

QTM 490RW Final Project
Analysis of Pretrial Incarceration and Voter Turnout
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Introduction

Every year, thousands of Americans are prevented from their constitutional right to vote. Individuals held in state or county jails for pretrial detention have not yet been convicted of a crime and therefore still retain their right to vote by mail. According to a report by Wendy Sawyer and Peter Wagner (2020) of the Prison Policy Initiative, there are around 470,000 individuals who are incarcerated but not yet convicted as of March 24, 2020. This staggering number represents a vulnerable population whose constitutional rights are being abused. It also represents a large population whose votes could change the outcome of an election. While it is likely that not all of these individuals would choose to exercise their right to vote, there are likely less people voting that would had they been informed of their right to vote. The United States is based within the idea of representation and it is important to understand who is and who is not being adequately represented through the ability and access to voting.

Often, the individuals who remain incarcerated but not convicted in jails are detained because they cannot produce enough money to pay their bail (Sawyer & Wagner, 2020). While incarcerated, these individuals often are not informed of the fact that they still retain the right to vote (Root & Doyle, 2018). The jail population that is being detained prior to trial is vulnerable to lack of transparency and a clear definition of their rights by the criminal justice system. In this case, this constitutes a feminist concept because the criminal justice system represents the institution which holds power over the individuals within the jail system. Our project seeks to identify the differences in voter turnout between the incarcerated and general United States populations. By answering this question we will be able to confirm the result of this abuse of power by the criminal justice system through its effect on voter turnout in the pretrial jail population.

Although this issue is likely widespread in the United States and occurring at many county jails around the country, there is very little data publicly available regarding this topic. There are various organizations around the country working on determining whether people have access to voting while in pretrial detention, but much of this data was not freely available online. For this reason we chose to focus on this topic for our final project. In particular, we sought to examine and analyze the voter turnout among the jail population detained prior to their trials and how this voter turnout compares to nationwide voter turnout. Our goal in undertaking this project is to highlight the lack of accessibility and awareness for voter registration in this vulnerable population. Our project will showcase the need for more research to be done to create more accurate databases regarding pretrial voter turnout that in turn will be able to inform public policy decisions. By shining a light

on this issue, we hope that further public policy may be enacted in order to ensure that all individuals, regardless of criminal status, understand the breadth of their constitutional rights.

Related Research

A study published by the Open Society Justice Initiative in February of 2011 entitled “The Socioeconomic Impact of Pretrial Detention” offers a comprehensive look at the effects of pretrial detention on a global scale versus just the United States. The summary of the report online states that the report “combin[es] statistics, personal accounts, and recommendations for reform [to] provide empirical arguments against the overuse of pretrial detention” (Open Society Foundations, 2011). The 74 page report examines negative socioeconomic impacts to individuals, communities and entire countries such as unemployment, homelessness, lack of education, and lasting physical and psychological trauma that occurs as a result of excessive pretrial detention. This relates to our project as it is a compilation of statistical and first hand account evidence of the injustices related to excessive pretrial detention. In this way, it is a good source of background information regarding the effects of pre trial detention. However, this differs from our project as the report takes a look at the impact of pre trial detention on a global scale whereas we plan to focus on the impact in the United States. Also, while this project does use statistical evidence, it is more of a compilation of qualitative evidence, where our project will likely consist primarily of quantitative analysis.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is a well known organization in the United States and it has a long history of fighting for civil liberties and constitutional rights. While the ACLU has a wide range of obligations, they have published models for programs to address the effects of pretrial detention and voter registration. In addition, the ACLU published a report in March of 2019 entitled “A New Vision of Pretrial Justice in the United States” which presents a public policy plan for pretrial justice. This report and policy plan mainly contains recommendations to “reduce pretrial detention, eliminate wealth-based detention, and combat bias and systemic racism” (Woods & Allen-Kyle, 2019). While the report does not directly focus on the effects of pre-trial detention on voting, it has a wider view. This report is likely informed by quantitative, data-based research which is similar to our project in that we are performing quantitative analysis on a subset of pretrial justice, which is access to voting. The results of our project would seek to inform broad public policy decisions like what is presented in this document.

Another group to consider when discussing access to voting and voting rights are the mentally ill. For example, when parents sign for conservatorship over children with autism, it automatically disqualifies the child from being able to vote. However, sometimes the child is entirely capable of voting and may just lack social skills. A review article by Okwerekwu et. al examined the current federal policies that govern the rights of the mentally ill to vote. This is similar to our project in that it examines the theme of mishandling of voting rights by people in power. However, this

research article is a review of current policies rather than a quantitative analysis like our project. However this paper presents an interesting layer to other populations vulnerable to mishandling of their voting rights, and it would be interesting to expand our own research to include this population.

Data

We began by emailing organizations with a mission regarding increasing voter turnout. We reached out to The Fairness Project, The Impact Fund, American Progress, The Demos Organization, the Southern California and Wisconsin branches of Unlock the Vote, and the Houston Justice Organization to inquire about their goals and data.

From the organizations that we reached out to, the only one to respond was The Houston Justice Organization, and we received a dataset from voter registration drives that were a part of their campaign called Project Orange, which worked to increase voter registration for prison inmates and their families. It consists of data from 3 separate days in September 2018 during which Volunteer Deputy Registrars (VDRs) from Harris county went to Harris County Jail to register people to vote.

