

BATTLING BATTLEGROUND

In Florida and Ohio, we get a glimpse into how dramatic demographic shifts will impact the voting in 2004 and beyond.

Late on Election night in November 2000, NBC TV newsman Tim Russert held up a chalkboard that read, "Florida, Florida, Florida!" Even before the saga of the hanging chads and the recount that followed, Russert harped on the significance of the Sunshine state's electoral votes in deciding that presidential election. In February 2004, on his *Meet the Press* program, Russert again brandished his chalkboard to draw attention to the state to watch this November. This time it read, "Ohio, Ohio, Ohio!"

Both Florida and the Buckeye state may play decisive roles in who wins the showdown between President George W. Bush and Democratic Sen. John Kerry. Nonetheless, the two states are hardly demographic twins. Their respective electorates reflect vastly different constituencies drifting inexorably in opposite demographic directions. Their relative clout in future national elections, as a consequence, will be even harder to peg than they are this year.

Florida epitomizes a part of America that is growing rapidly, and not only due to immigration from Latin America and other parts of the world. Florida is also gaining from U.S. domestic migration of white suburbanites, seniors, African Americans, Puerto Ricans and other groups heading to its growing cities and suburbs. This demographic dynamism is changing the nature of the Sunshine state's electorate in ways that both parties are scrambling to understand. No longer are Republican-leaning Cuban Americans the dominant Hispanic group, nor are domestic migrants primarily elderly transplants from the left-leaning Northeast and the moderate Midwest. As the influx of newcomers continues, and a younger and more diverse demographic heads toward the fast-growing I-4 corridor of the state from Tampa, and Orlan-

do to Daytona Beach, old rules and assumptions no longer apply.

Ohio is just the opposite. People are not coming to Ohio, but leaving—especially young college graduates attracted to the Sun Belt or the cosmopolitan coasts of Blue states America. Well-off retirees and suburban families are also heading for the exits in search of lower density, high amenity living or in search of jobs that have left the Buckeye state in substantial numbers over the past three years. What's more, its population trends older and whiter than most other states. Also, thanks to the state's modest appeal to immigrants, Ohio's minorities are mostly city-concentrated African Americans who see better opportunities elsewhere.

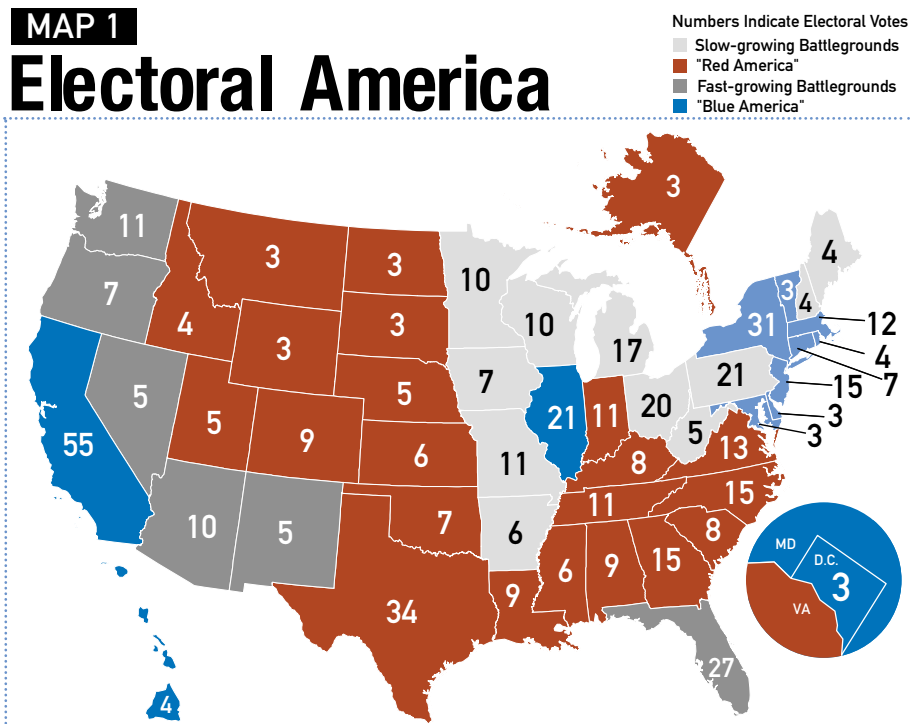
In Ohio, political analysts have less trouble identifying demographic sub-

groups than they have in understanding how to gain their support. More than a third of the state's voting-age population consists of whites over 45 without a college education. For these voters, in the current climate, economic issues loom large. Still, because a swath of the state's population holds socially conservative beliefs, their votes can also shift over party stances on issues such as gay marriage, abortion, and gun control.

