

Election Lessons from 2020: Absentee/Mail Voting

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NCSL 2021 Legislative Summit
November 3, 2021



MIT ELECTION DATA
+ SCIENCE LAB

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE 2020 ELECTION

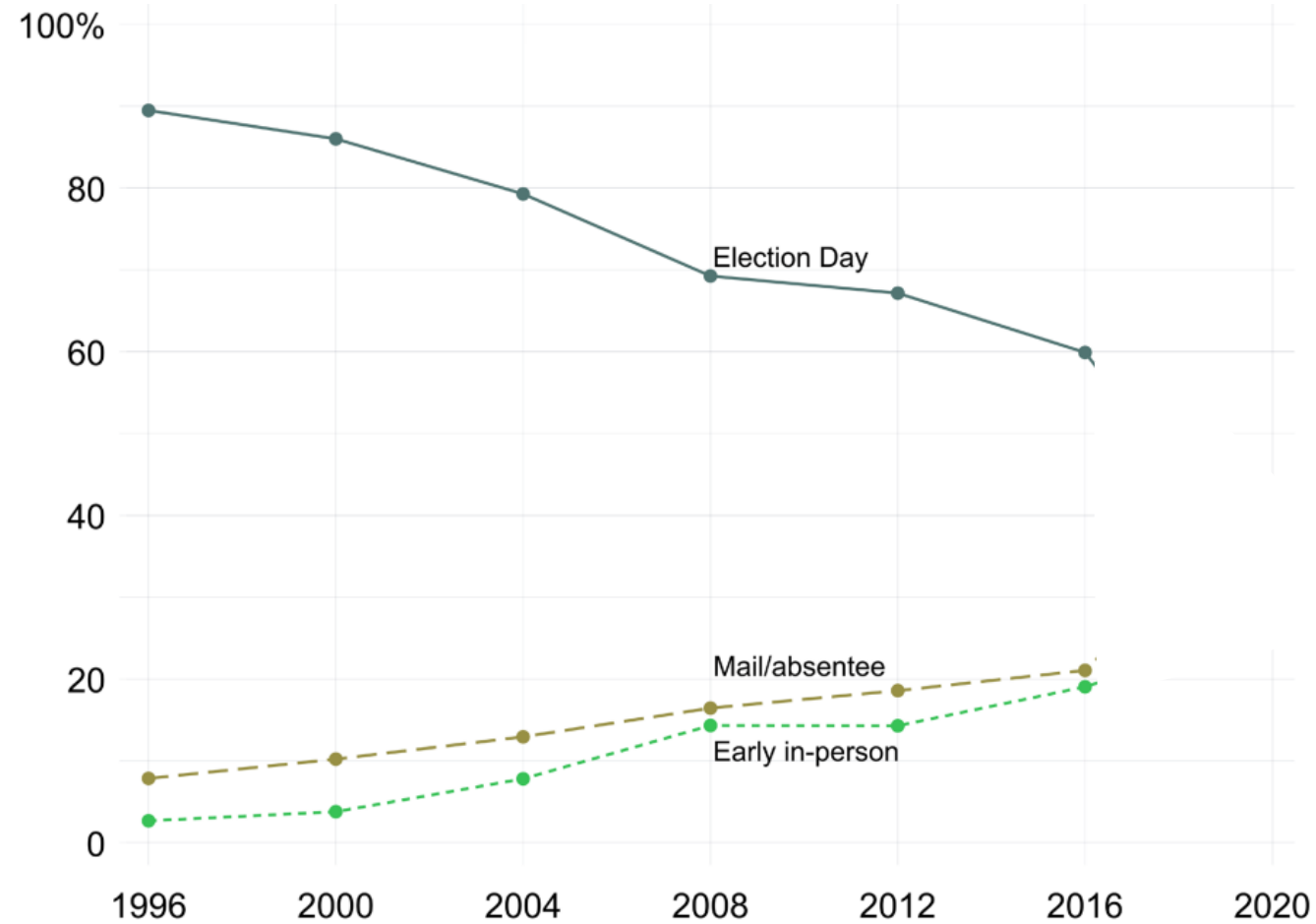
REPORT TO THE U.S. ELECTION
ASSISTANCE COMMISSION



