

Voter History Audit

When voters check in at polling places, they fill out authorization to vote (ATV) forms or one-stop applications during early voting. This results in a voter history record for each individual. When ballots are run through tabulators, tabulation software provides election return data that identifies the number of ballots cast. This audit compares the number of ATV forms and one-stop applications with the number of physical ballots cast. Those two numbers should generally match, but may be *slightly* off for valid reasons, such as if a voter checks in and then decides not to vote.

This audit is designed to identify certain problems or fraud, such as ballot stuffing, fraudulent manual entries, tampering with media cards or certain ballot coding issues. *Our audit discovered that for the March 2018 Election the absolute value of all variances statewide was, on average, two to three ballots per county.*

Manual Entry Audit

County election officials occasionally must enter election results by hand directly into the vote tabulation software. This may occur, for example, due to a media card failure. This audit can catch inadvertent mistakes in transcribing numbers, as well as purposeful manipulation of data.

North Carolina updated its Election Reporting system to include an automated process able to detect transcription errors in real time as results are entered by hand. Several data validation rules are run against manual entries which effectively eliminate transcription errors, within an error rate of a fraction of one percent.

Sample Audit

A post-election sample audit that checks the accuracy of the equipment is required by statute (163A-1166). State officials select a statistically significant number of precincts or absentee/early voting groupings (usually 2) for county officials who conduct a hand-eye-count of all ballots in those precincts or voting methods. These results are compared to the tabulated results and any variances are noted. Permitted variances are limited to the following situations: (1) The write-in oval was not filled in but a candidate's name was written in, or (2) the machine did not count a choice that was represented by checkmarks, x's, or that was poorly shaded.

Deeper Audits for Close Contests

The last audit that is executed compares the margin of victory in any particular contest to the sum of the following: the total number of Provisional Ballots cast, the total number of unapproved absentee ballots, and any other significant variance. If the margin of victory is less than this summation, then further audits are run to check issues related to (1) the aforementioned variances, (2) any relevant unapproved absentees, and (3) any applicable provisional ballots. Voters cast provisional ballots when questions arise about their qualifications or eligibility to vote in certain contests. Those ballots are held aside pending

research by county boards of elections as to whether they should be counted. When further auditing of provisional data is necessary, analysts process data from several data sources, including the DMV database, an incomplete queue that catalogs registration attempts that were deemed incomplete and the current registration database as of Election Day. Data analysts execute matching algorithms to determine whether provisional voters were eligible to vote in the counties where they presented to vote. Additionally, if needed, audit results are sent to county boards of elections, which analyze them and, where appropriate, amend their canvasses to reflect any changes.

This “Close Contest Audit” revealed no issues that could jeopardize election outcomes.