

Misleading Polls in the Media: Does Survey Clickbait Have Social Consequences?

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Abstract

In today's competitive information environment, clicks are the currency of the digital media landscape. Clickbait journalism attempts to entice attention with provocative and sensational headlines, but what are the implications when public opinion polls are the hook? Does the use of *survey clickbait*—news stories that make misleading claims about public opinion—have implications for perceptions of the public, journalists, or the polling industry? In two survey experiments conducted in the United States, we find that exposure to apolitical survey clickbait that makes exaggerated claims about the incompetence of the American public undermines perceptions of their capacity for democratic citizenship. At the same time, we find no evidence that this type of survey clickbait damages the reputations of the media or polling industry, suggesting that the media may have perverse incentives to use low quality polls or to misrepresent polling results to drive traffic.

In June 2020, dozens of news headlines around the world reported an alarming poll claiming that some Americans were gargling bleach to stave off COVID-19. The *Reuters* headline read, “Gargling with bleach? Over one in three Americans misusing disinfectants to prevent coronavirus, survey finds.”¹ The news stories were reporting on the results of a non-probability survey of 502 Lucid respondents that showed 39% of respondents were using cleansers and disinfectants in risky ways, with 4% responding affirmatively that they “drank or gargled diluted bleach solution.” Subsequent research found that alleged bleach-garglers are far more likely to be inattentive or mischievous respondents: in follow-up studies, 80 to 90 percent of the alleged bleach-garglers also reported other rare and implausible traits like “recently had a fatal heart attack” and “eats concrete for its iron content” (Litman et al. 2021). Unfortunately, due diligence was performed well after the spate of sensationalized headlines had already spread through the information ecosystem and prompted not only comedy show bits and funny memes but also public safety announcements and corrective infographics.² Credulous interpretation of a low quality poll resulted in journalists and media personalities actively disseminating misinformation about the American public.

Clickbait headlines have been implicated in the spread of misinformation (Zannettou et al. 2019), but previous research has not specifically examined public opinion polls as a source of that misinformation. Polling data are putative informational snapshots about the public that journalists use to lend quantified evidence, credibility, and authority to a chosen narrative (Mann and Orren 2010; Rosenstiel 2005). While it is well documented that media often give inadequate coverage of public opinion polling methodology (Bhatti and Pedersen 2016; Searles et al. 2016; Weimann 1990), the proliferation of low quality polls in the information environment might further contribute to misleading characterizations of

¹Reuters staff, “Gargling with bleach? Over one in three Americans misusing disinfectants to prevent coronavirus, survey finds,” *Reuters*, June 5, 2020. In addition to broad coverage among American media outlets, the survey also garnered substantial international coverage as well. For examples, see Brian Niemietz, “Americans have gargled bleach, applied it to their skin, survey shows,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 7, 2020; Matthew Amlot, “Coronavirus: Americans drinking bleach and washing food with disinfectants, finds CDC,” *Al Arabiya*, June 8, 2020.

²Sandra Knispel, “How to Clean and Disinfect—the Right Way,” University of Rochester, June 9, 2020.

public opinion in the media. What are the social consequences—for evaluations of the the public, journalists, and the polling industry—when polls are used to make fallacious claims about the public?

In this paper, we evaluate the impact of media headlines that make misleading claims about the American public’s incompetence. Such headlines are part of a larger phenomenon that we term *survey clickbait*. Survey clickbait headlines are deceptive either because of shoddy reporting (misrepresenting a poll result) or because they report on a shoddy poll.³ We report the results of two preregistered survey experiments that manipulate exposure to apolitical survey clickbait about the American public believing crazy things or demonstrating disturbing levels of ignorance (what might be generally termed “public incompetence”). We do so in the form of a series of real news headlines, evaluating the impact of exposure on several key attitudinal outcomes, including perceptions of public ignorance, confidence in democracy, support for voting restrictions, and trust in pollsters and the news media.

We find that exposure to such apolitical survey clickbait significantly undermines perceptions of the American public’s fitness for democratic citizenship. Encouragingly, we find only limited evidence that this translates into support for restricting the voting rights of uninformed people, and no evidence that it boosts more general support for restrictive voting measures. However, we also find that this type of survey clickbait does not harm the reputations of the journalists and pollsters who produce it, offering little disincentive to furthering its spread. These findings highlight the potential negative implications of survey clickbait, the challenges associated with countering its influence, and the need for greater scholarly attention to the pervasiveness and consequences of misleading survey journalism.

Evolution of the Media and Polling Environment

Public opinion polling and the news media have always been closely intertwined. News organizations both report on polls considered newsworthy and conduct polls to make news

³The motivating example suffers both of these ills.

(Dunaway 2011; Searles et al. 2016; Strömbäck and Kaid 2009). Journalists of course give breathless coverage to horse-race numbers during election season, but polling is a constant news staple, treated as objective, concrete, and important information that deserves public attention. A cursory search of U.S. newspapers over a four-year period (2018-2021) identified 33,694 articles mentioning survey or poll findings; the *New York Times* alone publishes more than a thousand annually, or roughly 2% of “all the news fit to print” (inclusive of non-news articles, e.g. Lifestyle, Food, and Sports).⁴

A rich and interdisciplinary literature has scrutinized media coverage of polling. It is well-documented, for instance, that polling coverage often fails to provide sufficient methodological information to evaluate data quality (Brettschneider 2008; Madson and Hillygus 2020; Toff 2019). Former ABC News pollster Gary Langer explains that the “the news media long have indulged in the lazy luxury of being both data hungry and math phobic.”⁵ Methodological details are generally relegated to a link or left out altogether. Coverage of statistical uncertainty in polling estimates is especially lacking, with journalists commonly reporting on differences in horse-race numbers that constitute statistical noise (Bhatti and Pedersen 2016; Mattes 2012; Oleskog Tryggvason and Strömbäck 2018).

We contend that the polling and media industries in the United States have evolved in ways that not only induce inadequate communication of polling methodology but also incentivize polling misinformation—that is, deceptive and misleading characterizations of the public. The economic, regulatory, and technology conditions that have driven growth, fragmentation, and democratization in the media industry (Munger 2020) have produced parallel changes in the polling industry, fueling a proliferation of low budget, low quality polls in the information environment (Cornesse et al. 2020; Hillygus 2011).⁶ At one time, major media organizations were not only the polling gatekeepers—determining if a poll was

⁴To generate these estimates, we searched the NexisUni database for articles with queries related to surveys or polls. Although the NexisUni database does not include every English-language U.S. newspaper, its coverage is extremely broad and covers most major papers.

⁵Gary Langer, “[Serious Problems Demand Serious Data](#),” Nieman Reports, March 28, 2022.

⁶For example, easy access to online samples has reduced the barriers to entry and sunk costs of polling.

deserving of public attention—they were also the ones collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the polls. Newspapers and broadcast networks were the primary clients of polling firms or, in some cases, had their own in-house operations. At the end of the 1980s, the majority of all TV stations in the U.S. and more than three-quarters of all daily newspapers with a circulation of over 100,000 conducted their own opinion polls (Frankovic 1998). Today, the media and polling organizations have fragmented and decoupled.⁷ Many media organizations no longer have the financial capacity to conduct their own polls, so they have become reliant on polling results provided to them by interest groups or entrepreneurial pollsters—pollsters who conduct surveys not for a client but for publicity (Blumenthal 2005). These pollsters are more likely to use lower-cost, lower-quality methodologies, such as interactive-voice-response polls (IVR; also called robocall polls) and opt-in non-probability internet samples (Kennedy et al. 2018; Clinton and Rogers 2013).⁸ The proliferation of low quality polling has happened alongside an increase in media outlets that can report on polls—social media, blogs, podcasts, and other digital platforms disseminate poll results alongside traditional news organizations. These outlets compete for a shrinking pool of revenue, so cheaply-produced, attention-grabbing content often wins out over in-depth reporting. For example, polling aggregators like RealClearPolitics provide a home for horse-race polls with a limited regard for a poll’s quality or transparency, with enough web traffic to rival major news organizations in the run-up to elections (Westwood et al. 2020; Jackson 2018). Similarly, news organizations are apt to disseminate polls “as reported by” another outlet without performing an independent assessment of the survey’s credibility.

In sum, today’s hyper-competitive media environment creates an insatiable demand for new and timely information (Iyengar et al. 2004). Pollsters (or the groups that hire them) can take advantage of journalists’ data appetite by feeding media outlets a diet of cheap

⁷Though we focus here on the U.S., it is a pattern found in a number of countries around the world (De Vreese et al. 2016). For example, Mattes (2012, p. 187) documents this trend in South Africa and Holtz-Bacha and Strömbäck (2012) discuss this evolution in Australia.

⁸Forecasting failures in the 2016 presidential election were largely attributed to the pervasiveness of low budget, low quality state-level polls in election forecasting models (Kennedy et al. 2018).

polls of dubious quality to fill that demand. In other words, if the gold standard is high quality reporting of high quality polls, we contend that low quality polling and lax reporting of polling data (of any quality) can produce false narratives about public opinion. The question motivating this paper is whether there are social consequences—for evaluations of the the public, journalists, and the polling industry—when polls are used to make misleading or deceptive claims about the public.

Potential Consequences of Survey Clickbait

A growing literature has scrutinized the nature, prevalence, and influence of attention-grabbing “clickbait” journalism around the world (Munger 2020; Lu and Pan 2021; Scacco and Muddiman 2016) but has not considered the specific implications when public opinion polls are the hook. We use the term *survey clickbait* to refer to the use of polls to make deceptive, misleading, and sensationalized characterizations of public opinion to attract attention or arouse curiosity. In the broader media literature, specific definitions and operationalizations of clickbait vary, and there is a bit of a “you know it when you see it” quality to popular discussions. In adding the word to the dictionary in 2015, Merriam Webster defined clickbait as “something (such as a headline) designed to make readers want to click on a hyperlink especially when the link leads to content of dubious value or interest.” Much of the empirical work on the topic focuses on clickbait detection methods, therefore eschewing formal definitions in favor of identifying the observable characteristics, such as exclamation points, question marks, hyberbolic words, and listicle formats (Chakraborty et al. 2016; Scott 2021). Rather than identifying any specific characteristics of a headline, we employ a more colloquial usage of the term “clickbait” in reference to misleading, attention-grabbing information. We view *survey* clickbait as deceptive either because it reports low quality polling uncritically or misrepresents polling data. While the current media and polling ecosystem has seen a proliferation in low quality surveys, it is also the case that high quality polling can be sensationalized or misinterpreted, such as the increasing use of clickbait headlines to

report on official government statistics (Dimitrova 2019).

We focus on a particular subset of survey clickbait: headlines that make fallacious claims about the incompetence of the American public. It is now commonplace to see provocative and misleading headlines reporting poll results about the public believing crazy things or demonstrating disturbing levels of ignorance.⁹ To be sure, not all reports of public ignorance should be considered unfounded; a substantial literature documents gaps between the traditional ideal of a democratic citizen and the public’s actual knowledge and behavior (e.g., Achen and Bartels 2016). Survey clickbait, however, makes misleading and deceptive assertions based on faulty polling data or faulty polling interpretations. Our concern is that survey clickbait headlines that characterize the public as misinformed or uninformed—even on apolitical topics—could unduly damage perceptions of democratic competence if they are taken at face value.

Research on the larger universe of clickbait headlines offers mixed evidence about the potential for negative impacts on public opinion. While some research finds that the attention-grabbing negativity of clickbait headlines increases click-throughs (Robertson et al. 2023), other work finds that clickbait reduces reader attention, decreasing engagement with and recall of the news content (Kaushal et al. 2022). This raises the possibility survey clickbait might just be an innocuous source of infotainment rather than something convincing enough to undermine confidence in democracy. Clickbait can also backfire, undermining trust in the news and the journalists who use it. For example, several studies—from the U.S. and elsewhere (Janét et al. 2022; Kaushal and Vemuri 2021; Molyneux and Coddington 2020; Pengnate et al. 2021)—find that clickbait headlines lower perceptions of story credibility and quality (but see Munger et al. 2020) and increase negative affect towards the news content itself (Scacco and Muddiman 2016). If the consequence of survey clickbait is to

⁹From *Fox*: “Survey: Nearly 40% of beer-drinkers won’t buy Corona because of coronavirus; From *Washington Post*: “Americans—especially but not exclusively Trump voters—believe crazy, wrong things;” From *Salon*: “Dumbass nation: Our biggest national security problem is America’s ‘vast and militant ignorance’; Millions of Americans embrace vapid lies and conspiracy theories—and the proudly moronic leader who spreads them.” For further discussion of what can go wrong when researchers conflate belief and certainty or do not account for response quality issues, see Graham (2023) and Lopez and Hillygus (2018).

primarily harm attitudes towards the media or polling industry, the reputational costs of survey clickbait could help to deter its use.

That said, other research provides compelling reasons to worry that survey clickbait—more so than other types of clickbait—could carry damaging social consequences. Surveys constitute quantitative evidence, providing a veneer of scientific veracity to a news narrative (Mann and Orren 2010; Rosenstiel 2005). As such, a headline reporting a polling result that paints many people as ignorant or foolish could have implications for how readers view the general public’s fitness for democratic citizenship. This parallels concerns expressed in the misinformation literature that criticize asking about conspiracy beliefs because doing so unwittingly contributes to their spread by introducing or repeating emotionally evocative content (Clifford and Sullivan 2023). And while a clickbait headline about a person (e.g., “Florida man”) who does or says crazy things might well be deemed newsworthy and yet have little impact on views about the public, a polling result inherently implicates a broader swath. By design, surveys are intended to describe a out-of-sample population; *survey* clickbait may thus alter perceptions of the public itself.

Our empirical evidence focuses on survey clickbait that paints an exaggerated picture of the American public’s incompetence. We offer three specific hypotheses regarding the “first-order harms” that may result from this subset of survey clickbait:

H1: Political ignorance. Exposure to survey clickbait about public incompetence reduces the perception that voters are informed.

H2: Un t for citizenship. Exposure to survey clickbait about public incompetence reduces the perception of voters as fit for democratic citizenship.

H3: Con dence in democracy. Exposure to survey clickbait about public incompetence reduces confidence in democracy.

To the extent that survey clickbait creates perceptions of citizen incompetence, it also has the potential to have downstream effects. For example, some political elites have recently used the specter of uninformed voters to argue in favor of restrictive voting measures (and, inevitably, the specific measures advocated tend to disproportionately limit voting by

ideological opponents). Mississippi Secretary of State Michael Watson couched his opposition to automatic voter registration in this explicit appeal:

So think about all those woke college and university students now who will automatically be registered to vote whether they wanted to or not. ... You've got an uninformed citizen who may not be prepared and ready to vote. Automatically, it's forced on them: 'Hey, go make a choice.' And our country's going to pay for those choices.¹⁰

Motivated by this and other recent rhetoric in American politics,¹¹ we evaluate whether creating an exaggerated impression that the public is ignorant—even on apolitical topics—could lead citizens to be more receptive to arguments in favor of restrictive voting measures. We offer two testable hypotheses regarding support for restrictions on uninformed voters in particular and restrictive voting measures more generally.

H4: Support for restrictions targeted at uninformed voters. Exposure to survey clickbait about public incompetence increases support for restrictive measures intended to reduce the threat of uninformed voting.

H5: General support for voting restrictions. Exposure to survey clickbait about public incompetence increases support for other restrictive voting policies.

Finally, we evaluate if survey clickbait has reputational consequences for the news media and the opinion polling industries producing it. As has been widely documented, the public's view of the media and the polling industries has declined in recent decades, in the United States (Kennedy et al. 2018; Kuru et al. 2017; Ladd 2012) and in many countries around the world (Hanitzsch et al. 2018; Jennings and Wlezien 2018).¹² The sensational and misleading nature of survey clickbait could exacerbate this reputational crisis; indeed, previous empirical work finds that clickbait headlines have negative consequences for the

¹⁰Ashton Pittman, "Mississippi Elections Chief Warns Biden May Register 'Uninformed,' 'Woke' College Voters," *Mississippi Free Press*, April 6, 2021.

¹¹For example, see Andrew C. McCarthy, "Major League Baseball and the Voting-Rights Con," *National Review*, April 3, 2021; Eric Bradner and Dianne Gallagher, "Arizona Republican lawmakers join GOP efforts to target voting, with nearly two dozen restrictive voting measures," *CNN*, March 11, 2021.

¹²Examining data from the World Values Survey and European Values Survey, Hanitzsch et al. (2018) find that trust in the press significantly declined in 24 of 45 countries analyzed between 1981 and 2014, while meaningfully increasing in 14 countries over the same period.

purveyors, with news stories using clickbait headlines being viewed as less credible and less trustworthy (e.g., Janét et al. 2022; Molyneux and Coddington 2020). The degree of damage to survey clickbaiters’ reputations can shed light on possible avenues for redress. A direct negative feedback mechanism should reduce survey clickbait over the long run, whereas the absence of such a disincentive would suggest the need for other interventions such as new poll literacy or ethics standards in the journalism profession. Here, we offer two testable hypotheses:

H6: Perceptions of polling. Exposure to survey clickbait about public incompetence decreases evaluations of news as accurate, informative, and trustworthy.

H7: Perceptions of the news media. Exposure to survey clickbait about public incompetence decreases evaluations of polling as accurate, informative, and trustworthy.

Research Design

We test these hypotheses with two preregistered survey experiments conducted on diverse samples of American adults.¹³ Study 1 was conducted June 5-12, 2021, using a non-probability convenience sample of 4,266 US adults recruited on the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform.¹⁴ To be eligible to participate, respondents were required to have completed at least one previous task on MTurk, have an MTurk approval rating of at least 95 percent, be of at least 18 years of age, reside in the United States, and pass a Captcha. Per our preregistration, we dropped respondents who did not reach the final outcome question, leaving us with a final sample size of 3,923. Study 2 was conducted June 24-28, 2022. Respondents were recruited by Qualtrics Panels via quota sampling to approximate the distributions of gender, race, and ethnicity among American adults. After dropping respondents who failed a set of preregistered quality checks, our final sample size was 2,400. Both studies were administered via the Qualtrics online survey platform. Appendix C provides a

¹³Although we draw on headlines from U.S. media and rely on American survey samples, we have no reason to think that our expectations are limited to the U.S. case—indeed, much of the previous literature examining the relationship between media and polling is focused outside the U.S.

¹⁴Prior to Study 1, we also conducted a pilot experiment. See Appendix B.6.

more complete methodological disclosure for both survey experiments, including the specific exclusion criteria, preregistration documents, full survey text, and balance tests.

Following a series of background questions, respondents in both studies were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (treatment, control, or placebo) with equal probability via simple random assignment. Subjects assigned to the control condition proceeded directly to the outcome measures. Those assigned to the treatment condition were exposed to a series of apolitical news headlines that make provocative claims about public ignorance using polling data.¹⁵ These are real news headlines published by US media outlets in recent years, which we formatted in a style similar to Google News results.¹⁶ An example appears in Figure 1a. Due to our focus on survey clickbait that creates an exaggerated sense of public incompetence, we intentionally avoided headlines that specifically refer to partisan controversies. The treatment headlines are shown in Figure 1b. The full text, including the one-sentence lede (sometimes lightly modified for conciseness), are shown Appendix C.3.

In addition to the control group, both studies included a placebo condition. The placebo conditions were designed to distinguish the effect of survey clickbait from a related but distinct type of content.¹⁷ In Study 1, the placebo condition consisted of headlines about apolitical polls that did not focus on the intellectual shortcomings of the American public. Finding effects relative to this baseline helps provide assurance that our findings are a consequence of survey clickbait’s tendency to deliver negative messages about public ignorance, and are not a more general consequence of the trivial focus of the content. In Study 2, the placebo condition consisted of clickbait headlines that do not reference polling at all. Finding effects relative to this baseline would provide assurance that our findings are

¹⁵In Study 1, we encouraged engagement by asking respondents to summarize the key information from each news story in their own words, and did not allow respondents to advance until at least 15 seconds had passed. In Study 2, we simplified the engagement mechanism by instead asking respondents to correctly identify the topic of each story from among six multiple-choice options.

¹⁶The source and date was randomly assigned to the headline.

¹⁷To ensure that our placebo conditions represent a class of content rather than an idiosyncratic feature of how we operationalize that class of content, we follow the recommendation by Porter and Velez (2021) to choose a large number of placebo headlines and expose each subject assigned to the placebo condition to a random subset.

