

What Changed? Predictors of the Latino Vote Shift During the Trump Era

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24th June 2026¶

Abstract

Donald Trump’s growing share of the Latino vote between 2016 and 2024 challenges prevailing theories of minority political behavior, which emphasize economic self-interest. Some have suggested, counterintuitively, that concern about immigrant crime may have also contributed to the shift. We suspect a third culprit may have been even more important: cultural arguments about gender role traditionalism, especially transgender rights that were emphasized in many political advertisements, may have resonated powerfully with Latinos in 2024. This paper explores mechanisms for the distinct shift, namely, persuasion, mobilization, and priming. We explore these three mechanisms via longitudinal panel data and cross-sectional samples from the 2016–2024 American National Election Studies (ANES). We find little evidence that persuasion and mobilization shifted Latinos to Trump. Instead, the shift seems to have been mostly driven by campaign priming. Attitudes toward transgender individuals became substantially more predictive of vote choice between 2020 and 2024, while the explanatory power of immigrant crime concern was mostly stable and the impact of economic concern actually declined. Additional analyses show that Trump did not influence Latinos to place a heavier weight on this issue; Trump taught anti-trans Latinos that he was the right candidate for them. These results suggest that Latinos’ surprising shift toward Trump reflected both a reweighting of opinions about transgender people, as well as an educative effect by the Trump campaign.

Keywords: Latino/ Hispanic politics, voting behavior, opinion, attitudes.

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¶The findings of this study are preliminary, subject to change, and should not be cited without consulting the authors.

Introduction

Latinos are a key swing voting group, comprising nearly 20% of the total US population, and represent a longtime target of Republican strategists. Latinos' growing support for Trump over the last two presidential elections has been, therefore, a subject of much discussion and attention from political pundits and scholars. A Pew Research study estimated a 22-point decrease in the Democratic presidential vote share among Latino voters between 2020 and 2024 (Pew Research Center [2025](#)). This change is so large, in fact, that it could meaningfully alter the partisan balance of power if it persists.

Several explanations have been proposed for the increase in Latino support for Trump, with economic concerns among the most common. Due to their vulnerable status in the working class on average, this story goes, Latinos will be more sensitive to changes in national or personal economic circumstances. Their voting behavior will, therefore, be more closely tied to economic forces than that of other voters. We will introduce two other potential explanations that are campaign driven: Concerns about immigrant criminality and negative affect toward transgender people.

Systematic comparative analysis of which factors are strongest, or how their impacts have changed over time, remains scarce. The current paper draws on longitudinal and cross-sectional survey samples from the 2016, 2020, and 2024 American National Election Studies (ANES). We examine three substantive dimensions: anti-trans attitudes, perceptions of immigrant criminality, and economic concerns. Furthermore, we explore the mechanisms by which each of these dimensions might operate: persuasion, mobilization, and priming. Identifying the substantive dimensions and potential causal mechanisms underlying those shifts will help determine whether these are short-term deviations from the norm or part of a longer-term trend.

Our empirical strategy directly maps onto these theoretical mechanisms. We use weighted panel data to assess persuasion by examining individual-level changes in attitudes over time. To evaluate mobilization, we use weighted cross-sectional data to test whether attitudes become more strongly associated with voter turnout over time. Finally, we test for priming by estimating weighted panel logistic regression models predicting vote

choice to assess whether the predictive power of attitudes increases across election cycles.

We find limited support for persuasion as the explanation for the Latino vote shift: Latino attitudes on key issues evolve similarly to other racial groups. We also find little to no evidence of mobilization-based explanations. Latinos who felt strongly about any of the issues we explore were not more likely to turn out in 2024 than in previous elections.

Our results point instead to a somewhat narrow explanation for the shift, based on a specific message emphasized by Republican candidates in many states and in federal races. Anti-transgender attitudes became substantially more powerful predictors of Trump support among Latinos in 2024 compared to previous years. We characterize this as a campaign priming effect, and it occurs among Latinos much more than among white or Black respondents. The impact of other issue dimensions—economic perceptions and concerns about immigrant criminality—did not change much over time. Explicating this result further, we find that Trump did not simply influence Latinos to place a heavier weight on this issue. Between 2020 and 2024, the Trump campaign *taught* anti-trans Latinos that he aligns with their attitudes, leading to a Trump vote in 2024. What is still left unknown is whether this effect will spillover to other Republican candidates, or if this effect is unique to Trump. The former suggests a stronger commitment between Latinos and the Republican party, whereas the latter suggests an ephemeral relationship that will sever once the Trump era comes to an end.

Background

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(Wakefield, Fraga & Fisk 2025), (Tucker 2020), (Pérez 2015), (Pew Research Center 2022), (Donato & Perez 2016), (Flavio R Hickel Jr et al. 2020), (S. Garcia-Rios, Pedraza & Wilcox-Archuleta 2019), (Fraga, Velez & West 2025), (De la Garza & Cortina 2007), (Barreto et al. 2009), (Alvarez & Bedolla 2003), (Alamillo 2019)

Recent work on Latino politics has pointed to various reasons for the increasing share of Latinos supporting Trump since 2016. Some of the most prominent explanations by scholars and pundits point to economic concerns, immigration attitudes, and gender ste-

reotypes. For instance, some work finds that economic concerns were a significant predictor of a Trump vote in 2020 (Múzquiz & Junn 2025) and 2024 (Hopkins & Marble 2025). Wakefield (2025) adds to this literature with three experiments and finds that independent Latinos are most receptive to economic messaging. Other authors have proposed that immigration attitudes have become more conservative over time. Hopkins & Marble (2025) found in repeated cross-sectional surveys in 2020 and 2024 that Latinos were more likely to support increasing the number of immigrant deportations. S. I. Garcia-Rios et al. (2025) also found that giving more importance to immigration compared to other issues predicted voting for Trump in 2024. Sommer & Franco (2024) similarly found that anti-immigration attitudes had a significant effect on Latinos' vote for Trump in 2020. However, these studies employ experimental designs, cross-sectional data, or panels within the same year. What is missing to date is a panel study that can observe individual change over time, between racial groups, across the three previous presidential elections.

Another explanation centers on gender norms. Muñoz et al. (2026) find that sexism or “machismo” predicted Trump support for Mexican Americans in 2024, but not for Cubans, for which income was a stronger predictor. However, Flavio Rogerio Hickel Jr & Deckman (2022) found that while Hispanics hold more sexist beliefs compared to other groups, these beliefs were not more strongly associated with Trump support than for other groups in 2020. These mixed findings invite further exploration of the role of conservative gender values in Hispanic political behavior.

We suspect the salience of traditional gender norms may have increased substantially in 2024, due to its emphasis by many Republican candidates including Trump during the campaign. According to a study by AdImpact (McNeill 2024), a firm which tracks advertising spending and content across all US media markets, between September and November of 2024 the GOP spent more than 200 million dollars on advertising emphasizing the Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris' support for gender affirming care and transgender rights. Furthermore, evidence suggests Latino neighborhoods in swing states may have been specifically targeted with these messages. In Colorado, post-cards were sent to predominantly Latino residential areas claiming that Joe Biden was

attempting to “indoctrinate your children” and falsely suggested that Democrats support “radical and irreversible gender experiments on children” (NBC News 2022). While no systematic content analysis has emerged to date, we suspect the attempt to boost the salience of traditional gender norms may have had an outsized impact on Latino voters even if they were not specifically targeted nationwide.

Given the methodological limitations of previous work and their mixed conclusions, the current paper may help deepen our understanding of which forces were most important in shifting Hispanic votes so dramatically over the last few elections. Furthermore, the ANES data allows us to test possible mechanisms by which such changes influenced votes over time. We discuss these three mechanisms in more detail next.

Mechanisms of Political Influence

Distinct group-level changes in voting behavior over time may spring from one or more of the following processes. First, individual members of one group may change their opinions about a given issue or group, and this may lead them to prefer a different candidate than they had previously supported. We label this a simple persuasion effect, because individuals are changing their minds as a result of exposure to events or campaign messages. Second, new voters might be drawn into the electorate in a given moment because of their strong feelings about any particular substantive dimension. We label this a mobilization effect since people are joining the electorate due to a specific issue. Finally, campaigns or events might make some issues, groups, or policies more salient in the minds of voters, and this might also cause them to drift toward the candidate who they believe comes closest to their pre-existing positions. We label this a priming effect since individuals are placing a greater weight on a specific issue and, consequently, are voting for the candidate who would address that issue. Each of these implies a different process of political change and generates distinct empirical expectations. While they are not mutually exclusive, our goal with the current paper is to adjudicate between these competing accounts to find which, if any, weighed most heavily for Latinos supporting Trump.

In this paper, we will examine three substantive domains that could explain the shift

among Latinos in the Trump era: attitudes about transgender individuals, beliefs about immigrant criminality, and both national and personal economic concerns. The ANES includes measures across all three waves (2016, 2020, 2024), tapping all three of these domains using consistent question wording.

Mechanisms and Hypotheses

Persuasion

We define *persuasion* as the process in which individual voters change their underlying attitudes in response to new information (Mutz, Sniderman & Brody 1996). Campaigns or events might cause voters to shift attitudes or beliefs about issues, social groups, or policies, and these new positions might subsequently lead them to prefer a candidate different than the one they supported previously. If persuasion is the dominant mechanism, then changes in Latino vote choice should be accompanied by within-individual changes in specific attitudes over time. Moreover, these changes should be unique among Latinos in the sample in order to explain the distinct change among that group. If persuasion is the main driver, therefore, we should see attitude change among Latinos, but not other groups, in affect toward transgender people, beliefs about immigrant criminality, or concern about economic conditions.

Hypothesis 1 (Persuasion). *Latino respondents, but not members of other racial groups, will exhibit significant changes in attitudes on one or more of the following issues across election cycles: Transgender affect, immigrant criminality, or economic concerns.*

Evidence of this sort of persuasion could support accounts of more lasting ideological realignment among Latinos. We test these assumptions with weighted panel data to track changes in attitudes over time.

