

N.C. whites boosted Obama

President-elect didn't have the same support from white voters in some other Southern states on Tuesday.

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Barack Obama inspired massive turnout among African Americans in Mecklenburg County and throughout North Carolina.

But he also did significantly better with N.C. white voters than John Kerry did in 2004 – an improvement not seen in many other Southern states.

Obama won 35 percent of N.C. white voters, up from Kerry's 27 percent, according to exit polls cited by CNN. Obama also showed gains among white voters in South Carolina and Virginia.

But in the deep South – Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Arkansas – his white support dropped significantly.

The uptick in white support helped Obama win Mecklenburg County

with 62 percent of the vote – a margin that stunned even Democratic Party activists. The inroads among white voters also helped Obama outperform Kerry across the state, even in rural areas in the east and in conservative counties ringing Charlotte. Kerry also won Mecklenburg County in 2004.

And while McCain got about the same number of votes in Mecklenburg as President Bush in 2004, Obama got 50 percent more votes in the county than Kerry. The turnout percentage was about the same in both elections.

Pollsters and consultants said Obama's improvement with white voters was due to a number of factors, such as politically moderate transplants moving to North Carolina and the state's faltering economy. Obama's advertising blitz was also credited with successfully wooing whites.

"I think in-migration here has a ton to do with it," said Tom Jensen of Public Policy Polling in Raleigh. "Whites

who aren't natives are about 20 points more likely to support a Democratic presidential candidate. They choose the candidate on an election-by-election basis."

Some experts said it showed North Carolina will likely become a consistent presidential toss-up state, one that straddles the old Confederacy and the northeast states that are the base of the Democratic party.

In voting at the Greek Orthodox Church on East Boulevard four years ago, Kerry barely won by only 52 votes. On Tuesday, voters favored Obama to Republican John McCain by 364 votes.

Obama also out-performed Kerry in heavily Republican precincts.

Kerry got about 40 percent of votes at Myers Park High School. Obama nearly won it, with 49 percent.

In Huntersville, at the North Regional Library, Obama improved on

Kerry's share of 28 percent by getting 41 percent of the vote.

In neighboring counties, which went heavily for McCain, Obama chipped away at the deficit. He lost by wide margins in Union, Cabarrus and Gaston counties, but ran 6-8 percentage points better than Kerry.

Experts wondered whether white voters, especially in the South, would support an African American candidate. Controversy over the Rev. Jeremiah Wright had dominated headlines in the spring during the Democratic primary, and the McCain campaign talked at great length about Obama's association with former domestic terrorist William Ayers.

Those factors may have cost Obama support in Southern states where he didn't campaign. In Alabama, for instance, 19 percent of white voters supported Kerry. Only 10 percent voted for Obama, according to exit polls.

Obama's television and radio advertising in N.C. convinced some hesitant voters that Obama was an ac-

ceptable choice, said Morgan Jackson, a Democratic consultant who worked for John Edwards.

Much of that field operation targeted young voters and African Americans. At heavily African American precincts on Election Day, there were a number of first-time voters who said they came to the polls solely because of Obama.

Voters casting ballots at Barringer Elementary School in west Charlotte have a long history of giving overwhelming support to Democrats.

In 2004, John Kerry snagged 723 votes there, compared with 36 for Bush.

In Tuesday's election, there was another Democratic tidal wave in Precinct 31 – though it was larger than many Democratic activists would have imagined.

Barack Obama got 1,617 votes. John McCain received 16.



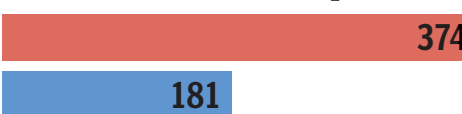
Kerry

The Regional Vote

A breakdown of Obama's votes in the region



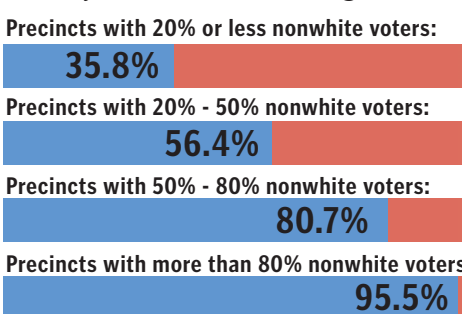
McCain carried the most precincts:



But McCain's stronger showings tended to be in smaller, rural precincts. Obama received almost as many votes:

