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TITLE   **Electronic Elections in a Politicized Polity**

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Abstract

Since the 2000 presidential elections, the evolution of electronic technologies in American elections—from voting machines to computerized voter registries—has occurred within the context of a highly partisan, polarized, and politicized environment. The decision about the type of voting systems to use within a given state has become especially political and these debates have affected the confidence and attitudes of voters toward various voting technologies. In this paper, we consider the evolution of voter confidence over this period and the evolution of the political debate that relates to electronic voting. We note that confidence in voting systems is affected by several factors, including race, partisanship, voting for a winning candidate, and the mode of voting (i.e., voting in person of voting via absentee ballot). During this time, certain factors, such as partisanship, have changed in importance based on previous election outcomes.

Introduction

The study of confidence in the electoral process—especially the process of counting ballots—in the United States has become a major field of research since the disputed 2000 presidential election. In that election, the decision regarding who won the race for president between Al Gore and George Bush became a tangled legal issue, largely because of the difficulties associated with determining how to count and recount ballots in the State of Florida. The decision of the United States Supreme Court in *Bush v. Gore*[1] determined that recounts in the election would end, making George Bush the victor, but the controversies surrounding election administration and voting technologies continued. Throughout 2001 and 2002, several research groups and blue-ribbon commissions examined the elections in the United States and made recommendations that informed the passage of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002.[2] Given that the most visible problem from the 2000 presidential election was the issue of how to count ballots, it is not surprising that the centerpiece of HAVA was providing funding to states to purchase modern voting technologies, with the intent of solving the vote-counting problem through the acquisition and implementation of new voting systems.

However, the contentiousness of the 2000 election was not just the result of the debate over way votes were counted and the closeness of the election in the State of Florida. As many scholars have noted, the 2000 election occurred in a period when the American electorate had become increasingly polarized (e.g., Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008). The highly politically engaged are especially polarized and there is evidence of strong partisan polarization in America as well. Liberals and conservatives, and Democrats and Republicans, view the political world quite differently; their issue preferences are highly bifurcated across an array of policy issues. In addition, the electorate is becoming divided geographically, with more states becoming uncompetitive and relatively few states serving as battlegrounds for electoral competition at the presidential level

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[1] Bush v. Gore, 2000

[2] See, for example, Caltech/MIT Voting Technology Project, 2001 and Carter & Ford, 2002.

(Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; Bishop, 2008). These divisions in America have become much more

pronounced than they were in the 1960s, with polarization increasing throughout the 1970s, 1980s,

and 1990s.

One key issue for voting is how polarization and having a polarized electorate affects the

confidence of voter's in the voting process. Given the problems that existed in the 2000 election, it

is reasonable to ask whether the partisan polarization—combined with issues with election

administration—affects the willingness of losers to "consent" to the outcome of the election. The

question of consent among losers is critical for the legitimacy of election administration because,

although winners always find the election to have been fair, losers have to think and feel that the

process that resulted in their loss was fair (Anderson, Blais, Bowler, Donovan, & Listhaug, 2005).

This consent is needed not just from the candidates and parties; voter's themselves must be

confident that election administration is not being manipulated for partisan reasons.

Since 2004, there has been an effort by political scientists in the United States to measure

voter confidence in the electoral process. This effort has examined confidence generally in the

electoral process but also with specific methods of voting, such as electronic voting or voting with

machine-counted paper ballots. In this paper, we review the findings in this literature and present

new analyses that show how Americans remain divided in their confidence levels in the voting

process generally and with specific voting technologies. We discuss how a simple measure of

confidence can be used to evaluate the attitudes of voters and election officials in various aspects of

the electoral process. We then consider how voter confidence has changed over time in the

electoral process and how partisanship, ideology, and the voting technology used all affect the

confidence of individuals participating in the electoral process. Finally, we consider how the

American experience may be unique in some ways but not others regarding voter confidence.

Measuring Confidence in the Electoral Process

Although discussions of voter confidence have existed for some time—the term "confidence" was used in the report of the National Commission on Federal Election Reform[3]—the systematic measurement of voter confidence in the voting process has been a more recent phenomenon. In 2004, Alvarez and Hall conducted one of the first studies to use what has become a standard voter confidence question.[4] The question they used was, "How confident are you that your vote was [or will be] counted as intended in [the election]?" with the response options "very confident," "somewhat confident," "not too confident," or "not at all confident." As Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn (2008, 755) discuss, this measure "define[s] trust in the electoral process as the confidence that the voters have that their ballot was counted as intended." As Gronke and Hicks (2009) note, several scholars have used voter confidence as a metric for studying voter attitudes toward election reforms (e.g., Hall 2008) and Stewart (2009) has referred to this voter confidence metric as "a summary judgments of the voting experience."

