

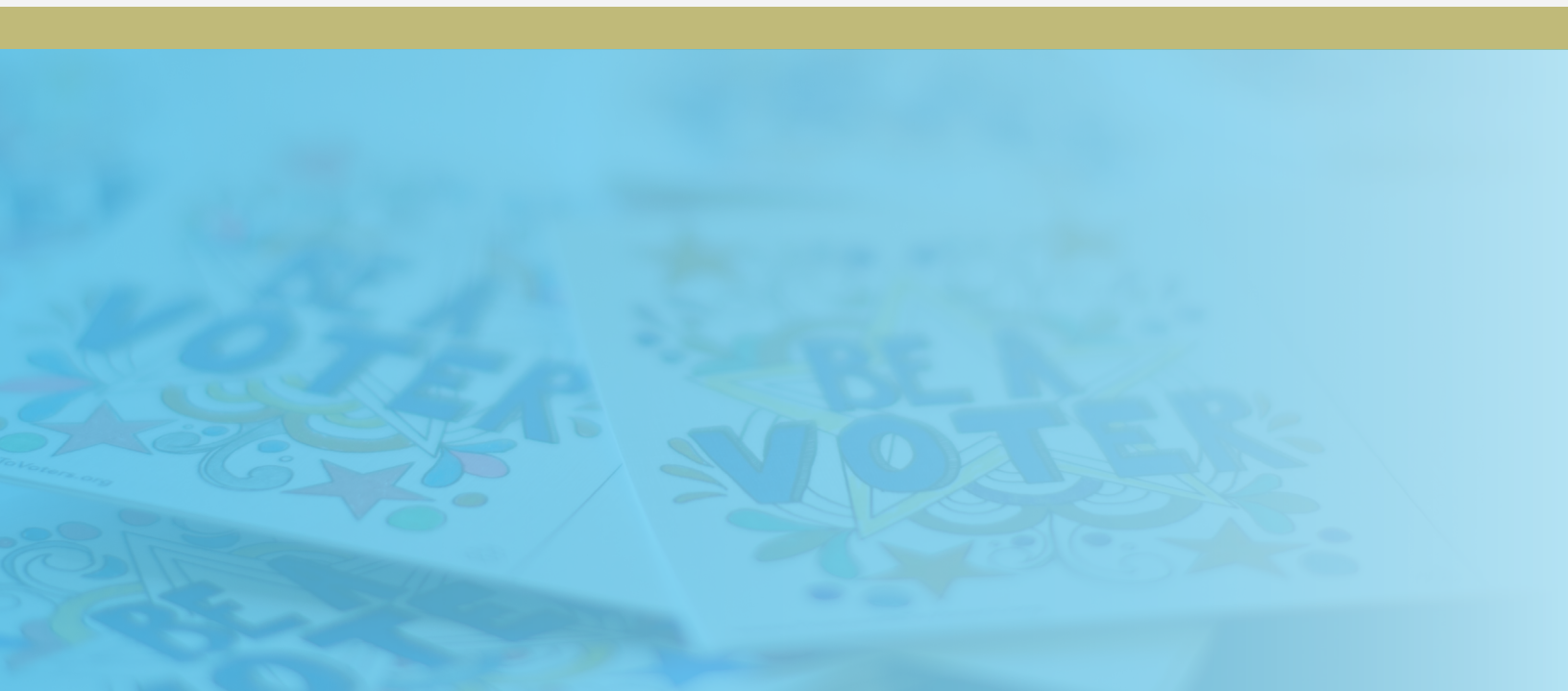


MIT ELECTION DATA  
+ SCIENCE LAB

# HOW WE VOTED IN 2024

A TOPICAL LOOK AT THE SURVEY OF THE  
PERFORMANCE OF AMERICAN ELECTIONS

Charles Stewart III



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Charles Stewart III is the Kenan Sahin Distinguished Professor of Political Science and the Director of the [MIT Election Data and Science Lab](#).

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## ABOUT THIS REPORT

The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this report do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology or other organizations or individuals who provided advice for the 2024 survey or report.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Survey of the Performance of American Elections (SPAЕ) provides information about how Americans experience voting in the most recent federal election. Conducted in every presidential election since 2008, the SPAЕ is the only national survey of election administration that focuses on the voting process and offers insights into the performance of elections in the individual states.

In 2024, a total of 10,200 registered voters participated in the survey conducted by YouGov, with 200 responses collected from each state as well as the District of Columbia. The study received financial support from the Election Trust Initiative.

Among the findings discussed in this report are the following:

### VOTING BY MAIL

- » The use of mail ballots in 2024 decreased from pandemic-era levels but stayed above historical norms.
  - » The percentage of voters casting ballots by mail decreased to 29%, down from 43% in 2020 but up from 21% in 2016.
- » The partisan divide in mail voting continued, with more Democrats than Republicans utilizing this method, although the gap narrowed because of declining usage among Democrats.
  - » Thirty-seven percent of Democrats reported voting by mail, compared to 24% of Republicans. This is a decrease from 60% for Democrats and 32% for Republicans in 2020.
- » Patterns of ballot returns continued to evolve, with drop box usage rebounding and Postal Service usage decreasing modestly.
  - » The use of mail to return ballots mailed to voters rebounded in 2022 to 62%, compared to 53% in 2020. Twenty-one percent of mail ballots were returned to drop boxes, which remains virtually unchanged from 2020.
- » Very few mail-in voters reported issues with requesting or completing their ballots.
- » Nearly three percent of voters who returned their ballots at a drop box reported witnessing something disruptive, such as demonstrators, during the drop-off process.

### VOTING IN-PERSON

- » The percentage of voters casting ballots on Election Day increased to 40%, up from 31% in 2020 but down from 60% in 2016. Meanwhile, the percentage of voters casting ballots during early voting saw a slight uptick compared to 2020, rising to 31% from 26%.
- » Most in-person voters noted a smooth process.
  - » Over 98% reported no issues with registration or equipment.
  - » The percentage of voters who reported that it was very easy to find their polling place on Election Day declined to 77%, down from 87% in 2020. Comparable statistics for early voting were 85% and 84%.
- » In-person voting at schools has gradually declined over the past decade, and they are no longer the most common sites for Election Day voting.
  - » The percentage of Election Day voters casting a ballot at a school decreased to 22%, down from 28% in 2020. In contrast, the percentage of those voting at a community center increased to 32%, up from 21% in 2020.
- » Average wait times for both Election Day and early voters decreased.
  - » Eleven percent of voters on Election Day waited over 30 minutes to cast their ballots, compared to 14% in 2020. Fifteen percent of early voters experienced wait times exceeding 30 minutes, a decrease from 21% in 2020.
- » The percentage of voters reporting that they showed a photo ID to vote increased since 2016 (when the question was last asked), and more voters reported having a driver's license than before.
  - » In 2024, 85% of individuals who voted in person showed identification, an increase from 75% in 2016.
  - » The most common form of ID presented was the driver's license or state ID card

(66% of Election Day voters, 85% of early voters), followed by voter registration cards (30% of Election Day voters and 11% of early voters).

- » Disruptions at polling places were infrequent, although there was a marked increase in reported picture-taking.
  - » Fourteen percent of Election Day voters and 8% of early voters reported encountering disruptions while voting. The most common disruptions involved voters speaking loudly and disputes between a voter and an election worker or another voter.

## REASONS FOR NOT VOTING

- » Approximately 7% of respondents indicated that they did not vote in 2024, likely due to social responsibility bias lowering this percentage.
- » The leading reason for not voting was dissatisfaction with the candidates (21%), followed by illness or disability (12%) and “other” reasons (12%).
- » Few respondents mentioned administrative obstacles like ID issues or confusion about where to vote.

## CONFIDENCE IN ELECTIONS

- » Voter confidence was high across all levels in 2024.
  - » The percentage of voters who reported being very or somewhat confident that their vote was counted as intended increased to 96%, up from 91% in 2020.
  - » The percentages of respondents who expressed confidence in the vote count for their city/county, state, and nationwide were 93%, 89%, and 83%, respectively.
- » The partisan gap in confidence narrowed considerably.
  - » In 2024, 88% of Republicans and 79% of Democrats expressed confidence in the nationwide vote count, compared to 22% and 93% in 2020, respectively.
  - » In 2024, 90% of Republicans and 91% of Democrats expressed confidence in the accuracy of their state’s vote count, compared to 63% and 95%, respectively, in 2020.

## ELECTION SECURITY MEASURES

- » Voter awareness about election security measures remained low.
  - » When asked about their knowledge of whether their state or locality practiced one of 11 security measures, about one-third of respondents indicated that none of these measures was implemented by election officials.
  - » Respondents were most aware that election officials conducted logic and accuracy testing of voting machines (37%) and handled paper ballots securely (37%).
- » Support for most security practices rose from 2022 to 2024, particularly among Republicans.
  - » The most widely endorsed security measures included securing paper ballots, conducting logic and accuracy testing, and performing post-election audits.
  - » The security measures that received the least support were partisan poll watchers and conducting “war games” to prepare for cyber-attacks.

## FRAUD

- » Respondents continue to believe that voter fraud is rare, but attitudes remain polarized along partisan lines.

## REFORM

- » Support remained robust for mandatory paper backups of voting machines, requiring photo ID, automatically updating registration when voters change addresses, designating Election Day as a holiday, and selecting election officials on a non-partisan basis. These reforms garnered majority backing from both parties.
- » Support for cell phone voting, universal vote-by-mail, Internet voting, and mandating that all votes be cast on hand-marked paper ballots did not receive majority backing from either party.



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## INTRODUCTION

The Survey of the Performance of American Elections (SPAЕ) provides detailed information about how Americans experienced voting in the most recent federal election. Conducted in every presidential election since 2008—and in the federal midterm elections of 2014 and 2022—the SPAЕ is the only national survey focused specifically on election administration. It offers valuable insights into how well the voting process works in each state.

In 2024, the SPAЕ surveyed 10,200 registered voters, with 200 respondents from each state and the District of Columbia. The survey was administered by YouGov and supported by the Election Trust Initiative.

This report presents key findings from the 2024 SPAЕ and updates the previous report based on the 2020 survey. In a few cases, survey items overlap with those in the Cooperative Election Study (CES). Where possible, we also include results from the 2010 and 2018 midterms using comparable items from the CES. To provide long-term context on voter turnout and voting methods, we draw on data from the Voting and Registration Supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS), conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.

This report reviews the substantive issues addressed by the SPAЕ. Technical information, including the questionnaire and data, is available through the Harvard Dataverse.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The URL for the SPAЕ Dataverse is <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/SPAЕ>.

## USE OF VOTE MODE

The 2020 election saw the biggest and most dramatic shift in how Americans vote in American history. Because of permanent and temporary changes made to state election laws, emergency declarations, and voter concern about public health, the percentage of voters casting ballots by mail in 2020 doubled compared to 2016. The 2022 and 2024 elections saw some backing off this surge, mostly due to Democrats shifting back to in-person voting. Still, overall, voting by mail in 2024 was well ahead of the trend that had been established prior to 2020.

For the past three decades, the percentage of voters casting ballots in person on Election Day has declined, as more have cast ballots either in person before Election Day or by mail. These changes, particularly regarding voting by mail, accelerated dramatically in 2020, with the percentage of voters casting votes on Election Day dropping from 60% in 2016 to 31% in 2020.<sup>2</sup> (See Figure 1.) Ballots cast by mail nearly dou-

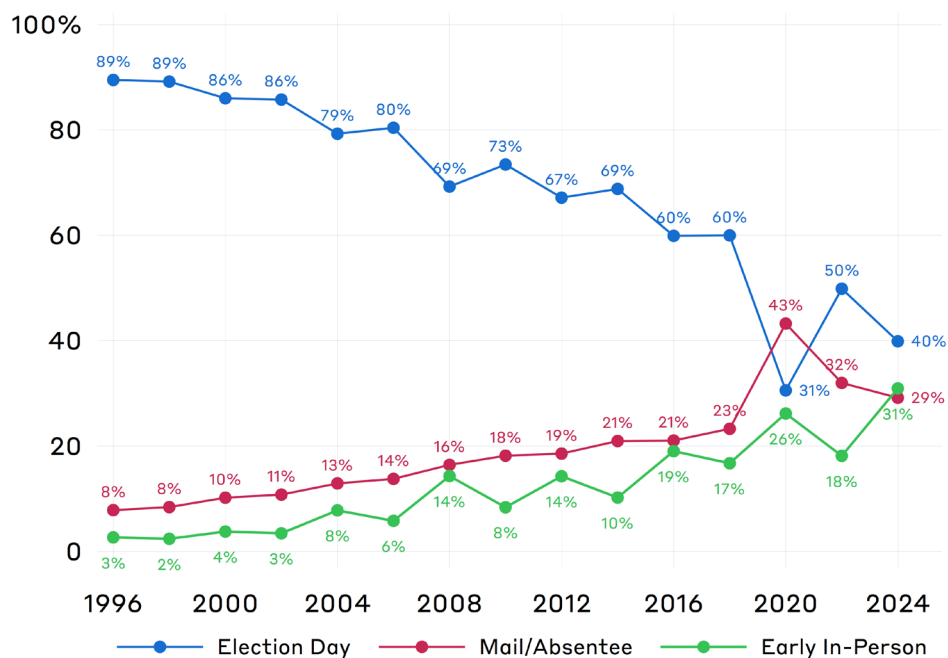
bled, from 23% to 43%, while votes cast early and in person continued their steady pace upward.

Election Day voting rebounded somewhat in 2022 compared to 2020, while voting by mail and early in-person voting declined slightly—mail balloting more than early voting. (The early voting decline in 2022 fits into the long-established pattern of early voting declining slightly compared to the previous presidential election.) Still, the overall usage pattern of mail ballots in 2022 was more like 2020 than the pattern in the previous midterm election, 2018. The decline in Election Day voting accelerated again in 2024 as the percentage of early voters continued its steady march upward. Voting by mail remained steady in 2022.

The national trend in voting mode usage from 2020 to 2024 saw a decline in voting by mail and an increase in both Election Day and early voting. This general pattern was present in many states, but not in all. Figure 2 uses a ternary (or triplot) graph to describe the mix of voting modes in each state in 2020 and 2024, at least as reported in the Census Bureau's Voting and Reg-

<sup>2</sup> Voting mode statistics in this subsection are taken from the Voting and Registration Supplement of the Current Population Survey.

**FIGURE 1. VOTING MODE USAGE, 1996 - 2024.**



Data sources: Census Bureau, Voting and Registration Supplement, 1996 – 2024.

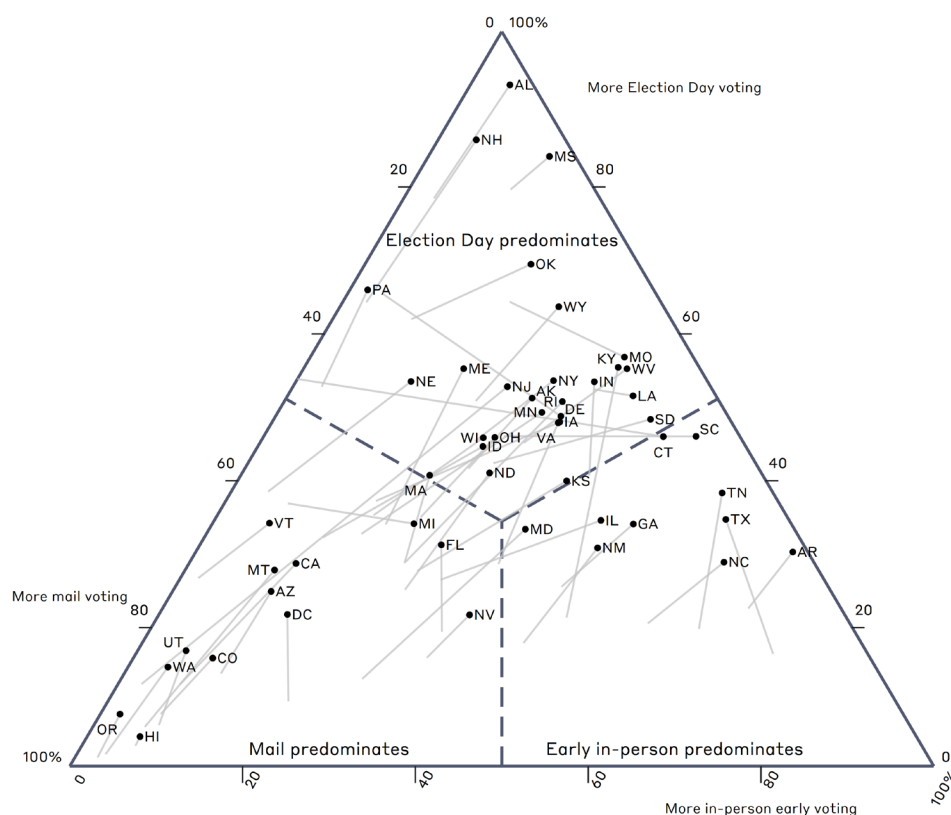
istration Supplement.<sup>3</sup> The data tokens represent the mix of voting modes reported in 2024. The gray lines attached to the data tokens trace the path of each state from where they were in 2020. Most grey lines trace a path to the northeast in the figure, which is consistent with a decline in both Election Day and mail voting and a rise in early in-person voting in these states. However, there are exceptions. For instance, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, and Alabama showed increases in Election Day voting and a decline in mail voting without a growth in early voting.

A close examination of the triplot graph reveals some important clusters of states in how their voters distribute across the three modes. Only three states remained at the top of the graph, indicating that only Alabama, Mississippi, and New Hampshire retained the tradi-

tional model of favoring Election-Day-only voting and allowing absentee voting for narrowly defined reasons. Second, while there are now a significant number of states in the lower left-hand of the graph, indicating states where mail voting predominates, the number of voters who reported voting in person increased notably in 2024.

However, the most important pattern in the figure is the aggregation of states in the middle of the triangle. States in this location have no majority voting mode. In practice, they have three voting modes that roughly equal numbers of voters use. This is significant because each additional voting mode not only introduces substantial administrative complexity for state and local election officials, but the complexity of one voting mode interacts with the complexity of the other voting modes in the state. The fact that about half of the states now are responsible for managing three different voting modes helps document one dimension in which election administration has become much more complicated for state and local officials.

**FIGURE 2. CHANGE IN VOTING MODE USAGE BY STATE, 2020 TO 2024.**



Data sources: SPAE.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the remainder of this report, the data sources of figures and tables will all be the SPAE. Exceptions will be noted.

## VOTING BY MAIL

Among the three major modes of voting, the most politically contentious has been voting by mail. The expansion of voting by mail in 2020 was understandable in light of widespread concerns about congregating in large groups because of COVID. Still, its rapid expansion also led to a backlash among many who believed the expansion was unwarranted. Certainly, many who supported the expansion of voting by mail as an emergency measure in 2020 did not support its permanent expansion.

