

How Obama prevailed

FROM PAGE 1
campaign against Mitt Romney.

After all the discussion of Obama's play for women — and his effort to make Romney appear extreme on women's issues — the president won among female voters by 12 points. He took 55 percent of the demographic, compared with 43 percent for Romney — not far off from 2008, when he won women by 13 points.

In particular, the president won big among unmarried women, who backed the president by a whopping 38 points, 68 percent to 30 percent.

But unlike 2008, when Obama won men by one percentage point, the president lost men to Romney this year. He took 45 percent of their vote, compared with 52 percent for Romney, according to the exit polls.

Obama prevailed among the two minority groups that supported him in large numbers in 2008: Latinos and African Americans.

Ninety-three percent of African-American voters backed Obama, while just 6 percent who backed Romney. Turnout among the demographic remained steady at 13 percent of the overall electorate.

Obama's support increased with Hispanic voters: he won 69 percent of the demographic, compared with 29 percent for Romney. That 40-point deficit is slightly higher than his 36-point victory among Hispanic voters in 2008.

And the president saw higher backing among Asian voters, who sided with him by a 49-point margin, 74 percent to 25 percent. The margin was 27 points in 2008.

Although he again lost Protestant voters to his GOP opponent, Obama held onto his advantages among Catholic and Jewish voters. He won 70 percent of the Jewish vote, down from 78 percent in 2008, and he won Catholic voters 50 percent to 47 percent. Romney carried

Protestant voters by a 13-point margin, 56 percent to 43 percent.

While Obama's previously huge margin among 18 to 29-year-olds dropped slightly — he won the age group by 34 points in 2008, compared with 24 points this year — the overall turnout was up slightly among young voters, certainly a factor in his victory.

Like McCain, Romney won older voters: he took 51 percent of 45- to 64-year-olds and 55 percent of voters 65 and older.

On the jobs front, Obama benefited from voters' slightly improved outlook about the direction of the country and the economy. Four in 10 voters said the economy is getting better, a group Obama won with 88 percent, and voters were roughly even split on the direction of the country: 52 percent of those surveyed said the country is still on the wrong track, while 46 percent said it's headed in the right direction.

The economy was still king at the polls: 59 percent of voters named it, and unemployment in particular, as their top issue. Of those voters, 51 percent of them chose Romney, compared with 47 percent for Obama. Romney also got high marks from voters on his proposed handling of the federal deficit.

Obama's issue strengths, on the other hand, came on foreign policy and health care — although both issues that fell much lower on voters' priority lists this year. Eighteen percent of voters said health care was their top issue, and 5 percent chose foreign policy.

But despite Romney's slight advantage on the economy, Obama's team proved able to portray Romney as someone who aims to help just the wealthy: exit polls showed that more than half of voters think the former Massachusetts governor's policies would favour the rich, compared with 34

percent who thought they'd favour the middle class and just 2 percent who said they'd favour the poor. For Obama, 43 percent said his policies would favour the middle class and 31 percent said they'd favour the poor, compared with only 10 percent said they'd favour the rich.

Reflecting national trends toward increased polarisation, Obama won more Democrats than he did in 2008 and Romney won more Republicans than McCain did that year. Obama took a full 92 percent of self-described Democrats, and Romney won 93 percent of Republicans.

The president lost among independents by a larger margin than he did in 2008: he took just 40 percent of independents this year to Romney's 58 percent, an 18-point gap that four years ago was just 12 points. However, Obama won among self-described "moderates" 57 percent to 41 percent.

Obama kept his previous margins among low-income voters, but medium- and high-income voters moved toward the GOP this year. Obama carried voters who make less than \$50,000 60 percent to 38 percent, but Romney won voters who with an income of \$50,000 or more.

In terms of geography, Obama won urban areas handily but lost to Romney in the suburbs and in rural areas. Of population areas with over 500,000, Obama won 70 percent to 28 percent; he also won in areas with a population between 50,000 and 500,000 by 18 points.

Romney won the suburbs by 2 points, 50 percent to 48 percent, and rural areas 60 percent to 38 percent.

National exit polling was conducted by the Associated Press and the television networks at about 350 polling places around the country, surveying about 60,000 voters.

Economy tops

FROM PAGE 1
to make the case that their respective plans were the best fix for an ailing economy buffeted by high unemployment, anemic home sales and high foreclosure rates.

"It's an election in a year when the economy is in a very slow, grinding recovery, so it's sort betwixt and between, right? It's neither the kind of booming recovery that would have given Obama an easy win nor the kind of really ugly jobs picture that we had a year ago," said CNN contributor and New York Times columnist Ross Douthat.

Sixty percent of those polled by CNN as they finished voting listed the economy as the most important issue. Those exit polls provide a window into voters' thoughts in some of the most-closely watched states of Florida, Virginia, Ohio and New Hampshire.

