

**De Facto Disenfranchisement: Estimating the Impact of Voting Rights Information on Ex-Felon Attitudes towards Voting and Civic Engagement**

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**Draft Date: 3/12/2015**

**To Be Presented at the Western Political Science Association 2015 Meeting**

**Las Vegas, NV**

## Introduction

Though a long history of offender exclusion from the electorate exists in the United States, the reality is that most ex-offenders remain eligible to vote. Estimates provided by Shannon et al., (2011) indicate that nearly 93% of ex-offenders formerly incarcerated are eligible to vote. While many ex-offenders remain eligible to vote, the existing felon disenfranchisement literature indicates that most ex-felons who retain the right to vote rarely participate in politics through voting (Miles 2004; Burch 2007; Haselswerdt 2009).

Exceptionally low voter turnout rates demonstrated by ex-felony offenders have garnered the attention of policy makers and organizations seeking to boost voter turnout in communities of color. Since the 1960's a trend has existed in the U.S. of states softening restrictions on ex-offender voting, although, not fully eliminating the practice of felon disenfranchisement (Porter 2010). In this paper, I quantitatively estimate the extent of misinformation existing in the ex-felon population, and estimate the impact of providing accurate voting rights information to ex-felony offenders, on their interest in public affairs, politics and trust in government.

Specifically I ask, what impact does providing ex-felony offenders with accurate information regarding their voting rights, have on their understanding of their right to vote, desire to vote in future elections, trust in government and overall interest in politics and public affairs? The results of this study indicate that just over half of eligible to vote, former felony offenders wrongly believe they are disenfranchised. Additionally, the results of the experiment reveal that providing ex-felony offenders with information regarding their voting rights, increases knowledge of voting rights, desire to vote in future elections and general interest in public affairs and politics. Limited evidence was produced by this study to suggest that

providing ex-felony offenders with accurate information regarding their right to vote impacts levels of trust in government.

### **Literature Review**

Scholars have highlighted different mechanisms to explain the robust negative relationship between felony convictions and voting (Burch 2007, Weaver and Lerman 2010, Manza and Uggen 2006). Felon disenfranchisement laws have been recognized as one factor leading to reduced levels of voter turnout demonstrated by ex-felony offenders (Uggen and Manza 2002; Manza and Uggen 2006). Other scholars have disagreed, believing that felon disenfranchisement laws have little impact on ex-felon voter turnout (Miles 2004, Burch 2007). Miles (2004) argues that felon disenfranchisement laws do not meaningfully impact voter turnout because the population prevented from voting by disenfranchisement laws, former felons, are already unlikely voters. Scholars arguing that the impact of felon disenfranchisement laws on voter turnout has been overstated, have argued that contact with the criminal justice system, and not disenfranchisement, exists as the primary mechanism leading to dismal levels of voter turnout exhibited by eligible to vote, ex-felony offenders (Burch 2007; Weaver and Lerman 2010; Lerman 2013).

Panel data collected on voting eligible ex-felons, both pre conviction and post-conviction, provides evidence that contact with the criminal justice system reduces both voter registration and turnout. Haselswerdt's (2009) cohort study in New York State, revealed that eligible to vote ex-felons released from parole were over 20% less likely to be registered to vote post-conviction, as compared to pre-conviction. Haselswerdt's study also revealed that ex-offender voter turnout in New York State during the 2004 general election was just 5%, dramatically lower than that of

the identified comparison group. The argument that contact with the criminal justice system negatively impacts ex-offender levels of political participation has been bolstered by research findings indicating that as contact with the criminal justice system increases in severity, levels of political participation decrease (Weaver and Lerman 2010).

Scholars have largely ignored misinformation amongst ex-felons and the false belief of disenfranchisement as a mechanism capable of explaining the negative relationship between contact with the criminal justice system and voting. Recently however, a growing literature in political science has begun to explore the effectiveness of post-felony conviction informational interventions on ex-felon voter turnout. This recent strand of research has examined the impact of felon voting rights notifications laws on ex-felon voter registration and turnout (Meredith and Morse 2013, Meredith and Morse 2014).

Felon voting rights notification laws passed over the past decade in several states, require government agencies to disburse materials to ex-felons informing them of their right to vote once their voting privileges have been legally restored. An untested assumption of this research, one that I explicitly test in this study, is that a sizable proportion of ex-felons fail to vote because they wrongly believe they are disenfranchised. Findings from existing research have revealed inconclusive results, either finding that informing ex-felons of their right vote increases voter registration and turnout (Meredith and Morse 2013), or that informing ex-felons of their right to vote has no effect on voter registration and turnout (Meredith and Morse 2014).

Meredith and Morse (2013) use a quasi-experimental discontinuity design to estimate the effect of a change to Iowa's electoral policy on ex-felon voter turnout. The 2005 change in Iowa's electoral policy restored the right to vote upon discharge, to ex-felony offenders released

from custody between July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2005 and September 30<sup>th</sup> 2008. The policy change additionally required ex-felons released during this period to be sent a formal certificate from the Iowa Governor's Office informing them of their right to vote prior to the 2008 general election. Ex-felons released prior July 4<sup>th</sup> 2005 were retroactively made eligible to vote in the 2008 general election but did not receive any notification informing them of their eligibility to vote in the 2008 general election. In this quasi-experimental discontinuity study, ex-felon's released between July 4<sup>th</sup> 2005 and September 30<sup>th</sup> 2008 are the treatment group, and ex-felons released prior to July 4<sup>th</sup> 2005 are the control group. This quasi-experimental design allowed Meredith and Morse (2013) to estimate the impact of informing ex-felony offenders of their right to vote prior to a major election, on voter turnout. Meredith and Morse (2013) find that the treatment condition of receiving a formal letter from the Governor's Office indicating ex-offenders eligibility to vote in the 2008 general election, increased ex-felon voter turnout between 3% and 6%.

