Evaluating Elections in Coos County

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Evaluating Claims That American Elections Are Broken

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- **Claim**: Stacey Abrams' organization registered 800,000 Georgia voters before 2020
  Reality: Absurd claim based on a misunderstanding Abrams never corrected

Evaluating Claims of Vote Manipulation

Assess prominent claims of vote manipulation and the public's perception of fraud

- Debunk claims of Russia causing Donald Trump to be elected (Grimmer 2019)
- Evaluate claims from the 2020 presidential election (Eggers, Garro, and Grimmer 2021; Grimmer and Ramaswamy 2024)
- Evaluate claims from the 2022 Nevada gubernatorial primary (Grimmer, Herron, and Tyler 2024)
- Measure American public's concerns about election integrity (Holliday, Grimmer, Lelkes, and Westwood 2024)
- Evaluate Douglas Frank's claims of vote manipulation (Grimmer, Herron, and Tyler 2024)

What Are Frank's Claims?

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He has three kinds of evidence:

1) Frank claims elections are "unnaturally" predictable

2) Frank claims to have evidence from neighborhood canvasses

3) Frank claims there is "too much churn" in the voter file, hiding "phantom voters"

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2) Frank's vague assertions about evidence from canvasses are not, on their own, evidence of fraud. If he has credible and specific allegations of fraud, he should alert authorities.

3) Frank's conclusions about voter file churn are based on his personal impressions. When I consult statistics on movers, death, and coming of age I find nothing surprising about changes in Coos County's voter file.

1) Assessing evidence about "unnaturally" predictable elections

Douglas Frank's Theory of Central Control of Elections

July 2, 2024 Coos County Commission Meeting:
"The bottom line point is that your elections are not under your control they're under control by somebody else. And the statistics show that because they're under control of somebody else I can predict every election in your state which is a preposterous situation and they've made documentaries about my work...It's quite shocking."

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Lindell: Every single age group [in each county] was exactly X% of each age group voted.

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Frank: Yes. Every single county.
Lindell: Every single age group [in each county] was exactly X% of each age group voted.
Frank: Yes. Which of course is preposterous.

Oregon Turnout Varies Substantially Across Counties

- Frank claims a single turnout "key" perfectly predicts the turnout rate (proportion of registered voters who turned out to vote) for each age group in a state.
- We evaluated that claim.
- Using Oregon voter roll data and Doug Frank's "key", we evaluate his predictions.

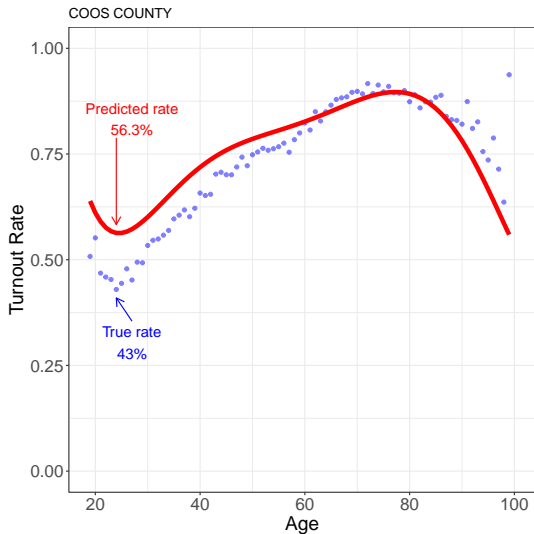# Oregon Turnout Varies Substantially Across Counties
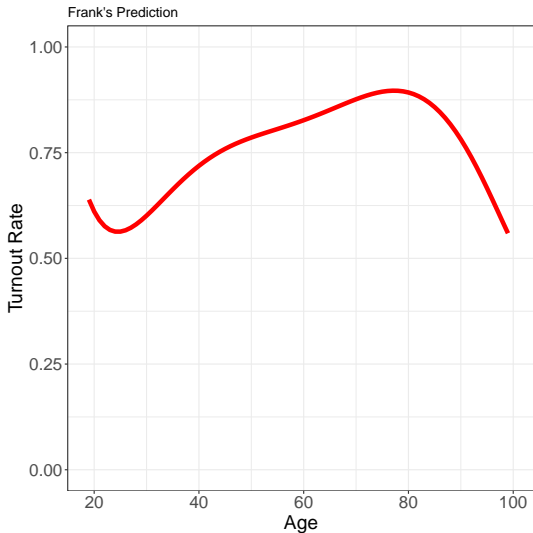
Frank's Prediction

Oregon Turnout Varies Substantially Across Counties

COOS COUNTY

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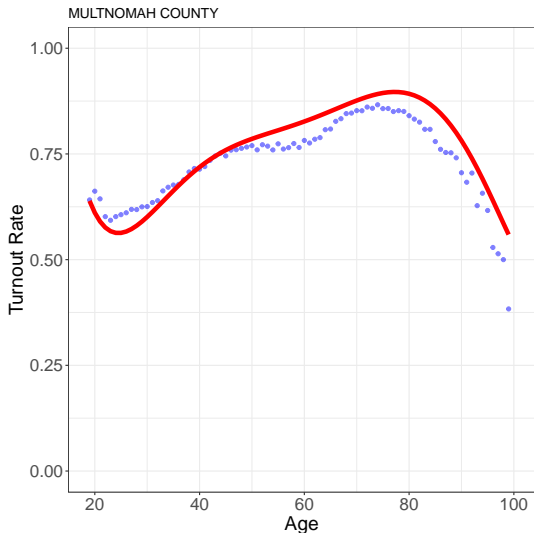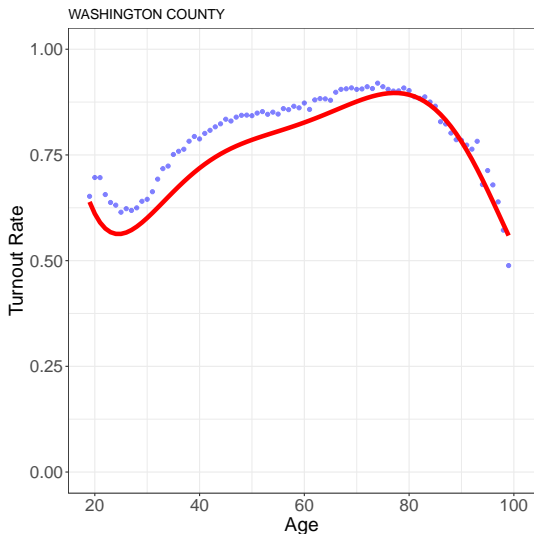# Oregon Turnout Varies Substantially Across Counties

