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# VOTER IDENTIFICATION STUDIES: WHICH STUDY IS RIGHT?

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**Voter Identification Studies: Which Study is Right?  
The Challenges and Limitations of Survey Research to Answer Public Policy Questions about  
Implementing New Voting Laws and Regulations**

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## Abstract

### **“Voter Identification Studies: Which study is right? The Challenges and Limitations of Survey Research to Answer Public Policy Questions about Implementing New Voting Laws and Regulations.”**

Key Words: Comparison of Research Methods, Study Limitations, Making Public Policy Decisions based on Survey Research

Public policy decision makers are often informed by survey research to promote policy change, enact new legislation, and make funding decisions. However, all surveys are not created equal and when survey research yields different results for the same policy question, policy-makers are often challenged on how to interpret the conflicting or differing information. In this case, we compare and contrast two research efforts of registered voters in Indiana - both aimed to provide input to the public debate over the hotly contested requirement to present photo identification before being allowed to vote. One study found that only a very small percentage of registered voters would not be able to show an ID and therefore such legislation would have minimal impact on voters; the other determined that showing an ID before being allowed to vote would disenfranchise certain groups of voters unfairly. Which study is right? Our analysis compares the survey methods, sampling design, survey instrument, mode choice, limitations and challenges of the research in an effort to shed light on how to interpret the findings and how policy makers can use research results to enact legislation that does not hinder the right of American citizens to participate in the political process. While it may not be possible to arrive at a concrete assessment that one study is right while the other is wrong, we believe policy makers will be better informed when it comes to interpreting survey research data findings.

## Introduction

Public policy decision makers are often informed by survey research in their efforts to promote policy change, enact new legislation, and make funding decisions that take into account the public's attitudes, values, beliefs and behavior. However, all surveys are not created equal and when survey research yields different results for the same policy question, policy-makers are often challenged on how to interpret the conflicting or differing information. In this case, we compare and contrast the methodological aspects of two research efforts of registered voters in Indiana - both aimed to provide input to the public debate over the hotly contested requirement to present photo identification before being allowed to vote. One study found that only a very small percentage of registered voters would not be able to show an ID and therefore such legislation would have minimal impact on voters; the other determined that showing an ID before being allowed to vote would disenfranchise certain groups of voters unfairly. Which study is right? Our analysis compares the survey methods, sampling design, survey instrument, mode choice, limitations and challenges of the research in an effort to shed light on how to interpret the findings and how policy makers can use research results to enact legislation that does not hinder the right of American citizens to participate in the political process. While it may not be possible to arrive at a concrete assessment that one study is right while the other is wrong, we believe policy makers will be better informed when it comes to interpreting survey research data findings.

## The Development of Survey Research

The field of survey research in the United States dates back to the first U.S. Census conducted in 1790. Organized surveys were conducted between that time and the early 1900s, however, survey research as a field did not experience real growth until the beginning of World War II.

After the war, survey research expanded along with the growth of manufacturing and technological advances. Consumers had more choices than ever and marketing research was born. A great deal of survey research took place in the military, but the practice extended to other fields, such as transportation, health, education and sociology, as scientific methods improved and better access to constituents became available, such as mass saturation of the telephone in Americans homes.

In the period from 1940 to 1960, American survey research expanded along four dimensions.<sup>1</sup> It began being taught in courses, texts and on-the-job trainings; it was used more frequently; it spread to new subjects; and it expanded cross-culturally to include other countries as well. Furthermore, by 1946 the growing field of opinion research was ready for a professional organization to facilitate communication between academic and commercial researchers.<sup>2</sup> Following a conference organized by Harry Field, then Director of the National Opinion Research Center, the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR), was formally founded in a conference at Williams College in Massachusetts.

## Methods, Strengths and Limitation and Biases in Survey Research

A myriad of survey research methods exist and some are now more used than others. About fifty years ago, the majority of high-quality surveys in America were conducted via face-to-face interviewing, but after the widespread introduction of the telephone in the U.S. in the mid-twentieth century, survey researchers began

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Converse (1987). *Survey Research in the United States: Roots and Emergence 1890-1960*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 398.

<sup>2</sup> Seymour Sudman and Norman M. Bradburn (1987). "The Organizational Growth of Public Opinion Research in the United States." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 51 (2): S67-S78.

conducting surveys via telephone instead.<sup>3</sup> Today, survey research methods include computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI), computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI), self-administered mail out/mail back, intercept, and web-based surveys.

Survey research, as any other research method, has certain strengths and limitations. Its strengths include the ability to collect large amounts of information as well as a wide range of information (on beliefs, attitudes, values and behavior). Survey research methods are also standardized, which protects against certain types of errors. The data collected can also be subjected to statistical techniques to determine validity, reliability, and statistical significance.

Survey research is also subject to certain limitations. The most serious limitations of survey research stem from concerns about the validity and reliability of responses obtained to questions as they cannot always be taken as accurate descriptions of what the respondents actually do or how they actually feel about something. This is particularly true for behavior contrary to generally accepted norms of society and results in social desirability bias (the tendency of some respondents to intentionally lie to interviewers at times). Other sources of bias also include sampling error, non-response bias, and satisficing/acquiescence bias (to the propensity of individuals to answer questions without much thought or to agree with questions in order to finish a survey as quickly as possible, which can stem dichotomous survey questions). Because of these inherent limitations, readers of the data findings must use caution when interpreting the results.

In addition to the above biases, declining response (participation) rates are also common throughout the survey research industry. Response rates to telephone surveys declined over the past decade, due in part to work and recreational schedules that result in respondents having less time to take surveys, a backlash against telemarketing, privacy concerns and screening technology.<sup>4</sup> In addition, mobility, cell phone only households, and non-listed numbers are a few factors that present challenges to all data collection firms.

While biases and limitations exist, survey research has the ability to overcome many of these challenges with well designed survey instruments and scientific sampling, as well as post weighting and adjustment factors.

At the core of every survey is the questions asked of the study population. While all of the elements discussed in this paper and more broadly, are important in survey research (e.g., survey design, sampling, mode choice, weighting), the survey instrument is likely the most critical component. Wording choice, use of scales, pre-coded versus open ended, question order – all of these contribute to the effectiveness of the survey and have a profound affect on the survey results.

Effective survey questions contain three important attributes: focus (directly related to the issue or topic), brevity (as short as possible while conveying the correct meaning) and simplicity (expressed clearly).<sup>5</sup> Though seemingly fundamental, in practice, not all survey instruments are created equal.

How respondents interpret each of the questions has significant impact on his/her answers. If a question fails to focus on a single, specific issue, it may be confusing or ambiguous to respondents. In terms of individual question length, shorter is best because they are less likely to produce error, both by the respondent and the

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<sup>3</sup> Allyson L Holbrook, Melanie C Green, Jon A Krosnick (2003). "Telephone versus face-to-face interviewing of national probability samples with long questionnaires: Comparisons of respondent satisficing and social desirability response bias." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 67(1): 79-126.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Curtin, Stanley Presser and Eleanor Singer (2005). "Changes In Telephone Survey Nonresponse Over The Past Quarter Century". *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69(1): 87-99; Scott Keeter, Courtney Kennedy, Michael Dimock, Jonathan Best, and Peyton Craighill (2006). "Gauging The Impact Of Growing Nonresponse On Estimates From A National RDD Telephone Survey" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 70 (5): 759-780.

