

# North Carolina datanet

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**THE PROGRAM ON PUBLIC LIFE**

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## 2012: The Year of a Republican Wave

FERREL GUILLORY, Director

*For the second consecutive* presidential-election year, North Carolina voters produced an electoral wave that washed across the state’s political landscape.

In 2008, Democratic candidates captured the top three statewide popularly elected offices – President, Governor, U.S. Senator – for the first time in 48 years. It was, as North Carolina Data-Net later described it, “a tide-changing election.”

The 2012 election propelled a powerful wave of another political hue, as Republican candidates for President and Governor scored victories and as the GOP solidified its majorities in the General Assembly and the state Supreme Court. Republicans have not had such power in Raleigh for more than a century.

In winning North Carolina’s 15 electoral votes, Republican Mitt Romney ran slightly more than 90,000 votes ahead of President Obama, the incumbent Democrat, out of nearly 4.5 million cast. Romney’s showing marked the

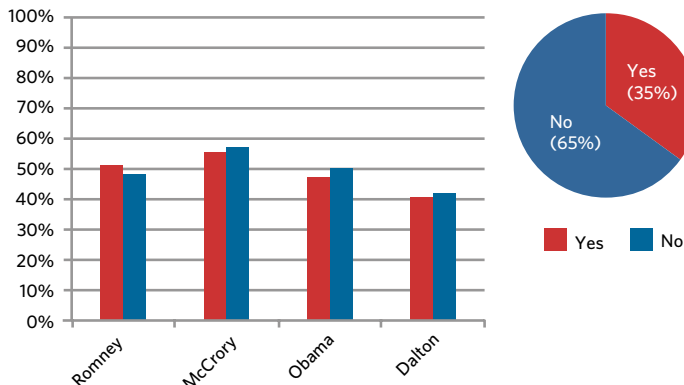
eighth GOP victory in North Carolina in nine presidential elections. Obama had carried the state in 2008 by barely 14,000 votes. North Carolina and Indiana were the only Democratic “blue” states in 2008 to turn Republican “red” on the 2012 election maps.

In winning the governorship, Republican Pat McCrory broke a string of five consecutive Democratic victories. McCrory not only outran his Democratic opponent, Lt. Gov. Walter Dalton, by 11 percentage points but he also won 170,000 votes more than Romney.

How did a state that swung to Democrats in 2008 swing so decisively to Republicans in 2012? For explanations, we turn to the election-day exit polls conducted for the consortium of national news organizations by Edison Research of Somerville, NJ.

The exit poll, a tool of analysis, offers a statistical-sample profile, though not a hard count, of the actual participants in an election. Exit-poll

### Has anyone in your household lost a job in the last four years?



### Vote by View of Government

	Romney	McCrory	Obama	Dalton
Should do more (41%)	21%	27%	79%	73%
Doing too much (53%)	77%	78%	21%	20%

In North Carolina as well as the nation, the 2012 election revolved around a debate over the scope and role of government. In addition, the state continued to feel the lingering effects of the 2007-09 deep recession, with an unemployment rate that had declined but still remained above the national level. The two charts on this page, drawn from the exit poll, provide some insight into how voting was shaped by these factors. Fully one-third of the voters said someone in their household had lost a job in the past four years, and voters were divided over the scope of government, with a majority (53 percent) saying government does too many things that should be left to businesses and individuals.

results are based on questionnaires completed by a large sample of voters as they left ballot stations, supplemented by telephone interviews with absentee and early voters. We used the results as reported on the CNN and MSNBC websites.

The principal finding is that, even as Republicans seized control of state government, North Carolina retained a narrowly divided, highly competitive presidential-year electorate. In its governance, Republican “red” dominates. In its body politic, the state shows up as distinctly “purple,” a blend of red and blue partisans, along with a growing segment of voters who consider themselves independents.

