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2020 Post-Mortem

PART TWO: The American Dream Voter

December 14, 2021

Why we're still talking about 2020

Trump has temporarily left the stage but the dynamics of last year's election persist. We are still talking about COVID and the economy, after all.

Studying last year's trends helps explain the current attitudes of a segment of the population that can seem elusive to outsiders, being as Latinos do not fit neatly into this country's typical frameworks for race or partisanship.

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Hispanic voters one of the last great wildcards in a hyper-polarized electorate
The shift from 2016 to 2020 amounts to big movement among a small subset of people

Latinos **swung** more than other groups from 2016 to 2020...

...and had the greatest increase in **vote share**...

...despite under-performing **potential**.

	Change in Support from Clinton to Biden			Composition of the Electorate			2020 Turnout (% Eligible)
	2016	**2020**	**2016 to 2020**	**2016**	**2020**	**2016 to**	**% Voted**
Latino	**71%**	**63%**	**-8%**	**9%**	**10%**	**1.2%**	**50%**
AAPI	68%	67%	-1%	4%	4%	0.8%	62%
Black	93%	90%	-3%	12%	12%	-0.1%	63%
White	41%	44%	3%	74%	72%	-2%	74%

Source: Catalist

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What we wanted to understand

1. What was the **relative importance of various factors in driving Trump's Latino vote**?

   - Of the leading theories in the world (the economy, Defund the Police, the Trump persona, COVID, racial resentment, socialism, media, etc.), which do the data suggest were especially meaningful?

2. What explains the **bigger shifts in South TX and South FL**?

3. What of these dynamics will carry over into **current policy debates, or the elections in 2022 and 2024**?

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In part one of the post-mortem (LINK), we used Equis data to show how a subset of Latinos proved to be more "swing" than previously assumed. **Trump made gains in the last year of his term among voters usually on the sidelines of politics** (less-frequent Latino voters), in a story of persuasion and turnout working hand-in-hand. We hypothesized then:

> Part of the story appears to be that **the barrier keeping some 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.

Additional research validates the core argument, but adds some complexity and texture.

Key insight #1

The debate over whether to prioritize the economy or public health in the middle of COVID— a debate that became, for some, about the value of hard work and the American Dream— **created a permission structure for formerly hesitant Latinos to embrace Trump's candidacy**.

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Key insight #2

Movement toward Trump coincided with one-sided attention lavished on key issues and geographies, part of a larger story about **the impact of uncontested communication and the consequences of voters feeling forgotten or unheard**.

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Key insight #3

The thing about less-partisan Latinos: **they are navigating their identities and values in ways that don't always map out neatly on the political spectrum and aren't always consistent.** That makes campaigns, policy action, and media all the more impactful. Few of the opinions or dynamics we include in this report are static— they can also be shaped by parties going forward.

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I. **The economy unlocked a door:** the issue landscape shifted to more favorable ground for Trump, opening a way for some Latinos who found it unacceptable to vote for him in 2016

II. **The socialism attack broke through:** it created a space for defection, concentrated on people getting media from WhatsApp and right-wing outlets, along with those who most believe in social mobility through hard work (aka the American Dream)

III. **Race mattered:** the events after the murder of George Floyd did not seem to alter the trajectory of the election, but race and public safety both still likely played a role (in both directions)

IV. **One-sided communication enabled bigger movement**: South Florida and South Texas served as examples of what happens when a candidate is allowed a one-sided advantage on a highly resonant issue (socialism in one, border security in the other)

V. **Most important missing pieces**: What happened in Arizona, which showed the smallest 2016-2020 Latino shift? And what failed to persuade or mobilize the 50% of eligible Latino voters who sat out the election?

VI. **Who is perceived to be better for American workers**? Democrats retain some natural credibility with Latino voters but have lost ground on workers, work and the American Dream; they're also open to attack for taking Hispanics for granted; Republicans have some openings but are still held back by their image as the uncaring party of big corporations.

Data used in this report

- **Equis post-mortem research** (in partnership with Way to Win, SEIU, and Florida Watch/ Progress Florida):
  - Texas: Equis/TargetSmart survey of 1400 Hispanics who voted in 2020 (5/25 - 6/7/2021)
  - Florida: statewide survey of 700 Hispanics who voted in 2020 (5/25 - 6/2/2021) and separate survey of 700 non-Cuban, non-Puerto Rican Hispanics in Miami-Dade/Broward who voted in 2020 (5/5 - 5/25/2021)
  - National post-mortem survey of 1200 Latinos who voted in 2020, 8/28 - 9-1/2021
  - Focus groups in Florida, Texas and Arizona; ethnographic interviews in Texas

- **Equis/Democracy Corps survey** of 1800 registered Hispanic voters in 11 states (8/19-8/24/21)

- **The 2016 VOTER Survey** (Democracy Fund Voter Study Group) & **2020 Nationscape dataset** (UCLA + Democracy Fund)

- **Latino Election Eve polls** (America's Voice, UnidosUS, et al, designed by Matt Barreto & Gabriel Sanchez)

- **2019-2020 Equis polling & groups** in 11 states (40,880 total interviews) (with GBAO, TargetSmart, Myers Research, Barreto Segura Partners, EMC Research, Castillo & Associates)

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I. The ground shifted

In their own words

On Voting in 2016:

"I was like, **my heart doesn't let me vote for Trump** because he's just saying this about us. It was super taboo . . . if I would have said I was voting for Trump, I would have been lynched."

On Voting in 2020:

"I'm **super Mexican**, but just the way **he wanted to keep jobs here**, and the way he wanted to promote the economy, that was something admirable… We were doing good as a country."

– 33-year-old female in Brownsville, Obama voter/didn't vote '16/voted Trump '20

Source: ethnographic interview (Equis/Cecilia Ballí)

The economy and COVID had become Latino voters' top priorities in 2020— at the expense of immigration.

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Primacy of immigration and Latino solidarity both dropped from 2016 to 2020
Importance of the economy peaked in Obama re-elect, jumped again in 2020

- ● Economy most important issue
- ● Immigration most important issue
- ● Voting to support the Latino community (vs. voting for a party)
- ● COVID most important issue

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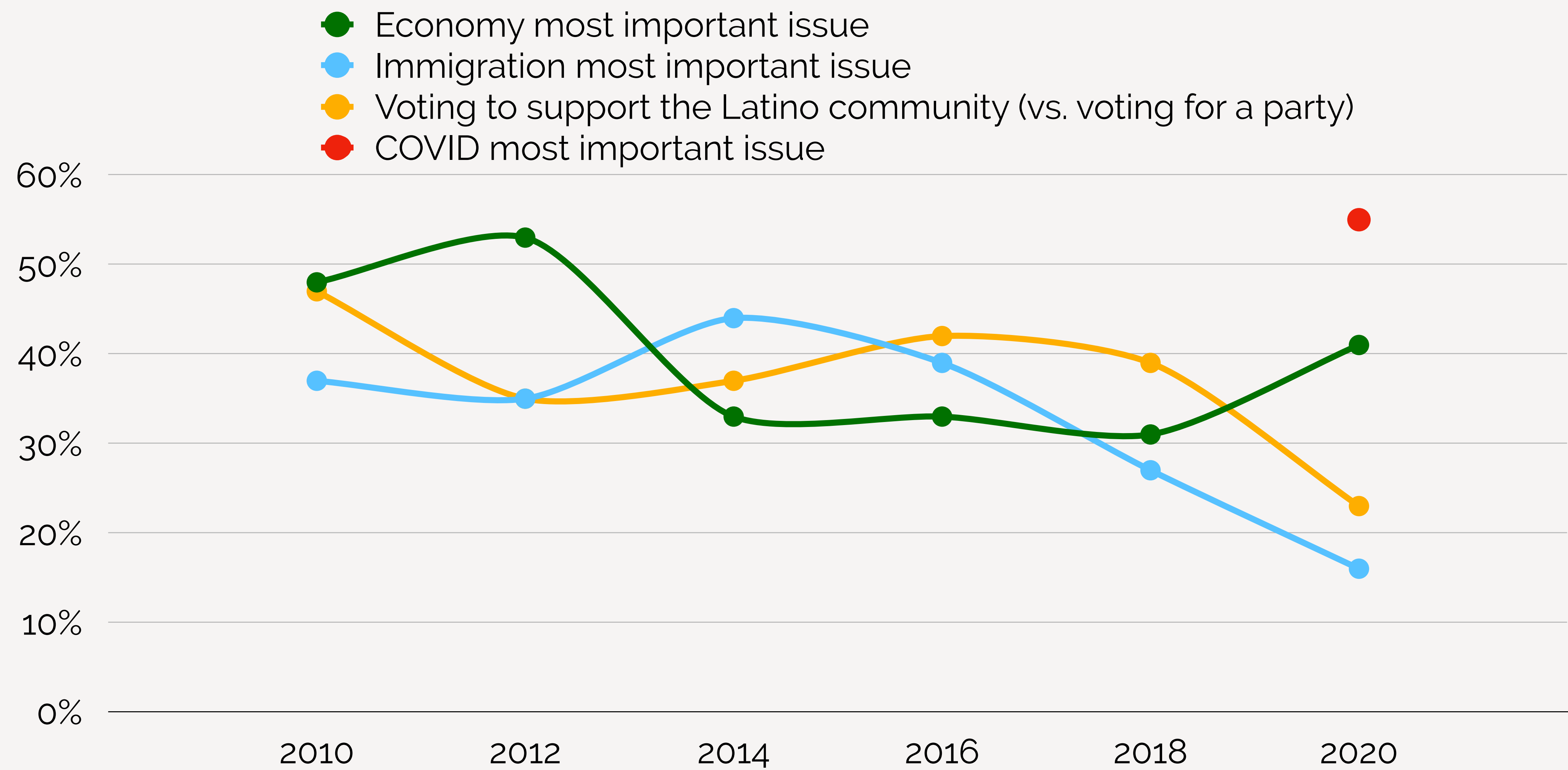
Importance of the economy rose as prioritization of immigration dropped

Sharpest changes in Wisconsin and Nevada

Shift in Issue Priorities, 2016 - 2020

change in % saying ___ is most important issue facing the Latino/Hispanic community

Immigration as Top Issue

☐ 2016   ■ 2020

	WI	NV	NC	AZ	FL	TX	CA	Nat'l
2016	48%	53%	50%	45%	39%	39%	39%	39%
2020	14%	21%	20%	20%	14%	15%	16%	16%
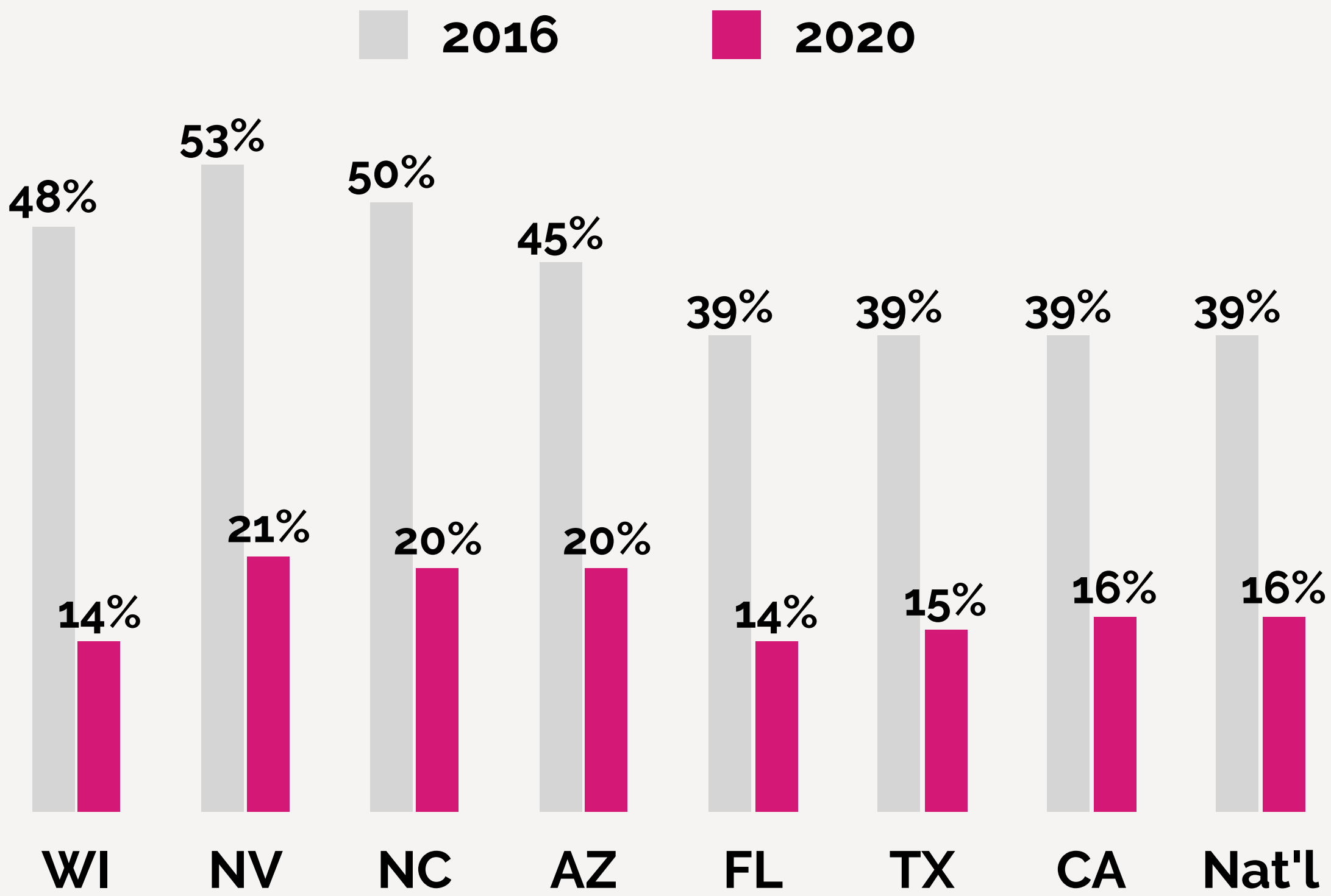
Jobs/Economy as Top Issue

☐ 2016   ■ 2020

	WI	NV	NC	AZ	FL	TX	CA	Nat'l
2016	29%	33%	32%	31%	36%	29%	30%	33%
2020	42%	51%	41%	46%	44%	42%	36%	41%

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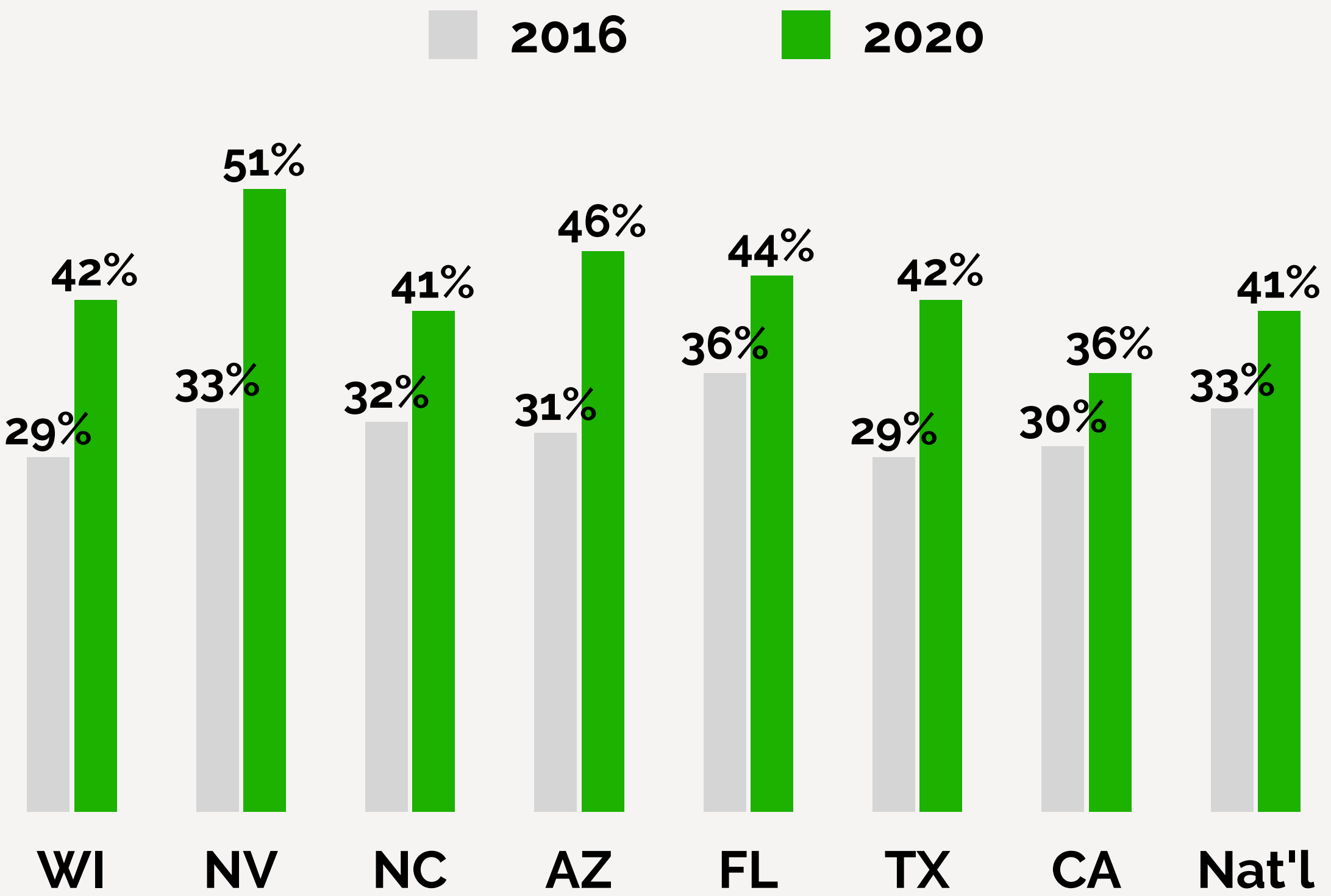
In 2016, some Latinos who we might predict would vote Republican — based on their demographics, partisanship and ideology— **were held back from supporting Trump by (a) opposition to his hardline immigration positions and (b) the importance of their Hispanic identity.**

In '16, immigration views & sexism strongly predictive of Trump's Hispanic vote
Identity also showed significant effect; racial resentment & views of the economy didn't
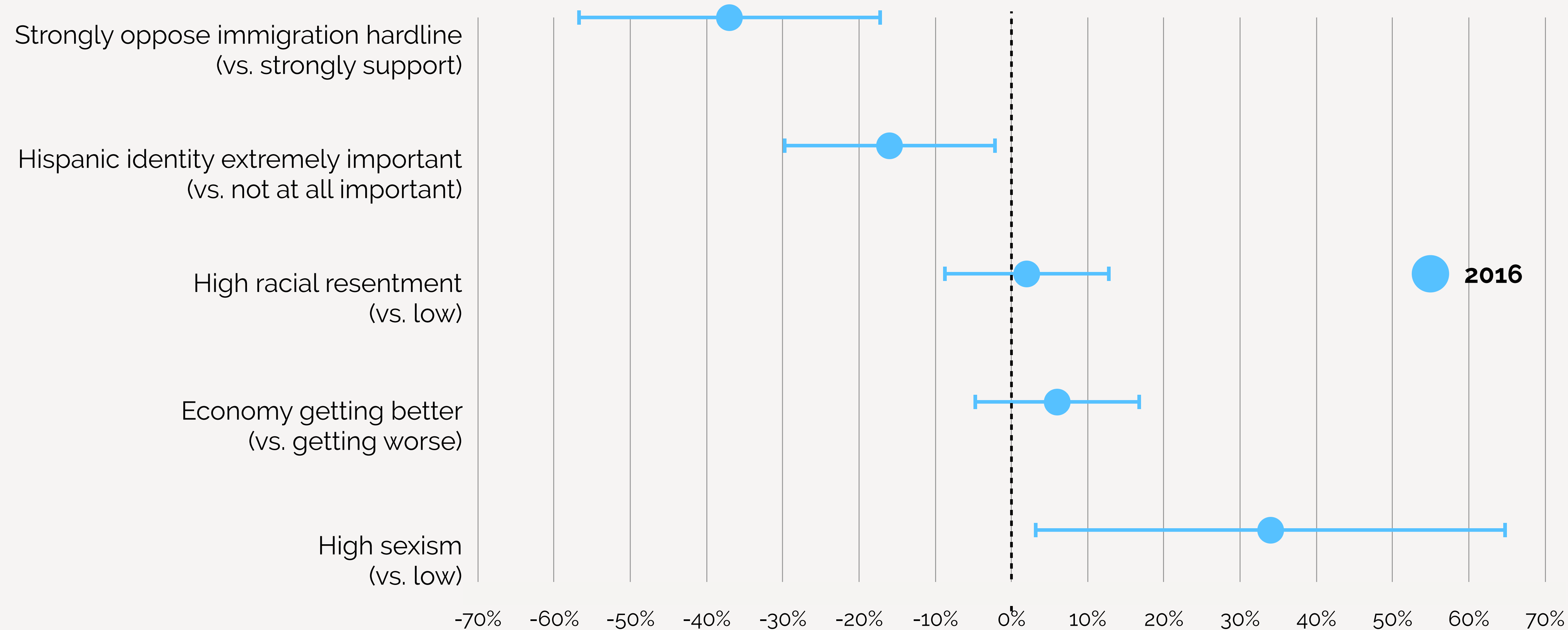
Average Marginal Effects on the Probability of Voting Trump (vs. Clinton)
Among Hispanic Voters Nationally

From a logistic regression model with controls for age, gender, education, religion, party ID and ideology (language, nativity and nat'l origin not available), using data from 2016 VOTER Survey (Voter Study Group/YouGov) (n = 386 in this analysis)

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By the middle of 2020, neither views on immigration nor the role of Hispanic identity were showing a major effect on vote choice — they were no longer cleanly differentiating Trump voters from Democratic voters.

