

The Power and Possibility of an Informed Electorate

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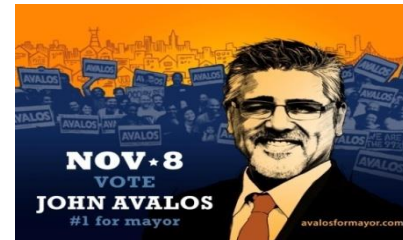
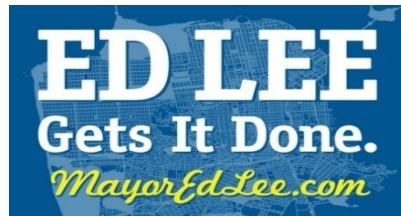
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How Do Voters Decide?

- The Democratic Ideal...



- In reality...



How Do Voters Decide?

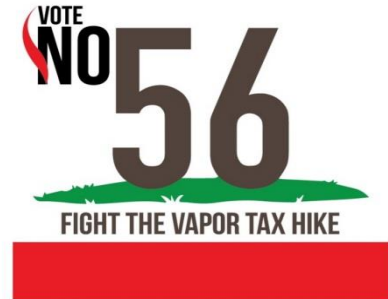
- The Democratic Ideal...



- In reality...



**PROTECT SMALL BUSINESS
AND SMOKE-FREE ALTERNATIVES**



Endorsements

The New York Times

OPINION
THE EDITORIAL BOARD

The Times Endorses Kathy Hochul for Governor of New York

CADEM

CALIFORNIA DEMOCRATIC PARTY

OFFICIAL RECOMMENDATIONS



PRESIDENT
Hillary Clinton
Tim Kalne



U.S. SENATE
Kamala D. Harris

PROPOSITIONS

Prop. 51..... YES	Prop. 57..... YES	Prop. 63..... YES
Prop. 52..... YES	Prop. 58..... YES	Prop. 64..... YES
Prop. 53..... NO	Prop. 59..... YES	Prop. 65.....*
Prop. 54..... NO	Prop. 60..... NO	Prop. 66..... NO
Prop. 55..... YES	Prop. 61.....*	Prop. 67..... YES
Prop. 56..... YES	Prop. 62..... YES	* No official position

VOTE ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8

Polls Open 7:00 am – 8:00 pm

Mail-In Ballots Must be postmarked by Tuesday, Nov. 8

Questions? Call 1-877-321-VOTE (8683)



November 2022 Endorsements November 2022 Endorsements

- District 4 Supervisor Gordon Mar
- District 6 Supervisor Honey Mahogany
- District 8 Supervisor Rafael Mandelman
- District 10 Supervisor Shamann Walton
- District Attorney John Hamasaki
- Public Defender Mano Raju

PAID FOR BY THE CALIFORNIA DEMOCRATIC PARTY (CADEM.ORG)

Issue-Oriented Voter Guides

SAN FRANCISCO VOTES 2012

A NON PARTISAN GUIDE TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CANDIDATES
IN THE NOVEMBER 6, 2012, CONSOLIDATED GENERAL ELECTION

A collaboration of the San Francisco Public Press, League of Women Voters San Francisco and faculty at U.C. Davis
Design by Justin Allen (www.justinallen.us) | For the unabridged text of the survey questions, visit www.sfpublishing.org/election2012

DISTRICT 1 SURVEY OF CANDIDATE POSITIONS ON LOCAL ISSUES

* BLANK SPACES INDICATE THE CANDIDATE DECLINED TO ANSWER

Candidate's full name	David Lee	Eric Mar	Sherman R. D'Silva
Supervisor with whom you most agree	Scott Wiener	John Avalos	David Chiu
Support creating an Affordable Housing Trust Fund	Yes	Yes	No
San Francisco must come up with a plan to restore the Hetch Hetchy Valley (Measure F)	No	No	No
Eight-year parcel tax to help City College of San Francisco (Measure A)	Yes	Yes	No
End the death penalty in California and replace it with life in prison without parole (State Prop 34)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Change "three strikes" law to impose a mandatory life term for a "serious or violent" third felony (State Prop 36)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Permit 8 Washington Street project (high-rise condominium replacing private tennis club) to move forward	Yes	Yes	Yes
Support the Mid-Market payroll tax exemption granted to Twitter and other businesses	Yes	Yes	Yes
Change rent control to protect only low-income and middle-class tenants who cannot afford market-rate rents	Don't know	No	No
Eliminate ranked-choice voting and return to the prior system of runoff elections	Yes	No	No
Enact San Francisco income tax for those earning more than \$500,000 per year	No	Yes	No

Information about Donors

Follow The Money.

Big Tobacco has spent \$66 Million dollars to defeat Prop 56 in California.

YES on 56 Campaign Funded by:
American Lung Association in California
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Heart Association
California Medical Association
California Dental Association
Planned Parenthood
SEIU
California Democratic Party
Tom Steyer
Michael Bloomberg

Source: <http://cal-access.ss.ca.gov/>

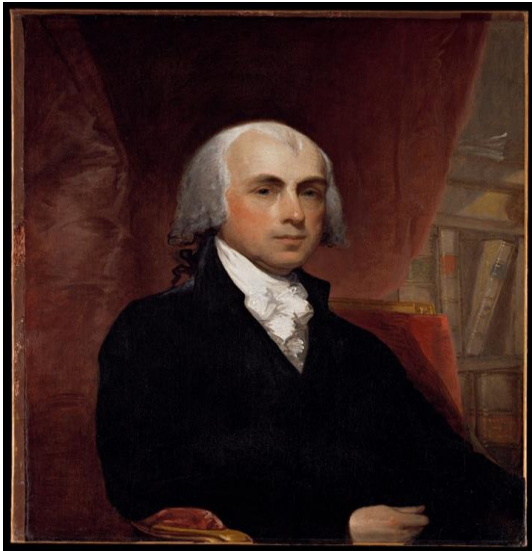
NO on 56 Campaign Funded by:
Philip Morris
R.J. Reynolds
Smoke-Free Alternatives Trade Assoc.
(vaping industry)



Do You Trust Big Tobacco?



Importance of an Informed Electorate



James Madison

“A popular government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy; or perhaps both”

Informing the Electorate is Possible, But...

- Three challenges:
 - 1) Are people willing to receive information?
 - 2) Will they trust it?
 - 3) Can they apply it effectively to their choices?

