



DIGITAL DEMOCRACY
INSTITUTE OF THE AMERICAS

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On Disinformation, Distrust, and Democracies:

A DDIA Poll of U.S. Latinos Leading Up to the 2024 Elections



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Context

- Latinos are a powerful force in U.S. politics. 36.2 million Latinos will be eligible to vote in the 2024 elections.
 - Understanding how U.S. Latinos consume misinfo + how trust plays into it is crucial for:
 - Understanding where to focus interventions,
 - Building community resilience and
 - Strengthening fair participation in democracy.
- Following Super Tuesday, DDIA partnered with YouGov to conduct a nationally representative poll of 3,015 Latino adults in the U.S.
- We measured familiarity and belief in misinformation narratives and claims, trust in elections and actors, and sentiments about AI.



◆ Methodology

- **Survey Period:** March 11 to April 26, 2024
- **Method:** Online
- **Sample Size:** 3,015
- **Inclusion Criteria:** Latino adults residing in the United States
- **Language Preference:** 89% chose to take the survey in English; 11% chose to take the survey in Spanish
- **Geographic Coverage:** All 50 states plus DC
 - Texas, California, Florida, New York (58% of sample, aligning with national geographic distribution of Latinos)
- **Political Affiliation:** Democrats: 46%; Independents: 20%; Republicans: 28%; Unsure: 6%
- **Weighting:** Analyses and statistics are weighted to population targets using vendor-provided weights to address sample imbalances.



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Takeaways



◆ Takeaways: Latinos & Misinformation

1. Latinos see a lot of misinformation, but don't outright believe it. 62% reject or express uncertainty about misinformation.
1. Conspiratorial narratives are more widely believed than false claims. At the top are:
 - a. "Traditional values are being eroded by a leftist political agenda being implemented in schools."
 - b. "There is a Deep State composed of shadowy political figures that is working against the public."
 - c. "Corporations are all-powerful in American politics, with little room for the public to make a difference."
 - d. "Elites are plotting with mainstream media outlets and social media companies to censor the truth."
1. Women, Facebook users, and Spanish-dominant Latinos form a "high-priority" group of uncertain people to which fact-checks and prebunking should be targeted.



◆ Takeaways: Latinos & Trust

1. Latinos' trust in elections and election officials, and other actors, including tech companies, fact-checkers, journalists, & media companies, is strongly correlated with partisanship and adoption of misinformation.
 - a. Partisan gaps in electoral and social trust are substantial.
 - i. Among Latino Democrats
 1. **Most trusted: Scientists; journalists; fact-checkers; Biden; other Democrats**
 2. **Least trusted: Fox News; social media; Supreme Court; Republicans**
 - ii. Among Republicans
 1. **Most trusted: Scientists; Supreme Court; religious leaders; other Republicans**
 2. **Least trusted: CNN; MSNBC; "media organizations"; journalists; activists; Biden**
 - iii. Dems and Reps both trust poll workers, but Dems trust them to a greater extent; Secretaries of State and Election Administrators slightly distrusted by Republicans
1. Republican Latinos and those with conspiratorial orientations distrust elections and feel less politically efficacious, but say will still turn out to vote.



◆ Takeaways: Latinos & AI

1. Few Latinos are using gen-AI tools like ChatGPT (15%), but there is high support for regulation.
2. Attitudes toward AI are largely ambivalent, but there is concern about it impacting jobs.
3. A majority see AI's impact on elections as either marginal or non-existent.
 - a. 41% agree that "The 2024 election will look just like every other election," and 31% view AI as "playing a minor role through chatbots and personalized information."
 - b. 28% agree that "AI could be a 'game-changer' in the 2024 election."



Familiarity and Belief in Misinformation Claims

DDIA tested 11 false claims that have been circulating online since 2020, along with four “placebo claims.”

1. Trump won the 2020 election
2. Antifa was responsible for the January 6th insurrection
3. January 6 was a false flag operation orchestrated by the U.S. federal government and law enforcement
4. Democrats are failing to secure the U.S. southern border in order to allow undocumented immigrants to vote for them in U.S. elections
5. Trump worked with Russians to steal the presidency in 2016
6. Police, not protestors, were responsible for damage to buildings during the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020
7. Donald Trump was named on the “Epstein List” that was released, a list featuring famous individuals who traveled with known convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein
8. Putin warned the U.S. to stay away from the “Israel-Hamas” war
9. Giving kids vaccines can cause autism
10. COVID-19 vaccines can lead to more serious health issues like myocarditis and infertility that would otherwise not be observed among those who catch COVID-19
11. Polls are being manipulated to distort public opinion



◆ Exposure/Familiarity

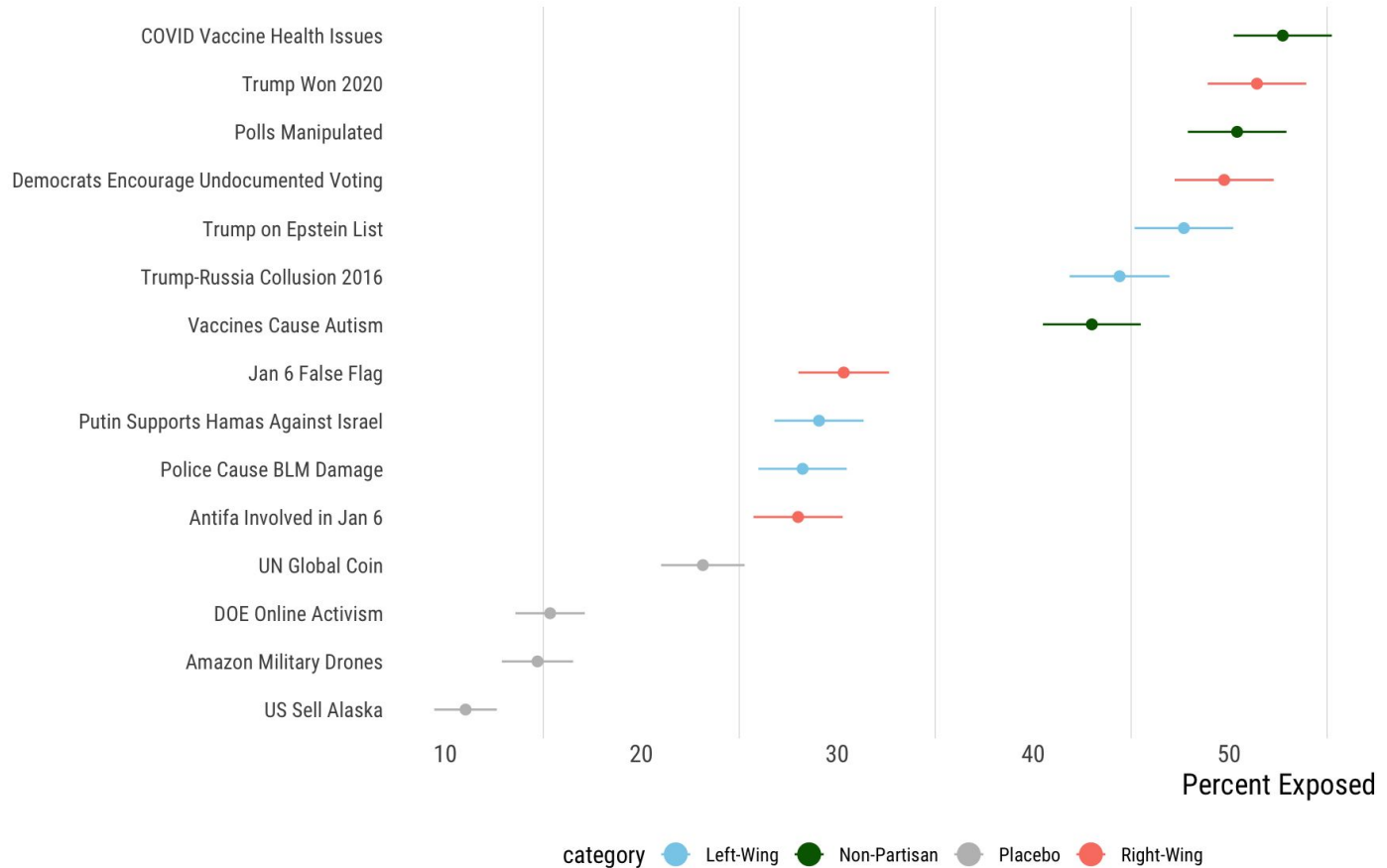
High-salience claims –

Over 40% of Latinos reported being familiar with the following false claims:

- “COVID-19 vaccines can lead to more serious health issues like myocarditis and infertility that would otherwise not be observed among those who catch COVID-19”
- “Trump won the 2020 election”
- “Polls are being manipulated to distort public opinion”
- “Democrats are failing to secure the U.S. southern border in order to allow undocumented immigrants to vote for them in U.S. elections”
- “Donald Trump was named on the “Epstein List” that was released, a list featuring famous individuals who traveled with known convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein”
- “Giving kids vaccines can cause autism”



Exposure to Claims





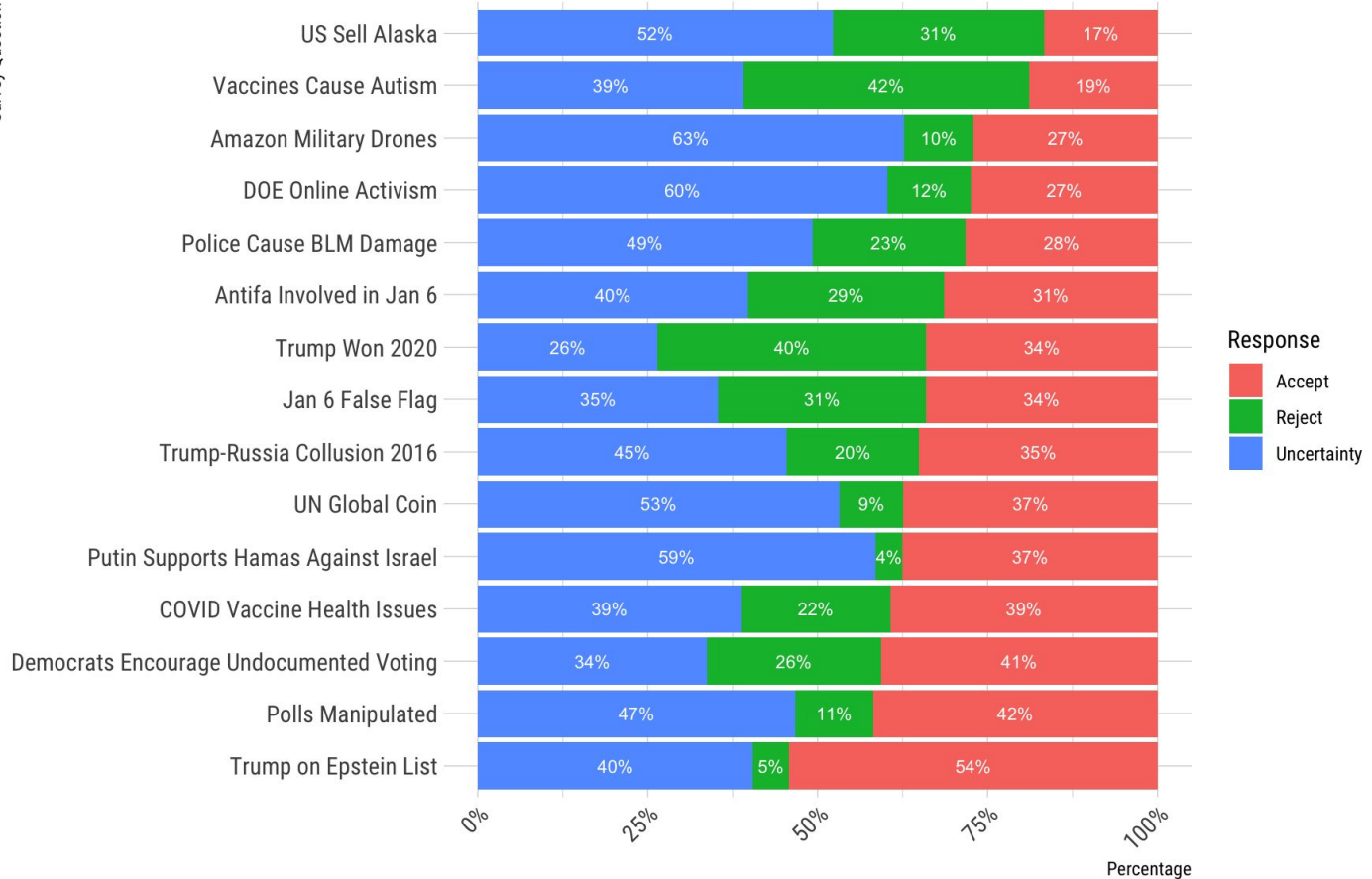
◆ Belief

- **Across claims, uncertainty tends to be the dominant response.** Most widely seen claims were the most likely to be rejected.
- Some claims have higher levels of acceptance among those exposed.
 - Election fraud: polls manipulated, undocumented voting
 - Claims involving elite influence
 - Covid-19 vaccines: cause heart issues and infertility
- The most widely rejected claims included “Trump won in 2020” and “vaccines cause autism.” Between 40% and 42% of our sample who had seen these claims rejected them.
- **Important to note that even though the “Big Lie” is widely rejected by most Latinos, one-third of Latinos who have been exposed to the “Big Lie” do accept it.**



Survey Question

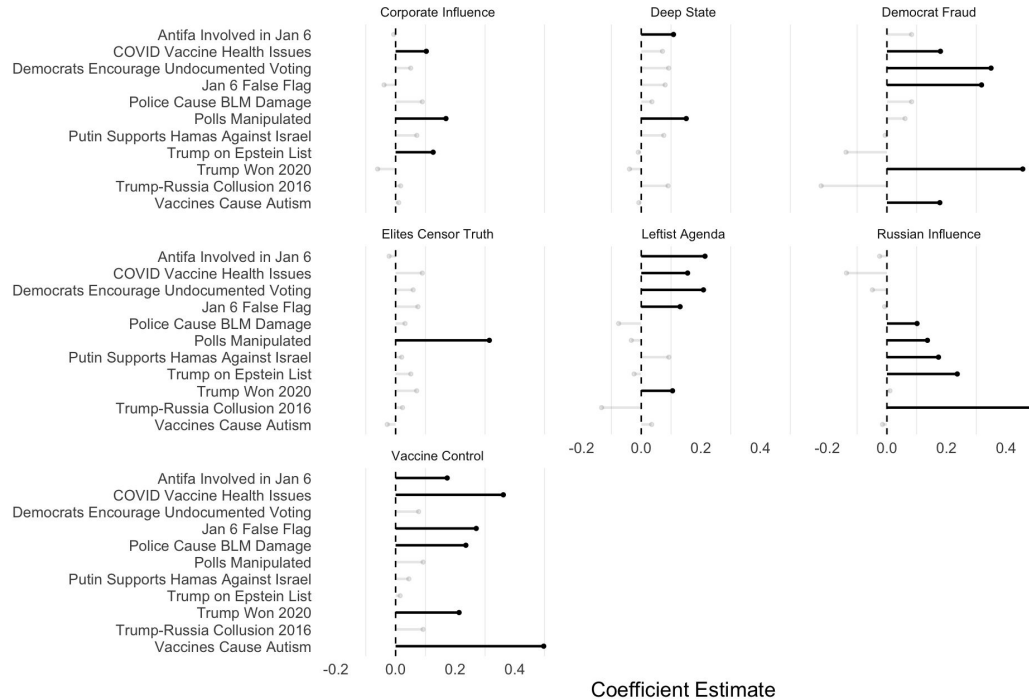
Distribution of Beliefs





Narratives Connect to Claims - Why?

