The Election Process

From a Data Prospective

By Kimball Brace, President

Election Data Services, Inc. 2017

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

17-2361-A-003314

Who is Election Data Services, Inc.?

Since 1986, we've been on your wall.

Since 2010 you've needed a larger wall

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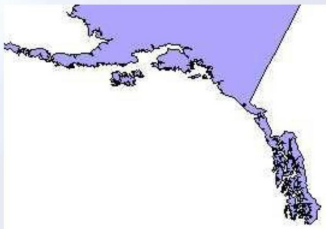
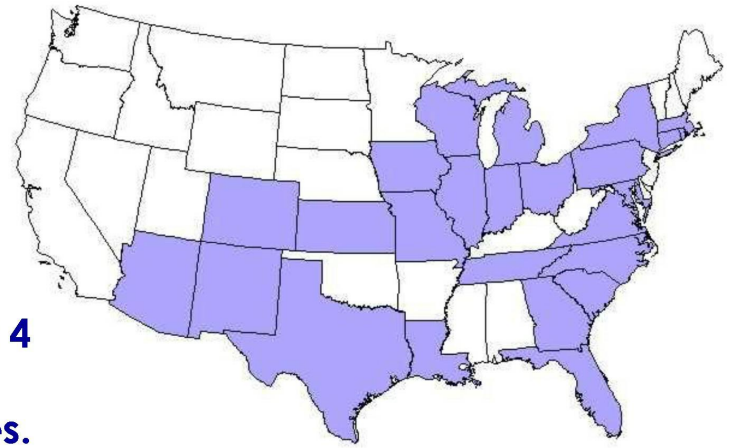
Who is Election Data Services, Inc.?



Since 1979,
more than half the nation has been helped by Election Data Services in redistricting



- **Compiled extensive databases of election results and census demographics for redistricting in more than half the nation over past 4 apportionments**
- **Testified in more than 75 court cases.**

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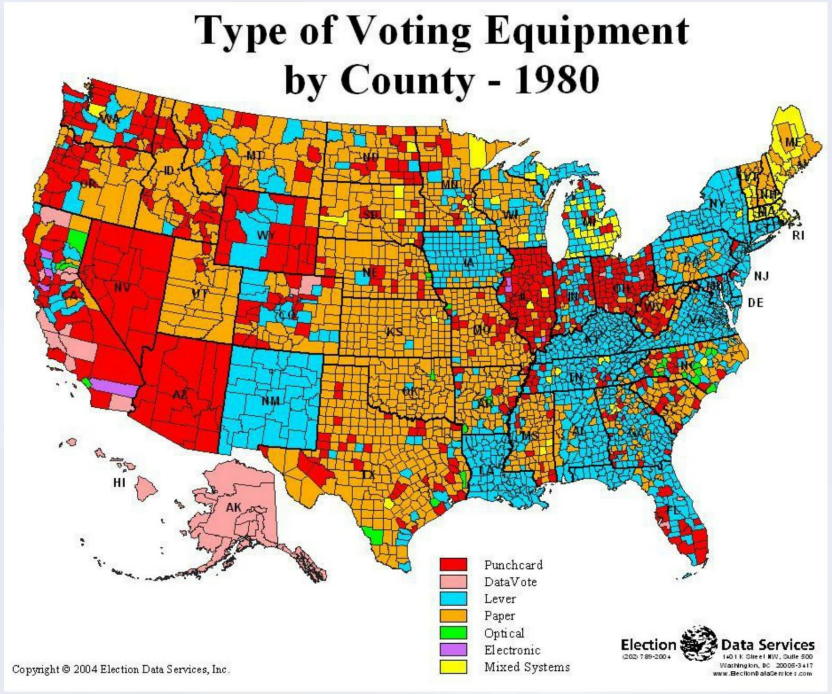
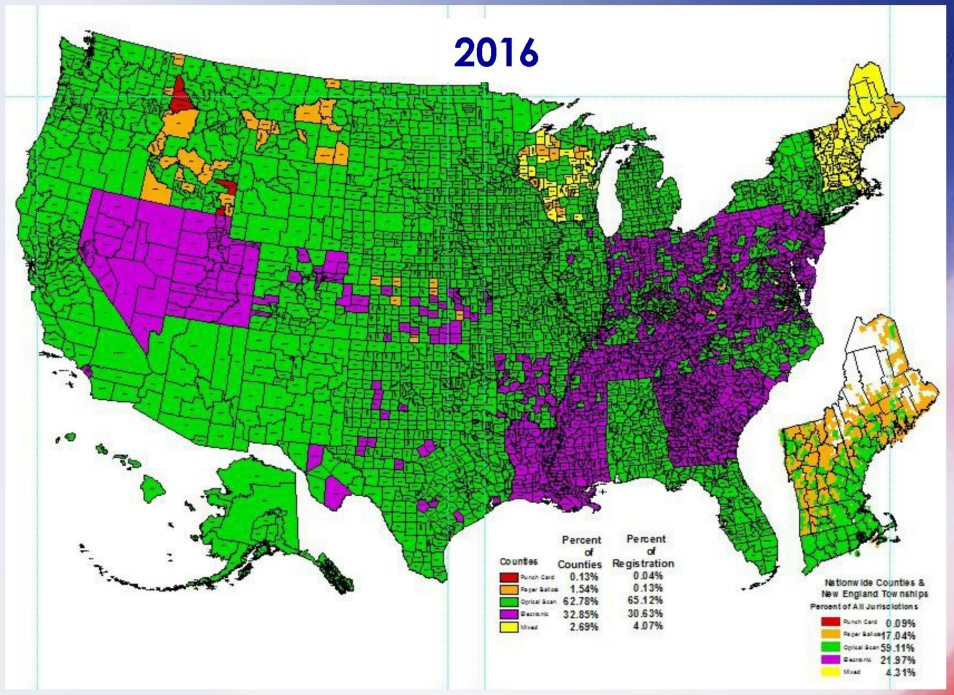
Who is Election Data Services, Inc.?

Since 1980, kept track of what voting equipment is used in every county of the nation for each election





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Who is Kim Brace?

That Old Guy Who's been in Election Administration for 42 Years

- Associate Editor of Dick Smolka's *Election Administration Reports*
- Consultant to Federal, State & Local Governments for Voting Equipment selection assistance
- Undertaken multiple projects on election administration over decades
- Worked with EAC on EAVS survey 2004 - 2008
- Provider of PRECIS – GIS for Precinct maintenance & Street File Creation
- Acting General Registrar for Prince William County, VA in 2013
- Member of County's Task Force on Long Lines
- Currently Chairman of County's Historical Commission
- Poll Worker since 2008

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Overview

1. Basic Election Administration Facts
2. Election Process from a Data Prospective
3. Registration Data
4. Turnout Data

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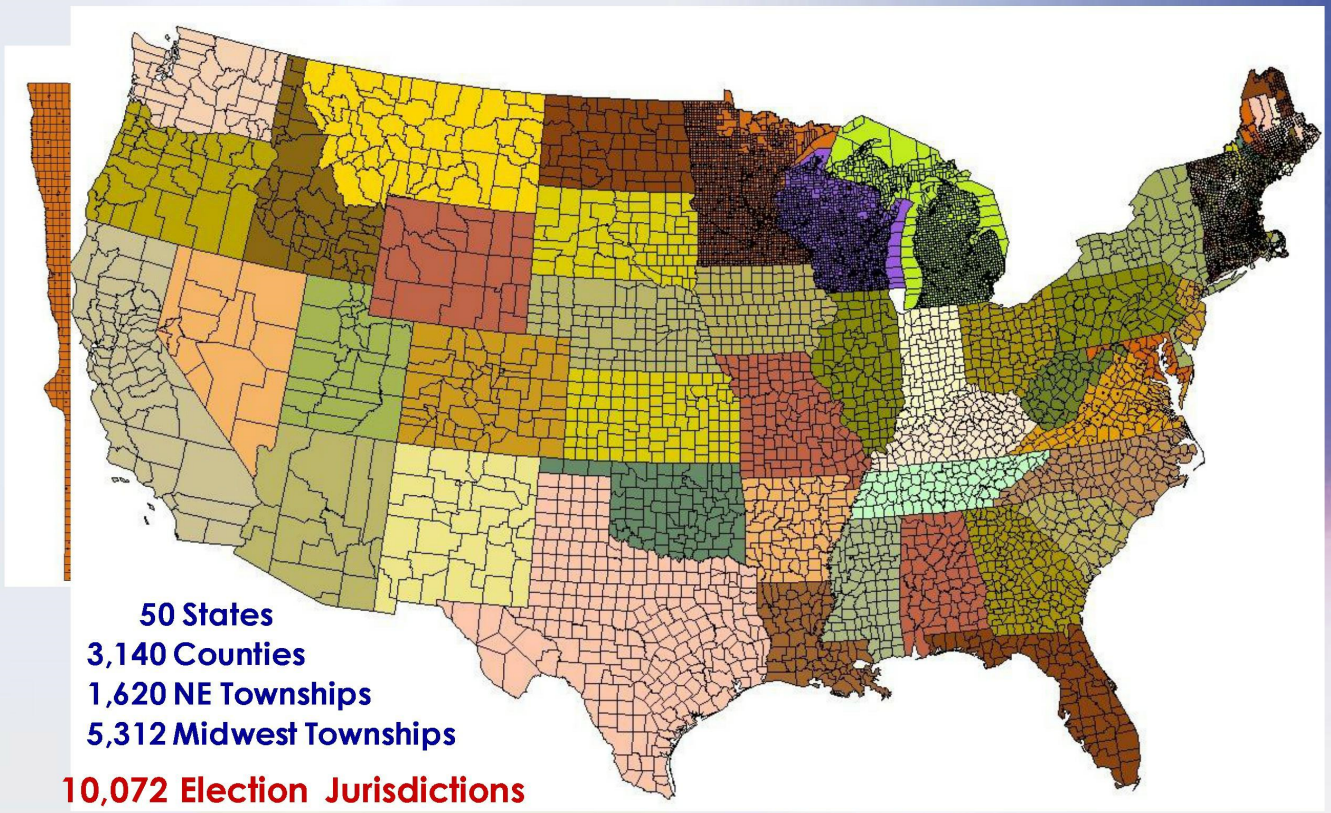
Basic Election Administration Facts

- Diversity is the underpinning of Elections.



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Basic Election Administration Facts

- Size is important to remember
  - Question: What is the mean size of jurisdictions in nation in terms of registration?
    - 1,492 registered voters
  - Over 1/3rd of nations' counties have fewer than 10,000 registered voters in them
  - Half of the nation's counties have less than 16,000 registered voters
  - Only 343 jurisdictions have more than 100,000 registered voters
  - Only 14 counties have more than 1 million voters
    - Smallest County: Loving County, Texas: 136 voters
    - Largest County: Los Angeles, CA: 3.9 million voters
      - Take 930 smallest counties to reach LA's total.

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Basic Election Administration Facts

Distribution of Election Jurisdiction's Size

Criteria	Jurisdictions	% of Juris.	Regis	% of Regis
Over 1 Million	15	0.15%	24,230,121	12.96%
500,000 - 999,999	40	0.40%	27,713,810	14.82%
250,000 - 499,999	87	0.86%	29,977,664	16.03%
100,000 - 249,999	198	1.97%	30,677,526	16.41%
50,000 - 99,999	320	3.18%	22,583,921	12.08%
25,000 - 49,999	545	5.41%	18,613,696	9.95%
10,000 - 24,999	1,212	12.03%	19,400,405	10.37%
5,000 - 9,999	963	9.56%	7,002,430	3.74%
1,000 - 4,999	2,212	21.96%	5,323,877	2.85%
Less than 1,000	4,479	44.47%	1,472,968	0.79%
TOTAL	10,071	100.00%	186,996,418	100.00%

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Basic Election Administration Facts

- Elections are run in small jurisdictions
  - With small staff
  - Many of which are part-time or performing other functions
- Reliance upon vendors for help

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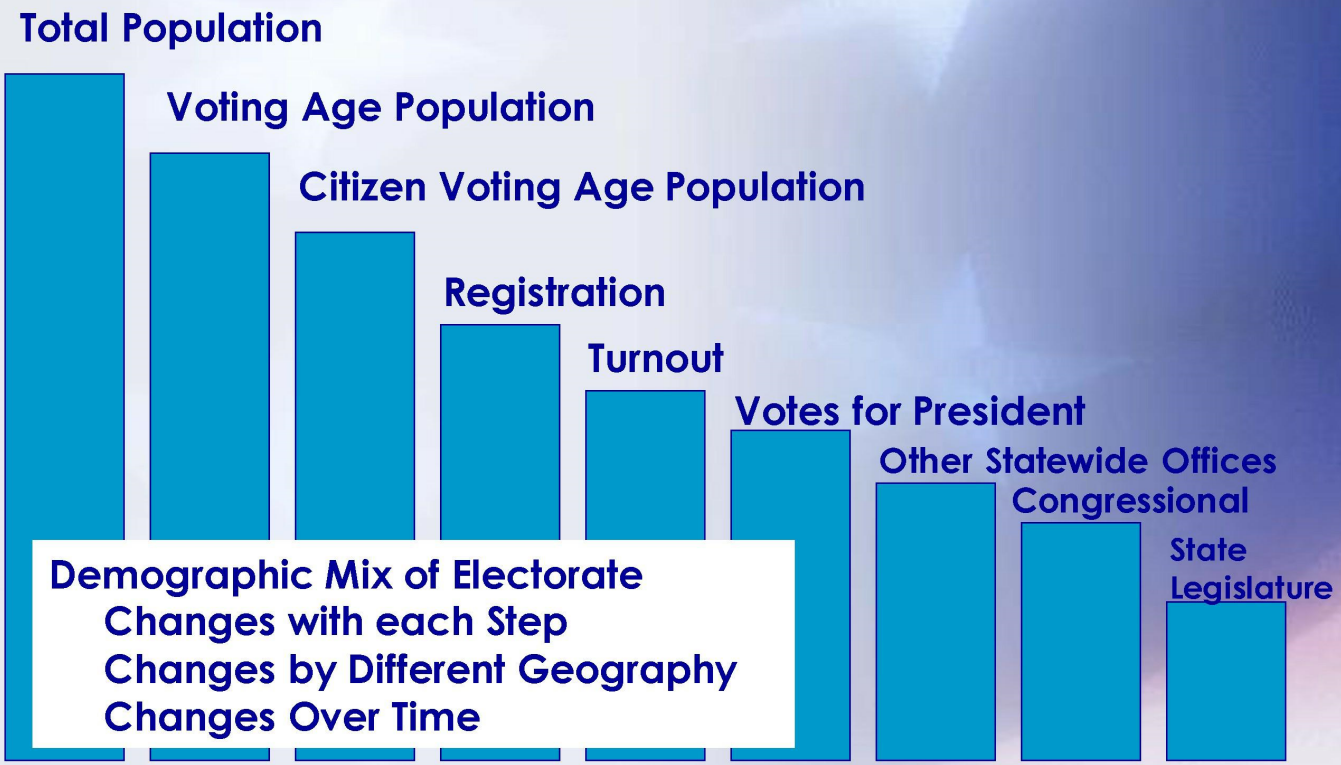
The Election Process –
From a data element prospective



