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Could Latinos Choose the Next President? States in Which Latinos Could Determine the Margin of Victory in the 2016 Presidential Election

Laird W. Bergad

Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies

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Could Latinos Choose the Next President?

States in which Latinos Could Determine the Margin of Victory in the 2016 Presidential Election

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

[CNN en Español](#) (CNNe) 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.

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The Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies is a research institute that works for the advancement of the study of Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinos in the United States in the doctoral programs at the CUNY Graduate Center. One of its major priorities is to provide funding and research opportunities to Latino students at the Ph.D. level.

The Center established and helps administer an interdisciplinary specialization in Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies in the Masters of Arts in Liberal Studies program.

The Latino Data Project was developed with the goal of making information available on the dynamically growing Latino population of the United States and especially New York City through the analysis of extant data available from a variety of sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Institute for Health, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and state and local-level data sources.

All Latino Data Project reports are available at <http://clacls.gc.cuny.edu>

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Methodological Note: The data found in this report on the total Latino population and the total Latino electorate in each state are slightly different than the data reported for each state whose gateway is the Pew Research Center Hispanic Trends, 2014 State Election Facts web page found at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/fact-sheets/2014-state-election-fact-sheets/> and on its “Mapping the Latino Electorate by State” web page at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/mapping-the-latino-electorate-by-state/>

This is because PEW researchers used the Census Bureau's-provided variable HISPAND found in the American Community Survey 2014 data set released by the University of Minnesota’s, Minnesota Population Center IPUMS project to quantify Latinos nationally and in each state. (See footnote 3).

That variable includes Europeans such as Spaniards, Canary Islanders, or other individuals born in a Spanish province and counts them as Hispanics. The variable also excludes Brazilians who CLACLS insists should be enumerated as Latinos

CLACLS eliminated all Europeans from the HISPAND variable and then created a variable called LATINOS in its 2014 ACS data set using the birthplace of the individual and/or the parents’ birthplace data if a person did not have a known nationality. Thus, a person whose nationality was unknown but who was born in Mexico is classified as Mexican and included as a Latino. Likewise a person whose nationality is unknown but whose mother was born in Mexico is 'turned into' a Mexican rather than 'Other Hispanic.' A Brazilian nationality variable was created using birthplace and parents’ birthplace data and added to the new ‘Latino’ variable created by CLACLS.

In some states the population and electorate data presented here are significantly different than PEW’s data on individual states for 2014,

Acknowledgements: This report was made possible by the meticulous research conducted by Justine Calcagno, Ph.D. and Director of Quantitative Research at CLACLS.

Executive Summary

The Latino electorate, citizens who are 18 years of age and older and thus eligible to vote, is projected to be approximately 28 million persons for the 2016 presidential election. However, because of low registration rates, about 58% of eligible voters in every presidential election between 1992 and 2012, only 48% of potential Latino voters (13.5 million) will in all likelihood actually cast ballots to choose the next president of the United States.

Eligible Latino voters are concentrated in relatively few states. California alone accounts for nearly 27% of the Latino electorate; Texas nearly 19%; and Florida slightly over 10%. New York at 7.4% is fourth; Arizona (3.9%) fifth; Illinois (3.7%) sixth; and New Jersey (3.3%) seventh. These seven states account for three-quarters of all eligible Latino voters in the U.S.

However with the exception of Florida, which was won by President Obama by 0.9% of the popular vote in 2012, each of the other six states are expected to be won by one party or the other by large margins in 2016 and are not 'in play.' Florida's 29 electoral votes will be a major objective of the Republican and Democratic candidates, and there is no question that the Latino vote will be a decisive factor in Florida.

In the other eight states which were won in 2012 by narrow margins, the Latino electorate is relatively small. These states were North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, Colorado, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Nevada and Wisconsin. Not only were Latino electorates a small percentage of total potential voters in each state, but together they accounted for only 9% of the total Latino electorate in the United States.

However, in very close elections in each state, Latinos may determine the victor despite the fact that they will be a small portion of those who vote. This report examines each of these states by looking at a series of statistical indicators on the electorate, registration and voter rates between 1992 and 2012 with projections to 2016. The key factors which will determine the role Latino voters play at the state level are registration rates and voter turnout, and in the past both of these were very different in each state.

Florida

- President Obama won Florida by 0.9% of the popular vote in 2012 and exit polls indicated that 60% of the state's Latinos voted for him.
- 75.7% of Latinos are projected by CLACLS to register to vote in 2016 compared with the national average of 58.7% in 2012 making Latinos a powerful political force in the state.¹
- It is estimated that 64% of eligible Latinos will vote in November 2016 much higher than the 48% rate at the national level in 2012.
- CLACLS projects that Latinos will comprise about 20% of all voters who will cast ballots in the state in 2016 and they will be decisive in determining which major party wins Florida.

¹ For the methodology used to project estimates to 2016 see footnote 5, page 10.

North Carolina

- Mitt Romney won North Carolina by 2.0% of the popular vote in 2012 although exit polls indicated that 68% of Latinos in the state voted for President Obama.
- 66% of Latinos are projected by CLACLS to register to vote in 2016 compared with the national average of 58.7% in 2012.
- It is estimated that 56% of eligible Latinos will vote in November 2016 much higher than the 48% rate at the national level in 2012.
- CLACLS projects that Latinos will comprise about 2.0% of all voters who will cast ballots in the state in 2016. If the election in North Carolina is extremely close, the Latino vote could be important.

Ohio

- President Obama won Ohio by 3.0% of the popular vote in 2012 and exit polls indicated that 54% of Latinos in the state voted for him, one of the lowest state levels of support in the nation.
- 69% of Latinos are projected by CLACLS to register to vote in 2016 compared with the national average of 58.7% in 2012.
- It is estimated that 57% of eligible Latinos will vote in November 2016 much higher than the 48% rate at the national level in 2012.
- CLACLS projects that Latinos will comprise about 2.2% of all voters who will cast ballots in the state in 2016. If the election in Ohio is extremely close, the Latino vote could be important.

Virginia

- President Obama won Virginia by 3.9% of the popular vote in 2012 and exit polls indicated that 64% of Latinos in the state voted for him.
- 91% of Latinos are projected by CLACLS to register to vote in 2016 compared with the national average of 58.7% in 2012 and if this comes to fruition it will be the highest state-level rate in the nation,
- It is estimated that 78% of eligible Latinos will vote in November 2016 much higher than the 48% rate at the national level in 2012.
- CLACLS projects that Latinos will comprise about 3.3% of all voters who will cast ballots in the state in 2016. If the election in Virginia is extremely close, the Latino vote could be decisive.

Colorado

- President Obama won Colorado by 5.4% of the popular vote in 2012 and exit polls indicated that 75% of Latinos in the state voted for him.
- 56% of Latinos are projected by CLACLS to register to vote in 2016 compared with the national average of 58.7% in 2012.
- It is estimated that 54% of eligible Latinos will vote in November 2016 much higher than the 48% rate at the national level in 2012.

- CLACLS projects that Latinos will comprise about 12.3% of all voters who will cast ballots in the state in 2016. The Latino vote will be critical in the state because of its relative size compared with states in which Latino populations were much smaller.

Pennsylvania

- President Obama won Pennsylvania by 5.4% of the popular vote in 2012 and exit polls indicated that 80% of Latinos in the state voted for him.
- 54% of Latinos are projected by CLACLS to register to vote in 2016 compared with the national average of 58.7% in 2012.
- It is estimated that 42% of eligible Latinos will vote in November 2016 significantly lower than the 48% rate at the national level in 2012.
- CLACLS projects that Latinos will comprise about 4.1% of all voters who will cast ballots in the state in 2016. If the election in Pennsylvania is extremely close, the Latino vote could be decisive. If registration rates were higher Latinos would be an even more important political force in the state.

New Hampshire

- President Obama won New Hampshire by 5.6% of the popular vote in 2012.
- The Latino electorate was extraordinarily small in New Hampshire at 23,445 people as of 2014 census data. Data on past registration and voting rates are based on very small sample sizes and make projections to 2016 not statistically reliable. It is unlikely that Latinos will play an important role in determining the outcome in the state.

Nevada

- President Obama won Nevada by 6.7% of the popular vote in 2012 and exit polls indicated that 71% of Latinos in the state voted for him.
- 63% of Latinos are projected by CLACLS to register to vote in 2016 compared with the national average of 58.7% in 2012.
- It is estimated that 53% of eligible Latinos will vote in November 2016 higher than the 48% rate at the national level in 2012.
- CLACLS projects that Latinos will comprise nearly 20% of all voters who will cast ballots in the state in 2016 making the Latino vote critical for either candidate to carry the state. Latinos could play an even more important role if registration rates were higher.

Wisconsin

- President Obama won Wisconsin by 6.9% of the popular vote in 2012 and exit polls indicated that 66% of Latinos in the state voted for him.
- Voter registration rates among Latinos in Wisconsin have been dismally low in the past and are projected by CLACLS to be about 40% in 2016 compared with the national average of 58.7% in 2012.

- It is estimated that 39% of eligible Latinos will vote in November 2016 much lower than the 48% rate at the national level in 2012.
- CLACLS projects that Latinos will comprise about 2.3% of all voters who will cast ballots in the state in 2016. Because of low registration rates Latinos will in all likelihood not be an important factor in determining the victor in the state unless it is won by a razor-thin margin.

The Latino Electorate, Voters, and Potentially Decisive States for the 2016 Election

The Latino electorate, citizens 18 years of age and older, is projected to be approximately 28 million persons for the 2016 presidential elections by CLACLS.² However, because of historic low voter registration rates among Latinos which have remained stagnant since 1992 at about 58%, approximately 13.5 million Latinos are expected to actually vote in 2016. Fewer than half of all Latinos who could have voted went to the polls in all presidential elections between 1992 and 2012 and there is no reason to believe that this will change in November 2016,

The Latino electorate is highly concentrated in states with the largest Latino populations. California alone accounts for 26.9% of the nation's Latino potential voting population followed by Texas at 18.7% and Florida at 10.2%. New York (7.4%), Arizona (3.9%), Illinois (3.7%) and New Jersey (3.3%) follow and together these seven states account for nearly three-quarters of all Latinos eligible to vote in the United States.³

However, with the exception of Florida which was won by President Obama by a razor-thin 0.9% margin of the total popular vote in 2012, it is states with smaller overall Latino populations that have the potential to determine the outcome of the 2016 presidential election. In the other six states with the largest Latino electorates, decisive victories were won in 2012 by President Obama or his challenger Mitt Romney and there are no changes expected with respect to which major party will win in 2016. The Democrats soundly carried California in 2012 (60% of the vote), New York (63%), Illinois (58%) and New Jersey (58%). The Republicans garnered 57% of the Texas vote and 54% of all votes cast in Arizona.⁴

The nine states with the narrowest victory margins in 2012 will be the focus of this report since they may determine who will be the next president of the United States. Of these states Mitt Romney carried only one, North Carolina. (See table 1). Colorado, Florida and Nevada have large Latino electorates. CLACLS has estimated that 20.4% of Florida's actual voters will be Latinos in 2016; 19.8% in Nevada; and 12.3% in Colorado. However, in the other six states Latinos will comprise less than 5% of all actual voters. In Pennsylvania they will be about 4.1% of all voters; 4.0% in New Hampshire; 3.3% in Virginia; 2.9% in North Carolina; 2.3% in Wisconsin; and 2.2% in Ohio.⁵ Yet, even

² See Laird W. Bergad, "The Latino Voter Registration Dilemma" CLACLS-CNNe Report 1, January 2016, p. 6 available at <http://clacsl.gc.cuny.edu/files/2016/01/CLACLS-CNNe-Report-1-The-Latino-Voter-Registration-Dilemma.pdf>

³ These data were derived from an analysis of the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) American Community Survey (ACS) 2014 raw data file released by the U.S. Census Bureau and made available by IPUMS in November 2015. See Steven Ruggles, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, and Matthew Sobek. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 6.0 [Machine-readable database]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2015.

⁴ See Table 2, Federal Elections 2012: Election Results for the U.S. President, the U.S. Senate, and the U.S. House of Representatives, Federal Election Commission available at <http://www.fec.gov/pubrec/fe2012/federalelections2012.shtml>

⁵ The 2016 estimate was derived by CLACLS using the yearly percentage rate of increase in voters between 2004 and 2012 and then calculating this same rate of growth between 2008 and 2012 and projecting both to 2016. Then the overall percentage increases to 2016 were divided by two. For example the Florida projections yielded a voter population of 21.4% of all voters in 2016 using the 2004-2012 rate of growth. Using the 2008-2012 yearly rate of growth the projected percentage of all Latino voters was 19.3%. These two numbers were added and divided by two, or averaged, to derive the 20.4% projection of Latinos as a percentage of all Florida voters in 2016. There is an unknown margin of error in these calculations and as in all hypothetical statistical calculations for the future these may not be precise but they do serve as fairly reliable statistical indicators because they use past trends. Data on voter turnout for Latinos was derived from the U.S. Census Bureau, Voting and Registration, found at:

in these smaller Latino-voting population states, Latinos could determine the margin of victory in tight state-level elections in 2016.

