

Too Much Information? Undermining Mobilization Efforts with Information Burden about the Voting Process

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Abstract. Theories of voter turnout in American elections state that instructional information about the voting process can reduce the perceived costs of voting and increase voter turnout. Our evidence counters this expectation. Relying on a field experiment (N=95,399) where we randomize the number of details about the voting process, we demonstrate that increases in information about the voting process can undermine the effect of voter mobilization efforts. We then use a national survey experiment to consider mechanisms underlying this relationship. We show that increases in information about the logistics of voting can make the process of voting seem more difficult and effortful. These results highlight the need to consider individual psychology when developing mobilization techniques, as citizens view the instructional information they are offered as a cue about the ease or difficulty of voting.

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One of the most basic forms of political participation in a representative democracy is turning out to vote. Yet the costs of voting—both actual and perceived—are higher for certain individuals than for others (Blais 2000; Blais et al. 2019; Brady and McNulty 2011; Downs 1957; Durán et al. 2018; Ferree et al. 2018; Goodman and Stokes 2018; Kudrnáč 2019; Leighley and Nagler 2013; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). While there are many factors that affect the perceived and actual costs of casting a ballot, including voting laws, information about the candidates, and an individual’s attitudes and demographics, one particularly key aspect is information about the voting process itself.¹ That is, people may not vote because they do not have (or do not perceive they have) enough *logistical* information—when, where, and how to vote—to complete the task of voting (Anderson et al. 2017; Blais et al. 2019). Logistical (or instructional) information about the voting process is more than just a reminder of the upcoming election, but includes information about voting locations, voting times, documents necessary to cast a ballot, and other steps for completing and casting a ballot (see Anoll and Michelson 2016 for review).

Evidence that providing individuals with information about the logistical process of voting can have a positive effect on the likelihood of voter turnout has been found in studies using surveys (McGregor and Anderson 2014; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980), administrative data (Brady and McNulty 2011; Holbein and Hillygus 2016; Schelker and Schneider 2017), formal approaches (Feddersen and Pasendorfer 1997, 1999), and

¹ The literature on the determinants of voter turnout is deep and rich, with extensive evidence about the numerous factors that affect the likelihood of voting (see Blais (2006) for summary).

experiments (Mann and Bryant 2020; Kölle et al. 2019; Bergh, Christensen, and Matland 2019; Herrnson, Hanmer and Koh 2018; Bhatti et al. 2018; Braconnier, Dormagen, and Pons 2017; Nickerson and Bennion 2016; John et al. 2015; Fieldhouse et al. 2013; Gerber et al. 2013; Gerber et al. 2018; Garcia Bedolla and Michelson 2012; Shineman 2018). Following this logic, election administrators across the globe provide registered voters with logistical information about the voting process (Mann and Bryant 2020; Kölle et al. 2019; Bergh, Christensen, and Matland 2019; Bhatti et al. 2018; John et al. 2015; Anderson et al. 2017; Gerber et al. 2013; Michelson et al. 2012). Similarly, political organizations emphasize this logic in their voter mobilization efforts (Anoll and Michelson 2016; Braconnier, Dormagen, and Pons 2017; Gerber and Green 2019; Garcia Bedolla and Michelson 2012; Hersh 2015; Pons 2018).

Focusing on logistical information about the process of voting, in this manuscript we pose the following question: does more information about the logistics of voting always increase the likelihood of turnout? The answer to this question may seem obvious: if information about when, where, and how to vote is positively related to turnout and obtaining all this information is costly, then providing people with increasing amounts of information about the task should increase turnout. Yet there is research to suggest that while offering detailed instructional information may *seem* intuitively beneficial, offering people more instructions about a task may instead make the task *appear* more difficult (Alter and Oppenheimer 2008; Song and Schwarz 2008).

Extrapolating this idea to voter turnout, we suggest that providing people with more logistical information increases the *perceived* burdens of voting, which means that providing more information could undermine the impact of voter mobilization efforts.

Using a field experiment that randomizes voter mobilization efforts during a real election, we find that offering people more and more information about the logistics of voting may not increase participation. Our results show that, relative to a control group that received no logistical information, small amounts of logistical information can have a positive effect on voter turnout. Offering people increasingly *more* information about the process, however, does not lead to higher voting rates relative to that same control group. A survey experiment reinforces these patterns by considering the underlying mechanism: the perceived ease of voting relative to the amount of logistical information received.

The Effect of Information About the Voting Process

Voting in an election is costly—participation not only requires that voters learn about numerous candidates and issues, but also that they master a shifting set of rules, requirements, and locations in order to cast ballots (Anderson et al. 2018; Biggers 2019; Brady and McNulty 2011; Burden et al. 2014; Garnett 2018, 2019; Goodman and Stokes 2018). As a result, people are most likely to turn out when they believe they have the capacity to deal with voting costs, or, alternatively, when they perceive those costs to be sufficiently low.

An abundance of literature finds that education is a critical determinant of an individual's likelihood of voting (Wolfinger and Rosenston 1980; Leighley and Nagler 2013). Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995), for example, argue basic civic skills serve as a critical explanatory factor in patterns of individual political participation. Civic skills and education enable individuals to effectively deal with the costs of participation or at least allow them to perceive these costs as relatively low. Individuals who are better educated

or have stronger civic skills are likely to find voting less costly simply because they are better informed about the process of casting a ballot.²

Reformers around the world have sought to increase turnout with “convenience voting,” such as early in-person voting and voting by mail, expecting to lower direct costs of voting (Goodman and Stokes 2018; Gronke et al. 2008; Shineman 2018). The growing use of convenience voting methods, though, has not increased participation in salient elections (Burden et al. 2014; Garnett 2018, 2019). This failure to increase turnout is attributable, at least in part, to a “if you build it, they will come” fallacy (Traugott 2003): the low voting propensity citizens—those who, in theory, should be most affected by policies that lower the direct costs of voting—are also most likely to be uninformed about when, where, and how to use these new methods of voting. Alternatively, increased turnout may have failed to materialize if attempts to inform citizens about new and different methods of voting are perceived to be more difficult due to unfamiliarity, confusing descriptions, or other communication problems, thereby offsetting reductions in direct costs (Michelson et al. 2012).

² Though see Rolfe (2012), who argues that social networks rather than *individual* education shape voting costs. The network effect, however, leads to the same outcome: some people (either by virtue of having a certain type of network or a certain type of education) perceive voting to be less costly.

Distinguishing Information About the Logistics of Voting

In this manuscript, we are speaking to logistical information about completing the process of voting. For ease of discussion we use the terms “logistical” and “instructional” interchangeably to describe information that is focused *specifically* on the task and process of voting. This type of information is more than just a simple reminder of the upcoming election³; rather, this information can include voting times, locations, and the various steps and documents necessary to cast or complete a ballot (see Anoll and Michelson 2016 for review).

