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From Ruby-Red to Deep Purple: How New Hampshire Became a Top-Ten Swing State

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Claremont McKenna College

**From Ruby-Red to Deep Purple:
How New Hampshire Became a Top-Ten Swing State**

submitted to
Professor Jack Pitney
and
Dean Peter Uvin

by
Hannah Oh

for
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Chapter 1: Introduction

“Over the last 25 years or so, New Hampshire has gone from ruby-red Republican to a deep shade of purple, with competitive partisan elections at just about every level of government.”¹

– *Concord Monitor*, November 6, 2012

For more than half a century, the New Hampshire primary has been a key event in the presidential nomination process. In general elections, however, it used to get little attention because it was so reliably Republican. Things have now changed. Despite its small size and modest four electoral votes, New Hampshire has become an increasingly influential state in presidential elections over the past two decades. Its “first-in-the-nation” primary and prominent status as a “swing state” has attracted heavy media coverage, making it a key battleground state for presidential primary candidates and nominees. Consequently, New Hampshire’s changing political culture and its voting intentions have been subjects of discussion among presidential campaign strategists, political scientists, and news commentators across the country.

New Hampshire’s state motto, “Live Free or Die,” concisely captures its libertarian ethos. New Hampshire adopted the motto after World War II to reinvigorate its adherence to traditional American values of liberty and freedom.² Today, it ranks as

¹ Ben Leubsdorf, “New Hampshire, Once a Republican Stronghold, Has Moved Slowly to the Middle,” *Concord Monitor*, November 6, 2012, accessed November 28, 2015,

<http://www.concordmonitor.com/news/livebreakingnews/2655386-95/state-hampshire-democrat-republican>

² “New Hampshire Almanac, State Emblem,” State of New Hampshire, accessed November 28, 2015, <https://www.nh.gov/nhinfo/emblem.html>

the fourth freest state in the country, and there are several characteristics that make it politically distinct.³ First, New Hampshire takes pride in having the nation's largest state "Citizen Legislature," composed of 424 members who come from a variety of professions and who each respond to a relatively small number of constituents.⁴ Second, New Hampshire is one of the few states without an income or sales tax.⁵ In 1972, Governor Meldrim Thomson Jr. officially created "The Pledge" in New Hampshire, which committed gubernatorial candidates to veto any income or sales tax proposals during their tenure.⁶ Since then, "The Pledge" has remained a staple in New Hampshire politics, and no governor has been elected without taking it.⁷ Third, New Hampshire tends to be less religious than most other states. Only 20 percent of New Hampshire's residents attend religious services every week, which is the second lowest rate in the country next to Vermont.⁸ Fourth, New Hampshire has distinctive state policies: for example, it has one of the weakest sets of gun control laws in the country,⁹ and it is the only state without mandatory seatbelt laws for adults.¹⁰ Since its founding, New

³ "Freedom in the 50 States, #4 New Hampshire," Mercatus Center, George Mason University, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://freedominthe50states.org/overall/new-hampshire>

⁴ "New Hampshire Almanac, State Government Overview," State of New Hampshire, accessed November 28, 2015, <https://www.nh.gov/nhinfo/stgovt.html>

⁵ "Residents, Taxes," State of New Hampshire, accessed November 28, 2015, <https://www.nh.gov/residents/taxes.html>

⁶ Grover Norquist, *End the IRS Before It Ends Us: How to Restore a Low Tax, High Growth, Wealthy America*, (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2015).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Frank Newport, "Frequent Church Attendance Highest in Utah, Lowest in Vermont," *Gallup*, February 17, 2015, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/181601/frequent-church-attendance-highest-utah-lowest-vermont.aspx>

⁹ "New Hampshire State Profile," NRA-ILA, November 12, 2014, accessed November 28, 2015, <https://www.nraila.org/gun-laws/state-gun-laws/new-hampshire/>

¹⁰ "Seat Belt Laws," Governors Highway Safety Association, November 2015, accessed November 28, 2015, http://www.ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/seatbelt_laws.html

Hampshire has been the home for many moderate “Yankee Republicans,” who have often represented the fiscally conservative, socially liberal wing of the Republican Party.¹¹

As a result, New Hampshire remained a reliably Republican state for over 130 years: from 1856 to 1988, the state consistently elected Republican presidential candidates with only some exceptions (1912, 1916, 1936, 1940, 1944, and 1964).¹² In fact, the entire Northeast region was a solid voter base for the Republican Party throughout most of this era.¹³ Several states in the Northeast began shifting toward Democratic presidential candidates starting in the late 1960s, but New Hampshire, along with Vermont, continued to elect Republican candidates.¹⁴

At the state level, however, Democrats in New Hampshire were starting to gain traction during this time. Over two-thirds of New Hampshire’s governors have been Republicans, but in 1962, Democrat John King won the governorship, becoming the state’s first Democratic Governor in nearly four decades.¹⁵ That same year, New Hampshire voters elected Thomas McIntyre to be the state’s first Democratic Senator in nearly three decades.¹⁶ In 1974, Democrat John Durkin won a special election to fill the state’s second Senate seat. In 1978, McIntyre lost to Republican Gordon Humphrey, and

¹¹ Cliff Montgomery, “‘Yankee Republicans’ May Be On Last Legs,” *American Spark*, November 15, 2006, accessed on October 23, 2015, http://www.americanspark.com/bytes_11-15-06.html

¹² “Presidential General Election Results – New Hampshire,” U.S. Election Atlas, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/index.html>

¹³ Howard L. Reiter and Jeffrey M. Stonecash, *Counter Realignment: Political Change in the Northeastern United States*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹⁴ “Historical Timeline,” 270 to Win, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://www.270towin.com/historical-presidential-elections/timeline/>

¹⁵ “New Hampshire: Past Governors Bios,” National Governors Association, accessed November 28, 2015, http://www.nga.org/cms/home/governors/past-governors-bios/page_new_hampshire.html

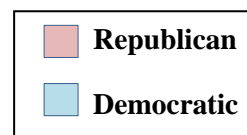
¹⁶ Niall Palmer, “Blue Dawn? New Hampshire and the Limits of the New England Democratic Rival,” in *Presidential Swing States: Why Only Ten Matter*, ed. by Donald Beachler et. al., (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

two years later Durkin lost to Republican Warren Rudman in the Reagan landslide.¹⁷

Though Republicans regained hold of New Hampshire throughout the 1980s, Democrats began winning more gubernatorial and congressional elections again in the 1990s.

New Hampshire Election Results

Presidential Election	Winning Percentage
1960	53.42%
1964	63.89%
1968	52.10%
1972	63.98%
1976	54.75%
1980	57.74%
1984	68.66%
1988	62.49%
1992	38.86%
1996	49.32%
2000	48.07%
2004	50.24%
2008	54.13%
2012	51.98%



Source: U.S. Election Atlas, New Hampshire, 1960-2012.¹⁸

After 1988, New Hampshire experienced an abrupt shift in its presidential elections, favoring Democratic candidates in five out of the next six election cycles.¹⁹ In the 1988 election, George H.W. Bush won with 62.49 percent of the vote, even though his opponent, former Governor Michael Dukakis, was popular in the neighboring state of Massachusetts. In 1992, however, support for Bush sharply declined to 37.64 percent. Bill Clinton picked up New Hampshire with only 38.86 percent of the vote, and independent candidate Ross Perot received 22.35 percent. Many people have argued that

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ U.S. Election Atlas. "Presidential General Election Results – New Hampshire."

¹⁹ Ibid.

Clinton won because Perot had effectively split the Republican vote that year, but the GOP's failure to regain the strong foothold it once had in New Hampshire in the elections following 1992 suggests that a larger political shift has occurred.

The 1990s marked the beginning of New Hampshire's political transformation into a key swing state in presidential elections. Since 1992, there has been a sharp rise in the percentage of registered independent voters in New Hampshire, outnumbering registered Republicans and Democrats by the late 1990s.²⁰ During the 1992 and 1996 presidential elections, growing numbers of independents in New Hampshire were drawn to Clinton's fiscally conservative, socially moderate views, and they often spurned Republican candidates who embraced socially conservative positions on issues such as abortion, gay marriage, and stem cell research.²¹ In the 2000 primary, New Hampshire favored John McCain, who focused on fiscal issues and downplayed social issues, over George W. Bush, who put more focus on socially conservative stances. In the general election, Bush won New Hampshire with 48.07 percent, but many people attribute his close victory to the split between Al Gore and Ralph Nader who each received 46.8 percent and 3.9 percent of the state's vote. In 2004, without a progressive third-party candidate running, Bush lost New Hampshire with the same share of votes, 48.87 percent, while John Kerry received 50.24 percent, signifying the state's leaning toward Democratic presidential candidates. At the state level, the Democratic Party won historic

²⁰ Daniel Barrick et al., "What is New Hampshire? A Collection of Data for Those Seeking Answers," New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies, September 2013, accessed November 28, 2015, http://www.nhpolicy.org/UploadedFiles/Reports/WINH_final_revised_100113.pdf

²¹ Dante Scala, "Shifting Granite: New Hampshire's Change from Largely Republican to Largely Democratic over Two Election Cycles," in *The Change Election: Money, Mobilization, and Persuasion in the 2008 Federal Elections*, ed. by David Magleby, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).

majorities in both chambers of New Hampshire's legislature in 2006 and 2008, while still controlling the governorship.²²

Political observers credit New Hampshire's political shift to the demographic changes that have altered the state's political composition. Scholars argue that large migration waves of "Massachusetts liberals" from the mid- to late-twentieth century have shifted the state ideologically to the left.²³ Between 1960 and 2000, New Hampshire's population more than doubled, from 600,000 to over 1.2 million residents.²⁴ Much of this growth stemmed from net migration gains, primarily coming from the Boston metropolitan area, rather than a natural population increase in the state. This migration trend continued from 2000 to 2010 with over 150,000 migrants from Massachusetts now residing in New Hampshire, which constitutes 40 percent of the total number of migrants from other states.²⁵

According to the "migration theory," the urban, well-educated, and high-income migrants from Massachusetts, who tend to vote Democratic in presidential elections, have mixed with New Hampshire's traditionally conservative voter base to create the swing state that it is today.²⁶ Moreover, scholars argue that the Republican Party has done little to accommodate these new voters. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the entire Northeast region was attracting a new population that relied more on government

²² Barrick, "What is New Hampshire? A Collection of Data for Those Seeking Answers."

²³ Palmer, "Blue Dawn? New Hampshire and the Limits of the New England Democratic Rival."

