

# [***Latino voters are coveted by both major parties. They also are a target for election misinformation***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BRP-9W91-JC5B-G2XS-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** CHRISTINE FERNANDO and ANITA SNOW, Associated Press

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**Body**

PHOENIX — As ranchera music filled the Phoenix recording studio at Radio Campesina, a station personality spoke in Spanish into the microphone.

“Friends of Campesina, in these elections, truth and unity are more important than ever,” said morning show host Tony Arias. “Don’t let yourself be trapped by disinformation.”

The audio was recorded as a promo for Radio Campesina’s new campaign aiming to empower Latino voters ahead of the [*2024 elections*](https://apnews.com/hub/election-2024). That effort includes discussing election-related [*misinformation*](https://apnews.com/article/elections-artificial-intelligence-language-platforms-ed829171343812cbe55fab99615c77e5) narratives and fact-checking conspiracy theories on air.

“We are at the front lines of fighting misinformation in our communities,” said María Barquín, program director of Chavez Radio Group, the nonprofit that runs Radio Campesina, a network of Spanish-language stations in Arizona, California and Nevada. “There’s a lot at stake in 2024 for our communities. And so we need to amp up these efforts now more than ever.”

Latinos have grown at the second-fastest rate, behind Asian Americans, of any major racial and ethnic group in the U.S. since the last presidential election, [*according to a Pew Research Center analysis*](https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/01/10/key-facts-about-hispanic-eligible-voters-in-2024/), and are projected to account for 14.7%, or 36.2 million, of all eligible voters in November, a new high. They are a growing share of the electorate in several presidential and congressional battleground states, including Arizona, California and Nevada, and are being [*heavily courted*](https://apnews.com/article/trump-milei-bukele-latin-america-conservatives-republicans-0215b7fdea225a0ca2cddfbebbd2438a) by [*Republicans*](https://apnews.com/article/2022-midterm-elections-ron-desantis-florida-e55ed9a1743d63d704fe40ea1ebcfbcc) and [*Democrats*](https://apnews.com/article/hispanic-voters-2024-biden-outreach-democrats-election-e184e6d0695368e4f59cb48d28ff22be).

Democratic President Joe Biden has [*credited Latino voters*](https://apnews.com/article/biden-trump-campaign-election-nevada-arizona-0f3a951e1201b35bf4cc7952905725bb) as a key reason he defeated Republican Donald Trump in 2020 and is urging them to help him do it again in November. Given the high stakes of a presidential election year, experts expect a surge of misinformation, especially through audio and video, targeting Spanish-speaking voters.

“Latinos have immense voting power and can make a decisive difference in elections, yet they are an under-messaged, under-prioritized audience,” said Arturo Vargas, CEO of NALEO Educational Fund, a national nonprofit encouraging Latino civic participation. “Our vote has an impact. These bad actors know this, and one way to influence the Latino vote is to misinform.”

In addition to radio, much of the news and information Latinos consume is audio-based through podcasts or on social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube. Content moderation efforts in Spanish are limited on these platforms, which are seeing a rising number of right-wing influencers peddling election falsehoods and [*QAnon conspiracy theories*](https://apnews.com/article/technology-donald-trump-conspiracy-theories-government-and-politics-db50c6f709b1706886a876ae6ac298e2).

The types of misinformation overlap with [*falsehoods*](https://apnews.com/article/capitol-riot-trump-election-lies-explainer-816a43ed964e6d35f03b0930e6e56c82?utm_source=homepage&utm_medium=RelatedStories&utm_campaign=position_03) readily found in other [*conservative media*](https://apnews.com/article/politics-television-donald-trump-business-1a4337a89c8abd952a814c60fa269b3c) and many corners of the internet — conspiracy theories about mail voting, dead people casting ballots, rigged voting machines and threats at polling sites.

Other narratives are more closely tailored to Latino communities, including false information about immigration, inflation and abortion rights, often exploiting the traumas and fears of specific communities. For example, Spanish speakers who have immigrated from countries with recent histories of [*authoritarianism*](https://apnews.com/article/biden-immigration-border-migrant-venezuela-b914be14aaeef14eb01bd10ee23067f4), socialism, high inflation and election fraud may be more vulnerable to misinformation about those topics.

Misinformation on the airwaves also is particularly difficult to track and combat compared with more traditional, text-based misinformation, said Daiquiri Ryan Mercado, strategic legal adviser and policy counsel for the National Hispanic Media Coalition, which runs the Spanish Language Disinformation Coalition. While misinformation researchers can more easily code programs to categorize and track text-based misinformation, audio often requires manual listening. Radio stations that air only in certain areas at certain times also can be difficult to track.

