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THE PROGRAM ON PUBLIC LIFE

is a non-partisan organization devoted to serving the people of North Carolina and the South by informing the public agenda and nurturing leadership. The Program on Public Life is part of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Profile of a Battleground Electorate

FERREL GUILLORY and ALLISON HAWKINS

Was the 2008 election in North Carolina the beginning of a trend? The question arose almost immediately after the victory of President Obama, a Democrat, in a state that Republicans had carried in every presidential election but one since 1968.

In our analysis of the 2008 results, DataNet called it a “tide-changing election.” North Carolina was one of three Southern states that Obama won. Democrat Bev Perdue became the first woman to win this state’s governorship. And Democrat Kay Hagan captured the Senate seat held for five terms by Republican Jesse Helms.

Two years later, GOP U.S. Senator Richard Burr won re-election. And Republicans swept to a majority in both the state House and Senate, holding a two-chamber legislative majority for the first time in more than a century.

Thus, we await the results of the 2012 election to provide more data on whether 2008 represented the emergence of a new trend, or whether North Carolina will return to its previous pattern of giving its electoral votes to Republicans in presidential elections.

In assessing North Carolina as a 2012 battleground, it is useful to look at the state’s electorate through the lens of election-day

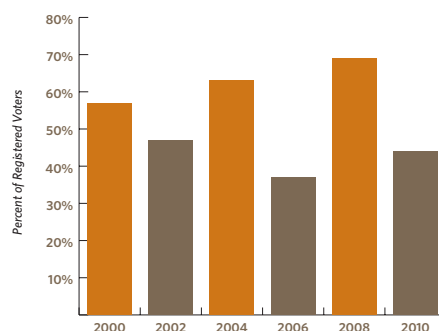
exit polls. The exit-poll data were pulled from the CNN website.

First, a few words about exit polls: The data come from interviews with a large sample of voters as they leave the polling station. In North Carolina, the 2008 exit poll findings were based on 2,814 voters who responded to the long questionnaire. From time to time, of course, they have engendered controversy for their use, and misuse, by the news media in projecting outcomes on election night. And yet, beyond election night, they are a tool of analysis, offering a statistical-sample profile, though not a hard count, of the actual participants in an election not otherwise available.

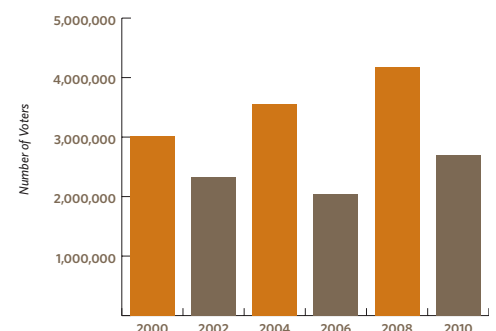
Here are some characteristics of the North Carolina electorate as indicated by exit poll data:

- North Carolina has a heavily majority-white electorate. But the white share of the electorate has declined from eight out of 10 voters to slightly more than seven out of 10 voters. Meanwhile, the share of the electorate represented by African-Americans has risen to more than two out of 10. Latinos, Asians and people of other ethnicities represented around six percent of the electorate in 2008, and perhaps somewhat more in 2012.

NC Voter Turnout Percentage, 2000–2010



NC Voter Turnout, 2000–2010



- Before 2008, the rule of thumb in North Carolina politics held that Democratic statewide candidates needed at least 40 percent of white voters to win. With Obama at the head of the ticket driving turnout, Democrats discovered they could win with somewhat less than 40 percent. One of the fascinating “factoids” from 2008 is that the exit poll reported 100 percent of black women voted for Obama – a statistically improbable result. Still, it says that every black woman who responded to the exit poll said she voted for the Democratic president.
- The influence of the baby-boom generation shows up in the substantial increase in voters in the 45-59 age range, from 25 percent in 1996 to 39 percent in 2008. More than half the electorate four years ago was 45 years and older.
- The electorate divides in half at about the \$50,000 a year income level – half above and half below. Obama won well more than half the votes of people with incomes \$50,000 and below, and he won nearly half of voters earning \$200,000 and above. Republican John McCain did

better among voters in the heart of the middle class.

