

## Colorado

(See the full report on four Intermountain West states by William Frey and Ruy Teixeira at [http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2008/08\\_intermountain\\_west\\_frey\\_teixeira.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2008/08_intermountain_west_frey_teixeira.aspx))

**A. Colorado's growing metropolitan areas, especially Denver's city and suburbs, but also including Colorado Springs, Boulder, Fort Collins, and Greeley in the Front Range megapolitan area are poised to play the key role in this year's election outcome.**

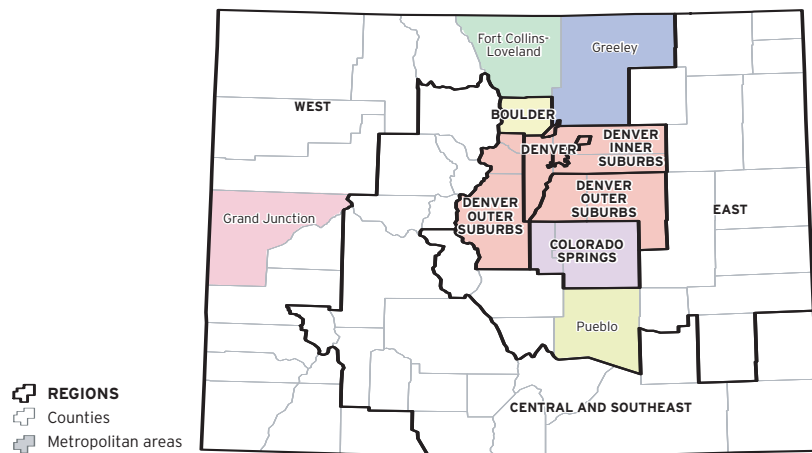
**B. The greatest recent gains in Colorado's eligible voters are among white college graduates and Hispanic-dominated minorities.** Growth of white college graduates has been fastest in Denver's outer suburbs, the as defined West region (including the Fort Collins and Greeley metros), and Colorado Springs. Growth of minority voters has outpaced other groups in all parts of the Denver metro, while also being very strong in the West and Colorado Springs.

**C. Recent GOP victories in Colorado have featured strong support from the white working class. However, this group is declining as a share of voters, while Hispanics and increasingly Democratic white college grads are growing.** Boulder, Denver, and the Denver inner suburbs show the weakest performances for the GOP among white working class voters.

**D. Political shifts in Colorado since 1988 have moved most regions in Colorado toward the Democrats, with only the slow-growing East becoming significantly more Republican. However, some of the fastest-growing counties in the state are heavily Republican, so this is blunting the effect of these pro-Democratic shifts.** Broadly speaking, the question for Colorado is whether a significant pro-Democratic shift in the Denver metro is a leading indicator of where the state as a whole is going (as might be suggested by the Democrats' 2004 Senate and 2006 gubernatorial victories) or whether continued population growth and GOP political strength in key counties outside of the Denver metro (and the Boulder and, increasingly, Fort Collins metros) can keep the state in Republican hands.

**E. Key trends and groups to watch in 2008 include the white working class, where the GOP needs to maintain its strong support; white college graduates, who are rapidly growing and have been moving toward the Democrats, especially since 2000; and Hispanics, who have been driving the growth of the minority vote and vote heavily Democratic.** These trends could have their strongest impact in the "battle of the suburbs" in the Denver metro, where Democrats need to expand their 2004 margin and the GOP needs to hold the line, and in the "battle of the metros" in the West region, which pits the Democratic-trending Fort Collins metro, now the fourth largest in the state against the smaller GOP-trending metros of Grand Junction and fast-growing Greeley.

**Map 1. Colorado Metropolitan Areas and Regions**



Source: Authors' calculations of Census population estimates

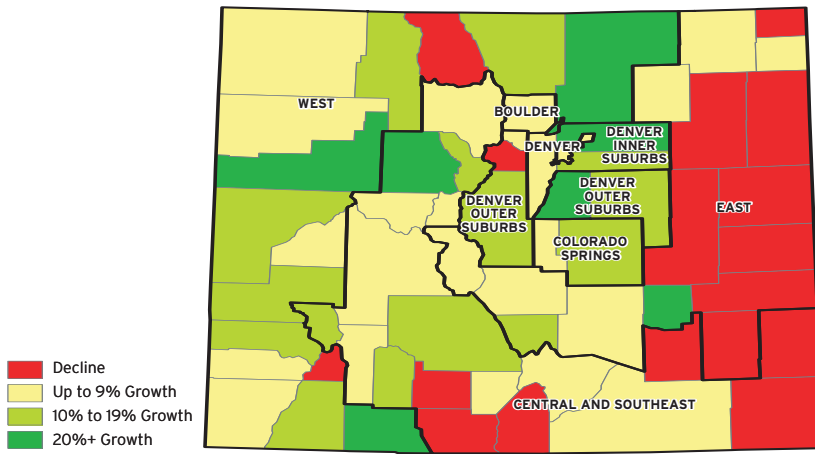
**A. Colorado's growing metropolitan areas, especially Denver's city and suburbs, but also including Colorado Springs, Boulder, Fort Collins, and Greeley in the Front Range megapolitan area are poised to play the key role in this year's election outcome.**