“When we have such limited representation, Spanish speakers feel like they can connect to these people, and they become trusted messengers,” Mercado said. “But some people may take advantage of that trust.”

Mercado and others said that's why trusted messengers, such as Radio Campesina, are so important. The station was founded by Mexican American labor and civil rights leader [*César Chavez*](https://apnews.com/article/cesar-chavez-legacy-biden-white-house-b582b1e7b43ccd25d61e1fdad9607db1) and has built a loyal listening base over decades. At any given moment, as many as 750,000 people are listening to the Chavez Radio Network on the air and online, Barquín said.

“They will come and listen to us because of the music, but our main focus is to empower and educate through information,” she said. “The music is just a tactic to bring them in.”

Radio Campesina’s on-air talent and musical guests often discuss misinformation on air, answering listeners’ questions about voting, teaching them about spotting misinformation and doing tutorials on election processes such as how to submit mail-in ballots. The station also has hosted rodeos and music events to register new voters and talk about misinformation.

They allow listeners to call or text questions on WhatsApp, a social media platform especially popular with [*immigrant communities*](https://apnews.com/article/elections-voting-misinformation-race-immigration-712a5c5a9b72c1668b8c9b1eb6e0038a) but where much of the misinformation they see festers. In March, the station partnered with Mi Familia Vota, a Latino advocacy group, for an on-air show and voter phone bank event to answer voter questions.

“We know that there are many people who are unmotivated because sometimes we come from countries where, when it comes to elections, we don’t trust the vote,” said Carolina Rodriguez-Greer, Arizona director of Mi Familia Vota, before she shared information on the show about how voters can track their ballots.

The organization began working with Spanish media outlets to dispel misinformation after seeing candidates such as former Arizona gubernatorial candidate [*Kari Lake spread election lies*](https://apnews.com/article/kari-lake-stephen-richer-defamation-lawsuit-9fe16e97b16edb8901171593cc399bf9) in 2022, Rodriguez-Greer said. Lake is now running for the U.S. Senate with Trump's endorsement.

“One way to combat this misinformation is to fill the airways with good information,” said Angelica Razo, national deputy director of campaigns and programs for Mi Familia Vota.

In Tempe, Brian Garcia tunes into Radio Campesina on drives to work. When he was growing up, the station played as his dad cooked dinner and his family gathered around the table. It was a staple for his family, he said, and he's excited about its efforts to tackle election misinformation.

“There aren’t many organizations or folks that go onto Spanish language media to combat misinformation and disinformation,” he said. “And I think serving as a resource and a trusted source within the Latino community that has already built those relationships, that trust will go a long way.”

A variety of other community and media groups also are prioritizing the seemingly never-ending fight against misinformation.

Maritza Félix often fact-checked misinformation for her mother, whom she calls the “Queen of WhatsApp.” This led to Félix doing the same for family and friends in a WhatsApp group that grew into the Spanish news nonprofit Conecta Arizona.

It now runs a radio show and newsletter that debunks false claims about election processes, health, immigration and border ***politics***. Conecta Arizona also combats misinformation about the upcoming [*Mexican presidential election*](https://apnews.com/article/mexico-election-2024-issues-c938aded9af2bfad2594a054574e8f50) that Félix said has been seeping over the border.

Jeronimo Cortina, associate professor of political science at the University of Houston, tracks broad misinformation narratives aimed at Spanish-speaking communities across the country but also localized content targeting the state’s rapidly growing Latino electorate. That includes misinformation about candidates' clean energy policies taking away jobs in Texas’ oil and gas industries and about migrants flooding over the border.

“You won’t see the same content targeting Latinos in Texas compared to Latinos in Iowa,” he said.

This has led to a wider universe of groups tackling misinformation aimed at Latinos. NALEO Educational Fund's Defiende La Verdad campaign monitors misinformation and and trains community leaders to spot it. In Florida, the We Are Más podcast combats Spanish-language misinformation nationally and locally, said its founder Evelyn Pérez-Verdía. Jolt Action, a Texas Latino advocacy group, registers new voters and helps them make sense of misinformation.

The Spanish-language fact-checking group Factchequeado is building partnerships with dozens of media outlets across the country to provide training and free Spanish fact-checking content.

“Disinformation is at the same time a global phenomenon and a hyperlocal phenomenon," said Factchequeado co-founder Laura Zommer. “So we have to address it with local and national groups uniting together.”

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The Associated Press\u202freceives support from several private foundations to enhance its explanatory coverage of elections and democracy. See more about AP’s democracy initiative [*here*](https://www.ap.org/media-center/press-releases/2022/ap-announces-sweeping-democracy-journalism-initiative/). The AP is solely responsible for all content.

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