Adjusted Correlation between Narratives and Claims



Reliable associations between narratives and claims, even after adjusting for partisanship and ideology.

Examples:

Those accepting the “vaccine as population control” narrative are also more likely to believe vaccine-related claims, but also a variety of left-wing and right-wing claims.

Those accepting the Russian influence narrative are more likely to accept claims about Trump-Russia collusion.

Those accepting the Democratic fraud narrative are more likely to buy into election-related misinformation.



Familiarity and Belief in Misinformation Narratives



◆ Narratives

DDIA tested belief in 7 broader narratives:

1. Democrats have won elections by resorting to fraud and electoral manipulation
2. Vaccines are a form of population control supported by elites and large corporations
3. There is a Deep State composed of shadowy political figures that is working against the public
4. Traditional values are being eroded by a leftist political agenda that is being implemented in schools
5. Russia is controlling American politics by undermining our elections and causing rifts between Americans
6. Corporations are all-powerful in American politics, with little room for the public to make a difference
7. Elites are plotting with mainstream media outlets and social media companies to censor the truth

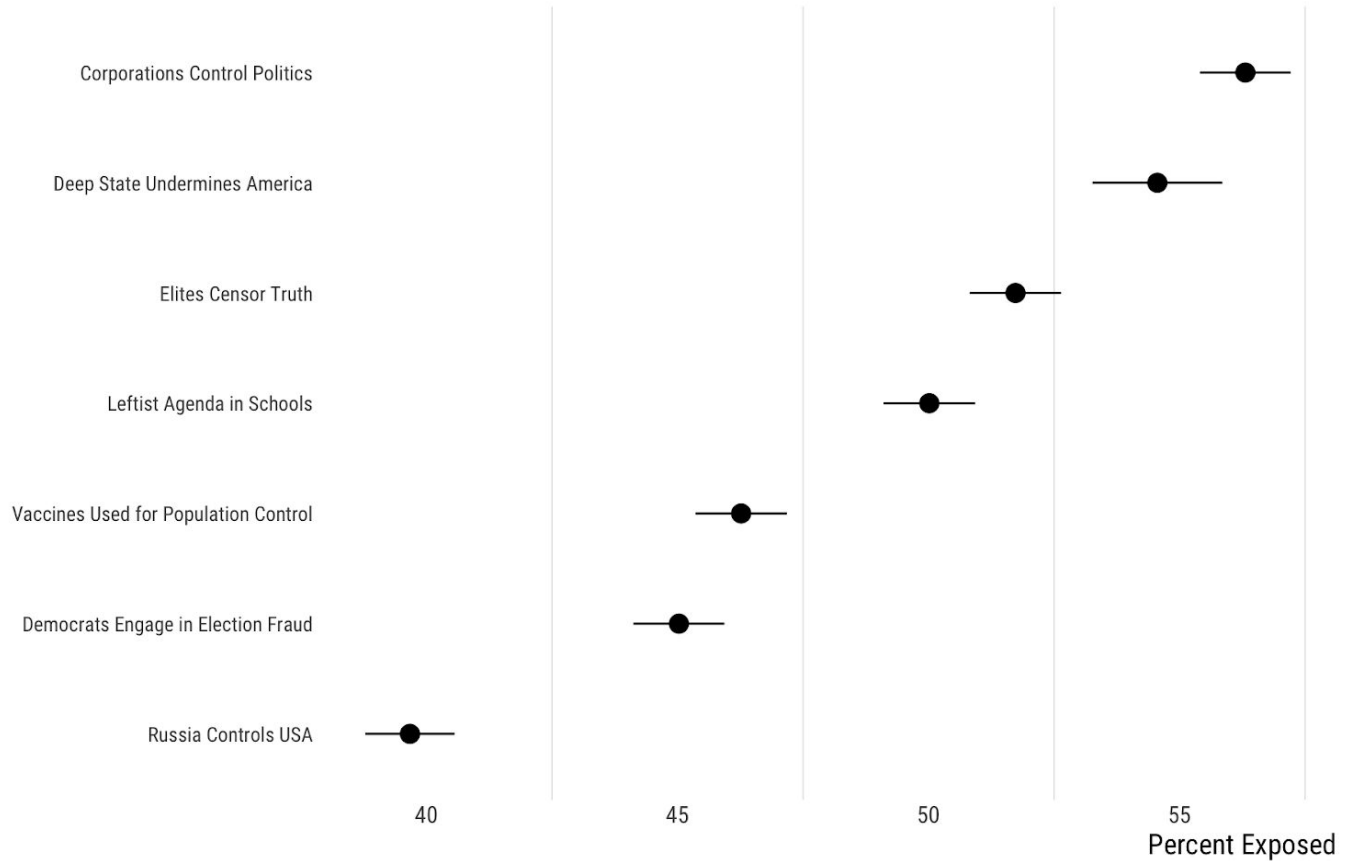


◆ Exposure/Familiarity

- **Most Widely Seen Narratives Involve Elite Influence:**
 - “Corporations are all-powerful in American politics, with little room for the public to make a difference”
 - “There is a Deep State composed of shadowy political figures that is working against the public”
 - “Elites are plotting with mainstream media outlets and social media companies to censor the truth”
- **Others Directly Involve Parties or Ideologies:**
 - “Traditional values are being eroded by a leftist political agenda that is being implemented in schools” (50%)
 - “Democrats have won elections by resorting to fraud and electoral manipulation” (45%)