Mobilization

Mobilization offers another plausible explanation: it assumes different citizens turn out to vote in one election compared to another, based on how they feel about a particular substantive dimension. We therefore define mobilization as processes by which campaigns

activate or bring new voters into the electorate (Rosenstone & Hansen 1993). In this framework, vote shifts and election outcomes occur because different individuals participate in the election, not because individuals change their preferences or voting calculus criteria.

Mobilization effects could explain Latino shifts toward Trump if more citizens who were concerned transgender rights, immigrant criminality, or economic conditions turned out to vote in one year compared to another. This could occur if campaign messaging or outreach efforts selectively encouraged participation among Latinos, but not other groups, who were more likely to support Trump. We test the following to examine whether mobilization explains the Latino shift:

Hypothesis 2 (Mobilization). *The relationship between issue attitudes and voter turnout will change across election cycles for Latinos distinctly, indicating that specific attitudes are more powerfully associated with turnout in one election compared to another.*

To test this hypothesis, we use weighted cross-sectional data to examine whether attitudes predict general election turnout differently across election years. Our outcome variable is individual level turnout via a self-report.

Issue Priming

Priming reflects changes in the cognitive salience given to issues, beliefs, or group attitudes when deciding for whom to vote (Iyengar & Kinder 1987). In other words, individuals need not change their pre-existing attitudes. Rather, the weight of a given dimension would increase or decrease, leading them to change their vote choice when the candidates carried different reputations on handling those dimensions. In this framework, voters hold stable attitudes and beliefs, but campaigns change the salience of those issues, thus altering the voting calculus.

For Latinos specifically, a priming effect would be revealed if attitudes toward economic concerns, immigrant criminality, or transgender affect, became more or less strongly associated with individual-level votes in one election compared to another. In particular, we suspect a strong shift in the weight assigned to transgender affect between 2020 and 2024, due to the massive emphasis placed on messaging about dimension during the final

months of the 2024 presidential campaign. Furthermore, these changes in the power of one or more dimensions to predict vote choice must be concentrated among Latino respondents compared to those from other racial groups, if this is to explain the unique movement of that group toward Trump.

Hypothesis 3 (Issue priming). *Attitudes on specific issues will be stronger predictors of Latino Trump support, but not that of other racial groups, over time.*

These three mechanisms are conceptually distinct and generate different empirical patterns. Persuasion implies changes in attitudes, mobilization implies changes in the relationship between attitudes and turnout, and priming implies changes in the relationship between attitudes and vote choice. These processes are not mutually exclusive, as multiple mechanisms may operate simultaneously. Discovering which dimensions, and by which mechanisms, are most important can help us understand whether these changes are part of a longer trend or are likely to be shorter term deviations from larger, structural determinants of the vote among Latino Americans.

Data and Methods

We use the ANES 2016-2020-2024 panel and cross-section to examine Latinos' changing political attitudes and behavior. Given the emphasis that scholars and pundits have given these issues, we examine the following substantive dimensions: transgender affect, immigration, and economic conditions. We test whether attitudes toward these issues help explain Latinos' shift toward Donald Trump in 2024. We examine the following independent variables: transgender feeling thermometer, whether immigrants are causing crime, whether the economy is doing better or worse in the last 12 months, and concerns the respondents have about their personal financial situation. We look at two dependent variables: (1) whether the respondent voted for Trump relative to the other candidates, and (2) whether the respondent voted in the general election. The former examines whether Latinos were persuaded or primed by these issues, and the latter examines whether Latinos were mobilized and drawn to the ballot box by these issues. Since both of our dependent variables are binary, the analyses use logistic regression. We subset each analysis by race

and election year to see which of these relationships are unique to Latinos. We use appropriate sample weights and calculate standard errors using the proper strata and cluster variables. All variables are rescaled 0-1 for ease of interpretation. Tables [1](#) and [2](#) show the descriptive statistics for the panel and cross-sectional samples, respectively.

Table 1: Panel Sample Demographics (ANES 2016-2024)

Characteristic	2016, N = 2,070	2020, N = 2,070	2024, N = 2,070
Race			
White	1,579 (77%)	1,537 (75%)	1,571 (77%)
Black	164 (8.0%)	161 (7.8%)	168 (8.2%)
Latino	171 (8.3%)	184 (9.0%)	185 (9.0%)
Other / mixed	144 (7.0%)	170 (8.3%)	128 (6.2%)
Gender			
Male	935 (46%)	944 (46%)	943 (46%)
Female	1,118 (54%)	1,111 (54%)	1,116 (54%)
Age	49 (16)	53 (16)	56 (16)
Education			
Less than high school	75 (3.7%)	74 (3.6%)	78 (3.8%)
Some post-high school	314 (15%)	303 (15%)	296 (14%)
High school	700 (34%)	674 (33%)	659 (32%)
Bachelor's	536 (26%)	538 (26%)	537 (26%)
Graduate	427 (21%)	457 (22%)	482 (23%)
Party identification			
Republican	848 (41%)	891 (43%)	954 (46%)
Independent/Other	242 (12%)	223 (11%)	97 (4.7%)
Democrat	971 (47%)	955 (46%)	1,012 (49%)

¹ n (%); Mean (SD)

Table 2: Cross-Section Sample Demographics (ANES 2016-2024)

Characteristic	2016, N = 3,648	2020, N = 4,783	2024, N = 2,894
Race			
White	2,631 (73%)	3,471 (73%)	2,016 (70%)
Black	342 (9.4%)	427 (9.0%)	276 (9.7%)
Latino	373 (10%)	407 (8.6%)	326 (11%)
Other / mixed	279 (7.7%)	419 (8.9%)	242 (8.5%)
Gender			
Male	1,690 (47%)	2,152 (45%)	1,342 (47%)
Female	1,925 (53%)	2,599 (55%)	1,530 (53%)
Age	49 (17)	51 (17)	52 (18)
Education			
Less than high school	230 (6.4%)	197 (4.2%)	156 (5.4%)
Some post-high school	674 (19%)	731 (16%)	555 (19%)
High school	1,267 (35%)	1,624 (35%)	893 (31%)
Bachelor's	843 (23%)	1,207 (26%)	733 (26%)
Graduate	603 (17%)	939 (20%)	531 (19%)
Party identification			
Democrat	1,677 (46%)	2,235 (47%)	1,403 (49%)
Independent/Other	473 (13%)	578 (12%)	225 (7.8%)
Republican	1,480 (41%)	1,946 (41%)	1,243 (43%)

¹ n (%); Mean (SD)

To test for persuasion, we examine attitudinal shifts by each racial group across election years. If respondents were persuaded by the Trump campaign, then we should see different weighted mean estimates among the same group of people. Equation 1 shows the estimation method:

$$\mathbb{E}[x \mid \text{Race} = s, \text{Year} = t] \quad (1)$$

Equation 1 calculates a weighted mean for each predictor variable conditional on an individual’s race and the election year. Specifically, x represents the predictor variable, s represents the respondent’s race, and t represents the election year.

To test for mobilization, we use logistic regression models to predict the cross-sectional turnout as a function of our explanatory variables. These models include control variables since we have a large sample of Latino and Black respondents. Equations 2 and 3 show the estimation method:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Turnout}_{it} = & \alpha + \beta_1 \text{TransAffect}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{ImmigrantCrime}_{it} + \beta_3 \text{EconomicWorry}_{it} \\ & + \beta_4 \text{PersonalFinancialWorry}_{it} + \gamma \mathbf{Z}_{it} + \epsilon_{it} \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

$$\text{Turnout}_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Predictor}_{it} + \gamma \mathbf{Z}_{it} + \epsilon_{it} \quad (3)$$

Equation 2 is a multivariate model that includes all of the main predictor variables. Turnout_{it} represents whether respondent i voted in election year t , TransAffect_{it} represents respondent i ’s transgender feeling thermometer rating in election year t , $\text{ImmigrantCrime}_{it}$ represents respondent i ’s perceived immigrant criminality in election year t , $\text{EconomicWorry}_{it}$ represents respondent i ’s negative evaluation of the economy in election year t , $\text{FinancialWorry}_{it}$ represents respondent i ’s personal financial worry in election year t , and $\gamma \mathbf{Z}_{it}$ represents a vector of control variables for respondent i in election year t .¹ Equation 3 is similar to equation 2, with the difference being that we test each predictor separately. Predictor_{it} represents each of the aforementioned variables for respondent i in election year t . All models are run separately for each racial group.

To test for priming, we use logistic regression models to predict a Trump vote as a function of our explanatory variables. All models exclude control variables due to the

¹We control for party identification, income, age, education, political interest, and gender.

low number of minority respondents in the panel sample. Equations 4 and 5 show the estimation methods:

$$\begin{aligned} TrumpVote_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 TransAffect_{it} + \beta_2 ImmigrantCrime_{it} + \beta_3 EconomicWorry_{it} \\ + \beta_4 PersonalFinancialWorry_{it} + \epsilon \end{aligned} \tag{4}$$

$$TrumpVote_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 Predictor_{it} + \epsilon \tag{5}$$

Equation 4 is, once again, a multivariate model that includes all of the aforementioned predictor variables. The only difference being the $TrumpVote_{it}$ variable, which represents whether respondent i voted for Trump in election year t . Equation 4 tests each main predictor separately with bivariate models. Once more, all models are run separately for each racial group.

Results

Persuasion

We examine the weighted means of our predictor variables to capture attitudinal shifts across election years. We first look at the mean Trump vote to establish that Latinos uniquely shifted toward Trump in the 2024 General Election. Figure 1 shows the weighted mean Trump vote by each racial group. Only among Latinos do we see a sharp increase from 2020 to 2024. A Wald test detects significant differences only among Latinos ($F(2, 28) = 11.31, p < .001$). Seeing as this shift was distinct to Latinos in the 2024 election, we now turn to Figures 2 through 5, which show the weighted means for each of the main predictors of interest. If Latinos were persuaded, we should see unique shifts in attitudes across election years.