Florida's increasingly younger, immigrant voter population tends to prize issues like school quality, affordable housing and small business opportunities. Ohio's older, blue-collar electorate is more concerned with social issues, health care, Social Security and economic survival.

FAST-GROWING VS. SLOW-GROWING

Florida and Ohio stand out as examples of two types of "battleground states" with distinctly different demographics. Analysts peg 17 such states as those in which Bush and Gore competed to a near-standoff in the 2000 election, and are projected to be competitive in 2004. At the same time, 22 "Red America" states and 12 "Blue America" states are thought already to be safely in the columns of Bush and Kerry, respectively (see Map 1).



Source: William H. Frey analysis

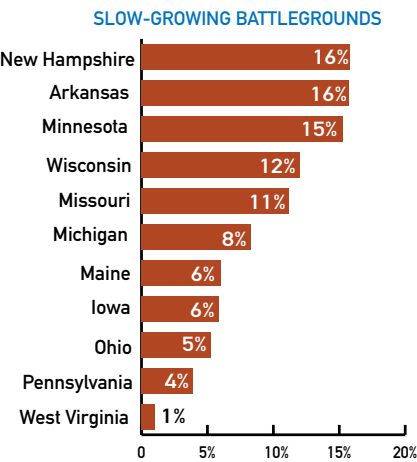
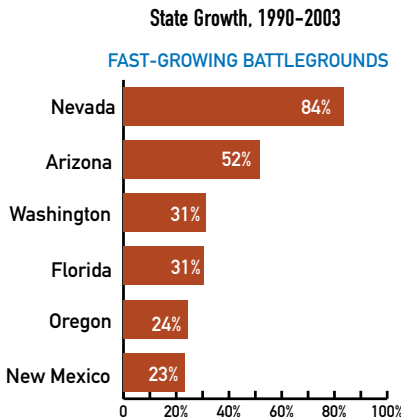
Florida is one of the six fast-growing battlegrounds that have higher rates of population growth than the nation as a whole (see Figure 1). In Florida, Nevada and Arizona, rapidly growing immigration and domestic migration are seen as instrumental in potentially shifting them from the Republican column to becoming truly competitive. That is, each of these three shows a strong growth in its Hispanic population along with domestic in-migration from highly congested Blue coastal states. Much of Florida's in-migration comes from New York and New Jersey. California's high cost of living is responsible for substantial in-migration gains in Nevada and Arizona. Hispanic immigrant flows to these states could bring more Democratic votes. What's more, the increasingly low-income, blue-collar flows of whites and minorities from California or the Northeast megalopolis could siphon in more Democratic support into these states.

The 11 slow-growing battlegrounds, while declining in prominence, still make up the majority of electoral votes among the 17 battleground states (see Figure 2). Neither candidate could amass the 270 electoral votes needed to win without carrying at least some of these slow-growing areas. Five of these states showed domestic out-migration over the 1995 to 2003 period: Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Iowa and West Virginia; and only New Hampshire showed more than modest domestic migration gains. As a group, these states differ from others thanks to their mostly white racial composition. White Baby Boomers comprise one-third of their voting-age populations, compared with only about a quarter of the populations of fast-growing battlegrounds, or of Red and Blue America. Their slow, almost steady growth patterns make the demographic profiles of their "left behind" voting-age populations especially unique (see Figure 3).

