

## A Socio-Economic Comparison of Democratic and Republican Counties in Oklahoma

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Regularly the Gallup Poll reports on the political attitudes of the American public. These reports often show distinct differences in the public attitudes as a result of: age, education, income, race, religion, sex, and union membership. Others who poll the public report similar distinctions. S. M. Lipset has written: ". . . such factors as occupational status, income and class character of the district in which people live probably distinguish the support of the two parties more clearly now than at any other period in American History since the Civil War." This author was not certain that such conclusions might now apply to Oklahoma. Since Oklahoma voted Republican in the last three Presidential races, as well as the 1962 Governor's race, we felt such generalizations may or may not be characteristic of the State of Oklahoma. Thus, the purpose of this study has been to test the extent of the effect of such economic and social factors on Oklahoma voting.

In order to determine some of the characteristics of the people of Oklahoma, we turned to the 1960 Census. There we found much that distinguished one county from another and groups of counties from other groups of counties. In general, we could say the counties bordering the Red River and those in the southeast third of the State tended to be rather similar in many respects. We also found rather consistent similarities in two other groups of counties: first, those in the northwest third of the State; and second, Oklahoma, Tulsa, and Washington Counties.

Coupled with the census data, we also recorded how each county voted in the Presidential elections of 1952, 1956, and 1960. Further checks were made on the Gubernatorial and Senatorial races, but we are not reporting on such in this paper. In those other various electoral contests there was some variation from the voting in the last three Presidential elections, but we found that those variations do not significantly affect the conclusions of this paper.

In making this study we compared the counties voting Democratic for President in 1952, 1956, and 1960 with those voting Republican in those years on nine different factors. Those factors were as follows: education, race, average farm values, median family income, family income of \$3,000 or less, family income of \$10,000 or more, unemployment, housing, and native of foreign or mixed parentage. In each of these factors we found very definite and significant differences between those counties voting Democratic and those counties voting Republican. Because of this continual variation between the Democratic and Republican counties, we felt others should have an opportunity to share this information.

The omission of two rather important factors should be noted: religious affiliation and union membership. So far as we know there is no

recent religious census of Oklahoma. One could use an old study, but we did not feel it would be wise. As for union membership, we felt that the State has such a small percentage of workers who are organized, that such a comparison might have little meaning. This may be an error on our part. We may yet check this factor.

Political observers who frequently gauge public attitudes commonly associate political party affiliation with the level of education attained. They commonly note that most persons with only a grade school education are Democrats, while most college graduates are Republicans. Is this characteristic, so frequently noted nationally, also true in Oklahoma? We cannot say with absolute certitude that such is the case, but it certainly seems to be true.

It will be seen in Table Ia that seventy percent of the Democratic counties in 1960 were counties where the median school years completed was under nine, while only a little over thirty-five percent of the Republican counties had so low an educational level. Was this only an aberration of the 1960 election? No, for one notes that 1952 and 1956 illustrate the same basic characteristic about the educational level of Democratic and Republican counties. One should also note in Table Ia that in 1952 and 1956 that forty-four percent and forty-eight percent of the Republican counties had median school years completed of ten or more. Democratic counties with so high a level of formal education amounted to but twelve percent of all Democratic counties in 1952 and 1960 and thirteen percent in 1956.

We note that only three Oklahoma counties had a median school level of twelve or more. In each of the three Presidential elections those three counties went Republican. Table Ib examines in a bit more depth those three counties: Oklahoma, Tulsa, and Washington. In Table 1b it will be seen that the Republican party won decisive victories. It will also be noted that each county's Republican margin varies in accordance with the educational attainment of those over twenty-five.

Nationally it has been noted that since 1932 non-whites have supported the Democratic party. In Oklahoma the last three Presidential elections have shown a marked racial distinction in the voting. This may be seen in Table II. There are ten counties with less than one percent non-white population. Each of these ten voted overwhelmingly Republican; that is, they voted from sixty to eighty percent for Eisenhower and Nixon. It will also be noted that seventy-nine to eighty-eight percent of those counties voting Democratic in those elections had over five percent non-white persons within the population.

The University of Michigan's Survey Research Center has observed that the size of the farm is directly related to the party the farmer supports.<sup>3</sup> Average farm values generally reflect the size of the farm and farm values in Democratic and Republican counties reflect economic differences in a clear cut fashion. One may note in Table III that in 1952 ninety-one percent of the Democratic counties had an average farm value of under \$40,000. Less than fifty percent of the Republican counties had such low farm values. This distinction also held in 1956 and 1960 with no really significant variation from 1952.

