

Document 1:

America may be more diverse than ever coast to coast, but the places where we live are becoming increasingly crowded with people who live, think and vote like we do. This transformation didn't happen by accident. We've built a country where we can all choose the neighborhood and church and news show- most compatible with our lifestyle and beliefs. Americans have been sorting themselves over the past three decades into ideologically homogenous communities- not at the regional level, or the red-state/blue-state level, but at the micro level of city and neighborhood. And we are living with these consequences of self-segregation which has made our country so polarized, ideologically inbred, that people don't know and can't understand those who live just a few miles away.

- Bill Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America is Tearing Us Apart*, 2008.

According to Bishop, where do Americans choose to live?

What does Bishop think are the consequences of this?

Document 2:

"...It's what allows us to pursue our individual dreams, yet still come together as a single American family: "E pluribus unum," out of many, one. Now even as we speak, there are those who are preparing to divide us, the spin masters and negative ad peddlers who embrace the politics of anything goes. Well, I say to them tonight, there's not a liberal America and a conservative America; there's the United States of America. There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America. The pundits like to slice and dice our country into red states and blue States: red states for Republicans, blue States for Democrats. But I've got news for them, too. We worship an awesome God in the blue states, and we don't like federal agents poking around our libraries in the red states. We coach little league in the blue states and, yes, we've got some gay friends in the red states. There are patriots who opposed the war in Iraq, and there are patriots who supported the war in Iraq. We are one people, all of us pledging allegiance to the stars and stripes, all of us defending the United States of America. In the end, that's what this election is about. Do we participate in a politics of cynicism, or do we participate in a politics of hope?..."

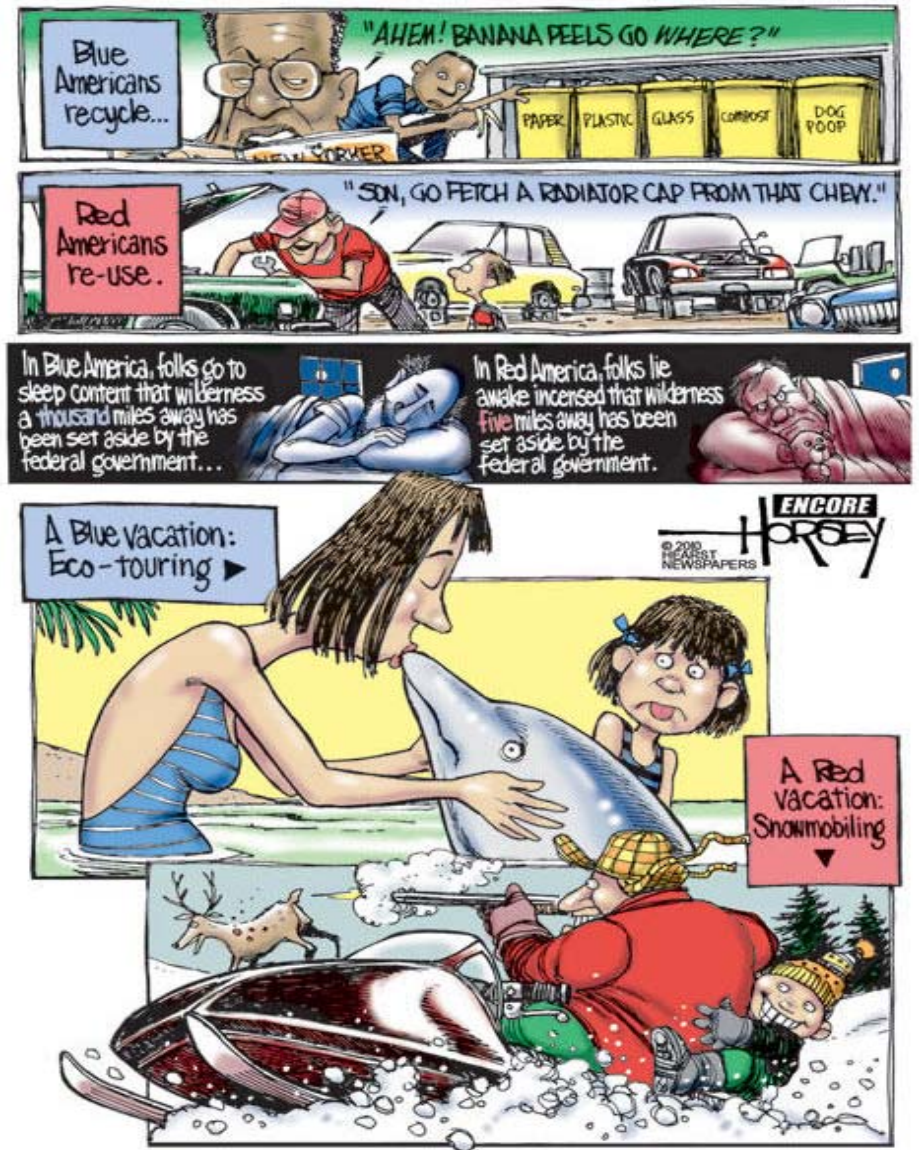
-Barack Obama, U.S. Senate Candidate. 2004 Democratic National Convention Keynote Address