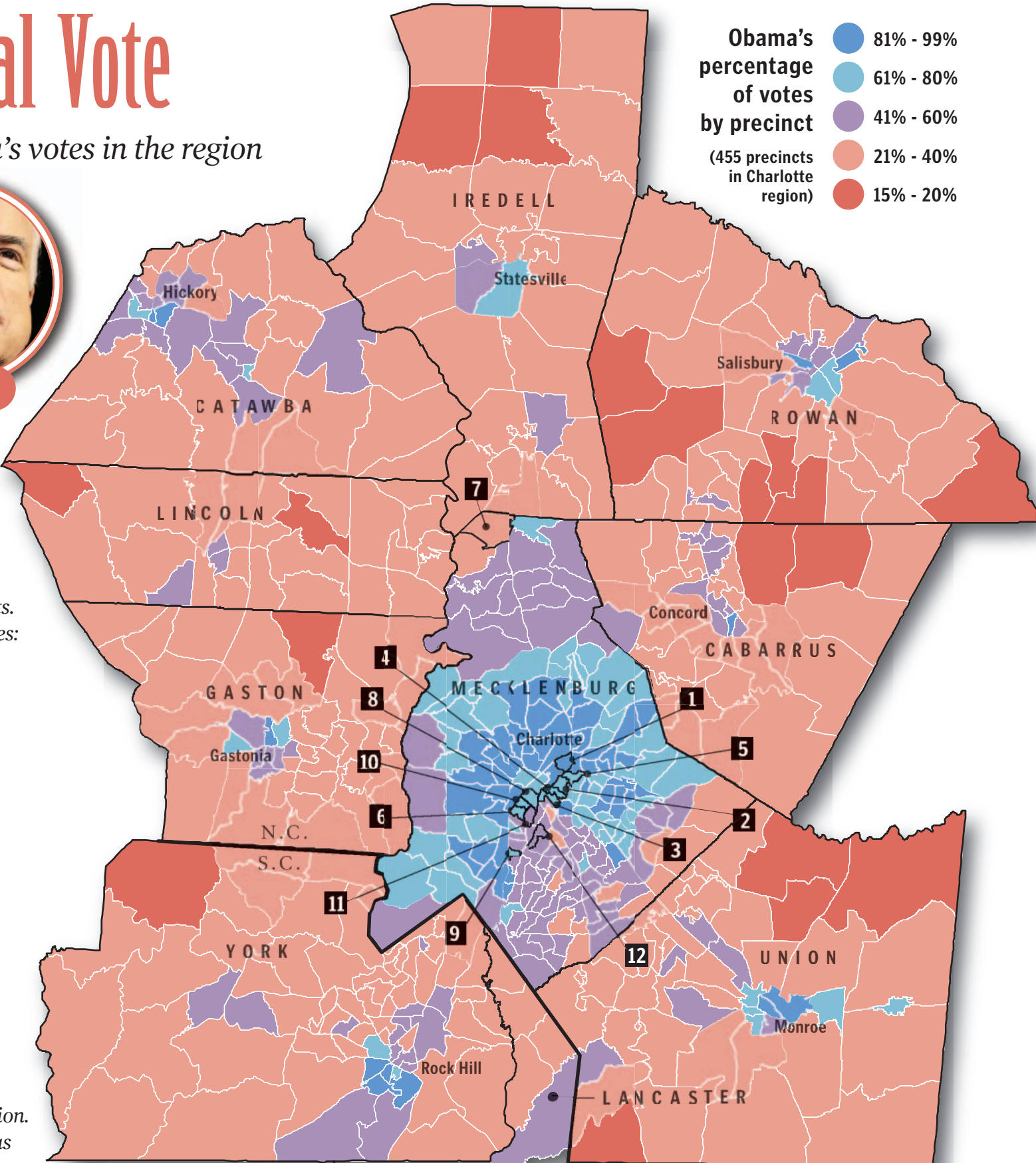


Obama's support closely tracked the level of nonwhite voters registered:



Obama received 99% of the vote in 4 precincts in Charlotte and 1 in Salisbury

There were some notable exceptions, however, to the overall pattern of Obama votes and nonwhite registration. In these precincts Obama support was stronger than expected based on nonwhite registration.



Precinct/County	Percentage of non-white voters	Obama's percentage of votes	Precinct/County	Percentage of non-white voters	Obama's percentage of votes	Precinct/County	Percentage of non-white voters	Obama's percentage of votes
1 Precinct 30 Plaza Road Pre-K MECKLENBURG	39%	82%	5 Precinct 44 Shamrock Gardens Elem. MECKLENBURG	25%	69%	9 Precinct 59 Montclair Elem. MECKLENBURG	20%	62%
2 Precinct 15 Midwood Baptist MECKLENBURG	18%	74%	6 Precinct 21 St. Paul United Methodist MECKLENBURG	20%	68%	10 Precinct 10 Greek Orthodox Cathedral MECKLENBURG	8%	61%
3 Precinct 2 St. John's Baptist MECKLENBURG	22%	70%	7 Precinct 206 Davidson Town Hall MECKLENBURG	16%	65%	11 Precinct 20 Avondale Presbyterian MECKLENBURG	6%	59%
4 Precinct 109 Hawthorne Rec Center MECKLENBURG	10%	69%	8 Precinct 9 Covenant Presbyterian MECKLENBURG	21%	64%	12 Precinct 19 Myers Park High MECKLENBURG	4%	49%