In support of this finding, here is evidence that emerges from our exit poll analysis:

- In the 2012 elections, which came after a quarter of a century of robust population growth, barely half of the state’s voters were native North Carolinians. Forty-nine percent were born elsewhere. Both Romney and McCrory won solid majorities among native North Carolinians and residents who moved in more than 10 years ago. However, among voters who arrived in the past 5-10 years, Obama got a landslide-majority of 62 percent. Among those relatively recent arrivals, McCrory held a 48-45 margin over Dalton – his appeal to those voters representing one explanation for his victory. (The sample size for voters arriving in the past five years was too small to provide relevant data on candidates.)
- No political party has an assured majority of the electorate. In 2012, self-identified Republicans made up 33 percent of the electorate, down from 40 percent in 2004. Democrats have remained between 39-41 percent since 2000. Self-identified independents have climbed from 21 percent to 29 percent. Of course, most independents actually vote for Democrats or Republicans. In statewide elections with large turn-outs, neither Democrats nor Republicans can count on winning simply with their base voters.
- Forty percent of North Carolina voters consider themselves conservatives – and the conservative share of the electorate has remained relatively constant since 2000. In 2012, 22 percent of Tar Heel voters identified themselves as liberal, a gain in the liberal share from 16 percent in 2000. Meanwhile, self-identified moderates have dropped from

46 percent to 38 percent. No ideological grouping has a clear majority.

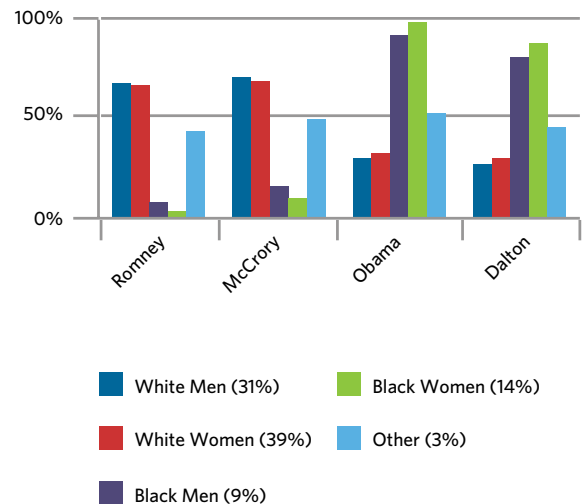
- In addition to the decline of the moderate share of the electorate, other signs pointed to a polarization of the state electorate. For example, asked their general view of government, North Carolinians split, with 53 percent saying government does too much, 41 percent saying government should do more. Romney and McCrory got the ballots of nearly eight out of 10 too-much-government voters. Obama and Dalton won similar margins among do-more-government voters.
- Romney and McCrory won six out of 10 voters who identified themselves as rural residents – further evidence of a Republican-tilt in rural regions where Democrats historically dominated. The Republican candidates received somewhat smaller majorities among suburban voters. Meanwhile, Obama won 59 percent of urban voters. Among urban voters, McCrory basically tied Dalton, 48-49 – the former Charlotte mayor’s showing in cities another explanation for his victory.
- The 2008 exit poll found that 100 percent of black women voted for Obama – a quirk in polling that hardly ever produces a 100 percent figure. What it meant is that every black woman who responded to the questionnaire said she voted for Obama. The 2012 exit poll found that 99 percent of black women voted for Obama; at least one black woman said she did not. Obama won 92 percent among black men. At the same time, the Republican candidates scored super-majorities – nearly seven out of 10 – among white men and women, while McCrory out-pollied Romney among black voters. ☒

EDITOR’S NOTE: *Further analysis of the 2012 elections comes in articles by three superb undergraduate students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: Jessica Kennedy, a senior journalism major from Boone; Max Morrill, a history and peace, war and defense major from Charlotte; and Chelsea Phipps, a global studies and political science major from Sylva. The students conducted election trends research, wrote articles and read books on U.S. politics and media in independent-study courses under my supervision.*

*Thanks go to Carolina Strategy Group for financial support for the dissemination of DataNet. As we continue to explore North Carolina demographic and electoral trends, we welcome your comments and suggestions.*

