

Are South Texas Latino Voters Really Trump Supporters or Is There Something Else Going On  
Here?—A look at the 2024 Texas Presidential Election Results

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For The Annual Meeting of the  
Western Political Science Association, Hilton Hotel, Seattle, Washington  
April 17-19, 2025

## **Introduction**

The post 2024 presidential analysis has been variable in identifying factors that influence the Latino vote: it was cultural; it was a gender gap; it was Latinos are conservatives; it was inflation; it was the influx of undocumented workers; it was the economy; it was young Latinos (Sanchez 2024) and less Latinas; it was “the secret salsa of Trump’s 2024 comeback” (Penn and Stein 2024). Other literature has suggested that Texas Latinos generally lean more Democrat given the more general anti-immigrant and anti-Latino GOP rhetoric (Barreto and Segura 2014; Sanchez 2014). Other analysis still showed lower SES Latinos as a source of increased 2020 Trump support (Fraga et al., 2024).

This paper offers a multi-prong approach to studying Texas Latino voting patterns. First, we extend our examination of Latino voting in Texas from 2016 and 2020 with the 2024 results using Texas’ counties as the unit of analysis. Is there a pattern here? Second, county demographic characteristics (urban/rural; percent Latino; percent unemployment, geography (South/North Texas), percent county unemployed, a measure of change of economic activity in a county, and 2024 county presidential voting behavior serve as the principal variables of investigation in an OLS multiple regression approach. Next, we examine the 37 counties that make up South Texas and apply the same analysis to determine the saliency of South Texas voting behaviors. This component allows for the control of Latino as a race/ethnic variable as South Texas is predominately Latino (85-95%). Ultimately, in using these varied approaches, we expect a fuller picture of the diverse voting behavior of South Texas Latinos to emerge.

## **Background**

President Trump won the State of Texas in 2024: 56.1 percent to Harris’ 42.8 percent and increased his vote share from his previous election efforts (Texas Secretary of State Office.

2024). . But context is important in examining the 2024 Presidential Election. Texas has not gone “blue” since the 1976 presidential election where Jimmy Carter (D-GA) defeated Gerald R. Ford (R-MI), the incumbent president.

In addition, not since 1968 have we had an incumbent president bow out of a presidential race. In President Johnson’s case, his announcement came five months prior to the Democrat nomination and eight months before the national election. While the Democratic Vice President Hubert Humphrey narrowly captured Texas by 1 percent over the former and Republican Vice President Richard Nixon, he ultimately lost that national election. In 2024, President Biden’s withdrawal took place one month prior to the Democratic convention and 107 days before election day, where Democratic Vice President and nominee Kamala Harris was defeated. In this context, and increasingly, the presidential election came down to winning a small set of “toss-up” states and Texas was not among them. No one expected Harris to win Texas as neither did Biden nor Clinton before her.

Politically, Texas is characterized as a Republican-majority and led state government and growing Democratic urban cities. Latinos and non-Hispanic Whites make up the largest ethnic groups in the state with nearly an identical proportion --39.7 percent Latino to 40.8 percent Non-Hispanic (NH) White population (Texas Demographic Center 2023). The state’s total population now stands at approximately 31 million, an increase of nearly 5 percent since 2020 with population growth in the State’s four largest metropolitan areas (You and Alvarez 2024). In addition, urban center counties have a lower percentage of residents 65 and older, while rural areas tend to have higher rates.

Despite the history of racial rhetoric espoused by former President Trump that often placed Latinos in a negative light, many Texas Latino voters supported his candidacy in 2016

and 2020, and even increased their support during the 2024 Presidential election. During the 2016, as in the 2024 campaign, Trump came out strong as the anti-immigrant candidate which resonated with many in South Texas, who experienced and witnessed large influxes of undocumented people crossing into border communities via the Texas communities of El Paso, Eagle Pass, Del Rio and Hidalgo/McAllen area in 2023 (Associated Press 2024).

During the 2020 campaign, however, he toned down that rhetoric since the COVID pandemic took precedence and managed to secure a higher percentage of the Latino vote in some parts of South Texas than he did in 2016. Garza (2021) states that Latinos took less offense with Trump's past rhetoric but voted based on pocket-book issues like jobs, the economy, healthcare and education in 2020. As a result, media outlets such as the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *Politico* began to sound the alarm that Republicans may be winning the hearts of Latinos in Texas.

Add that Trump also won the State in his previous campaigns 2016, and 2020. In 2016, candidate Trump received 52.2 percent of the Texas vote compared to Hillary Clinton, who received 43.2 percent with the additional four percent divided by some fifteen other candidacies. Clinton, in 2016, garnered 3.9 million votes but Biden picked up 5.3 million votes in 2020 in Texas or a 39.5percent increase over Clinton's campaign. By these measures, Democratic Biden outperformed Clinton's effort in Texas 2016. But in 2024, Harris garnered 4.8 million votes more than Clinton but less than Biden.

