

The Factors Behind U.S. Swing Counties

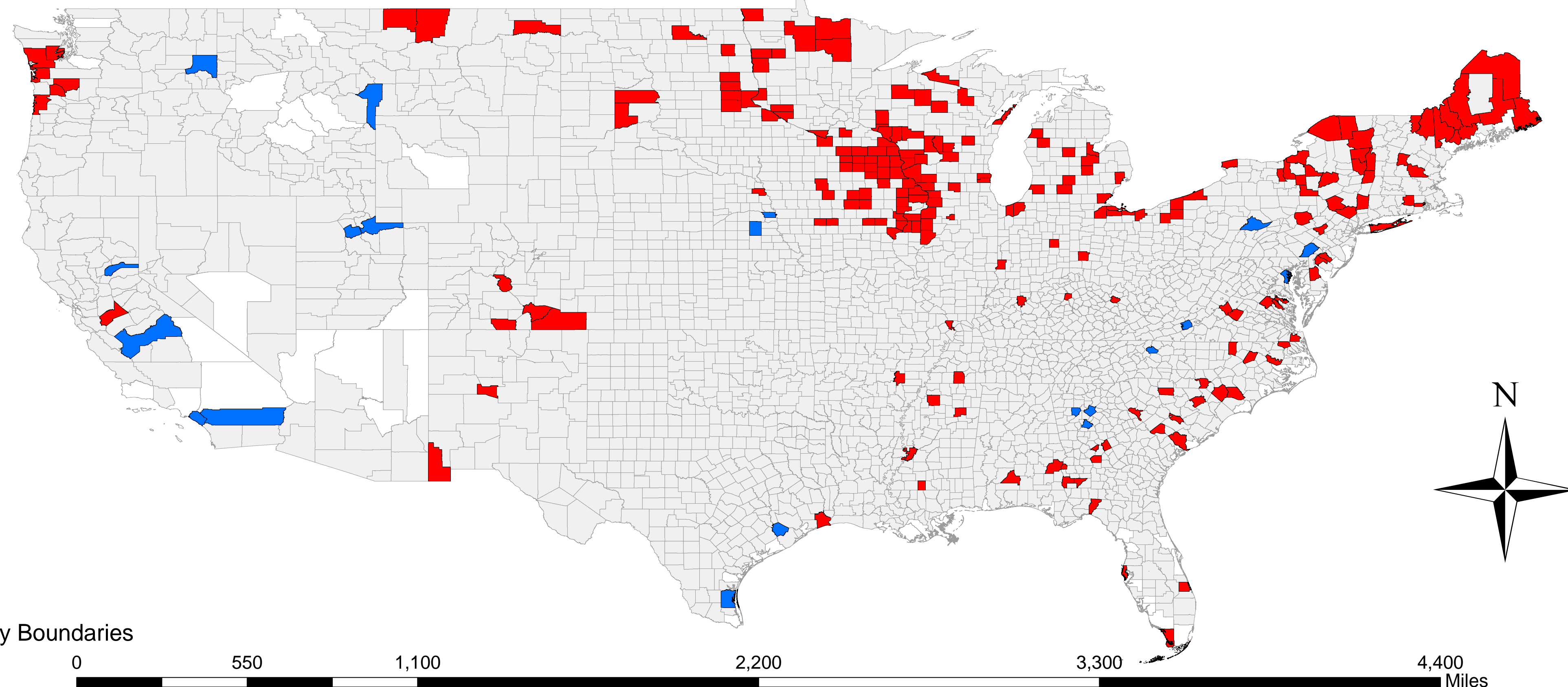
