

Arizona Report



Latino  **Decisions**

March 2014

Contents:

- I. Executive Summary..... 1**

- II. Demographic Trends 2**

- II. Participation and Party Competition**
 - A. Registration and Turnout 3
 - B. Presidential and Senate Race 4
 - C. Partisanship and Congressional Districts..... 6

- III. Public Opinion 10**

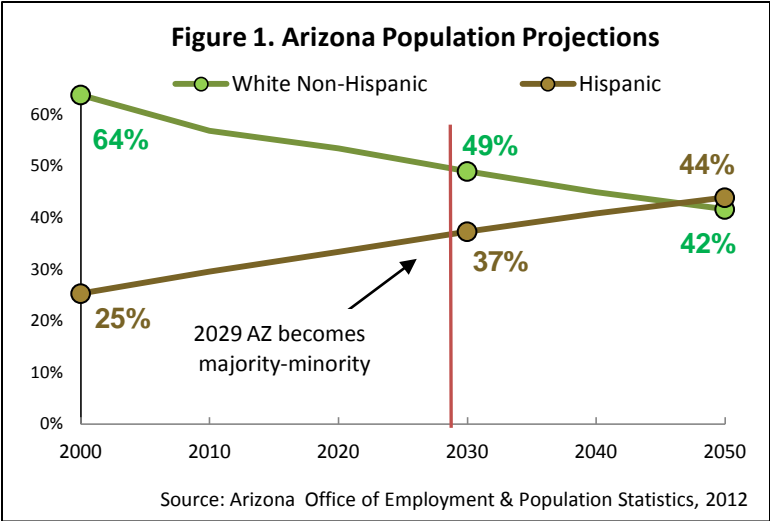
- IV. Conclusions 12**

Executive Summary

- Arizona demographic destiny is certain to be more Latino, and Hispanic voters are altering the shape of state politics. The Hispanic electorate continues to grow because of ongoing mobilization and incorporation strategies to register and turn out voters.
- There is room for improvement on Hispanic voter participation, but the needle is certainly moving. From 2008 to 2012 Hispanic voter registration grew by 26%, and turnout increased by 37%.
- Careful analysis of the actual and potential vote in Arizona shows relatively small increases in Latino voter participation could have turned the 2012 U.S. Senate election in favor of Democratic candidate Richard Carmona.
- Democrats made significant gains in Congressional elections and the state legislature as a result of Latino voter support in their districts.
- Decreasing partisan affiliation across the state should motivate both parties to expand their appeal with Latinos, the one place in the state where the electorate can be expanded for several years to come.
- The state's Latino electorate is more attuned to immigration issues compared to Latinos in all other states. Arizona's Latino electorate rates above their co-ethnic counterparts in the following:
 - ranking immigration the most important issue
 - voting in elections as a show of support for the Latino community
 - willingness to support Republican candidates if they pass immigration reform inclusive of a pathway to citizenship

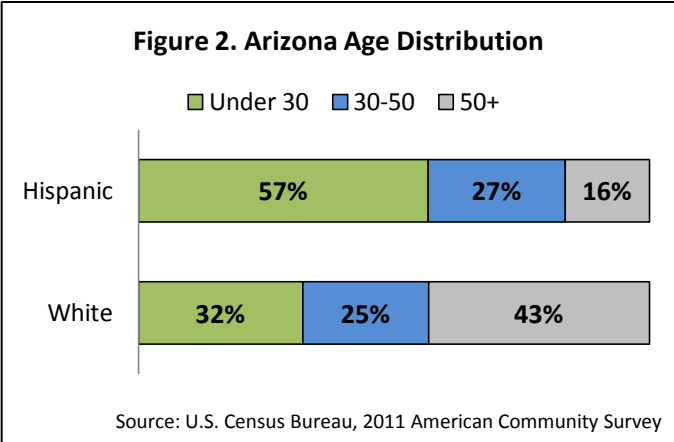
Demographic Trends

Today Latinos comprise 30% of Arizona's population, representing a significantly larger share than the national average of 17%. By 2050, Latinos will constitute 44% of the population, eclipsing the white, non-Hispanic proportion in the state (Figure 1). Arizona and Mexico are inextricably tied due to history and the 370 mile-long border they share.