Scholars have also broadened this concept in a small number of surveys to ask voters not just "how confident are you that *your vote* will be counted as intended" but also "how confident are you that *all votes in your county* will be counted as intended" and "how confident are you that *all votes in your state* will be counted as intended" (e.g., Atkeson, Alvarez, & Hall, 2009; Atkeson & Saunders, 2007). These broader measures are designed to determine if voters have different levels of confidence across varying levels of government—their vote, votes administered by a process in their county, and votes administered by various processes and various officials across the state—and various levels of abstraction in the process (your vote, votes in a county, votes in the state).

A key question that has emerged regarding the use of this metric is whether the metric is merely a reflection of the respondent's trust in government or the respondent's expectation of their

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[3] See Carter & Ford, 2002.

[4] See (Alvarez & Hall, 2004)

candidate winning the election. Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn (2008) make the claim that there is no *a priori* reason to think that vote confidence and trust in government are the same. They argue, "Voters not possess confidence in the voting technology used to cast a ballot but trust their elected officials completely. Alternatively, voters may believe that the electoral process is fair and accurate but simultaneously hold the belief that all politicians are crooks" (Alvarez, Hall, & Llewellyn, 2008, 755). They put the question of voter confidence within the literature on trust but note how the two concepts are different.

Recently, Atkeson, Alvarez, and Hall (2009) and Gronke and Hicks (2009) independently tested the validity of this construct, explicitly examining whether voter confidence and voter trust are truly distinct concepts. Atkeson, et al. (2009) compare three types of voter confidence— personal vote, the votes in a county, and votes in a state—with a measure of trust in government and a measure of political efficacy. They find that the confidence questions load differently in a principal-component analysis compared to the trust and efficacy questions; they are not part of the same dimension. In addition, trust, efficacy, and confidence have different correlation relationships; the confidence questions are highly inter-correlated but these questions in turn are not as correlated with either trust or efficacy. Importantly, when used as dependent variables in a regression model, different factors predict voter confidence when compared to either efficacy or trust. For the confidence questions, a voter's experience voting affects voter confidence but is unrelated to either trust in government or efficacy.

Gronke and Hicks (2009) use a different methodology to come to the same result. Specifically, they run a series of regression analyses to determine if voter confidence is explained by trust in government, confidence in social or political institutions, current economic-political factors, or by election administration experiential factors. They determine that, although trust in government and confidence in election officials do help to shape voter confidence, election experience is a strong predictor as well. If voter confidence were merely another measure of trust in

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government, these other factors would be washed out by the high correlation between trust and confidence. This adds weight to arguments that the voter confidence metric is a sound one to use as a "summary measure" for determining a voter's confidence in the electoral process, at least in the American context.

Experiential Influences on Voter Confidence

Research on voter confidence has generally focused on three sets of attributes that affect confidence in the voting process. First, there have been studies examining the way in which the voting experience—especially during in-person election-day voting—affects voter confidence (e.g., (Alvarez et al, 2009; Claassen, Magleby, Monson, & Patterson, 2008; Gronke and Hicks, 2009; Hall, 2009; Hall, Monson, & Patterson, Forthcoming). These studies have found that voter confidence is affected by voter experiences at the polls. Voter confidence is sensitive to the experience that voters have with their poll workers; poll workers that are not seen as competent can negatively affect voter confidence. This is not surprising, given the important role that poll workers play in ensuring that votes are counted and counted accurately. Figure 1 shows the linkage between poll worker confidence and voter confidence from the *2008 Survey of the Performance of American Elections* (Alvarez R. M. et al., 2009) for both in-person election day voting and in-person early voting.[5]

[Figure 1 here]

Second, there have been relatively consistent findings that voter confidence varies across modes of voting. This finding has been made by numerous scholars and the one consistency of these findings is that voter confidence is predicated on the mode by which voters cast their ballot

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[5] The *2008 Study of the Performance of American Elections* was a 50-state study conducted in the immediate aftermath of the 2008 presidential election. In the study, 200 registered voters in each of the 50 states—10,000 individuals total—were surveyed by Polimetrix in an online survey. This study was funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, which is not responsible for any interpretations of these data. A full methodology of the study can be found in Alvarez et al., 2009.

