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What Happened in Florida's 2016 Presidential Election? **A Search for Clues in Broward County**

By Mary K. Garber, April 2017

Leading into Election Day, and even throughout the day, polls and media outlets confidently predicted that Hillary Clinton would win the state of Florida and the presidency. The predictions were not only wrong, but dramatically so. The following report is the second in a series that looks at county-level data from Florida's 2016 presidential election to find out what actually happened that led to the unexpected Trump victory and why political pundits and pollsters failed to see it coming. We began with an examination of the election data from the state's most populous county, Miami-Dade. We found nothing there that helped us with our search for answers. Now we continue with a look at the data from Miami-Dade's neighbor to the north, Broward, the second-most-populous county in Florida. As with the first report, we caution the reader that this is not meant to be an exhaustive examination of the county's 2016 election, but only another step toward understanding this most unusual election.

The second-most populous county in Florida, Broward, lies directly north of the most populous county, Miami-Dade. Together, the two south Florida counties accounted for about one fifth of all the ballots cast in Florida in the 2016 general election. (Miami-Dade: 998,605; Broward: 843,767; Florida: 9,580,489).¹ But despite their large share of the total Florida vote, their choice in the 2016 presidential election did not prevail statewide. Both counties overwhelmingly voted for the Democratic nominee, Hillary Clinton, while the state of Florida went for Republican Donald Trump by a small margin (49.0% to 47.8%).

Predictive Turnout Modeling Projections

Election Day projections from real-time turnout data predicted that Clinton would win Florida in 2016. These projections, in part, were based on numbers in south Florida that showed turnout among her voters to be higher than for Obama in 2012 when he carried the state by a slim margin.²

¹ Unless otherwise specified, turnout data and election results are from Florida Department of State, Division of Elections, November 8, 2016 General Election, Official Results, accessed at <https://results.elections.myflorida.com/Index.asp?ElectionDate=11/8/2016&DATAMODE=>

² For a discussion of these election-day projections, see the first paper in this series, <http://www.ffec.org/files2016/Miami-Dade%202016%20presidential%20election%20report.pdf>

These projections were made using predictive turnout modeling (sometimes called predictive data modeling)—a campaign tool long used by candidates and parties to compile and analyze information on voters in order to develop detailed individual voter profiles. These models allow campaigns to target specific voters with messages that are crafted to address the issues of importance to them. Once voting has begun, turnout data is fed into the model to determine how the campaign is faring so that strategies can be altered and resources redirected.

Unlike opinion polls and exit polling, predictive turnout modeling is usually very accurate—that’s why campaigns spend huge amounts of money to create and maintain these campaign tools.³ Yet, the most-touted of the new predictive turnout models—VoteCastr—was wildly off the mark in its projections for Florida.⁴ In the months prior to the general election, the media widely publicized the new company’s controversial decision to break with tradition and publish real-time projections on Election Day of who was leading in presidential and senate races in key states—including Florida. Like many who study and analyze elections, we at FFEC were alarmed by the idea and warned of the potential for disaster. The founders of VoteCastr countered that their methods were far more accurate than those used in the past. VoteCastr went ahead with its arrangement with news sites Slate and Vice to publish projections and update them in real time on Election Day.⁵

Final projections for Florida on Slate.com at 6:30 p.m. election night had Clinton beating Trump by a substantial margin. Her final vote was projected to be nearly 5 million (4,959,569). Instead her final totals (as shown on the Florida Division of Elections website) were only about 4 ½ million (4,504,975). Yet, VoteCastr’s projection for Trump turned out to be quite accurate. At 6:30 p.m., its numbers for Trump showed him with 4,644,007; his final totals were only slightly less at 4,617,886. In sum, the projections for Clinton were off by more than 9% while the projections for Trump were only off by about half a percent, well within a reasonable margin of error.⁶

After the election, VoteCastr countered criticism that it had failed abysmally by saying that Slate had not posted its final projections. But those numbers, posted on Vice.com, were also well off the mark, giving Clinton a nearly 4 percentage lead over Trump in Florida. For our purposes, the precise numbers don’t matter. We are not concerned with the particular problems with

³ To learn more about predictive turnout modeling and other computer analytics for elections, see the website of Magellan Strategies, a firm that sells these services. <http://magellanstrategies.com/> It explains what services are available and gives testimonials from clients about their success.

⁴ For more information about VoteCastr, see “Real-Time Vote Projections May Upend News Tradition,” Nick Corasaniti, Sept. 10, 2016, New York Times. Accessed online at <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/11/us/politics/election-results-voting.html>.

⁵ To read about the objections we expressed in September 2016 to VoteCastr’s project, see “Real-Time Vote Projections on Election Day – A Truly Bad Idea,” Kitty Garber, FFEC, September 2016.

⁶ VoteCastr numbers are from http://www.slate.com/votecastr_election_day_turnout_tracker.html. To see the numbers from Vice.com and a discussion of the specific problems, see “Where VoteCastr Went Wrong: Assessing Our Election Day Experiment, Julia Turner & Josh Vorhees, Slate.com, Nov. 11, 2016.

VoteCastr's methodology. Polls and pundits throughout Florida and the nation got Florida wrong. The question is: Why? What happened in Florida that confounded the experts?

Miami-Dade – No Clues There

Our examination of Miami-Dade's election data offered no clues. In fact, everything there appeared to be just as predicted. Although not record setting, turnout was very high among all groups. Clinton not only won heavily among Democrats, but also among voters with no political affiliation. She won a substantial percentage of Republican precincts. And she won among all racial and ethnic groups. Considering the size of the county and her broad support among all racial and partisan groups, it was certainly reasonable to assume that she was well positioned to win Florida.