Median family income is another means of distinguishing Oklahomans by party. We may note in Table IV that eighty-two percent of the counties voting Democratic in 1952, 1956, and in 1960 were counties with a median

<sup>3</sup>Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes, *The American Voter*. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1960), pp. 418-419.

family income under \$4,000. It will also be seen that the Republican counties in that income bracket amounted to but forty-two to fifty-three percent of all Republican counties in those three Presidential elections.

To one who may wish another economic comparison than median family income, we present several others. In Table V we can see that over eighty percent of the Democratic counties in 1960, but only forty percent of the Republican counties, were those counties in which forty percent or more of the families had an income of \$3,000 or less. This was not peculiar to 1960, for we may note that in both 1952 and 1956 over seventy percent of the Democratic counties were in this low income bracket.

It is a truism that the country club set votes Republican. Do the wealthy vote Republican in Oklahoma? A glance at Table VI will show that sixty-five percent of the Republican counties, but only twenty-four percent of the Democratic counties, were those in which six percent or more of the families had an annual income of \$10,000 or more. One may also note that there were fourteen counties where over ten percent of the families had an annual income of \$10,000 or more in 1960. Only one of the fourteen counties voted Democratic.

Are the unemployed in Oklahoma Democrats or Republicans? We may not know individually how such a person may have voted, but we have compared the counties where there were large numbers of unemployed. We have summarized this information in Table VII. Of the counties voting Democratic in 1960, over seventy-six percent had over four and a half percent of its labor force unemployed. Less than fifty percent of the Republican counties had such a high percentage of unemployed. There was an even sharper contrast in 1952 and 1956. By way of further contrast one notes that in both 1952 and 1960 there were nine Republican counties with less than two and four-tenths percent unemployed, and not a single Democratic county with so few unemployed.

Where do the people live who reside in housing units without a tub or shower? In Oklahoma they live in counties that vote Democratic. As Table VIII will show, the ten counties where less than ten percent of the housing units are without a tub or shower all voted Republican in 1960. That same year saw twenty-nine percent of the Democratic counties with forty percent of the housing units with no tub or shower. This may be contrasted with less than seventeen percent for the Republican party. Again, this is not peculiar just to 1960, for in 1952 and 1956 only three of the fifteen counties with forty percent of the housing units without tub or shower voted Republican. Thus, when the Republicans refer to the "dirty Democrats", they may be more correct than they realize.

Where do the sons and daughters of the foreign born live? In Oklahoma they live in predominantly Republican counties. An examination of Table IXa will illustrate the extent to which this is true. There are only eleven counties in Oklahoma in which five percent or more of its population is native of foreign or mixed parentage. In 1956 only one of those eleven counties, Washita, voted Democratic. In 1952 and in 1960 even it voted Republican. Those eleven counties are all located in western Oklahoma, and only one is located south of the Canadian River. That one is Washita, which voted Democratic in 1956.

In Table IXb we have shown those eleven counties where at least five percent or more of the population is native of foreign or mixed parentage and how those eleven voted in the last three Presidential elections. It will be noted that Major County consistently cast the highest percentage for the Republican candidates. Major County also had the highest percentage of its population who were native of foreign or mixed parentage. One notes that the percentage of Major County was over twelve percent native of

foreign or mixed parentage.

The Census Bureau recorded the country of origin of the foreign stock for several of the eleven counties shown on Table IXb. In Blaine County forty-five percent were from Russia and twenty-three percent from Germany. In Garfield County fifteen percent were from Russia and thirty percent from Germany. The country of origin of the foreign stock of Kingfisher County shows ten and a half percent from Russia and forty-eight percent from Germany. In Major County one finds thirty-nine percent from Russia and seventeen percent from Germany. Finally, one notes this same pattern in Washita County, where thirty-nine percent of the foreign stock were from Russia and twenty-one percent from Germany. Thus, country of origin does make a difference in Oklahoma, just as in Iowa, North Dakota, Texas, or in other States as noted in many previous studies. Oklahoma definitely seems to follow the pattern of other States where German and Russian stock vote Republican.

Country of origin seems to be particularly significant in the case of Major County, for how else can one really account for this county being the most Republican county in all of Oklahoma. Of those eleven counties shown in Table IXb, Major County has the largest percentage of housing units without tub or shower, the lowest level of formal education, the lowest average farm value, the second lowest median family income, and the largest percentage of families with an income under \$3,000. Thus, this factor of Major County having the States's largest percentage of the population who were native of foreign or mixed parentage is very probably the only explanation for the county's deep and abiding loyalty to the Republican party.

