

# Latino Data Revisited: Digital Edition



**Latino Data Revisited**, a series of reports from Equis, revisits the basics of targeting to convey principles for thoughtfully and strategically using data to identify Latino voters for political engagement.

In a hyper-polarized electorate, Latino voters are one of the last great wildcards— a fast-growing swing constituency in need of renewed attention.

But the Latinos we most need to reach have often become effectively invisible to our campaigns and programs because of the ways we use data. This now requires us to broaden and diversify our approaches to targeting.

The digital edition of these reports is for digital practitioners running or managing ad campaigns targeted to Latino audiences. Whether you're buying the ads yourself or working with an agency, we hope the guidance in this document will help you better reach and engage Latinos online.



## Starting with the basics

There are many ways to target Latino audiences with digital ads. Depending on the platform or placement, you can use voter file lists, target specific locations like zip codes or congressional districts, or use behavioral or contextual targeting options to target users based on how they use the internet or what content they're consuming.

One common way to reach a key group of Latinos is to use browser setting data to target everyone in a region that uses their Internet browser in Spanish. You can “geo-fence” geographic regions to target users who are in a specific area or have been to a specific place before. You can even digitally target people based on what they've watched on TV in some places. There are lots of tools and tactics available to us online as we try to find the best ways to reach Latinos.

For digital programs, targeting also often includes placement strategies, meaning what sites or platforms you actually choose to run ads on in the first place. As you plan your programs, you're not just deciding what targeting strategies to use, you also need to decide on sites or placements. Common placements include Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Univision, Telemundo, Pandora, Snapchat, and Google Search.

Remember: you don't have to choose only one approach. In fact, **our recommendation for digital is to focus on diversifying your approaches to ensure you're reaching different kinds of Latino audiences.** Targeting tactics should be seen as additive - where you layer different approaches to get the best outcome - as opposed to mutually exclusive.

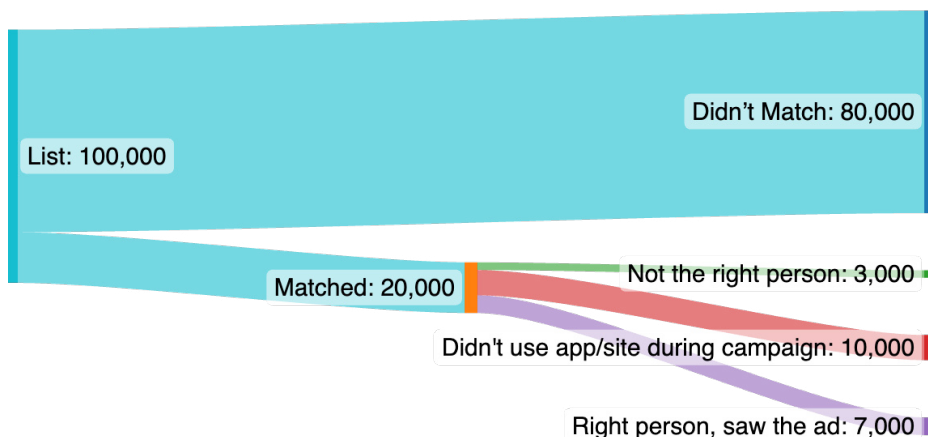


## Our recommendations

### ■ DON'T JUST USE THE VOTER FILE

When planning your digital programs, we recommend expanding beyond voter file lists for your targeting. These are useful tools or pieces of a larger strategy, but limiting oneself to exclusively list-matching will inevitably leave out important targets.

One of the main challenges with targeting voter file lists online is your match rate. A match rate is the percentage of your list that a platform or other tool can recognize or identify based on the data they have available to them. When you upload a voter file list to different digital platforms or tools for matching, you often only match a limited number of the folks on your original list. Match rates can range from 5 or 10 percent to 50 or 60 percent depending on the quality of your list and the platform you're using. That means you've already eliminated a large portion of your target audience. And that doesn't even account for the number of people you're actually able to reach with your program based on how often they use the platform or not. **You might start with a list of 100,000 registered voters and end up reaching just a few thousand people.**

