Can Visual Summaries of Post-Election Audits Increase Confidence in Elections?

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Research Questions. When election officials communicate to the public about key aspects of post-election audits, can this build confidence in the accuracy and integrity of the vote? What aspects of the audits are most effective to emphasize, process or results? Which members of the public respond the most to this information?

Our Approach. We explored these questions through a large-scale survey, including a survey experiment that randomly assigned people to view a visual summarizing a Washoe County post-election audit or a "control" visual about recycling. We conducted our survey from October 25-November 4, 2024, with a national sample of 6,013 Americans who reflected the eligible voter population, administering the survey via the Cint platform.

What we found. While our team will be working on a much more in-depth analysis later this winter, we wanted to provide you with a brief update on the key findings:

- Learning about Washoe's audits significantly increased trust in Washoe elections.[1] Compared to those who saw the "recycling" version of the visuals, viewing <u>any version of the visual summarizing the audit</u> increased the percentage who were "very" or "somewhat" confident in Washoe's primary by 6.1 percentage points and confidence in Washoe's presidential election by 5.5 points.

- This effect did not "spill over" much into trust of other jurisdictions that were not the subject of the audit. Confidence that their own vote would be counted as they intended was 2.1 percentage points higher for those who viewed the Washoe audit, but there was no impact on trust in elections for their locality, state, or the national elections. Audits impact trust in the elections that they audit, it seems.

- The most effective visual was the one that focused on the *process* of the audit. The least effective was the visual focused on the *results* of the audits — although it still brought a statistically and substantively significant impact on trust.

- Independents were more responsive to viewing an audit visual than Republicans or Democrats were.

RECYCLING IN THE UNITED STATES
2024 Update

In the United States, we're recycling more than we did three decades ago, but with a growing population, we're also producing more trash. With a few small changes, we can reduce the amount of waste we produce and help create a cleaner, healthier environment.

BY THE NUMBERS

When we throw something away, we may not always think about where it will end up. Most times, it's a landfill. Pausing to think about how much trash we generate in one year and where it goes may be a good first step toward reducing waste and making changes.

1 year

146.1 million tons of trash ended up in landfills

292.4 million tons of trash generated

94 million tons of waste recycled & composted

Small changes can have a big impact when it comes to reducing waste.

RECYCLING OVERVIEW
In the U.S., the recycling process is made up of three steps that repeat.

STEP 1 Collection and Processing Recyclables

STEP 2 Manufacturing Using Recycled Materials

STEP 3 Purchasing New Products Made from Recycled Materials

STEPS TO REDUCE WASTE

REDUCE the materials you use to reduce the amount of waste your household creates. Shop for products made with recycled materials. Buy items with less packaging. Buy refillable, reusable containers.

REUSE materials and recycle whenever possible. Bring your own bags to the store. If you must print, use recycled paper and print on both sides of paper.

RETHINK the materials you use and those you throw away. Compost your food scraps and yard waste. Buy only what you need or what you know you will use.

For more information on recycling, see epa.gov.

WASHOE COUNTY'S AUDIT PROCESS
2024 Primary Election: June 11

On June 20-21, 2024, the registrar of voters conducted a risk-limiting audit to confirm that our voting equipment counted voters' ballots accurately and that Washoe County's election results are correct. This type of audit uses statistical calculations and a random sample of ballots large enough to give us confidence that a full recount of all ballots would deliver the same result. (NRS 293.394)

The process we followed looks like this:

STEP 1: As ballots are scanned, each batch of ballots is numbered. Batch numbers are recorded on the county's ballot log spreadsheet along with their storage locations and the number of ballots scanned by the tabulation system.

STEP 2: After the final election results are made public, election staff examine the ballot log spreadsheet and results report produced by the voting system to verify that the number of ballots on the spreadsheet matches the number of ballots on the report.