These dynamics are illustrated in Figure 3, which maps voting-by-mail usage in each state in the 2016, 2020, and 2024 presidential elections. Before 2020, the greatest percentage of mail ballots were cast in the Western states. In 2020, voting by mail occurred at very high rates nationwide, with one major exception—the south-central part of the country, ranging from Texas to Missouri and over to Tennessee. In 2024, the Mountain West and Pacific coast states continued with high levels of mail balloting. In con-

trast, the area of the country with low levels of mail balloting—defined as fewer than 20% of votes cast by mail—spread to include virtually all of the South (except Florida) and pockets of the upper Midwest and Northeast.

Finally, we examine the most politically important feature of the changing patterns of voting by mail: the role of party. The 2020 election saw the development of a strong divide between Republicans and Democrats over the use of mail ballots, first at the elite level, and then at the grassroots. As Figure 4 shows, between 2008 and 2016 Democrats were slightly more likely to vote by mail than Republicans. However, this difference was primarily an artifact of which states had chosen to conduct their elections entirely by mail. In 2020, the partisan gap in voting by mail opened wide. In 2022, and then again in 2024, the gap closed somewhat, although this was primarily due to Democrats pulling back in the use of voting by mail rather than Republicans increasing their usage.

FIGURE 3. GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF VOTING BY MAIL, 2016 - 2024.

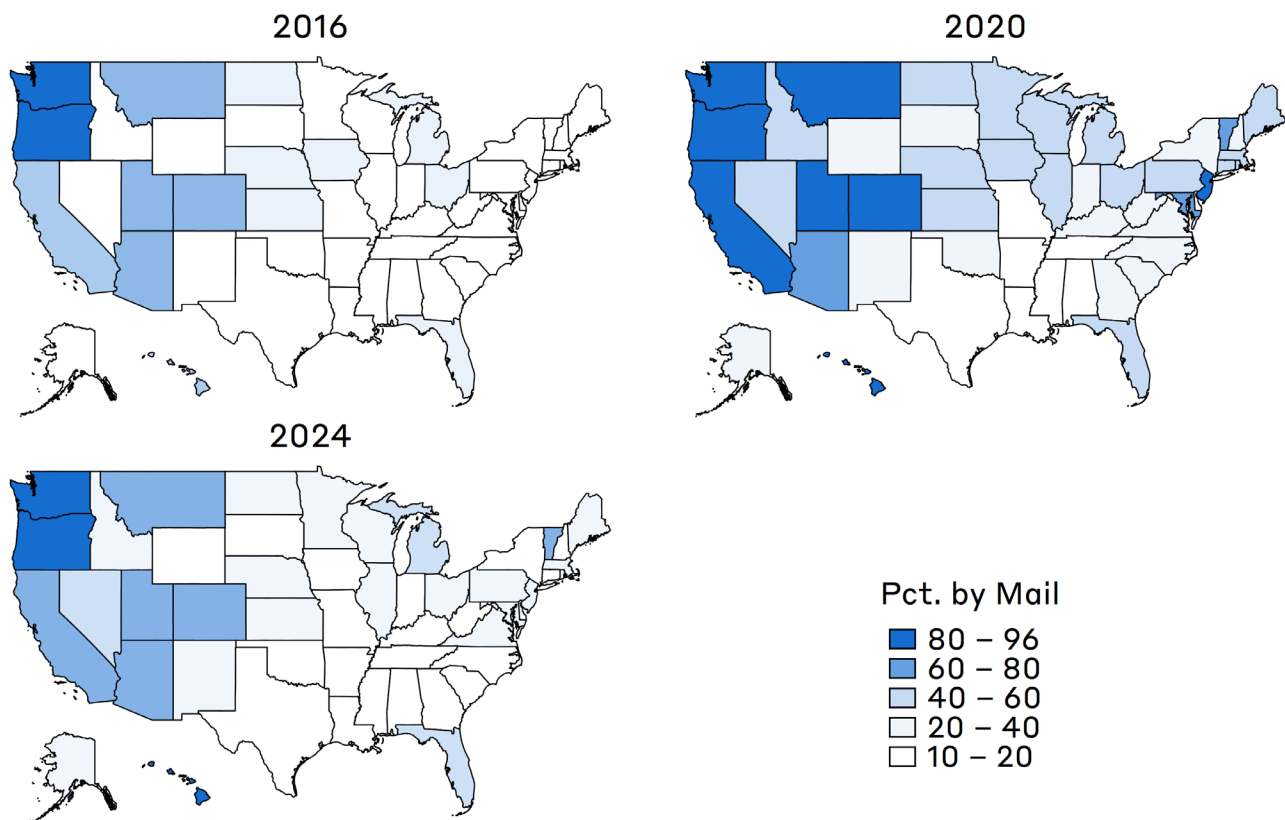
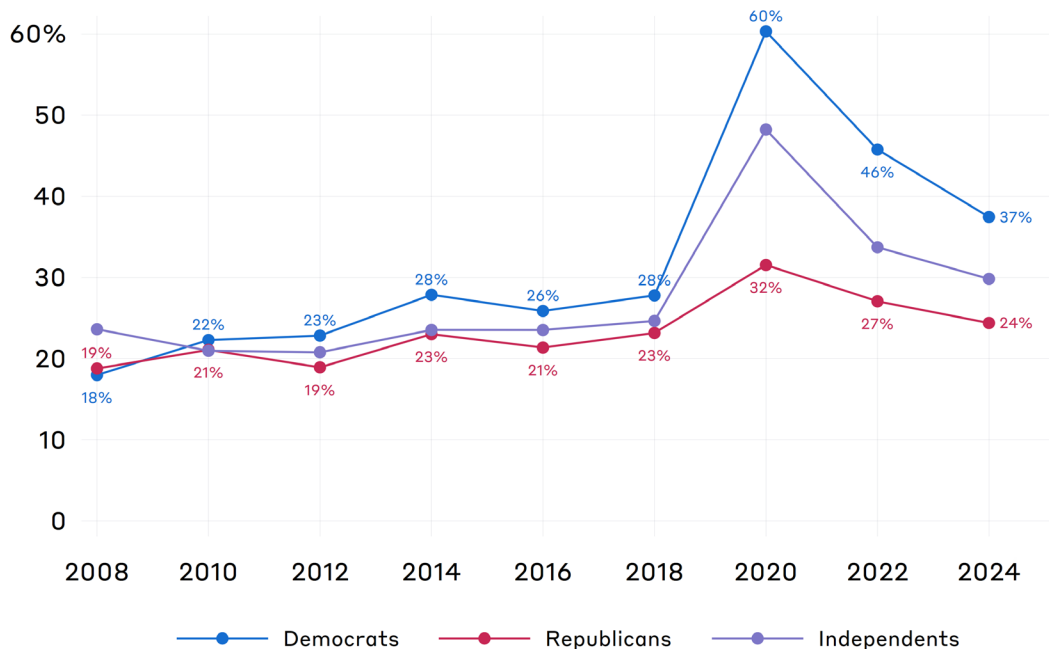


FIGURE 4. VOTING BY MAIL BY PARTY, 2008 - 2024.



Data source: SPAE (2008, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2020, 2022, 2024); Cooperative Election Study (2010, 2018).

## THE VOTING-BY-MAIL EXPERIENCE

A core feature of the SPAE is that it asks voters directly about their experience voting. With respect to voting by mail, the SPAE includes three key questions, which are reflected in the following graphs. In every iteration of the survey, mail voters have been asked whether they had any problems getting their absentee or mail ballots sent to them, if they had any problems marking their ballot, and how easy it was to follow all the instructions necessary to cast their ballot and return it to be counted.

As the graphs in Figure 5 show, the experience of mail voters in 2024 was similar to prior years. Ninety-nine percent of mail voters stated there were no problems in getting their absentee or mail ballot sent to them. Ninety-nine percent said they encountered no problems marking or completing their ballot. Eighty-four percent said it was very easy to follow all the instructions necessary to cast their ballot and return it. In the end, 72% of voters by mail said they were very confident that their vote was counted as intended.

## RETURNING MAIL BALLOTS

An important issue that arose in the 2020 election was how best to return mail ballots. Historically, experience in vote-by-mail states had suggested that the

most secure and convenient way for voters to return their mail ballots was through drop boxes provided by the election authority. In addition, controversy arose over the capacity of the United States Postal Service to deliver mail ballots in time to be counted in November. Election administrators responded by expanding opportunities to return ballots through modes other than the mail, and voters took advantage of those opportunities.

However, the use of drop boxes has become politically controversial, as have most features of mail-voting policy. This has led some states to outlaw the use of drop boxes after 2020. It may also have led Republicans to be less likely to use drop boxes as a method of returning mail ballots.

As Figure 6 shows, although nearly half of mail ballots in 2020 were returned in person—down from 2016, when two-thirds of all mail ballots were returned through the Postal Service—the share of ballots returned by mail rebounded in 2022. In 2024, the share of ballots returned by mail declined again, with voters primarily shifting to drop boxes. Voters were also slightly more likely to report returning their ballots at election offices or polling places.

FIGURE 5. EXPERIENCE CASTING A MAIL BALLOT.

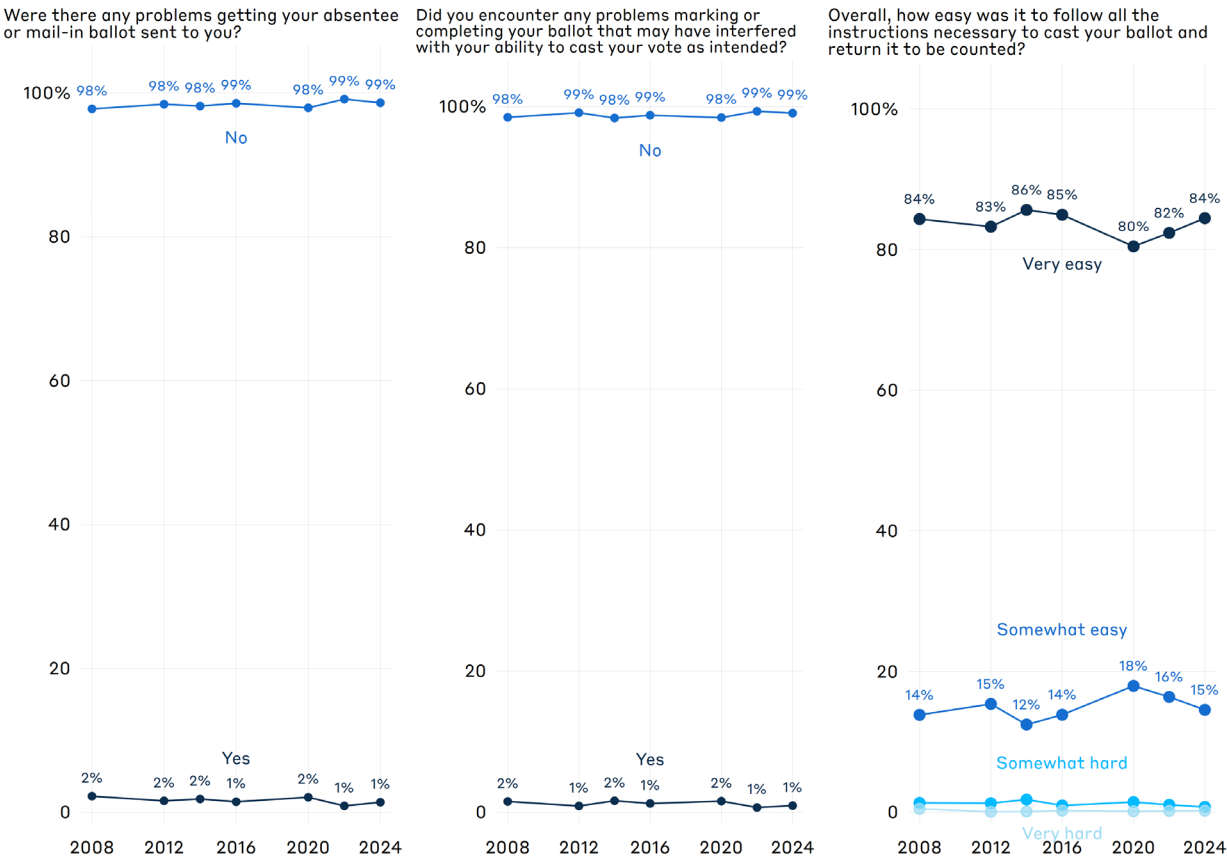
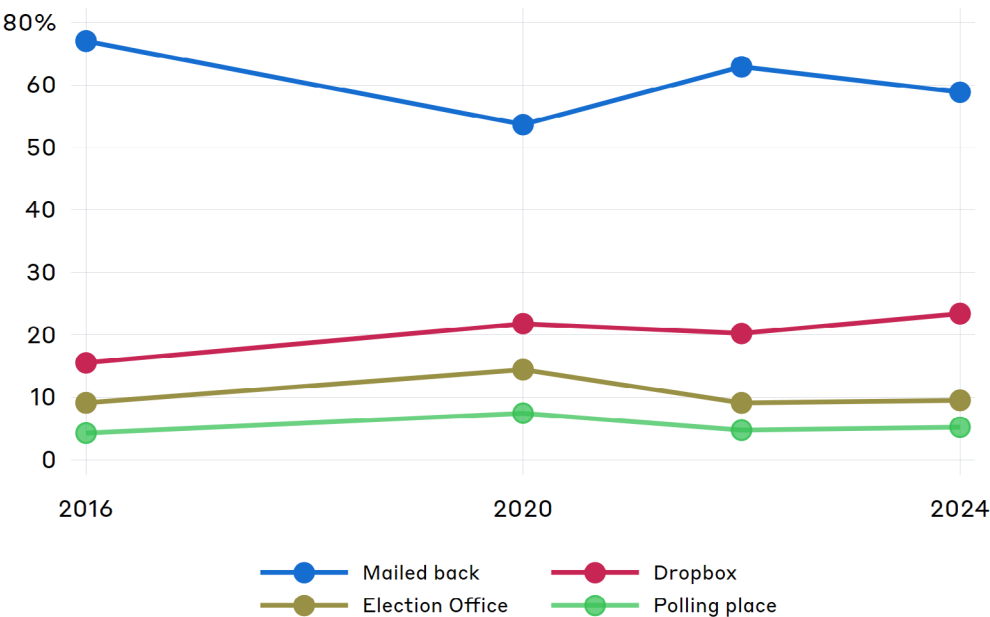


FIGURE 6. HOW MAIL BALLOTS WERE RETURNED, 2016 - 2024.



Of course, most of the country was new to the experience of voting by mail in 2020, and patterns of mail-ballot return may have differed between those new to the practice and those more experienced. It is instructive to compare how voters returned their ballots in the long-standing vote-by-mail states of Colorado, Oregon, and Washington to the rest of the nation. The two graphs in Figure 7 show how voters in those three states returned their ballots, compared to voters in the other states and D.C.

Although drop box usage declined in 2022 in both the long-standing vote-by-mail states and in all other states, it rebounded in 2024 across both categories. In Colorado, Oregon, and Washington, the rebound did not reach 2020 levels. However, in the remaining states, drop box usage did return to 2020 levels. And, despite the rebound in drop box usage across both groups, the fraction of voters reporting that they returned their ballot via the Postal Service remained

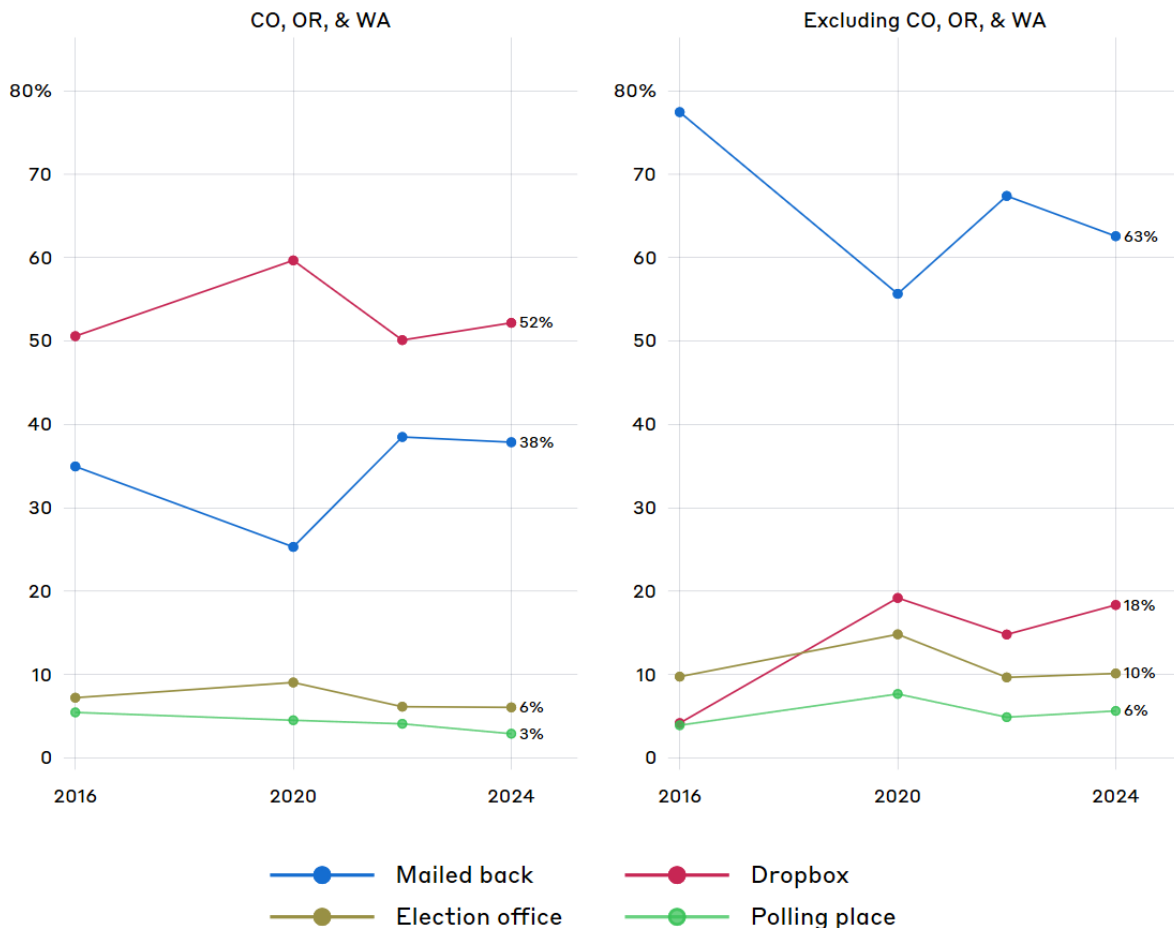
higher in 2024 than in 2020, despite ongoing concerns about declining service quality in mail delivery.

Partisanship does not appear to have played a strong role in the overall rebound in use of the Postal Service to return mail ballots by 2024. In 2020, 56% of Republicans reported returning their mail ballots through the Postal Service, compared to 51% of Democrats. By 2024, these percentages had risen to 61% for Republicans and 59% for Democrats.