Receiving Information

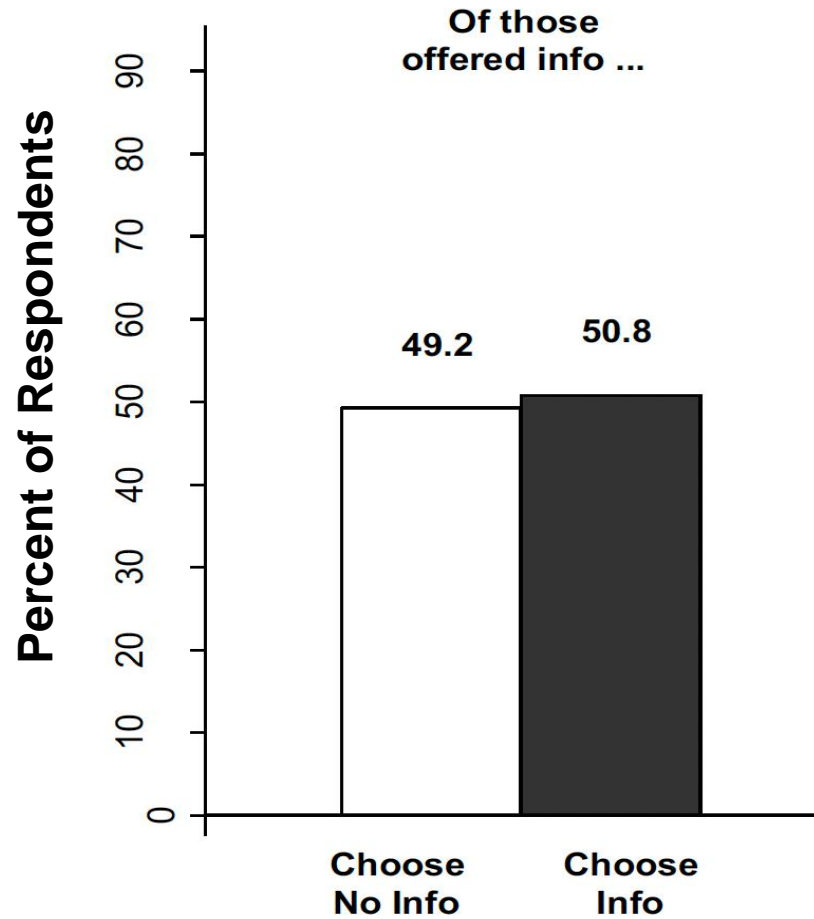
- Most citizens lack interest in and knowledge of politics
- Research shows that political information can help citizens with their choices
 - Experiments that isolate the effects of information from all other causes
- Experiments typically force participants to receive the information and then measure its effects
 - In reality, people *choose* whether to receive information
- Will citizens opt to receive information when given a choice? If so, how does it affect their decisions?

Receiving Information

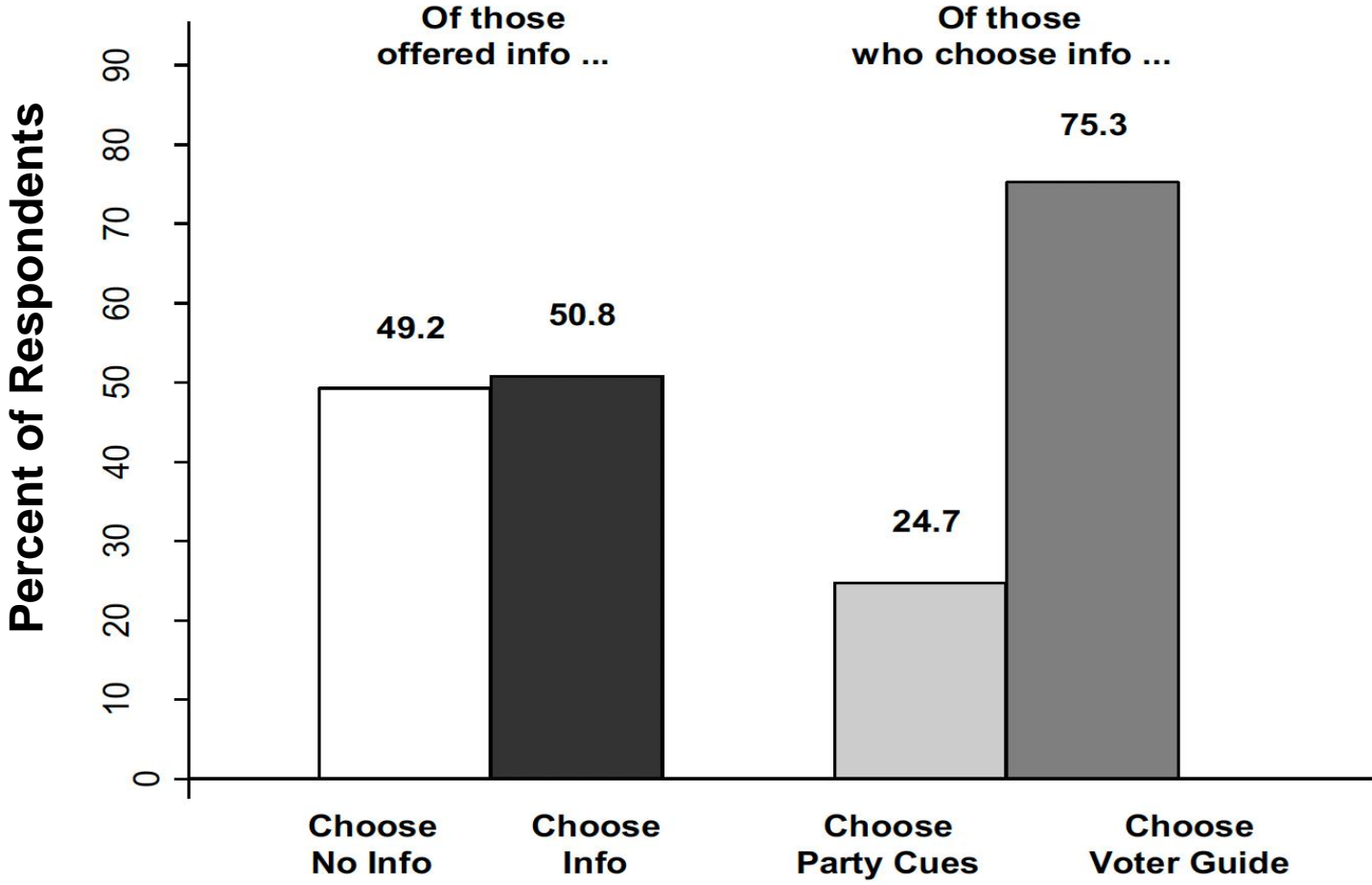
- Survey experiments in the 2018 mayoral special election in San Francisco
- Measured candidates' and citizens' views on local policies
- Respondents randomly assigned to receive either:
 - 1) Political party endorsements (forced exposure)
 - 2) Issue oriented voter guide (forced exposure)
 - 3) No information (control group)
 - 4) *Choice* between party endorsements, voter guide, or nothing

Source: Boudreau, Elmendorf, & MacKenzie (*Journal of Experimental Political Science*, 2022)