STEP 3: After calculating the sample size for the audit, the secretary of state holds a public meeting. At the meeting, randomly selected individuals roll 10-sided dice to generate a large random number that is used to select the ballots for the audit. The secretary of state ensures enough ballots are selected to meet the sample size and provides the counties with a list of the selected ballots.

STEP 4: County audit teams retrieve the randomly selected ballots.

STEP 5: The audit teams verify they have the correct ballots by matching the batch numbers on the storage containers with the batch numbers on the list.

STEP 6: Audit teams examine each ballot, hand-count the voters' choices and record them on tally sheets.

STEP 7: After the audit team completes the review and documentation process for their audited ballots, the team compares the voter choices recorded during the audit to the results report produced by the voting system, checking for any differences between the two.

> **Risk-Limiting Audits or RLAs like this one are considered the most accurate and efficient type of post-election audit.**

Note: Washoe County is an example jurisdiction only. This information was collected from publicly available audit resources. Washoe County did not participate in this survey.

WASHOE COUNTY'S AUDIT RESULTS
2024 Primary Election

On June 20-21, 2024, the registrar of voters conducted a risk-limiting audit to confirm that our voting equipment counted voters' ballots accurately and that Washoe County's June 11, 2024, primary election results are correct. This type of audit helps ensure that the winners really got more votes. It uses statistical calculations and a random sample of ballots large enough to give us confidence that a full recount of all ballots would deliver the same result.

80,262	**119**	**2 contests**	**0 discrepancies**
ballots cast	ballots audited	audited	identified

80,262 Ballots Cast: 0 Discrepancies Found

A discrepancy is the difference between what the voting machines reported for a ballot and what the audit team found when they checked it. Washoe County's team audited one statewide contest and one countywide contest: United States Senate (DEM) and School Board Trustee, District D. The team reviewed and hand-counted voters' selections for both contests on the randomly selected 119 ballots. They found 0 discrepancies between the votes recorded by the voting system and the votes on the paper ballots hand-counted by the audit team.

Examples of Discrepancies

While the audit team found no discrepancies, examples can include disagreements between the way election workers and the audit team interpret and decide unclear marks made by the voter as well as ballot selection errors, which can lead audit teams to review a ballot that does not match the one in the file recorded by the voting system.

Results

Voters can be confident that the 2024 primary election results are correct. The audit found strong evidence that the winners in the audited contests received the most votes.

CONTEST	WINNER TOTALS	LOSER TOTALS	CONTEST MARGIN	BALLOTS AUDITED	DISCREPANCIES
U.S. Senate [DEM]	31,430	1,093	30,337	119	0
School Board Trustee, District D	9,318	2,130	7,188	119	0

On July 12, 2024, the secretary of state certified that the risk-limiting audit conducted met the requirements of NRS 293.394, NAC 293.480, and NAC 293.485.
See nvsos.gov/sos/elections for more information.

WASHOE COUNTY'S POST-ELECTION AUDIT

2024 Primary Election

On June 20-21, 2024, the registrar of voters conducted a risk-limiting audit to confirm that our voting equipment counted voters' ballots accurately and that Washoe County's June 11, 2024, primary election results are correct. This type of audit helps ensure that the winners really got more votes. It uses statistical calculations and a random sample of ballots large enough to give us confidence that a full recount of all ballots would deliver the same result.

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PROCESS

1. Batches of ballots are numbered and logged during scanning. **2.** After the final results report is made public, election staff examine the log and the voting system results report to confirm they show the same number of ballots. **3:** The secretary of state calculates the sample size for the audit and then holds a public meeting where individuals roll 10-sided dice to create a large random number that is used to select the ballots for the audit. After confirming that enough randomly selected ballots were selected to meet the sample size, the secretary provides counties with a list of selected ballots. **4:** County audit teams retrieve the randomly selected ballots **5:** Audit teams verify they have the correct ballots. **6:** Audit teams examine each ballot, hand-count the voters' choices and record them on tally sheets. **7:** Audit teams compare the voter choices recorded during the audit to the results report produced by the voting system, checking for any differences between the two.

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