
# Latinos/as by the Numbers: Exploring Demographic Trends in Immigration, Economic Attainment, Economic Vitality, and Political Participation in the Midwest, 2006-2015

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## I. Introduction

Scholarship dedicated to exploring the demographic trends of the Latino population in the United States is profuse. Many have studied the rise in Latino immigration as a function of global neoliberal policies (cf. Dávila 2004; Aguirre et al. 2006; Martinez 2016; Massey 2014; Rocco 2010), as well as the increased role Latinos play in the economic vitality of the nation. Most of this research centers on either national or state-specific data, with very few regional or middle range analyses. While nationally oriented and locally focused research agendas are necessary as we seek to understand the dynamics of the Latino population, a regional analysis is useful because it compels us to consider the Latino experience in a comparative perspective, analyzing states throughout a region with relation to one another.

When it comes to Latino demographics in the Midwest, some of the first systematic regional analyses came between the 1920s and 1930s, particularly through the work of George Edson, Mexican anthropologist Manuel Gamio, and various scholars operating out of the Julian Samora Research Institute at Michigan State University. Robert Aponte and Marcelo Siles' report "Latinos in the Heartland: The Browning of the Midwest" (1994) was one of the first

reports to draw from census data. Focusing on data collected from 1980-1990 to paint a picture of the shifting demographic trends broadly experienced across the Midwest, the authors focused on net population growth, economic and educational attainment, labor and unemployment, and rural versus urban populations. Their paper demonstrates that Mexicans accounted for most of the Latino population growth, which primarily occurred in the city of Chicago (Aponte and Siles 1994: 30). While Aponte and Siles provide an in-depth numerical analysis of demographic shifts, they do not provide a detailed discussion of the factors that led to such growth.

Gouveia and Saenz (2000), however, do draw on regional data to isolate several reasons that explain Latino growth in the Midwest, particularly from 1990 onward. Specifically they consider how business profitability within the agricultural, agroindustrial, and meatpacking sectors has resulted in the demise of labor organizing and necessitated the rise in undocumented labor. They further argue that the Midwest is unique among regions experiencing Latino demographic growth because the region itself (particularly in the rural areas) is not experiencing *overall* population increase, thus creating "divergent patterns" (2000: 323) between substantial increases in the Latino population and a stagnant non-Latino population.

Most recently, the authors in Ruben Martinez's edited volume *Latinos in the Midwest* (2011) explore the many intersecting mechanisms that condition the Latino experience in the Midwest. The authors recognize the limited attention Latinos in the Midwest have received from scholars and politicians and draw from the "counternarrative" of the mythical homeland of *Azlán* to root Latinos historically in the Midwest. The contributors explore many topics, including political mobilization, Latinos in the criminal justice system, bilingual education, and the impact of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids on small towns.

We contribute to these studies by providing updated demographic data from 2006-2015, focusing on four key law and policy levers: 1) immigration; 2) education; 3) economic trends and attainment; and 4) political engagement. To explore demographic shifts within these 4 areas, we draw from data released by the American Community Survey and the United States Census, the Latino National Survey conducted in 2006, and reports from various research institutes. Our paper is divided into three sections. **First**, we assess demographic trends across the Midwest, focusing on growth of the Latino population in the Midwestern states. **Second**, we explore our four policy levers in isolation from one another, providing a regional analysis of the nature of Latino immigration into the region, the state of Latino educational opportunities, the economic vitality of Latinos in the Midwest, and the degree to which Latinos participate in the electoral process. **Finally**, we bring our analyses together to provide a regional synthesis of the main obstacles Latinos face as they seek the benefits of full social equality, as well as the opportunities available for researchers, advocates, and politicians as they assist this burgeoning population in pursuing those benefits.

*Defining our terms*

We compile data from the twelve states classified as Midwestern, according to the U.S. Census Bureau: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The majority of scholarship is focused on Illinois and Michigan, the two states in the region with the largest Latino populations. There exist few state-specific studies on states known for more rural Latino populations, such as Iowa, Minnesota, and the Dakotas.

For official government purposes, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) defines "Hispanic or Latino" as a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central

American or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, those who identify as "Hispanic" or "Latino" on the decennial census questionnaire and various other Census Bureau questionnaires classify themselves as "Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano" or "Puerto Rican" or "Cuban," or they indicate that they are of "another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin." For the purpose of this paper, we will adhere to the OMB and Census Bureau's definition of Hispanic or Latino, but we will opt for the term "Latino" as it is a more expansive and inclusive term. The word "Hispanic," while often used within many of the reports and datasets we engage with, is a term that privileges Spanish and Spanish-descendent identities (*Hispano* of *Hispanola)*. The term "Latino," however, acknowledges that this population is racially and ethnically diverse.

## II. Overall Demographic Growth in the Region

In this section, we compare demographic data from across the Midwest. We largely base these analyses on data collected by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, specifically the American Community Survey, which describes regional and state-specific demographic and socioeconomic trends. Figure 1 (next page) shows how the Latino population in the Midwest remained somewhat stagnant from 2003-2006. The population began to grow from 2006-2010, and experienced a significant increase from 2010-2015.

In the five-year period between 2010 and 2014, on average, each state's Latino population increased by 36,754 (Table 1, next page). During this time, Illinois experienced the largest growth by far. It is estimated that the state's Latino immigrant population increased by 125,396.

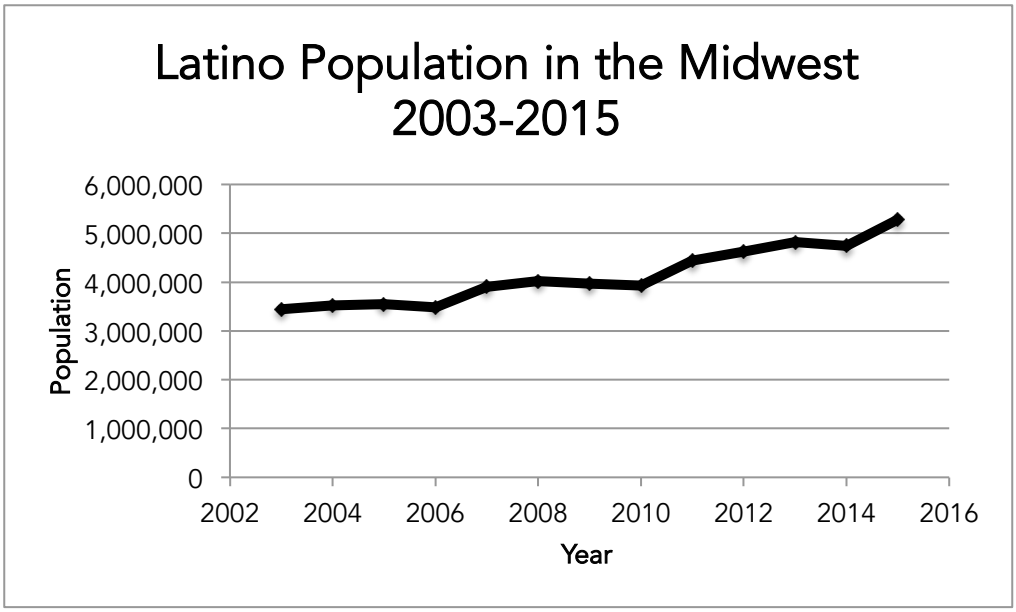



**Figure 1:** Latino population, 2002-2016 (data from U.S. Census Bureau).

**Table 1**
**Latino Population Nationwide and by state**

| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | Overall Population Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **United States** | 50,477,594 | 51,951,223 | 53,085,638 | 54,236,916 | 55,387,539 | 4,909,945 |
| **Illinois** | 2,027,578 | 2,067,060 | 2,097,018 | 2,125,860 | 2,152,974 | 125,396 |
| **Indiana** | 389,707 | 401,870 | 411,080 | 422,169 | 432,305 | 42,598 |
| **Iowa** | 151,544 | 158,209 | 163,374 | 168,850 | 173,594 | 22,050 |
| **Kansas** | 300,042 | 309,378 | 317,027 | 323,228 | 329,627 | 29,585 |
| **Michigan** | 436,385 | 447,047 | 457,330 | 467,198 | 476,285 | 39,900 |
| **Minnesota** | 250,258 | 258,243 | 264,204 | 270,882 | 277,009 | 26,751 |
| **Missouri** | 212,470 | 220,015 | 226,636 | 233,882 | 240,222 | 27,752 |
| **Nebraska** | 167,405 | 174,895 | 180,879 | 186,618 | 191,325 | 23,920 |
| **North Dakota** | 13,467 | 15,422 | 18,013 | 21,106 | 23,439 | 9,972 |
| **Ohio** | 354,674 | 367,726 | 379,050 | 390,759 | 403,190 | 48,516 |
| **South Dakota** | 22,119 | 24,497 | 27,257 | 29,478 | 30,537 | 8,418 |
| **Wisconsin** | 336,056 | 346,831 | 355,578 | 364,125 | 372,248 | 36,192 |

