

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE

Helping to Rebuild a Multiracial Progressive Coalition
by Winning Back White Working-Class Moderates

FEBRUARY 2017

WORKING
AMERICA

ABOUT THE REPORT

Since 2003, Working America has mobilized working people who don't have the benefit of a union at work to fight for good jobs and a fair economy. As the three-million member community affiliate of the AFL-CIO, we unite working people in urban, suburban and rural communities around a shared economic agenda.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2016 election laid bare the deep discontent that's been brewing among America's working class. Whether black or white, Latino or Asian, working-class Americans have been buffeted by economic and social forces that seem beyond their control. For decades, they've watched as wages have stagnated and good jobs have become hard to find. Many have come to feel that government isn't working for them and that politicians aren't representing their interests.

A profound disaffection with politics was at the root of the Democrats' devastating losses up and down the ballot in 2016. And those losses have been building for years. Since 2008, Democrats have resoundingly lost the elections where Barack Obama was not on the ballot, and a substantial share of those defeats was due to a lack of support from working-class voters, especially in small towns and exurbs.

In response to this crisis, Working America believes progressives must invest in sustained, face-to-face organizing that reaches all potential progressive voters. Instead of just engaging in TV-driven air wars and three months of direct voter contact every two years, progressives must be on the ground at all times reaching out to communities of color, millennials and women as well as the millions of white working-class voters who are open to a progressive agenda. While this paper focuses on electoral strategies, we know progressives must engage in robust organizing that creates lasting relationships between voters and institutions if we're going to build a more just and humane society.

Working America's Role in Rebuilding a Multiracial Progressive Coalition that Includes White Working-Class Moderates

Working America knows it's possible to build a multiracial progressive coalition by reaching both the rising American electorate and the white working-class moderates like those who swung from Obama to Trump. We know because for 14 years we've been on the ground in working-class neighborhoods. We are active in cities like Philadelphia and states like North Carolina where our membership and the electorate is strongly African-American. We also have experience in Latino neighborhoods, helping to inspire Latino voters in New York City municipal elections and running bilingual canvasses in Houston and Orlando. Yet our greatest strength is

having conversations with white working-class voters that break through the right-wing noise machine and show how progressive politics can improve their lives.

Across America, there are millions of white working-class moderates who are open to progressive ideas. Many of them live in the battleground states Barack Obama won in 2012. But in 2016 those white working-class moderates shifted decisively toward Trump. As one [post-election study](#) by Hart Research found, without this cratering of support from white working-class moderates Hillary Clinton almost certainly would have won Michigan, Pennsylvania and Ohio, and with them the presidency.

As a matter of electoral geography, we cannot win the political power needed to advance a progressive agenda without a substantial share of white working-class moderates. Yet for years, Democrats have failed to have a presence in the small cities, towns and rural areas where so many of these voters live. As political scientist [Theda Skocpol notes](#), “Effective political organization in America is always centered in and across the states ... [and] only people on the ground can network and engage in respectful two-way conversations.”

While organizing white working-class voters is critical, it is especially important in the Trump Era to invest in and empower communities of color. Organizers in these communities already receive far too few resources and attention. And with Donald Trump’s harshest rhetoric reserved for people of color, immigrants, Muslims and other vulnerable groups, progressive funders must step up their support for these communities. Only in that way will we unite people of all races, and across all geographies, around a progressive agenda.

How We Can Win Back the Battleground States Democrats Lost in 2016

This paper focuses on five key battleground states where Democrats must build multiracial coalitions to win — and where winning back white working-class moderates will be critical. In all five states — Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin — we take a detailed look at the reality of working people’s lives to see why Democrats failed to move them in 2016 and what progressives can do differently moving forward.

In 2016, Hillary Clinton received 1 million fewer votes in these five states than Barack Obama in 2012. A relatively small share of the decline came in the big urban centers and suburbs where Democrats focused their efforts. The much larger drop in support came in smaller population

centers like Lima, Ohio; Lancaster, Pa.; and Lumberton, N.C. — places where Democrats were often absent and Trump made the Republican advantage insurmountable.

The white working class in small-town and rural America is under severe stress. Mortality rates are rising, employment rates falling, and so Donald Trump’s apocalyptic message makes sense. A [survey of election results](#) found that Trump did best in two often overlapping types of communities: those with struggling economies and a large working class; and those with the highest drug, alcohol and suicide mortality rates. And because Democrats were absent in many of these struggling white working-class communities, they could not make the case that the last eight years offered an antidote to their problems.

Building on What Works to Rebuild Progressive Power

In 2016, Democrats lost the air war and neglected the long-term ground game. Donald Trump benefited from an overwhelming advantage in earned media. One study found broadcast and cable channels mentioned Trump twice as often as Clinton. But instead of countering Trump’s advantage on the airwaves with an early and intense ground game, Democrats and the Clinton campaign allocated the vast majority of money to TV and digital advertising and squeezed the bulk of field engagement into the last few months of the election cycle. That approach is insufficient and must change.

Working America believes Democrats must make a dramatic break with the way they’ve been reaching, or not reaching, potential voters:

- We have to **reach these voters face to face**, both to build trust and change the way economic stresses are being interpreted. Our experience has taught us what is and is not effective with these voters, and how to move them to a progressive perspective.
- We must **build direct communication channels** with targeted voters that can compete with the right-wing megaphone. Working America’s member communications program has moved voters on issues and in races that fly under the radar of most media. When deployed strategically, digital member communications offer rapid, targeted outreach to specific voters at an extremely low cost with effective results.
- We must **rigorously measure everything** we do, expanding what is successful and refining our efforts when we fail. Continuously measuring the impact of our organizing and communications work ensures that we are moving the voters we target.

- We must **create community** for disaffected voters as the Right has effectively done for years. Institutions, which provide good information and can mobilize those with a community of interest, can be found among people of color, immigrants and other parts of the progressive coalition but have atrophied within the white working class with the decline of labor unions. We need to fill this void with trusted messengers and local activism on scale. As historian Michael Kazin [argues](#), “Institutions matter,” and we must rebuild them in the places where they’ve declined so that people have a place to “learn about politics and discuss ways to tilt the world in a progressive direction.”

After 2016, repeating the strategies and tactics of the past will no longer do. We must reach out to all the potential voters that can make up a strong multiracial progressive coalition. Working together, we can bridge the divide that’s been separating America’s working-class communities.

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE

Overview

As we pick up the pieces from the 2016 election, one thing is clear: This defeat was systemic and far-reaching. Democrats suffered devastating losses up and down the ballot — losses that had been building since the GOP wave elections of 2010 and 2014 and for decades before that.

In this paper, we focus on five battleground states — Ohio, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Wisconsin and Michigan — to provide an assessment of what went wrong and what progressives can do differently moving forward. Our analysis is grounded in the belief that Democrats must engage with both the rising American electorate of millennials, people of color and women and also with white working-class voters open to progressive ideas.

In all five of these battleground states, Democrats must build multiracial coalitions if they're going to win in the future — and winning back white working-class Obama voters who swung away from Clinton will be critical to their success. We found that a central component of the 2016 losses in these five states was a drastic drop in support for Democrats by white working-class voters in large urban metros like Cleveland and Pittsburgh and especially in small towns, exurban areas and rural counties (collectively referred to as “non-urban” in the rest of this paper).

Analyzing the Democratic Drop in the Battleground States

To look more closely at the Democrats' drop in support, we examined the certified 2016 election results for every county in these five states and compared them to the 2012 tallies. We found Hillary Clinton received 1.02 million fewer votes in these states than Barack Obama in 2012. And our analysis of the county-level voting data suggests that significant numbers of white working-class Obama voters from 2012 shifted to Trump, voted for a third-party candidate or simply stayed home in 2016.

When one looks at where the decline from Obama to Clinton occurred, we see that 19 percent of the drop-off came in the big urban centers and suburbs — areas where Clinton largely prevailed, albeit by narrower margins than Obama. The much larger share of the decline, 81 percent, came in whiter non-urban population centers like Lima, Ohio; Lancaster, Pa.; and Lumberton, N.C. — areas where Trump made the Republican advantage insurmountable.

Defections of this magnitude cannot be explained by racial resentment alone if for no other reason than Obama won a substantially larger share of the vote than Clinton in these non-urban counties four years earlier. As [Dream Corps co-founder Van Jones noted](#), “a lot of people held their nose and voted for Donald Trump — despite his bigotry, not because of it. ... We have to build a bridge of respect to the Trump voters who don’t subscribe to every thing he ever said.” Instead of making simple assumptions, we must examine all the factors that drove the 2016 election results to see what choices the progressive community should, or should not, make to address the broad dissatisfaction with Democrats.

Trump’s Unorthodox Campaign; Clinton’s Traditional — and Ineffective — Response

From the moment he entered the race, Trump enjoyed an outsized advantage in earned media that created a wind at his back. He garnered nearly twice as many mentions from cable and local broadcast media outlets as Clinton and had a free media advantage estimated at \$2 billion. Trump also dominated social media, [most notably Twitter](#), where his engagement rate in the crucial month of October was triple Hillary Clinton’s.

As swing voters were caught up in this unusual media environment, the attempts by the Clinton campaign and her allies to reach them through various channels missed the mark. Clinton forces outraised and outspent Trump by a nearly 2-to-1 margin. But the vast majority of that spending was concentrated on paid advertisements in battleground states and voter mobilization efforts in large population centers that didn’t begin until the last few months of the cycle. While the portions of the Working America program — specifically in North Carolina, Ohio and Missouri — that focused on working-class persuasion proved effective, we were unable to scale up until late in the cycle, and it proved to be too little too late.

Clinton’s 1.02 million vote drop in these battlegrounds makes plain the inadequacy of relying on a traditional campaign strategy in this environment. This strategy contributed to a white working-class revolt that turned significant numbers of 2012 Obama voters into Trump voters in 2016. Democrats failed to recognize the different lived experiences of non-urban voters from their counterparts in big urban population centers and to make the necessary adjustments.

The Many Reasons for the 2016 Loss and the Strategies and Resources Needed for Recovery

Of course, many reasons have been offered for the Democrats' loss — from lower African-American turnout in crucial battlegrounds to the FBI director's highlighting of Hillary Clinton's emails in the election's final days. And most of them have merit. But perhaps more importantly, this is not the only election where progressives have come up short. If there were a single explanation for the loss, we would have a much easier job over the next four years. In fact, the task for progressives is to examine the choices we've made cycle after cycle and pinpoint the places where an immediate change of course is required.

To date, the movement's reading of the political zeitgeist has not led to consensus on crucial questions of what electoral strategies to pursue or where resources should be allocated. The debate continues on many fronts: How early should we engage in election cycles? How should we conduct communications outreach? And which voters should we target? In the past, the movement has too often ignored the fundamental math underlying these decisions, chief among them the need to reach the largest segment of the electorate in these battleground states: the white working class. Having lost ground in both urban and non-urban counties in this cycle, Democrats cannot make meaningful headway without a change in strategy that directly addresses the lived reality and needs of the white working class.

In this paper, we dig deep into the reasons for the Democrats' sweeping losses and offer evidence-based strategies to revive progressive fortunes in future elections. Our analysis is laid out in the following six sections:

- **I. DEEP AND WIDE: Understanding the Full Magnitude of the Democrats' Defeat.** The extent of the 2016 loss can be seen in: the GOP's shocking sweep of many battleground states that Barack Obama had won; the Democrats' failure to retake the U.S. Senate despite a favorable map; and the further decimation of Democratic power in statehouses across the country.
- **II. LOSING GROUND: The Loss of White Working-Class Swing Voters and Its Impact on Democrats.** A detailed analysis of the 2016 election results shows that the swing of white working-class Obama voters away from Clinton played a decisive role in her defeat in our five battleground states.
- **III. FALLING BEHIND: The Fading Prospects and Failing Health of the White Working Class.** All working-class Americans have struggled economically for decades. But spiraling rates of substance abuse and suicide have contributed to an alarming increase in white working-class

mortality rates, especially in non-urban communities. These communities, long ignored by Democrats, went decisively for a right-wing candidate who echoed their despair and promised the change they crave.

- **IV: UNFAIR FIGHT: How Democrats Lost the Media Air War and Their Ground Game Advantage.** While Donald Trump racked up huge advantages in free media and dominated social media, the Clinton campaign and her allies responded with conventional, but unsuccessful, TV ads and voter mobilization efforts that began far too late.
- **V: CONCLUSION: The Working America Solution.** The Democrats' reliance on TV ads and last-minute voter mobilization hasn't worked. We must embrace evidence-based electoral strategies, which include long-term, face-to-face engagement with white working-class voters in their communities. Only by winning back white working-class moderates can we build a strong multiracial progressive coalition.
- **APPENDIX: State-by-State Analysis.** The final section of the report takes a detailed look at each of our five battleground states. To better understand the Democrats' defeat in each state, we compare election results from 2012 and 2016 in urban and non-urban counties, examine base turnout rates and look at the economic factors that motivated voters.

