Consensus and Concern in Arizona's Hot Political Climate:
Voter Attitudes About Elections

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Executive Summary

Do voters have confidence in our election system? What is their level of support for election integrity and election reform measures?

To better understand these voter attitudes, the [Center for an Independent and Sustainable Democracy (CISD)](#) at Arizona State University interviewed 1,063 Arizona registered voters proportionally divided among Republicans, Democrats, and independents and reflecting the state's ethnic, education and age makeup.

Despite heated and polarizing rhetoric from both ends of the political spectrum, the study found broad areas of agreement:

- There was broad support for a range of measures to ensure election integrity such as public testing of voting machines, stricter requirements for voter identification, tracking of ballots, and auditing of election results.

- Similarly, there was wide support for voting by mail, having top election officials selected in a nonpartisan manner and requiring the same signature requirements for candidates seeking office regardless of party affiliation.

- There was overwhelming support across all categories for a system where top state and local election officials would be required to take an oath to function in a nonpartisan manner.

- Taken as a whole, the questions around top election officials suggest that the public is looking for nonpartisan supervision of Arizona's elections, rather than party-affiliated officials.

- A nonpartisan primary system was supported by 80 percent of voters, including a majority of Democrats, Republicans, and independents.

- However, ranked choice voting was supported by a slim majority of respondents, led by Democrats and non-voting independents. Republicans who voted in 2022 were highly opposed to this measure, with non-voting Republicans split on the idea.

- Arizona voters have low levels of trust in all sources of information about elections. Remarkably, no institutions were trusted by a majority of those asked.

This study of Arizona voters found there is a good deal of common ground regarding our election system and voters are more aligned in their views than partisan politics would suggest.

These findings provide a roadmap on how a nonpartisan election system could further enhance voter confidence in Arizona. It also underscores the importance and support for election security measures as well as the need for reforms that protect the core principle in the US of the fundamental right to right to vote without partisan interference.

Introduction

America's system of election administration has come under increasing and heated scrutiny over the past two decades. Once a largely stable arrangement that could claim the consent of the governed, elections have begun to devolve into bitter cycles of distrust and polarization.

Republican elected officials have brought the issue of election integrity to the fore. A plethora of legislation has been proposed in 2023 that would place greater restrictions on when and how people can vote.[1]

In parallel, Democrats in Congress and elsewhere have sought reforms that would make voting easier. These legislative efforts in 2023 include hundreds of bills introduced nationally which would expand access to voter registration and to mail-in voting; and restore voting rights to individuals with past convictions.[2]

At the same time, Democrats have joined Republicans in pursuing litigation and legislation to limit or eliminate participation by independent parties, candidates, and voters and/or to repel support for process reforms. [3]

Further, groups not necessarily aligned with either Republicans or Democrats have advocated for changes in how elections are run. These proposals include allowing every US citizen the right to participate in every election without joining a party; and allow voting for multiple candidates, in order of preference. Several states have adopted such reforms through the initiative and referendum process.[4]

Caught in the crossfire are everyday Americans who identify the importance of election security but also believe in the core American principle of the fundamental right to vote. The rhetoric on both sides has served to undermine the trust we have in each other while heightening public district in mainstream institutions. Too often, media sources amplify the loudest and most extreme voices, creating an environment in which the democratic process itself is called into question.

But where do most American fall on issues of election integrity and election reform? Are Americans more aligned in their views than partisan politics would suggest?

To better understand voter attitudes, the Center for an Independent and Sustainable Democracy (CISD) at Arizona State University conducted this study to explore issues of election integrity and election reform as seen by Arizona voters. Our hope is to gain insight into how Arizonans feel about these two directions and to learn what changes and adjustments might increase their confidence in our election system.

In many respects, Arizona is a unique state to focus on nationally. It is a true swing state, one of the few battleground or purple states that could be won by a Democratic, Republican, or independent candidate in a statewide election. It has a growing Latino population that comprises over 20% of registered voters.

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[1] Waldman, M., Berry, P., Sanders, R., & Loving, S. (2023, March 1). Voting laws roundup: February 2023. Brennan Center for Justice.

[2] Ibid.

[3] See for example: Bradner, Eric. (2023, March 30). Arizona Democrats sue to keep 'No Labels' candidates off ballots. CNN News; Klas, Mary Ellen. (2021, April 26). Florida legislators pass bill to limit citizen ballot initiatives, Times/Herald Tallahassee.; Snyder, Riley (2021, December 19) Lawsuit seeks to block proposed open primary, ranked choice ballot initiative, Nevada Independent.

[4] The Council of State Governments. (2023, March 23). Ranked Choice Voting: What, Where Why & Why Not.
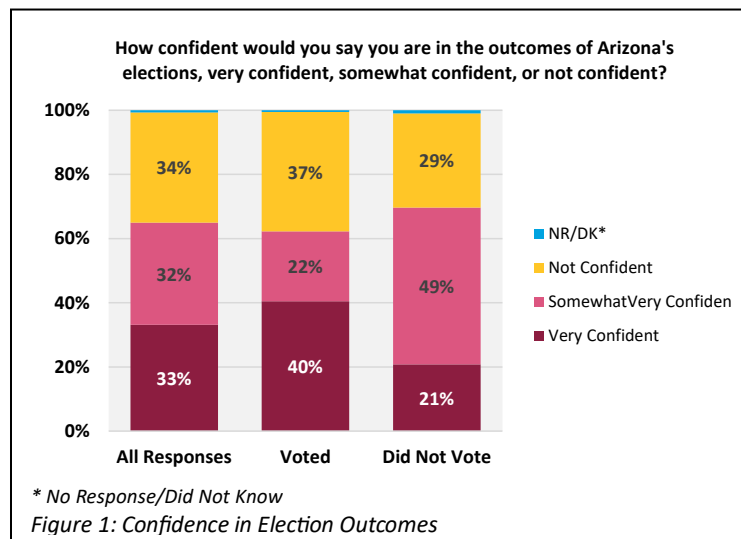
And its electorate is roughly divided between Republican, Democratic and independent or unaffiliated voters.

In addition to controlling for political affiliation, geography (urban vs rural), ethnicity, age, and education, we have included voting status to capture any differences between those voters who are registered and those who are registered and actually voted in the last election. Survey methodology is described in Appendix B.

This statewide study and report were funded by Arizona Clean Election Commission, a voter-centered state agency that fosters greater citizen participation via the election process and voter education; and Greater Phoenix Leadership (GPL), an organization of leading CEOs aligning leadership and resources at the intersection of the business, education, philanthropy , and public policy sectors to improve economic vitality and quality of life.

Common Ground

Despite heated rhetoric from both ends of the political spectrum and endless media stories about increased divisions in society, the survey found broad areas of agreement in many areas. When asked about Arizona's elections, 65 percent of respondents replied that they are either somewhat or very confident in the outcome (Figure 1). Those who did not vote in the 2022 General Election were more likely to express confidence (69.7%) than those who voted (62.2%). However, voters were much more likely to say they are very confident in election outcomes (40.5%) than the non-voters (20.8%).[5]

How confident would you say you are in the outcomes of Arizona's elections, very confident, somewhat confident, or not confident?

* No Response/Did Not Know
Figure 1: Confidence in Election Outcomes

Some variation is seen when these results are broken down by party identification, as seen in Table 1. Democrats were highly confident in election outcomes, with 74.6 percent saying they are very confident and 18.7 percent somewhat confident. Independents also expressed high levels of confidence with 68 percent either somewhat or very confident in outcomes. The majority of non-voting Republicans said they are at least somewhat confident in election outcomes (54.4%), but this percentage drops dramatically for the voting Republicans (32.2%).

Younger respondents (Age 18-34) were statistically more likely to express confidence in election outcomes at 80 percent, compared to 60 percent for ages 35 and older. Latinos were also more likely to have a favorable view of election outcomes at 77 percent, with Non-Latinos respondents registering 62 percent. Throughout the survey, the distinction between rural and urban respondents rarely turned up significant differences, but the question on election outcomes was an exception. Urban residents were

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[5] Each of these comparisons is significant at p < 0.05.

somewhat or very confident in election outcomes at a rate of 67 percent, while rural registered voters came in at 58 percent.
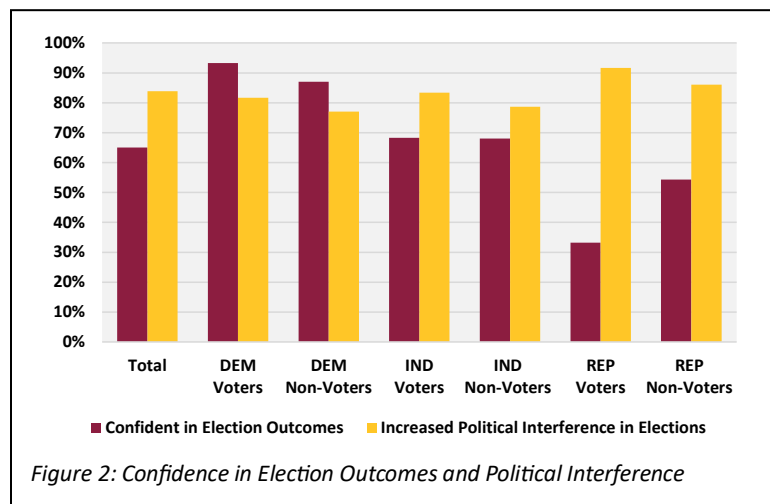
How confident would you say you are in the outcomes of Arizona's elections, very confident, somewhat confident, or not confident?							
	Total	DEM Voters	DEM Non-Voters	IND Voters	IND Non-Voters	REP Voters	REP Non-Voters
Very Confident	33.1%	74.6%	41.8%	39.9%	12.6%	13.4%	15.1%
Somewhat Confident	31.9%	18.7%	45.3%	28.4%	55.4%	19.8%	39.3%
Very + Somewhat Confident	65.0%	93.3%	87.0%	68.3%	68.0%	33.2%	54.4%
Not Confident	34.3%	6.5%	13.0%	31.7%	30.5%	65.6%	44.6%
NR/DK*	0.7%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	1.2%	1.0%

