The Two Americas: Assessing the Urban/Rural Electoral Divide
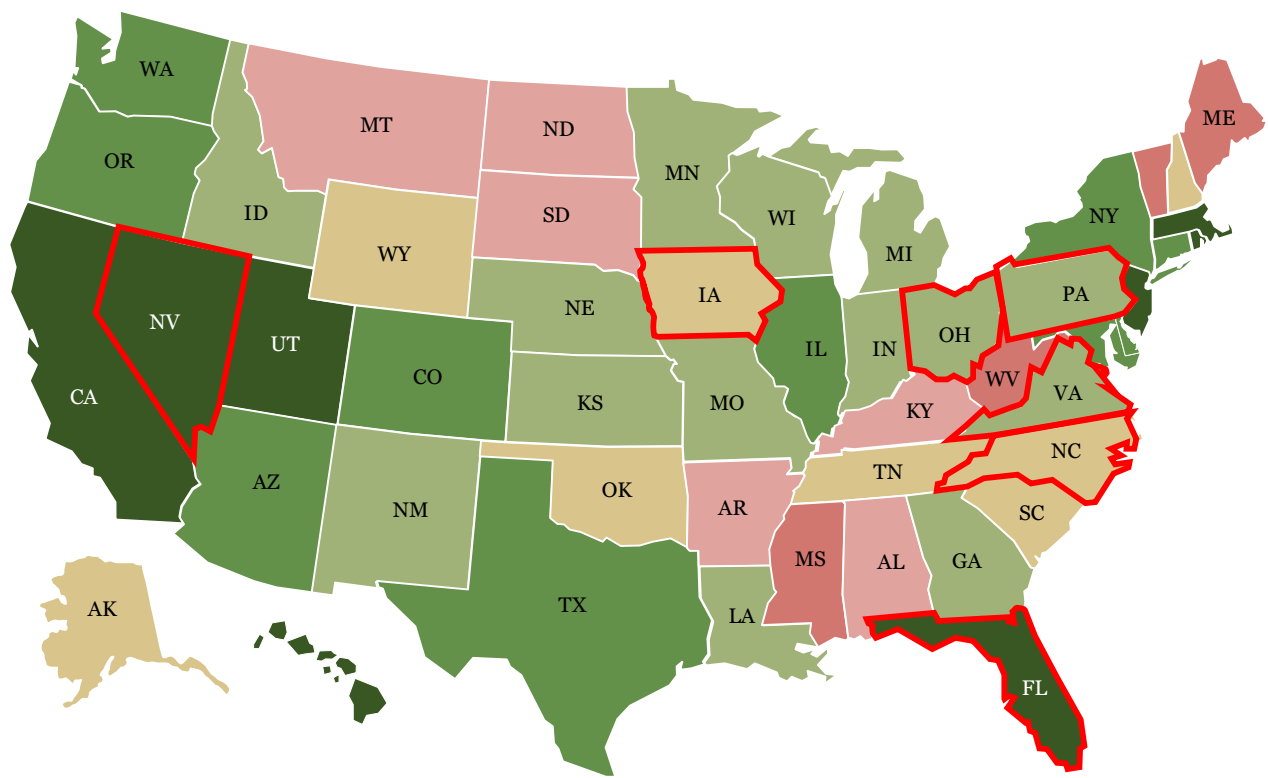
Most Americans live in urbanized areas, only 4 states have heavy rural populations