Upon receiving the dataset, we found that it was lacking demographic and contextual information regarding the populations that were registered to vote. To combat the demographic piece, we used information from the Harris County Jail Website to interpret the overall jail population demographic and apply it to the dataset. To combat the lack of contextual information, we also used information from the Texas Secretary of State website to acquire data on historic voting figures in Harris County and Texas. Additionally, we used the same website to obtain data on detailed 2018 Texas voting figures.

Our complete dataset consists of voter registration and voter turnout data from Harris County Jail in 2018, the historic voter turnout figures in Harris County and Texas from 1990-2018, and voter turnout figures from Texas in 2018. These four data frames combine to provide a comprehensive understanding of voter outreach efforts and empowerment, and the demographic information obtained from the Harris County Jail Website provides information on which populations might be the most affected by lack of voter empowerment while incarcerated.

Process & Methods

After obtaining the dataset, we used R for further analysis. We began by cleaning the Project Orange dataset to contain only relevant information for our research question. After this, we

created graphs to show how many out of the total number of registration applications were accepted, essentially a registration success rate (see fig. 1). From the people that were registered to vote, we created another graph to show how many of them voted in the 2018 election per weekend of registration (see fig. 2).

Next, we included the Harris County Jail voter turnout information from 1988-2018 and created a graph with the result (see rmd file). Since 2018 was the year of a midterm election, which tends to have a different voter turnout historically, we created another graph which included voter turnout data from only midterm election years between 1990-2018 to note how the 2018 election voter turnout compared to other midterm election years historically in Harris County (see rmd file).

We went through a similar process with Texas voter turnout information from 1988-2019, creating a graph showing the historic data and another one focusing on midterm election data (see rmd file). After this, we created a combined graph showing how the Texas voter turnout compared to the Harris County voter turnout from 1988-2018 (see fig. 3).

Next, we added on the Texas voter turnout data for the 2018 election. This included three methods of measuring voter turnout: by percent voting out of the voting age population, by percent voting out of the registered population, and the percent of the voting age population that is registered to vote (see fig. 5).

To contextualize and combine these three sets of data, we merged the voter turnout data from each weekend of registration in Harris County with the Harris County overall 2018 voter turnout into a graph (see fig. 4). To relate this to the bigger picture of Texas, we merged the Harris County and Jail voter turnout with the Texas voter turnout in 2018 to see how Harris County Jail and Harris County's voter turnouts compared to the voter turnout of the state as a whole (see fig. 6).

In the next phase of our analysis, we began conducting a statistical analysis of our data. We ran a t-test to see if Harris County jail voter turnout (28.2%) was significantly different from Harris county voter turnout (52%). Next, we completed another t-test to see if the Harris County jail voter turnout was statistically different from Texas state registered voter turnout (53.01%) in 2018. Lastly, we ran a linear regression to determine if there was a statistically significant correlation between the number of successfully registered voter applications and voter turnout at Harris County jail.

Finally, we created graphs to visualize the demographic breakdown of Harris County Jail to understand this issue from a data feminist lens (see fig 7).

Results

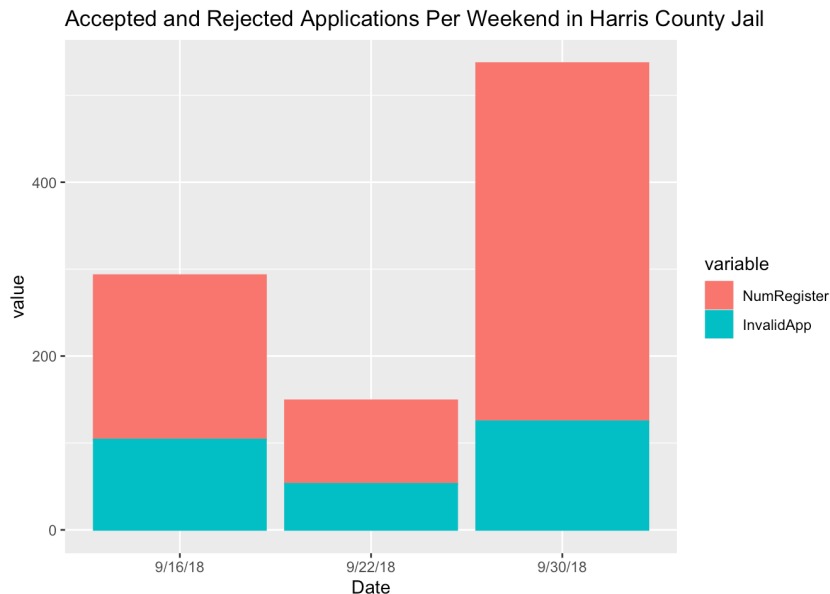


Figure 1: Accepted and Rejected Applications Per Weekend in Harris County Jail. InvalidApp represents the number of applications that were rejected, while NumRegister represents the number of applications that were accepted, leading to a successful voter registration.