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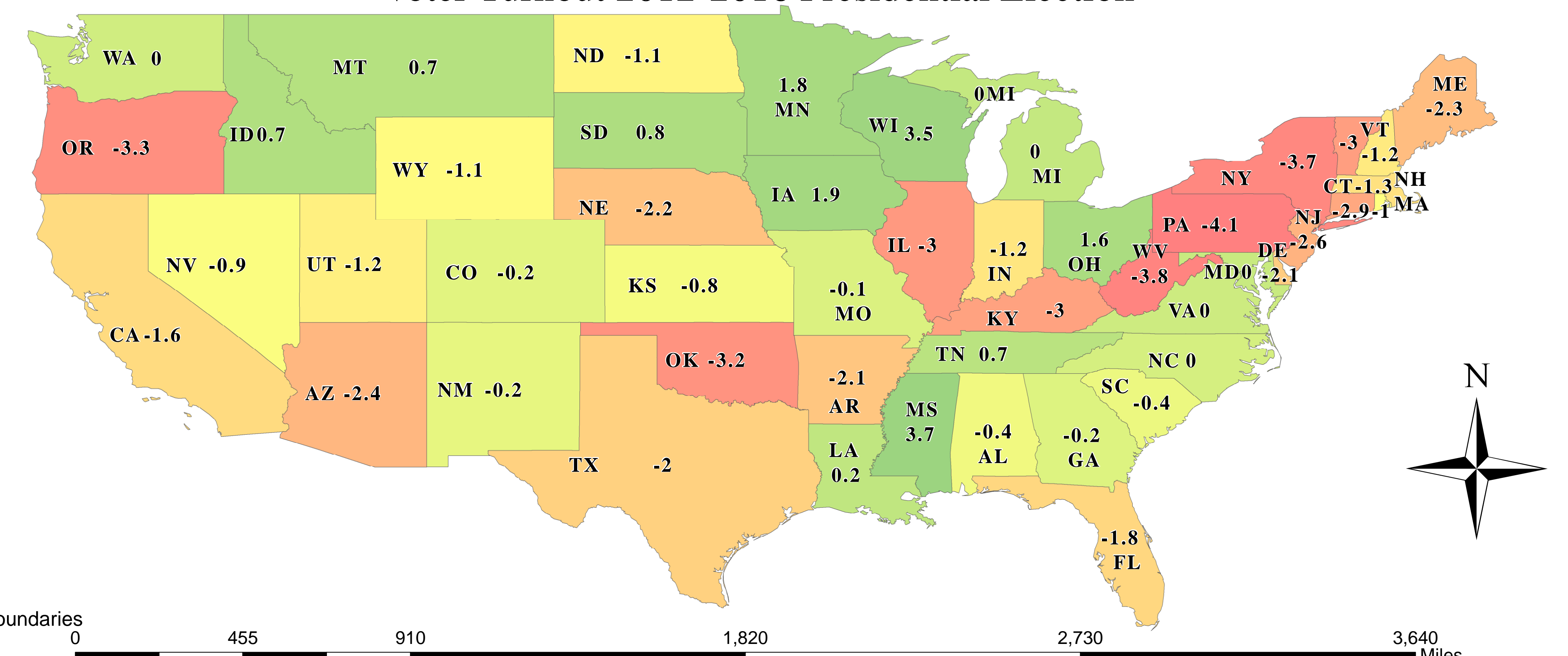
Abstract

