

North Carolina Mail Ballot Trends

November 2, 2020

The accompanying graphs document important trends related to absentee ballots in North Carolina. The data were downloaded from the website of the North Carolina State Board of Elections. *Request data* are based on aggregate weekly reports supplied by the state. *Return data* are based on daily reports of returned mail ballots, aggregated to correspond with the weekly request reports. *Ballots outstanding* are calculated by subtracting returned from requested ballots for the relevant time periods.

Note that these statistics pertain to individual ballot requests and returns. A small number of voters may have more than one request or return, because of problems encountered with the ballots. (For instance, if a voter “spoils” a ballot—that is, makes a mistake and asks for a new ballot—both the spoiled and replacement ballot will appear in the dataset.) We have not removed duplicates such as these. Therefore, there are slightly more requests reflected in this document than there are individuals who requested mail ballots.

Each week runs from Sunday to Saturday. The data on the x-axis is the Sunday that begins the week.

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Of Note this Week

- As of last week, over 1.4 million mail ballots have been requested. In all of 2016, a total of 106,000 were requested.
- Over 64% of requested ballots have yet to be returned, with a slight decline from previous weeks as many voter opt to vote early in person instead.
 - With just under 1 million ballots returned, the final returns fall approximately 200,000 ballots short of initial projections.
- Registered Democrats turned in over 230,000 mail ballots that Republicans, and over 100,000 ballots more than independents/unaffiliated voters.
- The greatest disparities in non-accepted ballots ultimately arose by race, with Black voters seeing 2.5 times the rejected ballots compared to White voters.
 - Rejection rates by party are effectively identical.

General trends

For the week of October 25:

- 15,503 mail ballots were requested. This brings the total number requested to 1,454,506.
 - 64.24% of all requested ballots have been returned for counting.
- 151,490 mail ballots were returned. This bring the total number returned to 934,318.
- 520,188 mail ballots are still outstanding.

By race

For the week of October 25,

- The breakdown of requests by race for the week was White 8,462, Black 2,945, and other race 4,096. Cumulatively, the breakdown of requests is White 941,868, Black 257,606, and other race 255,032.
 - 54.58% of ballots came from White voters, 19% from Black voters, and 26.42% from voters of other races. Cumulatively, 64.76% of requests have come from White voters, 17.71% from Black voters, and 17.53% from voters of other races.

- The breakdown of mail ballots returned by race for the week was White 95,794, Black 19,266, and other race 36,430. Cumulatively, the breakdown of returns is white 637,520, Black 141,000 and other race 155,798.
 - For the week, 63.23% of ballots were returned by White voters, 12.72% from Black voters, and 24.05% from voters of other races. Cumulatively, 67.69% of mail ballots returned have been from White voters, 54.73% from Black voters, and 61.09% from voters of other races.
 - Thus far, 68.23% of ballots requested by White voters have been returned, compared to 15.09% of ballots requested by Black voters and 16.68% of ballots requested by voters of other races.
- The breakdown of mail ballots still outstanding was White 304,348, Black 116,606, and other race 99,234.

