

Massachusetts Latino Landscape

Findings from a survey, focus groups, and elected officials interviews

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This project was sponsored by Amplify Latinx

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Project Background

- Statewide survey results based on a statewide survey of 1,203 Latino residents of Massachusetts. Conducted December 7 – 17, 2022 via live telephone and online interviewing in English and Spanish.
- Data was weighted to known population parameters on age, gender, education, nationality background, and region.
- Interviews were conducted with Latino elected officials at various levels of government (city councilors, state legislators, school committee members etc.).
- Two focus groups: Group 1 consisted of Latinos from Western MA / Greater Worcester and Group 2 consisted of Latinos from Eastern MA / Greater Fitchburg.
- Toplines, crosstabs, slides, and reports are at massincpolling.com.
- This project was sponsored by Amplify Latinx.

Key findings

- When it comes to residents' priorities for elected officials, affordability issues surpass everything else, followed by jobs and education.
- Residents express support for some lower priorities (transit quality, climate change, abortion rights), they are just seen as less important for state leaders at this time.
- Latino voters lean very heavily Democratic in Massachusetts, far more than the state as a whole. More Latinos see the Democratic Party representing them and standing for similar values.
- Latino residents express a variety of identities impacted by key factors such as ancestry, birthplace, language, LGBT+ identities, political party, and more. These factors influence views, experiences, and priorities express throughout the survey.

Key findings

- The survey found building civic engagement among Latino residents faces several specific hurdles.
 - Voter registration among those eligible but not registered. This group mostly reports they do not register due to disillusionment and skepticism about politics in general rather than structural barriers.
 - Building awareness of specific elected officials, what they do, and how / when to reach them. Right now, awareness of even high profile elected officials is fairly low, and contact is unusual.
 - Expanding participation in specific civic and political activities, some of which are rare at this point.
- Most say electing more Latinos to office is somewhat or very important. Majorities also say voting has a real impact and believe their communities could push effectively for change.

Key findings

- Focus groups with Latino residents and interviews with Latino elected officials echoed many of the same themes as the survey.
- Top priorities for both groups include housing, cost of living, economic opportunity, and education.
- In terms of civic engagement, there were a common set of barriers, which include time, financial resources, distrust of government, and disaffection with the political process.
- Expanding Latino representation is important both to residents and elected officials, though neither group sees it as a guarantee of added focus on key priorities.

Elected officials' favorability

- Elizabeth Warren is most well known among Latino residents, while Katherine Clark is least well known.

Most elected leaders are not well known, Senator Warren best known of the group

% of Latino residents who have a favorable / unfavorable view of _____

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Heard of / Undecided	Never heard of	Don't Know / Refused
Elizabeth Warren	43%	12%	20%	19%	6%
Maura Healey	25%	9%	15%	42%	9%
Ed Markey	22%	10%	19%	41%	7%
Ayanna Pressley	22%	7%	14%	49%	7%
Katherine Clark	15%	7%	14%	55%	9%

Party affiliation

- Latino voters are more likely than state voters as a whole to self identify as Democrats, and three times more likely to say they are Democrats than Republicans.

Most Latino voters in Massachusetts identify as Democrats

% of Latino registered voters who identify as / lean toward _____

	All Mass. voters*	Latino voters
Democrat	49%	60%
Republican	25%	19%
Independent / Other	21%	16%
Don't know / Refused	4%	5%

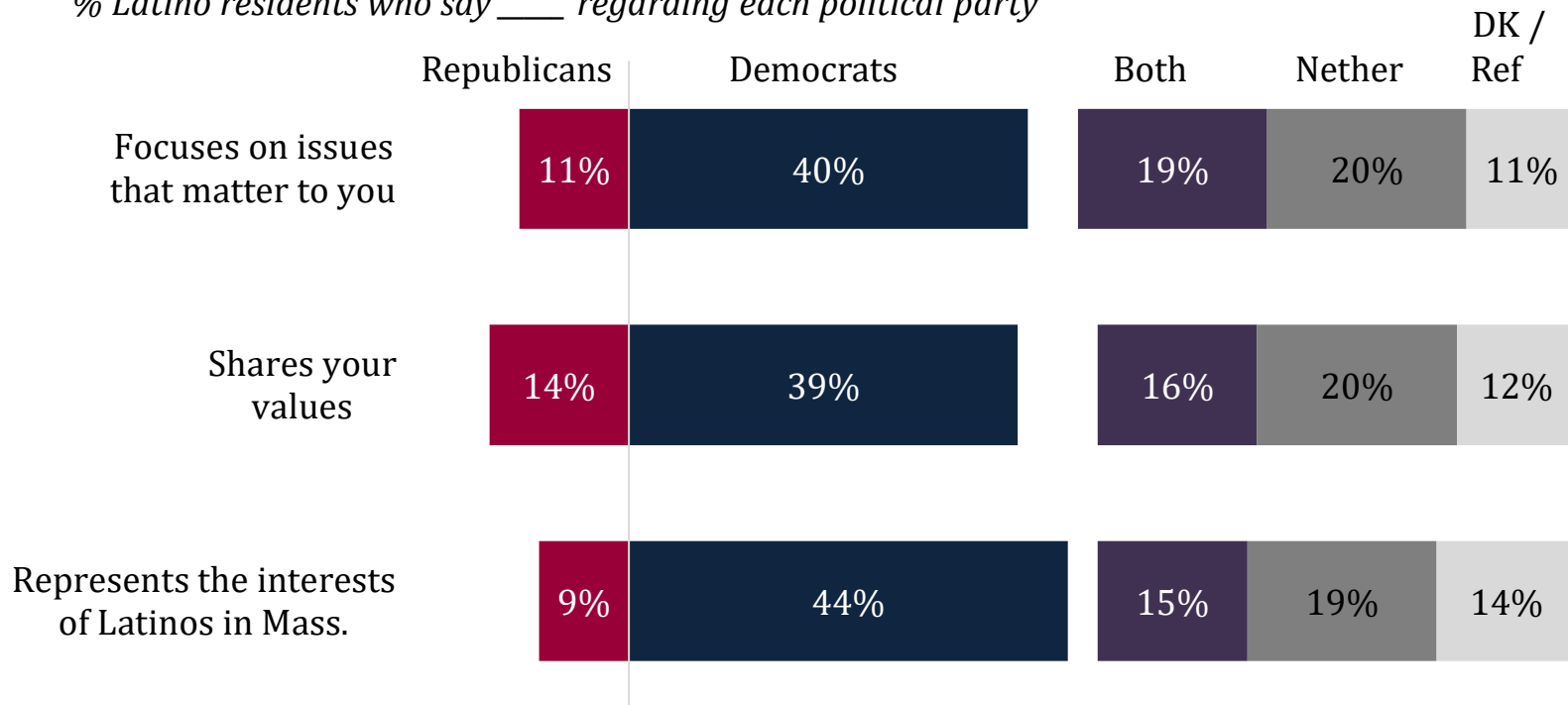
*From December 2021 statewide registered voter survey.