This type of instructional information is different from information about candidates (Pianzola et al. 2019; Pons 2018; Panagopoulos and Green 2008), salient political issues (Bhatti et al. 2019; Lassen 2005), partisanship (Foos and de Rooij 2017; Condon et al. 2016), characteristics of the political system (Chong et al. 2015; Guan and Green 2006), or behavior of other voters or social norms (Gerber and Rogers 2009). Although these types of information often have important effects on voting participation, they operate primarily through different psychological mechanisms related to decision costs or motivation (i.e., *why* to vote) than perceived and actual burdens about voting logistics of *when*, *where*, and *how* to vote.

³ Research suggests that treatments “that merely remind voters about the upcoming election and urge them to vote have no effect on voter turnout” (Green and Gerber 2015, p. 58).

Logistical information about the task of voting is also different from deploying implementation intentions as a mobilization tactic by asking people about their voting plans (Nickerson and Rogers 2010; Anderson et al. 2017). These types of plans require an individual to already be well-informed about the process to identify and appropriately respond to opportunities and obstacles. In this manuscript we focus on instructional information that may be offered to a person in order to make the task of voting seem less mysterious, specifically about the logistics and process of casting a ballot.

Logistical Information and Perceived Ability to Vote

The decision to vote is based on each individual's calculus of voting rather than uniform, objective measures of costs and benefits—this means that a person's *perception* of voting costs is a central consideration. A recent review by Blais et al. (2019) notes that there has been very little scholarly attention given to perception of voting costs, despite considerable attention to whether “objective indicators” of reduced direct costs impact turnout (e.g., studies of convenience voting or other reforms). However, the few exceptions demonstrate that people's perceptions of the costs of voting influence their willingness to turnout. Using survey data from Canada, for example, Blais et al. (2019) find that higher perceived costs have statistically and substantively significant negative impacts on turnout. Anderson et al. (2018) demonstrate in an experiment that encouraging voters to make a plan to vote (implementation intentions) is only effective when subjects are also provided with information about the voting process so plan making is perceived to be easy. In sum, people are more likely to vote if they perceive voting is something they can do with reasonable costs.

Perceptions About Abilities to Take Action

People are more likely to take action so long as they believe they will be able to accomplish the action successfully and with relative ease (Bandura 1977, 1997). This idea is often termed *perceived behavioral control*—an individual’s belief about how easy or difficult it would be to complete an action (Ajzen 1991). Perceived behavioral control can, in turn, depend on the instructions a person has received about completing a task (Ajzen 1988). Relative to offering them no instructions at all, providing people with some process-focused information should increase perceived behavioral control. Yet, it is not clear that adding more and more information about the process is always helpful (Song and Schwarz 2008).

Research suggests that people use “processing fluency,” or the ease of task instructions, as a proxy for their beliefs about the ease of completing the task in real-life (Song and Schwarz 2008; Schwarz 2004). In turn, there are numerous (often simple) factors that can affect processing fluency (Bless and Schwarz 2010). Changing processing fluency may not mean making the instructions or the task more difficult or easier *in actuality* (Bless and Schwarz 2010); rather, it may mean making the instructions *appear* more or less cumbersome (Song and Schwarz 2008; Schwarz 2004). In this way, when people are presented with more and more instructional information, or when the instructions include more and more steps, the task may seem more difficult—even if each step is, in itself, relatively simple.

While existing research points out that increasing levels of process-focused information can undermine perceived behavioral control, scholarship does not specify a precise “tipping point” at which each additional piece of instructional information becomes

unhelpful—starting with a null impact and perhaps progressing to undermining the impact of smaller quantities of information. Since people use the ease of following instructions as a processing proxy for the ease of completing a task, it is the overall impression of the information that matters (Schwarz 2004). Presenting information in a way that makes it appear overwhelming (e.g., a lot of information in a small space or too many steps and details to a single task) can lead individuals to determine that, based on the instructions, the task at hand will be difficult (Alter and Oppenheimer 2008, Song and Schwarz 2008).

Extrapolating this work to voter mobilization suggests offering too much information about the voting process may be problematic. Although it may seem intuitive that a mailer that aims to mobilize citizens to vote should include information about the voting process so that citizens are prepared, such increases in process-focused logistical information lead to longer instructions. Increases in instructional information, thus, may lead people to perceive voting as more complicated, making such a mailer with more instructions a less effective form of mobilization than a mailer which actually offered *fewer* instructions about the process of voting. Thus, while *small* amounts of logistical information should increase turnout relative to having no logistical information at all, one cannot assume every additional piece of instructional information should further increase turnout rates.

Suggestive Evidence of Information Burdens

While (to our knowledge) no turnout experiment has been designed to consider the possibility that offering people more logistical information about the voting process can have limited effects by making voting seem more difficult, experiments designed to test

the general effects of logistical information on voter turnout do offer hints of this possibility.

In a field experiment designed to test mobilization efforts around new types of voting in Maryland, Herrnson, Hanmer, and Koh (2018) also expected that more informational instructions about alternative means of voting should increase the likelihood of turnout. While they find that a small amount of additional information can indeed help increase turnout, the messages in their study that included the most detailed instructions failed to increase the use of these alternative voting forms.⁴ Similarly, in a survey experiment, Anderson et al. (2017) find that exposure to the extensive voter education materials from Elections Canada did not increase voter intention or validated turnout.⁵ In short, while giving people more instructions about voting may be intended as helpful, there is some evidence that this is not always necessarily the case.

Jointly, this suggestive evidence and our theoretic premises lead to the expectation that too much information undermines mobilization effects. Although giving people more and more logistical information is *unlikely to demobilize* them (i.e., make a person less likely to vote relative to one who is not mobilized at all), we do expect adding more

⁴ This detailed instructional information treatment did lead to an overall increase in turnout relative to the control group, but no increase in the *type* of turnout described in the instructions (see Herrnson et al. (2018), Figure 1).

⁵ The official Elections Canada material used by Anderson et al. (2017) provided extensive information about voter registration, new voter ID requirements, four voting methods, and more.

information to mobilization treatments will lead to *smaller* treatment effects on turnout. This undermining of treatment effectiveness could be labeled a “negative effect” relative to the optimal level, but we deliberately avoid this term because of potential confusion with demobilization or voter suppression. The connotations of “undermining” seem a more accurate for the theorized mechanism.

Increases in Process-Focused Information: Empirical Tests

We conduct two tests to consider whether offering people more and more instructional information about the logistics of voting may undermine mobilization effects. The first test is a field experiment, fielded in conjunction with a civic organization, which randomizes the information in mailers sent to potential voters. As the field experiment can only track the outcome (i.e., voter turnout), we turn to a second test to consider the mechanism (i.e., what people think of the tasks of voting as they receive more and more instructional information). This second test is a survey experiment where we attempt to measure perceived behavioral control by asking people to evaluate how difficult or easy it will be to vote based on the instructions provided.

