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```
Presidential ‘Elections’
{
  [From 1976-2024]

     < Alex, Serra, Eli, Luke >

}
```

Programming Language

Topic + Motivation

Our interests:

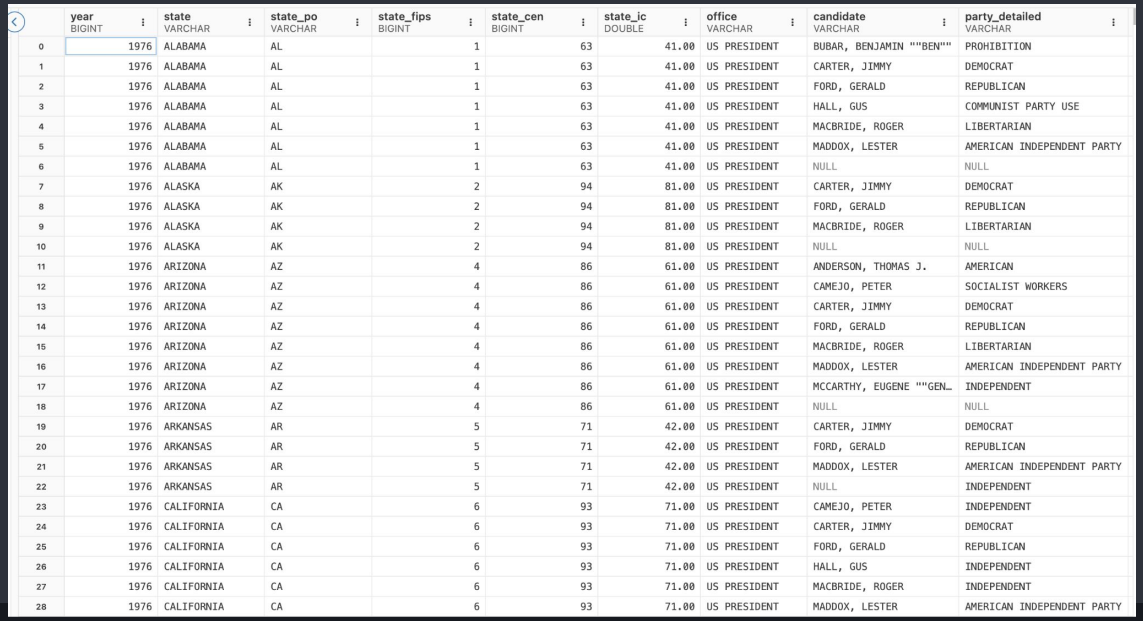
- Political science majors
- Upcoming midterm elections
- Major shift to “Independent” label in recent years
- Dissatisfaction with two-party system

Research question: How has the total percentage vote share for third-party and write-in candidates in presidential elections shifted across individual U.S. states between 1976 and 2024?

The Data

Source: MIT Election Data and Science Lab, published through Harvard Dataverse.

Spans 13 elections in all 50 states + DC



	year BIGINT	state VARCHAR	state_po VARCHAR	state_fips BIGINT	state_cen BIGINT	state_ic DOUBLE	office VARCHAR	candidate VARCHAR	party_detailed VARCHAR
0	1976	ALABAMA	AL	1	63	41.00	US PRESIDENT	BUBAR, BENJAMIN ""BEN""	PROHIBITION
1	1976	ALABAMA	AL	1	63	41.00	US PRESIDENT	CARTER, JIMMY	DEMOCRAT
2	1976	ALABAMA	AL	1	63	41.00	US PRESIDENT	FORD, GERALD	REPUBLICAN
3	1976	ALABAMA	AL	1	63	41.00	US PRESIDENT	HALL, GUS	COMMUNIST PARTY USE
4	1976	ALABAMA	AL	1	63	41.00	US PRESIDENT	MACBRIDE, ROGER	LIBERTARIAN
5	1976	ALABAMA	AL	1	63	41.00	US PRESIDENT	MADDOX, LESTER	AMERICAN INDEPENDENT PARTY
6	1976	ALABAMA	AL	1	63	41.00	US PRESIDENT	NULL	NULL
7	1976	ALASKA	AK	2	94	81.00	US PRESIDENT	CARTER, JIMMY	DEMOCRAT
8	1976	ALASKA	AK	2	94	81.00	US PRESIDENT	FORD, GERALD	REPUBLICAN
9	1976	ALASKA	AK	2	94	81.00	US PRESIDENT	MACBRIDE, ROGER	LIBERTARIAN
10	1976	ALASKA	AK	2	94	81.00	US PRESIDENT	NULL	NULL
11	1976	ARIZONA	AZ	4	86	61.00	US PRESIDENT	ANDERSON, THOMAS J.	AMERICAN
12	1976	ARIZONA	AZ	4	86	61.00	US PRESIDENT	CAMEJO, PETER	SOCIALIST WORKERS
13	1976	ARIZONA	AZ	4	86	61.00	US PRESIDENT	CARTER, JIMMY	DEMOCRAT
