RANKED CHOICE COULD DIMINISH EQUALITY

New voting rules in Minneapolis appear to discourage and confuse the less educated

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Our Star Tribune article on August 7, 2013 is based on a landline RDD phone survey that was fielded by the Information Specialists Group (ISG) between November 4th (the day after the 2009 municipal elections) and November 9th. In total, 300 Minneapolis voters, 204 Minneapolis nonvoters, 300 St. Paul voters, and 202 St. Paul nonvoters were interviewed. The response rate for the Minneapolis survey was between .29 (AAPOR RR1) and .46 (AAPOR RR6) and the response rate for the St. Paul survey was between .24 (AAPOR RR1) and .41 (AAPOR RR6).[1] The response rate for the combined survey was between .26 and .44.[2] The survey did not include cell phones – a decision that reflected common practice in 2009.

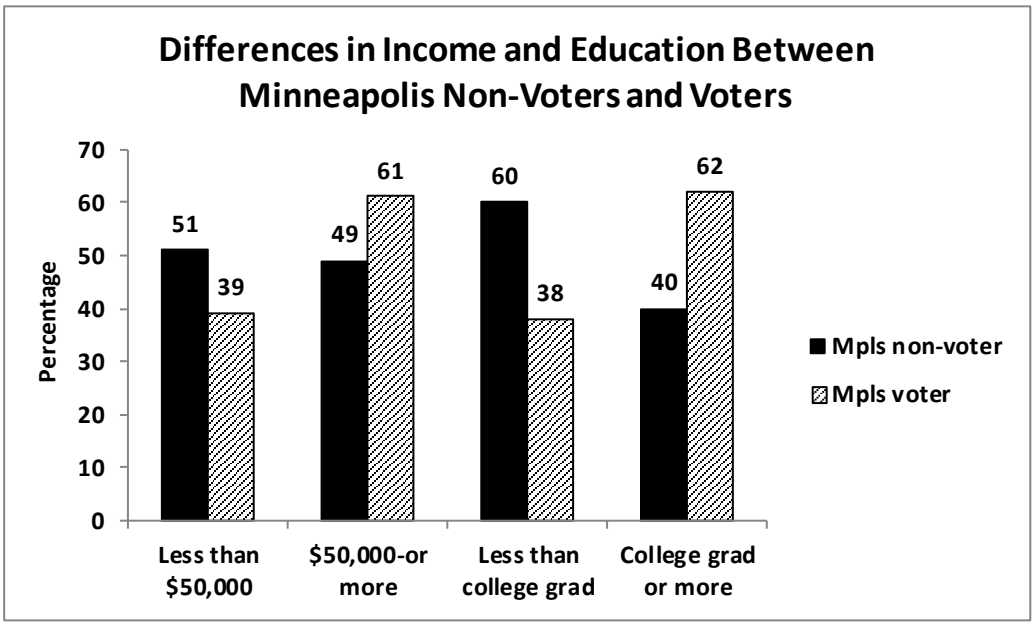
Although the number of respondents is modest, all of the results of our analyses of RCV and political equality that were discussed in our Star Tribune article are "statistically significant" using standard analysis techniques. We report these tests of statistical significance below as well as our results.

The wordings of the survey questions are listed at the end of this report.

[1] AAPOR is the survey field's lead professional association. Information on its response rate calculations can be found here -- http://www.aapor.org/Response_Rates_An_Overview1.htm