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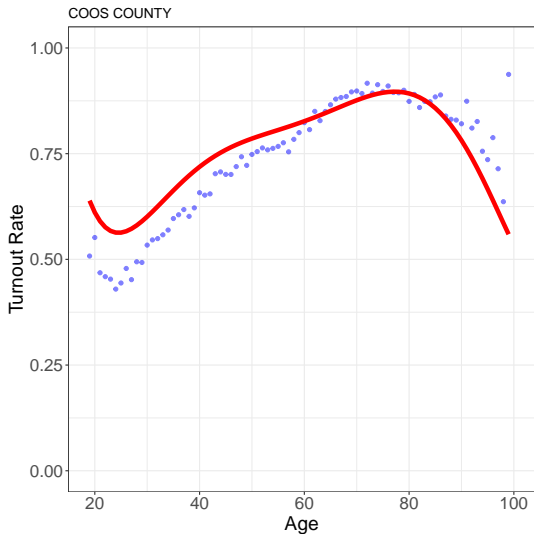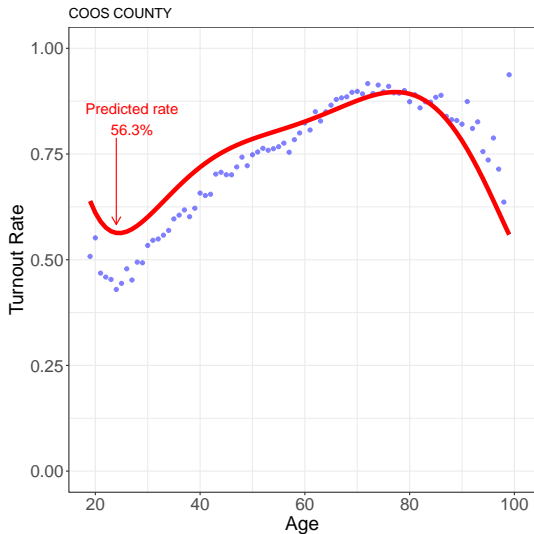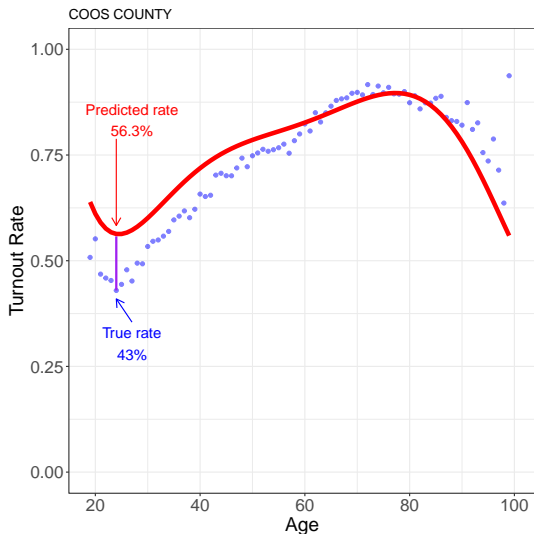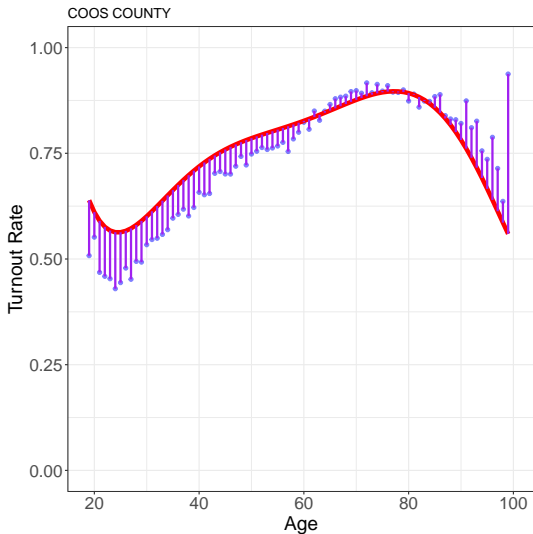
Mean Absolute Percentage Error: 8.54%

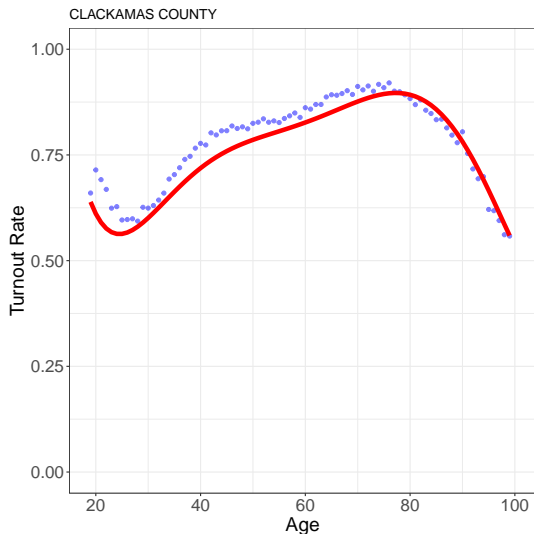# Oregon Turnout Varies Substantially Across Counties