Testing for Information Burdens: Field Experiment

Experimental Ethics

Our goal is to consider whether offering people more information about the logistics of the voting process can undermine the effectiveness of mobilization. We do not argue—nor do we anticipate—that our treatments will reduce turnout *below* the level expected without intervention (i.e., the control group). Rather, our goal is to consider potential for wasted

effort by those seeking to increase turnout, *not* reducing participation in elections from naturally occurring levels.

Further, our experiment is fielded in conjunction with an organization involved in GOTV efforts. Thus, following Hyde and Nickerson (2015), this is the type of intervention that would have occurred in similar form *regardless* of our involvement. The organization was fully informed of our theoretic reasoning and had full control of the development of the treatment mailers. Indeed, in Supplementary Information (SI), section 1.4 we include our communication with the partner organization, which outlines our a-priori stated expectations. This GOTV organization planned on (and went on to use) the mailers developed in this study in future direct mailers, which Hyde and Nickerson (2015) note means the ethical considerations for scholars lie primarily in accurate analysis of the data.

Field Experiment: Design

We worked with a non-partisan organization interested in the civic engagement of under-represented groups to conduct a program with the aim of encouraging participation in the first statewide statutorily mandated mail ballot election in the state of Colorado in the United States.⁶ This was a useful context for testing the effect of instructional information: with only low salience local contests in this off-year election, citizens received little information from news media, campaigns, or other sources about the new procedures for receiving and returning ballots in this election. The partner organization was concerned

⁶ The field experiment was reviewed and approved as exempt research by the Institutional Review Board at [University Redacted], Protocol #E8329.

that lack of information about the new voting process would reduce participation—a concern that is supported by academic research (e.g., Garnett 2019; Michelson et al. 2012; Stewart 2011). The partner organization selected the experimental sample (N=95,399) from registered voters in several counties in the Denver metropolitan area (see Supplementaar Information [SI] 1 for details and sample selection). The selection criteria produced a diverse sample typical of GOTV organizations’ efforts (Hersh 2015).

Half of this sample (N=47,696) was randomly assigned to a control condition that was sent no mailing. The other half (N=47,703) was randomly assigned to receive a letter about voting, mailed so as to arrive four days after the anticipated arrival of mail ballots from election officials.⁷ The letter included a randomly-assigned treatment from one of nine experimental conditions varying the amount of the instructional information about the voting process provided to recipients. The summary of treatments is in Table 1.

Our control group was sent no mailing. Our first treatment group, the *no-information condition* (1) had a gratitude social pressure message with an established record of increasing turnout (Doherty et al. 2017; Gerber et al. 2017; Rogers et al. 2017; Condon et al. 2016; Panagopoulos 2011, Davenport et al. 2010).⁸ This treatment, however, offered no logistical information about the process of casting a mail ballot.

The *basic information* condition (2) added three pieces of logistical process-focused information about voting: (i) ballot return deadline, (ii) reminder to sign the ballot

⁷ In multi-target households, one targeted individual at the address was randomly selected.

⁸ The experimental population was limited to people who had participated in the Presidential election because all treatments thanked voters for this prior participation.

envelope, and (iii) how to obtain a replacement ballot. Each piece of information was presented in a declarative statement. This is our *basic information* condition, as the partner organization believed these three pieces of information should be the minimum package based on anecdotal reports about the most likely problems under the new voting procedures.

While the first three pieces of information form our *basic instructions* condition, the partner organization also had a list of additional information about the voting process: voter ID requirements, required color of ink to fill out the ballot, and amount of postage needed. Our next set of randomly assigned mailings (treatment conditions 3-5) randomize the *addition* of another *single* piece of instructional process-based information from the additional list to the *basic instructions* set, for a total of 4 pieces of instructional information. Treatment conditions 3-5 represent the combinations of the three basic pieces of information and one piece of information from the additional list. This approach allows us to consider whether a particular piece of instruction is disproportionately affecting individuals' likelihood of voting.

Following this logic, treatment conditions 6-8 randomize the addition of two pieces of information to the *basic instructions* condition, so each treatment has 5 pieces of instructional information. Finally, treatment condition 9 includes the full list of additional instructional information alongside the basic set of instructions, for a total of 6 pieces of instructional information. In total, this study has 9 treatment conditions plus a control group. Our goal is to consider which groups increase turnout relative to the control group.

We note that one of the pieces of process-based information in our study concerns the need for an ID. Some research suggests informing people of voter ID requirements may

lower the propensity to turn out (Barreto et al. 2009), although a field experiment offering instructions similar to our treatment finds that information about ID requirements had a more ambiguous effect on turnout (Citrin et al. 2014). In a series of field experiments, Biggers (2019) found that attempting to motivate African Americans in the United States by framing voter ID requirements as designed to keep African Americans from voting had null effects on voter turnout. Since we randomize the inclusion of *each additional piece* of instructional information, our experimental design allows us to directly consider the possibility that *any* piece of process-based information has disproportionate effects.⁹

We summarize the full set of conditions, along with the number of voters assigned to each of the groups, in Table 1. Random assignment to one of these groups was conducted using the automated re-randomization procedure from Kennedy and Mann (2015) to ensure balance *prior* to treatment delivery on covariates from the voter registration file: age, number of voters in household, race and ethnicity, gender, county residence, and past voting (see SI 1.3 for discussion of the sample and randomization balance checks). The full text of the mailings can be found in SI 1.2. In SI 1.4, we also include our anonymized

⁹ The pieces of information in the *basic information* treatment and the other added information were based on the concerns of the partner organization. Thus, attributing either specific mechanism or expected magnitude for these items would be post-hoc, and thus inappropriate. We believe exploration of differences in the impact of theoretically relevant types of information is important, but it awaits a research opportunity where this is ethically appropriate.

communications with the organization prior to fielding, which document our a-priori expectations about this study.

The experiment is well-powered to detect increases in turnout between treatment groups and the control. Green and Gerber's (2019) meta-analysis of field experiments using social pressure mailers finds an average effect of 2.146 percentage points with a 95 percent confidence interval of 1.443 to 2.859. Our gratitude formulation of social pressure is weaker than many of the heavy-handed versions of social pressure in their meta-analysis, so our treatments effects were expected to fall at the lower end of this range. The minimum detectable increase in turnout from the control group with 80% power is 1.5 percentage points for the *no information*, *basic information*, and *six information items* treatments and 1.3 percentage points for the *four* and *five information item* treatments (due to larger N in these conditions). This means our experiments are sufficiently powered to detect effects at the lower end of the range expected in turnout field experiments (Gerber and Green 2019). Without prior empirical research to set expectations about the magnitude of differences between the treatment conditions, the experiment maximized statistical power (i.e. the size of the treatment groups) within the constraints of our partner organization's budget and interest in information items.¹⁰

¹⁰ Comparison of the smaller N treatment conditions (e.g., *no information* vs. *basic information* or *basic information* vs. *six information items*) has a minimum detectable effect of 2.2 percentage points. Comparison of the larger N treatment conditions (e.g., *four* vs. *five information items*) has a minimum detectable effect of 1.8 percentage points.