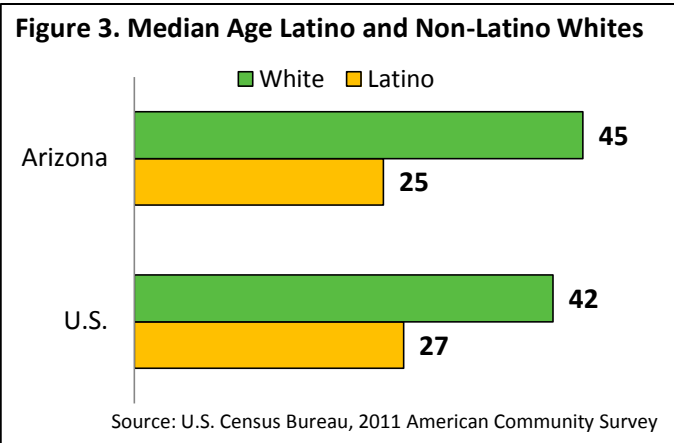


Hispanics are, of course, native to the region, the obvious explanation for the pronounced

presence of Latinos in the state (91% are Mexican origin) relative to national trends.



Population growth trajectories differ due to sharp age differences between the two groups. Over half of Arizona's Hispanic population is under thirty years old, with a median age of 25. Among White Arizonans, the median age is 45, and over 40% are age 50 or older (Figure 2).

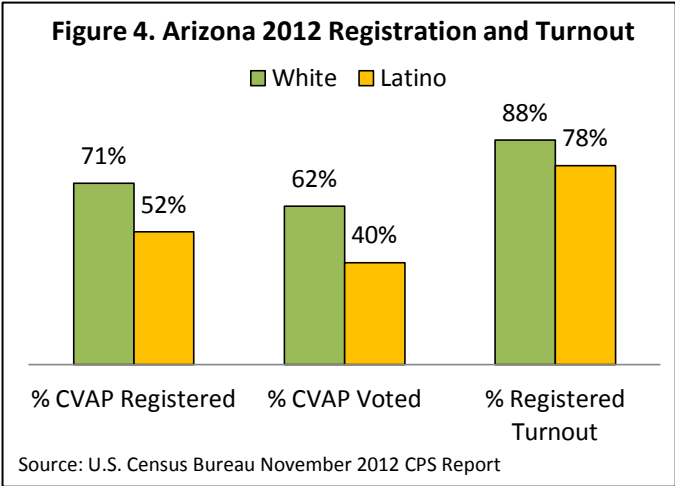


Relative to national trends, Arizona's whites are older, and Latinos younger (Figure 3). There is no question that Arizona's demographic destiny includes an ever-increasing share of minorities, where Latinos will ultimately comprise the largest single ethnic group in the state. This certainty has been unfolding for several decades.

Participation and Party Competition

Turnout and Registration

Demographic changes under way are reflected in the state and national electorate, where the total number of Latinos casting ballots increases with each election cycle. An average of 50,000 Hispanic American citizens turn 18 each month, aging into the electorate. In Arizona, 43% of American citizens under 18 years old are Hispanic. Beyond the large number newly eligible voters, the Hispanic electorate stands to grow because current participation rates have not reached their full potential (Figure 4). Voter engagement has



not moved in tandem with population growth. During the last general election, only 52% of Latinos eligible (citizen voting age population, CVAP) to register to vote in Arizona were registered, and only 40% of the Latino voting eligible population cast a ballot. Registered voter participation was significantly higher, 78% of registered Arizona Hispanics voted in 2012.

While voter engagement rates are low – especially in light of increases in eligible Latino voters over the four-year period – they improve upon 2008 turnout and registration. Specifically, there were 106,000 more Latinos registered to vote in Arizona in 2012, and 109,000 more Latinos cast a ballot in the state compared to 2008. Compared to past participation, these are significant rates of increase and provide evidence of growing political influence that cannot be dismissed.

Table 1. Arizona Latino Electorate 2012 and 2008

	Total Eligible	Total Registered	Total Voted
2012	989,000	516,000	400,000
2008	796,000	410,000	291,000
Difference	+193,000	+106,000	+109,000
% Change 08-12	24%	26%	37%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau November 2008 and 2012 CPS Reports.