But do these findings hold true in Broward? As we did in Miami-Dade, we looked to see if the data supported any of the explanations that have been offered to explain how the projections went awry:

- Was turnout lower than expected among Democratic voters, especially minorities?
- Was Clinton's lead on ballots cast before Election Day exaggerated based on faulty assumptions about her support among Democratic voters?
- After FBI Director James Comey's announcement that more Clinton e-mails were being investigated, did Democratic voters abandon Clinton in favor of third-party candidates or write-ins or possibly decide to skip voting in the presidential race?
- Did the projections that Clinton would handily win Florida depress turnout among her voters or cause them to change their vote based on the assumption that it no longer mattered?

Background--Race, Ethnicity, and Language

Like Miami-Dade, Broward County is majority minority, but non-Hispanic white voters still comprise the largest racial/ethnic group in Broward. In 2016, non-Hispanic white voters were slightly less than half of Broward's registered voters; white voters were less than one-fifth of Miami-Dade's voters (47% vs. 18%).

At book closing in 2016, Broward also had a larger percentage of black voters than did Miami Dade—23% vs 17%. But Hispanic voters made up only about one-fifth of Broward voters, compared to more than half of Miami-Dade voters (20% vs 57%).⁷ As is the case in Miami-Dade, Broward's ballot is in three languages – English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole.

⁷ Book closing numbers include only active voters. Official turnout percentages both by precinct and countywide are based on active voters, even though inactive voters are eligible to vote. Thus, if many inactive voters turn up to vote in some precincts it can skew percentages.

Like Miami-Dade, however, Broward was much less white than the state as a whole—47% compared to 64%. It had a much larger concentration of black voters—23% vs 13%--and Hispanic voters—20% vs. 16%.⁸

Partisan Affiliation

Considering its racial/ethnic composition, it is not surprising that a majority of Broward voters are Democrats. In fact, Broward County contains more Democrats than any other county in Florida. Fifty-one percent of Broward’s registered voters in 2016 were Democrats, compared to 42% of Miami-Dade voters. Like its neighbor, NPAs (no party affiliation) and minor parties combined (“Other”)⁹ were the second largest partisan group in Broward County, with 28% of voters (Miami-Dade: 29%). Republicans were less than 22% of all voters; in Miami-Dade they were 27% of registered voters.

Broward’s Democratic voters were racially diverse. Blacks and whites comprised roughly equal percentages (37%) of Broward’s registered voters. Hispanic voters were 17% of registered Democrats in Broward. In contrast, nearly three-quarters of Republican registrants in Broward were non-Hispanic whites (72%). Hispanics, however, were a slightly larger percentage of Republicans than of Democrats (19% vs. 17%), and only a tiny percentage of Republican voters (3%) were black.

Non-Hispanic whites were 44% of Broward’s NPAs. Black voters comprised 14% but this was a much larger share than among Republicans. More than a quarter (26%) of Broward’s NPAs were Hispanic.

Turnout

Turnout in Broward’s 2016 general election was 71.6%, up by nearly 5 percentage points from 66.8% in 2012. This is consistent with projections on Election Day that turnout for Clinton was higher than for Obama in 2012 when he won Florida narrowly. It was slightly less than Miami-Dade at 72.4% of registered voters and well behind the state turnout of 74.5%.¹⁰

⁸ Statistics on race/ethnicity and partisan affiliation are available at <http://dos.myflorida.com/elections/data-statistics/voter-registration-statistics/bookclosing/>.

⁹ The category of “Others” primarily consists of people who have chosen no party affiliation. About 94% of “Others” are NPAs. If we include voters who selected “Independent” as a party affiliation, then NPAs become 97% of “Others.” Consequently, we will use the term NPA since the use of the term “others” can be confusing in some contexts.

¹⁰ Please note that numbers for turnout in 2016 may differ slightly, depending on whether provisional ballots are included. In Broward’s report of its official results, provisional ballots are in a separate category. But its report of turnout statistics by mode of voting incorporates provisional ballots in the appropriate category. The differences, however, are relatively small and not significant for our work here. We should also note that state and county turnout percentages are generally calculated based on book closing numbers, which contain only active voters. We use that information when available.

Broward’s turnout in 2008 when Obama ran for his first term was higher at 73.4%--not surprising for a county with a large number of black voters. But turnout in 2016 was much higher than in 2004, when turnout was only 67.1% and in 2000 when it was 66.2%.

So, while turnout was lower than for Obama’s first term in 2008, it was substantially higher than in any other presidential election year in recent history. Thus, we can say that turnout in Broward was not at record levels, but only about 2 percentage points below that level. ¹¹

Turnout by Method of Voting

Like Miami-Dade, Broward had record turnout at early voting—particularly in the last four days when both Obama and Clinton visited the area. More than 426,000 people voted in Broward during early voting, more than half of everyone who voted in the election; in 2012 fewer than one in three voters voted during early voting.

Table 1.
Comparison of Turnout by Method of Voting, 2016 & 2012 General Elections,
Broward County, FL¹²

Year	Reg. Voters	Turnout	%Turnout	EV	EV%	ED	ED%	VBM	VBM%
2016	1,179,255	843,767	71.6%	426,592	50.6%	213,112	25.3%	204,063	24.2%
2012	1,140,454	762,345	66.8%	248,605	32.6%	342,783	45.0%	170,949	22.4%

Note: EV = early voting; ED = Election Day; VBM = vote by mail

The percentage of those voting by mail increased modestly, from 22% to 24% of all voters. This small increase is in line with what was experienced in Miami-Dade as well as statewide.

