



0

More

Next Blog»

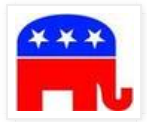
markleavinshistory@gmail.com New Post Design Sign Out

# Demographics and America

Stats and Stories About a Rapidly Changing World

Sunday, July 7, 2013

## State Population Density and the 2012 Presidential Election: The Romney States



In the wake of President Obama's re-election, a wealth of analysis and explanation has poured forth from journalists, pundits, and scholars as to why the election broke the way it did. Without a doubt, more will come.

In terms of fundamentals, so far, much of the analysis (at least the analysis that is commonly found on cable news and mainstream news websites) has focused on the changing racial-ethnic composition of the electorate, minority voter turnout, the cultural differences between so-called red and blue states, the relative electoral college importance of given states, and the respective dynamics of swing states like Ohio, Florida, Virginia, Colorado, and North Carolina.

In short, much of the analysis of the tectonic plates underlying the 2012 election has found profound demographic change to be at heart of Obama's re-election, along with Obama's advantages in key swing states.

There has also been a great deal of coverage of how day-to-day events (e.g. The prolonged GOP primary process, Romney's 47% speech, Obama's poor performance in the first debate, Super Storm Sandy, etc.), and how these daily ups and downs might have affected the outcome. Most analysts seemingly have concluded that Obama ran a better campaign, and that Romney squandered many an opportunity, and/or committed too many unforced errors.

I do not claim to have anything to offer that is completely original in this area of the election's fundamentals, nor do am I contesting the mainstream interpretations of Obama's victory and Romney's defeat. To put it another way, I largely accept much of the conventional wisdom as to why Obama beat Romney, both in terms of election fundamentals and the day-to-day campaigning.

But recently, I did notice a scarcity of discussion about how state population density correlated to the results of the 2012 presidential election. Again, I don't claim to be the first to notice this correlation, but compared with other factors, state population density has received far less public attention in our mainstream media outlets.

Simply put, there was a strong correlation between a state's population density and who won it. More specifically, **Romney did not win states with high population densities.** Yes, he did easily win Texas, a highly populated state. But Texas has a population density on par with Alabama, 96 to 94 respectively, per 2010 Census Bureau numbers.

Put another way, relative to the population densities of all 50 states and the District of Columbia, **Romney ONLY won states with mid-range or low population densities.**

Conversely, Obama won the states with the highest state population densities, along with certain states having moderate or low population density. The population densities of the 2012 Obama states will be covered more completely in a subsequent post.

Listed below are the 24 states Romney carried in 2012, a roster that proved insufficient to get him a majority of the electoral votes. Next to each state's name is the most-recent measurement of the population density of each state. State Population Density is expressed in total persons per square mile. The data source comes from the Census Bureau's 2010 numbers.

### Pages

- [Home](#)
- [About This Blog](#)
- [Links](#)
- [Basic Terms about Demography and Demographics](#)



### Blog Archive

- [2014](#) (65)
- ▼ [2013](#) (467)
  - [December](#) (76)
  - [November](#) (68)
  - [October](#) (64)
  - [September](#) (54)
  - [August](#) (56)
  - ▼ [July](#) (86)
    - [Forbes: Russia to Experience Mild Natural Inceas...](#)
    - [Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama Atop the Natio...](#)
    - [The American Prospect's Paul Waldman: White Privil...](#)
    - [The AP's Hope Yen: 80% of U.S. Adults Face Economi...](#)
    - [Andrew O'Hehir: Detroit Haters on the Right](#)
    - [Reactions to Victor Davis Hanson's Controversial C...](#)
    - [National Review's Victor Davis Hanson: Obama and H...](#)
    - [Charles Blow of The New York Times: Fifty States ...](#)
    - [Eleanor Clift: The Current Republican Electorate](#)
    - [CBS News: The New North Carolina Voter I.D. Law a...](#)
    - [The Atlantic: Economic Mobility and Two Milwaukee...](#)
    - [Ronald Brownstein: The Return of American Racial D...](#)
    - [Bowling Green State University: U.S. Marriage Rat...](#)
    - [CNN's Ruben Navarette: Keep the Dreamers; Discard...](#)
    - [Pew Research Center: 44% of the American Public S...](#)
    - [The American Prospect: Children in Poverty, the Nu...](#)
    - [The American Prospect: A Diminished Social Safety ...](#)