<sup>5</sup> Pamela L Alreck and Robert B. Settle, "The Survey Research Handbook, Second Edition: Guidelines and Strategies for Conducting a Survey." McGraw Hill, 1995.

interviewer. Clarity refers to ensuring that the meaning of the question is completely clear so that most every respondent interprets the question in the same way.

In addition to the core attributes, questionnaires should use words that are in the target audience's primary vocabulary (i.e., used in everyday conversation and easily understood) and avoid to the extent possible words that are in the broader vocabulary most people have but includes words that are less common and therefore less understood, or possibly are completely out of their range of comprehension.

Other important aspects to consider when designing a survey instrument are grammar, unstated criteria, inapplicable questions, use of examples, and recalling behaviors/actions (especially within a specific timeline). Ambiguity, overemphasis, and use of "double-barrel questions (two questions within the same item) should be avoided. Likewise, leading questions, and loaded questions should not be used, nor should overgeneralizations or overly technical or complicated jargon.

### **Purpose of the Paper**

In January 2008, American University's Center for Democracy and Election Management (CDEM) released a survey of registered voters in Indiana, Mississippi and Maryland that found, surprisingly, that only 1.2% of registered voters in the three states lack a government-issued photo ID, and that Indiana in particular only 0.3% lacked a government or state-issued photo ID. The study also found that more than two-thirds of all registered voters in the three states feel that the electoral system would be trusted more if people had to show an ID to vote. CDEM commissioned the survey of registered voters from NuStats, a research firm in Austin, Texas. Based on a random sample of registered voters in the three states, the study, entitled *Voter IDs Are Not the Problem: A Survey of Three States*, detailed the survey results and offered recommendations to transform what has been perceived as a problem into an opportunity to actively register voters and provide them free photo IDs. Earlier, in the Fall of 2007, a study of Indiana voters conducted at the Washington Institute for the Study of Ethnicity and Race, commissioned by the Brennan Center (Barreto, et.al.), found that about 13% of registered voters in Indiana are without valid photo ID. NuStats and CDEM discussed why the results of that study and the NuStats/CDEM study differed even though both asked seemingly similar questions regarding possession of a photo ID among registered voters. How could the NuStats/CDEM study differ so dramatically from the Indiana study in terms of the proportion of registered voters who lack a valid form of a photo ID (13% vs. 1%) and would therefore not have the opportunity to participate in the voting process.<sup>6</sup>

In light of the need for survey research to inform public policy decisions and the questions that may arise when two seemingly similar studies display such variability, one may legitimately wonder: which study was right? This paper attempts to address these questions and make conclusions about the opportunities and limitations that survey research faces and how policy decision-makers may use the data provided by survey research. First, the paper will provide a background of the policy question of concern here—voter IDs—and describe the pro and con arguments as well as information regarding which states currently require photo IDs, pending legislative proposals in this area, litigation generated due to the introduction of such legislation and the recent Supreme Court ruling on the Indiana voter ID. The paper will then provide a comparative analysis of the two surveys and make conclusions regarding how to interpret the findings.

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<sup>6</sup> Matt Barreto, Stephen Nuño, and Gabriel Sanchez, "The Disproportionate Impact Of Indiana Voter ID Requirements on the Electorate," Working Paper, *Washington Institute for the Study of Ethnicity and Race*, November 8, 2007, [http://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/documents/Indiana\\_voter.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/documents/Indiana_voter.pdf).

## Definition of the Policy Question: Voter IDs

Why is voter identification an issue? In general terms, voter identification requirements find themselves at the crossroads of the access vs. integrity debate in the U.S. electoral process, which was catalyzed by the failures of the U.S. election system in the 2000 presidential election. This debate juxtaposes the concern for ensuring that all eligible voters have access to the polling booth with the concern for ensuring that only eligible voters cast ballots on election day.

Concerns about what has been broadly categorized as “voter fraud”—ineligible voters casting ballots on Election Day and multiple voting—have led to calls for stricter ID requirements. Such requirements would stipulate that voters present an acceptable ID, generally a government-issued photo ID, to poll workers before being allowed to cast a regular ballot. The poll worker would then validate that the individuals are who they claim to be, that they are in fact registered to vote and that they are in the correct polling place. This line of reasoning, however, has been countered by arguments that individual voter fraud, specifically voter impersonation, is rare and that more stringent ID requirements may cause a larger problem by impeding the ability of some eligible citizens, particularly poorer populations, minorities, or elderly people, to vote because these populations are assumed to be less likely to have the required forms of ID than the general population of eligible voters. This brings us to the argument against stricter ID requirements—that they will become a barrier to voting and may even disenfranchise voters. Part of this opposition is based on the bitter history of voter suppression in the American South, which disenfranchised Black voters. Another part is grounded in concerns about low overall voter turnout and that additional burdens to voting, such as more stringent ID requirements, would further reduce electoral participation. Other arguments against voter IDs are that obtaining official citizenship documents, often required to get a government-issued photo ID, is expensive and time-consuming and that proof of identity requirements do not address any serious or widespread problem.

Although a compromise incorporating a national minimum identification standard was reached when Congress passed the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) in 2002, the debate over identification requirements has become contentious and politically polarized as most of the proponents of voter IDs are Republicans, and most of the opponents are Democrats.<sup>7</sup> Many states, particularly those with Republican-majority legislatures, have used HAVA as an opening to push for even more stringent identification requirements, while such efforts have been less successful in states under Democratic control. As a result, much has changed since 2002 in terms of voter identification requirements. As of April 2002, 11 states required all voters to present some form of document (with acceptable IDs varying widely) proving their eligibility and/or identity in order to cast a ballot; 4 states could request voters for identification; 9 states had a signature match system; 18 states required a signature; and 9 states allowed voters to cast a ballot just by stating their name.<sup>8</sup> However, as of February 2008, 23 states and DC have minimum HAVA ID requirements and ask first-time voters who register by mail and do not provide ID verification with their registration to show ID (photo and non-photo accepted) before voting; 18 states require ID (photo and non-photo accepted) for all voters; 3 states require that all votes show photo ID; 4 states request all voters show photo ID; and 2 states require ID (photo and non-photo accepted) of all first-time voters (see Table 1).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> PL 107-252, Sec. 303 (b). HAVA mandated that all first time voters who registered by mail and who failed to include a verifiable form of identification with their registration (generally a driver’s license number or that last four digits of a Social Security number), be required to present some form of ID at the polls. Full text of the law is available at: <http://electionline.org/Portals/1/Resource%20Library/HelpamericaVoteAct.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Electionline.org (April 2002). *Election Reform Briefing: Voter Identification*. Available at: [electionline.org](http://electionline.org).