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Voter Registration

Election Data Services has collected county level registration counts since 1980, state level back to 1948

Our data formed the bases for Congressional Research Services studies on Voter Registration and Turnout rates across the nation.
Author: Royce Crocker, CRS Government Division

2004 Contract with Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to compile their Election Administration Survey (EAVS) found:

- Not all states report registration the same way
  - 25 states & DC: "Active" voters only
  - 20 states: Combine "Active" & "In-actives"
  - 3 states (IA, NJ, OH): Different determination in each county
  - 2 states (ND, WI) used voting age population

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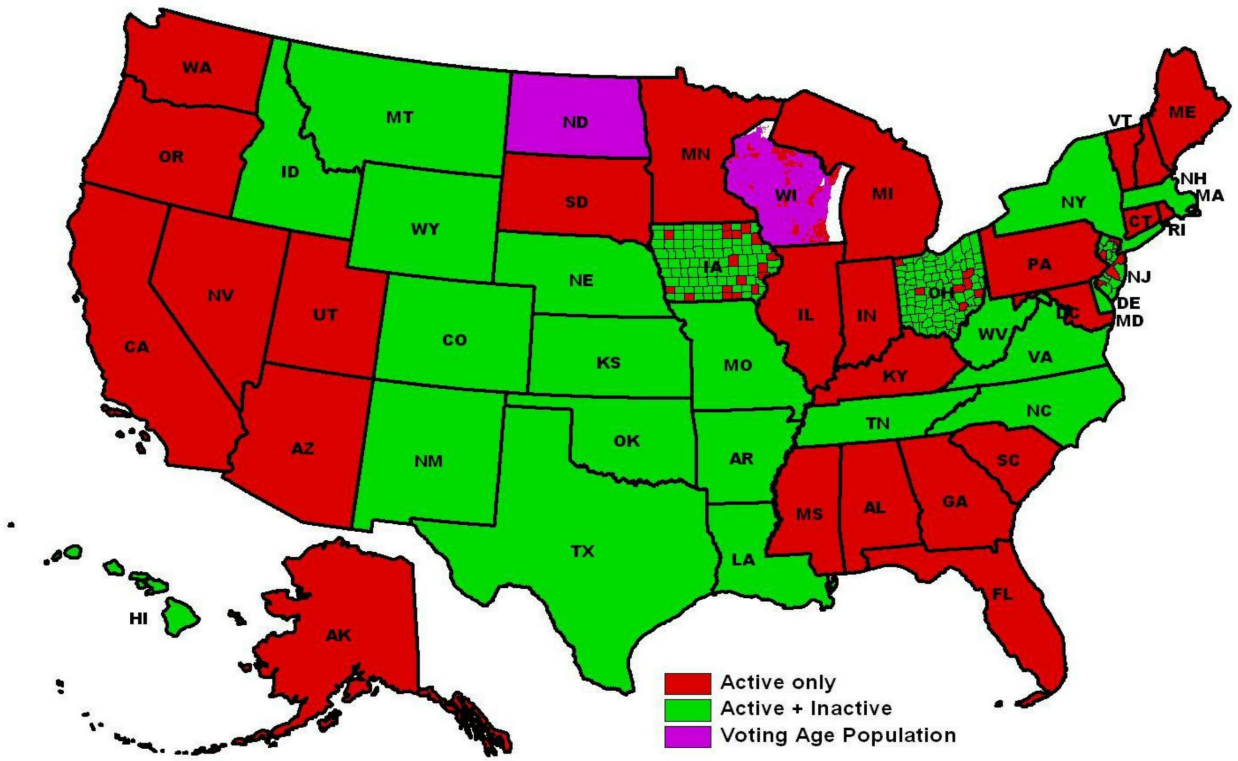
2004

Reported Registration



Results of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission
2004 Election Day Survey released 9/27/2005
Obtain the full report at www.eac.gov

Election Data Services

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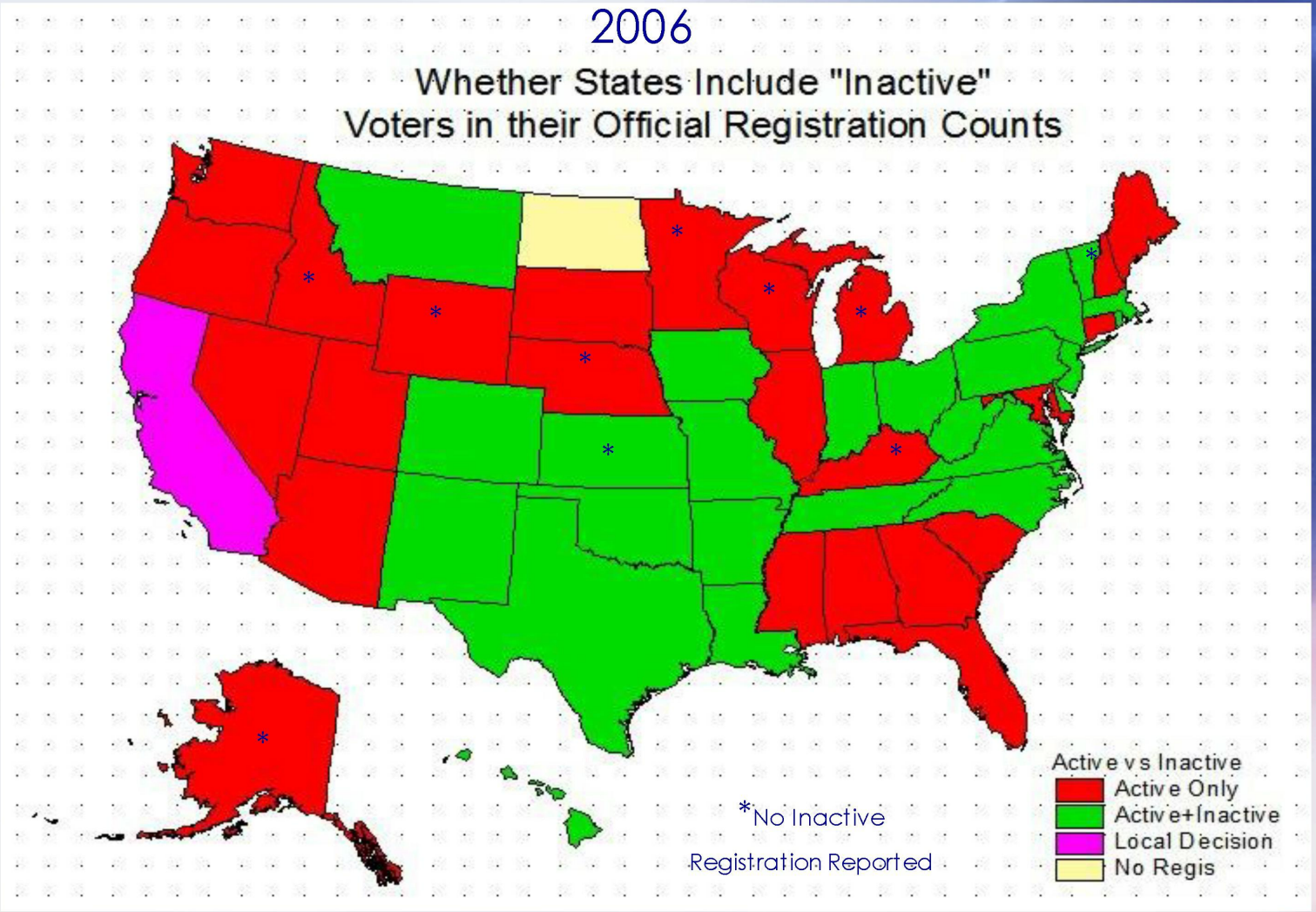

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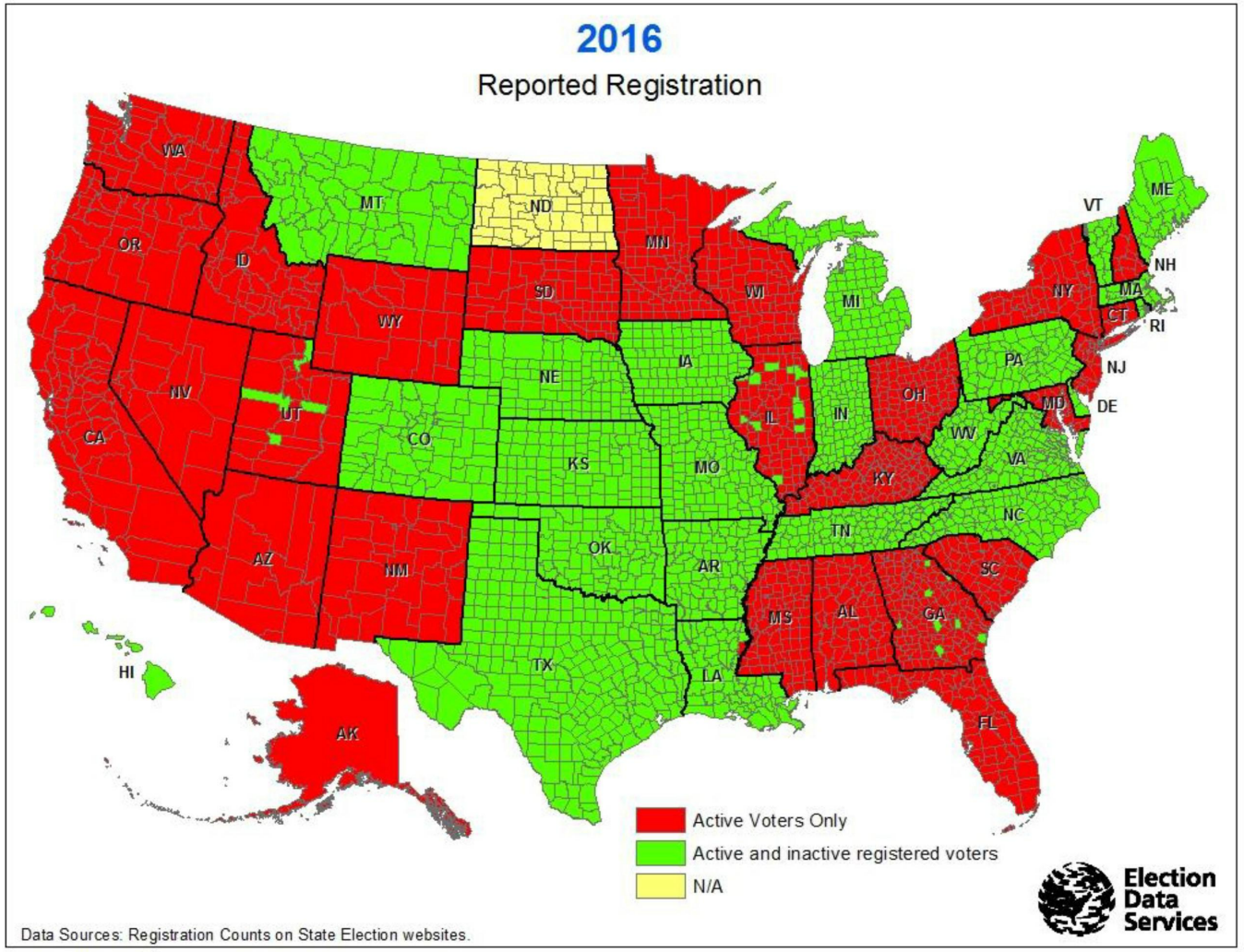
Registration

- 23 Active Only
- 23 Active & Inactive
- 3 Local Decision
- 1 Voting Age Population