Figure 1: Study Materials

(a) Example Treatment Screenshot



(b) All treatment headlines

Headline	Study
<i>1 in 4 Americans Thinks the Sun Goes Around the Earth, Survey Says</i>	1 and 2
<i>The Surprising Number of American Adults Who Think Chocolate Milk Comes from Brown Cows</i>	1 and 2
<i>Survey: One Third of Young Millennials Believe the Earth is Flat</i>	1 and 2
<i>Nationwide Poll: 47 Percent of Americans Mistakenly Believe Eating Chicken Can Spread Bird Flu</i>	1 and 2
<i>What's the Constitution? Don't Bother Asking 70% of Americans</i>	1 only
<i>Americans Believe crazy, wrong Things</i>	1 only
<i>Judge Judy is a Supreme Court Justice, a Surprising Number of College Grads Think</i>	2 only
<i>10 of the Craziest Conspiracy Theories that a Ridiculously Disturbing Amount of People Believe</i>	2 only

a consequence of *survey* clickbait specifically, not clickbait in general.¹⁸

Following the assigned treatment, all subjects answered outcome questions designed to test our hypotheses. We re-scale each outcome variable to vary between 0 and 1 to facilitate comparison. Where specified in our pre-analysis plans, we combine items into indices by taking their respondent-level average. As preregistered, we use covariate-adjusted estimates for hypothesis testing, which shrinks standard errors by reducing the amount of unexplained variance in the outcome (Gerber and Green 2012). The main potential pitfall of covariate adjustment is the potential that researchers with access to a large number of covariates may engage in specification search (Lin 2013). We tied our hands by preregistering the automated covariate selection procedure recommended by Bloniarz, Liu, Zhang, Sekhon and Yu (2016). For transparency, we also present unadjusted (i.e., difference-in-means) estimates. We report one-sided p -values for our preregistered directional hypotheses, which correspond to the thick error bars in Figures 2 through 6.

The first set of dependent variables measured perceived fitness for democratic citizenship (H1 through H3). To measure the perception that American voters are informed (H1), the post-treatment questionnaire began by asking subjects to rate American voters on a five-point scale from “very uninformed” to “very well-informed.” Regarding fitness for citizenship (H2), respondents rated their confidence that Americans cast informed votes on a four-point scale from “No confidence at all” to “A great deal of confidence.” Subjects also assessed whether American voters are well-qualified to vote using a five-point, agree-disagree scale. We test H3 (confidence in democracy) using a single measure that asked “how much confidence, if any, do you have in the US system of democracy,” again on a four-point scale from “No confidence at all” to “A great deal of confidence.”¹⁹

¹⁸While our use of the term *survey* clickbait parallels the more colloquial usage of “clickbait journalism” to broadly refer to misleading, attention-grabbing information rather than any specific characteristics of a headline, our placebo clickbait headlines do use elements such as surprise, hyperbole, curiosity, and emotion to deceptively grab attention.

¹⁹Two of our dependent variables were also asked pre-treatment with identical wording, with the exception that they were placed in grids alongside distractor items, allowing for a within-subject analysis of H1 and H3. As can be seen in the Appendix C.3, we included additional survey items to help disguise the intent of the survey and reduce the risk of demand effects.

The next set of dependent variables measured support for restrictive voting measures (H4 and H5). For each hypothesis, we preregistered one measure of threat perceptions and a three- or four-item index designed to measure support for acting on the perceived threat. The H4 index consisted of three five-point agree/disagree items: “Too many uninformed people vote in this country,” “People who are not well informed about election issues should not be allowed to vote,” and “People should be required to take a civics test before registering to vote.” The threat perception asked whether uninformed voters or non-voters posed a greater threat to American democracy, with a branching follow-up to measure strength of opinion. In Study 1 only, we examine support for other, more general voting restrictions. Two five-point agree/disagree scales measured support for requiring photo identification to vote (voter ID) and prohibiting vote-by-mail. Two more agree/disagree scales measured preferences on making it easy to vote and placing polling locations on college campuses; these two questions were reverse coded. The final question asked respondents whether voter fraud or voter suppression posed a greater threat to American democracy, again with a branched follow-up probe to measure strength of opinion.

Finally, in Study 2 only, we tested for effects on the reputations of pollsters and journalists (H6 and H7). Both sets of hypotheses were tested with three six-point agree/disagree items adapted from (Madson and Hillygus 2020): “I can count on [public opinion polls / the news media] to be accurate,” “I consider [public opinion polls / the news media] to be trustworthy,” and “I find that [public opinion polls / the news media] are informative.” Complete survey text appears in Appendix C.3.

Results

Perceptions of Democratic Competence

We first consider the effects of our treatment on perceptions of Americans’ capacity for democratic citizenship. Our design tests three hypotheses: that treated individuals will view the public as less informed (H1) and less qualified to vote (H2), diminishing confidence

in American democracy (H3).

In both studies, we find that exposure to the survey clickbait headlines inflates perceptions of public ignorance (H1). The average treatment effect (ATE) estimates are displayed in the top panels of Figure 2.²⁰ In the control group, the mean informedness rating for American voters was 0.51 (on a 0 to 1 scale), compared to a mean of 0.44 for the treatment group. The estimate of the average treatment effect was -0.068 ($p < 0.001$) in Study 1. This negative effect replicated in Study 2 (estimate = -0.033 , $p < 0.001$).

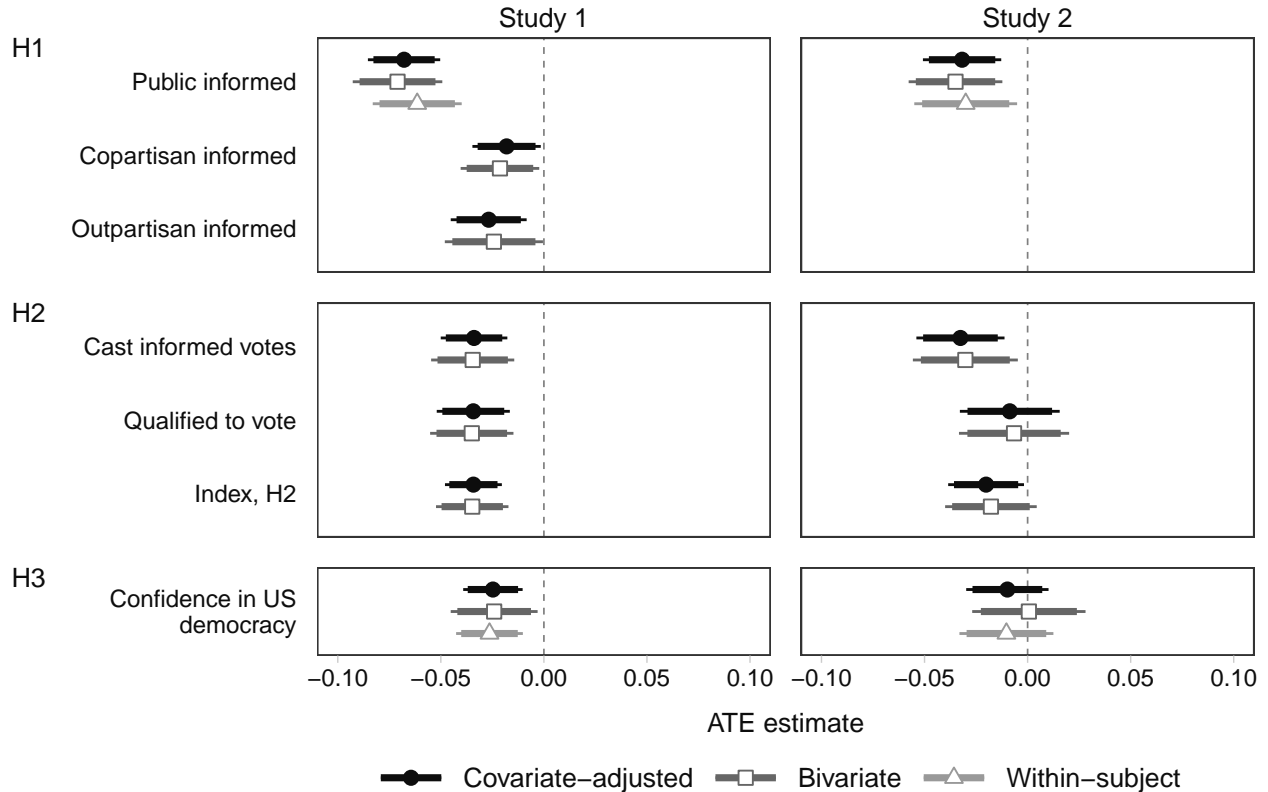
Based on existing evidence that partisans tend to view the other side negatively (e.g., Iyengar et al. 2019), Study 1 also tested the possibility that despite the apolitical nature of our treatments, subjects would infer that out-partisans are the problem. We included dependent variables regarding the perceived degree to which Democrats and Republicans are informed, which we re-code in terms of our subjects' partisanship.²¹ We find no evidence that the change in perceptions is driven by more negative views of the partisan outgroup. Instead, partisan respondents revised their perceptions of the partisan ingroup and outgroup by about the same magnitude. Exposure caused respondents to view copartisan voters as about 1.8 percent less informed (estimate = -0.018 , $p = 0.017$), and outpartisans as about 2.7 percent less informed (estimate = -0.027 , $p = 0.002$). These estimates are displayed in the top-left panel of Figure 2.

We next consider effects on views of Americans' fitness for democratic citizenship (Figure 2, middle panels). We find that treatment reduced confidence in Americans to cast informed votes in both Study 1 (estimate = -0.034 , $p < 0.001$) and Study 2 (estimate = -0.031 , $p = 0.002$). In Study 1, treatment also reduced agreement that most Americans are well-qualified to vote (estimate = -0.035 , $p < 0.001$). In Study 2, the effect of treatment on this question was directionally similar but not statistically significant (estimate = -0.009 , $p = 0.233$). Combining both measures into an additive index, we find a substantially negative impact on perceptions of Americans' fitness for democratic citizenship in both Study 1

²⁰These and all subsequent analyses are unweighted, as we use non-probability samples.

²¹Leaners are coded as partisans, while pure independents are dropped.

Figure 2: Effects on perceptions of democratic competence (H1-H3) versus control group.



Note: Figure displays ATE estimates for H1-H3. Thin (thick) horizontal bars represent 95 (90) percent confidence intervals. Legend refers to different estimators of the ATE; per our preregistration, we prefer the covariate-adjusted estimates (black dots). Corresponding regression tables appear in Appendix B.

(estimate = -0.034 , $p < 0.001$) and Study 2 (estimate = -0.019 , $p = 0.021$). We thus find support for H2: survey clickbait about public incompetence causes consumers to view the public as less capable democratic citizens.

The bottom panels of Figure 2 show the effect of treatment on our single measure of confidence in democracy (H3). Compared with no exposure, the results of Study 1 support H3 (estimate = -0.025 , $p < 0.001$); that is, survey clickbait about public incompetence reduces confidence in democracy. In Study 2, the estimate takes the expected sign but is not statistically significant in Study 2 (estimate = -0.007 , $p = 0.264$), providing only mixed support for H3.

In addition to our main set of treatment effect estimates (solid black dots), which are

covariate-adjusted, Figure 2 and all subsequent figures display difference-in-means estimates from a bivariate regression (hollow grey squares) for transparency. The point estimates are quite similar, but the standard errors and confidence intervals are slightly larger. Also reported in the figure are the estimates for a within-subject analysis for the two dependent variables measured both pre- and post-treatment (identical wording except pre-treatment questions were embedded in grids alongside distractor items).²² Here again, we find similar results.²³

Placebo Tests

Both studies included a placebo condition that enables us to distinguish the effect of the treatment headlines from the effect of headlines about other apolitical polls (Study 1) and generic clickbait that is unrelated to polling (Study 2). Figure 3 presents our estimates of the treatment effects relative to these alternative baselines.

Exposure to headlines making dubious claims about the American public with survey clickbait made consumers view the public as less informed than did the polling placebo headlines in Study 1 (estimate = -0.055 , $p < 0.001$) or the clickbait placebo headlines in Study 2 (estimate = -0.031 , $p = 0.001$). We also see no evidence that this effect is driven by views of outpartisans specifically: the results of Study 1 show very similar effects with respect to copartisans as outpartisans, as shown in the upper left panel of Figure 3.²⁴ The bivariate and within-subject estimates are similar to our the covariate-adjusted estimates. These analyses lend further support to H1.

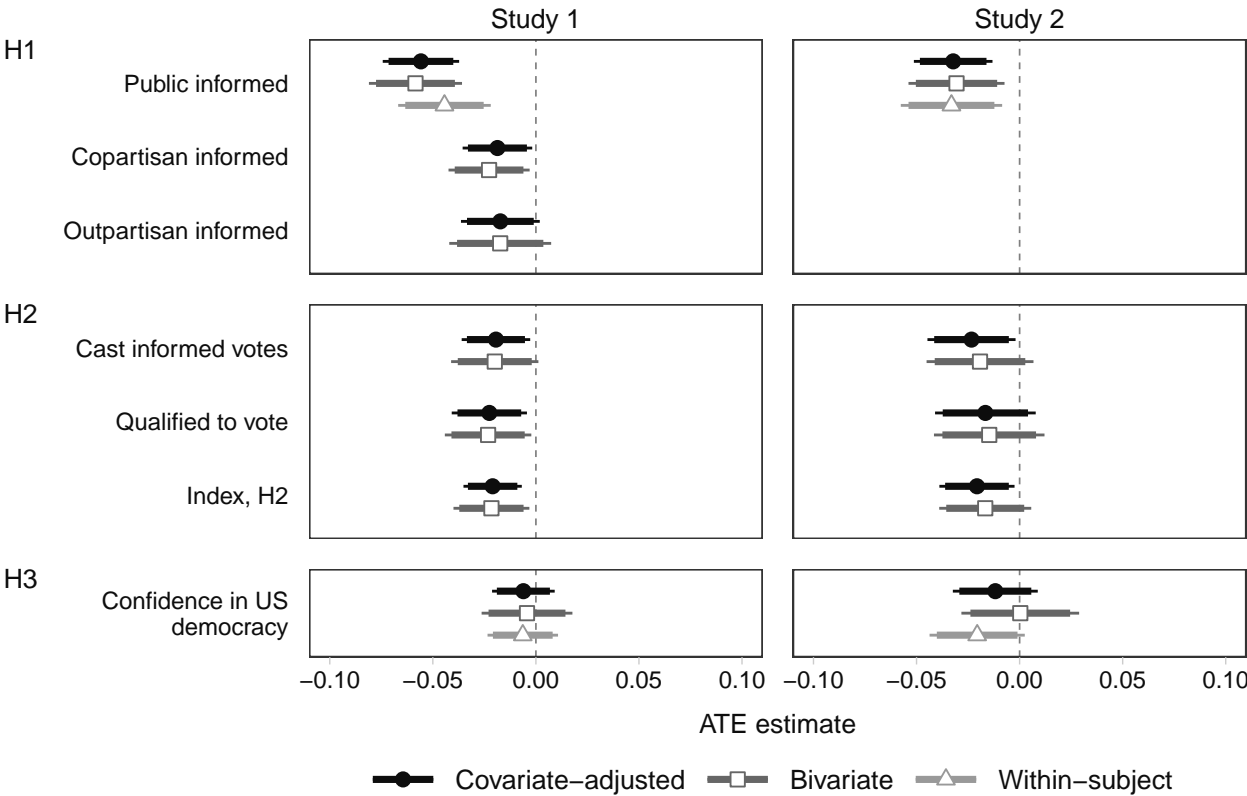
With respect to views about the public’s fitness for democratic citizenship (H2), the comparisons to the placebo suggest a similar negative effect of treatment relative to the placebo as we did relative to the pure control condition (Figure 3, middle panels). In Study

²²The within-subject tests were not preregistered. These are the only two items that allow for within-subject analysis, and we simply neglected to preregister our intent to conduct it. Given this, we display conduct two-sided tests in the corresponding regression tables (Appendix Tables B.23 and B.24). These correspond to the thin error bars in Figure 2.

²³Given that our automated covariate selection procedure also selected the pre-treatment outcome measures, it is not surprising that the covariate-adjusted and within-subject estimates are very similar.

²⁴Study 2 did not include outcome questions specific to partisanship.

Figure 3: Effects on perceptions of democratic competence (H1-H3) versus placebo groups.



Note: Figure displays ATE estimates for H1, H2, and H3, relative to the placebo groups. For more information, see note to Figure 2.

1, we find statistically significant negative effects on the additive index (estimate = -0.021, $p = 0.002$). In Study 2, we obtain a similar result (estimate = -0.018, $p = 0.025$).

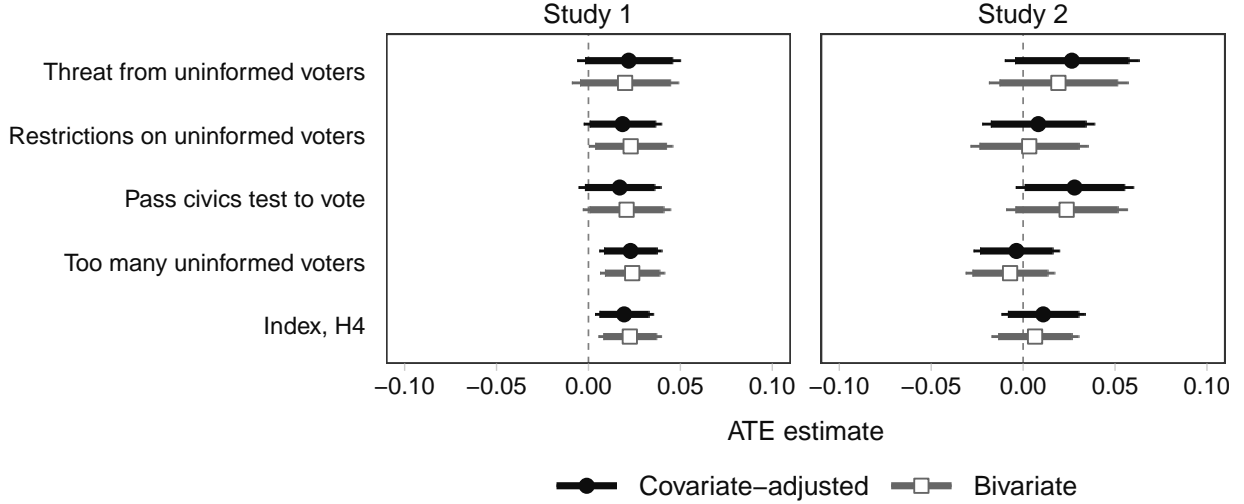
As shown in the bottom panels of Figure 3, we find somewhat less evidence of an effect on confidence in American democracy (H3) in the placebo comparison. The estimated effects of treatment relative to the placebo are negative but not statistically significant (Study 1 estimate = -0.006, $p = 0.217$; Study 2 estimate = -0.008, $p = 0.216$). The within-subject estimates are slightly more negative while the bivariate estimates are close to zero.

Support for Restrictive Voting Measures

Although we think that creating unduly negative impressions of democratic competence constitutes a harm in its own right, these effects would be even more concerning if they also translated into support for restrictive voting measures. We divided this potential consequence into two hypotheses. Most immediately, we hypothesized that diminished perceptions of democratic competence could translate into increased support for restricting the rights of uninformed voters (H4). Further downstream, we hypothesized that these same perceptions could affect support for broader restrictions on the franchise that have been commonly debated in the United States (H5). For each hypothesis, we preregistered one measure of threat perceptions and a separate, multi-item index designed to measure support for acting on the perceived threat.

We find some evidence that survey clickbait about public incompetence boosts support for voting restrictions that are explicitly targeted at uninformed voters (H4). First, consider the effects on threat perceptions, which are the top set of estimates in Figure 4. In both studies, the estimated effects on threat perceptions are in the expected direction and approach statistical significance. The Study 1 estimate was 0.022 ($p = 0.063$) and the Study 2 estimate was 0.027 ($p = 0.077$). Next, consider the three-item index of support for restrictive voting measures. In Study 1, we observe a treatment effect of 0.019 on the 0 to 1 scale ($p = 0.009$). The effects on the component measures are all of similar magnitude

Figure 4: Effects on support for restricting the rights of uninformed voters (H4).

