

Pennsylvania Mail Ballot Trends

November 2, 2020

The accompanying graphs document important trends related to absentee ballots in Pennsylvania. The data were downloaded from the website of the Pennsylvania Board of Elections. The *Request data* and *Return data* are based on aggregate weekly reports supplied by the state. *Ballots outstanding* are calculated by subtracting returned from requested ballots for the relevant time periods.

Estimates related to race are calculated employing Bayesian Improved Surname Geocoding (BISG) via the WRU package in R. These estimates arise from the surname and county level information present within the absentee file, and estimates the racial categories of White, Black, and other races.

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 3 million mail ballots have been requested. In all of 2016, a total of approximately 230,000 were requested.
- Approximately 20% of requested ballots have yet to be returned.
- Registered Democrats have continue to dominated cumulative requested and returned mail ballots, returning over 1 million more ballots than registered Republicans, and over 1.3 million more than indepedent/unaffiliated voters.
 - Distribution of ballots requested have been approximately proportional by race according to their proportion of registered voters
- Rates of returned ballots are approximately equal by race over time.

General trends

For the week of October 25:

- 141,832 mail ballots were requested. This brings the total number requested to 3,081,239.
 - 78.04% of all requested ballots have been returned for counting.
- 58,699 mail ballots were returned. This bring the total number returned to 2,404,727.
- 676,512 mail ballots are still outstanding.

By race

For the week of October 25,

- The breakdown of requests by party for the week was White 94,930, Black 21,979, and other race 24,923. Cumulatively, the breakdown of requests is Whites 2,268,024, Black 364,611, and other race 448,606.
 - For the week, 66.93 of requests came from Whites, 15.5 from Blacks, and 17.57 from voters of other or no party affiliation. Cumulatively, 73.61 of requests came from Whites, 11.83 from Blacks, and 14.56 from voters of other races.

- The breakdown of mail ballots returned by party for the week was White 37,675, Black 10,901, and other or no party affiliation 10,123. Cumulatively, the breakdown of returned ballots is White 1,784,005, Black 281,185, and other race 339,538.
 - For the week, 74.56% of ballots were returned by Whites, 10.19% from Blacks, and 15.25% from voters of other or no party affiliation. Cumulatively, 74% of ballots were returned by Whites, 12% from Blacks, and 14% from voters of other or races.
 - Thus far, 78.66% of ballots requested by Whites have been returned, compared to 77.12% of ballots requested by Blacks and 75.69% of ballots requested by voters of other races.
- The breakdown of mail ballots still outstanding was White 484,019, Black 83,426, and other race 109,068.