(e.g., Alvarez & Hall, 2004; Alvarez & Hall, 2008a; Alvarez, Hall, & Llewellyn, 2008; Alvarez, Hall, & Llewellyn, 2009; Atkeson & Saunders, 2007; Atkeson, Alvarez, & Hall, 2007; Hall, 2009; Stewart III, 2009; Alvarez, et al., 2009). In the American context, there are three modes by which voters can cast their ballots, although these laws do vary by state (Alvarez et al, 2009); voters can cast a ballot (1) in person in a polling place on election day, (2) in person in a polling place during a period prior to election day (often the two-weeks prior) in an "early voting" location, or (3) remotely, using a paper ballot that is mailed back to their election office (absentee or postal voting).

The research on voter confidence shows that voters who cast ballots using absentee voting are much less confident than voters who vote in-person, either early or on election day. Figure 2 shows the confidence of voters across various vote modes using data from the *2008 Survey of the Performance of American Elections* (Alvarez et al, 2009). These data illustrate the large gap in confidence between in-person and absentee voters. Absentee voters have many potential reasons for being less confident that their vote will be counted accurately, which may arise largely because these voters are less confident that their vote will be counted at all. In absentee voting, voters typically surrender their ballots to a third party—a postal service—and typically have to guess as to whether their ballot was received in the time frame required for ballots to be counted. As Alvarez, Hall, and Sinclair (2008) found, these concerns are well founded; a small but significant percentage of ballots are rejected because they are received at the local election office after the deadline for including such ballots in the vote count. Even among ballots that were received in a timely manner, another cluster of ballots contains errors that result in the ballots being disqualified and not included in the ballots counted. Even after this hurdle is eclipsed, the vote on the ballot may still have an error that results in the vote not being counted for a given race.

[Figure 2 here]

Finally, there has been research on voter confidence and how it is related to the voting technology the individual used to cast her ballot (e.g., Alvarez & Hall, 2004; Alvarez, Hall, &

Llewellyn, 2008; Alvarez & Hall, 2008a; Atkeson & Saunders, 2007; Herrnson, Niemi, Hanmer, Bederson, Conrad, & Traugott, 2008 (Stewart III, 2009). In these studies, the primary analysis has been whether voting technologies affect voter confidence. The findings of these studies have been relatively consistent; voters using DREs tend to be less confident that voters who vote on paper ballots. For example, Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn (2008) found that voting on a DRE lowered the predicted probability that an individual would have their vote counted accurately by 16 percentage points compared to a voter who voted using a paper ballot. Interestingly, this decline in confidence is the same as the decline in confidence for individuals who vote absentee. The confidence was even lower if an individual had low levels of trust in electronic voting generally.

In his study of the 2008 election, Stewart (2009) extended the work of Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn to determine if their results held in the 2008 election. Using a variety of statistical analyses, including ordered probit and ordinary least squares regressions (with state fixed effects and without), he found that voting technology was an important part of the confidence equation. Specifically, voters who cast ballots using electronic voting technologies were less confident than voters who cast ballots using optical scan voting. And, important for the discussion of voter confidence and polarization in the next section, Stewart also found that liberal voters who used DREs were much less confident than were other voters who used DREs. In fact, conservative voters who use DREs are especially confident that their vote is counted accurately.

Voter Confidence and Political Polarization

The fact that there are variations in confidence across voting technologies and voting modes—early , absentee, and election day—leads to questions regarding the political and ideological factors that also may affect voter confidence. There is a strong rationale for thinking that liberals and Democrats would be less confident overall compared to conservatives and Republicans, as well as thinking that liberals and Democrats would be less confident in electronic voting. The issue of overall confidence in this political and ideological context can be explained as resulting from two factors. First,

Democrats were on the losing end of the 2000, 2002, and 2004 elections—elections that were

generally very close and very polarizing. The close and controversial aspects of the 2000 election in

Florida and the 2004 presidential election in Ohio—where both Secretaries of State were

Republicans who had endorsed President Bush—led many Democrats to view these election as

being one where partisan decision making had made the playing field unfair (Alvarez and Hall 2008).