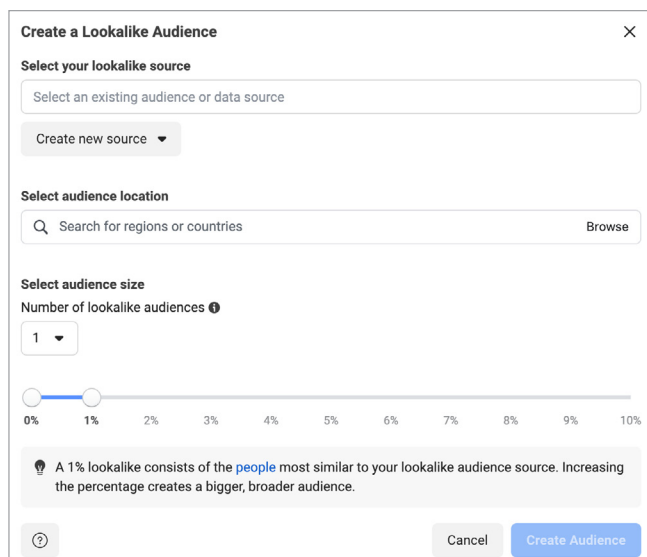


Using a voter file list for targeting does have its advantages though. It ensures that the people seeing the content are almost definitely the ones you initially wanted to engage and invest in. In this sense, **voter file lists can be a helpful way to maximize the use of limited resources. But they should be paired with some broader targeting strategies to make sure you're reaching enough people to make an impact.**

### ■ USE BROADER TARGETING STRATEGIES

Some broader targeting strategies include using lookalike audiences, in-platform or third party data, zip code or geographic targeting, or using browser settings to find the Spanish-dominant.

**Lookalike audiences:** Lookalike audiences are an easy way to broaden your voter file targeting (mostly on Facebook). Facebook can take your voter file list and build an audience of people that “look like” the ones you’re trying to target using their data. There’s little transparency from Facebook on who those people would actually be, so there is some element of risk. But in theory this would allow you to broaden your audience while still focusing on who you’re most interested in reaching.



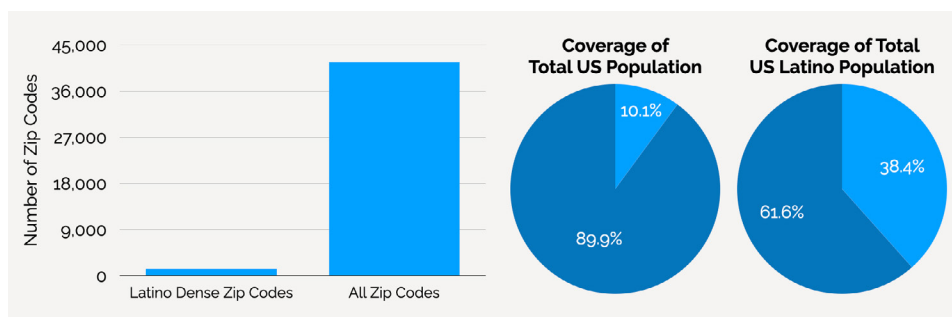
**In-platform or third party data:** When using other in-platform or third party data for targeting, we strongly recommend getting a good understanding of how the segments you plan to use have been built. What data inputs are used to build the segment? Are they self-reported or modeled? What assumptions have been made to bucket users into a particular group?

For example, some music streaming vendors will use data on the percentage of Spanish language music someone consumes to build different Latino-specific or language-specific segments. Knowing what we do about how people consume music (think about how many non-Latinos listen to Bad Bunny!), **it's important to interrogate the ways some segments are constructed so you know who you're targeting and where you're spending your resources.**

**Zip code targeting:** Zip code targeting is an especially important tool for a platform like YouTube where you may not be able to target specific lists.

There are lots of different approaches to zip code targeting for Latino audiences. Some might choose to take a list of all the zip codes in their area of interest, rank them by the percentage of the population of each that is Latino, and then target the top 10 or 20 percent of them depending on resources. You might also just choose to target all zip codes in an area that are at least 50% Latino. Depending on your budget, any of these options may be most strategic for your program.

Our only recommendation here is to **consider the ways Latinos who live in “Latino dense” or heavily Latino areas may be different from those who do not.** There are only 1,374 zip codes in the US that we'd call “Latino dense,” which is ~4% of all zip codes. Those cover 10.1% of the total population in the US and 38.4% of the Latino population. If we only engage those who are in dense areas, who does that mean we're leaving out? Layering other targeting approaches may help mitigate some of these concerns.



