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# *WHAT DIDN'T HAPPEN?*

*Breaking down the results of the 2016 presidential election*

By Joshua Clark

This research report is co-published by Tides and the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society.

The Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society at the University of California, Berkeley brings together researchers, community stakeholders, policymakers, and communicators to identify and challenge the barriers to an inclusive, just, and sustainable society and create transformative change. The Haas Institute advances research and policy related to marginalized people while essentially touching all who benefit from a truly diverse, fair, and inclusive society.

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# FOREWORD

**EARLIER THIS YEAR,** our two organizations—the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society at UC Berkeley and Tides—partnered to sponsor a new research fellowship that would explore the shifting social and political landscape in the United States following the 2016 presidential election.

This partnership reflects the mission of Tides to accelerate the pace of social change by working with innovative partners to solve society's toughest problems, and the commitment of the Haas Institute to respond with timely research and scholarship that can address issues of immediate and long-term social concern, especially those related to systemic exclusion and inclusion. We share a mutual vision and commitment to building a world of shared prosperity and inclusion, and we believe a key way to do that is through civic participation—an engaged and informed democracy ultimately leads to equality and human rights, a sustainable environment, quality education, and healthy individuals and communities.

This research report is the first in a series of public tools we will be disseminating as the outcome of our collaboration, the primary goal of which is to help us, our partners, and our movements understand the facts of the 2016 election, and what to do with them going forward, by offering data and analysis that helps all of us draw the correct lessons and build effective strategies in an age of misinformation, misconception, and misunderstanding.

Reflecting one year later, we share critical insights that help us understand voting dynamics across differences of race/ethnicity, income, education, gender, age, and place—and across many intersections thereof. Some key takeaways from this report include:

• Trump won in the Electoral College by carrying a coalition of white voters. His major gains relative to the previous Republican candidate, Mitt Romney, were among rural and small-town whites, and whites without a college degree, irrespective of income level, gender, or other characteristics.

• Depressed turnout rates, likely bolstered by new voter suppression laws, were notable in communities of color across some of the states that swung the election.

• High rates of third-party voting in the Rust Belt and among all voters under age 40 are noteworthy, as is the unusual incidence of voters casting ballots without selecting any presidential candidate.

These insights and many more are essential to guiding us toward a more nuanced and in-depth analysis of what happened in 2016. With this understanding we aim to create new visions and strategies of political engagement, ensuring our values are reflected in our elected officials and our democratic processes.

We have already seen a heightened sense of civic engagement across the country, with new organizations emerging since the Women's March and the launch of the organization Indivisible. Initially cast as "resistance" groups, these organizations are working not only to resist but to construct alternative visions of our country's future. Established organizations such as the ACLU and Color of Change have galvanized their bases, resulting in innovative advocacy and activism in the fast-changing policy landscape.

With this report, we start with the "what"—the foundational facts—of the 2016 election. Subsequent publications will focus on the "so what" and the "now what." How do we understand the roles of racial and economic anxiety? How do we support communities contending with state laws that make it harder to vote? What other structures of our democratic system, such as the 2020 Census and redistricting, can we make better equipped to serve all of our society?

Both Tides and the Haas Institute are fortunate to work with a large and established network of changemakers, scholars, funders, advocates, and policymakers, and we are committed to leveraging all the tools we have available to drive real and lasting change. We look forward to continuing this critical conversation in order to advance strategies and narratives that build an equitable democracy and a society where all belong.

**john a. powell**
Director, Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society

**Kriss Deiglmeier**
CEO, Tides

# INTRODUCTION

**A YEAR AFTER** the votes were tallied in the 2016 presidential election, many questions about the election's outcome continue to vex even close observers of US politics. Though broad-brush portraits of certain voter groups have circulated widely, many consequential facts about the composition of the electorate, and voting patterns within it, remain far less well known. Further, some prevalent narratives that emerged in the immediate aftermath of the election persist despite the appearance of evidence refuting, reducing, or otherwise complicating them. And this is not even to speak of issues for which research has only scratched the surface, and that may yet prove just as important as the dynamics laid out in this report.[1] All our gaps in knowledge about the election make it not only difficult to comprehend how we got where we are, they also leave us ill-equipped to prepare for upcoming elections.

Few US presidential election outcomes can be explained by one single overarching factor, and we should be skeptical of any such explanations proffered for the 2016 election. Numerous analysts have argued for one or another dynamic as *the* key determinant of the election's unforeseen result. Such arguments generally take the form of identifying a voter demographic that gave too little support to Secretary Hillary Clinton, flocked overwhelmingly to the GOP's Donald Trump, or failed to show up in sufficient numbers to the polls.[2] When one closely evaluates these arguments, what is astonishing is how many of them, in fact, make a convincing case. Many are the scenarios that, had they gone only a bit differently, might have tipped the election in Clinton's favor. In this sense, the only short answer to the ubiquitous question, "What happened?" is: Everything.

Our *What* Didn't *Happen?* report provides a more thorough and detailed elaboration of what that "everything" included. This report is the first in a set of publications from a collaborative research and analysis venture between the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society at UC Berkeley, and Tides to engage the evolving post-2016 US political landscape.[3] Any such undertaking must be rooted in a nuanced and accurate diagnosis of the current moment. This report offers such a diagnosis.

It is organized around six broad sub-groups of voters—the young, women, people of color, "working class" voters, Rust Belt voters, and whites—for which prominent narratives developed during the 2016 presidential race, and since. Each section of the report addresses at least one of these narratives, investigating its accuracy through various breakdowns of election data.

Beyond responding to popular "takes" on the election, we also use available data to reveal less widely discussed patterns of voting behavior, and to put forth our own conclusions.

We analyze voter data disaggregated by age, sex, race and ethnicity, and other social and economic characteristics, as well as geographic units. For any given group of voters classified in terms of one or more of these variables, several types of figures may prove important to understanding election results. A first and most obvious class of data are those that show which candidates received how many votes from which demographic group. This may be rendered as the share, or percentage, of the group that voted for a candidate, or as the margin by which a candidate won or lost the group. A second class of figures describes voter turnout. It includes both participation rate—the percentage of a group's voting-age citizen population that actually cast ballots—and the related measure of vote share. The vote share of a given group refers to the percentage of the total population of participating voters that belongs to that group. It is an inter-group, relational way of talking about turnout. In some cases we also consider a demographic group's *potential* share of voters, that is, its share of the total voting-age citizen population.

Arriving at reliable breakdowns of voter behavior requires considerable care and triangulation across multiple data sources, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. The obstacles to direct knowledge of these breakdowns begin with the longstanding norm of ballot secrecy, which is meant to shield voters from undue influence or intimidation by ensuring that their vote choices will never be disclosed compulsorily. Any analysis of voting patterns must thus begin with geographically-defined counts of anonymous ballots, and voters' self-reports of who they supported. The complexities multiply from there. The conclusions drawn in this report are based on in-depth analysis of state-certified voting results, exit polling figures, data from major post-election surveys, and the US Census Bureau's Voting and Registration supplement. We mediate inconsistencies among these sources to present a clear and detailed portrait of the electorate—the total of eligible voters who actually cast ballots—grounded in the best available evidence. A brief addendum following the report's main text describes each of the principal data sources we used and explains their respective strengths and weaknesses for understanding the election.

Finally, to identify the important patterns in any voting cycle also requires contextualizing current data within longer historical trends. At the same time, it is important to remain mindful that every election involves certain historically particular factors that must be taken into account if our comparisons are to yield valid lessons. Much of this report compares results from the 2016 presidential election to those of its most recent precursor in 2012. As we draw attention to shifts between these elections, we make every effort to acknowledge when the simple comparison of data points requires qualification due to particularities of the 2012 election. To historically contextualize the 2016 results is also about more than just explaining them, of course. It also means pointing us to trend lines that will be important as we shift from grappling with the recent past to embarking upon strategy for the near future.

# ELECTION 2016:
# A VERY BRIEF OVERVIEW

**CONTRARY TO EARLY** projections, voter turnout in 2016 ultimately exceeded that of 2012, both in raw numbers and in participation rate. According to results certified by state election boards, a total of around 139 million voters went to the polls in 2016.[4] Meanwhile, around 92 million of the country's estimated 231 million eligible voters did not cast ballots.[5] This is a participation rate of 60.2 percent, up from 58.6 percent in 2012.[6] As is well known, Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton received 2.87 million more votes than Republican Donald Trump, but lost in state-allocated electoral votes 306-232.