How does Barack Obama view the make-up of the United States?

What examples does Obama use that best support his argument?



-David Horsey, Seattle Post-Intelligencer. 2002



According to Horsey, what are the differences between Red States and Blue States?

How extreme are these differences?

Document 4:

	Solid Liberals %	Hard-Pressed Democrats %	New Coalition Democrats %	Post- Moderns %	Disaffecteds %	Libertarians %	Main Street Republicans %	Staunch Conservatives %
HEALTH CARE REFORM (QA59)								
Mostly good effect	43	16	34	16	8	3	4	0
Mostly bad effect	1	16	5	16	33	60	47	80
Mix of good and bad	51	61	56	65	54	34	47	19
GAY MARRIAGE (QA61)								
Favor	85	32	34	80	34	43	23	9
Oppose	13	57	51	14	52	45	72	85
ABORTION (QA62)								
Should be legal in all/most cases	84	54	40	75	48	58	36	27
Should be illegal in all/most cases	15	41	51	22	43	38	64	72
ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION REFORM (QB68a)								
Favor creating path to citizenship	94	61	80	87	65	66	58	49
Oppose path to citizenship	4	35	12	13	29	32	39	49
IMMIGRATION/BORDER ENFORCEMENT (QB68b)								
Favor stronger enforcement of borders	55	88	65	77	84	93	88	95
Oppose stronger enforcement	43	12	24	22	14	5	10	3
GUN CONTROL PRIORITY (QA60)								
Should protect right to own guns	25	41	21	45	58	77	64	86
Should control gun ownership	70	52	71	54	35	18	32	10
MARIJUANA USE (QA63)								
Should be legal	66	49	36	62	42	54	29	22
Should be illegal	31	48	56	34	49	43	69	73
ENERGY POLICY PRIORITY (QA58)								
Focus on alternative energy sources	88	60	67	79	57	44	66	15
Expand oil/coal/natural gas exploration	9	32	25	13	33	40	26	72
WALL STREET (Q37ii)								
Helps U.S. econ. more than it hurts	32	26	39	56	26	56	36	48
Hurts U.S. econ. more than it helps	59	66	32	35	59	32	45	39
CHILDHOOD OBESITY (QA64)								
Government should play major role	71	64	86	62	46	24	50	20
Government should not play major role	25	30	13	35	49	72	49	78

-Pew Research: "Beyond Red vs. Blue: The Political Typology" (May 4, 2011)

What issues seem to be most divisive?

Which group(s) tend to disagree with each other the most? (In other words, they are most closely split 50-50 on many issues.)

Which group(s) tend to be most consistently in agreement? (In other words, they are not closely split 50-50 on many issues.)

Document 5:

Trends in Party Affiliation:

The number of political independents has continued to grow, as both parties have lost ground among the public. Based on surveys conducted this year, 38% describe themselves as independents, up from 32% in 2008 and 30% in 2004.

The proportion of independents is now higher than at any point in more than two decades. Looking back even further, independents are more numerous than at any point in the last 70 years.

