

What Makes a State Swing?

Jonathan L. Clayton

Fort Hays State University, Hays, KS, USA, jlcayton5@mail.fhsu.edu

ABSTRACT: This report provides a methodology for defining and identifying true swing states in US presidential elections. After these states are identified by cross-tabulating high-performing states under the categories of battleground (states with the lowest margin between competitors), shift (states with the highest frequency of flipping from Republican to Democrat or vice-versa), and bellwether (the accuracy of a state to vote concurrently with the winner of the electoral college) during the US presidential elections from 1992 through 2016, an examination is completed to determine any similarities among these states in terms of median household income, population density, racial demographics, political party affiliation, voter behavior, and voter registration. These states are then compared to national averages to determine if the “average swing state” can be identified. Hecht and Schultz utilize a four-point method for identifying swing states (2015). This report attempts to utilize less arbitrary data, using a three-point methodology: battleground, shift, and bellwether.

KEYWORDS: swing state, bellwether, battleground, election

Introduction

The term “swing state” has been present in the American media during quadrennial presidential elections for several decades. Upon a search in Lexis Nexis Academic, the term “swing state” first appears in a 1980 Washington Post article referencing the presidential election between sitting president Jimmy Carter and challenger Ronald Reagan (Broder, 1980). Swing state is repeated more and more frequently as election dates draw nearer, with the media and curious voters focusing in on states that they perceive to have sway or will give tell of the outcome of an election.

During the most recent US presidential election in 2016, several states were incorrectly assumed to swing, or flip, to a candidate that the state had not voted for in recent history. Moreover, several states changed their recent historical voting patterns of selecting a candidate from a party that the state had chosen throughout the last seven presidential elections. Specifically, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania had each voted for the Democratic candidate during all the presidential elections from 1992 through 2012, changing to Republican in 2016. Why were these states not considered viable until after the election? Why did the press so intensely focus on the same swing states as previous elections, such as Virginia, Florida, and Ohio?

To better understand and identify possible swing states, this study hypothesizes that similar characteristics can be found in states that are identified as swing states, and that when averaged, these states will show a significant difference in these characteristics from national averages. This report examines a methodology for identifying swing states based on voting behavior. From these defined states, the demographic characteristics of race, income, and employment are studied, and compare these to national averages to determine if a swing state is significantly different or similar to national averages. This study will also examine the voter registration and turnout reports of these states to determine if these data points are also similar or vastly different from national averages.

Literature Review

This report will relate a study of swing states and attempt to identify characteristics or traits found common among them. To review and synthesize this study with previous works on similar matters, this study compares the findings to those made in previous texts around the subjects of voter turnout, current swing state status, voting behavior, flips in party choice by a state, and voter demographics. This report will also compare previous studies of swing state identification and behavior to attempt to further identify similar characteristics among swing states as a group or bloc of states.

Abbott and Levin (1991) provide an in-depth analysis of the electoral college and its usefulness, or lack thereof, of placing the winner of the election into the office of President. What Abbott and James conclude is that the electoral college is an unnecessary and rather dangerously out-of-date method for the United States to choose its chief executive. They correctly predict that in future elections, albeit off by just one cycle, the electoral college votes will conflict with the popular vote, sending a candidate into office under the guise of winning only the electoral college, negating the majority will of the American people. Their publication regards the necessity for understanding the influence of the electoral college, how it can disproportionately favor certain states over others in terms of their intense focus and effect on the outcome of an election. They also discuss the bias against rapidly growing states, as well as states with high voter turnout. These qualities are significant in terms of their relation to swing state status and will be reported further.

Lau and Redlawsk (2006) discuss the normative decision by voters to vote “correctly.” They describe this behavior as if a voter would be deciding “based on the values and beliefs of the individual voter” (75). This can relate to a study of swing states in terms of the state’s ability to choose candidates of differing parties over a period of time, causing the state to flip back and forth from Republican to Democrat, or vice versa. The demographics of voters are studied by Leighley and Nagler’s (2014). Leighley and Nagler delve into the minute data of voting behaviors and characteristics of voters, drilled down to income level, race, religion, and more. This study provides insight into the attitudes of all voters, and how those attitudes have led to changes in voting behavior or the past 40 years. Regarding this report, Leighley and Nagler relate the importance of understanding these voters and how these changing demographics have placed an importance on where they are located within the United States.

One of the most recent and thorough examinations into swing state behavior and characteristics comes from Hecht & Schultz (2015), a compendium and case-by-case study of ten identified swing states and their reasoning for this identification. Hecht and Schultz itemize four criteria for identifying swing states: competitiveness of a presidential election, ability of a state to predict and vote for the eventual winner of a presidential election, occurrence of the state flipping between the major parties during a presidential election, and number of post-convention campaign events. Hecht and Schultz do provide some limitations to their study of post-convention campaign events, restricting the examination to only the 2012 presidential election cycle. Furthermore, the use of a 5% threshold for determining if a state is competitive during an election also appears rather arbitrary, even citing that previous studies examined a 10% threshold.