Figure 1 shows the application rejections for individuals that applied to register to vote. During weekend 1 (9/16/2018), 104 applications were rejected, while weekend 2 (9/22/18) and 3 (9/30/18) had 53 and 125 applications respectively. To better understand these numbers, we expressed the number of rejected applications as a rejection rate. In relation to the total number of applications received, weekend 1 had a rejection rate of 35.49%, weekend 2 had a rejection rate of 35.57%, and weekend 3 had a rejection rate of 23.27%. The overall rejection rate, weighted by applications received, was 28.80%. Regarding the number of voting applications, we found that there were far more applications received during weekend 3 compared to weekend 1 and 2. A potential explanation for this is that there were 37 VDRs registering voters on weekend 3 compared to 31 on weekend 1 and 24 VDRs on weekend 2. This indicates that more VDRs correlate to more individuals applying to register to vote. Another explanation is that this was the last weekend VDRs were registering individuals that were incarcerated in Harris County Jail to vote. Therefore, a greater population registered that day, because they would not have had another opportunity to register with the help of Project Orange for the 2018 midterm election. Further, the rejection rate for weekend 3 was much lower than for weekend 1 and 2. One possible explanation is that the VDRs had more experience registering individuals to vote, causing errors such as incorrect matching of information to decrease by the third weekend.

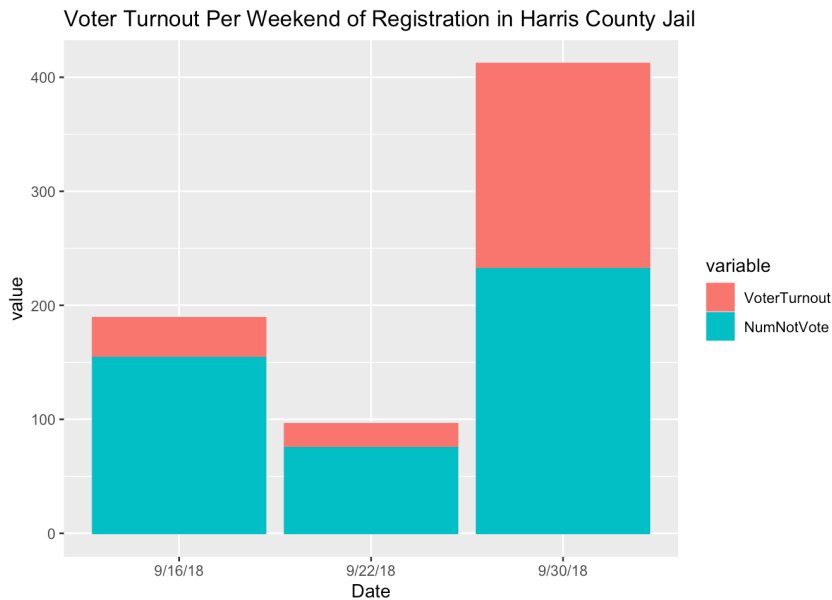


Figure 2: Voter Turnout Per Weekend of Registration in Harris County Jail. Out of the number of successful registrations per weekend, this graph shows the split between the number of people that voted (VoterTurnout in pink) and did not vote (NumNotVote in teal) in the 2018 election.

Figure 2 depicts registered Harris County Jail voters divided into those who voted in pink and those who did not vote in teal per weekend. For actual voter turnout, for the Weekend 1 group had a turnout of 35 registered individuals out of 189 registered applications or a voter turnout rate of 18.51%, while Weekends 2 and 3 had turnouts of 21 individuals out of 96 applications and 180 individuals out of 412 applications, making their turnout rates 21.85% and 43.68% respectively. Thus, the weighted overall registered voter turnout was 33.85%. Similar to having a higher application acceptance rate, weekend 3 also had a higher voter turnout rate. To compare whether there was a significant correlation between a higher number of successful voter application registration and voter turnout, we ran a linear regression model. The model showed that for every 1 successful voter registration application, the voter turnout went up by 0.53 persons ($p = 0.134$). The coefficient was not significant, but this is likely due to the fact that the regression is based on three data points from the three weekends.

Realizing that this data alone was not enough to meaningfully understand our results, we found historical data for voter turnout in both Harris County and the state of Texas from 1988 through to 2018, the year in which the ProjectOrange data is set. We used this historical data to contextualize the Harris County Jail's registered voter population turnout and to compare the voter turnout rates in Harris County Jail in 2018 to a larger population. Additionally we ran one sample student's T tests to compare whether the Harris county jail's voter turnout was significantly different from Harris county as a population mean or Texas as a population mean.