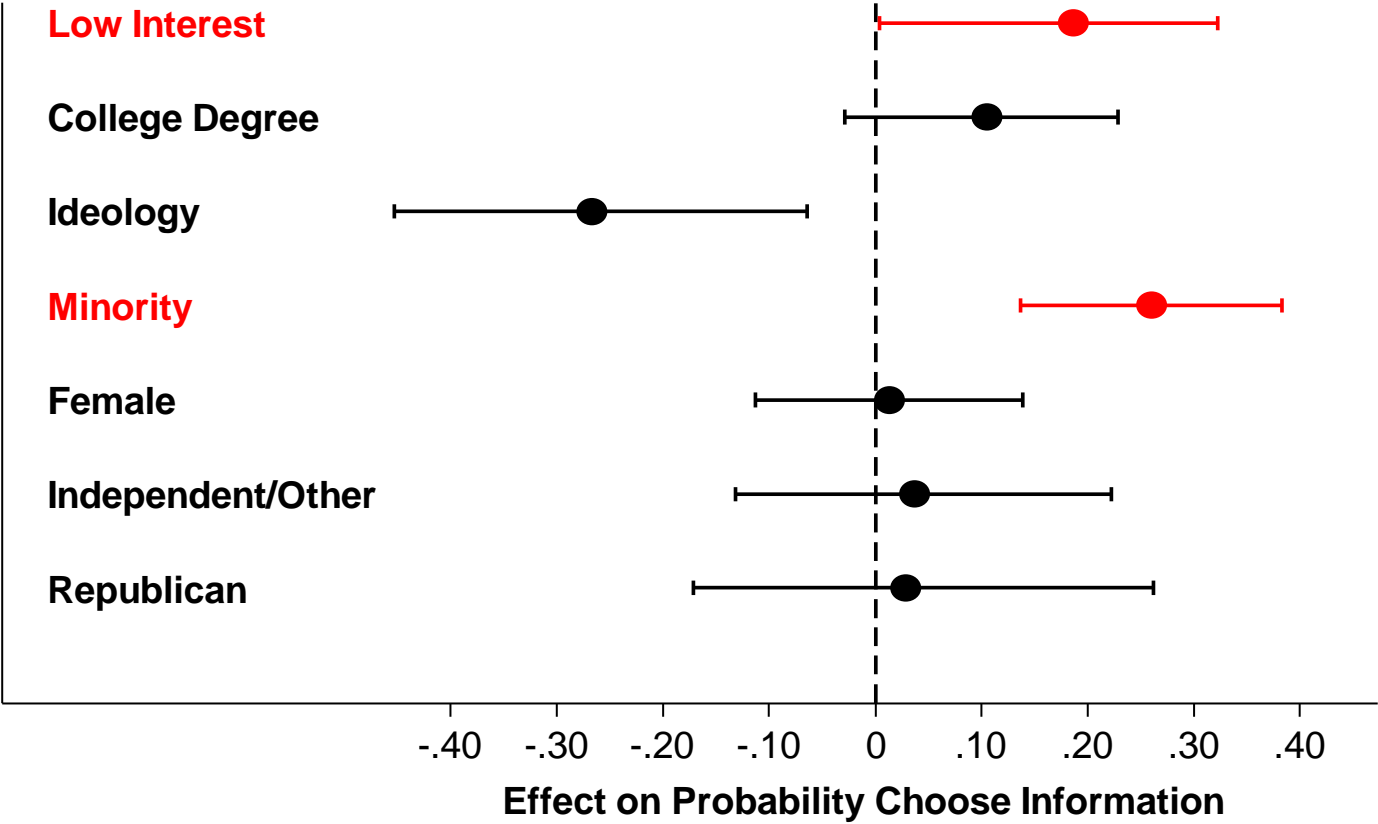
Citizens are Willing to Receive Information



Citizens Choose Policy over Partisan Information

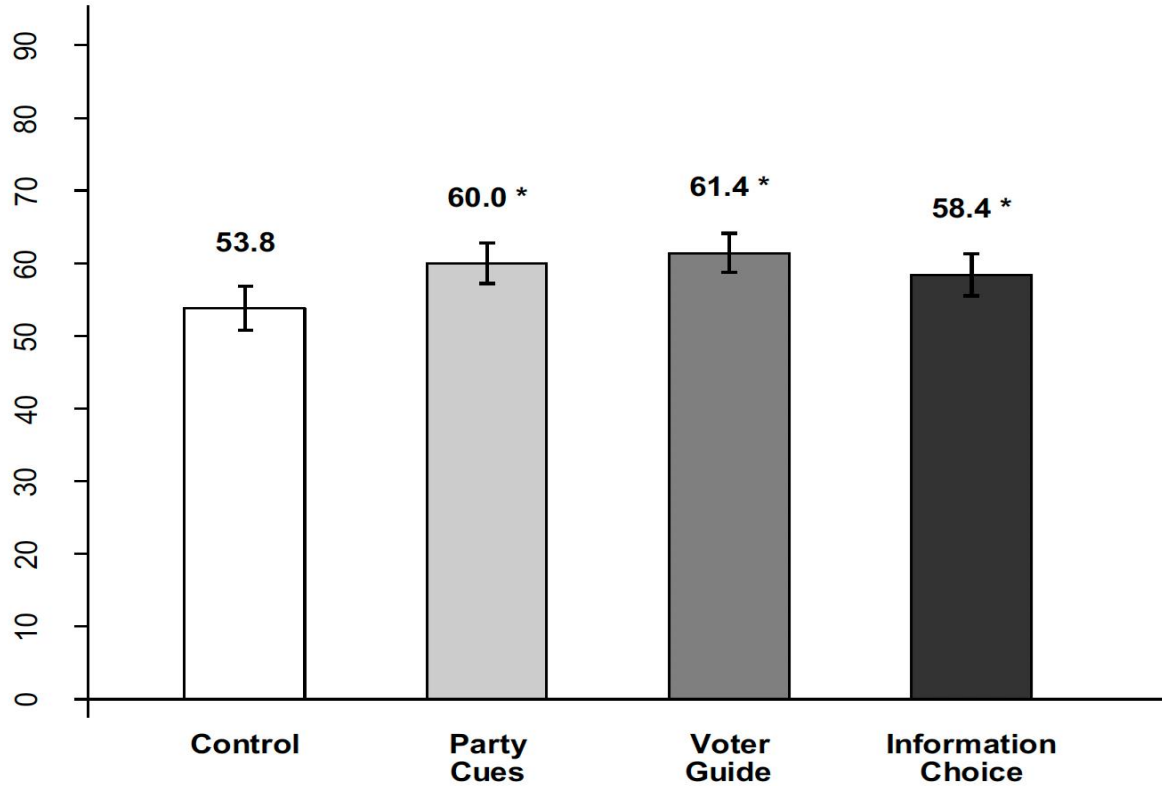


Who Chooses to Receive Information?



Information Helps People Choose Candidates Who Share their Policy views

Percent Choosing Candidate Who Shares Their Policy Views



Receiving Information: Take Away Points

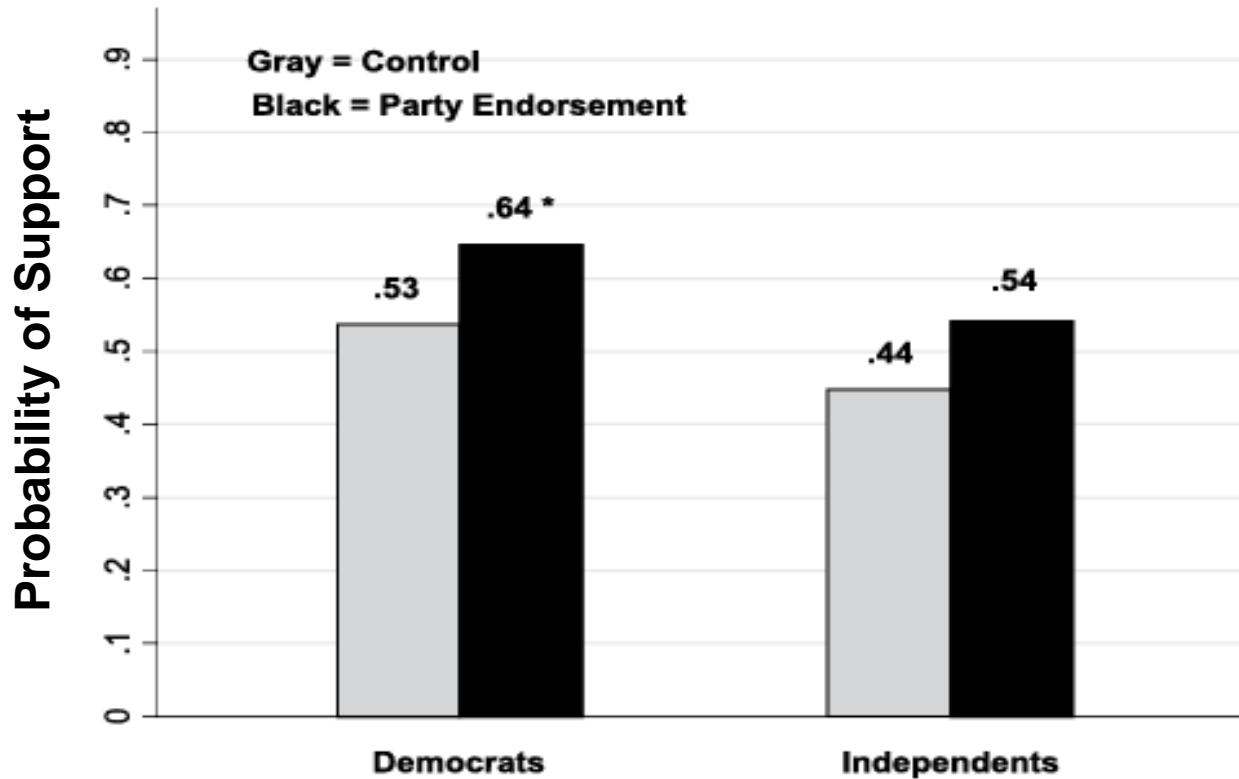
- Citizens take advantage of low-cost opportunities to receive political information
- Less politically interested citizens are *more* likely to choose to receive information
 - When they do so, it has powerful effects on their decisions
- Half the sample chose not to get information; these tend to be more informed citizens
- Challenge: Motivating the remaining uninformed citizens to receive information
 - Making information personally relevant can help