As we discuss in both our theoretic predictions and ethical considerations, we do not anticipate that increasing logistical information will decrease turnout below the levels of the control (i.e., we do not anticipate a *demobilization* effect). Rather our theoretic expectation is that beyond some “tipping point,” increasing logistical information will undermine the treatment effect on turnout. This would stand in contrast to a more conventional expectation that every additional piece of instructional information should lead to an additional increase in voter turnout.

Comparison of a larger versus a smaller N condition (e.g., basic information vs. four information items) has a minimum detectable effect of 2.0 percentage points.

**Supplementary Information for:
Too Much Information? Undermining Mobilization Efforts with Information Burden
about the Voting Process**

1. Field Experiment

The field experiment was designed to test the impact of each additional piece of information on voter turnout. We rely on nine different treatments (as well as a control group) designed to vary levels of information. The experiment was conducted in partnership with a non-partisan 501(c)3 public charity organization with a mission to increase participation in the electoral process. Our experiment was embedded in the organization's regular voter mobilization program, so it has a high degree of realism, and the arrangement with the partner organization granted unrestricted publication rights, thus avoiding potential selection bias in reported results (Nickerson and Hyde 2015).

Our partner organization's plans called for mobilization treatments using direct mail that informed registered voters about using mail ballots. Colorado's 2013 general election was the first statewide election following the state's adoption of postal voting, wherein all registered voters receive a mail ballot and Election Day polling places are eliminated. A limited number of Voter Service Centers are available on and prior to Election Day. The treatment was a single letter sent to the targeted registered voters on October 22, 2013—shortly after the anticipated arrival of ballots from the county clerks (October 18). The name of the partner organization is withheld in accordance with the partnership agreement. The organization was disclosed to the Institutional Review Board.

1.1. Selection of Experimental Population

Our partner organization targeted Colorado registered voters who were Latinos, African Americans, young voters (<35 y/o), or unmarried women. All targets were selected from a Catalist LLC data file of registered voters using the following criteria: Catalist LLC 2014 Vote Propensity between 15 and 80, voted in the 2012 general election, and resided in Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Denver, El Paso, Jefferson, or Weld Counties (excluding City of Boulder). The requirement of voting in 2012 was necessary for the letter's core motivational mechanism: saying "thank you for voting in the 2012 election."

Our partner organization divided their 2013 voter mobilization universe above between two programs: the experiment reported here and a phone-based contact program to encourage return of mail ballots. The experimental population of 95,399 unique address households was randomly selected among organizations targeted voters. For this experiment, one registered voter per household was randomly selected. Non-selected members of the households were not treated in either experiment.

1.2. Sample Mailing

In the samples below, information specific to a voter was included in the parts marked with < >. The name of the organization and the signature of the organization president has been removed to retain anonymity of our partner organization.

Condition 1 and 2: No Information & Basic Information

Below are the No Information treatment and Basic Information treatment in which three baseline pieces of information were provided to voters. For ease of reading we have italicized the three basic pieces of information added, though they were not italicized in the original mailing.

Dear <FirstName>,

We want to thank you for voting in the 2012 election.

Official public records from the <COUNTYNAME> County Clerk's Office show that you voted in the 2012 election and we want to thank you. Our democracy relies on exercising the right to vote. Many Coloradoans like you will vote in the important election on Tuesday, November 5th, 2013. I am counting on you to join them.

The <COUNTYNAME> County Clerk's Office official voting records are public information that show whether you cast a ballot, but not who you voted for. We appreciate your commitment to voting. We hope that you will continue your record of voting in the important election on Tuesday, November 5th, 2013.

<The following pieces of information is baseline and was **not** italicized in the original.>

If your ballot did not arrive in the mail or if you need a new ballot because you had problems filling it out, please call the <COUNTYNAME> County Clerk's Office at <CLERKPHONE> to request a replacement ballot or go to <COUNTYNAME_2> County Voter Service Center.

Remember to sign the back of the return envelope before returning your ballot.

Your ballot must arrive in the Clerk's Office by November 5th. Mail it early enough or drop it off at <COUNTYNAME_2> County Voter Service Center. For locations and hours go to <CLERKURL>.

Thank you in advance for voting in this important election. I look forward to thanking you after the election for voting and making our democracy work.

Sincerely,

<Signature of the Organization President>

<Name of the Organization President>

<Name of Organization>

This mailing has been paid for by the <Name of Organization>. <Name of Organization> is a non-government, nonprofit, and nonpartisan 501(c)(3) organization. If you have questions or comments about our work, you can contact us at <email of organization> or go to <website of organization>.

Conditions 3 through 9

In the remaining conditions people were assigned one, two, or all three additional pieces of instructional information (above the three baseline pieces of information in Condition 2). For ease of reading, the new information is in italics, but it was not in italics in the actual mailing.

Dear <FirstName>,

We want to thank you for voting in the 2012 election.

Official public records from the <COUNTYNAME> County Clerk's Office show that you voted in the 2012 election and we want to thank you. Our democracy relies on exercising the right to vote. Many Coloradoans like you will vote in the important election on Tuesday, November 5th, 2013. I am counting on you to join them.

The <COUNTYNAME> County Clerk's Office official voting records are public information that show whether you cast a ballot, but not who you voted for. We appreciate your commitment to voting. We hope that you will continue your record of voting in the important election on Tuesday, November 5th, 2013.

If your ballot did not arrive in the mail or if you need a new ballot because you had problems filling it out, please call the <COUNTYNAME> County Clerk's Office at <CLERKPHONE> to request a replacement ballot or go to <COUNTYNAME_2> County Voter Service Center.

The following pieces of information were added randomly by condition and **not** italicized in the original

Be sure to read your ballot thoroughly. Some voters will need to include a copy of their ID. <included in Conditions 3, 6, 8 and 9>

Remember to sign the back of the return envelope before returning your ballot.

Mark your ballot using a black pen. <included in Conditions 4, 6, 7 and 9>

Your ballot must arrive in the Clerk's Office by November 5th. Mail it early enough or drop it off at <COUNTYNAME_2> County Voter Service Center. For locations and hours go to <CLERKURL>.

If you mail your ballot, be sure to use proper postage. <included in Conditions 5, 7, 8 and 9>

Thank you in advance for voting in this important election. I look forward to thanking you after the election for voting and making our democracy work.

Sincerely,

<Signature of the Organization President>

<Name of the Organization President>

<Name of Organization>

This mailing has been paid for by the <Name of Organization>. <Name of Organization> is a non-government, nonprofit, and nonpartisan 501(c)(3) organization. If you have questions or comments about our work, you can contact us at <email of organization> or go to <website of organization>.

1.3. Random Assignment and Balance Checks

The experiments employed an automated re-randomization procedure to ensure well-balanced groups prior to fielding the treatments (Kennedy and Mann 2015). The randomization was stratified by permanent mail voter prior to 2013, multi-target household, and number of past general elections voted (2011, 2010, 2009, 2008, and 2007). Mean values of observables are presented in SI Table 1 while a randomization check using a multinomial logistic regression is in SI Table 2. We note that the model in SI Table 2 does not include stratification variables for permanent mail voter, multi-target household, and number of elections voted.