Ultimately, the analysis in this paper is rooted in Working America's 14 years of experience and the 10 million conversations we've had with working-class swing voters in the struggling industrial heartland and with voters from communities of color in the rapidly growing Southeast and West. In 2010, we published a series of messages from the field — which seem prescient today — describing working people at the “tipping point” between left-wing and right-wing populism. Then, we argued, “If we get to voters first, we can influence their thinking. But if Fox News gets to them first, we shouldn't assume they won't buy into what Glenn Beck is saying.” In 2016, the appeal of right-wing rhetoric won out among large swaths of voters who haven't heard from progressives in years. We should make different choices if we want to see different outcomes six years from now.

I. DEEP AND WIDE: Understanding the Full Magnitude of the Democrats' Defeat

Even before the election, political analysts were decrying Hillary Clinton as a candidate. She wasn't a natural campaigner. She wasn't spending enough time on the ground. She had too much baggage. She couldn't break through the noise about her email server. The natural extension of this argument is that a typical Democrat would have performed better than Clinton did and will in the future. However, the election results in key battleground states do not support this theory. Democrats lost up and down the ballot. And they have been losing cycle after cycle in non-urban America for some time.

By the middle of the 2016 cycle, there were nine competitive Senate races around the country: Florida, Indiana, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Heading into 2016, Democrats felt confident about this favorable map, but Republicans ended up winning seven of those contests. In New Hampshire, Democrats staggered to a narrow 1,017-vote (0.14%) victory, and only in Nevada did the party record a healthy win. Notably, in both of these two states, Clinton had a clearer ground game advantage over Trump than in the places Democrats lost.

Democrats Fall Even Further Behind in the States

Democrats also came up short in state legislative races around the country. Of the 7,383 state legislators in America, Republicans grew their margin by 90 seats in 2016. Building off of big Democratic losses in 2014 at the state level, Republicans currently occupy 1,038 more state legislative seats than Democrats nationwide. They now control 68 of 99 legislative chambers and 32 of 50 governorships.

We believe that these massive losses up and down the ballot indicate problems that are much bigger than any weakness Clinton might have had as a candidate or any drag she might have had on the rest of the ticket. Democrats have been losing small-town, exurban and rural voters cycle after cycle when Obama is not on the ballot. The consistency of those losses is illustrated in recent election results from our five states.

- In the 2014 Michigan gubernatorial race, unsuccessful Democrat Mark Schauer received 43.09 percent of the vote in the non-urban counties. Clinton's 2016 performance fell a bit further behind his result (38.26%). In contrast, Obama received 49.28 percent of the vote in these same

counties in 2012. Both Schauer and Clinton lost the state, yet Obama won it twice.

- In the 2010 and 2014 Wisconsin gubernatorial races, unsuccessful Democrats Tom Barrett and Mary Burke received 41.61 percent and 41.27 percent, respectively, in non-urban counties. Clinton's 2016 performance tracks slightly behind these benchmarks (39.38%) and was 7.5 points behind Obama (46.77%). This difference was a large part of the reason that Obama won Wisconsin twice while other Democrats lost.
- This same pattern held true in the North Carolina, Ohio and Pennsylvania midterm elections. Since 2008, Democrats have resoundingly lost the elections where Obama was not on the ballot, with a substantial share of those losses coming from a lack of support from working-class voters, especially in non-urban areas.

II. LOSING GROUND: The Loss of White Working-Class Swing Voters and Its Impact on Democrats

Much post-election analysis has focused on the drop in turnout among African-American voters. While we think lower turnout in this bedrock of the progressive base was a factor in some places, African-American turnout was not down everywhere. It did dip in crucial cities like Detroit and Cleveland, but turnout was up in other heavily African-American communities like Greensboro. Where there was a drop in turnout, it was not decisive for most states and in no state was it the largest share of vote loss.

Analyzing the Impact of African-American Turnout on Battleground State Losses

Some election postmortems hold that if we can just return African-American turnout to 2008 or 2012 levels, then Democrats will win again. Putting aside the importance of having a historic African-American presidential candidate the caliber of Barack Obama to reach 2008 and 2012 African-American turnout levels, high African-American turnout in the battleground states would not have led to a Clinton victory. The votes are simply not there. To test this theory, Civis Analytics looked at levels of support in high-percentage African-American counties in our five states — Ohio, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Michigan — as well as Florida. It categorized high-percentage African-American counties as any county with an African-American population of 25 percent or more. In each of those identified counties, it replaced Clinton and Trump raw votes with Obama and Romney votes, respectively, and calculated the new state-level results.

Out of the six states, only Michigan (16 electoral votes) and Ohio (18) flipped to Clinton. While these two important states would have made the Electoral College count a lot closer (272-266), the national outcome would have remained the same. This research suggests that while African-American turnout is an important focus, our overall strategy must also include outreach to persuadable white working-class voters. We must reach them in non-urban communities and speak to their unique social and economic anxieties.

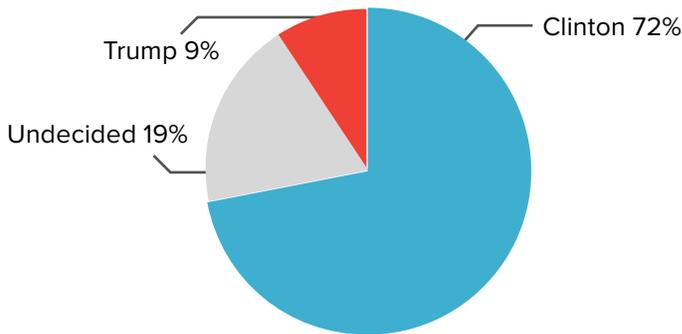
To be sure, building capacity and infrastructure to expand African-American voter turnout must be a priority. The issues affecting working families broadly — the economy, education, health care — are acutely felt in the African-American community. These issues, as well as those more specific to people

of color, like racial justice, can only be addressed with the robust engagement of African-Americans and other voters of color. In fact, Democrats' electoral efforts would be substantially improved by more investment in political organizing that engaged communities of color at all times, not just in the few months before Election Day. However, reliance on base turnout alone is too narrow of a strategy to win in battleground states and should be augmented.

Why White Working-Class Swing Voters Turned to Trump and What Can Bring Them Back

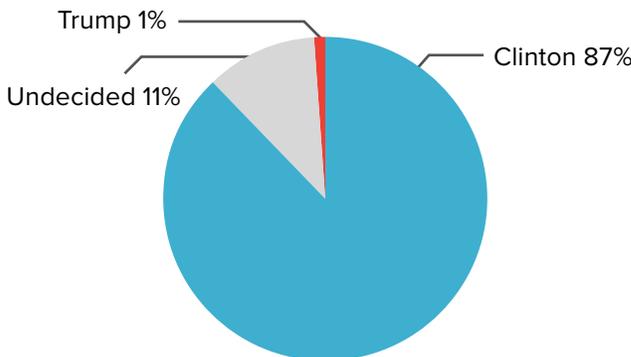
As noted earlier, Clinton won 1.02 million fewer votes than Obama in the five states we examined. Our analysis of this drop-off found that it was driven largely, but not exclusively, by white Obama voters who swung away from Clinton and who lived disproportionately in non-urban areas. Of this vote loss, 831,082 (81%) came from non-urban counties where the population was considerably whiter than the urban centers.

How White Obama Voters from 2012 Voted in 2016



SOURCE: 2016 Working America Canvass of White Voters IDed for Obama in 2012.

How Black Obama Voters from 2012 Voted in 2016



SOURCE: 2016 Working America Canvass of Black Voters IDed for Obama in 2012.

Having run field canvass programs in Ohio, Pennsylvania and North Carolina in both 2012 and 2016, Working America examined our candidate ID data from 7,531 voters canvassed in both years, focusing on the 4,854 voters who supported Obama. (These IDs were concentrated largely in urban population centers [95%], and are most indicative of the trends in those communities.) This ID data provides more insights into voters who supported Obama in 2012 but ended up backing Trump in 2016.

White voters were more likely than voters of color to defect to Trump in 2016. Of the 3,799 white voters who voted for Obama in 2012 and whom we canvassed in 2016, 28 percent told our canvassers that they were undecided or supporting Trump in 2016. However, white voters weren't the only defectors. Of the 1,074 African-American Obama

voters canvassed in 2012 and again in 2016, 12 percent were undecided or supporting Trump in 2016.

We also examined early vote records in Ohio, Wisconsin and North Carolina to answer the question: Did 2016 produce a surge in angry white voters supporting Trump?

While we still need the full voter file in several states, the initial evidence from early vote data and, where we have it, the complete 2016 voter file suggests that there was not a determinative surge from new disgruntled white voters, as much as previous voters swinging away from Democrats. We examined what share of voters in urban counties (which tended to support Clinton) and non-urban counties (which tended toward Trump) had cast ballots in 2012 or were new to the 2016 cycle. In this data, the share of new voters in urban counties and non-urban counties was nearly identical to 2012 levels, indicating that much of the change in the electorate was part of the normal churn of new voters participating and former voters dropping out. Using county-level election results, we compared the geographic distribution of new voters and found they were not overwhelmingly more Republican leaning than the existing voters. In North Carolina, for example, the increase in the white share of the electorate was as likely to be in places where Clinton's vote increased as in places where Trump's increased compared to 2012. In Ohio, where turnout was down for white voters, albeit by a lesser amount than for black voters, the new voters were as likely to be in the urban Clinton strongholds as they were to be in non-urban Trump communities.

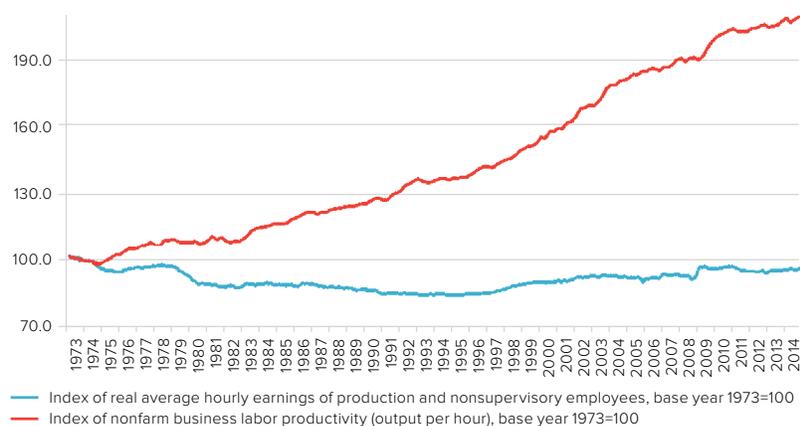
Taken together, these data points indicate: that a significant number of voters who backed Obama in 2012 did not back Clinton; that these voters were not exclusively white; and that discontented white voters who were not already part of the anticipated electorate were not a critical factor in Trump's victory. It supports the idea that many of the voters lost by Democrats are not racially animated Trump enthusiasts, but working-class people available to be reached by progressives.

These findings jibe with [a recent survey](#) by Hart Research's Guy Molyneux estimating that across America there are 23 million white working-class moderates who are open to progressive ideas. His research showed that Trump beat Clinton among white working-class conservatives by an overwhelming 85-point margin. But the outcome was much different among white working-class moderates, where Trump won by a smaller 26 percent margin. In 2012, that same group of moderates voted for Mitt Romney over Barack Obama by just 13 percent. Had Hillary Clinton not suffered such a steep drop in support from white working-class moderates, she almost certainly would have won Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio and, with those states, the presidency.

III. FALLING BEHIND: The Fading Prospects and Failing Health of the White Working Class

Whether black or white, Latino or Asian, working-class Americans have suffered in the modern economy. While the divergence of wage and productivity growth has continued for more than 40 years, the trends accelerated for working Americans in the decade from 2004 to 2014. The

Productivity and Hourly Earnings, 1973 to 2014



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor Blog, November 2014

graph below shows that while productivity has more than doubled, real wages have only recently returned to near 1973 levels. Put another way, only half as much labor is needed to produce the same amount of work product compared to 40 years ago. Most working people have not gained in this economy.