MULTNOMAH COUNTY

Mean Absolute Percentage Error: 6.18%

Oregon Turnout Varies Substantially Across Counties

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Mean Absolute Percentage Error: 5.93%

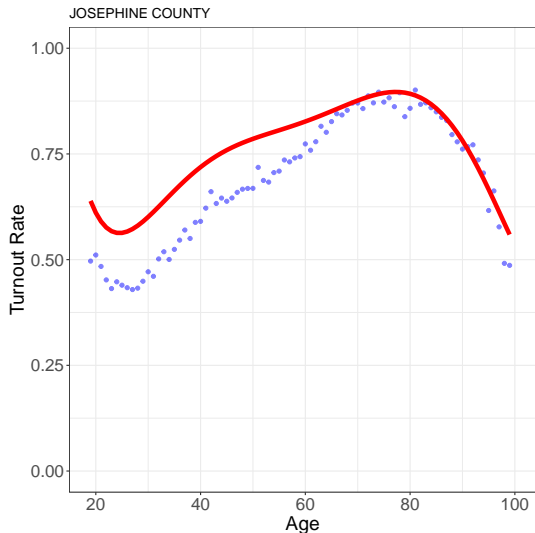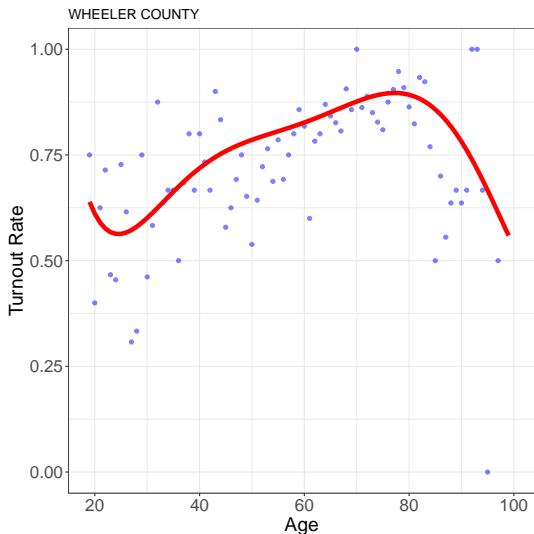# Oregon Turnout Varies Substantially Across Counties

CLACKAMAS COUNTY

Mean Absolute Percentage Error: 4.40%

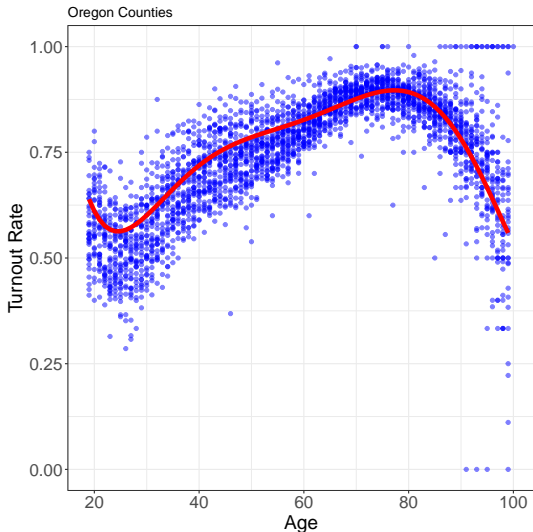# Oregon Turnout Varies Substantially Across Counties

Mean Absolute Percentage Error: 12.8%
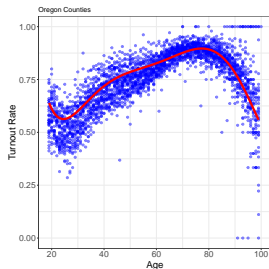
Oregon Turnout Varies Substantially Across Counties

Mean Absolute Percentage Error: 15.5%

Oregon Turnout Varies Substantially Across Counties

Overall Oregon Mean Absolute Percentage Error: 8.89%

Oregon Turnout Varies Substantially Across Counties

Clear evidence that "every age group turning out at the same X%" is simply wrong

Why does Frank think he is making a "perfect" prediction?

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   Calculate predicted count: multiply predicted rate by number in age group

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These two mistakes lead to a profound statistical error: Frank's incorrect conclusion about exact predictive performance

# Why Does Frank Think He Can Perfectly Predict Oregon Elections?

- Why? if a county has some differences in number of people each age, correlation of counts will be higher than correlation of rates (Grimmer, Herron, and Tyler 2024)

- Intuition: correlation of counts "cheats" and confuses two things: ability to predict turnout RATE (which Frank actually cares about) with variation in NUMBER of people in each age group (which is not something that Frank tries to predict).

- Mean Absolute Percentage Error does not have this issue and is a standard measure in machine learning (Grimmer, Roberts, and Stewart 2022)
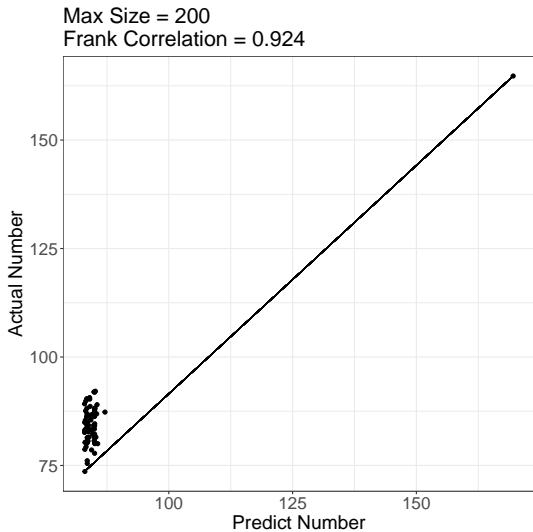
An Example to Reveal Why Counts Are Misleading

