November 2020 Election

- Record overall (5.5 million) and absentee ballot (3.3 million) turnout
- Smooth Election Day
- Major statewide races outside margins for cost-expedited recount
Post-Election Day Pressure Points

- Larger jurisdictions completed reporting of unofficial results Wednesday and Thursday because of large absentee ballot volume, as predicted
- Confusion/misunderstanding of election process by some challengers and observers
- Strict “recountability” rules
- Unofficial election night reporting errors
- Misinformation and disinformation
Misinformation Response Practices

- Coordination with local, state, and federal partners
- Threat assessment and mitigation
- Rapid response/fact check (Michigan.Gov/SOSFactCheck)
2020 Post-Election Processes

- Election Night canvass & chain of custody (Nov. 3-5)
- County canvass (Nov. 17)
- State canvass and certification (Nov. 23)
- Recount period (following Nov. 23 certification)
- Electoral College deadlines (Dec. 8 + 14)
- Post-election audits
2020 Post-Election Audits

• Procedural/Performance audits
  • Review individual precincts to determine procedures properly followed; one statewide race hand-counted

• Countywide ballot tally audit
  • Review all votes cast (technically a countywide RLA – copied Georgia)

• Absent voter counting board audits
  • Super-precincts used to count all absentee ballots for a jurisdiction

• Risk-limiting audit
Risk-Limiting Audits (RLAs)

• Quality control, using math

• Inspects enough ballots to ensure that the chance that the reported outcome differs from the outcome that would be reported by a full hand-count is lower than a pre-determined probability called the “risk limit”

• Provides a sufficient amount of evidence that the winner is the winner and the loser is the loser

• Developed and implemented widely by Colorado
RLAs: Michigan vs. Colorado

• Similarities
  • Paper ballots counted with scanners
  • Records with number of ballot containers and ballots per container

• Differences
  • Higher level of decentralization (primarily locally run elections)
  • Mix of in-person precincts and absentee/mail ballots
  • No uniform cast-vote record; ballots not stored in order of tabulation
  • MI-specific “Ballot-polling” method developed after extensive piloting
Risk-Limiting Audit Development

2018-2019
Local pilots with cities + partners
Read more: A Review of Robust Post-Election Audits (Howard, Rivest, Stark)

August 2019
Multi-county pilots
Clerk advisory committee

November 2019
Additional local and county pilots
Election security advisory commission

March 2020
Practice collecting ballot data statewide
Statewide pilot
March 2020 Pilot

- Randomly selected 669 ballots in 277 local jurisdictions
- Candidate percentages in sample were within 1 percentage point of reported outcome in both parties
Conclusions

• Preparation and coordination with adaptability

• State-specific solutions using other state models, with local input

• Opportunities for ongoing improvement

• Questions?