



CENTER FOR  
DEMOCRACY AND  
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

# Recruiting Veterans and Military Family Members Improves Confidence in Elections

Draft



UNIVERSITY OF  
MARYLAND

Center for Democracy and Civic  
Engagement



(301) 405 7379



mhanmer@umd.edu

Isaiah

Michael J. Hanmer, PhD

## Introduction

This report presents results from a survey experiment designed to examine how information that election officials are hiring veterans and military family members for the elections workforce influences the public's attitudes about elections. The survey was developed by the Center for Democracy and Civic Engagement (CDCE) at the University of Maryland (UMD) in consultation from [We the Veterans and Military Families](#). The survey was fielded from August 29 through September 9, 2024 on a sample of 1,263 US citizens of voting age purchased from Lucid and drawn to be representative of the US adult citizen population.

After answering several background questions, participants were randomly assigned to read one of two vignettes we described as short excerpts from news stories. These vignettes were not from actual news stories, but they were modeled after relevant published articles. Both vignettes were set in Maricopa County, AZ and explained that local election officials were seeking to expand the elections workforce in advance of the upcoming presidential elections. We chose Maricopa County, AZ because it was a place where election administration was under close scrutiny in 2020 and could be again in 2024.

The treatment condition focused on the recruitment of veterans and military family members from the local community to serve in elections jobs, while the control condition focused on recruiting members of the local community without reference to any populations to which they might belong. Due to the randomization into conditions, any differences in responses can be attributed to the inclusion of information about veterans and military family members. The text of the treatment and control conditions appears in the Appendix.

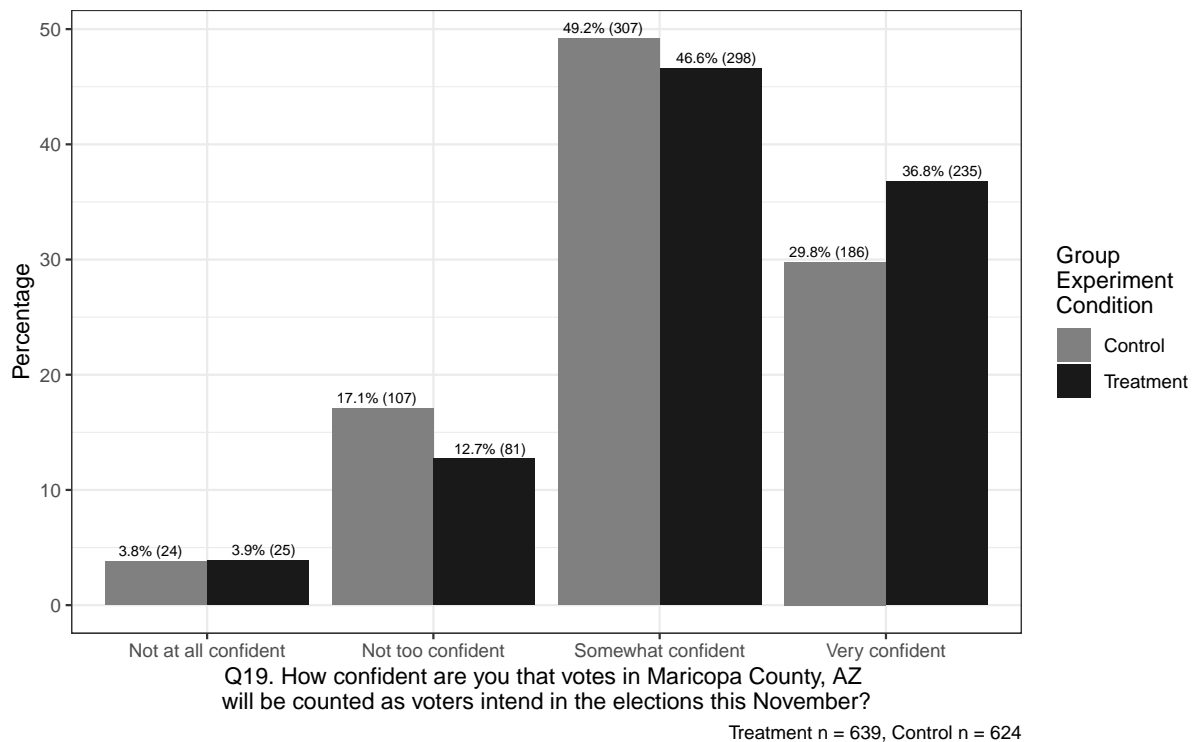
We examined the potential effect of the treatment on a variety of attitudes about elections in Maricopa County, AZ such as confidence, concern about the potential for violence, and expectations of fraud. **Across all of the questions we asked, information about the recruitment of veterans and military family members to elections jobs led to improved outcomes. The implications are clear—elections officials who are recruiting veterans and military family members should publicize this fact and those who are not doing this recruitment should do so.**

## Trust and Confidence in Elections

One of the most widely used questions in the study of attitudes about election administration asks how confident the respondent is that votes will be counted as intended. This question gets to the fundamental issue of how the process translates the voter's behavior into the outcome. The figure below shows that **information that election officials are recruiting veterans and**

**military family members boosts the rate at which respondents indicate they are very confident that votes in Maricopa County, AZ will be counted as intended (by 7 percentage points, from 30% to 37%,  $p < 0.025$ , one-tailed<sup>1</sup>).**

**Figure 1: Confidence in Accurate Vote Count by Experiment Condition**



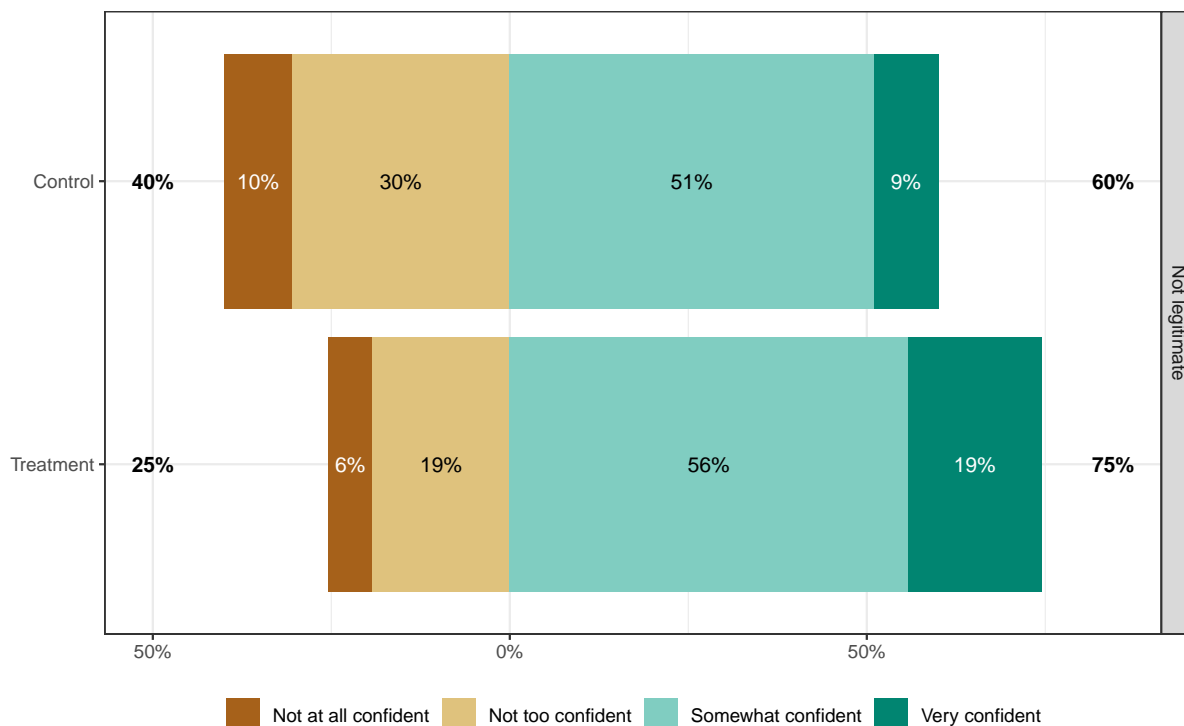
Importantly, the effects are generally even larger among those expected to be the most skeptical. For example, **among those who said that they thought Joe Biden’s election to president was not legitimate, exposure to information about veterans and military family members increases confidence overall by 15 percentage points (from 60% to 75%,  $p < 0.025$ ).** The bulk of this increase is driven by a shift in the rate at which respondents feel very confident, going from 9% in the control (community) condition to 19% in the treatment (veterans) condition. The following figures illustrate these results.