During much of the period from 2004 to 2014, job growth did not keep pace with

population growth, and labor-force participation declined. While the number of working-age people increased during that decade, the share who were working or actively seeking work, regardless of race, decreased from 66 percent to 62.9 percent, a drop of 3.1 percentage points. This drop in labor-force participation, the equivalent of 7.7 million fewer people working, was concentrated among people ages 16 to 54, while older workers held onto jobs and remained in the workforce longer.

Beyond just employment levels, the nature of work has been equally unsatisfying during this period. As noted by Lawrence Katz of Harvard University and Alan Krueger at Princeton University, nearly all of the net growth in employment has been in short-term and nontraditional jobs. Taken together, these indicators show all working-class Americans have been experiencing an increasing sense of economic insecurity and flux.

The Unique Political Response of the White Working Class

Though the economy has been harsh to most working-class Americans, the political response of the white working class has been distinct from other demographic groups, and it's been even more pronounced in non-urban communities. Even as partisan support for Democrats from African-American, Asian and Latino voters was either steady or grew from 2006 to 2016, it has been dropping steadily among white working-class voters in cycle after cycle. And in 2016, they swung dramatically away from their 2012 levels of support for Barack Obama and other Democratic candidates, especially in non-urban communities.

What explains the unique political response of white working-class voters? To understand the extent to which unique economic experiences might play a role, we focused on three economic measures in our battleground states — wage growth, job growth and employment levels for prime working-age adults. We looked at whether there were clear differences between urban counties and whiter non-urban counties. While this imperfectly captures differences between black and white workers, it does get at some of the different lived experiences of people in these areas.

For two of these economic measures, it was hard to find clear and consistent differences between the urban and non-urban counties:

- **Wage Growth** A quick look at wage growth in our five battleground states might make one think that non-urban areas were clearly better off. Wages did increase more rapidly in non-urban counties than urban ones over the last 10 years. But dig a little deeper and one sees that non-urban wages are actually lower than those in urban population centers.
- **Job Growth** Within the five states, job growth was a percentage point higher in urban areas (2.45%) than non-urban areas (1.4%) over the last decade. So that might lead one to believe that non-urban voters faced tougher economic prospects. However, the picture gets more complicated the closer you look. In Ohio, urban areas actually saw a decrease in the number of jobs over the last 10 years. And in Michigan, both urban and non-urban areas lost jobs in the decade past.

But there was one economic measure that did show a clear and consistent difference between urban and non-urban areas: the percentage of prime working-age people with jobs.

The differing job prospects of prime working-age adults in urban and non-urban areas

Though the data is mixed for wage growth and job growth, we found a clear distinction between urban and non-urban areas when we compared the total number of working-age people (those 18 to 64) to the total number of jobs in the five states we analyzed. While there are people both younger and older who participate in the labor market (they're included in the labor-force participation statistic cited at the top of this section), this measure of prime working-age adults reflects the large majority of the potential workforce. And it is in this comparison that we see a stark divergence in the economic vitality of urban and non-urban population centers.

In 2015 in the urban counties of our five states, there were 12.4 million people employed and 15.9 million people in the 18-to-64 age range, a ratio of 78 jobs for every 100 prime working-age adults. In the non-urban counties in our five states, there were 9.6 million working-age adults employed and 15.1 million 18- to 64-year-olds, a ratio of 64 jobs for every 100 prime working-age adults. The numbers reveal a much starker employment picture in the non-urban counties. To put the difference in context, were the ratio of jobs to prime working age adults as high in non-urban areas, 2.1 million more people in these five states would be employed.

Number of Jobs for Every 100 Prime Working-Age Adults: Urban vs. Non-urban Counties

STATE	URBAN	NON-URBAN	% DIFFERENCE
MI	76	59	-17%
NC	74	58	-16%
OH	83	63	-20%
PA	76	67	-8%
WI	84	73	-11%
TOTAL	78	64	-14%

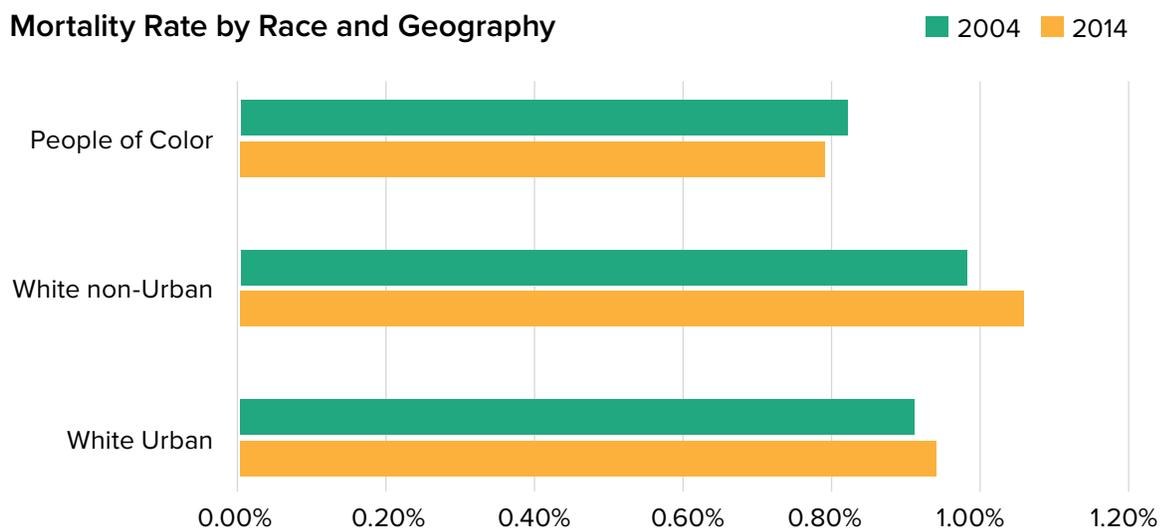
Source: BLS Employment Data March 2016; U.S. Census Bureau 2015 population estimates

While this comparison has its limitations, the data suggest that in each state the likelihood of prime working-age adults being employed is far lower if they reside in a non-urban community than if they live in a big urban population center. This factor could be one of many economic pressure points that helps explain what is pulling these communities rightward politically. Immediately following the election, new data emerged correlating economic distress, mortality and morbidity rates, and Trump support, adding another important dimension to the striking political difference separating white working-class Americans from other demographic groups.

The White Working Class and the Deaths of Despair

In recent years, there has been a startling rise in mortality rates among middle-aged white Americans. This trend was initially flagged in Anne Case and Angus Deaton's pivotal [2015 study](#) showing that, contrary to every other racial, ethnic and age group, the death rate for middle-aged white Americans has been rising. This death rate is climbing at a much faster pace in non-urban communities than in urban population centers. Moreover, these death rates are an indicator of declining life experiences — there are far more people living with the anxiety caused by these problems than there are dying from them.

Mortality Rate by Race and Geography



SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control Compressed Mortality Archive 2004-2014

What's notable for the 2016 election analysis is that the white non-urban death rate is rising faster than the white urban rate. Back in 2004, there was already a stark difference between the death rate for non-urban and urban whites as a percentage of the total population (0.91% for urban and 0.98% for non-urban). In the 10 years that followed, the urban death rate increased by 0.03 percentage points to 0.94 percent, and the non-urban death rate increased by 0.8 percentage points to 1.06 percent. This non-urban increase is more than double the rate in urban counties. By contrast, the mortality rate for people of color in the five states we studied dropped from 0.82 percent in 2004 to 0.79 percent in 2014, a 0.03 percentage point decline.

Death Rates and Donald Trump Support

In a recent research brief, Professor Shannon Monnat from Penn State University explored the relationship of death rates and economic prospects as they related to Trump support. Her research has profound implications for

progressives hoping to reach persuadable Trump voters in future elections. She found that Trump “overperformed the most in counties with the highest drug, alcohol and suicide mortality rates” and “performed best in counties with high economic distress and a large working class,” and that these two factors are related. Indeed, the dramatic rise in death rates, linked largely to high drug, alcohol and suicide rates, is accounted for by economic distress, namely the decades-long erosion of the job base in these regions.

Monnat is careful with her claims. She stresses that no single factor — including race, education, income or health — can explain the 2016 election. “To suggest otherwise,” Monnat writes, “ignores the economic, social, and demographic complexities that drive human behavior and the contexts of the communities where these voters live.” But, she goes on to note, “What these analyses demonstrate is that community-level well-being played an important role in the 2016 election, particularly in the parts of America far-removed from the world of urban elites, media, and foundations.”

As white working-class voters see more of their family and friends dying from suicide and substance abuse, it reinforces their discouraged worldview: The economy is tanking, the country is heading in the wrong direction and the government is not addressing their needs. It is this toxic cocktail of declining employment prospects combined with increasing mortality rates that helped fuel Trump’s victory, creating a formidable precariat with dire electoral implications for progressives.

As Working America wrote in 2010, “The cross-pressured working-class voters of 2008, torn between their economic and cultural fears, are cross-pressured still, torn between right-wing and progressive solutions to the formidable issues of this epoch. This tension is a historical mainstay at defining moments when rapid socio-cultural change collides with economic unfairness and uncertainty. Moments like now.”

In 2016, a population long ignored by Democrats and desperate to regain control of their lives swung toward a right-wing candidate who echoed the despair they felt and promised the change they craved.

IV. UNFAIR FIGHT: How Democrats Lost the Media Air War and Their Ground Game Advantage

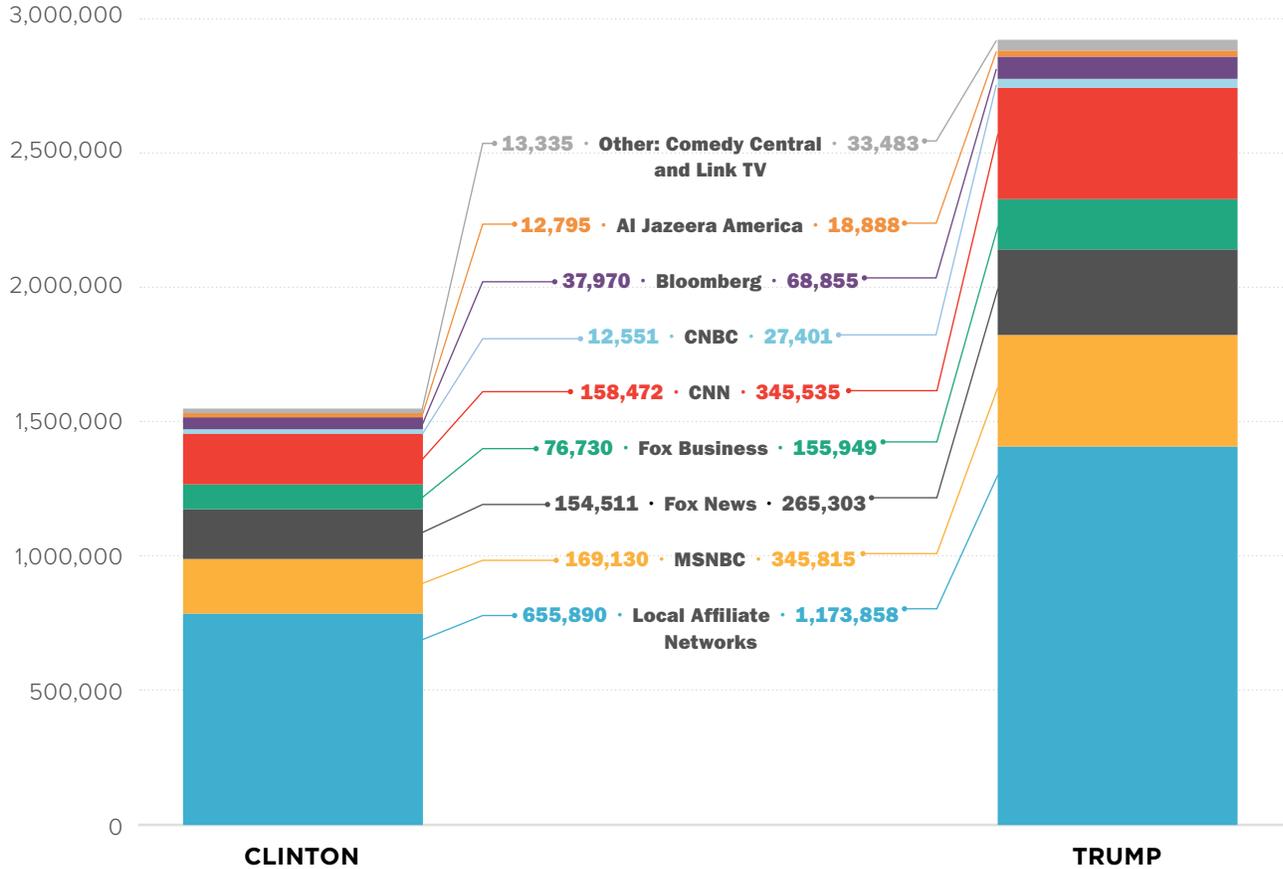
The shifting communications landscape undoubtedly abetted the outcomes in this election. But Democrats' campaign spending choices were not calibrated to address this changing landscape, especially given the challenges of reaching unsettled white working-class voters in battleground states.