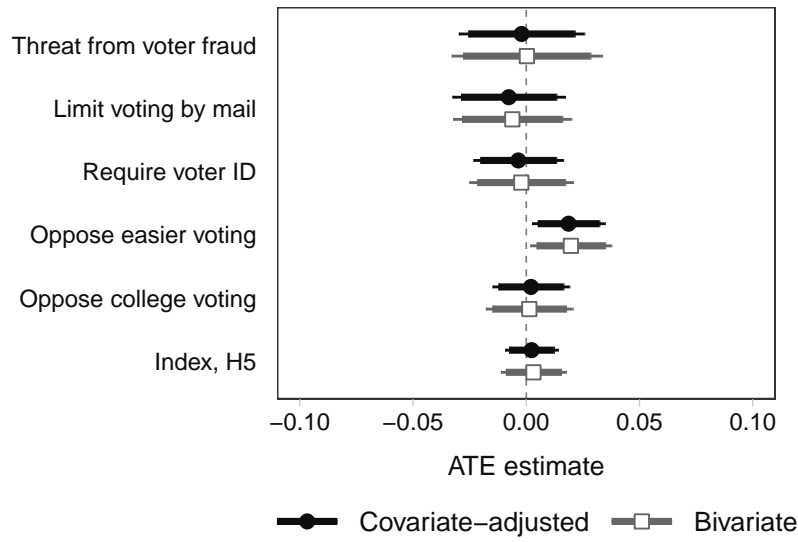


Note: Figure displays ATE estimates for H4. For more information, see note to Figure 2.

(0.017 to 0.023). In Study 2, however, we observe no statistically significant effects on the index (estimate = 0.011, $p = 0.172$) or its components. Moreover, calculating effects relative to the placebo groups weakens the evidence in both studies ($p = 0.060$ in Study 1, $p = 0.305$ in Study 2; see Appendix Figure A.1). We interpret these findings as providing only suggestive evidence that exposure to survey clickbait may increase support for restrictive voting measures that target uninformed voters, and encourage future research on this point.

Reassuringly, we find no evidence that the treatment increases general support for voting restrictions—that is, restrictions that are not directly targeted at uninformed voters (H5). Our estimates appear in Figure 5. We also find no evidence that the treatment enhances the perception of a threat from voter fraud. Similarly, the estimate for the four-item index is close to zero and is far from attaining statistical significance. Examining the components of the index, point estimates are also close to zero for three of the items: support for voter identification requirements, opposition to no-excuse absentee voting (mail voting), or opposition to polling locations on college campuses. Though the estimated increase in opposition to making voting easier stands out in the figure (estimate = 0.019, $p = 0.011$), the index serves as our primary preregistered hypothesis test, not the individual components.

Figure 5: Effects on generalized support for restrictive voting measures (H5), Study 1.



Note: Figure displays ATE estimates for H5. For more information, see note to Figure 2.

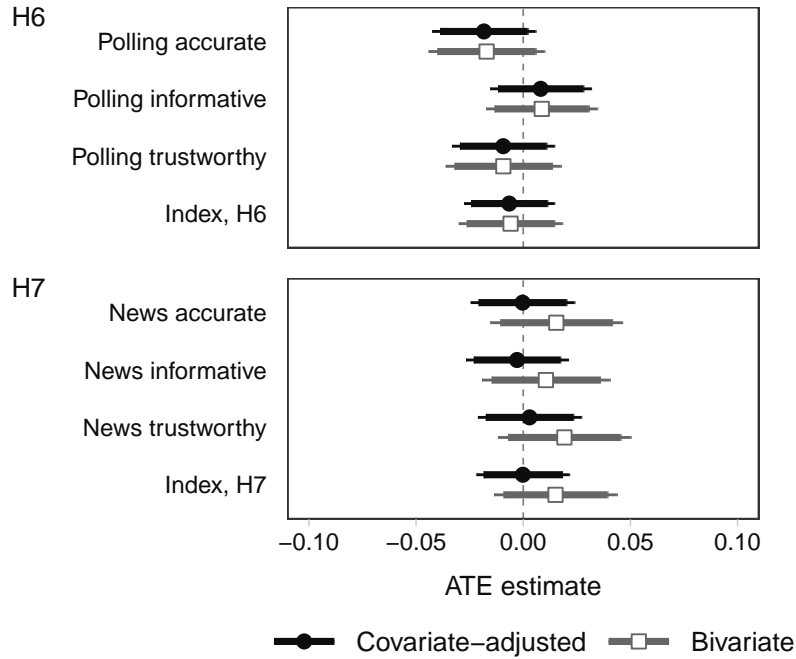
Moreover, there is no significant difference between the treatment and placebo conditions with respect to this particular outcome. Though the potential effect on support for making voting easier could be examined in future research, the balance of our evidence does not provide support for H5.

Reputation of Pollsters and News Media

Study 2 assessed the impact of survey clickbait about public incompetence on evaluations of the polling and news media industries (H6 and H7). These hypotheses provide insight into these actors' incentives to limit the use of survey clickbait. For each industry, we examined three components of their reputation: whether they provide accurate information, whether they are informative, and whether they are trustworthy. The presence of reputational costs would suggest that firms' self-interest could limit survey clickbait, while the absence of such costs would suggest that other solutions are necessary.

Our estimates of reputational costs for the polling industry appear in the upper panels of Figure 6. As above, our preregistered hypotheses are based on the additive index of the three attitudes. On this measure, we find little evidence that exposure to survey clickbait

Figure 6: Effects on reputation of of polling and news media (H6 and H7), Study 2.



Note: Figure displays ATE estimates for H6 and H7, which were tested only in Study 2. Thin (thick) horizontal bars represent 95 (90) percent confidence intervals. Corresponding regression tables appear in Appendix B.

undermines the polling industry’s reputation (estimate = -0.007, $p = 0.271$). Examining the component measures, we see suggestive evidence that exposure may marginally reduce perceptions that polling is accurate (estimate = -0.018, $p = 0.068$). However, the evidence is weaker relative to the placebo condition. We thus interpret our results as indicating that the polling industry’s reputation is not substantially harmed by these survey clickbait headlines about public incompetence.

The estimated effect on the news media’s reputation is shown in the bottom panels of Figure 6. The point estimate for the three-item index is almost exactly zero (estimate = -0.000, $p = 0.494$). The estimate for each of the component measures is also close to zero, with none approaching statistical significance. The same result is apparent when the treatment is compared to the generic clickbait placebo. We find no evidence that propagating survey clickbait about public incompetence undermines the reputation of the news media.

Discussion

Polling plays a significant role in today’s media landscape, serving as the basis for a wide range of generalizations regarding the public’s beliefs and characteristics. Yet investigation of polling’s social impact has largely been confined to understanding its effects on elections (e.g., [Boudrea and McCubbins 2010](#); [Traugott 2005](#)) and highlighting the inadequate communication of statistical uncertainty in media coverage (e.g., [Toff 2019](#)). This paper is a call for attention to the potential impact of polling journalism when it is conveying misinformation outside the election horserace. We identify a potentially concerning category of polling journalism, which we call survey clickbait: misrepresentations of public opinion, either due to credulous reporting of questionable polling or outright distortion of the data. More specifically, we report the results of two survey experiments evaluating the impact of survey clickbait about the incompetence of the American public.

Our first key finding, that exposure to survey clickbait exaggerating the American public’s incompetence diminishes perceptions of the public’s fitness for democratic citizenship, establishes the potential for survey clickbait to have negative social consequences. Sensational headlines that misrepresent the content of surveys are not just an innocuous form of entertainment or revenue-generation—they are a source of information that news consumers use to make inferences about their fellow citizens. This heightens the obligation of pollsters to avoid asking misleading questions, and the obligation of journalists to vet the surveys they report on and accurately communicate on the underlying data. To the extent that pollsters and journalists do not fulfill these obligations, they risk spreading misinformation and bear responsibility for the consequences that follow. And though we focused empirically on a particular type of survey clickbait, our results highlight the need to study the consequences of misleading polling claims in other domains and contexts.

We also examined this type of survey clickbait’s effect on support for voting restrictions. Our findings offer only limited evidence of such an effect, with increased support for restrictions targeted to uninformed voters in Study 1 but not in Study 2, and no evidence

of support for more general restrictions. Though the mixed evidence regarding increased support for voting restrictions is some cause for optimism, our approach also has limitations. In particular, we intentionally excluded survey clickbait headlines that are partisan in nature, and confirmed in Study 1 that the effects of apolitical content were not driven solely by negative inferences about the other party. Though we viewed this design as necessary to establish that survey clickbait’s effects can be distinct from negative partisanship, it also leaves out a common type of survey clickbait. For example, quirky polls like those claiming that most Democrats would prefer human extinction by meteor to losing an election,²⁵ or that most Republicans believe that red states should secede,²⁶ could serve to exacerbate partisan polarization alongside any effects on perceived citizen competence. The consequences of explicitly partisan survey clickbait deserve future investigation.²⁷

Finally, we examined factors that affect the incentives faced by producers of survey clickbait. We did so by examining our treatment’s effect on attitudes towards the survey clickbait purveyors: pollsters and journalists. We found little evidence that the polling industry’s reputation suffers as a result of survey clickbait about public incompetence, and no evidence of reputational impacts on journalists. Though a complete analysis of the underlying incentive structure is beyond the scope of this paper, this suggests that one potential avenue for limiting survey clickbait—self-interested self-policing—may not work. However, in order to distinguish the effects of the clickbait information from source cues, our treatments omitted references to specific pollster and randomized the purported source of the headline. Though we think this is a good feature of an initial investigation, it leaves open the possibility that exposure to clickbait could have narrower reputational impacts on specific polling firms and media organizations.

²⁵Benjamin Fearnow, “Majority of Democrats Prefer Meteor Wiping Out Humanity Over Trump Re-election: New Hampshire Poll,” *Newsweek*, February 8, 2020.

²⁶Madison Hall and Brian Metzger, “Majority of Trump voters believe it’s ‘time to split the country’ in two, new poll finds,” *Business Insider*, October 1, 2021.

²⁷We also note that we examined the effect of survey clickbait outside the context of other information that citizens may encounter, e.g. arguments that public ignorance justifies voting restrictions. It is possible that the headlines we studied prime people to be more susceptible to such arguments even in the absence of a direct effect.

In sum, our findings show that survey clickbait can have deleterious social consequences, and suggest a number of lines of inquiry regarding the nature of the problem. The twin findings that survey clickbait about public incompetence negatively impacts perceptions of the public’s democratic competence but does little damage to the reputations of the media or polling industry suggests that perverse incentives may contribute to the use of misleading poll reporting. Given this, it is essential that journalists and pollsters work together to develop professional standards for quality and ethics in reporting on polls—perhaps building on the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) Transparency Initiative—and that responsible observers call out violations of these standards. Without sustained attention to untrustworthy coverage of public opinion polls, we see little evidence that producers will have incentives to self-police.

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Appendix to
Misusing Polls in the Media:
The Consequences of Survey Clickbait

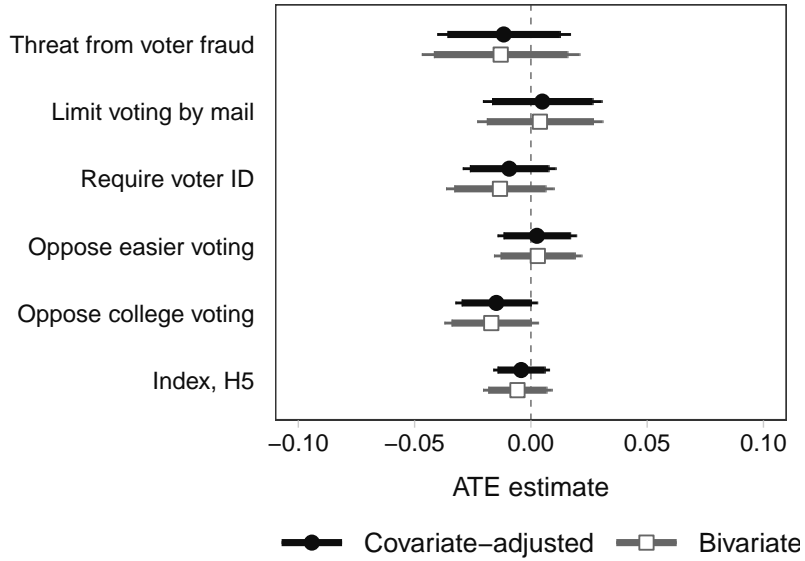
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A Supplemental Figures

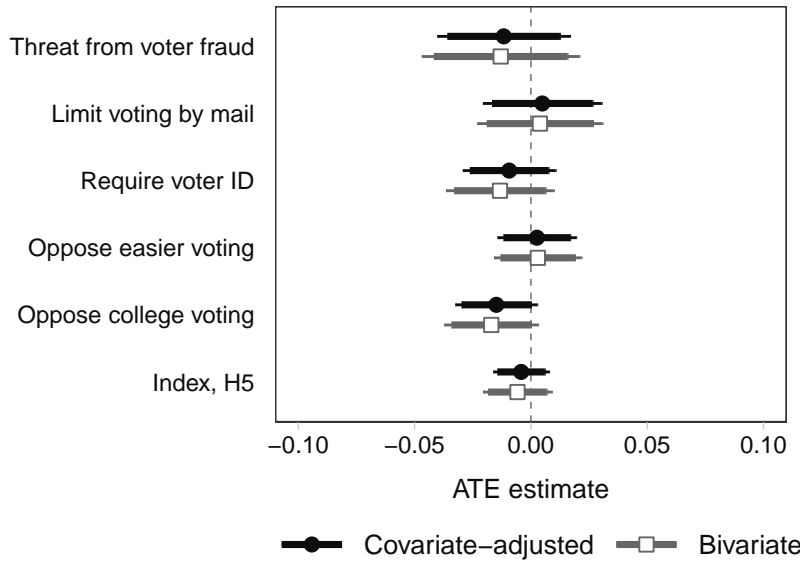
Figures A.1 through A.3 compare the treatment group to the placebo condition. These figures are otherwise identical to Figures 4 through 6.

Figure A.1: Comparison to Placebo Conditions, H4.



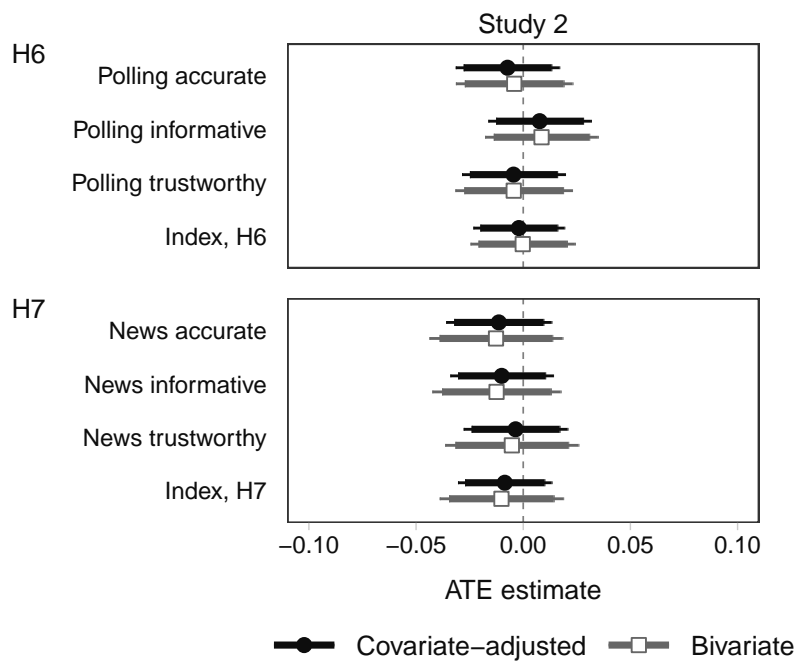
Note: This figure is identical to main text Figure 4, but with treatment effects estimated relative to the placebo condition.

Figure A.2: Comparison to Placebo Conditions, H5.



Note: This figure is identical to main text Figure 4, but with treatment effects estimated relative to the placebo condition.

Figure A.3: Comparison to Placebo Conditions, H6 and H7.



Note: This figure is identical to main text Figure 4, but with treatment effects estimated relative to the placebo condition.

B Regression Tables

This section contains regression tables for all estimates plotted in the main text and Appendix A. For all analyses, we use listwise deletion in the event of item non-response.

- *First-order harms (H1-H3)*: Tables B.1 through B.6 compare the treatment and control groups (plotted in Figure 2). Tables B.7 through B.12 compare the treatment and placebo groups (plotted in Figure 3). Tables B.23 and B.24 present the within-subject estimates.
- *Support for voting restrictions (H4-H5)*: Tables B.13 through B.15 compare the treatment and control groups (plotted in Figures 4 and 5). Tables B.16 through B.18 compare the treatment and placebo groups (plotted in Figures A.1 and A.2).
- *Reputation of journalists and pollsters (H6-H7)*: Tables B.19 and B.20 compare the treatment and control groups (plotted in Figure 6). Tables B.21 and B.22 compare the treatment and placebo groups (plotted in Figure A.3).

In each table,

- the title notes the study, hypothesis number, and comparison group (control or placebo).
- each pair of columns presents the estimates without and with covariate adjustment.
- the labels above each pair of columns note the dependent variable. The order matches the order of the main text figure.
- HC1 robust standard errors appear in parentheses.
- one-sided p-values are denoted as follows: $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$. These notations only appear in the rows containing the treatment effect estimates (i.e., they are omitted from the intercept and the covariates used for adjustment).

In the covariate-adjusted models, the covariates were selected using the following, preregistered procedure. We committed to this procedure because it is a principled way to identify all of the prognostic covariates after data collection.

- Subset the data to the control group.
- Select the optimal penalty for LASSO using cross-validation.
- Using the optimal penalty, run LASSO and store all covariates that are retained.
- Use this set of covariates in the covariate-adjusted estimates.
- Repeat this procedure for every dependent variable.

B.1 Hypotheses 1-3 (rst-order harms)

Table B.1: Table of plotted estimates, study 1, hypothesis 1, vs. control group.

	Public informed		Copartisan informed		Outpartisan informed	
Constant	0:513 (0:008)	0:130 (0:027)	0:656 (0:007)	0:279 (0:030)	0:430 (0:008)	0:138 (0:028)
Treatment	0:071 (0:011) $p=0.000$	0:068 (0:009) $p=0.000$	0:021 (0:010) $p=0.014$	0:018 (0:008) $p=0.016$	0:024 (0:012) $p=0.023$	0:027 (0:009) $p=0.002$
Attention to politics		0:110 (0:024)		0:036 (0:021)		0:025 (0:025)
Social media: Facebook				0:013 (0:011)		0:006 (0:013)
Social media: Twitter		0:031 (0:010)		0:010 (0:009)		
Social media: Instagram				0:002 (0:010)		0:016 (0:010)
Social media: Youtube		0:017 (0:017)		0:007 (0:017)		
Social media: Tiktok		0:001 (0:010)		0:011 (0:010)		
Social media: Snapchat						0:020 (0:011)
Social media: Doromojo		0:113 (0:021)		0:027 (0:024)		0:060 (0:024)
Informed: You		0:101 (0:026)		0:020 (0:024)		0:051 (0:027)
Informed: Young people		0:042 (0:019)		0:029 (0:018)		0:044 (0:021)
Informed: Voters		0:292 (0:027)		0:070 (0:023)		0:079 (0:027)
Informed: Republicans		0:095 (0:034)				0:432 (0:025)
Informed: Democrats		0:060 (0:034)				0:372 (0:034)
Informed: Copartisans		0:024 (0:037)		0:429 (0:025)		0:537 (0:038)
Informed: Outpartisans		0:015 (0:035)		0:146 (0:018)		
Con dence: Democracy		0:111 (0:021)		0:007 (0:019)		0:105 (0:021)
Con dence: Small business				0:058 (0:021)		0:004 (0:024)
Con dence: Education		0:086 (0:020)		0:070 (0:019)		0:081 (0:022)
Con dence: Catholic Church		0:093 (0:017)		0:032 (0:017)		0:117 (0:018)
Con dence: Tech companies		0:044 (0:021)		0:002 (0:019)		0:072 (0:021)
News days per week		0:008 (0:003)				0:006 (0:003)
Party ID (7-point)				0:001 (0:002)		0:002 (0:003)
Adj. R ²	0:015	0:367	0:002	0:256	0:001	0:410
Num. obs.	2674	2674	2395	2395	2395	2395

Table B.2: Table of plotted estimates, study 1, hypothesis 2, vs. control group.