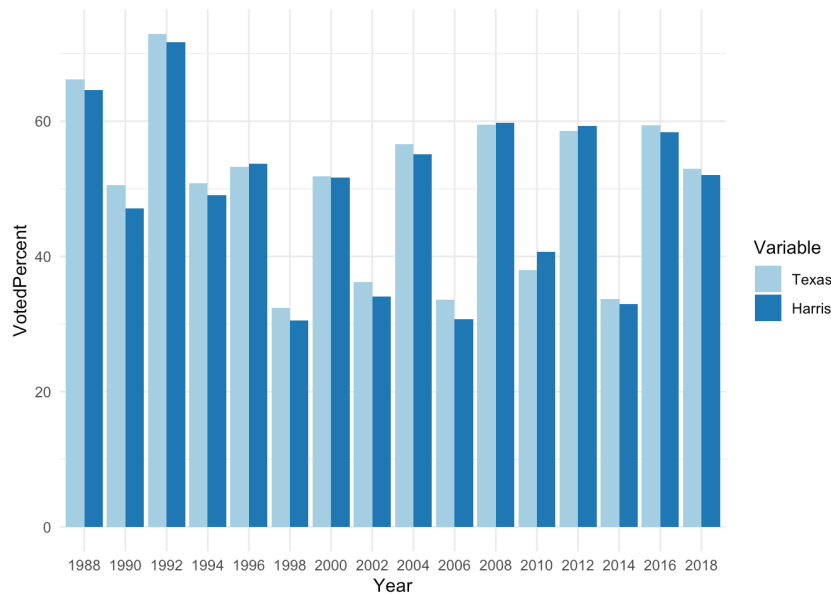


Figure 3: Harris County and Texas Voter Turnout from 1988-2018. This graph shows historic voter turnout percentages for midterm and major election years from 1988 to 2018 in both the state of Texas (light blue) and Harris County (dark blue).

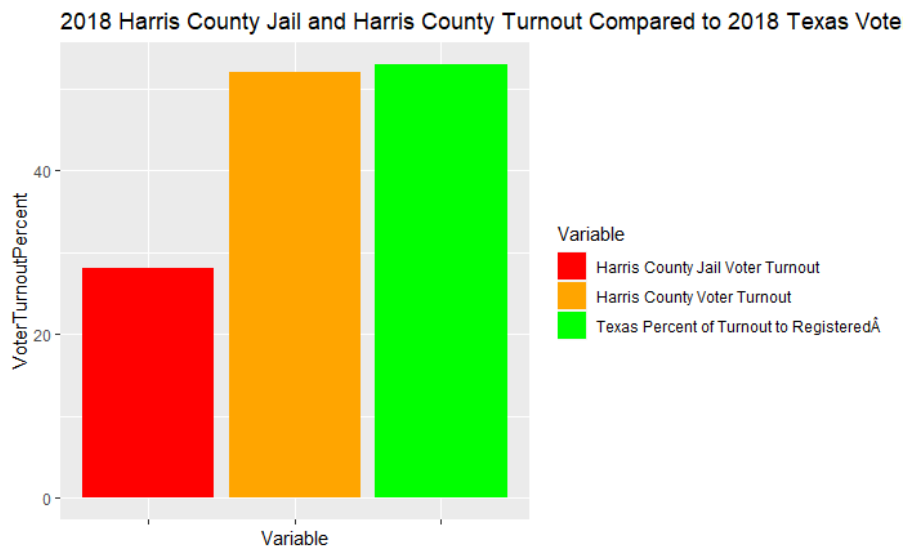


Figure 4: September 2018 Harris County Jail voter turnout (red) compared to 2018 voter turnout in Harris County (orange) and Texas state (green).

Figure 3 shows the historical voter turnout rates for the state of Texas and Harris county. It is notable that the voter turnout for Harris County in 2018 was much higher than that of past midterm election years, such as 2014, 2010, etc. Figure 4 shows the comparison of voting turnout rate in

2018 between Harris County Jail, Harris County, and Texas state. When compared to the voter turnout for Harris County Jail in 2018, which was 33.85%, the 2018 turnout for Harris County was 52% (Figure 4, orange bar), which corresponds to a difference of 18.15%. The green bar in Figure 4 shows that total Texas voter turnout was 53.01% in 2018. Thus, the difference between these two voter turnouts was 19.16%. We performed a T test to assess the significance between the Harris County Jail voter turnout and the Harris County/Texas voter turnouts. When comparing Harris County jail voter turnout over the three weekends to a population mean voter turnout of 52% (the Harris County voter turnout), the p value was 0.093. When compared to a population mean voter turnout of 53.01% (the Texas state voter turnout), the p value was equal to 0.087. Both of these values indicate that the Harris County Jail voter turnout is significantly different from the ‘population means’ of the Harris County and Texas state voter turnouts.

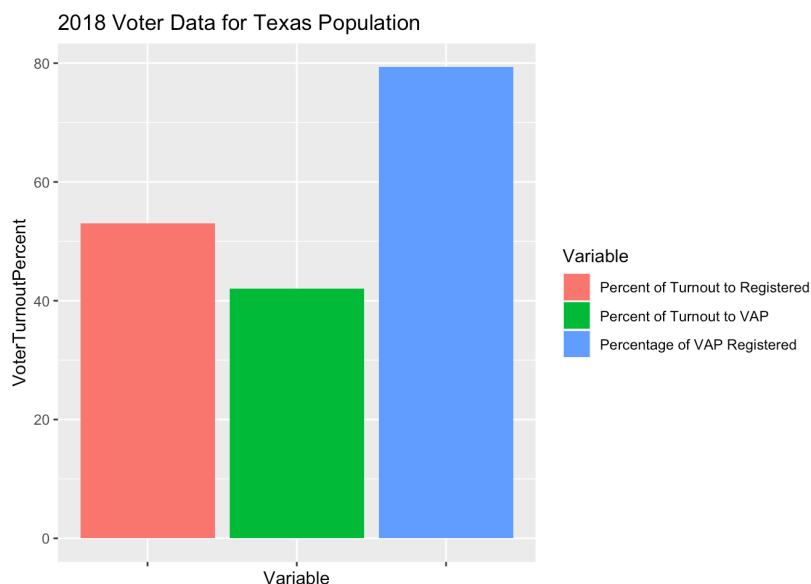


Figure 5: 2018 Voter Data for Texas Population. Shows the voter turnout as 3 percentages: percent voting of the registered population (pink), percent voting out of the voting age population (green), and the percent of the voting age population that is registered to vote (blue).