No event gathers anywhere near the public and media attention as does the United States Presidential Election. Publicity and advertising begins more than a year in advance of election night. Some of the most discussed topics of the election season are swing states. Since presidential elections are generally won by pretty close margins, the following election could be determined by how a few select states vote. Swing states are states in which the popular vote is consistently won by only a few percentage points, so candidates tend to focus their campaign efforts on these regions specifically. However, as we have learned in the most recent presidential election (2016), many of the largest news outlets were completely wrong in their estimates and forecasts. Very few people predicted the eventual outcome of the election, and I intend to find out why. Rather than simply relying on which states *could* flip, I take data more precisely on a county level of areas that actually *did* flip. Along with this data, I plan to match and compare it with non-conventional determinants/characteristics of each swing county. Many news outlets/reporters tended to focus on race, income, religion, or education. Instead, I turned to dominant employment industries and voter turnout/participation rates.

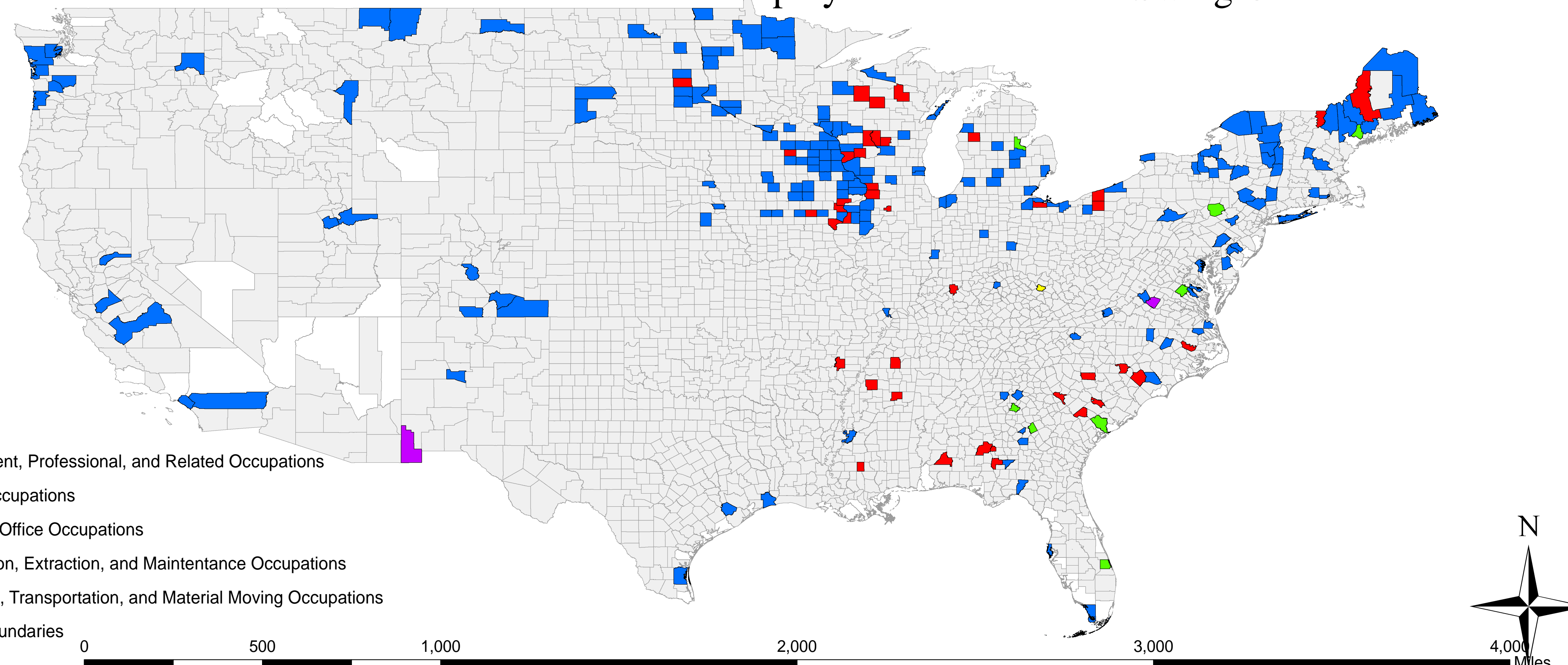
Voter Turnout 2012-2016 Presidential Election



