

The Impact of Distance from Voting Boxes: Do Out-of-State Students Vote Less?



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INTRODUCTION

As college students, we see a large variety of people around election day - people who are passionate about spreading awareness and encouraging voters to people who aren't even registered

There are huge barriers to voting for people under 25, in general, but especially for college students

The easiest way to track voting by students is by studying if out-of-state students (who arguably face the most challenges to casting their votes) vote less than in-state students, as well as the reasons for why college students do or do not vote

RESEARCH QUESTION

We plan to use this study to find the issues facing young voters, so that the proper remedy can be encouraged, whether that be a day off for election day, more instruction for registering to vote, particularly for out-of-state or in-state students deciding which district to vote in, or if young people truly do not care enough about politics to vote.

We are wondering: why do college students have such a low turnout rate in elections?

To study this, our research questions are:

- Are out-of-state students less likely to vote than in-state students?
- Do students know about and utilize mail-in voting as a means of overcoming distance-based barriers to voting?

THEORY

We theorize that many college students do not vote because they are uninformed of the voting process. We believe this to be the case because there are not enough resources on college campuses to propel students to vote.

A study that confirms this theory is the article “College Students Don’t Turn Out to Vote” written by Harvard professor of public policy, Dr. Kathryn Sikkink. Sikkink found that colleges that used peer-to-peer contact, like Northwestern University, registered 95% of its eligible student body to vote. These findings imply that college students *are* open and able to vote when faced with accessible methods of learning *how*.

HYPOTHESES

- HYPOTHESES #1: Out of state students vote less than in state students
 - We believe that out-of-state students vote less because they have not actively prepared to vote in the state they go to school in or they do not have a way to return home to vote, unless they have the ability to mail-in vote.
- HYPOTHESES #2: Out of state students are more likely to use mail-in voting.
 - We believe this is true because if out-of-state students choose to vote, they have to do additional research to be able to vote, which in-state students may not think about.

METHODS - SURVEY QUESTIONS

We asked age and whether or not people were registered to vote to make sure that the information we gathered was accurate: people under 18 will obviously not have voted yet and people who are not registered to vote in the US face the same problem.

We asked what state respondents were registered to vote in to find out-of-state students, then asked all respondents whether or not they had voted in an election while in college.

We asked how they cast their vote if they responded that they had voted. If they responded that they had not voted, we asked why they chose not to vote with these three options: could not find transportation, out-of-state voter, time restraints, and other.

METHODS – SURVEY SAMPLE

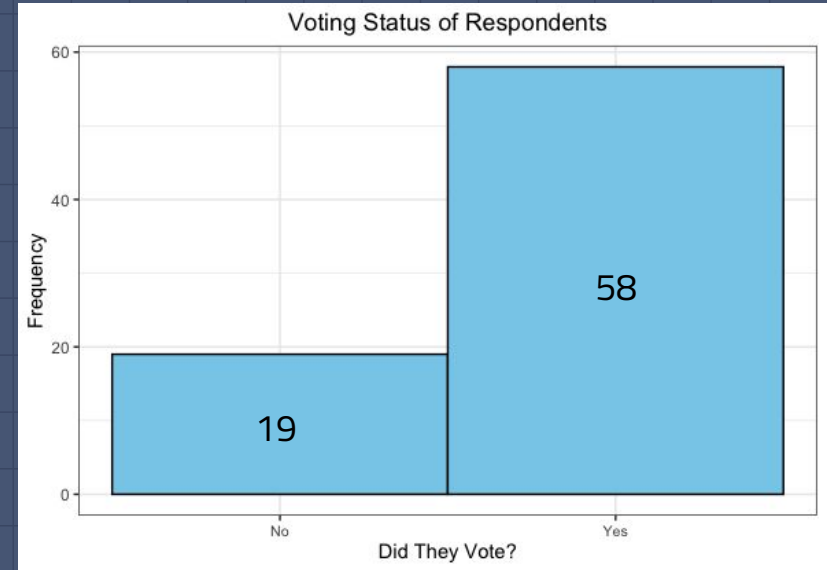
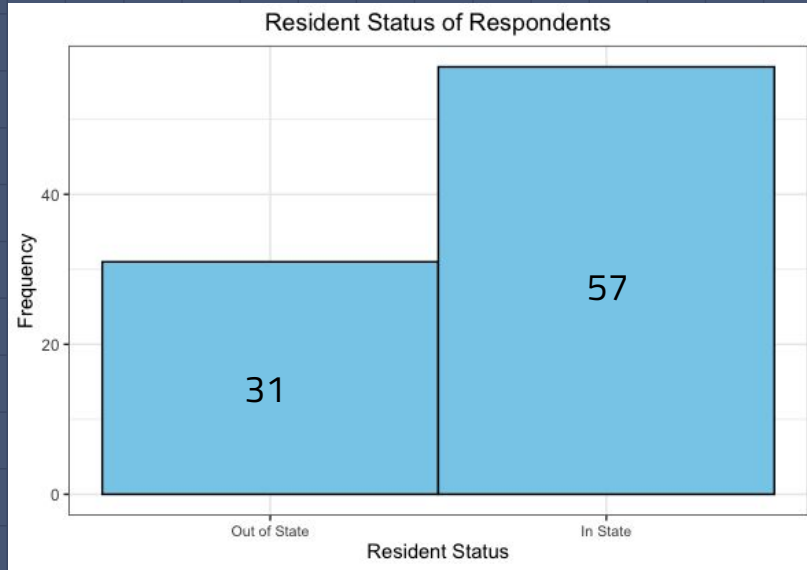
- Distributed via social media and through contacts with fellow UNC students.
- 92 respondents
- Mostly in-state students
- All attended UNC Chapel Hill
- Ages: all were between ages 18 and 25
- Yes, it was representative because we were studying college-age students, and UNC, as a public state school serves as a good representation of other college campuses.
- It would have been better if we had gotten more respondents, particularly out-of-state respondents to be completely representative of the student body and of the larger nation.