Romney States & **Persons per square mile**

1. Alabama: **94**
2. Alaska: **1**
3. Arizona: **56**
4. Arkansas: **56**
5. Georgia: **168**
6. Idaho: **19**
7. Indiana: **181**
8. Kansas: **35**
9. Kentucky: **110**
10. Louisiana: **105**
11. Mississippi: **63**
12. Missouri: **87**
13. Montana: **7**
14. Nebraska: **24**
15. North Carolina: **196**
16. North Dakota: **8**
17. Oklahoma: **55**
18. South Carolina: **154**
19. South Dakota: **11**
20. Tennessee: **153**
21. Texas: **96**
22. Utah: **34**
23. West Virginia: **77**
24. Wyoming: **6**

**Of the 24 states Romney won, per the Census Bureau's 2010 data, NONE had a state population density of over 200 persons per square mile. In contrast, Obama won 14 states with population densities greater than 200, plus the District of Columbia.**

Romney's five states that were most most densely populated were North Carolina at 196, Indiana at 181, Georgia at 168, South Carolina at 154, and Tennessee at 153. **It's worth noting that Romney's two most densely populated states--North Carolina and Indiana--were carried by Obama in 2008.**

In comparison, Obama's top five states were in terms of population density were New Jersey at 1,195, Rhode Island at 1,018, Massachusetts at 839, Connecticut at 738, and Maryland at 595. The District of Columbia, a source of electoral votes, easily went to Obama and had a population density of 9,857.

For anyone who followed the 2012 general election campaign season, the names Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Florida, and North Carolina should sound familiar. They were considered to be the key swing states upon which the election would hinge.

Of those five swing states, only North Carolina had a population density less than 200. Per the U.S. Census Bureau, it was 196. The Tar Heel State narrowly went to Romney.

Obama carried the other four major swing states, those being **Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Florida**. All four had population densities greater than 200 persons per square mile, with Ohio at 282, Pennsylvania at 284, Virginia at 203, and Florida at 351.

Please don't misunderstand the larger point. I'm not saying that Romney was absolutely incapable of winning states with a population density greater than 200 persons per square mile. To the contrary, I don't believe at all that the 2012 election results were inexorable at all. Simply put, the 2012 electoral map could have turned out differently.

But the fact that Romney only won states with mid-range or low population densities is a demographic and historical reality of the 2012 Presidential election. The calculation is quite easy (thanks to the U.S. Census Bureau), but is less easy to explain why that was the case. I believe that much of the conventional analysis conducted since the 2012 election surely goes a long way to providing the reasons. But in terms of telling the story of the 2012 Presidential Election, perhaps it is of some benefit to note more frequently the matter of state population density and the re-election of President Obama.

-----Mark Leavins, July 7, 2013

[The American Prospect: Children in the Wake of the...](#)

[The Nation's Richard Kim: The Republican Party as ...](#)

[New York Times Editorial Supports President Obama'...](#)

[Salon's Katie McDonough: Religious Progressives R...](#)

[The New Republic: The Decline of Detroit Shown Vi...](#)

[Life Expectancy Narrowing Between U.S. Whites and ...](#)

[Pew Research Center: A Deeply Divided Congress an...](#)

[Washington Post: President Obama and the Political...](#)

[The Washington Post's Eugene Robinson: Young Blac...](#)

[Joe Scarborough: The "Hyper-Partisan" Responses t...](#)

[Are We in a Long Hot "Summer of Hate?"](#)

[Popular Vote Totals in Presidential Elections, 197...](#)

[The Daily Beast's Bassam Gergi: Zimmerman Acquitte...](#)

[Regarding the George Zimmerman Trial: A Brief Demo...](#)

[The American Prospect's Paul Waldman: State-Level ...](#)

[New York Times: The Racial-Ethnic Demographic Comp...](#)

[Washington Post's Kathleen Parker: A Republican "B...](#)

[Conservative Columnist David Brooks Message to Hou...](#)

[National Journal's Charlie Cook: Warnings Against...](#)

[Salon's Joan Walsh: Appealing to White Racial Rese...](#)

[Pew Research Center: Food Stamps Political Demogra...](#)

[Brief State Demographic Profiles: Montana](#)

[Brief State Demographic Profiles: Missouri](#)

