



CRITICAL FINDINGS AND POLICY BRIEF

Latino Demography and Voter Registration and Participation Rates in the Southwest: Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico, 1990-2016

Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico lay claim to approximately one-quarter of all Latino living in the United States as of 2014. While the Latino population and electorate in these states have increased in recent decades, Latinos have yet to realize the maximum political potential because of low voter registration and participation rates. This report examines demographic changes and voting and registration patterns among Latinos in these three Southwestern states between 1990 and 2014, and offer projections for the 2016 presidential election.

The southwestern states studied in this report comprise almost one quarter of the United States' Latino population as of 2014.

- Nearly 13.5 million Latinos lived in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico in 2014 according to U.S. census data.
- In 2014, Latinos comprised 38% of the total electorate in New Mexico, 28% of all eligible voters in Texas, and 22% in Arizona.

The Latino population of Texas more than doubled between 1990 and 2014.

- In Texas there were approximately 4.3 million Latinos in 1990; by 2014 that number rose to 10.5 million.
- The Latino electorate in Texas increased from 2 million (18% of the state's electorate) in 1990 to 4.8 million eligible voters (28% of the state's electorate) in 2014.
- The Texan Latino population and electorate expanded primarily because of the growth of the Mexican-origin population of the state.

The Latino demographics of Arizona paralleled those of Texas between 1990 and 2014.

- In Arizona there were approximately 680,000 Latinos in 1990; by 2014 that number rose to slightly over 2 million.
- The Latino electorate in Arizona soared from 12% of all eligible voters in the state in 1990 to 22% in 2014.
- As with Texas, the Arizona Latino population and electorate expanded primarily because of the growth of the Mexican-origin population of the state.

New Mexico's total population has the highest percentage of Latinos of any state, and the highest percentage of Latinos in its electorate.

- In New Mexico there were approximately 462,000 Latinos in 1990; by 2014 that number rose to approximately 946,000.
- The Latino electorate in New Mexico increased from 26% of all eligible voters in 1990 to 38% in 2014.
- As with Texas and Arizona, Mexican-origin Latinos were the most numerous of the Latino nationalities in New Mexico.

Texas and Arizona both had low rates of voter registration and voter turnout among Latinos.

- Latinos in Texas had voter registration rates at about 53% in the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections, below the national average of approximately 59%. Because of this low registration rate, only 39% of eligible Latino voters cast ballots in 2012. CLACLS projects these numbers will remain relatively unchanged in the 2016 presidential election.
- Arizona Latinos also had comparably low voter registration rates, at about 52% of all eligible Latino voters in 2008 and 2012 -- below the national Latino average. Because of these low registration rates only 37% of eligible Latino voters actually voted in Arizona in 2008; 40% in 2012; and CLACLS projects that about 41% will vote in November 2016.

Latinos in New Mexico both registered and voted at rates that were significantly above national averages.

- Since 2004, about 64% of all Latinos in the state have been registered to vote, above the national average of about 59%. In 2012 56% of all eligible Latino voters in the state cast ballots, also well above the 48% national level.
- CLACLS projects that about 36% of all votes which will be cast in November 2016 in New Mexico will be by Latinos.

CLACLS Recommendations:

The southwestern region considered in this report stands as one of the great historical centers of Latino culture in the United States from historical and contemporary perspectives. As of 2014, Latinos in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico together comprised one-quarter or 25% of all Latinos in the United States. With the 2016 presidential election fast approaching, pundits and stakeholders would be wise to note that while New Mexico is an ever-expanding stronghold for the Latino electorate, Latinos in Texas and Arizona have not realized the potential extent of their political power and influence.

Organizations working with Latino groups in those two states would do well to promote registration and communicate to Latinos the potential importance of their electorate. Arizona and Texas have been solid Republican states despite the fact that over 70% of Latinos voted Democratic in the last presidential election. As the Latino population continues to grow as well as the Latino electorate, it is theoretically possible that these two Republican states could turn Democratic. But this will only occur if Latino voter registration and voting rates increase to levels commensurate with the other major race/ethnic groups in each state.

See full report [HERE](#).

About the CNN en Español and the Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies Partnership:

[CNN en Español](#) and the [Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies](#) (CLACLS) at the [Graduate Center](#), City University of New York (CUNY), have partnered to provide an exclusive focus on Latino voters in America, the fastest growing minority voting bloc that could play an instrumental role in determining the next President of the United States. Through rigorous academic research generated by CLACLS' Latino Data Project, CNN en Español will broadcast detailed reports about Latinos in the American elections over several multi-media platforms geared toward Spanish-speaking audiences around the world, including 4 million U.S. households.
CLACLS website: <http://clacls.gc.cuny.edu> CNNE website: <http://cnnespanol.cnn.com>