

CRITICAL INSIGHTS

RESEARCH FOR PRECISE PRAGMATIC DIRECTION

Maine Voter Preference Study

Summary Report of Findings

April 2010

Prepared for:



Focus Groups • Surveys • Public Opinion Polling

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Report of Findings

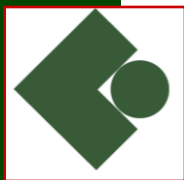


Introduction



Background

- Maine Citizen's For Clean Elections (MCCE) is in the process of evaluating the degree of disclosure that voters in Maine prefer regarding campaign financing.
- As a component of this evaluation, MCCE commissioned Critical Insights of Portland, a nonpartisan public policy polling firm, to conduct a strategic public opinion research effort to gauge voter reaction to a number of issues surrounding campaign funding, disclosure, and privacy.
 - This report summarizes results from this research effort, conducted in April of 2010.



Methodological Overview

Number of Respondents	Dates Research Conducted	Error Margin (each sample)		Initial Refusal Rate	Length of Interview
		90%	95%		
402	April 9 to April 16, 2010	+/-4.1	+/-4.9	< 3.0%	13 minutes

- A survey instrument of approximately 13 minutes in administrative length was developed by Critical Insights in collaboration with the project team.
- Eligible participants for the survey were required to be registered, “active” voters residing in Maine who self-reported that they are registered and planned to vote in the upcoming statewide election in November of 2010.
 - Data was statistically balanced according to relevant demographic dimensions to be reflective of recent voter turnout in Maine; a summary of the demographic profile of the sample appears later in this report.
- All interviews were conducted by telephone and coordinated from the Critical Insights Information Center in Portland, employing a computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system.
- Initial refusal rates for the study were less than 3% across the entire statewide sample, indicating a high level of engagement and the absence of any overt non-response bias.

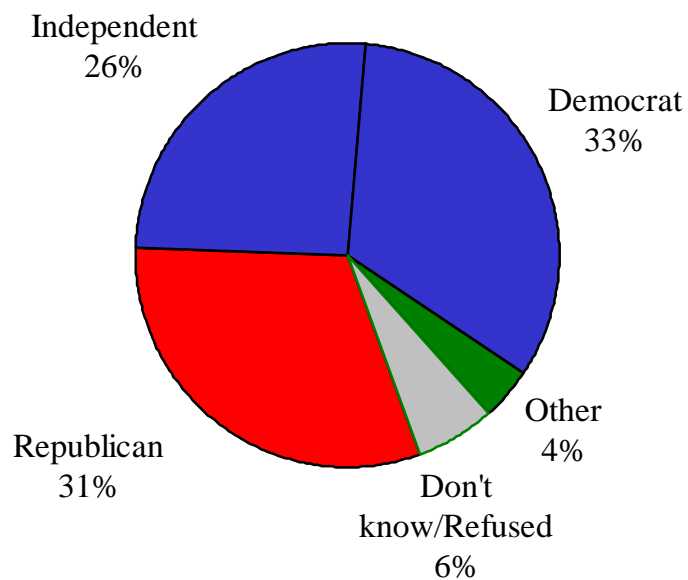


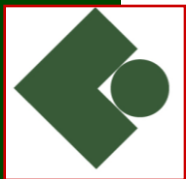
Sample Profile



Voter Party Affiliation

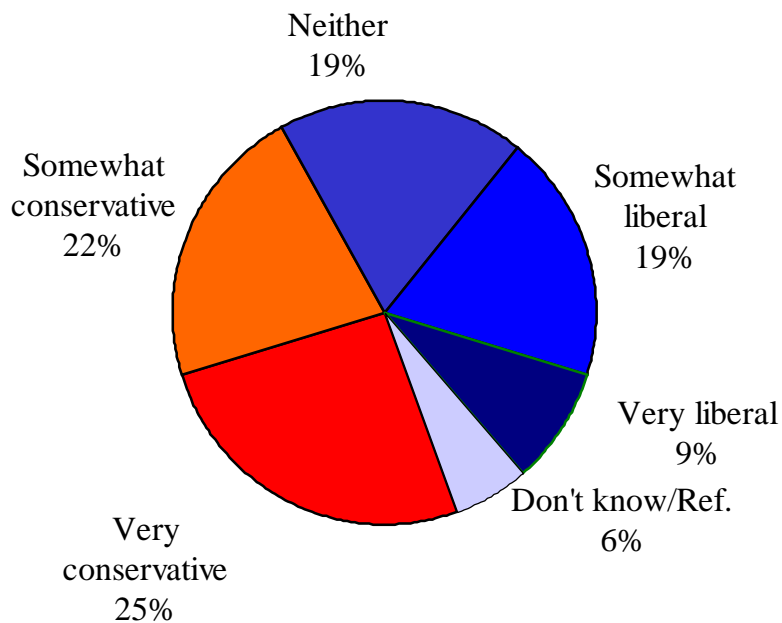
In what political party are you registered to vote?

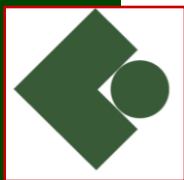




Political Philosophy

Thinking about your political leanings, would you say you are...?



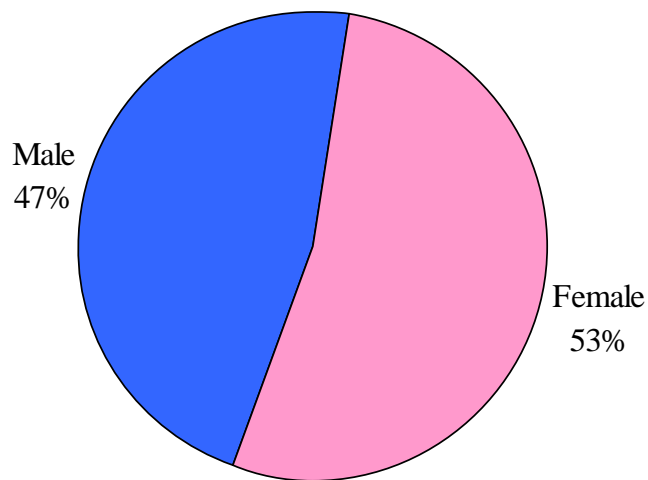


Political Donations

<i>In a typical election year, about how much have you given in the form of political donations?</i>	Percent
\$0/Nothing	54%
\$1 to \$50	19
\$51 to \$100	6
\$101 to \$250	5
\$251 to \$500	2
More than \$500	13



Respondent Gender and Age

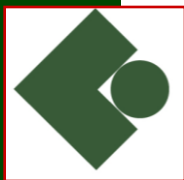


<i>Into which of the following categories does your age fall?</i>	Percent
18 to 34	14%
35 to 44	28
45 to 54	18
55 to 64	21
65 and older	16



Education

<i>What is the highest level of education you have completed?</i>	Percent
High school or less	3%
Graduated high school	26
Technical/Vocational/Community College	2
Some college	20
Graduated college	32
Graduate school	15
Don't know or refused to specify	3



Household Income

<i>Which of the following categories best describes your total household income before taxes last year?</i>	Percent
Less than \$25,000	15%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	19
\$50,000 to \$74,999	21
\$75,000 to \$99,999	19
\$100,000 or more	11
Don't know or refused to specify	15



Research Results



Views on Laws Pertaining to Political Donations



Views on Laws Pertaining to Political Donations

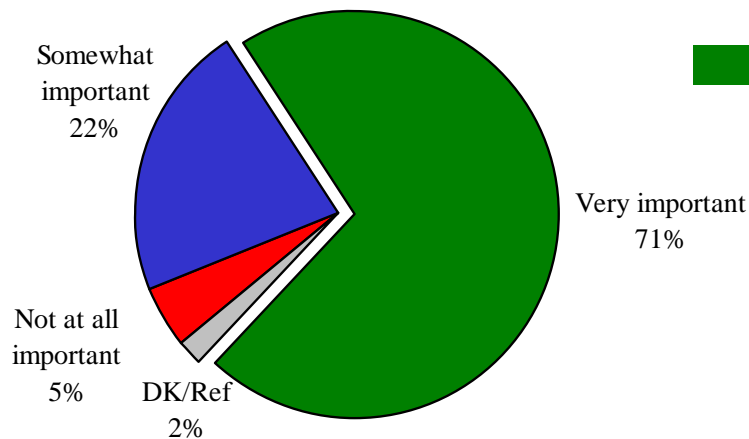
- Fully 7-in-10 registered voters polled said that Maine laws requiring public disclosure of political donations and spending are “very important.”
 - Another one-fifth of respondents stated the laws are “somewhat important,” while very few respondents feel they are “not at all important” (5%).
 - Notably, respondents most likely to view campaign funding laws as “very important” are those who give the most in yearly political donations (\$100 or more), and those not affiliated with any party.
- Among respondents who believe that State laws requiring reporting of political donations are important, the most frequently cited reason was, “It is important that people know.”
 - Other reasons cited for the importance of political donation laws include limiting the influencing or buying of politicians, accountability and honesty, and a need for transparency.
- Although very few respondents find the political campaign laws unimportant, the most commonly reported explanation was that they simply “don’t care.”