## DISRUPTIONS AT DROP BOXES

In recent years, election experts have expressed concern that groups or lone individuals might intimidate voters coming to deposit their ballots at drop boxes or to vote at polling places. Although there have been isolated reports of disruptions at polling places, the consensus among observers has been that voting has

**FIGURE 7. HOW MAIL BALLOTS WERE RETURNED, COMPARING LEGACY VBM STATES WITH ALL OTHERS, 2016 - 2024.**





gone smoothly, despite these reports. Media reports and other attempts to compile lists of voter problems run into the obvious issue that such accounts are anecdotal and rarely systematic. Consequently, there is value in asking a representative sample of voters what they observed when they voted or dropped off their ballot.

To address this issue, in both 2022 and 2024, the SPAE asked the following question of those who reported depositing their ballot at a drop box: “When you returned your ballot to a drop box, did you directly observe any of the following events taking place near the drop box?” The closed-ended response categories were:

1. People peacefully holding signs or giving out literature in support of a candidate or ballot question.
2. Individuals or groups of people casting doubt on whether the election was fraudulent.
3. Individuals or groups of people seeming to challenge whether some people were properly dropping off ballots.
4. Individuals or groups, other than police officers, carrying a gun.
5. Someone taking pictures of voters or election workers who did not seem to be a reporter.
6. Anything else that seemed disruptive.

Respondents were also allowed to report that they saw none of these things.

Among those who answered the question, roughly 1% of drop-box users reported seeing someone claim the election was fraudulent, someone challenge ballot drop-offs, or some other form of disruption. (See Figure 8.) Despite frequent media coverage, almost no

one reported seeing someone—other than a reporter—taking pictures of voters or election workers, or someone carrying a gun. (Indeed, while 1% of respondents reported seeing someone carrying a gun when using a drop box in 2022, no one reported this in 2024.) The most frequent observation was of individuals peacefully holding signs, though only 2.2% of respondents noted this. Overall, 97.5% of those who returned ballots via drop boxes in 2024 reported seeing nothing disruptive, virtually identical to the 96.6% reported in 2022.

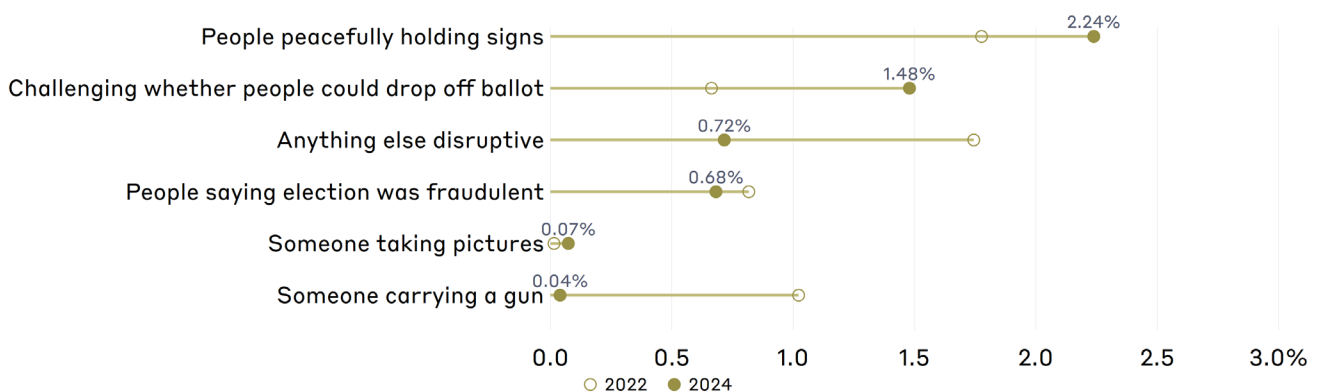
## BALLOT TRACKING

The availability of online ballot tracking for those voting by mail has grown significantly over the past few elections. The use of ballot tracking exploded during the 2020 election, paralleling the surge in voting by mail. By 2022, almost every state offered by-mail voters the ability to track whether their mail ballot had been received for counting.

In 2022, for the first time, the SPAE asked respondents who reported voting by mail whether they used online ballot tracking. Among those who answered the question, 40% said they used this service.

In 2024, the SPAE again asked by-mail voters whether they had used online ballot tracking. Unfortunately, due to a programming error in the survey, discovered only after the survey had been fielded, the 2024 results are not comparable to those from 2022. Therefore, readers interested in the use of ballot tracking are referred to the 2022 SPAE report.

**FIGURE 8. PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO REPORTED OBSERVING DISRUPTIONS AT DROP BOXES, 2022 AND 2024.**



## VOTING IN-PERSON

Although the expansion of voting by mail was the most notable issue in election administration in 2020 and beyond, in-person voting has remained important. Indeed, as previously noted, in-person voting rebounded in both 2022 and 2024.

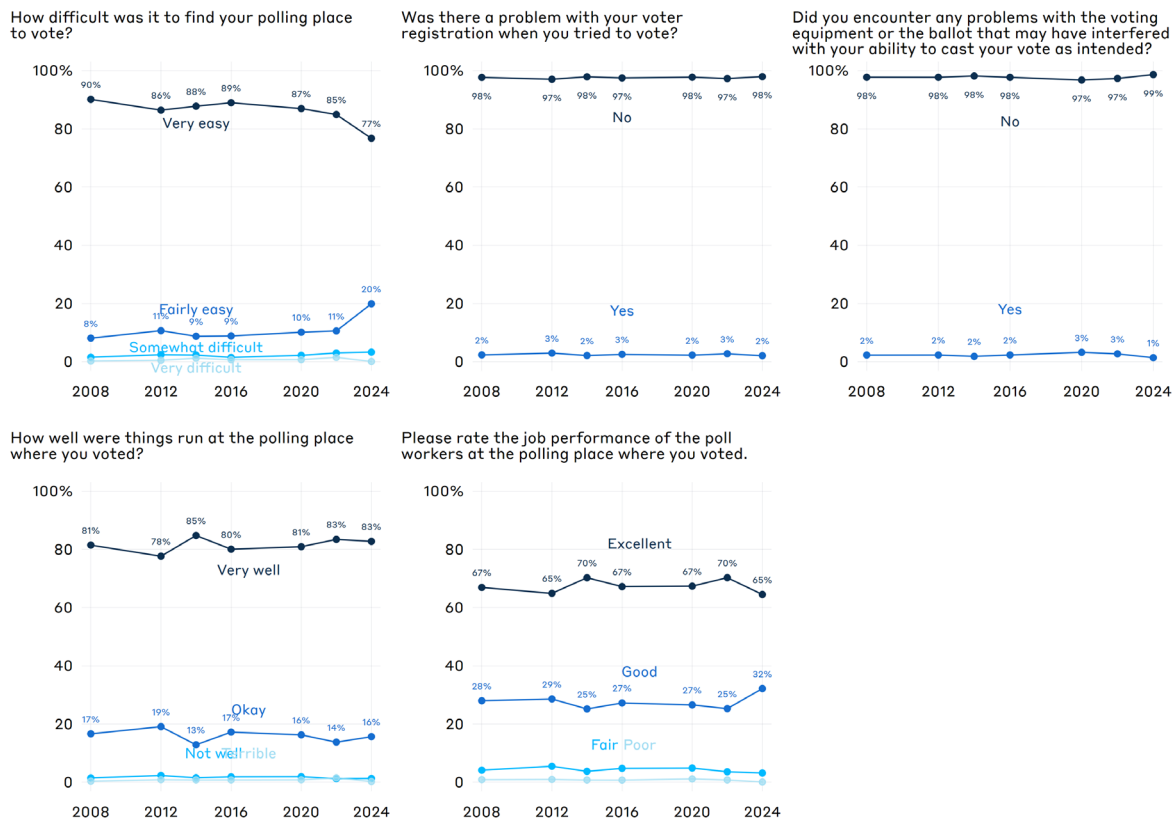
The challenge of managing in-person voting can be categorized into three components: people, places, and things. Particularly during the exigent circumstances of the 2020 election, responding to the demand for in-person voting was strained by the potential lack of poll workers, polling places, and the resources necessary to carry out in-person voting. Had voting by mail not been so successful in 2020, the in-person voting system would likely have faced an insurmountable strain. In the aftermath of 2020, more voters have returned to casting their ballots in person, although not yet at pre-2020 levels.

Responses to the SPAE indicate that the evolution of voting modes over the past three federal elections has

been met with positive feedback from voters, at least regarding their personal experience. This has been true for both in-person voters and those voting by mail.

The SPAE asks in-person voters about problems with voter registration and voting equipment, how well things were run at the polling place, and the performance of poll workers. As with mail voting, in-person voters reported very similar—and overall positive—experiences compared to past years. Among those who voted on Election Day, for example, 77% said it was very easy to find their polling place, 98% said they had no problems with registration, 99% did not encounter problems with voting equipment, 83% said the polling place was very well-run, and 65% rated the performance of poll workers as excellent. (See Figure 9.) These statistics are virtually identical to all past SPAE studies.

FIGURE 9. EXPERIENCE VOTING ON ELECTION DAY.



The one notable exception was the question about the ease of finding the polling place. In 2024, 77% of Election Day voters said it was “very easy” to find their polling place, down from an average of 88% in earlier years. Meanwhile, the percentage who said it was “fairly easy” doubled—from 10% to 20%. In other words, most Election Day voters in 2024 still found their polling place with ease, though their experience was slightly less seamless than in the past.

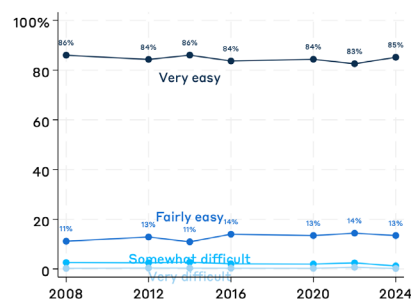
The experience of early voters was very similar to that of Election Day voters. Eighty-five percent said it was very easy to find their polling place. Ninety-eight percent said they had no problems with registration when they tried to vote. Ninety-nine percent did not encounter any problems with the voting equipment. Eighty-seven percent said the polling place was very well-run, and 73% rated the performance of the poll workers as excellent. (See Figure 10.) These results are also consistent with those from past years.

Voter experiences on Election Day and early voting were very similar. Where they differed, it was in the slightly better experience among early voters in finding their polling place (77% “very easy” on Election Day vs. 85% for early voters) and in their assessment of poll worker performance (65% “excellent” on Election Day vs. 73% for early voters).

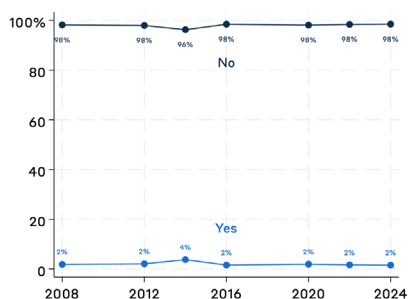
In 2024, 68% of Election Day voters said they were very confident that their ballot was counted as intended, with another 24% saying they were somewhat confident. (See Figure 11.) Ballot-counting confidence was similarly high among early voters: 71% said they were very confident, and 25% said they were somewhat confident. These increases in confidence compared to 2020 are discussed in more detail below.

FIGURE 10. EXPERIENCE VOTING EARLY

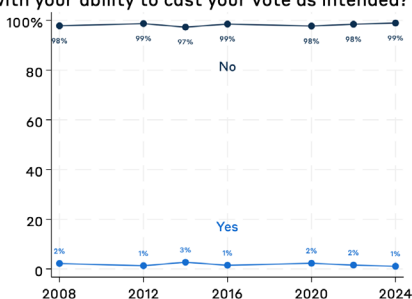
How difficult was it to find your polling place to vote?



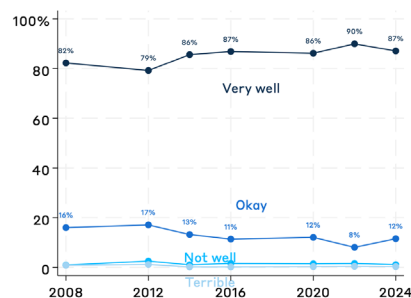
Was there a problem with your voter registration when you tried to vote?



Did you encounter any problems with the voting equipment or the ballot that may have interfered with your ability to cast your vote as intended?



How well were things run at the polling place where you voted?



Please rate the job performance of the poll workers at the polling place where you voted.

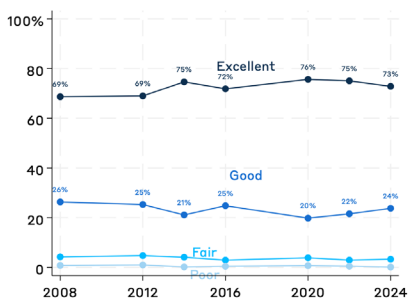
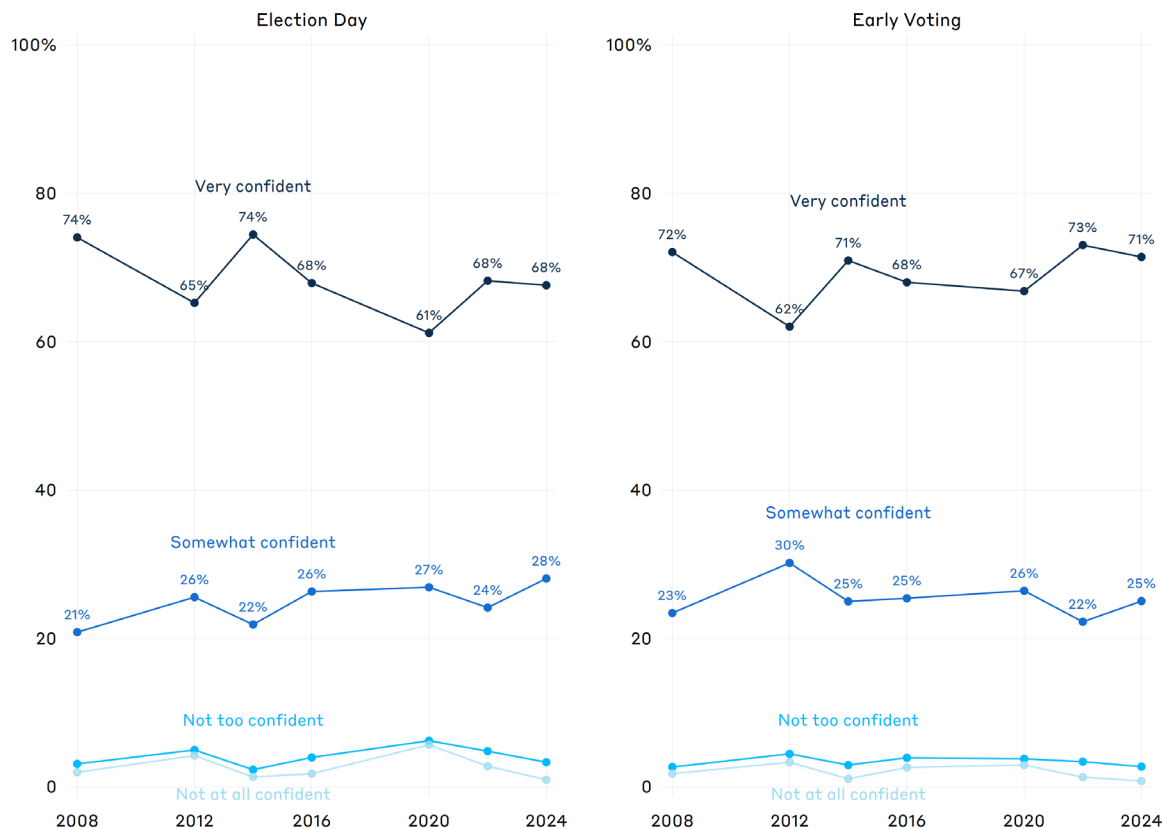


FIGURE 11. CONFIDENCE THAT VOTES WERE COUNTED AS CAST, 2008 - 2024.



## WHERE PEOPLE VOTED

Arranging for places for people to vote in person has become more difficult in recent years. The COVID pandemic in 2020 accelerated the pace of difficulties. In 2020, with schools closing, churches not holding services, rising concerns about infections in nursing homes, and apprehension among first responders about interacting with the public, the availability of schools, churches, senior centers, and fire stations — traditional high-demand polling places in the past — was in question. Furthermore, concerns over school safety have put pressure on the use of these facilities as polling places.

Patterns related to in-person voting locations continued from 2020 on into 2024, with one major exception. (See Figure 12.) The major long-term trend for Election Day has been the decline in the use of schools, which continued in 2024. In fact, in 2024, schools were no longer the most common Election Day polling place. The leading location was community centers, which rocketed from 20% of Election Day voters in 2022 to 32% of voters in 2024, a large and statistically different increase from 2020 and 2022. In addition,

churches, traditionally in second place behind schools in Election Day voting locations, fell to 16% of voters, down from 21% in both 2020 and 2022. Elsewhere, 12% voted in other types of government buildings (courthouses, government office buildings, etc.), 4% in libraries, and 15% in all other places.

Early voting typically takes place in different types of buildings as it spans a longer period, attracting more voters. “Other government buildings,” including courthouses, city halls, and election offices, have been the most common locations for casting early in-person votes. (See Figure 13.) The decline in the use of these facilities has stabilized since the drop in 2020. Similar to Election Day voting, the usage rates of building types remained very similar to those observed in 2020, except for a significant increase in community centers. In 2024, 36% of early in-person voters cast a ballot in an “other government building,” 26% in a community center, 13% in a library, 7% in a school, 4% in a church, and 13% in all other facilities.

