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**The Impact of News Reports of  
Survey Findings on Respondents  
In a Longitudinal Panel Study**

## The AP-Yahoo News Poll

- > Conducted by Knowledge Networks on KnowledgePanel
- > Respondents selected without regard to interest in politics, elections, and without regard to past voting history
- > Eleven waves of data collection over about a year of the election campaign

## Respondents Fully Informed

- > There was no attempt made to conceal the purpose and sponsorship of the poll from respondents
  - At the conclusion of wave one, respondents were informed of the sponsorship and of the basic design of the study
  - Practical concern: We needed consent to contact respondents for additional interviews that would be used for quotation in news stories

## Respondents Fully Informed

- > On invitations to participate in later waves, respondents were reminded of the sponsorship and knew that the questions would be mostly about politics
  - Cooperation appeal: We gambled that the benefits of disclosing the sponsorship by two well known media corporations and the appeal to interest in the election would help us maintain cooperation over time
  - Our target was to represent likely voters at the final pre-election waves, so it was less important to us if non-likely voters were more likely to drop out of the study at the end

## Results Reported After Each Wave

- > Our news interests required us to report the results quickly, often within hours of pulling the data and weighting the results
  - Typically, the poll was in the field for 7-10 days before the data were pulled and weighted
  - News stories were prepared and appeared in national and local media across the country and were clearly branded as AP-Yahoo surveys conducted by Knowledge Networks
  - However, the surveys remained open for several days, sometimes several weeks, after the survey was reported to collect data from late responders

## What Are The Possible Benefits?

- > Respondents who see the news reports about the poll may become more interested in the study
  - Perceived impact and importance
  - Novelty and excitement
- > May lead to improved cooperation over time and improved accuracy

## What Are The Possible Dangers?

- > Respondents seeing news reports about the poll could lead to unknown and undetectable effects on the data accuracy
  
- > Those exposed to the news reports could start to behave differently from those who are not exposed
  - Different rates of participation
  - Some respondents may be turned off of the study in a non-random manner
  - Some respondents may get more excited about the study in a non-random manner