By party

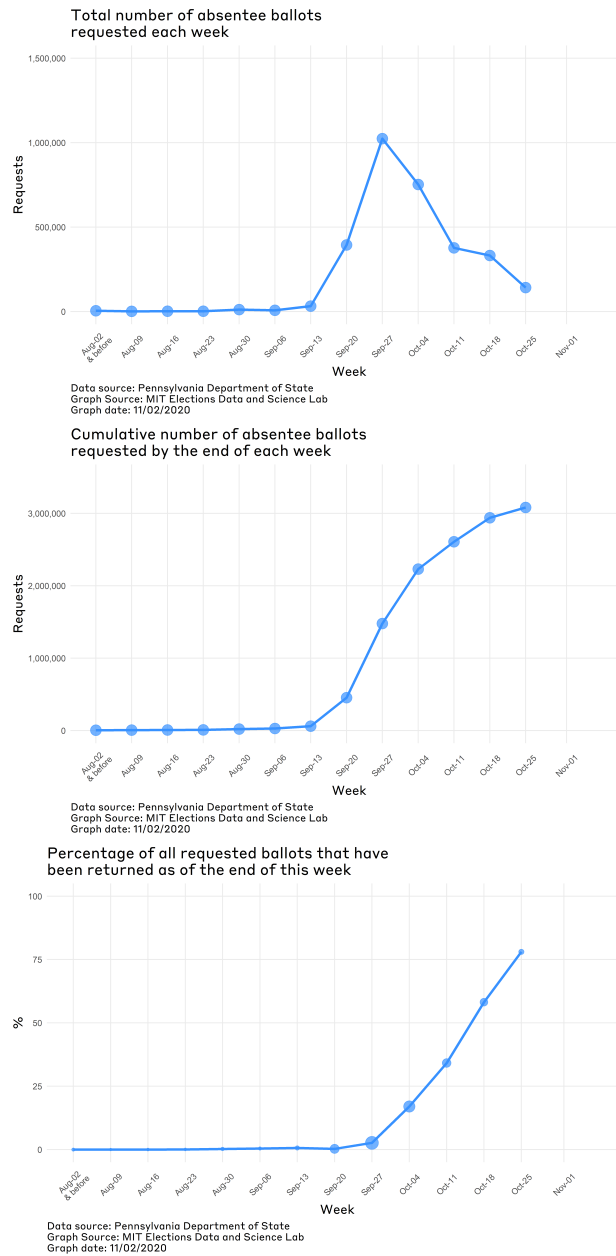
For the week of October 25,

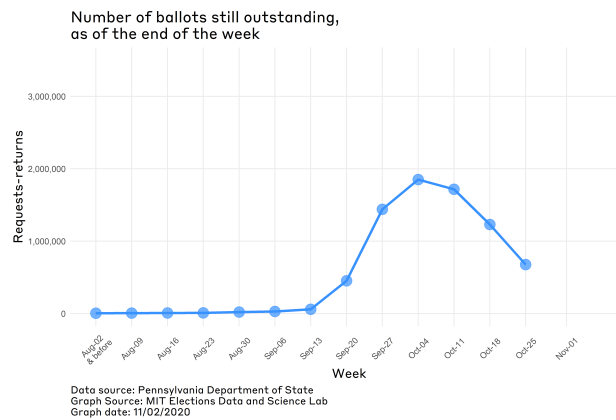
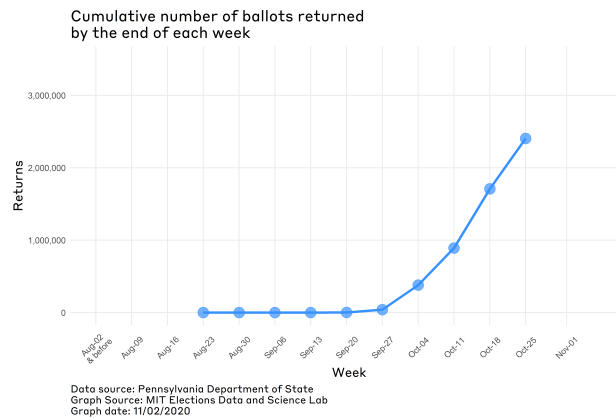
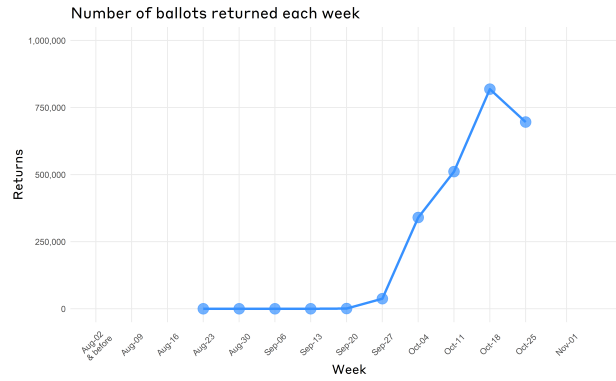
- The breakdown of requests by party for the week was Democrat 74,442, Republican 43,702, and other or no party affiliation 23,688. Cumulatively, the breakdown of requests is Democrats 1,937,113, Republican 782,916, and other or no party affiliation 361,210.
 - For the week, 52.49 of requests came from Democrats, 30.81 from Republicans, and 16.7 from voters of other or no party affiliation. Cumulatively, 52.49% of requests came from Democrats, 25.41 from Republicans, and 11.72 from voters of other or no party affiliation.
- The breakdown of mail ballots returned by party for the week was Democrat 35,886, Republican 14,683, and other or no party affiliation 8,130. Cumulatively, the breakdown of returned ballots is Democrat 1,590,853, Republican 552,836, and other or no party affiliation 261,038.
 - For the week, 57.04% of ballots were returned by Democrats, 28.74% from Republicans, and 14.22% from voters of other or no party affiliation. Cumulatively, 57.04% of ballots were returned by Democrats, 0.23% from Republicans, and 0.11% from voters of other or no party affiliation.
 - Thus far, 82.12% of ballots requested by Democrats have been returned, compared to 70.61% of ballots requested by Republicans and 72.27% of ballots requested by voters of other or no party affiliation.
- The breakdown of mail ballots still outstanding was Democrat 346,260, Republican 230,080, and other or no party affiliation 100,172.