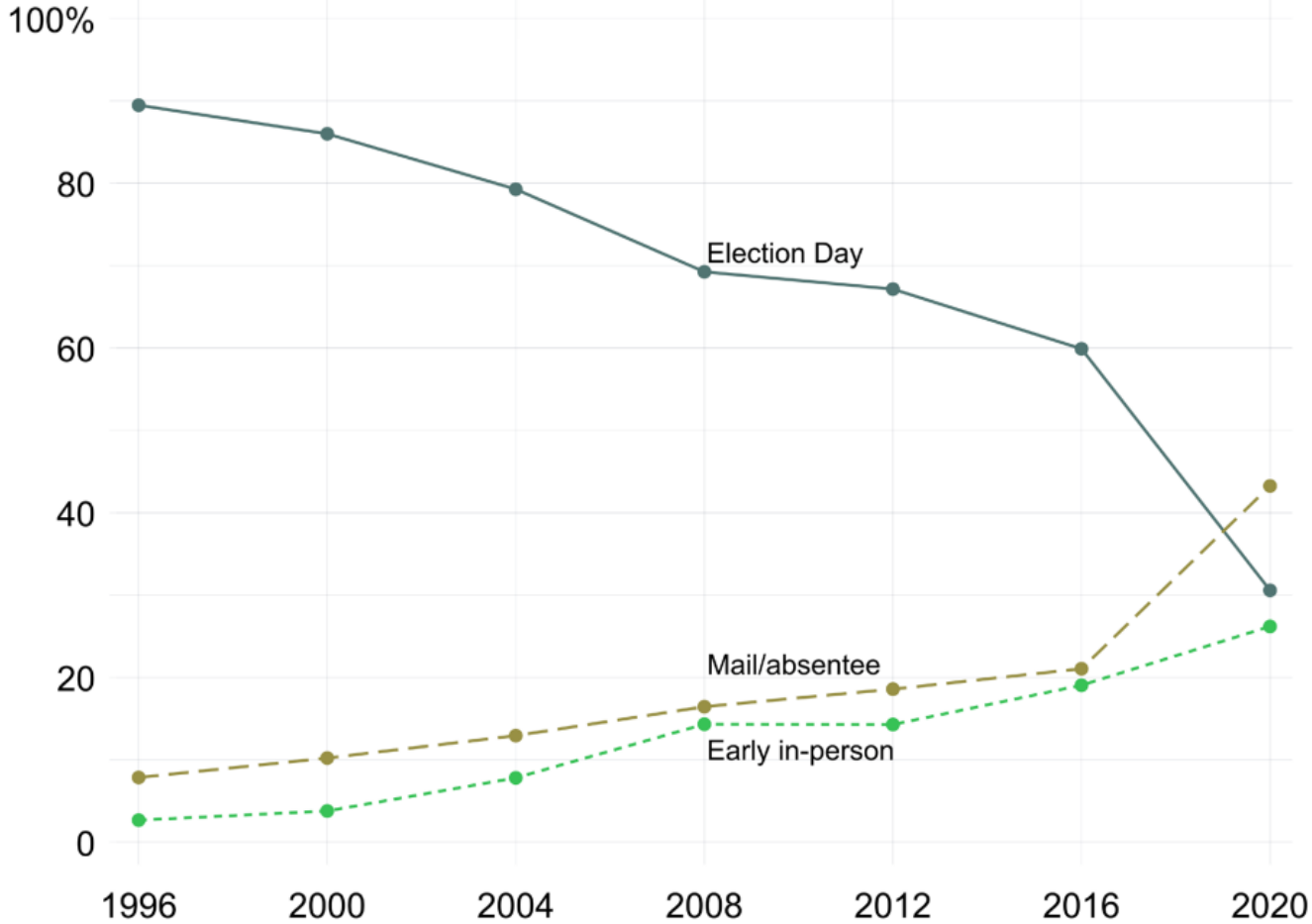
<https://electionlab.mit.edu/research/lessons-learned-2020-election>