Colorado's demographic history is one of boom or bust, but typically the boom periods have prevailed. Its current Electoral College delegate count is nine, up one after the 2000 census. Previous boosts followed the prior two census as well. It was the 1990s tech boom that drew people to Colorado, adding a new vitality to the greater Denver region. In that decade, Colorado ranked third in growth among states. Partly due to the bursting tech bubble, that high level of growth has tailed off somewhat this decade, but the state still ranks eighth in population growth for 2000-2007

Colorado's regional scheme, for this analysis is depicted in **Map 1**, with relative size and growth patterns for regions shown in **Map 2** and **Figures 3 and 4**. These regions are defined as follows:

- 1. Denver** – Denver County, coterminous with the city of Denver
- 2. Denver Inner Suburbs** – Adams, Arapahoe, and Jefferson counties
- 3. Denver Outer Suburbs** – Douglas, Ebert, Park, Gilpin, Clear Creek, and Bloomfield counties

**Map 2. Colorado Population Growth by County, 2000-2007**

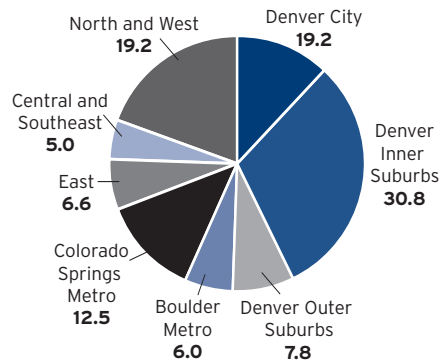


Source: Authors' calculations of Census population estimates

Together these three regions comprise the Denver-Aurora metropolitan area, centered on Denver city, also the state's largest county with a population of 588,000. Inner suburban counties, Arapahoe, Jefferson, and Adams counties fall close behind at 545,000 and 529,000, and 422,000 respectively. The outer suburban counties have a combined population of 379,000. Led by rapidly growing Douglas with 272,000 people, Denver's outer suburbs are the most rapidly growing region of the state. Overall, metropolitan Denver is over half (51 percent) of the state's population, with 31 percent of Colorado residents living in Denver's inner suburbs, 8 percent in the outer suburbs and 12 percent residing in the city of Denver. Powered by rapid growth in its outer suburbs, the metropolitan area grew by a brisk 12% from 2000-2007.

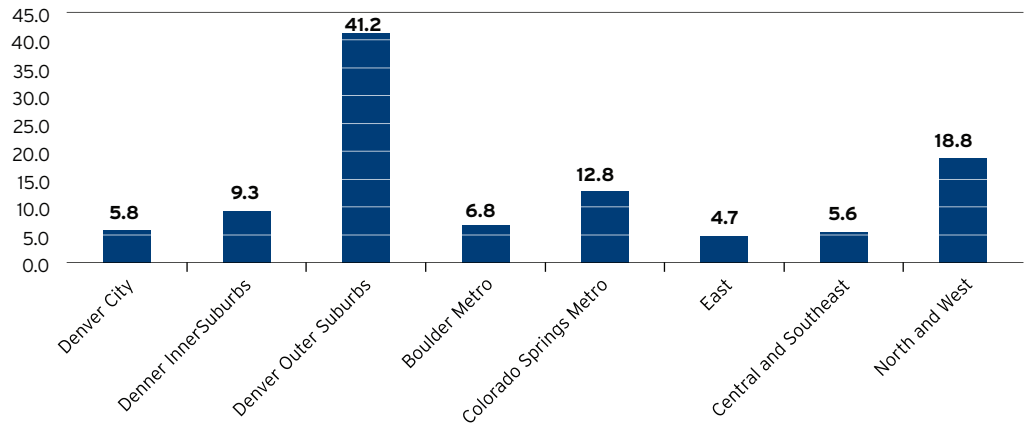
**4. Boulder** – Boulder County is coincident with the Boulder metropolitan area, the state's third largest

**Figure 3. Share of 2007 Population in Colorado Regions**



Source: Authors' analysis of US Census estimates

**Figure 4. 2000-2007 Population Growth in Colorado Regions**



Source: Authors' analysis of US Census estimates

metropolitan area, and home to the University of Colorado. It comprises 6 percent of the state's population. Its more controlled growth is more modest than its metropolitan neighbors.

**5. Colorado Springs** – the Colorado Springs metropolitan area, the state's second largest, is comprised of El Paso and Teller counties. At 587,000 people, El Paso will soon surpass Denver as the state's most populous county. The metro area comprises 12 percent of the state's population and has grown by 12.8 percent since 2000.

**6. East** - this region is comprised of 16 counties to the east and south of the Denver-Aurora and Colorado Springs metropolitan areas.<sup>5</sup> One small metropolitan area, the Pueblo metropolitan area, consisting of Pueblo Co, lies within this spacious if not highly populated region, where 8 of its smaller counties on the eastern plains are registering population declines. This region contains less than 7 percent of the Colorado's population and is growing by a modest 4.7 percent

**7 Central and Southeast** - consists of 19 counties in southern and central Colorado, all small in size and showing at best a modest population growth.<sup>6</sup> The region does not contain any metropolitan areas, and comprises 5 percent of the state's population.

