2018 Orange County Voter Experience Survey Preliminary Report

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Executive Summary

Immediately after the November 2018 general election, we implemented an innovative online survey, attempting to contact registered voters in Orange County (California) via email, and inviting them to participate in a survey about their voting experience in the general election. Here we present preliminary results from the survey, examining weighted assessments of voter confidence, voting experiences, opinions about election fraud, and perceptions of election hacking in the 2018 election. Our preliminary results show that the registered voters who responded to this survey are extremely confident that their votes were counted in Orange County as they intended.

Key preliminary results from this survey include:

- We find that 87% of voters responding to our survey were confident that their vote was counted as they intended; 86% of registered voters responding to our survey indicated that they were confident that votes in Orange County were counted as intended.

- Nearly all of our respondents indicated a positive voting experience, either in person, by mail or absentee, as we detail below. Of those who voted in person, 96% said it was very or fairly easy to find their polling place. For the by-mail voters, 95% did not have any trouble getting their ballot by mail, and 97% did not have any trouble marking their mail ballot.

- Orange County registered voters believe that most forms of potential election fraud do not frequently occur in Orange County, and a majority of our respondents (54%) respondent that computer hacking in the local administration of the 2018 elections was not a problem at all.

Summary of Preliminary Results

In the survey, we included a series of questions about whether those who said that they had voted in the November 2018 general election were confident that their own vote was counted as they intended; we then asked all registered voters who responded to our survey questions about their confidence about whether votes were correctly counted in Orange County generally, the State of California, and nationally. Overwhelmingly, we found that those who turned out to vote in Orange County were strongly confident that their vote was counted as they intended: 87% of the voters in our sample said they were very confident or somewhat confident that their vote was counted as they intended (Table 1). In Table 2 we provide similar estimates, but for all registered voters who responded to our survey invitation, regarding their confidence that votes were counted as intended in Orange County: 86% said they were very confident or somewhat confident.

Moving to evaluations of confidence for the state and nation, the Orange County registered voters who responded to our survey indicated less confidence that votes were counted as intended. Regarding statewide confidence, 78% said they were very or somewhat confident that votes in California were counted as intended. And at the national level, 57% of registered voters responding to our survey indicated confidence in the counting of votes. These results are consistent with academic research which has argued that voter confidence is "a local matter."[1]

The survey also included questions, for those who reported that they voted or tried to vote in the November 2018 general election, about their in-person or voting-by-mail voting experiences. These results are given in Tables 5 through 14. 96% of the voters reported it was easy to find their polling place and 91% found the polling place management satisfactory. 86% of registered voters responding to our survey did not encounter problem with their registration. For the 14% who reported a problem with their voter registration, we plan to summarize the types of problems encountered and their frequencies in our next report, which will require text-analysis of voters' descriptions of the problems they said that they encountered. Two thirds of voters waited in line for less than 10 minutes before they were able to cast their votes, and 10% of them had to wait for more than an hour, where the waiting time is mostly attributable to the check-in process, consistent with our Election Day observations. Few voters (7%) encountered problems with the voting equipment or ballot and 86% of the voters rated the poll workers at their polling locations as excellent or good.

For registered voters in our sample who voted by mail or absentee, 95% did not report having problems getting their absentee or mail-in ballots and only 3% encountered problems marking or completing their ballot. Almost all respondents (98%) found it easy to follow the instructions necessary to cast their ballot and return it.

We also asked respondents survey questions about general perceptions of voter fraud and hacking of election technology. These results are given in Tables 15 through 22. The first set of questions, on perceptions of voter fraud, are in Tables 15 through 22. These questions were presented to

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[1] See Lonna Rae Atkeson and Kyle L. Saunders, "Voter Confidence: A Local Matter?". PS: Political Science & Politics, 40(4): 655-60, 2007.

survey respondents in a set, trying to ascertain their opinions about how frequently various forms of election fraud might occur in Orange County. In general, Orange County registered voters indicated that most of these potential forms of election fraud occur infrequently or never occur in Orange County: people voting more than once in an election, people stealing or tampering with voted ballots, voter impersonation, and officials not reporting the vote count correctly. We see two of these areas where there are deviations from this general tendency: people voting who are not U.S. citizens (25% of our respondents indicated that was "very common"), and people voting an absentee ballot intended for another person (26% of our respondents indicated that this occurred "occasionally"). There is no indication that these issues actually arise in Orange County, however, we will examine these data in more detail in the future to better understand what might be driving these responses to these two questions.

Finally, we asked two questions about the potential for hacking of election administration in 2018, locally (Table 21) and nationally (Table 22). Here we see a pattern similar to that for voter confidence: most Orange County registered voters respondent that computer hacking in 2018 was not a problem in Orange County (54%). However, there appears to be more concern among Orange County registered voters regarding computer hacking nationally in 2018: 27% said it was a major problem, while 46% said it was a minor problem.