Trusting Information

- Citizens must believe the information is credible
- Two conditions must be met:
 - 1) Source must be perceived as knowledgeable
 - 2) Source must be perceived as trustworthy (common interests)
- Credibility is in the eye of the beholder!
- **What sources of information do people trust?**

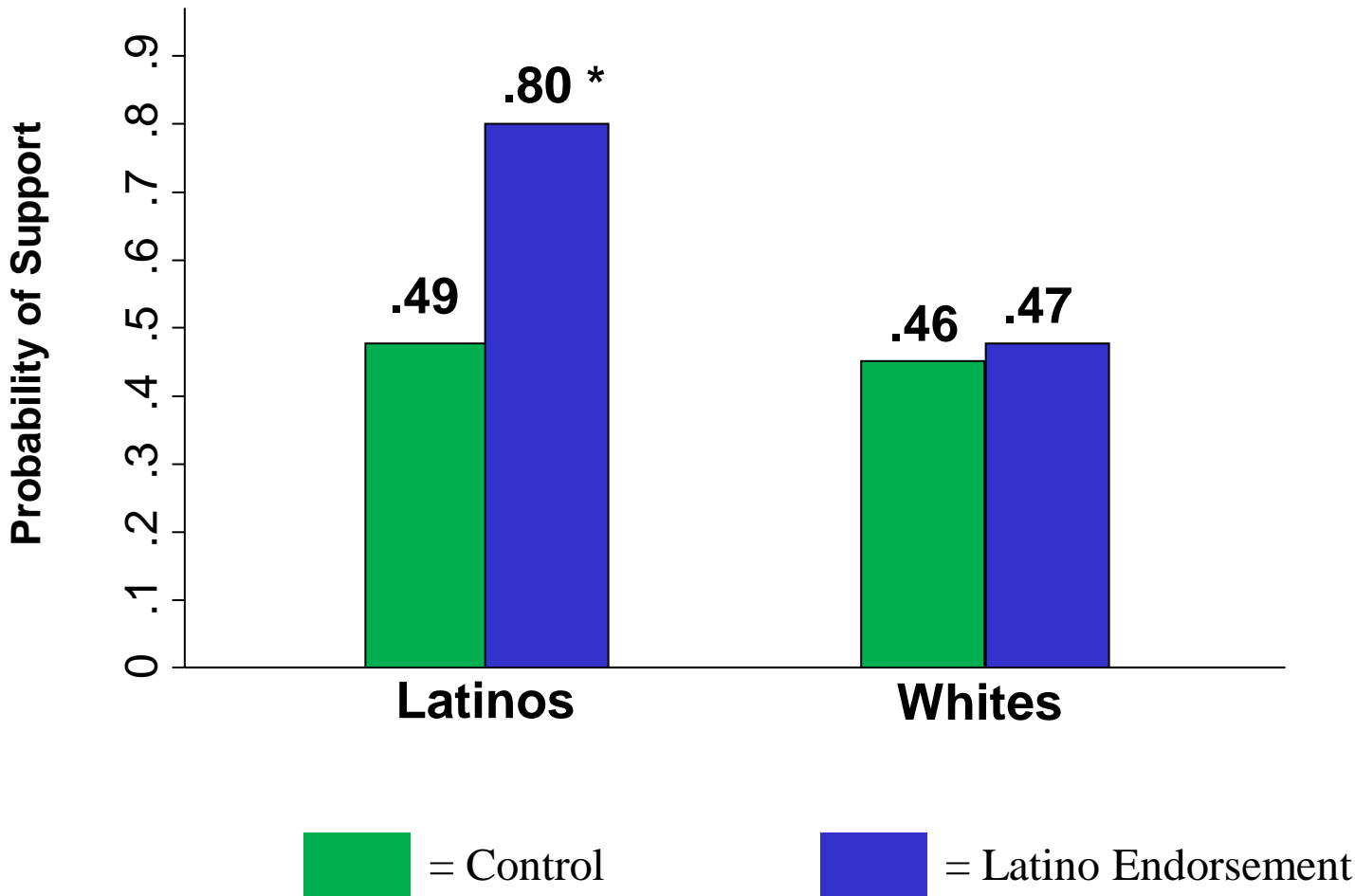
Source: Lupia & McCubbins (*The Democratic Dilemma*, Cambridge University Press, 1998)

Trust in Own Party



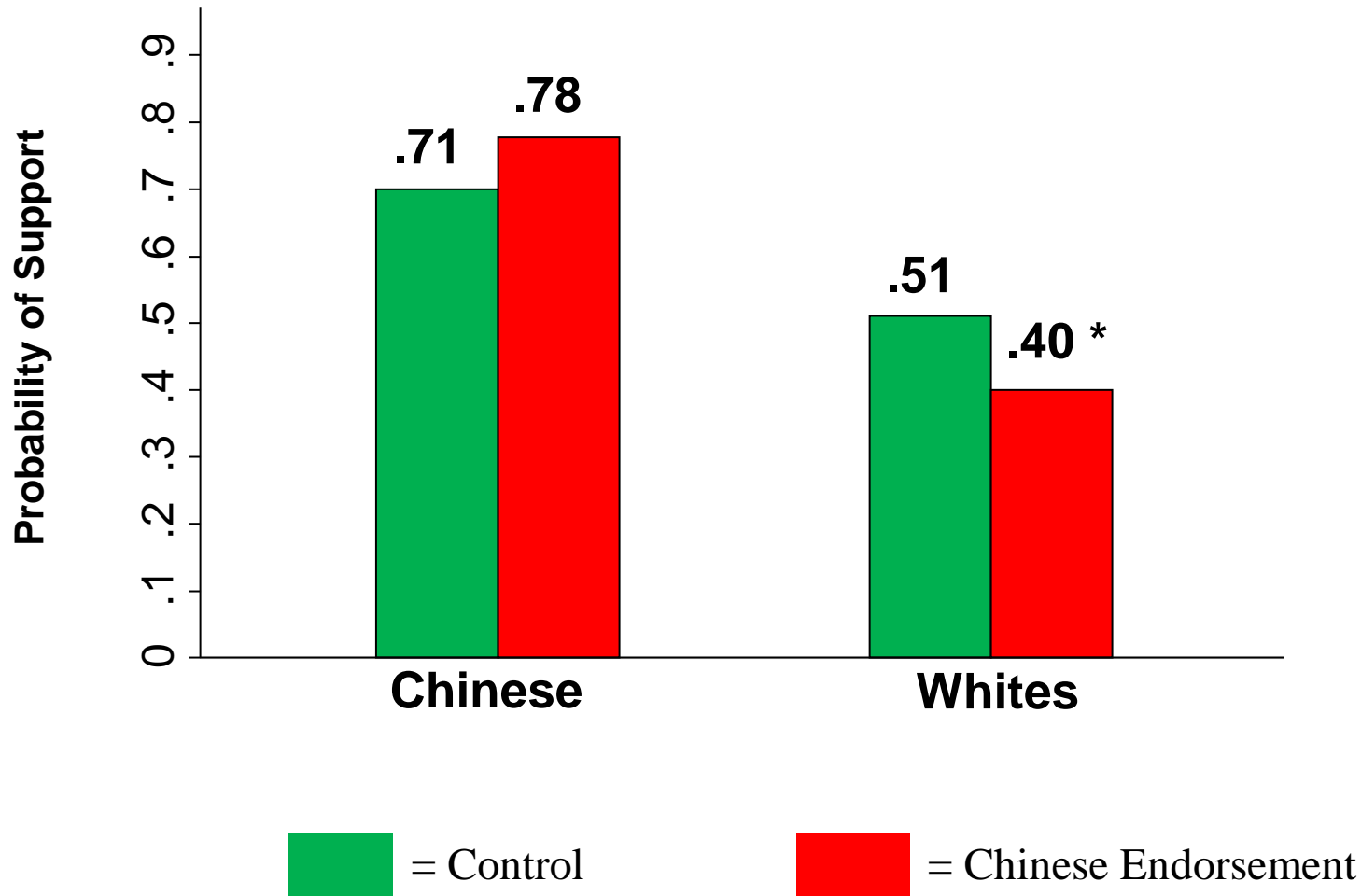
Source: Boudreau, Elmendorf, & MacKenzie (*Political Research Quarterly*, 2015)

