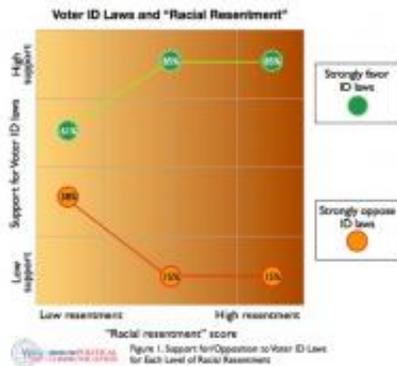


# Poll: Racial resentment tied to voter ID support

July 18 2012



This graph shows support for/opposition to voter ID laws for each level of racial resentment. Credit: University of Delaware Center for Political Communication

A new National Agenda Opinion Poll by the University of Delaware's Center for Political Communication reveals support for voter identification laws is strongest among Americans who harbor negative sentiments toward African Americans.

Voter ID laws require individuals to show government issued identification when they vote. The survey findings support recent comments by U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, who portrayed a Texas photo ID law now being challenged as similar to poll taxes used in the Jim Crow era, primarily by Southern states, to block African Americans from voting. Holder pledged to oppose "political pretexts" which, he

said, "disenfranchise" black voters.

The national telephone survey of 906 Americans was conducted by the University of Delaware's Center for [Political Communication](#) from May 20-June 6, 2012. Research faculty David C. Wilson and Paul Brewer supervised the study, as states and the federal government confront the voter ID issue.

## **Racial Resentment**

To assess attitudes toward African Americans, all non-African Americans respondents in the poll were asked a series of questions. Responses to these questions were combined to form a measure of "racial resentment." Researchers found that support for voter ID laws is highest among those with the highest levels of "racial resentment."

Brewer, the center's associate director for research, said, "These findings suggest that Americans' attitudes about race play an important role in driving their views on voter ID laws."

## **Ideology, politics shape ID opinion**

The survey reveals strong partisan and ideological divisions on racial resentment. Republicans and conservatives have the highest "racial resentment" scores, and Democrats and liberals have the lowest; Independents and moderates are in the middle. In addition, Democrats and liberals are least supportive of voter ID laws, whereas Republicans and conservatives are most supportive. The link between "racial resentment" and support for such laws persists even after controlling for the effects of partisanship, ideology, and a range of demographic variables.

Wilson, the center's coordinator of public opinion initiatives and an expert on race and public opinion, said, "Who votes in America has always been controversial; so much so that the U.S. constitution has been amended a number of times to protect voting eligibility and rights. It comes as no surprise that Republicans support these laws more than Democrats; but, what is surprising is the level at which Democrats and liberals also support the laws."

Here, CPC researchers found an interesting pattern in the data: it is Democrats and liberals whose opinions on voter ID laws are most likely to depend on their racial attitudes. Republicans and conservatives overwhelmingly support voter ID laws regardless of how much "racial resentment" they express. In contrast, Democrats and liberals with the highest "racial resentment" express much more support for voter ID laws than those with the least resentment.

## **About the study**

The National Agenda Opinion Project research was funded by the University of Delaware's Center for Political Communication (CPC) and the UNIDEL Foundation. The study was supervised by the CPC's Coordinator for Public Opinion Initiatives, David C. Wilson, an associate professor in the Department of Political Science and International Relations, and the CPC's Assistant Director for Research, Paul Brewer, a Professor in the Department of Communication.

## **Method**

Results are based on telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of 906 adults living in the continental United States. Telephone interviews were carried out using a dual sampling frame consisting of both landline (n=551) and cell phone (n=355,

including 158 without a landline phone) extensions. The survey was managed by Princeton Survey Research Associates International (PSRAI), and the data were collected through English only interviews by Princeton Data Source. The data were collected from May 30 to June 5, 2012. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is  $\pm 3.9$  percentage points. This estimate includes a calculated "design effect." Readers should be aware that in addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls. Please contact David C. Wilson at (302) 831-1935 for more details about the survey's methodology.

**More information:**

Question wording

Question wording and Topline Frequencies (\* Totals may not sum to exactly 100% due to rounding)

Now, I have a few questions about voter identification laws, or voter ID laws.

ASK ALL:

Q18. How familiar are you with the issue of voter ID laws? Are you ...

34% Not at all familiar

43% Somewhat familiar or

22% Very familiar?

0% Don't know (VOL.)

1% Refused (VOL.)

IF Q18="not at all familiar," "somewhat familiar," "don't know," or a refusal

READ: "Voter ID laws require individuals to show a form of

government issued identification when they attempt to vote."

If Q18="very familiar"

READ: "As you know, voter ID laws require individuals to show a form of government issued identification when they attempt to vote."

ASK FORM A:

Q19a. What is your opinion? Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose voter ID laws?

50% Strongly favor

29% Favor

9% Oppose

10% Strongly oppose

2% Don't know (VOL.)

2% Refused (VOL.)

ASK FORM B:

Q19b. Supporters of voter ID laws argue they are necessary to keep people who aren't eligible to vote from voting.

What is your opinion; do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose voter ID laws?

46% Strongly favor

29% Favor

9% Oppose

9% Strongly oppose

3% Don't know (VOL.)

3% Refused (VOL.)

ASK FORM C:

Q19c. Supporters of voter ID laws argue they are necessary to keep people from voting multiple times. What is your opinion; do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose voter ID laws? 45% Strongly favor

31% Favor  
8% Oppose  
12% Strongly oppose  
2% Don't know (VOL.)  
1% Refused (VOL.)

**ASK FORM D:**

Q19d. Opponents of voter ID laws argue they can actually prevent people who are eligible to vote from voting. What is your opinion; do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose voter ID laws?

33% Strongly favor  
34% Favor  
14% Oppose  
16% Strongly oppose  
1% Don't know (VOL.)  
3% Refused (VOL.)

**ASK FORM E:**

Q19e. Opponents of voter ID laws argue they are unnecessary because voter fraud is very rare. What is your opinion; do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose voter ID laws?

44% Strongly favor  
35% Favor  
9% Oppose  
9% Strongly oppose  
1% Don't know (VOL.)  
2% Refused (VOL.)

Provided by University of Delaware

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