Party description

- On the whole, Latino residents lean much more toward the Democratic party and more think Democrats represent their interests, though a large swath says “both” or “neither”.

Latino residents more likely to say Democratic party represents them

% Latino residents who say ___ regarding each political party



Why eligible voters are not registered

- Lack of time and knowledge about how to register (25%) and lack of interest in politics (24%) among top reasons some say they have not registered to vote even when eligible.
- Respondents also offered a set of reasons related to a general disaffection with politics and voting. This echoes major focus group themes.

Barriers, disaffection deter some from registering

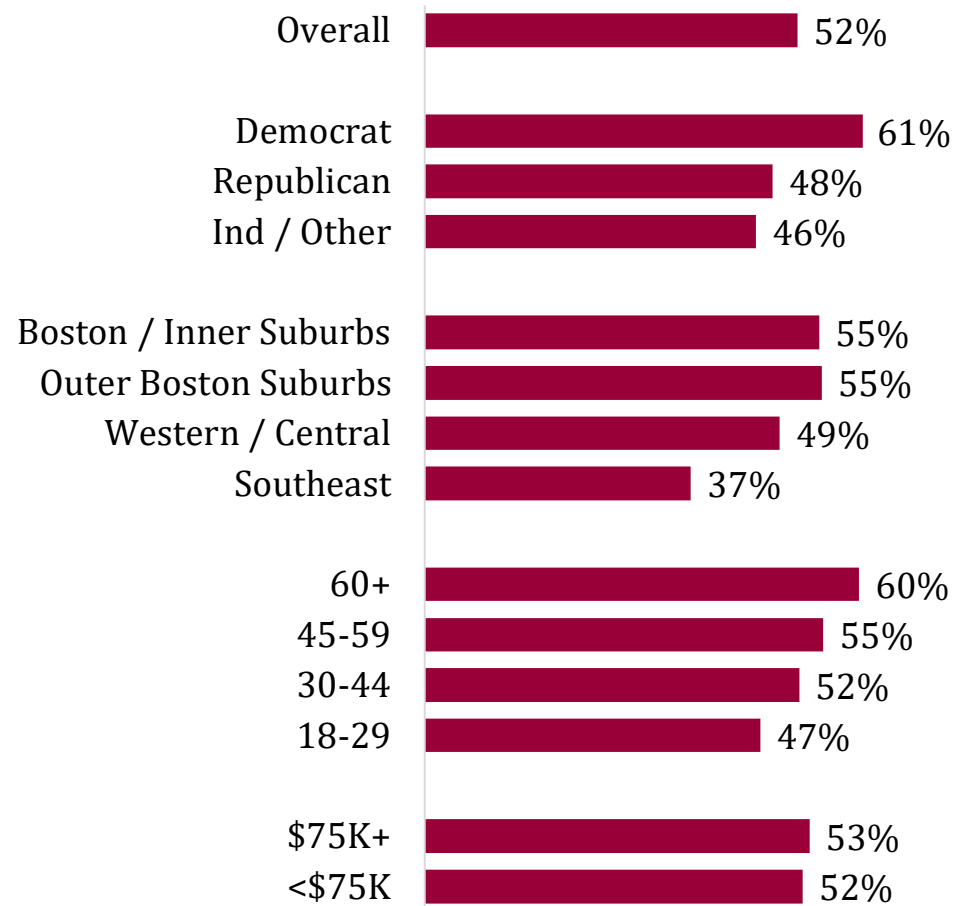
% of people not registered but eligible who say ___ is a reason they have not registered.

Don't have time to register / tried to and couldn't / need to learn more	25%
Don't follow politics / not interested in politics	24%
Don't believe in voting / don't want to vote / my vote doesn't matter	18%
Lost faith in politics / don't trust the system	11%
Don't like candidates or party / nothing changes	11%
Other	11%
Don't Know / Refused	5%

Majority says voting has an impact

- Overall, half strongly agree voting has a real impact on the way decisions are made.
- Latinos who are Democrats, older people, and those closer to Boston were the most likely to say so.

Majorities agree that voting has an impact
% of residents who "strongly" agree voting has a real impact



Max Diff explanation

- The survey included a set of questions where respondents were asked to choose which item was most / least important among a rotating set of options.
- Every time someone chooses the item as “most important”, the score goes up, every time someone chooses “least important”, it goes down.

Sample Max Diff style question format:

Which of the following features would be most likely to make you choose a particular smartphone, and which would be least likely to make you choose it?

I Prefer Most		I Prefer Least
<input type="radio"/>	Price	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	Operating System	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	Brand	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	Quad-camera System	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	Pop-up Selfie Camera	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	5G Support	<input type="radio"/>

Priorities measurement

- Here's what Latino residents said was most to least important when they had to make tradeoffs.
- Affordability issues were the top 2, followed by jobs and education issues.
- Transit, electing more women, and climate change were given the lowest importance.

Q: FOR EACH REPETITION, SHOW A RANDOM 5 OF THE POTENTIAL PRIORITIES LISTED BELOW. SHOW 8 SETS TO EACH RESPONDENT TO ENSURE EACH ITEM IS SHOWN 3 TIMES. I'm going to read you several things state leaders in Massachusetts could focus on over the next year. Which of the following do you think should be state leaders' highest priority and their lowest priority?

Latino residents' highest priorities for state leaders
Max Diff scores for each item (-100 to 100 scale)

Making housing more affordable	33
Making healthcare more affordable	27
Creating jobs and reducing unemployment	21
Ensuring access to high quality K-12 education	15
Protecting immigrant rights	10
Making childcare more affordable	6
Helping small businesses	-5
Increasing the number of Black, Latino, and Asian people in elected office	-11
Increasing voter turnout among Latinos	-13
Protecting access to abortion	-15
Protecting the state against climate change	-19
Increasing the number of women in elected office	-24
Improving public transportation	-25

Priorities vary between demos

- Priorities vary considerably among respondents born either on the US mainland, Puerto Rico, or elsewhere.

