

A Bug in Democracy: Real and Mythical Risks of the Electoral College



bit.ly/SamWangHLS2019



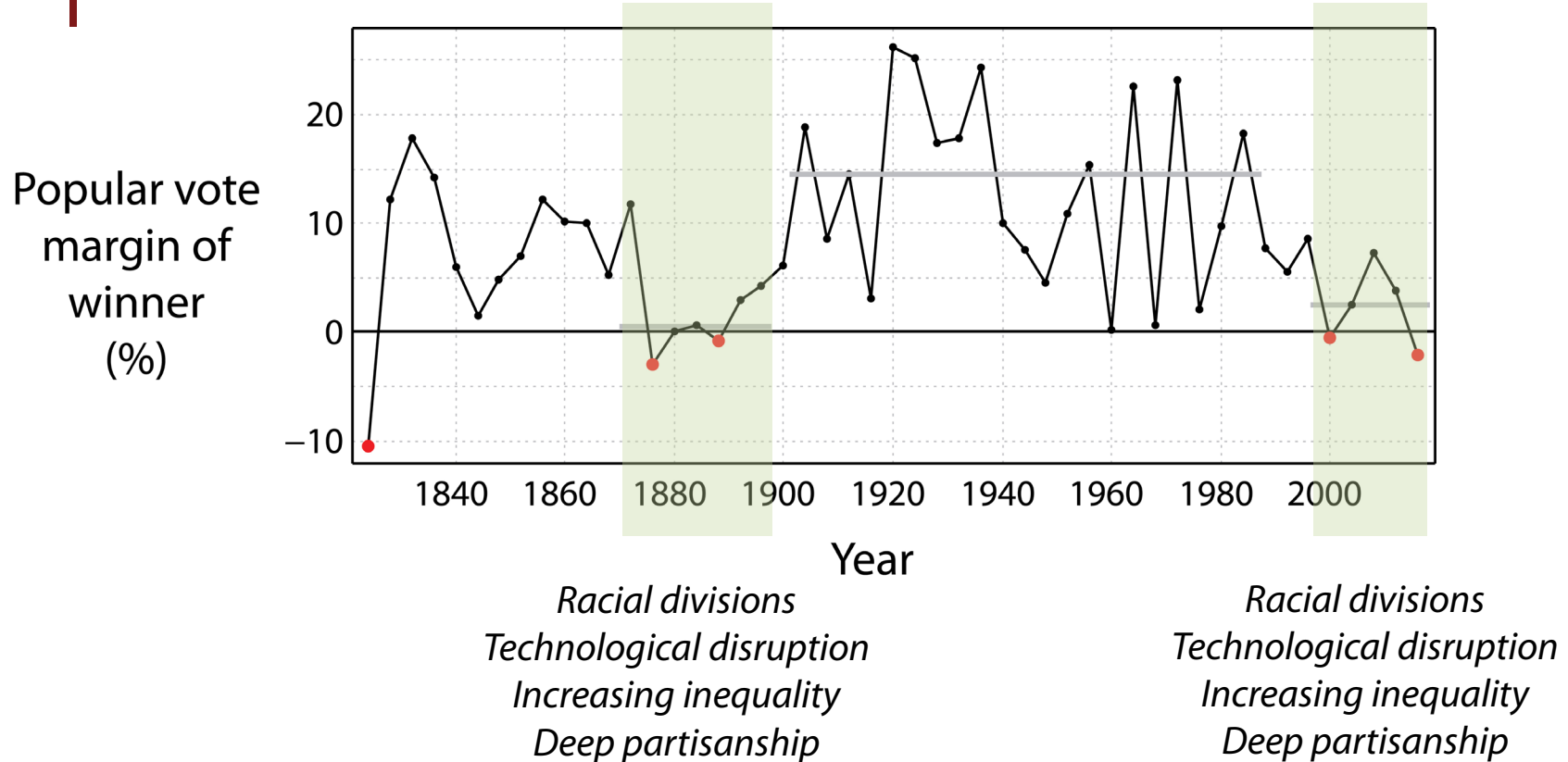
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Harvard Law School – October 18, 2019