²⁴ "Resident Population and Apportionment of the U.S. House of Representatives," United States Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/dmd/www/resapport/states/newhampshire.pdf>

²⁵ "Migration In-Out," State of New Hampshire, New Hampshire Migration Trends, <https://www.nh.gov/oep/data-center/documents/migration-trends.xls>

²⁶ Kenneth M. Johnson et al., "Many New Voters Make the Granite State One to Watch in November," Carsey Institute, University of New Hampshire, accessed November 29, 2015, <http://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1059&context=carsey>

assistance programs, while the Republican Party, especially under President Reagan, advocated less government activism.²⁷ Therefore, because of the high number of liberal migrants in the region and the Republican Party's adoption of a stronger conservative agenda, scholars assert that the Northeast region as a whole, and later New Hampshire, experienced a significant political realignment that favored Democrats. Between 1998 and 2008, New Hampshire's voter registration numbers grew overall by 14 percent. Democratic registrations grew by 30 percent during this time, while Republican registrations remained stagnant.²⁸

Nevertheless, a look at county-level data offers a different story. While statewide migration trends provide an adequate overview of the broad changes that have swept through the Northeast region, they mask important differences among certain counties that have experienced varying degrees of political shifts. According to the "migration theory," New Hampshire's urban, most southern border counties with the highest migration rates, such as Hillsborough and Rockingham, should have become more liberal than other counties. But they have both remained swing counties with Hillsborough voting Democratic in the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections by only 51.2 percent and 49.7 percent, and Rockingham voting Democratic by 49.9 percent in 2008 and Republican by 51.6 percent in 2012. On the contrary, the state's rural, most northern counties with much lower migration rates, such as Coos and Grafton, should have remained relatively conservative, according to the "migration theory," but they have become significantly more liberal. Coos voted Democratic in the 2008 and 2012

²⁷ Reiter and Stonecash, "Counter Realignment: Political Change in the Northeastern United States."

²⁸ Johnson et al. "Many New Voters Make the Granite State One to Watch in November."

presidential elections by 58.3 percent and 57.9 percent, and Grafton voted Democratic by even larger margins of 63.0 percent in 2008 and 60.9 percent in 2012. These results clash with the migration theory's assumption that a high influx of migrants itself creates a more liberal voting bloc.

From county-level data, one can develop a more nuanced analysis of the political effects of migration in New Hampshire than what is currently assumed. When one looks at the northern and southern parts of New Hampshire, one can see that the most important determinant of New Hampshire's political shift is not the numerical migration rate, but the type of economy in each county and the specific type of migrants these economies attract. For example, the urban, southern border counties of Hillsborough and Rockingham attract migrants who work for high-skill technology firms and other professional service industries that bring independent, rather than staunchly liberal, voters to the region. So despite having high migration rates and population growth, these southern counties have been swing counties because many of the migrants in this region are independent voters. By contrast, in the rural, northern counties of Coos and Grafton, their amenities- and recreation-based economy tends to attract young, low-skilled workers or retiring Baby Boomers who constitute a more liberal voting bloc. So despite having low migration rates and population losses, these northern counties have turned blue in the past few decades because those who have remained in or migrated to the region are more likely to vote for Democrats.

This study provides a data-driven explanation for New Hampshire's political transformation into a swing state by examining the two main types of economies in the

state and the political leanings of the voters that these economies tend to attract. For clarity, it only looks at four counties. Hillsborough and Rockingham were chosen because they are the most urban counties with the two highest population growth rates in the state. If the “migration theory” were true, these two counties should have turned into strong liberal voting blocs because they contain the most migrants from the Boston metropolitan area. Coos and Grafton are rural counties with the two lowest population growth rates in the state. The theory would suggest that these two counties should have remained relatively conservative, or at least turned into swing counties, since they did not experience an influx of liberal migrants. Through an evaluation of both economic and political data, this study casts doubt on the “migration theory.”

Understanding the political dynamics in these two regions of New Hampshire and their various voting blocs offers a more nuanced, in-depth theory than the one currently provided for the state as a whole, which almost exclusively relies on statewide migration data. A more detailed explanation based on county economies is valuable to tailor political strategies in these different regions of New Hampshire, and it offers an alternative theory about the political effects of migration in general, which could warrant further study in the future.

Chapter 2: Overview of New Hampshire

Population

New Hampshire stands out among New England states because of its unusually high population growth rate. From 1960 to 2000, New Hampshire's population more than doubled.²⁹ During this period, New Hampshire became the fastest-growing state in New England.

State	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	△
NH	606,921	737,681	920,610	1,109,252	1,235,786	104%
VT	389,881	444,330	511,456	562,758	608,827	56%
CT	2,535,234	3,031,709	3,107,576	3,287,116	3,405,565	34%
MA	969,265	992,048	1,124,660	1,227,928	1,247,923	29%
ME	969,265	992,048	1,124,660	1,227,928	1,247,923	29%
RI	859,488	946,725	947,154	1,003,464	1,048,319	22%

Source: United States Census Bureau, 1960-2000.³⁰

New Hampshire's high population growth rate reflected the positive net migration gains from Massachusetts residents, especially those from the Boston metropolitan area, moving into Hillsborough and Rockingham Counties, which are adjacent to Massachusetts. These two counties alone accounted for 61 percent of the population increase in New Hampshire over these four decades.³¹ Residents from Massachusetts were drawn to New Hampshire because of its lower housing costs and lower tax rates, which were particularly attractive for business owners looking to relocate or open new offices. According to the 2000 Census, over 25 percent of the migrants who moved to

²⁹ Michael Dupre and Dante Scala, "Border Crossings: The Impact of Migration on the New Hampshire House of Representatives," Saint Anselm College, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://www.anselm.edu/Documents/NHIOP/Working%20Papers/bordercrossing1.pdf>

³⁰ "Census of Population and Housing," United States Census Bureau, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html>

³¹ Ibid.

New Hampshire still worked in Massachusetts.³² Another cause behind the high population growth rate is the expansion of recreational sites in the rural parts of New Hampshire. Over time, migrants have been drawn to the state's amenities-based, scenic locations for low-skill service jobs, retirement destinations, or second vacation homes.³³

In recent years, New Hampshire's population growth rates have declined, much as with the country as a whole. Now, the state's natural increase in population—births exceeding deaths—is the primary cause of growth.³⁴ The decline in migration rates in New Hampshire, as well as New England, reflected the negative effects of the Great Recession and the resulting loss of job opportunities. However, while population growth is slowing overall in New Hampshire, some areas are still experiencing high growth rates, especially in the southern border counties of Hillsborough and Rockingham.³⁵

Economy

During the early 20th century, paper and grain mills were the key source of New Hampshire's economic stability and growth. After World War I, New Hampshire's mills, like those throughout the North, faced challenge from southern textile mills and soon became uncompetitive and outdated. Manufacturing centers then replaced these traditional mills and became the state's most prosperous industry. Employment in manufacturing increased in New Hampshire by 13 percent between 1977 and 1982, since

³² Robert Nakosteen et al., "MASS.migration," Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth, December 2003, accessed November 28, 2015, http://massinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2003/12/MassMigration_report.ashx_.pdf

³³ Kenneth M. Johnson, "New Hampshire Demographic Trends in the Twenty-First Century," Carey Institute, University of New Hampshire, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1163&context=carsey>

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

many businesses and factories from other states relocated to Hillsborough and Rockingham Counties.³⁶ The southern region of New Hampshire industrialized rapidly during this time, and the rural region in the north capitalized on the growing number of tourists and summer home buyers visiting the state. In the latter half of the twentieth century, tourism became New Hampshire's fastest growing source of income.³⁷ Thus, New Hampshire has consistently ranked among the nation's most industrialized states, despite its traditionally agricultural and pastoral characteristics.³⁸ New Hampshire now ranks 44th among states with economic activity related to agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting.³⁹ The state's economy relies almost entirely on small businesses with fewer than 500 employees. About half of its businesses employ fewer than five people, and there are only about 100 large businesses statewide that have more than 500 employees.⁴⁰

New Hampshire's services, retail trade, and manufacturing industries grew considerably during the early to mid-1990s.⁴¹ The services industry includes sectors like education and health care services, and it is the state's largest growing employment sector. Retail trade is the second largest industry, making up 27 percent of the state's total employment, and it offers many of the low-wage jobs in New Hampshire. Travel and tourism includes both the services and retail trade industries, providing 64,000 jobs and generating 8.4 percent of New Hampshire's gross state product. Manufacturing is New

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ "New Hampshire, United States," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://www.britannica.com/place/New-Hampshire-state>

³⁹ Stephen Norton et al., "What is New Hampshire? An Overview of Issues Shaping the Granite State's Future," New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies, September 2015, accessed November 28, 2015, http://www.nhpolicy.org/UploadedFiles/Reports/What_is_NH_2015.pdf

⁴⁰ "New Hampshire in the New Economy: A Vision for Expanded Prosperity," State of New Hampshire, accessed November 28, 2015, <https://www.nh.gov/oep/planning/resources/documents/state-development-plan.pdf>

⁴¹ Ibid.

Hampshire's third largest industry. Over time, the state's manufacturing industry has shifted from creating non-durable goods, such as paper and lumber, to high-end technology, such as electronics and software. In the late 1990s, finance, insurance, and real estate fields grew dramatically as well. While these sectors account for only 5 percent of the state's workforce, they add the second highest contribution to New Hampshire's gross state product at 22 percent.⁴²

New Hampshire suffered from the Great Recession like most other states, but it adapted its economy to spark a quick recovery. New Hampshire has reduced its unemployment rate below the national rate, and it has produced a higher than average annual economic growth rate.⁴³ New Hampshire has also developed a more business-friendly climate in recent years, ranking in multiple lists for the nation's top ten states for business growth, inventiveness, and technological innovation.⁴⁴ Strong tourism-related sales still continue to rise in the state.⁴⁵

New Hampshire's economy has moved toward smart manufacturing/high technology (SMHT) industries. According to 2011 reports, the SMHT industry brought in the most wealth to New Hampshire compared to any other sector.⁴⁶ New Hampshire now has a notably high concentration of technology workers, representing 12 percent of New

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ "New Hampshire," Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce, accessed November 28, 2015, <https://www.bea.gov/regional/bearfacts/pdf.cfm?fips=33000&areatype=STATE&geotype=3>

⁴⁴ "New Hampshire Economic Outlook," New England Council, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://newenglandcouncil.com/assets/NH-Executive-Summary.pdf>

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ "SMHT Report," New Hampshire High Tech Council, accessed November 28, 2015, <https://nhhtc.org/workforce/smht-report/>

Hampshire’s total private employment.⁴⁷ The SMHT sector employs about 44,000 people and contributes \$3 billion to the state’s GDP, which is a significantly higher economic impact than most other sectors.⁴⁸

Compared to the nation as a whole, New Hampshire fares much better in educational attainment, employment, and median household income.⁴⁹ According to the 2010 Census, 32.9 percent of New Hampshire’s population over the age of 25 has obtained at least a bachelor’s degree, compared to 27.9 percent in the country. Additionally, 65.8 percent of New Hampshire’s adult population is employed in the civilian labor force, compared to 59.4 percent in the country. And finally, New Hampshire has a median household income that is \$12,000 higher than the national median household income.

