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Ticket-Splitting in Montana Elections

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Hypothesis

I hypothesized that party affiliation would prove the most influential variable in determining if people split their ticket and that major parties would ticket-split less than independents or non-preference voters.

Background and Methods

Ticket-splitting is the act of supporting candidates from more than one party in a given election. The Carroll College Exit Poll allowed for analysis of ticket-splitting that occurred anywhere on the ballot as well as in national elections. It also allowed for the prevalence of ticket-splitting to be viewed for different political parties and for different demographic groups.

Carroll College 2014 Exit Poll

You are invited to participate in research designed by Carroll College students on local and national politics. Participation is voluntary and you can choose not to answer any question. The poll is anonymous. Your participation implies consent that your answers will be used for research purposes only. Thank you for your help!

- For whom did you vote today?
U.S. Senate
 Amanda Curtis, Democrat
 Steve Daines, Republican
 Roger Root, Libertarian
U.S. House of Representatives
 Mike Flores, Libertarian
 John Lewis, Democrat
 Ryan Zinke, Republican
Montana State Senate
 Democrat
 Republican
Montana State House of Representatives
 Democrat
 Republican
- How did you vote on Referendum No. 126, changing the deadline for voter registration in Montana?
 No, maintain the current deadline.
 Yes, change the registration deadline.
 Did not vote on Referendum No. 126.
- Is this the first time you have voted?
 No
 Yes
- No matter how you voted today, on most political matters do you consider yourself?
 Liberal
 Moderate
 Conservative

Do you have questions? Email Prof. Alex Street (astreet@carroll.edu) or call 406 447 4331.

Carroll College 2016 Exit Poll

You are invited to participate in research designed by Carroll College students on local and national politics. Participation is voluntary and you can choose not to answer any question. The poll is anonymous. Your participation implies consent that your answers will be used for research purposes only. Thank you for your help!

- For whom did you vote today?
U.S. President
 Hillary Clinton, Democrat
 Steve Daines, Republican
 Independent
 No preference
U.S. House of Representatives
 Denise Juneau, Democrat
 Ryan Zinke, Republican
Montana State Senate
 Democrat
 Republican
Montana State House of Representatives
 Democrat
 Republican
- Thinking of all the partisan races this year, did you only support a single party?
 Yes, only voted for Democrats
 Yes, only voted for Republicans
 No, voted for a mix of candidates
- No matter how you voted today, on most political matters do you consider yourself?
 Liberal
 Moderate
 Conservative
- Regardless of how you voted today, do you usually think of yourself as?
 Democrat
 Independent
 Republican
 No preference

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Carroll College 2018 Exit Poll

