

Challenging the Narrative: Latino Voting in Presidential Elections

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Abstract

Over the last three presidential elections, Latino voting patterns have shifted substantially. In 2016, Hillary Clinton won 65% of the Latino vote, yet by 2024 Kamala Harris captured only 51%. This decline in Democratic support and corresponding Republican gains have prompted renewed attention to the forces shaping Latino political behavior. While immigration has traditionally been viewed as the primary determinant of Latino vote choice, our analysis suggests that economic perceptions are now more influential. Using observational data from the Cooperative Election Study (CES) across the 2016, 2020, and 2024 elections, we assess how shifts in issue salience correspond with vote choice. Our findings indicate that in 2024, economic evaluations were the dominant predictor of Latino partisan alignment, surpassing immigration, abortion, and even longstanding predictors such as party identification and gender. Although immigration remains symbolically important, its direct influence on voting behavior has weakened over time. These results demonstrate that Latino voters are highly responsive to issue-based contexts and that their political priorities evolve with changing economic conditions. The study underscores the need to move beyond static identity-based explanations toward a more dynamic understanding of Latino political decision-making grounded in issue salience and contextual change.

Keywords: Issue Voting, Hispanic Attitudes, Immigration, Economic Perceptions,
Latino Public Opinion

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1 Introduction

Accounting for 19.5% of the population, Latinos are the most significant ethnic minority in the United States (US Census Bureau, 2024). Over the past decade, they have been an important contributor to national population growth. Between 2010 and 2022, the population increased by 24.5 million people; Latinos accounted for 53% of this growth (Krogstad et al., 2023). Notably, this increase in population has been primarily fueled by US-born Latinos rather than newly arrived immigrants, marking a shift from the 1980s and 1990s, when immigration was the dominant source of Latino population growth (Krogstad et al., 2023).

As the Latino population continues to increase, so does their share of the electorate (Garcia & Sanchez, 2021; Krogstad et al., 2024). Since the 2020 presidential election, Latinos have experienced the second-fastest growth among major racial groups in terms of voting eligibility (Krogstad et al., 2024). In 2024, approximately 36.2 million Latinos were eligible to vote in the US, up from 32.3 million in 2020 (Krogstad et al., 2024). Given this rapid expansion, political campaigns, public figures, and scholars alike are placing greater emphasis on understanding the Latino vote, recognizing its continued influence in shaping election outcomes (Garcia & Sanchez, 2021).

For a long time, immigration has been a powerful mobilizing issue for Latino voters (Barreto & Collingwood, 2015; Gutierrez et al., 2019). Its influence on political behavior depends on the broader political context. In some instances, immigration is framed as a unifying issue, strategically used by campaigns to engage and mobilize Latino communities. In other cases, it becomes a source of perceived group threat, particularly in response to anti-immigration rhetoric, increasing political participation (Barreto & Collingwood, 2015; Gutierrez et al., 2019). This mobilizing effect is commonly associated with a higher support for the Democratic Party. For example, Barack Obama’s re-election victory was partially attributed to the contrasting messaging between his more inclusive approach to immigration and Mitt Romney’s tougher stance on the matter (Wallace, 2012).

Interestingly, despite increasingly polarizing immigration stances between Democratic and Republican candidates, support for the Democratic Party among Latino voters has consistently declined in recent years (National Election Pool, 2024). During her 2016 presidential campaign, Hillary Clinton secured 66% of the Latino vote, a figure comparable to the support Barack Obama received in 2008. However, this represented a drop from 2012, when 71% of Latino voters supported Obama’s reelection (Krogstad & Lopez, 2016). In 2020, while the Democrats continued to obtain most of the Latino vote, the GOP made significant gains among this group, particularly with men without a college degree (Igielnik et al., 2021). By 2024, the erosion in Democratic support becomes more evident, as Republicans secured 46% of Latino voters, surpassing levels of support seen before in high-performing GOP campaigns with Latino voters, such as those of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush (Contreras & Galvan, 2024).

The growing disconnect between immigration issue salience and what appears to be a diminishing electoral influence among the Latino electorate shows an inevitable shift in Latino political behavior. Because Latinos are often at the center of the immigration debate, it remains a central political topic for them (Merolla et al., 2013; Morales et al., 2020). However, recent election results hint that its importance as an issue driving their vote is diminishing, begging the need to reevaluate how much influence immigration has on Latino voting decision-making. Alternatively, economic perceptions are taking force within the Latino community when making political calculations, mainly due to their changing socioeconomic background (UnidosUS & New American Economy, 2017)

This paper examines whether immigration holds the strongest predictive power in Latino vote choice in presidential elections and whether the economy has become a more decisive factor over time. To answer our questions, we analyze nationally representative data from Latino respondents in the 2016, 2020, and 2024 waves of the Collaborative Election Study (CES). Based on recent electoral outcomes in presidential elections, we hypothesize that (1) the predictive power of immigration on Latino vote choice has declined over time, and (2)

that perceptions of the economy are a stronger predictor of Latino vote choice. For the economy, we expect that these dynamics result in positive predictive power for the Republican candidate in 2016 and 2024, and positive predictive power for the Democratic candidate in 2020, given changes in incumbency. This paper contributes to a broader literature on Latino political behavior by challenging the commonly held assumption that immigration issues are the primary drivers of Latino vote choice. We also look to provide an updated account of the evolving political preferences of Hispanics in the United States.

2 Latino Voting Drivers

2.1 Immigration as a mobilizer

Given that a significant share of Latinos have a relatively recent immigration history, often tied to their parents or grandparents, immigration has commonly been placed at the center of explanations for Latino political behavior in the United States. It has been seen not only as a policy priority but also as a significant symbol of group identity and unity (Garcia & Sanchez, 2021). Consequently, immigration has often served as a salient policy concern but also as a part of Latino political identity, showing responsiveness to candidates' stances, whether they are restrictive or inclusive in their messaging (Barreto & Collingwood, 2015b; Garcia & Sanchez, 2021).

Overall, the literature on Latino politics consistently highlights the mobilizing effect of immigration policy on this specific demographic (De la Garza, 2008; Zepeda-Millán, 2017). Such mobilization and its influence on vote choice often stems from responses to perceived group threats, in a specific context in which Latinos may feel disproportionately targeted by immigration policies (Ocampo et al., 2021). Regarding vote choice, research shows that Latinos frequently use candidates' stances on immigration as a cue to determine who better represents their interests, considering factors like partisanship.

In elections such as Barack Obama's in 2008 and 2012, his perceived inclusive stance to-

ward immigration policy, despite his administration’s high numbers of deportations, helped him secure strong support from Latinos. Obama’s seen by Latinos as less punitive towards immigrants when compared with his counterparts (Barreto & Collingwood, 2015b). Latinos have also shown some willingness to support Republican candidates on immigration issues. For instance, President Ronald Reagan made significant strides among Latino voters by appealing to conservative and religious values, and through the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, which gave amnesty and a path towards regularization to millions of undocumented immigrants, many of Latino origin (Dávila et al., 1998).

