



Gender and Racial/Ethnic Diversity in Colorado's Legislature:

Lessons from the 2018 Elections and 2019 Session

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ABOUT THE REPORT

This report was written by participants in Metropolitan State University of Denver's Applied Political Research Lab in the Department of Political Science. It is published by the Golda Meir Center for Political Leadership. The goal of the report is to provide objective analyses of the processes related to, and impacts of, gender and racial diversification in Colorado's 2018 state legislative elections and the 2019 state legislative session. The research was conducted during the spring of 2020, and the focus on the 2019 legislative session avoids the unique nature of the 2020 session. The findings shed light on the role of diversification, the potential impact of redistricting, and the degree to which female legislators and legislators of color are represented and influence policymaking in what was the most diverse legislative setting in Colorado's history.

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The Golda Meir Center

The Golda Meir Center is a nonpartisan educational project whose purpose is to expand public understanding of the important role of leadership at all levels of political and civic life, from community affairs to transnational relations. As a woman from a poor family who was twice an immigrant to new lands, Golda Meir reminds us that the potential for leadership knows no class, ethnic, gender, religious, racial, age or geographical boundaries. Leadership can emerge from the most unlikely places.

KEY FINDINGS

The State legislative elections of 2018 lead to the most racially/ethnically diverse legislature in Colorado's history and resulted in a record number of female legislators, ranking Colorado 2nd among all states. Legislative diversity was a result of large numbers of women running for office, and impressive winning percentages among Latinx candidates. These groups of legislators, along with African American legislators, tended to bring new perspectives and approaches to the legislative arena. Legislators differed in outreach, issue positions and sponsored legislation. While power and success were similar across groups, the diversity of Colorado's Democratic caucus in both Chambers lead to more access to legislative power and legislative success among women and legislators of color than would have resulted in a Republican-controlled legislature. Below are the key findings:

2nd
 Colorado's Rank
 in the Percent of
 Legislative
 Seats Held by
 Women

- **Democratic women ran at much higher rates than Republican women.** 42 females ran in primaries for Democratic House seats compared to 32 males. Among Republicans, only 22 females ran compared to 44 males. In Senate races, an even number of men and women ran for Democratic nominations, while men outnumbered women 5 to 1 among Republicans. By the general election, these differences were even more pronounced. Of the 39 females winning seats in 2018, 31 were Democrats (79%).
- **Female legislators of Color comprised 27% of the House Democrats and 16% of Senate Democrats in 2019**, comprising a larger proportion of the Democratic caucus than the overall proportion of Black residents in Colorado.

**Black and Latinx
 Candidates**

17% of All Primary
 Candidates

29% of All Democratic
 Candidates

7% of Republican Candidates

0% of Minor Party Candidates

- **The candidate pool largely reflected the diversity of the winners**, with Democratic candidates more closely reflecting the racial/ethnic composition of the state.

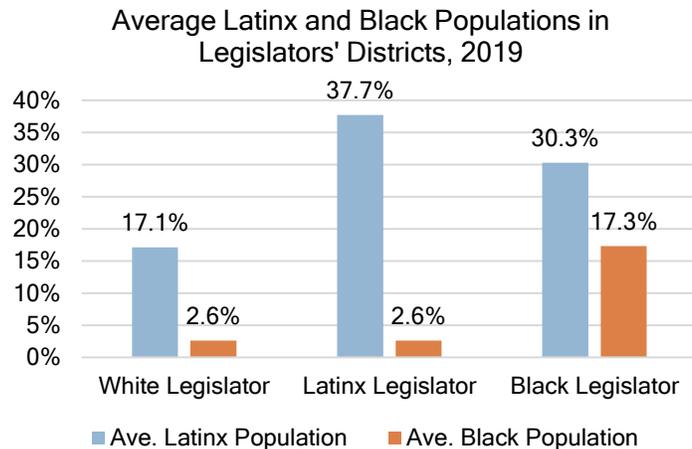
- **Racial gerrymandering can affect the prospects of racially/ethnically diverse legislature.** In particular, only in districts with more than 40% Latinx populations were Latinx legislators the most likely to hold seats relative to Whites and Blacks.

- **The Blue Wave help female Democrats, regardless of race, and White male Democrats** who pulled the most votes beyond what would be expected from a “normal” election.

- **Democratic candidates of color were the most successful in their bids to win seats in 2018.** Two-thirds or more of all Black or Latinx

candidates that ran as Democrats in the primaries eventually won their election. 80% of Latino candidates did so, and 100% of the 9 Latina Democrats running in the primaries eventually won the legislative seat in the general election.

- **Females dominated campaign spending.** Female Candidates Spent 3.5% More than Male Candidates, Even Though Females Accounted for Only 41% of Candidates. Latina candidates for the House spent more than any other group, on average. With \$85772 as an average. The highest average was for White female candidates for Senate, spending \$178,852 on average. Two Senate districts where Democratic women won elections (Senate 16 and 24) accounted for 31% of all spending in the 17 Senate races.
- **Females publicize more events and engage in more Facebook outreach.** Averaging 25.7 events compared to 17.2 events for males.
- **Issues, whether emphasized on websites or in sponsored legislation, reflect unique perspectives.** For instance, Latinx legislators mentioned Immigration (30% of them) more than others (12% of whites). Women sponsored all immigration bills, with two-thirds sponsored by Latinas. 40% of all Labor and Employment bills were sponsored by Black legislators or Latina legislators. Black female legislators comprised 15% of Crime bills while only comprising 5% of the House seats.
- **Democratic control led to more women and legislators of color holding leadership positions.** Women, Black and Latinx legislators are over-represented in committee leadership positions, and are at, or above parity, in chamber leadership.



INTRODUCTION

The state legislative elections of 2018 resulted in a legislature with the most racial/ethnic and gender diversity in Colorado's history. This report examines how this came about, the degree to which a diverse legislature introduces new and unique perspectives into the advocacy and policymaking processes, and the extent to which members from diverse backgrounds are able to obtain and exert power within the 2019 legislative session. A focus on these three aspects of diversity closely follows from what political scientists see as the process of incorporation of minority and female interests in representative institutions—from access, to inclusion, to power (Preuhs 2017).

The 2018 elections can be thought of as both a blue wave election, with wide support for Democratic candidates across all levels of government and geographic regions, as well as a year of the woman where female candidates ran for office at unprecedented rates. These factors, as well as a large group of Latinx candidates, resulted in Democratic control of both chambers of the Colorado General Assembly and the historic numbers of Latinx and female state legislators. The anticipated result of more descriptive representation, or a legislature that more closely reflects the demographic composition of the state, is broader substantive representation (the advocacy of policy) that follows the preferences of both women and people of color more closely than a less diverse legislature (Dovi 2002; Juenke and Preuhs 2017; Mansbridge 1999; Pitkin 1967; Reingold et al. 2020). This report aims to examine both how the legislature became more diverse as well as the effect of that diversity on legislative behavior and power. The analyses present some surprising results, but also well-established patterns of legislative behavior.

The report begins by framing the contours of the 2018 election and its results by presenting both the overall level of legislative gender and racial/ethnic diversity, as well as delineating the differences in diversity across parties. Moreover, relying on a unique data set from the *Candidate Characteristics Cooperative Database*, the report is able to not only identify and analyze the behaviors of those who ultimately won seats in the legislature, but also those who ran in all primary contests. This allows the report to trace the emergence of candidates from primaries to legislative seats, a key element of understanding how legislatures diversify (Juenke 2014).

From there, the report focuses on the districts behind diversity to evaluate what types of districts were more likely to elect legislators of color and female legislators. These findings also point to important insights that should be consulted during the next round of redistricting

following the 2020 Census. In particular, the racial composition of districts continues to be an important factor in the election of a racially and ethnically diverse legislature, but the creation of majority-minority districts does not seem to be a necessary condition for electing Black or Latinx candidates.

The report also examines campaign expenditure levels to evaluate the role of money in legislative diversification. The data reveal that the year of the woman certainly benefitted female candidates who while accounting for just over 40% of all candidates spent 3.5% more in aggregate than males. Moreover, spending was most prevalent among Latina candidates for House and Senate seats and White females running for Senate seats. Competitive districts and widespread support for female candidates likely contributed to the spending advantage.

The report then turns to substantive representation by examining outreach activities, legislator websites and bill sponsorship to examine the degree to which gender and racial/ethnic group differences emerge in the types of issues and activities pursued once in office. This is a key element of understanding the impact of a diverse legislature. If females advocate for the same issues as males, or Latinx and Black legislators pursue the same types of policy goals, then the substance of policymaking may not be affected by a diverse legislature. The results show clear partisan divisions, but even after accounting for partisanship, racial/ethnic and gender differences do emerge in the outreach activities as well as the issues addressed in and out of the legislative setting.

The report concludes with an evaluation of power in the legislature. Through the lens of committee assignments, leadership positions and legislative success, the analyses examine the degree of influence legislators from diverse backgrounds have on the legislative process. The results generally suggest a level of parity in institutional position. Parity is not uniform across committee assignments, however, and what emerges is a picture of partisan affiliation and majority status as the foundation for parity.

DIVERSITY IN COLORADO'S STATE LEGISLATURE

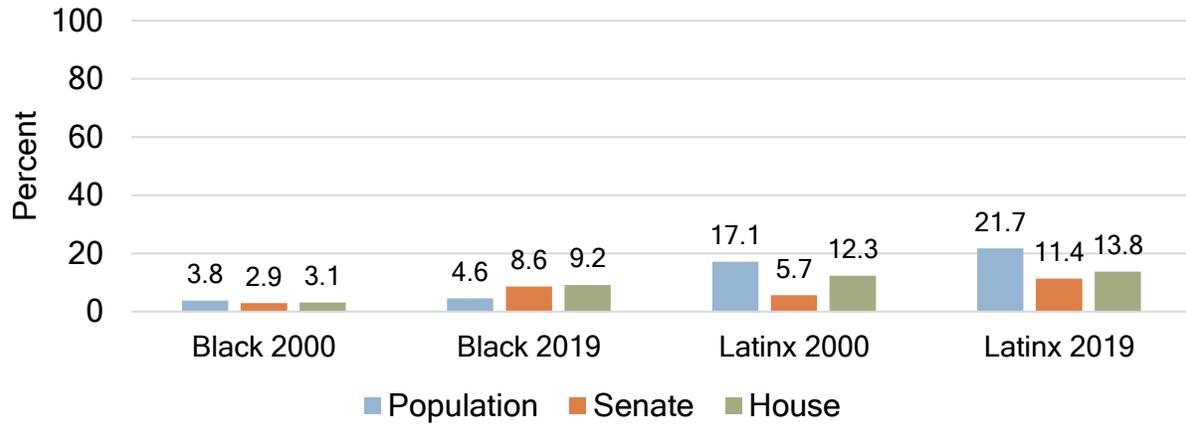
The state legislative elections of 2018 resulted in the most diverse legislature in Colorado's history—in terms of both racial and ethnic diversity, as well as gender diversity. After the elections, Colorado ranked second across all fifty states in the percentage of women holding legislative seats at 44%, a number that increased shortly after to 47% due to several non-electoral changes in the legislative composition. Black and Latino legislators of both genders held 23% of all one hundred legislative seats which is about 3 percentage points below parity with Colorado's Black and Latinx population combined. In all, legislators of color and females now hold a majority of seats in the State House (57%) and 46% of seats in the State Senate. This section lays out the diversity landscape in Colorado's legislature following the 2018 election, presenting general indicators of diversity as well as leveraging the data from the *Candidate Characteristics Cooperative Database* to demonstrate the level of diversity not only in the legislative setting, but the electoral context as well.

Colorado Ranks 2nd in
Percentage of
Legislative Seats held
by Female Legislators

Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Colorado's Legislature

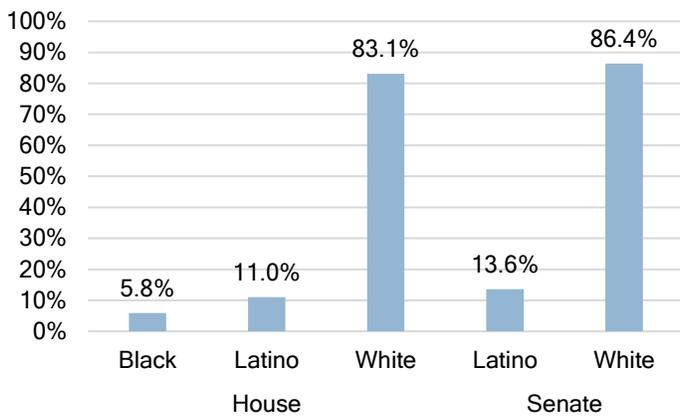
The 2018 state legislative elections resulted in substantial increases in the number of seats held by Black and Latinx legislators. In both chambers, as Figure 1.1 illustrates, Latinx and Black lawmakers held more seats in 2019 compared to just under a decade ago. Gains over the decade were experienced by both groups in the Colorado State House and State Senate. Black lawmakers doubled their numbers in the Senate and the House, with increases of 5.7 and 6.1 percentage points over the decade. These increases resulted in Black lawmakers holding a percentage of seats in each chamber that is above parity with the Black population in Colorado. Latinx lawmakers also gained seats in both chambers, increasing the seats held in the Senate by 5.7 percentage points and 1.5 percentage points in the House. While gains in both chambers resulted in more seats held by Latinx lawmakers, the percentage of Latinx lawmakers in the Senate (11.4%) and House (13.8%) still fell below parity with the 21% Latinx population in Colorado. For both groups, the percentage of legislative seats was greater in the lower chamber.

Figure 1.1 Percent of Legislative Seats Held by Black and Latinx Legislators, by Chamber, 2000 and January 2019.



The proportion of legislative seats held by Black and Latinx lawmakers are obvious indicators of inclusion in the legislative process, and part of the reason for the extensive coverage of the new faces of the legislature in Colorado’s media outlets. However, as one prominent study points out, in order for minority lawmakers to win elections and hold seats, it first takes a minority candidate (Juenke 2014). The data collected for this report also included the racial and ethnic background of the 198 individuals identified as candidates in the primary and

Figure 1.2 The Racial and Ethnic Background of Primary Candidates in the 2018 Legislative Elections



general elections for the 65 House Districts and 17 Senate Districts that held elections in 2018. As illustrated in Figure 1.2, the vast majority of candidates in the primary were White Non-Latinx candidates. Of the 154 candidates for the 65 House districts holding elections just under 17% were Black or Latinx candidates. A similar pattern occurred in the 17 Senate District elections, with Black or Latinx individuals comprising only 13.6% of

candidates for those seats. Compared to the eventual composition of the Colorado House of Representatives, where a comparison can be made since all seats were up for election, Black and Latinx candidates eventually over-performed relative to their numbers in the primaries.

