



Americans' Confidence in Vote Count Accuracy Continues Slow Decline

For Immediate Release:

Contact: M. Glenn Newkirk glenn_newkirk@infosentry.com **Phone:** 919.810.2514

Raleigh, NC (18 June 2013). Americans' confidence in the accuracy of election vote counts remains generally positive but continues a significant decline from its level ten years ago. This finding came from a nationwide opinion survey completed in mid-May 2013 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. "The Federal government has made over \$3 billion available to states and localities since that time for improving the administration of elections, mainly for upgrading voting and voter registration technology. However, in those ten years, public confidence has declined from just under two-thirds of Americans in 2004 who felt their votes were counted accurately to just barely over half who felt that way in our 2013 survey. During the same period, more Americans have started to express doubts that their votes were counted accurately. The trend over the past decade's annual surveys shows a gradual decline in overall voter confidence in the accuracy of the nation's vote counting."

In the 2013 survey, 53% of adult respondents expressed either high or very high confidence that votes were counted accurately in their area, while 26% expressed either little or no confidence in election count accuracy. By subtracting the negative confidence from the positive confidence, the 2013 survey reveals a "net confidence level" (or a "positive spread") of **+27**. Those numbers contrast with 62% expressing positive confidence and only 16% stating the negative confidence in the 2004 survey. The net confidence level in that 2004 survey was **+46**, a significantly greater positive spread than in 2013.

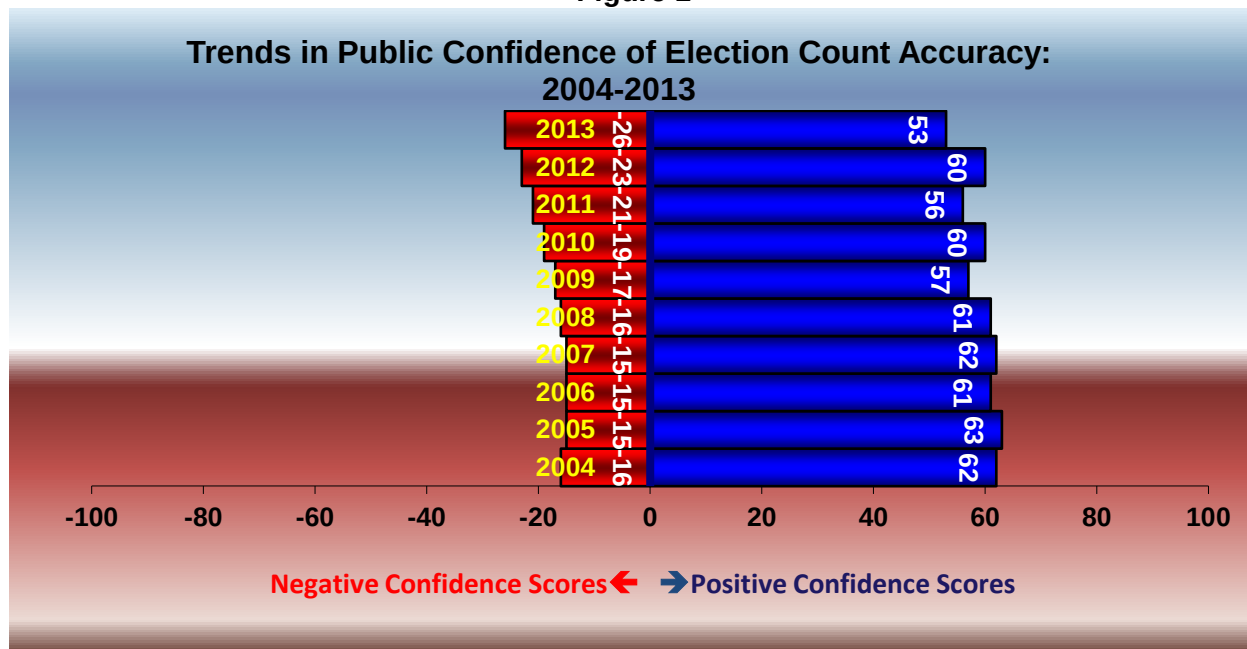
The survey in each year asked respondents the following question:

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?¹

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

¹ 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 a majority’s positive assessment of the accuracy of America’s vote counts. However, most election officials across the country surely would like the numbers to be much more positive and for the trend to be moving in the other direction, toward more confidence. In late 2002, Congress enacted and the President signed HAVA, the Help America Vote Act. However, in spite of substantial expenditures on voting machines, statewide voter registration systems, and other activities to strengthen election administration, our surveys show that overall voter confidence in the accuracy of the count has declined since passage of HAVA.”

The survey’s data show that in 2013 58% of Republicans (including Republican-leaning Independents) expressed “positive confidence” in the vote accuracy, compared with 27% who were not very or not at all confident in the accuracy of the vote. Corresponding responses from Democrats (including Democratic-leaning Independents) were 57% positive confidence and 22% negative confidence. Full Independents’ responses were less positive overall than were either of the two groups with stronger party leanings: 39% expressed positive confidence and 28% expressed negative confidence in the vote accuracy.

Newkirk’s analysis of the survey’s results led him to conclude that there are several forces behind the decline in Americans’ confidence in the accuracy of the vote count in public elections. “First, notice that the decline in voter confidence in election accuracy gained steam in 2009 after the election of President Obama. The election of President Obama apparently led some people to conclude that his election could not have happened if the vote tabulation had been accurate. A cottage industry has sprung up in some media outlets and on social media expressing this conclusion.”

“Second, reports of efforts in some states to shorten voting hours, reduce the number of polling places, and reduce the amount of voting equipment, along with some media outlets’ drumbeats about widespread ‘voter fraud’ and ‘vote suppression,’ almost certainly did not bolster confidence in the integrity of elections.”

“Third, there are still plenty of election critics spreading stories about voting equipment failures and security problems in order to support their favorite types of voting systems and undermine

support for other types of systems. Add all of these forces together and you have a powerful combination of negative messages and actions that question the integrity of vote accuracy.”

Newkirk concluded, “Election administrators will continue to improve and professionalize their processes and information systems. However, until the political parties, candidates, and elected officials take steps to bolster the institutions they created in the 2002 Help America Vote Act and take steps in their campaigns and offices to support the integrity of elections, it is difficult to see how Americans’ confidence in the accuracy of the vote count will improve noticeably.”

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, 1006 adults in 2012, and 1000 adults in 2013. 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. In the 2013 survey, Opinion Research Center’s CARAVAN® survey employed a “Landline/Cell Phone Methodology” for which the firm has provided statistical and analytical information to support the change away from reliance solely on landline calls. 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.

The InfoSENTRY logo and InfoSENTRY® are registered trademarks of InfoSENTRY Services, Inc. CARAVAN® is a registered trademark of Opinion Research Corporation.

###End###