	Cast informed votes		Qualified to vote		Index, H2	
Constant	0.524 (0.007)	0.091 (0.030)	0.584 (0.007)	0.281 (0.030)	0.554 (0.006)	0.186 (0.025)
Treatment	0.035 (0.010) $p=0$	0.034 (0.008) $p=0$	0.035 (0.010) $p=0$	0.034 (0.009) $p=0$	0.035 (0.009) $p=0$	0.034 (0.007) $p=0$
Attention to politics		0.113 (0.021)		0.075 (0.023)		0.094 (0.018)
Social media: Facebook		0.030 (0.011)		0.003 (0.013)		0.013 (0.010)
Social media: Twitter		0.031 (0.009)		0.015 (0.010)		0.023 (0.008)
Social media: Instagram		0.022 (0.010)		0.012 (0.011)		0.016 (0.008)
Social media: Youtube		0.005 (0.016)		0.020 (0.016)		0.013 (0.013)
Social media: Tiktok		0.011 (0.010)		0.013 (0.010)		0.013 (0.008)
Social media: Snapchat		0.001 (0.010)				0.003 (0.009)
Social media: Doromojo		0.124 (0.020)		0.096 (0.019)		0.109 (0.016)
Informed: You		0.047 (0.023)		0.067 (0.024)		0.056 (0.019)
Informed: Young people		0.038 (0.018)		0.023 (0.019)		0.030 (0.015)
Informed: Voters		0.171 (0.024)		0.184 (0.025)		0.177 (0.020)
Informed: Republicans		0.069 (0.030)		0.012 (0.038)		0.041 (0.028)
Informed: Democrats		0.062 (0.031)		0.024 (0.039)		0.044 (0.029)
Informed: Copartisans		0.074 (0.032)		0.045 (0.041)		0.060 (0.030)
Informed: Outpartisans		0.014 (0.030)		0.072 (0.038)		0.029 (0.028)
Confidence: Democracy		0.182 (0.019)		0.120 (0.020)		0.151 (0.016)
Confidence: Small business		0.006 (0.021)		0.027 (0.023)		0.017 (0.018)
Confidence: Education		0.108 (0.019)		0.106 (0.022)		0.107 (0.017)
Confidence: Catholic Church		0.125 (0.016)		0.074 (0.017)		0.099 (0.013)
Confidence: Tech companies		0.032 (0.018)		0.029 (0.020)		0.030 (0.016)
News days per week		0.006 (0.002)		0.004 (0.003)		0.005 (0.002)
Party ID (7-point)		0.006 (0.002)		0.010 (0.002)		0.008 (0.002)
Adj. R ²	0.004	0.369	0.004	0.239	0.005	0.394
Num. obs.	2675	2675	2675	2675	2675	2675

Table B.3: Table of plotted estimates, study 1, hypothesis 3, vs. control group.

	Confidence in US democracy	
Constant	0.560 (0.007)	0.102 (0.025)
Treatment	0.024 (0.011) $p=0.012$	0.025 (0.007) $p=0.000$
Attention to politics		0.047 (0.018)
Social media: Twitter		0.018 (0.008)
Social media: Youtube		0.010 (0.015)
Social media: Tiktok		0.029 (0.009)
Social media: Snapchat		0.009 (0.009)
Social media: Doromojo		0.073 (0.021)
Informed: You		0.003 (0.020)
Informed: Young people		0.010 (0.015)
Informed: Voters		0.009 (0.020)
Informed: Democrats		0.050 (0.025)
Informed: Copartisans		0.038 (0.025)
Informed: Outpartisans		0.025 (0.020)
Confidence: Democracy		0.599 (0.018)
Confidence: Small business		0.028 (0.019)
Confidence: Education		0.019 (0.017)
Confidence: Catholic Church		0.066 (0.014)
Confidence: Tech companies		0.037 (0.017)
Party ID (7-point)		0.005 (0.002)
Adj. R ²	0.002	0.538
Num. obs.	2675	2675

Table B.4: Table of plotted estimates, study 2, hypothesis 1, vs. control group.

	Public informed	
Constant	0.468 (0.008)	0.186 (0.023)
Treatment	0.035 (0.012) $p=0.001$	0.033 (0.010) $p=0.000$
Social media: Twitter		0.015 (0.013)
Social media: Youtube		0.008 (0.011)
Social media: Tiktok		0.002 (0.014)
Social media: Snapchat		0.010 (0.015)
Social media: Doromojo		0.087 (0.036)
Informed: Young people		0.062 (0.022)
Informed: Voters		0.292 (0.026)
Informed: MCs		0.014 (0.020)
Informed: Twitter		0.057 (0.024)
Con dence: Democracy		0.042 (0.021)
Con dence: Education		0.031 (0.022)
Con dence: Catholic Church		0.055 (0.018)
Con dence: Tech companies		0.041 (0.022)
Adj. R ²	0.005	0.307
Num. obs.	1608	1608

Table B.5: Table of plotted estimates, study 2, hypothesis 2, vs. control group.

	Cast informed votes		Qualified to vote		Index, H2	
Constant	0:487 (0:009)	0:118 (0:020)	0:548 (0:009)	0:263 (0:022)	0:517 (0:008)	0:185 (0:018)
Treatment	0:029 (0:013) $p=0.012$	0:031 (0:011) $p=0.002$	0:007 (0:014) $p=0.305$	0:009 (0:012) $p=0.233$	0:017 (0:011) $p=0.061$	0:019 (0:009) $p=0.021$
Attention to politics		0:017 (0:020)				
Social media: Twitter				0:022 (0:016)		
Social media: Tiktok				0:011 (0:016)		
Social media: Doromojo		0:144 (0:033)		0:070 (0:038)		0:101 (0:024)
Informed: Young people		0:022 (0:024)		0:064 (0:027)		0:042 (0:021)
Informed: Voters		0:296 (0:029)		0:279 (0:031)		0:288 (0:024)
Informed: MCs		0:028 (0:022)		0:031 (0:026)		0:031 (0:019)
Informed: Twitter		0:002 (0:024)		0:020 (0:029)		0:005 (0:021)
Confidence: Democracy		0:136 (0:025)		0:026 (0:027)		0:081 (0:021)
Confidence: Education		0:058 (0:026)		0:092 (0:028)		0:076 (0:023)
Confidence: Catholic Church		0:059 (0:020)		0:044 (0:023)		0:054 (0:018)
Confidence: Tech companies		0:042 (0:026)				0:011 (0:022)
News days per week						0:002 (0:002)
Party ID (7-point)		0:005 (0:003)		0:003 (0:003)		0:003 (0:002)
Adj. R ²	0:003	0:298	0:000	0:178	0:001	0:315
Num. obs.	1608	1608	1606	1606	1606	1606

Table B.6: Table of plotted estimates, study 2, hypothesis 3, vs. control group.

	Confidence in US democracy	
Constant	0.542 (0.010)	0.115 (0.032)
Treatment	0.002 (0.014) $p=0.545$	0.007 (0.010) $p=0.264$
Attention to politics		0.023 (0.024)
Social media: Facebook		0.021 (0.013)
Social media: Twitter		0.016 (0.013)
Social media: Youtube		0.012 (0.013)
Social media: Tiktok		0.043 (0.014)
Social media: Snapchat		0.015 (0.015)
Social media: Doromojo		0.011 (0.035)
Informed: You		0.003 (0.027)
Informed: Young people		0.043 (0.021)
Informed: Voters		0.100 (0.025)
Informed: MCs		0.025 (0.022)
Informed: Business		0.032 (0.026)
Informed: Twitter		0.015 (0.025)
Confidence: Democracy		0.532 (0.024)
Confidence: Small business		0.009 (0.027)
Confidence: Education		0.046 (0.023)
Confidence: Catholic Church		0.037 (0.020)
Confidence: Tech companies		0.035 (0.025)
News days per week		0.003 (0.003)
Party ID (7-point)		0.005 (0.003)
Adj. R ²	0.001	0.469
Num. obs.	1608	1608

Table B.7: Table of plotted estimates, study 1, hypothesis 1, vs. placebo group.

	Public informed		Copartisan informed		Outpartisan informed	
Constant	0:501 (0:008)	0:121 (0:028)	0:658 (0:007)	0:272 (0:030)	0:423 (0:009)	0:116 (0:030)
Treatment	0:058 (0:012) $p=0.000$	0:055 (0:009) $p=0.000$	0:023 (0:010) $p=0.012$	0:019 (0:009) $p=0.016$	0:017 (0:013) $p=0.085$	0:017 (0:010) $p=0.041$
Attention to politics		0:081 (0:024)		0:075 (0:021)		0:024 (0:027)
Social media: Facebook				0:019 (0:012)		0:004 (0:013)
Social media: Twitter		0:037 (0:010)		0:018 (0:009)		
Social media: Instagram				0:014 (0:010)		0:006 (0:011)
Social media: Youtube		0:001 (0:018)		0:006 (0:017)		
Social media: Tiktok		0:006 (0:011)		0:002 (0:010)		
Social media: Snapchat						0:020 (0:012)
Social media: Doromojo		0:112 (0:024)		0:037 (0:024)		0:052 (0:026)
Informed: You		0:086 (0:026)		0:038 (0:024)		0:065 (0:028)
Informed: Young people		0:076 (0:021)		0:025 (0:018)		0:062 (0:022)
Informed: Voters		0:272 (0:028)		0:064 (0:026)		0:085 (0:029)
Informed: Republicans		0:108 (0:033)				0:068 (0:036)
Informed: Democrats		0:052 (0:035)				0:198 (0:028)
Informed: Copartisans		0:054 (0:037)		0:438 (0:025)		
Informed: Outpartisans		0:015 (0:034)		0:151 (0:020)		0:498 (0:039)
Con dence: Democracy		0:094 (0:022)		0:046 (0:019)		0:141 (0:023)
Con dence: Small business				0:039 (0:022)		0:000 (0:024)
Con dence: Education		0:089 (0:021)		0:054 (0:020)		0:040 (0:023)
Con dence: Catholic Church		0:088 (0:018)		0:035 (0:018)		0:109 (0:020)
Con dence: Tech companies		0:041 (0:022)		0:026 (0:020)		0:107 (0:023)
News days per week		0:006 (0:003)				0:008 (0:003)
Party ID (7-point)				0:001 (0:002)		0:000 (0:003)
Adj. R ²	0:010	0:342	0:002	0:262	0:000	0:403
Num. obs.	2538	2538	2270	2270	2270	2270

Table B.8: Table of plotted estimates, study 1, hypothesis 2, vs. placebo group.

	Cast informed votes		Qualified to vote		Index, H2	
Constant	0.510 (0.008)	0.128 (0.030)	0.573 (0.008)	0.249 (0.031)	0.541 (0.007)	0.188 (0.025)
Treatment	0.020 (0.011) $p=0.032$	0.019 (0.008) $p=0.012$	0.023 (0.011) $p=0.015$	0.022 (0.009) $p=0.008$	0.022 (0.009) $p=0.011$	0.021 (0.007) $p=0.002$
Attention to politics		0.133 (0.023)		0.096 (0.023)		0.114 (0.019)
Social media: Facebook		0.009 (0.012)		0.002 (0.013)		0.005 (0.010)
Social media: Twitter		0.034 (0.009)		0.003 (0.010)		0.019 (0.008)
Social media: Instagram		0.026 (0.010)		0.022 (0.011)		0.024 (0.009)
Social media: Youtube		0.034 (0.016)		0.019 (0.017)		0.026 (0.014)
Social media: Tiktok		0.017 (0.010)		0.006 (0.010)		0.012 (0.009)
Social media: Snapchat		0.009 (0.010)				0.005 (0.009)
Social media: Doromojo		0.125 (0.021)		0.100 (0.020)		0.113 (0.016)
Informed: You		0.095 (0.023)		0.088 (0.024)		0.091 (0.019)
Informed: Young people		0.028 (0.019)		0.030 (0.021)		0.029 (0.016)
Informed: Voters		0.167 (0.025)		0.170 (0.027)		0.169 (0.020)
Informed: Republicans		0.071 (0.029)		0.045 (0.036)		0.058 (0.026)
Informed: Democrats		0.067 (0.031)		0.062 (0.036)		0.064 (0.027)
Informed: Copartisans		0.061 (0.032)		0.059 (0.038)		0.060 (0.028)
Informed: Outpartisans		0.005 (0.029)		0.006 (0.035)		0.006 (0.026)
Confidence: Democracy		0.189 (0.020)		0.128 (0.022)		0.159 (0.017)
Confidence: Small business		0.041 (0.021)		0.004 (0.023)		0.023 (0.018)
Confidence: Education		0.125 (0.020)		0.113 (0.023)		0.119 (0.018)
Confidence: Catholic Church		0.125 (0.017)		0.084 (0.018)		0.104 (0.014)
Confidence: Tech companies		0.031 (0.019)		0.027 (0.022)		0.029 (0.017)
News days per week		0.003 (0.002)		0.004 (0.003)		0.003 (0.002)
Party ID (7-point)		0.005 (0.002)		0.010 (0.002)		0.007 (0.002)
Adj. R ²	0.001	0.382	0.001	0.246	0.002	0.407
Num. obs.	2538	2538	2538	2538	2538	2538

Table B.9: Table of plotted estimates, study 1, hypothesis 3, vs. placebo group.

	Confidence in US democracy	
Constant	0.540 (0.008)	0.128 (0.027)
Treatment	0.004 (0.011) $p=0.351$	0.006 (0.008) $p=0.217$
Attention to politics		0.081 (0.020)
Social media: Twitter		0.008 (0.008)
Social media: Youtube		0.019 (0.015)
Social media: Tiktok		0.016 (0.009)
Social media: Snapchat		0.005 (0.009)
Social media: Doromojo		0.096 (0.022)
Informed: You		0.049 (0.021)
Informed: Young people		0.024 (0.017)
Informed: Voters		0.020 (0.022)
Informed: Democrats		0.066 (0.026)
Informed: Copartisans		0.073 (0.027)
Informed: Outpartisans		0.007 (0.019)
Confidence: Democracy		0.590 (0.019)
Confidence: Small business		0.014 (0.020)
Confidence: Education		0.051 (0.018)
Confidence: Catholic Church		0.087 (0.015)
Confidence: Tech companies		0.014 (0.017)
Party ID (7-point)		0.006 (0.002)
Adj. R ²	0.000	0.525
Num. obs.	2538	2538

Table B.10: Table of plotted estimates, study 2, hypothesis 1, vs. placebo group.

	Public informed	
Constant	0.465 (0.008)	0.174 (0.021)
Treatment	0.032 (0.012) $p=0.004$	0.031 (0.010) $p=0.001$
Social media: Twitter		0.022 (0.013)
Social media: Youtube		0.014 (0.011)
Social media: Tiktok		0.010 (0.014)
Social media: Snapchat		0.003 (0.016)
Social media: Doromojo		0.100 (0.036)
Informed: Young people		0.032 (0.022)
Informed: Voters		0.328 (0.026)
Informed: MCs		0.022 (0.020)
Informed: Twitter		0.084 (0.025)
Con dence: Democracy		0.031 (0.021)
Con dence: Education		0.024 (0.023)
Con dence: Catholic Church		0.063 (0.019)
Con dence: Tech companies		0.010 (0.021)
Adj. R ²	0.004	0.336
Num. obs.	1567	1567

Table B.11: Table of plotted estimates, study 2, hypothesis 2, vs. placebo group.

	Cast informed votes		Qualified to vote		Index, H2	
Constant	0.476 (0.009)	0.102 (0.022)	0.556 (0.010)	0.267 (0.023)	0.516 (0.008)	0.195 (0.020)
Treatment	0.018 (0.013) $p=0.083$	0.020 (0.011) $p=0.032$	0.014 (0.014) $p=0.145$	0.016 (0.012) $p=0.102$	0.016 (0.011) $p=0.079$	0.018 (0.009) $p=0.025$
Attention to politics		0.031 (0.020)				
Social media: Twitter				0.009 (0.016)		
Social media: Tiktok				0.027 (0.016)		
Social media: Doromojo		0.116 (0.031)		0.043 (0.041)		0.074 (0.024)
Informed: Young people		0.017 (0.024)		0.063 (0.028)		0.039 (0.021)
Informed: Voters		0.319 (0.028)		0.248 (0.032)		0.285 (0.023)
Informed: MCs		0.001 (0.022)		0.018 (0.025)		0.011 (0.019)
Informed: Twitter		0.065 (0.026)		0.027 (0.030)		0.038 (0.022)
Confidence: Democracy		0.136 (0.024)		0.085 (0.026)		0.118 (0.020)
Confidence: Education		0.048 (0.026)		0.056 (0.028)		0.054 (0.022)
Confidence: Catholic Church		0.061 (0.020)		0.052 (0.023)		0.059 (0.017)
Confidence: Tech companies		0.041 (0.025)				0.005 (0.022)
News days per week						0.001 (0.002)
Party ID (7-point)		0.001 (0.003)		0.005 (0.003)		0.004 (0.002)
Adj. R ²	0.001	0.321	0.000	0.171	0.001	0.329
Num. obs.	1567	1567	1566	1566	1566	1566

Table B.12: Table of plotted estimates, study 2, hypothesis 3, vs. placebo group.

	Confidence in US democracy	
Constant	0.543 (0.010)	0.122 (0.034)
Treatment	0.000 (0.014) $p=0.511$	0.008 (0.011) $p=0.216$
Attention to politics		0.028 (0.026)
Social media: Facebook		0.031 (0.012)
Social media: Twitter		0.014 (0.014)
Social media: Youtube		0.010 (0.013)
Social media: Tiktok		0.040 (0.015)
Social media: Snapchat		0.014 (0.017)
Social media: Doromojo		0.025 (0.033)
Informed: You		0.016 (0.028)
Informed: Young people		0.032 (0.022)
Informed: Voters		0.101 (0.025)
Informed: MCs		0.015 (0.021)
Informed: Business		0.029 (0.025)
Informed: Twitter		0.010 (0.027)
Confidence: Democracy		0.566 (0.023)
Confidence: Small business		0.039 (0.028)
Confidence: Education		0.049 (0.024)
Confidence: Catholic Church		0.044 (0.020)
Confidence: Tech companies		0.007 (0.024)
News days per week		0.004 (0.003)
Party ID (7-point)		0.003 (0.003)
Adj. R ²	0.001	0.482
Num. obs.	1565	1565

B.2 Hypotheses 4-5 (support for voting restrictions)

Table B.13: Table of plotted estimates, study 1, hypothesis 4, vs. control group.

	Threat from uninformed		Restrict on uninformed		Pass civics test		Too many uninformed		Index, H4	
Constant	0.687 (0.010)	0.862 (0.047)	0.452 (0.008)	0.415 (0.035)	0.487 (0.008)	0.436 (0.037)	0.677 (0.006)	0.734 (0.025)	0.538 (0.006)	0.527 (0.026)
Treatment	0.020 (0.015) $p=0.089$	0.022 (0.014) $p=0.063$	0.023 (0.012) $p=0.024$	0.019 (0.011) $p=0.043$	0.021 (0.012) $p=0.044$	0.017 (0.011) $p=0.068$	0.024 (0.009) $p=0.004$	0.023 (0.009) $p=0.004$	0.022 (0.009) $p=0.005$	0.019 (0.008) $p=0.008$
Attention to politics		0.011 (0.036)		0.006 (0.026)		0.005 (0.026)		0.045 (0.021)		0.018 (0.019)
Social media: Facebook		0.028 (0.018)		0.012 (0.015)		0.026 (0.016)		0.008 (0.012)		0.015 (0.011)
Social media: Twitter		0.019 (0.015)		0.039 (0.012)		0.021 (0.013)		0.002 (0.009)		0.019 (0.009)
Social media: Instagram		0.016 (0.017)		0.036 (0.013)		0.049 (0.014)		0.019 (0.010)		0.034 (0.010)
Social media: Youtube		0.039 (0.028)		0.009 (0.019)		0.016 (0.021)				0.007 (0.014)
Social media: Tiktok		0.008 (0.017)		0.004 (0.013)		0.007 (0.013)		0.010 (0.010)		0.007 (0.009)
Social media: Snapchat		0.025 (0.017)		0.039 (0.013)		0.007 (0.014)		0.019 (0.010)		0.022 (0.010)
Social media: Doromajo		0.075 (0.041)		0.118 (0.023)		0.165 (0.021)		0.053 (0.022)		0.112 (0.017)
Informed: You		0.033 (0.035)		0.005 (0.028)		0.016 (0.028)		0.080 (0.022)		0.031 (0.021)
Informed: Young people		0.086 (0.031)		0.047 (0.023)		0.042 (0.023)		0.006 (0.018)		0.029 (0.017)
Informed: Voters		0.025 (0.040)		0.006 (0.030)				0.065 (0.023)		0.030 (0.022)
Informed: Republicans		0.032 (0.037)		0.031 (0.041)		0.004 (0.026)				0.012 (0.021)
Informed: Democrats		0.089 (0.040)		0.142 (0.042)		0.161 (0.034)		0.089 (0.029)		0.133 (0.025)
Informed: Copartisans		0.114 (0.048)		0.118 (0.044)		0.140 (0.040)		0.048 (0.027)		0.104 (0.029)
Informed: Outpartisans				0.007 (0.041)				0.032 (0.023)		
Con dence: Democracy		0.113 (0.030)		0.076 (0.024)		0.034 (0.026)		0.063 (0.019)		0.057 (0.018)
Con dence: Small business		0.052 (0.034)		0.025 (0.026)		0.016 (0.027)		0.052 (0.020)		0.014 (0.019)
Con dence: Education		0.090 (0.032)		0.020 (0.024)		0.057 (0.026)		0.064 (0.019)		0.033 (0.018)
Con dence: Catholic Church		0.054 (0.027)		0.147 (0.020)		0.145 (0.021)				0.096 (0.015)
Con dence: Tech companies		0.075 (0.031)		0.117 (0.025)		0.127 (0.025)		0.046 (0.019)		0.097 (0.018)
News days per week		0.003 (0.004)		0.019 (0.003)		0.018 (0.003)		0.007 (0.002)		0.014 (0.002)
Party ID (7-point)		0.026 (0.004)		0.013 (0.003)		0.015 (0.003)		0.012 (0.002)		0.013 (0.002)
Adj. R ²	0.000	0.071	0.001	0.145	0.001	0.129	0.002	0.075	0.002	0.147
Num. obs.	2670	2670	2675	2675	2675	2675	2675	2675	2675	2675

Table B.14: Table of plotted estimates, study 2, hypothesis 4, vs. control group.