Most importantly, while Hecht and Schultz examine each of their identified swing states in depth, they do not pose a collective assessment of swing states as a bloc. They do not provide any significant data on the group of their swing states, nor do they identify similar behavior or characteristics thoroughly. This report will examine identified swing states utilizing the top 25%, or 12, states that identify with each of the first three criteria from Hecht and Schultz: competitiveness, occurrence of party flips, and bellwether status. These three criteria will represent the common and frequently used terminology found in discussions of swing states: *battleground*, *shift*, and *bellwether*. Any state that satisfies all three criteria will be determined as swing state for this report.

Methodology for Swing State Determination

The first task of identifying similarities among swing states is to define and execute a model for determining a swing state. As discussed previously, the method for determining a swing state will consist of three criteria: vote margin between Republicans and Democrats in presidential elections (battleground criteria), variation of party choice in presidential elections (shift criteria), and the state’s accuracy for correctly voting for the outcome of the presidential election (bellwether criteria). After calculating the top 25% (12) races for each of these three standards, those states identified as completing all three criteria will then be designated as swing states for this report.

To accurately reflect the patterns of these outcomes, this report will study the elections over the past 24 years, consistent with a generational study, and will include the general elections of 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2016. The beginning point for measurement is also determined best for 1992 as this was the first presidential election in 12 years to flip parties, as well as the starting point of an ongoing eight-year cycle of party power change in the executive office. To accurately report the final votes for each state in the elections from 1992 through and including 2012, I have utilized the findings from the quadrennial election reports of the US Federal Election Commission (FEC) (Federal Election Commission [FEC], 1993; FEC, 1997; FEC, 2001; FEC, 2005; FEC, 2009; FEC, 2013).

Battleground Criteria

The measure of each state’s average margin of difference among the Republican and Democratic candidates in the Presidential elections from 1992 through 2016 provided the results shown in Table 1, ranked in ascending order. The 12 states with the lowest average, or closest races between the two candidates, included the following: Florida (2.5%), New Hampshire (4.19%), Ohio (4.21%), Nevada (4.48%), North Carolina (5.24%), Wisconsin (5.26%), Colorado (5.41%), Virginia (5.45%), Pennsylvania (5.9%), Iowa (6.01%), Arizona (6.02%), and Georgia (6.88%). The full list of state averages can be found in Appendix A.

Shift Criteria

For the second criteria of party variation by state, each state was examined by tabulating the count of the presidential candidate’s political party associated with the state’s choice from 1992 through 2016. A count was completed for each state to determine the split in Republican and Democratic candidates for president over this period of time. As this was a count of the change in political party preference and not of the ratio of Democratic to Republican preference, the 1992 election was viewed as the baseline and not counted. Each time that a state changed its party, a count was tabulated for the full number of changes each state made in political party of its preference for president. Table 2 depicts the choices by each state with the respective count.

Table 1. Average Margin of Difference Between Presidential Candidates by State, 1992-2016
(Battleground Criteria)

Elections	FL	NH	OH	NV	NC	WI	CO	VA	PA	IA	AZ	GA
1992	1.89	1.22	1.83	2.63	0.79	4.35	4.26	4.37	9.02	6.01	1.95	0.59
1996	5.70	9.95	6.36	1.02	4.69	10.3 3	1.37	1.95	9.20	10.3 4	2.23	1.17
2000	0.01	1.27	3.51	3.54	12.83	0.22	8.36	8.03	4.17	0.32	6.29	11.6 9
2004	5.01	1.37	2.10	2.59	12.44	0.38	4.67	8.20	2.50	0.67	10.4 7	16.6 0
2008	2.81	9.61	4.59	12.5 0	0.32	13.9 1	8.95	6.30	10.3 2	9.54	8.52	5.21
2012	0.88	5.58	2.98	6.68	2.04	6.94	5.36	3.88	5.38	5.81	9.06	7.82
2016	1.20	0.30	8.10	2.40	3.60	0.70	4.91	5.40	0.70	9.40	3.60	5.10
AVERAGE	2.50	4.19	4.21	4.48	5.24	5.26	5.41	5.45	5.90	6.01	6.02	6.88

Note. Data for margin of difference between presidential candidates by state for 1992 from FEC (1993), for 1996 from FEC (1997), for 2000 from FEC (2001), for 2004 from FEC (2005), for 2008 from FEC (2009), for 2012 from FEC (2013), and for 2016 from FEC (2017).

More than 12 states are designated as meeting these criteria for swing state status, due to the identical number of presidential party change by state for multiple states. Florida had more changes

than any other state, changing between the parties four times from 1992 through 2016, with Iowa and Ohio each making three changes during this period. Arizona, Colorado, Indiana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, and North Carolina each varied in their choices twice over the 24-year period. As these states only constitute 10 of the 51 races and not the top 12 states mentioned as necessary, the next full block of states that obtained one change in political party should be included (Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin).

