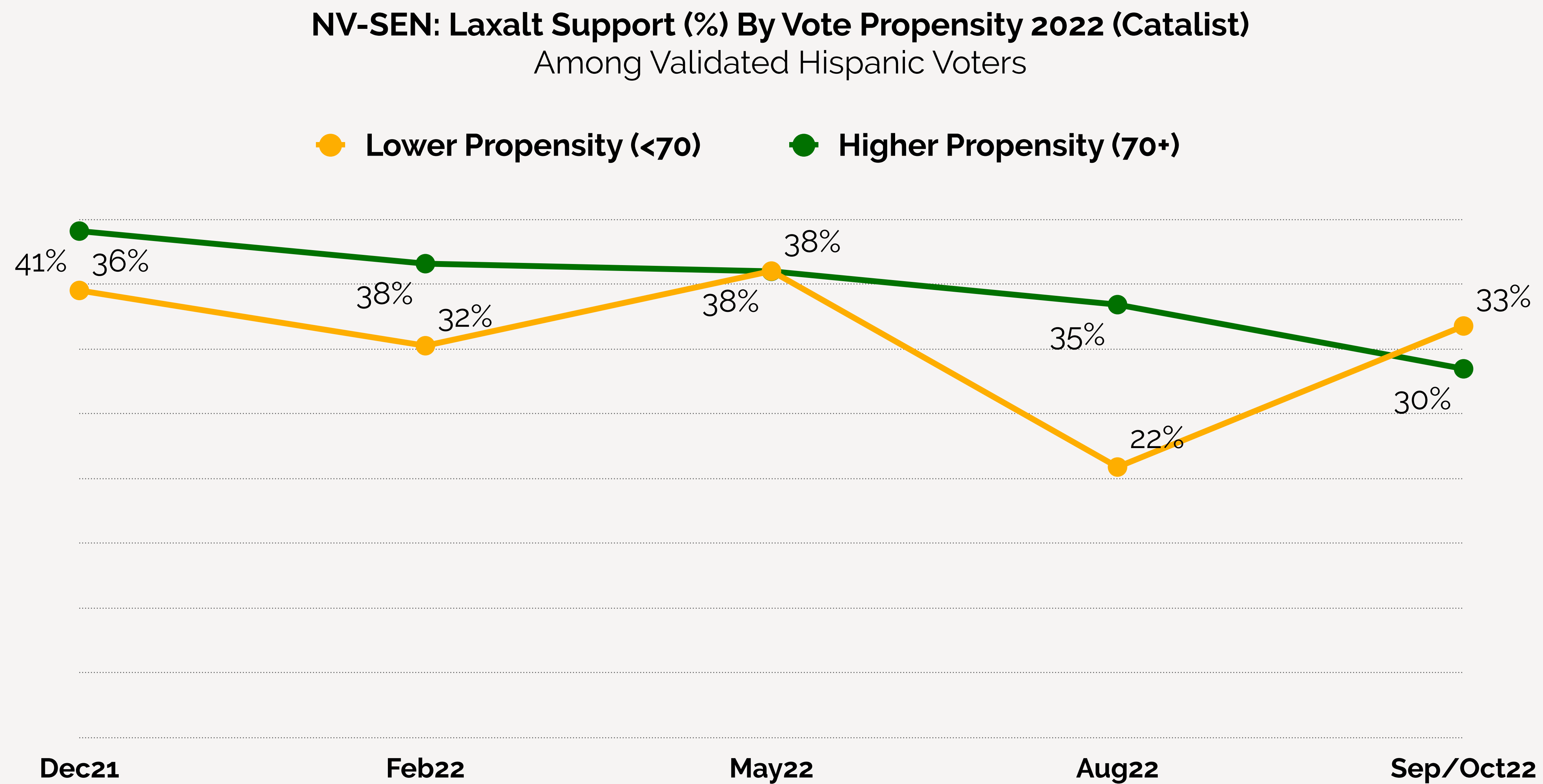
# Florida Latinos who are less likely to vote (but voted in '22) broke late for DeSantis (and Rubio)



Source: Equis State Series surveys in Florida (w/ EMC), matched to 2022 vote records & reweighted to electorate



**For comparison: how did low-propensity Latinos behave in Nevada?**  
Despite movement, they ended where they started the year when it came to Laxalt support



Source: Equis State Series surveys in Nevada (w/ Normington Petts), matched to 2022 vote records & reweighted to electorate





## Candidates & Campaigns - In Short

While the GOP increased outreach to Latino voters (or made indications they would), Democrats out-campaigned them in key races.

Republicans still held 2020 levels of Latino support in 2022, an improvement over 2016 or 2018. Still, **under-performing candidates, spending disparities & inability to break through to key Latinos may have kept them from further capitalizing on opportunities.**

Meanwhile, in Florida, Republicans out-campaigned Democrats and it did seem a factor in their steep increase in Hispanic support.



## The Elements of Stability in the Battleground States

### ISSUE ENVIRONMENT

Why didn't fundamentals translate into GOP gains? Economic troubles vs. new dynamics (Dobbs, MAGA-related democracy concerns)

+

### CANDIDATES & CAMPAIGNS

GOP signaled an increase in outreach to Latino voters. Were they out-campaigned in key races?

+

### PARTY BRANDS

Has there been a shift in how Latinos perceive the political parties? Or have party attachments held firm among swing Latino voters?



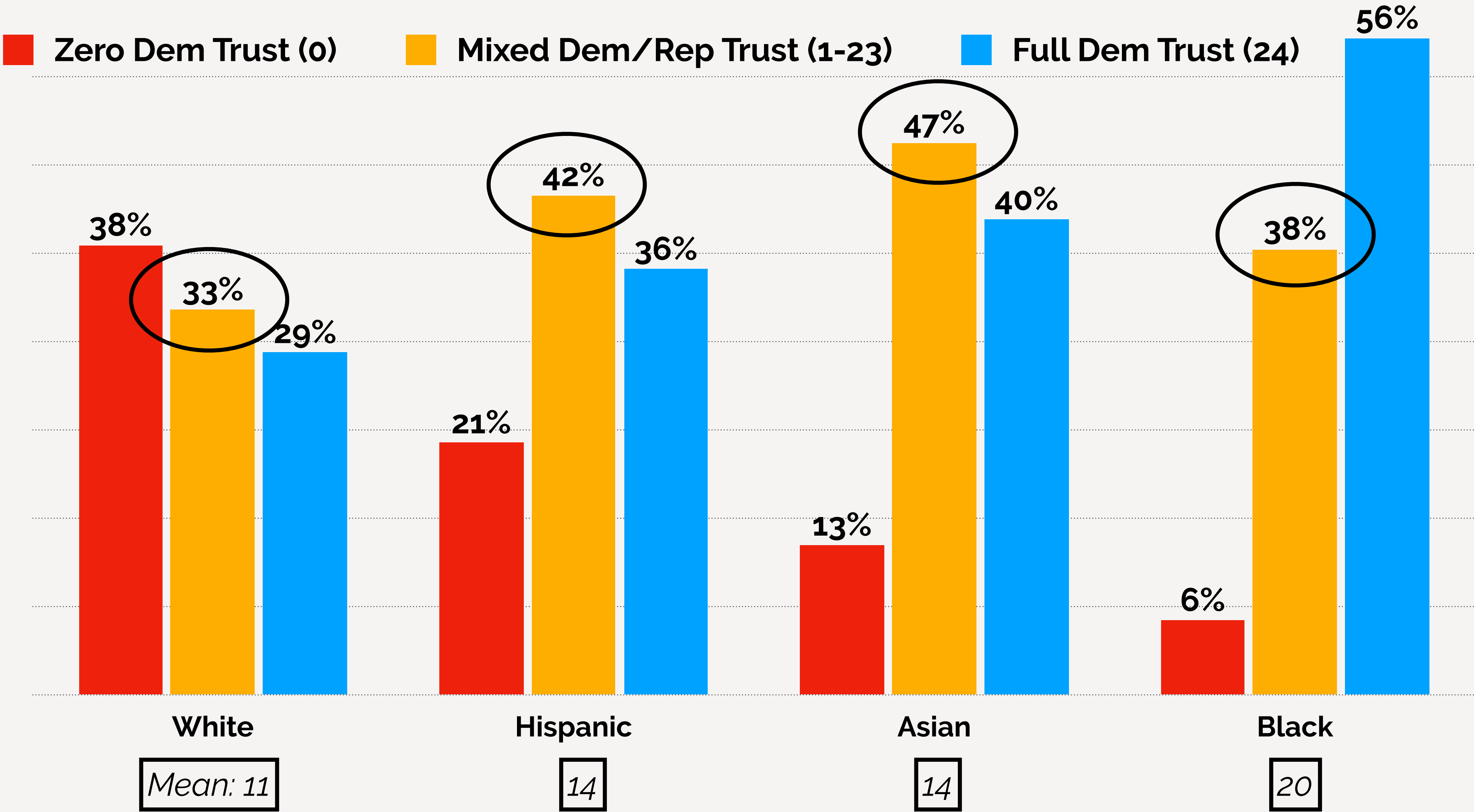
1. The 2016-2020 shift in Latino presidential support suggested a weakened link between Hispanic identity and support for Dems. Did this “identity forcefield” stay down? Would that enable a greater partisan realignment?
2. What is keeping Latinos with Democrats (or away from Republicans) beyond cycle-specific factors?
3. Has there been a shift in how some Latinos perceive the political parties?



It is not unusual— especially among non-white communities— to see a block of voters with **less-than-uniform views of the parties**.

# Large shares of non-white voters (and a third of white voters) have mixed views of the parties

Number of Issue Areas (Out of 24) Where Voters Trust Biden & Dems More Than Trump & Reps (vs. Vice Versa)



Source: Democracy Corps national web poll of registered voters (October 20-26, 2021, n=2500)





Cross-pressured voters would be among the first to move if there were a reshuffling in party support, one would expect.

So it is **helpful to look at where conflicted Latino voters landed in 2022, and why.**



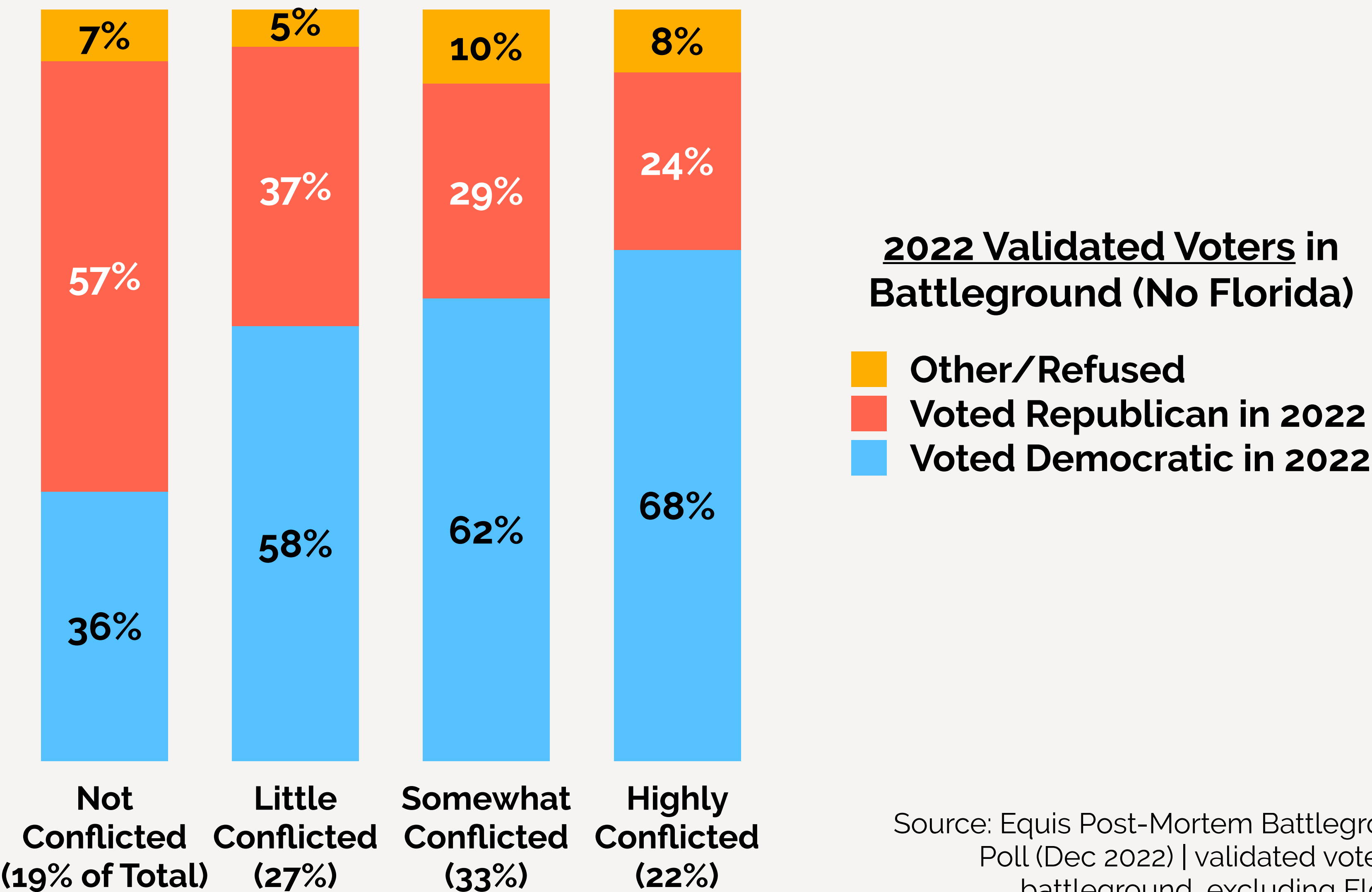
In 2022, the most ***conflicted***\* **Latino voters**, those who have mixed views of the parties, still largely defaulted to Democrats in the broader battleground — when they voted.

\*Conflicted = Trust Dems on some measures & Reps on others, and/or agree with some concerns about both parties.



Conflicted Latinos — those with mixed views of the parties — were also heavily Democratic...

2022 Generic Congressional Ballot - By Level of Cross-Pressure

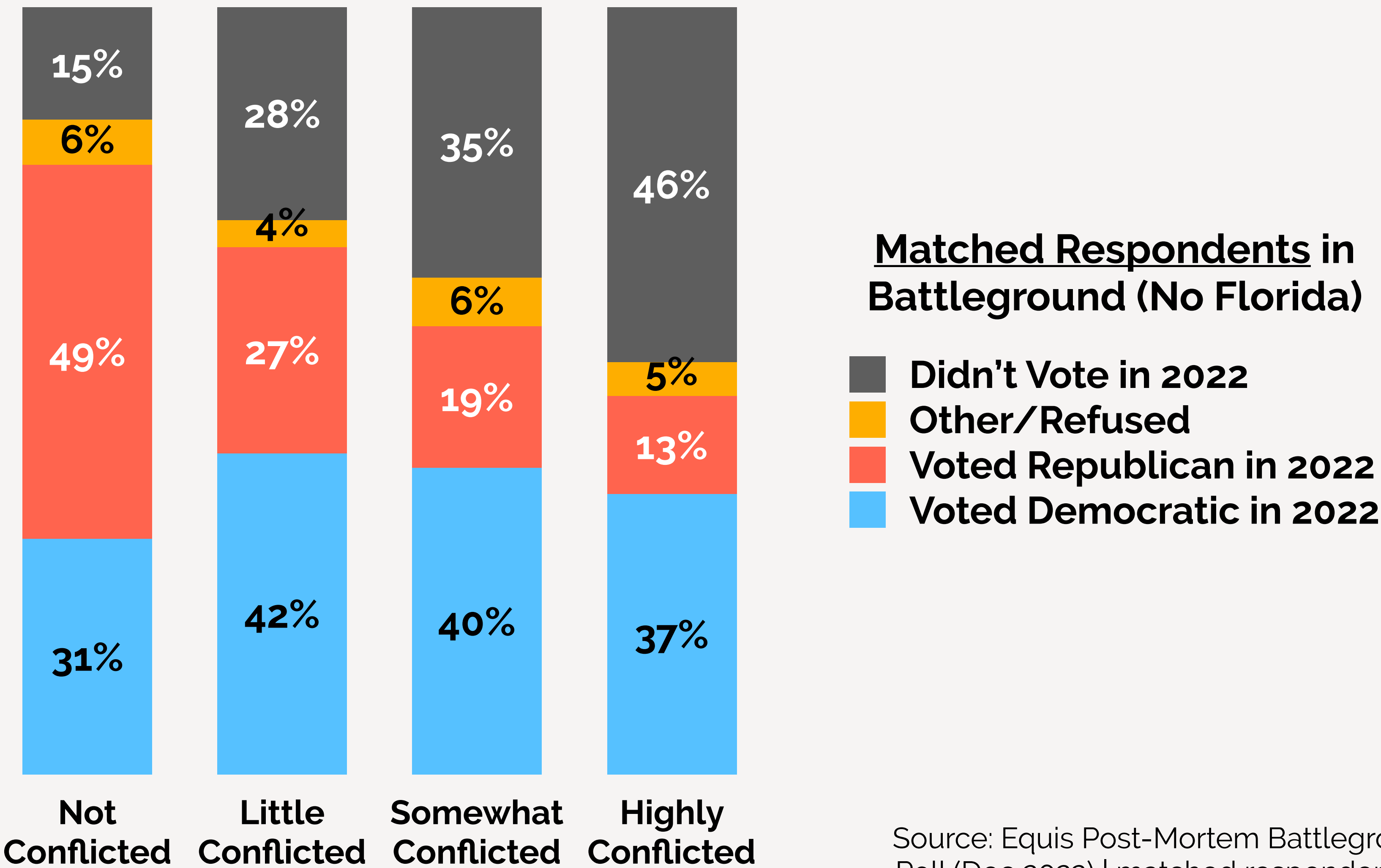


Source: Equis Post-Mortem Battleground Poll (Dec 2022) | validated voters in battleground, excluding Florida



