

Hispanic Voters and Colorado Politics



Latino  **Decisions**

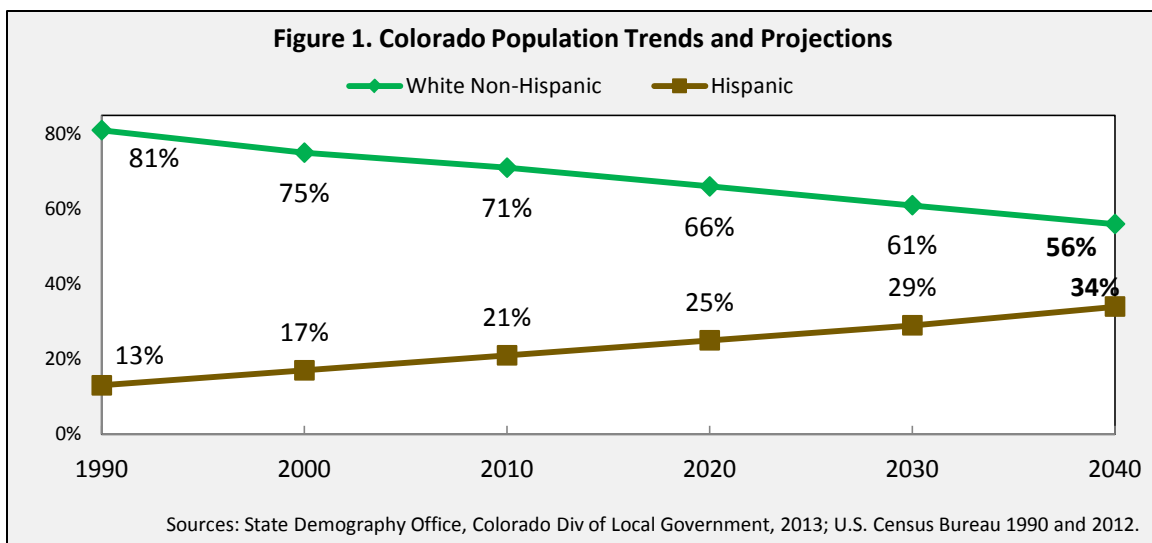
June 2014

Overview: Latino Politics in Colorado

This research brief summarizes the current state of Latino politics in Colorado. We focus on four aspects: 1) population trends, 2) participation, 3) partisanship, and 4) immigration politics. A detailed slide deck illustrating more on Colorado trends and projections is available at the [Latino Decisions website](#).

Demography and Voter Participation

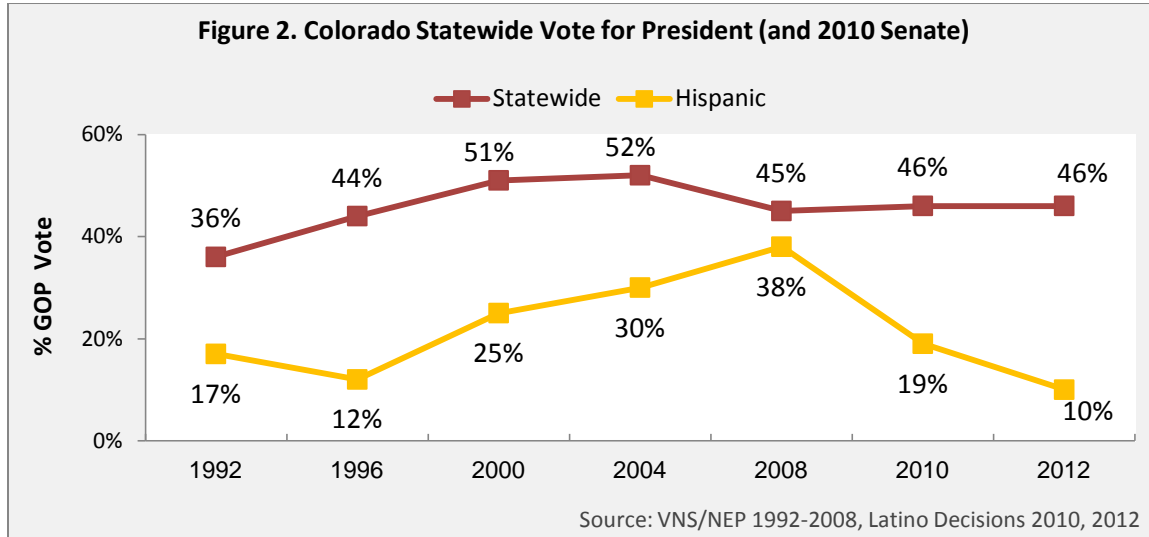
Hispanics account for 21% of the Colorado population and 14% of the eligible electorateⁱ. The state's demographic destiny is certain to be more Latino, by the end of this decade one out of four Coloradans will be Hispanic. That share will increase to 34% by the year 2040 according to [published state estimates](#)ⁱⁱ. An age differential, not immigration, is fueling this population shift. The vast majority of Hispanics, 75%, are native born. The average age for Hispanics in Colorado is 26, compared to non-Hispanic whites at 40 years old.



