



First in the Nation

New Hampshire's Changing Electorate

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More than half a million people are expected to participate in the New Hampshire 2016 Presidential Primary. The time-honored symbol of the primary is the laconic Yankee with deep ancestral roots in the state, who dismisses fourth-generation residents as newcomers. Certainly such voters exist, but in reality most Granite State residents arrived only recently. In fact, New Hampshire's population is among the most mobile in the nation. Only a third of New Hampshire residents age 25 and older were born in the state. Such migration, coupled with the natural change in the population as young voters come of age and older generations of voters pass from the scene, has produced considerable turnover in the voting population. More than 30 percent of potential voters this year were either not old enough to vote in 2008, or resided somewhere other than New Hampshire. Such demographic turnover contributes to the changing political landscape of the state, which has important implications both for the Presidential Primary and the November general election.

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Demographic Trends

Two powerful demographic forces are reshaping the New Hampshire electorate. The first is migration. New Hampshire has one of the most mobile populations in the nation. Only 45 percent of the population residing in New Hampshire was born in the state. In contrast, nationwide 68 percent of the U.S.-born population resides in the state in which they were born. Only five states and the District

KEY FINDINGS



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The Democratic primary voter base has grown significantly, but the Republican primary base has not.

of Columbia have a smaller proportion of their native born population living in their state of birth than New Hampshire. Among those 25 and older, who make up the bulk of the voting age population, just 33 percent of New Hampshire residents were born in the state.

The Great Recession slowed the movement of population within the United States and New Hampshire, but there was still a considerable flow of migrants to and from the Granite State. Between 2008 and 2015, an estimated 247,000 people moved to New Hampshire from elsewhere in the United States. Some subsequently left the state and a few died, but most remained. We estimate that 197,000 of these migrants who are U.S. citizens of voting age remain in the state. During the same period, an estimated 246,000 people moved out of New Hampshire to another state; some subsequently returned, but most did not. We estimate that 201,000 of those who left and have not returned were citizens of voting age. In all, as

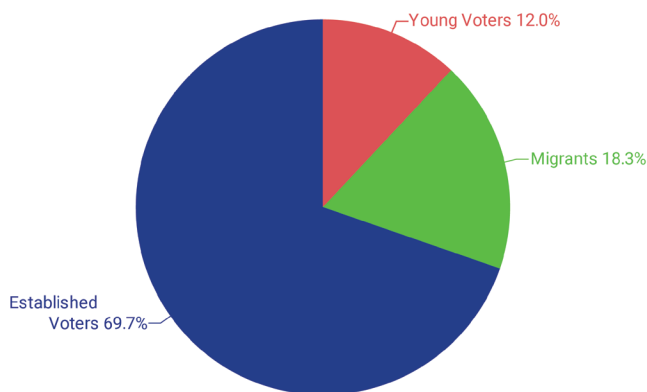
many as 398,000 potential voters moved in or out of New Hampshire during those seven years—a substantial change for a state with an electorate of only 1,078,000.

The largest source of new migrants to New Hampshire is the Boston metropolitan area, but New Hampshire also receives a significant number of migrants from the Northeast and the South.¹ Migrants to New Hampshire include many families with children that settle in the state’s urban and suburban region, as well as 50–69 year-olds who relocate to the state’s recreational and amenity areas.

A second demographic force influencing the electorate is life cycle changes among its population. Between 2008 and 2015, 129,000 New Hampshire citizens celebrated their 18th birthday. These young voters have the potential to change the political calculus of elections because their attitudes differ from those of older, more established voters. The influence of these younger voters is heightened by the loss of 68,000 older New Hampshire residents of voting age through mortality.

Together the migrants and those turning 18 in the past seven years represent 326,000 potential new voters or about 30 percent of those eligible to vote this year (Figure 1). A similar analysis comparing the 2000 and 2008 electorates found that 33 percent of those eligible to vote in the 2008 primary had not been part of the 2000 electorate.² Some will not register or vote, but those who do represent a substantial proportion of those casting ballots. Comparing these new residents with the established population of the state demonstrates how demographic change may affect the upcoming primary.