No Response/Did Not Know

Table 1: Confidence in Elections by Party and Voting

There was also agreement across all categories to the statement, *"Do you feel that there has been an increase in political interference in elections in recent years?"* Overall response to this question was 65 percent saying yes, with a range from 77 percent for Democratic non-voters to 92 percent for Republican voters. Figure 2 compares the results of this question with respondents who are somewhat or very confident in election outcomes. Democrats report seeing increased political influence in elections but remain quite confident in the final outcome. Republicans also perceive increased politicization of elections, but are much less optimistic about outcomes, with independent falling somewhere in between the two major parties.

Figure 2: Confidence in Election Outcomes and Political Interference

Election Integrity

There was broad support for a range of measures to ensure election integrity. Support for public testing of voting machines was 85 percent. This concept was highly endorsed across all groups shown in Figure 3. Under state law voting machines already undergo 'logic and accuracy' testing. This testing is public,

and counties are required to give notice of the time and place of the test.[6] Maricopa County, the state's most populous, live-streams the event on the internet.

Support for Election Integrity Measures

Figure 3: Support for Election Integrity Measures
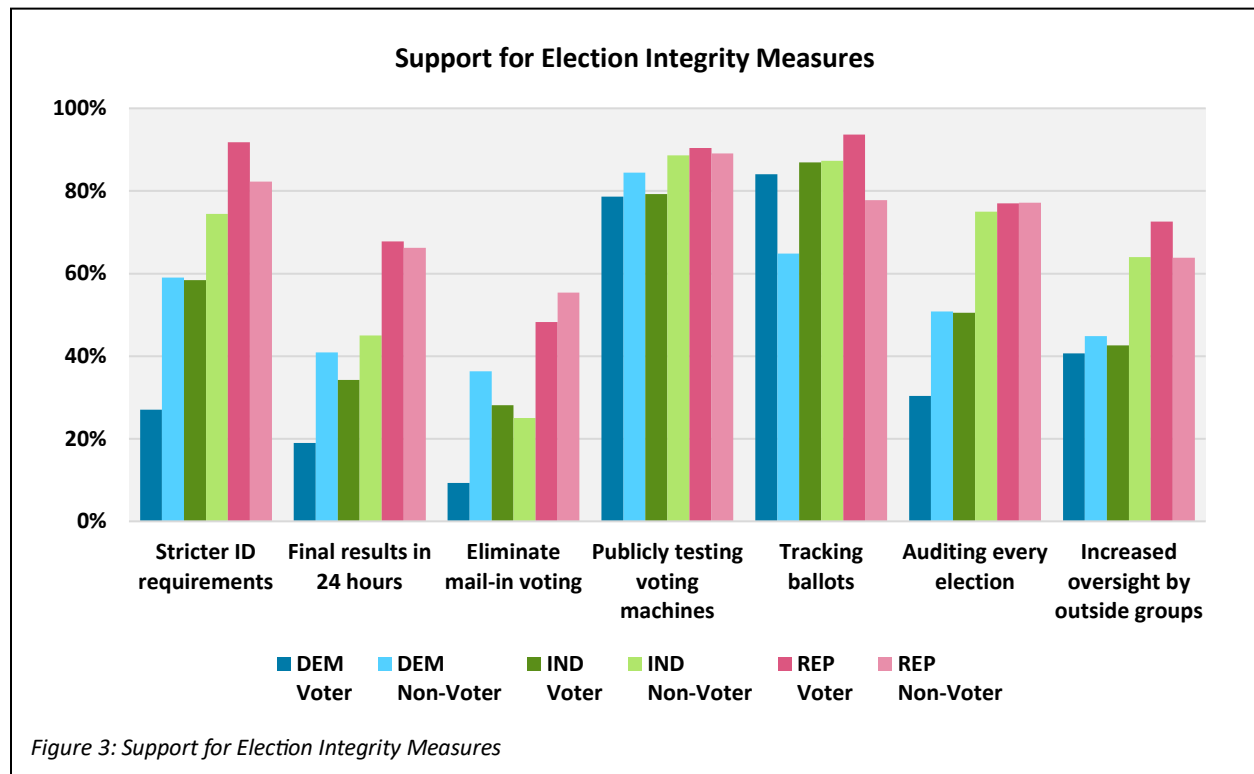
Stricter requirements for voter identification received support from 66 percent of respondents, with voting Democrats showing markedly less support than other groups.[7] Auditing election results received support from 60 percent of all respondents, with voting Democrats less supportive than others. As with the testing of voting machines, statute already has provisions to audit and verify election counts.[8] While not a full recount of all elections, the statute does mandate systematic checks to ensure that voting machines are reporting accurate results.

A question about rapid release of final election results was supported by a minority (45%) of the overall sample but received strong support from both Republican voters (65%) and Republican non-voters (66%). The full text of the question is as follows:

> *[Do you support or oppose] Posting final vote counts within 24 hours of polls closing,*
> *even if that means reducing early ballot drop off times.*

The elimination of mail-in voting was supported by just 32 percent of total respondents. The only group with majority support for this concept was Republican non-voters, who endorsed it by 55 percent. Early

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[6] ARS 16-649 states in part, "Public notice of the time and place of the test shall be given at least forty-eight hours prior thereto by publication once in one or more daily or weekly newspapers published in the town, city or village using such equipment, if a newspaper is published therein, otherwise in a newspaper of general circulation therein. The test shall be observed by at least two election inspectors, who shall not be of the same political party, and shall be open to representatives of the political parties, candidates, the press and the public."

[7] Current voter identification requirements are in ARS 16-579.

[8] See ARS 16-602.

balloting by mail has been available to all voters in Arizona since 1991 and is used by 80 percent of voters in the 2022 general election.[9]

Respondents were strongly in favor of tracking ballots, with 85 percent supporting the idea of tracking ballots in a manner similar to the way packages are tracked, so they would know when their votes have been counted. State statute already mandates the tracking of the early ballots used by 80 percent of the voters in the 2022 general election.[10] Response to this question may indicate a desire to expand this to include the tracking of ballots cast in polling places on election day.

The data does not provide insight into the respondent's thinking behind their support for election integrity measures that are already in place. It is possible that they are looking for more election protections in addition to those already in statute, and it is also possible that some respondents are unaware that such protections are already in place.

Election Reform

There was overwhelming support across all categories for the question: *"Should top state and local election officials be required to take an oath to function in a nonpartisan manner?"* Both voters and non-voters from all party identifications said yes to this question, in percentages that ranged from 86 to 97 percent (Figure 4).[11] Overall, 92 percent of survey respondents said yes to this question.

Figure 4: Support for Election Integrity Measures
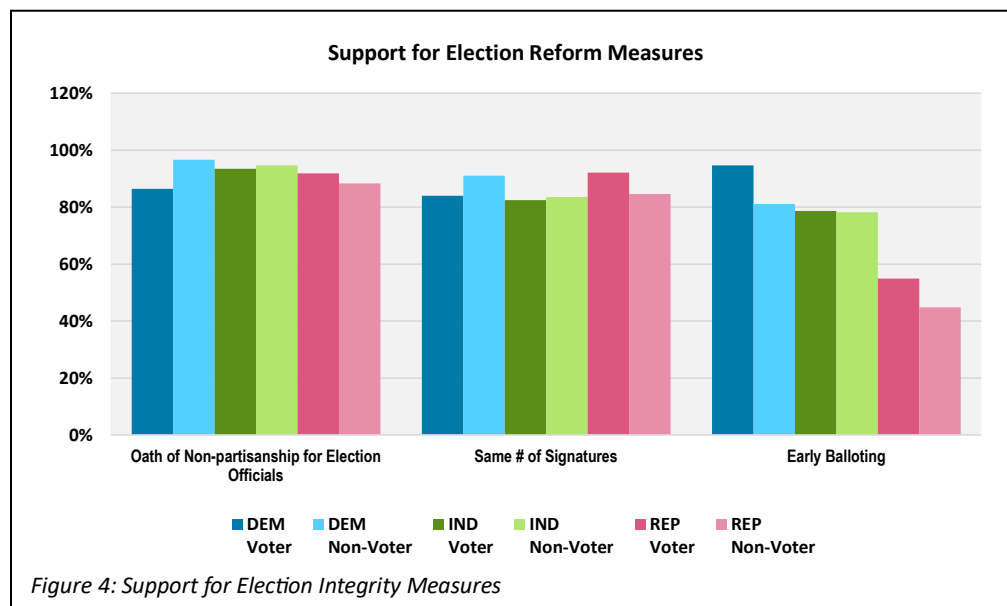
Support was nearly as strong for a question that asked about signature requirements for candidates seeking office. Currently, candidates for statewide office in Arizona running as Democrats or Republicans must gather approximately 10,000 signatures to appear on the ballot. However, candidates running as independents or minor party candidates need over 40,000 signatures. Total support for this question was 86 percent. The full text of the question is as follows:

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[9] See ARS 16-542
[10] See ARS 16-550.
[11] All state officials are currently required to take an oath to support the Constitutions of the United States and Arizona, and the laws of the State of Arizona. See ARS 38-231.

