



AMERICA

Goes to the Polls 2020

Policy and Voter Turnout
in the 2020 Election

AMERICA GOES TO THE POLLS

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A report on Voter Turnout and Election Policy in the 50 States for the 2020 Election – March 2021

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America Goes to the Polls 2020 represents the 7th edition in our biennial series based on the final certified voter turnout collected by the U.S. Elections Project. The report provides the official state rankings in voter turnout and turnout growth compared to the last presidential election in 2016. This ranking provides clear insights into the impact of election policies on state-by-state voter turnout.



www.nonprofitvote.org



www.electproject.org

Nonprofit VOTE partners with America's nonprofits to help the people they serve participate and vote. We are the leading source of nonpartisan resources to help nonprofits integrate voter engagement into their ongoing activities and services.

The U.S. Elections Project, founded and directed by Dr. Michael McDonald at the University of Florida, seeks to provide timely and accurate election statistics, electoral laws, research reports, and other useful information regarding the United States electoral system. In doing so, the project informs the people of the United States on how their electoral system works, how it may be improved, and how they can participate in it. It serves as the official source for national and state turnout rates for biennial national elections.

Special thanks to the National Vote at Home Institute team for reviewing our findings for clarity and accuracy.

Designed by Robert Calmer, Adgraphics911.com; Kimberley Carroll-Cox, Nonprofit VOTE

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INTRODUCTION

The November 2020 election was historic. Faced with the ongoing pandemic, many states expanded access to mail ballots, as well as options for early in-person voting. A new generation of poll workers was recruited to work at socially distanced polling locations. Meanwhile, many states had already implemented new policies prior to the pandemic, like Same Day Registration, that would help after months of DMV closures and a backlog of outdated registrations. America rose to the challenge. And **voters, with expanded options for voting, turned out in numbers not seen in over a century.** We extend our gratitude to the many poll workers and election officials – including some of our own neighbors, co-workers, and family members – who made this election possible.

Amid the story of record turnout nationwide is also a story of differences. At the core of this report is a state-by-state ranking of voter turnout in all 50 states and DC – from the lowest-turnout state at 55% to a record-shattering 80% in the highest-turnout state. This 50-state ranking provides a powerful tool for examining the impact of state election policies. **States in the top 10 of the ranking have markedly different policies than states in the bottom 10.** Same Day Voter Registration states and “Vote at Home” states that mail every registered voter their ballot were consistently at the top of the turnout rankings. Those at the bottom generally made both registration and use of mail ballots harder. The report also looks at the role of competition and the Electoral College in shaping turnout.

By lifting up policies that have a proven, real-world track record of increasing voter turnout, we aim to provide a blueprint for policy makers, advocates, and all Americans who care about a healthy democracy. Despite our differences, or perhaps because of those differences, **our democracy works better when more people participate and vote.** Only then can our democracy truly represent the will of the people. So let’s draw on the lessons of 2020 to build a stronger, more inclusive democracy.

Brian Miller,

Executive Director

Nonprofit VOTE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With high voter interest and a global pandemic, 2020 was a high point for mail ballots, early voting, and policies like same day voter registration that gave voters more and better choices to register and vote, helping fuel record voter turnout.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

For the first time ever, more people voted with mail ballots or early in-person than filled out a ballot at the polls on Election Day

- **70%** of voters voted with a mail ballot or early in-person vs **30%** of voters who voted in person on Election Day.
- **A record 111 million** voted with either a mail ballot or early in-person, more than double the number who voted in person on Election Day.
- **28 States changed their policy** to make it easier to use a mail ballot.

National voter turnout at 67% of eligible voters was the highest in 120 years

- **It set the modern record for turnout** since 1900 and the expansion of the electorate with women's suffrage, the Voting Rights Act, and lowering the voting age to 18.
- **All 50 states** increased their turnout over 2016.

Despite the record national turnout, there are still wide differences in voter turnout between states that make it easier or harder to vote

- **Turnout in the top 10 states averaged 17 percentage points higher** than the bottom 10.
- **All of the top 10 turnout states** either **sent all their voters a mail ballot**, have **Same Day Registration** that allows voters to register or update their registration when they vote, or both.
- **Eight of the bottom 10 turnout states** cut off voter registration **four weeks before the election** or required an excuse to use a mail ballot.

States that sent mail ballots to all voters had an advantage in turnout

- In the top 10 states for their voter turnout, **half were states that proactively mailed ballots** to all registered voters (a.k.a Vote at Home states).
- In the top 10 states for *increase* in voter turnout over 2016, **six mailed ballots to all voters** for the first time in a presidential election.

States with Same Day Registration also saw a big turnout advantage

- **Eight of the top 10** voter turnout states had Same Day Registration.
- States with Same Day Registration had an average turnout **five percentage points higher** than states that did not.
- With eight more states adding Same Day Registration since 2016, **this was a landmark year for the growth** in the number of states adopting this time-tested policy.
- **Nearly half of all states** now offer Same Day Voter Registration.
- Despite nearly doubling the number of states with Same Day Registration since 2016, we still see a **consistent turnout advantage** of at least five points higher than states without it.

Competition and the Electoral College impact the state turnout

- Competition is a big driver of voter turnout. When it comes to the presidential race, the **Electoral College divides the country** into battleground (competitive) and non-battleground states.
- Voter turnout in the **36 non-battleground states was four percentage points lower than** that of the battleground states. All but one of the bottom 10 states in turnout were non-battleground states.
- The two major candidates made **98% of their limited campaign visits to these 14 battleground states** and gave the bulk of their campaign money to these 14 battleground states.

NATIONAL TURNOUT

2020 had the highest turnout of eligible voters for a presidential election since **1900**.

National turnout over time - marks the modern record for turnout after major historic expansions.

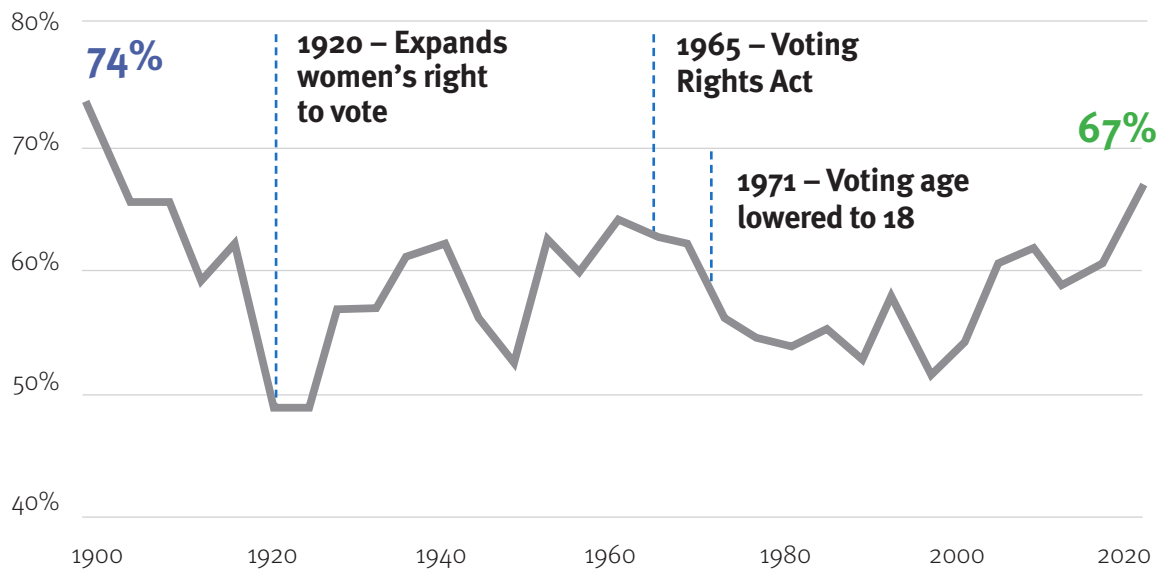


Figure 1

Source: U.S. Elections Project



Every state increased their turnout over 2016.