The primary way most voters received information about the election was via cable and broadcast media as well as social media. Trump was the clear beneficiary. Just the difference in total volume of media exposure between Trump and Clinton was larger than all campaign-directed communication (e.g., paid ads, direct mail, field) combined. While campaign-directed communications were ubiquitous on TV and online, a minority of voters in battleground states reported receiving direct contact — mail, canvass visit, phone calls, etc. — down significantly from 2012. These diverging trends — imbalanced media coverage and decreased direct voter contact — were a seismic shift from the 2008 and 2012 elections. As president, Trump inherits an even larger megaphone, and we should anticipate that saturation-level media coverage of him will continue for the next four years. Based on this, we must reconfigure our direct voter contact efforts proportionally.

Trump's Unprecedented Advantage in Media Coverage

From the outset, Trump's celebrity drove an outsized advantage in the free media he received from traditional and social media outlets — an advantage over Hillary Clinton of an estimated \$2 billion. An analysis by the GDELT Project using data from the Internet Archive's Television News Archives tallied the total mentions that Trump and Clinton received from cable and local broadcast news stations in battleground states. They found that Trump garnered 2.28 million TV news (cable and broadcast) mentions vs. 1.27 million for Clinton. The Qatar Computing Research Institute tallied candidate traffic on Twitter (retweets, favorability, duration of interests). It found that Trump was three times more popular than Clinton just in the month of October.

National Network and Local Broadcast Media Mentions 2015–2016



SOURCE: GDELT Project, Internet Archives Television News

While traditional and social media tools had been exploited in previous cycles, it was the celebrity-fueled advantage of Trump that was pervasive and new. While one might expect outlets like Fox News to provide lopsided coverage for Trump vs. Clinton (1.75-to-1 ratio), nominally centrist or liberal outlets like CNN (2.2-to-1), MSNBC (2-to-1) and even local broadcast news (1.79-to-1) were even better for Trump. To understand what drove this dynamic, one need look no further than comments by CNN chief Jeff Zucker on the financial benefit to his network of Trump’s blanket coverage — a roughly \$100 million rise in projected advertising revenue for 2016. Trump figured out early on that ratings drove advertising revenue, which in turn drove coverage volume. As Zucker put it in a forum at the Harvard Institute of Politics, “We put so many [Trump campaign rallies] on because you never knew what he was going to say. They did also attract quite a bit of an audience.”

This dramatic imbalance in news coverage was a new phenomenon. Pew’s Project for Excellence in Journalism measured the volume of news coverage

for the major party nominees in both 2008 and 2012, finding that while the tone of coverage varied by party, the volume of coverage was relatively even. While Obama enjoyed slightly more coverage than Romney in the 2012 election, it was a function of stories covering his presidential duties.

Clinton’s Cash Advantage Didn’t Translate into a Ground-Game Advantage

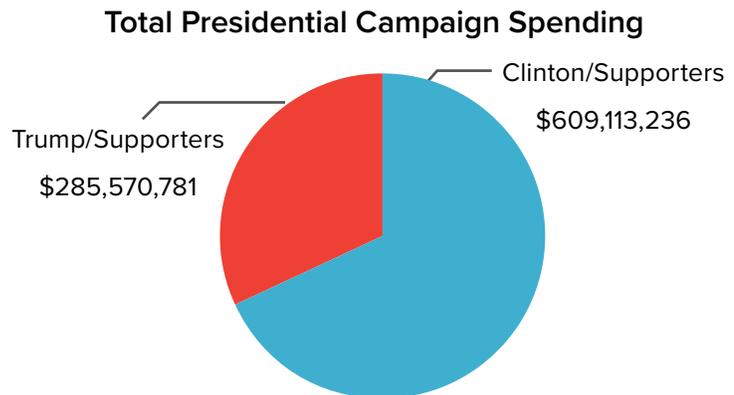
Trump’s free media advantage was evident early on, so Clinton’s backers were confronted with a question of how to counteract their disadvantage with paid campaign outreach.

Here Clinton had a clear war-chest advantage. As one report from the Center for Responsive Politics showed, Clinton and her allies outraised and outspent Trump \$609 million to \$286 million for the cycle.

The question was how to allocate the resources in this context. The largest part of spending for Clinton focused on paid media. In just the last four months of the election cycle, Clinton spent \$211 million on TV ads in battleground states, almost triple the \$74 million spent by Trump — and twice the advantage Obama enjoyed over Mitt Romney in his successful 2012 campaign.

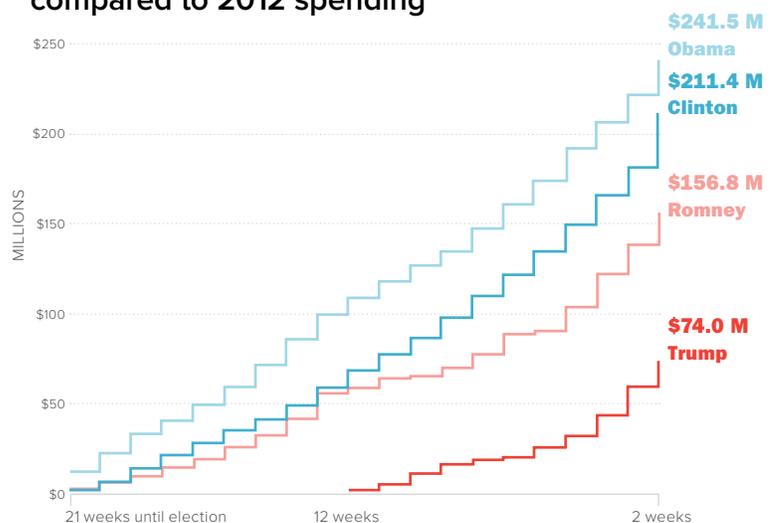
This pattern of robust paid-media spending was consistent with long-standing practice in progressive politics. According to a 2014 article by researchers David Broockman of Stanford University and Josh Kalla of UC Berkeley, the large majority of campaign spending is centered on TV and digital advertising, with only a fraction going to direct voter contact.

The share of investment that did go to direct voter contact was focused to a great extent in the urban population centers, which mostly targeted progressive base voters in



SOURCE: Center for Responsive Politics, 2016 Presidential Race Summary

General election TV ad spending in 2016, compared to 2012 spending



Note: Spending by the two campaigns only, not including money spent by Super-PACs and other outside groups.
SOURCE: Bloomberg.com 11/2/16, Goldstein, McCormick and Tartar

the last few months of the campaign. According to one cumulative tracker for the progressive community, 80 percent of all contacts with voters in the five battleground states took place in the urban areas where Clinton did best; 77 percent of contacts targeted Clinton's base, and 83 percent occurred after Labor Day.

The result was that most voters in battleground states did not recall any direct voter contact. According to the national exit polls, only 43 percent of Ohio voters, 38 percent of North Carolina voters and 51 percent of Pennsylvania voters reported receiving direct voter contact from the campaigns or their allies.

Looking at the same question by candidate, 28 percent of Ohio voters said they were contacted by the Clinton campaign vs. 24 percent reporting contact from Trump's. In Pennsylvania, 37 percent of voters said they were contacted by the Clinton campaign compared with 28 percent by Trump. In North Carolina, 26 percent reported contact by the Clinton camp vs. 22 percent by Trump. Despite widespread claims that Trump did not have a ground game, recall of contact from his camp was nearly as large as that from Clinton's. Notably, this level of direct voter contact was down from the 2012 cycle, when 60 percent of battleground state voters reported receiving direct voter contact. That year just over 40 percent of voters in the five battleground states we examined reported receiving direct contact from the Obama camp. Just under 40 percent reported contact from Romney. (Source: "The Ground Game from the Voters Perspective: 2012 and Before," Paul A. Beck and Erik Heidemann)

Given this lack of direct voter contact, the role of paid and earned media took on an even greater significance. It is in this context that the lopsided advantage Trump had in free media became even more important. Clinton and the Democrats made a heavy investment in paid media that targeted base constituencies late in the campaign, but it failed to counter Trump's coverage advantage, the proliferation of "fake news" on the internet and the other novel developments of 2016.

Clearly, the traditional models of campaign communications are no longer adequate to reach the needed voters in the battleground states in an effective way. We propose a different approach.

V. CONCLUSION: The Working America Solution

The systemic losses of the 2016 election reflect a profound failure to establish credibility or connect with voters. We need to make different choices that align with the existing electoral landscape. First, we need to start winning the trust of working-class voters through year-round, in-person engagement. In those conversations and subsequent communications efforts, we need to change the narrative so voters' frustrations are refocused on the appropriate targets instead of on other working-class people who are different from them. By doing so, we can defuse right-wing messages that target "others" and negate demands for racial justice. Instead, we can help unify working people across race, age and gender lines around a common agenda that holds corporate elites accountable for the challenges working people face. And we must do the hard work of stitching back together our communities by anchoring people in organizations that cut across differences to unify around a broad progressive economic agenda. It's work we can do only when we're reaching people in their communities.

Given how consequential the loss of support among working-class voters has been for all progressives, we believe there is an urgency to doing what we know works. Working America's 14 years of organizing working-class voters via face-to-face canvass organizing — doing what *The American Prospect* called "the hardest job in the country" this election cycle — is the basis from which we derive our next steps.

- 1. Clearly assess the electoral landscape** for each state and contest. While prevailing in some places may be a matter of turning out Democratic-inclined constituencies, in others the path to success includes reaching and persuading white working-class voters in large population centers and small towns.
- 2. Engage voters with high-quality, face-to-face conversations** that are as much about listening as talking. It's this kind of organizing that persuades the skeptical and mobilizes the committed. In the last five years, Working America has conducted 50 clinical experiments to evaluate and refine our political program. Lessons from those tests are applicable here. Journalist Andrew Cockburn notes in his April 2016 piece in *Harper's Magazine*, "Of all the ways to get people to come out and vote tested by the academics, one emerged as the absolute gold standard. Talking to them face-to-face, the longer the better, turned out to have a dramatic effect.... [T]he effect is infinitely more cost-effective than any traditional media-heavy approach."

Persuasion: In most instances, Working America has had large positive effects on changing the minds of white working-class voters about candidates. However, those positive effects can be highly dependent on timing. For example, early in the 2016 cycle, the Working America canvass had a measurable effect on changing support from Republican to Democratic candidates. In one experiment from Ohio, canvassers in June caused incumbent GOP Sen. Rob Portman's disapproval numbers to increase by 8 points while spurring a corresponding positive effect for Democratic challenger Ted Strickland. These results are consistent with tests in Ohio in the 2012 election cycle, where voters reached by our canvass increased their support for both President Obama and Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown by 8 points.

However, by September 2016, we saw that the opportunity to move voters had narrowed considerably as they split both for and against Democrats. In tests in Ohio and North Carolina, we found as many voters moving against Clinton and her Democratic Senate ticket-mates as were being persuaded toward them. While these findings were effective for the purpose of focusing the canvass on more productive targets, the range of voters available for persuasion had narrowed considerably.

While the persuasion effects early in the cycle worked broadly among all voters, the diminishing persuasion effects later on resulted in the need for a far more surgical approach to targeting.

Understanding how and when to move voters toward a candidate is useful, but the task before us in future elections will be much different. Instead of moving voters' views of a specific candidate, we must acknowledge the right-wing surround-sound in which voters live and utilize an appropriately scaled response to change the way they interpret the shifting political and economic realities. This objective is much more ambitious than changing a vote for a single election. Fortunately, we have the opportunity to begin this work now in a less crowded information environment and do not have to compete against a clear and aggressively promoted alternative like we do during elections. Investing in year-round, face-to-face engagement also provides an opportunity to educate voters on the decisions of their elected officials at all levels of government that are rarely evident to the average constituent.

Considering that in every community in which Working America has organized, roughly two out of three people we contact become members, we believe there is strong evidence that voters will respond to an issue-based economic argument and be better able to interpret which political candidates align with their interests during election season.