Second, there were linkages made between the outcomes of these elections and the use of

electronic voting. The concerns about electronic voting arose because of research by Kohno,

Stubblefield, Rubin, and Wallach (2004), which found problems associated with the Diebold touch

screen direct recording electronic (DRE) voting machines that were used in several states, including

Georgia and Maryland. These technical concerns became and remain a contentious source of

debate, which centers primarily on whether DREs can be secured using standard methods for

securing election materials through chain of custody procedures (Alvarez & Hall, 2008b).

These technical concerns became politicized when various advocates attempted to make

links between electronic voting and pro-Republican election outcomes, starting with claims that the

election in the state of Georgia in 2002 was potentially fraudulent. As Alvarez and Katz (2008) note,

> The allegations and concerns about the potential for election fraud in the trial use of
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> these "touchscreen" voting systems in Georgia's 2002 election only worsened when
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> the chairman and chief executive of Diebold, Inc., the corporation that produced the
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> "touchscreen" voting machines used in Georgia was quoted in a Republican
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> fundraising letter that he was "committed to helping Ohio deliver its electoral votes
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> to the president next year".[6]

Alvarez and Katz (2008) review the claims of irregular outcomes in the 2002 senatorial and

gubernatorial elections in Georgia—which introduced DREs statewide the same year—and use

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[6] Schwartz, John. 2004. ``Executive Calls Vote-Machine Letter an Error.'' New York Times, Section A, Column 6, page 19, May 12.

statistical analyses to refute these claims of fraud associated with electronic voting. However, questions continued to be raised about the accuracy and validity of elections conducted using DREs through the 2006 elections, as various issues have come up in jurisdictions that use electronic voting. Ironically, the same polarization has not occurred with similar problems have occurred with electronically counted paper ballots (Alvarez & Hall, 2008a). The debate over electronic voting has also failed to consider the important issue of usability and effective interaction between the voter and the voting technology, the issue that was the original concern of reformers after the 2000 presidential election. Excellent work in this area has been done by Herrnson, Niemi, Hanmer, Bederson, Conrad, & Traugott (2008), examining the usability of various voting equipment and the evaluation that voters have of these technologies. These data show that voters have varying attitudes toward specific voting technologies and that it is incorrect to view all electronic voting as being the same. Voters differentiate between various types of DREs and between DREs and paper ballots in ways that are much more subtle than would normally be thought.

We see evidence of the difference in attitudes toward electronic voting among political partisans in survey data where voters are asked the following: "I'm going to read you some statements about electronic voting and want to know whether you agree or disagree with each statement, or if you have no opinion. 'Electronic voting systems increase the potential for fraud.'"[7] Figure 3 shows data for this question from surveys conducted August 25 - 29, 2004, March 9 - 15, 2005, and October 26 - October 31, 2006 by International Communications Research. The top third of the figure shows the results from the August 2004 wave and the middle third shows the results from the March 2005 wave. In both cases, we see that Democrats are more likely to think that electronic voting increases the potential for fraud compared to Republicans and that the Democrat/Republican gap on this issue widens from six percentage points before the 2004 election to 13 points after the 2004 election. This widening gap comes from Democrats becoming more sure

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[7] A detailed discussion of these survey data and the methodology for their collection can be found in Alvarez and Hall 2008a and Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn 2008.

that electronic voting increases the potential for fraud; the attitudes of Republicans stays the same on the agree side of the question but five percentage points more Republicans are disagree with this statement between the three surveys.[8] The data from the 2006 wave is shown in the bottom third of the figure; it closely mirrors the 2005 survey data and suggests a relative stability in attitudes about electronic voting and the likelihood of it increasing the potential for fraud during this period.

[Figure 3 here]

There are also differences between Democrats and Republicans in their confidence that their vote will be counted accurately. If we look at data from before the 2006 election in the three waves of surveys, we see that there are marked differences between Democrats and Republicans who are very confident—Republicans are much more confident than Democrats are that their votes will be accurately counted. Prior to the 2006 election, we see that, even combining the very confident and somewhat confident categories for Democrats, more Republicans are very confident than Democrats are very or somewhat confident.

[Figure 4 here]

If we consider the context of the 2000 and 2004 elections—where Democrats lost close elections for the presidency and suffered losses in the Senate in 2002—it is not surprising that Democrats expressed little confidence in the electoral process. For many, it was likely easier to blame the electoral process than blame voters and the candidates for these losses. However, in 2006 and 2008, the Democrats were on the winning side of the elections. In 2006, Democrats nationally recaptured control of the Congress and, in 2008, they recaptured control of the Presidency. So how did these wins affect voter confidence?