Currently, candidates who are not running as either Democrat or Republican must gather many more signatures to get their name on the ballot than a major party's candidate. Do you support or oppose requiring all candidates, regardless of party affiliation, to gather the same number of signatures to qualify for the ballot?

Survey participants were also asked about the practice of voters receiving their ballots by mail in advance of election day. Respondents supported this practice despite some calls to revert to election-day only voting.

In the 2022 election, most Arizona voters received their ballots in the mail, and either mailed them back or personally returned them to a voting center. Do you support or oppose this practice?

Total responses were 73 percent in favor of this option, with support of 95 percent from Democrat voters. Support was much lower among Republicans, but a majority of voting Republicans (55%) support early voting, compared with just 45 percent of non-voting Republicans. Support was strong among independents, with 79 percent of voting independents supporting the practice as well as 78 percent of the non-voting independents.

Nonpartisan Primaries and Ranked Choice Voting

Respondents were asked about their support for two ideas that have been discussed to change Arizona's election system. First was a question about support for nonpartisan primary system:

Currently, independent voters can request a ballot for only one party's primary election. Would you support a statewide nonpartisan primary system where all candidates appear on a single ballot that all voters, regardless of affiliation, are entitled to vote on?

Finally, respondents were asked about their receptivity to ranked choice voting:

Ranked choice voting is a change being discussed for the general election. Currently Arizona voters cast a vote for one candidate. Ranked choice voting would allow voters to rank all candidates in their order of preference, instead of having to choose only one candidate. If no candidate receives more than 50 percent of the votes, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. If that eliminated candidate was a voter's first choice, that voter's vote is transferred to their second favorite candidate. This process is repeated until a candidate gets more than 50 percent of the votes. Would you support or oppose this kind of system?

A nonpartisan primary system was supported by 80 percent of respondents, including a majority of Democrats, Republicans and independents. Total support was highest among independents at 87 percent, with Republicans at 79 percent and Democrats at 74 percent. Support was especially strong support from non-voters, who supported this concept at higher rates than the respondents who voted in 2022. Ranked choice voting was supported by a slim majority of respondents, led by Democrats and non-voting independents. Republicans who had voted in the 2022 general election were highly opposed to this measure.
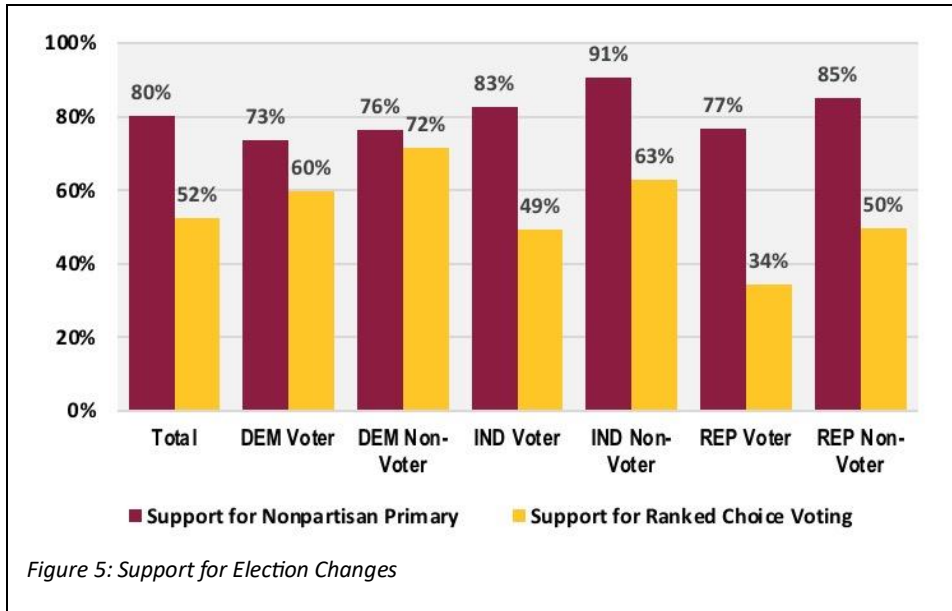
Figure 5: Support for Election Changes

Conduct and Selection of Top Election Officials

Perhaps reflecting concerns about increased political interference in the election process, a clear majority of respondents to the survey expressed support for having top election officials either elected in a nonpartisan election (63%) or appointed (14%). 'Top election officials' were defined as positions

Figure 6: How should top election officials be chosen?

such as Secretary of State and County Recorders, who oversee the running of Arizona's elections. As shown in Figure 6, support for a system of nonpartisan election officials was high across all party and voting categories.

A series of questions were asked about political activities that should be prohibited to the state's top election officials (Figure 7). Requiring these officials to take an oath to function in a nonpartisan manner was supported by 92 percent of all respondents. These figures have been broken out by party identification and voting status in Table 2.

Respondents took a dim view of election officials overseeing decisions that might impact their own elections, with just 20 percent supporting this concept. Table 2 indicates low support for this across all categories. Similarly, respondents did not look favorably upon election officials raising money for other candidates for office, with just 25 percent support. There were more supporters, but still not a majority

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(49%) who endorsed the idea of raising money for their political party. Respondents also were generally opposed to election officials endorsing candidates for other offices, with 42 percent supporting.

Figure 7: Top Election Officials
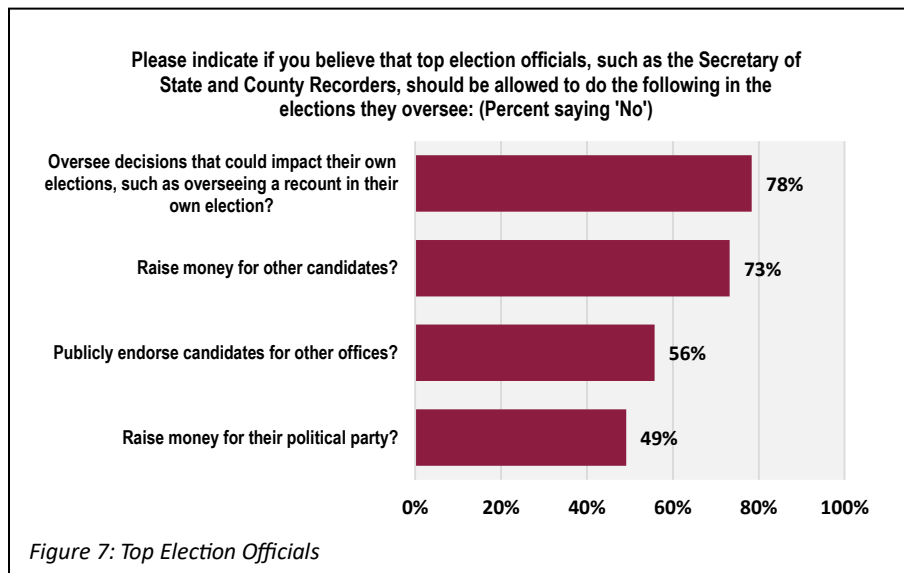
Taken as a whole, the questions around top election officials suggest a public that is looking for nonpartisan supervision of Arizona's elections, rather than having party-affiliated officials.

	Total	DEM Voters	DEM Non-Voters	IND Voters	IND Non-Voters	REP Voters	REP Non-Voters
Should top state and local election officials be required to take an oath to function in a non-partisan manner? (Percent saying 'Yes')	92%	86%	97%	94%	95%	92%	88%
Please indicate if you believe that top election officials, such as the Secretary of State and County Recorders, should be allowed to do the following in the elections they oversee: (Percent saying 'No')							
Oversee decisions that could impact their own elections, such as overseeing a recount in their own election?	78%	70%	79%	86%	77%	79%	83%
Raise money for other candidates?	73%	64%	76%	75%	70%	85%	63%
Publicly endorse candidates for other offices?	56%	58%	41%	62%	50%	67%	37%
Raise money for their political party?	49%	44%	40%	57%	39%	64%	34%

Table 2: Top Election Officials by Party and Voting

Trusted Institutions

Survey respondents were asked about their level of trust in sources of information about elections. Remarkably, none of these institutions were trusted by a majority of those asked, and distrust was more prevalent than trust in five of the eight categories, often by wide margins (Figure 8).