<sup>9</sup> Electionline.org. *Voter Id Laws*. Available at:

<http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/uploadedFiles/voter%20id%20laws.pdf>

**Table 1: Voter ID requirements across the states**

ID requirement	States
Minimum HAVA ID requirements - first-time voters who register by mail and do not provide ID verification with their registration must show ID before voting. Photo and non-photo ID accepted in these states.	<b>23 states and the District of Columbia</b> (CA, DC, ID, IL, IA, ME, MD, MA, MN, MS, NE, NV, NH, NJ, NY, NC, OK, OR, RI, UT, VT, WV, WI, WY)
Require ID for all voters. Photo and non-photo ID accepted in these states.	<b>18 states</b> (AL, AK, AZ, AR, CO, CT, DE, KY, MO, MT, NM, ND, OH, SC, TN, TX, VA, WA)
Require all voters show photo ID. Voters without the proper ID will be offered provisional ballots.	<b>3 states</b> (FL, GA, IN)
Request all voters show photo ID. Voters without the proper ID can sign affidavits and cast regular (non-provisional) ballots.	<b>4 states</b> (HI, LA, MI, SD)
Require ID of all first-time voters. Photo and non-photo ID accepted in these states.	<b>2 states</b> (KS, PA)

*Source: electionline.org*

More specifically, in 2003, new voter ID laws were passed in Alabama, Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota; in 2005 new voter ID laws were passed in Indiana, New Mexico, Washington, and Georgia tightened its existing voter ID law to require photo ID.<sup>10</sup> In 2006 Georgia passed a law that provided for the issuance of voter ID cards at no cost to registered voters who do not have a driver's license or state-issued ID card. Also in 2006, Missouri tightened its existing voter ID law to require photo ID. Moreover, voter ID remains a critical issue for state legislatures in 2008, with 11 states seriously considering ID legislation and two of those, Kansas and Oklahoma, considered likely to enact photo ID requirements before the 2008 General Election.

Given the breadth of disagreement over ID requirements, litigation has often accompanied the changes in voter ID rules. After Georgia passed a voter ID law in 2005 that required voters to pay a fee for a photo ID and made IDs available only at a limited number of offices, it was overturned in court. However, a revised Georgia ID law that was passed in 2006 and made the IDs available for free at a location in every county was upheld by the courts and allowed to go into effect in 2007. Similarly, outcomes have varied when ID laws in Indiana, Arizona, and Missouri have been challenged in court. While the laws in Indiana and Arizona have been upheld, the Missouri law was overturned by the state supreme court.

<sup>10</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures (January 9, 2009). *Requirements for Voter Identification*. Available at: <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/legismgt/elect/taskfc/voteridreq.htm>

The Indiana case has been a pivotal one for the voter ID debate as it was challenged all the way to the Supreme Court. The Court's April 28th ruling, rejecting the ID opponent's facial challenge to the constitutionality of law, is being hailed by voter ID supporters as a legitimization of more stringent ID requirements, but the splintering of majority and dissenting opinions within the Court has failed to bring greater clarity to the overall debate. Because of this, voter identification legislation is likely to continue to proliferate at the state level, though further changes in law are unlikely before the 2008 General Election.

Given the politically charged context of the ongoing debate, the need for empirical research on the impact of stricter voter identification requirements is at a premium and was, in fact, noted in the majority opinion of the Supreme Court, written by Justice Stevens.<sup>11</sup> The supporters of ID have been able to point to few examples of multiple or fraudulent voting and opponents have yet to identify many voters who were unable to vote because they didn't have an ID. Some data is beginning to emerge now that elections have occurred in both Georgia and Indiana under new ID requirements, but more research is needed to understand the effects of these laws.<sup>12</sup>

### **The NuStats/CDEM study and the Barreto, et al., Indiana study: an analysis**

The question of who has access to the types of photo identification beginning to be required for voting purposes and thus whether such ID requirements disenfranchise voters has been the subject of rancorous political debate but relatively little academic study. Moreover, there has been a lack of uniformity in attempts to quantify the impact of stricter ID requirements. Some research has examined state and national vehicle licensing records to provide estimates of the numbers of citizens who lack a state-issued photo ID. Other studies have compared state voter registration lists against driver's license and state ID records from state motor vehicle agencies to estimate the number of registered voters without photo ID. Still others have attempted to discern the impact of voter identification laws by comparing state voter turnout relative to the type of identification required in the state. Finally, there have been a very limited number of public opinion surveys, including our own and the most recent Barreto, et al., project to which we refer in this paper, that attempt to measure the number of voters and/or citizens without photo identification and/or public attitudes toward such requirements. But even among these there is variation in methodology, population surveyed, and definitions of photo ID.

Within the first category of research, the Wisconsin driver's license study conducted by John Pawasarat is most often cited because of its findings that a significant portion of voting age adults lack driver's licenses. Comparing 2002 data on driver's licenses from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to 2000 Census data for the voting age population (VAP) of Wisconsin and Milwaukee County, Pawasarat found that an estimated 83% of all Wisconsin residents had a valid driver's license, but that there was significant variation by ethnicity and location: Blacks, Hispanics, elderly (65+) and younger (18-24) residents, and residents within Milwaukee county were much less likely to have a valid license. Similar nationwide research referenced in the reports of the Carter-Ford National Commission on Election Reform (2001) and the Carter-Baker Commission on Federal Election Reform (2005) found slightly higher percentages of Americans aged 18 and older with a driver's license: 87% and 88%, respectively.

This first category of research suggests that more than a tenth of the adult voting age population lacks a driver's license. However, these estimates likely overstate the potential impact of photo identification on *actual* voters. Voting age population estimates include adults who may not be eligible to vote, particularly non-citizens. Moreover, these estimates do not take into account the possibility of possession of other forms

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<sup>11</sup> Crawford v. Marion County Election Bd. 553 U. S. \_\_\_\_ (2008)

<sup>12</sup> See Brief for Respondent Marion County Election Board at 8 ([http://brennan.3cdn.net/ebbb2f5f83bad24a92\\_jsm6b9ki5.pdf](http://brennan.3cdn.net/ebbb2f5f83bad24a92_jsm6b9ki5.pdf)) and McCaffey, S. (2008, February 15). More Than 400 Voters Lacked Photo IDs in Feb. 5 Georgia Primary. *The Associated Press*.

of photo identification (e.g. military ID, passport, federal/state government employee ID) that are acceptable even under the most stringent photo identification requirements currently in place.

Within the second category are two main reports, one from Georgia (Hood, III and Bullock, III, 2007) and one that was commissioned by the Indiana Democratic Party as part of that party's suit to overturn Indiana's voter ID law (Brace). Hood and Bullock's research involved a comparison of a list of registered voters without a driver's license generated by the state Department of Motor vehicles against the statewide voter registration database.<sup>13</sup> It found that roughly 6% of registered voters did not have a Georgia driver's license or ID, that minorities were even less likely to have a driver's license/ID, and that registrants without a driver's license were more likely to vote in Democratic, rather than Republican, primaries. Hood acknowledges, however, that the research is not conclusive because it contains no "information on the extent to which those who may lack driver's licenses might have other acceptable forms of identification such as a student ID card from a public institution of higher education or a passport. It is almost certain that the numbers of individuals who would be affected by the [Georgia voter ID] legislation are smaller than the figures for registrants without a valid driver's license or state identification card."