FIGURE 12. WHERE VOTERS CAST BALLOTS ON ELECTION DAY, 2008 - 2024

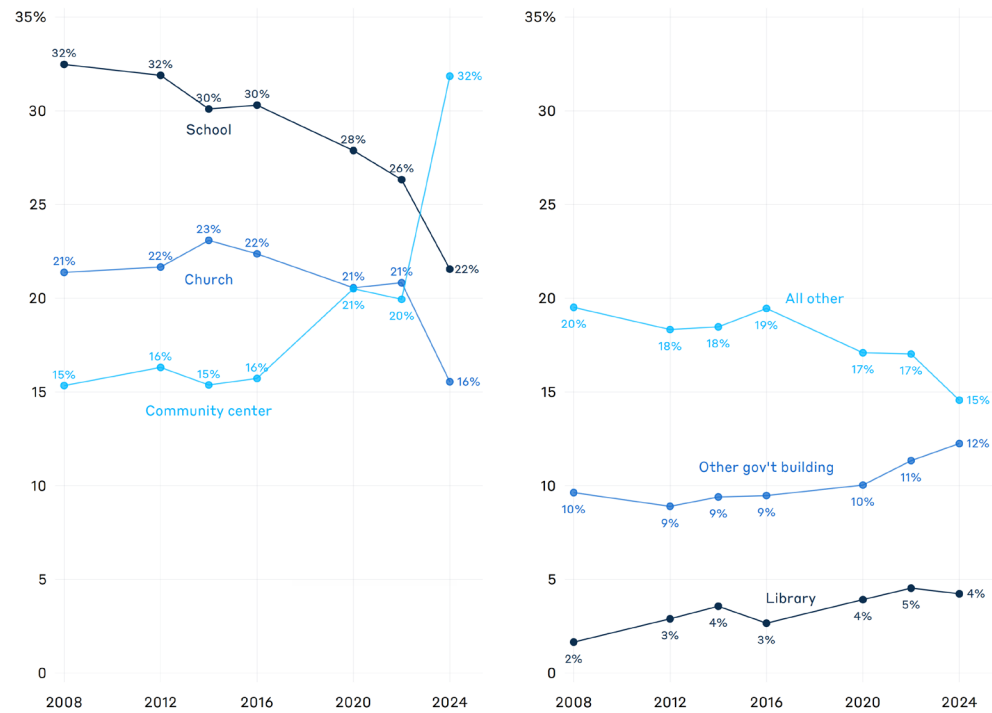
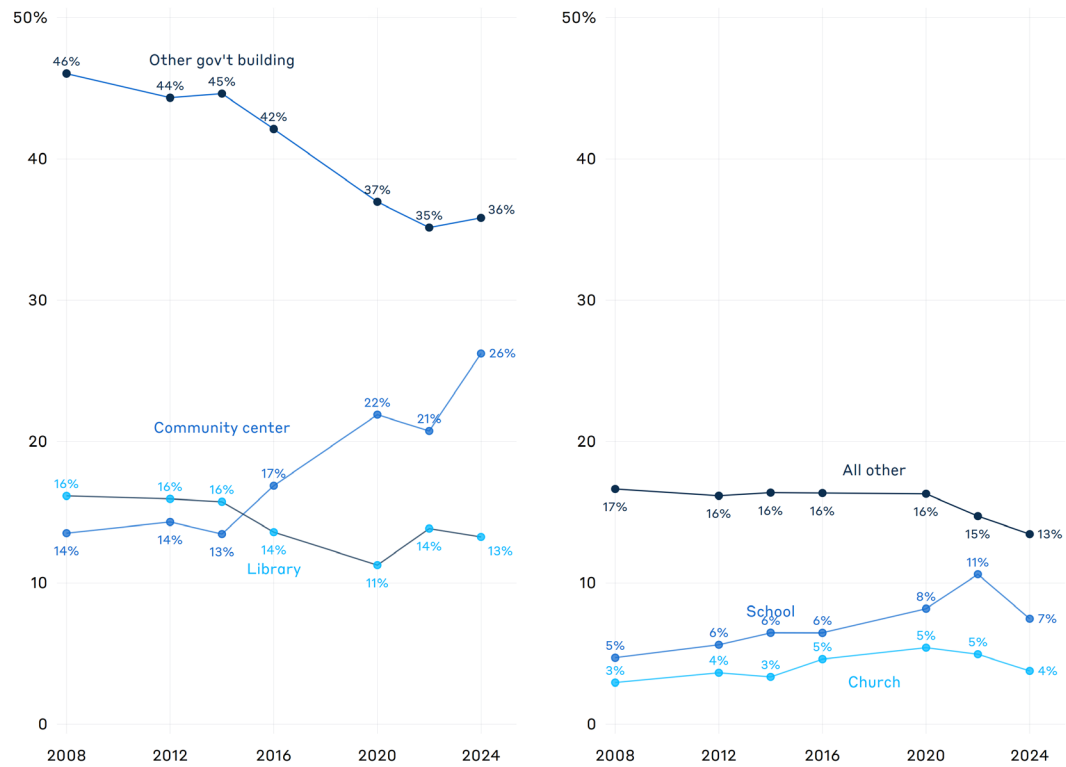


FIGURE 13. WHERE VOTERS CAST BALLOTS EARLY, 2008 - 2024



## WAIT TIME TO VOTE

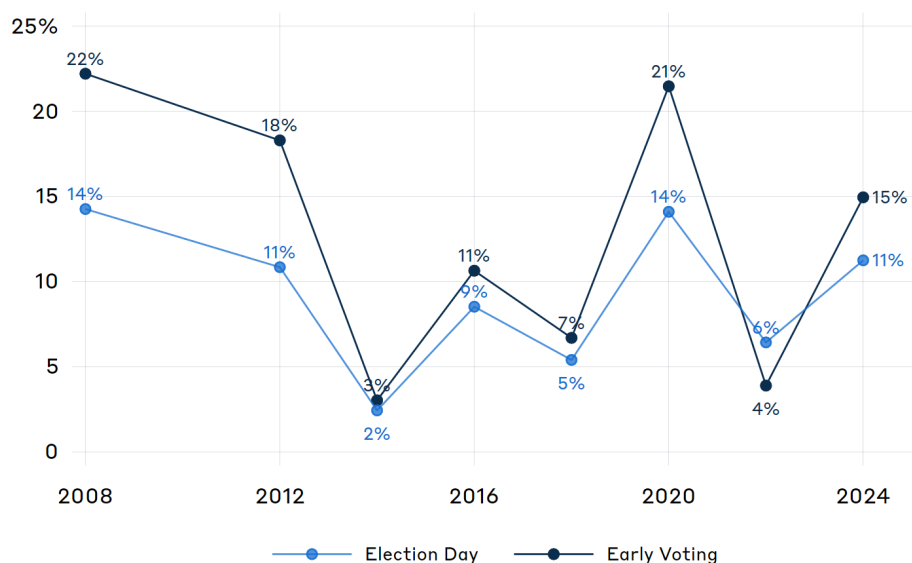
The issue of voter wait times became salient immediately after the 2012 election, when President Obama cited long lines in Florida during his victory speech, calling on Americans “to fix that.” Efforts to reduce wait times were successful in the following three federal elections, but increased again in 2020. Wait times were much greater in 2020 than 2016, reversing the gains made over the preceding decade. Wait times in 2024 were still above the levels of 2016 but have not returned to the levels of 2020.

Our benchmark for wait times is the percentage of voters who waited over 30 minutes to cast a ballot. (The thirty-minute benchmark was established in the 2014 report of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration.<sup>4</sup>) As illustrated in Figure 14, 15% of early voters and 11% of Election Day voters waited more than 30 minutes.

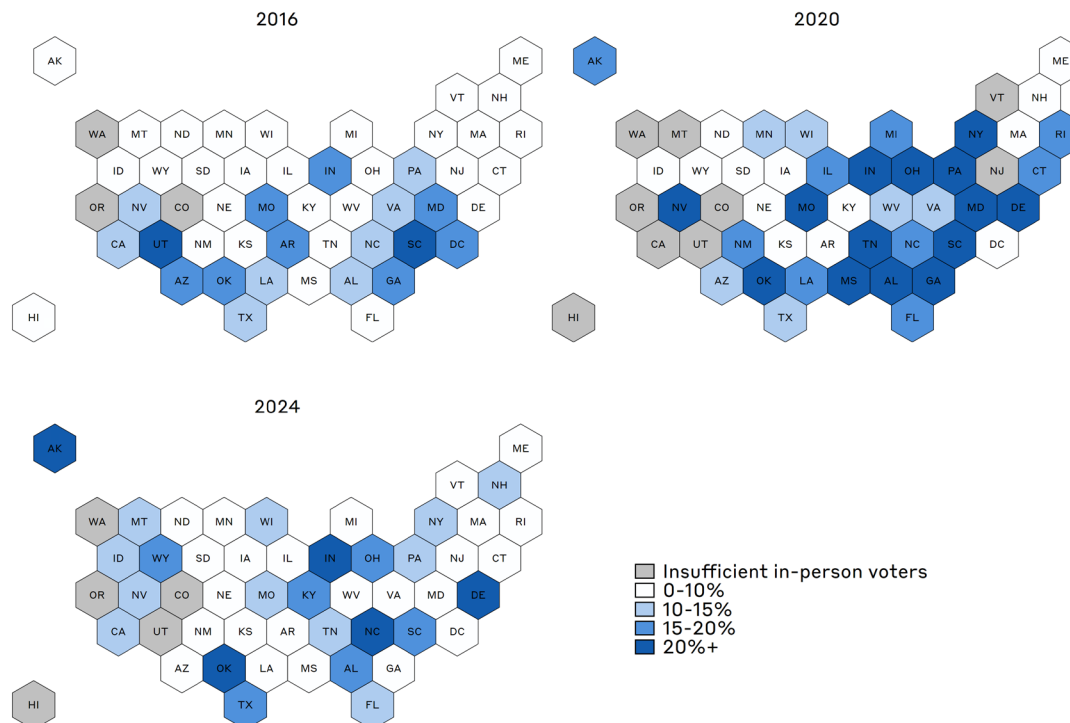
There were a few pockets of long wait times, measured by the percentage of voters reporting that they waited more than thirty minutes to cast a ballot. In 2024, five states (Alaska, Delaware, Indiana, North Carolina, and Oklahoma) saw more than 20% of all in-person voters waiting over thirty minutes to vote in person; 22 states saw more than 10% of all in-person voters waiting over thirty minutes.

Unlike most years, there were no statistically significant differences in the rates at which different racial groups waited more than thirty minutes. For instance, 13.0% of whites, 13.1% of African Americans, and 13.6% of Hispanics waited more than thirty minutes.

**FIGURE 14. PERCENTAGE OF VOTERS WAITING MORE THAN 30 MINUTES TO VOTE, 2008 - 2024.**



<sup>4</sup> U.S. President's Commission on Election Administration, The American Voting Experience: Report and Recommendations of the President's Commission on Election Administration, 2014, <https://web.mit.edu/supportthevoter/www/files/2014/01/Amer-Voting-Exper-final-draft-01-09-14-508.pdf>.

**FIGURE 15. PERCENTAGE OF IN-PERSON VOTERS WHO WAITED LONGER THAN 30 MINUTES TO VOTE.**

Note: States with fewer than 50 in-person voters in the sample are excluded.

## VOTER IDENTIFICATION

The core activity of precinct election officials in voting is voter authentication and preparing the ballot to give to the voter. Voter identification and registration are the two essential components of the authentication procedures in the United States. Earlier studies have documented that registration problems arise commonly and, in the 2000 general election, kept approximately 3% of people from voting. Since 2000, many states have strengthened voter identification laws, raising the possibility that applying identification rules at the polls could create further difficulties in voting.

In 2024, approximately 85% of individuals who voted in person showed identification, an increase from 75% in 2016, the last year when voter ID questions appeared in the SPAE. Presenting identification was slightly more prevalent in 2024 during early voting (86%) compared to Election Day (83%). Regardless of whether they voted early or on Election Day, the most common type of identification provided by voters was a driver's license or state identification card (66% of Election Day voters and 85% of early voters), followed by a voter registration card (30% of Election Day voters and 11% of early voters).

The SPAE questionnaire asked about the types of ID voters had access to, regardless of their state's requirements or what they presented at the polling place. The most common form of ID possessed by respondents was a driver's license (97%), an increase from 2016 (88%). When asked if their driver's license was unexpired, bore the same name under which the voter was registered, and displayed the same address where the voter was registered, the percentage of respondents was 85%, rising from 76% in 2016. Forty-six percent of registered voters reported having an unexpired passport with the same name as the one under which they are registered to vote, compared to 36% in 2016. Eighty-three percent of respondents indicated they could easily locate their official birth certificate, unchanged from 2016.

Finally, the SPAE also asked voters to list other types of ID they held and whether those forms of ID contained a photo. The distribution of voters who possessed each ID is reported in Table 1.

**TABLE 1. POSSESSION OF FORMS OF IDENTIFICATION OTHER THAN DRIVER'S LICENSES AND PASSPORTS, 2024**

<b>ID Type</b>	<b>Have ID with Photo (%)</b>	<b>Have ID without Photo (%)</b>
Public assistance ID card	7.4	3.6
Military ID card	5.6	0.4
Out-of-state ID card	6.7	0.7
ID card from a Native American tribe	0.8	0.4
In-state private university ID card	4.5	0.7
Out-of-state private university ID card	1.9	0.3
In-state public university ID card	6.8	0.6
Out-of-state public university ID card	1.7	0.2
License to carry a firearm	5.9	3.1
Voter registration card	9.1	35.2
ID card issued by another federal agency	7.4	1.2
ID card issued by another state agency	14.6	0.5
ID card issued by another local agency	3.8	0.5

Whether respondents reported showing identification varied based on the state's voter ID law, as classified by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL).<sup>5</sup> The NCSL classifies voter ID laws into five categories: strict photo ID, non-strict photo ID, strict non-photo ID, non-strict non-photo ID, and states without a voter ID law that only meet the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) minimum standard.<sup>6</sup> Nearly 100% of voters in states with a voter ID law exceeding the HAVA minimum showed some form of ID, whereas only 56% of voters in HAVA minimum states showed ID.

<sup>5</sup> NCSL Voter ID Laws. <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/voter-id>. Accessed May 1, 2025.

<sup>6</sup> In a "HAVA minimum" state, voters generally do not require any identification to vote, although they may have to attest to their identity by providing a signature, but first-time voters who registered by mail without providing a copy of their identification must show some form of identification, which does not have to include a photo.

The percentage of voters who reported showing photo identification also varied by NCSL classification. Notably, the percentage of respondents in HAVA-minimum states who reported showing photo ID when they voted increased from 2016 to 2024, from 21% to 28%, while the percentage showing photo ID in all other states dropped. The steepest drop was in the three strict non-photo ID states (Arizona, North Dakota, and Wyoming), where 62% of voters reported showing a photo ID, down from 83% in 2016.

The SPAE asks respondents who showed photo ID whether they were specifically requested to do so or if they did it because it was convenient. These differences are summarized in Table 2. Notably, in all states except for HAVA minimum states, the percentage of voters reporting that they showed a photo ID declined compared to 2016, as did the percentage of voters who reported that they were specifically requested to show a photo ID.



TABLE 2. PERCENTAGE OF VOTERS SHOWING PHOTO ID BY ID LAW CLASSIFICATION, 2016 AND 2024.

NCSL classification	N states		Showed photo ID (%)		Requested specifically (%)	
	2016	2024	2016	2024	2016	2024
HAVA minimum	18	14	20.9	28.1	8.2	9.1
Strict Photo ID	7	9	93.4	86.0	64.8	54.6
Non-Strict Photo ID	8	13	84.9	82.8	52.5	48.9
Strict Non-Photo ID	3	3	83.1	62.1	54.4	37.3
Non-Strict Non-Photo ID	14	11	76.5	78.0	38.3	42.1

Note: excludes first-time voters

Previous research into using photo ID to vote has examined racial disparities concerning the requirement to show an ID at polling places. The data from 2024 indicate that these disparities persisted in a surprising way. In the HAVA-minimum states, African American voters were twice as likely to report that they showed a photo ID when they went to vote as White voters (50% vs. 26%). (See Table 3.) On the other hand, African Americans reported showing photo ID to vote at a lower rate than Whites in both strict and

non-strict photo ID states. (There were insufficient African American respondents in strict non-photo ID and non-strict non-photo ID states to report relative percentages.)

These statistics illustrate the significant flexibility that election workers have in implementing state voter-identification laws, at least as experienced by voters.

TABLE 3. PERCENTAGE OF VOTERS SHOWING PHOTO ID BY ID LAW CLASSIFICATION, BY RACE, 2024.

NCSL classification	Race			
	White	Black	Hispanic	All Other
HAVA minimum	25.5%	49.8%	24.7%	35.1%
Strict Photo ID	88.7%	77.0%	*	91.6%
Non-Strict Photo ID	83.3%	75.2%	73.7%	94.2%
Strict Non-Photo ID	69.9%	*	*	*
Non-Strict Non-Photo ID	80.1%	*	*	*

\*Fewer than 50 observations in sample.

## DISRUPTIONS IN POLLING PLACES

Following the 2020 elections, there have been increased concerns about the safety and security of election workers and facilities. Although most public concern has focused on election officials and their offices, the election community has also worried that violence, or at least disruptions, could erupt in polling places themselves.

To gauge the degree to which voters encountered concerning behavior, starting in 2022, the SPAE included two related batteries of questions, which were repeated in 2024. The first asked about disruptions observed in polling places, both on Election Day and during early voting. The second asked about activities outside of polling places. (A related set of questions was posed to those who used drop boxes. See the voting-by-mail section for a discussion of these items.)

Voters who cast their votes in person, either on Election Day or during early voting, were asked, “When you went to vote, did you directly observe any of the following events taking place in the polling place? (Mark all that apply.)” The events mentioned were:

- » People in the polling place talking loudly or acting in a way that disrupted the voting.

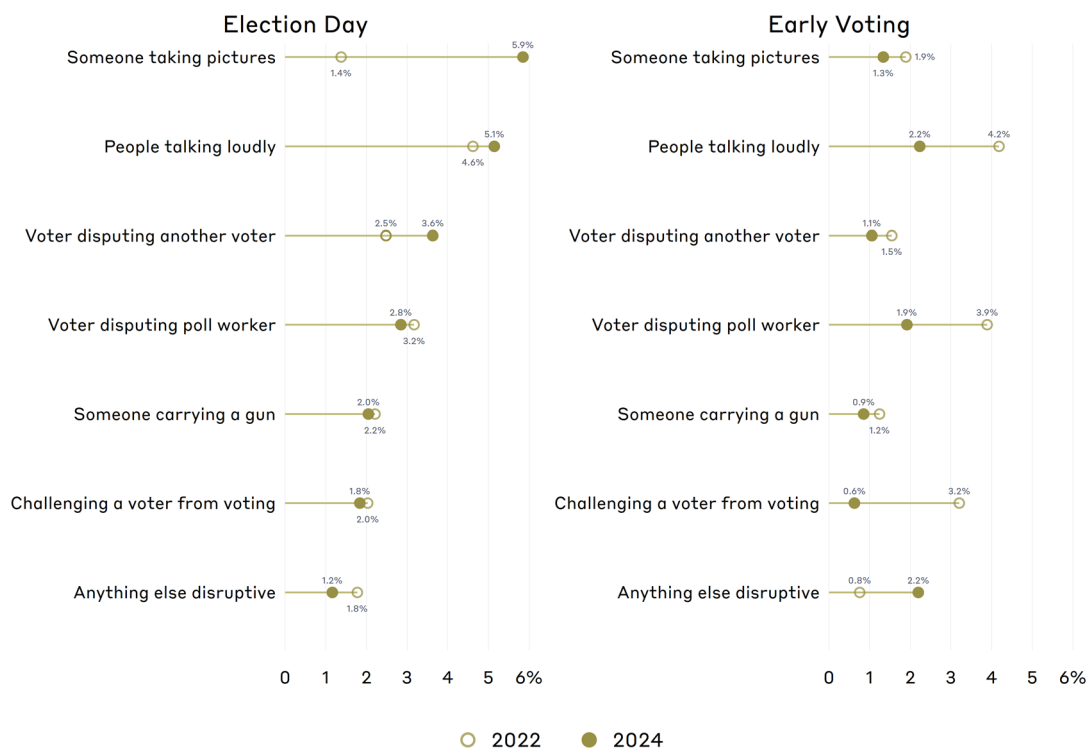
- » A voter in a dispute with an official election worker.
- » A voter in a dispute with another voter.
- » An individual, other than a police officer, carrying a gun.
- » Someone who was not an official election worker challenging whether someone could vote.
- » Someone taking pictures of voters or election workers who did not seem to be a reporter.
- » Anything else that seemed disruptive.

