

# Research on Voter Turnout & Voter ID Laws at the County Level

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Do Voter ID Laws have a significant effect on voter turnout at the county level?



# Background Information

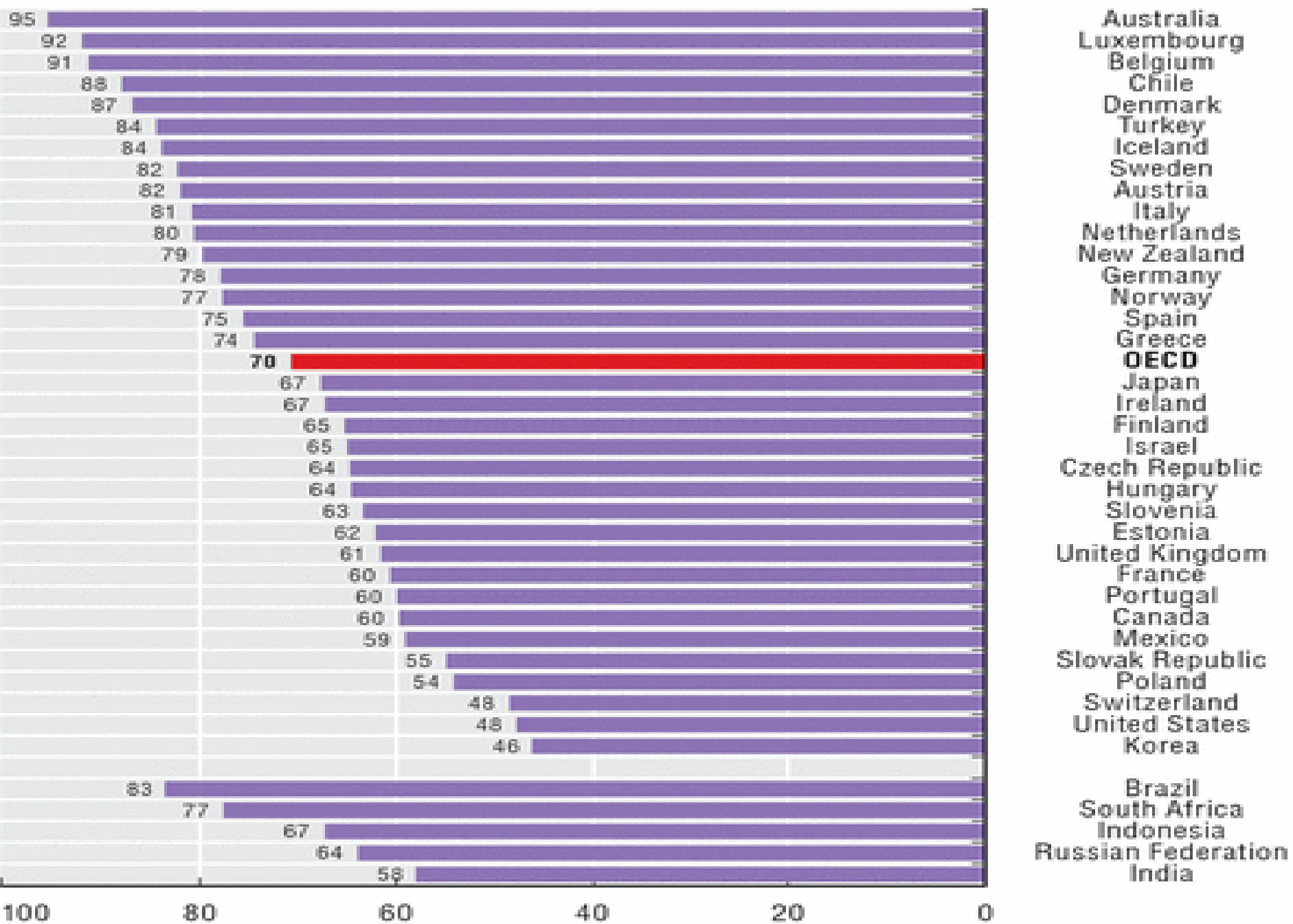
# What are Voter ID Laws?

