



Explaining Demographic Changes in the 2024 Election

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Abstract

This article looks at voting trends among Americans based on race and gender to uncover potential demographic shifts in recent American elections. NBC News exit polling data demonstrates that Black, Latino, and White men were more likely to vote for Donald Trump in the 2024 election than Black, Latino, and White women. However, using data from the American National Election Studies from 2000 to 2020, I find that these results are not an anomaly but are consistent with a trend that has been active in American electoral politics for many years.

Keywords: Race, Gender, Republican Party, Voting patterns, Demographic shift, Elections

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One of the surprising results of the 2024 election was the percentage of racial and ethnic minorities that voted for Donald Trump, especially men. In these comments, I will provide a starting point to contextualize and explain what some are calling the “racial realignment” in U.S. politics.¹

It breaks down, by race and gender, the percentage of respondents in the exit poll who voted for Kamala Harris or Donald Trump. There are a few takeaways from this initial exit poll that can start the conversation about how different groups voted in the 2024 election. First, although less Black Americans voted for the Democratic candidate in this election compared to previous general elections, Black Americans remain the racial group most likely to support the Democratic Party. Second, a similar statement can be made about Latinos. While Latino support for the Democratic ticket was less than in previous general election years, the majority of Latinos still voted for Harris.

The demographic changes of the 2024 election are illuminated by both race and gender. Again, starting with Black Americans, Black men were much more likely to vote for Trump than Black women—21% of Black men voted for Trump versus 7% of Black women. A gender gap also exists among Latinos at 54% versus 39%, respectively. In fact, the gender gap exists across all racial groups: It is not unusual that more Black and Latino men voted for the Republican candidate than Black and Latino women—the same can be said of white Americans.

Table 1 shows initial results from NBC News exit polls.²

	Democrat	Republican
White Americans	42%	57%
White men	38%	60%
White women	46%	53%
Black Americans	86%	13%
Black men	77%	21%
Black women	92%	7%
Hispanic/Latino	51%	46%
Latino men	44%	54%
Latina women	58%	39%

Questions remain, however, around whether these demographic trends are new. Is racial realignment a story of the 2024 election, or have these changes underlain previous recent elections? To answer this question, I examine partisan identification among Black and Latino men and women over time, using data from the American National Election Studies (ANES). Figure 1 shows the percentage of Black and Latino Americans who identify with the Democratic Party in 2000–2020. Starting with Black Americans on the left, Figure 1a shows that while Democratic partisan identification has somewhat fluctuated for Black Americans as a group, since 2008 there has been a 10-percentage-point decline among Black men. In 2008, 88 percent

1 For more on the racial realignment, see: John Sides. “The 2024 Election Story Is More Complex than ‘Racial Realignment.’” *Good Authority*. <https://goodauthority.org/news/election-2024-racial-realignment-us-politics/>.

2 For more on this exit poll, see “National Exit Polls: Election 2024 Results.” *NBC News*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2024-elections/exit-polls>.

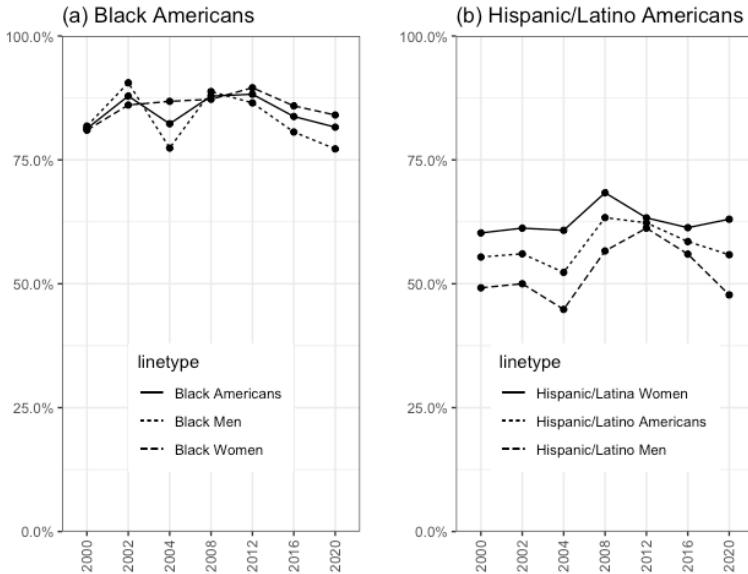
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of Black men identified with the Democratic Party, which had fallen to 77 percent by 2020. We do not see the same shift among Black women. In the same time frame, 87 percent of Black women identified as Democrats in 2008, and 84 percent in 2020.