As was the case in Miami-Dade and across the state, Election Day balloting declined substantially as the method of choice for voters. In Broward, Election Day balloting dropped by 20 percentage points, from 45% of all voters to only 25%. In terms of the actual numbers of people voting, nearly 130,000 fewer people voted on Election Day in 2016 than in 2012. This is very similar to the decline in Miami-Dade where Election Day voting dropped to only 22% of the total ballots cast.

At the state level, more people voted by early voting (40%) than by any other method for the first time. Vote-by-mail balloting increased slightly, but Election Day balloting declined to only 31% of all ballots cast, a figure that is still substantially above the rates for either Broward or Miami-Dade.

¹¹ County turnout rates are available from the Florida Division of Elections website at <http://dos.myflorida.com/elections/data-statistics/elections-data/election-results-archive/>

¹² Official turnout is 843,767 on state website.

Of course, the increase in early voting was not surprising, given that the length of the early voting period in 2016 was restored to its original 14 days after shortening it to only eight days in 2012. The shortened voting period in 2012 led to incredibly long lines and lawsuits. As we said in our earlier report, no doubt, in 2012, some would-be early voters decided to wait until Election Day to vote. Further, in 2016, both parties pushed to have their supporters vote early as this allowed them to focus their resources more efficiently during the waning days of the campaign.

Even though the smaller percentage of voters choosing vote by mail is in line with expectations, it is troubling, given widespread complaints that many voters who requested ballots did not receive them.¹³ Broward County also had the highest percentage of unreturned absentee ballots in the state (27%), which could bolster the claim that many voters did not receive their ballots in time to vote.¹⁴ Further, more than half of these unreturned ballots were requested by Democratic voters (56%). Less than 20% were requested by Republican voters. And the numbers are substantial. More than 73,000 of vote-by-mail ballots that were sent out by Broward County were not returned. Of these, more than 41,000 were requested by Democratic voters.

Miami-Dade also had a substantial number of absentee ballots that were not returned, although a search of the internet did not turn up any complaints about requested ballots not being received. Its rate of unreturned vote-by-mail ballots was slightly less than Broward at 24%, but still much higher than most other Florida counties. Together, the two counties accounted for more than a quarter (28%) of all unreturned absentee ballots in Florida. Even more significant is the fact that the counties' unreturned Democratic ballots comprised a third of all such ballots statewide. Further, the fact that Clinton won statewide among vote-by-mail voters, even though more of the returned ballots were requested by Republicans than by Democrats, makes it even more intriguing that so many Democratic ballots were not returned.

Turnout by Race¹⁵

Overall, according to the Broward County election office's calculations, turnout for non-Hispanic whites – the county's largest racial/ethnic group – was 72.6%. Turnout for both black and Hispanic voters was about one percentage point lower at 71.7%. As always, these numbers were calculated based on active voters at the time of book closing, the last day on which people can register to vote in the election.

¹³ Alanez, Tonya. "It's in the Mail, or Is It? Broward Voters Lament Vote by Mail Shortfalls," Sun-Sentinel, November 12, 2016, <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/fl-broward-absentee-ballots-unreceived-20161112-story.html>.

¹⁴ Early Voting and Vote-by-Mail Report, 2016 General Election, available at Florida Division of Elections website. <http://dos.myflorida.com/elections/data-statistics/elections-data/absentee-and-early-voting/>.

¹⁵ Please note that the turnout percentages by race are calculated using both active and inactive voters. Since we are only looking at relative turnout by race, this should be sufficient for our purposes. We did this because the most accurate and detailed information we had was in that form. Thus, these numbers may not be exactly the same as numbers calculated using active voters only.

In Miami-Dade, turnout among non-Hispanic whites was much higher at 75.8%, but as we mentioned earlier, they comprised a much smaller percentage of the electorate in Miami-Dade than in Broward – 18% vs 47%. Black turnout in Miami-Dade was lower at 69.9%, but they also were a smaller percentage of the registered voters than in Broward. On the other hand, Hispanic voters who make up the majority (57%) of Miami-Dade’s registered voters turned out at a higher rate than in Broward where they are only 17% of registered voters – 73.5% vs 71.7%.

Statewide, compared to 2012, the turnout rates for black voters in 2016 dropped by more than 3 percentage points to 69%, according to Professor Daniel Smith of ElectionSmith.¹⁶ Thus, Broward County’s black vote turnout rate of 71.7% was nearly 3 points higher than the state black turnout rate. The same was true for Hispanic voters – the Broward turnout rate was more than 3 points higher than the rate for Hispanic voters statewide – 71.7% vs. 68.9%. Smith also reported that non-Hispanic white turnout in turnout in Florida jumped 4 percentage points to 77.1%. Turnout among Broward’s white voters was, however, was more than 4 points below the statewide rate.

Early voting was by far the favorite method of voting for Broward’s black voters. About 62% of black voters in 2016 voted at early voting. Only 18% chose to vote by mail, and about 20% voted on Election Day. More than half of Hispanic voters also preferred early voting, but a much smaller percentage than black voters (52% vs 62%). About one in five Hispanic voters chose to vote by mail, and more than one in four voted at the polls. White voters were less concentrated in a particular method of voting. Less than half of them voted during early voting (44%). About 29% voted by mail, and 27% waited until Election Day to cast their ballots.

On the surface, Broward’s turnout numbers by race do not seem remarkable. Minority voter turnout was well above statewide levels, which was good news for Clinton, just as projected. The difference in turnout between minority and white voters seems relatively small – less than one percent. As discussed later in this paper, however, we found evidence at the precinct-level for lower levels of minority turnout than are suggested by these summary numbers. (See “Revelations from Precinct-Level Data” below.)