Ballots not accepted for counting

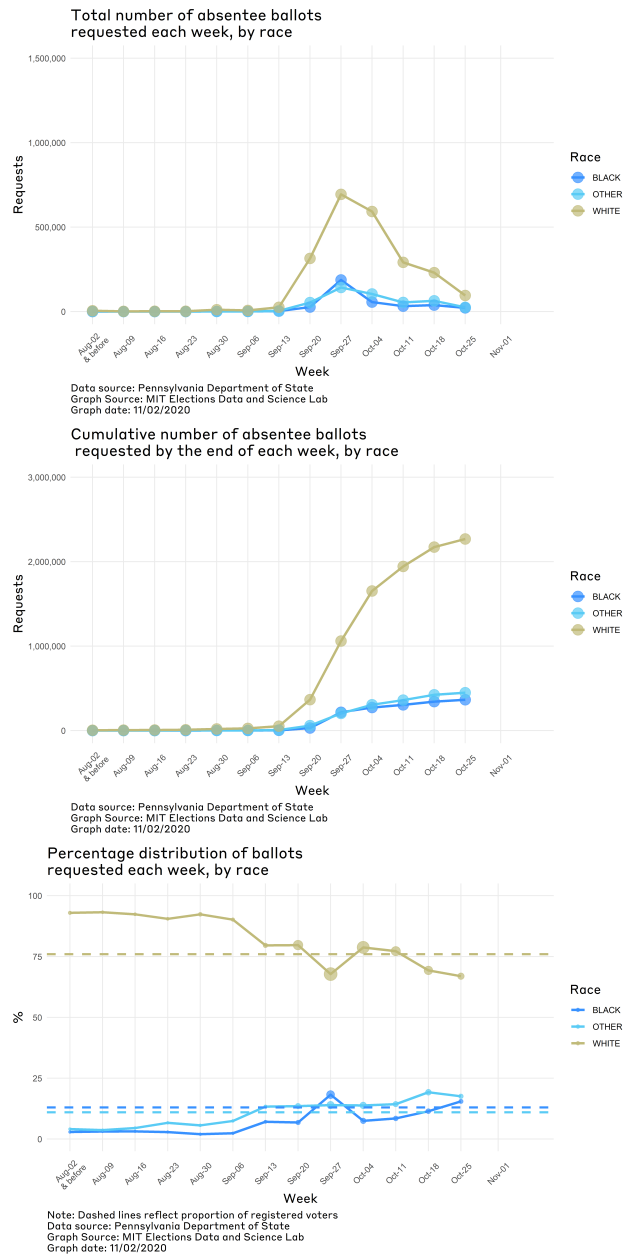
- For the week, 2.54% of ballots returned for counting were not accepted. Cumulatively, 1.18% of ballots were not accepted.
- Of the ballots requested for this week that were not accepted by race, 2.68% were from White voters, 1.89% from Black voters, and 2.32% from other races. Cumulatively, 1.26% were from White voters, 0.76% from Black voters, and 1.12% from other races.

