



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

POLICY RESEARCH CENTER

October 30, 2020



Research Policy Update

Native Vote Regional Report: Southwest Region

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Native Vote initiative is a nonpartisan effort to promote American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) voter engagement throughout Indian Country. The purpose of this report is to share bi-weekly updates on the status of competitive elections during the 2020 election cycle for states in each NCAI region where turnout of the Native Vote may make a difference.



NCAI Southwest Region – Voting Age Population

For the 2020 election cycle, a number of close races have the potential to be impacted by the number of voting age AI/ANs who vote, especially if they are a significant percentage of the total population in the state. The NCAI Southwest Region includes the states of Colorado and New Mexico. Twenty-six tribal nations have land within the Region. For the states in the Southwest Region, the AI/AN voting age population number and percentage of the overall population for each of the states is shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1: AI/AN Voting Age Statewide Population Percentage for States in the Southwest Region

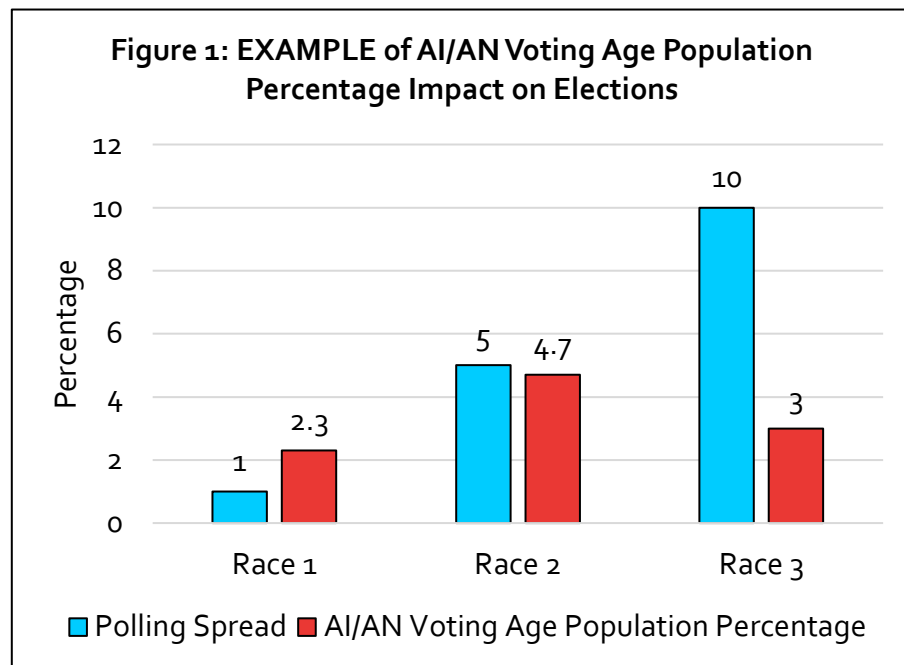
State	2019 State Total Voting Age Population Estimates	2019 AI/AN State Total Voting Age Population Estimates	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage of State Population
Colorado	4,499,217	114,190	2.54%
New Mexico	1,620,991	180,961	11.16%

Source: 2019 Census Bureau, 2019 Population Estimates, Tables SCPRC-EST2019-18+POP-RES and SC-EST2019-ALLDATA5.

The AI/AN voting age population has the potential to impact competitive national, Congressional district, and state legislative races where the margin of victory is estimated to be similar to the AI/AN voting age population percentage.

Figure 1 illustrates an example of how graphs are used in this report to illustrate how the AI/AN voting age population percentage can impact close elections. The polling difference or margin between candidates is represented as a percent in the blue bars, and the AI/AN voting age population percentage of the total state population is represented in the red bars in the graph.

In *Race 1*, the AI/AN percentage in the example state (red) is larger than the polling difference between candidates (blue) in Race 1. Here AI/AN voters can clearly impact the outcome of the race.



In *Race 2*, the AI/AN voting age population percentage is close to the polling difference between candidates. AI/AN voters in elections like this example can potentially impact the outcome.

In *Race 3*, the AI/AN voting age population percentage is smaller than the polling difference between candidates. In this example, AI/AN voters may not have a big impact on the outcome.

In this report, data on competitive and potentially competitive elections changes over time and is monitored with the *Cook Political Report*, which is a non-partisan newsletter that regularly analyzes elections at the national and state level. The *Cook Political Report* ranks races as tossups, with either candidate having a possibility to succeed, or as “leaning” or “likely” to result in a specific outcome, Democratic (“D”) or Republican (“R”).

This report also uses current polling on competitive races as collected by *FiveThirtyEight*, which is a news media source and national polling clearinghouse. Finally, this report uses data from the U.S. Census Bureau on the number and percentage of AI/AN voters in election districts. For national and statewide elections [Electoral College (Presidential), Senate, and Gubernatorial races], the data on AI/AN voting age population is drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2019 population estimates. For all other elections, AI/AN voting age population data for U.S. Congressional districts and state upper and lower legislative house levels is drawn from the Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) Census Bureau dataset from 2018. These reports are compiled using the NCAI regions, which may differ from other organizational or federal department regional designations for tribal nations. The reports for each state in this NCAI region are illustrated below.