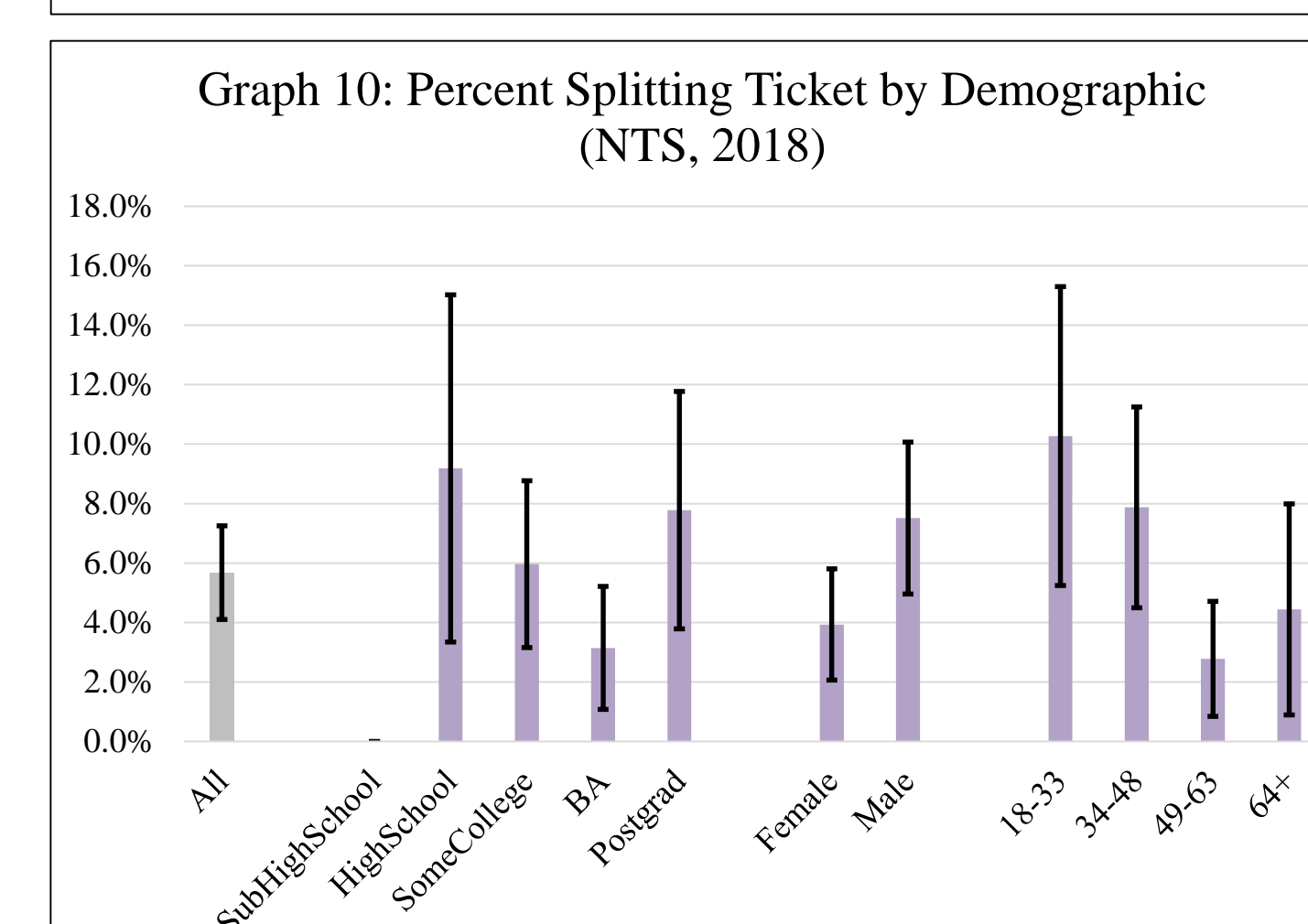
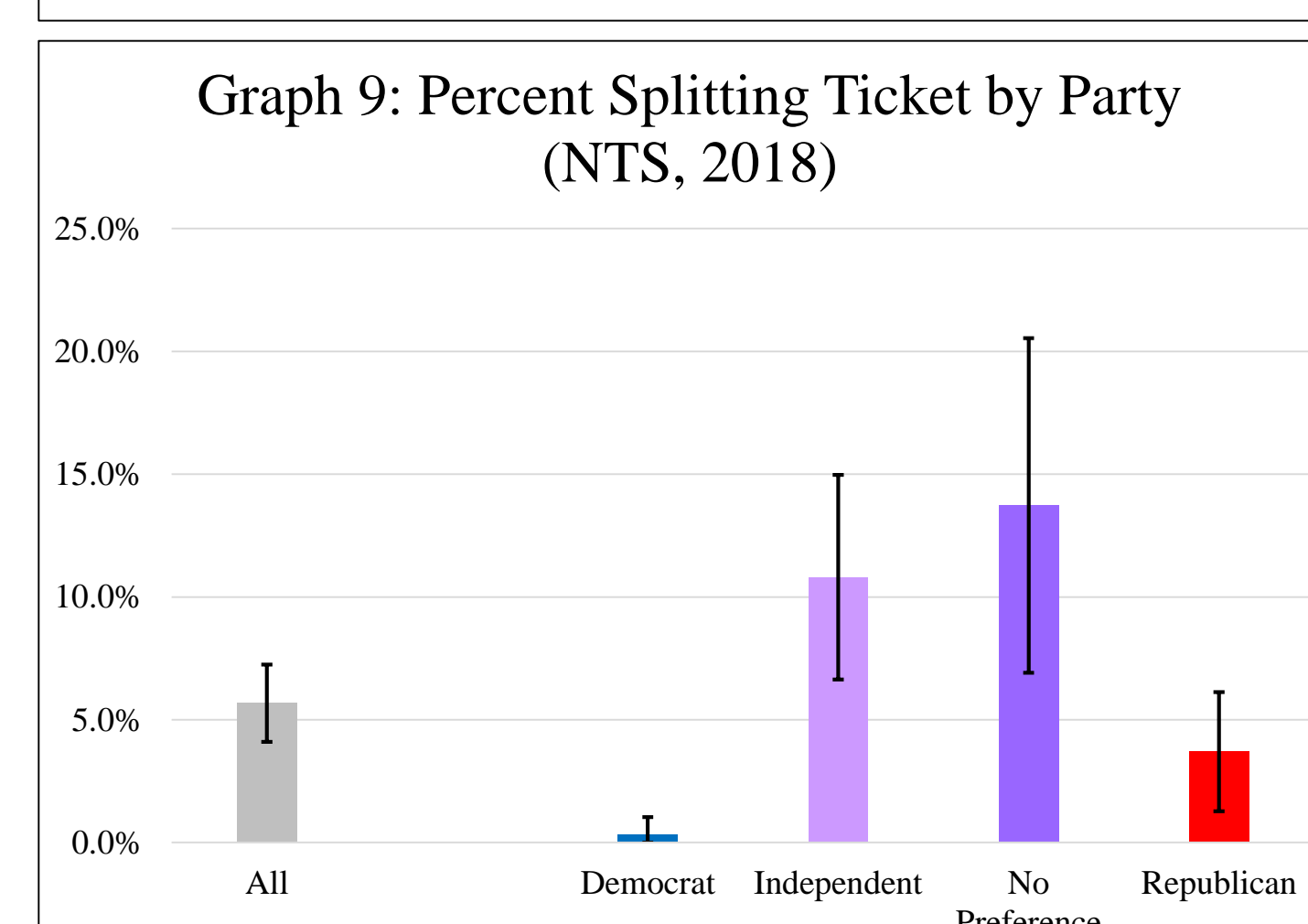
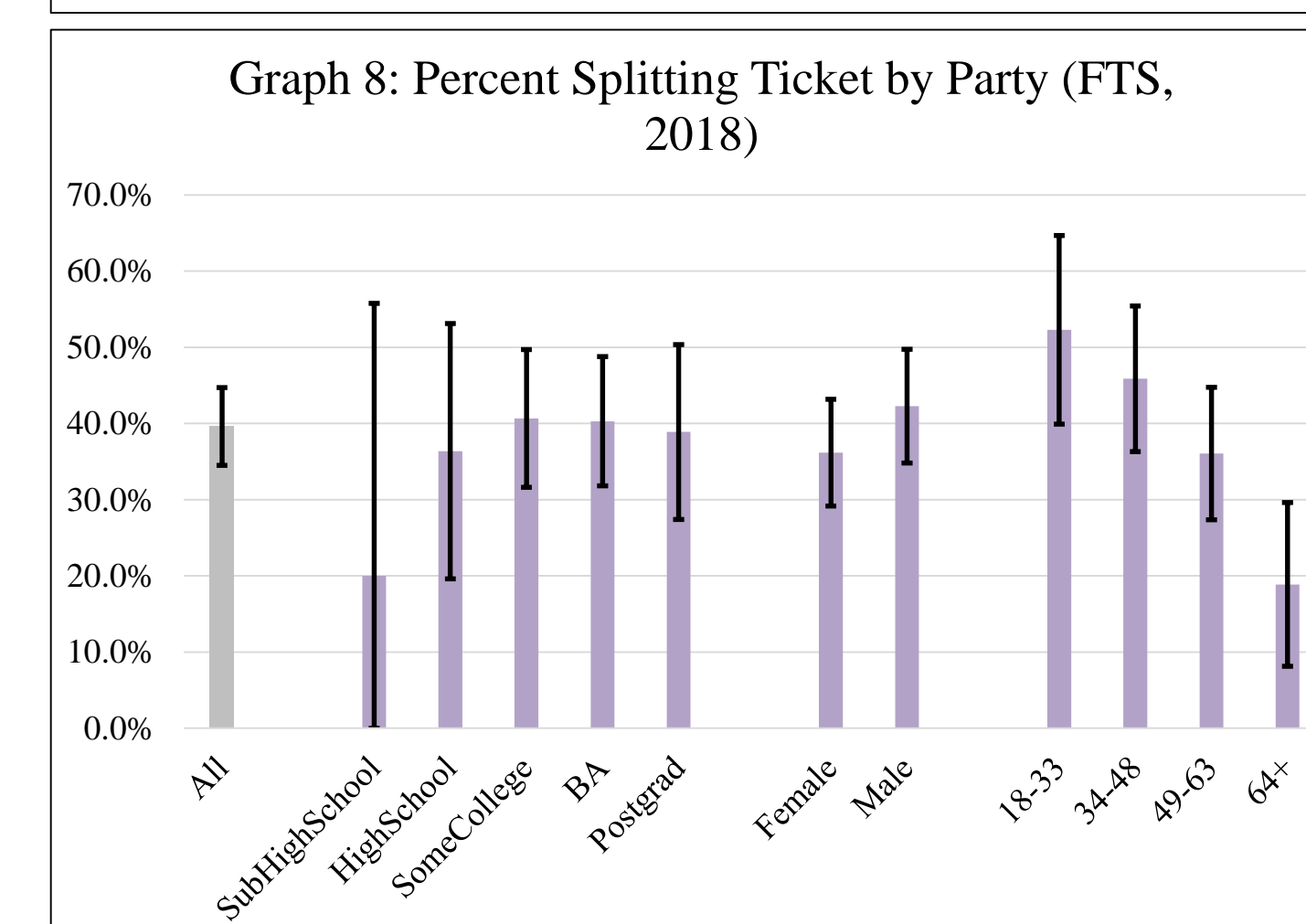
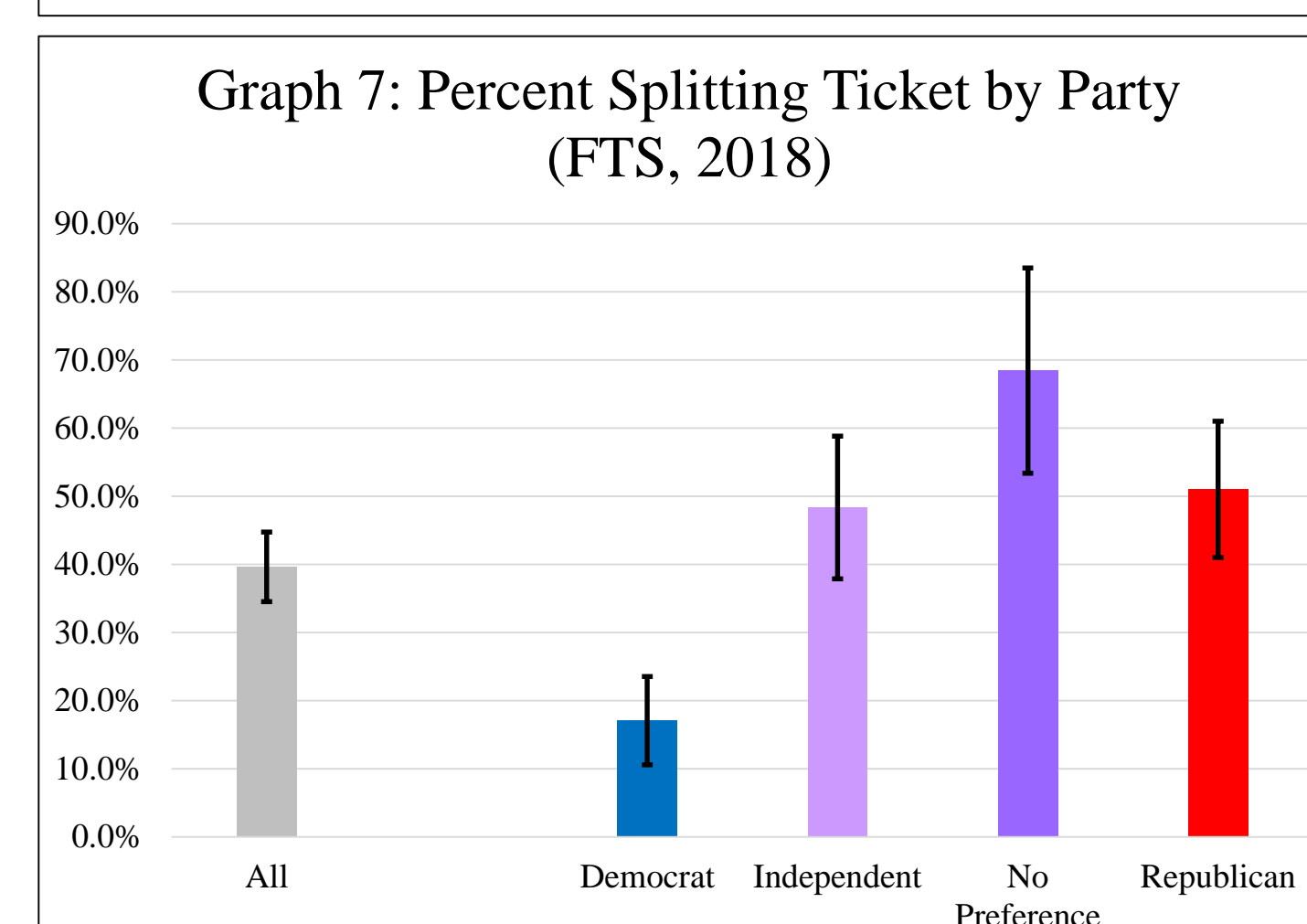
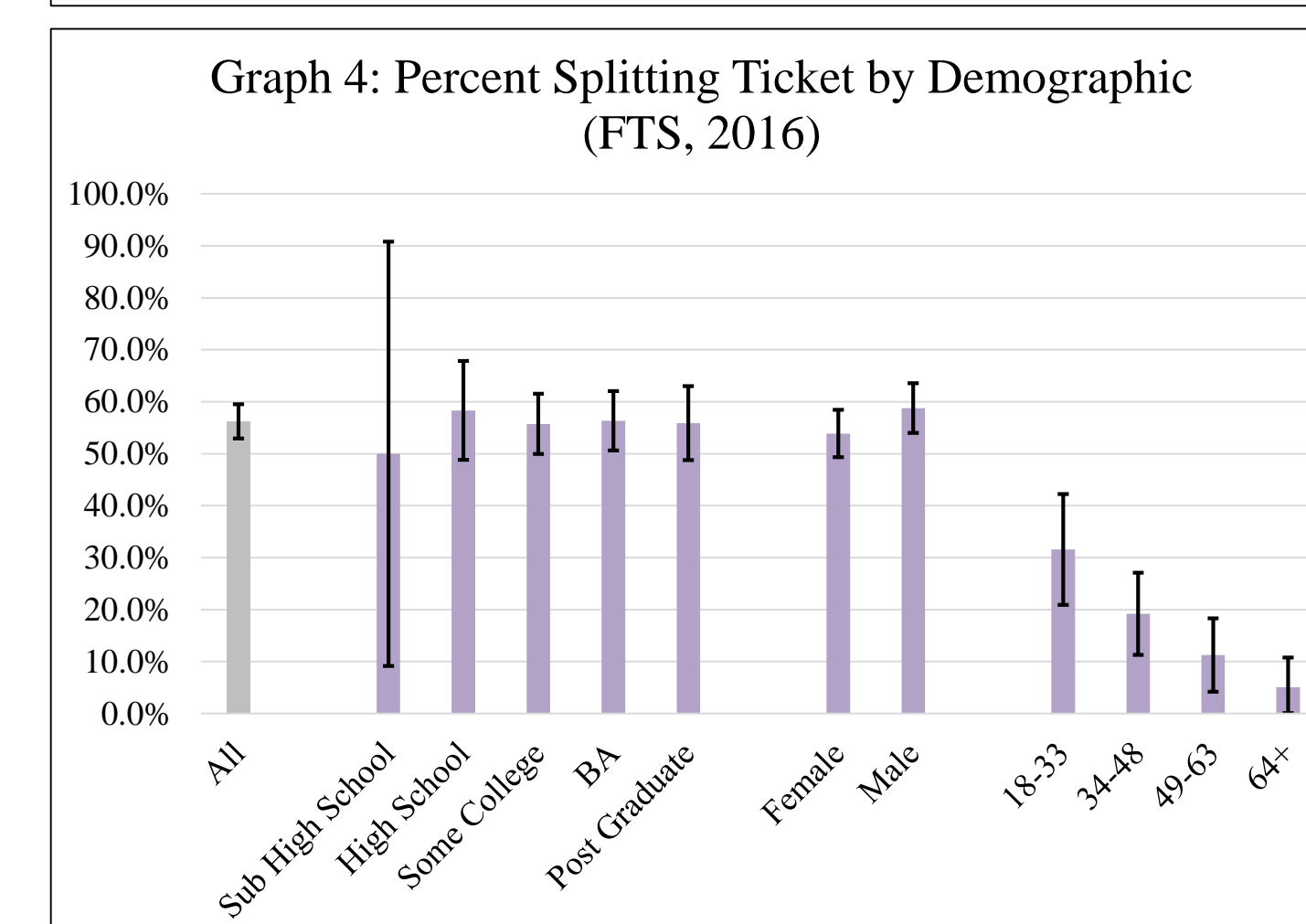
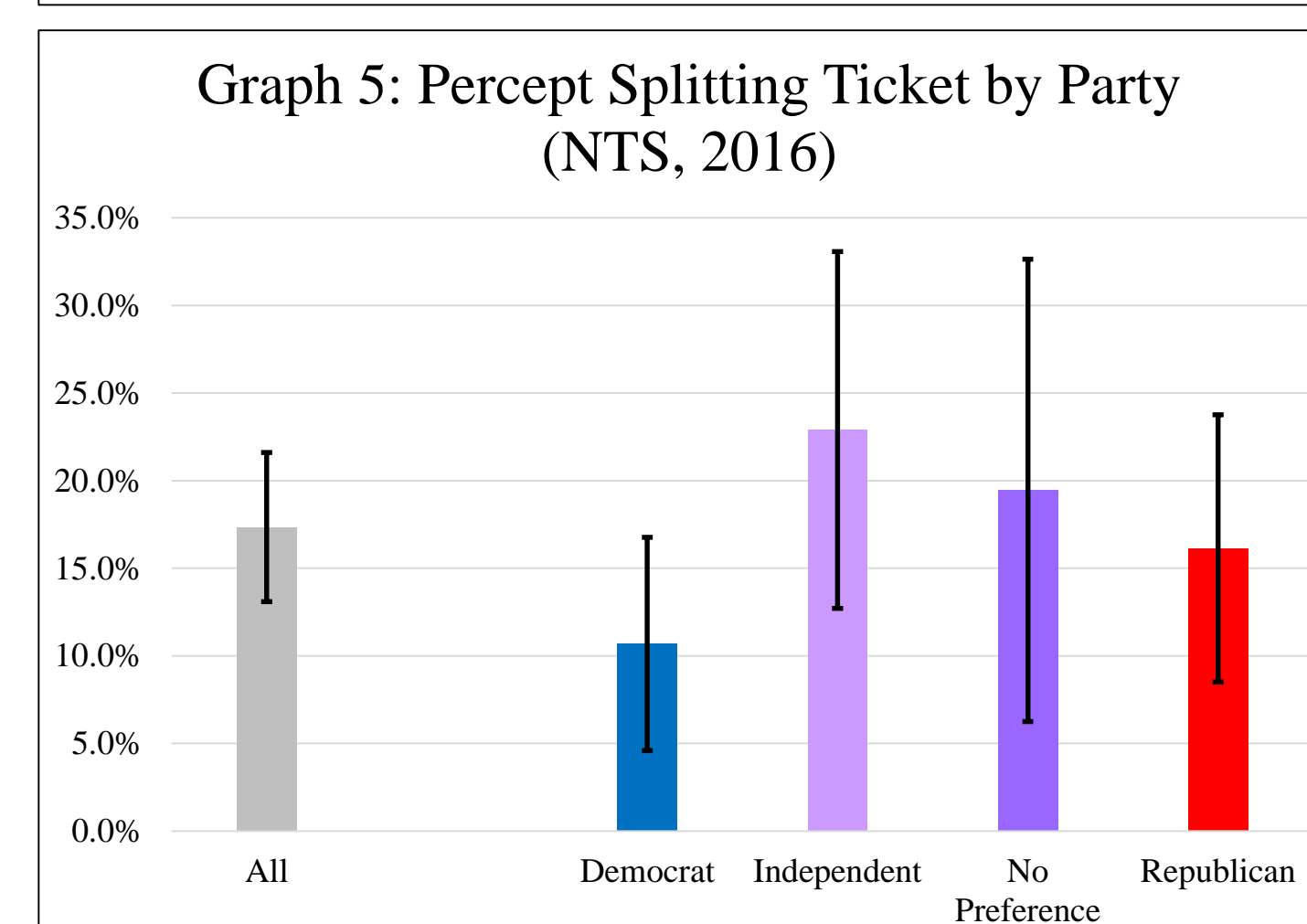
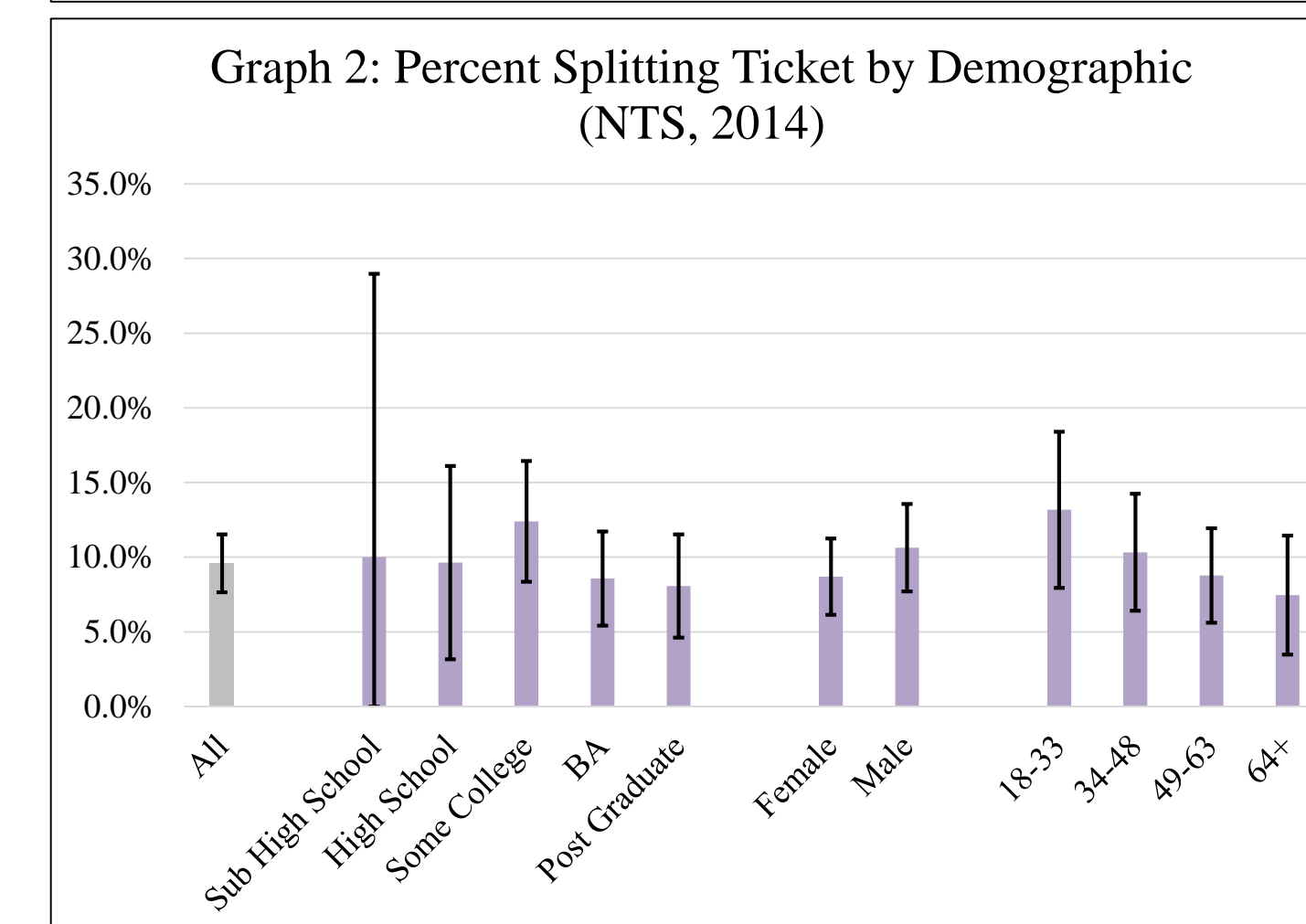
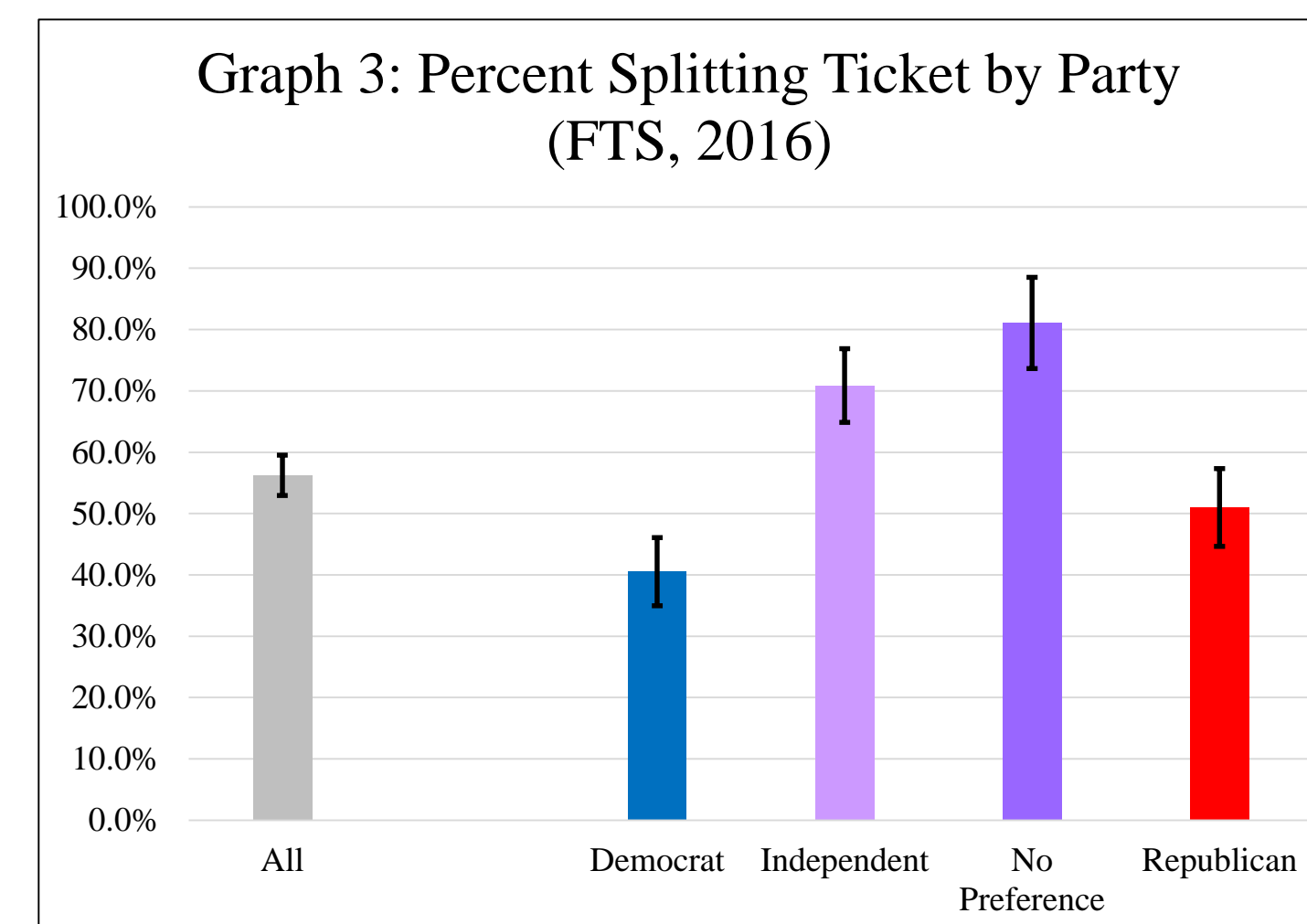
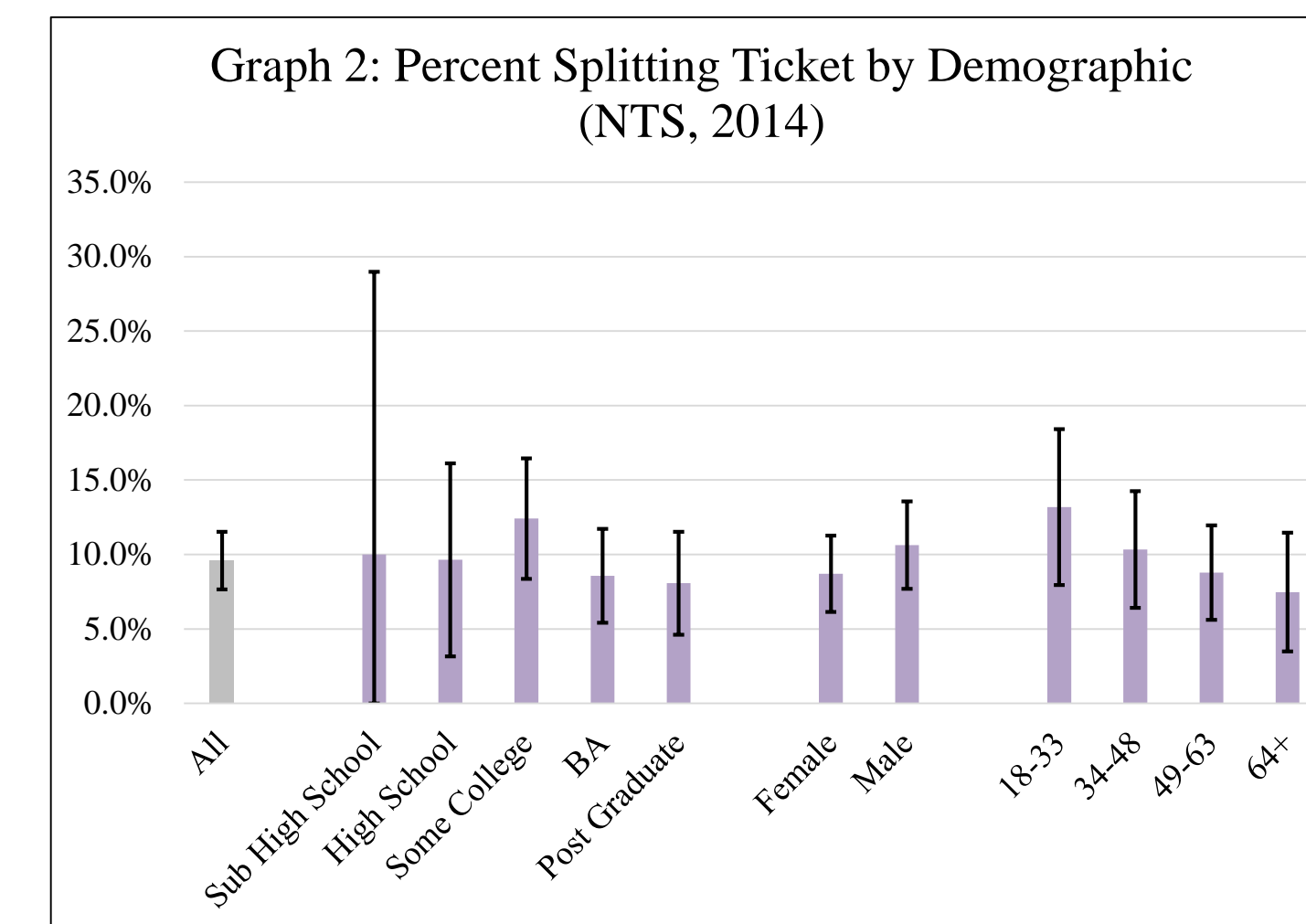
