

Poor red states and rich blue states

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Outline

The puzzle

The end of class voting?

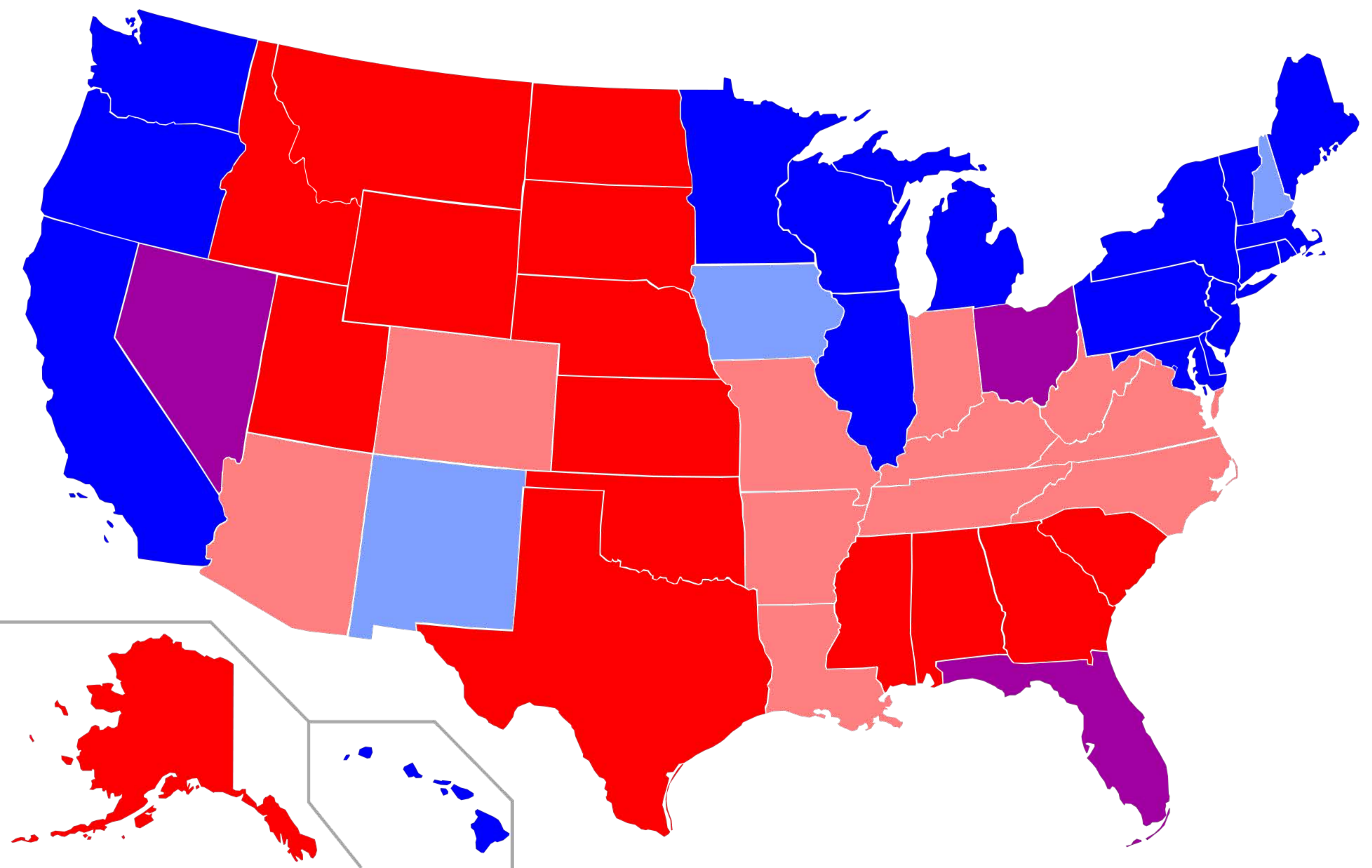
The puzzle

Red states and blue states

Since the mid-1990s, a large number of states have been reliably red or blue in presidential elections

Red: south, Indiana, plains and mountain states, Alaska

Blue: northeast, Illinois-Michigan-Wisconsin-Minnesota,
west coast, Hawaii



The puzzle

Blue states are, on average, much richer (GSP per capita) than red states

But how can that be, given that richer people tend to vote red (Republican) while poorer people tend to vote blue (Democratic)?