...but the conflicted Latinos were also more likely to abstain from voting in 2022

2022 Generic Congressional Ballot - By Level of Cross-Pressure



Source: Equis Post-Mortem Battleground Poll (Dec 2022) | matched respondents in battleground, excluding Florida



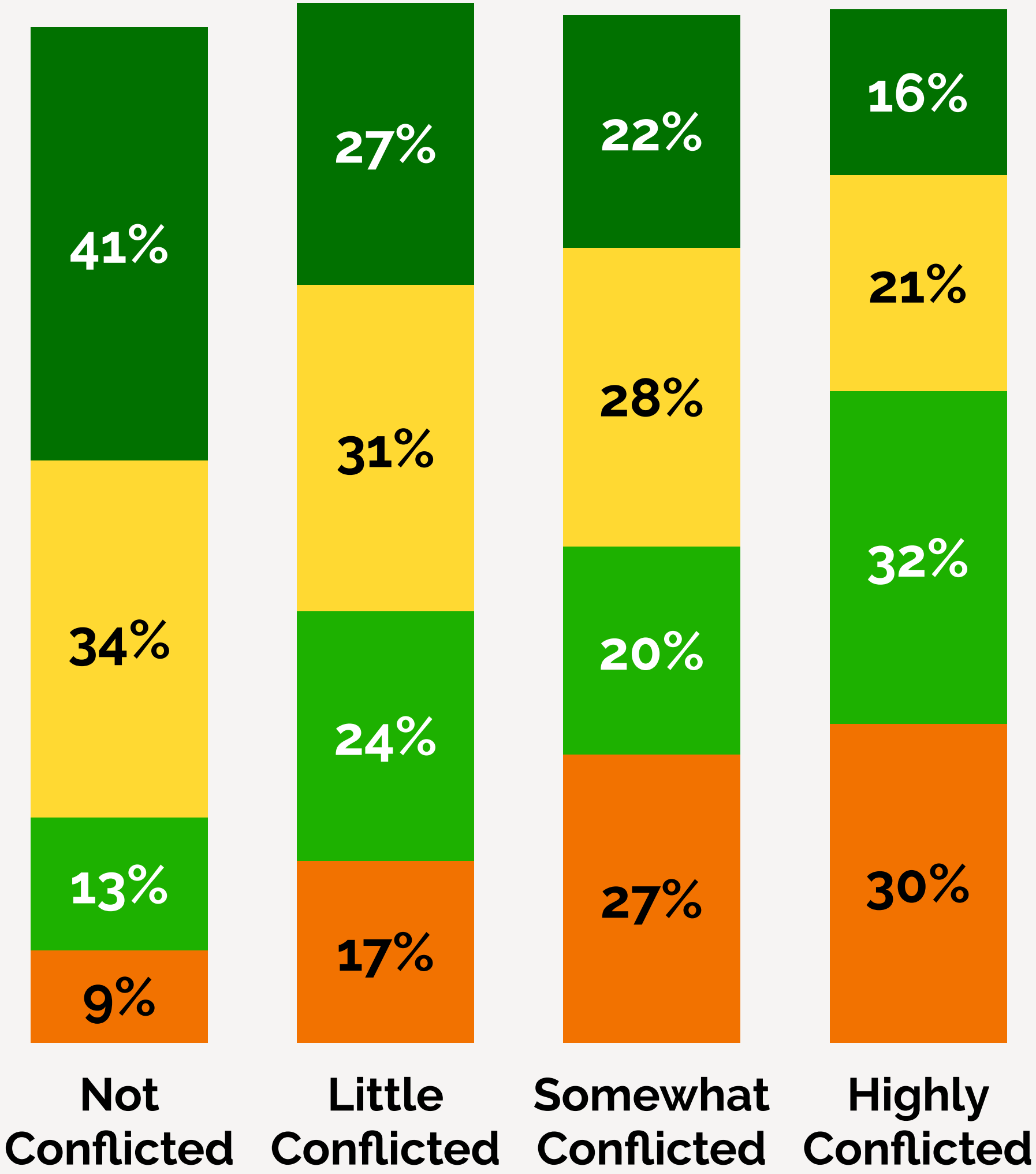


In their demographic make-up — **younger and/or more female** —  
conflicted voters also resemble base Democrats.

But they are not hard-and-fast partisans.

Latina women, younger Hispanics predominate the conflicted categories  
The least conflicted tend to be older

Age x Gender, By Level of Cross-Pressure  
Among registered Latino voters in 11 battleground states



Matched Respondents in Battleground (No Florida)

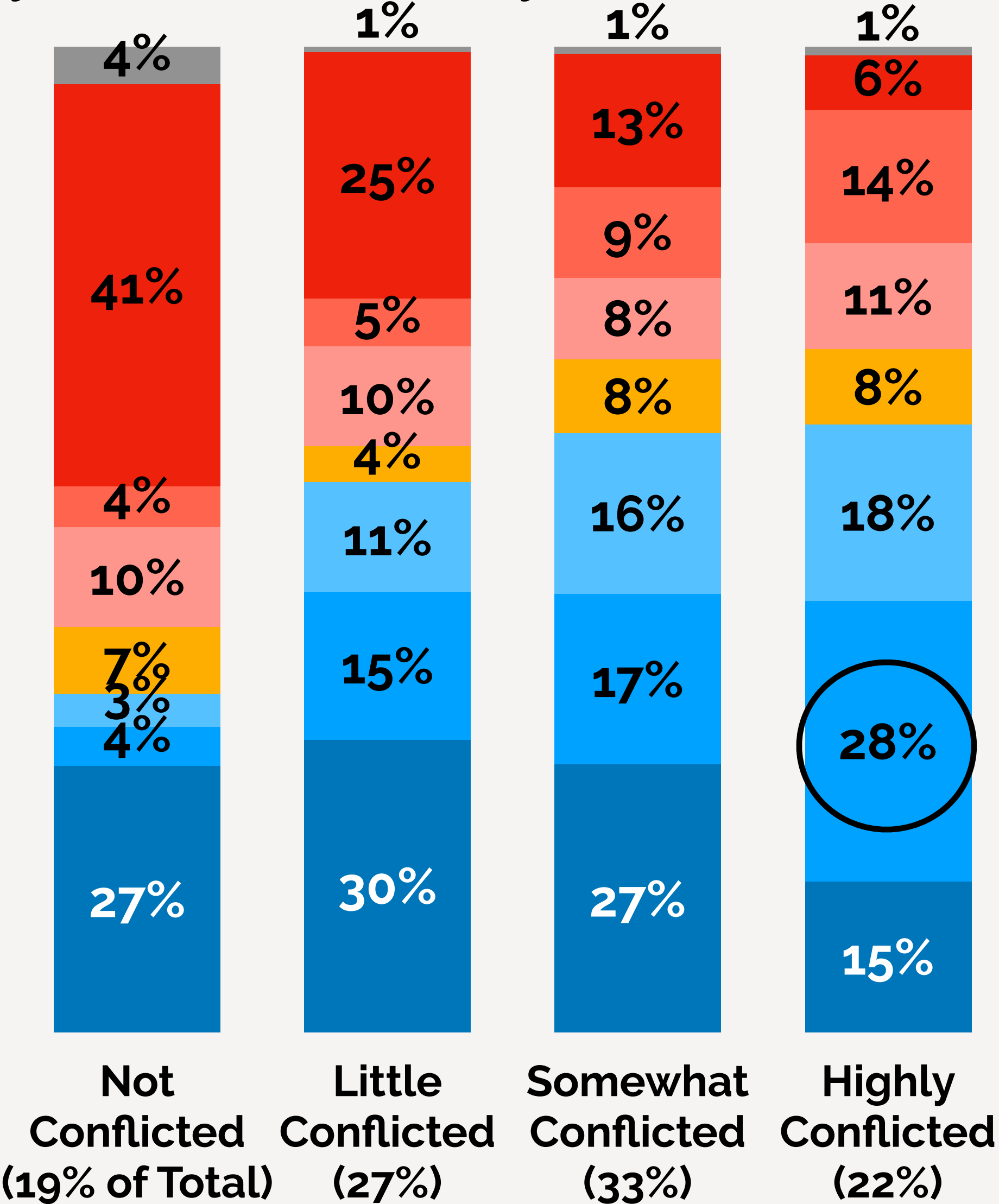
- Men 40+
- Women 40+
- Men <40
- Women <40

Source: Equis Post-Mortem Battleground Poll (Dec 2022) | matched respondents in battleground, excluding Florida



# Conflicted Latinos look like Democrats but they are not strong partisans

Party ID (7 Point Scale) - By Level of Cross-Pressure



2022 Validated Voters in Battleground (No Florida)

- DK/Ref
- Strong Rep
- Not Strong Rep
- Indy/Lean Rep
- Pure Independent
- Indy/Lean Dem
- Not Strong Dem
- Strong Dem

Source: Equis Post-Mortem Battleground Poll (Dec 2022) | validated voters in battleground, excluding Florida





What keeps more conflicted Latinos from voting for Republicans?

In 2022, conflicted Latinos were **concerned above all about Republicans prioritizing the rich** and **being extreme on abortion**.

At the same time they were less likely to agree with characterizations of the GOP as “hostile to minorities” or a “threat” to democracy.

**Concerns About GOP Among Highly Conflicted\* Latinos**  
Net Agreement (Total Agree - Total Disagree)



\*Mixed on all party trust/concern batteries  
(Trust Dems on some measures & Reps on others; agree w/ some concerns about both parties)





What sticks out among conflicted voters is what sticks out across every kind of “swing” voter we’ve studied: the enduring sense that **Democrats care more** and **are better for the group (Hispanics)**.

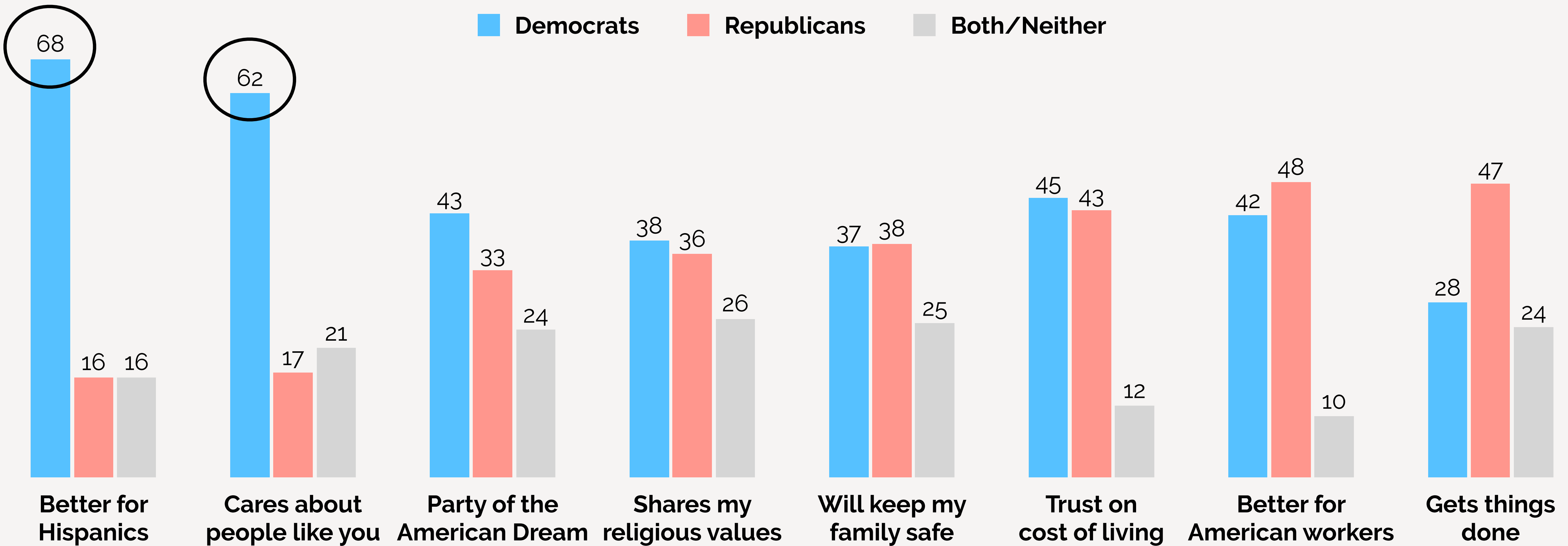
Those associations seem to win out even as Republicans gain ground on other dimensions.

# Caring about Hispanics stick out as Dem anchor among highly conflicted Latinos

Republicans show strength on perception of “delivery”

## Better Description of Democrats vs. Republicans

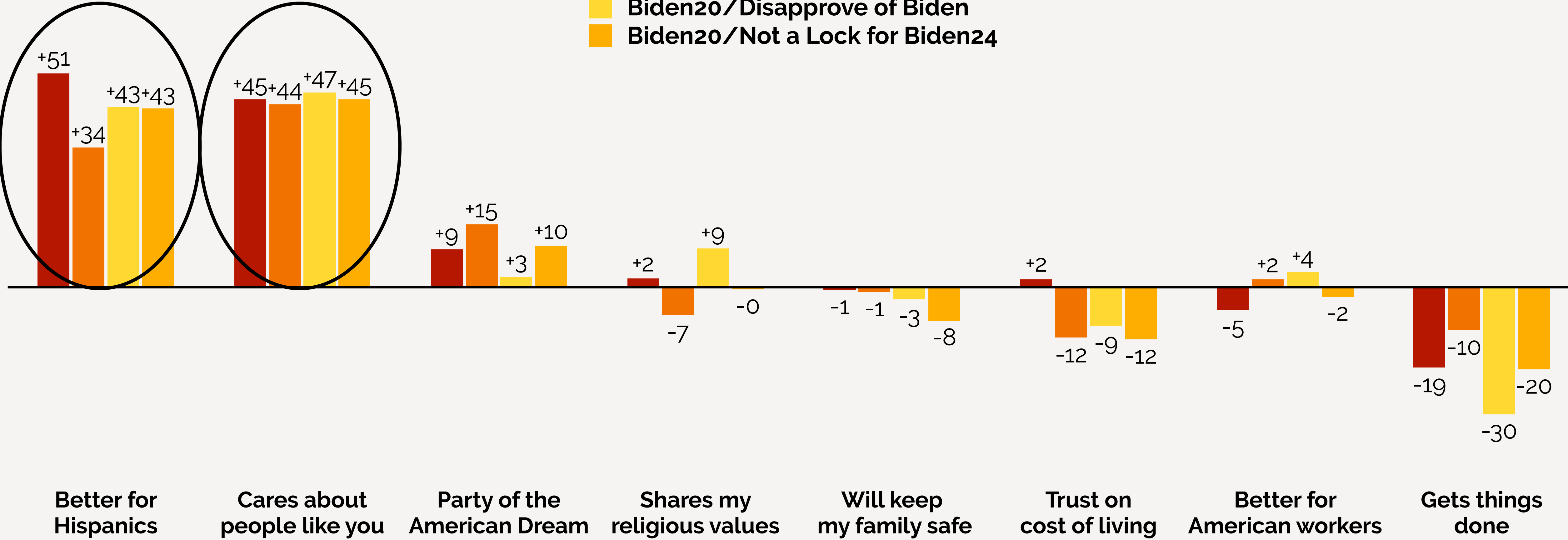
Among highly conflicted Latinos (mixed views of both parties across batteries)



# The same Dem anchors / GOP toeholds emerge across persuadable categories...

% Better Description of Democrats (vs. Republicans)  
Among different "swing" categories

- Highly Conflicted
- 2022 Ticket Splitters
- Biden20/Disapprove of Biden
- Biden20/Not a Lock for Biden24



Source: Equis Post-Mortem Battleground Poll (Dec 2022) | mix of registered and validated, in full battleground



Latinos aren't a monolith, but they **are still a group**. And the larger dynamics of the moment do appear common among swing voters who **(a) are not deeply political** and **(b) identify as Hispanic**, across other attributes.