For Harris County, we could not find data describing the percent of the voting age population (VAP), those eligible to vote, that were registered to vote. However, we were able to find such estimates for the state of Texas. The blue bar on Figure 5 shows that the percentage of VAP registered in Texas was 79.36%. Comparatively, 71.2% of applications were accepted at Harris County Jail over all three weekends. This is not meant to be a direct comparison, but there is still merit to understanding the difference between these two percentages. It can be assumed that the vast majority of those that applied for voter registration were eligible. Most rejections were due to incorrect matching of information on application with the system rather than ineligibility. Since the percentage of the Harris County Jail population that applied for registration is lower than the

percentage of the registered VAP for Texas, then logically the percentage of registered VAP for Harris County Jail would differ even more greatly from the total population of Texas. This shows that there are fewer accepted applications to register voters in jails than in the general population, which would require further analysis to determine why.

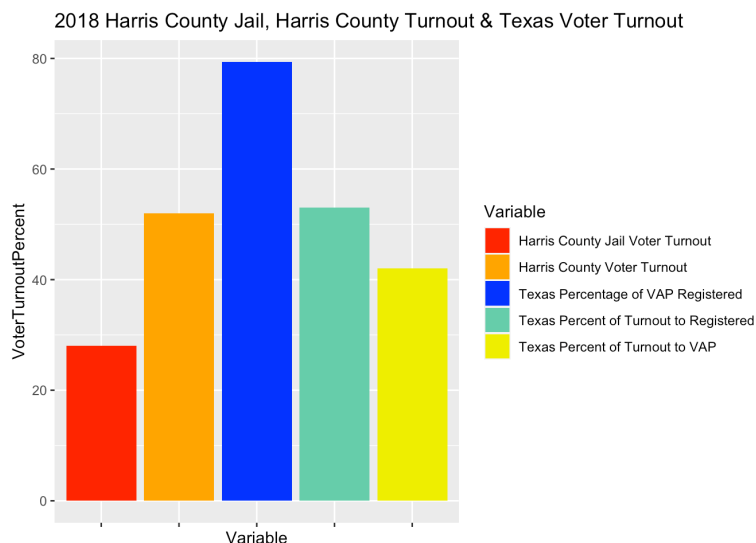


Figure 6: 2018 Harris County Jail Voter Turnout (red), Harris County Voter Turnout (orange), and Texas Voter Turnout (blue, green, yellow).

Figure 6 shows the comparison of Harris County Jail voter turnout to Harris County and the Texas population breakdown detailed above in Figure 5. Harris County and the state of Texas have similar average voter turnout percentages (orange, 52% compared to green, 53.01%). This graph also allows us to see the gaps in our data, in that it would be beneficial to have the percent of the VAP population registered to vote for both Harris County Jail and Harris County, in order to compare the data to the Texas data.

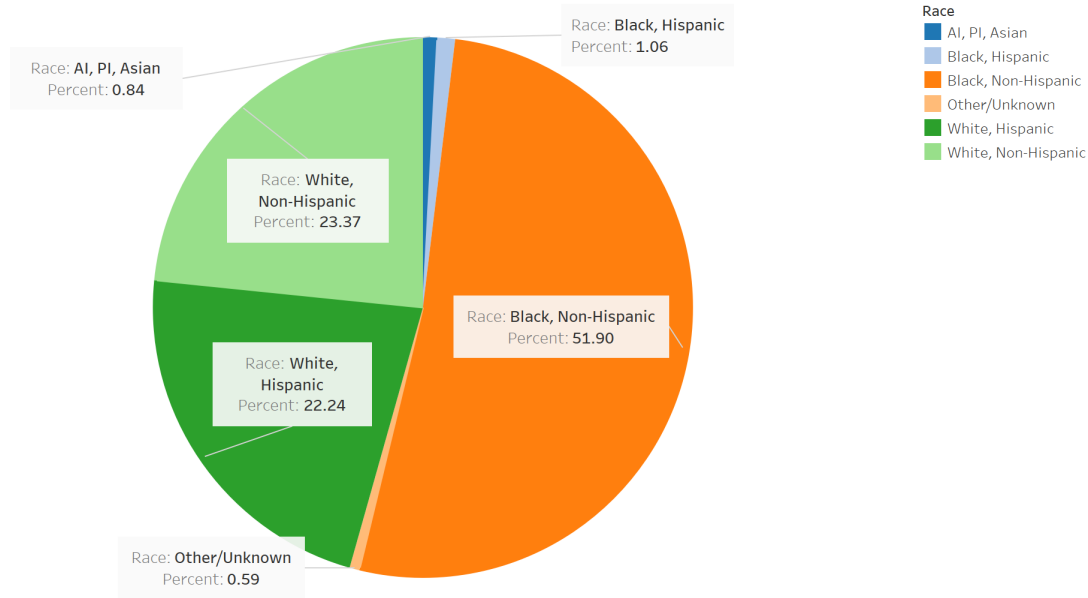


Figure 7: Harris County Jail demographic averages for September 2018. This figure shows the percent makeup by each race of the jail population on average over the course of September 1, 2018 through September 30, 2018.

