

2020 Post-Mortem

# PART ONE: Portrait of a Persuadable Latino

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*April 1, 2021*



# First of all

- **The 2020 elections were a reminder of the diversity—including ideological diversity— of Latino voters.** The results of 2020 challenge some facile assumptions about the Latino vote, and speak to the dangers of taking an overly simplistic view of any demographic group in the electorate.
- **Latinos were a critical part of the Democratic coalition that won the WH & Senate.** There are several states that Joe Biden and Senate Democrats won with the help of Latino voters, and there are none they lost because of them.
- **Still, Trump & the GOP actively campaigned for the Latino vote and made gains that cut across geography & place of origin.** In South Florida, the gains were enough to flip congressional seats. But questions remain about the nature of the shift, which will take yet more time to unpack.



## Key findings

**In 2020, a segment of Latino voters demonstrated that they are more “swing” than commonly assumed.**



# Key findings

1. **Trump appeared to make gains in the last year of his term among voters usually on the sidelines of politics.** While Latinos are often treated as a target for registration and turnout, it was less-frequent Hispanic voters who showed the most “swing.”
2. **This is a story of turnout *and* persuasion.** Some analysis makes the mistake of treating the Hispanic electorate as static from election to election, when in fact it is incredibly dynamic and fast-changing. The Trump coalition of Hispanic voters, still dwarfed in size by the Democratic coalition, grew on the margins thanks to a combination of defections and new voters, with likely a greater number of the latter.
3. While the “why” of this shift requires more investigation, part of the story appears to be that **the barrier keeping some conservative Latinos from voting for Trump went down during COVID**, with a change in focus from his anti-Latino or anti-immigrant positions to other concerns, including the economy.



# Shifts occurred in Hispanic-heavy geographies across the country, to differing degrees

Outside Miami, Latinos still supported Democratic nominee at high levels

	Two-Way Democratic Support		Shift
	Clinton '16	Biden '20	2016 -> 2020
<b>FLORIDA</b>			
Miami-Dade (>50% Cuban precincts)	49%	35%	-14
Miami-Dade (>50% LatAm precincts)	70%	50%	-20
Osceola (>30% PR precincts)	76%	65%	-11
<b>TEXAS</b>			
Rio Grande Valley (counties)	70%	58%	-12
<b>NEVADA</b>			
Clark County (>50% Latino precincts)	79%	73%	-6
<b>WISCONSIN</b>			
Milwaukee (>50% Latino precincts)	84%	78%	-6
<b>ARIZONA</b>			
Maricopa (>50% Latino precincts)	79%	76%	-3
<b>NEW JERSEY</b>			
Paterson (city)	91%	81%	-10
<b>MASSACHUSETTS</b>			
Lawrence (city)	85%	74%	-11

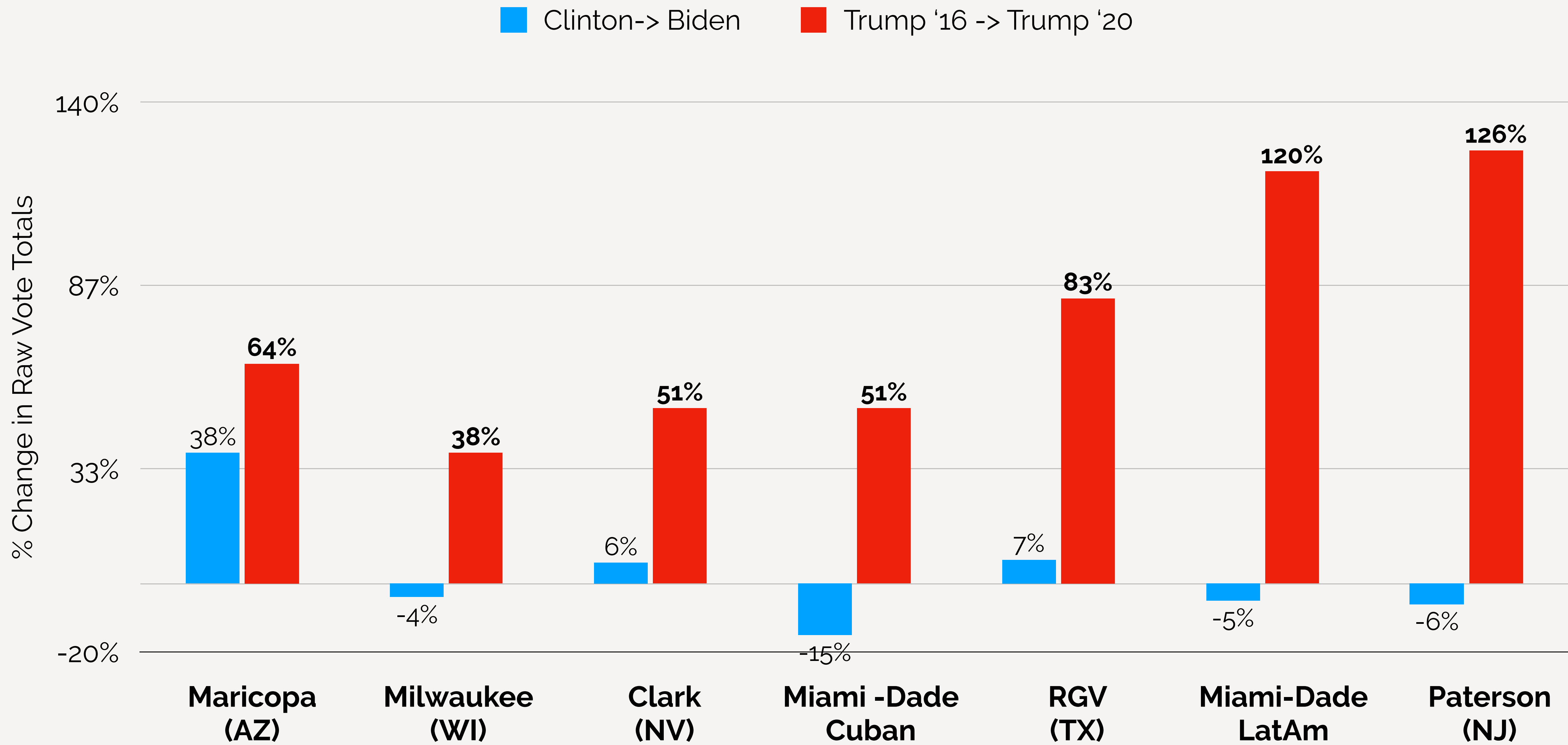


**Latinos aren't a monolith, but they remain a group.** Trump gains seemed to be unique among those identifying as Latino across geography and place of origin.

**We can't explain the *national* baseline shift toward Trump with idiosyncrasies specific to one region or nationality.** Border dynamics don't explain changes in New Jersey. Cuban/Venezuelan fear of socialism doesn't explain movement in Milwaukee.

# Trump's raw vote totals surged in Latino-heavy spots across the country

But Arizona a case study in countering GOP gains





## **Various credible theories to explain Trump gains — but not enough data yet to say**

No one theory has fully explanatory power, but they can't all be equally valid either

- Shifting salience of immigration and/or shifting norms around Latino identity
- Propaganda & misinformation
- Trump campaign & social pressure/relational persuasion
- Incumbency and personality
- “Socialism” and fear of the left
- Dog whistle politics & racial status anxiety
- COVID and the economy
- Realignment along lines of gender, education & ideology
- Activation around religion, SCOTUS and QAnon

# A story of turnout and persuasion



**Thinking in terms of “turnout vs. persuasion” misses the larger story about Latinos who feel on the sidelines of the political process.** We know enough to say it's a mistake to assume the 2020 shift was exclusively about turnout, or about vote-switching by Clinton voters. The truth is closer to both.

Evidence from FL, TX and NV shows how the distinction between turnout and persuasion get blurred.

# South FL

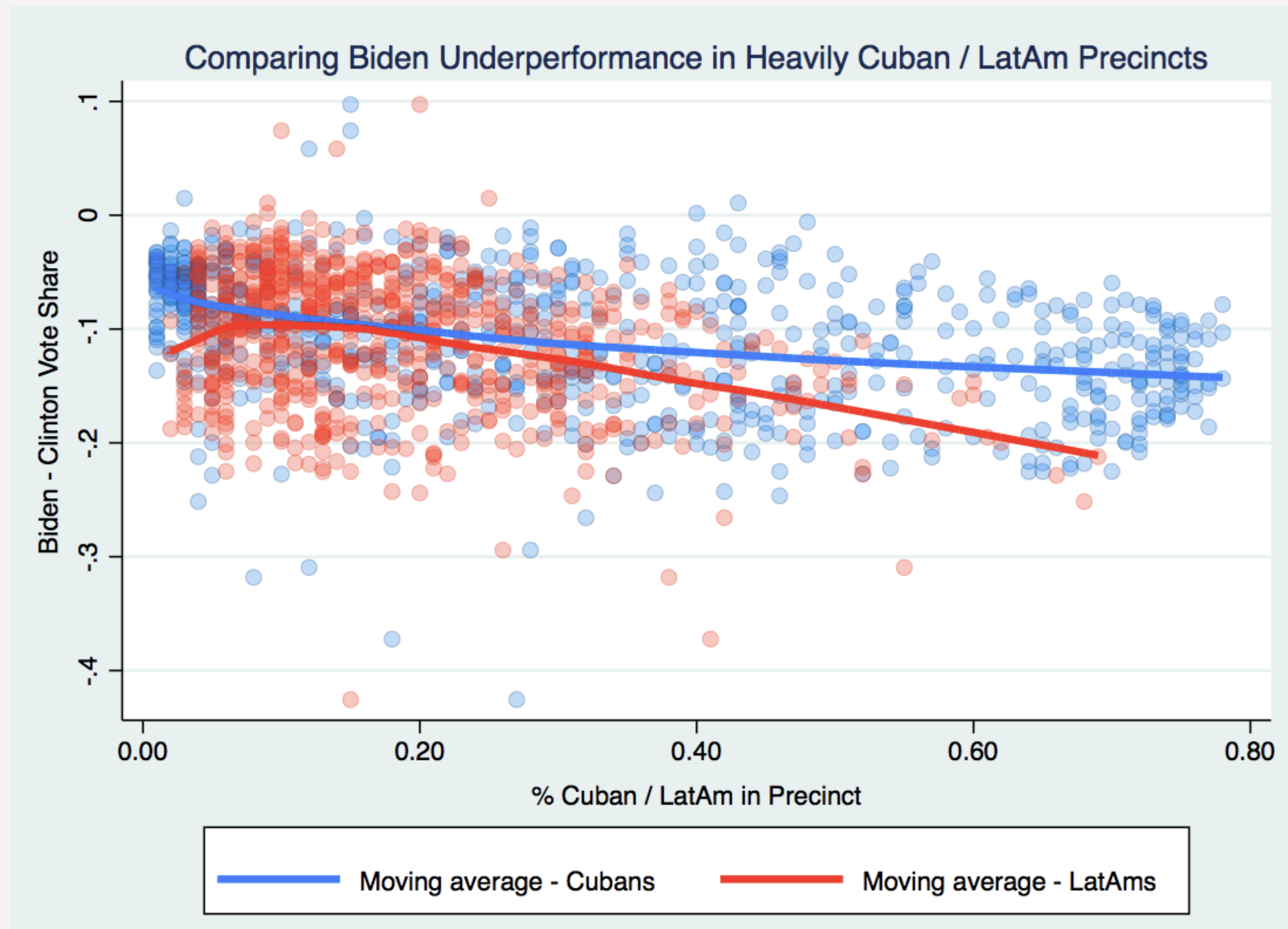
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Some 15% of Cubans who voted Clinton '16 went Trump '20— true vote-switching

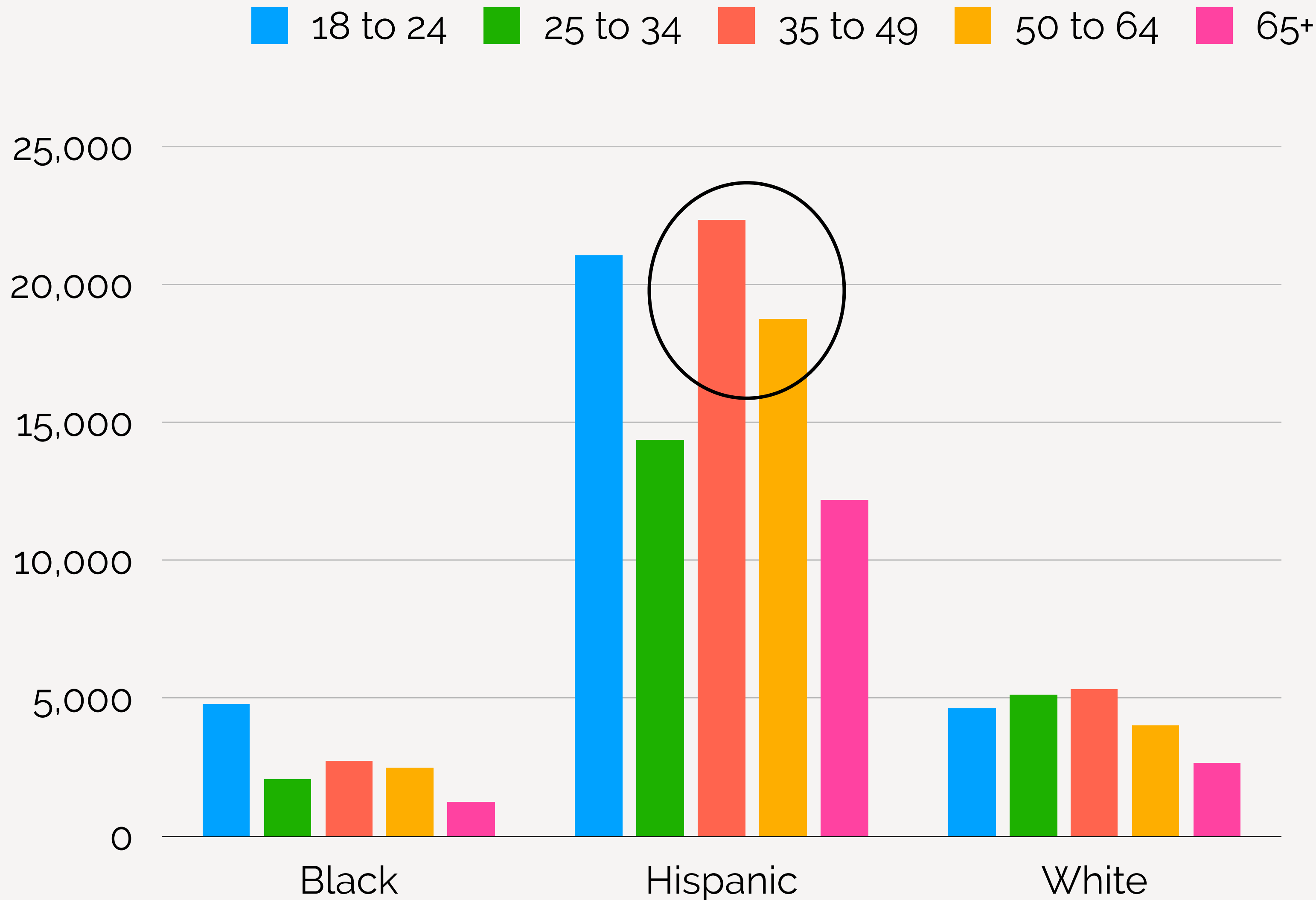
		2020 Vote Choice		
		Biden	Trump	Other
2016 Vote Recall	Clinton (30% of total)	85	15	—
	Trump (59%)	3	96	1
	Did Not Vote (6%)	44	54	2