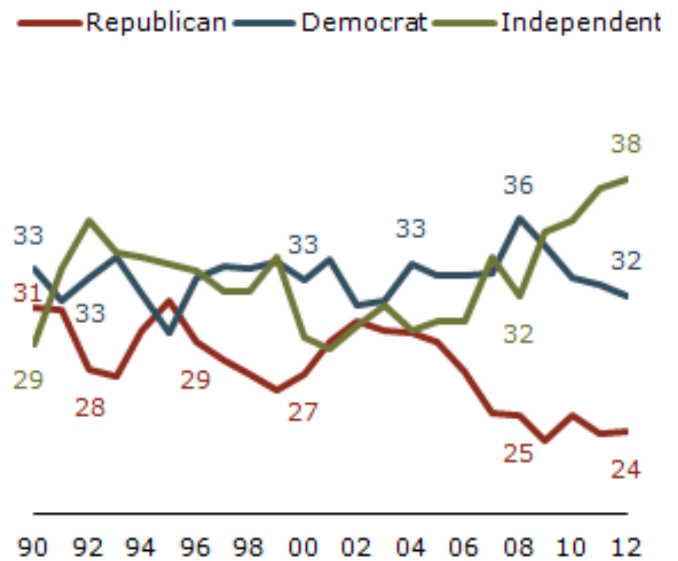
Meanwhile, the percentage of self-described Democrats has fallen from 36% four years ago to 32% today. Republican identification has remained largely stable over this period (24% today, 25% in 2008). In 1991, however, there were nearly equal percentages of Republicans (31%), Democrats (31%) and independents (33%).

Little Shift in Ideology

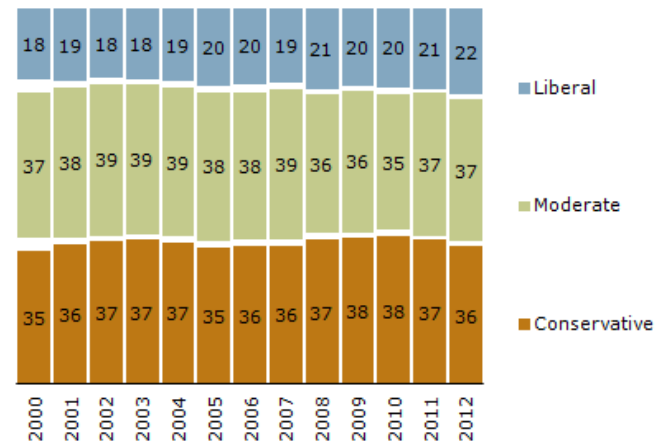
Despite electoral swings in recent elections, the fundamental ideological breakdown of the American public has shifted little in recent years. So far in 2012, 36% describe themselves as politically conservative, 22% say they are liberal and 37% say they are moderate.

Throughout 2008, an average of 37% said they were conservative, 21% said they were liberal and 36% said they were moderate. The breakdown in 2004 was only slightly different: 37% conservative, 19% liberal and 39% moderate.

Number of Independents Continues to Grow



Public's Ideological Balance Shows Little Change



PEW RESEARCH CENTER 2012 Values Survey.

- Pew Research: "Partisan Polarization & Trends in American Values: 1987-2012"

What has happened recently with "self-described" Independents, Democrats and Republicans?

How much change has occurred in political ideology (liberal/moderate/conservative)?

Document 6:

Although Americans often disagree on specific issues, they share a number of core beliefs and values. Those beliefs, some of which are listed below, shape our political culture. Keep in mind that individuals may vary in terms of their attachment to these core values.

Liberty. Americans believe they are entitled to the greatest amount of liberty possible as long as they do no harm to others. They firmly believe that citizens should be able to express their views openly, without fear of punishment from by the government.

Equality. Americans embrace equality of opportunity, without regard to race, religion, or gender. They believe that all citizens should enjoy the right to vote, to receive an education, to have a job and to succeed in life.

Democracy. Americans support a democratic system of government. They believe that political authority comes from the people and that public officials should be accountable to the voters. The importance of majority rule and protection of minority rights are important related beliefs.

- *Government Alive! Power Politics and You.* (pages 129-130)

According to this source, what makes up American political culture?