As expected, the re-randomization procedure produced well balanced groups. A log likelihood ratio test for multinomial logistic regression of random assignment on age, gender, Hispanic, African American, and congressional district demonstrates the assignment to treatment and control was balanced: $p=0.940$ ($\chi^2 = 62.213, 81$ d.f.).

SI Table 1: Balance: Mean Values of Observable Covariates within Random Assignment Groups in Colorado 2013

	Control	No info (Grat. Only)	Basic Treatment (3 items)	ID (4 items)	Black ink (4 items)	ID & Black ink (5 items)	Postage (4 items)	Black ink & Postage (5 items)	ID & Postage (5 items)	ID, Black ink & Postage (6 items)
Age	33.6	33.7	33.6	33.8	33.73	33.73	33.6	33.4	33.5	33.5
Female	0.575	0.583	0.567	0.578	0.580	0.579	0.571	0.570	0.573	0.573
Hispanic	0.229	0.243	0.227	0.23	0.232	0.222	0.228	0.223	0.226	0.232
African American	0.138	0.129	0.139	0.136	0.137	0.143	0.132	0.135	0.138	0.132
Voted 2011 General	0.149	0.143	0.15	0.147	0.144	0.143	0.148	0.147	0.15	0.147
Voted 2010 General	0.339	0.337	0.335	0.332	0.348	0.338	0.338	0.339	0.338	0.341
Voted 2009 General	0.080	0.082	0.079	0.081	0.087	0.081	0.08	0.078	0.077	0.084
Voted 2008 General	0.542	0.543	0.545	0.542	0.536	0.545	0.542	0.546	0.54	0.537
Voted 2007 General	0.048	0.052	0.047	0.049	0.044	0.045	0.052	0.046	0.051	0.044
Permanent Mail Voter	0.638	0.638	0.638	0.638	0.638	0.638	0.638	0.638	0.638	0.638
Multi-target household	0.73	0.73	0.73	0.729	0.73	0.73	0.73	0.73	0.73	0.729
Cong. Dist. 1	0.292	0.280	0.297	0.291	0.275	0.301	0.286	0.282	0.288	0.291
Cong. Dist. 2	0.049	0.052	0.049	0.049	0.047	0.047	0.049	0.053	0.055	0.049
Cong. Dist. 4	0.103	0.105	0.1	0.106	0.099	0.093	0.107	0.105	0.103	0.1
Cong. Dist. 5	0.152	0.157	0.154	0.151	0.16	0.156	0.152	0.154	0.148	0.154
Cong. Dist. 6	0.194	0.194	0.187	0.196	0.203	0.192	0.193	0.187	0.187	0.192
Cong. Dist. 7	0.211	0.212	0.212	0.206	0.217	0.211	0.213	0.218	0.218	0.214
N	47,696	7,951	7,952	3,973	3,976	3,972	3,975	3,977	3,974	7,954

SI Table 2: Balance: Multinomial Logistic Regression of Random Assignment on Observable Covariates in Colorado 2013.

Cat.: No Info (Gratitude Only)		Cat.: Basic Treatment (Info=3 items)	
Age	0.001 (0.001)	Age	0.000 (0.001)
Female	0.035 (0.025)	Female	-0.031 (0.024)
Hispanic	0.061 (0.034)	Hispanic	-0.017 (0.034)
African American	-0.066 (0.041)	African American	0.007 (0.040)
Cong. Dist. 2	0.107 (0.059)	Cong. Dist. 2	-0.015 (0.060)
Cong. Dist. 4	0.053 (0.044)	Cong. Dist. 4	-0.040 (0.045)
Cong. Dist. 5	0.077 (0.038)	Cong. Dist. 5	-0.002 (0.038)
Cong. Dist. 6	0.050 (0.036)	Cong. Dist. 6	-0.051 (0.036)
Cong. Dist. 7	0.036 (0.035)	Cong. Dist. 7	-0.009 (0.035)
Constant	-1.878 (0.044)	Constant	-1.762 (0.043)
Cat.: ID (Info=4 items)		Cat.: Black ink (Info=4 items)	
Age	0.002 (0.002)	Age	0.000 (0.002)
Female	0.011 (0.033)	Female	0.022 (0.033)
Hispanic	-0.022 (0.046)	Hispanic	0.012 (0.046)
African American	-0.045 (0.056)	African American	-0.019 (0.055)
Cong. Dist. 2	0.014 (0.081)	Cong. Dist. 2	0.016 (0.083)
Cong. Dist. 4	0.028 (0.060)	Cong. Dist. 4	0.014 (0.062)
Cong. Dist. 5	-0.007 (0.052)	Cong. Dist. 5	0.111 (0.052)
Cong. Dist. 6	0.019 (0.048)	Cong. Dist. 6	0.110 (0.048)
Cong. Dist. 7	-0.023 (0.048)	Cong. Dist. 7	0.082 (0.048)
Constant	-2.532 (0.059)	Constant	-2.570 (0.060)
ID & Black ink (Info=5 items)		Postage (Info=4 items)	
Age	0.001 (0.002)	Age	0.001 (0.002)
Female	0.014 (0.033)	Female	-0.015 (0.033)
Hispanic	-0.049 (0.047)	Hispanic	-0.023 (0.046)
African American	0.009 (0.055)	African American	-0.051 (0.056)
Cong. Dist. 2	-0.076 (0.083)	Cong. Dist. 2	0.012 (0.082)
Cong. Dist. 4	-0.124 (0.062)	Cong. Dist. 4	0.061 (0.060)
Cong. Dist. 5	-0.010 (0.052)	Cong. Dist. 5	0.019 (0.052)
Cong. Dist. 6	-0.043 (0.048)	Cong. Dist. 6	0.024 (0.049)
Cong. Dist. 7	-0.024 (0.047)	Cong. Dist. 7	0.028 (0.048)
Constant	-2.481 (0.059)	Constant	-2.501 (0.059)
Black ink & Postage (Info=5 items)		ID & Postage (Info=5 items)	
Age	-0.002 (0.002)	Age	-0.000 (0.002)
Female	-0.021 (0.033)	Female	-0.009 (0.033)
Hispanic	-0.021 (0.046)	Hispanic	-0.011 (0.046)
African American	0.007 (0.055)	African American	0.028 (0.055)
Cong. Dist. 2	0.106 (0.079)	Cong. Dist. 2	0.142 (0.078)
Cong. Dist. 4	0.056 (0.060)	Cong. Dist. 4	0.015 (0.060)
Cong. Dist. 5	0.041 (0.052)	Cong. Dist. 5	-0.012 (0.053)
Cong. Dist. 6	-0.001 (0.049)	Cong. Dist. 6	-0.025 (0.049)
Cong. Dist. 7	0.067 (0.048)	Cong. Dist. 7	0.049 (0.047)
Constant	-2.450 (0.060)	Constant	-2.480 (0.059)
ID, Black ink & Postage (Info=6 items)			
Age	-0.000 (0.001)		
Female	-0.006 (0.025)		
Hispanic	0.014 (0.034)		
African American	-0.043 (0.041)		
Cong. Dist. 2	0.008 (0.060)		
Cong. Dist. 4	-0.030 (0.045)		
Cong. Dist. 5	0.016 (0.038)		
Cong. Dist. 6	0.001 (0.036)		
Cong. Dist. 7	0.010 (0.035)		
Constant	-1.774 (0.044)		
N	95,399		
LR test: χ^2	62.213		
LR test: df	81		
LR test: p-value	0.94		

Control group is the omitted reference category. District 1 is the omitted geography category. Hispanic and African American are based on Catalist LLC's predictive models.