By middle of '20, neither immigration nor identity showed a major effect
Racial resentment still didn't register, but economic optimism had some power

Strongly oppose immigration hardline
(vs. strongly support)

Hispanic identity extremely important
(vs. not at all important)

High racial resentment
(vs. low)

Economy getting better
(vs. getting worse)

High sexism
(vs. low)

● **2016 VOTER Survey**

▲ **2020 Nationscape**

-70% -60% -50% -40% -30% -20% -10% 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70%
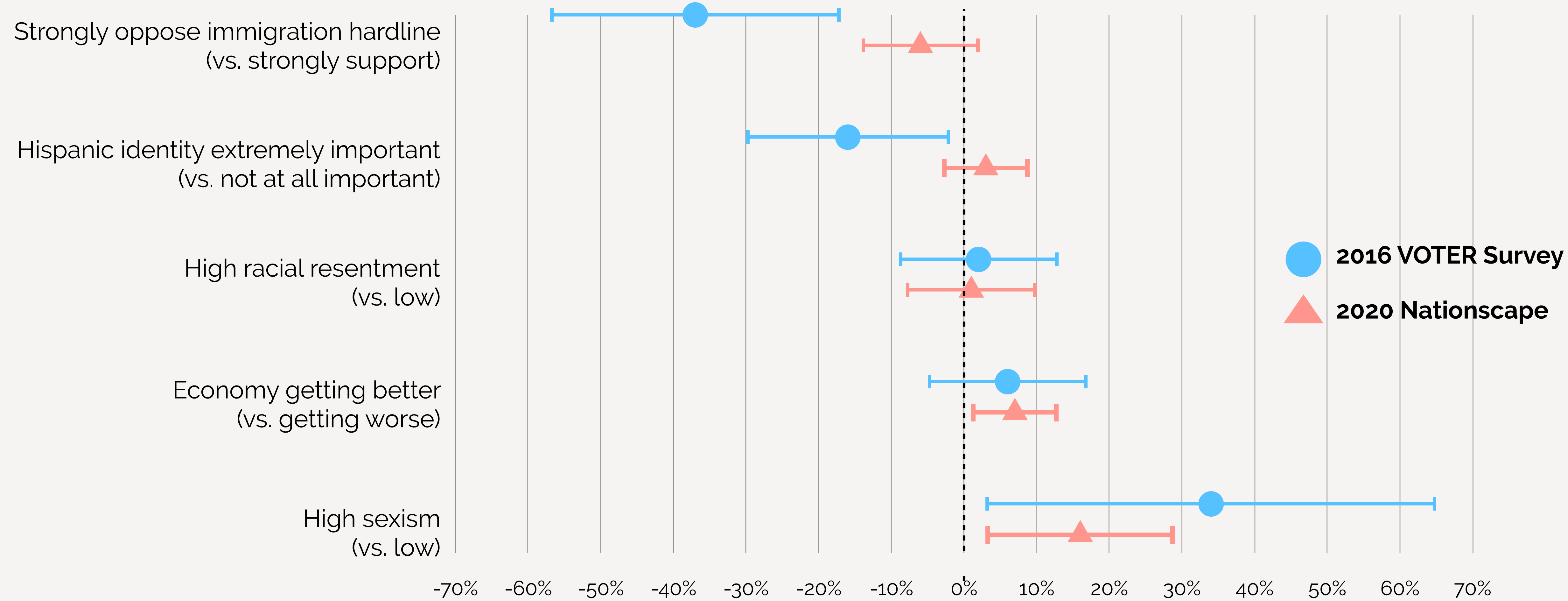
Average Marginal Effects on the Probability of Voting Trump (vs. Clinton/Biden)
Among Hispanic Voters Nationally

COVID, especially, appeared to drive Trump's less traditional Latino voters

Among independents and Democrats who voted for Trump, COVID was tops alongside economy

For Trump's core Republican following, economy was king

% Most Important Issue in Deciding 2020 Vote

■ **Republican Trump Voters (56% of Trump voters)**   ■ **Dem/Indy Trump Voters (44% of Trump voters)**

	COVID	Economy	Immigration	Crime & Safety	Healthcare	Education	Racial Inequality
Republican	4%	57%	11%	10%	2%	2%	3%
Dem/Indy	34%	32%	9%	10%	5%	4%	3%

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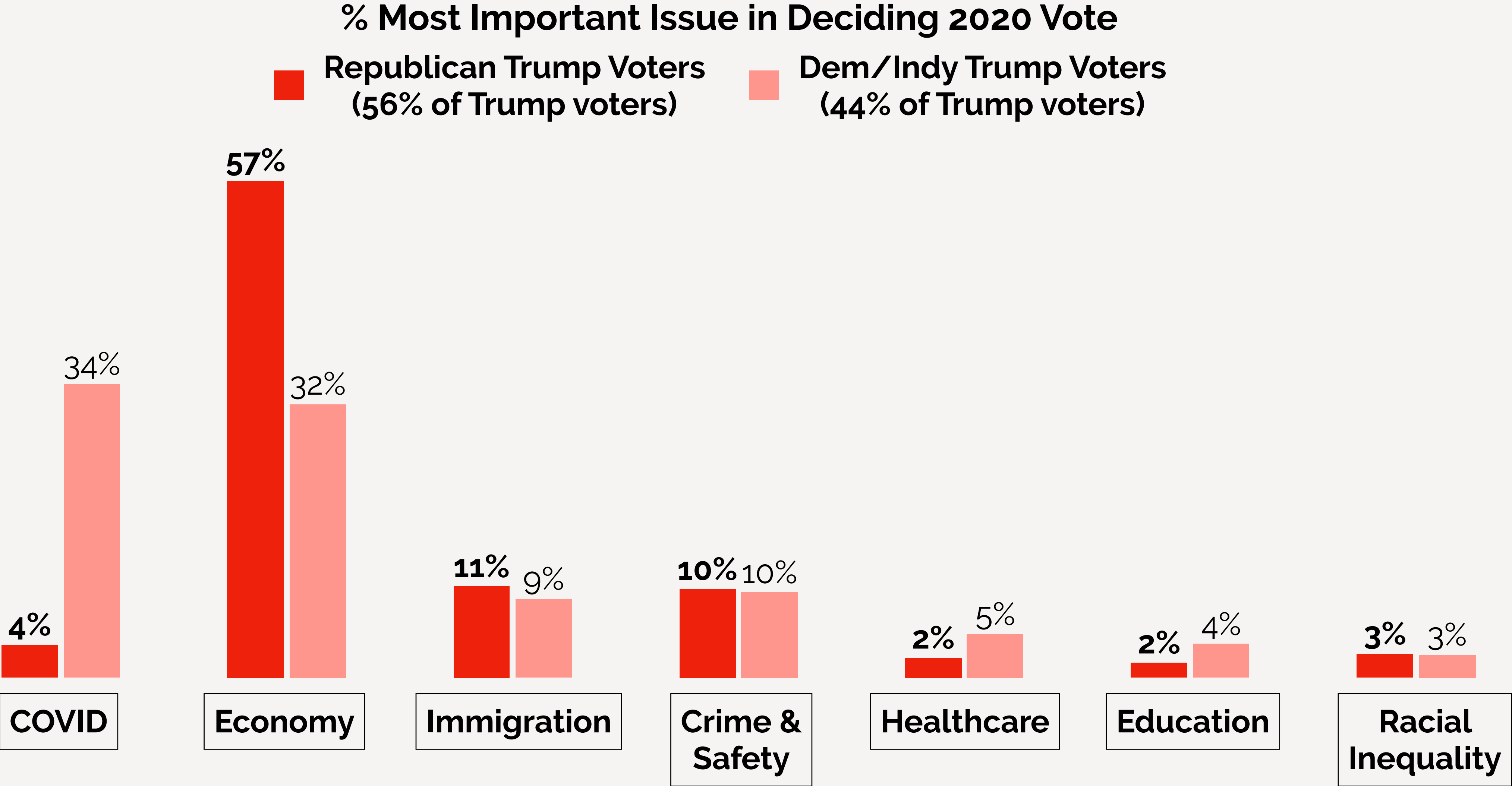
Trump's policies on COVID and the economy were, in isolation, very popular— even among liberal Hispanics. (Absent any context, the numbers might even suggest that the incumbent should have done better than he did.)

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Approval of key Trump policies
% strongly/somewhat approve among Hispanics who voted in 2020

Immigration **Economic** **COVID**

Policy	%
Stimulus	77%
Rapid vaccine development	74%
Middle class tax cuts	69%
Reopen economy	66%
COVID policy set by states	62%
Getting tough on China	60%
Living without fear of COVID	55%
More border spending	55%
Limiting refugees/asylum	51%
Reducing legal immigration	49%
Cutting social spending	45%
Cutting enviro regs	44%
More deportations	42%
Corporate tax cuts	41%
Build the wall	39%
Family separation	28%

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Source: Equis national post-mortem survey of 2020 Hispanic voters, 8/28 - 9-1/2021 (n=1200)
"Please tell me whether you approve or disapprove of each of the following parts of Donald Trump's agenda."

In their own words

"In the last elections, 2016, I didn't vote. **For me I saw [Trump] as a clown. He's a clown...** But he changed my mind. In my case, I felt a difference in stability. And he was running the country. Things that were problems a long time, he came in and did something about them quickly at the beginning... **He was doing things, not just talking about them**."

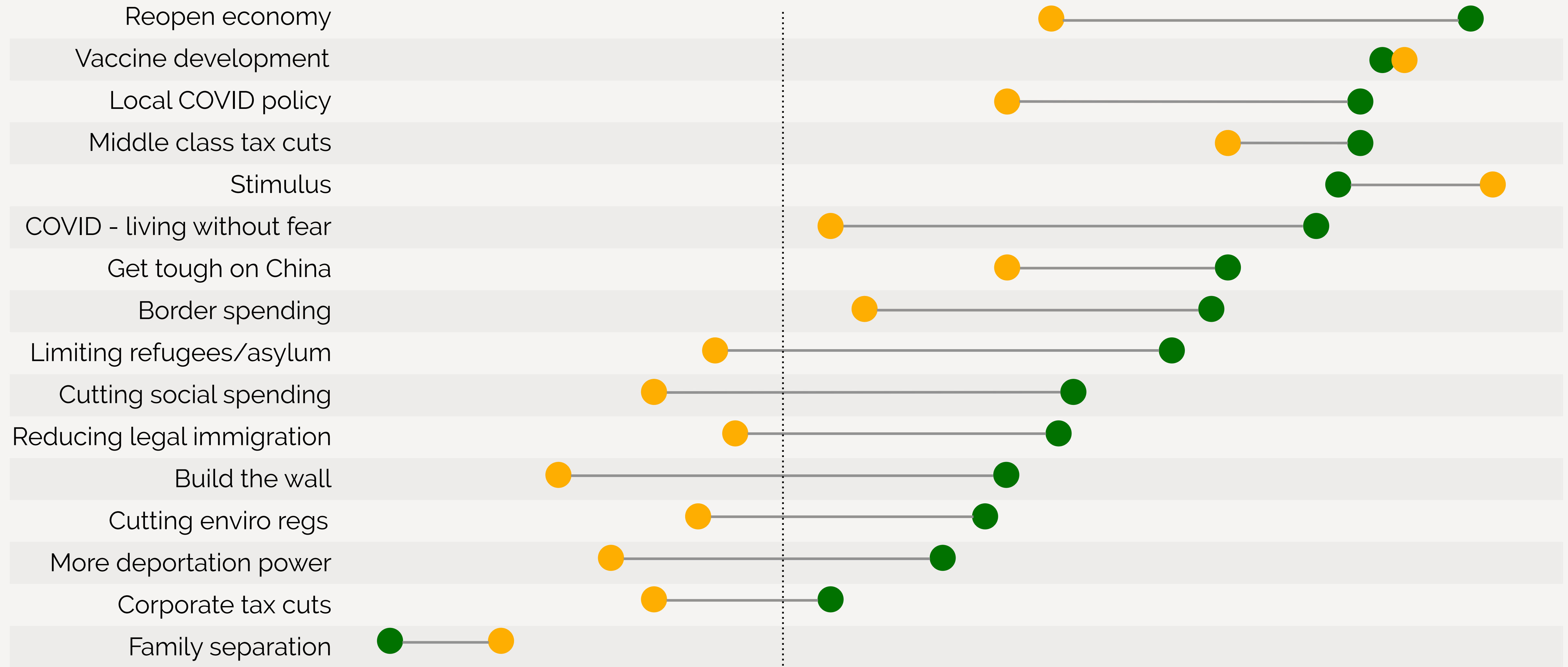- 40-year-old male Democrat in Miami, Colombian/Venezuelan, Clinton/Trump voter

While Trump's approach to border spending (not the wall) earned majority support among Latinos, he lost even the conservatives on family separation. **But family separation was not front-and-center by the end of the election. Reopening the economy— one of Trump's most popular planks with Latino voters— was.**

% approve of select Trump policies - by ideology
Among Hispanics who voted in 2020

● Liberals ● Conservatives

Policy	
Reopen economy	
Vaccine development	
Local COVID policy	
Middle class tax cuts	
Stimulus	
COVID - living without fear	
Get tough on China	
Border spending	
Limiting refugees/asylum	
Cutting social spending	
Reducing legal immigration	
Build the wall	
Cutting enviro regs	
More deportation power	
Corporate tax cuts	
Family separation	

30% 35% 40% 45% 50% 55% 60% 65% 70% 75% 80% 85%

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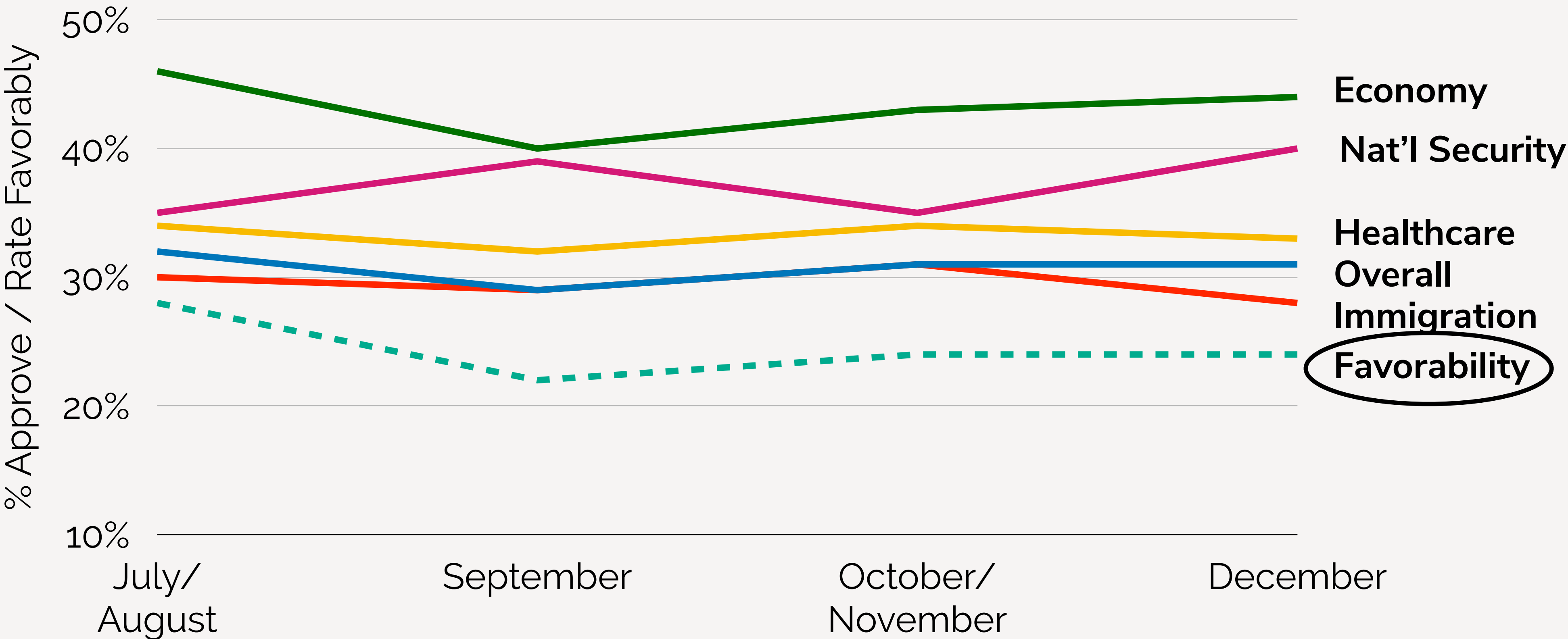Source: Equis national post-mortem survey, 8/28 - 9-1,/2021

Trump himself **was never well-liked** among Hispanics. **But on the economy, he consistently earned some of his highest marks even before the COVID debate**.

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

Trump job performance (by issue area) vs. favorability in 2019

% approve (or rate favorably) among registered Hispanics in 10 battleground states

Economy
Nat'l Security
Healthcare
Overall
Immigration
Favorability

% Approve / Rate Favorably

50%
40%
30%
20%
10%

July/
August
September
October/
November
December

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Source: Equis 2019 polling in 11 states

In their own words

"I guess what I can say is, if I met him [as a woman], I would be put off by him. **I've had bosses like him before, that it's like, 'Ugh, don't touch me, get away from me.' But I would congratulate him for his term.** I would applaud him, I would want him to run again."
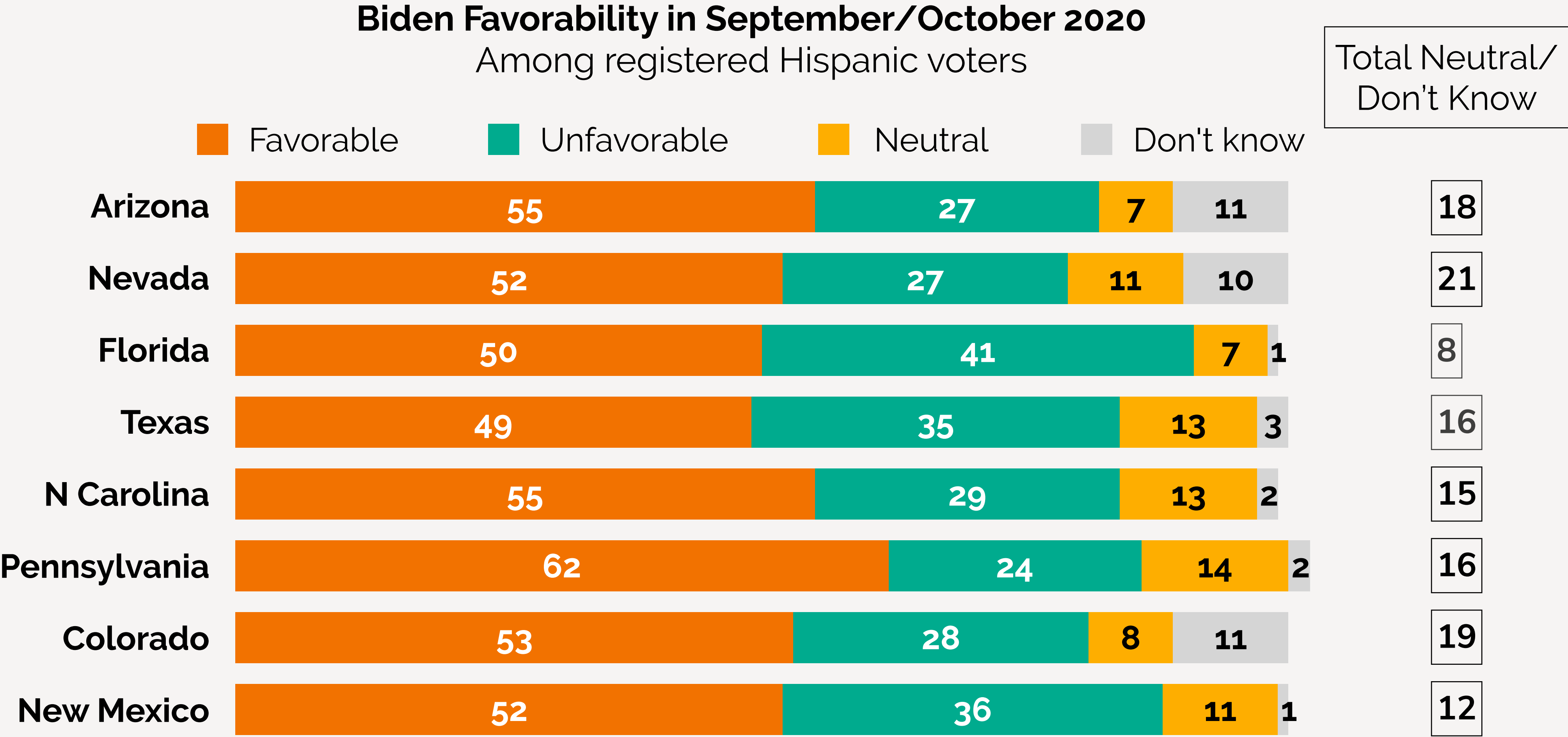
- 36-year-old female in Brownsville, Obama '08/Romney '12/Clinton '16/Trump '20 voter

Meanwhile, Biden was still relatively undefined late into the contest— in part because he'd been sidelined by COVID precautions, allowing Trump to aggressively court Latino voters without much competition.