More recent scholarship produced by Meredith and Morse has, however, produced contradictory findings. Meredith and Morse (2014) construct a similar discontinuity design using the time period that felon voting rights notification laws were rolled out in New Mexico, New York and North Carolina to examine the effect of felon voting rights notification laws on voter registration and voter turnout. In the three states examined, information regarding the felon voting rights restoration process was provided to ex-felons upon release from custody in written form, either in the form of a certificate, or as a single document as part of a larger discharge packet. Meredith and Morse (2014) find that voting rights notification laws as implemented in the three states studied, did not significantly increase levels of voter registration or voter turnout amongst ex-felony offenders. After considering the conflicting findings of the studies by Meredith and Morse, a question that must be asked is, why did providing ex-felons with

information regarding their right to vote increase participation in the case of Iowa but not in the cases of New Mexico, New York and North Carolina?

One potential explanation is that voting rights information, as provided in New Mexico, New York and North Carolina, was not made accessible to ex-felony offenders. Although ex-felony offenders in these three states were provided with discharge documentation containing information on the voting rights restoration process, it is possible that individuals receiving the information had trouble reading the documents, or choose not to read all components of their discharge paperwork. Given that nearly 2/3 of ex-felony offenders have been found to be functionally illiterate (Enders, Paterniti & Meyers 2005), this proposed explanation is very possible. In the concluding section of Meredith and Morse (2014), they recognize this very point, and add that documents given to ex-offenders containing information regarding their right to vote was often presented obscurely amongst many other densely worded documents.

In the case of Iowa, moderate increases found in ex-felon levels of political participation may be attributable to multiple factors, including factors unrelated to the treatment condition. First, the information provided to ex-felony offenders by the Governor's office prior to the 2008 general election contained only information regarding voting eligibility requirements and was *not* provided as part of a larger packet. As a result, the information disbursed in Iowa may have been more accessible to ex-felony offenders, especially to those that had limited literacy skills. Additionally, a problem with identifying the informational letter (treatment condition) as the causal factor responsible for increasing ex-felon voter turnout in Iowa, is that the treatment and control groups were different in ways other than one group receiving the treatment condition that are also likely correlated with voter turnout. For example, the treatment group was eligible to vote upon being released from custody, while the control group was ineligible to vote upon

release from custody and only became eligible to vote after their voting rights were restored retroactively. This difference across the designated treatment and control groups exists as a potentially confounding factor if voter eligibility at the time of release is correlated with voter turnout.

The most recent research study in this vein is a large scale field experiment conducted by Gerber et al. (2014). Their field experiment estimates the causal effect of an offender outreach campaign in Connecticut that aimed to increase ex-felon voter participation during the 2012 general election. Approximately one week and a half prior to the 2012 general election registration deadline, ex-felons in the treatment group were mailed a letter from the Connecticut Secretary of State's office informing them that "according to our records you are eligible to register and vote". Also included in the letter from the Connecticut Secretary of State's Office was general information about the upcoming 2012 election and appeals to civic duties and responsibilities to vote. A subset of the treatment group received an "assurance condition". Ex-felons in the "assurance condition" subset were told that once they registered to vote, no questions would be asked about their history. According to Gerber et al. (2014) the treatment conditions increased voter registration by 1.7% and voter turnout by approximately 1% as compared to the control group. No statistically significant differences were found across the two treatment conditions.

The average treatment effects in this study are statistically significant although modest. It is important to note that the treatment conditions in this study were innocuous and made no mention of criminal status in the letters. The letters sent to former felons encouraged political participation by informing recipients that the state believed they were eligible to vote, and by appealing to beliefs in civic duty and responsibilities to vote. The letters did not, however,

explain to recipients how their past conviction(s) impacted their ability to vote in future elections, and additionally did not explicitly address false perceptions ex-felons may have about felon disenfranchisement.

The studies discussed above provide some initial evidence that ex-felon registration and turnout may be increased through outreach campaigns prior to elections. The studies do not however, reveal if increases in participation are directly attributable to educating ex-felons about their voting rights, or if the increases in participation are the result of providing ex-felons already aware of their voting rights, with encouragement to register and vote prior to elections. As a result, the assumption that many ex-felons wrongly believe they are disenfranchised remains untested. While existing research has examined if ex-felon voter turnout can be increased, this paper examines the mechanism, and specifically explores how educating former felons about their voting rights influences their knowledge of personal voting rights, interest in voting, attitudes towards government and general interest in politics and public affairs.

Interestingly, studies of non-felons similarly show that appeals civic duty and reminders to vote also produce increases in both voter registration and voter turnout (Gerber and Green 2000, Arceneaux and Nickerson 2009). This fact should raise questions as to whether the increases in ex-felon voter participation found in Gerber et al. (2014) are attributable to informing ex-offenders of their right to vote, or the result of reminding individuals already aware of their right to vote, to vote in upcoming elections. Additional research, I argue needs to examine how providing ex-felons with accurate information regarding their voting rights, leads them to engage politics in ways they otherwise would not have, had they not been educated about their right to vote. This study begins to fill this gap by identifying how providing ex-



felons with correct information regarding their voting rights influences their attitudes towards government and general interest in public affairs and politics.

### **Data and Methods**

California, as compared to many other states has less restrictive criminal disenfranchisement laws. Once former felony offenders are no longer on parole, mandatory supervision, or post release community supervision<sup>1</sup> their voting rights are automatically restored. With the assistance of the Riverside County Probation Department IT Division, a list of voting eligible ex-felony offenders was generated. Individuals with past felony convictions that started probation after January 1, 2012, and that had been in the community for at least one year without violating their probation were included in the sample. The above selection criteria limited the sample to ex-felony offenders with recently updated contact information, who had successfully completed their probation and were at the time of creating the list eligible to vote. The final sample generated contained the names and addresses of 3,196 voting eligible ex-felony offenders in Riverside County California.