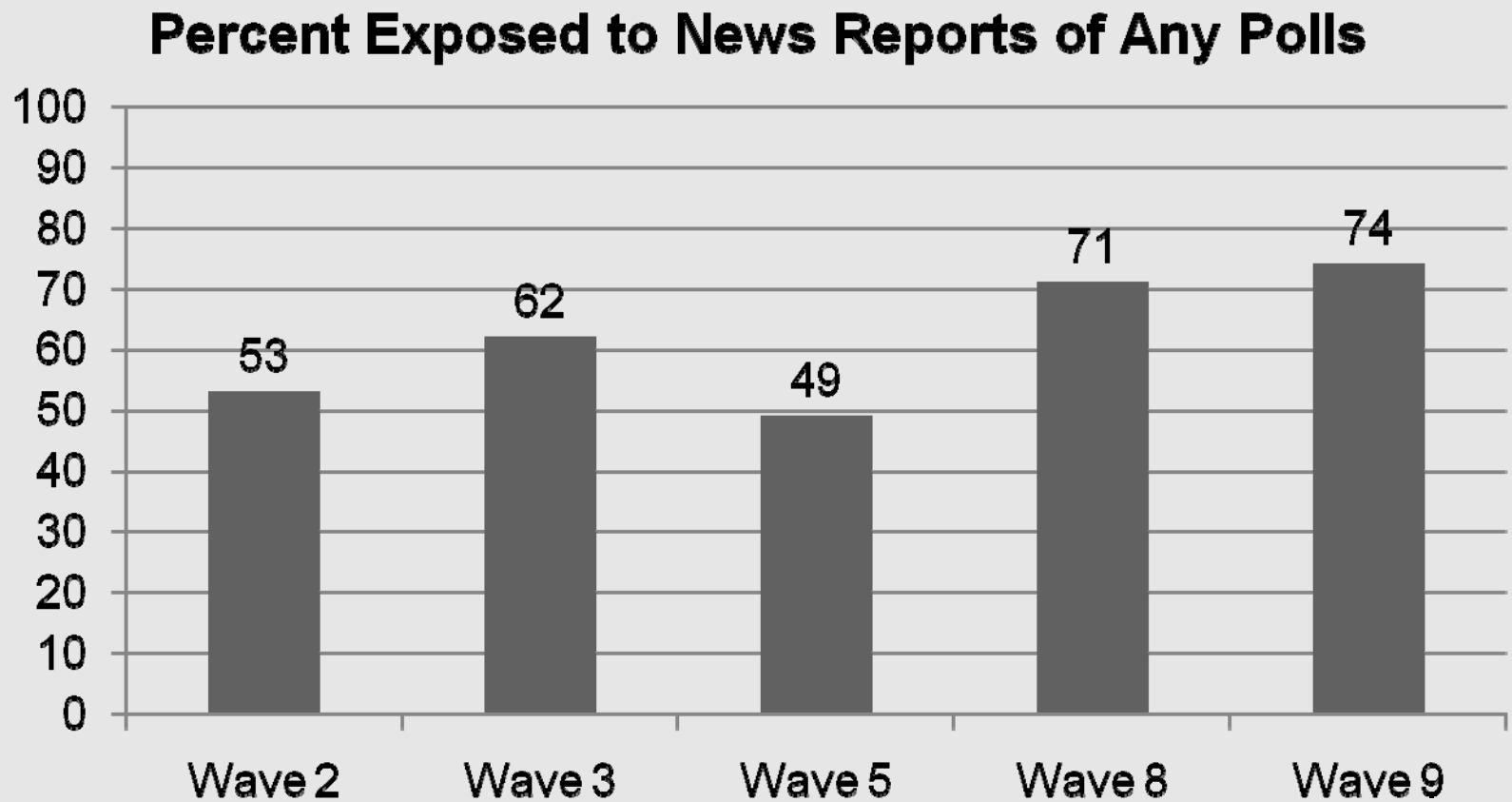
## Monitoring The Effects

- > Extremely difficult to monitor and control for the effects in an information-rich real-world environment
- > We did attempt to measure exposure to news reports about public opinion polls using a simple recall method

## Recall Question

- > Two-step measurement process
- > First: This item designed to capture exposure of previous news reports about ANY polls
  - In the past month, did you happen to hear about any public opinion polls about the presidential election, or not?