Table 1
The Nine States with the Narrowest Margins of Victory in the 2012 Presidential Election and Selected Data on Latinos in Each State

State	Margin of Victory in the Popular Vote in 2012	Winner	Latinos as Percentage of Projected 2016 Voters	Projected Absolute Size of Latino Voting Population in 2016	Projected Latino Voters in 2016 as a Percentage of All Projected Latino Voters in the United States	Projected Percentage of Latino Electorate which will Register to Vote in 2016	Electoral Votes	Percentage of Latinos Voting Democratic in 2012
Florida	0.9%	Obama	20.4%	1,709,006	12.5%	75.7%	29	60%
North Carolina	2.0%	Romney	2.9%	147,703	1.1%	66.0%	15	68%
Ohio	3.0%	Obama	2.2%	116,023	0.8%	69.0%	18	54%
Virginia	3.9%	Obama	3.3%	134,153	1.0%	90.8%	13	64%
Colorado	5.4%	Obama	12.3%	334,250	2.4%	56.3%	9	75%
Pennsylvania	5.4%	Obama	4.1%	238,175	1.7%	54.0%	20	80%
New Hampshire	5.6%	Obama	na	27,053	0.2%	62.4%	4	na
Nevada	6.7%	Obama	19.8%	219,486	1.6%	62.6%	6	71%
Wisconsin	6.9%	Obama	2.3%	74,734	0.5%	39.8%	10	66%
United States	3.9%	Obama	9.9%	13,586,000	100.0%	10.4%	538	71%

Note: See footnote 5 p. 10 for an explanation of how projections to 2016 were derived. The percentages of Latinos voting Democratic were derived from The New York Times President Exit Polls available at

<http://elections.nytimes.com/2012/results/president/exit-polls>

The Pew Research Center indicates very slightly different results by state in the percentage of Latinos voting democratic in November 2012. See

<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/11/07/appendix-a-national-and-selected-state-results/>

na is not available because of small sample size.

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/index.html>

These data originated in the Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (CPS) data from the November Voter Supplements for each year. These are estimates based on sample data and a description of these data and their comparisons to officially released Federal government data is found at

http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/other/State%20User%20Note_Final.pdf

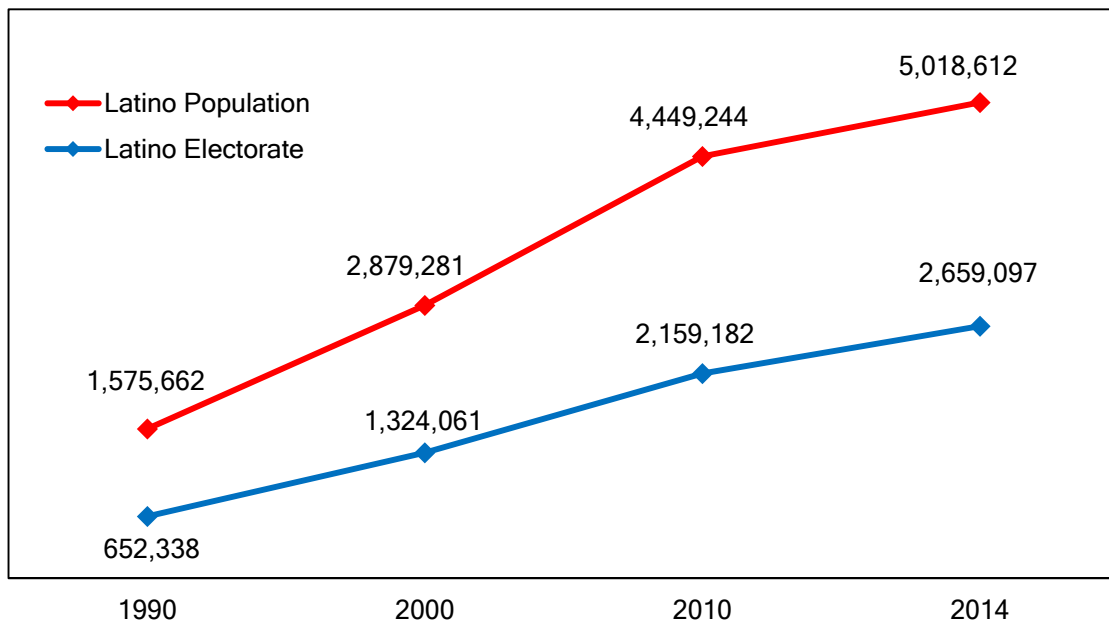
In the above report the Census Bureau observes “The estimates are also frequently accompanied by large margins of error, due to the small sample sizes involved. Data users are encouraged to interpret these results with caution. Despite these issues, the Census Bureau’s November supplement to the CPS remains the most comprehensive data source available for examining trends in the social and demographic composition of the electorate in federal elections.” Thus, the data presented in this report must be used with caution. They serve as indicators and may not be precise because of unknown margins of error.

It is impossible to project voter turnout rates for any race/ethnic group for the 2016 election. At the national level it has been estimated that if non-Hispanic black and white voters turn out at rates approximating the 2012 election participation rate of over two-thirds of eligible voters, and Latinos vote at the 48% of the electorate rate of 2012, a Republican presidential candidate will need to win at least 46% of the Latino vote to be elected to the White House in 2016.⁶ Given the anti-immigrant political declarations of major Republican contenders for that party’s nomination as of the publication of this report, this seems almost impossible to attain. Yet, in the critical states which had the narrowest margins of victory in 2012, there are many factors which could determine whether Latinos are to play a role in determining which party wins the electoral votes of each state in November 2016. The most important is Florida with its 29 electoral votes.⁷

Florida

Florida’s Latino population and its electorate, citizens 18 years of age and older, has increased meteorically between 1990 and 2014 and this has made the Latino vote central to the outcome of the Florida state presidential election and its 29 electoral votes. (See figure 1). Latinos comprised 25% of the state’s total population in 2014. About 71% of 18 years of age or older Latinos were citizens in 2014 and comprised the electorate.

Figure 1
Latino Population and Electorate of Florida, 1990 - 2014



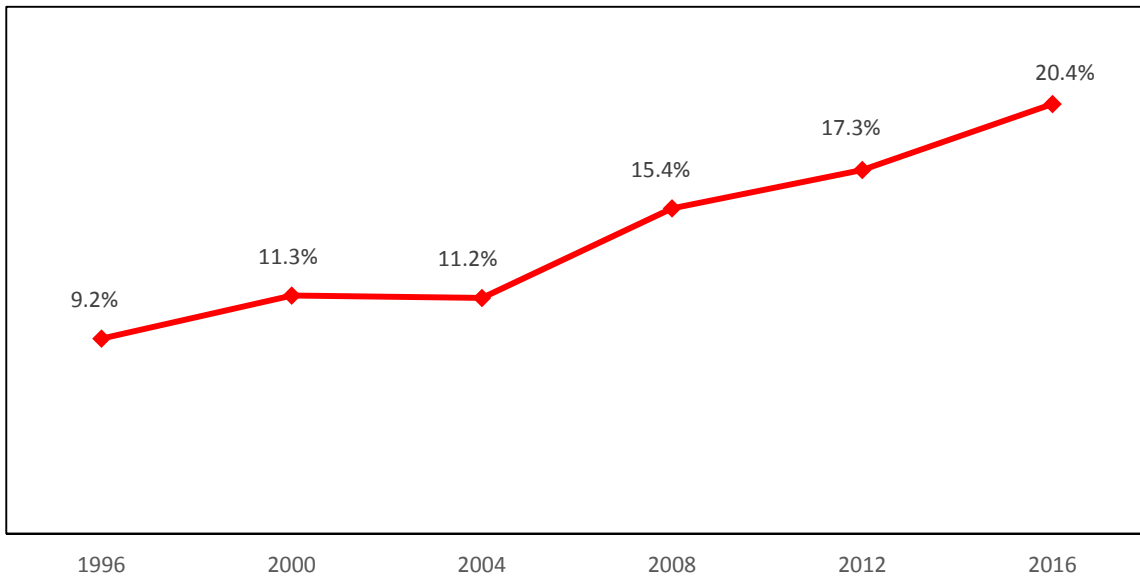
President Obama won Florida by less than 1% of the vote in 2012 and clearly the fact that 60% of the state’s Latinos voted for him was critical in winning the state election and the White House. Latinos have steadily increased as a percentage of all Florida voters from 9.2% of those who cast ballots in

⁶ See David Damore and Matt Barretto “The Latino Threshold to Win in 2016” *Latino Decisions* web page at <http://www.latinodecisions.com/blog/2015/07/17/the-latino-threshold-in-2016-to-win/>

⁷ CLALCS-CNNe will release a very detailed report which solely focuses on Florida in March 2016.

the 1992 presidential election to 17.3% in 2012. CLACLS projects that Latinos will comprise 20.4% of all voters in the 2016 election.⁸ (See figure 2).

Figure 2
Latinos as a Percentage of Total Voting Population in Florida, 1996 - 2016



Latino voters in the state registered at rates which were far above the national average of 58.7% among Latinos in the 2012 presidential elections and there have been steady increased in these rates since 1996 when 62.5% of eligible Florida Latino voters registered. In 2012 the registration rate was 72.1% and CLACLS projects a rate of 75.7% for the November 2016 election. (See figure 3).

Once registered Latinos in Florida voted at very high rates, 86% in 2012. This means that the percentage of eligible voters participating in presidential elections has been well above the national average of 48%. In 1996 49.4% of the Latino electorate in Florida voted. This rose to 62.2% in 2012 and CLACLS projects this to rise to 63.8% in 2016. (See figure 4).

Because of high voter registration and participation rates it is clear that the Latino vote will play a critical role in determining the outcome of the 2016 presidential election in Florida.

⁸ The methodology for deriving this estimate is indicated in footnote 5 p. 10.

Figure 3
Voter Registration Rates among Latinos as a Percentage of Total Florida Latino Electorate, 1996 - 2016

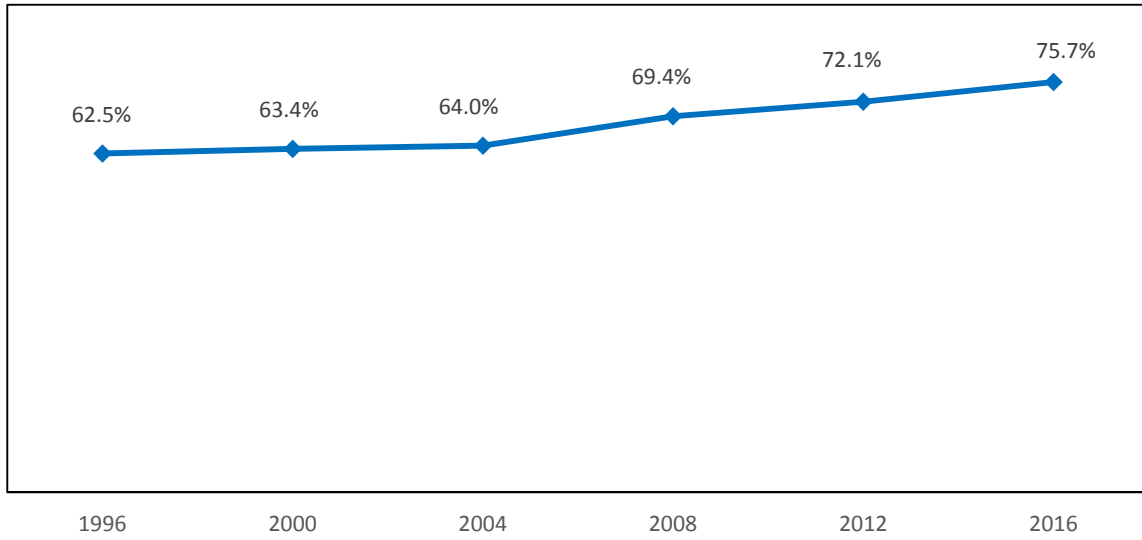
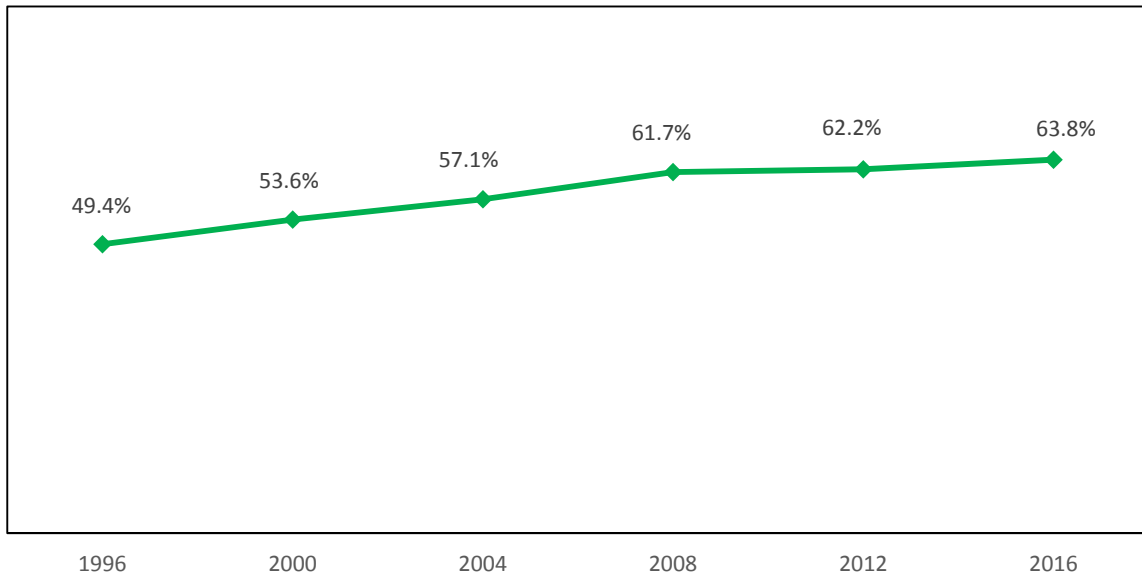


Figure 4
Percentage of Florida Latino Electorate Voting, 1996 - 2016



North Carolina

North Carolina’s Latino population has soared since 1990 and comprised 10% of the state’s population in 2014. Although the state’s electorate has increased as well, it has not kept pace with overall demographic growth because 54% of Latinos in the state 18 years of age and older were not citizens in 2014 and thus not eligible to vote. (See figure 5).