- North Carolina is a state without a majority party, and has been for quite a while. About four out of 10 voters think of themselves as Democrats, somewhat fewer think of themselves as Republicans. Neither major party can act with assurance that it represents more than 50 percent of the electorate.
- The share of voters who identify themselves as independents has risen above two out of 10, just as the number of people registered unaffiliated as risen dramatically. And yet, as election results and campaign polls show, most independents actually perform as either Democratic or Republicans. The 2012 election will give fresh evidence of how many voters act independently and split their ticket.
- The state has a moderate-to-conservative electorate. But it appears to have pulled apart somewhat since the mid-1990s. Moderates have declined over time, while liberals have gained to now represent about one-fourth of the electorate. ☒

A View from Exit Polls

PERCENTAGES REPRESENT SHARE OF VOTERS IN EACH CATEGORY

SHIFTING RACIAL, ETHNIC PROFILE

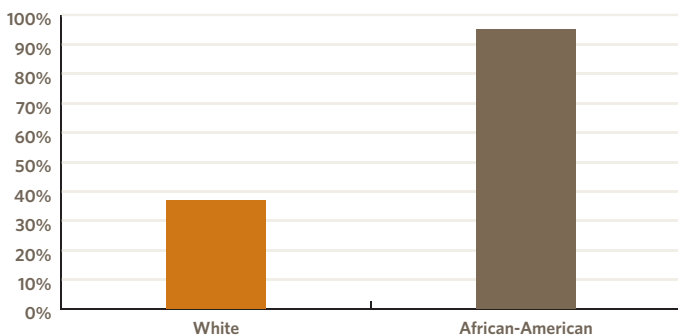
Year	White	African-American	Latino	Asian	Other
1996	80%	18%	n/a	n/a	n/a
2000	78%	19%	n/a	n/a	n/a
2004	71%	26%	1%	n/a	2%
2008	72%	23%	3%	1%	2%

VOTERS BY RACE AND GENDER

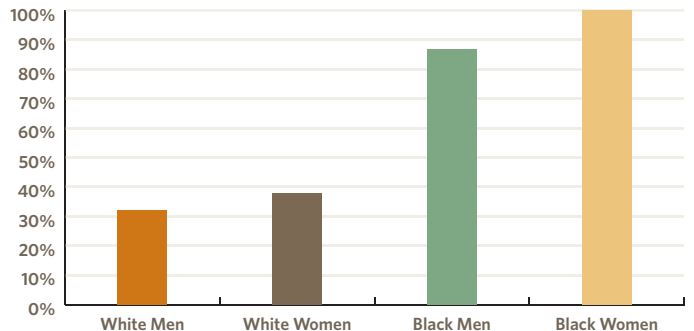
Year	White Men	White Women	Non-White Men	Non-White Women	Other
2004	32%	40%	11%	18%	n/a
2008	35%	37%	10%	16%	2%

Year	White Men	White Women	Black Men	Black Women	Latino Men	Latino Women	All Other Races
2008	35%	37%	9%	14%	1%	2%	2%

VOTED FOR OBAMA



VOTED FOR OBAMA



VOTERS BY AGE

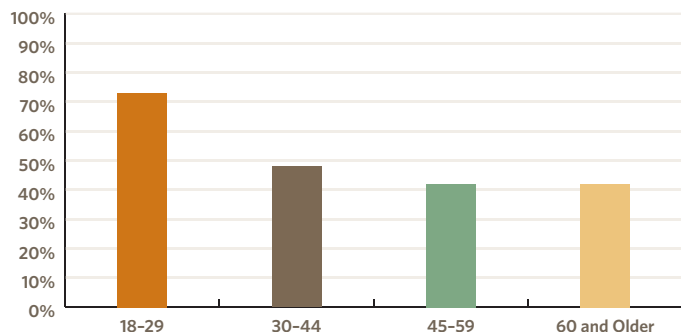
Year	18-29	30-44	45-59	60 and Older
1996	19%	33%	25%	23%
2000	18%	33%	28%	20%
2004	14%	33%	30%	22%
2008	18%	27%	39%	16%

VOTERS BY AGE AND RACE

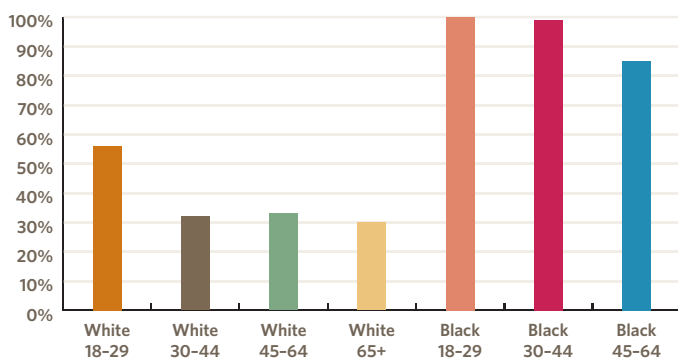
Year	White 18-29	White 30-44	White 45-64	White 65+
2008	9%	20%	30%	13%