Figure 1: Trump Vote (Weighted Means)

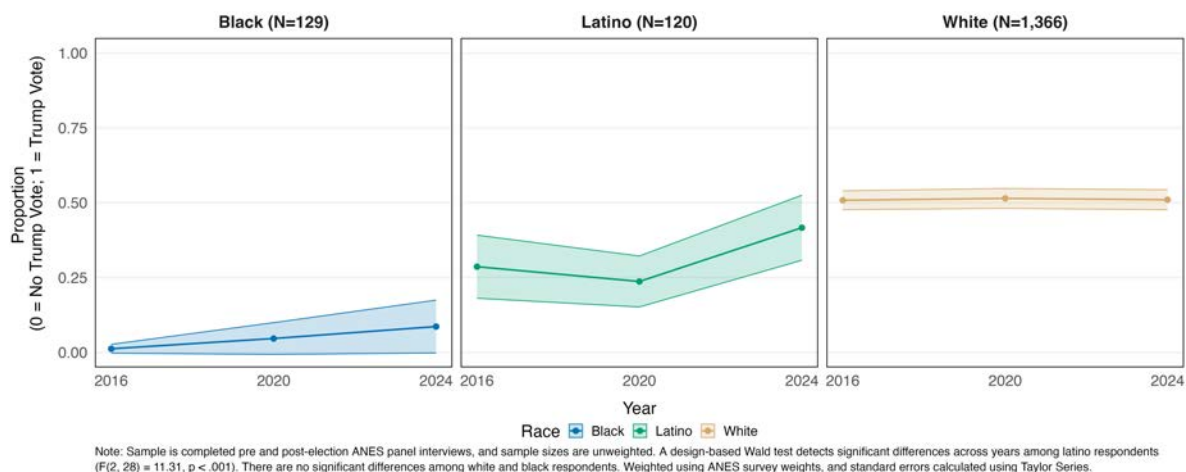


Figure 2 shows respondents' weighted mean for the transgender feelings thermometer. All races show a similar trend, with warmer attitudes in 2020 relative to 2016, followed by a decrease in 2024. A Wald test shows that the weighted means differed across election years for all races. Latinos' affect toward transgender people was not unique to this racial group.

Figure 2: Transgender Feeling Thermometer—Weighted Means

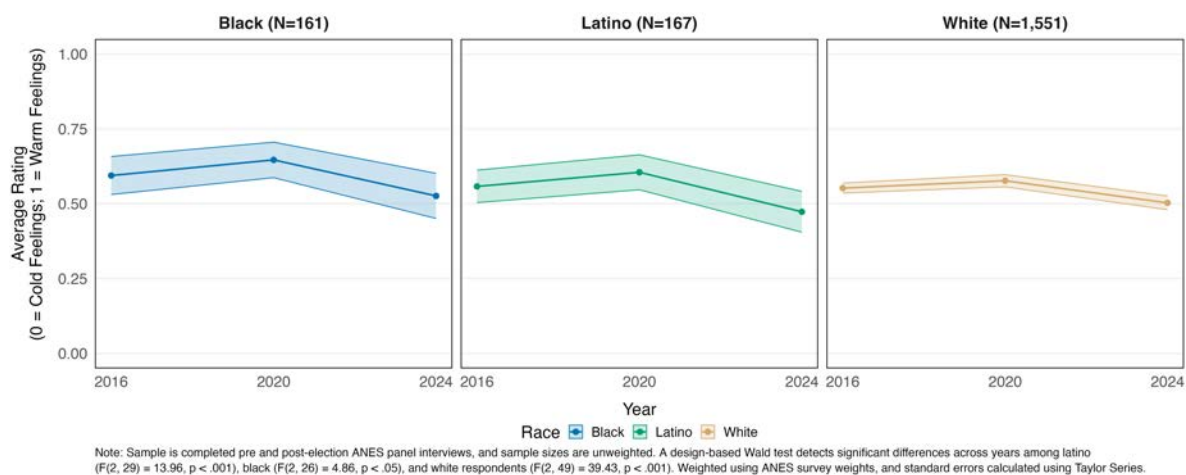


Figure 3 shows respondents' weighted mean for their perception of immigrant criminality. Once more, the trend appears the same for all races, and estimates differed across election years for all racial groups. There was a small decrease in perceived immigrant criminality in 2020, followed by a large increase in 2024. Once again, a Wald test shows that the weighted means differed across election years for all races. Latinos, again, seem to feel similarly to Blacks and Whites on this issue.

Figure 3: Immigrants Increase Crime Rates in the US—Weighted Means

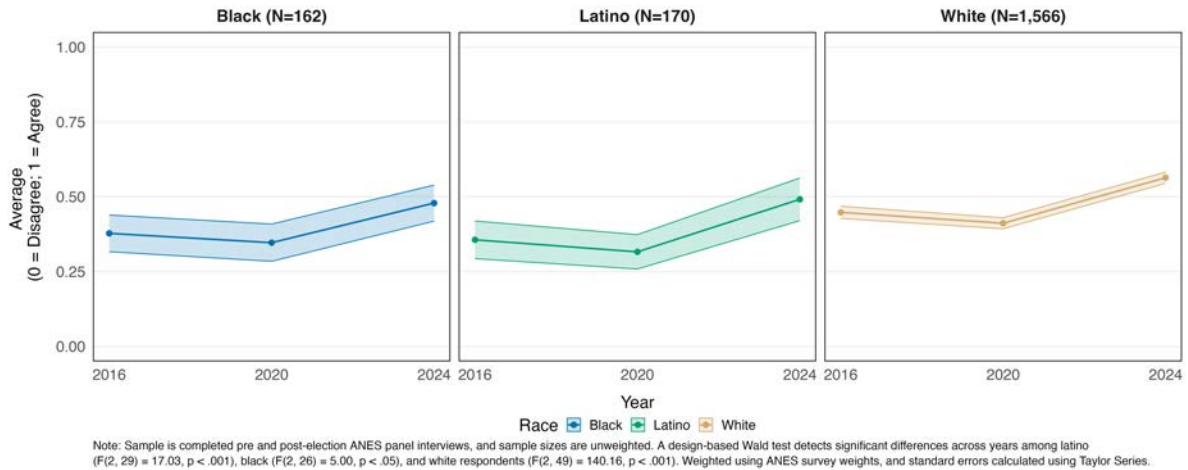


Figure 4 shows respondents’ weighted mean for their retrospective economic evaluations. Unlike the other two predictors, there are different patterns across races. While there was an increase for all races from 2016 to 2020, there were differences from 2020 to 2024. For Latinos, the point estimate is nearly the same from 2020 (0.71) to 2024 (0.70); for Blacks, there was a decrease from 0.80 to 0.55; and for Whites, there was an increase from 0.66 to 0.69. Wald tests indicate that the estimates differed significantly across election years among all racial groups.

Figure 4: National Economy in Last 12 Months is Worse—Weighted Means

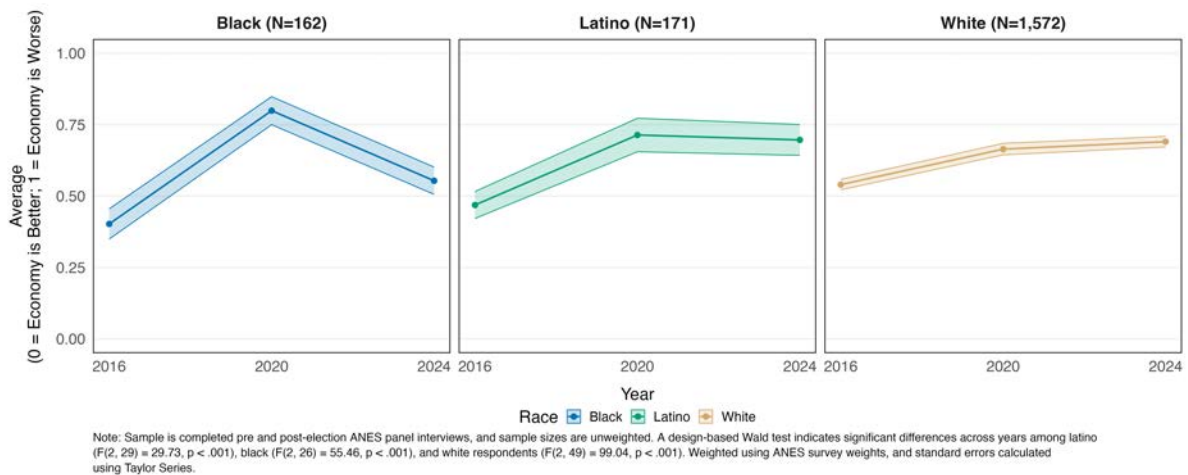
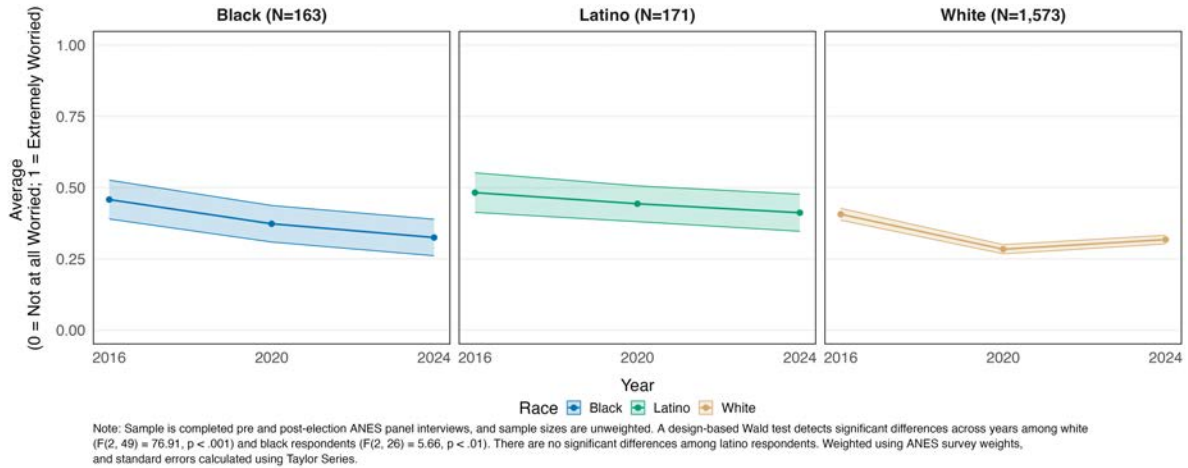


Figure 5 shows respondents’ weighted mean for their current financial worry. There is a slight decrease in financial worry for Latinos, although the differences are not significant. The differences are significant for Blacks ($F(2, 26) = 5.66, p < 0.01$) and Whites ($F(2, 49) = 76.91, p < 0.001$), but the patterns are not the same. There is a consistent

decrease in financial worry for Blacks, whereas Whites seem to feel more financial worry from 2020 to 2024. In terms of both dimensions of economic worry, Latinos felt largely the same from 2020 to 2024.