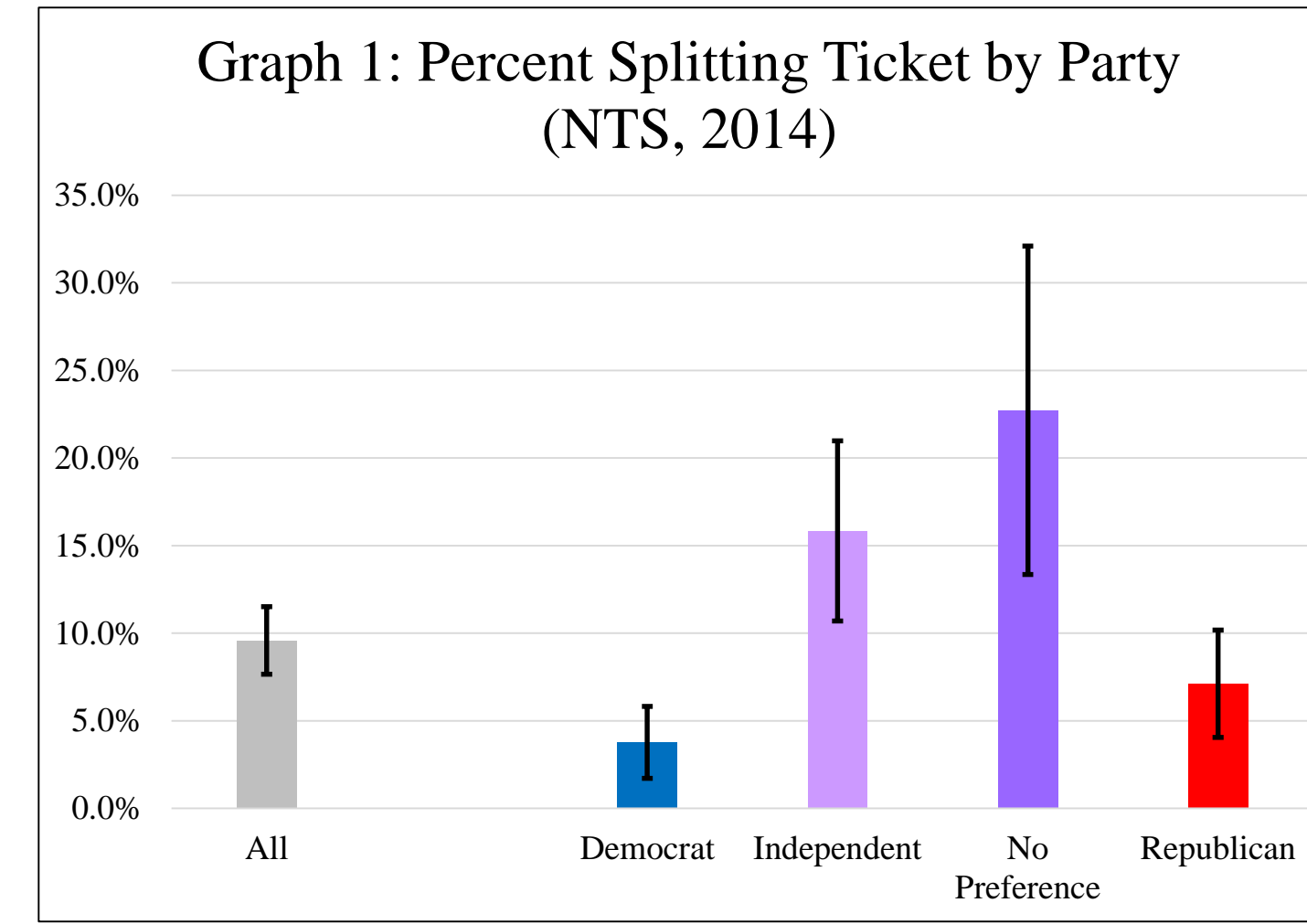
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- For whom did you vote today?
U.S. Senate
 Rick Brackenridge, Libertarian
 Matt Rosendale, Republican
 Jon Tester, Democrat
U.S. House of Representatives
 Greg Gianforte, Republican
 Elmer Strossman, Libertarian
 Kathleen Williams, Democrat
2. Thinking of all the partisan races this year, did you only support a single party?
 Yes, only voted for Democrats
 Yes, only voted for Republicans
 No, voted for a mix of candidates
3. No matter how you voted today, on most political matters do you consider yourself?
 Liberal
 Moderate
 Conservative
4. Regardless of how you voted today, do you usually think of yourself as?
 Democrat
 Independent
 Republican
 No preference
5. How much confidence do you have in the American people in making judgments about the issues facing our country?
 A great deal
 Quite a bit
 Only a little
 None at all
- How much of the time can you trust the federal government to do what is right?
 Just about always
 Most of the time
 Only some of the time
 Never
- How much of the time can you trust the media to report the news fairly?
 Just about always
 Most of the time
 Only some of the time
 Never
- Thinking about Congress today, should there be more women in Congress, or fewer, or should it stay about the same?
 Should be more women in Congress
 Should be fewer women in Congress
 This should stay about the same
- What is the highest level of education you have completed?
 Did not complete high school
 High school graduate/GED
 Some college/Associate's degree
 Bachelor's degree
 Post-graduate degree
- In what year were you born?
____ (year)
- Are you:
 Democrat
 Independent
 Republican
 No preference
- Are you:
 Female
 Male