**Cuban shift was notable, but LatAm (non-Cuban/PR) drop more dramatic**  
Trump won over many LatAms + benefited from increased turnout



# In MIAMI, big spike in new registrants among Hispanic GenXers, older millennials

**First-Time Voters in Miami-Dade, Newly Registered**  
Total 2020 Voters, Registered Post-2018 - By Race/Ethnicity and Age

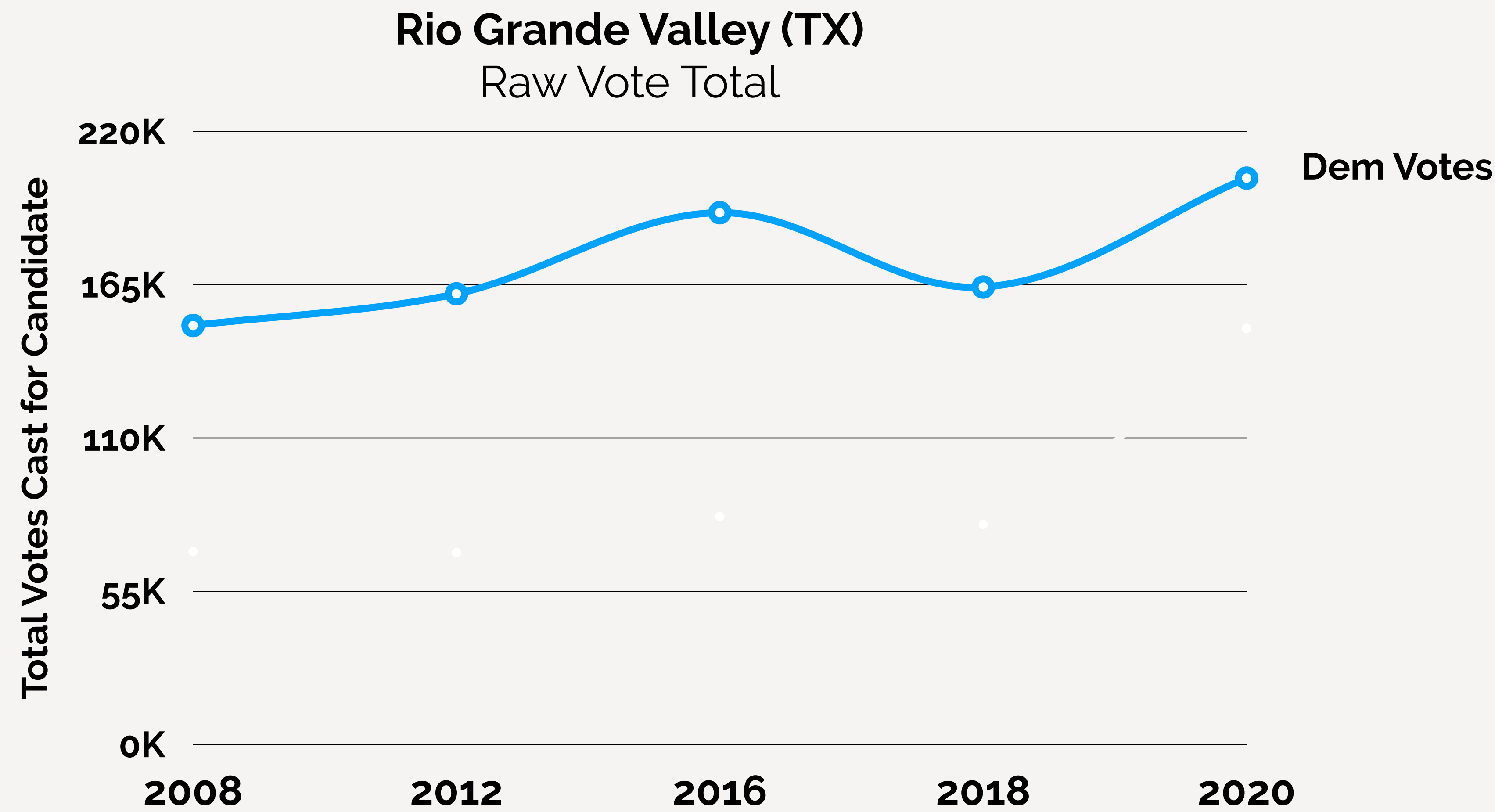


# South TX

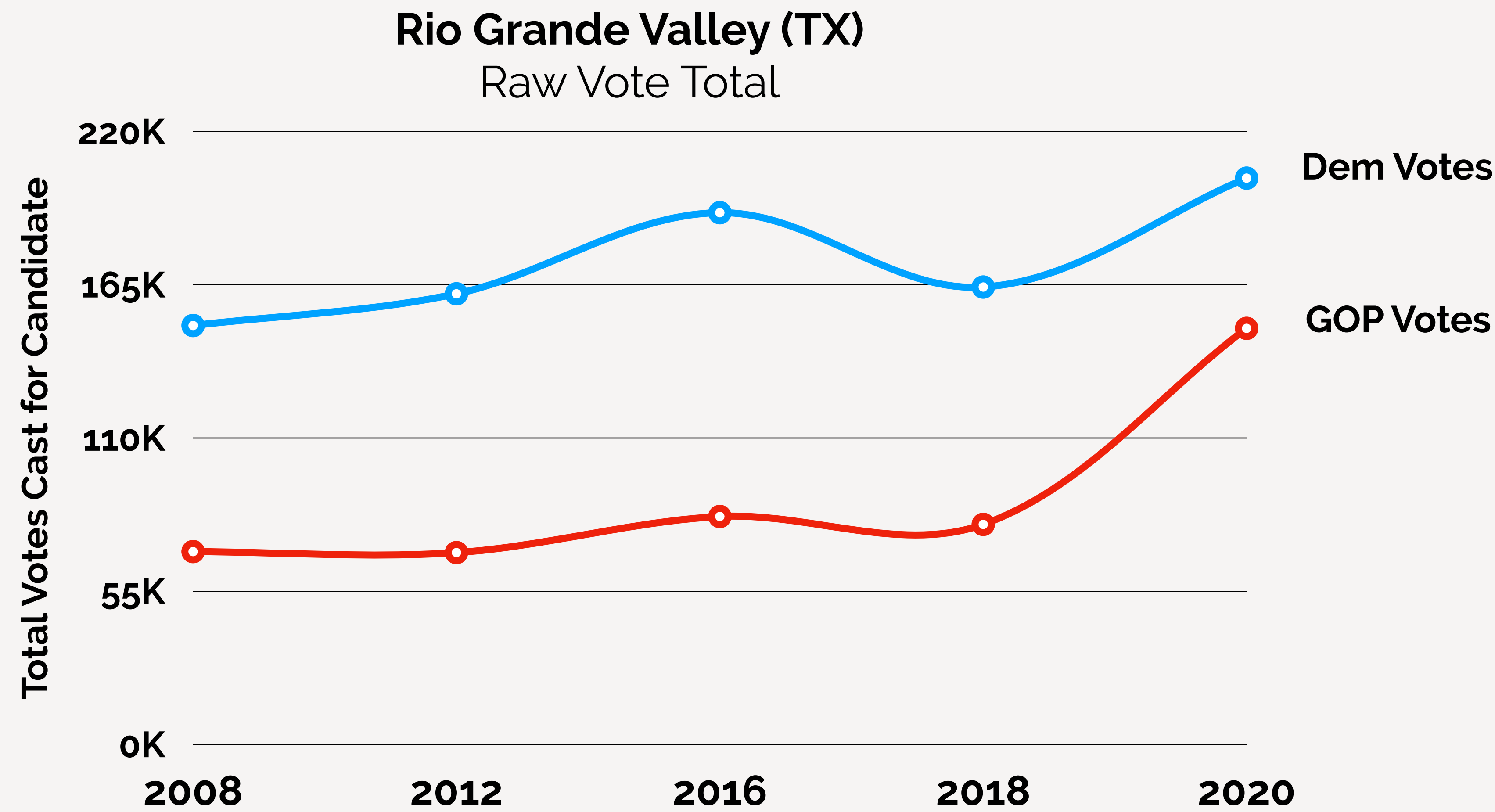
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In terms of total number of votes, the Democratic trend-line in the RGV looks healthy...

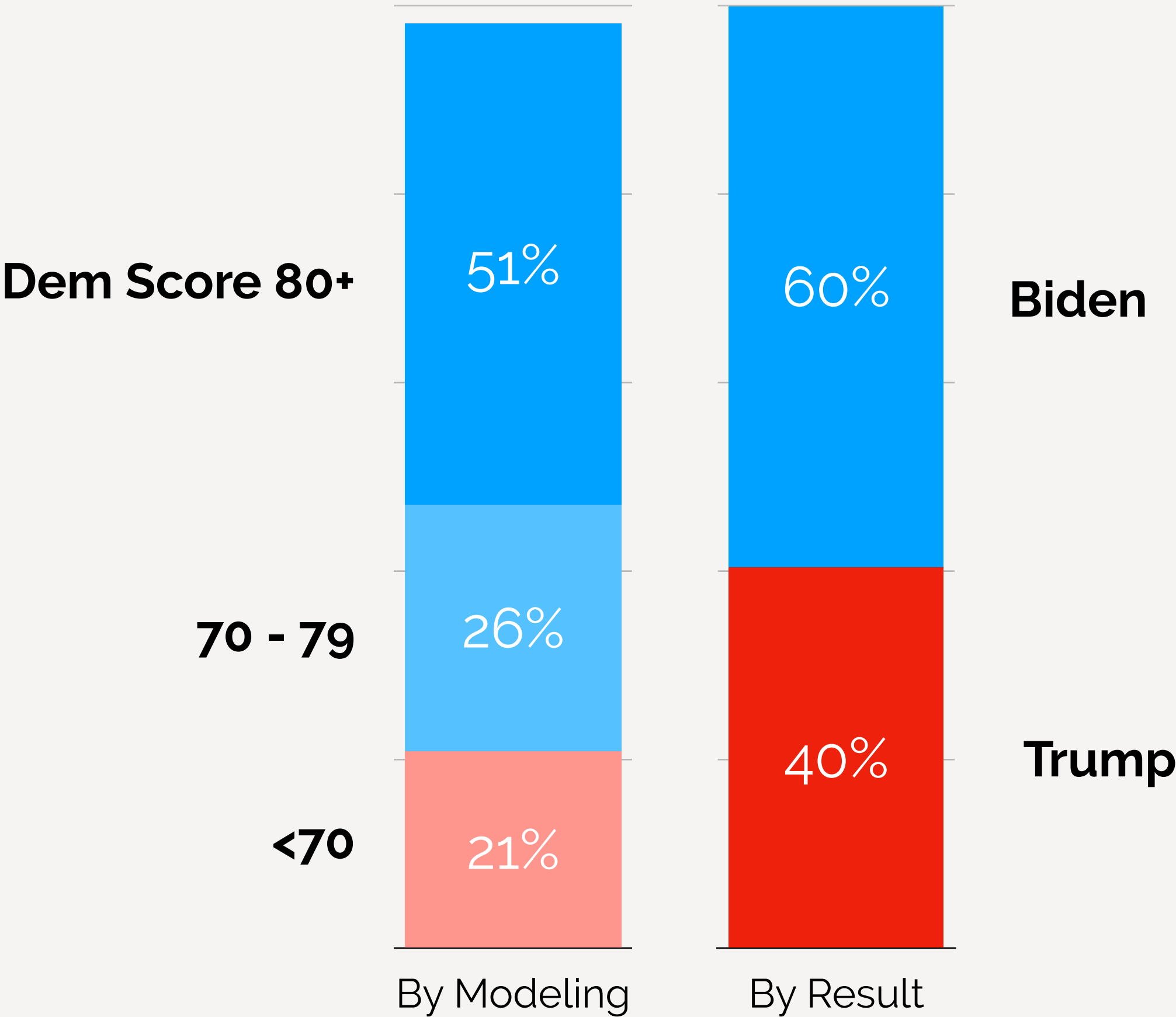


But Trump saw a huge surge in total votes that narrowed the Democratic margin



**In Texas' RGV, Trump made gains with voters predicted to be Dem-leaning**  
Early voter group averages 75 partisanship score, performed 15 points below

**Rio Grande Valley (TX)\***  
Early + Absentee Votes By Partisanship Score\*\*

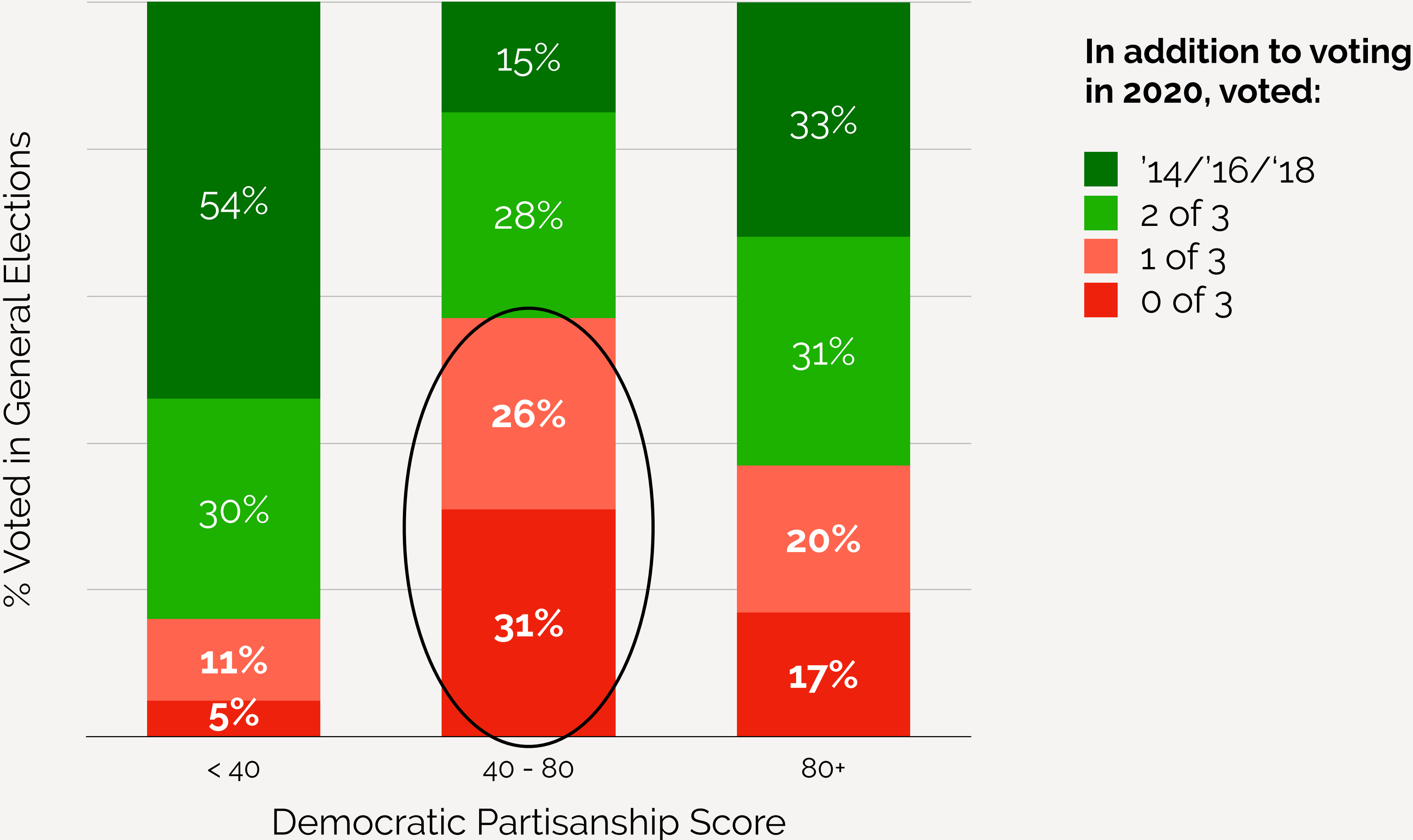


\*Counties included in analysis: Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, Webb  
\*\*Utilizing non-public predictive model for Democratic partisanship



