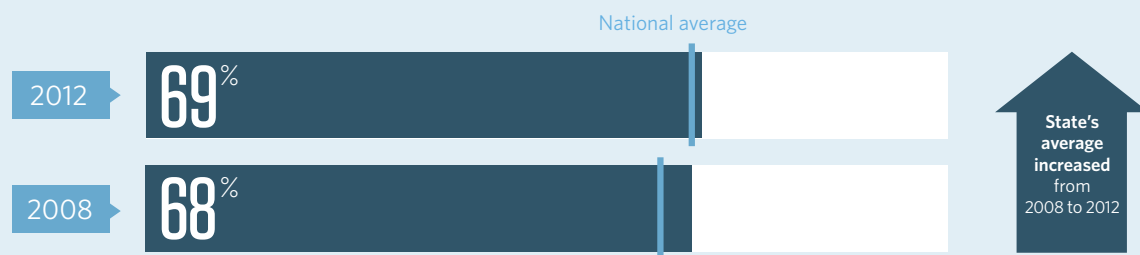# Florida

Elections Performance Index

This profile reports important trends for Florida 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*

National average

	2008	2012
2012		**69**%
2008	**68**%	

State's average increased from 2008 to 2012

Key indicators	2008	2012
Mail ballots unreturned	14.1%	18.2%
Registration or absentee ballot problems	9.6%	7.8%
Registrations rejected	0.4%	6.3%
Voting information lookup tools	0 of 2	4 of 5
Voting wait time	28.8 minutes	45 minutes

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

Beyond the numbers

Although the national conversation about election reform since the 2000 presidential election has focused on Florida, the state's performance on the EPI is relatively average. The state raised its overall score slightly between 2008 and 2012, but the increase was less than the national average.

Florida increased the number of voting information lookup tools available online from zero of two in 2008 to four of five in 2012, providing tools for polling place location, registration status, precinct-level ballot information, and absentee ballot status.

In addition, the state had one of the largest drops in nonvoting due to registration or absentee ballot problems: from 9.6 percent, the seventh-highest in 2008, to 7.8 percent, the 13th-highest in 2012. The rate of nonvoting for disability- or illness-related reasons also fell by more than the national average.

Room for improvement

Florida's below-average overall increase is largely the result of dramatic jumps in average wait time to vote and in rejected registrations, as well as a rise in unreturned mail ballots. These changes should be researched to identify the causes and possible solutions:

- Florida led the nation in 2012 in average voter wait time, which increased to 45 minutes from less than 29 minutes in 2008. The Presidential Commission on Election Administration stated that no voter should wait in line on Election Day for more than 30 minutes and suggested that "long wait times at select polling places result from a combination of mismanagement, limited or misallocated resources, and long ballots" and that "jurisdictions can solve the problem of long lines through a combination of planning … and the efficient allocation of resources."[1]

- The state's increase in the rate of rejected registrations was the largest in the nation from 2008 to 2012. Registrations can be rejected for many valid reasons, such as lack of a signature or missing information, but such a large increase could be a sign of an underlying administrative problem.

- Finally, the rate of mail ballots unreturned also increased, from 14.1 percent in 2008 to 18.2 percent in 2012, the sixth-highest rate nationwide. Mail ballots are not returned for many reasons, but rising rates are cause for concern and should be investigated.

Florida could also improve its overall performance by adding online voter registration. In doing so, the state would improve its score not only on the online registration indicator but also possibly on other indicators, including registration rate, wait time, and nonvoting due to registration and absentee ballot problems.

The state could also upgrade its voter registration lists by participating in data-sharing agreements, such as the Electronic Registration Information Center, which allow states to get more accurate and up-to-date information on voters who move or die.[2]

Adding online voter registration and participating in data-sharing agreements such as the Electronic Registration Information Center are recommendations of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration.

Endnotes

1   Presidential Commission on Election Administration, *The American Voting Experience: Report and Recommendations of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration* (January 2014), 30–31, https://www.supportthevoter.gov/files/2014/01/Amer-Voting-Exper-final-draft-01-09-14-508.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.