Veterans and military family members are also regarded highly by the public for their commitment. *Respondents were more likely to say the elections workforce would be very committed to making sure the elections held this November are fair and accurate when they heard that veterans and military family members were being recruited to elections jobs (by 9 percentage points,  $p < 0.01$ ).*

As shown in Figure 3, this increase is especially noteworthy as it brings the percentage of those saying very committed to nearly 50% (from just under 38.5% to 48%).

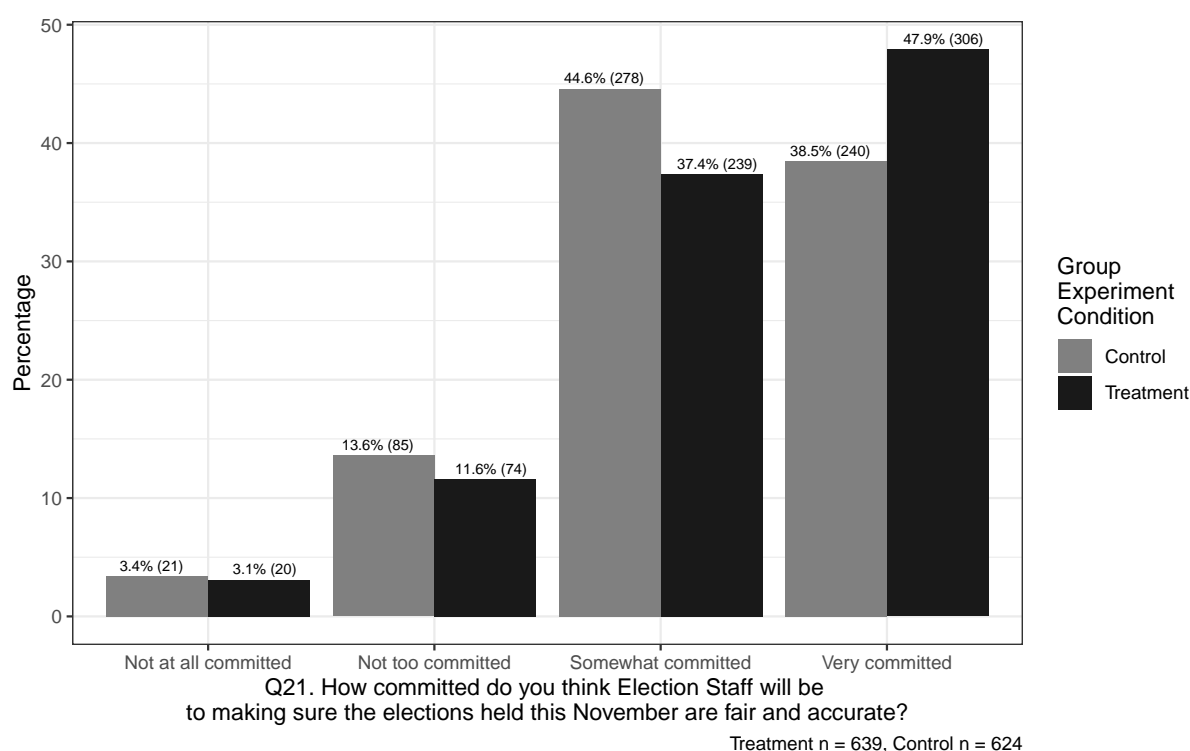
<sup>1</sup>All p-values are one-tailed as we have clear hypotheses that outcomes will be improved in the veterans and military veterans condition.

**Figure 2:** *Confidence in Accuracy of Vote counts in Maricopa County, AZ among those who believe Biden's 2020 election was or was not legitimate*



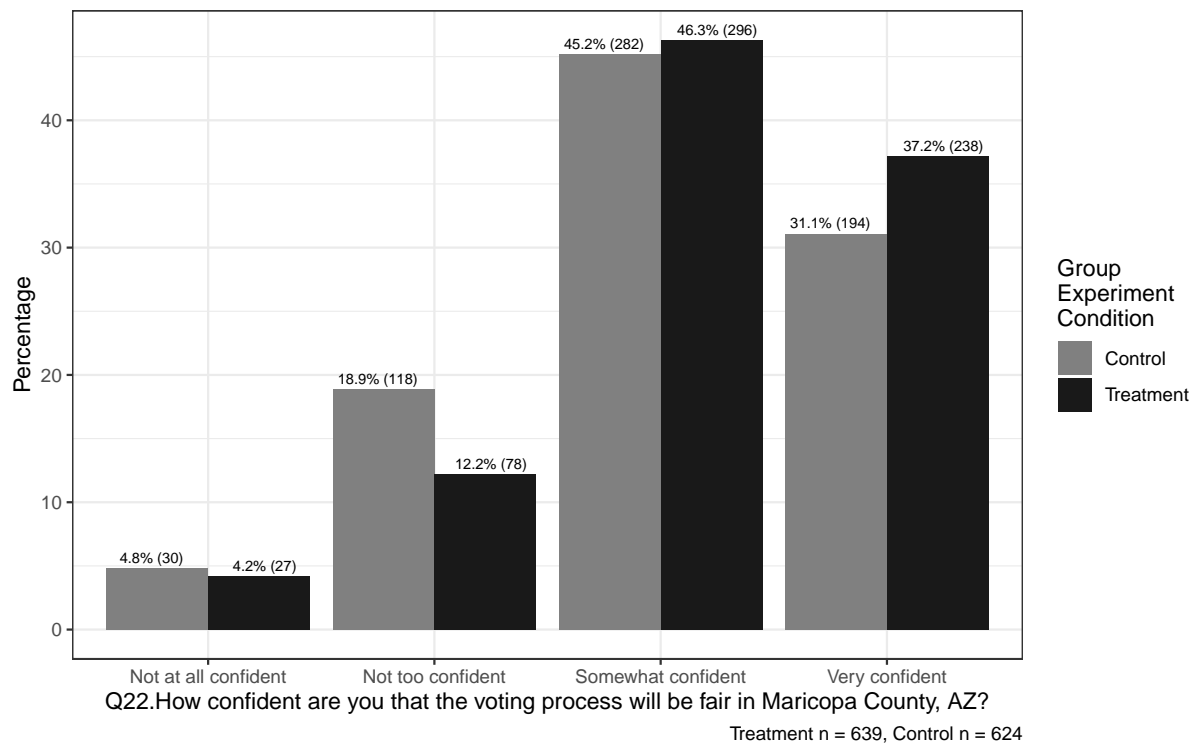
**(a)** *Proportion of confidence in vote count by belief of Biden's election legitimacy and Experimental condition*

**Figure 3:** *Confidence in Commitment of Election Staff and Volunteers by Experiment Condition*



**Information that election officials were recruiting veterans and military family members also increased confidence that the voting process in Maricopa County, AZ would be fair (by 7 percentage points,  $p<0.01$ ).**