## Exposure to Reports on Any Polls

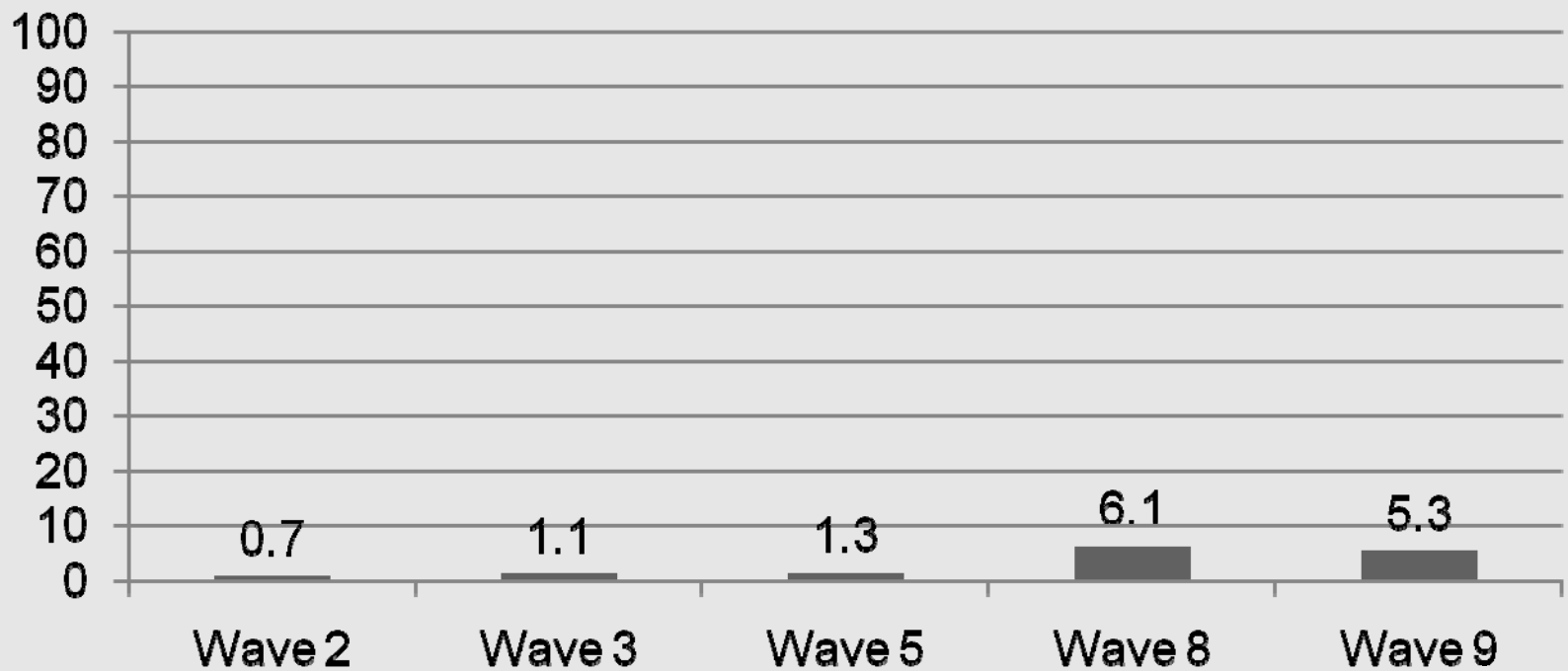


## Monitoring The Effects

- > Second, for those who said “yes” to the first:
  - Please tell us anything you might remember about the polls you might have read or heard about. If you can remember who sponsored the poll(s) please tell us that too.
  - Allowed a text box with plenty of room for respondents to write in their responses.
  - At the conclusion of the study, we coded the responses at all five waves.