Moreover, turnout in the Texas presidential race was also different: in 2016, 59.4 percent of the Texas registered voters voted; but, by 2020, turnout jumped to 66.7 percent, which coincides with increase in turnout nation-wide. By 2024, turnout was 61.5 percent; ahead of 2016 but a 5.2 percent decrease from 2020.

But how should we make sense of the voting behavior of Latinos voters in Texas and more specifically, voting behavior of Latinos in South Texas and border counties?

This paper examines these questions.

**Literature Review –“*There’s Something Happening on Here; But What it is Ain’t Exactly Clear*” (with apologies to Buffalo Springfield · 1966)**

Existing literature suggests that Texas Latinos generally lean more Democrat given the more general anti-immigrant and anti-Latino GOP rhetoric (Barreto and Segura 2014; Sanchez 2014). But, as early as 2008, and probably much earlier, political scientists have been careful in characterizing the Latino or Hispanic vote as a bloc (Garcia and Sanchez 2008). Garcia and Sanchez point to Latino votes from 1984 to 2004 as ranging between 50 to 75 percent Democratic with higher levels in the 1960s and 1970s. They wrote:

Only in 1980, when Latinos were notably supportive of Ronald Reagan, and in 2004, when Hispanics voted about 40 percent for George W. Bush, has the support for the Democratic presidential candidate dipped to less than 60 percent. ... the average voter percentage that Democratic presidential candidates received from Latino voters ...prior to 2004 is 67 to 68 percent (135).

Garcia and Sanchez add that the “Hispanic vote varied by the same socioeconomic indicators that affect the non-Hispanic vote” (ibid). Moreover, as Fraga et al. (2006) point out, there is long legacy of research that has found not only that Latino group identity is complex but also that “its saliency for political engagement is often situational,” citing the works of John García (1982); Felix Padilla 1986; Michael Jones-Correa and David Leal (1996) (517).

So how does the 2024 presidential differ from these patterns? Noe-Bustamante et al. (2024) report that in 2020, 61 percent of Latino voter cast ballots for Biden and 36 percent for Trump compared to 66 percent for Clinton and 28 percent for Trump in 2016.

One of Texas’ premier magazines, the *Texas Monthly*, had a piece titled “Why Democrats are Losing Tejanos,” where reporter Jack Herrera interviewed many Latinos in South Texas and

along the border to inquire about the shift towards the Republican party during the 2020 election. One interviewee, Sylvia Bruni who serves as party chair for the Webb County (Laredo, Texas) Democratic Party, stated that Republican candidates and volunteers “were knocking on doors; they were having *asadas* (similar to barbeques); and they were meeting people and talking to them. And we weren’t.” She indicated that the state’s Democratic party leadership prioritized outreach via phone calls, texts, and social media during the pandemic (Herrera 2021). These sentiments were also expressed in another *Texas Monthly* article, written by Balli, titled “Don’t Call Texas’s Latino Voters the Sleeping Giants.” She and a couple of colleagues interviewed over 100 individuals in South Texas regarding their voting patterns and several interviewees stated that Latinos want someone to take the time to listen to them. One interviewee stated, “You might not even be what they want in a [candidate]. But as long as you listen to them and give them that attention and respect, they’ll respect you just for that. And you might even get their vote” (Balli 2020). As Jason Villalba, CEO of the Texas Hispanic Policy Foundation, states “Texas Hispanics do not aspire to wear the red or blue of a political jersey. We are interested in kitchen-table issues that positively impact our families and our community” (Villalba 2022). Exit polling of the 2024 presidential election among Latino voters found similar views. Here, the principal issues were the economy, immigration, and specifically inflation. Reuters reported that “two-thirds of Hispanic voters thought that the U.S. economy in bad shape, compared with about half in 2020. Forty-six percent said their family's financial situation was worse than it was four years ago, compared with 20 percent who said the same in 2020” (Lange, Erickson and Heath).

Although support for the Republican party among Latinos in Texas appeared to increase during the 2020 Presidential election, political scientists who have studied Latino voting

behavior were not too concerned. Historically, Latinos have voted Democrat and in the 2012 Presidential election, Latinos made history by accounting for one in ten votes cast in a national election. Their support for Obama, at 75 percent, made a direct impact on his margin of victory over Romney (Barreto et al. 2014). And a 2020 Pew Research national poll of Latino registered voters found that 63 percent identify with the Democratic party compared to 34 percent with the Republican party (Noe-Bustamante, Budiman, and Lopez 2020).

Most importantly, the Latino share of the total active Texas electorate (those who cast a ballot) is more than twice the national average; however, Latinos in Texas have turnout rates that rank among the lowest in the country (Barreto, Manzano, and Segura 2015). This is why implementing Latino voter mobilization efforts in Texas communities is so important.