	Bachelor's, 25 Years+	Percent	Employed, 16 Years+	Percent	Median Income, Total Households
NH	294,200	32.90%	695,283	65.80%	\$63,277
US	55,726,999	27.90%	141,833,331	59.40%	\$51,914

Source: United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010.⁵⁰

These three statistics provide a general sense of the attractive features of New Hampshire’s economy and labor force that draw in many businesses and migrants seeking to relocate and work in the state. Overall, New Hampshire has experienced positive results in the past few decades, especially after it modernized parts of its economy to boost its SMHT and tourism industries.

⁴⁷ “High Tech Employment in New Hampshire 2010,” New Hampshire Economic Conditions, December 2011, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://www.nhes.nh.gov/elmi/products/documents/ec-high-tech-10.pdf>

⁴⁸ “The NH Tech Sector,” New Hampshire High Tech Council, accessed November 28, 2015, <https://nhhtc.org/about/the-nh-tech-sector/>

⁴⁹ “New Hampshire Quick Links,” United States Census Bureau, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/330001k.html>

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Presidential Election Results

In the past five decades, New Hampshire counties have roughly been split between both parties. Republican candidates had strong support in nearly every county from 1968 to 1988, but their dominance began to fade after Clinton's victory in 1992.⁵¹ Aside from Belknap and Carroll, counties in New Hampshire have either turned completely blue or have at least started to lean Democratic. The state as a whole has only elected a Republican presidential candidate once since 1988, which was George W. Bush in 2000.

In several counties, such as in Coos and Grafton, the shift toward the Democratic Party is much starker. While Coos voted for Bush in 2000 with 50.2 percent of the vote, it voted for Democratic candidates ever since then by far higher margins. In 2008 and 2012, Coos voters elected Barack Obama with nearly 58 percent of the vote both times. Grafton has shifted even more to the left. Grafton has supported Democratic candidates in every presidential election since 1992. In 2008 and 2012, Barack Obama received 63 percent and 61 percent of the vote in Grafton, respectively.

By contrast, in the southern counties of Hillsborough and Rockingham, the shift is more subtle. Hillsborough and Rockingham voted for Republican presidential candidates in the 1992, 2000, and 2004 elections, albeit by very small margins. Hillsborough backed Obama with roughly 50 percent of the vote in both 2008 and 2012. While Rockingham similarly voted for Obama in 2008 by 49.9 percent, it was one of the three counties in New Hampshire to vote for Mitt Romney in 2012 by 51.6 percent. Hillsborough and

⁵¹ "Presidential General Election Results – New Hampshire, County Data" U.S. Election Atlas, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/index.html>

Rockingham have therefore become swing counties with a large portion of crucial independent voters.

Winning Percentages in Presidential Elections, NH County Results



Year	NH	Belknap	Carroll	Cheshire	Coos	Grafton
1960	53.42%	61.90%	79.60%	57.20%	57.30%	64.90%
1964	63.89%	57.60%	55.00%	69.60%	71.10%	59.80%
1968	52.10%	61.40%	72.90%	52.60%	53.30%	59.80%
1972	63.98%	70.70%	77%	59%	60.80%	65.60%
1976	54.75%	60.80%	70.20%	53.90%	50.50%	60.30%
1980	57.74%	65.10%	67.20%	52%	60.10%	56.30%
1984	68.66%	74.60%	75.40%	63.60%	71.20%	67.60%
1988	62.49%	67.90%	70.80%	54.50%	63.30%	62%
1992	38.86%	42.40%	40.20%	46.30%	41.50%	42.30%
1996	49.32%	45.20%	44.20%	54.40%	50.90%	50.30%
2000	48.07%	55.20%	52.80%	52.00%	50.20%	47.30%
2004	50.24%	55.50%	51.80%	59.10%	50.70%	55.70%
2008	54.13%	50.00%	52.40%	63%	58.30%	63%
2012	51.98%	51.90%	49.70%	61.40%	57.90%	60.90%
Year	Hillsborough	Merrimack	Rockingham	Strafford	Sullivan	
1960	57.60%	60.60%	62.20%	51.40%	52.30%	
1964	67.10%	61.20%	58.30%	68%	68.90%	
1968	49.30%	57.90%	55%	50%	49.40%	
1972	64.40%	67.70%	63.10%	57.80%	58.10%	
1976	53.10%	58.60%	53.90%	48.90%	50.60%	
1980	59.80%	56.20%	57.80%	50.40%	52.90%	
1984	70.70%	67.20%	69.00%	61.30%	64.80%	
1988	65%	60.70%	63.10%	54.70%	57.80%	
1992	39.00%	41.50%	38.20%	44.70%	44.50%	
1996	48.60%	52.30%	47.40%	54.80%	48.60%	
2000	48.70%	48.10%	49.10%	51.40%	49.80%	
2004	51.00%	52.20%	51.70%	55.60%	52.40%	
2008	51.20%	56.30%	49.90%	59.50%	58.20%	
2012	49.70%	55.60%	51.60%	56.30%	55.70%	

Source: U.S. Election Atlas, New Hampshire County Data, 1960-2012.⁵²

⁵² Ibid.

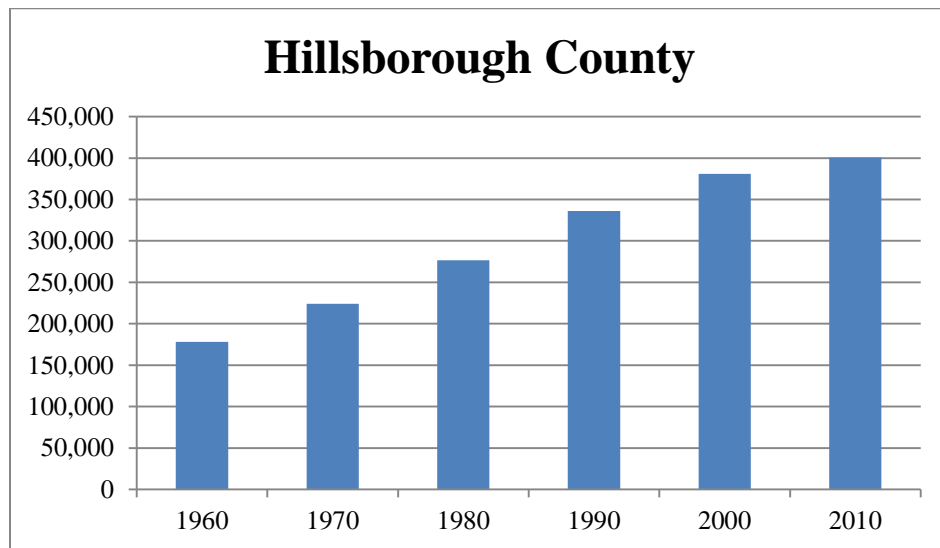
These four counties stand out because of their locations and economies. Their locations in the most southern and most northern parts of the state make it easier to distinguish the economies they contain, casting light on the relationship between certain types of economies and the political effects of migration. Hillsborough and Rockingham are typically grouped together because of their significant urban centers and high population growth rates, while Coos and Grafton are both known for their rural landscapes and amenities-based attractions. The results of national studies on the voting behavior of high-skilled workers in industrializing urban areas and low-skilled workers in newly developed rural areas can be applied to both of these regions because they neatly fit these categories. The following chapter looks at the economic and political datasets from each of these four counties to examine these topics in greater detail.

Chapter 3: County Data

Hillsborough County

Population

Hillsborough is New Hampshire's most populous, and most densely populated, county with 400,721 residents.⁵³ The county contains about a third of New Hampshire's total population, and it has experienced high population growth rates since the 1960s.⁵⁴ The largest increase occurred between 1980 and 1990 when the county gained approximately 60,000 new residents. Many of these new residents were migrants from other states. From 1985 to 1990, Hillsborough added over 55,000 out-of-state migrants, and from 1995 to 2000, it added about 48,000—the highest number of out-of-state migrants of all of New Hampshire's counties.⁵⁵



Source: United States Census Bureau, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire, 1960-2010.⁵⁶

⁵³ "Hillsborough County, New Hampshire," United States Census Bureau, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/33/33011.html>

⁵⁴ "New Hampshire, Population of Counties by Decennial Census: 1900 to 1990," United States Census Bureau, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://www.census.gov/population/cencounts/nh190090.txt>

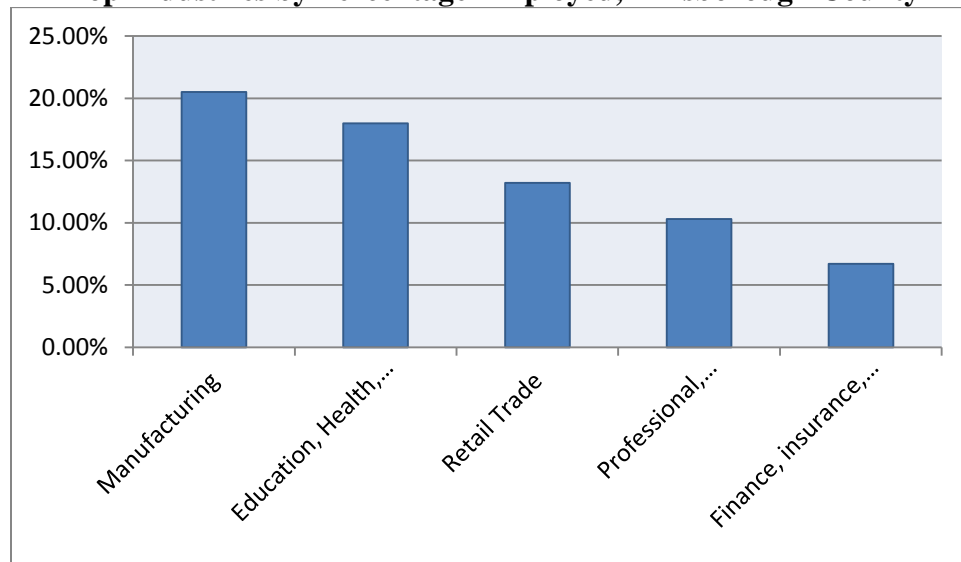
⁵⁵ "New Hampshire, Migration and Immigration," Census Scope, accessed November 28, 2015, http://www.censuscope.org/us/s33/c3/chart_migration.html

⁵⁶ United States Census Bureau. "Hillsborough County, New Hampshire."