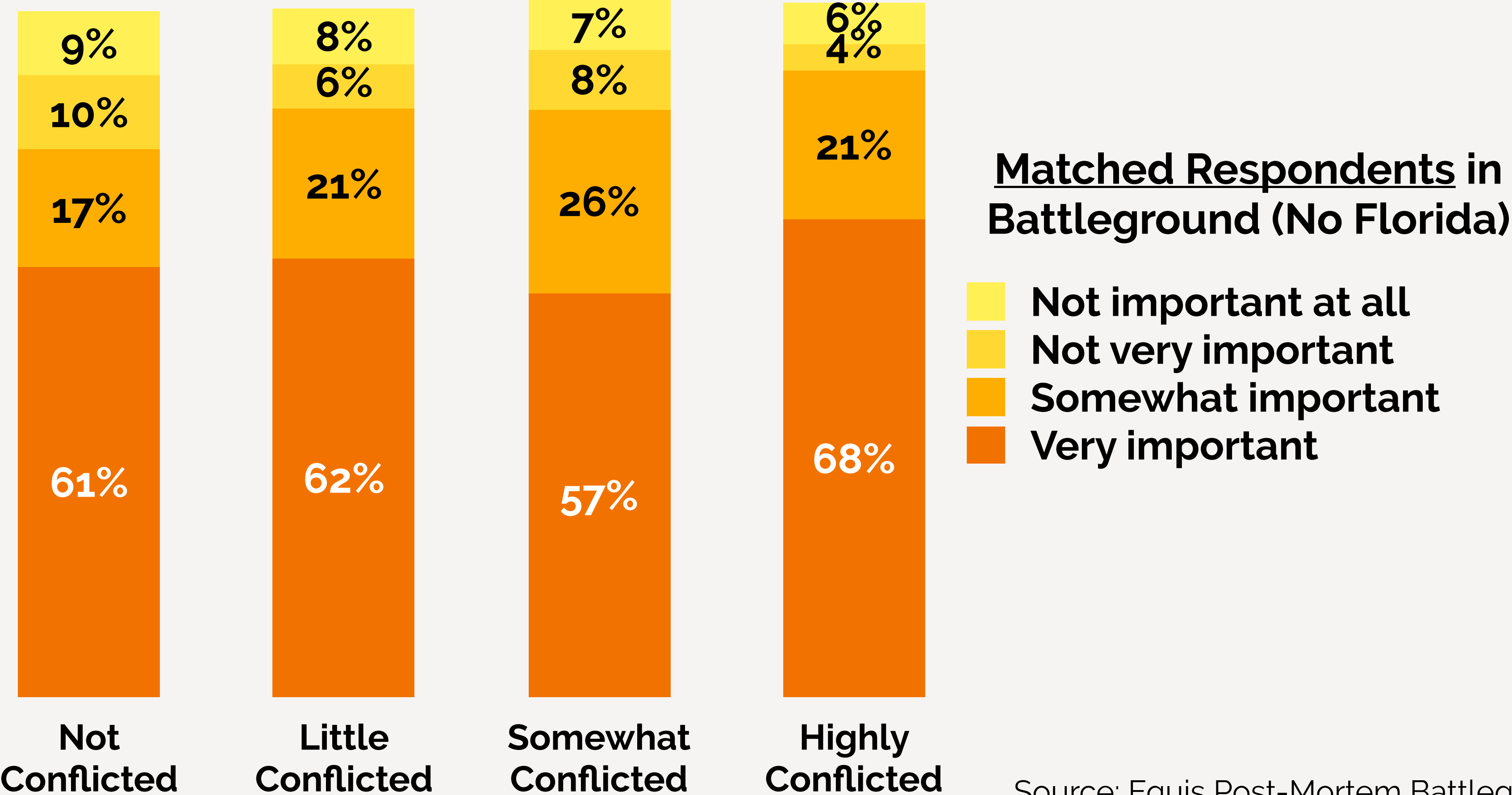
That is why this report is light on analysis of demographics (**age, gender, education, generation, religion, etc.**) — they don't seem to explain trends across states.

Identifying as Latino — which a majority of these voters report is **important to them personally** — is still at the center of the story they tell themselves about the political parties, especially when they don't have fixed party or ideological loyalties to hang their hats on.

# Most Latino voters view being Hispanic as “very important” to their identity

Strongest among those most conflicted, but importance is high across

“How important is being Hispanic or Latino/a to your identity?”  
Among registered Latino voters, by level of cross-pressure



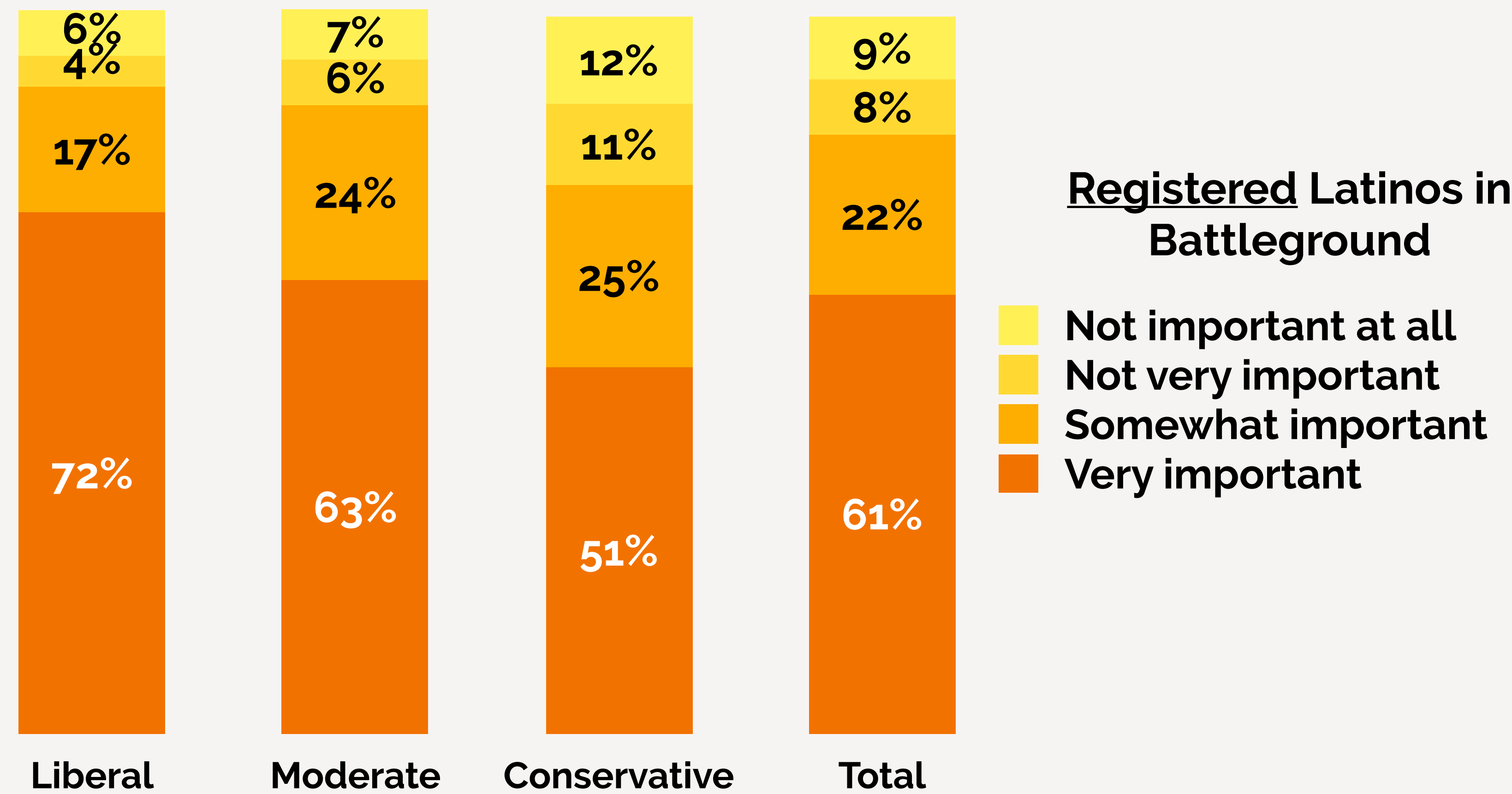
Source: Equis Post-Mortem Battleground Poll (Dec 2022) | matched respondents in battleground, excluding Florida



# Hispanic identity also remains central across the ideological spectrum

Less central for conservative Latinos, but still half say “very”, 3/4 say at least “somewhat”

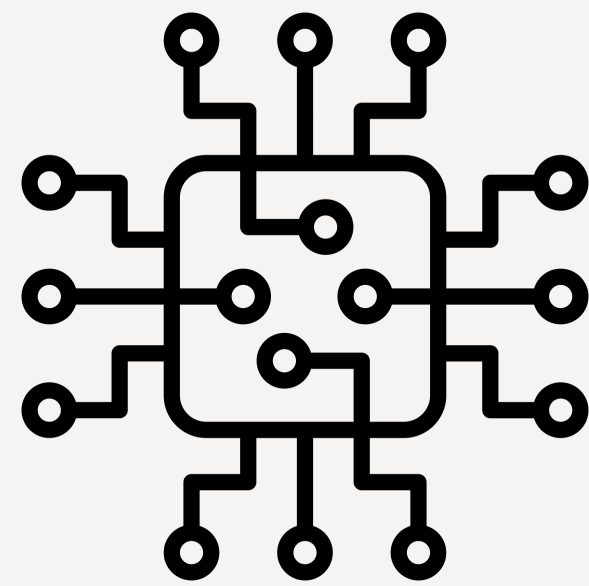
“How important is being Hispanic or Latino/a to your identity?”  
Among registered Latino voters, by self-reported ideology





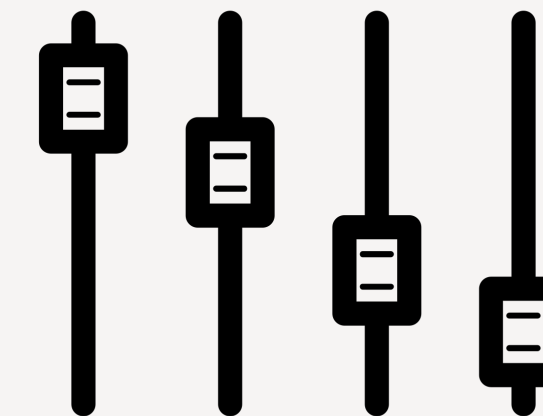
There is a deep level at which identifying as Latino is associated with certain political behavior, which can act as a useful **baseline** for those who aren't deeply immersed in politics.

But the **“volume levels” of identity concerns can also get turned either up or down** relative to other factors— shading how voters evaluate signals during an election.



## 1. Deep Associations

“Democrats generally care more about people like me than Republicans do, so people like me *usually* vote for Democrats”



## 2. Election-Specific Configurations

Latino identity concerns go up or down, either crowding out or opening space for shifting issue priorities, candidate assessments, campaign effort, etc.





In **2016**, the **volume on Latino identity was turned up**. Some Latinos who we might predict would vote Republican, based on their demographics and ideology, were held back from supporting Trump by (a) opposition to his hardline immigration positions and (b) the importance of their Hispanic identity.

In **the 2020 election, the identity knob had been turned down**. The economy and COVID had become Latino voters' top priorities during the cycle — at the expense of either immigration or “voting to support the Latino community.”



What happened in **2022**? A segment of Latino voters who had shifted to Republicans in 2020 stayed there. But the GOP couldn't make progress beyond that share in 2022.

Why did Republicans hit this **ceiling**? In part because the underlying partisan associations of Latino voters hadn't in fact changed: **the forces that kept many Latinos viewing Democrats (or not-Republicans) as the default option held firm**, to the point that critical Latino voters would rather stay home than vote GOP.



However: different **social identities** can have different **stories**. People have multiple, sometimes competing identities— even different conflicting *Hispanic* identities. And stories can change.

In Florida, older generations of **Cuban-American voters** have had their own partisan story, rooted in being Cuban, since the '80s. Newer Cuban arrivals came to adopt a similar story in the Trump years. Many younger, US-born Cubans appeared to **join them in 2022**.

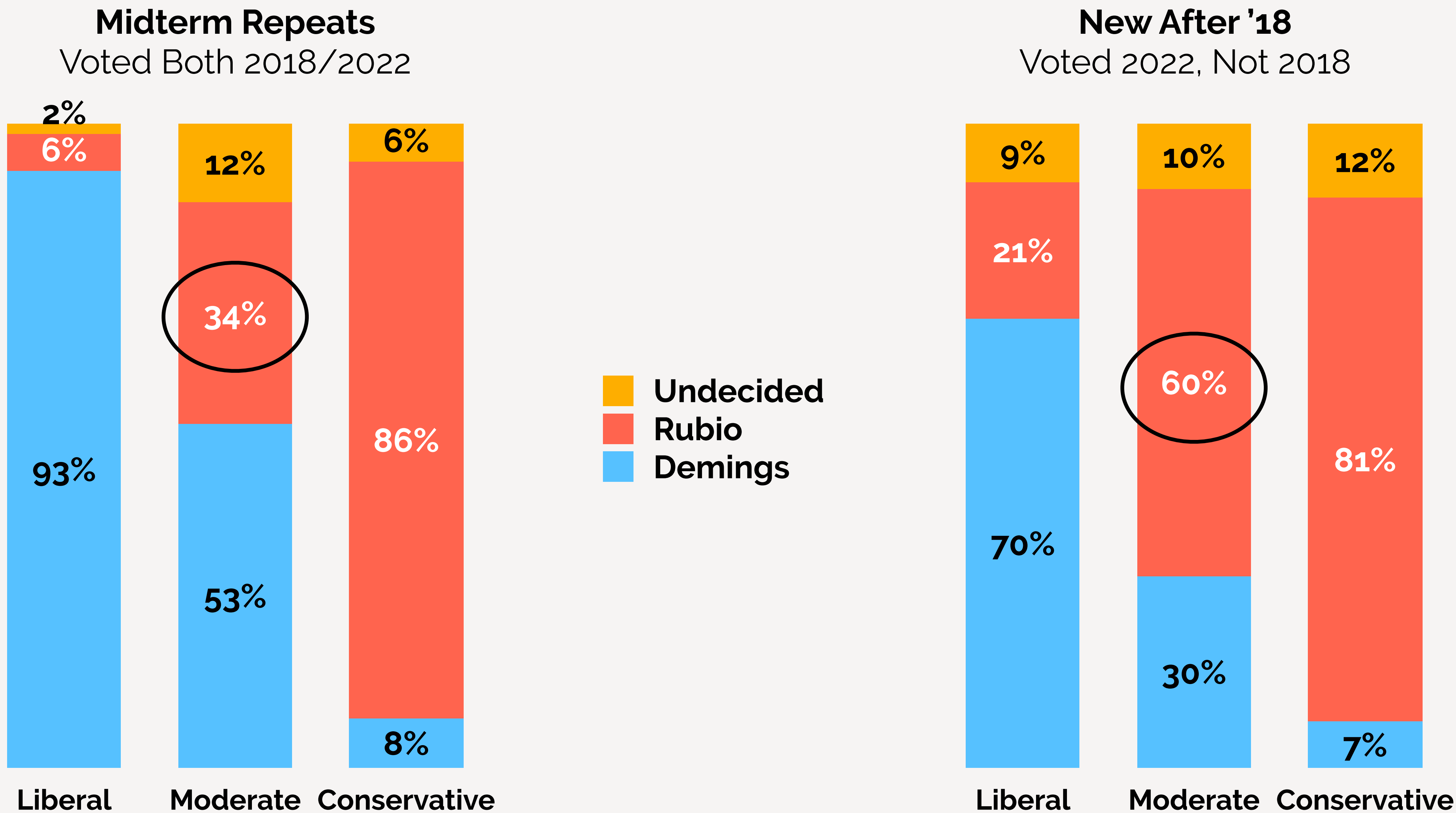
Did **other shifting Florida voters** adopt a new story about the parties? And is such a shift replicable for Republicans **outside of Florida**?



We can start with this: **moderate Hispanics** in Florida who were baptized politically during the Trump era look **more Republican** than moderates who've regularly voted in the past — in a way we don't see in the rest of the battleground.

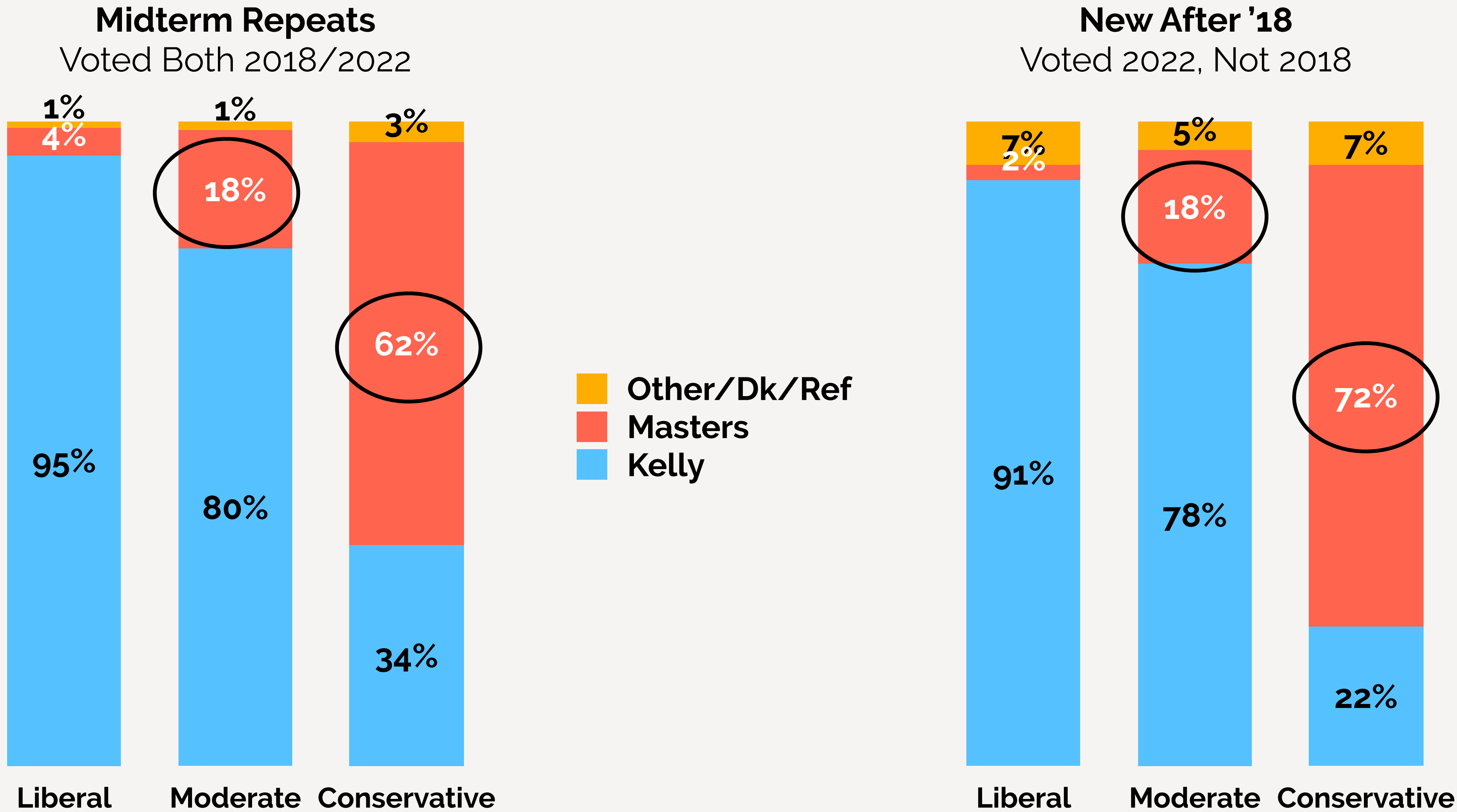
These Florida moderates as a whole have **different views** of the parties from **moderates in the battleground states**, starting with the extent to which they perceive that **Dems are better for Hispanics**.