Despite the number of studies identifying immigration as a motivating issue when choosing a candidate, a growing body of literature challenges this narrative, suggesting that although immigration remains salient for Latinos, it may not necessarily be linked to vote choice or vote turnout (Israel-Trummel et al., 2025; Roman et al., 2022). For instance, perceived network threat, which was found to be a motivator for political engagement and mobilization during the 2016 presidential election, may not continue to have the same effect, as it was found to have a negative relation with voter turnout (Israel-Trummel et al., 2025), similarly, having a connection with an undocumented immigrant is also not found to be related to turning out to vote, and in consequence, with vote choice, but positively linked to non-voting political participation in Latinos like protesting (Roman et. al, 2022).

Together, these studies complicate the assumption that immigration continues to hold a primary place in Latino vote choice. While immigration is a salient issue, particularly because of Latinos’ historical and familial connection with immigrants, its direct impact on vote choice may not be as strong as commonly assumed.

2.2 Economic Concerns in the Latino Community

Economic priorities and evaluation of the incumbent’s performance on economic issues play a central role in American electoral politics (Fiorina, 1978). Whether voters assess candi-

dates based on personal finances –commonly referred to as pocketbook voting- or based on perceptions of the economy on a national level –known as sociotropic voting, the economy remains a key driver of vote choice among the American electorate (Gomez Wilson, 2001). Economic concerns and vote choice fueled by this specific issue are not foreign to Latino voters. For decades, polling trends have consistently confirmed a long-standing economic focus among the Latino electorate (Madrid, 2024).

Economic concerns, including the high cost of living, minimum wage issues, and inflation, are among the top priorities for Hispanics (UnidosUS, 2024). Day-to-day economic challenges have a direct impact on Latinos’ perceptions of the economy (Figueroa, 2024; Unidos US, 2024). At the same time, sociotropic concerns are also present for Latinos, with many perceiving the overall state of the national economy as poor (UnidosUS, 2024). This reflects a growing dissatisfaction with the incumbents’ economic record.

Furthermore, studies in political science have indicated that across-the-board socioeconomic measures of economic perceptions have a much stronger predictive power on vote choice (Kinder Kiewiet, 1979). While economic concerns are not new to the Latino community, they have become more prominent as the community experiences upward economic mobility. Latinos are not only the fastest-growing minority by population but also among the fastest-growing contributors to the U.S. economy, accounting for 3.2 trillion in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in 2021 (Terrill, 2023). That same year, the average income for Latinos in the U.S. had grown 4.7 percent, compared to 1.9 percent for non-Latinos (Terrill, 2023). This economic growth is partially driven by rising population numbers, particularly U.S.-born Latinos, increased labor force participation, and higher levels of educational attainment (Terrill, 2023). Socioeconomic advancement of the Latino community does not occur in a political vacuum; as Latinos become more affluent and educated, their political behavior can also shift in response to new pressures and priorities. Latino voters are often described as a monolithic voting bloc; however, this assumption oversimplifies and, more importantly, misinterprets the political attitudes of Hispanics (Garcia Sanchez, 2021). His-

torically, most Latinos have tended to support the Democratic Party over the Republican Party. However, it is inaccurate to suggest that Latinos feel fully aligned with either party, as they show some of the weakest partisan attachments in the U.S.(Madrid, 2024)

Due to the ethnic and socioeconomic diversity among Latinos, their voting behavior is heavily influenced by overlapping and at times conflicting identities and needs (Alvarez Bedolla, 2003; Garcia Sanchez, 2021). These ever-evolving needs can create cross-pressures when deciding how to vote, particularly when Latino issue preferences might not align with other issues salient to the community. In this context, growing economic mobility can introduce new priorities, where economic self-interest may be prioritized over group-based loyalties, particularly on issues like immigration.

Despite the general tendency of Latinos to identify more closely with the Democratic Party, the prevalence of cross-pressures within the community, such as ethnic attachments, can result in weaker partisan attachments compared to other demographic groups in the United States (Morín et al., 2021). In other words, Latino voters often display stronger responses to issues than fixed partisan identities (Geron Michelson, 2008). Newer experimental research has shown that Latino independents are much less attached to partisan appeals and can be persuaded given economic messaging. Critically, the economy is a chief motivator for these independents, and these appeals remain understudied in the field (Wakefield, 2025).

3 Contextual Background and Hypothesis

The increasing importance of economic matters over immigration issues for Latinos raises important questions about the dynamics between issue salience and vote choice. Issue salience refers to how much attention and importance individuals place on a political issue and the way this translates into ballot-box decisions. (Moniz & Wlezien, 2020). While a policy area may be highly salient, as is the case for immigration and Latinos in the United States, it does not necessarily drive vote choice unless it is also prioritized when casting a ballot (Bélanger

& Meguid, 2005). In other words, an issue needs to be prioritized for it to influence voting decisions, even if it is salient within a community.

The disconnect between issue salience and vote choice is significant in the context of cross-pressures, which occur when people experience conflicts or inconsistencies between their values and opinions, causing pulls from different identities or values they may possess (Andina-Díaz & Meléndez-Jiménez, 2009). In this sense, the sociological model of electoral behavior notes how individual socio-demographic factors define vote choice. When a particular aspect of an individual's group identity, such as religion, gender, or ethnicity, becomes the dominant issue influencing their vote, it can cause conflict with other identity-based factors, making their electoral choices more complex and more challenging to predict (He, 2016).

In the case of Latinos, scholars have demonstrated how issue prioritization is a central aspect in vote choice. Immigration-related matters may be relevant because of close community ties, but other factors can be prioritized when making electoral decisions. While national origin diversity has been widely used to understand voting differences among Latinos (Corral & Leal, 2024), research also shows deeper nuances in different identity aspects like gender, age, religion, and policy aspects like government-funded health insurance and school vouchers (Garcia-Rios et al., 2024)

Survey data with a significant Latino subsample consistently show jobs and the economy as the most critical issues on voters' minds (Madrid, 2024). For instance, while immigration was a top concern for Latino voters in 2006, by 2024, 59% of voters identified it as the most critical issue (Lopez & Noe-Bustamante, 2024). In contrast, concern for the state of the economy has gained significance, rising from 12% in 2006 to 39% in 2016, and reaching 52% by 2022 (Garcia-Rios & Angel, 2024). Ahead of the 2024 presidential election, 85% of Latino voters reported that the economy was a very important factor in their vote choice (Lopez & Noe-Bustamante, 2024). Yet, despite this growing concern over the economy, much of the literature and political discourse continues to treat immigration as the central issue

mobilizing Latino voters.