Individuals that remained in the sample were sent a community reintegration survey by mail that contained 30 questions and was designed to assess former felony offender levels of civic engagement after having been in the community for one year or more. Individuals were sent either a treatment or control survey. The treatment survey was identical to the control survey with one exception. The treatment survey contained a statement taken from the California Secretary of State's website, plainly explaining the ex-felon voting rights restoration process in

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<sup>1</sup> Offenders under Mandatory Supervision and Post Release Community Supervision are ex-felony offenders who as a result of California Assembly Bill 109, are now supervised by county probation departments instead of state parole because they are considered non-violent, non-serious, non sexual offenders. Former offenders under these new types of supervision are not eligible to vote until they complete their probation supervision.

California. The statement provided by the California Secretary of State was placed in the treatment survey just prior to the section of the survey that contained questions included to measure levels of civic engagement. Participants that received the control survey also received the statement provided by the California Secretary of State's office, explaining the ex-felon voting rights restoration process, however, they were not given the statement until after they had completed the entire survey.

The statement provided in the surveys from the California Secretary of State read: **Done with parole, mandatory supervision, or post release community supervision. Your right to vote is automatically restored when parole or supervision is done. This means that once your supervision is completed your right to vote is automatically restored in California (Secretary of State—State of California).** It is important to note, that the statement does not encourage former felony offenders to vote by highlighting voting as a civic duty, or by describing voting as a responsibility. The statement included simply explains the voting rights restoration process for ex-felony offenders in California in a plain and concise manner.

Using random.org coin flip option, 1,598 individuals were selected at random to receive the treatment survey. The remaining 1,598 individuals were selected to receive the control survey. Of the 3,196 surveys sent out, 195 were returned. The response rate of 6% is low compared to the average mail survey response rate of between 10-15%. Since the target population for this study often struggles to maintain permanent housing, this low response rate was unsurprising.

A comparison of the demographic characteristics across the treatment and control groups after random assignment of the treatment condition indicates that the randomization procedure

produced a balanced sample. Table 1 below provides descriptive statistics across the treatment and control groups. To more precisely test if the randomization procedure resulted in balance across the groups, an omnibus balance test was conducted (see Hansen and Bowers 2008). The omnibus balance test compares the null hypothesis of balance against the alternative hypothesis of lacking balance. The omnibus balance test uses a chi-square distribution; p-values close to .5 are indicative of randomized designs (Fredrickson 2010). The overall result of the omnibus balance test is reported below in table 2 and indicates the sample is balanced. For the interested reader, the standardized differences in means across demographic characteristics for the treatment and control groups used to calculate the overall omnibus balance test statistic are included in appendix A.

**Table 1 Descriptive Statistics by Treatment and Control Groups**

Demographic	Control	Treatment
Gender	69.4%(M) 30.6% (F)	67.3%(M) 32.7%(F)
Age	38.6	41.4
<b>Race</b>		
White	62.3%	58.6%
African American	6.3%	8.3%
Asian	2.1%	2.3%
Native American	2.1%	1.2%
Hispanic	27.1%	29.6%
%Employed	37.5%	34.5%
Avg. Income	28,750	27,100
Avg. Educational Attainment	11.9	12.0
%Married	41.6%	42.9%
%Personal Vehicle	52.1%	57.5%
%Homeless/Assisted Living	14.9%	10.1%
Years Incarcerated	2.35	2.44
N=195	80	115

**Table 2 Omnibus Balance Test**

Chi-square	17.2
Degrees of Freedom	19
P-Value	.577
$\alpha$ .	.05

Questions included in the civic engagement section of the surveys were used as outcome measures to assess respondent knowledge of voting rights, desire to vote in upcoming elections, interest in public affairs and trust in government. A sample of these survey questions is provided below. For the interested reader, a complete copy of the treatment and control surveys can be found in appendix C. Note that in the results section of this paper, response categories were collapsed so that the experiment results could be more meaningfully interpreted.

## Survey Questions

Thinking about future elections in the years to come how likely is it that you will vote in either local or national elections? (select one choice only)

Very likely	
Likely	
Not likely, I am not interested	
I can't vote due to my conviction(s)	

Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs (select one choice only)

Most of the time	
Some of the time	
Only now and then	
Hardly at all	

How often do you discuss politics with others? (select one choice only)

Weekly	
Once a Month	
A few times a year	
Hardly at all	

How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right-- just about always, most of the time or only some of the time? (select one choice only)

Just about always	
Most of the time	
Only some of the time	
Never trust government	

## Hypotheses

H1: The percentage of respondents in the treatment group that indicate they can't vote due to their status as a convicted felon, will be significantly less than the percentage of respondents in the control group indicating they can't vote because of their status as a convicted felon..

H2: The percentage of participants in the treatment group that indicate they plan on voting in upcoming elections will be significantly greater than the percentage of participants in the control group that indicate they plan on voting in upcoming elections.

H3: A greater percentage of participants in the treatment group will indicate interest in public affairs after receiving the treatment condition, as compared to respondents in the control group.

H4: After receiving the treatment condition, a significantly greater proportion of respondents in the treatment group will indicate they discuss politics with others on a regular basis, as compared to respondents in the control group.

H5: A significantly larger percentage of respondents in the treatment group will indicate they trust government, as compared to respondents in the control group.