	Threat from uninfl		Restrict on uninfl		Pass civics test		Too many uninfl		Index, H4	
Constant	0:702 (0:013)	0:997 (0:048)	0:429 (0:011)	0:560 (0:045)	0:462 (0:012)	0:475 (0:046)	0:703 (0:009)	0:718 (0:037)	0:532 (0:008)	0:584 (0:035)
Treatment	0:019 (0:019) $p=0.160$	0:027 (0:019) $p=0.077$	0:003 (0:016) $p=0.419$	0:008 (0:016) $p=0.297$	0:024 (0:017) $p=0.079$	0:028 (0:016) $p=0.043$	0:007 (0:012) $p=0.718$	0:004 (0:012) $p=0.621$	0:006 (0:012) $p=0.295$	0:011 (0:012) $p=0.172$
Attention to politics		0:034 (0:043)		0:063 (0:036)		0:094 (0:039)		0:066 (0:029)		0:032 (0:028)
Social media: Facebook		0:033 (0:022)		0:014 (0:020)		0:027 (0:020)		0:009 (0:015)		0:011 (0:014)
Social media: Twitter		0:010 (0:023)		0:027 (0:019)						0:006 (0:015)
Social media: Instagram				0:029 (0:021)		0:006 (0:021)		0:015 (0:015)		0:013 (0:015)
Social media: Youtube				0:015 (0:019)		0:038 (0:020)		0:006 (0:014)		0:019 (0:014)
Social media: Tiktok		0:034 (0:025)		0:076 (0:022)		0:073 (0:022)		0:035 (0:017)		0:061 (0:016)
Social media: Snapchat		0:031 (0:026)		0:077 (0:024)		0:054 (0:024)		0:010 (0:018)		0:047 (0:018)
Social media: Doromojo				0:202 (0:041)		0:218 (0:048)		0:036 (0:036)		0:152 (0:033)
Informed: You		0:053 (0:044)		0:072 (0:039)		0:079 (0:041)		0:044 (0:030)		0:065 (0:029)
Informed: Young people		0:078 (0:040)		0:068 (0:033)		0:067 (0:034)		0:075 (0:026)		0:069 (0:025)
Informed: Voters		0:138 (0:042)		0:104 (0:037)		0:113 (0:039)		0:119 (0:030)		0:111 (0:028)
Informed: MCs		0:054 (0:036)		0:060 (0:032)		0:057 (0:034)		0:003 (0:025)		0:040 (0:024)
Informed: Business		0:064 (0:044)		0:059 (0:038)		0:084 (0:042)		0:032 (0:030)		0:059 (0:030)
Informed: Twitter		0:040 (0:040)		0:107 (0:036)				0:022 (0:027)		0:020 (0:027)
Con dence: Democracy		0:101 (0:037)		0:082 (0:033)		0:049 (0:036)		0:058 (0:026)		0:064 (0:026)
Con dence: Small business		0:033 (0:041)		0:106 (0:037)		0:030 (0:038)		0:092 (0:029)		0:016 (0:028)
Con dence: Education		0:097 (0:038)		0:015 (0:036)		0:067 (0:038)		0:036 (0:025)		0:031 (0:027)
Con dence: Catholic Church				0:004 (0:028)		0:043 (0:030)		0:053 (0:022)		0:034 (0:021)
Con dence: Tech companies				0:073 (0:035)		0:102 (0:036)				0:066 (0:027)
News days per week		0:002 (0:005)		0:002 (0:004)		0:007 (0:004)		0:003 (0:003)		0:002 (0:003)
Party ID (7-point)		0:024 (0:005)		0:007 (0:004)		0:003 (0:004)		0:005 (0:003)		0:005 (0:003)
Adj. R ²	0:000	0:079	0:001	0:106	0:001	0:071	0:000	0:069	0:000	0:093
Num. obs.	1608	1608	1606	1606	1606	1606	1607	1607	1606	1606

Table B.15: Table of plotted estimates, study 1, hypothesis 5, vs. control group.

	Threat from fraud		Mail voting		Require ID		Make easier		College polls		Index, H5	
Constant	0:418 (0:012)	0:744 (0:046)	0:573 (0:009)	0:441 (0:035)	0:701 (0:008)	0:690 (0:033)	0:216 (0:006)	0:416 (0:026)	0:295 (0:007)	0:517 (0:025)	0:446 (0:005)	0:516 (0:019)
Treatment	0:000 (0:017) <i>p</i> =0.494	0:002 (0:014) <i>p</i> =0.558	0:006 (0:013) <i>p</i> =0.678	0:008 (0:013) <i>p</i> =0.729	0:002 (0:012) <i>p</i> =0.574	0:004 (0:010) <i>p</i> =0.636	0:020 (0:009) <i>p</i> =0.015	0:019 (0:008) <i>p</i> =0.011	0:001 (0:010) <i>p</i> =0.445	0:002 (0:009) <i>p</i> =0.404	0:003 (0:007) <i>p</i> =0.332	0:002 (0:006) <i>p</i> =0.346
Attention to politics		0:056 (0:033)		0:050 (0:029)		0:013 (0:024)				0:033 (0:022)		0:002 (0:014)
Social media: Facebook		0:046 (0:017)		0:041 (0:018)		0:038 (0:015)		0:001 (0:011)		0:005 (0:012)		0:019 (0:008)
Social media: Twitter		0:014 (0:014)		0:005 (0:014)		0:032 (0:011)				0:022 (0:010)		0:013 (0:007)
Social media: Instagram				0:023 (0:015)		0:014 (0:012)				0:020 (0:010)		0:006 (0:007)
Social media: Youtube		0:014 (0:027)				0:021 (0:018)		0:008 (0:015)				0:006 (0:011)
Social media: Tiktok		0:017 (0:016)		0:017 (0:015)		0:004 (0:012)		0:003 (0:009)		0:010 (0:010)		
Social media: Snapchat				0:036 (0:015)		0:033 (0:012)				0:019 (0:010)		0:014 (0:007)
Social media: Doromojo		0:126 (0:043)		0:096 (0:023)		0:022 (0:022)		0:063 (0:018)		0:017 (0:019)		0:041 (0:011)
Informed: You				0:022 (0:030)		0:024 (0:026)				0:015 (0:023)		0:019 (0:015)
Informed: Young people		0:157 (0:028)		0:060 (0:027)		0:117 (0:022)		0:066 (0:016)		0:139 (0:019)		0:095 (0:013)
Informed: Voters				0:085 (0:036)		0:053 (0:027)		0:044 (0:023)		0:007 (0:025)		0:022 (0:017)
Informed: Republicans		0:328 (0:052)		0:123 (0:037)		0:178 (0:039)		0:126 (0:034)		0:195 (0:030)		0:152 (0:015)
Informed: Democrats		0:169 (0:054)		0:044 (0:037)		0:092 (0:041)		0:127 (0:035)		0:090 (0:025)		0:092 (0:018)
Informed: Copartisans		0:036 (0:058)				0:061 (0:043)		0:076 (0:036)				0:042 (0:022)
Informed: Outpartisans		0:069 (0:053)		0:036 (0:041)		0:024 (0:039)		0:013 (0:034)		0:053 (0:031)		
Con dence: Democracy		0:013 (0:030)		0:030 (0:029)		0:028 (0:022)						0:010 (0:014)
Con dence: Small business		0:076 (0:033)		0:072 (0:030)		0:122 (0:024)		0:029 (0:021)		0:036 (0:022)		0:051 (0:014)
Con dence: Education		0:102 (0:031)		0:071 (0:029)		0:139 (0:023)		0:097 (0:018)		0:125 (0:019)		0:108 (0:014)
Con dence: Catholic Church		0:182 (0:027)		0:111 (0:024)		0:097 (0:019)		0:088 (0:015)		0:066 (0:016)		0:091 (0:011)
Con dence: Tech companies		0:039 (0:031)		0:030 (0:028)		0:062 (0:022)		0:031 (0:018)		0:014 (0:019)		0:013 (0:013)
News days per week		0:013 (0:004)		0:010 (0:003)		0:005 (0:003)		0:006 (0:002)		0:002 (0:003)		0:005 (0:002)
Party ID (7-point)		0:062 (0:004)		0:013 (0:003)		0:033 (0:002)		0:024 (0:002)		0:020 (0:002)		0:022 (0:001)
Adj. R ²	0:000	0:303	0:000	0:106	0:000	0:259	0:001	0:202	0:000	0:221	0:000	0:344
Num. obs.	2673	2673	2675	2675	2675	2675	2675	2675	2675	2675	2675	2675

Table B.16: Table of plotted estimates, study 1, hypothesis 4, vs. placebo group.

	Threat from uninf		Restrict on uninf		Pass civics test		Too many uninf		Index, H4	
Constant	0.698 (0:011)	0.859 (0:047)	0.463 (0:009)	0.453 (0:038)	0.486 (0:009)	0.465 (0:040)	0.691 (0:007)	0.740 (0:028)	0.547 (0:007)	0.555 (0:030)
Treatment	0.009 (0:015) $p=0.285$	0.011 (0:015) $p=0.217$	0.012 (0:012) $p=0.168$	0.009 (0:011) $p=0.206$	0.021 (0:012) $p=0.045$	0.019 (0:012) $p=0.049$	0.010 (0:009) $p=0.146$	0.010 (0:009) $p=0.139$	0.014 (0:009) $p=0.056$	0.013 (0:008) $p=0.062$
Attention to politics		0.056 (0:037)		0.008 (0:027)		0.018 (0:028)		0.005 (0:022)		0.011 (0:020)
Social media: Facebook		0.002 (0:019)		0.020 (0:017)		0.014 (0:017)		0.005 (0:013)		0.013 (0:013)
Social media: Twitter		0.022 (0:016)		0.041 (0:013)		0.030 (0:013)		0.004 (0:010)		0.025 (0:009)
Social media: Instagram		0.019 (0:017)		0.026 (0:013)		0.030 (0:014)		0.011 (0:011)		0.022 (0:010)
Social media: Youtube		0.052 (0:028)		0.022 (0:020)		0.030 (0:021)				0.017 (0:016)
Social media: Tiktok		0.010 (0:017)		0.002 (0:013)		0.003 (0:014)		0.011 (0:010)		0.004 (0:010)
Social media: Snapchat		0.001 (0:018)		0.038 (0:014)		0.034 (0:014)		0.010 (0:011)		0.027 (0:010)
Social media: Doromojo		0.051 (0:044)		0.185 (0:024)		0.177 (0:023)		0.088 (0:023)		0.150 (0:018)
Informed: You		0.055 (0:036)		0.016 (0:028)		0.042 (0:029)		0.108 (0:022)		0.054 (0:021)
Informed: Young people		0.012 (0:032)		0.028 (0:024)		0.014 (0:024)		0.014 (0:019)		0.009 (0:018)
Informed: Voters		0.066 (0:042)		0.023 (0:031)				0.103 (0:024)		0.023 (0:023)
Informed: Republicans		0.048 (0:037)		0.012 (0:042)		0.040 (0:027)				0.018 (0:021)
Informed: Democrats		0.055 (0:040)		0.138 (0:043)		0.122 (0:034)		0.029 (0:029)		0.092 (0:026)
Informed: Copartisans		0.108 (0:047)		0.128 (0:045)		0.074 (0:041)		0.054 (0:028)		0.083 (0:031)
Informed: Outpartisans				0.037 (0:042)				0.011 (0:024)		
Con dence: Democracy		0.098 (0:033)		0.130 (0:026)		0.075 (0:027)		0.094 (0:020)		0.100 (0:020)
Con dence: Small business		0.058 (0:034)		0.088 (0:027)		0.043 (0:027)		0.066 (0:022)		0.021 (0:020)
Con dence: Education		0.075 (0:033)		0.007 (0:026)		0.028 (0:027)		0.066 (0:020)		0.035 (0:019)
Con dence: Catholic Church		0.090 (0:028)		0.106 (0:022)		0.117 (0:023)				0.076 (0:017)
Con dence: Tech companies		0.001 (0:033)		0.163 (0:026)		0.153 (0:026)		0.013 (0:020)		0.110 (0:019)
News days per week		0.008 (0:004)		0.019 (0:003)		0.016 (0:003)		0.005 (0:002)		0.014 (0:002)
Party ID (7-point)		0.023 (0:004)		0.012 (0:003)		0.017 (0:003)		0.009 (0:002)		0.013 (0:002)
Adj. R ²	0.000	0.068	0.000	0.142	0.001	0.124	0.000	0.074	0.001	0.135
Num. obs.	2536	2536	2537	2537	2538	2538	2538	2538	2537	2537

Table B.17: Table of plotted estimates, study 2, hypothesis 4, vs. placebo group.

	Threat from uninfl		Restrict on uninfl		Pass civics test		Too many uninfl		Index, H4	
Constant	0:721 (0:013)	0:991 (0:047)	0:430 (0:011)	0:581 (0:044)	0:457 (0:012)	0:479 (0:047)	0:703 (0:009)	0:727 (0:036)	0:530 (0:008)	0:594 (0:034)
Treatment	0:000 (0:019) $p=0.492$	0:004 (0:019) $p=0.424$	0:002 (0:016) $p=0.449$	0:000 (0:016) $p=0.504$	0:029 (0:017) $p=0.044$	0:025 (0:017) $p=0.065$	0:006 (0:012) $p=0.693$	0:006 (0:012) $p=0.700$	0:008 (0:012) $p=0.250$	0:006 (0:012) $p=0.305$
Attention to politics		0:058 (0:044)		0:001 (0:037)		0:069 (0:039)		0:043 (0:029)		0:040 (0:028)
Social media: Facebook		0:024 (0:021)		0:042 (0:019)		0:013 (0:020)		0:021 (0:014)		0:026 (0:014)
Social media: Twitter		0:036 (0:023)		0:039 (0:020)						0:023 (0:015)
Social media: Instagram				0:026 (0:022)		0:024 (0:021)		0:005 (0:015)		0:021 (0:016)
Social media: Youtube				0:001 (0:019)		0:017 (0:020)		0:016 (0:014)		0:012 (0:014)
Social media: Tiktok		0:014 (0:026)		0:070 (0:022)		0:078 (0:023)		0:010 (0:017)		0:054 (0:017)
Social media: Snapchat		0:021 (0:028)		0:099 (0:025)		0:015 (0:026)		0:006 (0:019)		0:040 (0:019)
Social media: Doromojo				0:148 (0:047)		0:177 (0:049)		0:026 (0:041)		0:119 (0:036)
Informed: You		0:122 (0:045)		0:069 (0:041)		0:095 (0:043)		0:089 (0:030)		0:085 (0:030)
Informed: Young people		0:006 (0:040)		0:021 (0:034)		0:043 (0:036)		0:031 (0:027)		0:032 (0:026)
Informed: Voters		0:158 (0:045)		0:111 (0:038)		0:138 (0:040)		0:156 (0:030)		0:136 (0:029)
Informed: MCs		0:048 (0:035)		0:066 (0:033)		0:071 (0:033)		0:030 (0:024)		0:056 (0:024)
Informed: Business		0:016 (0:043)		0:021 (0:039)		0:111 (0:042)		0:038 (0:030)		0:057 (0:029)
Informed: Twitter		0:060 (0:042)		0:040 (0:037)				0:037 (0:028)		0:005 (0:028)
Con dence: Democracy		0:074 (0:035)		0:108 (0:034)		0:015 (0:036)		0:072 (0:025)		0:064 (0:025)
Con dence: Small business		0:102 (0:042)		0:102 (0:037)		0:040 (0:039)		0:059 (0:027)		0:028 (0:028)
Con dence: Education		0:116 (0:038)		0:028 (0:036)		0:076 (0:038)		0:043 (0:026)		0:031 (0:027)
Con dence: Catholic Church				0:012 (0:029)		0:026 (0:031)		0:053 (0:023)		0:023 (0:022)
Con dence: Tech companies				0:095 (0:035)		0:072 (0:038)				0:057 (0:027)
News days per week		0:010 (0:005)		0:002 (0:004)		0:002 (0:004)		0:009 (0:003)		0:002 (0:003)
Party ID (7-point)		0:026 (0:005)		0:013 (0:004)		0:009 (0:004)		0:009 (0:003)		0:010 (0:003)
Adj. R ²	0:001	0:083	0:001	0:100	0:001	0:056	0:000	0:092	0:000	0:086
Num. obs.	1566	1566	1566	1566	1565	1565	1567	1567	1565	1565

Table B.18: Table of plotted estimates, study 1, hypothesis 5, vs. placebo group.

	Threat from fraud		Mail voting		Require ID		Make easier		College polls		Index, H5	
Constant	0:431 (0:012)	0:737 (0:047)	0:563 (0:010)	0:457 (0:037)	0:712 (0:008)	0:731 (0:034)	0:233 (0:007)	0:481 (0:029)	0:313 (0:007)	0:540 (0:027)	0:455 (0:005)	0:550 (0:019)
Treatment	0:013 (0:017) <i>p</i> =0.774	0:012 (0:015) <i>p</i> =0.789	0:004 (0:014) <i>p</i> =0.389	0:005 (0:013) <i>p</i> =0.353	0:013 (0:012) <i>p</i> =0.870	0:009 (0:010) <i>p</i> =0.820	0:003 (0:010) <i>p</i> =0.379	0:003 (0:009) <i>p</i> =0.382	0:017 (0:010) <i>p</i> =0.951	0:015 (0:009) <i>p</i> =0.951	0:006 (0:008) <i>p</i> =0.778	0:004 (0:006) <i>p</i> =0.752
Attention to politics		0:058 (0:033)		0:062 (0:030)		0:036 (0:024)				0:040 (0:022)		0:004 (0:014)
Social media: Facebook		0:055 (0:018)		0:023 (0:019)		0:026 (0:015)		0:020 (0:012)		0:029 (0:012)		0:025 (0:009)
Social media: Twitter		0:022 (0:015)		0:028 (0:015)		0:026 (0:011)				0:022 (0:010)		0:004 (0:007)
Social media: Instagram				0:008 (0:016)		0:007 (0:012)				0:031 (0:011)		0:006 (0:007)
Social media: Youtube		0:003 (0:027)				0:004 (0:018)		0:003 (0:016)				0:005 (0:011)
Social media: Tiktok		0:010 (0:016)		0:031 (0:015)		0:007 (0:012)		0:015 (0:009)		0:013 (0:011)		
Social media: Snapchat				0:026 (0:015)		0:031 (0:012)				0:029 (0:011)		0:007 (0:007)
Social media: Doromojo		0:119 (0:045)		0:112 (0:022)		0:036 (0:022)		0:011 (0:020)		0:058 (0:019)		0:025 (0:012)
Informed: You				0:043 (0:030)		0:010 (0:024)				0:002 (0:023)		0:009 (0:015)
Informed: Young people		0:153 (0:029)		0:095 (0:028)		0:142 (0:023)		0:061 (0:018)		0:118 (0:020)		0:104 (0:013)
Informed: Voters				0:030 (0:037)		0:091 (0:028)		0:020 (0:025)		0:023 (0:027)		0:031 (0:017)
Informed: Republicans		0:306 (0:051)		0:141 (0:037)		0:154 (0:034)		0:166 (0:034)		0:201 (0:029)		0:169 (0:016)
Informed: Democrats		0:186 (0:054)		0:072 (0:037)		0:165 (0:036)		0:102 (0:035)		0:099 (0:024)		0:105 (0:017)
Informed: Copartisans		0:013 (0:058)				0:017 (0:038)		0:012 (0:036)				0:008 (0:022)
Informed: Outpartisans		0:037 (0:053)		0:047 (0:042)		0:068 (0:035)		0:039 (0:034)		0:072 (0:030)		
Con dence: Democracy		0:012 (0:031)		0:054 (0:029)		0:007 (0:023)						0:021 (0:014)
Con dence: Small business		0:076 (0:034)		0:052 (0:030)		0:129 (0:024)		0:066 (0:022)		0:006 (0:022)		0:030 (0:015)
Con dence: Education		0:098 (0:032)		0:001 (0:030)		0:100 (0:023)		0:096 (0:019)		0:128 (0:020)		0:083 (0:014)
Con dence: Catholic Church		0:173 (0:028)		0:112 (0:025)		0:077 (0:020)		0:070 (0:017)		0:049 (0:017)		0:076 (0:012)
Con dence: Tech companies		0:022 (0:032)		0:031 (0:029)		0:088 (0:022)		0:037 (0:019)		0:017 (0:020)		0:015 (0:014)
News days per week		0:007 (0:004)		0:009 (0:004)		0:001 (0:003)		0:004 (0:002)		0:003 (0:003)		0:003 (0:002)
Party ID (7-point)		0:063 (0:004)		0:015 (0:003)		0:033 (0:003)		0:025 (0:002)		0:024 (0:002)		0:024 (0:002)
Adj. R ²	0:000	0:295	0:000	0:114	0:000	0:266	0:000	0:195	0:001	0:236	0:000	0:346
Num. obs.	2537	2537	2535	2535	2538	2538	2537	2537	2538	2538	2535	2535

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B.3 Hypotheses 6-7 (reputation of journalists and pollsters)

Table B.19: Table of plotted estimates, study 2, hypothesis 6, vs. control group.