Today, one out of ten voters in Colorado is Hispanicⁱⁱⁱ. While registration and turnout are higher in Colorado relative to similar states in the West, there is still significant room for improvement. Only 57% of the eligible Hispanic electorate is actually registered, which means approximately 213,000 Hispanics are not incorporated in the Colorado electorate.

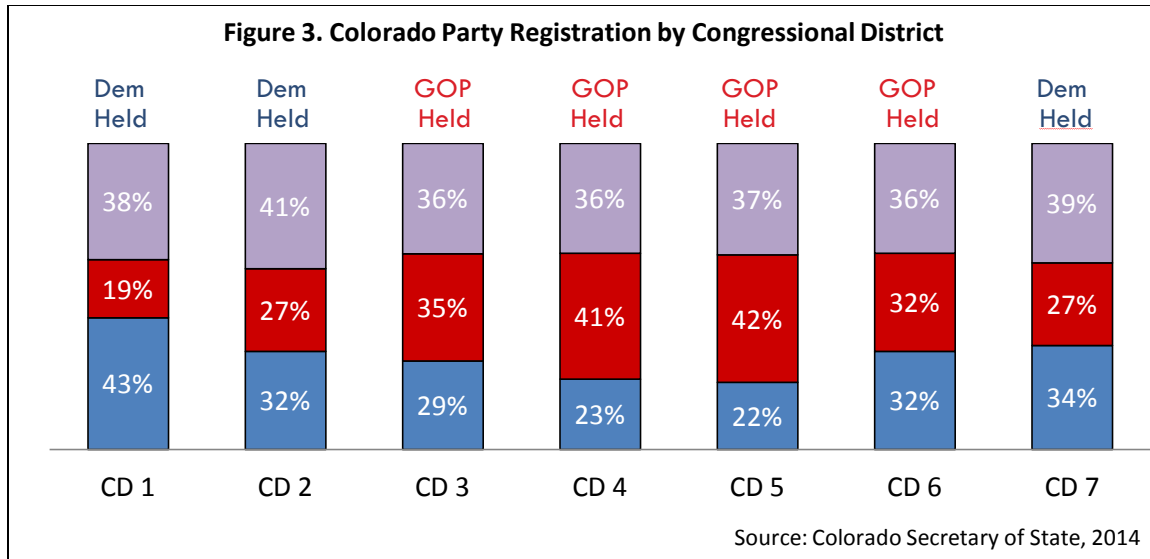
Partisanship

Hispanics have contributed to Colorado's competitive political climate. Over the last two decades, Democrats have carried over 60% of the Hispanic vote in presidential elections. Republicans had steadily improved their standing with Latino voters over the course of several election cycles. However, those gains evaporated in the most recent elections.



There are seven Congressional districts in Colorado, Republicans hold four seats and Democrats hold three. There are no Hispanic-majority districts, the eligible Hispanic electorate is largest in CDs 1 (18%), 3 (18%), and 7 (19%).

Currently GOP-held CD 6 is one of the most watched House races of 2014. The district that Tom Tancredo once represented (now held by Republican Congressman Mike Coffman) was effectively re-drawn after the last round of reapportionment. The Colorado Secretary of State reports show [party registration](#) is dead even in the district.



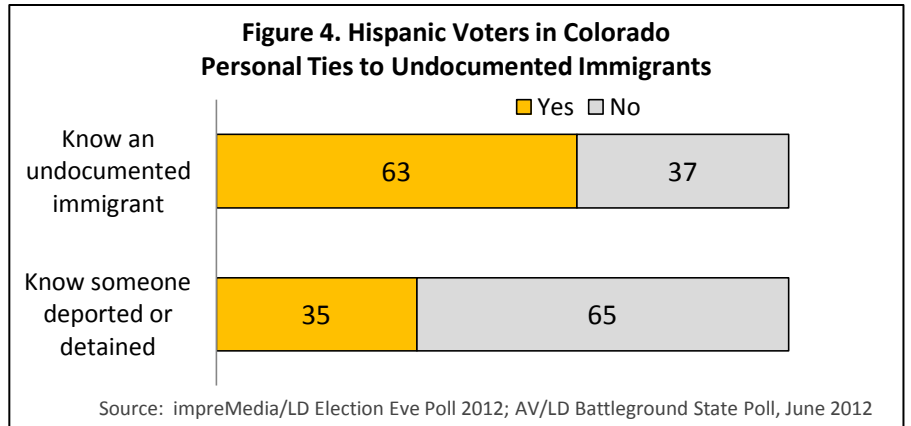
President Obama won majority of votes (52%) in CD 6 during his re-election campaign. On the other hand, Coffman barely won his 2012 race with only 48% of the vote; only two points ahead of his Democratic opponent. Hispanics account for 12% of the CD6 electorate; they could very well determine the outcome of the contest.