Latino residents' highest priorities for state leaders, by place of birth

Max Diff scores for each item (-100 to 100 scale)

	Overall	Puerto Rico	US mainland	Elsewhere
Making housing more affordable	33	26	37	34
Making healthcare more affordable	27	24	31	24
Creating jobs and reducing unemployment	21	19	15	26
Ensuring access to high quality K-12 education	15	14	15	16
Protecting immigrant rights	10	7	1	19
Making childcare more affordable	6	3	11	2
Helping small businesses	-5	-9	-6	-1
Increasing the number of POC in elected office	-11	-6	-8	-16
Increasing voter turnout among Latinos	-13	-9	-20	-8
Protecting access to abortion	-15	-12	-2	-29
Protecting the state against climate change	-19	-19	-22	-16
Increasing the number of women in elected office	-24	-15	-28	-24
Improving public transportation	-25	-21	-23	-29

Focus group / interviews: Top priorities

- Residents and elected leaders agreed on many policy priorities, while each group also mentioned additional items.

Resident focus groups

- Housing (lack of affordable housing, rent costs)
- Cost of living / necessities
- Economic mobility (jobs / higher education)
- K-12 education funding / resources
- Mental health
- Access to resources / assistance with problems
- Small business support

Elected official interviews

- Housing (lack of affordable housing, rent costs)
- Cost of living / necessities
- Economic mobility (jobs / higher education)
- K-12 education funding / resources
- Mental health
- Childcare

Quotes on top priorities

“I think economic mobility and I don't think people are getting paid enough.” (Latino elected officials interviews)

“I think more specifically, people are struggling with arbitrary rent hikes. Rent increases are a serious matter.” (Latino elected officials interviews)

“Just being economically stable, but also being economically mobile...Being economically mobile on the up. How do people go from an income bracket to another income bracket? How do you actually get to that growth?” (Latino elected officials interviews)

“The issue of housing is really important here in Massachusetts. The high cost and the development projects that are happening in Boston and Brockton come with a really high rent. They are building houses and apartments for people who truly have the money to pay rent...We also need to combine it with education so that there is access to higher wages to be able to pay the rent cost at this time.”
(Eastern MA FG participant)

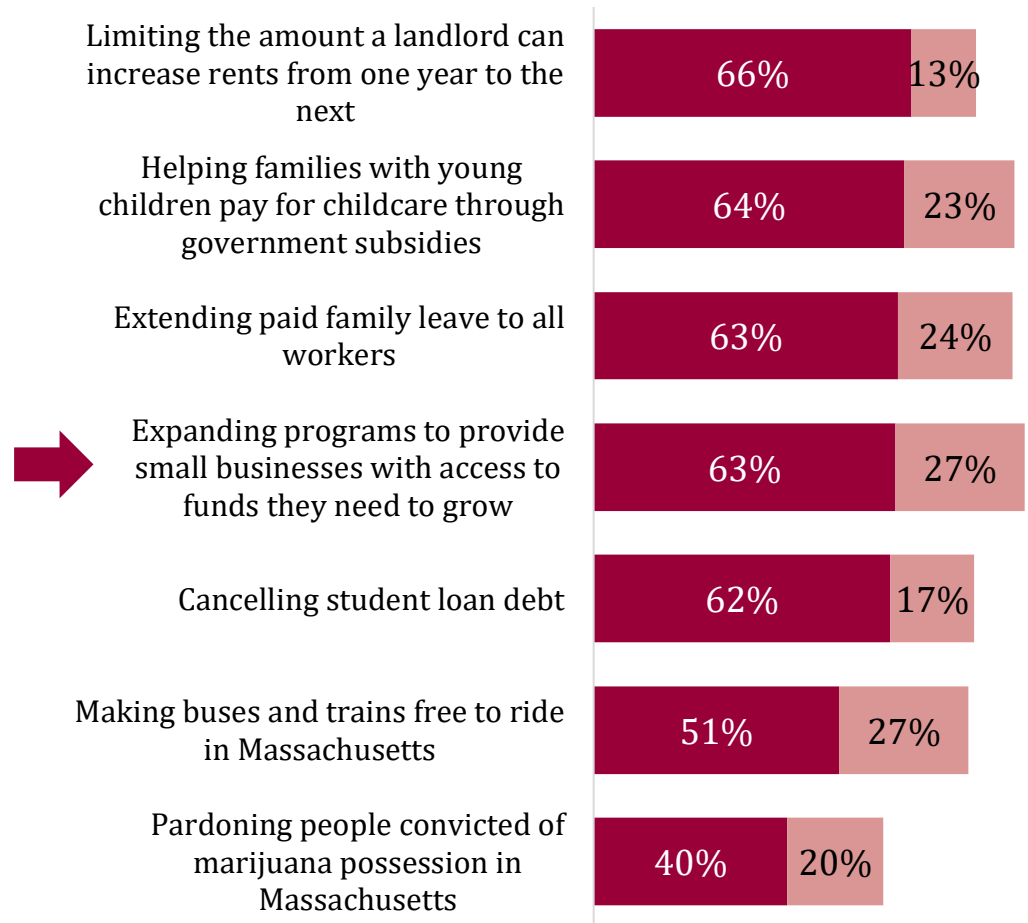
“The thing I have been having problems with is funding to get my business up and going. Contracts are there, and money is there but there it's just getting the equipment to get your business up and going as a Latino. That is what I am facing. It's in the process. I think it's right around the corner of getting it all wrapped up. That's what I can think of right now.”
(Western MA FG Participant)

Policy support

- There are differences between importance and support. Many policies which are ranked less important still draw majority support.
- Half or more support a range of progressive policies.
- Marijuana pardons earn the lowest support, though it is still 60%.

Q: Now, we would like to get your views on some issues that are being discussed in Massachusetts today. Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose READ FIRST? How about READ NEXT?

A range of policy proposals draw majority support % who say they _____ each proposal



■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support

News access and use

- Young people report far greater social media usage, while older people are more likely to rely on TV as a news source.

Age / language are key factors in news sources; TV / Social are dominant sources.