Importance of Laws Requiring Reporting of Most Political Donations

As we head into another election season, there has been some discussion in the state about what information is available to voters and how people learn about campaign issues. We are very interested in your thoughts on this topic.

The State of Maine has laws that require most political donations and spending to be reported. In general, how important do you think those laws are?



<i>And why do you say that? *</i>	%
It is important that people know	69
It will limit influencing and buying politicians	13
Accountability/Honesty	8
We need transparency/Too many loopholes	8
Don't know	5

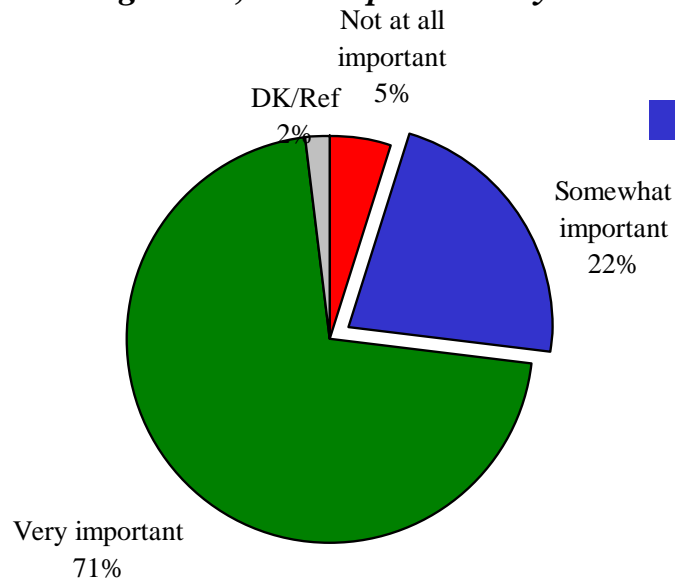
* Based on those claiming that laws are “very important”; n=285. Top responses shown. Multiple responses accepted.



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<i>And why do you say that? *</i>	%
It is important that people know	42
I don't read them anyway/Not important/Don't care	16
It will limit influencing and buying politicians	7
We need transparency/Too many loopholes	7
I don't like politics/Don't trust politicians	6
Don't know	17

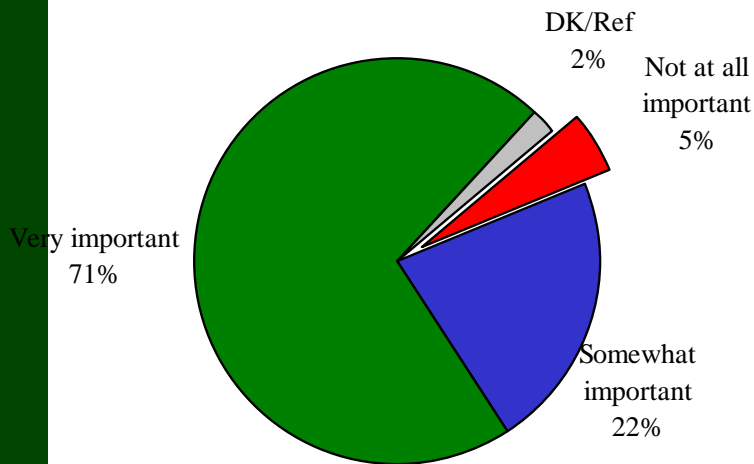
* Based on those claiming that laws are "somewhat important"; n=91. Top responses shown. Multiple responses accepted.



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<i>And why do you say that? *</i>	Number
I don't read them anyway/Not important/Don't care	9
I don't like politics/Don't trust politicians	4
Should be kept private/Nobody's business	4
We need transparency/Too many loopholes	2
Don't know	2

* Based on those claiming that laws are "not at all important"; n=20. Top responses shown. Multiple responses accepted. Due to the small number of responses, figures represent actual numbers rather than percent.

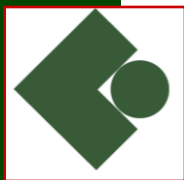


Perceived Importance of Political Communications



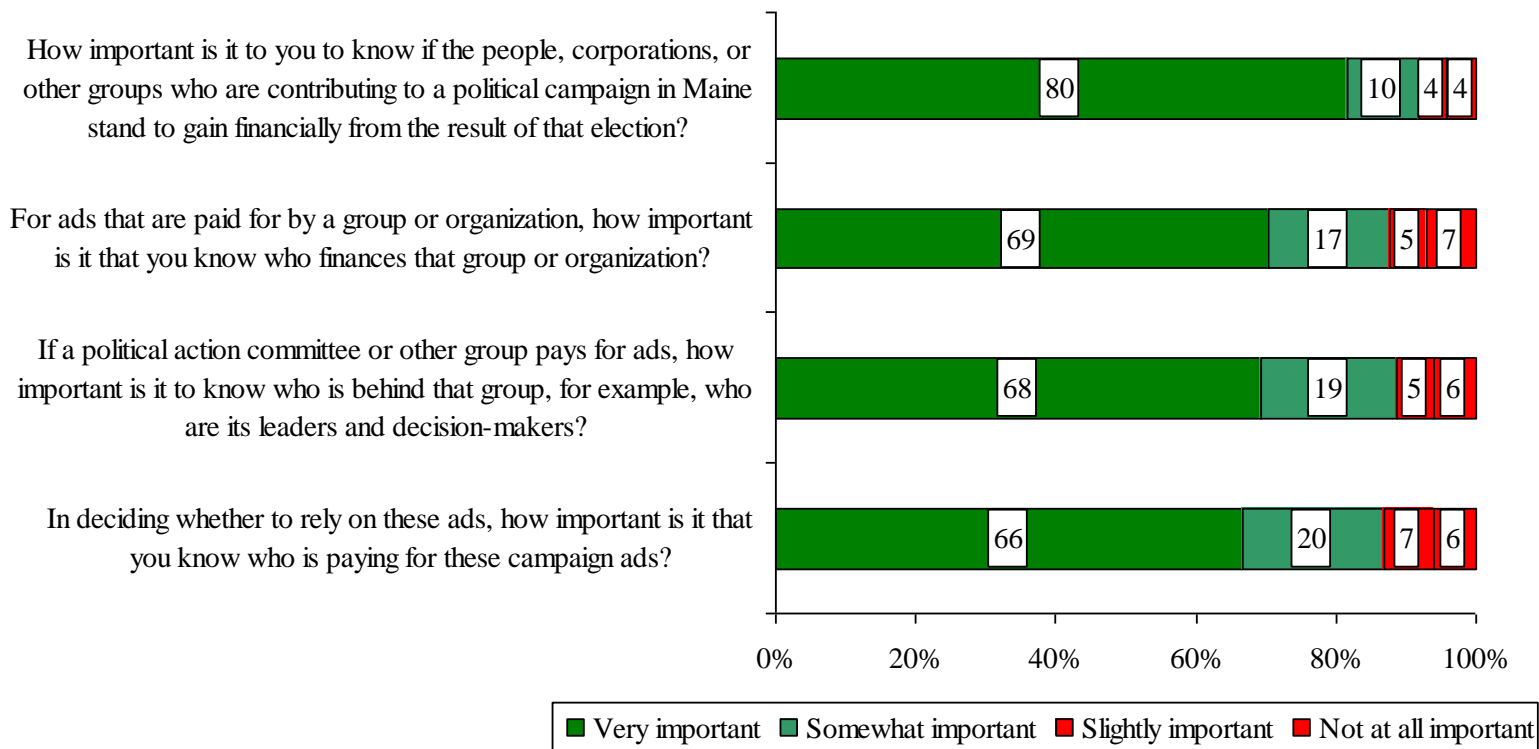
Perceived Importance of Political Communications