FIGURE 1. ESTIMATED YOUNG, MIGRANT, AND ESTABLISHED POTENTIAL VOTERS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE, 2016



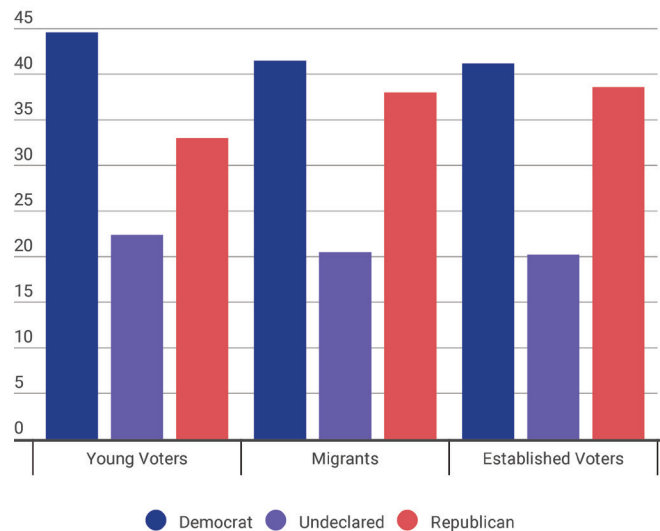
Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Internal Revenue Service Data

Young Voters Differ from Migrants and Established Voters

The influx of potential voters to New Hampshire has significant implications because their political ideology and party identification may differ from long-time residents. We divide the potential voters into three groups. **Young** potential voters are residents who are citizens and turned 18 after 2008. **Migrants** are potential voters who have moved to New Hampshire since 2008. **Established** potential voters are those eligible to vote who resided in New Hampshire in both 2008 and 2016. We also consider the implications of the mortality losses between 2008 and 2016 for the electorate that will vote in the primary this year.

Young voters (45 percent) are slightly more likely to identify as Democrats than are migrant voters (42 percent) or established voters (41 percent), according to analysis of the University of New Hampshire Survey Center’s Granite State Polls (Figure 2). In contrast, 39 percent of established voters identify with the Republican Party, compared to 38 percent of migrants and just 33 percent of young voters. Young voters are also slightly more likely to identify as independents than either migrants or established voters.

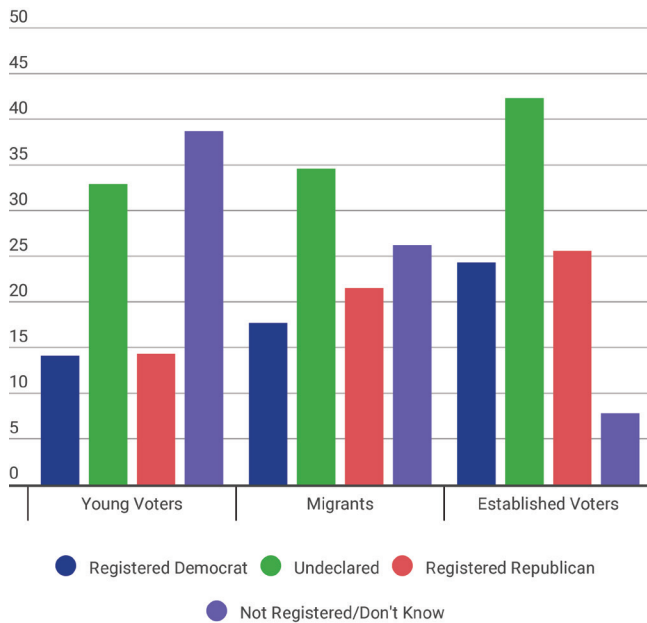
FIGURE 2. PARTY IDENTIFICATION OF YOUNG VOTERS, MIGRANTS, AND ESTABLISHED VOTERS



Source: Granite State Polls, University of New Hampshire

Although stated preferences of young potential voters differ from those of established residents and migrants, this has yet to be fully reflected in voter registration data. Voters in New Hampshire can conceal their partisan identity by registering themselves as “undeclared”; these voters are often described as independents, but most in fact identify with one major party or the other. For example, only 14 percent of young voters are registered as Democrats, yet 45 percent identify themselves as such (Figure 3). Similarly, the 14 percent of young potential voters who have registered as Republicans is considerably less than the 33 percent who identify as Republicans. Young voters are the least likely to have registered (61 percent), and among those who have, most registered as undeclared.