North Carolina was the only state among the ten closest state-level contests in the 2012 presidential election that Mitt Romney won and his margin of victory was 2.0% of the popular vote. Exit polls in North Carolina indicated that 68% of Latinos voted for Obama in 2012.

In 2012 Latinos comprised 2.0% of the total voters in the North Carolina state elections and CLACLS projects that despite demographic increase among Latinos in the state they will be approximately 2.0% of those who will cast their ballots in November 2016. (See figure 6).

Figure 5
Latino Population and Electorate of North Carolina, 1990 - 2014

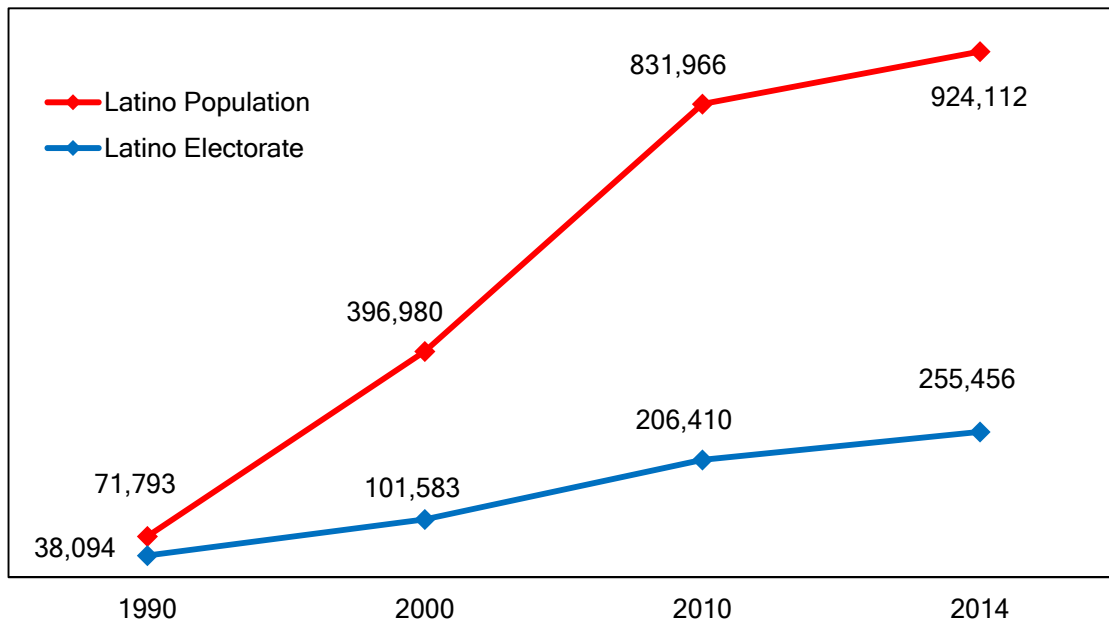
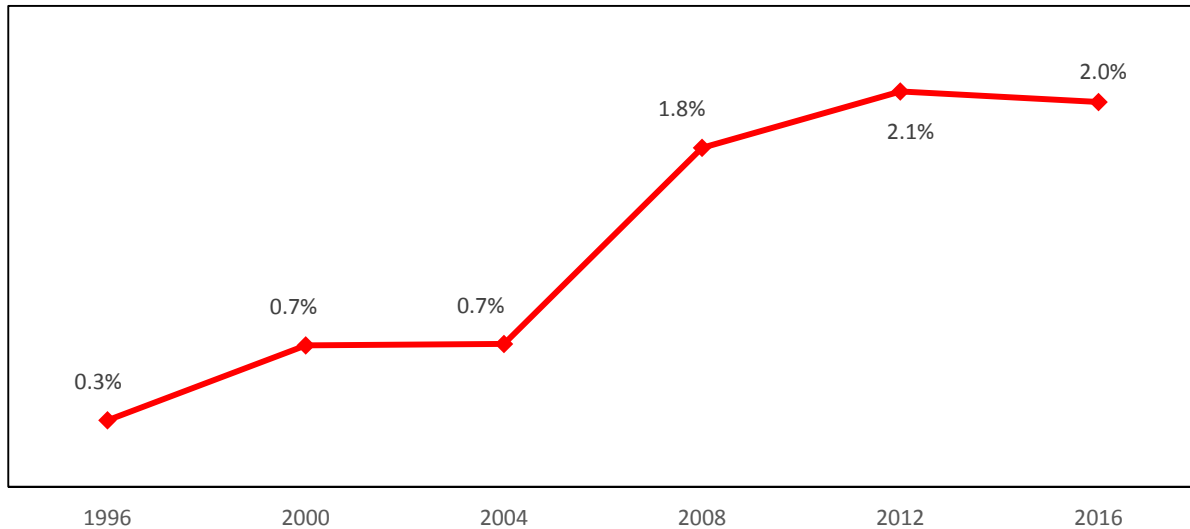


Figure 6
Latinos as a Percentage of Total Voting Population in North Carolina, 1996 - 2016



A critical variable will be Latino voter registration rates. With its relatively small electorate between the 1996 and 2004 presidential elections, registration rates were dismally low and below the approximate 58% national average. In 2004 the rate was 40%, However there was a sharp surge in the Latino voter registration rate to 70% in 2008 according to census data, and whether this was related to the Obama candidacy is unknown. Registration rates in 2012 were above the national average at 68%. However, according to the North Carolina State Board of Elections only 131,618 Latinos were registered to vote in the state as of January 23, 2016.⁹ This was only 2.0% of all registered voters. These data suggest that in a close election Latinos will be an important element in determining the winner, but they are not as critical as in other states because of low registration rates. As in other states with small Latino populations the failure to register severely reduces potential influence in state politics and presidential elections.

In 2012 83% of all North Carolina registered Latino voters cast their ballots. This translated into a higher electorate-participation rate of 56.2% compared with the national average of 48%. Based on registration rates reported by the North Carolina State Board of Elections CLALCS projects that about the same percentage of Latino eligible voters, approximately 56%, will vote in the 2016 presidential election. (See figure 8), The Latino vote will only be important for winning North Carolina’s 15 electoral votes if registration and participation rates increase or if the race is decided by a razor-thin margin.

⁹ See https://enr.ncsbe.gov/voter_stats/results.aspx?date=01-23-2016 for these data.

Figure 7
Voter Registration Rates among Latinos as a Percentage of Total North Carolina Latino Electorate, 1996 - 2016

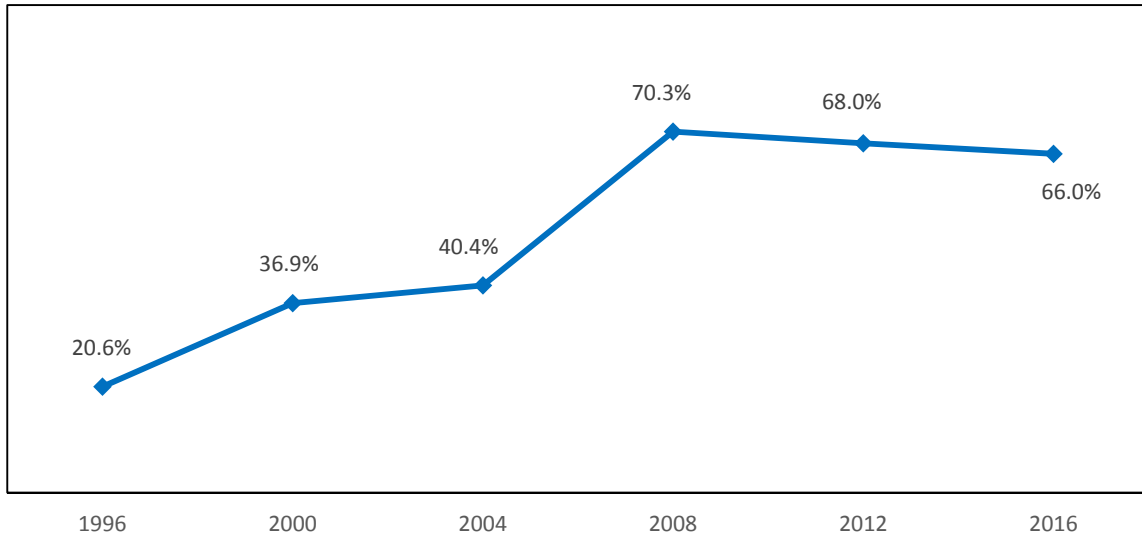
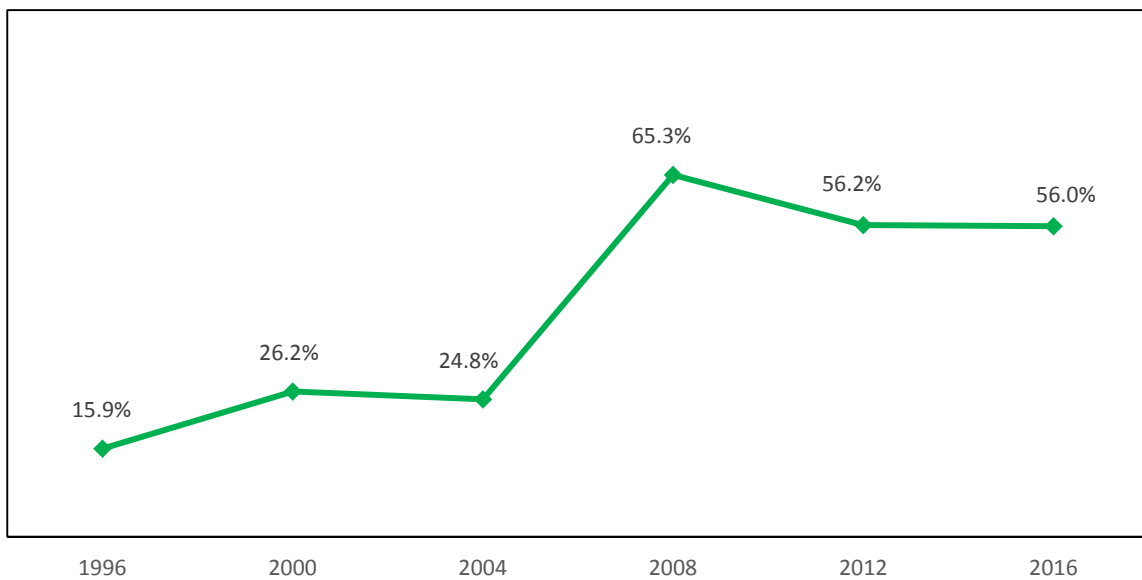


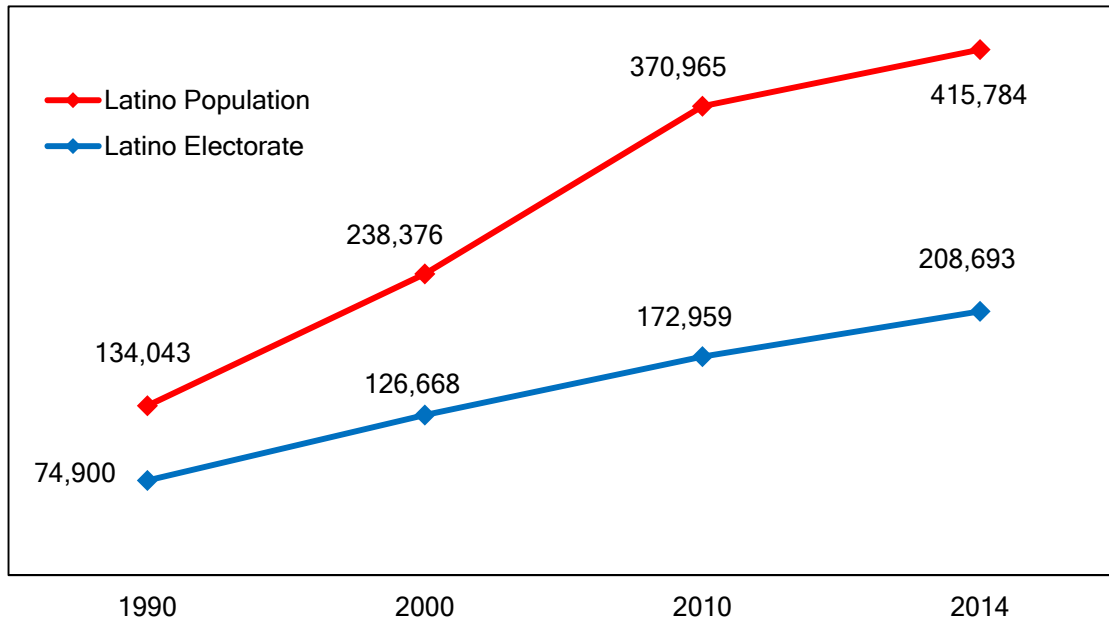
Figure 8
Percentage of North Carolina Latino Electorate Voting, 1996 - 2016



Ohio

Ohio’s Latino population has expanded impressively in absolute numbers since 1990 and its electorate has nearly kept pace as well because 80% of Latinos 18 years of age and older in the state were citizens in 2014. Yet, in 2014 Latinos were only 4% of the state’s population.