**8 West** - consists of 16 counties in the western and northern part of Colorado.<sup>7</sup> This sprawling region includes the Fort Collins-Loveland metropolitan area, which lies just above Boulder and is the state's

fourth largest metropolitan area, as well as the Greeley metropolitan area to its east, and the Grand Junction metropolitan area that abuts the western boundary of the state.<sup>8</sup> These metropolitan areas are growing at a moderate to rapid pace, with the former two located on the northern end of the Colorado's Front Range megapolitan area. This briskly growing region contains approximately one fifth of the state's population.

Looking between and within these regions, it is Colorado's metropolitan area populations, including the suburbs of Denver, which are showing the most rapid growth this decade and within which demographic segments are changing the most rapidly.

***B. The greatest recent gains in Colorado's eligible voters are among white college graduates and Hispanic-dominated minorities.***

Growth of white college graduates has been fastest in Denver's outer suburbs, the West—including the Fort Collins and Greeley metros—and Colorado Springs. Growth of minority voters has outpaced other groups in all parts of the Denver metro, while also being very strong in the West and Colorado Springs.

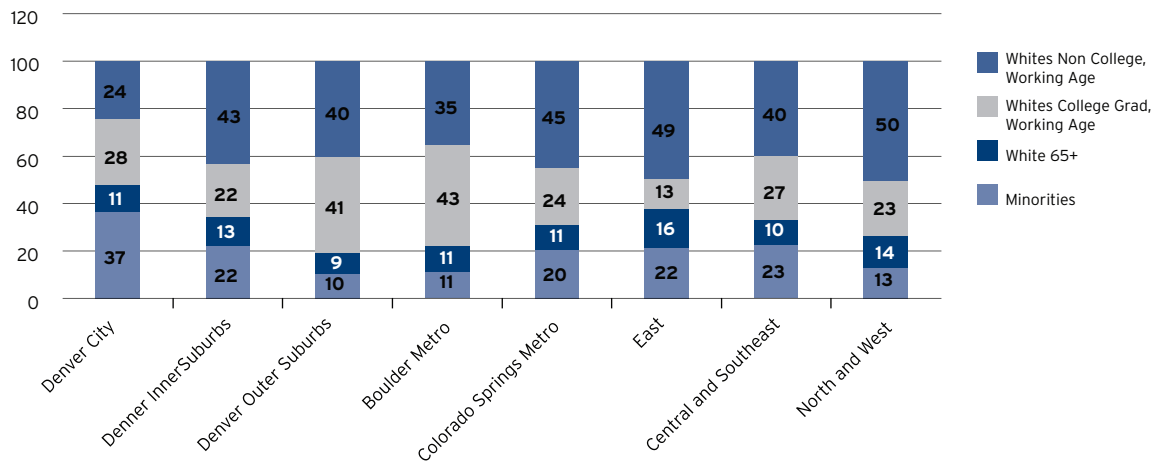
We focus on Colorado's eligible voter population—citizens ages 18 and above—as assessed from the 2006 American Community Survey and changes since the 2000 Census. A statewide picture of voters in key demographic segments is shown in **Appendices A and B**. Fully one quarter of Colorado's electorate is made up of white working age college graduates, well above their share in the other Intermountain West purple states. Moreover since 2000, along with minorities, this group is the fastest growing of Colorado's key demographic segments. As will be shown, white college graduates tend to be “on the fence” in their past voting preferences, compared with the more Republican-oriented white working class segment.

In Colorado, as in most other states, the working age white working class makes up the largest share, at 42 percent, of the key demographic segments. Yet, its growth since 2000 has been much smaller than the other key segments. This is consistent with Colorado's smaller gains on other eligible voter attributes, such as workers in the manufacturing and trade industries, and those with less than high school educations. Colorado groups which grew most rapidly included those with postgraduate degrees and those working in the education/health and information/financial/professional service industries.

Nearly two third's of Colorado's electorate was born out of state, especially in non-Western parts of the U.S. The greatest growth since 2000 has occurred among migrants born in California and those born abroad.

These eligible voter profiles and growth tendencies have played out quite differently across regions (**Figure 5, Table 3, and Appendix C**). White working age college graduates comprise substantial shares of eligible voters in Denver's outer suburbs, and in Boulder. It is only in these two regions, as well as the city of Denver, that the shares of white college graduates are higher than those of the white

**Figure 5. Eligible Voters in Key Demographic Segments, Colorado Regions**



Source: Authors' analysis of 2006 American Community Survey

working class. In Colorado's remaining regions, the working age white working class comprises at least 40 percent of eligible voters.

It is in Denver's outer suburbs and Boulder that minorities make up the smallest segments of eligible voters. The highest minority share by far is seen in the city of Denver at 37 percent. About three fifths of these are Hispanics, a quarter are Blacks and the remainder consists of Asians and other groups. Indeed, the city of Denver is the most diverse of all our regions in terms of race-ethnic groups and other key demographic segments.