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[8] The survey marginals presented in Figure 3 do not show the "don't know/no response" category. In the first survey, 4.6 percent of Republicans answered, "don't know" compared to 1.6 percent of Democrats. In the second wave, Republicans and Democrats were almost equal in this category (1.9 percent Republicans, 2.3 percent Democrats).

We can examine this by using data from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), which is a national survey conducted by Polimetrix in which individuals were surveyed before and after the 2006 congressional elections and the 2008 presidential elections.[9] Before the election, individuals were asked their confidence that their vote **would be** counted accurately and after the election, they were asked their confidence that their vote **was** counted accurately. Figure 6 shows the pre- and post-election confidence for Democrats and Republicans after each of these elections. In 2006, we see that the percentage of Democrats who were very confident doubled between the pre- and post-election surveys and the percentages of Democrats who stated being not too confident or not at all confident declined by half as well. Republicans—who were much more confident to begin with—saw little change in their confidence in the pre- to post-election surveys. In 2008, we see a similar pattern; Republicans have a relatively stable level of confidence between the pre- and post-election surveys and Democrats have a sharp increase in the percentage reporting being very confident in the post-election survey compared to the pre-election survey.

[Figure 6 about here]

As Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn (2009a, 2009b) have argued, this result can be viewed as a form of "winner's effect" that is conditional on an election outcome being different from one of the parties expected. In the case of the 2006 and 2008 elections, Republicans expressed relatively high levels of confidence in the system before the election but were not surprised by losing, given the level of polling on these elections and the amount of conservative punditry that had predicted— even welcomed the idea of—Republican losses. Democrats, on the other hand, had a more "believe it when I see it" attitude, which led them to have lower baseline levels of confidence pre-election and a relatively strong surge in overall confidence after the election.

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[9] For more information about the survey and its methodology, see
http://web.mit.edu/polisci/portl/cces/index.html (last accessed June 1, 2009).

In their work on a winner's effect in the 2006 elections, Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn (2009a) found that, in the pre-election voter confidence model, Democratic voters, and Independent voters, had significantly lower levels of confidence compared to Republicans. Specifically, the first differences in an ordered logit model show that "hypothetically changing the voter's party identification from Republican to Independent decreases the likelihood of a very confident response by 21 percentage points and from Republican to Democrat lowers confidence by 28 percentage points." Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn (2009a) also found that individuals who lived in an area that the respondent felt was not dominated by one political party was more confident, pre-electoral confidence may be increased through a belief in the existence of a politically balanced or non-partisan local government.

By contrast, they found that post-election voter confidence was driven by both partisan and election administration factors. There was a winner's effect—Democrats did have a marked increase in confidence after the election. In addition, voters who think that there is congruence between their party identification and the party that controls the local government are significantly more likely to be confident compared to voters who have incongruence. This finding supports previous research by Atkeson and Saunders (2007) regarding the link between confidence and local government politics. The post-election voter confidence was also affected by the voting technology the voter used. Specifically, voters who used electronic voting were significant less confident than were voters who cast ballots using paper ballots. The negative effects of electronic voting, however, were made up for if voters voted on an electronic voting machine that had a paper audit trail (PAT) that allowed the voter to review a printed copy of their ballot before casting their electronic vote. In fact, Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn (2009a) found that voting on an electronic voting machine with a PAT made voters 14 percentage points more likely to be very confident compared to paper ballot voters.

Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn (2009b) have also examined voter confidence in partisan primary elections, specifically the "Super Tuesday" presidential primaries held on February 5, 2008. These primary elections are interesting because they bring out the most committed partisan voters, who may have different views about the voting process compared to more casual voters. However, they find that the same factors that have been identified previously—a partisan difference in confidence between Democrats and Republicans (Republican primary voters have a higher base level of confidence compared to Democrats), lower confidence among absentee voters, and a "winner's effect" (voters in a primary who voted for a winner are more confident than those who voted for a loser)—all are significant in primary elections as well.

Reforms and Voting Technology: Reforms in a Polarized Electorate

The partisan differences that exist in voting technology in the United States may continue into the future, given the polarized views of Americans and the fact that Americans are "well sorted" both ideologically and geographically (e.g., Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; Bishop, 2008). This sorting makes politics in the United States self-reinforcing; individuals tend to be involved in self-referential worlds, interacting primarily with individuals who share their views. The debate over election fraud in the United States, for example, has a strong partisan bent as do debates over making voter registration and voting easier (e.g., Alvarez, et al., 2009; Alvarez, Hall, & Hyde, 2008). Given this partisan dynamic, how does the future debate over electronic voting look going into the future?