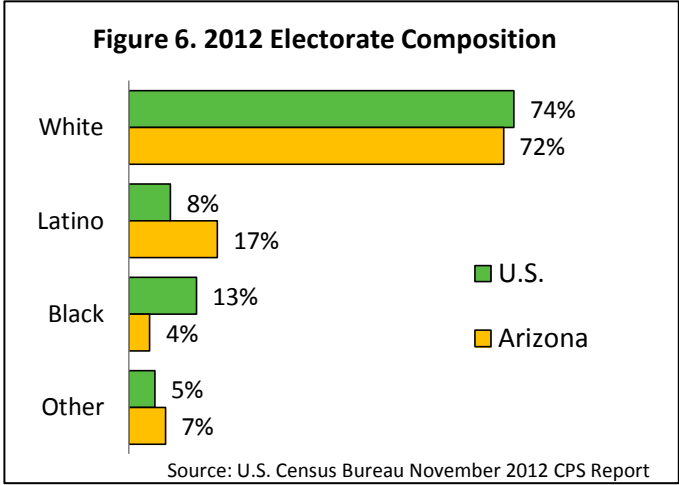
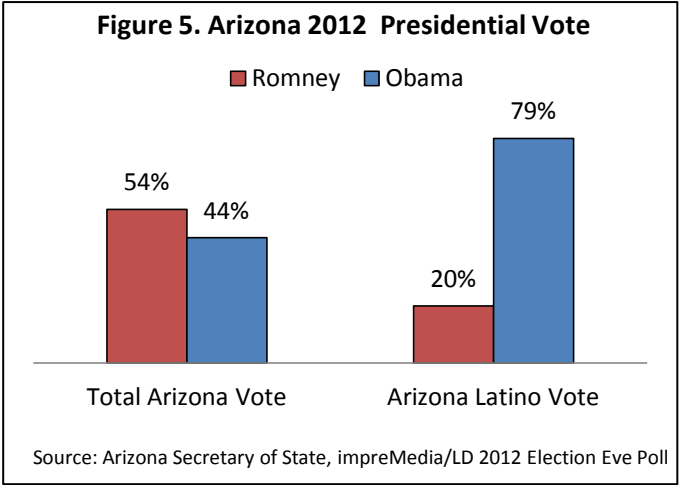
Capturing Latino Influence in Arizona: 2012 Presidential and Senate Elections

Republicans in Arizona have fared especially poorly with Hispanic voters in recent years due to the onslaught of punitive immigration policy and rhetoric championed by party leaders and elected officials. Consistent with this trend, the [impreMedia/Latino Decisions Election Eve Poll](#) found Arizona's Latinos cast 79% of their ballots for President Obama, and only 20% for Romney. At 17% of the statewide electorate, the Latino vote was not enough to provide a Democratic victory. Mitt Romney comfortably carried Arizona by a ten-point margin, beating President Obama by a net 212,382 votes.

The participation gap is significant in the state, more than half (60%) of the eligible Latino population did not vote in 2012.

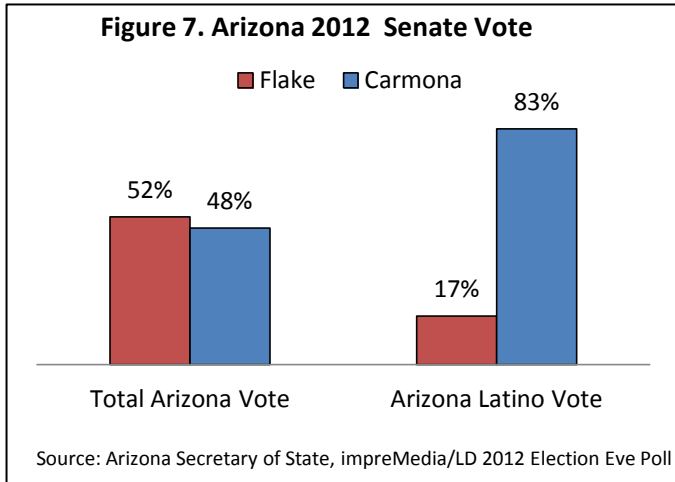
Table 2 re-estimates the presidential race outcome if the additional 589,000 voting eligible Latinos in Arizona had voted. Of course, 100% turnout would never occur for any group. We present this scenario to illustrate that Latinos already have the capacity to enact political change. Based on the Arizona Election Eve Poll, we estimate the vote split at 20% for Romney and 79% for

Obama. Under those conditions, President Obama would have carried the state, picking up eleven electoral votes.