Turning to Latinos in Figure 1b, we see a similar decline in Democratic partisanship among all Latinos, and it is Latino men who have driven it. In 2012, 61 percent of Latino men identified with the Democratic Party; in 2020, this number was only 47 percent. There has been no substantive movement in Democratic Party identification among Latina women in the same time frame. Sixty-three percent of Latina women identified with the Democratic Party in 2012 and 2020.

In summary, the 2024 election is not an anomaly in terms of Black and Latino Americans turning away from the Democratic Party. Results from Figure 1 show that these demographic shifts have been under way since at least 2012 for both Black and Latino Americans. Furthermore, they have occurred mostly among men of both racial and ethnic groups.

Figure 1: Partisan Identity for Black and Latino Americans men and women in 2000–2020



It is important to note that even though there are proportionally fewer Black American men who support the Democratic Party, Black men were still only behind Black women as the racial and gender group most likely to vote for Harris in the 2024 election. Hispanic/Latino women represented the next racial and gender group that supported Harris the most. Therefore, we should not overstate the demographic trends or go as far as to conclude that these groups contributed to a racial realignment similar to that seen in the middle of the twentieth century.

Nonetheless, the power of racial and ethnic groups in politics lies in their ability to vote together in elections. Scholarship theorizes that Black Americans should

work together politically as a group,³ that Black Americans historically have worked together as a group in political struggles,⁴ and that Black Americans put the interests of the racial group ahead of their own interests to accomplish political goals.⁵ Zepeda-Millán finds that certain issues like immigration create a sense of solidarity aimed at improving the group's position and lead to mass mobilization, in this case among Latinos.⁶ More recent scholarship shows that those who identify as “people of color”—Black, Latino, Asian, Muslim, and multiracial Americans—use the Democratic Party as the vehicle to achieve their political goals.⁷

We can leverage this understanding of the nature of racial and ethnic group politics to make sense of the demographic changes seen in the 2024 election. For example, it may be the case that the Black and Latino Americans who voted for Trump are less likely to situate themselves in social and political spaces around fellow racial and ethnic group members. Indeed, Laird and Wamble find that the Black partisan gender gap can be explained in this way.⁸ Black men are less likely to be in social groups with other members of their racial group, leading to Black men being more likely to identify as Republican. Furthermore, Beltrán questions the very existence of a Latino political agenda that works together to improve the racial group's position.⁹ Her work contains insights into Latinos' partisanship in 2024 and beyond.

One of the goals of this panel is to discuss racial and ethnic heterogeneity among churches and how that may be connected to the results of the 2024 election. The literature about racial and ethnic group politics, together with the events of 2024, leads one to hypothesize that Black and Latino people who go to multiracial churches behave differently politically compared to those who go to churches where their racial and ethnic group is the majority.

To explore this, I turn to the 2016 Collaborative Multiracial Post Election Survey (CMPS). Figure 2 plots the connection between partisan identity and a measure that asks Black and Latino Americans about the racial and ethnic composition of their church. In particular, the CMPS has respondents indicate the approximate racial/ethnic composition of their religious worship or gathering on a scale from 0 to 100. For Black Americans, the more Black people who attend each respondent's place of worship, the more likely the respondent is to identify with the Democratic Party. The same is true for Latino Americans. For them, this effect is quite meaningful—when an individual Latino American attends a place of worship that is zero-percent

3 Stokeley Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black power: The politics of liberation*. (New York: Random House, 1967); Tommie Shelby. *We who are dark: The philosophical foundations of black solidarity*. (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2005).