- Consider a fictitious county where there is no vote manipulation.
- Suppose every age group has a different turnout rate
- Initially, suppose there is the same number of residents of every age - 100 residents, but there are 101 41 year old residents.
- We follow Frank's procedure in this county and examine our predictive performance
- Examine what happens as we increase the size of one age group- 41 year olds.
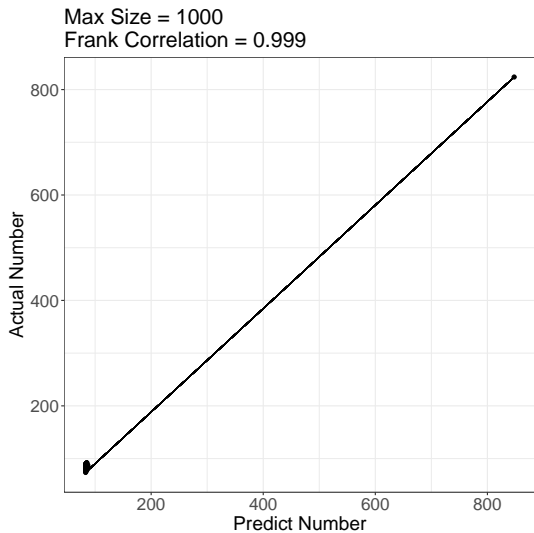
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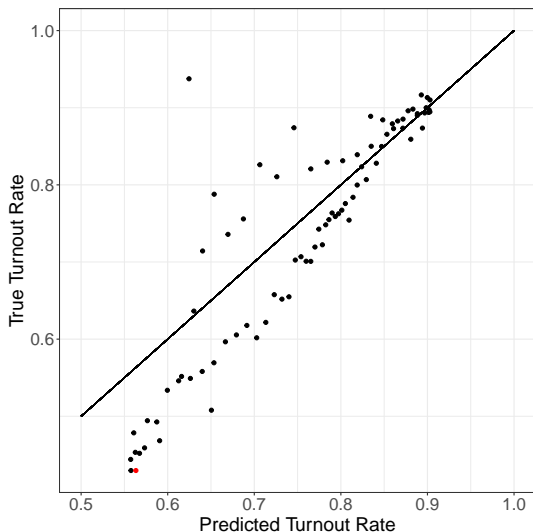Max Size = 101
Frank Correlation = 0.213
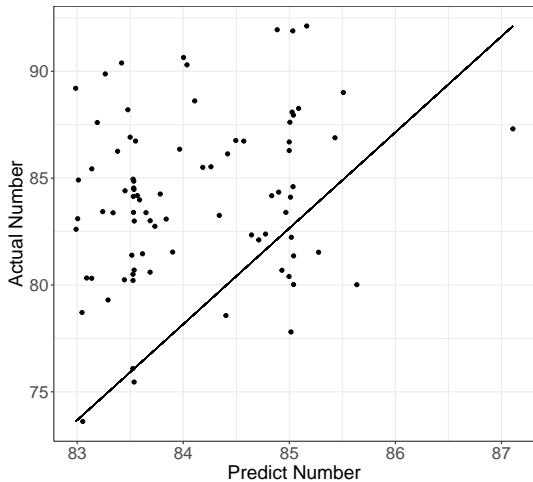
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Max Size = 200
Frank Correlation = 0.924

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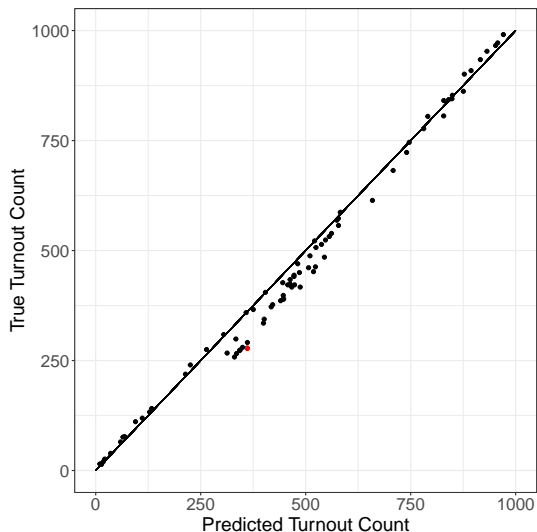Max Size = 1000
Frank Correlation = 0.999

Coos County, OR: Turnout Rates:
Correlation = 0.87 ; MAPE = 8.54%

Coos County, OR: Turnout Counts:
Correlation = 0.99; MAPE = 8.54%

2) Assessing evidence from canvasses

Evidence from Canvasses and "Phantom Voters"

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- Frank is sometimes confused about voter rolls and what is evidence of fraud
- July 23, 2023 Frank claims that he found voter fraud in San Joaquin County in California.
  "There's a simple idea. There's these two old ladies in San Joaquin county...they sit there all day long. What we did was we sorted their voters (the people who actually voted) from oldest to youngest. They just look them up, starting from the oldest. Of the first 2,700 people they looked up, they found 47 dead people who voted. Very simple strategy, but it takes a lot of work. But these are people who are dead who you're counting ballots from them. Ok, that's fraud! Just two ladies sitting at the computer. We don't stop there. We knock on the door. We get documentation. We get all that complete story. That's just one simple way to do it."

Investigating Claims of Dead San Joaquin Voters

My research group took this claim seriously and decided to investigate it.

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Olivia Hale (San Joaquin registrar of voters) responds:

I am 100% sure that if anyone in this county found 47 dead voters they would've been knocking at my door I haven't heard anything about it.

Hale then explains that there are 47 voters who were registered before a birthdate was required (1971), and therefore had a placeholder "birthday" of 1850.

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Hale subsequently provided me with a copy of the San Joaquin voter history file and accompanying voter file

Investigating Claims of Dead San Joaquin Voters

San Joaquin voter file:

- 50 individuals cast ballots in 2020 election with the grandfathered "1850" birthdate

- 3 voting center locations, 47 vote by mail

- I was able to confirm 46 of 47 were alive when casting the ballot, inconclusive on 47th

- No evidence of anything else other than a record keeping oddity

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What happened to the evidence of deceased voters?