By party

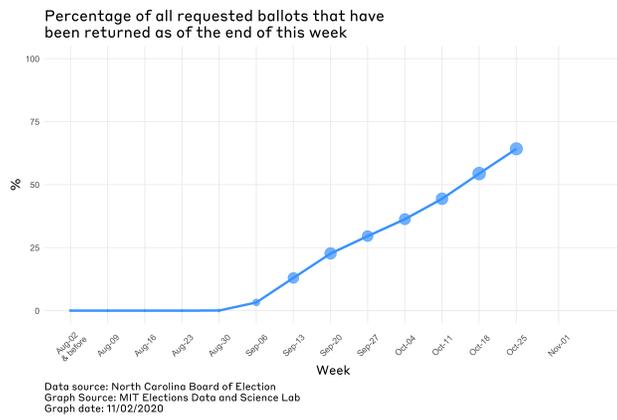
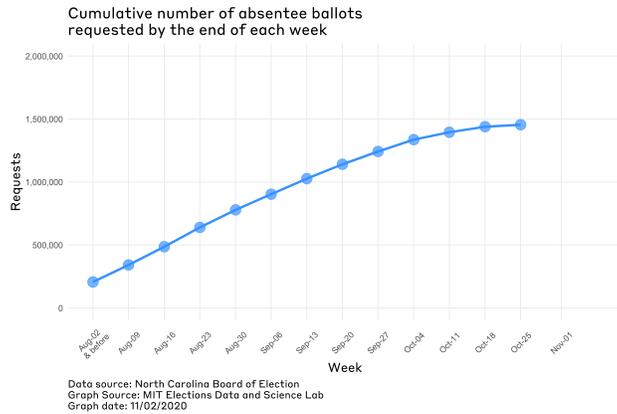
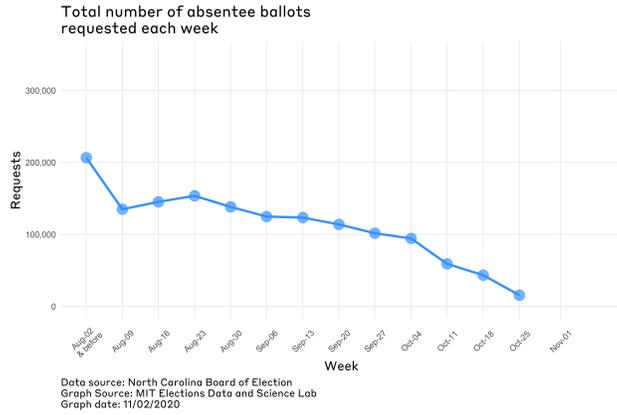
For the week of October 25,

- The breakdown of requests by party for the week was Democrat 5,439, Republican 4,477, and other or no party affiliation 5,587. Cumulatively, the breakdown of requests is Democrats 668,623, Republican 288,018, and other or no party affiliation 497,865
 - For the week, 35.08% of requests came from Democrats, 28.88% from Republicans, and 36.04% from voters of other or no party affiliation. Cumulatively, 45.97% of requests have come from Democrats, 19.8% from Republicans, and 34.23% from voters of other or no party affiliation.
- The breakdown of mail ballots returned by party for the week was Democrat 51,875, Republican 37,629, and other or no party affiliation 61,986. Cumulatively, the breakdown of returned ballots is Democrat 423,868, Republican 190,265 and other or no party affiliation 320,185.
 - For the week, 34.24% of ballots were returned by Democrats, 24.84% from Republicans, and 40.92% from voters of other or no party affiliation. Cumulatively, 45.37% of mail ballots returned have been from Democrats, 20.36% from Republicans, and 34.27% from voters of other or no party affiliation.
 - Thus far, 63.39% of ballots requested by Democrats have been returned, compared to 66.06% of ballots requested by Republicans and 64.31% of ballots requested by voters of other or no party affiliation.
- The breakdown of mail ballots still outstanding was Democrat 244,755, Republican 97,753, and other or no party affiliation 177,680.

Ballots not accepted for counting

- For the week, 2.37% of ballots returned for counting were not accepted. Cumulatively, 2.51% of ballots were not accepted.
- For the week, rates of non-acceptance by race were White 1.86%, Black 4.21%, and other race 2.49%. Cumulative rates by race have been White 1.86%, Black 4.69%, and other race 2.74%.
- For the week, rates of non-acceptance were Democrat 2.84%, Republican 2.12%, and other or no party affiliation 1.99%. Cumulative rates by party has been Democrat 2.86%, Republican 2.23%, and other or no party affiliation 2.03%.

