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NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll

Election Security:

Americans Confident But Wary of Election Security Risks ...

Misinformation Perceived as Biggest Threat...

Media Seen as Social Media Police

For Immediate Release

This NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll Reports:

A majority of Americans (53%), including most Republicans (85%) and a slim majority of independents (51%), consider the United States to be prepared to keep November's elections safe and secure. In contrast, more than four in ten Americans (41%), including two-thirds of Democrats (67%), do not think the nation is ready to fend off a threat to this year's elections.

"Like so many issues, Americans view election security from opposite poles of the partisan divide," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion.

In addition, many Americans have a great deal or good amount of trust that elections are fair. Despite racial, gender, and age differences, at least a majority trust that the 2020 election will be accurate and that their state or local government will run a fair election.

In fact, Americans' confidence in the fairness of U.S. elections has grown. More than six in ten (62%), up from 51% in October 2019, trust that elections are fair. 37% have not very much or no confidence at all that they will be fair. This is down from 46%.

About two in three Americans (68%) trust that the results of the 2020 election will be accurate. Of note, men (75%), white residents (73%), and Americans 45 or older (73%) are more likely than women (61%), non-white residents (61%), and younger Americans (62%) to say they have, at least, a good deal of confidence that the 2020 election will be accurate.

Similarly, 68% of residents are either confident or very confident that their state or local government will run a fair election in 2020. Again, white residents (74%) are more likely than non-white residents (58%) to have this view. Men (73%) are more likely than women (62%) to have confidence in their local officials to oversee a fair election process.

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Confidence in the integrity of the 2020 elections is, in part, due to Americans' impressions of the job the intelligence community is doing. A majority of Americans (53%) think the intelligence community has done a great deal or good amount since 2016 to make sure there is no interference from a foreign country in this year's elections.

But, Americans are also wary of the potential for election year mayhem. Despite Americans' trust in their state officials to conduct a fair election, residents are not confident these officials have done enough to safeguard the process from foreign interference. Only 42% of Americans, down from 51% last September, agree state officials have taken strides to protect the electoral process.

For many Americans, their concern about election interference from a foreign entity is due, in part, to what they see as the lack of effort by President Donald Trump to protect the vote from outside influences. Only 38% say the president has done a great deal or good amount to safeguard this year's elections from foreign interference. This is identical to the 38% who had this view in 2018.

RSNINT1. NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll National Tables January 7th through January 12th, 2020

National Adults			
Since 2016, do you think each of the following has done a great deal, a good amount, not very much, or nothing at all to make sure there is no interference from a foreign country in this year's elections:			
	A great deal/A good amount	Not very much/Nothing at all	Vol: Unsure
The Intelligence Community	53%	35%	12%
Your state election officials	42%	43%	14%
President Trump	38%	56%	6%

NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll National Adults

In fact, a slim majority of residents nationally (51%) think President Trump's actions encourage election meddling. 39% of Americans say the president is making elections safer. Most Democrats (88%) and 51% of independents do not think the president is doing enough to thwart election interference while 78% of Republicans report he is ensuring the 2020 election results will be safe and secure.

"The devil is in the details regarding Americans' concerns about the integrity of the 2020 presidential election," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion.

When asked to point to the biggest threat to election security, misleading information is mentioned by more than one in three Americans (35%). Voter fraud follows with 24%. 16% cite voter suppression, and 15% mention foreign interference. Five percent of residents believe problems at their polling place, such as long lines or broken machines, will be the biggest hindrance to keeping elections safe and accurate.

Not surprisingly, the focus of election concerns varies depending upon the partisan lens. The leading concern among Democrats is voter suppression (34%). More than one in four Democrats (27%) consider misleading information to be the biggest menace to election security. Foreign interference follows closely for these voters with 22%. In contrast, nearly half of Republicans (47%) believe voter fraud is the biggest challenge. Among independents, the plurality (39%) cite misleading information.

When taking into account specific efforts that may impede this year's election process, 82% of Americans think it is likely they will encounter misleading information on social media sites. 77% believe it is likely foreign countries will be the source of disinformation about the candidates.

"Americans, across party lines, worry about another nation spreading disinformation during campaign 2020," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. "Not so when it comes to a foreign power actually manipulating the vote. The partisan divide reappears."

More than six in ten Republicans (62%), independents (79%), and Democrats (90%) agree it is likely foreign countries will spread false information about the candidates during the election campaign. Democrats (54%), however, are more likely than independents (37%) and Republicans (19%) to think the vote count may actually be tampered with by a foreign country.

