

Texas Political Shifts from 2000–2024

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Introduction

Texas has long been a Republican stronghold in U.S. presidential elections, but in recent years, the state's voting behavior has shown signs of shifting. Increasing urbanization and demographic changes have made parts of Texas more competitive. This project examines these political dynamics over space and time, focusing on county-level voting data for presidential elections from 2000 to 2024. Using four visualizations and a narrative, we explore how the GOP's dominance has evolved.

Data and Methods

Data on county-level election results from 2000–2020 were obtained from the MIT Election Lab. Results from the 2024 elections were obtained through the Texas Secretary of State. We combined these datasets with a state level county shapefile obtained from Texas Department of Transportation. For data processing and visualizations, we used the `dplyr` and `ggplot2` packages in R.

One important measurement we used was the **Partisan Margin of Victory**, defined as:

$$\text{Partisan Margin of Victory} = \frac{\text{Republican Votes} - \text{Democrat Votes}}{\text{Total Votes}}$$

A positive Partisan Margin of Victory indicates Republican victory, while a negative margin suggests Democratic victory. The visualizations reveal shifts in competitiveness and county-level geographic trends, offering insight into Texas politics.

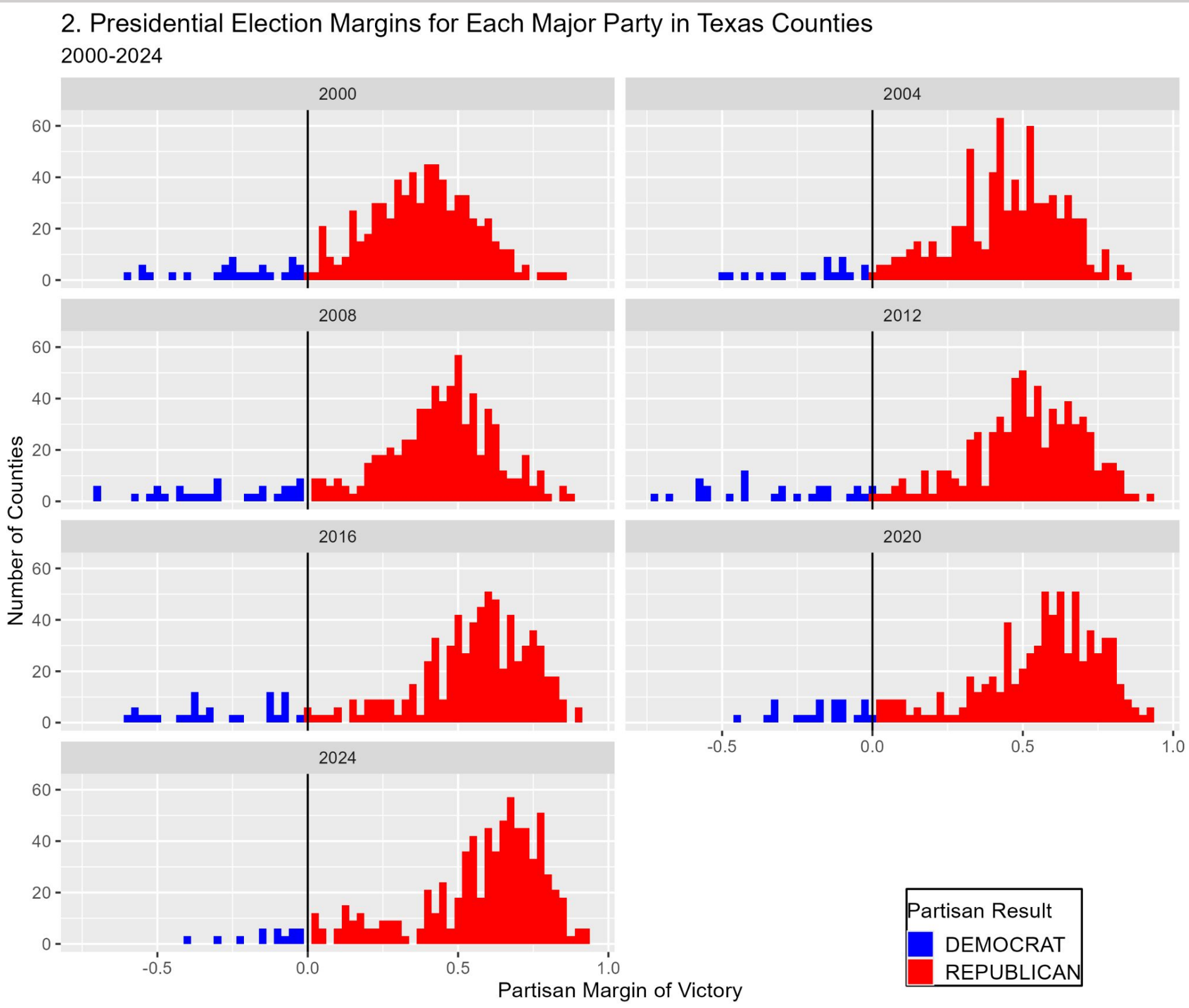


Figure 2 shows the shifts in county competitiveness in Texas Presidential elections from 2000 to 2024. As seen in the visualization, concentration of non-competitive counties won by the Republican party has shifted rightward over time, meaning that these Republican counties have voted for the Republican candidate by larger margins over time. This visualization may be valuable in understanding the polarization of Texans between the two major parties.

3. Texas Political Shifts wherein Donald Trump was a Presidential Candidate 2016-2024

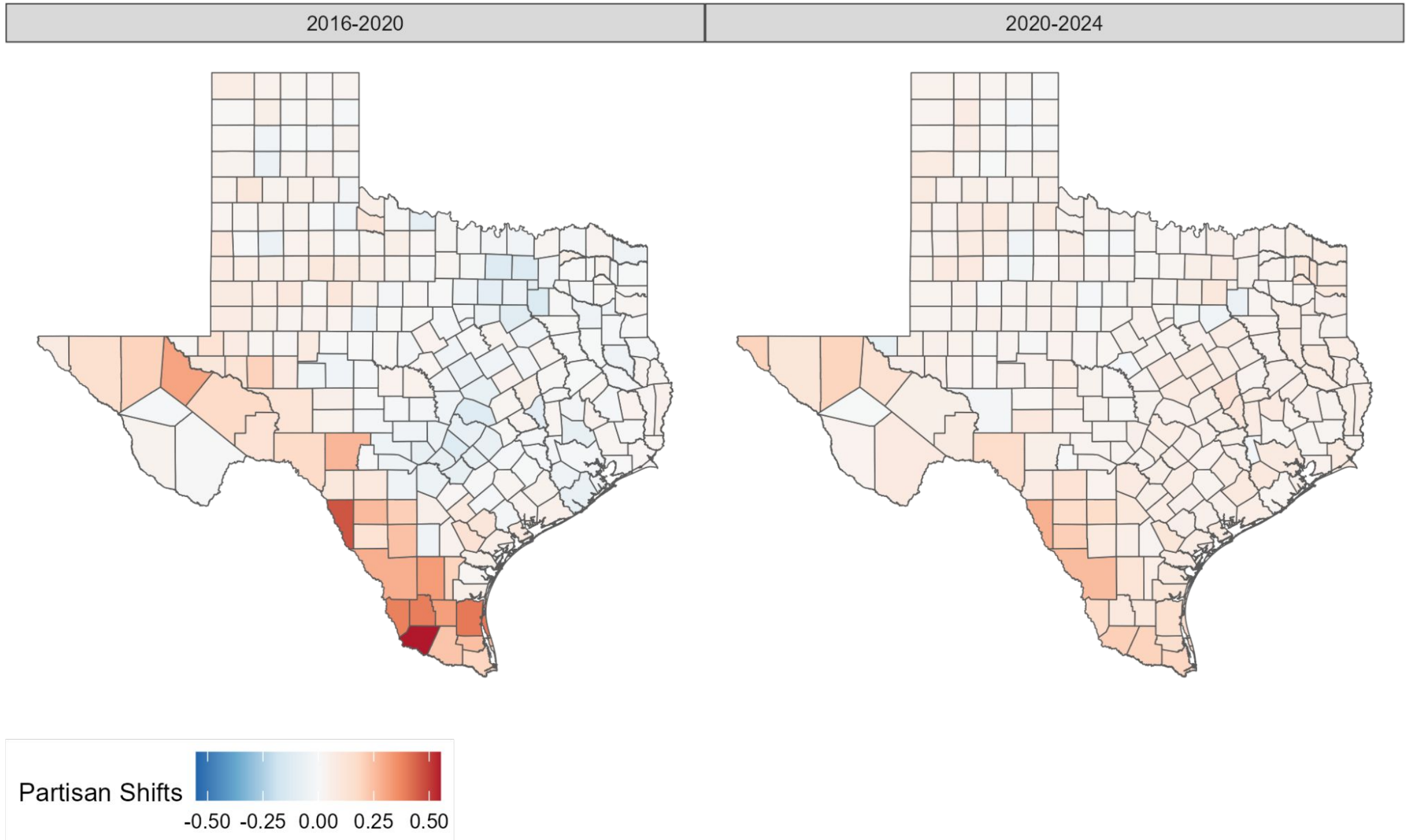


Figure 3 shows the partisan shift in electoral outcomes by county when Donald Trump was a candidate for the Republican Party. As can be seen in the map, the southern part of Texas where there are a lot of Hispanic voters shifted dramatically rightward from 2016 to 2020 and again from 2020 to 2024. This seems to line up with national trends over the last decade in which Hispanic voters have shifted rightward.