- Among registered voters polled, the most important aspect of political communications is knowing whether people or groups contributing to a Maine political campaign stand to gain financially from the result of the election.
 - Indeed, fully 9-in-10 respondents indicate that knowing whether political campaign contributors will benefit financially is “somewhat” or “very important” to them.
- While the majority still find them important, respondents place less salience on advertisements compared to other types of political communications tested.
 - Specifically, two-thirds of those surveyed indicate that ads are important in helping inform voters before an election.
 - Interestingly, the value placed on ads as a means of informing voters is significantly higher among respondents whose political leanings are conservative and those affiliated with the GOP.
 - By contrast, ads hold significantly less importance to those with liberal political leanings and who have Democratic or no party affiliation.



Perceived Importance of Various Aspects of Political Communications

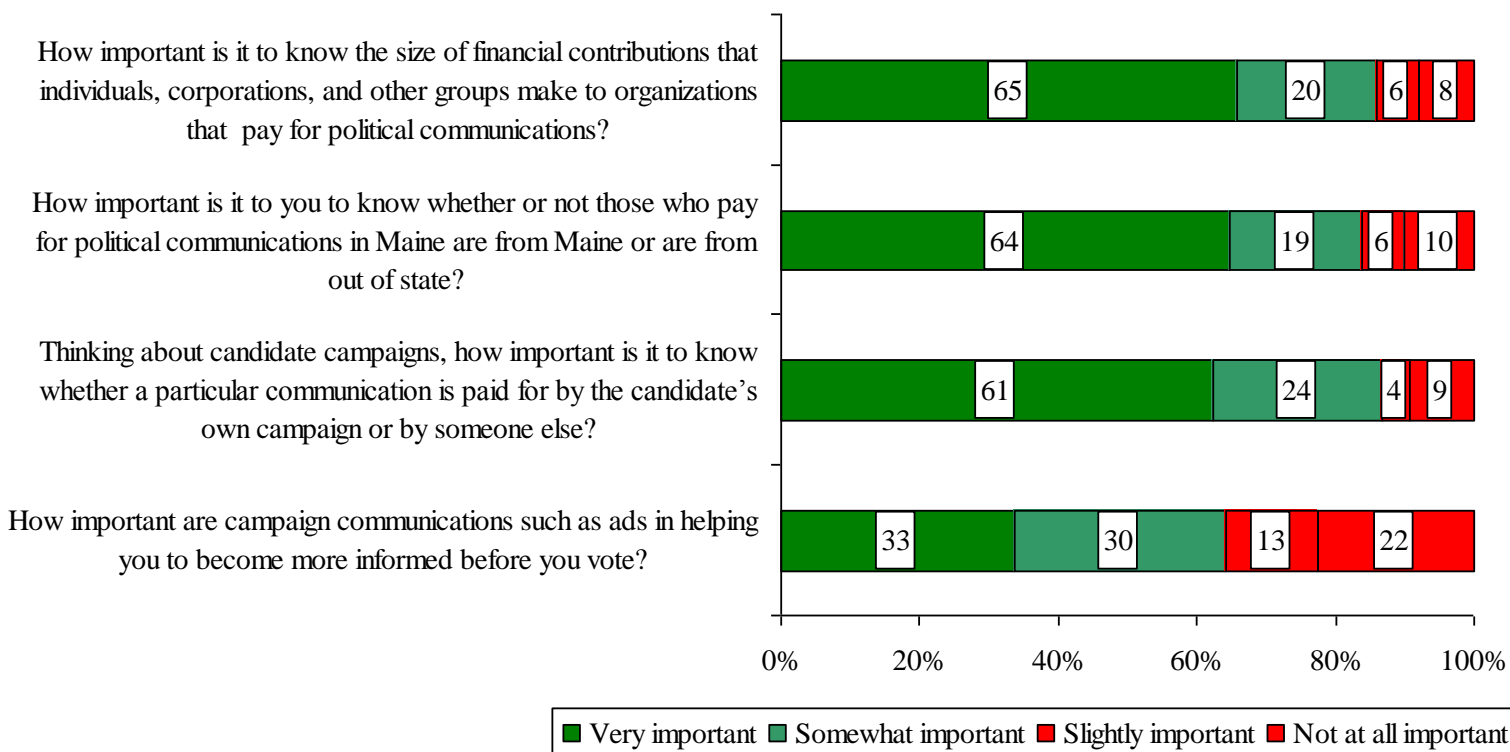
I am going to read you a series of statements about political communications such as advertising or campaign mail and ask you to tell me how important various aspects of these communications are to you personally.





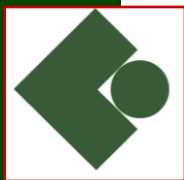
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Views on Campaign Communications



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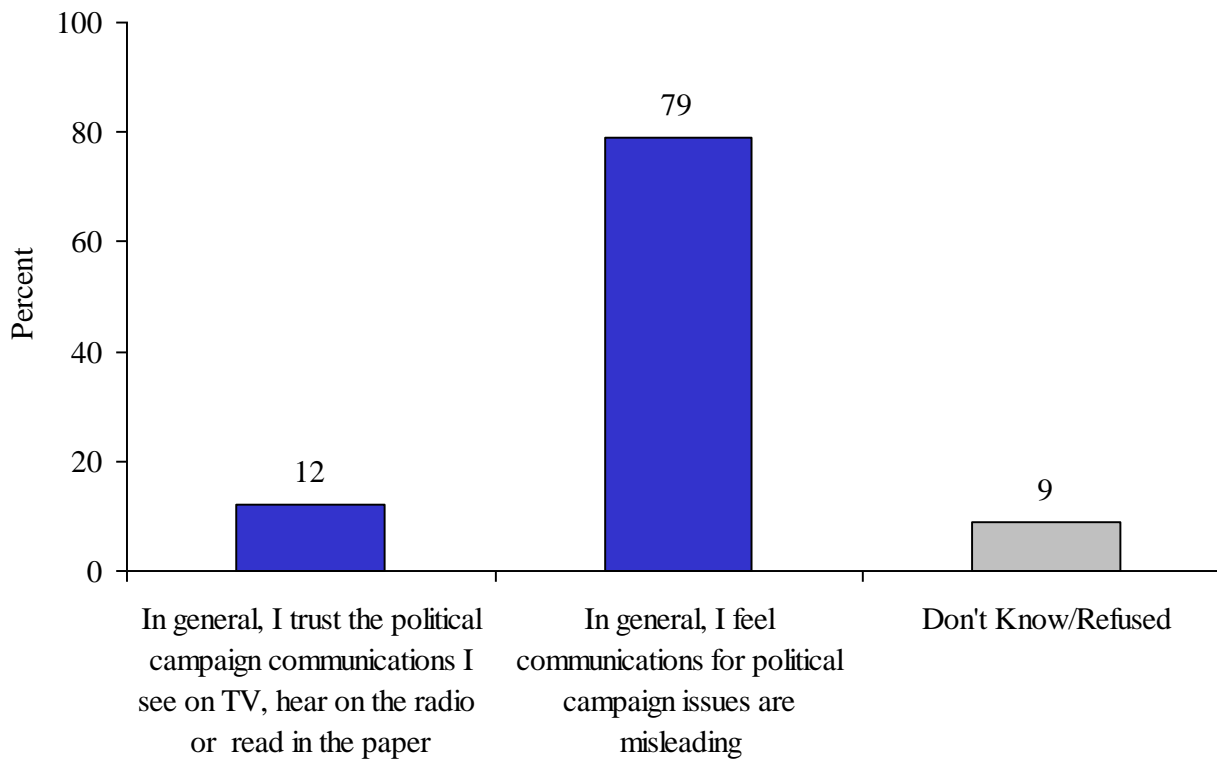
- When asked which statement most closely represents their personal point of view, the vast majority of registered voters responding to the survey indicate that political campaign communications are misleading (79%), while only about 1-in-10 said they trust the communications from the media (TV, radio, newspaper).
 - Those who are unenrolled in any party or describe themselves as “Independent” are more likely to feel that communications are misleading than respondents associated with other political parties.
- Overall, respondents tend to favor transparency over confidentiality in terms of political campaign communications.
 - Indeed, more than 8-in-10 voters surveyed feel it is important for them to know who pays for political campaign communications, and that making the names of political donors public is important in keeping the process open.
 - About three-quarters of respondents said that knowing who pays for a political advertisement – and specifically who is behind the group or organization – helps them determine its credibility.
 - Respondents with liberal political leanings were generally more likely than others to favor statements pertaining to open communications.