As Latinos navigate cross-pressures between group identity and economic well-being, we expect that immigration has become less powerful in predicting vote choice over time, while financial concerns have gained weight in their vote choice. These expectations suggest an interesting underlying shift in Latino political behavior. While this study does not directly address the underlying issue of issue-salience and cross-pressures, these provide a lens for interpreting shifts in the predictive power of immigration and the economy on Latino vote choice. From this perspective, we explore two hypotheses:

- H1: The predictive power of immigration on Latino vote choice has declined over the 2016, 2020, and 2024 presidential elections.
- H2: Perceptions of the economy (particularly sociotropic evaluations) are a stronger predictor of Latino vote choice than immigration between 2016 and 2024.

4 Methods

For our analysis, we have compiled an examination of the predictive nature of major issues among the Latino voting population. These issues include the effect of economic perceptions and immigration stances. We identified these issues as the top considerations for voters nationwide in the 2024 election (Gallup, 2024). In particular, economic expectations have been longstanding predictors of political decision-making. Immigration has been assumed to be a primary motivator for Latino voting nationwide (Barreto and Segura, 2014).

In addition to economic and immigration factors, we include abortion, gender, and party identification as additional control variables. Abortion as a policy issue has been found to motivate vote choice (Ellison & Echevarria, 2005). Party identification and gender are also well-established predictors of vote choice, even among minority communities like Latinos (Ondercin and Welch, 2009 & Campbell et al., 1960). Including these control variables helps ensure that partisan and demographic factors do not influence the effects of immigration and

the economy on vote choice. To best gauge a fair comparison of these two national issues, we decided to include sociotropic evaluations of the economy and national immigration policy preferences. For control issues such as abortion, we also included items that asked questions on a nationwide scale.

This study employs an observational approach to investigate how issue salience among Latino voters has influenced their presidential vote choices across the last three elections—2016, 2020, and 2024. Specifically, it aims to assess the evolving predictive power of immigration and economic attitudes on Latino voter behavior over time. While immigration has historically been a central factor in understanding Latino political preferences, this research assesses whether that influence has declined and whether the economy has emerged as a more decisive factor.

At the national level, the last three elections have shown a decline in Latino support for Democratic candidates. In 2024, for instance, Kamala Harris received 51% of the Latino vote – the lowest share recorded for a Democrat in recent history (National Election Pool, 2024). While these trends are nuanced, the goal of this research is to address the specific issues that have driven these shifts. Figure 1 shows the broad picture of partisan movement among Latino voting populations, with Republicans achieving the highest levels of support in recent presidential elections. This data comes from nationwide exit polling conducted via the NEP ¹ from 1984 to 2024.

In a more detailed approach, we compiled a predictive model of vote choice during these recent presidential elections. Of particular interest was the last three presidential elections, which saw the most movement towards Republican candidates and a departure from Democratic ones. To best gather a comprehensive view of Latino public opinion, we utilized data from the Collaborative Election Study (CES), which includes approximately 60,000 respondents nationwide in each election cycle. This scale enables the inclusion of a substantial Latino subsample, thereby creating a robust dataset for examining Latino political behavior

¹* Data collected from the NEP Exit Polling available via Roper Institute, nationwide samples, complete data is available in the appendix.

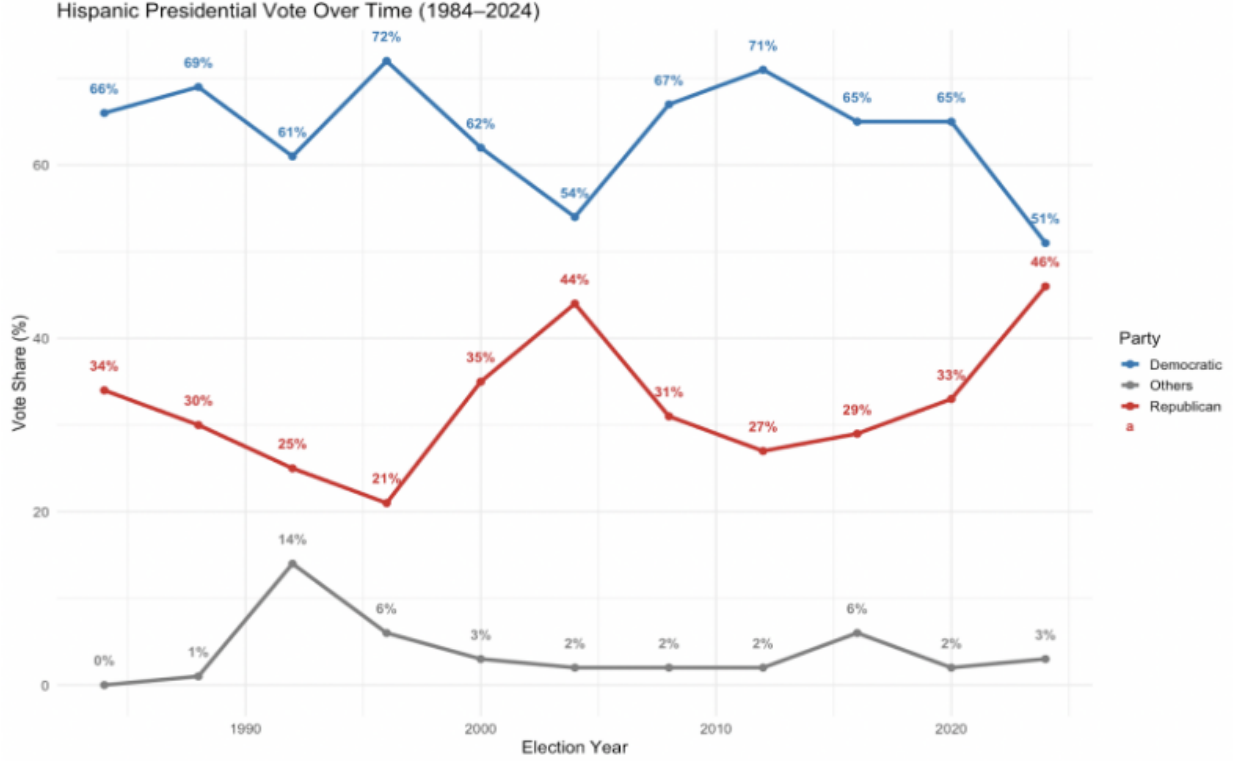


Figure 1: Hispanic Vote in Presidential Elections via NEP* Exit Polls 1984-2024

	2024	2020	2016
Hispanic Subset	7,647	6,978	7,495
Full Dataset	60,000	61,000	64,600

Table 1: Hispanic Subset* within the Cooperative Election Study (CES) Sample Size

across election years. We obtained this subsample by including those who identified racially or ethnically as Hispanic or Latino. Table 1 displays the Hispanic subsample ² available in the CES, compared with the national sample. As provided, we are working with a universe of roughly 7,000 Hispanic or Latino identifying voters across three presidential elections.

