

Competition or Representation?
How the Public Views the Descriptive and Partisan Effects
of Independent Redistricting Commissions[†]

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Abstract

Some states have moved redistricting from the state legislature and to independent redistricting commissions (IRCs), presumably to foster electoral competition. However, the use of IRCs has led to fears that they will focus on creating competitive districts at the expense of minority representation. For example, after Michigan implemented an IRC in the 2020 redistricting cycle, the commission produced maps that fostered political competition, but it reduced the number of majority-minority districts in the state legislature. This example highlights a tension between providing descriptive representation through the maintenance of majority-minority districts versus creating competitive districts that provide greater partisan representation. This study investigates this trade-off by studying public support for IRCs. Using a nationally representative survey, I find that support for IRCs decreases when framed as a threat to majority-minority districts. Subsequent analyses focus on politically relevant subgroups: Black Americans view the need for greater partisan representation as more important than descriptive representation, while White Americans place greater importance on minority descriptive representation over competitive elections.

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Research on political representation has found that descriptive representation—where representatives share the same race, ethnicity, or gender as an individual—serves as an important form of representation for the American public (Pitkin 1967; Mansbridge 1999; Casellas and Wallace 2014). Previous research has investigated the impact of descriptive representation on public policy and voting behavior. Descriptive representation has been found to impact the effectiveness of a member of Congress in completing a constituent’s casework (e.g., Miller and Stokes 1963; Lowande, Ritchie, and Lauterback 2019; Yeung 2023) and voter turnout (e.g., Barreto, Segura, and Woods 2004; Cho, Costa, and Horiuchi 2023). At the same time, as polarization has increased, partisanship may be a stronger identity than race (Iyengar and Westwood 2015). Given these trends, few studies have investigated whether the public prioritizes descriptive representation or partisan interests, and most studies on the tradeoff between descriptive and substantive representation have relied on hypothetical candidates (e.g., Jones 2013; McCarthy 2022; Cho, Costa, and Horiuchi 2023).

One real-world policy that makes decisions that impact descriptive representation and partisan interest is redistricting. Yet, few studies have researched the nature of public opinion toward redistricting. In fact, despite 10 states currently having independent redistricting commissions (IRCs) to redraw district lines (Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Michigan, Montana, New Jersey, New York, and Washington) few studies have examined how the public views these commissions.

Minority Representation, Partisan Interest, and Redistricting

An independent redistricting commission includes members of both political parties that work together to draw congressional district lines. The goal of independent redistricting commissions is to take the power of redistricting out of the hands of partisan state legislatures

and ensure district lines are as fair as possible (Nelson 2023). However, partisan fairness is one of many factors that influence the drawing of district lines. One such factor is mandates on the creation of majority-minority districts and ensuring minority representation in government (Jerit and Barabas 2004).

Majority-minority districts are congressional districts where a racial minority group or groups are a majority of the district's population (Lublin et al. 2009). According to the United States Census Bureau's 2021 American Community Survey, 131 congressional districts are majority-minority districts, which accounts for about 32% of the 435 congressional districts (Skelley 2023). The goal of majority-minority districts is to enhance the political power of racial minorities by increasing the likelihood of minorities electing a candidate of their choice that can represent the racial minority's interests. Lublin et al. (2009) find that candidates of color are more likely to get elected in majority-minority districts, illustrating the benefit of majority-minority districts on descriptive representation (Skelley 2023). However, some have raised concerns about whether the creation of majority-minority districts harms the substantive representation of minorities as it packs minority voters into a few districts (Hill 1995; Cameron, Epstein, and O'Halloran 1996).

Public opinion polls on majority-minority districts and descriptive representation are infrequent, but the few that have been conducted indicate that for minority voters, creating majority-minority districts is important, despite their potential negative effects on substantive representation. Tate (2003) found that Blacks were initially opposed to the creation of majority-minority districts when the elimination of these districts was framed as a way to remove race from the redistricting process. However, when respondents were presented with counterarguments about the descriptive effects of majority-minority districts on minority

representation, many Blacks changed their position, indicating support for majority-minority districts (Tate 2003). These findings suggest that Black voters place great importance on ensuring descriptive representation, and are even willing to shift from their initial opposition to majority-minority districts when informed about their impact on minority representation. Ansolabehere and Persily (2015) studied support for majority-minority districts by race and found that Black (83%) and Hispanic (74%) respondents were significantly more likely to support the creation of majority-minority districts compared to white respondents (44%).

Independent Redistricting Commissions and Minority Representation

These tensions play out beyond opinion polls. For example, the tradeoffs between the creation of majority-minority districts and competitive districts have been particularly salient for IRCs.

One such real-world example of this tradeoff was following the 2020 redistricting cycle, the Michigan Independent Redistricting Commission was sued for diluting the Black population by reducing the number of majority-minority Black Senate districts from five to zero, and the number of majority-minority districts in the Michigan House was cut in half (Gibbons and Barrett 2022; Lieb 2022). Despite the decrease in majority-minority districts, the maps drawn by the IRC were politically advantageous for Democrats. In 2022, the first election under the maps drawn by IRC, Democrats won both chambers of the Michigan state legislature for the first time in 14 years (Meyers 2023). In late 2023, a federal court required the Michigan IRC to redraw district lines to increase the number of majority-minority districts (King 2023).

The implementation of IRCs has led to variation in support for these commissions along partisan and racial lines. A 2020 Marquette Law School poll found that 80% of Democrats, 70% of Independents, and 63% of Republicans supported an IRC. Democrats' significant support for

IRCs is unsurprising given their desire for redistricting reform. In 2019, after winning a majority in the House of Representatives, Democrats introduced an election reform bill, H.R. 1, which would create an IRC to draw district boundaries nationwide (Parsons 2021). Despite Democrats being more likely to support IRCs, the Marquette Law School survey found that minorities were less likely to support IRCs. Whites (73%) supported the implementation of an IRC, at a higher rate than Blacks (70%) and Hispanics (50%).

In addition to the controversy related to the Michigan IRC map, other IRCs have faced criticism for potentially diluting minority voters. Colorado's IRC approved its map by a vote of 11 to 1 with the lone dissenting vote being a Democrat on the IRC who voiced concerns about the map's representation of Latino voters. A report by Common Cause wrote that the Colorado IRC chose "competitive districts over protecting minority communities" (Wilson 2023).

California's IRC faced similar allegations of trying to dilute the Latino voters with the California League of United Latino American Citizens writing that the maps "reduce the powers of our communities as the turnout of the maps were not what our community had been hoping for" (Mehta 2021). Litigation and concerns about the impact of the maps drawn by IRCs are not limited to the 2020 redistricting cycle. For example, the Montana IRC, one of the oldest IRCs in the country, was sued after the 1990 redistricting cycle by a group of Native Americans alleging the IRC's redistricting plan diluted their voting strength. The courts eventually upheld the Montana IRC's plan, but this illustrates that the controversies surrounding minority representation and IRCs have persisted for decades (Edwards et al. 2016).