FIGURE 3. VOTER REGISTRATION OF YOUNG VOTERS, MIGRANTS, AND ESTABLISHED VOTERS

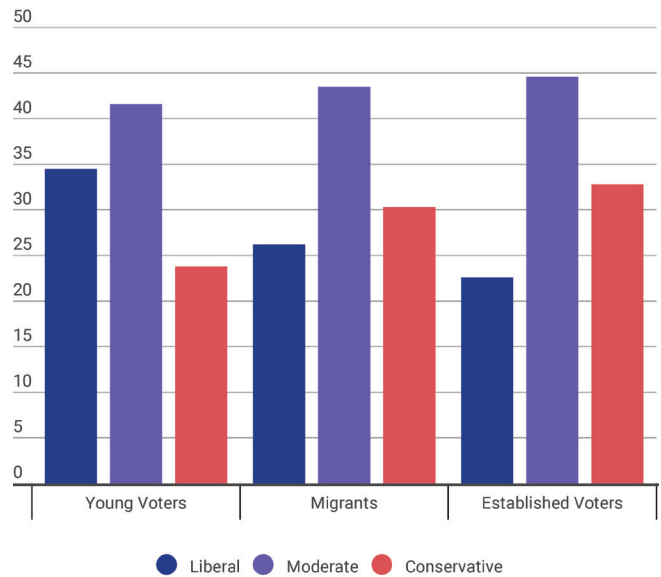


Source: Granite State Polls, University of New Hampshire

The trends are similar among migrants. Fewer than 18 percent have registered as Democrats and 22 percent as Republicans, although many more identify with each party. Some 35 percent are registered as undeclared and 26 percent are not registered. Established potential voters are the most likely to be registered (92 percent) and although many register as undeclared, they are also the most likely to have a party affiliation. Among those who are registered, 24 percent registered as Democrats and 26 percent as Republicans.

A matter of particular interest in the upcoming presidential primary is the distinct differences between the political ideologies of the three groups of voters. Young voters are significantly more likely to have a liberal ideology than migrants or established voters. Nearly 35 percent of young voters classify themselves as liberal, compared to 26 percent of migrants and 23 percent of established voters (Figure 4). Roughly equal proportions of the three groups classify themselves as moderates. Established voters are much more likely to classify themselves as conservative (33 percent), compared to young voters (24 percent). The young voters are also much more likely to believe the country is headed in the right direction (47 percent) than either migrants or established voters (36 percent).

FIGURE 4. POLITICAL IDEOLOGY OF YOUNG VOTERS, MIGRANTS, AND ESTABLISHED VOTERS



Source: Granite State Polls, University of New Hampshire

So far, we have examined three important groups that will be voting in New Hampshire in 2016. To understand how demographic forces are changing New Hampshire, we also need to consider a group that will not be voting in 2016. More than 68,000 residents that could have voted in 2008 died by 2016. Roughly two-thirds of them were age 70 or over. Historically in New Hampshire, older voters tend to be more conservative and more likely to vote Republican than their younger counterparts.