% who they regularly get news about their community from each source

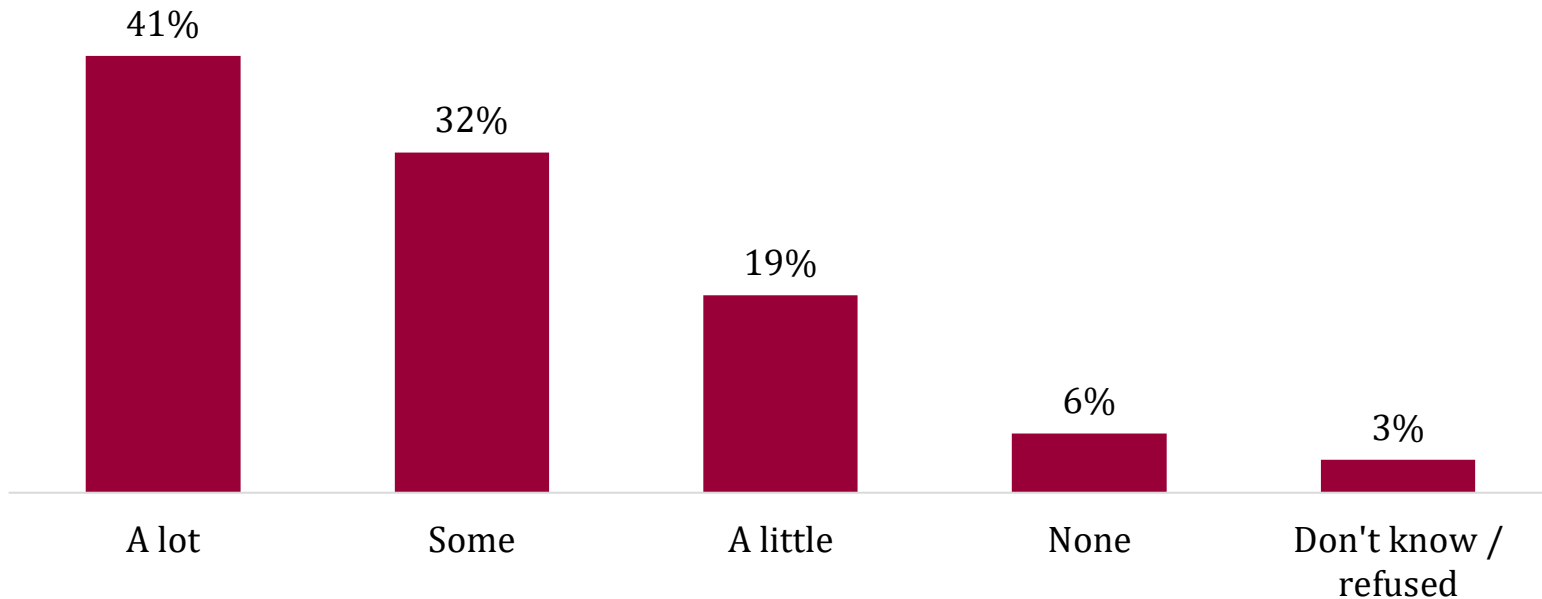
	Overall	Spanish only	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
TV	47%	54%	44%	44%	52%	55%
Social media (general)	40%	32%	49%	38%	37%	29%
Online news websites	35%	20%	37%	39%	30%	29%
Friends and family	25%	27%	35%	23%	17%	20%
Facebook	23%	15%	35%	20%	16%	12%
Instagram	18%	12%	31%	14%	12%	10%
Newspapers	18%	9%	19%	15%	21%	20%
Radio	17%	9%	20%	15%	14%	20%
TikTok	13%	12%	28%	7%	5%	6%
Twitter	10%	5%	19%	9%	4%	3%
Local community organizations	10%	7%	9%	10%	9%	13%
Somewhere else	5%	3%	2%	7%	6%	4%
Churches / religious inst.	4%	4%	5%	4%	3%	7%

Pushing for change

- Most think they could have at least some impact if their community pushed for change, but less than half see “a lot” of impact.

Most say their community could have at least some impact pushing for change

% who say if people pushed for change in their community it would make _____ of difference



Civic engagement activities by age

- On the most common civic engagement activities, there are sharp differences by age.

Political activity takes very different shapes for people of different ages

% who say they have done each in the last 12 months

	Overall	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Posted about your political views on social media	26%	31%	26%	21%	21%
Attended government meetings in your community, such as city or town council meetings	23%	23%	20%	17%	39%
Worn a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on your car, or placed a sign in your window or in front of your house	22%	22%	18%	17%	36%
Attended a political rally, speech, or campaign event	18%	22%	17%	11%	21%
Contacted an elected official	17%	17%	18%	14%	18%
Donated money to a ballot campaign or another political cause	14%	20%	10%	11%	16%
Donated money to a candidate for elected office	14%	16%	13%	12%	13%
Volunteered for a political campaign	10%	11%	9%	5%	13%

Contacting an elected official

- Among those who did not contact an elected official, reasons varied from not needing to do so, to other barriers.

Latino residents report many reasons for not contacting elected officials

% who have not contacted an elected official who offer each reason

Reason	Percent
I didn't have any issues I needed to contact them about	39%
I am not interested in contacting them	25%
I am not sure where to start	16%
I did not know I could contact elected officials	13%
I am not sure who my elected officials are	7%
I tried contacting an elected official, but never heard back	4%
<i>Don't know / Refused</i>	5%

Focus group / interviews: Civic Engagement Barriers

- Focus group participants identified 3 main barriers to civic participation: disaffection from government, cultural distrust of government, and lack of time to participate.

Resident focus groups

- Time, language barriers
- Distrust of government
 - Post-election broken promises
 - Corruption & political experiences in countries of origin
- Lack of community engagement from leaders, people want to be met where they are
- Don't feel Latino voice is heard
- Lack of Latino representation in elected office

Elected official interviews

- Time, language barriers
- Cultural perceptions of authority
- Elected officials need to go to communities more and educate on what they can offer
- Certain groups of constituent's access office more often (white, higher income)
- Want Latinos to feel engaged even after voting

Quotes on civic engagement barriers

“I don’t know if there are enough opportunities for elected people to be able to speak to the Latino community. Like a lot of barriers for the Latino community to be able to step in and have meaningful conversations. I mean if you think about the average Latino...a lot of the community members we have are parents, like when they are available to meet, they are not having lunch meetings, they need time after work.”
(Western MA FG Participant)

“But I think also then there's the racism at the time and still into existence, the fact that I'm a woman and a woman of color and very proud.... People you know, you know, some of the some of the attacks that came on me were very racially connected.” (Latino elected officials interviews)

“The financial aspect is it really is a barrier. And many folks of color, when they're initially running, many of them aren't coming in from significant money or connected to significant money.” (Latino elected officials interviews)