Our approach in testing the predictive power of these issues was to construct three cross-sectional models. The data presented covers the past three presidential elections, i.e., 2016, 2020, and 2024, to discuss how the effects of issue positioning on vote choice have changed over time. In this predictive model, we discuss key policy issues influencing Latino vote

^{2*} Respondents within the Hispanic Subset either checked yes to being ethnically Hispanic or Latino “Hispanic” and/or racially selected yes to identifying as Hispanic as a racial category “race”

choice, specifically the economy and immigration (Garcia-Rios et al., 2025). For economic perceptions, we use the standard sociotropic evaluation measure, which asks respondents whether they feel the economy has improved, worsened, or remained the same. This question has shown strong predictive power in models of vote choice across demographics (Kinder & Kiewiet, 1979). Decades of comparative work also affirm that these national-level economic judgments are consistently linked to shifts in incumbent support and vote choice across contexts (Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier, 2000). Including this measure in our models ensures we account for a well-established and theoretically grounded driver of electoral outcomes, allowing us to isolate the independent effects of other salient issues for Latino voters.

For immigration, the CES offers different questions across waves. To ensure consistency, we constructed a composite scale based on two immigration items asked in every election year: one assessing support for granting legal status to undocumented immigrants, and the other looking at support for increasing border security. For abortion, we selected the question asking whether abortion should be a right. We prioritize this question because it taps into respondents’ views on abortion as a rights issue, given the fact that this fundamental rights question most mirrors the other policy stances, particularly in outcome measures. The wording of each question used is shown in Table 2. Additionally, we made sure to include similar items across all three election cycles to best gauge changes in public sentiment.

With the overall goal of maintaining measurement consistency, we use CES items that appear across all three waves. For economic perceptions, we use a five-point sociotropic question on whether the national economy has improved or worsened in the last year. For immigration, we combine two policy stance questions—support for legalizing undocumented workers and support for border enforcement—into a scale. Abortion attitudes are measured using a question on whether abortion should always be allowed as a matter of choice. Question wording and coding are detailed in Table 2. Considering that views on immigration, the economy, and abortion have been shown to influence vote choice, we model the predictive power of these issues by regressing them onto the vote choice of the last three presidential

Table 2: CES 2024, 2020, 2016 – Policy Variables Defined

	Economy	Immigration	Abortion
Question	National economics: “Has the economy in the last year gotten ... ?” (sociotropic, retrospective)	Grant legal status to all undocumented immigrants who have held jobs and paid taxes for at least 3 years and have not been convicted of any felony; <i>and</i> increase the number of border patrols on the U.S.–Mexico border.	“Always allow a woman the right to obtain an abortion as a matter of choice.”
Response conditions	• Gotten much better • Gotten somewhat better • Stayed about the same • Gotten somewhat worse • Gotten much worse	• Support • Oppose	• Support • Oppose
Justification	Sociotropic economic perceptions are a strong predictor of vote choice (Kinder & Kiewiet, 1979).	Immigration policy stances have long been used to model vote choice, particularly among Latino voters (Garcia-Rios et al., 2025).	Abortion attitudes, measured via a policy question, provide comparable national context across issues (Ellison & Echevarria, 2005).

elections.

5 Model Results

To evaluate how policy issue attitudes influenced Latino presidential vote choice across the last three election cycles, we constructed three separate cross-sectional logistic regression models—one for each of the 2016, 2020, and 2024 elections. Each model regresses vote choice on respondents’ attitudes toward the economy, immigration, and abortion. The models also control for party identification, gender, education, and age. This approach enables direct comparisons of the relative strength of each issue over time. Figure 2 summarizes the core model results, visually depicting how the predictive power of each policy area shifted across election years. The corresponding coefficients and significance levels are reported in Table 3.

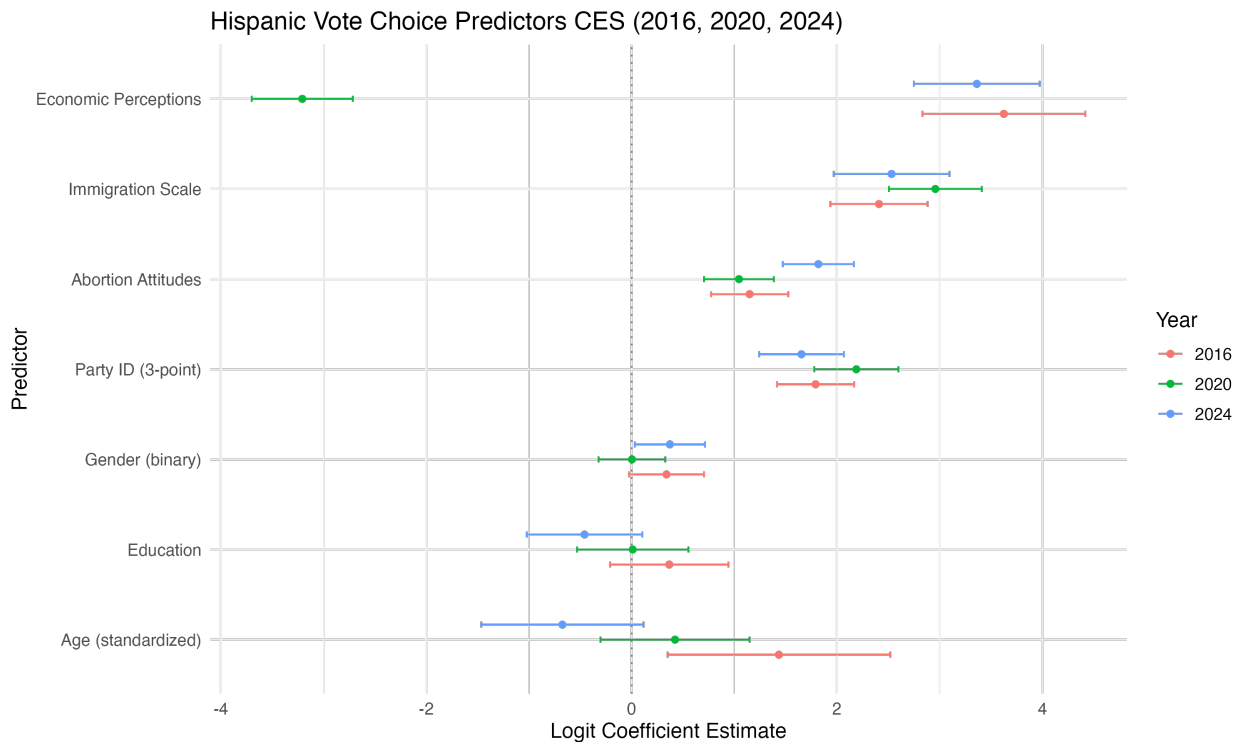


Figure 2: Cross-sectional vote choice among Hispanic voters

Across all three election waves, views on the economy consistently retained the strongest

predictive power for vote choice. This effect was especially pronounced in the 2024 presidential election. Similarly, while immigration views remained statistically significant predictors in each election, their effect declined from 2020 to 2024. Abortion attitudes, while substantial, showed a weaker influence on vote choice compared to immigration and economic views. We also added several controls to our model: party affiliation, gender, education level, and age. Party affiliation also showed significance, but was not the strongest predictor. These results are summarized in Table 3, which shows the logistic regression coefficients from the cross-sectional models for 2016, 2020, and 2024 ³. For this logistic regression, the outcome measure is pure vote choice, present in all three elections, with 1 indicating a vote for the Republican candidate and 0 indicating a vote for any other candidate across all three elections. When we examine respondents in detail across all three elections, we find an increasing