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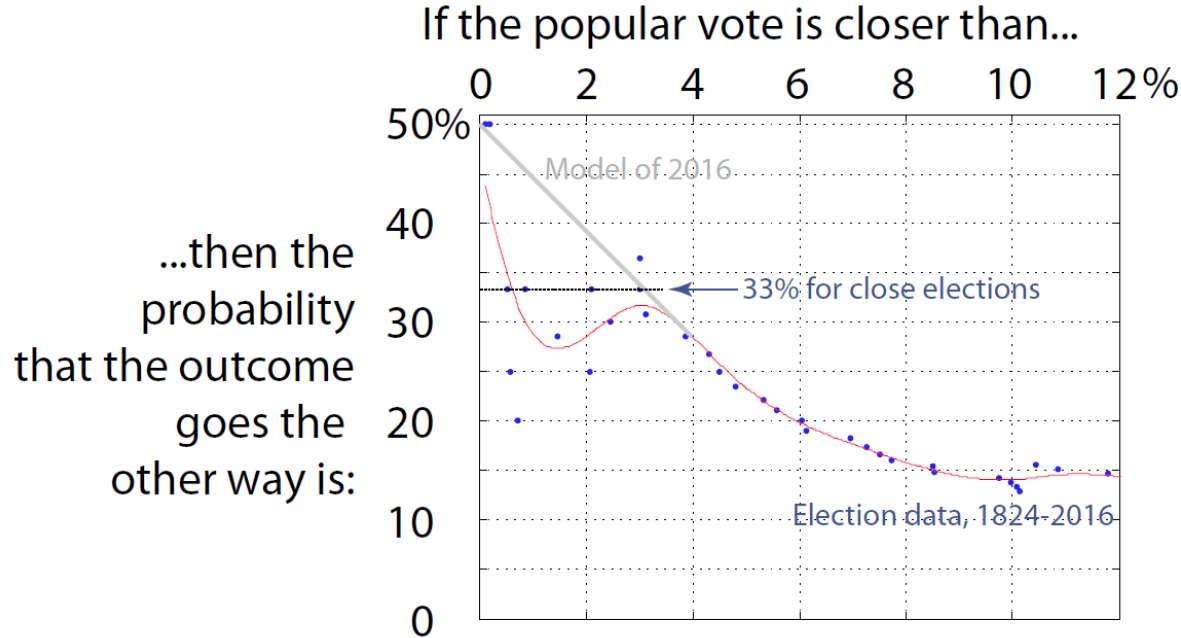
Problems posed by the modern Electoral College

1. Popular-vote/electoral-vote mismatches
2. Failure to build broad-based coalitions
3. Susceptibility to interference
4. Disempowerment of voters in partisan-leaning states