We can begin to see the potential future debate over electronic voting in recent survey data that asked 32,800 individuals who participated in the 2008 CCES survey conducted by Polimetrix. The survey asked individuals the following question: "States have tried many new ways to run elections in recent years. Do you support or oppose any of the following ways of voting or conducting elections in your state?" One reform the individuals were asked about was "Allow absentee voting over the Internet." Respondents were given the following response options:

"Support," "Oppose," and "Not Sure."[10] Given the movement toward Internet voting that is currently either ongoing or under consideration across western countries, it is interesting to consider the attitudes of Americans toward these reforms and how the partisan nature of the debate over this reform might shape up.[11]

In Figure 6, we see that overall support for Internet voting in the United States is not tremendously high; 31.0 percent support Internet voting, 46.9 percent oppose this reform, and 22.1 percent are undecided. However, there are clear differences in attitudes between Democrats, Republicans, and Independents and between younger and older voters on this issue. First, Republicans are much more opposed to Internet voting than are Democrats. Only 20 percent of Republicans support the idea of Internet voting and 65.2 percent of Republicans oppose it. By contrast, Democrats have a more diverse set of viewpoints and are more undecided on it; 37.4 percent of Democrats support Internet voting and a roughly equal percentage (38.7 percent) of Democrats oppose it. In addition, almost 24 percent of Democrats are undecided about Internet voting compared to only 14.9 percent of Democrats. There are also differences in attitudes toward these reforms vary across age cohorts as well. Younger individuals have more option views toward Internet voting than do older individuals, who are more negatively inclined toward this reform.

[Figure 6 here]

These partisan differences are not surprising, given that Democrats have used Internet voting in primary elections more than have Republicans, including the 2000 Arizona Democratic Presidential primary elections, the 2004 Michigan Presidential caucus, and the 2008 Presidential primary held by overseas voters. In addition, work internationally has shown differences in attitudes

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[10] Individuals could also skip the question. There were 26,066 valid responses to the survey question. The data in Figure 7 have 26,066 as the total number of cases analyzed, except for the partisan question, where individuals who did not state a party identification were excluded. For that table, 23,330 is the denominator.

[11] For a review of these reforms, see Alvarez and Hall, 2004; 2008a; McNeal & Tolbert, 2004; Trechsel & Mendez, 2005; Trechsel, Schwerdt, Breuer, Alvarez, & Hall, 2007.

and in use of Internet voting, especially in Estonia, across age groups. The key question is whether

this reform will become one that has a partisan component, like the debate over electronic voting

does in the United States, or whether Internet voting will be a reform that is debated without

partisan suspicions.

Conclusions and Implications

In the United States, the 2000 election raised critical questions about the performance of the

nation's voting system and these questions have continued to resonate through the polity. Most

troubling, they are creating questions among some voters about the security and accuracy of various

voting technologies. These concerns have polarized characteristics in some cases, especially in

regards to voting modes—voters tend to be less confident in by-mail voting compared to in-person

voting—and across voting technologies, with liberals and Democrats less confident in DREs

compared to conservatives and Republicans. In controversial elections, such as in 2000, 2002, 2004,

and in certain specific races in 2006, voting technology has been the focus of media and political

scrutiny, used to explain election losses and to question the voting process.

In the United States, one reason why confidence is so important is that losers are just that,

losers. There is no proportional representation in Congress or in the Executive, so voting for a losing

candidate can mean that your preferences will not be represented in the political debate. Obviously,

there are people who vote for losing candidates but the party they support may control the

Congress or one chamber therein. However, in proportional systems, a voter's party can finish third

or fourth and still get a plum portfolio in a coalition government. In the American context, losing can

be a more bitter experience.