Table 3 shows 2000-2006 growth across Colorado regions for key demographic segments and other attributes. For white working age college graduates, the fastest growth is occurring in Denver's outer suburbs, the fast growing West region with its three growing metropolitan areas, and Colorado Springs. Within all parts of the Denver metro-city, inner suburbs, and outer suburbs--minorities show the fastest growth rates among our demographic segments, including 66 percent in Denver's outer suburbs. Additionally, in Colorado Springs and the West, growth rates among minority voters are just behind those of white college graduates, the growth leaders in those regions. In Colorado as a whole, as well as almost every region (the big exception is the East), both white college graduates and minorities are increasing as a share of eligible voters.

When focusing on changes in working class whites, we find that in the city of Denver, its inner suburbs, and the Boulder metro, there is an absolute decline in the numbers belonging to this group. Only in

**Table 3. 2000-2006 Percent Change in Eligible Voters by Demographic Attributes: Colorado Regions**

Attributes	Denver	Denver	Denver	Colorado	Colorado	Southeast			Total
	City	Inner Suburbs	Outer Suburbs	Boulder Metro	Spring Metro	East	Central	West	
Key Demographic Segments									
Minorities	9	22	66	14	19	-3	8	23	17
Whites Age 65+	-10	12	40	11	10	8	6	15	11
White, Working Age College Grads,	2	6	28	16	21	4	18	28	16
White Working Age Non College Grads	-11	-2	18	-11	9	10	0	13	5
Race-Ethnicity									
White	-5	2	24	3	13	8	7	17	9
Black	-2	19	29	20	14	4	34	1	9
Hispanic	15	24	61	11	16	0	7	27	18
Age									
18–29	-18	4	44	-4	15	19	8	23	10
30–44	-2	-13	6	-11	-2	-15	-8	2	-5
45–64	19	23	41	25	31	16	20	31	26
65+	-2	14	42	13	15	11	10	16	13
Education									
HS grad or less	-1	2	29	-10	9	2	10	19	7
Some College	-7	6	17	-4	9	8	-9	9	5
College Grads	6	11	35	16	27	12	20	29	19
Industry of Worker									
Manfg and Other Goods Production	-11	-4	6	-22	-2	-4	4	13	0
Trade	-2	1	28	-21	11	10	-6	21	7
Education and Health	9	15	24	16	6	3	17	20	14
Info, Financial and Prof. Services	-9	0	36	1	26	12	30	31	12
Other Services	-3	5	24	20	24	18	-2	18	11

Source: Authors' analysis of 2006 American Community Survey

Denver's outer suburbs, which is growing rapidly across all segments, and the rapidly growing West region, is there something approximating a healthy growth of this segment. But even there, growth rates among the white working class lag growth among eligible voters as a whole, so this group's share of eligible voters is declining. In fact, only in the stagnating East region are white working class eligible voters growing more rapidly than the other key segments. Reflecting this, the East is the only region where this group actually increased its share of voters. Everywhere else, its share declined.

**Table 4. Colorado Voting by Selected Demographic Groups, 2004**

Group	2004 President			2004 Senate		
	Democrat	Republican	Dem-Rep	Democrat	Republican	Dem-Rep
White	42	57	-15	46	52	-6
Black	87	13	74	84	15	69
Hispanic	68	30	38	72	25	47
Men	45	53	-8	46	52	-6
Women	48	51	-3	53	45	8
White Men	39	58	-19	42	57	-15
White Women	44	55	-11	49	49	0
Single Women	59	41	18	61	36	25
Married Women	41	59	-18	47	52	-5
HS Dropout	62	36	26	69	30	39
HS Graduate	39	60	-21	43	53	-10
Some College	41	58	-17	44	54	-10
College Grad	47	52	-5	50	48	2
Postgraduate	55	43	12	61	38	23
White Noncollege	35	64	-29	38	59	-21
White College	48	50	-2	53	46	7
18–29	51	47	4	53	45	8
30–39	49	49	0	52	45	7
40–49	47	52	-5	48	48	0
50–64	47	52	-5	52	47	5
65+	40	60	-20	44	55	-11
City over 500,000	62	37	25	62	35	27
City 50,000-500,000	46	53	-7	48	51	-3
Suburbs	45	53	-8	50	48	2
City 10,000-50,000	36	63	-27	41	55	-14
Rural	40	59	-19	45	51	-6
Total	47	52	-5	51	46	5

Source: Authors' analysis of 2004 Colorado exit poll

With respect to other demographic attributes, the aging of the baby boomers has increased the size of the 45-64 year old electorate in each one of the regions of Colorado. In only a few regions—Denver’s outer suburbs, the West region, and Colorado Springs and the East—is there a rapid growth in the young voter population. This could reflect the recent migration of younger families in these areas or the coming of age of large late teen populations. The youth boom in eligible voters is hardly apparent in either the city of Denver or its inner suburbs, or for that matter, in metropolitan Boulder.

In terms of industry, there is pervasive pattern of decline of those employed in manufacturing or trade with the exception of the West region, Denver’s outer suburbs, and the Southeast and Central regions. Growth of eligible voters working in information, financial and professional services is most apparent in Denver’s outer suburbs, Colorado Springs, and the fast-growing West region.