Among the 136 candidates representing both major and minor parties that survived their primaries for a House district and ran in the general election, a similar pattern holds. Just over 83% of House primary winners were White, 10.3% were Latinx, and 6.6% were Black. In the 17 Senate races in 2018, Whites accounted for 83.8% of general election candidates while Latinx candidates comprised the remaining 16.2%. No African American candidates ran in State Senate general elections in 2018.

Finally, the racial/ethnic composition of the candidate pool and eventual winners varied by partisan affiliation. As Figure 1.3 illustrates, the Democratic Party had higher proportions of candidates of color than the Republican Party or Minor Parties, with the most striking differences in the lower chamber races. Of note, there were no Black candidates running for the Republican or Minor Party nominations in 2018. Democratic candidate pools consistently outpaced Republican pools, but by smaller margins relative the difference in black candidates. Minor Parties had no candidates of color in 2018—100% of minor party candidates were White Non-Latinx candidates.

Candidate Pools Remained Dominated by Whites in 2018

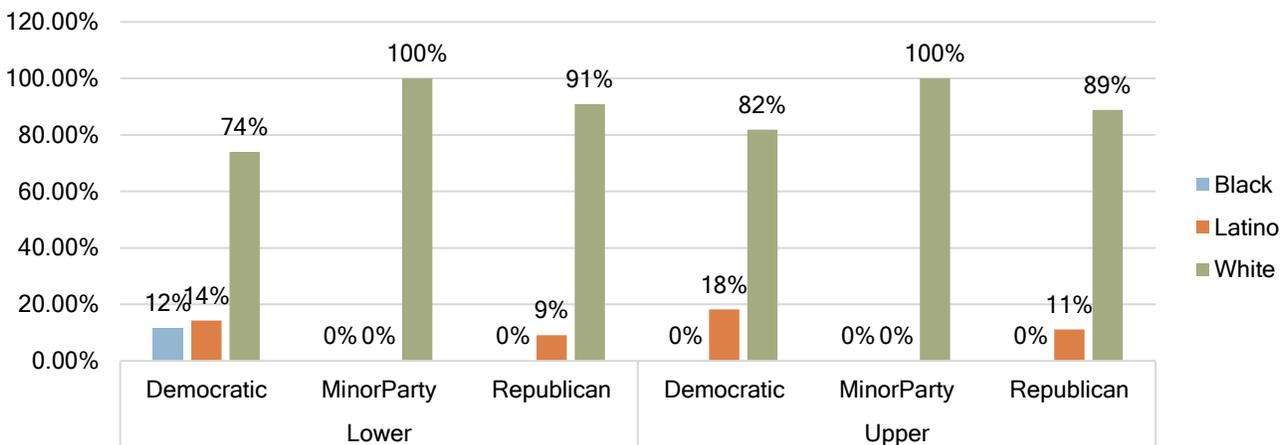
Distribution of General Election State House Candidates

6.6% Black

10.3% Latinx

83.1% White

Figure 1.3 Racial and Ethnic Background of Primary Candidates as Percent of Party's Candidates, by Upper and Lower Chamber

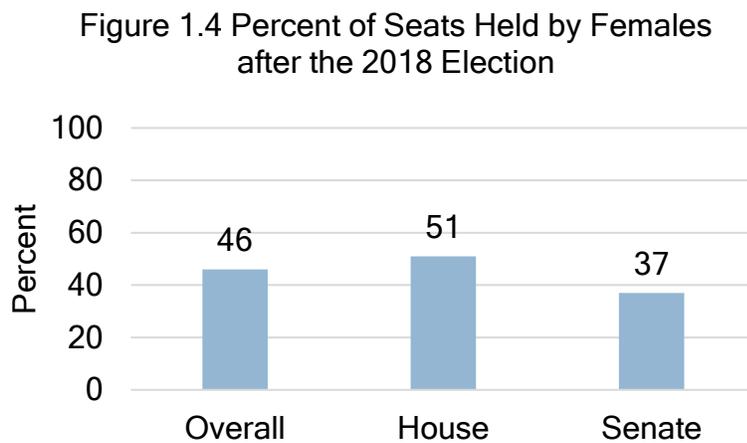


Once nominations were secured, the general election candidate pool reflected and highlighted the pattern of larger proportions of candidates of color among Democrats. In the lower chamber, only 71% of Democratic general election candidates were White, compared 14% Black and 15% Latinx. Among Republican general election candidates for lower

chamber seats, 93% of candidates were white compared to just 7% Latinx. Latinx candidates for the upper chamber elections accounted for 24% of Democratic candidates and 12.5% of chamber Republican candidates which are increases for Latinx candidates relative to all primary candidates within their respective parties.

Gender Diversity in Colorado's Legislature

Colorado's ranking of 2nd among all states in the nation in percentage of females holding office reflects a long history of gender inclusion in the state legislature. In fact, Colorado consistently ranks near the top of all states in this metric. Figure 1.4 also highlights



the difference in gender representation across the two chambers. While the House achieved parity with the female population in the state, the Senate continues to lag with females holding only 37% of State Senate seats. As noted earlier, replacements in both chambers

since the 2018 election have increased these numbers at the margins, with women now holding 47% of all state legislative seats.

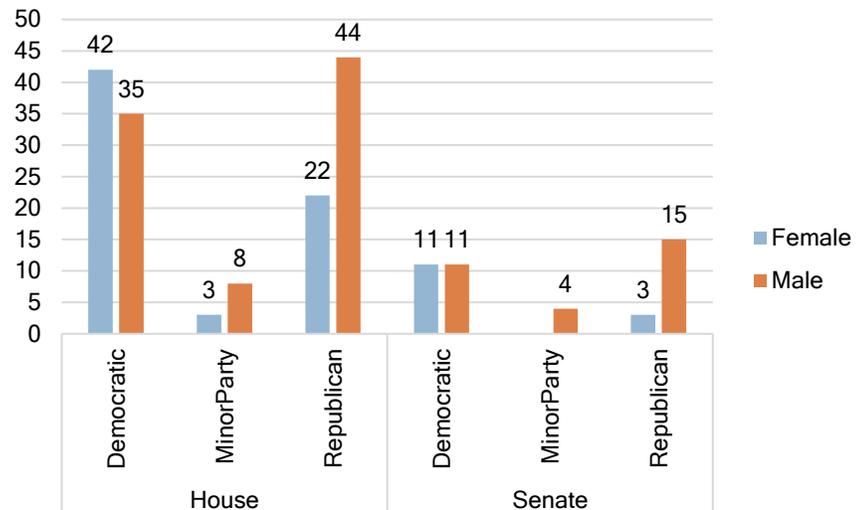
In what might be called the Year of the Woman, and the first election after mass participation in the Women's March following the swearing in of President Donald Trump in 2017, strong gender representation in the legislature was spurred in part by a significant influx of female candidates in the elections. As figure 1.5 demonstrates, the relative number of female candidates varied by party, with females outnumbering male Democratic candidates for lower chamber seats and equaling the number of Democratic males as candidates for the upper chamber. That pattern is in stark contrast to gender inclusion in the candidate pools among Republican candidates, where females were at a 2-to-1 disadvantage among Republicans running for House seats and a 5-to-1 disadvantage among Republican

candidates for the 17 Senate races. Females also were outpaced as minor party candidates, with minor parties failing to produce a single female candidate for upper chamber seats.

In the general election, the differences across parties became starker. The ratio of female to male candidates among Democratic candidates running for lower chamber seats was 1.3 (with 37 female candidates and 28 males). Among Republicans running for House seats, the ratio of females (19 candidates) to males (41 candidates) was a meager .46. Ten Democratic candidates for Senate seats were

women, while only 7 were males. Republicans produced only 2 female general election candidates while 14 were males. All in all, it is clear that the strong showing of female candidates in both chambers emerged primarily from the Democratic Party rather than equally distributed across all parties. In fact, among the 39 females winning elections in 2018, 31 (or 79%) were Democrats.

Figure 1.5 Number of Candidates by Gender and Party, 2018 State Legislative Primaries



Intersectional Aspects of Representation

One final aspect of the diversifying state legislature lies at the intersection of gender and racial/ethnic diversity. Women of Color hold unique perspectives on policy issues, and have traditionally faced a double set of obstacles to legislative inclusion. While still a numeric minority, 11 House seats (17%) and 3 Senate seats (9%) were held by female legislators of color after the 2018 elections. While relatively small compared to the overall proportions of women, female legislators of color are above parity relative to Colorado's population in the House, and just below parity in the Senate (the combined percentage of Black female and Latina populations in the state is about 13%). Moreover, all female legislators of color are part of the Democratic Caucus in their chambers, and thus reflect a much larger portion of the majority parties in each (almost 27% of the House Democrats and 16% of Senate Democrats).

Summary

The 2018 Colorado state legislative elections produced one of the most diverse legislatures in Colorado's history, in terms of both racial and ethnic diversity as well as gender diversity. Combined, female legislators and legislators of color held a majority of State House seats and 46% of State Senate seats. The diversity in the legislative chambers is not distributed equally across both parties, however. With only a single legislator of color affiliated with the Republican Party, and Democratic women outnumbering Republican women by more than 3-to-1, diversity as taken hold primarily within the seats held by Democrats. Moreover, diversity in the legislature and within parties emerged directly from similar partisan patterns in the primary process and the entire pool of candidates. If it takes a candidate to win, the large influx of female candidates and candidates of color not only reflected a context of heightened interest in the pursuit of public office, but also resulted in a legislature with a much more diverse gender and racial/ethnic composition than the previous year. How these patterns emerged and the impact of diversity on legislative behavior are the topics of the following sections.

THE DISTRICTS BEHIND DIVERSITY

What types of districts were behind the increase in legislative diversity following the 2018 elections? And to what extent did incumbency play a role? Answering these questions lies at the heart of this section. The report now turns to identifying districts where candidates of color were more likely to win, how that translates into distinct constituencies across legislators, and the nature of the incumbency advantage in a blue wave election. Our particular focus is on the demographic and geographic nature of legislative districts and how those characteristics correlate with electing female legislators and legislators of color. In particular, the analyses reveal that well-established patterns played out in Colorado's 2018 election. Latinx legislators were more likely to win seats from districts with larger Latinx populations compared to other districts. Districts with larger Black populations were more likely to produce Black representatives than districts with smaller Black populations. Female candidates, relying less on differences in district gender composition, were more likely to hold seats from suburban and urban districts than rural districts, even after accounting for partisanship. And, legislators of color tended to emerge in a similar way across the rural/suburban/urban continuum, as well as coming from districts with lower incomes.

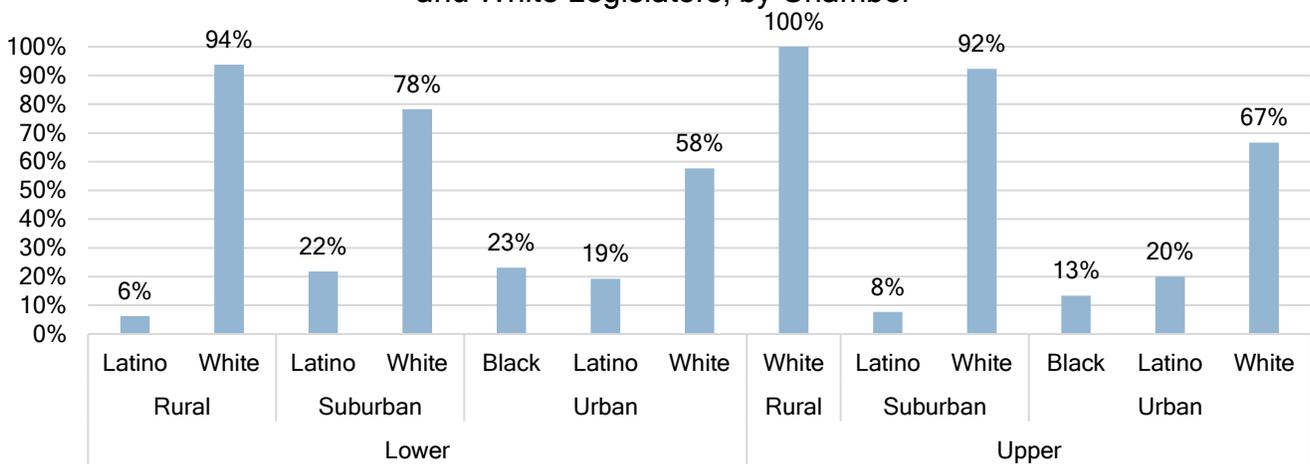
Beyond examining the relationship between these general district characteristics and the types of candidates that won the election, the report also evaluates the role of district income and turnout—in what was a high turnout election for a mid-term election. The report also notes how these contexts produce varying typical constituencies for female, Black and Latinx legislators which likely pull them in different directions than other legislators. Finally, this section examines the role of incumbency in this blue wave election, demonstrating that while incumbents did well as expected, newcomers, especially Latina candidates, were successful at unexpected rates. While the report is descriptive in nature, these relationships tend to confirm the long held understanding that district characteristics are key factors in the election of racial and ethnic minorities and highlights the importance of the redistricting process the state will engage in following the 2020 election.