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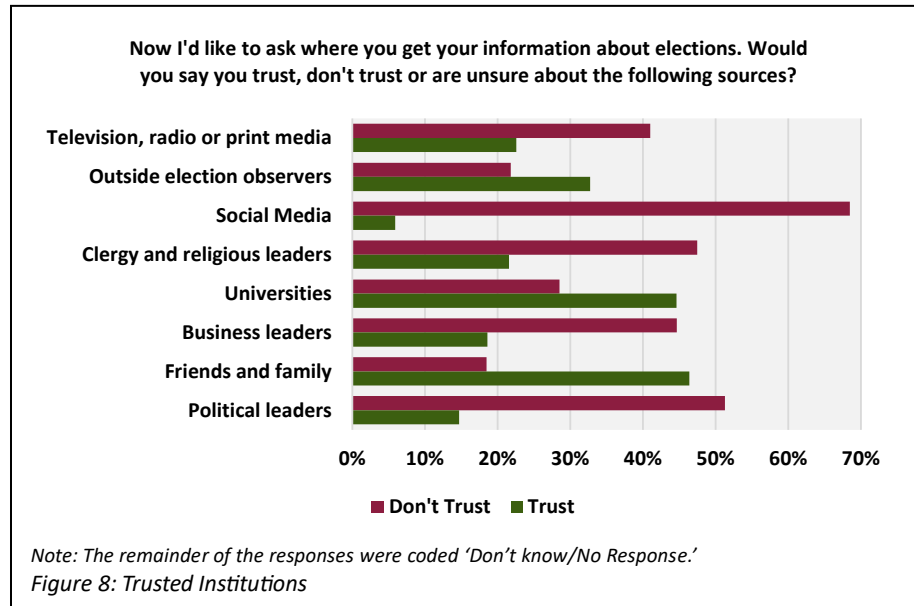
Friends and family, universities, and outside election observers were the only groups that were more trusted than mistrusted in the survey. 46 percent trust their friends and family, 45 percent trust university sources of information, and 33 percent trust outside election observers. Note that 45 percent of respondents did not respond with either trust or distrust to outside election observers, perhaps indicating that people are generally unfamiliar with these observers or that the question was poorly understood.

Now I'd like to ask where you get your information about elections. Would you say you trust, don't trust or are unsure about the following sources?

Note: The remainder of the responses were coded 'Don't know/No Response.'
Figure 8: Trusted Institutions

When the responses to these questions are broken out by party identification as shown in Table 3, some differentiation becomes apparent. Democratic respondents are more trusting of information from universities than registered independents and much more trusting than registered Republicans. Republicans, on the other hand are more trusting of clergy and religious leaders than either independents or Democrats. Perhaps not surprisingly, those classified as independents are less trusting of political leaders than their partisan peers. Independents are also less trusting of family and friends than either Republicans or Democrats.

Now I'd like to ask where you get your information about elections. Would you say you trust, don't trust or are unsure about the following sources?

	DEM Trust	DEM Don't Trust	IND Trust	IND Don't Trust	REP Trust	REP Don't Trust
Television, radio or print media	41.2%	21.3%	17.8%	46.3%	11.1%	53.0%
Outside election observers	33.7%	23.3%	31.0%	19.1%	33.7%	23.3%
Social Media	6.6%	67.4%	4.7%	67.4%	6.6%	70.6%
Clergy and religious leaders	16.9%	57.9%	18.9%	52.0%	28.4%	33.7%
Universities	74.7%	6.2%	44.3%	24.2%	18.7%	52.5%
Business leaders	18.7%	52.2%	18.1%	39.3%	19.0%	43.6%
Friends and family	48.8%	21.3%	36.0%	17.8%	54.9%	16.6%
Political leaders	21.2%	39.0%	8.4%	57.4%	15.4%	55.9%

Note: The remainder of the responses were coded 'Don't know/No Response.'
Table 3: Trusted Institutions by party

Notable Demographics

Results showed several interesting findings when examined across demographic categories.

Urban/Rural

Surprisingly, there were very few areas where the divide between urban and rural respondents showed statistically significant differences. Rural respondents were more likely to say they are not confident in the outcome of elections, and more likely to allow election officials to oversee decisions impacting their own elections but were otherwise well-aligned with urban respondents.

Age

Respondents ages 18 to 34 were substantially more confident in election outcomes (80%) than the sample as a whole (65%). This younger cohort also reported lower levels of trust in clergy and religious leaders, university sources, and friends and family when evaluating information about elections.

Middle-aged respondents (age 35-64) showed significantly higher levels of support for a 24-hour turnaround for final election results (51%) than either older (40%) or younger (41%) respondents. This group also showed higher support for the elimination of mail-in voting and tracking of ballots.

Respondents ages 65 and older were more likely to say that they are very confident in the outcome of elections (39%) than either middle age (33%) or younger (27%) respondents.

Educational Attainment

Respondents with no college education were more supportive of nonpartisan primaries (85%) than those with some college (82%) or with a college degree (73%). They were also less supporting of early voting than the rest of the sample, and more likely to support the elimination of main-in balloting.

Latino

Latino respondents were more confident in the outcome of elections (77%) than their Non-Latino counterparts (62%) and more supporting of ranked-choice voting (60% vs. 50%). They were also less supportive of increased oversight by outside election observers (47% vs 58%).

A plurality (39.9%) of Latino respondents were registered as independents, followed by Democrats at 35.8 percent. Republican registration of Latinos (24.4%) was significantly lower than that of non-Latinos (37.4%).

Non-Voters

In the 2022 general election, more than one-third of eligible voters chose not to vote. These potential voters have a number of characteristics that distinguish them from those who vote. They are younger than the voters; 44 percent of the non-voters were under age 35, while only 14 percent of the voters were that young. Despite their non-participation, non-voters are more likely to express confidence in the outcome of elections (70%) than their voting peers (62%). They are also more supportive of stricter voter ID requirements with 72 percent support, compared to 62 percent for voters. Non-voters are also more supportive of rapid posting of vote counts, elimination of mail-in voting, public testing of voting machines, auditing elections, and increasing oversight by outside election observers.

Non-voters are considerably more supportive of the concept of nonpartisan primaries, with 86 percent in favor, compared to 77 percent of voters. The most striking difference was seen in support for ranked

choice voting, which was supported by 62 percent of non-voters, but only 47 percent of voting respondents. This support was shown by non-voters of all parties, as seen in Figure 5.

Independents

Those registered as independents and with minor parties show greater support for choosing top election officials in a nonpartisan elections (69%) compared to major-party respondents (59%). Additionally, independents are more confident in the outcome of elections (68%) than major-party respondents (63%). They are less trustful of clergy and political leaders, and less likely to support the elimination of mail-in voting. Not surprisingly, independents were significantly more supportive of nonpartisan primaries (87%) than those registered with major parties (77%).

There are some striking differences between those independents who voted in 2022 and those who did not. Ninety-three percent of registered but non-voting independents felt that there is less public trust in election outcomes in recent years, which is similar to levels reported by Republican voters. However, 84 percent of voting independents felt less trust, a rate similar to Democrats.

Similarly, non-voting independents support stricter voter identification requirements (75%) at higher rates that are similar to non-voting Republicans, while independents who voted in the 2022 general election have rates (58%) that are closer to non-voting Democrats.

However, the situation changes on the question of ranked choice primaries. Non-voting independents are more aligned with Democrats in supporting this idea (62.8%), while 49.4 percent of voting independents support it, which is not far from the 49.8 percent of non-voting Republicans who favor ranked choice.
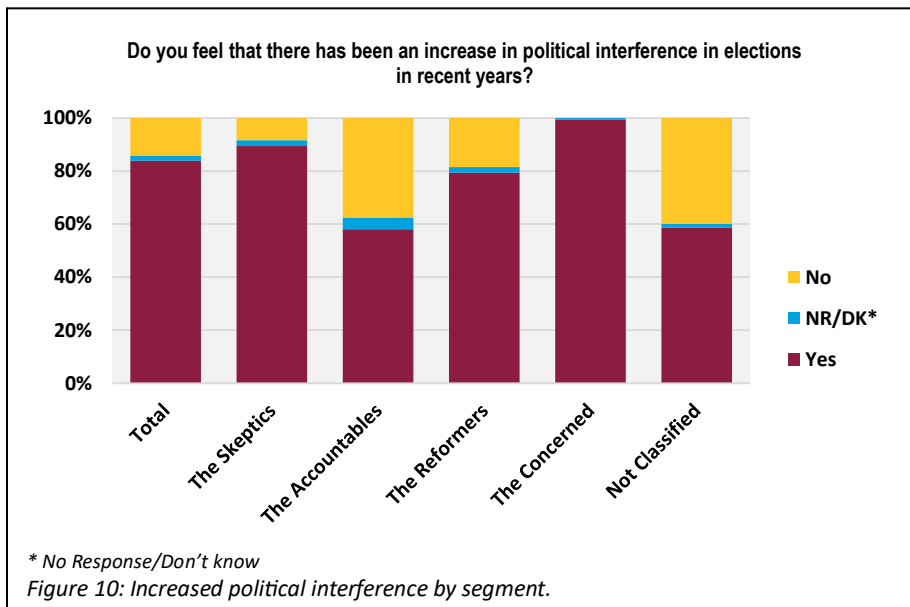
Segments within Arizona Voters

The large amount of data collected from this survey, both in terms of the number of respondents and the number of questions asked, presented an opportunity to dive deeper into the data and gather more insights into voter attitudes. To this end, a factor analysis was performed to see if any pattern emerged in responses to the questions. This is a statistical technique that identifies groups of respondents that tended to answer questions in a similar manner. The factor analysis identified four distinct groups in the data, plus a fifth group that did not seem to fit any pattern. These factors are named and described in Table 4.