What does this source imply about what's more important – specific issues, or core beliefs and values? How do you know?

Document 7:

Americans who blame Washington politicians for the polarization and gridlock of the nation's politics might want to look in the mirror: Like the elected officials they decry, voters tend to automatically retreat into partisan camps even when they disagree with the party line on policy.

"There's no question the American public sees the country as divided and as increasingly divided, and as usual, they don't think it's their fault," says Democratic pollster Mark Mellman, who conducted the survey in conjunction with Republican pollster Whit Ayres. "The public blames the polarization and the partisanship on the politicians, but in all honesty, it's their fault, too."

Consider this test: The survey asked 1,000 Americans to assess two education policies. The first plan was to reduce class sizes and make sure schools teach the basics. The second was to increase teacher pay while making it easier to fire bad teachers.

For half the sample, the first plan was labeled a Democratic plan and the second a Republican plan. Then the labels were switched for the other half. The "Democratic" plan became the "Republican" plan, and vice versa.

In both cases, about three-fourths of Democrats and Republicans lined up behind the plan they had been told belonged to their party. In fact, both sides were inclined to describe their support as intense, to say they "strongly" favored it — regardless of which policy it happened to be. That predisposition to automatically retreat to separate camps is "one of the primary reasons why our political climate is so partisan and polarized," Mellman and Ayres write.

- Susan Page. "Political Partisanship Mirrors Public," *USA TODAY* March 6, 2013

According to this source, who is to blame for political partisanship?

How does the survey about education help reinforce this argument?

Document 8:

Americans have been debating since before the Constitution was ever signed. The past decade, beginning with the disputed election of 2000, has been a long national civics debate about what is best for America. For eight years under George W. Bush, the nation wrestled with the balance between privacy and security (an issue the framers had to debate) while the left portrayed the country as moving toward tyranny. For the last five years under President Obama, we have weighed issues of individual freedom vs. government control while the right has portrayed the country as moving toward a socialist welfare state.

A new focus on the meaning of the Constitution is at the center of the political stage. Everywhere there seems to be debate about the scope and meaning and message of the Constitution. This is a healthy thing. Even the framers would agree on that.

So are we in a crisis? In a word, no. The Constitution was born in crisis. It was written in secret and in violation of the existing one, the Articles of Confederation, at a time when no one knew whether America would survive. The Constitution has never *not* been under threat.

Today's debates represent conflict, not crisis. Conflict is at the core of our politics, and the Constitution is designed to manage it. There have been few conflicts in American history greater than the internal debates the framers had about the Constitution. For better or worse- and I would argue better- the Constitution allows and even encourages deep arguments about the most basic democratic issues. A crisis is when the Constitution breaks down. We're not in danger of that, nor are we in danger of flipping the Constitution on its head and abandoning our nation's core values.

- Richard Stengel. "Does It Still Matter: The Constitution Today," *TIME* Magazine, July 4, 2011

What does the author think about the role of debate in our political culture?

What is this source arguing about the existence of a current political crisis? How does he support his argument?

Document 9:



- Facebook page of Senator Mitch McConnell (R-Ky) Senate Minority Leader



-Facebook page of Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-Ca) House Minority Leader

What do the visuals and comments from each Facebook page reveal about political attitudes?

Document 10:

	2008		2004		2000			1996			1992			1988	
	Obama	McCain	Kerry	Bush	Gore	Bush	Nader	Clinton	Dole	Perot	Clinton	Bush	Perot	Dukakis	Bush
Men	50	50	44	56	45	52	3	45	44	11	41	37	22	44	56
Women	57	43	52	48	53	45	2	54	39	7	46	38	16	48	52
White (incl. Hispanic)	45	55	44	56	43	55	3	46	45	9	39	41	20	41	59
Nonwhite	90	10	83	17	87	9	4	82	12	6	77	11	12	82	18
Non-Hispanic white	44	56	43	57	42	56	2	44	44	12	-	-	-	-	-
Nonwhite (incl. Hispanic)	86	14	78	22	80	17	3	80	14	6	-	-	-	-	-
Black	99	1	93	7	95	3	2	96	2	2	88	9	2	88	12
Under 30 years of age	61	39	60	40	47	47	6	54	30	16	40	37	23	37	63
30 to 49 years	53	47	43	57	45	53	2	49	41	10	42	37	21	45	55
50 to 64 years	54	46	48	52	50	48	2	47	45	8	-	-	-	-	-
65 years and older	46	54	52	48	56	42	2	51	42	7	-	-	-	-	-
50 years and older	51	49	50	50	53	45	2	50	43	7	46	39	15	49	51
College	55	45	48	52	46	51	3	47	45	8	43	40	17	42	58
High school	47	53	54	46	52	46	2	52	34	14	40	38	22	46	54
Grade school	67	33	69	31	55	42	3	58	27	15	56	28	16	55	45
Postgraduate	65	35	53	47	53	43	4	50	42	8	50	35	15	-	-
College grad only	51	49	42	58	44	55	1	46	46	8	32	45	23	41	59
Some college	52	48	44	56	44	53	3	46	42	12	40	41	19	40	60
High school or less	51	49	54	46	53	45	2	52	35	13	46	35	19	-	-
East	57	43	58	42	55	42	3	60	31	9	47	35	18	51	49
Midwest	53	47	48	52	48	49	3	46	45	9	44	34	22	47	53
South	50	50	43	57	45	54	1	44	46	10	38	45	17	40	60
West	55	45	48	52	48	47	5	51	43	6	45	35	20	46	54
Urban	-	-	56	44	62	35	3	58	36	6	50	34	16	-	-
Suburban	-	-	46	54	47	51	2	47	45	8	37	40	23	-	-
Rural	-	-	46	54	38	60	3	44	43	13	41	41	18	-	-

- CNN Post Presidential Election Exit Poll Data

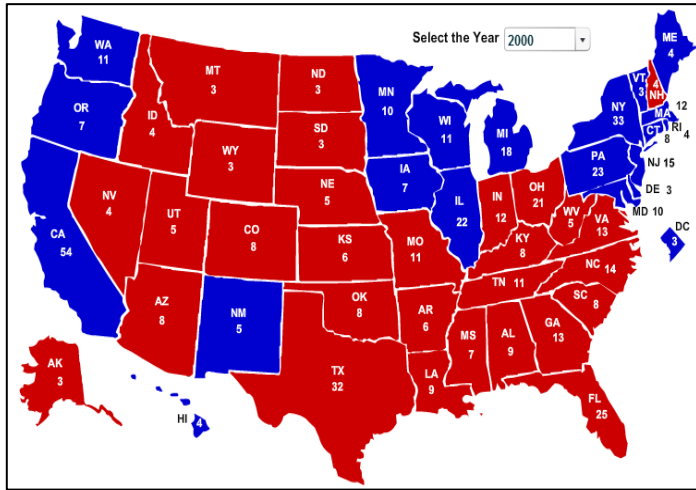
Which elections are closest?
Most lopsided?

What demographic group(s)
are most evenly split (closest
to 50/50)?

What demographic group(s)
are most lopsided/consistent
in who they vote for?

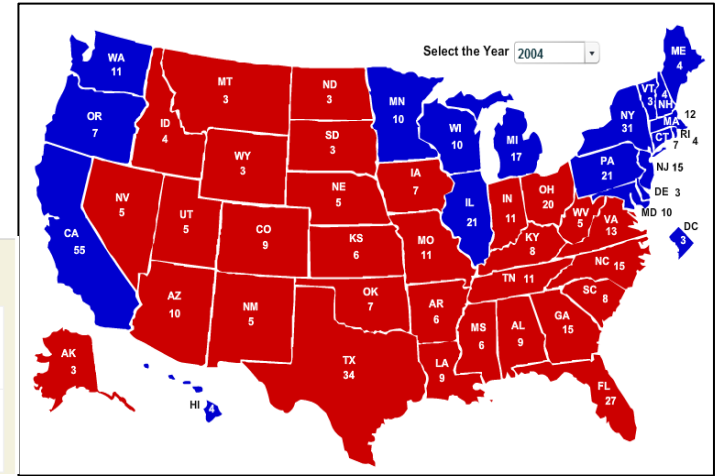
Which demographic group(s)
change who they vote for?