Figure 5: Personal Financial Worry—Weighted Means



Mobilization

We examine mobilization by running logistic regression models predicting turnout across all election years. We use cross-sectional samples since we are interested in new Latinos joining the electorate as a function of our predictor variables. We first examine the weighted mean turnout across all election years by race in Table 3. While we do see an increase in Latino turnout from 2020 to 2024, Wald tests show that differences in turnout were not statistically significant across election years. White turnout also increases across election years and, unlike Latinos, their differences are statistically significant ($F(2, 1555) = 4.38, p = 0.013$). Finally, Black turnout seems to decrease a small amount across election years, but their differences are not statistically significant. We now turn to our predictive models to see whether any of the explanatory variables uniquely mobilized Latinos.

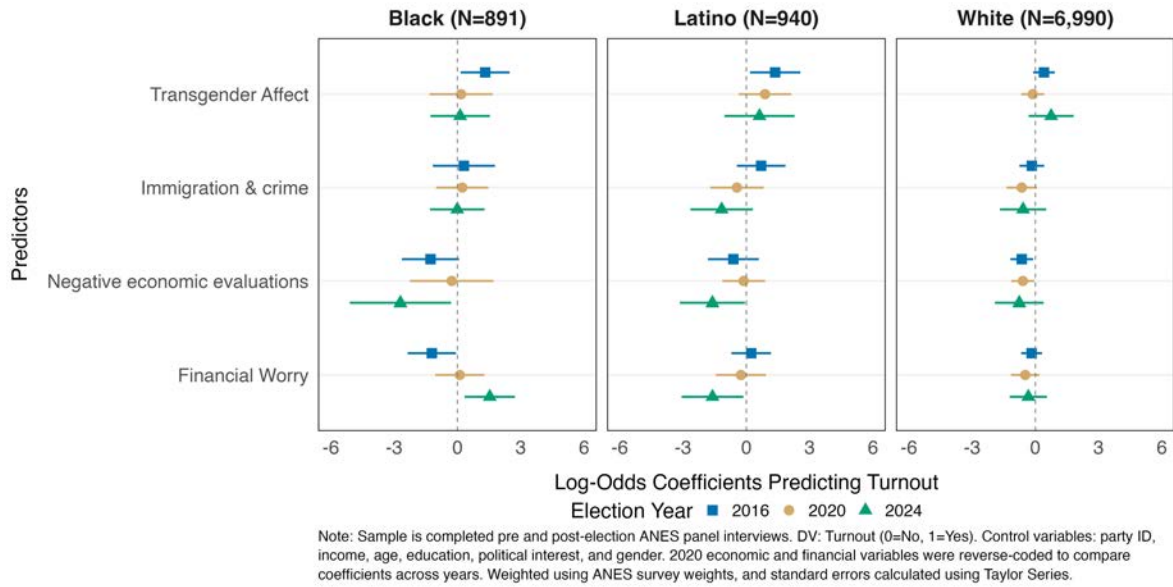
Table 3: Cross-Sectional Turnout—Weighted Means

Year	Black (N=1,028)	Latino (N=1,094)	White (N=8,014)
2016	76.6	63.3	77.8
2020	73.9	63.2	81.1
2024	73.4	68.5	82.4

Note: Wald tests of turnout differences across years. Black: $F(2,250)=0.31$, $p=0.732$; Latino: $F(2,286)=0.80$, $p=0.452$; White: $F(2,1555)=4.38$, $p=0.013$.

Figure 6 shows the coefficient plot for each predictor variable across all election years by race, or Equation 2. Here, we show the point estimates for our logistic regression models predicting turnout. If Latinos were mobilized, we should see these variables become more predictive of turnout over time. If this is the case, the point estimates should move further away from 0. Figure 6 shows very few discernible patterns for Latinos. Most of the point estimates cross 0, and the ones that don't run counter to what the literature would suggest: Negative economic evaluations and personal financial worry were *demobilizing* for Latinos. In 2016 and 2020, the point estimates were not significant for Latinos; in 2024, the point estimates became significant and negative for economic evaluations ($\beta = -1.61, p < 0.05$) and financial worry ($\beta = -1.61, p < 0.05$). As for Whites and Blacks, they follow different patterns. The point estimates for Whites remain largely stable across all predictors for all election years. For Blacks, personal financial worry was mobilizing in 2024, whereas negative economic evaluations became demobilizing in 2024.

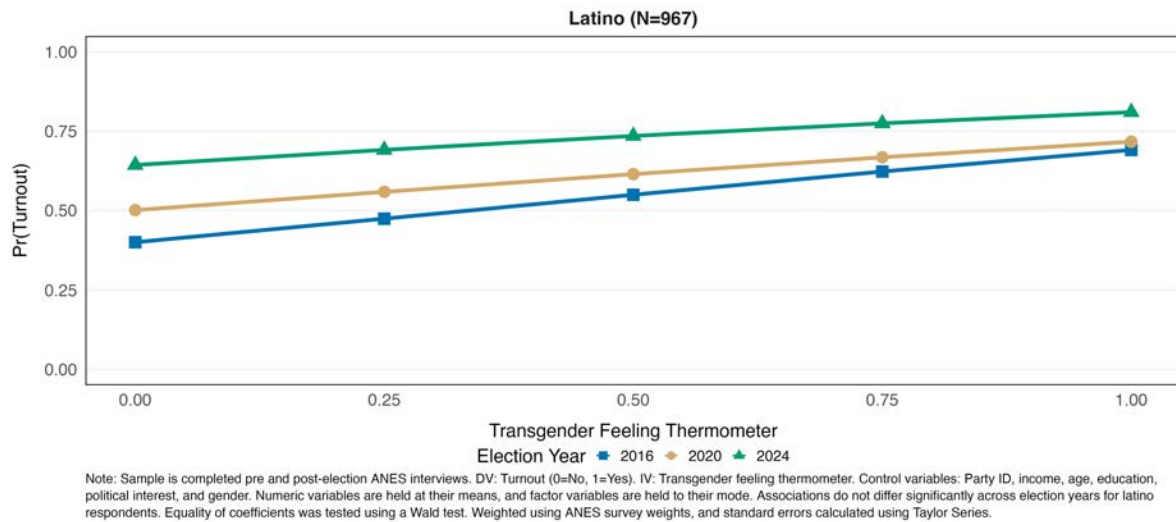
Figure 6: Turnout Coefficient Plots



While the coefficient plot showed null results for trans affect mobilizing Latinos in 2024, we continue to explore this variable since this was a new issue that Donald Trump heavily campaigned on in 2024. We analyze this variable for Latinos with a predicted probability plot.² Figure 7 shows the predicted probability of the transgender feeling thermometer predicting turnout among Latinos, or Equation 3. Here, we can see that the predicted probability slopes across all election years are parallel and positive. The former suggests that there was no unique effect across election years, and the latter suggests that it was pro-trans Latinos who were more likely to vote—an outcome that runs counter to our expectations.

²Predicted probability plots for all explanatory variables and races can be found in the appendix.

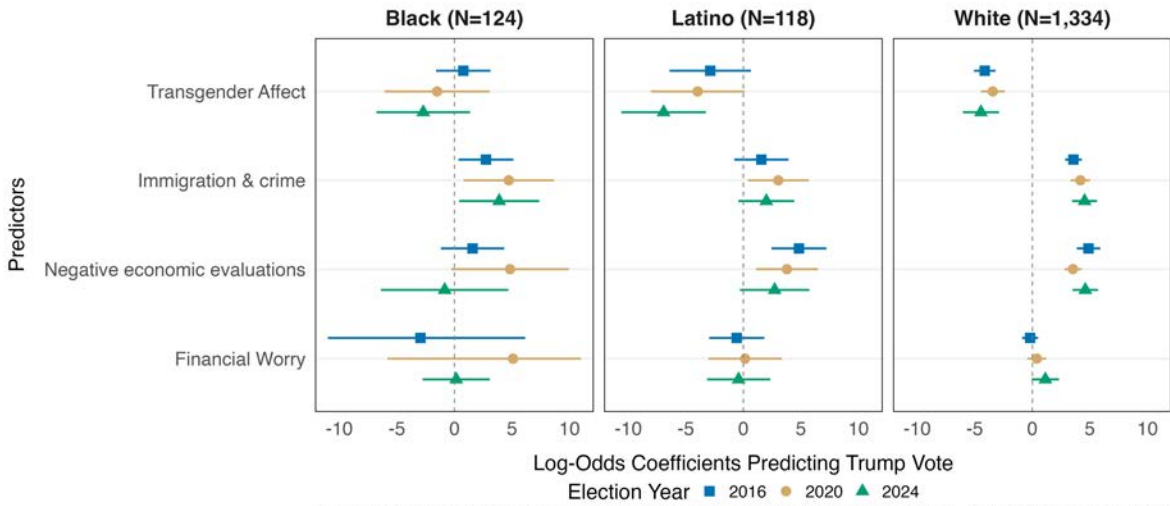
Figure 7: Transgender Affect Predicting Turnout—Latino Respondents



Issue Priming

We examine logistic regression models to capture priming across election years. Figure 8 shows the coefficient plot for each predictor variable across all election years by race, or Equation 4. This plot shows the multivariate logistic regression models with all of the independent variables predicting a Trump vote. If Latinos were primed, we should see the explanatory variables become more predictive of a Trump vote over time; this would be demonstrated by a predictor's point estimate shifting further away from 0. Figure 8 shows that only one predictor became stronger and more significant over time: the transgender feeling thermometer for Latinos. The transgender feeling thermometer variable was insignificant in 2016, marginally significant in 2020 ($\beta = -3.97, p < 0.10$), and highly significant in 2024 ($\beta = -6.93, p < 0.01$). Looking at the other predictors for Latinos, we can see that none of them grew in their predictive power over time; in fact, the economic evaluation variable became *weaker* over time. As for Whites and Blacks, all of the predictor variables are either stable or show no discernible pattern over time.