On the other hand, there is a rich literature on voting behavior of U.S. Latino electorate that recognizes the changing nature of the group's diversity within and between its ethnic and demographic subgroups (Brischetto and de la Garza 1985; Fraga 1985; Corral and Leal 2020; Fraga, B., et al. 2024). Here the evidence suggests that the Latino voting behavior motivated by self-interest and is situational. Brischetto and de la Garza (1985), for example, cite self-interest as an important historical pattern in voting behavior among San Antonio's Mexican-American electorate. Specifically, they suggest that historically when there was a reasonable prospect of having their collective will realized at the polls, Mexican Americans in San Antonio voted. Evidence of self-interest influencing voting behavior is also documented in the presence of ethnic bloc voting (see Fraga 1985). Ketter and Igielnik, for Pew Research Center (2020), lend evidence to a situational voting pattern among Latino voters. In examining the 2018 midterm elections, Ketter and Igielnik (2020) found that Latino voters favored Democrat congressional

candidates 72 percent to 25 percent Republican congressional candidates and “66 percent for Clinton and 28 percent for Trump in 2016” (para 18).

De la Garza and Cortina (2007) trace the Republican inroads into the Latino voting behavior since the 1980s and the Reagan presidential election (2007:203). They describe these efforts as “oscillating,” writing “Our conclusion is that although Latinos may change their partisan allegiances in a given election and over time, the Hispanic electorate is far from moving toward the Republican Party at the national level” adding that “nevertheless, we must recognize the possibility that many traditionally Democratic Latino voters increasingly vote Republican or change their partisan allegiance as their socioeconomic circumstances improve” (204).

Here, de la Garza and Cortinas suggest that higher socio-economic Latinos in “more integrated environments” (“more sophisticated”) are probably more conservative than Latinos in more homogeneous and traditional Latino environments (“less sophisticated”) (205). They conclude that “currently their movements toward Republicans seem more motivated by personal evaluations of the candidates than by ideological realignments” (217).

Corral and Leal (2020) write of Trump’s populist appeal relative to blue-collar and manufacturing jobs as well as evangelical protestants. Like Cortinas and de la Garza, Corral and Leal find that Trump in 2016 fared better among native-born third-generational Latinos, while Clinton did less well with second native-born generational Latinos, representing “a Trump resonance among specific sectors of the Latino electorate” (1128).

Finally, Fraga B., et al., examination of the Latino vote in the 2020 presidential election found “a more durable change in Latino voting” (517). Specifically, this work found increase support from Latino subgroup elements already predisposed toward the Republican Trump—



conservative, Catholics and of those less acculturated and with lower socio-economic status, in contrast to Alvaro and de la Garza.

Anecdotally, in an NPR podcast following the election, Perez-Verida in response to a question from the host relayed—

*Well, Michel, we have to look that former President Trump is up 13 points among Latinos compared to his performance in 2020. We saw that the top issue for Hispanics was actually the economy, also immigration. But we also saw an increase in Latino men that backed Trump. And the reason why is that most said that they were worse off financially compared to four years ago, which goes with 8 in 10 voters who backed Trump in this election.*

In sum, perhaps, the 2024 Presidential election, given its context, was an anomaly. Given the economic conditions, the issue of immigration, Harris' late jump into the race, Trump's populist rhetoric, Latino voters would, like the rest of the nation, move in support of Trump. Nonetheless, we still might expect to find important variations relative to Latino demographic and ethnic subgroups. Given the use of Texas counties as the unit of analysis we can control for some elements of diversity among Latino subgroups, but then use other surrogate variables to tap into the existing literature.

**Hypothesis: The Texas Latino voting behavior is situational not a realignment.**

## **Methods**

Thirty-seven (37) South Texas Counties are examined as the unit of analysis (see Table 1). The dependent variable of interest is the percent county votes in the 2024 election that went to the former President Donald J. Trump.<sup>i</sup> Election returns and voter registration data were attained from the Texas Secretary of State Office, Elections Division.<sup>ii</sup>

The principal independent variables include:

- 1) percent Latino in the county, as a measure of presence/residence in the county;

- 2) relative change in Gross Sales 3rd Quarter 2023 all industries to Gross Sales 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2024 all industries, a measure of change of economic activity in County.
- 3) percent increase in election turnout from November 2016 to November 2020, as a measure of voter mobilization;
- 4) percent unemployment in county for September 2022, as a measure of economic activity and “pocketbook” sentiments/perspectives in the county<sup>iii</sup>;
- 5) median household income in county for 2022 also as a measure of economic status;
- 6) a dichotomized variable for region (1=South Texas; 0=Non-South Texas Counties);
- 7) a dichotomized border or near border county variable; and,
- 8) county population as a measure of the population size in 2022.

Ordinary least squared regression was the primary means of analysis. The voting behavior of several (N=17) Texas counties over the last three presidential elections are examined first for contextual purposes. Next all 254 counties in the State are examined as a summary, followed by 37 counties identified as South Texas, and finally an examination of an additional 25 Texas counties to examine the impact of being a county near or on the border.

