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# Inland Empire Goes Red

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On November 5, 2024, Donald Trump was elected as the 47th president of the United States and, in the process, became the first Republican presidential candidate since George W. Bush in 2004 to carry the Inland Empire region. Trump was also the first Republican presidential candidate since George W. Bush to win the national popular vote, going from a two-party margin of D+4.5% for Biden in 2020 to R+1.50 in 2024, representing a six-point swing nationally towards the Republicans. Moreover, Trump gained support among Black and Latino voters, especially younger male voters, helping him improve dramatically in traditionally Democratic states such as California, New York, and New Jersey. Along with Trump's victory in the presidential election, Republicans retained the House of Representatives and gained control of the Senate.

Since World War II, the Inland Empire region generally leaned Republican in presidential elections with some exceptions, such as Lyndon Johnson's victory in 1964. In 1992, however, Democratic candidate Bill Clinton carried both San Bernardino County and Riverside County demonstrating the region's shift towards political competitiveness. Republican George W. Bush performed strongly, winning the region by a margin of 4.2% in 2000 and 14.5% in 2004. According to Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International exit polling from the 2004 election, Bush performed better among Latino voters than any other national Republican in the 21st century, getting 44% to Democratic candidate John Kerry's 53%. This proved especially important in the increasingly diverse and non-White Hispanic populations in the Inland Empire, a pattern Donald Trump replicated in 2024. Trump edged out Biden, garnering 50.85% of the Inland Empire vote. This represents a swing of more than 11 percentage points toward Republicans as the region was D+9.38% in 2020.

Democratic candidates Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and Joe Biden all carried the Inland Empire in their presidential runs, with Biden posting the strongest performance in recent memory. During this period, San Bernardino County consistently voted to the left of Riverside County, a trend that reversed in 2024. One explanation for this change may be that Riverside County has a higher percentage of adults with a bachelor's degree and more Whites than San Bernardino County. These two demographic characteristics trended less Republican than the nation in 2024. When examining 2024 election data by city, compiled by Jeff Horseman of the Southern California news group, a clear trend emerges where cities such as Indian Wells, with a high population of White college-educated voters, had the smallest shift to Republicans.

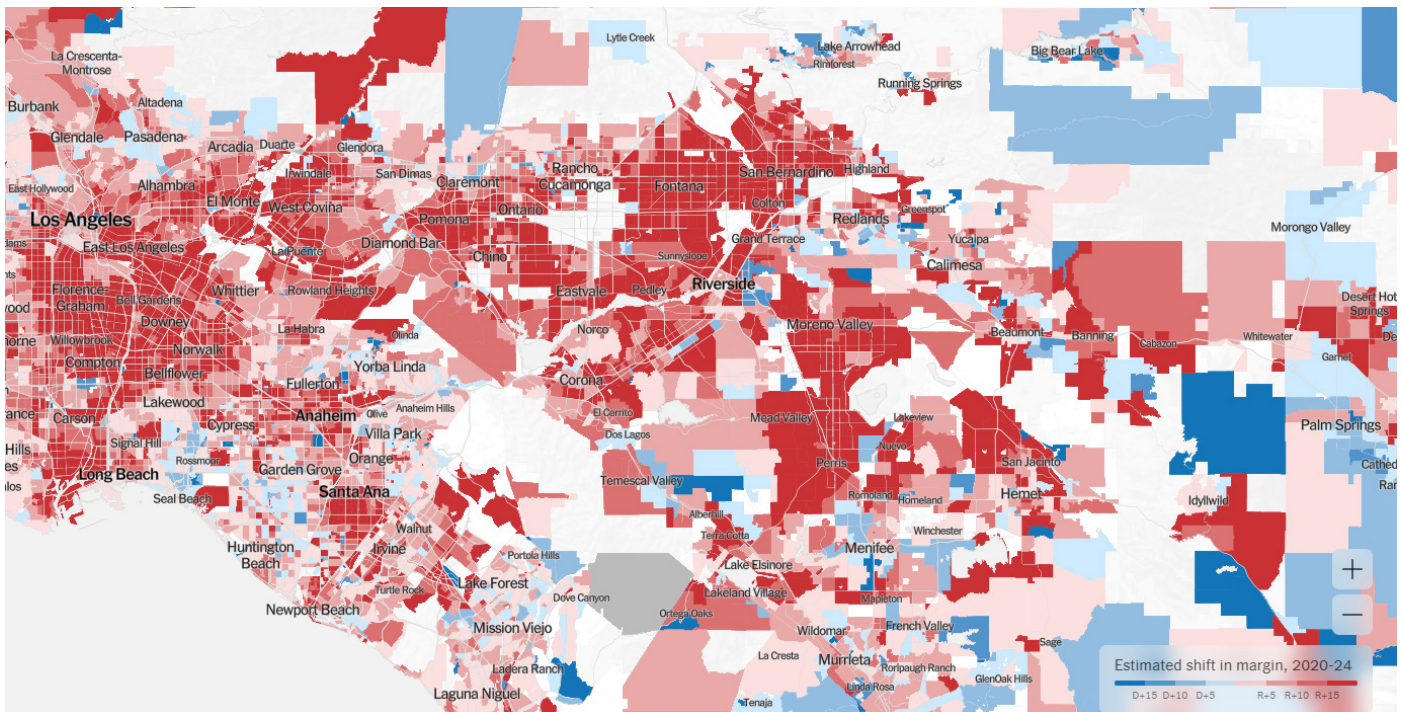
## Inland Empire Presidential Vote

Year	Democratic Candidate	Republican Candidate	Margin
2000	47.91%	52.09%	R+4.18%
2004	42.74%	57.26%	R+14.53%
2008	52.17%	47.83%	D+4.34%
2012	52.21%	47.79%	D+4.34%
2016	54.17%	45.83%	D+8.34%
2020	54.69%	45.31%	D+9.38%
2024	49.15%	50.85%	R+1.70%

Source: David Leip. *Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections*

Trump's victory in the Inland Empire likely helped propel down-ballot Republican candidates, such as Jeff Gonzalez in the 36th Assembly district and Leticia Castillo in the 58th Assembly district, to win in state legislative elections. Both of these victories took place in districts with a significant percentage of Latino voters, possibly showing that Latinos may be a growing part of the Republican coalition at all levels of government, an important fact in the diverse California electorate. In addition to Trump's victory in the Inland Empire, he became the first Republican presidential candidate to carry Imperial County since George H.W. Bush in 1988. His carrying Imperial County and other monumental victories in heavily Hispanic areas such as Rio Grande Valley may signal that more culturally conservative Latino voters are moving away from the Democratic party, depriving it of a historically significant part of its political coalition.

It is difficult to predict precisely how political coalitions will change through the course of the second Trump presidency, but current trends suggest that Republicans will continue to make inroads with Latinos and other minority voters nationally. Without strong margins among these voters, many regions similar to the Inland Empire will become more politically competitive, challenging Democrats to maintain their historic dominance. ♦



Source: *The New York Times*, "An Extremely Detailed Map of the 2024 Election."

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