Exposure to Narratives



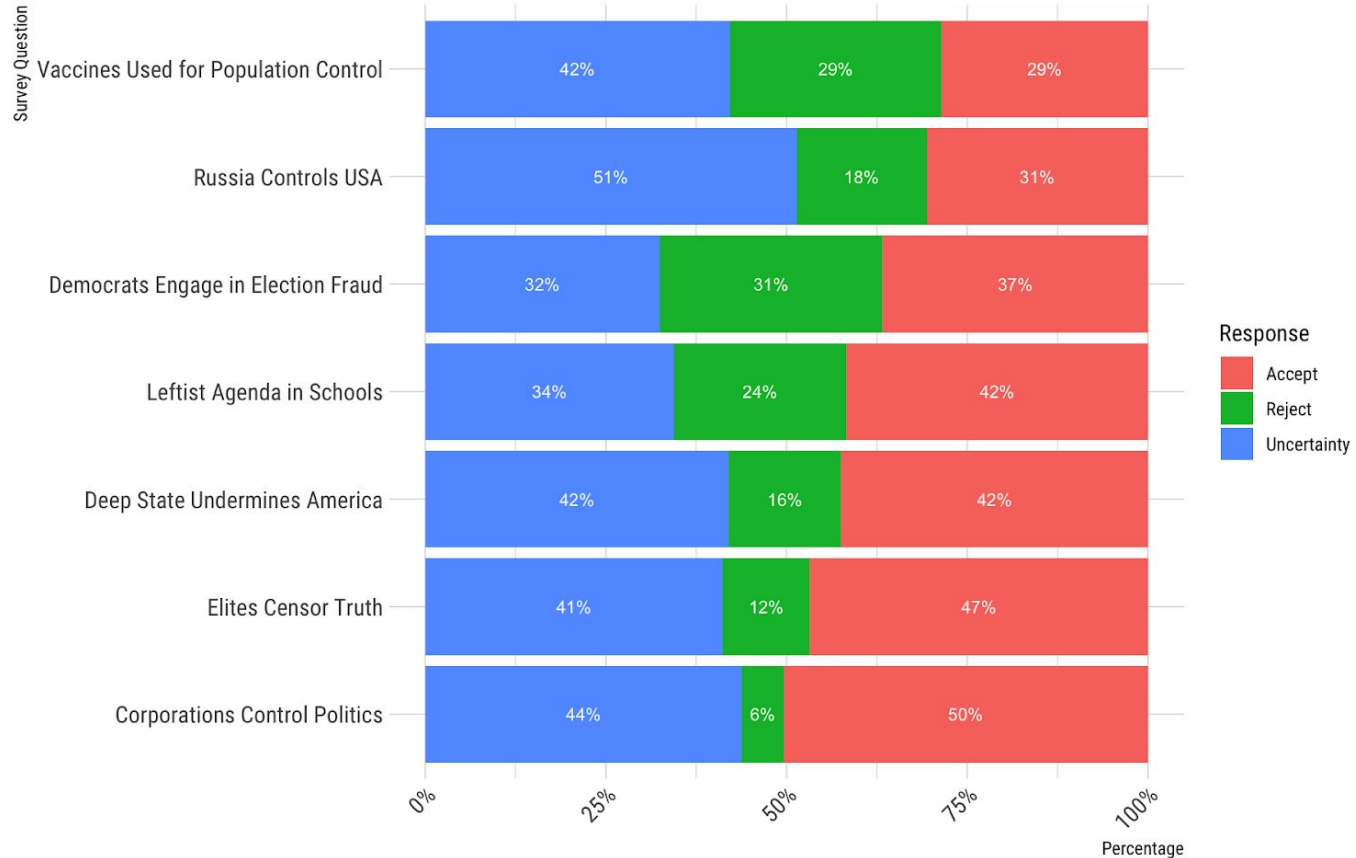


◆ Belief

- **Most-accepted narrative among those who are exposed:**
 - “Corporations are all-powerful in American politics, with little room for the public to make a difference.” (50% accepting)
- **Other narratives with high levels of acceptance among those who are exposed:**
 - “Elites are plotting with mainstream media outlets and social media companies to censor the truth.” (47% accepting)
 - “There is a Deep State composed of shadowy political figures that is working against the public.” (42% accepting)
 - “Traditional values are being eroded by a leftist political agenda that is being implemented in schools.” (42% accepting)



Distribution of Beliefs





Who Sees and Believes **Among Latinos?**



◆ Misinformation Susceptibility

- Average scores on the Misinformation Susceptibility Test (MIST) among Latinos are just a few points shy (62%) of the national average (66%).
- The issue is one of TRUST and POLARIZATION. Both open doors for engagement with misinformation.
- What is the MIST?
 - A set of eight headlines: four true and four false.
 - Participants are asked to rate their accuracy.
 - Total score is measured as share of correct answers.

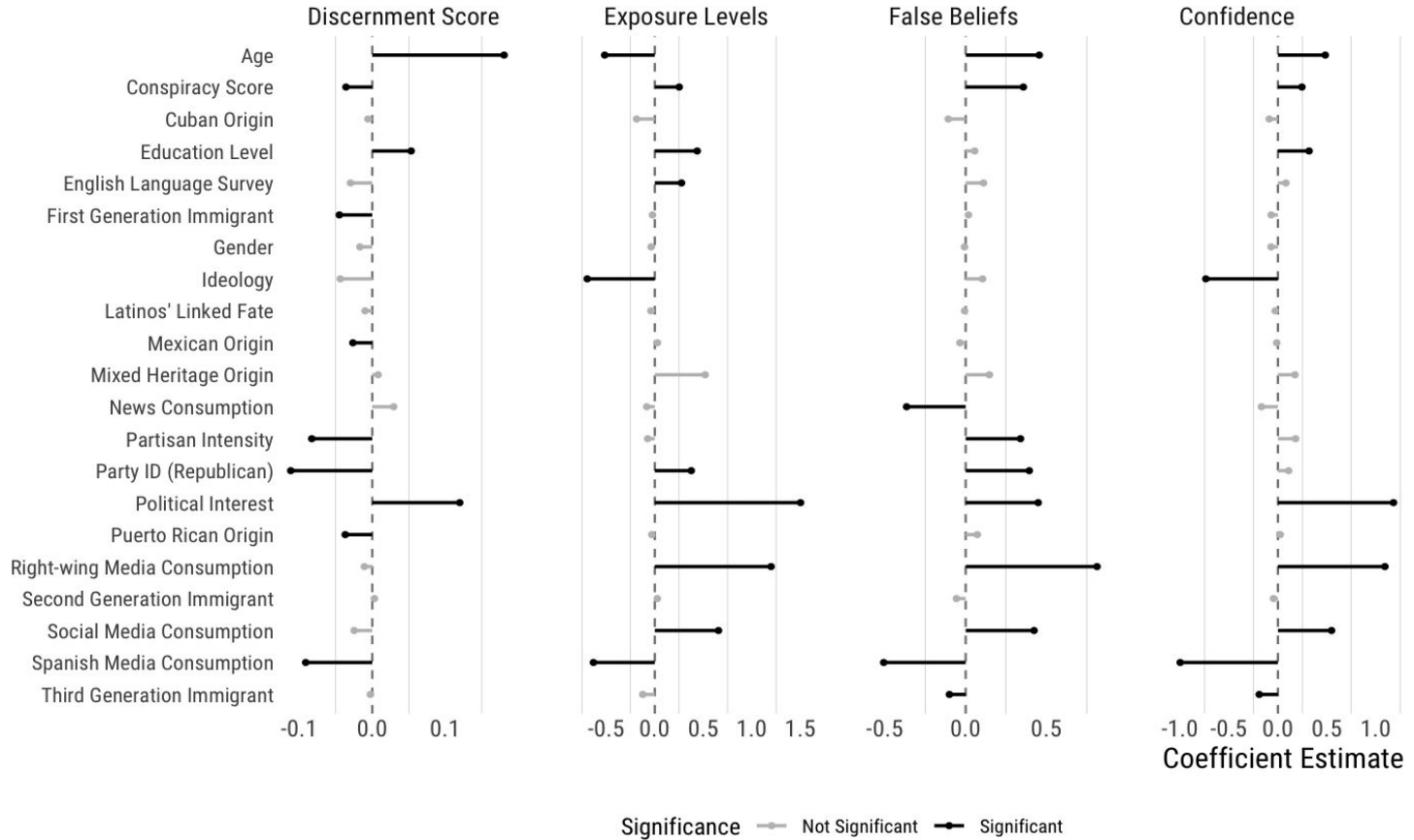


◆ Who Are the Discerning, Exposed, and Believing

- Older and more politically interested Latinos score higher on discernment, whereas Latinos who are conspiratorial, partisan, and Republican tend to score lower. Spanish media consumption is also correlated with lower discernment.
- Yet, some of these “discerning groups” also score higher on misinformation acceptance. Why? Higher levels of exposure. Despite being discerning, on average, the sheer amount of false claims may break through the “firewall.”
- Older Latinos? More confident, which may contribute to higher levels of misinformation adoption.



Correlates of Discernment and Belief





◆ Bottom Line

- Latinos are exposed to a range of left-wing and right-claims online, but remain skeptical.
- While beliefs in discrete claims are generally weak, narratives involving election fraud and elite influence hold more sway, structuring how Latinos respond to new information.
 - Addressing narratives and prebunking and debunking claims can be productively done in tandem.



Who Should We Prioritize **When Targeting Interventions?**



◆ Who Should Interventions Prioritize?

- The Uncertain.
- When producing fact-checking and prebunking, we may want to target groups that may be more receptive versus those with very fixed beliefs.
- Higher-priority Latinos who don't have fixed beliefs about what they are seeing online and may be moved by interventions:
 - Women
 - Facebook Users
 - Spanish-dominant and Spanish-language media consumers
- YouTube use is prevalent across both higher-priority and lower-priority groups. Don't lose sight of where Latinos as a whole consume information.