METHODS – STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

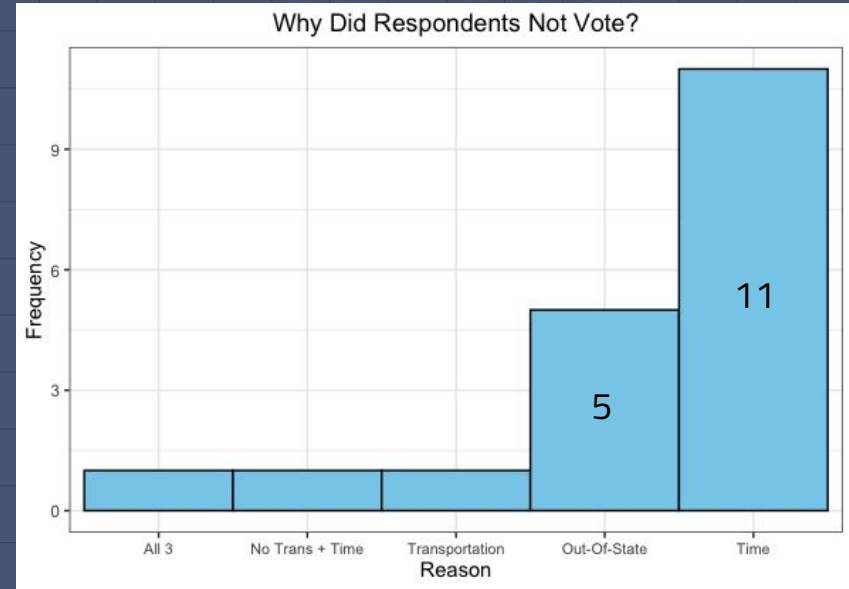
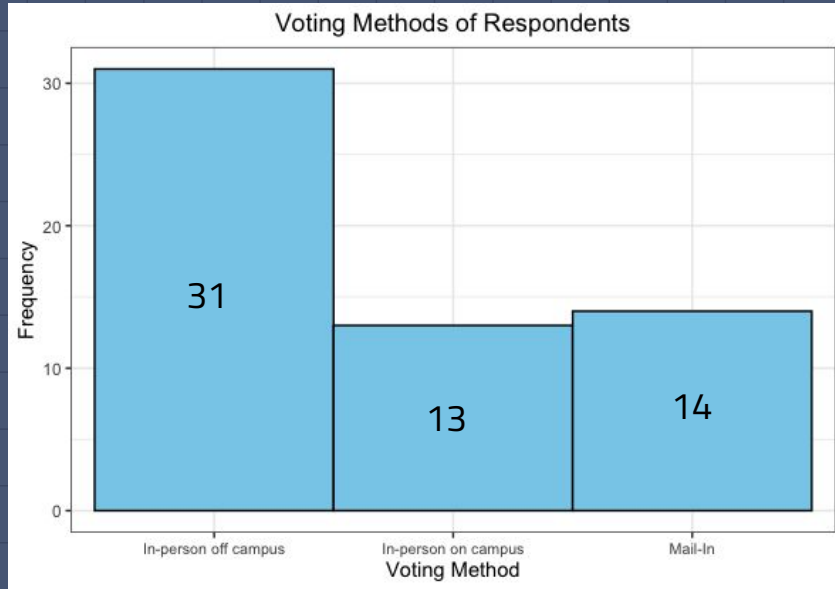
- For both of our analyses of data to test our hypotheses, we used the unpaired t-test. The reason we ran t-tests on both of our hypotheses is because we are comparing the mean scores of two different groups in respect to one variable.
- Hypothesis #1: Out-of-state and In-state vs. whether they voted
- Hypothesis #2: Out-of-state and in-state vs. whether they used mail-in voting

Findings

9



Findings #2



DISCUSSION – EXPLAIN RESULTS/HYPOTHESIS

From the T-Test that we used for our hypothesis #1, we got a p-value of .105, which isn't in the .05 range to say it is definitely a significant relationship, but it is close. From this, we can say there is some evidence to say that out of state students vote less than in state students. The mean values that we got from the T-Test told us that 81.5% of people who reported in-state voted and that 62.5% of people who reported out-of-state voted.

We can fairly confidently say that our hypothesis that out-of-state students voted less frequently than in-state students is accurate.

From the T-Test that we used for Hypothesis #2, we got the p-value result of .3687, which is significantly higher than the threshold of .05. This means that we cannot support the argument that out-of-state students use mail-in voting more than in-state students. The mean values that we got from the T-Test told us that 20.45% of people who reported in-state reported using mail-in voting and that 33.33% of people who reported out-of-state reported mail-in voting.

Therefore, our hypothesis that more out-of-state students utilize mail-in voting than in-state students was not accurate.

It is possible that our findings did not match our hypotheses because we did not have a large enough sample size. We surveyed a limited number of out-of-state students, which could have skewed the results.

CONCLUSION

As college students ourselves, we know many of our friends did not vote or even register to vote due to a myriad of inconveniences.

With classes, athletics, jobs, and studying, students may find it very hard to find time to cast ballots within the designated times

Our research suggests that mail-in voting could be a good option for both out-of-state and in-state voters, and North Carolina should encourage it as an option for college students.

Our results also suggest that college students are interested in voting, but external barriers make it harder, so if NC wants true representation of their constituency, they need to take steps to make the voices of college voters more heard.

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QUESTIONS?