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Academic studies show no evidence of widespread dead voters (Wu et al 2024, Grimmer and Ramaswamy 2024)

3) Assessing evidence of "unnatural" voter roll churn

Frank on Voter "Churn"

July 2, 2024 Coos County Commission Meeting: "I did a voter churn analysis. What I mean by that I took a snapshot of your voter rolls in January of 21 January of 22 January of 23 and March of 24 so it's a three year span and I have four copies of your voter rolls and I compared rolls to rolls and that's what this table summarizes and what is shocking to discover is that 40% of the people in your rolls have changed in the last three years we call that a 40% churn...you have a 40% churn in a mere three years...does that make sense to people? That doesn't seem natural"

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Important point: Frank uses a non-standard definition of "churn". Adding together departures and arrivals causes him to double count. Under his definition the maximum churn is 200%.

Turnover Is Expected

Sources of Turnover (Cantoni and Pons 2022, Pettigrew and Stewart 2017):

- Voter moves from one county to another in same state: 1-3% every year
- Voter moves from one state to another: 1-4% every year (De Leon 2023)
- Voter dies: 1% every year
- Voters turn 18 : 1-2% every year

Analyzing Changes in Voter File

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9,157	40,892
18.3 %	81.7%

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Departures:

- 3,099 move to a new Oregon county (calculated from voter file)
- 1,500 to 6,000 from out of state moves (estimated from census data)
- 1,500 from deaths (estimated from CDC)
- **6,100** to **10,600** expected departures.

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Analyzing Changes in Voter File

Present in 2024, Not in 2021	Present in 2024 and 2021
12,810	40,892
23.9%	76.1%

Arrivals:

- 3,326 moved in from other Oregon counties (calculated from voter file)

- 2,191 individuals became of age (calculated from voter file)

- 2,000 to 6,500 from out of state moves (estimated from census bureau)

- **7,000** to **12,000** individuals expected to arrive

Adding together departures and arrivals: **13,100** to **22,600**. Nothing surprising about Frank's "churn".

Evaluating US Elections

Some on the left and right are promoting false and misleading claims about American elections

- American elections are not manipulated with "suppression"
- No credible evidence of widespread manipulation with "fraud"
- Reforms almost never provide a partisan benefit (Grimmer and Hersh 2024)

My research group is here to help and evaluate concerns.

Thank you!
jgrimmer@stanford.edu
(617) 710-6803

State-Level Keys Are Not Unique
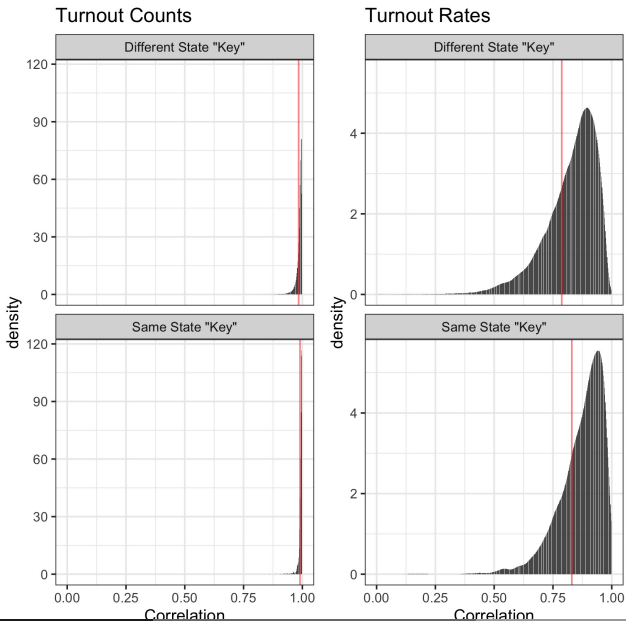
Assessing claims about "moving in tandem"

Automatic Voter Registration in Oregon

July 2, 2024 Coos County Commissioner Meeting: "page three shows that every single county in your state has that same surge, all of your populations did not surge in tandem, that is a direct policy consequence of the state policy. If your local clerks were in charge of the voter rolls in every county, it would go up and down depending on the population and how busy the clerks are."

July 2, 2024 Coos County Commissioner Meeting: "Starting in 2014 you started automatically registering people to vote. Your voter rolls suddenly surge dramatically. Your population didn't surge dramatically but your voter rolls surged dramatically."

July 2, 2024 Coos County Commissioner Meeting: "1 in 4 people in your voter rolls don't really belong there, they're automatically put in."

Automatic Voter Registration in Oregon

In 2015 Oregon passed a law for back-end automatic voter registration, it was implemented in 2016.

- Go to the DMV, prove citizenship, qualifying interaction $\rightsquigarrow$ automatically registered to vote
- 319,536 interactions identifed in 2016 among individuals who proved citizenship at DMV.
    - 9,917 mailers were undeliverable
    - 26,467 voters opted out
- 283,152 voters registered in 2016

Further, unclear why Frank thinks independent registrars would not have correlated changes in voter files

- Frank cites no analysis or study that supports this claim
- Oregon regulations ask local clerks to start performing maintenance on the same number of days before the election
- How would local registrars identify movers?

Automatic Voter Registration in Oregon

Unclear what Frank means when he says "1 in 4 people in your voter rolls don't really belong there, they're automatically put in".