Data from the US Census Bureau show that the composition of the 2016 electorate departed in some ways from recent historical trends, and that the increase in overall participation was not distributed evenly across groups. Notably, turnout rates declined across several Democratic-leaning voter groups, as we detail below. In the swing states of Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin, falling participation rates among non-white voters meant that white voters grew as a share of the electorate. Exit polls and post-election survey data meanwhile reveal that these white voters— and especially certain sub-groups thereof—gave Trump wider margins than they gave Mitt Romney four years earlier. It took both of these dynamics—depressed turnout among Democratic-leaning groups, and shifts in segments of the white electorate toward Trump—to ensure that Clinton would not prevail in the Electoral College.

# YOUNG VOTERS

**SOON AFTER THE** 2016 election, some analysts identified young voters as a group that was key in swinging the presidency to Donald Trump. Clinton campaign manager Robby Mook, for example, stated that lower-than-expected support from young voters was "why we lost."[7] Overall youth voter turnout was not unusually low in 2016, however. In fact, voters age 18 to 29 were the only age group that participated at a significantly higher rate than in 2012, up from 45 percent to 46.1 percent nationally.[8] In raw numbers, an estimated 21.62 million voters age 18 to 29 cast ballots in 2016 (15.7 percent of the electorate), out of a total of 46.87 million (20.9 percent of eligible voters) who could have done so.[9]

Secretary Clinton ultimately carried a smaller share of 18 to 29 year-old voters than President Obama did in 2012, however. Even as this demographic gave Clinton a much larger margin than any other age group, her 55 percent paled in comparison to Obama's 60 percent. Further, according to exit polls, Clinton did worse among young voters in some decisive swing states. In Florida, for example, Obama defeated Mitt Romney among young voters by a 34-point margin. Clinton won the same group by only 18 points. In Pennsylvania, Obama won by 28 points, while Clinton's edge was just nine. Most dramatically, the margin of young people in Wisconsin favoring Obama in 2012 was 23 points, but sank to just three for Clinton in 2016.[10]

Clinton's losses among young voters are best explained by disaggregating the age group by race/ethnicity. First, if we break down the overall 18 to 29 year-old turnout, we see that the increased participation rate is concentrated in one segment of these voters: whites. Indeed, Census Bureau estimates show that young white voters are the age-race group that most increased its 2016 participation rate over that from 2012. Though young Latinxs and Asian Americans also went to the polls in greater numbers in 2016, their share of the youth vote did not grow on pace with their share of the voting-eligible population. Meanwhile, turnout among young African Americans fell considerably since the last presidential election.[11]

The growing share of the youth electorate made up of whites was, as with all age groups, far more likely than the rest of its age cohort to support Trump. An estimated 46 percent of the young adults who voted for Trump were young white men, and another 33 percent were young white women.[12] Trump in fact won more of the votes of young whites than Clinton did, though it is significant to note that both candidates did worse with this group than their respective parties' 2012 candidates. Whereas Clinton lost young white voters 47-43, President Obama lost them to Mitt Romney 51-44.

These figures point to a final significant trend in youth voting in 2016: a spike in the number of votes cast outside the two major parties. Among white voters age 18 to 29, the rate of "third-party" voting increased from 5 to 10 percent since the previous election. For voters of color in the same age range, it went from

Voters age 18 to 29 turned out less than other groups, but increased their participation rate relative to 2012, from 45 percent to 46.1 percent.

Young voters supported Hillary Clinton by a larger margin than any other age group, but the share of their vote she received (55 percent) was smaller than that for President Obama in 2012 (60 percent).

The increase in young voter turnout was almost entirely comprised of young *white* voters, who were far more likely than young voters of color to support Donald Trump.

around 2 to 6 percent. When we expand to include all voters under the age of 40—accounting for around 31 percent of the 2016 electorate—between 9.5 and 10 percent voted for someone other than the Democratic or Republican nominees for president.[13] This is well above the 4 percent of voters age 40+ who did so, not to mention the 2-3 percent of the under-40 cohort that voted third party in the previous two elections.

This section has shown that the claim that young voters did not turn out in 2016 is misleading. To understand the influence of the 18 to 29 year-old electorate, we must further disaggregate the group by race/ethnicity. Doing so reveals that turnout rates decreased among young people of color, but actually increased among young whites. Clinton's margin among young people did not reach the level of President Obama's due to these shifts, as well as the influence of high rates of third-party voting.

# WOMEN VOTERS

**THE CLINTON CAMPAIGN** was also disappointed by the level of support it received from women, and one prevalent narrative holds that they are responsible for her loss. This despite Secretary Clinton's historic place as the first woman to top a major party ticket, not to mention Trump's misogynistic discourse and boasts of committing sexual assault with impunity. But here again we must disaggregate the larger group, because overall, Clinton performed well among women. She won the female vote nationally by a 12- to 13-point margin, while Trump won the male vote by 11-12 points depending on the poll. Only the 2000 election has had a gender gap even close to this large in the past 44 years.[14]

In the lead up to the election, a common forecast was that single women and college-educated women would show historic electoral might, catapulting Clinton to victory. National exit polls found that unmarried women did indeed give Clinton a much wider margin (63-32) than did married women (49-47), but it was not nearly as large as Barack Obama's margins with this group.[15] Nor did unmarried women come close to outnumbering married women at the polls, as some predicted they could.[16] This is in part because unmarried women's 2016 participation rate (56 percent) continued to be far below that of their married counterparts (68.7 percent).[17]

But the central line along which Clinton's margin with women split was that of race. While exit polls estimate that nearly 95 percent of African American women voted for Clinton, it was Trump who won the majority of white women—52 percent. Political scientist Jane Junn points out that this is consistent with a long historical trend: 1996 saw the only election of the past 50 years in which a Democratic presidential candidate carried a majority of white women. Junn further argues that what is conventionally known as the "gender gap" in voting is actually inflated by the presence of more voters of color in the female electorate than in the male.[18] Census Bureau estimates bear out that 28 percent of women who voted in 2016 identified with a race/ethnicity other than white, compared to 25 percent of men.[19] Trump's success with white women also reminds us that women—like all voters— vote their party affiliation first, irrespective of whether there is a female candidate in the race.[20] Indeed, an analysis of white Republican women finds that even those who expressed the strongest views on gender equality and against hostile sexism were only slightly less likely than the least gender-conscious Republican women to have voted for Trump in the general election.[21]

Among white women, there was also a noteworthy education gap in voting behavior. Secretary Clinton won among white women who hold college degrees 51-45—a margin that appears narrow, but in fact represents a reversal for this group relative to 2012.[22] Meanwhile, 60-62 percent of white women without a college degree voted for Trump. Significantly, this group is a larger portion of the electorate than white female college graduates in key Midwestern swing states, giving its voters outsize influence. Their support for Trump follows a longer-term migration of non-college white women to the Republicans.[23] The split among white voters between those with and without a college degree is a key dynamic to which we return in a later section. This section has shown that what was significant about the "women's vote" in 2016 was the extent to which it came down to these divisions of race and educational attainment.

> Clinton won among women nationally by 12 points; Trump won among men by about the same margin.
>
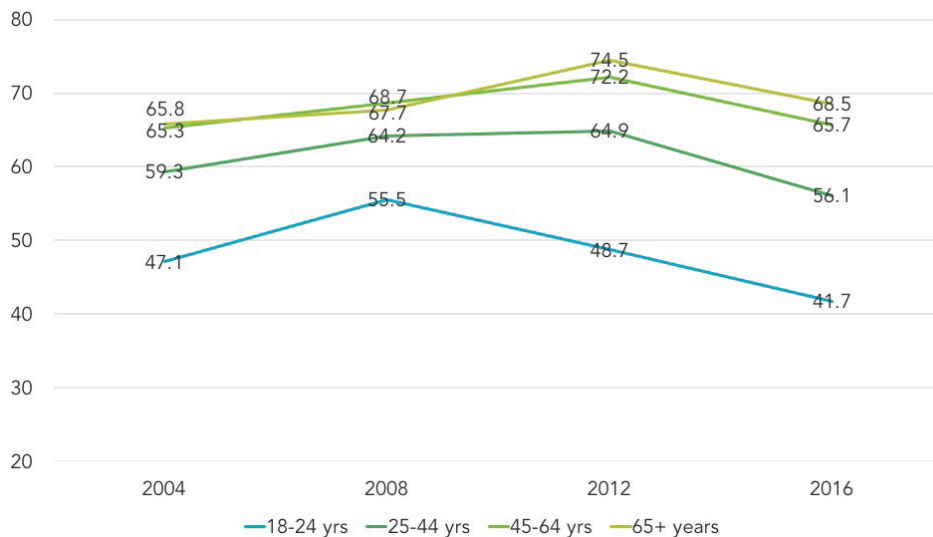> Around 95 percent of African American women supported Clinton.
>
> However, Trump won more of the votes of white women than Clinton did, and carried as much as 62 percent of votes cast by white women who do not hold a college degree.