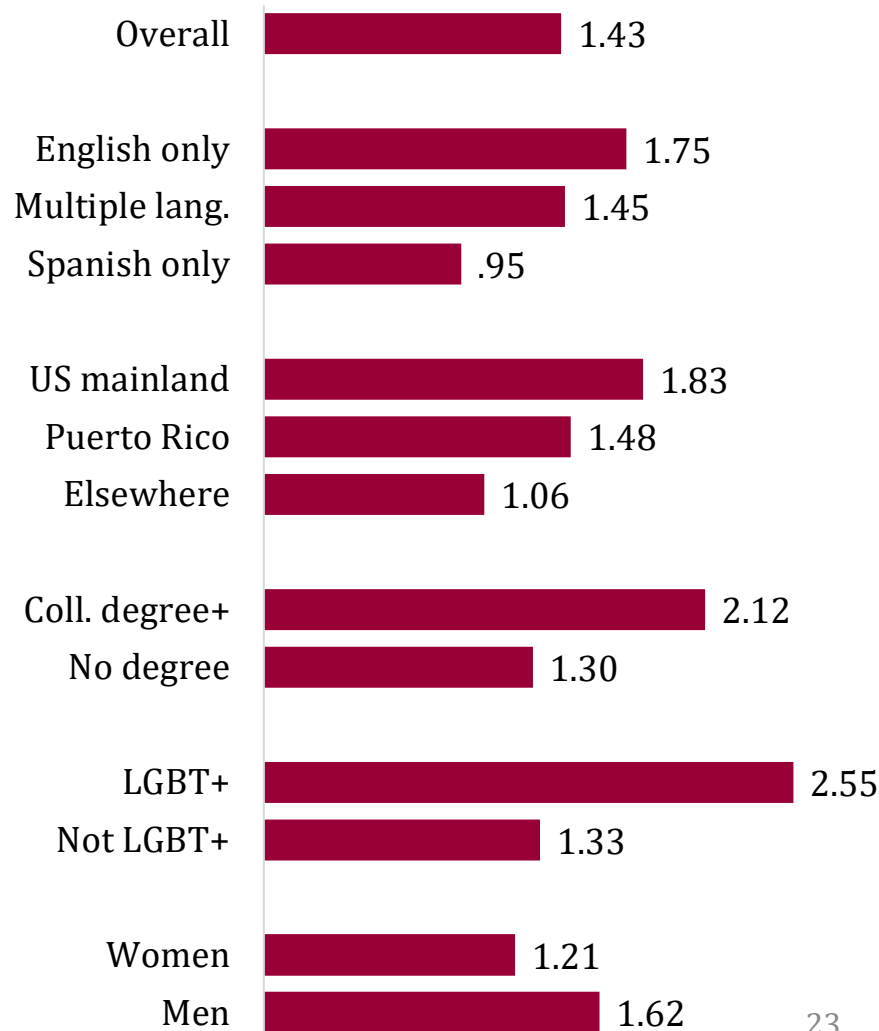
“...why should I come to the meetings and try to participate in the political process or civic process if there is no change? The elected leaders are elected, at least during the 20-25 years here, they are elected but then they forget about the people who elected them that's it.” (Eastern MA FG participant)

Levels of civic engagement

1. Posted about your political views on social media
2. Attended government meetings in your community, such as city or town council meetings
3. Worn a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on your car, or placed a sign in your window or in front of your house
4. Attended a political rally, speech, or campaign event
5. Contacted an elected official
6. Donated money to a ballot campaign or another political cause
7. Donated money to a candidate for elected office
8. Volunteered for a political campaign

Engagement levels vary by demographic groups

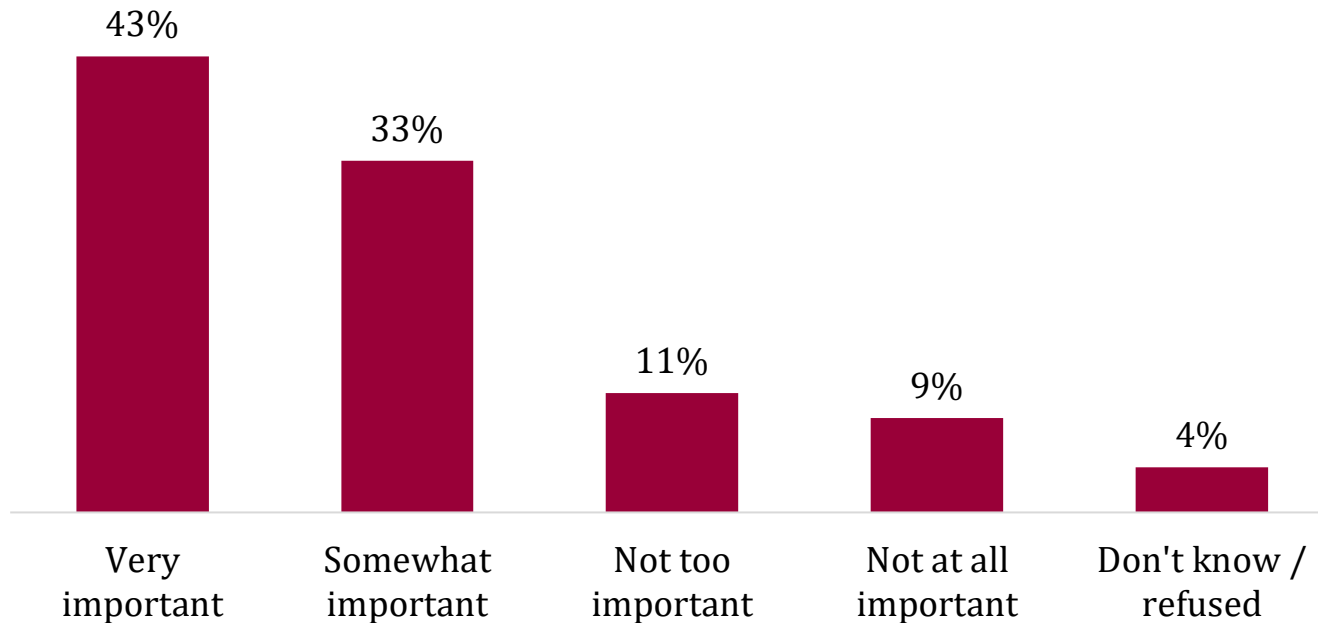
Average civic engagement actions taken by each group



Electing more Latinos

- Most (76%) say electing more Latinos to public office in future elections is very / somewhat important.

Most say electing more Latinos to public office is very / somewhat important
% who said it is _____ to elect more Latinos in future elections



Focus groups / interviews: Representation

- Both groups emphasize the importance of expanded representation in making residents feel more connected.