Over 159,690,000 votes were cast, 23.8 million more than 2016.



For the first time in recent history, 20 states had voter turnout over 70 percent.



Minnesota led the way with 80% voter turnout.

The 50 State Ranking– 2020 Election Voter Turnout

Voter turnout is calculated in each state as

The total number of votes

The number of people eligible to vote

The number of people eligible to vote is determined by the Census data for the number of citizens 18 and over, then adjusted for those prohibited from voting due to a past conviction, depending on state law.

Since the 1980s, the U.S. Elections Project has provided the official estimate of each state's voter eligible population (VEP) as the most accurate method to meaningfully compare voter turnout between states.

STATE VOTER TURNOUT RANKINGS 2020

Percentage turnout of voting eligible population

Rank 2020	State	Percentage Turnout	Rank 2020	State	Percentage Turnout	Rank	State	Percentage Turnout
1	Minnesota	80.0%	18	Maryland	71.1%	35	Kentucky	64.9%
2	Colorado	76.4%	19	Pennsylvania	71.0%	36	Louisiana	64.6%
3	Maine	76.3%	20	Delaware	70.7%	37	Wyoming	64.6%
4	Wisconsin	75.8%	21	Nebraska	69.9%	38	South Carolina	64.5%
5	Washington	75.7%	22	Utah	69.2%	39	North Dakota	64.5%
6	Oregon	75.5%	23	Alaska	68.8%	40	Dist. of Columbia	64.1%
7	New Hampshire	75.5%	24	California	68.5%	41	New York	63.4%
8	New Jersey	75.3%	25	Idaho	68.0%	42	Alabama	63.1%
9	Vermont	74.2%	26	Georgia	67.7%	43	Indiana	61.4%
10	Michigan	73.9%	27	Ohio	67.4%	44	New Mexico	61.3%
11	Iowa	73.2%	28	Illinois	67.0%	45	Texas	60.4%
12	Montana	73.1%	29	South Dakota	66.0%	46	Mississippi	60.2%
13	Virginia	73.0%	30	Arizona	65.9%	47	Tennessee	59.8%
14	Massachusetts	72.1%	31	Kansas	65.9%	48	West Virginia	57.6%
15	Florida	71.7%	32	Missouri	65.7%	49	Hawaii	57.5%
16	Connecticut	71.5%	33	Rhode Island	65.7%	50	Arkansas	56.1%
17	North Carolina	71.5%	34	Nevada	65.4%	51	Oklahoma	55.0%

Figure 2

Source: U.S. Elections Project, [2020 General Election Turnout](#)

The Top 10 States VS The Bottom 10 States

Despite the record nationwide turnout, there are still wide differences in voter turnout between states that make it easier or harder to vote.

The average turnout in the Top 10 states (76%) was 17 percentage points higher than the bottom 10 states (59%).

TOP 10 STATES VS BOTTOM 10 STATES

Every state in the top 10 makes voting easier by either allowing voters to register or update their registration when they vote, sending all voters a mail ballot, or both.

Top 10 highest turnout states using Voting Eligible Population

Same Day Registration	Vote At Home		
✓		Minnesota	80.0%
✓	✓	Colorado	76.4%
✓		Maine	76.3%
✓		Wisconsin	75.8%
✓	✓	Washington	75.7%
	✓	Oregon	75.5%
✓		New Hampshire	75.5%
	✓	New Jersey	74.3%
✓	✓	Vermont	74.2%
✓		Michigan	73.9%

Figure 3

Source: U.S. Elections Project

Only five of the top 10 states were battleground states. (see page 24)

Eight out of the bottom 10 states make voting harder by cutting off voter registration four weeks before the election, requiring an excuse to use a mail ballot, or both.

Bottom 10 states using Voting Eligible Population

4 WEEK	Excuse		
✓	✓*	Alabama	63.1%
✓	✓	Indiana	61.4%
✓		New Mexico	61.3%
✓	✓	Texas	60.4%
✓	✓	Mississippi	60.2%
✓	✓	Tennessee	59.8%
		West Virginia	57.6%
		Hawaii	57.5%
✓	✓*	Arkansas	56.1%
✓	✓*	Oklahoma	55.0%

* Excuse states include those that made temporary COVID exceptions but still had other mail ballot restrictions.

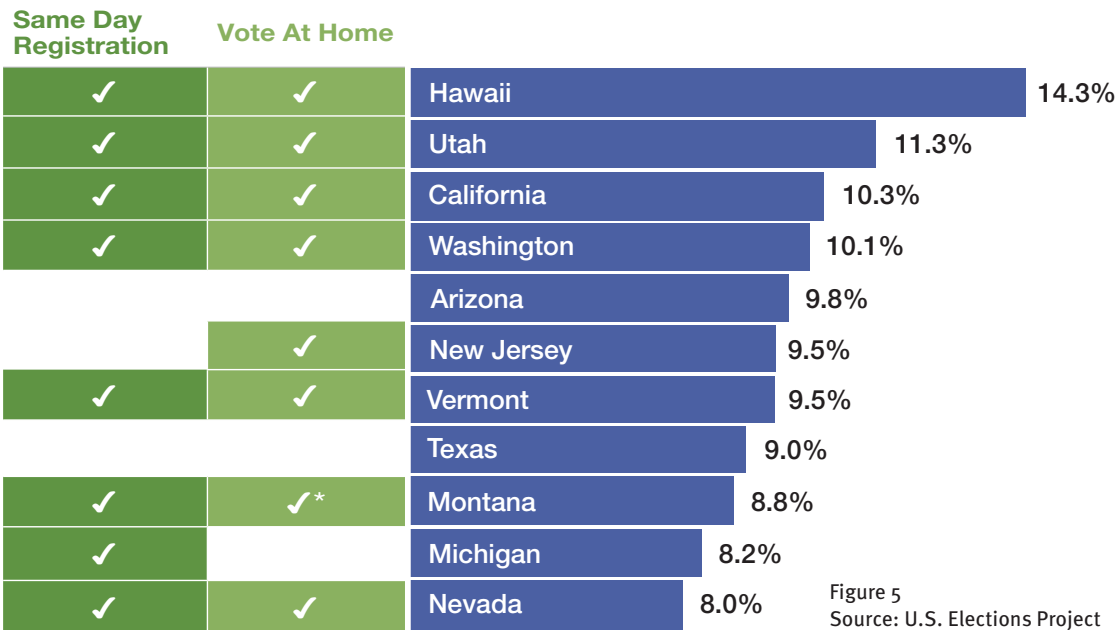
Figure 4

Source: U.S. Elections Project

TOP 10 HIGHEST GROWTH IN TURNOUT

Eight of the 10 states with the highest *increase* in voter turnout had implemented new or expanded policies since 2016, like Same Day Registration or Vote at Home.

Top 10 highest percentage point increase in turnout over 2016



More than half of the highest turnout growth states are not battleground states. Only four were:

Arizona, Texas, Michigan, and Nevada. (see page 24)



***Montana** operated like a Vote at Home state in 2020. Counties had the option to mail ballots to all voters. 46 of 56 counties chose this option and 99% of Montana voters used a mail ballot.



Arizona was the first state that allowed voters to permanently sign up for mail ballots and provide online voter registration. As a result, they were more prepared for remote registration and mail ballot voting.

Growth of Mail and Early Voting

For the first time in US Election history, over twice as many people voted early with a mail ballot or in-person at an early voting site than filled out a ballot on Election Day at the polls.