As electronic voting technology use expands, debates over its efficacy have expanded as

well. The Dutch experience with electronic voting is a case in point, where electronic voting

technologies came under sharp scrutiny and were eventually removed from use (Loeber, 2008). If

such debates become politicized, they can undermine trust and confidence in the voting process. As

advocates and politicians link to address concerns about certain voting technologies, the pro and con

sides of these debates can take on partisan dimensions, with one party or set of parties associated

with liking or disliking one voting technology or mode of voting over another. In the American

context, such linkage has occurred with electronic voting, as Democrats and liberals associate DREs

with pro-Republican interests. Other countries (e.g., Estonia) have much clearer core ideals about

the efficacy of electronic voting and these core ideals make confidence in the system higher

(Trechsel, Schwerdt, Breuer, Alvarez, & Hall, 2007). The American example is a cautionary one;

when voting technologies are politicized, they can undermine confidence in the voting process.

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Figure 1: Confidence and Poll Workers

	In Person Election Day				In Person Early			
	Not Confident	Not too Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Not Confident	Not too Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident
Excellent Rating	1.10%	2.28%	14.91%	81.72%	1.33%	1.86%	16.65%	80.16%
Good, Fair, Poor Rating	3.69%	4.73%	32.25%	59.33%	2.31%	4.41%	37.18%	56.09%

20
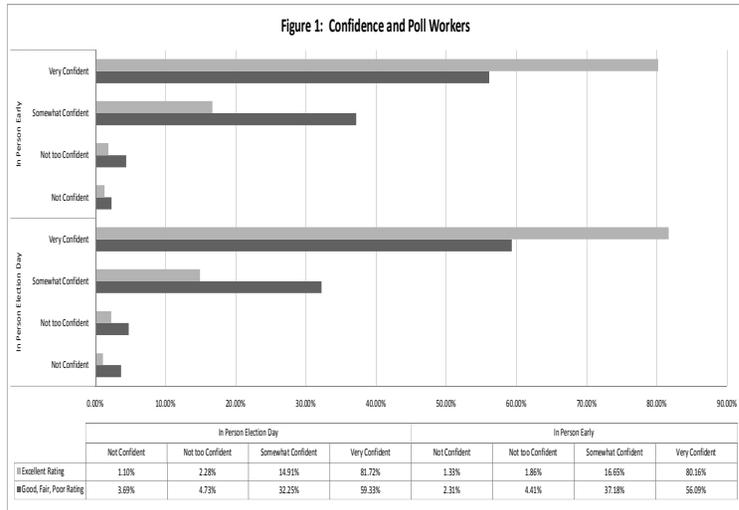
Figure 2: Confidence by Vote Mode
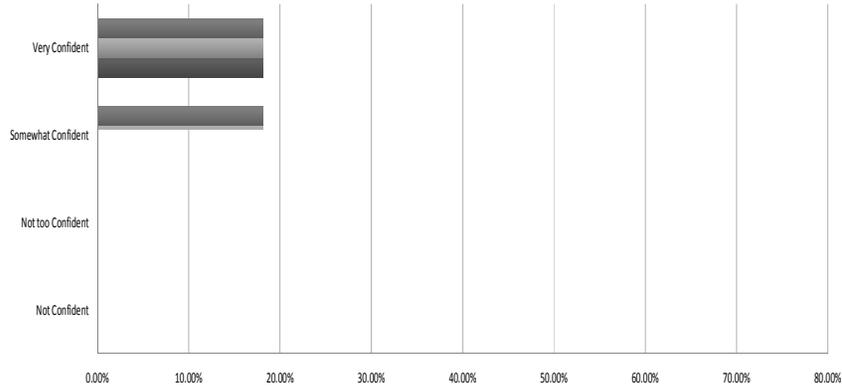
	Not Confident	Not too Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident
Absentee	2.52%	5.63%	31.76%	60.09%
In Person Early	1.62%	2.61%	22.87%	72.90%
In Person Election Day	1.92%	3.02%	20.16%	74.91%

Figure 3: Electronic Voting and the Potential for Fraud

	Oct-06			Mar-05			Aug-04		
	Republican	Democrat	Independent	Republican	Democrat	Independent	Republican	Democrat	Independent
No Opinion	26	29	37	27.7	27.8	32.1	29.5	34.7	28.8
Disagree	40	21	21	37.3	23.4	31.1	32	23.4	31.1
Agree	32	46	39	33.1	46.5	35.7	34	40.3	40