After Illinois, Ohio experienced substantial Latino growth, particularly in urban centers such as Toledo, Cleveland, and Columbus (Ohio Hispanic Americans Report, 2013). These cities have grown substantially in the last 20 years, and it is thus not surprising that Latinos migrated into these centers. After Ohio, Indiana's Latino population increased by 42,598 in four years. The Dakotas have experienced the least growth in numbers; however, South Dakota's population is among the top 5 states nationwide that experienced the largest percentage of growth in the Latino population, with a 46% increase from 2000-2005 (Indiana's Latino Population Report, 2007). By 2010, some cities in South Dakota underwent dramatic demographic shifts with up to 200% increases in the Latino population (Garrigan 2011). In one city, Hill City, this trend is attributable to the burgeoning logging industry, which draws primarily Latinos of Mexican descent (ibid.). Overall, the Latino population maintains a strong presence throughout the Midwest, with increasing numbers in traditionally underrepresented states like South Dakota and North Dakota.

## III. Demographic trends among Policy Areas

### A. Immigration

In 2006, several scholars (including advisory council members Luis Fraga and Gary M. Segura) led a nationwide survey. The Latino National Survey (LNS) polled 8,634 Latinos across the United States and asked individuals questions about their views, as well as their reasons for migrating to the United States.

Of the Latinos polled in the Midwest, the numbers are revealing. An overwhelming majority of those who self-identify as immigrants say they came to the United States to improve their economic standing (65%) (see figure 2, next page). Only 14% of those polled came to the

United States because they were brought by their parents when they were children, and a mere 1% reported that they escaped political turmoil. Many of these immigrants come to the United States in the hopes that they will work for a few years to support their families in Latin America and ultimately return to enjoy the fruits of their labor. Indeed, immigrants send money to family members to construct homes in their home town while working abroad (known as remittance housing) (cf Conway & Cohen 1998; Moctezuma & Rodriguez 1999). Nationwide, immigrants living in the United States send $110.8 billion in remittances to their countries of origin. Mexico alone receives $23 billion ever year, comprising 21% of all remittance money (World Bank Report). The majority of remittances are sent from California, Texas, Illinois, Florida, Georgia, and New York (Fox News Latino).

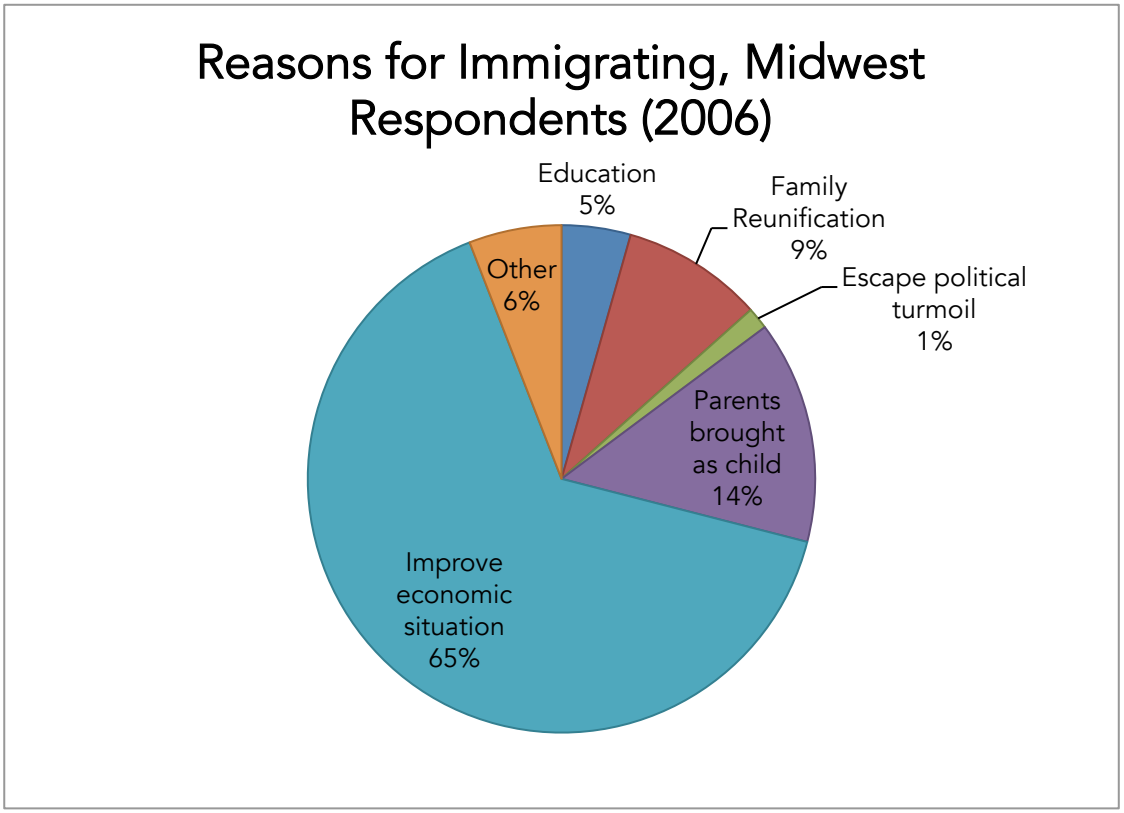



**Figure 2:** Reasons for immigrating, 2006 (data from Latino National Survey)

Only 9% of Latinos come to the United States to reunify their families, suggesting that many immigrant families from Latin America either come to the U.S. together or maintain transnational family structures.

Many of these immigrants become naturalized citizens (see figure 3). The number of naturalized citizens living in the Midwest has experienced tremendous growth in the last decade. In 2005, the Midwest's population of naturalized Latino immigrants was 1,721,972. By 2014 that figure increased to 2,086,725, a 21.18% increase over the course of the decade.

Non-citizens, however, still outnumber naturalized citizens. In terms of non-citizens, the region experienced growth as well, though to a lesser extent. Roughly 2.3 million Latinos living in the Midwest in 2005 were not citizens, and by 2014 that figure increased by nearly 7.6 percent. Taken in comparison with the region's total population growth from 2005-2014, which was roughly 5 percent, the Midwest's immigrant population continues to outpace its total population growth.