Appendix 1: Aggregate Ballot Request and Return Trends

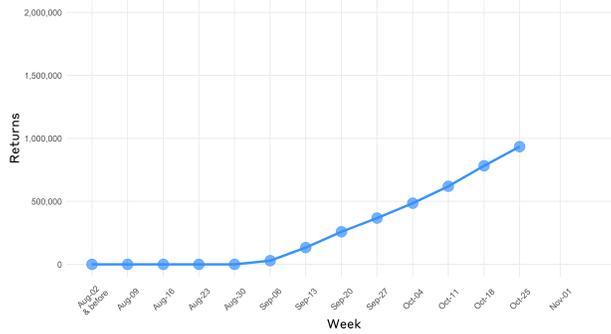


Number of ballots returned each week



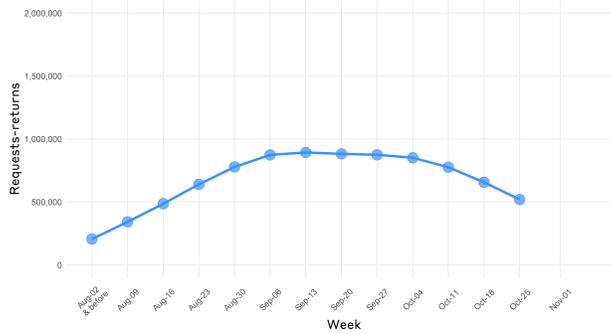
Data source: North Carolina Board of Election
 Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
 Graph date: 11/02/2020

Cumulative number of ballots returned by the end of each week



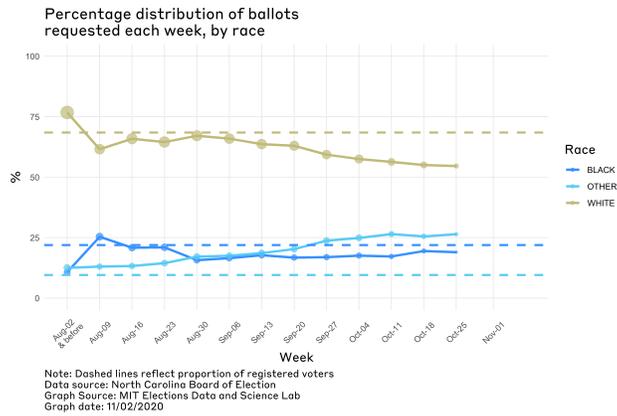
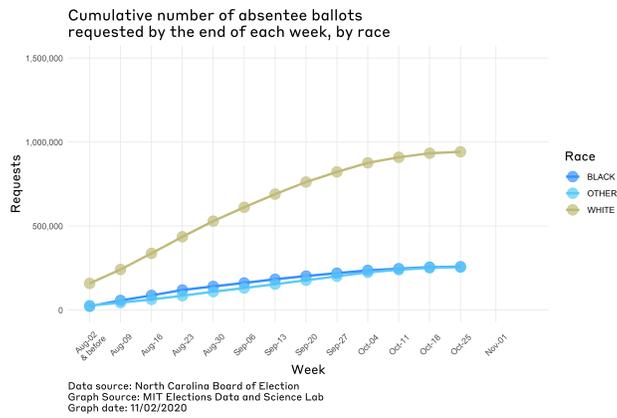
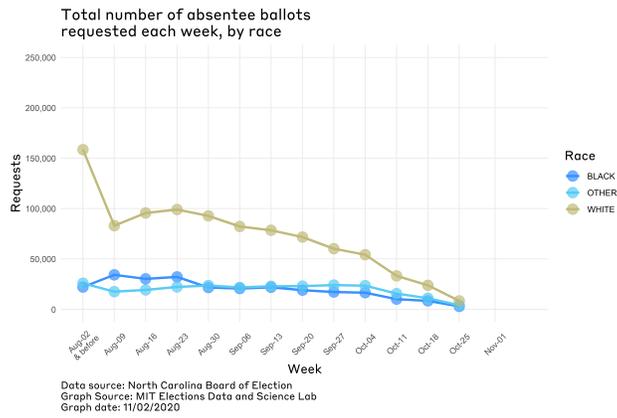
Data source: North Carolina Board of Election
 Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
 Graph date: 11/02/2020

