

The Impact of Deliberative Polling on Opinionation and Knowledge Acquisition

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What is Deliberative Polling (DP)?

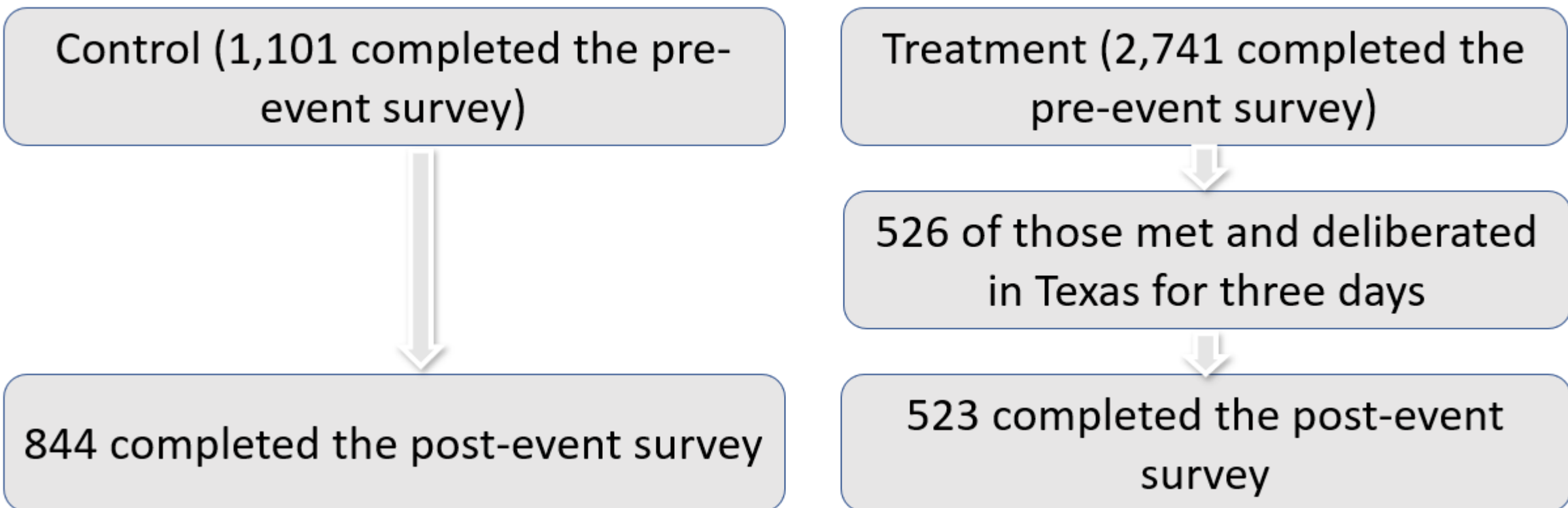
- Deliberative polling is a method of public opinion polling that seeks to obtain more informed and thoughtful responses from participants.
- In a deliberative poll, a representative sample of participants is first surveyed on the political issues to be studied. They are then brought together for an in-person small group discussion. After the discussions, participants are surveyed again, and their responses are compared to the pre-event survey.

Background of the current research

- Previous research on participation in DP has focused on how education and deliberation cause changes in pre-existing opinions.
- Little research explored whether participation in DP leads to the formation of new opinions where no prior opinions existed.
- The current study investigated the impact of DP on opinionation and knowledge acquisition.
- RQ: is the formation of policy preferences mediated by knowledge gains on those issues?

Data

- Participants were recruited from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak® panel and randomly assigned to the treatment and the control group.