In summary, we found very distinct economic, political, and social differences between Oklahoma's counties. These variations are on both a north-south and an east-west basis. Should a line be drawn diagonally from the northeast corner to the southwest corner of Oklahoma, one would find most of the education, employment, and wealth to the northwest of that line. To the southeast one would find most of the illiteracy, poor housing, poverty, and unemployment. One would find most of the foreign stock northwest of the line. One would find the bulk of the non-whites living southeast of that diagonal. Certainly, the Democratic counties are generally southeast of the line. As in national studies, this examination has illustrated that in the State of Oklahoma economic status, national origin, race, and education are all significant factors in distinguishing Democratic and Republican counties. As Oklahoma continues its growth as a two-party state, these characteristics should even more sharply delineate those counties supporting the two parties.

**TABLE Ia**  
**MEDIAN SCHOOL YEARS COMPLETED BY PERSONS OVER TWENTY-FIVE**  
**YEARS OF AGE IN OKLAHOMA COUNTIES IN 1960**

	1952				
Years Completed	8.0 to 8.9	9.0 to 9.9	10.0 to 11.9	12.0 and Over	
Counties Voting Republican	11 (26%)	13 (30%)	16 (37%)	3 (7%)	43
Counties Voting Democratic	23 (68%)	7 (20%)	4 (12%)	0	34
	1956				
Republican	10 (26%)	10 (26%)	15 (40%)	3 (8%)	38
Democratic	24 (61%)	10 (26%)	5 (13%)	0	39
	1960				
Republican	22 (37%)	17 (28%)	18 (30%)	3 (5%)	60
Democratic	12 (70%)	3 (18%)	2 (12%)	0	17

Source: Table 35, U.S. Census, 1960, Vol. 38, pp. 141-142.

**TABLE Ib**  
**MEDIAN SCHOOL YEARS COMPLETED BY PERSONS OVER TWENTY-FIVE**  
**IN THREE OKLAHOMA COUNTIES AND THE REPUBLICAN PERCENTAGE**  
**IN THREE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

<u>County</u>	<u>School Years Completed</u>	<u>1952</u>	<u>1956</u>	<u>1960</u>
Oklahoma	12.0	57.6	59.8	61.4
Tulsa	12.1	61.3	65.5	63.0
Washington	12.2	64.5	69.3	71.4

Source: Table 35, *U.S. Census, 1960*, Vol. 38, pp. 141-142.

TABLE II  
PERCENTAGE OF NON-WHITES IN OKLAHOMA COUNTIES IN 1960

Percentage of Non-Whites Counties Voting Republican Counties Voting Democratic	1952				15.0 and Over
	0.0 to 0.9 10 (23%)	1.0 to 4.9 9 (21%)	5.0 to 14.9 19 (44%)	5.0 and Over 5 (12%)	
	0	6 (18%)	21 (62%)	7 (20%)	34
Republican	10 (26%)	7 (18%)	15 (40%)	6 (16%)	38
Democratic	0	6 (21%)	25 (64%)	6 (15%)	39
	1960				
Republican	10 (16.6%)	13 (21.6%)	28 (46.6%)	9 (15%)	60
Democratic	0	2 (12%)	12 (70%)	3 (18%)	17

Source: Table 13, *U.S. Census, 1960*, Vol. 38, pp. 28-29.







TABLE V  
 PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES WITH INCOMES OF \$3000 OR LESS IN OKLAHOMA COUNTIES IN 1960

Percentage With Income Under \$3000 Counties Voting Republican	1952				Over 55%
	Under 25%	25.0 to 39.9%	40.0 to 54.9%	Over 55%	
Counties Voting Republican	8 (19%)	22 (51%)	10 (23%)	3 (7%)	43
Counties Voting Democratic	1 (3%)	8 (24%)	12 (35%)	13 (38%)	34
	1956				
Republican	8 (21%)	20 (53%)	7 (18%)	3 (8%)	38
Democratic	1 (3%)	10 (26%)	15 (38%)	13 (33%)	39
	1960				
Republican	9 (15%)	27 (45%)	13 (22%)	11 (18%)	60
Democratic	0	3 (18%)	9 (53%)	5 (29%)	17

Source: Table 36, *U.S. Census, 1960*, Vol. 38, pp. 142-143.