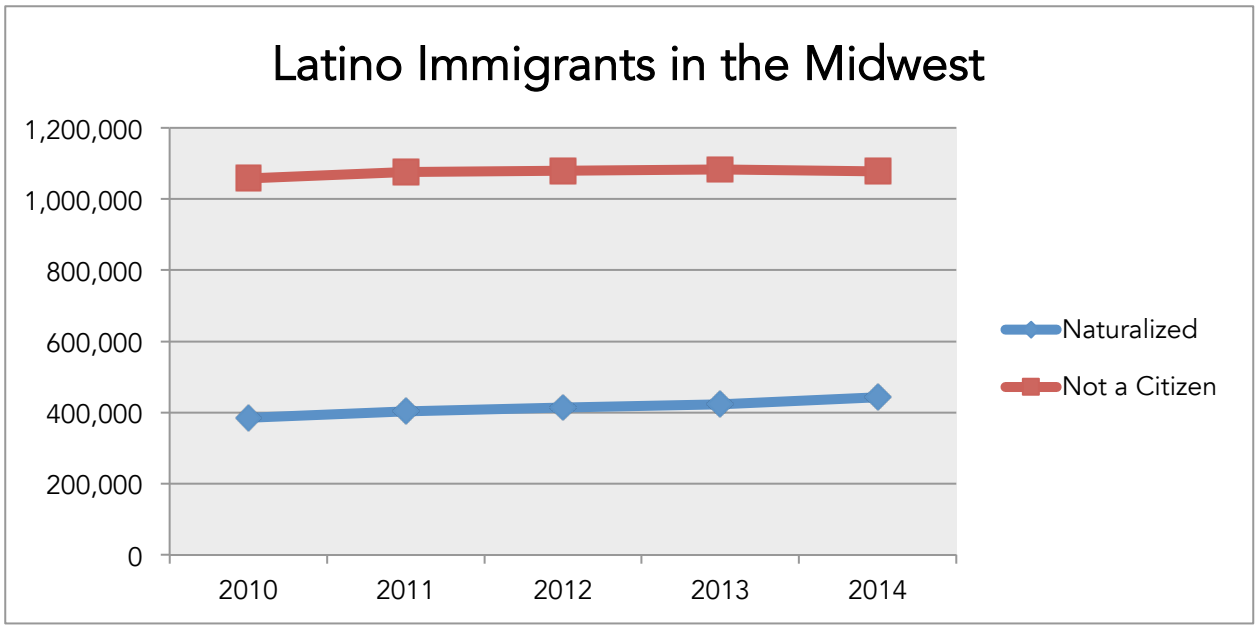



**Figure 3:** Latino Immigrants in the Midwest, naturalized vs. non-citizens

## B. Educational attainment

Much of the data on Latino educational attainment is national in focus and few regional analyses on the state of Latino education exist. This, of course, is problematic as it limits our ability to draw regional conclusions about gains and trends in Latino education within the Midwest. Without extensive regional data we are unable to locate trends in enrollment or degree attainment in the Midwest and compare those trends to regions elsewhere in the country or to national trends more broadly. Nonetheless, in this section we compare how the Midwest and individual states within it mirror or differ from national trends.

By 2023 Latinos will account for an estimated 30 percent of all public school enrollment (NCES, Digest of Education Statistics 2013, Table 203.50). These increases are not limited to elementary and secondary schools. At every stage of education, from pre-school through graduate school, Latino enrollment has increased. Degree attainment for Latinos, however, continues to fall short of other racial groups. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, across the country Latinos have the lowest levels of educational attainment. In 2013, only 22 percent of Latino adults, ages 25 years and over, had earned an associate degree or higher, compared to 60 percent of Asians, 46 percent of Whites, and 31 percent of African Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2013 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Table 1: Educational Attainment).

Latinos remain one of the most represented demographics in elementary and secondary education institutions. In 2013, the U.S. Census Bureau found that Latinos were the second largest group enrolled in secondary education. Across the Midwest, Latino students in elementary and secondary schools comprised 11 percent of the study body compared to whites

(68%), African Americans (14%), and Asians (3%).The share of Latinos enrolled in kindergarten through twelfth grade is the highest in Illinois at 24 percent followed by Kansas (17%) and Nebraska (16%). Unsurprisingly Latinos' share of enrollment is smallest in South and North Dakota at 4 and 3 percent respectively as these states are ranked 46th and 49th in the country for Latino school-age population (see figure 4).

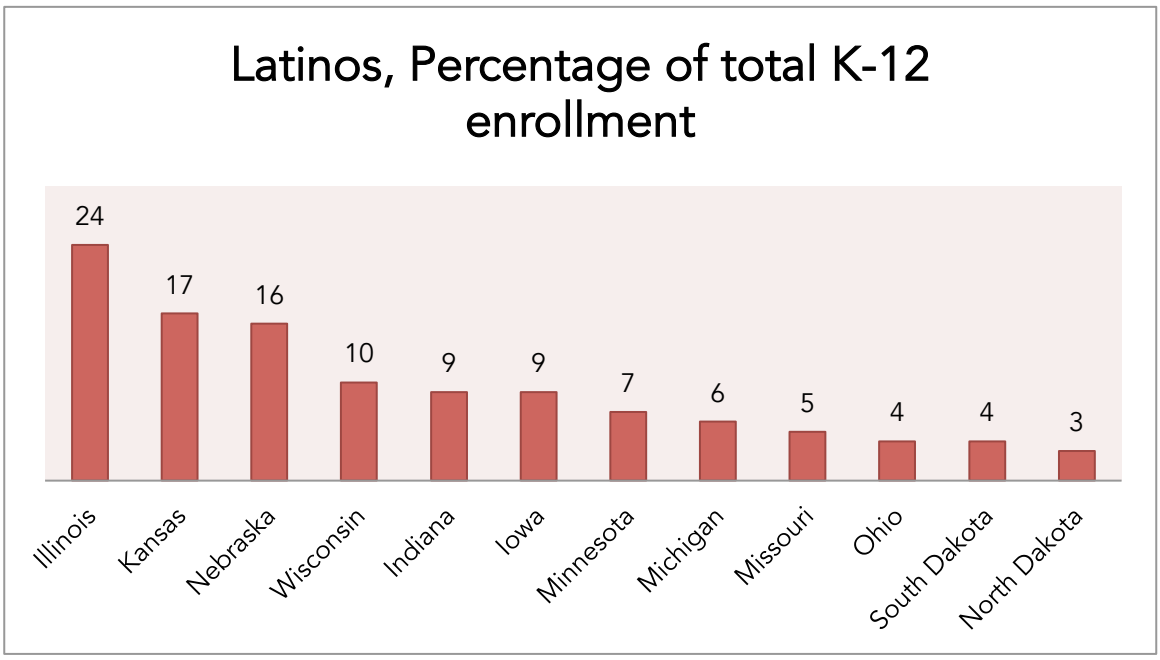



**Figure 4:** Percentage of Latinos enrolled in K-12 by state

Despite this representation in the educational system, Latinos are the least educated demographic. In the Midwest, only 65.3% have received a high school diploma or higher (see figure 5, next page). In comparison, 91.2% of Caucasians, the most educated group, have achieved this level of education, followed by Asians (87.3%), African Americans (84.3%), and

American Indian and Alaskan Natives (82.6%).[1] Although enrollment and degree attainment rates for Latinos in the Midwest continue to lag behind other groups within the region, within the past decade Latinos have made significant gains on a national scale. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), since 2004, the aggregate Latino enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools across the country increased from 19 to 24 percent and it is projected that this figure will continue to rise in coming years. While Latino students' enrollment in public schools is increasing nationwide, in the Midwest there are still substantial gains that need to be made in terms of combating Latinos' drop out rates.

