Beyond the numbers

Arizona’s overall EPI average increased more than 3 percentage points, just below the average improvement across the country.

This was due, in part, to Arizona’s addition of four out of five online voter information lookup tools in 2012. In 2008, the state had zero of two possible tools, but four years later it offered tools for finding polling place, registration status, absentee ballot status, and provisional ballot status.

The state also improved its rate of unreturned military and overseas ballots, which fell from 36.6 percent (fifth-highest) to 28.6 percent, one of the largest decreases in the country from 2008 to 2012.
The average time that Arizona voters waited to vote also decreased, falling nearly 13 minutes, from more than 23 minutes in 2008 to just under 11 minutes in 2012, the fourth-largest drop in the nation.

The state was the first to offer online voter registration, which has been in place since 2002.

**Room for improvement**

In 2008, Arizona had the highest rate of provisional ballots cast in the nation. In 2012, it continued to issue large numbers of these ballots; its rate rose from 6.5 percent to 7.9 percent, the third-highest. Maricopa County alone issued approximately 120,000 provisional ballots and counted nearly 100,000 at an estimated cost of $635,000 in materials and processing. Almost 30,000 of the county's provisional ballots were issued because voters had moved within the county and their addresses were not up to date.\(^1\)

Upgrading voter registration lists can minimize these kinds of issues. The [Presidential Commission on Election Administration](http://www.pewstates.org/research/analysis) recommends participating in data-sharing agreements, such as the Electronic Registration Information Center, which can help address these issues, allowing states to get more accurate and up-to-date information on voters who move or die, and reduce the rate of provisional ballot use.\(^2\)

Additionally, the state's rate of unreturned mail ballots skyrocketed in 2012, from 6.4 percent in 2008 to 19.7 percent (fifth-highest), the third-biggest increase of any state. In both years, Arizona had permanent mail voting, allowing any voter to request mail ballots for all future elections. Such a large jump could indicate a systemic problem and is worthy of further research to learn the cause and identify possibly remedies.

**Endnotes**


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**For further information, please visit:**

pewstates.org/epi

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