	2024	2020	2016
Economy	3.362($p < .001^{***}$)	-3.207($p < .001^{***}$)	3.626($p < .001^{***}$)
Immigration	2.532($p < .001^{***}$)	2.959($p < .001^{***}$)	2.410($p < .001^{***}$)
Abortion	1.819($p < .001^{***}$)	1.046($p < .001^{***}$)	1.150($p < .001^{***}$)
Party ID	1.655($p < .001^{***}$)	2.189($p < .001^{***}$)	1.792($p < .001^{***}$)
<i>N</i>	4,776	3,802	3,267

Table 3: Logit Coefficients: Issue Effects on Vote Choice Among Hispanic Voters

effect of economic predictions on GOP vote choice. This trend not only persisted in 2024 but also exhibited a gradual increase from 2016 through 2020. These results suggest that economic evaluations became an important driver of support for the GOP. The economy stands out as the most robust and temporally dynamic predictor: the baseline effect of economic concern is significant, indicating that across all years, those who rate the economy as more important are more likely to support the Republican Party. Notably, this effect intensifies in 2024, as evidenced by a positive and statistically significant logged odds coefficient, suggesting that economic discontent becomes even more closely linked to pro-GOP sentiment in

³ * *Cross-sectional logit model conducted on CES 2024, 2020, and 2016 studies*

that year. This may reflect both heightened concerns about inflation and Republican gains in messaging regarding economic performance under Democratic leadership.

Immigration is a consistent predictor of GOP support among Hispanic voters across the three elections, as shown by the significant positive baseline effect. However, in contrast to economic effects, there is no evidence from the interaction terms that the impact of immigration concern increased or changed significantly in 2020 or 2024 compared to 2016. Thus, rather than showing a rightward shift over time on this issue, the model suggests a stable alignment between immigration attitudes and Republican support among Hispanics throughout the period.

Similarly, abortion attitudes became significantly associated with GOP voting only in 2024, likely reflecting post-Dobbs political realignments. Demographic effects suggest that higher education is related to a decrease in support for the Republican Party, while the male gender is associated with a modest increase in support. Demographic factors did not retain the same effects as shown in all past models, except for gender and party identification. More broadly, vote choice effects, particularly when considering time as a crucial variable, are pronounced about the two central issues in Latino vote choice: economic concerns and immigration.

Another approach to measuring movement on this issue was to examine the 2024 voting population in detail. We crafted a supplemental recall vote model, which asked respondents to recall their vote decisions in 2020 and 2016. Results from this recalled vote model are located in the appendix. In A-2, our models suggested a surge in predictive power for economic predictions, while immigration held steady; however, growth slowed substantially by 2024. Results from this supplementary analysis are located in the appendix.

Additionally, gender not only is an important control variable but one could estimate might have interactive effects on these three tested issues. Within the appendix we include insignificant findings on this question and document how both women and men process these political issues within our subset. Lastly our immigration scale which holds two predictive

questions captured a broad movement towards trump, however both immigration issues are inherently different. With one question dealing with border control and the other about legal status for non criminal undocumented arrivals. We further investigate the impacts of these issues in isolation and find a weaker predictive relationship to trump support across all three election cycles and among both immigration questions. Results for this extended analysis are captured in the appendix.

6 Discussion

Our analysis showed several vital developments in the field of Latino voting. This work has provided cross-sectional evidence that, on a national level, economic concerns played a significant role in driving Latino voters toward choosing to vote for the GOP. We also identified a strong but declining influence of immigration attitudes on vote choice. While immigration remains highly salient for Latino voters, our findings suggest that issue salience does not necessarily translate into vote choice, indicating that immigration may not be a decisive factor at the ballot box for Latinos.

Across all three election years, economic evaluations consistently emerged as the strongest predictors of Latino vote choice. In 2016, economic attitudes were already highly predictive (logit coefficient = 3.63, $p < 0.001$). Still, their influence remained strong in 2020 (3.21, $p < 0.001$, with the sign reversed due to evaluations of the incumbent) and surged again in 2024 (3.36, $p < 0.001$). These findings confirm the growing influence of sociotropic economic concerns in shaping Latino presidential vote behavior, particularly in the context of increasing dissatisfaction with Democratic economic management ahead of the 2024 election.

Immigration attitudes also showed statistically significant relationships with vote choice in all three years, but with a notable trend of decline. The coefficient dropped slightly from 2.96 in 2020 to 2.53 in 2024, suggesting a weakening—though still relevant—impact on Latino vote behavior. While immigration remains a salient issue for Latino identity and

political discourse, these results indicate that it may no longer have the same mobilizing effect at the ballot box, especially in the context of other pressing issues, such as inflation and job security.

Abortion attitudes, while consistently less influential than economic or immigration views, show a steady and increasing significance. From a modest coefficient of 1.15 in 2016, the effect grew to 1.82 in 2024 ($p < 0.001$), possibly reflecting the post-Dobbs political realignments (Sanchez, 2022). This suggests that for a growing subset of Latino voters—particularly younger and more progressive ones—abortion rights are beginning to play a more meaningful role in electoral decision-making. Partisan identification maintained statistical significance across all years (coefficients ranging from 1.66 to 2.19), underscoring its enduring role in shaping vote choice. However, it did not surpass the predictive strength of economic or immigration views. Among demographic variables, gender and education showed modest effects, with higher education generally predicting lower support for the Republican Party, and male respondents being slightly more likely to support GOP candidates. These effects, however, were secondary compared to issue-based predictors.

Globally, issue mobilization can indeed manifest itself in many democratic actions within Latino communities. When considering vote choice prediction specifically, this analysis suggests that economic expectations are the most significant among these predictive variables. Immigration, while still predictive, has been shown to organize around other non-democratic methods of participation such as protests, boycotts, and community organizing. Still, in this modern electoral climate, immigration does not retain the same predictive power for Latino vote choice. As we have seen, the Latino voting population is not massively loyal to any political party and can change depending on the context of each election (Noe-Bustamante et al., 2024). Both parties will continue to fight for the votes of this emerging demographic. It remains to be seen whether the economy will play as central a role as it did in 2024, given the increasing contentiousness of modern presidential elections.

