

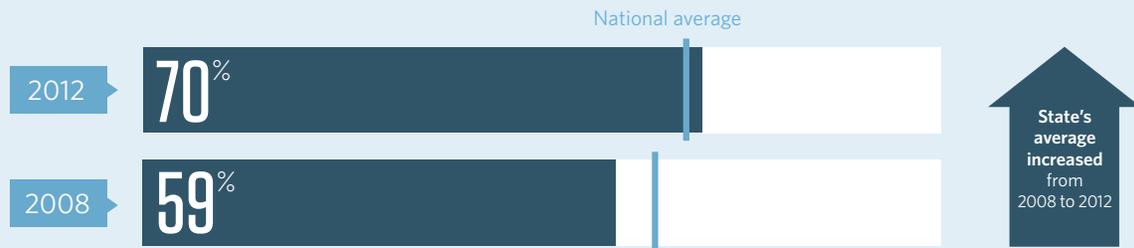


Oregon

Elections Performance Index

This profile reports important trends for Oregon 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	65.4%	94.4%
Military and overseas ballots unreturned	Incomplete data	34.3%
Online registration available	No	Yes
Provisional ballots rejected out of all ballots cast	Incomplete data	0.004%
Residual vote rate	0.9%	1.7%

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

Beyond the numbers

Oregon made significant improvements in its elections performance between 2008 and 2012, when it was one of only six states (plus the District of Columbia) that raised their overall EPI averages more than 10 points.

Oregon is one of two states—the other is Washington—that conduct elections entirely by mail and was the first to shift to all-mail voting in 1998. This change had clear effects on several indicators. For example, Oregon had:

- Some of the highest rates of mail ballots unreturned in both 2008 and 2012, at 14 percent and nearly 17 percent, respectively, as well as high rates of mail ballots rejected.
- One of the lowest rates of provisional ballots cast in 2012. Oregon was one of only 11 states to reduce this rate from 2008 to 2012. It had the fourth-largest improvement on this metric of any state, behind Washington, Arkansas, and North Carolina.

- The third-lowest rate of provisional ballots rejected in 2012, behind Maine and Wisconsin, two states that allow Election Day registration.

Oregon also added online voter registration in 2010.

Room for improvement

Oregon had the nation's highest rate of nonvoting resulting from registration or absentee ballot problems in both 2008 and 2012, with Washington second. It is not surprising that all-vote-by-mail states would experience unusually high levels of absentee ballot issues, but the question of whether all-mail voting is correlated with high rates of registration problems is a subject needing further study.

The state also had the second-highest rate of mail ballots rejected, behind only Washington. Again, this is not surprising for all-vote-by-mail states, but more research needs to be done to better understand the all-mail ballot process and its effect on rejection rates.

In addition, Oregon had the largest increase in residual vote rate—the difference between the number of ballots cast and the number of votes counted for an office—from 2008 to 2012. Preliminary research suggests a correlation between greater use of mail voting and higher residual vote rates. This occurs in part because mail voters do not have the opportunity to correct errors on their ballots, which are counted at a central location. A voter casting a ballot at a traditional polling place usually has an opportunity to correct the ballot if, for example, he or she marked too many choices for a single race.¹

Finally, although Oregon has dramatically improved its reporting of data since 2008, it was still in the bottom third of states for this indicator. Oregon can work with local election officials to identify better ways to collect and report key performance data, especially the numbers of mail ballots unreturned and registrations rejected. The [Presidential Commission on Election Administration](#) also recommends improving data collection.

Endnotes

- 1 Michael R. Alvarez, Dustin Beckett, and Charles Stewart III, *Voting Technology, Vote-by-Mail, and Residual Votes in California, 1990-2010*, MIT Political Science Department research paper; Voting Technology Project Working Paper No. 105, May 5, 2011, http://www.vote.caltech.edu/sites/default/files/wp_105_pdf_4dc97a0220.pdf.

For further information, please visit:

pewstates.org/epi

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