This raises questions of whether a tradeoff between competitive districts and majority-minority districts exists and whether this impacts public support for IRCs, which have been heralded as ensuring fair districts that represent the will of the people. Two previous studies have

investigated this question. McCarthy (2022) conducted a survey experiment to study the relationship between partisan affiliation and support for non-partisan maps. The experiment presented respondents with hypothetical congressional maps, some maps were partisan gerrymanders, while other maps presented to respondents ensured electoral competitiveness. McCarthy (2022) found that most citizens prefer having fair electoral districts over partisan considerations when they have an explicit choice. Those who considered themselves very strong partisans were more likely to support maps that took partisan considerations into account rather than maps that were based on fairness (McCarthy 2022). However, McCarthy's (2022) study did not consider any conditional effects by race and whether minority representation could be a confounding variable in the study's findings.

A second study, Fang (2019), starts to address the role of race in support of redistricting plans by conducting a nationally representative survey of Black, Latinos, and Asian Americans about the tradeoff between descriptive and substantive representation in redistricting decisions. Fang's survey focuses on minority support for the creation of majority-minority districts. Fang finds that minorities would be willing to decrease the number of majority-minority districts (descriptive representation) if doing so would increase the number of Democratic seats in a legislature (partisan interest).

However, there are two limitations of Fang's study that this study hopes to address. First is generalizability: Fang's study focuses on the views of racial minorities by utilizing a sample of Black, Latino, and Asian Americans. This study expands upon Fang's study by also investigating the views of White Americans, particularly White Democrats, to see whether they would be willing to give up descriptive representation for minorities if it would ensure greater partisan representation for themselves. Second, Fang's study does not investigate the impact of partisan

fairness in redistricting, which McCarthy (2022) finds to be particularly powerful. Thus, this study aims to further the research on the tradeoff by conducting a framing experiment that addresses both partisan interest and minority representation (descriptive representation) through a real-world policy consideration, independent redistricting commissions.

To study this trade-off, this study will employ a framing experiment. This experiment will investigate whether framing IRCs as a threat to majority-minority districts or as a way to foster political competition will impact support for these commissions.

Expectations

Previous studies have found that minority voters largely support the creation of majority-minority districts (Tate 2003; Ansolabehere and Persily 2015). Tate (2003) concluded that “blacks more strongly favor the goal of increasing minority representation than the principle of color blindness in congressional redistricting” (45). Given the importance minority voters place on majority-minority districts, I first hypothesize that support for IRCs will decrease if they are framed as a way of decreasing majority-minority districts:

H₁: By framing IRCs as a threat to the number of majority-minority districts, there would be a decrease in support for independent redistricting commissions.

Similarly, in line with the findings of McCarthy (2022), I hypothesize that framing IRCs as a way to ensure partisan fairness in elections will increase support for IRCs.

H₂: There will be an increase in support for independent redistricting commissions when IRCs are framed as promoting democracy and increasing electoral competitiveness.

I also expect to find heterogeneous effects by race, in line with previous polls which have found that racial minorities emphasize the need to create majority-minority districts, compared to White Americans (Tate 2003; Ansolabehere and Persily 2015).

H₃: The decrease in support for IRCs will be the largest among minority respondents when they are presented with a framing that presents IRCs as a threat to majority-minority districts.

Thus, when both the pro and con frames are presented to the respondents, it is hypothesized that white individuals would be more likely to support independent redistricting commissions compared to the control condition's level of support while minority voters (African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians) will decrease support for independent redistricting commissions compared to their level of support in the control condition.

Data and Methods

To test these hypotheses, I conducted a framing experiment about IRCs. In this 2x2 experiment, there are four treatment groups: a control group, a pro-IRC frame, a con-IRC frame, and a pro-and-con frame. The treatment vignettes varied in length, but a pilot study was conducted and found no differences in the main outcome measure by treatment vignette length.¹ The pro-IRC frame will frame IRCs as increasing electoral competitiveness and supporting democratic values, while the con-IRC frame will frame IRCs as a threat to majority-minority districts and minority representation.² The wording of each treatment frame is presented in Table 1.

Chong and Druckman (2007) outline four steps of framing that are followed in this study: identification of an event/issue, isolation of a specific attitude that is influenced by the framing, selection of initial frames, and selection of sources of content analysis. This survey experiment focuses on opinions related to IRCs, and studying whether portraying IRCs as a threat to majority-minority districts or as a way to increase competition in elections will impact public support for IRCs. Lastly, the control condition frame only provides an introduction to the

Table 1. Wording of Experiment Frame

Condition	Condition Wording
Control Condition	Every 10 years, the US Census occurs. After each new Census, states redraw their legislative districts. Historically, the task of redistricting has been left to politicians in state legislatures. However, some states have created independent redistricting commissions to draw their legislative districts.
Con Treatment Frame	Every 10 years, the US Census occurs. After each new Census, states redraw their legislative districts. Historically, the task of redistricting has been left to politicians in state legislatures. However, some states have created independent redistricting commissions to draw their legislative districts. Opponents of independent redistricting commissions argue that these commissions will probably reduce the number of majority-minority districts. These districts have a majority of their population composed of racial minorities, ensuring that Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians have representation in Congress. Many people worry that independent redistricting commissions will dilute the vote of minorities.
Pro Treatment Frame	Every 10 years, the US Census occurs. After each new Census, states redraw their legislative districts. Historically, the task of redistricting has been left to politicians in state legislatures. However, some states have created independent redistricting commissions to draw their legislative districts. Proponents of independent redistricting commissions argue that taking the power of redistricting out of the hands of politicians will increase the number of competitive districts, ensuring the will of the people is reflected in every election. Proponents believe independent redistricting commissions will take politics out of redistricting and ensure fairness in elections.
Pro & Con Frame	Every 10 years, the US Census occurs. After each new Census, states redraw their legislative districts. Historically, the task of redistricting has been left to politicians in state legislatures. However, some states have created independent redistricting commissions to draw their legislative districts. Proponents of independent redistricting commissions argue that taking the power of redistricting out of the hands of politicians will increase the number of competitive districts, ensuring the will of the people is reflected in every election. Proponents believe independent redistricting commissions will take politics out of redistricting and ensure fairness in elections. Opponents of independent redistricting commissions argue that these commissions will probably reduce the number of majority-minority districts. These districts have a majority of their population composed of racial minorities, ensuring that Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians have representation in Congress. Many people worry that independent redistricting commissions will dilute the vote of minorities.

redistricting process and does not provide any substantive information about IRCs to respondents.³

This framing experiment was conducted on the 2023 Cooperative Elections Study (CES). The CES is an annual web-based naturally representative survey conducted by YouGov. The 2023 CES was conducted as a single wave in the weeks after the November 2023 elections. The CES begins with a “common content” section, a 10-minute section asked of all respondents focused on demographic questions, political knowledge, and political attitudes. After respondents complete the Common Content, they are diverted into a “team module” which consists of 1,000 respondents each. These team modules last for 10 minutes and are designed by research teams. The questions in this framing experiment are a portion of the team module and asked of all 1,000 respondents.