Document 11:



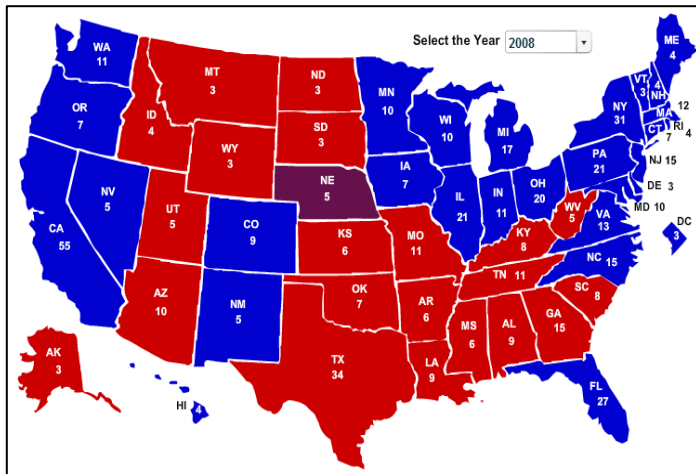
2000

- George W. Bush (R) ✓
Electoral 271
Popular 50,456,062
- Albert Gore, Jr. (D)
Electoral 266
Popular 50,996,582



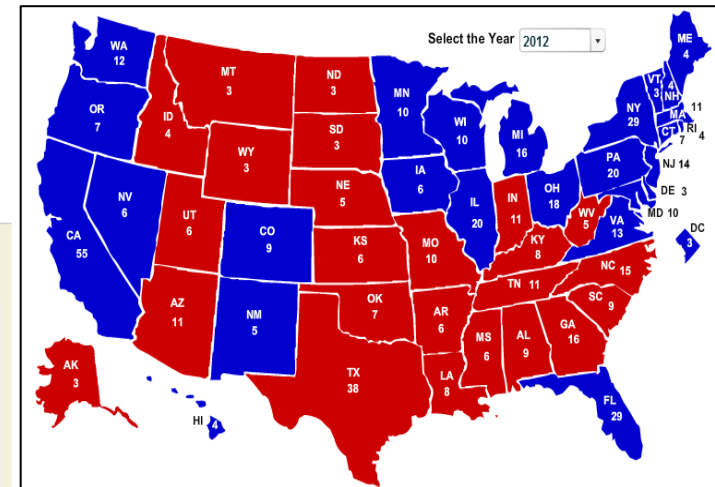
2004

- George W. Bush (R) (I) ✓
Electoral 286
Popular 62,039,073
- John F. Kerry (D)
Electoral 251
Popular 59,027,478



2008

- Barack H. Obama (D) ✓
Electoral 365
Popular 69,456,897
- John S. McCain (R)
Electoral 173
Popular 59,934,814



2012

- Barack H. Obama (D) (I) ✓
Electoral 332
Popular 65,889,660
- W. Mitt Romney (R)
Electoral 206
Popular 60,932,152

- 270twin.com Electoral College Results

What are key changes from map to map?

What is important to know about the states that stay the same? What about the states that change?

Document 12:

At the top of the column you can see the usual representation by state: who won where. One or the other. It shows a big area of red (republican) and some blue (democrat). If you see the results by county (second in the column), the difference between red and blue is even more overwhelming. Visually, it appears as if a few blue states are imposing their will on a huge majority of red states. We know that's not the case, but that's what the maps convey because we associate area and volume with importance.