Segment	Percent of Responses	Characteristics
The Skeptics	26%	Not confident in election outcomes, opposed to early and mail-in voting, supportive of audits, posting election results in 24 hours, and stricter voter ID.
The Accountables	10%	Support public testing of voting machines and tracking ballots.
The Reformers	29%	Support increased oversight of elections, nonpartisan primaries, and ranked choice voting.
The Concerned	28%	Feel that there is less trust in election outcomes and there has been an increase in politicization.
Not Classified	7%	Do not follow a recognizable pattern.

Table 4: Segments identified in responses.

The division of respondents into distinct groups can be seen when questions are analyzed by these groups, as seen in Figure 9. Just 24 percent of the Skeptics expressed any degree of confidence in the outcome of elections, compared to 65 percent of the overall survey. In contrast, 97 percent of those that were unclassified are at least somewhat confident in the outcomes, with 85 percent being very confident. Respondents in the other three categories expressed relatively high levels of election confidence.

How confident would you say you are in the outcomes of Arizona's elections, very confident, somewhat confident, or not confident?

* No Response/'Don't know
Figure 9: Confidence in election by segment.

Do you feel that there has been an increase in political interference in elections in recent years?

* No Response/Don't know
Figure 10: Increased political interference by segment.

When answers to the question about increased political interference are tracked by segment, we can see that although all groups feel politicization has increased, an overwhelming percentage (99%) of the segment labeled the Concerned think so (Figure 10).

Further patterns appear when support for election reforms is charted by segment (Figure 11). As expected, the Accountables show strong support of increased voter identification requirements and

13

auditing every election, but they also show support for early voting and nonpartisan primaries. The Reformers support most proposed election changes but oppose the elimination of mail-in balloting and the rapid turn-around of election results. The Concerned, who tightly clustered on their distrust of election outcomes and feelings of increased election politicization, seem to also support early voting and the idea of nonpartisan primaries. Finally, those who didn't fit into a formal, statistical classification were not supportive of any of the changes listed, but heavily supported the continuation of early voting, which has been part of the Arizona election system for years. This, coupled with the Not Classified's high confidence in election outcomes (Figure 9), may indicate that this group is satisfied with the status quo and does not feel that changes are need to the election system.

Figure 11: Support for election changes by segment.
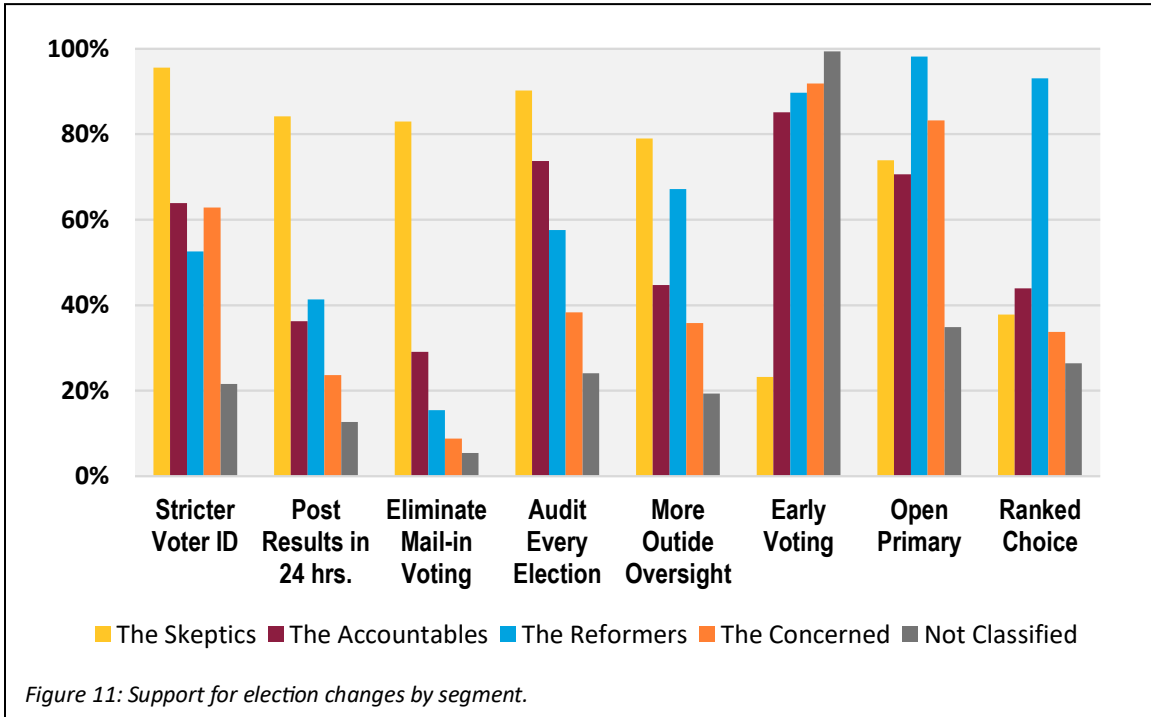
The sorting of respondents into these categories was done without regard to their political party, voting history or demographic background; only their answers to election-related questions were considered. There were no statistically significant differences in the percentage of urban versus rural respondents across the five categories. Likewise, the distribution of race and ethnicity across the groups mirrored that of the respondents as a whole (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Region and Race/Ethnicity by segment.
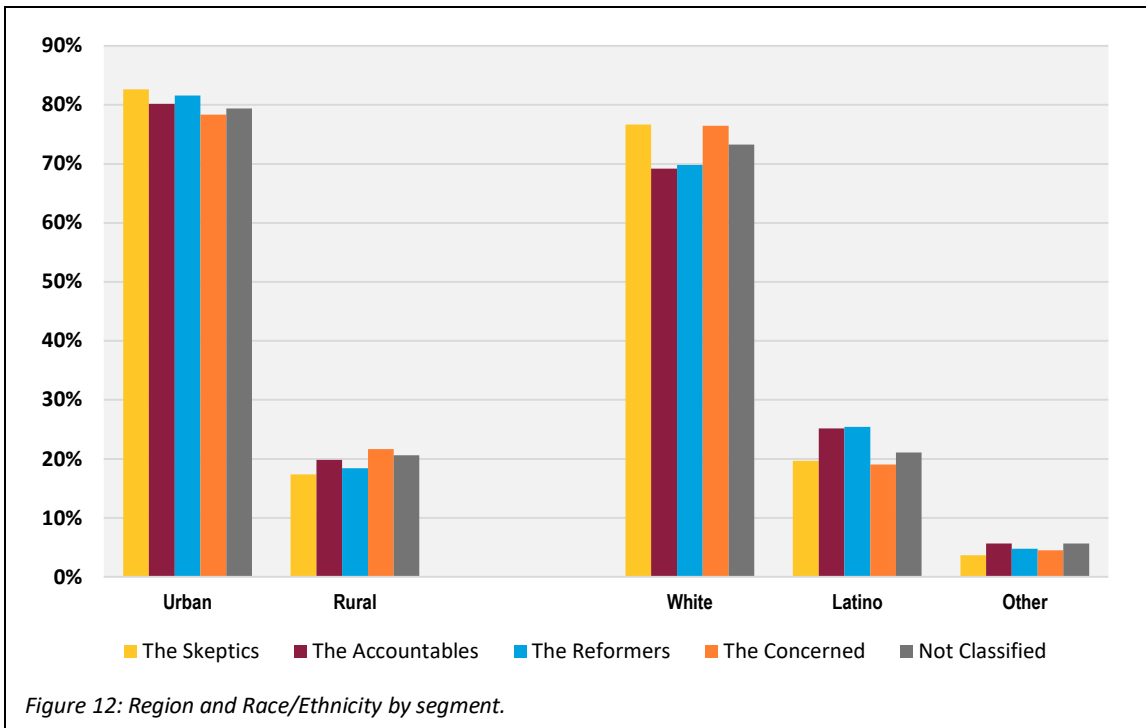
Respondents ages 18-34 were significantly more represented in the Accountables and Reformers segments, as seen in Figure 13. Older respondents were concentrated in the Skeptics and the Concerned. The Accountables and the Concerned showed significantly lower percentages of respondents with at least a bachelor's degree. The only significant difference across gender was with the Concerned segment which showed a higher percentage of females.