Overall, these shifts indicate that there are new voters from all segments in the fast gaining parts of Denver’s outer suburbs, the Colorado Springs metropolitan area, and the surging North and West regions, but that the strongest growth is from white college graduates and minorities. This means that these “outer” regions, while far more Republican than the city of Denver or its inner suburbs, are now gaining segments that are less predictably oriented toward the GOP.

***C. Recent GOP victories in Colorado have featured strong support from the white working class. However, this group is declining as a share of voters, while Hispanics and increasingly Democratic white college grads are growing.***

So far we have documented the basic demographic and geographic shifts that are reshaping Colorado and sketched a brief portrait of Colorado’s electorate. Now we turn to how Coloradans have been voting in recent elections which, as we shall see, is intimately bound up with these changes. The results and analysis not only illuminate how Colorado arrived at its current political coloration but provide some hints about how Colorado’s politics might change in the future as demographic and geographic shifts continue.

**Table 4** displays some basic exit poll data from the 2004 presidential election and 2004 Senate election in Colorado. In 2004, Colorado voted Republican in the presidential election, just as it did in 2000, but by a smaller margin (5 points in 2004 vs. 9 points in 2000). The basic building blocks of Bush’s victory can be discerned from the data in the table. He received 57 percent to 42 percent support from white voters, 86 percent of all voters according to the exit polls. This was more than enough to make up for large deficits among blacks (87 percent Democratic and 4 percent of voters) and Hispanics (68 percent Democratic and 8 percent of voters).

He carried men by 8 points, but women by only 3 points; a somewhat larger gender gap can be seen when comparing white men and white women, which he carried by 19 and 11 points, respectively. And Bush carried married women by 18 points but lost single women by an identical 18 point margin.

By education, Bush's best groups were high school graduates, which he carried by 21 points and those with some college, which he carried by 17 points. But he carried college graduates by only 5 points and lost postgraduates by 12 points. Bush lost young (18-29) voters by 4 points and split 30-39 year olds evenly, but carried all age groups 40 and over, including seniors (65 and over) by 20 points. The exit poll also indicates he lost large cities, but won everywhere else, with heavy margins in small cities and rural areas.

The 2004 Senate election was a different story with Democrat Ken Salazar defeating Republican Pete Coors by 51-47 percent. Salazar's victory was consistent with other changes that have taken place in Colorado recently which suggest a purpling of the state in this decade. It has already been mentioned that Bush's margin in the state shrank from 9 to 5 points between 2000 and 2004. In addition, Democrats took control of both chambers of the state legislature in 2004. And in 2006, the Democrats expanded their control of the state legislature and elected Bill Ritter as governor by a 57-40 landslide.<sup>9</sup> They also picked up a US House seat and carried the state Congressional vote by 54-41. They now control Colorado's House delegation by four to three.

In Salazar's 2004 Senate victory, exit polls indicate a far different coalition for Salazar than for Bush. He lost white voters by 6 points, a far smaller deficit than for Kerry who lost these voters by 15 points, and he actually split the vote of white women evenly, 49-49. And he carried the minority vote by wide margins, 84-15 among blacks and 72-25 among Hispanics. He lost married women by just 5 points and carried single women by 25 points. In terms of education, he did particularly well among voters with a postgraduate education, winning them by 61-38. He also carried college graduates by 50-48. And he lost high school graduates and those with some college by 10 points each, far smaller than Kerry's deficits among these voters.

Like Kerry, he also received solid support from young voters, carrying them by 8 points. He also carried 30-39 year olds by 7 points and 50-64 year olds by 5 points. The only age group he lost was seniors by 10 points. And unlike Kerry he did carry the suburbs (by 3 points), adding the support of these voters to his big margins in large cities.

Digging a little deeper into the exit poll data, it's instructive to focus on the white working class vote—the subject of much debate and discussion in this election season. In 2004, Colorado white working class voters (defined here as whites without a four year college degree) supported Bush over Kerry by 29 points. This is actually slightly worse than Kerry's nationwide deficit of 23 points among these voters. In contrast, Kerry lost Colorado's white college graduates by just 2 points, a distinct improvement over Gore's performance in 2000, which lost this group by 20 points.<sup>10</sup>

Kerry's support among white working class voters varied dramatically by region. Here we have to use the exit poll regions which are: Denver-Boulder, Arapahoe-Jefferson (roughly equivalent to the Denver inner suburbs), Central (roughly equivalent to our Central and Southeast regions) and East and West

(close to our East and West regions). Kerry's white working class deficit in the Denver-Boulder exit poll region was 11 points and in Arapahoe-Jefferson just 8 points. But in the other three exit poll regions, Central, East, and West, his deficits were respectively 42, 52, and 37 points.

Salazar did substantially better among white working class voters than Kerry, losing them by 21, as opposed to 29 points. And he actually carried white college graduates by 7 points. He also did better than Kerry among white working class voters in the Denver-Boulder, Arapahoe-Jefferson and the Central exit poll regions, losing them by 1, 4, and 19 points, respectively.