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By the end of the election, Biden was still undefined with a healthy segment of Latino voters
He was generally well-liked, though at rates lower than his actual support

Biden Favorability in September/October 2020
Among registered Hispanic voters

Total Neutral/ Don't Know

■ Favorable   ■ Unfavorable   ■ Neutral   ■ Don't know

State	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Don't know	Total Neutral/Don't Know
Arizona	55	27	7	11	18
Nevada	52	27	11	10	21
Florida	50	41	7	1	8
Texas	49	35	13	3	16
N Carolina	55	29	13	2	15
Pennsylvania	62	24	14	2	16
Colorado	53	28	8	11	19
New Mexico	52	36	11	1	12

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Source: Equis polling

In their own words

"Last year I didn't know who to vote for... I hated Trump for everything he said against my people, hated him for everything he did against my people... **But it was the lesser of two evils... Economy-wise, Trump would have handled it a little better.**"
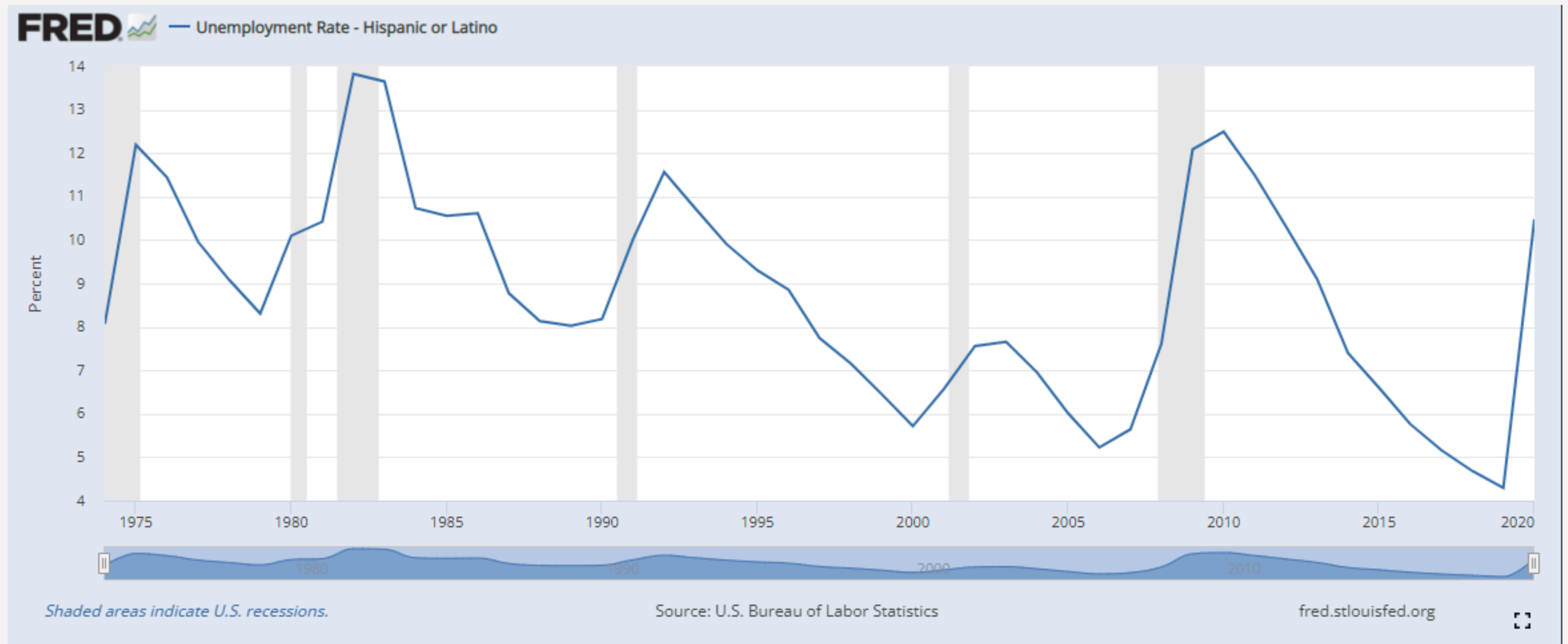
—33-year-old male in Chicago, leans Democrat, voted Trump '20

While the superficial snapshot of "Trump as businessman" emerges in our research as one reason for his high economic approvals, **it is also true that Latinos were going through a period of economic improvement before the pandemic.**

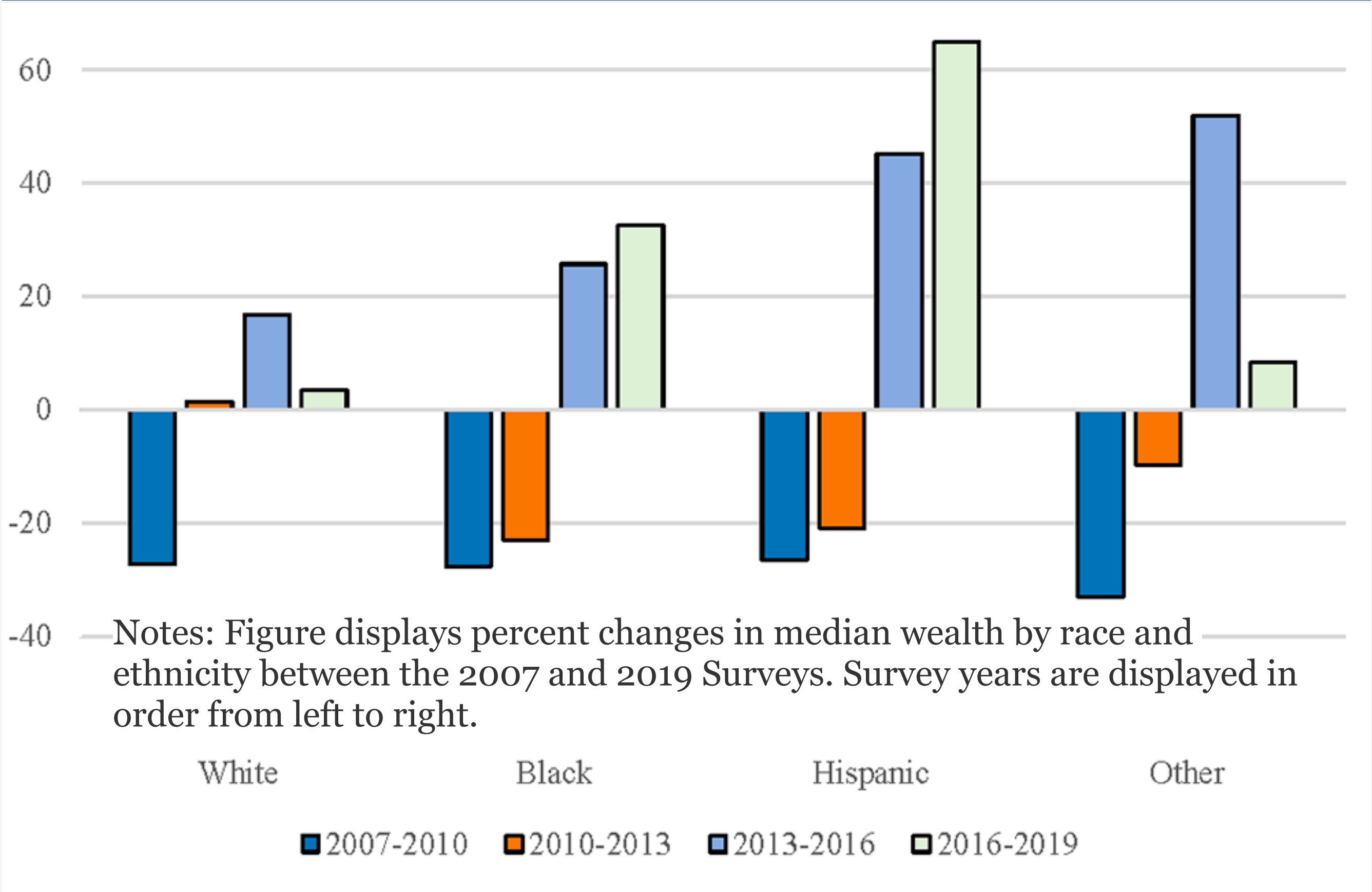# "Before the pandemic, we were winning Super Bowls"*
Trump took credit for historically low Hispanic unemployment

FRED 〰 — Unemployment Rate - Hispanic or Latino

Shaded areas indicate U.S. recessions.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

fred.stlouisfed.org

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*Line from mixed martial artist Jorge Masvidal, as featured in a Trump campaign video shared at the end of this report

"Before the pandemic, we were winning Super Bowls"
Trump took credit for rapid Hispanic wealth growth

Figure 2. Black and Hispanic families experienced faster growth in wealth over the last two surveys after experiencing larger declines in wealth caused by the Great Recession.

Notes: Figure displays percent changes in median wealth by race and ethnicity between the 2007 and 2019 Surveys. Survey years are displayed in order from left to right.

White   Black   Hispanic   Other

■ 2007-2010   ■ 2010-2013   ■ 2013-2016   ■ 2016-2019

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Ultimately, **support for Trump on the economy, COVID and the intersection of the two** (i.e. his focus on reopening the economy) stick out as major drivers of his vote among Latinos.

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Support for Trump on COVID/economy became especially polarizing over course of 2020
Approving of Trump on immigration, once meaningful, had little predictive effect by the end

Average Marginal Effects on the Probability of Voting for Trump (vs. Biden)
Approval of Trump on major issue areas, among all Hispanics

■ Immigration job approval　　■ Economic job approval　　■ COVID job approval

Immigration stands out

COVID & economy dominate

Average Marginal Effects on Pr(Vote Trump vs. Biden)

45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
-5

Early March　　Mid-April　　Early July　　Late Sept

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From a logistic regression model with controls for age, gender, education, language, nativity, national origin, religion, party ID and ideology, using data from NationScape (UCLA + Democracy Fund) (March n= 761, April n = 706, July n = 702, Sept. n = 461)
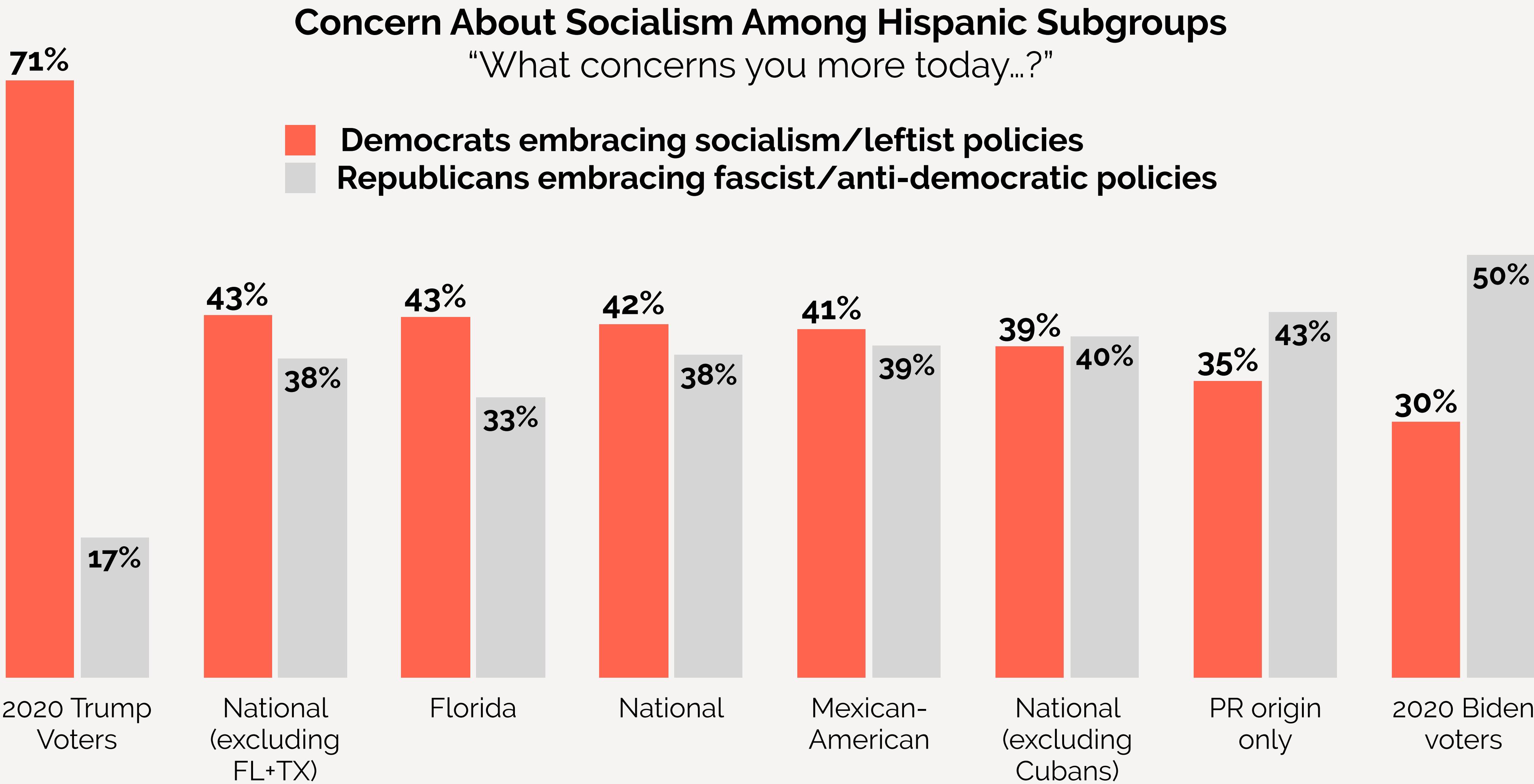
II. The opposite of socialism

We've asked in several ways whether Hispanic voters are **concerned about the Democratic Party "embracing socialism."** Some concern exists, even among a portion of Democrats— and not just in Florida.

Concern about socialism among Hispanic voters is a national phenomenon
Nationally, some 4-in-10 Latinos who voted in 2020 expressed the worry
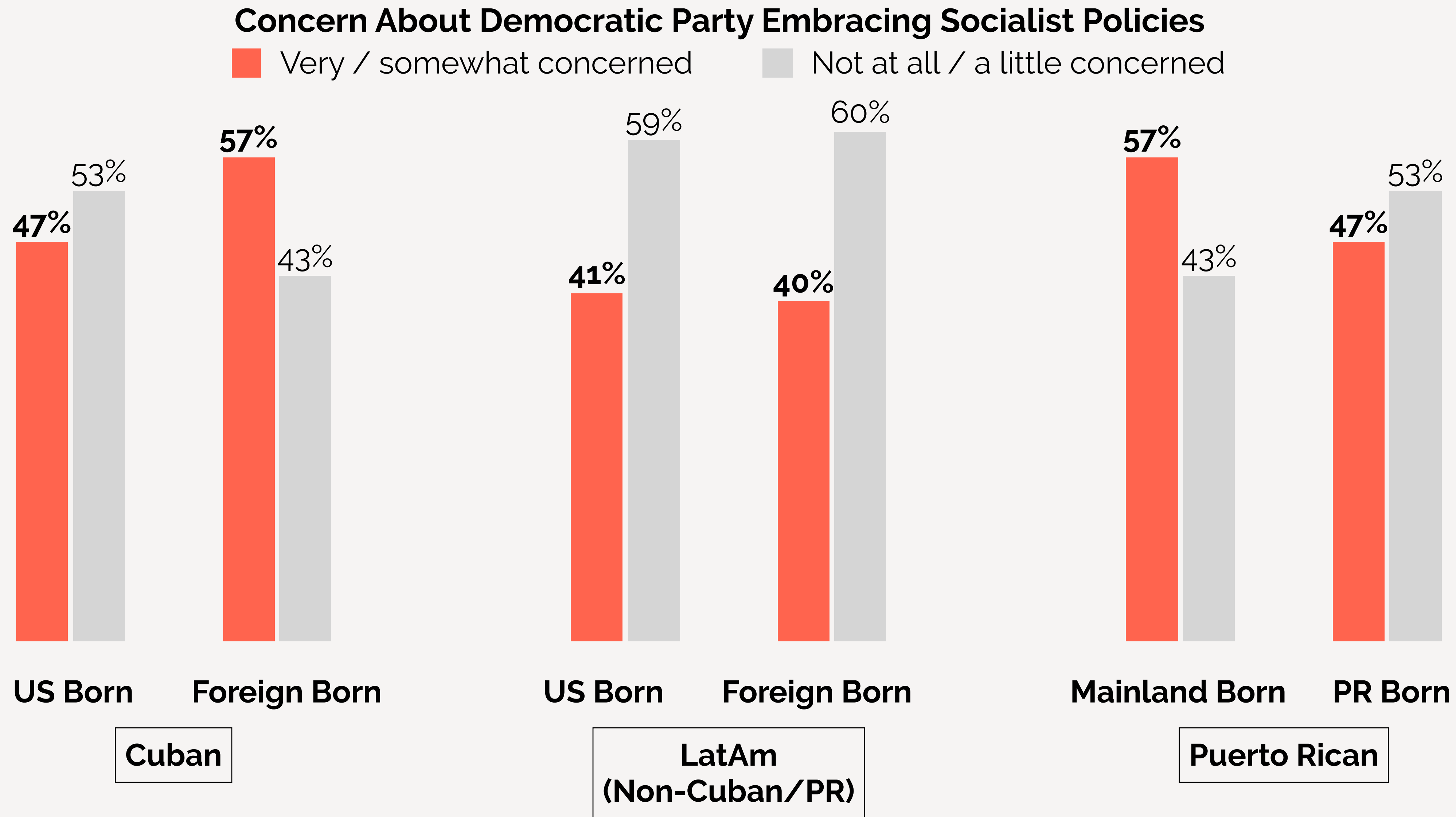
Concern About Socialism Among Hispanic Subgroups
"What concerns you more today…?"

■ Democrats embracing socialism/leftist policies
■ Republicans embracing fascist/anti-democratic policies

	2020 Trump Voters	National (excluding FL+TX)	Florida	National	Mexican-American	National (excluding Cubans)	PR origin only	2020 Biden voters
Democrats embracing socialism/leftist policies	71%	43%	43%	42%	41%	39%	35%	30%
Republicans embracing fascist/anti-democratic policies	17%	38%	33%	38%	39%	40%	43%	50%

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There isn't only one "kind" of socialism concern. The attack rings various bells.