The majority of voters chose to vote with mail ballots when all three voting methods were available in their state.

Among the states, no policy had a greater impact on increasing voter participation than proactively mailing all voters a ballot, often referred to as Vote at Home.

HOW WE VOTED EARLY OR BY MAIL

70% of voters voted early with a mail ballot or early in-person instead of in-person on Election Day

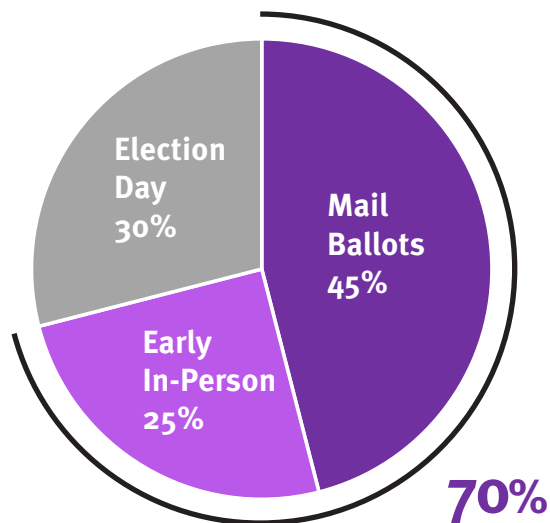


Figure 6

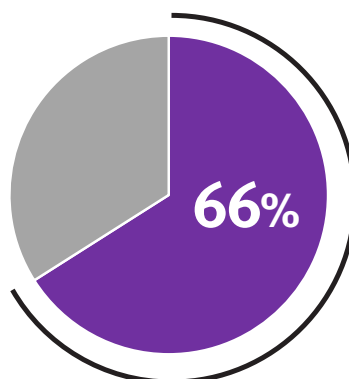
Source: Nonprofit VOTE analysis of method data - see methodology

A record 111 million voted with either a mail ballot or early in-person

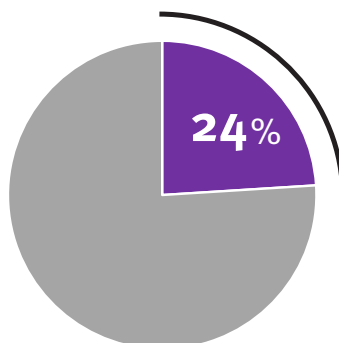
more than double the number who voted in person on Election Day²

Voters largely chose how they voted by **convenience, not “concerns about coronavirus”**

Voters asked to rate importance on a scale from not at all, minor, and a major reason¹



66% Said “**most convenient**” was “a major reason” for choosing their method of voting



Only **24%** chose “**concerns about coronavirus**” as a major reason

Figure 7

Source: Pew Research, [The Voting Experience in 2020](#)

Voting early increased over 30 percentage points since the 2016 presidential election.

Percentage of voters that voted early in-person or by mail by presidential election

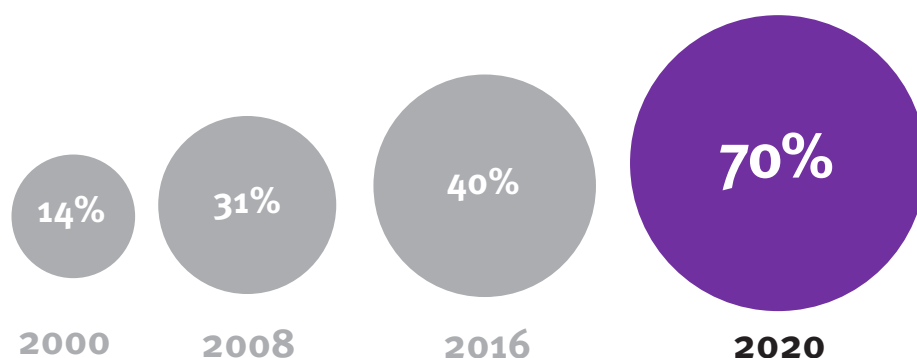


Figure 8

Source: Year 2000 - 2016, U.S. Census Current Population Survey

¹ Pew: [The Voting Experience in 2020](#), 2020.

² Nonprofit VOTE analysis of voting method data – see methodology

VOTE AT HOME - VOTE BY MAIL

Vote at Home states proactively mail a ballot to every registered voter two to three weeks before the election.

Each state provides voters **convenient options** to return their ballot at a secure local drop box, vote center or poll location, or by mail.

In all Vote at Home and many other states, voters also have the option to track their ballot online from when their ballot was sent out to when it was officially counted by their election office.

In 2020, **CA, CO, HI, MT*, NV, NJ, OR, UT, VT, WA, DC** all had Vote at Home policies.



Six had **full Vote at Home** for the first time in a presidential election.

All Vote at Home states were either among the top 10 voter turnout states or the top 10 states in turnout growth over 2016.

In addition to the Vote at Home states, **many other states encouraged the use of mail ballots.**

Efforts to expand mail ballot usage included mailing ballot request forms to all registered voters and making it easy to apply.

Vote at Home states had nearly twice the growth in turnout over other states.

Average percent growth in Voting Eligible Population turnout

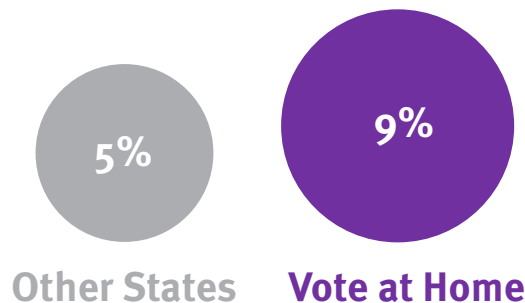
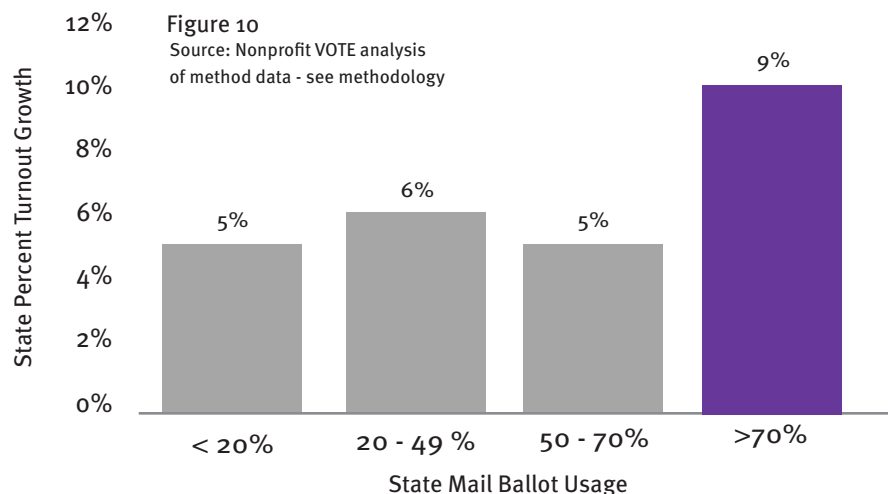


Figure 9
Source: U.S. Elections Project

States with the highest percent mail ballot usage had the highest percent turnout growth.

Average percent growth in Voting Eligible Population turnout



* operated like Vote at Home, see methodology

MAKING VOTE AT HOME EASIER

Mail ballot usage increased nationwide. While many states expanded access to mail-in ballots, others retained restrictive policies like excuse requirements, notary or witness signatures, and submitting a copy of one’s ID. In the scatterplot below, states with the highest use of mail ballots correlated with higher voter turnout.

States with the **highest use of mail ballots** correlate with **high voter turnout** in 2020.