The main outcome variable of interest in this study is support for IRCs. After respondents are presented with the frame they have been randomly assigned (control, pro, con, or pro and con), they are asked the question, “Do you support or oppose the use of independent redistricting commissions for drawing districts?” The answer choices are on a seven-point scale, with answers ranging from strongly support to strongly oppose. After the outcome question, a subjective manipulation check (SMC) is asked. The SMC asks whether respondents think IRCs threaten the number of majority-minority districts. In line with Kane and Barabas (2019), I placed the manipulation check after the outcome measure to ensure that the SMC does not influence the outcome measure.⁴ All hypotheses and data analysis methods were pre-registered on AsPredicted in December 2023, before data from the 2023 CES was distributed to researchers in February 2024.

Empirical Findings

Differences in means were used to compare responses to the outcome measure, support for IRCs. The results from the outcome measures are shown in Table 2. The directional effects of each frame are in line with the study's hypothesis: the con-frame saw a decrease in support for IRCs compared to the control frame and the pro-frame increased support for IRCs relative to the control condition.⁵ The outcome measure, support for IRCs, by treatment condition compared to the control group are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Outcome Measure by Frame

	Mean	(s.e.)	n
<u>Con Frame</u>			
Treatment Group	4.11	(0.09)	253
Control Group	4.70	(0.10)	252
Difference	-0.59	(0.13)	
Sig. test value	4.39		
p value	.00		
<u>Pro Frame</u>			
Treatment Group	4.88	(0.10)	248
Control Group	4.70	(0.10)	252
Difference	0.17	(0.14)	
Sig. test value	1.22		
p value	0.22		
<u>Pro and Con Frame</u>			
Treatment Group	4.50	(0.09)	246
Control Group	4.70	(0.10)	252
Difference	-0.21	(0.14)	
Sig. test value	1.52		
p value	0.13		

Note: The outcome measure is a seven-point scale with higher values indicating greater support for independent redistricting commissions.

Figure 1 shows the treatment effect of each treatment frame relative to the control group. The con-frame produced a significant decrease in support for IRCs compared to the control condition (effect = $-.59$, $p < .001$). Individuals in the control group supported IRCs at a level of 4.70 on a seven-point scale, while individuals in the con-frame had a support level of 4.11. Thus, this provides support for the first hypothesis that framing IRCs as a threat to majority-minority districts will lead to a decrease in support for IRCs. This result is also highly powered, with a power of 0.99.⁶

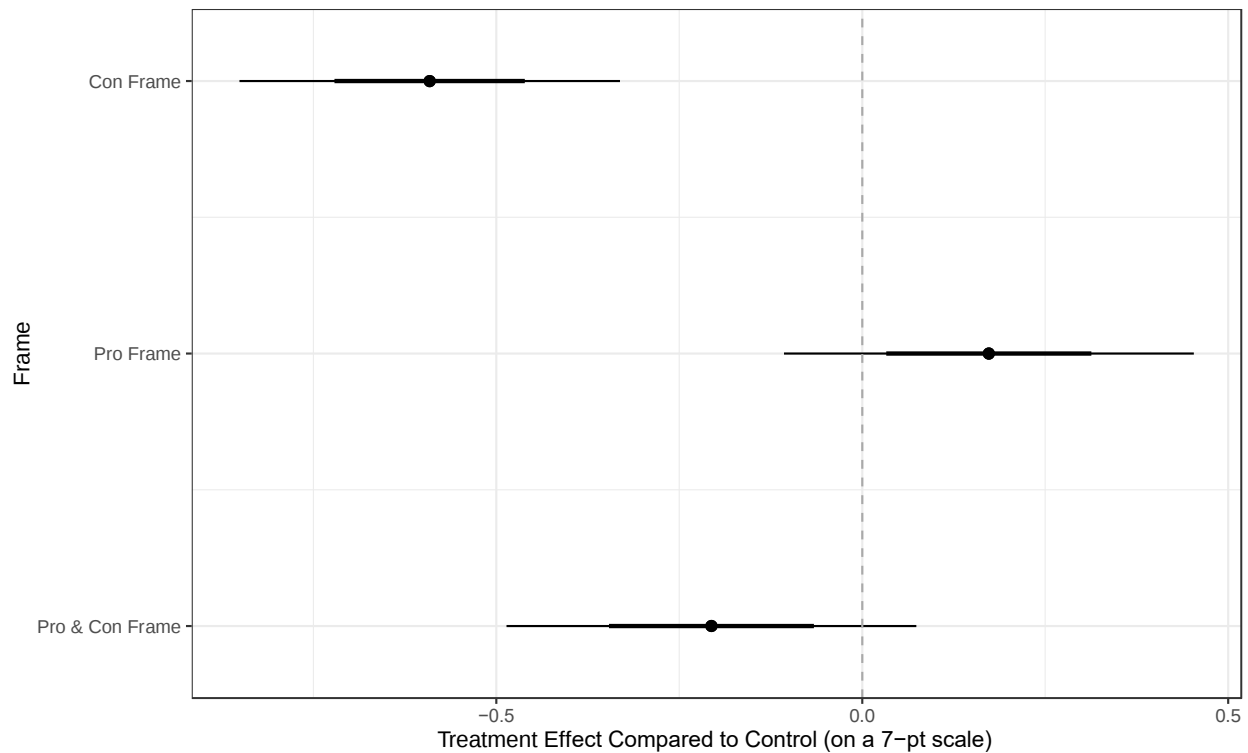


Figure 1. Treatment Effect for Frames

Note: The thinner error bars represent the 95% confidence intervals and the darker error bars represent the 90% confidence intervals. Higher values indicate greater support for IRCs.

The pro-frame seems to have increased support for IRCs, raising support from 4.70 in the control condition to 4.88, but this result is not statistically significant. Because of this finding, there is not enough support for the second hypothesis that framing IRCs as a way to increase competitive elections will increase support for IRCs. When both the pro and con frame are

presented, there is a decrease in support for IRCs, but this shift in support is also not statistically significant (effect = -.21, $p = .13$).

Conditional Effects by Race

The third hypothesis expected conditional effects by race, hypothesizing that the effect of the con frame would be particularly strong for Black and Latino respondents compared to the control based upon previous poll findings about the importance of creating majority-minority districts for minority voters. Interestingly, even among responses in the control condition, there were significant differences in support for IRCs by race: Black respondents' support for IRCs was more than one point lower (on a seven-point scale) than White and Hispanic respondents (see Figure 2). This difference is statistically significant at the .01 level (effect= -1.00, $p < .01$).