Mobilization: Progressives need to stimulate *consistent turnout* from base voters, especially in lower-turnout contests like midterm and local elections. While complete 2016 voter file data will not be available for several months, we see strong indications in the early vote data that repeated canvass contact from Working America can drive turnout long term. In North Carolina, for example, voters who were canvassed during the 2014 and 2016 cycles turned out during the voting period at a rate 3 points higher than those canvassed only in 2016. Once the voter file is updated in all of our states, we will have a more complete read of the compounding turnout effects from repeated in-person contact.

This cycle's early analysis follows a nine-state experiment in 2014, where we found that Working America members who were canvassed twice that year (once early in the cycle during issue campaigning and again during the election) turned out at a rate 3.5 points higher than those who were only canvassed once earlier in the year.

The lesson here is that repeated canvass contact can yield compounding effects on voting behavior, turning people with weaker voting histories into regular likely voters. Both for persuasion and mobilization purposes, we believe that **canvass contact of the same individuals multiple times throughout the cycle will build the progressive vote well before cross pressures from a campaign make moving voters harder and costlier.** We must reach big-city and small-town voters, a key part of the combined electorate needed to build progressive power and reach across racial constituencies.

- 3. Make measurement and evaluation central** to this longer-term organizing approach. Working America's commitment to learning from clinical measurement has propelled us to understand which parts of our program work and which do not. In 2016, we built on evaluations conducted in previous cycles and established in-house research and opinion survey tools that allowed us to measure change of voter attitudes and the persistence of that change. Our findings suggest that conversations in 2017 can change the way a voter behaves in 2018 and beyond. While there is much evidence to support this thesis, it must be constantly tested and refined so we are certain of the effect before the next election.
- 4. Build an alternative communications stream.** Sustaining communication with voters after canvass contact is essential in an environment of fake news and ratings-driven media coverage. The Working America digital communications program fills that need. As part of the issue-organizing and election canvass programs, we regularly collect email addresses

from a third of people we canvass. Those email addresses are then folded into the Working America member communications program.

As effective as email communication plans have been at generating online activism and in some instances raising money, we worked this cycle to answer the nagging question of how the digital channel can be used to change voter choices and behavior. In clinical tests in North Carolina and Ohio Supreme Court elections — low-profile contests where one in four voters did not traditionally cast ballots — we measured large effects (+21 points and +14 points, respectively) on getting voters who backed Clinton to support a down-ticket candidate. The communications treatment in these tests differed from the standard email program. We anchored the weeklong treatment with saturation-level emails about the candidates that highlighted issues that resonated with voters. Those emails were reinforced by social media ads keyed to the email address. A small segment of the recipients also received text messages. Not only were the effects large, but they were universal. For example, in North Carolina, white voters increased their support at the same rate as black voters for Michael Morgan, an African-American judge recently elected to the state's high court.

As part of this long-term organizing effort, our member communications strategy can also move voters on low-profile issues that may not be closely followed. For example, the evening news rarely reports on proposals to repeal new federal overtime regulations or limit the Consumer Financial Protection Board's power to curb abusive banking practices, but these actions profoundly affect the economic lives of the working class. Our member communications program can deliver regular information on these issues that is easily digested by the recipient — all at a relatively low cost. This issue awareness would then be the context in which future candidates for office are judged.

- 5. Create community.** As effective as canvass contact and member communications can be, we believe that a segment of voters are looking for a continuing presence — a place to go, to talk and to act. There are numerous progressive organizations with effective models for community organizing, although very few focus on working-class suburban, exurban and small-town populations. The Working America model of developing multiracial teams of activists is one approach. For example, our community team in Greensboro, N.C., which engages about 100 local activists, has led the way on providing paid family leave and increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour for municipal employees. There are a number of approaches we can take, but the need for sustained community engagement to cultivate activists is apparent.

We believe this work will require a large-scale engagement between 2017 and 2020, with constant reassessments along the way.

Starting in early 2017, we need to begin hiring and training large teams of canvass organizers, including many of the seasoned organizers from the 2016 cycle. In our experience, effective organizing is a skill that requires time and practice to develop. We will use the first six months of this year to build the proficiency of the canvass staff and experiment with organizing, educating and persuading many of the disaffected voters we lost this year. Our work will cover the large urban population centers and smaller towns that have received less direct contact from progressives.

During this initial period, we will also conduct clinical experiments in the field that measure issue and partisan persuasion. We'll test which voters are most responsive, for how long and in what context. In the second half of 2017, we will focus the work on off-year elections — largely special elections and local contests such as municipal races in Ohio and legislative contests in North Carolina. In addition to increasing the odds of winning, this will yield important information, such as: How many contacts does it take to change the partisan and issue orientation of a voter? What is the right combination of in-person and digital communications to fortify a voter against political cross pressure? And what is the maximum degree of effectiveness a canvasser can attain via persuasion?

Drawing from the lessons of 2017, we will then begin to scale up the canvass staff ahead of the 2018 elections, continuing to test and adjust the program as we progress. Presumably, much of the issue campaigning of 2017-18 will be calibrated to help these voters understand the decisions of incumbent policymakers from a progressive perspective. The work needs to fortify voters against the continuous drumbeat of Trump-dominated media and the inevitable onslaught of campaign communications. Our goal in this two-year period is to deliver significant wins for progressive candidates by the end of 2018, building momentum toward 2020. Based on what is learned from the first cycle, we will chart the path for the following two years.

APPENDIX: State-by-State Analysis

This section of the paper contains analyses of the five states we focused on in this report — Ohio, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Wisconsin and Michigan — where Clinton’s vote total was 1.02 million lower than Obama’s in 2012. We examined a variety of data to see what happened in each state, who showed up to vote, what economic realities helped shape the political decisions of the electorate this cycle, and where Working America sees immediate opportunities to begin year-round engagement of Obama-Trump swing voters to win them back in 2018, 2020 and beyond.

STATE ANALYSIS: OHIO

What happened?

- Clinton underperformed Obama in Ohio by 433,545 votes.
- Clinton received 161,763 fewer votes than Obama did in the urban counties and 271,782 fewer votes in the non-urban counties, ultimately losing to Trump by 446,841 votes.
- While turnout and a lack of support for Clinton statewide are definitely part of the story, Clinton garnered fewer votes by 10.33 percentage points than Obama in 2012 (271,782 votes) in the non-urban counties, which indisputably played a large role in her defeat.

For the purposes of this analysis, the following counties are considered urban: Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Lake, Lorain, Lucas, Medina, Montgomery, Stark and Summit.

Overall Democratic Performance

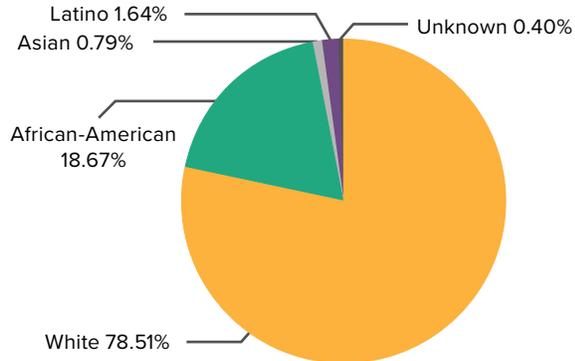
	STATEWIDE	URBAN VOTERS	NON-URBAN VOTERS
Obama 2012	50.20%	58.17%	41.52%
Clinton 2016	42.69%	53.52%	31.19%

Change in Total Votes Cast

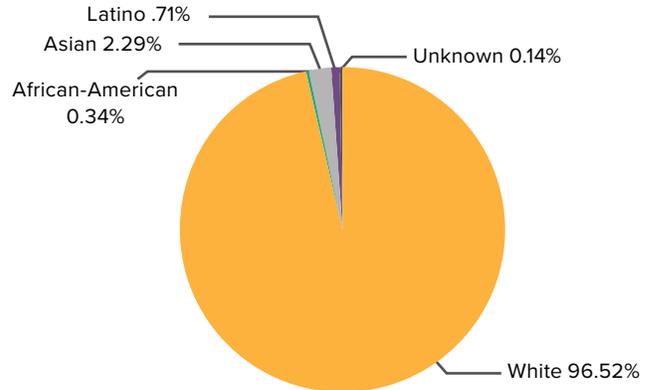
	STATEWIDE	URBAN VOTERS	NON-URBAN VOTERS
Change in Total Votes	-0.45%	-1.61%	+0.81%

Demographically, the non-urban counties are 18.01 percentage points whiter than the urban counties.

Registered Voters in Urban Communities



Registered Voters in Non-Urban Communities

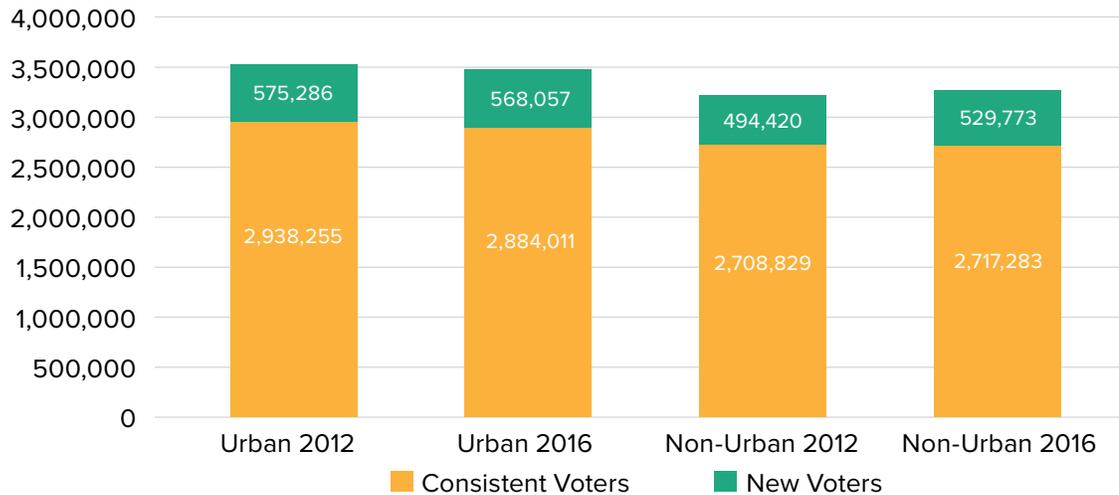


SOURCE: Working America analysis of voter file data

Did a surge in new voters change the result in 2016?

No. Looking at the voter file results, we see little evidence of a Trump surge of “hidden white voters” changing the result of the election. Comparing the share of the vote in 2016 that came from urban counties (51%) that largely supported Clinton and the non-urban counties (49%) that backed Trump to the distribution of the votes in 2012 (52% urban to 48% non-urban), we see that the different types of communities made up roughly the same vote share. Comparing the share of voters new to this election across urban (20%) and non-urban (19%) to 2012 results, we see that the level of surge was nearly identical to 2012 levels, regardless of how the county leaned — meaning this was largely the normal churn of the electorate cycle over cycle. While the share of vote and proportion of new voters remained even, the much larger drop in Democratic support came from non-urban communities. If we look at individual voter records, we see that total turnout was down across the board. African-American turnout dropped 10 percent and white turnout dropped 2 percent. These data points suggest that the problem was not so much that the electorate was different from previous cycles, but that those who did vote were less supportive of Democrats.

Ohio: 2012 and 2016 Consistent and New Voters



Is this a turnout problem or a support problem?

Both. African-American turnout and support played a strong role in Ohio, specifically in Cuyahoga County. When Civis Analytics matched Clinton and

Trump's support in high-percentage African-American counties to Obama and Romney's support, respectively, and recalculated the state level results, Clinton won Ohio.

The disparate results among states shows that there is not one reason that Clinton lost the presidency or that Democrats lost up and down the ballot. Rather, there were a myriad of factors, and we need to totally reconfigure our strategy in the coming years.

What economic factors help explain these changes?

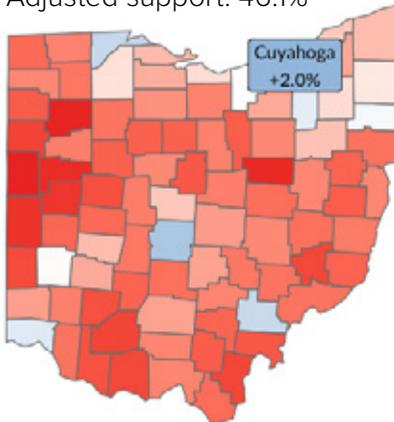
Wages and employment grew at faster rates in non-urban counties than in urban counties. In fact, employment dropped in urban counties over the last decade.