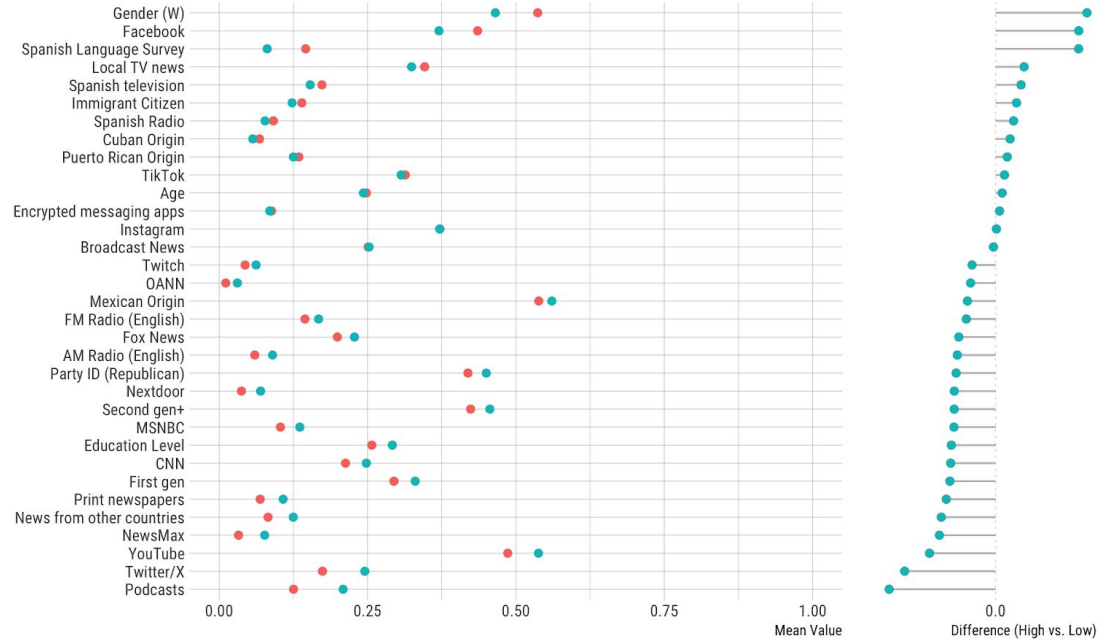


Latinas, Facebook users, and Spanish-dominant Latinos are more likely to belong to this higher-priority group.

Characteristics of Priority Groups

Mean values and differences between covariates for each group

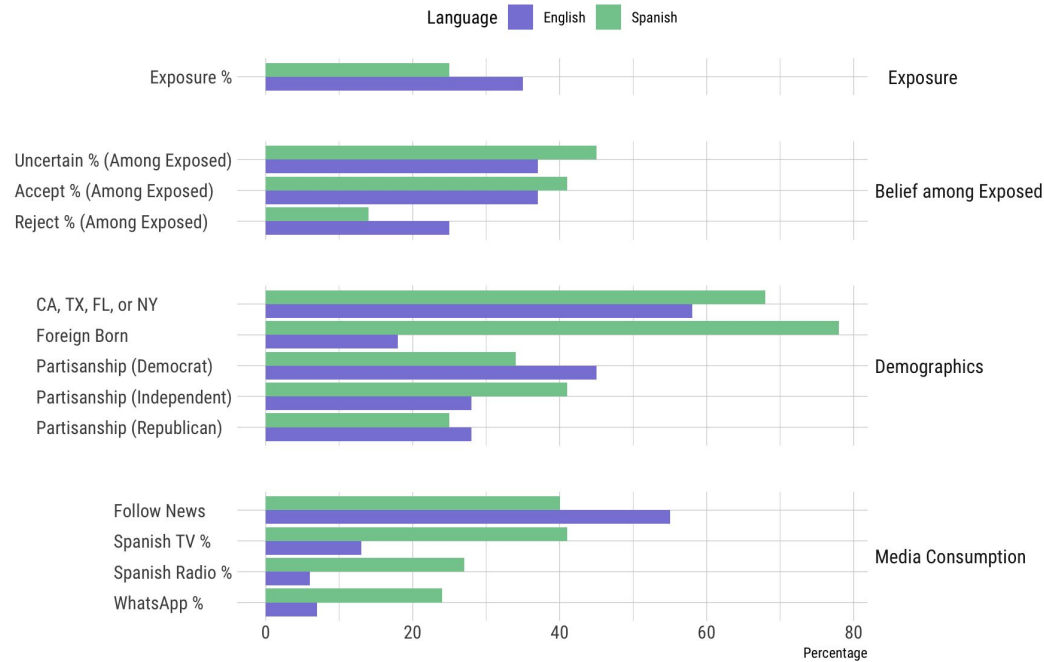
Red points (high priority); Blue points (low priority)





Differences between Spanish and English-dominant respondents are not attributable to a single source, but reflect variation in media consumption, demographics, and partisanship

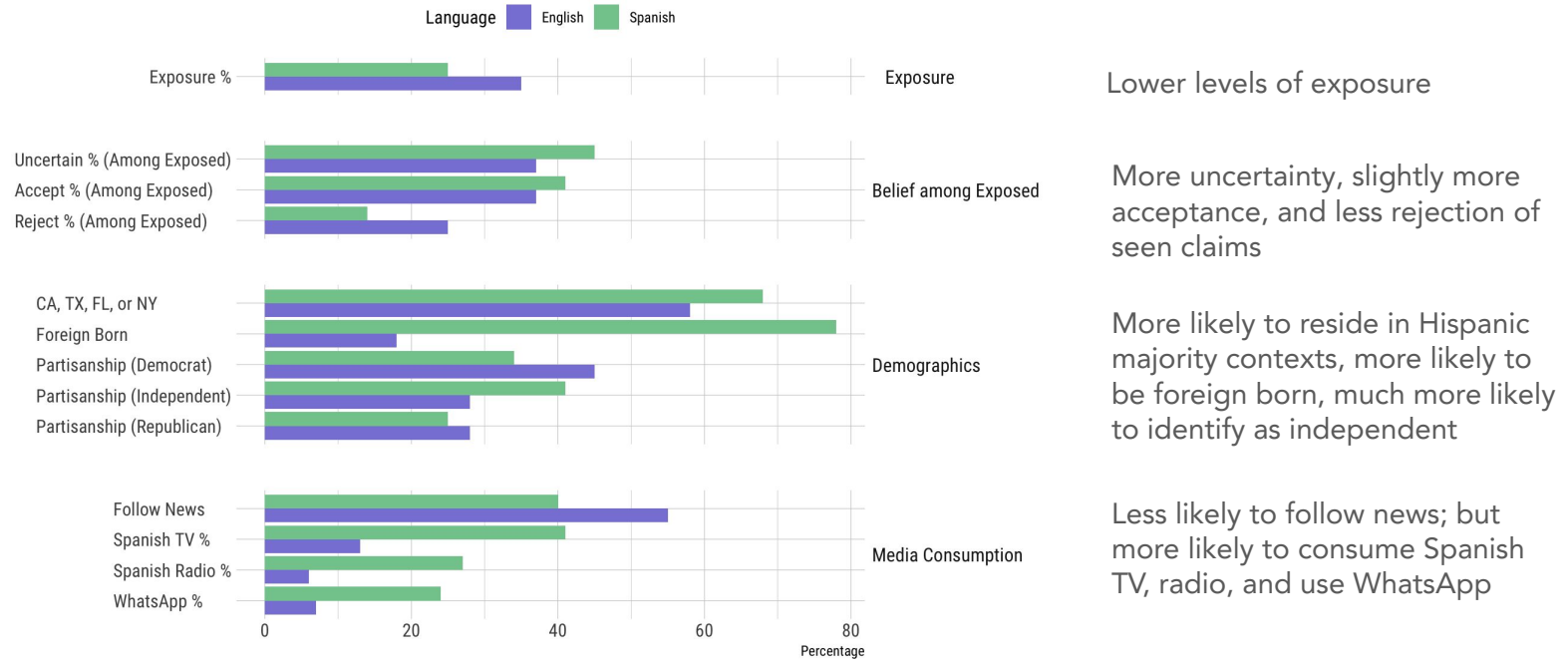
Language Deep Dive: English vs Spanish





Differences between Spanish and English-dominant respondents are not attributable to a single source, but reflect variation in media consumption, demographics, and partisanship

Language Deep Dive: English vs Spanish





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Trust, Distrust, and Misinformation