Views on Communications

I am going to read you two different statements that talk about how campaign communications efforts are paid for.

Listen carefully, then tell me which ONE comes closest to your own personal point of view:

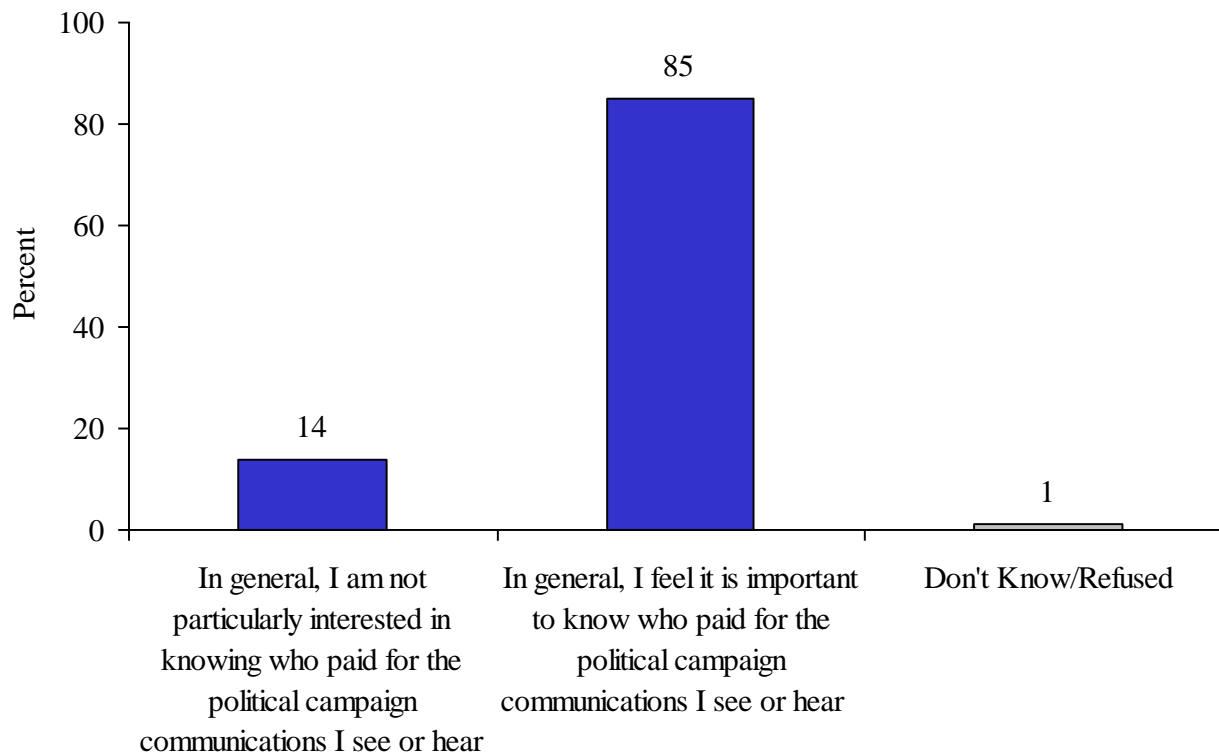




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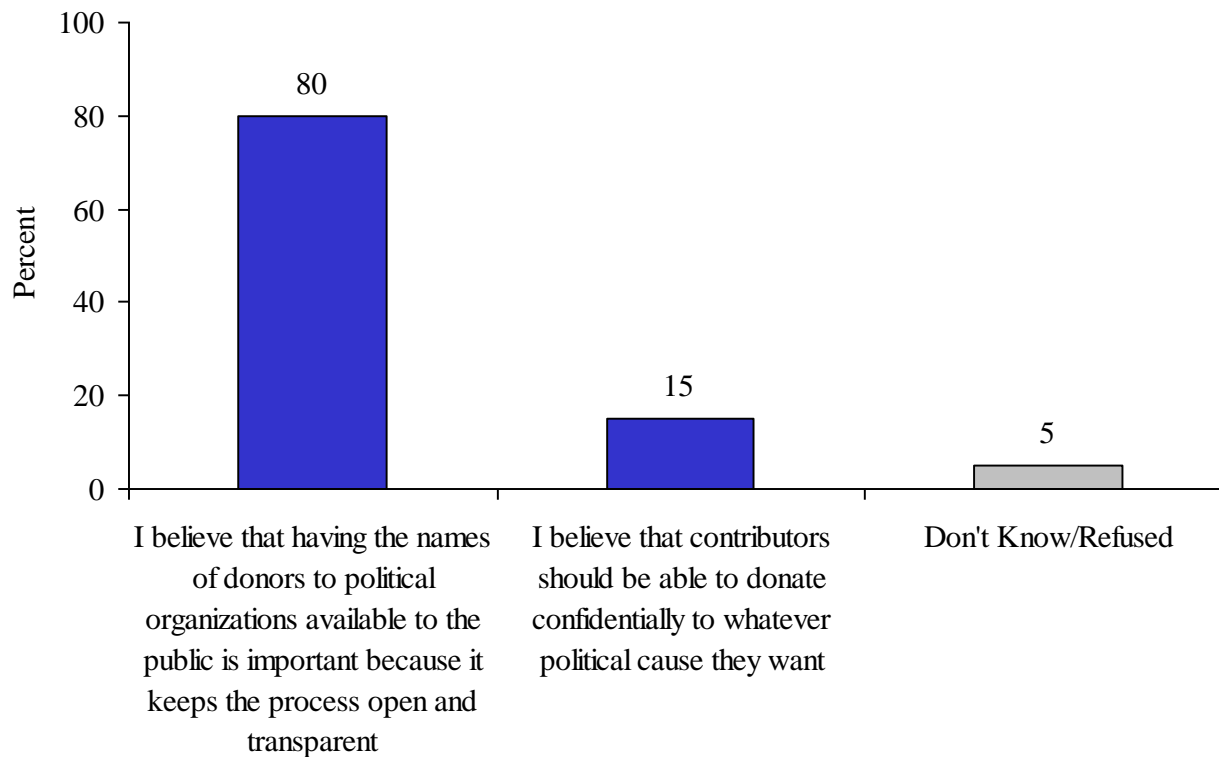