Two Gilded Ages: Unreliable Elections

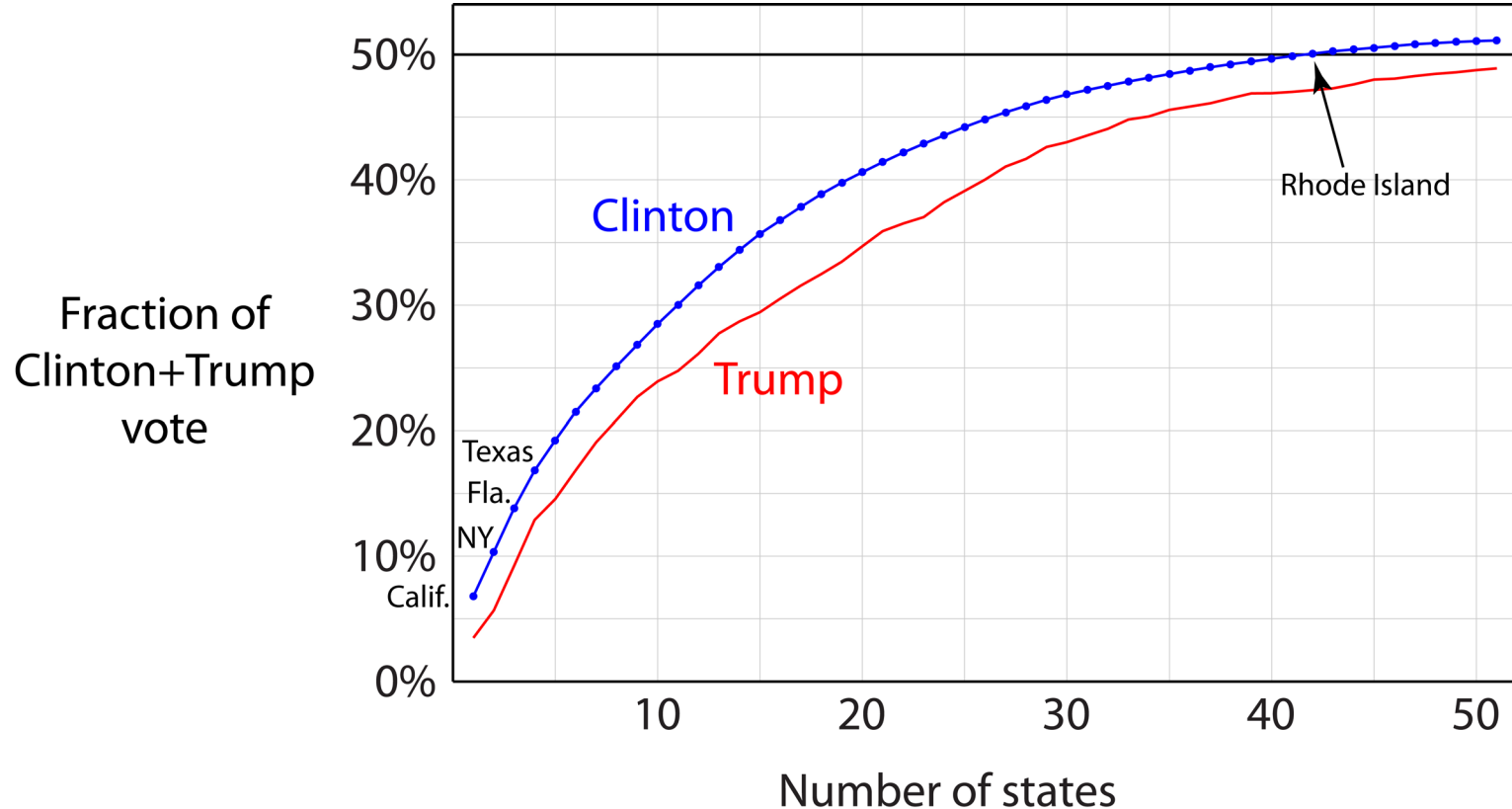


The popular vote winner has lost one in three close elections



*Five failures, including the first time the popular vote was ever tallied in 1824
Even when the popular vote margin is up to 10%, a 1 in 7 chance of a loss*

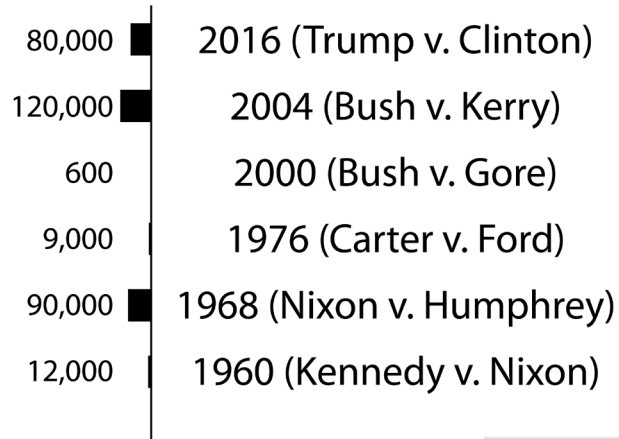
Getting a plurality already requires nationwide votes



Reducing the decision to a few states opens up vulnerability to hacking

How many votes would it have taken to flip ...