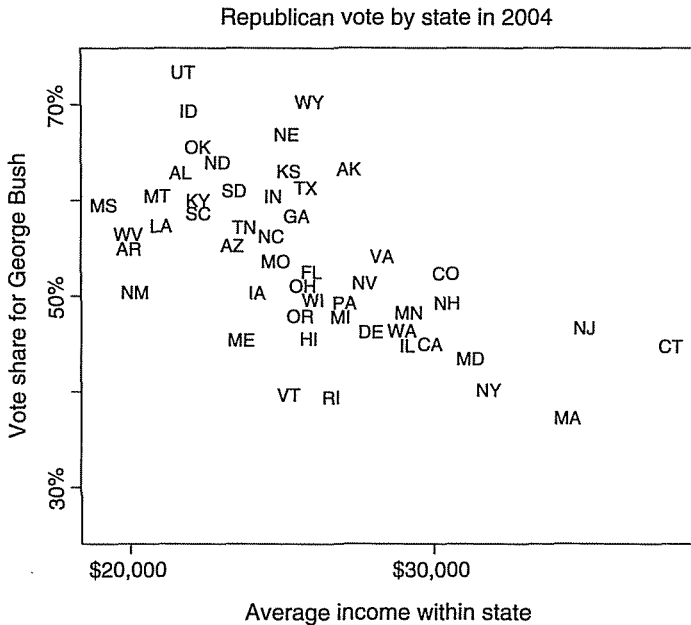


Figure 2.1: For each state, Bush's share of the two-party vote in 2004, plotted with the average income of people in the state, ordered from poorest (Mississippi) to richest (Connecticut). Republicans won the poor states and Democrats won the rich states. (Most of the states are above the 50% line, but Kerry won most of the larger states so that the national vote was close to evenly divided.) The red–blue map of the states won by each candidate in the 2004 election is shown in plate 1.

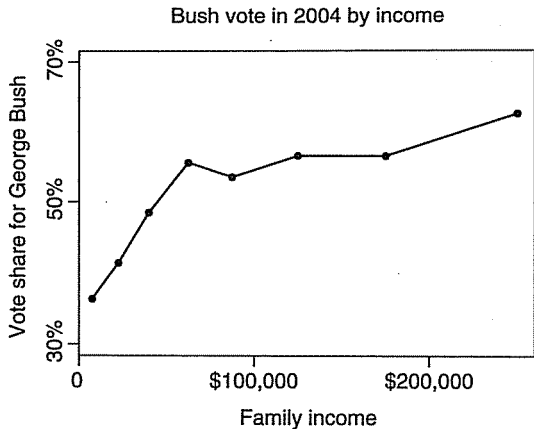


Figure 2.2: From exit-poll data, voting patterns by income. Despite all the talk of latte Democrats and NASCAR Republicans, Bush won among the rich voters and Kerry won in the lower-income brackets.

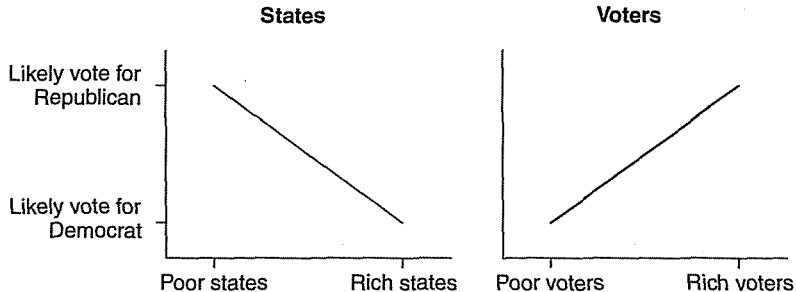


Figure 1.1: The red–blue paradox: Rich *states* vote for the Democrats, but rich *people* vote Republican.

The end of class voting?

The end of class voting?

One frequently-suggested possibility

Poor voters in traditionally conservative states now vote based on their views on social and cultural issues ("God, guns, and gays") rather than on their economic interests

So they vote Republican

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THE
NEGLECTED
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WHITE MEN
AND THE
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The end of class voting?

It turns out that the influence of income on voting has indeed weakened

But it's higher-income voters who now betray their (presumed) economic interests

Many upper-income voters — especially professionals — in blue states now vote based on their views on social-cultural issues

So they vote Democratic



red state

blue state



rich state

poor state



Why Americans Vote the Way They Do

Andrew Gelman

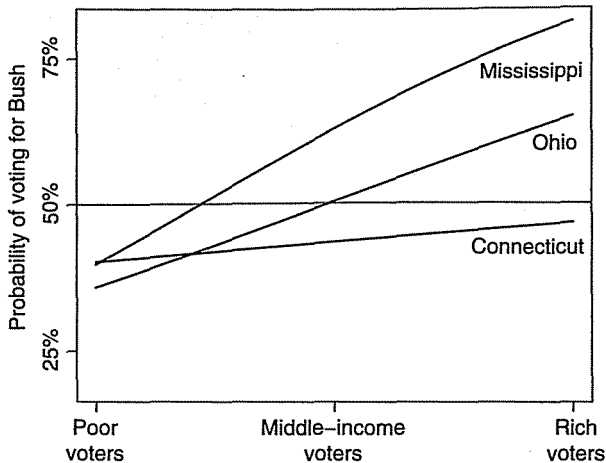


Figure 2.7: The resolution of the red–blue paradox and the introduction of a new puzzle. Within any state, Republican support is flat or increasing with income. At the same time, the Democrats do better in richer states. (The three lines show the estimated pattern of income and voting in 2004 in the poorest state, a middle-income state, and the richest state.) The new puzzle is that the relationship between income and vote choice is much stronger in poor states such as Mississippi than in rich states such as Connecticut.

Summary

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In the past four presidential elections, Republican candidates have consistently won one group of states while Democratic candidates have won another

The conventional view is that this is because low-income Americans in blue states continue to vote their economic interests (Democratic) while those in red states now vote their social-cultural preferences (Republican)

In fact, it's because high-income professionals in blue states have shifted to the Democrats on social-cultural grounds