The Brace report (2005), found in the district court record, involved similar comparison of the Indiana voter registration rolls against state motor vehicle records.<sup>14</sup> It concluded that even using the loosest matching criteria, over 8 % of registered voters could not be found in the driver's license file and that individuals in lower income census (less than \$15,000) tracts were nearly twice as likely not to have a state issued ID. However, the report came under strong criticism during the trial for failing to account for voter registration list inflation and voting rights advocates throughout the country have raised numerous concerns about the accuracy of database matching efforts (used to update registration lists and purge voters deemed ineligible or inactive) because databases are error-prone and the different state databases often record information in different ways.<sup>15</sup>

The third category of research doesn't attempt to estimate the actual number of voters without ID, but to evaluate voter turnout to discern whether and how voter identification laws impact participation. The findings have been mixed. In a 2006 paper, John R. Lott, Jr. suggests three different theories regarding the impact of voter identification requirements on voter participation: the Discouraging Voter Hypothesis that predicts that increased regulations deter legitimate voters from voting; the Eliminating Fraud Hypothesis that voter participation will decline because stricter regulations will eliminate fraudulent voters; and, the Ensuring Integrity Hypothesis that if regulations improve voter confidence they will encourage greater participation.<sup>16</sup> He then analyzes voter turnout data in primary and general elections from 1996 to 2006 to conclude that the identification regulations generally have little impact on turnout, but can improve turnout in areas viewed as voter fraud "hot spots."

Alvarez, Bailey, and Katz (2007) look at the ID issue at the aggregate and the individual levels. They found no evidence at the aggregate level that voter ID requirements reduce voter participation, but at the individual level, they find lower levels of voting in those states with stricter requirements, and they also found a more

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<sup>13</sup> In June 2006, the Georgia State Election Board asked the DMV to match its records to the State voter registration list to determine the number of registered voters without a state driver's license or ID as part of an education effort regarding the new voter identification law. It found that 6.04% of registered voters likely did not possess such identification and mailed notices about the new voter ID requirement to this group.

<sup>14</sup> Brace, K. (2005). Report on the Matching of Voter Registration and Driver's License Files in *Indiana Democratic Party et al v. Todd Rokita et al*. [Exhibit 5 for *Plaintiffs*].

<sup>15</sup> In 2006 Indiana was sued by the U.S. Department of Justice for failing to comply with the voter registration list requirements of the Help America Vote Act.

<sup>16</sup> John R. Lott, Jr., "Evidence of Voter Fraud and the Impact the Regulations to Reduce Fraud Have on Voter Participation Rates," Revised August 18, 2006. Accessed at: <http://www.votingtechnologyproject.org/VoterID/ssrn-id925611.pdf>

adverse effect on those with less education and income.<sup>17</sup> Vercellotti and Anderson (2007) of Rutgers University compare voting in states with more restrictive requirements with those with less, and find at the aggregate level some statistical support that more restrictive requirements lead to lower turnout. They also find a similar result at the individual level, and that correlates with education and income, though they conclude that there is no evidence “to support the claim that stricter voter identification requirements have a disproportionate negative effect on African-Americans or Hispanics.”<sup>18</sup> However, criticizing the methodology of Vercellotti and Anderson, Muhlhausen and Sikich (2007) of the Heritage Foundation attempt to replicate a portion of the Rutgers study and find that, controlling for factors that influence voter turnout, voter identification laws largely do not have negative impact on voter turnout in state-to-state comparisons.<sup>19</sup>

A further study released by Mycoff, Wagner, and Wilson (2007) also finds that voter ID laws do not affect voting at either the aggregate or individual levels.<sup>20</sup> Yet, a still more recent study by Logan and Darrah (2008), argues that stricter ID standards cause a substantial reduction in voter turnout that disproportionately affects blacks and Hispanics and citizens with lower incomes and education.<sup>21</sup> In contrast, an Indiana-specific study undertaken by Jeffrey Milyo (2007) suggests that the implementation of the photo ID requirement for voting actually increased overall voter turnout in 2006 compared with 2002, had an insignificant positive impact in counties with higher minority and poor populations, and had no consistent or significant impact in counties with greater percentages of less educated or elderly voters.

The disagreement among these studies reflects the difficulty of measuring the impact of any one factor on voter turnout because of the number of variables for which it is difficult to control, including the sensitivity of voter identification laws in particular to misapplication by poll workers. In addition, it appears differences in how various state identification laws are classified among different researchers leads to different conclusions about their overall impact on voter turnout. Moreover, too few elections have been conducted under newer photo identification schemes to offer enough data to discern definite trends in the relationship between identification requirements and voter participation.

Finally, we must examine the category of research in which our own study falls—public opinion surveys. As mentioned above, there have only been a limited number of such projects undertaken and they have varied in both methodology and population surveyed. Moreover, some have looked principally at photo ID possession, while others have looked at public opinions about voter ID and voting fraud. As part of the litigation filed against Indiana’s voter ID law, AARP Indiana commissioned a phone survey in 2005 of 843 *registered voters* 60 and over and found that 3% did not have either a state driver’s license or ID card. In 2006, the Brennan Center for Justice sponsored a national phone survey of 987 *voting-age U.S. citizens* and found that 11% had no government issued photo ID and 7% did not have ready access to documents that would prove their citizenship. It also found that minorities, the elderly and low-income households were significantly less likely to have a government-issued photo ID.

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<sup>17</sup> R. Michael Alvarez, et al, “The Effect Of Voter Identification Laws On Turnout,” Version 2, Revised Oct. 2007. Accessed at: [http://www.vote.caltech.edu/media/documents/wps/vtp\\_wp57b.pdf](http://www.vote.caltech.edu/media/documents/wps/vtp_wp57b.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Timothy Vercellotti and David Anderson, “Protecting the franchise or restricting it? The Effects of voter identification requirements on turnout”, paper prepared for presentation at the 2006 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 31, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> David B. Muhlhausen and Keri Weber Sikich (2007). “New Analysis Shows Voter Identification Laws Do Not Reduce Turnout.” *Heritage Center for Data Analysis*. Available at: <http://www.heritage.org/Research/LegalIssues/cda07-04.cfm>.

<sup>20</sup> Jason Mycoff, Michael W. Wagner, and David C. Wilson, “The Effect of Voter Identification Laws on Aggregate and Individual Level Turnout.” Presented at the 2007 Annual meeting of the American Political Science Association. Accessed at [http://www.vote.caltech.edu/VoterID/apsa07\\_proceeding\\_211715.pdf](http://www.vote.caltech.edu/VoterID/apsa07_proceeding_211715.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> John Logan and Jennifer Darrah (January 2008). “The Suppressive Effects of Voter ID Requirements on Naturalization and Political Participation.” *Report of the American Communities Project, Brown University*. Available at: <http://www.s4.brown.edu/voterid/voter%20id%20report%20final.pdf>

In contrast, in a paper presented to New York University's Election Law Symposium in February of 2007, Dr. Stephen Ansolabehere analyzed a very large national sample of *actual voters* collected by the Cooperative Congressional Election Survey through the internet during the 2006 election and finds that almost no one is prevented from voting because of voter ID requirements—only 23 people in the 36,500 person sample were unable to vote because of voter ID requirements.<sup>22</sup> He concludes that the ID issue is “a controversy that isn't.” To the extent that there is a problem, he notes, it may be with the way in which ID requirements are administered. Indeed, additional research by Atkeson, et al. (2007) on the application of New Mexico's voter identification requirements finds that during the 2006 general election Hispanic, male and Election Day voters were more likely to be asked show some form of identification than non-Hispanic, female and early voters - suggesting the potential that problems can arise from even more liberal identification schemes because the discretion given to poll workers can result in uneven application. However, as in other areas, more research is needed.