## Results

Reported below in table 3 in the column labeled *difference*, is the estimated average treatment (ATE) effect of the treatment condition. The ATE is calculated as follows:  $\mu_{Y(1)} - \mu_{Y(0)}$ , where  $\mu_{Y(1)}$  is the average value for the treatment group and  $\mu_{Y(0)}$  is the average value for the control group. Linear regression models including covariates were also used to calculate ATE's so the robustness of the results could be examined. Linear regression allows the ATE's to be estimated while simultaneously adjusting for covariates (Gerber and Green 2012). As expected, the statistically significant average treatment effects reported below in table 3 are robust to the inclusion of covariates. For those interested, the results of the regressions run, including covariates are provided at the end of this paper in appendix B. The robustness of these results is not surprising due to the random assignment of the treatment condition and because the sample is

balanced, however, the results of the regressions including covariates provide additional support for the reported findings.

### **Knowledge of Voting Rights and Likelihood of Voting in Future Elections**

The results from this experiment indicate that providing ex-felony offenders with accurate information regarding their voting rights increases their interest in voting in future elections and knowledge of voting rights. Only 26.3% of respondents in the control group indicated that they were “likely vote” in upcoming elections, as compared to 51.8% of respondents in the treatment group. The ATE, or difference in means across the two groups is large at 25.4% and is statistically significant at the  $P > .01$  level. Thus, providing ex-felony offenders with a concise statement explaining their voting rights to them but not encouraging them to vote, had a sizable impact on their stated likelihood of voting in future elections.

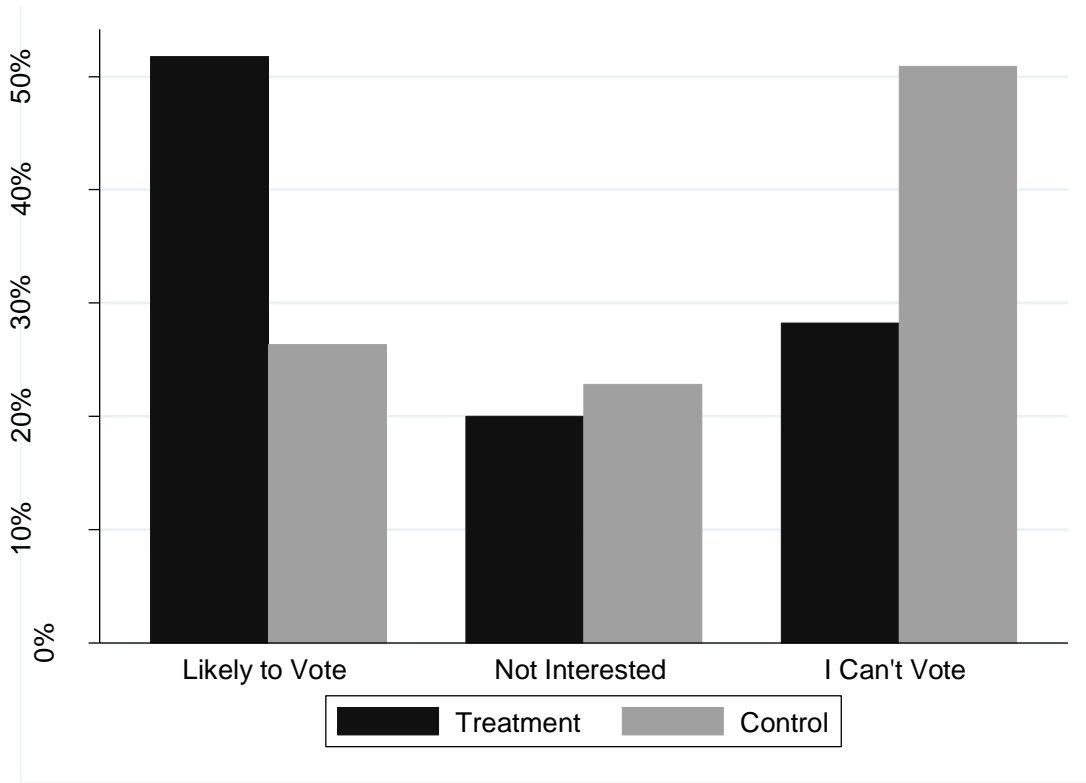
The share of eligible to vote ex-felony offenders that wrongly indicated they were disenfranchised as a result of their felony conviction(s) also differed across the treatment and control groups. Just over half (50.9%) of participants in the control group indicated wrongly that their felony conviction prevented them from voting, as compared to 28.2% of participants in the treatment group. The estimated average treatment effect of the treatment condition of 22.6% is statistically significant at the  $P > .01$  level. These findings provide strong evidence that providing voting rights information to ex-felony offenders improves their knowledge of personal voting rights. Table 3 below provides the results of the experiment across all outcome measures.

**Table 3 Difference in Outcomes across Treatment and Control Groups**

Outcomes	Treatment	Control	Difference	P-Value
<b>Voting</b>				
%Likely to vote	51.76	26.32	25.44	.002
%Not Interested in voting	20.00	22.81	-2.81	.690
%I can't vote	28.24	50.88	-22.64	.006
<b>Interest in Public Affairs</b>				
%Follow public affairs	56.47	28.80	27.65	.001
%Follow public affairs now and then	20.00	23.73	-3.73	.595
%Follow public affairs hardly at all	23.53	47.46	-23.93	.003
<b>Discuss Politics</b>				
%Discuss politics at least monthly	40.00	25.42	14.58	.07
%Discuss Politics a few times a year	21.18	15.25	5.92	.374
%Discuss politics hardly at all	38.82	59.32	-20.50	.015
<b>Government Trust</b>				
%Trust government	26.51	28.07	-1.56	.839
%Trust government some of the time	53.01	42.11	10.9	.207
%Never trust government	20.48	29.82	-9.34	.208