Survey and Weighting Methodology

We invited registered voters in Orange County via email to participate in our voter experience survey between Thursday, November 8, 2018 and Tuesday, November 13, 2018. The survey questions were developed to maintain as much comparability with statewide and national voter experience surveys, including other statewide surveys that we have been implementing in 2018, as well as surveys like the Survey of the Performance of American Elections and the Cooperative Congressional Election Study; as data from these other 2018 statewide and national surveys become available we will provide additional comparative analyses of those data.[2] The online survey was provided in English, and details about the questionnaire are available by request. From 531,777 invites to all registered voters with email addresses, we received 6,948 complete responses by November 20, 2018. We appreciate all registered voters who took their time to provide their valuable opinions and evaluations as part of this project.

The registered voters who voluntarily participated in the survey may not be a representative sample of the population of all registered voters in Orange County. To make our analysis representative for Orange County registered voters, we construct survey weights using a standard procedure known as "raking." The raking algoritm uses information on age, gender, race/ethnicity, party registration, permanent absentee ballot status, and city of residence, to produce weights that we use in our statistical analyses to produce more representative results. Thus, we incorporate these survey weights into figures that we report.[3]

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[2]For more information about the SPAE, see https://cces.gov.harvard.edu/; additional information about the Cooperative Congressional Election Survey can be found at https://cces.gov.harvard.edu/.

[3]For a summary of the"raking" method for constructing survey weights, see Chapter 7 of Lumley, Thomas. *Complex*

Tables

Voter Confidence

Table 1: How confident are you that your vote in the General Election was counted as you intended?

	Estimate	Std. Err.
Very confident	0.54	0.007
Somewhat confident	0.33	0.007
Not too confident	0.07	0.004
Not at all confident	0.05	0.003

Note: Response options are displayed in the order of choice frequencies. Respondents are randomly assigned to the displayed order or the reverse order with equal probability.

Table 2: Think about vote counting throughout Orange County, and not just your own personal situation. How confident are you that votes in Orange County were counted as voters intended?

	Estimate	Std. Err.
Very confident	0.47	0.007
Somewhat confident	0.39	0.007
Not too confident	0.09	0.004
Not at all confident	0.05	0.003

Note: Response options are displayed in the order of choice frequencies. Respondents are randomly assigned to the displayed order or the reverse order with equal probability.

surveys: a guide to analysis using R. Vol. 565. NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2011.

Table 3: Think about vote counting throughout California. How confident are you that votes in California were counted as voters intended?

	Estimate	Std. Err.
Very confident	0.39	0.007
Somewhat confident	0.39	0.007
Not too confident	0.12	0.005
Not at all confident	0.09	0.005

Note: Response options are displayed in the order of choice frequencies. Respondents are randomly assigned to the displayed order or the reverse order with equal probability.

Table 4: Think about vote counting throughout the country. How confident are you that votes nationwide were counted as voters intended?

	Estimate	Std. Err.
Very confident	0.19	0.006
Somewhat confident	0.38	0.007
Not too confident	0.26	0.006
Not at all confident	0.18	0.006

Note: Response options are displayed in the same order as Table 1 through Table 3 for consistency. Respondents are randomly assigned to the displayed order or the reverse order with equal probability.

Voting Experience – In-Person Voting

Table 5: How difficult was it to find your polling place to vote?

	Estimate	Std. Err.
Very easy	0.84	0.008
Fairly easy	0.12	0.007
Somewhat difficult	0.03	0.004
Very difficult	0.00	0.002
I don't know	0.00	0.001

Note: Response options are displayed in the order of choice frequencies. Respondents are randomly assigned to the displayed order or the reverse order (with "I don't know" fixed at the bottom) with equal probability.

Table 6: How well were things run at the polling place where you voted?

	Estimate	Std. Err.
Very well	0.64	0.011
Okay	0.27	0.010
Not well	0.06	0.005
Terrible	0.04	0.005

Note: Response options are displayed in the order of choice frequencies. Respondents are randomly assigned to the displayed order or the reverse order with equal probability.

Table 7: Was there a problem with your voter registration when you tried to vote?

	Estimate	Std. Err.
No	0.86	0.008
Yes	0.14	0.008
I don't know	0.00	0.001

Note: Response options are displayed in the order of choice frequencies. Respondents are randomly assigned to the displayed order or the reverse order (with "I don't know" fixed at the bottom) with equal probability.

Table 8: Approximately, how long did you have to wait in line to vote?

	Estimate	Std. Err.
Not at all	0.32	0.011
Less than 10 minutes	0.33	0.011
10-30 minutes	0.24	0.010
31 minutes-1 hour	0.07	0.006
More than 1 hour	0.03	0.004
I don't know	0.00	0.001

Note: Response options are displayed in the order of choice frequencies.

Table 9: Was your wait in line mostly when you first arrived to check in at the registration table, or after you checked in and were waiting to gain access to a place to cast your ballot?

	Estimate	Std. Err.
Check in	0.70	0.013
Access to voting machine	0.15	0.010
Evenly divided	0.13	0.010
I don't remember	0.01	0.003

Note: Response options are displayed in the order of choice frequencies.