Figure 8: Trump Vote Coefficient Plots

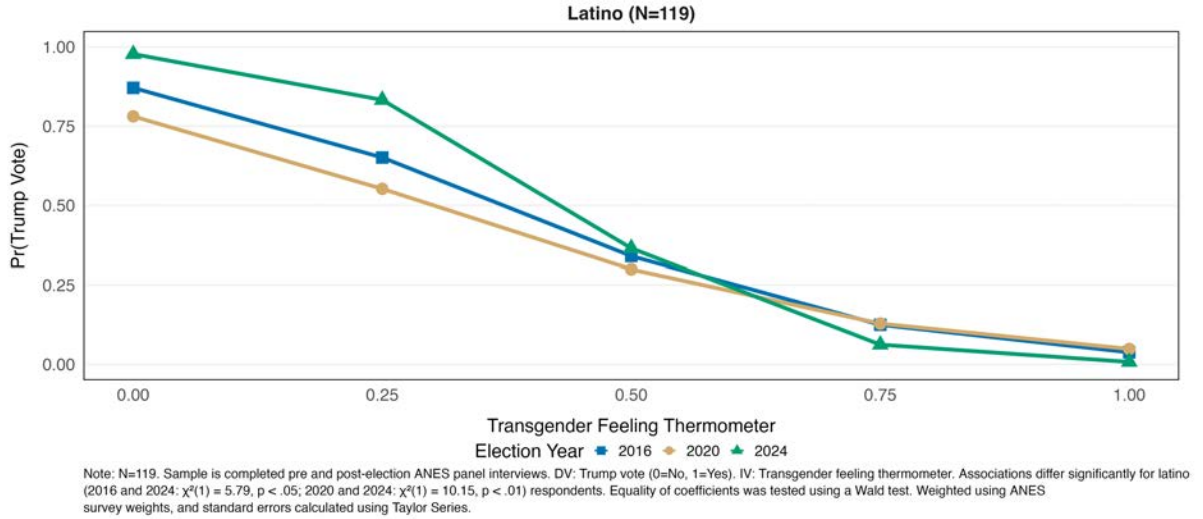


Note: Sample is completed pre and post-election ANES panel interviews. DV: Trump vote (0=No, 1=Yes). A Wald test shows that 2016 and 2024 trans affect coefficients differ significantly for latino respondents ($\chi^2(1) = 9.34, p < .01$). 2020 economic and financial variables were reverse-coded to compare coefficients across years. Weighted using ANES survey weights, and standard errors calculated using Taylor Series.

Similarly to Figure 7, we plot the predicted probability slopes for Latinos across all election years.³ If Latinos were primed to vote for Trump in the 2024 General Election, we should see a steeper predicted probability slope in the appropriate direction relative to previous election years. The difference in logistic coefficients that produce these slopes should also be statistically significant, specifically between 2020 and 2024. Figure 9 shows the predicted probability of voting for Trump as a function of Latinos' score on the transgender feeling thermometer. Across all three election years, a Latino respondent is more likely to vote for Trump as they move down on the feeling thermometer scale, and this relationship is strongest in 2024 ($\beta = -8.64, p < 0.01$). A Latino respondent in 2024 who rates their feelings toward transgender individuals at 0 has a 98% predicted probability of voting for Trump—this probability plummets to 1% for a Latino rating their feelings at 100. A Wald test also shows that the coefficients differed significantly across election years for Latinos, particularly from 2020 to 2024 ($\chi^2(1) = 10.15, p < 0.01$).

³Predicted probability plots for all explanatory variables and races can be found in the appendix.

Figure 9: Transgender Affect Predicting Trump Vote—Latino Respondents



Latino Transgender Affect: Learning or Priming?

Our analyses suggest that the Latino shift toward Donald Trump in the 2024 General Election was due to priming. However, we still cannot rule out whether Latinos were influenced by the Trump campaign to place a greater weight on this issue, or whether the heavy emphasis on transgender issues helped Latinos learn where both parties stood on this issue. The former suggests priming, whereas the latter suggests learning. To test for this, we adopt a similar strategy as Lenz (2009). We estimate the following cross-lagged models:

$$TrumpVote_{it_2} = \alpha + \beta_1 TransAffect_{it_1} + \epsilon \quad (6)$$

$$TransAffect_{it_2} = \alpha + \beta_1 TrumpVote_{it_1} + \epsilon \quad (7)$$

$$TrumpVote_{it_2} = \alpha + \beta_1 TransAffect_{it_1} + \beta_1 TrumpVote_{it_1} + \epsilon \quad (8)$$

$$TransAffect_{it_2} = \alpha + \beta_1 TrumpVote_{it_1} + \beta_1 TransAffect_{it_1} + \epsilon \quad (9)$$

Equation 6 is the first cross-lagged model, where $TrumpVote_{it_2}$ represents respondent i 's vote for Trump in a future election, and $TransAffect_{it_1}$ represents respondent i 's feelings toward transgender people in the current election. This model captures learning since the implication is that, between elections, Trump taught anti-trans Latinos that he

aligned with them on this issue, leading to a vote for Trump in a subsequent election. This is not priming since Trump is *not* influencing Latinos to adopt his viewpoint; instead, Latinos are learning that Trump agrees with *their* viewpoint. Equation 7 is the second cross-lagged model, where $TransAffect_{it_2}$ represents respondent i 's feelings toward transgender people in a future election, and $TrumpVote_{it_1}$ represents respondent i 's vote for Trump in the current election. This model captures priming since the implication is that, between elections, Latinos who *already* supported Trump changed their feelings toward transgender people as a result of the heavier emphasis Trump placed on this issue. Here, no learning was done since these Latinos already supported Trump—they are simply adopting the attitudes that Trump is endorsing. Equations 8 and 9 are Granger Causality models. These models are similar to the previous two in that they are the same cross-lagged models; however, we now include the lagged dependent variable, controlling for prior levels of the outcome variable. These models will serve as robustness checks to equations 6 and 7.

Figure 10 shows the coefficient plot estimating Equation 6. Each point estimate reflects a different lagged model. For instance, the beige point estimate reflects Latinos' transgender feeling thermometer in 2016 predicting a Trump vote in 2020; the blue point estimate reflects the transgender feeling thermometer in 2016 predicting a Trump vote in 2024; and the green point estimate reflects the transgender feeling thermometer in 2020 predicting a Trump vote in 2024. Figure 6 shows that trans affect in 2016 predicted a Trump vote in 2020 and 2024 in a similar manner. However, trans affect in 2020 stands out since it strongly predicted a Trump vote in 2024, especially compared to the other point estimates. This is a noteworthy finding since this where the rightward shift happened among Latinos.

