Election 2020: Trends in party support across states and counties

Chart

Description automatically generated

Democratic support across metro areas when normalized by state demonstrates relative to 2016, Biden made the greatest gains in medium and small metro areas. Medium metro areas, those within metro regions with populations over 250,00 but fewer than 1 million, saw a 1.4 percentage point shift towards Biden relative to Clinton’s vote share in 2016. Small metro areas, those within metro regions with fewer than 250,000 people, saw a 1.5 percentage point increase towards Biden relative to Clinton. Although these areas were already on average more Democratic relative to their state’s average Democratic vote share in 2016, Biden substantively improved upon Clinton’s performance. Given the marginal nature of Biden’s victories in Pennsylvania, Georgia, Wisconsin, and Michigan, these improvements clinched him victory.

Also important to note is that Trump did make gains in large metro areas and rural non-core counties. Large metro areas on average were still 23 percentage points more Democratic than their state average, but the 0.73 percentage point shift did prove effective in some key counties, such as Miami-Dade in Florida. More noticeably, Trump continued to make gains in the rural non-core counties, seeing a 0.5 percentage point shift from 2016 in what were already the most Republican areas of the country.

Chart, scatter chart

Description automatically generated

In analyzing the correlation between Clinton and Biden’s vote share reveals a strong correlation of 0.98. The data by metro area reveals that most of the non-metro areas to fall well under 50% Democratic vote share in both 2020 and 2016. Metro areas – large, medium, and small – trend towards Democrats, and see a substantive increase in areas where Clinton previously won between 50 and 75 percent of the vote. However, it is also noticeable that there are large metro areas that while still overwhelmingly Democratic, did see noticeable declines. Miami-Dade, for example, dropped nearly 10 percentage points, effectively costing Biden his chance at winning Florida. However, Miami-Dade tends to be the only large metro area in a battleground state. All of the counties encompassing New York City, and Los Angeles, California saw the next highest drop offs from 2016.