**Figure 4:** *Confidence in Fair Voting Process by Experiment Condition*



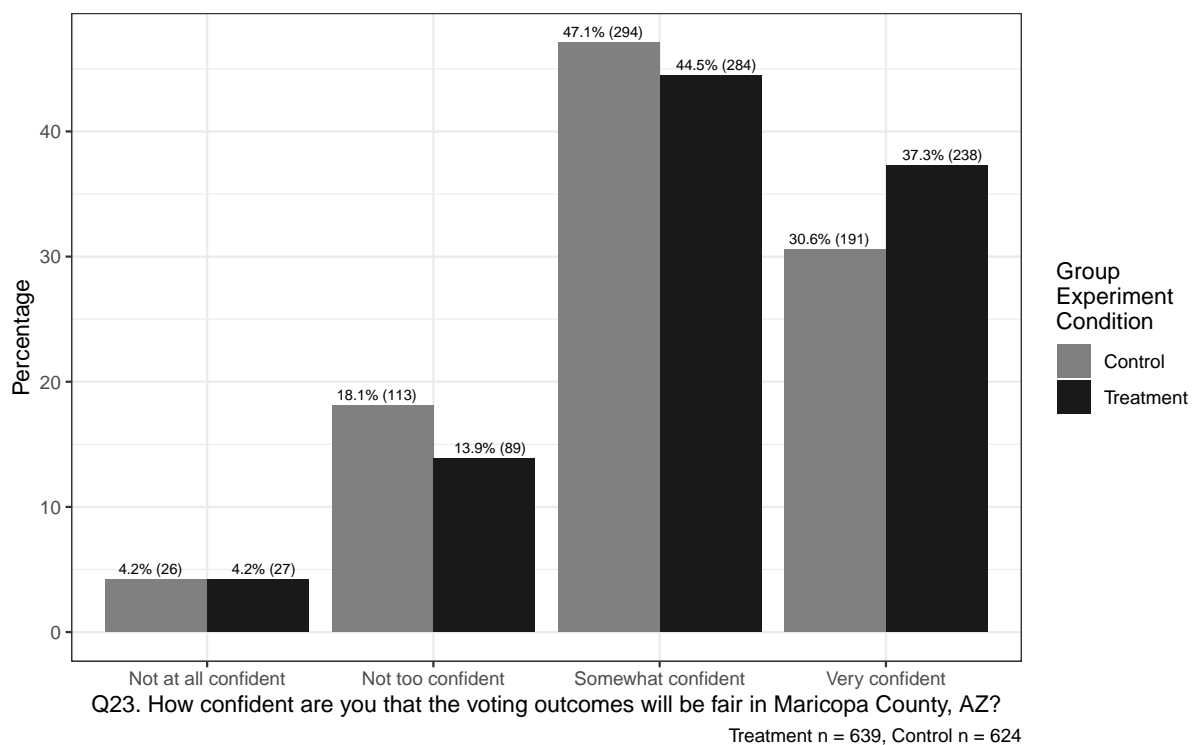
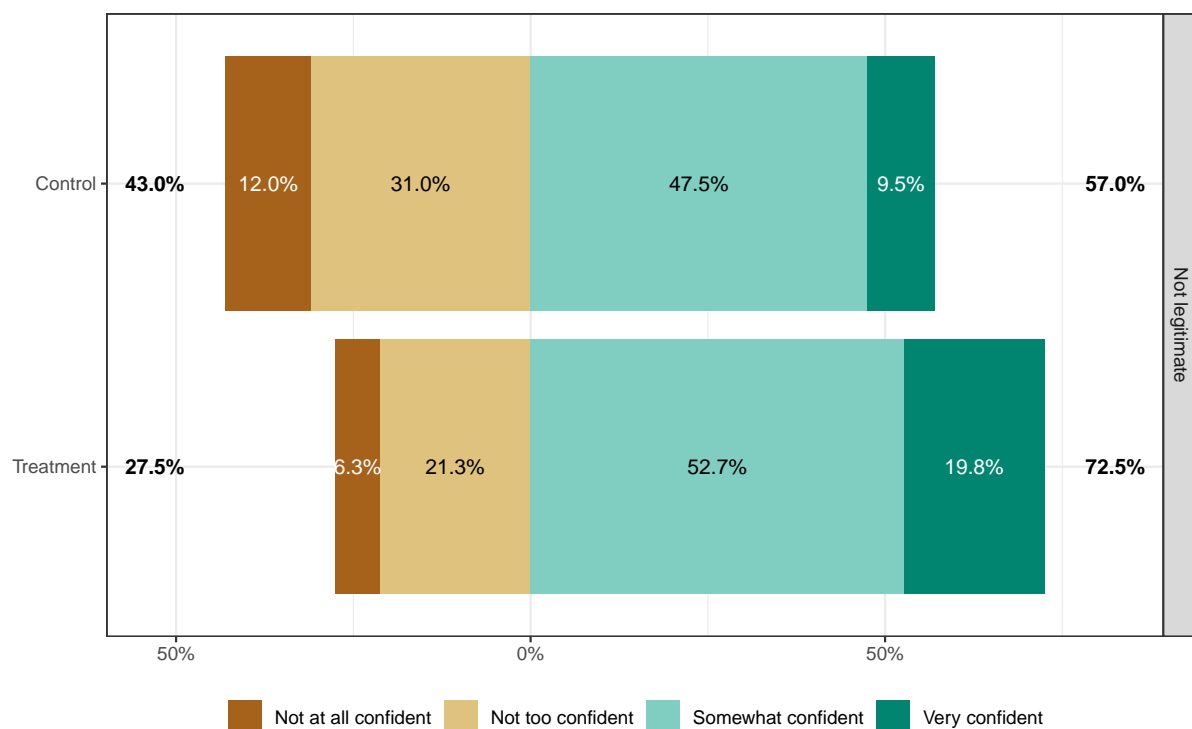
The bulk of this shift comes from an increase in the percentage of people saying they were very confident (6 points,  $p<0.025$ ). **Again, the treatment effect was largest for those who said that Joe Biden was not elected legitimately.** Whereas 57% of those saying Biden's victory was not legitimate were confident in the control (community) condition, confidence rose 16 percentage points to 73% among those who believe Biden's election was not legitimate in the treatment (veterans) condition.

Although outcomes are subject to a wider variety of factors, the veterans treatment also increased confidence that the outcomes would be fair (by 4 percentage points,  $p<0.05$ ), with a shift of 7 percentage points in the percentage saying they were very confident ( $p<0.025$ ).

Attitudes relating to election security and safety were also improved as a result of exposure to information that veterans and military family members were being recruited to elections jobs. **The percentage saying they were confident the election would be secure from hacking and other technological threats was 7 points higher ( $p<0.01$ ) in the veterans condition.**