Electoral College



National Popular Vote



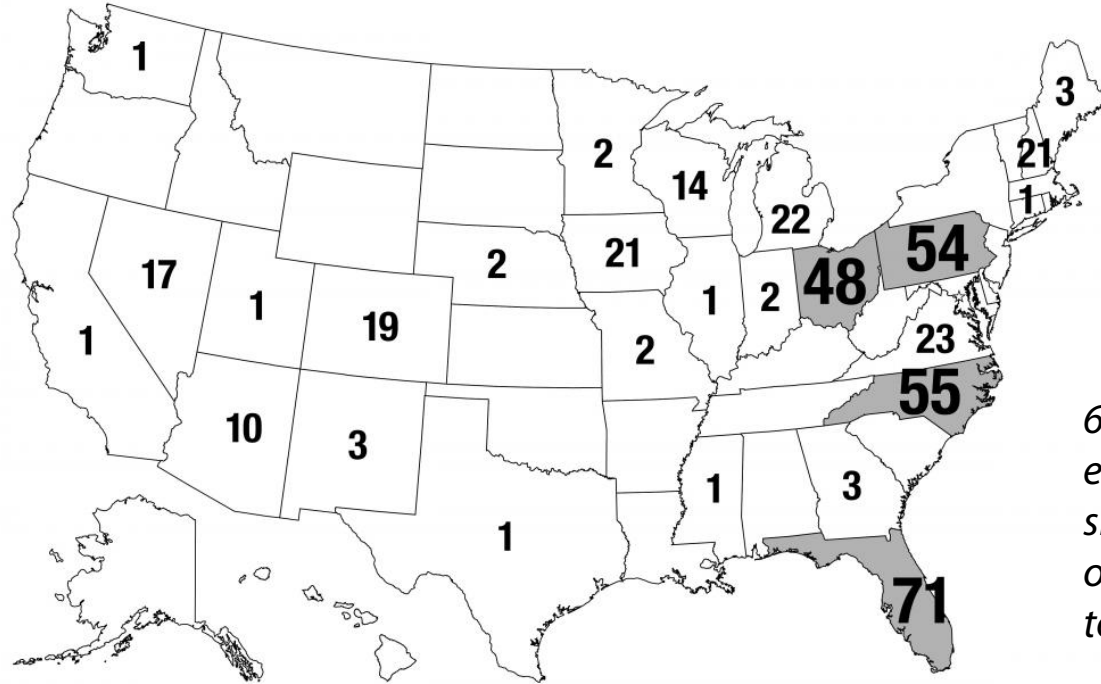
Wisconsin, Ohio, California
among states targeted by
Russian hackers in 2016 race

#U.S. LEGAL NEWS SEPTEMBER 22, 2017 / 5:29 PM / UPDATED AN HOUR AGO



Facebook said in its initial statement that about 25% of the ads purchased by Russians during the election "were geographically targeted"