A majority of these “swing voters” had sparse history of voting

Rio Grande Valley (TX)\*  
Early + Absentee Votes By Modeling & Vote History



\*Counties included in analysis: Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, Webb

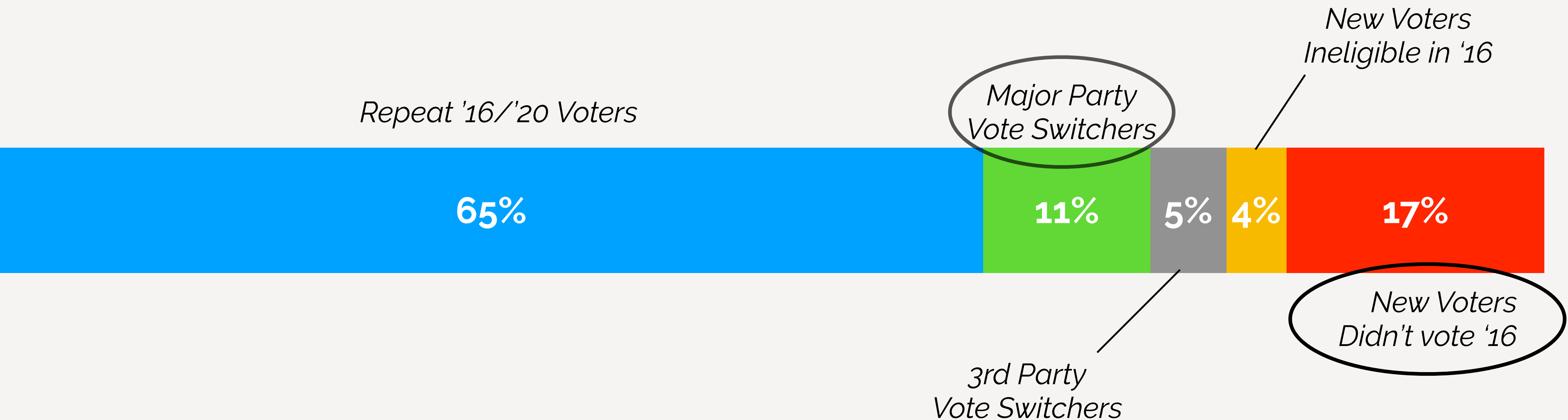
# Nevada

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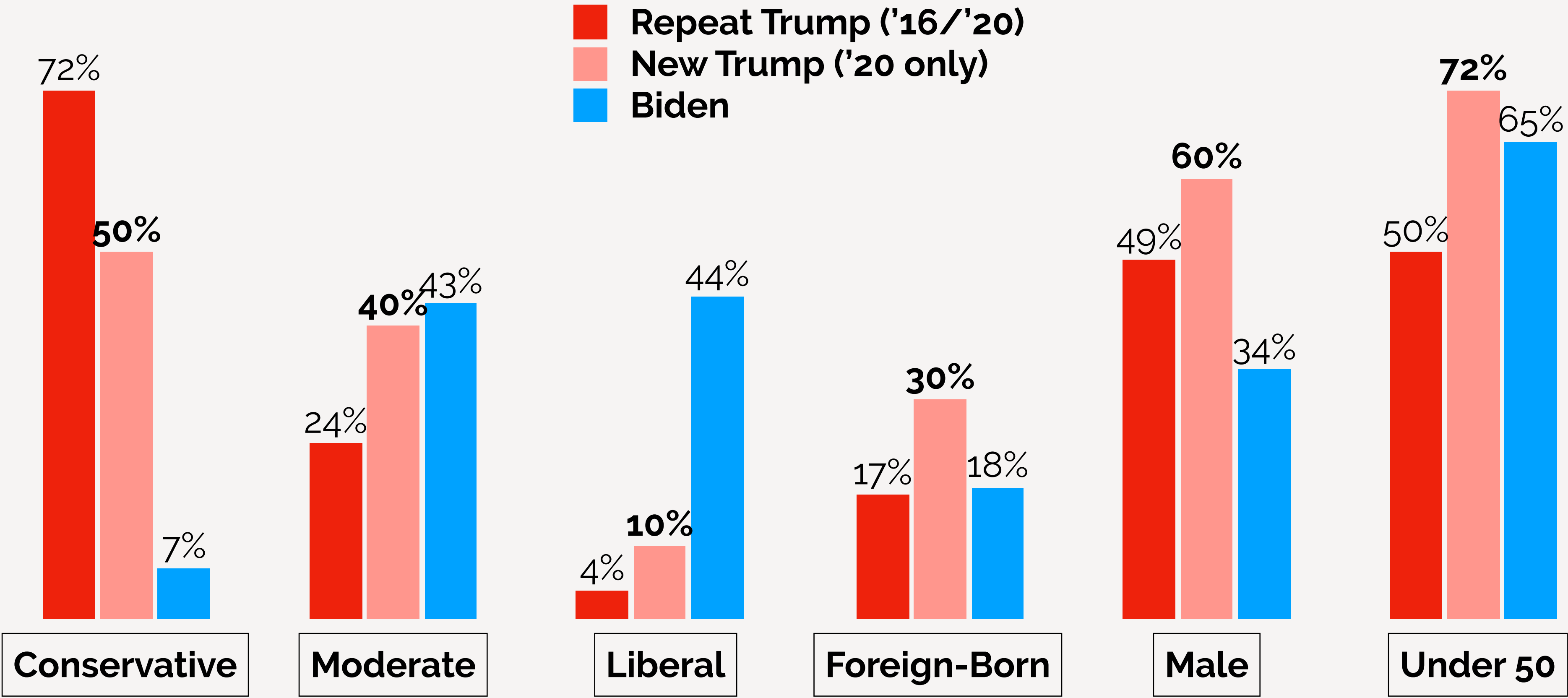


In Nevada, vote-switchers were a smaller part of Trump's 2020 coalition than new voters

NEVADA: Latino Trump Voters By Vote History



In NEVADA, first-time Trump voters were less ideological, younger, more foreign-born than regular Trump voters



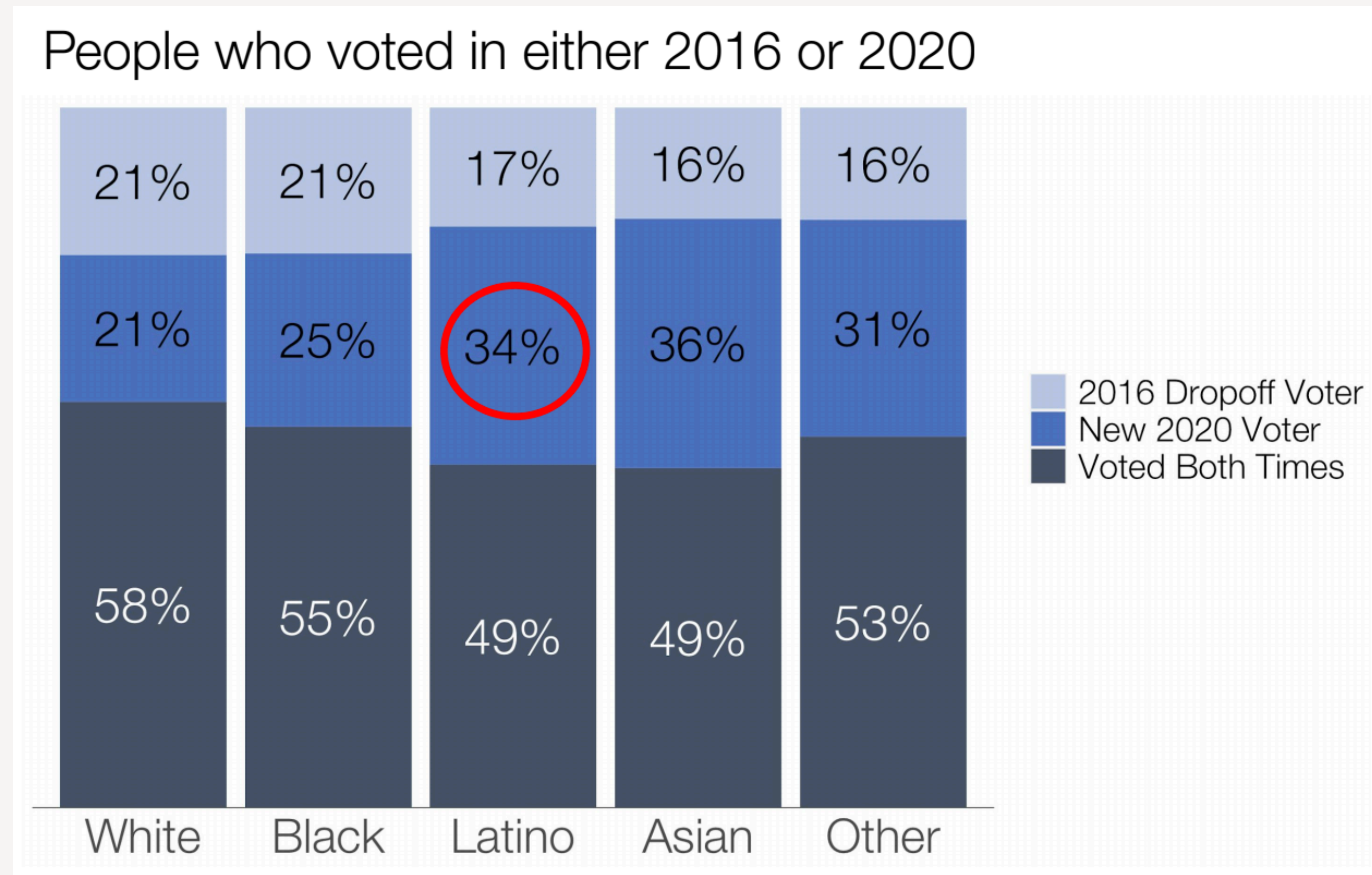
# Who shifted 2019->2020?

## *Voters on the margins of the electorate*

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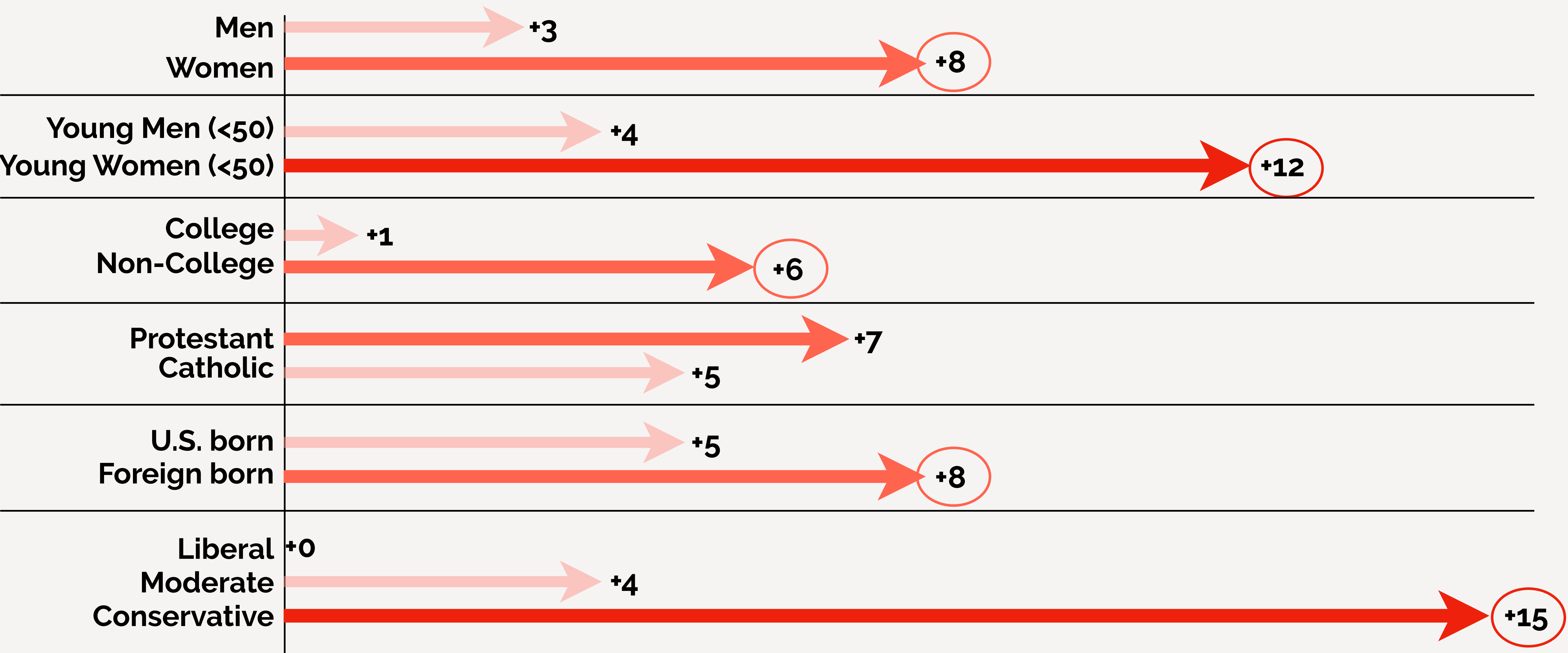
## No two electorates are the same

Preliminary state data shows large share of Latinos who voted in '20, not '16



# Largest in-cycle % shifts were among women, non-college, foreign-born & conservative

Shift in Net Trump Job Approval Among Hispanic Voters  
From 2019 average to last pre-election polling (average change across 7 states\*)



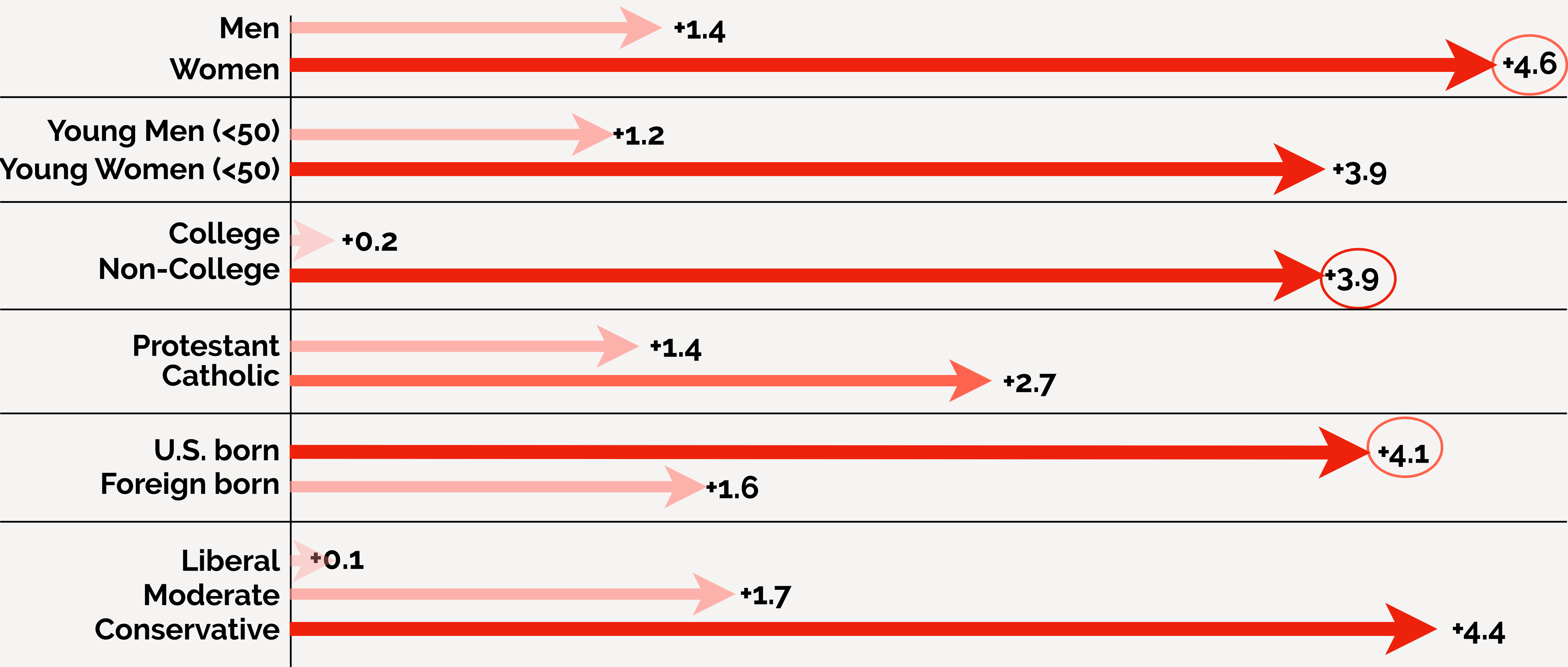
\*States included in analysis: Texas, Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico, North Carolina and Florida



