

July 7, 2020

**To:** Page Gardner and Tom Lopach, Voter Participation Center  
Maria Teresa Kumar, Voto Latino

**From:** Stephen Nuño-Perez, Latino Decisions

**Re:** Latino 6-state Battleground, Survey Results

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➤ **Project Overview**

On behalf of the Voter Participation Center, and in partnership with Voto Latino, Latino Decisions conducted a survey to assess the baseline, election-year opinions of Latinos. The 1,200-person survey includes 200 Latino eligible voters from each of six 2020 presidential battleground states that contain Latino populations significant enough to swing a statewide election: Arizona, Florida, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Texas. This is the first survey of 2020 to include robust samples of Latinos in North Carolina and Pennsylvania. Conducted online between June 7 and June 19, the poll has a margin of error of +/- 2.8.

Topics surveyed include:

- **The 2020 election, voting and candidates:** Likelihood and enthusiasm about voting in November; outreach efforts by the major political parties or candidates;
- **Black Lives Matter:** Opinions about policing, protests and the reform movement;
- **Vote-by-Mail:** Past experience with VBM, knowledge of state rules, confidence and trust;
- **COVID-19:** Experiences and attitudes about the impact of the pandemic, and the policy and political response by governments and elected officials.

Among the findings, Latino Decisions identified five key results:

1. Latinos, and especially younger Latinos, demonstrate a lower intensity or enthusiasm about the 2020 election than earlier in 2020 and at this point in 2016.
2. While Joe Biden is winning Latinos 2-1, he is underperforming with Latinos relative to Clinton in June 2016 polling and has opportunities for growth.
3. Latinos support the Black Lives Movement, believe police violence is systemic, and younger Latinos in particular see the protests as important.
4. Latinos express low levels of information about vote-by-mail options and how the COVID- 19 pandemic may affect their ballot access in November;
5. While certainty to vote may be low, Latinos can be mobilized and motivated to vote with specific, issue-based appeals. Expanding access and reducing costs of health care continue to be a top issue, as does fighting racial injustice against Latinos and Blacks.

➤ **Top Takeaways**

1. **Latinos—especially younger Latinos—are less motivated to vote in 2020.**

A somewhat low rate of 59% of Latinos said they definitely plan to vote. This figure is slightly higher for women (62%) than men (57%), but what's dragging down Latino turnout is a lack of enthusiasm among Latinos under 30, only 46% percent of whom intend to vote. Those with a high school degree or less are also less likely (50%) to vote. Voters undecided about the presidential election are especially unmotivated: Just 37% said they will definitely vote in November. In a February 2020 national poll Latino Decisions found 73% of Latino registered voters said they were certain to vote. There is no doubt the covid-19 pandemic and less headline attention on the presidential election has resulted in lower enthusiasm.

2. **Biden has a large advantage over Trump, however Latinos express somewhat low enthusiasm for Biden.**

The former vice president enjoys a respectable, but not overwhelming 25-point net positive approval rating among Latinos (57% approve, 32% disapprove). Likewise, Biden enjoys a comfortable but not overwhelming lead over Trump (60% to 25%) among those who expressed a preference in the presidential contest, but that split drops to 43%/20% among low-propensity voters. These findings are consistent with other survey results. In February 2020 Biden held 67% support among Latinos, down 7 points today. In early summer 2016 Hillary Clinton had 73% support among Latinos. There is a false perception shared broadly among political elites that Trump's hostility toward Latinos is enough to motivate Latino turnout. But we know mere disaffection with Trump is insufficient. Indeed, Trump's negative net approval rating of -16 among Latinos (42% approve, 58% disapprove) is essentially identical to that of Americans overall. Perhaps most alarming, 56% of Latinos interviewed said they were better off now than they were four years ago. Although Latinos recognize Trump's racism, Latinos require concerted outreach efforts from campaigns and organizations to motivate them to vote for Biden or, perhaps most accurately, against Trump. However, our findings do not suggest a path forward for Trump, Latinos strongly oppose his handling of the pandemic, racial relations, and his immigration rhetoric in particular. Instead of seeing movements *towards Trump*, many Latinos report to be "undecided" in their presidential vote today. These are most likely votes that Biden has a chance to win, especially younger Latinos. Biden needs to find energy and momentum in communicating more regularly with Latinos, in particular those in younger cohorts.

### 3. Political outreach continues to lag among already disconnected Latinos.

Fewer than half of Latino respondents said the Democratic Party is doing a good job or reaching out to them, and 52% of self-identified independents agreed the Democrats “do not care too much” about Latinos. Just 32% of low-propensity Latino voters say the Democrats are doing a good job of outreach, and an even lower 27% of Latinos ages 18-29 agree. We know that Latinos are disproportionately young, more likely to be registered independents, and are less-likely to vote—all factors that contribute to a “low-propensity” profile that therefore generates less attention and fewer investments by the two major parties. Nevertheless, Latino Republicans report higher levels of connectivity with their party than Democrats: 53% of self-identified Republicans were contacted by someone, compared to 43% of Democrats. Most disconcerting, this split actually widens for those who express a specific 2020 candidate preference: 59% of Trump supporters, but only 41% of Biden backers, report being contacted by a political party, campaign or organization so far in 2020.