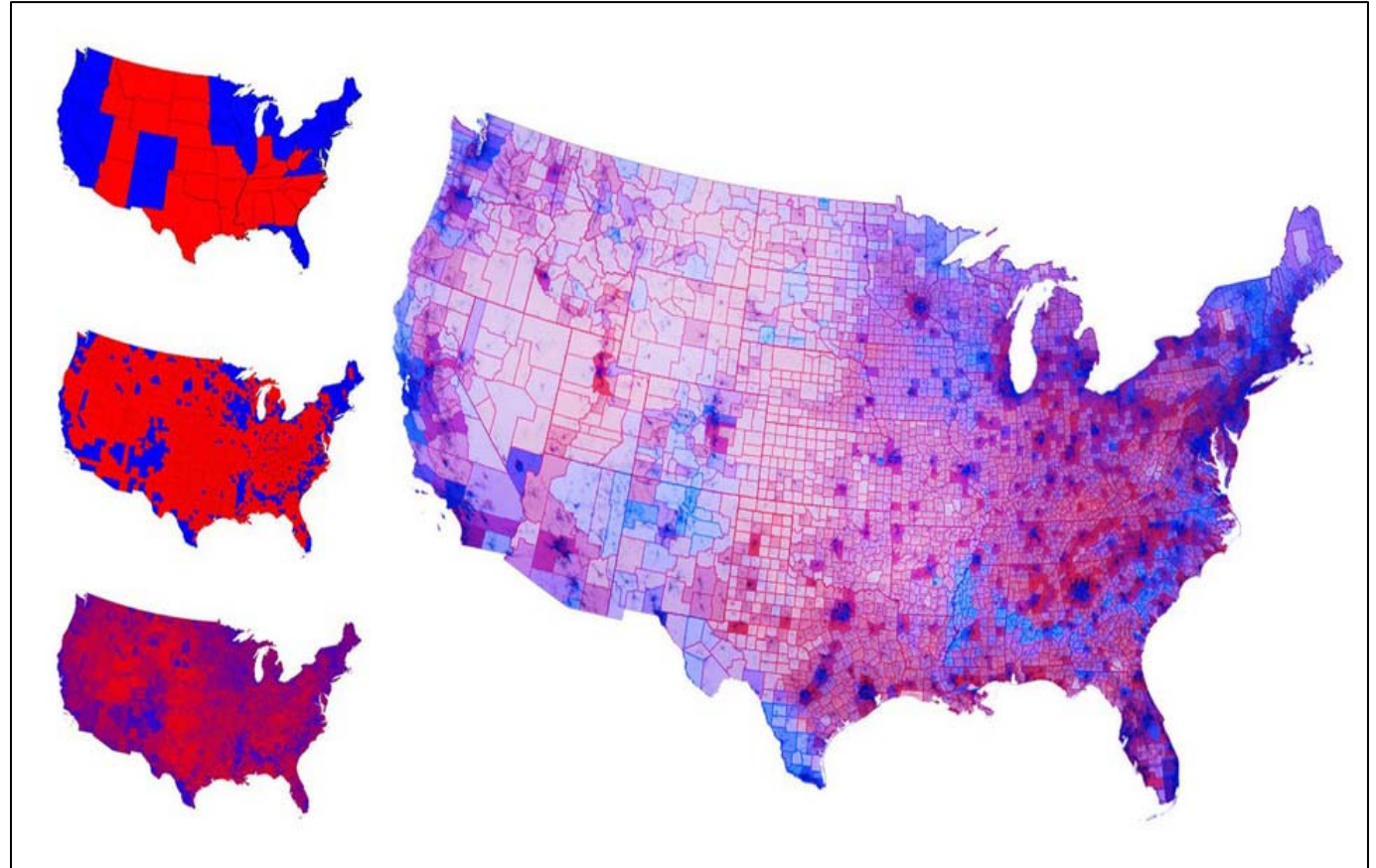
That's why those maps are not really good for understanding what really happened. They convey the wrong idea.

The third map of the column is much more accurate. Created by Mark Newman—from the Department of Physics and Center for the Study of Complex Systems, University of Michigan—it mixes blue and red based on popular vote percentage instead of showing a binary representation.

There's no huge area of red. There is a gradient. A lot of purple. That's the accurate map that reflects the actual result of the election. It also shows that the divide between the cities and the countryside is not that huge. There are differences of opinion everywhere.

The large map is even better. It factors in population density, showing the importance of every county based on the population. The lighter the color, the less populated, the less weight in the election. The more saturated it is, the more populated and more weight it shows.

- Jesus Diaz. "This Is the Real Political Map of America—We Are Not *That* Divided" *Gizmodo*, 11/13/12



Why does the author claim that the 3rd map and the big map are the most accurate?

Which colors are most prominent in the 3rd map and the big map? Red? Blue? Purple? What conclusions can be drawn from this fact?