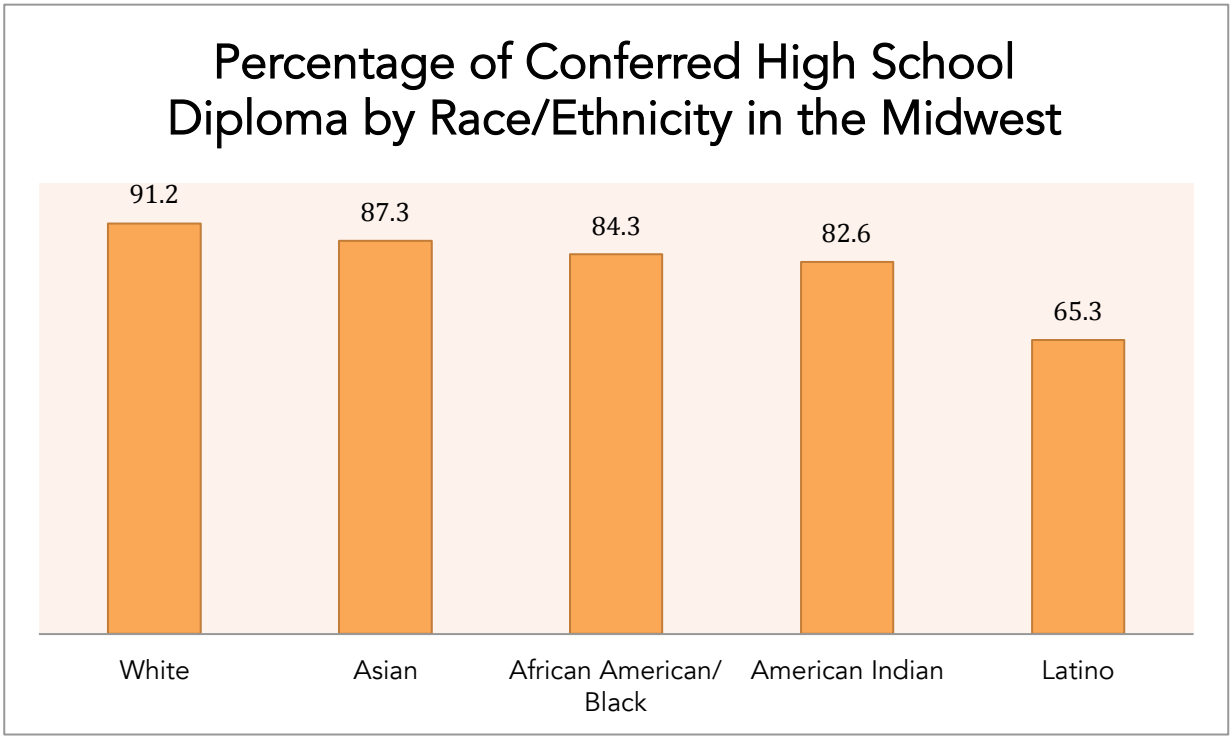



**Figure 5:** Percentage of conferred high school diplomas by race/ethnicity in the Midwest

[1]

Latinos who receive high school diplomas are least likely to receive a *traditional* degree. In other words, many Latinos either drop out of high school or they complete the General Education Achievement test (GED). In Illinois specifically, 30 percent of Latino males completed high school without obtaining a traditional diploma. In comparison, 27 percent of African American males did the same, while only 4 percent of white males received non-traditional diplomas (Sum et al. 2011). The discrepancy between the dropout rate of Latinos in secondary school compared to that of whites is drastic. However, in recent years, at least on the national level, this has begun to change. According to the U.S. Census, between 2003-12 Latinos' dropout rate decreased by nearly half (from 24% to 13%), although it still remains higher than that of African Americans (8%) and Whites (4%) **(**NCES, *Digest of Education Statistics 2013*, Table 219.70).

Undergraduate enrollment and degree attainment are areas in which Latinos' gains in education are clear. In the past ten years, the number of Latinos receiving associate degrees increased more than any other group at 75 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 Current Population Survey, Table 1: Educational Attainment, and 2004 Current Population Survey, Table 1: Educational Attainment). In the Midwest alone, the percent of degrees conferred to Latinos has grown exponentially. In three states, Iowa, South Dakota and Minnesota, the percentage of undergraduate degrees conferred grew over 100 percent in the period between 2009 and 2013. For the rest of the states in the region this number averages closer to 60 percent (ibid.). There are a couple of factors that may contribute to this. This country's growing Latino population is one example. For instance, as the Latino population continues to grow, it is likely that enrollment and degree attainment will increase given the rise in the population of school-age Latinos. It is also possible that changes within the Latino community, or improvements in progress through the

educational pipeline, have taken place sparking these changes. While the precise reason for the change is unclear as it is likely a combination of many factors working together, what is clear is that Latinos are making strides in educational achievement. Their enrollment and degree attainment rates are growing around the country, and in the Midwest, Latinos are beginning to make gains though they still fall significantly behind other groups, particularly Whites and Asians.

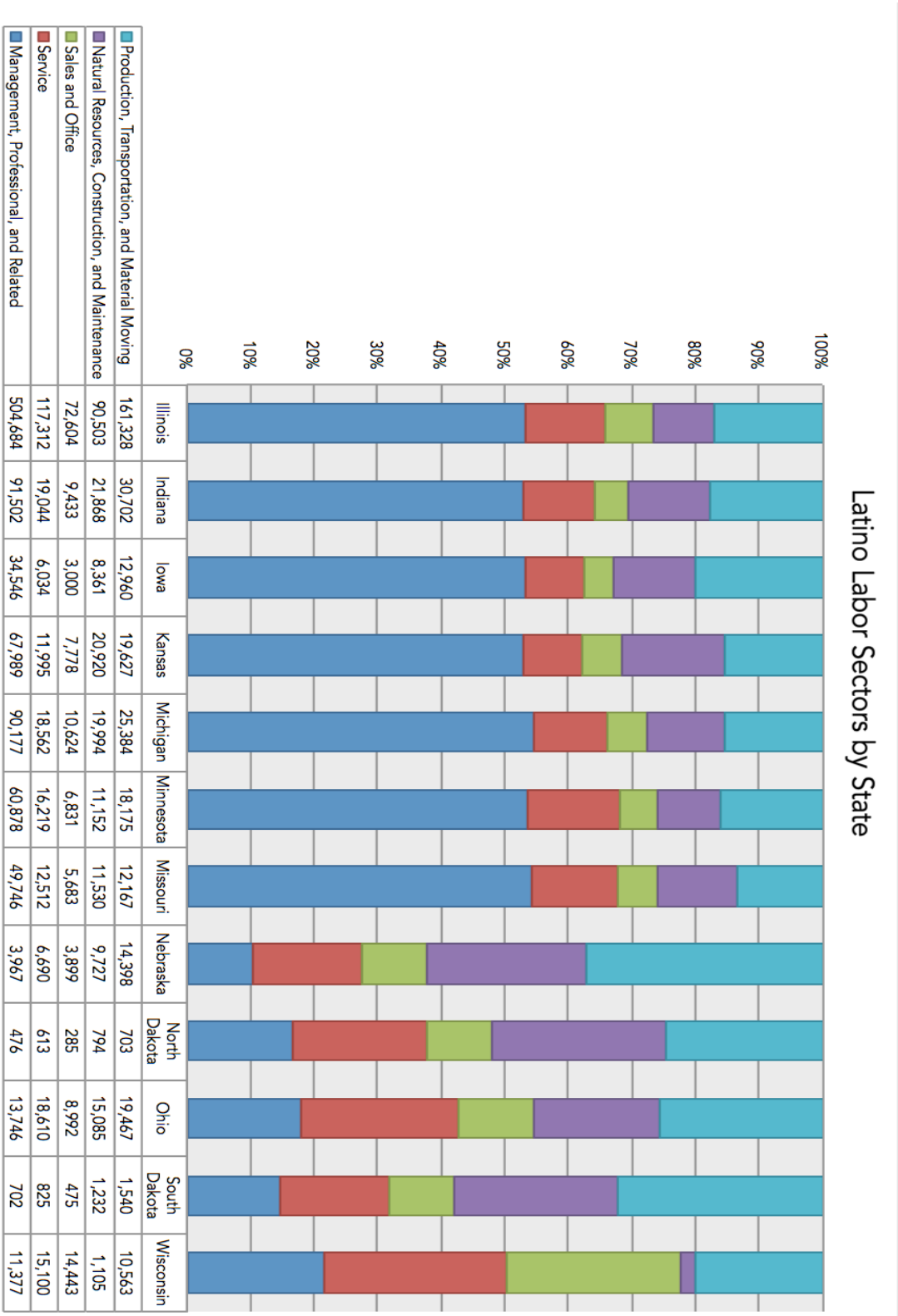
### C. Economic trends

By 2050, Latinos will make up roughly 30 percent of the United States' total population. As their representation continues to grow so too does their economic clout. According to Statista, in 2010 Latinos purchasing power was 1 trillion dollars. Two years later that figure increased to 1.2 trillion, and in 2015 it surpassed 1.5 trillion dollars (Statista). In total, in the past decade their purchasing power has increased by roughly 200 billion dollars every two years. With such substantial and consistent growths in purchasing power, Latinos are emerging as one of the most important consumer groups in the United States. They still, however, have been hardest hit by global and national economic forces such as the Great Recession and foreclosure crisis.

In the Midwest, Illinois is likely to be affected the most by Latino economic growth. Of states with the largest Latino markets, Illinois ranks fifth in the entire country. Within the state, Latinos have an estimated spending power of 43 billion dollars (Smartling FactSheet). In comparison, Latinos in California have a purchasing power of 253 billion dollars, the largest out of any state in the country. It is unsurprising that in the Midwest the Latino market is predominately concentrated in Illinois, as the state boasts one of the largest Latino populations in

the country. In fact, Illinois is one of only eight states in which the Latino population exceeds 1 million residents (ibid.).