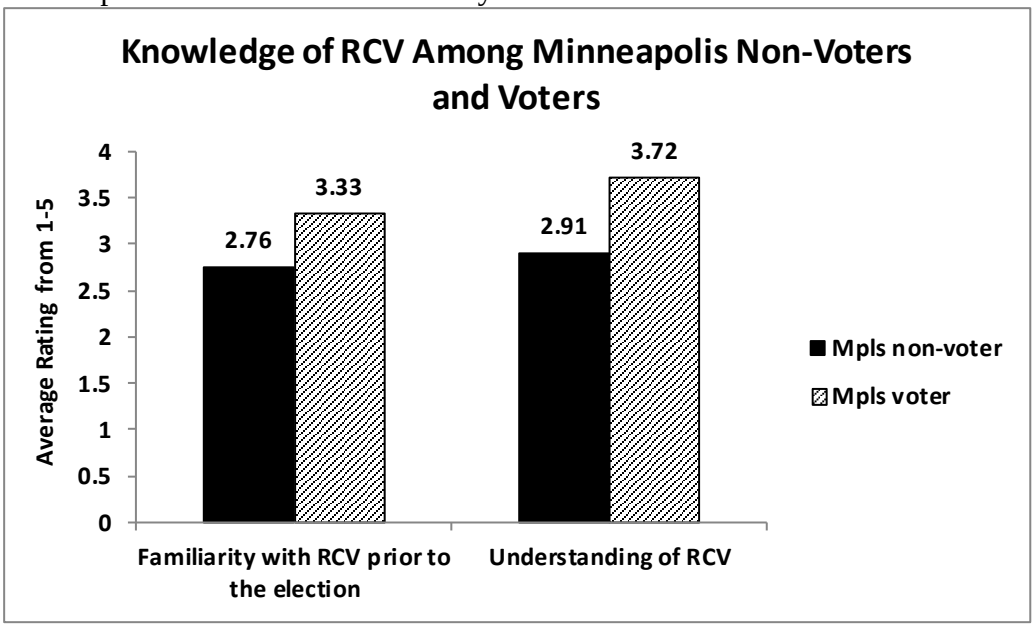
[2] The data were weighted in two stages. First, the Minneapolis and St. Paul cases were balanced to match Census (American Family Survey) benchmarks for each city on gender, age, race, and Hispanic ethnicity. During this first stage, an adjustment was also made for telephone service. The data were balanced to match federal estimates (from the CDC) for the percentage of adults who have both a landline and a cell phone versus the percentage with just a landline (cell phone only adults were not included in the sample). Weighting was accomplished using sample balancing, an iterative sample weighting program that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables. In the second weighting stage, ratio weights were used to weight voters to the outcome of the mayoral elections in the respective cities (using Minneapolis voters' responses to the following question: "Who did you select as your FIRST choice for Mayor?", and St. Paul voters' responses to the following question: "Who did you vote for in the race for Mayor?"). This was done to adjust the voter demographics to be more reflective of the November 3rd voter population.

Among Minneapolis voters, 61 percent earned $50,000 or more per year; only 39 percent earned less than $50,000. College graduates made up 62 percent of voters; only 38 percent had less formal education.



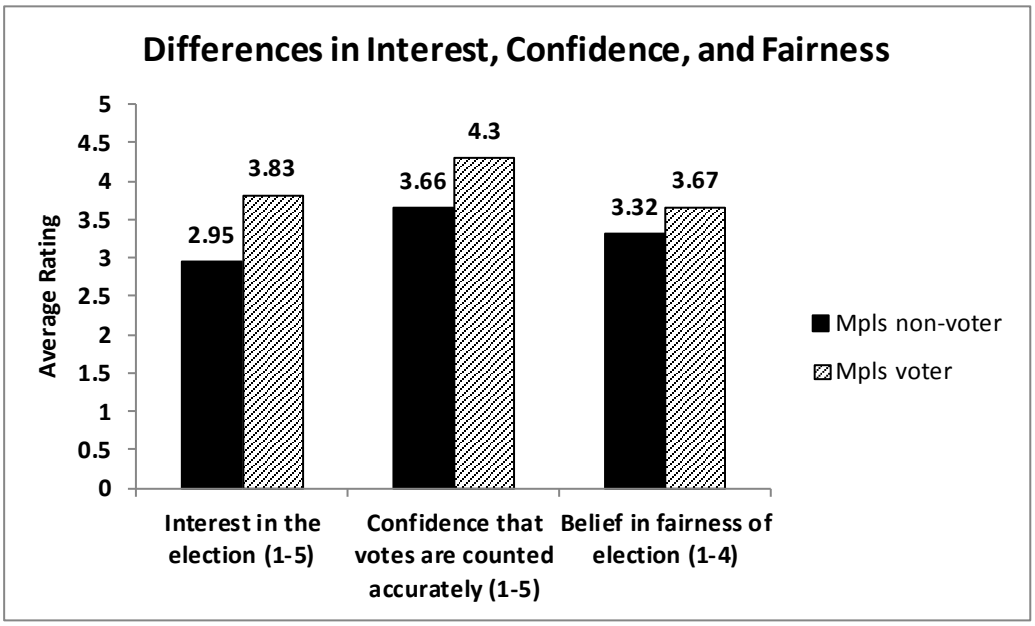
Note: The differences are statistically significant at the p<.001 level. This is a high level of statistical significance and means in practical terms that the probability is less than 1/1000 that these differences are the result of random chance.