Figure 10: Trump Vote Coefficient Plot—Learning

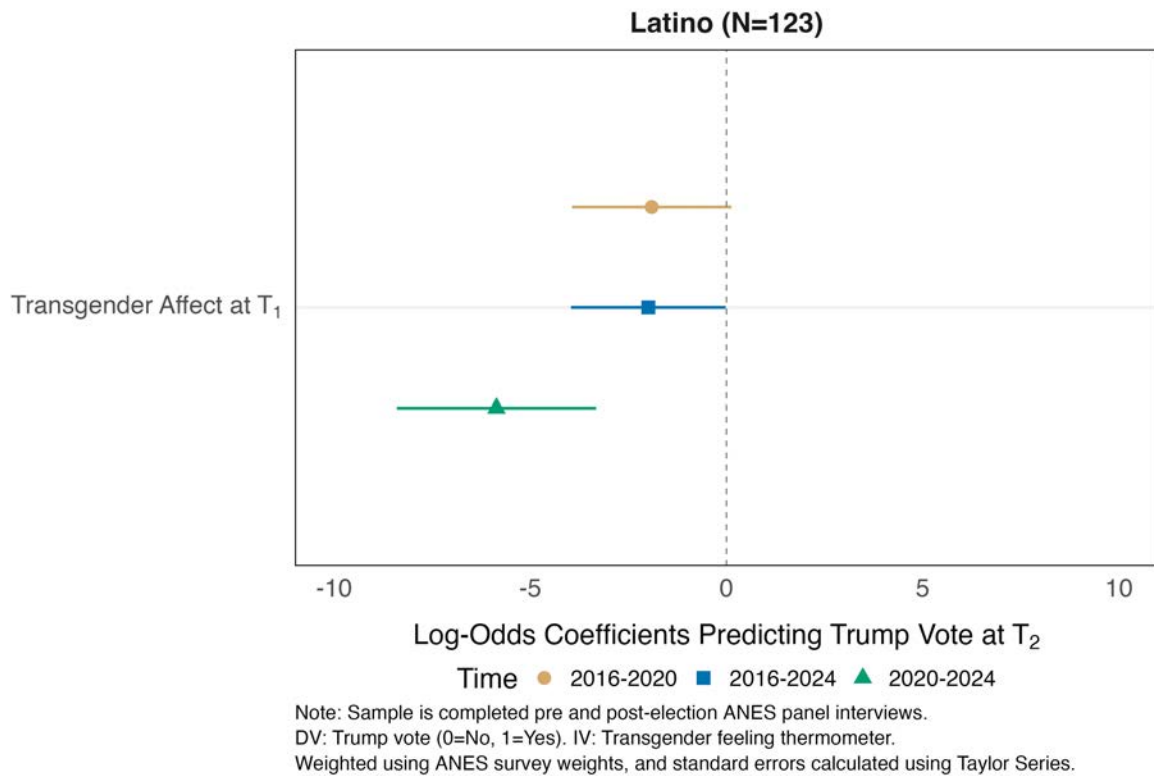
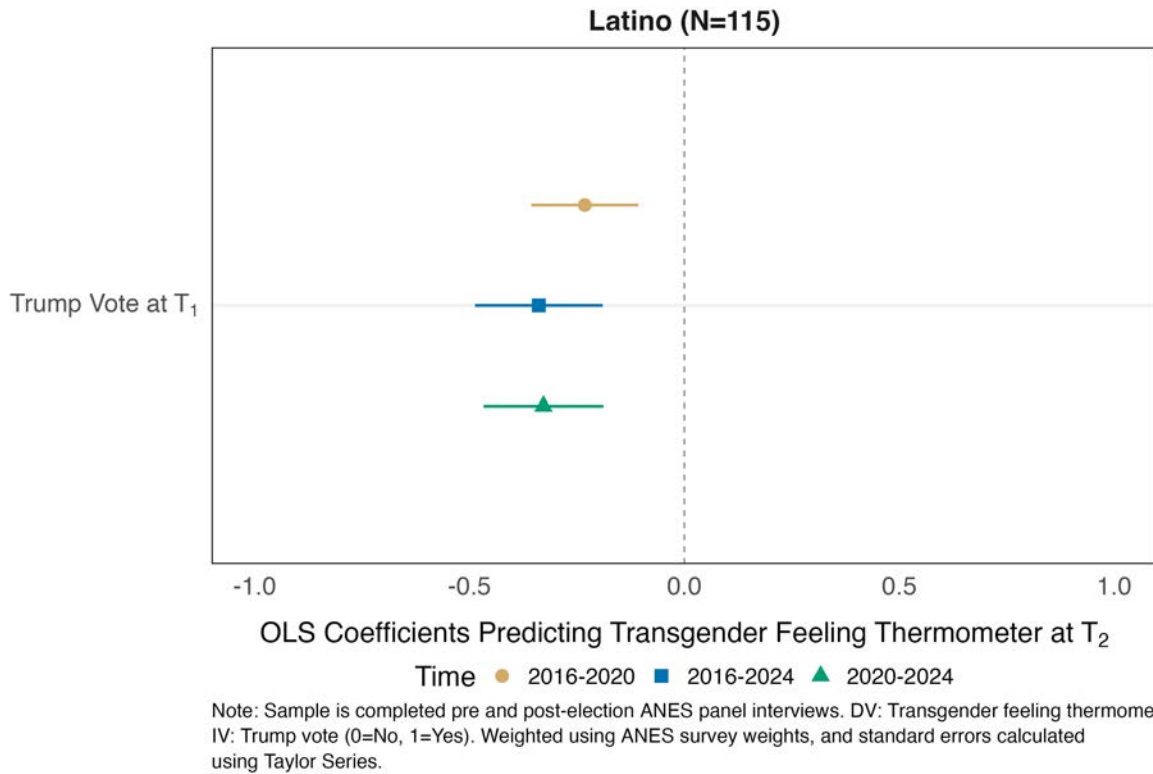


Figure 11 shows the coefficient plot estimating Equation 7. Each point estimate is interpreted in a similar manner as 10, but with the variables flipped. Now, it is a Trump vote predicting future transgender affect. As figure 11 demonstrates, a Trump vote in a previous election does not uniquely predict a future change in transgender affect. Looking at the point estimate of interest, 2020 to 2024, we can see that there was no distinct change between these election years.

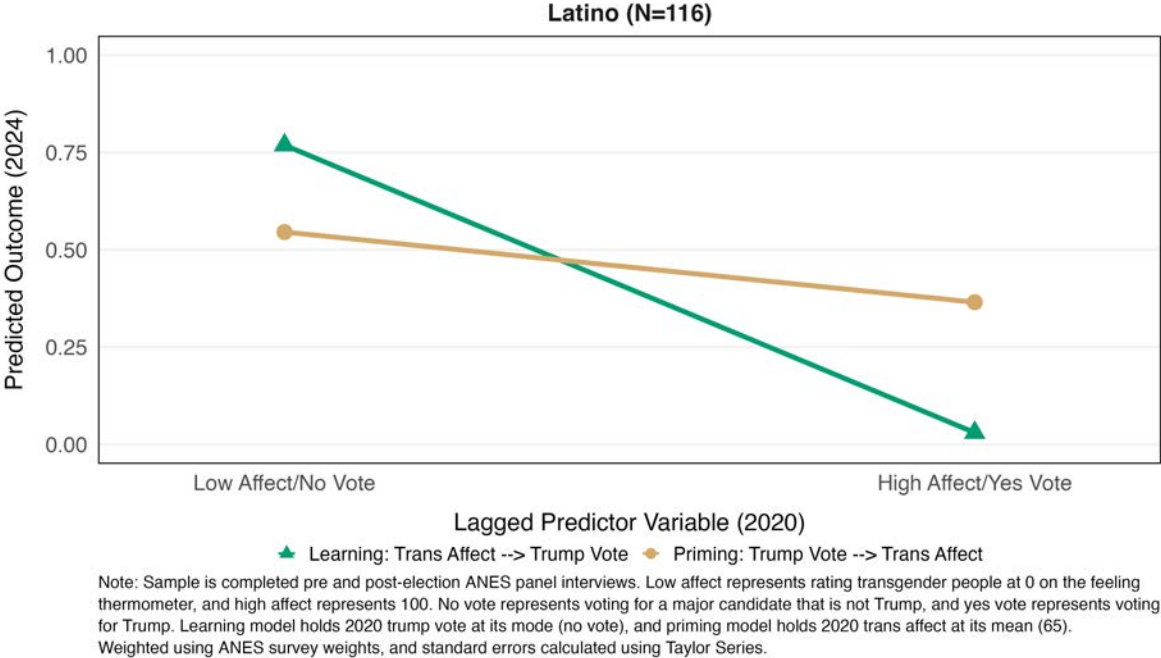
Figure 11: Trump Vote Coefficient Plot—Priming



So far, we have more evidence of the learning model than the priming model. As a robustness check, we now turn to Figure 12, which shows the predicted probability plot of our Granger Causality models. Since the cross-lagged models differ in their outcome variable and in their estimation method (logistic regression for Equation 8 and ordinary least squares for Equation 9), we plot the predicted probability slopes for ease of interpretation. The green slope represents our learning model: Did anti-trans Latinos in 2020 learn that Trump aligned with their views, thereby predicting a Trump vote in 2024? The beige slope represents our priming model: Did Trump-supporting Latinos in 2020 adopt Trump’s views on transgender people in 2024, resulting in a lower rating of transgender people in 2024? Here, we are looking for the model that produces the steepest predicted probability slope. Figure 12, once again, shows more support for the learning model than the priming model. Anti-trans Latinos in 2020 had around a 77% probability of voting for Trump in 2024, and pro-trans Latinos in 2020 had a 3% probability of voting for Trump in 2024—reflecting a relative decline of approximately 96%. In contrast, Trump-supporting Latinos in 2020 were predicted to rate transgender people at 55 in 2024, whereas Trump-

opposing Latinos in 2020 were predicted to rate transgender people at 37 in 2024—a relative decline of about 33%.

Figure 12: Granger Causality Predicted Probability Plot—Learning Versus Priming



Discussion

Our results provide a couple of insights regarding Latinos’ rightward shift in the 2024 General Election. First, the persuasion analyses showed statistically significant differences for most explanatory variables across election years, with the exception of Latinos and personal financial worry. Since these estimates were calculated using the panel sample, we can attribute these changes to attitudinal shifts. In terms of respondents’ attitudes toward transgender people and immigrant criminality, all racial groups had similar shifts in opinion. However, all races differ in their economic evaluations: Blacks felt that the economy got better in 2024 relative to 2020, Whites felt that it got worse, and Latinos felt that the economy was no better or worse than in 2020. Finally, Latinos’ personal financial worry was stable across all election years, Blacks became less worried, and Whites felt more worried in 2024 relative to 2020. Since Latinos moved in similar ways to Blacks and Whites on the issues of transgender rights and immigrant crime, and they did not shift

at all on their personal and national economic evaluations, we cannot say that persuasion was the reason that Latinos distinctly shifted to Trump in the 2024 General Election.

Third, the priming analyses showed that only one predictor for one racial group uniquely predicted a Trump vote from 2020 to 2024: the transgender feeling thermometer for Latinos. Additional tests demonstrated that the difference in the 2024 and 2020 trans affect coefficients was statistically significant. These findings lend support to the idea that Trump primed Latinos to place a heavier emphasis on transgender issues in 2024. However, cross-lagged models suggest that Latinos were not primed—they learned that Trump aligned with their anti-trans attitudes, resulting in a vote for Trump in the 2024 election. Proponents of democratic theory may find this result reassuring, as this suggests that Latinos were not simply manipulated by Trump to place a heavier emphasis on trans issues—they were taught that Trump was the right candidate for them.

Conclusion

In this paper, we set out to explore whether popular substantive dimensions were the reason Latinos shifted in favor of Trump over time and within individuals. Namely, we tested whether economic concerns, attitudes about immigrants committing crime, and feelings toward transgender individuals were equally important for Latinos' political behavior in 2016, 2020, and 2024. Further, we aimed to expand understandings of the underlying mechanisms motivating the pronounced shift in Trump support by testing whether persuasion, priming, or mobilization better explained the Latino support for Trump. Using panel data from the 2016, 2020, and 2024 ANES allows us to robustly test these mechanisms by examining changes for the same individuals over time.

First, we hypothesized that if persuasion was the underlying mechanism behind the pronounced change in voting behavior among Latinos, we would observe significant changes for Latinos *alone* in their attitudes toward the issue domains tested across election cycles. We found that Latinos were not different from other groups in their attitude change. Similar patterns emerged among panel respondents from 2016 to 2020 and 2024. Given this, we do not find support for our first hypothesis that persuasion could explain Latinos' move to the right.