Year	Black 18-29	Black 30-44	Black 45-64	Black 65+
2008	7%	6%	7%	3%

VOTED FOR OBAMA



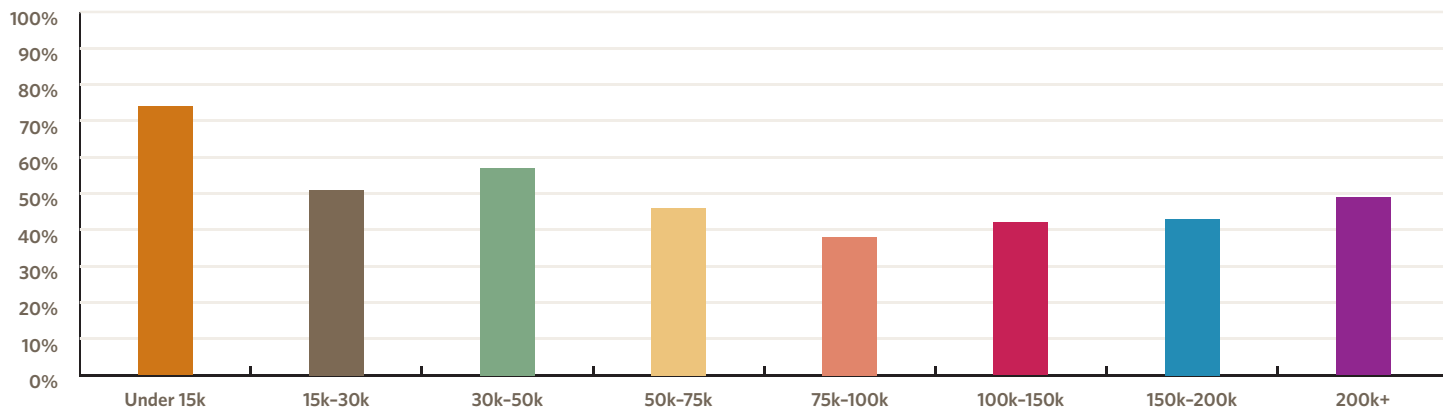
VOTED FOR OBAMA



VOTERS BY INCOME

Year	Under 15k	15k-30k	30k-50k	50k-75k	75k-100k	100k+
1996	11%	24%	27%	21%	9%	7%
2000	7%	18%	27%	23%	14%	11%
2004	10%	18%	22%	21%	12%	17%
2008	8%	19%	23%	21%	11%	19%

VOTED FOR OBAMA



VOTERS BY PARTY

Year	Democratic	Republican	Independent
1996	42%	39%	18%
2000	41%	38%	21%
2004	39%	40%	21%
2008	42%	31%	27%

VOTERS BY IDEOLOGY

Year	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal
1996	42%	39%	18%
2000	41%	38%	21%
2004	39%	40%	21%
2008	42%	31%	27%

A View from Voter Registration

NC VOTER REGISTRATION BY PARTY

Year	Democrats	Republicans	Libertarians	Unaffiliated	Total
2008	2,866,669	2,002,416	3,637	1,392,011	6,264,733
2012	2,789,654	2,013,483	16,814	1,658,642	6,478,593

NC VOTER REGISTRATION BY RACE

Year	White	Black	American Indian	Hispanic	Other	Total
2008	4,596,479	1,354,976	48,605	68,053	101,217	6,264,733
2012	4,651,364	1,437,491	51,782	103,894	337,956	6,478,593

NC VOTER REGISTRATION BY SEX

Year	Male	Female	Total
2008	2,822,503	3,391,427	6,264,733
2012	2,921,592	3,491,690	6,478,593

CHANGE IN NC VOTER REGISTRATION FROM 2008–2012

N.C. 2008 voter registration:	6,041,289 (84.5% of total)
N.C. 2008 voting age population:	7,148,000*
N.C. 2012 voter registration:	6,409,063 (88.35% of total)*
N.C. 2012 voting age population:	7,254,000 (as of 2010 census)**

*Source: NC Board of Elections

**Source: census.gov, <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0398.pdf>

Voter registration data as of November 4 for 2008 and September 29 for 2012

N.C. Ranks High in TV Ads

BY CHELSEA PHIPPS

A key difference between the 2008 and the 2012 presidential elections arises from the 2010 Supreme Court ruling, *Citizens United vs. Federal Communications Commission*.