The Rural/Urban Gap in Diverse Representation

When considering the geography of where Black and Latino legislators come from, it is apparent that they mostly come from urban and suburban districts. All eight Black legislators in the state legislature come from urban districts. Seven of the eight Black legislators represents Denver and Aurora, while one legislator represents Colorado Springs. Latino

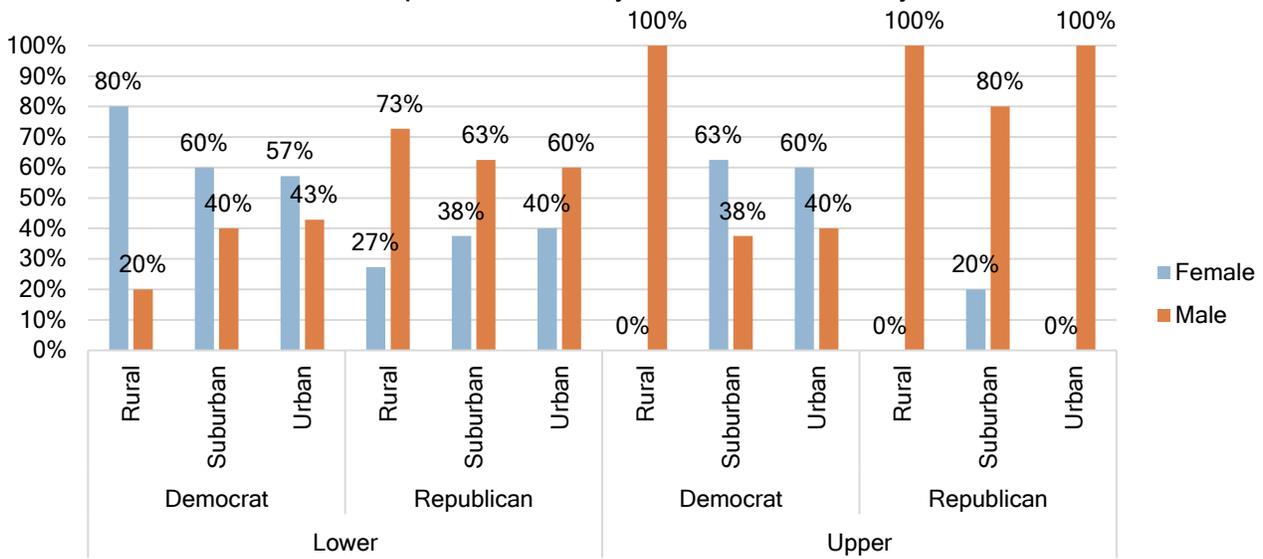
legislators, with the exception of one, represent urban or suburban districts. Latino legislators that represent urban districts come from Denver, Aurora, and Pueblo. Latino legislators that represent suburban districts hail from the northern suburbs of Denver. Blacks and Latinos most likely represent Urban districts of Denver, Aurora, Colorado Springs, and Pueblo and suburban districts north of Denver where large populations of Black and Latinos reside. As Figure 2.1 demonstrates, the probability of electing Black or Latino legislators clearly varies by district geography. No rural Senate districts were represented by legislators of color, and 94% of rural House districts elected White legislators in 2018. White representatives were least likely to be elected in urban districts.

Figure 2.1 Percent of Geographic Districts Represented by Black, Latino and White Legislators, by Chamber



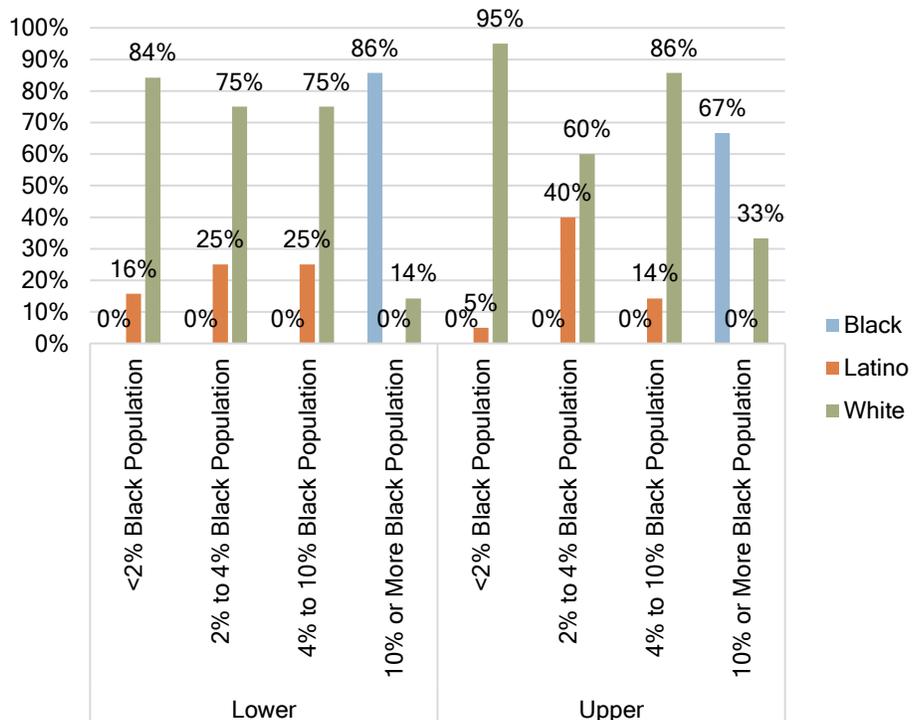
Female legislators makes up close to half of the legislators in the State Capitol, yet the parties vary substantially in this regard. Part of the difference may be due to the rural/urban divide in partisan orientation. To investigate this potential, Figure 2.2 presents the percentage of seats held by males and females within each party and geographic characteristic. In the lower chamber, women were more likely to be elected by Democratic districts across all geographic areas than in Republican districts. And the pattern across parties was reversed in the lower chamber. For Republican districts, Urban districts were the most likely to elect women, while for Democratic districts, rural districts had the highest percentage of seats held by women. In the Senate, or upper chamber, no women represent rural districts. Women represent the majority of both urban and suburban Democrat-held districts, while only 20% of Republican-held suburban districts are represented by women. In sum, the partisan gender gap in representation persists across geographic region, while regional effects do act upon the probability of gender diversity—although not always in the direction commonly expected.

Figure 2.2 Percent of Rural/Urban/Suburban Districts and Gender Representation, by Chamber and Party



Republican women may benefit from smaller House districts. Smaller districts also benefit Democratic women legislators when it comes to geographical diversity, and the disparity between House and Senate female representation is most pronounced among Republicans in suburban and urban districts. The lack of any female Democrats from rural districts, combined with a majority of women holding seats in rural Democratic districts, is the obvious anomaly. Nevertheless, the area and size of a district are seemingly a factor in the gender make-up of the state legislature.

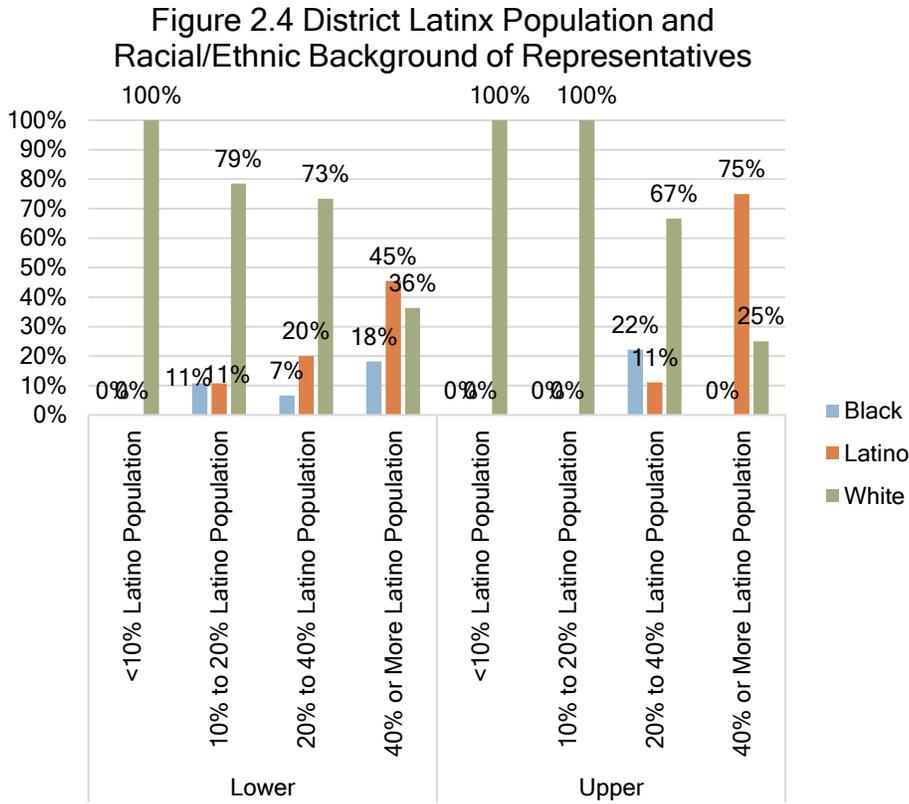
Figure 2.3 District Black Population and the Racial/Ethnic Background of Representatives



Racial Composition and the Election of Legislators of Color

The research on the election of legislators of color identifies the racial/ethnic composition of a district as the most prominent factor in electing Black and Latino state representatives. Colorado's experience is no exception as illustrated

in Figures 2.3 and 2.4, which present the percent of legislators of color holding seats across four categories of districts based on the Black and Latino population within the district, respectively. This relationship is clearly evident in Figure 2.3, which shows that only after the Black population in a district surpasses 10% are Black representatives elected. While this may be caused by a variety of factors, the association is striking and provides some rationale for ensuring that Black populations are kept intact in redistricting schemes to increase the probability of some level of Black descriptive representation.



The relationship between the size of the Latinx population within a district and the election of Latinx legislators follows a similar pattern (see Figure 2.4). Given the larger range of Latinx populations across districts, the categories utilized provide some additional nuance to the interpretation. First, in-line with the relationship between African

American district population and the racial/ethnic background of the legislator, no district with less than 10% Latinx population elected a Latinx legislator (and 20% seems to be the threshold in the Senate). Second, and underscoring the role of the racial/ethnic composition of the district, in both chambers, increasing Latinx district population size leads to higher proportions of Latinx legislators to the point where districts with higher proportions of Latinx populations approach parity in the proportion of Latinx legislators elected from those districts. Clearly, then, Colorado’s electoral process closely mirrors national trends—districts with more people of color are more likely to elect legislators of color. Drawing district lines with the intent of equalizing minority populations may thus have the effect of reducing the level of descriptive representation in the legislative body.

White Legislators Represent the Fewest Non-White Constituents.

Mean Latinx Population as a Proportion of Legislators' Districts

White Legislator: 17.1%

Black Legislator: 30.3%

Latinx Legislator: 37.7%

Mean Black Population as a Proportion of Legislators' Districts

White Legislator: 2.6%

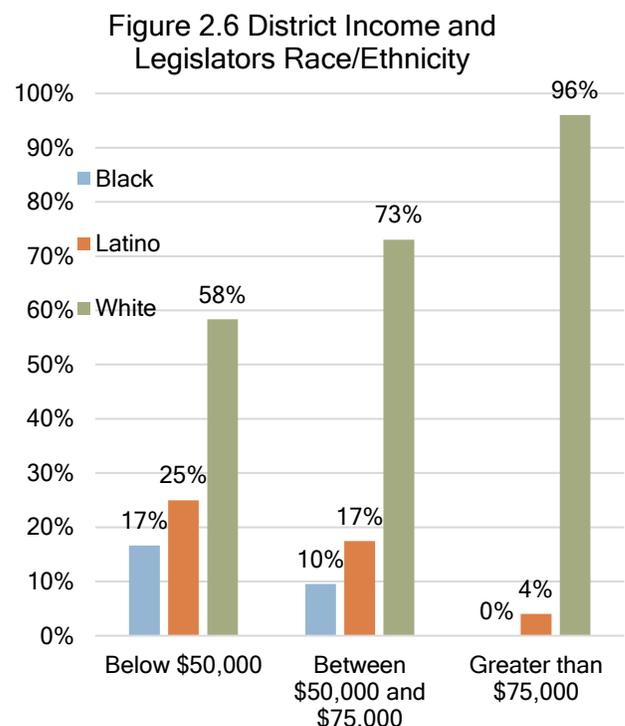
Latinx Legislator: 2.6%

Black Legislator: 17.25%

The diverging prospects of Black, Latinx and White candidates winning elections as the racial/ethnic district composition varies also means that the constituencies that each legislator represents changes dramatically across legislators. Given that racial and ethnic groups differ in their policy preferences and objective needs, as illustrated in the recent protest activities related to police brutality and racially biased policing, representing fundamentally distinct constituencies adds an additional line of cleavage to existing partisan lines and the perspectives legislators bring from their own experiences. And, the differences are striking. Among White legislators, the average district is 17.1% Latinx and 2.6% Black, while Black Legislators' districts average 30.3% Latinx and 17.3% Black. And while White legislators' districts average 74.2% White, Latinx and Black legislators' districts average White population drops to 54.5% and 43.8%, respectively.

District Household Income and the Election of Legislators of Color

Racial/Ethnic disparities in income are well documented in Colorado and throughout the nation. And, the relationship that emerges between district income and the probability of a district being represented by a White, Latinx or Black legislator is one that closely reflects the intersection of race and income inequality in U.S. society. While the data do not delineate between the effects of racial/ethnic composition and income, Figure 2.5 clearly shows that poorer districts, as measured by median household income, are more likely to elect Black or Latinx legislators than wealthier



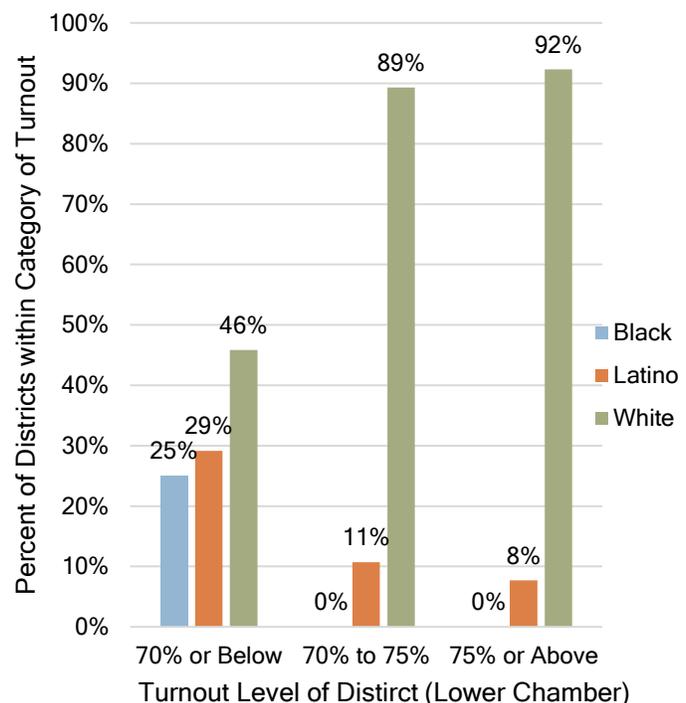
districts. Most striking is that among districts with a median household income above \$75,000, 96% were represented by White legislators, while only 4% of these districts were represented by a Latinx legislator and no such districts were represented by Black legislators. Moreover, it is clear that the probability of electing a legislator of color decreases as district median income increases, with the highest probability of Latinx or Black legislators occurring in districts with median household incomes of less than \$50,000.