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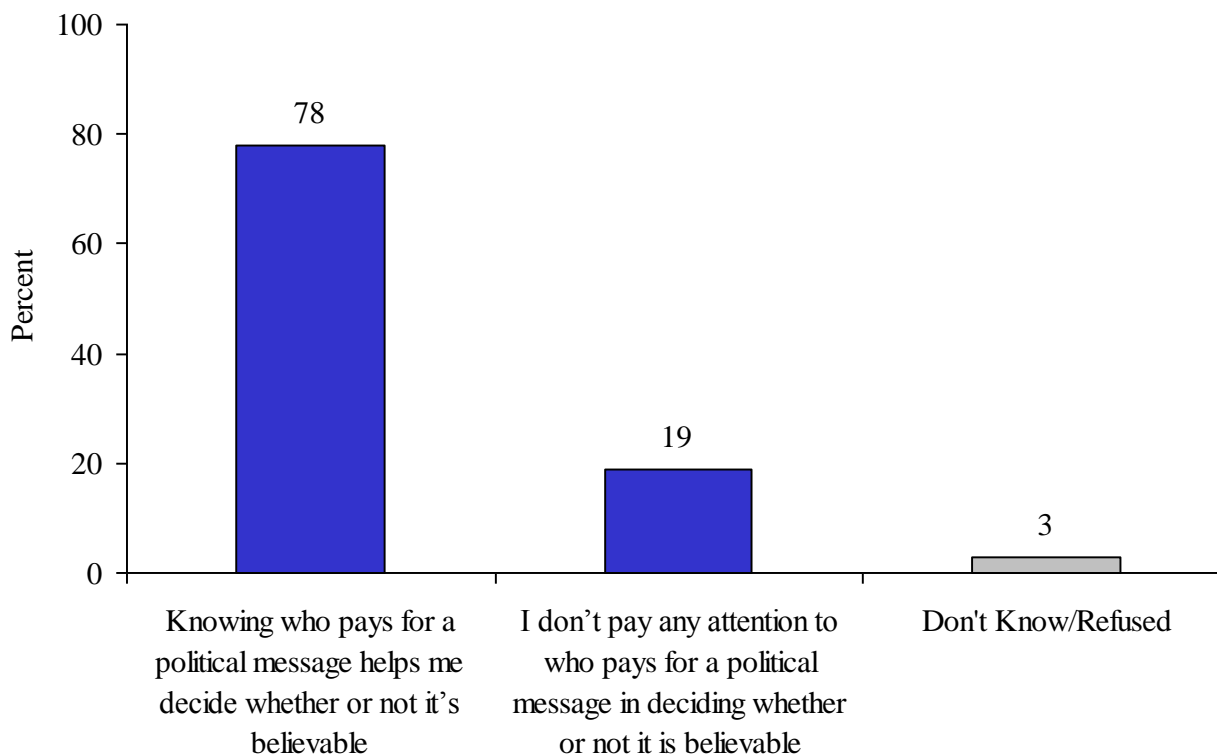




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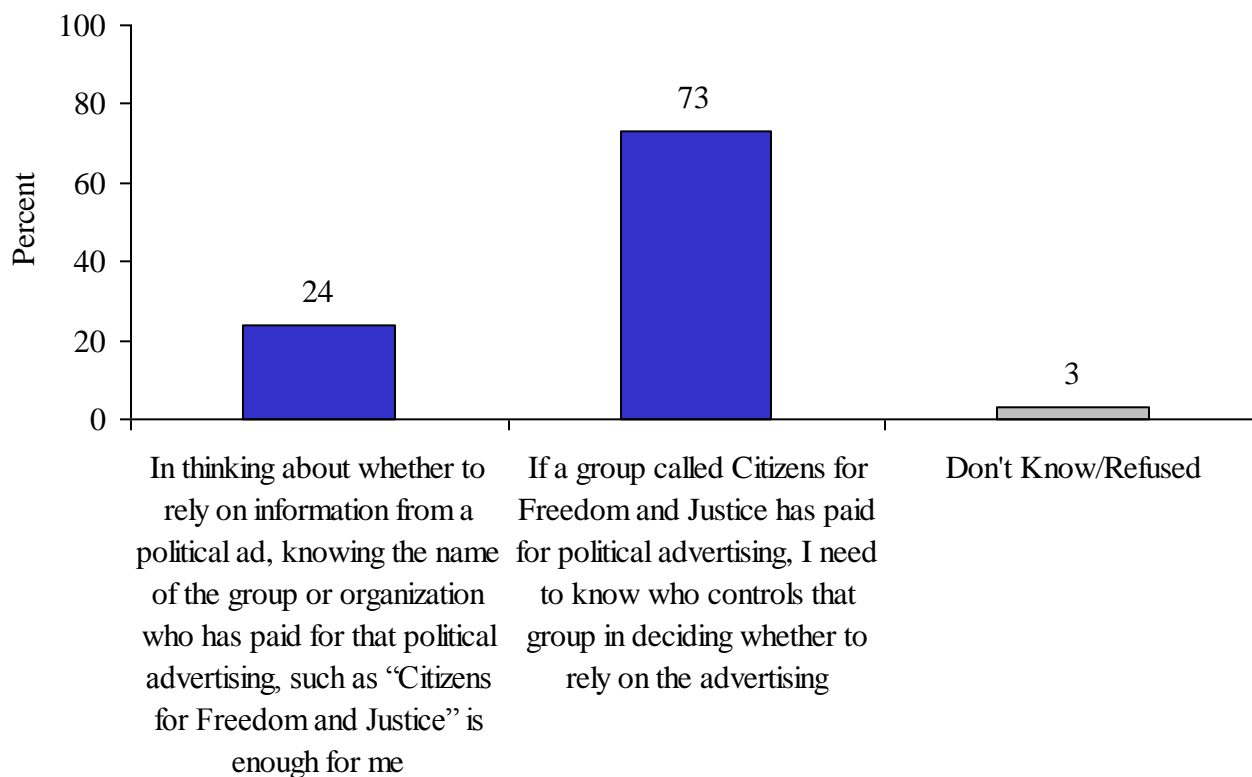




Views on Communications

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Agreement/Disagreement with Political Communications



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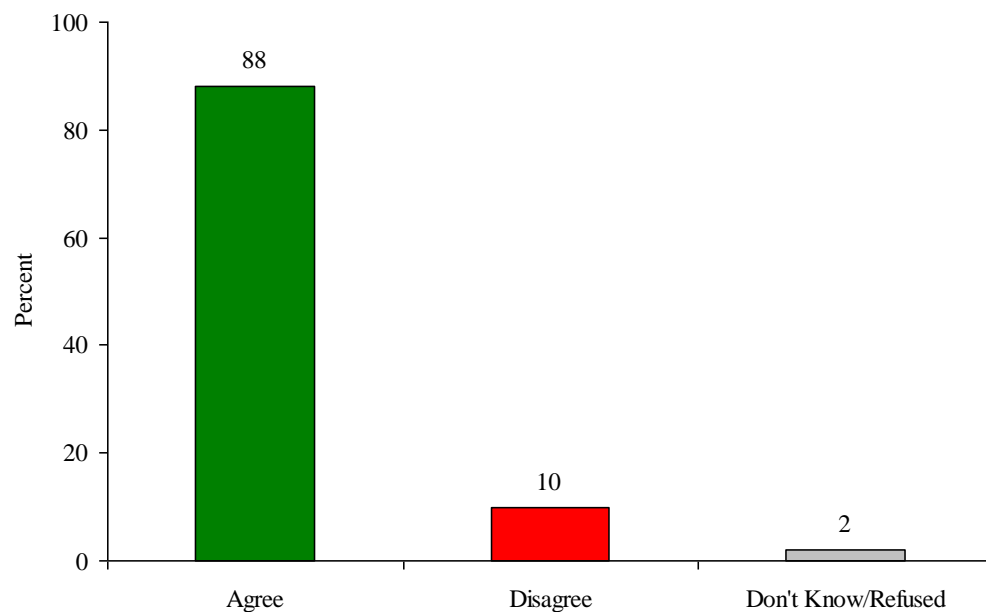
- When asked to express agreement or disagreement in terms of specific political campaign communications, respondents once again tend to support open communications.
 - Fully 9-in-10 voters polled agree that, regardless of whether they would personally use the information, it is important that the names of political action groups paying for political communications be publicly available.
 - Additionally, more than 8-in-10 respondents agree that the names of donors to political action groups should be available to the public, as well as who specifically controls a group or organization.
- Conversely, only 17% of respondents agree that it is important for political campaign donors to remain confidential.
- The difference in opinions about the size of political contributions being made public was less extreme, with 39% of voters surveyed agreeing that it is not important vs. 56% who disagree.
 - Similarly, 39% of those polled agree that knowing the identity of contributors would not affect their opinion or how they vote, while 58% disagree.