**Figure 1 Likelihood of Voting by Treatment and Control Groups**

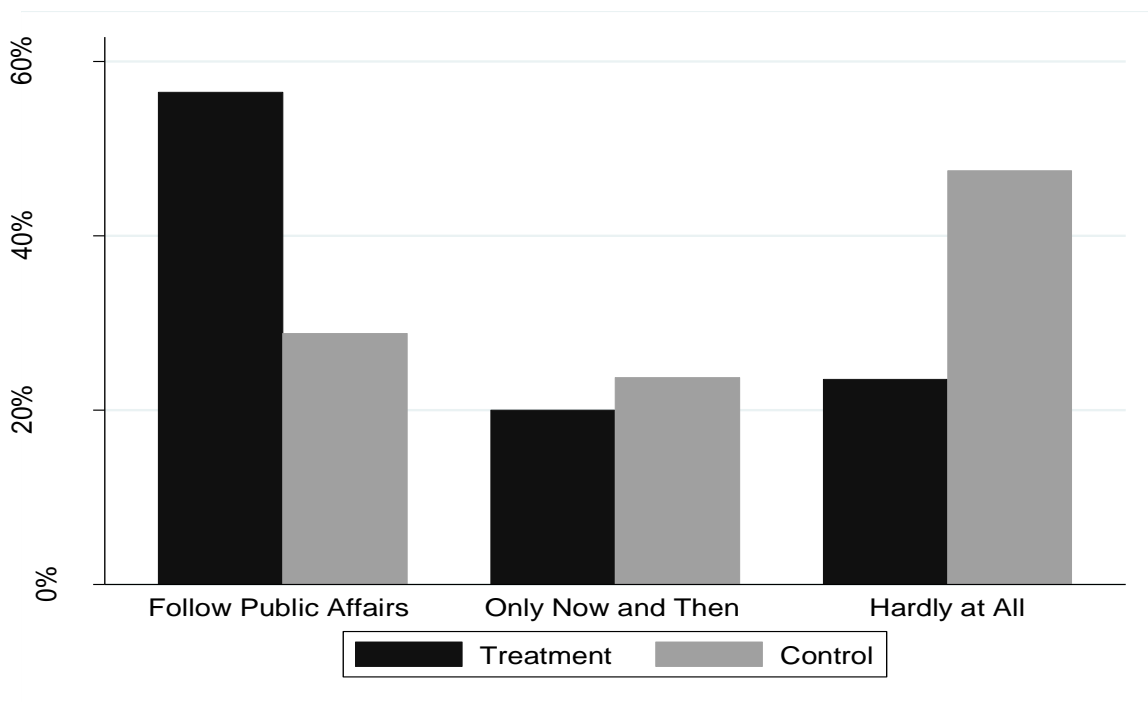


**Interest in Public Affairs**

Providing ex-felony offenders with accurate information about their voting rights also had a positive effect on respondent stated levels of interest in public affairs. Of participants in the treatment group, 56.5% indicated that they follow public affairs “at least some of the time”, as compared to just 28.8% of respondents in the control group. The average treatment effect of 27.7% is large and statistically significant at the  $P > .01$  level. The proportion of each group indicating that they follow public affairs “only now and then” was not largely influenced by exposure to the treatment condition. Approximately 20% of both groups indicated that they follow public affairs “only now and then”. The share of respondents in the control group that indicated “they hardly at all follow public affairs” was much larger than the share of respondents

in the treatment group that indicated “they hardly at all follow public affairs”. While only 23.53% of participants in the treatment group indicated they “hardly at all follow public affairs” 47.6% of participants in the control group indicated they “hardly at all follow public affairs”. The estimated average treatment effect of 23.9% is large and statistically significant at the  $P > .01$  level.

**Figure 2 Follow Public Affairs by Treatment and Control Groups**



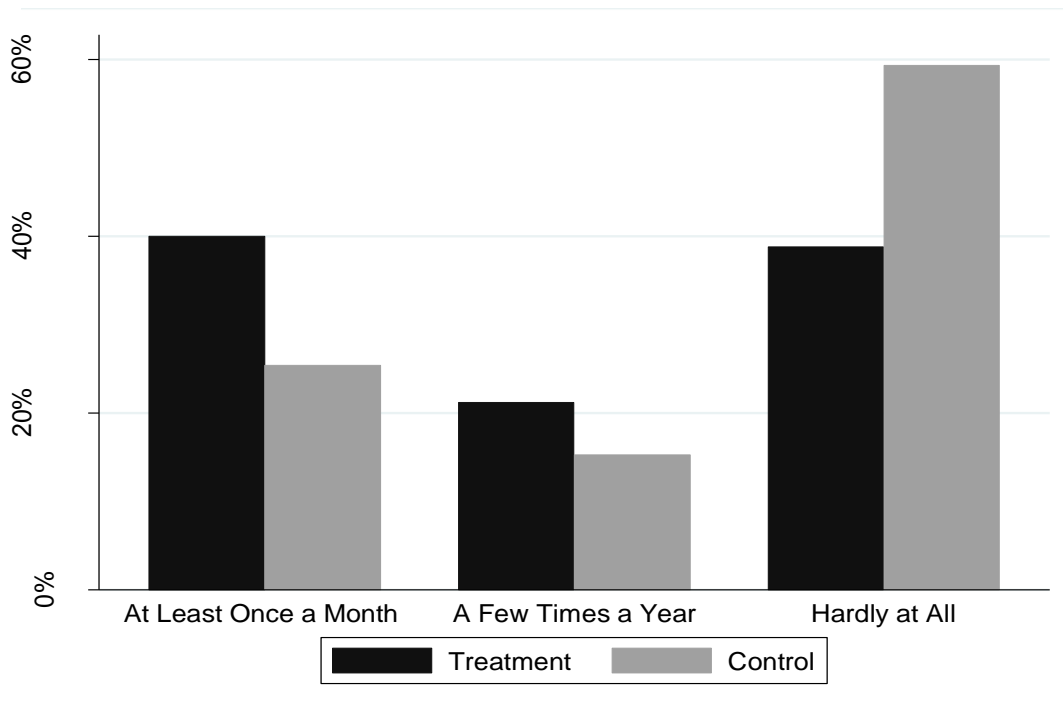
### **Discuss Politics with Others**

The proportion of ex-felony offenders in the treatment group that indicated they discuss politics with others “at least once a month” was greater than the proportion of ex-felony offenders in the control group that indicated they discuss politics “at least once a month”. This finding provides some initial evidence that informing former felons of their voting rights increases interest in politics. Forty percent (40%) of participants in the treatment group indicated

they discuss politics at least once a month as compared to just 25.42% of the control group. The difference in means across the two groups of 14.58% with a p-value of .07 is not significant at the conventional  $P > .05$  significance level, however, the trend in the data suggests a relationship likely exists between the treatment condition and the frequency with which individuals indicate they discuss politics.