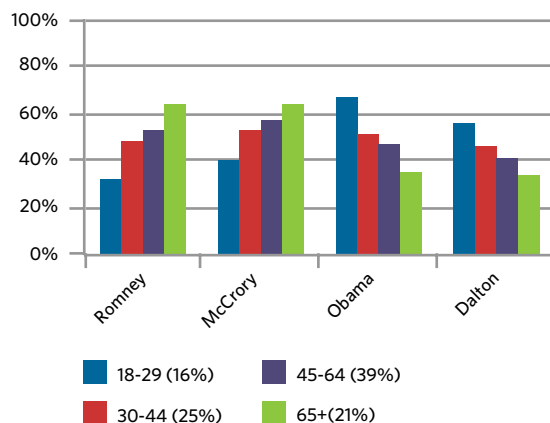
### Vote by Race/Gender

	Romney	McCrory	Obama	Dalton
White men (31%)	68%	71%	30%	27%
White women (39%)	67%	69%	33%	30%
Black men (9%)	8%	16%	92%	81%
Black women (14%)	1%	10%	99%	88%
Others (3%)	44%	50%	53%	46%



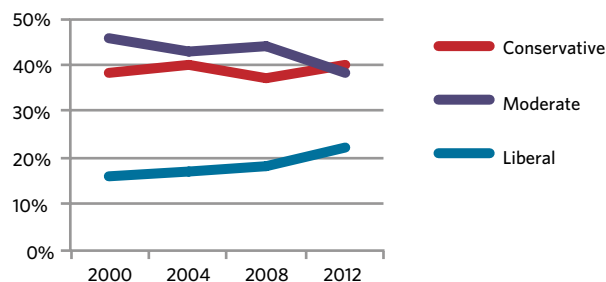
### Vote by Age

	Romney	McCrory	Obama	Dalton
18-29 (16%)	32%	40%	67%	56%
30-44 (25%)	48%	53%	51%	46%
45-64 (39%)	53%	57%	47%	41%
65+ (21%)	64%	64%	35%	34%



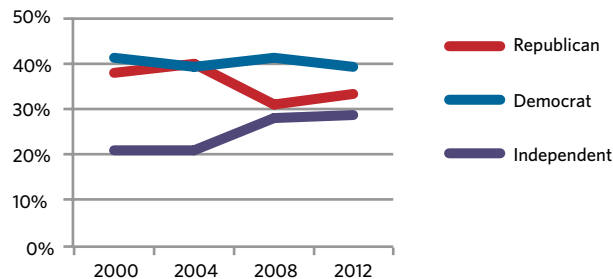
### Shift by Ideology

	2000	2004	2008	2012
Conservative	38%	40%	37%	40%
Moderate	46%	43%	44%	38%
Liberal	16%	17%	18%	22%



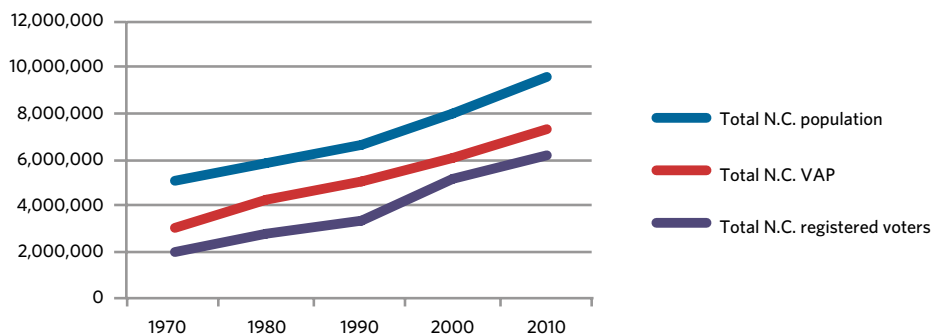
### Change by Party, Self-identification

	2000	2004	2008	2012
Republican	38%	40%	31%	33%
Democrat	41%	39%	41%	39%
Independent	21%	21%	28%	29%