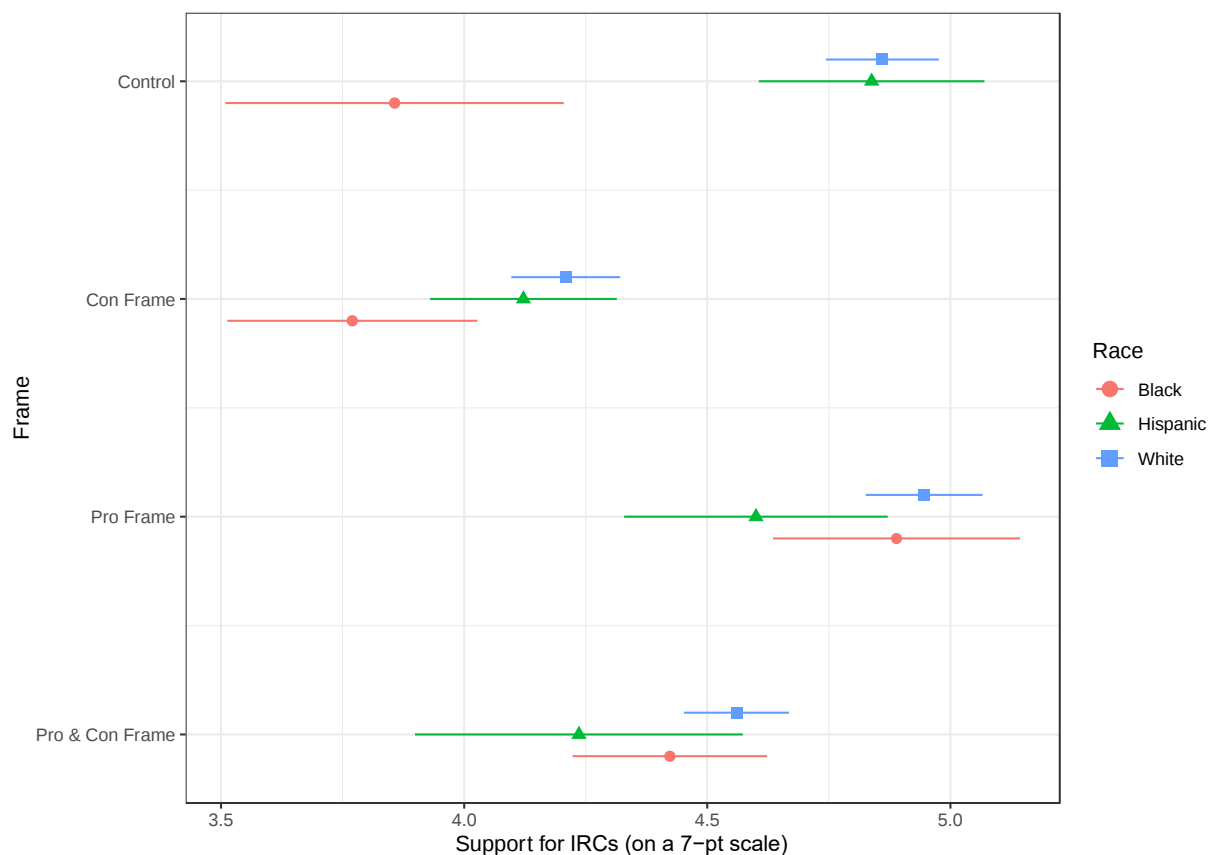


Figure 2. Conditional Effects by Race

Note: The error bars represent the 90% confidence intervals. Higher values indicate greater support for IRCs.

Black respondents' level of support for IRCs in the control condition is 3.86 compared to 4.86 for White respondents and 4.84 for Hispanic respondents. This is an interesting finding that needs to be investigated further: without any framing of IRCs, Black respondents are already statistically significantly more likely to support IRCs. One explanation for this is that Black respondents already associate IRCs with a decrease in majority-minority districts, which explains why the con-frame treatment was not as efficacious for Black respondents.⁷

Figure 3 shows the conditional effects of each by race relative to support for IRC in the control group for each race. In the con-frame, there was a statistically significant decrease in support for IRCs by White and Hispanic respondents. White respondents' level of support for