Resident focus groups

- Increased Latino representation leads to more understanding of everyday struggles from elected officials
- Some voters register / vote just to back a Latino candidate
- Some Latino-dominant communities need more Latino leaders
- Latino identity doesn't guarantee focus on Latino priorities

Elected official interviews

- Elected officials emphasize the need for more Latino representation in government
- Constituents feel more comfortable when officials can speak Spanish and share identities
- Some voters register / vote just to back a Latino candidate
- Representation is starting to expand, but there is more room for growth

Quotes on representation

“Oh, there's someone who looks like me who I can probably talk to about these issues like that...So I think that it is back to like representation. Like do you see people who look like you in these positions of power? Do you feel comfortable reaching out?”
(Latino elected officials interviews)

“I think in having a diverse representative body of Latino electeds, we can help mitigate some of the biases that might come over through.” (Latino elected officials interviews)

“I've had people that are Latino that aren't even from my district that will call me that are from another district because they feel like I'm the one that will hear them...I think because of a lot of times people seek me out because they feel like they can connect with me and they don't really want to talk to anybody else because the ability yeah, the level of comfortability.
(Latino elected officials interviews)

“...but someone who is Latino as such, someone who comes out of the community, someone who comes out of the public, of us today, that understands what our culture is like and how we express it...Latino is like a spectrum, we have more or less the same similar statistics.” (Western MA FG participant)

“As a Latino, I feel nothing but pride if we have someone Latino in that position. Maybe that's because one of us, maybe we can, that's why we voted for that person, maybe only because they are Latino.” (Western MA FG participant)

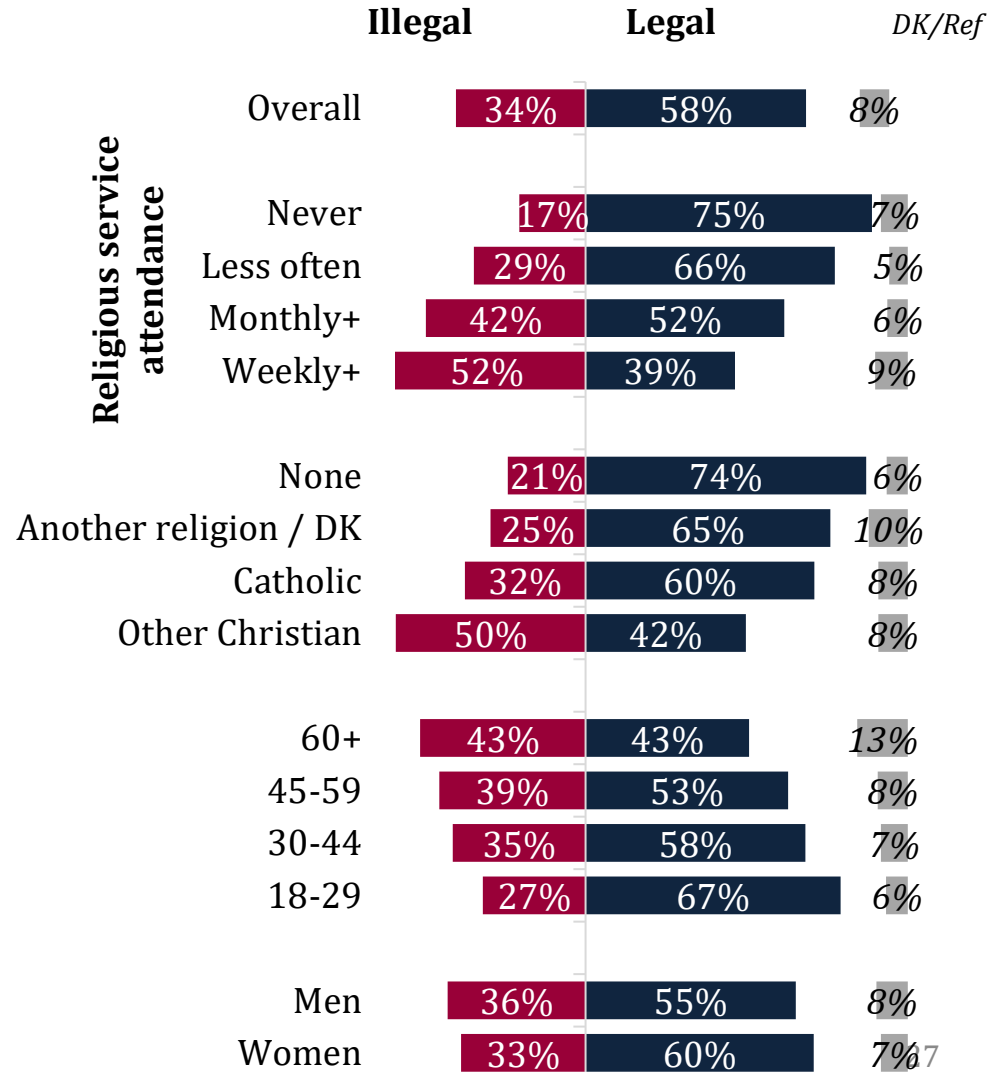
Views on abortion rights

- Most Latino residents (58%) say abortion should remain legal in all or most cases
- Women and younger people are the most likely to say abortion should remain legal in most / all cases.
- Religion also plays a major part, with Christian Latinos (non-Catholic) expressing the most opposition to legal abortion.

Q: Do you think abortion should be legal in all cases, legal in most cases, illegal in most cases, or illegal in all cases?