14	1976	ARIZONA	AZ	4	86	61.00	US PRESIDENT	FORD, GERALD	REPUBLICAN
15	1976	ARIZONA	AZ	4	86	61.00	US PRESIDENT	MACBRIDE, ROGER	LIBERTARIAN
16	1976	ARIZONA	AZ	4	86	61.00	US PRESIDENT	MADDOX, LESTER	AMERICAN INDEPENDENT PARTY
17	1976	ARIZONA	AZ	4	86	61.00	US PRESIDENT	MCCARTHY, EUGENE ""GEN…	INDEPENDENT
18	1976	ARIZONA	AZ	4	86	61.00	US PRESIDENT	NULL	NULL
19	1976	ARKANSAS	AR	5	71	42.00	US PRESIDENT	CARTER, JIMMY	DEMOCRAT
20	1976	ARKANSAS	AR	5	71	42.00	US PRESIDENT	FORD, GERALD	REPUBLICAN
21	1976	ARKANSAS	AR	5	71	42.00	US PRESIDENT	MADDOX, LESTER	AMERICAN INDEPENDENT PARTY
22	1976	ARKANSAS	AR	5	71	42.00	US PRESIDENT	NULL	INDEPENDENT
23	1976	CALIFORNIA	CA	6	93	71.00	US PRESIDENT	CAMEJO, PETER	INDEPENDENT
24	1976	CALIFORNIA	CA	6	93	71.00	US PRESIDENT	CARTER, JIMMY	DEMOCRAT
25	1976	CALIFORNIA	CA	6	93	71.00	US PRESIDENT	FORD, GERALD	REPUBLICAN
26	1976	CALIFORNIA	CA	6	93	71.00	US PRESIDENT	HALL, GUS	INDEPENDENT
27	1976	CALIFORNIA	CA	6	93	71.00	US PRESIDENT	MACBRIDE, ROGER	INDEPENDENT
28	1976	CALIFORNIA	CA	6	93	71.00	US PRESIDENT	MADDOX, LESTER	AMERICAN INDEPENDENT PARTY

}

Data Dictionary

- `year`: An election year.
- `state`: A state where a vote was cast.
- `state_po`: Abbreviation of a state where a vote was cast.
- `state_fips`: FIPS code of a state where a vote was cast.
- `candidate`: Presidential candidate voted for in last_name, first_name format.
- `party_detailed`: The exact and specific political party a candidate belongs to.
- `writein`: Whether the type of vote cast was write in (true or false) .
- `candidatevotes`: Number of votes was cast for that specific candidate in that state for that election year.
- `totalvotes`: Total number of votes cast in that state for that election year.
- `party_simplified`: Simplified grouping of the political party a specific candidate belongs to: Democrat, Republican, Libertarian or other.