Just over twenty one percent (21.18%) of participants in the treatment group indicated they discuss politics with others a few times a year as compared to 15.25% of participants in the control group. While just 38.2% of participants in the treatment group indicated they “hardly at all” discuss politics, 59.32% of participants in the control group indicated they “hardly at all discuss politics”. The difference in means between the two groups of 20.5% is statistically significant at the  $P > .05$  level.

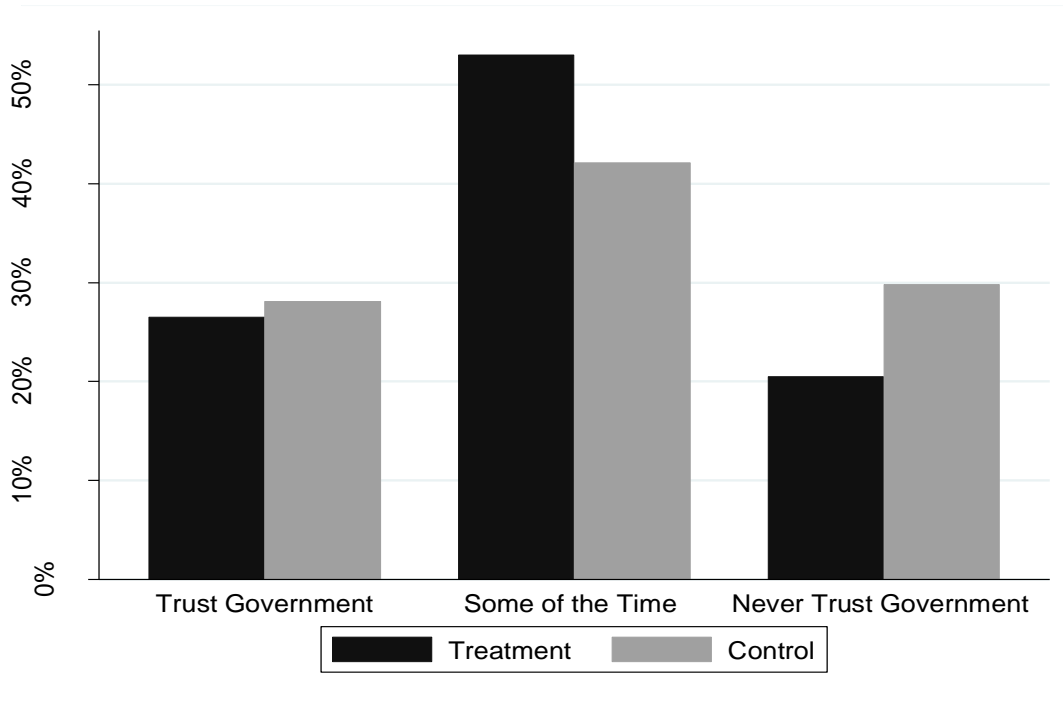
**Figure 3 Discuss Politics by Treatment and Control Groups**



## Government Trust

Limited evidence emerged from this experiment to suggest that providing ex-felony offenders with information about their right to vote impacts their levels of trust in government. Of respondents in the treatment group, 26.5% expressed they trusted government most of the time, as compared to 28.1% of respondents in the control group. The difference in averages between the two groups of 1.56% is not statistically significant at any level. The share of respondents in the treatment group that indicated they trust government “at least some of the time” was 10.9% greater than the share of participants in the control group that indicated they “trust government at least some of the time”. The share of participants in the treatment group indicating they “never trust government” was 9.3% lower than the share of participants in the control group indicating they “never trust government”. Of participants in the treatment group 20.48% stated they “never trust government” as compared to 29.82% of the control group. Given the proportion of the treatment group indicating that they “trust government at least some of the time” is greater than the control group, and the proportion of the treatment group indicating they “never trusts government” is less than the control group, a significant relationship may be detectable in a larger sample between ex-felon knowledge of voting rights and levels of trust in government. Figure 4 below demonstrates levels of trust in government across the treatment and control groups.

**Figure 4 Trust in Government by Treatment and Control Groups**



### **Discussion**

Existing research examining whether post-conviction interventions increase levels of voter registration and turnout amongst ex-felony offenders has produced conflicting results. Both Meredith and Morse (2013), and Gerber et al. (2014), find that moderate increases in ex-felon voter registration and turnout can be achieved through outreach efforts that encourage ex-felons to vote. An untested assumption of this research, however, is that many former felons are unaware of their right to vote. This research study has explicitly tested this assumption, and found that approximately half of former felons wrongly believe they are ineligible to vote. Though the sample size used to estimate the percent of voting eligible former felons that wrongly believe they are disenfranchised is small  $N=80$ , as compared to the population of interest in Riverside County of  $N=3,196$ , the estimate of 50.9% with a margin of error of  $\pm 10.8$  indicates

that a large share of ex-felons wrongly believe they are unable to vote. Of greater importance, this study has shown that providing accurate voting rights information to ex-felony offenders, positively impacts their levels of knowledge regarding personal voting rights, desire to vote in future elections, interest in politics and overall interest in public affairs.