Respondents were also allowed to state that they observed none of these events.

In 2024, an overwhelming number of in-person voters—86% of Election Day voters and 92% of early voters—reported that they observed none of these potentially disruptive behaviors. In 2022, these figures were 90% and 91%, respectively.

In both 2022 and 2024, these potentially disruptive behaviors were generally more common on Election Day than in early voting. (See Figure 16.) The exception in 2024 was the catch-all category “anything else disruptive.” In addition, the percentage of Election Day voters reporting that someone was taking pictures

**FIGURE 16. OBSERVATION OF DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIORS IN IN-PERSON POLLING PLACES, 2022 AND 2024.**



tures in their polling place skyrocketed to 5.9%, up from 1.4%. (Whether this represents an increase in voters attempting to document the process, intimidate others, or take “ballot selfies” is unknown.) After picture taking, the most commonly reported disruptive behaviors were disputes with poll workers or voters, and people talking loudly. (Often, the loud talking was noted alongside the disputes.)

In-person voters were also asked about their observations outside the polling place with this question: “When you went to vote, did you directly observe any of the following events taking place outside the polling place?” The possible responses were as follows:

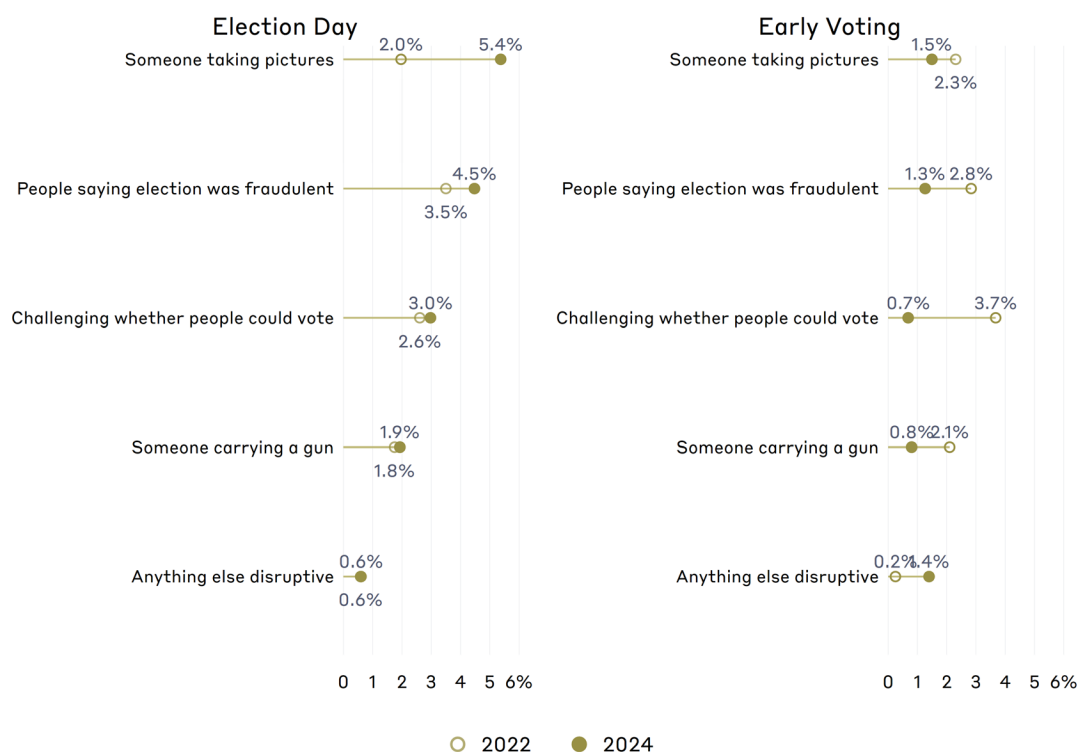
- » People peacefully holding signs or giving out literature in support of a candidate or ballot question.
- » Individuals or groups of people casting doubt on whether the election was fraudulent.
- » Individuals or groups of people seeming to challenge whether some people could enter the polling place to vote.
- » Individuals or groups, other than police officers, carrying a gun.

- » Someone taking pictures of voters or election workers who did not seem to be a reporter.
- » Anything else that seemed disruptive. (Please describe what you observed.)
- » I didn’t observe any of these things.

The first response, with people peacefully holding signs or passing out literature, should not be considered a disruption, although voters may find even these activities intimidating. In 2024, 21.2% of respondents reported seeing this type of activity, compared to 21.5% in 2022.

Observations of disruptions outside early voting sites were generally much less frequent than similar behaviors noted inside those locations. (See Figure 17.) In addition, many more respondents observed people taking pictures outside Election Day polling places than in 2022, just as they noticed more picture-taking inside those same polling places. Finally, disruptive activities, apart from picture-taking, were generally as common in 2024 Election Day polling places as they were in 2022. However, they were generally less frequent in early-voting sites.

**FIGURE 17. OBSERVATION OF DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR OUTSIDE IN-PERSON POLLING PLACES, 2022 AND 2024.**



## NOT VOTING

In 2024, 6.8% of respondents reported that they did not vote, virtually the same as in 2020 (6.0%). To understand the reasons for not voting, these respondents were asked, “What was the main reason you did not vote?” The categories presented to these respondents were as follows:

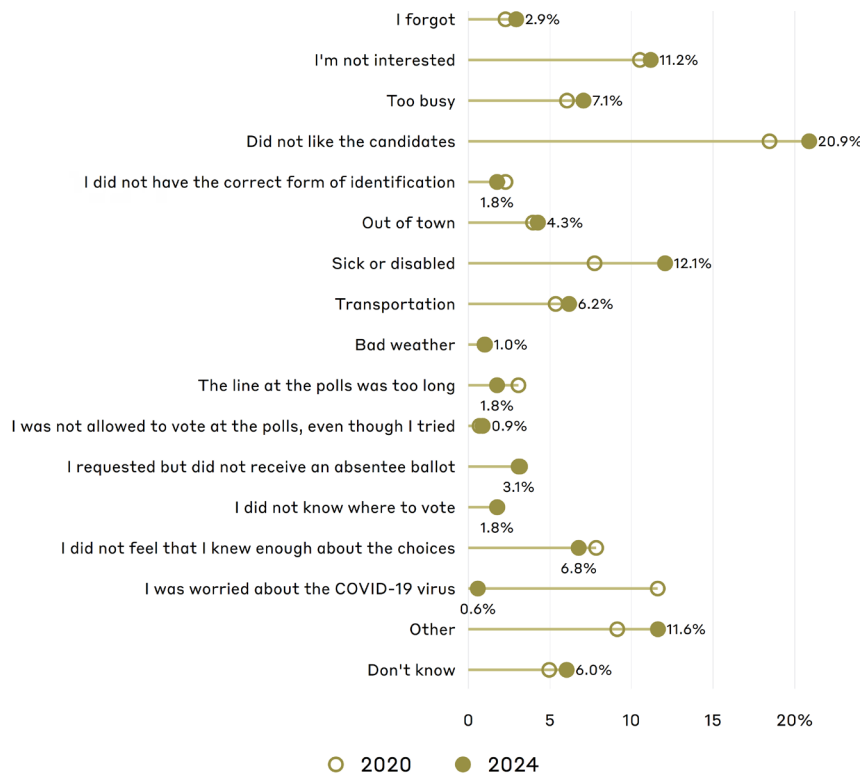
- » I forgot
- » I'm not interested
- » Too busy
- » Did not like the candidates
- » I am not registered
- » I did not have the correct form of identification
- » Out of town
- » Sick or disabled
- » Transportation
- » Bad weather
- » The line at the polls was too long
- » I was not allowed to vote at the polls, even though I tried
- » I requested but did not receive an absentee ballot
- » I did not know where to vote

- » I did not feel that I knew enough about the choices
- » I was worried about the COVID-19 virus
- » Other
- » Don't know

The three most common responses in 2024 were “did not like the candidates” (20.9%), “other” (11.6%), and “sick or disabled” (12.1%). (See Figure 18.) With the exception of the “COVID” response, the distribution of reasons for not voting in 2024 corresponded closely with responses from 2020. The “other” responses were truly a catch-all category, but significant numbers of respondents who chose it mentioned believing the election was rigged, having moved recently, and believing that elections were one-sided in their state.

It is notable that reasons for not voting due to election administration issues, such as not receiving a mail ballot, lacking an ID, not knowing where to vote, and encountering long lines, were cited less frequently in 2024 than reasons related to the respondent’s personal situation, including disengagement from the process or being sick or out of town.

FIGURE 18. REASONS FOR NOT VOTING, 2020 AND 2024.



## CONFIDENCE IN THE ELECTION

From its inception, the SPAE has measured confidence in election administration among registered voters. This issue has become increasingly important in recent years, as discord over the conduct of elections has grown.

The SPAE asks four similarly worded questions to probe levels of confidence across four levels of interest: personal, local, state, and national. In particular, the four questions are:

- » How confident are you that your vote in the [year] General Election was counted as you intended? [asked only of respondents who reported they successfully voted]
- » Think about vote counting throughout your county or city, and not just your own personal situation. How confident are you that votes in your county or city were counted as voters intended in the [year] general election? [not asked in 2008]
- » Now, think about vote counting throughout [state]. How confident are you that votes in [state] were counted as voters intended in the [year] general election? [not asked in 2008]
- » Finally, think about vote counting throughout the country. How confident are you that votes nationwide were counted as voters intended in the [year] general election? [not asked in 2008]

There are five response categories for each question: very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, not at all confident, and I don't know.

The general pattern of responses to these questions in 2024 mirrored that of previous years. Respondents expressed the highest confidence that their own votes were counted as intended, slightly less confidence that votes in their county were counted correctly, even less confidence about votes in the state, and the least confidence regarding votes nationwide. (See Figure 19.)

### CONFIDENCE IN ONE'S OWN VOTE VS. THE COUNTY, STATE, AND NATION

Underlying these general patterns are important dynamics that show how confidence has evolved over time and how it differs among groups.

We begin this discussion with the respondent's own vote. As has been the case in previous years, over two-thirds of respondents were very confident that their personal votes were counted as intended in 2024. (See Figure 20.) The results on this score have been virtually unchanged over the past two decades.

Although confidence in the vote count at the county level has been lower than confidence in one's own vote, the time trend also remained stable in 2024 compared to past years. (See Figure 21.)

FIGURE 19. SUMMARY OF VOTE CONFIDENCE RESPONSES, 2024.

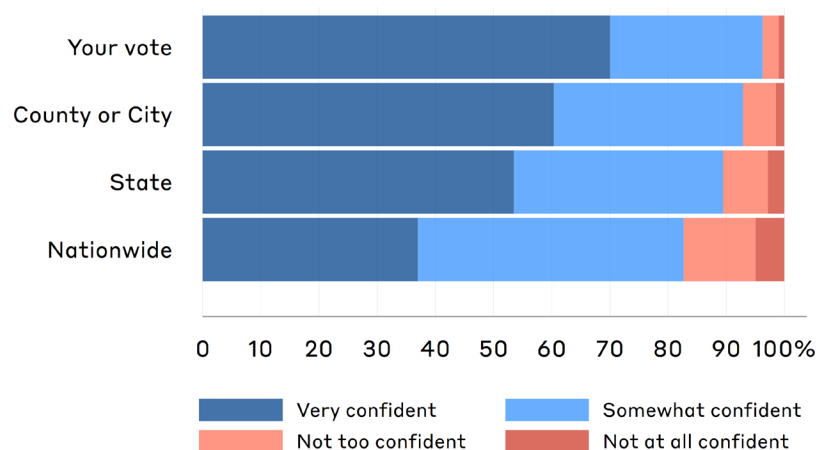


FIGURE 20. PERSONAL CONFIDENCE IN VOTE COUNT, 2008 - 2024.

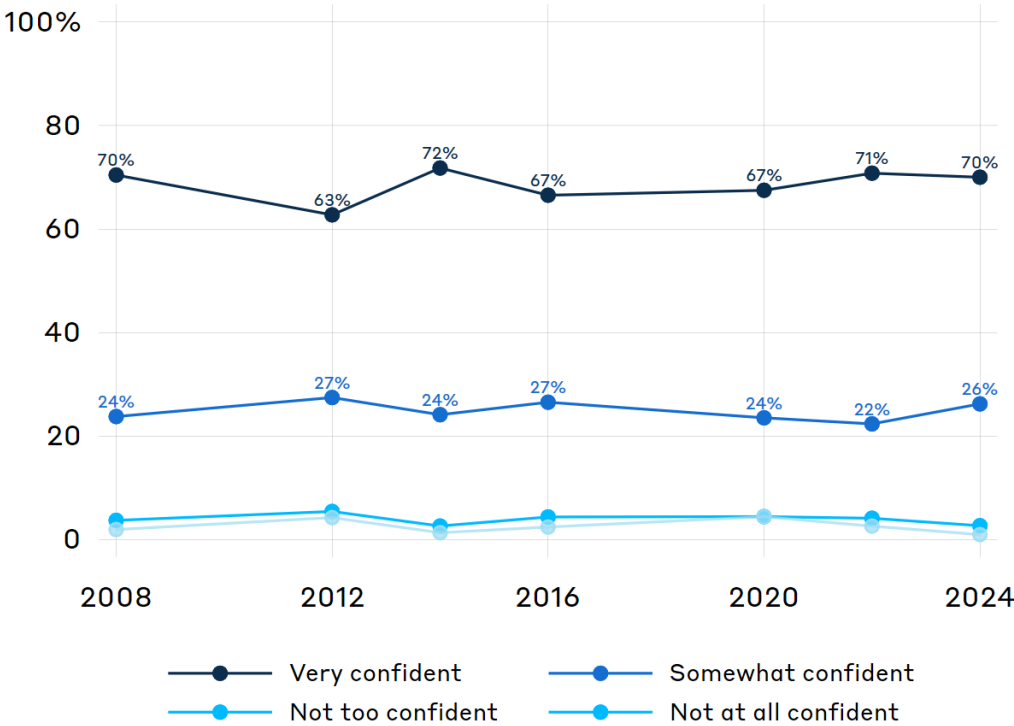
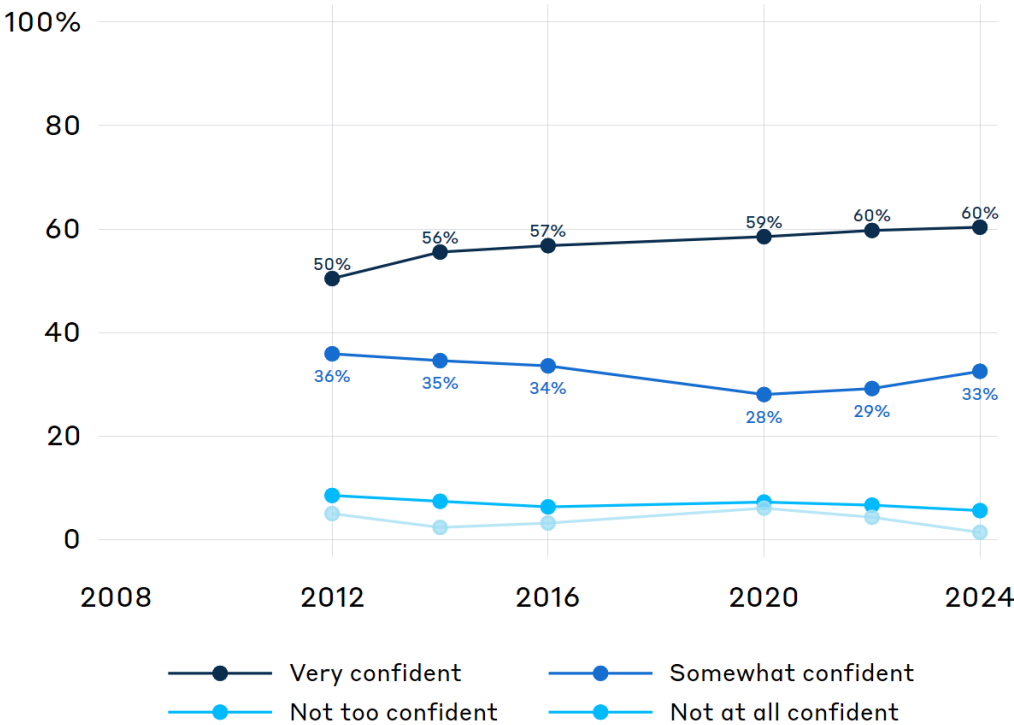


FIGURE 21. CONFIDENCE IN COUNTY OR CITY VOTE COUNTING, 2012 - 2024.



It is in asking about confidence that votes in the state were counted as intended, where the movement in the time trend becomes apparent. Confidence that votes were counted as intended softened in 2020 when respondents were asked about their state. (See Figure 22.) The percentage of voters who were very confident actually rose slightly in 2020 compared to past years, but the percentage of those who were somewhat confident fell significantly, from 38% to 29%. In addition, the percentage of respondents who answered “not at all confident” doubled, rising from 3% to 6%.

Responses in 2024 continued the slight upward trend seen in 2022. Since 2020, overall Confidence (very confident + somewhat confident) has increased from 80% to 89%, while overall lack of confidence (not too confident + not at all confident) has fallen from 20% to 11%.

Respondents’ answers to the questions regarding confidence in votes nationwide have been the most volatile over time, especially beginning with the 2020 election. In 2020, both the percentage of respondents indicating they were very confident that votes were counted as intended nationwide and the percentage reporting that they were not confident at all increased from 2016. (See Figure 23.) In 2022, the percentage of

respondents who indicated they were not at all confident decreased to 13%, further declining to 5% in 2024.

Over the past three elections, the proportion of respondents indicating they were somewhat confident has followed the trend of the not-at-all-confident responses. In 2020, only 23% of respondents expressed some confidence in the nationwide vote count, down from 44% in 2016. However, in 2022, that percentage increased to 32%, rising again to 46% in 2024.

Another way to appreciate how nationwide confidence has shifted over the past three elections is to combine the two “confident” and “not confident” responses into single measures. This is done in Figure 24. As the graph shows, the proportion of respondents expressing some lack of confidence in nationwide vote counting grew substantially in 2020, but has steadily receded since then. In 2024, the combined confidence measure showed the largest value ever recorded by the SPAE, although this is due to the recent growth in the proportion of respondents who stated they were somewhat confident of the nationwide vote count.