Our last step of analysis was to contextualize the data by understanding the demographics of the Harris County Jail. Figure 7 shows the demographic breakdown of the Harris county jail on average for the month of September 2018. We find that the majority of the jail population (51.90%) is non-hispanic Black. The next largest population in the jail are white Hispanic individuals (22.24%) followed by white non-Hispanic individuals (23.37%). This poses the question of whether we would see a similar demographic breakdown within the population that was registered to vote at the jail.

Discussion

The data we received from Project Orange was limited. It only had the number of applications received, the number of registered voters by volunteer VDR, and the date the VDR registered voters. From this data, the number of rejected applications was calculated. Finally, each weekend had an aggregate sum of how many individuals that were registered on that weekend actually voted. Thus, it was difficult to analyze this data. First, there was no information about individuals that registered to vote and were denied voter registration. This is important to note because literature shows that purging voter registration disproportionately targets nonwhite voters, and white individuals are much more likely to vote than nonwhite individuals (McCormick et al, 2020; Corasaniti, 2019; Johnson & Feldman, 2020; Fraga, 2018). In addition, there was no reason for why individual registrations were denied. This would be helpful to better understand where education support for VDR and prospective voters should be directed in order to better ensure the

same rejections do not happen in the future. The organization, however, noted that “there were kick-backs based on incorrect matching [information] such as social [security number], Texas Driver’s License, date of birth, etc. to a net valid voter registrations” but not for specific applications. This data is limited for a variety of potential reasons. One explanation is that nonprofit organizations focused on pretrial incarceration voting are primarily concerned with registering voters and giving voters access to ballots once they have been registered. Thus, data collection and analysis becomes secondary, causing it to be less comprehensive and more difficult to analyze with significant results. In addition, data collection and analysis can be time-consuming and costly. Nonprofit employees and volunteers are often overworked and underpaid (or unpaid). Therefore, data collection can be more demanding than the organization can accommodate (i.e. matching reasons for voter registration rejection to application). Finally, collecting personal data that would be helpful for data analysis could be seen as intrusive, discouraging individuals from wanting to participate in voter registration (i.e. asking personal details about race, socioeconomic status, etc.). For all of these reasons, data collection by nonprofits regarding pretrial incarceration, especially as it pertains to our dataset, is quite limited.

To combat this limited dataset, we sought information about Harris County and Texas total population voting patterns to better compare our limited data to fuller data. We found that Harris County and the state of Texas have a much higher turnout rate than Harris County Jail even though the former populations have a history of voter suppression. Despite higher turnout rates in Harris County and Texas, there are still many reports of voter suppression tactics. In Harris County, during the 2018 election, Harris County mistakenly suspended more than 1,700 voters in response to a local Republican’s official challenge of nearly 4,000 voter registration (Despart, 2018). The suspensions were attributed to a glitch in the system and suspensions were reversed. However, this reveals the ease by which individual’s voter registrations can be invalidated in Harris County. A Houston in Action study found in 2016, 41% in-person registration applications were rejected, compared to the 14% of in-person applications statewide and 11% nationwide (Trovall, 2019). In 2018, days before the voter registration deadline for the midterm elections, 2,400 online applications submitted through Vote.org, a nonprofit that allows individuals to register to vote online for convenience and ease, were rejected because signatures were provided electronically (Wallace, 2018).

These accounts of voter registration rejection and suppression in Harris County indicate voter registration rates and, thus, turnout rates are lower than they should be. By extension, in pretrial detention, because voter registration and voter turnout rates are even lower than these other populations, it can be acknowledged that there are potentially even more barriers to register to vote as well as actually casting a ballot. Although this must be verified through further research.

Existing literature for voter suppression for people that are incarcerated but have not been convicted, is predominantly qualitative. Often, outlets report individual accounts of inadequate

access to voting within jails marked by poor education and awareness about voter registration procedures and qualifications. Margaret Barthel is a journalist for The Atlantic, in her article “Getting Out the Vote from the County Jail” (2018), she writes, “nearly every voter-registration advocate that I spoke with had a similar experience, where detainees hadn’t realized that they were eligible to vote”. Barthel’s account of pretrial voting throughout the United States is a pretty standard account of the literature based on the subject. Rather than looking at observations about voting patterns in jails, our project adds a quantitative element that has been largely missing from the conversation and literature. Furthermore, for this specific issue it is difficult to explain how our quantitative analysis extends the current literature because that approach barely exists currently.

