

To: Latino Victory, Giffords

Date: September 4, 2019

From: Matt Barreto, Co-founder, Latino Decisions; Sylvia Manzano, Principal, Latino Decisions

Subject: Latino Voter Focus Groups in San Antonio, Texas

On behalf of Latino Victory and Giffords, Latino Decisions conducted focus groups in San Antonio, Texas to learn more about how Latino voters are experiencing the current political climate, their views on gun violence, and issues that motivate their interest in participating in the 2020 elections.

Two sessions with Latino registered voters were held on August 28th; one in Spanish and one in English. All participants reside in Texas 23rd Congressional District, but have missed one or more recent elections. For more information about the participants, see the participant demographic profile at the end of this memo, which provides demographic details.

Summary

Latinos are tired of bearing the brunt of Trump's consistently anti-Latino and anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies. Concerns about gun violence are deeply entwined with worry that Trump inspires anti-Latino sentiment and violence. Many describe feeling they have to think "in survival mode" now because guns are easily available, and "Trump put a target on our backs". Enthusiasm to vote in 2020 is driven in part by the strong desire to replace Trump, but voters are also paying attention to candidate policy positions on gun violence (universal background checks, banning assault rifles), immigration, and health care.

Key Findings

1. Participants share the view that Trump has emboldened racists and is responsible for increased discrimination and violence directed at Latinos.

"It starts at the top, the office of the president. The things he says – in his official capacity -- gets people whipped up. They believe if he can say it, they can too. Trump gives people permission to puff out their chest with racism."

"He's talking about all Hispanics, ALL of us. Infestation?! We aren't animals or insects – it is an insult."

"Racism always been, but people were tolerant. But now, with way country is going, racists are speaking out more, they feel they have a right to be racist because of Trump. He shows it is okay to be outwardly racist."

"I think others hear what he says and think all Latinos are that way. They see the news, then tell people "go back where you came from". They assume we are all illegal. On social media they tell us to go back to Mexico, they group us together and think we don't belong here."

2. They are fearful of racist violence that targets their families and communities, especially in light of the recent mass shooting in El Paso.

“The (El Paso) murderer was from Dallas. They can come here or any other city that has a lot of Latinos. I worry for myself and other Latinos.”

It is different because he went a long way to kill people – wasn’t from there. Lots of hate, he was looking for Latinos and Mexicans. I’m feeling a lot of fear, that they would come here and do the same.”

“It’s scary, he could have shortened his trip four hours and come for us in San Antonio. We are closer to Dallas. I feel threatened.”

3. Universal background checks and banning assault rifles were unanimously supported. By the end of the session, 12 of the 16 said gun violence was a priority issue for them going into the 2020 election.

“These guns (semi-automatics) are used for massacres. Why do we need to have them? There is no need.”

“Only the military needs those kinds of rifles.”

“I was surprised to learn how easy it is to get guns online. What is the point of having licensed gun dealers if people can get them online?”

4. These voters are tired of inaction on gun violence and weak response following mass shootings.

“After Sutherland Springs they said they would do some kind of gun control and they didn’t do anything. Abbott talked about it, that we needed to change the laws. But then nothing.”

“That picture of Trump in El Paso giving a thumbs-up looked like he was laughing in our faces – it reminded me, just like when he went to Puerto Rico and threw paper towels.”

“Pray for this person and pray for that person. It’s not sincere, they don’t care because it isn’t their family. NRA tells them what to do.”

5. The Trump Administration’s treatment of immigrants at the border, particularly children, is viewed as inhumane and motivated by his antipathy for Latinos.

“I see those kids and it hurts me. He’s separating families – that is different even from other Republicans. They never separated kids before, I’ve never seen things like I am seeing now.”

“At this point, we got it: he doesn’t like Mexicans. He doesn’t want a wall with Canada, just Mexico.”

6. They feel a real kinship with immigrants, even those who are several generations removed from the immigrant experience. Their personal relationships and cultural ties run deep.

“It is an insult to our ancestry.”

“Our kids are very involved in sports, and we have lots of tournaments in the Valley, and some kids won’t go because they are afraid (of the Border Patrol check points along the route).”

“It is not really directly personal for me, I mean I’m 3rd generation. But I totally disagree with how he’s separating families. I feel connected emotionally, to see people go through that.”

7. These voters hold Republican elected officials responsible, for going along with Trump, and creating a hostile or even dangerous climate for Latinos.

“Other Republicans support him and his laws. They are afraid of Trump so they go along.”

“A lot of them are quiet because they are afraid of him. Or, they don’t say it (anti-Latino or anti-immigrant speeches) like him, but it is all the same because they support his laws.”

“Trump uses immigration as a soapbox. He rants and raves about rapists and criminals. He has been saying this since he started running, we know that. The Republicans will follow suit because they have no spines.”

8. Presidential candidates Julian Castro and Beto O’Rourke are the only two people in politics or government that participants said have stood up to Trump and stood up for the Latino community.

“Julian, he went to check on the kids at the border, took pictures to show everyone what is going on there. He’s been very outspoken about it.”

“Beto, he says Trump is leading the hate. He just said, ‘you know that Trump is a racist’, and you know it especially after the El Paso incident.”

“Trump is different, he’s tearing us apart. He has no respect for us. He insults us. We’re supposed to be the UNITED States.”

9. Family members – specifically spouses and children – are the people that these voters trust most to discuss their worries about gun violence, and look to for reliable information. Trusted formal news sources were primarily local news outlets, along with CNN, and Spanish language news networks Univision and Telemundo.

“I talk with my daughter – we are in survival mode, we need to be ready if something happens. I encourage her to be nice to everybody, if you are nice to someone who is shooting, maybe they won’t shoot you if you are nice to them.”

Table 1. Participant Demographic Profile

Sex		Children under age 18 at home	
Men	6	Yes	9
Women	10	No	7
Age		Marital Status	
18-39	7	Married	9
40-60	9	Not Married	7
Education		Preferred News Language	
High school	5	English	6
Some college	7	Both English and Spanish	9
College degree	4	Spanish	1
Household Income		Recent Elections Missed	
Less than \$45k	10	Missed 2018	10
\$45k-\$80k	2	Missed 2016	3
More than \$80k	4	Missed 2018 and 2016	3
Session Language		Gun Ownership	
English	8	Currently own / have guns in the home	5
Spanish	8	Grew up with guns in the home	5
Participant Nativity		Party Identification	
U.S. Mainland Born	13	Lean Democrat	11
Mexico	2	Independent	5
Puerto Rico Island Born	1	Lean Republican	0
Parent Nativity		Presidential Approval	
Both U.S. mainland born	9	Neither approve nor disapprove	1
Both Mexican born	4	Somewhat disapprove	7
1 US born and 1 Mexican born	2	Strongly disapprove	8
Both Puerto Rico island born	1		
Latino origin			
Mexico	15		
Puerto Rico	1		

Table 2. Important Issues Going Into 2020 Election

*Going into the 2020 elections, what issues are the most important to you, personally?
List up to three issues or concerns.*

Table reports number of participants who cited issue at beginning and end of the session.)

Issues of Personal Importance Going in the 2020 Election	Start of Session	End of Session
College affordability	2	0
Corruption	1	1
Crime	3	1
Domestic Violence	0	1
Economy	3	3
Education	5	3
Energy	1	1
Environment	1	1
Health care / costs	7	10
Human rights	1	0
Immigration	5	9
Job security / low pay	4	0
Mass shootings / too many guns	2	12
Mental health	0	1
Medical marijuana	1	0
Poverty	2	0
Racism	5	2
Vote out Trump	0	2