Economy

Hillsborough’s population growth is rooted in its thriving industrial cities and metropolitan areas. It has the state’s two largest cities: Manchester and Nashua. Over the past several decades, these cities have transformed from traditional mill and farm towns into industrial centers and modernized urban hubs.⁵⁷ They have become desirable locations for many businesses seeking to relocate and for workers with families seeking more affordable costs of living compared to Boston.⁵⁸ The top five industries in Hillsborough are its manufacturing industry, which employs over 20 percent of its workforce, followed by education, health, and social services; retail trade; professional, scientific, and management services; and finance, insurance, and real estate.⁵⁹

Top Industries by Percentage Employed, Hillsborough County



Source: United States Census Bureau, Economic Characteristics, Hillsborough County, 2000.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Kenneth M. Johnson, “The Changing Faces of New Hampshire: Recent Demographic Trends in the Granite State,” Carsey Institute, University of New Hampshire, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1033&context=carsey>

⁵⁸ Paul Feely, “Manchester-Nashua Region Ranked Second-Best Place for Families,” *New Hampshire Union Leader*, July 26, 2012, accessed November 28, 2015,

<http://www.unionleader.com/article/20120726/NEWHAMPSHIRE/707269909&template=mobileart>

⁵⁹ “Hillsborough County, New Hampshire, Economic Characteristics,” United States Census Bureau, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/33/33011k.html>

⁶⁰ Ibid.

During the twentieth century, Manchester was a single-industry, textile town.⁶¹ Today, Manchester is most known for its retail center and over 200 manufacturing firms. The city is also known for its major insurance and financial institutions. In the past few decades, Manchester has engaged in revitalization efforts for its downtown area, opening up major hotels, convention centers, and the Verizon Wireless Arena in 2001 to host more business conferences, sporting events, and entertainment venues.⁶² These revitalization efforts have contributed to the growth and retention of Manchester's workforce. In 2013, Manchester ranked among the top ten most upwardly mobile cities in the country.⁶³ Nashua, by contrast, is most known for its high technology industry. The city benefits from its proximity to Boston. Many business service firms and information technology (IT) companies have moved to the city, specifically for Nashua's highly skilled, highly educated workforce.⁶⁴ Nashua's population is relatively young compared to most other counties. Nashua's second largest segment of its population is 25 to 34 year-olds.⁶⁵ Oftentimes, graduates from nearby academic institutions, such as Harvard, MIT, Boston College, and Boston University, move to Nashua to work in industries like engineering, business, and other technical fields.⁶⁶ Nashua is now part of Boston's high-

⁶¹ "The Northeast, Manchester: Economy," City Data, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://www.city-data.com/us-cities/The-Northeast/Manchester-Economy.html>

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Max Nisen, "10 Cities Where the American Dream is Still Alive," *Business Insider*, July 30, 2013, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://www.businessinsider.com/10-cities-where-the-american-dream-is-still-alive-2013-7>

⁶⁴ "Chapter 3 – Overview of the New Hampshire and Regional Economy," New Hampshire State Airport System Plan Update, State of New Hampshire, accessed November 28, 2015, <https://www.nh.gov/dot/org/aerorailtransit/aeronautics/sasp/documents/TR3economic.pdf>

⁶⁵ "Demographics," City of Nashua, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://nashuadares.com/grow-your-business/demographics/>

⁶⁶ "Workforce," City of Nashua, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://nashuadares.com/grow-your-business/skilled-workforce/>

tech corridor, hosting companies like BAE Systems, Teradyne Connection Systems, Hewlett-Packard, and other software development, engineering, and IT companies.⁶⁷

Tens of thousands of migrants from Boston have moved to Hillsborough, seeking to work for large companies in urban settings, while still enjoying the benefits of New Hampshire’s more affordable cost of living. Since 1990, there has been a substantial net inflow of working-age migrants and children in Hillsborough, which reflects this larger trend.⁶⁸ Additionally, many residents in Manchester and Nashua still commute to and work in the Boston area.⁶⁹

Hillsborough has better educational attainment levels, employment percentages, and median income numbers than New Hampshire as a whole.⁷⁰

	Bachelor's Degree, 25 years+	Percent	Employed, 16 years+	Percent	Median Income, Total Households
Hillsborough	93,026	34.50%	213,942	67.90%	\$69,321
NH	294,200	32.90%	695,283	65.80%	\$63,277

Source: United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010.⁷¹

Hillsborough has a relatively highly educated population. Out of its population aged 25 or over, 34.5 percent hold at least a bachelor’s degree, which is slightly higher than the statewide average. The high percentage of Hillsborough residents with college degrees is one reason why several businesses have been attracted to the region. Nearly

⁶⁷ “NH’s Top 100 Public Companies,” American Registry, accessed November 28, 2015,

<http://www.americanregistry.com/recognition/nhs-top-100-public-companies/12205>

⁶⁸ Johnson, “The Changing Faces of New Hampshire: Recent Demographic Trends in the Granite State.”

⁶⁹ Emily Corwin, “Granite Staters Commute Longer Than Most, Paying Quarter Billion in Income Taxes to Massachusetts,” State Impact, March 28, 2013, accessed November 28, 2015,

<https://stateimpact.npr.org/new-hampshire/2013/03/28/granite-staters-commute-longer-than-most-paying-quarter-billion-in-income-taxes-to-massachusetts/>

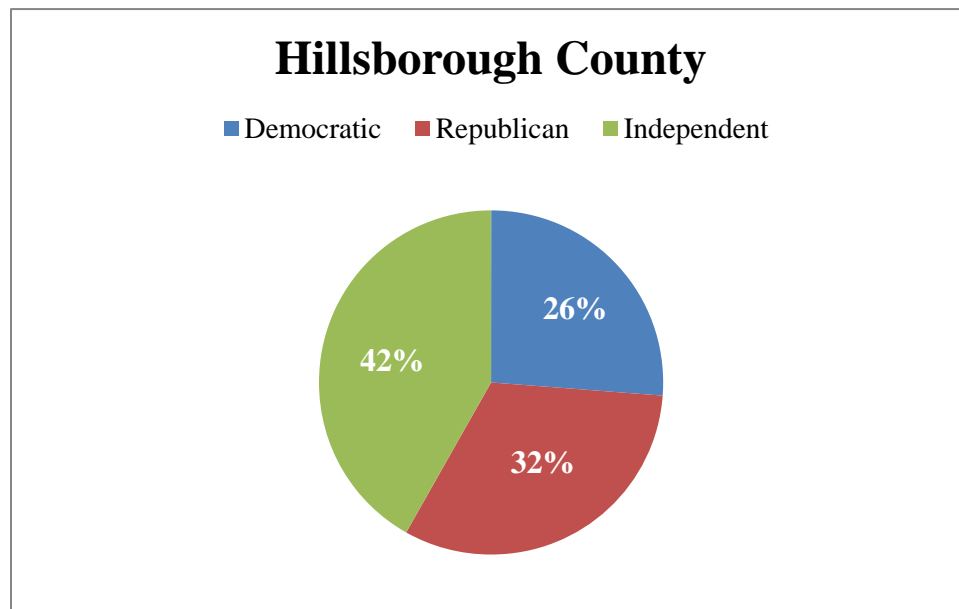
⁷⁰ “Hillsborough County, New Hampshire QuickLinks,” United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Social and Economic Characteristics, 2010, accessed November 28, 2015,

<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/33/33011lk.html>

⁷¹ Ibid.

214,000 residents—68 percent of Hillsborough’s population aged 16 or over—are employed in the civilian labor force, which is 2 percent higher than the statewide average. The county’s largest employers include Fidelity Investments, a highly prominent Boston-based mutual fund; BAE Systems, the state’s largest manufacturing employer; and many hospitals and health care service providers.⁷² The county’s median household income is \$6,000 above the statewide average. These numbers have been increasing ever since Hillsborough’s downtown revitalization efforts and the development of its high-tech corridor.

Presidential Election Results



Source: United States Census, Political Party Registration Counts, 2010.⁷³


⁷² “Hillsborough County,” Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, NH Employment Security, December 2014, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://www.nhes.nh.gov/elmi/products/cp/documents/hillsborough-cp.pdf>

⁷³ “Population of Hillsborough County, New Hampshire: Census 2010 and 2000 – Overview Statistics and Quick Facts,” Census Viewer, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://censusviewer.com/county/NH/Hillsborough>

Since the late 1990s, Hillsborough gained a substantial number of Independent voters and a relatively modest number of Democratic voters. This trend reflects the statewide trend. Since 1996, the percentage of registered Independents in New Hampshire has increased from 28 percent to 37 percent.⁷⁴ In both cases, much of this increase relates to the overall increase of high-technology workers. Nationwide studies have found that high-technology workers tend to be less partisan, less politically involved, and less trusting about the role of government.⁷⁵

Hillsborough County Election Results

Presidential Election	Winning Percentage
1960	57.60%
1964	67.10%
1968	49.30%
1972	64.40%
1976	53.10%
1980	59.80%
1984	70.70%
1988	65%
1992	39.00%
1996	48.60%
2000	48.70%
2004	51.00%
2008	51.20%
2012	49.70%



Source: U.S. Election Atlas, New Hampshire, Hillsborough County, 1960-2012.⁷⁶

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Hillsborough became known as a strong Republican county in presidential elections, as many conservative Bostonians migrated to

⁷⁴ Leslie Eaton, “The New New Hampshire Has a High-Tech Face,” *The New York Times*, January 31, 2000, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/01/31/us/the-new-new-hampshire-has-a-high-tech-face.html>

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ “Presidential General Election Results – New Hampshire, Hillsborough County,” U.S. Election Atlas, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/index.html>

southern half of New Hampshire. The county became a reliable voter base for Republicans, voting for Ronald Reagan by over 70 percent in 1984. After the late 1980s, Democrats started making significant inroads in Hillsborough. After voting for George H.W. Bush by 65 percent in 1988, his support dropped down to 39 percent in 1992. The county voted for Bill Clinton in 1996, the first Democratic candidate Hillsborough elected in almost three decades. Today, Hillsborough remains one of New Hampshire's most important swing counties. County residents narrowly voted for George W. Bush in 2000 and 2004 and then supported Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012 by similarly slim margins. Independent voters in Hillsborough are unpredictable, focusing more on issues than on party lines. These independents have significant voting power, since Hillsborough contributes nearly a third of all votes cast in the state.⁷⁷

While Hillsborough has become less conservative over time, its shift was not necessarily the result of more liberal migrants entering the county from Boston, as the “migration theory” assumes. In fact, these large migration waves occurred in decades when Hillsborough had its strongest Republican voting numbers. Hillsborough became a competitive swing county in the past decade because of its rising number of independent voters, who were attracted to New Hampshire's more affordable, business-friendly climate. While the number of registered Democrats increased slightly over this period, there was no large wave of liberal migrants from Boston that significantly skewed the county's partisan makeup. Registered Republican voters in Hillsborough still outnumber Democrats by 6 percent.