While there is a consensus in economic reports that Latino males will continue to benefit the American economy as consumers, they are also integral members of the labor force. According to the U.S. Census's American Community Survey, from 2005-2014 the five most populated labor sectors in the Midwest for Latino male workers were services; sales and office; natural resources, construction and maintenance; production, transportation, and material moving; and management, professional and related positions (see figure 6, next page). In 2014, most Latino male workers were concentrated in the services sector (12.5%), natural resources and construction (10.4%) and production and transportation (10%). In these three fields Latinos' share of the workforce was disproportionately higher than their total regional population (7.9%). Comparatively, in sales and in management positions in particular, their representation was significantly lower than their overall share of the population, at 5.6 percent and 3.6 percent respectively.

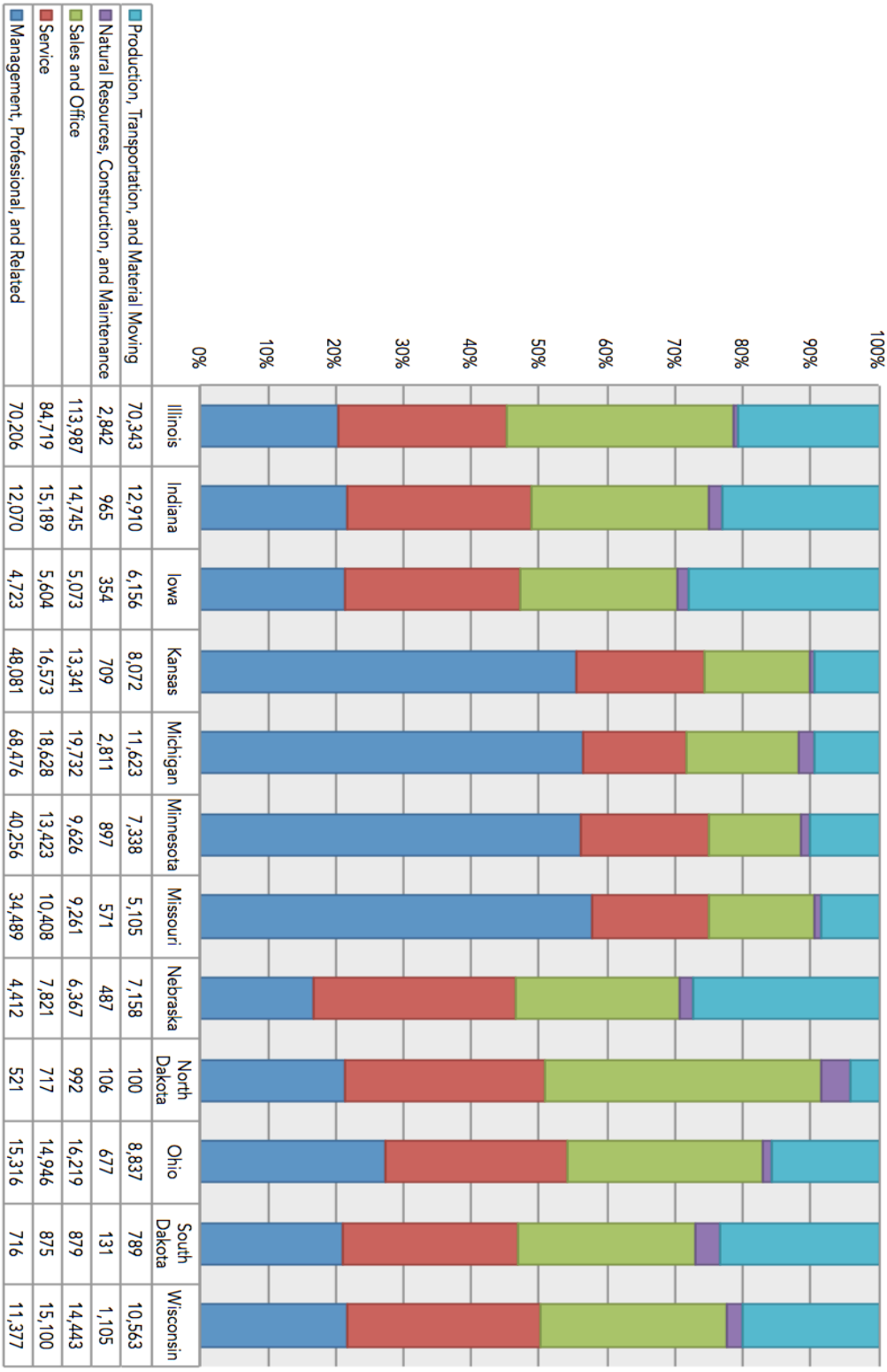



| | Illinois | Indiana | Iowa | Kansas | Michigan | Minnesota | Missouri | Nebraska | North Dakota | Ohio | South Dakota | Wisconsin |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Production, Transportation, and Material Moving | 161,328 | 30,702 | 12,960 | 19,627 | 25,384 | 18,175 | 12,167 | 14,398 | 703 | 19,467 | 1,540 | 10,563 |
| Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance | 90,503 | 21,868 | 8,361 | 20,920 | 19,994 | 11,152 | 11,530 | 9,727 | 794 | 15,085 | 1,232 | 1,105 |
| Sales and Office | 72,604 | 9,433 | 3,000 | 7,778 | 10,624 | 6,831 | 5,683 | 3,899 | 285 | 8,992 | 475 | 14,443 |
| Service | 117,312 | 19,044 | 6,034 | 11,995 | 18,562 | 16,219 | 12,512 | 6,690 | 613 | 18,610 | 825 | 15,100 |
| Management, Professional, and Related | 504,684 | 91,502 | 34,546 | 67,989 | 90,177 | 60,878 | 49,746 | 3,967 | 476 | 13,746 | 702 | 11,377 |

**Figure 6:** Latino Labor Sectors by State

Although their share of the sales and managerial workforce was significantly lower than their share of the total population, in seven out of the twelve states in the Midwest—Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota and Missouri—the number of Latinos working in those positions outnumbered other sectors, likely because there are more sales and managerial positions in the Midwest than occupations in production and transportation, construction and so on. When looking at the composition of the workforce on a state level, we find comparable results. Although numerically Latinos worked in managerial jobs more so than other positions, their share of the workforce in those sectors was still significantly lower than their share of the total population. While the largest number of Latinos occupied managerial positions, the fewest number of Latinos worked in sales and office positions. In eleven out of the twelve states (Wisconsin being the only outlier), Latino males were least concentrated in the sales field. This is unsurprising given that we know only 5.6 percent of Latinos occupy sales positions throughout the entire region.

Regionally, Latinas were concentrated to a slightly different degree than males (see figure 7, next page). Although services, natural resources and construction, and production and transportation remained the three most populated areas of employment, their concentration in those areas was even higher than their male counterparts. Latinas comprised 14.2 percent of the workforce in natural resources and construction; 15.1 percent in production and transportation; and 8 percent in service occupations. Like Latino males, Latinas were underrepresented in




| | Illinois | Indiana | Iowa | Kansas | Michigan | Minnesota | Missouri | Nebraska | North Dakota | Ohio | South Dakota | Wisconsin |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Production, Transportation, and Material Moving | 70,343 | 12,910 | 6,156 | 8,072 | 11,623 | 7,338 | 5,105 | 7,158 | 100 | 8,837 | 789 | 10,563 |
| Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance | 2,842 | 965 | 354 | 709 | 2,811 | 897 | 571 | 487 | 106 | 677 | 131 | 1,105 |
| Sales and Office | 113,987 | 14,745 | 5,073 | 13,341 | 19,732 | 9,626 | 9,261 | 6,367 | 992 | 16,219 | 879 | 14,443 |
| Service | 84,719 | 15,189 | 5,604 | 16,573 | 18,628 | 13,423 | 10,408 | 7,821 | 717 | 14,946 | 875 | 15,100 |
| Management, Professional, and Related | 70,206 | 12,070 | 4,723 | 48,081 | 68,476 | 40,256 | 34,489 | 4,412 | 521 | 15,316 | 716 | 11,377 |

**Figure 7:** Latina Labor Sectors by State

managerial and sales positions at 3.7 and 5.4 percent respectively compared to their total share of the population (7.9%).