1.4 Communication with Partner Organization

In this section, we present our email conversation with our partner organization. We do so to (1) note our a-priori expectations about the results of the field experiment, and (2) underscore that the organization was informed of these expectations.

We also include the original document description of the experiment presented to the organization.

These items have been anonymized to retain both the anonymity of authors for the review process and the anonymity of the organization. For example, the URL at the bottom is anonymized as the name of the recipient is included in the search term.

These emails were sent September 29; mailers were sent in mid-October.

Email communication with organization:

From: Author Sun, Sep 29, 2013 at 9:49 PM
To: [Redacted]
Cc: [Redacted]
Names of Org. Leaders

Here are some thoughts about two ballot chase experiments for 2013. I hope they clarify things (but I always fear that I make things confusing when I get into the weeds of experimental design).

First, a direct mail experiment on the amount of voter education information to deliver. I didn't get a list of the information you thought you might want to deliver so I only have loose categories at the moment. These can easily be revised and the design tweaked. My categories are "Logistics" (e.g. return before the deadline, or remember to sign), "Access" (e.g. mail it or return it to vote center, or get a replacement ballot), and "Research" (e.g. where to find more info about what is on the ballot).

Within each category, voters get either one piece of information (level 1) or two pieces of information (level 2). The table below attempts to make this design clear. In total they get between 3 and 6 pieces of information, plus a zero information pure "thank you" piece as a baseline for measuring the effect of information. This approach allows us to measure the effect of the total amount of information and see whether some types of information are more problematic than others. (Note that I would assign more records to the smallest 3 info item and largest 6 info item pieces to increase our leverage, since we have multiple versions with 4 and 5 info combinations).

	Logistics	Access	Research	Info items	Share of 40K
Group 0	--	--	--	--	7500
Group 1	Level 1	Level 1	Level 1	3	7500
Group 2	Level 1	Level 1	Level 2	4	4200
Group 3	Level 1	Level 2	Level 1	4	4200
Group 4	Level 1	Level 2	Level 2	5	4200
Group 5	Level 2	Level 1	Level 1	4	4200
Group 6	Level 2	Level 2	Level 1	5	4200
Group 7	Level 2	Level 1	Level 2	5	4200

[https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ui=2&ik=407ccd9ad3&view=pt&q=\[Redacted\]&qs=true&search=query&th=1415617e9a59151a](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ui=2&ik=407ccd9ad3&view=pt&q=[Redacted]&qs=true&search=query&th=1415617e9a59151a)

Potentially Identifying Subject Line

Group 8	Level 2	Level 2	Level 2	6	7500 40200
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The basic treatment should be a "thank you for voting in 2012" positive social pressure letter. I have a version of this that LCV Education Fund has used successfully in experiments for Early In Person Voting and Election Day GOTV in 2011 & 2012. I think it will give us a good chance of having a solid baseline effect for mail ballot chase in 2013.

In terms of timing, I think it would be best to aim to have the letter in homes sometime the week after ballots arrive (10/21-10/25)... but I don't have strong feelings about this.

Original Information given to the partnering organization is shown below:

Experiment on Information about Mail Ballots (a.k.a. the Goldilocks Experiment)
2013 General Election
Colorado [Name Anonymized]

Research Question: How much information and what types of information increase return of valid mail ballots? Does too much information undermine the effect by making voting seem complex/burdensome?

Treatment:

Start with the "thank you for voting" treatment letter that has been successful in past experiments for Voter Participation Center, League of Conservation Voters Education Fund, and others. Starting with a treatment with a track record of success will allow us to measure the value of adding information, over and above the value of a good GOTV contact.

The experiment adds information on mail ballot procedures. The quantity and type of added information will be randomly assigned. Chart 1 below shows the information developed by [anonymized] staff and [author] for the test. The versions of the letter will range from a baseline treatment encouraging return of the ballot but no specific procedural information to a letter with 6 added items about mail ballot procedures. There are multiple combinations of 4 or 5 informational items. Chart 2 shows the approximate distribution of the random assignment.

Target: RAE registered voters in Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, El Paso, Jefferson, Boulder County (excluding Boulder city), and Weld. Approximately 47,700 in treatment group (plus control group).

Timing: Intended in-home date during week of Oct 21-15. This is after ballots will be delivered but with plenty of time to return ballot before Election Day.

Chart 1: Informational Items

	Return	Procedure	Replacement / ID
Fixed	Your ballot must arrive by November 5th. Mail it early enough or drop it off at a <COUNTYNAME> County Voter Service Center. For locations and hours go to <CLERKURL>.	Remember to sign the back of the return envelope before returning your ballot.	If your ballot did not arrive in the mail or if you need a new ballot because you had problems filling it out, please call the <COUNTYNAME> Clerk's Office at <CLERKPHONE> to request a replacement ballot or go to a <COUNTYNAME> Voter Service Center.
Variable	If you mail your ballot, be sure to use proper postage.	Mark your ballot using a black pen.	Be sure to read your ballot thoroughly. Some voters will need to include a copy of their ID.

Chart 2: Research Design

	Return	Procedure	Replacement /ID	Info items	Share of 40K
Group 0	--	--	--	--	7500
Group 1	Items=1	Items=1	Items=1	3	7500
Group 2	Items=1	Items=1	Items=2	4	4200
Group 3	Items=1	Items=2	Items=1	4	4200
Group 4	Items=1	Items=2	Items=2	5	4200
Group 5	Items=2	Items=1	Items=1	4	4200
Group 6	Items=2	Items=2	Items=1	5	4200
Group 7	Items=2	Items=1	Items=2	5	4200
Group 8	Items=2	Items=2	Items=2	6	7500
					40200

1.5. Field Experiment: Additional Results

The post-election vote history was obtained from the Colorado Secretary of State and matched to the original data using individual state voter id number.

In the manuscript, we report the average treatment effect (ATE) controlling for covariates to provide more precise estimates (S1 Tables 3 and 4, Model (b)), although as expected from balanced random assignment the estimates are nearly identical without covariates and strata indicators (SI Tables 3 and 4, Model (a)).