Percentage of population living in urbanized areas

Percentage of total US pop. living in urbanized areas: 80.7%

Less than 50% 50 – 60% 60 – 70% 70 – 80% 80 – 90% 90 – 100%

☐ Battleground states

Sources: 2010 U.S. Census, National Journal Research

Trump could lose Florida with his rhetoric on Hispanics, high urban populations may favor Clinton
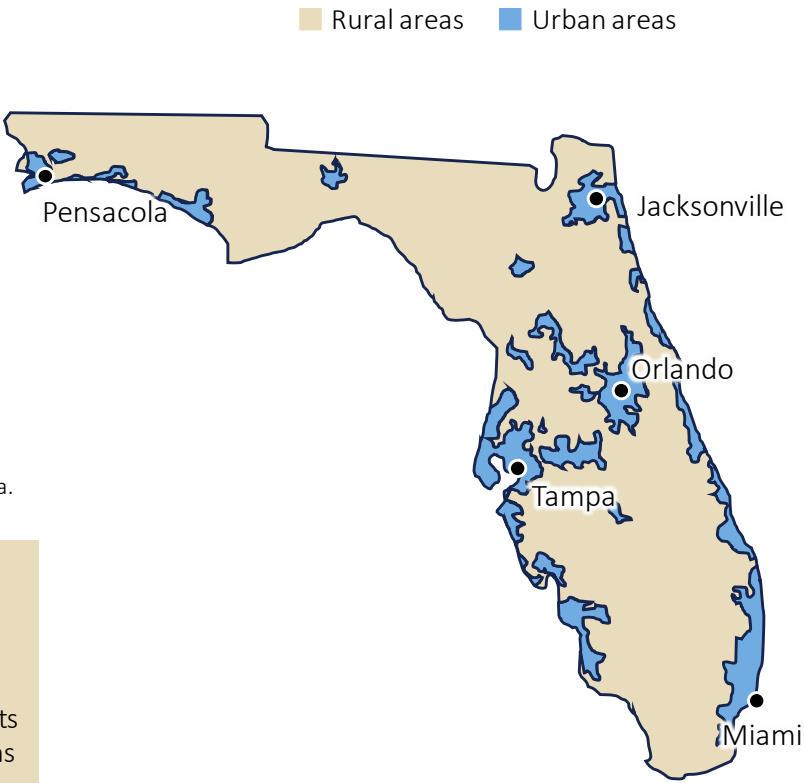
State demographics

	State Total	Urban	Rural
Population	18,801,310	17,689,964	1,111,346
White, Non-Hispanic	57.9%	56.9%	74.6%
African American	15.2%	15.2%	12.1%
Native American	0.3%	0.2%	0.6%
Asian American	2.4%	2.6%	0.8%
Hispanic (of any race)	22.5%	23.1%	11.8%

*Rural population consists of all residents living outside of a census-designated metropolitan area.

Analysis
- The biggest difference between urban and rural populations in Florida falls among Hispanics. Urban areas boast significantly higher shares of Hispanic residents which helps Florida's cities lean Democratic
- Donald Trump's hard stance on immigration and past problematic comments toward Hispanics may be very costly in Florida as the vast majority of citizens live in urban areas where many Hispanics are found
- Trump's trouble among Hispanics could affect Marco Rubio's Senate race, which has been close in recent weeks

Florida urbanization map

■ Rural areas ■ Urban areas

Sources: 2010 U.S. Census, National Journal Research

Nevada's demographics bode well for Clinton: low rural population, high Hispanic representation

State demographics

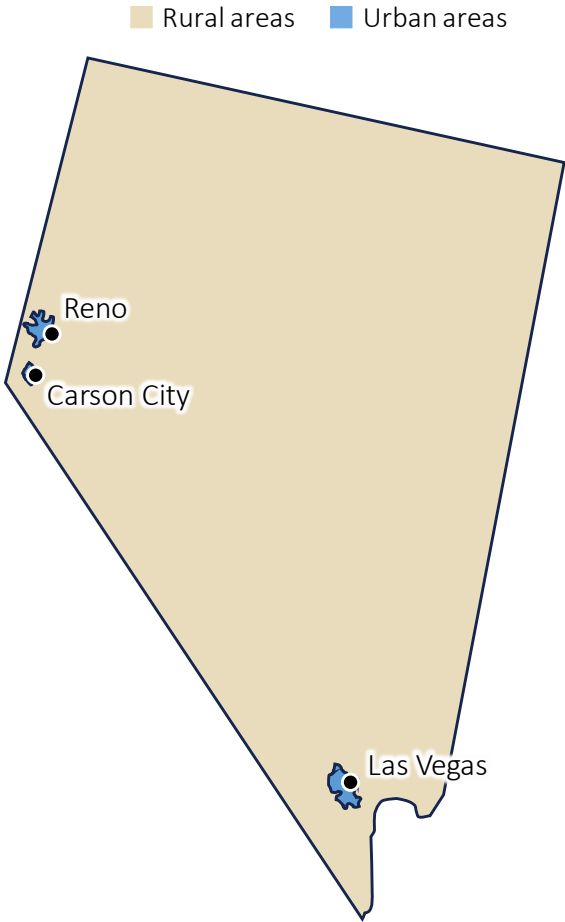|	State Total	Urban	Rural
Population	2,700,551	2,431,960	268,591
White, Non-Hispanic	54.1%	51.7%	76.4%
African American	7.7%	8.4%	1.2%
Native American	0.8%	0.6%	2.9%
Asian American	7.1%	7.7%	1.3%
Hispanic (of any race)	26.5%	27.7%	15.7%

*Rural population consists of all residents living outside of a census-designated metropolitan area.