# Weighted by subgroup size, shift among women made greatest impact

US-born, Catholic and non-college shifts become more important too

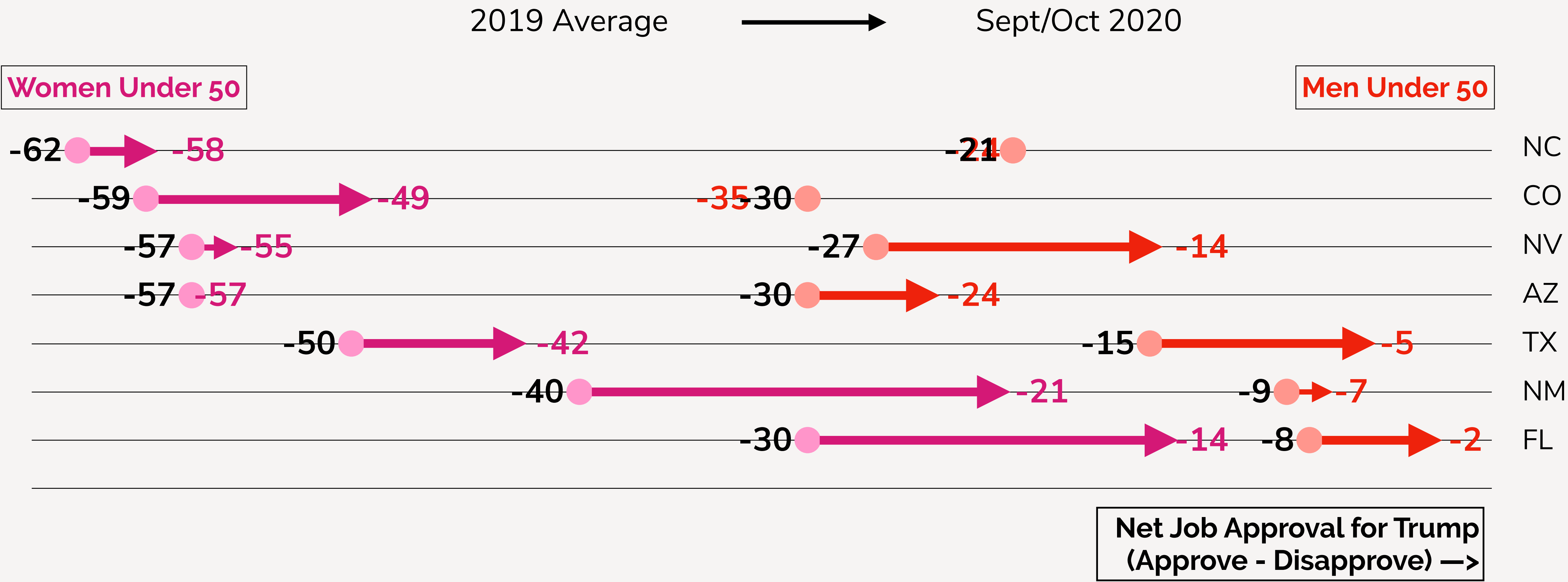
Impact of Demographic Shifts on Trump Job Approval Margin  
Change from 2019 average to last pre-election poll, weighted by % of sample



\*For this analysis, we use an average of Equis polling across 7 states, not a combined, weighted number.  
States included: Texas, Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico, North Carolina and Florida.

# Youngish women shifted more than male peers in-cycle, but remained far more anti-Trump

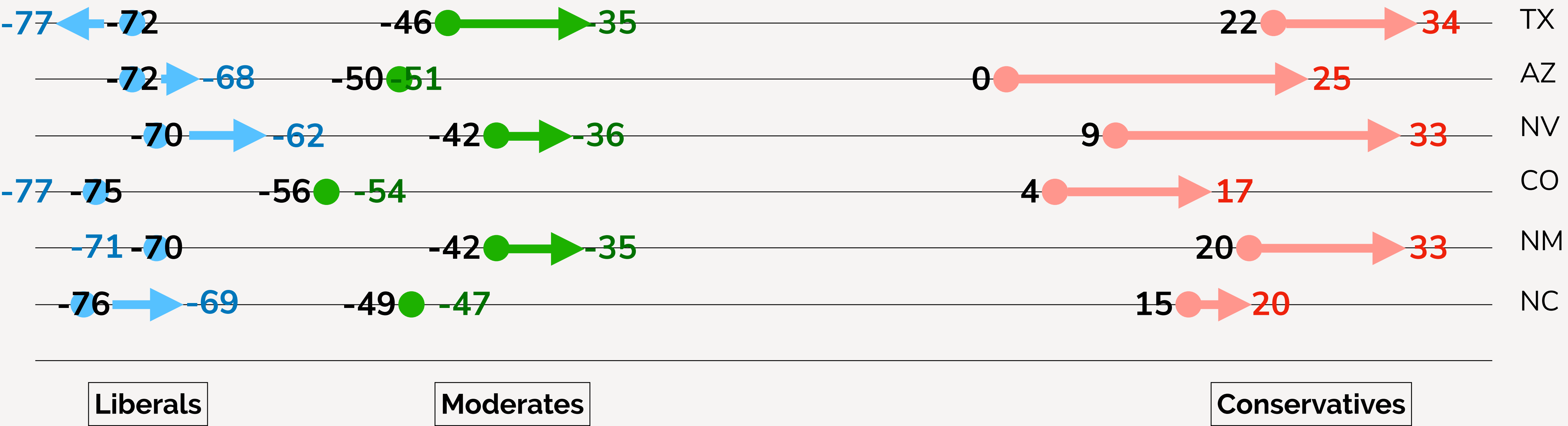
Gender divide persisted, even as Latina numbers came back down to Earth



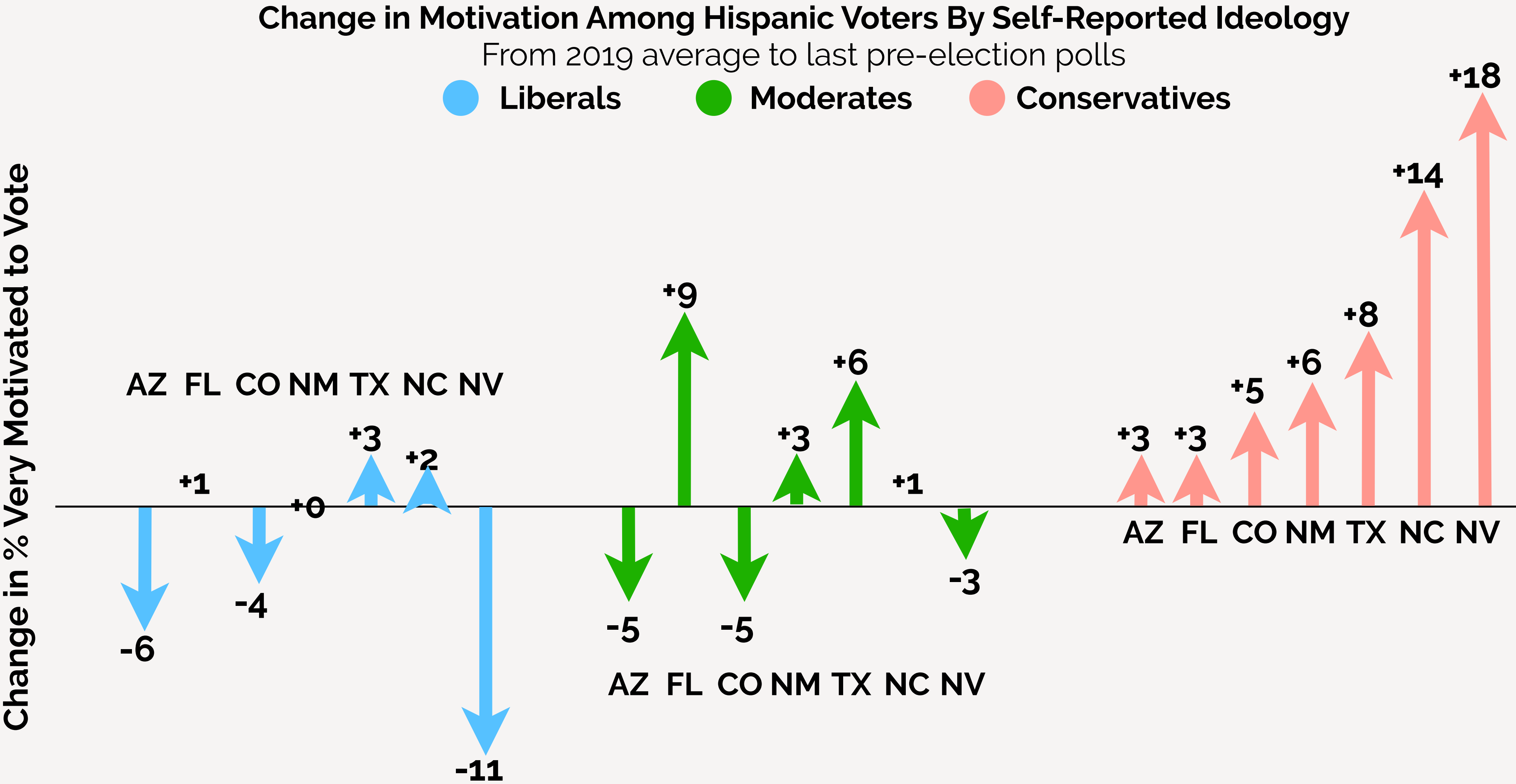
In polling, most consistent shifts toward Trump were among conservatives who'd earlier held back

Trump Job Approval (Net) among Registered Hispanic Voters - By Self-Reported Ideology

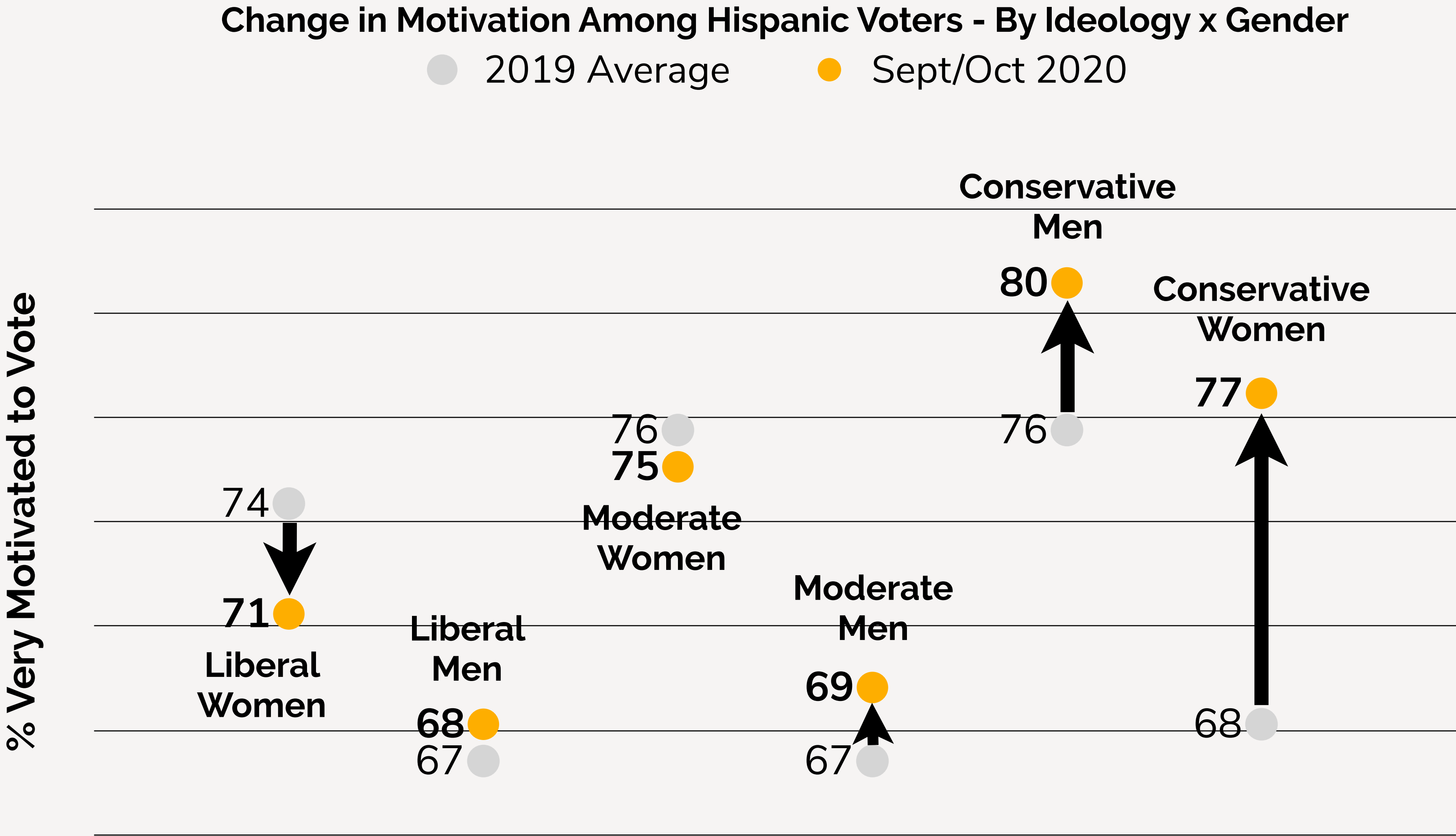
2019 Average      →      Fall 2020



Not just passive support: conservative Latinos also became more motivated to vote across key states