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The 3 Versions of the Exit Poll used in this research. In 2016 and 2018, other versions of the Exit Poll existed with different questions, resulting in reduced sample sizes.

Results



Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Alex Street for his design and execution of the Carroll College Exit Poll and for statistical assistance. I would also like to thank Dr. Jeremy Johnson for providing valuable literature on ticket splitting. Finally, I would like to thank my classmates (of whom there is too many to list) for helping refine my poster, and Anastasia Vidger for supporting me throughout this project.

Limitations

- The Exit Poll lacked explicit definitions.
- The n value of each analysis varied greatly in each poll.
- Sufficient data to perform this analysis was only gathered in Lewis and Clark County.
- The Exit Poll is unable to assess the motives of respondents; even the most extensive analysis can only suggest correlations, and respondents would need to be explicitly asked why they voted how they did to ascertain motives.

Conclusion and Next Steps

My hypothesis was supported by my findings, albeit with important qualifications:

- Party considerations appear more important than demographic considerations in determining the likelihood of an individual ticket-splitting.
- Non-major parties split their ticket more than major parties in almost all cases, and frequently did so to a statistically-significant degree.
- When comparing the two major parties, Republicans consistently split their ticket more than Democrats.
- Relatively few people split their national ticket, while FTS enjoyed greater popularity.

In moving forward, I would:

- Consider additional demographic variables like income or urban-rural status.
- Attempt to conduct the Exit Poll in more counties.
- Using this information, develop an algorithm for predicting the likelihood of ticket-splitting occurring in elections in different counties.