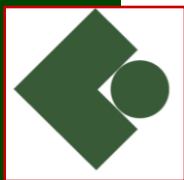


Agreement/Disagreement with Issues of Political Communication

Maine has laws that generally require political contributions and spending to be reported. A state agency uses these reports to keep track of information such as who gives, how much is given, and how the money is spent. That information is available to the public. I am going to read you a series of statements about political campaign communications and ask you to tell me if you agree or disagree with that point of view.

Whether or not I would personally use such information, it is important that the names of **individual, group, or corporate donors** to political action groups are publicly available.

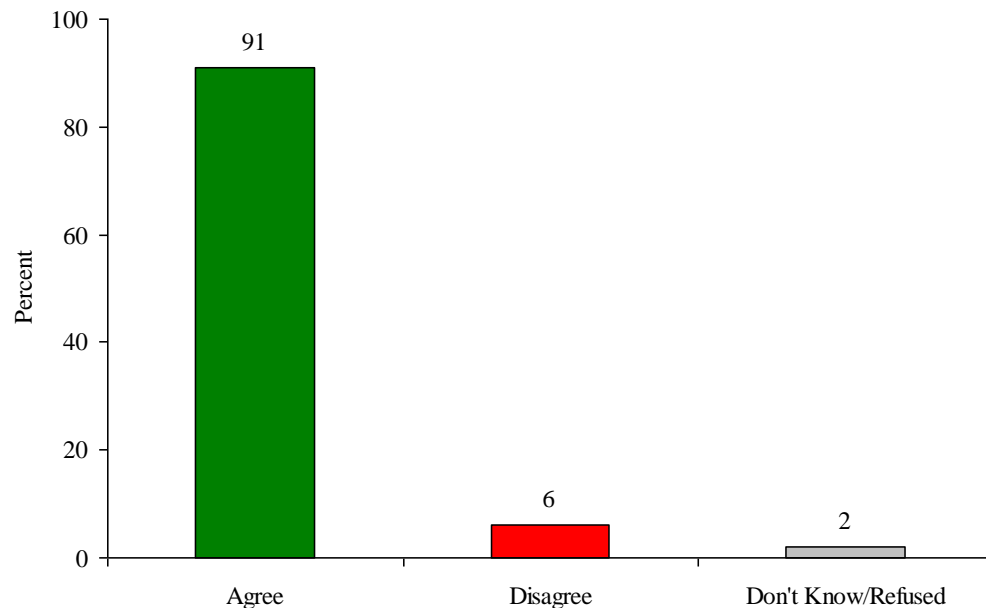




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Whether or not I would personally use such information it is important that the names of political action **groups** that pay for the political communications are publicly available.

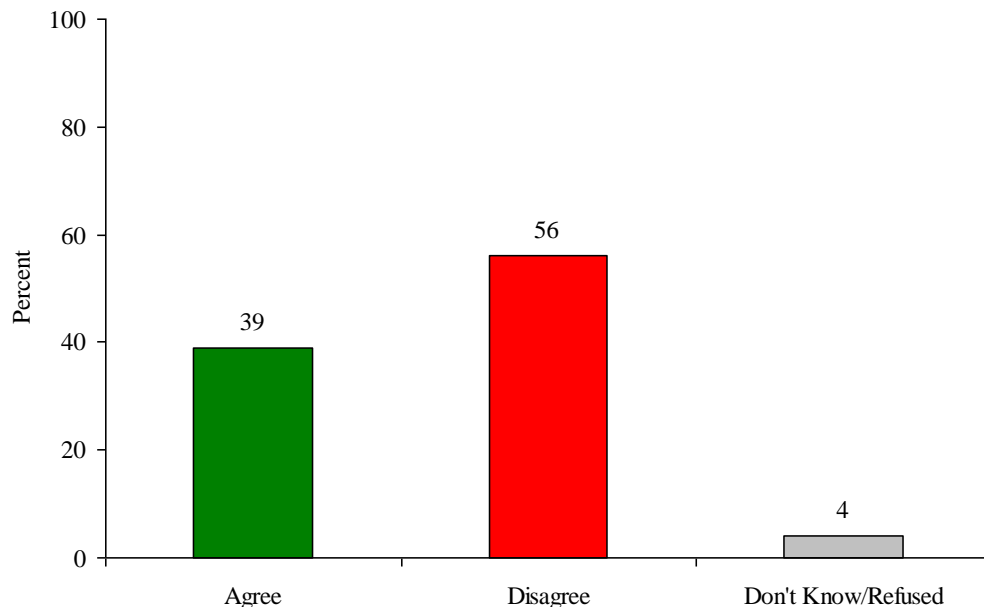




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It is not important to me that the size or amount of contributions to political action groups be available to the public.

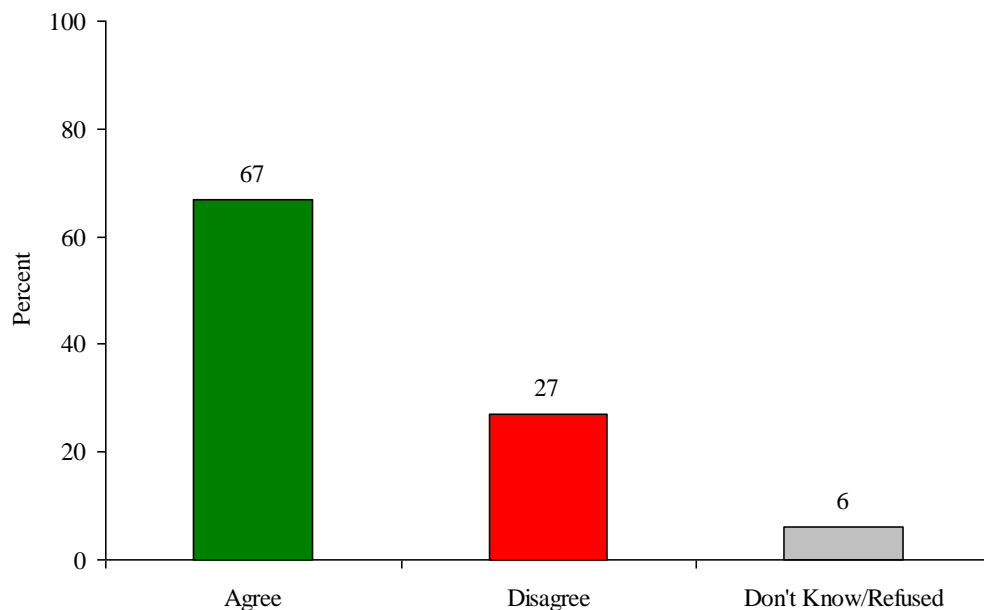




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Statements on ads indicating that a certain candidate 'approved' the messages in the ad make for more honest communications.

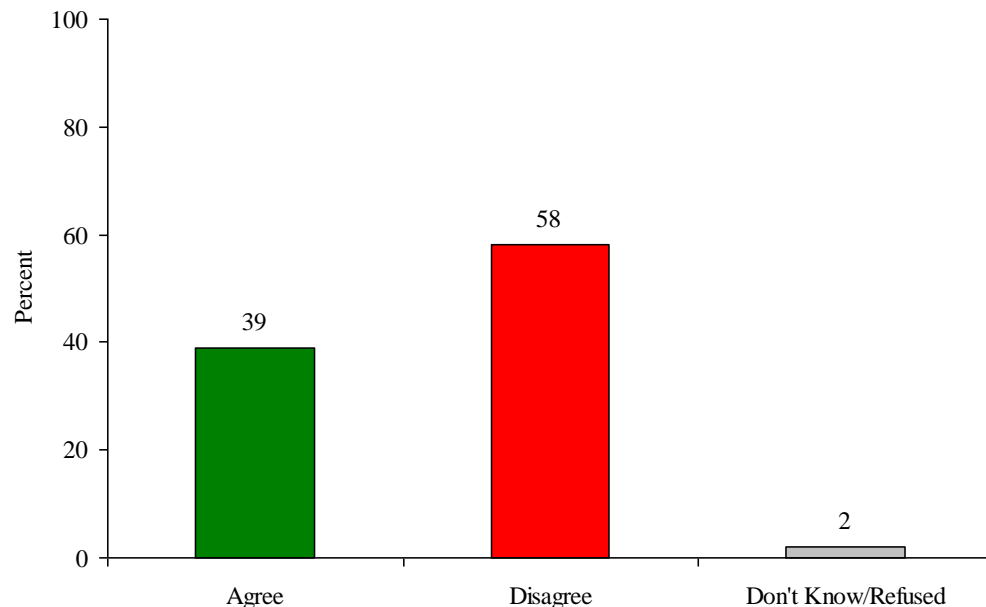


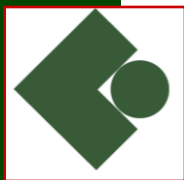


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Knowing the identity of individuals and organizations that contribute money to political campaigns would not affect what I think or how I would choose to vote.