# AFRICAN AMERICAN, LATINX, ASIAN AMERICAN, AND AMERICAN INDIAN VOTERS

**IN ADDITION TO** young voters and women, African Americans and Latinxs were two other Democratic-leaning demographics with which the Clinton campaign hoped to repeat President Obama's success. After historically high rates of participation in 2012, it is little surprise that Black voter turnout decreased somewhat in 2016; not every year can be a record year.[24] Nationally, the African American participation rate dropped to 59.3 percent—down from 66.6 percent in 2012 and 65.2 percent in 2008, but still similar to the 60.3 percent rate in 2004. When we break down African American turnout by age, however (see Fig. 1), we see that 2016 participation rates among those under age 45 was low even by that standard. Only 56.1 percent of Black adults age 25 to 44 voted in 2016—down from 64.9 percent in 2012, and below even their 59.3 percent rate in 2004. Likewise, African Americans age 18 to 24 dropped to their lowest rate of participation (41.7 percent) since 2000.

African American voter participation dropped significantly since 2012; among African Americans age 18 to 45, turnout rates reached their lowest point since 2000. Low turnout in some states with new voting regulations raise questions about voter suppression.

Clinton won a large majority of Latinx voters, but available evidence suggests that she under-performed relative to President Obama in 2012.

Even after a campaign in which he insulted Mexicans as a group, scapegoated immigrants, and vowed to build a wall on the US-Mexico border, Trump received the support of around 1 in 4 Latinx voters.

**FIG. 1**

## African American voter participation in presidential elections by age



Sources: US Census Bureau Voting and Registration tables, 2004-2016.
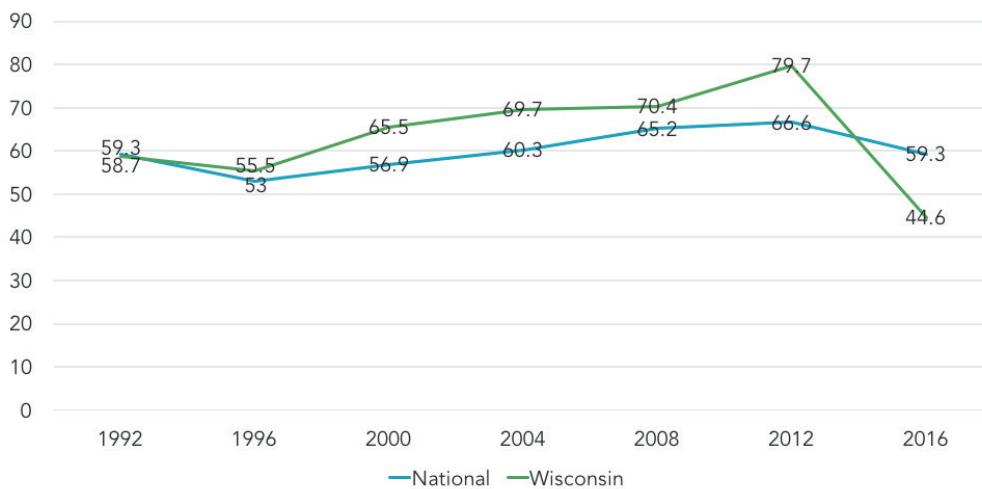
African American voters supported Clinton overwhelmingly, but the decrease in their numbers may have proved significant in a few key locales. Analysts have noted, for example, sizable declines in Black voter turnout in Milwaukee[25] and Philadelphia.[26] If African Americans had turned out in these cities in numbers closer to those of

2012, they may well have tipped their states to Clinton. Still, *New York Times* data analyst Nate Cohn points out that President Obama would have won in 2012 even with 2016 levels of Black voter turnout; this is because he also did much better than Clinton among whites.[27]

Census Bureau figures on turnout raise questions about the impact of voter ID laws, early-voting cutbacks, and elimination of same-day voter registration on African American voting. These and other voter suppression techniques have been instituted in numerous states since 2012,[28] including a handful of swing states. Among these are North Carolina, Ohio, and Wisconsin—each of which lost 80,000 or more Black voters in 2016 according to the Census Bureau.[29] It is difficult, however, to assess how much of this drop is due to the states' new laws versus lack of enthusiasm for the candidates. One possible approach would be to begin by comparing African American turnout in neighboring states that have no such laws. But unfortunately, there are enormous discrepancies across data sources and methods for estimating Black voter turnout in Michigan in 2016, and smaller but still significant discrepancies for Pennsylvania.[30]

**FIG. 2**

## African American voter turnout rates in presidential elections



*Sources: US Census Bureau Voting and Registration tables, 2004-2016.*

This is therefore an area in urgent need of qualitative, on-the-ground investigation. Given that its strict voter ID law was accompanied by precipitous declines in Black and young-adult participation, as well as a drop in participation among voters 65 and older,[31] Wisconsin seems an obvious starting point for such a research agenda.

Among Latinxs (or "Hispanics"), voter participation remained at the same low rate from 2012 to 2016: just 48 percent of eligible voters cast ballots. Due to population growth, together with depressed African American turnout, the nearly 12.7 million Latinxs who voted in 2016 were a slightly larger share of the electorate (9.2 percent). Still, their share of voters continues to lag well behind their share of the voting-eligible population (11.9 percent), not to mention their share of the total adult population (15.9 percent). The increase in Latinx vote share was perhaps most impactful in Nevada and Arizona, the latter of which was the only battleground state in which Clinton out-performed President Obama's 2012 margin.[32] Vote share gains in the crucial state of Florida were more modest, and were superseded by that state's increased white vote share.
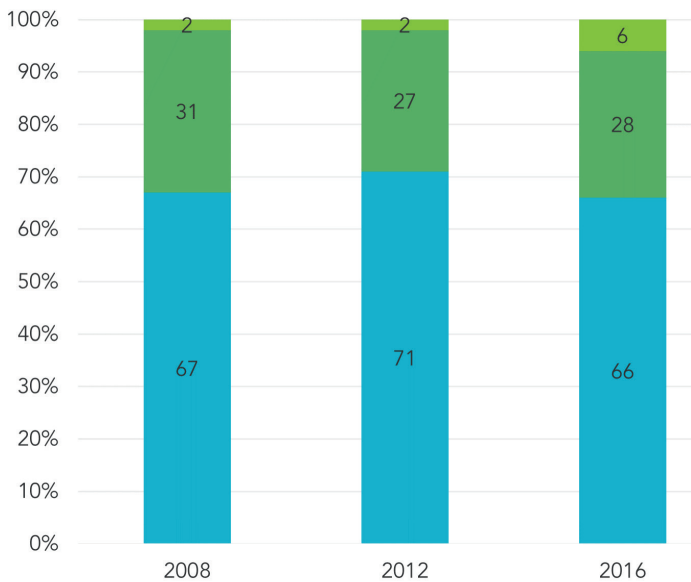
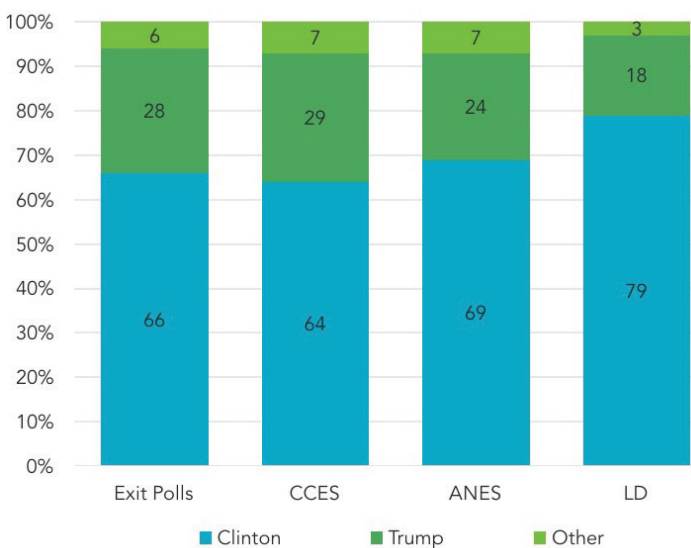**FIG. 3**