Turnout by Party

Of the nearly 600,00 Democrats who were registered to vote in Broward County at the time of book closing for the 2016 general election, about three-quarters (74.5%) participated (445,349 of 597,474) in the election. The percentage of registered Republicans who turned out to vote was slightly higher--75.4% (193,346 of 256,587). Voters belonging to minor parties or with no party affiliation turned out at a much lower rate – 63.5% (206,500 of 325,194).

¹⁶ Smith, Daniel. ElectionSmith.com, January 17, 2017.

Turnout among Democrats in Miami-Dade at 74.3% was almost identical to Broward at 74.5%. But Republican turnout in Miami-Dade was higher than Broward (77.8% vs. 75.4%). Although still very low, turnout among NPAs in Miami-Dade was more than 3 percentage points higher than in Broward – 66.6% vs. 63.5%.

In terms of their share of all voters, Democrats were more than half of those who voted (53%) in Broward’s 2016 general election. NPAs were the second largest group of voters at more than 24%. Republicans made up about 23% of Broward voters.

In comparison, Democrats in Miami-Dade made up a far smaller percentage of all voters at 43%. Republicans were the second largest partisan group with 29% of all voters, and NPAs were about 27% of all voters.

Turnout by Party for Each Method of Voting

As seen in the following graph, Democrats made up more than half of the total voters for both early voting and vote-by-mail balloting, but fell to less than half of total voters on Election Day.

More than half (56%) of Broward’s early voters in 2016 were Democrats. NPAs (Other) comprised about one in four of the early voters (24%). About one in five early voters was a Republican (20%). Democrats also made up more than half (54%) of those voting by mail. About one in four (25%) of those voting by mail were Republicans. NPAs comprised a little more than one in five of vote by mail voters (21%). Democrats were less than half of Election Day voters at 45%. NPAs made up about 29% of those voting at the polls. More than one in four Election Day voters were Republicans (26%).

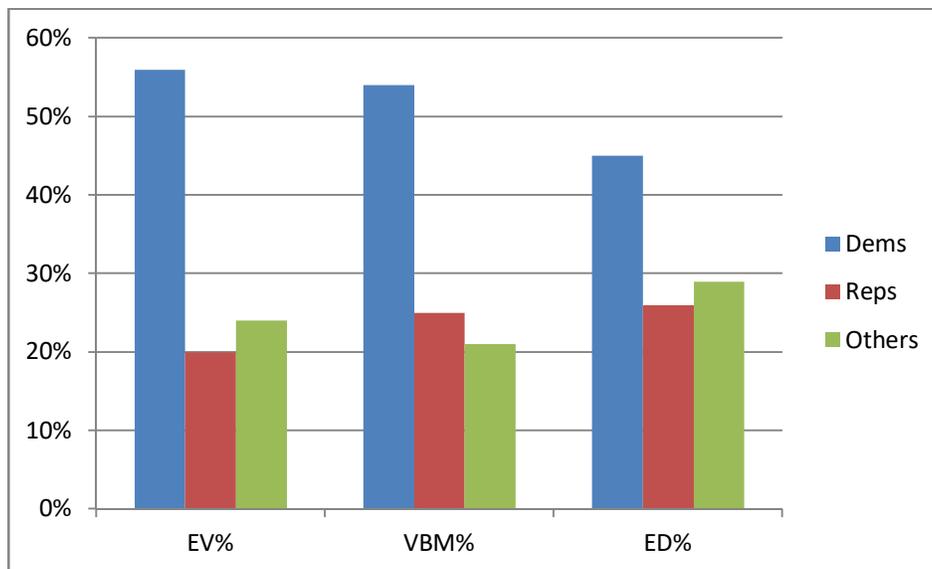


Figure 1. Turnout by Party by Method of Voting, 2016 General Election, Broward County, FL

Election Results

Clinton won Broward County handily, with 66% of the vote. The only county that had a higher percentage for Clinton was Gadsden (67%), a small majority-black county in north Florida. Obviously, the fact that Broward had the state's largest number of Democratic voters and had such a high percentage of the vote for Clinton was good news for her campaign. Newspaper articles had suggested that Clinton would win a larger share of the vote in south Florida in 2016 than Obama did in 2012. While this was true in Miami-Dade, it was not true in Broward, but it wasn't far off. Clinton's share of the vote in 2016 was almost identical to Obama's share of the vote in 2012—66.1% vs. 66.7%.

Table 2.
Election Results, 2016 Presidential Election, Broward County, FL

	Party	Votes	% of Votes
Trump	REP	260,951	31.16%
Clinton	DEM	553,320	66.08%
Johnson	LPF	11,078	1.32%
Castle	CPF	907	0.11%
Stein	GRE	5,094	0.61%
De la Fuente	REF	600	0.07%
Write-In		5,438	0.65%
OV		1,434	0.17%
UV		4,941	0.59%
Total		843,763	

Source: Broward County Official Election Results, EL45A Report

Clinton's percentage of the vote in Broward was 3 points higher than in Miami-Dade—66% vs. 63%. Trump's share of the vote was corresponding lower by 3 points in Broward than in Miami-Dade—31% and 34% respectively. As these numbers suggest, the percentages for minor party candidates and residual votes were very similar for the two counties. Libertarian candidate Gary Johnson had almost identical percentages of the vote in the two counties--1.34% in Miami-Dade compared to 1.32% in Broward. And Green Party Candidate Jill Stein's percentage of the vote *was* identical at 0.61% in both counties. Castle and De La Fuente both received very small amounts of the vote in both counties.