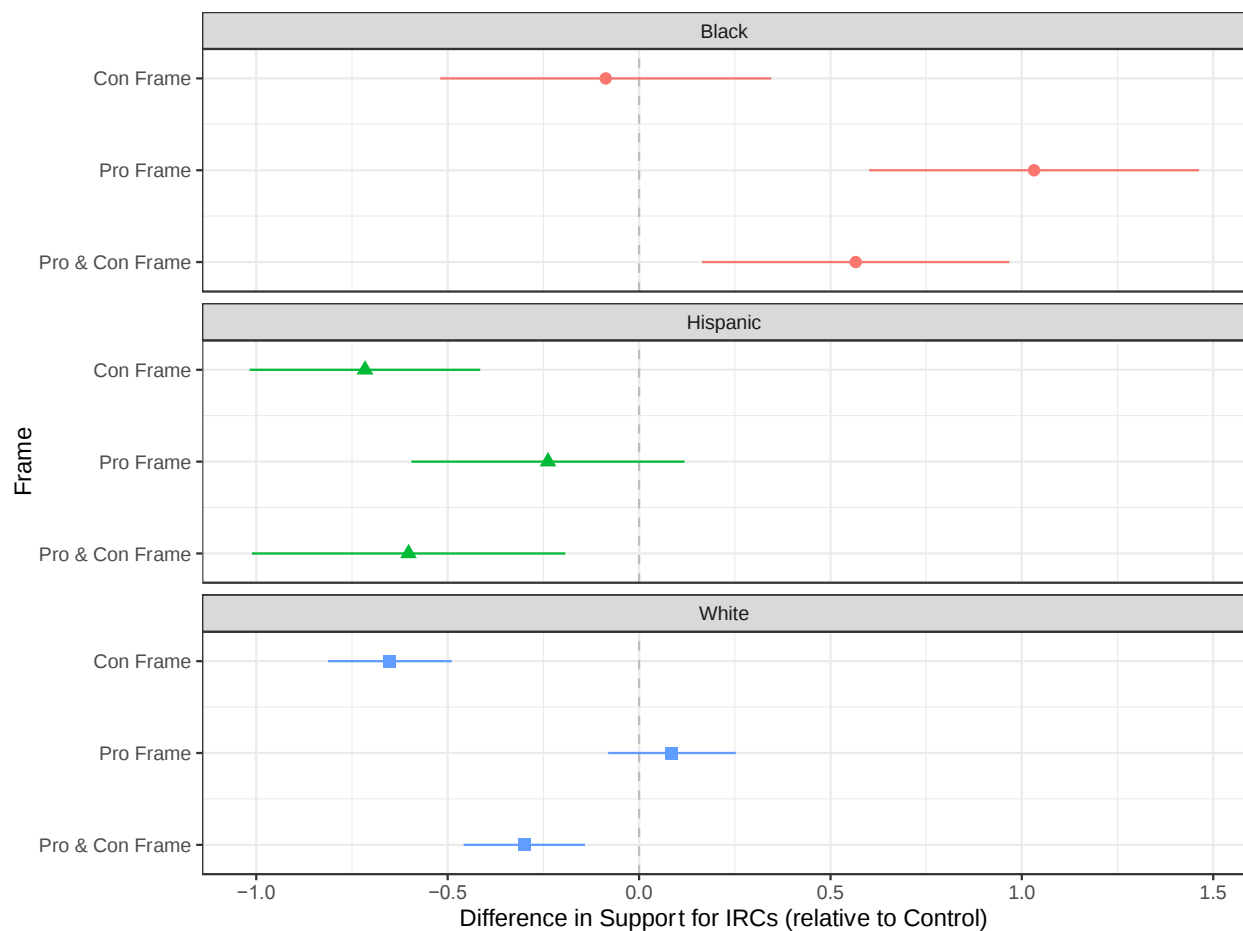


Figure 3. Conditional Effects by Race Relative to Control

Note: The error bars represent the 90% confidence intervals.

IRCs dropped from 4.86 in the control condition to 4.21 in the con-frame, a .65 decrease, significant at the .001 level. Similarly, Hispanic respondents' support for IRCs decreased by .72 decrease, and this decrease is statistically significant ($p < .05$). However, there was no significant decrease in responses by Black respondents (effect = $-.08$, $p = .85$). As mentioned previously, one explanation for this lack of significant decrease is that Black respondents may already associate IRCs with decreasing majority-minority districts, as seen in the court cases that have arisen out of Michigan's IRC.

While the con-frame produced a significant decrease in support for IRCs among White and Hispanic respondents, the pro-frame produced a statistically significant increase in support for IRCs by Black respondents. Compared to the control condition, Black respondents' support for IRCs in the pro-frame condition was more than one point higher (effect = 1.00 , $p < .05$). There was no statistical difference between support for IRCs between the control condition and the pro-frame condition for White respondents (effect = $.09$, $p = .61$) and Hispanic respondents (effect = $-.23$, $p = .51$).

Of note, for respondents for the pro and con frame, White respondents decreased their support for IRCs compared to control frame (effect = $-.30$, $p = .06$), and Hispanic respondents were also more likely to decrease their support for IRCs, but not statistically significantly (effect = $-.55$, $p = .18$). However, for Black respondents, unlike Whites and Hispanics, their support for IRCs increased in the pro and con frame compared to the control frame (effect = $-.57$, $p = .16$). Because it is theorized that Black respondents associate IRCs with a decrease in majority-minority districts, providing these respondents with an alternate framing of IRCs as a way to ensure electoral competitiveness will increase support for IRCs. This also explains why Black respondents increase their support for IRCs when provided with both the pro and con frame, as

they already believe the framing that IRCs threaten majority-minority districts, and thus, the strongest effect comes from the pro framing.

Conditional Effects by Party Identification

In addition to race, there are significant conditional effects by party identification, which are shown in Figure 4.⁸ Unsurprisingly, among respondents in the control condition, Democrats were more likely to support IRCs compared to Republicans (effect = .31, $p = .21$). However, when respondents are presented with the con-frame, there are significant decreases in support among all party identifications. The decrease in support is statistically significant for Republicans (effect = -.64, $p < .01$) and Democrats (effect = -.84, $p < .001$).

Among respondents who received the pro-frame, Independents (effect = .65, $p < .05$) were statistically more likely to support IRCs. However, Republicans' support for IRCs decreased relative to the control group (effect = -.39, $p = .13$). Despite the frame's focus on

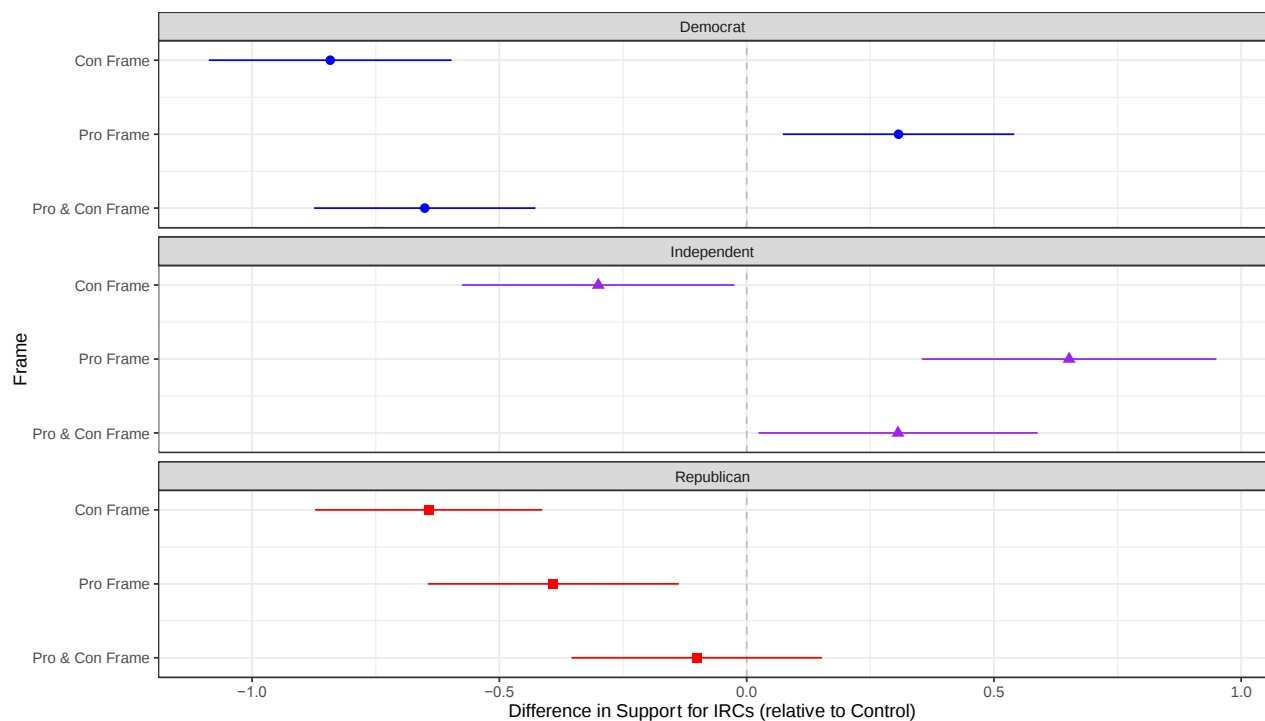


Figure 4. Conditional Outcome Effects by Party Identification

Note: The error bars represent the 90% confidence intervals.

democratic values and increasing electoral competitiveness, Republicans' decrease in support for IRCs can likely be attributed to the belief that IRCs will reduce Republicans' power.