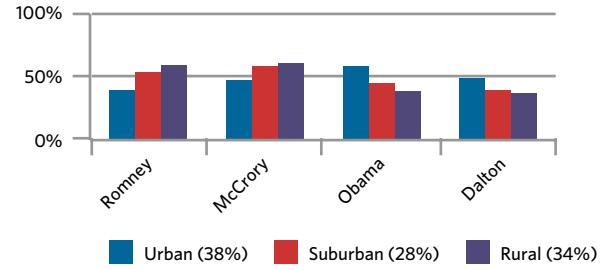
### Trends in Population, Voter Registration

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Total N.C. population	5,082,059	5,881,766	6,628,637	8,049,313	9,535,483
Total N.C. VAP	3,043,000	4,222,654	5,016,747	6,085,266	7,310,961
Total N.C. registered voters	1,945,187	2,774,844	3,347,635	5,122,123	6,200,703



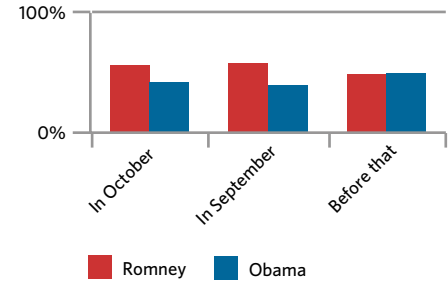
### Vote by Size of Place

	Romney	McCrary	Obama	Dalton
Urban (38%)	40%	48%	59%	49%
Suburban (28%)	54%	59%	45%	40%
Rural (34%)	60%	61%	39%	37%



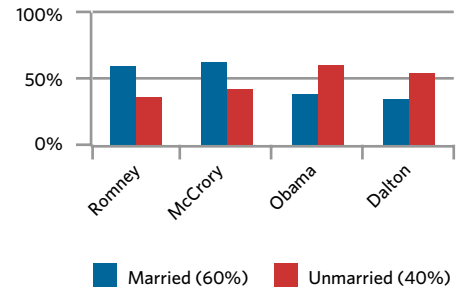
### When Did You Decide Your Vote?

	Romney	Obama
In October (11%)	56%	42%
In September (10%)	58%	40%
Before that (73%)	49%	50%



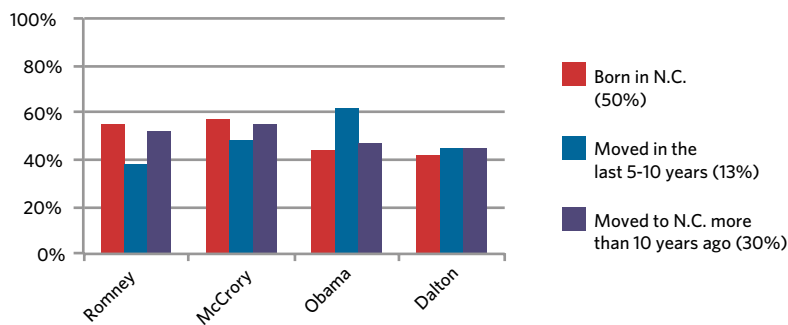
### Vote by Marital Status

	Romney	McCrary	Obama	Dalton
Married (60%)	60%	63%	39%	35%
Unmarried (40%)	37%	43%	61%	55%



### Were you born in N.C.?

	Romney	McCrary	Obama	Dalton
Born in N.C. (50%)	55%	57%	44%	42%
Moved in the last 5-10 years (13%)	38%	48%	62%	45%
Moved to N.C. more than 10 years ago (30%)	52%	55%	47%	45%



# Unsteady youth voter turnout in North Carolina

BY CHELSEA PHIPPS

*If future presidential candidates* don't pay close attention to young voters, they do so at their own peril.

The country has seen a trend of rising youth participation, from 17 percent in 2004, to 18 percent in 2008, to 19 percent of the total vote in 2012.

DataNet reported in 2010 that, while the youth segment of the electorate had waned in comparison to 2008, the role young voters played in 2008 was significant: CNN exit polls found that North Carolina voters 18-29 accounted for 18 percent of the vote in 2008 (as compared to 14 percent in 2004), and overwhelmingly chose Barack Obama over John McCain, 72 to 28 percent.