However, just like we are seeing across the country, these positive economic indicators are overshadowed by the depressed level of employment and the increased white mortality rate in non-urban counties. In urban counties in the state a person is 20% more likely to be employed than if residing in a non-urban county. While the mortality rate for people of color in Ohio dropped 0.05 percentage points from 0.85 percent in 2004 to 0.80 percent in 2014, the mortality rate for whites in urban counties increased by 0.06 percentage points from 0.98 percent to 1.04 percent and increased by

Ohio

Actual support: 45.5%

Adjusted support: 46.1%



0.11 percentage points for whites in non-urban counties from 0.93 percent to 1.04 percent. The white mortality rate in non-urban counties grew at almost double the rate of that in urban counties.

The lived experience in non-urban counties feels harsher and more dire. The white mortality rate is a symptom of the vast opioid crisis and other social pressures squeezing economically insecure counties.

Where do we go from here?

We need to begin this work by looking at the 433,545 voters who defected in 2016 to start to figure out how we bring them back into the progressive movement.

Cuyahoga and the counties surrounding Cleveland accounted for half of the top counties for a change in vote choice, grounding a strong argument that persuasion and turnout in urban communities must be a part of our strategy going forward. However, this cannot be at the expense of persuasion in the non-urban communities. Looking just at the top 10 counties, Obama received 61,685 more votes from Mahoning, Trumbull, Montgomery and Ashtabula counties in 2012 than Clinton did in 2016. Any program that does not speak directly to these folks leaves those votes on the table.

Top Counties Where Clinton Underperformed Obama's Support in 2012

COUNTY	POPULATION CENTER	VOTE DIFFERENCE
Cuyahoga	Cleveland	49,002
Lucas	Toledo	25,783
Stark	Cleveland suburbs	21,286
Mahoning	Youngstown	19,678
Summit	Cleveland suburbs	18,785
Trumbull	Warren	18,658
Montgomery	Dayton	15,123
Lorain	Cleveland suburbs	14,515
Lake	Cleveland suburbs	11,283
Ashtabula	Ashtabula	8,226

STATE ANALYSIS: PENNSYLVANIA

What happened?

- Clinton underperformed Obama by 63,833 votes in Pennsylvania.
- Clinton received 57,469 more votes than Obama did in the urban counties, but 121,302 fewer votes in the non-urban counties, ultimately losing to Trump by 44,292 votes.
- Trump outperformed Romney by 290,299 votes, far exceeding just the number of voters who may have swung from voting Democrat. This suggests that there was a surge among white voters.

For the purposes of this analysis, the following counties are considered urban: Allegheny, Bucks, Chester, Dauphin, Delaware, Montgomery, Philadelphia and York.

Overall Democratic Performance

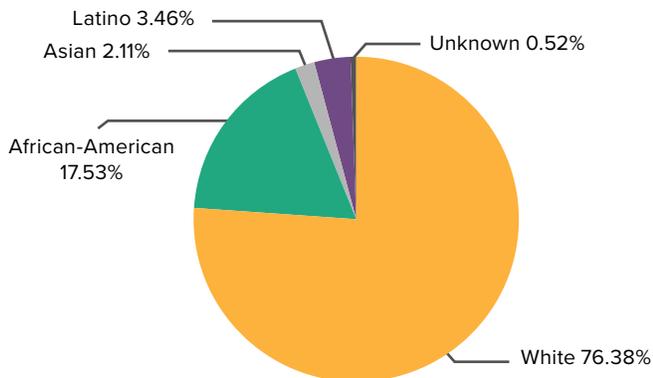
	STATEWIDE	URBAN VOTERS	NON-URBAN VOTERS
Obama 2012	52.08%	61.10%	42.90%
Clinton 2016	47.85%	60.10%	35.75%

Change in Total Votes Cast

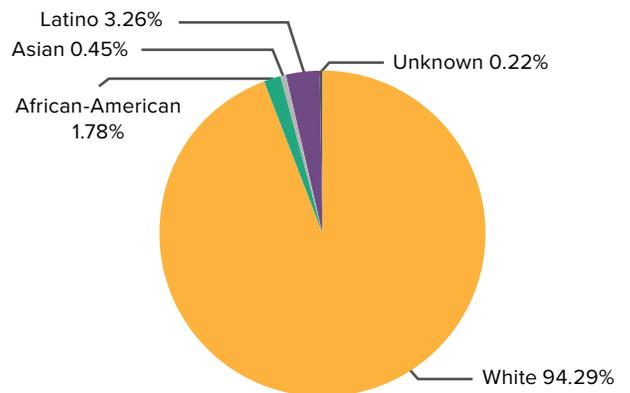
	STATEWIDE	URBAN VOTERS	NON-URBAN VOTERS
Change in Total Votes	+6.5%	+4.96%	+8.07%

Demographically, the non-urban counties are 17.91 percentage points whiter than their urban counterparts.

Registered Voters in **Urban** Communities



Registered Voters in **Non-Urban** Communities



SOURCE: Working America analysis of voter file data

Did a surge in new voters change the result in 2016?

Yes. Looking at the election results, Trump outperformed Romney by 290,299 votes. That result is well over the number of votes potentially swung away from Democrats from Obama to Trump (121,302 votes in non-urban counties).

Among swing voters, this type of weak support for Democrats is not new. Democrats in Pennsylvania have been underperforming in non-urban counties for a number of cycles. In the open gubernatorial race in 2010, Democrat Dan Onorato garnered 36.7 percent of the vote in non-urban counties, tracking 0.95 percent ahead of Clinton in 2016, but 6.2 percent behind Obama in 2012.

However, four years later, Tom Wolf overperformed both Obama and Clinton in the gubernatorial race, winning 46.4 percent of the vote in non-urban counties. While this was a notably rough race for the incumbent, Wolf's performance proves that these voters are not inextricably lost to the Democrats.

Is this a turnout problem or a support problem?

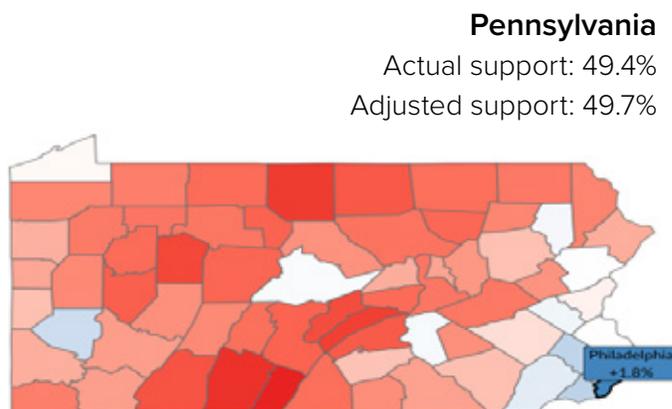
Support. Civis Analytics looked at high-percentage African-American counties (defined as any county with an African-American population of 25 percent or more). It replaced the Clinton and Trump votes with Obama and Romney votes, respectively, and calculated the new state totals. While the margin shrinks, Pennsylvania still comes up as a loss for Clinton.

What economic factors help explain these changes?

Pennsylvania followed the same economic trends as the rest of the battleground states. Employment and wages grew faster in non-urban counties than in urban counties.

But factors such as likelihood of being employed and the growing white mortality rate, and everything that comes along with it, are overshadowing these otherwise positive economic indicators. Pennsylvanians in urban population centers were 8 percent more likely to be employed than their non-urban counterparts.

Deaths as a percentage of the white population were 1.08 percent in 2004 — the highest for any state we studied. Interestingly, the statewide white mortality rate dropped to 1.07 percent in 2014, but the trend lines by race



and geography were markedly different. White deaths in urban counties dropped in Pennsylvania by 0.05 percentage points from 1.06 percent to 1.01 percent. The death rate for people of color dropped by 0.07 percentage points from 0.85 percent in 2004 to 0.78 percent in 2014. In contrast, white deaths in non-urban counties started at 1.09 percent in 2004 and rose to 1.12 percent over the next decade.

Where do we go from here?

We need to begin this work by looking at the 121,302 voters who defected in 2016 to start to figure out how to bring them back into the progressive fold.

With the exception of Philadelphia and York counties (Harrisburg suburbs), every other top county is non-urban. With only 9,448 votes to make up in Philadelphia and York, there is plenty of opportunity and need for persuasion in the non-urban counties.

In order to win statewide (and not just in elections where our opponent is notably weak), we need a clear assessment and plan for persuasion that focuses on channeling white working-class anger toward corporate interests that are taking advantage of workers; we need to create a focused communications plan that addresses this shared lived experience; and we need to build a community hub for activists and new volunteers.

Top Counties Where Clinton Underperformed Obama's Support in 2012

COUNTY	POPULATION CENTER	VOTE DIFFERENCE
Luzerne	Wilkes-Barre	11,856
Erie	Erie	9,924
Lackawanna	Scranton	9,855
Schuylkill	Pottsville	7,776
Mercer	Hermitage	5,499
Cambria	Johnstown	5,382
Philadelphia	Philadelphia	4,781
York	Harrisburg suburbs	4,667
Beaver	Beaver	4,524
Westmoreland	Greensburg	4,053

STATE ANALYSIS: NORTH CAROLINA

What happened?

- Clinton overperformed Obama in North Carolina by 10,925 votes.
- Bucking the trends nationwide, Democrats in North Carolina won the state’s gubernatorial, lieutenant governor and Supreme Court elections, but ultimately fell short in the presidential and senate races. While Clinton overperformed Obama in urban areas by 87,677 votes, Clinton had to make up 92,004 votes from Obama’s performance to take the state; that increase in urban counties was offset by the 76,752-vote decrease in non-urban counties. Hence, what was a 2.04 percentage point loss for Obama ballooned to a 3.66 percentage point loss for Clinton.

For the purposes of this analysis, the following counties are considered urban: Alamance, Buncombe, Chatham, Cumberland, Davidson, Durham, Forsyth, Gaston, Guilford, Johnston, Mecklenburg, New Hanover, Onslow, Orange, Pitt, Randolph, Union and Wake.

Overall Democratic Performance

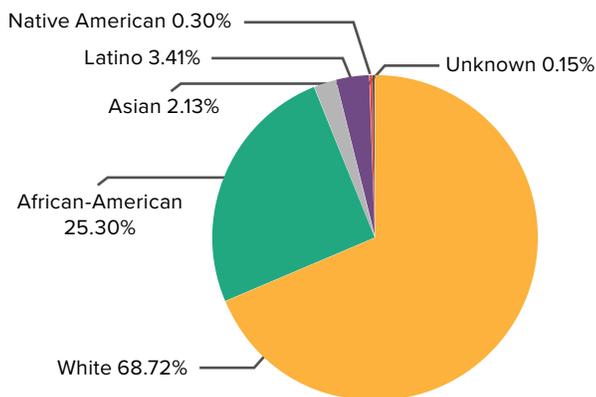
	STATEWIDE	URBAN VOTERS	NON-URBAN VOTERS
Obama 2012	48.35%	53.38%	41.67%
Clinton 2016	46.17%	53.28%	36.44%

Change in Total Votes Cast

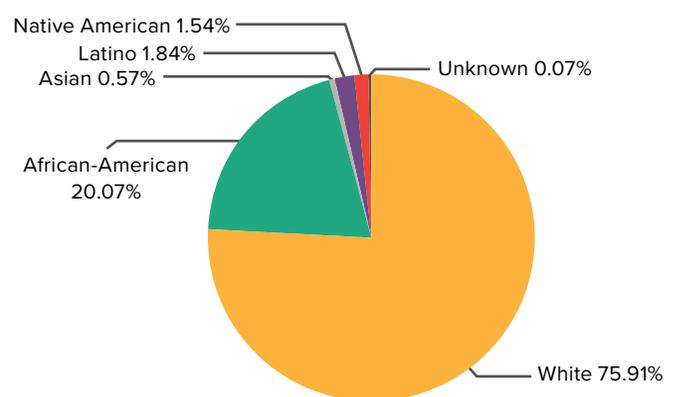
	STATEWIDE	URBAN VOTERS	NON-URBAN VOTERS
Change in Total Votes	+5.2%	+6.6%	+3.5%

Non-urban counties in North Carolina are 7.19 percentage points whiter than the urban counties.