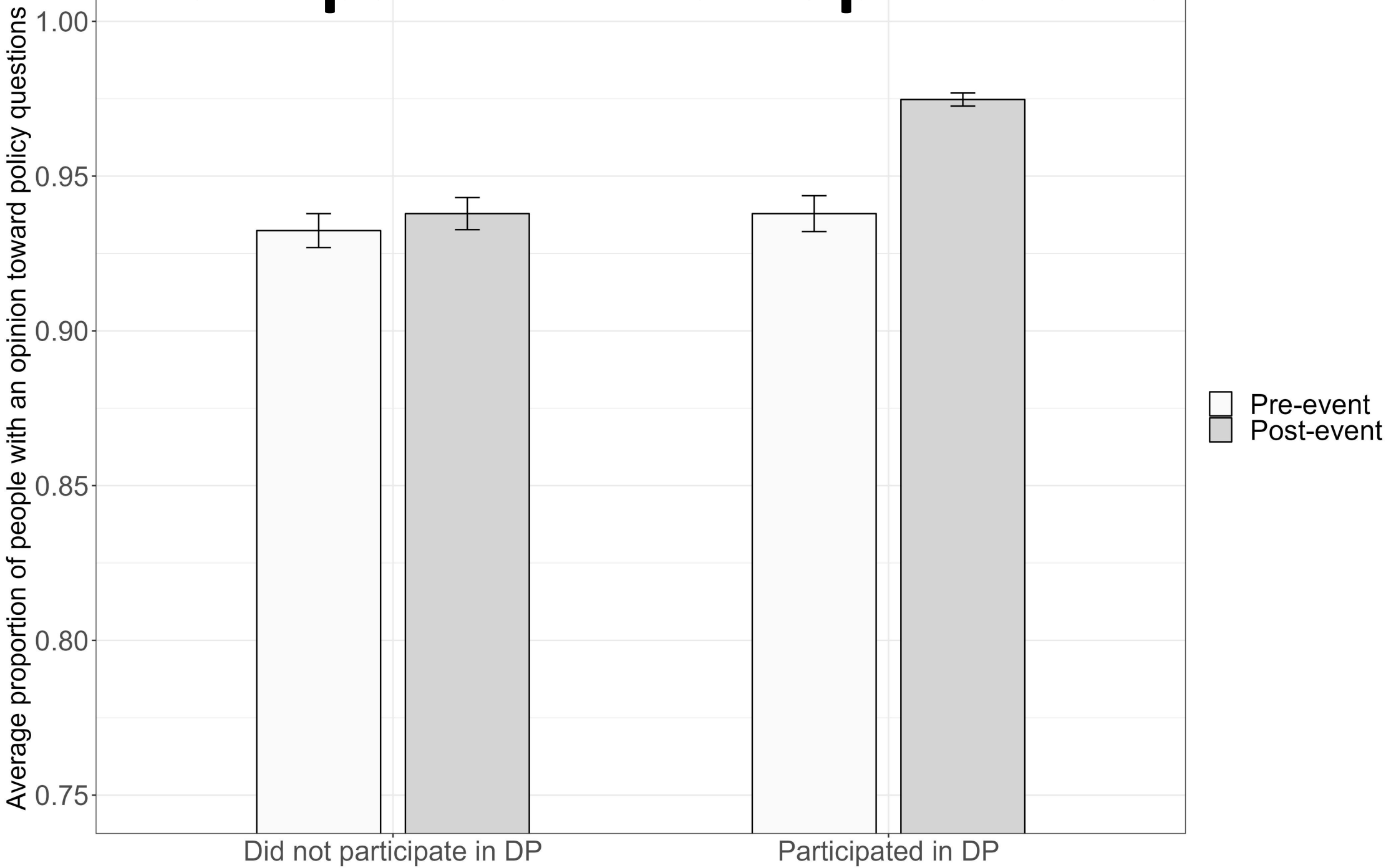


- Respondents answered 47 preference questions and 7 knowledge questions. Of the knowledge questions, 2 were general knowledge questions, and the remaining 5 were related to the policies discussed.

- We defined opinionation as the number of policy questions where a respondent had no opinion in the pre-event survey but reported an opinion in the post-event survey. Knowledge acquisition was operationalized as the number of knowledge questions where a respondent answered wrong or refused in the pre-event survey but answered correctly in the post-event survey.