Overall, Broward did somewhat better than Miami-Dade in terms of residual votes—that is, invalid write-in votes, overvotes, and undervotes. Write-in votes in Broward garnered a slightly smaller share of the vote than in Miami-Dade (65% vs. 0.71%). The percentage of ballots spoiled by overvoting in Broward was less than in Miami-Dade (0.17% vs. 0.35%), and a smaller percentage of Broward voters chose not to vote in the presidential race than was the case in Miami-Dade (0.59% vs 0.80%).

Broward voters, like those in Miami-Dade, were somewhat less likely to vote for minor party candidates than were Florida voters as a whole. But the differences were very small except for

Libertarian candidate Gary Johnson who received 2.2% of the statewide vote and 1.32% in Broward County. Since Johnson was considered an alternative to Trump by many Republican voters, this probably reflects the smaller percentage of Republicans in Broward compared to the state overall.

Write-in votes were up dramatically across the state in 2016 (from 0.21% to 0.86%). But Broward's percentage of write-ins at 0.65% was lower than the statewide rate of 0.86%. The overvote rate for Broward at 0.17% was very close to the state overvote rate of 0.15%, and a slightly smaller percentage of Broward voters did not indicate a choice in the presidential race (undervote) than did Florida voters as a whole (0.59% vs. 0.68%).

Overall, the summary totals for the two major party candidates as well as the minor party candidates and residual vote rates do not raise any issues. Given the partisan registration and racial makeup of the county, they seem in line with expectations. It is true that the turnout among Clinton supporters did not set records as was predicted, but it was still higher than in 2012.

Some political observers suggested that the projections could have underestimated the number of Democratic voters who decided to vote for minor party candidates. But all the information that we have seen so far does not indicate that Clinton was more adversely affected than Trump by votes for these candidates. Trump seems to have lost as many votes to Johnson as Clinton did to Stein. And the other candidates did not receive sufficient votes to make a difference.

Others have suggested that unexpectedly high rates of residual votes in south Florida were disproportionately in Clinton strongholds, indicating that Democratic voters may have chosen to write in a name or not vote at all in the presidential race rather than voting for Clinton. But this also does not seem to be borne out by the evidence. As we have seen, the percentages of write-in votes in Broward and Miami-Dade were lower than for the state overall. Further, our inspection of write-in ballots in Volusia County (based on other votes on the ballot) indicated that they were not more likely to be Democrats, but may even have slightly tilted toward Republicans. But that was a very preliminary conclusion.

In 2016, the undervote rate increased statewide, but a quick examination of the undervote rates for all 67 counties doesn't reveal any apparent relationship between the rate of undervoting and whether the county voted for Clinton or Trump. And Broward County, which went heavily for Clinton, has an undervote rate that is slightly lower than that for the state as a whole.

Partisan Turnout, Candidate Vote Differential. Voters registered as NPAs were the second largest group of voters in Broward, comprising nearly a quarter of all voters. But who are these people, and for whom did they vote? Since Clinton received 66% of the vote, but Democrats only comprised 53% of the total voters, there is a differential between partisan turnout and

candidate votes of about 13 percentage points. If a substantial portion didn't come from Republican voters, then she must have picked up a considerable share of NPA voters. In Miami-Dade, a large portion of the NPAs were Hispanic. In Broward, more than a fourth (26%) of NPAs were Hispanic.

But, of course, Trump also received more votes than Republicans who participated in the election. Republicans comprised 23% of total voters in Broward, and Trump received 31% of the vote. That difference is only 8 percentage points, however. Thus, it seems that more NPAs voted for Clinton than for Trump.

But if everything looks fine in Broward County, why did the projections fail? To understand how Broward may have contributed to those erroneous projections, we need to look at the election results in more detail—first, by method of voting.

Election Results by Method of Voting

Clinton's hefty percentage of the vote in Broward obscures considerable variation in her share by method of voting. Clinton won more than 70% of the vote among early voters, who made up more than half of all voters in Broward. Among vote-by-mail balloters, her percentage was less, but still very high—about 66%. Historically, more Republicans have chosen vote by mail, while Democrats have favored early voting. So these numbers seem normal. But Clinton's percentage of the vote among Election Day voters was drastically lower than among early voters—by a full 14 percentage points. Trump's percentage of the Election Day vote rose considerably, 11.5 points over his share of votes cast during early voting, but he did not gain all of the share lost by Clinton. Minor parties and residual vote rates combined went up by more than 2.5% on Election Day compared to early voting—which means they doubled.

Table 3.

Results of Presidential Race by Method of Voting, 2016 Presidential Election, Broward County, FL

Candidate	EV	EV%	ED	ED%	VBM	VBM%	Total	Total %
Trump	116,168	27.24%	82,579	38.76%	62,026	30.48%	260,951	31.16
Clinton	299,519	70.22%	119,785	56.22%	133,566	65.63%	553,320	66.08
Johnson	4,265	1.00%	3,989	1.87%	2,812	1.38%	11,078	1.32
Castle	318	0.07%	322	0.15%	265	0.13%	907	0.11
Stein	2,042	0.48%	1,973	0.93%	1,076	0.53%	5,094	0.61
De La Fuente	229	0.05%	187	0.09%	184	0.09%	600	0.07
WRI	2,010	0.47%	1,866	0.88%	1,559	0.77%	5,438	0.65
OV	399	0.09%	554	0.26%	477	0.23%	1,434	0.17
UV	1,569	0.37%	1,810	0.85%	1,560	0.77%	4,941	0.59
Total	426,519	50.55%	213,065	25.26%	203,525	24.18%	843,763	100%

Of course, it isn't unusual for early voting to be more heavily Democratic than Election Day. When we compare these percentages to 2012, we find that Obama carried early voting in Broward by an even higher percentage—77%. But, of course, early voting only accounted for about a third of the ballots cast that year. Obama's percentage of the vote among vote-by-mail balloters in 2016 was actually less than Clinton's percentage in 2016, by 4 percentage points. But among Election Day voters, Obama did far better than Clinton, winning 61% of the vote compared to Clinton's 56%. Of course, Election Day voters accounted for a small percentage of the overall vote in 2016. But what we can see is that Clinton did much better in votes cast prior to Election Day—that is, early voting and absentee balloting combined—than on Election Day.