Registered Voters in Urban Communities



Registered Voters in Non-Urban Communities

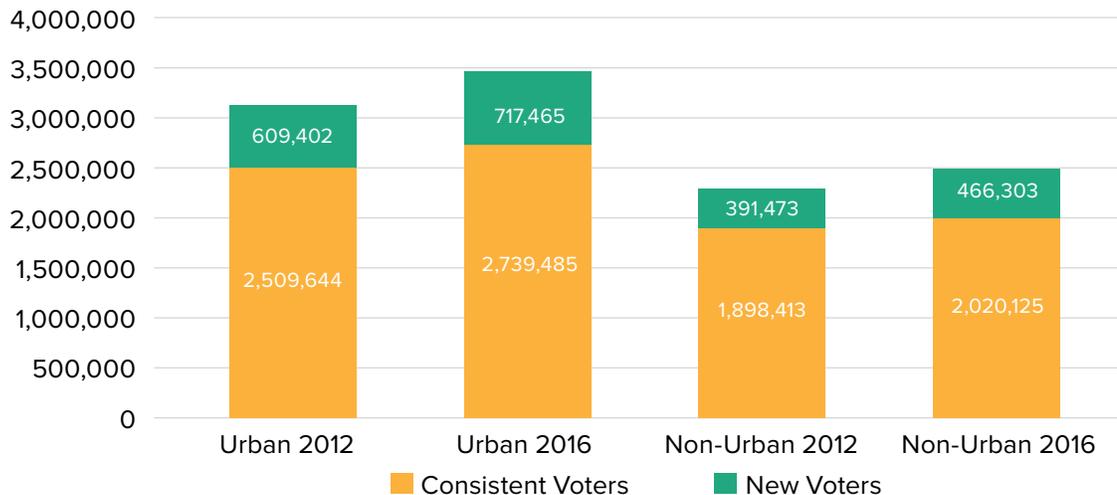


SOURCE: Working America analysis of voter file data

Did a surge in new voters change the result in 2016?

No. Looking at the voter file results, we see little evidence of a Trump surge of “hidden white voters” changing the result of the election. Comparing the share of the vote in 2016 that came from urban communities (58%) that largely supported Clinton and the non-urban counties (42%) that backed Trump to the distribution of the votes in 2012 (57% urban to 43% non-urban), we see that the different types of communities made up roughly the same vote share. Comparing the share of voters new to this election across urban (26%) and non-urban (23%) to 2012 results, we see that the level of surge was up slightly from 24 percent of urban voters and 21 percent of non-urban voters in the earlier election — meaning this was largely the normal churn of the electorate cycle over cycle. While the share of vote and proportion of new voters remained relatively even, the drop in Democratic support came from voters in non-urban communities. While white voter turnout increased by 7.7 percent, these new voters were as likely to be in pro-Clinton urban communities as in pro-Trump non-urban communities.

North Carolina: 2012 and 2016 Consistent and New Voters



Is this a turnout problem or a support problem?

Support. Turnout grew 3.9 percent statewide in 2016, with the largest growth occurring in urban areas. Clinton also outperformed Obama in areas with high-percentage African-American counties.

Civis Analytics’ African-American turnout analysis simulated voter turnout in high-percentage African-American counties in North Carolina by replacing Clinton and Trump’s raw voters in these counties with Obama and Romney’s vote count. Those findings back up our assertion that Clinton would not have prevailed with increased turnout in base communities.

What economic factors explain these changes?

Similar to the national trends outlined previously, both raw employment and wages are growing across the state, but factors such as the likelihood of being employed lags and the widely discussed white mortality rate is increasing faster in non-urban communities than in urban centers.

North Carolinians living in the urban population centers are 16 percent more likely to be employed than those in non-urban communities. In 2004, white people in non-urban counties were already dying at a higher rate than their urban counterparts (1.03 percent for non-urban residents and 0.74 percent for urban residents). White deaths trended up in both urban and non-urban counties, but they increased at twice the rate in non-urban counties (0.07 percentage point increase to 1.1 percent for non-urban residents and 0.03 percentage point increase to 0.77 percent for urban residents). In contrast, the death rate for people of color dropped by 0.05 percentage points from 0.82 percent in 2004 to 0.77 percent in 2014.

The different trajectories in white deaths are part of a growing opioid crisis among white working-class communities and connected to the rapidly dropping white employment levels; hence, the dramatic drop in Democratic votes from 2012 to 2016 in many of these communities.

Where do we go from here?

We begin this work by looking at the non-urban areas where Obama in 2012 received 76,752 votes more than Clinton.

In North Carolina, nine out of the 10 top counties for vote change from 2012 to 2016 are non-urban. This is to be expected, since Clinton received more votes in the urban counties than Obama did in 2012. These are the counties that need a clear assessment and plan for persuasion that focuses on channeling white working-class anger toward corporate interests that are taking advantage of workers, that creates a focused communications plan that addresses this shared lived experience, and that builds a community hub for activists and new volunteers.

Top Counties Where Clinton Underperformed Obama's Support in 2012

COUNTY	POPULATION CENTER	VOTE DIFFERENCE
Robeson	Lumberton	5,972
Surry	Mount Airy	4,324
Cumberland	Fayetteville	4,187
Rowan	Salisbury	3,250
Catawba	Hickory	2,853
Davidson	Greensboro/High Point suburbs	2,515
Caldwell	Lenoir	2,473
Burke	Morganton	2,450
Rockingham	Wentworth	2,123
Cleveland	Shelby	2,098

STATE ANALYSIS: WISCONSIN

What happened?

- Clinton underperformed Obama in Wisconsin by 238,449 votes.
- Ever since the showdown with Gov. Scott Walker in 2011, Wisconsin has become the symbol of a potentially progressive state that turned rightward. The drop-off in support for Democrats in non-urban areas has already had drastic effects on the state’s politics. In 2016, Clinton received 55.73 percent of the vote in urban areas, 2.52 percentage points less than Obama (70,031 votes). She received 39.38 percent in the non-urban counties, 9.17 percentage points less than Obama (168,418 votes).

For the purposes of this analysis, the following counties are considered urban: Brown, Dane, Kenosha, Milwaukee, Racine and Waukesha.

Overall Democratic Performance

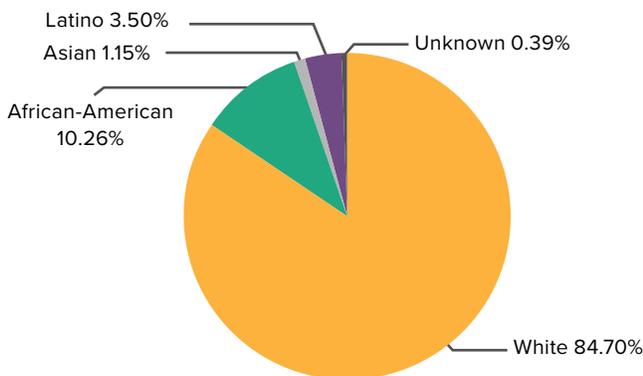
	STATEWIDE	URBAN VOTERS	NON-URBAN VOTERS
Obama 2012	52.83%	58.25%	48.55%
Clinton 2016	46.45%	55.73%	39.38%

Change in Total Votes Cast

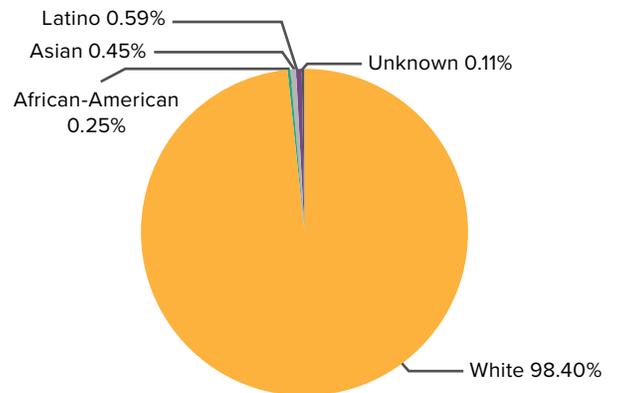
	STATEWIDE	URBAN VOTERS	NON-URBAN VOTERS
Change in Total Votes	-3.0%	-4.8%	-1.6%

Demographically, the non-urban counties in Wisconsin are 13.7 percentage points whiter than the urban counties.

Registered Voters in Urban Communities



Registered Voters in Non-Urban Communities



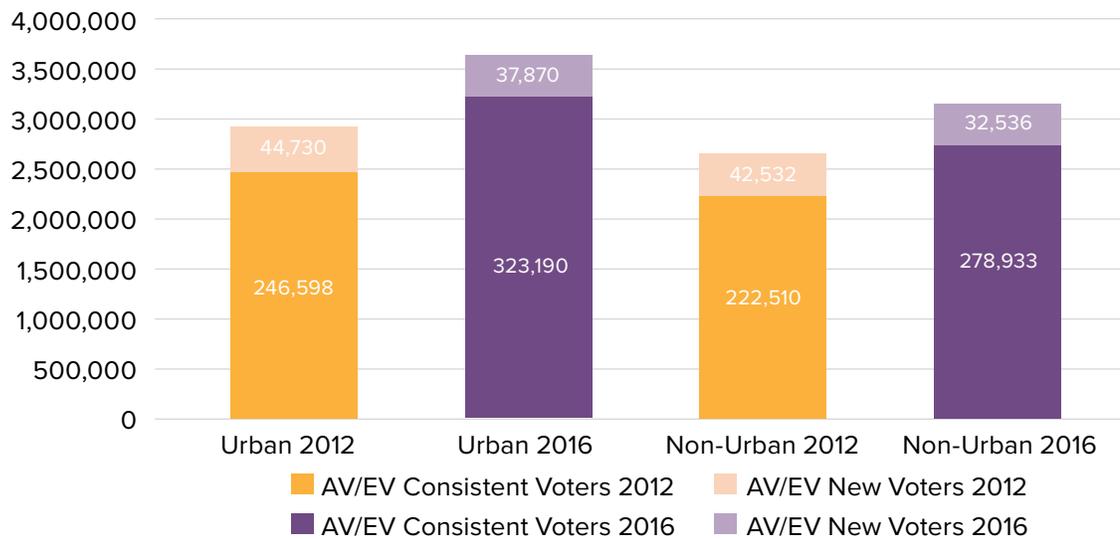
SOURCE: Working America analysis of voter file data

Did a surge in new voters change the result in 2016?

No. We don't have the full voter file yet, but early vote data shows a consistent picture. In 2016, 672,529 Wisconsinites voted early or absentee, making up 27.9 percent of the total electorate. Out of the total early votes cast, 53.69 percent were from urban counties, and 46.21 percent were from non-urban counties; 10.47 percent of early and absentee voters were "new," meaning that they didn't vote in 2012. Of these folks, 53.79 percent were from urban counties, and 46.21 percent were from non-urban counties.

In 2012, 556,370 Wisconsinites voted early, making up 25.7 percent of the total electorate. Of these votes, 52.36 percent were from urban counties, and 47.64 percent were from non-urban counties; 15.68 percent did not vote in the 2008 election, and of these folks, 51.26 percent were from urban counties, and 48.74 percent were from non-urban counties.

Wisconsin: 2012 and 2016 Absentee and Early Voters



Democrats in Wisconsin have been underperforming in non-urban counties for cycles. In the 2010 open gubernatorial race, Democrat Tom Barrett received 41.61 percent of the vote. This is 1.59 percentage points more than Clinton, but still 6.94 percentage points behind Obama.

Similarly, in the 2014 gubernatorial race, Democrat Mary Burke received 41.27 percent of the vote in the non-urban counties.

Is this a turnout problem or a support problem?

Support. When Civis Analytics' African-American turnout analysis simulated voter turnout in high-percentage African-American counties in Wisconsin by replacing Clinton and Trump's raw voters in these counties with Obama and Romney's vote count, the outcome did not change.

What economic factors help explain these changes?

Wisconsin followed the national trends. While average wages and employment are up in non-urban counties and wages are growing at a faster rate than in the urban counties, factors such as the likelihood of being employed for non-urban residents is lower and the mortality rate for non-urban whites is increasing almost two times faster than it is for urban whites and people of color. Residents of non-urban counties are 11 percent less likely to be employed than those in urban communities. For whites in non-urban counties, the death rate increased 0.07 percentage points from 0.89 percent to 0.96 percent. The mortality rate for urban whites increased by 0.03 percentage points from 0.83 percent in 2004 to 0.86 percent in 2014. For people of color, the death rate increased 0.04 percentage points from 0.55 percent to 0.59 percent. This difference is remarkable and contributes to the frame through which white working-class people see and interpret their circumstances.

Where do we go from here?

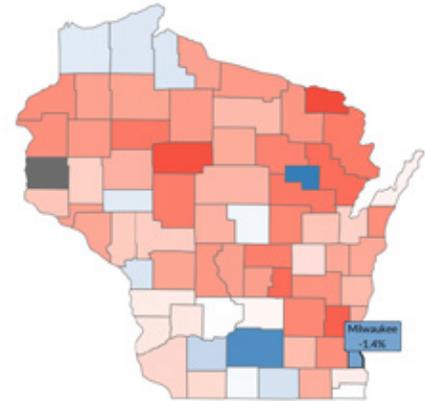
In order to put together an effective strategy, we have to start by assessing which counties played the biggest role in Clinton receiving 238,449 fewer votes than Obama in 2012.