Voter Turnout and Diversity

Given the excitement and generally high turnout of the 2018 election, it is possible that high voter participation translated into a more diverse legislature. While a comparison to the previous election is not conducted in this report, as Figure 2.7 shows, Black and Latinx legislators were more likely to be elected in districts with low turnout rates, namely 70% turnout or below, while high turnout districts were the most likely to elect White legislators. Indeed, of the 13 districts in the Colorado House of Representatives that had turnout rates of 75 percent or above, 12 of those districts elected White candidates.

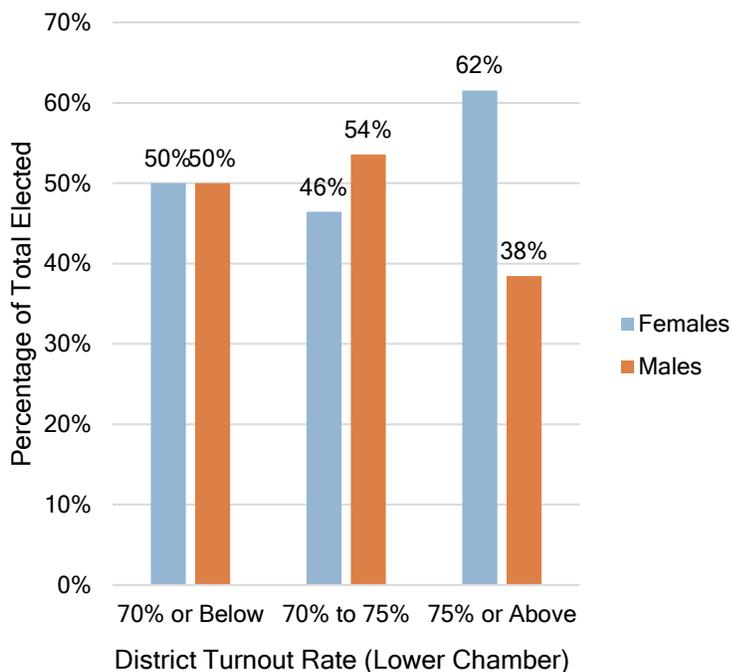
A significant factor that must be noted in this analysis is the causal relationship that exists between the income level of districts and the rate of turnout. Historically, affluent districts have more resources and thus produce higher rates of turnout, and the 2018 elections in Colorado were no exception to this paradigm. For example, of the top 10 highest earning districts in the lower chamber, which had an average median household income of \$101,286 and elected only White candidates, six of those districts had high turnout, and the other four were medium-turnout districts (70 percent to 75 percent). Conversely, there were no high turnout rates in the 10 lowest earning districts, which had an average household income of \$55,802. These 10 districts had either medium or low turnout rates, and they elected four Latinos, two Blacks, and four Whites. It is also important to note that the median

Figure 2.7 District Turnout and Racial/Ethnic Characteristics of Legislators



household income of the 12 high turnout districts in the House that elected White candidates was \$85,223, well above the Colorado statewide median household income of approximately \$70,000. Conversely, the median household income for all districts in the lower chamber that elected Black candidates was \$56,852, and the median household income for all districts in the lower chamber that elected Latino candidates was \$58,218. Thus, while the data shows that Black and Latino candidates enjoyed greater success in low turnout districts, the income level of a district greatly affects the level of turnout. That is, districts with higher levels of median household income are more likely to have high turnout rates and elect White candidates, and districts with lower income levels are more likely to have low turnout rates and elect minority candidates.

Figure 2.8 District Turnout and the Election of Female Legislators



The year of the women, and its associated high turnout may not have directly translated to a higher rate of election for women—who enjoyed the most success in high, but also low, turnout districts (See Figure 2.8). Indeed, 62% of elected candidates in high turnout districts were women while only 38% were men. Male candidates only performed better than women in medium turnout districts, but even then, the margin was less than 10 percentage points. Upon analysis of the partisan makeup of each district,

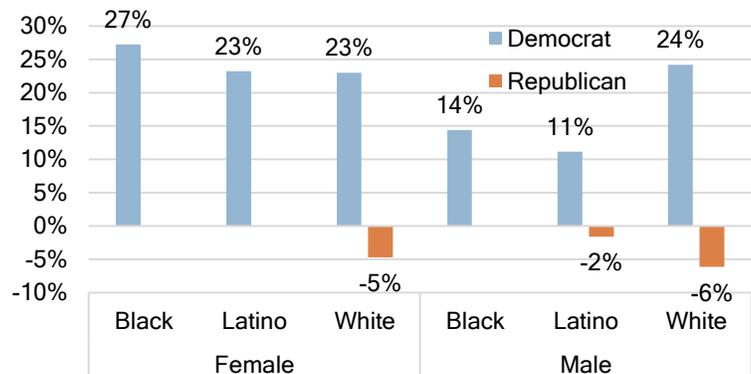
there was still no marked paradigm indicating that higher turnout rates resulted in a higher rate of election for women generally. Democratic districts had the highest rate of election for women when turnout was low (i.e. below 70 percent). Republican districts had the highest rate of election for women when turnout was moderate (i.e., 70 percent to 75 percent). Mixed districts had the highest rate of election for women when turnout was moderate and high. In sum, as opposed to the effect of turnout on the election of Latinx and Black legislators, it seems that it did not markedly result in higher rates of elected women, but women surely performed better in high turnout districts than men.

Winning Margins

The Blue Wave of 2018 led to a strong showing for Democratic candidates across the state. But did female candidates and candidates of color benefit to a greater degree than would be expected simply due to the partisan composition of the district? To address this question, a Democratic Surprise indicator was derived by subtracting the Democratic candidate's share of the two-party vote in 2018 from the Democratic partisan affiliation of registered voters in October of 2018 (both as percentages). The larger the positive value on this indicator reflects a higher vote for the Democrat than would be expected given just the partisan breakdown of the districts registered voters. Negative values of greater magnitude indicate the Republican share of the vote was greater than expected. Values of zero would indicate that the partisan split followed exactly along the partisan composition of the district.

Figure 2.9 reveals, Democratic winners enjoyed large surprises across all racial/ethnic and gender groups. But female Democrats, regardless of race, and White male Democrats pulled the most votes beyond what would be expected from a “normal” election where district partisan composition directly translated to votes at the ballot box. Helped to a lesser extent by the blue wave were male Black and Latino candidates, of either party, whose “surprise” winning margins were substantially less than other Democratic candidates. Republican candidates, when they won, generally experienced much more normal elections, with negative surprise indicators averaging in the single digits.

Figure 2.9 Average Democratic Surprise in the 2018 Colorado House Elections, by Gender and Party



Incumbency and Diversity

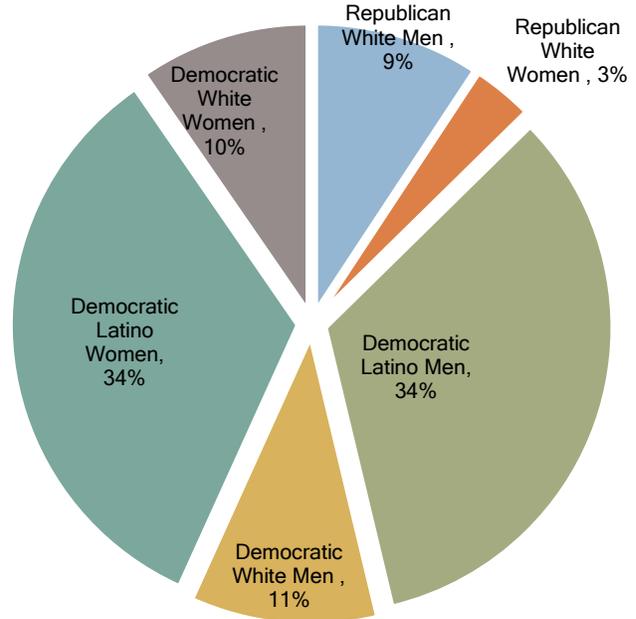
If a person runs for office what is the likelihood of winning the election? Many factors obviously contribute to the outcome any particular race; however, this section specifically examines the role of a candidate's individual characteristics or combination of characteristics in light of the most dominant factor—incumbency. Incumbency was

In 2018, Incumbents Were 3 Times More Likely to Win a Seat than Non-Incumbents

a powerful factor in 2018. Despite a 2.5 to 1 ratio of non-incumbents to incumbents in the primary field, incumbents enjoyed a 3 to 1 advantage in the probability of successfully winning a legislative seat. Thus, in order to determine whether women or candidates of color can win races, one must address the issue of incumbency.

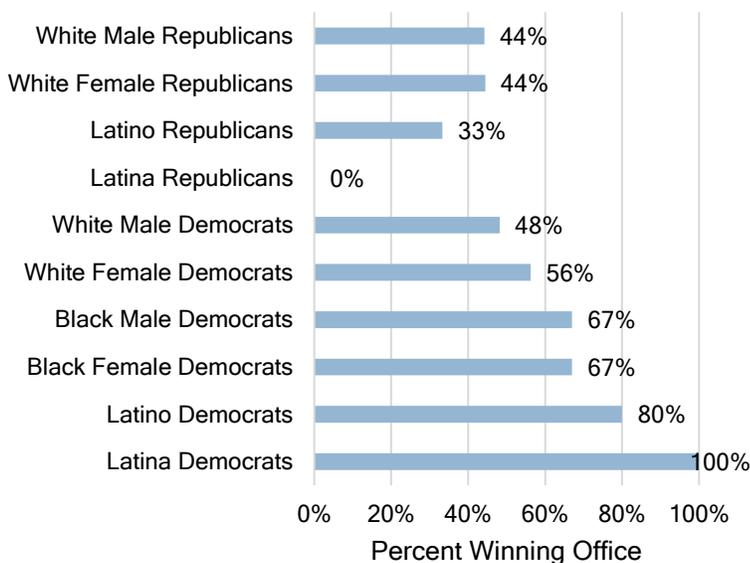
Among open seat contests for the State House of Representatives, Latino and Latina Democrats did well as they tied for the groups with the highest percentage of winners. Given a lack of Black males or females among open seat winners, the large portion of successful Latinx candidates may be in part due to the number of open seats in larger Latinx population districts. The window for winning and the context of a wave election may have combined to aid Latinx candidates to a greater degree than others.

Figure 2.10 Breakdown of Non-Incumbent Winners in Open Seat Elections for the State House



Besides accounting for a third of the winning candidates for open seat elections, Latina Democrats also were substantially more successful than other candidates in their pursuit of office. As Figure 2.11 demonstrates, Latina Democrats and Latino Democrats were the most

Figure 2.11 Percent of Each Group's Candidates Winning a Legislative Seat in 2018



successful candidates in the 2018 as measured by the percentage each partisan/demographic group. All 9 Latina Democratic candidates eventually won office. Female candidates, overall, were equally or more successful than male candidates, but it partisan was clearly the major contributor to the odds of winning a seat. The year of the women seemed to apply primarily to Latinas and White Female Democrats, as these two

groups outperformed their male counterparts. It is worth noting, however, that candidates act strategically and part of the success rates may be due to anticipated wins on the part of the candidate, or anticipated losses on part of those that did not run. The latter leads to better opportunities for those that do run, which in turn reinforces the strong showing of anticipated winners. But regardless of that effect, the 100% win rate for Latina candidates followed by the 80% win rate of Latino candidates, suggest that while the year of the woman increased gender diversity, 2018 may be better described as the year of the Latinx candidate.

Summary

The analyses above underscored the unique nature of diverse legislators. Racial and ethnic legislative diversity tended to emerge from more racially/ethnically diverse districts, highlighting the link between a district's context and the background of its representatives. The diversity divide also emerged across district geographies, with urban and suburban districts much more likely to produce legislators of color and female legislators than rural districts. This in turn leads to very different sets of constituencies to which representatives must respond—a divide across geography, racial/ethnic populations and income—that interacts with partisanship to produce exceedingly diverging views of government and policy.

2018 was indeed the year of the woman. Women are now a majority in the House and the share of all legislative seats held by women increased to 44% directly after the election and now stands at about 46%. Female candidates had higher average margins than most men, tended to benefit from higher turnout, and pulled more surprise votes than male counterparts. But it was especially the year of the Latina candidate. All nine Latina candidates won their respective elections in 2018, outperforming any other demographic group. Latinas now make up a larger proportion of the state legislature than ever before, and with the benefit of incumbency in future elections, Latinas should continue to be a substantial portion of the Democratic caucus and legislature more generally for years to come.

Do dollars diversify? Campaign finance in the “year of the woman.”

The previous section examined the emergence of Colorado’s diversifying legislature from the perspective of candidate and district characteristics. Another important element of understanding the diversifying legislature is the role of campaign donations and expenditures. While the causal link between campaign finance and election prospects continues to be tenuous as good candidates are likely to both win more often on their own, while also receiving more donations because they are viewed as more viable, the role of money in campaigns still lies at the forefront of public interest. Moreover, funds help a campaign function and compete, and particularly in close or open-seat elections where both candidates are seeking to add any marginal benefit they can to win an election. In what follows, the analyses take a closer look at campaign donations and expenditures in the 2018 legislative elections and any relationship between campaign finance and diversity.

Donations and Expenditures

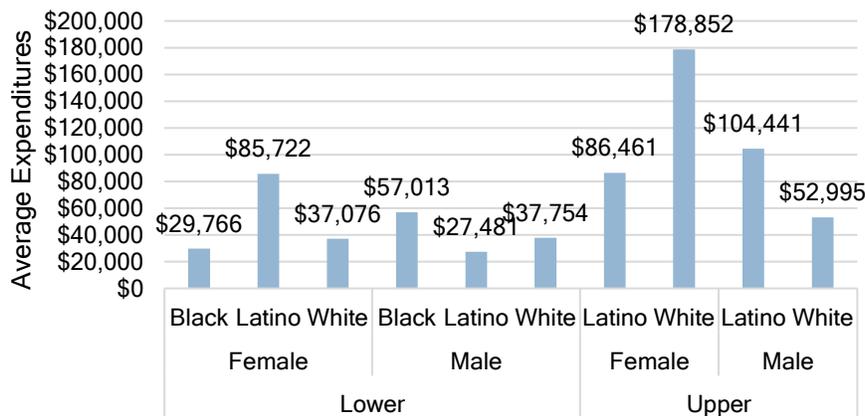
Coined as the “the year of the woman,” what role did money play in assisting female candidates in Colorado’s 2018 elections? The role of money in a campaign is in no doubt important, but it does not guarantee a win. This section investigates whether there is a relationship between campaign finance and gender, to better identify if this added to the successful election of females in the 2018 Colorado election. When examining the data collected from the 2018 Colorado election some conclusions can be drawn regarding the relationship between the gender of a candidate and campaign finance, clearly demonstrating a significant increase of both contributions and expenditures by female candidates in Colorado in 2018. With this information the analysis turns to an investigation of whether this holds true for both the upper and lower house, amongst race, district types, and party lines; or are outside contributing factors influencing these results specific to the individual, the region, or the political climate of 2018?