For Latinas, managerial, professional, and sales and office occupations were the sectors where they were most heavily concentrated in terms of raw numbers only, not in regards to total share of the labor force within those sectors. There were ten states in which either sales or managerial positions were the most numerically populated occupation for Latina workers. To further illuminate the gender differences across Latino/a workers, unlike their male counterparts who were disproportionately concentrated in work related to natural resources, construction, and maintenance, Latina workers were least likely to have positions in these fields. This is true for every state but North Dakota where the least populated sector for Latina workers was production, transportation and material moving.

There are clear trends both in the concentration of Latino workers in the Midwest and the differences between female and male workers in the region. Not only do these data tell us which labor sectors are the most robust in the region, it also illuminates gender differences across the Latino/a workforce. Males are more likely to be in positions requiring physical labor. They outnumbered Latinas both in natural resources, construction and maintenance, and production, transportation, and material moving. Latinas out-represented males in the sales and offices sectors and hold a relatively larger share of jobs in managerial positions. These trends may be attributable to social expectations of appropriate gendered division of labor both within the Latino community and within the United States more broadly.

## D. Political Participation and Civic Engagement

Latinos have a long history of political participation and civic engagement throughout the United States. In the Midwest specifically, Latinos began to mobilize politically for social change in the 1970s (cf. Martinez 2011), with the establishment of various organizations that focused on serving and advocating for the Latino population. While there are many aspects of political and civic participation that we may analyze, we focus here on five aspects: 1) the number of eligible voters; 2) the numbers of Latinos who registered to vote for the 2014 election; 3) the number of Latinos who voted; 4) Latino partisan identification; and 5) Latino political ideology. The first four features we assess are necessarily related to citizenship and thus exclude nearly 10% of the Latino population who is undocumented, as well as those who live in the United States with documentation but without becoming naturalized citizens.

*Eligible Voter Population*

Pew Hispanic Center estimates that a record 27.3 million Latinos will be eligible to participate in the 2016 elections. This number is higher than any previous years. The share of Latino voters nationally varies across states and regions, with the largest proportion of the voter eligible populus concentrated in the Southwest, and in California and Texas specifically. Within the Midwest, Latinos comprise anywhere from 2.1%-9.9% of eligible voters within a given state (see figure 8, next page). Comprising 16% of the Illinois population, Latinos account for 9.9 percent of the share of eligible voters. Region-wide, Illinois's eligible Latino voters comprise 17% of all Latino eligible voters in the Midwest, while Missouri and Minnesota only comprise 4% of regional eligible voters (see figure 9). Perhaps surprisingly, Nebraska follows Illinois, with 9.1% of the eligible voter population being Latino. The state with the least share of Latinos among eligible voters is Minnesota.

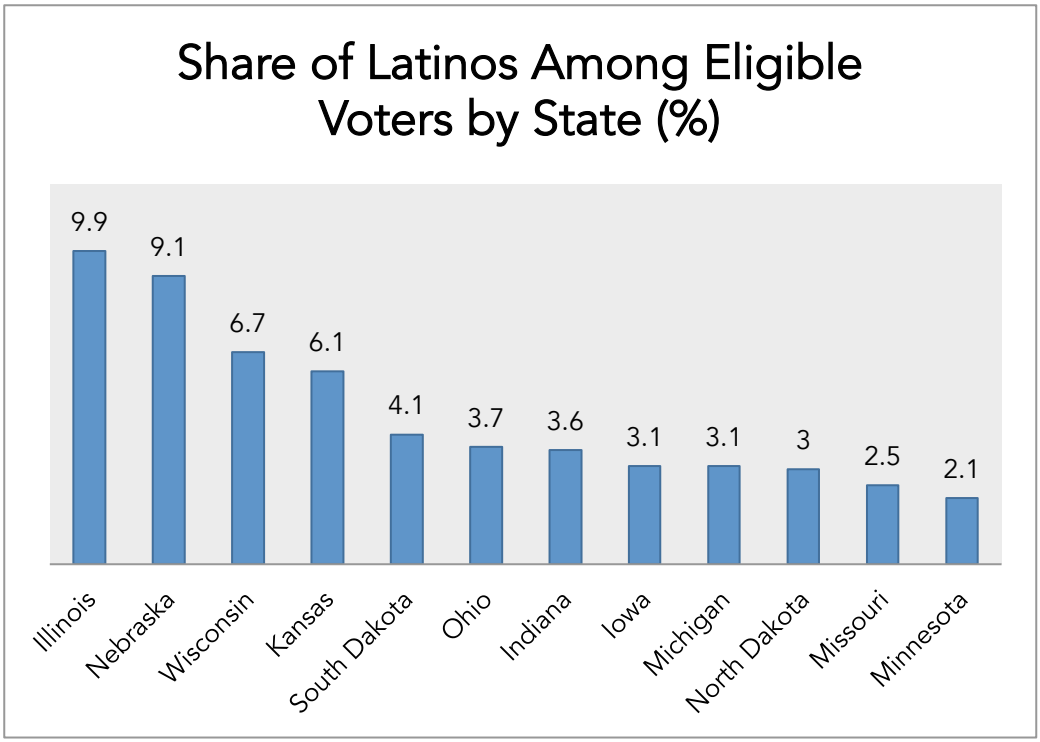



**Figure 8:** Share of Latinos among eligible voters by state (graph compiled by authors using data from Pew Hispanic Research Center)

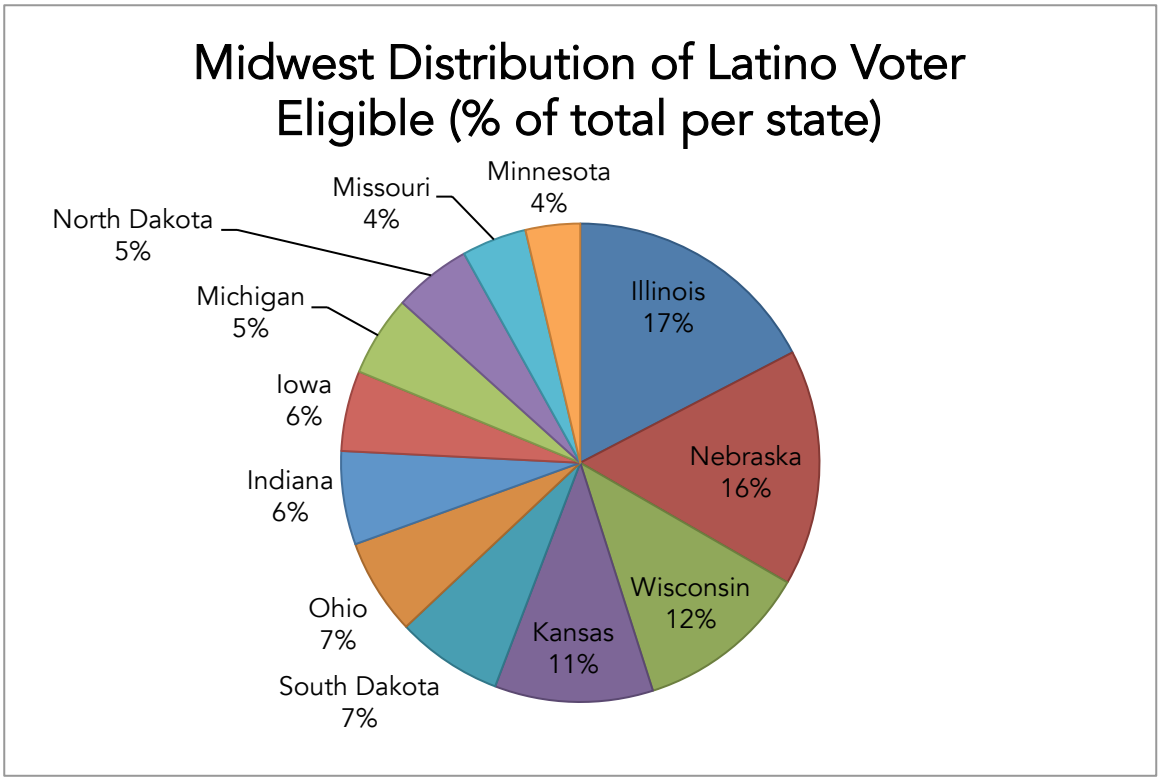



**Figure 9:** Share of eligible Latino voters regionally (graph compiled by authors using data from Pew Hispanic Research

*Percentage of Registered Voters and Voter Turnout*

The U.S. Census Bureau released voter registration data for the 2014 elections. These data are presented in Figure 10. Illinois has the largest number of registered Latinos in the region, with 410,000 Latinos registered. Michigan follows Illinois in sheer number at 179,000. While Nebraska's percentage of Latino eligible voters is 9.1% of the electorate (figure 8, pg. 19), very few register to vote (26,000).