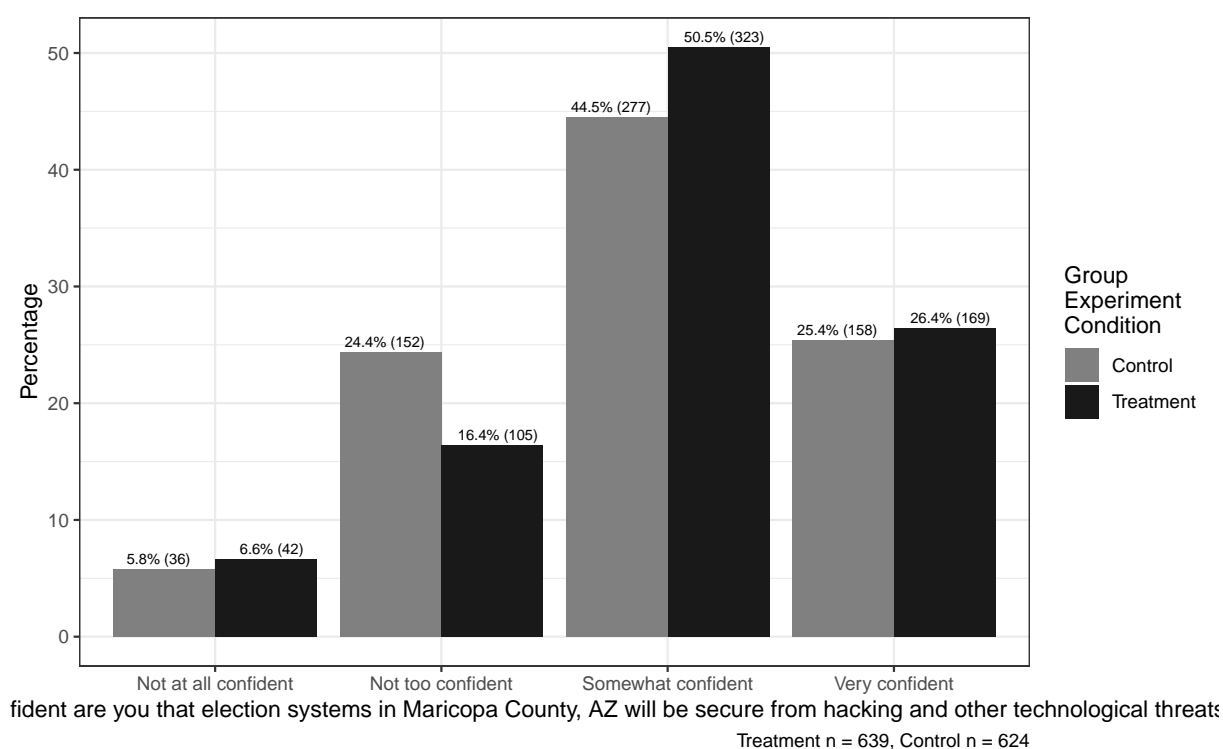
We assessed perceptions of violence by asking how concerned voters in Maricopa County, AZ should feel about potential violence, threats of violence, or intimidation while voting in person

**Figure 5:** *Confidence in Electoral Process in Maricopa County, AZ among those who believe Biden's 2020 election was not legitimate*



**Figure 6**

**Figure 7:** *Confidence in Election Systems Tech by Experiment Condition*



at their local polling place. **The level of concern with potential violence, threats, and intimidation was considerably lower (by 8 percentage points,  $p < 0.01$ ) among those who read that veterans and military family members were being recruited to the elections workforce.**

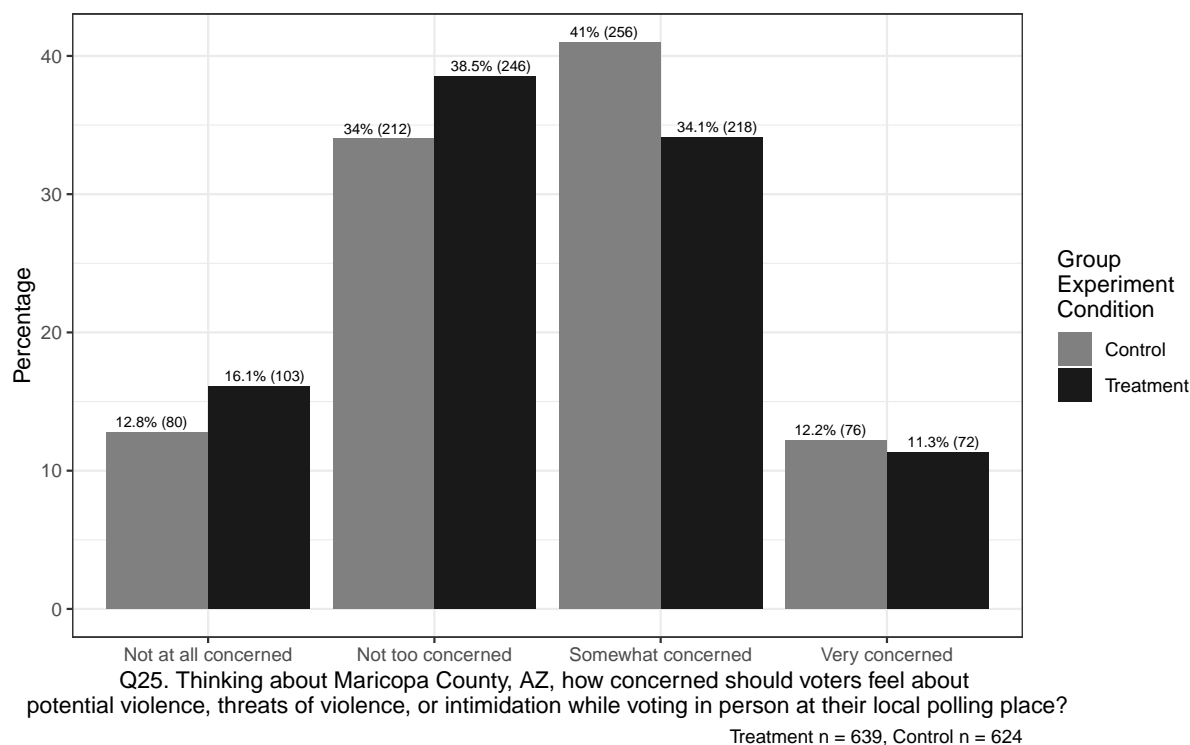
The size of this effect is especially significant because it brings the level of concern (“Somewhat concerned” and “Very concerned”) below the 50% mark. That is, while a majority, 53%, of those in the community condition (control) were at least somewhat concerned, this drops to 45% among those who learned that Maricopa County, AZ was recruiting veterans and military family members.

Additionally, those in the veterans condition were more likely to say they were confident (by 7 points,  $p < 0.01$ ) that polling places would be safe places for voting.

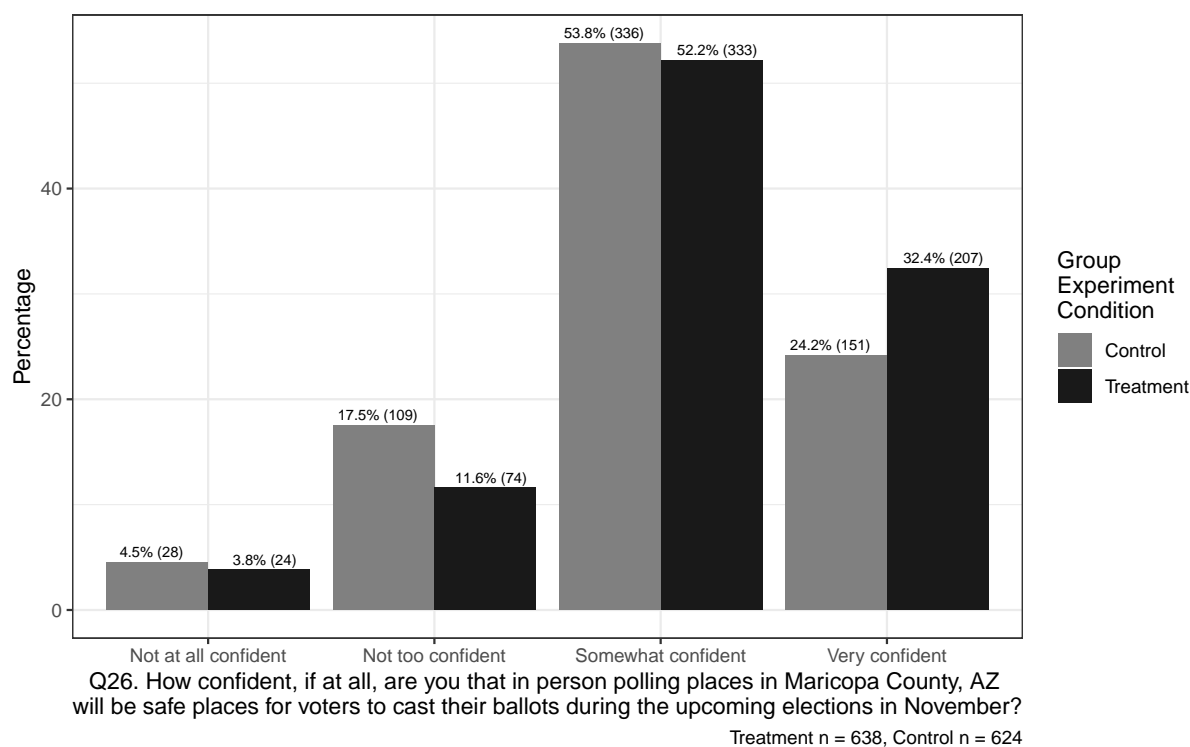
Learning that Maricopa County, AZ was recruiting veterans and military family members for elections jobs also led to improved performance ratings for election officials there. In the veterans condition, those saying they somewhat or strongly approve of the way election officials are handling their jobs was 5 percentage points higher ( $p < 0.05$ ), driven by a nearly 8 point increase in the percentage saying they strongly approve of election officials ( $p < 0.01$ ).