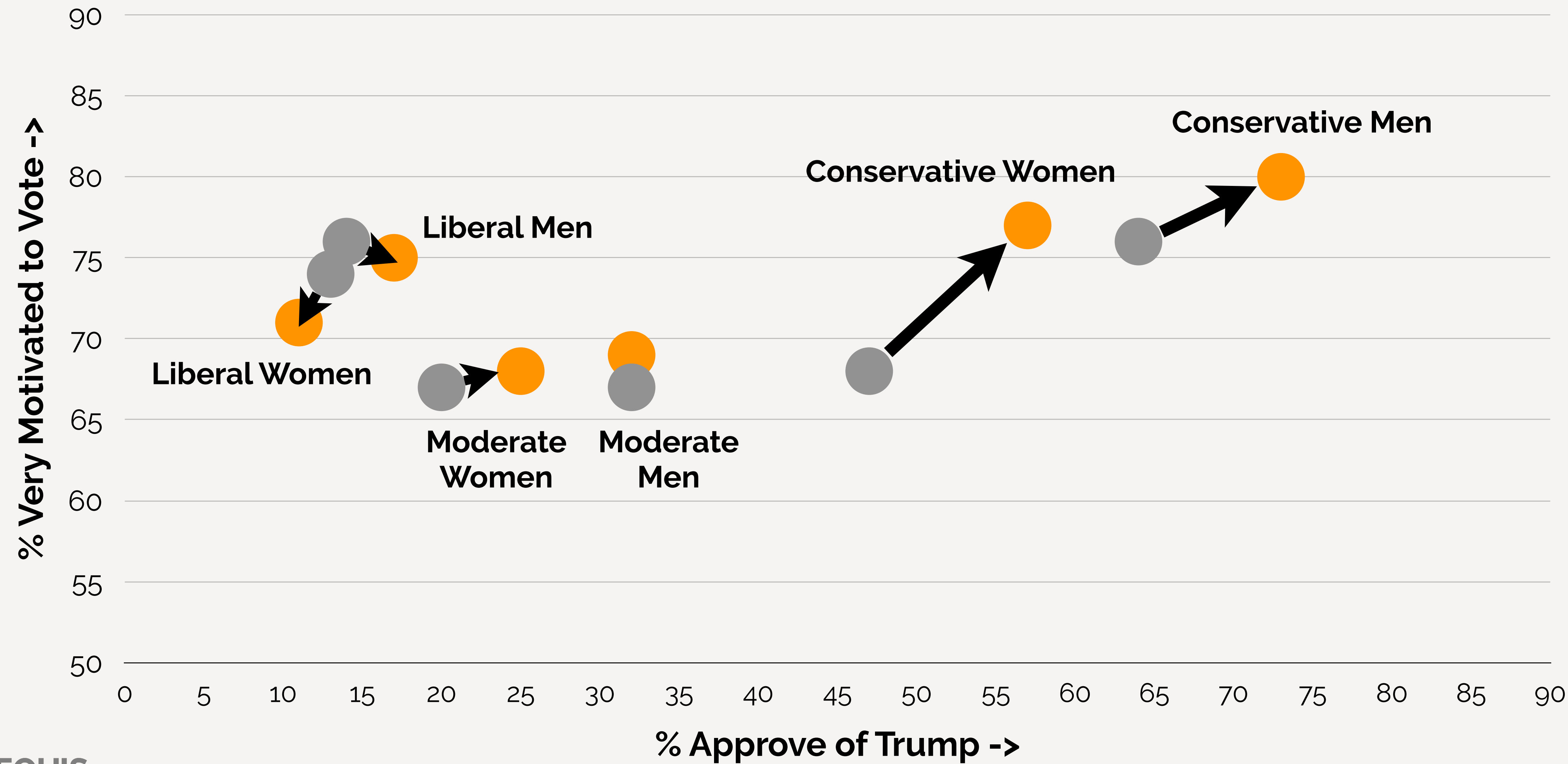


**Conservative Latinas, in particular, appear to have been galvanized**  
Meanwhile their liberal counterparts became slightly *less* motivated during the election



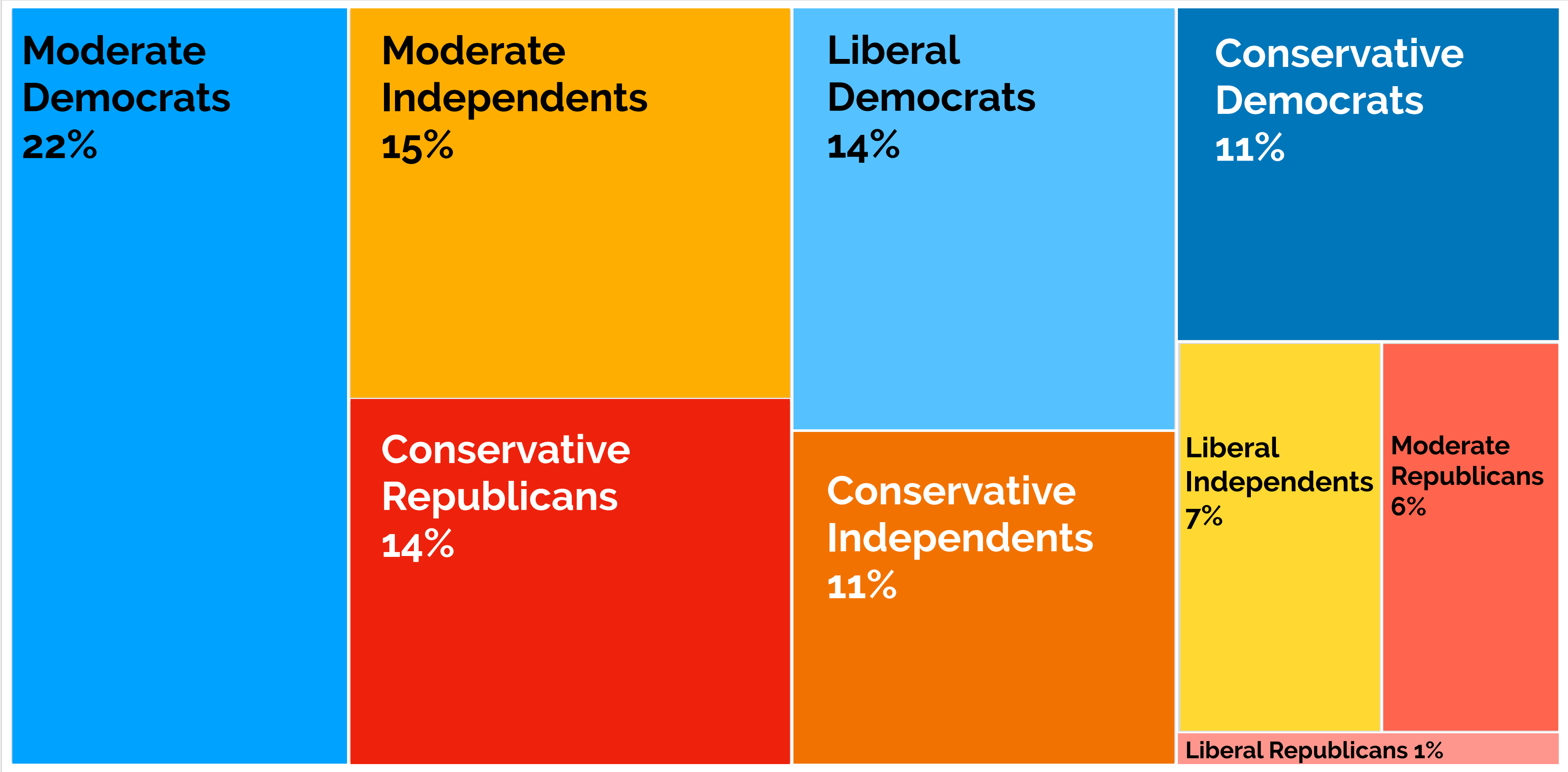
Change in Motivation x Trump Approval Among Hispanic Voters - By Ideology x Gender

● 2019 Average ● Sept/Oct 2020



# The ideological & partisan diversity of Latinos

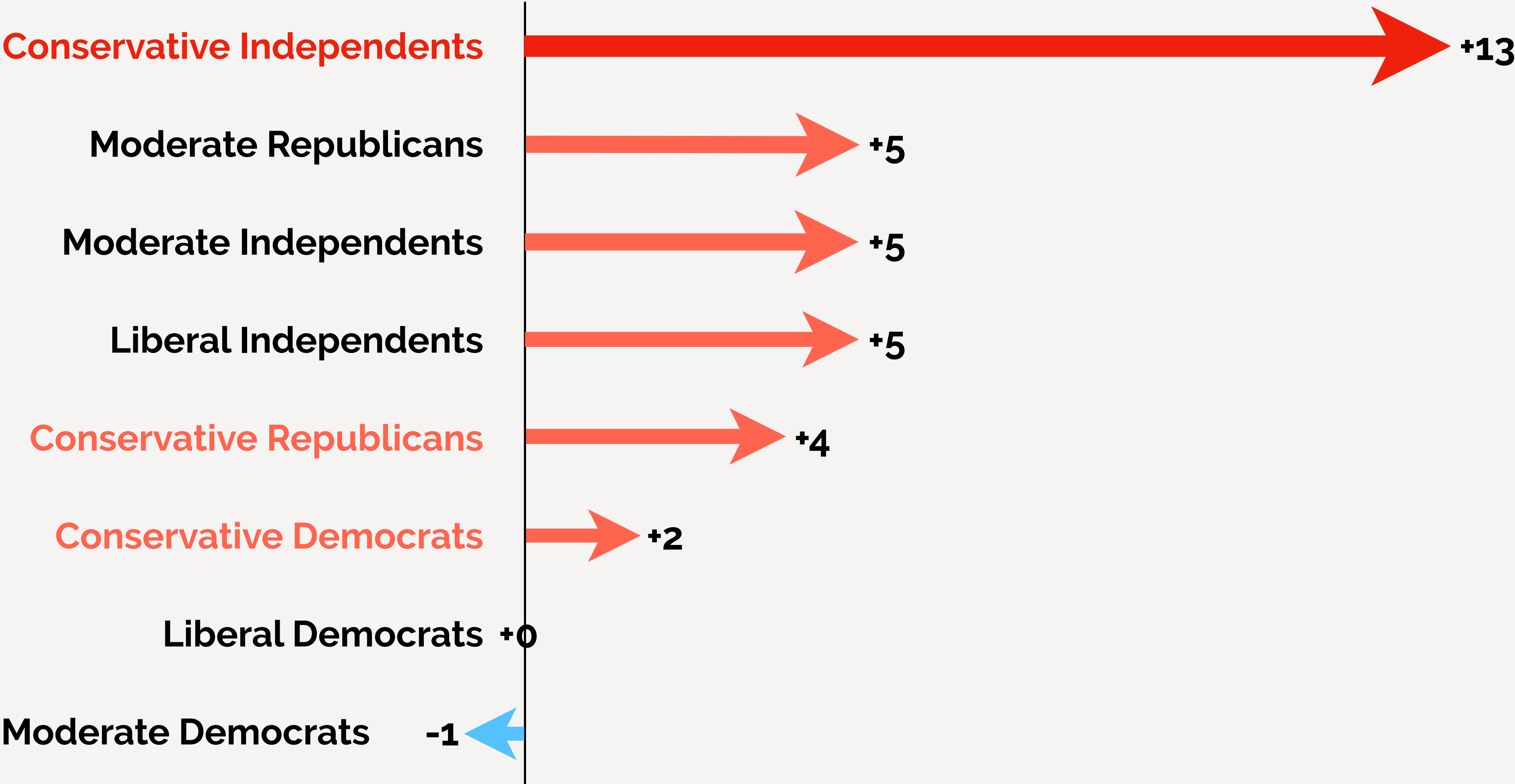
Registered Latino Voters By Party ID x Self-Reported Ideology





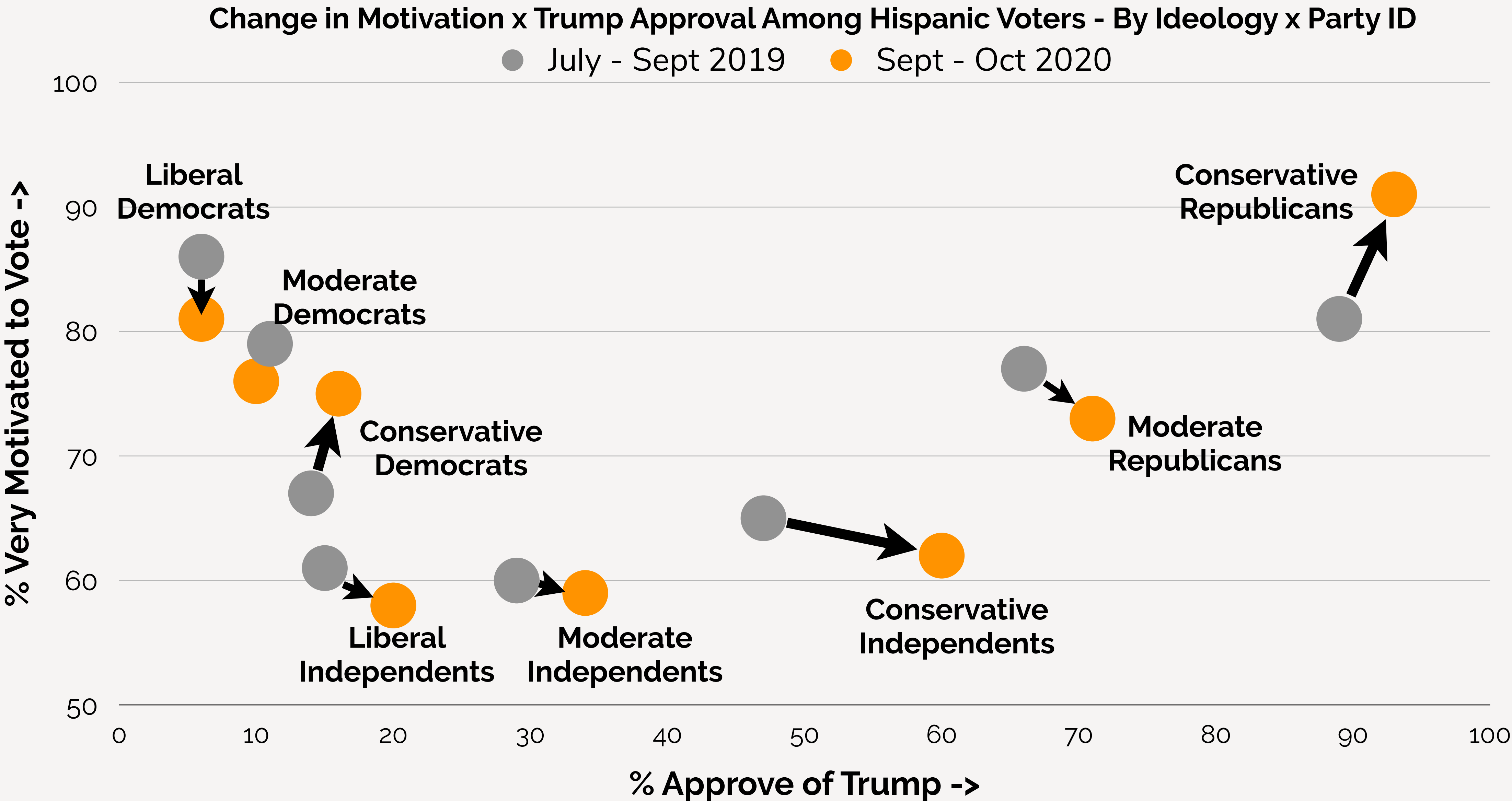
# Conservative shift driven more by independents than by Republicans or Democrats

Shift in Net Trump Job Approval By Self-Reported Ideology x Party ID  
From July - Sept 2019 to Sept - Oct 2020



\*States included: Texas, Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico, North Carolina and Florida. "Independents" includes "leaners."  
Equis polling from July & September 2019 (n = 9,230) and Sept/Oct 2020 (n = 4,042)

# Conservative independents became more pro-Trump, while conservative R's & D's got more motivated



\*States included: Texas, Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico, North Carolina and Florida. "Independents" includes "leaners."  
Equis polling from July & September 2019 (n = 9,230) and Sept/Oct 2020 (n = 4,042)

# Low-Frequency Voters

## *Assumptions vs. Reality*

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**TheUpshot**

## ***Nonvoters Are a Source of Hope for Democrats. But Maybe a False Hope.***

Demographically, they seem like people who'd want to vote out Trump. Yet at least in the battleground states, many favor Republicans.