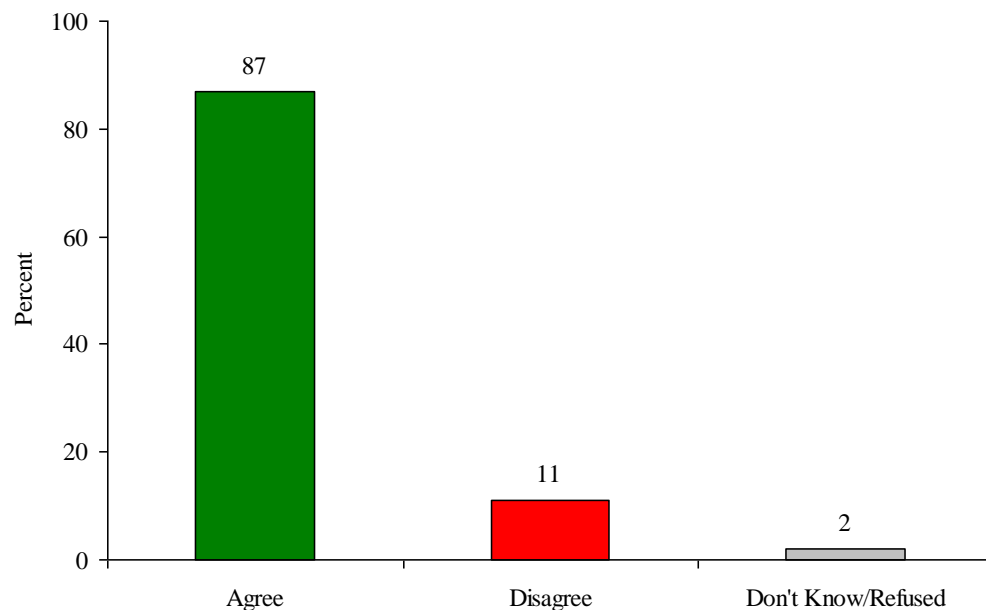




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I think the names of organizations or groups that contribute to political campaigns can be unclear, so I think it is important to know who controls the group.

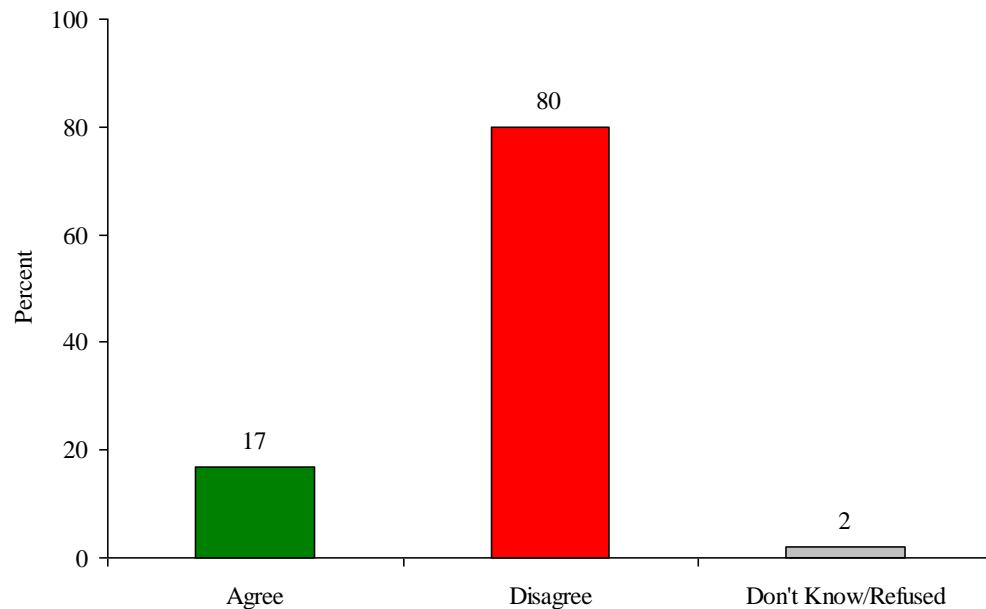


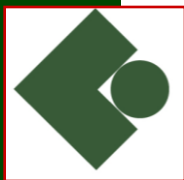


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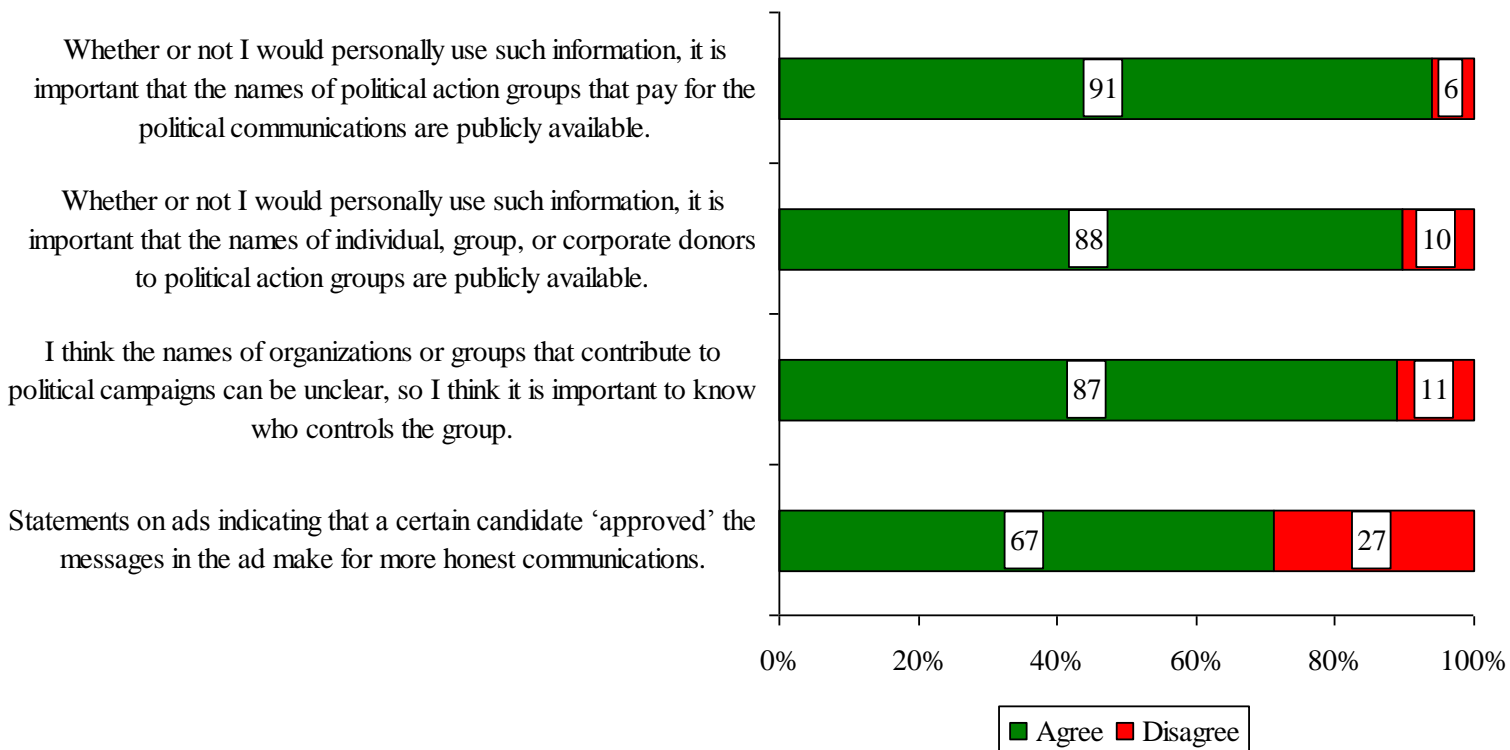
It is important for donors to have their political campaign donations be confidential.





