

Author(s): Traugott, Santa

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Abstract

Traugott notes that the proportion of survey respondents who report having voted is almost always substantially higher than the estimates of turnout derived from official election returns. We assume that some major component of the discrepancy must be do to respondents claiming to have voted when they did not and that the way to remedy this is to look up actual voting records so that these misreports can be determined and corrected. She reports on the procedures and results of the NES "validation" effort. A consistent result over time is that 12-14% of self-reported voters cannot be confirmed in the records as voting. Consistently, this error has been approximately equally divided between those respondents for whom no records at all could be located, and those for whom a record was located which does not indicate that they voted. The "not-found" are a threat to the validity of the validation enterprise itself because their meaning is not clear: are these respondents who have misreported both the fact of voting and their registration status, or are they respondents for whom we are looking in the wrong office (or under the wrong name)? Traugott compares the confirmed voters, the "not-found" and the confirmed misreporters on several characteristics and tentatively concludes that the "not found" are most often misreporters, both of their vote and in effect, of their registration status. The "not found" tend to look like the survey respondents who report not being registered.