SI Table 3: Logistic Regression for Average Treatment Effect by Quantity of Information on Turnout in Colorado 2013 General Election.

	Model (a)		Model (b)	
	Logit Coef. (p)	Pct. Point Change	Logit Coef. (p)	Pct. Point Change
No Info (Gratitude Only)	0.0400 (0.090)	0.0079	0.0397 (0.091)	0.0078
Three Info Items (Basic Treatment)	0.0842 (0.001)	0.0167	0.0835 (0.001)	0.0165
Four Info Items	0.0311 (0.089)	0.0061	0.0295 (0.108)	0.0058
Five Info Items	0.0407 (0.042)	0.008	0.0390 (0.046)	0.0076
Six Info Items	0.0390 (0.087)	0.077	0.0394 (0.082)	0.007
Difference of Three Info Items vs:				
No Info (Gratitude Only)		p=0.268		p=0.125
Four Info Items		p=0.114		p=0.054
Five Info Items		p=0.203		p=0.100
Six Info Items		p=0.218		p=0.108
Indicators for Randomization Strata	Yes		Yes	
Covariates	No		Yes	
N	95,399		95,399	

Notes: p-values in parentheses calculated using randomization inference to account for the constrained randomization procedure. Tests used one-tailed p-values used to test for the hypothesized increase in turnout for treatment compared to control. Two-tailed p-values used to compare treatments. Validated vote data from public records are from the Colorado Secretary of State. Covariates are age, gender, Hispanic, African American, and congressional district. Strata indicators are the combinations of the following: permanent mail voter status prior to 2013, multi-target household, and number of past general elections voted in (out of 2011, 2010, 2009, 2008, and 2007). Percentage-point change calculated with other treatments at zero and all covariates at respective means.

SI Table 4: Logistic Regression Isolating Effect of Content from Quantity on Turnout in Colorado 2013 General Election

	Model (a)		Model (b)	
	Logit Coef. (p)	Pct. Point Change	Logit Coef. (p)	Pct. Point Change
Copy of ID Required	0.0083 (0.871)	0.0017	0.0098 (0.845)	0.0020
Black Ink Required	-0.0275 (0.564)	-0.0055	-0.0252 (0.589)	-0.0051
Postage Required	-0.0259 (0.379)	-0.0052	-0.0286 (0.336)	-0.0057
Basic Treatment (Info=3 items)	0.0842 (0.194)	0.0167	0.0835 (0.199)	0.0165
No Info (Gratitude Only)	-0.0441 (0.267)	-0.0089	-0.0438 (0.267)	-0.0087
Four Info Items	-0.0381 (0.639)	-0.0076	-0.0394 (0.631)	-0.0079
Five Info Items	-0.0134 (0.775)	-0.0027	-0.0152 (0.757)	-0.0031
Indicators for Randomization Strata	Yes		Yes	
Covariates	No		Yes	
N	95,399		95,399	

Notes: p-values in parentheses are calculated using randomization inference to account for the constrained randomization procedure. Test used one-tailed p-values used to test for hypothesized increase in turnout for Basic Information treatments compared to control. All other tests use two-tailed p-values for marginal effect of treatment variations. Validated vote data from public records are from the Colorado Secretary of State. Covariates are age, gender, Hispanic, African American, and congressional district. Strata indicators are the combinations of the following: permanent mail voter status prior to 2013, multi-target household, and number of past general elections voted in (out of 2011, 2010, 2009, 2008, and 2007). Percentage-point change calculated with other treatments at zero and all covariates at respective means.

2. SSI Study Details

2.1 Experimental Tasks

Participants completed the following experimental tasks, in the following order:

1. Eligibility Assessment (IRB and SSI requirement: over 18, US resident, received study invitation directly)
2. Consent form
3. Pre-treatment measures (described in Pre-Treatment Measures Section)
4. Randomization (check in Sample and Randomization)
5. Exposure to treatment (described in Treatment Section)
6. Post-treatment measures (described in Post-Treatment Measures Section)

2.2 Pre-Treatment Measures

Previous Voting Knowledge Measures:

Have you ever heard of either early voting or voting by mail?

- I have heard of early voting
- I have heard of voting by mail
- I have heard of both, early voting and voting by mail
- I have not heard of either, early voting or voting by mail

Do you currently live in a state that allows early voting?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Do you currently live in a state that allows voting by mail?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

2.3 Post-Treatment Measures

Post-treatment measures focus on the type of voting specific to the type of voting mentioned in the treatment. This means that participants randomly assigned to the vote by mail treatments received the vote by mail questions, and the participants assigned to the early voting treatments received the early voting questions.

Vote by Mail Measures:

How easy do you think it is to vote by mail? On the scale below, a score of 1 means that you think it is very easy, while a score of 7 means that you believe it is very difficult.

How much effort do you think it takes to vote by mail? On the scale below, a score of 1 means that you think it takes very little effort, while a score of 7 means that you believe it takes a great deal of effort.

Early Voting Measures:

How easy do you think it is to vote early? On the scale below, a score of 1 means that you think it is very easy, while a score of 7 means that you believe it is very difficult.

How much effort do you think it takes to vote early? On the scale below, a score of 1 means that you think it takes very little effort, while a score of 7 means that you believe it takes a great deal of effort

2.4 Treatments

Participants were randomly assigned along two factors: (1) type of voting (voting by mail (VBM) or early voting (Early)) and (2) amount of instructional information (no instructional information, mid-level of instructional information or high-level of instructional information).

[VBM, No Instructional Information Treatment]

Some states allow citizens to cast ballots for elections for President, Governor, Congress and other offices by mail rather than going to vote in person at a polling place. This is called absentee voting or voting by mail. Organizations do the same thing when they send ballots to members to vote for organizational leadership positions or policies.

[VBM, Some Instructional Information]

Some states allow citizens to cast ballots for elections for President, Governor, Congress and other offices by mail rather than going to vote in person at a polling place. This is called absentee voting or voting by mail. Organizations do the same thing when they send ballots to members to vote for organizational leadership positions or policies. Imagine that people receive the following information about voting by mail: Remember to sign the back of the return envelope before returning your ballot. Your ballot must arrive in the Clerk's Office by November 4th, 2014. Mail it early enough or drop it off at your County Voter Service Center. For locations and hours go to provided URL. If your ballot did not arrive in the mail or if you need a new ballot because you had problems filling it out, please call the County Clerk's Office to request a replacement ballot or go to the County Voter Service Center.

[VBM, High Instructional Information]

Some states allow citizens to cast ballots for elections for President, Governor, Congress and other offices by mail rather than going to vote in person at a polling place. This is called absentee voting or voting by mail. Organizations do the same thing when they send ballots to members to vote for organizational leadership positions or policies. Imagine that people receive the following information about voting by mail: Remember to sign the back of the return envelope before returning your ballot. Your ballot must arrive in the Clerk's Office by November 4th, 2014. Mail it early enough or drop it off at your County Voter Service Center. For locations and hours go to provided URL. Be sure to read your ballot thoroughly. Some voters will need to include a copy of their ID. If your ballot did not arrive in the mail or if you need a new ballot because you had problems filling it out, please call the County Clerk's Office to request a replacement ballot or go to the County Voter Service Center. Mark your ballot using a black pen. If you mail your ballot, be sure to use proper postage.