About six in ten Americans (59%) think it is hard to tell the difference between what is fact and what is misleading information. A majority (55%) say it will be harder to identify disinformation in 2020 than it was in 2016 except for Republicans. A majority of GOP voters (52%) say it will be *easier* to identify misleading information this election year than it was four years ago.

Americans (75%) lack confidence in technology platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Google and YouTube to prevent their being misused to spread false information during this year's election. This is an increase from 66% in the fall of 2018 when The Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel reported this question.

However, most Americans do not think the main responsibility for reducing the amount of public disinformation lies with these technology companies. 39% of Americans say it is the responsibility of the news media, 18% say it is the role of these technology platforms, and 15% say the onus is on the government. Another 12% say it is up to the public, and 12% don't think it's the responsibility of any of these groups.

A majority of Republicans (54%) point a finger at the news media for the amount of misleading information that is made public. 39% of independents and just 29% of Democrats agree. Regardless of party, Americans believe there is a likelihood that they will encounter misleading information on a social media site.

“Many Americans think election cycles are no longer on the up-and-up,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. “These opinions are a troublesome sign about this keystone of our democracy.”

A majority of Americans (52%) think there is a likelihood there will be voter fraud. Fewer, yet still notable, proportions of residents say it is likely many votes will not actually be counted (44%) or that many people will show up to vote and will be told they are not eligible (43%). 37% of residents, up from 32% in 2018, report it is likely that a foreign country will engage in vote tampering. More than three in ten (31%), a downtick from 37%, think their state election officials will try to discourage some people from voting during this year’s elections. 29% think it is likely their own vote will not actually be counted. One in five (20%) think it is likely that the information provided by the people working at their polling place will not be correct.

RSNINT1. NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll National Tables January 7th through January 12th, 2020

National Adults			
Do you think it is very likely, likely, not very likely, or not likely at all that each of the following will happen during this year’s elections:			
	Very likely/Likely	Not very likely/Not likely at all	Vol: Unsure
You will read misleading information on a social media site such as Facebook or Twitter	82%	16%	2%
Foreign countries will spread false information about candidates running for office	77%	21%	2%
There will be voter fraud, that is, people who are not eligible to vote will vote, or vote more than once	52%	46%	2%
Many votes will not actually be counted	44%	52%	4%
Many people will show up to vote and be told they are not eligible	43%	53%	4%
A foreign country will tamper with the votes cast to change the results	37%	61%	2%
Election officials in your state will try to discourage some people from voting	31%	67%	2%
Your vote will not actually be counted	29%	70%	1%
The information you get from the people working at your polling place is not correct	20%	75%	6%

NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll National Adults

Partisan differences are also present on the questions of voter fraud and voters being deemed ineligible. Republicans (74%) are more likely than independents (55%) and Democrats (28%) to perceive voter fraud to be a possibility. Democrats (63%) and independents (38%) are more likely than Republicans (23%) to think people who show up to vote will be told they are ineligible at their polling place.

Gender and racial differences exist on the questions pertaining to whether or not all votes will be counted. Women (35%) and non-white residents (39%) are more likely than men (22%) and white residents (23%) to say it is likely *their own* vote will not be counted. Half of women (50%) and a majority of non-white residents (54%) think it is possible that, in general, *many votes* may not be counted. Only 38% of men and 39% of white residents say the same.

While many Americans say they do not experience difficulties while voting, there has been a notable increase in the proportion of residents who say they have had to wait on long lines at their voting place, 31% up from 20% in September 2018. 68%, though, report they hardly ever or never have to wait on long lines.

94% of Americans say they have hardly ever or never had voting machines break or not enough ballots at their polling place. A similar 93% say they hardly ever or never experience problems with their voter registration or identification, and 89% say it is rare that they have difficulty getting to their polling place. 84% say it hardly ever or never happens that they have a hard time getting time off from work to vote or are confused about how to fill out their ballot (84%). While the proportions are small, the number of people experiencing difficulty should not be discounted.

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Please tell me whether each of the following has happened to you a lot, sometimes, hardly ever, or never:	A lot/Sometimes		
	National Adults	White	Non white
Having to wait on long lines at your voting place	31%	25%	40%
Being confused about how to fill out your ballot	15%	14%	19%
Not getting time off from work to vote	15%	12%	18%
Having a hard time getting to your polling place	10%	8%	14%
Having problems with your voter registration or identification	6%	6%	7%
Having broken voting machines or not enough ballots at your polling place	5%	4%	6%

NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll National Adults

Most Americans (88%), though, personally think voting is easy. This November, nearly six in ten residents (58%) say they plan to vote in person on Election Day as opposed to by mail or absentee ballot (23%) or at an early voting location (18%).