While this result is unsurprising among Democrats, as the Democratic Party has valued the creation of majority-minority districts, this is an unexpected result among Republicans which have historically opposed creating majority-minority districts (Ansolabehere and Persily 2015). For example, in 2023, Republicans in the state of Alabama were forced by the Supreme Court to add a second majority-minority district in the state, which it had resisted for many years (Chandler 2023). One explanation could be that Republicans see the potential benefit of creating majority-minority districts for furthering their political power. During the 2020 redistricting cycle, Republican state legislators recognized the political benefit of drawing majority-minority districts and allied with racial minority lawmakers to control redistricting, as “Republicans understood that creating large majority-minority districts would pack Black Democrats into a few districts, which would increase the percentage of Republican voters in surrounding districts,” leading to the election of more Republicans but also more minority representatives (Mitchell 2023). If Republican voters have recognized the potential political benefit of creating majority-minority districts was not explored in this study and future studies could investigate this possibility.

Conclusions

There is often a perceived tradeoff between partisan fairness and minority representation through support for IRCs. This study finds that framing IRCs as a threat to minority representation leads to a statistically significant decrease in support for IRCs. On the other hand, framing IRCs as a way to increase electoral competition in our political system increases support for IRCs, although the increase in support is not large nor statistically significant.

One potential explanation for these patterns is that IRCs already evoke a sense of electoral competitiveness, as they have been described as a way to prevent gerrymandering, and thus, reminding respondents of a core benefit of IRCs may not be as effective (Jacobson 2023). With relevance here, Druckman and Leeper (2012) find that the impact of timing and events that occur before an experimental treatment (what they term “pretreatment”), may impact experimental results. In particular, they find that pretreatment effects often occur when individuals are likely to form strong attitudes on an issue. Since most coverage of IRCs has focused on reducing gerrymandering and making districts more competitive, this may explain the lack of effectiveness of the pro-frame (Grose and Nelson 2021; Drutman 2022; Sneed 2022). Pretreatment may also explain the lack of effectiveness of the con frame for Black respondents: pretreatment effects may have already led Black voters to believe that IRCs reduce the number of majority-minority districts. Because majority-minority districts have historically been aimed at increasing Black representation within Congress, Black Americans are most likely to form stronger attitudes on majority-minority districts than other racial groups (Skelley 2023; Lublin 1999).⁹ As such, future studies should investigate whether Black Americans already associate IRCs with a reduction in majority-minority districts.

The study’s results also shed light on how IRCs are perceived by party identification. When IRCs are framed as a way to ensure democratic fairness, Democrats and Independents were more likely to support IRCs, but Republicans decreased their support for IRCs. Because IRCs threaten to take power away from state legislatures, a majority of which are currently held by Republicans, it is likely Republicans view IRCs as a threat to their existing control over the redistricting process (Leaverton 2022). During the 2020 redistricting cycle, Republicans had full control over redistricting in 41 percent of congressional districts (177 districts) compared to just

11 percent of congressional districts (49 districts) in which Democrats had full control over the redistricting process (Leaverton 2022).

These results suggest that descriptive representation through the creation of majority-minority districts remains an important goal for many Americans. There is a significant decrease in support when IRCs are framed as a threat to majority-minority districts. When respondents are presented with a frame that presents both the benefits to electoral competition and the potential decrease in majority-minority districts (descriptive representation), it seems that the need for descriptive representation outweighed the desire for more competitive elections. Interestingly, one group that this finding did not hold for is Black Americans. For Black respondents, the decrease in support for IRCs among those presented with the frame depicting IRCs as a threat to majority-minority decrease was insignificant, while there was a large increase of support for IRCs when they are framed as increasing electoral competition.

Further, in the dual pro and con frame, they were more likely to support IRCs compared to the control condition, indicating they view the need for greater partisan representation as more important than descriptive representation. This is in line with Fang's (2019) findings, at least for minority respondents, but this study seems to find the opposite effect for White Americans.

Black Americans' preference for more competitive elections over increased descriptive representation seems to run contrary to Tate's (2003) findings. Tate (2003) finds greater opposition by Black Americans to majority-minority districts when these districts were described as a race-conscious policy, but when Black Americans were later told that majority-minority districts were important to ensuring minority representation in government, a majority of Black respondents indicated their support for majority-minority districts. This study's findings suggest that for Black respondents, informing respondents about the potential impact of IRCs on

majority-minority districts did not shift support for these commissions. However, there was a significant increase in support for IRCs for Black Americans when they were informed about the benefits of IRCs in increasing electoral competition. The finding that Black respondents are willing to increase electoral competition at the expense of minority representation is important to understand in the context of the Supreme Court's 2023 decision overturning affirmative action in college admissions and a greater focus on race-conscious policies (Totenberg 2023). Further, in a 2024 decision on racial gerrymandering, Justice Clarence Thomas questioned whether the judiciary should be deciding racial gerrymandering cases (Woodward 2024). Given these developments, these findings suggest that Black Americans' conception of the best form of representation may be shifting.

This study raises questions that need to be studied in the future, specifically how White Americans emphasize minority representation over competitive elections, despite Black Americans' preference for greater partisan representation. These counterintuitive patterns suggest that the politics of redistricting are much more nuanced than previously thought.

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Appendix A: Manipulation Check Results

Following the treatment, both a subjective (SMC) and factual manipulation check (FMC) were asked of respondents. The purpose of manipulation checks is to “check whether the manipulation conducted in an experiment is perceived by the subjects as the experimenter wishes it to be perceived.” (Morton and Williamson 2010, 108; Kane and Barabas 2019, 234).