Percent of voters using a mail ballot vs percent of VEP voter turnout by state ($R^2 = 0.2596$)

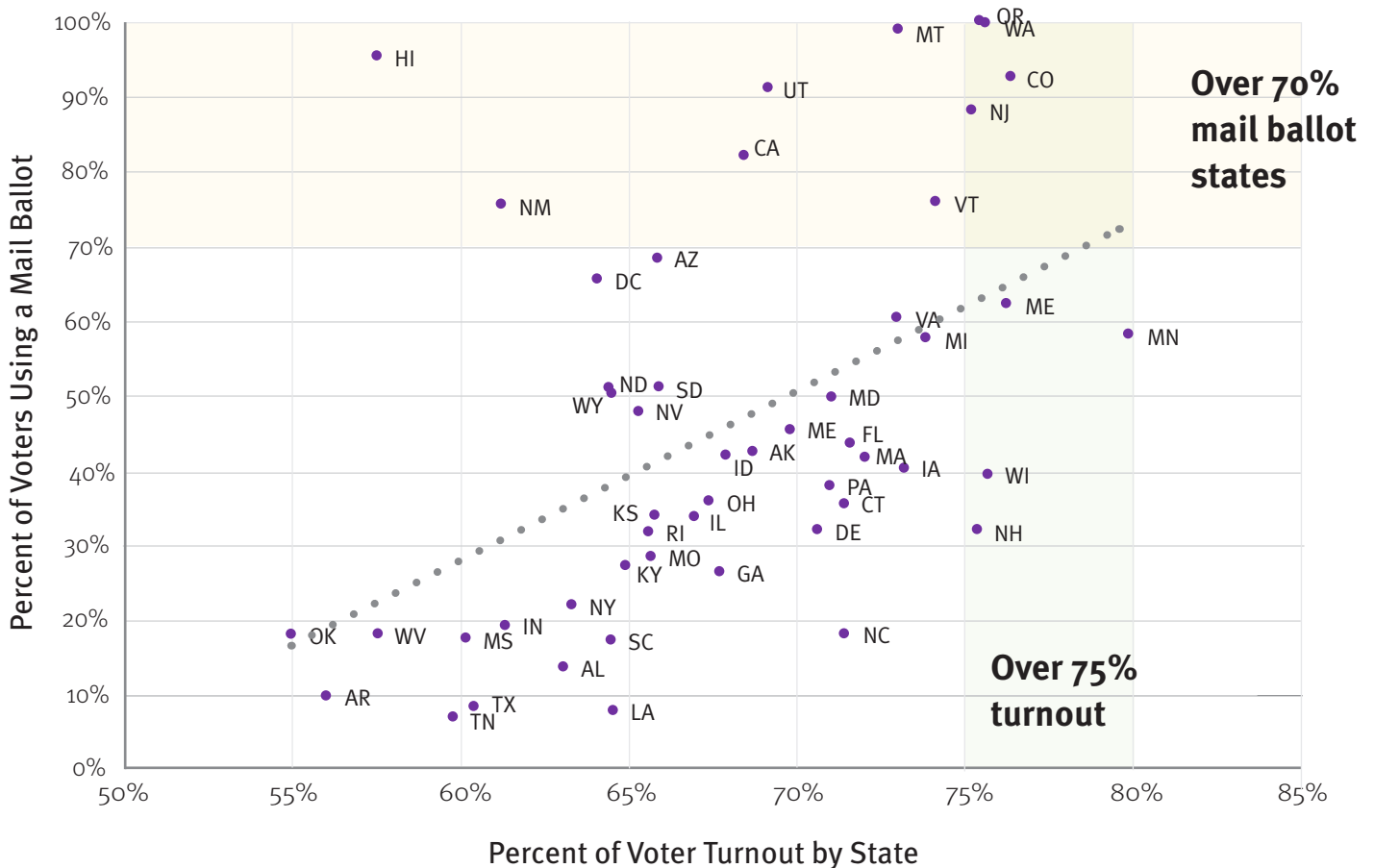







Figure 11

Source: Nonprofit VOTE analysis of method data – see methodology

BENEFITS OF VOTE AT HOME

-  **Ballots are automatically sent to all registered voters** - Voters are not required to locate, fill out, and return a ballot request application form.
-  **More choice in returning mail ballots** - Voters can choose between returning ballots by mail or in-person at secure drop boxes or vote centers open before and on Election Day. The large majority opt to return their mail ballot in person³.
-  **Turnout benefits across all demographics** - While voting from home contributed to higher voter turnout for everyone, research in Washington and Colorado showed that voters least likely to vote saw the highest growth in participation, helping to narrow participation gaps⁴.
-  **Higher turnout in down ballot races** - In studies of Vote at Home states, voters are more likely to vote in races further down the ballot⁵. With a mail-in ballot in hand, voters have time to study down-ballot races and vote with confidence as opposed to seeing those down-ballot races for the first time on Election Day.
-  **Ballot tracking** - Most states, including all Vote at Home states, have ballot tracking technology to let voters track their mail or absentee ballot. Ballot tracking, much like tracking a package, makes it easy for voters to know the location of their ballot at each stage in the voting process.

More resources: National Vote at Home Institute - voteathome.org

³ Vox, [Oregon already votes by mail. Here's what it can teach us in 2020](#), (63 % put ballots in drop boxes or returned them to county officials)

⁴ WA: Gerber, et al, [Identifying the Effect of All-Mail Elections on Turnout, Political Science Research and Methods](#), 2013.
CO: Hill et al, [All-Mail Voting in Colorado Increases Turnout and Reduces Turnout Inequality](#), 2020

⁵ Marble, William, [Mail Voting Reduces Ballot Roll-Off](#), 2017 and *
James Szewczyk, [How Electoral Institutions Affect Political Accountability](#), 2018