- Laws that require some type of identification before voting.
  - Photo
  - State issue IDs
  - Voter ID cards
- The strictness of the law depends on the state

# Importance of the Issue

- The US lags behind in Voter Participation
- People are concerned Voter ID Laws will decrease voter turnout rates.
- **Voting Decision-Theory Model:**
  - vote if  $pB > c$
  - not vote if  $pB < c$

Panel A. Voting rates in the most recent election, percentages (↘)



STATE	TURNOUT	RANK
		'12 ('08)

Minnesota	76.1%	<b>1</b> (1)
Wisconsin	73.2%	<b>2</b> (2)
Colorado	71.1%	<b>3</b> (5)
New Hampshire	70.9%	<b>4</b> (4)
Iowa	70.2%	<b>5</b> (6)
Maine	69.2%	<b>6</b> (3)
Virginia	66.9%	<b>7</b> (11)
Maryland	66.8%	<b>8</b> (12)
Massachusetts	66.6%	<b>9</b> (20)
Michigan	65.3%	<b>10</b> (8)
North Carolina	65.2%	<b>11</b> (21)
Ohio	65.2%	<b>12</b> (16)
Washington	65.0%	<b>13</b> (15)
Oregon	64.3%	<b>14</b> (9)
Montana	63.6%	<b>15</b> (17)
Florida	64.0%	<b>16</b> (13)
DC	63.3%	<b>17</b> (22)

STATE	TURNOUT	RANK
		'12 ('08)

Missouri	63.1%	<b>18</b> (7)
New Jersey	62.6%	<b>19</b> (19)
Delaware	62.0%	<b>20</b> (37)
Connecticut	61.5%	<b>21</b> (14)
North Dakota	61.1%	<b>22</b> (23)
Louisiana	61.0%	<b>23</b> (32)
Idaho	60.9%	<b>24</b> (27)
Vermont	60.9%	<b>25</b> (18)
Nebraska	60.8%	<b>26</b> (30)
Mississippi	60.3%	<b>27</b> (35)
South Dakota	60.1%	<b>28</b> (25)
Pennsylvania	59.9%	<b>29</b> (26)
Alabama	59.5%	<b>30</b> (34)
Illinois	59.3%	<b>31</b> (29)
Wyoming	59.3%	<b>32</b> (24)
Alaska	59.2%	<b>33</b> (10)
Georgia	58.7%	<b>34</b> (36)

STATE	TURNOUT	RANK
		'12 ('08)

Rhode Island	58.6%	<b>35</b> (31)
Kansas	58.1%	<b>36</b> (28)
Nevada	57.2%	<b>37</b> (43)
South Carolina	57.1%	<b>38</b> (42)
Utah	56.0%	<b>39</b> (48)
Indiana	56.0%	<b>40</b> (38)
California	55.9%	<b>41</b> (33)
Kentucky	55.9%	<b>42</b> (40)
New Mexico	54.9%	<b>43</b> (39)
New York	53.6%	<b>44</b> (41)
Arizona	53.3%	<b>45</b> (46)
Tennessee	52.6%	<b>46</b> (44)
Arkansas	51.0%	<b>47</b> (49)
Texas	50.1%	<b>48</b> (47)
Oklahoma	49.6%	<b>49</b> (45)
West Virginia	46.8%	<b>50</b> (50)
Hawaii	44.5%	<b>51</b> (51)

Source: U.S. Elections Project. The table ranks states by total ballots cast as a percent of eligible voters in the 2012 general elections (see methodology page 4). 2008 turnout rank is in parenthesis.



# Summary of the Literature



# No Impact on Turnout

- “The Empirical Effects of Voter ID Laws: Present or Absent” by professors Mycoff, Wagner and Wilson
  - “...examined the bivariate relationships among turnout and state-ID law using analysis of variance (ANOVA) techniques. Second, we provided hierarchical regression model results for the turnout—state-ID-law relationship, controlling for other factors”
  - Voter ID Laws do not have a significant influence on voter turnout

# No Impact on Turnout

- “Election Laws, Mobilization, and Turnout: The Unanticipated Consequences of Election Reform” by professors Burden, Canon, Mayer, and Moynihan
  - Examines several different types of voting laws: Voter ID, Early Voting, etc
  - Finds that alone Voter ID does not have a significant influence
  - Vote by mail has the biggest influence