Analysis
- Nevada's population is almost exclusively urban, with less than 10% of the population living outside of its three major metro areas.
- Despite being a battleground state, Nevada's demographics lean heavily in Clinton's favor thanks to high urban populations of Hispanics and a relatively low count of White, non-Hispanic rural residents compared to other states

Nevada urbanization map

■ Rural areas ■ Urban areas

Reno

Carson City

Las Vegas

Sources: 2010 U.S. Census, National Journal Research.

Ohio may be the perfect toss-up state in 2016, both candidates need high turnout among their bases

State demographics

	State Total	Urban	Rural
Population	11,536,504	9,299,425	2,237,079
White, Non-Hispanic	81.1%	78.1%	93.9%
African American	12.0%	14.5%	1.8%
Native American	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Asian American	1.7%	1.9%	0.5%
Hispanic (of any race)	3.1%	3.3%	2.2%

*Rural population consists of all residents living outside of a census-designated metropolitan area.

Analysis
- Ohio's demographic breakdown makes the state's presidential election outcome very difficult to predict
- The state's reasonably sized rural population leans heavily White which plays into Trump's campaign strategy perfectly
- Clinton's path to a win is through driving high turnout among the state's urban African American population. She may be able to rely on President Obama's sustained popularity among this group to keep the race close

Ohio urbanization map

🟫 Rural areas 🟦 Urban areas

Cleveland
Lima
Columbus
Cincinnati

Sources: 2010 U.S. Census, National Journal Research

Pennsylvania may turn red for the first time since 1988 if rural white voters turn out for Trump en masse
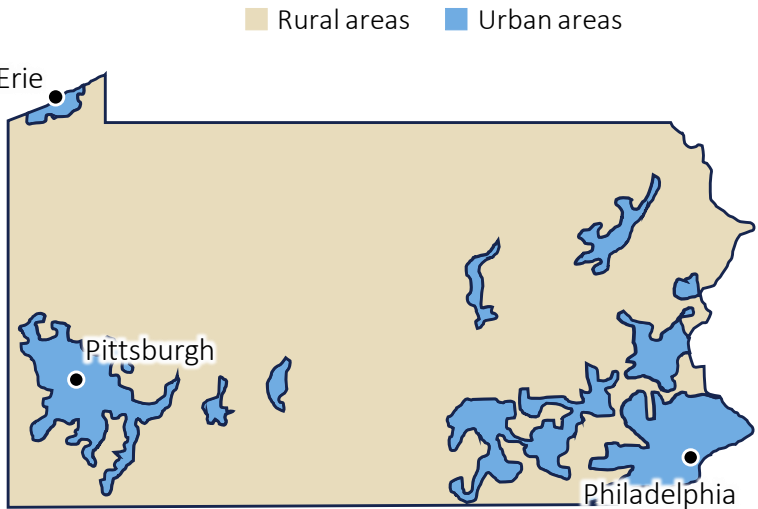
State demographics

	State Total	Urban	Rural
Population	12,702,379	10,685,735	2,016,644
White, non-Hispanic	79.5%	77.4%	90.4%
African American	10.5%	11.9%	2.9%
Native American	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%
Asian American	2.7%	3.1%	0.6%
Hispanic (of any race)	5.7%	6.2%	3.0%

*Rural population consists of all residents living outside of a census-designated metropolitan area.

Pennsylvania urbanization map

Rural areas   Urban areas

Erie

Pittsburgh

Philadelphia

Analysis

- The key to Donald Trump's success in Pennsylvania relies on a high turnout among the state's rural white population, as the cultural divide between urban and rural Whites in the state is fairly large
- Pennsylvania's urban population should be large enough to secure a Clinton win; however, her low favorability could cause many voters to sit out this election
- Many urban, uneducated White voters in the state have been turned off by Trump and may be the key to a Clinton victory if they show up at the polls on election day

*Sources: 2010 U.S. Census, National Journal Research.*

Clinton must resonate among rural African Americans to have a chance at winning in North Carolina

State demographics

	State Total	Urban	Rural
Population	9,535,483	6,704,358	2,831,125
White, non-Hispanic	65.3%	67.1%	61.0%
African American	21.2%	21.8%	19.8%
Native American	1.1%	0.5%	2.8%
Asian American	2.2%	2.8%	0.8%
Hispanic (of any race)	8.4%	9.1%	6.7%

*Rural population consists of all residents living outside of a census-designated metropolitan area.