[Brief State Population Profiles: Mississippi](#)

[Brief State Demographic Profiles: Minnesota](#)

[Thomas Edsall: Declining Political Power for Black...](#)

[Slate's John Dickerson: Immigration Reform and Co...](#)

[Brief State Demographic Profiles: Michigan](#)

[Brief State Demographic Profiles: Massachusetts](#)

[Michael Tomasky: White Voters Likely to be Less C...](#)

[The New Republic's Nate Cohn: The Theory That Mor...](#)

[NBC News' Allison Linn: A Lower American Birth Rat...](#)


[Brief State Demographic Profiles: Maryland](#)

[Brief State Demographic Profiles: Maine](#)

Posted by [Mark Leavins](#) at 12:16 PM 


 Recommend this on Google

2 comments:

 **J Simon** July 8, 2013 at 5:15 AM

Golly, you have been busy! No surprise on the Romnyites in 'Bama! Will it ever swing the other way???

[Reply](#) [Delete](#)

 **Mark Leavins** July 8, 2013 at 5:54 PM

Short answer: Not in the near future...unless Nick Saban were to seek the presidency as a Democrat

But Alabama's next door neighbor to the east, Georgia, just might be experiencing enough demographic change to earn "swing state" status. Recently, I heard Obama campaign strategist David Axelrod state that they were tempted to make a play for Georgia in 2012, but it fell a little outside the metrics they were using to determine where to allocate their campaign resources.

In 2016, if the Democrats field a strong ticket, I suspect that they will take a shot at Georgia. Having said that, 2016 is a long way off in the warped universe of political time.

[Reply](#) [Delete](#)

Enter your comment...

Comment as: 

Mark Leavins (C)

Sign out

Publish

Preview

☐ Notify me

[Newer Post](#) [Home](#) [Older Post](#)

Subscribe to: [Post Comments \(Atom\)](#)

- [State Population Density and the 2012 Presidential...](#)
- [YouTube and Demography: Brookings Institution Dem...](#)
- [Brief State Demographic Profiles: Louisiana](#)
- [Brief State Demographic Profiles: Kentucky](#)
- [Andrew O'Hehir: A New Era of Revolution](#)
- [Brief State Demographic Profiles: Kansas](#)
- [Brief State Demographic Profiles: Iowa](#)
- [Brief State Demographic Profiles: Indiana](#)
- [More Analysis of Congressional GOP Options on Immi...](#)
- [U.S. Economy Adds 195,000 Jobs in June, Exceeding ...](#)
- [Brief State Demographic Profiles: Illinois](#)
- [Brief State Demographic Profiles: Idaho](#)
- [How Will Congressional Republicans Respond to the ...](#)
- [The Demographics of Driving: Young Americans Seem...](#)
- [YouTube and Demographics: Population Reference Bur...](#)
- ["Diversity Explosion," a New Book By Brookings Ins...](#)
- [Allen Barra, Biographer of Bear Bryant, Agrees tha...](#)
- [YouTube and Demographics: Population Reference Bur...](#)
- [YouTube and Demographics: Population Reference Bur...](#)
- [YouTube and Demographics: Population Reference Bur...](#)
- [YouTube and Demographics: Population Reference Bur...](#)
- [NBC's Benjy Sarlin: Conservative Devolution on Imm...](#)
- [Charleston Gazette Editorial: Demographic Change a...](#)
- [NBC's Mark Murray: Demographics, Immigration Refor...](#)
- [Quick Demographic Data on Egypt](#)
- [The Daily Beast's Michael Tomasky: A Righter and W...](#)
- [Brief State Demographic Profiles: Hawaii](#)
- [A Somber Ronald Brownstein: Red America, Blue Ame...](#)
- [Pew Research Center: Single Fathers Raising Childr...](#)
- [Tom Jacobs: Mexican Immigrants in the U.S. are Id...](#)
- [Brief State Demographic Profiles: Georgia](#)
- [Brief State Demographic Profiles: Florida](#)
- [Brief State Demographic Profiles: Delaware](#)
- [Jeb Bush Editorial: Republicans Should Embrace Imm...](#)
- [Politico's Alex Isenstadt: GOP Congressional Gerr...](#)

► June (63)



About Me

 Follow

0

[View my complete profile](#) 

Simple template. Powered by [Blogger](#).