We also asked a general question about confidence that Maricopa County, AZ elections officials would do a good job conducting elections this November. Those who read about veterans

**Figure 8:** *Concern for violence, threats, or voter intimidation in Maricopa County, AZ by Experiment Condition*

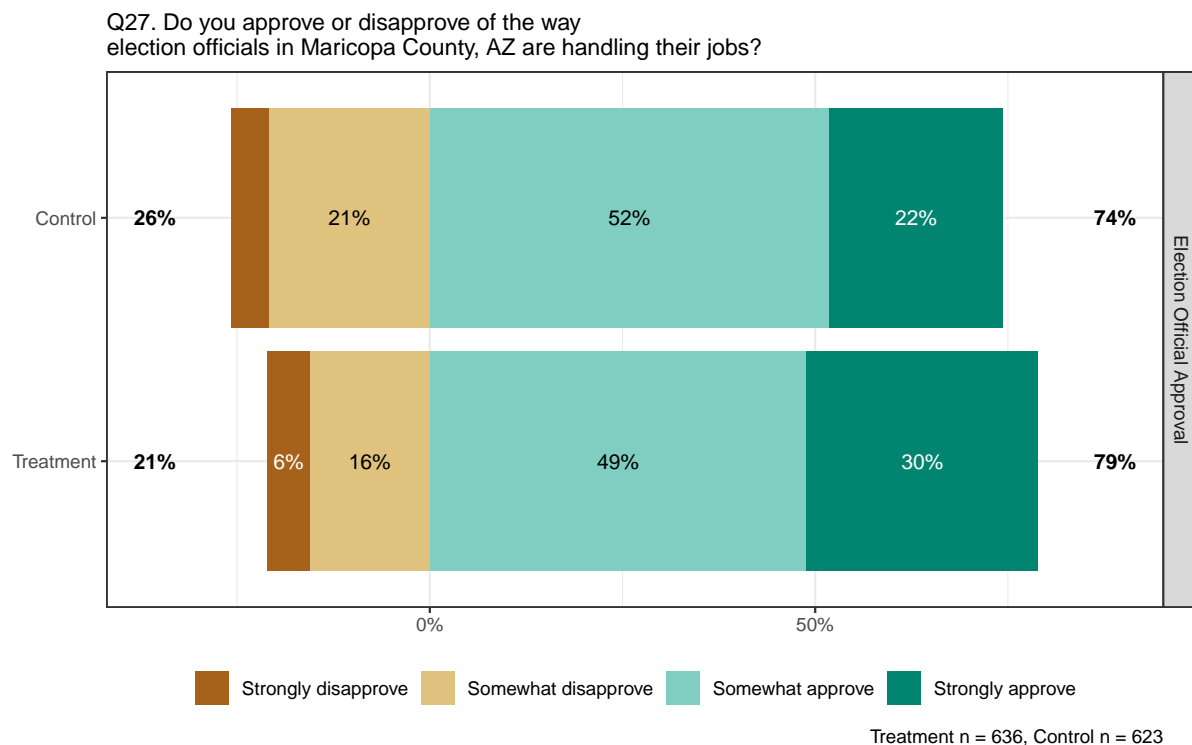


**Figure 9:** *In-person voter safety in Maricopa County, AZ by Experiment Condition*





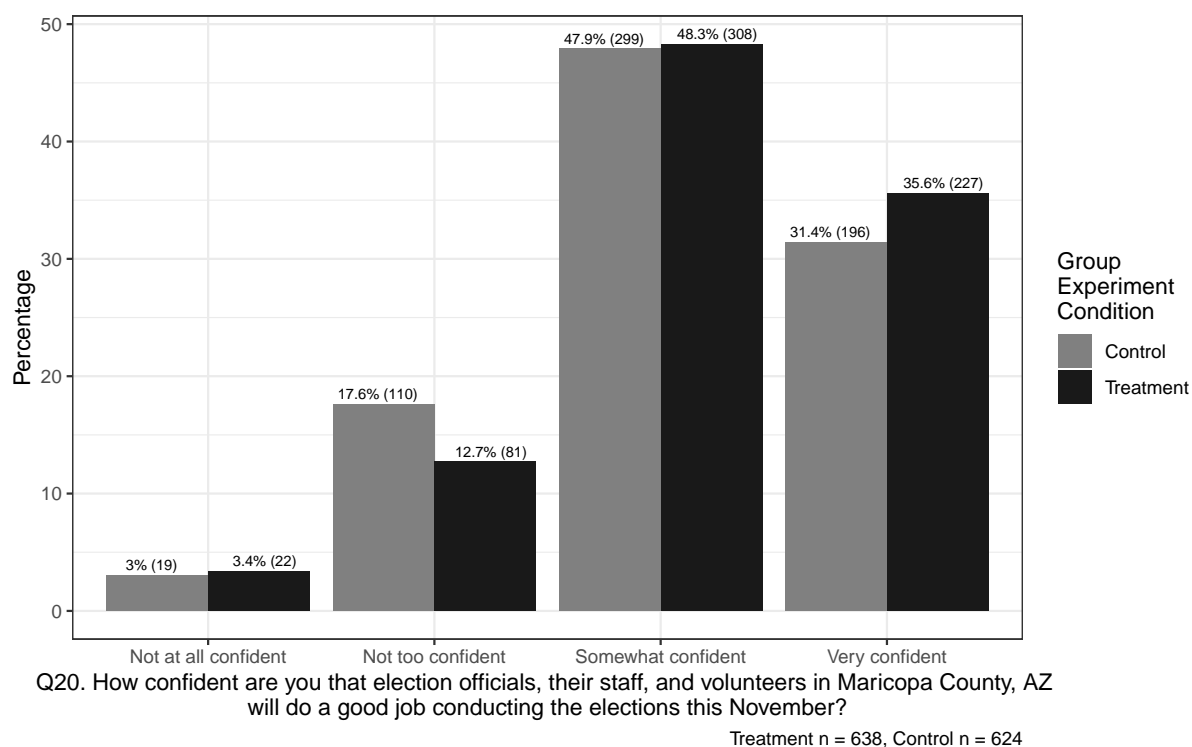
**Figure 10:** *Approval of Election Officials in Maricopa County, AZ by Experiment Condition*