Second, we hypothesized that if priming was the underlying mechanism explaining Latinos' rightward shift, we would observe that attitudes in the tested issue domains would be stronger predictors of their vote than those of other groups over time. We find support for priming as a mechanism when it comes to feelings toward transgender people. Compared to Blacks and Whites, Latinos in the panel had the only significant change from 2020 to 2024: those who had more negative feelings toward transgender people were significantly more likely to vote for Trump in 2024 compared to 2020. Given this, we find support for our second hypothesis that priming, specifically about transgender issues, moved Latinos to the right.

Third, we hypothesized that if mobilization was the underlying mechanism of vote change, we would observe that attitudes toward the tested issue domains would more strongly predict Latino turnout compared to the turnout of other groups. We find that Latinos were not mobilized on any of the issues, and, moreover, they were *less*, not more, likely to vote when they had more economic worries. In summary, from the three mechanisms tested and the three issue domains explored, priming about transgender issues emerged as the better explanation for the change in Latinos' vote choice during the Trump era. However, this trend may prove temporary.

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Appendix

A. Question wording

A.1 ANES 2016 - 2024

A.1.1 Feelings Toward Transgender People

Transgender Feeling Thermometer (V241719). Respondents were asked: “How would you rate transgender people?” Responses are measured on a feeling thermometer ranging from 0 (very cold or unfavorable) to 100 (very warm or favorable). The variable is rescaled to range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating more positive affect toward transgender individuals. Non-substantive responses are coded as missing.

A.1.2 Immigrant Criminality

Immigrant Crime Attitudes (V242453) Question: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Immigrants increase crime rates in the United States.”

Response Options:

- 1: Agree strongly
- 2: Agree somewhat
- 3: Neither agree nor disagree
- 4: Disagree somewhat
- 5: Disagree strongly

A.1.3 Economic Evaluations

Retrospective Economic Evaluations (V241748) Question: Has the national economy gotten better or worse over the past year?

Response Options:

- 1: Gotten much better

- 2: Gotten somewhat better
- 3: Stayed about the same
- 4: Gotten somewhat worse
- 5: Gotten much worse

Financial Worry (V241539) Question: So far as you and your family are concerned, how worried are you about your current financial situation? [Extremely worried, very worried, moderately worried, a little worried, or not at all worried.]

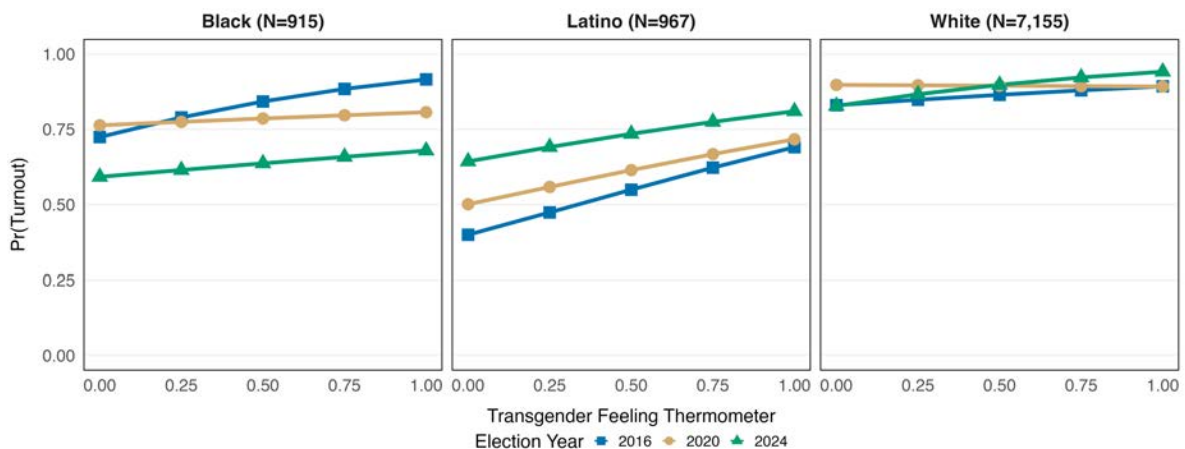
Response Options:

- 1: Extremely worried
- 2: Very worried
- 3: Moderately worried
- 4: A little worried
- 5: Not at all worried

Figures

Mobilization Figures

Figure 13: Transgender Affect Predicting Turnout



Note: Sample is completed pre and post-election ANES interviews. DV: Turnout (0=No, 1=Yes). IV: Transgender feeling thermometer. Control variables: Party ID, income, age, education, political interest, and gender. Numeric variables are held at their means, and factor variables are held to their mode. Associations differ for black (2016 and 2024: $\chi^2(1) = 4.29, p < .05$) and white respondents (2020 and 2024: $\chi^2(1) = 5.90, p < .05$). Associations do not differ significantly across election years for latino respondents. Equality of coefficients was tested using a Wald test. Weighted using ANES survey weights, and standard errors calculated using Taylor Series.

Figure 14: Immigrant Crime Concern Predicting Turnout

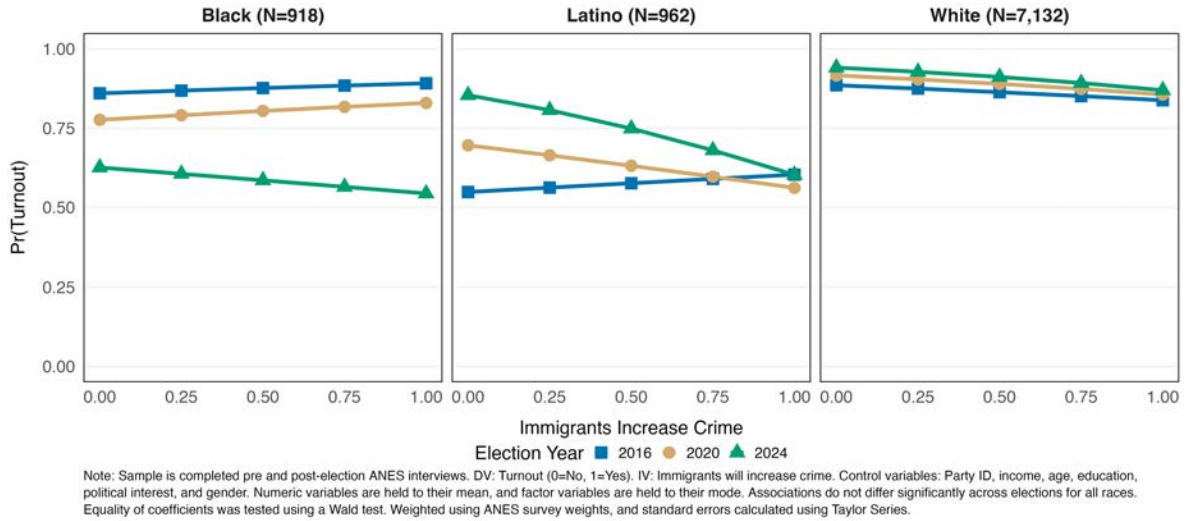


Figure 15: Economic Concern Predicting Turnout

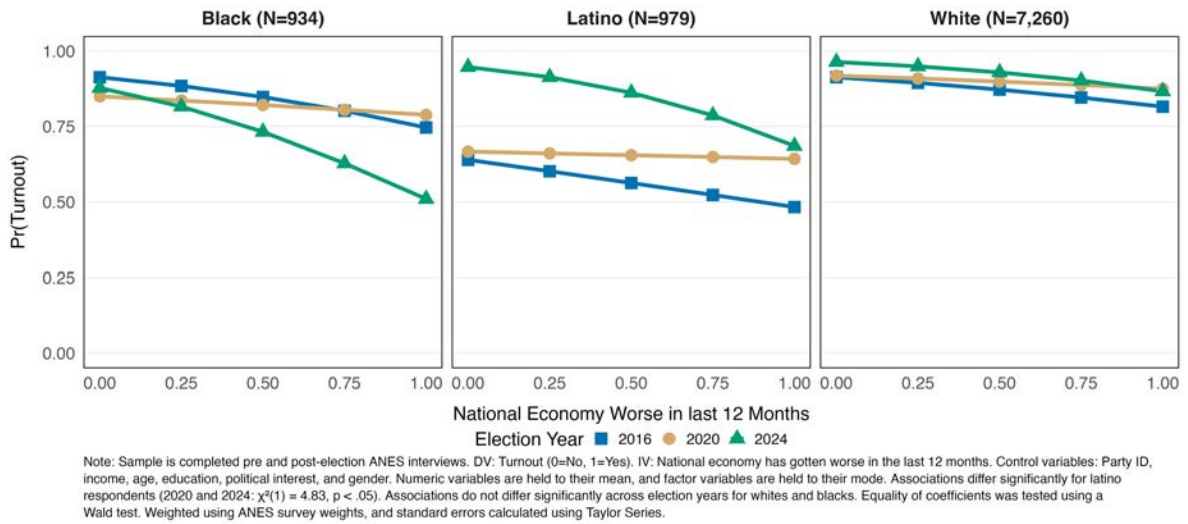
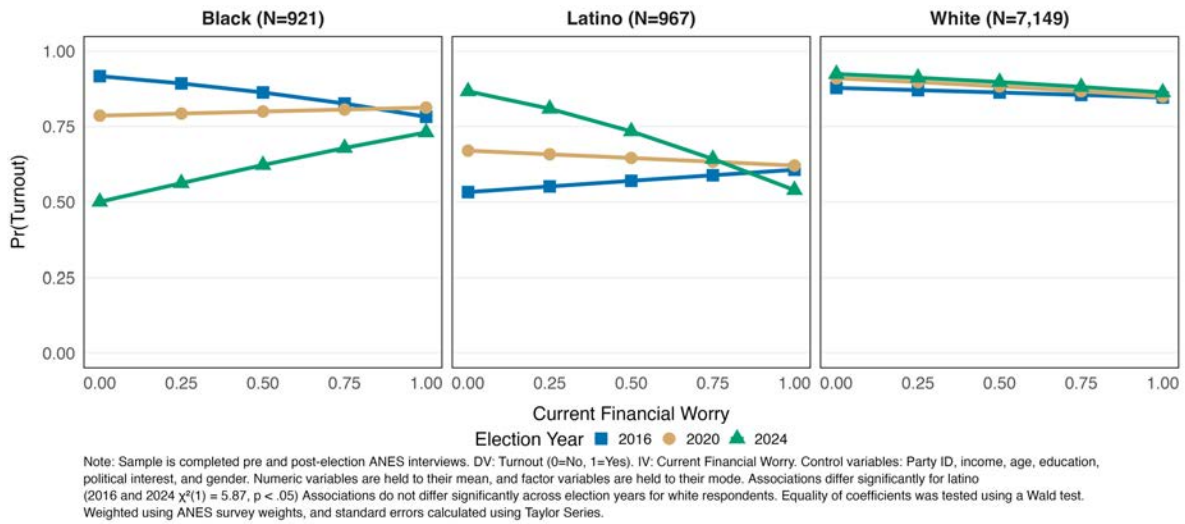