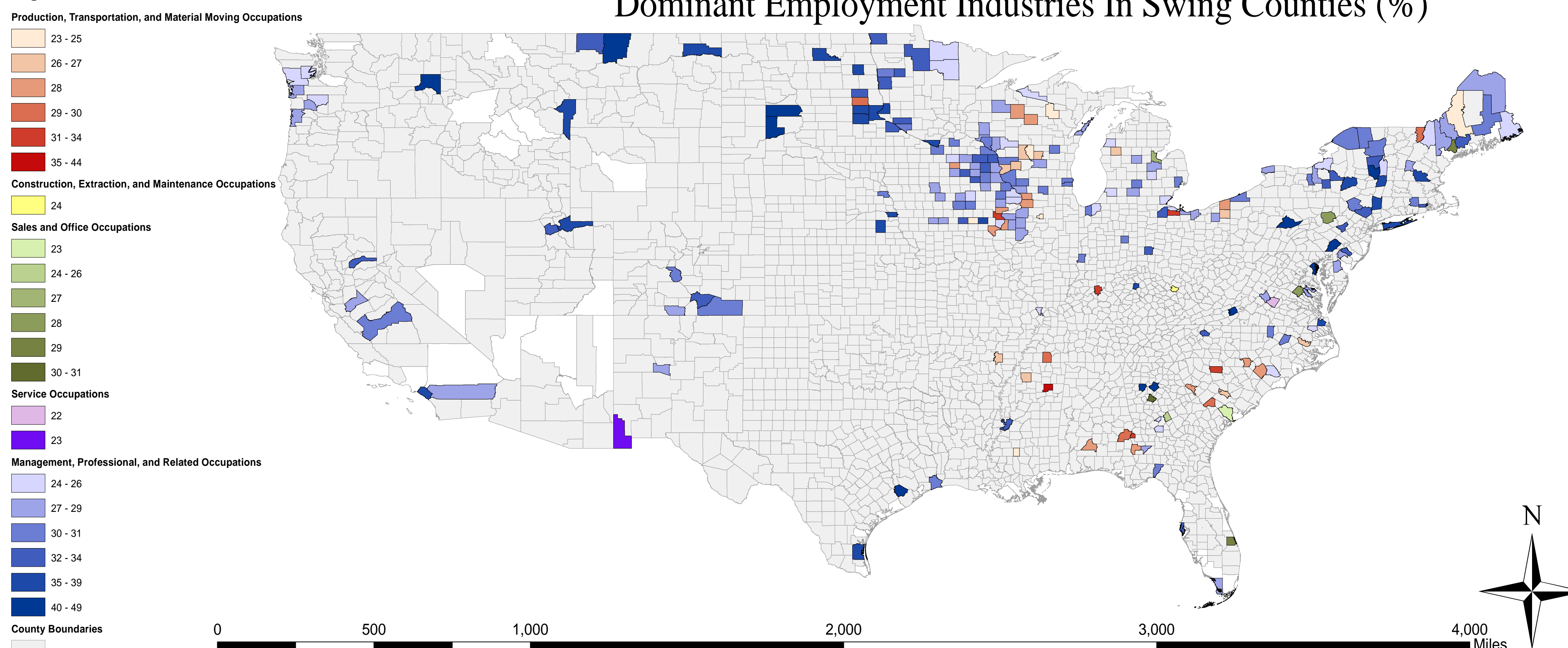
Voter Turnout 2012-2016 Presidential Election