More generally, our project analyzes pretrial detention populations that are often ignored. Although there is a legal presumed innocence, pretrial incarcerated populations are often treated as if they are guilty (before any trial or conviction) (Dryer, 2017). In addition, research with large sums of funding often has wealthy contributors with a vested stake in the issue. By contrast, individuals that are in pretrial detention are often incarcerated before their trial because they cannot afford to pay bail (Dobbie et al, 2018). Thus, unlike well-financed research subjects, research on pretrial populations has fewer resources allocated towards it. This has led to a lack of funding for research regarding pretrial voter suppression and related research. In addition, pretrial incarceration is difficult to study. Jail populations are constantly fluctuating, which makes it difficult to estimate the voting population inside (Barthel, 2018). Due to the constant fluctuation of populations, not only is studying pretrial voting difficult, but virtually any research involving this population would be difficult to analyze. Finally, there are often obstacles for volunteers to work with jail populations. Durrell Douglas is the founder of Project Orange, where we obtained our dataset. He noted that because he was a former prison guard, he was able to persuade Harris County Jail to permit a registration drive (Barthel, 2018). In addition, he assured that all volunteers would be vetted, trained, and in-and-out of the jail in a short period of time. This shows that there is a need for a large number of qualified volunteers to register voters for programs like Project Orange to exist. Simply put, the priority is upholding the rights of individuals in pretrial detention. Obtaining data about who is able to and choosing to exercise those rights becomes secondary. Again, our project extends this research by adding a quantitative analysis to the literature. In addition, our project looks to cooperate with nonprofits whose primary goal is often not to collect data on individuals. However, by working with nonprofits focused on upholding the rights of those in pretrial detention, we extend the scope by which researchers can collect data on a population that has largely been disregarded or inaccessible.

The project models many methods of data feminism; however, considering context is exemplified the most. Because our dataset is so limited, it is even more important for us to contextualize our dataset as best possible, and examine what conclusions, if any, can be drawn from it due to its limited capacity. First and foremost, it is necessary for us to explain what is missing from the

dataset. As previously mentioned, it would be beneficial to have data about individual voters that apply to be registered, are actually registered, and choose to vote once registered. Identifiers such as race, socioeconomic status, and even name would be helpful in identifying patterns of who is more likely to vote and who is more likely to have their applications rejected. This is not only beneficial to better understand voting patterns in jails and which populations are more at risk of low turnout. It is also beneficial for organizations that seek to increase voter turnout among persons that are incarcerated because they can delegate appropriate resources to vulnerable groups. While our data does not explicitly note the race of individual voters, Figure 7, depicts the race breakdown of the jail population for September 2018, the date individuals in Harris County Jail were registered to vote. This data shows that the largest racial group in the jail is Black, Non-Hispanic at 51.9%, followed by White, Non-Hispanic at 23.37%, and then White, Hispanic with a population of 22.24%, the remaining groups American-Indian, Pacific Islander, Asian; Black, Hispanic; Other/Unknown comprised the other percentages. Despite accounting for 19.9% of the population of Harris County in 2018, the black population in Harris County Jail at the same time was 52% (US Census, 2018). Existing data reports that Black felony defendants are over 25% more likely than their white counterparts to be held in pretrial in urban areas, which includes Harris County (Sawyer, 2019). The overrepresentation of the black population in Harris County corroborates this statistic. Thus, while our data cannot explicitly indicate that voter suppression and lack of voter access in jails targets people of color, the disproportionate representation of minority groups in pretrial detention in the first place and low voter turnout for pretrial populations indicates that minority groups are not properly represented in civic engagement. In addition, there is a history for purging voter records of minority populations. In the 2018 midterm Georgia election, just a month before the election it was reported that Brian Kemp's office still had not approved 53,000 voter registrations, 80% of which were voters of color (Fair Fight). Kemp was running for mayor during this election and heavily enforced laws that require voter registration information to match exactly with information from the Department of Motor Vehicles of Social Security Administration, which disproportionately impacted black and latinx communities (Knight, 2018). This inspired Stacey Abrams, who lost the gubernatorial election to Kemp, to start Fair Fight, an organization that advocates for victims of unlawful voter purging and voter suppression, where we can now find more data about voter suppression throughout the United States.

Secondly, our data is limited, so we analyzed the voter turnout compared to Harris County Voter Turnouts in the same year along with voter turnouts for the entire State of Texas during the 2018 election to provide some context. Voter turnout for registered voters in Harris County Jail was 33.85% compared to the 52% and 53% voter turnout for registered voters in Harris County total population and Texas total population respectively. However, this does not tell the whole story of voter turnouts for each population. While the 2018 midterm elections was the only date we received data about pretrial incarceration voting, we found public data about voter turnout in Harris County from 1988-2008. Figure 3 shows that both Harris County and the State of Texas, 2018 had an unusually high voter turnout rate for a midterm election. Figure 3 also indicates that the 2018

election voter outcome was the highest voter turnout rate for a midterm election in 30 years (midterm election years were 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018). Therefore, our obtained data is not representative of all election years for Harris County or the State of Texas. In 2018, there was an extremely close election between republican senate incumbent, Ted Cruz, and former House Representative democrat, Beto O'Rourke for state senate. The tight race caused members of both political parties to have more engagement with the election process through voting (Wang, 2018). Ultimately, Ted Cruz won the senate seat with 50.9% of the vote compared to Beto O'Rourke obtaining 48.3% of the vote (Murphy, 2018). Therefore, this data must be analyzed while acknowledging that this data is not representative of normal voting patterns for the general population, so it cannot be analyzed as the norm for voting in pretrial detention. In addition, Texas has one of the worst voter turnout rates throughout the country. Despite having an 15 point increase for this election compared to 2014, it still had the 44th worst voter turnout throughout the United States. While it may seem as though this is a good year for Texas, it was actually still a poor voter turnout rate compared to other states. Thus, Texas also cannot be seen as a model state to study voting patterns. One must understand the historical and relative context when analyzing data. In this case, conclusions cannot be drawn and applied to other populations because this population is so drastically different from the norm.