Figure 16: Personal Financial Worry Predicting Turnout



Priming Figures

Figure 17: Transgender Affect Predicting Trump Vote

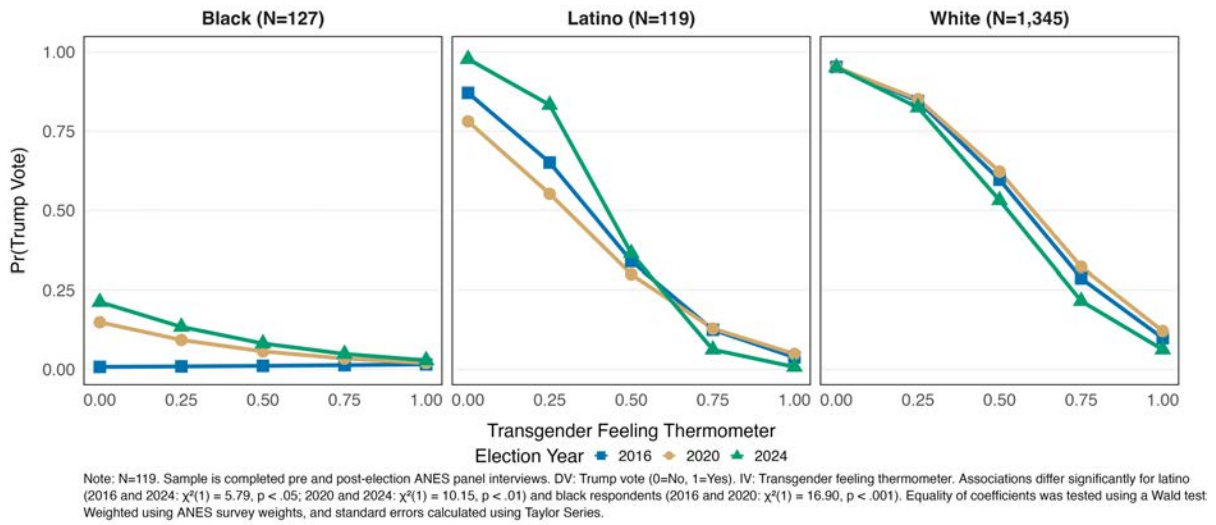


Figure 18: Immigrant Crime Concern Predicting Trump Vote

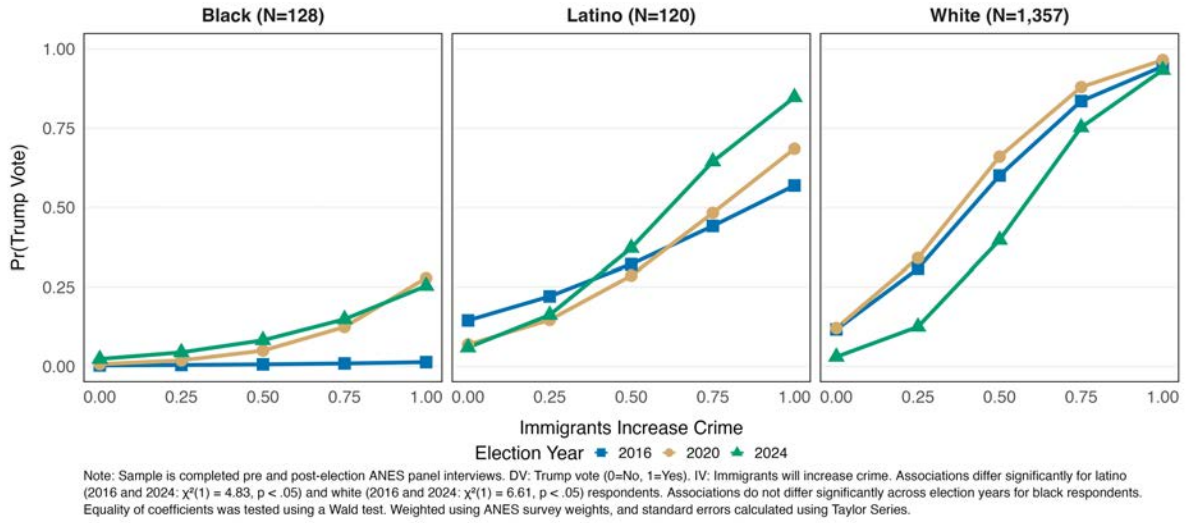


Figure 19: Economic Concern Predicting Trump Vote

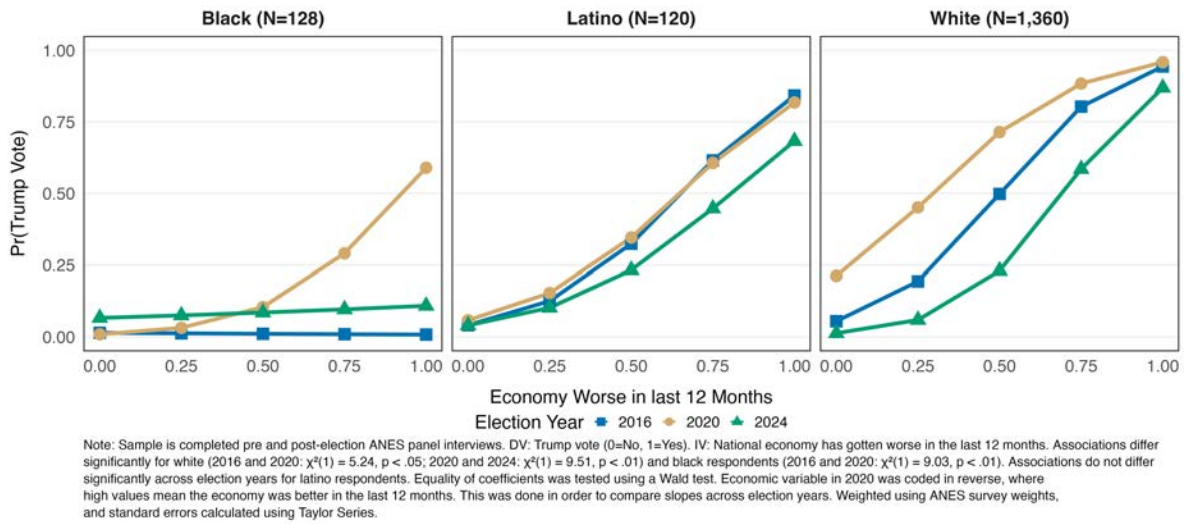
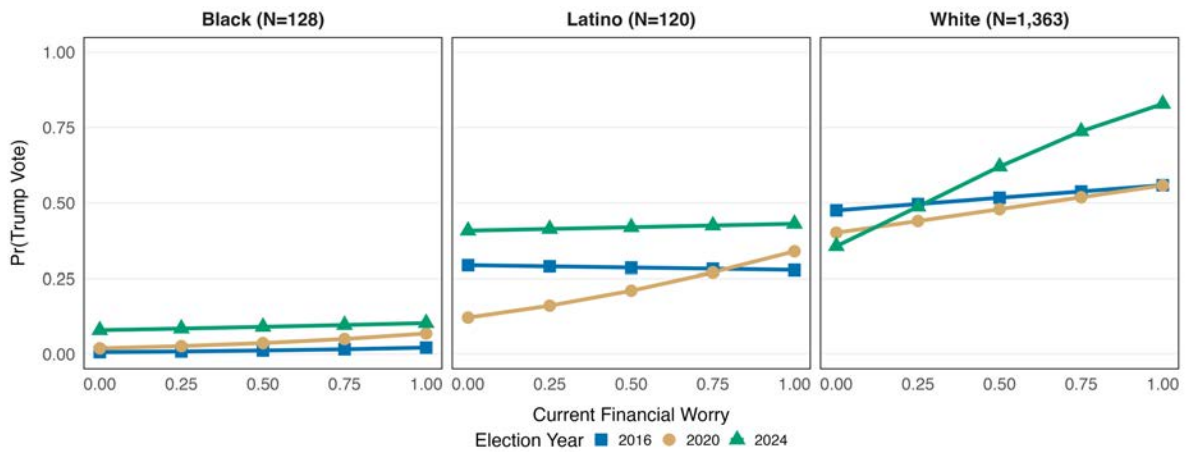


Figure 20: Personal Financial Worry Predicting Trump Vote



Note: Sample is completed pre and post-election ANES panel interviews. DV: Trump vote (0=No, 1=Yes). IV: Current Financial Worry. Associations differ significantly for white respondents (2016 and 2024: $\chi^2(1) = 25.68, p < .001$; 2020 and 2024: $\chi^2(1) = 9.40, p < .01$). Associations do not differ significantly across election years for latino and black respondents. Equality of coefficients was tested using a Wald test. Financial variable in 2020 was coded in reverse, where high values mean more financial security. This was done in order to compare slopes across election years. Weighted using ANES survey weights, and standard errors calculated using Taylor Series.