Figure 13: Age, Educational Attainment, and Gender by segment.
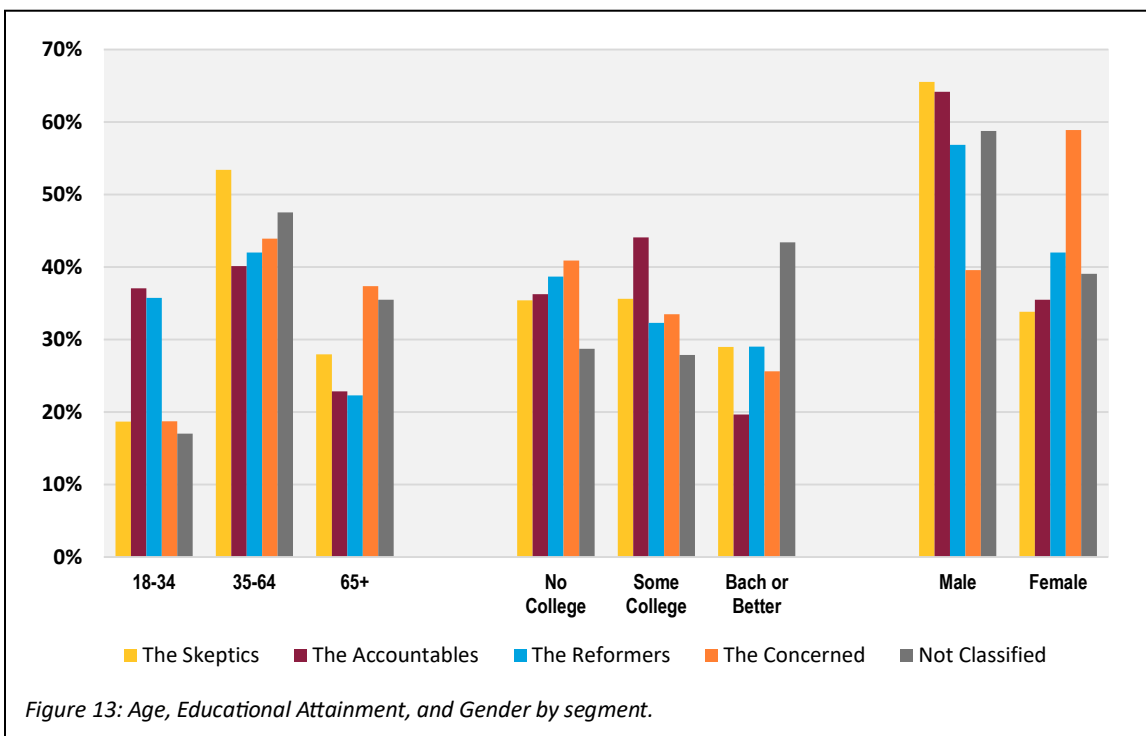
As might be expected, more significant differences were found when the five categories were looked at by party identification and voting status (Figure 14). The Skeptics were overwhelmingly Republican (65%), with the Not Classified largely Democratic (61%). Interestingly, the independents were fairly uniformly distributed in the allocation across the segments. The varying percentages of independents across segments did not rise to the level of statistical significance. Voting behavior was fairly uniform across the segments, with the notable exception of the Not Classified, 85 percent of whom voted in the 2022 general election. Although the Not Classified segment is small at just seven percent of respondents, they lean heavily Democratic, vote in high numbers and, as noted above, may be satisfied with the status quo on election issues.

Figure 14: Party and voting status by segment.
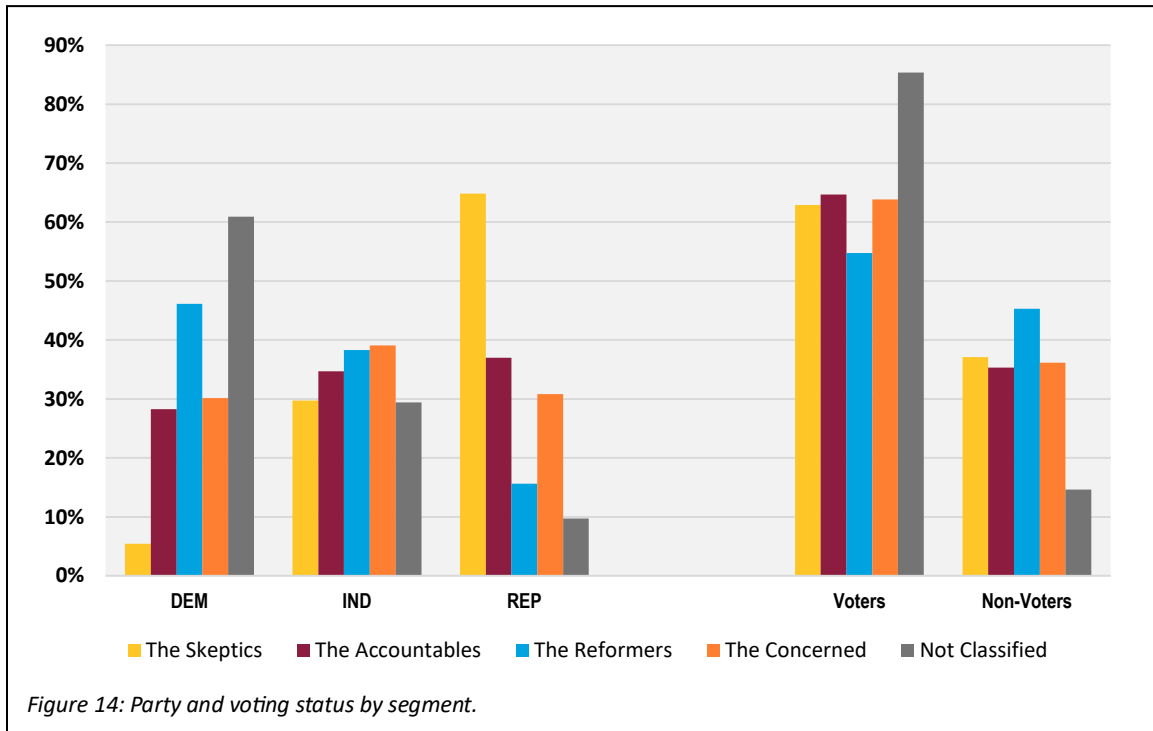
Discussion

In this study of 1,063 Arizona registered voters, we found a good deal of common ground regarding defining the problems and solutions in the state's election system. Voters appear to be more aligned in their views than partisan politics would suggest. These findings may seem a surprise, as the media regularly portrays a deeply divided public. And the amount of conflicting voting legislation being introduced at the local, state, and national level makes it seem as if the conflict is deeply embedded within the public. Too often, media sources and our two major political parties amplify the loudest and most extreme voices, creating an environment in which the democratic process itself is called into question. Our findings suggest that there are other, more compatible, currents operating among Arizonans.

Our interviews with registered voters in Arizona found that there are broad areas of agreement on both election integrity and election reform issues. While there was significant agreement across all categories of voters in calling out an increase in political interference in elections in recent years, over two-thirds of voters are either somewhat or very confident in Arizona election outcomes. Those who did not vote in

the 2022 General Election were more likely to express confidence than those who voted. However, voters were much more likely to say that they are very confident in election outcomes than the non-voters.

There was also broad support for a range of measures to ensure election integrity such as public testing of voting machines, stricter requirements for voter identification, and auditing election results, even though Democrats were a bit less inclined to these measures than their Republican and independent counterparts. Public testing of voting machines prior to an election as well as post-election audits are required by state law and have been for years. It is unclear if voters feel the need to improve these existing safeguards, or if they are simply unaware of election integrity protections that already exist. In any case, this may be an area where increased voter education is warranted. Policymakers may also want to conduct a deeper dive into the level of voter safeguards that citizens want.

Similarly, there was widespread support for voting by mail, requiring the same ballot access signature numbers for candidates seeking office, and for having top election officials selected in a nonpartisan manner. Nonpartisan election administration is the norm in other western democracies where the administrators running the system have no stake in the outcome and electoral agencies are legally and administratively shielded from partisan actors. Regarding this last point, it was very clear that Arizonans strongly favor nonpartisan supervision of Arizona's elections, rather than party-affiliated election officials. Voters took a dim view of election officials overseeing decisions that might impact their own elections, publicly endorsing candidates, and raising money for other candidates for office. There was overwhelming support across all categories for a system where top state and local election officials would be required to take an oath to function in a nonpartisan manner. Both voters and non-voters from all party identifications felt such an oath was desirable, with support from 92 percent of respondents.

The responses to questions about certain structural election reforms were also enlightening. National election reform efforts have focused primarily on two areas gaining some momentum and attracting public controversy. These are open or nonpartisan primaries and ranked choice voting. Regarding primary reform, while the general election is open to all voters in a jurisdiction, in many states the primary is conducted by party and frequently limited to registered party members. Independent voters who are not affiliated with a party[12] are often blocked or restricted from voting in primary elections. Since general elections are overwhelmingly noncompetitive, being excluded from a primary can mean being excluded from the election altogether. The rules for primary participation vary from state to state and oftentimes between jurisdictions in the same state. In Arizona, independent voters can participate in primary elections for local, state, and federal office, but are barred from presidential primaries. In Arizona, independent voters can request a ballot for only one party's primary election, however few independents take advantage of this privilege.

We asked Arizona voters if they supported a statewide nonpartisan primary system where all candidates appear on a single ballot in which all voters, regardless of affiliation, can vote. This nonpartisan primary system was supported by 80 percent of voters, including a majority of Democrats, Republicans, and independents.