Subjective Manipulation Check

The SMC asks whether respondents think IRCs threaten the number of majority-minority districts and response options were on a four-point scale. The purpose of an SMC is to determine whether the respondents in the treatment groups differ from the control group on a key variable of interest, in this case, minority representation. The SMC asked respondents whether they believed that IRCs would dilute the vote of minority voters, measuring whether respondents perceived the con-frame as intended. The results from the SMC, as shown in Table A1 and Figure A1, indicate that the con-frame was somewhat efficacious. Because IRCs were portrayed as a threat to majority-minority districts in the con-frame it is expected that respondents in the con-frame would be more likely to believe IRCs will dilute the vote of minority voters. Both the control and pro-frame did not make any mention of IRCs and minority voters and, thus pooling the responses in these groups to the SMC and comparing them to the con-frame’s SMC responses is appropriate. The SMC results, as shown in Table A1, indicate that those in the con-frame were more likely to believe (effect = .122, $p = .1$) that IRCs will dilute the vote of minority voters than those in the condition groups that did not receive any information about the effect of IRCs on minority representation, but this effect is not statistically significant. Respondents in the condition group which frames IRCs as a threat to the number of majority-minority districts (con-frame) had the greatest fear that IRCs would dilute the vote of minorities, 2.052 on a four-point

scale. The condition with the second highest fear is the treatment condition which received both the pro and the con frame, this is expected as the frame includes the message that IRCs harm the number of majority-minority districts, but respondents' fears about IRCs diluting the vote of minorities may not be as strong because of the competing frame that IRCs promote competitive elections. Both the control and pro-frame, which did not include any messages about IRCs and majority-minority districts, as expected, had the lowest level of fears that IRCs would dilute the vote of minorities, indicating the efficaciousness of the con-framing.

Table A1. SMC Responses between Con Frame and Control Frames

	Mean	(s.e)	n
<u>Con Frame SMC</u>			
Treatment Group	2.05	(0.06)	253
Control Groups	1.93	(0.04)	500
Difference	0.12	(0.07)	
Sig. test value	1.64		
p value	0.10		

Note: The control groups include both the control frame and the pro frame as neither frame included any reference to majority-minority districts and minority voters.

Factual Manipulation Check

In addition to a subjective manipulation check being asked post-treatment, another measure of attentiveness conducted in the survey experiment is a factual manipulation check (FMC). A factual manipulation check is asked posttreatment and is a question asked about the experiential treatment asked of respondents; however, unlike a subjective manipulation check, they contain a correct answer (Kane and Barabas 2019). In the survey experiment, the factual manipulation check asked all respondents, “What was the topic of the previous question?” The answer choices were as follows: Independent Redistricting Commissions, Chinese Technology Advances, Latin American Music Trends, Inflation Rates in the United States, and Weather Patterns in Europe. The answer choices were randomized for each respondent, and the correct

answer choice was Independent Redistricting Commission. The proportion of each treatment group that correctly answered the FMC is shown in Figure A1.

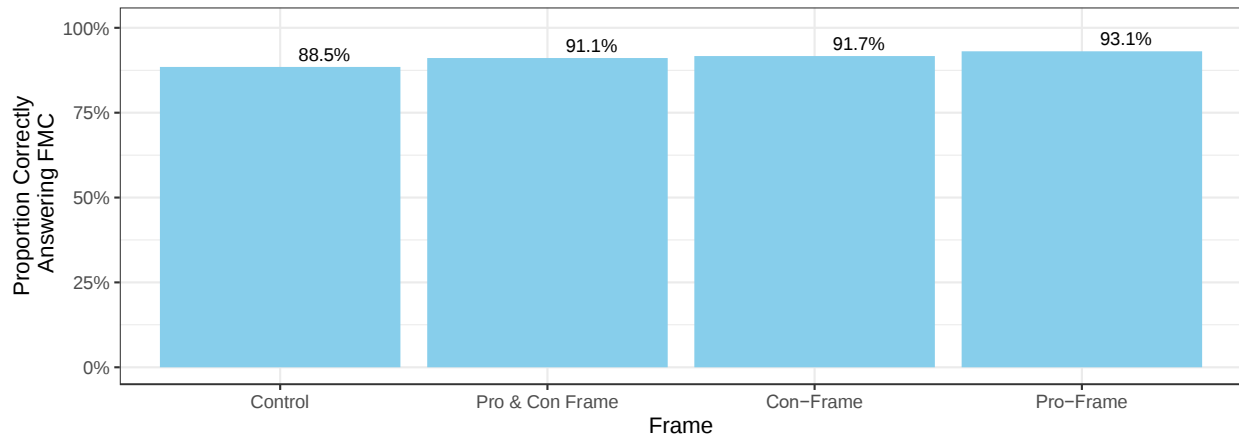


Figure A1. Proportion Correctly Answering FMC

Note: Responses represent proportion of respondents correctly answering the FMC-TI. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Appendix B: Manipulation Check Results

Post-hawk power was calculated for each treatment group. The power calculations are shown in Table B2. The power calculation results show that the effect size found for the con-frame is highly powered, with a power of 0.99. However, the effect size for both the pro frame and the pro-and-con frame is underpowered, with a power of 0.338 and .449, respectively.

Table B2. Power Calculations

	Mean	(s.d.)	<i>n</i>
<u>Con Frame</u>			
Treatment Group	4.11	1.407	253
Control Group	4.7	1.615	252
Significance Level	0.05		
Power	0.997		
<u>Pro Frame</u>			
Treatment Group	4.88	1.534	248
Control Group	4.7	1.615	252
Significance Level	0.05		
Power	0.338		
<u>Pro and Con Frame</u>			
Treatment Group	4.5	1.405	246
Control Group	4.7	1.615	252
Significance Level	0.05		
Power	0.449		

Appendix C: Pilot Study Results

In October 2023, prior to the fielding of the survey experiment through the 2023 CES, a pilot study was conducted on CloudConnect to test the question wording and treatment effects. Despite CloudConnect being a non-probability sample, in line with the findings of Jerit and Barabas (2023), a non-probability sample may be fit for the purpose of testing questions and instrumentation. The pilot study informed the question-wording and treatment effects for the main study in the 2023 CES. The pilot study was conducted with two main goals: determining the reactivity of the control condition and approximating treatment effects for power calculations.

To ensure that the control condition in the CES did not induce any sentiment for or against IRCs, the outcome question in the framing experiment, the CloudConnect survey contained a group with the control condition wording (see below for condition wording) and another group that was not given any introduction to the redistricting process and was only asked about support for an IRC (outcome variable). Ideally, one would expect to see no difference in responses between the two control conditions. A subjective manipulation check (SMC) was asked of respondents in each treatment group, the SMC asked whether respondents think IRCs threaten the number of majority-minority districts, identical to the SMC in the 2023 CES. Comparing results from the subjective manipulation check (SMC), there was no statistically significant difference ($p = 0.17$) in responses to the SMC between the group receiving no introduction (Condition A) and the group receiving the CES control condition (Condition B) with an introduction to the IRC. Because there was no statistically significant difference in responses to the SMC between Condition A and Condition B (effect = .12, $p = .17$), this supports the assertion that the control condition in the CES (Condition B in the CloudConnect study) did

not impact sentiment related to IRCs and minority representation, just as expected. Table C1 shows the SMC results by treatment frame.