# Moderate Hispanics who are newer to the electorate voted reverse of super-voting moderates



Source: Equis State Series surveys in Florida (w/ EMC), matched to 2022 vote records & reweighted to actual electorate

**We do not see the same elsewhere: in Arizona, no sign of a shift among Hispanic moderates**  
 GOP pulling in more of the newer conservative Latinos, but not full consolidation



Source: Equis Post-Mortem Survey in Arizona (May 2023) | validated voters

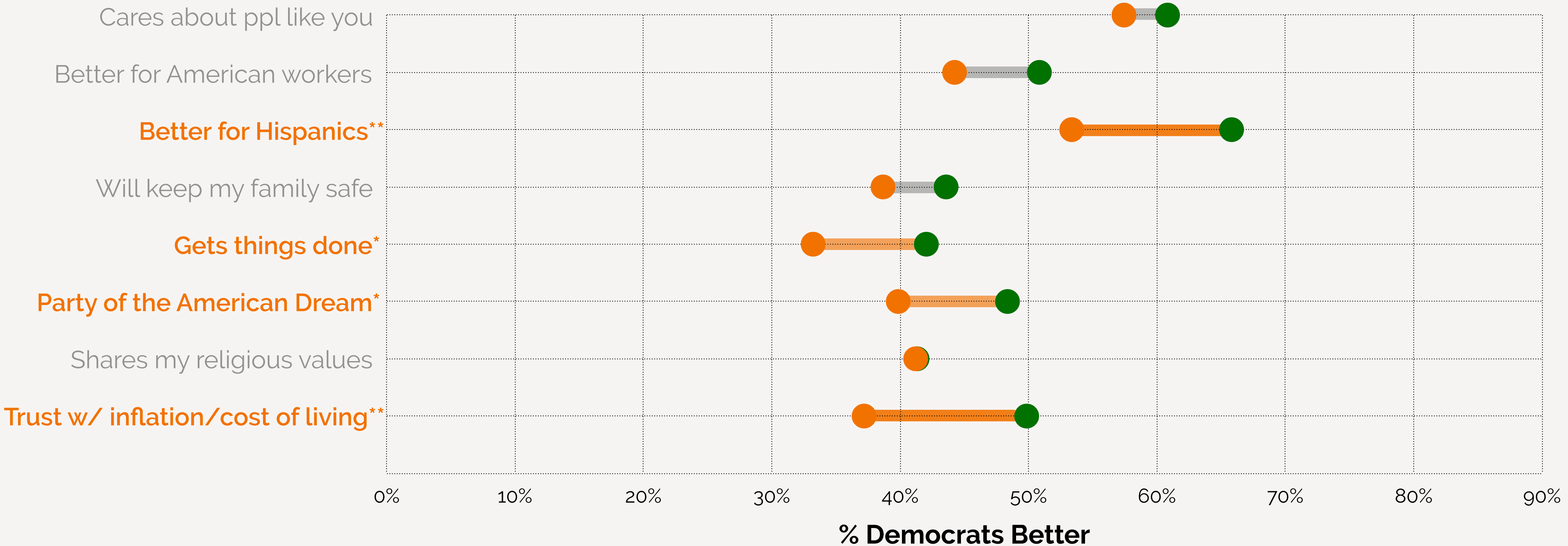


# Moderate Hispanics in Florida believe a different story about Dems, led by a break on the question of who is “better for Hispanics” (and trust in handling inflation)

Party Descriptors - Among Registered Latino Voters by Ideology

● Florida ● Rest of Battleground

MODERATES







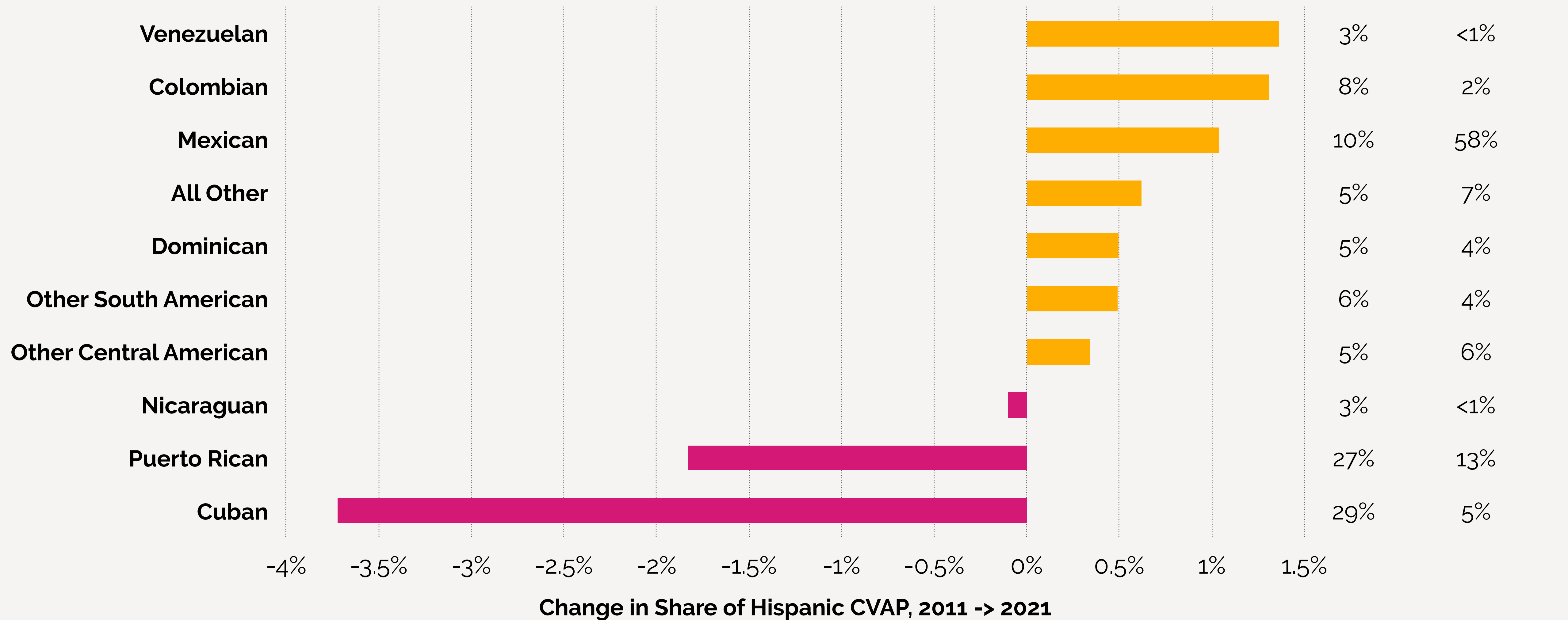
We can also look at the voters who, for lack of a better term, we call the broader Latin-American vote, or **LatAm voters**: a fast-changing constellation of some 18 national origin groups, including Colombians, Dominicans, Mexicans and Venezuelans, that together make up a plurality of the Hispanic vote in Florida (but are harder to poll individually because of sample size issues).

# FL Hispanic electorate has seen increased share of LatAm voters (esp. South American immigrants)

Puerto Rican/Cuban still represent majority; in all, Florida remains markedly different from national

**FLORIDA: Change in Share of Total Eligible Hispanic Voters (CVAP)**  
**By Origin Group, 2011 - 2021**

**% of FL CVAP**      **% of Nat'l CVAP**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates for 2011, 2016 & 2021



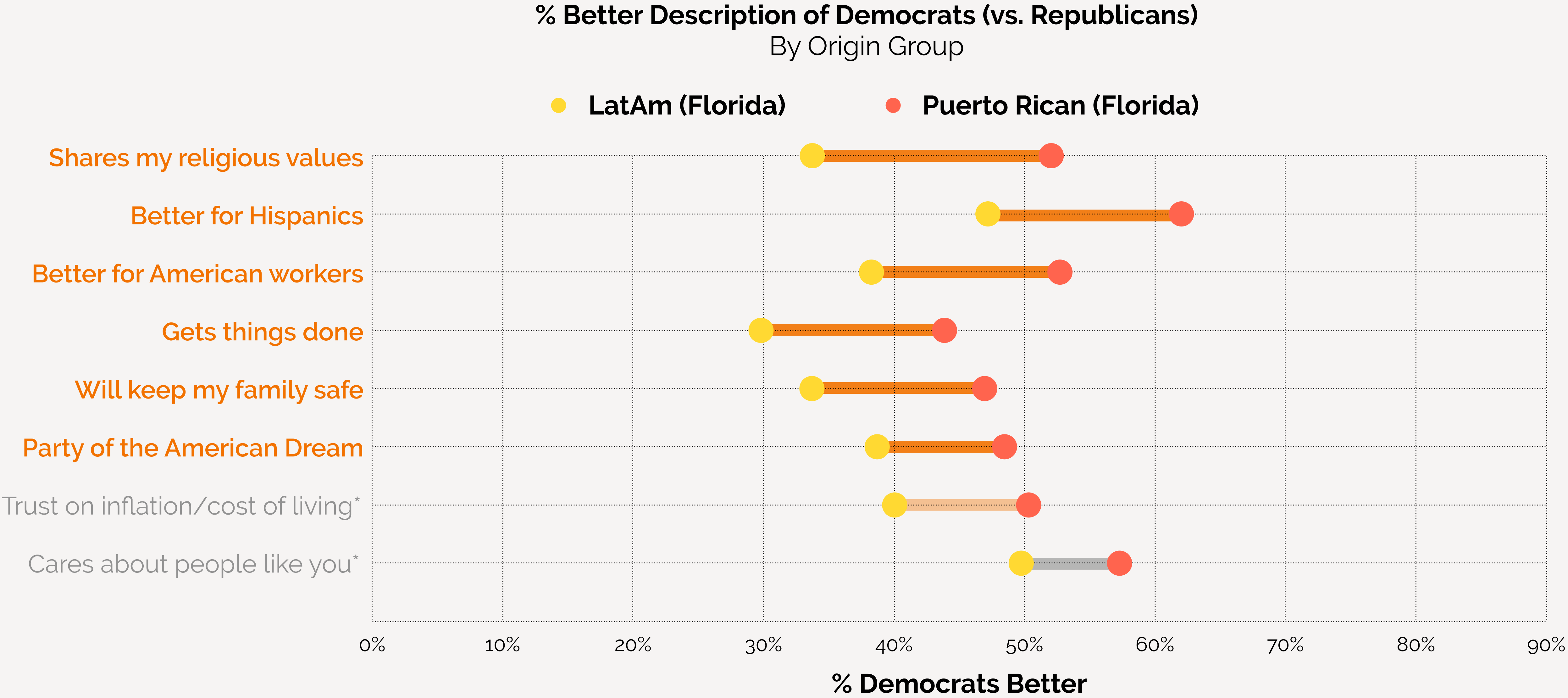
Around **60-70%** of this LatAm category voted for **Obama & Clinton**, but those support levels have dropped every election since. Republicans likely won a **majority of Florida's LatAm voters in 2022**.

How do their **views of the parties** compare to others who haven't shifted in the same way (e.g. Puerto Ricans in the same state, Mexican-Americans in the larger battleground)?

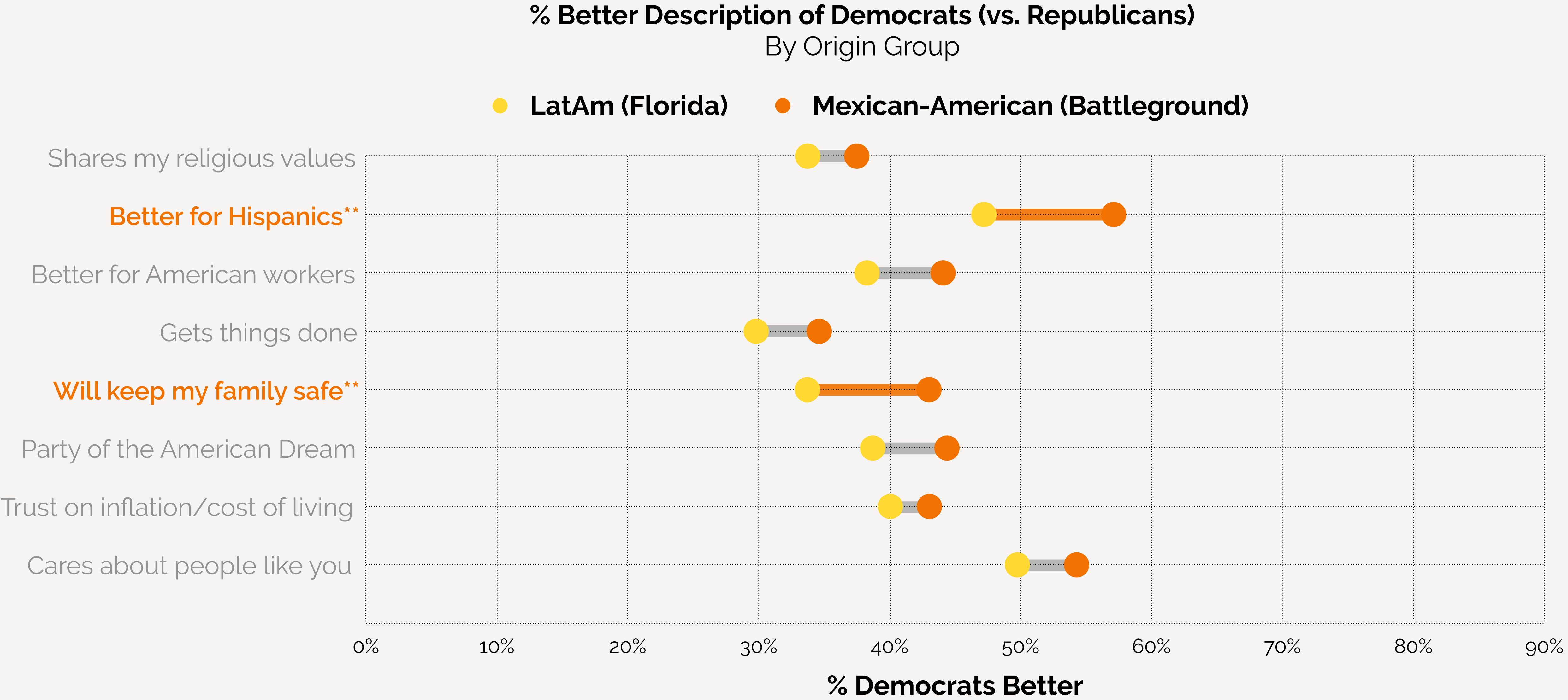
They differ on varying dimensions (religious values, who delivers, and safety). But the common point of divergence is on... **which party is better for Hispanics**.