Figure 4 contrasts some key demographic groups located in the two camps. Slow-growing battlegrounds have especially large numbers of white married women and white non-college graduate men—together accounting for well over half of these states' voting-age populations. Both of these groups are regarded as politically up for grabs. Especially in economically vulnerable states, voters will carefully weigh each candidate's economic policies versus their stances on Iraq and social issues. These groups constitute smaller shares of the fast-growing battle-

FIGURE 1 DRAWING LINES

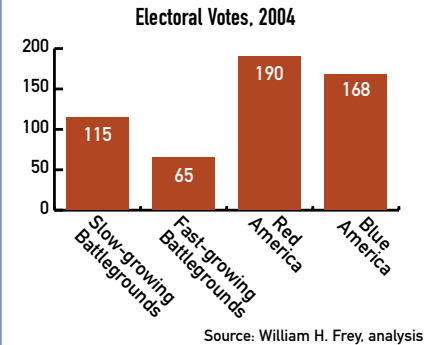
The Democrats know how valuable it would be to add the votes from the Republican column (in 2000) in states that have had rapidly growing immigrant and domestic migrant populations.



Source: William H. Frey, Brookings Institution analysis of Census Bureau estimates

FIGURE 2 WHAT THEY'RE WORTH

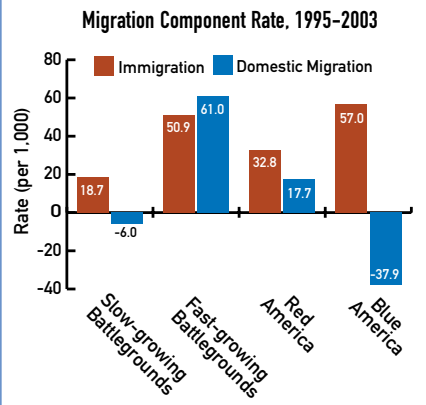
Slow-growing battleground states look to be the most valuable prize in November.



Source: William H. Frey, analysis

FIGURE 3 MOVING TARGETS

As voters move out of high immigrant areas and into some of the fastest growing battleground states, it could create a swing in political makeup of some of the important electoral states.



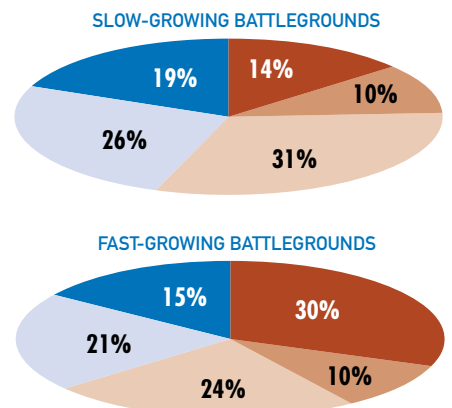
Source: William H. Frey, Brookings Institution analysis of Census Bureau estimates

FIGURE 4 UP FOR GRABS

White married women and white non-college graduate men are considered volatile demographic groups in the 2004 election. These demos also make up a significant portion of the population in both slow- and fast-growing battlegrounds.



Source: William H. Frey, analysis of 2003 Current Population Survey



grounds, although there is about the same proportion of male white college graduates in both groups of states. In fast-growing states, minorities—especially Hispanics—make up much of the difference. While well-off white suburbanites in these areas may lean toward the Republican party, increasing numbers of Democratic-leaning minorities and blue-collar whites make these states more competitive.

Noteworthy, however, is that the Hispanic share of the voting-age population is greater than the actual voting population due to lower rates of citizenship, registration and turnout. In Nevada, for example, Hispanics account for 20 percent of the voting-age population but are expected to amount to only 10 percent of the state's voters. In Arizona, Hispanics are 24 percent of those who are of voting age, but only 12 percent of those expected to turn out at the polls.

THE PAST VS. THE FUTURE

Clearly, Ohio and Florida each fits the demographic pattern typical of their respective battleground groupings (see Tables 1a & 1b, Maps 2 & 3). Demographically, Ohio is not typical

of the rest of the U.S. with its significant out-migration, and largely white and less-educated senior population. Similarly, Florida is also an atypical state with its fast-growing, highly diverse population and better educated senior citizens. Yet, because of the intensified polarization among the safe "Red" and "Blue" states, Ohio and Florida and their demographic peers will exert disproportionate influence on who gets elected in November.