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8 Appendix

8.1 Appendix A: Full Cross Sectional Model Results and Exit Polling Full Results

Below are full model results for all three election waves

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
Intercept	-0.304	0.129	-2.344	0.019*
Economy (econ_scaled)	3.626	0.404	8.967	< .001***
Immigration (immig_scale)	2.410	0.242	9.971	< .001***
Abortion	1.150	0.192	5.997	< .001***
Education (educ_recode)	0.367	0.293	1.248	0.212
Gender	0.340	0.186	1.825	0.068
Party ID (pid3)	1.792	0.191	9.358	< .001***
Age (age_scaled)	1.435	0.553	2.595	0.010**
Observations	N = (2016 Hispanic subsample)			

Table 4: Survey-weighted logistic regression results (2016 Hispanic subsample, CCES)

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
Intercept	0.273	0.113	2.419	0.016*
Economy (econ_scaled)	-3.207	0.251	-12.776	< .001***
Immigration (immig_scale)	2.959	0.231	12.832	< .001***
Abortion	1.046	0.173	6.031	< .001***
Education (educ_recode)	0.011	0.277	0.039	0.969
Gender	0.004	0.166	0.022	0.983
Party ID (pid3)	2.189	0.209	10.471	< .001***
Age (age_scaled)	0.423	0.370	1.142	0.254
Observations	N = (2020 Hispanic subsample)			

Table 5: Survey-weighted logistic regression results (2020 Hispanic subsample, CCES)

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
Intercept	-0.637	0.117	-5.470	< .001***
Economy (econ_scaled)	3.362	0.313	10.758	< .001***
Immigration (immig_scale)	2.532	0.288	8.806	< .001***
Abortion	1.819	0.176	10.310	< .001***
Education (educ_recode)	-0.458	0.287	-1.599	0.110
Gender	0.373	0.174	2.141	0.032*
Party ID (pid3)	1.655	0.211	7.861	< .001***
Age (age_scaled)	-0.674	0.403	-1.674	0.094
Observations	N = (2024 Hispanic subsample)			

Table 6: Survey-weighted logistic regression results (2024 Hispanic subsample, CCES)

Table 7: NEP National Exit Polling of Latino Voters from 1984–2024

Year	Democratic Candidate	Republican Candidate	Others	Latino Sample Nationwide	Total N (All Voters)
1984	66%	34%	–	453	20,637
1988	69%	30%	1%	743	22,785
1992	61%	25%	14%	430	15,237
1996	72%	21%	6%	703	16,326
2000	62%	35%	3%	861	13,106
2004	54%	44%	2%	1,030	13,660
2008	67%	31%	2%	1,497	17,514
2012	71%	27%	2%	2,539	26,565
2016	65%	29%	6%	1,677	24,558
2020	65%	33%	2%	1,875	15,103
2024*	51%	46%	3%	–	–

* 2024 data is preliminary (NEP/CNN).

NEP exit poll data provided by the Roper Center Archive of Exit Poll Results: <https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/exit-polls/us-national-election-day-exit-polls>

2024 preliminary data source: <https://www.cnn.com/election/2024/exit-polls/national-results/general/president/0>

8.2 Appendix B: Recalled Vote Model Results

In addition to the primary model of measuring issue effects on vote choice, we also provided further clarity by examining the 2024 CES data explicitly and analyzing recalled votes across decisions made in the 2020 and 2016 elections. We find, once again, that economic predictors are the clear driver of vote choice, but with emerging strength coming in the 2024 election wave.

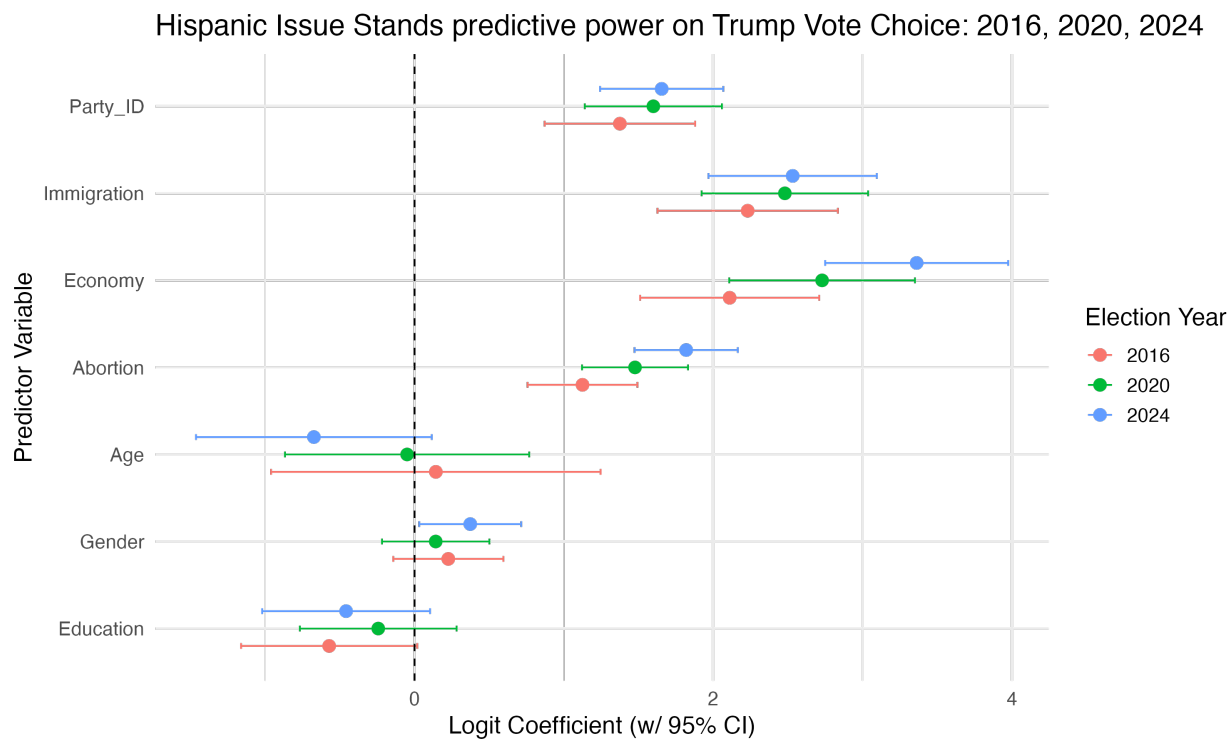


Figure 3: Issue Predictors on recalled vote from the 2024 CES on elections in 2024, 2020 & 2016

	2024	2020 (Recalled)	2016 (Recalled)
Economy	3.362($p < .001^{***}$)	2.729($p < .001^{***}$)	2.110($p < .001^{***}$)
Immigration	2.532($p < .001^{***}$)	2.480($p < .001^{***}$)	2.231($p < .001^{***}$)
Abortion	1.819($p < .001^{***}$)	1.477($p < .001^{***}$)	1.125($p < .001^{***}$)
Party ID (3 Point)	1.655($p < .001^{***}$)	1.599($p < .001^{***}$)	1.375($p < .001^{***}$)
N	4,776	4,457	3,635

