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USA

Latinos May Decide the Midterms, Defeating Trump and the Republicans

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Donald Trump arguably won the 2024 presidential election because between 42 and 48 percent of the country's Latinos voted for him. His was the largest Republican share ever of the Latino vote. In the last two years, however, Latinos have turned against Trump, as seen both in their participation in social protests and in pre-election polls. Latinos could cost Trump and the Republicans the election. [\[1\]](#)

Even Republican politicians have turned against Trump. Florida State Senator Ileana García, a co-founder of Latinos for Trump, made a vehement public criticism of Trump, saying, "This is not what we voted for... this is unacceptable and inhumane." She gave expression to the sense of betrayal felt by many Latinos.

Before the 1960s, Latinos were a negligible factor in U.S. elections, though there were already six million of them or 3.5% of the population. In many areas racist laws and practices excluded them from voting. John F. Kennedy's presidential Viva Kennedy! campaign of 1960, brought Latinos into national politics for the first time. Kennedy and his successor Lyndon B. Johnson patronized the Latinos and brought them into the Democratic Party coalition together with the AFL-CIO unions, Blacks, and women. By and large for the next fifty years Latinos were Democrats, with the exception of the Cubans who had fled the revolution of 1959 and resented Kennedy for failing to overthrow Fidel Castro.

Waves of immigrants over succeeding decades made Latinos the largest U.S. ethnic minority. Today there are 65 million Latinos in the United States, making up 20% of the total U.S. population, while 13.5% are Black. The Latino population is diverse: Mexican Americans make up 57%, followed by Puerto Ricans, Cuban, Salvadorans and Dominicans. Some 36.5 million are eligible to vote. Most Latinos are Catholic but there are many Evangelical Christians. The largest groups are 8.5 million in California, 6.5 million in Texas, 3.5 million in Florida, 2.2 million in New York, and 1.3 million in Arizona. Not all Latinos are eligible to vote: 20 percent because they are not citizens and another 20 percent because they are under 18.

In 2024, Latinos like many other middle-class and working-class voters, especially men, believed Trump's promises that he would raise their living standards, deport only immigrants with criminal histories, "the worst of the worst," and avoid foreign wars. But under Trump, not only did he launch a war on Iran, but the war led to higher prices not only for fuel, but food and many other goods. And Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) launched a virtual war against immigrants. Latinos began to see co-workers, friends, and family members arrested, imprisoned, and deported.

And all of this has been very violent. With a \$75 billion budget, ICE has deported 400,000 immigrants during Trump's second term. ICE agents have shot 21 people and killed eight of them. Others have died in ICE custody: 33 people last year and 27 already this year. Communities organized protests intended to impede ICE in Chicago and Los Angeles, cities with large Latino populations who participated.

In protest, 250 Latino leaders signed a letter to Trump and Congress arguing that long-time undocumented immigrants should be given legal protection and work permits. Most may be Democrats, but the list included conservatives such as Massey Villarreal, a former chairman of the Republican National Hispanic Assembly, and Reverend Samuel Rodríguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference.

Latinos, like everyone else can now see it all: the war, the rising prices, the corruption, and, above all, the violence against them. Trump has lost many of these voters and Republicans may well lose Congress without them.

4 October 2026

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[1] Photo: That was then...