# Not as Simple as One Law

- “Election Laws, Mobilization, and Turnout: The Unanticipated Consequences of Election Reform”
- Finds that Early Poll voting has more of an impact on turnout.
- Vote by mail has the largest turnout.
- Only affects those who vote on the margin

# Election Pressure

- “Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment” by Professors Alan Gerber, Donald Green, and Christopher Larimer

**TABLE 2. Effects of Four Mail Treatments on Voter Turnout in the August 2006 Primary Election**

	Experimental Group				
	Control	Civic Duty	Hawthorne	Self	Neighbors
Percentage Voting	29.7%	31.5%	32.2%	34.5%	37.8%
N of Individuals	191,243	38,218	38,204	38,218	38,201

# Vote by Mail

- Relatively new
  - Oregon, Washington, Colorado
    - Starting in California
- 2014 turnout rates (study by Michael McDonald)
  - Washington, Oregon, and Colorado voted at 43.1%, 52.0%, and 53.4%, respectively



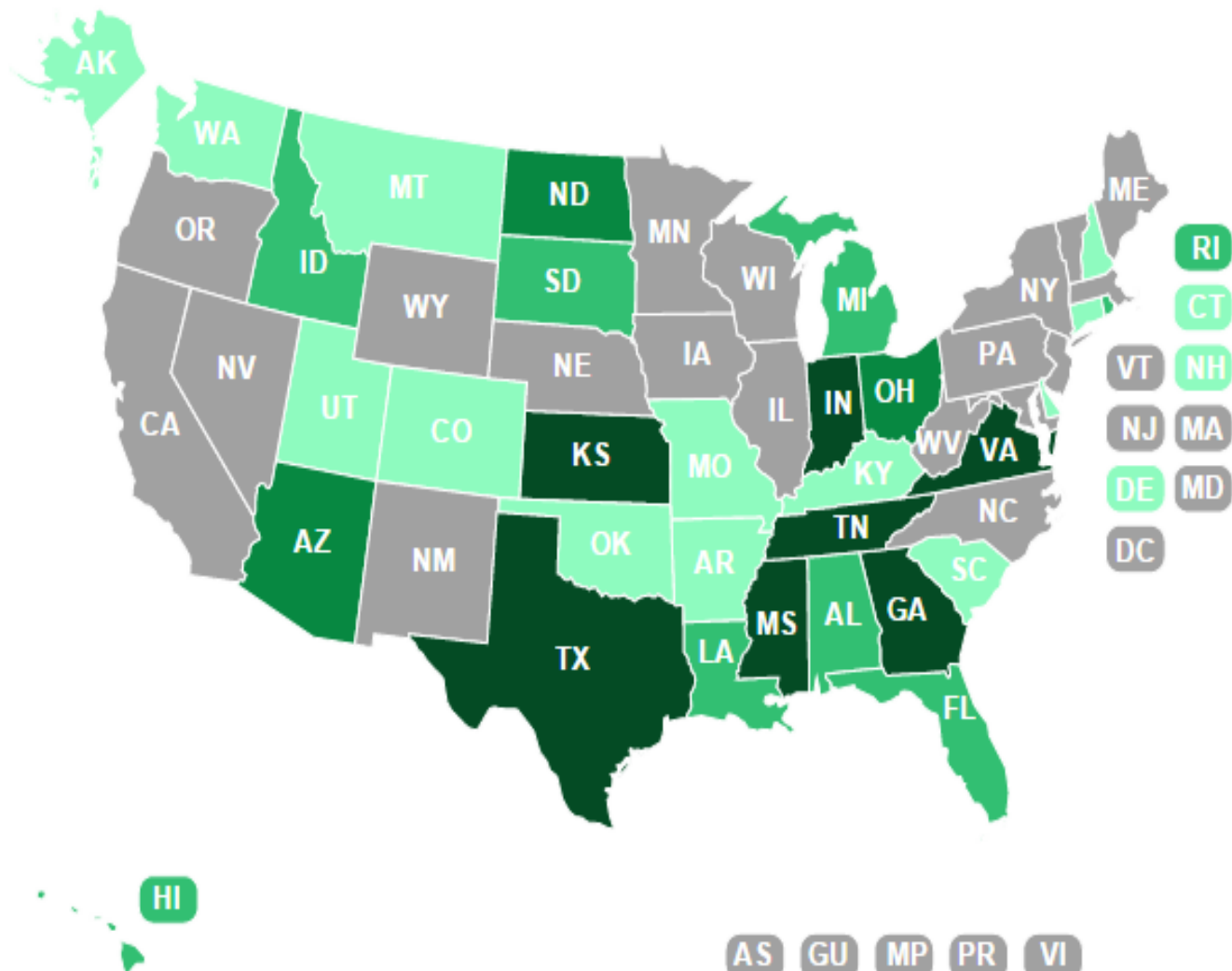
# Data & Methods

# Data Collection

- Use of four presidential elections
  - 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012
- County-level turnout data from 14 states
- $\frac{1}{4}$  of the counties represented
- County level demographic information collected
- Information on state voting laws and regulations

# Voter Identification Laws in Effect in 2014

Strict Photo ID	Strict Non-Photo ID	Photo ID requested	ID requested; photo not required	No document required to vote




“Voter Identification Requirements, Voter ID Laws” by Wendy Underhill





# Model & Results


$$\text{Turnout}_{cst} = a + \beta \text{voter\_id}_{cst} + \gamma \text{demographics}_{cst} + \lambda_{cst} + \Theta_{cst} + \varepsilon_{cst}$$

# Results

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	turnout	turnout	turnout	turnout
voter_idlaw	-11.776*** (0.829)	-12.211*** (0.876)	-13.046*** (1.142)	-14.113*** (1.224)
voter_idlaw*minority	— —	4.771 (3.287)	— —	7.685** (3.181)
voter_idlaw* rural	— —	— —	4.653* (2.429)	5.996** (2.462)
minority	5.857 (40.766)	2.143 (41.477)	9.049 (41.320)	3.989 (41.697)
rural	35.530 (24.238)	36.307 (24.367)	29.021 (26.213)	28.394 (26.153)

\* p<0.1 \*\*p<0.05 \*\*\*p<0.01