Number of ballots still outstanding, as of the end of the week

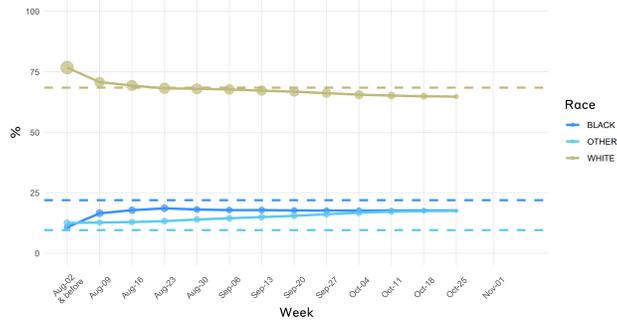


Data source: North Carolina Board of Election
 Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
 Graph date: 11/02/2020

Appendix 2: Ballot Request and Return Trends by Race

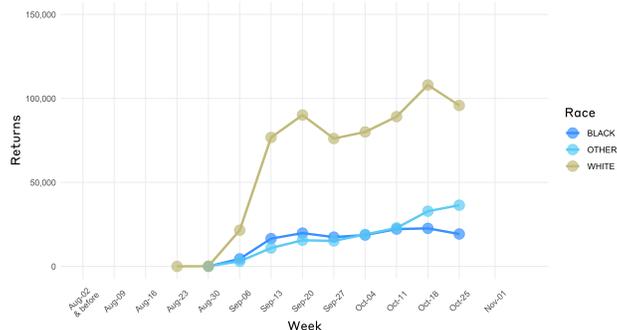


Cumulative percentage distribution of ballots requested by the end of each week, by race



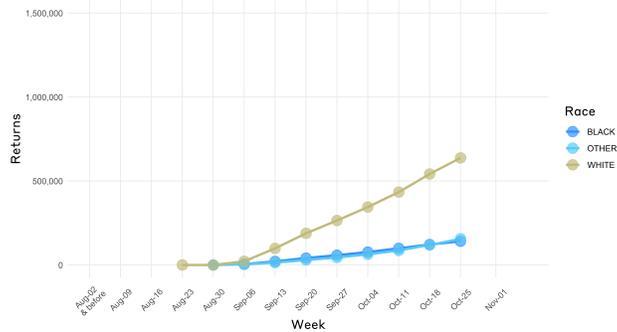
Note: Dashed lines reflect proportion of registered voters
 Data source: North Carolina Board of Election
 Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
 Graph date: 11/02/2020

Number of ballots returned each week, by race



Data source: North Carolina Board of Election
 Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
 Graph date: 11/02/2020

Cumulative number of ballots returned by the end of each week, by race



Data source: North Carolina Board of Election
 Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
 Graph date: 11/02/2020

Percentage of ballots returned out of each week's requests, by race



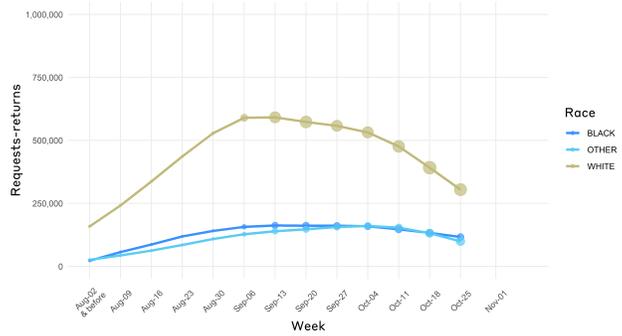
Data source: North Carolina Board of Election
 Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
 Graph date: 11/02/2020