Trust in Ethnic Interest Groups



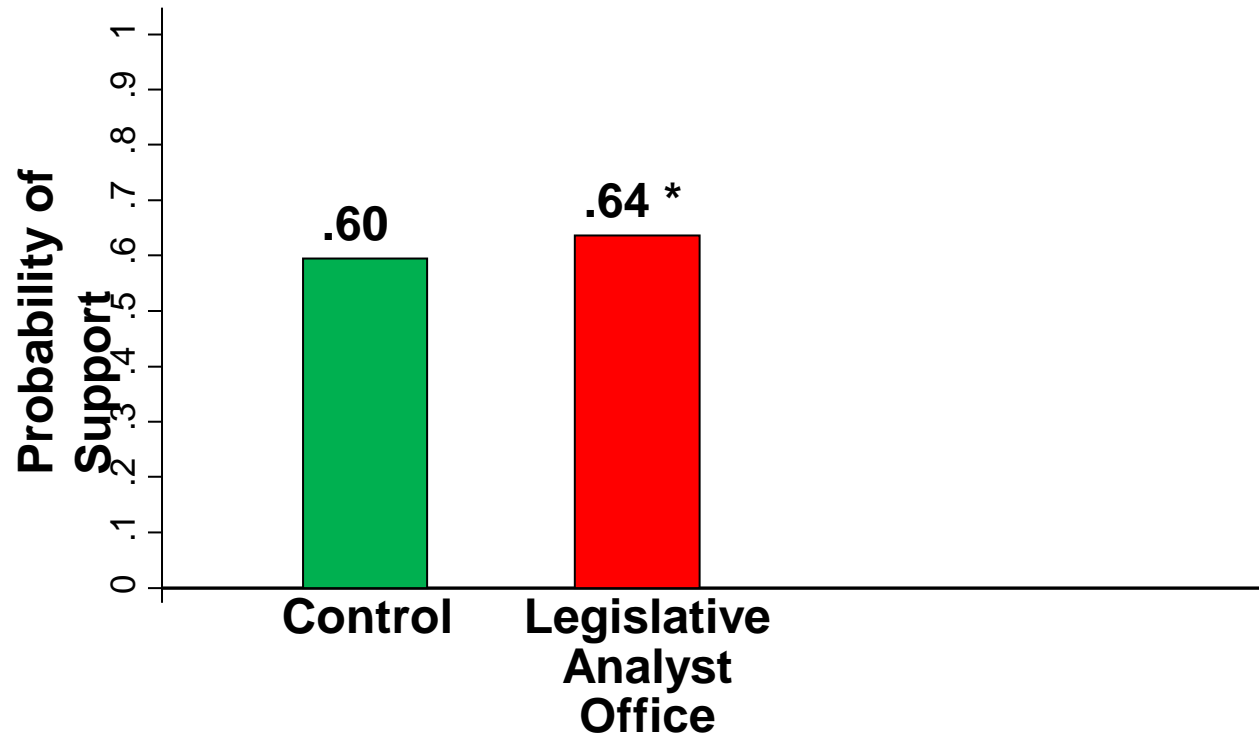
Source: Boudreau, Elmendorf, & MacKenzie (*American Journal of Political Science*, 2019)

Trust in Ethnic Interest Groups



Source: Boudreau, Elmendorf, & MacKenzie (*American Journal of Political Science*, 2019)

Trust in Nonpartisan Experts



Source: Boudreau & MacKenzie (*Political Research Quarterly*, 2021)

Trust in League of Women Voters!

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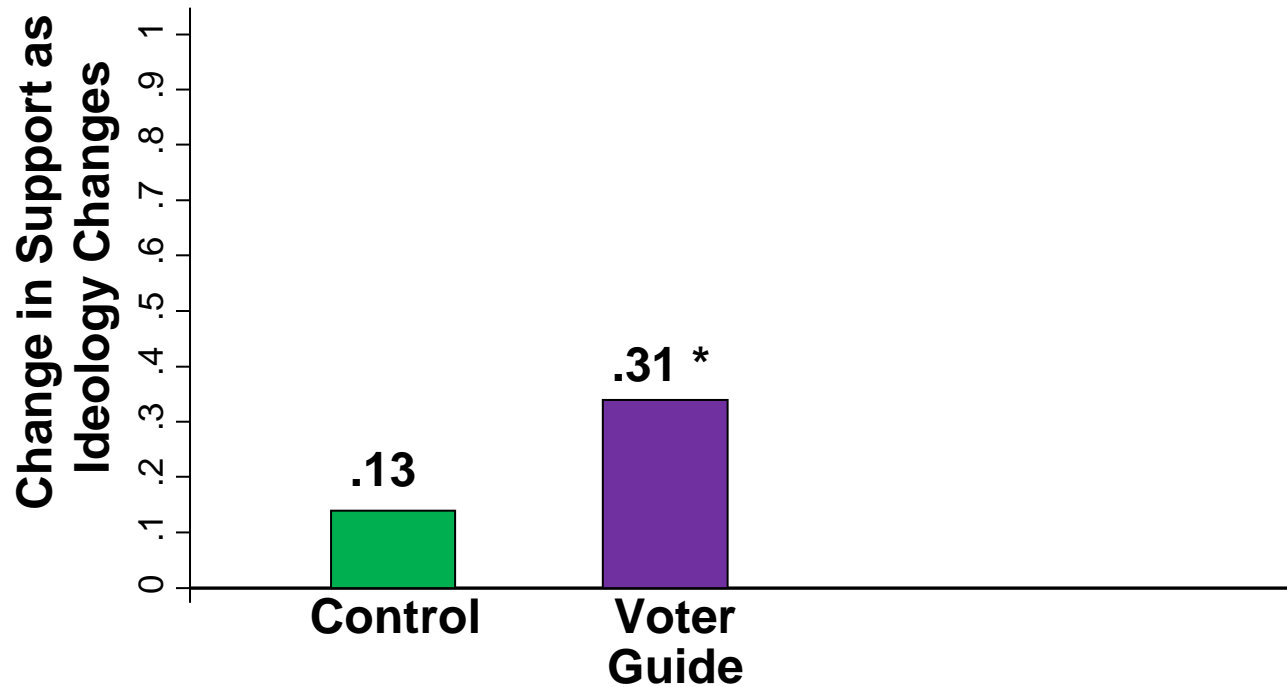
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- 95% said the guide was “somewhat” or “very” helpful
- 52% spent 1-5 minutes reading the guide; 36% spent longer

