



BISC Voter Engagement Tactics Research Toplines (2024)

Target campaign states: AZ, CA, CO, FL, ME, MI, MS, MO, MT, NE, NV, OH, OR, + WA
Panel size was 7,204 voters

Key Takeaways

ON NEWS + INFORMATION CONSUMPTION:

Most voters do not watch much cable news.

- Overall, it appears that the average voter who does watch cable news utilizes multiple networks. However, 3 in 5 or more of voters (60-68%) say they don't watch any of the top three highest-ranked news networks – CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC.
- Fox News viewership is the highest in Mississippi, Nevada, and Montana, while CNN is a more popular option in Nebraska, California, and Washington. Average allocations are pretty even for the top three in Arizona, while MSNBC is more popular in California, Colorado, and Washington.

Online news remains the top source for ballot measures, but social media use is rising in some states.

- Online news searches and websites continue to be the most popular news source for measures, which is consistent going back to 2020. This is followed by voter guides and local national newspapers, while social media like Facebook and Twitter/X is still at the bottom. However, social media has experienced an increase since this question was reprioritized for voters in BISC's surveyed states in April. It's also important to note that about one-quarter of voters (21-29%) appear to use all four methods equally, allocating between 20-39 points to each.
- Voter guides are the most popular news source in Colorado, California, Washington, and Oregon, while social media use is more prevalent in Nevada, Maine, Nebraska, Mississippi, and Montana.

Voters use multiple social media channels for ballot initiative information, but many in certain states prefer not to use social media for this purpose.

- When asked which social media platforms they typically use to learn about ballot initiatives, voters allocate an even number of points across all answer options, indicating they utilize multiple social media channels for this purpose. However, it does vary widely by state – Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, Oregon, and Washington voters are more likely to say they don't utilize social media to research ballot measures.

Unbiased information is the biggest barrier for voters staying informed on ballot initiatives.

- Voters say that a lack of unbiased information is the biggest barrier or challenge they encounter when trying to stay informed about ballot initiatives. Navigating mis and disinformation as well as confusing ballot language also pose problems for voters.
- Lack of unbiased information is ranked the highest by Nebraska, Nevada, and Maine voters, while voters in Michigan report being more impacted by mis- and disinformation, and voters in Arizona and Colorado are more likely to allocate points towards confusing ballot language.

ON VOTER GUIDES + EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS + DIRECT OUTREACH

Voters have varying preferences for voter guides, with most favoring the official state guide, while some prefer community or local newspaper guides.

- Overall, voters allocate points across all three options for preferences – the official state voter guide, community voter guides, and local newspaper voter guides – but tend to prefer the official state voter guide from their Secretary of State. API voters, voters under the age of 45, and Black voters prefer to use voter guides from a community organization or advocacy group they trust, while Native Americans prefer their local newspaper voter guide the most.
- Washington, Oregon, Arizona, and Colorado voters heavily lean on their Secretary of State for voter guides, while Nebraska, Maine, Missouri, and Ohio voters lean more on their trusted community or advocacy groups for this information.

Voters prioritize clear and unbiased educational materials for ballot initiatives.

- Voters say that local organizations and campaigns should create easily understandable and unbiased educational materials for upcoming ballot initiatives. The remaining options receive between 8-18 points on average. Voters in Montana also value the use of social media platforms, websites, and emails to disseminate information, while Mississippi voters put more stock into holding town halls, forums, or other community meetings as the most useful way of providing information on ballot initiatives.

Most voters put effort into researching ballot measures.

- The average voter is likely to put some level of effort into researching ballot measures before voting on them, with an average answer of 68 out of 100 and 85% of voters answering 40 or higher. However, this has declined since this question was reprioritized in April by slightly more than 4 points.
- Colorado voters are the most likely to say they research ballot measures (77), while Nebraska voters are the least likely (58).
- Looking at voters who report watching a single specific news network most of the time, all three (CNN, Fox News, MSNBC) report higher averages than the overall average voter. MSNBC viewers are most likely to say they research beforehand (75).

Voters are fed up with campaign contacts, especially phone calls and TV ads.

- Generally, voters are fed up with being contacted by campaigns via phone calls, followed by TV ads, someone coming to their door, and text messages. They are less bothered by emails and online ads. This has been relatively consistent since 2020,

although voters have become slightly less annoyed by text messages over the past few months (-2 points).

- Looking at the data state by state, Montana voters are the most frustrated with TV ads, while Nebraska and Mississippi voters are the most frustrated by a person coming to their door.

Most voters prefer to keep their ballot measure decisions private, with notable state variations.

- Overall, voters lean more towards keeping their decisions to themselves, with every demographic group agreeing. This varies mostly by state – voters in Nebraska and Missouri are the most likely to say they keep these decisions to themselves, while voters in Washington and Colorado say they are more likely to discuss it with friends and family.

(BISC research is provided in partnership with Tendency - a research platform that convenes online panels of registered voters on behalf of BISC.)

BISC's Approach to Research

BISC's mission is to strengthen democracy by implementing a national progressive strategy for ballot measures rooted in building state-based power. We center the following principles when approaching our research program:

1. We conduct comprehensive research that includes quantitative and qualitative methodologies.
2. We collect data that gives us insight to a snapshot in time (like most traditional polling and focus groups) and we collect longitudinal data to give us insight over time through our Tendency panels.
3. We conduct research in the multi-modal ways that people access data, including text messaging, social media and online methodologies for gauging opinions.
4. We conduct research that allows for more complexity and nuance, utilizing scale - seeing participants as multi-dimensional, rather than binary beings.
5. We conduct research that helps us disrupt “monolith” narratives and strategies for BIPOC, immigrant and youth communities, to understand in more depth what is important to these traditionally underrepresented people -- the people we center in our long-term, movement building work.

For more information, or if you have any questions, please contact Adam Snipes, BISC's Director of Strategic Partnerships at adam@ballot.org.