



## Americans' Confidence in Vote Count Accuracy Shows Little Change since 2011: But Doubts are Increasing in Key Groups Ahead of the Presidential Election

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Americans' confidence in the accuracy of election vote counts remains generally positive in the lead-up to the 2012 Presidential Election, but there are signs of some erosion in that overall confidence. This finding came from a nationwide opinion survey completed in March for InfoSENTRY Services, Inc., a national information technology consulting firm located in Raleigh, North Carolina.

"InfoSENTRY has tracked U.S. public opinion toward vote count accuracy since January, 2004, just over a year after Congress passed the Help America Vote Act," said M. Glenn Newkirk, InfoSENTRY's President. "After a slight drop in the 2011 survey, the positive confidence level in vote count accuracy has rebounded to a level similar to what it was right after the U.S. passed the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) in 2002. Also, in the aftermath of the disputed 2000 election of George W. Bush, many states passed acts that they claimed would 'restore voter confidence' by requiring paper trails for voting systems. After all the sound and fury, not much has changed in the way Americans view the vote count accuracy in their elections. If anything, the overall trend over the past annual surveys shows a slight decline in overall voter confidence."

In the 2012 survey, 60% of adult respondents expressed either high or very high confidence that votes were counted accurately in their area, while 23% expressed either little or no confidence in election count accuracy. By subtracting the negative confidence from the positive confidence, the 2012 survey reveals a "net confidence level" (or a "spread") of **+37** in 2012. Those numbers compare with 62% expressing positive confidence and only 16% stating the negative confidence in the 2004 survey. The spread in that 2004 survey was **+46**, significantly more positive than in 2012.

The survey in each year asked respondents the following question:

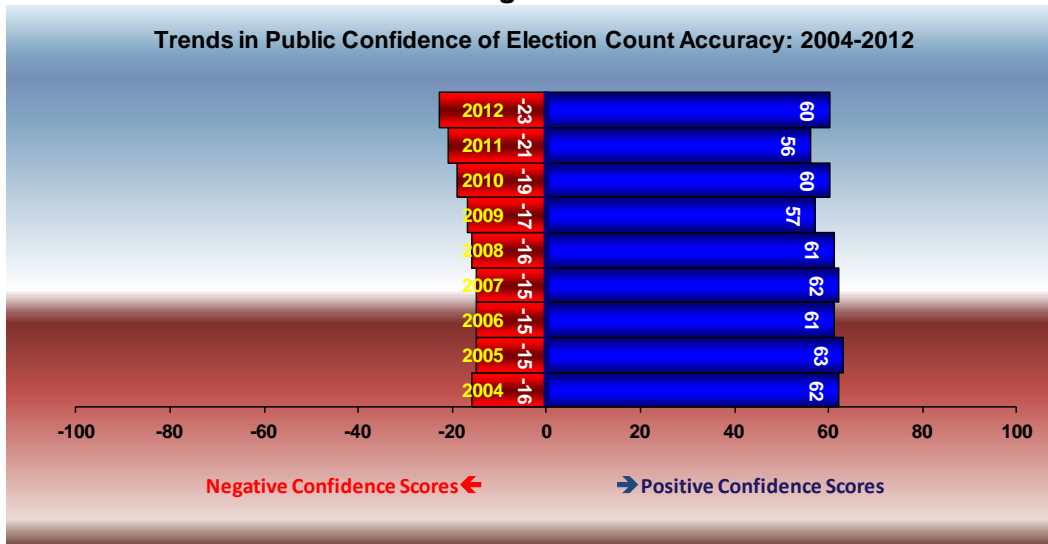
Now I have a question about elections in your local area. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means you are not at all confident and 5 means you are very confident, how confident are you that votes for federal, state, and local offices and ballot issues are counted accurately in the elections in your area?<sup>1</sup>

Figure 1 contains the trend results of the positive ("4" and "5") and negative ("1" and "2") responses over the past seven years.

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<sup>1</sup> The questions and response sets in this survey are copyrighted by InfoSENTRY Services, Inc. 2004-2012. All rights are reserved. The questions and the response sets may not be used without the express written permission of InfoSENTRY Services, Inc.

Figure 1



Newkirk continued, “The numbers still reflect an overall confident view in the accuracy of America’s vote counts. But election officials across the country would like the numbers to be even more positive. The small, but statistically significant, growth in the number of Americans who express low or very low no confidence in elections voting accuracy is an increasing source of concern. Add to that number the 17% who expressed a “no opinion” or “don’t know” response and you have the making of a particular problem for confidence in the core of our democracy—voting. It can be difficult to convince someone to get out and vote if they do not believe their vote will be counted accurately.”

The survey’s data show that in 2012, Republicans (including Republican-leaning Independents) expressed 65% positive confidence and 23% negative confidence in vote count accuracy of their elections. However, only 61% of Democrats (including Democrat-leaning Independents) expressed positive confidence in the election count accuracy and 19% expressed negative confidence. Among fully Independents, 50% expressed positive confidence and 32% expressed negative confidence.

Newkirk continued, “The persistent situation of Democrats and Independents having lower confidence in vote count accuracy than do the Republicans over the past three annual surveys points to the challenge facing President Obama in getting the same coalition of Democrats and Independents that supported him in 2008 to go to the polls again in 2012. The President’s re-election supporters face an obstacle right out of the chute in convincing many core supporters that their votes will be counted accurately.”

The 2012 survey showed a continued widening of one fissure in attitudes toward vote count accuracy that has been clear and pervasive in InfoSENTRY’s previous tracking surveys: African-Americans have significantly lower confidence in the accuracy of vote counts than do Whites and Hispanics. In 2012, White respondents to the survey had a net confidence rating of +40 (62%-22%). Hispanic respondents’ net confidence rating was +43 (65%-22%). The confidence spread for Black respondents was only +11 (44% - 33%).

Newkirk concluded by stating that, “The deep political divisions in the country, the persistent campaigns decrying government as ‘the problem,’ and the attempts by various groups to question accuracy of voting systems have started to gain a foothold in weakening public confidence in the accuracy of election results. Our internal polling data show varying levels of this division across the country’s political party affiliations, gender, geographic regions, rural/urban dwellers, income categories, and education categories. It will be a major task for public officials to maintain current confidence levels in the accuracy of the vote count and convince the skeptics and the unsure that when they vote this year, the counts will be accurate.”

This news release presents the findings of telephone surveys conducted among national probability samples of 1026 adults in 2004, 1018 adults in 2005, 1004 adults in 2006, 1017 adults in 2007, 1018 adults in 2008, 1002 adults in 2009, 1024 adults in 2010, 1006 adults in 2011, and 1006 adults in 2012. All respondents were 18 years of age and older, living in private households in the continental United States. The margin of error is plus or minus three percentage ( $\pm 3\%$ ) points. Interviewing for this Opinion Research Center CARAVAN® Survey occurred in mid-January of each year. Opinion Research Center is one of the best known and most established opinion research organizations in the United States.

InfoSENTRY Services, Inc. is an independent information technology services firm based in Raleigh, NC. The firm manages project assessments, quality assurance audits, information systems security and business continuity projects, and system analyses for public and private sector clients throughout the United States and Europe. InfoSENTRY has provided project management, information security, quality management, and system testing services for state and local elections offices throughout the United States. InfoSENTRY® has no financial relationships or business partnerships with hardware, software, network, or election systems vendors.

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