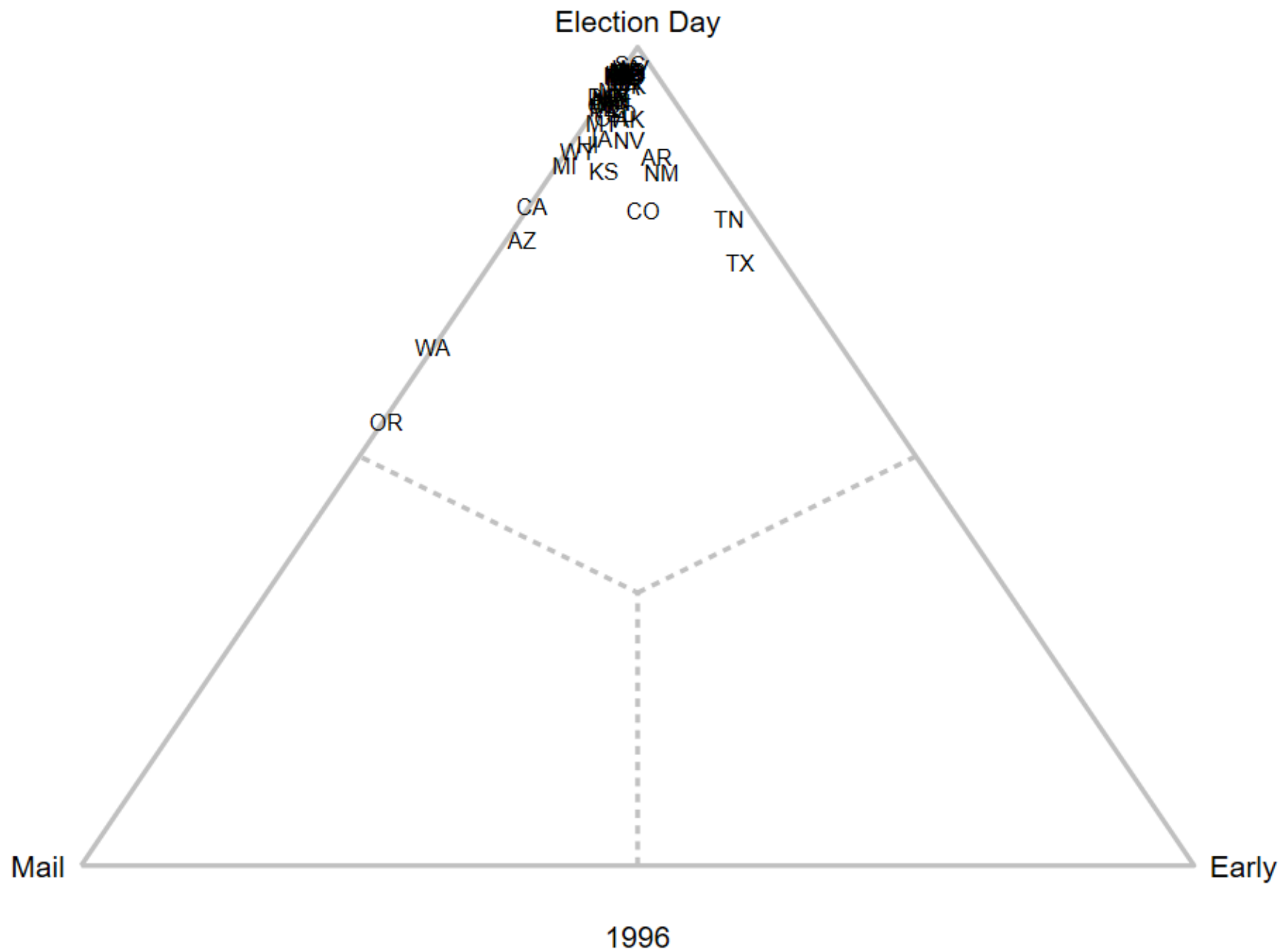


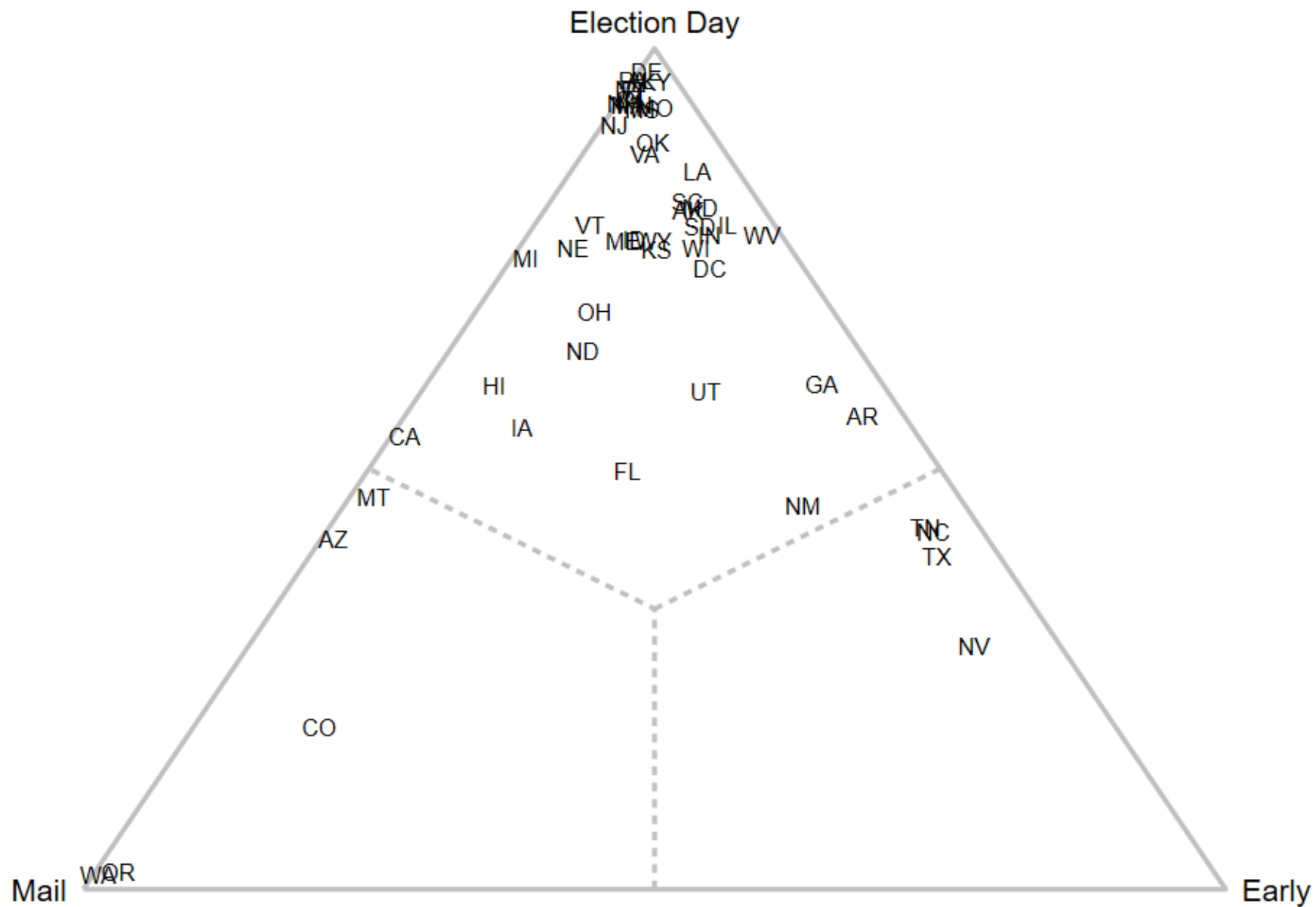
Before 2020, Mail and In-Person Early Voting Were growing Steadily