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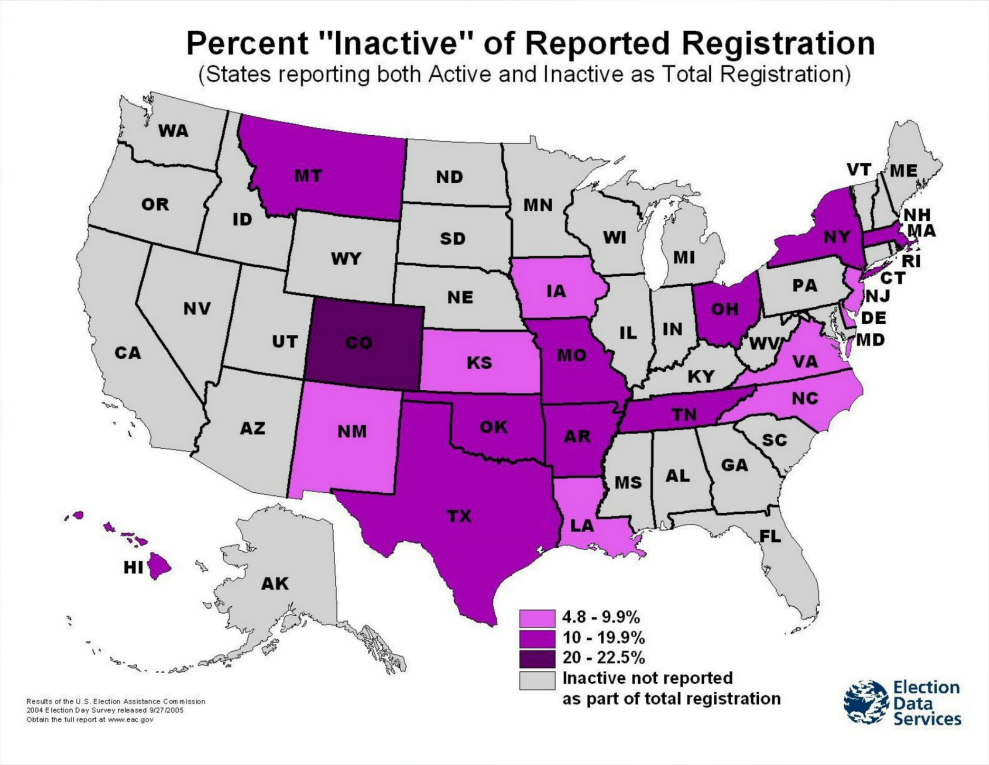
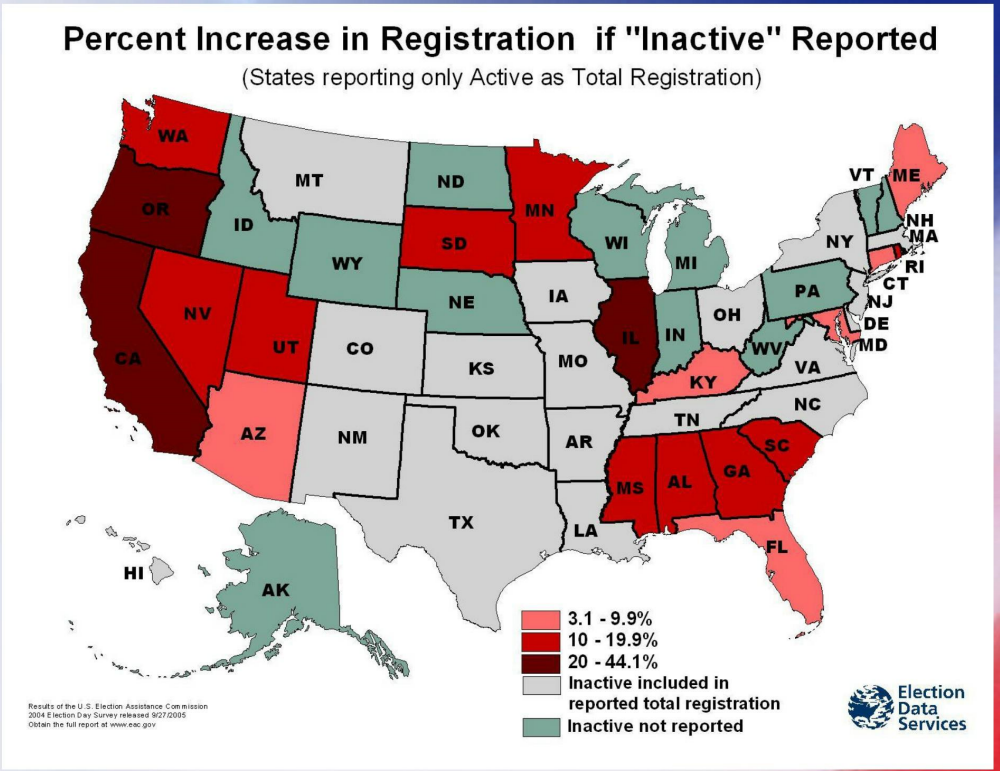
Impact of "In-actives" on registration file size 2004





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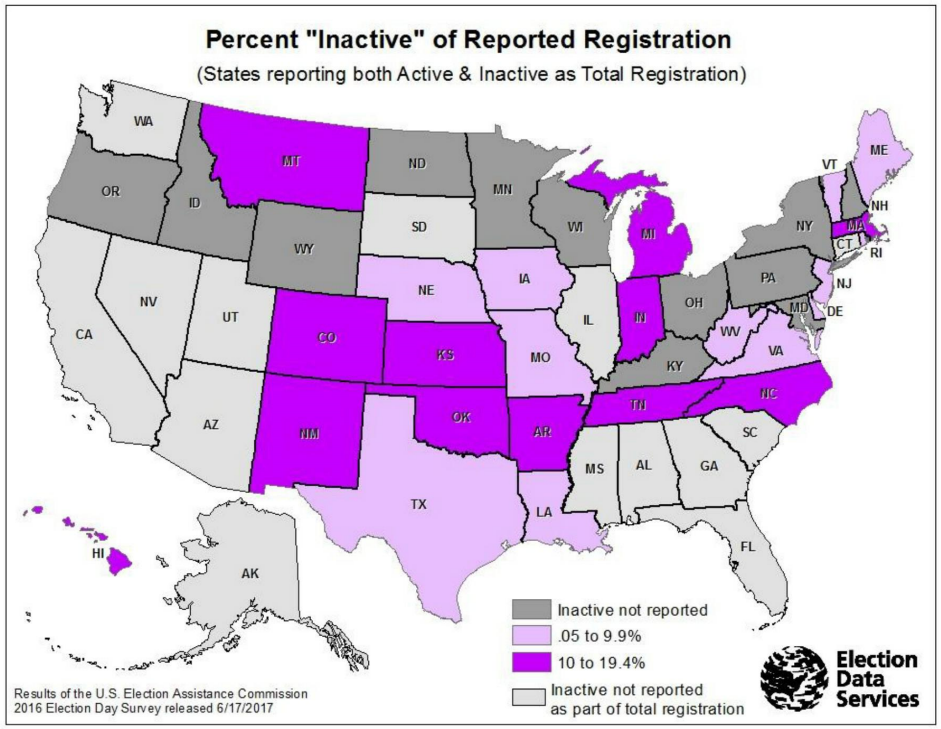
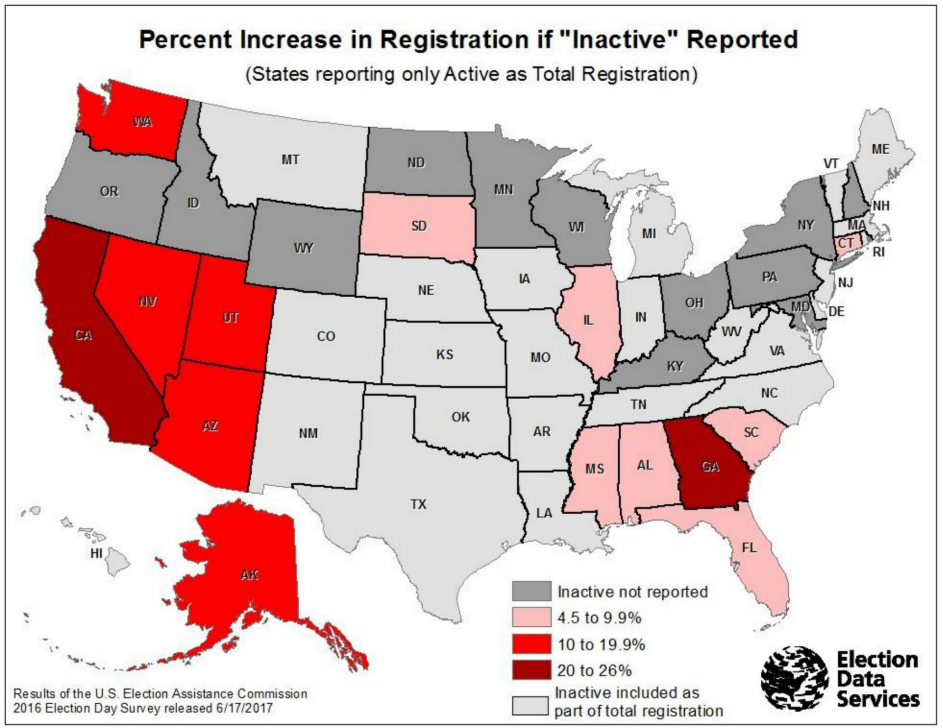
Impact of “In-actives” on registration file size 2016





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In-active is fail-safe

In-active voters can still show up & vote
How many do?

Most jurisdictions don't know. Not studied

Our research in Prince William County showed:
11% of In-active voters showed up & voted

Call upon all Election Administrators to determine in their jurisdictions

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Simple concept:

Compare
Voting Age Population
To
Registered Voters

Instinctively you shouldn't have more registered voters than you have voting age population

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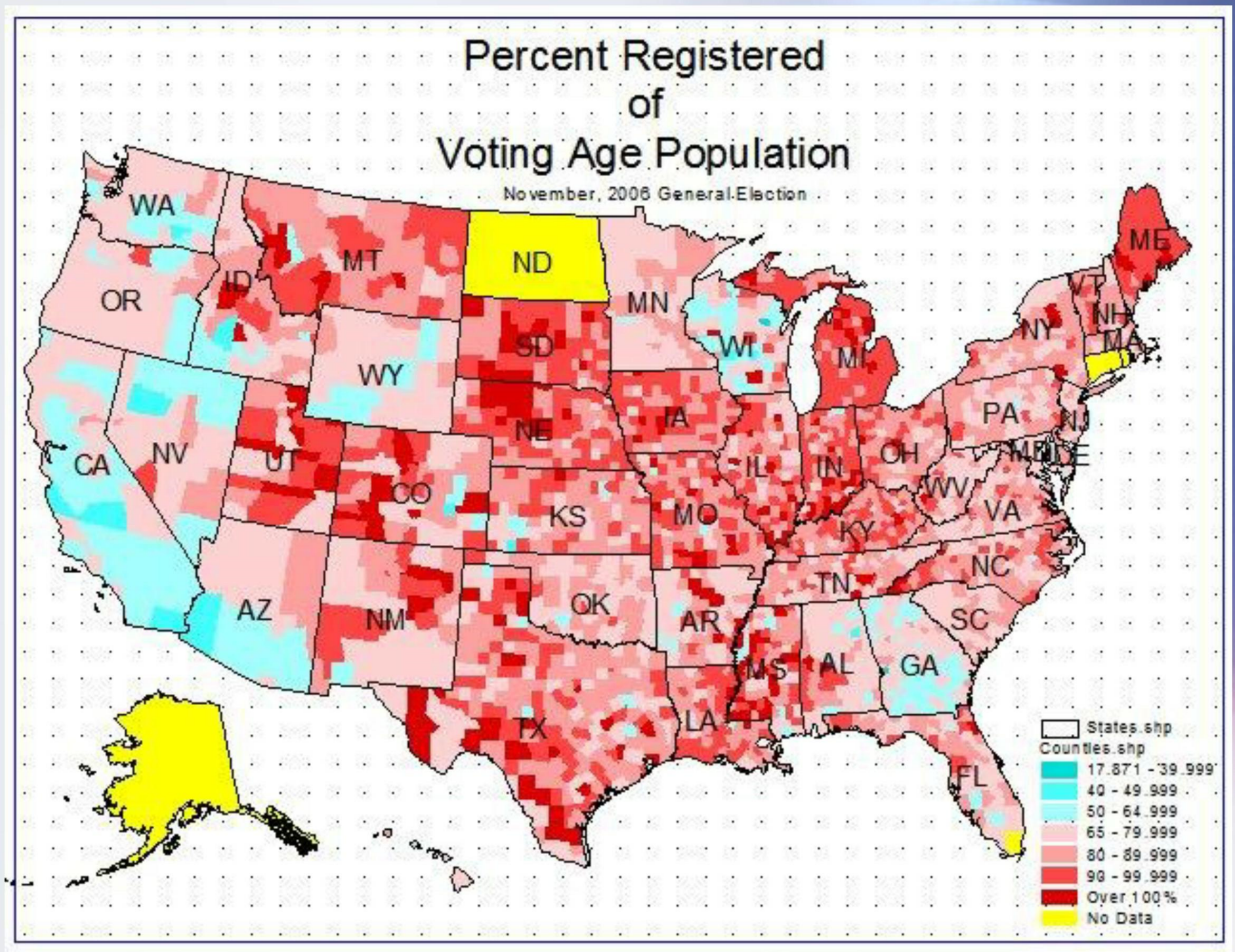
Registration of Voting Age Population



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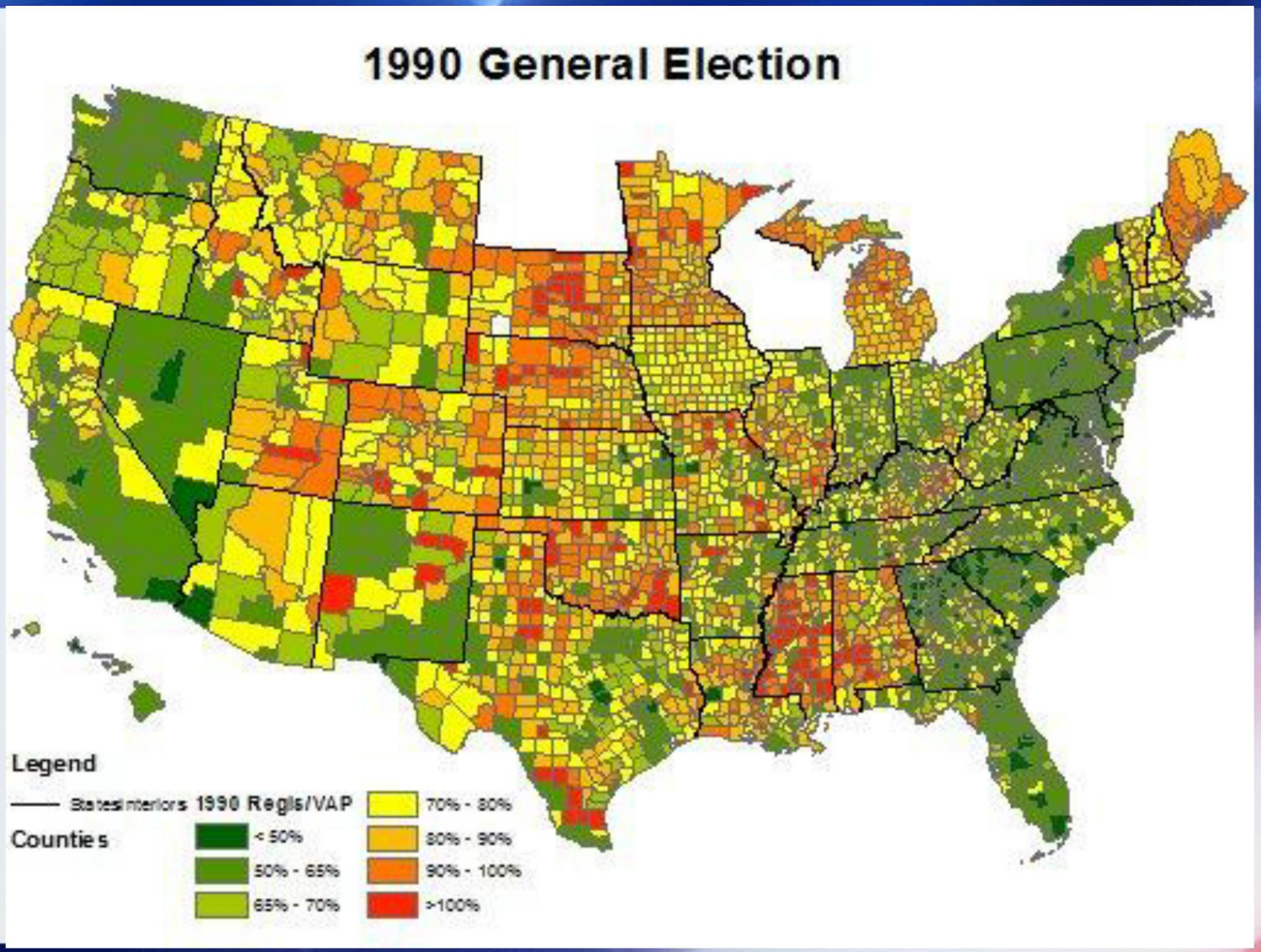

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Voting Age Population:

Date of VAP

Census conducted every 10 years

- Done in April of years ending in "0"
- Because elections are conducted in November, one has to "age" the data by 7 months

American Community Survey (ACS) conducted every year, but to get county level data you need to have five years of surveys to create a number, especially for small counties.