- Voters only added after an interaction at the DMV
- Registrations increased because eligible voters were registered
- Of course it exceeded the population growth, the DMV identified eligible but unregistered voters
- Discovery of non-citizen registrants result of poor form design at DMV
- Considering any policy: how do you balance legitimate registrations (eligible citizen) against risk of registration errors (non-citizens).
- Automatic voter registration also ensures voters have up to date registrations (after a move)

Voter Registration Rates

July 2, 2024 Coos County Commisioner Meeting: "Healthy voter rolls has 70% of your voting age people in it"

- Frank offers no citation for this claim
- Why would it be "healthy" to not have eligible voters on the voter rolls?
- It is the case that list maintenance is important and recent claims of "vote purges" from liberal organizations politicizes a standard registration practice

Frank's Claim That Hand Counting Saves Money

July 2nd, 2024 Coos County Commission Meeting: "Talking about your budget. When I was in Shasta County last year who recently did this [hand counting, sic] they have 75,000 voters they save $250,000 a year on their budget. "

Frank's Claim Hand Counting Saves Money

It is unclear what Frank is referring

- "Shasta has 111,503 voters; typical turnout ranges from 50,000 votes in a primary to a high of 94,084 votes in the November 2020 Presidential General Election. In the November 2022 General Election, which saw 61.8% turnout, there were 47 ballot types, 42 contests, and 114 candidates. There were over 2.8 million ovals counted across the ballots" (Shasta Cost Analysis, 2023)

- "We conclude, based on our study, that adding the necessary resources would cost at least $1,651,209.68 for tally staff and require the addition of more than 1,200 staff members" (Shasta County Cost Analysis, 2023)

- "Shasta County officials on Thursday approved spending $950,000 to hire a company to provide the equipment needed to hand-count ballots, something that hasn't been done in California in decades, at least not on the scale proposed in the county." (Damon Arthur, Redding Record Searchlight, April 2023)

Placer County Elections

Aug 21,2022 "Moment of Truth" summit: stated simply 88% of the registered Republicans in EVERY Placer County precinct voted...Exactly 88% of all Republicans voted in that Precinct." He continues stating: "this is all over the state [California], this is happening everywhere"

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Frank 2023 Memo: "In order to attribute this to a natural phenomenon, one would have to believe that partisans in every Placer precinct voted at a nearly identical rate; that voter turnout is the same regardless of whether a precinct is rural or urban, minority or diverse, wealthy or poor, or suburban or farming communities. Every Republican in every precinct voted with the same propensity (88.3%) - and so did every Democrat (87.8%). Even voters registered as 'other' are unnaturally consistent, they just turned out at a lower rate (76.6%)"

Placer County Precinct Turnout Rates

Placer County Republican Turnout Rate
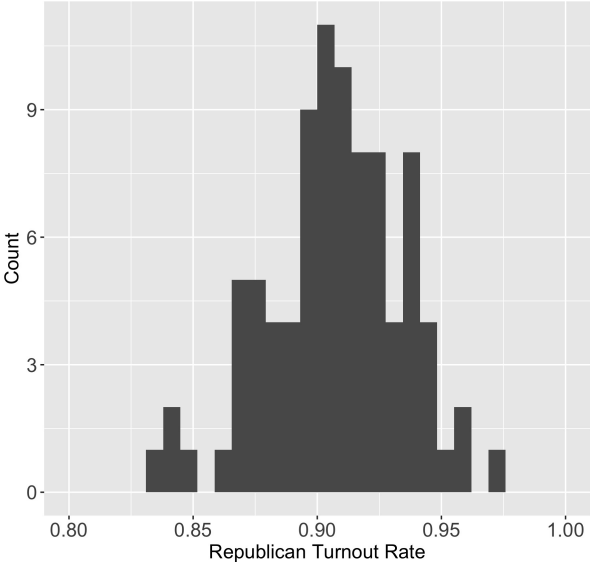
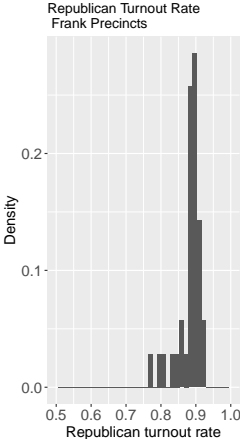# Placer County Precinct Turnout Rates

Placer County Democratic Turnout Rate
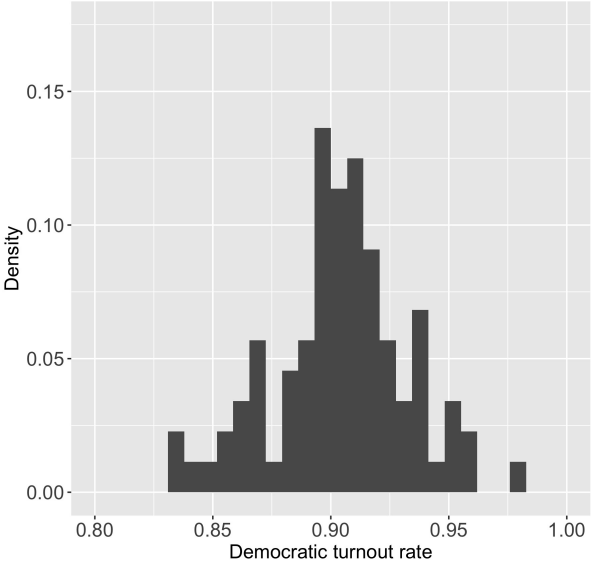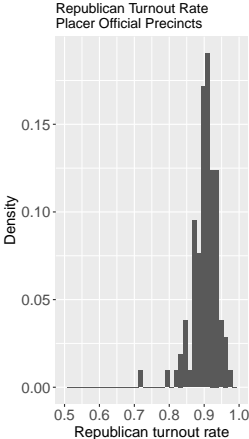
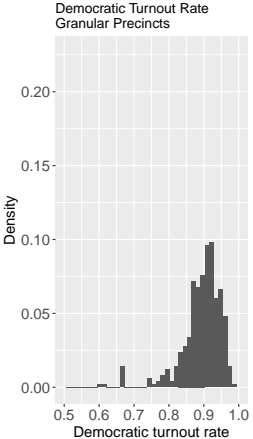# Placer County Precinct Turnout Rates
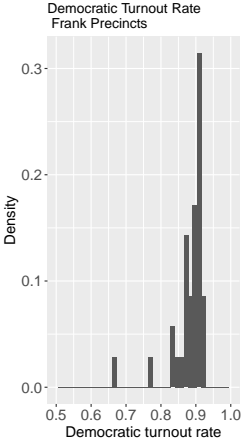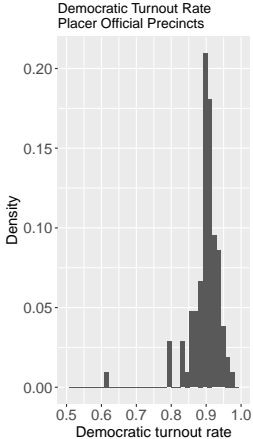