# Florida LatAms see Dems differently than Puerto Rican peers on most items — but not “cares”

Tension here between religious identity, Hispanic identity & who “delivers” (not just cares)



# Florida LatAms see Dems differently from battleground Mexican-Americans on two dimensions: safety and "better for Hispanics"







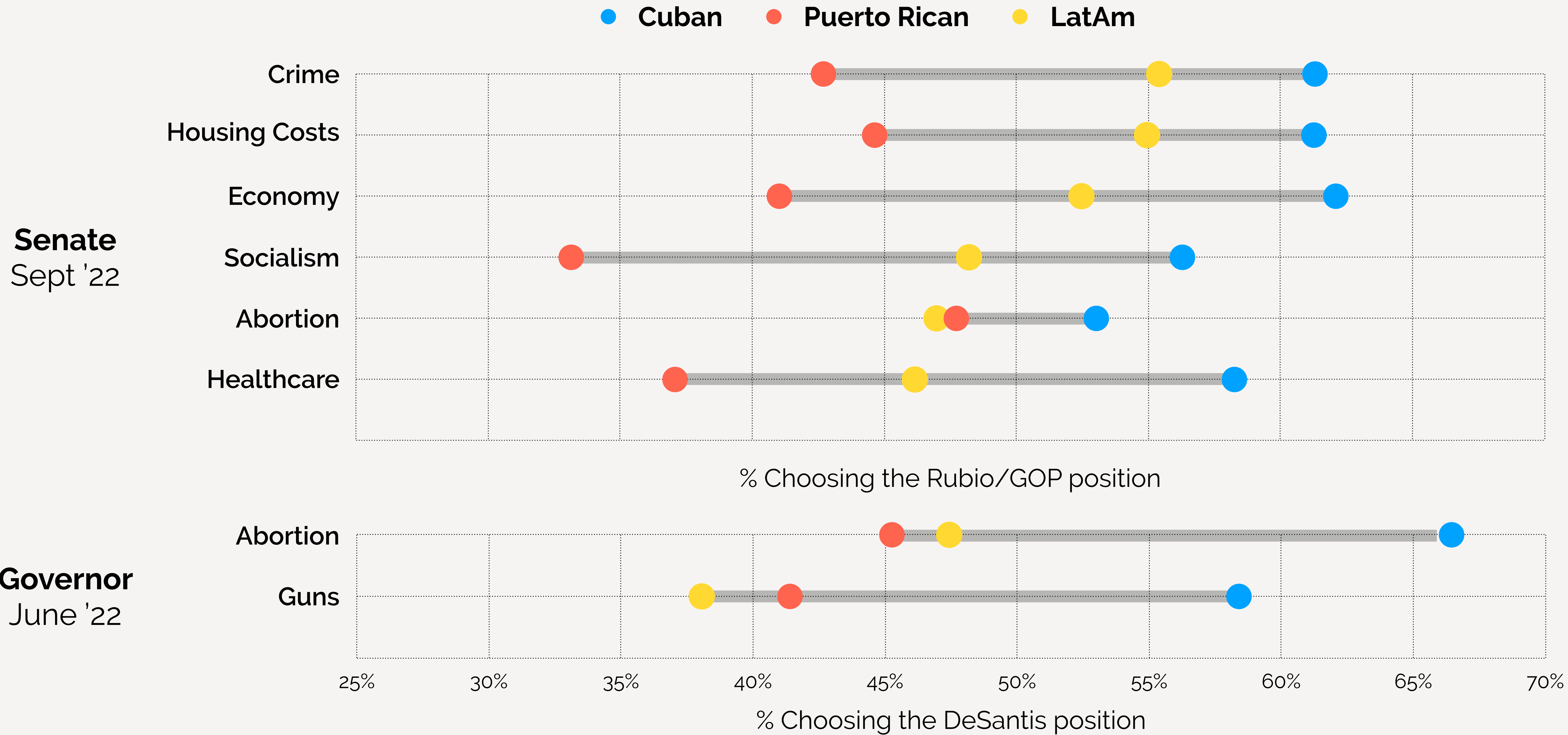
What we saw for Florida LatAms is that the issue environment in 2022 was being evaluated less in terms of “rich” vs. “people like you” and more in terms of **which party can guarantee order & stability**.

**COVID-era fights** about keeping businesses and schools open, or about public safety, plugged into a pre-existing story for people who came to the US fleeing unstable situations presided over by leftist governments.

That is perhaps how LatAms have come to be closer to Cuban voters on matters of **crime and economy** — even while aligning with Puerto Rican voters on **guns and abortion**.

# LatAms closer to Cubans on crime, economy, socialism, but shared views w/ PRs on abortion, guns

The thread, perhaps, among those who voted in 2022: prioritizing stability & safety



Source: Equis State Series surveys in Florida (w/ EMC) | validated 2022 voters







Are these conditions **replicable** for the GOP outside Florida?

Republicans have been gaining ground on multiple brand dimensions. But a change in the underlying partisan story requires an **emotionally and culturally resonant alternative**.

In Florida, there was a story shaped around the specter of socialism among those closest to the experience. It didn't work with Puerto Rican voters in the same way, because they didn't share that trauma. Similarly, in South Texas in 2020, we saw the rising salience of a border identity that didn't apply in the rest of the state.

What is the version for Latinos in **Nevada** or **Pennsylvania**? How can Republicans there overcome the **perception they don't care**?



## Party Brands - In Short

The **identity force-field** that helps orient Latino voters amid mixed signals — essentially party brands tied to a social identity — weighed less in 2020 than in 2016. But it **held steady in 2022** in hotly contested states, crowding out the possibility of a wider realignment.

Still 2022 showed that the party stories **can change** among those voters without a fixed partisanship, when there is an emotionally and culturally resonant alternative. It remains to be seen whether the GOP can replicate that feat **outside Florida**.



## ISSUE ENVIRONMENT

Why didn't fundamentals translate into GOP gains? Economic troubles vs. new dynamics (Dobbs, MAGA-related democracy concerns)

+

## CANDIDATES & CAMPAIGNS

GOP signaled an increase in outreach to Latino voters. Were they out-campaigned in key races?

+

## PARTY BRANDS

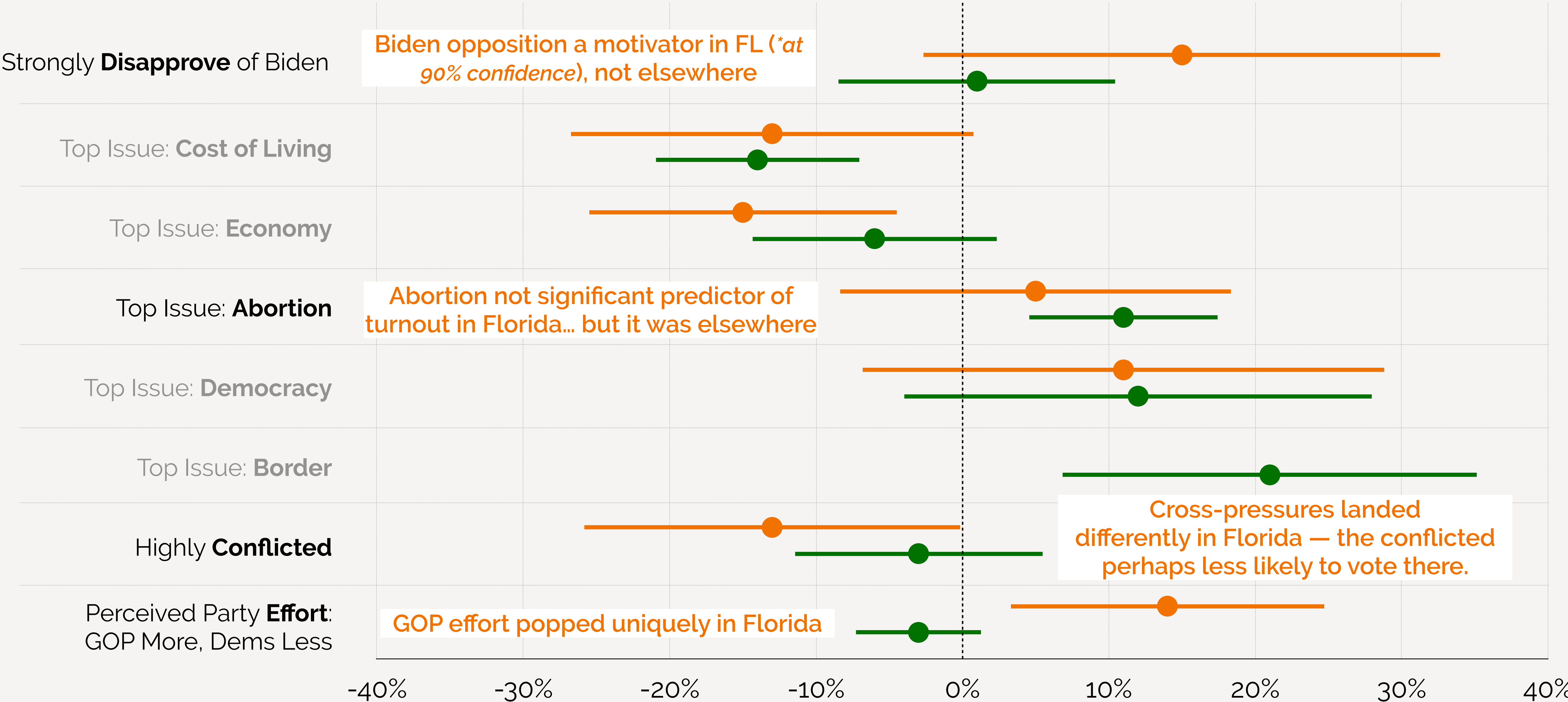
Has there been a shift in how Latinos perceive the political parties? Or have party attachments held firm among swing Latino voters?



To **sum up** this section, we can look at how **campaign effort**, **presidential approval**, **abortion**, and **conflicted views of the parties** helped shape, or not, which Latinos **turned out** in highly-contested states. We can again see these factors more clearly by comparing their effect in Florida.

# Marginal Effects on the Probability of Voting in 2022

● Florida  
● Rest of Battleground



Biden opposition a motivator in FL (\*at 90% confidence), not elsewhere

Abortion not significant predictor of turnout in Florida... but it was elsewhere

Cross-pressures landed differently in Florida — the conflicted perhaps less likely to vote there.

GOP effort popped uniquely in Florida



# Stability in the Battleground - Summary

1. The fundamentals, including rising costs & Biden job approval, looked dire for Dems. **But inflation voters stayed home, Dobbs & democracy voters didn't.**
2. While the GOP increased outreach to Latino voters (or made indications they would), **Democrats out-campaigned them in key races.**
3. The **force-field held**. We saw the staying power of the traditional perception of the political parties among Latinos — the identity force-field — hold firm, even among the swingiest voters.
4. In Florida: **a steep decline in Democratic support**, in a way that reinforces the above. R's out-campaigned D's, fundamentals caught up with Dems & many Hispanic voters in FL adopted a new story about the parties. These realities only seemed to cast in relief the role of campaign effects, issue environment and party brands in enabling stability in the highly-contested states.



# 4. What it Means for 2024

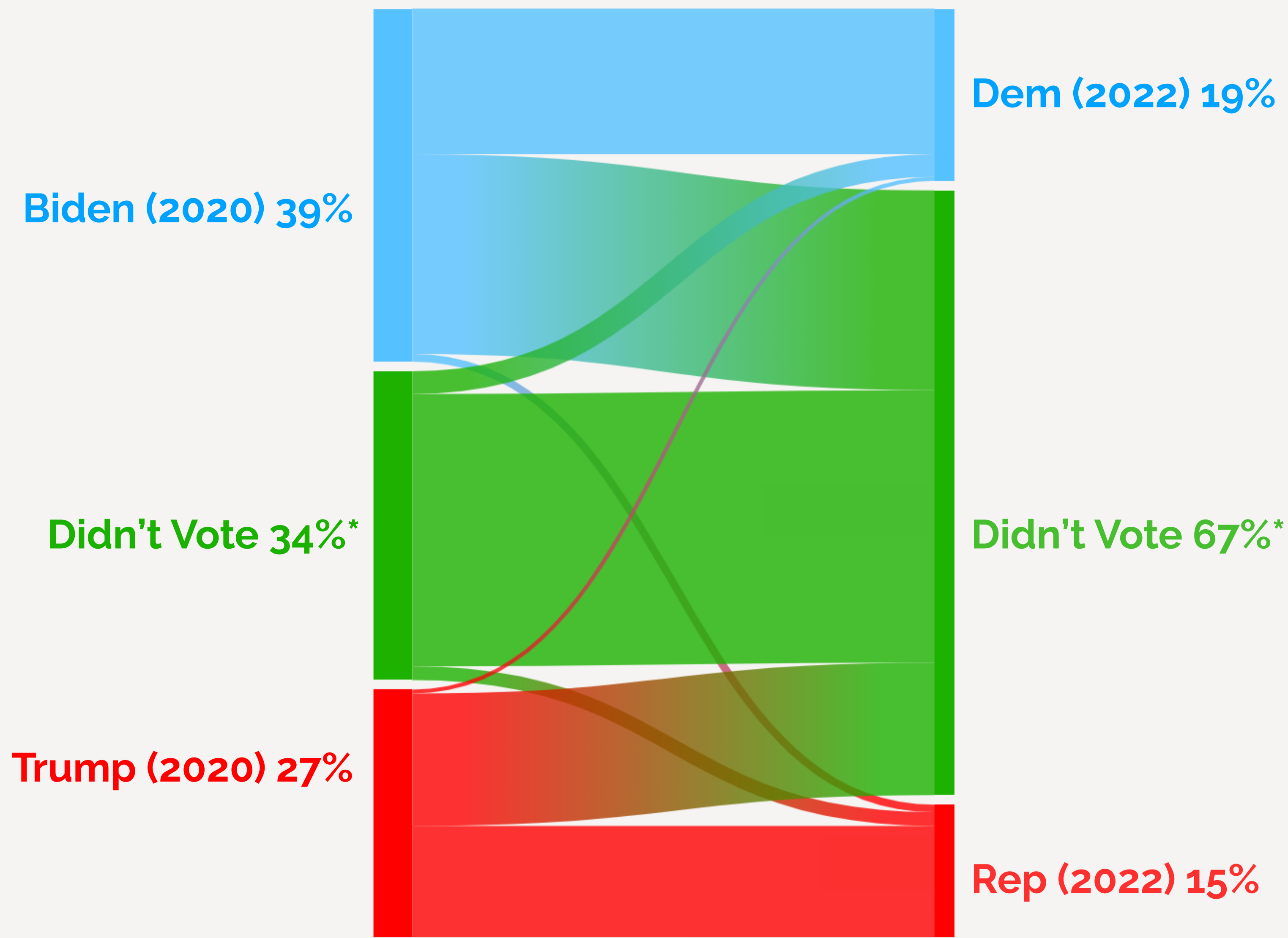
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## What it means for 2024

1. The swingiest Latinos still largely **default to Democrats** due to enduring party associations but remain **willing to vote for Republicans on a case-by-case basis**;
2. Dynamism in the Latino electorate means opportunity for both parties with **those who are new or previously sat on sidelines**. Latino voters who sat out 2022 are different from the midterm electorate in important ways.

**2022 a skirmish in a larger conflict / midterms are weird**  
Large share of Latinos (like all voters) sit out midterms



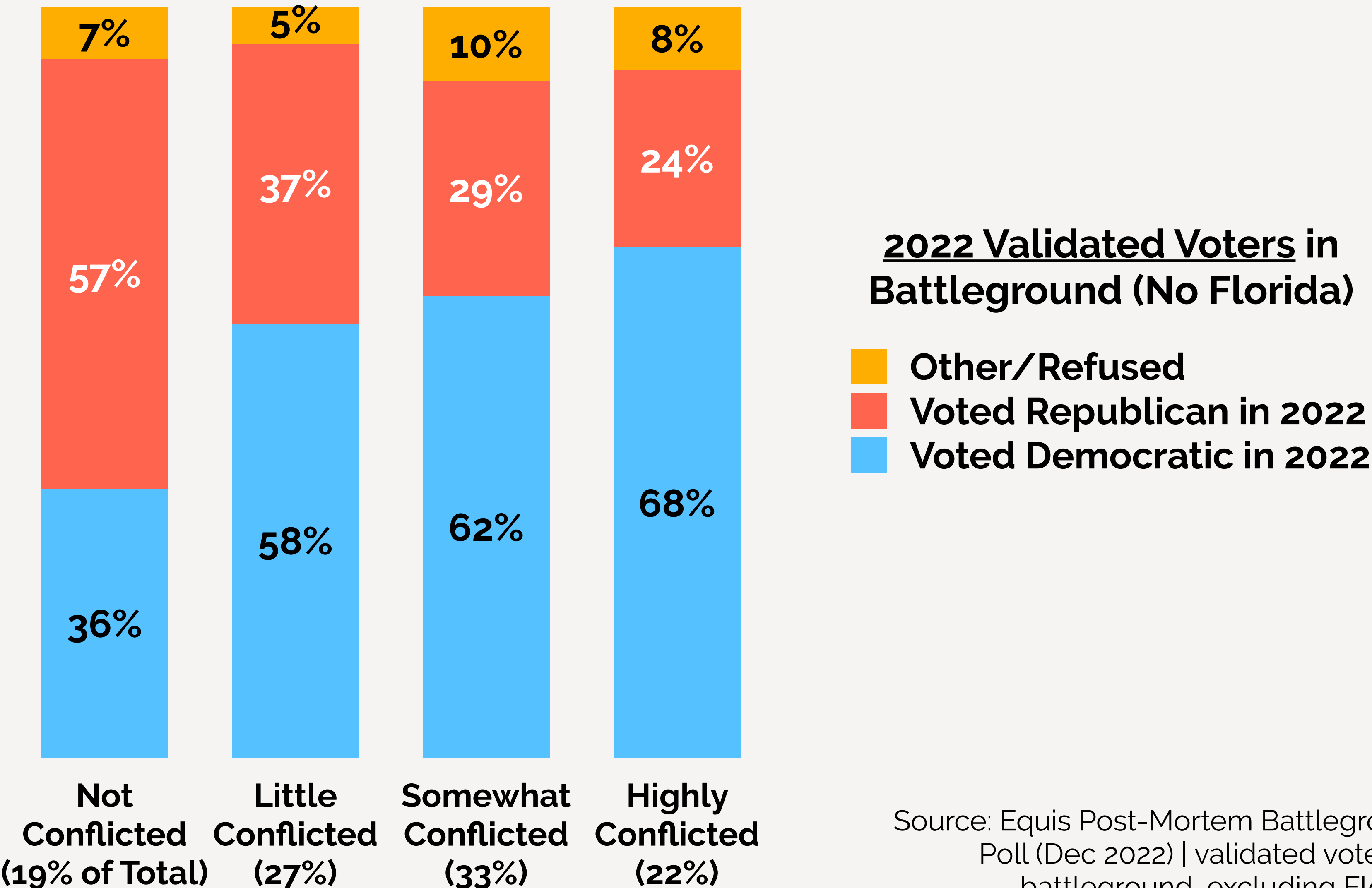


It is likely wrong to suggest, as we have before, that swing Latinos feel stuck between both parties.