**FIGURE 22. CONFIDENCE IN STATE VOTE COUNTING, 2012 - 2024.**

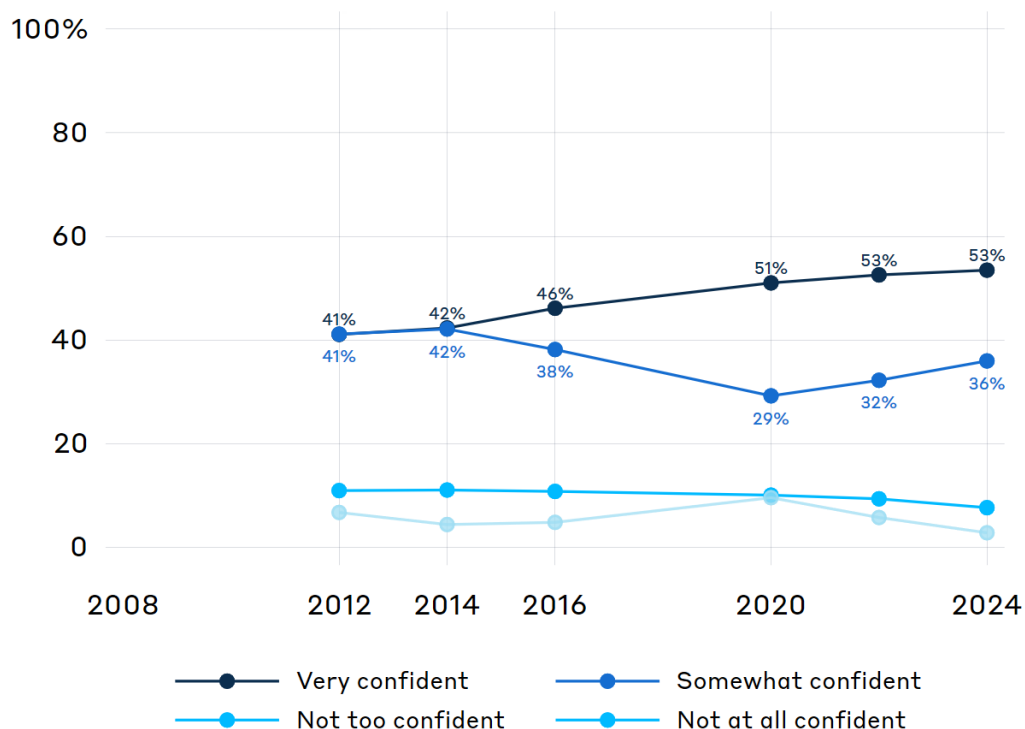


FIGURE 23. CONFIDENCE IN NATIONWIDE VOTE COUNTING, 2012 - 2024.

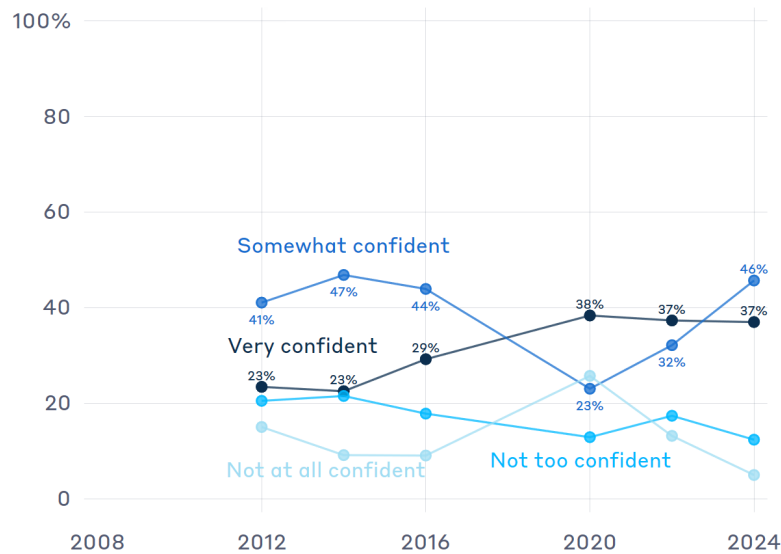
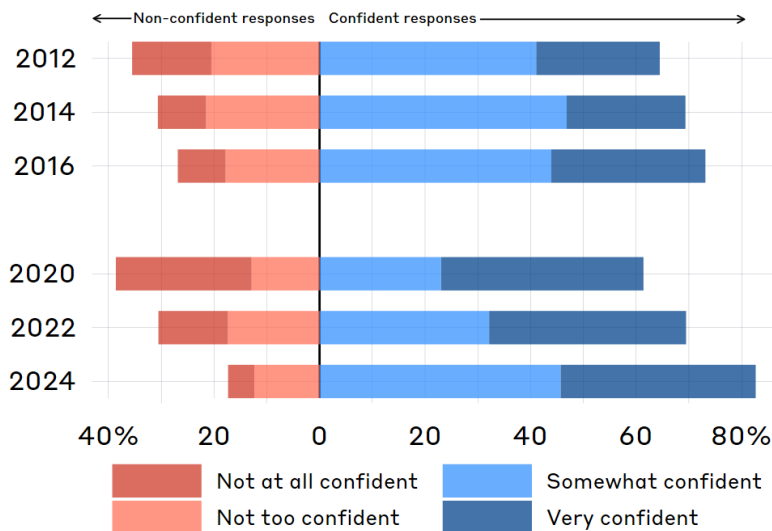


FIGURE 24. SIMPLIFIED CONFIDENCE IN NATIONWIDE VOTE COUNTING, 2012 - 2024.



## PARTISAN POLARIZATION OF CONFIDENCE IN STATE AND NATION

Recent trends in voter confidence, particularly at the state and national levels, stem from the polarization of attitudes toward the electoral process along partisan lines. During presidential election years, the nationwide confidence measure particularly reflects the well-known winner-loser effect, where supporters of the presidential winner experience a rise in confidence while supporters of the loser see a decline.

In 2016, 80% of Republicans stated they were very or somewhat confident that votes across the country

were counted as intended (nationwide confidence), compared to 69% of Democrats. (See Figure 25.) In 2020, confidence among Democrats rose to 93%, while the percentage of Republicans who were either very or somewhat confident fell to 22%. Democratic confidence remained essentially unchanged in 2022, whereas Republican confidence increased by twenty points. By 2024, Democrats and Republicans became more aligned in the nationwide confidence measure, with Republican confidence rising to 88% and Democratic confidence decreasing to 79%.



Of particular interest here is the confidence in vote counting across the states. The states administer elections and, therefore, bear the brunt of controversy in close and contested elections. Dissatisfaction with election administration in many states, especially battleground states, led to intense state legislative activity in 2021 and beyond.

In 2020, the gap in state confidence between Democrats and Republicans grew to a 32-point difference, having been nearly zero in 2016. (See Figure 26.) Although considerable, it was significantly smaller than the 71-point partisan gap in national confidence. By 2024, the gap had nearly vanished between Democrats and Republicans.

In reporting on the 2020 SPAE results, we noted that in some states, the partisan gap in confidence about state voting was enormous, while in others, it was small or non-existent. The states that exhibited the largest partisan gaps shared one of two characteristics. They were either states where Donald Trump narrowly lost

(Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Nevada, and Georgia) or states that implemented universal vote-by-mail (Nevada, New Jersey, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, and California).

In 2024, the Democratic-Republican gap closed in all but thirteen states—Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Louisiana, South Dakota, South Carolina, Texas, Kansas, Wyoming, Ohio, and Arkansas. (See Figure 27.) Furthermore, while in 2020 Democrats in nearly every state showed greater confidence in voting than Republicans, in 2024 some states saw Republicans more confident than Democrats, and vice versa in others.

While it is beyond the scope of this report to explain these partisan changes in states, it appears that older patterns from before 2020 reemerged in 2024. Specifically, Democrats became less confident than Republicans in states with large Republican majorities. Moreover, Republican confidence continued to lag behind Democrats in states with many mail ballots, even after accounting for partisan dominance in the state.

FIGURE 25. CONFIDENCE IN NATIONWIDE VOTE COUNTING BY PARTY, 2012 - 2024.

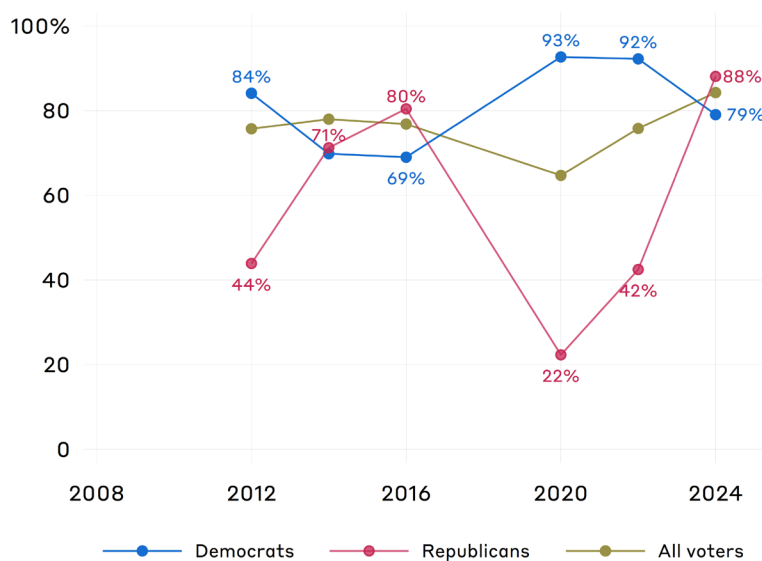


FIGURE 26. CONFIDENCE IN STATE VOTE COUNTING BY PARTY, 2012 - 2024.

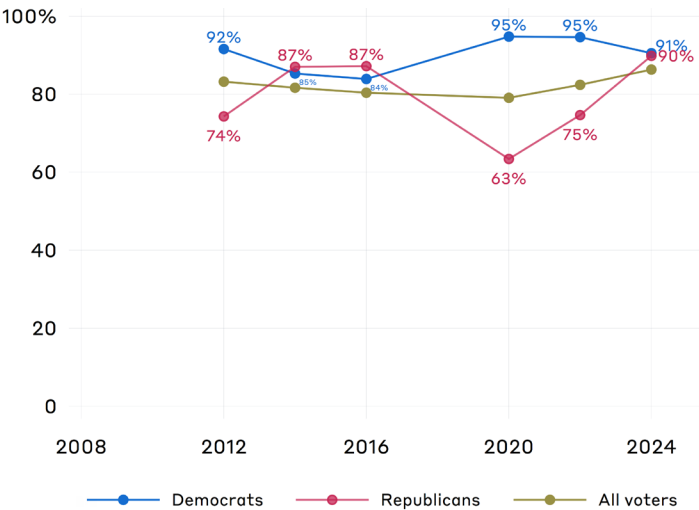
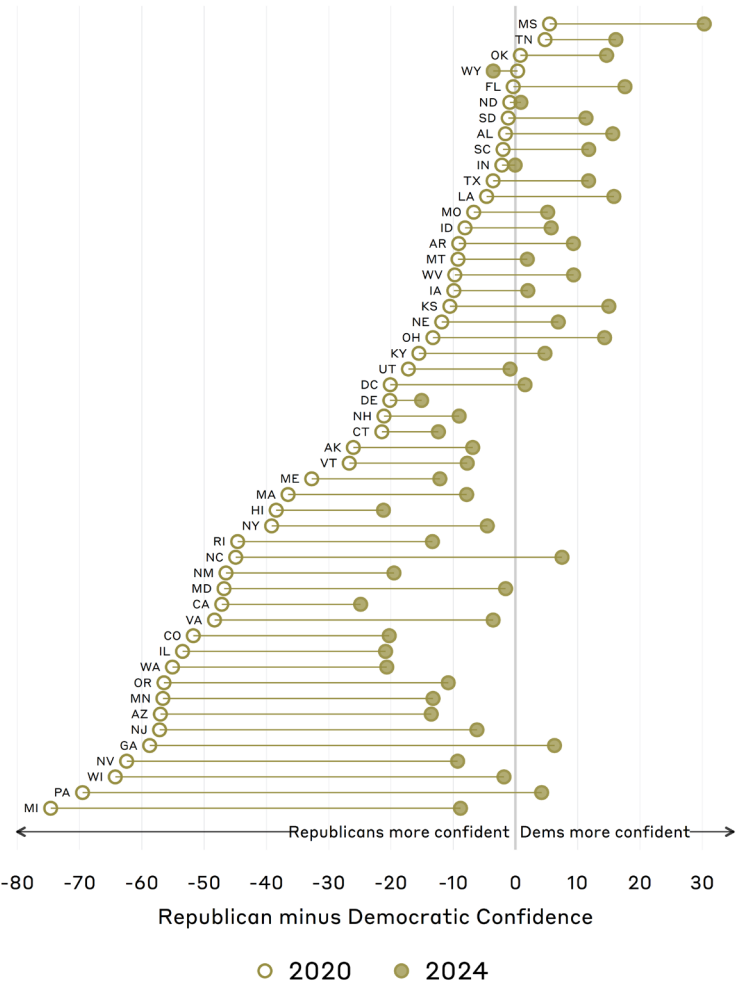


FIGURE 27. DEMOCRATIC-REPUBLICAN DIFFERENCE IN STATE VOTE CONFIDENCE, 2020 AND 2024.



## INCREASING THE SECURITY OF ELECTIONS

With the 2016 election came increased awareness of the security threats surrounding elections. Before 2016, these threats had primarily been physical, related to safeguarding ballots from theft or tampering. Concerns were also raised about the accuracy of voting equipment and the ability to detect attempts to compromise that equipment. These worries fueled a movement to mandate paper ballots and post-election audits. During the 2016 election, a new type of threat emerged: cyberattacks on election administration infrastructure. This shift led to a renewed focus on cybersecurity.

Whether cyber or physical, security has become a more salient issue for the public over the past few years. To gauge where voters stand on this issue, the SPAE added a battery of questions in 2022 to measure how much voters know about the efforts officials make to secure elections and which of these measures are most reassuring to voters. In 2024, the SPAE included a measure related to poll worker audits to act as a placebo, helping to assess the reliability of other results.<sup>7</sup>

The first question assessed voter knowledge. All respondents were asked, “Which of the following actions, if any, are you aware of that occur to ensure elections are secure and free from fraud locally and in [your state] (Check all that apply).” The response categories were as follows:

1. Election officials test every machine used in the election to ensure they are secure.
2. Non-partisan poll watchers observe the election to ensure it’s fair.
3. Poll watchers affiliated with the political parties or candidates observe the election to ensure it’s fair.
4. Election officials conduct audits of ballots after every election to confirm the results were accurate.

5. Paper ballots are stored in secure facilities so there is always a paper trail and audits and recounts can be conducted.
6. Election officials work with law enforcement to prosecute those who commit voter fraud.
7. Impartial teams of election judges conduct signature verification on each mail-in ballot received.
8. Election officials work closely with national security agencies, such as the Department of Homeland Security, and the military to prevent foreign interference.
9. Election officials work with the [state] National Guard on Election Day to prevent cyber-attacks.
10. Election officials conduct “war games” with election officials across the state and the National Guard to protect the election from cyber-attacks.
11. Poll workers are randomly audited to review compliance with election laws.<sup>8</sup>
12. None of the above.

Respondents were then asked, “Regardless of whether your state does the following, how would knowing that [your state] took the following actions impact how much confidence you have in the security and integrity of [your state’s] election system?” The response categories were identical to those of the knowledge question.

Responses to the knowledge question indicate that voters are not very aware of the measures election officials take to secure elections. First, 33% of respondents in 2022 and 29% of those in 2024 stated that officials took none of these measures. Second, among the practices that respondents claimed to know about, the responses in 2024 were very similar to those in 2022. (See Figure 28.) In 2024, 37% of respondents reported knowing that their state conducted logic and accuracy (L&A) tests, and a similar percentage claimed to know that paper ballots were stored securely and accounted for. The only items that saw statistically significant changes from 2022 were knowledge that election officials work with law enforcement to prosecute voter

<sup>7</sup> As far as we know, states do not regularly conduct “poll worker audits.” As discussed below, in 2022, we concluded that responses to the security questions were prone to problems of “nonattitudes” being expressed about a low-salience concern.

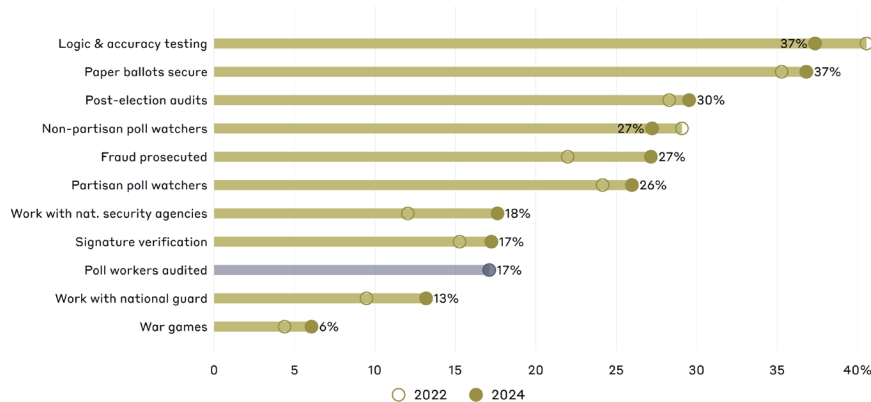
<sup>8</sup> As mentioned above, this item was added in 2024 to allow us to explore the role of nonattitudes in expressing opinions about election security.

fraud (27% in 2024, up from 22%) and that they worked with national security agencies to guard against election interference. Finally, 17% of respondents claimed to know that “poll workers are randomly audited to review compliance with election laws,” even though this is a practice that is not regularly conducted, as far as we know.

The second question regarding security measures asks which activities would enhance confidence in the security and integrity of their state’s elections. Responses to this question in 2024 were also similar to those in 2022, with one important difference: respondents were

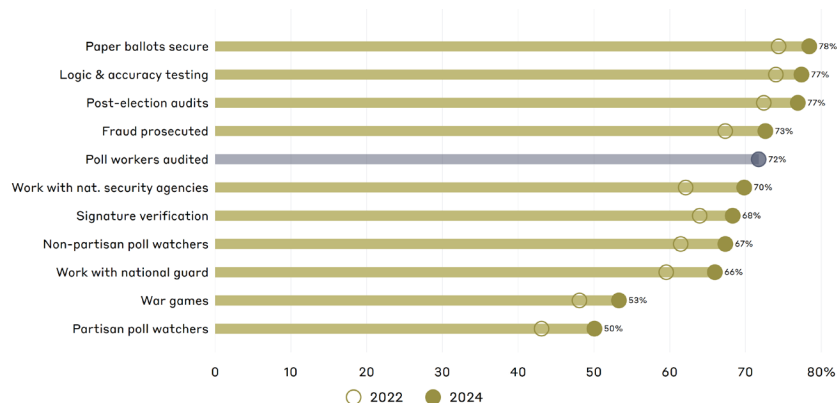
more supportive of all these security measures in 2024 than in 2022. (See Figure 29.) Indeed, each of these practices received strong endorsement from respondents, with two exceptions: conducting “war games” to plan against cyber-attacks and partisan poll watchers. L&A testing, securing ballots, and post-election audits are at the top of the list when it comes to items that respondents said would assure them of the election’s security and integrity. At the bottom of the list is the presence of partisan poll watchers, while non-partisan poll watchers are regarded much more highly.

**FIGURE 28. REPORTED KNOWLEDGE OF STATE AND LOCAL ELECTION SECURITY PRACTICES.**



Note: “Poll workers audited” was added in 2024 as a placebo to study nonattitudes about security measures.