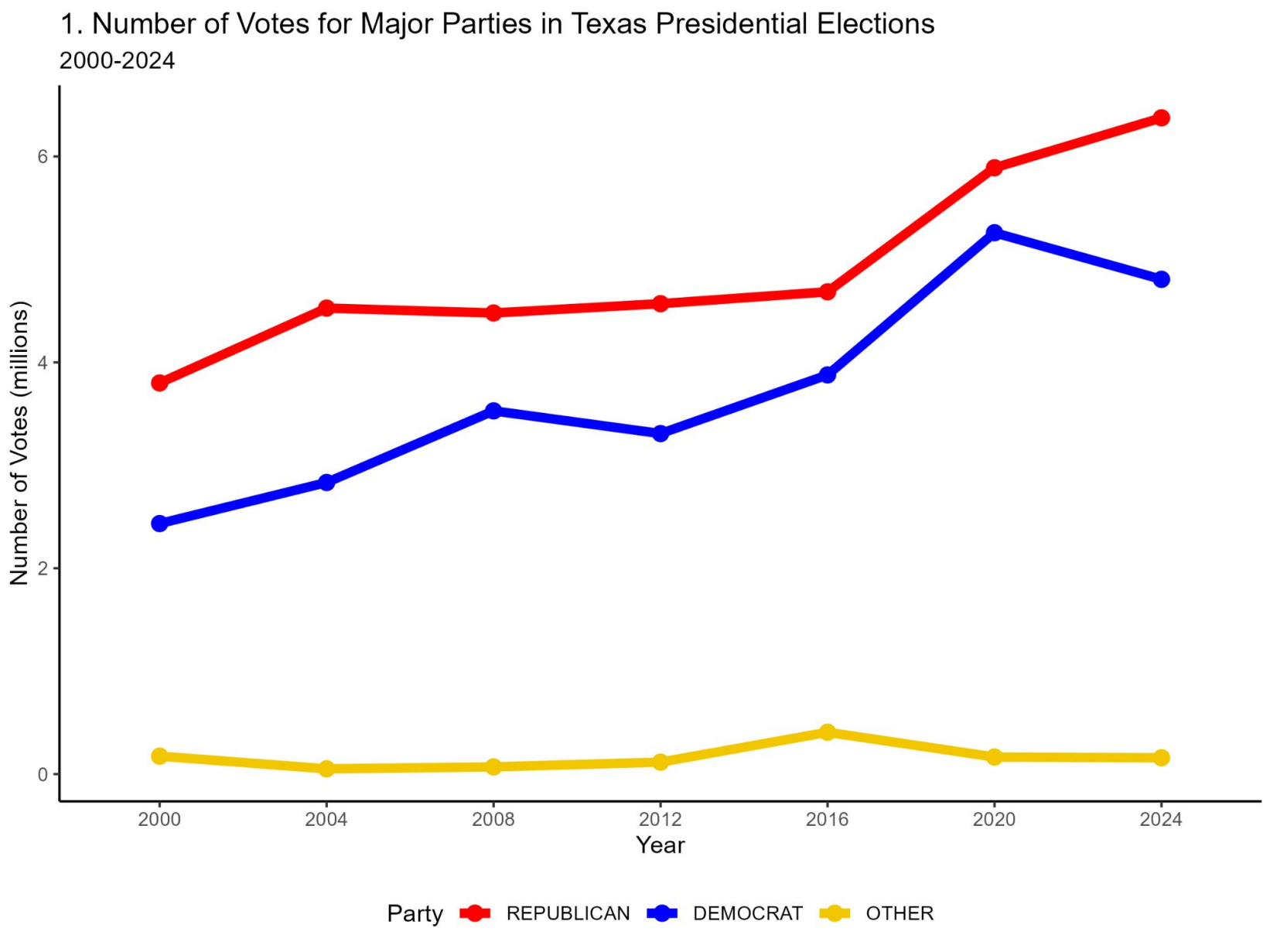


Figure 1 shows the number of votes for major parties in Texas presidential elections from 2000 to 2024, with smaller parties grouped into “Other”. Over this period, the total number of votes steadily increased, with the most significant jump occurring in the 2020 election, reflecting heightened voter turnout.