## Latinx voting in presidential elections
*What The National Exit Polls Say*



**FIG. 4**

## Latinx voting in 2016
*Comparing Survey Findings*



Exactly what portion of Latinxs voted for Secretary Clinton remains one of the most hotly contested issues of 2016 voter behavior. No one would deny that Clinton won among Latinxs, but analysts disagree about the size of the margins this broad demographic category gave her. National exit polls found that Clinton won two-thirds of Latinx voters, while the polling firm Latino Decisions (LD) insists it was closer to four-fifths. One analysis of the debate shows that Clinton's margins in heavily Latinx counties only support the LD estimate if Latinx turnout ended up being far less than expected.[33] Subsequent findings from the Census Bureau do not bear out this premise. Nor has subsequently released data from other major national post-election surveys found support for Clinton reaching even 70 percent among Latinxs (see chart below).[34] Thus, it is likely that Clinton did indeed under-perform President Obama's 71-27 advantage among Latinx voters—and that Trump did at least as well as Mitt Romney.[35] As others have pointed out, whether Trump got 28 percent or 18 percent of the Latinx vote nationally, this is still a substantial number of voters; either result suggests that there is a "floor" for the level of support Republican presidential candidates can count on receiving from Latinxs.[36]

Whether or not the Latino Decisions poll yielded the best estimates of overall Latinx voting, it offers valuable insights into voting patterns among sub-groups of this diverse demographic group. It shows, for example, that the only real outlier among national-origin groups was Cuban Americans, who essentially split their votes between Clinton and Trump. Participants in the LD survey who chose to be interviewed in Spanish were much less likely to have supported Trump, and first-generation, naturalized Latinx voters voted for him at half the rate of third-generation US-born Latinxs. Finally, evangelical or "born-again" Christian Latinxs supported Trump at over twice the rate that the Catholic majority of Latinx voters did.[37]

Major national studies have a harder time capturing less populous demographic groups like Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs). The Census Bureau finds that "Asian" continues to be the racial/ethnic category of US citizens with the lowest rate of voter registration (56.3 percent). This group's participation rate increased from 47.3 to 49 percent in 2016, for a total of just over five million Asian American voters. Asian Americans have a rapidly growing voter base, but continue to receive little attention from pollsters and political campaigns, due at least in part to their residing disproportionately in non-battleground states.[38]

Targeted polling projects offer the best information on AAPIs' 2016 voting behavior. One such effort was a multilingual exit poll carried out in 14 states by the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF). In AALDEF's poll, 79 percent of the 14,000 voters surveyed said that they voted for Secretary Clinton.[39] Other experts on AAPI voting point out, however, that this figure probably over-estimates support for Clinton due to the poll's disproportionate focus on "enclave" communities that skew Democratic.[40] For this reason, the National Asian American Survey (NAAS) is likely more representative.[41] The NAAS put AAPI support for Clinton at 69 percent, with 25 percent supporting Trump.[42] Bangladeshis and Pakistanis were the national-origin groups that gave Clinton the largest margins—90 percent and 88 percent, respectively. Trump's highest favorability among AAPIs was with Vietnamese Americans, while Chinese Americans voted for him at a slightly higher rate (35 percent) despite somewhat lower favorability (28 percent). This gap between voting and favorability suggests that a different Democratic candidate may have garnered more votes from Chinese Americans, though the NAAS also suggests that they are the most politically independent of all AAPI national-origin groups.[43]

American Indian voters, meanwhile, are not even contemplated as a group in the Census Bureau's Voting and Registration studies. This is unfortunate, as it makes it difficult to investigate American Indian turnout and any possible issues with access to polling places or other forms of voter suppression. In Arizona, Census Bureau figures from 2012 and 2016 show a 47,000-person drop (40 percent) in the number of voters *not* identifying as non-Hispanic white, Black, Hispanic, or Asian. Is this decline in unclassified voters due to depressed American Indian turnout? Or is it instead a product of sampling error? It is difficult to tell. But given the history of American Indian voter suppression in Arizona, as well as the state's new restrictions on mail-in ballots, the issue warrants further investigation.[44]

Few media analyses consider American Indian voting behavior, even with respect to competitive states like Arizona. A report in *Indian Country Today* highlights data suggesting that American Indians voted much like other Democratic-leaning groups in 2016. That is, they overwhelmingly favored Secretary Clinton, but in numbers that fell short of Obama's in the two previous elections.[45] Indeed, our review of results from the 10 counties in the contiguous United States with the highest percentage of American Indian residents found that Secretary Clinton won nine of them, by an average margin of +35. Still, Clinton received fewer votes in each and every one of these counties than President Obama received in 2012.

This section has shown that across communities of color, voters overwhelmingly supported Hillary Clinton for president. The margin of Latinx voters favoring Clinton was less than some anticipated given the platform and rhetoric of the Trump campaign, but this was partially due to GOP partisanship among one segment of Latinx voters: Cuban Americans. Meanwhile, though African American, Asian American, and American Indian voters favored Clinton over Trump by overwhelming margins, their impact on the election was lessened by low participation rates, especially in the context of high white voter turnout.

# "WORKING CLASS" VOTERS

**PERHAPS THE MOST** prominent narrative about the 2016 election is that Donald Trump emerged victorious because disaffected "working class"—or white working class—voters flocked to him. Many such accounts stress in particular the importance of working class voters in the "Rust Belt," the region where most of the states that swung to Trump are concentrated. We will consider the specific voting patterns in that region in the following section. But first it is important to scrutinize the extent to which Trump's was a largely "working class" constituency—a characterization that we find both conceptually fraught and empirically suspect.

Media coverage of the 2016 election tended to use the concept of "the working class" in inconsistent and reductive ways. This may, to some extent, be unavoidable. There is no consensus among social researchers as to the criteria by which to define social class, nor even whether it should be assigned through objective versus subjective metrics. A person's class identity generally lies at the intersection of a number of social and economic characteristics—occupation, income, education, and racialization, among others.[46] The degree of significance of each of these in turn varies depending on contextual factors; as with other forms of social differentiation, the enactment of class is situational and relational, not fixed or absolute.[47]

Many analyses of the 2016 electorate slipped back and forth between conflating class identity with income on one hand, and with educational attainment on the other. Both conflations run the risk of yielding misleading analyses. Where income is concerned, the $50,000 mark often used as the "working class" cut-off is not necessarily a threshold of economic security; this varies based on family size, place of residence, and other factors. Meanwhile, to boil class down to whether or not an individual has a college degree reduces it to a binary with no possibility of a "middle class." It also ignores the fact that it is still relatively common for persons without a college degree to earn above what most would consider a "working class" income—in some cases, far more. Data from the ANES post-election survey find that almost 60 percent of white voters without a degree who supported Trump in fact came from households in the top half of the income distribution. One in five non-college white Trump voters were from households earning over $100,000.[48] Should these be counted among his "working class" supporters?

Though there is a fairly strong correlation between median household income and the share of a population with a college degree, the two factors can be disentangled. Numerous analyses show that educational attainment was much more predictive of 2016 voter preference, especially among whites, as we discuss below. The narrative that Trump won over low-income voters requires more caveats. Exit polls suggest that, while those earning $50,000 or less in swing states gave Republicans more support in 2016 than in 2012, they did not do

Media analyses of the 2016 election have deployed the term "working class" in inconsistent and reductive ways, oscillating between conflating class identity with household income and with educational attainment.

The popular racialized image of "the working class" as white is inaccurate by any standard. Of all 2016 voters who had no college degree *and* lived in households with an income under $50,000, around 40 percent reported a racial or ethnic identity *other than* white.

Of the white voters without a college degree who voted for Trump, around 60 percent were from households in the top half of the income distribution. One in five was from a household with an income over $100,000.

so in numbers even close to those that abandoned the Democrats. That is, hundreds of thousands more voters in this income group abstained or voted for a smaller party's candidate compared to 2012.[49]

Though they are rarely the focus of post-election discourse on the "working class," members of union households did in fact give Secretary Clinton smaller margins than they gave past Democratic candidates. She won among union household members, but only by +8, down from +18 for President Obama in 2012. But again, much of this lost support for Democrats did not go to Trump. According to national exit polls, for every seven voters from a union household that voted for Obama in 2012 but not for Clinton in 2016, only three went to Trump while four went to other candidates.

In some cases, the characterization of Trump supporters as "working class" appears to be a shorthand for myriad local social problems that correlate with large increases in support for Trump relative to other Republicans. For example, sociologist Shannon Monnat shows that Trump out-performed Mitt Romney in counties with low rates of college graduates, but even more in those with rising rates of mortality from drugs, alcohol, and suicide. Monnat discusses such "deaths of despair" as a scourge of the post-industrial US working class.[50] Similarly, *The Economist* found that a low score on an index of county-level public-health statistics is an extraordinarily strong predictor of gains in the county for Trump vis-à-vis Romney. The index includes statistics on county-wide obesity, diabetes, heavy drinking, and rates of physical (in)activity. Here too the authors associate these conditions with "the working class," while stressing that poor physical health strongly predicts Trump support even when controlling for educational attainment.[51] Correlations like these perpetuate the ongoing debate over the role of economic anxiety in motivating voters to support Trump—a debate we take up in a forthcoming companion piece to this report.