Appendix Table C1. SMC Results for Treatment A and C

Treatment	Average response (4- point scale)	Sample Size (n)	Std. Error
Treatment A (no introduction, just a support/oppose question about IRC)	1.99	285	0.06
Treatment B (control introduction about redistricting) - Currently used in CES	2.1	285	0.06
Difference	0.11		
Sig. test value	1.38		
p value	0.17		

The pilot study was also used to determine whether vignette length impacted the main outcome variable in the CES, support for IRCs. Two of the treatments in the pilot study were used in the CES, Condition B is the control condition for the CES, and Treatment E is the pro and con frame in the CES. Treatments C and D in the pilot study were placebo treatments with a vignette about the census and community funding. Treatment C was only 42 words, and Treatment D was 145 words. There was no statistically significant difference in responses to the treatment question ($p = 0.1$) and SMC responses ($p = 1$), thus dispelling any fear that vignette length impacted responses. Between Treatment C and D, which had vignettes with no relationship to IRCs, there was a statistically significant difference in responses to the SMC between Treatment C and D compared to Treatment E, the pro and con frame ($p = .03$). This indicates that responses are successfully inducing the treatment from the pro and con frame that

IRCs threaten the number of majority-minority districts. The results from the pilot study for the main outcome treatment, support for IRCs is shown in Table C2.

Appendix Table C2. Outcome Measure Results from Pilot Study

Treatment	Average response (7- point scale)	Sample Size (n)	Std. Error
Condition A (no introduction, just a support/oppose question about IRC)	4.58	285	0.08
Condition B (control introduction about redistricting) - Currently used in CES	4.84	285	0.08
Treatment C (short version of Census & funding)	4.87	288	0.08
Treatment D (long version of Census & funding)	4.67	286	0.09
Treatment E (pros and cons of redistricting) - Currently used in CES	4.57	286	0.08

Note: Higher values indicate greater support for IRCs.

Appendix D: Balance Check Results

To ensure the respondents in each treatment group were balanced on key variables of interest, a probit and multinomial logit regression were run to ensure the treatment groups were balanced relative to the control group. The results from the probit regression balance check are shown in Table D1 and the results from the multinomial logit are shown in Table D2. The results from the balance checks indicate that the treatment groups are balanced on all key variables, including education, gender, income, race, marital status, party id, and ideology.

Table D1. Regression Balance Check

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	z-statistic	Prob.
Education	-0.004	0.030	-0.13	0.89
Age	0.003	0.003	1.28	0.20
Gender	-0.039	0.087	-0.45	0.65
Income	0.002	0.002	1.48	0.14
Black	0.206	0.140	1.47	0.14
Hispanic	0.059	0.134	0.44	0.66
Married	0.126	0.092	1.36	0.17
Democrat	-0.063	0.115	-0.55	0.58
Republican	0.039	0.124	-0.32	0.75
Liberal	-0.076	0.117	-0.66	0.52
Conservative	-0.060	0.120	-0.50	0.62
N	999			
LR Chi	9.17			
Prob.	0.60			

Table D1. Multinomial Balance Check

N = 999

LR Chi = 24.06

Prob. = .87

Con Frame:

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	z-statistic	Prob.
Education	-0.021	0.063	-0.34	0.73
Age	0.008	0.005	1.49	0.14
Gender	0.138	0.182	0.76	0.45
Income	0.004	0.003	1.06	0.29
Black	0.339	0.296	1.14	0.25
Hispanic	0.397	0.266	1.49	0.14
Married	0.247	0.191	1.29	0.20
Democrat	-0.195	0.237	-0.82	0.41
Republican	-0.137	0.253	-0.54	0.59
Liberal	-0.122	0.243	-0.51	0.61
Conservative	0.026	0.245	0.11	0.92

Pro Frame:

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	z-statistic	Prob.
Education	0.005	0.063	0.07	0.94
Age	0.003	0.005	0.56	0.57
Gender	-0.197	0.182	-1.08	0.28
Income	0.006	0.003	1.71	0.09
Black	0.385	0.288	1.34	0.18
Hispanic	-0.133	0.293	-0.45	0.65
Married	0.242	0.193	1.26	0.21
Democrat	-0.060	0.238	-0.25	0.8
Republican	0.153	0.256	0.6	0.55
Liberal	-0.040	0.240	-0.17	0.87
Conservative	-0.246	0.383	-0.82	0.41

Pro & Con Frame:

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	z-statistic	Prob.
Education	-0.001	0.063	-0.02	0.99
Age	0.006	0.005	1.10	0.27
Gender	-0.139	0.182	-0.77	0.44
Income	0.003	0.003	0.91	0.36
Black	0.335	0.289	1.16	0.25
Hispanic	-0.124	0.286	-0.05	0.96
Married	0.159	0.193	0.82	0.41
Democrat	-0.074	0.235	-0.32	0.75
Republican	-0.224	0.260	-0.86	0.39
Liberal	-0.216	0.240	-0.90	0.37
Conservative	-0.121	0.249	-0.48	0.63

¹ The frame varies in length, the control frame is 42 words, the pro-frame is 94 words, the con-frame is 94 words, and the pro and con frame is 146 words. To ensure that vignette length did not impact responses to the outcome measure, a pilot study was conducted and found no differences in the outcome measure by treatment vignette length. See data appendix for pilot study results.

² For the pro and con frame, whether the proportion or opponent portion of the frame was presented first was randomized.

³ A pilot study was conducted in October 2023 and found the control frame to not have any reactivity compared to a condition that did not receive any introduction information. See data appendix for pilot study results.

⁴ A factual manipulation check (FMC) was also asked of respondents post-treatment to measure attentiveness. The results from the FMC indicate that respondents were largely attentive, with 91% correctly answering the FMC. The proportion answering the FMC correctly is balanced across treatment groups. See appendix for manipulation check results.

⁵ To ensure the four conditions are balanced, balance checks were conducted. Across multiple variables such as education, age, gender, race, party identification, and party, the four conditions were balanced. See data appendix for results from balance checks.

⁶ See appendix for power calculations.

⁷ The subjective manipulation check (SMC) results by race provide some support for this explanation: there was no statistical difference in SMC responses between Black respondents in the control group and those in the con frame as expected (effect = -.06, $p = .84$), while there was a statistically significant difference in SMC responses for White respondents between the control group and the con frame (effect = -.20, $p = .04$). See appendix for SMC results.

⁸ Hypothesizes on conditional effects by party identification were not preregistered.

⁹ A survey question was asked of all respondents pre-treatment to rank four common redistricting principles from most important to least important, keeping cities and towns together, preserving existing district boundaries, protecting incumbents, and creating majority-minority districts. In line with previous findings, the percentage of Black respondents that ranked creating majority-minority districts as the most important redistricting criteria, was 27%, three times the percentage of White respondents (9%) (Ansolabehere and Persily 2015). This is significant at $p = .01$ level ($p < .001$), indicating that Black respondents strongly favor the creation of majority-minority districts and see these districts as vital to political representation. See appendix for results from this survey question.