Most say abortion should remain legal in most cases

% who say abortion should be _____ in most or all cases

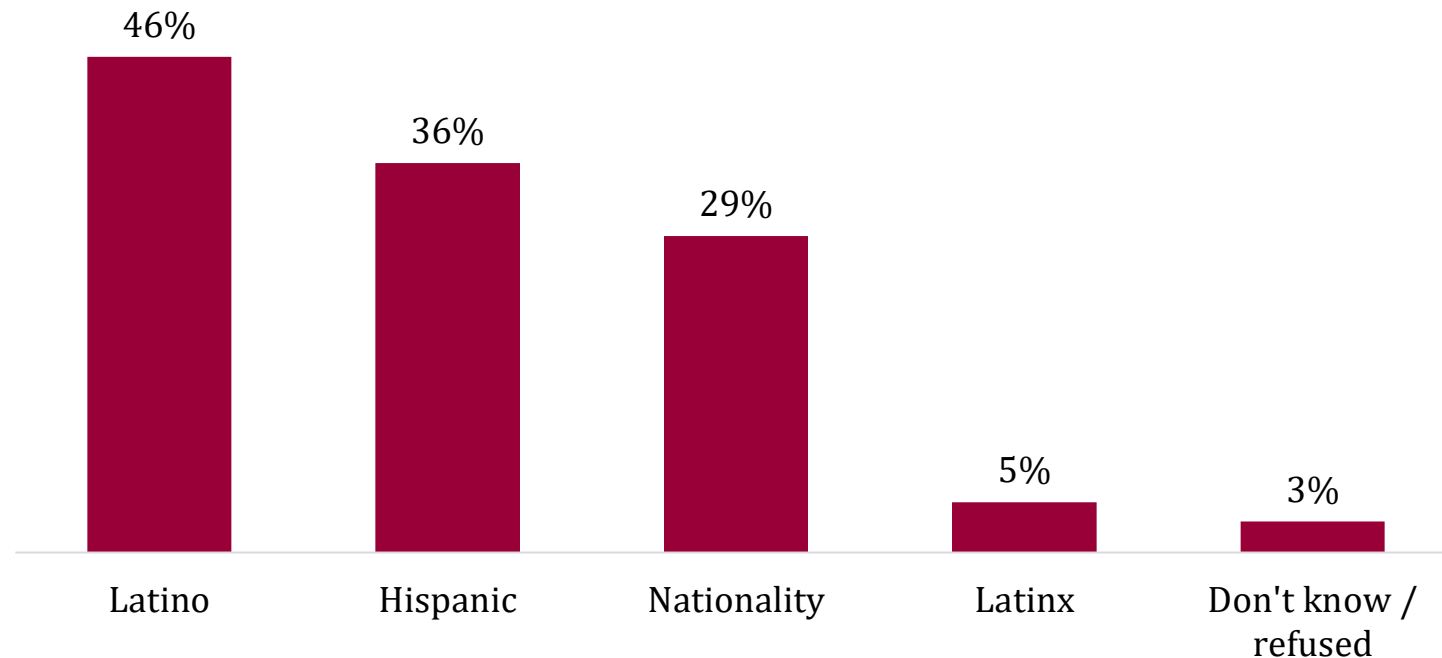


Preferred terms

- Most prefer Latino, Hispanic, or their national ancestry to describe themselves. Few (5%) say they prefer Latinx.

Most prefer Latino, Hispanic, or their nationality over Latinx

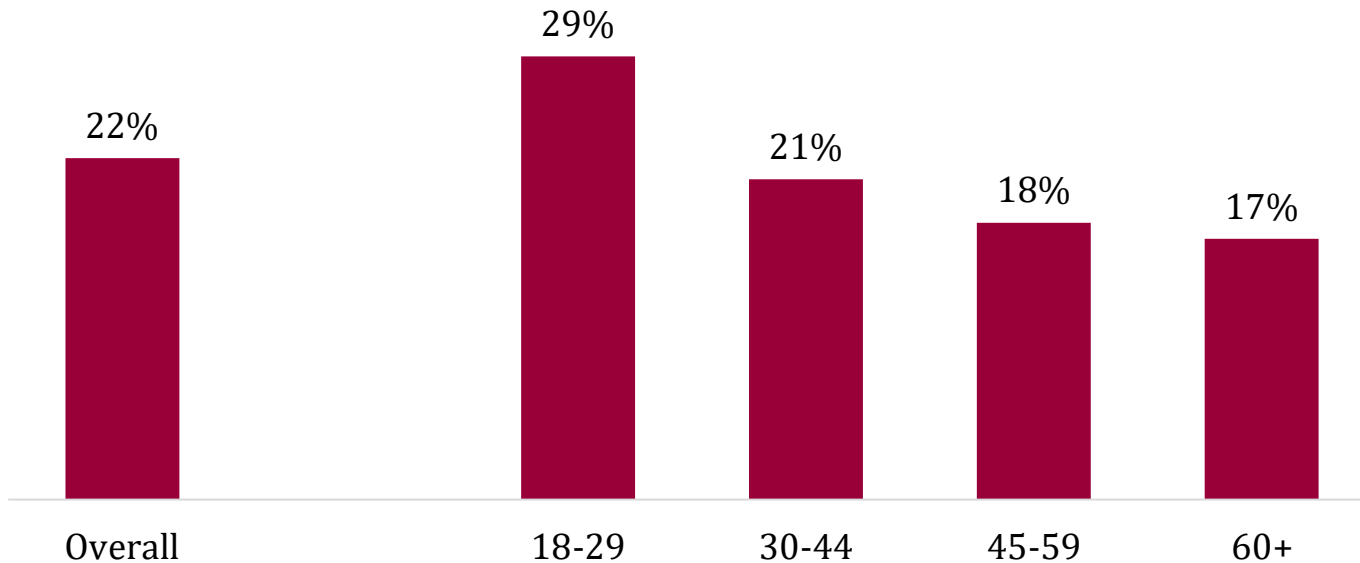
% who say they prefer / use each term to describe themselves (select all that apply)



Afro-Latino identity

- Overall, 22% of Latino residents of Massachusetts identify as Afro-Latino, including 29% of those under age 30.

Afro-Latino identification is more common among younger people
% who say they identify as Afro-Latino



Languages spoken at home

- Among Latino residents, majorities speak English and Spanish at home, though prevalence varies greatly depending on place of birth.

English and Spanish are common, though place of birth has big impact

% who say each language is spoken regularly at home.

	Overall	Puerto Rico	US mainland	Elsewhere
English	74%	74%	91%	59%
Spanish	68%	80%	49%	79%
Portuguese	10%	4%	10%	12%
Cape Verdean	1%	1%	2%	1%
Other	1%	0%	1%	2%
Haitian Creole	1%	2%	2%	<1%
Mandarin	%	0%	1%	0%
Arabic	%	%	1%	0%
Vietnamese	%	0%	1%	0%
Don't know / Refused	1%	1%	1%	0%

Adds up to >100% since respondents could select more than one language.

LGBT+ identity

- In all, 10% of Latino residents statewide identify as LGBT+, including 19% of those under age 30. This age pattern echoes many other recent surveys of the broader population.
- Place of birth and religiosity are also key influences.