In reality: the swingiest Latinos **still largely default to Democrats** due to enduring party associations, but they remain **willing to vote for Republicans on a case-by-case basis.**

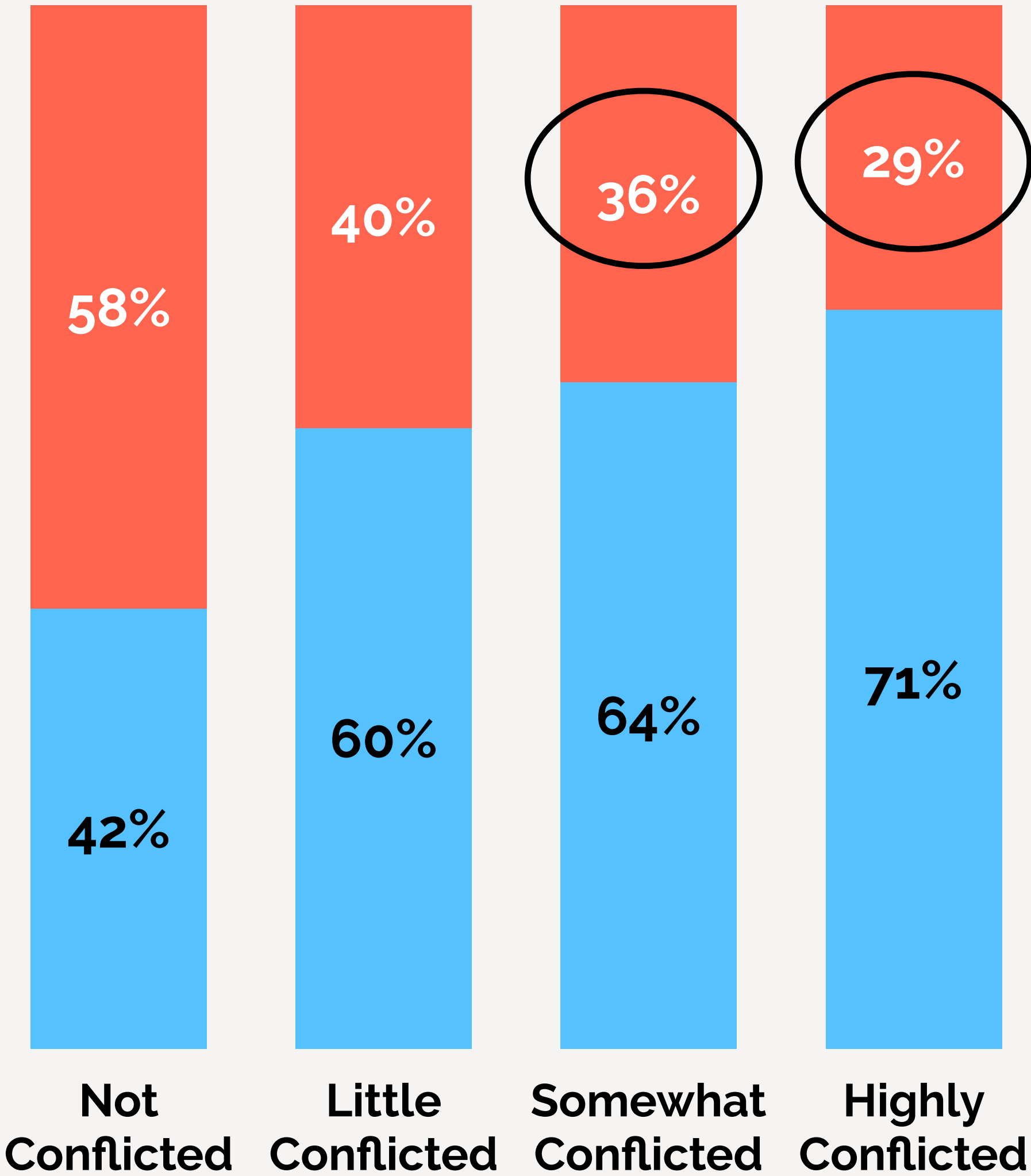
# Conflicted Latino voters (like other swing Hispanics) still tend to break for Democrats

2022 Generic Congressional Ballot - By Level of Cross-Pressure



Conflicted Latino voters (like other swing Hispanics) still tend to break for Democrats  
**But meaningful share appear willing to vote for Republicans on a case-by-case basis**

2022 Vote Choice (Senate/Gov/Cong) - By Level of Cross-Pressure



2022 Validated Voters in Battleground (No Florida)

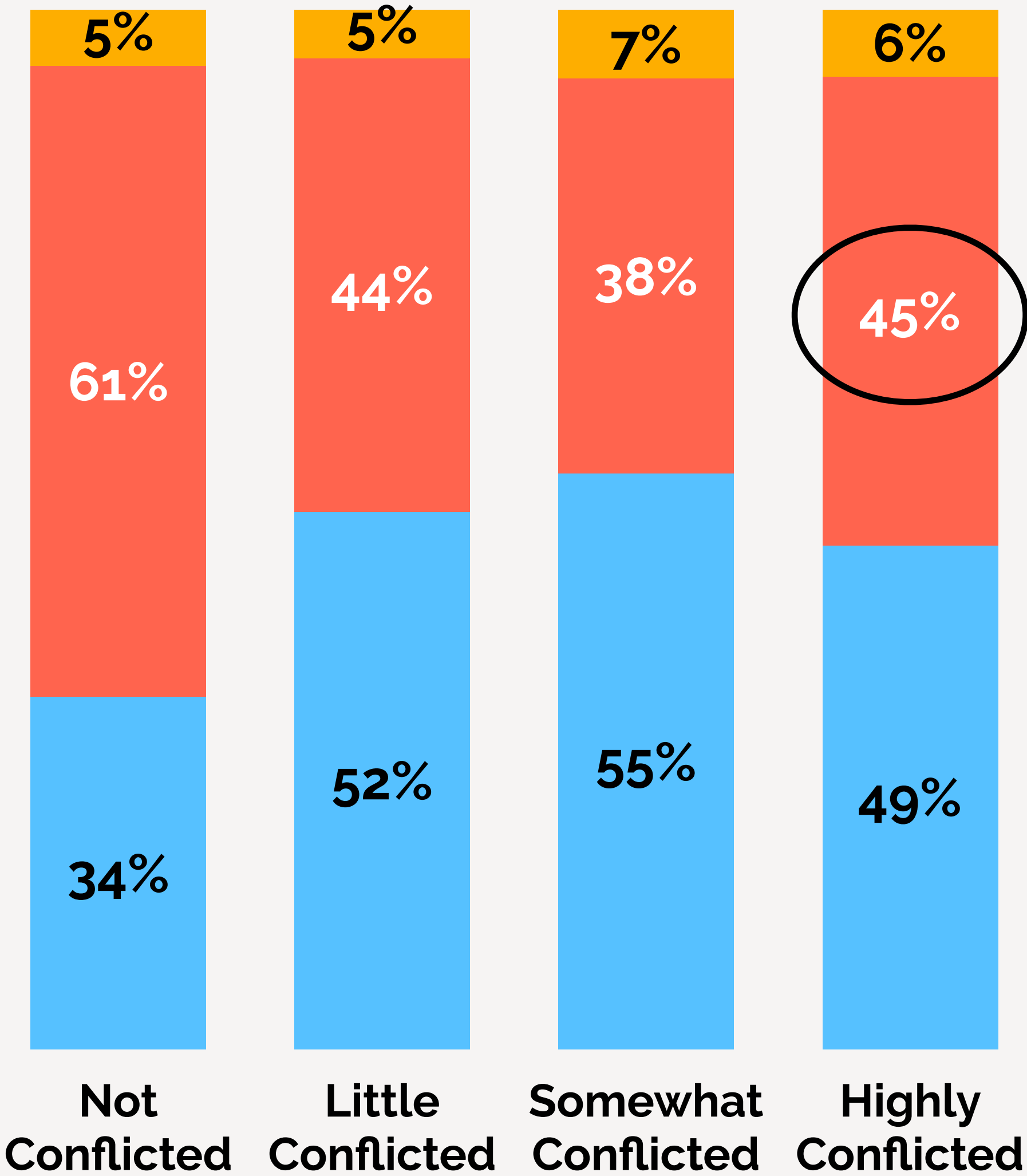
■ Voted for at Least One GOP in '22  
■ Didn't Vote for any GOP in '22

Source: Equis Post-Mortem Battleground Poll (Dec 2022) | validated voters in battleground, excluding Florida



Conflicted Latino voters (like other swing Hispanics) still tend to break for Democrats  
**But meaningful share appear willing to vote for Republicans on a case-by-case basis**

2024 Presidential Election - By Level of Cross-Pressure



Registered Latinos in Battleground (No Florida)

- Undecided
- Generic Republican in 2024
- Biden in 2024

Source: Equis Post-Mortem Battleground Poll (Dec 2022) | registered voters in battleground, excluding Florida







These voters look like Democrats (for example, in modeling used to predict partisanship). They often respond in surveys like Democrats. But they are liable to “defect” in the right circumstances.

As such, **expect down-ballot campaigns in both parties to be focused on persuasion to Hispanic voters**, while presidential campaigns focus on both persuasion *and* turnout.



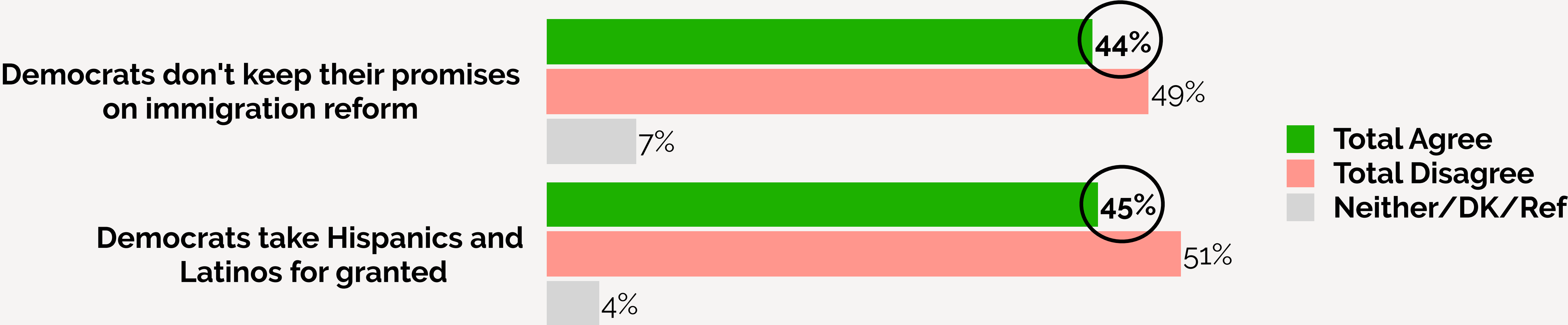
As we showed, shifts in issue environment and identity concerns play roles in determining when swing Latinos vote for Republicans.

That's why **a question going forward** is what happens when **immigration reform falls out of the headlines** and off the agenda.

The “identity forcefield” keeping many Latinos from Republicans has **never been entirely about immigration**. But public fights around the treatment of immigrants have in the past **drawn a line in the sand** — helping some Latinos sort out who is welcoming (or not) to people like them.

**Even among Latinos who say Dems are better for the group, strong sense of disappointment**  
Concerns potentially undercut identity-based narrative

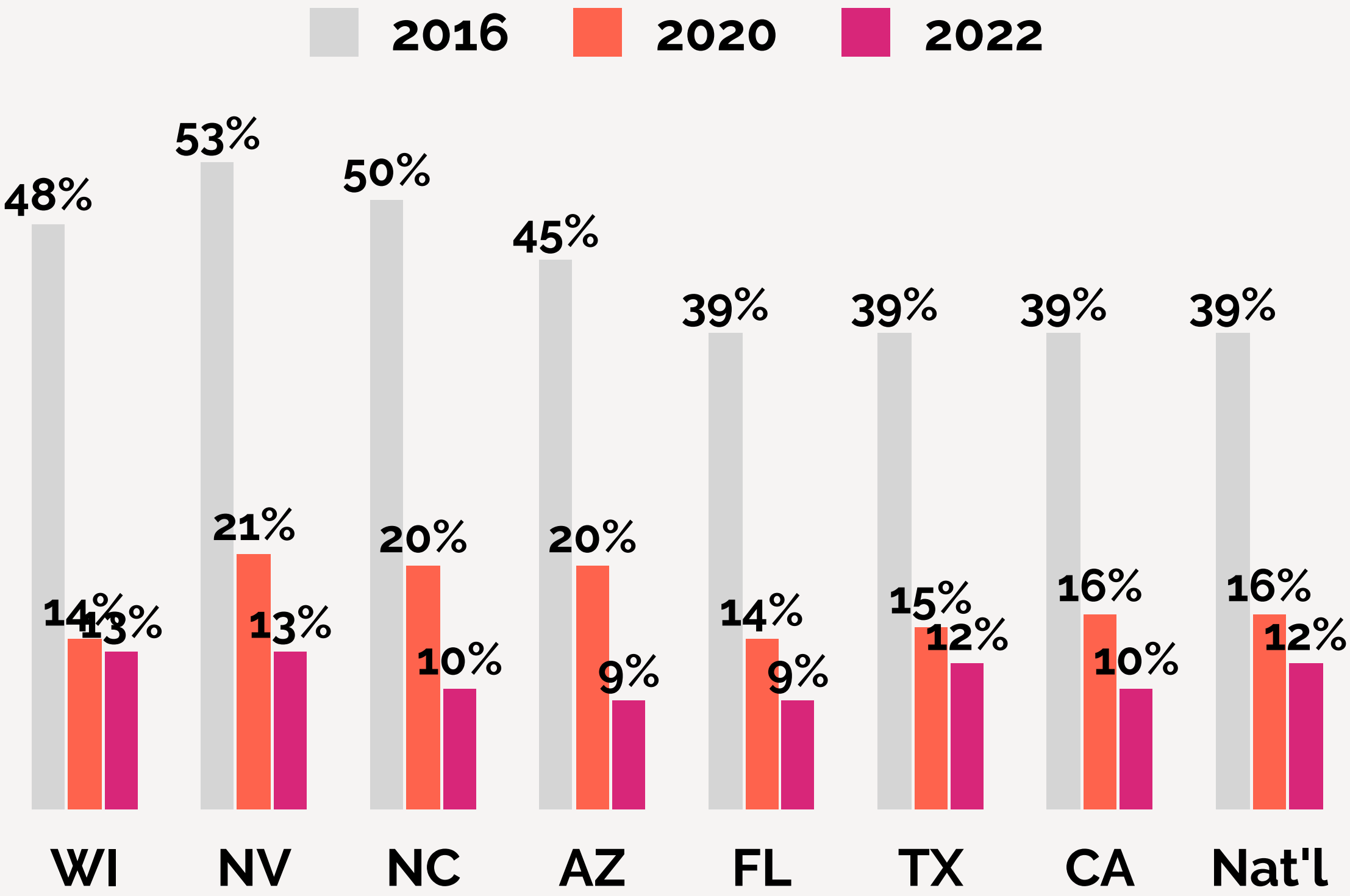
**Among Latino Voters Who Believe Democrats are “Better for Hispanics”**



A wildcard going forward: in the absence of action, immigration has dropped precipitously in salience & Democrats no longer “own” the issue