NCAI Southwest Region – Colorado

Colorado Competitive & Potentially Competitive Races

1 Electoral College Race
1 Congressional District Race
Upper State Legislative House

In Idaho, the latest *Cook Political Report* ranks two races to be competitive or potentially competitive. **Table 2** illustrates the Native candidate races for Colorado, the *Cook Political Report* ranking, the voting electorate or district, and the AI/AN voting age population percentage in those districts. The races include the Electoral College (Presidential) race and the third Congressional district race. The Electoral College ranks potentially competitive and likely to result in a Democratic outcome, or “Likely-D.” The Congressional district race ranks competitive and potentially to result in a Republican outcome, or

“Lean-R.” The *Cook Political Report* also ranks Colorado’s upper state legislative house to be potentially competitive and likely to result in a Democratic win, or “Likely-D.”

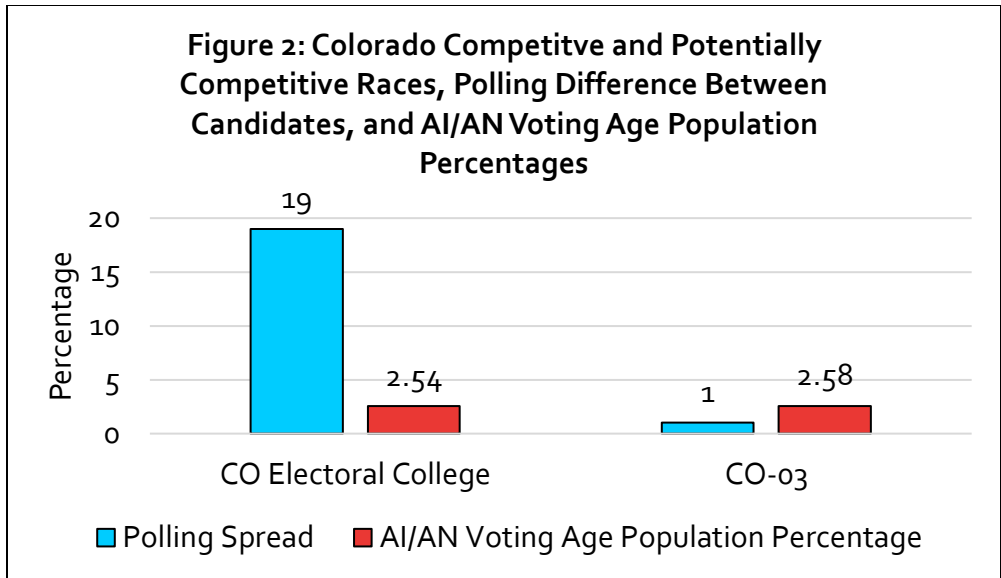
Table 2: Colorado Competitive and Potentially Competitive Elections

Race	<i>Cook Political Report</i> Ranking	Electorate	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage
Electoral College	Likely-D	Statewide	2.54%
Congressional 3rd District	Lean-R	Congressional District	2.58%
Upper State Legislative House	Likely-D	State Legislative District	Varies by District

Source: 2019 Census Bureau, 2019 Population Estimates, Tables SCPRC-EST2019-18+POP-RES and SC-EST2019-ALLDATA5; Census Bureau, 2018 Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) by Race and Ethnicity, Table CVAP 2014-2018 t Year ACS Data; Cook Political Report, Accessed October 30, 2020.

AI/AN voters can impact races where the current polling shows the candidates are expected to receive a similar percentage of votes and in areas where the percent of AI/AN voters is larger than the difference in polling percentages between the candidates.

Figure 2 illustrates the AI/AN voting age population percentages and recent polling spread or percent margins for the Electoral College and Congressional races in Colorado. The AI/AN voting age population percentage in Colorado’s third district is larger than the current polling spread. AI/AN voters can impact the outcome of this close race.



Source: 2019 Census Bureau, 2019 Population Estimates, Tables SCPRC-EST2019-18+POP-RES and SC-EST2019-ALLDATA5; Census Bureau, 2018 Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) by Race and Ethnicity, Table CVAP 2014-2018 t Year ACS Data; FiveThirtyEight, Accessed October 30, 2020.

Though control of Colorado’s upper state legislative house is considered to be competitive, the state does not have any Native candidates running for state legislative office according to *Indian Country Today*.

NCAI Southwest Region – New Mexico

New Mexico Competitive & Potentially Competitive Races

1 Congressional District Race

10 Native Candidates

In New Mexico, the latest *Cook Political Report* shows one competitive race. **Table 3** illustrates the competitive race for New Mexico, the *Cook Political Report* ranking, the voting electorate or district, and the AI/AN voting age population percentage in the district. The race is New Mexico’s second district race and it ranks competitive and as a tossup, with a slight lean toward a Democratic outcome, or “Tossup-D.” In addition to the competitive race, two Native candidates are running for Congressional office in New Mexico. In New Mexico’s second district, incumbent Xochitl Torres Small is being challenged by Native candidate Yvette Herrell. In New Mexico’s first district, Native candidate incumbent Deb Haaland is running for reelection in

New Mexico’s first district and is being challenged by Michelle Garcia Holmes.