# Results

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	turnout	turnout	turnout	turnout
voter_id2	-10.673*** (0.824)	-10.975*** (0.909)	-12.946*** (1.201)	-13.877*** (1.318)
voter_id5	-13.043*** (0.907)	-13.176*** (0.971)	-12.635*** (1.233)	-12.420*** (1.462)
voter_id2*minority	—	2.748 (3.794)	—	6.267* (3.716)
voter_id5*minority	—	1.952 (5.301)	—	-1.193 (5.769)
voter_id2*rural	—	—	8.677*** (2.765)	9.623*** (2.815)
voter_id5*rural	—	—	-1.435 (2.886)	-1.812 (3.218)
minority	6.008 (40.745)	3.988 (41.503)	8.904 (41.292)	5.431 (41.678)
rural	35.674 (24.237)	36.082 (24.394)	26.859 (26.082)	28.394 (26.153)

\* p<0.1 \*\*p<0.05 \*\*\*p<0.01

# Results

- Voter ID laws have significant negative effect on turnout
- Areas with larger rural populations have higher turnout
- Perfect collinearly between other laws



# Conclusions & Implications

# Harmfulness of Voter ID Laws

- Voter ID Laws do not increase costs significantly according to literature
  - Could help reduce voter fraud
- We see this is clearly inaccurate with as much as a 14 percentage point decrease in turnout with states that have a law.
- Affect those who vote on the margin.
- All people, not specific to minority or low income populations

# Increasing Participation

- Vote by mail reduces the costs to voting
- Early voting reduces costs to voting
- Costs and benefits to social pressure
- Type of election
  - Midterm, Presidential, Primary, General, Special



# Potential Future Studies

- More time would allow for collection from all states
- In the coming years more states will have more restrictive and newer laws.
- More states are heading towards vote by mail
- Compare presidential cycles to midterm elections

# Important Results, Questions, & Issues

- Voter ID laws do hurt turnout, but who do they hurt?
- The US lags in voter participation and policy makers want to get more people involved in the Public Policy Process
- Does the nation want everyone involved?
  - What about poor decision makers?
- Can a certain sector of people harm the majority?
- When does the VPR become high enough that it is no longer an issue?



Thank you

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Questions?