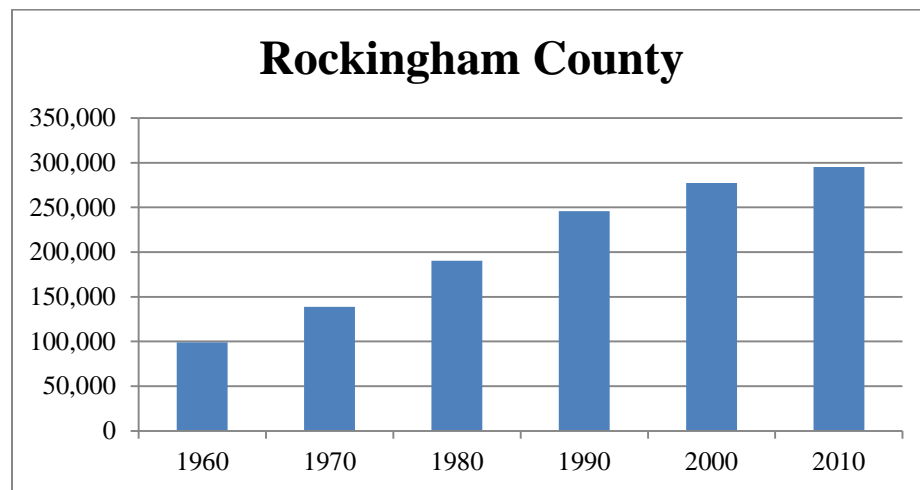
⁷⁷ Dante J. Scala, “Changes in New Hampshire's Republican Party: Evolving Footprint in Presidential Politics, 1960-2008,” Carsey Institute, University of New Hampshire, 2011, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1155&context=carsey>

This case study of Hillsborough shows that despite its high migration numbers, the county has not turned into a Democratic voter base in presidential elections. It remains a competitive swing county due to the increasing number of independent voters, who have tilted the county toward both directions over the past two decades.

Rockingham County

Population

East of Hillsborough is Rockingham, New Hampshire's second most populous county with 300,000 residents.⁷⁸ Rockingham made its most significant population gains during the 1970s and 1980s when it added over 100,000 residents. Population growth rates have declined slightly since then. During these five decades, its population increased by 200 percent.



Source: United States Census Bureau, Rockingham County, New Hampshire, 1960-2010.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ "Rockingham County, New Hampshire," United States Census Bureau, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/33/33015.html>

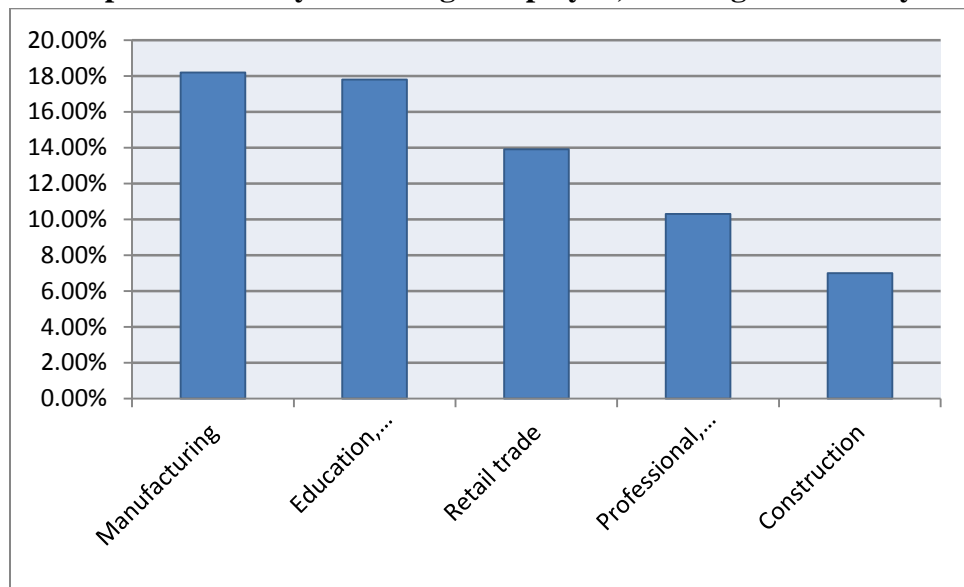
⁷⁹ Ibid.

Rockingham has the second highest number of out-of-state migrants after Hillsborough. From 1985 to 1990, Rockingham added 55,000 out-of-state migrants, and from 1995 to 2000, it added 43,000 out-of-state migrants.⁸⁰ As of 2013, over two-thirds of Rockingham’s population was born in a different state.⁸¹

Economy

Like Hillsborough, Rockingham was built on traditional mill and farm towns. Fishing, farming, and other agriculture-related activities were popular sources of income, especially given Rockingham’s location along New Hampshire’s seacoast. As these industries became outdated and less profitable, Rockingham, like Hillsborough, adapted and modernized its economy.

Top Industries by Percentage Employed, Rockingham County



Source: United States Census Bureau, Economic Characteristics, Hillsborough County, 2000.⁸²

⁸⁰ “Rockingham County, Migration and Immigration,” Census Scope, accessed November 28, 2015, http://www.censuscope.org/us/s33/c3/chart_migration.html

⁸¹ “Rockingham County, New Hampshire QuickLinks,” United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Social Characteristics, 2013, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/33/33015lk.html>

⁸² “Rockingham County, New Hampshire, Economic Characteristics,” United States Census Bureau, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/33/33015.html>

In the latter half of the twentieth century, Rockingham experienced tremendous industrial growth, transforming into an IT and business-services driven economy.⁸³ Many small businesses have sought after the office spaces and land development areas in Rockingham, as those located in Boston became more expensive. Additionally, Rockingham’s highly skilled, highly educated workforce has attracted technology and professional services firms to relocate in the county. Accordingly, Rockingham’s top five industries are manufacturing; education, health, and social services; retail trade; professional, scientific, and management services; and construction.⁸⁴

Rockingham was hit particularly hard by the 1980s and early 1990s recessions. To recover, the county has invested in its transportation infrastructure, commercial and industrial parks, and service and trade establishments.⁸⁵ The economic center of Rockingham is the city of Portsmouth, which employs 12,000 people. Portsmouth’s convenient location near three major highways provides easy access to other major cities in the region, such as Manchester, Nashua, Concord, and Boston. Many of Rockingham’s largest employers are headquartered in Portsmouth, such as the Hospital Corporation of America, Liberty Mutual Insurance, and Bottomline Technologies.⁸⁶

	Bachelor's Degree, 25 Years+	Percent	Employed, 16 Years+	Percent	Median Income, Total Households
Rockingham	74,477	36.60%	159,707	68.10%	\$75,825
NH	294,200	32.90%	695,283	65.80%	\$63,277

Source: United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010.⁸⁷

⁸³ “Chapter 3 – Overview of the New Hampshire and Regional Economy.”

⁸⁴ “Rockingham County, New Hampshire, Economic Characteristics.”

⁸⁵ “Chapter 3 – Overview of the New Hampshire and Regional Economy.”

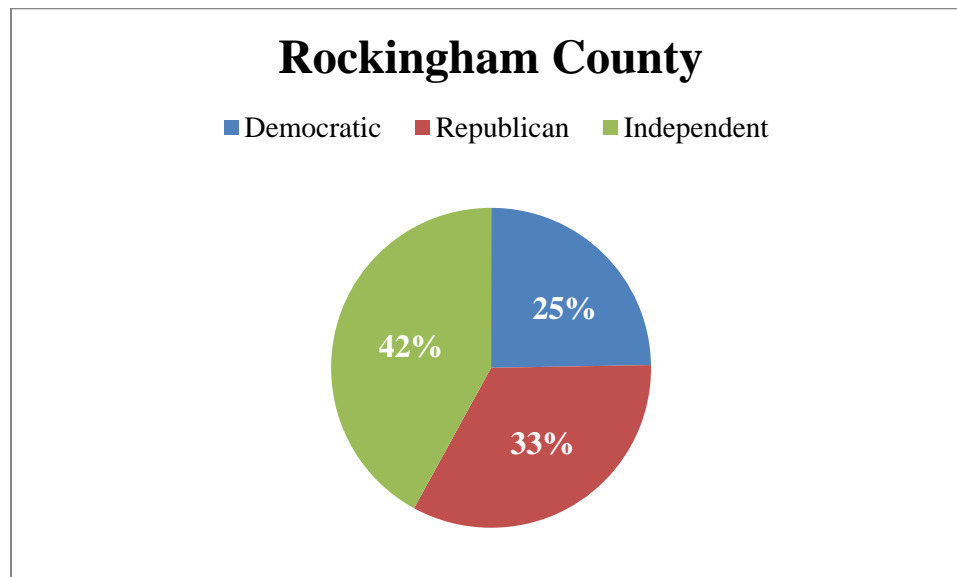
⁸⁶ “Rockingham County,” Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, NH Employment Security, December 2014, accessed November 28, 2015,

<http://www.nhes.nh.gov/elmi/products/cp/documents/rockingham-cp.pdf>

⁸⁷ “Rockingham County, New Hampshire QuickLinks.”

Like in Hillsborough, Rockingham’s population is more educated, employed, and affluent than the rest of the state. Over 36 percent of Rockingham residents aged 25 or over have at least a bachelor’s degree, which is about 4 percent higher than the statewide average. Many IT and business service companies relocate to the southern region of New Hampshire to take advantage of the high number of college graduates in the county. Over 68 percent of Rockingham’s population aged 16 or over is employed in the civilian labor force, slightly outpacing the statewide average of 66 percent. Rockingham has the highest median household income in the state at \$75,825, which is more than \$10,000 higher than the statewide average. These positive aspects of Rockingham’s economic prospects have drawn both business owners and workers to the county.

Presidential Election Results



Source: United States Census, Political Party Registration Counts, 2010.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ “Population of Rockingham County, New Hampshire: Census 2010 and 2000 – Overview Statistics and Quick Facts,” Census Viewer, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://censusviewer.com/county/NH/Rockingham>

In Rockingham, there are fewer registered Democrats than there are Republicans and Independents. Rockingham’s party registration numbers are similar to Hillsborough’s, but the portion of registered Republicans in Rockingham is slightly higher by a few percentages. Out of Rockingham’s 177,000 registered voters, a quarter are registered Democrats, a third are registered Republicans, and 42 percent are registered Independents.⁸⁹ Rockingham’s increase in independent voters can largely be attributed to the influx of high-technology and professional service workers who migrated to the county during the late-twentieth century. The percentage of Republican voters in Rockingham has remained stagnant over this period.