Appendix 1: Aggregate Ballot Request and Return Trends

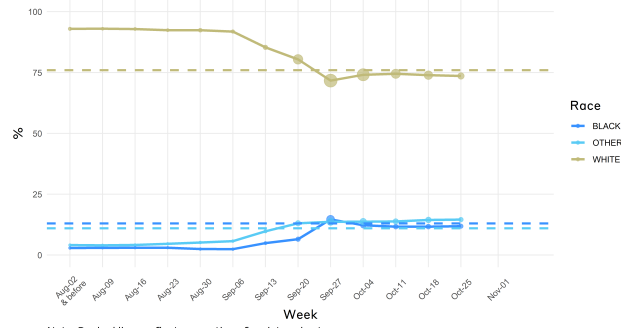




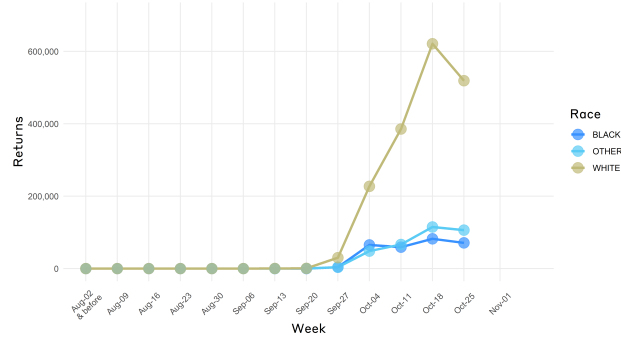
Appendix 2: Ballot request and return trends by race



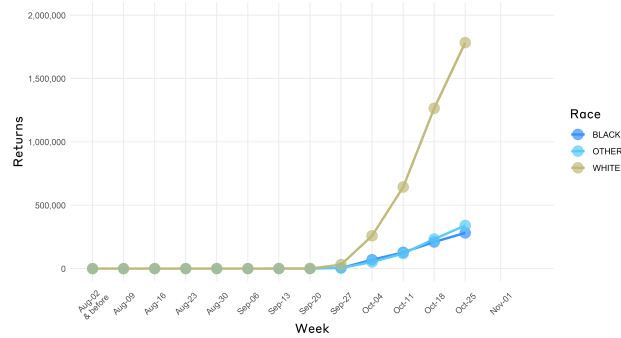
Cumulative percentage distribution of ballots requested by the end of each week, by race



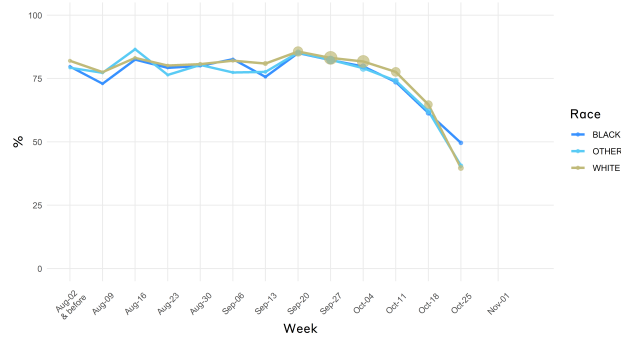
Number of ballots returned each week, by race



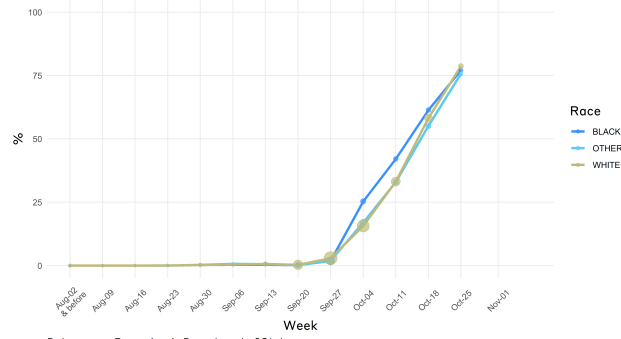
Cumulative number of ballots returned by the end of each week, by race