**FIGURE 29. PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS REPORTING THAT CONFIDENCE WOULD BE INCREASED “A LOT” OR “SOMEWHAT” BY SECURITY PRACTICES.**

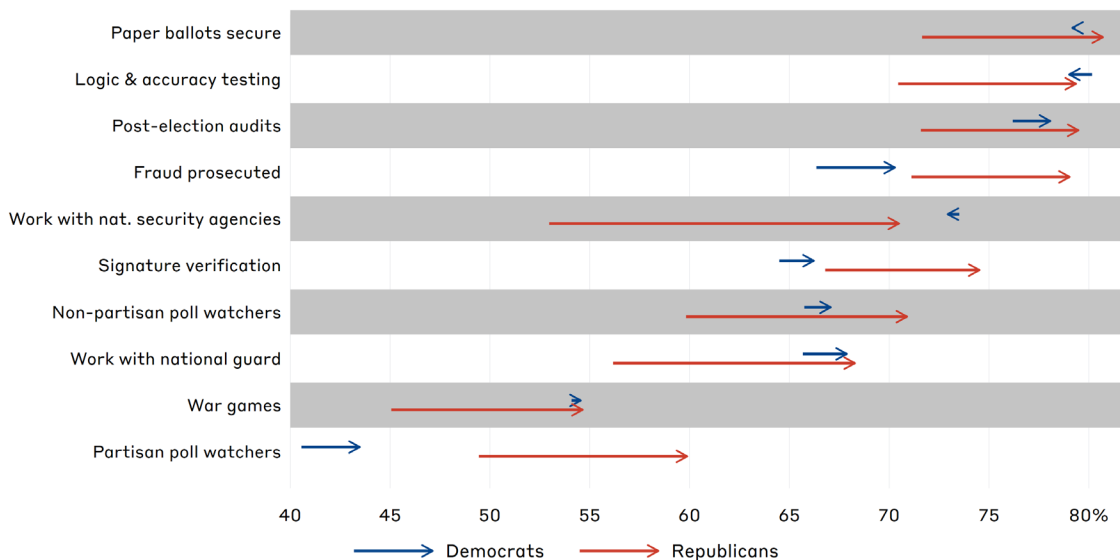


Note: “Poll workers audited” was added in 2024 as a placebo to study nonattitudes about security measures.

Due to the partisan divide that has emerged regarding confidence in elections and the longstanding differences over the prevalence of fraud, it is informative to understand whether there is a partisan split concerning which activities would foster trust in the security and integrity of elections. In 2022, there were some partisan differences about what boosts respondents' confidence, but these were small.

In 2024, for the most part, those partisan differences diminished, primarily because Republicans grew more confident in most of these practices. (See Figure 30.) Partisan differences increased regarding fraud prosecution, signature verification, and the practices of partisan poll watchers. Additionally, Republican confidence grew for each of these practices, sometimes substantially.

**FIGURE 30. PARTISAN CHANGE IN THE PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS REPORTING THAT CONFIDENCE WOULD BE INCREASED "A LOT" OR "SOMEWHAT" BY SECURITY PRACTICES, 2022 - 2024.**



Note: The arrows begin at the percentage associated with the party in 2022; the arrow head indicates the percentage associated with the party in 2024.

## FRAUD

For over a decade, the SPAE has asked respondents to indicate how frequently they believe certain fraudulent or illegal activities occur in their city or county. These activities include people voting with absentee ballots intended for another person, noncitizens voting, voter impersonation, individuals voting more than once, election officials fraudulently altering the reported vote count, and individuals stealing or tampering with ballots that have been cast. In 2022, four new items were introduced: vote counting software manipulated to not count ballots as intended, paying voters to cast a ballot for a particular candidate, voting under fraudulent voter registrations, and submitting too many ballots in drop boxes. These new items were continued in 2024.

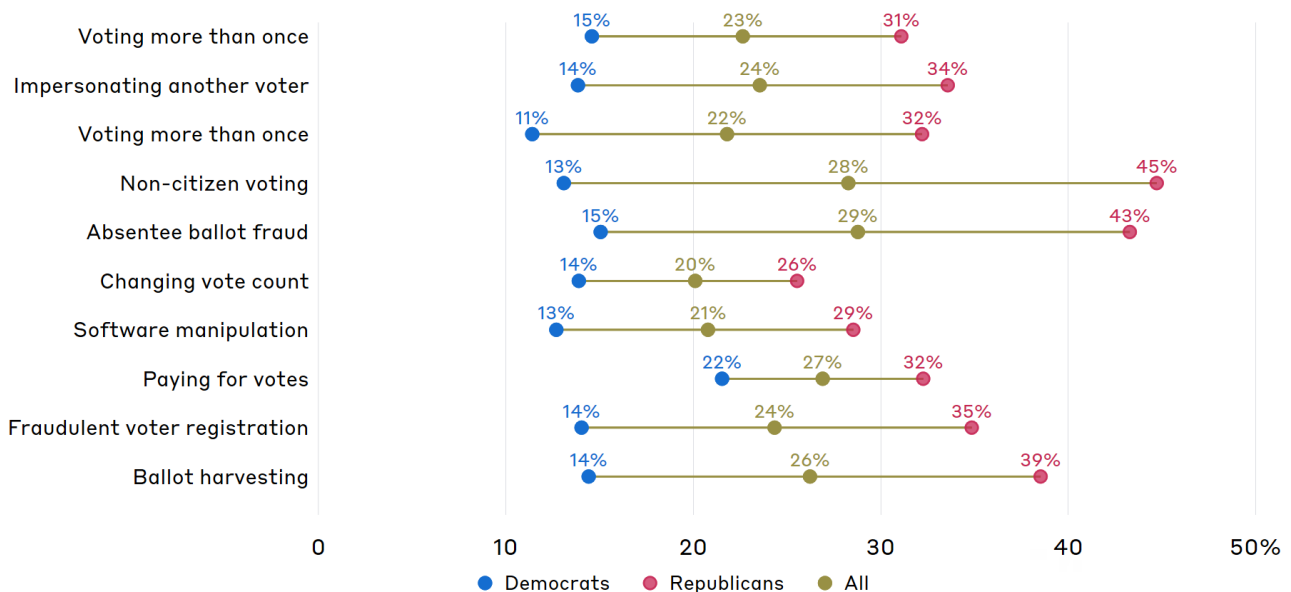
In 2024, the percentage of respondents who indicated that these activities were very common or occurred occasionally ranged from 20% (changing vote count) to 29% (absentee ballot fraud). (See Figure 31.)

However, the partisan divide on these issues was significant. The overall percentage of voters who believed these activities occurred remained consistent with trends observed over the past dozen years. (See Figure 32.)

### PARTISAN PATTERNS IN BELIEFS ABOUT FRAUD

Historically, Republicans have been more inclined than Democrats to believe in a high frequency of voter fraud within the SPAE. This gap widened significantly in 2020 and showed only a slight moderation in 2022 and 2024. Figure 33 illustrates one example of this, with respondents' answers to a question about stealing or tampering with ballots that have already been voted. In the 2016 election, the percentage of Democrats and Republicans saying this almost never or infrequently occurred was only 8 percentage points apart — 77% for Democrats and 69% for Republicans.

FIGURE 31. REPORTED FREQUENCY OF FRAUD OCCURRENCE IN 2024, OVERALL AND BY PARTY.



Note: Percent answering “very common” or “occasionally.”

FIGURE 32. TIMELINE OF FRAUD ATTITUDES, 2008 - 2024.

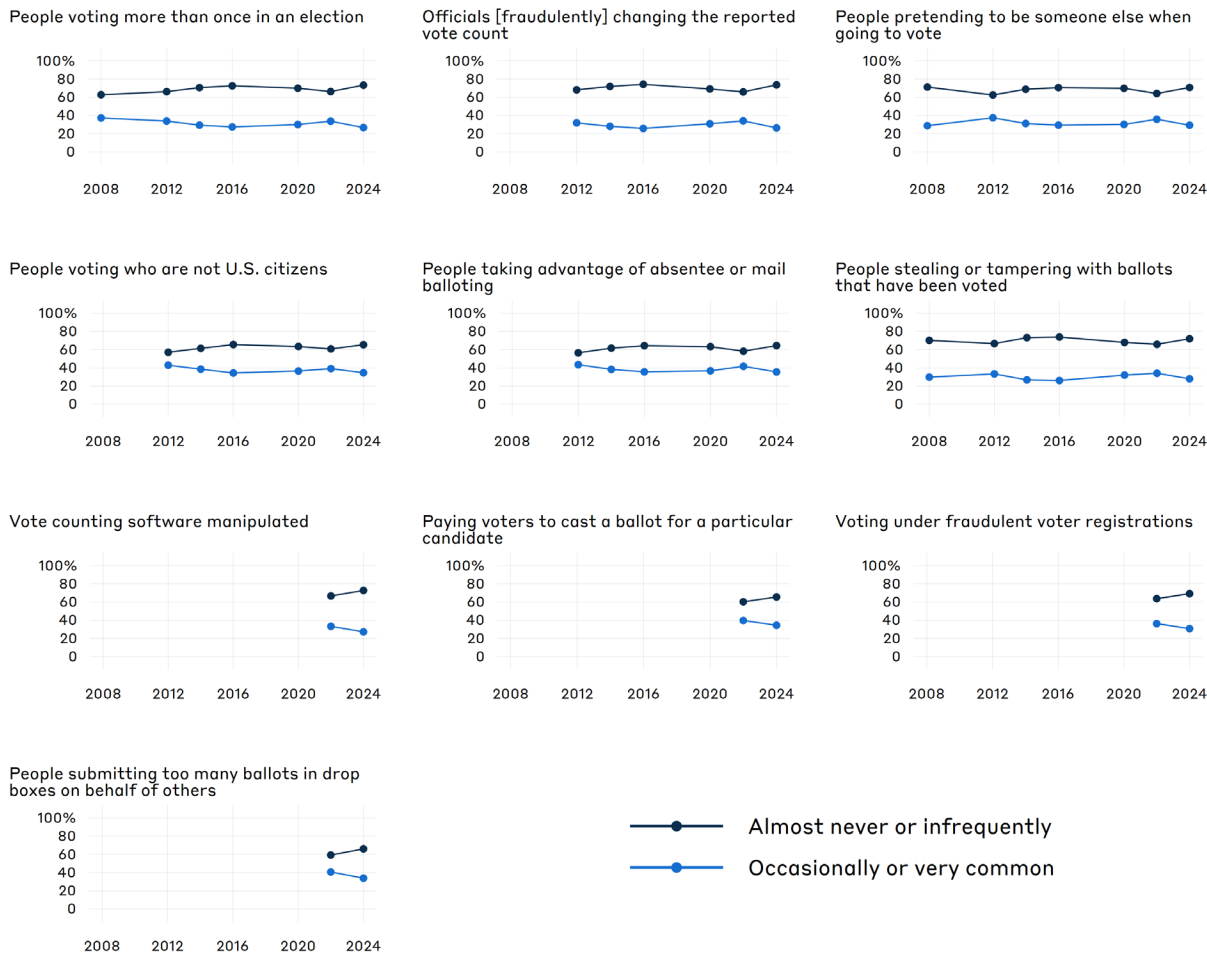
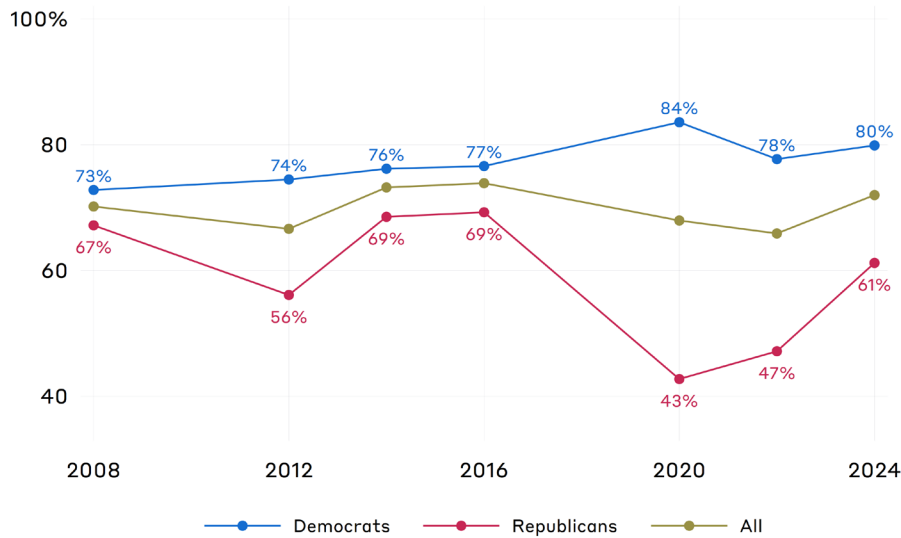


FIGURE 33. PARTISAN DIFFERENCES IN BELIEFS ABOUT HOW COMMONLY PEOPLE STEAL OR TAMPER WITH BALLOTS.



Note: Percentage answering "almost never" or "infrequently."

By 2020, the gap widened to 41 points (84% for Democrats and 43% for Republicans). In 2022, the gap decreased to 29 points, as the percentage of Democrats asserting that tampering with ballots almost never or infrequently occurred dropped to 78%, while rising to 47% among Republicans. In 2024, the percentage of Democrats increased slightly to 80%, but most notably, the percentage of Republicans rose dramatically to 61%. Thus, the gap narrowed compared to 2020, yet it is now comparable to the gap measured in 2012.

the percentage of Republicans who reported that various types of fraud occurred “almost never” or “infrequently” increased, and in a couple of cases, nearly matched Democratic responses. Republicans became much less likely to provide these positive assessments in 2020 and 2022, but in 2024, their evaluations of the frequency of fraud became more optimistic. Nonetheless, Democrats were more likely to respond that fraud was uncommon in 2024.

Similar patterns have been evident in all the fraud items on the SPAE. (See Figure 34.) In 2014 and 2016,

**FIGURE 34. PARTISAN DIFFERENCES IN BELIEFS ABOUT HOW COMMONLY ALL TYPES OF FRAUD OCCUR, 2008 - 2024.**



Note: Percentage answering “almost never” or “infrequently.”



## REFORM

Finally, there's the issue of election reform. For over a dozen years, the SPAE has asked respondents for their opinions on eleven reform ideas that various groups have advocated for from time to time. These reforms include voting over the Internet, voting by mail, designating Election Day as a holiday, and moving it to a weekend. In 2022 and 2024, two new items were introduced: counting all ballots by hand and ranked-choice voting.

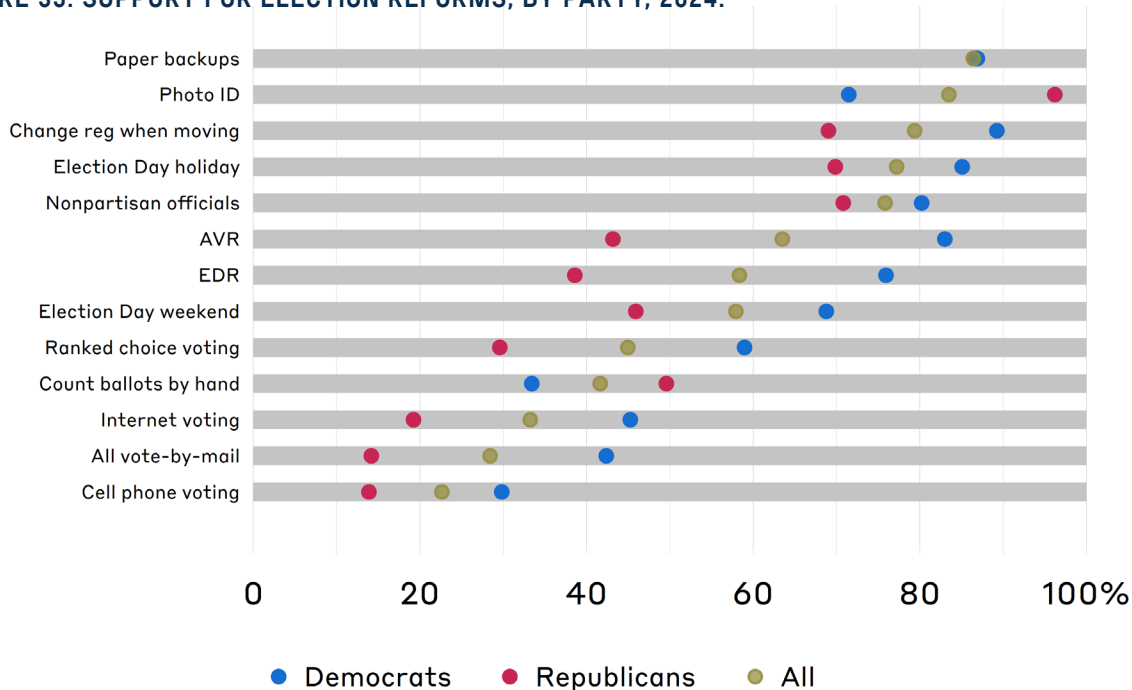
- » The wording of the reform proposals is as follows:
- » Allow voting over the Internet [Internet voting]
- » Voting using cell phones [cell phone voting]
- » Run all elections by mail [all vote-by-mail]
- » Automatically register all citizens over 18 to vote [AVR]
- » Allow people to register on Election Day at the polls [EDR]
- » Require all people to show a government-issued photo ID when they vote [photo ID]
- » Require electronic voting machines to print a paper backup of the ballot [paper backups]
- » Move Election Day to a weekend [Election Day weekend]

- » Make Election Day a national holiday [Election Day holiday]
- » Only select election officials on a non-partisan basis [nonpartisan officials]
- » Make it so that when a registered voter moves, he or she is automatically registered to vote at the new home [change reg when moving]
- » Prohibit the use of computers to mark or count ballots. [no computerized voting machines]
- » Conduct elections using ranked-choice voting [RCV]

The 2024 response categories were “support strongly,” “support somewhat,” “oppose somewhat,” and “oppose strongly.”

In 2024, responses remained consistent with previous years. The most popular reforms included requiring computerized voting machines to have paper backups, mandating voters to show photo ID to vote, permitting automatic updates to a voter's registration upon moving, electing officials on a bipartisan basis, and designating Election Day as a national holiday. (See Figure 35.) Similar to previous years, the least popular

**FIGURE 35. SUPPORT FOR ELECTION REFORMS, BY PARTY, 2024.**



Note: Percentage of respondents supporting “strongly” or “somewhat.”

reforms were cell phone voting, Internet voting, and universal voting by mail.

Among the items introduced in 2022, neither ranked choice voting nor the prohibition of computerized voting machines received support from a majority of respondents. However, both items displayed patterns of partisan support, with a majority of Democrats in favor of RCV and nearly half of Republicans backing the ban on computerized voting machines.