Rockingham County Election Results

Presidential Election	Winning Percentages
1960	62.20%
1964	58.30%
1968	55%
1972	63.10%
1976	53.90%
1980	57.80%
1984	69.00%
1988	63.10%
1992	38.20%
1996	47.40%
2000	49.10%
2004	51.70%
2008	49.90%
2012	51.60%

Republican
 Democratic

Source: U.S. Election Atlas, Rockingham County, 1960-2012.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ “Presidential General Election Results – New Hampshire, Hillsborough County,” U.S. Election Atlas, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/>

Rockingham was a strong Republican county in 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. It became a “bellwether” county, as Republican presidential candidates performed 6 percentage points better on average in Rockingham than they did statewide.⁹¹ However, there was a sharp turning point in the Rockingham electorate when support for George H.W. Bush dropped to 38.2 percent in 1992, compared with 63.1 percent in 1988. Bush still picked up Rockingham that year, along with three other New Hampshire counties. Clinton received 35 percent of the vote and Perot received 25 percent. In 1996, Clinton won with 47 percent of the vote, making him the first Democratic presidential candidate to win Rockingham in over three decades.

Since the 1990s, neither Democrats nor Republicans have done well in Rockingham. George W. Bush won by small margins in 2000 and 2004, and the 2008 election between Barack Obama and John McCain was one of the closest elections Rockingham has ever had. Obama won with 49.9 percent, while McCain was behind by fewer than 2,000 votes at 48.8 percent. The county switched back to electing a Republican candidate in 2012, voting for Mitt Romney by 51.6 percent. It was one of only three counties in the state to vote for Romney that year.

Despite Rockingham’s high migration numbers, it has remained relatively conservative. The county still has more registered Republicans than Democrats, and it has voted for Democratic presidential candidates only twice in the past two decades—Clinton in 1996 and Obama in 2008. Rockingham has gained more Independents during this

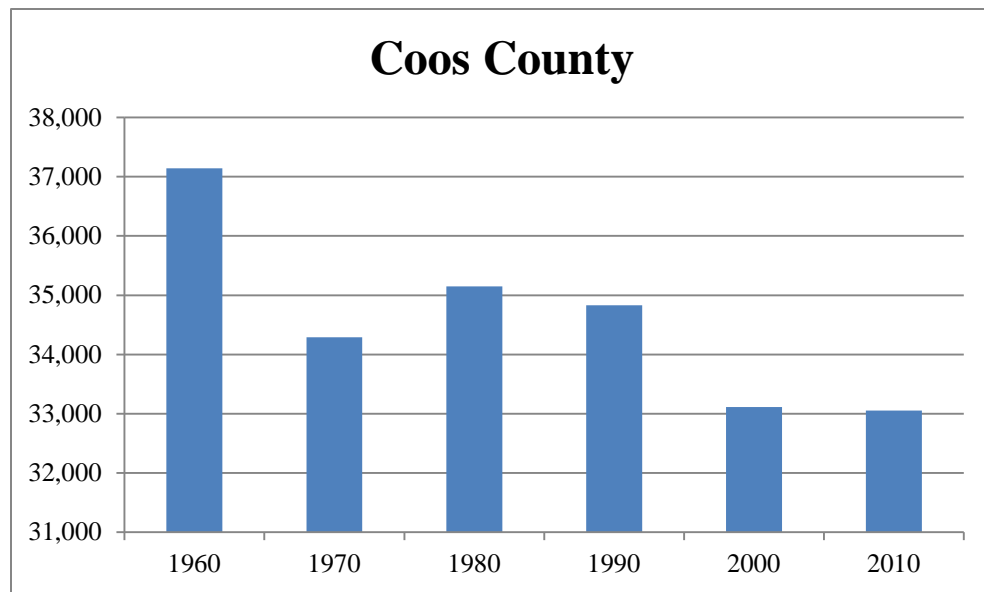
⁹¹ Scala, “Changes in New Hampshire’s Republican Party: Evolving Footprint in Presidential Politics, 1960-2008.”

period, but they have not turned the county more Democratic as expected. This case study of Rockingham weighs against the “migration theory.”

Coos County

Population

Coos covers the entire northern panhandle of the state, which contains the White Mountains and Great Northern Woods. Though the county constitutes over 20 percent of New Hampshire’s land mass, it accounts for just 2.5 percent of its total population.⁹² Unlike Hillsborough and Rockingham, Coos has lost population since the 1960s. The only population increase it experienced was from 1970 to 1980, adding less than 1,000 new residents.



Source: United States Census Bureau, Coos County, New Hampshire, 1960-2010.⁹³

⁹² “About, Coos County, New Hampshire,” County of Coos, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://www.cooscountynh.us/about>

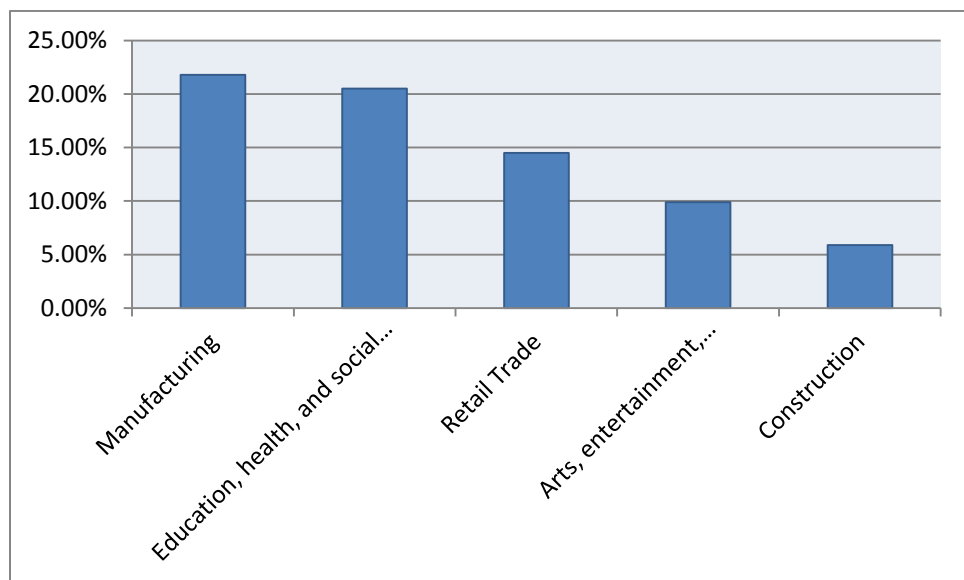
⁹³ “Coos County, New Hampshire,” United States Census Bureau, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/41/41011.html>

Coos has the lowest out-of-state migration number out of all of New Hampshire’s counties. From 1985 to 1990, Coos gained 3,200 out-of-state migrants, and from 1995 to 2000, it gained 2,700.⁹⁴ Only 29 percent of Coos’ residents were born in another state, which is a far lower rate than those of Hillsborough and Rockingham.⁹⁵

Economy

One of the major reasons for this population decline is Coos’ old, rural economy. Coos has the most unstable economic environment in New Hampshire, due to its heavily reliance on natural resources and forestry. The county consists of small towns and villages and is therefore less capable of becoming an industrial powerhouse.

Top Industries by Percentage Employed, Coos County



Source: United States Census Bureau, Economic Characteristics, Coos County, 2000.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ “Coos County, Migration and Immigration,” Census Scope, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://www.census.gov/scope/tables/states/33/330071k.html>

⁹⁵ “Coos County, New Hampshire QuickLinks,” United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Social Characteristics, 2013, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/33/330071k.html>

⁹⁶ Ibid.

The top three industries in Coos are manufacturing; education, health, and social services; and retail trade.⁹⁷ What is different in Coos, especially in comparison with Hillsborough and Rockingham, is that its fourth largest industry is the arts, entertainment, and recreation, which employs 10 percent of the county's workforce. The fifth largest industry is construction.

Historically, Coos' economy has always relied on agriculture, timber, and farming. Competition from modernized facilities around the county, and the growing lack of demand for its extraction-based products, has been a significant detriment to the region. Additionally, Coos was hit hard by the economic recessions in the late twentieth century, as well as the Great Recession in the 2000s.

To recover from these severe losses, Coos has attempted to become less dependent on its traditional, rural industries by investing more in its tourism sector, which has now become a multi-million dollar industry. The largest employers in Coos include hospitality services and seasonal resorts, such as the Mount Washington Hotel, Bretton Woods Ski Area, and Mountain View Grand.⁹⁸ "Eco-tourism" and recreational visits in these areas of Coos generate much of the county's economic activity.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ "Coos County, New Hampshire, Economic Characteristics," United States Census Bureau, 2000, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/33/330071k.html>

⁹⁸ "Coos County," Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, NH Employment Security, December 2014, accessed November 29, 2015, <http://www.nhes.nh.gov/elmi/products/cp/documents/coos-cp.pdf>

⁹⁹ "Coos County Economic Study of Current and Proposed New Federal Land," County of Coos, New Hampshire, accessed November 29, 2015, http://www.cooscountynh.us/sites/coosconh/files/file/file/coos_county_report_final_4-18-2014.pdf

Coos has far lower education attainment levels, employment rates, and median household incomes than most other counties in the state.¹⁰⁰

	Bachelor's Degree, 25 Years+	Percent	Employed, 16 Years+	Percent	Median Income, Total Households
Coos	3,971	16.10%	15,681	56.10%	\$41,534
NH	294,200	32.90%	695,283	65.80%	\$63,277

Source: United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010.¹⁰¹

Coos has the least educated population in New Hampshire with only 16 percent of its population holding at least a bachelor’s degree, which is about half that of the statewide statistic. The low educational level of Coos’ workforce discourages new businesses from seeking opportunities in the region. About 56 percent of Coos residents are employed in the civilian workforce, compared to 66 percent in the state. Employment in Coos has declined by over 10 percent since 1990.¹⁰² The county’s median household income is \$41,534, which is \$20,000 less than the statewide median. These statistics make sense, given that 20 percent of Coos’ residents are over the age of 65 and are likely retired.¹⁰³ Coos’ median age, 41, is higher than those in Hillsborough and Rockingham, which are 36 and 37, respectively. The higher median age in Coos further reflects the fact that there is a higher percentage of residents who are retired or near retirement, compared

¹⁰⁰ “Coos County, New Hampshire QuickLinks,” United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Social and Economic Characteristics, 2010, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/33/330071k.html>

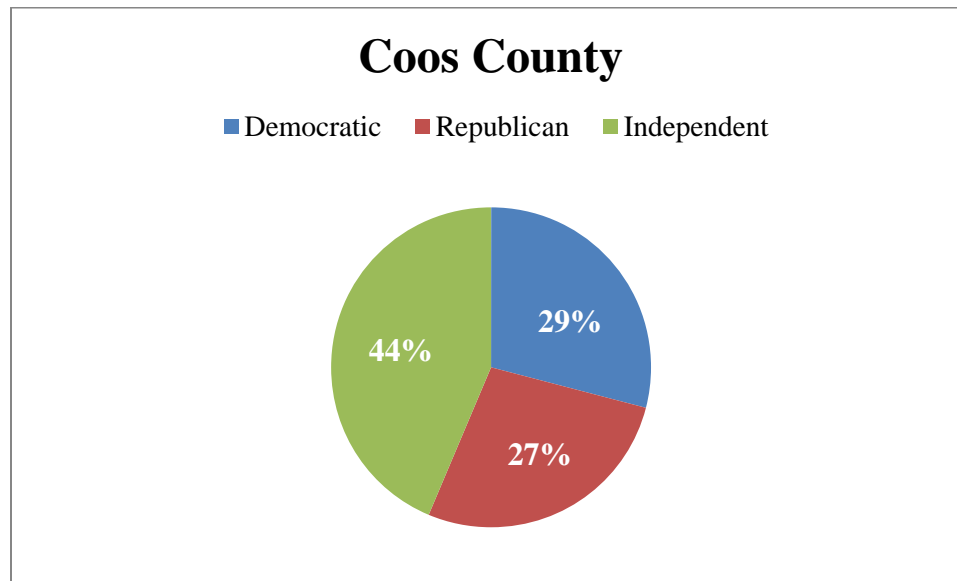
¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² County of Coos. “Coos County Economic Study of Current and Proposed New Federal Land.”

