My Seven

The Geography of U.S. Elections

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Who'll win the White House? There's no better person to ask than James Campbell. He came closer to predicting the popular vote in 2000 than any other political science prognosticator. His formulas rely heavily on the economy and polls, but we asked him for something more up our alley—geographic and demographic indicators.

1 Bellwethers Four states—Missouri, Nevada, Ohio, and Tennessee—have voted for the winner in 13 of the last 14 elections. Since 1948 every candidate who carried at least three of them won.

2 Magic numbers Republicans do better in less populous states, so they need to carry more of them to win an electoral majority. No Republican since 1904 has been elected without winning at least 30 states. The Democrats' magic number: 23.

3 Gender gap Since 1980 the gender gap has been a factor in elections: Democrats, who tend to run stronger among females, have needed at least 55 percent of the women's vote to win the popular vote.

REBECCA HALE, NGS STAFF (TOP); BETTMANN/CORBIS (ABOVE); HARTFORD UNIVERSITY

4 Bigger home states From 1900 on, 18 of the 26 presidential elections were between candidates whose home states differed by 10 or more electoral votes. The candidate from the larger state won two-thirds of the time. (Texas has 34 electoral votes, Massachusetts 12.)

5 Twentysomethings Since Eisenhower's second election in 1956, candidates who carried the under-30 vote won in all but two presidential contests.

6 Must-haves Six states have been in the column of every winning Democrat since 1948, while 18 states are consistently carried by winning Republicans. In 2000 Democrats lost three of their must-haves: Arkansas, Missouri, and West Virginia. Closely decided must-have Republican wins: Florida, Tennessee, New Hampshire, and Ohio.

7 It starts at home In the 20th century only one candidate was elected without winning his home state: Woodrow Wilson lost New Jersey in 1916.

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> Who will win? Get Jim Campbell's prediction on the outcome of the 2004 presidential election at **nationalgeographic.com/ magazine/0411.**