Of those voters who were asked about the biggest economic problem facing "people like you," 38% said it was unemployment, 37% said rising prices, 14% said taxes and 8% said it was the housing market.

Of those who voted Tuesday, 25% said they were doing better today compared with four years ago, 32% said they were doing worse and 42% said they were doing about the same.

The last government unemployment figures before Election Day showed more of the incremental economic growth that Obama heralds as continued recovery and Romney labels insufficient.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the economy added 171,000 jobs last month and the unemployment rate rose to 7.9%, up from 7.8% in September after being above 8% since February 2009 -- the month after Obama took office.

More voters in the swing states of Florida, New

Hampshire, Ohio and Virginia blame George W Bush than Obama for the state of the US economy. In the critical battleground state of Ohio, 59% of voters polled approve of the federal government's aid to US automakers while 36% disapprove.

House Speaker John Boehner on Sunday said "the auto bailout may help the president in Ohio a little."

Health care and the deficit also ranked high with voters.

That, too, was no surprise.

The US Supreme Court's narrow upholding of the health care reform law this summer gave Obama and Democrats a morale boost and riled Republicans who vowed to repeal the law "lock, stock and barrel." The two presidential candidates' rival proposals to trim the nation's debt provided for some of the liveliest exchanges during the presidential debates.

In the battleground state of Florida, which has a large elderly population, 49% of voters said Obama would better handle Medicare, while 47% gave the nod to Romney.

Meanwhile, 29% of those polled said they want someone who has a vision for the future and a nearly identical number, 27%, want someone who shares their values; 21% say the top quality they were looking for is whether a candidate cares about people like them, while 18% want a strong leader.

Meanwhile, political experts say one important indicator would be the question of ethnicity and how the white vs the nonwhite population splits.

In the 2008 election, 74% of the electorate was white. That percentage has declined recently because of the growth in the Hispanic and voting African-American population.

Recipe for friction

FROM PAGE 1
breakthrough.

By early yesterday in the East, Democrats had knocked off 12 GOP House members - including 10 members of the huge tea party-backed House GOP freshman class of 2010. Republican losers included four incumbents from Illinois, two each from New Hampshire and New York, and one apiece from Florida, Maryland, Minnesota and Texas.

Republicans nearly matched that, picking up nine previously Democratic seats. Their candidates defeated one Democratic incumbent apiece in Kentucky, New York, North Carolina and Pennsylvania and picked up an open seat in each of Arkansas, California, Indiana, North Carolina, and Oklahoma currently held by Democrats who retired or ran for another office.

With more than 90 percent of the 435 House races called by The Associated Press, Republicans had won 227 seats and were leading in 9 more. For a majority in the chamber, a party must control 218 seats. Democrats had won 176 seats and were leading in 21 others.

It appeared likely that the two parties' margins in the new Congress would closely resemble the current tally. Republicans control the chamber by 240 to 190, plus five vacancies; two seats once held by the GOP and three by Democrats.

However, the Republicans suffered multiple blows to their quest to take back control of the Senate, failing to win several hoped-for seats in Tuesday's elections, as the Democrats added three to their column.

Some 33 of the Senate's 100 seats were up for grabs, with 23 of those being defended by Democrats, giving Republicans a chance -- albeit slim -- of gaining four seats and seizing control of the chamber.

Democrats currently control 53 seats in the 100-seat chamber.

While eyes were focused on the race for the White House, the battle for control

Hope revived

FROM PAGE 1
The path to victory for Romney narrowed as the night wore along, with Obama winning at least 303 electoral votes.

Accused by Romney throughout the campaign of taking a partisan tone, Obama vowed to reach out to Republicans in his new, four-year term.

"You voted for action, not politics as usual," Obama said, calling for compromise and pledging to work with leaders of both parties to reduce the deficit, to reform the tax code and immigration laws, and to cut dependence on foreign oil.

He said he intends to sit down with Romney in the weeks ahead to talk about how the two can work together.

Obama's re-election extended his place in history, carrying the tenure of the nation's first black president into a second term.

The evening was not without the drama that has come to mark so many recent elections: For more than 90 minutes after the networks projected Obama as the winner, Romney held off calling him to concede. And as the president waited to declare victory in Chicago, Romney's aides were prepared to head to the airport, suitcases packed, potentially to contest several close results.

But as it became increasingly clear that no amount of contesting would bring him victory, he called Obama to concede shortly before

1:00am. "I wish all of them well, but particularly the president, the first lady and their daughters," Romney told his supporters in Boston. "This is a time of great challenges for America, and I pray that the president will be successful in guiding our nation."

Obama faces governing in a deeply divided country and a partisan-rich capital, where Republicans retained their majority in the House and Democrats kept their control of the Senate. His re-election offers him a second chance that will quickly be tested, given the rapidly escalating fiscal showdown.

