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TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
Statistics

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THE ACCURACY AND PREDICTIVENESS OF STATE-LEVEL PRESIDENTIAL POLLS

ABSTRACT:

National Presidential polls have been used for years to predict the popular vote, but in two of the past five elections, the popular vote winner didn't become President. The rise of state-level public polling in recent Presidential elections has allowed for a better understanding of the election in individual states and therefore the Electoral College. Two key measures of polling are how far the poll is from the result (accuracy) and the predictive power of a poll through the correlation and R-square of a poll result and the election. In this paper, we evaluate the accuracy and predictive power of state-level election Presidential polls using the Huffington Post's Pollster database of over seven thousand polls from 2008, 2012, 2016 using a series of linear regressions and Bayesian Model Averaging. We include multiple models with combinations of the following variables: the time before election day, poll methodology (IVR, internet panel, etc.), pollster, state. We also calculate the coverage of the confidence intervals using the margin of error provided by the polls and estimates of the error based on historical results. The goal is to understand how polls months before the election should be interpreted and when, if ever, it is appropriate for them to be used to predict the election day result.

BIO: Brittany Alexander is a second year Ph.D. student. Her research focuses on Bayesian methodology for public opinion polls and American election modeling. She is a pre-doctoral fellow at the Institute for Science, Technology, and Public Policy at Texas A&M where she works on developing models of public opinion about policy. Her advisor is Dr. Jeff Hart. She expects to graduate in May 2023.

Friday, April 10, 2020
3:00 PM - 4:00 PM
Online webinar only. No meeting room.

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