## **Results**

President Trump defeated Vice President Kamala Harris handily in Texas in the 2024 election. Of the thirty-seven South Texas Counties examined, President Trump in the 2020 election won twenty-seven and lost ten (see Table 2). By 2024, Trump gained five additional South Texas counties, winning thirty-two of thirty-seven. Trump’s support in all these counties increased on average by 6 percentage points from 2020 to 2024, ranging from a low of 1.5 points to nearly 13 percentage increase in Webb County, a border county. Nonetheless, the correlation

**TABLE 1: VARIABLES OF INTEREST**

<b>Dependent Variable:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Percent county</b> votes in the 2024 election that votes for Republican Donald J. Trump</li> </ul>
<b>Independent Variables:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Percent Latino</b> in the county, as a measure of presence/residence</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Relative Change from in Gross Sales 3rd Quarter 2023 all industries to Gross Sales 3rd Quarter 2024 all industries.</b></li> <li>• <b>Change of economic activity in county</b> Source: Hegar, Glenn. Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. Quarterly Sales Tax Historical Data.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Percent increase in election turnout</b> from November 2020 to November 2024, as a measure of voter mobilization.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Percent unemployment</b> in county for September 2024, as a measure of economic activity and “pocketbook” sentiments/perspectives in the county</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Median household income</b> in county for 2022 also as a measure of economic status; Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Per capita personal income by County, Annual, Texas <a href="https://fred.stlouisfed.org/release/tables?eid=268680&amp;rid=175">https://fred.stlouisfed.org/release/tables?eid=268680&amp;rid=175</a></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dichotomized variable for region</b> (1=South Texas; 0=Non-South Texas Counties);</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dichotomized border or near border</b> county dichotomized variable;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>County population</b> as a measure of the population size in 2023. <a href="https://demographics.texas.gov/Estimates/2023/">https://demographics.texas.gov/Estimates/2023/</a></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Percent County population 65 and older</b> U.S. Census Bureau. Annual County and Puerto Rico Municipio Resident Population Estimates by Selected Age Groups and Sex: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2023. Texas.</li> </ul>

between the percent Latino population in the county and support for Trump was strong and negative (-.69) but much less strong than in the 2020 election, where the correlation was -.88.

Table 2 reports voter turnout in our South Texas counties of interest over time. A t-test of the difference in turnout comparing South Texas counties against Non-South Texas counties finds statistically significant difference between the two areas. Notably South Texas counties, while increasing in voter turnout over time, lagged behind non-South Texas counties, with the largest difference in the 2024 presidential election. We also note that voter turnout is negatively correlated with the percent Latino in the counties in both 2020 (-.86) and 2024 (-.90) presidential elections.

**TABLE 2: TURNOUT SOUTH TEXAS COUNTY COMPARED TO NON-SOUTH TEXAS COUNTIES IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS OVER TIME**

	turnout16	turnout20	turnout24
Mean (n=254)	59.0	65.4	62.9
Std. Deviation	7.4	7.6	7.9
Mean (Not STx; N=217)	60.1	66.5	64.1
Std. Deviation	6.7	6.9	7.2
Mean (STx; N=37)	52.4	58.9	56.2
Std. Deviation	7.8	7.9	8.1
Difference in means	7.69	7.6	7.89
t-values	6.31*	6.03*	6.03*

(\*statistically sign; prob=<.001)

Table 3 and Figure 1 are opposite sides of the same coin. Table 3 presents the electoral patterns of Democratic presidential candidates from 2012 and Figure 1 demonstrates the same for Republican presidential candidates. Table 3, demonstrates for example, that Obama in 2012 and Clinton in 2016 did relatively the same, while Biden in 2020 declined only slightly with an average by .5 percent from Obama's results and declined from Clinton's results in 2016 by 1.5 points on average. On the other hand, Harris' 2024 electoral outcome in these counties declined by 5.22 points on average over Biden in 2020. This table also demonstrates that in the eight top Texas majority Latino counties, Harris' electoral fortunes worsened in 2024. In these counties, the average percent Latino was 86.4 percent with an entire population of 4.5 million or 14.5 percent of the State's population but also represents forty-six percent of the entire Latino population in Texas. Here, Harris, on average, performed less well than Biden in 2020 by -7.6 percentage points.

Equally and cumulatively, in these counties, Trump, on average, in 2016 outpaced Romney in 2012 by 10 percentage points and in 2020 outpaced his own 2016 performance in these counties by 11 percentage points. An interesting observation to add here is that among

**TABLE 3: DEMOCRAT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, SELECT TEXAS COUNTIES  
OVER TIME <sup>a</sup> (Majority Latino Counties in **RED**)**

