
Can public information campaigns restore trust in American elections across polarized state and party lines?

Research by Jennifer Gaudette (UC San Diego), Seth J. Hill (UC San Diego), Thad Kousser (UC San Diego), Mackenzie Lockhart (Yale University), Mindy Romero (USC), and Laura Uribe (UC San Diego)

What you need to know:

Public information campaigns can boost trust in American elections across state boundaries and party lines. Non-partisan messages from election officials in one state can increase trust in that state's elections among voters in both that state and other states, regardless of party affiliation.

How we learned this:

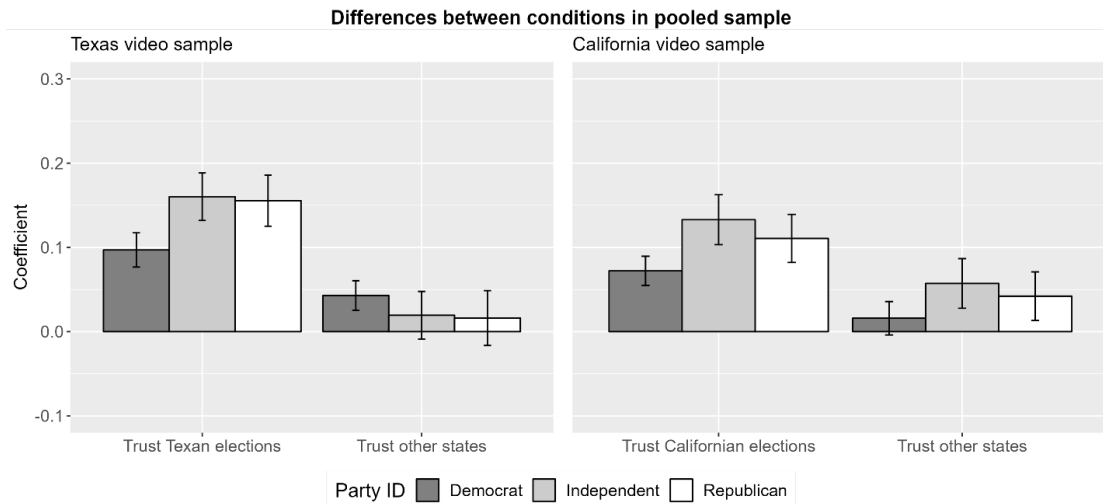
We conducted experiments with national and geographically-targeted samples, randomizing exposure of respondents to simple videos produced by election officials that explain how the vote is protected in their jurisdictions. We surveyed five samples: national (4,972 respondents), Colorado (2,494), Georgia (2,500), Los Angeles County (2,472), and Texas (2,508) between May 24th and June 14th of 2023.

Respondents in Texas and Georgia watched videos about California's election protections ([1](#), [2](#)), while respondents in Colorado and Los Angeles County watched videos ([1](#), [2](#)) from Texas. The national sample was split between the Texan and Californian messages.

Results:

Videos increased trust in the elections they described by 10-12.5 percentage points. When we look at partisanship, this effect is between 8 and 16 percentage points, depending on the partisanship. The videos also have smaller spillover effects, increasing trust in elections held in other states generally and willingness to sign a pre-election petition asking their candidate to honor the election results.

Outcome	Treatment Effect
Trust in CA/TX elections	10-12.5% increase
Trust in other state elections	3-4% increase
Willingness to sign pre-election petition	3-4% increase
Willingness to serve as poll worker	No increase
Intent to vote in 2024	No increase



Note: Coefficients are the proportion increase in trust by partisanship. For example, the Texas video increased trust by 10% among Democrats and 15% among Republicans.

How can election officials act on these findings?

Election officials can use non-partisan messaging to improve trust in American elections. A sustained public information campaign across state lines could yield significant increases in voters' trust in elections.

What we don't know yet:

How long do the effects of messaging last? What are the best ways to deliver these messages? Could other messengers like poll workers, faith leaders, elected leaders, or celebrities strengthen election trust?

Learn more:

Support for this project was provided by the [UC San Diego Yankelovich Center](#) and by the [MIT Election Data and Science Lab](#).