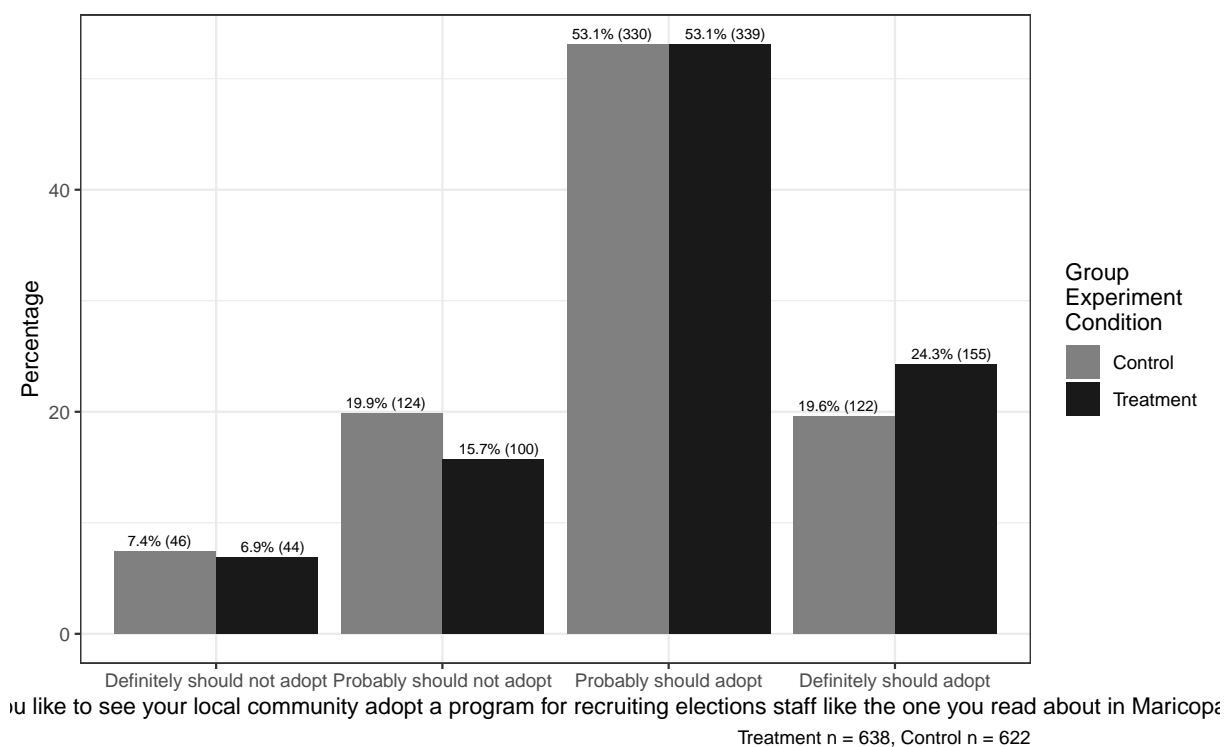
and military family members were more confident that election officials would do a good job conducting the election than those who read about community members (by 4.5 percentage points,  $p < 0.025$ ).

Before asking a series of questions about election administration in their own community, we asked how much respondents would like to see their local community adopt a program for recruiting elections staff similar to the one they read about in Maricopa County, AZ. Among those in the community condition just under 73% said their local area should probably or definitely adopt the policy compared to over 77% in the veterans condition (difference of 5 percentage points,  $p < 0.03$ ). The difference is driven entirely by an increase in enthusiasm (i.e., the likelihood of saying definitely should adopt is 5 points higher in the veterans condition,  $p < 0.025$ ).

**Figure 11:** *Confidence Election Officials in Maricopa County, AZ will do a good job by Experiment Condition*



**Figure 12:** *Adopt by Experiment Condition*

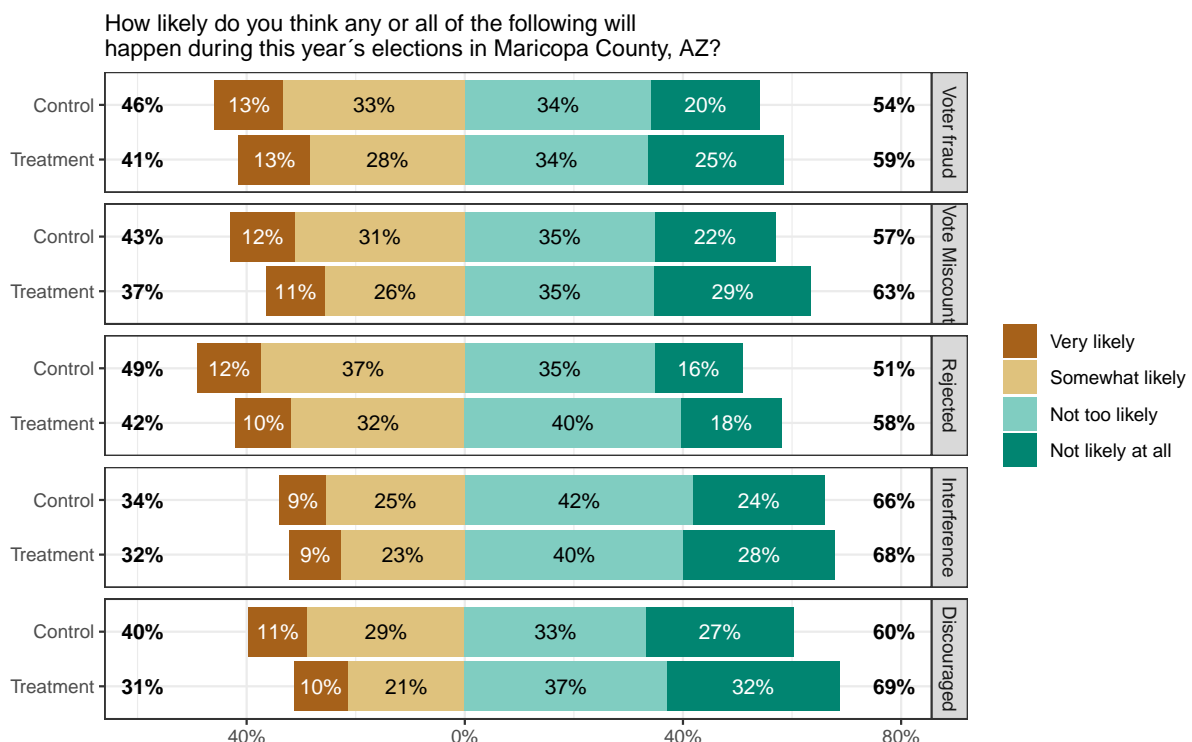


## Expectation of Electoral Fraud

Our survey also asked respondents a series of questions designed to assess an individual's expectation of electoral fraud and voter suppression in Maricopa County, AZ. Five statements were prefaced with the question, "How likely do you think any or all of the following will happen during this year's elections in Maricopa County, AZ?". Survey participants gave their expectations of the likelihood that each of the following would occur in Maricopa County, Arizona this election cycle on a scale of "Not likely at all", "Not too likely", "Somewhat likely", and "Very likely".

1. There will be voter fraud, that is, people who are not eligible to vote will vote, or vote more than once;
2. Many votes will not actually be counted
3. Many people will show up to vote and be told they are not eligible
4. A foreign country will tamper with the votes cast in this area to change the results
5. Election officials in Maricopa County, Arizona will try to discourage some people from voting

**Figure 13:** *Expectation of Electoral Fraud in Maricopa County, AZ by Experiment Condition*



As Figure 13 illustrates, those in the veterans condition were more likely to say that voter fraud was "not likely at all" (by 5 percentage points,  $p < 0.025$ ). The percentage saying that election officials will try to discourage people from voting was not likely to occur in Maricopa

---

**County was 8 percentage points higher among those who read that veterans and military family members would be part of the elections workforce** ( $p < 0.01$ , with a shift of about 4 points among both those saying not too likely and not likely at all). Additionally, in the veterans condition the percentage saying that it was “not likely at all” that many votes will not actually be counted was nearly 7 percentage points higher ( $p < 0.01$ ), with a similar increase in the percentage saying it was not likely (not too likely and not likely at all) that many people will show up and be told they are not eligible ( $p < 0.01$ ).