The population patterns occurring in these two states reflect, at once, new and old directions of national demographic trends. Florida and its sibling fast-growing battleground states represent the future of our increasingly dynamic and diverse national electorate. By 2012, after the next census, their electoral vote count will increase, and their growing second- and third-generation Hispanic populations will constitute significant shares of all voters. Ohio and its contemporary slow-growing battleground states depict America's past. These states lost 5 electoral votes after the 2000 census, and stand to lose even more after 2010. Their populations will also change as

younger, "new economy" workers replace those who grew up when heavy industry was king. Still these slow-growing battleground states are currently in the driver's seat. November's election may very well be the last hurrah for the interests of the aging, blue-collar, white America that constitutes much of their electorate. ■

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OHIO VS. FLORIDA

TABLE 1a

STATE COMPARISONS

	OH	FL
RATES PER 1,000		
1995-2003 DOMESTIC MIGRATION	-19.3	67.4
1995-2003 IMMIGRATION	14.9	58.9
Percent in Metro Counties >100,000*	74.4	92.0
SHARES OF VOTING-AGE POPULATIONS, 2003		
Nonwhite Minorities	15.6	34.4
Blacks	10.6	13.1
Hispanics	2.5	18.6
White Baby Boomers	32.08	23.52
White Non-College Grad Men	30.06	22.12
White Married Women	25.01	19.64
Whites Age 55+	26.45	27.50
Ratio of College Grads to HS Grads or Less among Whites, Aged 55+	27.89	44.64

*pertains to total population, 2003

Source: William H. Frey analysis of 2003 Current Population Survey and Census Bureau estimates

TABLE 1b

BATTLEGROUND COUNTIES

	OH	FL
Battleground Counties* (total counties)	18 (88)	20 (67)
Share of State Population, 2003	28.5	49.6
RATES PER 1,000		
1995-2003 DOMESTIC MIGRATION	-30.1	41.3
1995-2003 IMMIGRATION	19.8	70.9
Percent in Metro Counties >100,000*	84.7%	95.0%
RACIAL MAKEUP		
Percent Nonwhite Minorities***	16.9%	41.6%
Percent Black	11.9%	13.4%
Percent Hispanic	1.7%	25.2%

* Counties where Bush or Gore won by less than 10% in 2000

** pertains to total population, 2003

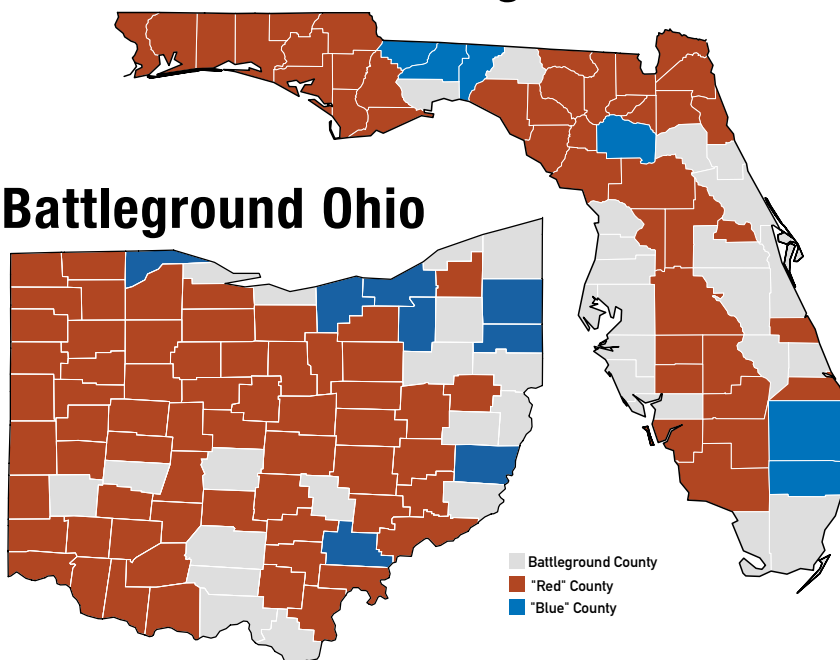
*** Race-Ethnicity 2002, total population

Source: William H. Frey analysis of 2003 Current Population Survey and Census Bureau estimates

MAPS 2 & 3

Battleground Florida

Battleground Ohio



Source: William H. Frey analysis