- Survey's are based on a "June" date
- One has to "age" the data another 5 months

ACS data lags in release dates

- 2016 numbers just came out

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Voting Age Population:

Accuracy of Census data

Even decennial census's have an error:

an over count and an undercount

But those error rates are announced as nationwide numbers, not by state and certainly not by county

ACS (because it is a "survey", not a 100% census) has what's called "Margins of Error" or MOEs.

These are generated for all levels of geography (like counties), but the smaller the populations, the larger the MOE. Therefore MOEs really affect smaller counties to a greater degree than larger counties.

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Voting Age Population:

Special Considerations in certain areas:

Some states allow 16 & 17 year-olds to register, but these are not in the VAP data from the Census Bureau

Large numbers of military & persons living overseas are not allocated to local jurisdictions by Census Bureau, even though they can register to vote there.

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Voting Age Population:

Citizenship

Not a question on the decennial census.

Only available from the ACS survey (with all those flaws already noted)

Traditionally come out after election

2016 numbers finally just released

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Registration:

Registration

Deadline for registration varies for November election

Reported registration carried on state's websites varies on whether they include or exclude "inactive".

This even varies by county in some states (as can be seen when comparing EAC results with state reported Regis for election.

Know there are some jurisdictions that have more "deadwood" in their registration rolls than others.

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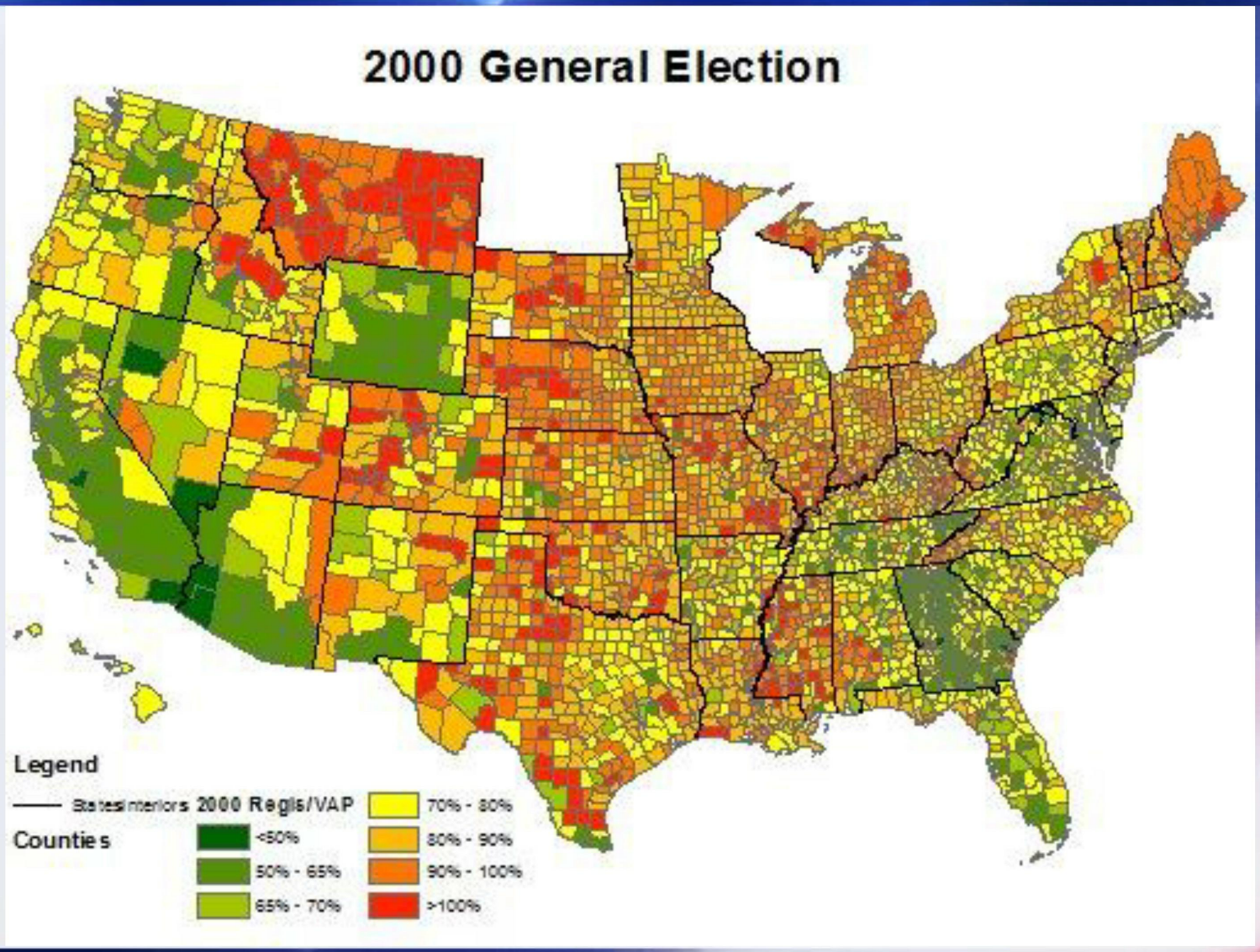

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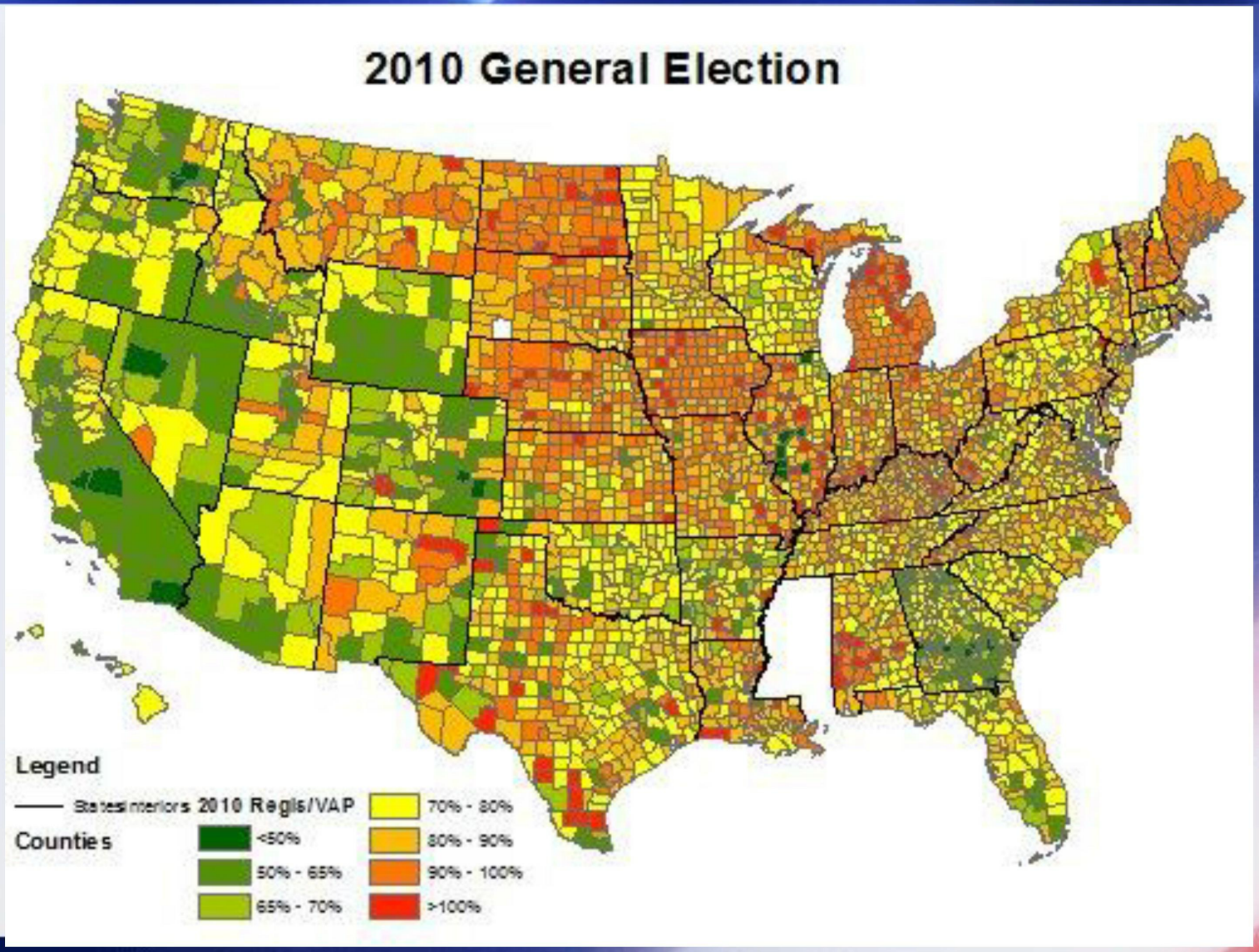

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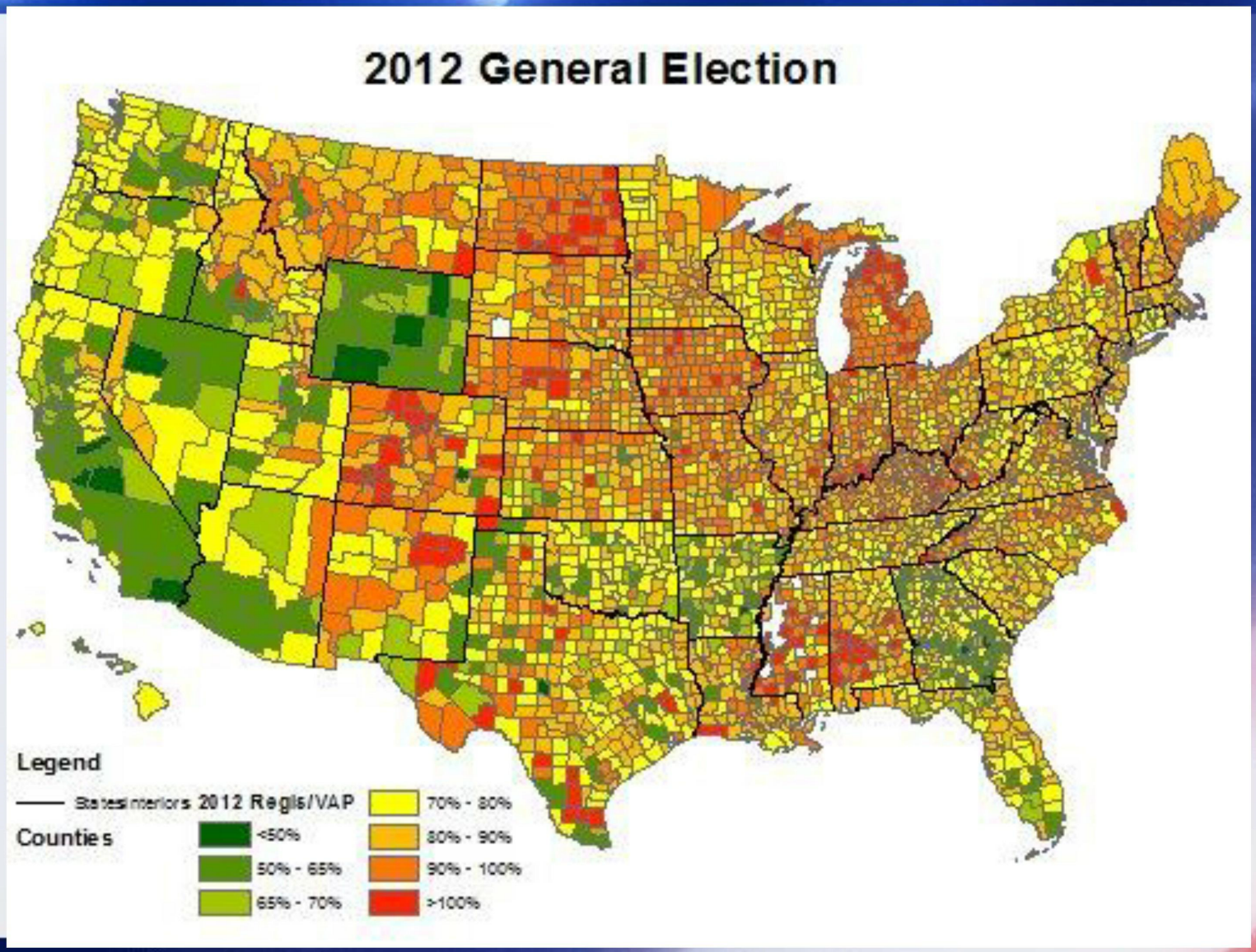