Placer County Overall Turnout Rate
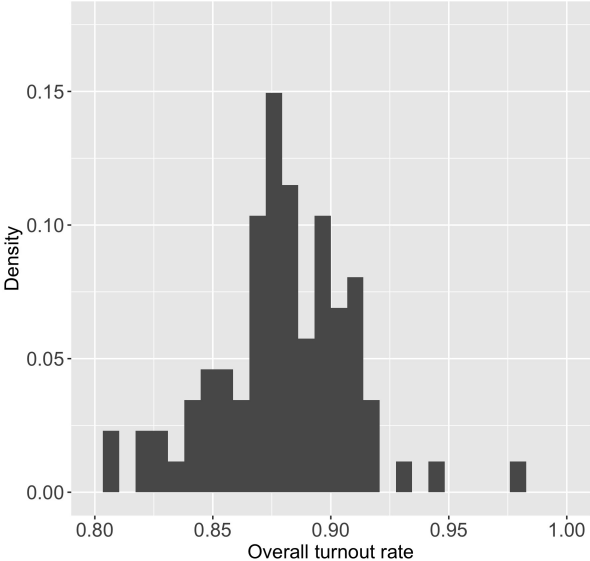
Placer County Precinct Turnout Rates
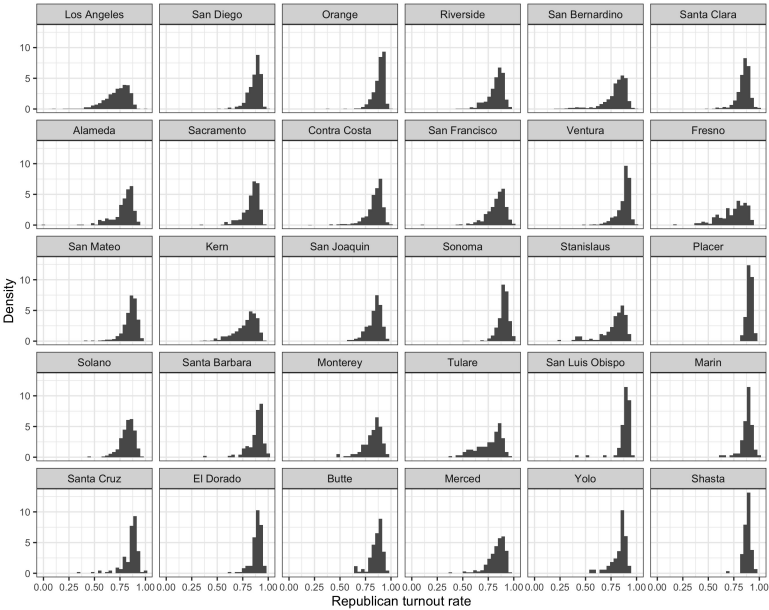
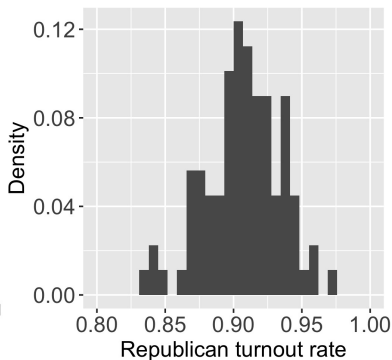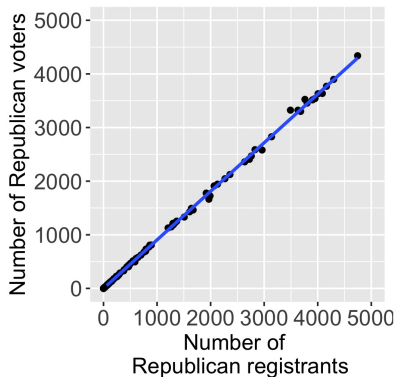# Placer County Precinct Turnout Rates
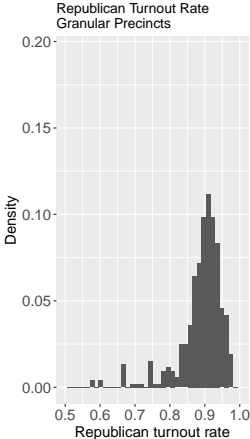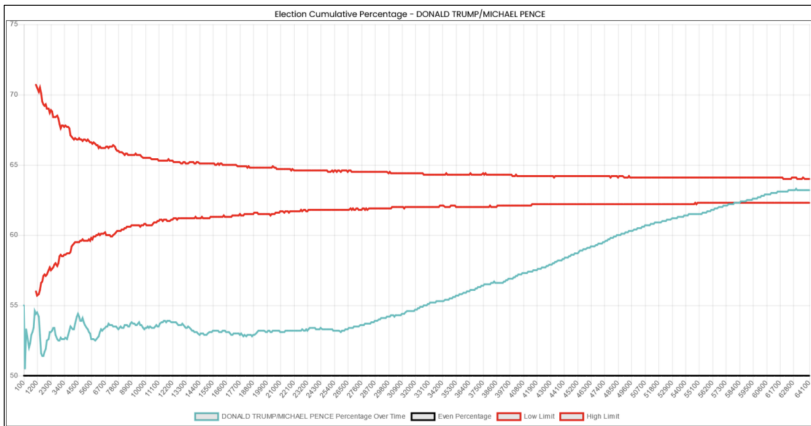
Placer County Precinct Turnout Rates

What Went Wrong?

