



CALTECH/MIT VOTING TECHNOLOGY PROJECT

A multi-disciplinary, collaborative project of
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the Massachusetts Institute of Technology – Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

TITLE 2008 Survey of the Performance of American Elections

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2008 Survey of the Performance of American Elections

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Survey Background

- Gauging the quality of the voting experience
- Research design
 - 200 respondents contacted in every state, or 10,000 total
 - Survey in the field the week following Nov. 4
 - Pilot surveys conducted on in Nov. '07 and Super Tuesday '08
 - Parallel nationwide survey
 - Limited set of questions
 - 32,800 total respondents



Overall, the experience of voters on Election Day* was positive

- 90% said it was “very easy” to find their polling place
- 2% said they encountered a registration problem when they went to vote
- The average voter waited 15 minutes to vote
 - 63% said most of this time was waiting to check in
- 2% said they encountered voting equipment problems
- 82% said their polling place was run “very well”
- 67% said the performance of polls workers was “excellent”
- 70% said they were “very confident” that their vote was counted as cast

*63% of voters



Early voting* experience was very similar to that of Election Day

- 88% said it was “very easy” to find their polling place
- 2% said they encountered a registration problem when they went to vote
- The average voter waited 20 minutes to vote
 - 62% said most of the time was waiting to check in
- 2% said they encountered voting equipment problems
- 81% said their polling place was run “very well”
- 67% said the performance of polls workers was “excellent”
- 74% said they were “very confident” that their vote was counted as cast

*18% of voters



Absentee voters* also satisfied

- 2% said they encountered problems receiving their mail ballot
- 2% said they encountered problems marking their mail ballot
- 84% said they found the instructions easy to follow in marking their ballot
- 56% said they were “very confident” that their vote was counted as cast
- Of those who reported not voting, 2% reported a problem requesting, but not receiving, an absentee ballot.

*19% of voters

Voter identification presents issues

- Do voters have identification?
- How uniformly are voter identification laws implemented?

Almost all voters have identification

- 95% of all voters have a drivers license
 - 97% for Whites
 - 84% for Blacks
 - 90% for Hispanics
 - 83% have a drivers license that is unexpired, has the voter's name, and has the voter's current address
 - 86% for Whites
 - 66% for Blacks
 - 74% for Hispanics

 - 64% for ≤ 30 yrs old / 86% for > 30 yrs old
 - 70% for ≤ 5 yrs in current residence / 92% for > 5 yrs
-

Voters are asked for photo ID at varying rates on Election Day

- 16% of voters in the 23 “HAVA only” states say they were required to show a photo ID
- 80% of voters in the 3 “photo ID required” states say they were required to show a photo ID
- Racial differences in rate of being asked in “HAVA only” but not “photo ID required” states

	HAVA only	Required
Black	29%	79%
White	14%	79%

Lines a issue in 2008 election

- Lines longer for early voting (23 min.) than for Election Day voting (15 min.)
- Almost 2/3 of voters report that most of the wait was to check in, not to gain access to a machine or booth
- Lines longer for Blacks (27 min.) than for Whites (13 min.), Hispanics (13 min.), Asian Americans (10 min.) or Native Americans (9 min.) on Election Day
 - Racial differences consistent with 2006 CCES, Nov. '07, and Super Tuesday studies