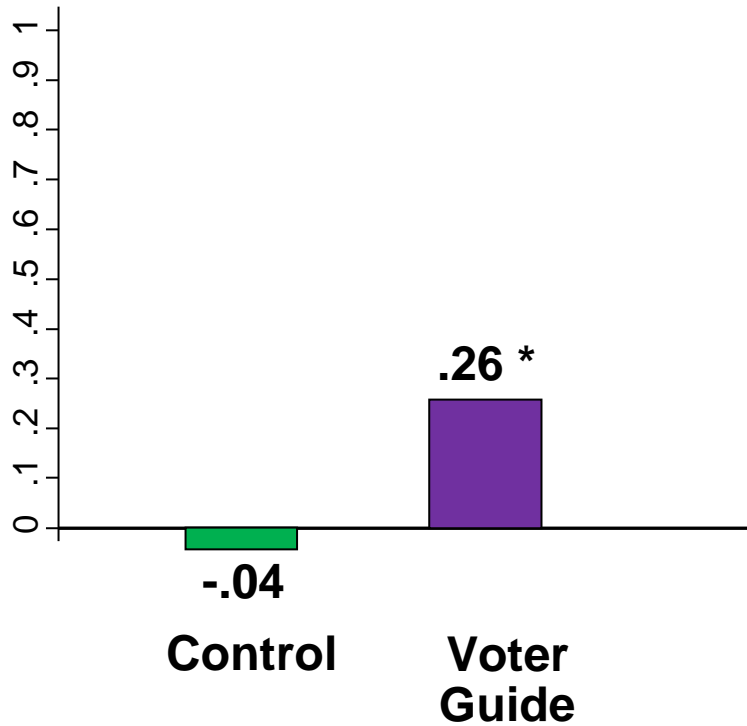
Trust in League of Women Voters!



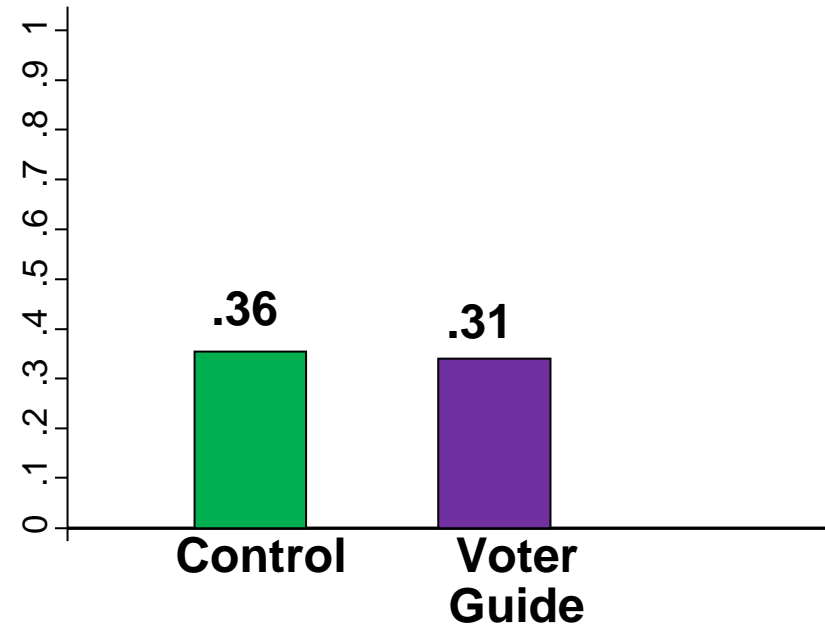
Source: Boudreau, Elmendorf, & MacKenzie (*Political Behavior*, 2018)

Trust in League of Women Voters!

Uninformed Citizens



Informed Citizens



Source: Boudreau, Elmendorf, & MacKenzie (*Political Behavior*, 2018)

Trusting Information: Take Away Points

- Citizens must perceive information to be credible
 - Perceived knowledge and trustworthiness are key
- Citizens tend to perceive their own party and ethnic interest groups as sharing common interests with them
 - Information from these groups can be powerful
- Information from nonpartisan, expert sources (e.g., LAO, LWV) also effective
- Challenge: Can citizens identify the interests of lesser known, but politically active groups?

Applying Information

- Fears that citizens cannot identify whether sources share common interests with them
- Concerns that citizens will misinterpret or misapply political information
 - Lack of comprehension
 - Biased processing/motivated reasoning
- Can citizens apply information to their choices effectively?

Applying Information

- Survey experiment before the 2016 general election in CA
- Measure opinions about 8 initiatives on the ballot
 - Included social (e.g., repeal death penalty), fiscal (e.g., cigarette tax), and complex (e.g., revenue bonds) policy issues
- **Control group:** Express opinions about initiatives
- **Treatment groups:** Receive information before doing so
 - Donor information (drawn from FPPC website)
 - Political party endorsements
 - Policy information from a nonpartisan expert source (LAO)

Source: Boudreau & MacKenzie (*Political Research Quarterly*, 2021)

Example:

Early Parole for Nonviolent Offenders

- Control group

This November, Californians will be asked to vote on a ballot measure that would allow inmates convicted of nonviolent crimes to be given parole consideration upon completion of their primary sentence. Currently, many prisoners receive both a primary sentence for a crime and “enhancements” or extra time if there are multiple victims or if they previously were in prison. This measure would allow prison officials to award credits toward early release to prisoners who demonstrate good behavior, efforts to rehabilitate themselves, or participate in prison education programs.

Example:

Early Parole for Nonviolent Offenders

- Donor information group

Donors Supporting Additional Parole Consideration for Nonviolent Inmates

Donor	Description	Amount
Governor Brown's Ballot Measure Committee	Organization established by Governor Brown to support selected initiatives	\$4,138,764
Service Employees International Union (SEIU) – California State Council	California union of state and local employees, nurses, and other workers with more than 700,000 members	\$164,846

Donors Opposing Additional Parole Consideration for Nonviolent Inmates

Donor	Description	Amount
Association of Deputy District Attorneys	Association representing deputy district attorneys in Los Angeles County with approximately 1,000 members	\$60,000
San Diego Police Officers Association	Association representing police officers in the City of San Diego	\$5,000

Example:

Early Parole for Nonviolent Offenders

- Party endorsements group

The Democratic Party supports allowing inmates convicted of nonviolent crimes to be given early parole consideration, while the Republican Party opposes this.