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

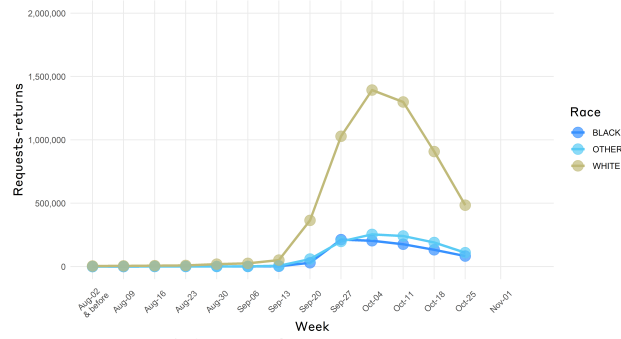


Cumulative percentage of ballots returned by the end of each week, by race



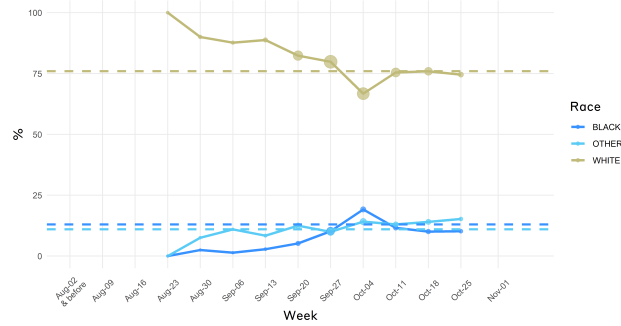
Data source: Pennsylvania Department of State
Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
Graph date: 11/02/2020

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



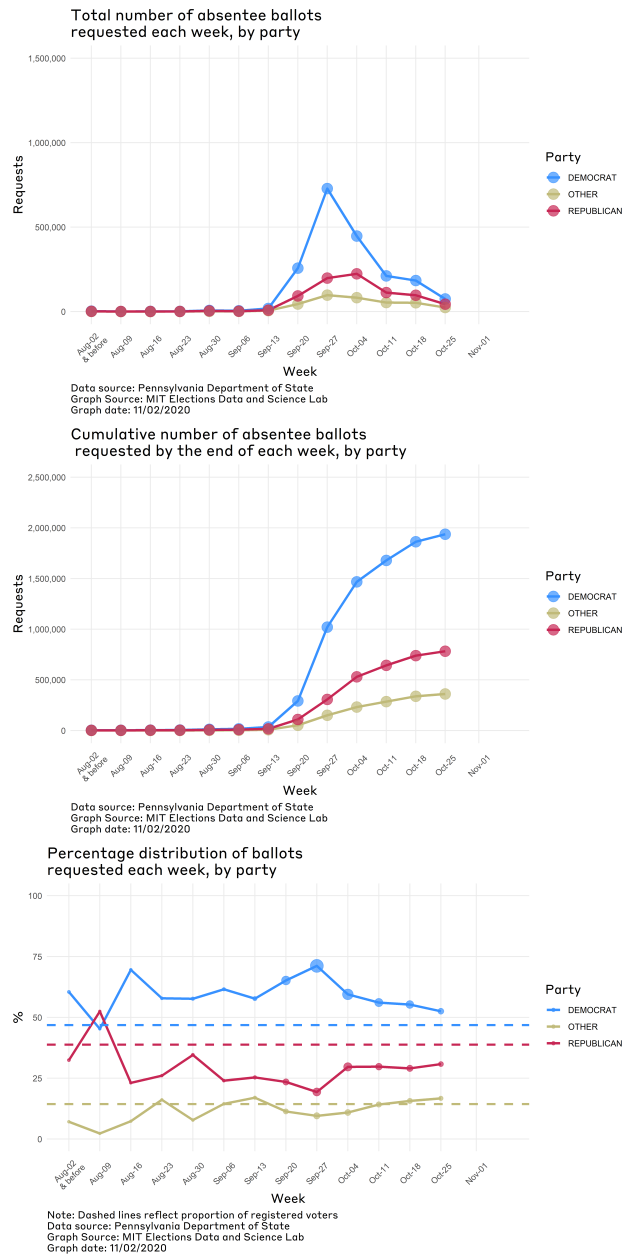
Data source: Pennsylvania Department of State
Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
Graph date: 11/02/2020