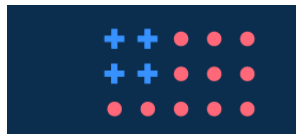
Things Really changed in 2020

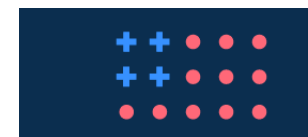
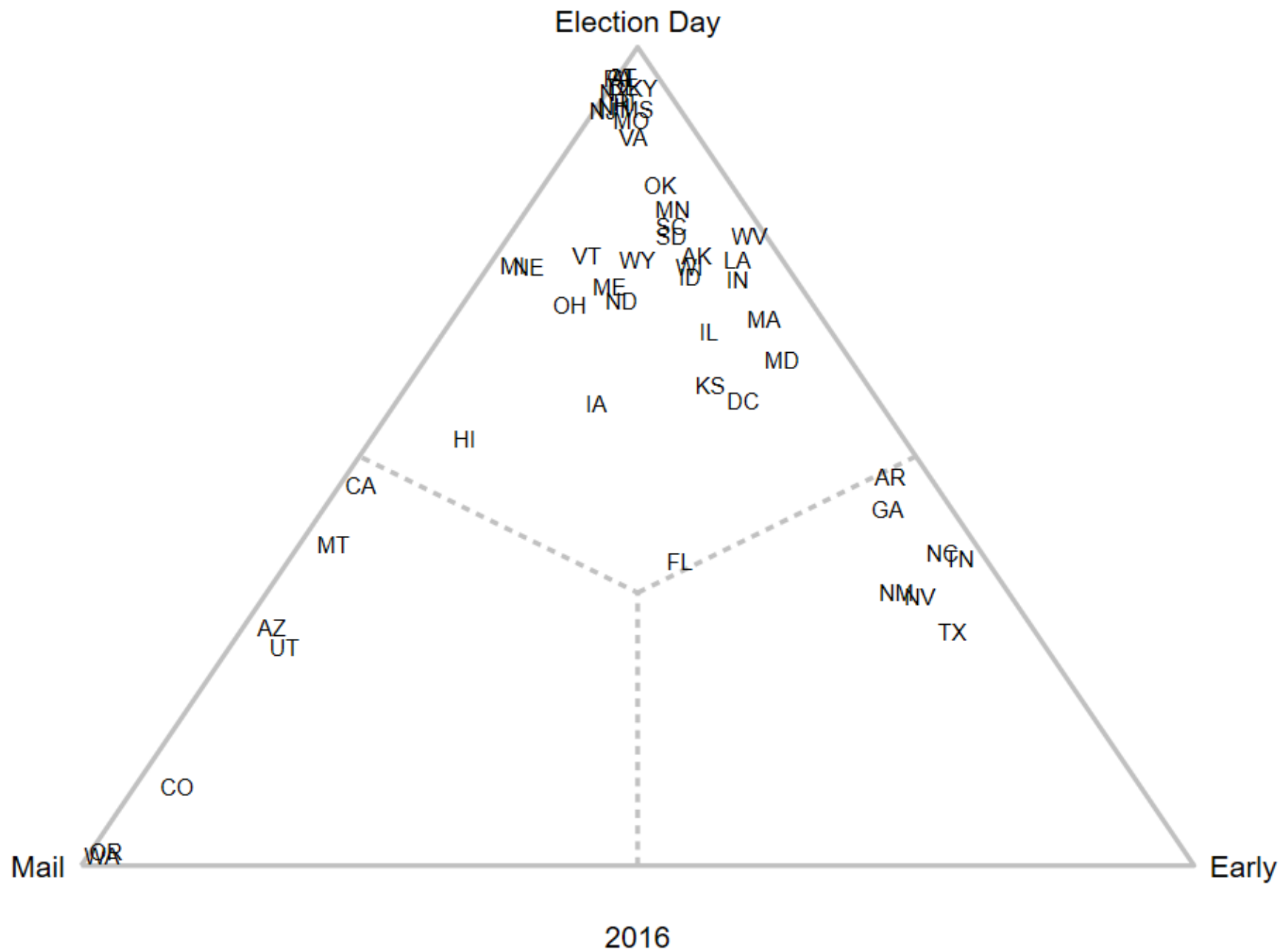






2012







TAMPA BAY
FLORIDA



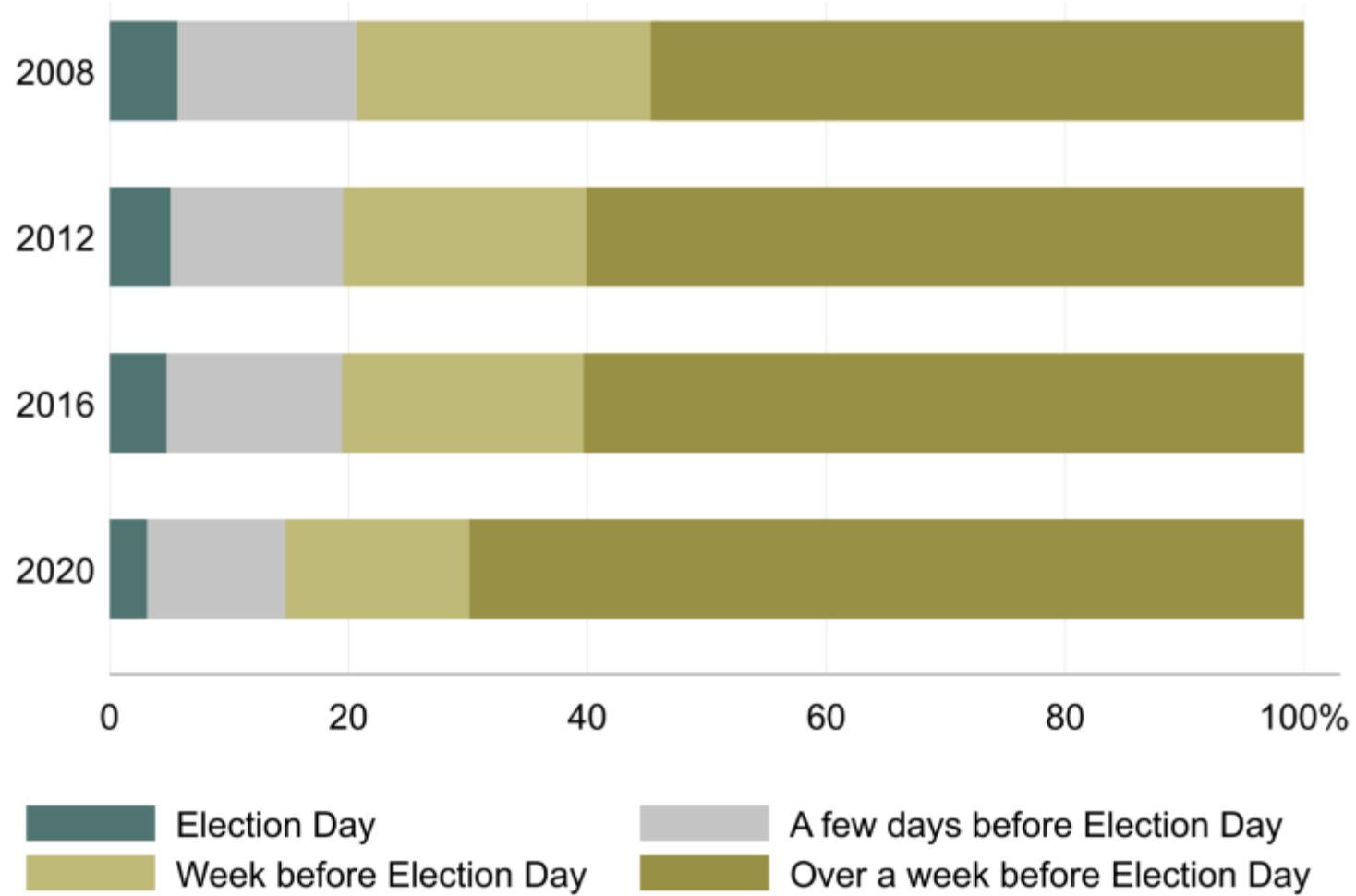
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Some Other Ways 2020 Was Different