Figure 9
Latino Population and Electorate of Ohio, 1990 - 2014



President Obama won Ohio by a 3% margin in 2012. Exit polls indicated that only 54% of all Latinos voted Democratic and of the nine states with the closes margins of victory for the winner, Ohio was the state with the lowest percentage of Latinos who supported the President’s reelection in 2012.

In 2012 Latinos comprised 1,8% of the total voters in Ohio and CLACLS projects that because of demographic increase among Latinos in the state they will be approximately 2.2% of those who will cast their ballots in November 2016. (See figure 10). In a tight 2016 state election, despite the fact that Latinos are a relatively small percentage of those who are predicted to vote, they may very well be the decisive factor in determining which candidate wins the state’s 18 electoral votes, A task for both parties is to increase their share of the Latino vote.

Voter registration rates in Ohio, at 69%, were above the national average of 58.7% in 2012. This will probably increase slightly for 2016 and this will contribute to the importance of the Latino vote in the state. (See figure 11).

Yet, while 56.6% of eligible Latino voters in the state went to the polls in November 2012, above the 48% national average, Latinos could exert a great deal more political power if a greater portion of Latinos in Ohio would register in 2016 since 82% of those registered voted in 2012. (See figure 12).

Figure 10
 Latinos as a Percentage of Total Voting Population in Ohio, 1996 - 2016

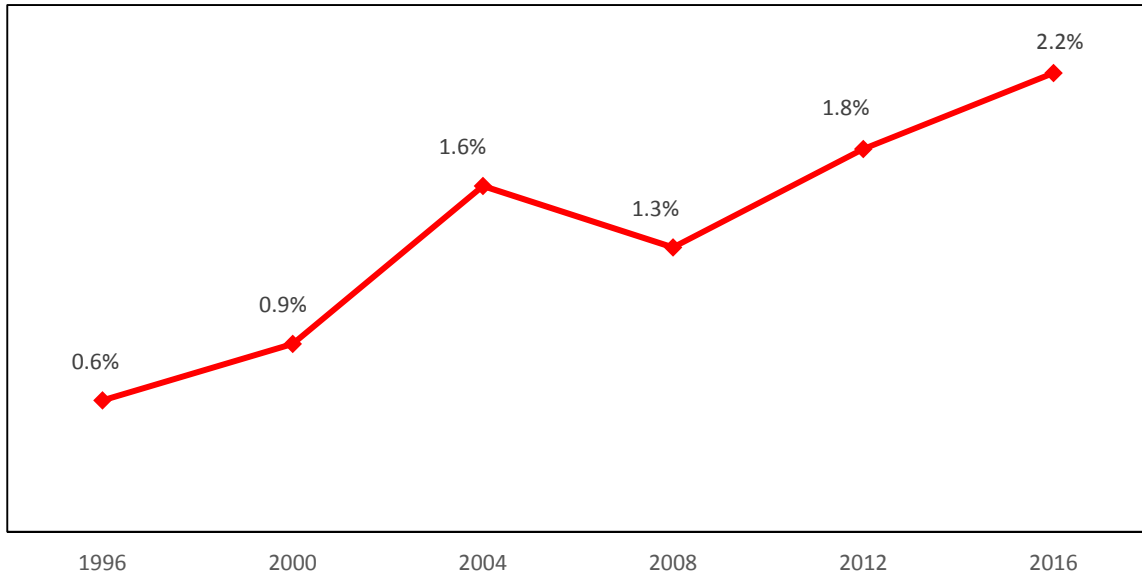


Figure 11
 Voter Registration Rates among Latinos as a Percentage of Total Ohio Latino Electorate, 1996 - 2016

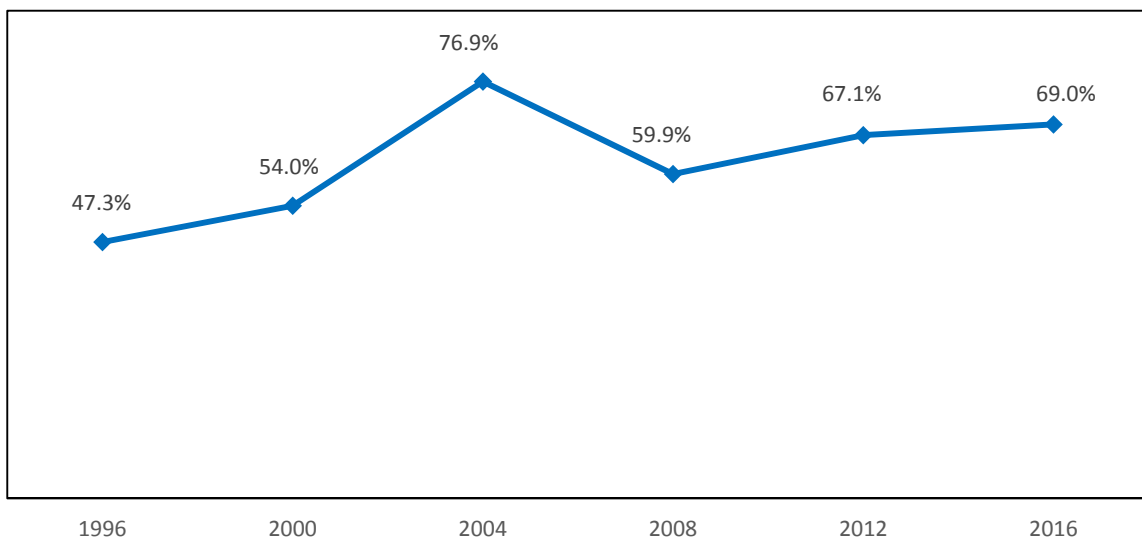
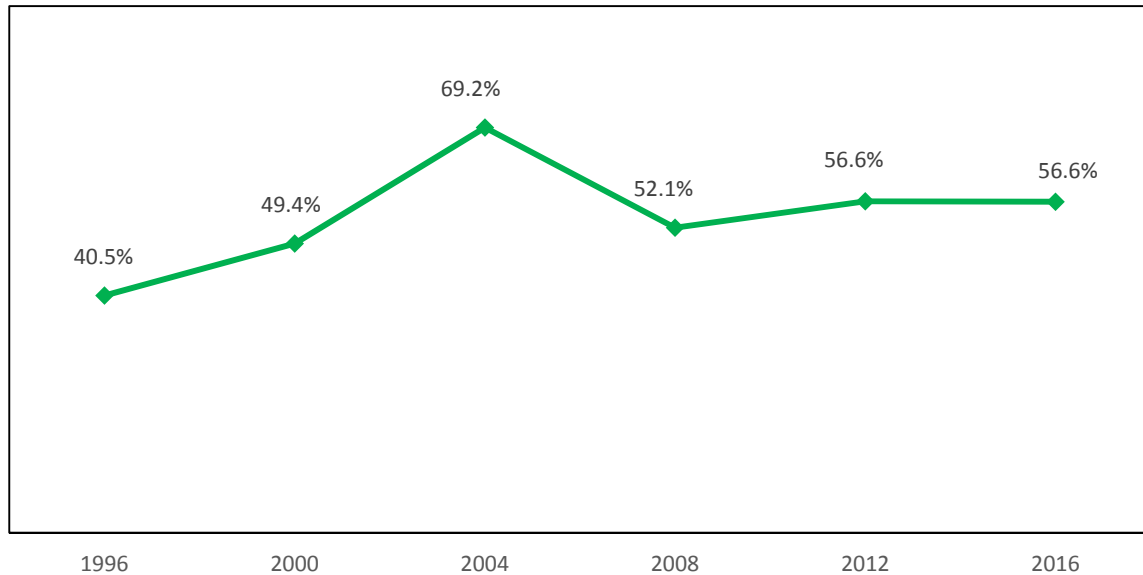


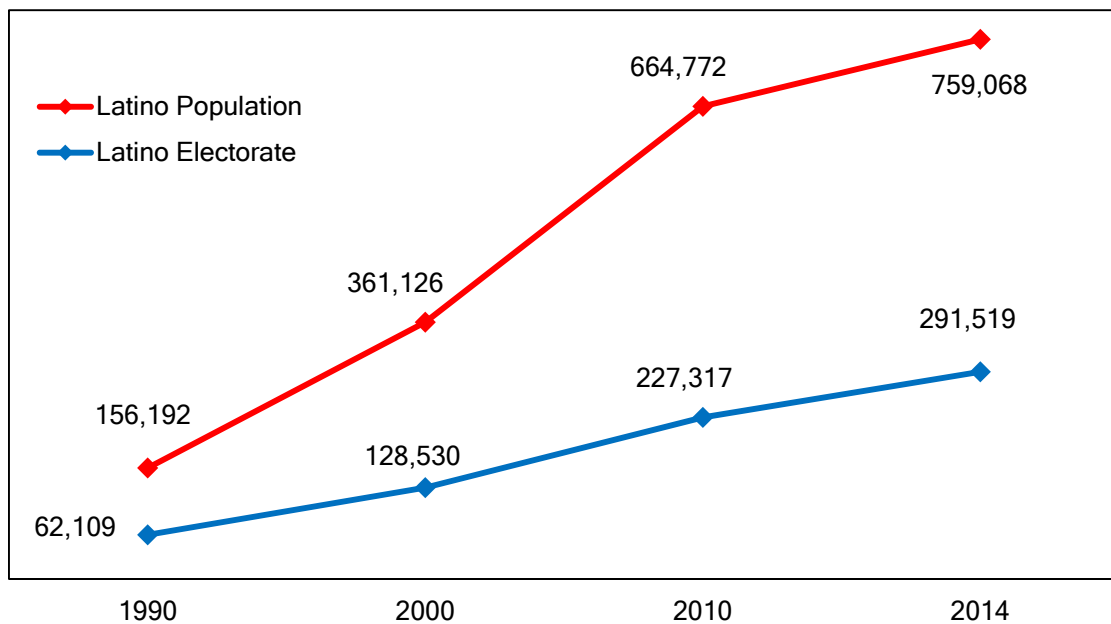
Figure 12
Percentage of Ohio Latino Electorate Voting, 1996 - 2016



Virginia

Virginia’s Latino population is poised to play a critical role in determining the victor in the state’s 2016 presidential election because of extraordinary overall demographic expansion and the growth of Latino electorate as indicated in figure 13. In 2014 Latinos were 9% of the state’s total population. The growth of the Latin electorate did not keep pace with overall population growth because 43% of all Latinos 18 year of age and older were not citizens.

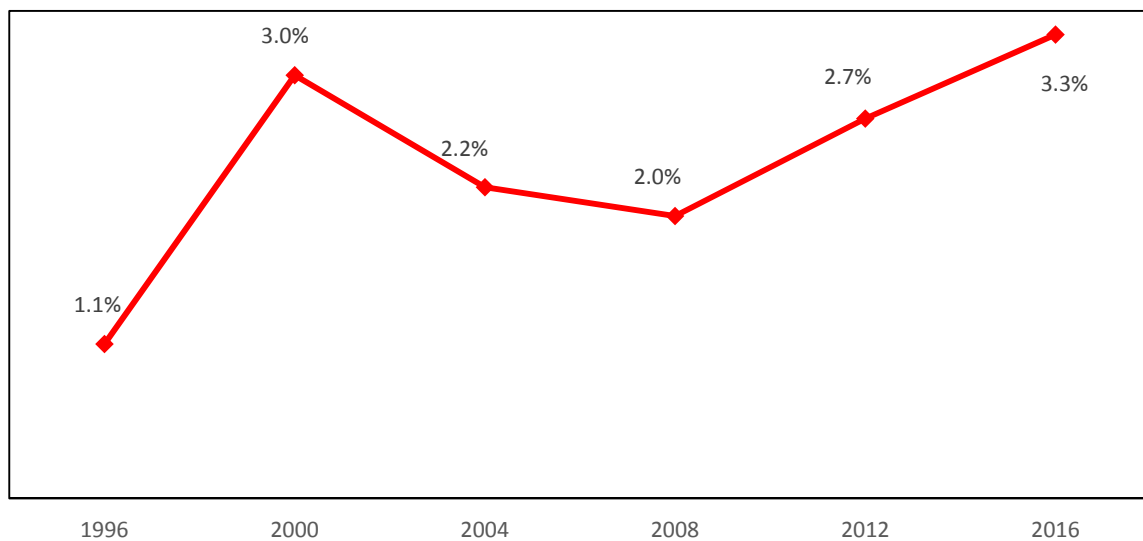
Figure 13
Latino Population and Electorate of Virginia, 1990 - 2014



President Obama carried Virginia by 3.9% of the popular vote and exit polls indicated that 64% of Latinos in the state voted Democratic.