Table 8: Table of recalled vote logit coefficients

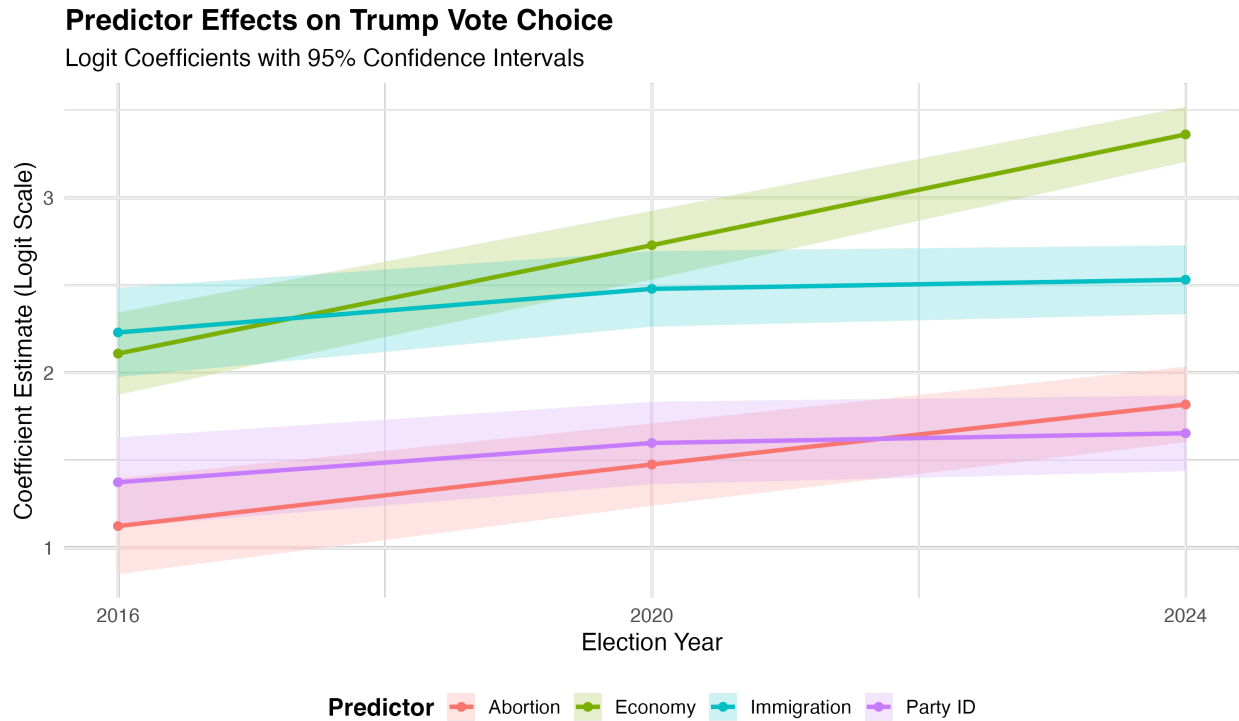


Figure 4: Predictor Effects on Republican Vote Choice 2016 - 2024

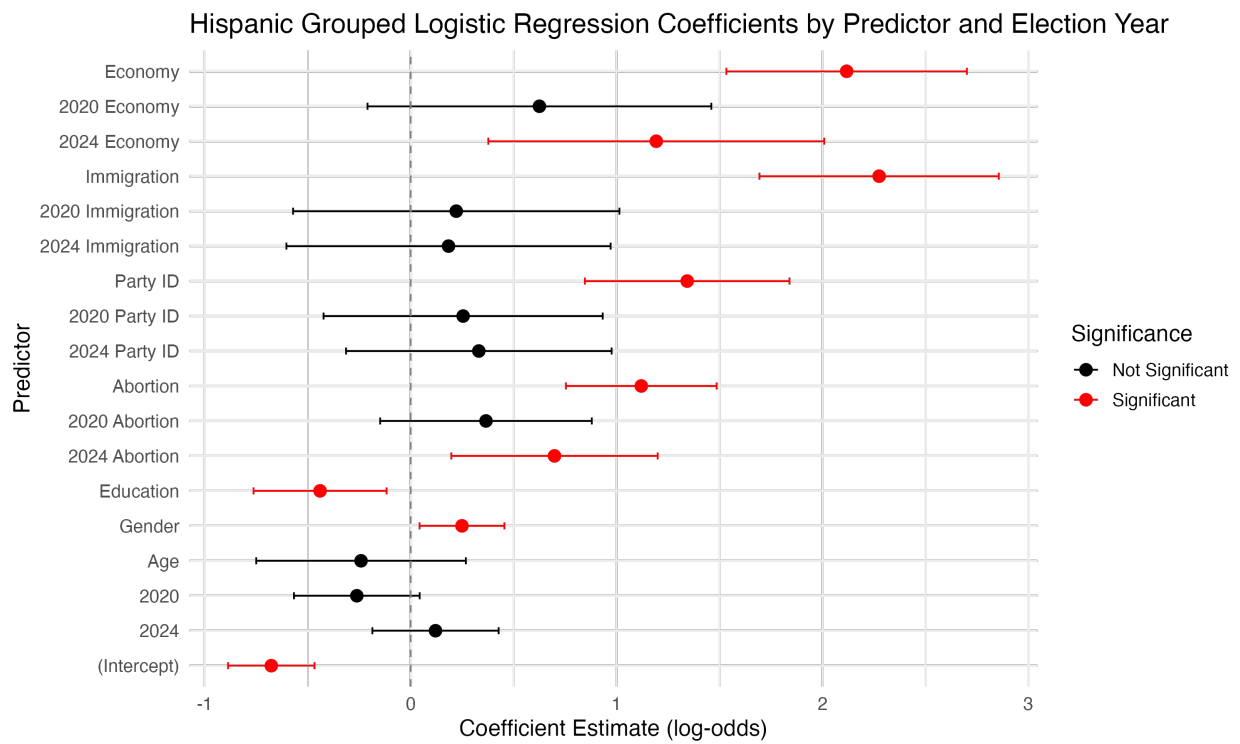


Figure 5: Time Effects on Issue Prediction 2016 - 2024

8.3 Appendix C: Extended Analysis Gender

In addition to using gender as a control variable, we tested the interactive effects for both men and women within the CES Latino subset. From the context of vote choice, we found no significant differences in how both of these groups processed these political issues.