Ballots Were Returned More Quickly



Source: Survey of the Performance of American Elections



The Rejection Rate was Lower

+ As a percentage of mail ballots returned

- 0.80% in 2020
- 0.96% in 2016

+ As a percentage of all ballots cast

- 0.36% in 2020
- 0.24% in 2016

Source: Election Administration and Voting Survey



Drop Box Use Climbed

	All States		Excluding CO, OR, & WA	
	2016	2020	2016	2020
Mailed back	69.6%	51.3%	80.3%	55.0%
Drop boxes	15.4%	25.6%	5.0%	20.7%
Election office	6.2%	11.5%	6.0%	12.0%
All other	8.8%	11.6%	8.7%	12.3%

Source: Survey of the Performance of American Elections



Partisan Changes

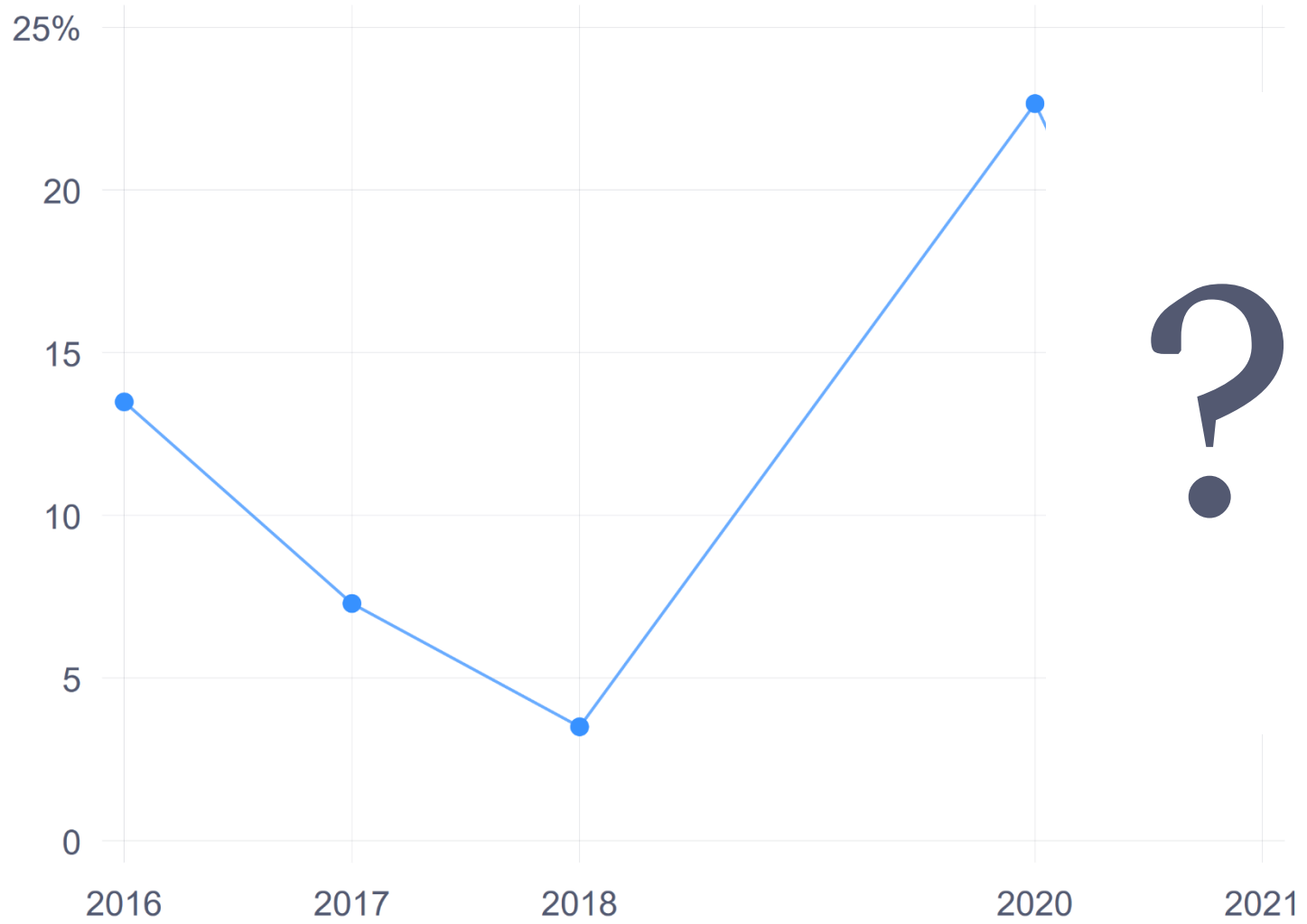
	2008	2012	2016	2020
Democrats	18%	23%	26%	60%
Republicans	19%	19%	21%	32%
Under 65	17%	19%	22%	46%
Over 65	29%	30%	30%	55%
With disabilities	24%	26%	30%	55%
Without disabilities	18%	20%	22%	46%