MAIL BALLOT USAGE

Percent of total state voter turnout that used mail ballots

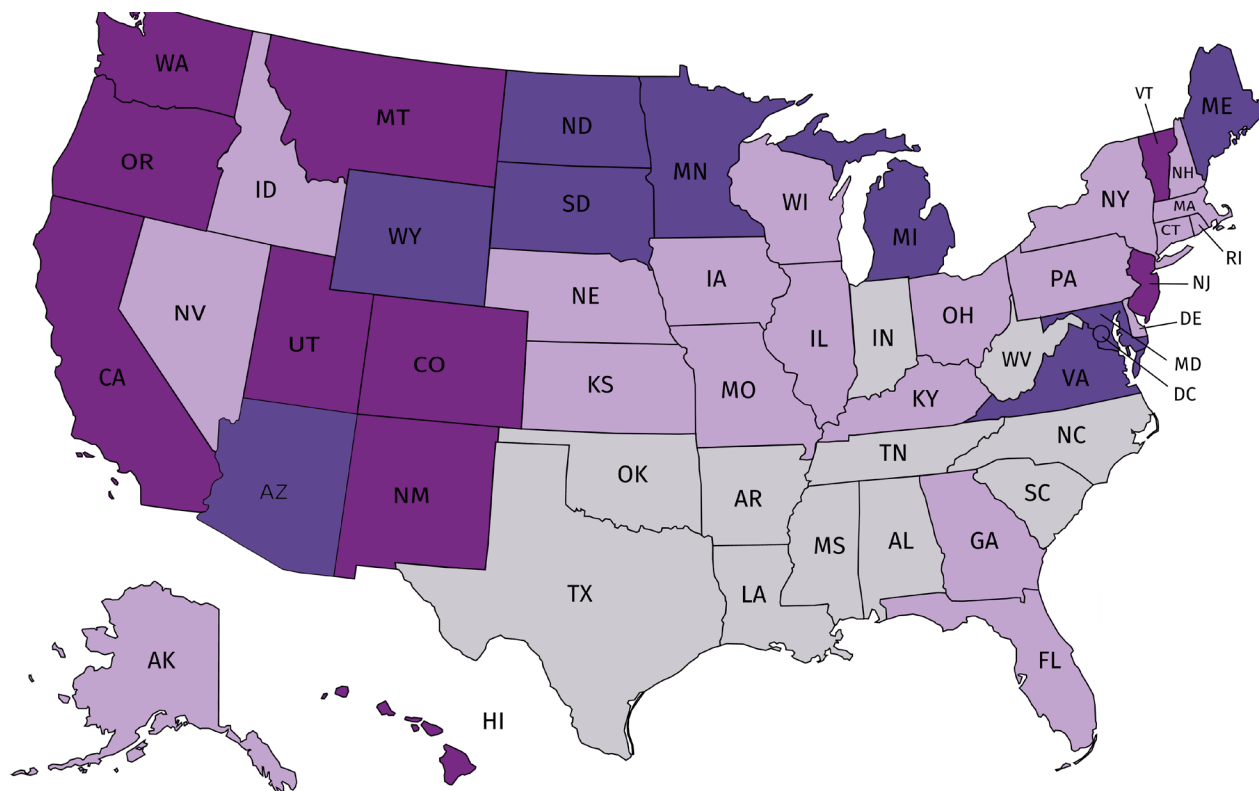
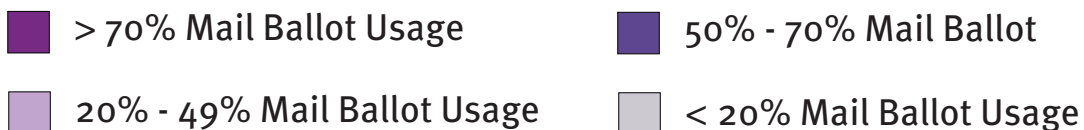


Figure 12

Source: Nonprofit VOTE analysis



Link to [National Vote at Home Institute](#) mail ballot access by state map.

Growth of Same Day Registration

Same day registration is a time-tested policy of over 40 years that allows voters to register or fix a problem with their registration when they vote in-person on Election Day or in early voting.

This voter friendly policy has long been cited in political science research as likely to increase voter turnout by three to seven percentage points once implemented⁶.

⁶ [National Conference of State Legislatures - SDR.](#)

SAME DAY REGISTRATION

With Same Day Registration (SDR) – also known as Election Day registration – voters may register or update their registration when they vote in-person on Election Day or in early voting. States differ in how it's implemented.

For more visit Nonprofit VOTE's [Voting in Your State tool](#) or the [resource page](#) of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

In 2020, voter turnout in **Same Day Registration states** was **five percentage points higher** than states without.

Same Day Registration states consistently show turnout advantages.

Turnout by presidential election

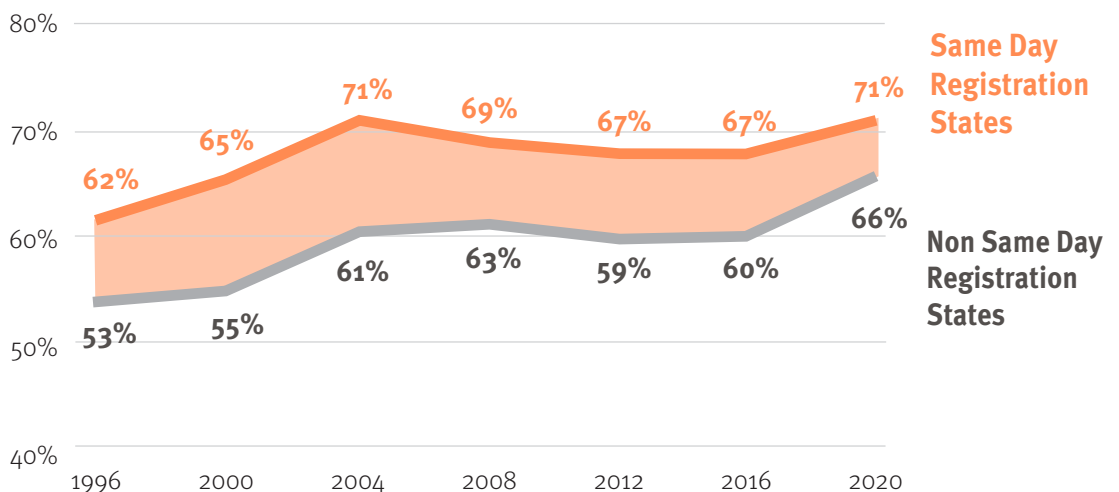


Figure 13

Source: U.S. Elections Project

Eight of the top ten voter turnout states have Same Day Registration.

Turnout advantage persists with **increased adoption** of Same Day Registration.

Number of states that implemented Same Day Registration

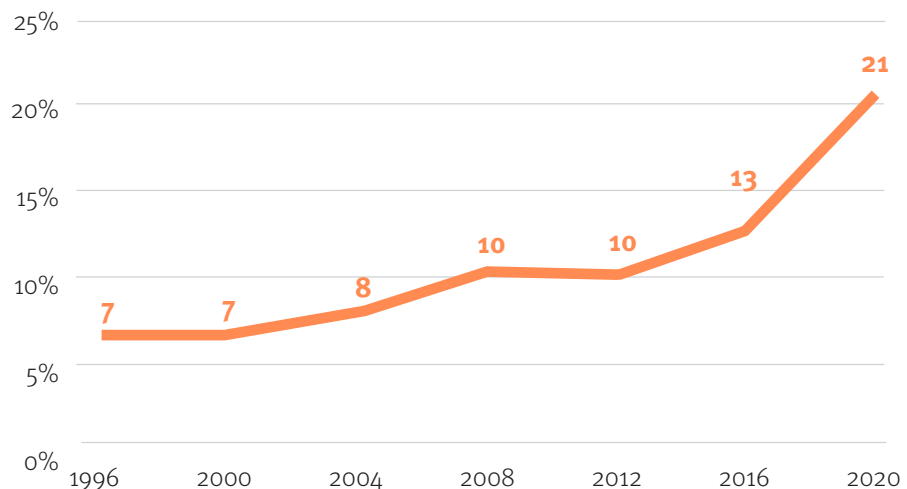


Figure 14

Source: Nonprofit VOTE analysis

In general more than half of Same Day Registrations are updates (change of name, address, etc.), not new registrations⁷.