Cumulative percentage of ballots returned by the end of each week, by race



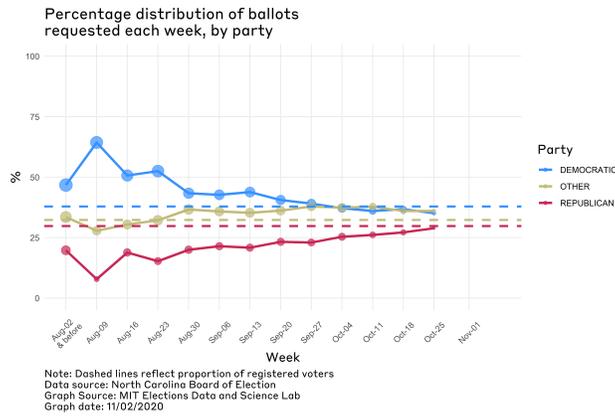
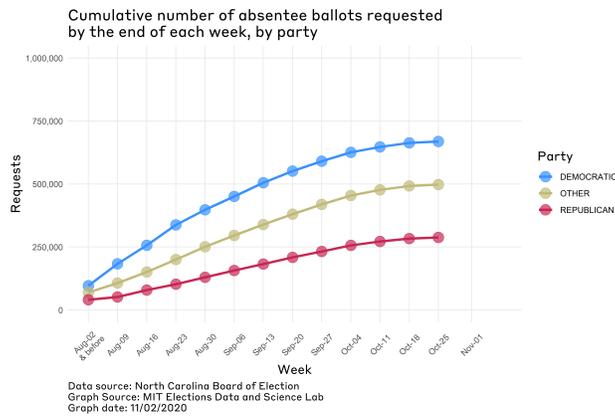
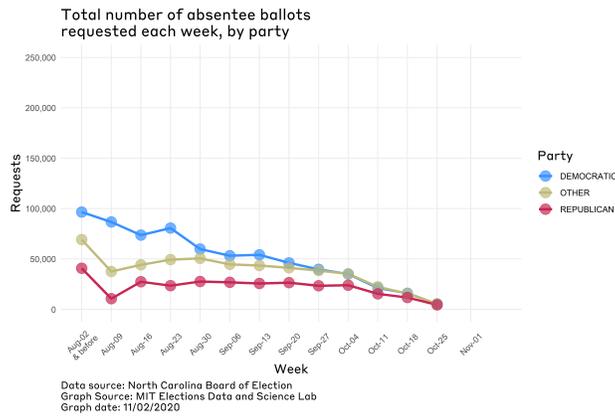
Data source: North Carolina Board of Election
 Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
 Graph date: 11/02/2020

Number of ballots still outstanding, as of the end of the week, by race

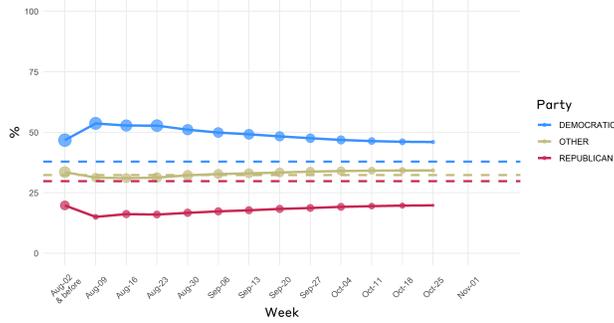


Data source: North Carolina Board of Election
 Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
 Graph date: 11/02/2020

Appendix 3: Ballot request and return trends by party

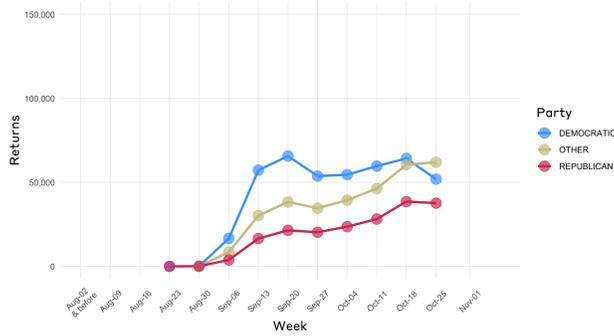


Cumulative percentage distribution of ballots requested by the end of each week, by party



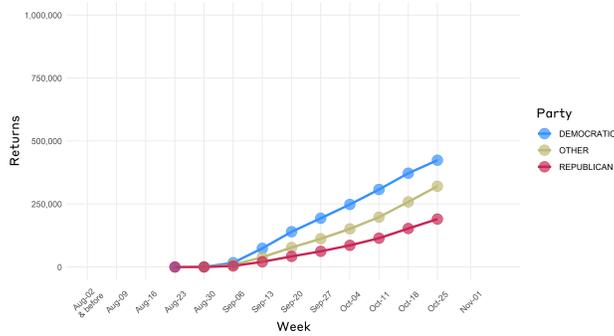
Note: Dashed lines reflect proportion of registered voters
 Data source: North Carolina Board of Election
 Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
 Graph date: 11/02/2020