**Browser settings:** Finally, using browser settings to find and target those who are Spanish-dominant continues to be a helpful tool for digital programs. It's the easiest and most straightforward approach listed here, it leads to the least spill-over, and (in our experience) has also led to the cheapest CPAs (cost-per-action) for digital voter registration or vote by mail programs and the highest engagement rates in general.

We [strongly recommend](#) increasing investment in Spanish-language creative and we encourage you to target not just Spanish-dominant audiences but also those that are bilingual. **So using browser settings to target Spanish creative is the bare minimum.**

To find bilinguals, use the tools we've already suggested here. Think about using third party or in-platform data to target Latinos sending signals they speak or understand Spanish. When targeting Latino-dense zip codes, think about including both Spanish and English creative instead of just targeting Spanish creative to folks with Spanish browser settings.

### **Consider exclusion targeting**

You might also consider different ways of using exclusion targeting. Exclusion targeting is exactly what it sounds like - excluding a list or other audience segment from your campaign.

You could target broadly and use exclusion targeting to cut out the subgroups or places you're not interested in reaching. For example, if you wanted to target a specific DMA that crossed state lines, you might target the DMA and exclude the state you aren't interested in. If you wanted to broadly target Latinos for a mobilization program, you could start broad but upload an exclusion list of people you're less interested in reaching. Some segments aren't available for exclusion targeting, so look at the options in the platform you're working with or talk to your vendors to learn more about your options.



## **So which targeting tactic is most important? What should I do first?**

The best way to answer this question is to remember our goal: reaching as many Latinos as we can with our message. So if we were to say list-matching or zip code targeting were most important, as an example, and all our partners focused their efforts on those tactics alone, we'd be neglecting a huge portion of the electorate.

The real answer to this question is that you should **prioritize gaps**. What are other organizations already doing? What are they investing and where? What targeting tactics are they using? What messages are they promoting? Especially if the field is crowded, prioritize gaps. What messages aren't being delivered? If you're sharing the same message, what targeting tactics aren't being covered? Who are we leaving out?

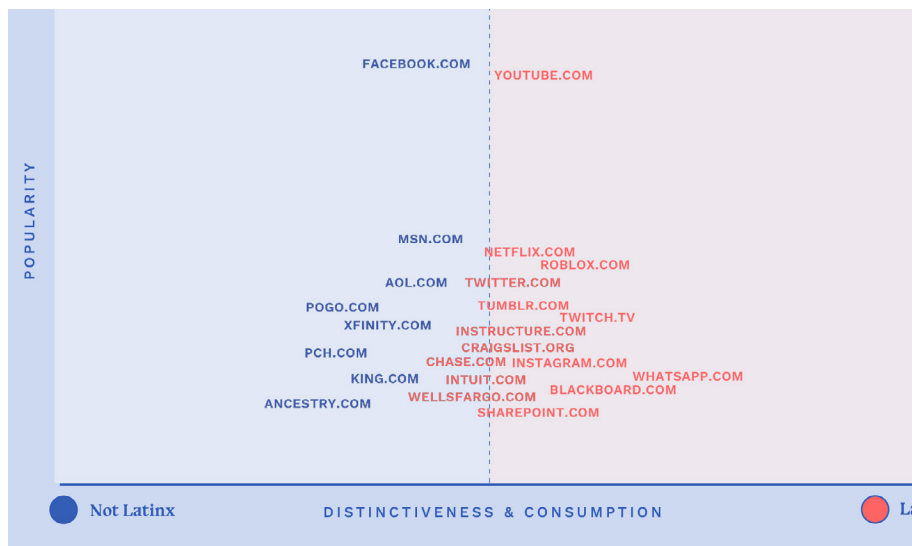
If the field is relatively clear, you have two options depending on your resources:

- With **limited resources**, prioritize zip code targeting in Latino dense zip codes and listmatching - particularly on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.
  - Depending on your campaign objective and resources, it may also make sense for you to place ads on Spanish news sites like Univision and Telemundo.
  
- With **larger budgets**, prioritize diversifying targeting tactics. Depending on the timing of your program, you might consider avoiding list-matching to make space for other organizations who will run voter file matched programs as Election Day approaches, or prioritize cutting lists using scores you know other organizations won't have the resources to reach.
  - For similar reasons, you might prioritize placements that require spend minimums or have more premium inventory, like Pandora or Hulu.
  - Larger programs might also allow for Google Search campaigns.