Finally, any talk of "the working class" should be careful not to present it as either overwhelmingly white, or engaged principally in manufacturing. One analysis of the 2016 electorate found that 40 percent of voters who both (1) had no college degree and (2) lived in a household earning less than $50,000 were non-white. Not surprisingly, a larger share of this group was employed in the service sector than in manufacturing. And *this* "working class" split its votes evenly between Clinton and Trump, 47-47.[52] This is a far cry from the narrative on 2016 working-class voters still put forward in most media accounts, which this section has shown to be based on fluid, partial, and often problematic conceptions of the group in question.

# RUST BELT VOTERS

**DONALD TRUMP SECURED** victory in the 2016 presidential election by defeating Hillary Clinton in six states that had supported President Obama in 2012: Florida, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa. Post-election analyses have focused considerable attention on the latter five of these states, which are geographically contiguous and similarly comprised of vast rural areas and post-industrial cities and towns. Indeed, these "Rust Belt" states' economic and demographic similarities have given rise to analyses purporting to explain all five collectively, generating narratives about the region that are in turn presented as the keys to Trump's Electoral College victory. This section shows that the Rust Belt's embrace of Trump was more qualified than commonly reported, and only one among several factors that led to his success in the region.[53]

A first such additional factor was the significant incidence of voter abstention in the Rust Belt, likely combined with voter suppression. Here Wisconsin offers the exemplary case. Wisconsin historically has been among the states with the highest rates of voter participation, and 2016 was no exception: It placed fifth in the country in voter turnout.[54] But this rank obscures the fact that 2016 had the lowest participation rate *for Wisconsin* in 16 years.[55] In raw numbers, around 92,000 fewer Wisconsin voters cast ballots for president in 2016 compared to 2012.[56] Ohio and Iowa also saw statewide drops in raw numbers of ballots cast for president, meaning that three out of the five states in the country with such a drop were from the "Rust Belt 5" that swung. Meanwhile, Minnesota's numbers were stagnant from 2012 to 2016, and Michigan's increase in turnout was marginal (+1.44 percent).

Trump ultimately carried Wisconsin with a 22,748 vote advantage over Clinton. Yet he won with fewer votes than Romney received when he lost the state in 2012. Even among the oft-mentioned 22 Wisconsin counties that supported President Obama in 2012 before "flipping" to Trump in 2016, what is most notable is not how much Trump out-performed Mitt Romney. It is rather Clinton's—and in many cases *both* candidates'—under-performance relative to Obama.[57] It is thus clear that significant numbers of 2012 Wisconsin voters did not cast ballots for either Clinton or Trump in 2016.

Michigan illustrates a distinct but related dynamic from 2016: large increases in the proportion of votes cast for candidates outside the two major parties. As mentioned above, Michigan saw a modest increase in voters—around 68,000 more than in 2012. However, the number of Michigan voters to cast ballots for Trump or Clinton was almost 200,000 fewer than the number of people who voted for Obama or Romney. Secretary Clinton lost the state by 10,700 votes. Meanwhile, Libertarian Gary Johnson received 172,000 votes, and Green Party candidate Jill Stein received 51,000. Similarly, in Minnesota—where Clinton prevailed by just a 1.5 percent margin—250,000 voters chose a candidate other than Clinton or Trump.[58] In Wisconsin, where Trump's margin was +0.8 points, "third-party" and write-in candidates garnered 5.56 percent of votes for president.

Trump secured his victory in the Electoral College by winning the states of Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin by a combined total of less than 78,000 votes.

Significant rates of voter abstention and third-party voting in the Rust Belt temper the image of unbridled enthusiasm for Trump across the region.

Trump's margins saw the biggest increases principally in those small-town and rural counties in which voters consistently favor GOP candidates. These "red" areas got redder.

Michigan voters were also notable for the large number that apparently voted in 2016 *without* voting for president. Sometimes called "undervoting," the practice of casting a ballot while leaving the presidential portion blank was unusually widespread in this election.[59] While figures on the phenomenon are imperfect, multiple reports place the undervote in Michigan at 75,000 ballots—seven times Trump's margin of victory. Ohio is reported as having had over 100,000 undervotes, around twice as many as in 2012.[60] These trends in third-party voting and voter abstention push back against the narrative of unbridled enthusiasm for Trump in the Rust Belt.

**TABLE 1**

## Third-Party Voting and Declining Turnout in the Rust Belt

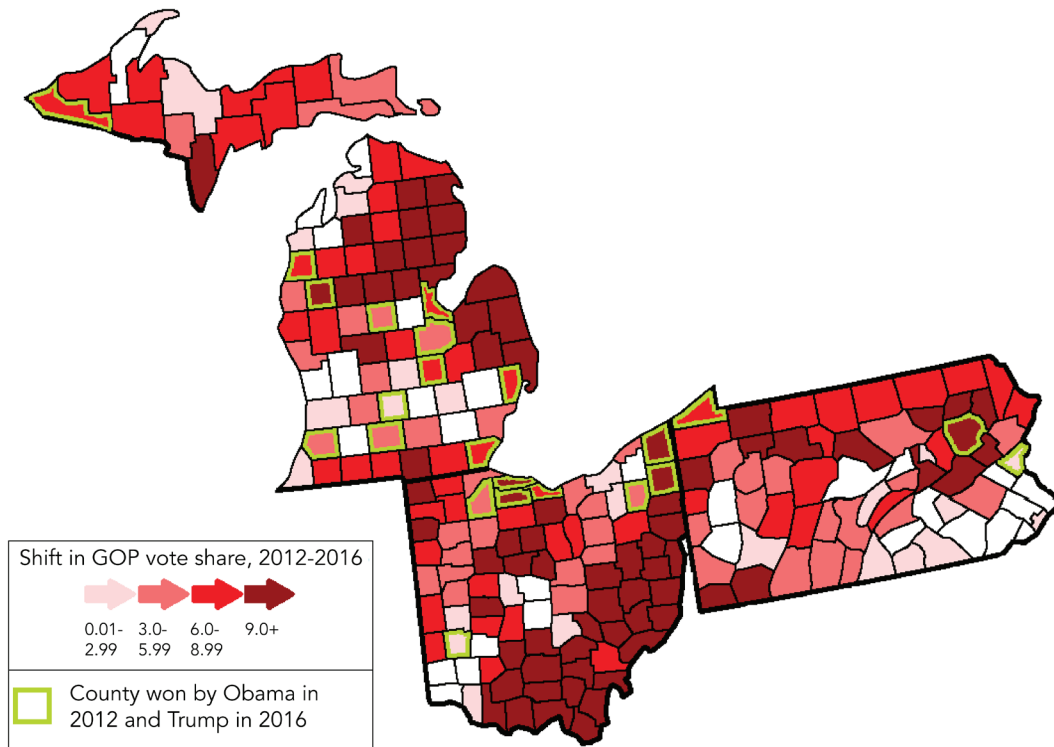| State | Vote margin | Third-party votes | Presidential left blank | States with least growth in raw voter turnout 2012–16 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Michigan | 10,700 | 250,000 | ~ 75,000 | Mississippi | -5.9% |
| Pennsylvania | 44,300 | 218,000 | [no data] | Wisconsin* | -3.0% |
| Wisconsin | 22,700 | 188,000 | [no data] | Ohio* | -1.5% |
| | | | | Hawaii | -1.3% |
| | | | | Iowa* | -1.0% |
| | | | | Minnesota* | 0.3% |
| | | | | Michigan* | 1.4% |

Pennsylvania's election results are more in line with some of the prevailing stories about the Rust Belt in general. There the electorate grew by a respectable 6.3 percent since 2012, adding 362,000 voters. These gains in turnout included Philadelphia and its four surrounding counties, which were expected to be key to a Clinton victory. Clinton's performance was strong in these affluent suburban counties, even improving on Obama's 2012 margins by around 65,000 votes.[61] But it was not enough to keep up with Trump's gains in other parts of the state. Particularly in rural and small-town counties, much of Pennsylvania went from pink in 2012 to dark red in 2016. Of the ten most densely populated counties in Pennsylvania, Trump under-performed Mitt Romney in eight.[62] But of the 40 *least* densely populated, Trump won 38, improving on Romney's share of the vote by an average of +7.3 percent.[63]

This pattern held elsewhere in the Rust Belt as well. Though a good deal of media attention has focused on counties that "flipped," most of Trump's big gains over Romney were actually in areas that Romney won, but less emphatically. That is, the 2016 election saw red counties turn redder. Ohio offers a stark example. There Trump improved on Romney's share of the vote by more than 9 points in 42 counties. Four of these were "flips;" but 21—fully half—were counties that Romney already won in 2012 *by at least 12 points*. The map below further illustrates the pattern wherein most of the counties with the biggest GOP vote share increases in 2016 were counties that were already red—not those that moved from Obama to Trump.