While Illinois Latino voters comprise only 17% of the region's eligible Latino voters, they represent 40% of the total number of Latinos who voted in the Midwest (see figure 11, next page). After Illinois, Michigan's Latino voters comprised 15% of all Latinos who voted in the Midwest. Second only to Illinois, Nebraska leads the region in eligible voters with 16% of the total Latino eligible voter population, but this population comprised only 2% of the actual voters in 2014. In Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Missouri, Latinos remain largely

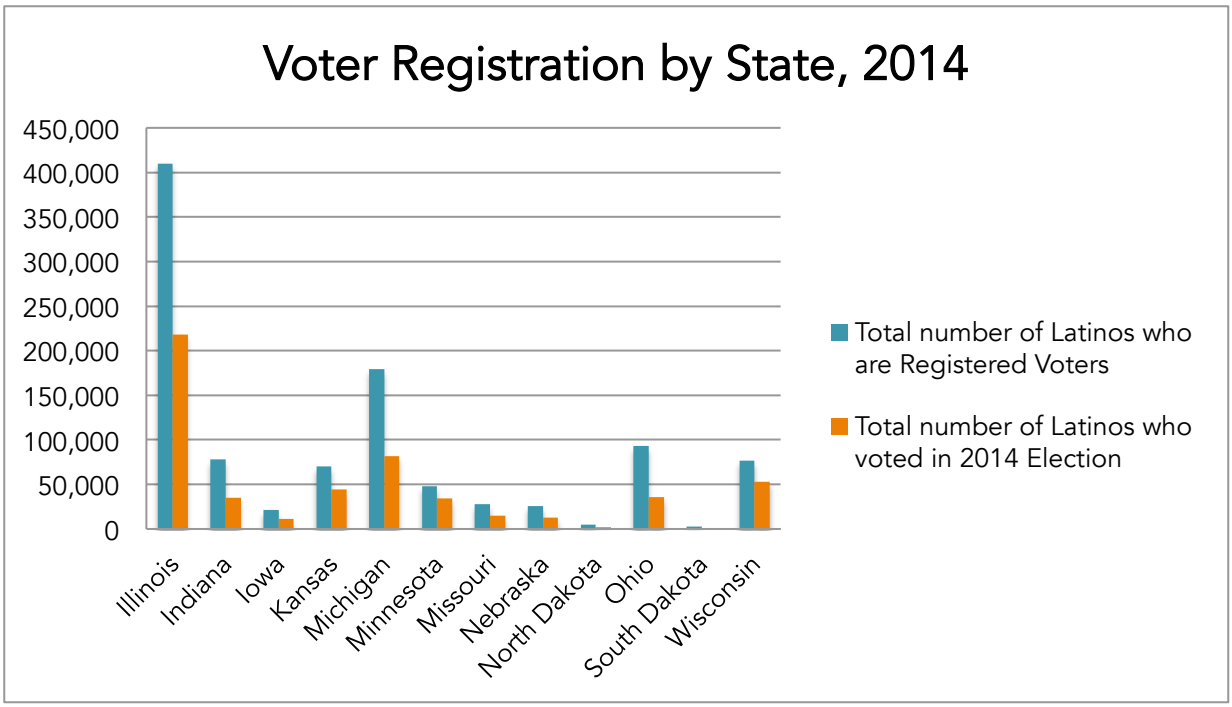



**Figure 10:** Share of Latinos among eligible voters by state (graph compiled by authors using data from Pew Hispanic Research Center)

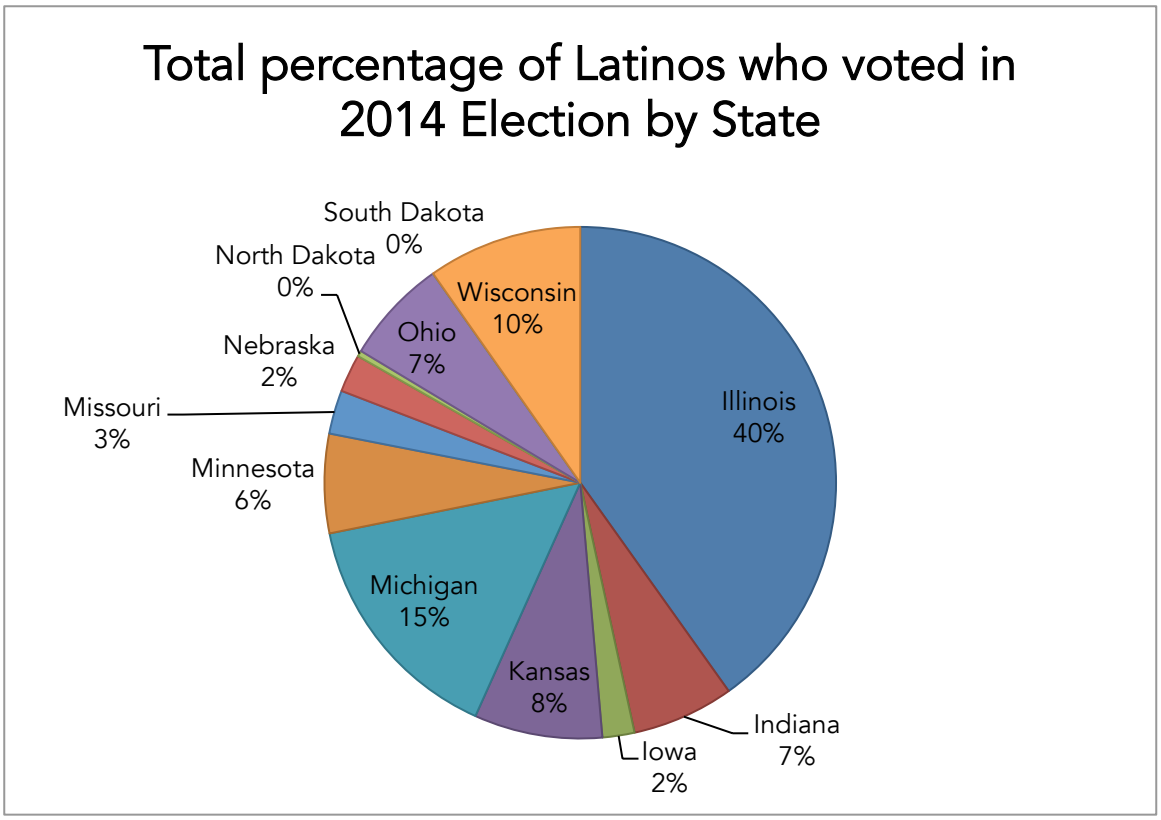



**Figure 11:** Share of Latinos among eligible voters by state (graph compiled by authors using data from Pew Hispanic Research Center)

underrepresented in voter turnout.

These disparities in representation are particularly astounding given that these states are experiencing tremendous growth in the Latino population. Local Latino organizations recognize the dire situation reflected in these statistics and are working hard to register Latino voters through Get Out The Vote (GOTV) campaigns. In Iowa, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) led the effort to get 10,000 Latinos to pledge participation in the 2016 Iowa Caucus (Gamboa 2016). In Nebraska, activists believe that the main barrier to full political participation is language. Such organizations as the Heartland Workers Center have worked with election commissions to ensure that there are bilingual poll workers assisting Spanish-speaking voters on election day (Sojico 2014).