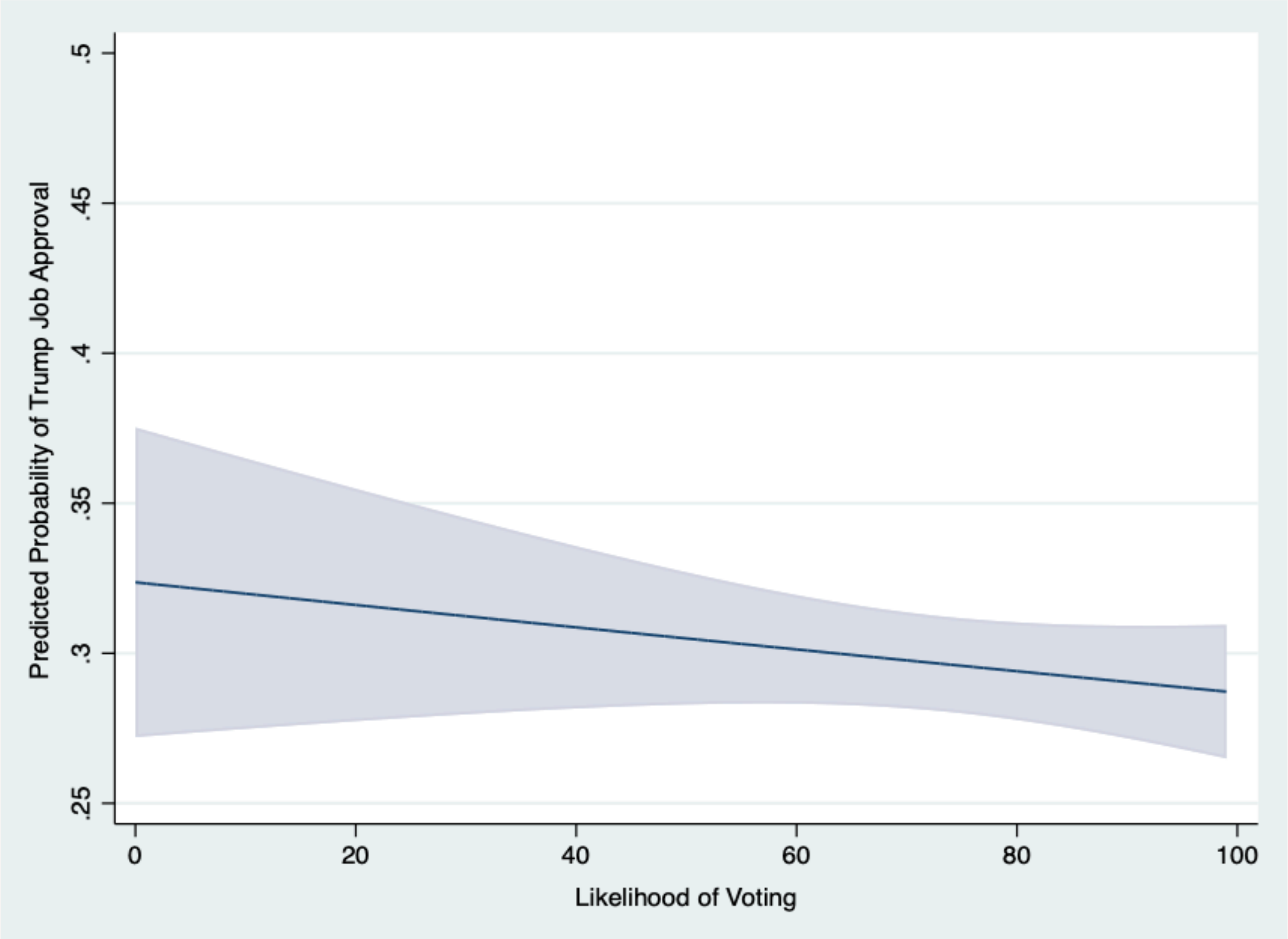
By **Nate Cohn**

“[A] large portion of nonvoters sit out because they do not neatly line up with either party. This fact... tends to diminish the Democratic advantage that would seem to exist based on their demographics alone.

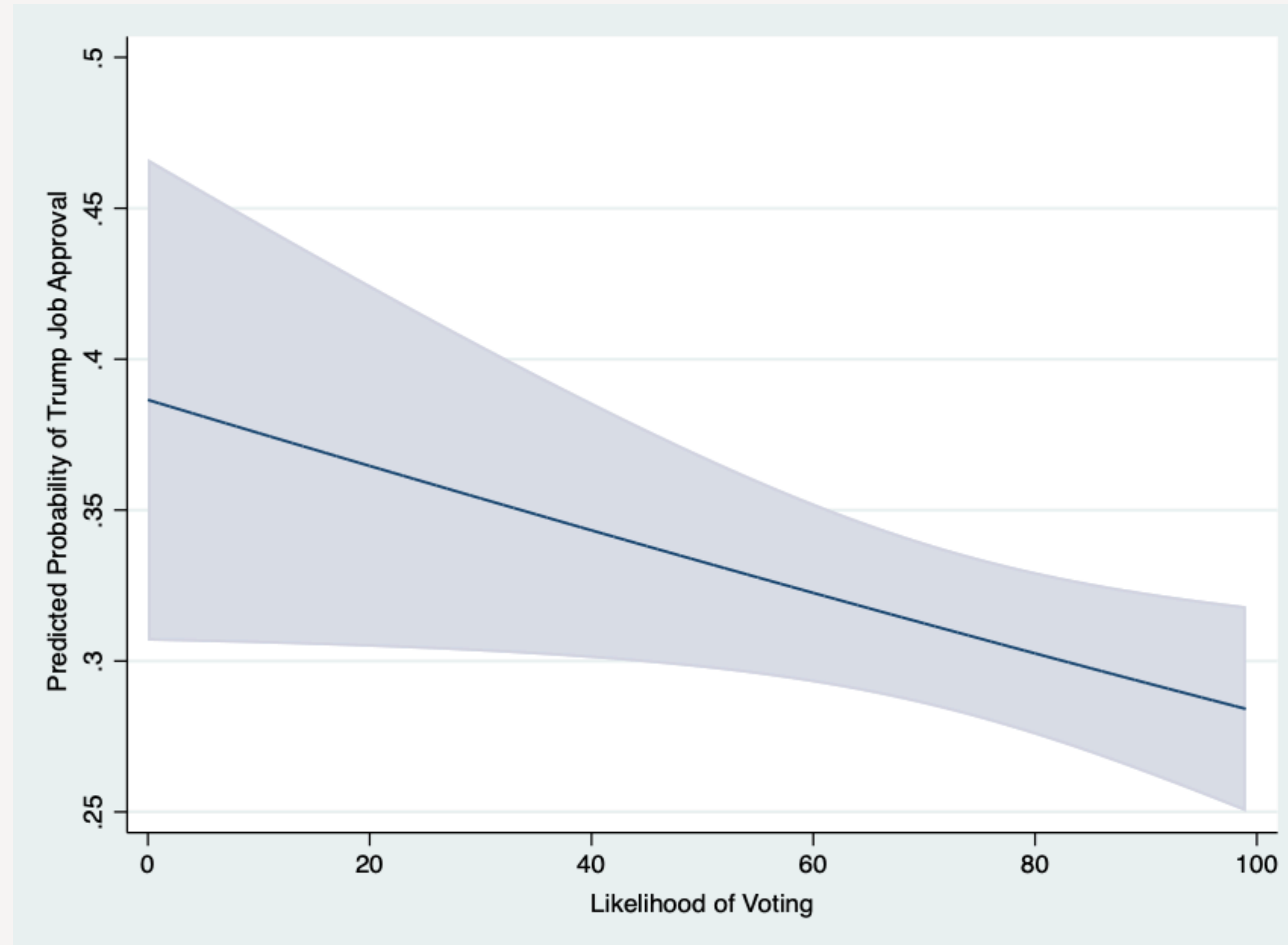
**“One exception to this general pattern is among Hispanic nonvoters, who tend to be just as Democratic as their voting counterparts, or even more so.**

“The relative Democratic strength among Hispanic voters may... **add further intrigue to speculation about Democratic prospects in Texas**, where nonvoters are even more diverse than they are in Arizona.”

# Low and high propensity voters felt similarly about Trump in 2019



...But in fall 2020, low propensity voters were significantly more approving of Trump



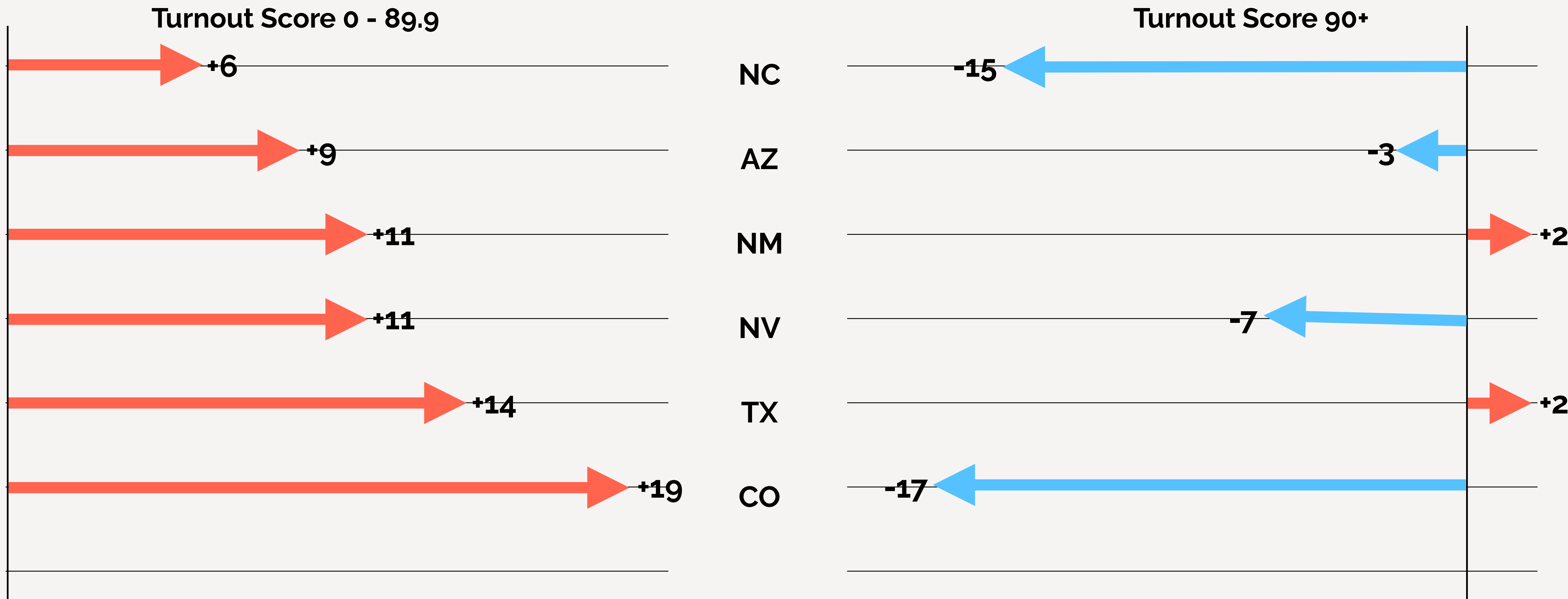
Bivariate relationship between likelihood of voting (measured by turnout score) and Trump job approval

Source: TargetSmart turnout score + Equis polling of registered Latino voters in AZ, NV, CO and NM, September/October 2020



Very likely & less-likely Latino voters moved in different directions on Trump approval

Shift in Net Trump Job Approval By Modeled Likelihood to Vote in 2020  
From 2019 average to Sept/Oct 2020 polls







In other words: the shifts appear to be among those with the lowest partisan formation. **We know enough to say these look like true swing voters.**

Neither party should assume that a Hispanic voter who cast a ballot for Trump in 2020 is locked in as a Republican going forward. Nor can we assume this shift was exclusive to Trump and will revert back on its own.

And if there's a lesson for the future, it's to watch the margins and **those voters who often remain invisible**: the ones who stayed home and the many others aging into the electorate.

# Setting Up the Why

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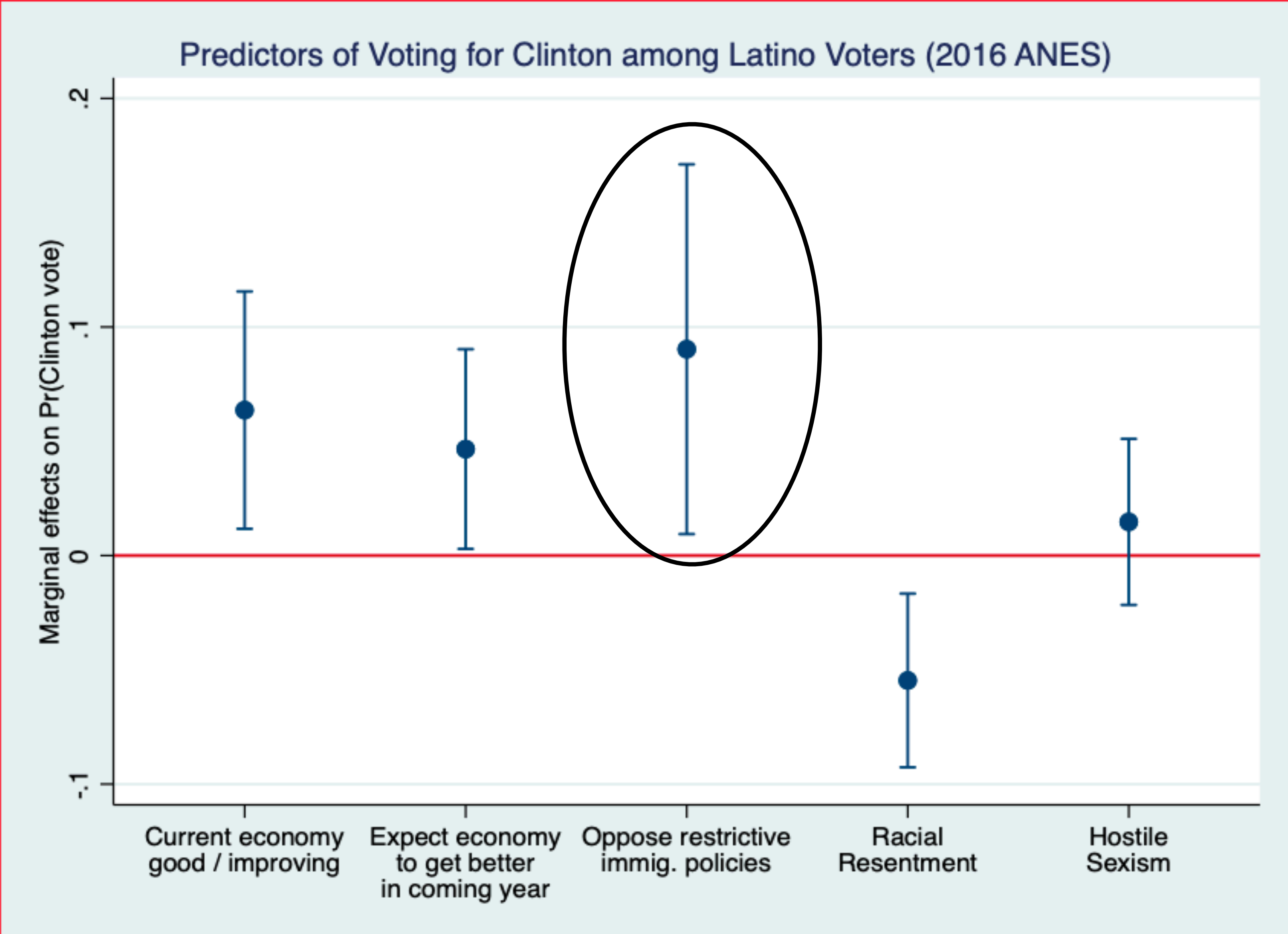


First things first: **we can't ask what moved conservative Latinos toward Trump without asking what held them back from Trump or other Republicans in the past.**

This is where “Latino identity”— and, relatedly, the role of immigration— emerges as central.