Out of the top 15 counties that swung against Clinton in 2016, six of them are non-urban. While there is definitely room for persuasion and turnout in the urban centers, any clear strategy to elect Democrats statewide in Wisconsin must include persuading white, working-class voters in non-urban communities.

Wisconsin

Actual support: 49.5%

Adjusted support: 49.8%



Top Counties Where Clinton Underperformed Obama's Support in 2012

COUNTY	POPULATION CENTER	VOTE DIFFERENCE
Milwaukee	Milwaukee	43,641
Racine	Racine	10,496
Rock	Beloit	9,876
Brown	Green Bay	9,162
Kenosha	Milwaukee suburbs	9,096
Winnebago	Oshkosh	8,395
Outagamie	Green Bay suburbs	7,572
Manitowoc	Manitowoc	5,897
Marathon	Wausau	5,886
Fond du Lac	Sheboygan	4,962
Sheboygan	Sheboygan	4,962
Dodge	Juneau	4,794
Wood	Wisconsin Rapids	4,349
La Crosse	La Crosse	4,287
Sauk	Baraboo	4,044

STATE ANALYSIS: MICHIGAN

What happened?

In a surprising upset, Clinton lost Michigan, garnering 295,730 fewer votes than Obama in 2012.

- While turnout in big cities played a major role in her loss (turnout was down 5.1 percent in Wayne County alone), Clinton’s support dropped 6.88 percentage points statewide compared to Obama’s in 2012. In urban counties, Clinton received 55.63 percent of the vote, coming in 4.56 percentage points behind Obama. In non-urban counties, she received 38.26 percent of the vote, coming in 9.4 percentage points behind Obama.
- While this is the first time that Michigan has voted for a Republican in a presidential race since 1988, this follows a trend of statewide elections recently as economic factors in the state changed over the last decade.

For the purposes of this analysis, the following counties are considered urban: Ingham, Kent, Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw and Wayne.

Overall Democratic Performance

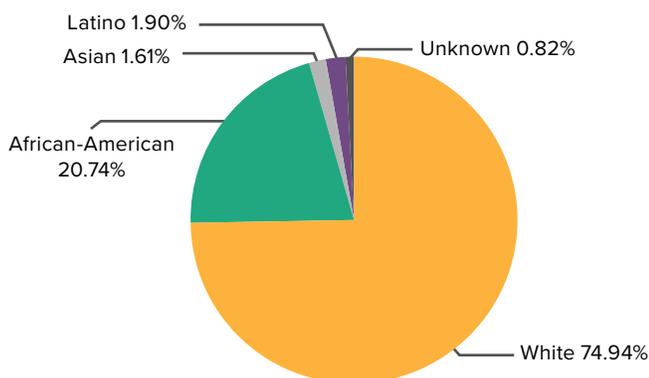
	STATEWIDE	URBAN VOTERS	NON-URBAN VOTERS
Obama 2012	54.21%	60.19%	47.66%
Clinton 2016	47.33%	55.63%	38.26%

Change in Total Votes Cast

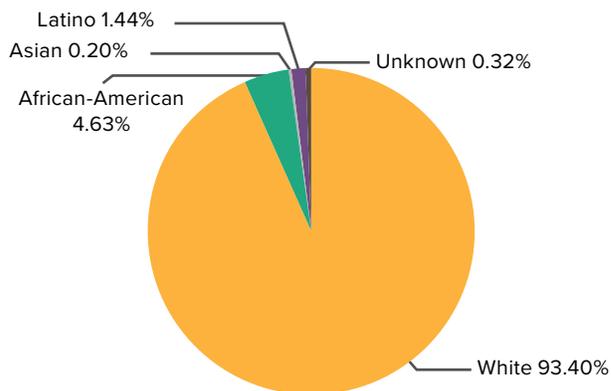
	STATEWIDE	URBAN VOTERS	NON-URBAN VOTERS
Change in Total Votes	+1.4%	+0.07%	+2.2%

Looking at the demographics of the registered voters in the urban and non-urban counties, the non-urban counties are 18.46 percentage points whiter.

Registered Voters in Urban Communities



Registered Voters in Non-Urban Communities



SOURCE: Working America analysis of voter file data

Did a surge in new voters change the result in 2016?

No. While we don't have the benefit of early vote data for Michigan or the full voter file until next year, we can look at past cycles for patterns. Recognizing that the Democratic candidate in the 2010 gubernatorial race was weak and it was not a competitive election overall, we focused on the 2014 gubernatorial election.

In 2014, Democrats ran Mark Schauer against then-incumbent Rick Snyder. Schauer received 43.09 percent of the non-urban vote. While this is 1.7 percentage points more than Clinton in 2016, it is still 4.57 percentage points less than Obama in 2012. If Schauer had been able to replicate Obama's level of support in these counties, Schauer would have won that state overall with 51.28 percent of the vote.

Is this a turnout problem or a support problem?

Both. Civis Analytics repeated its analysis of African-American support from Pennsylvania in Michigan. It matched Clinton and Trump's support in high-percentage African-American counties to Obama and Romney's support, respectively. It then recalculated the state level results.

Because of the significant drop in turnout in Detroit (down 5.1 percentage points from 2012, bringing down the turnout statewide), matching support to the 2012 election in Wayne County flipped the state for Clinton.

However, this is just a piece of the elephant. In order to win consistently statewide, Democrats must also increase their vote share in non-urban counties.

What economic factors help explain these changes?

Nearly the entire Michigan economy has worsened considerably in the last decade. There are fewer total jobs in Michigan now than there were in 2006, and the rate of the decrease is even sharper in non-urban communities. Wages are growing slower than in any of the other battleground states, and there is lead in

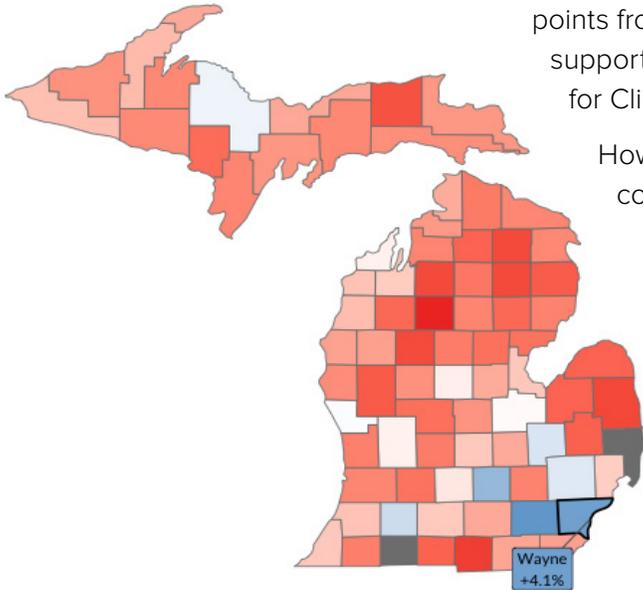
the water in Flint.

Following the national trend, factors such as the likelihood of being employed in a non-urban community is lower and white deaths as a percentage of the population have increased for both urban and non-

Michigan

Actual support: 49.9%

Adjusted support: 50.9%



urban white residents in Michigan, as well as people of color, but they have increased fastest for non-urban whites. For Michiganders living outside of the urban population centers, the likelihood of being employed is 17 percent lower. The death rate for urban whites increased 0.09 percentage points from 0.85 percent to 0.94 percent, and the death rate for non-urban whites increased 0.14 percentage points from 0.90 percent to 1.04 percent over the same decade. The death rate for people of color increased 0.05 percentage points from 0.81 percent to 0.86 percent. This pattern is consistent with the opioid crisis and “deaths of despair” that are ravaging communities in the industrial Midwest and around the country.

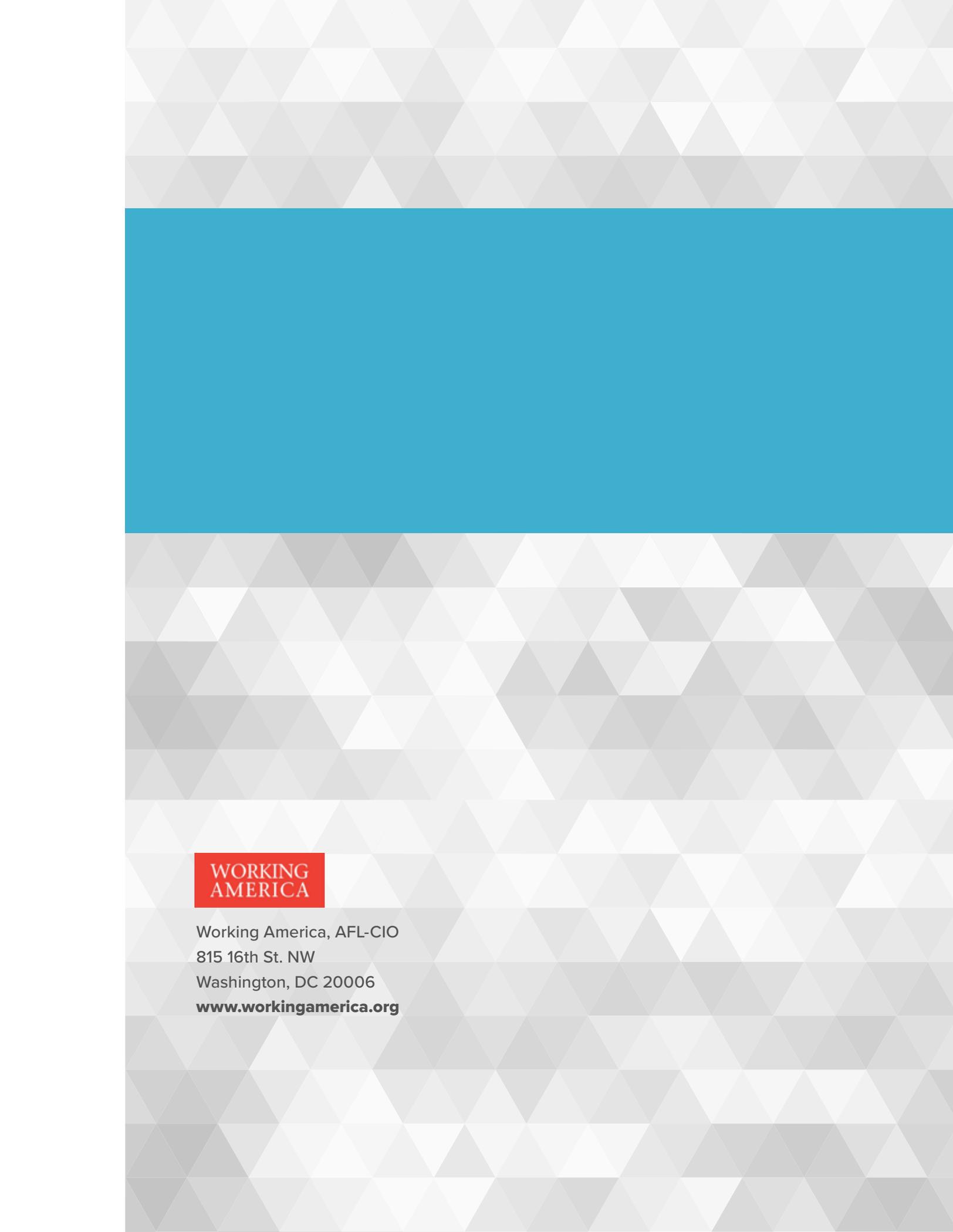
Where do we go from here?

In order to put together a cohesive strategy, we need to start by assessing which counties played the biggest role in Clinton receiving 295,730 fewer votes than Obama in 2012.

Since turnout in Detroit accounted for the drop in support in Wayne County, turnout in these counties must be a part of any clear plan for gaining back power in Michigan. After Wayne and Macomb counties, the next eight counties on the list are all non-urban. Persuading white working-class voters in these counties in a direct way that acknowledges their economic distress and distinct shared lived experience must also be a part of the solution.

Top Counties Where Clinton Underperformed Obama’s Support in 2012

COUNTY	POPULATION CENTER	VOTE DIFFERENCE
Wayne	Detroit	76,402
Macomb	Detroit	31,699
Genesee	Flint	26,227
Saginaw	Saginaw	9,985
Monroe	Monroe	9,447
St. Clair	Port Huron	9,430
Muskegon	Muskegon	7,132
Jackson	Jackson	6,506
Bay	Bay City	6,235
Lapeer	Lapeer	6,062



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