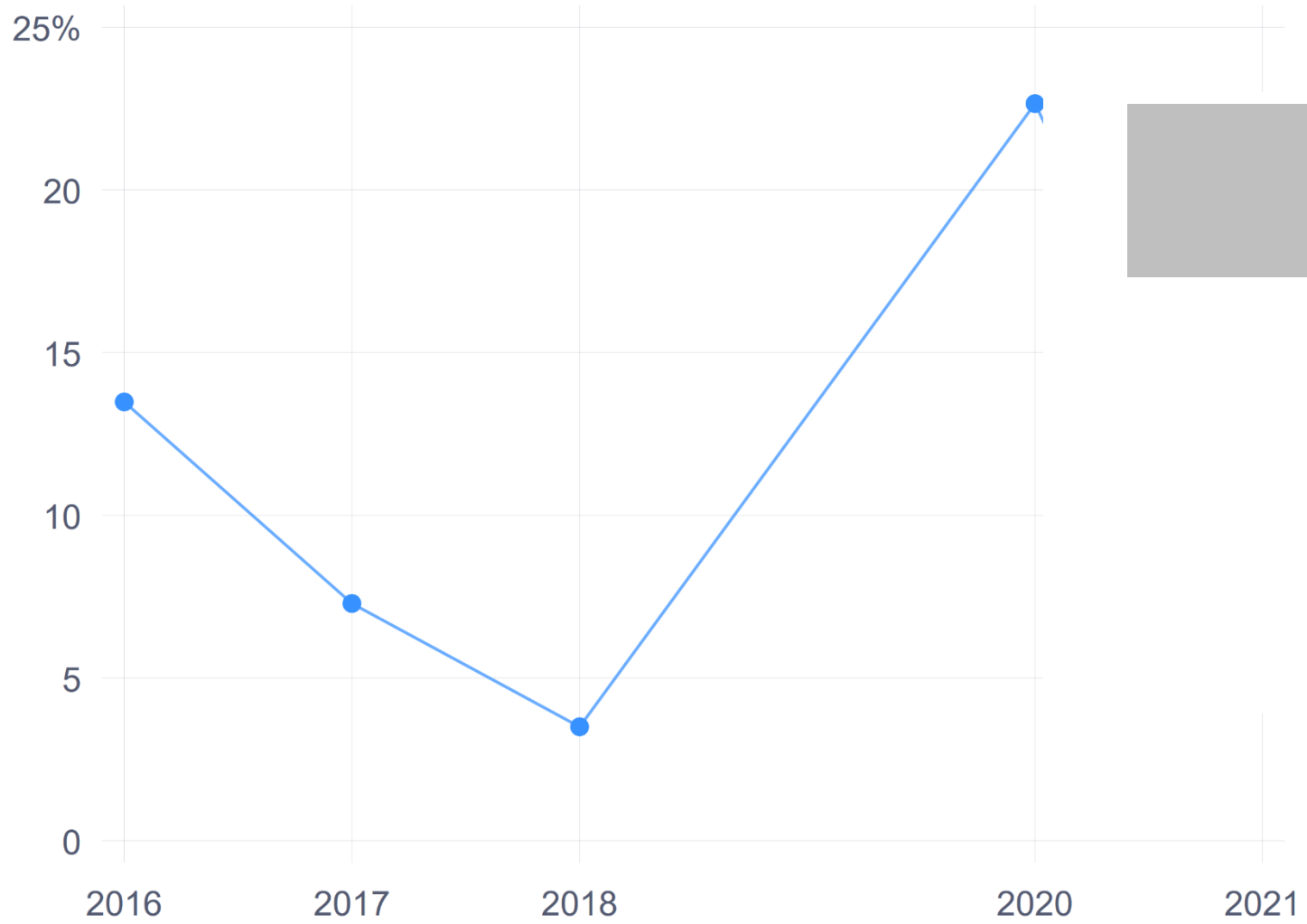
The Future?