"If not for young people, North Carolina would still be a red state," John Della Volpe, director of polling at the Institute of Politics at Harvard University, told the Triangle's Independent Weekly in 2008.

The upward trend prevailed nationally despite polls showing youth engagement and registration falling sharply from 2008. North Carolina, on the other hand, did not follow the trend. Instead, the proportion of the total vote that young voters claimed has arced, from 14 percent in 2004 to 18 percent in 2008 and curved downward to 16 percent in 2012.

The burst in youth participation in the 2008 election, when North Carolina went to the Democrats and voted President Obama into the Oval Office, was not sustained in 2012. Even as the youth vote became increasingly significant across the nation, in North Carolina it lagged in its importance, coinciding with the state going to Mitt Romney.

Granted, the difference is in mere percentage points. According to CIRCLE, a center that conducts research on the civic and political engagement of young Americans, if young voters had split between Romney and Obama or had simply not voted, the fiercest battleground

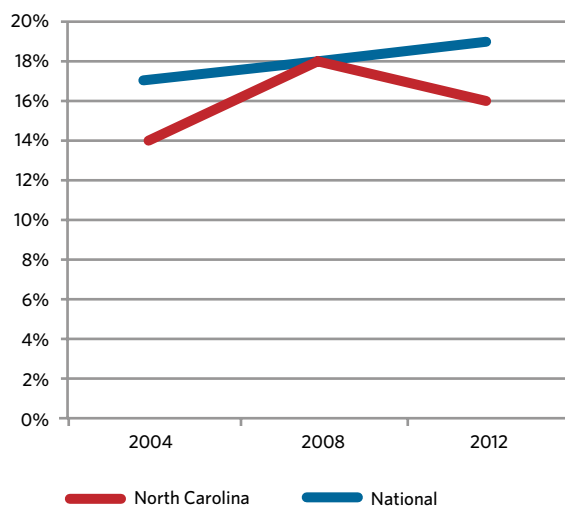
states of Ohio, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Florida would have gone to Romney, giving him the presidency.

It's impossible to say exactly how a higher percentage of youth voters would have affected North Carolina's swing in the 2012 election. It is clear, however, that higher youth participation colors the state more purple than its recent history of voting red. ☒

## SOURCES:

<http://www.people-press.org/2012/09/28/youth-engagement-falls-registration-also-declines/>

<http://www.civicyouth.org/at-least-80-electoral-votes-depended-on-youth/>



## Electorate Expands Over 40 Years

	Total N.C. Voting Age Population	Total N.C. Registered Voters	Turnout Percent of Registered Voters	Turnout Percent of Voting Age Population	Percent of Voting Age Population Registered
1968	2,921,000	2,077,538	76.41%	54.35%	71.12%
1972	3,541,399	2,357,645	64.41%	42.88%	66.57%
1976	3,884,477	2,553,717	65.70%	43.20%	65.74%
1980	4,222,654	2,774,844	66.88%	43.95%	65.71%
1984	4,585,788	3,270,933	68.45%	48.83%	71.33%
1988	4,887,358	3,432,042	62.19%	43.67%	70.22%
1992	5,182,321	3,817,380	68.42%	50.40%	73.66%
1996	5,499,000	4,330,657	60.46%	47.61%	78.75%
2000	6,085,266	5,122,123	58.88%	49.56%	84.17%
2004	6,483,010	5,519,992	64.36%	54.80%	85.15%
2008	7,148,000	6,041,289	69.24%	58.52%	84.52%
2012	7,254,000	6,650,522	67.65%	62.02%	91.86%

# A 2012 Picture of North Carolina Voters

BY JESSICA KENNEDY

*Data collected* from the national exit poll and the North Carolina State Board of Elections give valuable insight into the makeup of the state's voters in 2012. They provide a picture of a state that has experienced rapid growth and change.

