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## United States of America

# 'Forgotten' white vote powers Trump to victory

Campaign unleashed previously unseen level of vitriol in US politics



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NOVEMBER 9, 2016 by: **Shawn Donnan** in Washington

For months [Donald Trump \(http://next.ft.com/content/1f58d530-a5a9-11e6-8898-79a99e2a4de6\)](http://next.ft.com/content/1f58d530-a5a9-11e6-8898-79a99e2a4de6) has dismissed polls and experts and proclaimed that he was at the head of a movement of disaffected voters that would upend conventional political wisdom and kick out the Washington establishment.

The New York businessman was proved right on Tuesday as he rode a wave of anger with economic change, dogwhistle racial politics and pledges to crack down on immigration and rip up trade agreements to a stunning upset win.

And one demographic above all took him there: the once solidly Democratic blue-collar white voters that may now be known as Trump Democrats. "The forgotten men and

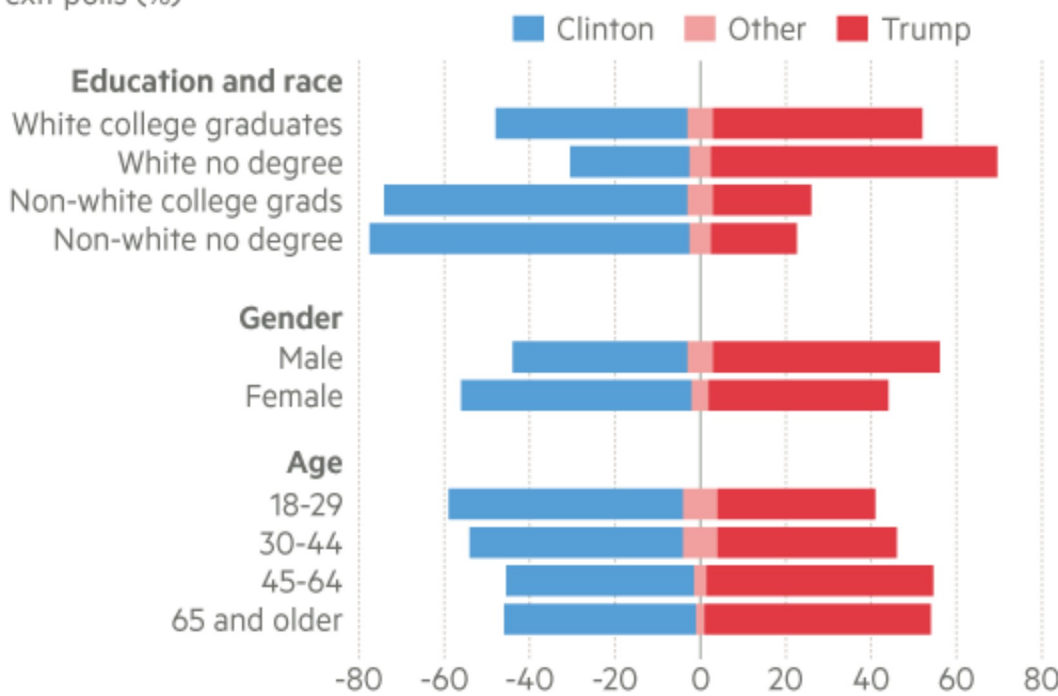
women of our country will be forgotten no longer,” the tycoon declared in his victory speech.

According to exit polls, across the US Mr Trump carried the white voters who made up 70 per cent of the electorate by a 58:37 margin over Hillary Clinton.

Among white voters without a university degree that margin grew to 67:28. But even among white voters with a degree, exit polls showed him carrying the day 49:45, despite surveys that for months had predicted they would be part of a demographic firewall benefiting Mrs Clinton.

### Education and race reveal a divided nation

CNN exit polls (%)



Source: CNN exit polls

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“This was a whitelash. This was a whitelash against a changing country,” said Van Jones, a black activist and CNN commentator. “It was a whitelash against a black president, in part. And that’s the part where the pain comes.”

Tuesday’s scream of the angry white voter was heard loudest in rust belt states such as Ohio and Indiana and threw into play previous Democratic strongholds such as Michigan and Pennsylvania — neither of which had voted for a Republican presidential nominee since 1988.