	Romney	Obama	Win Margin
Actual	1,143,051	930,669	212,382
Eligible Latino non-voter (589k at 20/79 split)	+117,800	+465,310	
Simulation Total	1,260,851	1,395,979	135,128

Source: Arizona Secretary of State, impreMedia/LD 2012 Election Eve Poll



Arizona's U.S. Senate race was much closer than the presidential contest. Republican Jeff Flake beat Democratic candidate Richard Carmona by only a four point margin. Latino voters supported the co-ethnic candidate at a rate of 83%. Carmona would have required a much smaller share of the non-voting Latino eligible electorate to turnout in order to win his race.

Table 3 illustrates, Carmona needed less than 100,000 additional votes to win. Only a portion of the non-participating voting-eligible Latinos in the state could have

	Flake	Carmona	Win Margin
Actual	1,024,459	943,660	80,799
Eligible Latino non-voter (589k at 20/79 split)	+100,130	+488,870	
Simulation Total	1,124,589	1,432,530	307,941

Source: Arizona Secretary of State, impreMedia/LD 2012 Election Eve Poll

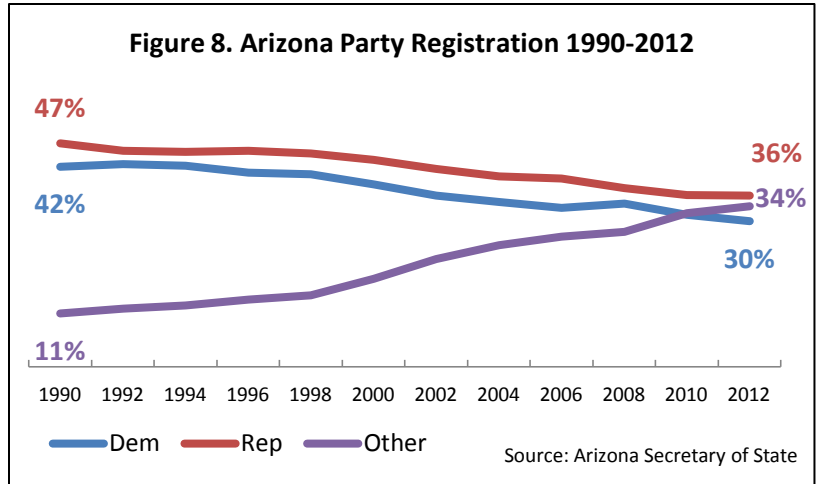
delivered them. There is wide consensus that the Senate race was a close contest, in no small part because Carmona's candidacy had specific appeal to Latino voters. The data bear this out, Carmona won higher margins of support from Latinos compared to President Obama, but turnout margins were not strong enough to overcome the statewide margin.

Latino voters have the capacity to make any state-wide contest competitive. At this point, Latinos comprise 23% of Arizona's entire eligible electorate. The fact that they vote in a cohesive manner makes their collective impact more potent, whereby the Latino vote margin can be decisive in close elections. As these two contests illustrate, interesting candidates and high-profile elections alone are not enough to maximize statewide turnout; but it's close. Consistently competitive elections are well within reach in the state. Such outcomes will occur if parties and their allies continue to invest significant resources to mobilize the Latino vote in the state -- a task Arizona partisan officials make especially difficult by advancing policies that diminish Hispanic voter participation.