22
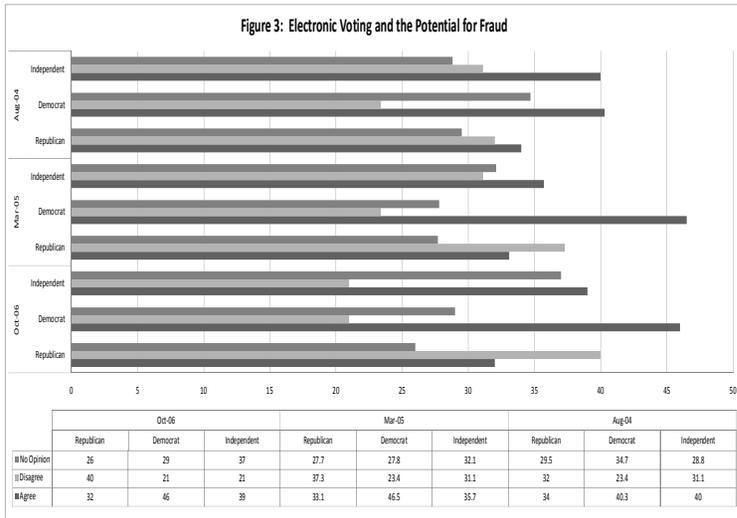
Figure 4: Voter Confidence by Partisan Affiliation

| | | Oct-06 | | | Mar-05 | | | Aug-04 | | |
		Republican	Democrat	Independent	Republican	Democrat	Independent	Republican	Democrat	Independent
■ Very Confident		70	32	35	84.3	48.5	66.9	81.6	63.5	74.4
▯ Somewhat Confident		13	26	21	12.4	33.7	20	12.1	22.4	16.6

23
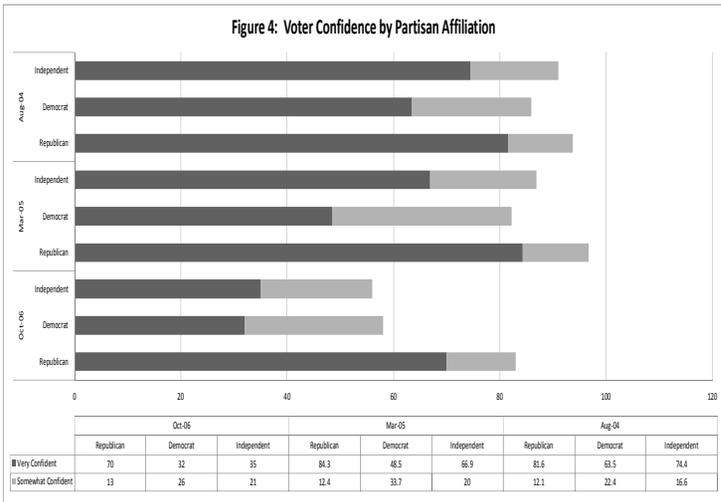
Figure 5: Pre- and Post-Election Confidence 2006 and 2008
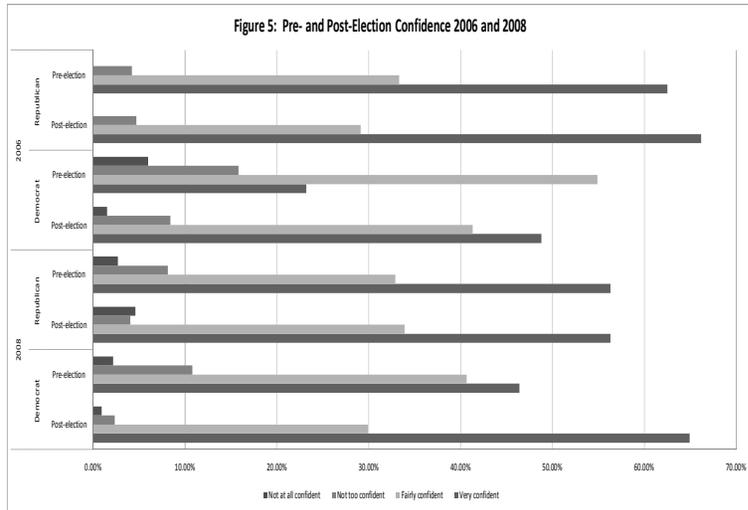
Figure 6: Attitudes toward Internet Voting in the United States

	Age Group			Party Identification		
	55+	35-54	18-34	Independent	Republican	Democrat
▥ Support	24.74%	32.19%	37.14%	33.05%	19.99%	37.36%
▥ Oppose	54.72%	46.13%	38.10%	46.56%	65.16%	38.69%
▥ Not sure	20.54%	21.69%	24.76%	20.39%	14.85%	23.95%

25