SAME DAY REGISTRATION STATES

24 States and the District of Columbia Have Same Day Registration

Last updated March 2021

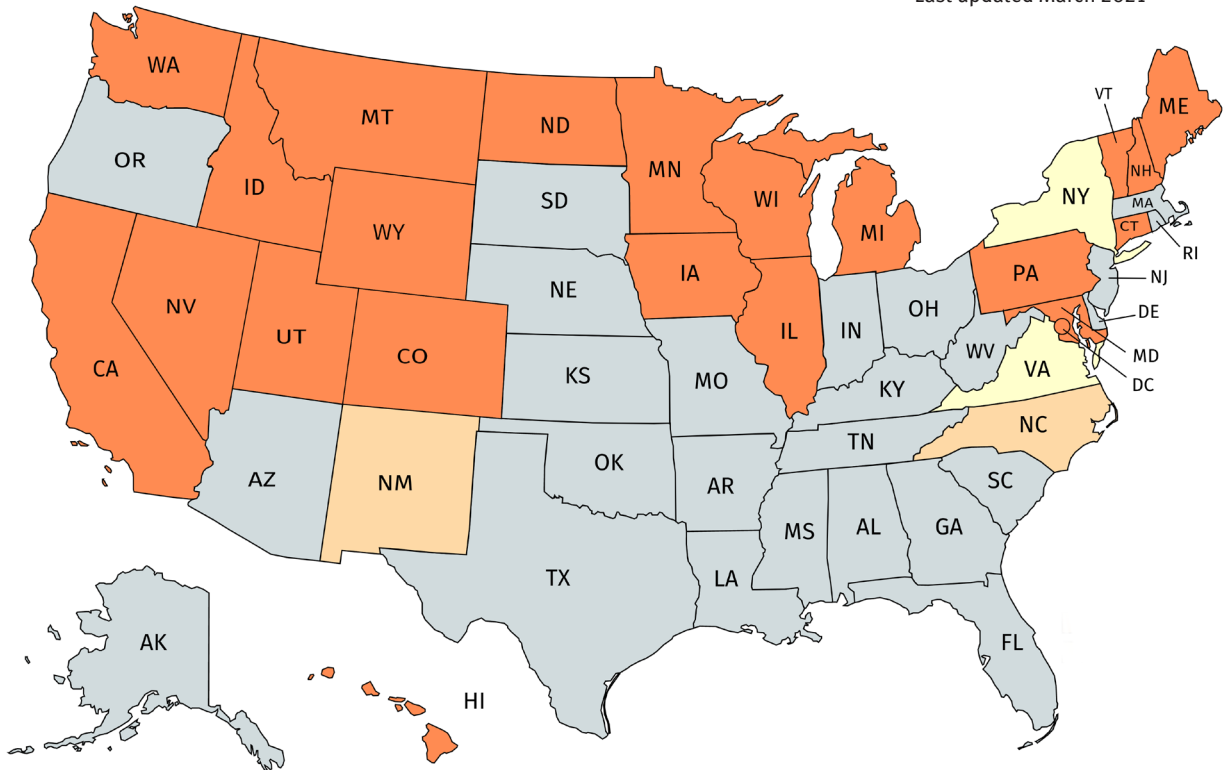


Figure 15

North Carolina and New Mexico had SDR in early voting **only for 2020**. **New Mexico** will include Election Day starting in **2021**

New York (pending voter approval) and **Virginia** will start in **2022**

Before 1990

Maine
Minnesota
North Dakota
Wisconsin

1990-2008

Idaho
Iowa
Montana
New Hampshire
North Carolina
Wyoming

2010-2018

California
Colorado
Connecticut
Dist of Columbia
Hawaii
Illinois
Utah
Vermont

2019-2022

Maryland
Michigan
Nevada
New Mexico
New York
Virginia
Washington

BENEFITS OF SAME DAY REGISTRATION

- ✓ **No eligible voter is turned away by fixable voter registration issues** - Voters still have a chance to fix mistakes or update the address of a previous registration when they vote. This is especially beneficial for new voters.
- ✓ **Safeguards voters** - Voters who are removed from the voter roll, due to inactivity or other reason, and don't know that their registration is no longer valid until Election Day, can still re-register.
- ✓ **Increases accuracy of registration rolls** - All Same Day Registrations are overseen by election officials and processed immediately, ensuring more accurate rolls.
- ✓ **Reduces need for provisional ballots** - Allows voters to feel more confident in their vote and reduces administrative overhead of processing provisional ballots.

Resources - [National Conference of State Legislatures - SDR](#)

OTHER POLICIES THAT INCREASE ACCESS TO VOTER REGISTRATION

Automatic Voter Registration (19 states): Eligible voters that interact with motor vehicles and select government agencies are automatically registered to vote unless they opt out.

- Once registered the voter is more likely to vote and also to be contacted about voting by others.

Resources: [NCSL State Election Resources-AVR](#); [Brennan Center For Justice](#)

Preregistration for 16- and 17-year old Voters (21 states): Voters 16 or 17 may preregister so once they turn 18, they are automatically registered and eligible to vote.

- Young voters are welcomed earlier and more informed as a full participant in democracy.

Resources: [NCSL State Election Resources-Pre-Reg](#); [FairVote](#)

Online Voter Registration (40 states): Voters register or update their registration online. Most states, but not all, require a driver's license or state ID.

- Makes it easier to register, especially for more mobile and younger voters to keep their registration up-to-date.

Resources: [NCSL State Election Resources-OVR](#); [Vote.Gov](#)

Competition and the Electoral College

Political competition is seen as a foundation of a healthy democracy. It impacts voter mobilization, media coverage, voter interest, and of course, voter turnout. As election policies impact access to the ballot box, they also frame whether voters have meaningful choices.

While competition in local, state, and Congressional races impacts turnout, 2020 was dominated by the Presidential race with clear impacts on turnout across the nation. The Electoral College confines competition and voter engagement into a small number of battleground states.

COMPETITION AND THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

14 Battleground States in 2020 include those with the most ad spending by campaigns.

Arizona	Michigan	Ohio
Florida	Minnesota	Pennsylvania
Georgia	Nevada	Texas
Iowa	New Hampshire	Wisconsin
Maine	North Carolina	

These battleground states are almost identical to 2012 and 2016. Only Texas was a new battleground state. Colorado and Virginia moved from battleground to safe for Democrats.

Battleground states consistently show turnout advantages between **four to eight** percentage points.

Turnout by presidential election

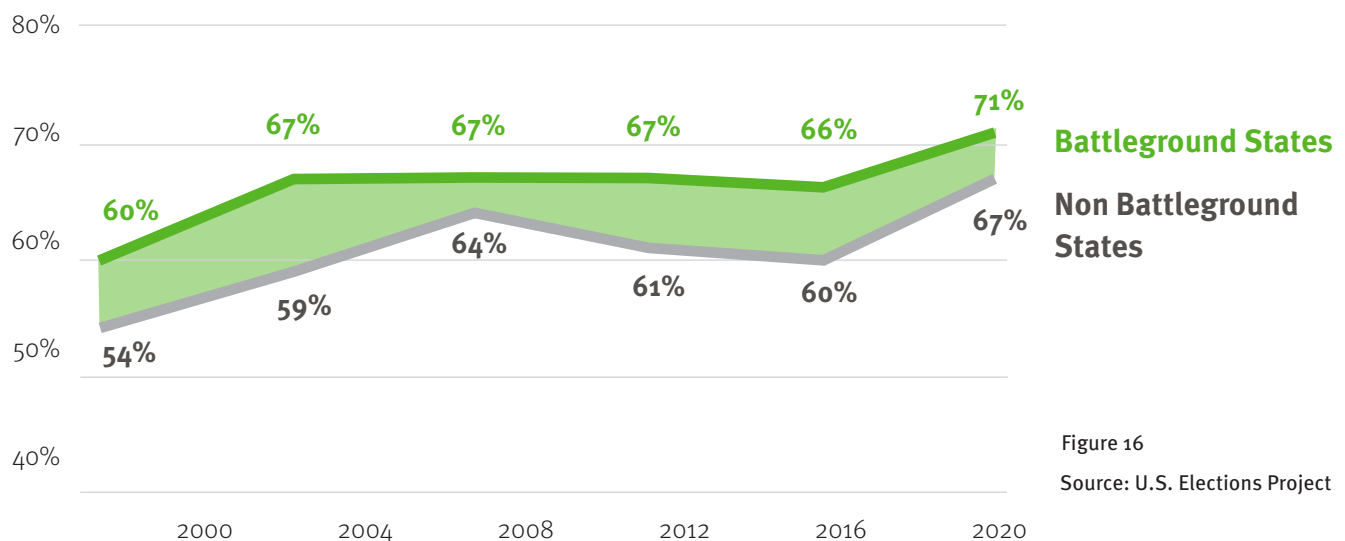
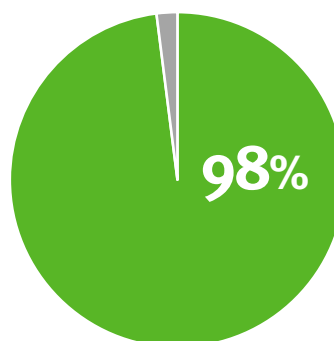


Figure 16
Source: U.S. Elections Project

The top six: Money and attention of the national campaigns predominantly went to six states:

Arizona, Florida, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

They accounted for 84% of campaign ad spending and 71% of candidate appearances⁸.