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This was coupled with a decline in turnout for the Democratic candidate compared with the

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The Republican's rhetoric has helped him in Ohio, but the state is not the bellwether it once was

previous two elections. Mrs Clinton is sitting just shy of 60m votes, with a narrow 150,000 lead over Mr Trump. However, Mr Obama received 65.9m votes in 2012 and 69.5m votes in 2008. Mr Trump's total vote is in line with what John McCain received in 2008 and about 1m below what Mitt Romney received in 2012. However, the overall turnout figure could shift depending on how many provisional and mail-in ballots are still to be counted.

Certain counties across the mid-west told the story. Macomb County, Michigan - where many auto workers felt the brunt of America's manufacturing woes - flipped from a place that Mr Obama carried with 17,000 more votes than Mr Romney in 2012 to a near 50,000 vote victory by Mr Trump over Mrs Clinton. Elsewhere, voter turnout in urban areas such as Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, which voted heavily Democrat, dived by as much as 25 per cent and proved fatal to the Clinton camp.

Mr Trump's campaign and his appeal to white voters had an ugly side, unleashing a previously unseen level of vitriol in American politics with his calls to prosecute his Democratic rival provoking chants of "lock her up!" at his rallies.

He was also criticised widely for courting the vote of white nationalists and the "alt-right" movement that has taken anti-semitic and racial bullying to [new levels](http://next.ft.com/content/c0052e1e-a14b-11e6-86d5-4e36b35c3550) (<http://next.ft.com/content/c0052e1e-a14b-11e6-86d5-4e36b35c3550>) on social media.

But his economic message, filled with calls to bring back jobs from overseas and impose new tariffs on imports from China and Mexico, was tailored for the aftermath of crisis. And by appealing to disenchanted white voters and puncturing Democratic expectations of an easy victory in states such as Michigan, the Republican demolished what Mrs Clinton had hoped would be a "blue wall".

In those states Mr Trump pledged to crack down on illegal immigration and bring back industrial jobs that through automation or trade have vanished in recent decades. That message resonated with voters, who were fed up with the decline that they said they saw around them. It also resonated most, analyses showed, in counties where the population was most heavily white.

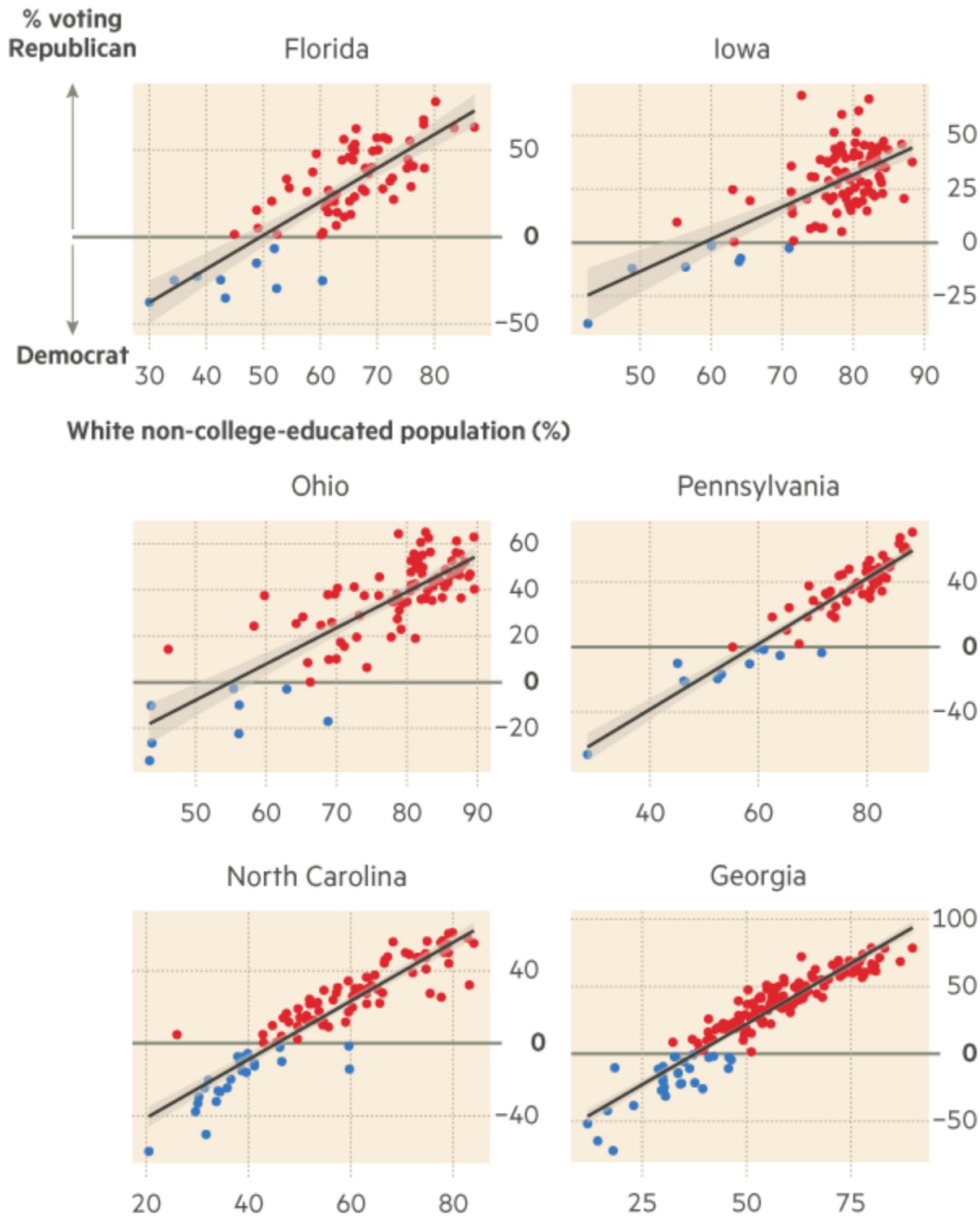
Black and Hispanic voters voted overwhelmingly for Mrs Clinton although results also showed that pre-election reports of a surge in Latino turnout might have been wishful