First, it is useful to clearly identify the scope of difference between what was spent in the 2018 Colorado Election by male candidates and that of female candidates. During the 2018 Colorado election male candidates spent a total of \$5,066,097 while female candidates

racked up a total of \$5,245,832 despite being only 41% of the candidates running, meaning female candidates spent 3.5% more campaigning than their male counterparts despite accounting for about 30% fewer candidates than men. The top female spender in the upper chamber, Tammy Story in the District 16 race, found use for \$523,876.27 in campaign money, compared to Tim Neville, her Republican rival in District 16 and top male spender in the upper chamber, who spent \$218,644.60—a difference of \$305,231.67 and more than double Neville’s expenditures. Of all the female candidates running, 18.5% of them spent over \$100,000, while only 13.7% of males running did the same, a difference of about 5 percentage points. These numbers confirmed most of the money spent in the 2018 Colorado election was spent by female candidates. By separating the spending of female candidates between the upper and lower houses of Colorado State Legislature, a clear difference emerges. White female candidates in the upper chamber spent 57% over that of the lower chamber White female candidates.

Female Candidates Spent 3.5% More than Male Candidates, Even Though Females Accounted for Only 41% of Candidates.

Figure 3.1 Average Expenditures by Chamber, Gender and Race/Ethnicity in 2018 State Legislative Races



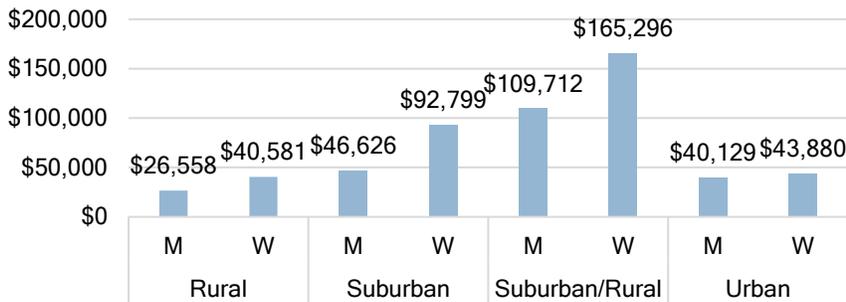
When we further control disaggregate by race, district demographic, or party lines, even greater insight to the big spenders of the 2018 Colorado Election emerge. As demonstrated by Figure 3.1, White women running for a State Senate seat were by far the largest

spenders, with an average topping the next highest spending group by \$74,000.

Additionally, Figure 3.2 demonstrates average campaign expenditures were highest, on average, in Suburban/Rural and Suburban areas. What would explain such a need for these gigantic campaign cost in these areas? Part of the explanation, as discussed below, was the competitiveness of the suburban swing districts, as well as the ability to utilize large-scale media outlets to run expensive advertising.

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 shows the varied spending of candidates in the Colorado 2018 campaign across both the upper and lower houses across race and gender; Black men are top Male spenders in the lower house, outspending Black women by about double, however Latinas

Figure 3.2 Average Expenditures by District Geography and Gender



spent \$28,709 more than Black males and also more than any other demographic in the lower house. This may in part explain some of the success of Latina candidates discussed in pervious sections. Overall, however, Figures 3.1 and

3.2 demonstrate that expenditures varied by group, and the expenditure advantage of females becomes consistently apparent only after we control for geographic region. How might these variations be explained?

Let us first consider the competitiveness in these districts. The upper house race between Tammy Story and Tim Neville in District 16 was considered to be a very close race with both candidates gaining support. The same holds true for the race for the lower house in District 24 between Faith Winter, a Democrat, and Republican Beth Martinez Humenik, as well as the addition of a third party candidate, Adam Matkowsky. These two races alone counted for 31% percent of the spending in the Colorado State Senate campaigns in 2018.

The movement toward female candidate's popularity allows for more money to be raised, resulting in female's ability to be more successful in races that are highly competitive. Tammy Story went on to win the competitive race in District 16 and no doubt that large bank roll did not hurt. However, it is worth noting our lowest Colorado 2018 election spender is also a woman; Adrienne Benavidez only spent \$7,544.27 to win District 32, but had little competition in Kim Bishop who spent \$0.

There is an additional outlier worth examination; why did Jonathan Singer spend \$454,555 in the race for House District 11? He spent \$279,180 more than any other candidate running in the lower chamber and \$453,778 more than his district competition Brian O. Donahue. Had Jonathan Singer not invested so much more than the average male candidate running in 2018 House races one would see a greater gap in spending in the House races between genders, and a gap similar to what emerged in the upper house races.

Summary

It was clear from the analysis of expenditures that typical expenditures on state legislative seats varied widely across candidates' gender, race/ethnicity and the geographic nature of their districts. Yet, in the year of the woman, it was not surprising that some of the highest spending campaigns were conducted for female candidates. Without considering racial/ethnic or partisan factors, women outspent male candidates across all types of district geographies. Moreover, white males had the lowest average spending in Senate races, by far, and spent considerably less than Latina and Black male candidates in House races. Overall, while a clear link between expenditures and winning seats is not established in this analysis, the high degree of spending among women and candidates of color reflects strong fundraising efforts and a clear interest in diverse candidates among donors. One implication is that the role of money in politics may not exclusively prevent change and maintain the status quo. Clearly, new faces in the legislature benefited from well-financed campaigns that were able to spend where needed to aid their election prospects.

OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY: HOW DIVERSITY MATTERS IN LEGISLATIVE BEHAVIOR

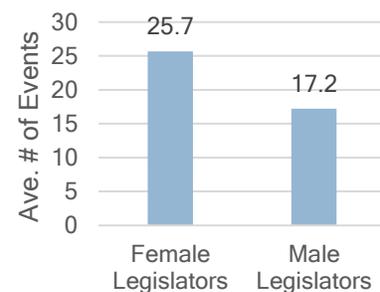
The effects of diverse legislatures should not be taken for granted. While some effects are harder to measure and observe, such as an increase in a sense of trust in government that emerges from shared backgrounds between constituents and representatives, others, such as outreach and advocacy for unique issues can be readily observed. In this section, the report turns to several indicators of advocacy, from outreach on social media to the issues highlighted on legislators' websites, and finally to the types of bills legislators sponsor. To do so, the report refocuses the analysis from all candidates, to those that won election in 2018, with the goal of identifying if, and how, these behaviors differ across gender and the racial/ethnic background of representatives.

Outreach and Events

It is important for representatives to reach out to their constituents. Approximately 90% of Colorado's State House of Representatives have a Facebook page, making it the most comparable source for data. Thus, by focusing on Facebook outreach efforts, the analysis is able to compare the outreach effort of a broad spectrum of representatives. Given the focus of this study on the diversity in the legislature, if, and how, the gender and racial/ethnic characteristics of legislators relate to outreach efforts is the primary focus of this section. The events coded for the analysis include town halls, fundraisers, and events like canvassing and coffee with the representative. Essentially, the analysis aims to understand these types of events that are publicized on Facebook as a way to gauge outreach efforts among legislators. The time period encompasses the year 2019.

Initial comparisons across partisan lines show that Democratic representatives hold more public events on average than Republicans, with 31.97 and 5.3, respectively during the observation period. Specifically looking at diversity, we can see that women hold many more events on average than men, with 25.67 events on average for female legislators compared

Female Legislators Held More Events than Male Legislators



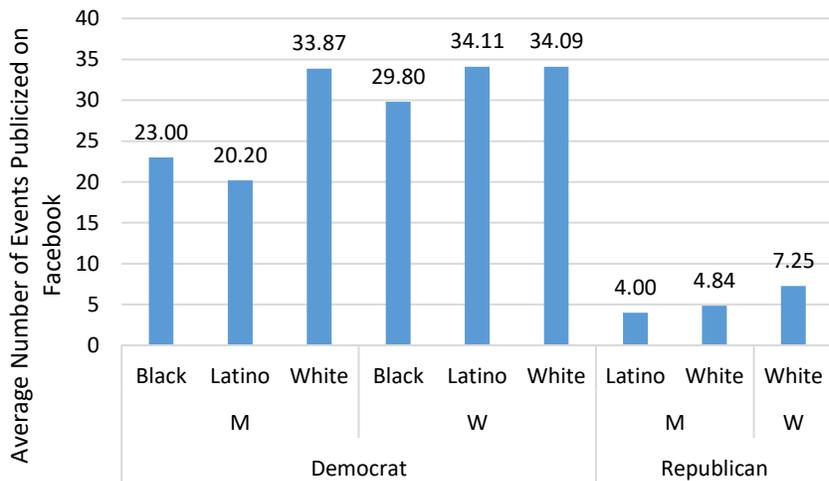
to 17.21 events for male legislators. Comparing average events by race, Black and Latinx representatives hold more events on average than White legislators, with Latinx legislators holding, on average, with 27.47 events, Black representatives publicizing 27.25 events, and White representatives advertising 19.48 events, on average.

Breaking the data down further, by sex and party, one can see that even within parties, women hold more events than men (See Figure 4.1). This holds for all racial and ethnic groups, and across parties, while the difference is slight between White Males and White Females.

One can go into more detail by looking at the parties broken down by race and sex. Among male Democratic legislators, Whites are by far the most prolific in terms of Facebook publicized events, with more than 45% more events than either Black or Latino legislators. Turning attention to Democratic women, Latinas (34.11) and White (34.09) women hold more events on average than black women (29.80), yet the racial/ethnic differences were not nearly as striking as among men. Figure 4.1 also demonstrates the striking partisan differences in outreach efforts publicized on Facebook. With White female Republicans holding the most events on average, yet only still averaging 7.25 events, even the most prolific Republicans are outpaced in terms of Facebook publicized events by almost 3 to 1 by the least prolific Democrats (Latino legislators).

If one sees community outreach and events as a measure of how representatives are interacting with their constituents, we can draw the conclusion that diverse representatives communicate more with their constituents. Gender diversity is the clearest manifestation. Partisan differences also emerge in a striking fashion. However, given the almost complete lack of racial/ethnic diversity within the Republican caucus, it is not possible to disentangle racial/ethnic differences from partisan differences. But the differences across racial/ethnic groups within the Democratic Party suggest that racial diversity may not lead to greater

Figure 4.1 Average Number of Events Publicized on Facebook by Party, Gender and Race/Ethnicity

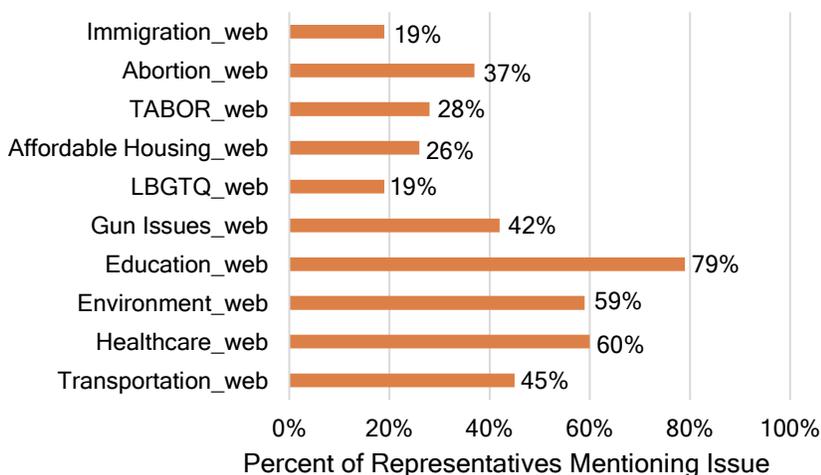


outreach via Facebook. Such communications clearly were dominated by White legislators and women generally.

Issue Attention on Legislators' Websites

Diverse legislators are often considered beneficial for bettering democracy as these legislators, with their own values and perspectives, widen the range of issues discussed and represented in the legislature. This section presents data on the issues addressed on legislators' campaign websites or websites used by the legislator to communicate to constituents outside of campaigns, as these websites can be viewed as a way for legislators to communicate the issues and ideas that legislators feel are most important or important to present to their constituents and potential voters. To determine differences between the issues prioritized by the members of the Colorado House of Representatives, ten categories of issues were identified: immigration, abortion, TABOR (tax related issues), affordable housing, LGBTQ related issues, gun issues, education, environment, healthcare, and transportation. A straightforward coding scheme was utilized. Websites were reviewed to evaluate if an issue was mentioned on their issues page or highlighted elsewhere. The overall percentage of Representatives mentioning specific issues on their websites provides a baseline for describing the issues Representatives felt were important to emphasize to their constituents, and proportions within each of the diverse groups provides a means to compare

Figure 4.2 Percent of State House Members Mentioning Issues on Their Websites



how Colorado's diverse legislature affects attention to issues.