Of all presidential campaign visits, 98% were to **the 14 battleground states**

Figure 17
Source: FairVote

⁸ Source: Campaign spending - Nonprofit VOTE analysis of data from AdImpact.com, National Public Radio, and New York Times; Campaign Visits-FairVote. See methodology, P 28)

ALTERNATIVE TO THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

Over

139 million

ELIGIBLE VOTERS

Or nearly 3 out of 5 voters live outside of battleground states



That's almost 60% of the entire voting eligible population

Figure 18

Source: U.S. Elections Project

Electing the President by a popular vote has long been proposed as a better way to reflect core principles of one person one vote where every citizen has an equal vote. All 50 states use the popular vote to elect their governor.

As recently as 1969, Congress came close to replacing the Electoral College with the popular vote. The House voted 338 to 70 for a constitutional amendment. Strong support in the Senate was blocked by a filibuster. In 2020, a Gallup poll showed bi-partisan support (61%) for the popular vote.

NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE - INTERSTATE COMPACT

One way to move to a national popular vote is the [National Popular Vote compact](#); an agreement among states to award all their electoral votes to the presidential candidate who wins the popular vote. The compact only goes into effect when enough states join whose Electoral College votes exceed the 270 electoral votes needed to win.

As of 2020, 15 states and DC have voted to join the compact, representing 196 electoral votes. It's a shorter path than a constitutional amendment and, at minimum, brings electoral competition and the debate of every citizen having an equal vote to every state.

RESOURCES

- [National Popular Vote](#)
- [FairVote](#)
- [Common Cause](#)
- [Why Do We Still Have the Electoral College?](#), Alexander Keyssar, 2020.

OTHER POLICIES THAT IMPROVE COMPETITION

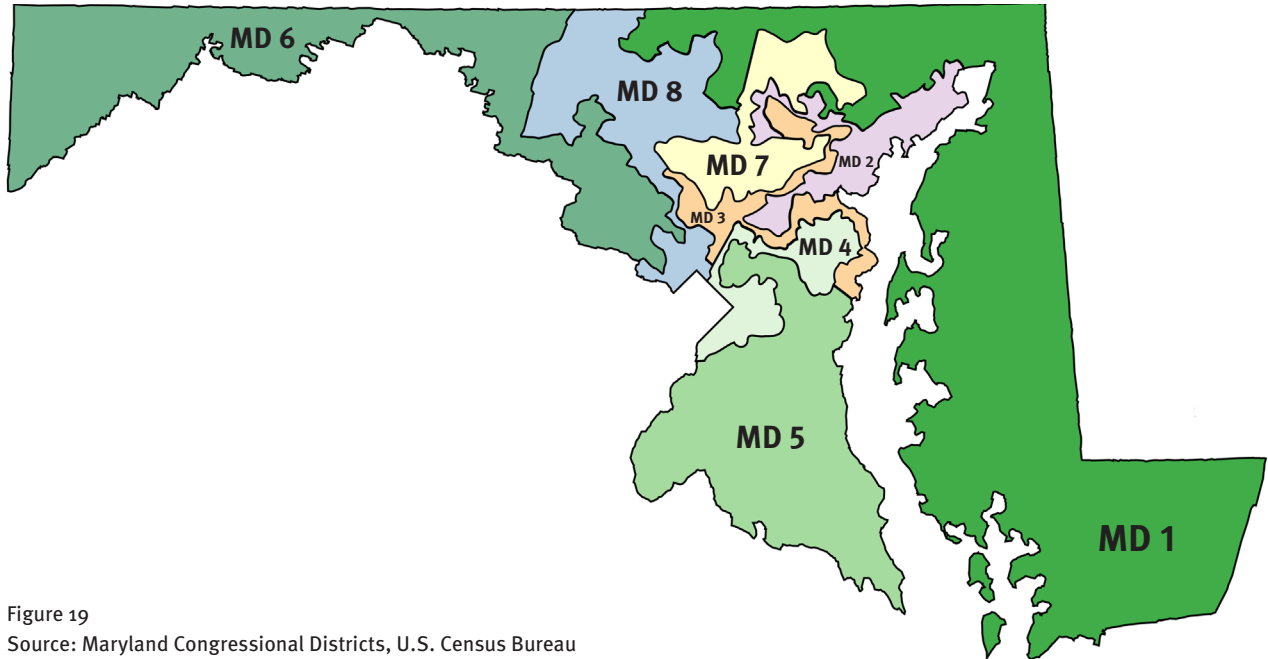


Figure 19

Source: Maryland Congressional Districts, U.S. Census Bureau

Nonpartisan Redistricting (11 states): Generally described nonpartisan, multi partisan, independent, or citizen led commissions as solution to lawmakers drawing their own districts.

- Commission rules and composition facilitate and encourage negotiation and compromise. They value fair redistricting principles, political competition, transparency, and public input.

Resources: [All About Redistricting](#), [NCSL Congressional Redistricting](#)

Ranked Choice Voting (22 states): Voters rank candidates in order of preference. This gives voters more choice, and lets more candidates run while ensuring the winner has majority support. Ranked Choice Voting is used in local and state races, party primaries, and for overseas voters to vote in two round elections.

- It frees voters to vote their top choice with the safety of backup choices. It allows more competition among candidates and incentives for less polarizing politics.

Resources: [FairVote](#); [Ranked Choice Voting Center](#)

The background of the slide is a photograph of a hand holding a pen, poised to mark a ballot. The ballot is covered in a grid of small, dark, triangular marks. A circular sticker with the text "I Voted Today!" is affixed to the ballot. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter.

Methodology

America Goes to the Polls reports official voter turnout in national elections as reported by the 50 states. Certified election results were collected by the U.S. Elections Project from state election offices in the months following the 2020 election.

METHODOLOGY

VOTER TURNOUT

Voter Turnout is the number of certified ballots cast and counted divided by the voting-eligible population. (Full definition on page 7)

$$\frac{\text{Ballots Cast}}{\text{Voting-Eligible Population}}$$

BALLOTS CAST

In 2020, 40 states and the District of Columbia reported official ballots cast. For the states that did not report total turnout, the U.S. Elections Project [estimates](#) total ballots cast based on the total votes reported for the state office that attracts the most votes (i.e. U.S. Senate, Governor, or At-large seat for Congress, called “highest office” turnout). The Elections Project will update total ballots counted as states report data later this year, but a handful of states never report this statistic.

VOTING-ELIGIBLE POPULATION (VEP)

Since 1980, the Elections Project has provided the [official estimate](#) of voting-eligible population. It includes the number of citizens over 18, except for those who cannot vote due to a past felony conviction. It uses current data from the U.S. Census and other government sources⁹.

POLICY DIFFERENCES IN THE STATES WITH THE HIGHEST AND LOWEST VOTER TURNOUT

On page 11, the report highlights two election policies for the 10 states with the highest percent voter turnout; states that have same day voter registration and/or Vote at Home where states proactively send mail ballots to all registered voters. It associates 10 states with the lowest percent turnout with the negative impact seen in previous research.