Bellwether Criteria

Moving to the final of the three criteria for determination of swing state status, this report calculated the accuracy of each state for voting for the presidential candidate who eventually won the general election, fulfilling the “bellwether” criteria. This standard was calculated by designating a point for each correct vote. After calculating the seven elections from 1992-2016 for the 51 contests, a percentage of accuracy was determined for each contest. Those 15 states with the highest average of accuracy from these elections (Ohio, 100%; Iowa, Nevada, and Ohio, 85.71%; and Arkansas, Colorado, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and West Virginia, 71.43%) are shown below in Table 3. Again, as in the results for the “swing” criteria, the top 12 performing states by accuracy to predict the eventual winner of the presidential election include three additional states due to equivalent performance measures. The full results for all states are found in Appendix B.

Table 2. Variance in Political Party for Presidential Election by State, 1992-2016 (Shift Criteria)

FL (4)	RDRRDDR	IA (3)	DDDRDDR	OH (3)	DDRRDDR
AZ (2)	RDRRRRR	CO (2)	DRRRDDD	IN (2)	RRRRDRR
NC (2)	RRRRDRR	NH (2)	DDRDDDD	NM (2)	DDDRDDD
NV (2)	DDRRDDD	AR (1)	DDRRRRR	GA (1)	DRRRRRR
KY (1)	DDRRRRR	LA (1)	DDRRRRR	MI (1)	DDDDDDR
MO (1)	DDRRRRR	MT (1)	DRRRRRR	PA (1)	DDDDDDR
TN (1)	DDRRRRR	VA (1)	RRRRDDD	WV (1)	DDRRRRR
WI (1)	DDDDDDR	AK (0)	RRRRRRR	AL (0)	RRRRRRR
CA (0)	DDDDDDD	CT (0)	DDDDDDD	DE (0)	DDDDDDD
HI (0)	DDDDDDD	ID (0)	RRRRRRR	IL (0)	DDDDDDD
KS (0)	RRRRRRR	ME (0)	DDDDDDD	MD (0)	DDDDDDD
MA (0)	DDDDDDD	MN (0)	DDDDDDD	MS (0)	RRRRRRR
NE (0)	RRRRRRR	NJ (0)	DDDDDDD	NY (0)	DDDDDDD
ND (0)	RRRRRRR	OK (0)	RRRRRRR	OR (0)	DDDDDDD
RI (0)	DDDDDDD	SC (0)	RRRRRRR	SD (0)	RRRRRRR
TX (0)	RRRRRRR	UT (0)	RRRRRRR	VT (0)	DDDDDDD
WA (0)	DDDDDDD	DC (0)	DDDDDDD	WY (0)	RRRRRRR

Note. Data for variance in political party for presidential election by state for 1992 from FEC (1993), for 1996 from FEC (1997), for 2000 from FEC (2001), for 2004 from FEC (2005), for 2008 from FEC (2009), for 2012 from FEC (2013), and for 2016 from FEC (2017).

Swing States Identified

After completing the analysis of the battleground, swing, and bellwether criteria, I then cross-referenced each result to determine any states that were identified with all three criteria. Those states identified as meeting all three criteria are listed below in Table 4. The seven swing states designated as

meeting all three BSB criteria include Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. These states will now be used for an analysis to determine if there are any certain similarities among racial demographics, median income, and population density and allocation during respective census reports, and political party affiliation, voter turnout, and unemployment ratings during the months of their respective elections.

Searching for Swing State Similarities

Comparison of Swing States Using US Census Measures

Racial demographics. To compare the racial demographics of the seven swing states, I have gathered the findings of the 1990, 2000, and 2010 US Census reports. These reports can produce an accurate description of the racial composition of these states, determining if there are any similarities among them and how they measured compared to US averages. For this report, I will be assessing the ratios of White, Black, and Hispanic citizens. Table 5 produces the percentages of each racial demographic for the seven swing states through these three census reports.

Table 3. Accuracy of States to Predict Eventual Presidential Election Winner by State, 1992-2016 (Bellwether Criteria)

Elections	OH	FL	IA	NV	AR	CO	KY	LA
1992	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1996	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2000	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2004	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2008	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		
2012	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		
2016	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accuracy %	100	85.71	85.71	85.71	71.43	71.43	71.43	71.43

Elections	MI	MO	NH	NM	PA	TN	WV
1992	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1996	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2004		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2008	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
2012	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
2016	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accuracy %	71.43	71.43	71.43	71.43	71.43	71.43	71.43

Note. Data for accuracy of states to predict eventual presidential election winner by state for 1992 from FEC (1993), for 1996 from FEC (1997), for 2000 from FEC (2001), for 2004 from FEC (2005), for 2008 from FEC (2009), for 2012 from FEC (2013), and for 2016 from FEC (2017).

It can be viewed that in each census, the White population of each of these seven swing states were above the national data, with the exception of Nevada in 2010. Moreover, the average White population of the seven swing states is significantly higher than the US average, while the average of Blacks and Hispanics of the seven swing states measures lower than the US numbers.

Median income. The same US Census Reports also conveyed information regarding household income. These reports can verify any similarities between the designated seven swing states and the US

averages, as shown on Table 6. It can be viewed that each of the swing states, as well as the US data, all reported a decrease in median household income from 2000 to 2010, with the exception of New Hampshire. It can also be viewed that the average median household income of the seven swing states is higher than the US data in both 2000 and 2010, and nearly identical in 1990.