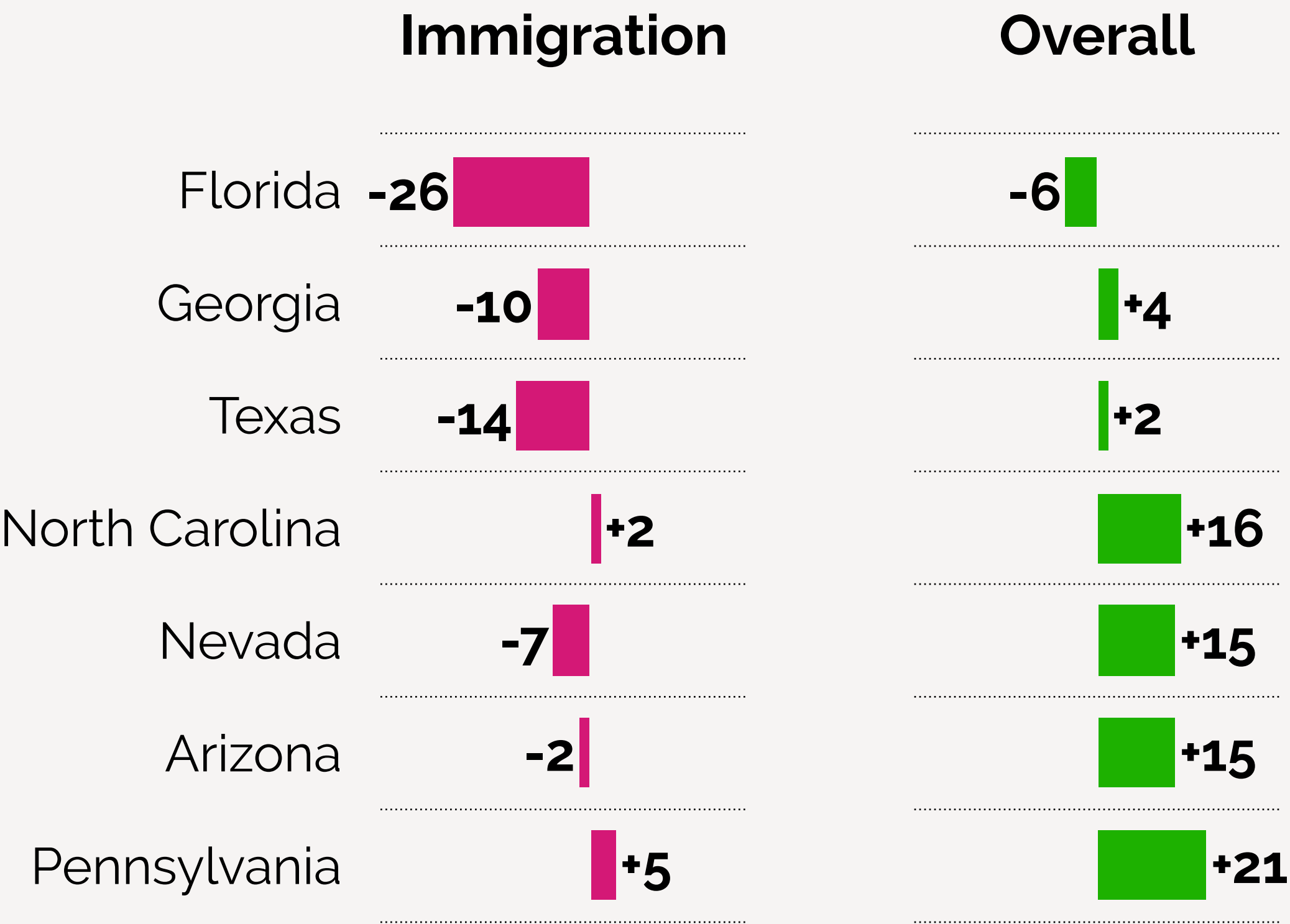
Immigration as Top Issue

Among Latino Voters



Net Biden Job Approval

Late 2021/Early 2022 (Approve - Disapprove)





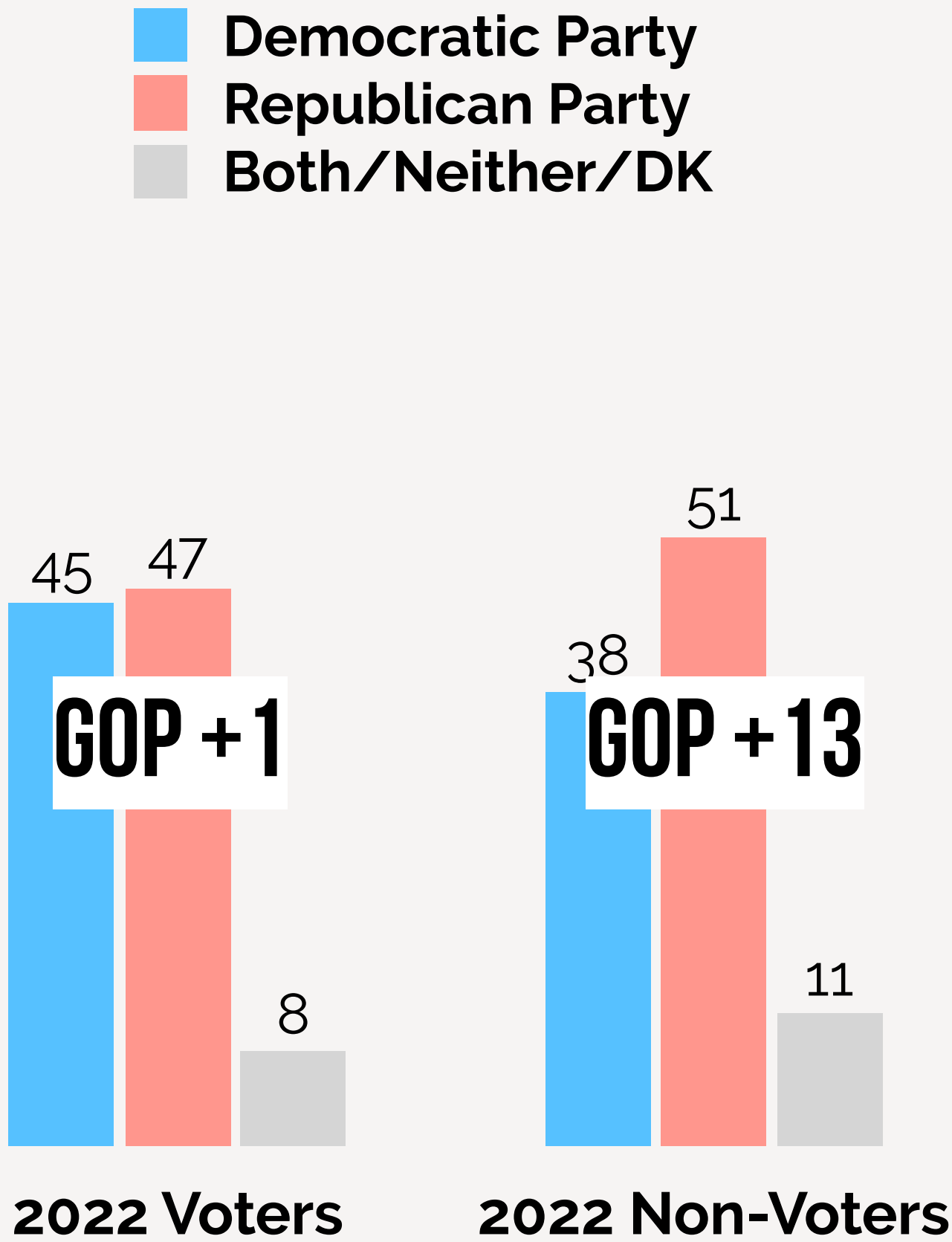
The **dynamism** in the Latino electorate, with great growth and regular churn, presents an opportunity for both parties with those who are **new or previously sat on the sidelines**.

These less-regular voters are also those most likely to be **persuadable**.

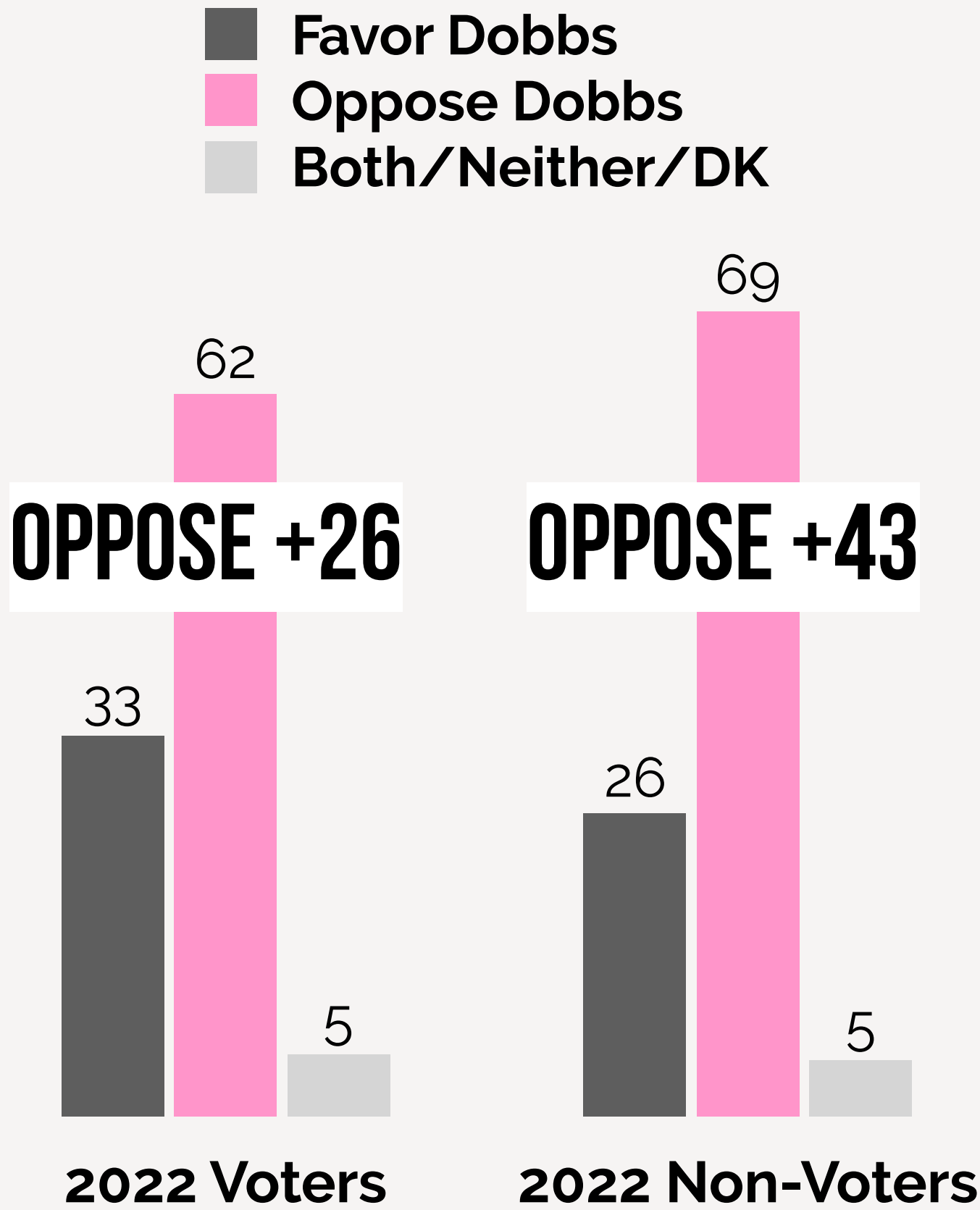
Notably, Latino voters who sat out 2022 are different from those who voted in important ways.

**Latino non-voters are not monolithic in their views, hold sometimes contradictory-seeming positions**  
More likely to trust GOP on inflation, more likely to think Rs favor rich; more likely to oppose Dobbs

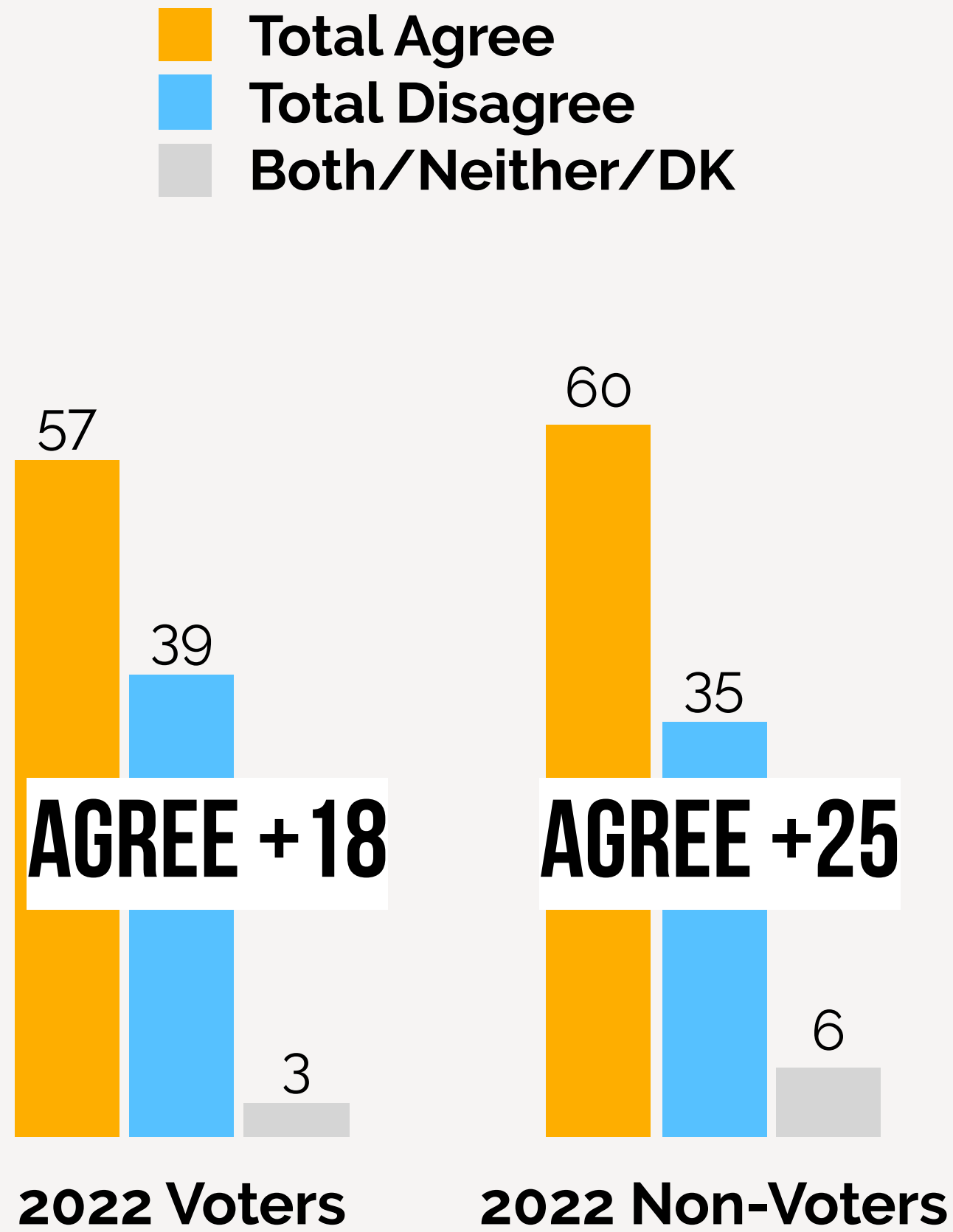
Trust to Deal with  
**Inflation/Rising Costs**



Views on  
**Dobbs decision**



**GOP prioritizes rich**  
over working people



Source: Equis Post-Mortem Battleground Poll (Dec 2022) | voter-file-matched respondents in battleground





There are some indications, at this early stage of the cycle, that the GOP or Trump would do better with Latino voters in 2024 than they did in 2020.

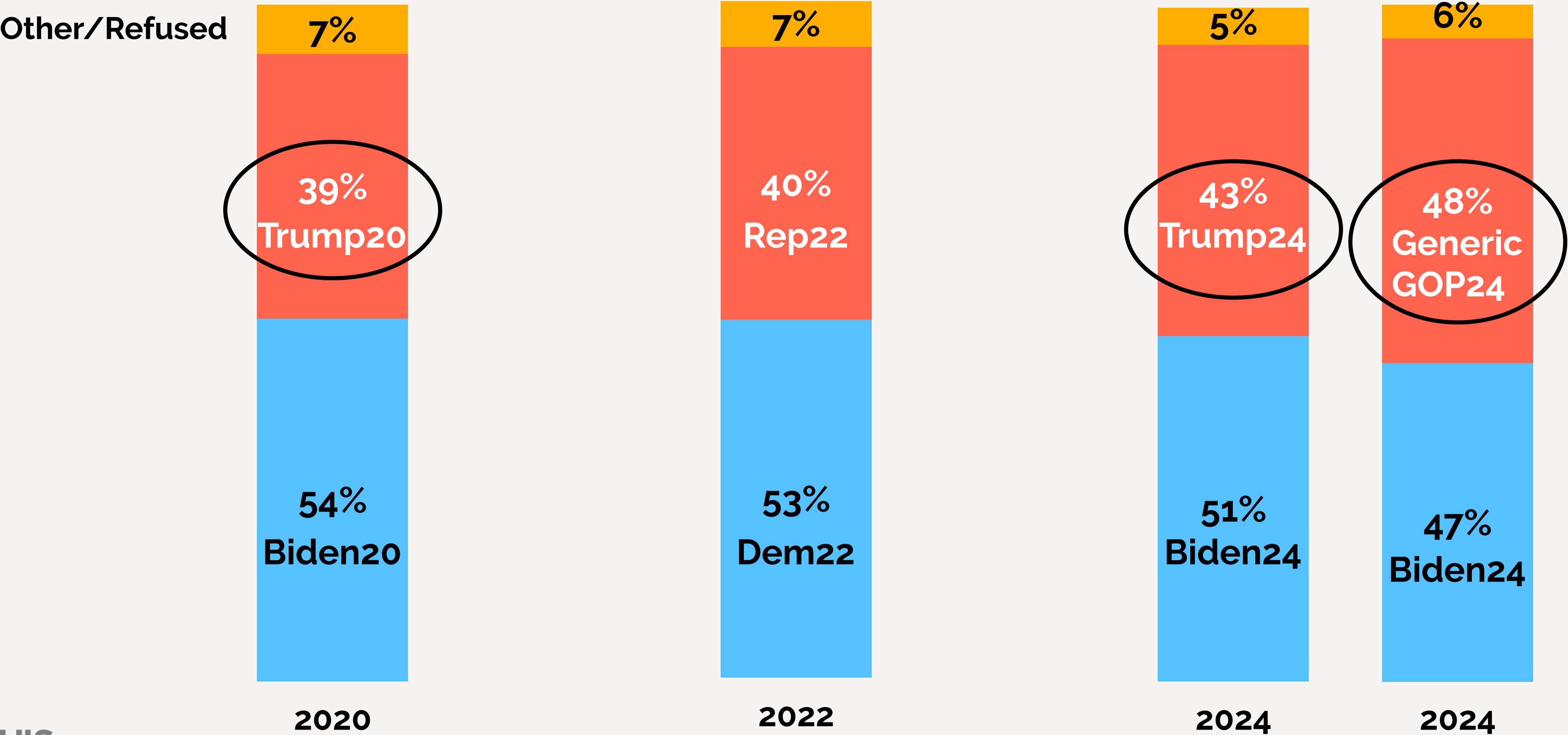
In particular, **Republicans show some pockets of strength among non-voters.**

Much can change, but the numbers are a reminder that this important part of the electorate is **far from calcified** in its attitudes.