Number of ballots returned each week, by party



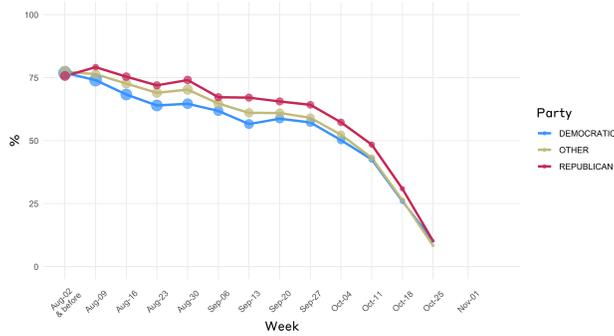
Data source: North Carolina Board of Election
 Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
 Graph date: 11/02/2020

Cumulative number of ballots returned by the end of each week, by party



Data source: North Carolina Board of Election
 Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
 Graph date: 11/02/2020

Percentage of ballots returned out of each week's requests, by party



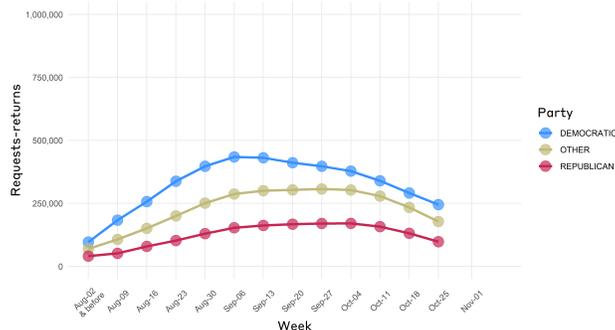
Data source: North Carolina Board of Election
 Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
 Graph date: 11/02/2020

Cumulative percentage of ballots returned by the end of each week, by party



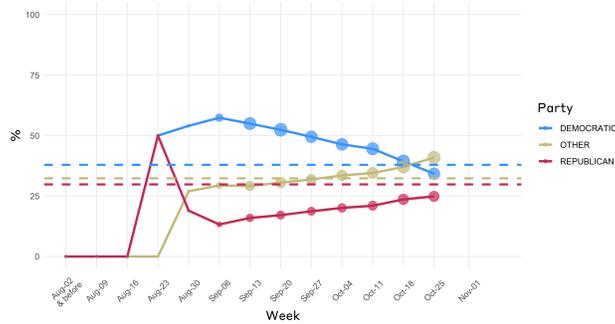
Note: Dashed lines reflect group's proportion of electorate
 Data source: North Carolina Board of Election
 Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
 Graph date: 11/02/2020