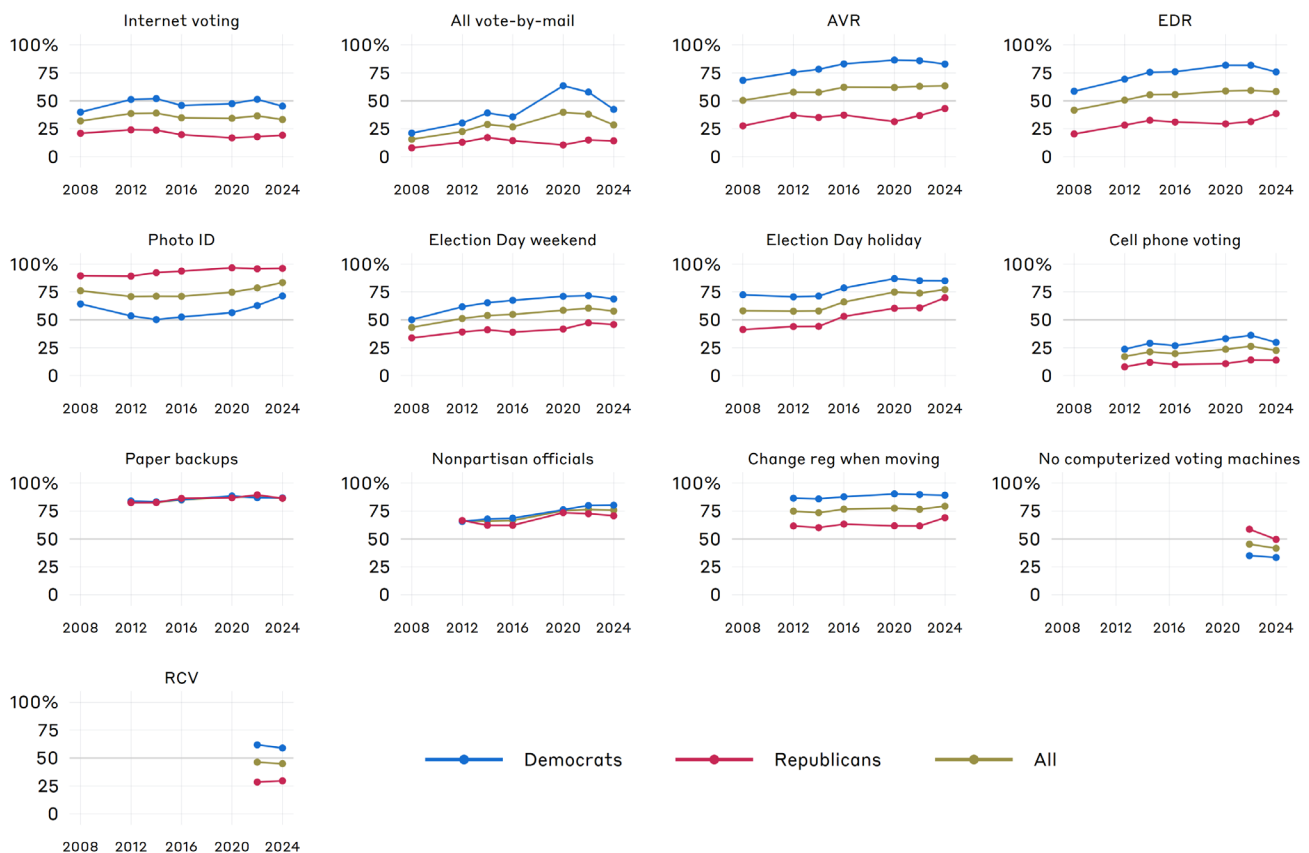
As in previous years, opinions regarding most of these reforms were divided along party lines. The only reform in 2024 without some partisan divide was the requirement for electronic machines to include paper backups.

Examining trends in reform support over the past decade, attitudes have gradually shifted from one election to the next. (See Figure 36.) For most reforms, we

observe a gradual drift in a supportive direction over the past decade, except for Internet voting and possibly the requirement of photo IDs. The trend in support for voter ID is particularly noteworthy. Since 2008, support among Republicans has steadily increased to the point where it is nearly unanimously favored by Republican respondents (92.4% support in 2024). Support among Democrats weakened in the early years covered by the data but has rebounded in recent years. Indeed, in 2024, most Democrats supported requiring photo IDs in all but three states (Minnesota, Vermont, and Maine) and the District of Columbia.

Another reform where partisan attitudes have notably shifted in recent years is universal vote-by-mail. Before 2020, Democrats were more likely to support the reform than Republicans, but neither group gave it majority approval. For instance, in 2016, 14% of Republicans and 36% of Democrats expressed their favor for universal VBM. That 22-point gap more than doubled

**FIGURE 36. TRENDS IN ELECTION REFORM SUPPORT, 2008 - 2024.**



Note: Percentage of respondents supporting “strongly” or “somewhat.”

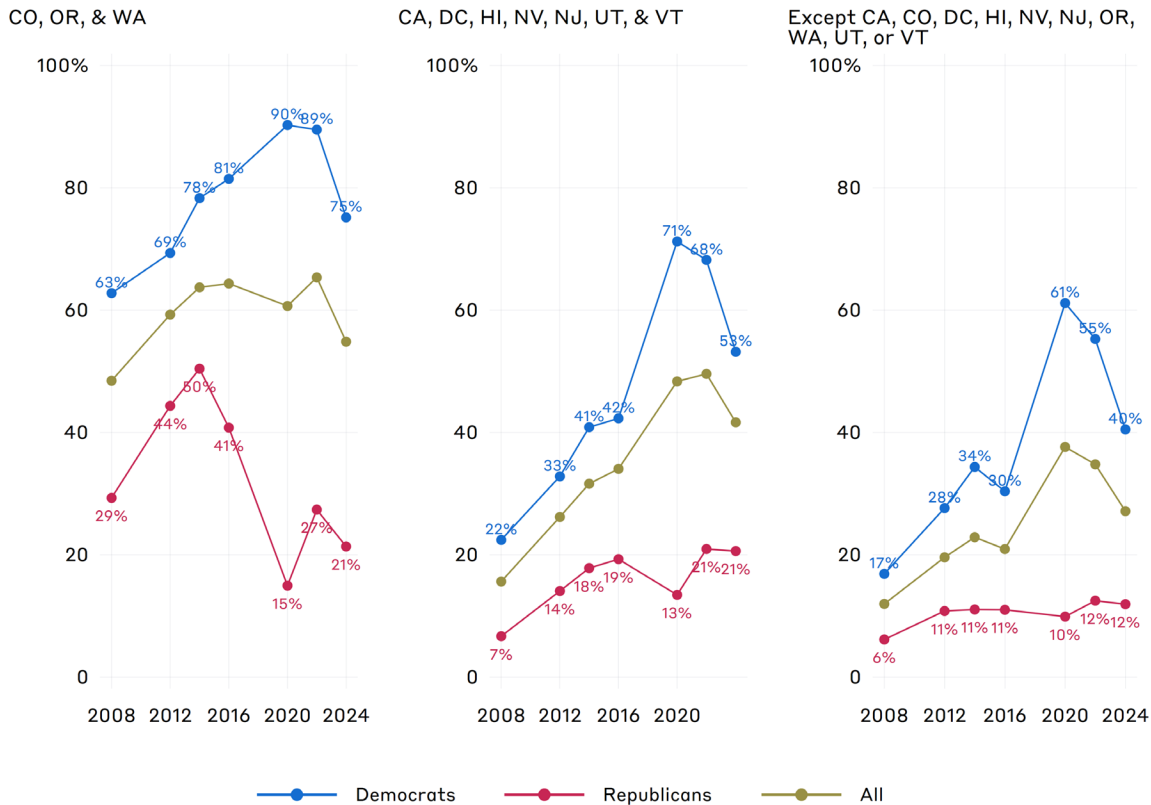
in 2020, rising to 54 points, with 10% of Republicans favoring it compared to 64% of Democrats. The gap narrowed somewhat in 2022, decreasing to 43 points, with 15% of Republicans and 58% of Democrats in support. In 2024, it narrowed further to 28 points, with 15% of Republicans and 42% of Democrats supporting.

Support for universal vote-by-mail is an intriguing topic to examine, given the impact of absentee/mail voting in 2020. Before 2020, respondents in Colorado, Oregon, and Washington — states that have held all vote-by-mail elections for several cycles — were significantly more favorable toward voting by mail than the rest of the country. (See Figure 37.) Although Republicans in these states have tended to support voting by mail at much lower rates than Democrats, in the 2012 and 2016 elections, their support for voting by mail was in the range of 40 to 50%. However, in 2020, Republican support plummeted to 15% in these three states, while support among Democrats continued to grow, reaching 90%. Democratic backing for voting by mail in these three states remained high in 2022, but fell to 75% in 2024. In other words, most

Republicans continue to be uneasy with VBM in these states, despite showing signs of warming to the practice before 2020. Conversely, support among Democrats may also be softening.

In 2020, seven states adopted universal vote-by-mail for the first time. Hawaii and Utah had already chosen this option before 2020, while New Jersey did so only in 2020. Among the six states that first implemented VBM in 2020 and have retained it since then, support for universal VBM was low prior to 2020, even among Democrats. In 2020, support surged to 71% among Democrats and declined among Republicans. Since then, Republican support has returned to 2016 levels in 2024, while Democratic support has dropped considerably. Furthermore, in the states that did not have VBM in 2024, support for universal VBM remained even lower among both Democrats and Republicans. Support among Democrats increased sharply in 2020 but has declined considerably since then. Republican opposition to VBM in these states has stayed unchanged for the past decade.

**FIGURE 37. SUPPORT FOR HOLDING ALL ELECTIONS BY MAIL, 2008 - 2024.**



Note: Percentage of respondents supporting "strongly" or "somewhat."

## CONCLUSION

The reverberations from the 2020 election continued to be felt in 2024, although the experiences of voters in 2024 echoed many themes that were prevalent before the pandemic. Voters reported positive experiences when voting, whether in person or by mail. They maintained long-term trends by increasingly abandoning voting on Election Day in favor of early voting. They expressed confidence in how elections were conducted at all levels of government, although they felt much more confident about their own experiences than about the experiences of voters nationwide. Furthermore, although concerns about disruptions in the election process persist, voters witnessed little, if any, of this firsthand.

A topic that garnered much attention in 2020, partisan polarization, continued to manifest itself among voters in 2024, although the extent of this polarization was significantly less compared to 2020. Similarly, Democrats and Republicans maintained significantly different views on how the electoral process should be reformed—although they shared opinions on some issues, such as paper trails for electronic voting machines and non-partisan election administration—and the scale of the vote fraud problem—although both Democrats and Republicans are more likely to assert that fraud of all types is infrequent.

The information and security environments that have emerged in recent years have caused election officials to dedicate more of their time to communicating with voters and enhancing their security practices. If there is a sour note in this report, it is that voters, while trusting elections and believing fraud is uncommon, remain unaware of what election officials are doing to secure the vote.

Nonetheless, in the context of ongoing negative news regarding election administration, the news from the SPAE in 2024 is, overall, positive: voters had a good experience and trust the results. Of course, this is merely a snapshot in time, and the next election might present different results. However, as surveying the voting public for over a decade has shown, despite the broader currents of controversy surrounding election administration, the lived experiences of voters remain fairly stable and positive. These surveys also show that election administration can become a concern for voters, not due to their own experiences, but because of what they hear about others' experiences

and how election administration (in other locations) can impact outcomes. This volatility in how voters interpret the larger context of voting makes regularly surveying them crucial, as the political process continues to respond to significant policy concerns that arise among voters throughout the election cycle.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

This report does not show the confidence intervals (“margins of error”) for the statistics reported. This is to enhance the readability and flow of the report. Due to the large sample sizes used to compute most statistics, the margins of error are generally quite small, often comparable to the size of the data tokens used to display the statistics. This section offers the reader a guide to the approximate 95% confidence intervals of the statistics reported here.

The two major determinants of confidence intervals are (1) the size of the (sub)sample and (2) the size of the estimated statistics (e.g., percentage). The sample size of the complete SPAE is 10,200 for each year except 2008, when the District of Columbia was not sampled. In that year, the total sample size was 10,000. Some statistics are broken down by party affiliation. In 2024, there were 5,135 self-identified Democrats, including leaners (50.3% of the sample), 3,764 Republicans, including leaners (36.9%), and 1,301 either non-leaning independents or identifiers of other parties (12.8%) in the sample. Some analyses in this report break down the sample by voting method. In 2024, the overall

sample included 3,828 respondents who reported voting on Election Day, 2,691 who voted in person before Election Day, 2,977 who voted by mail, 680 who stated they did not vote, and 24 who indicated they voted but did not remember how.

The following table reports the confidence intervals for various proportions based on the sample size and the estimated proportion. The sample sizes correspond to the overall sample size for 2024 (10,200), as well as to the different partisan and vote-mode subsamples. For example, if an estimate from the entire SPAE sample shows that 10% of respondents answered in a certain way, the 95% confidence interval (or margin of error) would be  $\pm 0.59$  percentage points. If the statistic were calculated for Democrats alone, the 95% confidence interval would be  $\pm 0.82$  points.

This table indicates that the 95% confidence intervals for the percentages reported in this report typically range from 1 to 2 percentage points.

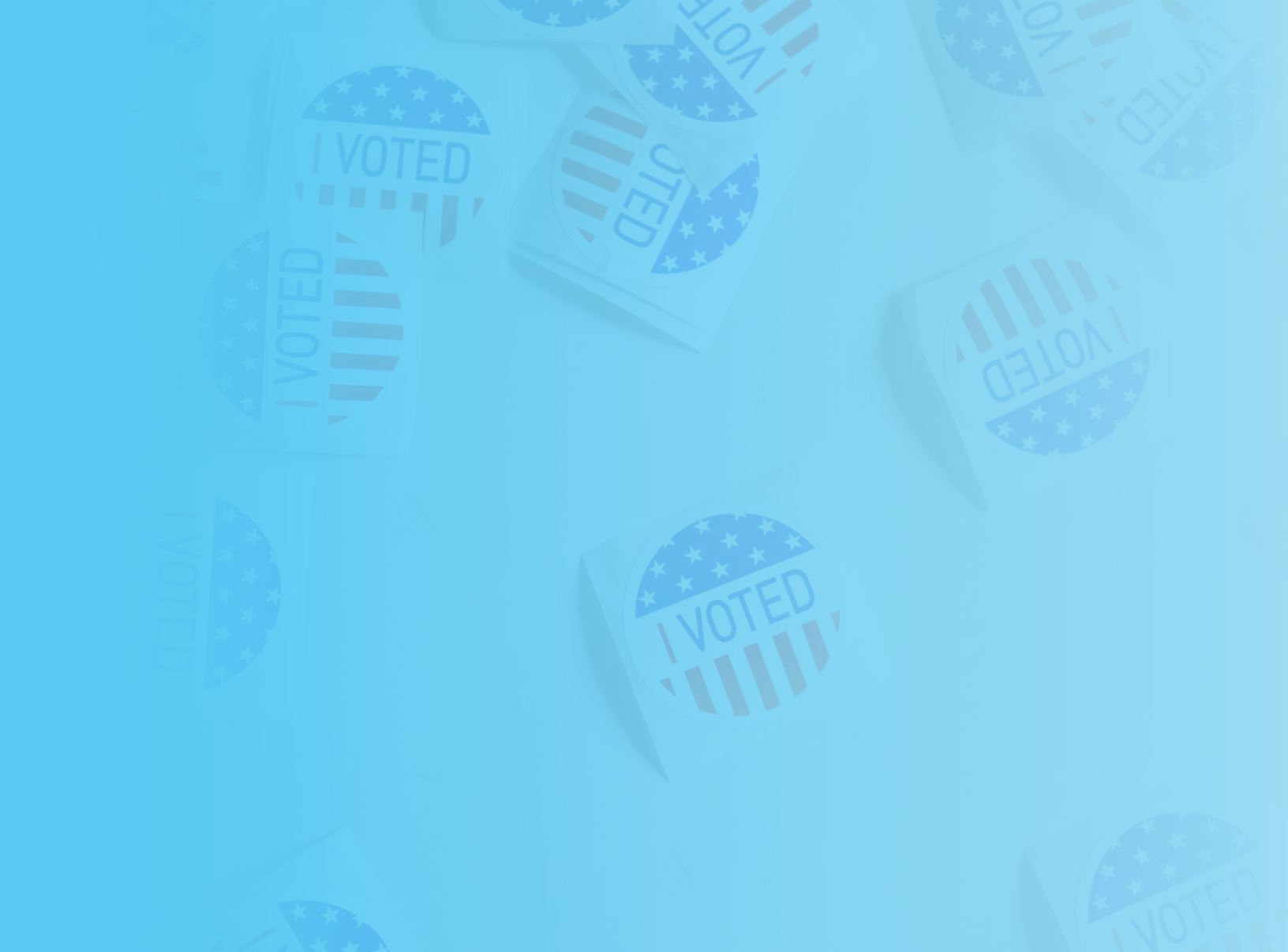
Basis of sample	Sample size	Probability				
		10%	25%	50%	75%	90%
Overall	10,100	0.59	0.84	0.98	0.84	0.59
Democrats	5,135	0.82	1.18	1.37	1.18	0.82
Republicans	3,764	0.96	1.38	1.60	1.38	0.96
Independents	1,301	1.63	2.35	2.72	2.35	1.63
Election Day	3,828	0.95	1.37	1.58	1.37	0.95
Early	2,691	1.13	1.64	1.89	1.64	1.13
Mail	2,977	1.08	1.56	1.80	1.56	1.08
Non-voters	680	2.25	3.25	3.76	3.25	2.25

This report also compares differences between sub-samples; for instance, the percentage of Democrats who indicated they were very confident their vote was counted as intended compared to the percentage of Republicans. The 95% confidence interval for the difference of two proportions is calculated using the size of the two samples being compared and the associated percentage statistics for each sample. The table below presents examples of 95% confidence intervals for various percentages linked to Republican and Democratic samples. For example, if 10% of Democrats agreed with a particular question and 25% of Republicans did, the confidence interval for this difference (15 points) would be + 1.6 percentage points.

<b>Democratic %</b>	<b>Republican %</b>				
	<b>10%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>90%</b>
<b>10%</b>	1.3	1.6	1.8	1.6	1.3
<b>25%</b>	1.5	1.8	2.0	1.8	1.5
<b>50%</b>	1.7	1.9	2.1	1.9	1.7
<b>75%</b>	1.5	1.8	2.0	1.8	1.5
<b>90%</b>	1.3	1.6	1.8	1.6	1.3

To err on the side of caution, percentage differences in this report of less than 3 percentage points should not be regarded as a statistically significant difference.

Aside from confidence intervals, a second methodological issue is misreporting whether someone has voted. It is well established in the political science literature that respondents to public opinion surveys often misreport that they voted, a phenomenon explained by the term “social desirability bias.” (That is, non-voters often do not want to admit that they did not vote.) Therefore, it is likely that the non-voting rate among SPAE respondents was much greater than the 6.8% reported. As part of the SPAE project, the official state voting records of SPAE respondents are double-checked, and a code is added to the dataset indicating which respondents were validated as having voted. As of the writing of this report, that validation has not been completed—it usually takes a year to finish this task—therefore, the statistics concerning the experience of reported voters undoubtedly include individuals who did not vote but claimed they did.



++ . . . MIT ELECTION DATA  
++ . . . + SCIENCE LAB  
. . . . .