# Research in Process: Shifting Role of Immigration

In 2016, opposition to tough immigration policy a driver of Clinton vote



Derived from a logistic regression model with controls for gender, age, education, religion, nativity, language, party ID and ideology (n = 225)



## In late 2019, children in detention + family separation were top of mind even with conservative Latinos who agreed with Trump on other aspects of immigration

“**Separating families** is the ultimate disgrace of this administration. Some of these families will not be able to be put back together again. **People are not animals and should not be caged like in a zoo.**”

“I think you had the right idea in how you were trying to deal with the immigration issue but then you do things that backfire on you like **separating families** and then making racist comments about Mexicans.”

“Yes they shouldn't cross illegally, but **breaking up families** is a little harsh, your plan needs more work.”

“He did bad with the whole immigration thing. I mean I think he's thinking in the right direction like building the wall is ok but **separating the kids from their family's big thumbs down.**”



## Post-primary in 2020, moral high ground on immigration may have been muddled by attacks on Obama/Biden-era deportation policies

“There are many Hispanics who voted for [Trump] because... For example, **Obama talked about immigration and didn't do anything**. He says, he promises, and he didn't act. Meanwhile, Trump didn't say and he didn't promise and he didn't act. It's what many people didn't like about him, he says things clearly and directly. Unlike other presidents who talked and didn't act.”

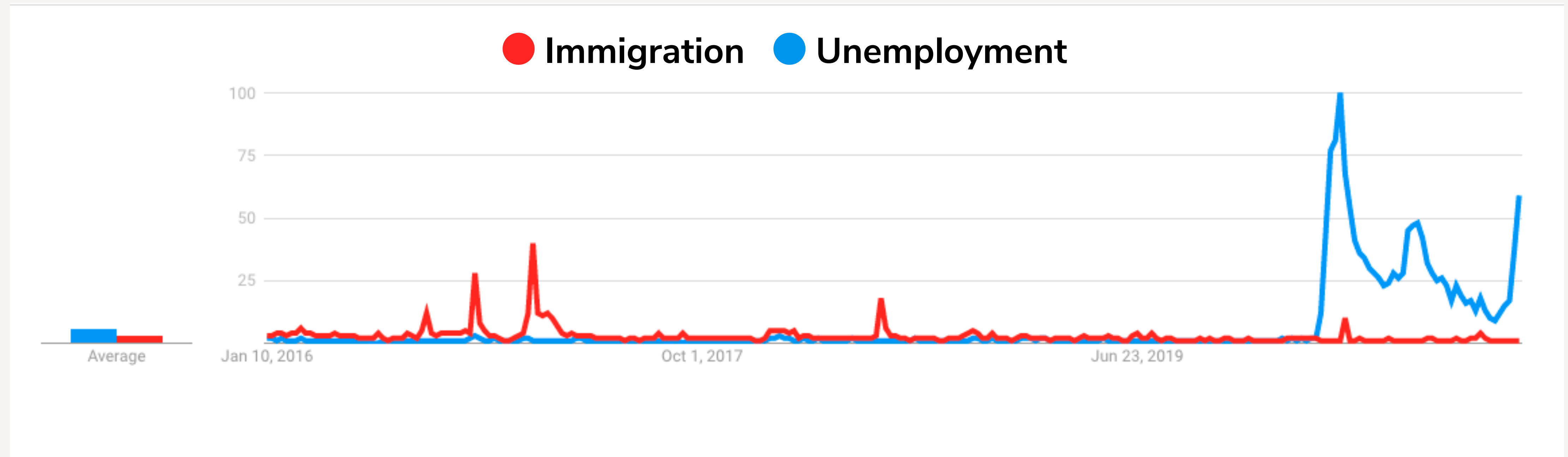
- Peruvian-born Latina, 42, first-time Trump voter





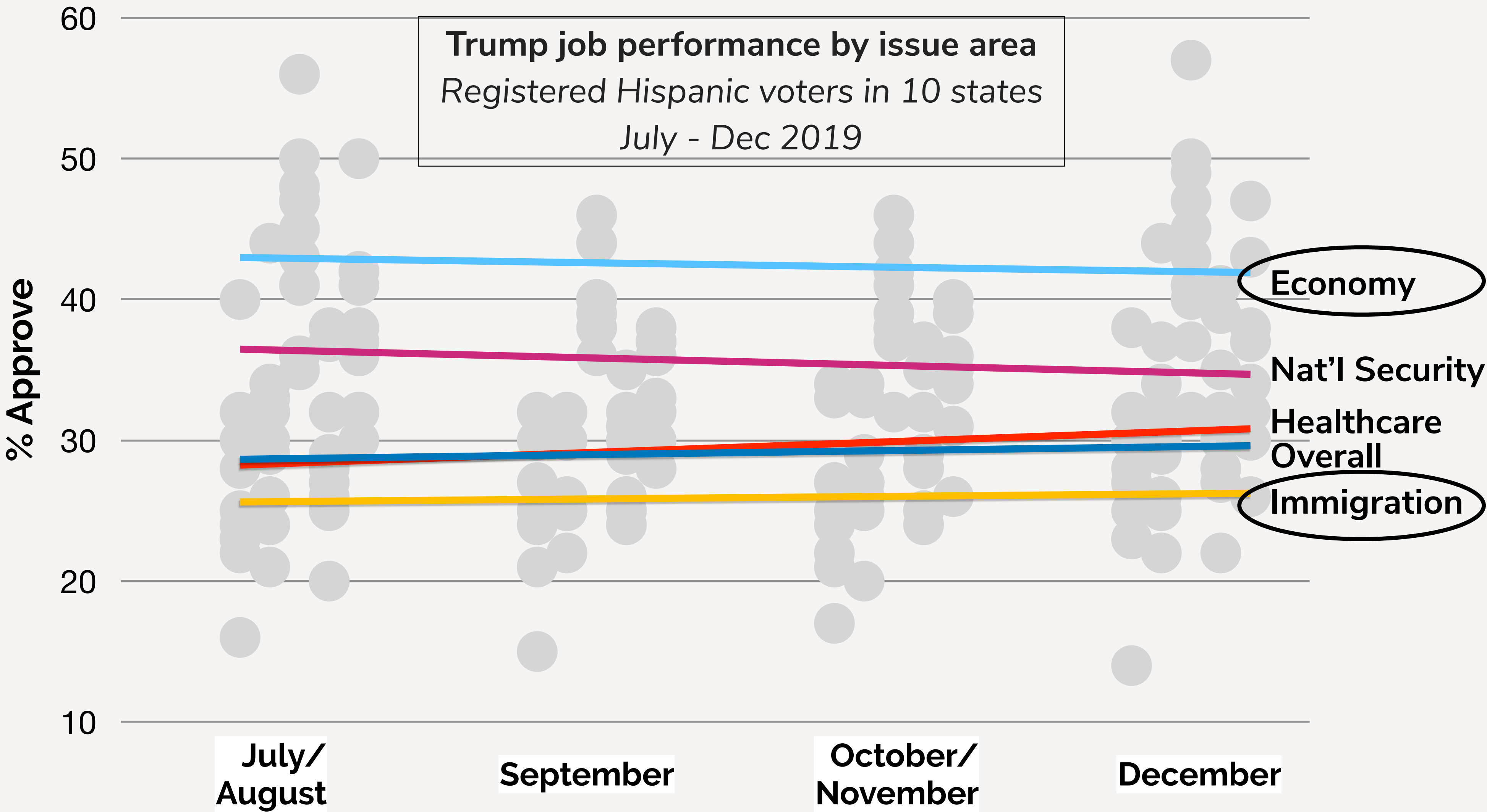
# Immigration was in the zeitgeist in 2016 & 2018... but not in late 2020

## Google searches for “Immigration” vs “Unemployment” (General Population) From January 2016 to November 2020

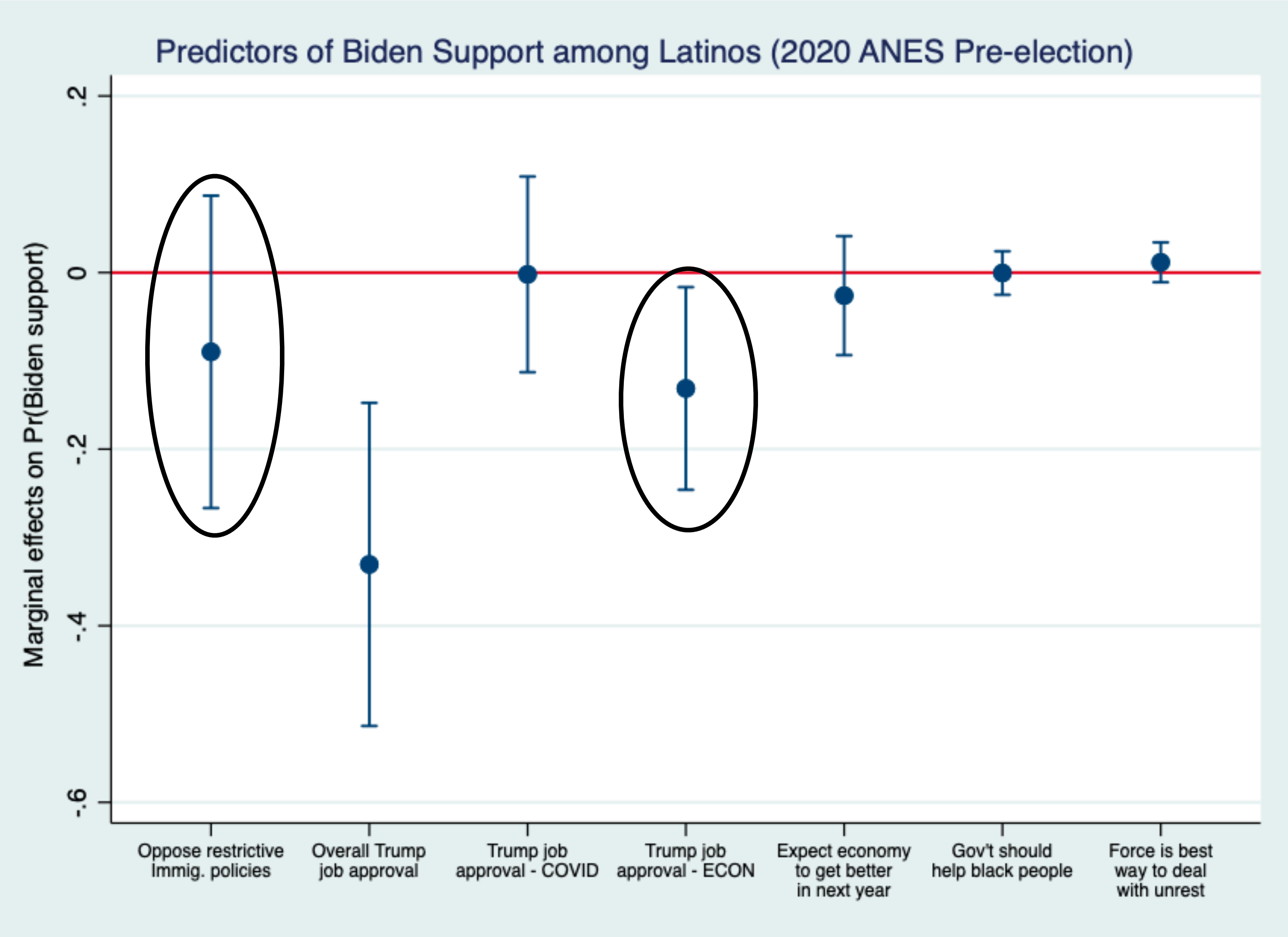


Throughout cycle, Trump's highest numbers were on economy, lowest were on immigration

An election that was a referendum on former, vs. latter, could've produced narrower margin



In 2020, immigration wasn't salient to vote choice— but approval of Trump on economy was



# Research in Process: Role of COVID-Era Economy

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## Theme among swing Latino voters in focus groups: Trump the Businessman

Among some subset of voters, terrible COVID economy *more* reason to support Trump (or not to support Biden)

- Persistent view of Trump as a **businessman** who “*knows how to move money*”
- Credit for Trump for pre-pandemic economic growth
- A desire to reopen the country and, more importantly, avoid a shutdown: “*Biden was acting like he wanted to do a **complete shutdown**. Trump wanted to reopen the states, return to normal.*”





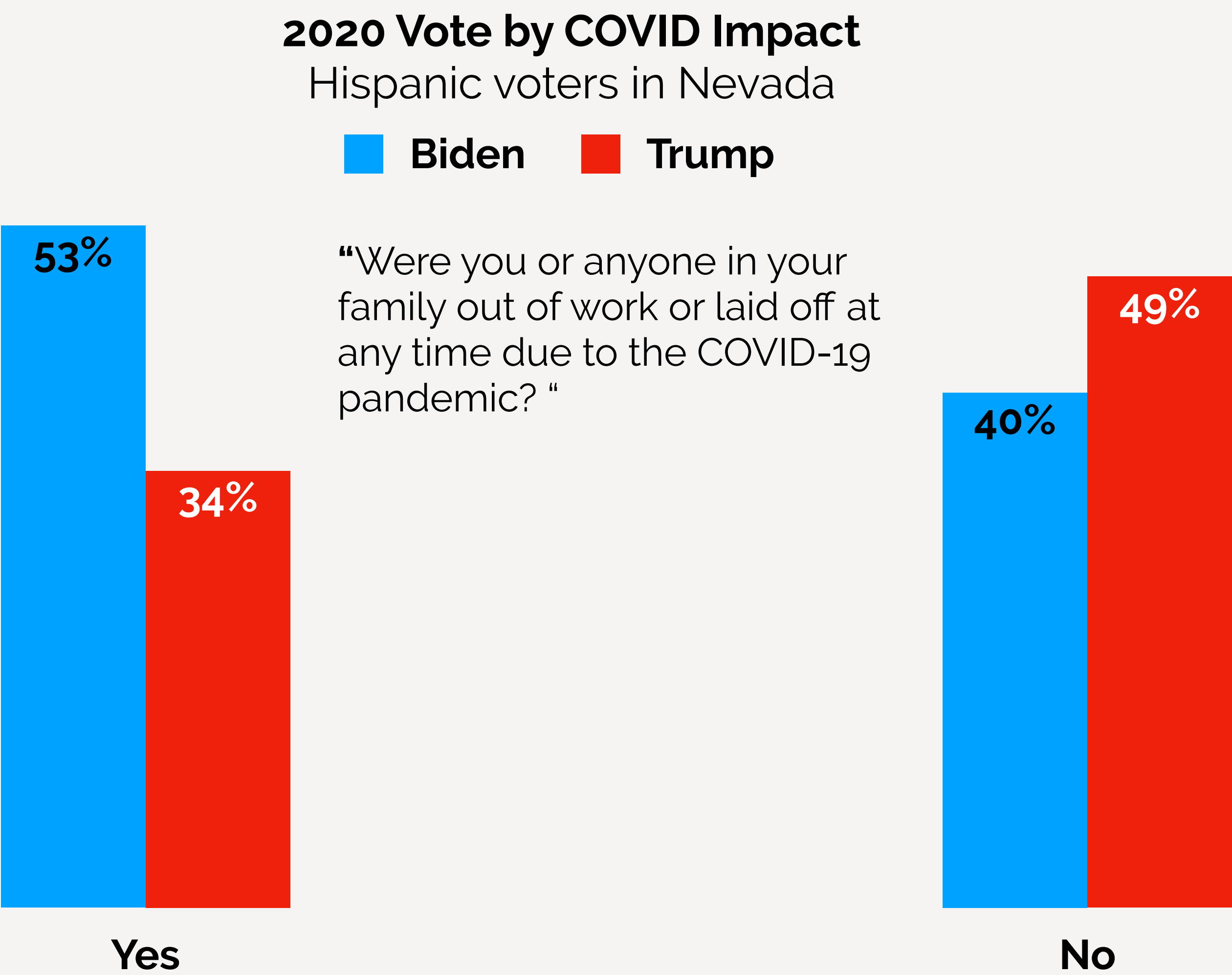
*“Me convenía por mi trabajo. Este año me ha ido mucho mejor... Su forma de expresarse me hacía dudar. **Pero voté por él más bien por lo económico.**”*

