2020 Post-Mortem

PART ONE: Portrait of a Persuadable Latino

April 1, 2021
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.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Precinct Type</th>
<th>Two-Way Democratic Support</th>
<th>Shift 2016 -&gt; 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FLORIDA</td>
<td>Miami-Dade (&gt;50% Cuban precincts)</td>
<td>49% 35%</td>
<td>-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miami-Dade (&gt;50% LatAm precincts)</td>
<td>70% 50%</td>
<td>-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Osceola (&gt;30% PR precincts)</td>
<td>76% 65%</td>
<td>-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXAS</td>
<td>Rio Grande Valley (counties)</td>
<td>70% 58%</td>
<td>-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEVADA</td>
<td>Clark County (&gt;50% Latino precincts)</td>
<td>79% 73%</td>
<td>-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WISCONSIN</td>
<td>Milwaukee (&gt;50% Latino precincts)</td>
<td>84% 78%</td>
<td>-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARIZONA</td>
<td>Maricopa (&gt;50% Latino precincts)</td>
<td>79% 76%</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW JERSEY</td>
<td>Paterson (city)</td>
<td>91% 81%</td>
<td>-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASSACHUSETTS</td>
<td>Lawrence (city)</td>
<td>85% 74%</td>
<td>-11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on analysis of densely Latino precincts in AZ, WI, NV, FL; county results for TX; city results for NJ & MA.
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

% Change in Raw Vote Totals

Clinton-> Biden  |  Trump ’16 -> Trump ’20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maricopa (AZ)</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee (WI)</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark (NV)</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami -Dade Cuban</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RGV (TX)</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami-Dade LatAm</td>
<td>120%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paterson (NJ)</td>
<td>126%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Equis analysis of densely Latino precincts in AZ, WI, NV, FL; county results for TX; city results for NJ
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
Some 15% of Cubans who voted Clinton ’16 went Trump ’20— true vote-switching

2020 Vote Choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016 Vote Recall</th>
<th>Biden</th>
<th>Trump</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinton (30% of total)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump (59%)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Vote (6%)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cuba Study Group/Equis post-election survey of 600 Cuban-American voters in Miami-Dade, 11/4 - 11/8/20
Cuban shift was notable, but LatAm (non-Cuban/PR) drop more dramatic
Trump won over many LatAms + benefited from increased turnout

Source: Equis precinct analysis based on BlueLabs sub-ethnicity model
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

Source: Catalist data
South TX
In terms of total number of votes, the Democratic trend-line in the RGV looks healthy...

*Counties included in analysis: Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, Webb*
But Trump saw a huge surge in total votes that narrowed the Democratic margin

*Counties included in analysis: Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, Webb*
In Texas’ RGV, Trump made gains with voters predicted to be Dem-leaning. Early voter group averages 75 partisanship score, performed 15 points below.

**Utilizing non-public predictive model for Democratic partisanship.**

*Counties included in analysis: Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, Webb.*
A majority of these “swing voters” had sparse history of voting in 2020, voted:

- **54%** voted in 2020 and had a democratic partisanship score of less than 40.
- **30%** voted in 2020 and had a democratic partisanship score between 40 and 80.
- **33%** voted in 2020 and had a democratic partisanship score of 80 or more.

In addition to voting in 2020, voted:

- **31%** voted in 2020 and had a democratic partisanship score of less than 40.
- **26%** voted in 2020 and had a democratic partisanship score between 40 and 80.
- **31%** voted in 2020 and had a democratic partisanship score of 80 or more.

*Counties included in analysis: Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, Webb*
Nevada
In Nevada, vote-switchers were a smaller part of Trump’s 2020 coalition than new voters

![Diagram showing vote history of Latino Trump voters in Nevada](https://example.com/diagram.png)

Repeat ’16/’20 Voters: 65%

- Major Party Vote Switchers: 11%
- 3rd Party Vote Switchers: 5%
- New Voters: 4%
- New Voters Ineligible in ’16: 17%
- New Voters Didn’t vote ’16: 11%

Source: Equis/Myers survey of 2020 Latino voters in Nevada, 1/14 - 1/19/21
In NEVADA, first-time Trump voters were less ideological, younger, more foreign-born than regular Trump voters

Source: Equis/Myers survey of 2020 Latino voters in Nevada, 1/14 - 1/19/21
Who shifted 2019->2020?
Voters on the margins of the electorate
No two electorates are the same
Preliminary state data shows large share of Latinos who voted in '20, not '16

![Bar chart showing voting patterns by ethnicity and year](chart.png)