County	%Obama 2012 <sup>d</sup>	%Clinton 2016 <sup>d</sup>	%Biden 2020	%Harris 2024	%Biden over %Obama	%Biden over %Clinton	%Harris over %Biden
<b>BEXAR</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>58.1</b>	<b>54.22</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>-3.88</b>
<b>CAMERON</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>56.11</b>	<b>46.69</b>	<b>-9.89</b>	<b>-8.89</b>	<b>-9.42</b>
Collin	33	39	47.05	42.90	14.05	8.05	-4.15
Dallas	57	61	65.1	60.00	8.1	4.1	-5.1
<b>EL PASO</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>66.78</b>	<b>56.90</b>	<b>0.78</b>	<b>-2.22</b>	<b>-9.88</b>
Fort Bend	46	51	54.7	49.4	8.7	3.7	-5.3
Harris	49	54	55.96	51.82	6.96	1.96	-4.14
<b>HIDALGO</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>58.04</b>	<b>48.08</b>	<b>-11.96</b>	<b>-10.96</b>	<b>-9.96</b>
<b>JIM HOGG</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>58.79</b>	<b>53.98</b>	<b>-19.21</b>	<b>-18.21</b>	<b>-4.81</b>
Lubbock	29	28	33.12	29.71	4.12	5.12	-3.42
Potter	27	27	29.76	29.68	2.76	2.76	-0.08
<b>PRESIDIO</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>65.99</b>	<b>64.66</b>	<b>-4.01</b>	<b>-0.01</b>	<b>-1.33</b>
Randall	15	15	19.79	19.33	4.79	4.79	-0.46
Tarrant	41	43	49.31	46.66	8.31	6.31	-2.65
Travis	60	66	71.62	68.62	11.62	5.62	-3
<b>WEBB</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>61.14</b>	<b>48.51</b>	<b>-15.86</b>	<b>-12.86</b>	<b>-12.63</b>
<b>ZAPATA</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>47.13</b>	<b>38.54</b>	<b>-23.87</b>	<b>-18.87</b>	<b>-8.59</b>
Average					-.50	-1.5	-5.22
Correlation	0.98 (%Obama to %HRC)	0.88 (%HRC to %Biden)	0.97 (%Harris to %Biden)				

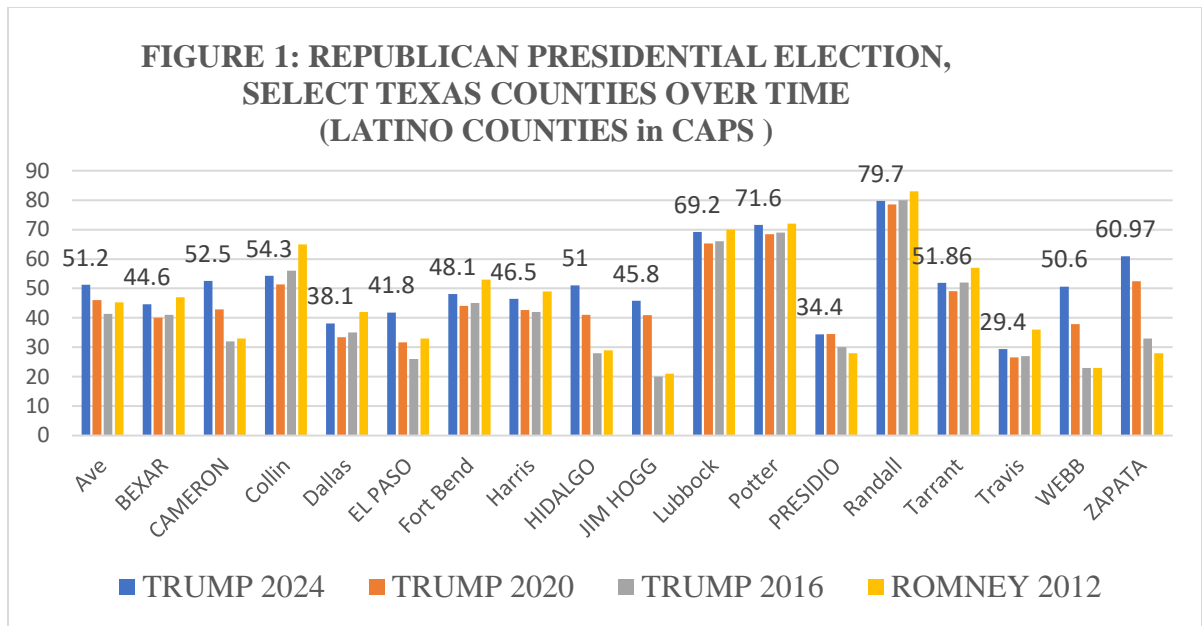
Sources:

<sup>a</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census P.L. 94-171 Redistricting Data;  
<https://demographics.texas.gov/InteractiveTools/2021/CBRedistrictingCounty>

<sup>b</sup> Population density data available at: <https://www.census.gov/2010census/>

<sup>c</sup> Calculated by authors using the United States Census 2010 data compiled by the Research Center

<sup>d</sup> From the State of Texas, Office of the Secretary of State, available at  
<http://elections.sos.state.tx.us/index.htm>



these counties, in South Texas border counties and other border counties (see Table 4), Trump exceeded his 2016 effort. In South Texas border counties (n=17), the outperformance averaged 7.3 points.