***D. Political shifts in Colorado since 1988 have moved most regions in Colorado toward the Democrats, with only the slow-growing East becoming significantly more Republican. However, some of the fastest-growing counties in the state are heavily Republican, so this is blunting the effect of these pro-Democratic shifts.***

How did these patterns of support play out geographically? **Maps 3A-3C** provide this information for 2004, 1996 and 1988 by color-coding each county by its margin for the victorious presidential candidate (deep blue for a Democratic victory of 10 points or more, light blue for a Democratic victory of under 10 points, deep red for a Republican victory of 10 points or more, light red for a Republican victory of under 10 points). In addition, our eight Colorado regions are shown on each map by heavy black lines.

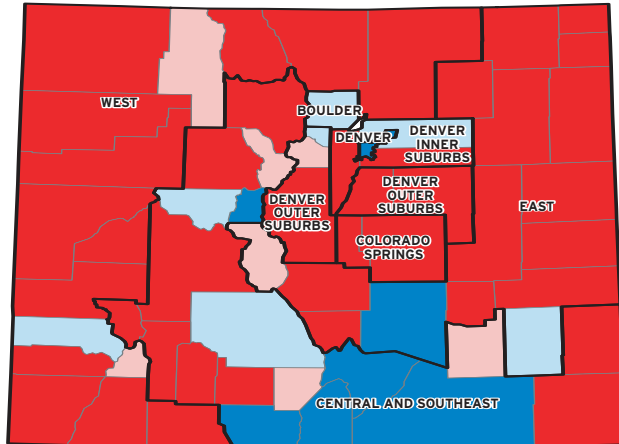
Looking at the 2004 map, it is striking how much of the map is not only colored red, but even bright red, indicating Bush carried the county by 10 points or more. How, then, did Bush wind up with just a 5 point margin? The answer lies in the distribution of voters. Denver, which is just one county on the map, and a small one, had 239,000 voters in 2004—that's 11 percent of the statewide total—and they went for Kerry by 40 points (**Table 5**). Then surrounding Denver are the three counties of its inner suburbs, Adams, Arapahoe, and Jefferson. These counties cast 640,000 votes (30 percent of the statewide total) and gave Bush only a 3 point margin. And just northwest of Jefferson County is Boulder, containing 7 percent of the statewide vote, which went for Kerry by 34 points. So, in this relatively small area—Denver, the Denver inner suburbs and Boulder—is about half the statewide vote which was either strongly Democratic or close to evenly-divided.

Kerry also did well in the Central-Southeast region, 5 percent of the statewide vote, which he carried by 4 points. Combined with Kerry's Denver-Denver inner suburbs-Boulder performance, that was enough to hold Bush to a 5 point victory despite the sea of red covering the rest of the state: Bush took the Denver outer suburbs by 28 points, the Colorado Springs metro by 35 points, West Colorado, which includes the Fort Collins, Greeley and Grand Junction metros, by 18 points and East Colorado by 17 points (only the Pueblo metro went Democratic in that whole vast area).

Maps 3A-3c. Colorado County Presidential Voting, 1988-2004

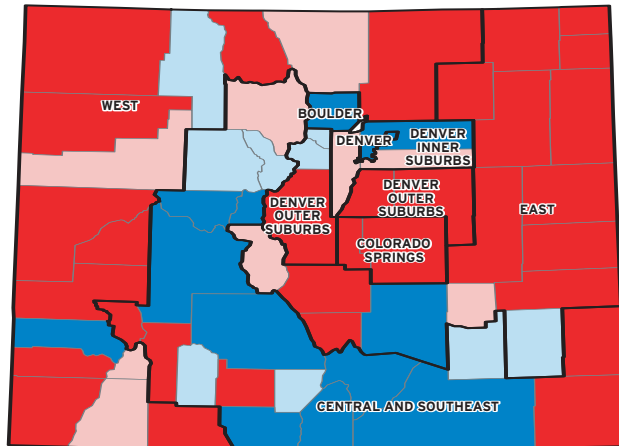
Colorado County  
Presidential Voting, 1988

- Republican Margin 10%+
- Republican Margin up to 10%
- Democratic Margin up to 10%
- Democratic Margin 10%+



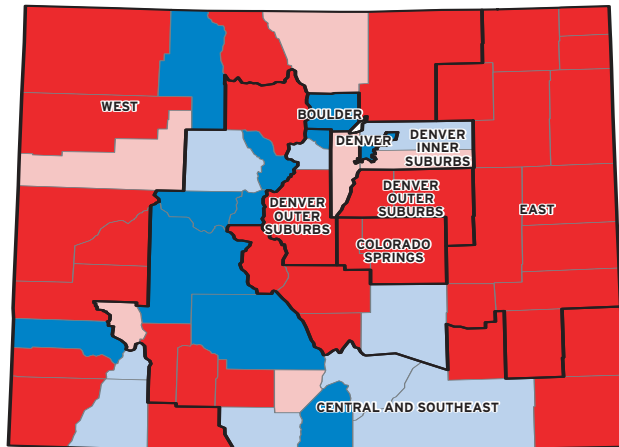
Colorado County  
Presidential Voting, 1996

- Republican Margin 10%+
- Republican Margin up to 10%
- Democratic Margin up to 10%
- Democratic Margin 10%+