For Obama, the result brings a ratification of his sweeping health care act, which Romney had vowed to repeal. The law will now continue on course toward nearly full implementation in 2014, promising to change significantly the way medical services are administered nationwide.

But he will be venturing back into a Congressional environment similar to that of his first term, with the Senate under the control of Democrats and the House under the control of Republicans, whose leaders have hinted that they will be no less likely to challenge him than they were during the last four years.

The state-by-state pursuit of 270 electoral votes was being closely tracked by both campaigns, with Romney winning North Carolina and Indiana, which

Obama carried four years ago. But Obama won Michigan, the state where Romney was born, and Minnesota, a pair of states that Republican groups had spent millions trying to make competitive.

Americans delivered a final judgment on a long and bitter campaign that drew so many people to the polls that several key states extended voting for hours. In Virginia and Florida, long lines stretched from polling places.

As he delivered his brief concession speech yesterday, Romney did not directly address the challenges facing Republicans. His advisers said his second failed quest for the White House would be his last, with his running mate, Representative Paul D Ryan of Wisconsin, standing as one of the leaders of the party.

"We have given our all to this campaign," said Romney, stoic and gracious in his remarks. "I so wish that I had been able to fulfil your hopes to lead this country in a different direction."

The results were more a matter of voters giving Obama more time than a second chance. Through most of the year slight majorities of voters had told pollsters that they believed his policies would improve the economy if they could stay in place into the future.

Compiled from reports of The New York Times, The Washington Post, AFP and Reuters; Infographics: NYT

Dhaka seeks Delhi's help in dredging

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Pending a solution to sharing of the waters of common rivers including the Teesta, Bangladesh yesterday sought India's help for dredging and re-excavating those rivers to ensure irrigation in the lower riparian country.

Raising the issue during her talks with Indian Water Resources Minister Harish Rawat here, visiting Agriculture Minister of Bangladesh Matia Chowdhury cited the example of Japanese assistance for Bangladesh in building irrigation facilities. She mentioned that India too can chip in with its expertise in the area in a similar manner.

Talking to newsmen, she said the issue of the proposed Teesta water-sharing deal came up for discussion in the meeting. The Indian minister said his government was continuing its efforts to evolve a consensus on the issue.

"While we want India to give due importance to a deal on sharing of Teesta waters, efforts should also be made to augment availability of water for irrigation in the common rivers flowing in the Bangladesh territory," noted Matia.

Responding to a question on the flurry of visits by an array of Bangladeshi leaders to India in recent months, she welcomed the trend. "It's a global village we are living in and it is but natural that there will be more and more interaction even between people who used to shun each other."

Indian Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar hosted a lunch for Matia.

The two ministers discussed Indian expertise for growing water-resistant crops in Bangladesh and increasing the number of scholarships for Bangladeshi agricultural scientists.

Later, noted Indian agricultural scientist Dr M S Swaminathan met the Bangladeshi minister at a hotel and discussed potential areas of cooperation between the two countries in agriculture and irrigation.

Late on Tuesday night, Indian National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon had a meeting with Matia. They discussed security cooperation between India and Bangladesh.

Bangladesh, India and Pakistan face the common problem of extremism and the neighbouring countries should cooperate with each other to end this, she observed.

Another chance

FROM PAGE 1
similarly had little choice but to look on in wonder and apprehension at China's phenomenal economic rise.

Obama now has four more years and a second chance to deliver on his promise to become an agent of change in the world. The logic of a second term will certainly push him to try. All presidents want an enduring legacy, and an obdurate, even vengeful, Republican majority in the House of Representatives will send Obama in search of one abroad, where he will enjoy a freer hand.

Obama has pulled American forces out of Iraq. By the end of 2014, US combat troops will have left Afghanistan. He has managed so far to keep the US out of the Syrian conflict, but aid to the armed opposition, overt and covert, is bound to creep up as the conflict drags on. A few hours after the election result, it was reported that Turkey was in talks with the US over the deployment of patriot missiles along its border, which would go a long way to establishing a no-fly zone over a rebel-held strip of northern Syria.

The greatest looming crisis offers the greatest opportunity. Iran is in the balance, but Obama also has a chance to avert another war in the Middle East and finally earn the Nobel peace prize he won at the beginning of his first term.

A new round of international talks is due at the end of the month. The US has been holding secret bilateral discussions with Tehran in parallel, and Obama signalled publicly in a presidential debate that his administration is prepared to negotiate one-on-one.

Soon after Obama's victory, a prominent Iranian figure, Mohammad Javad Larijani, head of Iran's human rights council and the parliamentary speaker's brother, said that talks with US were not taboo.

The outlines of a possible deal are clear: Iran gives up production of 20%-enriched uranium (the biggest proliferation threat) in return for sanctions relief. Israel will not like such a deal, but Binyamin Netanyahu backed the wrong horse in this US election race, and will not have much of a say.