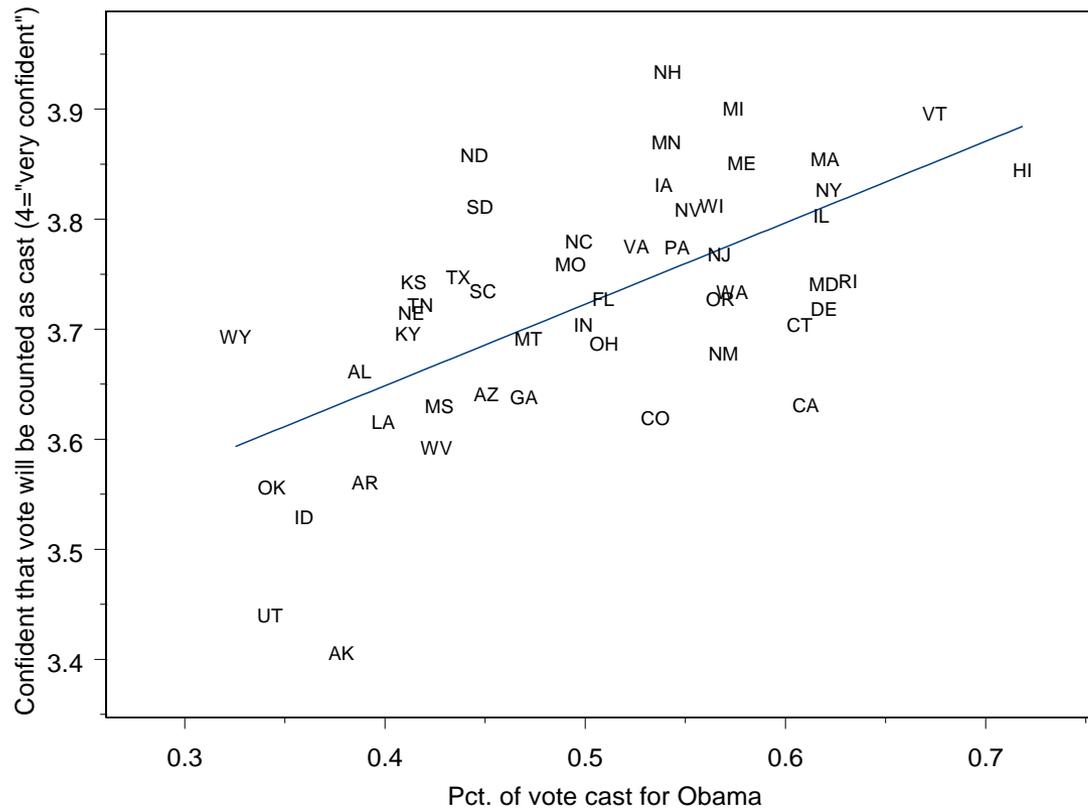


Confidence measures indicate lingering partisanship

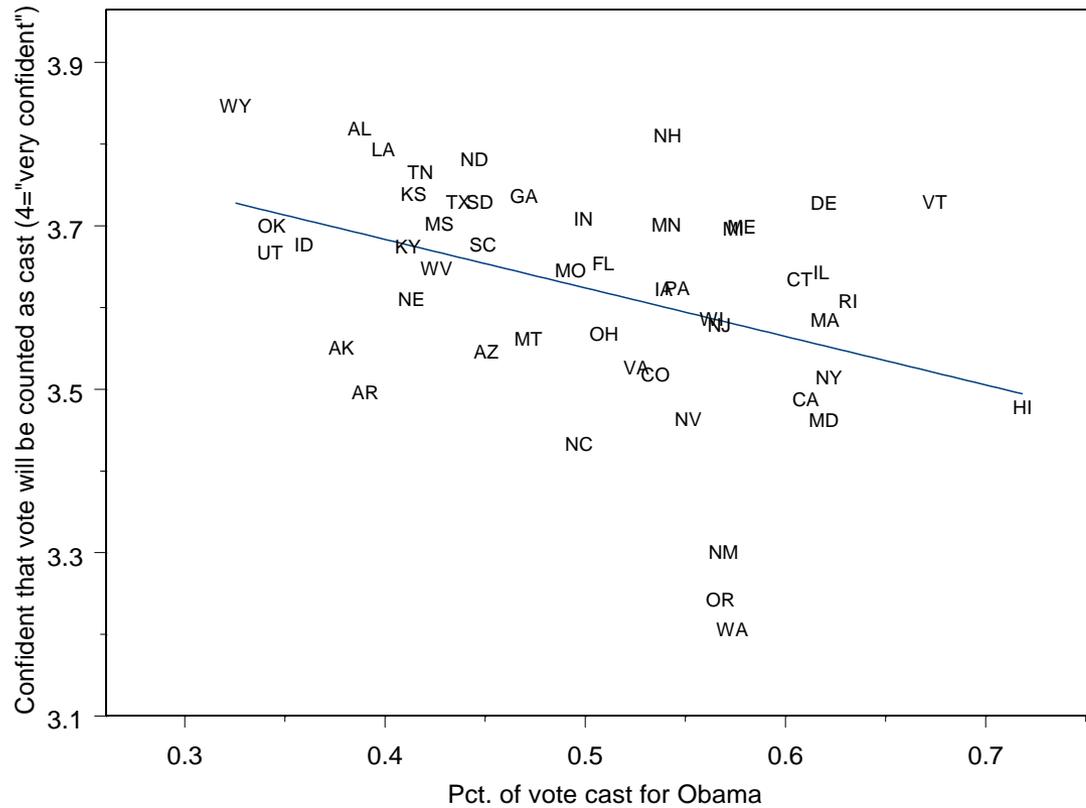
- 75% of Election Day, 73% of early voting, and 60% of absentee voters state they were “very confident” their vote would be counted as cast
 - Democrats more confident: 76%D vs. 67%R
 - Blacks and Hispanics more confident: 78%B vs. 76%H vs. 69%W
 - No relationship between type of voting machine used and confidence
- Confidence strongly correlated with partisanship of state
 - Democrats more confident in Democratic states
 - Republicans more confident in Republican states
 - Independents less confident in battleground state