◆ The Crisis of Trust

- Misinformation adoption doesn't occur in a vacuum
- Credible sources of information like traditional media have been attacked, trust in institutions are at an all-time low
- This creates opportunities for malicious actors to fill this information vacuum
- Understanding the implications and correlates of trust is important in the fight against misinformation



◆ Stakeholders

We measured trust in election-related groups such as:

- Secretaries of State
- Poll Workers
- Election Administrators
- Democrats
- Republicans
- The President

As well as other democracy-related actors:

- The Supreme Court
- Congress
- Religious Leaders
- Activists
- Media organizations (CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, Telemundo, Univision)
- Journalists
- Local Journalists
- Fact-Checkers
- Political Parties
- Religious Leaders
- Tech Companies
- Social Media
- Scientists
- Neighbors



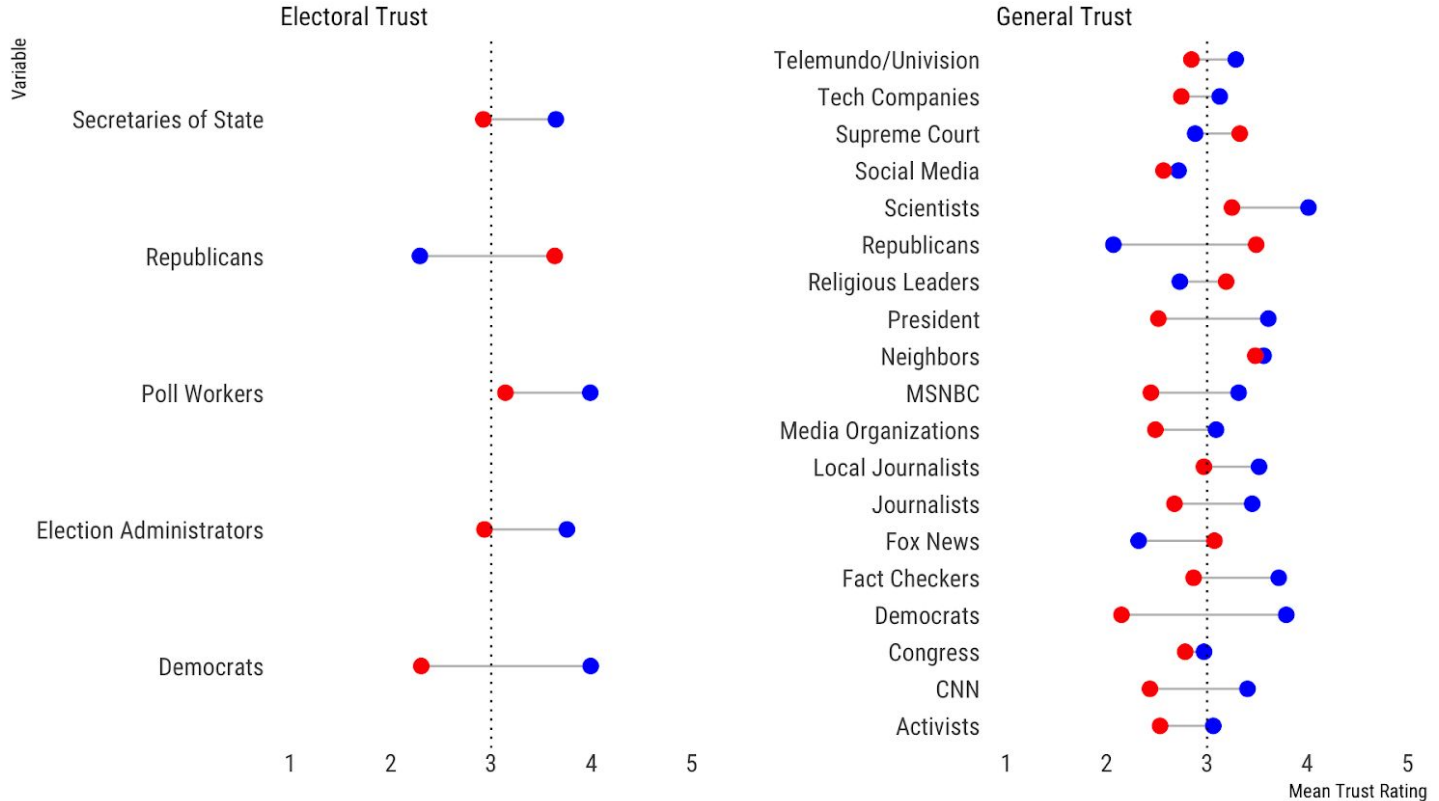
◆ Which Stakeholders do Latinos Trust Most and Least?

- **Latino Republicans** largely feel ambivalent about election officials (poll workers, secretaries of state) though tend to rank them lower on the trust scale than Democrats.
- **Latinos Democrats** are much more likely to trust secretaries of state, poll workers and election administrators. Also more likely to trust fact-checkers, journalists and local journalists.
- Both sides distrust the other side to “do the right thing” on election day.
- Partisan gaps emerge for more partisan media outlets.
- Only groups that emerge as trusted by both include neighbors and scientists.



Comparison of Trust Ratings by Political Affiliation

Dashed line represents ambivalence. Scores lower than this line represent greater distrust. Scores higher than this line represent greater trust.



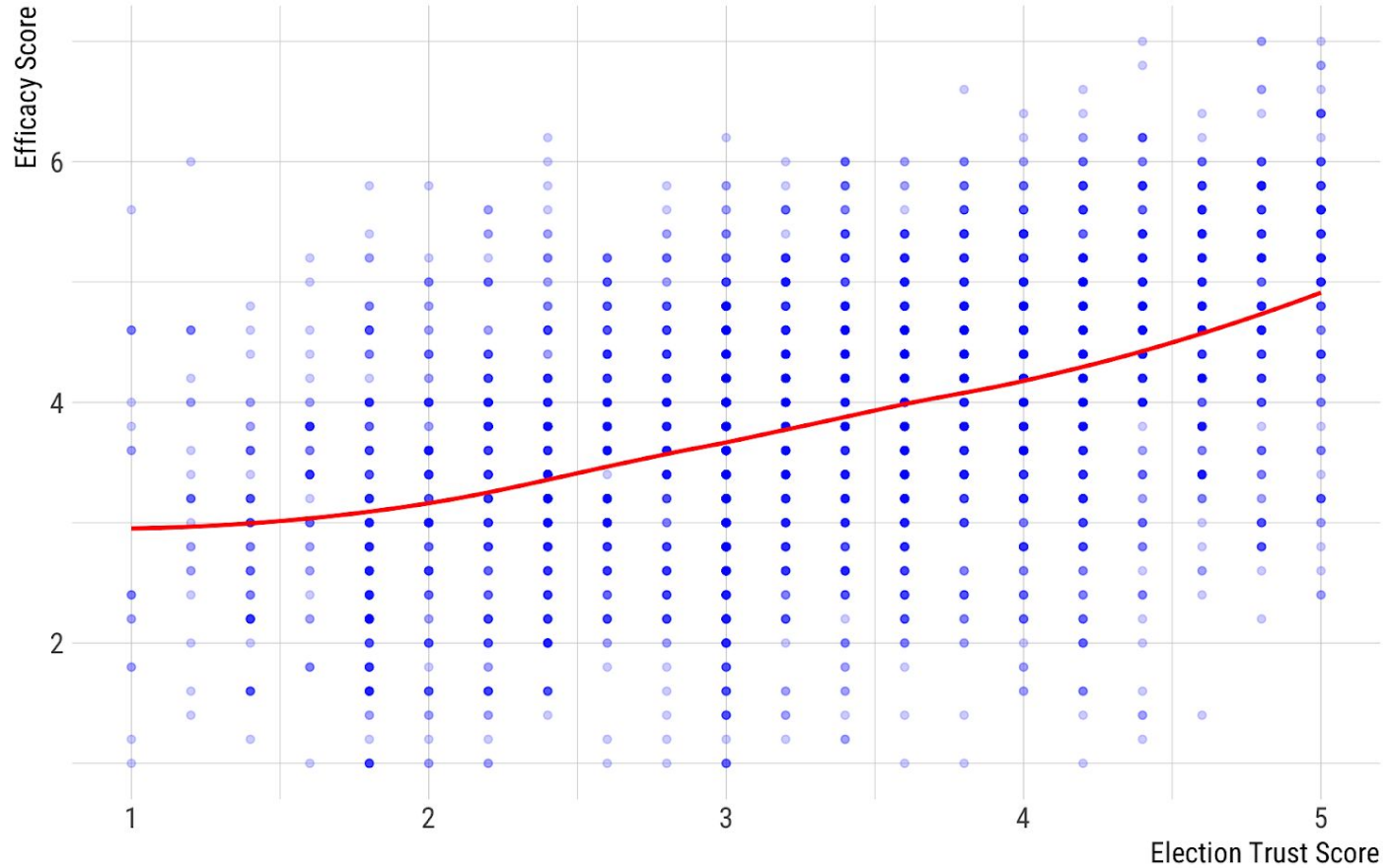


◆ How Might Trust Matter?