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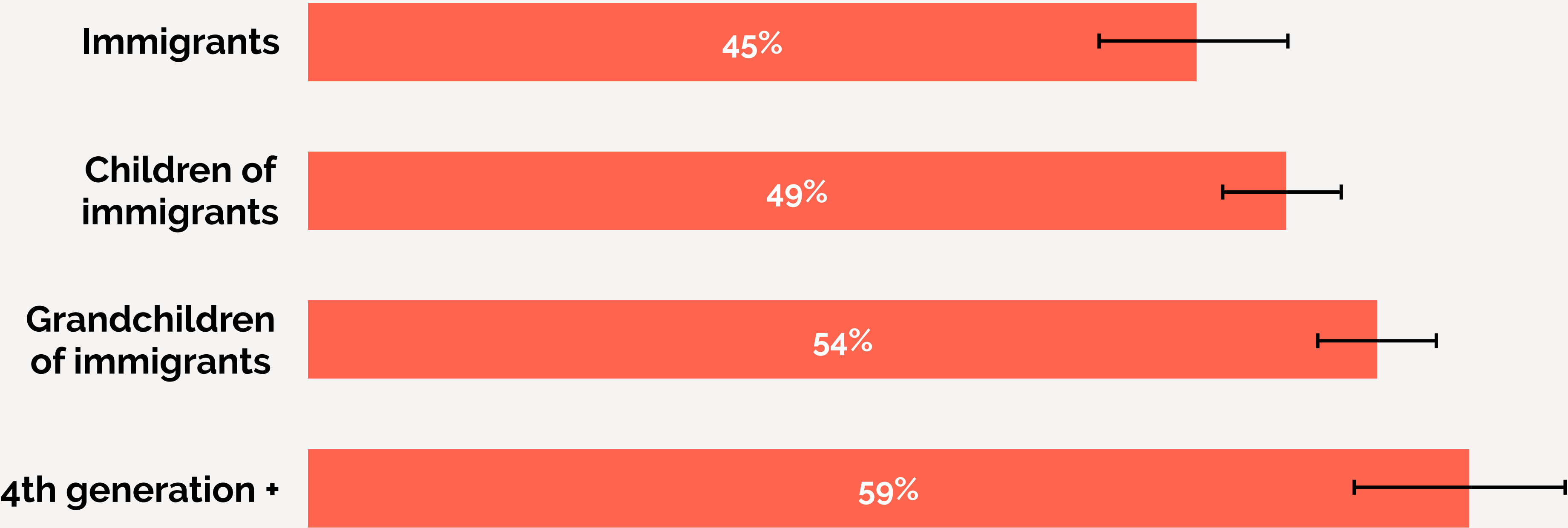# Socialism concerns differ by nativity, but Florida origin groups each have their own story
Foreign-born Cubans more concerned than US-born, reverse among PR, same levels across LatAms

Concern About Democratic Party Embracing Socialist Policies

■ Very / somewhat concerned   ■ Not at all / a little concerned

Cuban
- US Born: 47% / 53%
- Foreign Born: 57% / 43%

LatAm (Non-Cuban/PR)
- US Born: 41% / 59%
- Foreign Born: 40% / 60%

Puerto Rican
- Mainland Born: 57% / 43%
- PR Born: 47% / 53%

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Concern about socialism increases by generation
There isn't a drop-off as Hispanics become assimilated— it is the opposite

Model of predicted concern about socialism (vs. concern about fascism)
After controls for partisanship/demographics/ideology

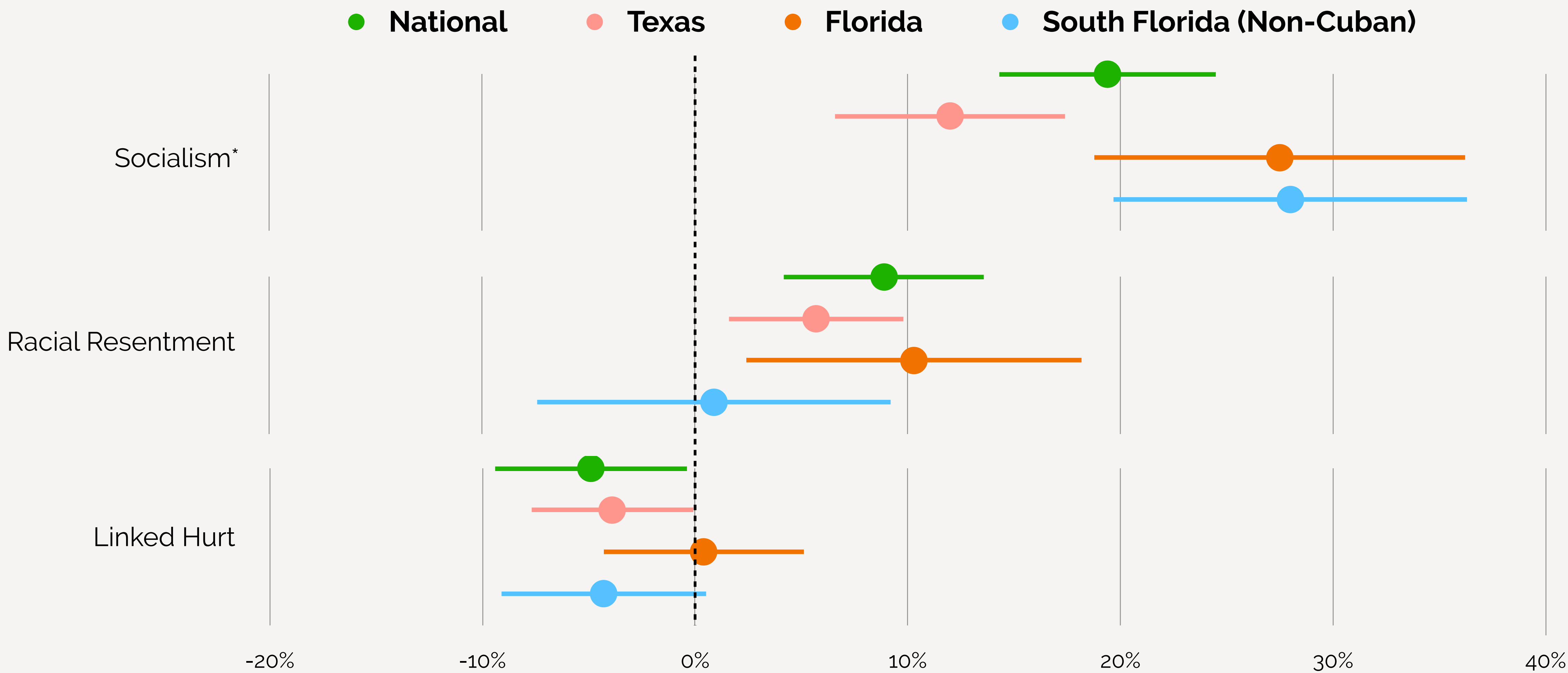|	
Immigrants	45%
Children of immigrants	49%
Grandchildren of immigrants	54%
4th generation +	59%

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Concern over socialism does appear to increase the likelihood of voting for Trump, all else being equal. The effect is the highest in Florida but is not contained to Florida.

Socialism concern a significant predictor of Trump support everywhere
The effect is magnified in Florida

● **National** ● **Texas** ● **Florida** ● **South Florida (Non-Cuban)**

Socialism*

Racial Resentment

Linked Hurt

-20%   -10%   0%   10%   20%   30%   40%

Marginal Effects on the Probability of Voting for Trump

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From a logistic regression model with controls for gender, age, education, nativity, national origin, religion, party ID, and ideology. Source: Equis post-mortem polls. (*Note: question was asked differently in Florida)

This modern "red panic" is a story about **uncontested propaganda in isolated media ecosystems**, what is sometimes reduced to "disinformation."

And it's a story about **the weaponization of the American Dream—** the true opposite of socialism in the right-wing narrative.

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Who is most likely to express concern over socialism, after controls for partisanship, ideology and demographics?

1. Those who get news from **WhatsApp or right-wing outlets**
2. Those who distrust the **media**
3. Those who believe in **social mobility through hard work**

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Measures used to capture voters' values
"Tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement…"

- **Media distrust:** "The media cannot be trusted to tell the truth."

- **Social mobility:** "There is a lot of opportunity in America today for the average person to get ahead."

- **Meritocracy:** "People mainly get ahead through hard work rather than luck."

- **Healing through faith:** "God will grant good health and relief from sickness to believers who have enough faith."

- **Racial resentment:** "Irish, Italian, and Jewish people, along with other minorities, overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Black people should do the same without special favors."

- **Linked hurt:** "When things get worse for Latinos and Hispanics in this country, they get worse for my family."

- **Belonging:** "I feel that my family and I belong in U.S society."

Use of WhatsApp for news predicts significant increase in concern about socialism
Also: right wing news outlets, distrust of the media & belief in the American Dream
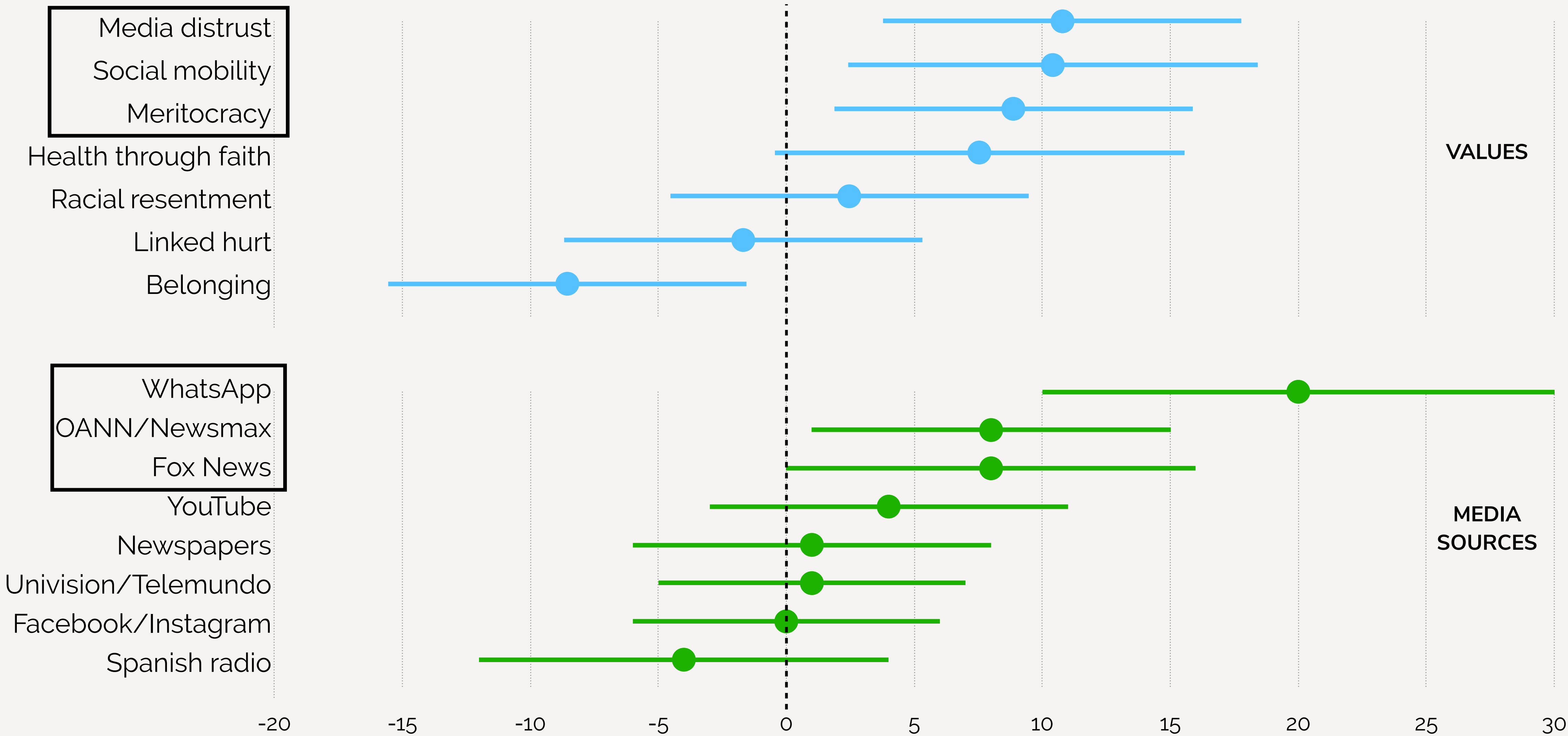
Marginal Increase in Concern About Socialism among Dems (vs. Fascism in GOP)

Logistic regression model predicting "more concerned about socialism on the left" vs. "more concerned about fascism on the right." Controls for gender, age, education, language, generation, national origin, region, party ID and ideology, using data from Equis national post-mortem survey (n = 917)

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There isn't one overriding concern about "socialism"— but a package of complaints usually rises to the top (around government control over people's lives, raising taxes, and money going to "underserving" recipients). **If a through-line exists, it is a worry over people becoming "lazy & dependent on government"** by those who highly value "hard work."

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What do they mean by socialism? No one answer; attack rings several bells
Prioritization differs slightly by subgroup

Top concern about socialism	3rd+ Generation (National)	1st/2nd Generation (National)
People will become lazy and dependent on gov't	**20%**	12%
The government will tell us what we can say or do	16%	**16%**
This country will become a dictatorship	15%	14%
We will have more rioting and lawlessness	15%	6%
We will become a poor country like Cuba and Venezuela	12%	**17%**
They will take away our homes, businesses and properties	9%	9%
They will raise our taxes to give money to undeserving people	8%	13%
Other/Refused	5%	14%

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In Texas, gov't handouts top worries for border counties and 2020 first-time voters
Gov't control the top statewide concern (driven by urban areas)

Top concern about socialism	TX Statewide	TX Border Counties	TX First-Time Voters
The government will tell us what we can say or do	22%	11%	14%
People will become lazy and dependent on gov't	21%	24%	24%
They will raise our taxes to give money to undeserving people	13%	17%	16%
This country will become a dictatorship	11%	8%	11%
Other/Refused	9%	10%	10%
We will have more rioting and lawlessness	9%	7%	7%
We will become a poor country like Cuba / Venezuela	8%	7%	7%
They will take away our homes, businesses, properties	7%	8%	11%

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When allowed two choices, gov't dependence emerges as a common concern among Florida Hispanics, across origin group

Top two concern about socialism	Cuban/ US-Born	Cuban/ Foreign-Born	LatAm (Other Hispanic) US-Born	LatAm/ Foreign-Born	Puerto Rican/ Mainland-Born	Puerto Rican/ Island-Born
People will become lazy and dependent on gov't	**37%**	**27%**	**44%**	**44%**	**39%**	**52%**
The government will tell us what we can say or do	25%	20%	13%	13%	20%	13%
They will raise our taxes to give money to undeserving people	14%	13%	32%	24%	15%	14%

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The socialism concern works to create space for defection. But while the concern is widespread, **many Latinos are still voting for Democrats in spite of those concerns— something is keeping them from defecting**. (Similarly, a portion of Republican voters worry about anti-democratic tendencies in the party of their choice — but are sticking with them in 2022 regardless.)
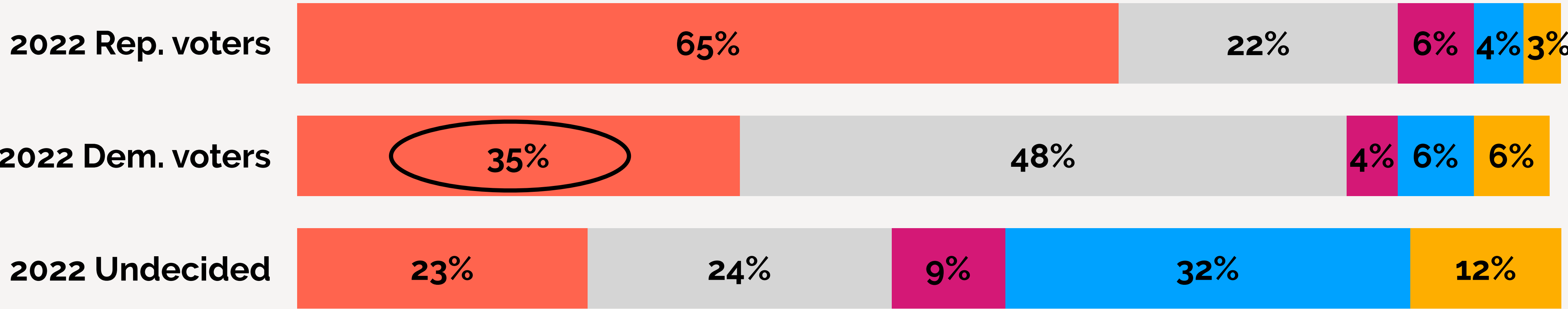
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1-in-3 Latinos who say they will vote Dem in 2022 state concern about socialism
Similarly, about 1-in-4 Republicans are more worried about fascism in the GOP

Concern about Socialism by 2022 Generic Ballot
Among Hispanics nationally who voted in 2022

- ■ More concerned about socialism on the left
- ■ More concerned about fascism on the right
- ■ Concerned about both
- ■ Concerned about neither
- ■ DK/RF

2022 Rep. voters
65% | 22% | 6% | 4% | 3%

2022 Dem. voters
35% | 48% | 4% | 6% | 6%

2022 Undecided
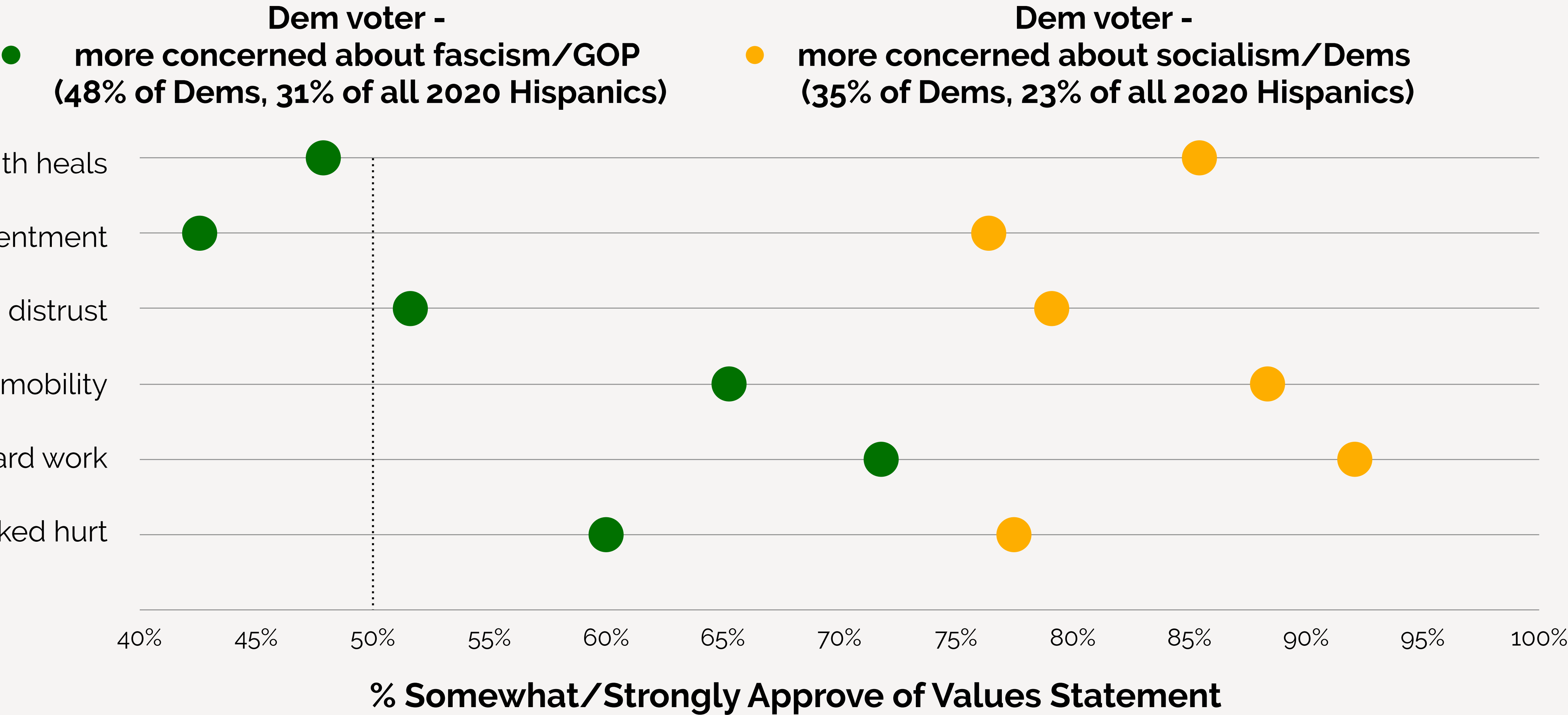23% | 24% | 9% | 32% | 12%

EQUIS RESEARCH

Socialism-fearing Dems more conservative on several fronts but show greater group solidarity
For cross-pressured voters, identity (via "linked hurt") could be keeping them with Dems