Table 4. Cross-Tabulation and Identification of Swing States from BSB Methodology

BATTLEGROUND CRITERIA	SWING CRITERIA	BELLWETHER CRITERIA	ALL THREE CRITERIA MET
Arizona	Arizona	Arkansas	Colorado
Colorado*	Arkansas	Colorado*	Florida
Florida*	Colorado*	Florida*	Iowa
Georgia	Florida*	Iowa*	Nevada
Iowa*	Indiana	Kentucky	New Hampshire
Nevada*	Iowa*	Louisiana	Ohio
New Hampshire*	Kentucky	Michigan	Pennsylvania
North Carolina	Louisiana	Missouri	
Ohio*	Michigan	Nevada*	
Pennsylvania*	Missouri	New Hampshire*	
Virginia	Nevada*	New Mexico	
Wisconsin	New Hampshire*	Ohio*	
	New Mexico	Pennsylvania*	
	North Carolina	Tennessee	
	Ohio*	West Virginia	
	Pennsylvania*		
	Tennessee		
	Virginia		
	West Virginia		
	Wisconsin		

Table 5. Racial Demographics in Swing States from 1990, 2000, & 2010 US Census Reports

SWING STATE	1990			2000			2010		
	W	B	H	W	B	H	W	B	H
COLORADO	88.2	4.0	12.9	82.8	3.8	17.1	81.3	4	20.7
FLORIDA	83.1	13.6	12.2	78.0	14.6	16.8	75	16	22.5
IOWA	96.6	1.7	1.2	93.9	2.1	2.8	91.3	2.9	5
NEVADA	84.3	6.6	10.4	75.2	6.8	19.7	66.2	8.1	26.5
NEW HAMPSHIRE	98.0	0.6	1.0	96	0.7	1.7	93.9	1.1	2.8
OHIO	87.8	10.6	1.3	85	11.5	1.9	82.7	12.2	3.1
PENNSYLVANIA	88.5	9.2	2.0	85.4	10	3.2	81.9	10.8	5.7
US	80.3	12.1	9.0	75.1	12.3	12.5	72.4	12.6	16.3
SWING AVERAGE	89.5	6.6	5.8	85.2	7.1	9.0	81.8	7.9	12.3

Note. Data for racial demographics for 1990 from United States Census Bureau (1992) and for 2000 & 2010 from United States Census Bureau (n.d.).

Population density and allocation. For the final analysis utilizing US Census data, I have examined the population allocation for the seven swing states in comparison with US data to see if there are similarities among these states to determine if the ratio of urban and rural citizens is comparative to US data, as shown in Table 7. From this data, I have examined the population density in people per square mile (PPM²), as well as the percentage of rural and urban residents. Notably, the average of the seven swing states are all at a much higher population density than the US data, nearly double, in all three measures. Furthermore, the average percentage of rural citizens is slightly higher than the US data in each of the three Census reports, leading to a lower urban population.

Table 6. Median Household Income in Swing States from 1990, 2000, & 2010
US Census Reports

STATE	1990 MEDIAN \$	2000 MEDIAN \$	2010 MEDIAN \$
COLORADO	\$50,340	\$60,764	\$59,669
FLORIDA	\$45,902	\$49,971	\$45,350
IOWA	\$43,808	\$50,808	\$50,504
NEVADA	\$51,795	\$57,389	\$53,082
NEW HAMPSHIRE	\$60,677	\$63,678	\$66,303
OHIO	\$47,495	\$52,722	\$46,752
PENNSYLVANIA	\$48,551	\$51,628	\$49,826
US	\$50,200	\$54,058	\$50,599
SWING AVERAGE	\$49,795	\$55,280	\$53,069

Note. Data for state income in 1990 and 2000 from National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.) and for 2010 from United States Census Bureau (2011).

Individually, the seven swing states range drastically in population density in all three reports, ranging from 10.9PPM² to 265.1PPM² (1990), 18.2PPM² to 296.4PPM² (2000), and 24.6PPM² to 350.6PPM² (2010). Each state also showed a larger growth of PPM² from 1990 to 2000 than from 2000 to 2010.

Comparison of Swing States Using Voter Registration Data and Voter Turnout

Political party affiliation. Due to the state of Ohio delaying their request for a public information report on political party affiliation throughout the previous seven presidential elections, the data for this measurement is not entirely complete, with the exception of 2016. However, an average can still be determined with the remaining six swing states, and a comparison to national averages. Table 8 provides the breakdown of party registration by election cycle for each of the swing states and separates the responses into Democratic (DEM), Republican (GOP), and Independent/Other (IND/OTH) registrants. The IND/OTH registrants also includes citizens who registered and selected no party or affiliation.

As shown in Table 8, political party affiliation for the average of the seven swing states is stronger for the registered Democrats and Republicans compared to the national average. Both political parties do exhibit and downturn overall from 1992 to 2016 in party identification, mirroring the national average, but the swing states do have stronger registration for both parties, compared to Independents or Unaffiliated.