Poll suggests 2024 could look different than 2020 among battleground Latinos — due to movement among Latino non-voters as they re-engage

2020 Presidential vs. 2022 Congressional vs. 2024 Presidential  
Registered Latinos in Battleground

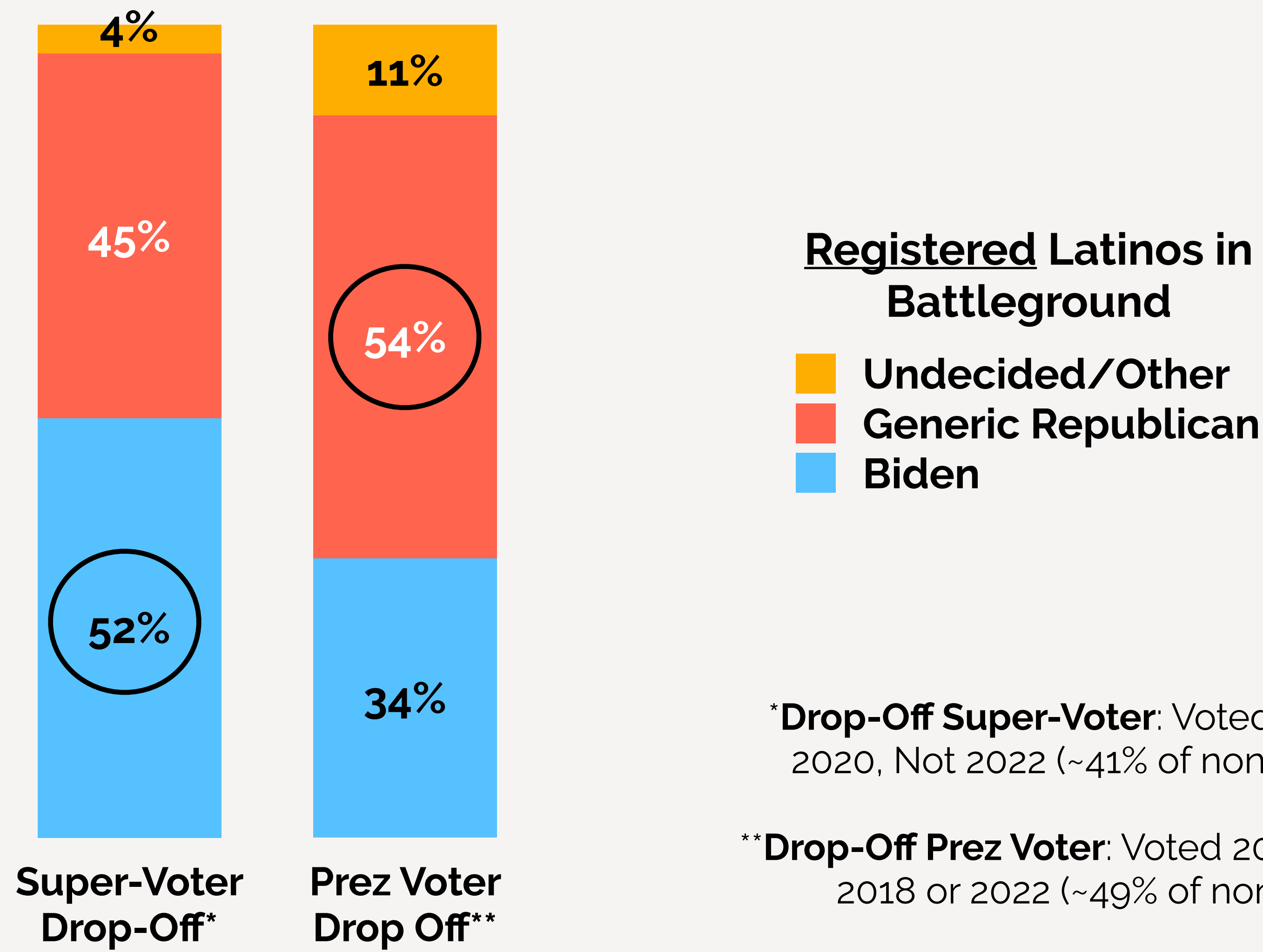




The greatest uncertainty stems from the Latinos who sat out 2022 but are in position to **return in 2024**.

Under the hood: infrequent (presidential-only) voters more GOP-supporting than super-voters who skipped '22

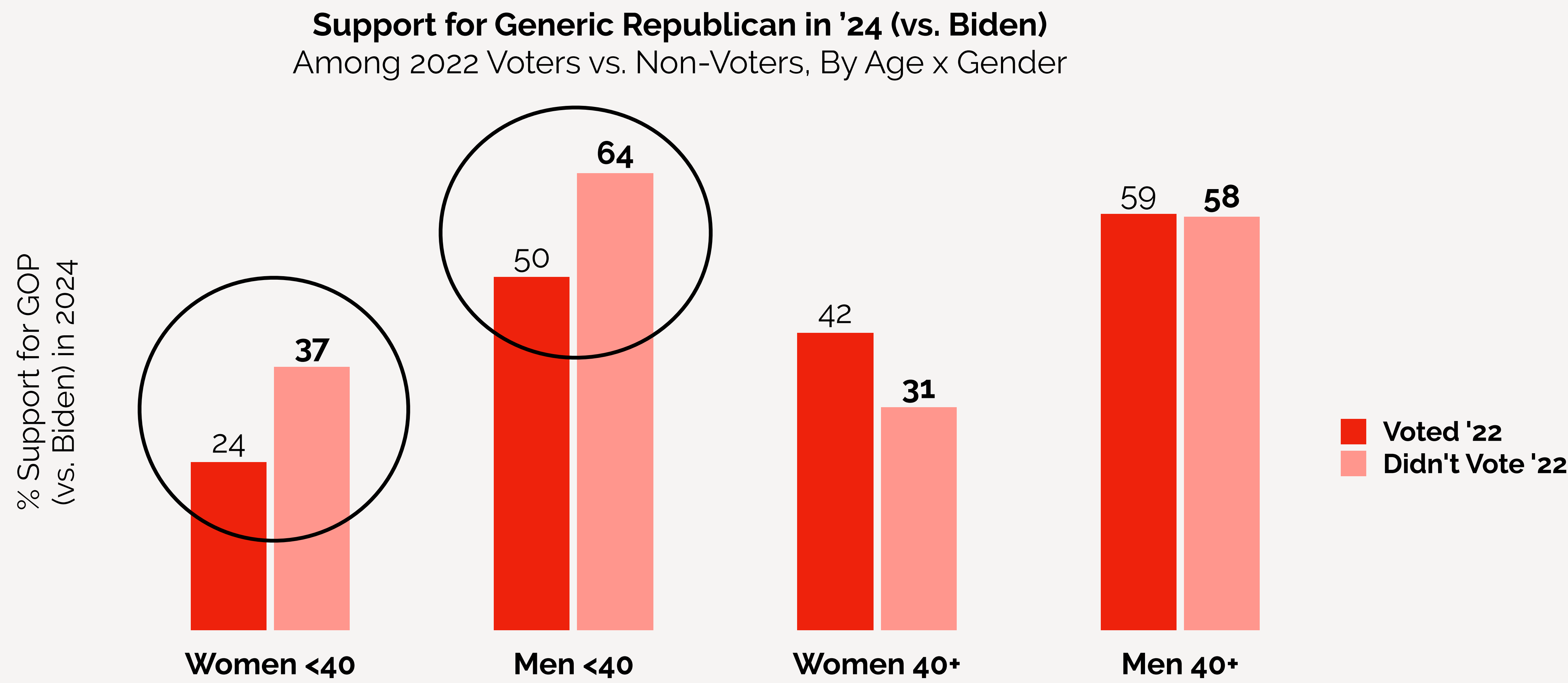
2024 Presidential Election



\*Drop-Off Super-Voter: Voted 2018 & 2020, Not 2022 (~41% of non-voters)

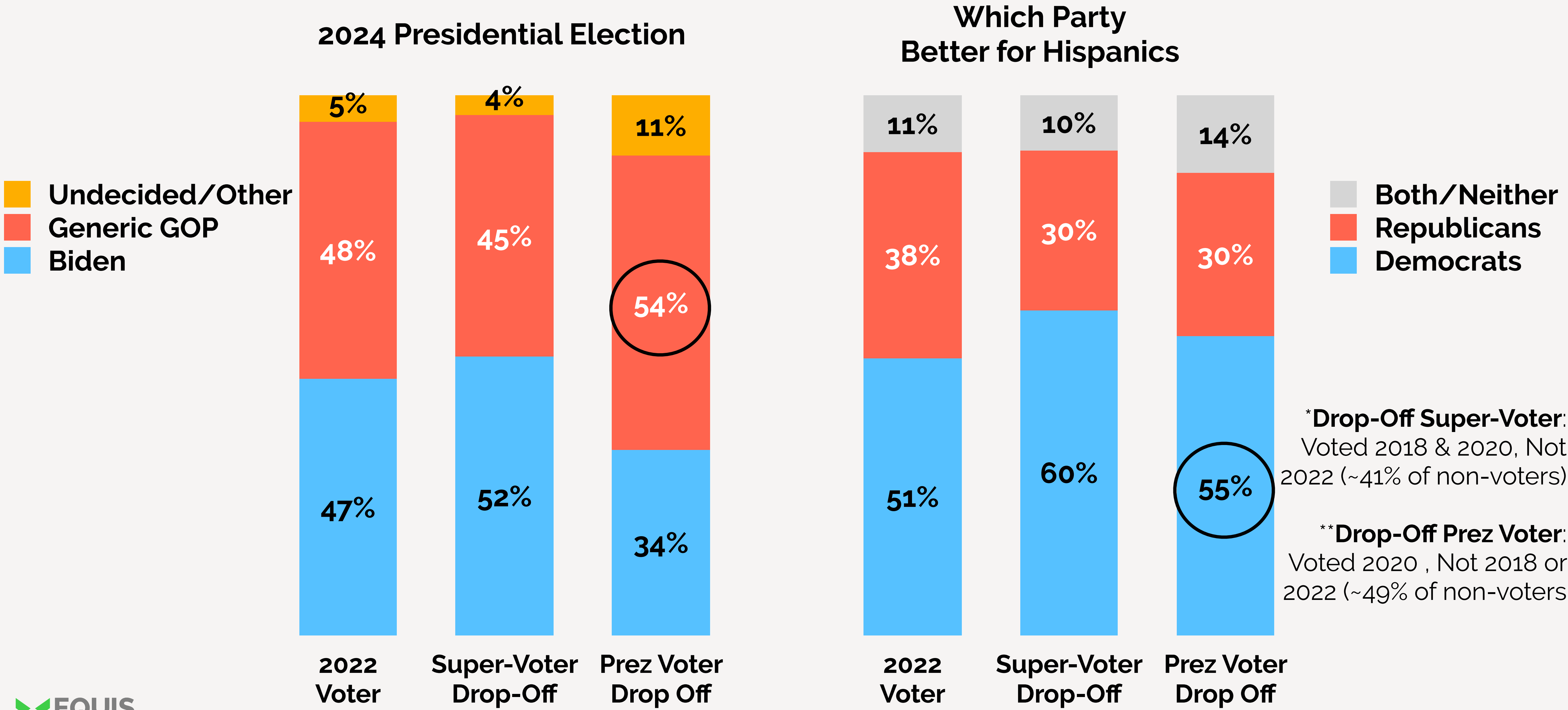
\*\*Drop-Off Prez Voter: Voted 2020, Not 2018 or 2022 (~49% of non-voters)

**Under the hood: differences in GOP vote b/w younger Latinos who voted in '22 vs. those who didn't**  
GenZ/millennial men *and* women who didn't vote in midterm more GOP-supporting than peers



# The infrequent Latinos currently pick GOP over Biden... but see Dems as better for Hispanics

The dance between identity and vote choice continues





The great irony is that the Latinos **most liable to be receptive** to strong candidates, campaigns, and issue pushes — and the most open to adopting a new story about the parties — are often the **most neglected**, written off by campaigns from both parties for voting sporadically, or taken for granted as turnout targets alone.

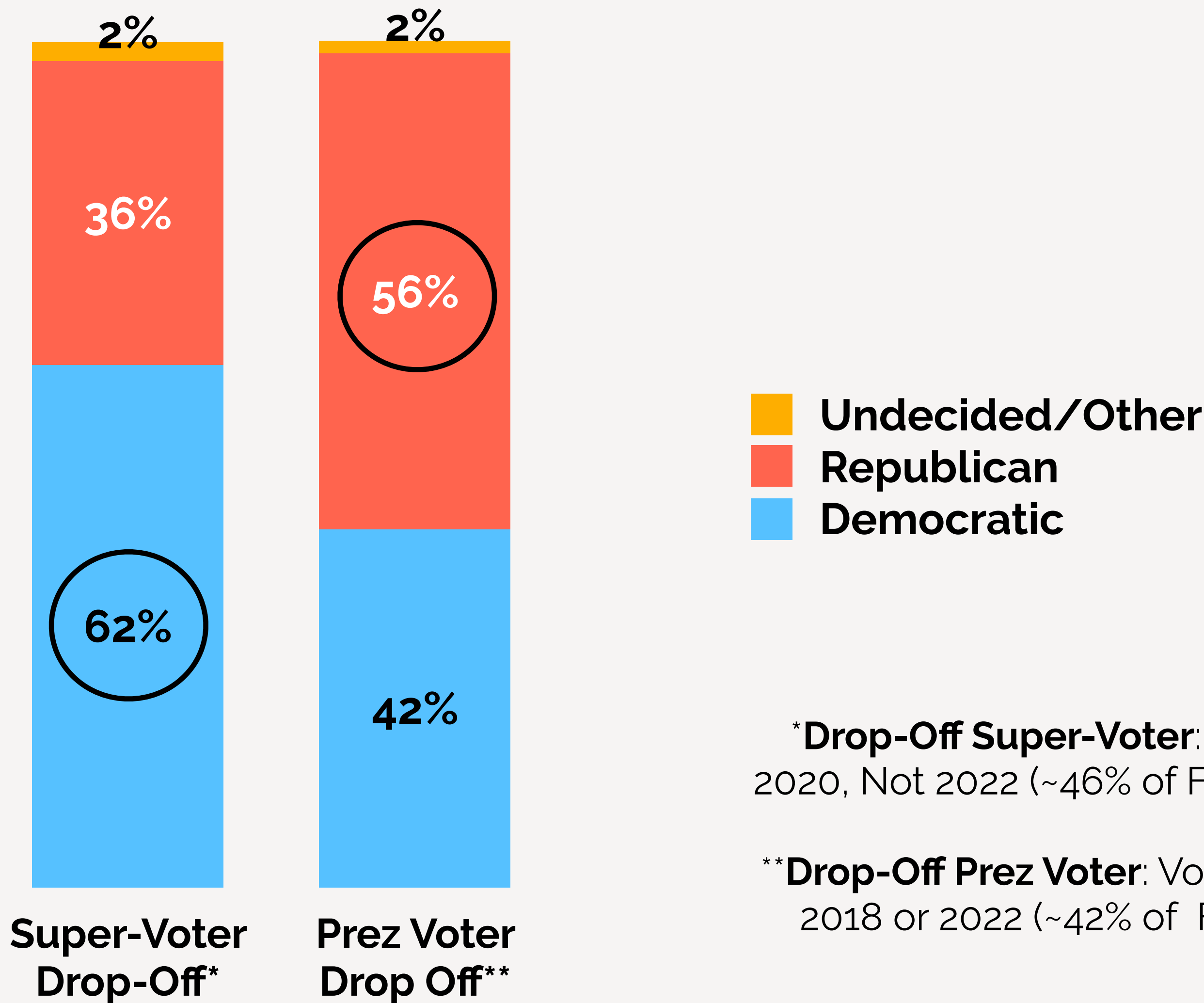


This dynamism in a constantly-churning Hispanic electorate means things can **always change**, even over a short period of time... and even where **trends look the most intractable**.



**This dynamic in a constantly-changing Hispanic electorate means things can change even in Florida**  
Both parties have hidden pockets of strength, and room to grow

**FLORIDA: 2022 Generic Congressional Ballot**  
Among Registered Latino Non-Voters in Florida



# 5. In Conclusion

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## In conclusion

A **tectonic shift** in the national Latino vote, along the lines of what we saw in Florida perhaps, is still theoretically **possible**. But there is **no evidence for it in the 2022 elections**.

That doesn't mean Latino voting patterns have become static.

Quite the opposite: Latinos, like Black and AAPI voters, are at a **highly dynamic point**. They remain one of the great wildcards in US elections and in the study of them, ready to subvert any overconfident expectations.

# Thank you!



Equis will return this year with...

- The **2023-2024 Equis State Series:** polling and focus groups in ~10 states, scheduled to launch in August 2023 [sponsorship opportunities are still available];
- **Equis Playbook:** a synthesis of best practices for engaging Latinos; featuring new polling and testing;
- **Data Reloaded:** analysis of Latino voter data and modeling;
- And more...