Values of voters who are/aren't concerned about socialism
Among Hispanic voters who voted in 2020 & intend to vote for Democrats in 2022

● **Dem voter -
more concerned about fascism/GOP
(48% of Dems, 31% of all 2020 Hispanics)**

● **Dem voter -
more concerned about socialism/Dems
(35% of Dems, 23% of all 2020 Hispanics)**

% Somewhat/Strongly Approve of Values Statement

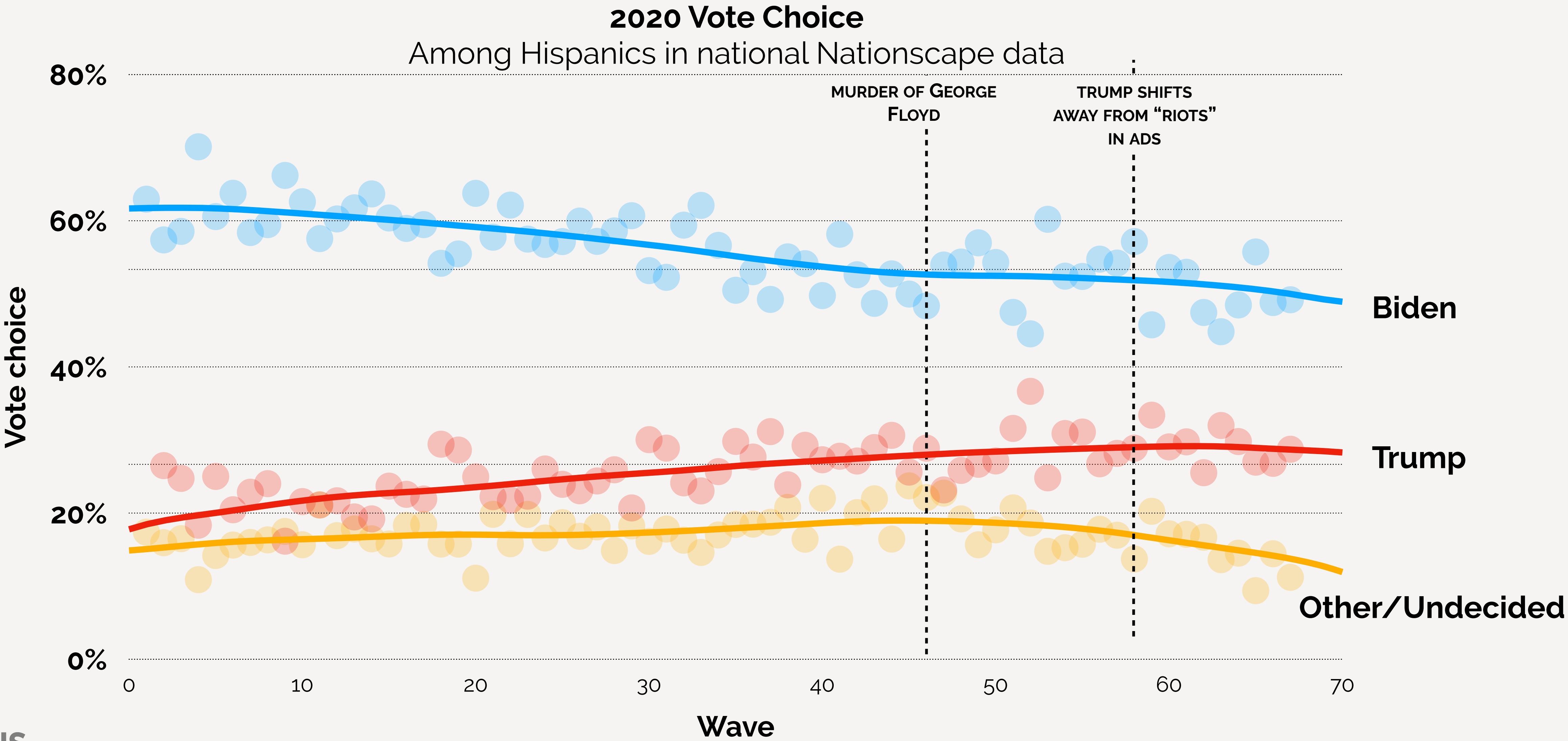EQUIS RESEARCH

III. Matters of race & policing

If the protests following the murder of George Floyd and ensuing calls to "Defund the Police" moved Latino voters toward Trump, as conventional wisdom now holds, **you'd expect to see a change in the trajectory of vote choice around the time of those protests**.

But week-to-week data from the time (courtesy of the Nationscape survey) **shows no major shift toward Trump during the extended protest period**. Some Latinos had started moving toward Trump *before* Floyd's murder.

EQUIS RESEARCH

Hispanic support for Trump was rising well before George Floyd's murder

2020 Vote Choice
Among Hispanics in national Nationscape data

MURDER OF GEORGE FLOYD

TRUMP SHIFTS AWAY FROM "RIOTS" IN ADS

Biden

Trump

Other/Undecided

Vote choice

80%

60%

40%

20%

0%

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70

Wave

EQUIS RESEARCH

Week-to-week data starting 7/1/2019 and ending 10/28/20. Source: Nationscape (UCLA + Democracy Fund)

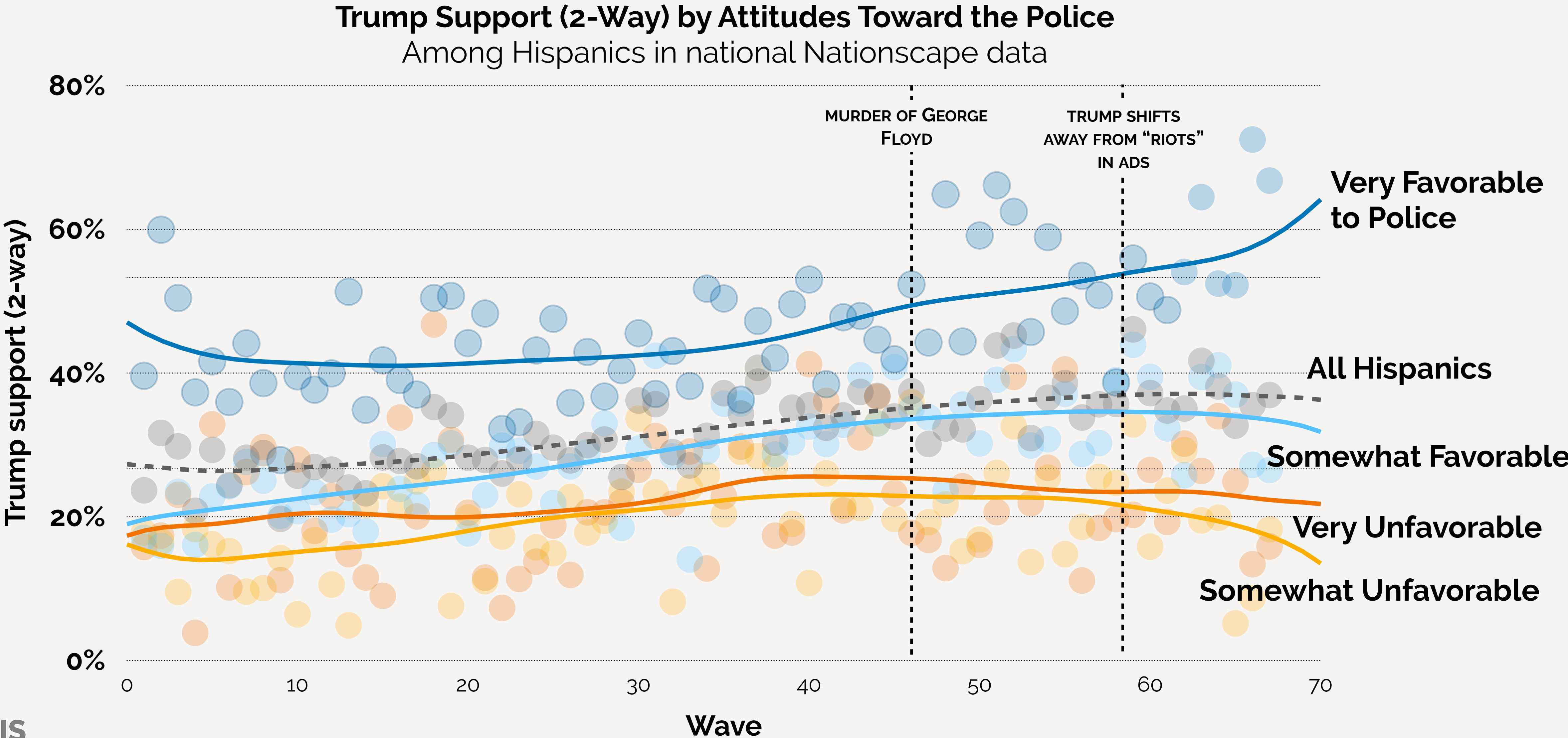# Trend in Trump support doesn't increase in the protest period— it flattens out

Comparing the Linear Trend in Trump Support Before and After the Week of May 25th
Among Hispanics in national Nationscape data

Before

After

Vote choice

Wave

Trump

Other/Undecided

EQUIS RESEARCH

Week-to-week data starting 7/1/2019 and ending
10/28/20. Source: Nationscape (UCLA + Democracy Fund)
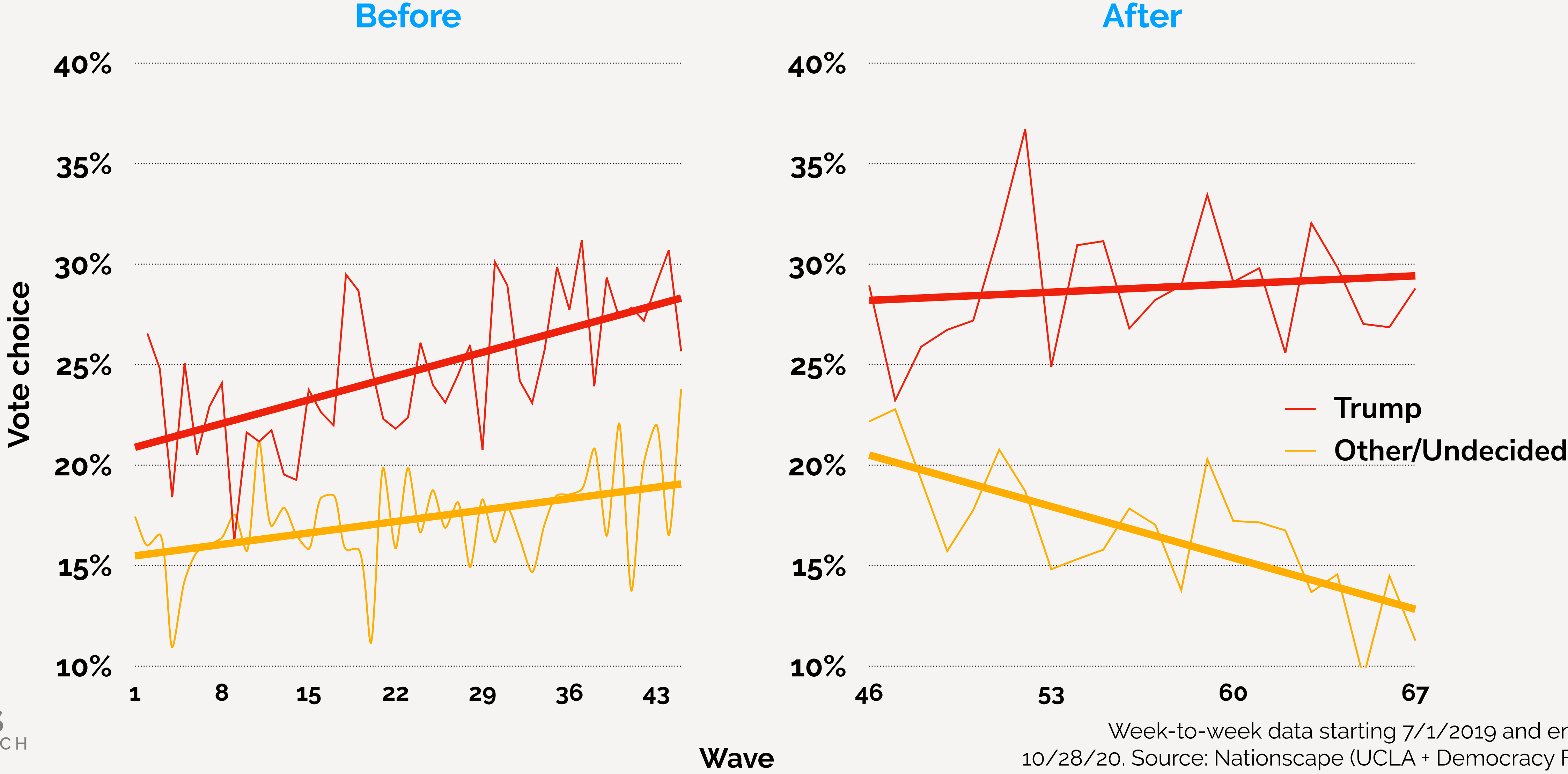
Those highly favorable toward police shifted Trump...starting *before* Floyd murder
In addition, Trump vote may have decreased among Hispanics unfavorable to police

Trump Support (2-Way) by Attitudes Toward the Police
Among Hispanics in national Nationscape data

MURDER OF GEORGE FLOYD

TRUMP SHIFTS AWAY FROM "RIOTS" IN ADS

Very Favorable to Police

All Hispanics

Somewhat Favorable

Very Unfavorable

Somewhat Unfavorable

Trump support (2-way)

Wave

EQUIS RESEARCH

Week-to-week data starting 7/1/2019 and ending 10/28/20. Source: Nationscape (UCLA + Democracy Fund)
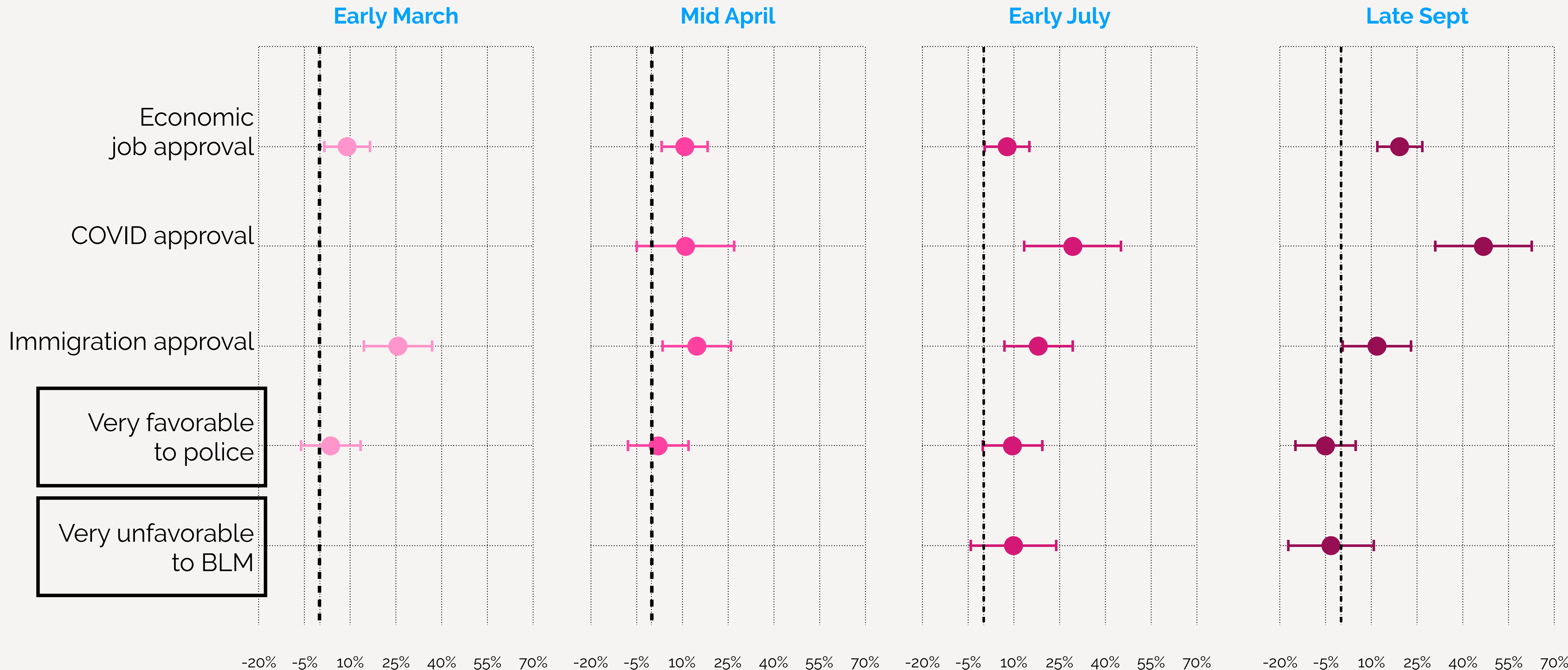
Do attitudes toward the police and BLM help us to predict which Hispanic voters supported Trump? Our analysis says no: **feeling very favorably toward police or unfavorably toward BLM didn't show any significant effect beyond what we would predict based on a Hispanic voter's partisan and demographic profile.**

EQUIS
RESEARCH

Police/BLM attitudes don't seem to add predictive power over/above partisanship
COVID (especially) & economy once again dominate

Marginal Effects on the Probability of Voting for Trump

	Early March	Mid April	Early July	Late Sept

Economic job approval

COVID approval

Immigration approval

Very favorable to police

Very unfavorable to BLM

-20% -5% 10% 25% 40% 55% 70%

From a logistic regression model with controls for age, gender, education, language, nativity, national origin, religion, party ID and ideology, using data from NationScape (UCLA + Democracy Fund) (March n= 761, April n = 706, July n = 702, Sept. n = 461) *BLM favorability was not asked in March or April.
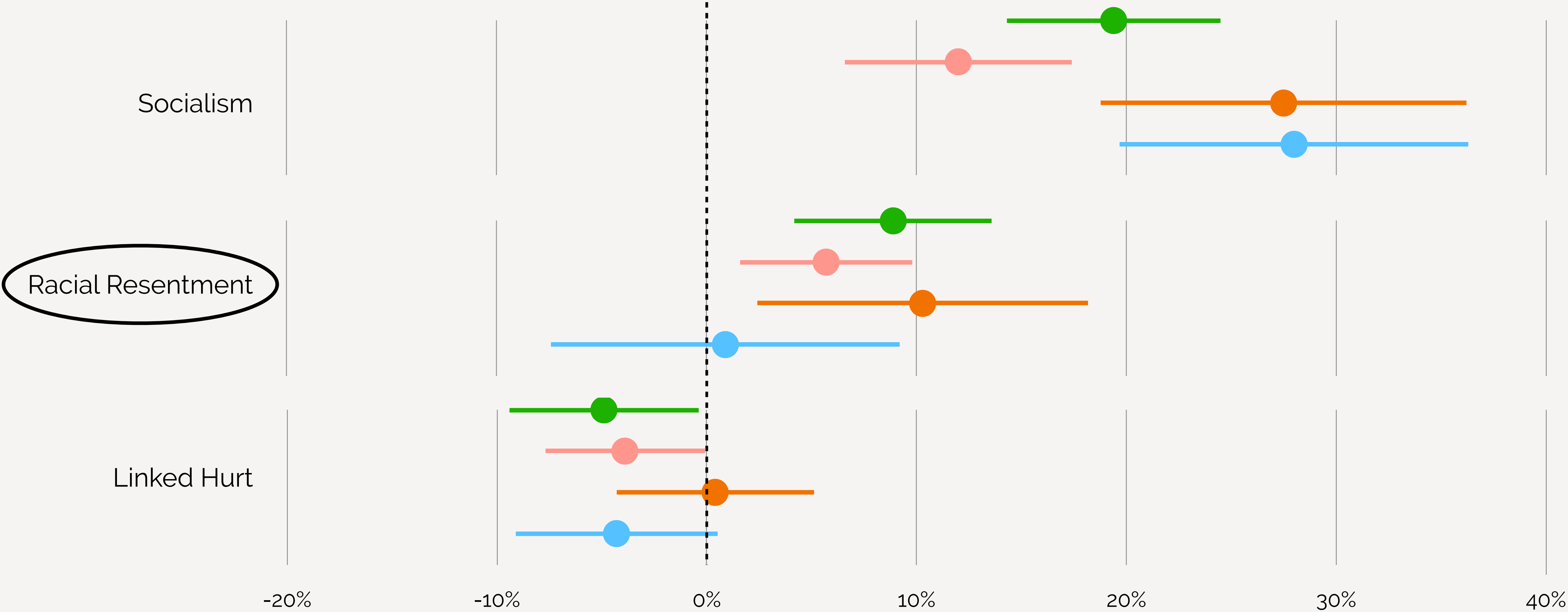
EQUIS RESEARCH

It doesn't mean that race, or even public safety, didn't play a role in shaping Latino vote preferences. Racial resentment does show some effect, and "crime and safety" or "maintaining order" make appearances. Other data, and qualitative work, suggest some Latinos feel ignored by Democrats relative to non-Hispanic Black voters. But also **some data suggest the salience of police brutality and racial inequality may have galvanized Biden's new Latino voters**.