The variation in these surveys can be relatively easily explained by noting the different populations surveyed— elderly registered voters, voting age citizens, and actual voters. With the Ansolabehere surveying focused on those fully participating in elections, one could argue that it best reflects the impact of ID on voting. However, as an internet survey it raises questions of how representative it is (even given efforts to compensate for low internet participation by low-income and minority groups). Moreover, since it only includes those who voted or tried to vote, it fails to capture those who might have stayed home because of ID requirements. At the same time, while the Brennan Center Survey may provides estimate of the overall voting age population without ID, it says little about the impact on actual voters.

So, while recent literature has provided some interesting insights and raised important questions, they have not offered a definitive answer. This leads us to the question of how best to evaluate competing studies and how such studies should be used to inform a polarized political debate. To answer this question we have undertaken a comparison between the recent CDEM/NuStats survey and the research by Barreto, et al., as they share a common goal of identifying voters who do not have photo identification.

## Comparative Analysis of Research Questions and Methodologies

### 1. Research Questions

An important initial step when comparing the Barreto, et al., and the NuStats/CDEM surveys is to analyze their research questions since differences in what they are trying to find out, i.e. differences in their research questions, can explain differences in their results. The Barreto, et al., study aimed to “assess whether *all eligible [Indiana] voters* have equal access to valid photo identification, or if some segments of the population are being uniquely harmed by Indiana voter ID laws” and the NuStats/CDEM study aimed to “measure the proportion of *registered voters [in Indiana, Maryland and Mississippi]* who currently lack valid ID, explore the characteristics of these voters, and gauge public attitudes on the issue.”<sup>23</sup>

The first difference between the research questions of these studies concerns the populations they are trying to study: the Barreto, et al., study looks at eligible voters in *Indiana only* whereas the NuStats/CDEM study looks at registered voters *in three states*: Indiana, Maryland and Mississippi. These three states were selected

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<sup>22</sup> Stephen Ansolabehere, 2007 “Access versus Integrity in Voter Identification Requirements,” Accessed at: [http://www.vote.caltech.edu/media/documents/wps/vtp\\_wp58.pdf](http://www.vote.caltech.edu/media/documents/wps/vtp_wp58.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Matt Barreto, Stephen Nuño, and Gabriel Sanchez (November 8, 2007). “The Disproportionate Impact Of Indiana Voter ID Requirements on the Electorate,” Working Paper, *Washington Institute for the Study of Ethnicity and Race*. Available at: [http://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/documents/Indiana\\_voter.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/documents/Indiana_voter.pdf), see abstract of the paper; Robert Pastor, Robert Santos, Alison Prevost and Vassia Gueorguieva (2008). Voter IDs Are Not the Problem: A Survey of Three States. *Center for Democracy and Election Management*. Available at: <http://www.american.edu/ia/cdem/pdfs/VoterIDFinalReport1-9-08.pdf>, p. 9.

for the CDEM/NuStats survey because their demographic profiles are different and they have different ID requirements. Indiana requires a photo ID but allows for exemptions due to indigence, religious objection, assisted living, and absentee ballots, but it requires those who vote provisionally to return to a courthouse within 10 days to show their ID. Mississippi and Maryland both currently employ HAVA minimum standards. Mississippi is under court order to implement a photo identification requirement, but the state legislature has not approved a law to do so. Secondly, Barreto, et al., look at all “eligible voters,” by which they mean both registered voters *and* eligible non-registered adults, whereas NuStats/CDEM look at registered voters only.

Thirdly, the survey instruments designed to study each survey’s target population differ markedly based on the differences in the research questions. While the NuStats/CDEM survey had to use broader language to collect standardized data considering the differences in the voter ID requirements of the three states, the Barreto, et al., survey used voter ID questions that were specifically tailored to Indiana’s more stringent voter ID law. Questions that seem similar may result in very different results, as is probably the case with these two studies. Without proper testing of the two survey instruments, we cannot assume concordance. However, a few things stand out when comparing the two studies.

The Indiana law states that a photo ID is acceptable for voting purposes, as long as the ID <sup>24</sup>:

- Displays voter’s photo;
- Displays voter’s name, and the name must conform with the name on the voter registration record (conform does not mean match identically);
- Contains an expiration date, and either be current, or have expired after the date of the last General Election;
- Is issued by the state of Indiana or the US government.

Eighty-four percent (84%) of registered voters in the Barreto, et al., study had a valid driver’s license. Similar to the CDEM study, the Barreto, et al., study first asked, “8. *Switching topics, do you happen to have a current Indiana driver’s license?*” Without the actual data, we do not know the percentage of people who said yes to this question; it may or may not be comparable to the results found in the CDEM study where almost everyone who completed the study said they had a driver’s license or other state-issued photo ID. However, the Barreto, et al., study included a second question to determine whether the license was valid, which stated, “9A. *[IF Q8 = 1] And do you happen to know if your current license has been updated, and had a new photo taken, within the last six years, meaning since October 2001, or do you think your current license might be more than six years old?*”

It is possible this question confused respondents. Indiana licenses are only valid/good for 4 years, so if it is older than 6 years, then it is definitely expired, yet the wording itself, i.e., “updated, and had a new photo taken,” does not explicitly say, “current and unexpired”.<sup>25</sup> However, citizens have to get their picture taken every time they renew, so maybe no confusion existed among Indiana voters.

The NuStats/CDEM question was worded more broadly, “Q4. *Which of the following U.S or state government-issued photo identification documents do you have? 1) Driver’s license or other state-issued photo ID; 2) Passport; 3) Military ID; 4) NONE; 7) Something other than those I’ve already read?*” This question implicitly asks about valid and current documents (i.e. not expired)<sup>26</sup>, but because a separate question was not explicitly asked about current validity, it is possible that some respondents may have reported possession of a document that would have been out of date.

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<sup>24</sup> Indiana Code 3-5-2-40.5.

<sup>25</sup> Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles. Available at: <http://www.in.gov/bmv/3476.htm>

<sup>26</sup> Indeed, some of the verbatim responses to “other” included “Old Driver’s License.”

Beyond the question about driver's licenses, it is not clear what constitutes an alternative, valid government-issued ID in the Barreto, et al., survey. Following the question about driver's licenses, they ask: "*Q9B. Instead of a license, do you happen to have another form of photo identification such as a state ID card, US Passport, Military ID, or public university card from here in Indiana?*" While this question seems to cover all acceptable forms of government issued IDs, the data tables only report the percentages of respondents with a "Current DL or State ID" card – for example, they report that 86.7% of registered voters in Indiana have a current driver's license or state ID card. Nowhere in their report is it explicit how many people have military IDs or passports, which are also valid for voting. Thus, they may be overstating the number without valid ID.

A second question is also asked about whether other photo IDs are current: "*Q9C. And do you happen to know if that ID has an expiration on it? If you have it with you, it's OK to take it out to check.*" This question differs from the earlier question about driver's license expiration and the report doesn't make explicit the standard for counting the validity/currency of an alternative photo ID. Since Indiana law permits the use of an expired government-issued photo ID (so long as it expired AFTER the most recent General Election) for voting identification, some respondents in the Barreto, et al., study may have expired IDs that remain valid for voting purposes.