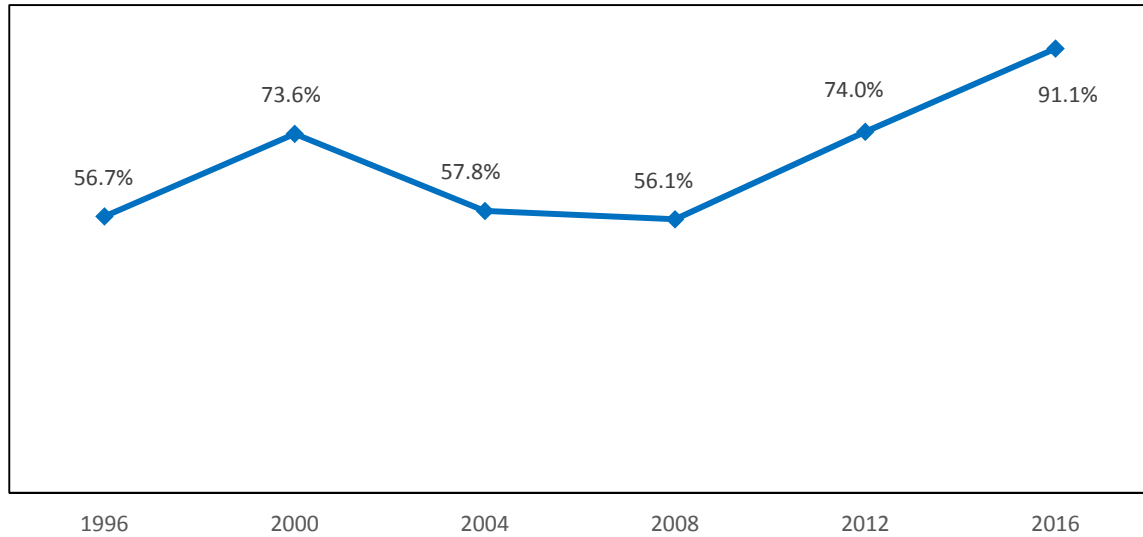
In 2012 Latinos comprised 2.7% of all voters in Virginia and CLACLS projects that they will be approximately 3.3% of total voters in November 2016. (See figure 14), Despite the fact that Latinos will be a relatively small percentage of those who may vote, their presence at the polls has the potential to determine the outcome of the election in the state and its 13 electoral votes if the count is very close.

Figure 14
Latinos as a Percentage of Total Voting Population in Virginia
1996 - 2016



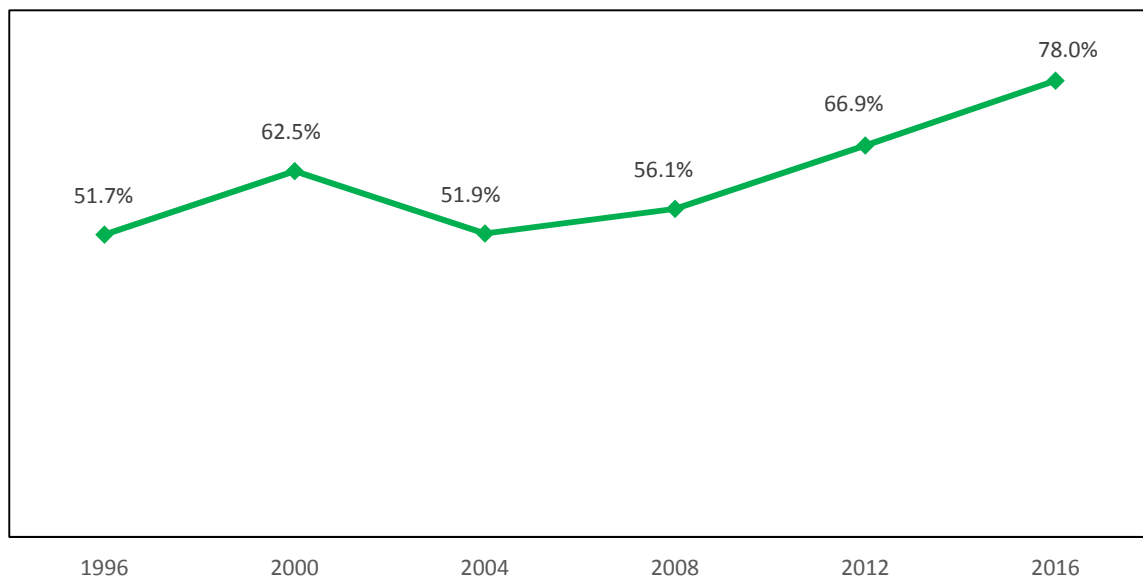
Voter registration rates among Latinos in Virginia was one of the highest among eligible Latino voters in the nation in 2012 at an estimated 74%, which was about the same as among non-Hispanic whites and blacks. It is likely that this was closely related to the fact that the Latino electorate in the state was highly educated. About one-third of all eligible Latino voters had college degrees and another 31% had attended some college according to 2014 census data. There is no reason to believe that registration rates will not increase and based on the rate of increase since 2008 CLACLS predicts that the registration rate among Latinos could reach 91% although this is probably an over estimate. (See figure 15).

Figure 15
 Voter Registration Rates among Latinos as a Percentage of Total Virginia Latino Electorate, 1996 - 2016



Yet, because of high registration rates, in November 2012 about two-thirds of all eligible Latino voters cast their ballots in the presidential election. If the hypothetical scenario based on growth rates in registration comes to fruition, CLACLS projects that an extraordinary 78% of the Latino electorate may vote in 2016. These projections are based on past growth rates, and there is an unknown margin of error projecting to the future. But if these estimates hold Latinos could become a major factor in determining the Virginia victor in November 2016 despite their relatively meager percentage of the overall voting population. (See figure 16).

Figure 16
 Percentage of Virginia Latino Electorate Voting, 1996 - 2016

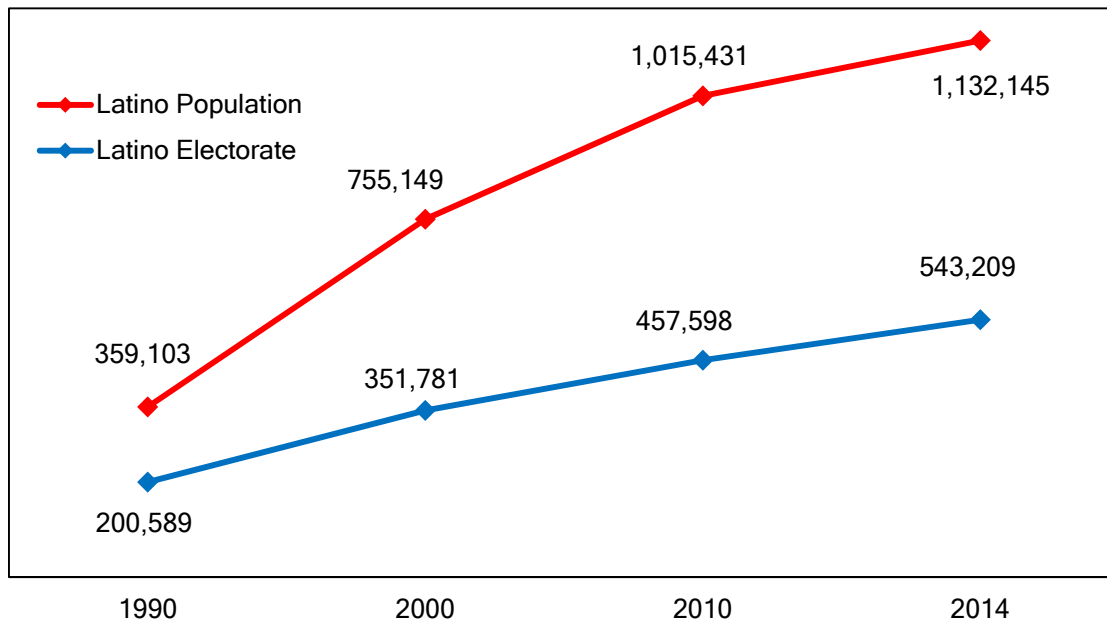


Colorado

The Latino population of Colorado reached over 1.1 million people in 2014 and accounted for 22% of the state’s population. The Latino electorate increased to over one-half million eligible voters, 15% of the state’s total eligible voters in 2014. (See figure 17). Approximately 73% of Colorado’s Latino population 18 years of age and older were eligible to vote and 27% were not citizens and thus were not in the electorate.

President Obama carried Colorado’s by 5.4% of the popular vote and exit polls indicated that 75 % of Latinos in the state voted for his reelection in 2012. It is clear that Latinos played a critical role in his victory as they comprised 10.4% of all voters in the 2012 election. CLACLS projects that they will account for approximately 12.3% of the voting population in November 2016 and for either candidate to win the state Latino support will be of great importance. (See figure 18).

Figure 17
Latino Population and Electorate of Colorado, 1990 - 2014



Yet despite an increasing population and growing electorate the voter registration rate among Colorado Latinos has not increased between 1992 when it was 57.8% through 2012 when it was 57.1%. There is no reason to believe that this will change in 2016. This low rate was in line with national trends which hovered around 58% over the same period. (See figure 19). Because of these low registration rates, voting rates were also relatively low. About 52% of all eligible Latino voters cast their votes in 2012 and based in slightly increasing rates CLACLS projects this will be about 54% in 2016. (See figure 20).

Figure 18
Latinos as a Percentage of Total Voting Population in Colorado
1996 - 2016

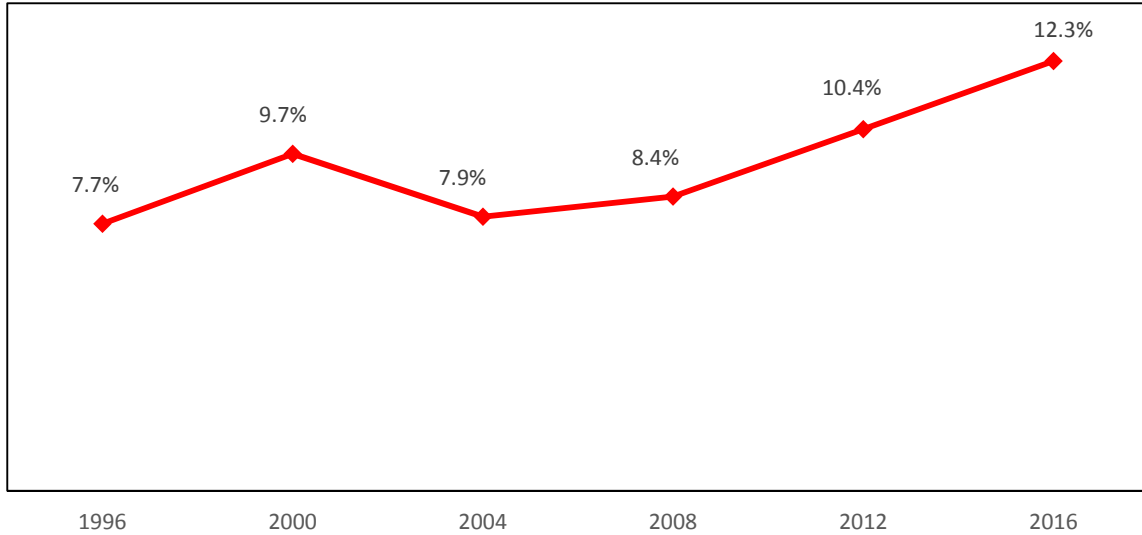


Figure 19
Voter Registration Rates among Latinos as a Percentage of Total
Colorado Latino Electorate, 1996 - 2016