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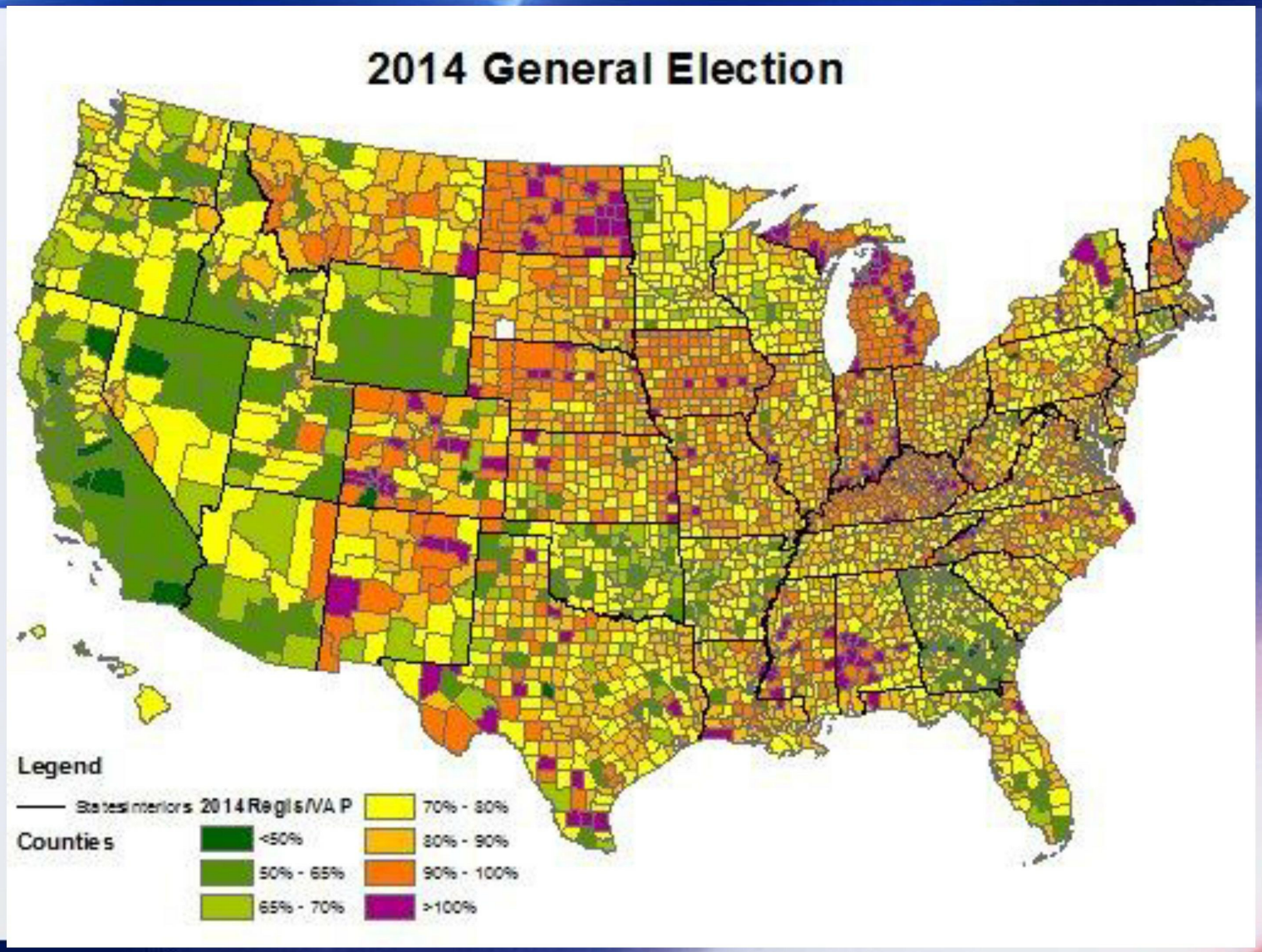

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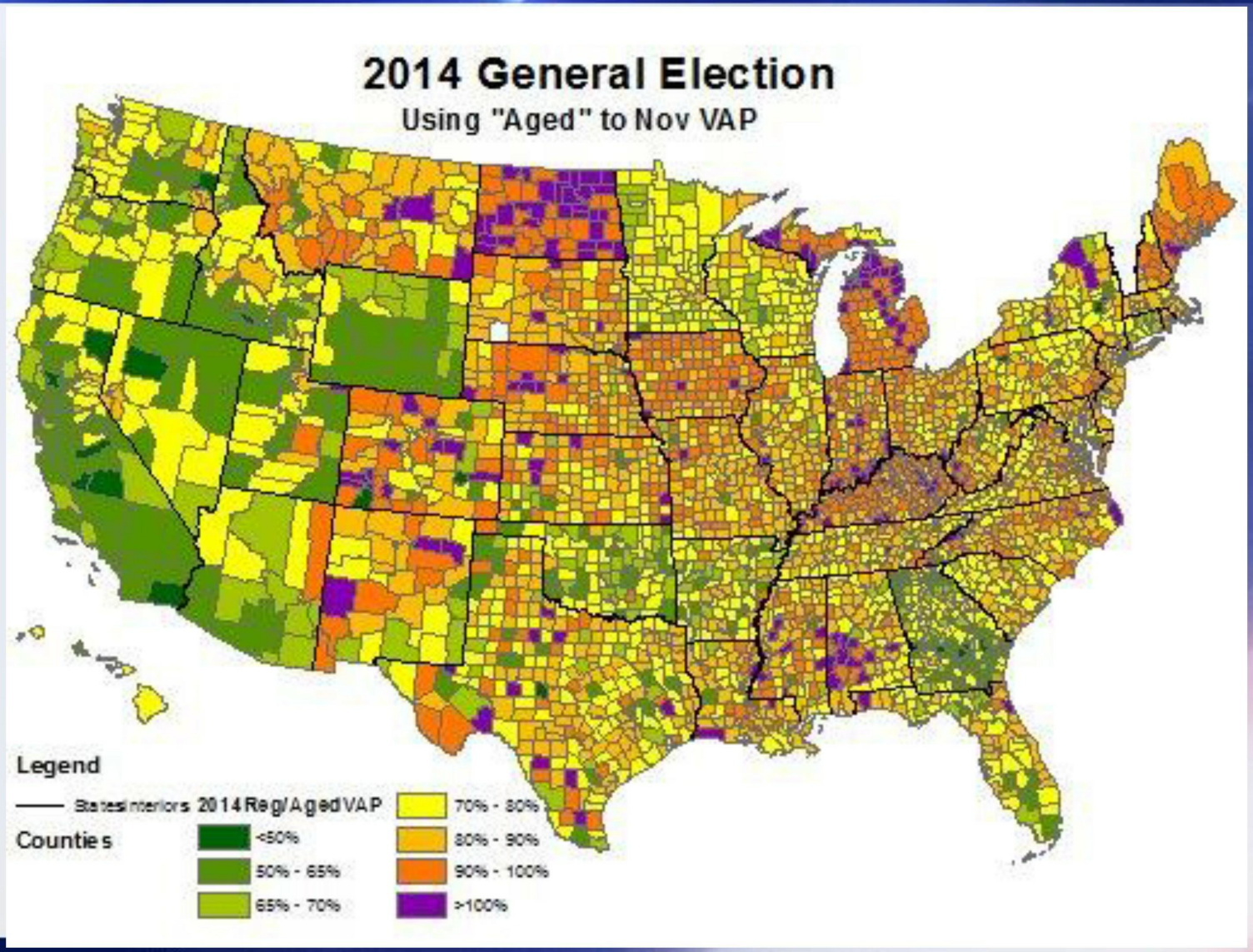

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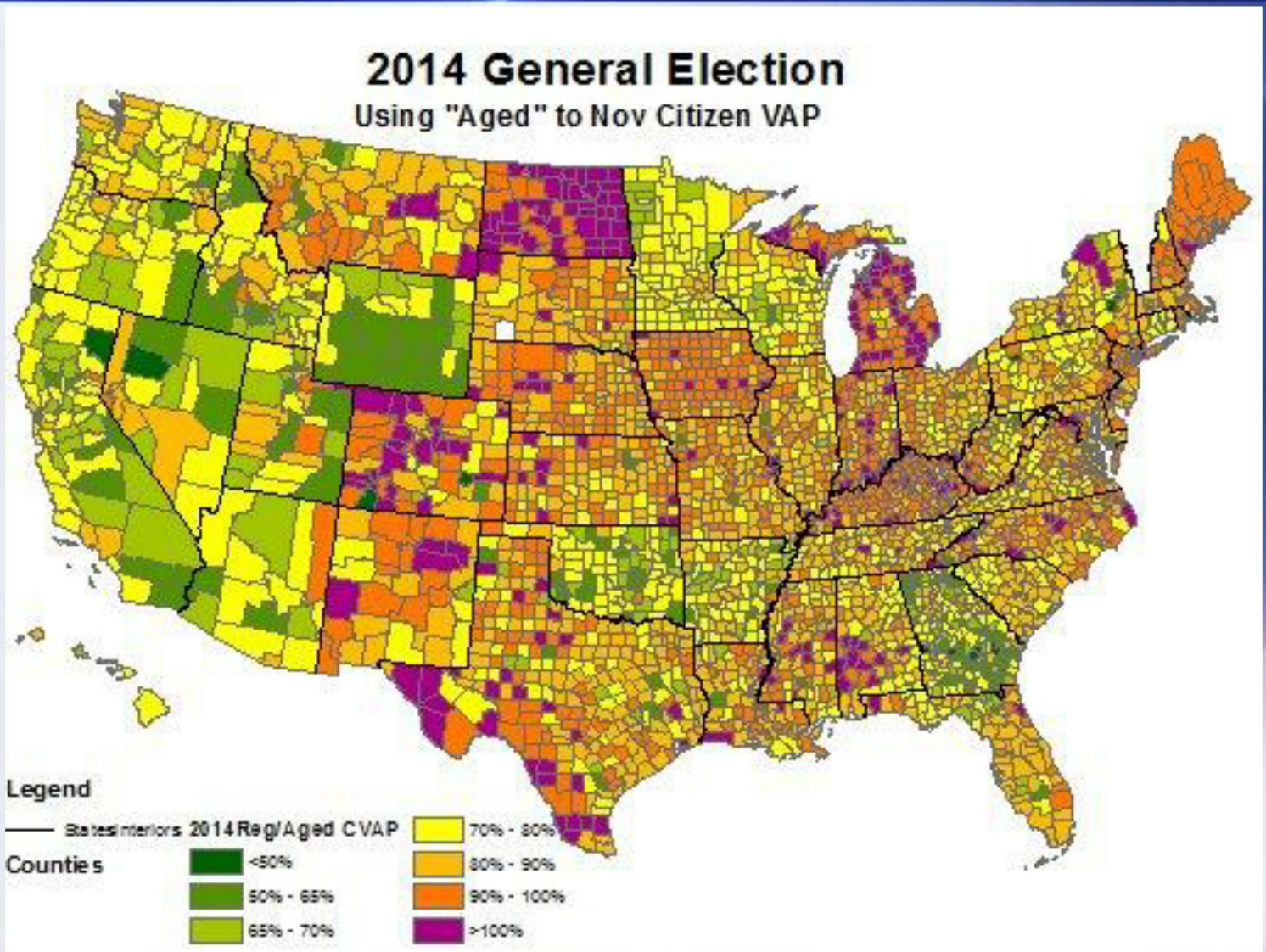

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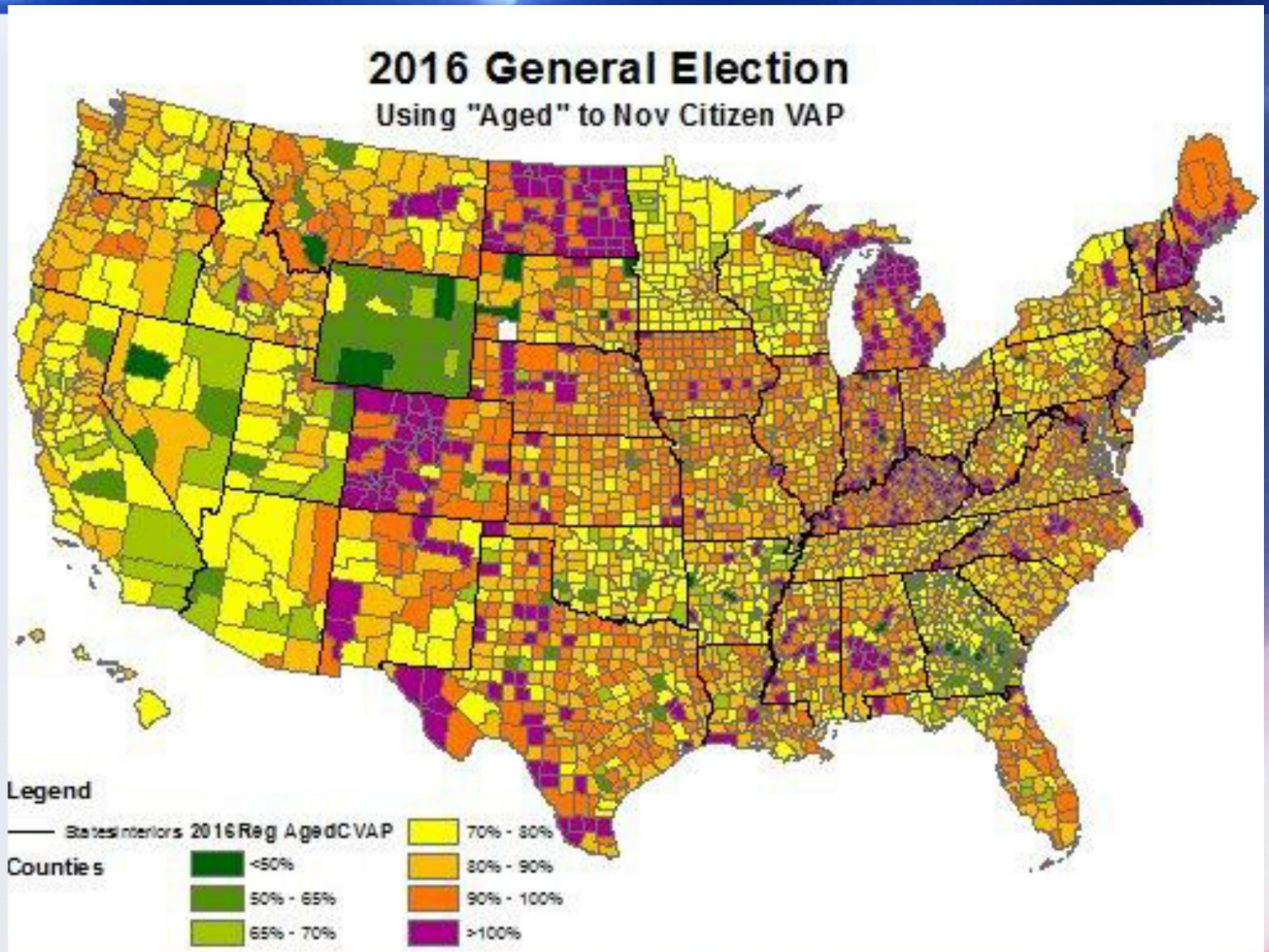