In contrast, the CDEM/NuStats study explicitly reports the number of respondents with various types of IDs acceptable under the Indiana standard and, though it is implied in the question that the ID is current and valid, unlike the Barreto, et al., study, the question treats all forms of acceptable ID uniformly.

While more than valid for each respective study, the survey instrument for one study may not be valid to answer the questions of the other. Pulling one question (albeit an important one) out of the context of the questionnaire and analyzing it stand-alone to other studies, without regard to the whole study can lead to confusion and misinterpretation. So, while we have isolated a few questions above to highlight some possibilities for the differences in findings, it is important to evaluate the surveys as a whole also.

## 2. Methodologies

The first questions that need to be answered in terms of comparing the two studies are: 1) what were the methods used and 2) how was the sampling plan designed?<sup>27</sup> Without knowing the answers to these questions, NuStats could only speculate that the two studies had several fundamental methodological differences. Yet with the findings so disparate on such an important topic, we wanted to do explore some of the possibilities for the differences.

While the data from the Barreto, et al., study was not yet available prior to submission of this paper, we received the survey instrument and draft report from one of the co-authors, Dr. Gabriel Sanchez. We thankfully acknowledge his help and willingness to provide this information.

Based on what was publicly available, though, we offer some initial points of comparison between the two studies. The Barreto, et al., survey used a registered voter sample that included a) a random statewide component and oversamples of African-American and low-income residents of Indiana and b) a sample of non-registered voters using random digit dialing.<sup>28</sup> The NuStats/CDEM study did not oversample specific groups because it expected a higher proportion of voters without IDs overall based on previous national

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<sup>27</sup> NuStats contacted Matt Barreto and Gabriel R. Sanchez, co-authors of the Barreto et al. study to request the survey instrument and the data. The authors had decided to restrict access to the instruments and the data until oral arguments became complete with the Indiana Voter ID case. The dataset could not be provided for the purposes of this paper by the time of its writing since the agency that funded the research had rights over the data. Frequencies and crosstabs were also not available for us at the time of the writing of the study.

<sup>28</sup> See [http://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/documents/Indiana\\_voter.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/documents/Indiana_voter.pdf), p. 8.

estimates such as those from the Carter-Ford Commission (5-7% of adults estimated to not possess a driver's license or other photo identification), the Carter-Baker Commission on Federal Election Reform (12% of people aged 18 and over estimated to not have a drivers license).<sup>29</sup> Theoretically, this methodological difference should not affect the overall estimate of how many people have a photo ID. However, without further methodological documentation from the Barreto, et al., study, it is not apparent whether the samples were comparable.

Weighting, for example, can drastically changes results depending on the biases chosen to correct. Weighting of survey data is needed to develop estimates of population parameters and more generally to draw inferences about the population that was sampled. Without the use of analytic weights, population estimates are subject to biases of unknown (possibly large) magnitude. Weighting can be done to adjust the relative importance of responses to reflect the different probabilities of selection from the population, reduce bias in survey estimates from differing patterns of response, and align the sample distributions to population distributions thereby improving coverage and precision, among others.

The analytic weights applied to NuStats/CDEM data had three components: Sampling weights to adjust for probabilities of selection of a phone number; Non-response weight adjustments to compensate for differing patterns of response; and Post stratification adjustments to align the weighted sample to known population distribution from 2004 Current Population Survey for registered voters only in each of the three states. The final analytic weight is simply the product of the sampling weight, the non-response adjustment, and the post stratification weight.

The draft report available from the Barreto, et al., study did not disclose any methodology used for weighting the data. As such, a direct comparison of weighting methods between the two studies is not possible. However, as mentioned above, it is known that the Barreto, et al., study oversampled African-Americans and low-income populations, but the report does not indicate if the final data match Census proportions, and what, if any, other corrections (such as weighting) were made for bias.

The CDEM study did not include deliberate oversampling of any population, but did weight the data to match Census proportions of registered voters in each of the three states. It is unknown at this point, but if the Barreto, et al., study oversampled populations to the point of surpassing Census distribution, and if these populations were less likely to have ID, the sample will show a larger percentage of people without ID than the overall population.

On the other hand, it is important to note that the CDEM study may deflate the number of people without ID if it failed to capture enough of the population without ID (e.g., the populations highlighted by Barreto, et al., as being less likely to have ID). Post-weighting can only correct so much, if that portion of the sample is too small.

Beyond this, a direct comparison of the two data sets has not been conducted, as the Barreto et al., data has not been released to the public.<sup>30</sup> One last point that needs to be made before going into the comparisons of the two surveys is to report what their margins of error are. For the NuStats/CDEM survey, at the aggregate level (N=2,000) the margin of error at the 95% confidence interval is +/-4.5%. At the state level, the margins

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<sup>29</sup> The National Commission on Election Reform (2001). To Assure Pride and Confidence in the Electoral Process. p.32. Accessed at: [http://www.tcf.org/Publications/ElectionReform/99\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www.tcf.org/Publications/ElectionReform/99_full_report.pdf); see Footnote 22 from the Carter-Baker Commission Report. A comparison of driver's license records and census data for 2003 suggests that about 88 percent of Americans aged 18 and over have a driver's license, see U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Licensed Total Drivers, By Age, 2003, Table DL-22, Oct. 2004, at [www.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/ohim/hs03/hm/dl22.htm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/ohim/hs03/hm/dl22.htm), and U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Estimates of the Population by Selected Age Groups and Sex for the United States: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2004, (June 2005), available at [www.census.gov/popest/national/asrh/NC-EST2004-sa.html](http://www.census.gov/popest/national/asrh/NC-EST2004-sa.html).

<sup>30</sup> See note 22.

of error for the 95% confidence interval are: +/- 6.7% for Indiana; +/-10% for Mississippi; and +/- 6.4% for Maryland. The Barreto et al. study reports that for the 1,000 interviews collected among registered voters the margin of error is 3.1% and for the 500 interviews among non-registered adults the margin of error is 4.4%.

### 3. Results of the Surveys

#### a. The NuStats/CDEM survey findings

The NuStats/CDEM survey found that for the three states combined (see Table 2) , 98.6% of the respondents have driver’s licenses (computed as the sum of the “Driver’s license only,” “Driver’s license and passport,” “Driver’s license and military ID” and “Driver’s license, military ID and passport” categories, which do not overlap) and 39.2% have passports (the sum of the “Passport only,” “Driver’s license and passport,” and “Driver’s license, military ID and passport” categories, which do not overlap). About 1.1% had no photo ID, while 0.1% had some other form of ID that would likely be considered unacceptable under more stringent ID standards (e.g., hunter’s license, employee ID, credit card with photo).

Reviewing the data by state (Table 2), we find that over 98% of Mississippi respondents have a driver’s license, 27.5% have a passport, and 1.5% either have no ID or another photo ID that would likely be unacceptable under the most stringent ID laws (e.g. hunting license, bank card with photo, union card, etc.). In Indiana, an even higher percentage (99.6%) of respondents had a driver’s license, nearly 45% had a passport, and only 0.3% had no photo ID. Finally, Maryland had a slightly higher percentage of voters without photo ID than the other two states, but still below 2%.