This section has aimed to provide a richer and more accurate description of 2016 election outcomes in the Rust Belt than is offered in most analyses. When we eschew any singular narrative about the region, we can access several state- and sub-state-level dynamics of considerable consequence. One of these is depressed voter turnout, which we

**FIG. 5**

## County-Level Shifts and Flips in the Rust Belt



Shift in GOP vote share, 2012-2016

0.01-   3.0-   6.0-   9.0+
2.99    5.99   8.99

County won by Obama in
2012 and Trump in 2016

*Sources: Michigan Secretary of State; Ohio Secretary of State; Pennsylvania Department of State.*

have suggested is due at least to abstention, but likely also to voter suppression in Wisconsin and Ohio. Another is a pronounced increase in votes cast outside the two major parties. These dynamics both suggest that the embrace of Trump was uneven, especially outside dependably GOP-supporting areas.

Still, there is no denying that certain parts of the region's electorate moved decidedly toward Trump. He did after all win five states that voted for Barack Obama twice, orchestrating significant swings in all of them. Trump's margins in Ohio and Iowa exceeded what we expect from battleground states, and in Michigan, despite the spike in third-party voting, Trump won 164,000 more votes than Mitt Romney. Perhaps most striking, Trump's margins in Pennsylvania—where overall turnout was strong and third-party voting was well below the national average—makes clear that he won over large numbers of voters there who had supported President Obama in 2012. The data indicate that these gains were concentrated in a few sub-groups of white voters, the demographic group to which we now turn.

# WHITE VOTERS

**DESPITE ONGOING** demographic shifts, still more than 2/3 of US citizens age 18 and older identify as non-Hispanic whites. Donald Trump won among these white voters in 2016 by an overall margin of 20 points (57-37). As the previous sections indicated, Trump consistently did much better among whites than any other racial or ethnic group across other variables such as age, gender, and income. Still, support for Trump varied in its degrees of strength and historical precedence across white sub-groups, as the following paragraphs detail.

Overall white voter participation increased in 2016 relative to 2012, even if not to the historic proportions some pre-election forecasts projected.[64] It is notable that white voters maintained their 2012 *share* of the electorate, breaking with what had been a steady downward trend.[65] Non-Hispanic whites are consistently over-represented in the electorate compared to their share of the voting-age citizen population. But usually as the latter figure drops—from 71.1 percent in 2012 to 69.9 percent in 2014 to 68.9 percent in 2016—so too does their vote share. This was not the case in 2016, when increased white turnout, together with depressed Black turnout, maintained whites as a 73 percent majority of the electorate.[66]

Trump's 20-point win among all white voters merely matched that of Mitt Romney in 2012. But the margins by which certain *segments* of the white electorate opted for the GOP candidate—or fled the Democrats—proved decisive. We consider two groups the most significant in this regard: first, whites who do not have a college degree; and second, whites from rural and small-town communities.

As we noted above, many post-election analyses have homed in on educational attainment as a key predictor of voter preference in 2016, often using it as a proxy variable for class identity. Although we object to the latter conflation, there is no doubt that the attention to the split between voters with and without a college degree is warranted. Indeed, had pre-election polls done a better job of attending to voters without a college degree (or "non-college" voters), the errors in their projections likely would have been far less dramatic.[67]

The spike in the share of non-college voters who supported the GOP was not however an across-the-board phenomenon; it was an overwhelmingly white one. Looking at the electorate by educational attainment alone, exit polls and surveys say that nationwide Clinton won 52-53 percent of college degree holders, and Trump won 49-51 percent of non-college graduates.[68] This is a gap, but it pales in comparison to what we find when we disaggregate by both education and racial or ethnic identity. For example, among *non-white* voters with no college degree, exit polls found that 75-76 percent supported Clinton. White voters with no degree, on the other hand, gave Trump 66-67 percent of their votes.[69]

Indeed, within the white electorate, 2016 appears to have seen a historic gap in voting choice along lines of

*Trump won the presidency by securing a coalition of white voters, including the vast majority of dependable GOP supporters and significant shares of key segments of the white electorate without strong party allegiance.*

*Trump's most significant gains over Romney's 2012 performance were with whites who do not have a college degree. Though it is often glossed as a shift in "working class" voting, the pattern was in fact (a) exclusive to white voters, and (b) observable across income levels.*

*Part of the GOP's increase in votes among Rust Belt whites was due to volatility in the voter pool. But there were also significant numbers of white voters who voted for Obama in 2012 and Trump in 2016, especially in rural and small-town Pennsylvania and Iowa.*

educational attainment. The precise size of that gap, however, remains a matter of debate. According to exit polls, white college graduates favored Trump by 3-4 points, while Trump won whites without a degree by +37—a 34-point gulf. These are the figures that have been widely reported, and they represent a marked acceleration in white non-college voters' preference for GOP candidates. But data from a much larger national survey—the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES)—differ substantially. They show Secretary Clinton narrowly *winning* among white college graduates, and Trump carrying whites without a degree by a smaller margin of +27.[70]

Non-college whites' support for the GOP has been steadily increasing for several election cycles, including in the battleground region of the Midwest. There, the Pew Research Center finds that the percent of whites without a degree who identify as "Republican or Republican-leaning" has gone from 40 percent in 2000 to 56 percent in 2016.[71] In 2008, Barack Obama won non-college whites in 15 states, including Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa. In 2016, Clinton carried them in only Massachusetts and Vermont.[72] Nationally, Republican presidential candidates won among whites without a degree by +18 in 2008 and +25 in 2012.[73] Against this backdrop, the question of whether non-college whites favored Trump by 27 versus 37 points is significant: It speaks to whether 2016 conformed to or exceeded the historical trend—and how much credence we should give the idea of a "Trump effect."

**TABLE 2**

## 2016 Vote Shares by Race and Education

| Race and Education | Exit poll | | | | CCES | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % share | Clinton | Trump | Other | % share | Clinton | Trump | Other |
| White college | 37 | 45 | 48 | 7 | 31 | 48 | 45 | 7 |
| White no degree | 34 | 29 | 66 | 5 | 42 | 34 | 61 | 5 |
| Nonwhite college | 13 | 72 | 22 | 6 | 10 | 70 | 25 | 5 |
| Nonwhite no degree | 16 | 76 | 20 | 4 | 17 | 74 | 20 | 6 |

*Reproduced from: Skelley, "Another Look Back at 2016."*

But as whites without a degree increasingly turn toward the GOP, so too are they declining as a share of potential voters. Debates over whether the group is more accurately represented in the 2016 national exit polls or the CCES essentially turn on questions about the magnitude of these trends. According to the CCES, whites without a degree accounted for around 42 percent of the electorate, as compared to just 34 percent in the national exit polls.

For historical context, non-college whites were around 70 percent of voting-age US citizens in 1980; by 2016, they had dropped to just 45 percent of potential voters.[74] Still, for the exit polls' 34 percent vote share figure to be correct, non-college whites would have needed to vote at a rate dramatically below the national average; this does not appear to be the case.[75] The Census Bureau's estimates of the vote shares of college and non-college whites are in fact entirely consistent with those of the CCES. Furthermore, certified election results also show a pattern of increased turnout in 2016 (relative to 2012) in counties where eligible voters are overwhelmingly non-college whites.[76] We thus concur with the CCES that Trump's margin among white voters without a degree was several points less than commonly believed (though surely still topping Mitt Romney's). Meanwhile, the group comprised a *larger share* of the electorate than the national exit polls reflect, due to a modest increase in turnout rate, together with depressed overall participation among non-whites.