Using data from our 2008 Brief,³ it is possible to compare voters at the greatest risk of mortality to those with minimal mortality risk. These data suggest that those aged 70 and older in 2008 were significantly more likely to identify with the Republican Party than were those under the age of 70. These older adults were also significantly more likely to identify with a conservative political ideology than younger voters. As this older generation fades from the scene, they are being replaced by the leading edge of the baby boomers, who are now in their 60s. This large cohort of early baby boomers is among the most liberal and most likely to identify with the Democratic Party of any New Hampshire age group, except the young voters considered earlier.⁴

To summarize the demographic trends, the changing political landscape in New Hampshire is shaped in part by powerful demographic forces of change. More than 30 percent of the population eligible to vote in New Hampshire in 2016 was either not here or too young to vote in 2008. In addition, mortality has further diminished the older generations of voters long associated with New Hampshire's traditional role as a bastion of Yankee Republicanism.

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The changing demographic landscape also underscores the need for political pollsters in New Hampshire to carefully assess their sampling methods. The high percentage of new voters means that pollsters should not rely on lists of previous primary voters to draw samples because they would systematically exclude a high fraction of the electorate, including many young voters who have shown a propensity to support Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders.

Changing Geographic Patterns of New Hampshire's Presidential Primary Voters

This considerable turnover among individual New Hampshire residents translates into less dramatic but nonetheless significant changes in the state's political geography. Since the 2000 presidential primary, New Hampshire's citizens have markedly changed their patterns of participation in this quadrennial event.

The greatest change occurred in recent Democratic primaries, in which voter participation nearly doubled. This has created a Democratic primary voter base that is much larger and more geographically diverse, with northern and western rural counties generating a greater share of voter turnout.

There were only small increases in the number of voters in Republican presidential primaries from 2000 to 2012, but noteworthy changes in the political geography of Republican voting. Increasing numbers of Republican primary voters now come from the state's two most populous and densely settled counties, Hillsborough and Rockingham. In contrast, northern and western rural counties comprise a diminishing portion of the Republican vote, and several counties experienced an outright decline in Republican primary voter turnout.

Democratic Presidential Primary Participation

In 2000, New Hampshire's Democratic Party was still the minority party. Democrats enjoyed occasional successes (such as Jeanne Shaheen's three-term stint as governor from 1996 to 2002), but had many fewer registered voters than their Republican opponents. This disadvantage is reflected in turnout for the 2000 presidential primaries. Both the Democratic and Republican parties had competitive contests: Vice President Al Gore narrowly beat back a strong challenge from former New Jersey Senator Bill Bradley, while Arizona Senator John McCain became a national figure overnight with a strikingly large victory over frontrunner Texas Governor George W. Bush. Turnout for the Republican primary far exceeded that in the Democratic contest: Almost 240,000 voted in the former, compared to approximately 157,000 in the latter.

Four years later, participation in the Democratic primary (in which Massachusetts Senator John Kerry staged a comeback victory against Vermont Governor Howard Dean) soared more than 40 percent. This increase might be attributed at least in part to the fact that while the Democrats had an open competition for their nomination, President Bush ran without noteworthy primary opposition. Approximately 96,000 of New Hampshire's "undeclared" voters, who have the option to vote in either party's primary, chose the Democratic ballot in 2004, up from just 43,000 in 2000.

In 2008, both parties held competitive contests for the presidential nomination and Democratic turnout grew another 30 percent over its 2004 total. This decade-long surge in Democratic presidential primary participation coincided with a period of much brighter prospects for the party overall. Kerry and Barack Obama carried New Hampshire three consecutive times in the general election, and state Democrats had significant successes in winning statewide races and capturing the state legislature. While Democrats still suffer electoral setbacks (as in 2010 and 2014), they are now competitive with their Republican rivals.