As we have seen, the share of the vote for minor party candidates and residual votes was higher on Election Day than during early voting in 2016. For absentee balloting, rates for minor party candidates and residual votes were higher than for early voting, but still lower than for Election Day. Our examination of write-in ballots in Volusia County found that write-in voters were not more likely to be Democratic voters, as evidenced by their other choices on the ballot. While our findings are still preliminary, we found some evidence that write-ins might be slightly more prevalent among people who otherwise voted for Republican candidates.

At the state level, the difference in Clinton's percentage of the vote by method of voting was also dramatic. Clinton won Florida among early voters by nearly 6 percentage points and among absentee balloters by 2 percentage points, but lost Election Day voters to Trump by a huge margin—11.5 points.¹⁷

But in 2012, Obama's percentages among absentee voters and Election Day voters in Broward County were nearly identical. And in 2016 in neighboring Miami-Dade, there was no significant difference between Clinton's share of the vote among absentee voters and Election Day voters. Considering the larger population of Democratic voters in Broward, one would have expected a larger percentage of the vote for Clinton than in Miami-Dade—and that is the case for votes cast before Election Day, but dramatically different for those cast on November 8th. *We have to conclude that this difference in Broward represents a crucial part of why the projections went wrong and why Clinton lost Florida.*

Partisan Turnout, Candidate Vote Differential. Republicans made up about 19% of early voters, and Trump received about 27% of the vote, a difference of about 8 percentage points. Democrats made up more 56% of early voters, but Clinton pulled more than 70% of the vote, a difference of 14 percentage points. NPA and minor party voters made up 24% of early voters.

¹⁷ Smith, Daniel, "Presidential Vote by Method," ElectionSmith, posted January 19, 2017. Accessed at www.electionsmith.com.

Thus, it is reasonable to assume that a much greater percentage of these voters chose to vote for Clinton than for Trump.¹⁸

About one in four (25%) of those voting by mail were Republicans, but Trump pulled more than 30% of the vote, a difference of 5 percentage points. More than half (54%) were Democrats, but Clinton pulled about 66% of the vote, a difference of 12 percentage points. Once again, NPAs and others clearly voted more heavily for Clinton than for Trump.

Republicans were about 26% of Election Day voters, but Trump pulled almost 39% of the vote, for a difference of about 13 percentage points – much more than during early voting or absentee balloting. Democrats were less than half of Election Day voters at 45%, and Clinton won about 56% of the vote, for a difference of 11 percentage points. Obviously, not only did Democratic participation decline, but Election Day NPAs seem to have favored Trump over Clinton by a slight margin, in sharp contrast to early voting and vote-by-mail NPAs. And it is possible that they drove up the rates of minor party voting and residual votes on Election Day.

Table 4.
Comparison of Partisan Turnout to Candidate Vote Totals, by Method of Voting
2016 General Election, Broward County, FL

Candidate/Party	Early Voting			Vote by Mail			Election Day		
	Vote %	Party %	Dif.	Vote %	Party %	Dif	Vote %	Party %	Dif
Trump/Rep	27%	20%	7	30%	25%	5	39%	26%	13
Clinton/Dem	70%	56%	14	66%	56%	10	56%	45%	11
Difference			C+7			C+5			C-2

The Comey Effect? The Clinton campaign blamed their defeat on the Comey effect, that is, FBI Director Comey’s announcement on October 28th that more Clinton e-mails had been found and were being investigated, a stunning revelation that contravened longstanding FBI policy of not commenting on investigations still in progress. But the huge increase in early voting that so strongly favored Clinton took place *after* the Comey announcement. And the subsequent announcement that nothing was found in the e-mails took place prior to Election Day. So while Comey’s actions no doubt had an effect on the election, it didn’t seem to deter Democratic early voters. And there is no evidence that the reduced number of Election Day Democrats was related to the announcement.

Information about turnout on Election Day was being received continuously and fed into the predictive turnout models. So it doesn’t really tell us why they missed the mark. But it does indicate that an overstatement of Election Day votes for Clinton in Broward may have

¹⁸ Of course, not all Democrats voted for Clinton, and not all Republicans voted for Trump, but the assumptions here are that partisans generally stuck with their candidate and that NPAs, rather than the other party’s voters, constituted most of the votes above the number of partisans who voted. The purpose is to get a rough idea of how the NPAs voted so the assumptions only need to be broadly true at this point.

contributed to the erroneous projection. To find out more about this large difference in Clinton's percentage by method of voting and how it might have affected projections, we examined precinct-level data from Election Day.

Revelations from Precinct-Level Data

Broward has 577 precincts, with no very small precincts such as we found in Miami-Dade. Only one precinct, Z073, was excluded from examination. That precinct is located at the Broward Elections office and had very low turnout. Most likely, this precinct is set up for homeless voters or other exceptional cases.¹⁹ Regardless, it was atypical so we excluded it from our calculations.

By Race. Turnout percentages by race for the 2016 general election published by Broward County indicated only a small difference in turnout between voters based on race—72.6% for white voters and 71.7% for both black and Hispanic voters. An examination of precinct turnout based on race seemed to confirm those numbers for Hispanic voters, but showed dramatic differences in turnout between predominantly white and predominantly black precincts.