	Polling accurate		Polling informative		Polling trustworthy		Index, H6	
Constant	0:440 (0:010)	0:189 (0:033)	0:535 (0:009)	0:212 (0:034)	0:463 (0:010)	0:163 (0:035)	0:479 (0:009)	0:185 (0:030)
Treatment	0:017 (0:014) $p=0.108$	0:018 (0:012) $p=0.068$	0:009 (0:013) $p=0.743$	0:008 (0:012) $p=0.752$	0:009 (0:014) $p=0.249$	0:009 (0:012) $p=0.221$	0:006 (0:012) $p=0.315$	0:007 (0:011) $p=0.271$
Attention to politics		0:017 (0:027)		0:018 (0:029)		0:014 (0:029)		0:001 (0:024)
Social media: Facebook		0:014 (0:015)		0:017 (0:015)		0:019 (0:014)		0:016 (0:013)
Social media: Twitter		0:020 (0:016)		0:033 (0:015)		0:016 (0:016)		0:023 (0:014)
Social media: Instagram		0:037 (0:016)		0:046 (0:016)		0:055 (0:016)		0:046 (0:014)
Social media: Youtube		0:033 (0:015)		0:034 (0:015)		0:013 (0:015)		0:027 (0:013)
Social media: Tiktok		0:042 (0:017)		0:026 (0:017)		0:038 (0:018)		0:035 (0:015)
Social media: Snapchat		0:028 (0:019)		0:025 (0:018)		0:035 (0:019)		0:029 (0:016)
Social media: Doromojo		0:113 (0:040)		0:125 (0:031)		0:043 (0:039)		0:094 (0:031)
Informed: You		0:030 (0:033)		0:046 (0:033)		0:036 (0:032)		
Informed: Young people		0:080 (0:027)		0:043 (0:026)		0:073 (0:026)		0:065 (0:023)
Informed: Voters		0:040 (0:030)		0:051 (0:030)		0:084 (0:030)		0:057 (0:026)
Informed: MCs		0:032 (0:027)		0:089 (0:028)		0:074 (0:027)		0:065 (0:024)
Informed: Business		0:029 (0:032)		0:001 (0:032)		0:005 (0:032)		0:011 (0:027)
Informed: Twitter		0:047 (0:029)		0:022 (0:030)		0:018 (0:029)		0:029 (0:025)
Con dence: Democracy		0:011 (0:028)		0:021 (0:028)		0:010 (0:027)		0:007 (0:024)
Con dence: Small business		0:105 (0:030)		0:030 (0:030)		0:074 (0:030)		0:070 (0:027)
Con dence: Education		0:153 (0:028)		0:134 (0:028)		0:163 (0:028)		0:150 (0:025)
Con dence: Catholic Church		0:052 (0:023)		0:005 (0:022)		0:047 (0:023)		0:031 (0:020)
Con dence: Tech companies		0:092 (0:029)		0:089 (0:028)		0:081 (0:029)		0:088 (0:026)
News days per week				0:008 (0:003)		0:007 (0:003)		0:005 (0:003)
Party ID (7-point)		0:010 (0:003)		0:010 (0:003)		0:010 (0:003)		0:010 (0:003)
Adj. R ²	0:000	0:215	0:000	0:191	0:000	0:222	0:000	0:249
Num. obs.	1606	1606	1606	1606	1606	1606	1606	1606

Table B.20: Table of plotted estimates, study 2, hypothesis 7, vs. control group.

	News accurate		News informative		News trustworthy		Index, H7	
Constant	0:410 (0:011)	0:046 (0:033)	0:515 (0:011)	0:048 (0:034)	0:409 (0:011)	0:021 (0:035)	0:445 (0:010)	0:007 (0:031)
Treatment	0:015 (0:016) $p=0.837$	0:000 (0:012) $p=0.490$	0:011 (0:015) $p=0.757$	0:003 (0:012) $p=0.406$	0:019 (0:016) $p=0.888$	0:003 (0:012) $p=0.595$	0:015 (0:015) $p=0.849$	0:000 (0:011) $p=0.494$
Attention to politics		0:015 (0:026)		0:018 (0:028)		0:007 (0:026)		0:006 (0:024)
Social media: Facebook		0:011 (0:015)		0:026 (0:015)		0:021 (0:015)		0:019 (0:013)
Social media: Twitter				0:008 (0:016)				0:003 (0:014)
Social media: Instagram						0:030 (0:015)		
Social media: Youtube		0:030 (0:015)		0:018 (0:015)		0:048 (0:015)		0:030 (0:014)
Social media: Tiktok		0:030 (0:015)		0:033 (0:016)		0:022 (0:016)		0:030 (0:014)
Social media: Doromojo		0:129 (0:041)		0:041 (0:041)		0:099 (0:039)		0:091 (0:036)
Informed: You				0:034 (0:033)				
Informed: Young people		0:057 (0:027)		0:055 (0:027)		0:055 (0:027)		0:055 (0:024)
Informed: Voters		0:023 (0:029)		0:000 (0:030)		0:007 (0:029)		0:009 (0:027)
Informed: MCs		0:112 (0:026)		0:161 (0:026)		0:108 (0:023)		0:127 (0:023)
Informed: Business		0:032 (0:031)		0:022 (0:032)				0:016 (0:028)
Informed: Twitter		0:023 (0:029)		0:046 (0:029)		0:028 (0:028)		0:034 (0:026)
Con dence: Democracy		0:069 (0:027)		0:035 (0:027)		0:082 (0:027)		0:062 (0:025)
Con dence: Small business		0:133 (0:031)		0:114 (0:030)		0:175 (0:030)		0:141 (0:027)
Con dence: Education		0:263 (0:029)		0:265 (0:028)		0:285 (0:029)		0:273 (0:026)
Con dence: Catholic Church				0:037 (0:022)				0:017 (0:020)
Con dence: Tech companies		0:129 (0:028)		0:151 (0:028)		0:154 (0:028)		0:147 (0:025)
News days per week		0:014 (0:003)		0:016 (0:003)		0:017 (0:003)		0:015 (0:003)
Party ID (7-point)		0:040 (0:003)		0:035 (0:003)		0:039 (0:003)		0:038 (0:003)
Adj. R ²	0:000	0:383	0:000	0:375	0:000	0:403	0:000	0:437
Num. obs.	1606	1606	1606	1606	1606	1606	1606	1606

Table B.21: Table of plotted estimates, study 2, hypothesis 6, vs. placebo group.

	Polling accurate		Polling informative		Polling trustworthy		Index, H6	
Constant	0.427 (0.010)	0.177 (0.032)	0.535 (0.010)	0.208 (0.034)	0.458 (0.010)	0.161 (0.036)	0.474 (0.009)	0.176 (0.029)
Treatment	0.004 (0.014) $p=0.381$	0.007 (0.012) $p=0.276$	0.009 (0.013) $p=0.738$	0.008 (0.012) $p=0.735$	0.004 (0.014) $p=0.374$	0.005 (0.012) $p=0.356$	0.000 (0.012) $p=0.492$	0.002 (0.011) $p=0.425$
Attention to politics		0.023 (0.026)		0.041 (0.028)		0.036 (0.028)		0.027 (0.023)
Social media: Facebook		0.003 (0.015)		0.017 (0.015)		0.018 (0.015)		0.012 (0.013)
Social media: Twitter		0.027 (0.016)		0.038 (0.015)		0.028 (0.016)		0.032 (0.014)
Social media: Instagram		0.022 (0.016)		0.001 (0.016)		0.023 (0.016)		0.015 (0.014)
Social media: Youtube		0.021 (0.015)		0.046 (0.015)		0.025 (0.015)		0.030 (0.013)
Social media: Tiktok		0.007 (0.017)		0.018 (0.017)		0.006 (0.018)		0.010 (0.015)
Social media: Snapchat		0.035 (0.020)		0.034 (0.019)		0.025 (0.020)		0.030 (0.017)
Social media: Doromojo		0.126 (0.037)		0.105 (0.033)		0.081 (0.038)		0.105 (0.031)
Informed: You		0.054 (0.033)		0.024 (0.033)		0.044 (0.031)		
Informed: Young people		0.060 (0.027)		0.023 (0.027)		0.071 (0.027)		0.049 (0.023)
Informed: Voters		0.081 (0.029)		0.101 (0.031)		0.120 (0.030)		0.098 (0.026)
Informed: MCs		0.022 (0.025)		0.033 (0.027)		0.019 (0.026)		0.011 (0.022)
Informed: Business		0.077 (0.030)		0.037 (0.031)		0.042 (0.030)		0.051 (0.026)
Informed: Twitter		0.119 (0.030)		0.066 (0.030)		0.108 (0.030)		0.098 (0.026)
Con dence: Democracy		0.069 (0.027)		0.046 (0.027)		0.040 (0.027)		0.050 (0.023)
Con dence: Small business		0.130 (0.029)		0.061 (0.030)		0.102 (0.030)		0.099 (0.026)
Con dence: Education		0.129 (0.028)		0.112 (0.028)		0.144 (0.028)		0.128 (0.024)
Con dence: Catholic Church		0.016 (0.024)		0.016 (0.024)		0.031 (0.024)		0.010 (0.021)
Con dence: Tech companies		0.099 (0.028)		0.102 (0.029)		0.097 (0.028)		0.101 (0.024)
News days per week				0.004 (0.004)		0.005 (0.003)		0.002 (0.003)
Party ID (7-point)		0.006 (0.003)		0.006 (0.003)		0.005 (0.003)		0.005 (0.003)
Adj. R ²	0.001	0.217	0.000	0.180	0.001	0.230	0.001	0.251
Num. obs.	1565	1565	1564	1564	1565	1565	1564	1564

Table B.22: Table of plotted estimates, study 2, hypothesis 7, vs. placebo group.

	News accurate		News informative		News trustworthy		Index, H7	
Constant	0:438 (0:011)	0:038 (0:034)	0:538 (0:011)	0:032 (0:035)	0:434 (0:011)	0:035 (0:034)	0:470 (0:010)	0:013 (0:031)
Treatment	0:013 (0:016) $p=0.211$	0:011 (0:013) $p=0.182$	0:012 (0:015) $p=0.207$	0:010 (0:012) $p=0.205$	0:005 (0:016) $p=0.369$	0:004 (0:012) $p=0.386$	0:010 (0:015) $p=0.245$	0:009 (0:011) $p=0.220$
Attention to politics		0:045 (0:028)		0:084 (0:029)		0:055 (0:026)		0:065 (0:024)
Social media: Facebook		0:021 (0:015)		0:029 (0:015)		0:017 (0:015)		0:022 (0:013)
Social media: Twitter				0:033 (0:015)				0:023 (0:014)
Social media: Instagram						0:012 (0:015)		
Social media: Youtube		0:028 (0:015)		0:013 (0:015)		0:043 (0:015)		0:027 (0:014)
Social media: Tiktok		0:009 (0:016)		0:010 (0:016)		0:007 (0:016)		0:006 (0:014)
Social media: Doromojo		0:086 (0:039)		0:030 (0:038)		0:098 (0:040)		0:075 (0:036)
Informed: You				0:006 (0:034)				
Informed: Young people		0:052 (0:029)		0:029 (0:028)		0:029 (0:028)		0:036 (0:025)
Informed: Voters		0:100 (0:031)		0:067 (0:032)		0:113 (0:031)		0:094 (0:028)
Informed: MCs		0:081 (0:026)		0:121 (0:026)		0:089 (0:023)		0:099 (0:023)
Informed: Business		0:002 (0:031)		0:002 (0:032)				0:008 (0:027)
Informed: Twitter		0:045 (0:029)		0:059 (0:029)		0:050 (0:029)		0:055 (0:026)
Con dence: Democracy		0:049 (0:028)		0:046 (0:027)		0:068 (0:026)		0:056 (0:024)
Con dence: Small business		0:164 (0:030)		0:141 (0:030)		0:208 (0:029)		0:170 (0:027)
Con dence: Education		0:265 (0:030)		0:260 (0:030)		0:251 (0:029)		0:259 (0:027)
Con dence: Catholic Church				0:017 (0:022)				0:009 (0:020)
Con dence: Tech companies		0:174 (0:028)		0:171 (0:028)		0:188 (0:027)		0:178 (0:025)
News days per week		0:005 (0:004)		0:010 (0:003)		0:009 (0:003)		0:008 (0:003)
Party ID (7-point)		0:039 (0:003)		0:035 (0:003)		0:041 (0:003)		0:038 (0:003)
Adj. R ²	0:000	0:381	0:000	0:374	0:001	0:404	0:000	0:437
Num. obs.	1566	1566	1566	1566	1566	1566	1566	1566

B.4 Within-subject estimates

For two of our dependent variables, we designed pre-treatment covariates that were almost identical, with the exception that they were placed in grids alongside unrelated distractor items. In this section, we estimate the treatment effect on the difference between the pre- and post-treatment versions of these variables. Specifically, we use OLS to estimate the parameters in

$$Y_i^{\text{POST}} - Y_i^{\text{PRE}} = \alpha + Z_i + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

where i indexes respondents, Y^{POST} is the post-treatment DV analyzed elsewhere in the main text, Y^{PRE} is the pre-treatment version of the DV, and Z is a treatment indicator. The parameter of interest, α , estimates the treatment effect on this variable. The intercept, μ , is the control mean. We do not employ clustering in these analyses.

The results appear in the tables below. In all cases, the results are similar to the covariate-adjusted estimates reported in the main text. Given that our automated covariate selection procedure also selected the pre-treatment outcome measures, it is not surprising that the covariate-adjusted and within-subject estimates are similar.

Table B.23: Effect on perception that fellow citizens are informed (H1), within-subject DV.

	vs. Control		vs. Placebo	
	Study 1	Study 2	Study 1	Study 2
(Intercept)	0.028** (0.007)	0.045** (0.008)	0.062** (0.009)	0.059** (0.009)
ZTreatment	0.061** (0.011)	0.044** (0.011)	0.030* (0.013)	0.032* (0.012)
Adj. R ²	0.011	0.005	0.003	0.004
Num. obs.	2675	2538	1605	1563

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed).

Table B.24: Effect on confidence in democracy (H3), within-subject DV.

	vs. Control		vs. Placebo	
	Study 1	Study 2	Study 1	Study 2
(Intercept)	0.025** (0.006)	0.005 (0.006)	0.002 (0.008)	0.011 (0.008)
ZTreatment	0.026** (0.008)	0.006 (0.009)	0.007 (0.012)	0.016 (0.012)
Adj. R ²	0.003	0.000	0.000	0.000
Num. obs.	2675	2537	1608	1565

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$ (one-tailed).

B.5 Balance Tests

Table B.25: Balance test, treatment vs. control, study 1.

Variable	Ctrl	Treat	Di	SD	Z	p
age	39.708	40.628	0.920	0.488	1.884	0.060
news_days	5.228	5.265	0.036	0.078	0.465	0.642
informed_pre_you	0.696	0.700	0.004	0.010	0.422	0.673
informed_pre_young	0.496	0.504	0.007	0.011	0.643	0.520
informed_pre_voters	0.532	0.541	0.010	0.011	0.927	0.354
informed_pre_rep	0.530	0.531	0.001	0.012	0.047	0.962
informed_pre_dem	0.589	0.591	0.002	0.011	0.182	0.856
conf_pre_dem	0.538	0.535	-0.003	0.011	-0.243	0.808
conf_pre_smallbusiness	0.674	0.690	0.016	0.009	1.800	0.072
conf_pre_educ	0.532	0.528	-0.004	0.011	-0.340	0.734
conf_pre_catholic	0.394	0.392	-0.001	0.013	-0.101	0.920
conf_pre_tech	0.531	0.520	-0.011	0.011	-0.976	0.329
pid7	4.565	4.547	-0.017	0.086	-0.201	0.841
attention_to_politics	0.583	0.602	0.019	0.010	1.883	0.060
social_facebook	0.834	0.820	-0.015	0.015	-0.993	0.321
social_twitter	0.537	0.557	0.021	0.019	1.077	0.281
social_instagram	0.696	0.664	-0.032	0.018	-1.748	0.080
social_youtube	0.917	0.920	0.003	0.011	0.304	0.761
social_doromojo	0.065	0.058	-0.007	0.009	-0.767	0.443
social_snapchat	0.353	0.315	-0.038	0.018	-2.091	0.036
social_tiktok	0.343	0.324	-0.019	0.018	-1.024	0.306
educ_Associate_degree	0.115	0.125	0.010	0.013	0.783	0.434
educ_Bachelor_degree	0.415	0.435	0.020	0.019	1.047	0.295
educ_Did_not_complete_high_school	0.008	0.001	-0.006	0.003	-2.432	0.015
educ_Graduate_degree	0.203	0.197	-0.006	0.015	-0.385	0.700
educ_High_school_diploma_or_GED	0.078	0.081	0.003	0.010	0.274	0.784
educ_Some_college	0.179	0.158	-0.022	0.014	-1.506	0.132
race_Asian	0.073	0.077	0.003	0.010	0.311	0.756
race_Black_or_African_American	0.126	0.119	-0.007	0.013	-0.590	0.555
race_Some_other_race_or_origin	0.015	0.019	0.004	0.005	0.825	0.409
race_Two_or_more	0.101	0.073	-0.028	0.011	-2.598	0.009
race_White	0.684	0.713	0.028	0.018	1.605	0.108
gender_Female	0.533	0.544	0.011	0.019	0.564	0.573
gender_Male	0.461	0.449	-0.012	0.019	-0.619	0.536
gender_Something_else	0.006	0.007	0.001	0.003	0.330	0.741
informed_pre_young (missing)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-1.034	0.301
conf_pre_dem (missing)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-1.034	0.301
conf_pre_smallbusiness (missing)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-1.034	0.301
conf_pre_educ (missing)	0.002	0.001	-0.002	0.001	-1.068	0.285
conf_pre_catholic (missing)	0.002	0.001	-0.001	0.001	-0.636	0.525
conf_pre_tech (missing)	0.001	0.001	0.000	0.001	-0.048	0.962
educ_Associate_degree (missing)	0.002	0.004	0.001	0.002	0.613	0.540
educ_Bachelor_degree (missing)	0.002	0.004	0.001	0.002	0.613	0.540
educ_Did_not_complete_high_school (missing)	0.002	0.004	0.001	0.002	0.613	0.540
educ_Graduate_degree (missing)	0.002	0.004	0.001	0.002	0.613	0.540
educ_High_school_diploma_or_GED (missing)	0.002	0.004	0.001	0.002	0.613	0.540
educ_Some_college (missing)	0.002	0.004	0.001	0.002	0.613	0.540
race_Asian (missing)	0.002	0.004	0.002	0.002	0.901	0.368
race_Black_or_African_American (missing)	0.002	0.004	0.002	0.002	0.901	0.368
race_Some_other_race_or_origin (missing)	0.002	0.004	0.002	0.002	0.901	0.368
race_Two_or_more (missing)	0.002	0.004	0.002	0.002	0.901	0.368
race_White (missing)	0.002	0.004	0.002	0.002	0.901	0.368
gender_Female (missing)	0.002	0.004	0.001	0.002	0.613	0.540
gender_Male (missing)	0.002	0.004	0.001	0.002	0.613	0.540
gender_Something_else (missing)	0.002	0.004	0.001	0.002	0.613	0.540

Chi-sq = 46.345, df = 39, p = 0.195

Table B.26: Balance test, treatment vs. placebo, study 1.