EQUIS RESEARCH

Socialism concern a significant predictor of Trump support everywhere
The effect is magnified in Florida

● **National**   ● **Texas**   ● **Florida**   ● **South Florida (Non-Cuban)**

Socialism

Racial Resentment

Linked Hurt

-20% -10% 0% 10% 20% 30% 40%

Marginal Effects on the Probability of Voting for Trump

EQUIS RESEARCH

From a logistic regression model with controls for gender, age, education, nativity, national origin, religion, party ID, and ideology. Source: Equis post-mortem polls. (*Note: question was asked differently in Florida)
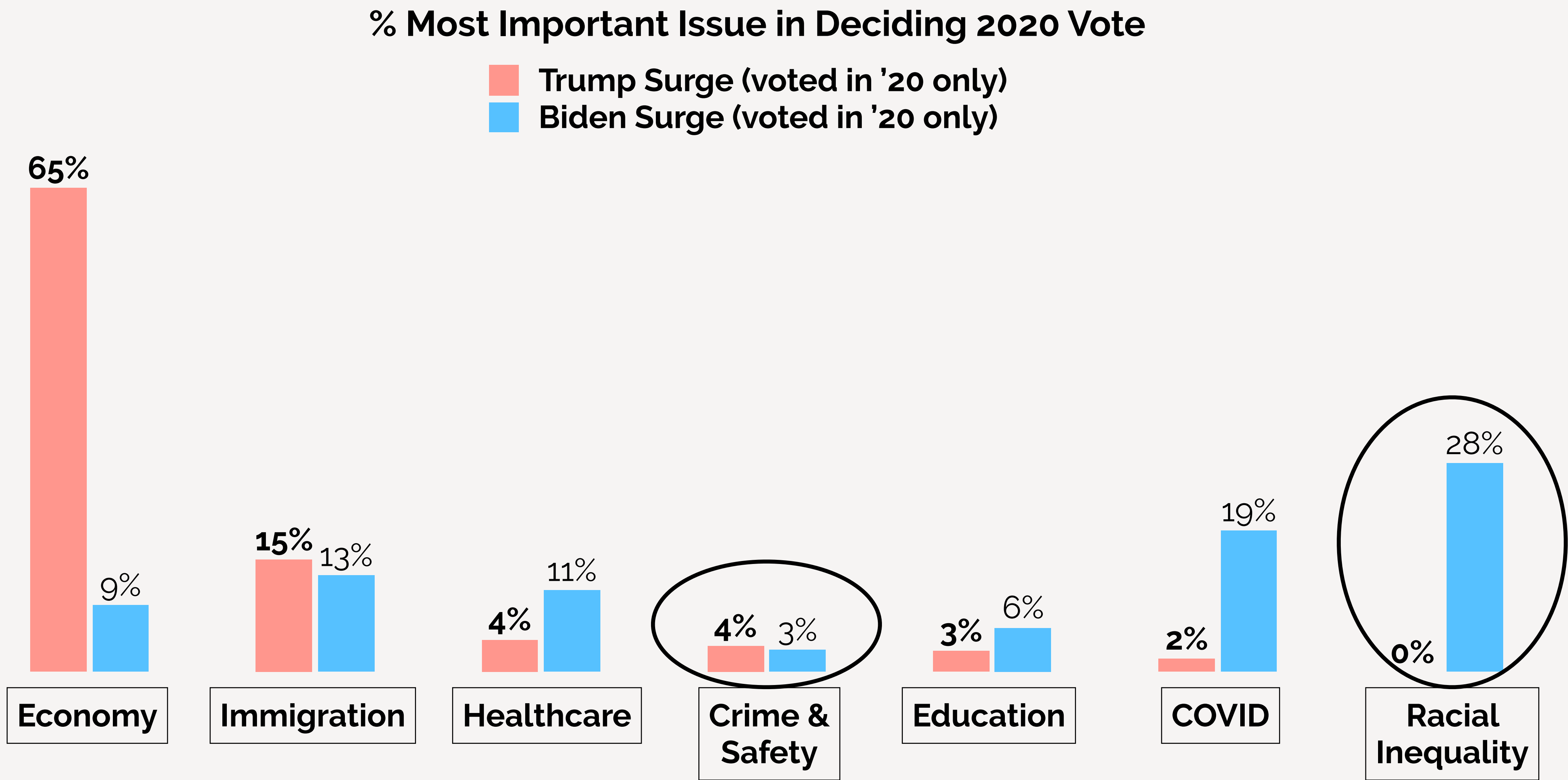
In their own words

When voters feel neglected, it opens them up to divisive tactics

"Black Lives Matter…I don't agree with that. Where are the Latinos? **I feel like [people] have forgotten about the Latino community**. A majority of us Latinos are immigrants, we are the ones who make this country run, and they don't always appreciate us."
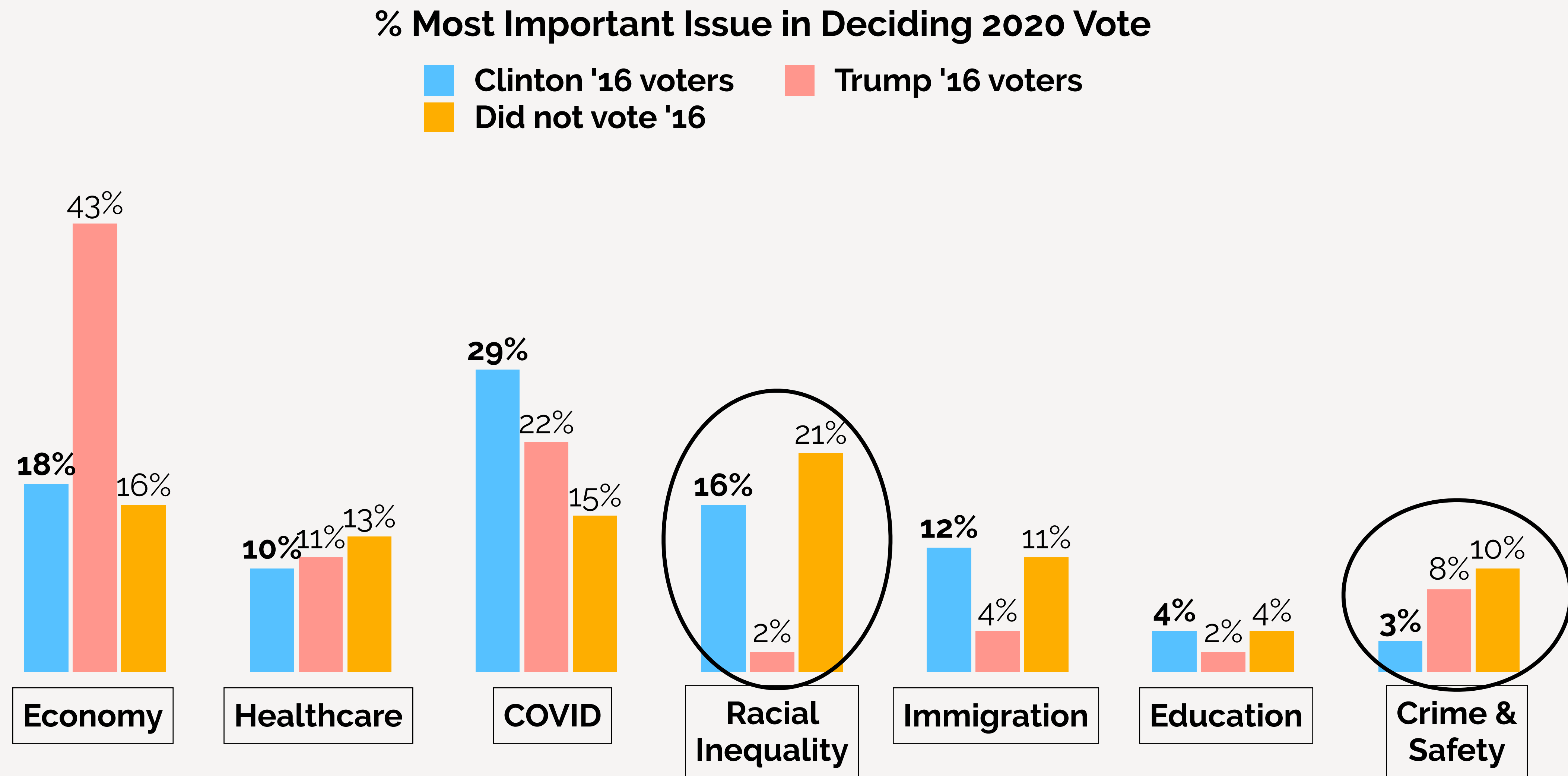
- Latino Male in Miami, 33, Peruvian-American, didn't vote '16/voted Trump '20

TEXAS: Biden's surge voters had diffuse priorities, but some suggestion that BLM protests helped with them on net

% Most Important Issue in Deciding 2020 Vote

- Trump Surge (voted in '20 only)
- Biden Surge (voted in '20 only)

Economy: Trump **65%**, Biden 9%
Immigration: Trump **15%**, Biden 13%
Healthcare: Trump **4%**, Biden 11%
Crime & Safety: Trump **4%**, Biden 3%
Education: Trump **3%**, Biden 6%
COVID: Trump **2%**, Biden 19%
Racial Inequality: Trump **0%**, Biden 28%

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NATIONAL: Clinton '16 voters had mix of priorities in '20; racial inequality pops
Among '16 non-voters who voted in '20, racial inequality a higher priority than crime

% Most Important Issue in Deciding 2020 Vote

■ Clinton '16 voters   ■ Trump '16 voters
■ Did not vote '16

Economy: 18%, 43%, 16%
Healthcare: 10%, 11%, 13%
COVID: 29%, 22%, 15%
Racial Inequality: 16%, 2%, 21%
Immigration: 12%, 4%, 11%
Education: 4%, 2%, 4%
Crime & Safety: 3%, 8%, 10%

EQUIS RESEARCH

Source: Equis national post-mortem poll

In sum, a focus on "Defund the Police" as a primary driver of Trump's Latino vote ignores the mountain of evidence behind other, more obvious factors.

IV. The southern poles

What happened in **South Texas and South Florida**, the two subregions where Trump's gains were greatest?

National trends were put into pressure cookers, in relatively insular media networks, and left to explode. **Both are seemingly cases of neglect— where one side completely owns a highly salient issue without meaningful competition.**

We've previously talked about what happened with **a segment of the Cuban-American electorate that voted at high levels for Obama**: Democrats failed to consolidate their support, and Trump took advantage.

[MORE HERE]

What truly surprised close observers in 2020 were **the gains Trump made with "LatAms" in South Florida** (the bloc of voters that includes those of Colombian, Nicaraguan, Dominican, Mexican and Venezuelan descent, among others): a bigger percentage shift than among Cubans.

With LatAms in Miami, socialism jumped out as a significant predictor of the Trump vote.

EQUIS RESEARCH

Concern for socialism a powerful predictor of Trump support among Miami LatAms

Other value & identity measures in poll don't achieve significance
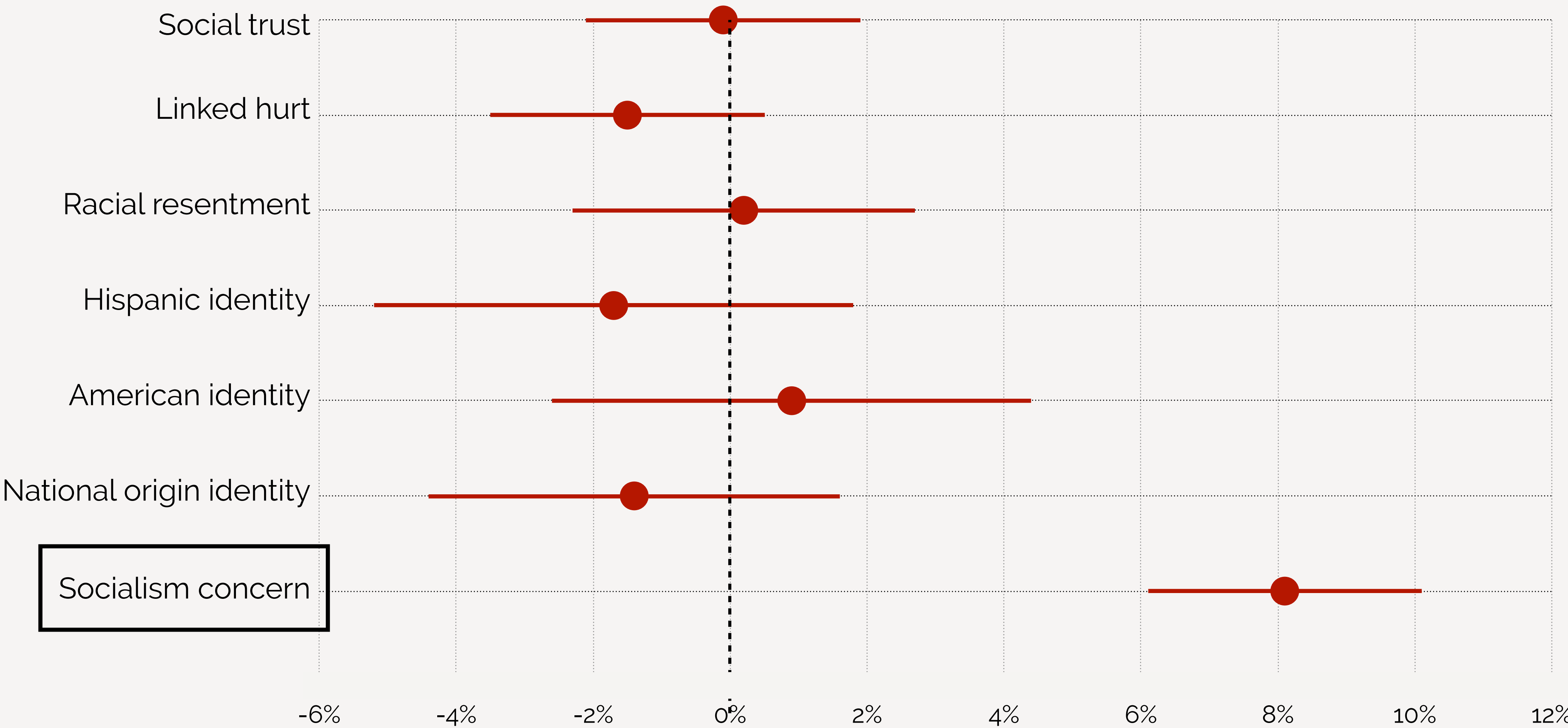
Average Marginal Effects on the Probability of Voting Trump (vs. Biden)
Among Non-Cuban/Non-Puerto Rican Hispanic Voters in Miami/Broward

EQUIS RESEARCH

From a logistic regression model w/ controls for gender, age, education, religion, nativity, language, national origin, party ID and ideology (n = 532 for this analysis)

The highly developed media ecosystem in Miami is a factor here. While **consuming news from Spanish-language radio** didn't seem predictive of socialism concerns nationally, it was among South Florida LatAms (as was exposure to specific influencers we've identified as purveyors of misinformation.)

EQUIS
RESEARCH

Media sources matter: Spanish radio & Fox News consumption predict greater concern about socialism than demographics and partisanship alone
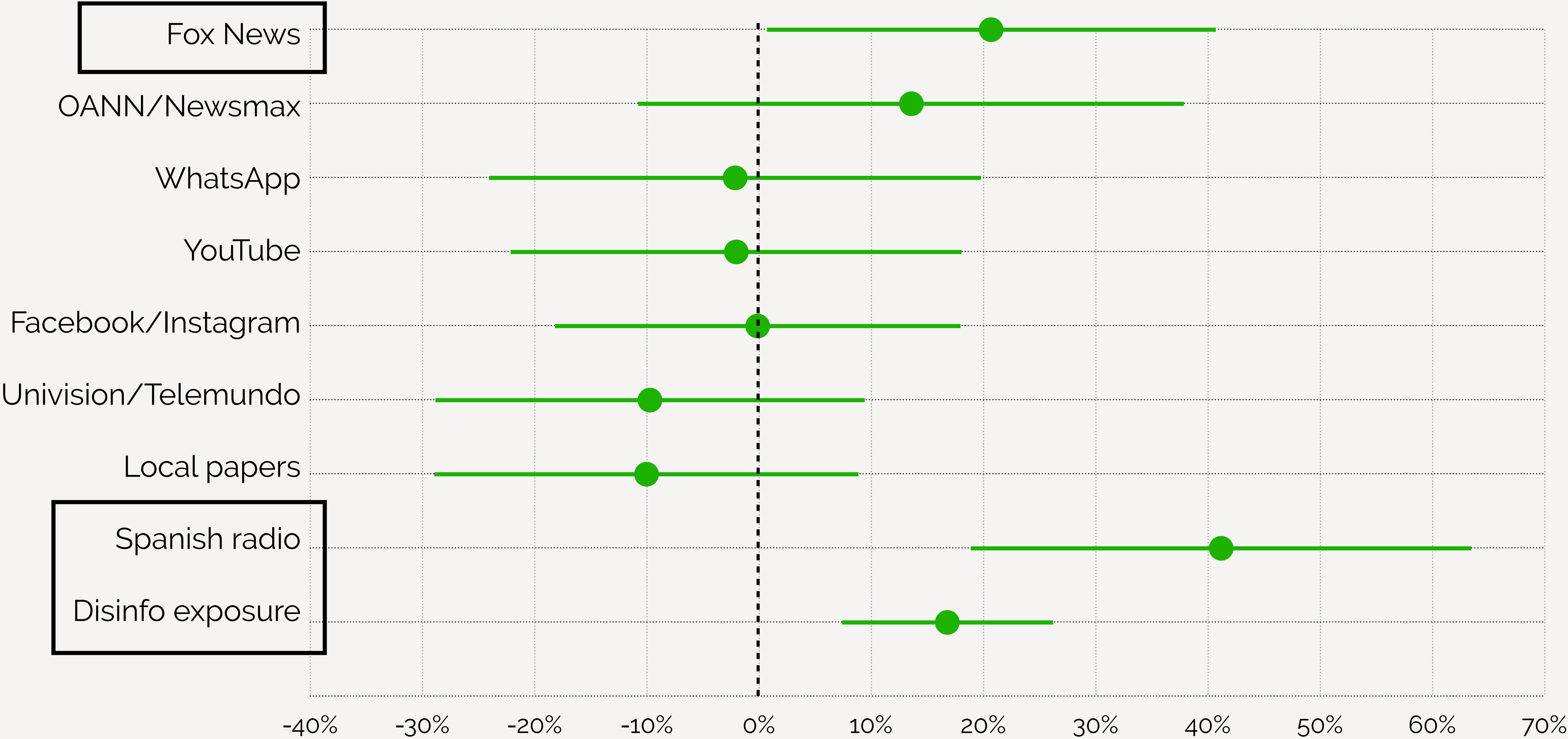
Average Marginal Effects on Concern About Socialism (vs. Not Concerned)
Among Non-Cuban/Non-Puerto Rican Hispanic Voters in Miami/Broward