The Clinton campaign expected to be able to counter a poor showing among non-college whites by targeting swing

voters with college degrees, especially in affluent suburbs in battleground states. Clinton did indeed win the support of a larger share of white college graduates than had Democrats past, but it was not enough to offset her losses. GOP gains among whites without a college degree were also evident up and down the household income scale. Statistician Nate Silver of *FiveThirtyEight* has shown that white-majority counties with low rates of college degrees and high incomes shifted further toward the GOP; meanwhile white-majority counties with high rates of degrees and low incomes tended to give Clinton larger margins than they gave President Obama.[77]

As we mentioned in the previous section, many of the largest county-level shifts in 2016 were in rural counties that are predominantly white and that Romney won in the previous presidential election. In 2016, the margins favoring the GOP candidate in these counties swelled, helping deliver their states to Trump. A *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* analysis found that Trump improved on Romney's margin in communities of less than 2,000 residents across Wisconsin by 20 points, or 120,000 votes.[78] Recall that Trump carried Wisconsin by less than 23,000 votes. Nationwide, there are 1,552 counties in which more than 90 percent of the population identifies as white, the vast majority rural. Trump won 1,466 of them, with an average margin of +43 points.[79]

Finally, one of the most hotly debated matters surrounding the 2016 election is how many white voters cast ballots for Trump after having voted for President Obama in 2012. Major national surveys allow for different stories about the numbers of these white "Obama-to-Trump" voters. Often they are exaggerated when pundits and analysts fail to account for changes in which individuals comprised the white electorate—that is, the actual voters casting ballots. The estimates can also be inflated due to the common polling problem that voters over-report having supported past victorious candidates. One widely respected voter study minimized this problem by re-interviewing 8,000 voters in 2016 for whom they had previous voting data from 2012. It found that around 9 percent of those who supported President Obama in 2012 voted for Trump in 2016.[80]

As with all else, there are surely different stories to be told for different states with respect to white Obama-to-Trump voters. In Wisconsin, a notable increase in whites' 2016 vote share undoubtedly accounts for some of the GOP's margin shift relative to 2012 (+7.7 points).[81] But it is just as certain that there *were* white Obama-to-Trump voters in Wisconsin. Likely there were more of them in Michigan and Ohio, where the white vote share increased much more modestly, while the Democrat-to-Republican swing was larger (9.7 points in Michigan, 11.1 in Ohio). Using the same metrics of shift in white vote share and shift in partisan vote margin, Pennsylvania likely had even more Obama-to-Trump voters. Nate Cohn comes to this same conclusion about Pennsylvania through his analysis of official voter file data, which apparently do not show widespread changes in which individual white Pennsylvanians cast ballots in 2012 versus 2016.[82] Obama-to-Trump shifts were no doubt extensive in Iowa as well, where the steadily 94 percent white electorate swung an astounding 15.2 points.

# CONCLUSION

**DONALD TRUMP CLAIMED** the US presidency with the smallest percentage of the popular vote of any victorious candidate since Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876. His share of the vote was just 0.4 percent higher than that of Michael Dukakis in 1988. In raw votes, his deficit was similar to John Kerry's when he lost in the re-election of George W. Bush—the only election in which the GOP candidate won the popular vote in the past 28 years. But the United States does not elect our presidents based on the popular vote.

This report has shown that Trump won in the Electoral College by carrying a coalition of white voters. This included retaining almost the entirety of the GOP's regular voter base; capitalizing on increased turnout among young white voters; and improving on past Republicans' margins among rural and small-town whites and whites without a college degree. By examining exit polls alongside other post-election survey findings, and in relation to Census Bureau Voting and Registration data, we argue that Trump's margin among white voters without a degree was somewhat smaller than has been widely reported. However, due to their size as a portion of eligible voters, their modest increase in participation rate came together with lower turnout among other voter groups to make the white non-college vote *share* significantly higher than polls forecast. Ultimately, it was 78,000 votes in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin that made the difference—tipping these three states, and with them the Electoral College.

But the report has stressed as well that we should not allow our analysis of who voted and for whom to downplay the critical matter of who did not. Depressed turnout rates—and quite possibly voter suppression—across several Democratic-leaning groups contributed enormously to Clinton's defeat. If the 2016 presidential contest is indeed, as one commentary put it, "the election that spawned a million takes,"[83] it is in part because the Clinton campaign had numerous potential paths to victory. Those who wish to assign blame can—and do—debate whether the brunt should be placed on Obama voters who swung to Trump, Romney voters who didn't swing to Clinton, or those who voted for neither major-party candidate.

But a clear-eyed assessment must acknowledge that no one of these alone can be deemed *the* reason for the election's outcome. Still less is there any singular explanation for *why* voters chose to act as they did—the subject of forthcoming companion publications to this one. Rather than seeking such master causes, those wishing to build future campaign strategy will find their surest footing on a foundation that recognizes that *all of the above* put Donald Trump in the White House. And when those unhappy with the outcome move beyond disappointment that so many failures came to pass, they should see this also means that the way forward has not one but many possible openings.■

# ENDNOTES

1   Given multiple ongoing investigations into Russia's role in the election, recent revelations about the manipulation of social media during the campaign, and the release of Hillary Clinton's memoir, *What Happened*, we may still see new issues claiming pride of place in prevailing narratives about the election.

2   This is leaving aside arguments emphasizing the role of foreign meddling and contrived scandals.

3   Future publications will address, for example, what recent research tells us about how we can fight voter suppression; how different forms of racial, cultural, and economic anxiety influenced 2016 voting choices; and what role anti-government and anti-elite sentiments are playing in ongoing reconfigurations of the electorate.

4   Around 2 million fewer were cast for the office of President.

5   US Elections Project and Nonprofit Vote, America Goes to the Polls 2016: A Report on Voter Turnout in the 2016 Election, March 2017, p. 8. Another 6.1 million voting-age citizens were barred from voting due to a felony conviction. Over half of these – almost 3.1 million – were persons who have already completed their prison sentences. See Christopher Uggen, Ryan Larson, and Sarah Shannon, 6 Million Lost Voters: State-Level Estimates of Felony Disenfranchisement, 2016, The Sentencing Project, 2016.

6   See US Elections Project and Nonprofit Vote, America Goes to the Polls 2016. The US Census Bureau estimates the 2016 participation rate at 61.4 percent,

but this is based on voters' self-reported participation, not actual ballots counted.

7   Aaron Blake, "Yes, you can blame millennials for Hillary Clinton's loss," The Washington Post, December 2, 2016.

8   Young voters participated at the unusually high rate of 51 percent in 2008. See Thom File, "Voting in America: A Look at the 2016 Presidential Election," Census Blogs, United States Census Bureau, May 10, 2017.

9   United States Census Bureau, "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2016," May 2017, Table 1.

10  As Blake cautions, these state-level figures are inexact representations that likely overestimate the change in youth vote margins. But assuming, as we do, that they are not *radically* inaccurate, they suggest a shift in youth voting with significant implications. See Blake, "Yes, you can blame millennials for Hillary Clinton's loss."

11  File, "Voting in America."

12  William A. Galston and Clara Hendrickson, "How Millennials voted this election," The Brookings Institution, November 21, 2016.

13  This 9.5-10 percent range is consistent for national exit polls and the larger sample of voters surveyed in the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES).

14  See Alec Tyson and Shiva Maniam, "Behind Trump's

victory: Divisions by race, gender, education," Pew Research Center, November 9, 2016.

15  In 2008, unmarried women supported Obama at the historically high rate of 70 percent according to exit polls. In 2012, they supported President Obama 67-31 over Mitt Romney.

16  In fact, unmarried women only narrowly increased their vote share since 2012. According to Census Bureau estimates, 41.8 million of the women who reported voting in the 2016 election were currently married, 24.9 million were divorced or had never been married, and the remaining 7 million were widowed. See United States Census Bureau, "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2016," Table 9.

17  These rates of participation for married and unmarried women are essentially unchanged since 2012.

18  Jane Junn, "The Trump majority: white womanhood and the making of female voters in the U.S.," Politics, Groups, and Identities, Vol. 5, pp. 343-352 (2017).

19  There are no doubt multiple causes for this discrepancy, but the disenfranchisement of Black and Latino men via mass incarceration is surely a significant one. See Uggen et al., 6 Million Lost Voters.

20  See Clare Foran, "Women Aren't Responsible for Hillary Clinton's Defeat," The Atlantic, November 13, 2016; and Tara Golshan, "The women who helped Donald

Trump win," Vox, January 21, 2017.

21  Pavielle Haines, "Why the Trump Tape Didn't Matter: White Women in the 2016 Presidential Election," Paper presented at the American Political Science Association (APSA) Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA, September 2017. This analysis was carried out using data from the American National Election Study (ANES).

22  In 2012, Mitt Romney won this demographic 52-46. It bears noting that in two other national post-election voter samples – the American National Election Studies (ANES) and the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) – Clinton won white women with college degrees by larger margins.

23  See Clare Malone, "Clinton couldn't win over white women," FiveThirtyEight, November 9, 2016; Lois Beckett, Rory Carroll, Carmen Fishwick, and Sam Thielman, "The real 'shy Trump' vote: how 53% of white women pushed him to victory," The Guardian, November 10, 2016; and Golshan, "The women who helped Donald Trump win."

24  File, "Voting in America."

25  Sabrina Tavernise, "Many in Milwaukee Neighborhood Didn't Vote – and Don't Regret It," New York Times, November 20, 2016.

26  See Nate Cohn, "How the Obama Coalition Crumbled, Leaving an Opening for Trump," New York Times, December 23, 2016.

27  Ibid.

28  See ACLU, "Voter Suppression Laws: What's New Since the 2012 Presidential Election."

29  In contrast, the white electorate in Wisconsin held its numbers, while both raw voter turnout figures and rates of participation among whites *increased* in North Carolina and Ohio. Compare Tables 4b in: United States Census Bureau, "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2016;" and United States Census Bureau, "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2012," May 2013.