When we asked about the likelihood that a foreign country would tamper with votes in Maricopa County, AZ a larger percentage of those in the veterans condition said this was “not likely at all” (by 4 percentage points,  $p < 0.07$ ).

## Impacts on Confidence

We asked respondents to report how various features of election administration would: 1) influence their confidence in the fairness and accuracy of elections this November; and 2) influence their confidence that voters would be safe from violence, threats of violence, or intimidation while voting in-person this election. One of the primary objectives was to determine whether recruiting veterans was preferable to recruiting lawyers and college students, two other groups that are commonly discussed as potential additions to the elections workforce.

### Impact on confidence in fairness and accuracy of elections

Survey participants responded to six statements, all prefaced with the following,

“Regardless of whether any of these are actually the case, how would the following impact your confidence in the fairness and accuracy of elections conducted this November?”

1. Election officials test every machine used in the election to ensure they are secure.
2. Election officials conduct audits of ballots after every election to confirm the results were accurate.
3. Poll watchers affiliated with the political parties or candidates observe the election.
4. Election staff and volunteers include military veterans and their family members from the community<sup>2</sup>.
5. Election staff and volunteers include lawyers from the community.
6. Election staff and volunteers include college students from the community.

For each statement, survey participants responded by selecting one of five response options:

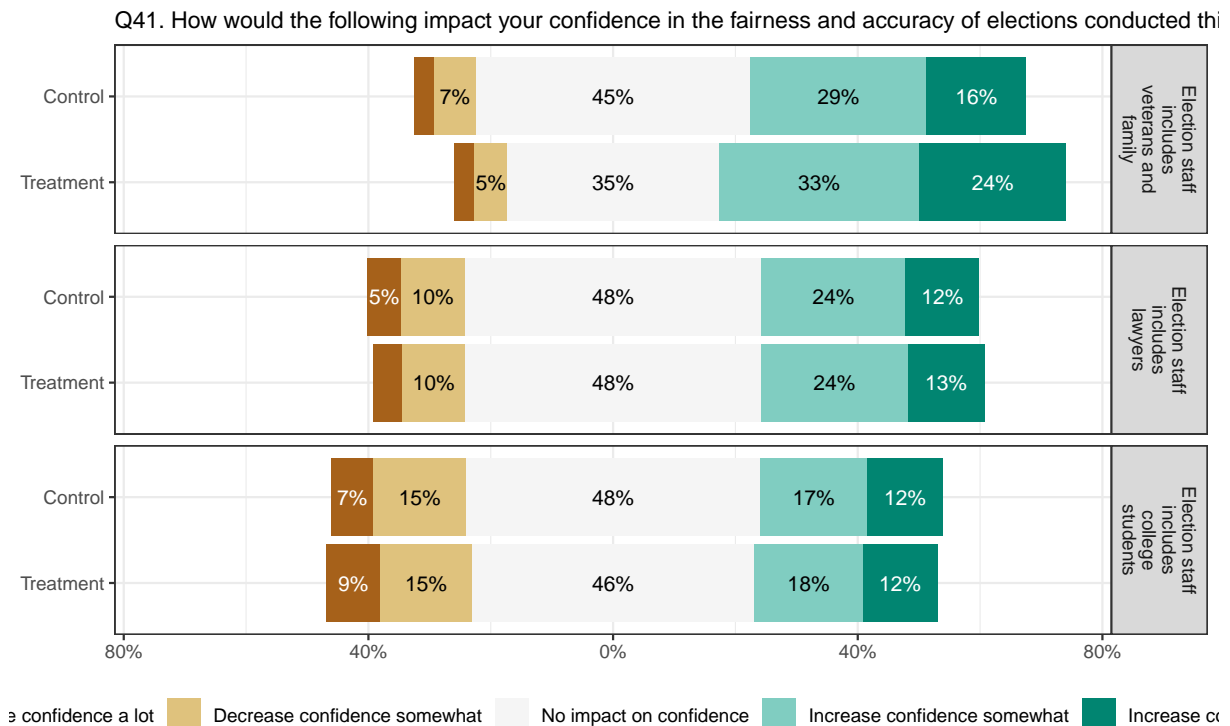
1. Decrease confidence a lot
2. Decrease confidence somewhat
3. No impact on confidence
4. Increase confidence somewhat
5. Increase confidence a lot

The primary interest concerned whether confidence in election fairness would increase or decrease based on the composition of election staff and volunteers. Of particular importance are

---

<sup>2</sup>Two different versions of this statement was presented to survey participants. Half of the sample read the statement as, “Election staff and volunteers *include* military veterans and their family members from the community”, whereas the other half of the sample read, “The *majority* of election staff and volunteers consist of military veterans and their family members from the community.” No significant differences in responses were observed between those who read one version of the statement over the other. However, the same was done for statements number 5 and 6 which concern “lawyers from the community” and “college students from the community”. Significant differences were found when comparing responses between the different versions of these statements. See the appendix for further discussion on these results.

responses to the statement which asked respondents to consider whether inclusion of military veterans and veteran’s family members as election staff and volunteers has any impact on their confidence in the fairness and accuracy of elections in November.



**Figure 14:** *Impact on Confidence in Election Fairness and Accuracy by Experiment Condition*

Results displayed in Figure 14 suggest that county efforts to recruit veterans as election staff and volunteers does more to increase one’s confidence in the fairness and accuracy of elections regardless of the experimental condition. That is, even for those who were in the *control* group, respondents reported that the inclusion of veterans and their family members as election staff and volunteers would increase confidence in the fairness and accuracy of elections more than when election staff includes lawyers or college students. This increase in confidence was 9 percentage points higher compared to when lawyers are included as election staff, and 16 percentage points higher than when election staff and volunteers are said to include college students.

Moreover, Figure 14 demonstrates a clear boost in confidence when election staff includes veterans and family members, especially for those who were in the treatment group. The percentage of people who said their confidence in election fairness would increase when election staff includes veterans was about 11.6 percentage points higher than those who said the same in the control group.

These results suggest that county efforts to recruit veterans as election staff and volunteers does

more to increase one's confidence in the fairness and accuracy of elections, especially under the prospect that election staff and volunteers would include veterans and their family members.

These results suggest that reading a vignette about county efforts to recruit veterans as election staff and volunteers does more to increase one's confidence in the fairness and accuracy of elections, especially under the prospect that election staff and volunteers would include veterans and their family members.

### Impact on Confidence in Voter Safety at polling sites

The same analysis was conducted for questions that assessed the reported impact on confidence that voters would be safe to vote in-person. Survey participants provided responses to the same six statements as before, which were all prefaced with the following question,

"How would the following impact your confidence that voters are safe from violence, threats of violence, or intimidation while voting in-person during elections this November?"

Again, the bar graph below displays a clear boost among participants in the treatment group who reported that their confidence in voter safety would increase when election staff is said to include veterans and their family members.