Percentage distribution of ballots returned each week, by race

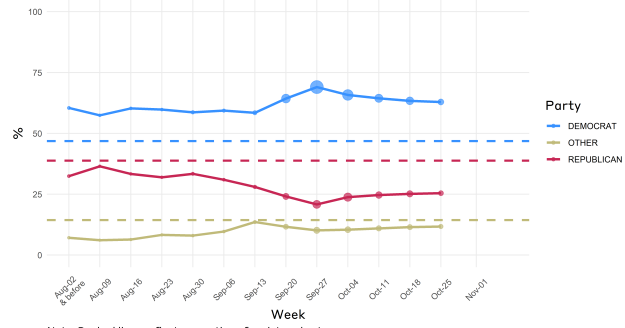


Note: Dashed lines reflect proportion of registered voters
Data source: Pennsylvania Department of State
Graph Source: MIT Elections Data and Science Lab
Graph date: 11/02/2020

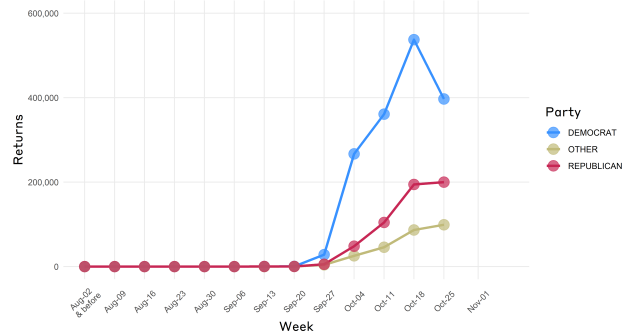
Appendix 3: Ballot request and return trends by party



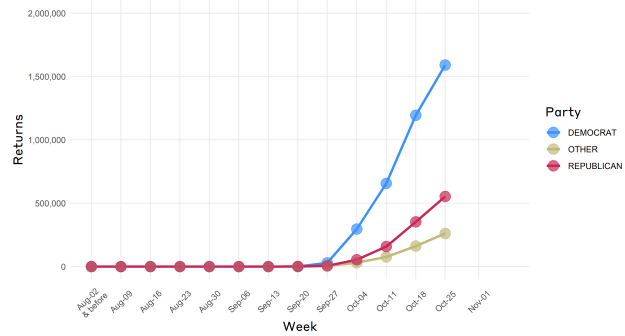
Cumulative percentage distribution of ballots requested by the end of each week, by party



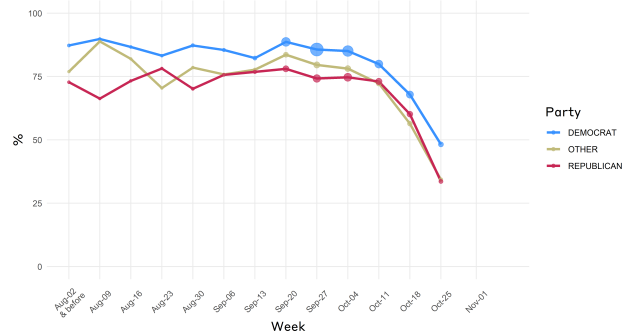
Number of ballots returned each week, by party

