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The Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS): Overview and 2024 Findings

The Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS) is a biennial survey of state and local officials about the administration of federal elections. The survey is conducted for each regular federal election cycle by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC), which reports its findings to Congress and the public the year after the election.

The EAVS is not the federal government’s only election data collection effort—the U.S. Census Bureau also surveys individuals about their voting and registration behavior, for example—but it is the most comprehensive regular survey of the state and local jurisdictions that oversee U.S. elections. It has the potential to offer insight into how, and how well, states and localities are running elections, so it may be useful to Members who are interested in identifying either possible problems with the conduct of elections or potential models for improving election administration.

Overview of the EAVS

Versions of the EAVS date back two decades, to the first regular federal election cycle after the creation of the EAC by the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA; 52 U.S.C. §§20901-21145). The current iteration of the survey contains six sections, with questions about voter registration, military and overseas voting, and a range of other election administration topics (see **Table 1** for details). The EAVS has been accompanied since 2008 by another survey—introduced with open-ended questions as the Statutory Overview and redesigned with closed-ended questions and renamed the Election Administration Policy Survey (Policy Survey) for 2018—that asks about states’ elections policies.

Sections A and B of the EAVS are conducted to meet specific reporting requirements of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA; 52 U.S.C. §§20501-20511), as amended, and the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986 (UOCAVA; 52 U.S.C. §§20301-20311), as amended, respectively. The Policy Survey and Sections C-F of the EAVS fall under a broader EAC mandate, in HAVA, to serve as a clearinghouse of election administration information.

The EAVS is distributed to the 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and, in presidential election years, Puerto Rico (referred to hereinafter as “states”). Responses are submitted and certified by chief state election officials using data from local officials, state-level resources like voter registration databases, or a combination of both. The EAC builds data validation checks into the data collection templates it distributes to states, conducts additional reviews of the submitted data, and works with states and localities before

and after they submit their data to help clarify survey procedures and identify and correct errors.

Table 1. Sections of the 2024 EAVS

Section	Topic	Selected Citations
A	Voter Registration	52 U.S.C. §20508 11 C.F.R. §9428.7
B	Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)	52 U.S.C. §§20301-20302 32 C.F.R. Part 233
C	Mail Voting	52 U.S.C. §20922
D	In-Person Polling Operations	52 U.S.C. §20922
E	Provisional Voting	52 U.S.C. §20922
F	Voter Participation and Election Technologies	52 U.S.C. §20922

Source: CRS, based on review of the 2024 EAVS Survey Instrument, the *U.S. Code*, and the *Code of Federal Regulations*.

Note: The EAVS has had this basic structure—with some variations in the questions within each section, such as the changes to Section A for 2024—since 2008.

Responding to the EAVS takes an estimated 90 hours per state, and some state and local officials have expressed concerns about the time and effort it involves. Changes have been made to the survey since its inception to ease that administrative burden, encourage participation, and streamline data collection and reporting. The NVRA questions, the UOCAVA questions, and the general election administration questions were combined into a single survey instrument in 2006, for example, and reporting on the three sets of data was combined into a single product for 2014. The 2014 EAVS also marked the beginning of a collaboration between the EAC and the U.S. Department of Defense’s Federal Voting Assistance Program to reduce redundancies in UOCAVA data collection.

Findings of the 2024 EAVS

The EAC includes topline findings in the report on the EAVS and accompanying Policy Survey that it releases to Congress and the public after each regular federal election cycle. Its topline findings from the 2024 EAVS included that more than 85% of U.S. citizens of voting age were registered as active voters for the 2024 general election and almost 65% of that citizen voting-age population turned out to vote. More than two-thirds cast their ballots in person, including roughly half each on and before Election Day, and about 30% used mail voting, with an almost 10-

percentage-point increase in use of ballot drop boxes from 2022 to 2024 in states that offered them both years. The age distribution of poll workers in states that reported that data point shifted upward from 2020 to 2024, and more than 84% of 2024 poll workers overall had served in a previous election. The trend toward increased use of electronic poll books (e-poll books) and paper-based voting systems continued in 2024, with an all-time high of nearly 40% of states reporting using e-poll books and almost all states using voting systems that relied on a paper ballot or produced a paper record of voters' choices.