Example:

Early Parole for Nonviolent Offenders

- Policy Information from LAO

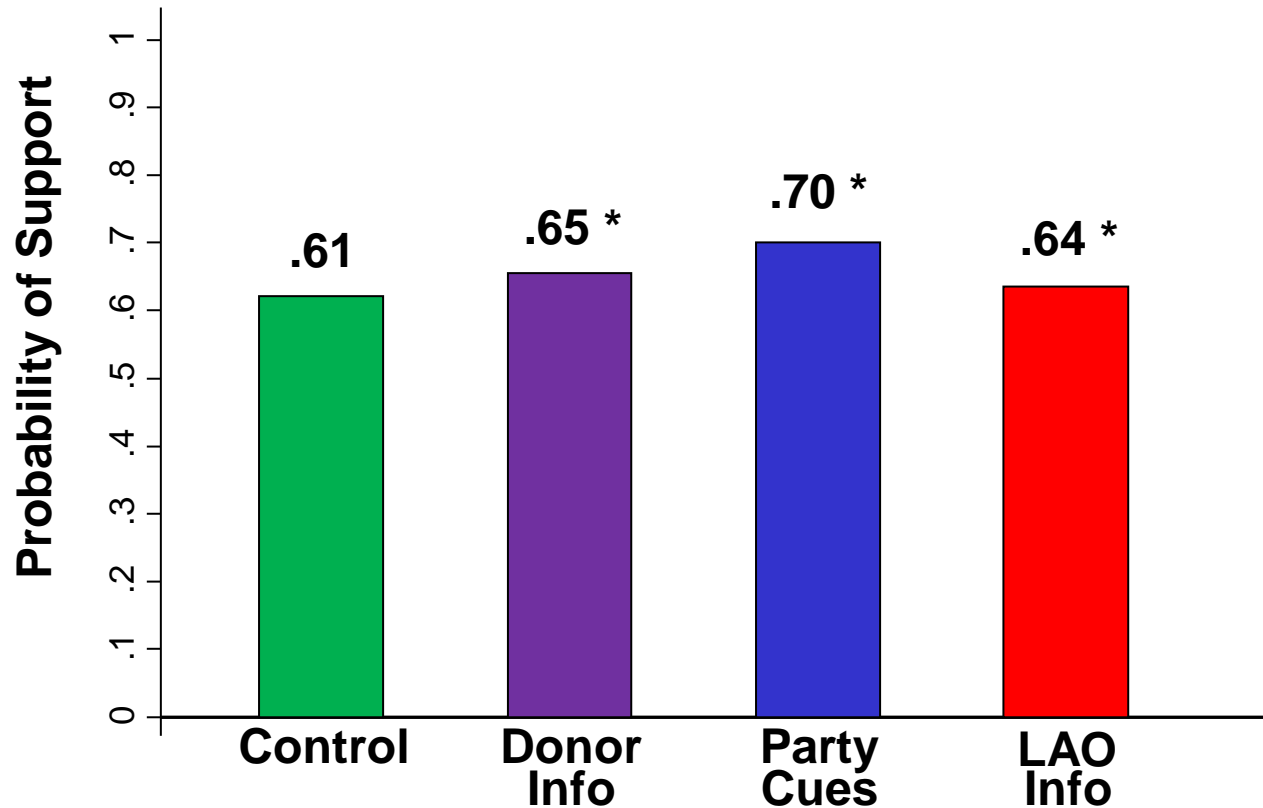
This initiative would help reduce significant overcrowding problems in state prisons by increasing the number of non-violent inmates eligible for parole consideration. California's nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office estimates that this initiative could save the state tens of millions of dollars each year in correctional and other costs.

Results

Donors: Groups affiliated with own party support

Party endorsements: Own party supports

Policy info: Reason for supporting

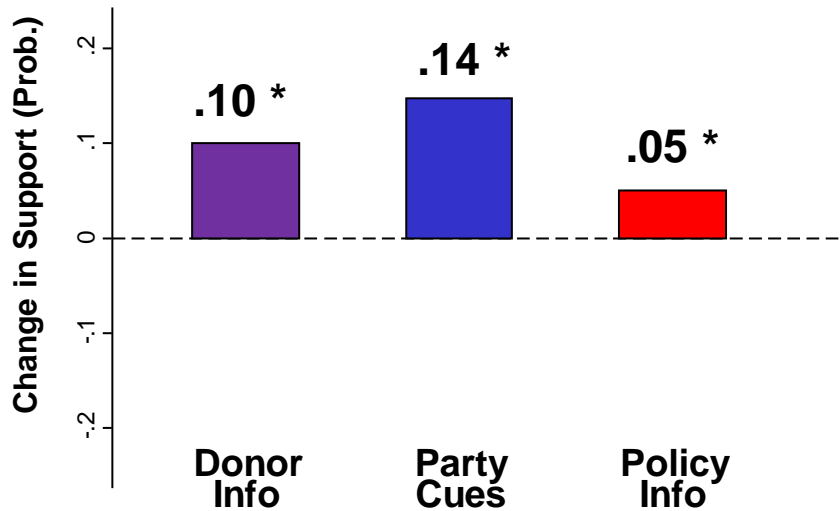


Results

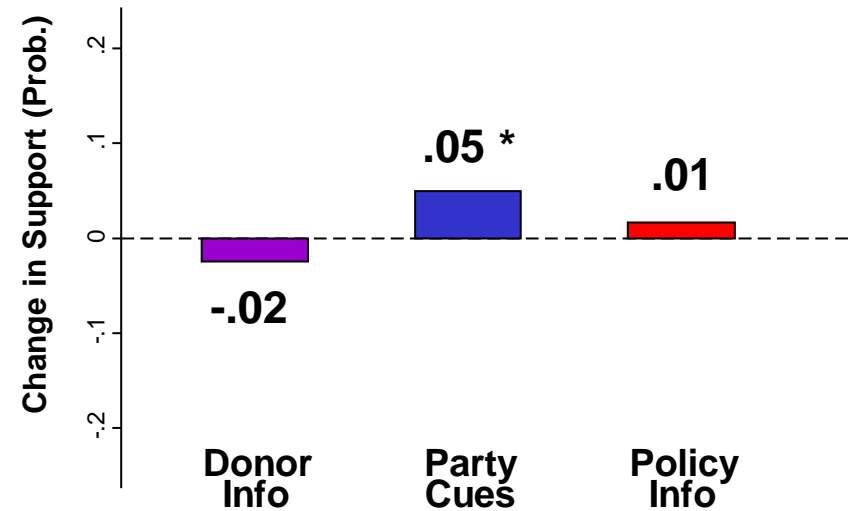
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Informed