Once again, Frank uses the wrong data to test his claim

The "Mesa" Pattern

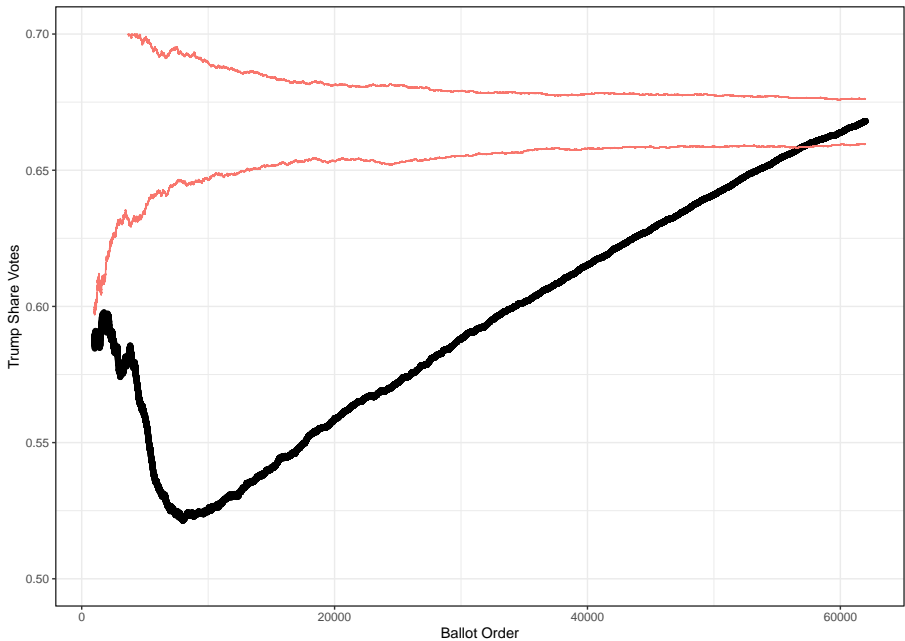Election Cumulative Percentage – DONALD TRUMP/MICHAEL PENCE

Legend: DONALD TRUMP/MICHAEL PENCE Percentage Over Time — Even Percentage — Low Limit — High Limit

Shasta Daily Mail Returns
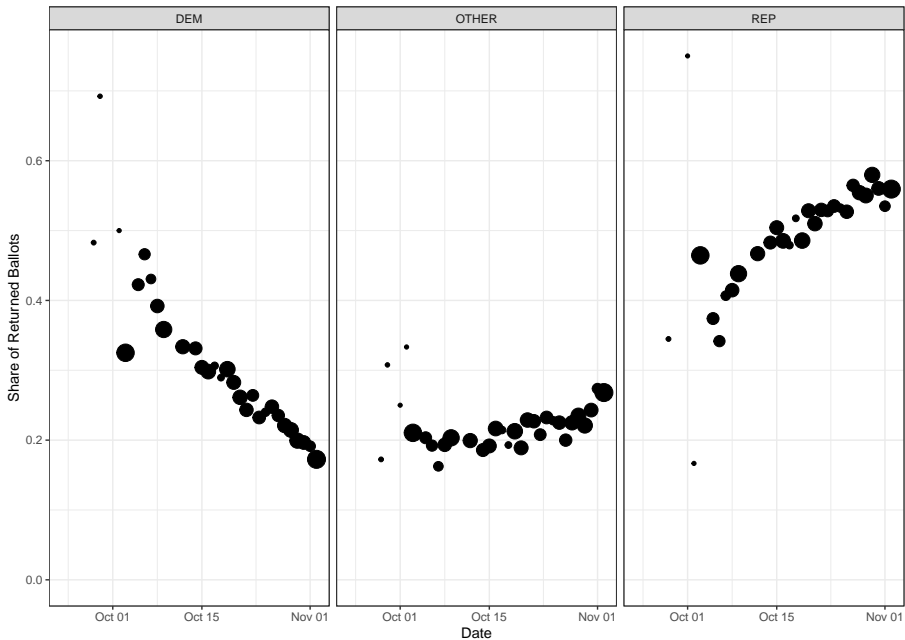
Shasta Pattern Based on Return Date

Did private election administration funding advantage Democrats in 2020?

Apoorva Lal[a,1] and Daniel M. Thompson[b,1,2]

Private donors contributed more than $350 million to local election officials to support the administration of the 2020 election. Supporters argue these grants were neutral and necessary to maintain normal election operations during the pandemic, while critics worry these grants mostly went to Democratic strongholds and tilted election outcomes. How much did these grants shape the 2020 presidential election? To answer this question, we collect administrative data on private election administration grants and election outcomes. We then use advances in synthetic control methods to compare presidential election results and turnout in counties that received grants to counties with similar election results and turnout before 2020. While Democratic counties were more likely to apply for a grant, we find that the grants did not have a noticeable effect on the presidential election. Our estimates of the average effect on Democratic vote share range from 0.03 to 0.36 percentage points. Our estimates of the average effect of receiving a grant on turnout range from 0.03 to 0.14 percentage points. Across specifications, our 95% CIs typically include negative effects and all fail to include effects on Democratic vote share larger than 0.58 percentage points and effects on turnout larger than 0.40 percentage points. We characterize the magnitude of our effects by asking how large they are compared to the margin by which Biden won the 2020 election. In simple bench-marking exercises, we find that the effects of the grants were likely too small to have changed the outcome of the 2020 presidential election.