An OLS regression including all 254 counties in Texas and using percent votes for Trump as a dependent variable and the independent variables of percent Latino in 2022, the difference in sales tax revenue in third quarters from 2023 and 2024, percent increase in voter turnout from 2020 to 2024, percent unemployment in September 2024, the 2022 median household income, the percent county population 65 years of age and older, and county population, yields an explanatory model with an adjusted-R Square value of .534 (see Table 5). Here, percent Latino in the county (Beta=-.43), county population (Beta=-.37) and percent unemployment (Beta= -.28) are negative and substantially contributing to the model<sup>iv</sup>. Median household income was also significant and negative (-.15), while turnout was significant and positive (.13) with smaller impacts. Urban counties with high Latino presence and high

**TABLE 4: THE 2024 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN SOUTH TEXAS COUNTIES  
(MAJORITY PERCENT LATINO COUNTIES IN **RED**) (N=37)**

County	Border County (0=not; 1=Border/ Near Border (n=17)	Pop2020	%Latino 2020	%Trump 2020	%Trump 2024	Diff (2020- 2024)
Aransas	0	23,830	25.84	75.17	77.43	2.26
<b>Atascosa</b>	0	48,981	63.65	66.45	71.28	4.83
<b>Bee</b>	0	31,047	62.46	63.76	69.58	5.82
<b>Bexar</b>	0	2,009,324	59.3	40.04	44.58	4.54
<b>Brooks</b>	1	7,076	88.21	40.18	44.84	4.66
Calhoun	0	20,106	49.03	71.8	75.83	4.03
<b>Cameron</b>	1	421,017	89.47	42.94	52.53	9.59
DeWitt	1	19,234	34.76	80.89	83.19	2.3
<b>Dimmit</b>	1	8,615	86.91	37.75	48.39	10.64
<b>Duval</b>	1	9,831	80.99	48.35	54.76	6.41
<b>Frio</b>	0	18,385	77.08	53.48	61.76	8.28
Goliad	0	7,012	32.63	77.22	79.7	2.48
<b>Gonzales</b>	0	19,653	50.36	73.57	77.13	3.56
<b>Hidalgo</b>	1	870,781	91.87	40.98	51.01	10.03
<b>Jim Hogg</b>	1	4,838	88.49	40.91	45.77	4.86
<b>Jim Wells</b>	0	38,891	79.29	54.52	57.65	3.13
Karnes	0	14,710	52.58	75.55	78.86	3.31
<b>Kenedy</b>	1	350	74.57	65.46	72.78	7.32
Kinney	1	3,129	46.98	71.37	74.95	3.58
<b>Kleberg</b>	0	31,040	70.78	50.29	56	5.71
<b>La Salle</b>	1	6,664	73.65	55.49	60.06	4.57
Live Oak	0	11,335	42.26	83.08	84.57	1.49
<b>Maverick</b>	1	57,887	94.9	44.84	58.9	14.06
McMullen	0	600	37.33	89.15	91.99	2.84
<b>Medina</b>	0	50,748	50.16	69.04	70.96	1.92
<b>Nueces</b>	0	353,178	61.46	50.75	55.3	4.55
<b>San Patricio</b>	0	68,755	55.59	63.79	67.81	4.02
Refugio	0	6,741	49.04	65.66	69.41	3.75
<b>Starr</b>	1	65,920	97.68	47.06	57.73	10.67
<b>Uvalde</b>	1	24,564	70.5	59.69	66.35	6.66

<b>Val Verde</b>	1	47,586	80.29	54.21	62.9	8.69
Victoria	0	91,319	47.01	68.32	70.95	2.63
<b>Webb</b>	1	267,114	95.22	37.86	50.6	12.74
<b>Willacy</b>	1	20,164	87.34	43.99	51.34	7.35
Wilson	0	49,753	38.65	73.81	76.65	2.84
<b>Zapata</b>	1	13,889	93.59	52.48	60.97	8.49
<b>Zavala</b>	1	8,944	92.49	34.03	42.41	8.38
Total		4,753,011				

Source: U.S. Census, P2 Hispanic or Latino, and Not Hispanic or Latino by Race, 2020: DEC Redistricting Data (PL 94-171)  
[https://data.census.gov/table?g=040XX00US48,48\\$0500000&y=2020&d=DEC%20Redistricting%20Data%20\(PL%2094-171\)](https://data.census.gov/table?g=040XX00US48,48$0500000&y=2020&d=DEC%20Redistricting%20Data%20(PL%2094-171))

unemployment viewed Trump's reelection less favorably. This fits the traditional urban, ethnic, pocketbook explanations of voting behavior.

A second OLS regression using only 37 South Texas counties is also illuminating (see Table 6). Again, percent county votes for Trump is a dependent variable and the independent variables included percent Latino, the difference in sales tax revenue in third quarters from 2023 and 2024, percent increase in voter turnout from 2020 to 2024, the percent county population 65 years of age and older, and county population, yielded an explanatory model with an adjusted-R Square value of .76.<sup>v</sup> Here only percent Latino (Beta= -.88) and county population (Beta= -.33) are substantially adding to the model. So, in large Latino and large populated South Texas counties favored Trump's reelection less than their smaller Latino and less populated South Texas county counterparts. This model rules out the difference in sale revenue, as a surrogate for economic condition, turnout, and percent county population 65 and older as additional contributing explanations.