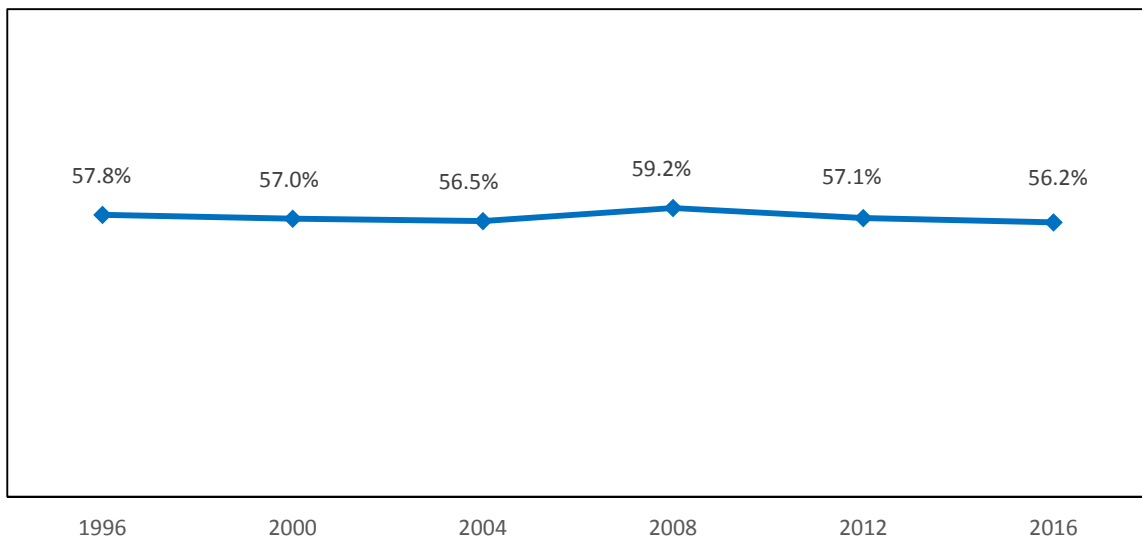
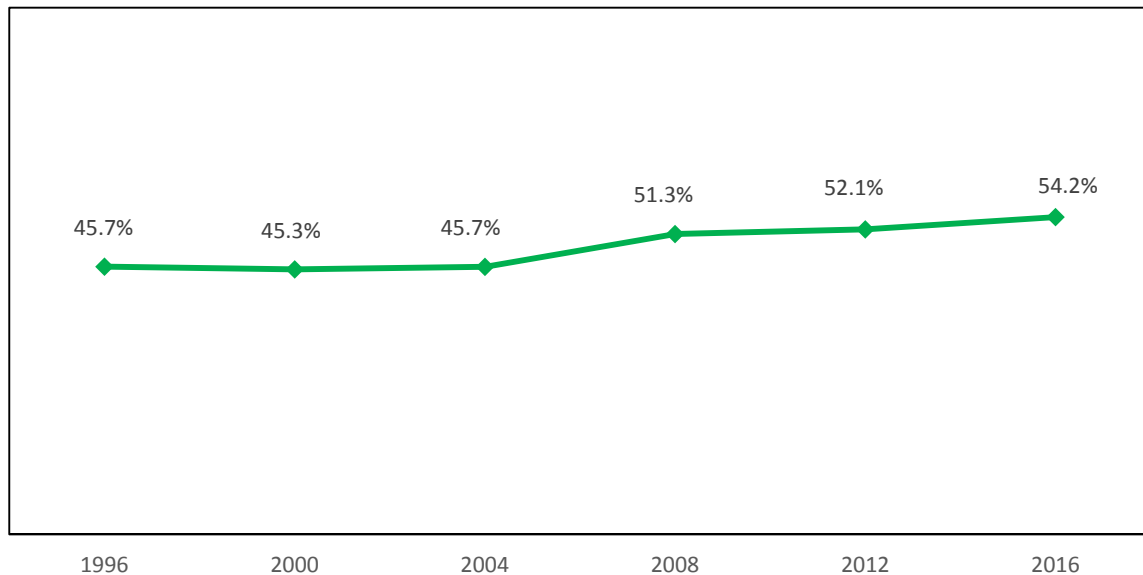


Figure 20
 Percentage of Colorado Latino Electorate Voting, 1996 - 2016



Because Latinos comprise such a significant share of the Colorado voting population they will play a major role in determining which candidate wins the state’s 9 electoral votes despite relatively low registration rates. If these were higher the political clout exercised by Latinos in the state would be impressive.

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania’s Latino population has increased by over four times between 1990 and 2014 when it was over 880,000 people and 7% of the state’s total population. The electorate rose as well to 5% of the state’s total eligible voters in 2014. Of Latinos 18 years of age and older 80% were citizens and eligible to vote. (See figure 21).

President Obama won Pennsylvania by 5.4% of the popular vote and exit polls indicated that 80% of Latinos voted for him. At 3.2% of the voting population Latinos contributed to his victory because of this overwhelming support, but were not a decisive factor as in other states. CLACLS projects that Latinos will comprise 4.1% of the voting population in 2016 based on past rates of increase. (See figure 22),

However, Latinos could have a much greater impact on the 2016 if they registered at higher rates. Between 1992 and 2012 voter registration rates among Latinos declined as the overall Latino population increased. In 2012 it stood at 55% below the national average of 58.7%. (See figure 23). CLACLS projects that this rate will decline slightly based on past trends to about 54% of eligible Latino voters in 2016.

Figure 21
 Latino Population and Electorate of Pennsylvania, 1990 - 2014

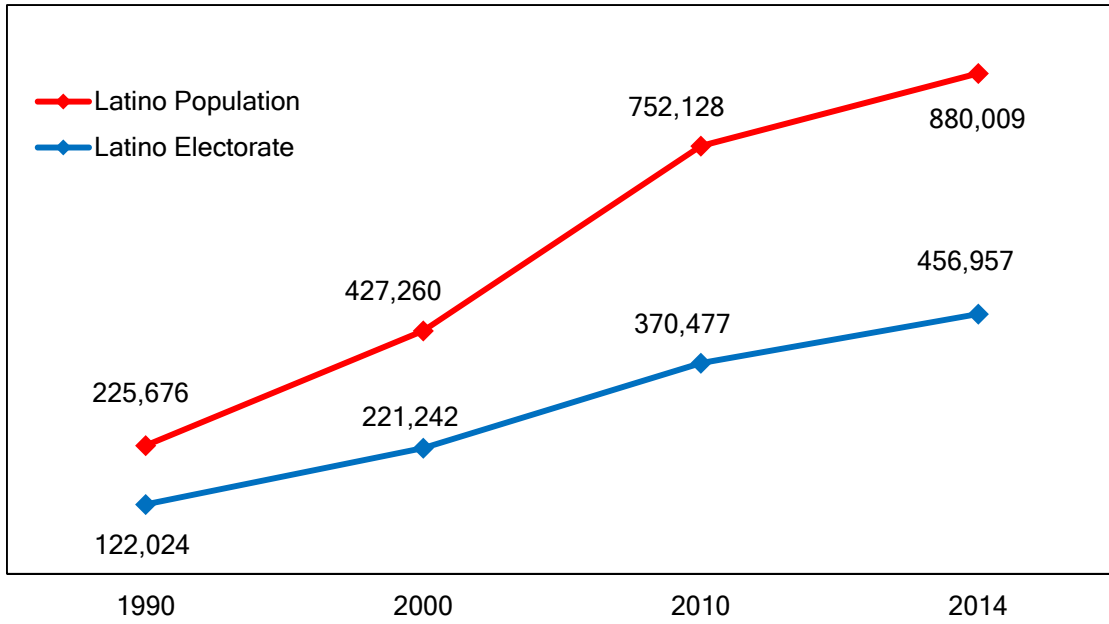


Figure 22
 Latinos as a Percentage of Total Voting Population in Pennsylvania
 1996 - 2016

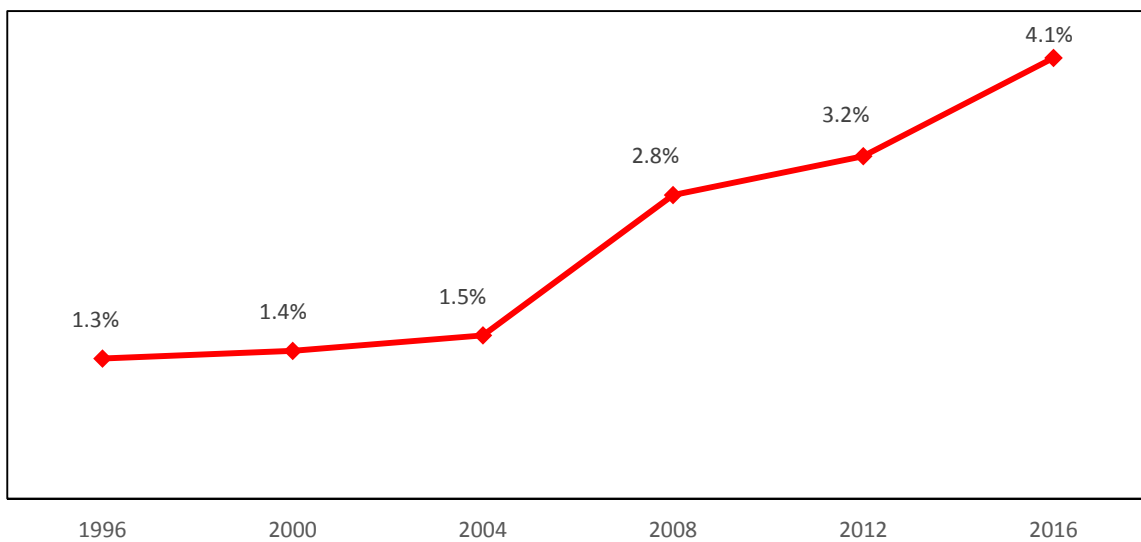
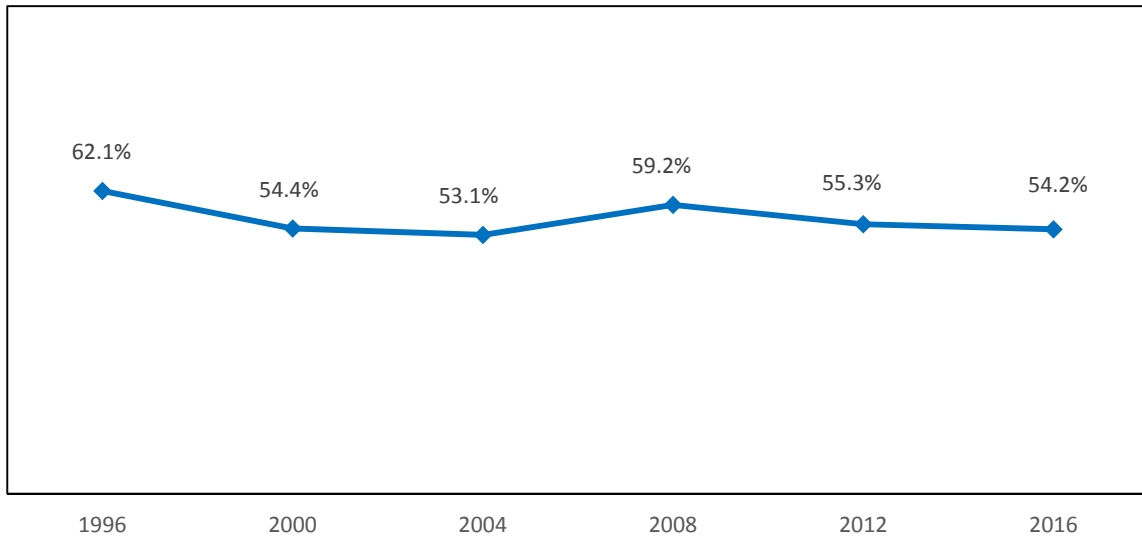
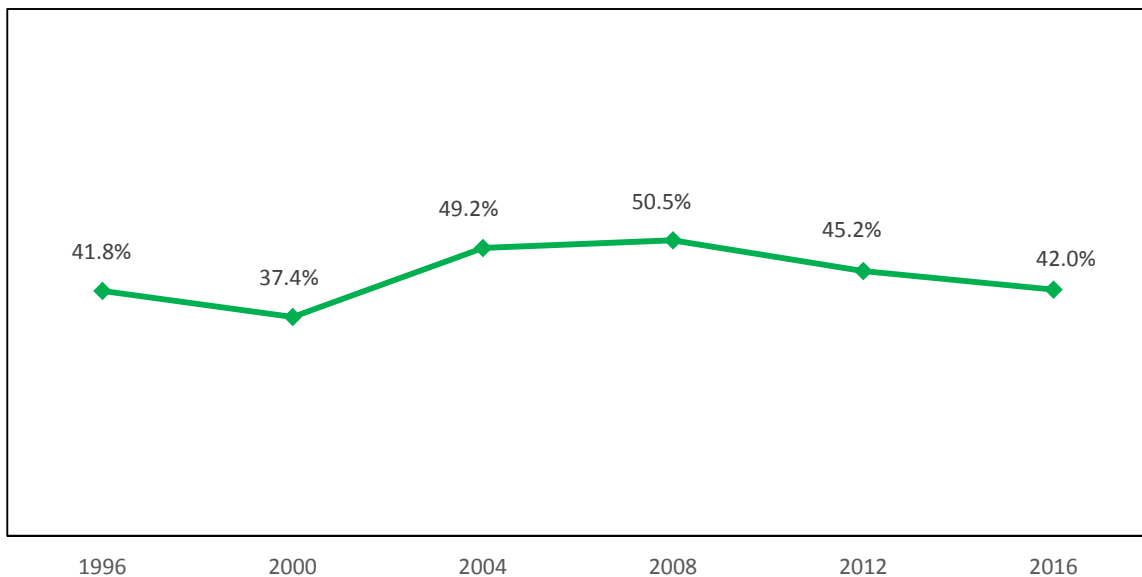


Figure 23
 Voter Registration Rates among Latinos as a Percentage of Total
 Pennsylvania Latino Electorate, 1996 - 2016



As a result of these low registration rates only 45% of Latinos in Pennsylvania who were eligible to vote in 2012 cast ballots and CLACLS projects that this may decline to 42% in 2016, well below the national average of 48% in past elections. (See figure 24).