¹⁰³ United States Census Bureau. “Coos County, New Hampshire.”

to most other counties in the state.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, several small towns in Coos are made up almost entirely of seasonal vacation homes.¹⁰⁵

Presidential Election Results



Source: United States Census, Political Party Registration Counts, 2010.¹⁰⁶

Coos residents have voted for Democratic presidential candidates since 1992 (2000 was the only exception). But Coos only started voting for Democrats in large margins during the past two election cycles. In 2008 and 2012, Coos voted for Barack Obama by 58.3 percent and 57.9 percent, respectively. Despite these seemingly large Democratic gains in Coos, the county does not have a significantly higher percentage of registered Democrats than other parts of the state. Out of its 15,870 registered voters, 29 percent are registered Democrats, 27 percent are registered Republicans, and 44 percent

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

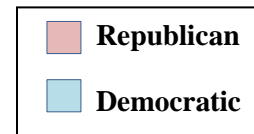
¹⁰⁵ "Why New Hampshire is a First Choice for Second Homeowners," State Impact, accessed November 29, 2015, <https://stateimpact.npr.org/new-hampshire/tag/vacation-homes/>

¹⁰⁶ "Population of Coos County, New Hampshire: Census 2010 and 2000 – Overview Statistics and Quick Facts," Census Viewer, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://censusviewer.com/county/NH/Coos>

are registered Independents. Surprisingly, these numbers are relatively consistent with the percentages in Hillsborough and Rockingham.

Coos County Election Results

Presidential Election	Winning Percentages
1960	57.30%
1964	71.10%
1968	53.30%
1972	60.80%
1976	50.50%
1980	60.10%
1984	71.20%
1988	63.30%
1992	41.50%
1996	50.90%
2000	50.20%
2004	50.70%
2008	58.30%
2012	57.90%



Source: U.S. Election Atlas, Coos County, 1960-2012.¹⁰⁷

While Coos voted for Democratic candidates throughout the 1960s and in 1976, it aligned with the rest of New Hampshire in the 1980s, voting for Republican candidates by at least 60 percent. Support for George H.W. Bush dropped down to 33.4 percent in 1992, and Clinton won the county with 41.5 percent of the vote. In 2000 and 2004, Coos remained roughly split, voting for George W. Bush by 50.2 percent and John Kerry by 50.7 percent. There was jump in 2008 and 2012 when Coos voted for Obama by approximately 58 percent—the largest percentage of votes for either side that Coos had seen since 1988.

¹⁰⁷ “Presidential General Election Results – New Hampshire, Coos County,” U.S. Election Atlas, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/index.html>

The results in Coos during the 2008 and 2012 elections are best explained by a recent study on presidential voting patterns in “new rural” economies around the country. While “old rural” economies based on farming and agriculture traditionally support Republican candidates, research has shown that there are “new rural” economies emerging in America, which are based on recreational services and natural amenities. These “new rural” economies now have the potential to be strong Democratic electoral bases.¹⁰⁸ New rural economies, such as the economy in Coos, often attract aging Baby Boomers who seek amenities-rich retirement destinations or second vacation homes. Residents of these new rural economies typically have more liberal stances on political issues, such as abortion, gay marriage, and climate change.¹⁰⁹ The study found that these residents were significantly more likely to vote for Barack Obama than their “old rural” counterparts in 2008 and 2012, which was reflected in Coos’ election results.

Despite Coos lack of migration gains and its dramatic population losses, it became more liberal in the past few decades, voting for Democratic presidential candidates in five out of the past six elections by increasingly larger margins. These results suggest that the “migration theory” cannot be the sole reason for why New Hampshire has become more Democratic, since Coos did not experience high migration, or any influx of Democratic voters, before turning decidedly blue.

¹⁰⁸ Dante J. Scala et al., “Red Rural, Blue Rural? Presidential Voting Patterns in a Changing Rural America,” *Political Geography* 48 (September 2015): 108-118.

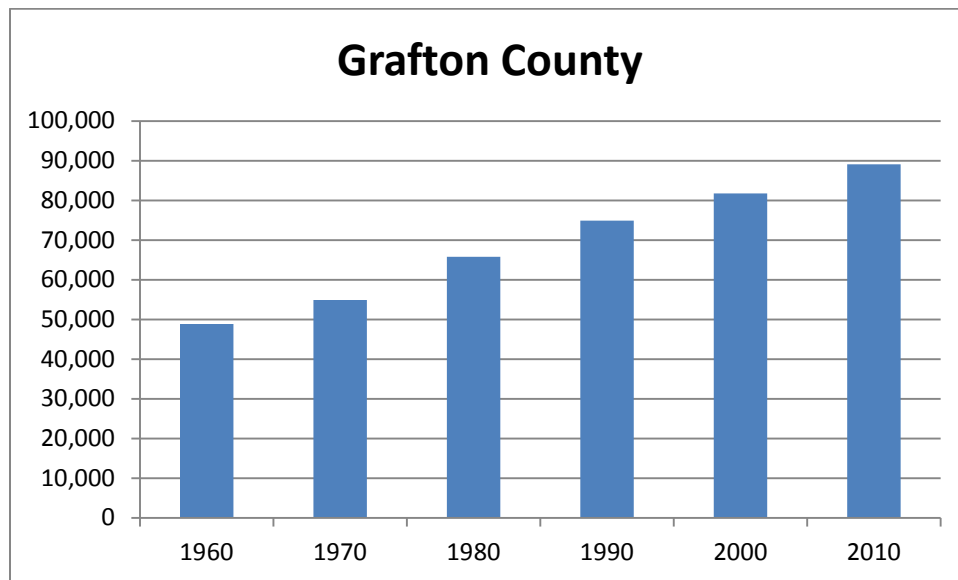
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0962629815000207>

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Grafton County

Population

Grafton is located right below Coos in the northwestern part of New Hampshire. It includes part of the White Mountains, as well as many national forests, state parks, and lakes. Grafton mainly consists of small rural communities and mid-sized towns, such as Claremont, Lebanon, and Hanover. Grafton has a population of 89,000 people. It has experienced slower population growth than most other counties. The largest increase occurred between 1970 and 1980 when the county added 11,000 people to its population. Over these past five decades, Grafton's population has increased by 82 percent.



Source: United States Census Bureau, 1960-2010.¹¹⁰

Grafton has moderate out-of-state migrant numbers since many people come to Grafton to attend, teach at, or research for Dartmouth College and other academic

¹¹⁰ "Grafton County, New Hampshire," United States Census Bureau, accessed November 29, 2015, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/33/33009.html>

institutions. From 1985 to 1990, Grafton added 16,000 out-of-state migrants, and from 1995 to 2000, it added nearly 14,000.¹¹¹

Economy

Like Coos, Grafton is rich in amenities and natural resources. Grafton has also abandoned its “old rural” economic activities in favor of a “new rural” economy based on services and other tourism-centered activities. There are three types of labor markets in Grafton.¹¹² First, there are colleges and universities, along with some high technology and medical businesses, in Hanover and Lebanon, which create vital academic and research communities in the southwestern corner of the county. Grafton benefits from the presence of both Dartmouth College and Plymouth State University. These academic and research communities have attracted highly educated workers and employ a significant portion of the county’s population. Grafton’s top employers are Dartmouth College and the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, which employ 10,000 people combined.¹¹³ Second, Grafton has a service-based sector that is driven by tourism, retail trade, and second home ownership. The county has successfully adapted part of its “old rural” economy by boosting its amenities- and recreation-based activities, capitalizing on the state’s growing tourism industry. Winter ski parks and summer lake resorts are two of the

¹¹¹ “Grafton County, Migration and Immigration,” Census Scope, accessed November 28, 2015, http://www.censuscope.org/us/s33/c3/chart_migration.html

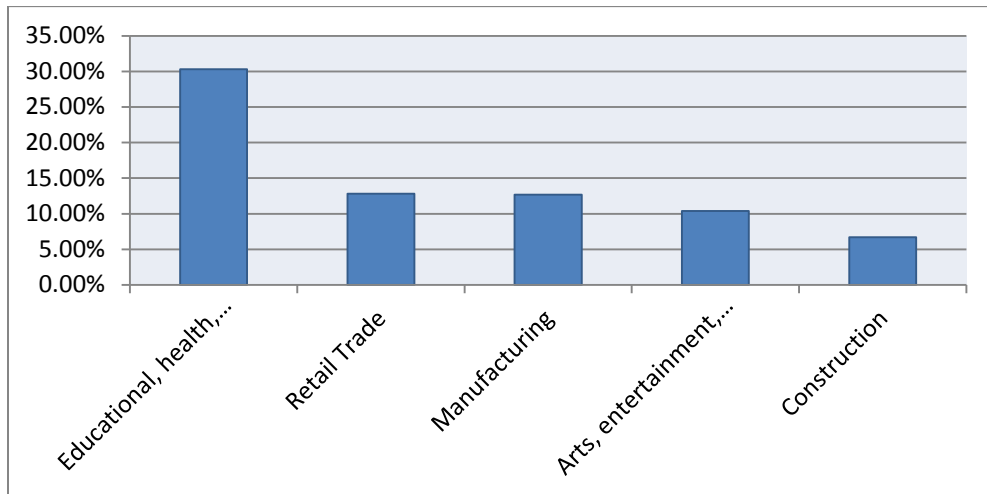
¹¹² Benoni Amsde et al., “Economic Assessment of Grafton County, New Hampshire,” Plymouth State University Center for Rural Partnerships, September 2010, updated January 2012, accessed November 29, 2015, https://www.plymouth.edu/center-for-rural-partnerships/files/2012/03/Grafton-County-NH-Economic-Assessment-2010_Update-2012-PSU.pdf

¹¹³ “Grafton County,” Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, NH Employment Security, December 2014, accessed November 29, 2015, <http://www.nhes.nh.gov/elmi/products/cp/documents/grafton-cp.pdf>

most popular seasonal businesses in the county.¹¹⁴ The Waterville Valley Resort, Franconia Notch State Park, and other major tourist sites are some of Grafton’s top employers.¹¹⁵ Third, Grafton’s smallest portion of the economy is still characterized by “old rural” activities, such as traditional farming and forestry, and consists of rural communities and villages.