[Early Voting, No Instructional Information]

Some states allow citizens to cast ballots prior to Election Day for elections for President, Governor, Congress and other offices. This is called early voting.

[Early Voting, Some Instructional Information]

Some states allow citizens to cast ballots prior to Election Day for elections for President, Governor, Congress and other offices. This is called early voting. Imagine that you receive the following instructions about early voting: You must bring your ID. Please visit your county website to check the dates and times for early voting. Please visit your county website to make sure that you know how to use the voting machines.

[Early Voting, High Instructional Information]

Some states allow citizens to cast ballots prior to Election Day for elections for President, Governor, Congress and other offices. This is called early voting. Imagine that you receive the following instructions about early voting: You must bring your ID. Your options are a photo ID or some other government-issued document that shows your name and address. You may also use a utility bill or bank statement. Please visit your county website to check the dates and times for early voting. Please visit your county website to make sure that you know how to use the voting machines. County workers are also on call to explain how to use the machines.

2.5. Sample and Randomization

Our sample was recruited by SSI (as of 2019 renamed Dynata). We include the characteristics of the sample below in SI Table 5.

SI Table 5: Sample Characteristics, Survey Experiment

Modal age categories:	(1) 25-34 (0.223) (2) 55-64 (0.192)
Democrats (non-leaning):	0.38
Women:	0.595
Modal education categories:	(1) Some college (0.285) (2) Bachelor's degree (0.264)
Modal income categories:	(1) \$50,000 to under \$75,000 (2) \$75,000 to under \$100,000
Average ideology (higher values = more conservative, 7pt)	3.91

Critical to our randomization procedures is that conditions are balanced on people's prior experiences with various types of voting procedures. To consider this possibility, we run a multinomial logit on our three experimental levels (no instructional information, some instruction, high instruction). We find no evidence that people's prior experiences affect assignment (SI Table 6).

SI Table 6: Balance: Multinomial Logistic Regression of Random Assignment on Pre-Treatment Experience Measure in the Survey Experiment.

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error.
Some Info		
Heard of VBM	0.472	(0.278)
Heard of VBM and Early	0.218	(0.198)
Not Heard	-0.010	(0.287)
Constant	-0.162	(0.158)
High Info		
Heard of VBM	0.324	(0.278)
Heard of VBM and Early	0.143	(0.194)
Not Heard	-0.177	(0.289)
Constant	-0.059	(0.154)
N=898		
LR test: χ^2	4.56	

No instructional information is omitted reference category. Hearing about early voting is the omitted category on the experience measure.

2.6 Results for Mean Response

SI Table 8 presents the results for the mean response to the measures of difficulty and effort. We separately model all respondents, respondents unfamiliar with pre-Election Day voting procedures, and respondents familiar with voting procedures. The latter two models underly Figure 2 in the manuscript. The results are from the following OLS models (estimated for perceived ease and perceived effort):

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_{some} + \beta_2 T_{high}$$

SI Table 7. Changes in Mean Perceived Difficulty and Effort of Voting Relative to No Information Condition

	All: Perceived Difficulty b/se	All: Perceived Effort b/se	Familiar: Perceived Difficulty b/se	Familiar: Perceived Effort b/se	Unfamiliar: Perceived Difficulty b/se	Unfamiliar: Perceived Effort b/se
Some Info (3 Items)	-0.1939 (0.145)	-0.1739 (0.141)	-0.5409* (0.224)	-0.5860* (0.231)	-0.0425 (0.182)	0.0050 (0.175)
High Info (6 Items)	-0.1051 (0.143)	-0.0583 (0.140)	-0.0845 (0.230)	-0.1315 (0.236)	-0.0862 (0.178)	-0.0041 (0.172)
Constant	3.0451*** (0.102)	3.1324*** (0.100)	3.3409*** (0.157)	3.4432*** (0.161)	2.9150*** (0.129)	2.9950*** (0.124)
N	877	873	251	249	626	624

Notes: Results are based on an OLS model, where for “Difficult” DV: 1=very easy, 7=very difficult and for “Effort” DV: 1=little effort, 7=great deal of effort. Lower values mean that participants perceive voting to be easier and less effortful.

2.7 Results by Voting Type

In the manuscript we present results jointly for both Voting by Mail conditions and Early Voting conditions. In SI Table 8, we examine whether there is a difference between the results for the two types of voting. We do this by adding an interaction term for assignment to the early voting version of the information conditions to the model used for SI Table 7:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_{some} + \beta_2 T_{high} + \beta_3 T_{some} * D_{early} + \beta_4 T_{high} * D_{early} + \beta_5 D_{early}$$

The added interaction terms are not remotely statistically significant, and there would be no substantively meaningful difference interpreting the information conditions about early voting or voting by mail.

SI Table 8: Changes in Mean Perceived Difficulty and Effort of Voting Relative to No Information Condition with Interaction for Method of Voting in Information Conditions

	All: Perceived Difficulty b/se	All: Perceived Effort b/se	Familiar: Perceived Difficulty b/se	Familiar: Perceived Effort b/se	Unfamiliar: Perceived Difficulty b/se	Unfamiliar: Perceived Effort b/se
Some Info (3 Items)	-0.1916 (0.210)	-0.1815 (0.203)	-0.8583** (0.319)	-0.7556* (0.330)	0.1101 (0.266)	0.0667 (0.253)
High Info (6 Items)	-0.1269 (0.200)	0.0080 (0.195)	-0.1728 (0.317)	-0.1391 (0.328)	-0.1189 (0.249)	0.0577 (0.239)
Some Info x Early Voting version	-0.0139 (0.290)	0.0031 (0.283)	0.6792 (0.448)	0.3790 (0.465)	-0.2819 (0.367)	-0.1305 (0.352)
High Info x Early Voting version	0.0499 (0.287)	-0.1336 (0.281)	0.2249 (0.462)	0.0471 (0.480)	0.0604 (0.357)	-0.1307 (0.344)
Early Voting version	0.1048 (0.205)	0.1422 (0.200)	0.0292 (0.314)	0.0792 (0.325)	0.1018 (0.259)	0.1305 (0.250)
Constant	2.9931*** (0.145)	3.0621*** (0.141)	3.3250*** (0.232)	3.4000*** (0.240)	2.8667*** (0.179)	2.9333*** (0.172)
N	877	873	251	249	626	624

Notes: Results are based on an OLS model, where for “Difficult” DV: 1=very easy, 7=very difficult and for “Effort” DV: 1=little effort, 7=great deal of effort. Lower values mean that participants perceive voting to be easier and less effortful.