**Table 2: Type of Photo ID (Mutually Exclusive), Aggregate and by State**  
Q - Which of the Following Government or State-issued Photos IDs do you Have?

	Aggregate (N=1,994)			Mississippi (N=662)			Indiana (N=666)			Maryland (N=666)		
	Frequency	Percent	Standard error[1]	Frequency	Percent	Standard error[1]	Frequency	Percent	Standard error[1]	Frequency	Percent	Standard error [1]
Driver's license only	1144	57.4	2.3	451	68.1	4.7	354	53.1	5.7	340	51	3.2
Passport only	5	0.2	0.2	<1	<0.1	0.7	<1	0.1	0.5	4	0.7	0.5
Military ID only	1	<1%	0.3	<1	<0.1	0.7	<1	0.1	0.5	<1	<1.0	0.5
None	23	1.1	0.5	8	1.3	1.2	2	0.3	0.6	13	1.9	0.9
Other[2] only	1	0.1	0.1	1	0.2	0.5	<1	0	0.5	<1	<1.0	0.5
Driver's license and passport	694	34.8	2.2	147	22.1	4.2	292	43.8	5.6	255	38.3	3.2
Driver's license and military ID	44	2.2	0.7	20	3	1.7	11	1.7	1.5	13	1.9	0.9
Driver's license, military ID and passport	83	4.2	0.9	35	5.4	2.3	7	1	1.1	41	6.2	1.6
<i>Total*</i>	1,994	100		662	100		666	100		666	100	

To further understand the characteristics of registered voters who do not have a photo ID, cross-tabulations of the mutually exclusive ID type were run against demographic variables. Table 3 shows the total distribution of ID type by the following demographic variables: gender, ethnicity, political affiliation, age and household income.

**Table 3: Type of Photo ID In Possession by Demographic Variables (Mutually Exclusive) - Aggregate Q - Which of the Following Government or State-issued Photos IDs do you Have?**

	Driver's License Only	Driver's License and Passport	Other Gov;t- Issued ID or ID Combo^	None/Other	Total
<b>Gender</b>					
Male (n=923)	50.7%	40.2%	8.9%	0.1%	100.0%
Female (n=1072)	63.1%	30.1%	4.7%	2.1%	100.0%
<b>(N=1995) Total*</b>	<b>57.4%</b>	<b>34.8%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Ethnicity (broad categories)*</b>					
White (n=1432)	49.6%	41.6%	7.8%	.9%	100.0%
Black/African American (n=457)	84.1%	10.7%	3%	2.2%	100.0%
Other (n=61)	28%	63.3%	8.7%	.0%	100.0%
<b>(N=1950) Total*</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Political affiliation (broad categories)*</b>					
Republican (n=535)	55.4%	34.4%	10%	.3%	100.0%
Democrat (n=732)	71.1%	23%	3%	2.8%	100.0%
Independent (n=317)	40.8%	55.3%	3.9%	.0%	100.0%
None/Other (n=373)	44.8%	43.7%	11.4%	.2%	100.0%
<b>(N=1957) Total*</b>	<b>56.8%</b>	<b>35.2%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Age</b>					
Under 35 (n=457)	60.2%	38.5%	1.3%	.0%	100.0%
35-44 (n=449)	49.8%	41.7%	8.4%	.1%	100.0%
45-54 (n=381)	55%	37.4%	4.5%	3.2%	100.0%
55-64 (n=317)	66.4%	29.1%	4.4%	.2%	100.0%
65 + (n=360)	57.8%	25%	15.8%	1.4%	100.0%
<b>(N=1964) Total*</b>	<b>57.4%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Household Income</b>					
Under \$25,000 (n=329)	81.9%	11.9%	4.0%	2.2%	100.0%
\$25,000-49,999 (n=414)	77.2%	18.1%	4.4%	.3%	100.0%
\$50,000-64,999 (n=224)	53.2%	37.9%	8.9%	.0%	100.0%
\$65,000-99,999 (n=377)	29.7%	61.1%	9.2%	.0%	100.0%
\$100,000 and Over (n=403)	39.6%	55.0%	5.5%	.0%	100.0%
<b>(N=1747) Total*</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>37.2%</b>	<b>6.2%</b>	<b>.5%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\*Each demographic category excludes all DK/refusals, therefore totals may differ slightly.

^Passport only; military ID only; driver's license and military ID; driver's license, military ID, and passport

Table 3 indicates that 50.7% of males have a driver's license only, and 40.2% have a driver's license and passport; 63% of females have a driver's license only while about 30% have a driver's license and passport; 2% of females have no photo ID compared to 0.1% of males. Among Whites, about half have a driver's license only and another 41.6% have both a driver's license and passport. In comparison, 84% of Blacks/African Americans have a driver's license only, and 10.7% have a driver's license and passport; 2.2% of Blacks/African Americans have no photo ID, compared to .9% of Whites. About 71% of Democrats have only a driver's license compared to 55.4% of Republicans. About 2.8% of Democrats have no photo ID, while 0.3 percent of Republicans do not have one. Among those with incomes less than \$25,000 annually, 82% have only a driver's license, and 12 % have a driver's license and passport.

Table 3 shows results that are, and that are not, consistent with conventional wisdom regarding who has government-issued photo identification. We see a lower percentage of African Americans with passports compared to Whites. However, we see that .3% of Republicans do not have a government issued ID in comparison with 2.8% of Democrats. We can also notice that 3.2% of those aged 45-54 and 1.4% of those aged above 65 do not have a government issued ID, which are higher percentages than those for the other age groups. Also, 2.1% of females do not have a government issued ID in comparison with 0.1% of males.

Table 4 shows the demographic characteristics of those who indicated they do not have a photo ID. It should be noted that the table is based on a very small sample – only 24 weighted cases (31 unweighted). This small sample results in large standard errors (shown in the rightmost column of Table 4). So while definitive conclusion cannot be made, the results can be suggestive. We see that survey respondents lacking photo ID tended to be female, Democrat, and aged 45-54, and a disproportionate number are minority (relative to their representation among registered voters, shown in Table 1). The most striking result is the dominance of females in the survey without photo ID. But this result cannot be generalized due to the small sample size.

**TABLE 4: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONS WHO LACK PHOTO ID**<sup>31</sup>

	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	STANDARD ERROR
<b>GENDER</b>			
Male	1	4.8	9.2
Female	23	95.2	9.2
<i>Total*</i>	<b>24</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>ETHNICITY</b>			
White	13	56.3	21.2
Black/African American	10	41.6	21.0
Refused	1	2.2	n/a
<i>Total*</i>	<b>24</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>POLITICAL AFFILIATION</b>			
Republican	2	6.6	10.8
Democrat	21	87.1	14.6
Independent	0*	.6	3.3
None	1	2.7	7.2
Don't know	1	2.3	n/a
Refused	0	.6	n/a
<i>Total*</i>	<b>24</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>AGE</b>			
35-44	0	1.9	6.0
45-54	12	51.5	21.4
55-64	1	2.2	6.4
65 +	5	21.5	16.6

b. The Barreto, et al., survey findings

Table 5 reports the rates at which different segments of the Indiana voter population have valid photo identification. The data shows that those having a valid and up-to-date state ID with their full legal name represent 86.1% of those who voted in 2006 compared to 78.1% of those who are registered but did not vote, and 75.4% of those who are not registered voters. The authors speculate that this gap between voters and registered non-voters may be evidence that the new voter ID standards in 2006 kept additional would-be voters away from the polls.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> 62% of those without ID failed to report income and because of such a high non-response rate, income was excluded from this table.