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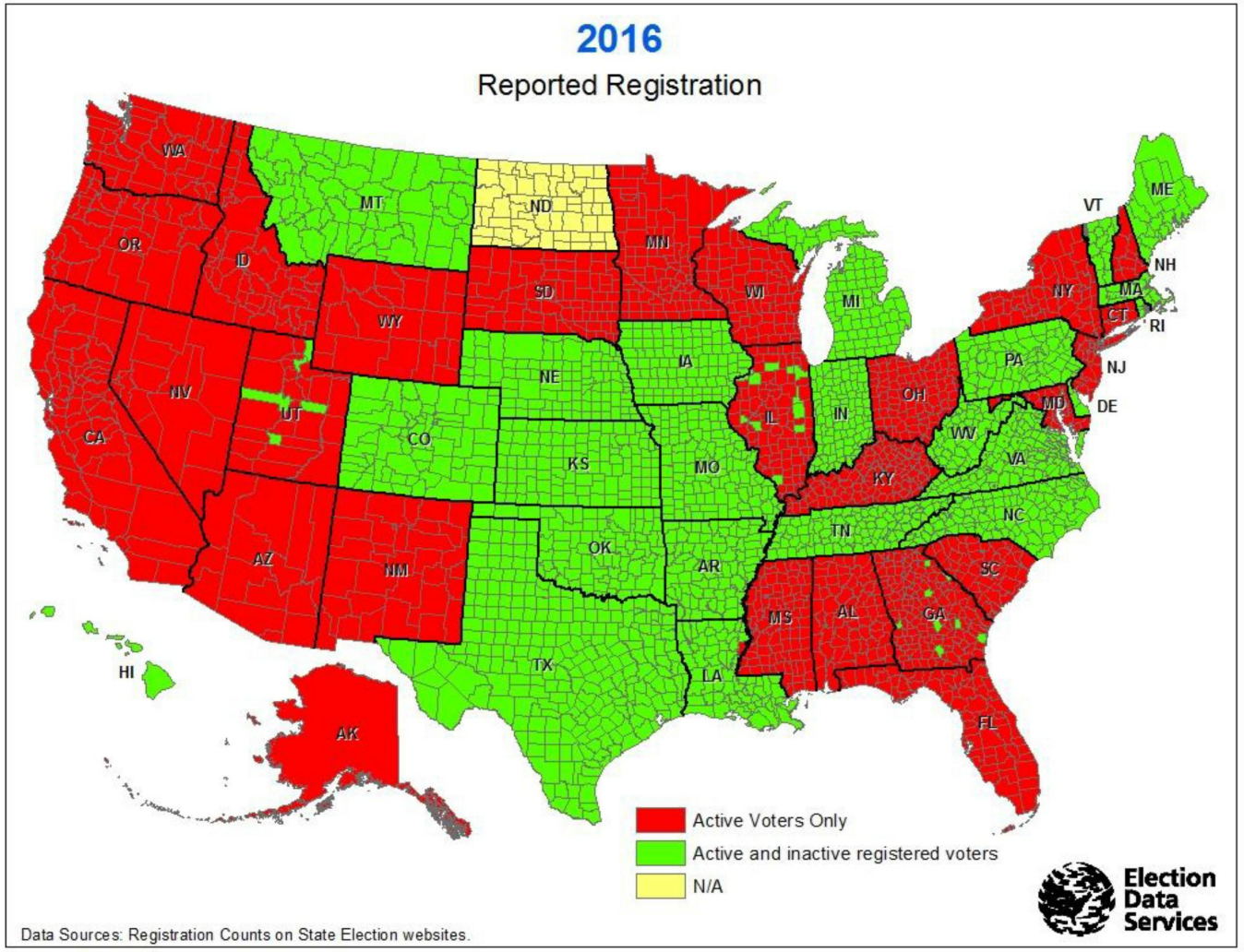

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Registration Summary

- Many more Jurisdictions open to questions on their data because there is no uniformity in definitions.

However:

- It is the smaller jurisdictions that are caught with the problem of small numbers
  - VAP or CVAP estimate of 1,300 compared to a registration of 1,360. **Which is right?**

  - Estimates Are Estimates

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Turn-out

What is Turn-out?

Different states say different things make it up.

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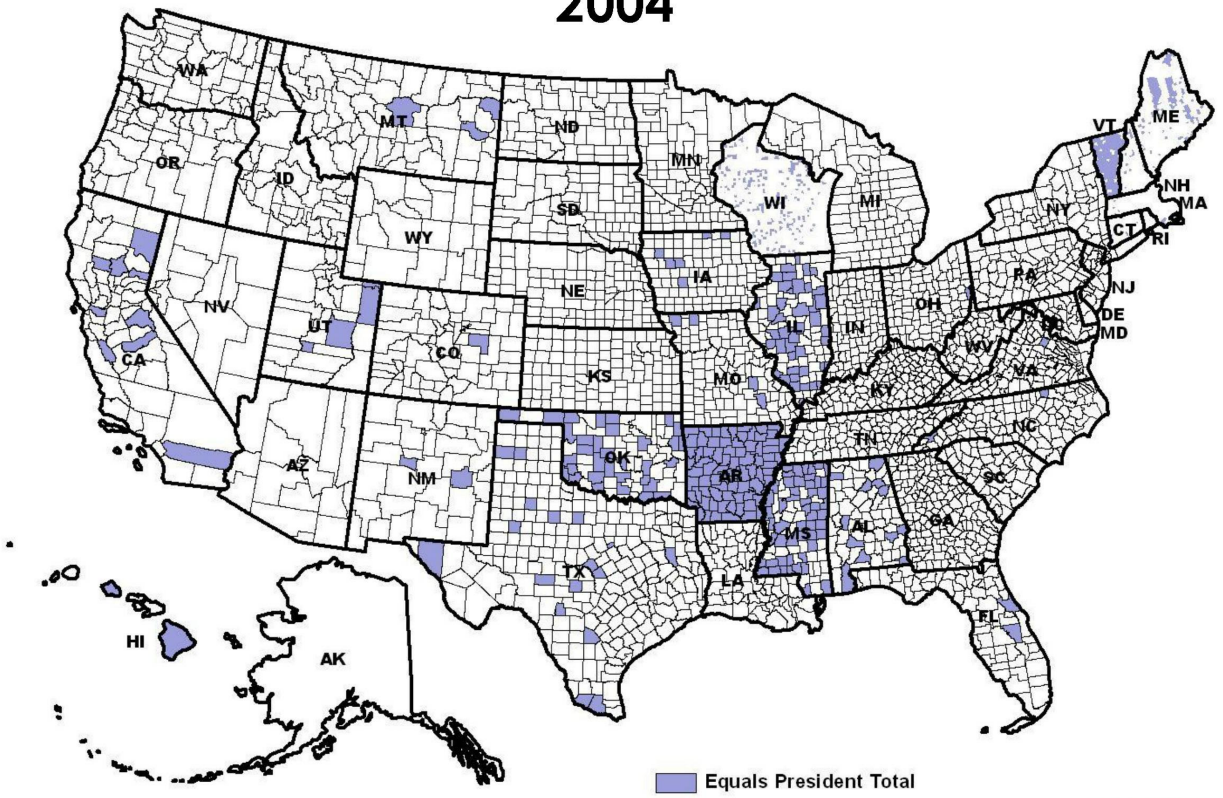
17-2361-A-003349

Turnout Equal to Vote for President 2004



Equals President Total

Results of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission
2004 Election Day Survey released 9/27/2005
Obtain the full report at www.eac.gov

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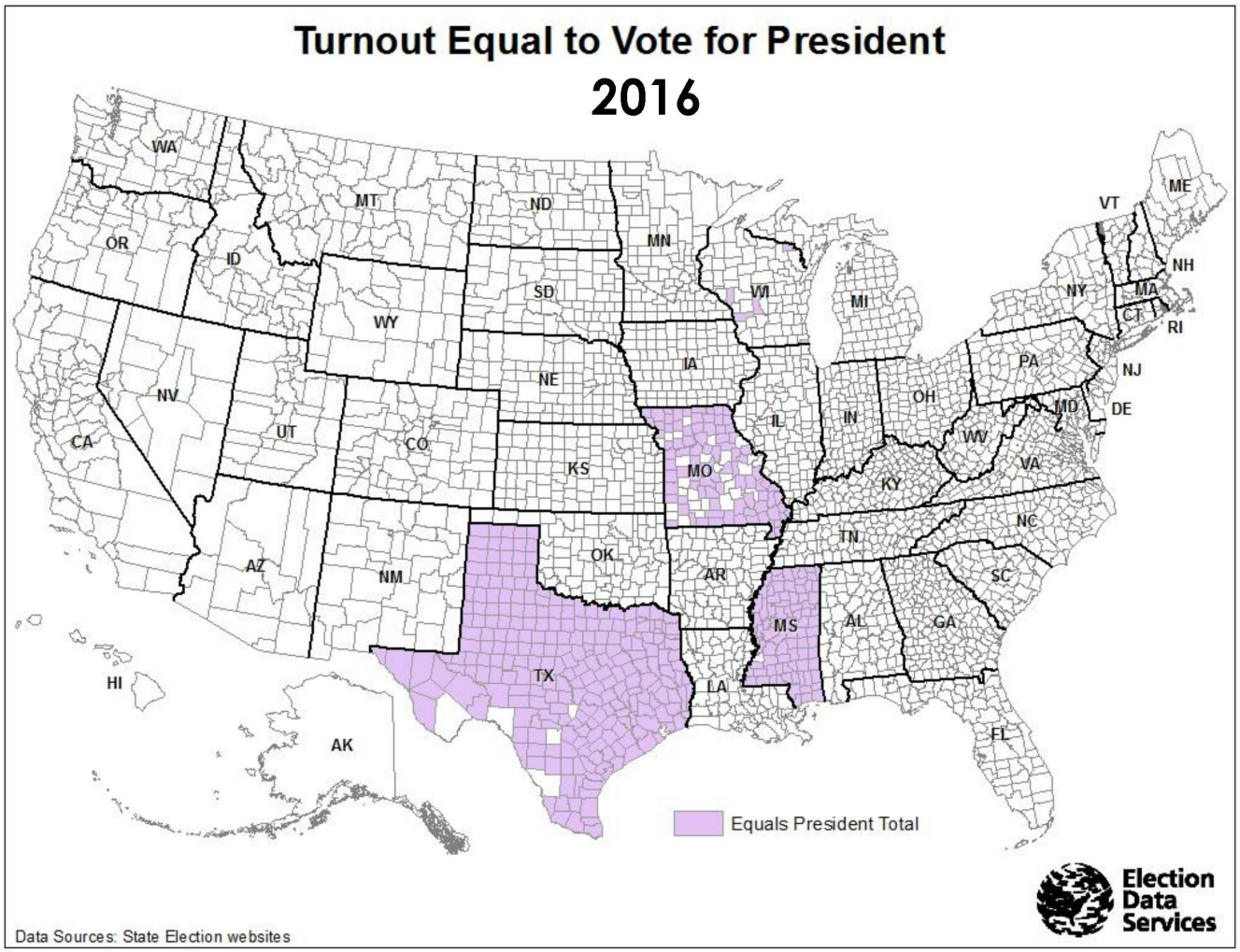

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How many people participated in the 2012 General Election?

Obama	65,899,392
Romney	60,929,639
Others	2,211,840
TOTAL	129,040,871

But Presidential contest was not the highest vote generator in all counties

More votes cast for US Senate Contests in 99 Counties
Governor Contests in 48 Counties
US House Contests in 28 Counties

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17-2361-A-003352

How many people participated in the 2016 General Election?

Clinton	65,840,578
Trump	62,978,288
Others	7,558,877
TOTAL	136,377,743

But Presidential contest was not the highest vote generator in all counties

More votes cast for US Senate Contests in 209 Counties
Governor Contests in 119 Counties
US House Contests in 73 Counties

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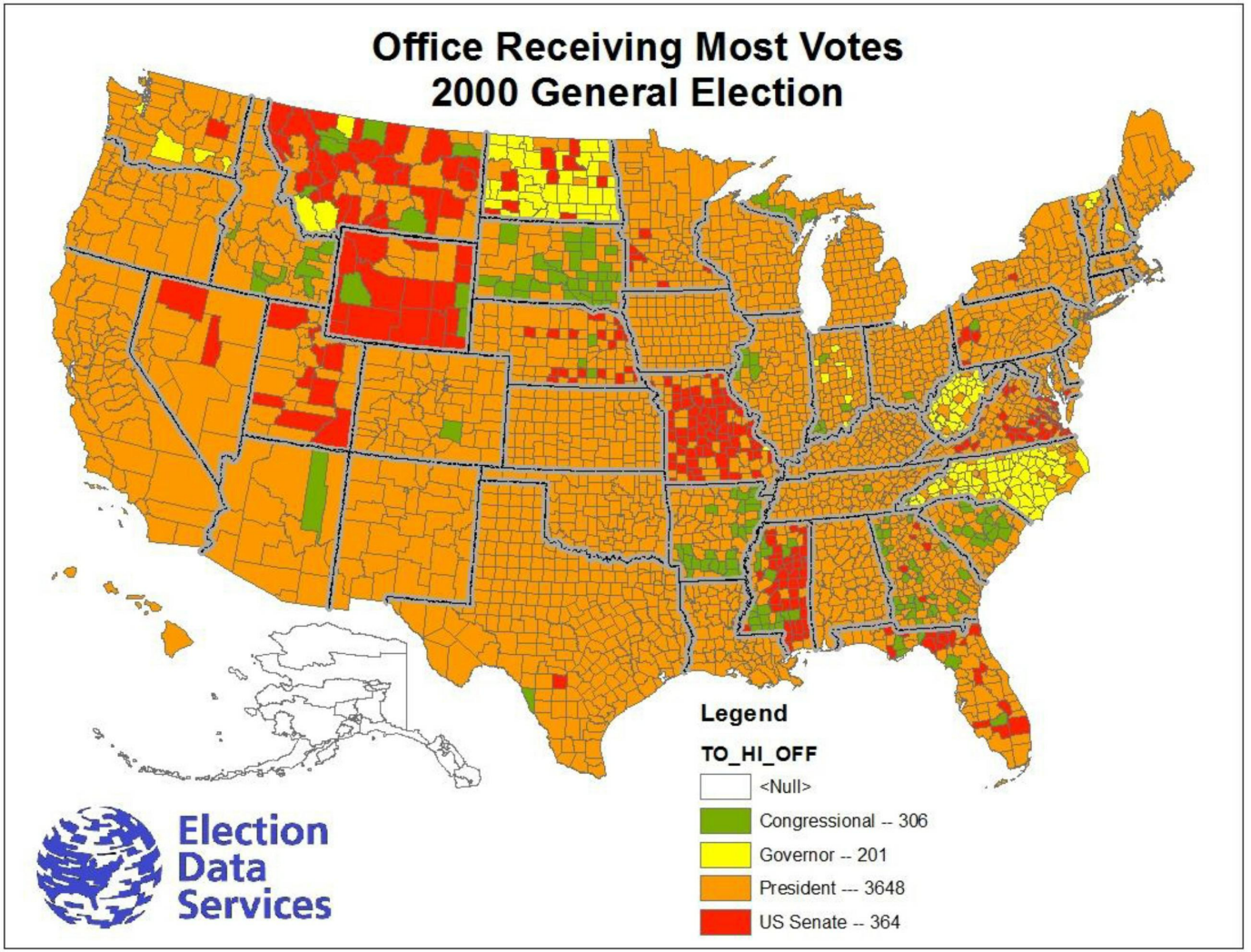