Minneapolis voters indicated that they understood RCV better than those who did not vote.



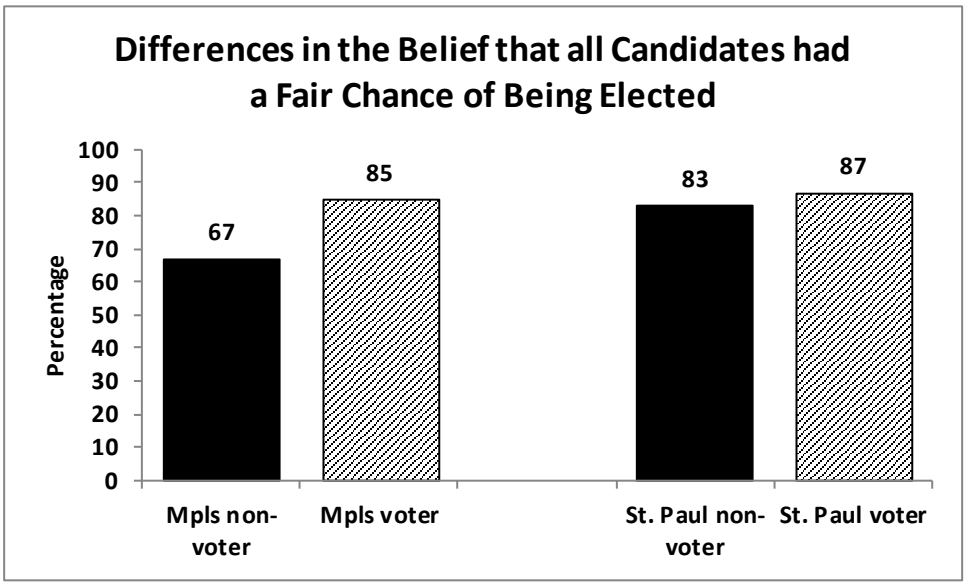
Note: We report the average responses. The differences are statistically significant at the p<.001 level. This is a high level of statistical significance and means in practical terms that the probability is less than 1/1000 that these differences are the result of random chance..

Minneapolis voters reported being more interested in politics, had more confidence that votes would be counted accurately, and were more likely to believe that the election was fair than non-voters.



Note: We report the average responses. The differences are statistically significant at the p<.001 level. This is a high level of statistical significance and means in practical terms that the probability is less than 1/1000 that these differences are the result of random chance.

In St. Paul, where RCV was not used in 2009, more than 8 out of 10 voters and non-voters alike were confident that the election gave all candidates a fair chance of being elected. Minneapolis offered a striking contrast: Only 67 percent of non-voters were similarly confident, as compared to 85 percent of voters.



Note: The difference between voters and non-voters in Minneapolis is statistically significant at the p<.001 level. The difference between voters and non-voters in St. Paul is not statistically significant.

Additional Reading:

There is a large and longstanding body of research in the social sciences exploring the impact of income and education on political behavior and voting. Here are a few publications that discuss this body of research:

- Flanigan, William H. and Nancy H. Zingale. 2009. *The Political Behavior of the American Electorate*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Here are the wordings of survey questions:

Familiarity: "Before the election, how familiar were you with ranked-choice voting (not at all familiar, slightly familiar, somewhat familiar, very familiar, or extremely familiar)?" Responses were coded to range from 1 (not at all familiar) to 5 (extremely familiar).

Knowledge: "Overall, how well do you think you understand ranked-choice voting (not at all well, slightly well, somewhat well, very well, or extremely well)?" Responses were coded to range from 1 (not well at all) to 5 (extremely well).

Interest: "How interested are you in politics (not interested at all, slightly interested, somewhat interested, very interested, or extremely interested)?"

Confidence: "How confident are you that your vote in the election on November 3rd will be counted accurately (not at all confident, slightly confident, somewhat confident, very confident, or extremely confident)?" Responses were coded to range from 1 (not at all confident) to 5 (extremely confident).

Fairness of Election: "Thinking of the election we just had, do you believe it was very fair, somewhat fair, somewhat unfair, or very unfair?" Responses were coded to range from 1 (very unfair) to 4 (very fair).

Fair Chance of Being Elected: "Do you think the ballot in this year's election gave all the candidates running a fair chance of being elected, or do you think the ballot gave only some of the candidates a fair chance of being elected?" Responses were coded such that 0=only some candidates and 1=all candidates.