

Early Trump support climbed in areas with recent Latino population growth: study

January 19 2018, by Tess Eyrich

Donald Trump announced his presidential candidacy in June 2015 with a bold, double-edged promise: that he would build a "great wall" on the border separating the United States and Mexico, and that he would make Mexico pay for it.

That polarizing statement, since repeated ad nauseam by commentators on both sides of the political spectrum, quickly went on to become one of the defining hallmarks of Trump's presidential campaign.

According to three political scientists from the University of California, Riverside, Trump's remarks also galvanized his voter base in the initial stages of his campaign, particularly in areas that had experienced considerable Latino population growth in recent years.

"Support for Trump early in the campaign was drawn from areas where citizens had *lived experience* with Latino growth, suggesting that the political ascent of Trump represents an adversarial reaction among racially threatened Americans to the expansion of Latino populations in their own communities," said UCR's Benjamin J. Newman, an associate professor of public policy and [political science](#); Loren Collingwood, an assistant professor of political science; and Sono Shah, a Ph.D. candidate in political science.

The trio's [findings](#), published earlier this month in the journal *Public Opinion Quarterly*, demonstrate that Trump's use of inflammatory language—including his promise to construct a "[great wall](#)" and

additional comments describing Mexican immigrants as "criminals" and "rapists"—served to "activate" latent support for his candidacy among Republican voters in areas such as Riverside County; Broward County, Fla.; and Jerome County, Idaho.

The researchers compared the results of four geocoded surveys conducted by the New Jersey-based Monmouth University Polling Institute: one in March 2015; one in early June 2015, prior to Trump's campaign announcement and inflammatory statements deriding Latinos; one in early July 2015, roughly a month after the announcement and statements; and yet another nearly a month later, in early August.

The evaluations—each of a national random sample—measured respondents' favorable or unfavorable impressions of several candidates slated to compete in the 2016 presidential election, including Trump.

Newman, Collingwood, and Shah then merged the results of these surveys with data from the 2000 Decennial Census and 2010-2014 American Community Survey, which allowed them to gauge increases in county Latino populations between the same years.

Following Trump's infamous remarks about "rapists" and "the wall," made in June 2015, the researchers observed a statistically significant increase in support for his presidential candidacy among people identifying as Republican who lived in areas experiencing pronounced growth in the Latino population.

"Residing in a high-Latino-growth area is predictive of support for Trump following," they deduced, "but not before his utterance of inflammatory and bellicose comments about Mexican immigrants."

Such findings suggest Trump's stoking of immigration-related fears effectively catalyzed support among his nascent voter base. Future

research, the [political scientists](#) said, could examine whether these findings also apply to Arab Americans and Muslim immigrants, two additional groups Trump's campaign rhetoric targeted in the lead-up to his election.

More information: Benjamin J Newman et al, Race, Place, and Building a Base, *Public Opinion Quarterly* (2017). [DOI: 10.1093/poq/nfx039](#)

Provided by University of California - Riverside

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