Finally, when analyzing context, it is important to not make assumptions about the population. Because there is often limited interaction between people that are in pretrial detention versus those that are not, there are many feelings and emotions that are overlooked of the problem this project seeks to address. Voting advocates often assume that the majority of individuals would want to vote and assume the largest cause for individuals to not vote is lack of access or education especially among incarcerated populations. While this is a large reason individuals do not vote, it is not the only reason. One volunteer VDR noted that she talked to "individuals who have completely lost faith in the system". Nothing, they cut off emotionally to just pass the time (Barthel, 2018). We cannot make assumptions about populations we are trying to support through data analysis. We must ask questions like why individuals choose to engage in or withdraw from civic practices so we can better understand and inspire change for individuals. The VDR mentioned above explained that she told prospective voters about their ability to change the system by electing leaders that they believed would make a difference in their everyday lives (i.e. judges, deputies, etc). However, it is the responsibility of social justice advocates to inform individuals of their rights and choices, so people who have been incarcerated before their trial are better informed to make autonomous decisions. Regarding voting, it is the responsibility of elected officials to ensure that they are listening to the needs of all populations (including those in pretrial detention) to inspire individuals to vote that have potentially lost faith in the system.

Considering context creates a broader depiction and better understanding for individuals reviewing data. Data (including raw data) is not objective, and when data such as our dataset is so limited, conclusions can be drawn in many different directions rather than addressing those limitations. By

explaining how and recognizing that important identifiers in data are missing, the data is from an anomalous year, and the data come from a population that researchers do not fully engage with properly, our project engages properly with feminist data because rather than purporting perfection in our dataset, the imperfections of this research outline many problems within our current system. It examines how society engages with the criminal justice system both politically and through research practices.

Conclusion

The contributions of our research are beginning a quantitative analysis of voter suppression within pretrial detention centers. The existing literature has relied on individual accounts and anecdotal evidence. However, showing the contrast between voter turnout of Harris County Jail and Harris County & Texas general populations begins a depiction of the stark contrast between voter turnouts. By identifying low rates of voter turnout among pretrial incarcerated populations and underlying causes, which often include lack of awareness of voting rights and lack of engagement with electoral processes, nonprofits can better address these issues to collaborate with as well as help educate incarcerated persons about their rights. In addition, by empirically highlighting inequalities through quantitative analysis, there can be a greater call to action for politicians to create reform to make voting more accessible. The implications of such reform could greatly impact the way politicians engage with the criminal justice system.

While we have preliminary evidence indicating that there are differences in voting application rejections and voter turnout between people in pretrial detention versus those that are not incarcerated, it is too presumptuous to make any definitive claims about the subject without further data and analysis. Instead, the larger conclusion from this research is that there is a shockingly low amount of previous research done on the topic. It is virtually impossible to find comprehensive data driven research about voting outcomes for pretrial incarceration compared to the number of articles about said topic. This is largely due to the lack of resources distributed for this type of research and the inaccessibility for researchers to obtain data from jails and jail officials.

Next Steps

Next steps for the topic would be to continue reaching out to more sites that have data on pretrial incarceration and voter registration and turnout. This would be to obtain existing data from previous elections as well as preparing data collection for future elections. By establishing relationships with organizations like Project Orange, we can encourage them to obtain individual data for those that were registered to vote or applied to register such as race, socioeconomic status, reason for voter application rejection, reason for registering to vote but not actually voting, etc. This data would have more meaningful interpretations that can inform nonprofit organizations and policy makers about how to better delegate resources to improve voter registration application acceptances and encourage voter turnout. Further, there are different approaches nonprofit organizations and governments take to encourage voter turnout in pretrial detention centers. While

Project Orange has volunteers help cast absentee ballots, Cook County Jail has a different approach to voting while incarcerated. The jail just became a first time polling station, so individuals can cast their vote on election day. By contrast absentee ballots often must be received by voting clerks days before an election. The difference in these voting methods could potentially have differences in voter turnout that would be helpful for other jails to adopt more effective practices. Finally, there needs to be data about voter registration in jails that do not have organizations and individuals coming to register people. This leaves those that are incarcerated with the responsibility of asking for voting applications and ballots to those that are in positions of power over them. Further, as previously noted, there is a large lack of awareness about one's rights regarding voting when they are incarcerated (i.e. whether they are eligible or not). Our data shows poor voting outcomes for Harris County Jail. However, this data was obtained by an organization that seeks to maximize voter turnouts for pretrial populations; thus, this information is not indicative of the majority of jails that do not have programs such as Project Orange. Many jails throughout the United States do not have any support for people that are incarcerated to register to vote and cast their ballot. It would be beneficial to work with jail officials to note how many individuals in pretrial detention are actively seeking materials necessary to vote and what their voting outcomes look like compared to jails with support in obtaining these materials.

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