

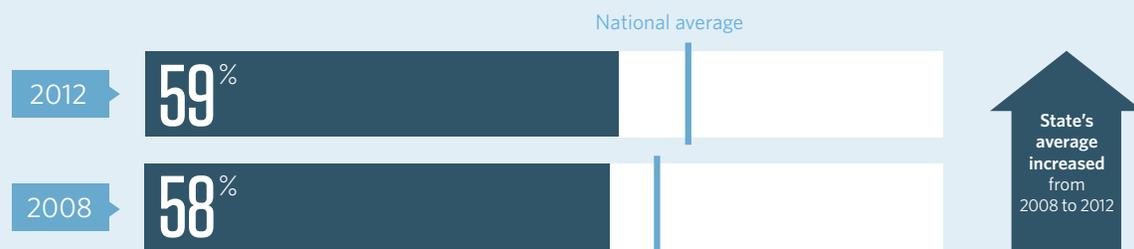


Idaho

Elections Performance Index

This profile reports important trends for Idaho that emerged from the 2012 update to The Pew Charitable Trusts' Elections Performance Index, or EPI. The EPI analyzes 17 key indicators of election administration and scores each state's performance by indicator and overall. For more information and to view the full interactive index, visit www.pewstates.org/epi.

Overall EPI Average*



Key indicators	2008	2012
Data completeness	93.8%	93.7%
Military and overseas ballots rejected	12.8%	13.6%
Registration or absentee ballot problems	2.2%	3.2%
Residual vote rate	1.9%	2.1%
Voter registration rate	77.1%	77.1%

*The overall EPI average is a simple average of all 17 indicators.

Beyond the numbers

Idaho was among the bottom 25 percent of states in overall EPI average in 2012. Although the state's overall score rose slightly between years, most states had larger increases.

In 2008, Idaho had the second-highest rate of military and overseas ballots rejected, at 12.8 percent, and in 2012 this rate increased to 13.6 percent, the third-highest in the nation.

The rate of mail ballots unreturned, however, remained among the lowest in the country at 3.3 percent in both years. Idaho has no-excuse mail voting: any registered voter may request a mail ballot without providing a reason.

Room for improvement

Although military and overseas ballots are rejected for many reasons, higher rates can indicate systemic problems. More research is needed to identify the reasons for Idaho's high rejection rate in 2012.

The state had the third-highest residual vote rate—the discrepancy between the number of ballots cast and the number of votes counted for an office—up from fifth-highest in 2008. Residual vote rate is a good indication of voting technology accuracy, and in 2012 several counties in Idaho still used punch-card machines, a technology that research has shown results in higher error rates than other types of machines.¹ More research is needed in Idaho to see whether this high rate is an anomaly, a problem with one county or municipality, or a more systemic product of poorly functioning or outdated technology. The state can also require a postelection audit of voting equipment to ensure that vote totals match the votes cast and that any problems related to machinery are discovered and reported.

Adding online voter registration would also improve Idaho's overall performance. This would not only positively affect the online registration indicator but could also improve others, including the voter registration rate and wait times to vote.

The state can further upgrade its voter registration lists by participating in data-sharing agreements, such as the Electronic Registration Information Center, allowing Idaho to get more accurate and up-to-date information on voters who move, die, or are eligible but unregistered.

Idaho was one of only 10 states whose data completeness rates decreased in 2012; its rate of 93.7 percent was the nation's 10th-lowest. The state can work with local election officials to establish or improve processes for collecting and reporting key performance data.

The [Presidential Commission on Election Administration](#) also recommends all four of these practices—improving data collection, adding online voter registration, participating in data-sharing agreements, and requiring postelection audits.

Endnote

- 1 Caltech/MIT Voting Technology Project, *Residual Votes Attributable to Technology: An Assessment of the Reliability of Existing Voting Equipment* (March 30, 2001), http://www.hss.caltech.edu/~voting/CalTech_MIT_Report_Version2.pdf.

For further information, please visit:

pewstates.org/epi

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