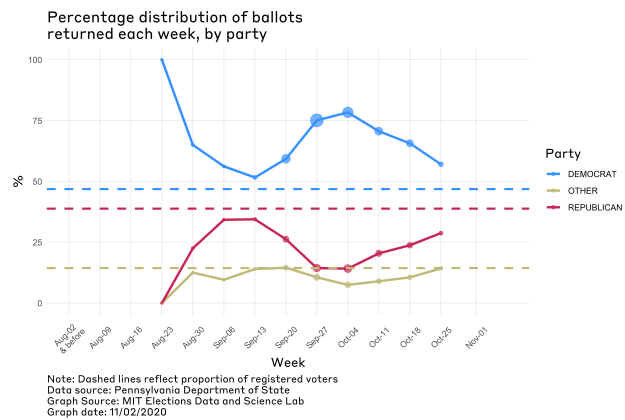
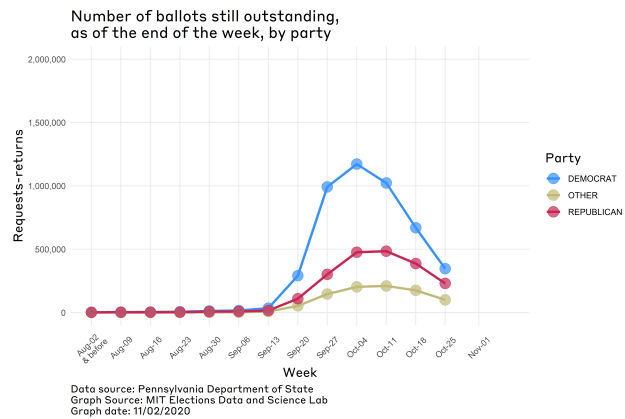
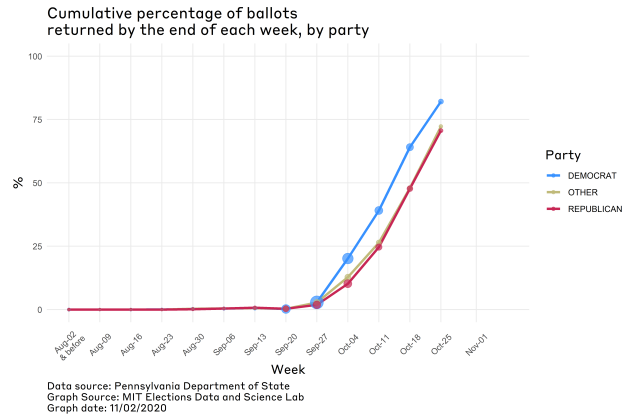