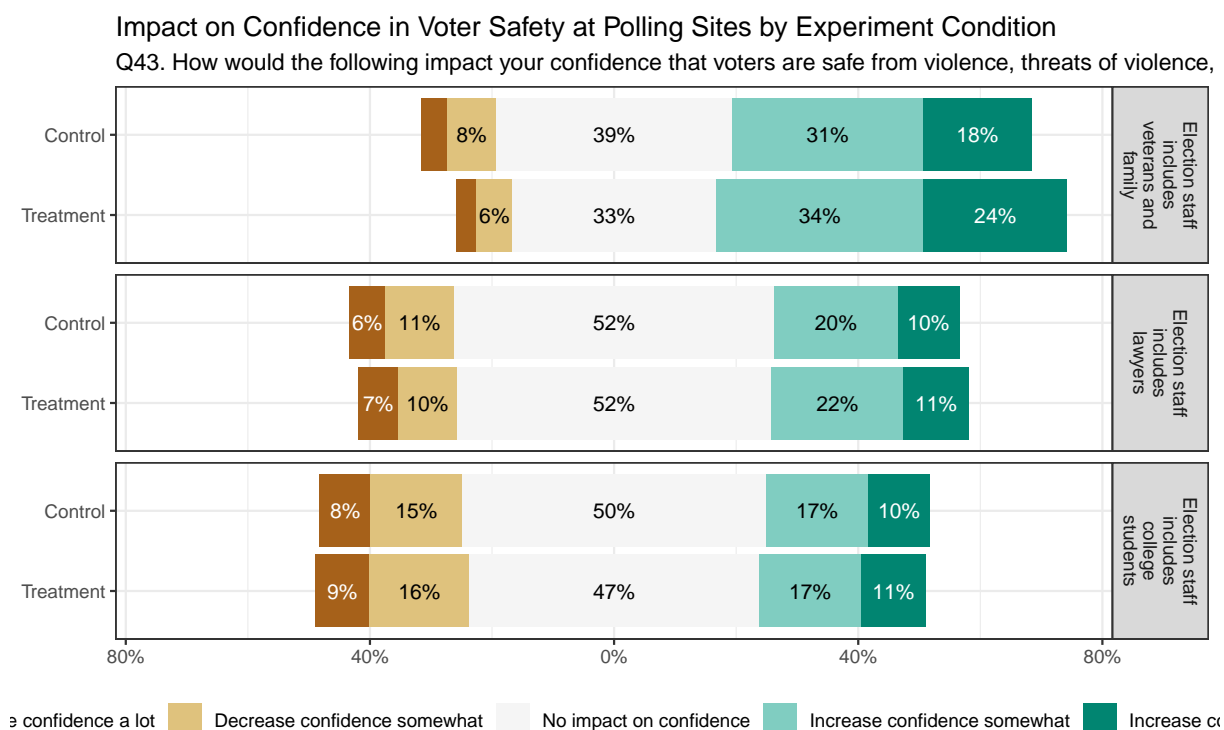


Figure 15

The proportion of people who said their confidence in voter safety would increase when election

staff includes veterans was about 8.4 percentage points higher than those who said the same in the control group.

## Sample Demographics and Balance

The decision was made to exclude any respondents who didn't complete the survey. There were a total of 125 respondents who started but didn't finish the survey. Of those 125, 105 quit before reaching Q40\_1, whereas the rest exited the survey after that question<sup>3</sup>.

NA missing values from the Qset variable removes those 105 partial survey responses, i.e., respondents who quit prior to reaching Q40.

## Appendix

### Treatment Vignette

#### *Local Military Veterans Recruited for Election Jobs in Maricopa County*

PHOENIX (AP) — Election officials in Maricopa County, Arizona, announced a program designed to recruit military veterans and their family members from the community to serve as election administrators, including election polling place workers, temporary workers, and full-time staff. As the U.S. general elections in November near, election officials must fill several thousand temporary positions and hundreds of other open positions to ensure sufficient staffing for the 2024 elections and beyond.

Army veteran Jordan Braxton just joined the elections workforce. Jordan believes their role is important to ensuring a secure, accurate, and transparent election, “Many places are short on staff this election cycle. I served my country in the Army, and I want to do my part as a veteran and a citizen to ensure that everyone trusts the process and the outcome of the election.”

: Text of the Treatment Condition: Recruitment of Veterans and Military Family Members {#fig-treatment}

---

<sup>3</sup>Due to the programming of the survey, respondents were randomly assigned to either question set ‘A’ or question set ‘B’. The grouping variable in the data set is Qset. Those respondents assigned to Qset A answered questions Q41 and Q43; those assigned to Qset B answered question Q44 and Q46. For each question, respondents were presented six statements and selected a response on a 5-point scale from “Decrease Confidence a lot” to “Increase confidence a lot”. The six statements were the same for each question. This resulted in six variables per question within the data set (e.g., Q41\_1 to Q41\_6), where each variable consisted of responses to one of the six particular statements. Tests of differences in proportion between the question sets determined that responses were mostly equivalent between question sets (i.e., no statistically significant differences between proportions) except for the fifth and sixth statements pertaining to lawyers and college students. More detailed information on the results of this analysis are given in a supplementary document.



**Table 1:** *Survey sample characteristics by treatment condition*

	Control	Treatment	Overall
	(N=624)	(N=639)	(N=1263)
<b>Age categorized into eight groups</b>			
18-24	56 (9.0%)	51 (8.0%)	107 (8.5%)
25-34	107 (17.1%)	127 (19.9%)	234 (18.5%)
35-44	130 (20.8%)	121 (18.9%)	251 (19.9%)
45-54	113 (18.1%)	110 (17.2%)	223 (17.7%)
55-64	124 (19.9%)	115 (18.0%)	239 (18.9%)
65-74	70 (11.2%)	74 (11.6%)	144 (11.4%)
75-84	20 (3.2%)	36 (5.6%)	56 (4.4%)
85-92	4 (0.6%)	5 (0.8%)	9 (0.7%)
<b>What is your current gender?</b>			
Male	285 (45.7%)	307 (48.0%)	592 (46.9%)
Female	329 (52.7%)	326 (51.0%)	655 (51.9%)
Other/Refused	10 (1.6%)	6 (0.9%)	16 (1.3%)
<b>Primary race reported by respondent</b>			
White or Caucasian	476 (76.3%)	493 (77.2%)	969 (76.7%)
Black or African American	82 (13.1%)	79 (12.4%)	161 (12.7%)
American Indian	10 (1.6%)	12 (1.9%)	22 (1.7%)
Asian	26 (4.2%)	30 (4.7%)	56 (4.4%)
Other	30 (4.8%)	25 (3.9%)	55 (4.4%)
<b>Highest level of education completed</b>			
Less than high school degree	20 (3.2%)	14 (2.2%)	34 (2.7%)
High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED)	152 (24.4%)	174 (27.2%)	326 (25.8%)
Some college but no degree	141 (22.6%)	140 (21.9%)	281 (22.2%)
Associate degree in college (2-year)	69 (11.1%)	68 (10.6%)	137 (10.8%)
Bachelor's degree in college (4-year)	166 (26.6%)	156 (24.4%)	322 (25.5%)
Master's degree	61 (9.8%)	69 (10.8%)	130 (10.3%)
Doctoral degree	5 (0.8%)	13 (2.0%)	18 (1.4%)
Professional degree (JD, MD)	10 (1.6%)	5 (0.8%)	15 (1.2%)
<b>Party ID 3 categories, with true Independents</b>			
Republican	261 (41.8%)	276 (43.2%)	537 (42.5%)
Democrat	222 (35.7%)	222 (34.7%)	444 (35.2%)
Independent	141 (22.6%)	141 (22.1%)	282 (22.3%)

### Control Vignette

#### *Local Residents Recruited for Election Jobs in Maricopa County*

PHOENIX (AP) — Election officials in Maricopa County, Arizona, announced a program to recruit members of the community to serve as election administrators, including election polling place workers, temporary workers, and full-time staff. As the U.S. general elections in November near, election officials must fill several thousand temporary positions and hundreds of other open positions to ensure sufficient staffing for the 2024 elections and beyond.

Jordan Braxton just joined the elections workforce. Jordan believes their role is important to ensuring a secure, accurate, and transparent election, “Many places are short on staff this election cycle. I want to do my part as a citizen to ensure that everyone trusts the process and the outcome of the election.”

: Text of the Control Condition: Recruitment of Community Members {#fig-control}