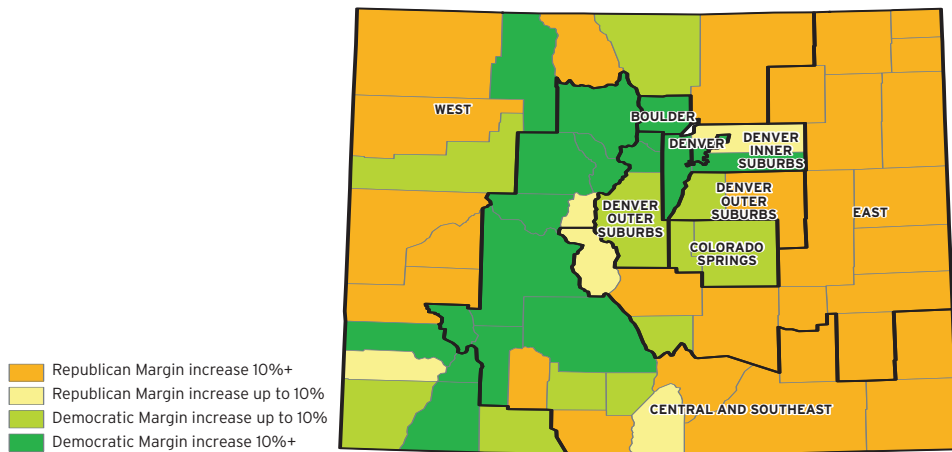
Colorado County  
Presidential Voting, 2004

- Republican Margin 10%+
- Republican Margin up to 10%
- Democratic Margin up to 10%
- Democratic Margin 10%+



Source: Authors' analysis of US Census estimates

**Map 4. Colorado County Presidential Voting Change, 1988-2004**



Source: Authors' calculations of election data

Turning to the 1988 map—when Republicans carried the state by 8 points—the most obvious difference visually is that Democratic strength in the Central-Southeast region is concentrated in the central portion of that region rather than in the southeast part of that region as it was in 2004. But this whole region is very lightly populated so the significance of this difference is less than meets the eye. Far more consequential is that in the heavily populated center of the map, Arapahoe and Jefferson counties in the Denver inner suburbs were dark red—heavily Republican—in 1988, as opposed to light red in 2004 and that Boulder was light blue—weakly Democratic—in 1988 compared to dark blue in 2004. In addition, Larimer county (Fort Collins), adjacent to Boulder, which casts 7 percent of the statewide vote and is the fourth largest metro area in the state, was dark red in 1988 and changed to light red by 2004.

In 1996, Dole won the state for the Republicans, but by a comparatively modest 2 points. In this election, we see the emergence of Democratic strength in the central portion of the Central-Southeast and—more importantly—the shifting of Arapahoe, Jefferson and Larimer counties away from the Republicans and the deepening of Democratic dominance of Boulder. These shifts are still evident in 2004 though, as mentioned, the southeast portion of the Central-Southeast slips away from the Democrats.

**Map 4** provides a visual representation of where political shifts took place over the 1988-2004 time period. Counties that are dark green had margin shifts toward the Democrats of 10 points or more, light green counties had margin shifts toward the Democrats of 10 points or less, orange counties had margin shifts toward the Republicans of 10 points or more and light yellow counties had margin shifts toward the Republicans of 10 points or less. The most striking thing is how much of the map is orange, indicating a margin shift of 10 points or more toward the Republicans, despite the fact that the state moved toward the Democrats over the time period. The orange parts of the map include essentially the entire

**Table 5. Democratic Margins for Colorado Regions, 1988 and 2004**

Region	Democratic Margins:		
	1988 President	2004 President	Change, 1988-2004
Denver	24	40	17
Denver Inner Suburbs	-13	-3	10
Denver Outer Suburbs	-32	-28	4
Boulder	8	34	26
Colorado Springs	-41	-35	6
East	2	-18	-20
Central and Southeast	-1	4	6
West	-16	-17	-2

*Source: Authors' analysis of Colorado election returns*

East region, except for two small counties, Custer and Chaffee. Reflecting this pattern, the East region of Colorado, as shown in **Table 5**, moved toward the GOP by 20 points over this time period.

The West region was more mixed, with Republican gains in the far west of the state, including Mesa (Grand Junction), and in Weld (Greeley) being counterbalanced by Democratic gains in the southwest corner and in Larimer (Fort Collins). The net result was a small 2 point gain for the Republicans (Table 5).

But every other region in the state moved toward the Democrats. This included a 6 point gain in the Central-Southeast, reflecting Democratic gains in the central part of that region; a 6 point gain in Colorado Springs, where Democrats made progress in heavily Republican El Paso county; and a 4 point gain in the Denver outer suburbs, where Democrats made significant progress (8 points) in populous, fast-growing Douglas county.

The big gains for the Democrats, however, came in the Denver inner suburbs (10 points, with a particularly sharp 18 point gain in Arapahoe), Denver itself (17 points) and Boulder (25 points). As mentioned earlier, these three areas by themselves account for about half the statewide vote.

Further insight into these patterns can be gained by comparing the political shifts in Map 4 to the population growth map (Map 2). One clear pattern is that a good chunk of the counties that gave the GOP big margin gains between 1988 and 2004 are also counties that are losing population (colored red in Map 2). In fact, every shrinking county, with a couple of minor exceptions, moved sharply toward the Republicans over this time period.