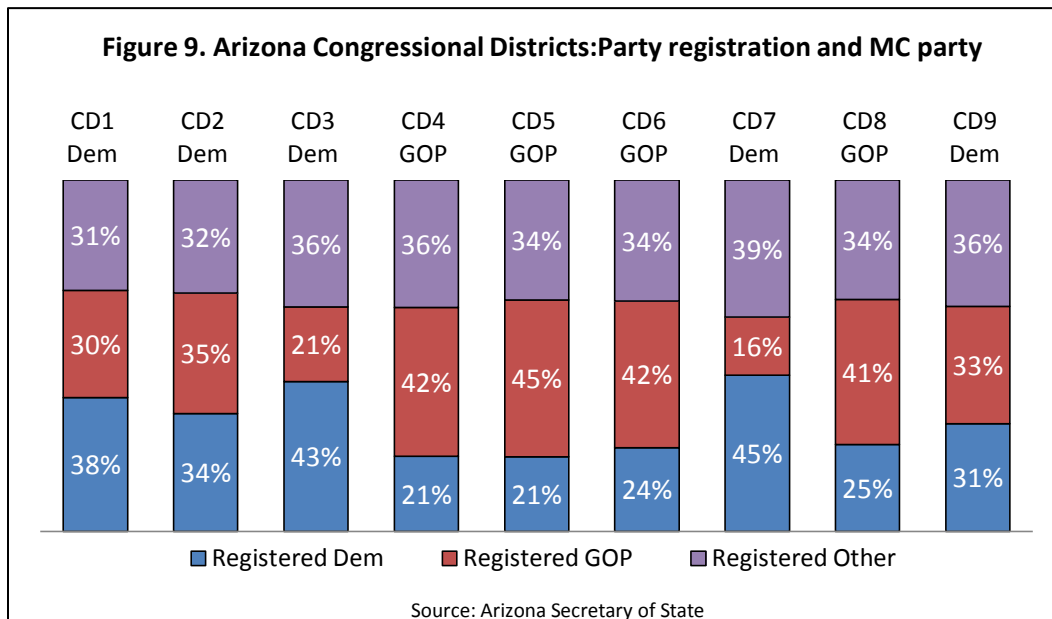
Partisanship and Congressional Districts

Arizona is among the twenty-eight states where registered voters declare party affiliation.

Republicans currently enjoy a six-point advantage in the state, 36% of Arizona voters are registered Republicans, 30% Democrats, and 34% identify as independent or another party. Consistent with

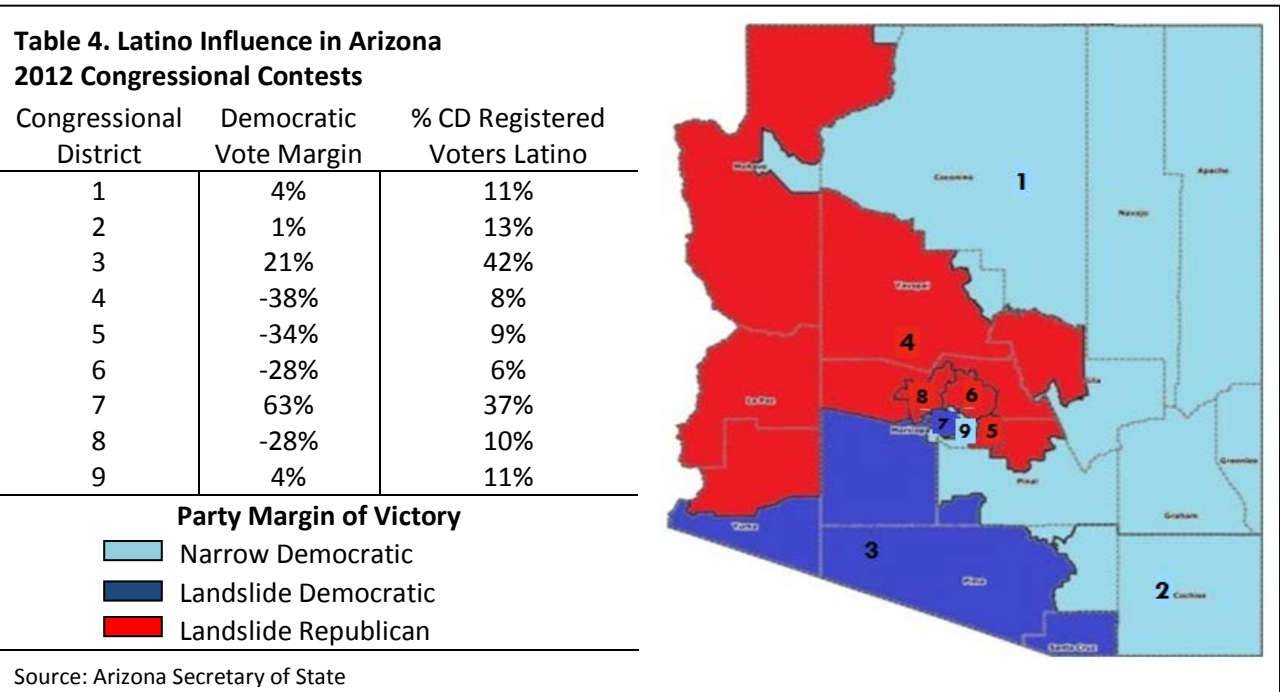


national trends, both major parties have seen their ranks drop by more than ten points over the last two decades, while independent identifiers have surged (Figure 8). Despite these declines, two-party registration trends remain a useful indicator of party competition. Partisan identifiers vote at higher rates and comprise the party base that gets mobilized. Viable contenders in most races still run as Republicans or Democrats after all.