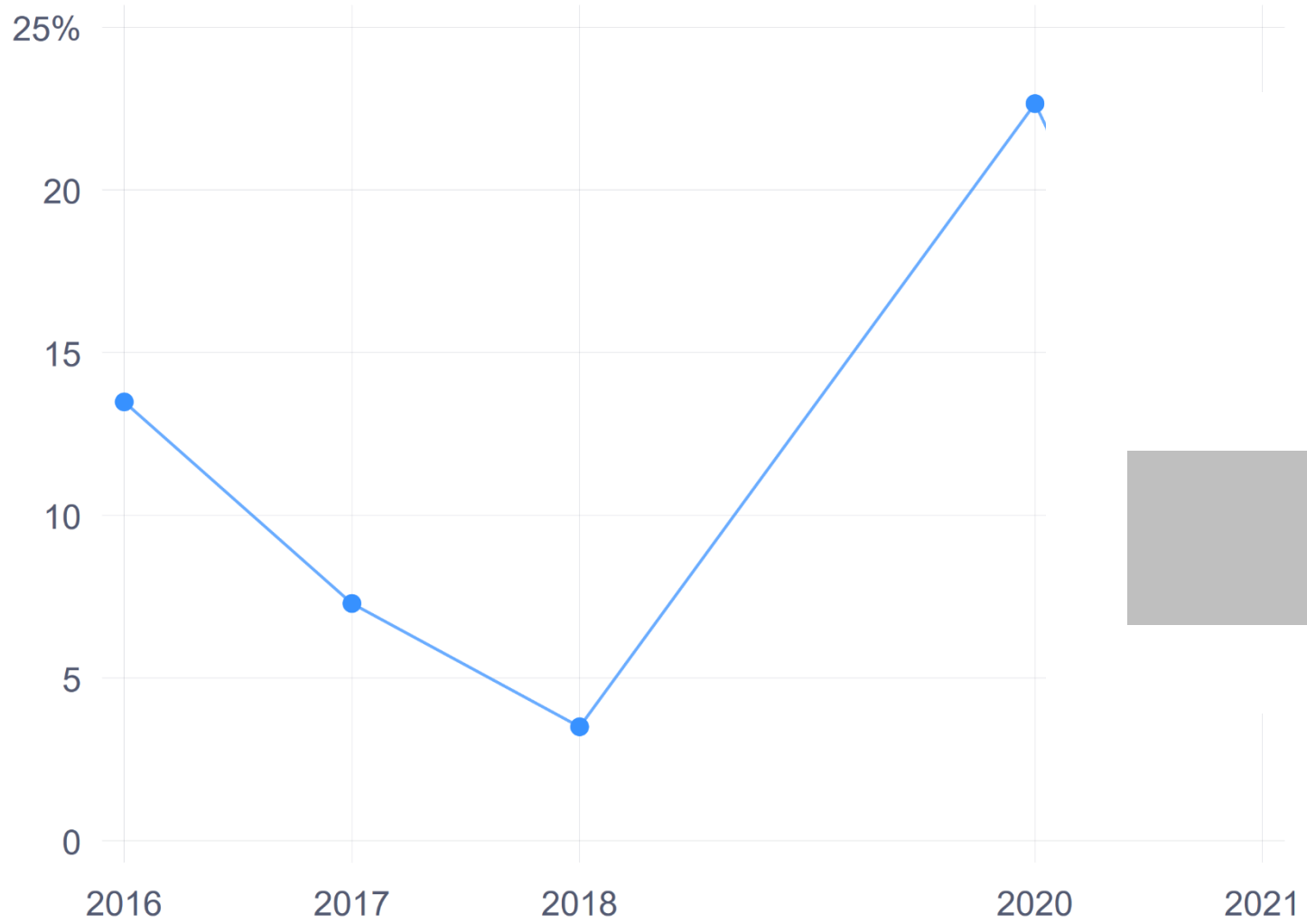
Voting by Mail in Virginia



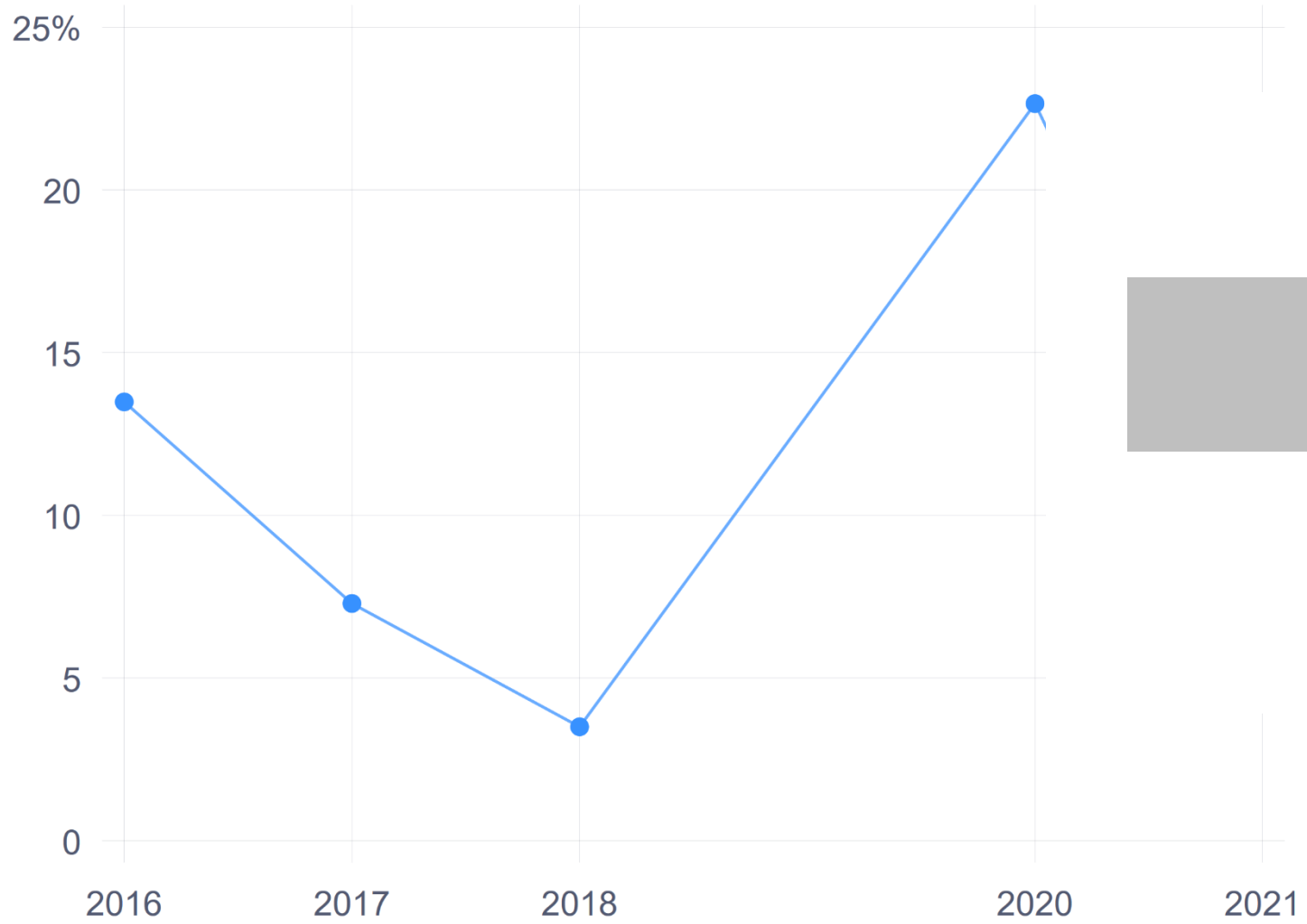
Voting by Mail in Virginia



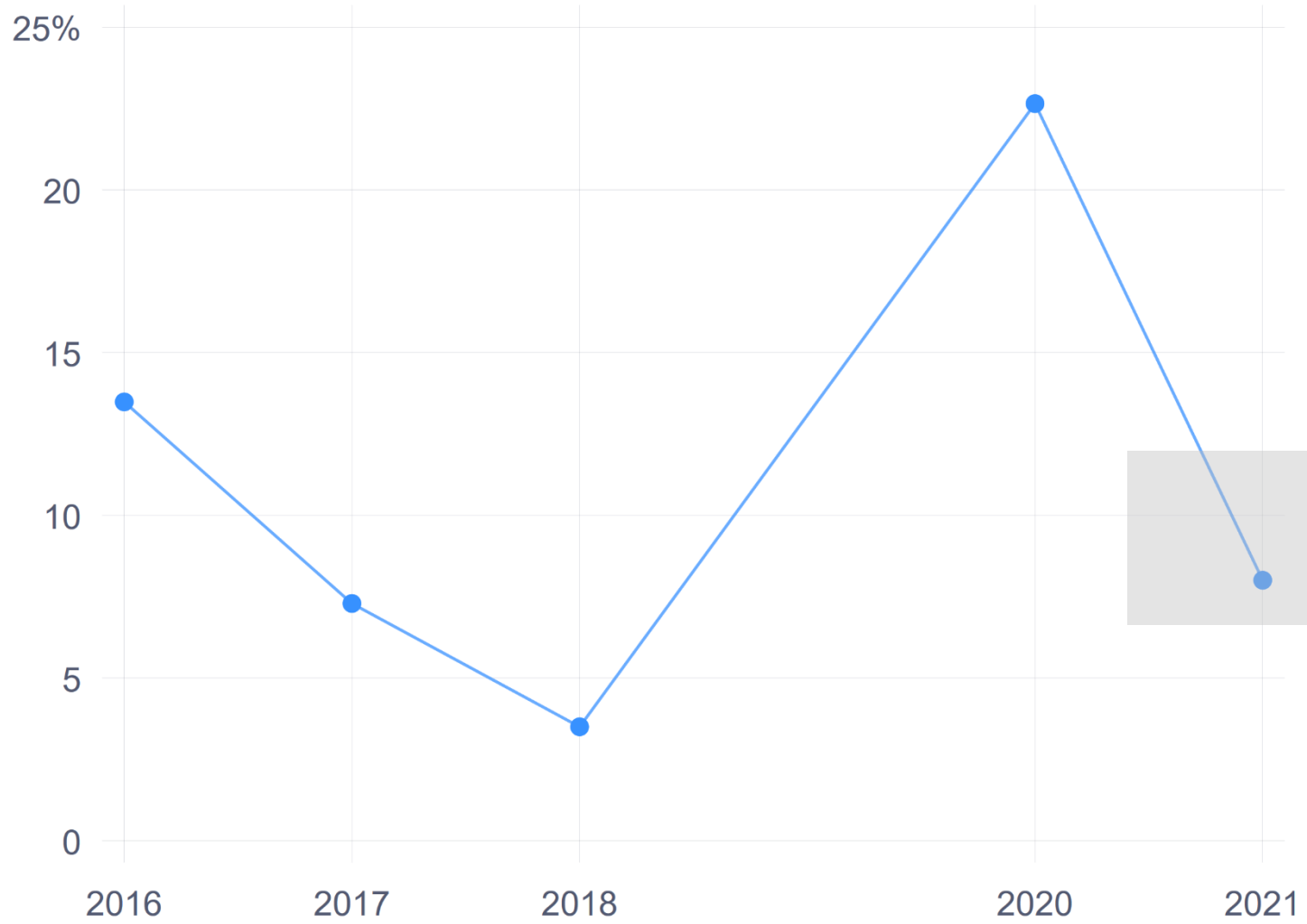
Voting by Mail in Virginia



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Voting by Mail in Virginia



Some Legislative Issues to Consider

- + Excuse/no excuse
- + Support for online capabilities
 - Applications
 - Tracking
- + Deadline/timelines
 - Deadlines for requesting
 - Deadlines for return
 - Window for processing
- + Uniformity in verification requirements
- + Separate reporting of actual mail ballots