Cumulative number of ballots returned by the end of each week, by party

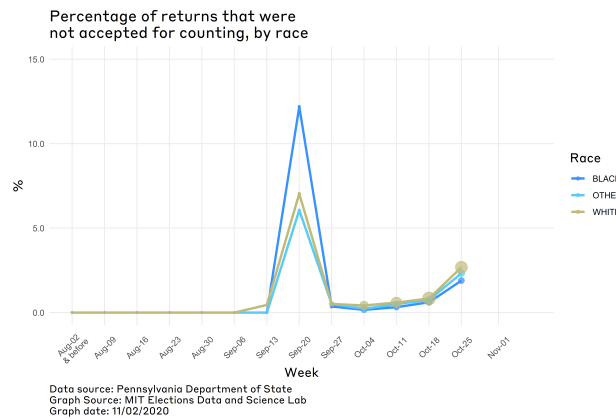
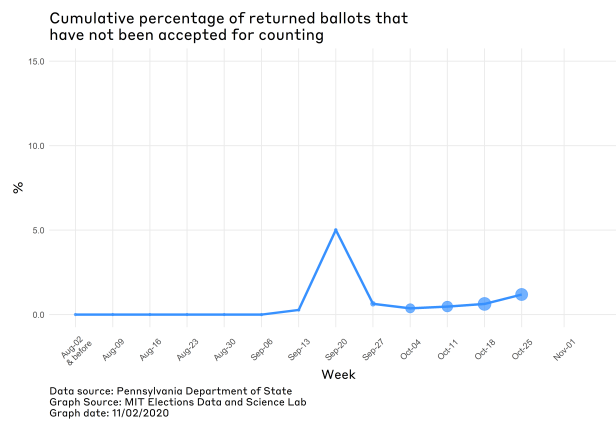
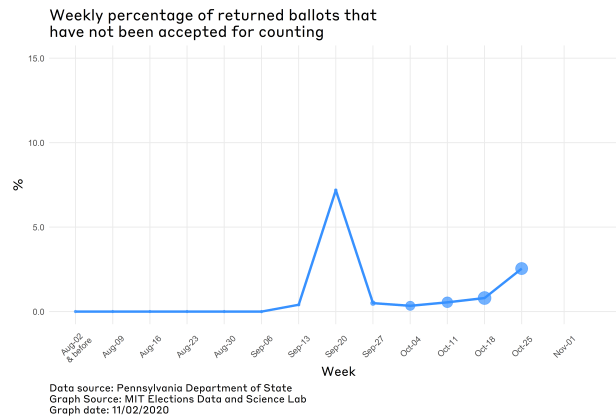


Percentage of ballots returned out of each week's requests, by party

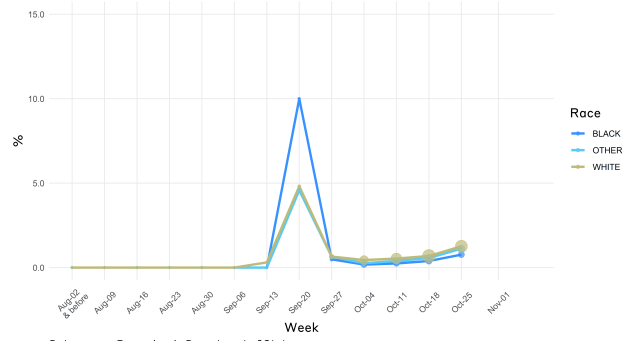




Appendix 4: Ballot not accepted trends

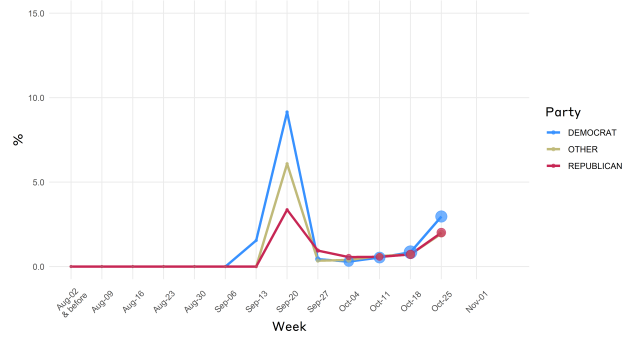


Cumulative percentage of returns that were not accepted for counting, by race



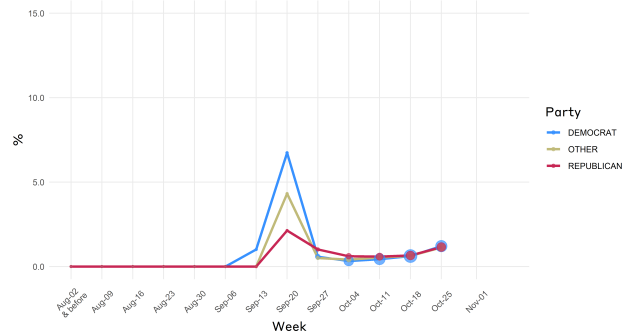
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Graph date: 11/02/2020

Percentage of returns that were not accepted for counting, by party



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