Number of ballots still outstanding, as of the end of the week, by party



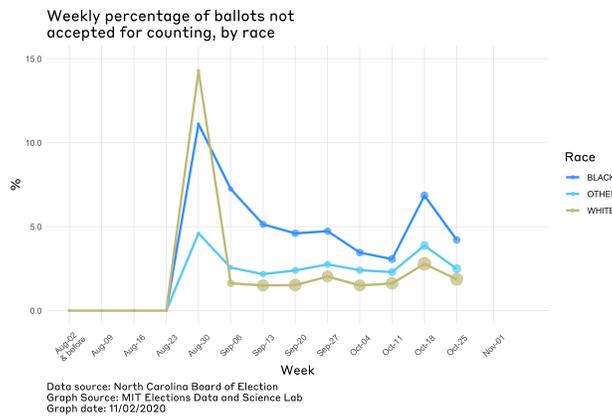
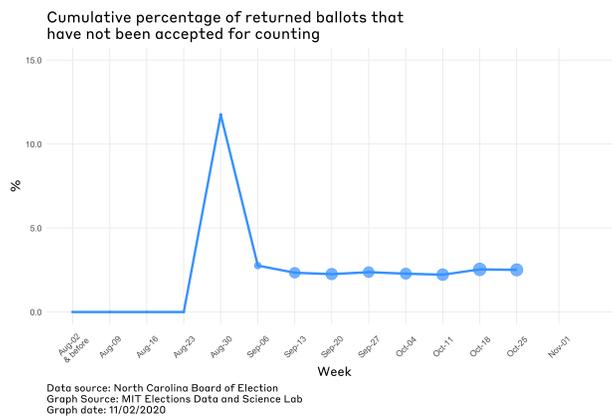
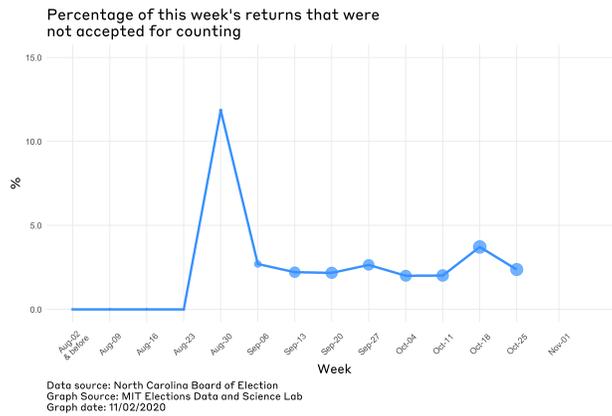
Data source: North Carolina Board of Election
 Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
 Graph date: 11/02/2020

Percentage distribution of ballots returned each week, by party

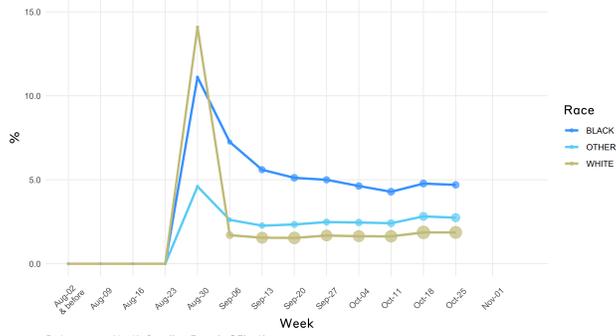


Note: Dashed lines reflect proportion of registered voters
 Data source: North Carolina Board of Election
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 Graph date: 11/02/2020

Appendix 4: Trends in ballot non-acceptance

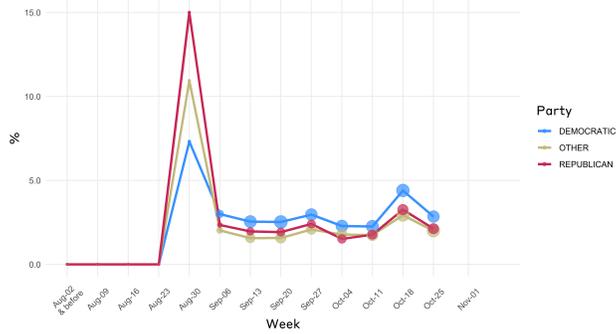


Cumulative percentage of returned ballots that have not been accepted for counting, by race



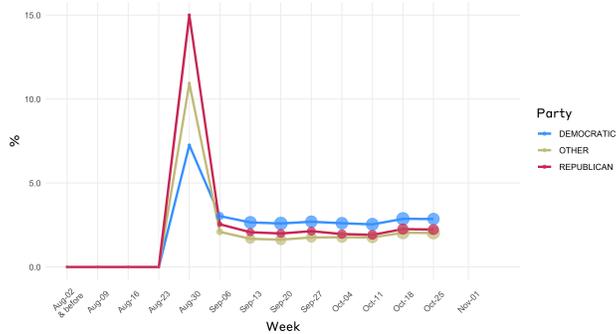
Data source: North Carolina Board of Election
 Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
 Graph date: 11/02/2020

Percentage of this week's returns that were not accepted for counting, by party



Data source: North Carolina Board of Election
 Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
 Graph date: 11/02/2020

Cumulative percentage of returned ballots that have not been accepted for counting, by party



Data source: North Carolina Board of Election
 Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
 Graph date: 11/02/2020