<sup>32</sup> Matt Barreto, Stephen Nuño, and Gabriel Sanchez (November 8, 2007). "The Disproportionate Impact Of Indiana Voter ID Requirements on the Electorate," Working Paper, *Washington Institute for the Study of Ethnicity and Race*. Available at: [http://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/documents/Indiana\\_voter.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/documents/Indiana_voter.pdf), p. 10.

**Table 5: Access to Valid Photo ID among Registered Voters in Indiana**

	(1) Driver's License	(2) Current DL or State ID card	(3) Valid ID + full name	(4) Valid ID + name match
All RVs	83.4	86.7	83.7	82.7
Voted06	86.0	89.3	86.1	85.9
Non-Voter	77.2	80.7	78.1	75.1
Non-Registered <sup>†</sup>	64.8	77.8	75.4	n/a
White	86.0	88.5	85.0	84.2
Black	66.7	81.9	80.7	78.2
Men	82.5	84.8	81.5	81.3
Women	84.2	88.5	85.7	83.9
18-34	73.4	79.7	79.7	78.0
35-54	87.4	89.0	85.2	83.8
55-69	87.7	90.6	86.4	85.9
70+	78.7	83.6	80.6	80.6
HS Grad	78.3	83.3	80.1	79.0
College grad	91.4	92.1	89.3	88.5
Less \$40K	74.8	82.5	80.5	78.9
\$40K - \$80K	87.1	88.8	88.0	87.3
Over \$80K	88.2	88.2	83.5	83.0
Marion County	75.0	81.5	80.4	78.1

Source: Matt Barreto Stephen Nuño, and Gabriel Sanchez (November 8, 2007). "The Disproportionate Impact of Indiana Voter ID Requirements on the Electorate," Working Paper, *Washington Institute for the Study of Ethnicity and Race*. Available at: [http://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/documents/Indiana\\_voter.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/documents/Indiana_voter.pdf), p. 18.

This survey also concludes that there is a gap in access to valid ID among White and Black registered voters, which is even more pronounced among the overall adult population in Indiana. Among those already registered to vote (column 4 in Table 5), a 6-point gap exists in access to valid photo ID with 84.2% of White registered voters reporting proper ID in comparison with 78.2% of Black registered voters.

Similar data is reported for the overall adult eligible population (see Table 6), by merging the non-registered voter data with the registered voter data. Barreto, et al., establish from this data that there is an 11.5 point gap with 83.2% of all Whites in Indiana reporting access to valid photo identification compared to 71.7% of Blacks statewide.

**Table 6: Access to Valid Photo Identification Among General Population**

	Driver's License	Current DL or State ID card	Valid ID + full name
All Eligible Adults <sup>††</sup>	77.5	83.9	81.1
White Eligible Adults	81.4	86.4	83.2
Black Eligible Adults	55.2	73.4	71.7

Source: Matt Barreto, Stephen Nuño, and Gabriel Sanchez (November 8, 2007). "The Disproportionate Impact of Indiana Voter ID Requirements on the Electorate," Working Paper, *Washington Institute for the Study of Ethnicity and Race*. Available at: [http://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/documents/Indiana\\_voter.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/documents/Indiana_voter.pdf), p. 19.

Barreto, et al., also provide demographic breakdown of the data (see Table 5). They conclude that younger voters and older voters are less likely to have valid ID compared to voters in the middle categories: 78% of registered voters age 18-34 had proper ID and 80.6% of those over age 70 did (see column 4 in Table 5). Furthermore, the survey identifies that 83.8% of those between the ages of 35-54 had ID as did 85.9% of those between the ages of 55-69. The survey also found that compared to college graduates, those with just a high school degree were 9.5 percentage points less likely to have access to valid ID and that lower-income voters were the least likely to have valid ID.

In addition to demographic differences within the Indiana population, the Barreto, et al., study also explores whether the “haves and have nots [are] randomly distributed across the political spectrum, or are members of one political party more likely to be left out under strict ID standards?” The response to this question is provided in Table 7: Democrats have lower rates of access to valid photo ID at 81.7% compared to 86.2% of Republicans. Also, among registered voters with valid ID, 41.6% are Republican<sup>8</sup> and 32.5% are Democrats. Among registered voters without proper ID, 34.8% are Republican and 38.0% are Democrats. Barreto, et al., conclude that the “data suggests that a greater number of Democrats are excluded from voting under Indiana’s voter identification laws.”<sup>33</sup>

**Table 7: Partisan Implications of Access to Valid Photo Identification**

Access to ID

	Driver's License	Current DL or State ID card	Valid ID + full name	Valid ID + name match
Republican	88.0	91.1	86.5	86.2
Democrat	77.5	83.0	82.6	81.7
Independent	87.1	88.0	84.7	83.2

Party Affiliation by Access to ID

	Republican	Democrat	Independent		
Have valid ID	41.6	32.5	25.9	=	100.0
Do not have ID	34.8	38.0	27.2	=	100.0

<sup>33</sup> Matt Barreto, Stephen Nuño, and Gabriel Sanchez (November 8, 2007). “The Disproportionate Impact Of Indiana Voter ID Requirements on the Electorate,” Working Paper, *Washington Institute for the Study of Ethnicity and Race*. Available at: [http://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/documents/Indiana\\_voter.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/documents/Indiana_voter.pdf), p. 12.

## **Conclusions: How can policy makers can use survey research findings?**

How can policy makers use survey research findings, particularly when they may present results that vary? “With caution” may be the best answer. While surveys may be probing for the same issues, differences in their sample populations, in their methodologies, and questionnaires may lead to results that vary as evidenced by the case study of the Barreto, et al., and the NuStats/CDEM surveys.

When considering which of the voter ID studies we discussed in this paper is “right”, we posit that these studies are merely two preliminary forays into the abyss of the debate surrounding voter identification laws. Both employed acceptable survey research methods and practices, but both have their limitations. In the case of the Barreto, et al., survey, these limitations may have led them to overstate the number of people without acceptable photo identification in Indiana. In the case of the CDEM/NuStats, the number may be understated. However, the question of whether voters are disenfranchised by photo identification laws isn’t fully answered by either study. For the CDEM/NuStates study, the focus was on the impact of ID requirements for those who are already registered to vote. This population definitely includes people who want to vote, but lack ID; however, it excludes (by design) an undetermined amount of people who are not registered to vote but would like to do so, providing they can meet the requirements. The Barreto, et al., study did include non-registered voters, but neither study addressed the issue of desire to vote.

The divergence between these two highlights the importance of developing clearer and more standardized questionnaires so that they are relevant to the specific public policy question being address, carefully sampling target populations, and making explicit all methodological limitations. In the end, it’s most important to be aware of what the results mean, and what they do not. We encourage public policy makers to be informed by public policy research, but to be careful in drawing overly broad conclusions, particularly in an area, such as voter identification, where limited research has so far been conducted.