Table 10: Did you encounter any problems with the voting equipment or the ballot that may have interfered with your ability to cast your vote as intended?

	Estimate	Std. Err.
No	0.93	0.006
Yes	0.07	0.006
I don't know	0.01	0.002

Note: Response options are displayed in the order of choice frequencies. Respondents are randomly assigned to the displayed order or the reverse order (with "I don't know" fixed at the bottom) with equal probability.

Table 11: Please rate the job performance of the poll workers at the polling place where you voted

	Estimate	Std. Err.
Excellent	0.54	0.012
Good	0.32	0.011
Fair	0.10	0.007
Poor	0.04	0.004

Note: Response options are displayed in the order of choice frequencies. Respondents are randomly assigned to the displayed order or the reverse order with equal probability.

Voting Experience – Voting by Mail or Absentee

Table 12: Were there any problems getting your absentee or mail-in ballot sent to you?

	Estimate	Std. Err.
No	0.95	0.004
Yes	0.05	0.004
I don't know	0.00	0.001

Note: Response options are displayed in the order of choice frequencies. Respondents are randomly assigned to the displayed order or the reverse order (with "I don't know" fixed at the bottom) with equal probability.

Table 13: Did you encounter any problems marking or completing your ballot that may have interfered with your ability to cast your vote as intended?

	Estimate	Std. Err.
No	0.97	0.003
Yes	0.03	0.003

Note: Response options are displayed in the order of choice frequencies. Respondents are randomly assigned to the displayed order or the reverse order with equal probability.

Table 14: Overall, how easy was it to follow all the instructions necessary to cast your ballot and return it to be counted?

	Estimate	Std. Err.
Very easy	0.83	0.007
Somewhat easy	0.15	0.006
Somewhat hard	0.02	0.002
Very hard	0.00	0.001

Note: Response options are displayed in the order of choice frequencies. Respondents are randomly assigned to the displayed order or the reverse order with equal probability.

Perceptions of Voter Fraud

Table 15: People voting more than once in an election

	Estimate	Std. Err.
It almost never occurs	0.47	0.008
It occurs infrequently	0.20	0.007
It occurs occasionally	0.20	0.007
It is very common	0.13	0.006

Note: Response options are displayed in the order of choice frequencies. Respondents are randomly assigned to the displayed order or the reverse order with equal probability.

Table 16: People stealing or tampering with ballots that have been voted

	Estimate	Std. Err.
It almost never occurs	0.45	0.008
It occurs infrequently	0.24	0.007
It occurs occasionally	0.19	0.007
It is very common	0.12	0.006

Note: Response options are displayed in the order of choice frequencies. Respondents are randomly assigned to the displayed order or the reverse order with equal probability.

Table 17: People pretending to be someone else when going to vote

	Estimate	Std. Err.
It almost never occurs	0.42	0.007
It occurs infrequently	0.22	0.007
It occurs occasionally	0.20	0.007
It is very common	0.16	0.006

Note: Response options are displayed in the order of choice frequencies. Respondents are randomly assigned to the displayed order or the reverse order with equal probability.

Table 18: People voting who are not U.S. citizens

	Estimate	Std. Err.
It almost never occurs	0.43	0.007
It occurs infrequently	0.16	0.006
It occurs occasionally	0.16	0.006
It is very common	0.25	0.007

Note: Response options are displayed in the order of choice frequencies. Respondents are randomly assigned to the displayed order or the reverse order with equal probability.

Table 19: People voting an absentee ballot intended for another person

	Estimate	Std. Err.
It almost never occurs	0.29	0.007
It occurs infrequently	0.27	0.007
It occurs occasionally	0.26	0.007
It is very common	0.18	0.007

Note: Response options are displayed in the order of choice frequencies. Respondents are randomly assigned to the displayed order or the reverse order with equal probability.

Table 20: Officials changing the reported vote count in a way that is not a true reflection of the ballots that were actually counted

	Estimate	Std. Err.
It almost never occurs	0.47	0.008
It occurs infrequently	0.22	0.007
It occurs occasionally	0.19	0.007
It is very common	0.13	0.006

Note: Response options are displayed in the order of choice frequencies. Respondents are randomly assigned to the displayed order or the reverse order with equal probability.

Perceptions of Computer Hacking

Table 21: Computer hacking locally in the administration of elections in 2018

	Estimate	Std. Err.
Not a problem at all	0.54	0.009
Minor problem	0.35	0.008
Major problem	0.11	0.006

Note: Response options are displayed in the order of choice frequencies. Respondents are randomly assigned to the displayed order or the reverse order with equal probability.

Table 22: Computer hacking nationwide in the administration of elections in 2018

	Estimate	Std. Err.
Not a problem at all	0.26	0.008
Minor problem	0.46	0.009
Major problem	0.27	0.008

Note: Response options are displayed in the same order as Table 21 for consistency. Respondents are randomly assigned to the displayed order or the reverse order with equal probability.