Uninformed

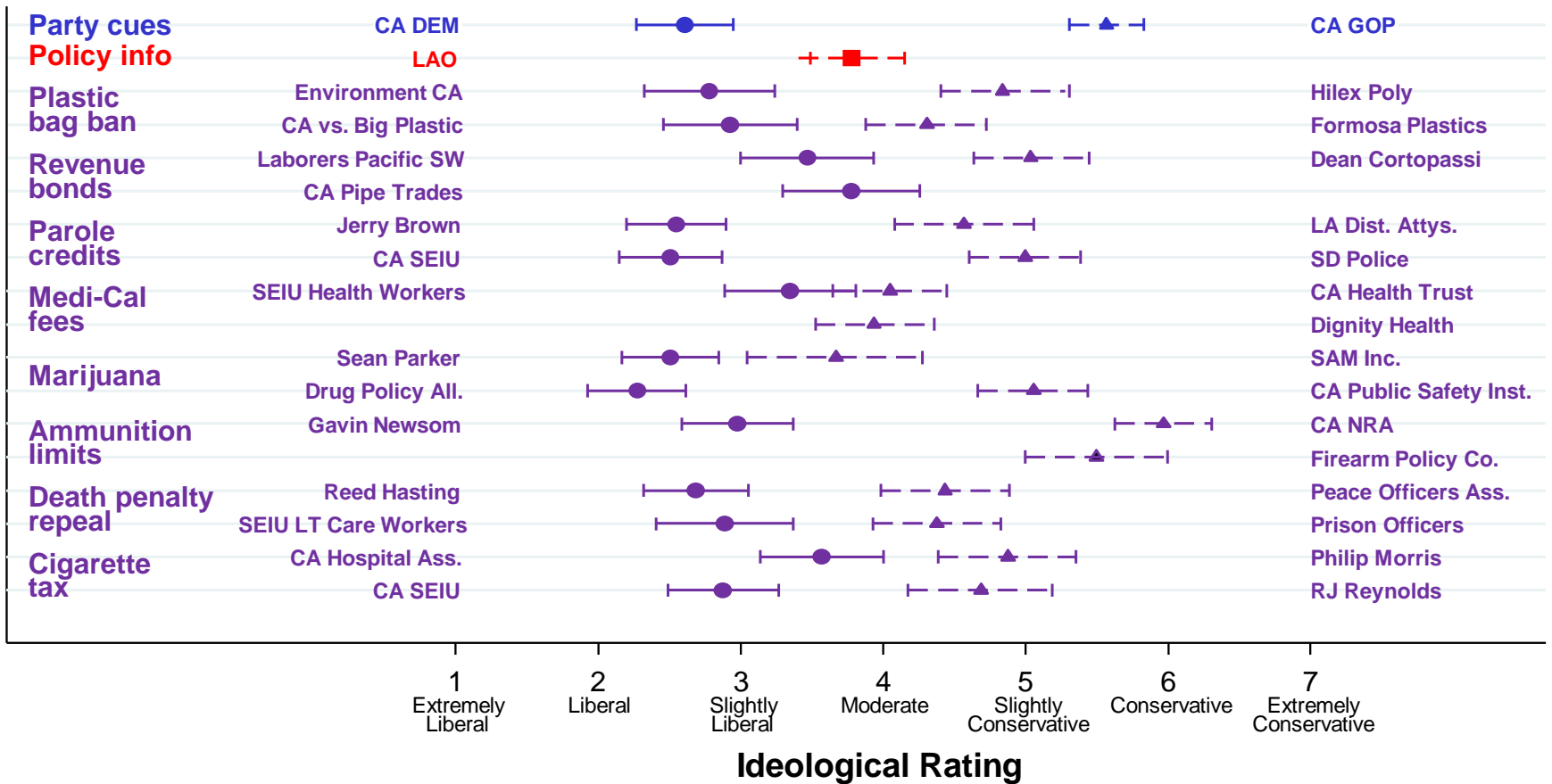
Why?

- Are uninformed respondents *unwilling to process* or *unable to use* donor information?
- Reaction times indicate that uninformed respondents spend more time processing donor information than party endorsements
- Both informed and uninformed citizens are *willing to process* the information

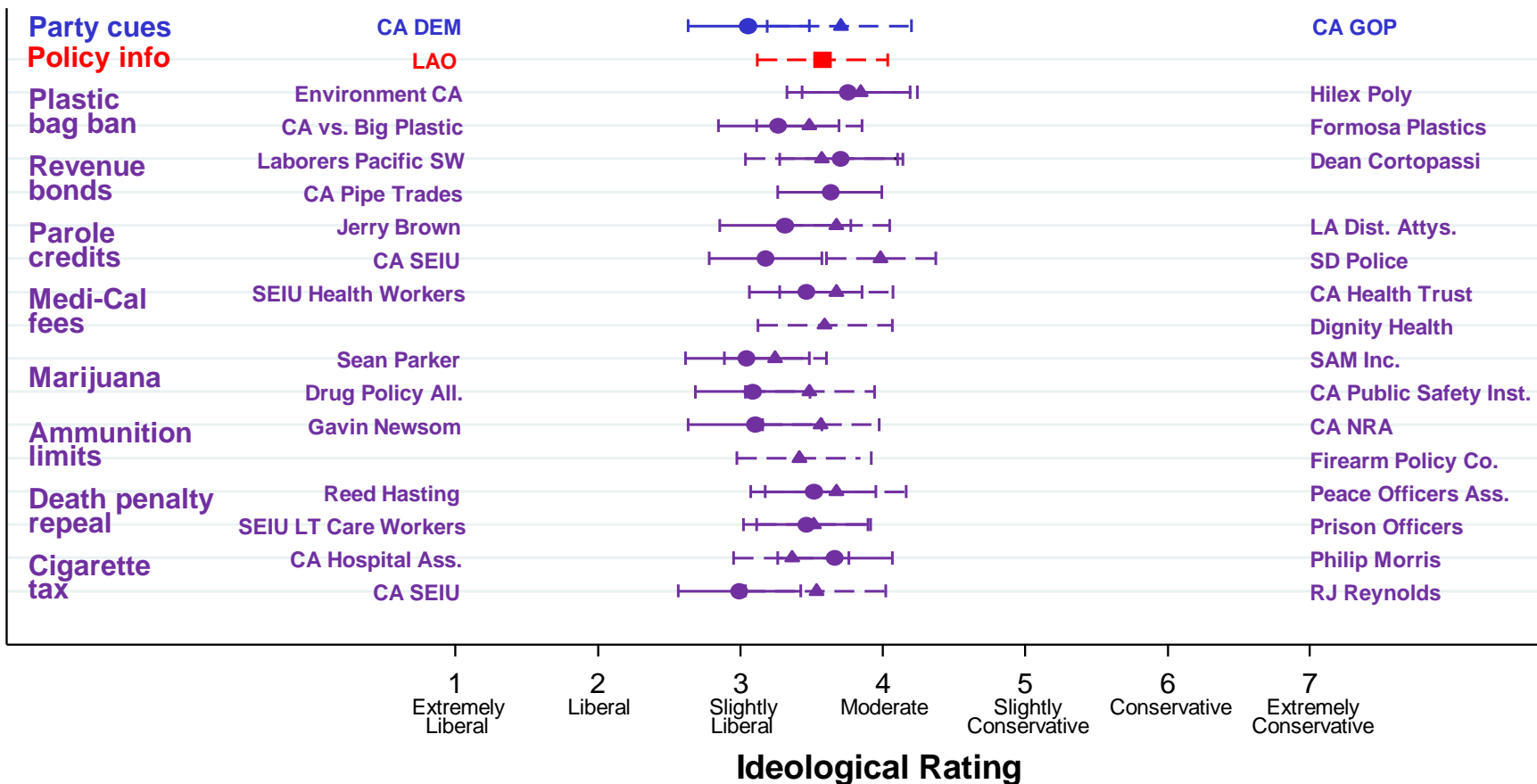
Measuring Donors' Interests

- Respondents rate groups on a seven-point liberal-conservative scale
 - Included the two CA political parties, the LAO, and 29 donors to the campaigns for and against the 8 initiatives
 - Examine whether perceptions of groups are accurate
- Measure the extent to which respondents perceive differences in these groups' policy views
- A necessary condition if they are to relate these groups' interests to their own

Informed Citizens Can Perceive Groups' Interests



Uninformed Citizens Do Not Perceive Groups' Interests



Applying Information: Take Away Points

- Citizens can apply information about initiatives to their choices
 - Donor information comparable to party cues and policy
 - Suggests the value of sources with identifiable interests
- Uninformed citizens have difficulty identifying donors' political or financial interests
- Challenge: Helping uninformed citizens connect this information to their choices
 - Providing information about groups' ideological positions and/or partisan allegiances (or lack thereof) can help

Power and Possibility

- An informed electorate is possible, but challenges exist
 - Receiving information
 - Trusting it
 - Applying it effectively
- Willingness to receive information, but must identify trusted sources for different communities
 - Who do they perceive as knowledgeable and trustworthy?
- Uninformed citizens need help identifying groups' interests and relating them to their own
 - Provide information that helps them connect their interests to their choices in real time