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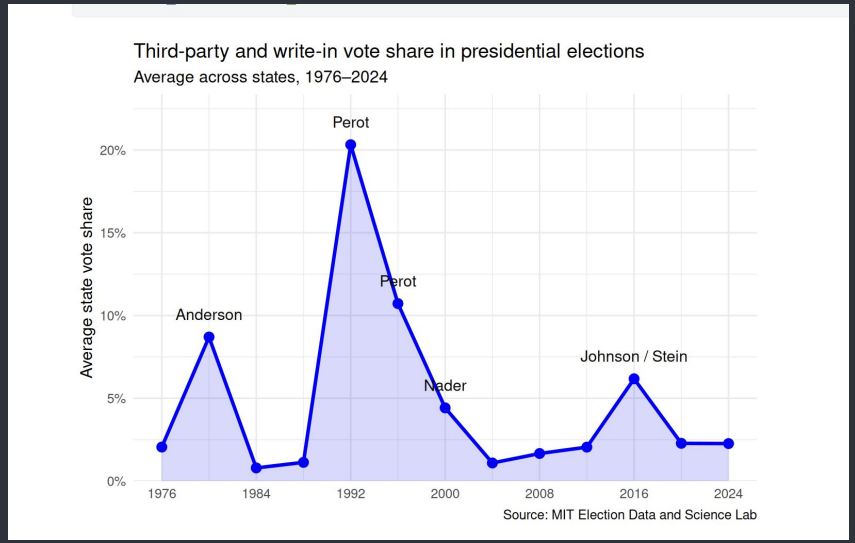
Highlights from EDA



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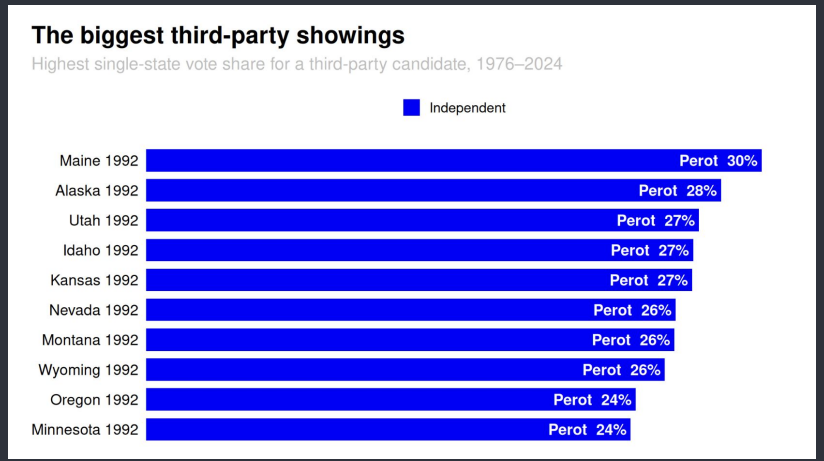
-Support fluctuates over time
-Highest average state share: 20.3% in 1992, during Perot's campaign
-Lowest was 0.8% in 1984
-Large temporary spikes do not mean sustained growth
- Jill Stein did better in 2016 than 2024

forbeginners.html

workshop.css

Ross Perot





-Perot has all 10 highest individual state level vote shares
-Indicates the power of money, grassroots campaigning
- Won no electoral votes (structural boundary)
- Self funding a campaign is really important

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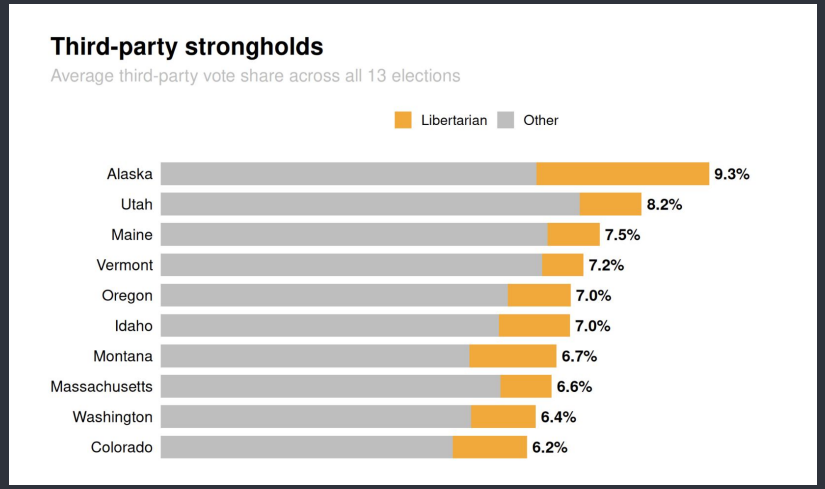
Programming Language

Geography and Individual States



- Political culture, candidate appeal, ballot access all potential explanations

- Lower population density/geographic isolation is a recurring theme

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Conclusions + Discussion + Critique

- Third party support comes in waves
  - Individual candidate vs. general attitude
- Third party support hasn't risen steadily
  - Large spikes but similar in 2024 vs 1976
- Influence of geography
  - Some states (Alaska, Utah, New England states) have more robust third party/indie infrastructures
- Indicates a general pattern of apathy towards third parties
- When both parties lean away from economic populism
- Limitations:
  - Variance between different elections (Perot vs other years)
  - Difficult to predict individual election cycles