North Carolina's population grew from 9.5 million in 2010 to 9.7 million in 2012. Voter registration grew from 6 million in 2008 to more than 6.6 million in 2012.

It was the first time in the 50 years tracked by DataNet – and perhaps the first time ever – that more than 90 percent of North Carolinians of voting age were registered to vote. The state had a 68 percent turnout rate among registered voters in the November election.

Still a majority-white state, North Carolina is also becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Seven out of 10 voters in this election were white, down from eight out of 10 in 1996. The proportion of voters who are Latino or African-American has continued to increase.

Here are some key characteristics of North Carolina voters in November:

- The state has a higher percentage of older voters than the nation as a whole -- 21 percent were 65 and older in North Carolina, compared to 16 percent nationally.
- Black women made up 14 percent of North Carolina voters, compared to 8 percent nationally. In 2008, the exit poll found that 100 percent of black women said they voted for President Obama. In 2012, the exit poll found 99 percent voted for the Democratic president. Overall

black voters made up 23 percent of the N.C. electorate, compared to 13 percent nationally.

- Six out of 10 voters are married. Of married voters, six out of 10 voted for Republican Presidential candidate Mitt Romney, while six out of 10 unmarried voters supported Obama.
- Only 5 percent of the state's voters don't have a high school diploma; 23 percent are high school graduates; 29 percent have some college education or an associate degree; and 28 percent are college graduates, with 15 percent having postgraduate study. The electorate is weighted toward people educated beyond high school.
- Of North Carolina voters, fully 34 percent said someone in their household had lost a job in the last four years. These voters supported Romney by a small margin.
- Forty-eight percent of North Carolina voters attend religious services weekly or more often, while 38 percent attend occasionally and 13 percent never attend. Those who attend weekly broke for Romney, while those who never attend went heavily for Obama. Those who attend occasionally were split.
- Sixty-nine percent of North Carolina voters identified themselves as Protestants, with white Protestants making up 48 percent of the electorate. Among white voters, 35 percent identified themselves as born-again Christians. Born-again Christians and white Protestants gave strong majorities to Romney. ☒

## Shifts in Metropolitan Voting

In recent years, the Program on Public Life has tracked the “metropolitanization” of North Carolina. In analyzing electoral implications, we have focused in particular on the 15 counties in which half of the total votes are cast in a typical statewide general election. The charts on this page and the following page provide an assessment of Democratic and Republican gains and losses, county-by-county, in the past three presidential and gubernatorial races. The data come from results reported by the state Board of Elections, with the candidate's margin of victory rounded to the nearest thousand. The charts were compiled by Anasa Sinegal, a PhD student in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

## Governor's Race County Shifts

County	2004	2008	2012	2008-2012 Shift
Buncombe	Easley +18k	Perdue +22k	Dalton +6k	D -16k
Cabarrus	Ballantine +1k	McCrory +22k	McCrory +31k	R +9k
Cumberland	Easley +23k	Perdue +32k	Dalton +18k	R -14k
Durham	Easley +52k	Perdue +61k	Dalton + 63k	D +2k
Forsyth	Easley +18k	Perdue +21k	McCrory +5k	R +26k
Gaston	Ballantine +4k	McCrory +24k	McCrory +34k	R +10k
Guilford	Easley +44k	Perdue +42k	Dalton +16k	D -26k
Iredell	Ballantine +3k	McCrory +23k	McCrory +34k	R +11k
Johnston	Ballantine +1k	McCrory +10k	McCrory +25k	R +15k
Mecklenburg	Easley +59k	Perdue +337 votes	McCrory +2k	R +2k
New Hanover	Easley +6k	Perdue +3k	McCrory +15k	R +18k
Orange	Easley +28k	Perdue +25k	Dalton +23k	D -2k
Pitt	Easley +8k	Perdue +15k	Dalton +574 votes	D -14k
Union	Ballantine +10k	McCrory +23k	McCrory +43k	R +20k
Wake	Easley +66k	Perdue +26k	McCrory +8k	R +34k

# Why McCrory Out-Polled Dalton, and Romney

BY MAX MORRILL

*The 2012 election* saw North Carolina voters select both a Republican governor and a Republican presidential candidate. While Mitt Romney carried the state and Pat McCrory won the gubernatorial election, McCrory received significantly more support from Tar Heel voters than Mitt Romney—by a margin of 170,000 votes.