Arizona's Congressional districts evidence both party competition and Latino political influence that can be masked in statewide snapshots. During the last election cycle, Democrats won five of nine Congressional seats despite the fact that Republicans have a

registration advantage in six Congressional districts (Figure 9). In terms of baseline support (measured as party registration), Republicans have a clear advantage in four districts, (CD's 4, 5, 6, 8) and a slight advantage in two (CD's 2, 9). Democratic seats are safe in two districts (CD's 3, 7) and mostly safe in District 1. Statewide, 83% of Arizona Latino voters reported casting ballots for Democratic Congressional candidates. Among registered Latino voters in the state, 78% turned out. Combining Congressional district level data with the statewide figures, it is fair to say that Latino voters played an important role in electing Arizona's five Democrats in Congress. Table 4 compares the Democratic candidate margin of victory with the share of Latino registered voters in each district. In four districts (1, 2, 3 and 9) the proportion of Latino voters exceeds the margin of victory. District 7 is the exception, but there was no Republican challenger in that contest. In this case, Latino voter influence has made the district safely Democratic.



Presidential and high-profile statewide contests dominate the headlines, but they do not capture incremental political changes that can build to a crescendo over a few election cycles. For example, 2012 also saw Arizona Democrats pick up eight seats in the state legislature, ending the GOP super-majority in Phoenix.

Population and Political Projections

Looking carefully at victory margins, voter participation, turnout trends, and down-ballot contests, it is clear that the political ground is already moving in Arizona. The state's underlying demography is largely the reason why. A plurality of Arizona's population under 18 is Latino origin (43%), and over 90% of them are American citizens. In contrast, over 80% of Arizona citizens age 65 and above are non-Hispanic whites. Consequently, the Arizona eligible electorate will become more Hispanic with time. Even if immigration to the state were to entirely stop, the state's existing combinations of age and ethnicity portend a more Latino, and less white, populace and electorate. By 2014 Arizona's eligible electorate will be 25% Latino. In Congressional elections, the impact stands to be most notable in Congressional districts 1, 2, and 9, where the share of registered Latino voters eclipsed the very narrow margins of victory for Democratic candidates. If new Latino voters cast their ballots similar to their co-ethnic counterparts already participating, these three districts will move from being competitive swing districts, to solid blue, safe Democratic districts.

By the next presidential election, even a very conservative estimate of 4% growth (taking prior increases, Census voting data trends, and population projections in to account) in the Arizona eligible Latino electorate would mean over one million Latinos could cast a ballot in the 2016 election. Table 5 illustrates, even if Latino turnout remained at 2012 levels in 2016, an additional 12,000 Latinos would vote on election day. If turnout increases at a modest rate, matching the 2012 statewide average of 55%, there will be 166,500 more Latino voters casting ballots in 2016.

Table 5. Arizona's Projected Latino Electorate Scenarios		
<i>Estimated Latino Eligible Voters = 1,030,000</i>		
Turnout Scenarios	Number of Voters	Change from 2012
35% (5 pt decrease 2012)	309,000	- 91,000
40% (same as 2012)	412,000	+ 12,000
55% (state average 2012)	566,500	+ 166,500
62% (national average 2012)	638,600	+ 238,600
80% (mobilized scenario)	824,000	+ 424,000