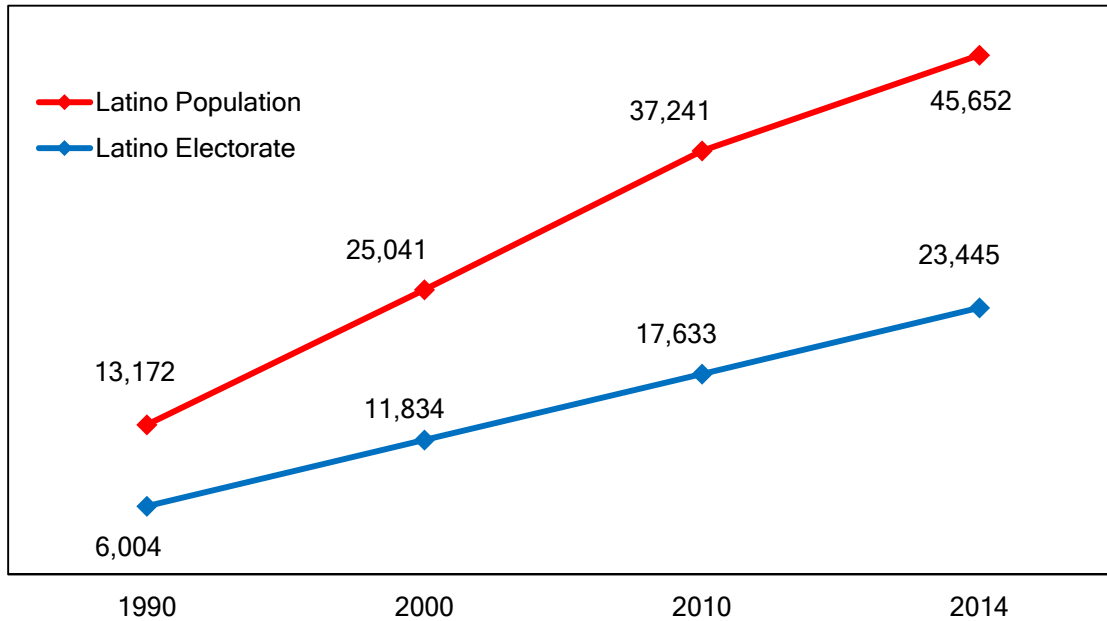
Figure 24
 Percentage of Pennsylvania Latino Electorate Voting, 1996 - 2016



New Hampshire

New Hampshire had a very small Latino population in 2014, only 45,652 people of whom 23,445 were in the electorate. Latinos were only 3% of the state’s population and 2% of its electorate in 2014. (See figure 25).

Figure 25
Latino Population and Electorate of New Hampshire, 1990 - 2014



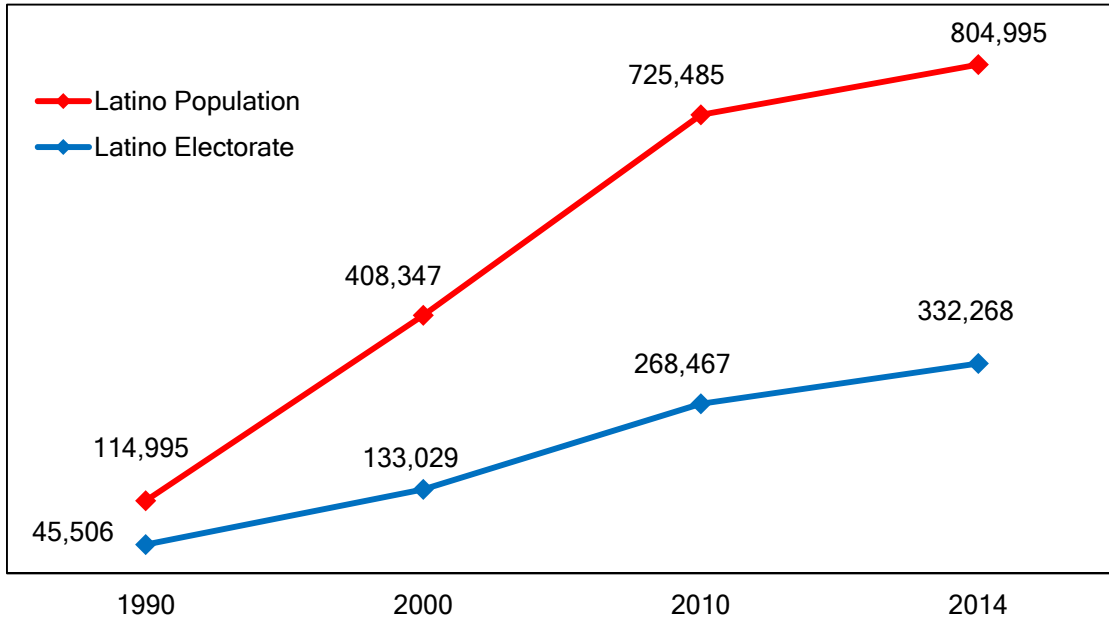
President Obama won New Hampshire’s 4 electoral votes by a 5.6% margin and Latinos were estimated to comprise about 2.2% of the voting population.

Since data generated by the Current Population Survey November Voter Supplements in presidential election years are based on samples, in states with smaller samples the data are not reliable because they are likely accompanied by a very large margin of error. It is unlikely that Latinos will surpass the percentage of overall voters in 2016 and it is questionable whether they will play an important role in determining the state’s outcome.

Nevada

Nevada’s Latino population grew impressively between 1990 and 2014 from 114,995 to 804,995 and 30% of the state’s total population. The state’s Latino electorate increased as well but accounted for a smaller 18% of all potential state voters, a large share to be sure, This is because 37% of Nevada’s population 18 years of age and older were not citizens and thus ineligible to vote. (See figure 26).

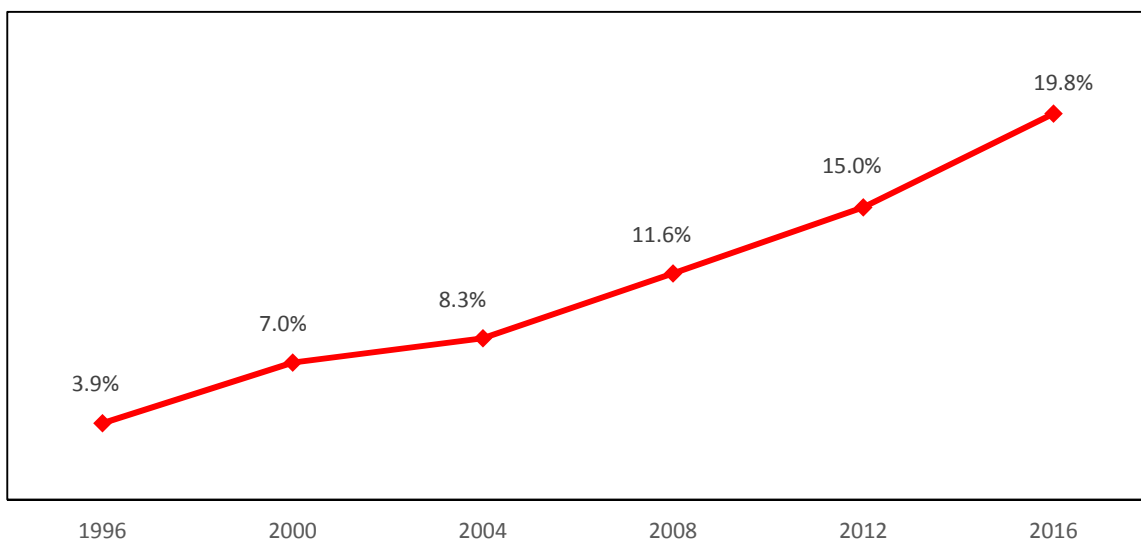
Figure 26
 Latino Population and Electorate of Nevada, 1990 - 2014



President Obama won Nevada’s 6 electoral votes by a significant 6.7% of the popular vote and this was linked to the favorable Latino vote. Exit polls indicated that 71% of Nevada’s Latinos voted for the President’s reelection in 2012.

In 2012 Latinos comprised 15% of those casting ballots in 2012 and based on past rates of growth CLACLS is projected that this could reach 19.8% in 2016. If this estimate is realized by Nevada’s Latinos, they have the clear potential to swing the state’s election to either candidate in a two party race. (See figure 27).

Figure 27
 Latinos as a Percentage of Total Voting Population in Nevada
 1996 - 2016



A greater potential exists to influence state elections if registration rates would increase. Nevada Latino electorate registered at increasing rates between 1996 (39.7%) and 2012 when it was 59.9%, slightly above the national average Latino registration rate of 58.7%. CLACLS projects that 62.6% of Latinos will be registered for the 2016 election based on past rates of increase. (See figure 28).

The trends toward higher registration are favorable for Latinos in the state, but still in 2012 slightly more than half (52.2%) of Latino eligible voters in the state went to the polls. CLACLS projects that this will increase slightly to 53.1% in 2016, higher than the 48% national voter participation rates among Latinos. (See figure 29). If a greater share of the Latino electorate would register, Latino influence on the outcome in future presidential elections would increase significantly.

Figure 28
 Voter Registration Rates among Latinos as a Percentage of Total Nevada Latino Electorate, 1996 - 2016

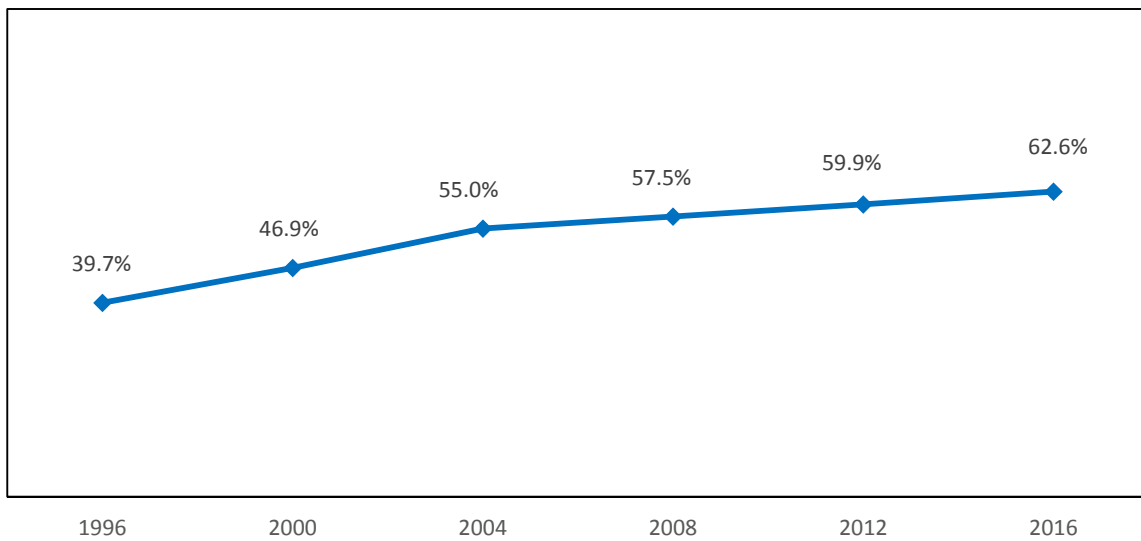
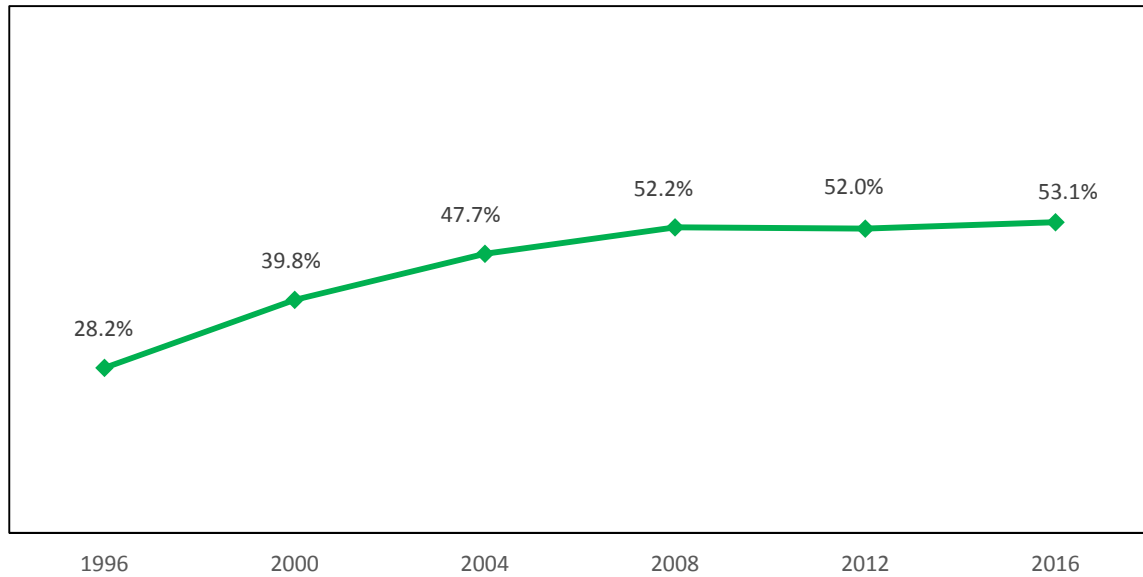