As a long-time mayor of Charlotte running his second campaign for governor, McCrory was well known by many voters in the state. Strong support in large urban areas, as well as votes from other traditional Democratic-leaning voter groups, helped McCrory beat Democrat Walter Dalton by 12 percentage points.

By contrast, Romney beat out President Obama for the state's 15 electoral votes by only 3 percentage points. Here are key factors that contributed to McCrory's showing in North Carolina:

- 62,000 more Republicans voted in 2012 than in the 2008 election, while 53,000 fewer Democrats cast ballots.
- McCrory had significantly more support among younger voters than Romney. Among voters age 18 to 29, McCrory won 40 percent, contrasted to the 32 percent Romney received. The only age group in which McCrory did not get a higher percentage of votes than Romney was in the 65 and over category, of which they both received 64 percent of the vote.
- Among African-Americans, McCrory won 13 percent of the vote, while Romney received a mere 4 percent. McCrory's support among African-American men was twice that of Romney. McCrory received 11 percent of the votes of African-American women, while Romney received only 1 percent.
- Among voters who identified themselves as a "Democrat," McCrory received 15 percent of the votes, while Romney got only 8 percent of self-identified Democrats. Among "independents," McCrory received 5 percentage points more than Romney. Among "liberals," McCrory got 5 percentage points more, and among "moderates," 7 percentage points more than Romney.
- McCrory's victory also had to do with his relative strength in the state's large urban areas. In localities with populations over 50,000, McCrory received 48 percent of the vote, while Romney managed to get 40 percent of votes. In the two largest urban counties -- Mecklenburg and Wake -- Obama won by as many as 100,000 votes. Yet McCrory won both counties. McCrory also won but Romney lost Richmond, Forsyth, Chatham, Granville, and Nash counties.
- While Romney received fewer votes than Obama from those whose family earnings were under \$30,000 annually, as well as from those in the \$30-50,000 range (41 percent and 49 percent respectively), McCrory was able to earn 46 percent of the vote of those earning less than \$30,000 and in the \$30-50,000 range actually received more votes than his Democratic opponent, taking 54 percent of the votes.

Pat McCrory had a successful gubernatorial campaign in 2012 because he was able to attract votes from demographic groups that tend to lean toward the Democratic Party. ☒

## SOURCES:

*Exit poll results on CNN and MSNBC website sites*

*Democracy North Carolina*

*"NC Republicans could offer GOP blueprint" by Jim Morrill*

*US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics*

## Presidential Race County Shifts

County	2004	2008	2012	2008-2012 Shift
Buncombe	Bush +1k	Obama +17k	Obama +15k	D -2k
Cabarrus	Bush +21k	McCain +14k	Romney +16k	R +2k
Cumberland	Bush +3k	Obama +22k	Obama +25k	D +3k
Durham	Kerry +40k	Obama +70k	Obama +77k	D +7k
Forsyth	Bush +12k	Obama +17k	Obama +12k	D -5k
Gaston	Bush +23k	McCain +21k	Romney +22k	R +1k
Guilford	Kerry +2k	Obama +44k	Obama +41k	D -3k
Iredell	Bush +20k	McCain +17k	Romney +23k	R +6k
Johnston	Bush +19k	McCain +16k	Romney +21k	R +5k
Mecklenburg	Kerry +11k	Obama +99k	Obama +100k	D +1k
New Hanover	Bush +9k	McCain +1k	Romney +5k	R +4k
Orange	Kerry +22k	Obama +33k	Obama +32k	D -1k
Pitt	Bush +3k	Obama +6k	Obama +5k	D -1k
Union	Bush +24k	McCain +22k	Romney +28k	R +6k
Wake	Bush +7k	Obama +64k	Obama +55k	D -9k



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