Topline findings from the 2024 Policy Survey included that the majority of states offered automatic voter registration in 2024 and just over half allowed voters to register and vote on the same day. All states reported offering in-person voting before Election Day and allowing at least some voters to use mail voting, with about one-fifth automatically mailing ballots to all registered voters, two-thirds providing ballot drop boxes, and three-quarters offering voters opportunities to correct errors on mail ballot envelopes. All but four states reported providing provisional ballots to voters whose eligibility was in question, such as because they did not appear on the voter rolls or were attempting to vote outside their home precinct. States also commonly reported checking election equipment and procedures for accuracy, including with logic and accuracy tests (almost 93% of states), post-election tabulation audits (more than 66%), and ballot reconciliation audits (more than 57%).

Caveats About EAVS Data

The EAC has taken steps, including in the 2024 EAVS, to improve the quality of the data it reports. Its data validation checks are intended to catch errors before states submit their data, for example, and post-submission reviews by the agency serve as additional quality controls. As the EAC notes in its reports, however, some responses to the EAVS—and topline findings that might be drawn from them—should be interpreted and used with care.

One caution is that, despite state and EAC checks, state and local data may be inaccurate or incomplete. One state reported in 2024, for example, that it had found a flaw in the code it used to pull its UOCAVA data in previous years. Another state noted that the data provided by some local jurisdictions for its 2024 submission may have been incomplete or incorrect.

Also, some data may not be straightforwardly comparable across years, states, or localities. Changes in the EAVS survey instrument from one year to another and changes or differences in data collection practices or election laws, procedures, or definitions complicate comparisons. For example, one state might appear to have been understaffed for early voting relative to others because many of its poll workers worked multiple shifts and each of them was only counted in the data once.

Those kinds of complexities suggest that it matters how EAVS data are used. The EAC includes notes about missing, inconsistent, and improbable data in its EAVS reports and releases raw data for individual jurisdictions. Responses to the EAVS and the Policy Survey provide information about the sources and circumstances of the data states and localities report. Taking such context into

account might enable policymakers and election officials to draw more meaningful conclusions about how election administration is working—and whether and how policy interventions might affect it—than relying solely on decontextualized data like state rankings.

Legislative Activity on the EAVS

The EAC conducted its first post-election survey of state and local officials in 2004. Some Members of Congress have offered proposals related to the EAVS in the years since.

Some of those proposals have addressed the content of the survey. The EAC has revised EAVS questions over the years to reflect new developments, such as the evolution of voter registration practices and data collection. Some Members have also supported other changes. In its report accompanying a Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Act, 2010 (H.R. 3170), for example, the House Committee on Appropriations urged the EAC to add questions to the EAVS about voting system performance and malfunctions. The Youth Voting Rights Act (H.R. 5293/S. 2985; 118th Congress) would have added collection of certain data about polling places, voter registration, and absentee and provisional ballots, and the Verification and Oversight for Transparent Elections, Registration, and Identifications (VOTER ID) Act (H.R. 1529; 117th Congress) would have required states to include the results of post-election audits mandated by the bill in their survey responses.

Other legislative proposals have focused on how the survey is conducted. The EAC's 2024 EAVS report included two recommendations to Congress about the administration of the survey: (1) to exempt the EAC from the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA; 44 U.S.C. 3501-3521), and (2) to extend the reporting deadline for the NVRA section of the EAVS from June 30 of each odd-numbered year to September 30. Bills like the Voting Opportunity and Technology Enhancement Rights Act of 2011 (H.R. 108) and the EAC Improvements Act of 2013 (H.R. 2017) would have made the first of those changes. Proposals like the latter bill and the For the People Act of 2021 (H.R. 1/S. 1/S. 2093) would have required states to participate in post-election surveys like the EAVS and Policy Survey, and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008 (P.L. 110-161) established and funded a grant program to improve the EAC's collection of election data.

A third type of proposal would supplement the EAVS and Policy Survey with new election data collection efforts. For example, in the 118th Congress, H.R. 4317 and the Voter Empowerment Act of 2024 (H.R. 9727/S. 5151) would each have required states to submit certain voter registration data to the EAC every two years. The Streamlined and Improved Methods at Polling Locations and Early (SIMPLE) Voting Act of 2019 (H.R. 118) included a provision, similar to the NVRA's reporting requirement, for reporting on the impact of elections policy changes that would have been required by the bill.

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