Summary Agreement/Disagreement with Issues of Political Communication

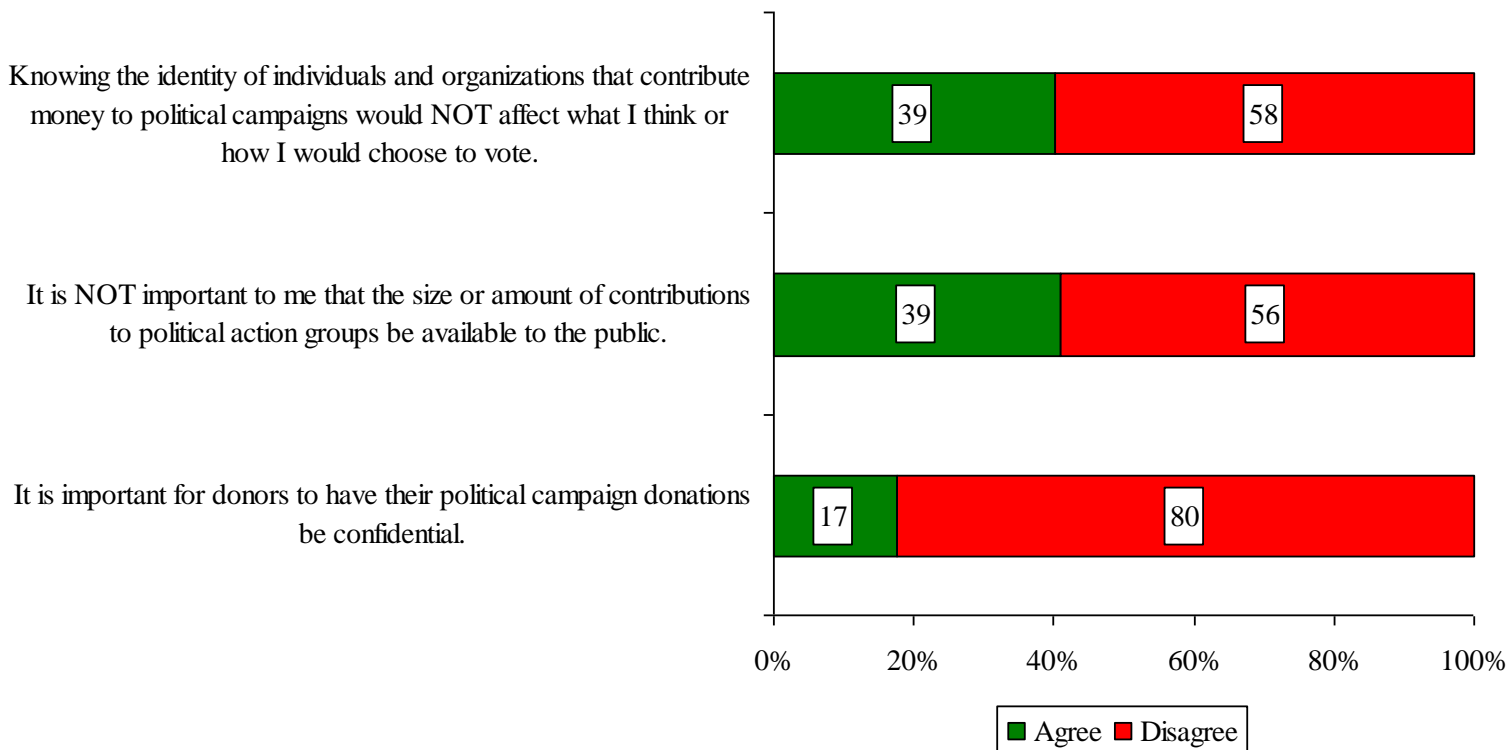
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*Perceived Importance of
Disclosure vs. Confidentiality*



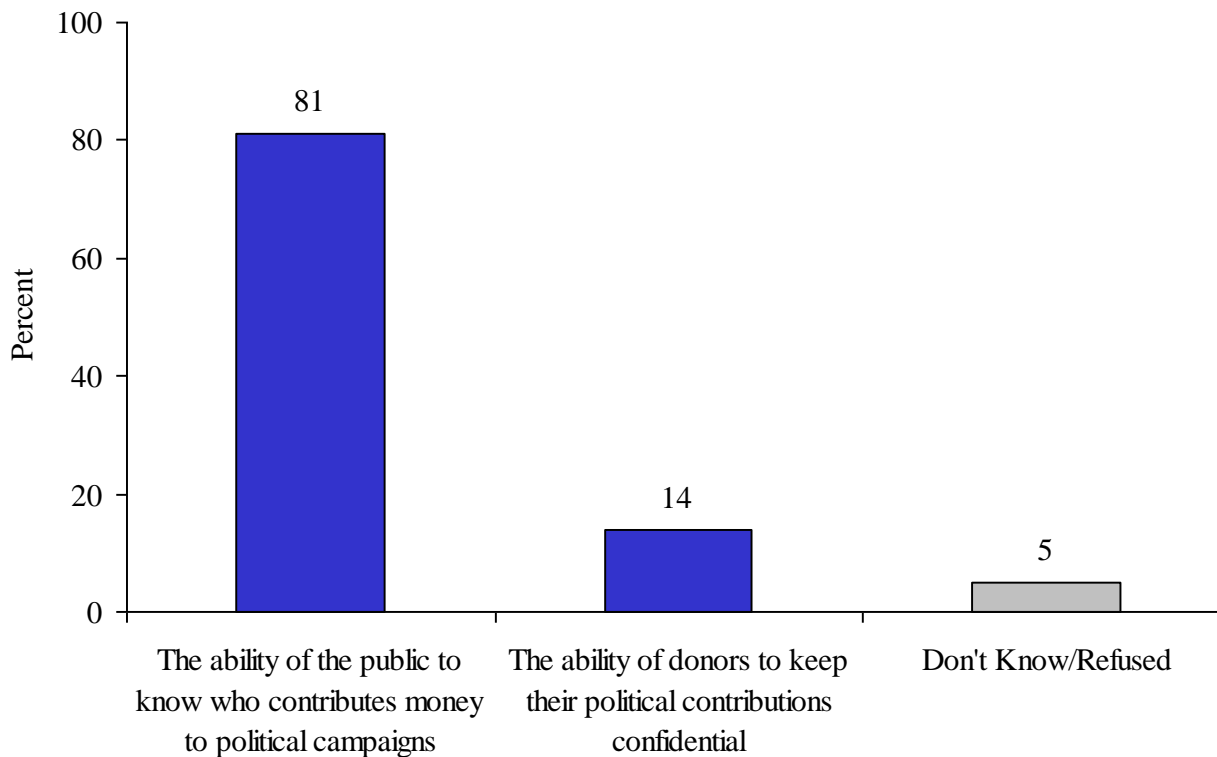
Perceived Importance of Disclosure vs. Confidentiality

- Consistent with findings noted throughout this report, when asked to choose which of two opposing statements is the most important, the majority of voters surveyed place higher importance on public knowledge than on donor confidentiality.
 - Specifically, 81% of respondents feel that the ability of the public to know who contributes financially to political campaigns is important, while only 14% place more importance on the ability of donors to keep their contributions confidential.
 - Likewise, more than three-quarters of those polled indicate that greater disclosure of political donations to assure integrity of the election process is important, vs. 15% who feel that greater anonymity is important to protect donors' privacy.



Trade-Off

*I'm going to read you two opposing statements regarding some of the issues we've been discussing. Listen carefully, then choose the **ONE** which is most important to you...*





Trade-Off

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