

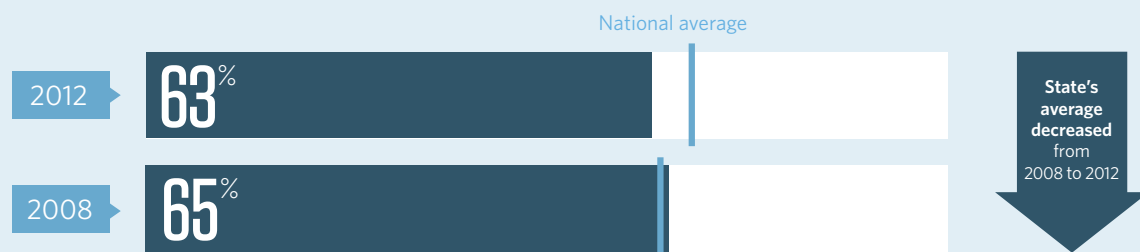


New Jersey

Elections Performance Index

This profile reports important trends for New Jersey 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	89.5%	100%
Provisional ballots cast out of all ballots	1.8%	2.7%
Registrations rejected	4.5%	8.6%
Residual vote rate	1.8%	1.0%
Voting information lookup tools	2 of 2	2 of 5

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

Beyond the numbers

New Jersey's overall EPI average decreased marginally from 2008 to 2012, and it was one of only 10 states to do so. The drop is the result of strong improvements on some indicators being overtaken by stark declines on others, and possibly due to the impact of Hurricane Sandy on the election of 2012.

On the plus side, New Jersey submitted 100 percent of the measured data, which increased its data completeness by 10.5 percentage points from 2008. The state reduced its average wait times at the polls by almost three minutes to the seventh-lowest in the nation, and it had the fourth-largest decline in residual vote rate from 2008 to 2012. Residual vote rate—the discrepancy between the number of ballots cast and the number of votes counted for an office—is a good indication of voting technology accuracy.

On the other hand, the state also had the fifth-highest increase in the rate of provisional ballots issued out of all ballots cast. This was probably due at least in part to the hurricane, which hit a week before Election Day and displaced thousands of people, damaged polling places, and caused some polls to be relocated. In response, the state allowed displaced voters to cast provisional ballots at any polling place in the state.¹

Room for improvement

From 2008 to 2012, New Jersey had the second-largest increase in the rate of registrations rejected, behind Florida. Registrations can be rejected for many legitimate reasons—such as lack of a signature or missing information—but high rates or large increases may indicate a systemic problem, and further research is needed to determine the causes and identify possible solutions.

New Jersey could improve its overall performance by adding online voter registration. Such a change not only would raise the state's score on the online registration indicator, but it also could have a positive impact on other metrics as well, including the voter registration rate, wait time, nonvoting due to registration and absentee ballot problems, and provisional ballots cast.

Provisional ballot use could also be reduced if the state upgraded its voter registration list. The [Presidential Commission on Election Administration](#) recommends that states provide online voter registration and participate in data-sharing agreements such as the Electronic Registration Information Center, which allows them to get more accurate and up-to-date information on voters who move or die.²

In addition, New Jersey could improve its overall elections performance by providing more readily accessible online voter resources. In 2012, the state provided just two of five possible online voting information lookup tools on its state elections website; 10 states had all possible lookup tools available.

Endnotes

- 1 Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno, "Directive Expanding Ability of Displaced Voters to Vote," Nov. 3, 2012, <http://nj.gov/state/elections/2012-results/directive-displaced-voters.pdf>.
- 2 Gary Bland and Barry C. Burden, *Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) Stage 1 Evaluation Report to the Pew Charitable Trusts*, RTI International, http://www.rti.org/pubs/eric_stage1report_pewfinal_12-3-13.pdf.

For further information, please visit:

pewstates.org/epi

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