TABLE VI  
 PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES WITH INCOMES OF \$10,000 OR OVER IN OKLAHOMA COUNTIES IN 1960

Percentage With Income Over \$10,000 Counties Voting Republican	1952				Over 10%
	Under 3%	3.0 to 5.9%	6.0 to 9.9%	Over 10%	
Counties Voting Republican	2 ( 5%)	10 (23%)	18 (42%)	13 (30%)	43
Counties Voting Democratic	9 (27%)	13 (38%)	11 (32%)	1 ( 3%)	34
	1956				
Republican	2 ( 5%)	8 (21%)	15 (40%)	13 (34%)	38
Democratic	9 (23%)	15 (38%)	14 (36%)	1 ( 3%)	39
	1960				
Republican	6 (10%)	15 (25%)	26 (43%)	13 (22%)	60
Democratic	5 (29%)	8 (47%)	3 (18%)	1 ( 6%)	17

Source: Table 36, U.S. Census, 1960, Vol. 38, pp. 142-143.

TABLE VII  
 PERCENTAGE OF UNEMPLOYED IN THE LABOR FORCE IN OKLAHOMA COUNTIES IN 1960

Percentage Unemployed Counties Voting Republican Counties Voting Democratic	1952			
	Under 2.4%	2.4 to 4.4%	4.5 to 6.9%	7% and Over
	9 (21%)	20 (47%)	13 (30%)	1 (2%)
	0	6 (18%)	17 (50%)	11 (32%)
	1956			
Republican	8 (21%)	18 (47%)	11 (29%)	1 (3%)
Democratic	1 (3%)	8 (20%)	19 (49%)	11 (28%)
	1960			
Republican	9 (15%)	22 (37%)	21 (35%)	8 (13%)
Democratic	0	4 (23.5%)	9 (53%)	4 (23.5%)

Source: Table 36, U.S. Census, 1960, Vol. 38, pp. 142-143.

TABLE VIII  
 PERCENTAGE OF HOUSING UNITS WITHOUT TUB OR SHOWER IN OKLAHOMA COUNTIES IN 1960

Percentage Without Tub or Shower Counties Voting Republican Counties Voting Democratic	1952			20.0 to 39.9%	40% and Over
	Under 10%	10.0 to 19.9%			
	8 (19%)	12 (28%)	20 (46%)	3 (7%)	43
	2 (6%)	7 (21%)	13 (38%)	12 (35%)	34
	1956				
Republican	8 (21%)	9 (24%)	18 (47%)	3 (8%)	38
Democratic	2 (5%)	10 (26%)	15 (38%)	12 (31%)	39
	1960				
Republican	10 (16.6%)	15 (25%)	25 (41.6%)	10 (16.6%)	60
Democratic	0	4 (24%)	8 (47%)	5 (29%)	17

Source: *U.S. Census of Housing, 1960, Vol. 38, pp. 49-54.*

TABLE IXa  
 PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION THAT WAS NATIVE OF FOREIGN OR  
 MIXED PARENTAGE IN OKLAHOMA COUNTIES IN 1960

Percentage Native of Foreign Parentage Counties Voting Republican Counties Voting Democratic	1952			
	Under 1%	1.0 to 4.9%	5.0 to 9.9%	10% and Over
	2 ( 5%)	30 (70%)	10 (23%)	1 (2%)
	11 (32%)	23 (68%)	0	0
	1956			
Republican	2 ( 5%)	26 (68%)	9 (23%)	1 (3%)
Democratic	11 (28%)	27 (69%)	1 ( 3%)	0
	1960			
Republican	8 (13%)	41 (68%)	10 (17%)	1 (2%)
Democratic	5 (29%)	12 (71%)	0	0

Source: Table 35, *U.S. Census, 1960*, Vol. 38, pp. 141-142.

**TABLE IXb**  
**PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION THAT WAS NATIVE OF FOREIGN OR MIXED**  
**PARENTAGE IN ELEVEN OKLAHOMA COUNTIES IN 1960 AND THE**  
**REPUBLICAN PERCENTAGES IN THREE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

<u>County</u>	<u>Native of Foreign or Mixed Parentage</u>	<u>1952</u>	<u>1956</u>	<u>1960</u>
Alfalfa	7.2	78.8	70.3	75.7
Blaine	8.6	72.7	67.6	67.9
Canadian	5.5	63.4	59.4	57.4
Ellis	8.2	78.3	67.6	74.6
Garfield	6.6	71.4	69.4	69.3
Grant	8.3	72.4	58.8	62.0
Kingfisher	8.9	77.0	70.2	64.5
Major	12.4	80.5	74.8	80.2
Noble	7.8	71.0	63.7	62.6
Washita	6.2	55.2	44.4	57.1
Woods	5.9	71.0	64.1	68.1

Source: Table 35, *U.S. Census, 1960*, Vol. 38, pp. 141-142.