However, this was not the case for ranked choice voting. Ranked-choice voting (RCV) is a system in which constituents vote for multiple candidates, in order of preference. A candidate can win outright by

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[12] In March 2023, Gallup found that 49% of American voters self-identify as independents.

receiving a majority of first-preference votes. However, if there is no majority winner within the first-choice votes, votes are then subject to a new counting system, often an "instant runoff." In this instance, the candidate with the fewest first-preference votes is eliminated, and voters who picked that candidate as their first choice will have their next choice counted. If there still is not a winner, then the candidate with the next fewest votes is eliminated. This process continues until one candidate obtains a majority. Arizona voters supported this system only by a slim majority of respondents, led by Democrats and non-voting independents. Republicans were highly opposed to this measure.

Where do voters turn to for sources of information about elections? Systematic efforts to undermine the ability of those overseeing the counting and casting of ballots on an independent, nonpartisan basis have been very destructive. The polarizing rhetoric on both sides and in the media has served to undermine the trust we have in each other as well as in mainstream institutions. With the increase in election misinformation, finding credible outlets to provide accurate information to voters is essential. Sadly, Arizona voters have low levels of trust in sources of information about elections. Remarkably, no institutions were trusted by a majority of those asked, and distrust was more prevalent than trust. Friends and family, universities, and outside election observers were the only groups that were more trusted than mistrusted in the study. Television, radio & print media, social media, clergy, political leaders, and business leaders were widely distrusted.

Based on this study, universities and outside election observers may be able to increase their visibility and develop innovative ways to serve as sources of information about elections. It was interesting to note that 45 percent of respondents did not respond with either trust or distrust to the option of outside election observers, perhaps indicating that people are generally unfamiliar with the definition of such observers or that the question was poorly understood. This may serve as an additional opportunity for voter education efforts.

Given the large sample size, we were able to gain some insight into various demographics in addition to the differences noted in this report concerning political affiliation and voting status (those voters who are registered and those who both registered and voted in the last election). Differences in voting attitudes based on age and education were noted as were those of Latino voters. Interestingly, little difference was observed between rural and urban voters. Since this survey included proportional participation from independent voters, comprising 35.2% of respondents, combined with the fact that 39.9% of Latino respondents were independents, we were able to see certain aspects of the profile of these unaffiliated Arizonans. Given that the lens too often used in surveys and polls is a binary one (Democrat/Republican) these results offer insights into this rapidly growing segment of the Arizona, and national, electorate. Arizona independent voters share views on the troubled nature of politics consistent with those of Democrats and Republicans. At the same time, they have a more pointed response to the intrinsic partisanship of current election practices.

It is important to note that this study comes on the heels of a sizable amount of intense scrutiny and controversies on Arizona's processes, rules and counting. A cybersecurity firm, Cyber Ninjas, was picked from relative obscurity to conduct an unprecedented review of ballots in Arizona in response to baseless claims the 2020 election was stolen.[13] Additionally, while the 2022 midterm election results were largely certified without issue around the country, Arizona was an exception. Arizona's super close races for

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[13] Cooper, Jonathan. (2021, August, 22). What's wrong with Arizona's 2020 audit? A lot, experts say. AP News.

Governor, Attorney General and other offices led to final tallies not being released until weeks after the election, fueling many conspiratorial claims.[14] Further, a number of lawsuits were filed questioning the election results. These eventually were all tossed out.[15] The degree to which these activities may have influenced responses from registered voters is not fully known.

These findings provide a roadmap on how a nonpartisan election system could further enhance voter confidence in Arizona and possibly beyond. It also underscores the importance of support for election security measures combined with the need for reforms that protect the core American principle of the fundamental right to self-governance through the exercise of the right to vote.

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[14] Kinnard, Meg. (2022, November 11). Why Are Arizona Elections Taking So Long. AP News.
[15] Schonfeld, Zach. (2022, November, 24). Arizona becomes epicenter of GOP challenges to 2022 election. The Hill.

Appendix A – Survey Questions and Toplines

All responses represent weighted values.

Region							
	Urban	Rural	Total				
Frequency	858	205	1063				
Percent	80.7	19.3	100.0				
2022 General Election vote history of respondent interviewed							
	VOTED	DID NOT VOTE	Total				
Frequency	665	398	1063				
Percent	62.6	37.4	100.0				
Party of the respondent interviewed							
	DEM	PND/Other	REP	Total			
Frequency	321	375	367	1063			
Percent	30.2	35.2	34.5	100.0			
Age of the respondent interviewed							
	18 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 and over	Total
Frequency	93	177	161	154	171	308	1063
Percent	8.7	16.6	15.1	14.5	16.1	28.9	100.0
GENDER							
	Male	Female	Other	Total			
Frequency	588	464	12	1063			
Percent	55.3	43.6	1.1	100.0			
Race & Ethnicity							
	White	Latino	African American	Native American	Asian	Other	Total
Frequency	783	232	13	6	3	27	1063
Percent	73.6	21.8	1.2	0.6	0.3	2.5	100.0
4_3. What is your highest level of education?							
	No high school diploma or GED	High school diploma or GED	Some College	Bachelor's degree	Advanced degree: master's or doctorate	Don't know/No Response	Total
Frequency	128	264	365	189	110	5	1063
Percent	12.1	24.9	34.4	17.8	10.4	0.5	100.0
2_13. Do you feel that there is less public trust in the outcome of elections in recent years?							
	No	Nr / DK	Yes	Total			
Frequency	115	16	932	1063			
Percent	10.8	1.5	87.7	100.0			

2_11. Do you feel that there has been an increase in political interference in elections in recent years?						
	No	Nr / DK	Yes	Total		
Frequency	151	20	892	1063		
Percent	14.2	1.9	83.9	100.0		

2_2. How do you think top election officials, such as the Secretary of State and County Recorders, should be chosen?						
	Elected as a member of a political party	Elected in a nonpartisan election	Appointed	Other (Specify)	Total	System	
Frequency	195	634	142	44	1015	48	1063
Percent	18.3	59.7	13.3	4.2	95.5	4.5	100.0

2_4. Publicly endorse candidates for other offices.				
	No	Nr / DK	Yes	Total
Frequency	593	25	445	1063
Percent	55.8	2.4	41.8	100.0

2_5. Raise money for their political party.				
	No	Nr / DK	Yes	Total
Frequency	522	17	523	1063
Percent	49.2	1.6	49.2	100.0

2_6. Raise money for other candidates.				
	No	Nr / DK	Yes	Total
Frequency	779	16	268	1063
Percent	73.3	1.5	25.2	100.0

2_7. Oversee decisions that could impact their own elections, such as overseeing a recount in their own election.				
	No	Nr / DK	Yes	Total
Frequency	833	13	216	1063
Percent	78.4	1.3	20.4	100.0

2_8. Should top state and local election officials be required to take an oath to function in a nonpartisan manner?				
	No	Nr / DK	Yes	Total
Frequency	75	13	975	1063
Percent	7.1	1.3	91.7	100.0

2_9. How confident would you say you are in the outcomes of Arizona's elections, very confident, somewhat confident, or not confident?				
	Not Confident	Nr / DK	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Total
Frequency	364	8	339	352	1063
Percent	34.3	0.7	31.9	33.1	100.0

Now I'd like to ask where you get your information about elections. Would you say you trust, don't trust or are unsure about the following sources? 2_15X. Television, radio or print media.						
	Don't Trust	Nr / DK	Trust	Total		
Frequency	436	387	240	1063		
Percent	41.0	36.4	22.6	100.0		
2_16X. Outside election observers						
	Don't Trust	Nr / DK	Trust	Total		
Frequency	232	483	348	1063		
Percent	21.8	45.4	32.8	100.0		
2_17X. Social Media						
	Don't Trust	Nr / DK	Trust	Total		
Frequency	728	272	63	1063		
Percent	68.5	25.6	5.9	100.0		
2_18X. Clergy and religious leaders						
	Don't Trust	Nr / DK	Trust	Total		
Frequency	505	329	229	1063		
Percent	47.5	30.9	21.6	100.0		
2_19X. Universities						
	Don't Trust	Nr / DK	Trust	Total		
Frequency	303	285	475	1063		
Percent	28.5	26.8	44.6	100.0		
2_20X. Business leaders						
	Don't Trust	Nr / DK	Trust	Total		
Frequency	475	391	198	1063		
Percent	44.7	36.8	18.6	100.0		
2_21X. Friends and family						
	Don't Trust	Nr / DK	Trust	Total		
Frequency	196	373	493	1063		
Percent	18.5	35.1	46.4	100.0		
2_22X. Political leaders						
	Don't Trust	Nr / DK	Trust	Total		
Frequency	545	361	156	1063		
Percent	51.3	34.0	14.7	100.0		

For each of the following changes, please tell me whether you support, oppose, or neither support nor oppose the following measures:						
3_2X. Stricter voter identification requirements.						
	Don't Support	Nr / DK	Support	Total		
Frequency	252	112	698	1063		
Percent	23.7	10.6	65.7	100.0		
3_3X. Posting final vote counts within 24 hours of polls closing, even if that means reducing early ballot drop off times.						
	Don't Support	Nr / DK	Support	Total		
Frequency	415	167	481	1063		
Percent	39.0	15.7	45.2	100.0		
3_4X. Eliminating mail-in voting.						
	Don't Support	Nr / DK	Support	Total		
Frequency	606	115	341	1063		
Percent	57.0	10.9	32.1	100.0		
3_5X. Publicly testing voting machines before election day.						
	Don't Support	Nr / DK	Support	Total		
Frequency	75	83	905	1063		
Percent	7.1	7.8	85.1	100.0		
3_6X. Tracking ballots similar to the way packages are tracked, so voters know when their votes have been counted.						
	Don't Support	Nr / DK	Support	Total		
Frequency	61	97	905	1063		
Percent	5.8	9.1	85.1	100.0		
3_7X. Performing an audit after every election.						
	Don't Support	Nr / DK	Support	Total		
Frequency	219	205	639	1063		
Percent	20.6	19.3	60.1	100.0		
3_8X. Increasing oversight by outside election observers.						
	Don't Support	Nr / DK	Support	Total		
Frequency	207	261	595	1063		
Percent	19.4	24.6	56.0	100.0		

3_10. Now I'd like to ask you about how candidates qualify for the ballot. Currently, candidates who are not running as either Democrat or Republican must gather many more signatures to get their name on the ballot than a major party's candidate. Do you support or oppose requiring all candidates, regardless of party affiliation, to gather the same number of signatures to qualify for the ballot?