Of the 132 precincts with a plurality of black registrants, none had a turnout rate above 75%, and only one was at that level. Median turnout for these black precincts was about 68%. Seven precincts had very low turnout rates below 60%. More than 80% of the black plurality precincts (110 of 132) had turnout rates below the summary turnout for black voters of 71.7%.

In contrast, of the 396 precincts in which white voters had the edge, one third (128) had turnout rates above 75%; 14 white plurality precincts had turnout rates above 80%. The median precinct turnout rate for white precincts was about 73%, 5 percentage points higher than the median rate for black precincts. Only eight of the 396 precincts had a turnout rate below 60%.

With such a contrast in precinct turnout rates by race, it is hard to understand how overall black and white voter turnout percentages could be so close. An examination of the voter registration file for Broward County did not reveal any obvious problems, although a more detailed analysis of the numbers seems merited.²⁰

There are a number of reasons why turnout by precinct could differ substantially from summary numbers. Differences in precinct size are perhaps the most obvious possibility since that varies considerably across the county. But a quick look at the relative size of black and white plurality precincts did not show any obvious differences. Hispanic precincts did seem somewhat smaller. It is also possible that there are pronounced differences in voting habits between those voters who live in residentially segregated areas and those who do not. These differences in voter participation rates could be the result of differences in age, income, national

¹⁹ Just for the records, this precinct is mostly composed of white voters.

²⁰ We want to thank Dr. Daniel Smith for providing us with a merged voter history and voter registration file for Broward County.

origin, language, or other factors. While we did not examine these factors here, we think it is necessary to mention them because they may have affected not only rates of voting, but voting choices as well.

By Party. Democrats were the largest partisan group in 514 of the 576 precincts. NPAs held the edge in three precincts. Sixty precincts were mainly Republican in registration. All three of the NPA precincts had turnout well above the county's summary rate. Of the 60 Republican precincts, only two were below the county turnout. Of the 514 Democratic precincts, more than half (246) had turnout rates below the county rate.

A look at the precincts with extremely low turnout rates – 60% or less – gives us an even better picture of the turnout problem. All of the twenty-three precincts with extremely low turnout were primarily Democratic in registration, and all voted for Clinton. But 19 of these low turnout precincts had not just a plurality of Democrats, but a majority.

Of Broward's 576 precincts, Clinton won 510, and Trump won 66. More than half (55%) of Clinton's precincts had turnout below the county rate. In contrast, only 9 of Trump's 66 precincts (14%) were below the county rate. Of the 514 Democratic precincts, Clinton won all but 12. Clinton also won all three of the NPA precincts and five Republican precincts, and Clinton and Trump tied in one Republican precinct. Clinton won every black precinct (136) and all but two of the Hispanic precincts (54). Of the white precincts, she won 317 of 382 and tied in one.

When we compare the above numbers with those from Miami-Dade, sharp differences are immediately apparent. In Broward, Clinton lost 12 of 514 Democratic precincts; in Miami-Dade, she only lost 3 of 376 Democratic precincts. Clinton only won 5 Republican precincts in Broward (about 8%); in Miami-Dade, she won 87 of 217 (40%) of the precincts in which Republicans held the edge in registration.

The end result was that Miami-Dade had more votes for Clinton – 624,146 – than Broward did – 553,320 – even though Broward had more Democratic registered voters. What makes this truly unusual is the fact that Democratic turnout was *not* higher in Miami-Dade than in Broward. It was just about the same. Further, Miami-Dade had higher Republican turnout than Broward did. Thus, it appears that the chief difference between the two counties may not have involved the behavior of Democratic voters, but of Republicans and/or NPAs. It appears that Clinton did much better among Republican and NPA voters in Miami-Dade than she did in Broward – at least on Election Day.

Conclusions

In Miami-Dade, we found no clues to explain why the polls and projections went awry. Our examination of Broward's election data, however, gave us plenty of evidence for what went wrong. Let's revisit our original questions:

Was turnout lower than expected among Democratic voters, especially minorities?

Overall turnout in Broward was 5 percentage points higher than in 2012 when the state went for Obama by a slight margin, largely based on Democratic turnout in Broward and other south Florida counties. Turnout among minority voters statewide was well below 2012 levels, but it was significantly higher in Broward County than the state average. Going into Election Day 2016, turnout among Democratic voters in Broward was exceptional. But on Election Day, the percentage of Democratic voters fell considerably. Regardless of the reasons for this drop, an overestimation of the Election Day Democratic vote was certainly a factor in the erroneous projections—even though they were supposedly being updated in real time.

Was Clinton's lead on ballots cast before Election Day exaggerated based on faulty assumptions about her support among Democratic voters?

The short answer here is no. Her lead on ballots cast before Election Day was considerable. She seems to have done well not only among Democratic voters, but among NPAs and perhaps even attracted some Republican votes.

After the Comey announcement that more Clinton e-mails were being investigated, did Democratic voters abandon Clinton in favor of third-party candidates or write-ins or possibly decide to skip voting in the presidential race?

There is no evidence that the Comey announcement had any discernible effect on Democratic voting behavior, but it is clear that the voting behavior of NPAs and possibly Republicans changed between the early voting period and Election Day. Together with the lower levels of Democratic turnout, this change in support from NPAs was likely responsible for Clinton's much lower share of the vote on Election Day. Certainly, it makes sense that people who do not identify with a political party might be more easily swayed by the Comey announcement than those with a strong partisan commitment.