Table 7. Population Density and Rural/Urban Percentages of Swing States from 1990, 2000, & 2010 US Census Reports

STATE	1990			2000			2010		
	PPM ²	RURAL	URBAN	PPM ²	RURAL	URBAN	PPM ²	RURAL	URBAN
CO	31.8	17.6	82.4	41.5	18	82	48.5	16.9	83.1
FL	239.6	15.2	84.8	296.4	10.7	89.3	350.6	8.9	91.1
IA	49.7	39.4	60.6	52.4	38.6	61.4	54.5	36.5	63.5
NV	10.9	11.7	88.3	18.2	9.4	90.6	24.6	6.5	93.5
NH	123.7	49	51	137.8	44.4	55.6	147	44.1	55.9
OH	264.9	25.9	74.1	277.3	21.1	78.9	282.3	20.5	79.5
PA	265.1	31.1	68.9	274	23.6	76.4	283.9	22.5	77.5
US	70.3	24.8	75.2	79.6	21	79	87.4	19.3	80.7
SWING AVERAGE	140.8	27.1	72.9	156.8	23.7	76.3	170.2	22.3	77.7

Note. PPM² among swing states from United States Census Bureau (n.d). Percentage of rural/urban split among swing states for 1990 from United States Census Bureau (1995), and for 2000 & 2010 from United States Census Bureau (n.d.).

Voter turnout. By measuring the turnout for each of the seven swing states during presidential elections from 1992-2016, I can report at any observable similarities or differences among the states and compare the swing state average to national voter turnout. Table 9 reports these findings regarding eligible voter population.

As shown in Table 9, the seven swing state average was higher in every presidential general election, with the exception of 2000. Individually, Iowa was the only state that never dropped below the national turnout level in any of the seven presidential elections, while Nevada never rose above the national turnout level on a statewide basis.

Comparison of Swing States Using Unemployment Data

The Bureau of Labor and Statistics has provided vast amounts of data regarding statewide unemployment figures for decades. Table 10 identifies the unemployment records during the months of November on general election years. Most notably, the average of the seven swing states reports lower unemployment percentages than the US national data in each of the seven election cycles. No more than three states had higher unemployment figures than that of the US as whole.

Summary of Findings

From the measurements of the seven swing states, several similarities were reported among the states, as well as their trends with or against national data. Regarding the US Census data on racial demographics, the average of the seven swing states displayed a higher percentage of White citizens than the US average in all three Census reports. Additionally, the median household income average for these swing states was slightly higher than national averages. Finally, the population density averaged significantly higher than US reports, and showed a slightly higher number in rural citizens than urban city dwellers. Demographically, our swing states are less racially diverse with a higher White population, contain a slightly higher than average median household income, have more people per square mile than the US average, and are slightly more rurally populated than the US average. Unemployment numbers are also lower than national averages.

Regarding the political party affiliation and turnout for the swing states, several similarities were also discovered. The average of the swing states showed more self-identified Democrats and Republicans than the national data. These states do not have an abundance of independent or third-party members; rather, they are exhibiting slightly stronger identification with a political party. This could answer an important question as to the composition of the swing state. With a smaller group of voters unaffiliated, this could be the cause for the state to flip between parties and prohibit one party controlling all decisions. As with national trends, the average of the swing states does also show a growing number of voters not affiliating with either Democrats or Republicans. The voter turnout in the seven swing states was also slightly higher than national averages, whereas the voters in these states are more active and knowledgeable, possibly causing their choice of president to sway with their focus on the election.

Table 8. Voter Registration by Political Party during Presidential Elections, 1992-2016

	1992			1996		
STATE	DEM	GOP	IND/OTH	DEM	GOP	IND/OTH
COLORADO	34.0	33.3	32.7	31.5	36.1	32.4
FLORIDA	50.7	40.9	8.4	46.1	40.8	13.1
IOWA	37.6	31.5	30.9	32.6	34.0	33.4
NEVADA	45.4	39.4	15.2	41.8	42.4	15.8
NEW HAMPSHIRE	33.2	38.9	27.9	27.3	36.6	36.1
OHIO	NO DATA AVAILABLE					
PENNSYLVANIA	50.8	42.8	6.4	49.0	42.8	8.2
US	36.0	29.0	32.0	34.0	33.0	29.0
SWING AVERAGE	42.0	37.8	20.3	38.1	38.8	23.2
	2000			2004		
STATE	DEM	GOP	IND/OTH	DEM	GOP	IND/OTH
COLORADO	29.9	35.5	34.6	30.4	36.1	33.5
FLORIDA	43.4	39.1	17.5	41.3	37.7	21.0
IOWA	30.4	31.6	38	30.5	30.9	38.6
NEVADA	41.6	41.7	16.7	40.1	40.5	19.4
NEW HAMPSHIRE	26.2	35.3	38.4	26.7	31.2	42.1
OHIO	NO DATA AVAILABLE					
PENNSYLVANIA	48.0	41.8	10.2	47.6	40.7	11.7
US	35.0	31.0	27.0	35.0	33.0	27.0
SWING AVERAGE	36.6	37.5	25.9	36.1	36.2	27.7
	2008			2012		
STATE	DEM	GOP	IND/OTH	DEM	GOP	IND/OTH
COLORADO	32.9	33.2	33.9	31.6	31.7	36.7
FLORIDA	42.1	36.0	21.9	40.1	35.4	24.5
IOWA	34.5	29.1	36.4	31.9	31.0	37.1
NEVADA	43.2	35.5	21.3	42.3	33.6	24.1
NEW HAMPSHIRE	29.5	28.3	42.2	27.6	30.2	42.2
OHIO	NO DATA AVAILABLE					
PENNSYLVANIA	51.2	37.0	11.8	50.1	36.8	13.1
US	38.0	28.0	29.0	35.0	29.0	33.0
SWING AVERAGE	38.9	33.2	27.9	37.3	33.1	29.6
	2016					
STATE	DEM	GOP	IND/OTH			
COLORADO	31.2	30.6	38.2			