North Carolina urbanization map

■ Rural areas ■ Urban areas
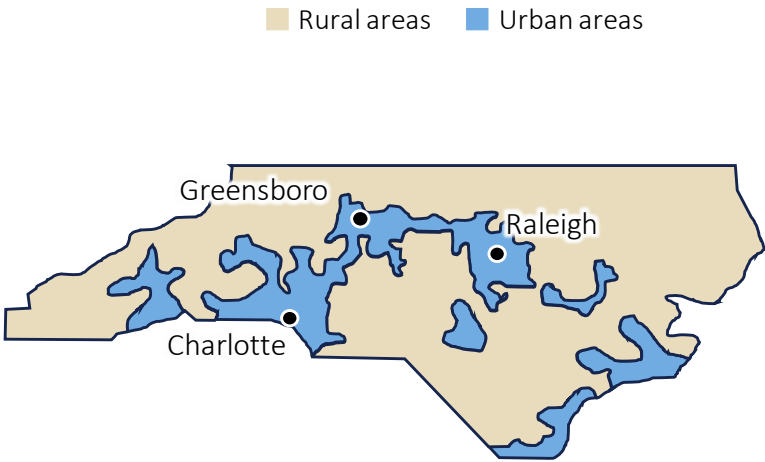
Analysis
- North Carolina's governor, Pat McCrory, has made the state a focal point for conservatives with his fight against the federal government over gendered bathroom laws. The recent fervor among the state's Republican base could drive high turnout for Trump among both rural and urban Whites
- Clinton's only hope in the state is through driving high turnout among rural African Americans. This group was essential to President Obama's win in 2008 and may be a pivotal demographic in deciding this election if they show up to the polls

Sources: 2010 U.S. Census, National Journal Research.

Northern Virginia will have a strong say in 2016 but sizeable rural population will likely cast deciding votes
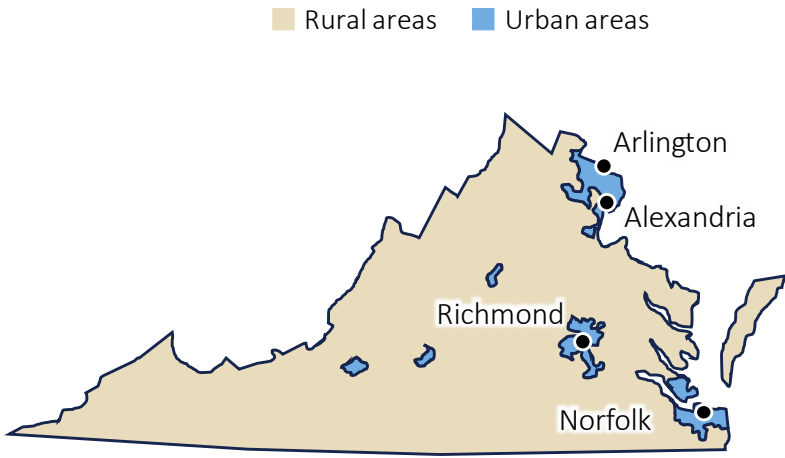
State demographics

	State Total	Urban	Rural
Population	8,001,024	6,887,509	1,113,515
White, non-Hispanic	64.8%	62.5%	79.1%
African American	19.0%	19.6%	15.9%
Native American	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%
Asian American	5.5%	6.3%	0.5%
Hispanic (of any race)	7.9%	8.7%	3.0%

*Rural population consists of all residents living outside of a census-designated metropolitan area.

Virginia urbanization map

■ Rural areas   ■ Urban areas

Analysis

- Northern Virginia is vital for both candidates as nearly 30% of the state's population resides on the Virginia side of the Washington, D.C. metro area. This area is extremely diverse and has largely rejected Donald Trump since the state's Super Tuesday primaries. (The region largely supported Rubio.)

- It is essential for Trump to draw massive turnout among the state's rural White population to stand a chance

- If Clinton can mobilize the state's substantial rural African American population, she may be able to definitively lock up Virginia in her favor

Sources: 2010 U.S. Census, National Journal Research.

Iowa will likely be decided by cultural values, not demographics

State demographics

	State Total	Urban	Rural
Population	3,046,355	1,721,714	1,324,641
White, non-Hispanic	88.7%	85.9%	92.3%
African American	2.9%	4.2%	1.1%
Native American	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
Asian American	1.7%	2.5%	0.8%
Hispanic (of any race)	5.0%	5.3%	4.6%

*Rural population consists of all residents living outside of a census-designated metropolitan area.

Iowa urbanization map

■ Rural areas   ■ Urban areas

Waterloo

Des Moines

Davenport

Analysis

- With a high percentage of rural voters and a lower share of minorities, Iowa should theoretically be safe for Trump; however, the two candidates have polled close to one another throughout the summer

- Iowa historically has high turnout in elections (among the top 5 states with 67% in 2012) so both candidates have less room to control the outcome through strategies that work in many other states. Instead, each candidate has to meaningfully appeal to the values of Iowans to persuade voters

Sources: 2010 U.S. Census, National Journal Research.