*Q: Which of the following best describes you?
Heterosexual / straight, Gay or Lesbian, Bisexual,
Other, Don't know / refused
Q: Are you transgender?*

Differences in LGBT+ identity between groups

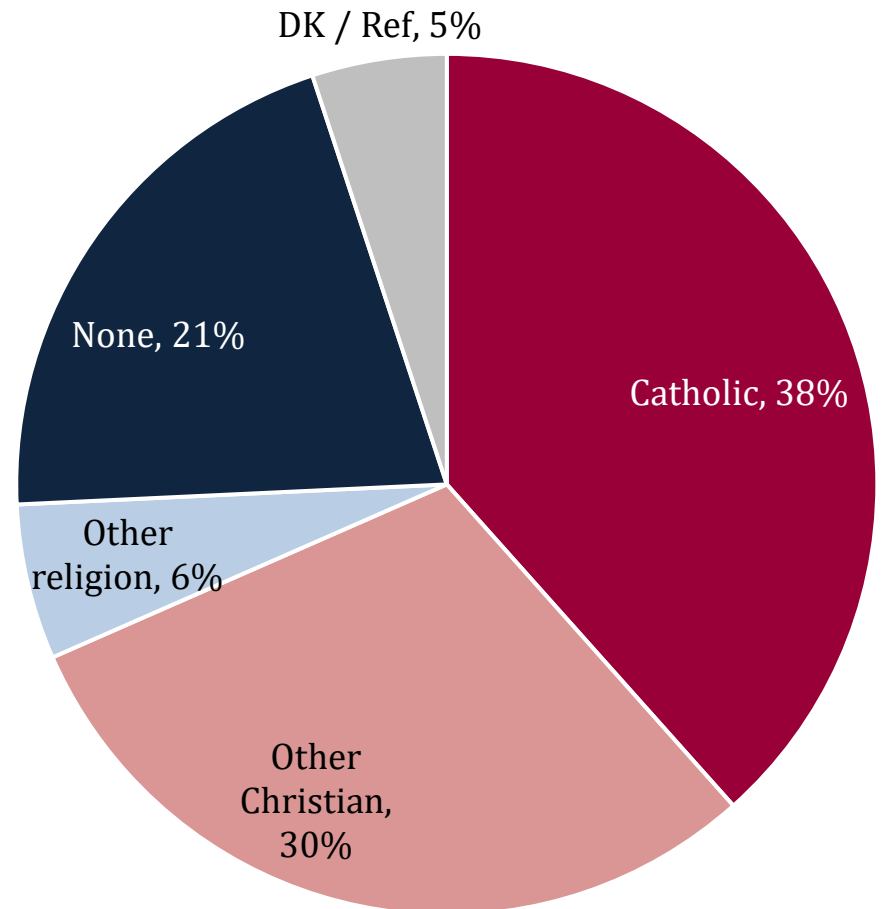
In each demographic group identifying as LGBT+

All	Overall	10%
Age	18-29	19%
	30-44	4%
	45-59	6%
	60+	8%
Place of Birth	Elsewhere	3%
	Puerto Rico	9%
	United States mainland	17%
Religious service Attendance	Weekly+	5%
	Monthly+	8%
	Less often	12%
	Never	16%

Religious affiliations

- Catholicism and other Christian faiths remain predominant with the rest divided between other Christian denominations and other identities.
- In all, 32% identified as something other than Christian.

Religious identification among Latino residents
% of Latinos who identify as ____



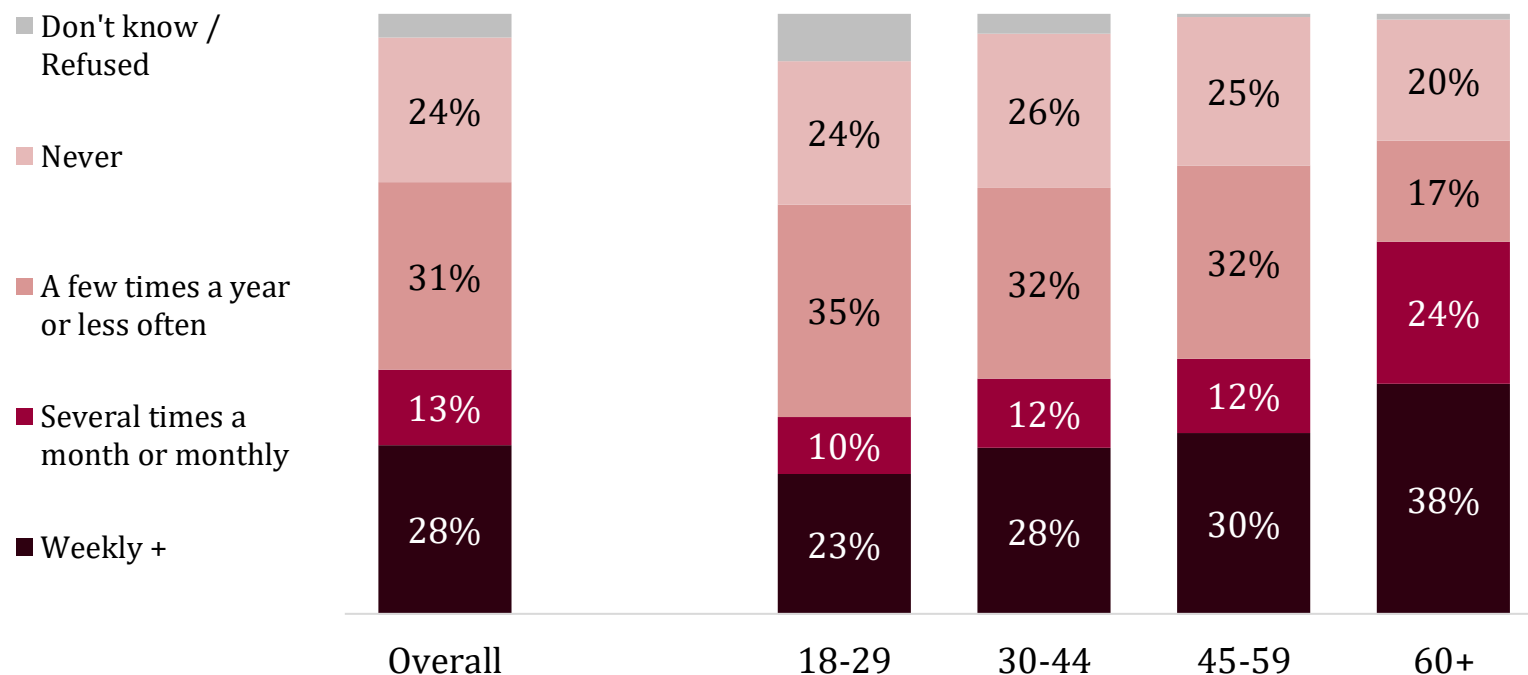
Q: And may I ask what your religious preference is? IF "CHRISTIAN," ASK: Are you Catholic or Protestant? [IF "PROTESTANT," ASK: What specific denomination?

Religious service attendance

- Less than half say they attend religious services monthly or more. Attendance is lower among younger Latino residents.

Younger Latino residents report less frequent religious service attendance

% reporting they attend religious services with each frequency level





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