FLORIDA	37.9	35.3	26.8
IOWA	31.0	32.2	36.8
NEVADA	39.7	32.6	27.7
NEW HAMPSHIRE	28.7	30.7	40.6
OHIO	16.7	26.2	57.1
PENNSYLVANIA	48.3	37.8	13.9
US	33.0	29.0	34.0
SWING AVERAGE	33.4	32.2	34.4

Note: Data for Colorado from 1992 and 1996 from Colorado Secretary of State (n.d.), from 2000 from Sanchez (2017), and from 2004-2016 from Colorado Secretary of State (n.d.). Data for Florida from Florida Department of State (2016). Data for Iowa from 1992 and 1996 from Iowa Secretary of State (n.d.) and from 2000-2016 from Iowa Secretary of State (2017). Data for Nevada from Nevada Secretary of State (n.d.). Data for New Hampshire from New Hampshire Secretary of State (n.d.). Data for Ohio for 1992-2012 not available, and for Ohio from Ohio Voter Project (2019). Data for Pennsylvania from 1992 from Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Bureau of Elections (1992), from 1996 from Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Bureau of Elections (1996), and from 2000-2016 from PA Department of State (n.d.). Data for US from Pew Research Center for the People and Press (2016).

Table 9. Swing State Voter Turnout during Presidential General Elections, 1992-2016

STATE	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016
COLORADO	64	54.4	57.5	67.3	71.6	70.6	72.1
FLORIDA	57.2	53.3	57.5	64.7	66.6	63.3	65.7
IOWA	66.1	59.7	63.2	70.6	69.7	70.6	69
NEVADA	54.6	41.2	45.6	55.4	57.2	56.5	57.3
NEW HAMPSHIRE	67	60.1	65.0	71.5	72.5	70.9	72.5
OHIO	62.5	56.7	57.8	67.9	67.8	65.1	64.2
PENNSYLVANIA	54.9	49.7	54.1	62.6	64.2	59.5	63.6
US	58.1	51.7	60.2	60.7	62.2	58.6	60.2
SWING AVERAGE	60.9	53.6	57.2	65.7	67.1	65.2	66.3

Note. Data from United States Elections Project (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.electproject.org/home/voter-turnout/voter-turnout-data>.

Table 10 Swing State Unemployment Percentages during November in General Election Years

STATE	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016
COLORADO	6.1	4	2.7	5.3	5.7	7.5	3
FLORIDA	7.8	5	3.7	4.4	8.1	7.9	4.9
IOWA	4.3	3.5	2.9	4.5	5	4.9	3.5
NEVADA	6.7	4.8	4.5	4.1	8.5	10.5	5.2
NEW HAMPSHIRE	7.1	3.7	2.6	3.6	4.5	5.5	2.8
OHIO	7.3	5	3.8	6.3	7.7	7.3	5
PENNSYLVANIA	7.4	5.2	4.3	5.3	6.4	7.8	5.5
US	7.4	5.4	3.9	5.4	6.8	7.7	4.6
SWING AVERAGE	6.7	4.5	3.5	4.8	6.6	7.3	4.3

Note. Data from Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017). Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/lau/>