	Don't Support	Nr / DK	Support	Total			
Frequency	114	30	919	1063			
Percent	10.7	2.8	86.5	100.0			

3_11. In the 2022 election, most Arizona voters received their ballots in the mail, and either mailed them back or personally returned them to a voting center. Do you support or oppose this practice?

	Don't Support	Nr / DK	Support	Total			
Frequency	259	28	776	1063			
Percent	24.4	2.6	73.0	100.0			

3_13. Currently, independent voters can request a ballot for only one party's primary election. Would you support a statewide nonpartisan primary system where all candidates appear on a single ballot that all voters, regardless of affiliation, are entitled to vote on?

	Don't Support	Nr / DK	Support	Total			
Frequency	177	32	854	1063			
Percent	16.7	3.0	80.3	100.0			

3_15. Ranked choice voting is a change being discussed for the general election. Currently Arizona voters cast a vote for one candidate. Ranked choice voting would allow voters to rank all candidates in their order of preference, instead of having to choose only one candidate. If no candidate receives more than 50 percent of the votes, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. If that eliminated candidate was a voter's first choice, that voter's vote is transferred to their second favorite candidate. This process is repeated until a candidate gets more than 50 percent of the votes. Would you support or oppose this kind of system?

	Don't Support	Nr / DK	Support	Total			
Frequency	465	41	557	1063			
Percent	43.7	3.9	52.4	100.0			

Appendix B – About the Study

This study of registered voters in Arizona was designed by the Center for an Independent and Sustainable Democracy and administered by Venture Data, Inc. To ensure that the survey accurately reflects the electorate in the state, the sample was controlled for the following factors:

- Party Identification – Democrat, Republican, or independent. Those registered with minor parties and as Party Not Declared were grouped as independents.
- Voting Status – Voters in the 2022 General Election and those who are registered but did not vote.
- Ethnicity – Latino and Non-Latino registered voters.
- Urban/Rural – Urban counties of metro Phoenix and Tucson.
- Age across six categories – 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65 and over.
- Educational Attainment - No high school diploma, high school diploma or GED, some college, bachelor's degree, advanced degree.

Venture Data was contracted to administer the survey and were given instructions to draw a sample from Arizona's Voter Registration Database (VRDB) of registered voters that was balanced by party affiliation, voting status in the 2022 general election, Latino status, and urban/rural residence.
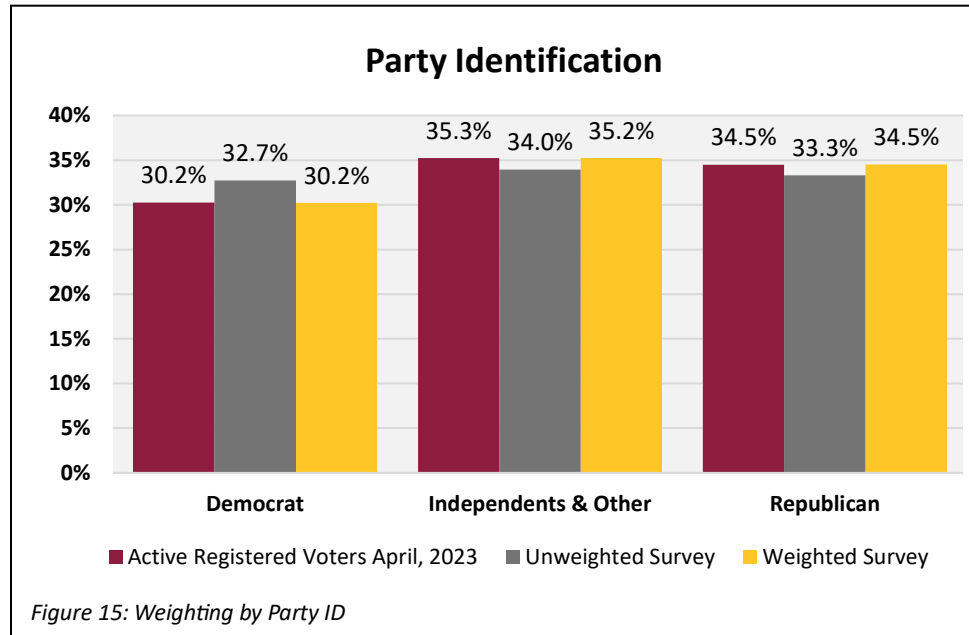
The survey was conducted by telephone between May 17 and May 26, 2023, drawing names and telephone numbers from the VRDB. The final sample included 1,063 responses, yielding a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percent. Topline results are presented in Appendix A.

Registered Voter Database

The Voter Registration Database contains the names, addresses, phone numbers party identification, and limited demographic information on all actively registered voters in Arizona. The database is available for a fee from the office of the Arizona Secretary of State. The sample for this survey was drawn from the VRDB data for April 2023, which includes information on 4,171,577 registered voters.

Weighting the Survey

To ensure the analysis of results accurately reflected the makeup of Arizona's registered voters, raked weights were applied to the initial survey results. This is a statistical procedure that adjusts several factors to bring the sample into line with the overall registered voter population. The survey vendor endeavored to draw a sample that closely matched the VRDB on party identification, participation in the 2022 general election, Latino status, and urban/rural location. Two additional factors were added to the raked weighting procedure: age and educational attainment. Careful selection of the initial sample meant that adjustments due to weighting were generally small. Figure 15 shows the

Party Identification

	Democrat	Independents & Other	Republican
Active Registered Voters April, 2023	30.2%	35.3%	34.5%
Unweighted Survey	32.7%	34.0%	33.3%
Weighted Survey	30.2%	35.2%	34.5%

Figure 15: Weighting by Party ID

adjustments made to the Party Identification of respondents. A full list of target percentages with unweighted and weighted percentages is found in Appendix C. All figures in this report reflected weighted values.

Reporting the Results

Throughout this report, the independent category includes both those who expressed no party affiliation and those who registered under parties other than Democratic or Republican. Minor party registrants such as Libertarians and Greens make up just two percent of registered voters.

Urban areas of Arizona were defined as metropolitan Phoenix and Tucson as defined by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which includes all of Maricopa, Pinal, and Pima Counties. Respondents from all other counties were considered rural.

Although detailed information was recorded for both age and educational attainment for each respondent, these results have been collapsed down to three categories each for the purposes of reporting. Age is reported as 18-34, 35-64, and age 65 and above. Educational attainment is classified as those with no college experience, those with some college, and those with at least a bachelor's degree.

Ethnicity has been reduced to two categories: Latino and non-Latino. African American, Native American, Asian and other ethnic categories represented a fairly small portion of total respondents. These numbers were too small for robust statistical analysis. Larger, targeted samples will be needed to gain insight into the characteristics and attitudes of these other important populations.

Appendix C – Survey Weighting

Party	VRDB	Unweighted Survey	Weighted Survey
DEM	30.2%	32.7%	30.2%
PND/Other	35.3%	34.0%	35.2%
REP	34.5%	33.3%	34.5%

Age	VRDB	Unweighted Survey	Weighted Survey
18 to 24	8.6%	12.5%	8.7%
25 to 34	16.6%	14.8%	16.6%
35 to 44	15.2%	14.8%	15.1%
45 to 54	14.5%	14.7%	14.5%
55 to 64	16.1%	17.2%	16.1%
65 and over	29.0%	26.1%	28.9%

Region	VRDB	Unweighted Survey	Weighted Survey
Urban	80.7%	75.5%	80.7%
Rural	19.3%	24.5%	19.3%

Educational Attainment	Census	Unweighted Survey	Weighted Survey
No high school diploma or GED	12.1%	1.8%	12.1%
High school diploma or GED	25.0%	14.6%	24.9%
Some College	34.6%	40.1%	34.4%
Bachelor's degree	17.9%	25.9%	17.8%
Advanced Degree	10.4%	17.2%	10.4%

Latino & Voting Status	CPLC	Unweighted Survey	Weighted Survey
Non-Latino Voters	52.8%	55.4%	52.8%
Latino Voters	9.9%	11.3%	9.8%
Non-Latino Non-Voters	25.4%	24.5%	25.4%
Latino Non-Voters	12.0%	8.8%	12.0%