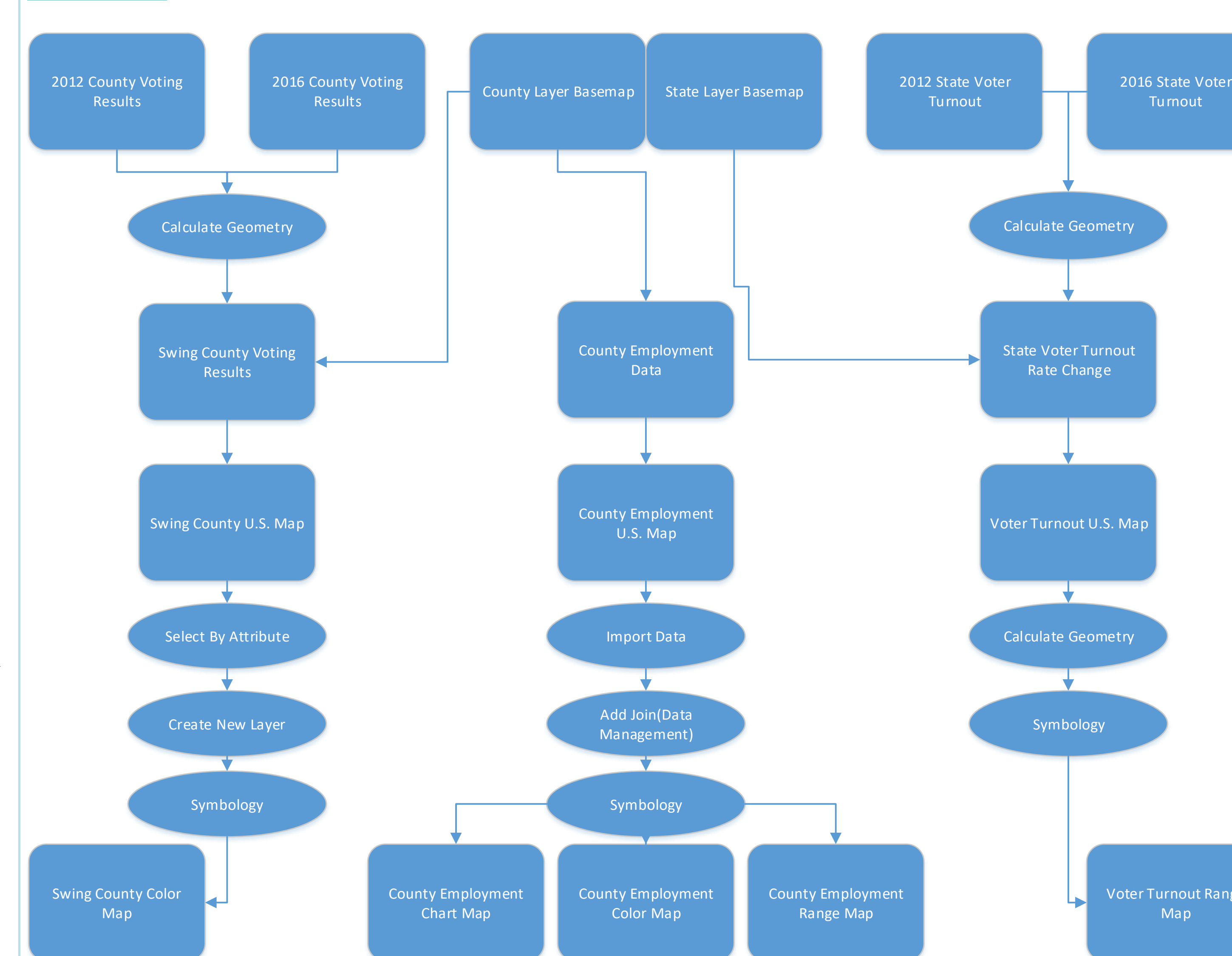
Dominant Employment Industries In Swing Counties



Dominant Employment Industries In Swing Counties (%)



Methods



Conclusion

As can be seen in the first swing counties map, many of the counties that flipped red were located in the Northeast and Midwest. When compared with the voter turnout state map, it can be seen that the Midwest saw greatly increased voter participation rates, while the Northeast fell slightly. No particular trends are immediately visible, although when compared with the county employment maps, patterns begin to appear. Management occupations are commonly the dominant industry across the country, so this doesn't say much. But in the Midwest, a disproportionately large group of counties dominated by production occupations flipped, and in the Northeast, Service, Construction, and Sales industries are represented in relatively large numbers. When the maps and data are combined, it can be said that workers in production dominated industries were inspired by the rhetoric of Donald Trump, and came to the polling booths in greater numbers, while workers in the Service, Construction, and Sales industries were either uninspired by either candidate, or discouraged by the Obama administration. This could at least partly explain why the 2016 presidential election had such a surprising result.

References and Data Sources

Federal Election Commission (2012-2016). Federal Elections: Election Results for the U.S. President, the U.S. Senate, and the U.S. House of Representatives. Retrieved from <http://www.fec.gov/pubrec/fe2012/federalections2012.shtml>

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