The major candidates ignore all but a few states

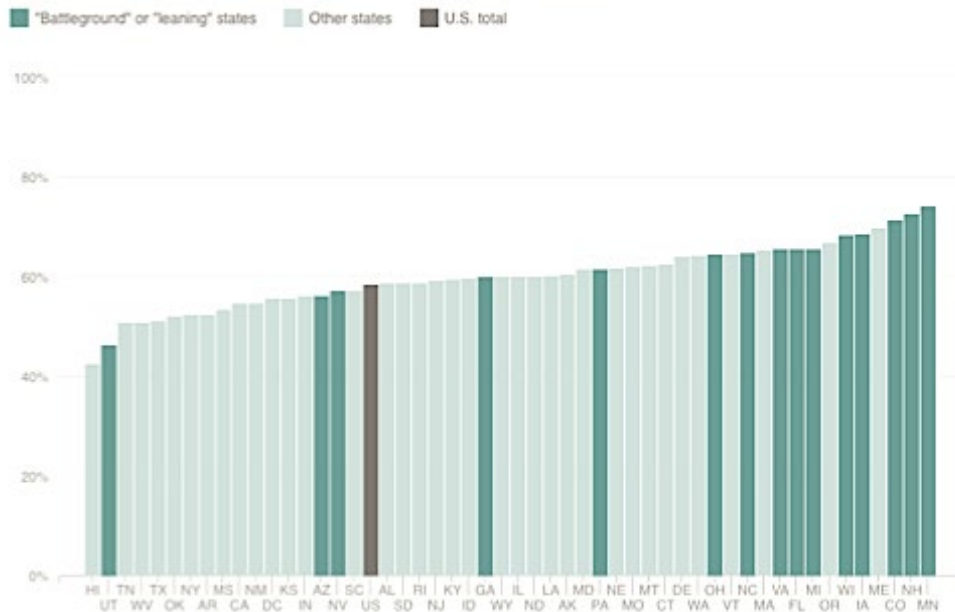


68% of post-convention events occurred in six states representing only 23% of the total population

Ignored citizens do not participate

Turnout Tended To Be Higher In Battleground States

In the states that NPR called "battlegrounds" or leaning states in its [final battleground map](#), the majority had voter turnout rates far above the national rate (measured as the percentage of eligible voters who participated in the election).

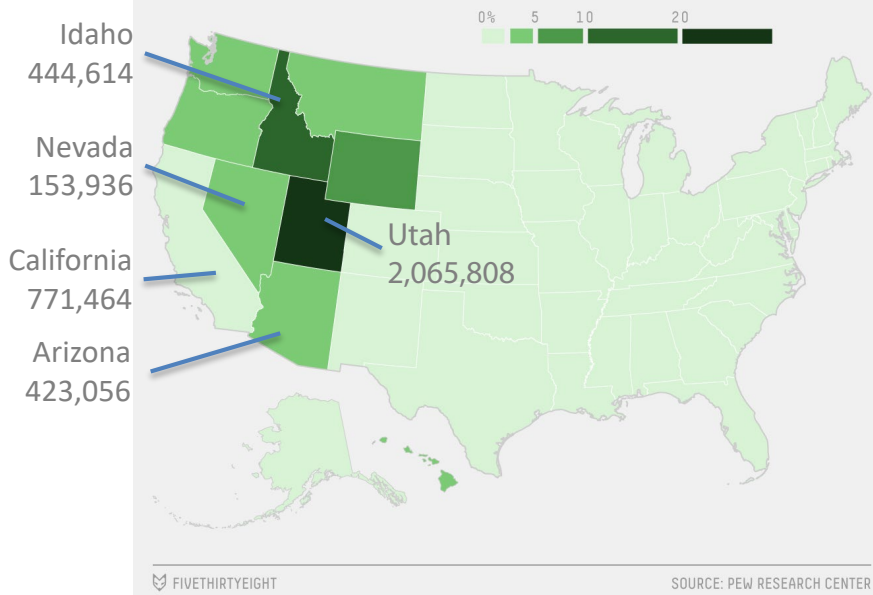


Source: U.S. Elections Project, NPR Final Battleground Map

Credit: Danielle Kurtzleben/NPR

Geographically concentrated communities are disempowered

Share of adults identifying as Mormon by state, 2014



U.S. (all)
Mormons

Voter power over Presidential outcome
(relative)



Princeton Election Consortium

National Popular Vote: Benefits

- Increased turnout in all states
- Voters and communities know that all are weighted equally
- No voters, states, regions, interests are ignored
- Equal participation creates trust in the system and outcome