As a battleground state, North Carolina has felt the influence of the ruling, which dramatically changed the flow, and the amount, of money spent in presidential campaigns. Presidential campaigns tend to apply the largest amounts of money in TV ads, so it's telling to focus in on where that money is spent and by whom.

North Carolina's battleground-state status can be clearly seen as the state, in mid-October, ranked in fourth place in the nation in TV ad spending. Counting spending by presidential campaigns, super-PACs and interest groups, \$85 million in TV ads had been directed at North Carolina voters.

Based on the premise that political spending is a form of free speech, protected under the First Amendment, the *Citizens United* ruling allows corporations, labor unions, independent groups and individuals to spend money to influence the presidential campaign, even if they do not give directly to the presidential candidates.

In today's politics, campaigning for president does not spread evenly across the 50 states, but rather concentrates on the so-called swing or battleground states, where the race between Democrat Barack Obama and Republican Mitt Romney is closely contested.

Data on spending on campaign commercials at major TV stations was collected from public records, which were posted online by the Federal Communications Commission for the first election in history. Previously, the records had been available, but only on an in-person basis. The FCC voted to change the rule on April 27 in order to make advertising spending more transparent. In addition, this article and an accompanying chart drew data for a national tracking of campaign spending by *The Washington Post*.

Collecting the amount of money spent on TV ads by interest groups, super PACs and presidential campaign teams for each of the major TV stations in all of the major cities in North Carolina led to these findings:

- The state's two most populous media markets have drawn more than four out of five dollars spent on presidential campaign advertising – Charlotte \$39 million, Raleigh \$15 million.
- Raleigh, the state capital, saw around \$5 million spent at the three major TV stations (WNCN, WTVD, WRAL) on wooing its citizens -- \$3.6 million of that spending was on the part of the Obama campaign.
- Charlotte, the host of this election's Democratic National Convention, saw around \$4 million in spending by Obama's campaign of the \$6.4 million spent at major the three TV stations (WBTV, WSOC, WCNC).
- However, according to the Center for Responsive Politics, contributions to Romney in Charlotte were much higher than those to Obama. Romney has snagged more contributions in the state of North Carolina as a whole, about \$426,000 more than Obama, as of Oct. 21, 2012.
- Around \$1.3 million were spent on pro-Obama ads in the Greensboro market on the three major TV stations (WFMY, WGHP, WXII), and almost \$1.5 million were spent on pro-Romney ads.

- The Obama campaign has spent some half a million dollars in the Asheville TV market at major TV stations, but the Romney campaign obviously did not deem it to be at risk enough to spend on any ads there.

- In Wilmington, neither candidate has yet to spend a dollar at the major TV station, WWAY, though independent groups have purchased ads to influence voters. [X](#)

NORTH CAROLINA CONTRIBUTIONS TO PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES (UNTIL OCTOBER 21, 2012)

BARACK OBAMA	4,946,444
MITT ROMNEY	5,372,413

NORTH CAROLINA CONTRIBUTIONS, TOP ZIP CODES (UNTIL OCTOBER 21, 2012)

28207 Charlotte, NC	
MITT ROMNEY (R)	325,830
BARACK OBAMA (D)	61,925
27514 Chapel Hill, NC	
BARACK OBAMA (D)	333,044
MITT ROMNEY (R)	31,140
28211 Charlotte, NC	
MITT ROMNEY (R)	250,700
BARACK OBAMA (D)	74,371
27609 Raleigh, NC	
MITT ROMNEY (R)	196,920
BARACK OBAMA (D)	75,408
27517 Chapel Hill, NC	
BARACK OBAMA (D)	202,859
MITT ROMNEY (R)	66,281

Source: *The Center for Responsive Politics*. All data are for the 2012 election cycle based on Federal Election Commission data released electronically: Oct. 21, 2012

WHERE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS BOUGHT TV ADS

NC TV Station	Location	Obama's Campaign Spending	Romney's Campaign Spending
WLOS	Asheville	\$501,360	\$0
WCNC	Charlotte	\$467,143	\$243,950
WBTV	Charlotte	\$304,514	\$1,058,298
WSOC	Charlotte	\$3,143,814	\$1,208,994
WFMY	Greensboro	\$436,478	\$306,719
WGHP	Greensboro	\$249,075	\$695,794
WXII	Greensboro	\$660,702	\$449,982
WRAY	Raleigh	\$0	\$0
WNCN	Raleigh	\$133,896	\$177,506
WTVD	Raleigh	\$2,411,750	\$702,858
WRAL	Raleigh	\$1,073,561	\$497,671
WWAY	Wilmington	\$0	\$0