The Democratic vote count in 2024, however, was notably lower compared to previous years, marking a significant decline in support.

4. Texas Presidential Election Results 2000-2024

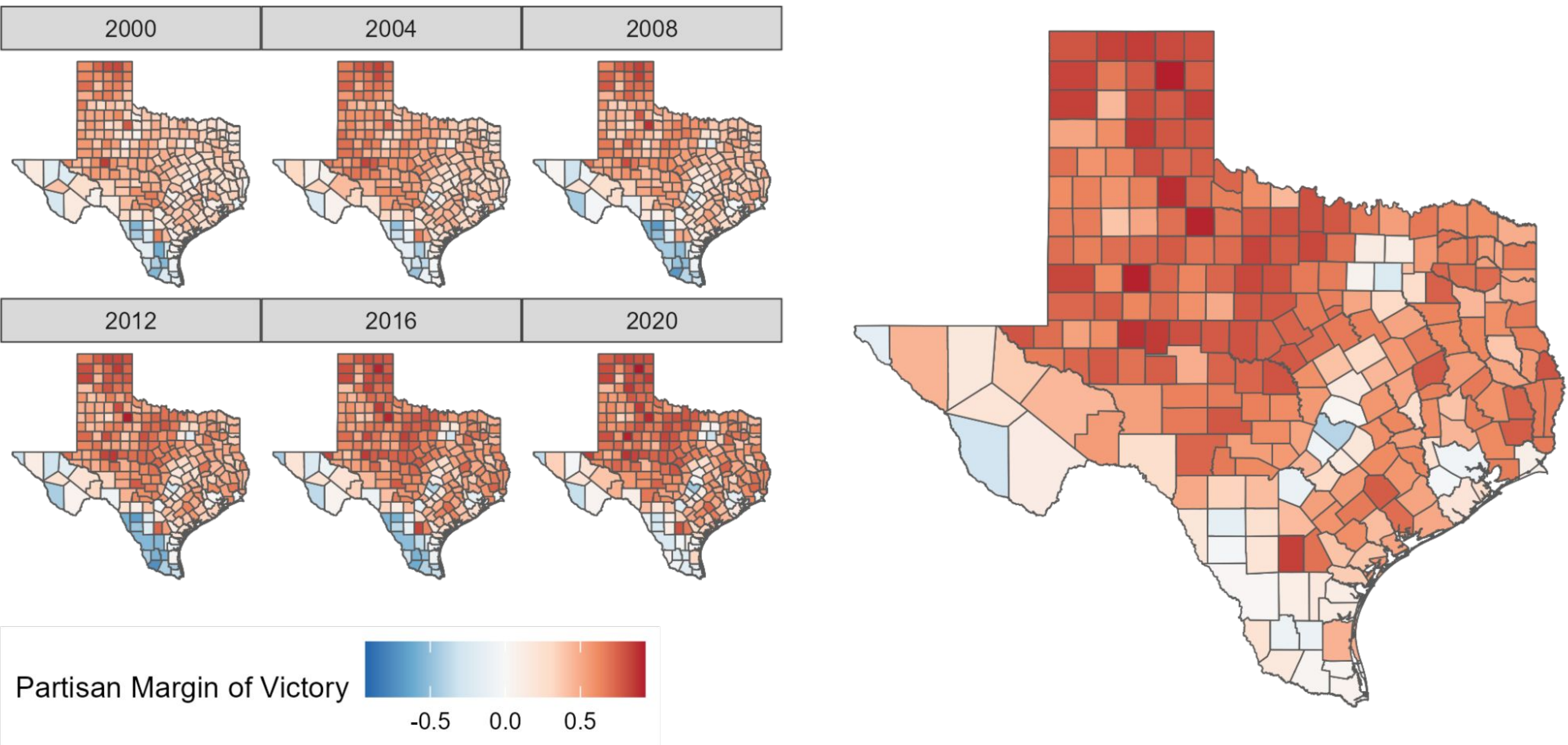


Figure 4 shows 7 maps detailing the results of Texas Presidential elections by county from 2000 to 2024. We created this to try to see where political shifts are happening within the state. The most dramatic shifts in partisan margin of victory have occurred in the urban centers of Texas (Dallas, Houston, Austin) and southern counties along the border with Mexico.

Summary

Texas was trending towards the Democratic Party since 2000. In 2024, this trend was disrupted. It seems that this lurch to the right was due to shifts in southern Texas and suburban counties.