4 Dennis Chong. *Collective action and the civil rights movement*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Steven Hahn. *A nation under our feet Black political struggles in the rural South from slavery to the Great Migration*. (Chicago: Harvard University Press, 2005); Isabel Wilkerson. *The warmth of other suns: The epic story of America's great migration*. (London: Penguin UK, 2011).

5 Michael C. Dawson. *Behind the mule: Race and class in African American politics*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Jasmine Carrera Smith. “Electability Politics: How and Why Black Americans Vote in Primary Elections,” 2022. <https://hdl.handle.net/10161/25785>; Julian J. Wamble. *We choose you: How Black voters decide which candidates to support*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025); Ismail K. White and Chyrl N. Laird. *Steadfast democrats: How social forces shape Black political behavior*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

6 Chris Zepeda-Millán. *Latino mass mobilization: Immigration, racialization, and activism*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

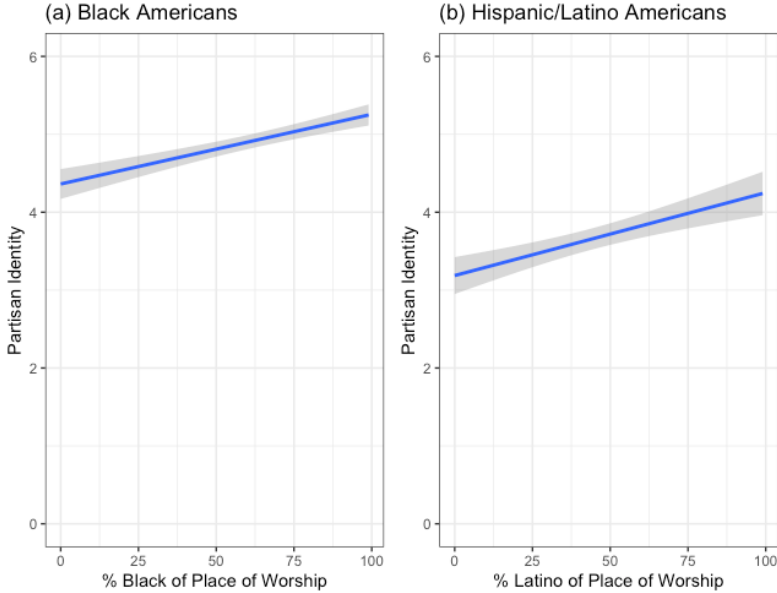
7 Efrén O. Pérez, *Diversity's child: People of color and the politics of identity*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021); Efrén Pérez, Bianca Vicuña, and Alisson Ramos. “Taking Stock of Solidarity between People of Color: A Mini Meta-Analysis of Five Experiments.” *American Political Science Review* 118, no. 3 (2024): 1549–55. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055423001120>.

8 Chyrl Laird and Julian Wamble. “Social Influencers: How Race-Based Social Dynamics affect the Black Partisan Gender Gap.” Unpublished manuscript, October 22, 2022.

9 Christina Beltrán. *The trouble with unity: Latino politics and the creation of identity*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Latino, they are likely to identify as independent; however, when they attend a place of worship that is 100-percent Latino, they are likely to identify with the Democratic Party.

Figure 2: Relationship between Partisan Identity and Racial and Ethnic Composition of Place of Worship



In summary, there were meaningful demographic shifts in the 2024 presidential election. While I do not want to overstate the extent to which Black and Latino Americans, and men in particular, supported the Republican Party, the ANES over time shows that the gradual migration to the Republican Party among this demographic group is not new. I turned to research on race, ethnicity, and politics examining whether and how Black and Latino Americans work together as a group to achieve their political goals. I further questioned whether it is those less likely to behave politically with their racial and ethnic group who are most likely to identify as Republican and vote for Republican candidates. To provide initial support for this hypothesis, I found that those who attend places of worship with less Black or Latino people were more likely to identify with the Republican Party.