People who voted in either 2016 or 2020

- **White**: 21% (58% 2016 Dropoff Voter, 42% New 2020 Voter)
- **Black**: 25% (55% 2016 Dropoff Voter, 45% New 2020 Voter)
- **Latino**: 34% (49% 2016 Dropoff Voter, 51% New 2020 Voter)
- **Asian**: 17% (49% 2016 Dropoff Voter, 51% New 2020 Voter)
- **Other**: 16% (31% 2016 Dropoff Voter, 69% New 2020 Voter)

Courtesy of Catalist. Based on 33 states with vote history, defined as voting in the same state both years (more analysis to come)
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*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>+8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Men (&lt;50)</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Women (&lt;50)</td>
<td>+12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-College</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. born</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born</td>
<td>+8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>+0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>+15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Total Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>+1.4</td>
<td>+4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>+1.2</td>
<td>+3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Men (&lt;50)</td>
<td>+1.4</td>
<td>+2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Women (&lt;50)</td>
<td>+1.6</td>
<td>+4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>+0.2</td>
<td>+3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-College</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>+1.4</td>
<td>+4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. born</td>
<td>+1.6</td>
<td>+4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>+0.1</td>
<td>+4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>+1.7</td>
<td>+4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*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

Based on Equis 2019/2020 polling of registered Latino voters.
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

-77 to -72
-46 to 35

72 to 68
50 to 51

70 to -62
-42 to 36

-77 to -75
-56 to 54

-71 to 70
-42 to 35

76 to 69
-49 to 47

Based on Equis 2019/2020 polling of registered Latino voters.
Not just passive support: conservative Latinos also became more motivated to vote across key states.

Change in Motivation Among Hispanic Voters By Self-Reported Ideology
From 2019 average to last pre-election polls

- Liberals
- Moderates
- Conservatives

Based on Equis 2019/2020 polling of registered Latino voters
Conservative Latinas, in particular, appear to have been galvanized. Meanwhile, their liberal counterparts became slightly less motivated during the election.

Change in Motivation Among Hispanic Voters - By Ideology x Gender

- 2019 Average
- Sept/Oct 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideology</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>2019 Average</th>
<th>Sept/Oct 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Equis 2019/2020 polling of registered Latino voters. States included: AZ, NV, TX, FL, NM, NC, CO.
Change in Motivation x Trump Approval Among Hispanic Voters - By Ideology x Gender

Based on Equis 2019/2020 polling of registered Latino voters. States included: AZ, NV, TX, FL, NM, NC, CO
The ideological & partisan diversity of Latinos

Registered Latino Voters By Party ID x Self-Reported Ideology

- Moderate Democrats: 22%
- Moderate Independents: 15%
- Liberal Democrats: 14%
- Conservative Democrats: 11%
- Liberal Republicans: 1%
- Conservative Republicans: 14%
- Conservative Independents: 11%
- Moderate Independents: 7%
- Moderate Republicans: 6%
- Liberal Republicans: 1%

Source: Equis baseline survey of Latino registered voters in 11 states, July/August 2019 (n=4000)
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

- Conservative Independents: +13
- Moderate Republicans: +5
- Moderate Independents: +5
- Liberal Independents: +5
- Conservative Republicans: +4
- Conservative Democrats: +2
- Liberal Democrats: +0
- Moderate Democrats: -1

*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
“[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

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, July 2019 to December 2019
...But in fall 2020, low propensity voters were significantly more approving of Trump
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

Turnout Score 0 - 89.9

- Turnout Score 90+

Source: TargetSmart turnout score + Equis 2019/2020 polling of registered Latino voters
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
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.”

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

“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.”

“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.”

Source: Equis/TargetSmart online journals with registered Latino voters in Texas, Dec 19-21, 2019
Post-primary in 2020, moral high ground on immigration may have been muddied 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

Source: Equis focus groups (with Castillo & Associates/Myers Research), February 2021
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

Source: Google Trends
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
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.”

Source: Equis focus groups (with Castillo & Associates/Myers Research), February 2021
“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

Source: Equis focus groups (with Castillo & Associates/Myers Research), February 2021
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

53% of those who lost jobs voted for Biden
49% of those who held on to jobs voted for Biden

40% of those who lost jobs voted for Trump
49% of those who held on to jobs voted for Trump

Source: Equis/Myers survey of 2020 Latino voters in Nevada, 1/14 - 1/19/21 (chart includes oversample of Trump voters)
Other Areas of Inquiry: Role of Social Media
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
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.
What’s next
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
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.
Thank you!