References

- Abbott, D., & Levine, J. 1991. *Wrong winner* (1st ed.). New York: Praeger.
- Broder, D. 1980. Carter, Reagan camps focusing on suburbs in the swing states. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from LexisNexis Academic database
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2017. *Local area unemployment statistics home page*. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/lau/>
- Colorado Secretary of State. (n.d.). *Election results archives*. Retrieved from <https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/Results/Archives.html>
- Colorado Secretary of State. (n.d.). *Voter registration statistics*. Retrieved from <http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/VoterRegNumbers/VoterRegNumbers.html#>
- Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Bureau of Elections. 1992. *Official voter registration statistics*. Harrisburg, PA.
- Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Bureau of Elections. 1996. *1996 voter registration statistics*. Harrisburg, PA.
- Federal Election Commission. 1993. *Federal elections 92* (pp. 15-32). Washington, D.C.
- Federal Election Commission. 1997. *Federal elections 96*. Washington, D.C.
- Federal Election Commission. 2001. *Federal elections 2000*. Washington, D.C.
- Federal Election Commission. 2005. *Federal elections 2004* (pp. 27-39). Washington, D.C.
- Federal Election Commission. 2009. *Federal elections 2008* (pp. 27-40). Washington, D.C.
- Federal Election Commission. 2013. *Federal elections 2012* (pp. 5, 27-40). Washington, D.C.
- Federal Election Commission. 2017. *Federal elections 2016*. Washington, D.C.
- Florida Department of State. 2016. Voter registration - yearly. Retrieved from <http://dos.myflorida.com/elections/data-statistics/voter-registration-statistics/voter-registration-monthly-reports/voter-registration-yearly/>.
- Hecht, S., & Schultz, D. 2015. *Presidential swing states* (1st ed.). London: Lexington Books.
- Iowa Secretary of State. (n.d.). *Archived election results and statistics*. Retrieved from <https://sos.iowa.gov/elections/results/archive.html>.
- Iowa Secretary of State. 2017. *Voter registration totals by county*. Retrieved from <https://sos.iowa.gov/elections/voterreg/county.html#2010>.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Median household income, by state: Selected years, 1990 through 2009* [Table]. In Digest of Education Statistics. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d10/tables/dt10_025.asp.
- Nevada Secretary of State. (n.d.). *Voter registration statistics*. Retrieved from <http://nvsos.gov/sos/elections/voters/voter-registration-statistics>.
- New Hampshire Secretary of State. (n.d.). *Party registration/names on checklist history*. Retrieved from <http://sos.nh.gov/NamesHistory.aspx>.
- New Hampshire Secretary of State. (n.d.). *State election results*. Retrieved from <http://sos.nh.gov/ElectResults.aspx>.
- Ohio Voter Project. (2019). *Real-time analytics and voter statistics in Ohio*. Retrieved from <https://ohiovoterproject.org/voter-statistics>.
- Pennsylvania Department of State. (n.d.). *Voter registration statistics archives*. Retrieved from <http://www.dos.pa.gov/VotingElections/OtherServicesEvents/VotingElectionStatistics/Pages/Voter-Registration-Statistics-Archives.aspx>.
- Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. 2016. *Party identification trends, 1992-2016*. Retrieved from <http://www.people-press.org/2016/09/13/party-identification-trends-1992-2016/>.

- Sanchez, R. 2017. *Personal communication*. Voter Registration Data Request.
- United States Census Bureau. (n.d.). *2010 Urban and rural classification - geography - U.S. census bureau*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/geo/reference/ua/urban-rural-2010.html>.
- United States Census Bureau. (n.d.). *American factfinder*. Retrieved from <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>.
- United States Census Bureau. (n.d.). *Density using land area*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/density.html>.
- United States Census Bureau. (1992). *1990 census of population: General population characteristics*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1992/dec/cp-1.html>.
- United States Census Bureau. 1995. *Urban and rural population: 1900 to 1990*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/population/censusdata/urpop0090.txt>.
- United States Census Bureau. 2011. *Income, poverty, and health insurance coverage in the U.S.: 2010*. Retrieved from <https://census.gov/data/tables/2011/demo/income-poverty/p60-239.html>.
- United States Election Project. (n.d.). *Voter turnout data - United States elections project*. Retrieved from <http://www.electproject.org/home/voter-turnout/voter-turnout-data>.

Appendix A. Average Margin of Difference Between Presidential Candidates by State, 1992-2016

	FL	NH	OH	NV	NC	WI	CO	VA	PA	IA	AZ	GA	NM	MN	MO	MI	OR	IN	ME	SC	WA	TN	MT	TX	NJ
1992	1.89	1.22	1.83	2.63	0.79	4.35	4.26	4.37	9.02	6.01	1.95	0.59	8.56	11.63	10.15	7.39	9.95	6.12	8.37	8.14	11.44	4.65	2.51	3.48	2.37
1996	5.70	9.95	6.36	1.02	4.69	10.33	1.37	1.95	9.20	10.34	2.23	1.17	7.32	16.14	6.30	13.21	8.09	5.58	20.86	5.83	12.54	2.41	2.88	5.38	17.86
2000	0.01	1.27	3.51	3.54	12.83	0.22	8.36	8.03	4.17	0.32	6.29	11.69	0.06	2.40	3.34	5.13	0.44	15.64	5.12	15.94	5.58	3.87	25.08	21.32	15.83
2004	5.01	1.37	2.10	2.59	12.44	0.38	4.67	8.20	2.50	0.67	10.47	16.60	0.79	3.48	7.20	3.42	4.16	20.68	8.99	17.08	7.18	14.27	20.51	22.87	6.68
2008	2.81	9.61	4.59	12.50	0.32	13.91	8.95	6.30	10.32	9.54	8.52	5.21	15.13	10.24	0.14	16.47	16.35	1.04	17.33	8.97	17.17	15.07	2.26	11.77	15.57
2012	0.88	5.58	2.98	6.68	2.04	6.94	5.36	3.88	5.38	5.81	9.06	7.82	10.15	7.69	9.38	9.50	12.09	10.20	15.29	10.47	14.87	20.40	13.65	15.79	17.79
2016	1.20	0.30	8.10	2.40	3.60	0.70	4.91	5.40	0.70	9.40	3.60	5.10	8.30	1.50	18.70	0.20	11.00	19.10	2.90	14.20	15.50	26.00	20.50	9.00	14.10
AVERAGE	2.50	4.19	4.21	4.48	5.24	5.26	5.41	5.45	5.90	6.01	6.02	6.88	7.19	7.58	7.89	7.90	8.87	11.19	11.27	11.52	12.04	12.38	12.48	12.80	12.89