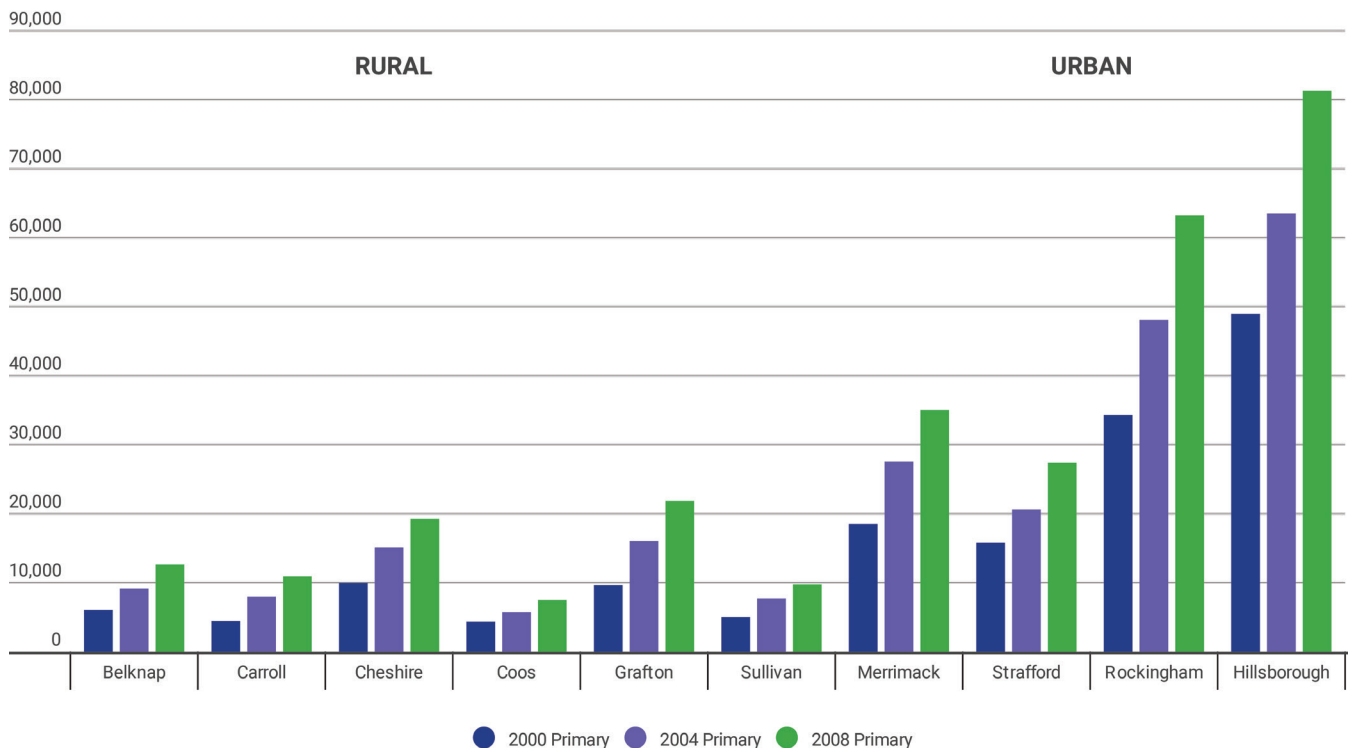
As Democratic primary turnout grew sharply, it also became more geographically widespread (Figure 5). Democrats expanded their voter base in the state's rural counties—a conspicuous exception to the Republican dominance of rural America. Along the western edge of the state bordering Vermont, the Connecticut River Valley's portion of Democratic primary turnout increased 20 percent. Grafton County, in the northwestern portion of the state, led this growth, along with Cheshire and Sullivan counties. Democratic turnout also spiked

in traditionally Republican counties such as Belknap and Carroll, possibly reflecting the influx of migrants to these rural amenity counties.⁵ As a result of the turnout boost in rural New Hampshire, the percentage of all Democratic primary voters from populous Hillsborough and Rockingham decreased.

Republican Presidential Primary Participation

In contrast with the expansion of interest in the Democratic primary, voter turnout for the Republican presidential primary increased just 10,000 votes from 2000 to 2012. In 2008—the last time both parties held competitive contests for their presidential nominations in the same year—turnout for the Republican primary trailed Democratic turnout by nearly 50,000 votes. Even when the Republicans had the sole spotlight in 2012 (President Obama ran without noteworthy opposition for his party's nomination), turnout only rose by 8,000 votes over 2008, despite the participation of 99,000 undeclared voters.