“[Voting for Trump] suited me because of my job. This year things have gone much better for me. The way he communicates made me hesitate. **But I voted for him more for economic reasons.**”

- **31, Amazon delivery driver in Wisconsin, first-time Trump voter**



**In NV, those who lost jobs less likely to vote Trump than those who held on to jobs**  
59% of Latinos said their jobs were impacted by pandemic

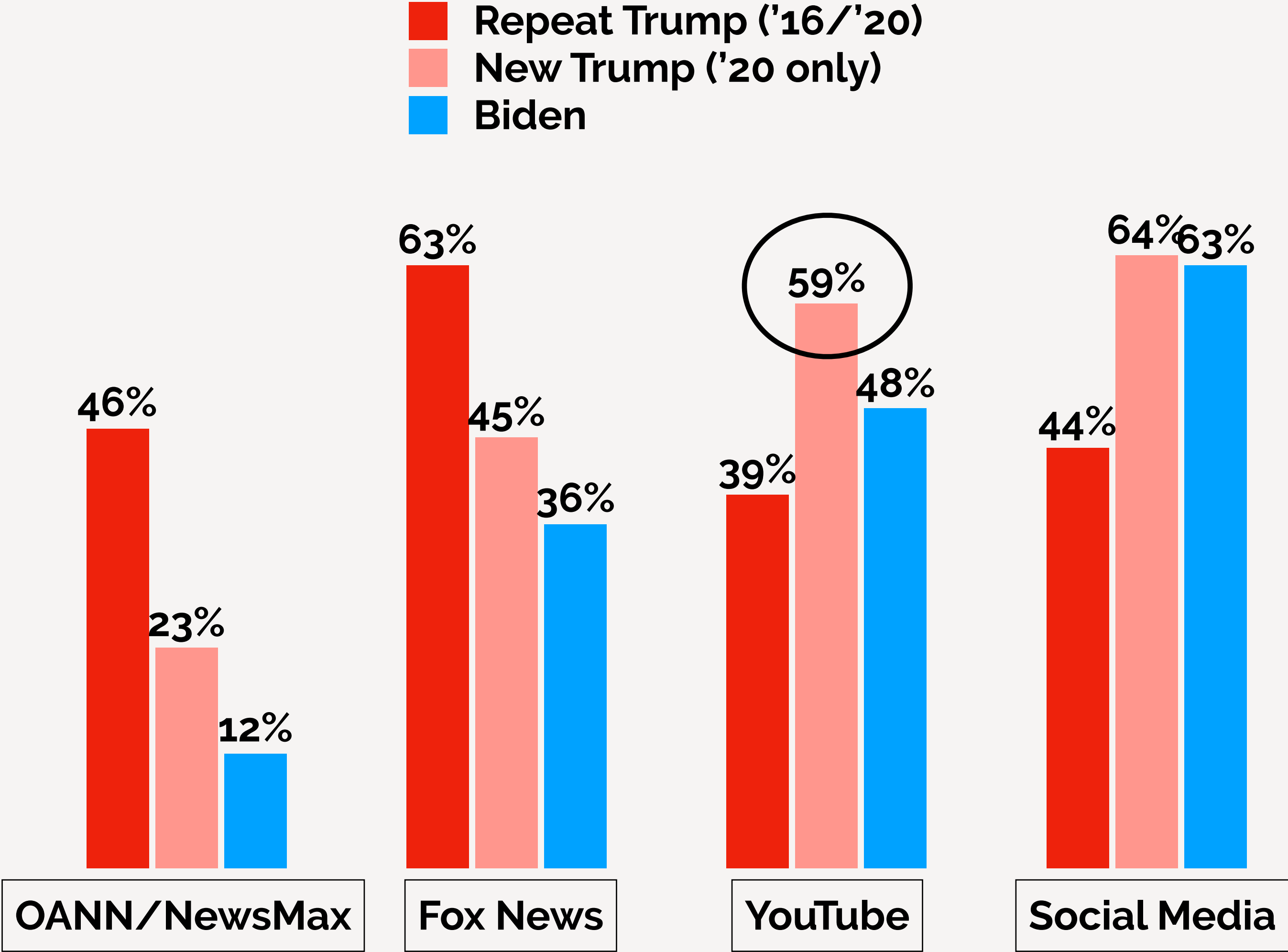




# Other Areas of Inquiry: Role of Social Media

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In NEVADA, new Trump voters more likely to get political news from YouTube



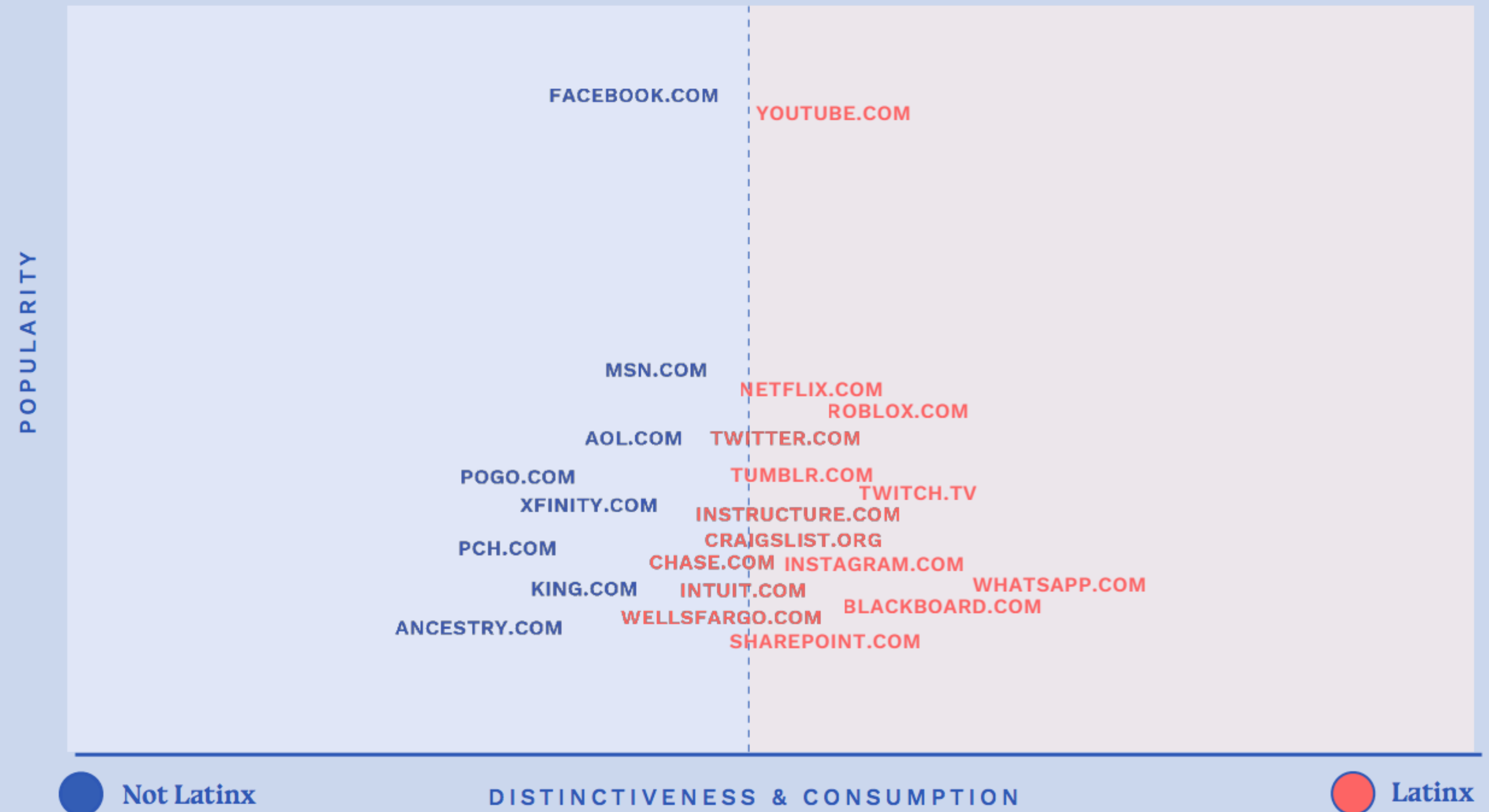
## Cultural Spotlight

# What websites are uniquely Latinx?

Overall, Latinx audiences are active on social media. Where they differ from the national population is in the platforms they prefer. YouTube and Google are more important digital ad platforms than Facebook, particularly YouTube, where Latinx audiences spend 2x the time compared to non-Latinx adults.

Esports are also popular—Twitch is a popular Latinx destination—as is online banking. Non-Latinx audiences engage more with puzzle type games through providers like King and Pogo and with online news on sites like MSN.

Drilling down into the individual sites where users spend their time highlights again the importance of thinking of Latinx adults as several distinct audiences. Heavy users of Twitch and Roblox probably aren't the same people using Sharepoint to get work done.




This map shows the most popular websites that are also distinctively Latinx.



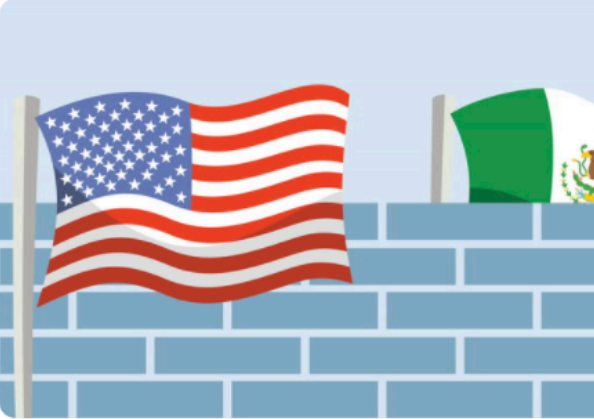
# YouTube now a leading source of political news

64% of registered Latino voters said they got election information from YouTube-- including 74% of Hispanic voters in Florida


5-MINUTE VIDEOS RECOMMENDED FOR YOU




**Immigrants! Don't Support What You Fled**  
Gloria Alvarez



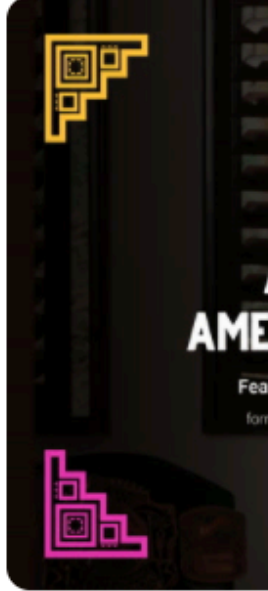
**Build the Wall**  
Charles Krauthammer



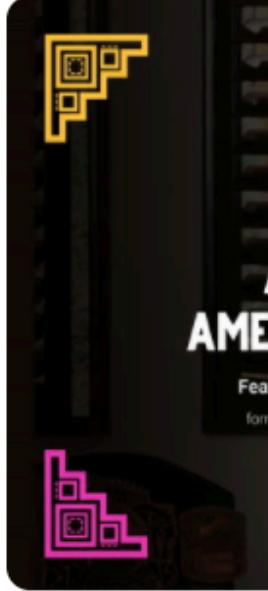
**Jesse Holguin, Mexico**




**Felix Guillermo, Dominican Republic**  
Felix Guillermo




**Farah Jimer**  
Farah Jimer




**Tito Ortiz**  
Tito Ortiz




**MARIA ELVIRA SALAZAR**  
CANDIDATA AL CONGRESO



**SOCIAL NEWS TIMES**  
EXCLUSIVO: La loca orden ejecutiva de Biden sobre el cambio climático le dio a China acceso a la red eléctrica de EE. UU. - De repente, hay una crisis energética en Texas. ¿Alguna relación?



**G24 INFORMATIVO**  
#DESCLASIFICADO-Los Planes de Canadá que conocía-#TRUMP  
103,259 views • Streamed live on Feb 17, 2021



**RESPONSABLE DIRECTO DE LA CRISIS ELÉCTRICA EN TEXAS**  
ULTIMA HORA  
#Bloomberg #nypost #foxnews  
NOTICIAS HOY 20 febrero 2021 NEWS HOY, es el responsable directo del desastre en Texas



In rare Election Day takeover of the YouTube homepage, Trump featured Latino-themed ad Jorge Masvidal ad his second-most-watched video of all time



Trigger Warning

34,396,130 views • Oct 20, 2020

392K 117K SHARE SAVE ...



# What's next

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## **Additional post-mortem research from Equis**

1. Additional post-mortem polling and focus groups in key states + national post-mortem survey
2. Ongoing focus groups
3. 2020 vote estimates, polling analysis and modeling assessment (w/ Catalist)
4. Study of media consumption habits on YouTube
5. 2021/2022 horserace polling beginning in summer



# About the data

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- Equis Research operates a subscription model to provide high-quality polling of Latino voters to advocacy, civic engagement and electoral organizations.
- The 2019-2020 polling was conducted in partnership with GBAO, Matt Barreto & Co., EMC Research, GSG, Myers Research & TargetSmart
- All polls were multi-modal (live interview calls via both landlines and cellphones, and online surveys via multiple recruitment methods). Calls were made by bilingual callers who offered a choice of interview language. (Our spring 2020 survey was a mix of SMS/text & live calls.)
- 40,880 total interviews from July 2019 to October 2020

	Sample Sizes							
State	July 2019	Oct	Nov	Dec	Feb 2020	May	Aug/ Sep	Sep/ Oct
AZ	700	600	600	600		600	600	600
CO	700	600	600	600	600	600	600	
FL	1200	600	600	600		800	1000	600
MI	500	400	400	400		400		300
NC	500	400	400	400		400	400	
NM	700	600	600	600		600		
NV	600	600	600	600	600	500	600	500
PA						600		400
TX	1000	985	945	1000	1000	800		700
VA	500	400	400	400		400		
WI	500	400	400	400		400		250
CA CDs	1200	1200	—	—	—	—		
<b>Total</b>	<b>8100</b>	<b>6785</b>	<b>5545</b>	<b>5600</b>	<b>2200</b>	<b>6100</b>	<b>3200</b>	<b>3350</b>

# Thank you!