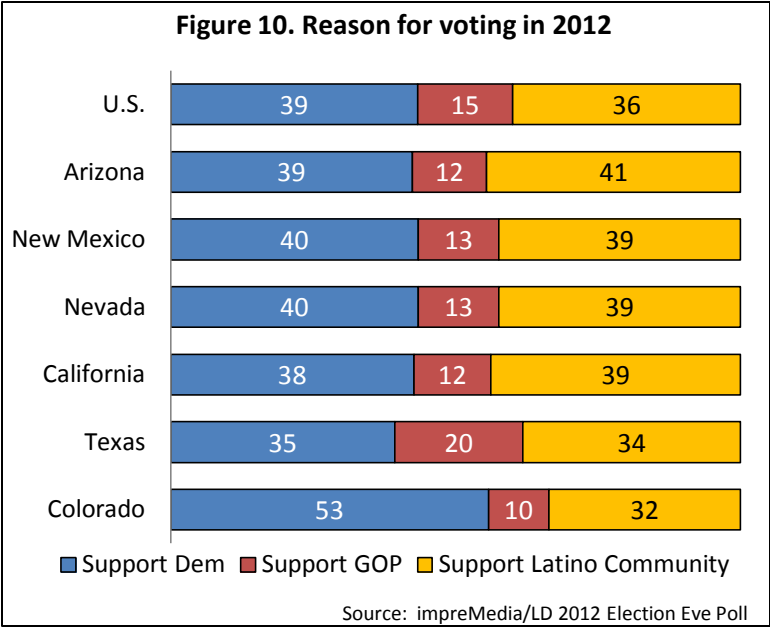
Estimates based on 2012 Census Bureau Election Report, and 2012 Arizona Office of Employment & Population Statistics Report.

Because the Republican Party has so effectively spurned the Latino vote by way of both policy and rhetoric (see [SB1070](#), [Sheriff Joe Arpaio](#)), additional Latino participation in Arizona signals increased Democratic votes. As noted earlier, 79% of Arizona Latino voters supported President Obama in 2012, four percent higher than the national Latino average. However, increased numbers of Latino eligible voters alone will not deliver Democratic victories in 2016. Arizona Democrats only needed higher turnout among already eligible voters to win statewide contests in 2012. Thus, both parties have their work cut out for them in terms of Latino outreach including improved registration and GOTV, running high quality candidates, and perhaps most importantly -- giving Latinos good reasons to support their candidates.

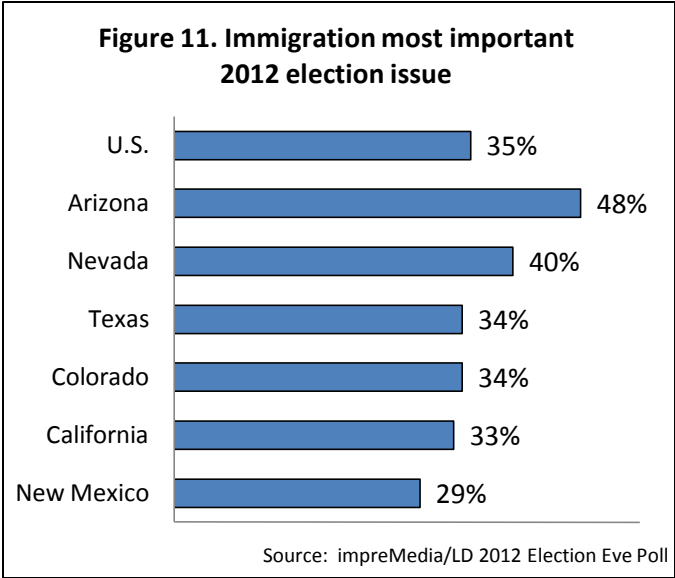
Latino Public Opinion in Arizona

Latino voters in Arizona are more attuned to immigration and Latino group politics than their counterparts in other parts of the country. Of course, this is not surprising given the spate of policy, practices, and rhetoric detrimental to Latinos and immigrants, that has flourished under the leadership of elected officials like Governor Jan Brewer and Sherriff Joe Arpaio over the past few years. Last November, a plurality of Latino voters,

41%, said the reason they voted was to support the Latino community. Group interests were more instrumental than party support in drawing them to the polls. Figure 10 illustrates Arizona Latinos felt more strongly about group interests compared to the national average, and relative to peers in western states with similar demography.