Four-Week Advance Voter Registration Deadlines: Considered to be states that maintain their primary registration deadlines 25 to 31 days before the election. These states do not offer same day registration. The data for [2020 deadlines](#) is compiled by Ballotpedia.

Excuse Needed for Mail Ballot: Includes states that continue to require an excuse to apply for a mail or absentee ballot, including states that made limited temporary COVID exceptions (Alabama, Arkansas, and West Virginia). These states also maintained other special restrictions such as requiring the returned ballot to have two witnesses or be notarized. These states were also among the lowest 10 states in use of mail or absentee ballots in 2020.

⁹[Overview of how the voting-eligible population \(VEP\) is constructed](#), U.S. Elections Project.

VOTING METHOD: MAIL, EARLY IN-PERSON, OR ELECTION DAY

Data for voting method came from Nonprofit VOTE analysis of public data reported by the states on their websites on how they assigned voting method of ballots returned and counted. For states that did not publish voting method on their election websites, the report used data from their state voter files. The underlying voter data for state-by-state aggregations were supplied by Citizen Data, a public benefit

The data was obtained from their national voter file, which undergoes various processing procedures making it clean and reliable. At the time of release of this report, updated data from Kansas, Kentucky, New Jersey, and New York was not available so it was sourced from an analysis of voter file data by TargetSmart, published by NBC. For any preliminary numbers, the US Elections Assistance Commission will also be reporting final numbers in the 2020 Election Administration and Voting Survey.

GROWTH IN EARLY VOTING

On page 14 total early voting in 2020 is compared to prior years based on voting method estimates from the U.S. Census biennial report on voting and registration in the Current Population Survey.

VOTE AT HOME STATES

Vote at Home states are defined as those that proactively send mail ballots to all registered voters, including California, Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington, Utah, and the District of Columbia. It includes states that adopted Vote at Home for the 2020 election, including New Jersey, Nevada, and Vermont, but have not yet decided to make the policy permanent. "Full" Vote at Home states were defined as states that proactively sent mail ballots to 100% of registered voters. Montana also operated like a Vote at Home state in 2020 with 46 of 56 counties proactively mailing ballots to voters and 99% of Montana voters using a mail ballot.

SAME DAY REGISTRATION

The report looks at the 21 states that had Same Day Registration policies fully implemented for 2020. Figures 13, 14, and 15, do not include New Mexico and North Carolina, which limited SDR to early voting only. It also excludes the District of Columbia (D.C) because it doesn't have the comparable election or competition for state or federal offices outside of the vote for president. D.C. is included in the national turnout and role in the Electoral College and cited as having SDR and Vote at Home policies.

ELECTORAL COLLEGE

The battleground states were the 14 most heavily targeted by the presidential campaigns as evident from campaign spending and visits. Campaign spending was based on a Nonprofit VOTE analysis of data from 14 states where campaigns spent the most money according to AdImpact.com (formerly Advertising Analytics) as reported by National Public Radio, and the New York Times. The number of campaign visits to states was compiled by FairVote.

APPENDIX

CHANGE IN VOTER TURNOUT AND RANK: 2016 – 2020 GENERAL ELECTIONS

State	Total Ballots 2020	VEP Percent Turnout 2020	Total Ballots 2016	VEP Percent Turnout 2016	Percent Turnout Change 16-20	2020 Rank (2016 Rank)
Alabama	2325000	63.1%	2134061	59.1%	4.0%	42 (36)
Alaska	361400	68.8%	321271	61.5%	7.3%	23 (26)
Arizona	3420565	65.9%	2661497	56.1%	9.8%	30 (43)
Arkansas	1223675	56.1%	1137772	53.2%	2.9%	50 (46)
California	17783784	68.5%	14610509	58.2%	10.3%	24 (37)
Colorado	3295666	76.4%	2859216	71.9%	4.5%	2 (4)
Connecticut	1861086	71.5%	1675955	64.9%	6.6%	16 (15)
Delaware	509241	70.7%	445228	64.4%	6.3%	20 (18)
District of Columbia	346491	64.1%	312575	60.7%	3.4%	40 (28)
Florida	11144855	71.7%	9580489	65.6%	6.0%	15 (14)
Georgia	5000511	67.7%	4165405	59.8%	7.9%	26 (32)
Hawaii	579784	57.5%	437664	43.2%	14.3%	49 (51)
Idaho	878527	68.0%	710545	60.9%	7.1%	25 (27)
Illinois	6050000	67.0%	5666118	63.1%	4.0%	28 (23)
Indiana	3068542	61.4%	2807676	57.9%	3.5%	43 (38)
Iowa	1700130	73.2%	1581371	69.1%	4.1%	11 (6)
Kansas	1375125	65.9%	1225667	59.7%	6.2%	31 (34)
Kentucky	2150954	64.9%	1955195	59.6%	5.4%	35 (35)
Louisiana	2180000	64.6%	2049531	60.6%	4.1%	36 (29)
Maine	828305	76.3%	771892	72.9%	3.4%	3 (2)
Maryland	3066945	71.1%	2807322	67.0%	4.1%	18 (9)
Massachusetts	3658005	72.1%	3378801	68.3%	3.8%	14 (7)
Michigan	5579317	73.9%	4874619	65.7%	8.2%	10 (12)
Minnesota	3292997	80.0%	2968281	74.7%	5.2%	1 (1)

State	Total Ballots 2020	VEP Percent Turnout 2020	Total Ballots 2016	VEP Percent Turnout 2016	Percent Turnout Change 16-20	2020 Rank (2016 Rank)
Mississippi	1325000	60.2%	1209357	55.2%	5.0%	46 (44)
Missouri	3026028	65.7%	2811549	62.2%	3.5%	32 (24)
Montana	612075	73.1%	516901	64.3%	8.8%	12 (19)
Nebraska	966920	69.9%	860573	64.0%	5.8%	21 (21)
Nevada	1407754	65.4%	1125429	57.4%	8.0%	34 (40)
New Hampshire	814499	75.5%	755850	72.5%	3.0%	7 (3)
New Jersey	4635585	75.3%	3957303	65.8%	9.5%	8 (11)
New Mexico	928230	61.3%	804043	54.9%	6.4%	44 (45)
New York	8661735	63.4%	7786881	57.2%	6.1%	41 (42)
North Carolina	5545847	71.5%	4769640	64.9%	6.6%	17 (16)
North Dakota	364251	64.5%	349945	61.7%	2.7%	39 (25)
Ohio	5974121	67.4%	5607641	64.2%	3.3%	27 (20)
Oklahoma	1565000	55.0%	1452992	52.3%	2.7%	51 (47)
Oregon	2413890	75.5%	2056310	68.0%	7.5%	6 (8)
Pennsylvania	6950000	71.0%	6165478	63.6%	7.4%	19 (22)
Rhode Island	525000	65.7%	469589	59.7%	5.9%	33 (33)
South Carolina	2533010	64.5%	2123584	57.3%	7.3%	38 (41)
South Dakota	427529	66.0%	378995	60.0%	5.9%	29 (31)
Tennessee	3065000	59.8%	2545271	51.8%	8.0%	47 (48)
Texas	11350000	60.4%	8975000	51.4%	9.0%	45 (49)
Utah	1515845	69.2%	1152369	57.9%	11.3%	22 (39)
Vermont	370968	74.2%	320467	64.8%	9.5%	9 (17)
Virginia	4523142	73.0%	3984631	66.1%	6.9%	13 (10)
Washington	4116894	75.7%	3363440	65.7%	10.1%	5 (13)
West Virginia	802726	57.6%	714423	50.2%	7.4%	48 (50)
Wisconsin	3310000	75.8%	2976150	69.5%	6.3%	4 (5)
Wyoming	278503	64.6%	258788	60.2%	4.3%	37 (30)



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