But why would this have affected NPAs and Republicans in Broward, but not in Miami-Dade? Even though Broward had more Democrats than Miami-Dade and about the same Democratic turnout rate, it had fewer votes for Clinton than its southern neighbor. This meant that a larger portion of Clinton's votes in Miami-Dade compared to Broward came from voters who were not Democrats. The fact that Clinton won 40% of Miami-Dade's Republican precincts while she won less than 10% of Republican precincts in Broward points to how this happened. Nearly three-quarters of Miami-Dade's Republicans and a little less than two-thirds of its NPAs were Hispanic. Broward's Republicans were overwhelmingly non-Hispanic whites, and whites made up the largest racial group among NPAs. Plus, we know that Hispanic turnout was much higher in Miami-Dade than in Broward or statewide. A reasonable conclusion is that neither the

Comey announcement nor the disinformation campaign against Clinton was sufficient to overcome Hispanic discomfort with Trump.

Did the projections that Clinton would handily win Florida depress turnout among her voters or cause them to change their vote based on the assumption that it no longer mattered?

While there is no evidence that significant numbers of Broward Democrats changed their vote based on the rosy projections, it is possible that the assurance of a Clinton win allowed some NPAs to feel comfortable with voting for a minor party candidate or write in. And, certainly, some Clinton voters—both Democrats and NPAs—decided that it wasn't worth the trouble to get to the polls if the election was already decided. Voters who faced barriers to voting—difficulty getting off work, child care issues, lack of transportation, and other problems—were able to tell themselves that it didn't matter anyway. (Let's hope this is a cautionary tale for pollsters and journalists.)

Finally, are there reasons to suspect that the Broward results are not accurate?

Yes, indeed. Nearly every election cycle, there have been complaints that thousands of absentee ballots were not received by those who requested them. This election cycle was no exception. Newspaper accounts indicate that there were once again widespread complaints that voters who requested absentee ballots never received them. Given that the county ended up with the highest rate of unreturned vote-by-mail ballots in the state, it is reasonable to assume that many would-be voters were disenfranchised by the fact that their ballot never arrived. More than a quarter of all vote-by-mail ballots mailed out by Broward County were not returned. And, of course, the unreturned ballots were overwhelming those requested by Democratic voters. The fact that Clinton won 66% of all returned vote-by-mail ballots in Broward, even though Democratic voters were only 56% of those voters, means that the absence of so many ballots has considerable implications for the size of her vote in the county and, thus, statewide. When considered with the very large number of unreturned vote-by-mail ballots in neighboring Miami-Dade, these numbers take on even more significance. Obviously, more research is needed into this issue.

Other problems with vote-by-mail ballots in Broward County also surfaced. Absentee ballots were sent out that didn't include one of the amendments.²¹ The explanation was that test ballots had been sent out by mistake, but this hardly increases confidence in the Broward election's offices ability to respond to ballot requests. A very serious problem with vote-by-mail ballots was discovered by Republican Party officials who found that ballots were not being processed in public by the canvassing board as required by law, but by staff without public scrutiny. This even included filling in the ovals on blank ballots to replace those that could not be read by the

²¹ Sherman, Amy and Michael Auslen, "Another Blunder for Broward Elections: Ballots Missing Medical Marijuana Question," *Miami Herald*, October 21, 2016, accessed at <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/broward/article109574732.html>.

scanner. To make matters worse, the supervisor of elections contended that this was the process that had always been used.²²

Finally, for the second presidential election in a row, the county was the last in Florida to report its results. This year, the problem was blamed on its process for reporting results from the precinct to the elections office.²³ But the process was not new. In 2012, the county failed to report results on time because it discovered uncounted ballots days after the election.²⁴ The presidential results for Florida could not be finalized because of Broward's snafu.

But, quite frankly, Broward has a history of election problems affecting the accuracy of the count. In addition to the perpetual problems with absentees and late reporting of results, the county has several times lost large numbers of ballots or admitted to counting them incorrectly. The county has at least twice experienced an integer overflow that resulted in ballots being subtracted rather than added.²⁵ In at least one case, a correction to its results after every other county had reported changed the results of an election benefitting special interests in Broward County.²⁶ Further, the Broward County Elections office has, by its own admission, a history of restricting public oversight of the county canvassing board and its entire elections process. Finally, in our experience, it has been nearly impossible to get complete, accurate, and reasonably priced public records from the county in a timely manner in order to check its results.

In 2016, all of these problems are compounded by the fact that we know very little about the voting behavior of NPAs. By definition, voting irregularities occur when results are out of line with expectations based on historical data and current circumstances. But what do we know about NPAs that could be used to determine such a disconnect? People who decline to be affiliated with either major party are an increasing percentage of the Florida electorate. If we are to analyze elections accurately, we need to know more about them.

²² Sherman, Amy; Patricia Mazzui and David Smiley, "Deal Reached After GOP Claims Absentee Ballots Were Handled Improperly," *Miami Herald*, Nov. 2, 2016.

²³ Sherman, Amy, "Why Broward Was Late With Its Vote Count on Election Day," *Miami Herald*, Nov. 8, 2016.

²⁴ Clary, Mike, "Voter Advocates Seek to Fix Broward Election Woes," *Sun-Sentinel*, Nov. 14, 2012.

²⁵ "Report on Conduct of Election, Broward County Canvassing Board, General Election, Nov. 2, 2004, Attachment for Question 2," filed Nov. 17, 2004, Florida Secretary of State.

²⁶ Ibid. Also see Walker, Ken, "Opponents Weighing Legal Options in Fla. Gambling Loss," *Baptist Press*, Nov 5, 2004 and Bolstad, Erika and Curtis Morgan, "Gambling Vote Glitch Mars Tally," *Miami Herald*, Nov. 5, 2004.