As a result of participating in this study, many ex-felons learned for the first time that they were eligible to vote in upcoming elections. As evidence of this, ex-felons that received the treatment condition were approximately 23% less likely to wrongly indicate that they could not vote due to their status as a convicted felon. Though many participants likely learned about their voting rights as a result of participation in this study; 28.2% of participants that received the treatment condition still wrongly indicated they were disenfranchised. These participants likely either failed to read, or understand the excerpt included in the treatment survey that was intended to inform them of their right to vote. This result may partially be explained by low literacy levels common amongst ex-offenders (Enders, Paterniti & Meyers 2005). As a result, the best way to inform voting eligible ex-felons of their right to vote may be to provide voting rights information to them verbally. As a result, future research should attempt to estimate the effect of providing accurate voting rights information on civic engagement utilizing different treatment delivery methods that may be more accessible to individuals with low literacy levels.

## Appendix A

### Standardized Differences in Means across Variables

Variable	Standard Difference
Gender	-.10949
Age	.26123
Years Incarcerated	.02113
Marital Status	.03695
Employed	-.08687
Education	.10658
Income	-.03457
White	-.06767
African American	-.00138
Asian	.03056
Native American	-.05766
Hispanic	.00696
Other	.23489
Public Transportation	-.27184
Personal Vehicle	.08426
Bike	.16845
Walk	.07917
Own Home	-.01406
Rent Home	.26729
Live With Family Member	-.23321
Sober Living Facility	.09232
Homeless	-.13290

## Appendix B

### Robustness of Results: Models Run with Control Variables

#### Effect of Voting Information on Likelihood of Voting in Future

Vote in future	$\beta$	Stand. Error	P-Value	95% Conf. Interval
Treatment	.2247	.0892	.013	.0481 .4013
Living Situation	-.1891	.1367	.169	-.4600 .0816
Years Incarcerated	-.0569	.0429	.187	-.1419 .0281
Marital Status	.0436	.1097	.692	-.1737 .2609
Education	.0393	.0532	.462	-.0661 .1447
Income	.0415	.0406	.309	-.0388 .1219
Race				
African American	-.0395	.1449	.785	-.3267 .2476
Asian	-.5983	.2585	.022	-1.110 -.0862
Native American	-.3911	.3463	.261	-.1077 .29488
Hispanic	.0245	.1021	.810	-.1778 .2269
Other	-.1936	.2499	.440	-.6887 .3014
Constant	.2398	.2067	.248	-.1695 .6493

#### Effect of Voting Information on False Belief of Disenfranchisement

Vote in future	$\beta$	Stand. Error	P-Value	95% Conf. Interval
Treatment	-.1792	.0874	.043	-.3523 -.0061
Years Incarcerated	.0397	.0408	.334	-.0412 .1206
Income	-.0114	.0356	.750	-.0821 .0592
Race				
African American	-.2156	.1420	.132	-.4969 .0656
Asian	.3923	.2507	.130	-1.141 .8782
Native American	.5471	.3373	.107	-.1208 1.215
Hispanic	-.0886	.1001	.378	-.2870 .1097
Other	-.1028	.2411	.671	-.5812 .3747
Constant	.4548	.1157	.000	.2256 .6839



Effect of Voting Information on Interest in Public Affairs

Vote in future	$\beta$	Stand. Error	P-Value	95% Conf. Interval
Treatment	.2163	.0879	.015	.0420 .3906
Age	.0039	.0035	.265	-.0032 .0108
Living Situation	-.2920	.1327	.030	-.5552 -.0289
Marital Status	.1666	.1128	.143	-.0571 .3903
Education	.0635	.0531	.234	-.0418 .1689
Income	.0592	.0406	.148	-.0213 .1398
Race				
African American	.0762	.1523	.617	-.2255 .3781
Asian	-.4189	.2918	.154	-.9973 .1594
Native American	-.5333	.3366	.116	-1.200 .1340
Hispanic	-.4312	.1019	.673	-.2451 .1588
Other	-.0654	.2820	.820	-.6236 .4945
Constant	-.0866	.2248	.700	-.5312 .3579

Effect of Voting Information on Frequency that Politics is Discussed with Friends

Vote in future	$\beta$	Stand. Error	P-Value	95% Conf. Interval
Treatment	-.2003	.0863	.022	-.3711 -.0295
Living Situation	-.0013	.1294	.992	-.2547 .2573
Years Incarcerated	-.0678	.04207	.109	-.1510 .0154
Marital Status	-.0592	.1018	.562	-.2608 .1423
Education	-.0396	.0537	.463	-.1458 .0667
Race				
African American	-.0631	.1489	.672	-.3577 .2314
Asian	-.2376	.2315	.305	-.6938 .2185
Native American	.6302	.3543	.078	-.0709 1.331
Hispanic	.1162	.0973	.098	-.0304 .3545
Other	.0899	.2569	.727	-.4184 .5982
Constant	.7878	.2048	.000	.3826 1.193

## Appendix C

### Community Reintegration Survey (treatment)

We know that individuals with criminal convictions face many obstacles upon release from jail or prison and that overcoming such obstacles plays a major role in facilitating positive community reintegration. We also recognize that having a criminal conviction can make some types of civic engagement difficult. Often times ex-offenders demonstrate a lack of civic engagement but this does not reflect poorly on them but rather is a result of the circumstances they have encountered. The aim of this research project is to help probation departments develop programs that facilitate civic reengagement.

**Directions: Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability by placing an “x” inside the box which most closely represents your answer.**

- 1) What is your gender?