Data as of October 1, 2012

Cities	Obama Total Spending	Romney Total Spending	Total
Asheville	\$501,359.75	\$0	\$501,360
Charlotte	\$3,915,471	\$2,511,242	\$6,426,713
Greensboro	\$1,346,253.9	\$1,452,494	\$2,798,748
Raleigh	\$3,619,206.75	\$1,378,035	\$4,997,241
Wilmington	\$0	\$0	\$0

PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN SPENDING BY SUPER PACS AND INTEREST GROUPS ON TV ADS

North Carolina TV Markets as of October 17, 2012

	Charlotte	Greensboro	Raleigh	Greenville	Wilmington
American Crossroads/ Crossroads GPS	\$6 million	\$774,430	\$2 million	\$651,830	\$149,140
Restore Our Future (Pro-Romney)	\$2 million	\$273,280	\$771,540	\$225,670	\$187,190
Americans for Prosperity	\$2 million	\$405,820	\$1 million	\$235,430	\$151,370
Republican National Committee	\$2 million	\$263,100	\$680,180	\$144,260	\$166,730
Republican National Committee & Mitt Romney (Pro-Romney)	\$2 million	\$211,210	\$538,700	\$183,190	\$0
Democratic National Committee & Barack Obama (Pro-Obama)	\$802,360	\$123,910	\$307,240	\$73,070	\$93,250
Priorities USA Action (Pro-Obama)	\$0	\$0	\$28,970	\$0	\$0
Democratic National Committee (Pro-Obama)	\$805,440	\$0	\$264,810	\$680	\$230
Total:	\$39 million	\$5 million	\$15 million	\$4 million	\$2 million

■ Pro-Romney Donors
 ■ Pro-Obama Donors

Source: WashingtonPost.com

Director's Note:

FERREL GUILLORY

Director, Program on Public Life

For the second consecutive presidential election, North Carolina has found itself a center of the action. The Democratic Party held its national convention in Charlotte, and North Carolina once again emerged as a general-election battleground state.

These developments provided the impetus for a summer and early fall of intense activity in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication and the UNC Program on Public Life. This issue of NC DataNet is yet another product in a stream of research and educational activities:

- 1) On the eve of the Democratic National Convention, we conducted a roundtable for journalists entitled: The South and President Politics 2012: Red States and Purple States. The convention gave us the opportunity to showcase faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the preeminent university in the study of the American South.

More than 100 people attended the event held in the auditorium of The Charlotte Observer, and the discussion was broadcast nationwide on C-Span. (<http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/SouthernPol>)

Judy Woodruff, co-anchor of the PBS NewsHour, served as moderator. Scott Keeter, director of survey research at the Pew Research Center, gave a presentation on the political distinctiveness of the South. UNC faculty participants were:

- **Hodding Carter**, *University Professor of Public Policy and Leadership*
- **Peter Coclanis**, *UNC history professor and director, Global Research Institute, co-editor, "A Way Forward: Building a Globally Competitive South"*
- **Kareem Crayton**, *UNC professor of law, scholar on election laws*
- **Jacquelyn Hall**, *UNC history professor and director emeritus, Southern Oral History Project*
- **Gene Nichol**, *professor of law and director, UNC Center on Work, Poverty and Opportunity*
- **Jesse White**, *UNC adjunct professor of government and former executive director of Southern Growth Policies Board*

- 2) UNC students in the summer program of the Reese News Lab of the journalism school produced an interactive map, charting, county-by-county, 40 years of demographic and political change in North Carolina. Here's a link to the map: <http://whichwaync.com/election-map/>

- 3) I wrote an essay on North Carolina as a battleground state for The Charlotte Observer, accompanied by sidebars written by seven

students on their home towns. Here's a link to that package of articles: <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/2012/09/01/3494049/from.html#storylink=misearch>. In addition, several of our students worked as interns for The Charlotte Observer during the Democratic convention.

Once again, students have contributed substantially to the data-gathering and analysis for NC DataNet. Allison Hawkins, a Morehead-Cain scholar from Brevard who graduated in May 2012, spent most of the summer assembling data on North Carolina political and economic trends; she developed the exit-poll profile of the state's electorate. Chelsea Phipps, a senior Morehead-Cain scholar from Sylva, is currently editorial-page editor of the Daily Tar Heel and is taking an independent study course under my direction; she gathered the information on campaign finance and TV ads.

I also extend special thanks to Paul Shumaker, a Republican political consultant, for the grant from his firm, Carolina Strategy Group, to the Program on Public Life to support its publishing research in state electoral trends. ☒





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