It is widely forgotten, but the most ambitious, "transformational" speech Obama made in his first term was delivered three months after taking office, in Prague. The new president described a future for the world free of nuclear arms, and pledged that America, one of the world's two leading nuclear

powers, would play its part in moving in that direction. The next year, he took the first step towards delivering on that promise, signing the New Start treaty with the then Russian president Dmitry Medvedev, which reduced both countries' nuclear stockpiles by a third, to a ceiling of 1,550 deployed strategic warheads. But the huge political effort of pushing the deal through a reluctant Senate exhausted the administration's disarmament effort for the first term.

All the signs from the White House suggest Obama still believes the world's nuclear powers will have to disarm much further if they are to continue to expect the nuclear have-nots to accept the status quo.

There will also be a new push to engage the Russians in a new treaty.

Obama needs to settle the US relationship with Moscow to help sustain his "pivot to Asia" intended to contain a rising, more assertive China, which is beginning to challenge America's regional allies over territory. He will continue to bolster those alliances, but he has little control over the driving force in the region, China's economic growth and the political uncertainty that comes with it. The coming party congress in Beijing will usher in a new generation of Chinese leaders who are far more nationalist than their predecessors and who may be tempted to look for confrontation abroad as a distraction if growth rates start to sag.

With regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the US alliance with Israel gives Obama a powerful lever he can pull to influence the course of events but he has so far balked at using it. In his second would-be transformational speech on foreign policy, made in Cairo in June 2009, Obama pledged to change the US role in the Middle East, and Arabs took that to mean more American pressure on Israel to accept a peace deal. However, in a stand-off with Netanyahu over Israeli West Bank settlements later the same year, Obama blinked, mindful of the imperatives of re-election in a strongly pro-Israel country.

With that now out of the way, the question is whether the president has the stamina to try again.

The great attraction of foreign affairs for a second-term president is that he does not have to deal with Congress. The downside is that he has to find partners prepared to take the long view.

Where Romney failed to sail

FROM PAGE 1
country's first Mormon president and marked a dramatic comeback from his 2008 primary defeat to Senator John McCain.

Instead, the loss will likely mark the end of a political career that began with a failed 1994 Senate run but saw Romney go on to become the governor of Massachusetts and the flag-bearer of a Republican Party slow to warm to him.

Romney, 65, argued that the management skills that made him so effective in business as he amassed a huge fortune and saved the Salt Lake City Olympics from ruin made him the ideal candidate to steer the country back to prosperity.

But he struggled to counter the image that was stuck on him in the primary battles and beyond -- that of a policy flip-flopper with awkward social skills and questionable concern for America's struggling middle class.

When Romney presented himself as a skilled manager with impressive business acumen his opponents countered that he was a cut-throat capitalist raider, and when he projected pragmatic moderation critics saw only deceitful opportunism.

Throughout the roller-coaster primaries, rivals struggled to land telling blows on the former Boston venture capitalist, who managed to stay above the fray while giving off the air of an inevitable nominee.

Despite lingering doubts about his opposition on hot-button social issues like gay marriage and abortion, he handily won the nod of his conservative party as the candidate with the best chance of beating Obama.

But early in the campaign the multimillionaire businessman demonstrated a tin ear with a string of wealth-related gaffes -- including challenging Texas Governor Rick Perry to a \$10,000 bet during a debate -- that made it all too easy for opponents to portray him as out of

touch with ordinary Americans.

Romney's image received a carefully scripted makeover at the convention in Tampa, Florida, as he tried close the yawning likability gap between himself and Obama.

His wife Ann invoked their love story as high school sweethearts to show the human side of a man whose ram-rod straight bearing is lampooned as too stiff, whose hair was never even slightly mussed.

The couple's squeaky-clean and loving family life -- they have been married 43 years and have five sons and 18 grandchildren -- was thought to be a clear vote-winner.

Mitt was born into wealth and privilege in Detroit in 1947, the son of George Romney, who served as Michigan governor and chairman of American Motors.

George Romney tried and failed his own presidential bid, briefly emerging as a top contender for the 1968 Republican nomination before losing to Richard Nixon.

His son was often at his side while campaigning for the governorship, but for two years Mitt's Mormon faith took him to France as a religious missionary.

It was there in 1968 that tragedy struck. Romney had been driving members of the Mormon church when another car slammed into their Citroen. A passenger was killed and Romney himself nearly died.

But he recovered and returned to the United States and to Ann, whom he married months later.

As a rising star with Harvard degrees in law and business, he joined Bain & Company in 1977, where he so impressed the chief executive that in 1984 he was entrusted with heading the new venture capital arm, Bain Capital.

Romney ran the firm for 15 years, earning spectacular wealth and laying the groundwork for a political