When it comes to party affiliation, according to the 2006 National Latino Survey, 36% of Latinos in the Midwest identify as Democrat (see figure 12, next page). While only 8% identify as Republican, 17% are independent, 21% do not know what their partisan identification is, and 18% do not care. A striking 39% of Latinos in the Midwest may not be as civically engaged as they could be. Nationwide, 33.8% of Latinos identify as Democrat and 10.8% identify as Republicans. This means that, on average, Latinos in the Midwest are more likely to be Democrat and less likely to be Republican than in other regions in the United States.

In comparing Latino partisan identification with political ideology, the numbers are more fluid (see figure 13, next page). 18% of Latinos in the Midwest claim conservative values/ideology, while only 14% refer to themselves as "liberal." This comparative view demonstrates that Latinos do not necessarily understand liberal values as Democratic values, nor do they consider conservative values to necessarily be linked to Republic orthodoxy.

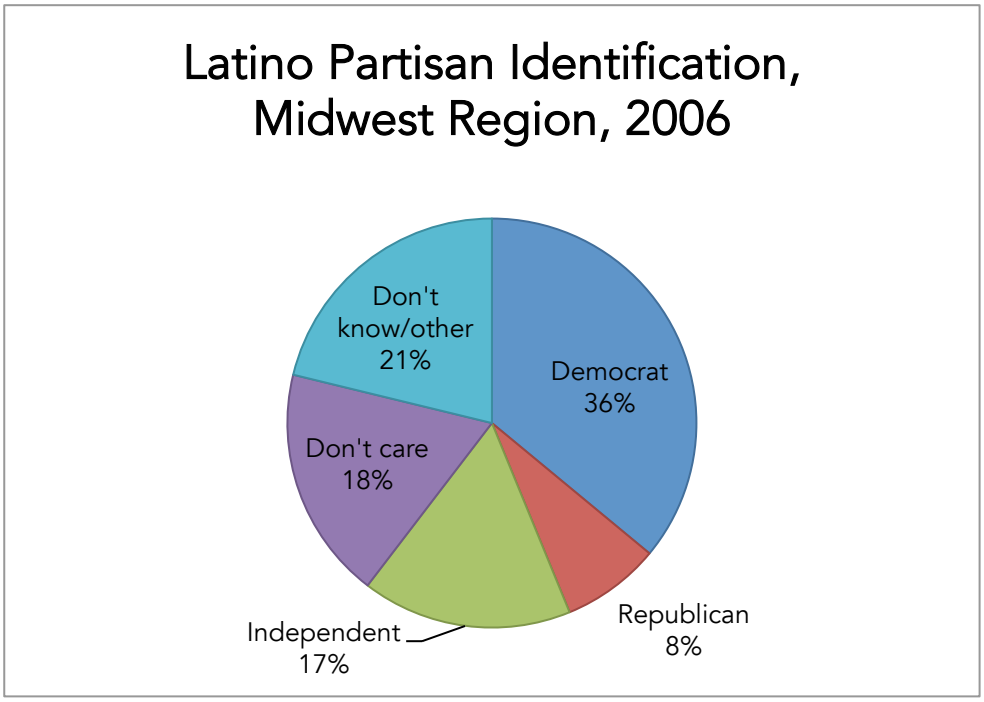



**Figure 12:** Share of Latinos among eligible voters by state (graph compiled from data included in Vega et al. 2011: 67, Table 12).

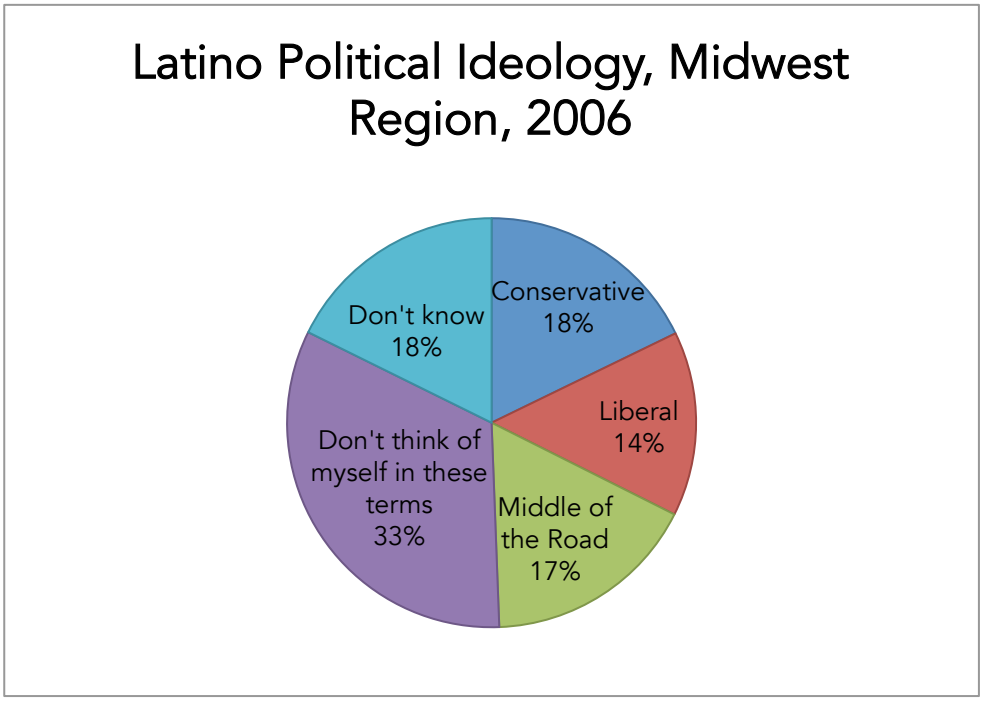


**Figure 13:** Share of Latinos among eligible voters by state (graph compiled from data included in Vega et al. 2011: 67, Table 13).

Interestingly, 68% of Midwest Latinos view themselves as neither conservative nor liberal, with 1/3 of reporting that they do not consider their political ideologies as significant definers of self. Given that electoral politics in the U.S. relies on the dichotomization of "liberal" vs. "conservative" values, this may explain the relative lack of Latino engagement with the electoral process nationwide and in the Midwest in particular.

## II. Conclusion

In this paper we have presented and analyzed the most recent demographic data in the Midwest. We have also focused on four key law and policy areas: 1) Immigration; 2) Educational attainment; 3) Economic trends; and 4) Political participation and civic engagement. Table 2 (next page) summarizes these data.

Overall we see a situation in which Latinos regionally are gaining in size and recognition. Their numbers are increasing and they are contributing to the economic growth of the Midwest; however, they are not receiving the full benefits of inclusion. Their contributions to local and regional economies have not translated into equality. Latinos are still underserved in educational contexts, lagging behind their white, Asian, and African American counterparts, and they experience high levels of political disenfranchisement in the Midwest and nationally, accounting for only a small percentage of the electorate.

Nonetheless, the Midwest context provides an opportunity for scholars to explore how demographic shifts may positively or negatively affect educational opportunities, economic attainment, and civic engagement. These data are currently not collected on the regional level

and we hope that this paper is a call to action for future researchers. In particular, demographic data collection on education and – to a lesser extent, economic vitality – is lagging behind immigration and political participation. This may be a function of the global shift to neoliberal governance in which education and economic stability are construed as individual pursuits as opposed to rights conferred by the state. Immigration and political participation, on the other hand, are viewed as national interests and thus are the subjects of many nationwide and statewide studies. Whatever the reason for this lacuna in scholarship, we need more regionally centered studies on the state of Latinos in the Midwest.

**Table 2**

**Summary of Findings**

| Key Policy Lever | Status |
|---|---|
| **Immigration** | Increased numbers of Latinos, especially in rural areas of South Dakota, Ohio, and Indiana. Traditional strongholds such as Illinois maintain large populations. The majority of immigrants come for economic opportunity. |
| **Educational Attainment** | While Latinos experience higher levels of enrollment, Latinos in the Midwest are the most uneducated group, graduating from high school at lower rates than their white, Asian, and African American classmates. |
| **Economic Vitality** | Large Latino markets in Illinois. Gendered divisions of labor across the states, with Latino occupying jobs that require physical labor and Latinas taking managerial and office positions. |
| **Political Participation and Political Engagement** | While many Latinos are eligible to vote across the Midwest, few register to vote and even fewer engage in the voting process. |

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