- Trust may influence how much people engage with false claims and disputed narratives.
- It may also affect how people feel about the political system.
- Focusing on “efficacy” or one’s feelings that they can have an impact on the political process, we observe a modest and positive correlation with trust in elections (Pearson’s $r = .5$). As trust in elections goes up, we see stronger feelings of political efficacy.
- Though correlational, it suggests one pathway to political engagement is through trust in political processes.



Relationship between Election Trust and Political Efficacy





Who is More Likely to Trust and Engage?

- Older Latinos trust in election actors (e.g., poll workers, Secretaries of State), believe their votes will be counted, and score higher on turnout intention.
- Groups like more conspiratorial and conservative Latinos are less likely to trust the process. Despite this, they are no less likely to express an intention to turnout.
- Demographic factors tied to recency of immigration such as Spanish dominance and generational status predict a lower voting likelihood.

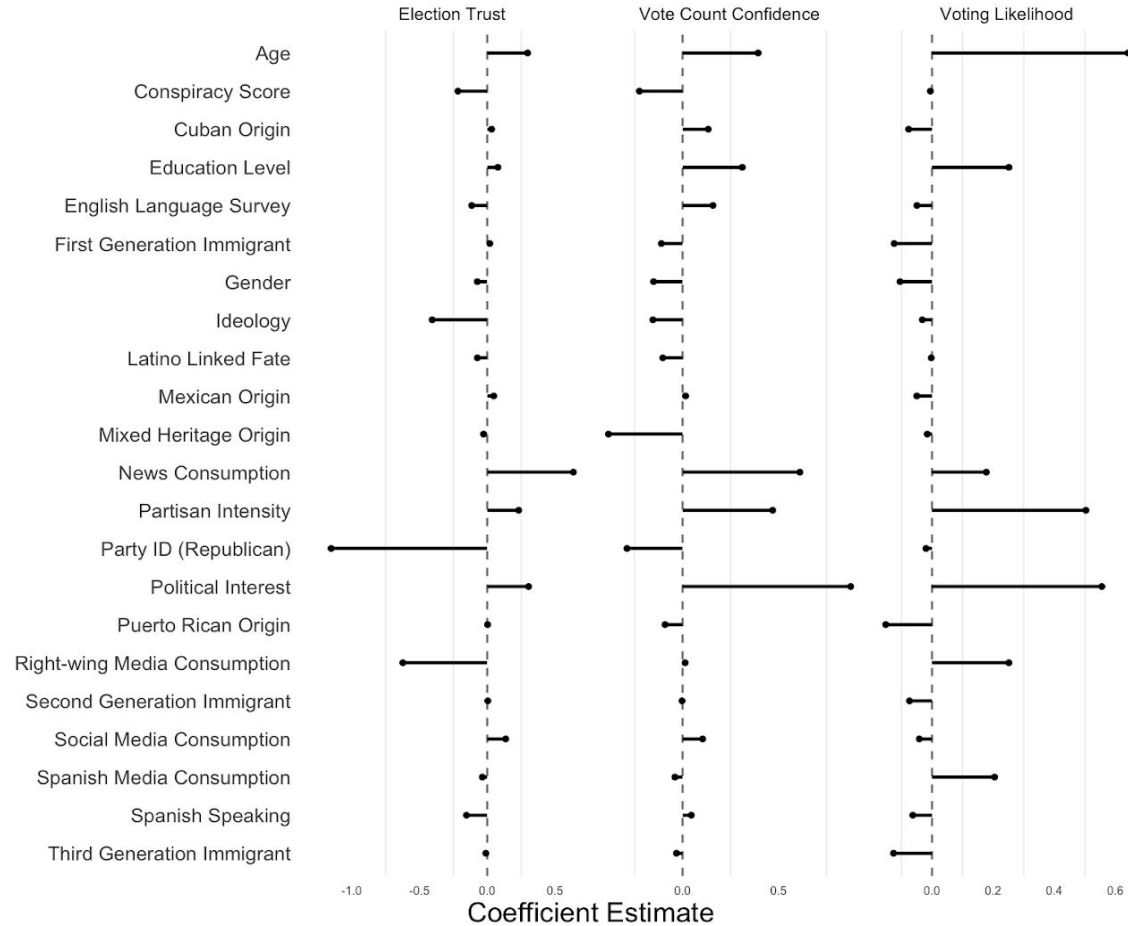


How Does Trust Relate to Voter Turnout?

- Some Latinos choose to participate *in spite* of beliefs of “rigged elections” or untrustworthy officials.
- For example, older Latinos above the age of 65 are less likely to perceive their participation in elections to matter relative to those who have recently reached voting age (ages 18-29), but are more likely to report a desire to turnout to vote.
- More conspiratorial and conservative Latinos are less likely to trust the process, but they are no less likely to express an intention to turn out to vote.



Correlates of Engagement and Efficacy





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Latinos and AI



AI Tool Use among Latinos

AI Tool	Proportion
ChatGPT	0.15
Bing/Copilot Chat	0.05
Midjourney	0.02
Dall-E	0.02
Stable Diffusion	0.02
Familiar with these tools, but not regular user	0.30
Have never used	0.50

◆ Where do Latinos stand on AI?

- Few use popular tools like ChatGPT on a regular basis, but more are aware of them.



Attitudes Toward AI and Regulation

- Latinos were largely ambivalent about AI - nearly half (47%) viewed AI as “neither positive nor negative.”
 - The remaining responses were evenly split between seeing AI as positive (27%) or negative (27%).
- Latinos who use AI on a regular basis feel more positive about its benefits for society, particularly in scientific discovery and productivity.
- But 68% of Latinos surveyed report that there is a “pressing need for stricter regulations and oversight of artificial intelligence technologies.”



AI and Elections

- Only 28% believed AI could be a “game changer” in the 2024 election.
- The majority viewed AI’s political impact as either marginal or non-existent, with:
 - 41% agreeing that “The 2024 election will look just like every other election,” and
 - 31% who saw AI playing a minor role through chatbots and personalized information.