thinking by Democrats.

But exit polls also showed a country divided along other lines and with Mr Trump's victory coming in defiance of broader demographic trends. Among women Mrs Clinton, who was vying to become the US's first female president, won 54:42.

# The white non-college-educated vote powered Trump to victory

Each dot ● represents one county



FT graphic: Billy Ehrenberg-Shannon; John Burn-Murdoch; Joanna S Kao  
Sources: American Community Survey; Secretary of State websites

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The former secretary of state also won 52:43 among university graduates, who turned out in high numbers and made up a majority of the electorate. Among those with postgraduate degrees she did even better, winning those voters 58:37, exit polls showed.

Mr Trump ran as a champion of the country's working class, but his support lay predominantly with those earning more than the country's \$56,000 median income. Mrs Clinton won 52:41 among voters earning less than \$50,000 a year, according to exit polls. Mr Trump won narrowly among all income groups above that.

This is the last gasp of the type of voter that really believes in an America that doesn't exist any more

**David Cohen, political scientist**

As in the UK, where low turnout among the young contributed to the June vote to leave the EU, the US electorate was also divided by age, with Mr Trump carrying voters over 45 while Mrs Clinton won among those under 45.

“This is a huge blowback among older Americans, an older demographic that is

responding to change that they are not comfortable with,” said William Frey, an expert in political demographics at the Brookings Institution in Washington.

The problem with that, as well as Mr Trump's reliance on white voters, is that his victory was at odds with the way the country is moving, Mr Frey said. The US is becoming steadily more diverse and more educated so younger voters, when they turn out are becoming an increasingly powerful political force.

This time that force was not enough to stop Mr Trump's victory. But “they will be very energised four years from now”, Mr Frey said. “They are young and they are going to be better organised next time.”

“What you saw [Tuesday] is the revenge of the angry white working class voter, but I think this really will be the last gasp of the angry white male,” said David Cohen, a political scientist at the University of Akron in Ohio.

He was able to expand his coalition to many other people

**John Green, Bliss Institute**

“Trump represents a throwback to the 1950s” — a time when the Midwest was a beacon of affluence for many working class whites with high-paying factory jobs, Mr Cohen said. “But I think this is the last gasp of the type of voter that really believes in an America that doesn't

exist any more. Even four years from now, America will be a very different country, a more diverse country.”

John Green, head of the Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron in Ohio said: “If only angry white males had voted for Trump, then Hillary Clinton would have won. This is not just or even mainly about demographics. He was able to expand his coalition to many other people, it’s not as diverse as the country but ideologically and in terms of issues, it’s really diverse.

“How does he take this diverse coalition that only agrees on one thing — that politics isn’t working — and make politics work for them? That will present some real challenges to a Trump presidency.”

*Additional reporting by Arash Massoudi*

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