Male	
Female	

- 2) What is the month, day and year of your birth? (please fill in the blank spaces)

Month\_\_\_\_\_ Day\_\_ Year\_\_\_\_\_

- 3) What form of transportation did you most frequently rely on over this past year? (select one choice only)

Public transportation	
Personal vehicle	
Bike	
Walk	

- 4) What best describes your current living situation? (select one choice only)

Own	
Rent	
Live with family member other than spouse	
Sober living facility	
Homeless	

- 5) In the past 12 months have you ever worked together informally with someone or some group, to solve a problem in the community where you live? If yes, how frequently did you engage in this activity? (select one choice only)

3 or more occasions	
1-2 occasions	
Never	

- 6) In the past 12 months, have you ever spent time participating in any community service or volunteer activity? By volunteer activity, I mean actually working in some way to help others for no pay. (select one choice only)

Yes, on a regular basis	
Yes, but only once in a while	
No, Never	

- 7) In the past 12 months how often have you attended events open to the public such as concerts, farmers markets and sporting events? (select one choice only)

Very frequently over 5 times	
Frequently 2-5 times	
Only once or twice	
Never	

- 8) In the past 12 months, how often have you frequented busy public spaces, such as shopping malls or movie theaters? (select one choice only)

Very frequently, over 5 times	
Frequently, 2-5 times	
Only once or twice	
Never	

- 9) In the past 12 months have you taken part in a march, protest or demonstration. If yes, how many times? (select one choice only)

More than a few times	
Only once or twice	
Never	

- 10) Do you belong to or donate money to any groups or associations either locally or nationally? Are you an active member of this group, a member but not active, or have you given money only? (select one choice only)

Active member	
Member but not active	
Money only	
No membership	

- 11) Lots of things come up that keep people from attending religious services even if they want to. Thinking about your life these days, do you ever attend religious services, apart from occasional weddings, baptisms or funerals? IF YES: Do you go to religious services (select one choice only)

Every week	
Almost every week	
Once or twice a month	
A few times a year	
Never	

Civic Involvement: Did you know that in California voting rights are automatically restored to ex-felony offenders once they complete their mandated period felony supervision? See the information below as provided by the California Secretary of State: ***Done with parole, mandatory supervision, or post release community supervision. Your right to vote is automatically restored when parole or supervision is done. This means that once your supervision is completed your right to vote is automatically restored in California (Secretary of State—State of California).***

- 12) Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs (select one choice only)

Most of the time	
Some of the time	
Only now and then	
Hardly at all	

- 13) How often do you discuss politics with others? (select one choice only)

Weekly	
Once a Month	
A few times a year	
Hardly at all	

- 14) Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Jerry Brown is handling his job as governor of California? (select one choice only)

Approve	
Disapprove	
Don't know	

15) Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Barack Obama is handling his job as President of the United States? (select one choice only)

Approve	
Disapprove	
Don't know	

16) Have you in the past 12 months contacted or visited a public official - at any level of government - to ask for assistance or to express your opinion? If yes, how many times? (select one choice only)

More than a few times	
Only once or twice	
Never	

17) In the past 12 months, did you do any work for one of the parties or candidates? If yes, how many times? (select one choice only)

More than a few times	
Only once or twice	
Never	

18) How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right - just about always, most of the time or only some of the time? (select one choice only)

Just about always	
Most of the time	
Only some of the time	
Never trust government	

19) Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what? (select one choice only)

Republican	
Democrat	
Independent (neither)	

20) Thinking about future elections in the years to come how likely is it that you will vote in either local or national elections? (select one choice only)

Very likely	
Likely	
Not likely, I am not interested	
I can't vote due to my conviction(s)	

**Legal History**

21) Have you ever been convicted of a felony offense? (select one choice only)

Yes	
No	

22) Approximately how many years have you spent incarcerated throughout your life? Please include years that you were incarcerated as a juvenile. (select one choice only)

Less than 1 year	
1-5 years	
6-10 years	
11-20 years	
21-30 years	
31-40 years	
41 or more years	

23) If you were incarcerated prior to being placed on probation, when were you released from county jail or state prison? If you have never been incarcerated please skip this question (please fill in the blank spaces).

Month \_\_\_ Day \_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

24) Please indicate the type of probation supervision you are currently under. (select one choice only)

Regular probation	
PRCS (AB 109)	
Mandatory Supervision (AB 109)	

25) If you do not violate your probation when can you get off of probation? (please fill in the blank spaces)

Month \_\_\_ Day \_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

**Demographics**

26) What racial or ethnic group best describes you?

White	
Black	
Asian	
Native American	
Hispanic	
Other	

27) What is your marital status? (select one choice only)

Single, never married	
Married or domestic partnership	
Widowed	
Divorced	
Separated	

28) Please indicate your employment status (select one choice only)

Employed	
Out of work	
Unable to work	

29) What is the highest degree of education you have completed? (select one choice only)

No schooling completed	
Elementary to 8 <sup>th</sup> grade	
High School	
Associates degree	
Bachelors degree	
Graduate degree	

30) Please indicate which category best describes the total income of all members living in your house before taxes. This figure should include salaries, wages, pensions, dividends, interest, and all other income. (select one choice only)

Under 20,000\$	
20,000-39,999\$	
40,000-59,999\$	
60,000-79,999\$	
80,000-119,999\$	
120,000 or more	

## Example Survey: Control

### Community Reintegration Survey (control)

We know that individuals with criminal convictions face many obstacles upon release from jail or prison and that overcoming such obstacles plays a major role in facilitating positive community reintegration. We also recognize that having a criminal conviction can make some types of civic engagement difficult. Often times ex-offenders demonstrate a lack of civic engagement but this does not reflect poorly on them but rather is a result of the circumstances they have encountered. The aim of this research project is to help probation departments develop programs that facilitate civic reengagement.

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Month\_\_\_\_\_ Day\_\_ Year\_\_\_\_\_

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- 6) In the past 12 months, have you ever spent time participating in any community service or volunteer activity? By volunteer activity, I mean actually working in some way to help others for no pay. (select one choice only)

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120,000 or more	

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