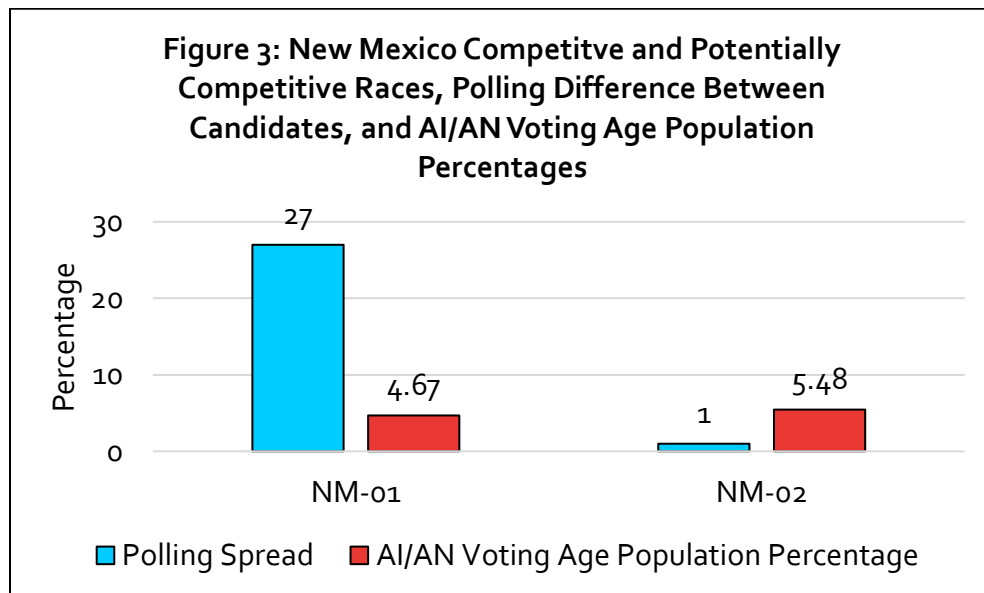
Table 3: New Mexico Competitive, Potentially Competitive, and Native Candidate Elections

Race	Cook Political Report Ranking	Electorate	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage
Congressional 1st District	Unranked	Congressional District	4.67%
Congressional 2nd District	Tossup-D	Congressional District	5.48%

Source: 2019 Census Bureau, 2019 Population Estimates, Tables SCPRC-EST2019-18+POP-RES and SC-EST2019-ALLDATA5; Census Bureau, 2018 Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) by Race and Ethnicity, Table CVAP 2014-2018 t Year ACS Data; Cook Political Report, Accessed October 30, 2020.

AI/AN voters can impact races where the current polling shows the candidates are expected to receive a similar percentage of votes and in areas where the percent of AI/AN voters is larger than the difference in polling percentages between the candidates.

Figure 3 illustrates the AI/AN voting age population percentages and recent polling spread or percent margins for the Congressional district races in New Mexico. The AI/AN voting age population percentage in New Mexico’s second district is larger than the current polling spread. AI/AN voters can impact the outcome of these close races.



Source: 2019 Census Bureau, 2019 Population Estimates, Tables SCPRC-EST2019-18+POP-RES and SC-EST2019-ALLDATA5; Census Bureau, 2018 Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) by Race and Ethnicity, Table CVAP 2014-2018 t Year ACS Data; FiveThirtyEight, Accessed October 30, 2020.

Though *Cook Political Report* does not rank control of New Mexico’s state legislative houses to be competitive, eight Native candidates are running for state legislative office according to

Indian Country Today. **Table 4** describes each Native candidate, their district race, and the AI/AN voting age population percentage in the district.

Table 4: New Mexico State Congressional Candidates and AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage

Candidate	District Race	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage
Anthony Allison	State House District 4	74.07%
Patricia Roybal Caballero	State House District 13	75.23%
Dorren Wonda Johnson	State House District 5	3.37%
Derrick Lente	State House District 65	4.01%
Georgene Louis	State House District 26	63.11%
Brenda McKenna	State Senate District 9	75.72%
Shannon Pinto	State Senate District 3	3.21%
Benny Shendo Jr.	State Senate District 22	65.04%

Source: Census Bureau, 2018 Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) by Race and Ethnicity, Table CVAP 2014-2018 t Year ACS Data; *Indian Country Today*, Accessed October 30, 2020.

In all races for New Mexico, the Native candidates have over 3% of AI/AN voting age population percentages in their districts and a majority in five of the races. AI/AN voters can impact these races if they are close.

For more information, email research@ncai.org or visit NCAI's Native Vote website at: <http://www.nativevote.org/>

Suggested citation: NCAI Policy Research Center (2020). *Research Policy Update – Native Vote Regional Reports: Southwest Region*. Washington DC: National Congress of American Indians, October 30, 2020