**TABLE 5: PERCENT TRUMP 2024 OLS REGRESSION ALL TEXAS COUNTIES  
(N=254)**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	108.693	5.981		18.173	<.001
Percent Latino 2022	-.239	.029	-.426	-8.132	<.001
Difference In Gross Sales Tax 3rd Q 2023 To Same in 2024 All Industries	-.028	.027	-.046	-1.061	.290
Turnout Difference In 24 Compared To20	.569	.206	.134	2.764	.006
September 2024 Unemployment	-3.267	.577	-.278	-5.662	<.001
2022 Median Household Income	.000	.000	-.146	-2.643	.009
Percent County Pop 65+ In Age	.034	.119	.015	.281	.779
County Population	-1.142E-5	.000	-.371	-7.803	<.001

**Adj R-Sq=.534; F=42.3; prob.=<.001**

Dependent Variable: Percent Trump 2024

**TABLE 6: OLS PERCENT TRUMP 2024 SOUTH TEXAS COUNTIES ONLY (N=37)**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	107.361	10.286		10.437	<.001
Percent Latino 2022	-.537	.073	-.853	-7.329	<.001
Difference In Gross Sales Tax 3rd Q 2023 To Same in 2024 All Industries	-.008	.093	-.008	-.087	.931
Turnout Difference In 24 Compared To20	.204	.277	.067	.735	.468
Percent County Pop 65+ In Age	-.224	.348	-.077	-.643	.525
County Population	-1.146E-5	.000	-.322	-3.592	.001

**Adj R-Sq=.76; F=23.7; prob.=<.001**

Dependent Variable: Percent Trump 2024

A third and final OLS regression model examined the 25 counties of Border South Texas and other border counties (see Table 7). Given the multicollinearity issues associated with percent Latino and border counties, an interactive “Latino Border county” variable was utilized by combining the dichotomized variable of border or near border county and percent Latino in the county. In this regression model, Latino Border County variable has the largest and negative impact (Beta=-.52), followed by percent county population 65 and older (Beta=.33) and county population (Beta =-.26). In this model, the higher the Latino presence in a border county, and the larger the county population, the less support that the Trump candidacy received. On the other hand, as the percent of the county population that was age 65 or older, the more Trump was supported. Again, this model confirms the persistent voting patterns in presidential elections over the last decade and the role of geographic location on the border, the presence of Latinos in the county, the county population and percent of population 65+. It also signals a small but positive impact of county turnout sloping positively toward percent Trump.

## **Conclusion**

Where does this leave us? What are the patterns? The Texas Latino vote for Trump has increased over the last three presidential elections or, said the other way, the Texas Latino vote for Democratic presidential candidates has decreased over the last three presidential elections.

But it appears that the Texas Latino voting behavior continues to be contextual or situational as opposed to threat mobilization or a traditional higher socioeconomic status or even a lower socioeconomic, conservative disposition to a populist rhetoric explanation. De la Garza and Cortina (2008) labelled it as a higher SES sophisticates Latinos appealed by the conservative status of the Republican party. On the other hand, Fraga et al (2024) found lower SES, less acculturated (less sophisticates) attracted to Trump’s populist message.

**TABLE 7: OLS PERCENT TRUMP 2024 SOUTH TEXAS BORDER AND OTHER BORDER COUNTIES ONLY (N=37)**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	56.421	6.932		8.139	<.001
Latinoborder	-.150	.033	-.520	-4.606	<.001
Difference In Gross Sales Tax 3rd Q 2023 To Same in 2024 All Industries	.052	.117	.050	.443	.661
Turnout Difference In 24 Compared To20	.414	.351	.137	1.180	.247
Percent County Pop 65+ In Age	.960	.344	.330	2.791	.009
County Population	-9.310E-6	.000	-.262	-2.317	.027

**Adj R-Sq=.61; F=12.2; prob.=<.001**

Dependent Variable: Percent Trump 2024

Overall, examining all 254 counties in the State, as the percent of Latino population in the counties, the county population, unemployment (“less sophisticates”) and median household income (“sophisticates”) increased, the support for Trump decreased. Turnout over 2024 had a positive but smaller impact. Here, the relative change in gross sales in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarters comparing 2023 to the same time in 2024, our measure for economic development, nor percent county population 65+ in age were impactful.

Specially, examining South Texas counties, percent Latino and percent county population were the only significant variables with strong negative effects, following the larger Texas counties pattern. Here, none of the other variables were impactful, including difference in relative change in gross sales tax, unemployment or median household income. This suggests that these measures of economic conditions were not influential in support for Trump.