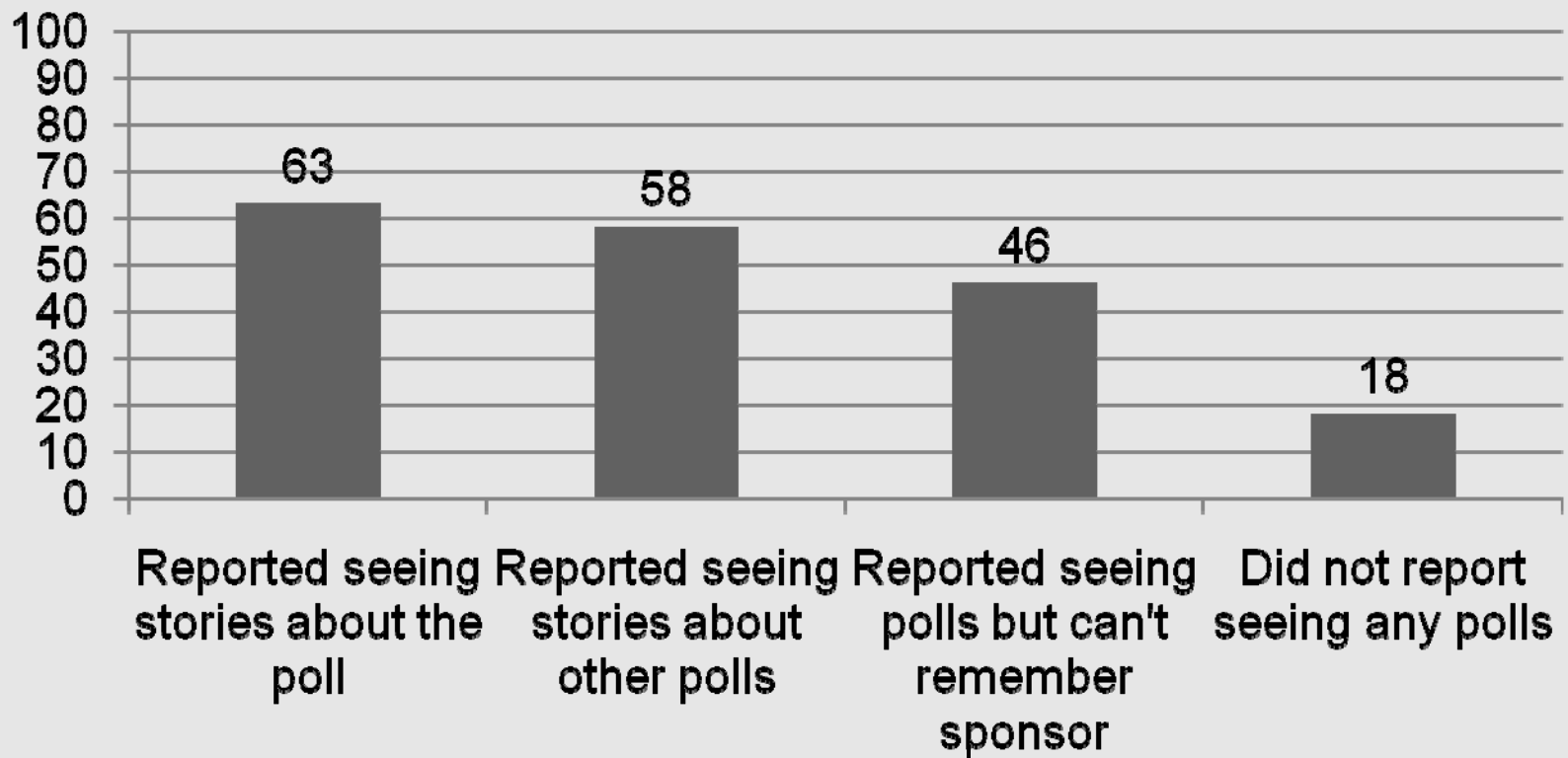
## Exposure by Wave

**Percent Exposed to Reports about the Poll  
of all respondents at each wave**

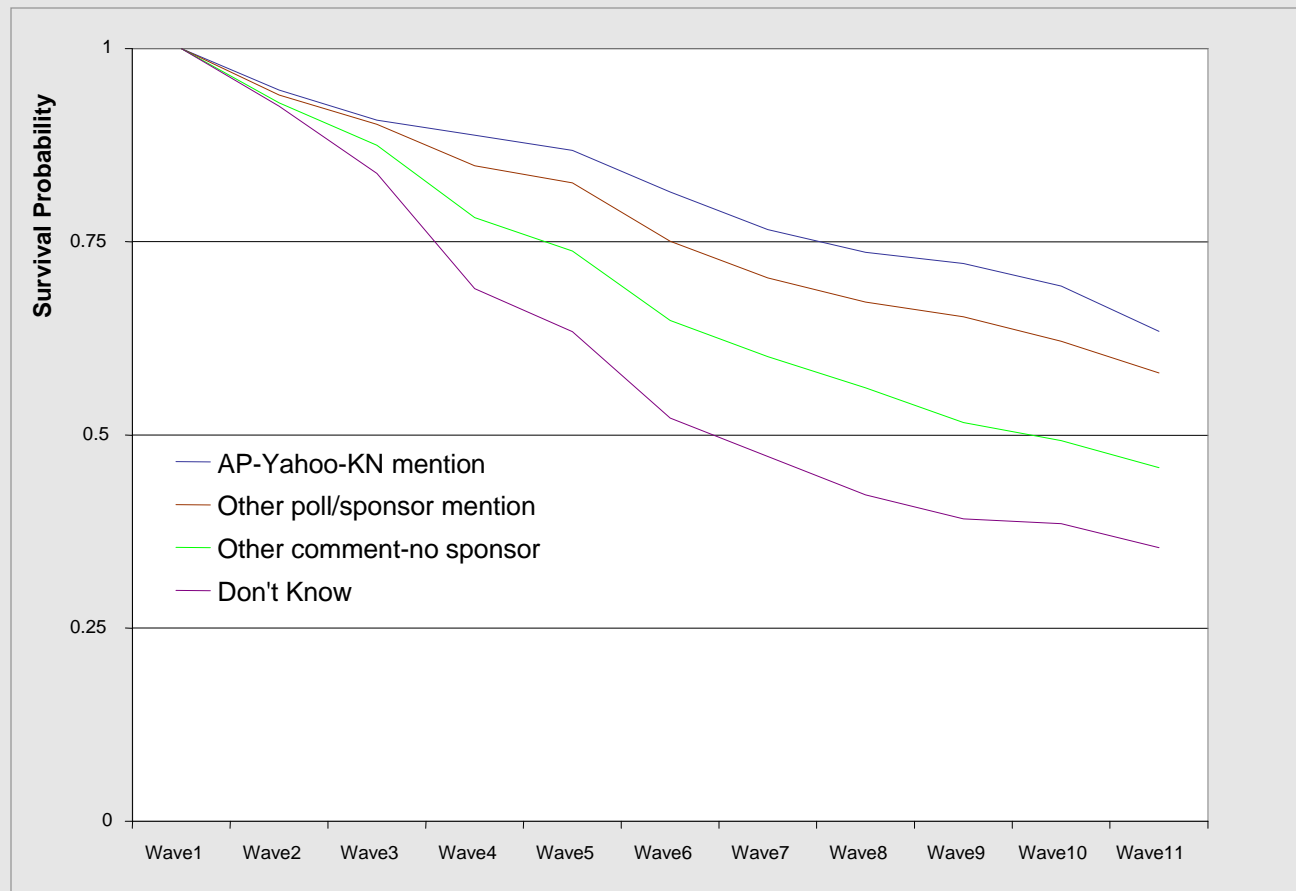


## Exposure Associated With Behavior

**Percent Completing All 11 Waves**



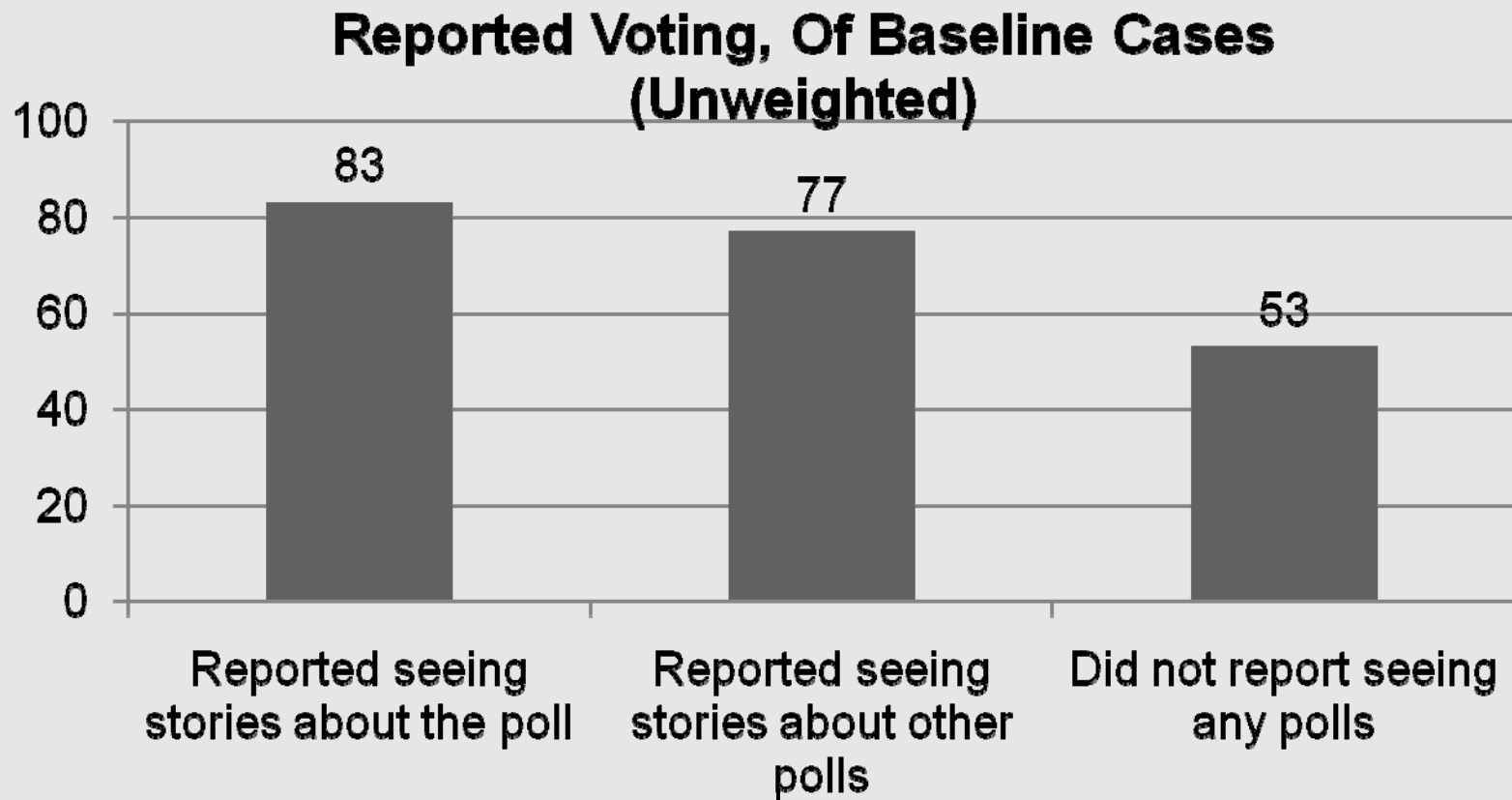
# Survival Analysis



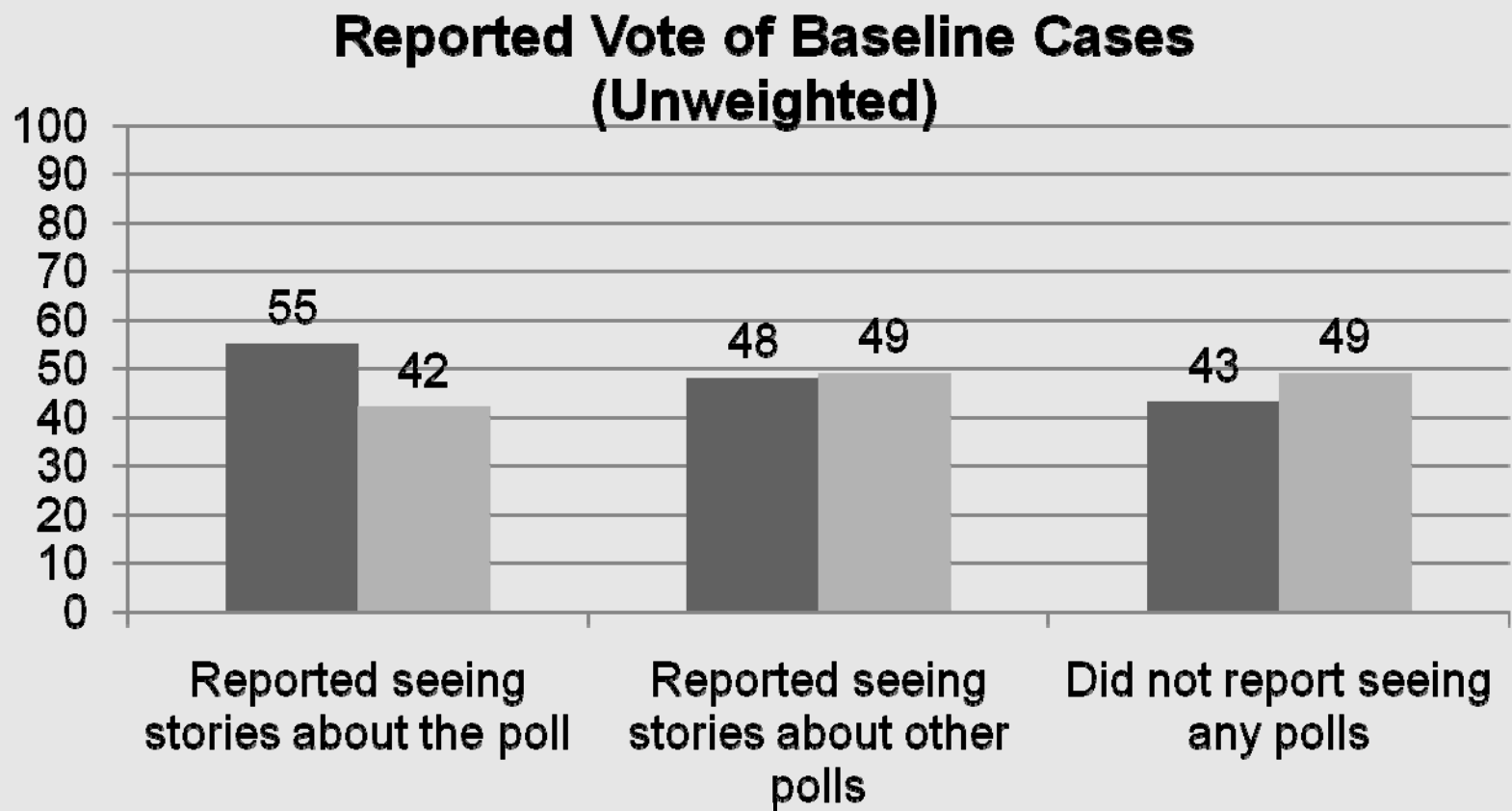
## Hypothesis Confirmed?

- > Overall of those interviewed in the baseline, 8.5 percent of them reported seeing news about the study by wave 9
- > Those respondents who reported seeing stories about the AP-Yahoo poll were more likely to stay in the study
  - Because many media effects and interest variables would be closely correlated with exposure to news reports, difficult to sort out the exact impact

## Are They Different?



## Vote for Obama and McCain



## Conclusions

- > Only a small number of cases reported exposure at each wave
- > Those few that did report exposure were more likely to complete the survey and displayed small differences in candidate preference
- > Important to monitor exposure of news reports when conducting a similar study

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