Variable	Ctrl	Treat	Di	SD	Z	p
age	39.708	39.793	0.085	0.511	0.167	0.868
news_days	5.228	5.249	0.021	0.081	0.259	0.796
informed_pre_you	0.696	0.703	0.007	0.010	0.664	0.507
informed_pre_young	0.496	0.496	-0.001	0.011	-0.065	0.948
informed_pre_voters	0.532	0.546	0.014	0.011	1.281	0.200
informed_pre_rep	0.530	0.533	0.003	0.012	0.227	0.821
informed_pre_dem	0.589	0.591	0.001	0.011	0.128	0.898
conf_pre_dem	0.538	0.535	-0.003	0.011	-0.224	0.822
conf_pre_smallbusiness	0.674	0.686	0.012	0.009	1.263	0.207
conf_pre_educ	0.532	0.532	0.000	0.012	0.037	0.971
conf_pre_catholic	0.394	0.385	-0.008	0.013	-0.648	0.517
conf_pre_tech	0.531	0.537	0.006	0.011	0.527	0.598
pid7	4.565	4.482	-0.083	0.088	-0.941	0.347
attention_to_politics	0.583	0.610	0.027	0.010	2.612	0.009
social_facebook	0.834	0.828	-0.006	0.015	-0.429	0.668
social_twitter	0.537	0.535	-0.002	0.020	-0.091	0.928
social_instagram	0.696	0.683	-0.013	0.018	-0.725	0.468
social_youtube	0.917	0.911	-0.006	0.011	-0.575	0.565
social_doromojo	0.065	0.051	-0.014	0.009	-1.457	0.145
social_snapchat	0.353	0.338	-0.015	0.019	-0.769	0.442
social_tiktok	0.343	0.350	0.008	0.019	0.401	0.688
educ_Associate_degree	0.115	0.125	0.010	0.013	0.779	0.436
educ_Bachelor_degree	0.415	0.383	-0.031	0.019	-1.615	0.106
educ_Did_not_complete_high_school	0.008	0.005	-0.003	0.003	-0.927	0.354
educ_Graduate_degree	0.203	0.224	0.021	0.016	1.320	0.187
educ_High_school_diploma_or_GED	0.078	0.088	0.010	0.011	0.934	0.350
educ_Some_college	0.179	0.173	-0.007	0.015	-0.445	0.656
race_Asian	0.073	0.080	0.006	0.011	0.573	0.567
race_Black_or_African_American	0.126	0.108	-0.018	0.013	-1.379	0.168
race_Some_other_race_or_origin	0.015	0.013	-0.002	0.005	-0.398	0.691
race_Two_or_more	0.101	0.082	-0.019	0.011	-1.691	0.091
race_White	0.684	0.717	0.033	0.018	1.804	0.071
gender_Female	0.533	0.523	-0.010	0.020	-0.503	0.615
gender_Male	0.461	0.470	0.009	0.020	0.451	0.652
gender_Something_else	0.006	0.007	0.001	0.003	0.322	0.748
informed_pre_young (missing)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-0.981	0.326
conf_pre_dem (missing)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-0.981	0.326
conf_pre_smallbusiness (missing)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-0.981	0.326
conf_pre_educ (missing)	0.002	0.001	-0.002	0.002	-0.963	0.336
conf_pre_catholic (missing)	0.002	0.000	-0.002	0.001	-1.388	0.165
conf_pre_tech (missing)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-0.981	0.326
educ_Associate_degree (missing)	0.002	0.002	-0.001	0.002	-0.405	0.685
educ_Bachelor_degree (missing)	0.002	0.002	-0.001	0.002	-0.405	0.685
educ_Did_not_complete_high_school (missing)	0.002	0.002	-0.001	0.002	-0.405	0.685
educ_Graduate_degree (missing)	0.002	0.002	-0.001	0.002	-0.405	0.685
educ_High_school_diploma_or_GED (missing)	0.002	0.002	-0.001	0.002	-0.405	0.685
educ_Some_college (missing)	0.002	0.002	-0.001	0.002	-0.405	0.685
race_Asian (missing)	0.002	0.002	0.000	0.002	0.046	0.963
race_Black_or_African_American (missing)	0.002	0.002	0.000	0.002	0.046	0.963
race_Some_other_race_or_origin (missing)	0.002	0.002	0.000	0.002	0.046	0.963
race_Two_or_more (missing)	0.002	0.002	0.000	0.002	0.046	0.963
race_White (missing)	0.002	0.002	0.000	0.002	0.046	0.963
gender_Female (missing)	0.002	0.002	-0.001	0.002	-0.405	0.685
gender_Male (missing)	0.002	0.002	-0.001	0.002	-0.405	0.685
gender_Something_else (missing)	0.002	0.002	-0.001	0.002	-0.405	0.685

Chi-sq = 38.366, df = 38, p = 0.453

Table B.27: Balance test, treatment vs. control, study 2.

Variable	Ctrl	Treat	Di	SD	Z	p
age	54.039	52.928	-1.111	0.928	-1.197	0.231
news_days	5.299	5.298	0.000	0.112	-0.001	0.999
informed_pre_you	0.740	0.733	-0.007	0.012	-0.535	0.593
informed_pre_young	0.444	0.444	0.000	0.015	0.003	0.997
informed_pre_voters	0.523	0.530	0.007	0.014	0.486	0.627
conf_pre_dem	0.548	0.540	-0.008	0.015	-0.562	0.574
conf_pre_smallbusiness	0.720	0.745	0.025	0.012	2.085	0.037
conf_pre_educ	0.543	0.531	-0.011	0.014	-0.779	0.436
conf_pre_catholic	0.403	0.410	0.007	0.016	0.414	0.679
conf_pre_tech	0.508	0.524	0.016	0.014	1.098	0.272
pid7	4.162	3.968	-0.195	0.111	-1.746	0.081
attention_to_politics	0.620	0.609	-0.011	0.015	-0.752	0.452
social_facebook	0.750	0.770	0.020	0.021	0.931	0.352
social_twitter	0.314	0.341	0.027	0.023	1.132	0.258
social_instagram	0.430	0.466	0.036	0.025	1.444	0.149
social_youtube	0.694	0.748	0.055	0.022	2.450	0.014
social_doromojo	0.039	0.029	-0.010	0.009	-1.082	0.279
social_snapchat	0.242	0.277	0.035	0.022	1.590	0.112
social_tiktok	0.322	0.351	0.030	0.024	1.256	0.209
informed_pre_MCs	0.598	0.592	-0.006	0.015	-0.396	0.692
informed_pre_business	0.634	0.622	-0.012	0.013	-0.928	0.354
informed_pre_twitter	0.417	0.418	0.001	0.014	0.040	0.968
educ_Associate_degree	0.125	0.135	0.010	0.017	0.592	0.554
educ_Bachelor_degree	0.257	0.241	-0.017	0.022	-0.775	0.438
educ_Did_not_complete_high_school	0.018	0.018	0.000	0.007	0.005	0.996
educ_Graduate_degree	0.152	0.155	0.003	0.018	0.187	0.852
educ_High_school_diploma_or_GED	0.219	0.202	-0.017	0.020	-0.817	0.414
educ_Some_college	0.228	0.249	0.021	0.021	1.001	0.317
race_Asian	0.026	0.022	-0.004	0.008	-0.538	0.591
race_Black_or_African_American	0.069	0.065	-0.005	0.012	-0.361	0.718
race_Some_other_race_or_origin	0.013	0.028	0.015	0.007	2.092	0.036
race_Two_or_more	0.210	0.194	-0.016	0.020	-0.801	0.423
race_White	0.682	0.692	0.010	0.023	0.425	0.671
gender_Female	0.538	0.540	0.002	0.025	0.094	0.925
gender_Male	0.457	0.456	-0.001	0.025	-0.033	0.974
gender_Something_else	0.005	0.004	-0.002	0.003	-0.468	0.640
informed_pre_you (missing)	0.000	0.004	0.004	0.002	1.676	0.094
informed_pre_young (missing)	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.967	0.334
informed_pre_voters (missing)	0.003	0.001	-0.001	0.002	-0.636	0.525
conf_pre_catholic (missing)	0.001	0.001	0.000	0.002	-0.048	0.962
informed_pre_MCs (missing)	0.001	0.001	0.000	0.002	-0.048	0.962
informed_pre_business (missing)	0.000	0.002	0.002	0.002	1.368	0.171
informed_pre_twitter (missing)	0.003	0.002	0.000	0.002	-0.067	0.946
educ_Associate_degree (missing)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-1.034	0.301
educ_Bachelor_degree (missing)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-1.034	0.301
educ_Did_not_complete_high_school (missing)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-1.034	0.301
educ_Graduate_degree (missing)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-1.034	0.301
educ_High_school_diploma_or_GED (missing)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-1.034	0.301
educ_Some_college (missing)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-1.034	0.301
race_Asian (missing)	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.967	0.334
race_Black_or_African_American (missing)	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.967	0.334
race_Some_other_race_or_origin (missing)	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.967	0.334
race_Two_or_more (missing)	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.967	0.334
race_White (missing)	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.967	0.334

Chi-sq = 44.231, df = 42, p = 0.378

Table B.28: Balance test, treatment vs. placebo, study 2.

Variable	Ctrl	Treat	Di	SD	Z	p
age	54.039	53.864	-0.175	0.926	-0.189	0.850
news_days	5.299	5.410	0.112	0.110	1.014	0.311
informed_pre_you	0.740	0.724	-0.016	0.012	-1.272	0.204
informed_pre_young	0.444	0.443	-0.001	0.015	-0.077	0.939
informed_pre_voters	0.523	0.523	0.000	0.014	-0.009	0.993
conf_pre_dem	0.548	0.532	-0.016	0.015	-1.069	0.285
conf_pre_smallbusiness	0.720	0.726	0.005	0.012	0.439	0.661
conf_pre_educ	0.543	0.537	-0.005	0.015	-0.353	0.724
conf_pre_catholic	0.403	0.414	0.010	0.016	0.642	0.521
conf_pre_tech	0.508	0.522	0.014	0.015	0.955	0.339
pid7	4.162	4.211	0.049	0.111	0.439	0.661
attention_to_politics	0.620	0.625	0.005	0.015	0.337	0.736
social_facebook	0.750	0.731	-0.019	0.022	-0.870	0.384
social_twitter	0.314	0.331	0.017	0.024	0.711	0.477
social_instagram	0.430	0.413	-0.017	0.025	-0.681	0.496
social_youtube	0.694	0.711	0.017	0.023	0.743	0.457
social_doromojo	0.039	0.032	-0.007	0.009	-0.758	0.448
social_snapchat	0.242	0.241	-0.001	0.022	-0.037	0.971
social_tiktok	0.322	0.313	-0.009	0.024	-0.367	0.714
informed_pre_MCs	0.598	0.606	0.008	0.016	0.508	0.612
informed_pre_business	0.634	0.623	-0.011	0.013	-0.836	0.403
informed_pre_twitter	0.417	0.411	-0.006	0.014	-0.444	0.657
educ_Associate_degree	0.125	0.114	-0.011	0.016	-0.685	0.494
educ_Bachelor_degree	0.257	0.241	-0.016	0.022	-0.743	0.457
educ_Did_not_complete_high_school	0.018	0.019	0.001	0.007	0.135	0.892
educ_Graduate_degree	0.152	0.162	0.010	0.018	0.531	0.595
educ_High_school_diploma_or_GED	0.219	0.225	0.006	0.021	0.284	0.776
educ_Some_college	0.228	0.240	0.012	0.021	0.566	0.571
race_Asian	0.026	0.028	0.002	0.008	0.250	0.803
race_Black_or_African_American	0.069	0.063	-0.006	0.013	-0.507	0.612
race_Some_other_race_or_origin	0.013	0.021	0.009	0.007	1.308	0.191
race_Two_or_more	0.210	0.184	-0.025	0.020	-1.266	0.205
race_White	0.682	0.703	0.021	0.023	0.909	0.364
gender_Female	0.538	0.545	0.007	0.025	0.298	0.766
gender_Male	0.457	0.451	-0.006	0.025	-0.244	0.807
gender_Something_else	0.005	0.004	-0.001	0.003	-0.404	0.686
informed_pre_you (missing)	0.000	0.003	0.003	0.002	1.401	0.161
informed_pre_young (missing)	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.990	0.322
informed_pre_voters (missing)	0.003	0.004	0.001	0.003	0.426	0.670
conf_pre_dem (missing)	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.990	0.322
conf_pre_smallbusiness (missing)	0.000	0.003	0.003	0.002	1.401	0.161
conf_pre_catholic (missing)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-1.010	0.313
conf_pre_tech (missing)	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.990	0.322
informed_pre_MCs (missing)	0.001	0.004	0.003	0.003	0.982	0.326
informed_pre_business (missing)	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.990	0.322
informed_pre_twitter (missing)	0.003	0.003	0.000	0.003	-0.019	0.985
educ_Associate_degree (missing)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-1.010	0.313
educ_Bachelor_degree (missing)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-1.010	0.313
educ_Did_not_complete_high_school (missing)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-1.010	0.313
educ_Graduate_degree (missing)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-1.010	0.313
educ_High_school_diploma_or_GED (missing)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-1.010	0.313
educ_Some_college (missing)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-1.010	0.313

Chi-sq = 34.049, df = 43, p = 0.834

B.6 Pilot Study

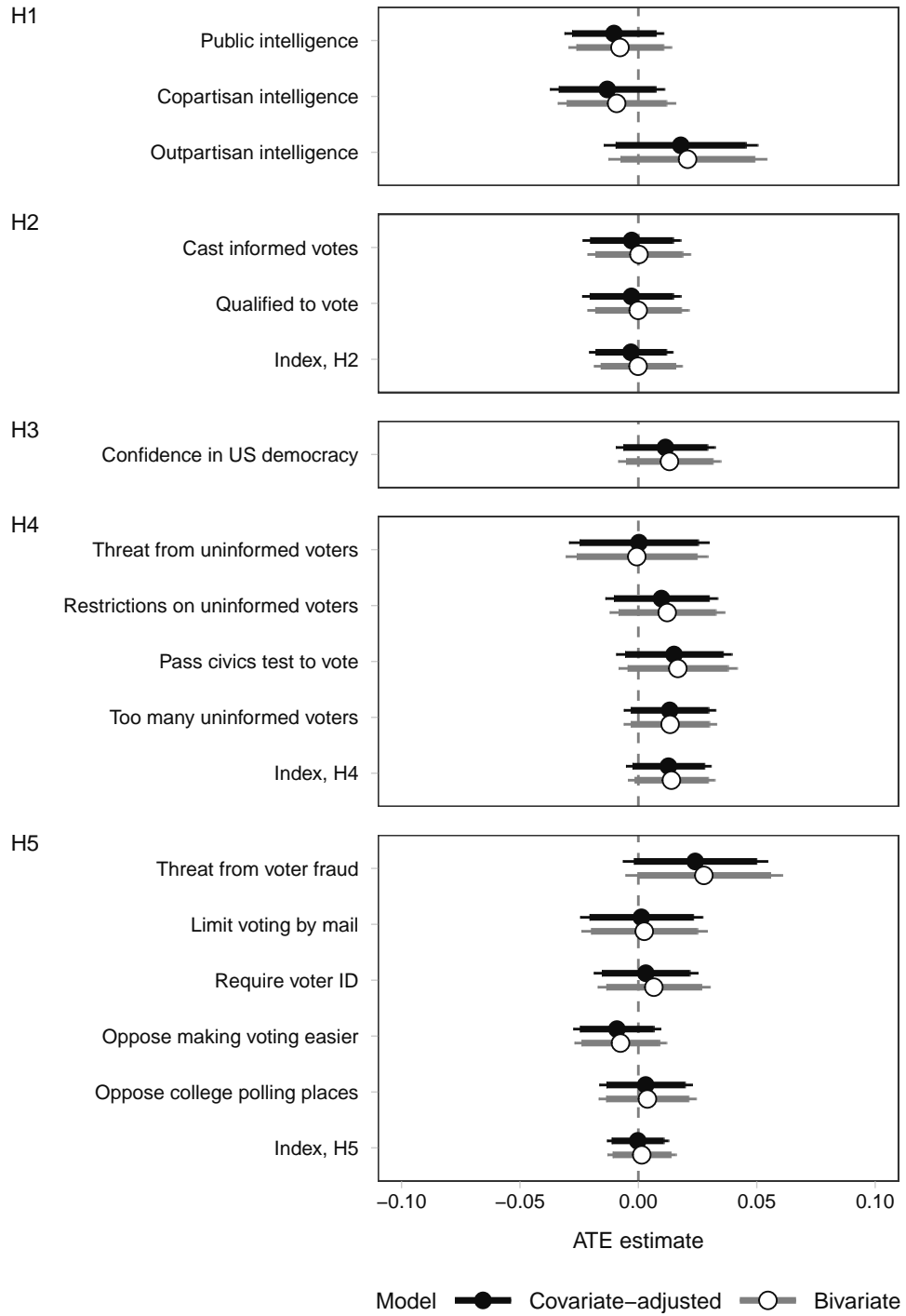
Prior to conducting Study 1, we conducted a pilot study on MTurk on May 18, 2021. We recruited 2,627 subjects using the same eligibility criteria as Study 1 (see Appendix). After dropping non-consenting and ineligible respondents, our final sample size was 2,577 (cooperation rate 97.9 percent). An anonymous version of the preregistration is available at https://aspredicted.org/Q9L_96Q.

The pilot study was similar in design to Studies 1 and 2, with the following key differences. First, there was no pure control condition. Second treated subjects were exposed to five randomly selected treatment headlines and five randomly selected placebo headlines, while placebo subjects were exposed to ten placebo headlines. Third, subjects were just asked “Have you seen this headline before?” rather than being asked to describe or identify the content of the headline.

We found little evidence of treatment effects on any dependent variable. Figure B.1 displays our treatment effect estimates for all five hypotheses tested in the study (H1 to H5). None of the estimates are statistically significant.

We considered three possible reasons for the null results: our expectations were misplaced, our treatment was too weak, or our placebo was too similar to the treatment. We therefore redesigned the experiment to have a stronger treatment and an explicit control condition. The observed patterns across studies suggest the null results in the pilot were primarily attributable to a weak treatment. In the pilot study, the null result extended even to our first measure of perceptions of the public (H1). By contrast, Study 1 used a stronger version of the treatment and found large effects on H1, H2, and H3, which were replicated in Study 2. The null effect for perceptions of the public suggests that the pilot stood little chance of detecting effects on other variables that are less directly related to the treatments, regardless of whether our expectations were accurate or misplaced.

Figure B.1: Treatment effect estimates, pilot study.



C Survey Information

C.1 Study 1

Study 1 is a web survey conducted by the authors from June 5th, 2021 to June 12th, 2021. The authors recruited a non-probability convenience sample of 4,266 US adults on the Amazon Mechanical Turk platform to complete the survey. To be eligible to participate, respondents were required to have completed at least one previous task on MTurk, have an MTurk approval rating of at least 95 percent, consent to participate, be of at least 18 years of age, reside in the United States, and pass a Captcha. Respondents who did not reach the final outcome question of the survey were dropped for the analysis, providing a final $N = 3,923$ for analysis (cooperation rate 91.8 percent). Respondents were paid \$0.70 each for their participation.

Study 1 was approved by [ANONYMIZED] with a concurrence from [ANONYMIZED]. The preregistration materials for Study 1 are available at https://aspredicted.org/V1D_1R5.