Figure 4.2 presents the percentage of State House members mentioning each of the ten issues on their websites. Most Representatives prioritized education, healthcare, and environment on their websites' issues section, as noted by

Out of the sixty-five Representatives, 79% of them (51 Representatives) mentioned education. With regard to healthcare, 60% of Representatives incorporated the issue into their platform. Falling slightly behind the percentage for healthcare was environment with 59% of Representatives demonstrating a stance on the topic. Issues pertaining to immigration and

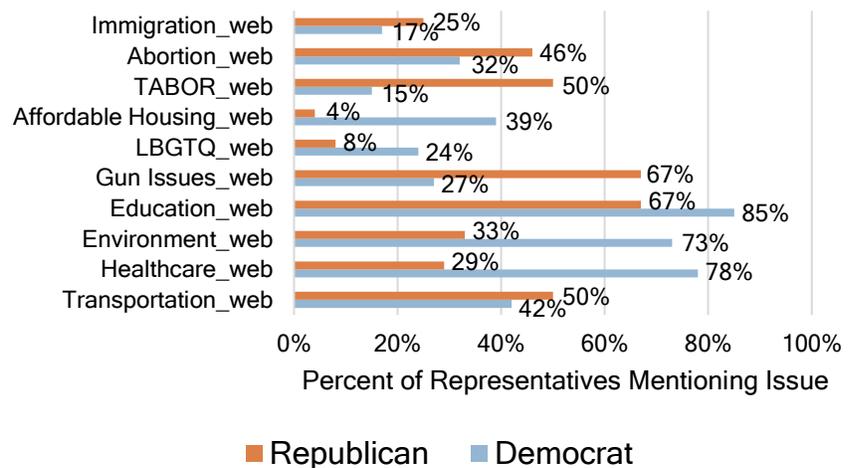
the LGBTQ community were mentioned the least. Only 19% of Representatives mentioned each respective issue, essentially marking a 60 percentage point difference between these issues' prioritization and education's.

Partisan Differences. However, the percentage of representatives mentioning an issue by party deviated to a certain extent from the overall percentages (see Figure 4.3). While education, healthcare, and environment were mentioned the most among Democrats, Republicans mentioned gun issues, education, transportation and TABOR the most. Out of all the Democrats in the Colorado House of Representatives, 85% of them disclosed a position on education, 78% of them did so for healthcare, and 73% of them did the same for environment. The highest percentage of issues mentioned by Democrats mirrored the issues to be mentioned the most in the previous section. In contrast, of the Republicans in the House of Representatives, 67% mentioned gun issues and education respectively, while 50% of them stated a position on transportation and TABOR, respectively.

Overall, as the Figure 4.2 revealed, elected representatives emphasized issues pertaining to education, environment, and healthcare the most on their respective websites. However, these issues were mentioned the most within the Democratic Party, which was also the majority party following the 2018 election. In contrast, Republican representatives mentioned these issues to a lesser extent than their Democrat peers.

As such, constituents elected representatives that were most likely to have a platform on education, healthcare, and/or environment. But these issues were primarily highlighted by Democrats rather than Republicans. After all, there was an 18 percentage point difference between the percentage of Democrats and Republicans who mentioned education. With regard to healthcare, there is 49 percentage point difference between Democrats and Republicans. Although the difference somewhat less striking, there was also a 40 percentage point difference between the percent of Democrats who mentioned environment and the

Figure 4.3 Partisan Differences in Issues Mentioned on Websites

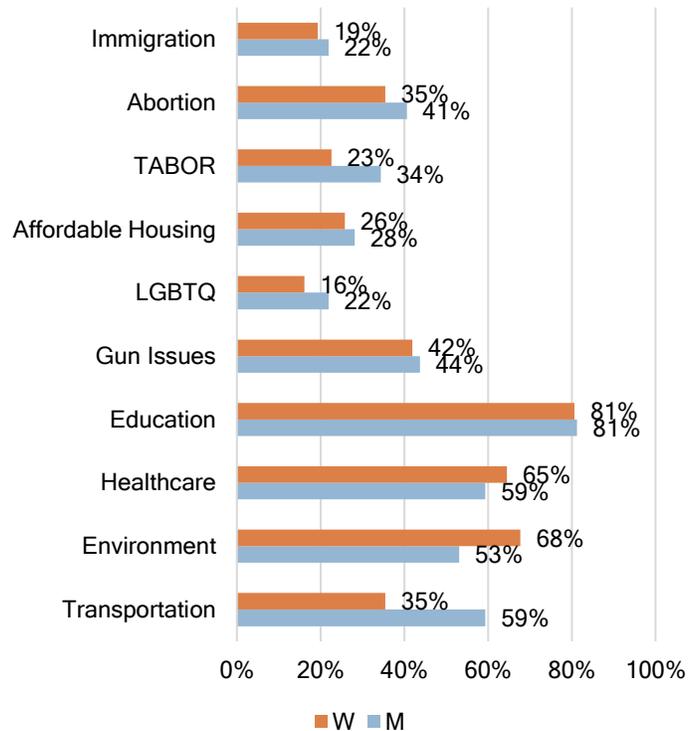


percent of Republicans who did so as well. Partisan differences in issue prioritization with respect to education, healthcare, and environment are clearly striking, but note that differences also exist across a wide spectrum of issues, from affordable housing to LGBTQ. Transportation and immigration issues came the closest to partisan parity in terms of priorities, but even for these issues, partisan differences emerged.

Gender Differences. What role might gender play in the distinct nature of issue attention on Representatives' websites? First, as displayed in Figure 4.3, there are some differences in the types of issues emphasized on Representatives' websites. Men are more likely to mention Transportation than women (59% to 35%), and, somewhat surprisingly, male Representatives are more likely to mention Abortion than women. Female Representatives tended to mention the Environment more than males, but other issues, such as Education, were mentioned by both genders at equal rates. But some of these differences, or similarities, may be due to partisanship, and given the dearth of female Republicans in the State House, we turn to differences between men and women within the Democratic Party to evaluate the gender effects without the confounding element of party affiliation.

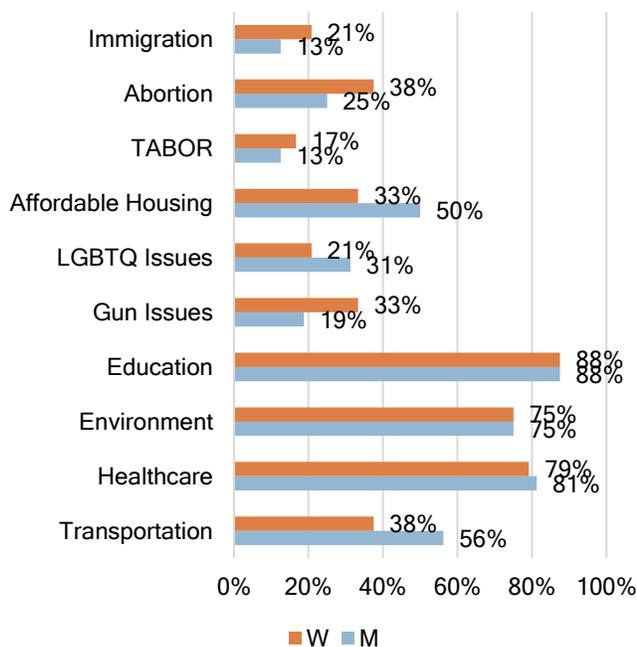
While the seats of the lower chamber could not be more evenly distributed between men and women, 32 and 33 respectively, partisanship is controlled for in order to isolate discrepancies between the two. The benefit is two-fold. First, using Democratic Representatives as a control group, differences observed can be more accurately attributed to gender, rather than partisanship. For instance, examining the Colorado House of Representatives as a whole, women list the environment as an issue of concern 15 percentage points more often than men. However, as demonstrated in Figure 4.4, which provides data only for members of the Democratic Caucus, 75% of men and 75% of women mention the environment on their campaign websites. Second, it magnifies gender

Figure 4.3 Website Issue Mentions, All State Representatives, by Gender



differences that would otherwise go unnoticed, due to the make-up of parties of the House or the possible partisan nature of an issue, such is the case with affordable housing. Looking at Democrats and Republicans together, there is only a 2 percentage point difference between men and women in listing affordable housing as an issue on their websites. After controlling for partisanship, that difference increases to 16.77 percentage points (see Figure 4.4). Of all Female Democratic Representatives, 33 percent list affordable housing as an issue on their campaign website compared to 50 percent of male Representatives of the same party.

Figure 4.4 Percent of Democratic Representatives Listing Issue on Their Websites



Similar to the case of affordable housing are both gun and LGBTQ issues. While 33% of female Democrats list issues pertaining to firearms on their campaign websites, gun issues are mentioned by only 19% of males, a 14 point difference. Regarding the issue, the disparity between genders in the whole of the House is merely 2 percentage points. While there was only a 6 point gender difference in LGBTQ issues among the House as a whole, after controlling for party that figure increases to 10.45 point difference, with males more likely to mention the issue. Together, this suggests men are more likely to prioritize LGBTQ

issues than women of the Colorado House, while women are more likely to prioritize gun issues than Representative men.

The gender gap in Abortion attention is not only extended, but reversed, once the analysis controls for party. Among all Representatives, males were more likely to mention abortion, while among Democrats, the more expected gender gap is revealed, with women being more likely to mention abortion. Of all Democratic Representative women 37.5 percent mention abortion on their campaign websites, compared to 25 percent of Democratic Representative men, a 12.5 percentage point discrepancy.

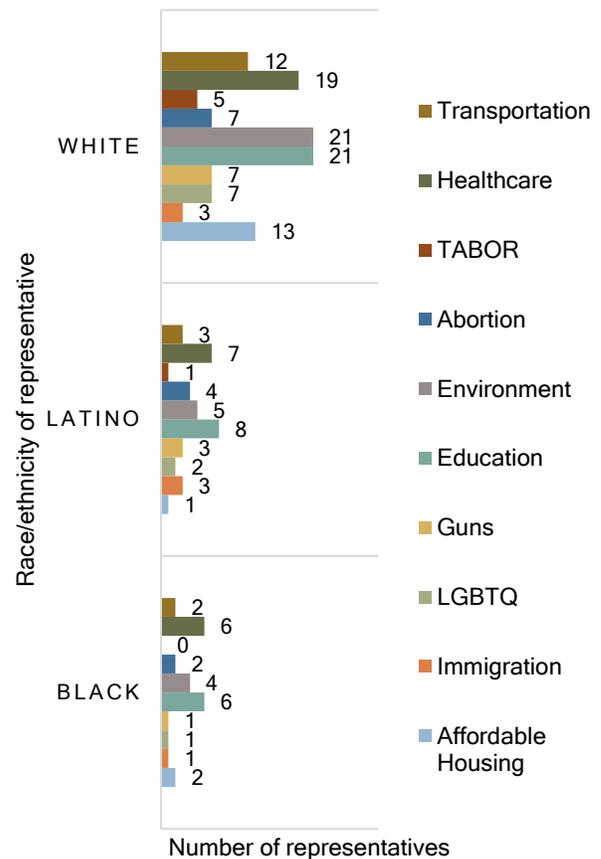
The most significant disparity of issues listed between Representative men and women was that regarding transportation and infrastructure. Men are much more likely than women to grant the issue attention on their campaign websites. Among Democratic

Representative men, 56% mention the topic, while only 39.5% of Democratic women address transportation; a 16.75 percentage point difference. The resulting difference holds even in the absence of the party control, in which there is a 24.4 point difference. This suggests male Representatives in Colorado more prevalently prioritize issues relating to transportation and infrastructure than their female colleagues. Conversely, the findings suggest no significant gendered difference in how Representatives prioritize issues of education, environment, or healthcare.

Racial/Ethnic Differences. Do issues mentioned on websites vary by the racial/ethnic background of the representative? Or, does diversity matter in terms of issues deemed important to elected officials? In Figure 4.5, the sum of representatives mentioning one of the key issues on their website is presented within each racial/ethnic grouping. For this particular chart, only Democrats are shown due to the lack of racial/ethnic diversity within the Republican Caucus and this approach also allows the analysis to control for party. Thus, a more definitive conclusion that any differences discovered is based on race rather than party can be presented. Furthermore, due to the disproportional racial breakdown of the Colorado Legislature as a whole, we found it pertinent to put the issues mentioned in the legend. By doing this, it is easier to see trends among the racial/ethnic groups analyzed rather than being distracted by the vast differences in the number of White legislators.

For all three racial/ethnic groups, the top three issues mentioned are education, environment, and healthcare issues. From this, we find some convergence among key issues across race/ethnicity. However, one of the more noteworthy is the issue of immigration. While 12% of White legislators and 17% of Black legislators mentioned immigration, 30% of Latinx legislators mentioned race. Given the disproportionate effects of immigration on Latinx

Figure 4.5 Frequency of Mentions by the Racial/Ethnic Background of Representatives



communities, this may not be surprising. But the differences are striking relative to the overall greater emphasis placed on immigration by Republicans than Democrats. More distributive policies, such as Transportation seem to be highlighted by Whites to a greater extent than others. For instance, 52% of White legislators mention transportation issues, while only 10% and 33% of Latinos and Blacks, respectively, mention transportation issues. In all, while there are clearly similarities in the emphasis on high-profile issues with widespread effects, such as healthcare, the environment and education, Representatives differed in their emphasis on other issues in systematic ways. Clearly, diversity matters in the types of policies and issues emphasized in legislator communications.