With respect to mobilization, parties have been effective in mobilizing the Colorado Hispanic electorate. [Our research finds](#)^{iv} that Hispanics in Colorado were contacted at a significantly higher rate than the national average: 59% of Hispanic voters said they had been contacted by parties and campaigns during the 2012 election cycle. The vast majority, 75% reported being reached by Democrats, 40% by Republicans, and one third received messaging from community organizations.

Immigration Politics

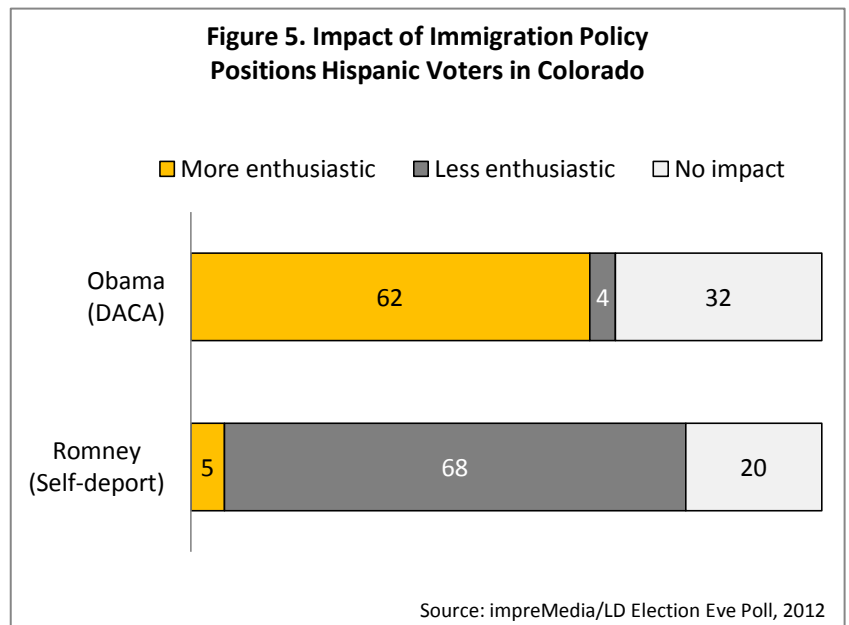
Immigration politics have loomed large in Colorado politics. Over the [last eight years](#) in particular, [the state legislature has battled over hundreds of controversial immigration policies](#). Former Congressman (current Republican candidate for Governor) Tom Tancredo's antagonistic talk further amplified the role of immigration in Colorado politics.

Colorado Hispanic voters are highly attuned to these issues because of their ties to the immigrant community. Specifically, 63% of Colorado Hispanic voters personally know someone who is an undocumented immigrant.



Another 35% know people who have been deported or detained for immigration reasons. It makes sense that 24% say they would be more likely to vote for Republicans again if the party passes immigration reform with a path to citizenship. One-third also indicated that immigration was the most important issue facing Hispanics, and 32% said the reason they cast a ballot in the 2012 election was to support the Hispanic community (as opposed to supporting either Republicans or Democrats).

It is striking that Colorado's Hispanic citizens were so turned off by Republican candidate Mitt Romney's references to "self-deportation", and so very enthused by President Obama's deferred action program (DACA). As American citizens, these voters are not personally at risk of deportation or in need of relief from such pending action. Yet, the issue resonates at a high decibel.



ⁱ U.S. Census American Community Survey 2012 1-year Estimates are used throughout to measure state and national population size and traits including nativity, age, and ethnicity/race.

ⁱⁱ Table 2. Colorado Ethnic Group Share of Total Population, 2000 - 2040. State Demography Office, Colorado Division of Local Government, October 2013.

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Census Bureau, November 2012 CPS Report
<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2012/tables.html>

^{iv} Public opinion data drawn from the impreMedia/Latino Decisions 2012 Election Eve Poll and the America's Voice/Latino Decisions 2012 Battleground Survey.

^v Specifically, voters were asked (with the Obama/Romney questions rotated): "During the campaign Mitt Romney stated that we need a nationwide system in place so that undocumented immigrants are not allowed to work here in the United States. If they can't work here, Romney has said immigrants should choose to quote "self-deport". If elected, Romney has said he will not grant any new work permits to undocumented immigrant youth. Do these statements make you feel more enthusiastic about Romney, less enthusiastic about Romney, or have no effect on how you feel about Romney?"

In June President Obama announced a new Department of Homeland Security policy to stop the deportation of any undocumented immigrant youth who attends college or serves in the military and to provide them with a legal work permit that is renewable. Did this announcement make you feel more enthusiastic about Obama, less enthusiastic about Obama, or did it have no effect on how you feel about Obama?"