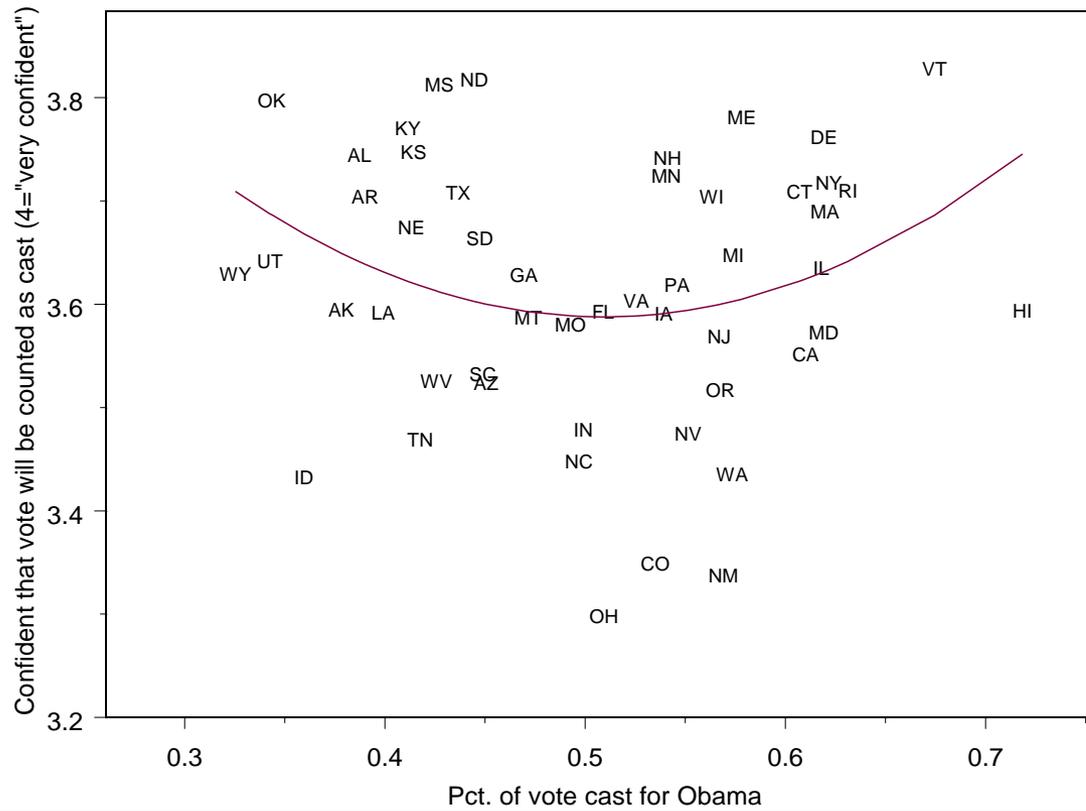
Democratic respondents



Republican respondents



Independent respondents



Reform

Measure	Pct. supporting
Require identification in order to vote	76%
Make election day a holiday	58%
Automatically register everyone to vote	50%
Move election day to weekend	43%
Allow registration at polls	42%
Absentee ballots via Internet	32%
Run all elections by mail	16%

Conclusion

- Substantive findings
 - Positive voting experience for most voters
 - Voter ID
 - Lines
 - Confidence
- More research is to be done
 - Final report posted at Caltech/MIT Voting Technology Project web site: vote.caltech.edu