Bill Sponsorship

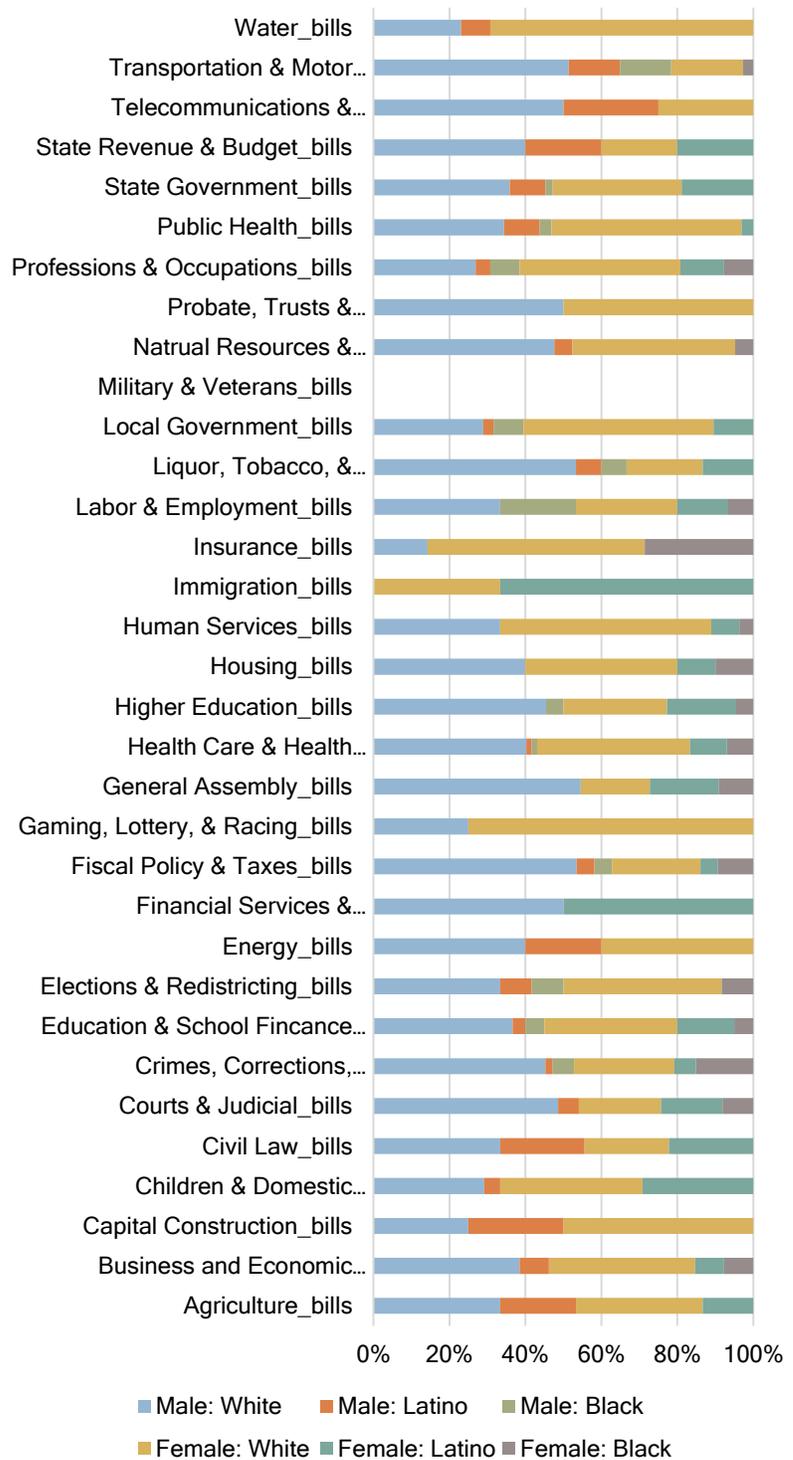
Each year, members of the Colorado House of Representatives sponsor bills under various issue subjects. In 2019, the House sponsored over 300 bills under 32 subjects identified by House records. With 65 Representatives who usually sponsor multiple bills per person, there was a total of 532 prime bill sponsorships, 399 of which resulted in being signed by the governor. The percentage of bill sponsorship by group varies but some topics have significantly higher numbers of overall sponsors than do others. It is essential to examine these rates of sponsorship in that it is a direct means to understanding legislative interests and priorities overall. Generally, House members sponsor bills of interest to their district, therefore, examining bill sponsorship by group can also help detect the concerns of Colorado's districts. And, by examining the variation in sponsorship across gender and racial/ethnic background, one can extend the inquiry into the effects of diversification on Colorado's legislature beyond the signals presented by website issues. Focusing solely on prime sponsors, Figure 4.6 presents the percentage of each set of bills within a topic that were sponsored by Representatives of each gender and racial/ethnic background in the study. The relative proportion of each set of bills can be interpreted as the degree to which each topic is part of the legislative agenda of each group.

Healthcare & Health Insurance bills had the highest number of prime sponsors with a total of 68. As presented in Figure 4.6, of the 68 prime sponsorships, 40% were White males, 1% black males, 1% Latino males, 40% White females, 6% Latina females, and 1% black females. To interpret differences in the emphasis of groups of legislators, one must focus on the comparison of the composition of sponsors across issues. Where the portions of the bars vary, one can see how topics are more or less emphasized by different groups of legislators.

For instance, no immigration-related bills were sponsored by male legislators or Black legislators. Latina legislators sponsored two-thirds of all immigration bills, while White females sponsored the remaining third. Gaming and lottery bills were exclusively sponsored by White legislators, while 40% of Labor and Employment bills were sponsored by Latina legislators or Black legislators (male and female). There are other subjects that present a shift in percentage of prime sponsorship, particularly by Latina and black women. With 51 bills sponsored, Crimes, Corrections and Enforcement was one of the prevalent topics in which bills were dropped into the hopper. Black females sponsored about 15% of these bills, while comprising only 5% of the 65 House Members. Latina women also show similar disproportionate attention to subjects like Children & Domestic Matters. While comprising only about 12% of the House, they sponsored roughly 30% of the total bills in this topic.

While the types of bills sponsored by individual legislators is a product of multiple factors, including district characteristics and committee assignments, the variation across gender and racial/ethnic background is telling. In particular, the disproportionate sponsorship of immigration, crime

Figure 4.6 Percent of Legislative Bills Sponsored by Group, by Issue



policy or childcare bills by legislators of color are well in-line with expectations. Black legislators' sponsorship of elections and labor bills also reflects the disproportionate impact these topics have their communities.

Summary

In the preceding analyses, the impact of Colorado's diversifying legislature was examined through the lenses of constituent outreach, issue attention, and legislative advocacy. In each of these aspects of legislative behavior and advocacy, clear differences emerged across the various groups comprising Colorado's House of Representatives. While party affiliation clearly affected dispositions, even within the Democratic Party, clear distinctions emerged. Women were more likely to engage with social media, specifically Facebook, to engage constituents. Among Democrats, issues like abortion were mentioned more often on female legislators' websites than males, and Latinx legislators noted immigration to a greater extent than others. In terms of the direct advocacy of bill sponsorship, variation emerged across topics, with immigration bills exclusively sponsored by women, and disproportionately so by Latina House members. Other issues emerged as points of departure as well, and often in a clear direction reflective of the shared experiences legislators of color and females share with their constituents that would not occur in a less diverse legislative setting. These findings further support the unique levels and types of advocacy introduced by individual groups of legislators, but also the aggregate focus on activities of Colorado's representatives.

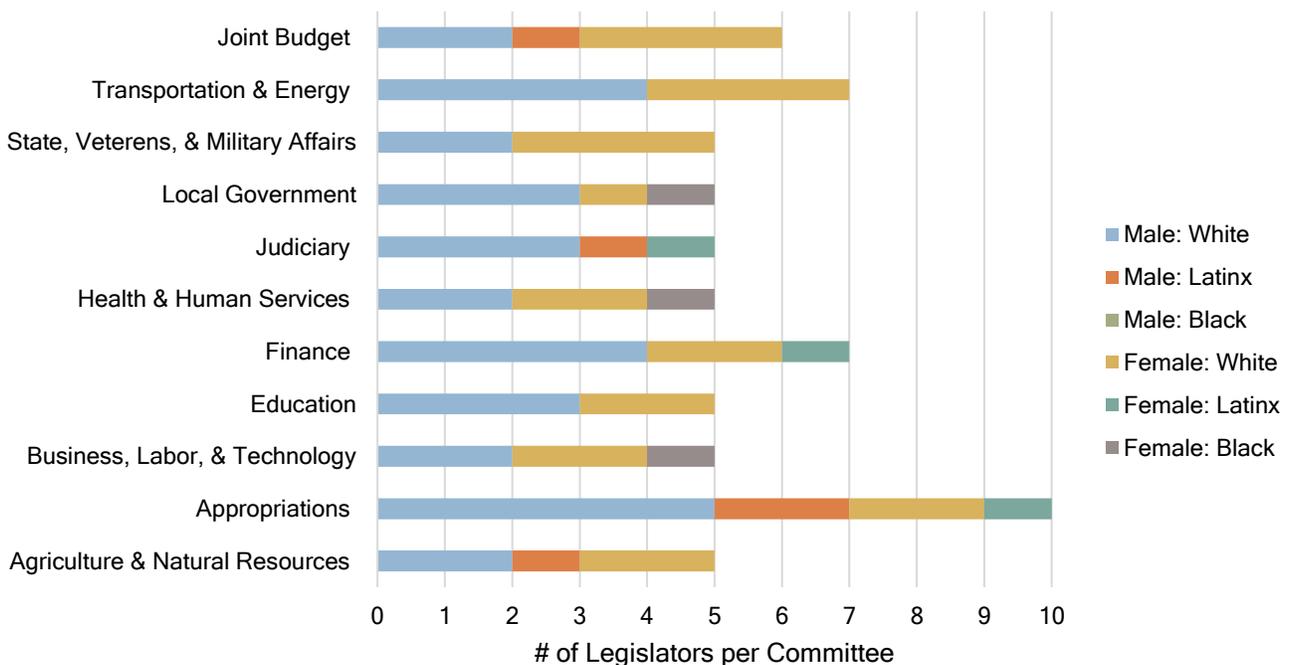
POWER IN THE LEGISLATURE

The previous sections outlined differences in the prospects of election, campaign expenditures and issue advocacy. Each of these elements are important to understand in the representational system which first requires individuals to win elections and gain a seat at the legislative table, and second documents the unique nature of advocacy once those seats are secured. In in this section, the analysis turns to legislative power by focusing on the level of incorporation into the legislative system. Specifically, the report documents inclusion in committees and the differences in committee assignments then turns to diversity within legislative leadership, and finally the degree to which female representatives and legislators of color experience legislative success. These are important questions as election to office and a distinct orientation in issue advocacy are only precursors to the goal of policy change.

Committee Assignments

Committees are where the work of legislative institutions is conducted. From initial hearings to crafting amendments and recommendations to the chamber as a whole, committees form the heart of Colorado's, and the Nation's, legislative processes. For the following analysis, the membership of Colorado's 22 standing committees in the 2019 legislative session (11 in the House, 10 in the Senate, and the Joint Budget Committee) were coded for both gender and racial/ethnic characteristics. First, in terms of gender, both

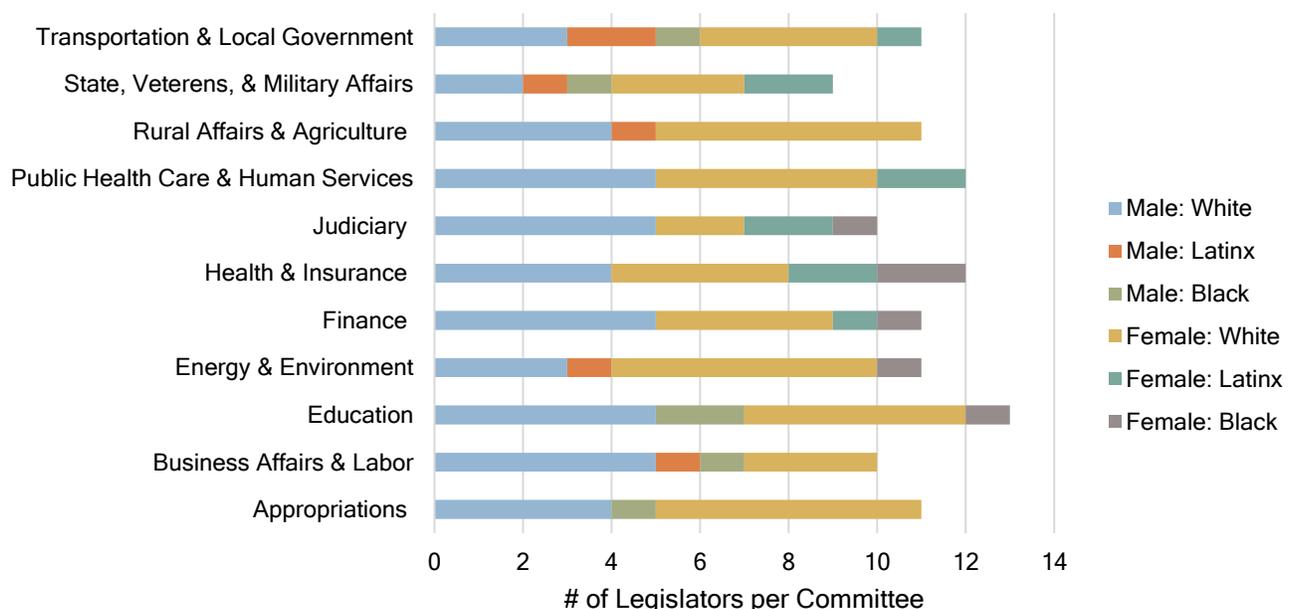
Figure 5.1 Diversity in Senate and Joint Budget Committees



chambers generally approximate gender parity with their respective gender compositions (See Figure 5.1). However, there are some deviations across committees. Of the six members of the powerful Joint Budget Committee in 2019, half were women—roughly in line with the legislature’s overall composition. In the State Senate, where 37% of members are female, women were over-represented or equally represented on 8 out of 10 committees. These committees ranged from Health and Human Services where women may be expected to draw assignments given issue advocacy in abortion or health care, but also included Agriculture and Natural Resources, which encompasses both rural issues, but also environmental concerns regarding natural resource extraction. However, under-representation occurs in two of the most powerful committees—the Appropriations and Judiciary—where only 30% and 20% of seats are held by female Senators. Overall, and recognizing the caveats of Appropriations and the Judiciary Committees, females were generally well-represented in the committee structures in the State Senate.

In the State House of Representatives (see Figure 5.2), where women comprise over 50% of the chamber, female lawmakers generally hold seats on committees in proportion to their overall share of legislative seats. However, women are under-represented on the Transportation and Local Government and Business Affairs and Labor Committees, holding 45% and 30% of committee seats, respectively. Conversely, women are over-represented on the Health and Insurance and Energy and Environment Committees with about two-thirds of the seats in each committee. In terms of gender equity, both chambers seem to generally reflect the composition of their members. On average, parity is observed, and sometimes

Figure 5.2 Diversity in House Committees



surpassed in both the House and Senate. And, while some variation in composition reflects anticipated differences in interests (Health or Environment, for instance), a striking pattern of over- or under- representation is not apparent in terms of committee jurisdictions or committee power.

Even though there is no evidence to suggest unequal gender representation, there is some variation in the representation of legislators of color on committees with several being severely below parity. In three committees in the State Senate, the Education, State/Veterans/Military Affairs, and Transportation/Energy Committees, no legislators of color held seats in 2019. No African American legislators hold seats on the Senate Judiciary, Finance, Appropriations or Agriculture and Natural Resources Committees. And, no Latinx Senators held seats on the Senate Local Government, Health and Human Services, and Business and Labor Affairs Committees. Given the relatively small size of the Senate, and the limited availability of relatively small committees, part of the explanation may be simply the size of the legislature. In other committees, by definition due to small sizes, Latinx and Black Senators are over-represented. That said, the dearth of any racial/ethnic diversity in several committees precludes the direct impact of diverse perspectives on committee decisions.