FIGURE 5. BALLOTS CAST IN DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY 2000, 2004, 2008



Source: New Hampshire Secretary of State

The minimal aggregate changes in Republican primary turnout masked meaningful shifts at the county level.⁶ Republican primary turnout became increasingly concentrated in the densely populated southern tier counties of Hillsborough and Rockingham (Figure 6). More than 55 percent of Republican primary voters came from these two counties in 2012. Turnout in Rockingham surged and to its north, historically Democratic-dominant Strafford County also had a slightly increased GOP primary turnout.

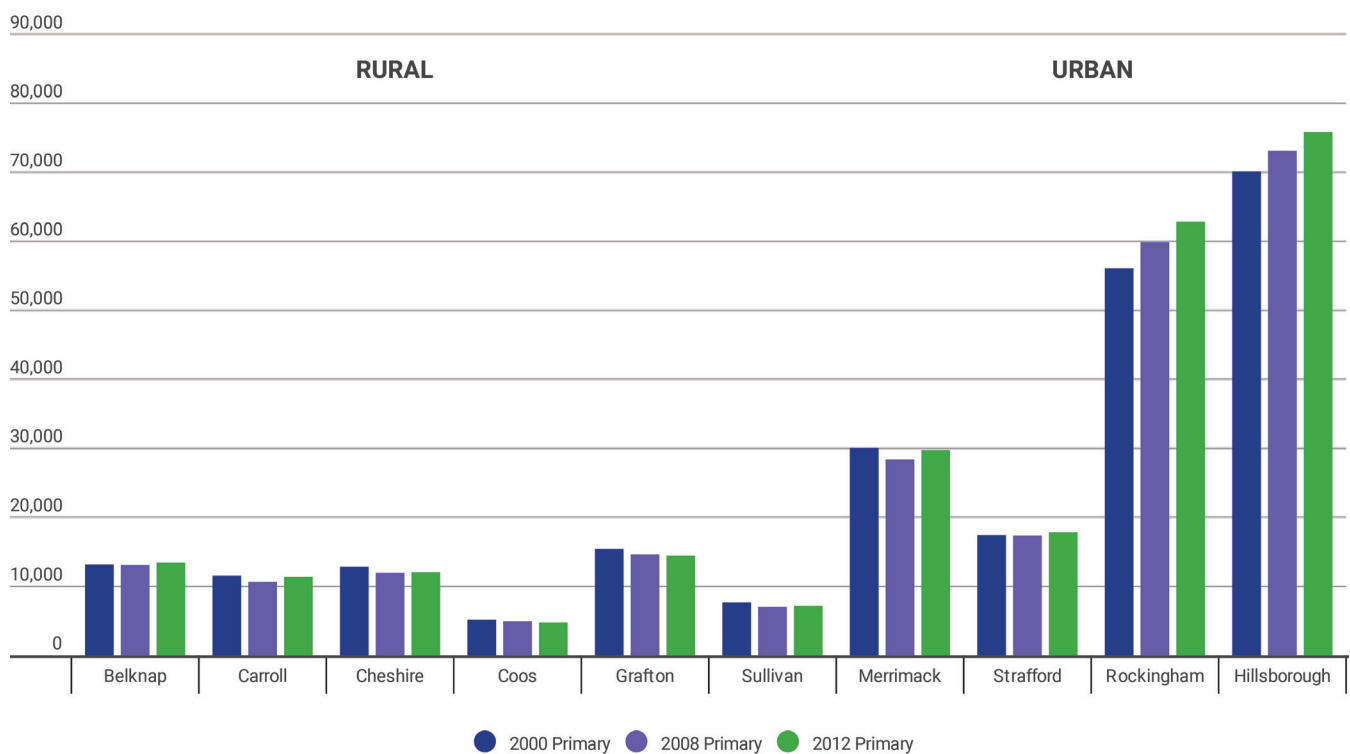
As Hillsborough and Rockingham increased their dominance within New Hampshire’s GOP primary electorate, rural New Hampshire continued its slow fade. Six of New Hampshire’s ten counties cast fewer Republican primary ballots in 2012 than they did in 2000, and five of them are located in the northern and western parts of the state. The turnout decline was especially precipitous in the Connecticut River Valley. Turnout in Merrimack County, the state’s third-largest, also diminished. While presidential candidates still make the time-honored trek north of the Notches or west to Keene, Republican voters outside of New Hampshire’s four largest counties (Hillsborough,

Rockingham, Merrimack, and Strafford) are increasingly scarce, comprising just one of four primary participants in 2012.