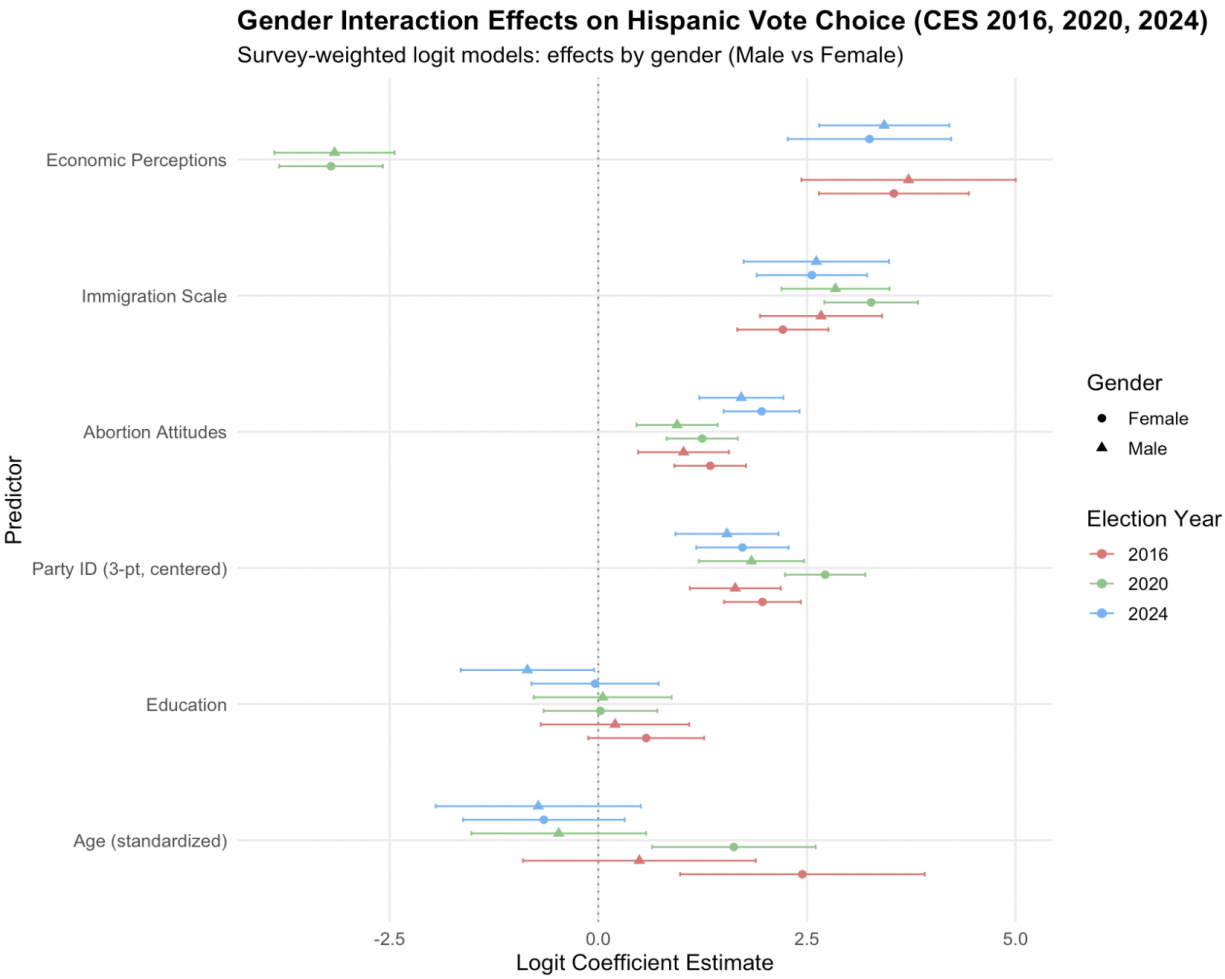


Figure 6: Gender Effects

8.4 Appendix D: Extended Analysis Immigration Items

Lastly, the immigration scale that we used asked two different types of question, we split up the immigration scale and measured the effects. The questions regarding "stock" and "flow" both had significant findings, but remained weaker than sociotropic economic evaluations.

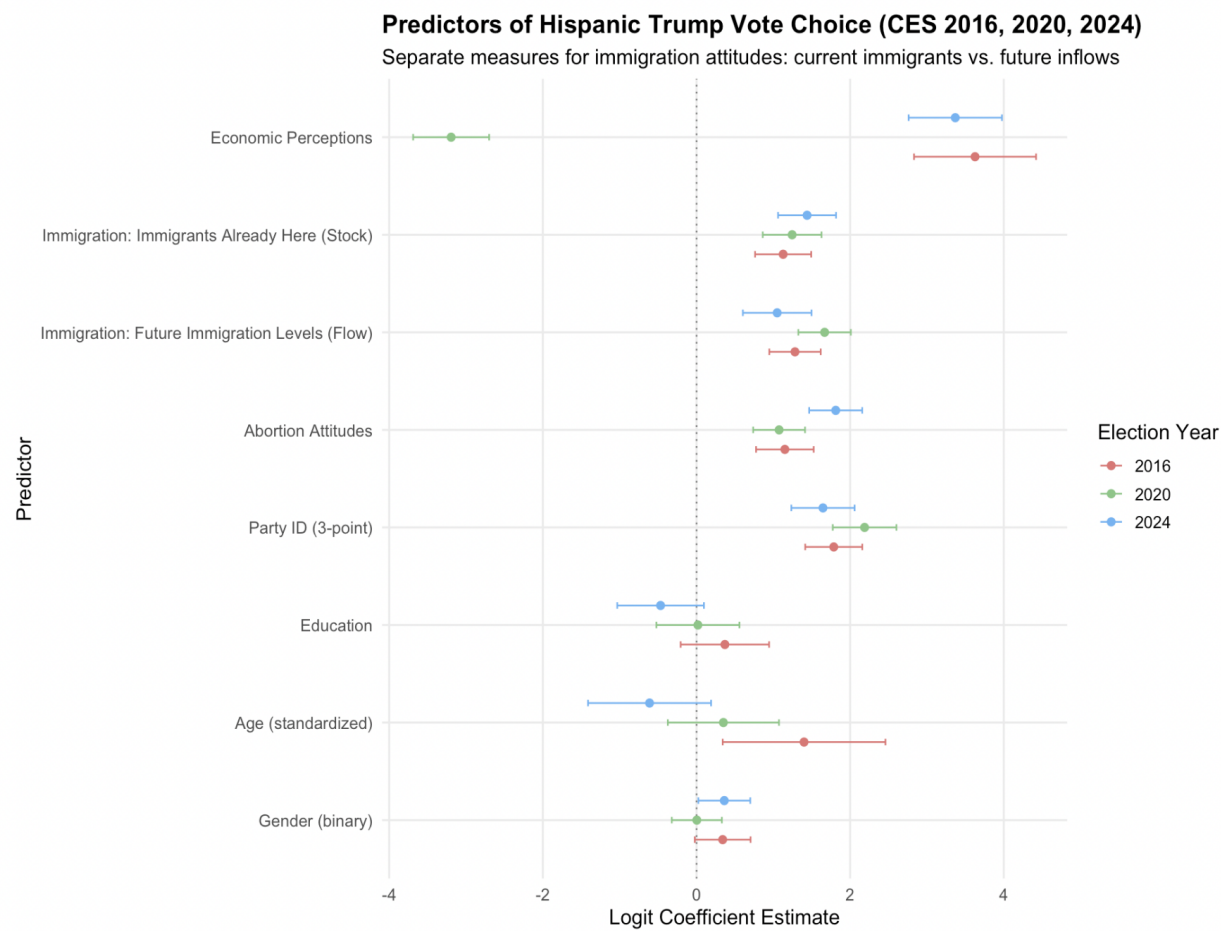


Figure 7: Model with Both Immigration Items Separated