C.2 Study 2

Study 2 is a web survey conducted by the authors. The study was hosted on the Qualtrics survey platform and fielded June 24th, 2022, to June 28th, 2022. The authors recruited a non-probability convenience sample of 2,685 US adults via Qualtrics Panels, using quota sampling to approximate the distributions of gender, race, and ethnicity among American adults (cooperation rate 85.8 percent). The quota sampling constraints were as follows:

- Male: 48%
- Female: 52%
- Non-binary: natural fallout

- White: 75%
- Black or African American: 13%
- Asian, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander: 6%
- Native American, Alaska Native, or other race or ethnicity: 6%

- Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin: 18%
- Non-Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin: 82%

To be eligible to participate, respondents were required to consent to participate, be of at least 18 years of age, reside in the United States, and pass a Captcha. After removing those who did not reach the final page of the survey, 23 respondents who showed evidence of speeding (defined as completing all elements of the survey that were common to all treatment

groups in less than one third of the median time, specifically less than 130 seconds) were dropped for the analysis. 24 additional respondents were also dropped from the analysis because they failed at least two of four separate quality checks: the respondent reported a birth year did not reflect their reported age (within an error tolerance of 5 years), the respondent reported a zip code did not match their reported state of residence, the respondent reported using a social media platform that does not exist, or the respondent provided a non-sequitur or item non-response to an open-ended question about the most important problem facing the country. These exclusions provided a final $N = 2,400$ for analysis.

Study 2 was approved by the Institutional Review Board of [ANONYMIZED]. The preregistration materials for Study 2 are available at https://aspredicted.org/Q1M_V8Y.

C.3 Questionnaires

The following pages contain the full text questionnaires of both studies.

Study 1 Questionnaire

Screening

Please select below:

- [Captcha verification]

IF Captcha is not completed, disqualify respondent.

Consent Information [available upon request]

- I agree to participate.
- I do not agree to participate.

IF "I agree to participate" is not selected, disqualify respondent.

We first have just a few questions to check your eligibility for the survey.

In which state do you currently reside?

- I do not reside in the United States
- Alabama
- Arkansas
- ...
- Wyoming

IF "I do not reside in the United States" is selected, disqualify respondent.

What is your year of birth?

- [Text entry, values 1900-2020 permitted]

IF birthyear >= 2004, disqualify respondent.

Background questions

Thank you, you have qualified for the survey. We want to start by asking just a few questions about topics in the news.

During a typical week, how many days do you watch, read, or listen to news on TV, radio, printed newspapers, the Internet, or social media, not including sports?

- None
- One day
- ...

- Seven days

How often do you pay attention to what's going on in government and politics?

- Always
- Most of the time
- About half the time
- Some of the time
- Never

Generally speaking, how informed or uninformed about politics are each of the following individuals and groups? [Yourself, young people, American voters, Republican voters, Democrat voters]

- Very well-informed
- Somewhat well-informed
- Neither informed nor uninformed
- Somewhat uninformed
- Very uninformed

How much confidence, if any, do you have in each of the following? [The U.S. system of democracy, small businesses, public education, Catholic church, large technology companies]

- A great deal of confidence
- A fair amount of confidence
- Not too much confidence
- No confidence at all

Which of the following social media platforms have you used in the past two weeks? Select all that apply.

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- WeChat
- Snapchat
- TikTok
- Doromojo
- None of the above

What do you think is the most important problem facing the country today?

- [Text box]

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?

- Republican
- Democrat
- Independent
- Other: _____

Display this question if Republican:

Would you call yourself a strong Republican or a not very strong Republican?

- Strong
- Not very strong

Display this question if Democrat:

Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or a not very strong Democrat?

- Strong
- Not very strong

Display this question if neither Republican or Democrat:

Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party?

- Republican
- Democratic
- Neither

Treatment

Design note: Using simple random assignment, respondents were assigned to treatment ($p = 1/3$), placebo ($p = 1/3$), or control ($p = 1/3$). Treated respondents viewed all six treatment headlines. Placebo respondents viewed six randomly selected placebo headlines. Control respondents proceeded straight to the outcome measures.

On each of the next **six** pages, we'll show you a headline that appeared in the news. We want to know what people learn from these headlines. You will be asked to summarize the information presented in your own words.

Before you write your summary, please read each headline carefully and reflect on the information presented. To make sure you have enough time to read and write your summary, the "proceed" button will not appear until you have been on each page for 15 seconds.

[A series of 6 headlines will be shown to the respondent. A sample one is displayed below and the full list of possible headlines follows.]

Example of how the headlines appeared:

Majority of Americans Plan to Vacation This Summer

Daily Mail • May 31

According to a recent Gallup poll asking Americans about their vacation plans for this summer, the average American will vacation during the month of July.

In your own words, how would you summarize the key information from this news story?

- [Text box]

Complete list of headlines:

Placebo Title	Date	Description
Hot chocolate: Americans say it's the most-loved part of winter	Jan 28	In a survey, "sipping on some cocoa" was named the "best part of the season," winning out over watching the first snowfall and warming up by the fire.
Chocolate is the most popular ice cream flavor in America	Jul 14	Additional polling finds that the most popular topping is hot fudge.
What's America's favorite sandwich?	Aug 1	America's top sandwich is grilled cheese, according to the results of a YouGov survey.
America's favorite vegetable is broccoli, survey says	Jun 13	The survey discovered broccoli is the most popular vegetable in 47 percent of the United States, with corn coming in second place.
Reese's Peanut Butter Cups are America's favorite candy, poll finds	Oct 10	Thirty-six percent love the peanut butter and chocolate combo, while just 18% favor second place Snickers. M&M's came in at number three with 11%.
Majority of Americans Plan to Vacation This Summer	May 31	According to a recent Gallup poll asking Americans about their vacation plans for this summer, the average American will vacation during the month of July.
Poll: Americans grateful at holidays — and a bit stressed	Dec 20	Most Americans say the holiday season makes them feel very grateful and generous — but many report feeling stressed, too
Majority of American workers are unhappy in their jobs	Oct 28	Although more people are in work in the US than at any time in the past 50 years, only 40 percent of American workers said in a survey that they work in good jobs
Most Americans Think Their Job Is Bad or Mediocre, Gallup Poll Shows	Oct 24	The majority of American workers aren't satisfied with their job, a new Gallup poll showed.

Holiday spending estimates lowest in four years: poll	Oct 27	Anticipated spending on holiday gifts is expected to drop significantly this year amid a retail slump due to the coronavirus pandemic, a Gallup poll released Tuesday found.
Poll: Majority of Americans See No Health Impact From a Few Drinks	Jul 31	While the majority of Americans (55%) think that drinking in moderation makes no difference to their health, the percentage who say it is bad for one's health outweighs those who say it is good, 28% to 16%.
What is America's favorite music genre?	Jan 28	Country and rock are America's favorite music genres, according to a recent poll.
Bugs Bunny most popular cartoon among Americans, poll finds	Jul 16	When it comes to cartoons, Americans are saying "what's up, Doc?" Bugs Bunny is the most popular cartoon in the U.S., with 11% saying this was their favorite cartoon.

Treatment Title	Date	Description
1 In 4 Americans Thinks The Sun Goes Around The Earth, Survey Says	Feb 14	A quarter of Americans surveyed could not correctly answer that the Earth revolves around the sun and not the other way around, according to a report out Friday from the National Science Foundation.
The surprising number of American adults who think chocolate milk comes from brown cows	Jun 15	Seven percent of American adults believe chocolate milk comes from brown cows, according to an online survey.
Survey: One third of young millennials believe the earth is flat	Apr 6	A new survey has found that a third of young millennials in the U.S. aren't convinced the Earth is actually round.
Nationwide Poll: 47 Percent Of Americans Mistakenly Believe Eating Chicken Can Spread Bird Flu	Nov 8	Nearly half of Americans questioned in a new opinion poll mistakenly believe that they can contract bird flu by eating chicken.
What's the Constitution? Don't bother asking 70% of Americans	Mar 21	A survey shows that alarming number of U.S. citizens don't know basic facts about their own country.
Americans believe crazy, wrong things	Dec 28	Many Americans believe a lot of dumb, crazy, destructive, provably wrong stuff, according to a poll from the EconomistYouGov.

Outcomes

Generally speaking, would you say that American voters are... [Well-informed/uninformed, patriotic/unpatriotic, honest/dishonest, selfish/generous]

- Very [positive trait]

- Somewhat [positive trait]
- Neither [positive trait] nor [negative trait]
- Somewhat [negative trait]
- Very [negative trait]

Generally speaking, how much confidence, if any, do you have in the U.S. system of democracy?

- A great deal of confidence
- ...
- No confidence at all

Generally speaking, how much confidence, if any, do you have in the American people to...cast informed votes in elections?

- A great deal of confidence
- ...
- No confidence at all

Which of the following is the greater threat to American democracy?

- People who do not vote
- Uninformed voters

How strongly do you feel that [people who do not vote / uninformed voters] are a greater threat than [uninformed voters / people who do not vote]?

- Not too strongly
- Strongly

Which of the following is the greater threat to American democracy?

- Too many ineligible people casting ballots (voter fraud)
- Too many eligible voters being prevented from voting (voter suppression)

How strongly do you feel that [too many ineligible people casting ballots (voter fraud) / too many eligible voters being prevented from voting (voter suppression)] is a greater threat than [too many eligible people being prevented from voting (voter suppression) / too many ineligible people casting ballots (voter fraud)]?

- Not too strongly
- Strongly

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

People who are not well informed about election issues should not be allowed to vote.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

People should be required to take a civics test before registering to vote

- Strongly agree
- ...
- Strongly disagree

Too many uninformed people vote in this country

- Strongly agree
- ...
- Strongly disagree

Most Americans are well-qualified to vote

- Strongly agree
- ...
- Strongly disagree

Everything possible should be done to make it easy for every citizen to vote

- Strongly agree
- ...
- Strongly disagree

Voters should only be allowed to vote by mail if they can't vote in-person

- Strongly agree
- ...
- Strongly disagree

All voters should be required to present photo identification before voting

- Strongly agree
- ...
- Strongly disagree

Polling places should be located on college campuses so that students can vote more easily

- Strongly agree
- ...
- Strongly disagree

Earlier we asked you about the traits of the American public, now we want your views of the traits of different groups in society.

Generally speaking, would you say that [Democrat voters/Republican voters] are...

[See above]

Manipulation check

Thinking about the headlines you reviewed earlier, which topics were included? Please select all that apply:

- U.S. political events
- Foreign affairs
- Public opinion polls
- Sports and exercise
- None of the above

Demographics

Finally we have just a few background questions for statistical purposes.

Which of the following best describes you?

- Female
- Male
- Something else

What is your race or origin? Mark one or more.

- White
- Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- Black or African American
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Some other race or origin

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- Less than high school degree
- High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED)
- Some college but no degree (yet)
- Associate degree in college (2-year)
- Bachelor's degree in college (4-year)
- Graduate degree (e.g., MA, JD, PhD)

Thank you for your participation! Is there anything else you would like to share about the survey?

- [Text box]

Study 2 Questionnaire

Screening & Demographics

Please select below:

- [Captcha verification]

IF Captcha is not completed, disqualify respondent.

Consent Information [available upon request]

- I agree to participate.
- I do not agree to participate.

IF "I agree to participate" is not selected, disqualify respondent.

We first have just a few questions to check your eligibility for the survey.

What is your year of birth? Please enter a four-digit number:

- [Text entry, values 1900-2022 permitted]

IF birthyear >= 2005, disqualify respondent.

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Something else

What is your race or origin? Mark one or more:

- White
- Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- Black or African American
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Some other race or origin

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Did not complete high school
- High school diploma or GED
- Some college, no degree
- Associate degree
- Four-year college degree
- Graduate degree (Master's, professional, or doctorate)

In which state do you currently reside?

- I do not reside in the United States
- Alabama
- Arkansas
- ...
- Wyoming

IF "I do not reside in the United States" is selected, disqualify respondent.

Background

Thank you. You have qualified for the survey. We want to start by asking just a few questions about topics in the news.

During a typical week, how many days do you watch, read, or listen to news on TV, radio, printed newspapers, the Internet, or social media, not including sports?

- None
- One day
- ...
- Seven days

How often do you pay attention to what's going on in government and politics?

- Always
- Most of the time
- About half the time
- Some of the time
- Never

How much have you used the following social media platforms in the past two weeks? [A lot, Some, Not at all]

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- YouTube
- Doromojo
- Snapchat
- TikTok

What do you think is the most important problem facing the country today?

- [Text entry.]

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?

- Republican
- Democrat

- Independent
- Other: _____

Display this question if Republican:

Would you call yourself a strong Republican or a not very strong Republican?

- Strong
- Not very strong

Display this question if Democrat:

Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or a not very strong Democrat?

- Strong
- Not very strong

Display this question if neither Republican or Democrat:

Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party?

- Republican
- Democratic
- Neither

Are you registered to vote?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

How much confidence, if any, do you have in each of the following? [American democracy, small business owners, public education, the Catholic Church, large technology companies]

- A great deal of confidence
- A fair amount of confidence
- Not too much confidence
- No confidence at all

Generally speaking, how informed or uninformed about politics are each of the following individuals and groups? [Yourself, American voters, members of Congress, young people, business executives, Twitter users]

- Very well-informed
- Somewhat well-informed
- Neither informed nor uninformed
- Somewhat uninformed
- Very uninformed

Treatment

Design note: Using simple random assignment, respondents were assigned to treatment ($p = 1/3$), placebo ($p = 1/3$), or control ($p = 1/3$). Treated respondents viewed all six treatment headlines and two placebo headlines. Placebo respondents viewed all eight placebo headlines. Control respondents proceeded directly to the outcome measures.

On each of the next **eight** pages, we'll show you a headline that appeared in the news, and you will be asked a question about the news story.

{ A series of 8 headlines will be shown to the respondent. A sample one is displayed below and the full list of possible headlines follows. }

Example of how the headlines appeared:

Majority of Americans Plan to Vacation This Summer

Daily Mail • May 31

According to a recent Gallup poll asking Americans about their vacation plans for this summer, the average American will vacation during the month of July.

From what you read, how would you classify the main topic of the news article?

- Sports
 - Foreign Affairs
 - Polling & Surveys
 - Health & Exercise
 - Politics & Elections
 - Technology & Social Media
-

Complete list of headlines:

Placebo Title	Date	Description
How to Diet in 2022: Easy, Healthy Ways to Lose Weight with These Top 3 Tips	Jan 28	For millions of Americans, New Year's Day marks the start of a new diet. Losing weight is always among the most popular New Year's resolutions, and 2022 is no different.
We Know Your Age Base on Your Social Media Habits	Jul 14	We can guess your age, just tell us your social media preferences.
Bitcoin Is Not Most Used Cryptocurrency in the World, You'll Never Guess What It Is	Aug 1	The daily trading volumes have spoken, and the most used crypto is not Bitcoin.

Five Mental Health Signals You Should Never Ignore	Jun 13	There are hundreds of symptoms which can indicate a mental health issue, but it can be difficult to know when to pay attention to them and when they are not a concern.
7 Weird and Surprising Things Linked to Dementia	Oct 10	Recent research has found some pretty unexpected things that are linked to dementia, a term for diseases associated with memory loss.
13 Surprising Things That Are Damaging Your Skin	May 31	You're probably aware that you should wear sunscreen for a day at the beach. But there are also some surprising things you may not have realized are affecting your skin.
6 Weird Ways to Trick Your Mind into Sleep That Actually Work	Dec 20	Sure, it might be easier said than done—but there are several not-so-obvious ways to quiet your thoughts and prep the brain and body for sleep.
5 Tech Hacks to Improve Work-Life Balance	Oct 28	Imagine what you could do with an extra two hours in your week. Here are some tech hacks to give you back your time.

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Nationwide Poll: 47 Percent of Americans Mistakenly Believe Eating Chicken Can Spread Bird Flu	Nov 8	Nearly half of Americans questioned in a new opinion poll mistakenly believe that they can contract bird flu by eating chicken.
Judge Judy is a Supreme Court Justice, a Surprising Number of College Grads Think	Mar 21	An alarming one in 10 college graduates believe that Judge Judith Sheindlin, better known as Judge Judy, is actually a Supreme Court justice, according to a recent study.
10 of the Craziest Conspiracy Theories That a Ridiculously Disturbing Amount of People Believe	Dec 28	Outlandish conspiracies have been embraced by a surprisingly large segment of the population, according to a survey conducted last year.

Outcomes

Now we'll move on to another set of topics.

Generally speaking, would you say that **American voters** are...

...informed or uninformed about politics?

- Extremely well-informed
- Very well-informed
- Somewhat well-informed
- Somewhat uninformed
- Very uninformed
- Extremely uninformed

...patriotic or unpatriotic?

- Extremely patriotic
- Very patriotic
- Somewhat patriotic
- Somewhat unpatriotic
- Very unpatriotic
- Extremely unpatriotic

...tolerant or intolerant?

- Extremely tolerant
- Very tolerant
- Somewhat tolerant
- Somewhat intolerant
- Very intolerant
- Extremely intolerant

...generous or selfish?

- Extremely generous
- Very generous
- Somewhat generous
- Somewhat selfish
- Very selfish
- Extremely selfish

How much confidence, if any, do you have in American voters to cast informed votes in elections?

- A great deal of confidence
- A fair amount of confidence
- Not too much confidence
- No confidence at all

How much confidence, if any, do you have in the American democracy?

- A great deal of confidence

- ...
- No confidence at all

Which of the following is the greater threat to American democracy?

- People who do not vote
- Uninformed voters

How strongly do you feel that [people who do not vote / uninformed voters] are a greater threat than [uninformed voters / people who do not vote]?

- Not too strongly
- Strongly

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

People who are not well informed about election issues should not be allowed to vote.

- Completely disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Slightly agree
- Moderately agree
- Completely agree

People should be required to take a civics test before registering to vote.

- Completely disagree
- ...
- Completely agree

Too many uninformed people vote in this country.

- Completely disagree
- ...
- Completely agree

Most Americans are well-qualified to vote.

- Completely disagree
- ...
- Completely agree

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

I can count on public opinion polls to be accurate.

- Completely disagree
- ...
- Completely agree

I consider public opinion polls to be trustworthy.

- Completely disagree
- ...
- Completely agree

I find that public opinion polls are informative.

- Completely disagree
- ...
- Completely agree

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

I can count on the news media to be accurate.

- Completely disagree
- ...
- Completely agree

I consider the news media to be trustworthy.

- Completely disagree
- ...
- Completely agree

I find that the news media are informative.

- Completely disagree
- ...
- Completely agree

Additional Demographics + Quality Checks

Finally, we have a few background questions for statistical purposes.

What is the number of people in your household? Please enter a whole number:

- [Text entry. 1-100 permitted.]

What is your age? Please enter a whole number:

- [Text entry. 1-150 permitted.]

What is your ZIP code? Please enter a 5-digit number:

- [Text entry. 5 characters required.]

Based on the survey so far, what is your best guess as to the purpose of this research study?

- [Text entry.]

We sometimes find people don't always take surveys seriously, instead providing humorous or insincere responses to questions. Thinking back on **the current survey**, how often did you do this? (This will not influence your compensation at all.)

- Always

- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- Rarely
- Never

Thank you for your participation. Is there anything else you would like to share about the survey?

- [Text entry.]

D Media Analysis

To estimate the proportion of U.S. newspaper articles that mention polls, we searched the NexisUni database (on March 1, 2022) for newspaper articles that met the following parameters:

1. Published between January 1, 2018, and December 31, 2021.
2. English language.
3. U.S. newspaper (non-international).
4. Word count greater than 25 words.
5. Not an obituary.
6. Contained one or more of the following keywords or phrases:
 - “poll finds”
 - “survey finds”
 - “poll shows”
 - “survey shows”
 - “poll found”
 - “survey found”
 - “poll showed”
 - “survey found”
 - “poll says”
 - “survey says”
 - “poll suggests”
 - “survey suggests”
 - “poll conducted”
 - “survey conducted”
 - “poll released”
 - “survey released”
 - “poll published”
 - “survey published”
 - “poll produced”
 - “survey produced”
 - “poll” or “survey” and one or more of
 - { “study finds”
 - { “study found”
 - { “study shows”

- { “study showed”
- { “study says”
- { “study suggests”

We developed this extensive list of query terms after a review of articles citing surveys. We use these specific terms to ensure that our search identified articles that discuss surveys/polling rather than (e.g.) voting at “the polls” or other contexts in which these same root words might be used. We therefore consider our estimate to be conservative.

This procedure generated a total of 33,694 articles over the period of search that met the above criteria, including 4,801 produced by the *New York Times*. To estimate the total number of articles produced by the same newspapers over the same period, we repeated the same procedure as above, but with a blank query in place of step 6. This generated a total of 5,203,309 articles for the period of search, including 322,974 from the *New York Times*. Analyzing by year, we find that the estimated proportion of *New York Times* articles that mention polling or surveys ranges from a low of 1.2 percent (in 2018) to a high of 2.1 percent (in 2020), with the average at 1.5 percent over the period of search.