Finally, the examination of the smaller subset of South Texas Border and other Texas border counties (N=37) revealed a moderate and negative influence (-.52) of percent border Latinos on percent Trump in the county. This was followed by similar but less impactful negative effects county population. Finally, the percent county population 65 and older in these counties was positive and weak to moderate (.330) in support for the Trump candidacy.

Overall, the strong negative impacts percent Latino in the county and county population in all three models were found in all Texas counties (N=254), as well as in South Texas and Border counties. The impacts of unemployment and median household income when examining all the Texas counties was surprising. Both measures were negative relative to support Trump. If the economy played a large role then these measures might have had opposite effects and had similar influence in South Texas counties. And, in border counties, our measure of economic development, relative difference in gross sales tax from 2023 to 2024, had no impact.

In these analyses, we are not picking up “it was about the economy!” And, while we did not have a measure at the county level for the immigration condition issues, large Latino population counties and large population counties were less supportive of Trump. Given the perceptions of the saliency of immigration, one might expect these variables to be less influential. On the other hand, moving some voters over appears to have been enough.

Finally, we return to the context of the 2020 and 2024 presidential elections. Notably, election turnout in 2020 was the highest level of presidential election turnout nationwide since 1968 and followed a pandemic. Might these factors make that election an outlier? We note the downward trend in turnout in 2024, which was more aligned with the 2016 election. Nonetheless, in the three presidential elections from 2016 to 2024, turnout in South Texas

counties, which is predominately Latino populated, was significantly different, ranging from 7.9 to 8.1 percentage points, from non-South Texas counties.

One additional point seems relevant. South Texas Border counties make up 2.75 million people and 61 percent (1.68 million) of this population resides in 5 counties (Hidalgo, Cameron, Webb, Starr and Maverick). These five counties supported Trump on average by 43 percent in 2020 and on average by 54 percent in 2024. The remaining 32 Texas border counties had an average of 66 percent support for Trump in 2024 but were also counties that lost population from 2010 to 2020, which aligns with analysis that rural, non-Hispanic White, and older Americans tend to support Trump.

So, yes, there were shifts among South Texas counties. Of the 37 South Texas Counties, 26 are majority Latino populated counties, ranging from marginally Latino (52 percent Medina County) to nearly completely Latino (97.8 percent Starr County). Of these 26 Latino Counties, 14 or 38 percent supported Trump in 2020 with a majority of its voters, but in 2024, that number jumped to 21 or 57 percent supported Trump. On the other hand, the total population of these 26 counties is slightly over 4.1 million or approximately 13 percent the entire State population and the correlation between percent Latino in these counties and percent Trump in 2020 was a  $-.68$ .

So is this “much to do about nothing?” First, could the Harris campaign have mobilized more South Texas voters? Did voters view lack of mobilization efforts in their communities as a sign that the Democratic party was taking their vote for granted, while Republican operatives were knocking on their doors? Could these factors reasonably explain the increase in Trump support during the 2024 campaign in South Texas? Certainly! But understandably, given the importance that large electoral swing states still in play, it is not surprising that the Harris campaign did not expend considerable resources in South Texas as compared to other places.

A message throughout is that personal, grassroots outreach is critical in Latino communities and the Republican party has seemingly taken note. Michael Rodriguez, resident of the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas states, "You can really lose any community just simply by not being present. And I'll give you a for instance. In 2016, Cameron County had voted for Trump, 31 percent of their vote. In 2020, 42 percent. In Hidalgo County was 27 percent in 2016, and in 2020 was 40 percent. There is a rising sentiment. But just like the Democrats, [if] the Republicans are not present in both policy and also in simply just reaching out to the people, they can just as well lose this area" (Chakrabarti and Kotsonis 2021).

Ultimately, to say "something's happening here" a further examination of the down ballot congressional races and state-wide races in 2026 and beyond is necessary before claiming a voter, much less, a Latino voter partisan realignment toward the Republican party in South Texas has occurred.

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## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> [From the State of Texas, Office of the Secretary of State, available at http://elections.sos.state.tx.us/index.htm](http://elections.sos.state.tx.us/index.htm)

<sup>ii</sup> [About the Elections Division \(state.tx.us\)](http://state.tx.us/about-the-elections-division)

<sup>iii</sup> Federal Reserve Economic Data, FRED; [Counties | FRED | St. Louis Fed \(stlouisfed.org\)](https://fred.stlouisfed.org/); Unemployment data for September 2020, <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/TXZAVA7URN>

<sup>iv</sup> T-tests and their associated probabilities are reported as heuristics not as measure of statistical significance. Given the population is Texas counties, South Texas counties, or Texas border counties, tests of statistical significance is not necessarily appropriate.

<sup>v</sup> Given the high correlation between percent unemployment and percent Latino in these counties (.61), and median household income and percent Latino (-.78), percent unemployment and median household income were dropped from this model to avoid issues of multicollinearity. Substituting percent unemployment, for example, for percent Latino in the model reduced the efficacy of the model by half (adjusted R-Sq =.40) and adding it to the equation did not substantively changed the outcome (adjusted R-Sq=.82 to .81).