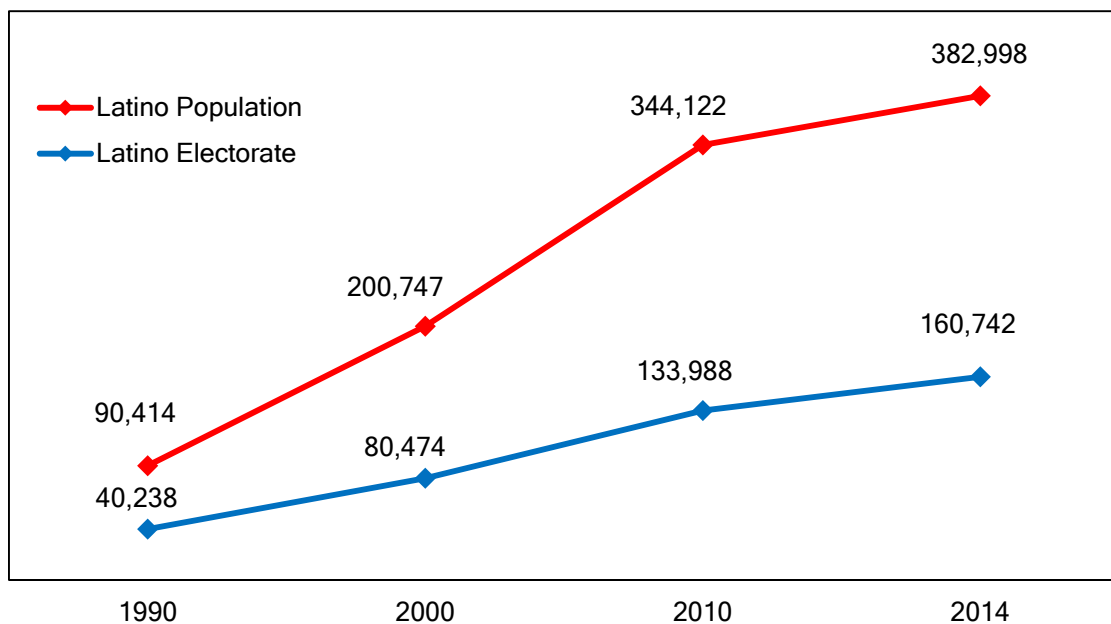
Figure 29
Percentage of Nevada Latino Electorate Voting, 1996 - 2016



Wisconsin

Wisconsin’s Latino population and its electorate expanded steadily between 1990 and 2014 as indicated in figure 30. By 2014 Latinos comprised 7% of the state’s total population and 4% of its electorate. About 31% of the Latino population in the state which was 18 years of age and older was not citizens in 2014 and this accounts for the differential in the portion of the total population and potential voters.

Figure 30
Latino Population and Electorate of Wisconsin, 1990 - 2014



In 2012 Wisconsin was won by President Obama by a margin of 6.9%. Latinos comprised 2.3% of the total voting population in 2012 and CLACLS projects that this will remain unchanged in 2016. (See figure 31). In fact Latinos in the state have not increased as a percentage of all voters since 2004. About two-thirds of voting Latinos supported President Obama's reelection in 2012.

This was related to a very low voter registration rate, 46.6% in 2012. There has been a constant decline in the Latino voter registration rate in Wisconsin, and CLACLS projects, based on past trends that this could fall to 39.6% in 2016, much lower than the national average of 58.7%. (See figure 32).

Because of this low registration rate the percentage of the electorate voting in 2012 was a dismally low 43.6% and based on past declining trends in Latino voter participation rates CLACLS projects that this could fall to 38.7% in 2016. (See figure 33). If this projection is accurate Latino voters in Wisconsin would have very little impact on the state's election in 2016 unless the margin of victory is very small.

Figure 31
 Latinos as a Percentage of Total Voting Population in Wisconsin
 1996 - 2016

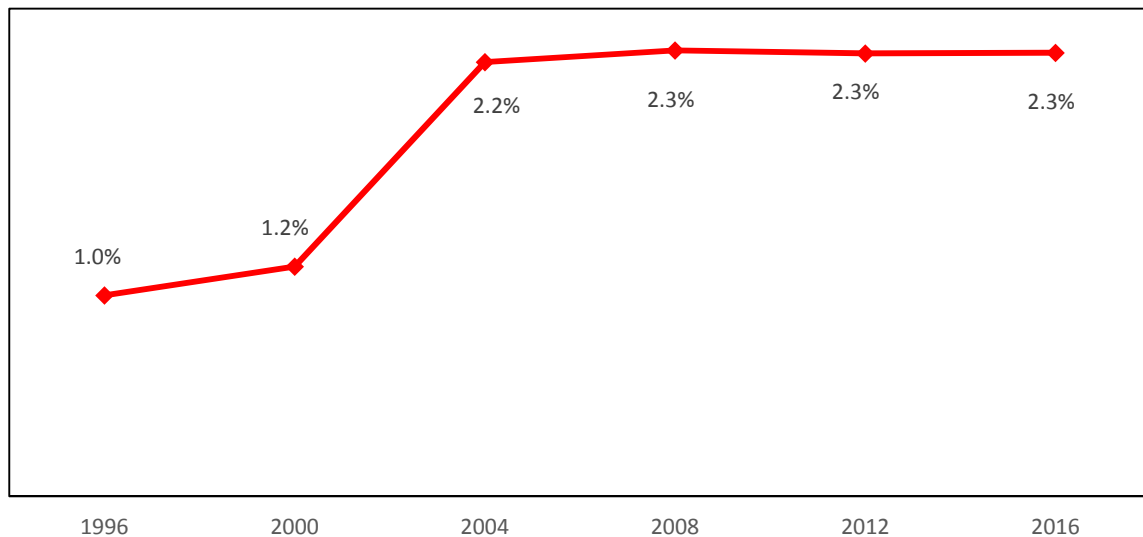


Figure 32
Voter Registration Rates among Latinos as a Percentage of Total Wisconsin Latino Electorate, 1996 - 2016

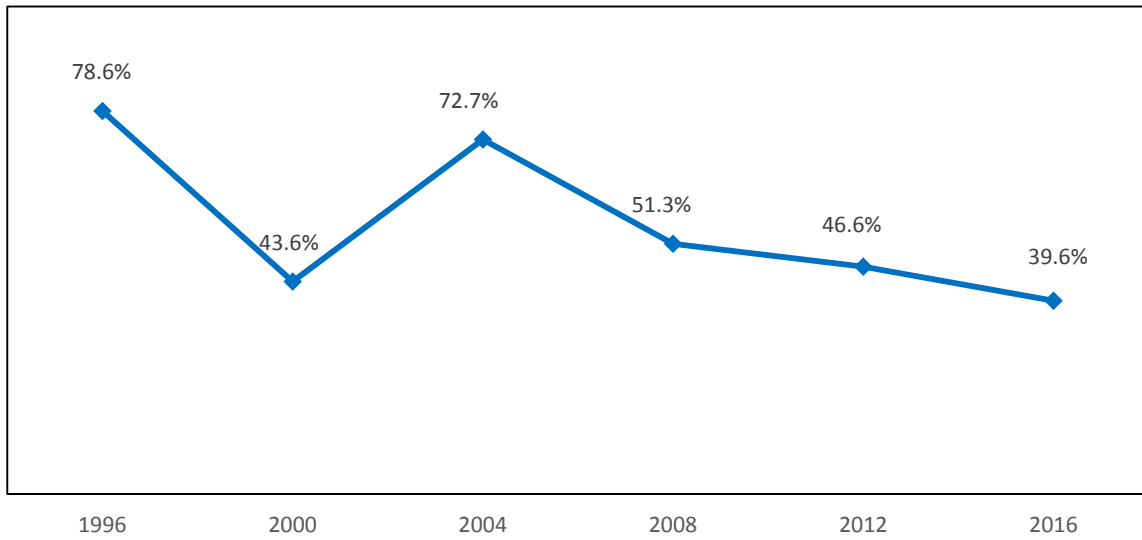
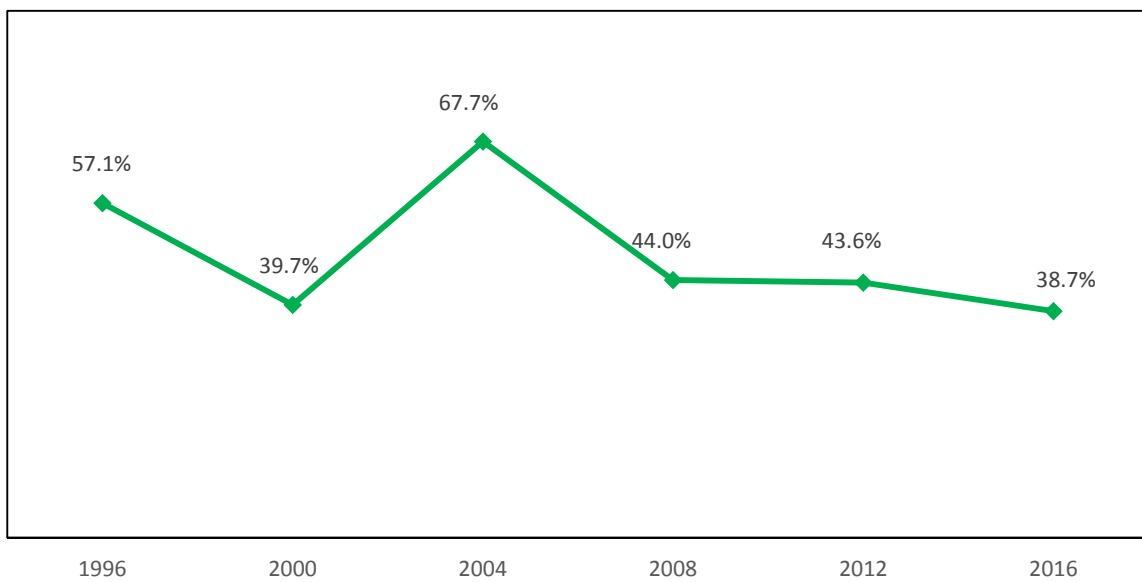


Figure 33
Percentage of Wisconsin Latino Electorate Voting, 1996 - 2016



Conclusion

The Latino population of the nation and in each state examined in this report, as well as the absolute number of registered voters and those actually casting their ballots in presidential elections between 1992 and 2012, have increased to the point where the Latino vote has become a critical factor in national presidential elections. In 1992 Latinos cast a mere 3.9% of all votes at the national level. CLACLS projects that this may reach close to 10% in November 2016.

However, as is well-known it is state elections which decide presidential races. The concentration of potential Latino voters in states whose outcomes are in all likelihood a foregone conclusion in November 2016, with the exception of Florida, was noted at the beginning of this report. States with relatively small percentages of the total national Latino electorate will probably determine who will be the next president of the United States.

The size and portion of the Latino vote in each of these states, as well as registration and voting rates, vary. In Florida, Nevada, and Colorado Latinos comprise sizeable portions of potential voters although registration and voting rates are different in each of these states. In the other six states examined in this report Latino voters will be a very small percentage of the overall votes cast in each state in November 2016.

However, with the exception of New Hampshire, in very close elections Latinos have the potential to sway state elections to either candidate. This however, depends on a number of factors. The turnout rates of non-Latinos are critical in determining the impact that the Latino vote will have on each state's elections. Even more important is the voter registration rate of the Latino electorate since this determines the number of Latinos who will actually vote and their percentage of each state's voting population when ballots are cast for the next president. Once registered, Latinos vote at over 80% of those who have joined each state's voter rolls.

In the states examined in this report registration rates among Latino electorates are projected by CLACLS to vary in 2016 from an extraordinary 91% in Virginia to a dismal low of 40% in Wisconsin. It is clear that in states with higher registration rates, Latinos will have a greater impact on the electoral outcome in close races, even though they may constitute small percentages of overall voters.

It is impossible to predict voter choices or turnout rates among any state's population by race/ethnicity. However, one thing is certain. If Latino potential voters registered at higher rates, especially in states with low registration rates, the political influence of Latinos in each state could be significantly enhanced, as well as on national-level political decisions.