From a linear regression model w/ controls for gender, age, education, religion, nativity, language, national origin, party ID and ideology (n = 610 for this analysis)
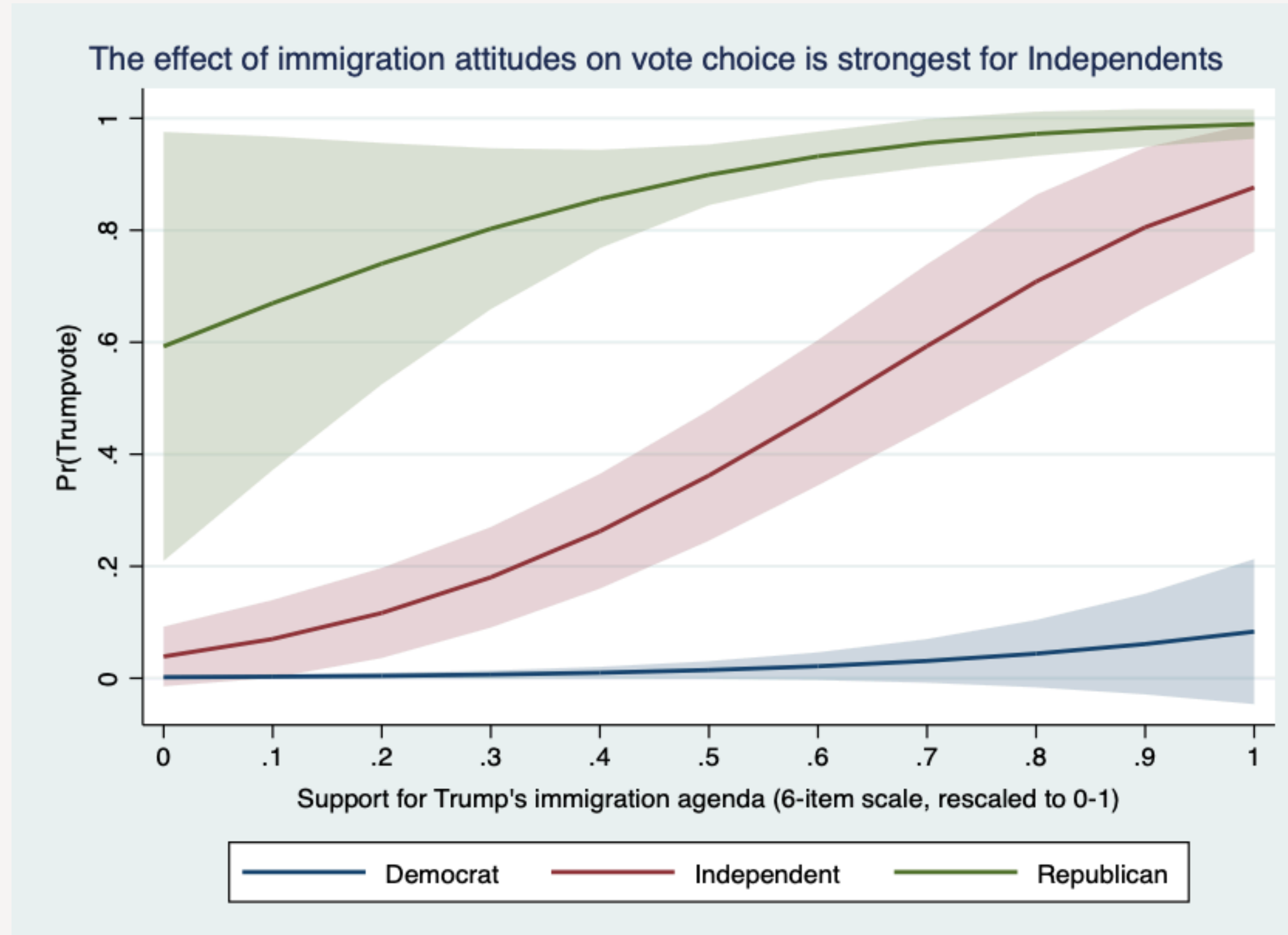
EQUIS RESEARCH

The story in South Texas: Republicans owned the border issue.

In Texas, immigration stood out in a way it didn't elsewhere in the country. Views on Trump's immigration agenda powerfully sorted Hispanic independents between the two presidential candidates: hardliners with Trump, opponents with Biden.

EQUIS RESEARCH

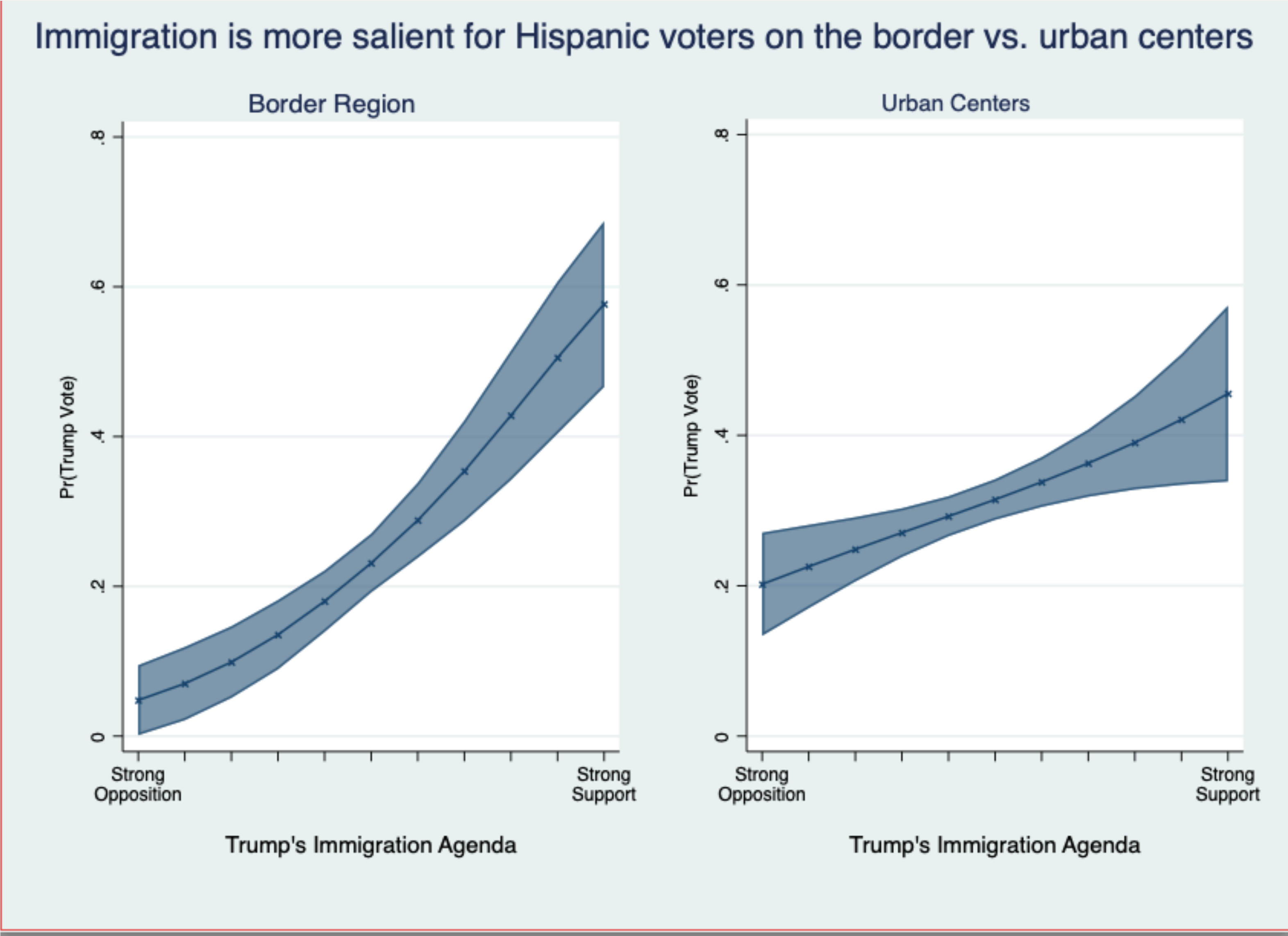# Immigration uniquely polarizing among Latino independents in Texas
Effect is small among Dems, significant among GOP (but few R's reject Trump on immigration)

The effect of immigration attitudes on vote choice is strongest for Independents

Legend: Democrat, Independent, Republican

X-axis: Support for Trump's immigration agenda (6-item scale, rescaled to 0-1)
Y-axis: Pr(Trumpvote)

From a logistic regression model with controls for gender, age, education, religion, language, generation, national origin, ideology, party ID and concern about socialism, using data from Equis post-mortem poll in Texas (n = 824 for this analysis)

EQUIS RESEARCH

The effect of immigration was strongest along the border, **where it centered quite naturally on the highly salient issue of border security**. While Trump didn't directly campaign in the Rio Grande Valley or the border— he and his surrogates frequented it often as part of his "law and order" pitch.
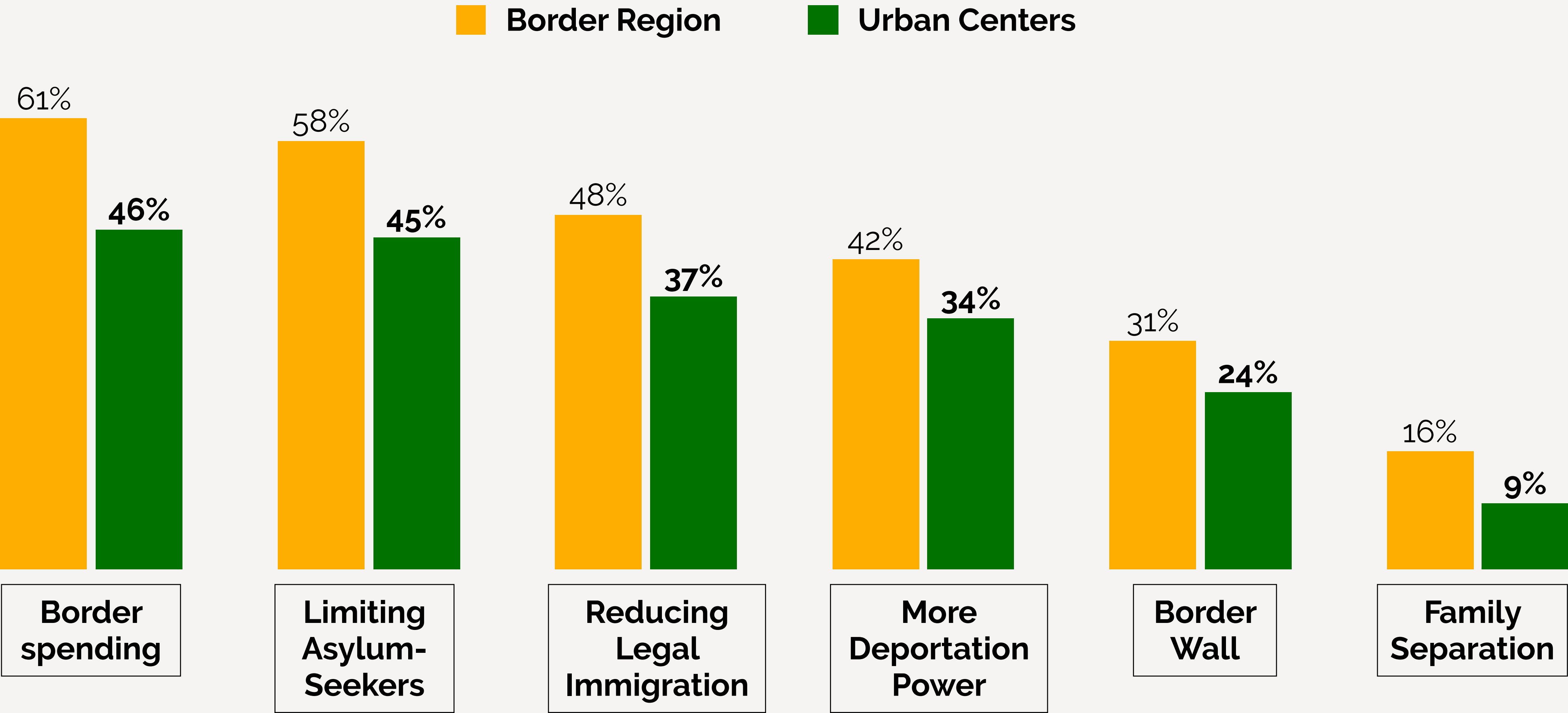
Immigration attitudes appear more polarizing along border than in metro areas

Immigration is more salient for Hispanic voters on the border vs. urban centers

Border Region | **Urban Centers**

Pr(Trump Vote) vs. Trump's Immigration Agenda (Strong Opposition — Strong Support)

Logistic regression model with controls for gender, age, education, religion, generation, language, national origin, party ID and ideology. Border defined as RGV & other border counties (minus El Paso) (n = 202 for this analysis). Urban centers are Dallas/Houston/Austin/San Antonio markets (minus rural) (n = 272).

EQUIS RESEARCH

More support for Trump's immigration agenda on the border than in the big cities

Especially true on border security and limiting refugees/asylum seekers

■ Border Region   **■ Urban Centers**

	Border spending	Limiting Asylum-Seekers	Reducing Legal Immigration	More Deportation Power	Border Wall	Family Separation
Border Region	61%	58%	48%	42%	31%	16%
Urban Centers	46%	45%	37%	34%	24%	9%

EQUIS RESEARCH

Source: Equis/TargetSmart post-mortem poll in Texas

Suggestively, **Miami and the Rio Grande Valley both hosted repeated, highly visible demonstrations of support for Trump among Hispanics**— most memorably in their respective "Trump caravanas" and "Trump trains." In all, "Latinos for Trump" were far more public in 2020 than they had been in 2016.

Did visible support for Trump among Latino voters create a permission structure?
"Latinos for Trump" more vocal in 2020 than in 2016; did it change perception of social acceptability?
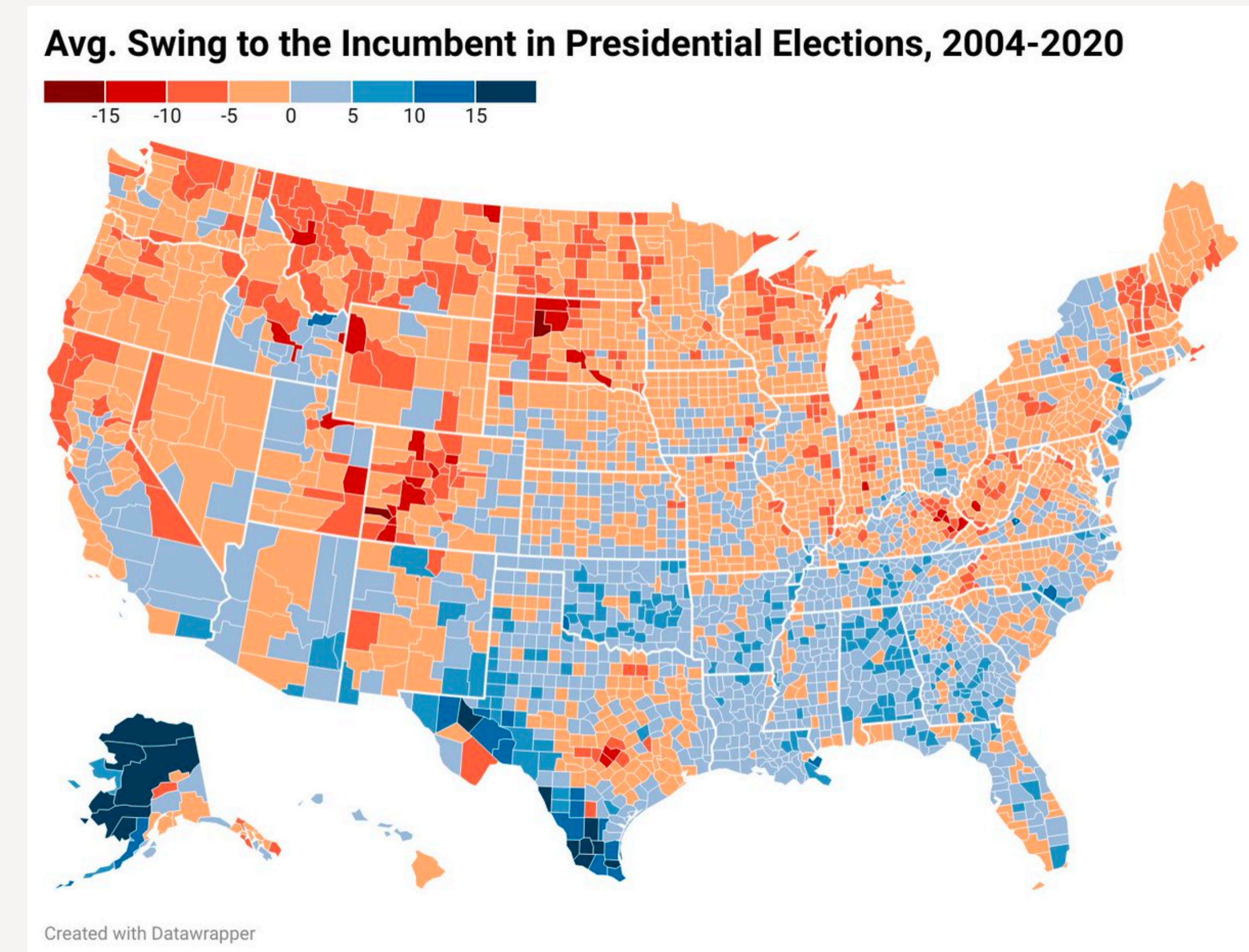
V. The untold stories

This report aims to describe the environment that enabled a small group of Latino voters to change their voting behavior. **It does not purport to tell the story of all Hispanics in the 2020 election.**

In fact, **it remains incomplete even in its attempt to explain this one subset of Trump voters**. A few ways jump out.

I. **Is there an incumbency effect unique to Latino voters?** For voters previously constrained by identity, increased familiarity with Trump alone could have done the trick. Similarly, swing voters in focus groups often talk about the media treating Trump unfairly. Was there backlash to how they perceived his treatment? Will this apply now to Biden?

II. **What happened in Arizona?** The narrowest 2016-2020 Latino shift was in Arizona. Trump's raw vote total still surged there— but Democratic votes spiked too. What was different there? (One clue: in the Election Eve Polls, AZ Latinos reported highest level of contact by Democrats of all states polled.)

III. **What about the 50% of eligible Latino voters who sat out the election?** What failed to motive or persuade half the Latino electorate (a higher rate of abstention than what we see in other racial/ethnic groups)? This ultimately could be the most important question of them all.

Avg. Swing to the Incumbent in Presidential Elections, 2004-2020

-15 -10 -5 0 5 10 15

Created with Datawrapper

Source: Siddharth Khurana @SidKhurana3607

VI. No end to 2020

In their own words

"My family... we're stuck in the middle here, right? In between both parties. **There's not one that completely represents us with everything or our thoughts on it**. For the middle class and the working class, possibly the Democratic Party represents it more. The Republican Party is more for the upper class... Yes, it's going to help the economy grow, but the middle class is kind of stuck paying for that as well. So in the middle class— I wouldn't say *definitely*— but the Democratic Party probably represents families more."

