

SouthNow Update
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The Southern Electorate: 2004 v. 2000

Southern voters who participated in the recent Democratic presidential primaries differ significantly from the overall electorate in those states. A comparison of exit poll data from the 2004 Democratic primaries and the 2000 presidential election shows that Democratic primary voters differ from the general electorate in terms of race, age, education, religion, political affiliation and political ideology.

Four Southern states already have held Democratic presidential primaries in 2004. Voters in South Carolina and Oklahoma went to the polls on 3 February, while Virginians and Tennesseans voted their preferences on 10 February. Table 1 summarizes the results from those four states.

Candidate	South Carolina			Oklahoma			Virginia			Tennessee		
	# Votes	% Vote	# Delegates	# Votes	% Vote	# Delegates	# Votes	% Vote	# Delegates	# Votes	% Vote	# Delegates
Kerry	88,508	30.3	17	81,012	26.8	12	203,486	51.6	54	150,185	41.1	31
Edwards	131,174	44.9	28	89,194	29.5	13	104,782	26.6	28	96,732	26.4	20
Clark	21,011	7.2	0	90,469	29.9	15	36,461	9.2	0	84,589	23.1	18

Voters in these primaries, however, differed from the overall electorate of those states and the larger Southern electorate. Table 2 (see page 2) uses exit poll data from the 2000 presidential election and the 2004 Democratic primaries to illustrate key differences. Note the following:

- The Democratic primary electorate contains more African-American voters than the overall electorate. For example, African Americans accounted for 47 percent of the 2004 vote in South Carolina but only 22 percent of the 2000 general election vote. This pattern – blacks constituting a higher percentage of the 2004 Democratic primary electorate than the 2000 general electorate – existed in all four primary states.
- Democratic primary voters are older than the overall electorate. In Oklahoma, roughly three-fourths of Democratic primary voters were age 45 or older, while 53 percent of general election voters were in that age range. Also, the percentage of younger voters in the 18-29 and 30-44 age brackets was considerably lower in 2004 than 2000 in all four Southern states.
- The 2004 Democratic primary electorate of all four states contained a higher percentage of people with post-graduate educations than the 2000 electorate. In Virginia, 31 percent of Democratic primary voters possessed post-graduate degrees compared to 20 percent of the 2000 general electorate.
- The 2004 Democratic primary electorate has consisted primarily of Democrats and Independents. Democrats have accounted for roughly three-fourths of 2004 primary voters, while Independents have accounted for between a fifth and a quarter. Few crossover Republicans have participated in the 2004 Democratic primaries.
- The Democratic primary electorate is much more liberal than the overall electorate. Only 15 percent of Southern voters described themselves as liberal in 2000, but in no 2004 Democratic primary did less than 31 percent of voters identify as liberals.

- In a reflection of the times, a higher percentage of voters concerned about the economy participated in the 2004 Democratic primaries than the 2000 general election. At least one-third of primary voters in every state described their financial situation compared to one year ago as being worse. Only nine percent of Southern voters expressed that view in 2000.
- Fewer white Protestants were represented in the Democratic primary electorates of all four states than in the general electorate and the South as a whole. White Protestants, for instance, cast 52 percent of Tennessee's 2004 Democratic primary vote and 75 percent of the general vote in 2000.

Table 2: Comparison of 2004 Southern Democratic Primary Voters to 2000 Southern Presidential Voters

	South 2000	S. Carolina 2004	S. Carolina 2000	Oklahoma 2004	Oklahoma 2000	Virginia 2004	Virginia 2000	Tennessee 2004	Tennessee 2000
Gender									
<i>Male</i>	47	43	45	47	45	44	46	46	47
<i>Female</i>	53	57	55	53	55	56	54	54	53
Race/Ethnicity									
<i>White</i>	74	51	76	82	88	63	78	74	80
<i>Black</i>	17	47	22	8	5	33	16	23	18
<i>Hispanic</i>	7	1	0	2	2	2	3	1	1
<i>Asian</i>	1	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	0
Age									
18-29	17	9	19	6	16	8	16	7	17
30-44	33	23	33	17	31	24	34	22	38
45+	50	68	48	76	53	65	50	72	46
Education									
<i>No H.S.</i>	6	6	6	7	-	4	4	7	8
<i>H.S. Grad</i>	22	23	27	31	-	17	17	27	30
<i>Some College</i>	33	29	31	27	-	25	30	29	31
<i>College Grad</i>	24	21	22	18	-	23	29	19	20
<i>Post Grad</i>	15	21	14	17		31	20	19	10
Income									
<\$15 K	8	12	8	14	10	5	4	9	9
\$15-\$30 K	17	22	19	23	23	15	12	18	18
\$30-\$50 K	25	24	28	26	30	21	23	26	30
\$50-\$75 K	25	22	24	21	22	24	25	25	22
\$75-\$100 K	12	11	11	10	8	17	17	11	10
\$100 K +	12	9	10	7	6	18	19	10	10
Economic State									
<i>Better</i>	48	10	49	13	49	29	54	12	54
<i>Same</i>	37	37	39	48	12	34	36	36	34
<i>Worse</i>	9	48	11	34	37	30	9	46	10
Partisan Self ID									
<i>Democrat</i>	40	71	33	83	42	73	35	75	39
<i>Republican</i>	38	5	39	6	44	5	37	5	37
<i>Independent</i>	22	24	28	11	14	22	28	20	24
Ideology									
<i>Liberal</i>	15	39	14	31	11	44	20	38	21
<i>Moderate</i>	49	44	45	48	49	41	50	45	44
<i>Conservative</i>	35	17	40	21	40	14	31	17	35
Religion (Whites)									
<i>Protestant</i>	68	32	84	59	82	-	64	52	75
<i>Catholic</i>	18	6	8	6	8	-	21	6	10
<i>Jewish</i>	2	1	1	1	0	-	3	1	6

Note: Due to a difference in the way the age question was asked in 2000 and 2004, the higher age brackets (45-59 and 60+) have been collapsed. Also, dashes indicate incomplete data.

Sources: 2000 Voter News Service Exit Polls; 2004 National Election Pool Exit Polls

Articles of Interest

William Saletan. "Turning the Tables." *Slate.com*, 17 February 2004.

<<http://slate.msn.com/id/2095655>>

* An analysis of exit poll results in primary elections.

Dan Balz. "For Kerry, A Tough Geography Test." *The Washington Post*, 17 February 2004.

<<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A46430-2004Feb16.html>>

* A discussion of political strategy as it relates to culturally conservative states.

Joshua Green. "In Search of the Elusive Swing Voter." *The Atlantic Monthly*, January/February 2004.

<<http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2004/01/green-voter.htm>>

* An appraisal of the role that independent voters will play in 2004.

Curtis Wilkie. "A 'Southern Strategy' for Democrats." *The Boston Globe*, 8 February 2004.

<http://www.boston.com/news/politics/president/articles/2004/02/08/a_southern_strategy_for_democrats/>

* An analysis of Southern presidential politics.

Also, state-level polling data related to the 2004 presidential election has been collected by Thad Beyle, Pearsall Professor of Political Science at UNC-Chapel Hill, and is available online at www.southnow.org

News from the Program on Southern Politics, Media and Public Life

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