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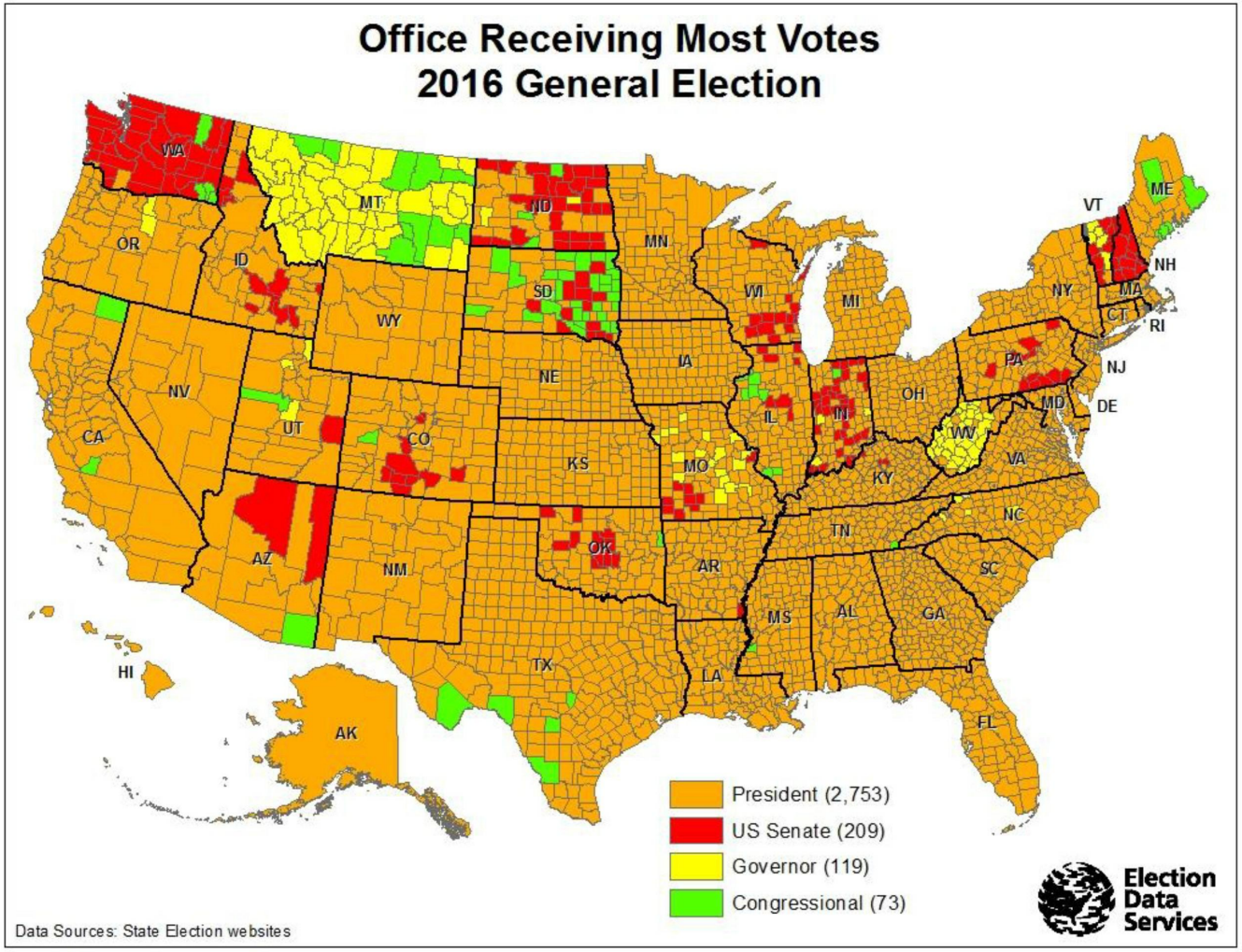

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How many people participated in the 2012 General Election?

EAC survey reported that
129,664,614 persons participated
in 50 states

But their survey lacked data in the following:
1 County in California
24 Counties in Mississippi
7 Counties in New Mexico
1 Township in Vermont

EDS dataset shows at least 130,081,900 participated

Means that over 1.4 million participated, but didn't cast a ballot for President – 0.8%

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17-2361-A-003356

How many people participated in the 2016 General Election?

EAC survey reported that
138,467,690 persons participated
in 50 states and DC
(Excluding Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands & Guam)

But their survey lacked data in the following:
6 Counties in Arkansas
39 Counties in Texas

EDS dataset shows at least 138,773,658 participated

Means that around 2.4 million participated, but didn't cast a ballot for President – 1.7%

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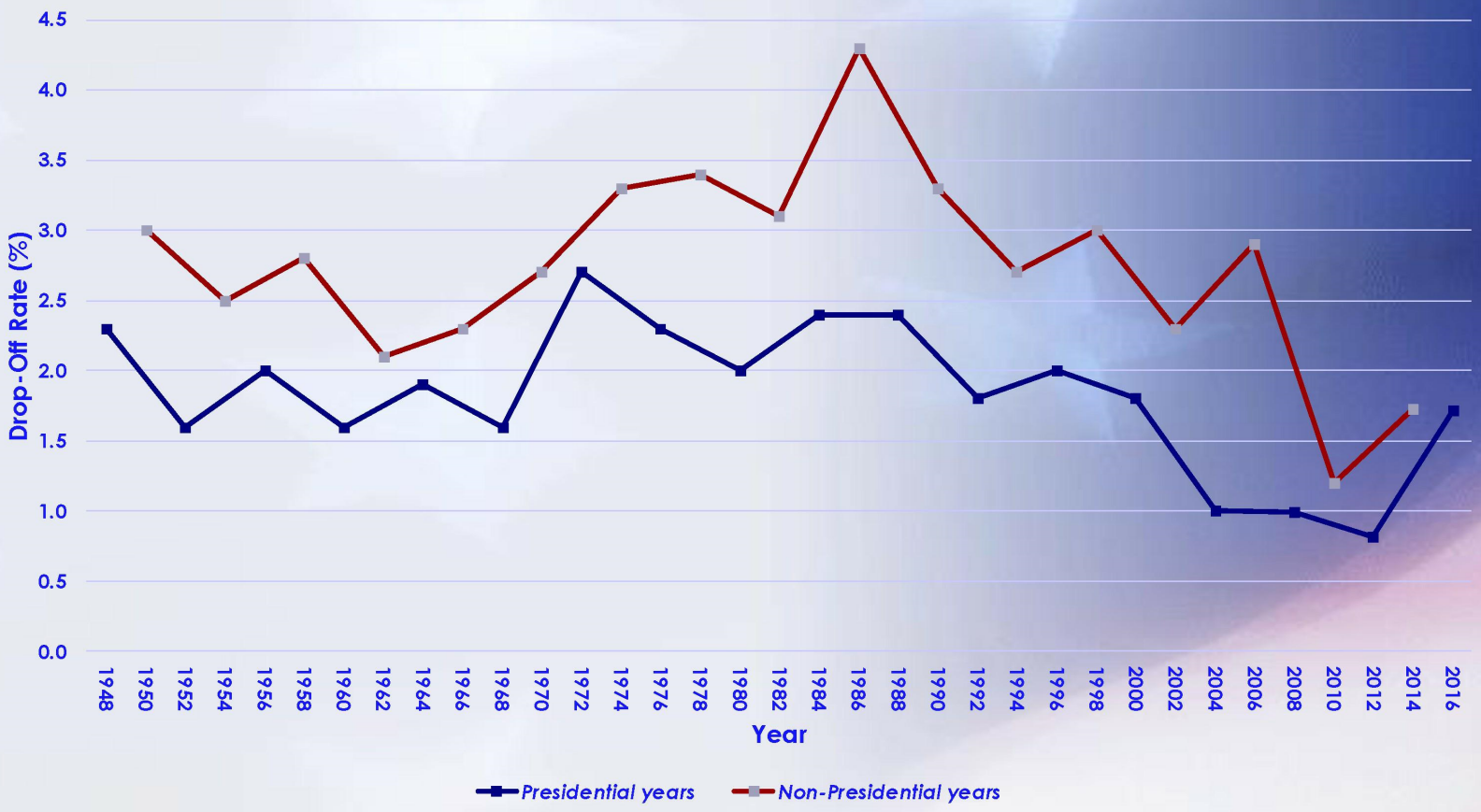
Drop – off (or Residual Votes)

(Difference between Total Turn-out & Votes for highest office)



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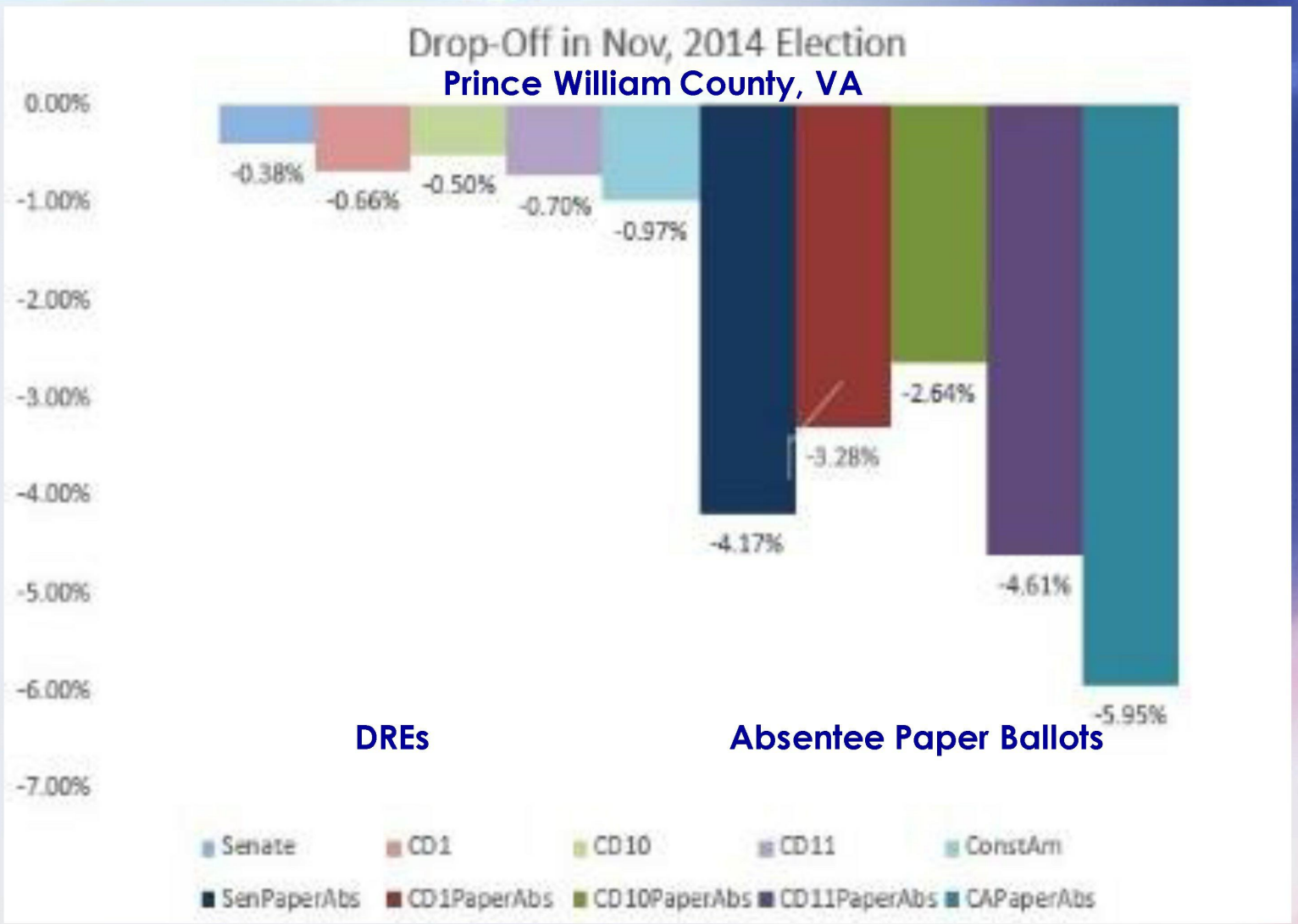

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How many people participated in the 2016 General Election?