30  Compare Table 4b of the US Census Bureau's "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2016," to the innovative analysis in Bernard L. Fraga, Sean McElwee, Jesse Rhodes, and Brian Schaffner, "Why did Trump win? More whites – and fewer blacks – actually voted," Monkey Cage/The Washington Post, May 8, 2017.

31  Compare the US Census Bureau's Tables 4c on the web pages cited above for the 2012 and 2016 elections.

32  Clinton lost Arizona by only 3.5 percent, whereas Obama lost the state by 9.1 percent.

33  Harry Enten, "Trump Probably Did Better with Latino Voters than Romney Did," FiveThirtyEight, November 18, 2016.

34  Even the ANES – a major national survey that skews noticeably toward Clinton – found Trump carrying just shy of 25 percent of Latinx voters.

35  Enten, "Trump Probably Did Better with Latino Voters than Romney Did;" and Jens Manuel Krogstad and Mark Hugo Lopez, "Hillary Clinton won Latino vote but fell below 2012 support for Obama," Pew Research Center, November 29, 2016.

36  Asma Khalid, "Latinos Will Never Vote for a Republican, and Other Myths about Hispanics from 2016," NPR, December 22, 2016.

37  See Latino Decisions and National Council of La Raza, Latino Decisions 2016 Election Eve Poll: Interactive Results Tool.

38  US Elections Project and Nonprofit Vote, America Goes to the Polls 2016, p. 18. Post-election research confirms that Asian Americans were much less likely to be contacted by a political party during the 2016 election cycle than were whites and African Americans. See Karthick Ramakrishnan, Janelle Wong, Jennifer Lee, and Taeku Lee, Asian American Voices: Results from the 2016 Post-Election National Asian American Survey, National Asian American Survey, May 16, 2017.

39  Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, "In AALDEF's Election Day exit poll of close to 14,000 Asian American voters, Clinton favored over Trump by wide margin," Press Release, November 9, 2016.

40  Karthick Ramakrishnan, "The 2016 NAAS and the Two Paradoxes of AAPI Politics," Paper presented at the American Political Science Association (APSA) Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA, September 2017.

41  Disclosure statement: The Haas Institute's Associate Director Taeku Lee is a co-Principal Investigator for the 2016 Post-Election National Asian American Survey. Lee was not involved in the drafting of this report.

42  Ramakrishnan et al., Asian American Voices.

43  Ibid.

44  On recent barriers to American Indian voting access in Arizona, see Victoria Massie, "Voting from a Native American reservation is much harder than it should be," Vox, October 28, 2016. For a longer historical view, see Patty Ferguson-Bohnee, "The History of Indian Voting Rights in Arizona: Overcoming Decades of Voter Suppression," Arizona State Law Journal, Vol. 47, pp. 1099-1144 (2015).

45  Mark Trahant, "Indian Country Was Like America… Only More So," Indian Country Today, November 19, 2016.

46  See, for example, David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (Revised Edition), Verso, 1999; and Kathryn Marie Dudley, *The End of the Line: Lost Jobs, New Lives in Postindustrial America*, The University of Chicago Press, 1994. For explication of the concept of racialization, see john a. powell, *Racing to Justice: Transforming our Conceptions of Self and Other to Build an Inclusive Society*, Indiana University Press, 2012.

47  For a concise, classic statement of this understanding of identity formation and difference, see Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in Jonathan Rutherford, ed., *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1990.

48  Nicholas Carnes and Noam Lupu, "It's time to bust the myth: Most Trump voters were not working class," Monkey Cage/The Washington Post, June 5, 2017.

49  Konstantin Kilibarda and Daria Roithmayr, "The Myth of the Rust Belt Revolt," Slate, December 1, 2016.

50  Shannon M. Monnat, "Deaths of Despair and Support for Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election," Research Brief, The Pennsylvania State University, December 2016.

51  The Economist, "Illness as indicator: Local health outcomes predict Trumpward swings," The Economist, November 19, 2016.

52  Saleem Reshamwala and Giovanni Russonello, "Election 2016: Label Breakdown," New York Times, November 15, 2016.

53  We use the term "Rust Belt" generally to include not only Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa, but also Indiana, Illinois, and Minnesota.

54  See US Elections Project and Nonprofit Vote, America Goes to the Polls 2016.

55  Wisconsin Elections Commission, General Election Voter Registration and Absentee Statistics, 1984-2016.

56  Milwaukee County alone accounts for over 51,000 of these missing voters.

57  For example, each of the "flipped" Wisconsin counties of Columbia, Door, Grant, Lafayette, Sauk, Trempealeau, and Vernon delivered more votes to Obama in 2012 than to Trump in 2016. According to US census data, these counties' populations are all between 96 and 99 percent white. Obama also easily out-performed Trump in the more populous counties of Kenosha and Racine, which are themselves over 80 percent white.

58  This represents an increase in the share of votes cast in Minnesota outside the two major parties from 2.4 percent in 2012 to 8.6 percent in 2016.

59  We thank Alex Thebert for bringing this to our attention.

60  Philip Bump, "1.7 million people in 33 states and D.C. cast a ballot without voting in the presidential race," The Washington Post, December 14, 2016. Outside the Rust Belt, the swing state of Florida reported almost 65,000 undervotes, up from 23,500 in 2012. See Anthony Mann and Stephen Hobbs, "Florida voters found way to express displeasure with presidential choice," Sun Sentinel, February 2, 2017.

61  Clinton's principal gains were in Montgomery and Chester counties.

62  Further, Philadelphia was among the two where Trump's numbers improved, but only by going from Romney's 14.1 to 15.3 percent.

63  Jonathan Rodden has shown that if we break down the vote in these counties to the precinct level, there is a further divide *within* rural areas, between (bluer) towns and (red) country. See his "'Red' America is an illusion. Postindustrial towns go for Democrats," Monkey Cage/The Washington Post, February 14, 2017.

64  Many consider this increase a vindication of the Trump campaign's choice to flout the lesson Republican leaders drew from their second defeat to President Obama by doubling down on white voters rather than seeking to broaden the GOP's support base.

65  File, "Voting in America."

66  The 4.4 percentage-point difference between whites' share of the voting-eligible population and their share of the electorate was the largest such gap in the

past four presidential elections.

67    Most state polls were not weighted by educational attainment, and on average the percentage of poll respondents who had college degrees was much higher than for adult population in general. See Nate Cohn, "Why Key State Polls were Wrong about Trump," New York Times, May 31, 2017.

68    See William A. Galston and Clara Hendrickson, "The educational rift in the 2016 election," The Brookings Institution, November 28, 2016; and Geoffrey Skelley, "Another Look Back at 2016," Rasmussen Reports, March 23, 2017.

69    Ibid. This is, at least, according to national exit polls.

70    Skelley, "Another Look Back at 2016."

71    Reid Wilson, "Misreading lessons of an evolving electorate," The Hill, June 21, 2017.

72    Cohn, "How the Obama Coalition Crumbled."

73    Tyson and Maniam, "Behind Trump's victory."

74    Robert Griffin, John Halpin, and Ruy Teixera, "Democrats Need to Be the Party of and for Working People – of All Races," The American Prospect, June 1, 2017.

75    According to the Census Bureau, the participation rate among whites without a degree was 57.8 percent.

76    Griffin et al., "Democrats Need to Be the Party of and for Working People." Furthermore, a map like the one in the section above, showing Trump's county-by-county vote-share increase vis-à-vis Romney, is nearly identical

to a map color-coding counties based on the percentage of their populations that are whites without a college degree.

77    Nate Silver, "Education, Not Income, Predicted who would Vote for Trump," FiveThirtyEight, November 22, 2016; see further Jeff Guo, "Yes, working class whites really did make Trump win," The Washington Post, November 11, 2016.

78    Craig Gilbert, "As dust settles, parts of political map scrambled," Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, December 4, 2016.

79    Wilson, "Misreading lessons of an evolving electorate."

80    John Sides, Race, Religion, and Immigration in 2016: How the Debate over American Identity Shaped the Election and What it Means for a Trump Presidency, Research Report from the Democracy Fund Voter Study Group, June 2017.

81    The amount of that shift for which it accounts depends largely on the degree of variation in the voter pool.

82    Nate Cohn, "Turnout Wasn't the Driver of Clinton's Defeat," New York Times, March 28, 2017.

83    Sean McElwee and Jason McDaniel, "Fear of Diversity Made People More Likely to Vote for Trump," The Nation, March 14, 2017.

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