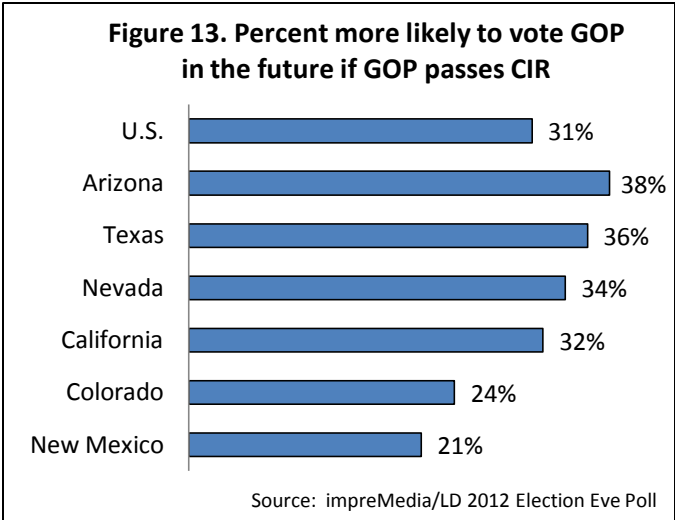
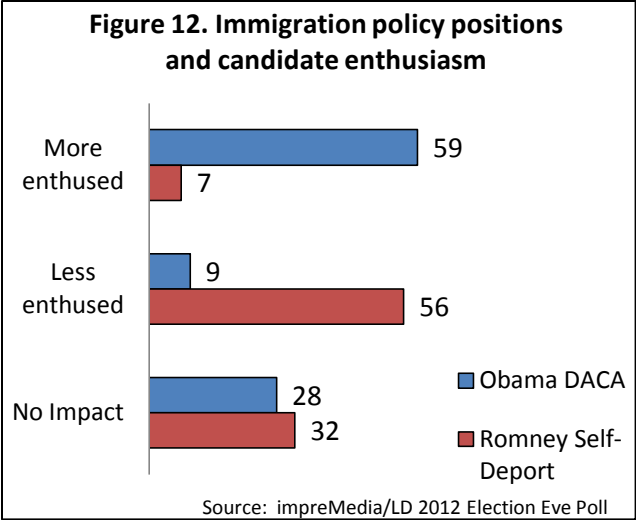


41%, said the reason they voted was to support the Latino community. Group interests were more instrumental than party support in drawing them to the polls. Figure 10 illustrates Arizona Latinos felt more strongly about group interests compared to the national average, and relative to peers in western states with similar demography.



Similarly, 48% of Arizona's Latino electorate cited immigration as the most important issue in the 2012 election, compared to the national average of 35%. Latino voters in other border and western states share the view that immigration is important, it ranked just behind the economy in all other states in November, and now rates as the most important issue in national surveys of Latino voters. Still, the issue poses a particular urgency in Arizona.

Immigration policy positions espoused by the two major-party presidential candidates weighed heavily on voter evaluations. President Obama's deferred action measure drew enthusiasm from over half of the state's Latino electorate. Mitt Romney's self-deportation approach to immigration made 56% of Arizona Latinos less enthusiastic about his candidacy. This is perfectly consistent with the response that voting is motivated by support for the larger Latino community.



Precisely because immigration is the highest priority for Arizona voters, the Republican party stands to gain more Latino votes in Arizona (as a percentage) than any other state if they pass immigration reform including a pathway to citizenship. The responses from Arizona Latinos have been perfectly consistent: immigration is a priority issue and they will support candidates who support their community on this matter.

Conclusions

- Arizona's politics are in the midst of change, driven in large part by the dramatic demographic shift taking place. Increases in Latino voter registration and turnout have influenced election outcomes, making some contests closer than they would be otherwise, and in determining winners in others.
- Hispanic voters in Arizona have absorbed the brunt of the harsh political environment state Republicans crafted around immigration and Latino identity issues (e.g. language policy, ethnic studies, and voting rights). It is perfectly reasonable that this electorate places a high priority on the issue that has been thrust upon them in many ways.
- Despite it all, the Arizona Latino electorate remains willing to support GOP candidates if the party passes comprehensive immigration reform inclusive of a pathway to citizenship. In fact, Arizona Hispanic voters are more inclined to support Republicans under that condition, than their counterparts in any other state. Given the current and growing influence of Hispanic voters in state legislative, Congressional and statewide races, the party would be wise to take them up on it.
- As members of the Gang of Eight, Arizona Senators Flake and McCain have taken leadership roles in attempting to pass CIR, and re-build bridges with Hispanic constituencies. Their co-partisans would do well to learn from their more diplomatic tenor in addressing immigration issues and the broader Latino electorate.