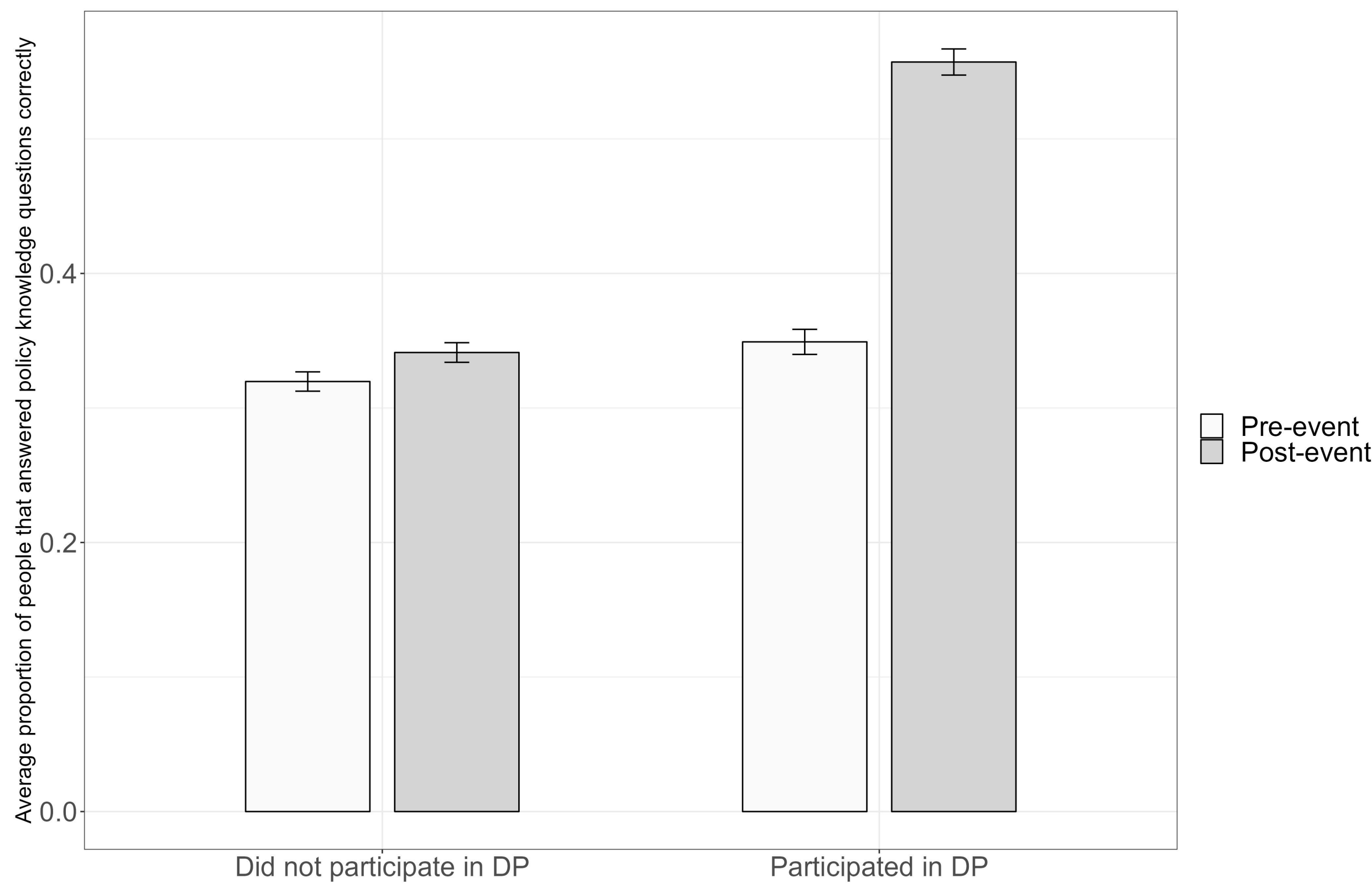
Results

The Impact of DP on Opinionation



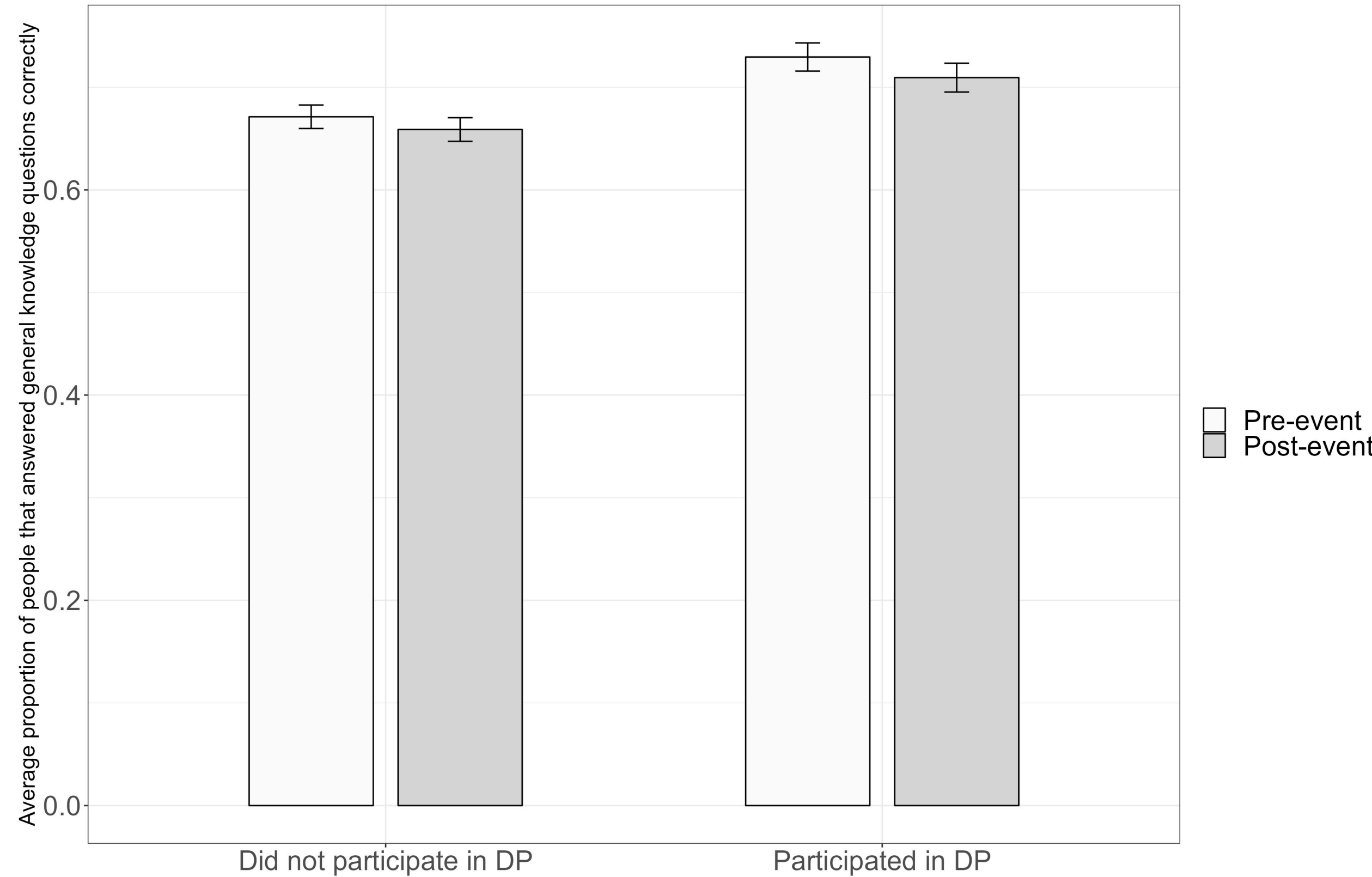
- Participants who took part in the deliberation process showed greater increases in opinionation than those who did not.

The Impact of DP on Issue-Specific Knowledge Acquisition



- Those who participated in the deliberation process experienced a greater increase in issue-specific knowledge compared to those who did not participate.

The Impact of DP on General Knowledge Acquisition



- The impact of deliberation on knowledge acquisition was limited to the specific issues covered during the deliberative process.
- Participants in the treatment group only demonstrated a greater ability to answer knowledge questions related to the issues discussed during the deliberation, and not on general knowledge questions such as identifying the majority party in the Senate or the House, which were not covered in the deliberative material.

Mediation analyses

- The impact of DP on opinionation was not mediated by knowledge acquisition (ACME = 0.07, 95% CI = (-0.07, 0.24), $p = 0.340$).
- No evidence of moderated mediation: mediation effect was not observed in either the more-educated subgroup or the less-educated subgroup.

Discussion

- DP can be an effective tool for increasing both opinionation and issue-specific knowledge among participants.
- Opinionation induced by DP cannot be attributed to learning factually correct information.
- DP caused people to form new opinions independently of becoming better-informed on the factual matters addressed by the quiz questions.
- An alternative mechanism might be hearing and thinking about competing arguments for and against policies during deliberation.