## Using Media Consumption for Media Planning

To make the most of your digital budget, it's important to know where your audience spends time online, especially for platforms where it's harder to narrow in on Latinos alone. Media consumption reports are great tools to help us reach voters where they spend time. Pew Research Center has several reports on Latino media consumption, and you can also reference [our work](#) with Harmony Labs to learn more about where Latinos are spending time online. Equis also has lots of media consumption data from our polling and research.



One important thing to keep in mind when referencing media consumption reports is whether or not the data is self-reported via surveys or tracked on someone’s device. Self-reported media consumption is not as accurate or valuable as data that’s been tracked, but tracked data often excludes specific devices like connected TVs or even mobile devices.

**We recommend using both, insofar as that is an option for you,** to make decisions about what platforms to invest in.



## Platform-specific recommendations

This section includes specific recommendations for platforms where targeting options or approaches are a little different than most. It doesn’t mean you should always include both of these placements in all your digital programs (though we’d likely argue YouTube should be included) or that other placements are less important. Remember to reference media consumption data to better understand where you should be investing your resources.

### ■ YOUTUBE

YouTube is a critically important platform for reaching Latino audiences. We did a special YouTube-specific project with Harmony Labs earlier this year to learn more about Latinos’ YouTube media consumption and how to better reach and engage them. You can find a summary of our findings [here](#), along with [a full deck](#) on our website.



This detailed guidance can be especially helpful to campaigns or programs run in less dense or more distributed Latino populations. If zip code targeting in dense areas isn't available to you, you can use some of the targeting tactics provided in the resources above to efficiently narrow your program without leaving out too many voters. Remember, though, that tolerating some spillover is necessary when reaching Latinos strategically online, particularly in places where Latino voters are distributed but absolutely critical for success.

## ■ GOOGLE SEARCH

Search is also a critically important platform for reaching Latinos - specifically, meeting them at the point of their curiosity. When it comes to targeting Latinos with Search ads, our primary recommendation is to broaden the scope of your Spanish outreach.

Based on recent research with Harmony Labs, we see that only about 4% of Latino searches happen in Spanish, which is a much smaller percentage of Latinos that are Spanish-speaking or even Spanish-dominant. We believe this happens primarily because Spanish searchers aren't able to find the content they're looking for in Spanish. Data from Google has shown that Spanish searchers often have to search multiple times to find an answer to their questions.

For these reasons, we recommend targeting your Spanish search ads more broadly than you might think. Instead of only targeting Spanish keywords, you should target Spanish ads to all users with Spanish browser settings (even if the terms they're searching for are in English). You might also consider targeting Spanish ads to folks that live in areas that are especially Latino-dense, since we've seen from our digital test results that Spanish digital outreach can be especially effective for folks who are bilingual with little risk of backlash with the English-dominant.

## Working with Digital Agencies

We know some/most groups aren't buying digital in-house themselves. The recommendations we've laid out in this document should still be helpful to you even if you're not the one in the platforms setting up campaigns. Additionally, we are including a specific section for folks working with agencies on their digital programs.

### **Our #1 tip: ask lots of questions.**

Here are some examples:

- If you're approving a media plan with an audience description that just says "Latinos," ask more questions about which audience segments or voter file lists your agency is planning to use to find the Latinos you're interested in.
- If you're using a voter file list, what vendor are they using? What score cut-offs? Why?



- What other kinds of targeting tactics are you using (zip codes, third party data, etc)?
- Ask why they've chosen the platforms and placements listed in the media plan. Are they using media consumption data to make those decisions? Which kind of media consumption data?
- If you're running any Spanish creative in your program, who is it targeted to? Could/should you consider broadening the audience?

Your digital agency should be your partner, not just a vendor. They have lots of knowledge and experience in running smart digital campaigns, but you likely have a deeper understanding of the specific audiences you and your organization have been working with and investing in.

**Asking questions shouldn't signal a lack of trust.** Instead, transparency and knowledge-sharing lead to better digital programs for your specific organization, as well as improved programs for other clients your agency might be working with.





**About Equis:**

Equis is a set of organizations working to create a better understanding of Latinos, innovate new approaches to reach and engage them, and invest in the leadership and infrastructure for long-term change and increased engagement.

Learn more about our work: <https://wearequis.us>.