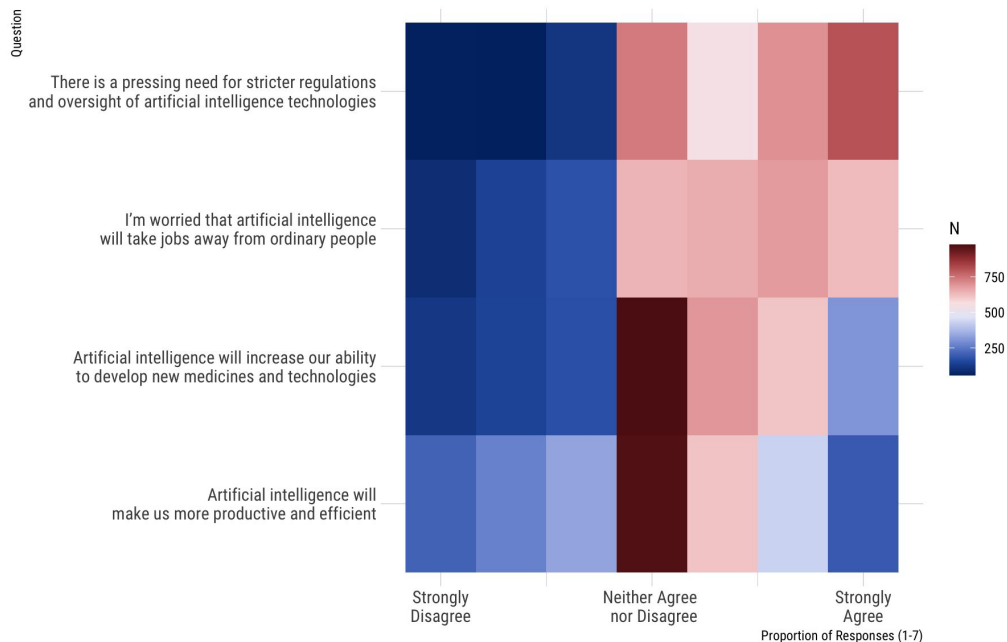
AI and Jobs

- 66% of Latinos surveyed reported being “worried that artificial intelligence will take jobs away from ordinary people.”



◆ Ambivalence about Artificial Intelligence

Heatmap of Likert Scale Responses



- Most support regulations and are worried about their impact on the labor market
- Still, there is some optimism regarding these tools making us more productive and enabling medical discoveries
- 47% have a neutral view on AI in general, with equal percentages (27%) seeing it as either a positive or negative force.

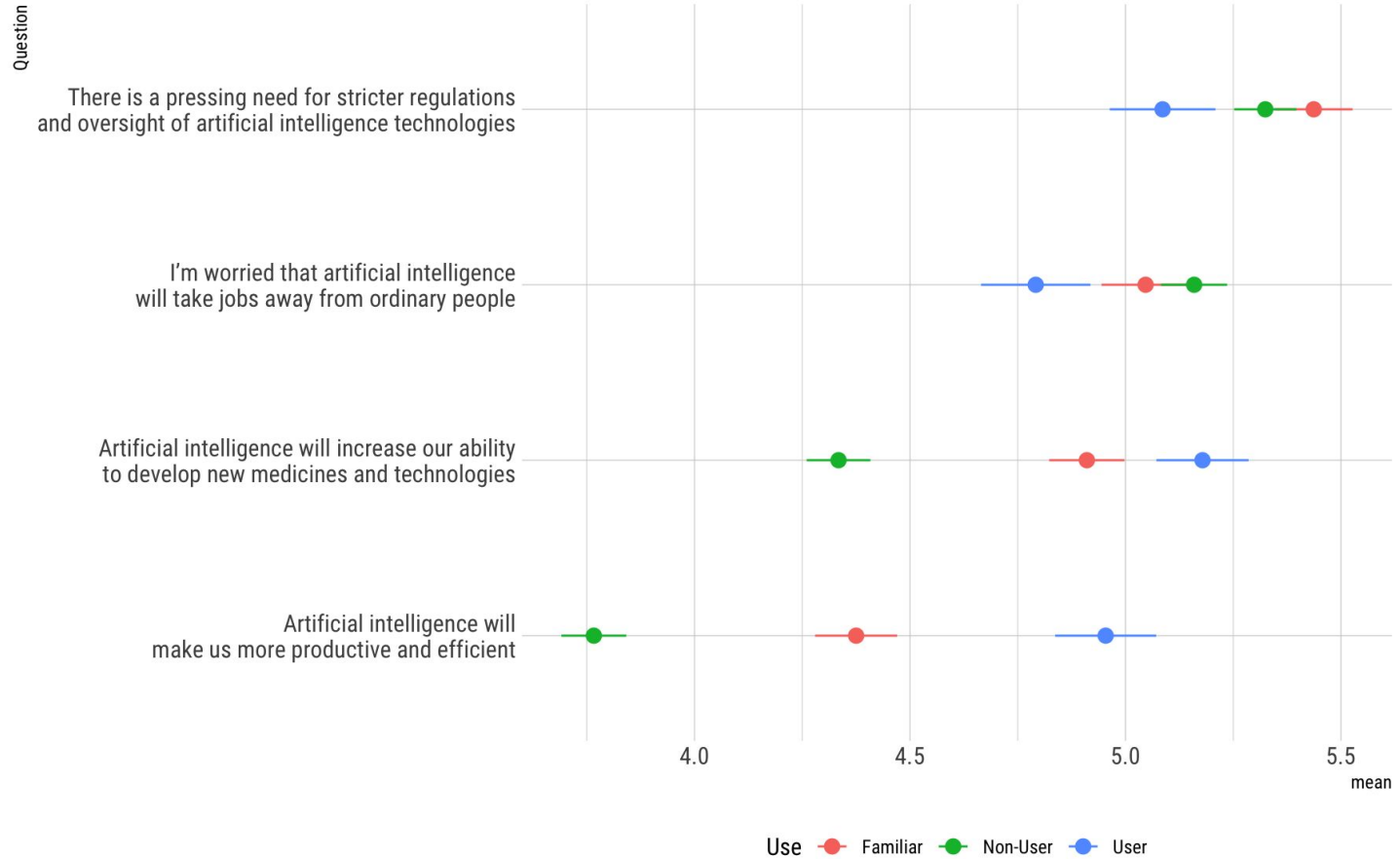


AI Use and AI Attitudes

- AI users tend to have slightly more positive attitudes about AI
- Understanding the benefits and challenges of these technologies may require more “AI literacy” education
- Knowing how to spot AI-generated content may need to be incorporated into digital literacy curricula



AI Use and AI Attitudes



◆ Wrapping Up - Latinos & Misinformation

1. Latinos have high exposure to and low acceptance of misinformation - skepticism and uncertainty prevail.
2. Targeting specific claims can be productive if you target the more uncertain Latinos, but don't lose sight of larger narratives that transcend elections because those are increasingly penetrating.
3. Demographics most likely to be "higher-priority" for interventions: women, Facebook users, Spanish dominant, more recent immigrants.

◆ Wrapping Up - Latinos & Trust + AI

1. Sizable partisan gaps in political trust.
2. Scientists remain trusted by both groups. Could be leveraged for communication.
3. Distrust doesn't necessarily imply less engagement, but it may lead to a more pessimistic outlook on politics.
4. AI attitudes: Ambivalent, and hopeful, but incorporating "AI literacy" into existing digital literacy trainings may be necessary.



◆ Resources - 2024

- [POLL TAKEAWAYS: Latinos & Misinformation](#)
- [POLL TAKEAWAYS: Latinos & Trust](#)
- [POLL TAKEAWAYS: Latinos & AI](#)
- [FULL POLL REPORT](#)



◆ Resources - 2022 and 2023

- (Memo 1): [In and Out of the Rabbit Hole: Exploring Misinformation Adoption among Subgroups of Latinos in the United States](#)
- (Memo 2): [Unpacking Misinformation Adoption Among U.S. Latinos: Toward a Typology](#)
- (Memo 3): [Seeking Antidotes to Misinformation: An Analysis of Effective Counter-Strategies among U.S. Latinos](#)

Original Equis Disinfo Dept. Research below:

- Information Integrity Research
 - Equis - [Disinfo Poll Summary](#)
 - Equis - [Disinfo Poll Full Results](#)
- Trusted Messengers
 - Equis - [The Role of Trusted Messengers in Countering Disinformation](#)
- Latino Media Consumption Research
 - Equis - [Equis Playbook: Media Consumption Among Latinos](#)
 - Equis - [YouTube Research](#)



◆ More Resources

Also available:

- Six snapshot analyses of [issues and narratives](#) in Latino spaces online (also available in Spanish and Portuguese)
- Six summaries of Latino usage of key [platforms and apps](#) (also available in Spanish and Portuguese)
- A [review of academic literature](#) on U.S. Latinos and disinformation



◆ Contact Information

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We look forward to working more closely with you all in 2024!