### 4. Police reform and Black Lives Matter have captured the attention of Latinos.

In an April 2020 national survey, just 3% of respondents said that police reform was an important issue. Now, 19% of Latinos cited criminal justice and police reform as a top issue. Latinos exhibit strong support for Black Lives Matter, with 76% saying they support or strongly support the movement. A combined 69% said that “racial injustice and violence against black and Latino communities” was either the “most important” (35%) or “a top” (34%) reason to vote this November. When asked between two options: “police violence is a big problem” or “these incidents are rare,” a combined 67% of Latinos identified police violence as a problem, compared to 23% who said it was rare. Latinos’ views on the protests are less lopsided. Looking at the violence and disruption during protests, a majority of Latinos hold the police more responsible for the anger of the protestors than they blame protestors for taking matters too far, but opinion is not as split as titled as it is for supporting BLM or agreeing that police violence is problematic. Overall 53% blame the police for violence at protests, while 35% blame protestors. However, we see there is work to be done in outreach and education to Latinos on police violence and support for protest, which falls from a high of 76% support for BLM down to just 53% on blaming the police for taking things too far. Finally, Latinos continue to see protest as working *alongside* voting, not instead of. When asked the best way to influence change, 50% said voting was more important, 13% said protest and 33% said both were equally important. Indeed, the common theme of *hoy marchamos, mañana votamos* seems to ring true in these survey findings.

**5. Latinos' experience and familiarity with vote-by-mail is limited.**

Just 42% of Latinos surveyed said that they have ever voted using an absentee ballot or vote-by-mail to cast a ballot and confidence was mixed. While 30% said they were very confident mail ballots are delivered and counted, an equal 30% were not that confident, and the remaining 40% said “somewhat.” Those who have not voted by mail have low familiarity with the process to register for a mail ballot; in fact, two-thirds of in-person Latino voters admitted they are unfamiliar with how to vote by mail in their state. Much more work is needed in outreach and education on how to sign up for vote-by-mail, and trusting the system. When asked if they had the option to vote in-person or by mail, Latinos were split with 51% saying in-person and 49% saying by mail. As more states move to close down in-person voting locations, long lines and crowds await voters in November. To ensure maximum Latino turnout, a vote-by-mail education and awareness campaign is essential.

**6. COVID-19 continues to have a broad impact on the Latino community.**

Previous Latino Decisions surveys demonstrate the disproportionate impact COVID-19 has had on the Latino community. Despite Latinos' clear preference for in-person voting, a sizable majority (75%) of respondents are concerned that they may be exposed to coronavirus if they vote in-person this November. Responding to COVID-19 and lowering the costs of health care also continue to rank at the top of the list of most important issues among respondents, with health care cited as the top choice of 26% of respondents and COVID-19 the top choice of another 25%. Overall, 60% of Latinos in these six battleground states disapprove of President Trump's handling of the COVID-19 response, and 64% of Latinos say Trump ignored the early warning signs of the disease.

**7. Most Latinos find the Trump Administration's rhetoric offensive and off-putting.**

Whatever voters think of his substance; most Latinos have soured on President Trump's style. Fully seven-in-ten (71%) say Trump and the Republicans use toxic rhetoric to divide Americans against each other. Nor is this sentiment limited to Democrats and Trump detractors: 40% of Latino Republicans and 38% of Trump supporters agree. Despite signs of weak enthusiasm, 70% of Latinos say Biden and the Democrats will fight for Latinos, and even 45% of Latino Republicans agree.

**8. Democratic vice-presidential candidates of color have potential for Latino mobilization.**

With national attention on a woman candidate of color, Kamala Harris, Stacy Abrams, and Val Demings each show potential for mobilization in the Latino community. As a presidential candidate in the Democratic primary, Harris has the highest name recognition. When asked if these potential picks made the respondents excited, 59% of respondents said Harris did, with 55% saying Abrams did, and 53% saying Demings made them excited. When asked if these candidates would make respondents more or less likely to vote for Joe Biden, 52% said Harris would make them more likely to vote for Biden, with 49% saying Abrams made them more likely, and 46% saying Demings did so. Harris also scored highest in excitement among pro-BLM protest Latinos, with 69% saying a Biden-Harris ticket made them excited or somewhat excited. This is important to note given the media attention to concerns over Harris' history in law enforcement.

**9. Health care and racial justice present important opportunities to mobilize the Latino electorate.**

The current health care crisis continues to resonate strongly with Latinos. Respondents were asked a series of questions on the importance of voting for several issues; 73% of Latinos saying the costs of health care was the most important or one of the top reasons to vote. This issue was especially important for low income respondents, at 79%, and 78% of those who consume Spanish media saying so. When respondents asked how important it was for them personally to vote for racial justice in November, 69% said it was the most important issue or one of their top issues. Perhaps most important was how much this issue resonated with key segments of the Latino community, with 75% of respondents who consume Spanish media saying it was the most important or a top issue for them. This sentiment was also consistent across income and marital status. Similarly, 72% of non-registered Latino voters said police reform was the most important or a top reason to vote, presenting an important mobilizing issue that can pick up new voters.