Better news for the GOP is that the other counties that gave the Republicans big margin gains—and there are quite a few of those—are growing and some quite sharply. Almost all Republican-shifting coun-

ties outside of the East region are colored dark green, indicating population growth of 20 percent or more, light green, indicating 2000-2007 population growth between 10 and 19 percent, or yellow, indicating positive growth rates under 10 percent. This includes relatively populous Mesa (light green) and Weld (dark green) counties.

For the Democrats, with only two exceptions, every Democratic-shifting county is also a growing county. This would appear to be very good news for the Democrats.

On the other hand, some of the most important Democratic-shifting counties, like Denver, Boulder and Jefferson, are in the slowest growth category (yellow). Moreover, while Arapahoe County in the Denver inner suburbs is growing fast, Adams, the lone county in that area to move Republican since 1988, is growing even faster. And Douglas county in the Denver outer suburbs, while it has moved Democratic since 1988, remains strongly Republican (by 34 points in 2004) and is growing phenomenally fast (by 51 percent since 2000). The same could be said of El Paso County in the Colorado Springs metro: Despite moving toward the Democrats, it is still strongly Republican (by 35 points) and growing fast (by 13 percent since 2000).

So ranged against general population growth in Democratic-shifting counties, some with very large populations, is even faster growth in some Republican-shifting counties plus strong growth in some Democratic-shifting counties that remain solidly Republican. How does this net out? Looking at the Denver metro as a whole shows that in half of the state the net clearly favors the Democrats. Despite trends in Adams and the spectacular growth in Douglas, the Denver metro went from three points Republican in 1988 to 3 points Democratic in 2004. Broadly speaking, the question for Colorado is whether this shift in the Denver metro is a leading indicator of where the state as a whole is going (as might be suggested by the Democrats' 2004 Senate and 2006 gubernatorial victories) or whether continued population growth and GOP political strength in key counties outside of the Denver, Boulder, and Fort Collins metros can keep the state in Republican hands.

***E. Key trends and groups to watch in 2008 include the white working class, where the GOP needs to maintain its strong support; white college graduates, who are rapidly growing and have been moving toward the Democrats; and Hispanics, who have been driving the growth of the minority vote and vote heavily Democratic.***

Despite the shifts discussed above, the GOP has managed to win the last three presidential elections in Colorado. Whether the Republicans can keep their victory streak alive—and perhaps expand their margin—or whether the Democrats can add a presidential win to their recent successes in Senate, gubernatorial and state legislative contests will depend greatly on the demographic groups and trends we have reviewed in this report. Here are some things to watch out for in the 2008 election.

First, will the white working class maintain its level of support for the GOP? If it does not, and moves toward the Democrats (as some recent polls have suggested), this could be a crippling blow to the GOP's efforts to hold the state. Given other political trends in the state, their coalition is dependent on a super-majority of the white working class vote to win statewide.

Second, will white college-educated voters, who are steadily increasing their share of the electorate, continue their movement toward the Democrats? If so, that would significantly undercut the GOP's chances of holding the state.

Third, will minorities, particularly Hispanics whose share of voters is rapidly growing turn out for the Democrats? Given their very high levels of support for the Democrats in the 2004 election (which appear likely to continue in this election), the greater their turnout, the better for the Democrats. Ditto for single women who have also been recording very high support levels for the Democrats.

In terms of regions, there are several areas of interest. In the Denver metro, it could be the battle of the suburbs. In the Denver inner suburbs, will the pro-Democratic trends in Arapahoe and Jefferson continue to overwhelm the pro-Republican trend in Adams, moving that area further toward the Democrats? And will the fast-growing Denver outer suburbs (particularly Douglas) continue their modest move toward the Democrats or intensify their commitment to the GOP? This battle of the suburbs will be key to the outcome in the Denver metro as whole, where Democrats need to expand their 2004 margin and the GOP needs to hold the line.

The Boulder metro has shifted hugely to the Democrats since 1988 and now provides that party with lopsided majorities. Maintaining or increasing their advantage in 2008 would add significantly to any majority the Democrats might have coming out of the Denver metro.

The Colorado Springs metro is another area like the Denver outer suburbs where the GOP typically reports large margins but where some movement toward the Democrats has been evident. If the GOP can stop or reverse this trend, that will help their efforts to hold the state.

In the fast-growing West region, which contributes a healthy 20 percent of the Colorado vote, it could be the battle of the metros. On the one hand is the Fort Collins metro, now the fourth largest in the state and almost the size of the third-ranking Boulder metro, which has been moving sharply toward the Democrats, particularly since 2000. On the other are the smaller metros of Greeley, which is growing particularly fast, and Grand Junction which have been moving toward the GOP. If the Democrats can keep the Fort Collins trend going and halt or reverse the Greeley and Grand Junction trends, that could significantly reduce the GOP's advantage in the West region and, in a close election, potentially tip the state toward the Democrats. Conversely, if the GOP can push back in Fort Collins and intensify support in Greeley and Grand Junction, that would increase their margin in the West and provide a big boost to their efforts to keep the state red.