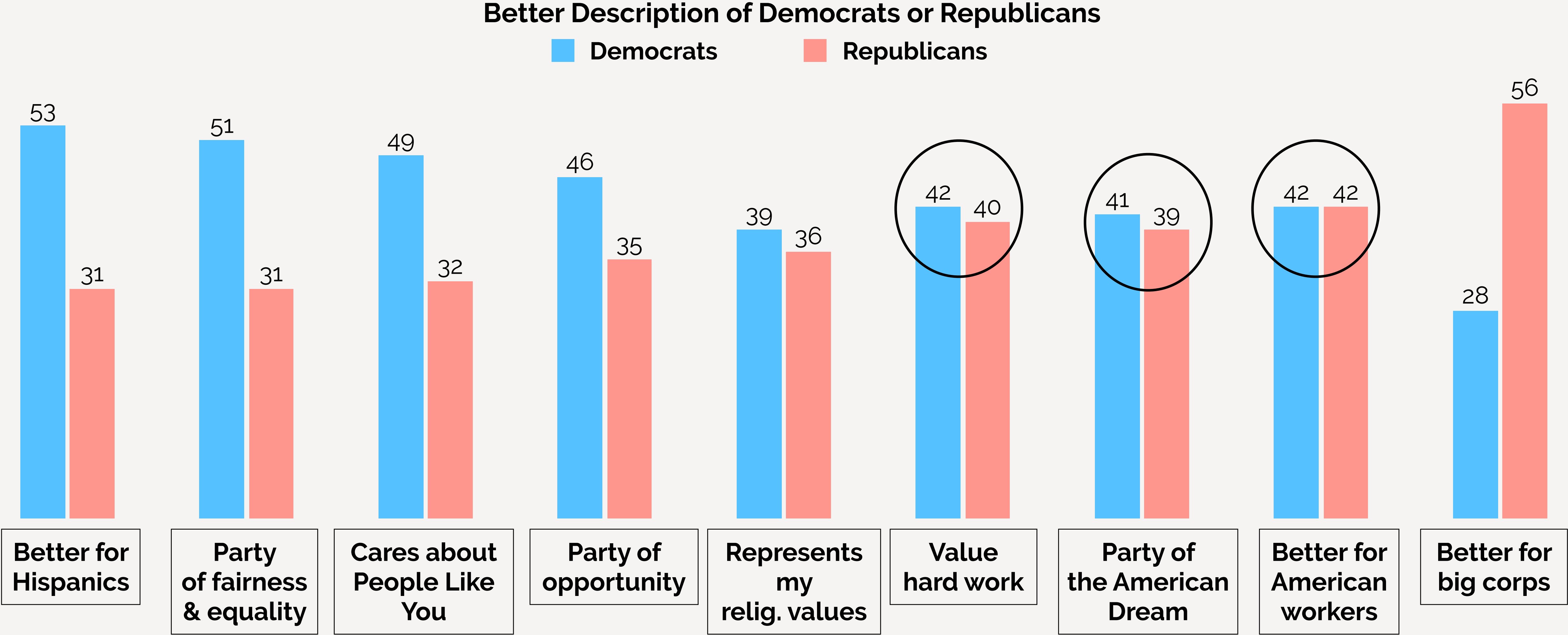– Latina in Chicago, didn't vote Trump '16/voted Trump '20

Among Latinos, **Democrats continue to have some natural advantages**— specifically on caring more about "people like you" and being "better for Hispanics"— **but are on even ground with Republicans in areas that once defined their brand**: valuing hard work, standing for the American Dream, and helping American workers.

Dems have narrow advantage over GOP on work, opportunity & the American Dream
Republicans seen as better for big corporations, while ethnic solidarity strongest point for Dems

Better Description of Democrats or Republicans

■ **Democrats**   ■ **Republicans**

Category	Democrats	Republicans
Better for Hispanics	53	31
Party of fairness & equality	51	31
Cares about People Like You	49	32
Party of opportunity	46	35
Represents my relig. values	39	36
Value hard work	42	40
Party of the American Dream	41	39
Better for American workers	42	42
Better for big corps	28	56

EQUIS RESEARCH

Talk of the American Dream & the ethic of hard work has long been a feature of campaigning to Hispanic-American voters.

Obama 2008 (in Spanish): "we share a dream... that through hard work your family can succeed"

Bush 2004 (in Spanish): "the American Dream belongs to everyone who lives in this country"
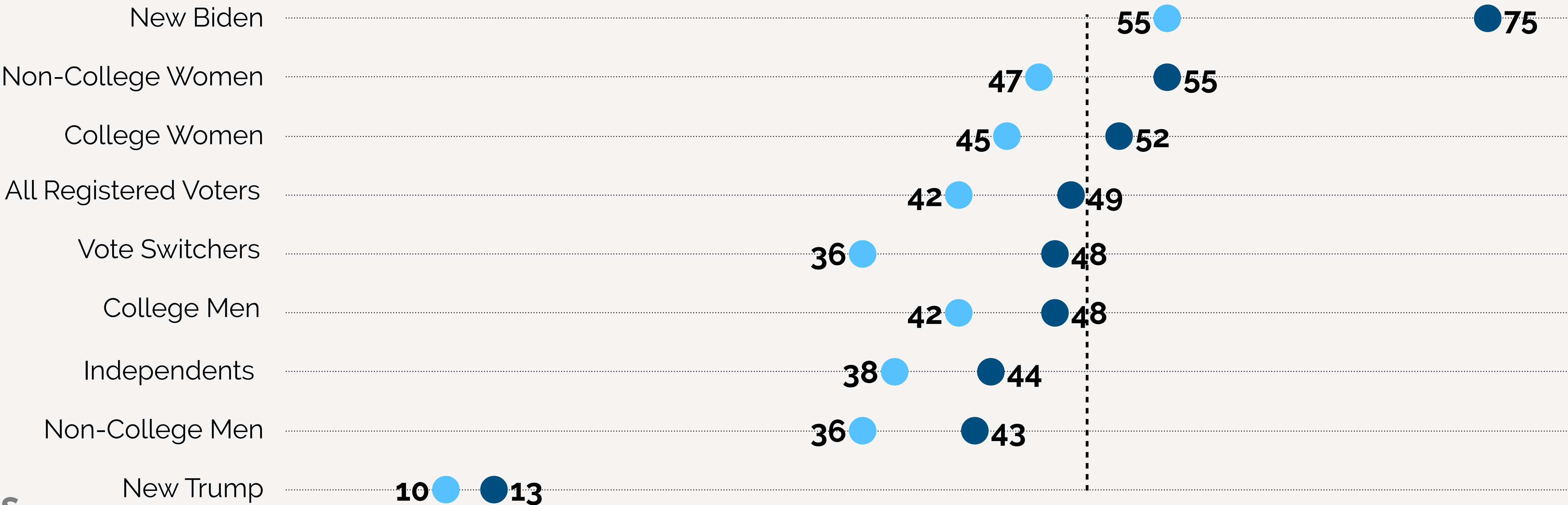
For Democrats, the question is whether either the **GOP's broad economic/cultural attack** or the **sense among some Hispanics that their votes have been taken for granted by Democrats** could create a new social norm that prevents less-partisan Latinos from defaulting to Democrats, as they usually have.

EQUIS RESEARCH

Hispanics believe Dems "care" more, but which party is "better" for workers is in dispute
Gender & education drive divides on party images

% Describes Democrats Better
Among registered Hispanic voters in 11 states

● Better for American Workers
● Cares About People Like You

	Better for American Workers	Cares About People Like You
New Biden	55	75
Non-College Women	47	55
College Women	45	52
All Registered Voters	42	49
Vote Switchers	36	48
College Men	42	48
Independents	38	44
Non-College Men	36	43
New Trump	10	13

EQUIS RESEARCH

Source: Equis survey for Democracy Corps of registered Hispanic voters in 11 battleground states, 8/19 - 8/24/21 (n=1800)
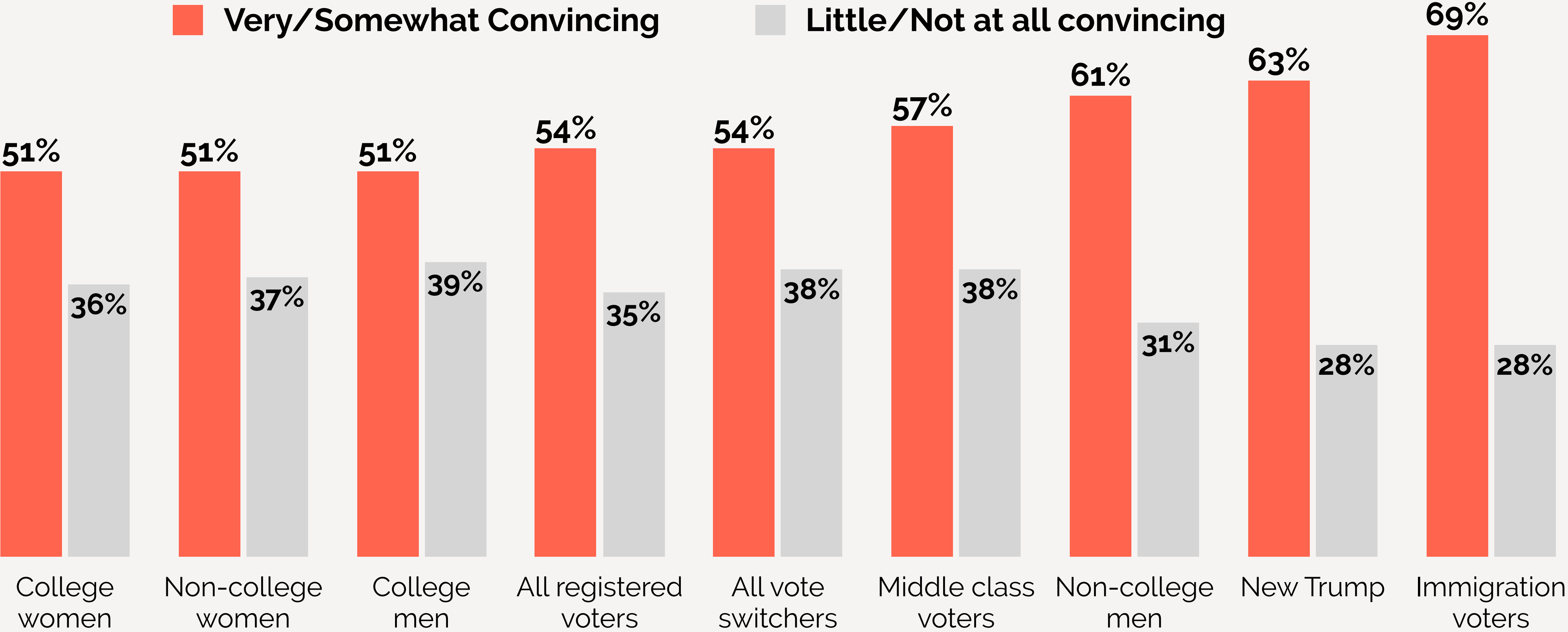
Among most potent attacks on Democratic agenda: that they take Hispanics for granted
Majorities across key subgroups find it a convincing argument— few more than those who call immigration their top issue (on both sides of it)

% feeling Democrats forget Hispanics
"Democrats take Hispanics for granted. They want our votes but forget about us when it comes time to deliver."

■ **Very/Somewhat Convincing**　　　■ **Little/Not at all convincing**

	College women	Non-college women	College men	All registered voters	All vote switchers	Middle class voters	Non-college men	New Trump	Immigration voters
Very/Somewhat Convincing	51%	51%	51%	54%	54%	57%	61%	63%	69%
Little/Not at all convincing	36%	37%	39%	35%	38%	38%	31%	28%	28%

EQUIS RESEARCH

Dems taking Hispanics for granted was opening hook of Trump's most-watched campaign video

Masvidal spot a good summary of Trump effort to build permission structure for Latinos

Trigger Warning

34,396,130 views • Oct 20, 2020
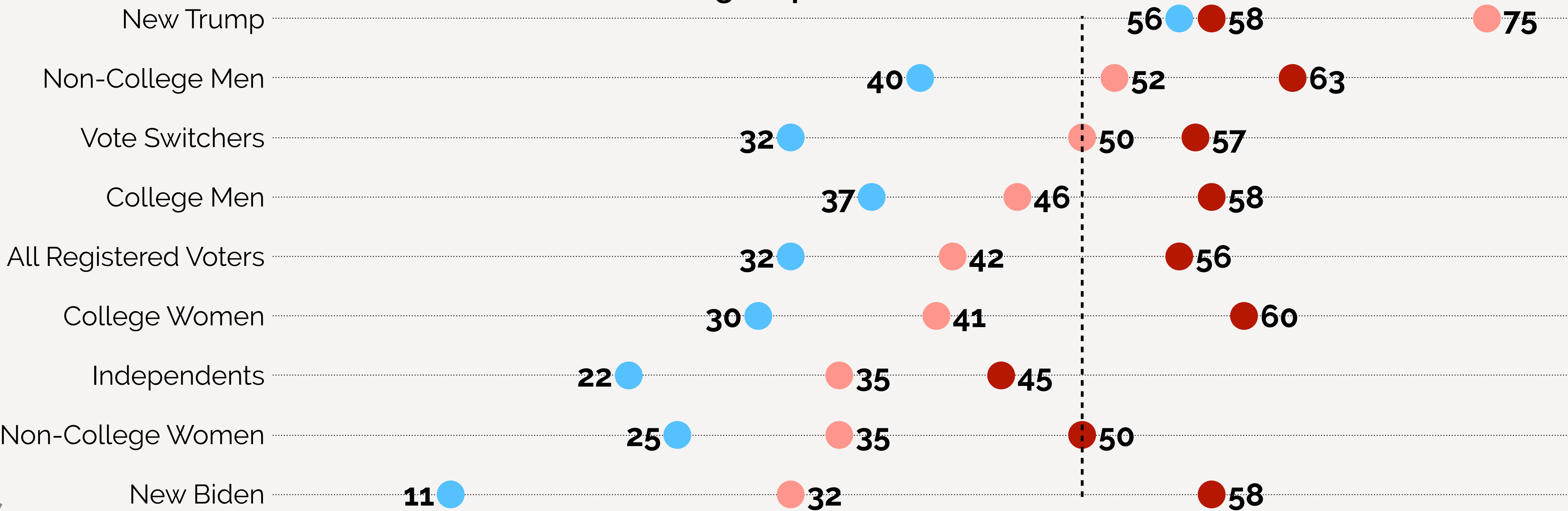
392K   117K   SHARE   SAVE   ...

The Republicans have a bigger albatross: **for all their efforts to rebrand as a working class party, Hispanics largely identify the GOP as the uncaring party of big corporations and the rich.**

GOP could grow support but still viewed as the uncaring party of big corporations
Rebranding effort still hasn't erased major liabilities

% Describes Republicans Better
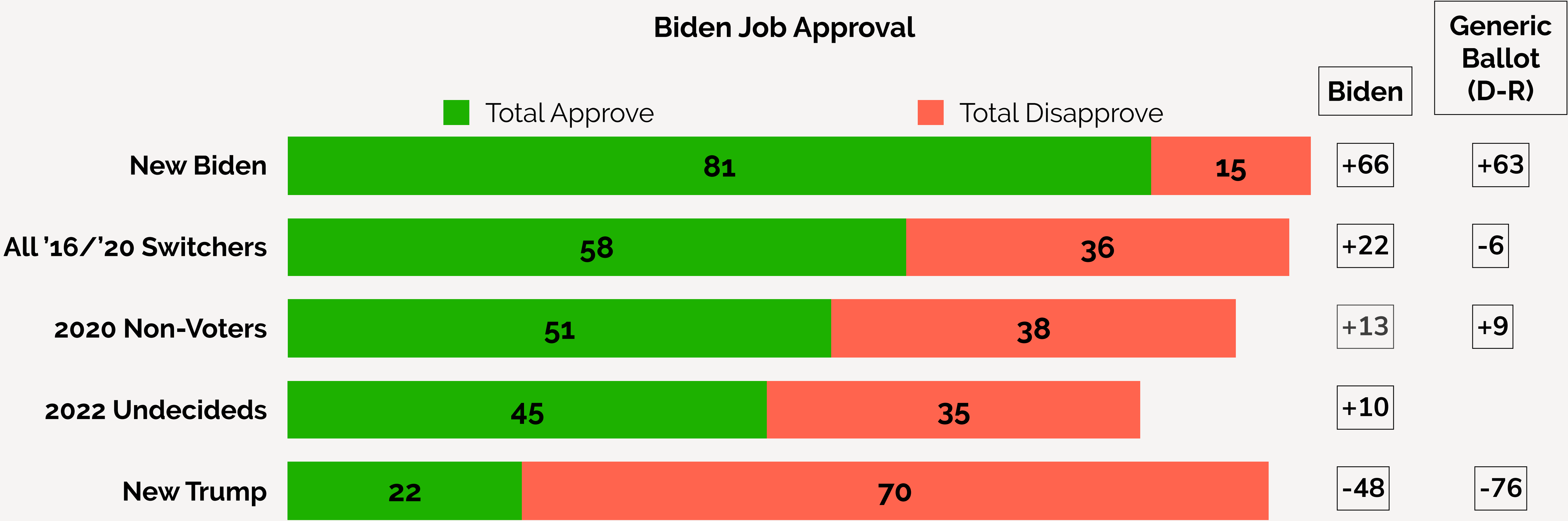### Among registered Hispanic voters in 11 states

- 🔵 **Cares About People Like You**
- 🔴 **Better for American Workers**
- 🔴 **Better for Big Corporations**

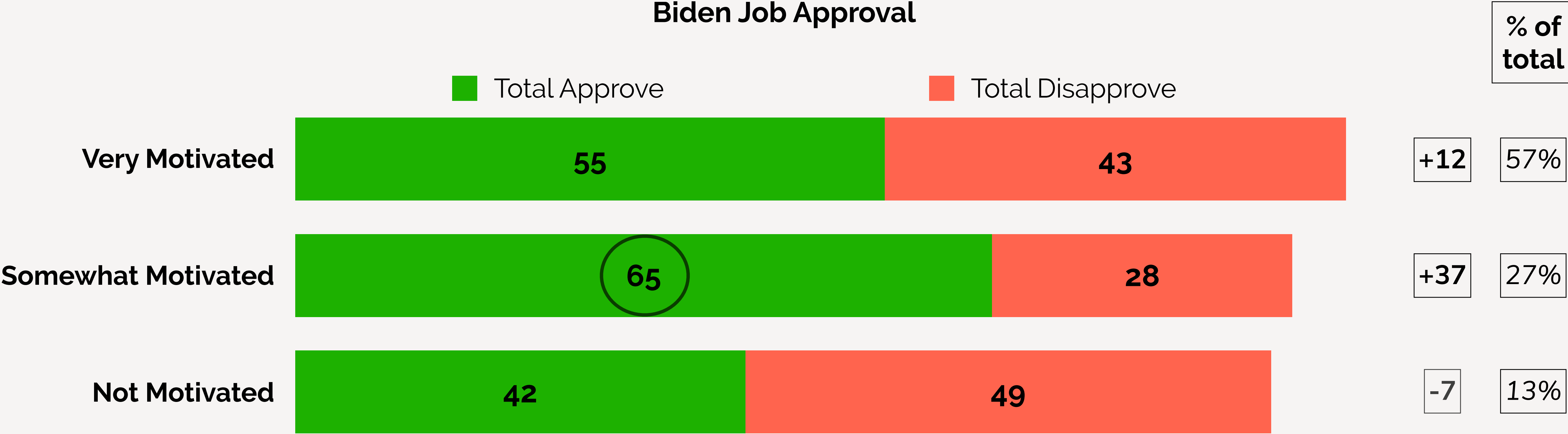|	Cares About People Like You	Better for American Workers	Better for Big Corporations
New Trump	56	75	58
Non-College Men	40	52	63
Vote Switchers	32	50	57
College Men	37	46	58
All Registered Voters	32	42	56
College Women	30	41	60
Independents	22	35	45
Non-College Women	25	35	50
New Biden	11	32	58

EQUIS RESEARCH

Was 2020 the beginning of a trend that will continue into 2022?
Some wildcards: the economy, COVID... and President Biden.

In August, Biden approval out-performed his party's generic vote among some key audiences
Some switchers & new Trump voters seemed to still be giving the new president a chance

Biden Job Approval

	Total Approve	Total Disapprove	Biden	Generic Ballot (D-R)
New Biden	81	15	+66	+63
All '16/'20 Switchers	58	36	+22	-6
2020 Non-Voters	51	38	+13	+9
2022 Undecideds	45	35	+10	
New Trump	22	70	-48	-76

EQUIS RESEARCH

Biden's highest approvals were among those still soft on voting in 2022
The likeliest voters and, more so, the *unlikeliest* Latino voters, were tougher customers

Biden Job Approval

% of total

	Total Approve	Total Disapprove

Very Motivated	55	43	+12	57%
Somewhat Motivated	65	28	+37	27%
Not Motivated	42	49	-7	13%

Source: Equis survey for Democracy Corps of registered Hispanic voters in 11 battleground states, 8/19 - 8/24/21 (n=1800)

Since you've come this far...

Study guide for 2022 election & Latino voters:

1. Who is owning **the debate about work, workers, and their livelihood**? In what terms is it being framed?

2. Who is **communicating to Hispanic voters**, on what, and is there an asymmetry in who is visible and present (in both virtual and physical spaces)?

3. As the media and operatives start ascribing power to **new variables and buzzwords** (e.g. Defund, Latinx, Critical Race Theory), is there evidence that voters are aware of those attacks? What are those conversations actually about?

4. How is race showing up, and who is **benefitting from racial division**?

5. Who is **speaking to the margins**— to those Latinos voters who are usually sidelined from politics— and what assumptions about them does this outreach reveal?

6. On top priorities beyond jobs (**immigration, healthcare, education**), are parties conveying a big difference between them (through policy action and communication), or has the choice been muddled? Who is doing the muddling?

EQUIS RESEARCH

Thank you!