	MS	LA	DE	CT	SD	KY	IL	AR	CA	AL	KS	WV	AK	MD	ND	NE	NY	VT	OK	RI	MA	HI	ID	UT	WY	DC	US
1992	8.91	4.61	8.20	6.43	3.52	3.21	14.24	17.73	13.40	6.76	5.14	13.02	9.17	14.18	12.04	17.18	15.84	15.69	8.62	18.02	18.52	11.39	13.61	16.02	5.58	75.54	5.56
1996	5.13	12.07	15.24	18.14	3.46	0.96	17.50	16.94	12.89	6.96	18.21	14.74	17.53	15.98	6.81	18.71	28.86	22.26	7.81	32.89	33.39	25.29	18.54	21.07	12.97	75.85	8.53
2000	16.92	7.67	13.06	17.47	22.74	15.13	12.02	5.45	11.80	14.91	20.80	6.33	30.95	16.39	27.60	28.99	24.98	9.93	21.88	29.08	27.30	18.33	39.53	40.49	40.06	76.21	0.51
2004	19.69	14.50	7.60	10.36	21.47	19.86	10.34	9.76	9.94	25.62	25.38	12.86	25.55	12.98	27.36	33.22	18.29	20.14	31.14	20.75	25.16	8.75	38.12	45.54	39.79	79.84	2.46
2008	13.18	18.63	24.99	22.37	8.41	16.23	25.14	19.86	24.06	21.58	14.96	13.12	21.53	25.45	8.63	14.93	26.85	37.01	31.30	27.80	25.81	45.27	25.43	28.17	32.24	85.93	7.28
2012	11.50	17.20	18.63	17.33	18.02	22.69	16.87	23.69	23.12	22.19	21.72	26.76	13.99	26.07	19.63	21.77	28.18	35.60	33.54	27.46	23.14	42.71	31.91	48.04	40.82	83.63	3.86
2016	17.80	19.70	11.50	13.64	29.80	29.80	17.00	26.92	30.10	27.96	20.60	42.10	14.73	26.40	35.80	25.00	22.50	26.40	34.40	15.50	27.20	32.20	31.80	18.00	46.30	86.80	2.10
AVERAGE	13.30	13.48	14.17	15.11	15.35	15.41	16.16	17.19	17.90	18.00	18.12	18.42	19.06	19.64	19.70	22.83	23.64	23.86	24.10	24.50	25.79	26.28	28.42	31.05	31.11	80.54	4.33

Appendix B. Accuracy of States to Predict Eventual Presidential Election Winner by State, 1992-2016

	AL	AK	AZ	AR	CA	CO	CT	DC	DE	FL	GA	HI	ID	IL	IN	IA	KS	KY	LA	ME	MD	MA	MI	MN	MS	
1992	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	D	R	D	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	R
1996	R	R	D	D	D	R	D	D	D	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	R
2000	R	R	R	R	D	R	D	D	D	R	R	D	R	D	R	D	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	D	R
2004	R	R	R	R	D	R	D	D	D	R	R	D	R	D	R	R	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	D	R
2008	R	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	D	R	D	R	D	D	D	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	D	R
2012	R	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	D	R
2016	R	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	D	R	D	R	R	R	R	R	D	D	D	R	D	R	R
ACCURACY	42.86%	42.86%	42.86%	71.43%	57.14%	71.43%	57.14%	57.14%	57.14%	85.71%	42.86%	57.14%	42.86%	57.14%	57.14%	85.71%	42.86%	71.43%	71.43%	57.14%	57.14%	57.14%	71.43%	57.14%	42.86%	

	MO	MT	NE	NV	NH	NJ	NM	NY	NC	ND	OH	OK	OR	PA	RI	SC	SD	TN	TX	UT	VT	VA	WA	WV	WI	WY	US
1992	D	D	R	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	D	R	D	D	D	R	R	D	R	R	D	R	D	D	D	R	D
1996	D	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	D	R	D	D	D	R	R	D	R	R	D	R	D	D	D	R	D
2000	R	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	D	R	D	R	D	R	D
2004	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	D	R	D	D	D	R	D
2008	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	D	R	D	R	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	D	D	D	R	D	R	D
2012	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	D	R	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	R	D
2016	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	R	D	D	R	D	R	R	R	R	R	D	D	D	R	R	R	D
ACCURACY	71.43%	57.14%	42.86%	85.71%	71.43%	57.14%	71.43%	57.14%	57.14%	42.86%	100.00%	42.86%	57.14%	71.43%	57.14%	42.86%	42.86%	71.43%	42.86%	42.86%	57.14%	57.14%	57.14%	71.43%	57.14%	42.86%	71.43%

Note: Boxes marked green validate a state’s vote siding with the winner of the Electoral College vote for President