Accordingly, the top five industries in Grafton are education, health, and social services, which employs over 30 percent of its workforce, followed by retail trade; manufacturing; arts, entertainment, and recreation; and construction.¹¹⁶ Given its distance from Boston and other major urban areas, Grafton has struggled to keep up with the more robust economic development efforts in the southern half of New Hampshire.

Top Industries by Percentage Employed, Grafton County



Source: United States Census Bureau, Economic Characteristics, Coos County, 2000.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Amsde et al., “Economic Assessment of Grafton County, New Hampshire.”

¹¹⁵ Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau. “Grafton County.”

¹¹⁶ “Grafton County, New Hampshire, Economic Characteristics,” United States Census Bureau, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/33/330091k.html>

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

In the mid-2000s, many highly skilled workers left Grafton because of the declining number of jobs available in the county.¹¹⁸ As a result, Grafton’s aging population and younger, low-skilled workers have filled these gaps in employment. To create more job opportunities, Grafton has been working to support local businesses and entrepreneurship in recent years.

	Bachelor's Degree, 25 Years+	Percent	Employed, 16 Years+	Percent	Median Income, Total Households
Grafton	20,849	35.30%	45,949	62.30%	\$53,075
NH	294,200	32.90%	695,283	65.80%	\$63,277

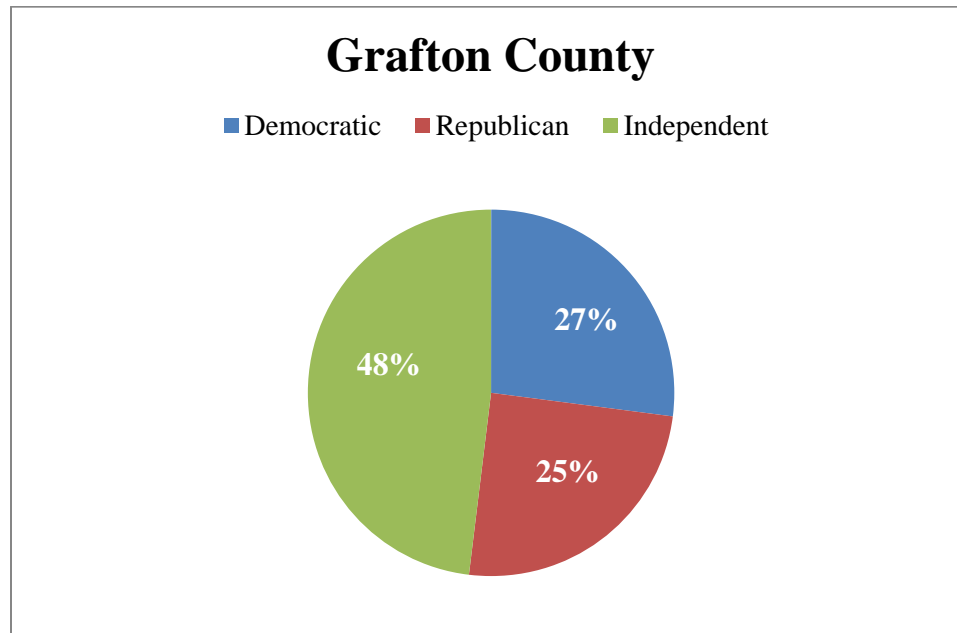
Source: United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010.¹¹⁹

Grafton is far better than Coos in educational attainment, employment, and median income due to its academic and research communities. About 35.3 percent of Grafton’s population holds at least a Bachelor’s degree, compared to 32.9 percent statewide. However, Grafton employs a smaller percentage of people and has a lower median income than Hillsborough, Rockingham, and the state as a whole, since it has not experienced any major industrialization efforts. About 62 percent of Grafton’s population is employed in the civilian labor force, which is about 3.5 percent below the statewide rate. Grafton’s median household income is \$53,075, which is \$10,000 below the statewide median.

¹¹⁸ Alix Kashdan, “Grafton County: Building a Skilled Labor Force,” National Association of Counties, December 8, 2014, accessed November 29, 2015, <http://www.naco.org/blog/%E2%80%8Bgrafton-county-building-skilled-labor-force>

¹¹⁹ “Grafton County, New Hampshire QuickLinks,” United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Social and Economic Characteristics, 2010, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/33/330091k.html>

Presidential Election Results



Source: United States Census, Political Party Registration Counts, 2010.¹²⁰

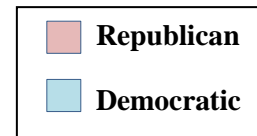
In presidential elections, Grafton has shifted even more to the left than Coos during the past few decades, voting for Democratic presidential candidates since 1992. Yet, registered Democrats in Grafton outpace registered Republicans by only 2 percent. Almost half of the county's voters are Independents, which is the highest percentage of all of New Hampshire's counties. Out of Grafton's 51,200 registered voters, 27 percent are registered Democrats, a quarter are registered Republicans, and 48 percent are registered Independent.¹²¹

¹²⁰ "Population of Grafton County, New Hampshire: Census 2010 and 2000 – Overview Statistics and Quick Facts," Census Viewer, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://censusviewer.com/county/NH/Grafton>

¹²¹ Ibid.

Grafton County Election Results

Election Year	Grafton
1960	64.90%
1964	59.80%
1968	59.80%
1972	65.60%
1976	60.30%
1980	56.30%
1984	67.60%
1988	62%
1992	42.30%
1996	50.30%
2000	47.30%
2004	55.70%
2008	63%
2012	60.90%



Source: U.S. Election Atlas, Grafton County, 1960-2012.¹²²

In 1988, Grafton voted for George H.W. Bush by 62 percent. In 1992, a shift occurred in Grafton as well, when only 37 percent of its population voted for Bush. Clinton won the county that year with 42 percent of the vote, and Perot received 20 percent. Since then, Grafton has only voted for Democratic presidential candidates, at first by very small margins. In 1996, Grafton supported Clinton with 50 percent. In 2000, Grafton was nearly split with 47.3 percent of voters supporting Gore and 46.7 percent of supporting Bush. After 2000, however, Grafton began voting for Democrats in bigger majorities. In 2004, Grafton voted for John Kerry by 55.7 percent. In 2008 and 2012, Grafton voted for Barack Obama in high percentages of 63 percent and 61 percent, respectively.

¹²² “Presidential General Election Results – New Hampshire, Grafton County,” U.S. Election Atlas, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/index.html>

Like Coos, Grafton's voting behavior likely reflects the political trend among "new rural" economies across the country. The amenities- and recreation-based economic activities of the "new rural" economy in Grafton has attracted or retained certain types of voters, who have more liberal stances than their "old rural" counterparts and are more likely to vote Democratic as a result. Despite Grafton's slow population growth and relatively low migration numbers, the county has voted for Democratic presidential candidates in each of the past six presidential elections. The most likely explanation for this political shift is not the influx of liberal migrants to the region, but the transformation of Grafton's "new rural" economy and the demographic changes that resulted from that transformation.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

New Hampshire's population has grown during the late twentieth century, which transformed the state's economy and political makeup. Because of the decline of traditional mill and farm work after World War I, New Hampshire had to adapt and rapidly industrialize its economy. Manufacturing, high-technology, and other professional services began to replace agricultural sectors in the urban, southern half of the state, while tourism and recreation-based economic activities began to replace the paper and pulp industries in the rural, northern half. Both of these economic transformations attracted thousands of migrants seeking new work and who wanted to take advantage of New Hampshire's lower housing costs and tax rates.

The two main types of economies in New Hampshire brought different sets of migrants to the state. The urban, southern counties of Hillsborough and Rockingham attracted younger, better educated, and more affluent migrants, particularly from the Boston metropolitan area. These migrants joined the growing white-collar workforce in these southern counties in industries such as smart manufacturing, high technology, engineering, health care, finance, and real estate. By contrast, the rural, northern counties of Coos and Grafton attracted migrants seeking low-skill service jobs in their growing hospitality and tourism industries, as well as aging Baby Boomers who were planning to retire or buy second vacation homes.

Scholars have asserted that the influx of migrants from Massachusetts in New Hampshire's southern counties has added more liberal voters to the state, causing New Hampshire to become the competitive swing state it is today. According to this

“migration theory,” Hillsborough and Rockingham should have turned into Democratic voting blocs because they experienced the highest population growth rates driven by migration over the past five decades. Nevertheless, both counties have remained relatively conservative during this period of growth compared with most other counties. Both counties have added a significant number of independent voters, who now outnumber registered Democrats and Republicans. Hillsborough has been evenly split in recent presidential elections, voting for George W. Bush in 2000 and 2004 and Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012 by narrow margins each time. Rockingham has also been evenly split with election results similar to Hillsborough’s with the exception of voting for Mitt Romney in 2012. The election results and political composition in these southern counties suggest that the “migration theory” does not fully account for the political shift that occurred in the statewide electorate.

In the northern half of the state, Coos has experienced a population loss and Grafton has had a relatively low population growth rate since the 1960s. But despite the lack of migration in these counties, they have voted for Democratic presidential candidates more frequently and by higher margins than their southern counterparts. Like Hillsborough and Rockingham, Coos and Grafton added more independent voters, but these voters have tended to lean more Democratic in recent elections. While Coos voted for Bush in 2000, it voted for Kerry in 2004 and for Obama in 2008 and 2012. Grafton has voted for Democrats since 1992 by some of the highest margins in the state. In 2008 and 2012, Grafton voted for Obama by over 60 percent both times. The election results and political composition in these northern counties offer counter evidence to the

“migration theory,” suggesting that numerical migration rates alone are not the key factor in New Hampshire’s political shift to the left.

Through county-level analysis, it is clear that the economic transformations of these two regions of the state have been crucial in forming New Hampshire’s current voting blocs. Education attainment levels, employment rates, and median household incomes are just some of the many important characteristics that are tied to these kinds of economic changes, which can significantly influence voting behavior in presidential elections.

New Hampshire will probably continue experiencing demographic changes in the short- and long-term. While migration has slowed in recent years, natural population increases are still likely to influence the state’s political composition and voting behavior. New Hampshire’s rapidly aging population and its increasingly diverse economic centers are likely to produce some statewide changes, but it is important to look at the distribution of these changes at the county level. The southern and northern regions of New Hampshire contain disparities that can shape the political effects of these changes in different ways. By examining a few counties in each of these regions, this study offers a general overview of the disparities in their populations, economies, and political voting behaviors that can provide a better foundation for future studies on New Hampshire and its status as a top-ten swing state in presidential elections.

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