WE DON'T KNOW

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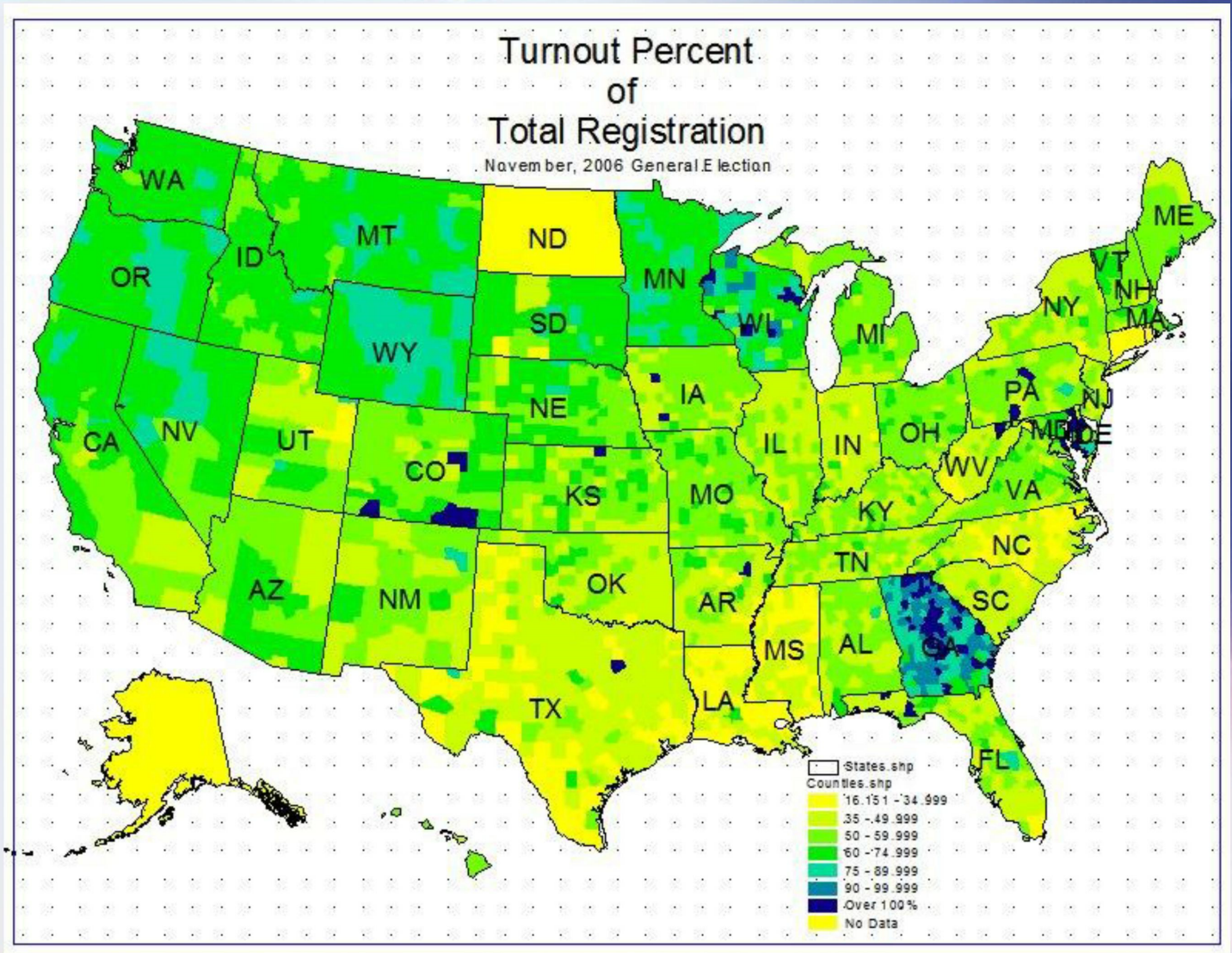

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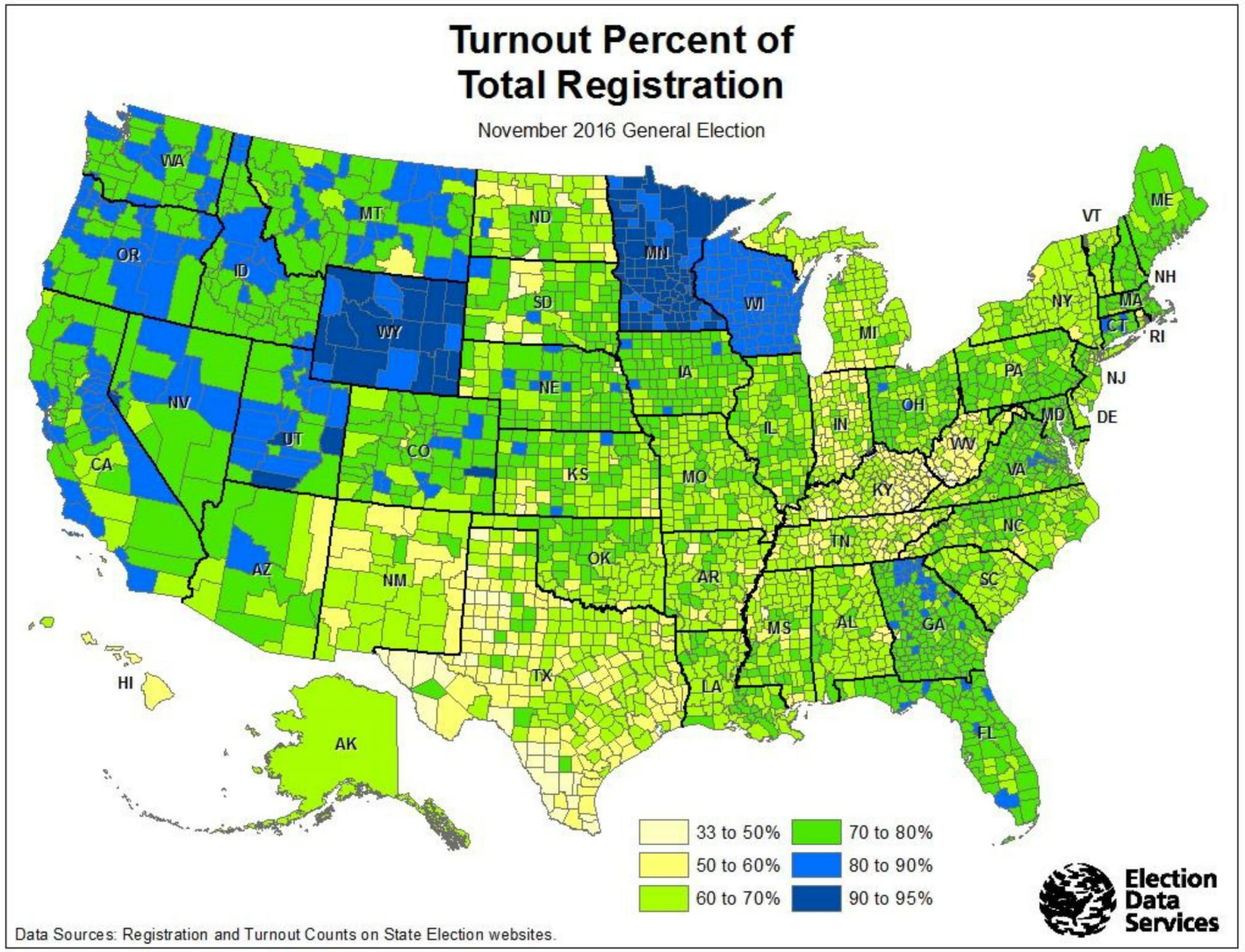

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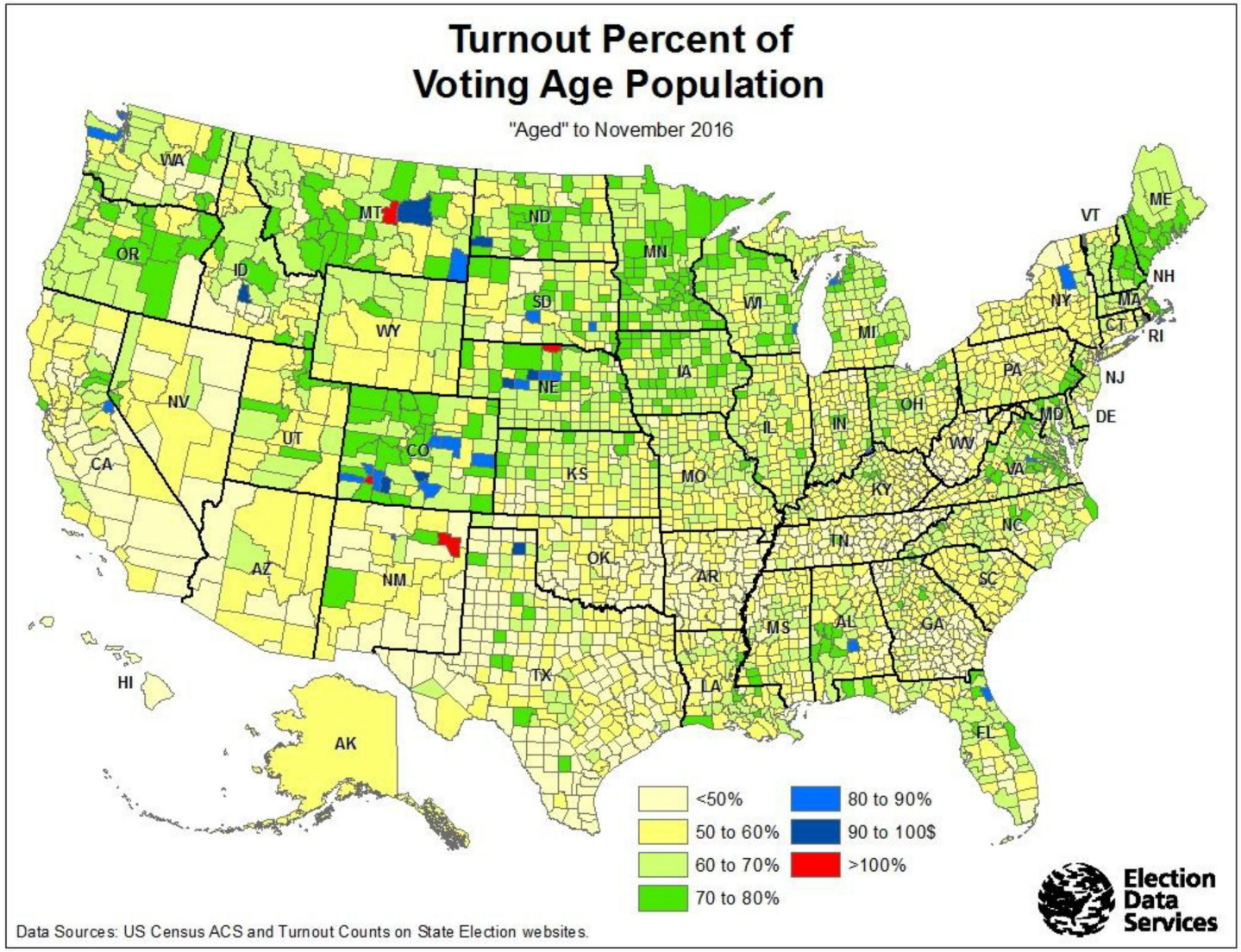

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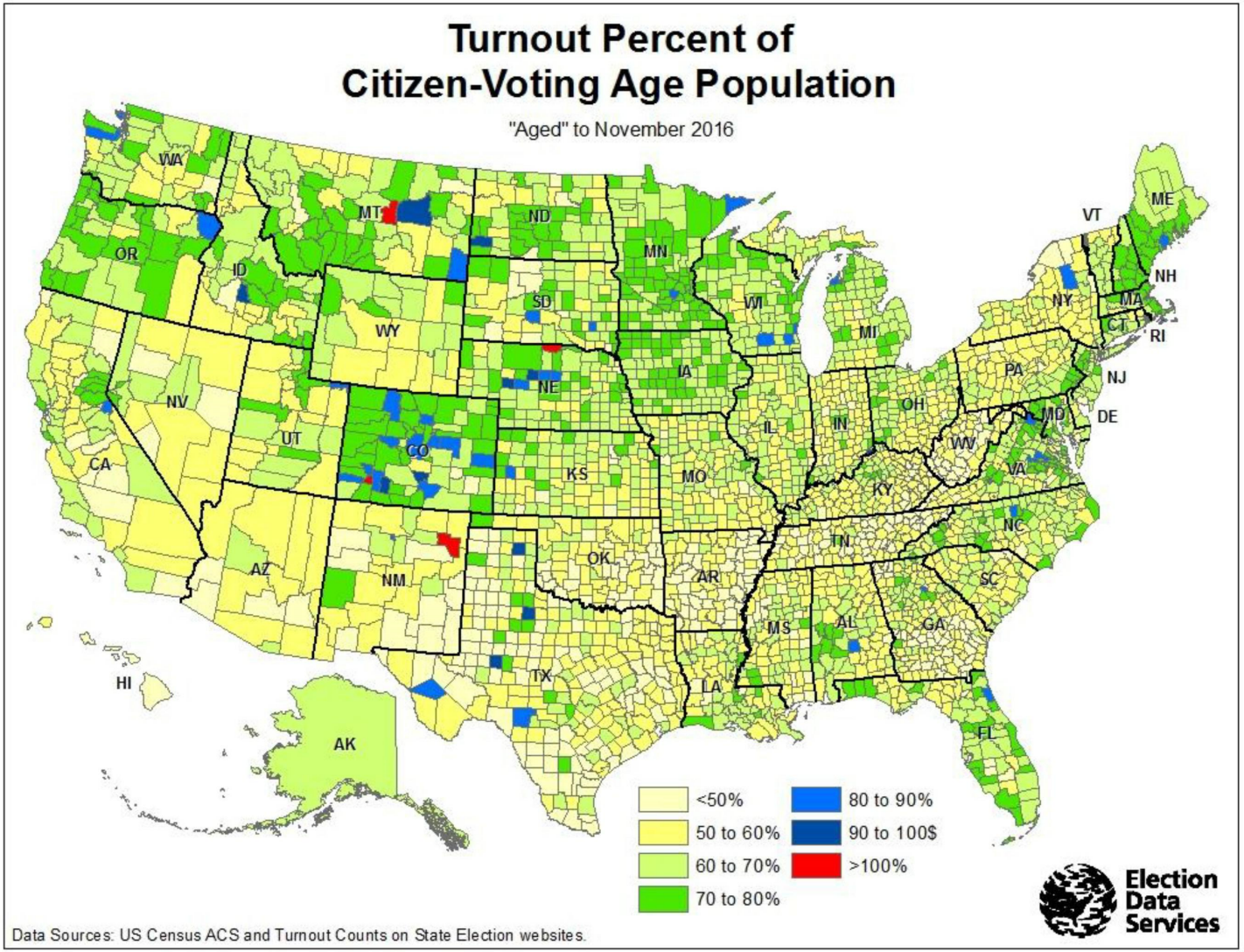

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I Believe it's important to study all data

To know their pluses & minuses

To understand their relationships

To view their variation over geography & time

Let the data tell the story

After all, data is our middle name

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17-2361-A-003365

Thank you

Kimball Brace

President

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