In the House, with larger committees and broader membership, parity is more closely approximated. However, no seats in the House Rural Affairs and Agriculture or Public Health Care and Human Services Committees were held by African American Representatives, while the Education and Appropriations Committees were void of Latinx Representatives in the 2019 sessions. Given the urban districts Black lawmakers represent, the lack of a seat on the Rural Affairs committee is no surprising, but Public Health Care and Human Services holds jurisdiction over a variety of issues pertinent to the African American community. While these committees are below parity by definition, others are above parity. Education, for instance, where 30% of its members are Black, is well above parity to the 9% of Representatives that are African American. Forty-four percent of the membership of the State, Veterans and Military affairs committee in the House is either Black or Latinx and thus over-represented by over 20 percentage points. Other key committees, such as the House Judiciary, also reflected a degree of over-representation of Black and Latinx lawmakers. On balance, while the complete lack of representation in some committees precludes a diverse perspective, other committees, including some powerful ones, exhibited over-representation.

The Joint Budget Committee (See Figure 5.1) may best reflect some of the elements of both gender and racial/ethnic parity in the state legislative committee structure. The

committee is charged with studying the management, operations, programs, and fiscal needs of the agencies and institutions of the state government. It is largely considered one of the most important committees in the entire legislature and those seated on it have substantial power. The committee is made up of 6 individuals and, in 2019, was perfectly split in regards to gender (3 men, 3 women). This is analogous to a lot of the committees in the legislature. However, only one legislator of color sat on the committee in 2019—Dominick Moreno. A single seat on the committee equates to 16%, just above the 14% of the entire 100 legislative seats that are held by Latinx lawmakers. African American lawmakers did not hold a seat, and thus fell below legislative parity on this committee. In general, this reflects the general disposition of parity in legislative committee membership. Given small numbers, and limited committee assignments, parity seems to be reached, or surpassed, on a number of committees, but also committee assignments also resulted in the lack of voice of one or more racial/ethnic groups on key committees in the legislative process.

Leadership Positions

Membership on committees provides a heightened voice in the legislative process, yet holding key leadership positions, such as Committee Chair or Vice Chair, and Caucus and Chamber leadership positions provide additional power in crafting and directing legislation. Leadership's agenda control is perhaps the most important of these powers, and the individuals who hold leadership positions often reflect the hard to measure perception of influence by colleagues as they elect their own leadership.

Percent of House and Senate Committee Leadership Positions Held By:

Women: 68%
Latinx: 14%
Black: 18%

In the 22 Standing Committees in both Chambers in 2019, including both Chairs and Vice Chairs as leadership positions, women and legislators of color are over-represented in the aggregate. Of these 44 positions, female legislators hold 30, or 68% of all committee leadership positions. Given that female legislators make up just under half of all legislators across the chambers, women are overrepresented in committee leadership positions by more than 20 percentage points relative to parity. African American and Latinx lawmakers hold 32% of all committee leadership positions, a number that also

indicates committee power beyond the percentage of legislative seats held by the two groups (about 10 points above what might be expected based on seats held).

In addition to committee leadership positions, Chamber and Party Leadership positions also provide influence over the general direction of the legislative process and policymaking. In the Senate, women held 5 out of the 10 generally recognized leadership positions in 2019, including President Pro Tempore, Assistant Majority Leader, Majority Whip, Majority Caucus Chair and Minority Caucus Chair. The highest position in the Senate, President of the Senate, is held by Sen. Leroy Garcia, the first Latino President of the Senate in Colorado's history. He is the only Latinx holding a chamber leadership position. Sen. Rhonda Fields, Assistant Majority Leader, is the sole Black legislator with a chamber leadership position. In all, just over half of the 10 Senate leadership positions are held by women or legislators of color—a degree of disproportionate impact facilitated primarily through Democratic control of the chamber.

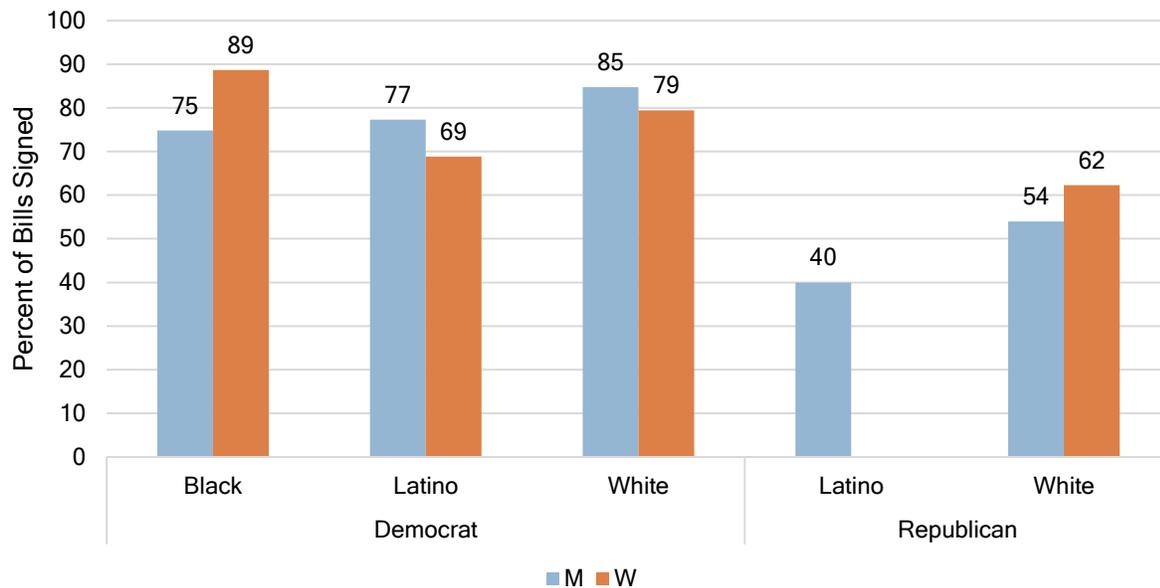
The State House's 11 leadership positions also reflect above-parity influence among women and legislators of color. Rep. KC Becker holds the top leadership post as Speaker of the House—a position she took over from another female Speaker, Crisanta Duran, in 2017. Becker is one of six females holding leadership positions in the House which equates with women holding 54% of House chamber leadership positions. African American legislators hold 2 leadership positions Co-Majority Whip and Speaker pro Tempore. Adrienne Benavidez is currently (2020 session) Co-Majority Whip and the only Latinx legislator in leadership. In all, women and legislators of color tend to hold positions of power within the legislative chambers that surpass their respective numbers in the chamber. This institutional influence is facilitated primarily, but not exclusively, through Democratic majorities in both chambers which provide opportunities for their own members to hold leadership positions. While the Republican caucus does provide disproportionate opportunities for women (eg. half of the House GOP Leadership positions are held by women), the lack of racial/ethnic diversity within the party is a roadblock to racial/ethnic diversity in GOP leadership.

Legislative Success

Holding positions within committees and leadership are important mechanisms to exert influence. Passing legislation is another, perhaps more direct, measure of influence. This section addresses the ability of female, Black and Latinx legislators to pass their own sponsored legislation, focusing exclusively on bills introduced in the House of Representatives in 2019, in comparison to other groups within the legislative body.

During the 2019 legislative session, Colorado's House of Representatives had a productive year with 405 bills signed by Governor Polis. Figure 5.3 shows that the most

Figure 5.3 Percentage of Sponsored Bills Signed, by Gender and Race/Ethnicity and Party in 2019 Session



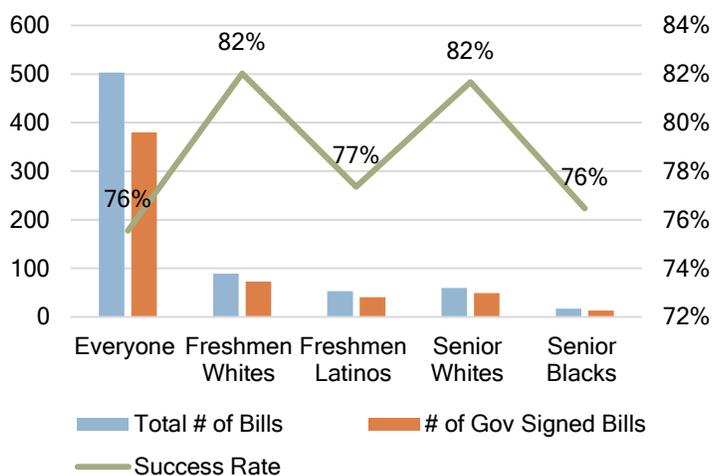
successful of the legislators were African American women in the Democratic Party with 89% of their bills signed by Governor Polis. White males were not far behind with 85% of their bills signed by the governor. The success of bill sponsorship of African American women is impressive due to the fact that African American women only make up 5% of the Colorado House of Representatives, compared to white males who make up 40%. The other women of the Colorado House of Representatives were also very successful, with white women legislators having 79% of their bills signed, and Latina legislators with 69% of their bills signed. Women overall had 73% of their bills signed, compared to men with 66% bills signed. This success may be due to women legislators consisting of 51% of the House of Representatives which may give them a small advantage over the men. This success may also stem from the rise in the Me Too movement in 2017. Democratic women legislators also tend to sponsor more progressive bills such as health insurance, immigration, and children & domestic matters. With this combination of the rise of women empowerment along with their leadership in sponsoring more progressive bills, women in the legislature are beginning to show more legislative success in terms of passing bills than their male counterparts. It is also clear that majority status, and the large portion of the Democratic seats held by women and legislators of color, benefitted success rates of diverse legislators.

White Republican women also had a successful year with 62% of their bills signed by Governor Polis, with White males not far behind with 53% of their bills signed. This success of the GOP is more surprising because of the control the Democratic Party has in the House of Representatives.

Outside of clear partisan differences in legislative success, there are no obvious patterns across the racial/ethnic and gender groups. African American Democratic women were more successful than their male counterparts, as were White female Republicans. Democratic Latina and White women, on the other hand, were less successful than males within their racial/ethnic group. While males were marginally more successful than Latino or African American male legislators. The overall picture that emerges is that given the Democratic Party's majority status, the disproportionate number of women within the party's caucus, and the almost exclusive Democratic Caucus membership of Black and Latino legislators, diverse legislators saw success through partisan coalitions above anything else.

More senior, and therefore experienced, politicians are likely to pass more bills than less experienced legislators. Logically, they would have stronger relationships and more

Figure 5.4 Success Rate Among Representatives in 2019, By Seniority



knowledge of how to convince other people or simply the best practices when negotiating legislation. People even take prior experience in government into account when voting for one candidate over another. Given the large cohort of Latinx freshman, in particular, but also newly elected officials in 2019, accounting for seniority will provide an even more nuanced glimpse into the legislative success of legislators.

Figure 5.4 provides the number of bills sponsored, signed, and success rates for a set of legislators within the Colorado House in 2019. Freshman status did not seem to have a large influence success. Among White legislators, both senior and freshman Representatives were equally successful. The most notable difference resulted from racial/ethnic backgrounds, with representatives of color underperforming slightly compared to Whites of similar seniority. However, it is important to note that the differences are in the realm of 5 percentage points, and if just two more bills sponsored by Latinx freshman were passed and signed by the Governor, parity in success would have been achieved. An Senior African American legislators would need to pass just one more bill and have it signed to reach parity. Overall, then, success, or lack thereof, did not seem to stem from seniority, and was only nominally related to the racial/ethnic background of the Representative.

Summary

This concluding section assessed the degree of institutional influence held by members of the Colorado state legislature, examining committee assignments, leadership positions and legislative success as indicators of power and influence. The overall results of the analysis suggest that while there are points where groups are under-represented, legislative power in 2019 was fairly representative of the proportions of legislative seats held by females and legislators of color. While committee assignments did display some disproportionate under-representation, or complete lack of representation, among legislators of color, other committees were over-represented. Gender equity was generally achieved in committee assignments. On the whole, and across all committees, both female legislators and legislators of color held positions reflective of their numbers in the Chambers. Moreover, female, African American and Latinx legislators held higher proportions of committee leadership positions than their numbers would suggest, as was the case with Chamber Leadership in both the House and the Senate. These two findings are likely a result of the almost exclusive affiliation with the majority Democrats among legislators of color and the greater proportion of females within the Democratic caucus than within the minority Republican caucus. Legislative success, as measured by the percent of sponsored bills passed and signed by the Governor, displayed similar equity across racial/ethnic groups and gender. While slight differences emerged, the clear, and unsurprising, conclusion was that majority status aided all members of the Democratic Party. The underlying finding from these analyses of power in the legislative chambers is that partisan control matters, and female's and legislators of color's success and power is dependent upon the ability of the Democrats to maintain control of the legislature.

Coupled with the findings of the previous sections, the role of redistricting becomes all the more important. Colorado's switch to an independent commission to draw new district lines following the 2020 Census certainly changes the dynamics of the process. Yet the outcome of the process will still impose significant consequences to electoral prospects and legislative success of female legislators and legislators of color. Democratic control, following a redistricting process that adds competitiveness as a consideration, may be less certain than under a system of legislative control of the redistricting process.

DATA SOURCES

Data used in this report came from a variety of sources. These sources are listed below. For further assistance with data sources for replication or updates, please contact Robert Preuhs whose contact information is publicly available at <https://www.msudenver.edu/polisci/>.

Candidate's race/ethnic and gender were provided by the Candidate Characteristics Cooperative Database.

Fraga, Bernard L., Eric Gonzalez Juenke, Paru Shah. 2019. "Candidate Characteristics Cooperative Database, 2018 State Legislative Elections." Version 2; Published on 9/12/2019.

Klarner, Carl, 2018, "State Legislative Election Returns, 1967-2016", <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/3WZFK9>, Harvard Dataverse, V: 2018 update.

Election Returns were obtained from the Colorado Secretary of State's Office at: <https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/Results/archive2000.html>

District Partisan Registration and Turnout Data were obtained from the Colorado Secretary of State's Office at:

<https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/VoterRegNumbers/VoterRegNumbers.html>

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Campaign Expenditure Data were obtained TRACER at the Colorado Secretary of State's Office: <https://tracer.sos.colorado.gov/PublicSite/homepage.aspx>

Bill Sponsorship, Bill Passage, Committee Assignments and Leadership positions were coded from the Colorado General Assembly's chamber websites, or Legislator websites. All can be found through the following link: <https://leg.colorado.gov/>

Website Issues and Outreach activities were coded from each legislators campaign or non-Assembly website and Facebook pages.

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