Conclusion

The voting population of New Hampshire is among the most mobile in the United States. More than 30 percent of the potential voters are new to the state’s electoral process since 2008. These younger voters and recent migrants have the potential to change the political landscape of the state in the coming presidential primary and November election. The new young voters tend to be more liberal and slightly more likely to identify with the Democratic Party than their older contemporaries. These younger voters also identify less with the Republican Party than do the oldest New Hampshire voters, whose ranks have been sharply diminished by mortality since the 2008 election. At the county level, we find New Hampshire Democrats making significant inroads in rural counties, while Granite State Republicans are increasingly concentrated proximate to the Massachusetts border. We conclude that demographic change has significant implications for the upcoming presidential primary and the subsequent November election.

FIGURE 6. BALLOTS CAST IN REPUBLICAN PRIMARY 2000, 2008, 2012



Source: New Hampshire Secretary of State

Data

Demographic data for this study comes from the U.S. Census Bureau's Census of 2010, American Community Survey of 2010–2014, and Population Estimates Series. Additional data on migration come from the Internal Revenue Service. The migration estimates derived from the IRS data should be interpreted with caution. Although IRS data is comprehensive, those who do not file returns or are filing their first return are excluded from the migration analysis. Also, an unknown number of in-migrants to New Hampshire during the study period later left the state and a modest number of the in-migrants died by 2016. We have estimated the impact of these two factors in our modeling, but their exact impact is unknown because little research exists on the topic. For an analysis of recent demographic trends in New Hampshire and a detailed discussion of methods, see the Carsey School of Public Policy Report, *New Hampshire Demographic Trends in the 21st Century*.

The Granite State Poll is a quarterly survey of randomly selected New Hampshire adults conducted by telephone. The sample is drawn using random digit dialing so each household in New Hampshire has an equal probability of selection. For this research, data from the Granite State Polls from Winter 2009 to Fall 2015 were combined. The weighted sample size from these polls is 23,200.

Presidential primary voting data come from the New Hampshire Secretary of State.

Endnotes

1. K.M. Johnson, "New Hampshire Demographic Trends in the 21st Century," A Carsey Institute Report on New England, 4: 1–32 (Durham, NH: Carsey Institute, University of New Hampshire, 2012).
2. K.M. Johnson, D. Scala, and A. Smith, "Many New Voters Make the Granite State One to Watch in November," Issue Brief No. 9: 1–6 (Durham, NH: Carsey Institute, University of New Hampshire, 2008).
3. Ibid.
4. To fully document the impact of demographic change on the New Hampshire electorate, it would be necessary to know the political preferences of the 201,000 voting age migrants who left the state between 2009 and 2015. However, no data exists on these out-migrants, so we are unable to assess the impact their outmigration has on the political landscape of the state. Roughly half of the voting age out-migrants from New Hampshire were between the ages of 18 and 29. An additional 25 percent were between 30 and 49, and the remaining 25 percent were age 50 and over.
5. D. Scala, K.M. Johnson, and L.T. Rogers, "Red Rural, Blue Rural? Presidential Voting Patterns in a Changing Rural America," *Political Geography*, vol. 48 (Sept 2015): 108–118.
6. For a more detailed look at the geography of the New Hampshire Republican Party, see D. Scala, "Changes in New Hampshire's Republican Party: Evolving Footprint in Presidential Politics, 1960–2008," Issue Brief No. 30: 1–6 (Durham, NH: Carsey Institute, University of New Hampshire, 2011).

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